

## **Sample study four**

**Title: A study of census material regarding religion and education in Dunlavin, Co. Wicklow in 1881 and 1901.**

### **Outline Plan:**

This research study will examine religion and education at local level in 1881 and in 1901. The late nineteenth century saw the emergence of a literate Catholic middle class due to the spread and success of the national school system. Local history is becoming ever more important and more popular, and is contributing significantly to our knowledge of national history. This study will use primary source material from two censuses and will examine data regarding religion and education in Dunlavin, Co Wicklow. The research study includes charts for easy understanding of the local situation. It will add to the body of historical knowledge about Dunlavin and religion and education in Co. Wicklow at this time.

### **Evaluation of sources:**

The principal sources used for this study were the Census of 1881 and the Census of 1901. Both of these censuses are available on microfiche in the National Archive of Ireland in Bishop St., Dublin. They have the advantage of dating from the time in question and are primary sources. They contain the most accurate data available. However, they contain so much information and not all of it was relevant to this study. This research study will only concentrate on the information regarding religion and education and has taught me the skill of finding the necessary information and ignoring the rest.

## Extended essay

This research study examines religion and education in one locality between 1881 and 1901. The study concentrates on Dunlavin in County Wicklow. The information given in this study is all taken from the primary source of the census figures of 1881 and 1901 respectively. The study contains pie charts, which have been drawn to show the situation represented by the data more clearly.

In 1881 there were 506 Roman Catholic males and 457 Roman Catholic females in Dunlavin, while there were 132 Church of Ireland males and 126 Church of Ireland females. Apart from one Presbyterian, no other denominations were represented in the parish. So, at parish level in 1881, Protestants made up 21% of the population. By 1901, the percentage of Protestants had increased to 23%, but this is a small increase.

**Figure 1**  
**Religious Breakdown in Dunlavin**  
**Village 1881**

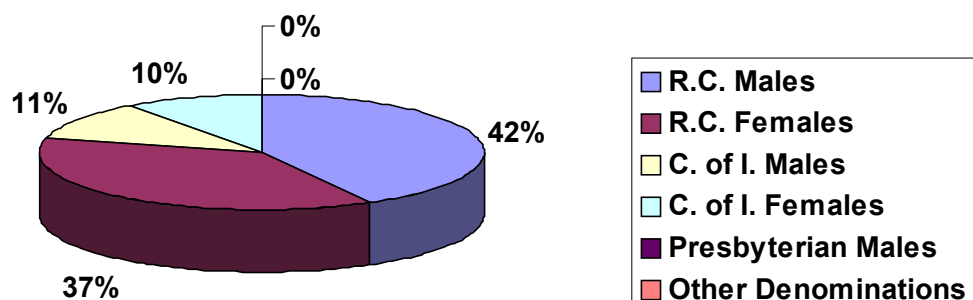
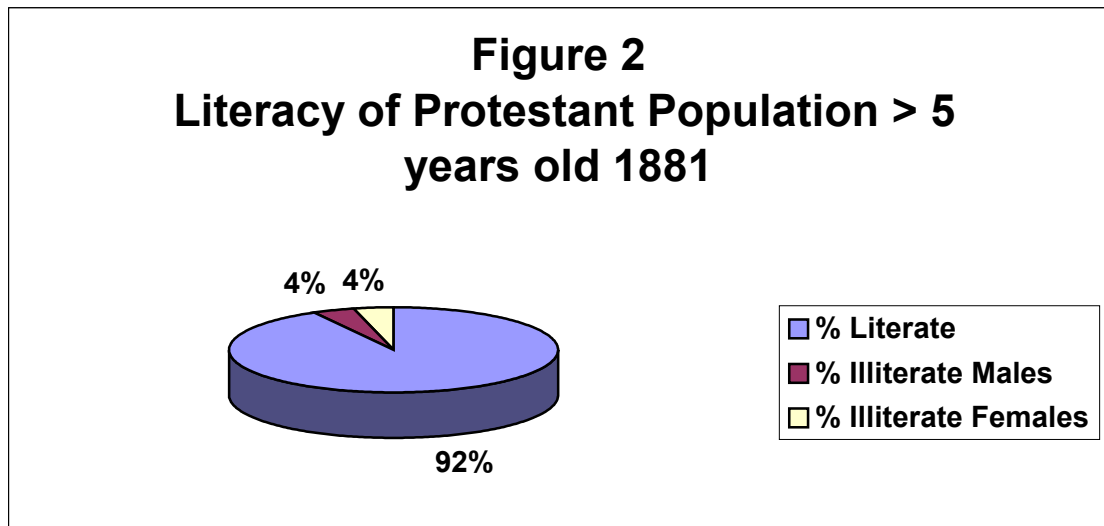
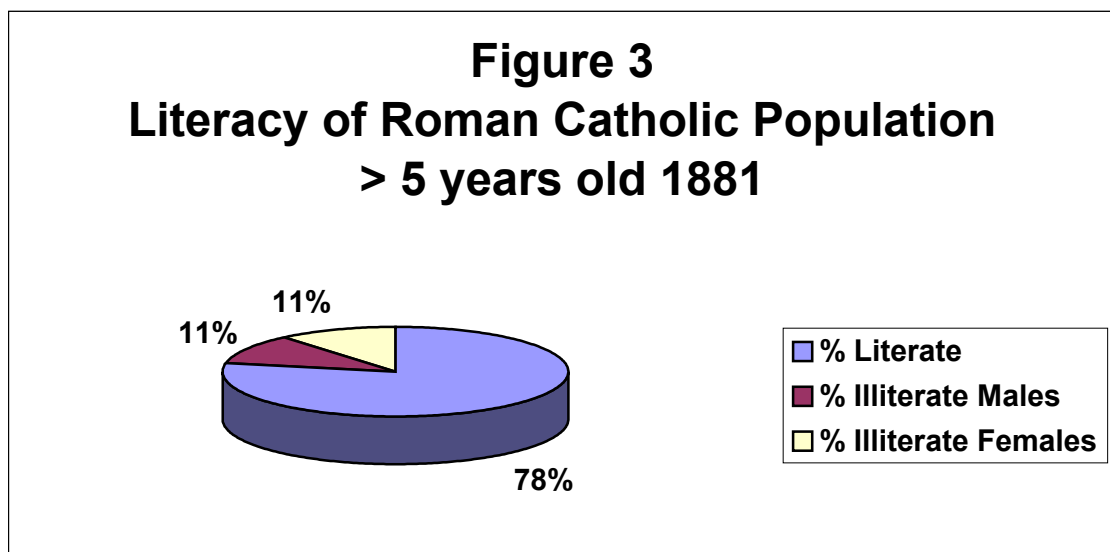


Figure 1 shows the religious breakdown in Dunlavin parish in 1881. It is interesting to note that while Protestants comprised 21% of the population, the illiteracy rate among Protestants was quite small (7.7% for males and 7.0% for females). The figures regarding literacy are taken from the 1881 census and from the people over five years old.



The amount of illiterate Protestants in 1881 is shown on the pie chart in figure 2, and is much smaller than the percentage of illiterate Catholics in 1881 (21.1% for males and 21.3% for females) shown on the chart in figure 3.

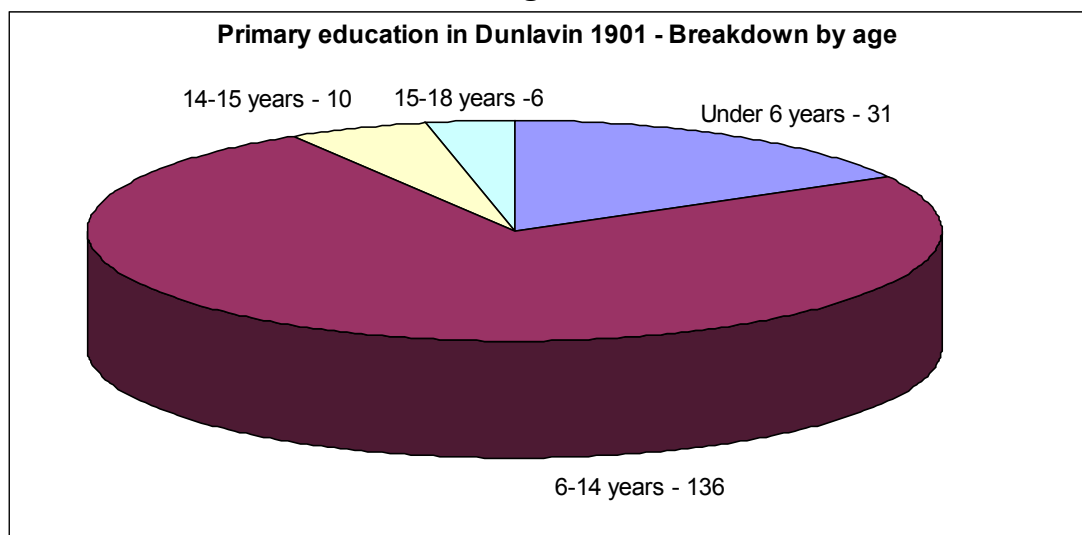


Catholic children were approximately three times more likely to be illiterate than protestant children in Dunlavin parish in 1881. So Catholic children were probably more likely to be kept out of school, to skip school and to leave school at an early age. The low status given to education among families from a poorer social background was probably also more likely to affect Catholic families.

The study will now proceed from the 1881 census figures to the situation in 1901.

Figure 4 shows the breakdown of students in Dunlavin in 1901 by their ages.

**Figure 4**



Obviously, most students left school by the time they were 14. Only 16% of the students fall into the 14 and over categories. It was not until much later that large numbers of students continued their education beyond their early teens. Of course, some students may have gone on to secondary education, but the vast majority left school to take up employment.

One big disadvantage of this pie chart (Figure 4) is the very large age heaping in the 6-14 age bracket. This is unavoidable in this study as this is the age heaping used in the 1901 census.

**Figure 5**

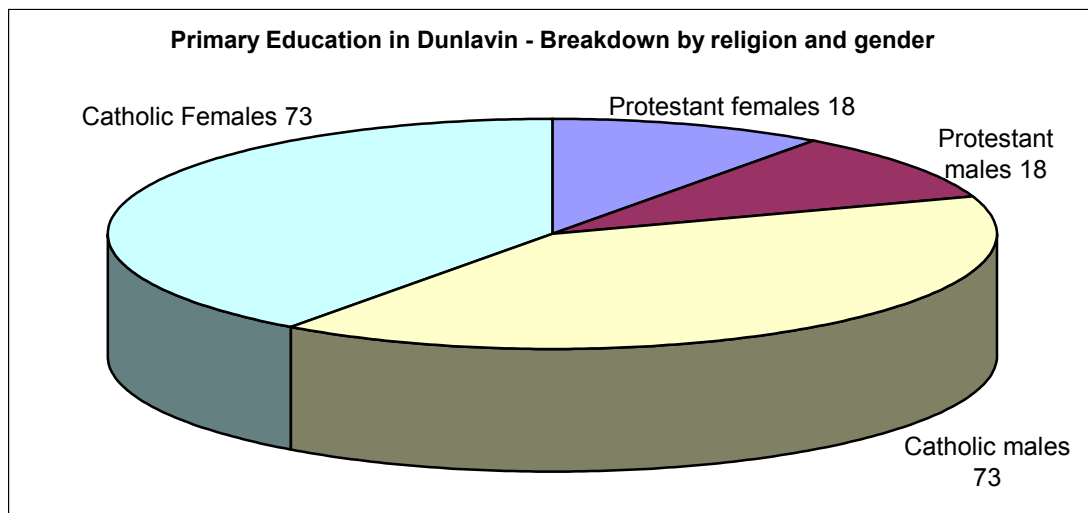
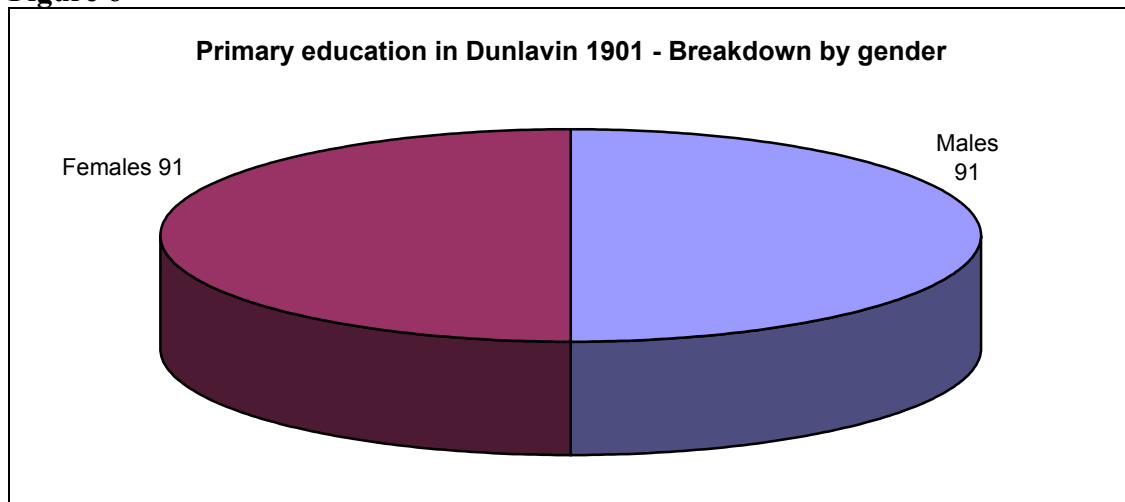


Figure 5 shows the breakdown of students in Dunlavin by religion and gender. Protestant children made up nearly one quarter of the school going population. This is quite close to the 23% of Protestants in the total population figures for 1901, and indicates no great difference in birth rates between Catholics and Protestants.

**Figure 6**



The very symmetrical nature of the pie chart in Figure 5 led me to include Figure 6 in this study. This figure shows the breakdown of students in Dunlavin by gender in 1901. The pie chart in Figure 6 is evenly halved between males and females. At first glance, this means that there was no gender-based discrimination in education at this

time. However, census statistics do not tell the full story. The real anti-female discrimination was to be found in the teaching and curriculum at the time. Boys and girls studied different subjects in school at this time.

This research study has used material for the census of 1881 and 1901 to show the religious division of the community of Dunlavin in County Wicklow at the time of the study. The breakdown of the population into Catholics and Protestants has been noted and graphed. The education and literacy rates of both Catholics and Protestants in 1881 have also been examined and the results graphed. The numbers of both religions attending school in 1901 have also been investigated and graphed. In addition, the breakdown of boys and girls in school in Dunlavin in 1901 has been noted and graphed. There were even numbers of boys and girls in school, but they did not do the same subjects. The graphs in this study help us to see what the overall situation was in relation to religion and education in this place at this time, and the study shows that just over one fifth of the population of Dunlavin was Protestant at this time and nearly a quarter of the schoolchildren of Dunlavin were Protestant, with better literacy rates. The village also had a large majority of Catholics, and no other churches at this time.

### **Sources:**

1. Census of Ireland 1881, County Wicklow, table xxx, p. 1161.
2. Census of Ireland 1901, County Wicklow, table xxxiii, p. 98.