

COUNTY CARLOW – POPULATION TRENDS

County Carlow's population is 52,500 (2008) – an increase of 6,486 between 2002 and 2008 – over 14% increase from the Census 2002 and ahead of the national average, 10%. Table below shows the actual population of the town and county from 1996 to 2008.

Population in Carlow Town and County 1996-2008

	1996	2002	2006	2008
Carlow County	41,616	46,014	50,349	52,500
Carlow Town & Environs	11,721	18,487	20,724	21,840

***The increase of 26.5% in the County's population in the 12 years since 1996 is remarkable.**

Net migration into Ireland has increased in recent years, averaging 22,500 per annum between 1997 and 2001. This was largely driven by the return of many Irish nationals who had emigrated in the previous decade. Since 2002 this trend has intensified, helped to a large degree by the entrance of Eastern European states into the EU. From 2002 until 2007 net migration into the State has averaged an annual 45,000. The performance of the economy at that time, in achieving high and sustained job creation relative to much of Europe has acted as the most significant attractor of EU migrants. More recently however, a reduced level of out-migration has been an additional factor adding to net migration. According to the CSO more than half (54 per cent) of immigrants were aged 25-44 while a further 28 per cent were aged 15-24. Approximately 1 in 10 of the immigrants were children under the age of 15.

The downturn in the economy has considerably reduced net migration to the state with imminent probability of an increase of out migration. These factors combine to reflect a lower level of population increase during the Plan period.

County Carlow Population Trends

The geographic spread of population in Ireland has not been confined to Greater Dublin or other urban centres but is increasingly evident in smaller towns and rural areas. Almost all towns within the County have experienced growth in population. In addition, rural Electoral Districts experienced growth in population. However, Carlow has also enjoyed considerable economic growth in recent years. The County has developed and remained firm in growth sectors such as financial services, Healthcare, Mechanical Engineering and Information Technology. This has helped to attract employment and population growth into the Town and County. The major focus for expansion in population has been in the Environs of Carlow Town. An increase of 3,500 persons was recorded in the Environs of Carlow Town in the period 2002 to 2008. This is an indication that as the County population increases, a greater percentage of the resulting population are living within the urban areas of the county i.e. Carlow Town.

Population Projections

The National Spatial Strategy aims to achieve balanced development across Ireland. The NSS has designated Carlow as a County Town with significant potential for growth and development. The NSS further envisages Carlow Town as providing a critical mass of population and skilled labour, achieving a population of 30,000+ by 2020. The priority given to regional economic development in the National Spatial Strategy means that job growth is likely to remain a source of strong inter-regional migration flows over the medium to long term. In addition, the expansion of nearby towns and centres such as Naas, Newbridge and Kilkenny and the Greater Dublin Area will continue to enhance Carlow's central location as a residential preference for commuters. This will be particularly relevant as the M7/M9 motorway is built and improvements continue to be made to train and bus services serving the County.

Projections of population provided for Carlow County by 2020 indicate a population of 63557. (Source: Regional Authority projections based on revised CSO projections).

Review of Census Data

Review of population trends in County Carlow based on Census data 1996 – 2008

Over 52,500 are resident in County Carlow, equivalent to 1.24% of the total national population and 12% of the South-East region's population. The County has experienced a rapid population expansion over the past decade, in part due to its location on the periphery of the Greater Dublin Area, within commuting distance of large employment centres on the outskirts of Dublin City. The County's population has been swelled by supply and affordability constraints in the Dublin housing market over recent years and a general behavioural shift towards greater commuting distances amongst the Irish population. Aside from these 'spillover' effects from the Greater Dublin Area, the County Carlow population has also been swelled by net immigration into Ireland from abroad and by expanding employment opportunities within County Carlow.

Growth of Carlow's Population

In the six years from 1996 to 2002 Carlow's population increased by 10.6% and by a further 9.4% in the four years to 2006; well in excess of the State average increases of 8% and 8.2% respectively. Between 1996 and 2002, the number of births in County Carlow exceeded the number of deaths by 1,613, thus there was a natural increase in the population, which accounted for 37% of the total population increase over the period, with net inward migration into County Carlow accounting for the balance of the increase (2,785 or 63% of the total). In the latest inter-censal period (2002-2006), the number of births in Carlow again exceeded the number of deaths, resulting in a natural increase in population of 1,927. Natural increase accounted for a higher proportion of the total increase in population over this period at 44.5% of the overall increase. Net inward migration, at +2,408, accounted for the balance (55.5%) of the total increase.

Carlow's population grew at an average annual rate of 1.9% over the ten year period from 1996 to 2006 (compared with the national average of 1.6%). Growth in the Carlow population was strongest in the last four years of this period – accelerating to an annual rate of 2.3%.

The following table shows the contribution of natural increase and net migration to the annual average growth rate of the Carlow population over the two latest intercensal periods. As can be seen from the table, the contribution of net inward migration exceeded that of natural increase over both periods.

Annual Average %Growth, Carlow		
	1996-2002	2002-2006
Natural Increase	+0.6%	+1.0%
Estimated Net Migration	+1.1%	+1.3%
Total population	+1.7%	+2.3%

Source: CSO Census 1996, 2002, 2006

The next table details the components of population change in Carlow over the decade from 1996 to 2006. Both the rate of natural increase and the rate of net migration in Carlow were ahead of the State average over each of these periods.

Components of Population Change, Carlow 1996-2008			
		<i>Carlow</i>	
Population	1996	41,616	
	2002	46,014	
	2006	50,349	
	2008	52,500	
Natural Increase	1996-2002	1,613	
	2002-2006	1,927	
Net Migration	1996-2002	2,785	
	2002-2006	2,408	
Annual Rates		Carlow	State Average
2002-2006	Births	17.2	15.0
	Deaths	7.2	7.0
	Net Migration	12.5	11.7
1996-2002	Births	14.8	14.3
	Deaths	8.7	8.3
	Net Migration	10.6	6.8

Location of That Growth

The population of County Carlow is largely concentrated in the County's prime urban centre, Carlow Town, which accounted for over 40% of the total County population in 2006, according to Census data. The balance of the County's population is located in a number of smaller population centres, the largest being Tullow and Bagenalstown. There is also a sizeable rural population in the County. The experience in Carlow

over the past decade has reflected the predominant national trends – with population growth largely occurring on the periphery of (rather than within) the major urban settlements. One of the major drivers of this pattern of population growth has been the affordability difficulties faced by those attempting to enter the housing market in recent years. The end of the housing boom could see a reversal of these trends in the coming years. Overall Carlow’s population has been growing extremely rapidly over the past decade, as detailed above. However, within the County, the fastest rates of population growth have been recorded in the “environs” of Carlow Town and in some of the other population centres around the County.

Although the total population served by Carlow Town increased by almost 40% in the years from 1996 to 2006, the “urban” element of the Town’s population declined by over 4% over the same period, according to Census figures. The town of Bagenalstown to the south-west of Carlow Town, despite being the County’s third largest population centre, has also seen its “urban” population decline marginally over the last two inter-censal periods.

The “rural” element of the Carlow Town population and the three electoral districts classified as “environs” of Carlow Town for Census purposes, all experienced dramatic population growth in the decade from 1996 to 2006, while other smaller population centres in the County, such as Tullow, Leighlinbridge and Rathvilly have also seen rapid increases in Census numbers over this period.

The population of County Carlow looks set to continue to expand at a rapid rate. The South East Regional Planning Guidelines (2004) suggest “significant potential for growth” in the County, with Carlow Town potentially reaching a population of over 30,000 people by the year 2020, according to this document.

CURRENT POPULATION 2008

It is estimated that the current population of County Carlow in 2008 is 52,500 approximately including 22,000 approximately at Carlow Town and its Environs. This Plan has examined and included the full service population at each of the Towns and Villages in the County giving the actual number of persons who are effectively serviced within these Towns/Villages. These figures more accurately reflect population centres than some of the census data which excludes parts of townlands.

COUNTY CARLOW **POPULATION DATA – JULY 2008**

MAJOR TOWNS

Carlow	21,840
Tullow	3,430
Muinebheag	2,940

TOWNS/VILLAGES

Ardattin	106
Ballinabranna/Raheendoran	521
Ballinkillen	98
Ballon	620
Ballymurphy	80
Bennekerry /Kernanstown	240
Borris	810
Carrigduff	330
Clonegal	195
Clonmore	80
Fenagh	240
Grange	217
Hacketstown	806
Kildavin,	196
Leighlinbridge	540
Myshall	216
Nurney	110
Old Leighlin	130
Palatine	251
Rathoe	210
Rathvilly	866
Tinnahinch	256
Tinryland	272

Note: Updated from 2006 official census and including full service area of each Town (i.e. more accurate than bare census data which in some cases excludes edge of town development)

Note: It is observed that over 70% of Carlow people live at established, serviced towns or villages in 2008 compared to 50% approximately in 1967