



Central Statistics Office
An Phríomh-Oifig Staidrimh

Press Statement
Preas Ráiteas

2002 Census of Population
Volume 11 – Irish Language

1.57 million people can speak Irish

Just over 1.57 million people aged 3 years and over were able to speak Irish in 2002 compared with 1.43 million in 1996. However, in percentage terms there was a slight decline from 43.5 per cent in 1996 to 42.8 per cent in 2002. Ability to speak Irish was higher among females (45.9%) than males (39.7%).

This information is contained in Census 2002 Volume 11 – Irish Language, which gives further detailed results of the census conducted on 28 April 2002. This report contains the final population figures classified by ability to speak Irish and frequency of speaking it for detailed territorial divisions in the country (see Editor's note).

Ability varies with age

Ability to speak Irish was highest among the school-going population with over two-thirds of 10-19 year olds recorded as being able to speak the language.

Ability declines in the immediate post-education age groups but picks up again for 45-54 year olds.

Females outperformed males in each age group in 2002 - the differential being most pronounced in the 15-19 age group.

Dingle out on its own

Of the towns with a population of 1,500 or more in 2002, Dingle in West Kerry had the highest proportion of Irish speakers (62.4%). There were proportionately fewer Irish speakers in urban areas (40.8%) compared with rural ones (45.7%).

Three out of four Gaeltacht residents speak Irish

Irish speakers accounted for 73 per cent of the population aged 3 years and over in Gaeltacht areas in 2002 – down from 76 per cent in 1996. The proportion of Irish speakers varied between Gaeltacht areas. It was highest in County Cork (83.1%) and lowest in the part of the Galway Gaeltacht located in Galway City (54.2%). All Gaeltacht areas, apart from Meath, experienced a decline in the proportion of Irish speakers between 1996 and 2002.

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Teachers top of the class

The occupational groups with the highest ability to speak Irish were Teachers (79.3%), Gardaí (76.6%) and Religious (65%).

The higher the educational level attained, the more likely the ability to speak Irish. The relevant proportions for the population aged 15 years and over varied from 18 per cent in the case of people who left the education system with a primary education only, to 58 per cent for those with a degree.

Majority of households have an Irish speaker

55 per cent of private households contained at least one Irish speaker in 2002. The corresponding figure for households in the Gaeltacht was 83 per cent.

The person designated as the reference person of the household was able to speak Irish in nearly two out of every three Irish-speaking households in the State.

Irish usage

Nearly a quarter of those who indicated that they could speak Irish were reported as speaking it on a daily basis. Most of these (76.8%) were in the school-going ages.

Over two thirds of persons who were recorded as being able to speak Irish either never spoke it or spoke it less frequently than weekly. This proportion rises to 87.2 per cent in the case of those aged 20 years and over.

Over 55 per cent of Irish speakers located in Gaeltacht areas spoke Irish on a daily basis in 2002 – down from 60 per cent six years earlier. A further 11 per cent spoke Irish on a weekly basis. About a quarter of the Irish speaking Gaeltacht population spoke Irish less frequently than weekly in 2002 while 7.4 per cent were recorded as never speaking the language.

Editor's note

The publication *Census 2002 - Principal Demographic Results*, released on 19 June 2003, contains a summary at State level of data from Volumes 1 - 4, 8, 11 and 12 of the detailed census reports. The publication released today, Volume 11, provides figures for the Irish language at a more detailed geographical level.

All published tables from Census 2002 are being made available on the CSO web site (www.cso.ie).

For copies of the publication contact:

Central Statistics Office, Information Section, Skehard Road, Cork

or

Government Publications Sales Office, Sun Alliance House, Molesworth Street, Dublin 2.

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@cso.ie

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

Central Statistics Office

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