

# **COUNTY LEITRIM RESOURCE SURVEY**

## **Part III — Demography, Sociology and Economics**

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## CONVERSION FROM METRIC TO IMPERIAL UNITS

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|                      | <i>Metric</i>      | <i>Imperial</i>           |
|----------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Length               | 1 cm               | 0.39 in                   |
|                      | 1 m                | 3.28 ft                   |
|                      | 1 km               | 0.62 miles                |
| Area                 | 1 cm <sup>2</sup>  | 0.155 in <sup>2</sup>     |
|                      | 1 m <sup>2</sup>   | 10.8 ft <sup>2</sup>      |
|                      | 1 ha               | 2.47 ac                   |
| Volume               | 1 litre            | 0.22 Imp. gal             |
| Volume per unit area | 1 l ha             | 0.089 Imp. gal/ac         |
| Weight               | 1 g                | 0.035 oz                  |
|                      | 1 kg               | 2.20 lb                   |
|                      | 1 tonne(Mg)        | 0.984 ton                 |
| Weight per unit area | 1 g/m <sup>2</sup> | 0.0305 oz/yd <sup>2</sup> |
|                      | 1 kg/ha            | 0.89 lb/ac                |

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## FOREWORD

For many years it has been recognised that some of the worst features of western decline are represented in Co. Leitrim. Controversy has surrounded the county with regard to the possible means by which this continuing decline could be halted and reversed. Farming in the county is beset by many problems arising from natural, technical, economic and social forces.

The natural limitations of the county are those imposed mainly by a combination of heavy, poorly drained soils and a relatively wet climate. This dictates a predominantly grassland farming system which encounters serious problems such as poaching by grazing animals, short grazing season, the necessity for the conservation of large amounts of winter fodder, and poor trafficability for farm machinery. This latter problem is accentuated by the presence of many steep slopes associated with the predominant drumlin topography.

It is not surprising, therefore, to find serious sociological problems associated with these conditions. Farm size is small, off-farm employment is scarce, and the resulting emigration has brought about a population structure dominated by the old and very young. This represents a very serious obstacle to economic development.

Against this background the Council of An Foras Taliintais decided in 1971 that the overall agricultural situation in Leitrim should be examined. It was realised that much of the information already available was related to situations of the past and was irrelevant in terms of future demands created by EEC requirements. It was also realised that the positive way to progress is through identifying the resources available and, using those, to develop systems based on modern technology and innovation. Having completed an inventory of Leitrim's resources, recommendations could then be made with regard to alternative land-use systems. The objective is to bring about an overall improvement in the welfare of the people of the county, and of the drumlin belt as a whole, to which the results should equally well apply.

The conduct of such a comprehensive resource survey presented a formidable task, demanding the collective efforts of people in a wide variety of disciplines and from a number of organisations. The experience gained on methodology and organisation in the course of two previous resource surveys, West Cork and West Donegal, was of great value. It is hoped that the report of the present survey will go further than the other two in making an economic assessment, from the basic output potential data, of the major alternative land uses, namely, grassland and forestry.

It is a pleasure to be associated with the highly merited acknowledgments given to those within An Foras Taliintais and those outside who co-operated in this survey. Finally, may I commend the efforts of the Working Party who embarked on and completed this task with such dedication and enthusiasm.

*T. Walsh,*  
Director

## PREFACE

The findings of the Leitrim Resource Survey are published in four parts:

- Part I — Grazing capacity, forestry potential and soils.
- Part II — Some aspects of production — drainage, machinery use, grass production and utilisation, farm systems, animal health, fisheries.
- Part III — Demography, sociology and economics.\*
- Part IV — Summary, conclusions and development proposals.

The background and objectives of the study are outlined in the introduction to Part I which deals with the physical resources and their influence on grass production and forestry potential within the county. Part II outlines the major land utilisation problems such as drainage, machinery use, and poaching of pastures. Grass production and utilisation problems are examined as well as winter feed conservation and animal disorders. In this section, Part III, the demographic features of the county are examined, as well as sociological aspects of agricultural development. A chapter on economic aspects covers problems such as farming structure, farm returns and the effects of EEC Directives on future farming in the country.

The co-operating agencies in this study included: Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Land Project, Department of Lands, Bord Failte, Inland Fisheries Trust, Central Statistics Office, Meteorological Office, Geological Survey, Co. Leitrim Advisory Services.

For their assistance in the work reported here, grateful acknowledgement is due to the Agricultural Advisory Officers of the county especially Mr. J. Hennelly, C.A.O., Mr. H. McKearey, Deputy C.A.O., Mr. P. O'Loan (C.A.O. up to 1971) and Mr. A. Kilbane; to Mr. M. Lavelle, Land Commission Office, Carrick-on-Shannon; to the Land Project Officers of the county; to Mr. J. Martin, County Development Officer, Mr. P. McHugh, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, and to the Central Statistics Office, Dublin.

Our thanks are due to the local people, especially the farmers who co-operated so willingly in answering questionnaires and in other ways, to the North-West Regional Development Organisation and to the members of the Manorhamilton Development Company who gave the survey their full support.

Both the Economic Development Survey Report of Co. Leitrim compiled by the late Mr. S. Duke, then County Development Officer, and The Western Development Report of Dr. J. Scully, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, were of considerable value to the resource survey team in providing useful background information.

\*An economic assessment of forestry production will be presented in Part IV.

Dr. P. Ryan, Deputy Director, was most helpful in his capacity as adviser to the working party, and Dr. T. Walsh, Director, gave the study his enthusiastic support.

There was excellent collaboration from colleagues in An Foras Taliintais, especially Mr. J. Lynch, Cartographic Section, National Soil Survey, Johnstown Castle, who prepared the figures.

The technical assistance provided by Messrs. T. McGarry, M. Cushion and L. Holton, Economics and Rural Welfare Centre, An Foras Taluntais, is gratefully acknowledged.

Finally, thanks are due to those who assisted in the preparation of the report, especially Mr. E. Wymes and Miss K. Johnston for their editorial work.

*M. J. Gardiner*  
Project Leader

An Foras Taluntais,  
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## INTRODUCTION

*M. J. Gardiner\**

Co. Leitrim has lost 50% of its population since 1926, the highest percentage loss of any county in the State. The decline still continues at a rate of 400 to 500 people per annum.

The county has over one half of its work-force engaged in agriculture which consists mainly of store cattle production, dairying, mountain sheep and some pig enterprises. Farm size is small with over 80% of the holdings less than 22.7 hectares (50 acres).

The land in Leitrim is difficult to farm. The principal soils are of the heavy impermeable type on drumlin topography. Farm incomes are low. Previous investigations (1) have shown that these wet impermeable soils not only dominate in Co. Leitrim but also occupy 0.5 million hectares throughout the area generally referred to as the north-west drumlin belt, including parts of Monaghan, Cavan, Longford and Roscommon.

The purpose of this study was to examine the salient land-use and associated problems more closely so that recommendations could be made for improvement in the welfare of the people living in the drumlin belt as a whole and in Co. Leitrim in particular.

### Methodology

Most of the findings were derived through the following five methods:

- a) complete surveys in the field, e.g., soils
- b) farm income surveys on a random selection of farms
- c) field experiments, e.g., grass production
- d) questionnaires to farmers, e.g., sociology
- e) use of existing knowledge, e.g., climatic and population records etc.

The results of the field experimental programme at An Foras Taluntais Research Station, Ballinamore, over the past 10 years were also used in addition to those from the more recently established station at Drumboylan, Co. Roscommon.

### Objectives

The objectives of the survey were:

1. To provide basic factual information on the physical, economic and sociological resources of Leitrim against which the principal rural problems of low farm income and high population decline could be analysed.
2. To assess the optimum land-use enterprises for the county bearing in mind the predominant soils and climate.

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3. To assess the potential for development within the county of a stable population where farm incomes would reach at least a minimum acceptable viable level.
4. To assess the potential for tourist income development in as far as this was directly related to agriculture, e.g., farm guest houses, fishing, boating, etc.

Since Co. Leitrim, which occupies 158,937 ha (392,573 acres), is representative of an estimated 0.5 million ha of similar land in the north-west drumlin belt, the results are largely applicable to this entire region and to a lesser extent to similar land in West Limerick, North Kerry and Clare which occupies approximately another 0.5 million hectares.

Parts I and II of the study have been published. In part I the potential for agriculture and forestry was determined on the basis of the physical resources (land and climate mainly) of the county. Part II deals with the main agricultural problems such as land drainage machinery use, grass production and utilisation and farm systems.

In this section of the report (Part III) detailed studies of the demographic, sociological and economic features of the county are reported. It is obvious from these results that the problems of poor land, small farms and low farm incomes are now compounded by very undesirable demographic features. A persistent outmigration of the younger age groups has resulted in a seriously imbalanced population structure. Such a situation can result not only in a poorer quality of community services for the county but it also constitutes a serious obstacle to the introduction of improved farm systems.

The implications of these conditions in the future development of the county will be discussed in detail in Part IV.

## SUMMARY

*J. Curry\* and B. C. Hickey\*\**

The following is a summary of the main demographic, sociological and economic findings of the report.

### *Demographic features*

1. Since the middle of the nineteenth century, Co. Leitrim has experienced the highest proportionate decline in population of any county in the State. Against a background of rising population at national level since the early 1960s the rate of decline in Leitrim has fallen but its relative position to other counties remains unchanged.
2. Certain areas have had greater loss of population than others. The decline is most pronounced in the Rural Districts of Kinlough and Manorhamilton in the northern half of the county.

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3. At the District Electoral Division level only those units with stable or increasing town population elements maintained their populations or had low decreases between 1951 and 1971.
4. While trends at national level have been towards an increasing urban and decreasing rural population the proportion of the population living in the aggregate town areas of Leitrim (by Census definition Carrick-on-Shannon is the only such area), is, at 5.3%, the lowest of any county in the State. In 1971 the national proportion was 52.2%. The absence of large town populations, which in recent times have shown stability or growth potential, is one of the principal contributing factors to the exceptionally high rate of decline in the county.
5. By comparison with other counties the net emigration rate has been persistently high. As in the State generally, the average annual rate of net emigration has decreased considerably and the numbers emigrating in the late 1960s were approximately half those of the 1950s. Emigration has been exceedingly high among the young adult age groups (15 to 34 years) and an estimated two-thirds of children aged 0 to 4 in 1951 were living outside the county by 1971.
6. A reversal of the traditional decline among those in the young adult age group (20 to 24) occurred between 1966 and 1971 and there was also a drop in the rate of decline in the 25 to 29 age group.
7. The effects of persistent migration especially among the young adult age groups is reflected in the unbalanced age structure of the population with a contraction of the active population and a relative increase in the older age groups. At 17.3%, the proportion of persons aged 65 and over is the highest in the State. Surprisingly, the burden of dependency is considerably lower than that of the State generally—the number of dependants per 100 workers in 1971 being 162.3 and 182.3 respectively. Due to the exceptionally high proportion of the working population engaged in agriculture where underemployment and low-incomes are undoubtedly widespread, the real burden of dependency in Leitrim is concealed.
8. By comparison with other areas, the population of Co. Leitrim contains relatively high proportions of unmarried males in each age group from 20 to 24 upwards, the lowest female-male ratio and one of the lowest marriage rates per 1,000 population.
9. The effects of population loss and emigration are also reflected in the composition of households within the county. Here the percentage of non-family units, particularly of households containing one person only, is higher than in the aggregate rural areas and the State. A distinct feature of Leitrim's household composition is that the proportion of households with one person only (18.3%) is the highest of any county in the State.
10. The working population of Co. Leitrim shows a heavy dependency on agriculture. The percentage of the labour force engaged in agriculture is exceedingly high (54.4%) in comparison with that of the State (24.4%)

which in turn is exceptionally high by European standards. While the total working population declined by 43.1% between 1951 and 1971, the loss in the agricultural sector represented a decline of 54.6% compared with 9.2% in non-agricultural occupations. Recent short-term trends show a continuing decline in the agricultural labour force and an increase in other occupations.

11. The decline in the agricultural sector has varied considerably between the size categories of farms and the different sections of the farming population. Between 1951 and 1966 the decline in the male farming population ranged from 66.2% among farmers' sons and sons-in-law to 20.9% among farmers. The variation in the proportionate decline may be partly attributed to differences in ages between the two groups and also to the traditional occupational immobility of farmers. The decline among farmers was especially high in the farm size categories under 15 acres and 15 to 30 acres where the main concentration of elderly farmers occurs.

### *Sociological features*

1. Over three-quarters (76.5%) of the 200 landholders interviewed in the social survey had farms of less than 50 acres and the mean was 38.9 acres.
2. Since taking over as manager of the farm, 29.5% of the sample (59 landholders) had increased the size of their holdings. Approximately three-quarters of such additions were less than 30 acres. The most important means by which extra land was acquired were by purchase and through the Land Commission.
3. Renting land under the eleven months system was an alternative to purchasing land and 29.0% of landholders rented land in 1973 while 7.5% of landholders let land. The main disadvantage to renting land as perceived by lessees was insecurity. As a consequence, the quality of rented land deteriorated since little attempt was made to improve its productive capacity by the application of fertiliser.
4. Between 1923 and 1970 the Land Commission acquired a total of 35,111 acres in Co. Leitrim, representing 12.7% of the total area under crops and pasture. The average size of allotment in the county was small—11.6 acres in the period 1960-70. It is noteworthy that for many small farmers the Land Commission is the only means of acquiring additional land.
5. The age structure of the farming population of Co. Leitrim suggests that on the basis of age alone many farmers are eligible to participate in the EEC retirement scheme. Many unmarried farmers, however, have specific successors in mind for their holdings. Furthermore, the greatest concentration of elderly farmers is in the small acreage groups so that the amount of land surrendered from those most likely to participate in the scheme would not have an appreciable effect on structural changes.
6. Forestry as an alternative land-use to agriculture is an emotive topic in Leitrim and opposition to the acquisition of land for afforestation is strong

and widespread. When asked whether they would consider selling all or part of their holdings for forestry purposes, 96.0% of the 200 landholders replied that they would not under any circumstances.

7. Sources of farming information were not used extensively. Only 14.6% of the farmers in the sample had been in contact with their local agricultural adviser in the 2-year period prior to interview; approximately one-third (32.4%) watched a farming programme on television regularly while 37.3% listened to farming programmes on radio or read a weekly farming paper.
8. Since the inception in 1968 of the small farm incentive bonus scheme, applications had been received from 686 farmers, representing approximately 16.0% of those eligible to participate on the basis of acreage alone. Some of the important reasons given for non-participation in the scheme were the inability to meet targets set under the farm plan and the reluctance to add a pig production enterprise as a means of increasing gross margins.
9. The majority of farmers in Co. Leitrim will fall into the transitional category under the EEC modernisation scheme. Their numbers alone dictate that certain differential aids available under the scheme as at present outlined and in particular the allocation of available land must include these farmers as well as development farmers.
10. Only one in six farmers had availed of credit facilities since taking over as manager of the farm. The most important reason given for not using credit was the risk involved.
11. Housing conditions in Co. Leitrim compare unfavourably with those in other areas. In 1971, for example, 51.7% of dwellings lacked sanitary facilities, compared with 38.7% in the aggregate rural areas and 19.3% in the State generally.
12. That dependence on social security is high is suggested by the high proportion (75.0%) of households in which at least one person was in receipt of certain social welfare payment and also by the fact that approximately half of the total population are entitled to free health services.
13. By comparison with other areas, Co. Leitrim has a high proportion of elderly persons living alone. In 1971, 16.8% of males and 11.1% of females aged 65 and over were living alone. The welfare needs of this section of the community are heightened by physical and social isolation.

#### *Economic features*

1. In 1971 there were 5,173 farmers in the county. Of these more than half had 30 acres or less and over 80% had 50 acres or less.
2. Although the number of farmers in the county declined rapidly (16% in 5 years) in recent times there was not a corresponding increase in the number of larger farms. This appears to be due to an increase in part-time farming and/or land letting as well as to acquisition of land by the Department of Lands.

3. Over 40% of farms were found to consist of two or more parcels of land. This imposes limitations on farming systems.
4. Between 1923 and 1970 only 13%, of the land (as a proportion of total area of crops and pasture) was redistributed. The magnitude of the demographic changes which have taken place in agriculture in the county in recent years calls for restructuring on a much larger scale than this.
5. State forests occupy 25,000 acres (6.4% of the county) while tillage occupies only 3,000 acres (0.76%). The cattle population, which has increased in recent years, reached 113,300 in 1973.
6. The intensity of land utilisation has not changed significantly in recent years and stood at 3.50 acres of hay, silage and pasture per livestock unit in 1973.
7. The male agricultural labour force halved between 1951 and 1971.
8. A high degree of underemployment in agriculture in the county is indicated by the number of standard man days required of each male engaged in agriculture to cater for the size and combination of agricultural enterprises occurring in the county. This ranged from 78 to 108 depending on assumptions made about methods of milking and feeding.
9. Mixed dairy farms had a higher level of income than other farms.
10. The level of income per acre was low both in mixed dairy farms and on suckling farms at £21 and £15 respectively. (Pig enterprises were not taken into account on any of the farms studied since they are not land using enterprises.)
11. Some 82%, of farms had no pig enterprises.
12. Main avenues for farm income improvement in the absence of extra land are (a) more intensive stocking, (b) improved livestock productivity, (c) inclusion of a pig enterprise in the farm programme.
13. A study of farms which had participated in the Small Farm Incentive Bonus Scheme showed that the average number of grazing livestock units on participating farms increased (over a 3-4 year period) by 50%, with a corresponding intensification in land use from 2.8 to 1.8 acres per livestock unit. Average output per farm increased from £1,655 to £3,818. Incomes on completion of the scheme were almost double those of non-participating farms of similar size. In contrast to farms generally in the county, most of the farms participating in the scheme had a pig enterprise.
14. Very few farms in the county are likely to qualify as development farms under the EEC Farm Modernisation Scheme. The main reasons for this are small farm size, poor livestock productivity and lack of farmers' own funds for investment.
15. In order to qualify for investment aids for pigs under the Farm Modernisation Scheme a minimum size of unit, considerably larger than that on many farms, is required.
16. Almost half the farmers in the county would be eligible to avail of the retirement pension under the Farm Retirement Scheme. In addition to these,

a significant number of landholders who would be eligible on the basis of age and acreage owned would be excluded from the scheme as originally drawn up, but many of these are now likely to be eligible due to modification of the scheme.

17. All of Co. Leitrim has been included in the EEC Disadvantaged Areas Directive. The benefits from this scheme, however, will not compensate for the lower livestock productivity in Leitrim than in other parts of the country.

#### REFERENCE

1. Gardiner, M. J. and Ryan, P., *fr. J. agric. Res.* 8: 95, 1969.

## CHAPTER I

### DEMOGRAPHIC FEATURES

*J. Curry<sup>1</sup>*

One of the more basic resources of any area is its human population. Changes in the size and structure of this population are normally associated with the presence or absence of economic and social opportunities. Rural regions with poor physical resources are characterised by a heavy dependence on primary industries and on agriculture in particular (1). In such areas employment opportunities in the secondary and tertiary sectors are extremely limited. The relentless commercialisation of the farming industry and the increased employment prospects in large centres of population have inevitably tended to make these regions marginal in economic and social terms. The consequent problems of these areas include persistent outmigration among the active sections of the population and underemployment in agriculture.

By any of the accepted socio-economic indicators, Co. Leitrim may be classified as a marginal area. A comprehensive survey of the land-use potential of the county (2) revealed that, by comparison with other areas in the State, it has an exceedingly high proportion of poor quality soils with limited potential for agricultural development. The demographic features and changes of such an area are inextricably linked with the physical environment.

In this study the demographic aspects of Co. Leitrim are examined under the following headings:

- (i) trends in population size
- (ii) migration
- (iii) population structure
- (iv) the working population

The main source of data for this section is the Census of Population Reports. The most complete series published to date are those relating to 1966 while certain basic data from the 1971 Census are also available. These include two volumes on population size by area, ages and conjugal conditions together with bulletins containing other preliminary data at national level and more limited results on a county basis. Relevant information from each of these most recently published sources has been used and, where possible, comparisons are made between Co. Leitrim and other areas.

#### **Change in Population Size**

##### *Population of Co. Leitrim*

Between 1841 and 1971 the population of Co. Leitrim declined by 81.7%. Over the same period the population of the State had a 54.4% decline. Since the foundation of the State in 1922, Co. Leitrim has lost almost half its popula-

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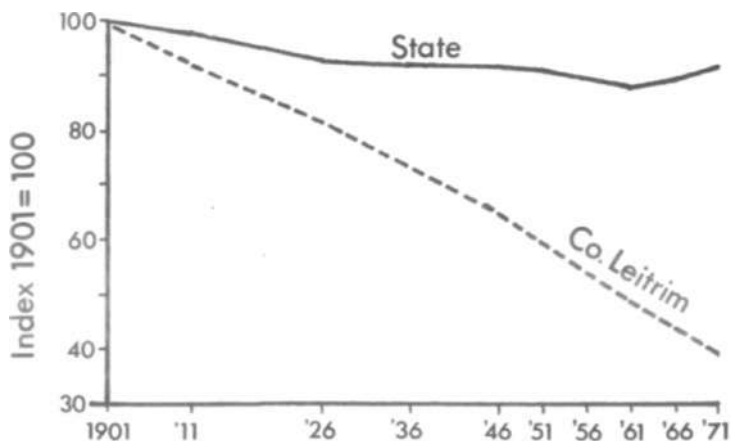


Fig. 1: Population trends, 1901-1971

tion, proportionately more than any other county (Appendix, Table 1). Between 1926 and 1971 Leitrim had a population decline of 49.3% and during the same period the population of the State increased marginally (0.2%). Leitrim's loss in absolute numbers was 27,547 — from 55,907 in 1926 to 28,360 in 1971.

At each intercensal period since the beginning of the century Leitrim has recorded the highest percentage decline of any county with the exception of the 1911-26 period when the proportionate decline in Co. Kildare<sup>2</sup> (12.9%) was slightly higher than that of Leitrim.

TABLE 1 — Percent decrease in population in Co. Leitrim at each intercensal period, 1901-1971

| Period  | % decrease | Period  | % decrease |
|---------|------------|---------|------------|
| 1901-11 | 8.3        | 1946-51 | 7.6        |
| 1911-26 | 12.1       | 1951-56 | 10.6       |
| 1926-36 | 8.9        | 1956-61 | 9.7        |
| 1936-46 | 12.4       | 1961-66 | 8.7        |
|         |            | 1966-71 | 7.2        |

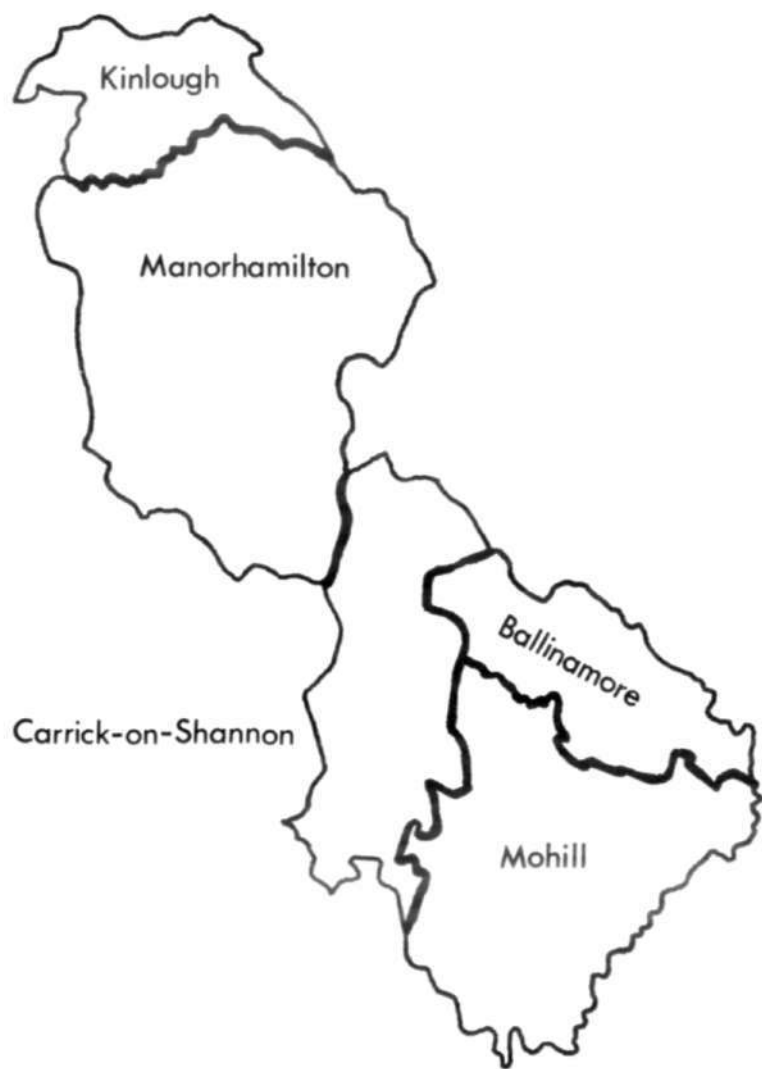
Source: Census of Population

By 1971, Leitrim's total population of 28,360 was less than that of Galway Municipal Borough (including suburbs and environs) which was 29,375.

#### Rural districts

Within the county certain districts have experienced higher rates of depopulation than others. The more recent changes (1951-71) at rural district level are set out in Table 2.

<sup>2</sup>This was partly due to the abandonment or reduction of the British military centres in the county during this period.



*Fig. 2: Rural Districts*



TABLE 2 — Population change by rural district, 1951-71

| Rural District     | 1951   | 1971  | Decrease % |
|--------------------|--------|-------|------------|
| Manorhamilton      | 12,336 | 7,881 | 36.1       |
| Kinlough           | 3,120  | 2,039 | 34.6       |
| Mohill             | 12,330 | 8,362 | 32.2       |
| Ballinamore        | 5,162  | 3,649 | 29.3       |
| Carrick-on-Shannon | 8,261  | 6,429 | 22.2       |

Source: Census of Population

The highest rates of decline were recorded in the two rural districts of North Leitrim, i.e., Manorhamilton and Kinlough (Fig. 2) where each lost over one-third of its population between 1951 and 1971. Of the three rural districts in South Leitrim, the highest rate of decline (32.2%) was in Mohill. In absolute numbers the greatest loss was 4,455 in Manorhamilton — from 12,336 in 1951 to 7,881 in 1971.

These trends over 20 years, however, conceal important changes in the rate of decline. Further examination of the intercensal periods between 1951 and 1971 indicates a lessening in the rate of decline in all rural districts (Appendix, Table 2). This is particularly evident in the case of Ballinamore and Carrick-on-Shannon and to a lesser extent in the other rural districts.

#### *District electoral divisions*

A more detailed view of population decline at a local level within the rural district can be obtained by examining change in the District Electoral Division (D.E.D.), the smallest territorial unit for which data are published. Within Co. Leitrim there are 78 such units.

The District Electoral Divisions were ranked in order of the magnitude of the percentage decline in population between 1951 and 1971 (Appendix, Table 3). The range of the rates of decline and the number of D.E.D.s involved may be summarised as follows:

| Range of decline          | Number of D.E.D.s |
|---------------------------|-------------------|
| 50% and over              | 3                 |
| 40 - 49.9%                | 21                |
| 30 - 39.9%                | 33                |
| 20 - 29.9%                | 14                |
| 10 - 19.9%                | 4                 |
| Less than 10% or increase | 3                 |

Almost threequarters of the 78 D.E.D.s lost 30% or more of their populations. Of the 29 D.E.D.s in North Leitrim, 22 lost over one-third of their population as compared with 27 of the 49 D.E.D.s in South Leitrim (Fig. 3).

The range of decline varied from 65.6% in Arigna to 7.5% in Drumshanbo\

<sup>3</sup>For location and names of D.E.D.s see Appendix, Table 3.

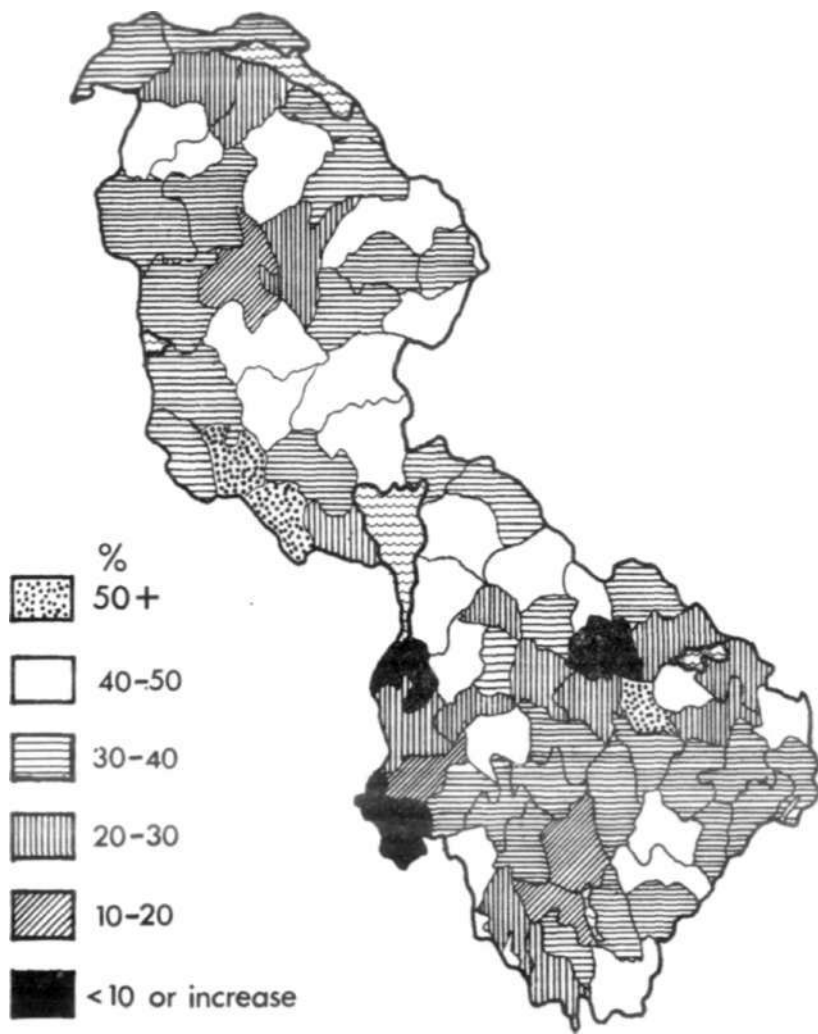


Fig. 3: Percentage decline in population by District Electoral Division, 1951-1971

TABLE 3 — Change in town population, 1951-71

| Town                  | 1951   | 1971   | % Change |
|-----------------------|--------|--------|----------|
| Carrick-on-Shannon    | 1,333  | 1,495  | + 12.2   |
| Mohill                | 848    | 869    | + 2.4    |
| Manorhamilton         | 833    | 858    | + 3.0    |
| Ballinamore           | 723    | 808    | + 11.8   |
| Drumshanbo            | 515    | 576    | + 11.8   |
| Carrigallen           | 186    | 230    | +23.7    |
| Dromahair             | 262    | 177    | -32.4    |
| Kinlough              | 154    | 160    | + 3.9    |
| Total town population | 4,854  | 5,172  | + 6.6    |
| Rest of County        | 36,355 | 23,188 | -36.3    |

Source: Census of Population

Only two D.E.D.s, Carrick-on-Shannon and Ballinamore, recorded increases in population during this period. This may be attributed to the stabilising influence of the town populations in both of these D.E.D.s. In the case of Carrick-on-Shannon the town population accounts for almost threequarters (73.2%,) of the inhabitants of the D.E.D. while in Ballinamore the town accounts for over two-thirds (68.1%). Similarly, the relatively low rate of decline in Drumshanbo and Mohill may be accounted for by the fact that the towns of Drumshanbo and Mohill contain almost three-fifths (59.8%,) and over two-thirds (67.5%) of the total population in their respective D.E.D.s. An exception to this pattern is the D.E.D. of Manorhamilton which, despite having a town population accounting for 62.2% of the total, had a relatively high decline (21.2%). By contrast with the other towns (except Mohill), Manorhamilton experienced a low rate of increase in population between 1951 and 1971.

In general, the rate of decline lessened between the 1950s and 1960s. Nevertheless, 34 of the 78 D.E.D.s recorded a higher percentage decline in the 1960s than in the previous decade (Appendix, Table 3).

### Towns

Changes in the definition of what constitutes a town and in the boundaries of towns make it difficult to compare trends in town population over time. For census purposes towns fall into two categories, those with and those without legally defined boundaries. The second category comprises 'census towns', the boundaries of which are determined, for census purposes only, by the census authorities. At each census from 1926 to 1951 a 'census town' was defined as a cluster of 20 houses or more, the exact delimitation being left to the discretion of each census enumerator. In 1956 those towns were redefined as clusters of 20 occupied houses or more. In 1971 the definition was changed once again and in that year 'census towns' were those clusters of 50 occupied houses or more. On this basis Leitrim had eight 'census towns' in 1971 ranging in population size from 160 in Kinlough to 1,495 in Carrick-on-Shannon.<sup>4</sup> Table 3 compares the populations of these towns over a 20-year period.

<sup>4</sup>Part of the town of Carrick-on-Shannon is situated in Co. Roscommon. The total population of the town in 1971 was 1,854.

Between 1951 and 1971 the total population of these towns increased by 6.6%. With the exception of Dromahair each of the towns recorded increases in population ranging from 23.7% in Carrigallen to 2.4% in Mohill. In absolute terms, however, the increases in each of the towns were relatively small, ranging from six in Kinlough to 162 in Carrick-on-Shannon. The town of Dromahair lost almost one-third of its population.

A comparison of population trends in these towns in the two decades between 1951 and 1971 indicates that in the period 1951-61 two of the eight towns recorded decreases and this number rose to four between 1961 and 1971 (Appendix, Table 4). In both decades, three towns, i.e. Ballinamore, Drumshanbo and Carrigallen, consistently increased in population while Dromahair alone experienced consistent decline.

While the town population of Co. Leitrim increased between 1951 and 1971 the rural population declined by 36.3%. In 1951 the town population of Leitrim accounted for 11.8% of the county's total population. By 1971 this proportion had increased to 18.2%. In general, one can conclude that the rate of population decline within Co. Leitrim would have been even greater but for the stabilising effect of the town population. Conversely, it could be argued that the absence of larger towns has contributed to the exceptional rate of depopulation in the county.

### **Migration**

The estimated net emigration from an area is found by combining the population loss or gain over a given period together with the natural increase in population (an excess of births over deaths) in the same period. Areas where population loss is accompanied by a natural decrease in population (an excess of deaths over births) are likely to have exceptionally high rates of net emigration.

Leitrim, with the highest death rate (15.1 per 1,000 of average population) and the lowest birth rate (14.8 per 1,000 of average population) in 1971 was the only county in the State to record a natural decrease in population in the intercensal period 1966-71. During that period 2,183 births were recorded while the number of deaths was 2,224.

At each intercensal period since 1946, Leitrim has consistently maintained the highest average annual rate of net emigration per 1,000 of average population in the State.

|         |      |
|---------|------|
| 1946-51 | 18.7 |
| 1951-56 | 23.1 |
| 1956-61 | 22.7 |
| 1961-66 | 19.1 |
| 1966-71 | 14.7 |

The rate has decreased considerably however and in 1966-71 it was 14.7 compared with a high point of 23.1 in 1951-56. In absolute terms the high

*s*Migration in this context refers to movement out of the area though not necessarily abroad.

TABLE 4—Percentage decrease in age cohorts, 1951-71

| Age in 1951        |    | 0-4   | 5-9   | 10-14 |
|--------------------|----|-------|-------|-------|
| Age in 1971        |    | 20-24 | 25-29 | 30-34 |
| Rural district     |    |       |       |       |
| Kinlough           | *M | 57.1  | 64.3  | 69.0  |
|                    | F  | 73.3  | 74.2  | 77.4  |
| Manorhamilton      | M  | 57.5  | 67.3  | 67.6  |
|                    | F  | 71.9  | 73.6  | 73.1  |
| Ballinamore        | M  | 56.6  | 69.7  | 60.8  |
|                    | F  | 71.8  | 69.7  | 71.7  |
| Mohill             | M  | 57.5  | 64.6  | 63.4  |
|                    | F  | 72.0  | 75.2  | 72.8  |
| Carrick-on-Shannon | M  | 49.5  | 62.7  | 58.1  |
|                    | F  | 51.0  | 59.7  | 55.1  |
| County Leitrim     | M  | 55.7  | 65.7  | 63.7  |
|                    | F  | 68.0  | 71.0  | 69.7  |

Source: Census of Population

•M=Males F=Females

annual emigration of over 800 persons during the 1950s had fallen to approximately 430 in the late 1960s.

Migration mostly occurs among the young adult age groups (15 to 34 years) and by an analysis of change in these age groups over time it is possible to estimate the numerical effects of migration on a vital section of its population. The three youngest age groups (0 to 4, 5 to 9 and 10 to 14 years) in 1951 were selected and the percentage change which had occurred in them by 1971 were determined (Table 4). Due to lack of data on the age group 0 to 4 for 1956 the proportionate change which had taken place in the age group 15 to 19 of 1971 was not possible to determine. This analysis does not take account of loss due to deaths or of possible immigration. It may be assumed, however, that the influence of both these factors in an area of heavy outmigration is negligible on the age groups in question. For comparative purposes the analysis was undertaken at rural district level within the county.

In the 20-year period 1951-71 it is estimated that over half of males and two-thirds of females in the 20 to 24 age group had migrated from Leitrim. If it is accepted that most emigration takes place in the under 35 age groups then approximately two-thirds of both males and females in the 10 to 14 year age group of 1951 had migrated by 1971.

The proportionate loss among females was greater in all age groups. The rural district of Carrick-on-Shannon is the area of lowest net emigration of both males and females in each age group. Ranked according to the proportionate magnitude of emigration the districts are Kinlough, Manorhamilton, Mohill, Ballinamore and Carrick-on-Shannon.

### Population Structure

Persistent migration and population loss are reflected in the demographic composition of the remaining population, e.g., age composition, burden of dependency, female-male ratio, marital status and household composition.

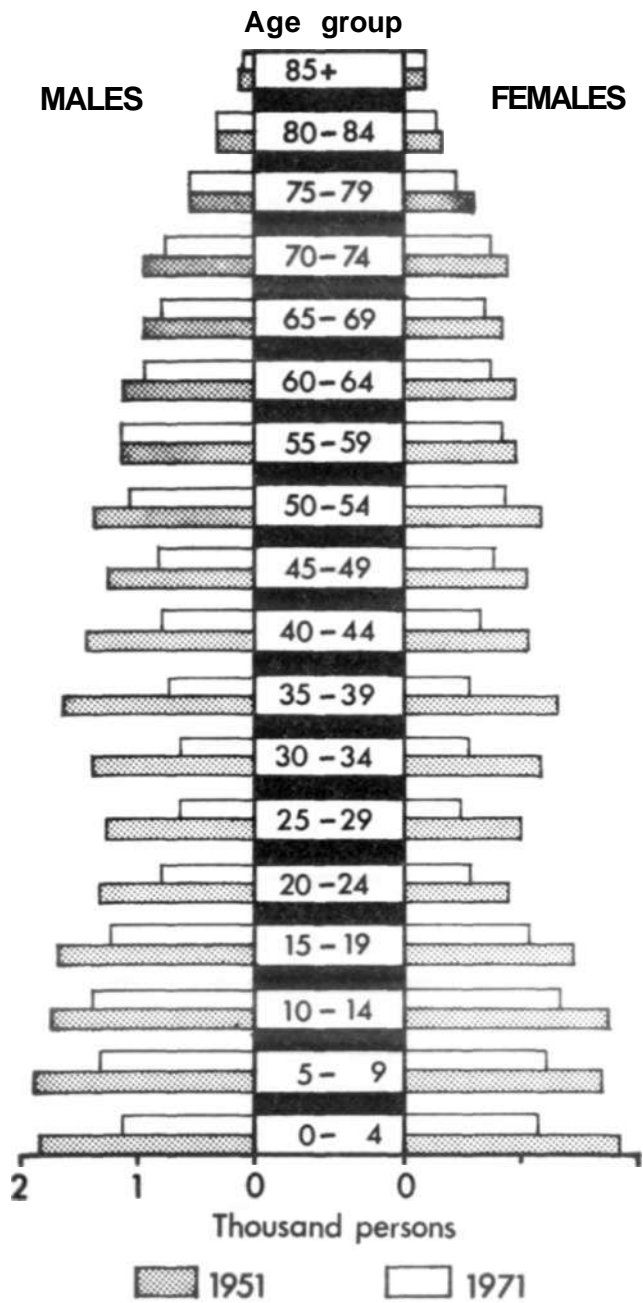


Fig. 4: Distribution of population by age group in Co. Leitrim

### Age composition

The proportion of elderly persons in the population of the State has been increasing steadily since the middle of the nineteenth century. Due to the reduction in death rates during infancy, childhood and middle age, the proportion of the population and the absolute number who survive until 65 years of age is much higher than in the past. In 1841 the proportion of the State population over 65 was approximately 3%. By 1971 this had increased to 11.1%. The proportion of elderly persons in rural areas is considerably higher than in urban areas. In the aggregate rural areas of the State 13.2% of the population were over 65 in 1971 as compared with 9.1%, in the aggregate town areas.<sup>6</sup> The population structures of rural areas which have experienced heavy outmigration are characterised by a contraction in the younger adult age groups and a relative increase among the older age groups.

In 1971 the proportion of Leitrim's population over 65 was 17.3%—the highest proportion of any county in the State.

The percentage distribution in the four main age groups in Leitrim in 1951 and 1971 was as follows:

|      | 0-14 | 15-44 | 45-64 | 65 and over |
|------|------|-------|-------|-------------|
| 1951 | 26.2 | 37.8  | 21.9  | 14.1        |
| 1971 | 26.5 | 30.7  | 25.5  | 17.3        |

While the proportion of young people (0 to 14 years) did not change appreciably between 1951 and 1971 there was a significant decline in the proportion of the young adult group (15 to 44 years) in the population and an increase in the proportions aged 45 to 64 and 65 and over. These trends indicate that the population of Co. Leitrim is being seriously affected by the process of ageing.

Comparative statistics on the age structure of Co. Leitrim and other areas (Table 5) indicate that in 1971 the percentage of the total population in Leitrim aged 0 to 14 and 15 to 44 was considerably lower at 26.5% and 30.7%, respectively than in the aggregate rural areas and the State generally. By contrast, the proportion of people in the over 45 age groups was higher in Leitrim than in other areas.

TABLE 5—Percentage age distribution, 1971

|                       | Age groups |       |       |             |
|-----------------------|------------|-------|-------|-------------|
|                       | 0-14       | 15-44 | 45-64 | 65 and over |
| Co. Leitrim           | 26.5       | 30.7  | 25.5  | 17.3        |
| Aggregate rural areas | 29.9       | 34.1  | 22.0  | 13.2        |
| State                 | 31.3       | 37.2  | 20.4  | 11.1        |

Source: Census of Population

<sup>6</sup>The aggregate town areas are defined as population centres of 1,500 or more inhabitants. The areas outside of such clusters constitute the aggregate rural areas.