



Central Statistics Office
An Phríomh-Oifig Staidrimh

Press Statement
Preas Ráiteas

Census 2006 – Preliminary Report

Highest population since 1861

The population of the State increased by 318,000 persons between 2002 and 2006 to reach the highest recorded census level since 1861, according to *Census 2006 – Preliminary Report* published today. The preliminary total for the population enumerated on census night 23 April 2006 was **4,234,925** persons, compared with 3,917,203 in April 2002, representing an increase of 8.1 per cent in four years or 2 per cent per annum.

Migration the dominant factor

On average there were 46,000 more immigrants than emigrants annually over the 2002-2006 period compared with an annual excess of births over deaths of 33,000. The corresponding figures for the 1996-2002 period were 26,000 and 23,000, respectively.

Largest population growth in EU

Looked at from a ten-year perspective, Ireland's population increased at an annual average rate of 1.6 per cent between 1996 and 2006 – the largest population growth rate in the EU. Cyprus (+1.5%) and Luxembourg (+1.2%) were the only other countries to record population growth rates in excess of 1 per cent over this period.

Populations of Fingal and Meath increased by over a fifth

The populations of Fingal (+43,400) and Meath (+28,616) both increased by over a fifth between 2002 and 2006. Along with Kildare (+22,131), these three counties together accounted for 30 per cent of the national increase in population. Other Leinster counties which showed large increases were Laoighis (+14%), Wexford (+12.9%), Offaly (+10.9%), Westmeath (10.5%) and Wicklow (10.2%).

Apart from Fingal, there was a relatively modest increase of just 20,000 in the rest of Dublin and, as a result, the overall population grew by just 5.6 per cent – considerably less than the 8.1 per cent increase for the State as a whole.

The population of Leitrim grew by almost 12 per cent between 2002 and 2006. This followed a modest increase of 3 per cent between 1996 and 2002, which in itself was remarkable in that it occurred after continuous declines in population over the previous century and a half.

Cork City and Limerick City were the only two of the thirty-four administrative counties in the State to register a fall in population during the 2002-2006 period.

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Natural increase positive in all counties

All counties experienced positive natural increase in the intercensal period 2002-2006 with the rates highest in the counties with the youngest age profiles (Fingal, Dublin South, Kildare and Meath) and lowest in counties with the oldest age profiles (Leitrim, Roscommon and Mayo).

Only six of the thirty-four administrative counties experienced net outward migration between 2002 and 2006. These were the cities of Limerick, Cork, Waterford and Dublin along with Dublin South and Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown. This was due to a combination of factors including adult children leaving the family home, urban renewal schemes and regeneration projects involving the demolition of older housing.

Blanchardstown-Blakestown the fastest growing small area

At Electoral Division (ED) level, Blanchardstown-Blakestown in Fingal recorded the highest increase in intercensal population – up 7,901 to 32,305 in April 2006. Other EDs with a population increase in excess of 5,000 during 2002-2006 were Navan Rural (+5,176) in Meath and Balbriggan Rural (+5,150) in Fingal.

For copies of the publication contact:

Central Statistics Office, Information Section, Skehard Road, Cork

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Price: €15.00

Copies can also be downloaded from the CSO website (see below).

For further information contact:

Central Statistics Office, Ardee Road, Rathmines, Dublin 6.

Census Inquiries (01) 498 4000 ext. 4284-4288.

Fax (01) 498 4268

E-mail census@csso.ie

Internet <http://www.csso.ie>

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