

IRELAND POPULATION

Over the last eighty years or so, the natural change in the population of Ireland has been positive, due to a rising birth rate and a declining death rate. For the ten years from 1996 to 2006, Ireland's population increased at an average annual rate of 1.6 per cent – this was the largest population growth rate in the EU. Cyprus and Luxembourg were the only other countries to record population growth rates in excess of 1 per cent over this period.

POPULATION DISTRIBUTION

The main concentrations of settlement in Ireland are around the east and south coasts, and the major metropolitan areas include Belfast, Cork and Dublin. After Dublin, eastern Ulster has the highest population density in Ireland. By contrast, population on the west coast is very sparse. This is partly due to the proximity of the east coast to the economic markets in Britain and because the best agricultural land lies to the east.

The most common negative factors for changes in population distribution involve adult children leaving the family home, urban renewal and certain regeneration projects where older housing has been demolished and replaced with smaller units. Meanwhile, positive factors include rapid housing development and a relatively large number of births in areas with large numbers of young family households.



Many towns and cities are growing as new housing is built. This is one of several new developments in Kilkenny.

POPULATION CHANGE

Many of the changes in population in Ireland are due to net migration. Net outward migration reached a peak in the 1950s and the 1961 census recorded a very low population of 2.8 million. There was another period of strong outward migration in the 1980s, but since then the migration trend has been inwards and the flow is increasing as Ireland has become a popular destination for people from Poland, Nigeria, Latvia and several other countries, as well as Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

