

SAORSTÁT ÉIREANN.

CENSUS OF POPULATION, 1926.

VOLUME VIII.—IRISH LANGUAGE.

EXPLANATORY NOTES.

The Statistics in the present volume were compiled from replies given in the following column on the Census Schedule :—

IRISH LANGUAGE.
(1) Write "Irish only" opposite name of person who can speak only Irish.
(2) Write "Irish and English" opposite person who is a Native Irish speaker, but who can speak English.
(3) Write "English and Irish" opposite persons who can speak both languages, but who is not a Native Irish speaker.
(4) For persons who can Read but cannot speak Irish, write "Read but cannot speak Irish."
(5) Do not write anything opposite persons who can neither speak nor read Irish.

Personal judgment must necessarily enter so largely into the replies to this question that the number of "Irish speakers" would appear to be far less susceptible of exact measurement than any of the other matters into which it is the purpose of the Census to enquire. To every other query (place of residence, age, birthplace, religion, occupation, etc.) on the Census Schedule it is possible to give an exact reply. With regard to language it is extremely difficult to devise a method simple enough for Census purposes which would permit a rigid distinction being made between those who "know Irish" and those who do not. At the same time the statistics have a considerable value for purposes of comparison as between one part of the country and another, between this and previous censuses, between one age group or occupation and another, etc.

In this volume the population is classified in three categories as to language : (1) able to speak Irish only, (2) able to speak Irish and English, (3) other persons, including infants. The form of questionnaire shows that it had been originally intended to initiate at this Census a classification of

Irish speakers into the categories (a) native speakers and (b) persons whose Irish was acquired. This project had to be abandoned. At an early stage, scrutiny of the replies in the "language" column of the family schedules revealed obvious errors. It was evident that in many cases the question was not understood: possibly "native speaker" was often taken to mean "proficient speaker." There were also many fairly clear cases of inadvertence, "Irish and English" being set down where "English and Irish" was intended. The procedure of correcting presumed errors from evidence on the Census schedules was considered, but not adopted, because such corrections would be so numerous that the final results would be highly conjectural. It was decided to proceed with the compilation as if the returns were correct in the hope that errors would be largely compensatory and that the final summaries would be satisfactory. This hope was not realised. The statistics of native speakers classified by areas and by ages revealed too many obvious discrepancies. As an example it may be stated that native speakers were returned as 50% more numerous at ages 10-14 than at ages 5-9.

Detailed statistics are given in this volume of the numbers, language spoken, ages, housing, industrial status, industries and the occupations of persons residing in the Fíor-Ghaeltacht and Breac-Ghaeltacht. These areas are as defined in the Report of the Gaeltacht Commission, 1925.

STANLEY LYON,

Director.

STATISTICS BRANCH,

DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE,

October, 1932.