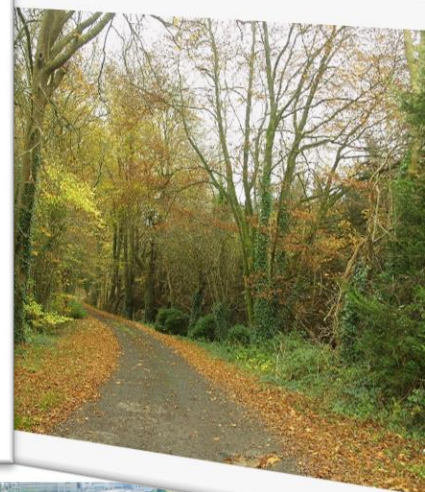


# Local Economic and Community Plan for Limerick City and County 2023-2028

## Draft Socio-Economic Statement



ATLANTIC EDGE

**LIMERICK**  
EUROPEAN EMBRACE



Comhairle Cathrach  
& Contae **Luimnigh**

Limerick City  
& County Council

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## 11. Introduction

The Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) for Limerick City and County supports the sustainable development of Limerick. The LECPs were first described in *Putting People First: Action Plan for Effective Local Government (2012)* and then formalised in the Local Government Reform Act 2014. The LECP is a statutory plan. The first and current LECP for Limerick City and County (2016-2021) has come to the end of its timespan. Guidelines for the development of the new LECP have been issued by the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD). The process of developing the new LECP has commenced. The development and implementation of the LECP is led by the local authority and supported by collaborative working with other public agencies, community and voluntary bodies, business, enterprise and other sectoral interests.

### 1.1 Purpose of the LECP

The purpose of the LECP, as set out in the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) Guidelines (2021) is “to set out, for a six-year period, the objectives and actions needed to promote and support the economic development and the local and community development of the relevant Local Authority area, both by itself directly and in partnership with other economic and community development stakeholders”. The overall aim is “to promote well-being and quality of life of citizens and communities” including all people living and working in the county, some of whom are not citizens.

The LECP provides the framework for local implementation of national and regional framework plans that set out the development path for the state and the region over the next 10 to 20 years. The key plans are the *National Planning Framework Ireland 2040* and the *National Development Plan 2021-2030* (NPF/NDP) and the *Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region* (RSES). The LECP identifies objectives from those framework plans that need to be implemented locally. It also identifies local objectives under other national and regional policies in areas including social inclusion, rural development, urban regeneration, health and well-being, education, training and skills development, employment, enterprise and climate change / climate action. The LECP must be consistent with overarching local authority plans – in particular, *the Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028* and *Limerick City and County Council’s Corporate Plan*. All of these plans need to align with the *UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*, to which Ireland is a signatory. The *UN SDGs* aim to address urgent economic, social and environment challenges in a harmonised way across all governments of the world.

The LECP has the following elements:

1. Economic elements, led by the Economic Development Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) of the local authority
2. Community elements, led by the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) – a partnership-based committee of the local authority and
3. Integrated elements with shared objectives and outcomes across Economic and Community elements.

The LECP is best described as an Integrated Framework Plan where objectives and actions across different themes can be connected in the local setting. Integrated, connected and coordinated approaches based on collaboration and partnership are seen to be most effective in achieving lasting and sustainable outcomes.

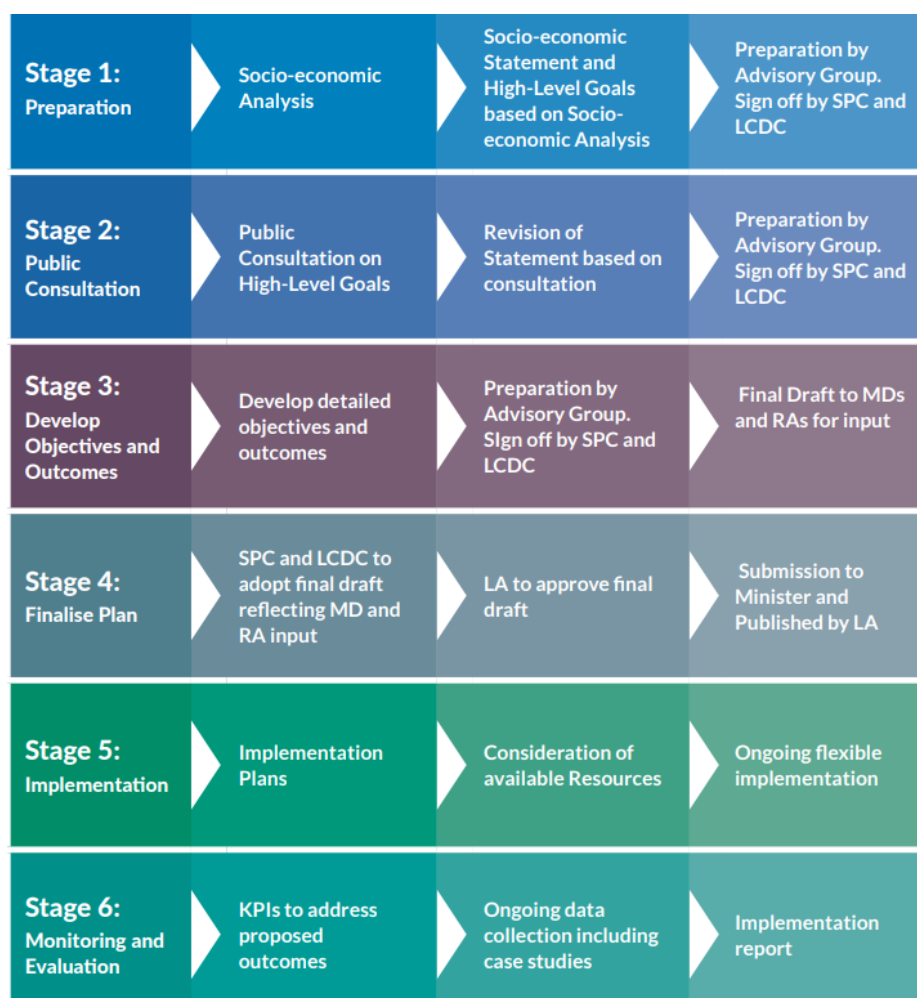
## 1.2 Process for developing the LECP

The process for development of the LECP involves four broad phases: (1) Preparation involving a Socio-Economic Statement and High-level Goals for the Plan based on the socio-economic analysis and experience of implementation of the current LECP; (2) Public Consultation on the Socio-economic Statement produced as an outcome of Phase 1; (3) Development of detailed Sustainable Community and Economic Objectives and Outcomes taking into account views presenting in the consultation process; and (4) Finalised Plan. The outcome from phases 1-4 is the framework LECP that will be in place over the six-year period.

This will be followed by a fifth phase, (5) Implementation, that involves preparation of two-year Implementation Plans. This is an additional phase and represents a change for the 2022-28 LECP compared with the first set of LECPs.

A sixth stage involves (6) Monitoring, Evaluation and Review of the plan.

The Stages in the LECP, as set out in the Guidelines, are shown in the figure below.



The process followed to date, at the Preparation phase, has involved review of delivery of the main programmes in local economic and community development in Limerick including: the *Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) 2017-2023*, which is reviewed each year at mid-year and end of year stages; the *Local Development Strategy for Rural Development, LEADER 2014-2020*; the *Limerick Regeneration Framework Implementation Plan 2013-2023*, which has an annual

monitoring and review cycle; *Limerick 2030 Spatial and Economic Plan* which was reviewed and updated in 2021 as part of the development of the new *Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028* and monitoring and review data from the *Limerick Local Enterprise Office (LEO)*. The preparation of the Socio-Economic Statement involved a review of the higher level statutory plans – the *Regional Spatial and Economic strategy for the Southern Region (2021)*, the *National Policy Framework Ireland 2040* and the *National Development Plan* and the *Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028*. The LECP High Level Goals and Objectives must be consistent with these plans. The preparatory phase also involved review of a number of national and regional strategies and policies named in the *LECP Guidelines*.

The preparation of the LECP for Limerick is being undertaken soon after the process of preparation of the new *Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028*. As these plans need to be consistent with each other, the work on the *Limerick Development Plan* is used to inform the preparation of the LECP.

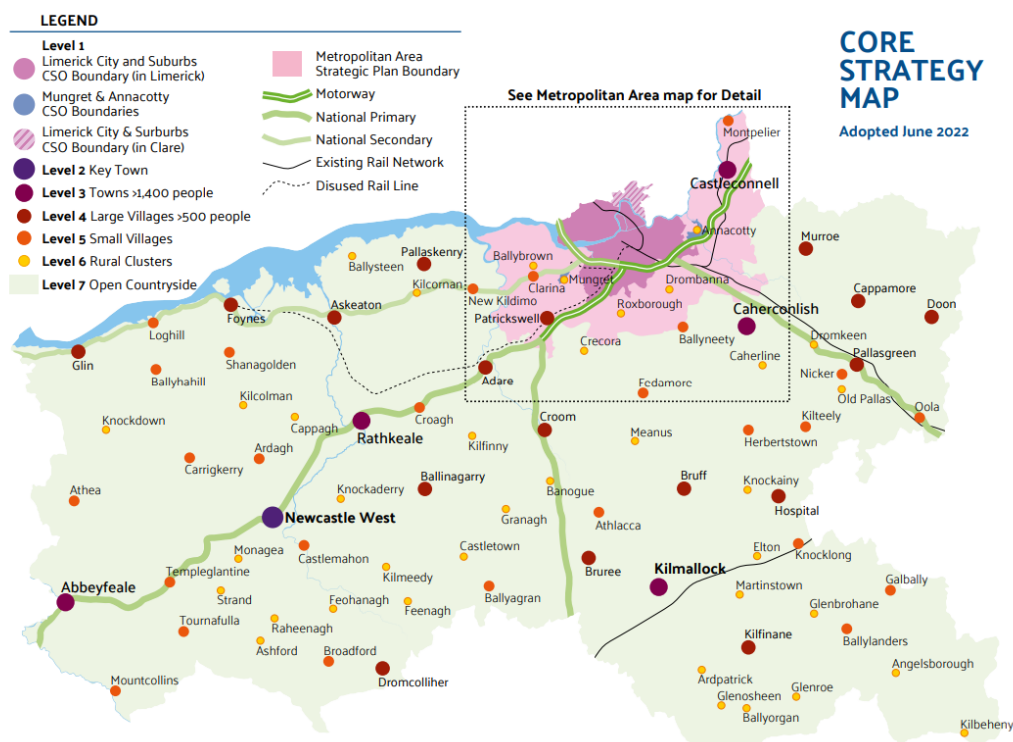
### 1.3 The LECP and the Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028

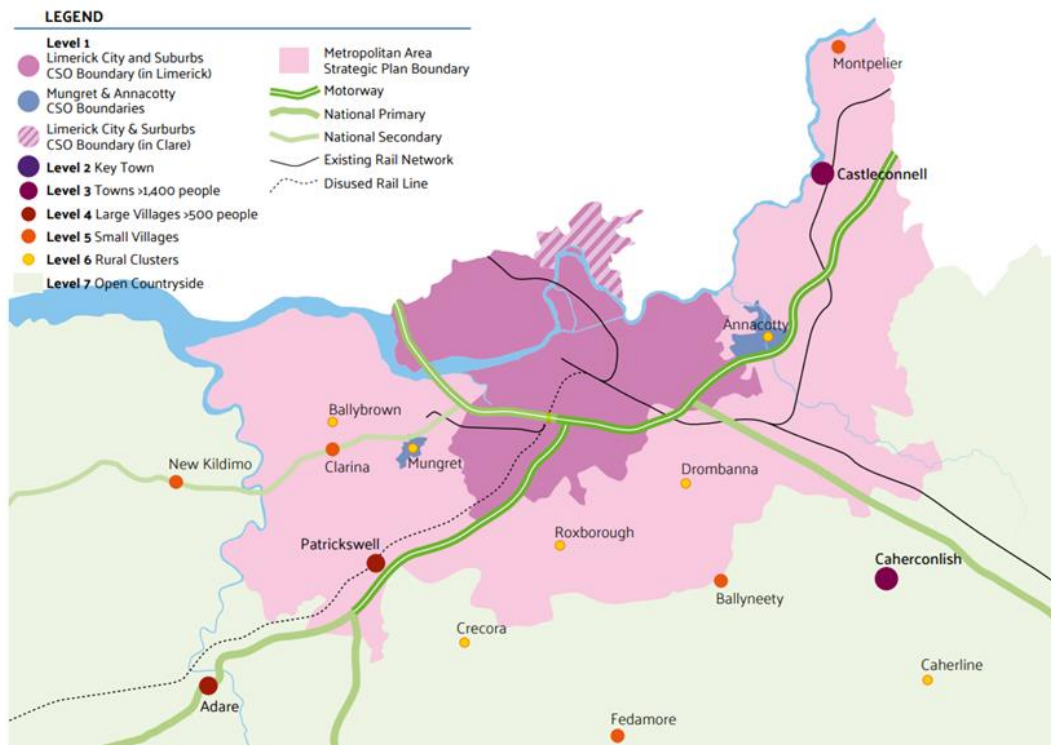
The first combined Development Plan for Limerick City and County was adopted at a Council meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2022 and came into effect on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

#### What is the vision & purpose of the Limerick Development Plan?

The plan sets out a blueprint for the development of Limerick from a physical, economic, social and environmental perspective until 2028. The vision set out in the *Limerick Development Plan* is that, Limerick will become a green city region on the Shannon Estuary connected through people and places. This will be achieved through engagement, innovation and resilient urban development and self-sustaining rural communities.

The *Limerick Development Plan* seeks to support the development of a robust City, towns and villages across Limerick, placing quality of life at the centre of decision-making. It focuses on the development of “ten-minute” neighbourhoods, supporting people to live, work and engage in recreation in their local neighbourhoods. The Map of Limerick shows the Metropolitan Area, the key towns and villages in the settlement hierarchy and connecting transport infrastructure.





Source: Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028

Under the Core Strategy set out in the *Limerick Development Plan*, the key locations for population and housing are shown, as required under the Planning and Development Action 2000 (Amended). The Core Strategy guides the development of settlements within Limerick. Under the *National Planning Framework: Ireland 2040*, Ireland’s population is projected to grow by one million by 2040. In order to achieve balanced regional development, 25% of the projected population growth is to occur in the Dublin region, 25% across the other four cities in the state combined (Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford) and 50% in key regional centres, towns and villages across the state. The *Limerick Development Plan* envisages growth in the existing built-up areas of Limerick City and Environs including Mungret and Annacotty by 50%; Newcastle West, the largest town outside of Limerick urban area, is targeted as a key town for growth. Generally, Limerick’s towns and villages will also be expected to grow their populations.

Projected population growth for Limerick to 2026 is 229,000 to 235,500, and for 2031 to 246,000-256,000, an increase of between 41,000 and 51,000 from its population base in 2022 (population 205,444, Census 2022 Preliminary Results). Sufficient lands have been zoned to accommodate over 15,500 new homes in Limerick over the lifetime of the Plan. Growth in population will need to be supported by strong economic activity, high quality environments and adequate social and physical infrastructure.

#### [What is the difference between the LECP and the Limerick Development Plan?](#)

The LECP provides the social and economic vision for the county/city while the development plan provides for the proper planning and sustainable spatial development of Limerick. Both plans deliver a strategic and operational framework for integrated planning. The LECP needs to complement and be consistent with the broad locational policies of the *Limerick Development Plan* – e.g., lands to zone for housing. The LECP cannot present alternate or competing proposals that would lead to inconsistency.

Preparation of the *Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028* was informed by extensive consultations with members of the public, service providers, community and voluntary organisations, schools, Elected Members, Strategic Policy Committees, Statutory Bodies, Government Departments and with the various Directorates of Limerick City and County Council. Notwithstanding restrictions on public events and meetings due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the level of engagement was high with a total of 556 public submissions received throughout the process. In order to ensure that the LECP for Limerick City and County is complementary to, and consistent with, the *Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028*, the submissions received have been taken into consideration as part of the first stage of the LECP process – the preparation stage.<sup>1</sup>

The following sections of this Socio-Economic Statement present key points from the Socio-Economic analysis; Economic and Community Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis; the Draft Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) Vision and High-Level Goals and Next Steps.

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<sup>1</sup> See background papers and issues paper from Limerick Development Plan preparation.  
<https://www.limerick.ie/council/services/planning-and-property/limerick-development-plan/how-do-you-see-limerick-2028>

## 2. Socio-economic Highlights

Analysis of socio-economic conditions in Limerick City and County is an important part of the evidence base for the LECP. It presents the situation of Limerick based on key indicators of development and well-being and shows how we compare with the national average and / or other counties. This helps to identify issues that need to be addressed and where change is needed. A general socio-economic analysis of Limerick City and County can provide useful information. In order to understand the development issues presenting, however, it is necessary to look at variations across the local authority area – for instance, differences between and within urban and rural areas such as the core of the city, the suburbs, disadvantaged neighbourhoods, rural settlements, remote rural areas etc. – and differences by social characteristics of groups in society such as women and men, young people, older people, people with disabilities, people from different social and cultural backgrounds.

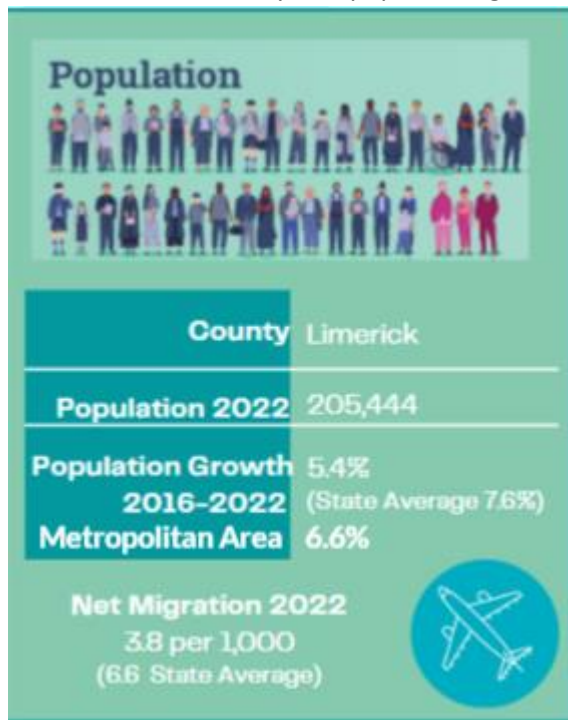
The socio-economic analysis will be updated as new data become available. An important source of local data is the Census of Ireland. Data at Small Area Level (the lowest unit of analysis) from the 2022 Census will not be fully available until 2023. The baseline conditions for the LECP will be updated as these data become available.

-	<a href="#">Heading</a>	-	<a href="#">Heading</a>
<a href="#">1</a>	<a href="#">Population</a>	<a href="#">13</a>	<a href="#">Knowledge economy, R&amp;D &amp; Innovation Capacity</a>
<a href="#">2</a>	<a href="#">Ethnic / cultural diversity</a>	<a href="#">14</a>	<a href="#">Tourism</a>
<a href="#">3</a>	<a href="#">Educational attainment</a>	<a href="#">15</a>	<a href="#">Retail</a>
<a href="#">4</a>	<a href="#">Education provision &amp; key indicators of performance</a>	<a href="#">16</a>	<a href="#">Cultural &amp; creative industries</a>
<a href="#">5</a>	<a href="#">Poverty, Social Exclusion and Area-based Deprivation</a>	<a href="#">17</a>	<a href="#">Food</a>
<a href="#">6</a>	<a href="#">Health &amp; well-being</a>	<a href="#">18</a>	<a href="#">Manufacturing</a>
<a href="#">7</a>	<a href="#">Children &amp; young people</a>	<a href="#">19</a>	<a href="#">Energy efficiency / renewables / green</a>
<a href="#">8</a>	<a href="#">Crime &amp; Justice</a>	<a href="#">20</a>	<a href="#">Transport</a>
<a href="#">9</a>	<a href="#">Labour Market</a>	<a href="#">21</a>	<a href="#">ICT &amp; Broadband</a>
<a href="#">10</a>	<a href="#">Daytime working population</a>	<a href="#">22</a>	<a href="#">Housing</a>
<a href="#">11</a>	<a href="#">Dereliction &amp; vacancy</a>	<a href="#">23</a>	<a href="#">Sports, Recreation and Community Facilities</a>
<a href="#">12</a>	<a href="#">Enterprise</a>	<a href="#">24</a>	<a href="#">Local services &amp; distance to everyday services</a>



## 2.1 Population

Preliminary results from Census 2022 show that the population of Limerick City and County grew by 5.4% between 2016 and 2022. This is below the national average (7.6%). Limerick is amongst the counties with relatively low population growth during this period (lowest at 5.1%). Net migration –

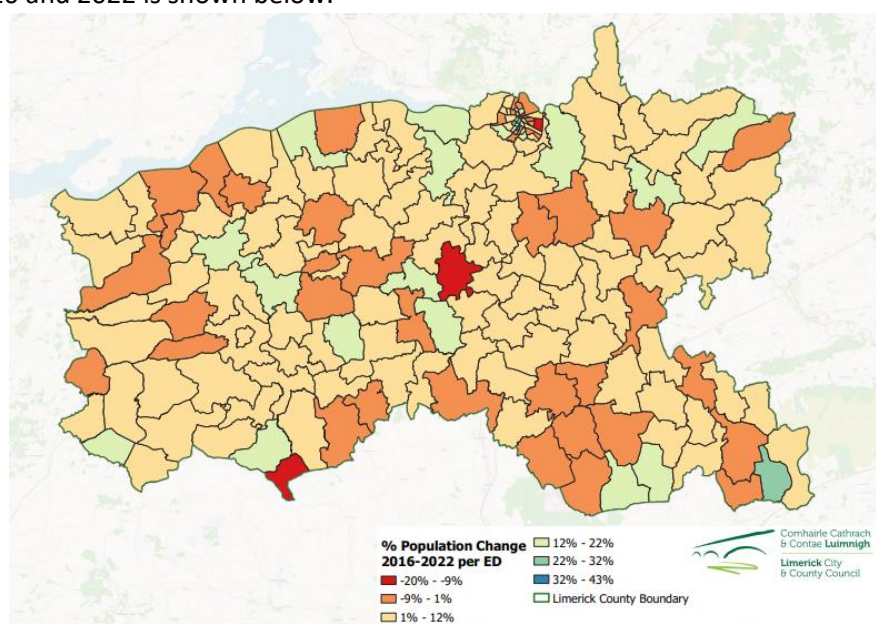


people coming into the country - accounted for more than half of the population growth (53%) in the state. The average annual net migration rate was 6.6 per 1,000 population nationally. This rate was lower for Limerick at 3.8 per 1,000 population.

### Population Change Limerick

Between 2016 and 2022, the population grew at a faster rate for all sub-areas of Limerick compared with the previous census period (2011-2016). The Metropolitan Area experienced a higher rate of population growth (6.6%) compared with the city and county as a whole (5.4%). The more rural parts of the County (i.e., the Adare-Rathkeale, Cappamore-Kilmallock and Newcastle West Municipal Districts) show positive but lower rates of population growth.

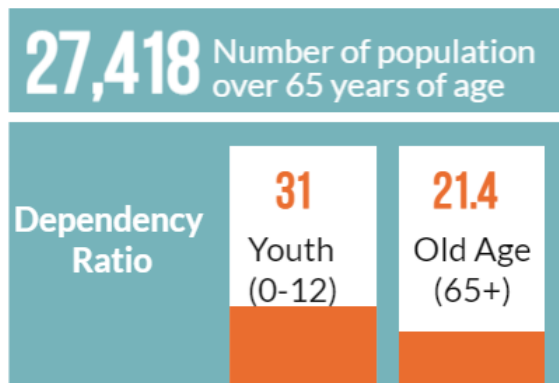
The outer parts of the city – the suburbs and villages within the Metropolitan Area – experienced strong population growth. Local areas (Electoral Divisions) in the city centre - around the Docks and Market area - showed the highest rates of population growth (125% to 155%) within the Metropolitan Area. These are areas with concentrations of migrant populations and rented accommodation. The population of the regeneration areas of the city (Moyross, Southill, St. Mary's Park and Ballinacurra Weston) stabilised between 2016 and 2022. The two larger estates, Southill and Moyross, experienced positive population growth in this period. The map showing the percentage change in population between 2016 and 2022 is shown below.



While the recent trends in population change in the state need more detailed analysis as Census 2022 data become available, there is evidence that more rural areas (and counties with significant rural populations) have increased their populations. This trend is reflected in parts of rural Limerick. This could be associated with rural areas considered more attractive places to live (for instance, linked to impact of COVID-19) and more availability of housing stock and at affordable prices in rural locations.

### Dependency Ratio

The demographic strength or weakness of an area as it relates to its economically productive population is reflected in the dependency ratio. A higher value for the Youth Dependency Ratio can be viewed as positive in that it represents an economic strength that can be harnessed in the future.



The Youth Dependency ratio (population 0-14 years relative to the population 15-64 years) in Limerick City and County was 31.0 in 2016, which was lower than the state average of 32.3. The Old Age Dependency ratio (population 65+ relative to the population 15-64 years) was 21.4, higher than the state average of 20.4 for the same period.

The inner and outer suburban neighbourhoods of Limerick have a higher Youth Dependency Ratio (31.3) and a lower Old Age Dependency Ratio (15.7).

This reflects the general structure of population living in the suburbs – family-based households with children and young adults. The city has a mixed pattern. Parts of the inner city have high Youth Dependency Ratios (areas around the Docks and Market with concentrations of migrant families, and lone parent households). Other parts of the city in both affluent and disadvantaged areas have high Old Age Dependency Ratios.

The Total Dependency Ratio for Limerick City and County (52.4) is very close to the state average (52.7) but there are differences within the City and County. Some areas have a relatively low Total Dependency Ratio mostly because they have a larger proportion of families with children and do not have a large proportion of the population in older age groups. This is the case in sub-urban and peri-urban areas. Other areas in rural Limerick have a high Total Dependency Ratio because they have both a large proportion of young children and older residents. These include some parts of the city and also remote rural areas.

## 2.2 Ethnic / Cultural Diversity

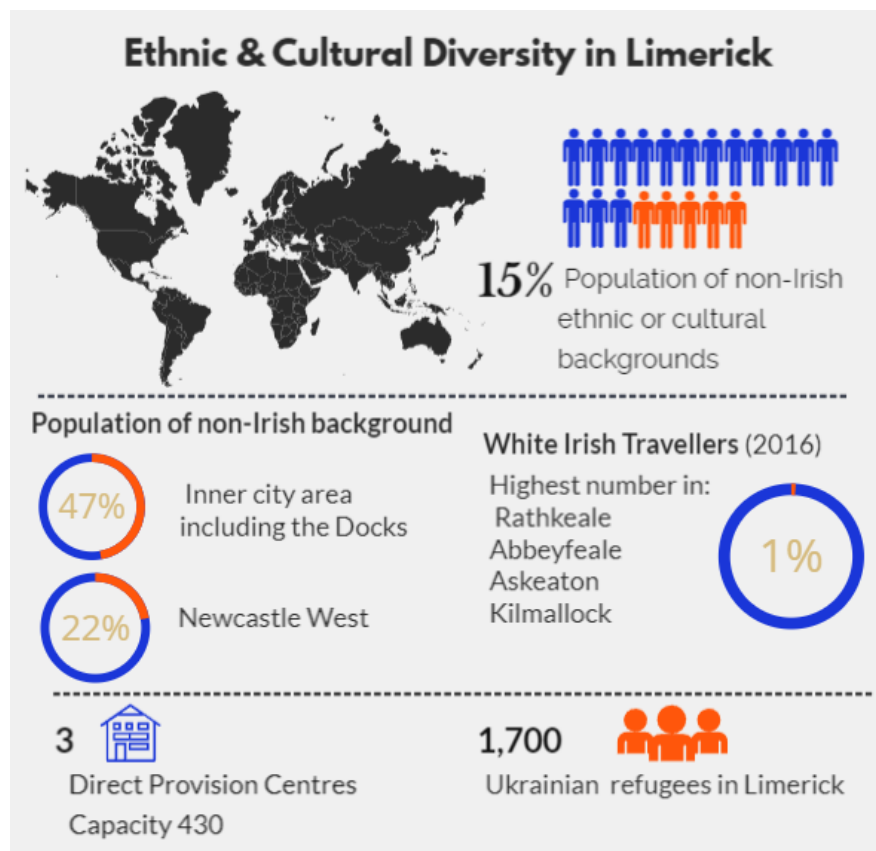
Demographic change and in-migration are making Limerick a more diverse and vibrant place. Immigration from different countries is contributing to cultural, economic and social diversity.

### Ethnic Characteristics of the Population: Limerick

Incoming migrants with non-Irish nationality are also choosing to stay and raise families in Limerick. Based on Census 2016, approximately 85% of the population identify as White Irish, just under 1% White Irish Traveller and just under 15% are of different ethnic / cultural origin.

The percentage of the population self-identifying as White Irish Travellers in Limerick in Census 2016 under-estimates the size of this population. Concentrations of Traveller families are found in certain county towns, especially Rathkeale, Kilmallock, Abbeyfeale and Askeaton and in parts of the city. Accommodation is the key issue for Travellers. All indicators of well-being and social and economic

inclusion indicate that Travellers are amongst our most disadvantaged social group – a very high percentage of this group have no formal or low education, they are at much higher risk of early school leaving, highest unemployment, poorest health and high mortality rates – and they also suffer discrimination.



In relation to people of non-Irish ethnicity / cultural background or who were not born in Ireland, the largest concentrations are in Limerick City centre. In the inner city area (population base of approximately 10,000), some 47% were not born in Ireland and within that, 22% were from “the rest of the world” apart from the UK and EU countries. There are also higher percentages of people who were not born in Ireland in parts of the suburbs (e.g., Dooradoyle-Raheen). Outside of the city and suburbs, Newcastle West has the largest percentage of its population (22%) born outside of Ireland.

#### Refugees and Persons Arriving Under International Protection

More recent issues emerging are the arrival and re-settlement of refugee populations linked to wars in other parts of the world – in particular, Syrian refugees and currently Ukrainian refugees. In summer 2022, there were approximately 1,700 known Ukrainian refugees in Limerick, processed through the International Protection Accommodation Services (IPAS). The local authority plays a key role in sourcing accommodation and putting in place a coordinated service response across public agencies to the Ukrainian refugee crisis.<sup>2</sup>

This is in addition to approximately 7,400 people seeking asylum / international protection in Ireland, living in Direct Provision Centres and emergency accommodation across the state.<sup>3</sup> The country of

<sup>2</sup> Data from Limerick City and County Council

<sup>3</sup> Data from the Asylum Information Database (AIDA) / European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRD).  
<https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/republic-ireland/>

origin of people seeking asylum / international protection is mostly African countries (Nigeria, Somalia, and Zimbabwe) and Afghanistan. There are three Direct Provision Centres in / or serviced by Limerick City (one in Meelick Co. Clare) with occupancy capacity of some 430 persons. The numbers living in other accommodation options in Limerick, while waiting for a decision on their case, is not known. Hosting those seeking asylum in Direct Provision Centres, overseen by the International Protection Accommodation Services (IPAS), is due to end in 2024. A new accommodation model and support services are being developed for people seeking international protection.

There are a number of non-profit organisations in the city engaged in advocacy and providing support services to migrants including those arriving under and currently in the IPAS system – in particular, Doras engaged in advocacy and services and the Jesuit Refugee Service. The Local Development Companies in the city and county also target this population providing support services directly and referrals to mainstream services.

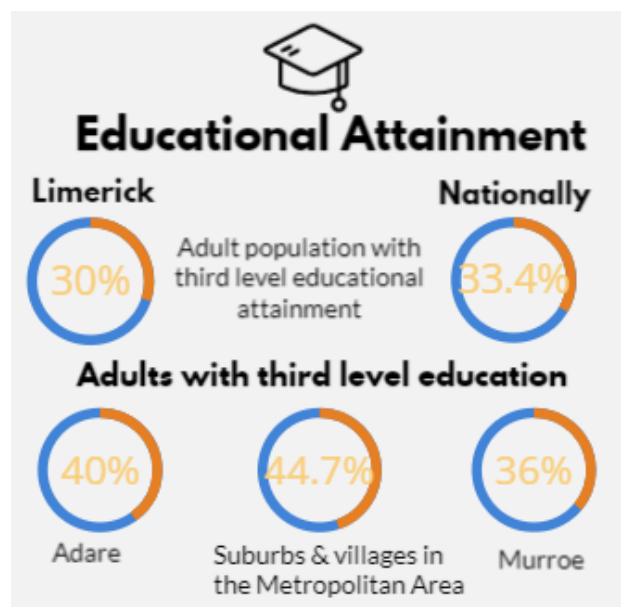
Migration places additional challenges on public services and infrastructure including housing / accommodation, education, health and other services. The quality of services, social and community infrastructure and amenities for a diverse and multi-cultural society will be a key determinant to achieve sustainable communities over the longer-term. Opportunities to engage in the cultural and civic life of host communities are essential for integration.

### 2.3 Educational Attainment

A trend reflected across the state generally is the increase in the level of educational attainment in the adult population.

#### Higher levels of educational qualification in Limerick

In 2016, 30% of the population aged 15 years and over in Limerick City and County had third level educational qualifications. This was lower than the national average of 33.4%. The distribution of persons with higher levels of educational qualifications varies across sub-areas of Limerick. In the inner and outer suburbs and villages in the Metropolitan Area, large percentages of adults have third level education. For instance, 44.7% of the adult population in the suburbs and outer Metropolitan Area have third level qualifications compared with 25% in the former Limerick City Council area.



Educational attainment levels are generally higher in rural Limerick (the former County compared with the former City Council area). In rural Limerick, the settlements with the best education profile are

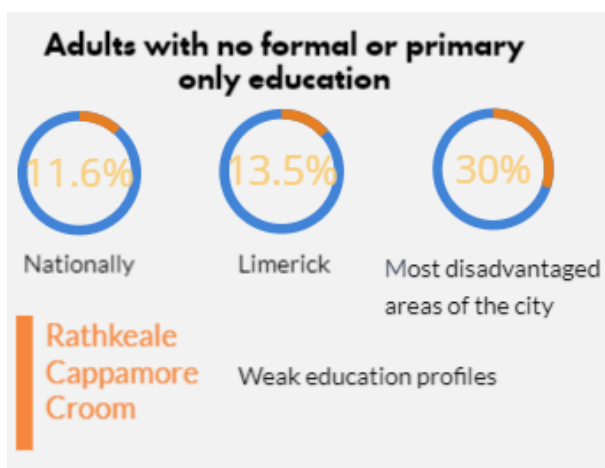
Murroe and Adare, having the highest percentage of adults with third level education (40% in Adare and 36% in Murroe) and the lowest percentages of adults with Primary Only or No Formal Education and Lower Secondary at most.

Bruff and Newcastle West present a balanced picture. Both have a relatively high percentage with third level education and low percentage with low education compared with other settlements.

Some towns have a high proportion of adults with vocational qualifications – Newcastle West and Killmallock – which traditionally have been locations of manufacturing employment – and Cappamore and Bruff.

#### Lower level educational qualification Limerick

In Limerick City and County, 13.5% have at most Primary Education or No Formal Education. The actual number of adults in this category is 16,938 – 6, 250 adults in the former city and 10,688 in the former county. The rate with lowest education in Limerick is higher than the national average (11.6%). Low education is a significant issue in the city. There are nine Electoral Divisions across the city and county where 30% of the adult population state “No formal or primary education only” as their highest level of qualification. Eight of these Electoral Divisions are in the city (and one in Rathkeale). Low levels of educational attainment is a characteristic of Limerick’s most deprived urban areas. Across all of the regeneration areas of the city, 60% or more of the adult population have lower secondary education or below as the highest level of qualification.



Of the county towns, Rathkeale has the weakest education profile. It has, by far, the highest percentage of adults with Primary / No Formal Education – which reflects large concentrations of Traveller families in the town – and the second lowest percentage with third level education.

Cappamore and Croom also have a relatively weak education profile (high percentage with low education and small percentage with third level education). Cappamore has the lowest percentage of adults with third level education. This is associated with the older age structure of residents of the town.

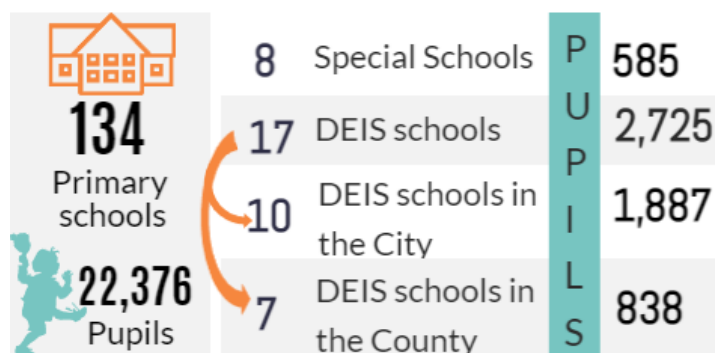
Generally, low education is difficult to capture in rural Limerick as persons with lowest education can be widely dispersed. Adults with low education may be unemployed, in work, retired or economically inactive. Delivery of learning opportunities to dispersed rural population present challenges in terms access to education, training and lifelong learning. The growth in online learning can help to address low education and support learning across the population. However, skills, capacity and connectivity to fast broadband can remain barriers to rural populations, disadvantaged urban communities and specific social groups (e.g., older people, Travellers).

## 2.4 Education Provision & Key Indicators of Performance

Limerick City and County is well-served in its school and higher education infrastructure.

### Primary and Special Schools

Across Limerick City and County, in the school year 2021/2022, there are 134 primary schools with 22,376 pupils. Of these, 24 schools are located in the city with 6,647 pupils and 110 in the former county with 15,729 pupils.



Of the total number of schools, 17 are designated as DEIS schools (servicing disadvantaged areas / with significant numbers of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds) with 2,725 pupils. Of the DEIS schools, 10 are located in the city (with 1,887 pupils) and seven in the county (with 838 pupils). As such, just under 70% of the disadvantaged primary school population live in Limerick city.

School size	No. schools	No. pupils
up to 50 pupils	22	681
51 to 100 pupils	31	2,407
101-200 pupils	41	5,882
201-300 pupils	23	5,382
301-400 pupils	9	3,128
401 to 900 pupils	8	4,896
<b>Totals</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>22,376</b>

Of the Limerick Primary schools, 681 pupils are enrolled in very small schools (22 schools with up to 50 pupils) and an additional 2,407 pupils are enrolled in schools (31 schools) with 51 to 100 pupils. At the other end of the spectrum, 17 schools have 300 pupils and upwards, with one school having over 850 pupils. Six of the eight largest schools are located in suburban Limerick – Castletroy / Monaleen, Dooradoyle, Mungret and Corbally.

In addition, there are eight Special Schools in Limerick (e.g., for intellectually disabled, deaf, etc.) with 585 pupils in 2021/2022.

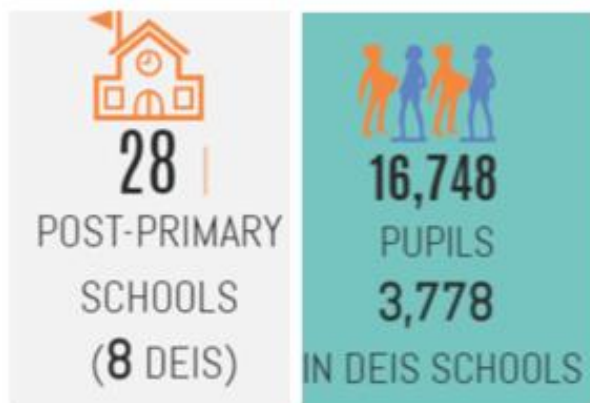
Source: Department of Education

### Post-Primary Schools

In the school year, 2021/2022, Limerick City and County has 28 such schools aided by the Department of Education with 16,748 pupils. The number of pupils enrolled in 2021/2022 is approximately the same as in 2012.<sup>4</sup> The number of pupils decreased in the years 2017 to 2020 to under 16,000 pupils but has been increasing in 2021 and 2022. Fourteen of the post-primary schools are located in the city / urban catchment area and 14 in the more rurally-based county. Over recent years, there has been significant change in the school infrastructure. The number of second level schools has reduced from 33 in 2012 to 28 at present due to school closures and school amalgamations in both the city / urban

<sup>4</sup> Data from Department of Education statistics database. <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/055810-education-statistics/#education-statistics-database>

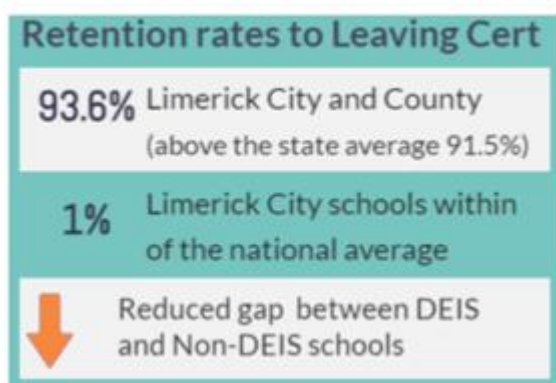
catchment area and rural Limerick. New schools have been established over that period and there has been significant investment in new school buildings.



Of Limerick’s post-primary schools, eight are designated as DEIS schools (located in disadvantaged areas or serving disadvantaged populations), including one additional DEIS school designated for the city in 2022. In 2022, 3,778 pupils (23% of the school population) are enrolled in DEIS schools. Six of these DEIS schools are within the school population catchment area of the city / urban area and two in rural Limerick county towns.

### Retention Rates in School / Early School Leaving

In the state as a whole, retention rates to Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate have shown steady improvement over the last ten years and the situation in Limerick follows this trend.<sup>5</sup> Based on the latest data - the 2014 school entry cohort, sitting the Junior Cert in 2017/2018 – national average retention rates to Junior Cert are 97.6%, showing an improvement of approximately 3 percentage points over ten years. For the same 2014 school entry cohort, sitting the Leaving Cert in 2019/2020, national average retention rates to Leaving Cert are 91.5%. Limerick City and County performs better than the state average on both indicators - with a retention rate of 98.1% to Junior Cert and 93.6% to Leaving Cert for the school entry cohort 2014.



Cities and more urbanised local authority areas across the state have lower retention rates / higher Early School Leaving rates. Prior to amalgamation of Limerick City and Limerick County to form a single local authority in 2014, Limerick County performed well above the state average on retention in education and Limerick City well below the state average.<sup>6</sup> In Limerick City schools, retention rates to Leaving Cert over ten years ago (in the 2004 cohort, sitting the Leaving Cert in 2009/10) were 4% lower than the state average and the second lowest of all

local authority areas in the state. In the last year for which data are available for Limerick City (2009 school entry cohort, sitting Leaving Cert in 2014/15), the gap in the retention rate to Leaving Cert for the city was less than 1%.

<sup>5</sup> The retention rate to Leaving Cert is used as a measure of Early School Leaving (ESL). However, retention rates in mainstream schools do not take into account participation in educational pathways outside the school system, such as Youthreach and apprenticeship training, or early entry into the labour force (Department of Education, 2020). If participation in alternative educational pathways were included – e.g., measured by the completion of the National Framework of Qualifications levels of 4, 5 and 6 – retention rates to completion of second level qualification would be even higher and Early School Leaving Rate lower.

<sup>6</sup> With the amalgamation of Limerick City and County Council (2014), there is a break in the statistical series for Limerick. The former City and former County are no longer reported separately. As such, the actual figures for Limerick City are not available for any of the years from 2015/2016 onward.

National level data shows a gender difference in retention rates to Leaving Cert (lower for males compared with females) and between DEIS and Non-DEIS schools. There has been a gap of between 3-4% in retention rates to Leaving Cert in favour of females since the 2012/2013 school entry cohort. Going back to students entering secondary school in the late 1990's, the gap between males and females was much greater (10% gap in favour of female retention in school to Leaving Cert). Local Limerick data on the gender gap are not available but it is expected that a similar trend prevails.

Focusing on schools in disadvantaged areas and serving disadvantaged populations, a gap in retention rates remains between DEIS<sup>7</sup> and non-DEIS schools but this has been reducing over time. The “achievement gap” in retention rates to Leaving Cert between DEIS and Non-DEIS schools currently stands at 8.6% - i.e., in the 2014 school entry cohort, sitting the Leaving Cert in 2019/2020 – and registers a further improvement compared with the previous year (9.3% gap). Males in DEIS schools are also more at risk of early school leaving (with a retention rate of 82.2% for males to Leaving Cert compared with 88.2% for females). It is also known from national level data that Travellers have lowest retention rates to qualification in second level education. Other groups most at risk of early school leaving are young people in the criminal justice system, and youth with mental health issues.

### Third Level Education

There are three third level education institutions in Limerick offering courses at under-graduate and post graduate levels across a range of disciplines and with different profiles / specialisations: the University of Limerick (17,062 students), Technological University of the Shannon (TUS): Midlands and Mid-West<sup>8</sup> (11,999 students), and Mary Immaculate College (4,987 students). The last institution specialises in teacher training / education, early childhood education and liberal arts. These three institutions have seen an increase in student numbers in recent years and, in the 2021/2022 academic year, had a combined intake of 34,048 students.<sup>9</sup> The Limerick-based institutions are expected to expand further their



student enrolments. University of Limerick is planning an increase in student registrations to 19,416 students by 2023/2024<sup>10</sup>, LIT (now part of TUS) an increase to 7,500 students by 2022<sup>11</sup>, and Mary Immaculate College forecasting a student population of up to 6,000 by the middle of the decade<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> DEIS (Delivery Equality of Opportunity in Schools) schools are those supported with a special support programmes and higher levels of capitation because of the profile of their pupils intake as socially disadvantaged / location in socially disadvantaged communities.

<sup>8</sup> Formerly Limerick Institute of Technology (LIT) including Limerick School of Art and Design amalgamated with Athlone Institute of Technology to create TUS: Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands and Mid-West, beginning operations in October 2021. It operates across six campuses in four counties: Limerick, Athlone, Thurles, Clonmel and Ennis

<sup>9</sup> Higher Education Authority statistics, Sept 2022. <https://hea.ie/statistics/>

<sup>10</sup> University of Limerick Strategic plan 2019-2024 [Online: [https://www.ul.ie/UL\\_Strategic\\_Plan\\_2019-2024\\_Web.pdf](https://www.ul.ie/UL_Strategic_Plan_2019-2024_Web.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Limerick IT Strategic Plan 2018-2022 [Online: <https://lit.ie/getmedia/1c35e9a1-974f-4125-b6fbd075511249ec/LIT-Strategic-Plan-2018-2022.pdf>]

<sup>12</sup> Mary Immaculate College Strategic Plan 2023, p. 20 [Online: <https://www.mic.ul.ie/about-mic/office-ofthe-president/strategic-plan>]



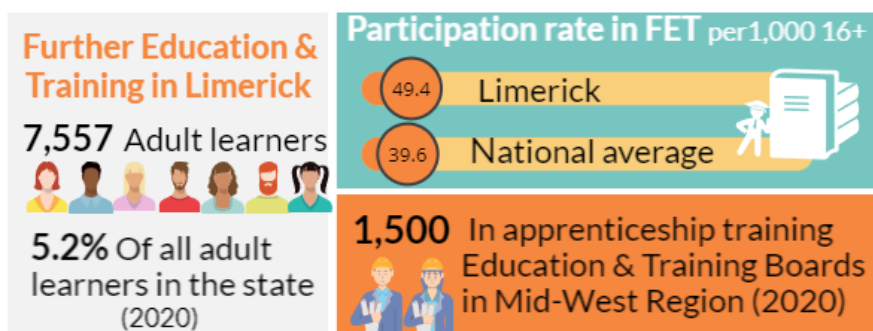
### Further Education and Training & Apprenticeships

The Further Education and Training (FET) sector, operating under SOLAS, delivers life-long learning options to learners aged 16 years and upwards across the state. These include Post-Leaving Cert Courses (the largest proportion of courses), apprenticeships, traineeships, community education and core learning in literacy and numeracy. Courses are delivered by Education and Training Boards and other providers including community and voluntary groups. Courses are developed for, and certified at, different on the National Framework of Qualification, levels 1 to 6.

Across the state in 2020, excluding apprenticeships and e-Colleges, there were 151,630 enrolments. Of the enrolments, 108,793 learners achieved full or partial completions with 70% of those completing achieving certification.

The number of learners enrolled with Limerick as the county of residence was 7,557 or 5.2% of all learners in the state. This gives a rate of participation in adult learning of 49.4 per 1,000 population aged 16 years and over (2016), above the national average rate (39.6 per 1,000 population 16 years and over).

The profile of learners at county level is not reported but they are available at national level. Of the enrolments, 61.1% are female and 38.5% male; 44% are on full-time courses, 49% part-time and 6% online. In terms of age-profile, one-third are under 25 years. The education profile of those entering FET (enrolments) shows that this is reaching those with lower levels of education in general: over one-quarter (27%) of enrolments in 2020 have low education (Lower Secondary or below) and over one-third (36%) have Upper Secondary education. Just under one-fifth (19%) have some post-second level education and 15% a third level degree. In relation to employment status, approximately equal proportions are unemployed (30.5%) and employed (28.9%) while over 40% are economically inactive (retired, in home duties, otherwise inactive).<sup>13</sup>



With a stronger focus on developing apprenticeship training to meet skills needs of employers / industrial and business sectors, the number in apprenticeship training in the state was 24,212 in 2021 with over 8,600 new registrations in that year.<sup>14</sup> The Education and Training Boards in the Mid-West Region had some 1,500 in apprenticeship training in 2020.

### Progression to Third Level Education

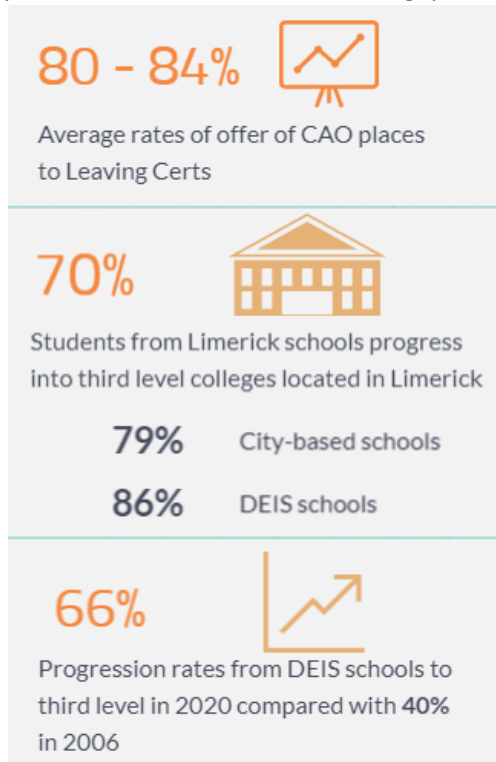
Progression to third level education from school is an indicator of attainment in the school population on completion of second level (Leaving Certificate or equivalent). Over the last ten years, across all Post-Primary Schools in the city and county, rates of progression to college based on offers of places through the Central Applications Office (CAO) system have increased. The significant increase

<sup>13</sup> SOLAS Data Analytics [https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/cdfb3456d9/15665-fet\\_facts\\_report\\_2020.pdf](https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/cdfb3456d9/15665-fet_facts_report_2020.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> The target number of new registrations per year is 10,000 from 2021 to 2025 under the *Action Plan for Apprenticeship 2021-2025*

occurred over the earlier period from 2006 to 2012. In 2012, the rate of progression to third level colleges from all post-primary schools in Limerick City and County was 77% compared with 60% in 2006. Since 2013, it has been 80% (highest in 2019 and 2020 at 84%).<sup>15</sup>

A significant change has been in the rate of progression from schools serving disadvantaged areas / school populations, DEIS schools. In 2021, the rate of progression to college from DEIS schools in Limerick City and County was 66% compared with 58% in 2012 and 40% in 2016. However, the gap between DEIS schools and non-DEIS schools remains significant. In 2021, the rate of progression from Non-DEIS schools was 85% compared with 66% for DEIS – a gap of 19%. While fluctuating over the years above and below 20% - the gap was lowest in 2018 at 17% and highest in 2015 at 29%.



In schools in Limerick City / Urban area, where there are greater social inequalities, the same trends are in evidence. The gap in progression rates to third level education between DEIS and non-DEIS schools has been consistently greater in the city. In 2021, Non-DEIS schools in the city / urban area achieved a progression rate of 88% compared with 64% for DEIS schools (a gap of 24%). In recent years, the achievement gap was largest in 2015, at 32%.

The destination colleges for Limerick students' progression to third level shows the importance of having third level education colleges located in Limerick. In the latest year (2021), 70% of second level offers of college places for students in Limerick schools were for institutions located in Limerick – University of Limerick, Mary Immaculate College and the Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands and Mid-West (TUS, formerly LIT). The percentage progressing to Limerick insitutions is higher for students from schools in the city /

urban area (78% in 2021 go to colleges in Limerick). The availability of college places in Limerick is more important for those students in DEIS schools, particularly from DEIS schools in the city / urban area. In 2021, the percentage of students from DEIS schools across Limerick City and County progressing into third level who went to Limerick-based colleges was 79%. In DEIS schools in Limerick City/Urban area, the percentage progressing to Limerick-based colleges was 86%. If DEIS schools located in or serving the most disadvantaged areas of the city (regeneration areas) are considered, the percentage of those students offered places at third level progressing to Limerick-based colleges is 93%.<sup>16</sup>

### Graduate Outcomes and Retention of Graduates

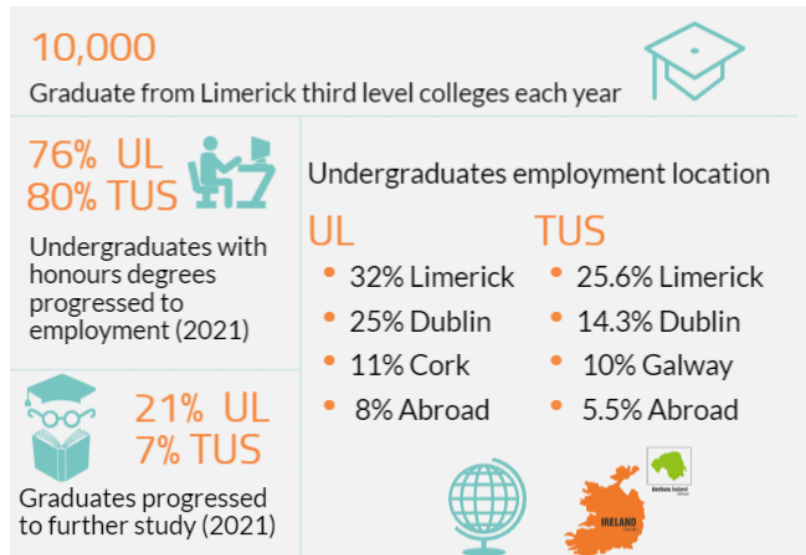
Each year, approximately 10,000 students graduate from third level colleges in Limerick. Based on Graduate Outcomes surveys, in 2021, 76% of under-graduates gaining honours degrees from UL were in employment and a further 21% in further study nine months after graduation. In the case of TUS, 80% of honours under-graduates were in employment and 7% in further study nine months after

<sup>15</sup> Data collated from [www.schooldays.ie](http://www schooldays.ie) published data on progression statistics from Limerick-based post-primary schools excluding “grind” schools and LCFE

<sup>16</sup> Data collated from analysis of individual school returns, data published on [www.schooldays.ie](http://www.schooldays.ie)

graduation. Rates of entry to employment were higher for those graduating with post-graduate qualifications.

Of those UL graduates progressing to employment in 2021, for 92%, the location of employment was Ireland while 8% took up employment abroad. In terms county location, 32% of UL graduates taking up employment went into employment in Limerick, 25% Dublin and 11% Cork. In the case of TUS, 94.5% went into employment in Ireland and 5.5% abroad; 25.6% took up employment in Limerick, 14.3% Dublin and 10% Galway. While this shows the importance of the third level colleges generating an educated workforce for businesses in Limerick, it also shows some leakage of talent out from the county and the region i.e., reflected in the significant percentage of graduates taking up employment elsewhere in Ireland as well as a small proportion abroad.



## 2.5 Poverty, Social Exclusion and Area-based Deprivation

Poverty, social exclusion and social inequality are key inter-related issues that must be addressed in the interest of fairness and societal cohesion.

### Poverty and Social Exclusion

The concept of social inclusion means having sufficient income, having access to services and participation in society. Based on the definition used in Ireland’s *Roadmap to Social Inclusion* “*Social inclusion is achieved when people have access to sufficient income, resources and services to enable them to play an active part in their communities and participate in activities that are considered the norm for people in society generally*”.

Living standards of people in Ireland have improved significantly. However, a certain percentage of households / people live in poverty and social deprivation. In the state in 2021, 11.6% of households were at risk of poverty, meaning that their income was at or below the poverty threshold of 60% of median disposable income. Under another measure of poverty – enforced deprivation - the rate in 2021 in the state was 13.8%. Enforced deprivation is a measure of households unable to afford two or more basic items considered the norm for society. Using the third measure of poverty - the consistent poverty rate – the percentage of households that are both at risk of poverty and in enforced deprivation – was at 4% in 2021.

Based on household surveys of income and living conditions, we know the characteristics of households that are most at risk of poverty and deprivation. People unable to work due to illness or disability have highest poverty rates under all three measures (e.g., 39.1% are at risk of poverty, at the threshold of 60% or less of median disposable income), followed by unemployed people. Disability or illness can relate to mental health as well as incapacity due to addiction / substance misuse. Households headed by people with lowest education, households with adults living alone and in one parent households with young children, people in rented housing (particularly local authority-rented

and on rent-support schemes) and in households where no adult is working or only one adult is at work have highest poverty rates across all three measures. Travellers and persons coming out of or in Direct Provision / International Protection system are also at high risk of poverty and deprivation. Rural areas have higher rates of at risk of poverty (based on 60% or less median disposable income) but lower rates of enforced deprivation and consistent poverty compared with urban areas. Isolation, lack of transport, unemployment /under-employment and poor access to services are characteristics of rural deprivation.

Local data for Limerick show that we have relatively large numbers, particularly in the city, that are not in work (due to unemployment, inability to work due to illness / disability or otherwise inactive). In 2016, 15% of the population of Limerick City and County have a disability. There are also significant numbers with low education (16,938 adults across the city and county with primary only or no formal education in 2016) and lone parent households with young children. Just over 15% of all households in Limerick City and County were lone parent households with at least one child under 15 years (2016). In 2022, between local authority housing stock and rent subsidy scheme for households in housing need on low means, there were some 9,200 households in social housing provision.

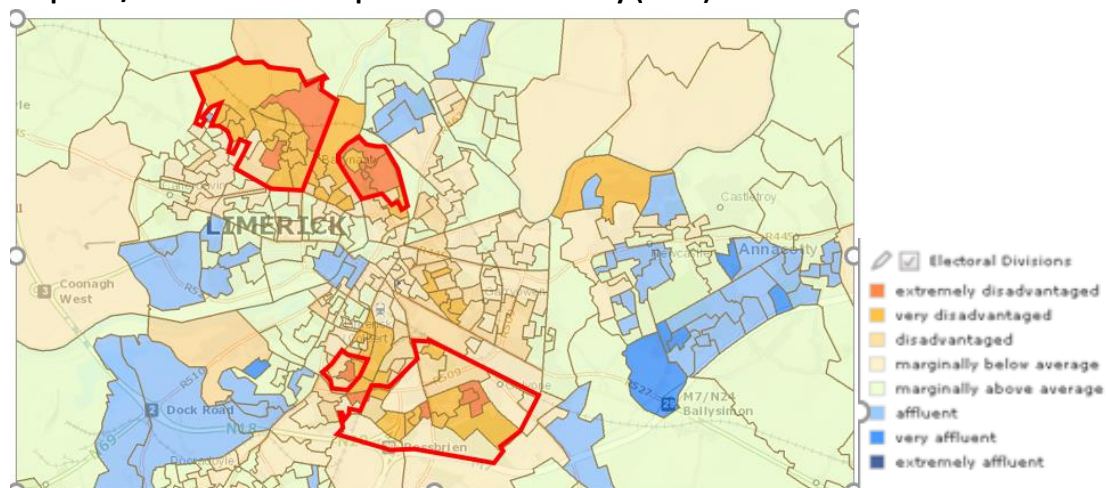
The social welfare system is very important in addressing income poverty. If all social welfare income transfers were excluded from income, the risk of poverty rate (60% median disposable income or below) in 2021 would have been 38.6% compared with a rate of 11.6% with social welfare transfers (e.g., unemployment and disability benefits, pension, family and child allowances etc.).

#### Area-based Deprivation

The Pobal Relative Deprivation Index shows that Limerick City has a strong pattern of social inequality. Large numbers of people live in areas of social and economic deprivation. There are greater extremes of social inequality in the city compared with the former County Limerick.

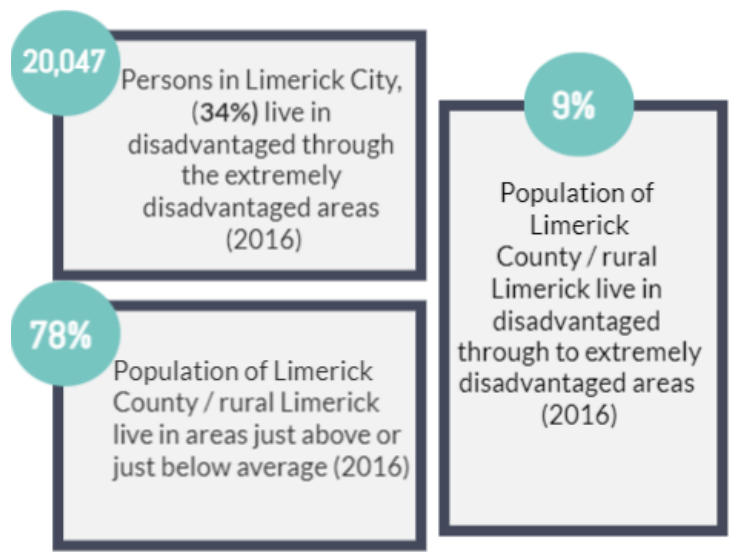
Some 34% (20,047) of the population of the former Limerick City Council area live in neighbourhoods that are classified as extremely disadvantaged / very disadvantaged / disadvantaged while over 2,200 persons (4%) live in affluent areas under the HP/Pobal Relative Deprivation Index (2016). The regeneration areas of the city – Moyross, Southill, Ballinacurra Weston and St. Mary’s Park – have highest deprivation levels. Adjacent to them are other very disadvantaged or disadvantaged neighbourhoods, mostly areas of older social housing stock and traditional working class communities. St. Mary’s Park, in the core of the city, is the most disadvantaged small area in the state with a male unemployment rate of 70% and only 2% with any third level qualification (2016).

**Map: HP / Pobal Relative Deprivation Limerick City (2016)**



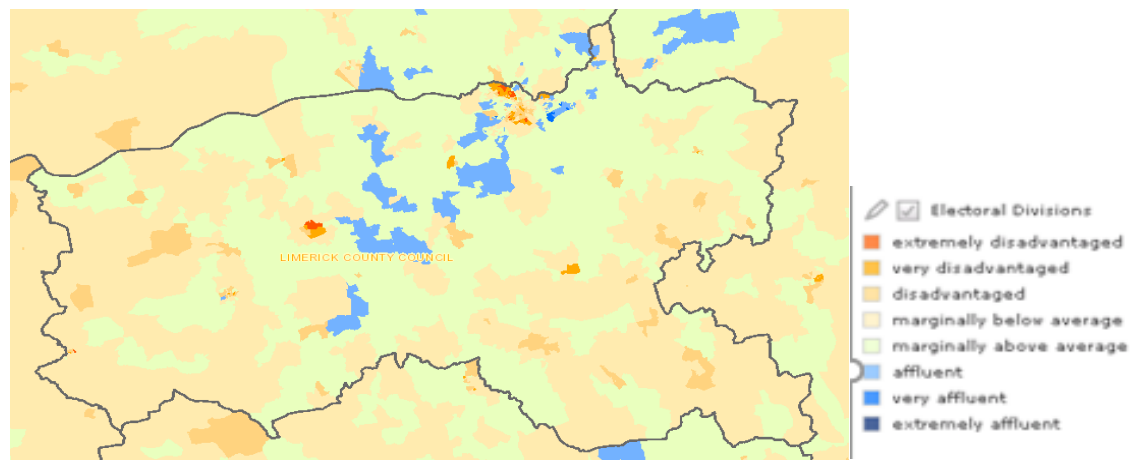
The suburbs of the city present a different picture. They are generally classified Above Average under the Pobal Relative Deprivation Index and some neighbourhoods are affluent (e.g., Castletroy / Monaleen).

In the former County Limerick (all parts outside of the city), 78% of the population live in areas that are classified as just above or just below average and 9% live in areas classified as disadvantaged through to extremely disadvantaged (based on the Small Area unit of analysis). At the same time, relative deprivation in rural Limerick is found in parts of the core of the towns such as Rathkeale (parts of which are extremely disadvantaged), Askeaton, Abbeyfeale and parts of Newcastle West in the west, in Bruff, Croom and Cappamore in the east and Patrickswell and Castleconnell within the Metropolitan Area.



The west Limerick towns show stronger concentrations of relative deprivation, and Rathkeale, with concentrations of Traveller households, is the most disadvantaged of all county towns. Abbeyfeale and Askeaton also contain Small Areas with concentrations of populations that are very / extremely disadvantaged. Newcastle West – the largest town – has Small Areas of relative deprivation. However, it is generally more mixed and includes a Small Area of relative affluence.

**Map: HP/Pobal Relative Affluence and Deprivation Index Limerick County (2016)**



The dispersed population base of rural Limerick means that many people who are disadvantaged are not “picked up” in an area-based measure, which requires clustering of people with characteristics of disadvantage into certain areas such as social housing estates in towns and villages. The area-based approach to identifying deprivation works better in urban settings.

## 2.6 Health & Well-being

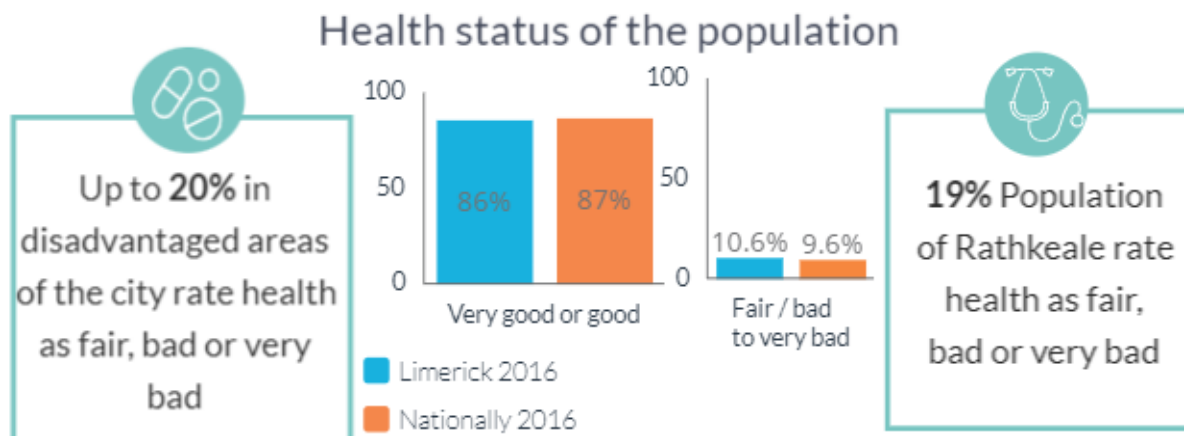
Limerick City and County Council area has a general health profile close to the national average (Census 2016). In the local authority area, 86.1% of the population rate their health as very good or good (87% national average) and 10.6% rate their health as fair, bad or very bad (9.6% national average).

### Health Inequalities

In Limerick City, the health status of the population is worse compared with the average situation in the state, and the more rural County Limerick. In the city, 81.4% rate their health as very good or good compared with 88.1% in the County while 13.8% rate their health as fair, bad or very bad in the city compared with 9.2% in the County. The poorer health status of people in the city is linked to social deprivation and an ageing population structure.

The more disadvantaged areas of the city including the regeneration areas have the poorest health profile compared with the average. Of the regeneration areas, Ballinacurra Weston has the worst health profile with over three-quarters of the population rating their health as good or very good and over 20% rating their health as fair, bad or very bad. The poor health profile in the southside disadvantaged estates of the city (Southill, Ballinacurra Weston, parts of Garryowen) is also connected to a larger percentage of the population being in the older age groups in these areas compared, for instance, with large areas of social housing on the northside, Ballynanty and Moyross (which have a younger population structure).

In the County, the area which shows poorest health status is Rathkeale, where 19% of the population rate their health as fair, poor or very bad. Again, this is associated with social deprivation in the town.



### Deliberate Self-harm & Mental Health

Drawing on other sources of data, the rate of deliberate self-harm is used as an indicator of poor mental health status. Drawing on the Registry of Deliberate Self-Harm, rates of deliberate self-harm are higher in more urbanised local authority areas compared with rural counties. Deliberate self-harm rates are consistently higher for females compared with males. Limerick City rates of male and female deliberate self-harm are amongst the highest in the state. Limerick County is amongst those counties with lowest rates for male deliberate self-harm (less than 143 per 100,000 in 2019) while in 2019, the female rate (between 201 and 219 per 100,000) was below the national average (226 per 100,000). Limerick County was amongst those where the gender difference between males and females was



Rates of deliberate self-harm low in Limerick County, particularly for males (less than **143 per 100,000** in 2019)



High rates of deliberate self-harm in Limerick City:

- **468 per 100,000** females
- **370 per 100,000** males

Highest rates in the state (2019)

greatest. The female rate of deliberate self-harm in Limerick County was 88% higher than the male rate in 2019.<sup>17</sup>

In 2012 and 2013, Limerick City had the highest rate of male self-harm of all local authority areas in the state (469 per 100,000 in 2012 and 406 per 100,000 in 2013). The male self-harm rates in Limerick City in 2012 / 2013 were more than twice the state average and over four times higher than the county with the lowest rate. The rate has fluctuated over the years and there has been a decline in some years. However, in 2019, the male rate of deliberate self-harm in Limerick City (370 per 100,000) was again the highest in the state.

In all years from 2012 to 2019, Limerick City had the highest rates of female self-harm in the state, well above twice the state average in most years. Similar to the male rate, the female rate of deliberate self-harm was highest in 2012 and 2013 (528 per 100,000 and 570 per 100,000 respectively) and has fluctuated over the years. In 2019, the rate of female deliberate self-harm in Limerick City was 468 per 100,000 compared with a state average of 226 per 100,000.

The very high rates of male and female self-harm in Limerick City are associated with the high level of social deprivation in

the city. Based on analysis of national data, the younger age groups have the highest incidence rates – i.e., for males in the age groups 15-19 years, 20-24 years and 25-29 years – and females in the age group 15-19 years.

#### Disability and Carers

In Limerick City and County, in 2016, 15% of the population had a disability. The rate of disability is higher in Limerick City (18.8%) compared with Limerick County (13.4%). Disability rates in the city follow the same pattern of being significantly higher (from 24% to 31%) in disadvantaged areas of the city, especially those areas with ageing populations. In the County, the highest rates of disability are found in Rathkeale Urban and Askeaton West (both at 22%). On average, female disability rates are higher than male rates (15.2% compared with 14.7% for Limerick City and County) and this applies to both the city and county sub-units.

Across the city and county, 8,476 persons are carers and 61% of those are female.



**15%** of the population of Limerick City and County have a disability (2016)

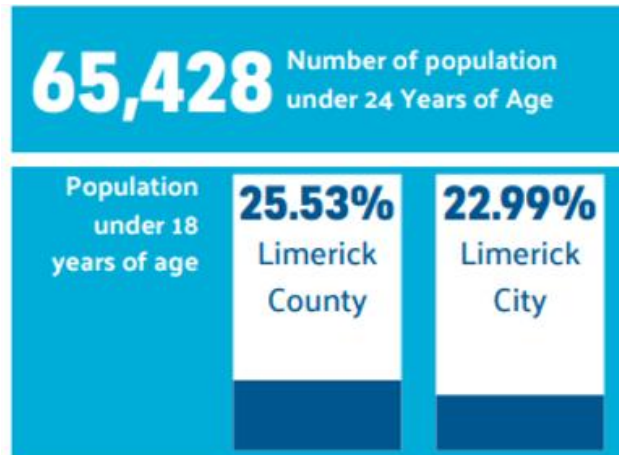


**8,476** carers in Limerick in 2016, **61%** female (2016)

<sup>17</sup> Data from published reports on the National Self-Harm Registry Ireland. <https://www.nsrif.ie/national-self-harm-registry-ireland>

## 2.7 Children and young people

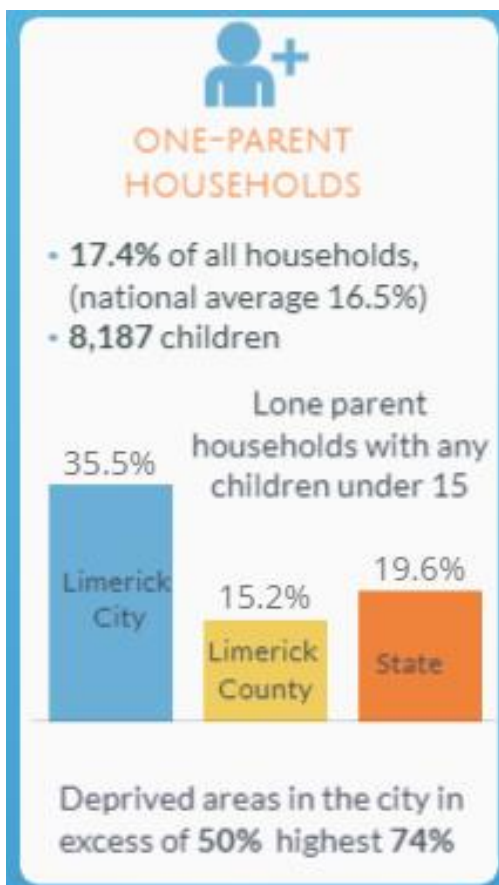
The child population of Limerick City and County (persons aged 0-17 years) is just under one-quarter of the total population, with a higher percentage aged under 18 years in the county compared with the city. The population under 25 years is approximately one-third of the total population of the city and county (2016).



### Children & Social Disadvantage

Focusing on characteristics of the child population that impact on well-being, 8,187 children live in one-parent households, 17.4% of all children, slightly higher than the state average (16.5%) (2016). The average rates of lone parent households with any children under 15 years is 35.5% for Limerick

City and significantly lower for the County (15.2%) compared with a national average of 19.9%. In the most disadvantaged communities in the city, the percentage of lone parent households with any children under 15 years is in excess of 50%, highest in St. Mary's Park at 74% and 68% in O'Malley Park, Southill. Parts of the city centre, where lone parent families occupy rented housing (e.g., under the Housing Assistance Payment), also have high rates of lone parent households with children.



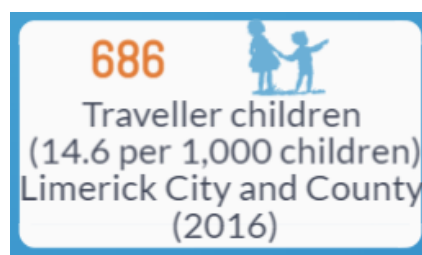
Parts of the County where the percentage of lone parent households is relatively high are Rathkeale Urban (33%), Mountcollins (29%), Patrickswell (27%), Askeaton West (26%), Kilmeedy (25%), Newcastle West Urban (24%) and Croom (22%). Children living in disadvantaged areas in lone parent families are at higher risk of poverty.

In 2020, 840 children in Limerick City and County were in households identified in need of social housing. Of these, 596 were living in lone parent households and 240 in households comprising a couple with a child / children.



### Traveller Children

Travellers are amongst the most disadvantaged social groups and in the child population are at highest risk of poor educational outcomes especially early school leaving. In 2016, there were 686 Traveller children living in Limerick City and County, giving a rate of 14.6 per 1,000 children. This is above the state average of 11.9 Traveller children per 1,000 children but well below the local authority area, Galway City, with the highest rate (48.3 per 1,000 children).



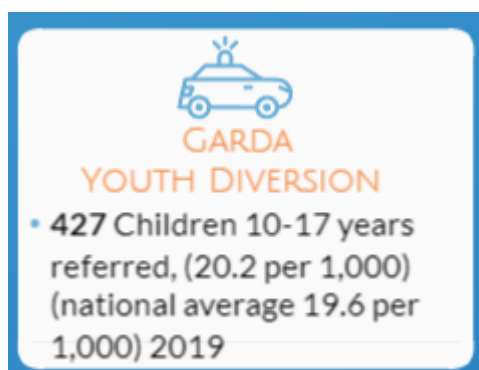
### Child Welfare & Protection

In the Mid-West Region including Limerick, *Tusla – the Child and Family Agency Year End Data 2021* reports 3,813 referrals (a rate of 40 per 1,000 population 0-17 years) to Tusla, lower than the national average (45 per 1,000 population 0-17). In all recent years (2014-2021), the main source of referral is An Garda Síochána (37-39%). In 2021, there were 549 children resident in the Mid-West region in the care of Tusla, a rate of 5.7 per 1,000 (above the state average, 4.9 per 1,000). In 2022, the number decreased to 538 children in the care of Tusla (5.6 per 1,000 population). The rate of children in the care of Tusla in the Mid-West Region has decreased since the years 2014-2018 (over 590 in each year).<sup>18</sup>

While the number of children in high risk categories are small relative to the total population of children in Limerick City and County, they represent the most vulnerable children. Furthermore, the numbers are likely to understate the actual number of children at risk as they are based on known and reported cases.

### Young People at Risk of Offending

In 2019, the number of individual children resident in Limerick referred to the Garda Youth Diversion Programme was 427 children (a rate of 20.2 children aged 10-17 years per 1,000 children and slightly above the national average of 19.6 per 1,000).<sup>19</sup> The number of referrals where the offence took place in Limerick is higher at 776 referrals (2019). In the case of both indicators, the number of referrals is down compared with 2018 (by -4% in the case of referrals from children resident in Limerick and by -17% in terms of the location of the offence in Limerick) while the rate increased on average across the state between 2018 and 2019.



The number of children referred to Garda Youth Diversion in Limerick Garda Division (427 children in 2019 compared with 663 in 2012) decreased in line with the trend in the state. Generally, higher rates of referrals are found in more urbanised areas (cities) especially the Dublin Metropolitan Region and in inner city areas. In the Southern Region (Cork, Limerick, Tipperary, Kerry), Limerick Garda Division returns the second highest rate of children referred into Garda Youth Diversion after Cork City (665 referrals and a rate of 27.2 per 1,000 in 2019).

<sup>18</sup> Data from the Tusla Data Hub and Performance and Activity Reports. <https://www.tusla.ie/data-figures/>

<sup>19</sup> Department of Justice, Garda Youth Diversion Statistics, <https://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/Publications-youth-justice-children-family?opendocument&start=0&year=2020>

Based on the national pattern, referral rates are higher for boys (2.5 times higher) compared with girls and 70% are for children in older age groups (15-17 years). With Limerick Garda Division including both city and county, the problem of youth offending / risk of offending is not fully captured in this analysis. With the exception of two Garda Youth Diversion projects in Rathkeale, all other Garda Youth Diversion Projects (five) are located in the city. Rates of referrals of children into Garda Youth Diversion are likely to be significantly higher if the analysis related to the city only. However, data are not available for Limerick city only.

### Health Outcomes for Children

The key statistics related to health outcomes for children at the level of administrative county – Limerick City and County – are mostly in line with national averages.

Immunisation rates at 12 months and 24 months are slightly above the national average for the Limerick Local Health Office (90% Limerick compared with a national average of 88% at 12 months and 93.3% for Limerick compared with a national average of 91% at 24 months).

The rate of hospital discharges of children per 1,000 children by county of residence and the rate of discharge of children with a principle diagnosis of injury, poisoning and other external causes (2020) shows that Limerick is close to the national average on both indicators (rate of 22.5 children per 1,000 children resident in Limerick discharged from hospital compared with a national average of 24 per 1,000 and 2.8 children per 1,000 discharged with a principle diagnosis of injury poisoning or other external cause compared with a national average of 2.5 per 1,000).

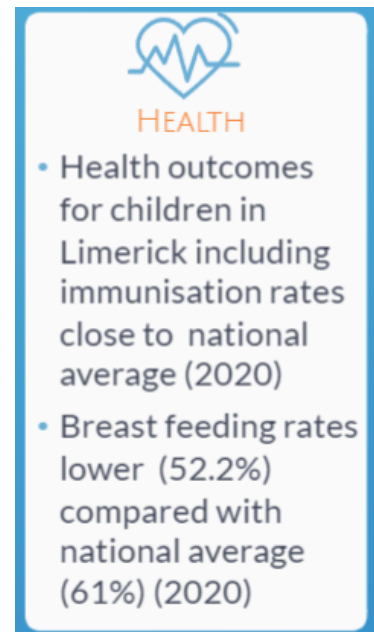
The number and rates of children per 100,000 admissions to psychiatric hospitals / units and child and adolescent units by county of residence is low generally (10 children and a rate of 21.2 per 100,000 for Limerick compared with a national average of 40.4 per 100,000 in 2020). This indicator does not pick up on lower level difficulties that are experienced by children and young people in terms of mental health issues.

Breast-feeding rates on discharge of mothers from hospital are significantly lower for Limerick City and County (52.2%) compared with the national average of 61%.<sup>20</sup> A campaign to promote and support breast-feeding was delivered in Limerick under Healthy Ireland in 2018 – “We’re Breast-feeding Friendly”.

### Children with Disabilities and Children as Carers

The rates of children registered with an intellectual disability by county (2.4 per 1,000 children for Limerick compared with a national average of 4.5) and with a physical and sensory disability (1.2 for Limerick compared with a national average of 2.34) are lower for Limerick compared with the national average (2020).

The number and rate of children that act as carers (regular unpaid personal help for a friend or family member with a long-term illness) in Limerick is 251 children and a rate of 5.3 per 1,000 children compared with a national average of 5.1 per 1,000.



<sup>20</sup> Data collated in *State of the Nation's Children* report series. Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. <https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/1f703-state-of-the-nations-children/>

### Level of Maternal Education

The level of education of the mother is known to have an impact on child outcomes. In Limerick, the percentage of mothers of children with low education (no formal education or primary only) is 8.9%, slightly above the national average (8.1%). Local Limerick data are not available to examine variations in rates between different types of areas (disadvantaged compared with average communities) and by social groups. Evidence-based research in Limerick (2010) showed significantly lower levels of maternal education in disadvantaged areas of the city. It confirmed general findings from wider research that better outcomes for children are achieved for households / mothers which have higher levels of socio-economic status (based on occupations) and with higher levels of education in particular.

### Child Well-being & Satisfaction with their Lives

Regional level survey data indicate a high level of child well-being with 89.4% of children in the Mid-West Region indicating in 2018 that they are “happy with their lives”. This is slightly above the state average on the same indicator (86.3%). The percentage of children indicating that they are “happy with their lives” has been decreasing slightly since 2010 (90.5% in 2010, 89.5% in 2014 in the Mid-West Region) and the same trend is reflected at national level.

Based on surveys with children aged 10-17 years, children are less satisfied with the environment of their area - 60% of children in the Mid-West Region report that “there are good places in their area to spend free time” compared with 67% across all regions and 78% in the region with the highest satisfaction rates on this indicator (the South East region).

### Feeling Safe and Participation in Civic Life

Based on national level data (2018), 90.4% of all children report “feeling safe in the area where they live”. However, Traveller children (82.9%), children from immigrant backgrounds (88.3%) and children with chronic illness (87.5%) are less likely to report feeling safe. Traveller children report the lowest rates of safety where they live.



Based on a local study of needs of children and young people in Limerick County (10-18 years) conducted by Limerick Youth Services, certain minority groups of young people face greater difficulties

than their mainstream peers.<sup>21</sup> These include LGBTQ young people, immigrants to Ireland and Traveller young people.

One in four of all young people included in the study reported that it is not clear to them who to approach in the community if they feel unsafe, and one in three reported that they have “*sometimes been treated badly on-line*”.

This study also found that often young people do not feel that their voice is always heard at home, at school and in their community and two out of three young people state they would like more opportunities to volunteer in their community.

One in three young people aged 16-18 years express dissatisfaction with the levels of information available on sexual health. A significant number of young people in rural Limerick wish to access support to stop, reduce or avoid substance misuse.

### Services for children and families

Across Limerick City and County, based on the Pobal Annual Survey (2020/2021), there are 191 Early Learning and Care (ELC) and School Age Childcare Services (SAC) contracted to private and community providers to deliver schemes funded by the Department of Children Equality Disability Integration and Youth (DCEDIY). The main funding schemes are the National Childcare Scheme, Early Childhood Care and Education and Community Childcare Subvention Plus. Childcare services are delivered by 174 childcare facilities across Limerick, 122 in the former Limerick County and 53 in the city.



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Of the 191 ELC and SAC services, 73% of services in Limerick are delivered by private providers (74% national average) and 27% by community providers (26% national average). Community childcare facilities and services are concentrated in disadvantaged areas. The capacity of the services across Limerick is for 4,880 childcare places in 2020/21. In that year, 3,904 children were enrolled and 976 places were vacant. The high vacancy rate in this year (25%) was linked to the impact of COVID-19 and is not likely to continue.



Childcare fees in Limerick City and County are below the national average - €175.48 full-time, €103.54 part time and €72.52 sessional rate compared with the national averages (€186.84 full-time, €110.92 part-time and €74.20 sessional rates respectively). Fees are highest in urban areas of the state, especially in the greater Dublin area and Cork City, and in private services.<sup>22</sup>

In terms of specific services to support families and targeting disadvantaged population, there are four Family Resource Centres in Limerick – in Croom and Hospital in the east of the County and in Southill and Ballynanty in Limerick City. These are core-funded by *Tusla – the Child and Family Agency*. These

<sup>21</sup> Limerick Youth Service (2019). *Baseline Study & Needs Analysis of Young People Aged 10-18 in Rural County Limerick*

<sup>22</sup> Data from *Pobal Early Years Sector Profile Report 2020/21*.

[https://www.pobal.ie/app/uploads/2022/05/Pobal\\_22\\_EY\\_20-21-Report\\_final\\_2.pdf](https://www.pobal.ie/app/uploads/2022/05/Pobal_22_EY_20-21-Report_final_2.pdf)

are based in communities, within community and voluntary organisations, and provide a range of universal and targeted services and development opportunities to meet the needs of families. There is no Family Resource Centre in west Limerick despite significant levels of deprivation in some west Limerick towns (e.g., Rathkeale).



## 2.8 Crime and Justice

CSO issues data on a quarterly basis on offences of crime, across the main categories (14) and sub-categories of crime. These data are based on reported offences recorded on the PULSE Garda system and are available for Garda Divisions and Garda Stations (not all categories for the latter).<sup>23</sup>

### Most Prevalent Reported Offences

In Limerick Garda Division, covering the city and county, the largest number of reported offences in each year between 2007 and 2021 are “theft and related offences” (2,768 in 2021), “public order and other social code offences” (1,380 in 2021) and “damage to property and the environment” (1,180 in 2021). Other categories where there are consistently larger numbers of reported offences are “offences against government, justice procedures and organisation of crime”<sup>24</sup> (949 offences in 2021), “attempts / threats to murder, assaults, harassments and related offences” (876 in 2021) and “controlled drug offences” (839 in 2021).

### Largest number of offences 2021:

- 2,768 “theft and related offences”
- 1,380 “public order and other social code offences”
- 1,180 “damage to property and the environment”
- 949 “offences against government, justice procedures and organisation of crime”
- 876 “attempts / threats to murder, assaults, harassments and related offences”
- 839 “controlled drug offences”



### Trends in Crime & Types of Offences

In terms of change since 2007, the general trend has been downwards especially up to 2016 but there have been fluctuations in specific years. For instance, of the 14 categories of offences, 10 showed a decline in the number of offences between the year 2007 and 2021. Exceptions are “sexual offences”

**Reported offences in Limerick Garda Division in decline, especially between 2007 and 2016**

(+70% from 2007), “robbery, extortion and hijacking offences” (+43%), “fraud, deception and related offences” (+208%) and “offences against government, justice procedures and organisation of crime” (+206%). In these cases, the number of offences were greater in 2021 compared with 2007. Part of the explanation for the increase in sexual offences (146 in 2021) is that such offences are more likely to be reported by victims now compared with earlier years (and this is linked to public awareness campaigns and other action to encourage reporting of sexual offences).

<sup>23</sup> Crime and Justice Data. <https://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/crimeandjustice/>

<sup>24</sup> The main type of offence driving this category are breaches of bail and court orders. The number of such offences increased from 2013. An explanation for this is that such offences were not recorded systematically or to the same extent in earlier years.

There was a downward trend in certain categories of offences (“dangerous or negligent acts”, “robbery extortion and hijacking”, “theft and related offences” and “fraud, deception and related offences”) during COVID (2019 to 2021) especially between 2019 and 2020.

**Decline in robbery and theft during the period of Covid (2019-2021)**



In relation to more serious offences, between 2007 and 2010, there were between seven (2008) and 10 homicides (2010) in Limerick. The number of homicides declined after that with two to four recorded in the years 2011 to 2014. The number was high again in 2017 (7) but from 2019 to 2021, two such offences were recorded in each year.

“Kidnapping and related offences”, which also represent more serious crimes, recorded from six (6) to nine (9) offences in years from 2007 to 2011, declined to three such offences in 2012 (the lowest recorded number), increased again from 2017 to 2019 (highest at 12) and were relatively high in 2021 (10 offences).

**Offences associated with more serious crimes mostly in decline compared with 2007-2010 (homicides, kidnapping and related offences)**



“Attempts/threats to murder, assaults, harassments and related offences” declined between 2007 through to 2016 but the number of such reported offences was over 900 in each year from 2017 through to 2019 and while it declined in 2020 (784), the number of such offences increased again in 2021 (876).

“Controlled drug offences” recorded the highest number of such offences in 2010 (1,100). Since that time, the trend showed a decline up to 2015 but an increase the number of such offences in 2019 and 2020 (882 in 2020) and remaining high in 2021 (839). This was one of the categories of offences that did not decline during COVID.

**Decreasing offences**

- weapons and explosives
- damage to property
- environment and public order
- social code




“Weapons and explosives offences” (128 in 2021), “damage to property and the environment” (1,180 in 2021), “public order and social code offences” (1,380 in 2021) show a relatively consistent decline in the number of reported offences over the years since 2007. These declines may be connected in part to the roll-out of CCTV across the city and county.

Overall, data on reported crime (offences) for Limerick Division shows a general downward trend compared with the period when Limerick City was considered to have a serious crime problem (2006-2010).

In categories of offences showing significant increase over the years (e.g., “offences against government, justice” and “sexual offences”), some of this is accounted for by an increase in reporting the crime (and does not necessarily represent a large increase in the incidence of the crime). As the economy recovered post the Great Recession, certain types of offences also showed an increase (e.g., “controlled drug offences”, “fraud, deception and related offences”). This shows that economic conditions can influence crime rates - for instance, in boom times certain offences show an increase and with the significant reduction in circulation of people in social activity during COVID, certain offences showed a decrease. While crime

**Increasing offences**

- against justice, government and the state
- sexual
- controlled drug
- fraud, deception and related



in Limerick generally seems within normal incidence rates for a Division which includes a large urban area, crime and criminal activity remain live issues for on-going attention in Limerick.

### Youth Crime

Specific sub-categories of offences are associated with youth crime. Four or five types of offences account for approximately 50% of the crimes committed by young people. The general picture is one of decline in recorded offences in most of these sub-categories, particularly comparing the situation in 2007 with 2017.

However, a small number of offences are as high as, or close to the level they were at, in 2007. These are “theft from shop” with 1,480 offences reported in 2021 compared with 978 in 2007, “possession of drugs for personal use” (638 in 2021 compared with 610 in 2007), and “possession of drugs for sale or supply” (188 in 2021 compared with 211 in 2007). Drug-related crime are a particular cause of concern in communities. Drug-related crime impacts badly on most disadvantaged communities, fuelling other types of crimes (theft) and making neighbourhoods and other spaces unsafe. Low incomes and lack of economic opportunities for young people, especially those not in work or education, could be amongst the explanatory factors for the increase in theft from shops.



There has been a significant drop in disorderly conduct over the years. The number of reported offences in this sub-category - often associated with anti-social behaviour – has dropped from 2,050 in 2007 to 1,052 in 2016 (-49%) and 638 in 2021 (-70% compared with 2007). Theft of vehicles has declined significantly with almost 1,000 reported offences in 2007 compared with 149 in 2021 – the lowest number of reported offences in this category over all the years. Criminal damage decreased consistently from 2007 (2,775 offences) to 2021 (188 offences) but showed a slight increase in 2019 and 2020 compared with 2018.

While many offences associated with youth crime have shown decreases in Limerick (with the exception of drug-related crime and theft from shops), certain offences are causes for concern in communities. Crime associated with vulnerable young people requires on-going attention.

### Imprisonment Rates

Imprisonment rates – for offenders that are apprehended, convicted and sentenced under the criminal justice system – by home address of adult persons committed shows higher rates for Counties which include a city (Dublin, Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford).<sup>25</sup> Changes in such rates can result from differences in crime detection rates, in gaining convictions in the courts and changes in policies and attitudes related to the appropriateness of imprisonment as punishment.

<sup>25</sup> Data from Irish Prison Service statistics. <https://www.irishprisons.ie/information-centre/statistics-information/yearly-statistics/>

Bearing these factors in mind, the rates of imprisonment per 100,000 population aged 18+, across all of the five counties which include a city decreased especially since 2017 compared with the previous years (2014 to 2016).



The rate for adults receiving custodial sentences with a home address in Limerick in 2014 was 665.7 per 100,000 persons aged 18 years and over compared with 289.56 in 2019 and 246.94 in 2020. The differences in the rates of imprisonment across the five counties that include a city all reduced in 2018, 2019 and 2020 compared with the earlier period. Rates of imprisonment across these counties have shown some convergence over these years. For each year, however, the imprisonment rate is highest for prisoners with home addresses in Limerick.

There is extensive research evidence showing the association between social exclusion, crime, offending behaviour and imprisonment. There are difficulties for prisoners in reintegration back into society on release, and a vicious cycle of factors that are difficult to break. The prison population shows concentrations of males, people with low education, with an address in deprived neighbourhoods, family and personal histories of unemployment, untreated mental health conditions, drug addiction problems and personal histories of childhood trauma.

Imprisonment has a strong negative impact on families and maternal incarceration has a particularly negative impact on child well-being. Again using the counties that include a city, there has been a decrease in the percentage of female prisoners from a high of just under one-third of prisoners (30%-33%) in the worst cases in 2015 to under one-fifth in the worst case in 2019. The percentage of prisoners that were female with a home address in Limerick was 16.6% in 2019 and 14.5% in 2020 compared with 32.5% in 2015. In four of the six years analysed, Limerick showed the highest percentage of female prisoners. Waterford and Limerick were the counties with the highest percentage of female prisoners in all years.

## 2.9 Labour Market

The health of the local labour market can be measured in different ways including labour market participation, unemployment rates and the employment rate (the percentage of the working age population at work).

### Unemployment

The unemployment rate for the state in July 2022 was 4.2%, a decrease compared with June 2022 and down compared with June 2021 (6.3%). The unemployment rate for the Mid-West Region in Quarter 1 2022 is 4.3%. These are amongst the lowest rates ever recorded.



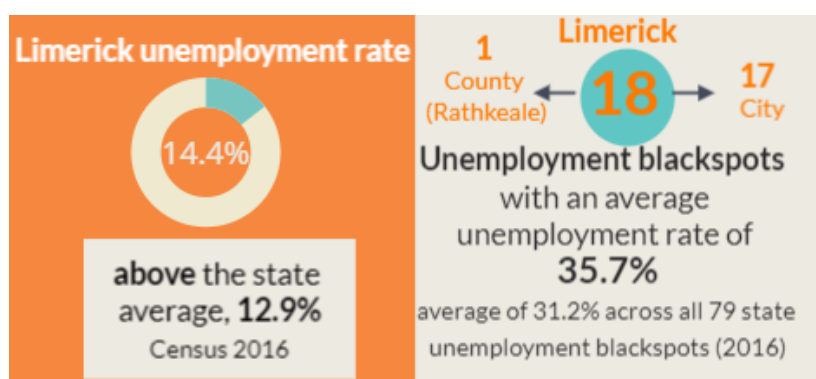
Up-to-date local data on unemployment are not available from existing data sources. We can expect that the Limerick labour market follows the national trend (unemployment going downwards and now at a low level). However, we can also expect that the local labour market continues to display some challenges that are in evidence for a long time.



Going back to 2016 and using a different approach to measurement of unemployment as applied in the Census, the unemployment rate in Limerick City and County in 2016 (latest data) was 14.4% compared with a national average of 12.9%.<sup>26</sup>

### Unemployment blackspots

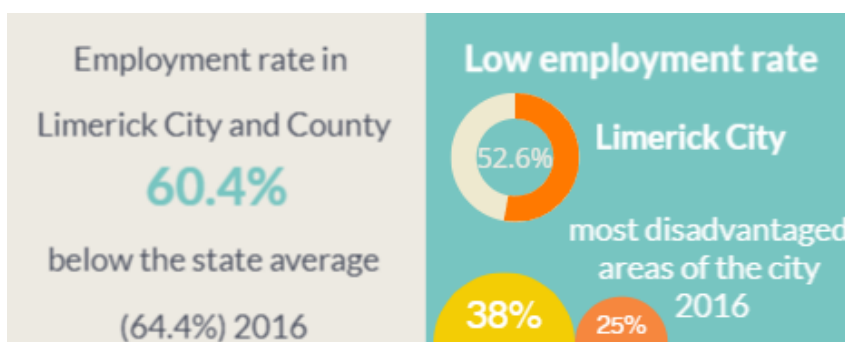
There is a problem of structural unemployment in certain neighbourhoods within Limerick City. Census 2016 identified 79 unemployment blackspots across the State, where unemployment is two to three times the national average. Limerick City and County has the largest number of unemployment blackspots (18). It also has the highest average unemployment rate across these blackspots (average of 35.7% for Limerick blackspots compared with 31.2% across all 79 blackspots in the state). With one exception (Rathkeale, County Limerick) all unemployment blackspots in Limerick are in the city. The areas include all of the regeneration communities and other adjacent disadvantaged communities. Limerick City in 2016 accounted for eight out the 10 Electoral Divisions with the highest unemployment rates in the state. Economic growth in itself and an increase in the number of local job opportunities have not proved sufficient to change the pattern of high unemployment in these areas.



Much of the county or rural Limerick had unemployment rates below the state average (2016). Areas with higher unemployment rates were in the western part (including Abbeyfeale and pockets in Newcastle West) and in areas along the Estuary particularly Askeaton.

### The Employment Rate

The employment rate – the percentage of the working age population (15-64 years) at work - is an important indicator of the health of the economy. This has been increasing steadily since the end of the Great Recession and, in the state as a whole, there has never been more people in work. The employment rate for the state as a whole in Q2 2021 was 68.6%, 73.4% for males and 63.9% for females.

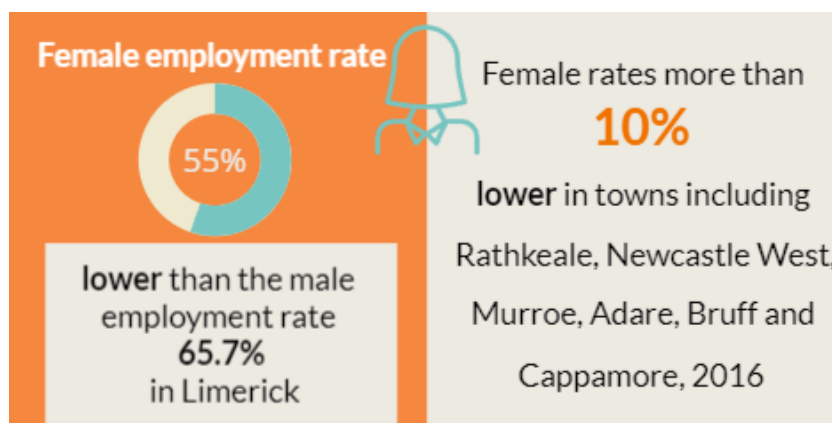


<sup>26</sup> This measure of unemployment is based on self-identified “principal economic status” in the Census. The measure returns a higher rate than the official unemployment rate, based on the ILO measure. The lowest level at which the official unemployment rates are recorded routinely (on a quarterly basis) is the Regional Level.

Similar to unemployment data, there are no up-to-date data available at local level on the numbers of people in work. Latest local data on this indicator are based on Census 2016. In 2016, the employment rate for Limerick City and County was 60.4%, and below the state average of 64.4%. The employment rate for Limerick City was particularly low at 52.6% (56.4% for males and 48.8% for females), again a reflection of the serious structural employment problems across the city's deprived communities. In the most disadvantaged areas, the regeneration areas, the employment rate was between 25% and 38%. In these areas, larger numbers of people of working age are unemployed, not working due to illness or disability or are economically inactive.

In the former Limerick County, the employment rate in 2016 was 63.8% just below the national average at the time, with a rate of 69.8% for males and 57.7% for females. Some rural areas had very high employment rates, especially for males.

In all settlements in Limerick County, the female employment rate is lower than the male employment rate. However, the gap between males and females varies. The gap between male and female employment rates is 10% and greater in favour of males in the towns of Newcastle West, Rathkeale, Murroe, Adare, Bruff and Cappamore and significantly lower in Croom, Hospital and Askeaton. The greatest difference is in Rathkeale where the male employment rate is 60.7% compared with a female rate of 35.4% (a gap of 25 percentage points).



#### Scope to Increase Labour Supply?

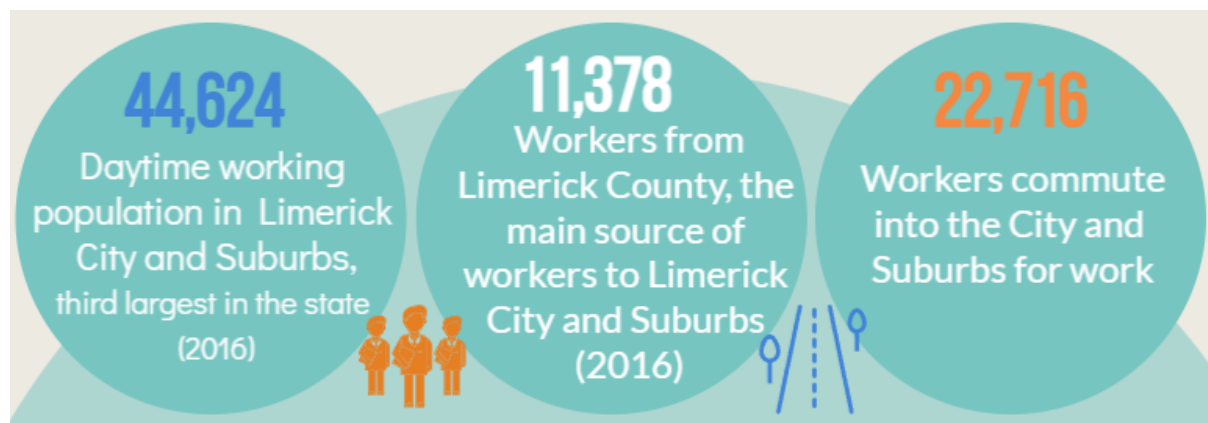
Labour supply is a key determinant of future economic growth for the city and the county. There is considerable unrealised potential within the working age population in the city and in the female population of working age. This highlights the scope to increase economic activity by expanding work opportunities for women and increasing the employment rate of females. It is also important to increase economic activity by building the human capital (education and skills) targeting disadvantaged areas in the city and other disadvantaged groups that show high rates of unemployment and economic inactivity (disabled people, Travellers, migrants coming out of Direct Provision). Specific interventions are needed to support people of working age in most disadvantaged groups into employment.

## 2.10 Daytime Working Population

Commuting data from Census 2016 confirm that Limerick City is a major centre of employment, with over 22,700 workers commuting daily into the city and suburbs. This represents slightly more than the number of city residents where the location of their work is the city and suburbs. After Dublin and Cork, Limerick City and Suburbs overtook Galway as the State's third largest daytime working population in 2016.

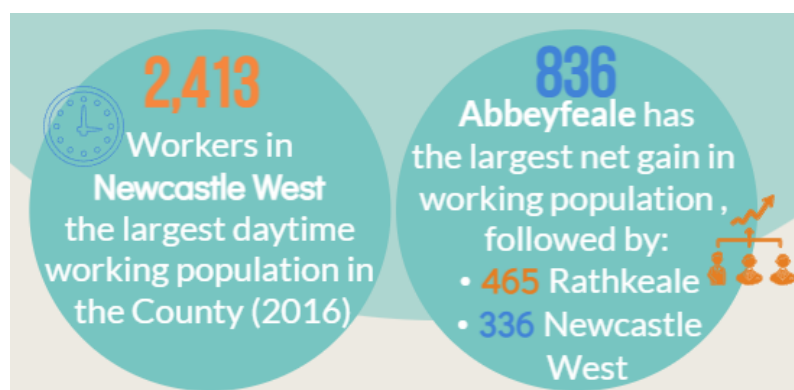
### Key Locations of Jobs

Limerick County (11,378) was the main source of workers to Limerick city and suburbs, followed by Clare (5,553) and Tipperary North (2,542). Annacotty was the main feeder town for Limerick city and suburbs (743), followed by Castleconnell (400), Ballina (355), Newport (318) and Ardnacrusha (302). This highlights the importance of Limerick City and Suburbs as a location of jobs.



### Towns with Significant Numbers of Jobs

An analysis of the largest population towns in County Limerick shows that Abbeyfeale (836), Rathkeale (465) and Newcastle West (337) all have a significant net gain in their respective working populations (i.e., they have more daytime jobs in the towns compared with the number of residents of the town at work). Newcastle West, the largest town, has the largest daytime working population (2,413). However, Abbeyfeale shows the largest net gain in the working population (number of daytime jobs in Abbeyfeale) relative to the number of residents who are at work. Patrickswell, in contrast, shows a net loss in its working population (-78) with more people resident in Patrickswell at work compared with the number of daytime jobs in the village. The analysis of the daytime working populations of the larger settlements shows the economic importance of the larger rural market towns (Newcastle West, Abbeyfeale, Rathkeale and Kilmallock).



## Commuting Patterns and Climate Action

Abbeyfeale has the largest proportion of residents who live and work within the settlement (51%) followed by Kilmallock (42%). Generally, the data show a pattern of cross-commuting to work and home. This highlights the scope for, and need to, create the economic opportunities, infrastructure and quality of life factors to allow and incentivise people to live and work within the same area.

The growth of populations along and close to main transport corridors in rural Limerick and the profile of higher incomes in these areas indicate that these areas are populated by persons in work. As much of this area is rural in character, these are likely car commuters. Revitalising areas based on compact growth, where people can live and work in the same place or commute shorter distances using active travel, is a national policy priority. This is important in order to decrease carbon emissions by reducing reliance on the car for day-to-day transport.

### 2.11 Dereliction and Vacancy

Dereliction and vacancy of buildings and sites in cities, towns and villages and abandoned rural dwellings are the hallmarks of decline.

#### Residential Vacancy

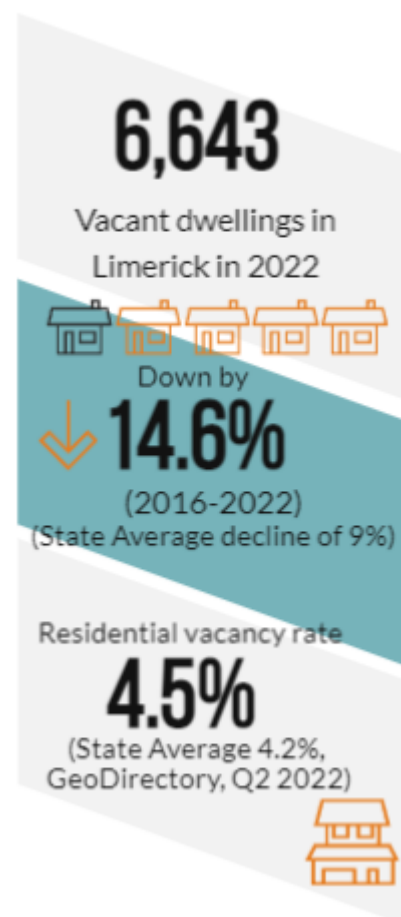
In Limerick City and County, the total number of vacant dwellings in 2022 was 6,643 giving a vacancy rate of 7.7%, slightly lower than the national average (7.8%). The residential vacancy rate in Limerick in 2022 declined by 14.6% compared with 2016 and, as such, reduced at a faster rate compared with the state average (-9%). Based on Census 2022 data, the dominant pattern across the state shows large numbers of vacant dwellings in more rural areas. This pattern is reflected in Limerick where some towns and villages in rural Limerick show high rates of residential vacancy.

Using a different source of data, for Q2 2022, the GeoDirectory reported a residential vacancy rate for Limerick of 4.5%, slightly higher than the national average (4.2%) based on this source of data.

High residential vacancy levels can reflect preference for households to locate in suburban and peri-urban areas, nearer to work and services, and to outskirts of towns / settlements and open countryside. Movement out of town and village centres is also linked to changed expectations in relation to standards and quality of housing. These shifts in populations were identified from the analysis a cross-section of settlements in rural Limerick and are in evidence for some time, particularly from 2001.

#### Commercial Vacancy

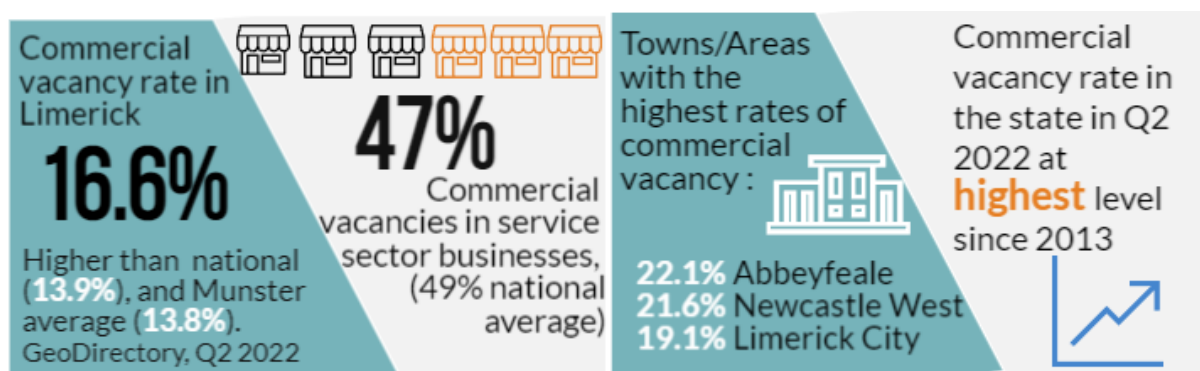
Based on GeoDirectory Commercial Buildings Report, the national commercial vacancy rate in Q2 2022 was 13.9% (showing an increased by 0.25 percentage points compared with the situation in Q2 2021). The commercial vacancy rate recorded in 2022 is the highest it has been since 2013.<sup>1</sup> Across the state, commercial vacancy rates are generally higher in the west and north west (Donegal and western counties).



County Limerick (the whole local authority area) is amongst the counties with a relatively high commercial vacancy rate at 16.6% (above the average for Munster 13.8% and seventh highest in the state). Compared with the previous 12 months, the commercial vacancy rate in Limerick increased by 0.4 percentage points.

Factors associated with the current situation include challenges faced by businesses and the economy post COVID, increased energy and other input costs, increased inflation (linked to the war in Ukraine), tight labour market conditions and wage inflation.

Based on NACE (Nomenclature of Economic Activities) codes, in the state as a whole, businesses in the services sector account for 49% of commercial vacancy. Businesses in the accommodation and food sector account for 29% of commercial vacancy followed by retail and wholesale (22%). In Limerick City and County, 47% of commercial vacancies are in the services sector.



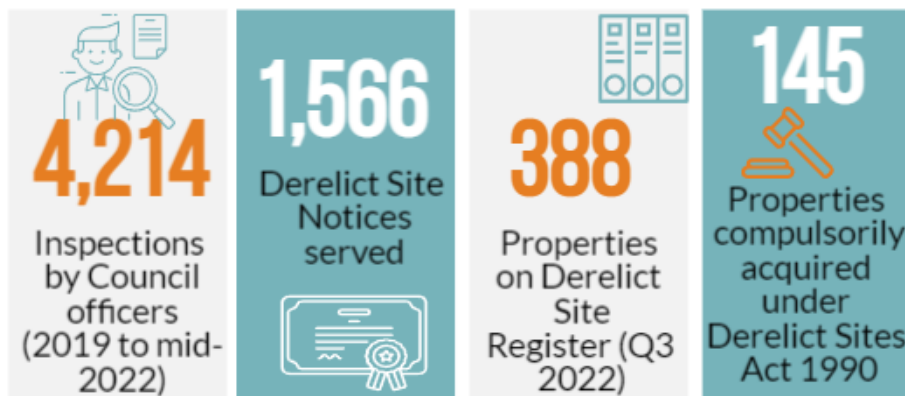
In terms of locations with highest vacancy rates, one Limerick town, Abbeyfeale, was amongst the 15 towns in the state with the highest commercial vacancy rates, at 22.1% in Q2 2022, an increase of 1.6 percentage points compared with Q2 2021. In addition to Abbeyfeale, Newcastle West (21.6%) and Limerick City (19.1%) were amongst the towns / areas with the highest commercial vacancy rates in Munster.

Addressing vacancy and dereliction in the city, in the core of towns and villages and bringing these buildings back into productive use – for commercial, residential, civic and community uses - is a priority policy issue. Conversion of use - e.g., from commercial to residential and community uses – can be appropriate for older buildings in towns and villages (former shops, vacant units over shops and other commercial premises). Physical renewal can support the creation of compact, attractive, vibrant and safe environments.

#### Council Action on Vacancy & Dereliction

The issue of vacancy is being addressed with a comprehensive response by Limerick City and County Council in the city and rural Limerick. The Council set up a Dereliction Vacancy and Re-use Unit in 2018, staffed by a multi-disciplinary team, including a full-time Vacant Homes Officer. The team works with an area-based approach identifying vacant properties and sites and taking action including legal powers of the Council and engagement with property owners to bring them back to productive uses. From 2019 to mid-2022, 4,214 inspections were completed by Council officers and 1,566 Derelict Site Notices served under the Derelict Sites Act 1990. Engagement with property owners typically leads to a significant number of derelict / vacant units being enhanced or brought back to use. In Q3 2022, 388 properties are on the Derelict Sites register and 145 properties have been compulsorily

acquired under the Derelict Sites Act 1990. The majority of derelict sites / buildings are made available for sale on the open market (76 sold since 2019) and some are retained by the Council for use as social housing, re-development as private housing for sale under a Rural Housing Initiative or for community / tourism uses. The recently-introduced *Croí Conaithe* (Towns) Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant has increased interest in vacant properties for sale, for re-use as housing.

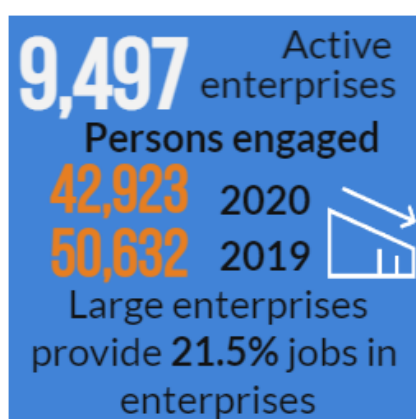


## 2.12 Enterprise

Limerick has been performing well in enterprise growth and job creation. New enterprise start-up, enterprise expansion in the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and indigenous business sectors are important objectives to build resilience and sustained job creation.

### Business Activity and Jobs Located in Limerick

The CSO's Business Demography series<sup>27</sup> shows that the number of active enterprises located in Limerick was 9,497<sup>28</sup> in 2020 (the most recent data). The number of active enterprises in Limerick has ranged from approximately 8,900 to 9,500 over the years since 2008.



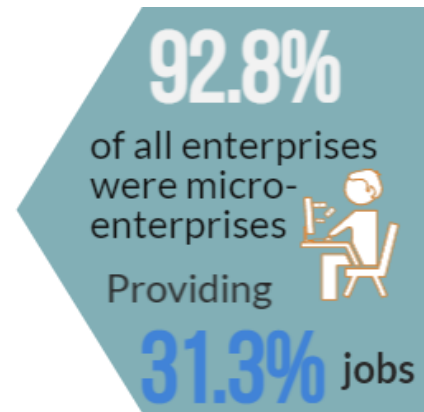
The number of persons engaged (owner-managers and employees) in businesses located in Limerick has fluctuated with the economic cycle. In the years of the Great Recession (2008 to 2012), the number of persons engaged dropped by over 15,000 (-25%). Employment in enterprises has been recovering consistently since 2013. The highest number of persons engaged was recorded in 2019 (50,632) but this reduced to 42,943 in 2020. The drop in the number of persons engaged in 2020 is linked to contraction of economic activity due to COVID-19, although enterprises and employees were sustained with the financial support (COVID payments) from government.

<sup>27</sup> CSO Business Demography. <https://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/enterprisestatistics/businessdemography/>

<sup>28</sup> This number relates to enterprises classified under the NACE Codes B-N and excludes the service categories Education (P), Human Health & Social Work Activities (Q), Arts, Entertainment and Recreation (R) and Other Services (S). If all of these categories are included, the number of active enterprises located in Limerick is 12,346 and the number of persons engaged is 69,179.

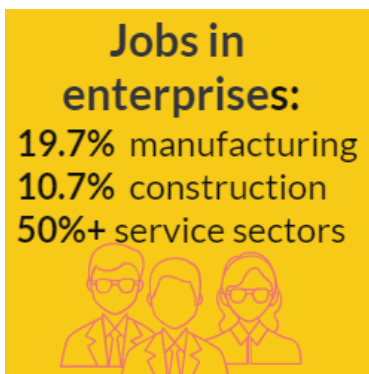
### Enterprise Size-structure: SMEs and Large Enterprise

Analysis of latest data (2019 and 2020) shows the importance of micro- and small enterprises in the local economy of Limerick City and County. In 2020, 92.8% of all active enterprises in Limerick and 31.3% of all jobs in those enterprises were in micro-enterprises (less than 10 person engaged). Large enterprises (250 persons engaged) accounted for only 0.15% of enterprises in 2020. However, large enterprises account for over one-fifth (21.5%) of jobs in Limerick-based enterprises.



### Sectoral Profile of Businesses Located in Limerick

Analysis of the sectoral profile of employment in enterprises in Limerick shows the importance of manufacturing, accounting for 19.7% of persons engaged in 2020. There has been a growth in employment in construction (10.7% of persons engaged in 2020 compared with 9.5% in 2019). Service sector employment accounts for over half of all employment in private businesses located in Limerick (50.2% in 2020) and this has been the case since 2012. Employment in services cuts across different skills levels (advanced business services, wholesale and retail trade and repair of motor vehicles, accommodation and food services). In 2020, wholesale, retail and repair of motor vehicles had 10,146 persons engaged (17.9%) and food and accommodation services 6,046 persons engaged (10.7%). If additional services categories are included in the analysis (Human Health & Social Work Activities and Other Services), some 63% of employment in private businesses in Limerick is in services plus an additional 1% in Financial Services.

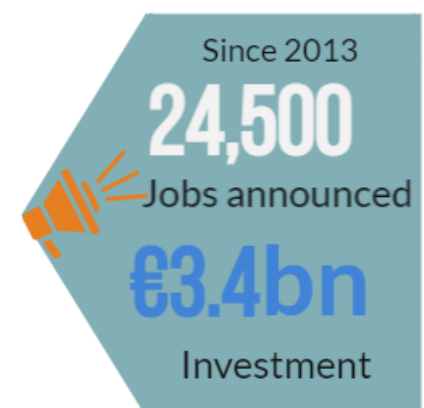


### Investment and Job Creation: Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)

Between 2013 and April 2022, over 24,500 jobs have been announced for Limerick. These came from companies including Johnson & Johnson, Regeneron, Edwards Lifesciences, Legato Health Technologies, Northern Trust, Bon Secours and Nordic Aviation Capital. More than €3.4 billion of investment has been announced by companies including Eli Lilly, Takumi, Shannon Foynes Port Company, Becton Dickenson and Pallas Foods. The predominant sectors for job announcements, and employment growth, include biopharma, medical devices, ICT, construction, retail, fintech and the creative sector.<sup>29</sup>

The FDI performance in Limerick has been consistent over the past five years with employment among IDA client companies increasing considerably, by 40.5% since 2016. The most important sector for FDI investment in Limerick is ICT/Hardware/Software, followed by Engineering and Medical Technology. Biopharmaceuticals, Business Services, Financial Services and Consumer Goods also feature. While Limerick does not enjoy the same degree of sectoral FDI clustering as Cork and Galway, it has the advantage of a wide range of sectors - a characteristic which improves resilience to sectoral downturns.

Over the next few years, further opportunities in ICT can be built upon, especially as technology increasingly permeates other sectors, such as life sciences, pharma, MedTech and agri-tech.



<sup>29</sup> Data from LCCC Economic Development Directorate / Forward Planning

### Indigenous Enterprise Sector

Enterprise Ireland-assisted jobs in Limerick have increased by 14% since 2016. The number of clients that received support from the Limerick Local Enterprise Office (LEO) increased substantially in 2020 to 1,091, due to COVID, with 90 companies assisted in 2021. However, the numbers employed in Limerick Local Enterprise Office (LEO)-assisted companies declined by 22.4% from 2,091 in 2016 to 1,622 in 2021, which highlights the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.



### 2.13 The Knowledge Economy, R&D and Innovation Capacity

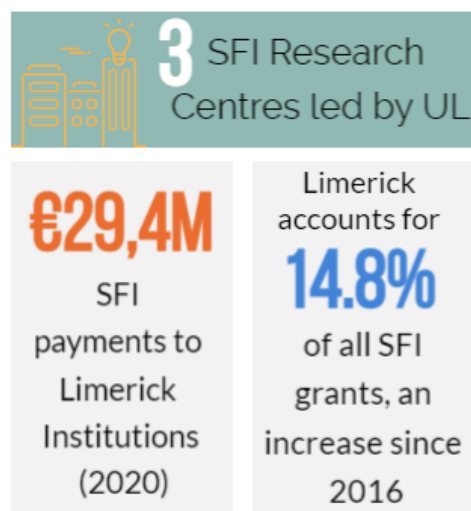
Expanding the knowledge economy is important for Limerick's long-term growth and prosperity.

#### Factors to Drive the Knowledge Economy

Key factors that drive the knowledge economy include an educated and skilled population, technological infrastructure, foreign direct investment, an environment that encourages technology application and entrepreneurship and collaborative public and private research organisations and initiatives. Other factors that are important in order to retain and attract the highly mobile talent in the knowledge economy workforce centre on quality of life. These include the quality of the natural environment, the built environment, connectivity, housing, quality and accessible public services such as childcare, schools and healthcare and safety and tolerance of diversity. While Limerick has some strengths in quality of life factors of attractiveness, it also has some weaknesses. Lack of housing supply is a key weakness at present. Investment is also needed in other public (water services, transport, broadband) and social infrastructures (childcare, schools).

#### R&D Centres in Limerick

Research and Development (R&D) is a crucial component of sustainable economic activity, employment and societal well-being. The third level educational institutions in Limerick play a critical role in R&D and innovation through their research programmes working in collaboration with other academic institutions and industry. Of the Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) Research Centres in the state, there are three where the lead institution is located in Limerick: LERO SFI Research Centre for Software at UL, SSPC SFI Research Centre for Pharmaceuticals, Bernal





Institute UL and CONFIRM SFI Research Centre for SMART Manufacturing at Castletroy Digital District Limerick.<sup>30</sup>

Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) payments to Limerick institutions were €29,420,000 in 2020. The main institutions were the University of Limerick, Technological University of the Shannon, Midlands Mid-West (TUS) and Mary Immaculate College. Limerick accounts for 14.8% of SFI grants awarded which represents an increase from 12.6% in 2016. The largest award for research from SFI in 2020 was to LERO of some €35.5 million.

## 2.14 Tourism

Tourism is an important economic driver, playing a significant role in the economy and job creation.

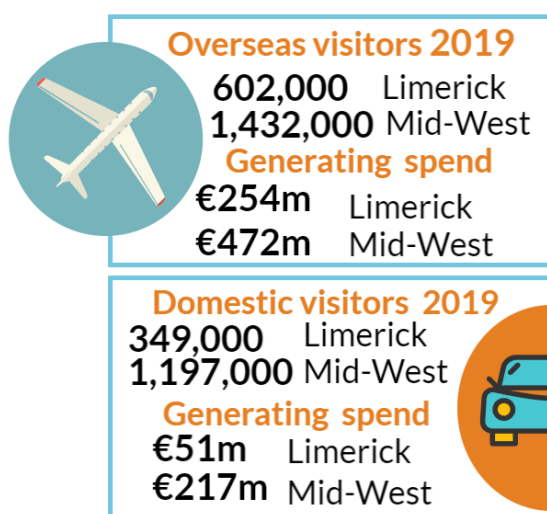
### Economic contribution of Tourism: Ireland

In 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic, overseas and Northern Ireland tourist expenditure in the state amounted to €5.6 billion. With additional spend on fares to Irish carriers and other expenditures by overseas visitors together with domestic tourist expenditure of €2.1 billion, the tourism industry in the state amounted to €9.5 billion (Fáilte Ireland). Direct employment in accommodation and food services activities in Q3 2019 was 177,700 (7.6% of total employment). Taking into account additional services in the tourism industry (e.g., attractions and other services), Fáilte Ireland estimates employment in the sector at 260,000 (2019) or 11% of total employment.

As well as its overall importance to the economy, tourism offers employment-intensive growth across a range of skills areas and sub-sectors and flexible jobs. Tourism and related-sectors (hospitality, visitor attractions and services) can contribute to job creation, attract economically inactive people or under-employed people into work (especially women seeking part-time and seasonal jobs, farm families) and reduce unemployment in both urban and rural Limerick.

### Visitors to Limerick and Revenue Generation

Based on Fáilte Ireland data, in 2019, Limerick had 602,000 overseas visitors generating revenue of €254 million and 349,000 domestic visitors generating revenue of €51 million (€305 million combined revenue in 2019). Both domestic and overseas visitor numbers and revenue have increased for Limerick since 2014 (€204 million).



In the Mid-West Region in 2019, there were 1,432,000 overseas visitors generating revenue of €472 million and 1,197,000 domestic visitors generating €217 million in revenue. Of the overseas visitors, 36% were from North America, 32% mainland Europe and 26% from Britain.

While tourism has been growing in Limerick (pre-COVID), the county is less advanced in tourism development compared with the main tourist counties in Munster (Kerry, Cork and to a lesser extent Clare). The tourism potential of Limerick continues to lag behind.

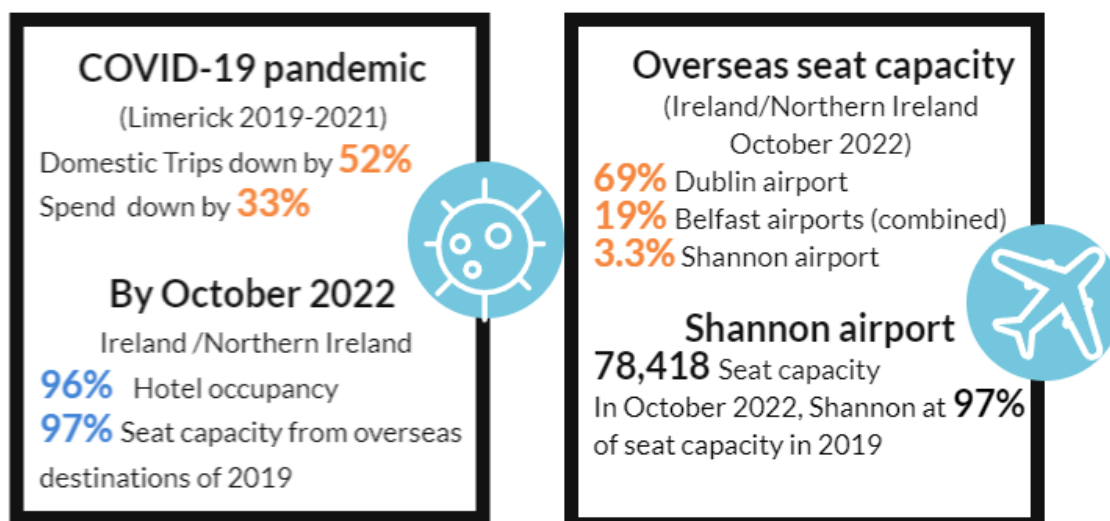
<sup>30</sup> Data from Science Foundation Ireland. <https://www.sfi.ie/about-us/governance/open-data/>

### Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic

Tourism was amongst the industries severely impacted by COVID linked to restrictions on travel and lockdowns. Data on domestic / Irish resident trips and spend for the counties in the Mid-West illustrate this.

County	Year	Domestic Trips ('000)	Domestic Spend (€m)	% change 2019-2021 Domestic Trips	% change 2019-2021 Spend
Limerick	2019	349	51	-52%	-33%
	2021	166	34		
Clare	2019	571	110	-54%	-34%
	2021	261	72		
Tipperary	2019	276	40	-62%	-60%
	2021	104	16		

However, by summer 2022, a significant recovery in overseas tourism to Ireland was in evidence. For instance, air access to Ireland based on the airlines' seat capacity from all overseas destinations recorded in October 2022 (2,357,381 seats) is at 97% of the level of October 2019. Hotel occupancy in the Republic of Ireland in August 2022 was -4% of the occupancy rate of August 2019.



In relation to passenger seat capacity into airports in Ireland, Dublin Airport is the main entry point, accounting for 69% of the seat capacity into Ireland in October 2022 followed by Belfast International and Belfast City airports (19% combined). Shannon Airport recorded a seat capacity of 78,418 (3.3% of all seat capacity into Ireland). While Shannon Airport seat capacity in October 2022 is at 97% of the seat capacity of October 2019, it accounts for only a small proportion of the share into Ireland. The overall figures across all airports in Ireland (north and south) show the dominance of Dublin Airport and Dublin as the main point of access by air for overseas visitors. As such, there is much scope to grow tourism market connectivity directly in the Mid-West Region via Shannon.

### Developing Tourism in Limerick

In 2019, the top visitor attractions in Limerick were the Hunt Museum (113,000 visitors), King John's Castle (110,794 visitors), Limerick City Gallery of Art (85,000 visitors) and Foynes Flying Boat Maritime



### Top visitor attractions in 2019:



Hunt Museum  
113,000 visitors



King John's Castle  
110,794 visitors



City Gallery of Art  
(85,000 visitors)



Foynes Flying Boat  
Maritime Museum  
(50,500 visitors)

Museum (50,500 visitor). The next order of visitor attraction ranking were: Limerick City Museum (28,000 visitors) and Desmond Hall Newcastle West (12,356 visitors).

Limerick City and County Council in partnership with local and national stakeholders aim to increase visitor numbers and sustainable job creation by further developing existing visitor attractions and expanding the tourism offering. King John's Castle in the city is now under the management of Limerick City and County Council; there has been major public investment in the Foynes Flying Boat and Maritime Museum to expand its footprint

and enhance its offering; there is an expanded programme of events at the museums, Limerick City Gallery of Art and festivals and events in the city (Riverfest) and rural Limerick; there has been significant investment in strategic recreation infrastructure – in particular, the Limerick Greenway in the west of the county and Ballyhoura Mountain Bike Trails in east Limerick as well as cultural tourism in the towns and villages along the Shannon Estuary. Private investment in recent years includes major investment in the Adare Manor Hotel and other hotel expansions in the city, the International Rugby Museum in the city centre and other sites.

The selection of the golf course at Adare Manor as the host venue for the 2027 Ryder Cup is not only a major opportunity for Limerick but for Ireland. Preparation for the Ryder Cup 2027 will be the focus of a national programme and inter-departmental / inter-agency approach involving the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht and Sport, Fáilte Ireland, Sport Ireland as well as the local authority and local stakeholders. This will focus on putting in place the necessary infrastructures (e.g., transportation, tourism, economic) and marketing and promotion in order to capitalise on this event as an opportunity for tourism development and attraction to Ireland and Limerick. It offers the opportunity to showcase the heritage village of Adare and the attractions in other parts of Limerick and as a major spur to the development of rural tourism.

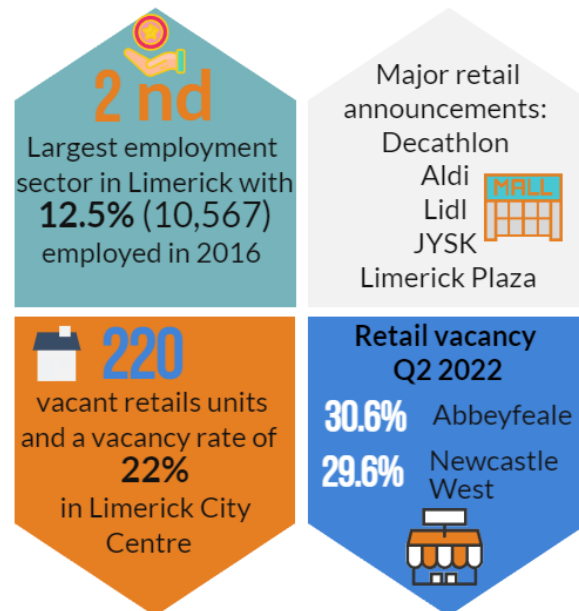
Limerick as a tourism destination is the focus of new marketing campaigns, supported by Fáilte Ireland, with Limerick now designated as a Gateway City for the Wild Atlantic Way.

Plans are being advanced by the Council to expand the Limerick Greenway infrastructure and tourism attractions on it. The *Limerick Tourism Development Strategy 2019-2023*, the *Limerick 2030 Economic and Spatial Plan for Limerick* and the *River Shannon Tourism Masterplan*, are key strategic plans which support further development of tourism in Limerick. In February 2022, Limerick City and County Council established *Discover Limerick DAC*, as a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Council, to take on operational responsibility for major attractions under its control (King John's Castle) and to drive the development of tourism in Limerick.

## 2.15 Retail

Retail is an important employment sector in Limerick, with Limerick City having a diversity of retail uses. Retail has been a key part of the economic base of the city and town and village centres. However, the retail sector in Limerick City centre has been in decline in recent decades, with shops migrating to purpose-built out-of-town shopping centres and increasingly to online platforms. The retail and services sector remains a significant employer and economic contributor in the Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area in Limerick.

The *Retail Strategy for Limerick – Shannon Metropolitan Area and County Limerick 2022 – 2028* provides analysis of the changing sector and key challenges. It shows that of the 1,014 retail units in Limerick City Centre, 220 are vacant recording a retail vacancy rate of 22%. In Q2 2022, the retail and wholesale vacancy rate in Limerick City was 24% (GeoDirectory Commercial Buildings Report). Almost all of the streets within the City Centre have some level of vacancy from closure of shops / retail outlets including some large-scale vacant sites in the core of the city centre. County towns with the highest retail vacancy rates in Q2 2022 were Abbeyfeale (30.6%) and Newcastle West (29.6%).



The retail sector is pivotal to regeneration and renewal, bringing footfall and economic vitality to city and town centre areas. Footfall for retail brings other benefits including improved daytime safety linked to the presence of people and activity in those areas and generates business to cafés and restaurants. This can also spin-off into participation of people in cultural and civic activities. High levels of vacancy in city, town and village centres can have a detrimental impact on the visual appearance, discouraging residential settlement there as well as visitors.

## 2.16 Cultural and Creative Industries

Cultural and creative industries are increasingly important in the economy and a source income and job creation. As well as its economic impact, culture contributes to creating a sense of identity, distinctiveness of place and social objectives such as improved well-being linked to engagement in cultural activities.

### What types of industries?

Cultural industries are based on individual creativity, skills and talent. They may be developed within businesses across a range of sectors (e.g., design, technologies, advertising, information and marketing campaigns) and well as business ventures in their own right. Creative industries can emerge from the generation and exploitation of intellectual property including advertising, software, publishing, architecture, music and the visual and performing arts, film, video, photography and literature.

## Limerick as a City of Culture

There is a growing movement internationally by cities to become recognised as “creative cities” and this can be an important element of regeneration and re-branding strategies. Cultural and creative industries remain an under-developed sector in Limerick. There is significant potential for growth from the base that has emerged over recent years, particularly since Limerick was designated the National City of Culture in 2014, and the profile that was developed as Limerick applied to be the European City of Culture (2016). Demand to expand these industries applies across all age groups – older people, young people – as consumers as well as creators. In certain sub-sectors, demand may be high amongst young people, as workers in the sector, enterprises and as consumers of its products.

## Cultural Assets, Venues and Other Resources

Limerick has activities in place and developed facilities / services and human resources engaged in culture and arts from which to further develop in these industries. The presence of the Limerick School of Art and Design in the city centre campus with some 1,450 students, Troy Film Studios, the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance at the University of Limerick, and other centres of cultural creativity and design (e.g., Product Design Centres at third level education institutions) are significant assets in Limerick.

It also has concert and exhibition venues including commercial operations (University Concert Hall, the Lime Tree Theatre), community cultural venues in the city and county (e.g., Kilmallock, Lough Gur, Newcastle West) and other venues including the Milk Market, Thomand Park, TUS/Gaelic Grounds and King John’s Castle.

Involvement in cultural and creative projects gives community and voluntary groups and interest groups in society (e.g., young people) opportunities to work together. It can build community spirit and promote social inclusion.

## Film in Limerick

The development of the film sector has been a strong focus of *Innovate Limerick*, a Designated Activity Company wholly-owned by Limerick City and County Council. Troy Studios, Ireland’s largest studio facility, was established in Limerick in 2016 and has been utilised for productions by Netflix and Apple with other productions in the pipeline. In 2021, *Innovate Limerick* through *Film in Limerick* partnered with Gorm Media to launch a diversity initiative to attract workers to the film and TV industry. Innovate Limerick secured funding (€13.5 million) from the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) to develop a Film Production and Digital Collaboration and Skills Academy in the city centre in a building purchased by Limerick City and County Council, known as Engine. The Academy is important for the social and economic transformation of Limerick. The aim is to target specific groups of people from most disadvantaged areas in the city for training in skills needed in the developing TV production and film industry in Limerick.

University Concert Hall,  
Limetree /Belltable,  
Millennium Theatre & many smaller theatres and cultural venues

UL with the  
• Irish World Music  
• Dance Academy  
Home to the Irish Chamber Orchestra

65 Creative Ireland Projects and Initiatives in Limerick in 2019

Limerick School of Art and Design  
1,450 students- world-renowned centre of art and design

Troy Studios  
• 26 acres  
• 4 sound stages  
• 100,000 sq. ft. number of TV and film production completed / released

## 2.17 Food

The agri-food sector is one of Limerick's important indigenous industries. Historically, Limerick had a profile in the food, food processing and drinks industries in the city and county (Limerick Bacon Factory, Matternons, Cleeves). While the large traditional industries are gone, industries in food production have expanded in recent years and new businesses have been created. Food and drinks businesses in Limerick include Ballygowan and Pallas Foods / Sysco Ireland – both with a base in Newcastle West. There is potential to further develop Limerick's reputation for food and drink, by supporting local producers and promoting Limerick as a leader in sustainable food and agricultural systems.

There has been a growth in small businesses in artisan food in rural Limerick – supported by the Limerick Local Enterprise Office and rural development programmes (LEADER) offering specific supports for the – e.g., Ballyhoura Food Centre Hospital. The Limerick Milk Market, which is long-established and has been improved in recent years with a dome covering the inner core of the market area, draws large numbers into the city centre on the weekends for shopping, social meet-ups and cultural activities. Limerick has a rich local food heritage in its market towns. It has potential to revive and further develop farmers markets and other outlets to support local SMEs and food tourism. The Urban Coop (a social enterprise) located in sub-urban Limerick provides an outlet to sell local food produce.

Food security is becoming a more important consideration especially linked to supply chain difficulties, the impact of the war in Ukraine on distribution of grains, higher costs for transportation of food across global markets and the increased awareness of the negative impact on climate change of the current pattern of food distribution and trade.

At local community level, there is also a movement to develop local food supply – for instance, allotments, urban gardens, community gardens, Grow Your Own (GYO) initiatives in schools and communities, and community-based planting offering free food (e.g., orchards). Such initiatives support sharing of resources in communities and development of local markets. They can also have important health and well-being and social and community outcomes, bringing people together into local organisations / groups and building social capital.

## 2.18 Manufacturing

Limerick was an old industrial city and went through a number of waves of industrial restructuring away from traditional industries into assembly-based operations in the 1970's and 1980's and into ICT and more advanced manufacturing in the 1990's and 2000's. Limerick has further developed into higher value-added manufacturing, ICT, pharmaceuticals, biotech, medical devices / technologies and orthopaedics. These are amongst the highest value-added industries.



Based on Census 2016, manufacturing contributes significantly to employment in Limerick with 14.9% of persons at work resident in Limerick City and County working in the manufacturing sector, higher than the national average, 11.4%. Manufacturing employment remains important in the rural economy accounting for some 9,000 persons at work in the former Limerick County in 2016.

Manufacturing in the city and suburbs is concentrated in the industrial parks in Raheen Industrial Park and Plassey Technological Park - the location of high tech industries and larger companies (e.g., Regeneron, Johnson & Johnson). A number of Limerick county towns have a strong profile of manufacturing industry - Newcastle West, Rathkeale and Kilmallock.

Based on CSO Business Demography data on the profile of private enterprises located in Limerick, in 2020, just under one-fifth (19.7%) of all persons engaged in Limerick-based enterprises are in manufacturing.

## 2.19 Energy Efficiency / Renewables/Green

Renewable energy plays an important role in energy production nationally and in Limerick. In progressing climate action measures and in order to achieve 2030 targets for Ireland, energy from renewable sources is expected to grow significantly.

### Energy from Renewables

Limerick has assets / resources to support the development of renewable energy sources.

In Limerick, 12 solar farms have been permitted with an output capacity of 113.49 MW and there are 15 wind farms with a total output of 205.75 MW.

There is significant potential to harness energy from the River Shannon, subject to an appropriate level of environmental and ecological assessment. The concept of the Atlantic Green Digital Basin (GDB) is being explored as a project to achieve a green and a digitally-diversified region. The GDB project aims to support a business cluster that uses digital technologies powered 100% by own-generated energy from renewables to create a centre point for Europe's digital traffic and a global exporter of clean energy.



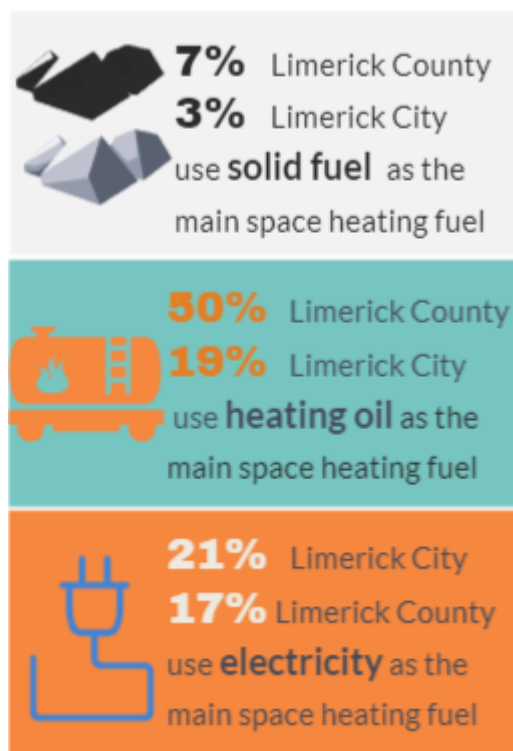
There is potential for development of community-based renewable energy projects. In recent years, community-supported renewable energy projects have had access to the energy market. For instance, Limerick is one of two EU 'Lighthouse' cities (Limerick and Trondheim Norway) selected for a climate-change pilot project focused on how to reduce the carbon footprint of urban areas. The EU +CityxChange Programme (Positive City Exchange) in Limerick is rolling out a project in the Georgian quarter of the city. This is a testbed for data collection and new technologies to transform it into a positive energy city centre where it creates more electricity than it uses.

### Energy Efficiency of Buildings: Reliance on Fossil Fuels

Based on national and county-level data on dwellings that have completed Building Energy Rating (BER) audits, the trend has been towards the reduction in fossil fuels (oil, gas, solid fuel, LPG) as the main space heating source and improved energy efficiency of buildings. CSO data<sup>31</sup> on main sources of energy used in domestic and non-domestic buildings from 2010 to 2022, however, shows continued strong reliance on fossil fuels. Electricity is the main space heating source used (82%) in the most recently constructed dwellings (2020-2022) compared even to those constructed in 2015-2019 where 48% of dwellings with a BER audit used electricity.

Age of dwellings is a key factor in terms of energy efficiency of buildings. In dwellings constructed in 2015-2019 and 2020-2022 with a BER rating, 96% and 99% respectively are given an “A” rating compared with 33% in 2010-2014 and 1% in 2005-2009.

Considering all dwellings in Limerick with BER audits (43,777), 21% in the City and 17% in the County use electricity as its main space heating fuel with the remainder using a fossil fuel source. There is a higher dependence on sources other than electricity in the more rurally-based county (83%) compared with the city (79%). Of the main space heating sources, a larger proportion of county dwellings use heating oil (50%) and solid fuel (7%) compared with those sources in the city (19% heating oil and 3% solid fuel). Mains gas is the most important source in the city (57%) compared with 25% of dwellings using this source in the county.



### Building Energy Ratings (BERs): Limerick

If we examine BERs for Limerick City and Limerick County (2009-2022), based on 18,705 dwellings in the city and 25,223 in the county and an average age of dwelling of 38 years, only 5% in the city and 5% in the county have an A rating. This compares with a national average of 10% with an average age of dwelling of 33 years. Twelve percent (12%) in Limerick City and 11% in Limerick County have B ratings (B1 to B3) compared with 13% at national level. The most common rating is C with 40% of dwellings in the city and 38% in the county have ratings from C1 to C3. Six percent (6%) of dwellings in the City and 8% in the County have a G (worst) rating compared with 7% at national level.



More rural counties (Mayo, Leitrim, Roscommon, Tipperary) generally have worse ratings – with a smaller percentage rated A and B and a larger percentage with G ratings. Dublin and the urbanised counties around Dublin (with larger tracts of more-recently built accommodation) have the best ratings.

These data on energy use and energy efficiency of domestic and non-domestic buildings shows that there is great need and much scope to reduce dependence on fossil fuels and improve the energy efficiency of our buildings – across public bodies, businesses, community / sports and other user types

<sup>31</sup> Data from CSO. <https://data.cso.ie/table/DBEREL01>



as well as dwellings. A local Limerick study to audit community buildings and community cultural facilities across the city and county (2020-2021) found that these buildings mostly have poor energy efficiency and are strongly reliant on fossil fuels as the main source of heating.

### Social Aspects of Energy Efficiency & Energy Poverty

Analysis of social aspects of energy efficiency of dwellings (based on Census 2016 data) shows that older people, unemployed people, one-parent families with children, one person households, people with poor mobility and people from black and Asian ethnicity are more at risk of energy poverty. Dwellings that are occupied by people from these social backgrounds have lower combined A and B ratings, and in many cases, have the highest percentage of G ratings. Social groups living in dwellings with a higher percent of G ratings are farmers (9%), agricultural workers (11%), persons over 75 years (8%), people with mobility difficulties (7%), people living in very bad health (7%) and people living alone (7%).

**Most at risk  
of energy poverty**

- Older people,
- people living alone
- in poorer health
- with mobility difficulties
- farmers and agricultural workers
- one parent families with children
- black and Asian ethnic minorities



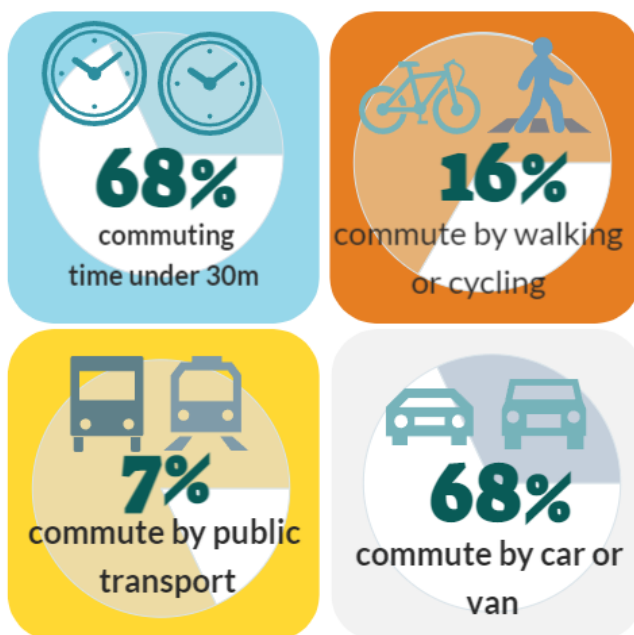
## 2.20 Transport

An effective transport network and public transport are essential for the creation of compact and connected places in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The *NPF Ireland 2040* and the *RSES for the Southern Region* seek to reduce dependence on the private car and shift towards sustainable modes of transport, including walking, cycling and public transport.

### Usual Means of Travel – Everyday Commuting Limerick

Based on Census 2016, in Limerick City and County, only 16% used active travel (14.4% walking and 1.5% bike) as their usual means of travel to work, school or college. While rates were higher in Limerick City (27% walking and 2.9% by bike) compared with the County (9.5% walking and 1% by bike), overall active travel rates in 2016 were extremely low and had changed very little compared with 2011.

In 2016, some 68% of persons across Limerick City and County were reliant on the car as the driver (42.8%) or passenger (21.4%) or van (4.1%) as the usual means of transport. Only 7% used a bus / coach or train while 3% worked mainly from home. These data are likely to have changed by 2022 (Census 2022) in favour of active travel, public transport and working from home but not to the extent needed as a response to climate action.



In terms of commuting times, 35% had a commute time to work, school or college of under 15 minutes while 33% had a commute of 15 to 30 minutes. Only 4.5% commute for more than one hour. City residents generally have shorter commuting times - 72% have a commuting time of 30 minutes or under, compared with 66% county residents while 5% of city residents have a commuting time of 45 minutes and over compared with 10% county residents.

## Sustainable Travel

Current transport patterns that are highly reliant on the car are unsustainable. However, change in favour of sustainable travel and expansion of public transport services will be challenging in view of the highly dispersed population base in rural Limerick and the strong pattern of cross-commuting to work between the city and county and adjacent counties.

Good public transport links are vital for towns and villages in rural Limerick. Integrating land use and transport (active travel routes, public transport) to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and facilitate the transition to a low carbon economy are essential needs going forward.

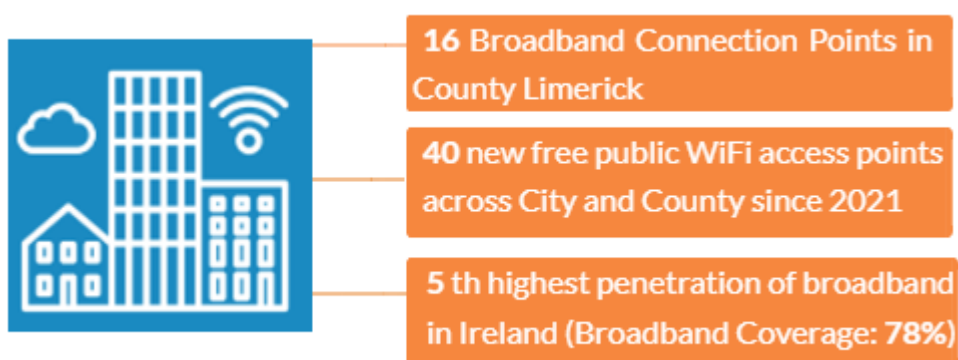
The concept of developing a 10-minute city / town neighbourhoods and vibrant towns and villages, which are compact and offer jobs, services and housing choice provide the basis of strong economies and communities. This model also support a greater range of sustainable modes of transport, both within and between settlements in sub-regions of Limerick.

### 2.21 Information and Communications Technology and Broadband

Availability of high-speed, cost-competitive and reliable broadband underpins economic development and contributes to good quality of life for Limerick's communities. The absence of such infrastructure makes it significantly more difficult to retain employment, attract new jobs, limits educational and entrepreneurial opportunities and access to services. High-speed, readily available and consistent broadband is crucial for Foreign Direct Investment, indigenous entrepreneurial opportunities and access to national and global markets.

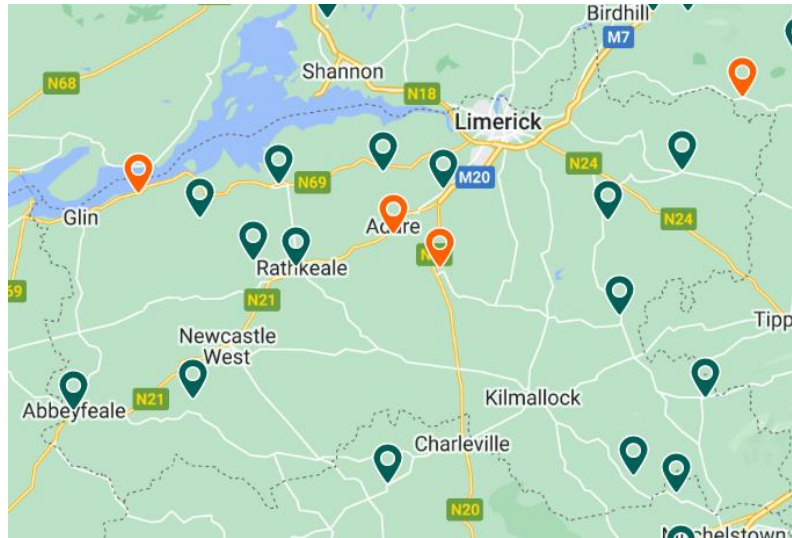
#### Broadband Connection Points Rural Limerick

Broadband Connection Points (BCPs) provide high speed broadband to local communities throughout rural Ireland.<sup>32</sup> Each BCP provides 150Mb high-speed broadband access to the local community. This enables people living in rural areas to access broadband at specific community locations for a range of uses including remote working, online services and keeping in touch with family and friends. There are 16 BCPs in County Limerick in areas including Rathkeale, Askeaton, Kildimo, Cappamore, Hospital and Galbally. Limerick City and County Council has worked in partnership with National Broadband Ireland, the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) and Vodafone to install a 150Mbps radio broadband service in each location (300Mbps for a couple of the larger sites). This is made available by the BCP for public use both inside and outside the premises.



<sup>32</sup> Data from LCCC Digital Strategy

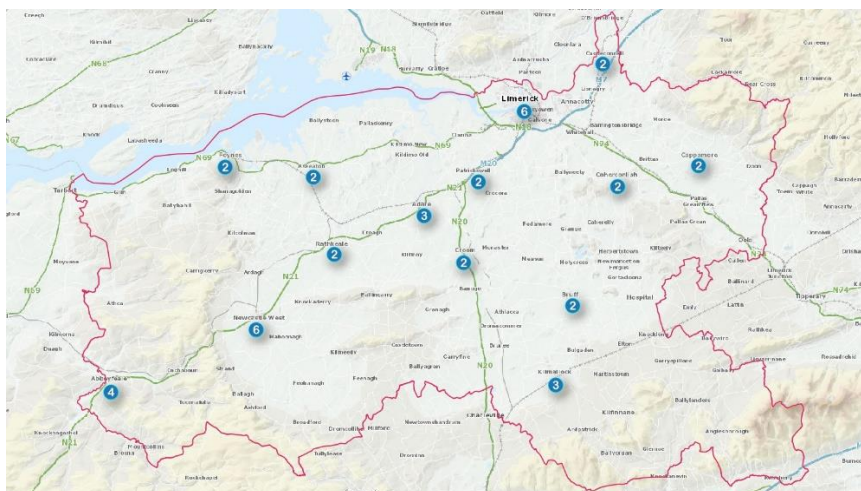
**Figure: Broadband Connection Points in Limerick 2022**



Source: [www.myconnectedcommunity.ie](http://www.myconnectedcommunity.ie)

### Free Public WiFi

Limerick City and County Council’s Digital Services team has delivered 40 free public WiFi access points across the city and county under the WiFi4EU initiative in 2021. These are part-funded by the EU, the DRCD and LCCC. The WiFi4EU locations are Abbeyfeale, Adare, Askeaton, Bruff, Caherconlish, Cappamore, Castleconnell, Croom, Foynes, Kilmallock, Limerick Metro, Newcastle West, Patrickswell, and Rathkeale.



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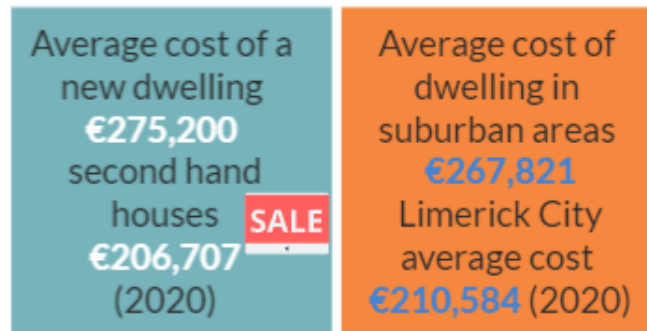
## 2.22 Housing

Housing is a basic need. A well-functioning housing market, with a supply of accommodation to suit households at different stages of the lifecycle, underpins a successful economy. Housing together with essential public and social infrastructures (access transport, water and waste treatment capacity, schools, recreation) and services are essential for building sustainable communities.

Current difficulties in the housing market in Ireland are well-documented. There is limited supply in the housing stock across all tenure types (private ownership, private rental, social and affordable housing) and strong demand for housing. This situation is resulting in increased prices in house purchase and rents. These difficulties are present in the local housing market in Limerick.

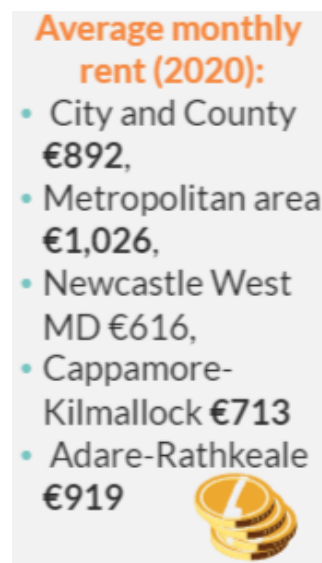
### House purchase and rental costs Limerick

Based on analysis of house purchases in Limerick over the period 2008-2020, the average cost of a new dwelling in Limerick was €275,200 and €206,707 for second hand houses. Prices mainly increased from 2012 onwards with prices increases accelerating from 2018. Average price varies by location. They are highest in the Metropolitan Area, followed by Adare Rathkeale, Cappamore-Kilmallock and Newcastle West. Within the Metropolitan Area, prices are higher on average in the suburban areas - €267,821 on average in 2020 compared with €210,584 on average in the former Limerick City Council area).<sup>33</sup>



Since 2020, house prices have continued to increase nationally, and in the Mid-West and Limerick housing market. Between February 2021 and February 2022, national house prices increased by 15.3% and by 14.8% for the Mid-West.<sup>34</sup> In February 2022, average house prices for Limerick City were €222,000 and €231,000 for the former Limerick County. It is expected that the same sub-area differentials apply (Metropolitan Area versus rural Municipal Districts, city versus suburbs) as outlined above.

Average rental prices have also increased significantly but again show substantial variations across the territory. Areas within and with closer proximity to the city have higher rental costs. For instance, the average monthly rent (all property types) for Limerick City and County in 2020 was €892. For rentals within Limerick Metropolitan area, it was €1,026. Monthly rents were lower on average in Newcastle West MD at €616, €713 in Cappamore-Kilmallock and Adare-Rathkeale (€919). More recent data indicate that between Q4 2019 (pre COVID-19 pandemic) and Q 4 2021, rental prices have increased by 15.6% for Limerick City and 21.1% for Limerick County (including sub-urban and outer parts of Limerick Metropolitan Area).<sup>35</sup>



### Limerick Housing Stock

Based on preliminary data from Census 2022, Limerick City and County has a total housing stock of 85,776 units, an increase of 4.5% compared with 2016. This level of growth in the housing stock is below the national average (6%). The rate of growth in the housing stock was faster in the Metropolitan Area (8%) compared with the City and County as a whole and compared with the former city council area (3%).

<sup>33</sup> Data from Limerick City and County Council (2021). Limerick City and County Housing Strategy and HNDA 2022-2028. Incorporated into the Limerick Development Plan 2022-28.

<https://www.limerick.ie/sites/default/files/media/documents/2021-06/volume-6-limerick-city-and-county-draft-housing-strategy-and-housing-need-demand-assessment.pdf>

<sup>34</sup> Data from *Mid-West Economic Insights, Spring 2022*. Limerick Chamber

<sup>35</sup> Based on data from [www.daft.ie](http://www.daft.ie) reported in *Mid-West Economic Insights, Spring 2022*. Limerick Chamber.

Areas that show the largest increases in housing stock between 2016 and 2022 are in the Metropolitan Area and mostly in or close to the suburbs – in the Electoral Divisions of Limerick South Rural (+26%), Ballysimon (+14%) and Clarina (+16%).



Electoral Divisions in the city where the housing stock increased at faster rates are Prospect A (Lord Edward Street, Bourke Avenue connected to a new social housing scheme) (+15%) and Shannon B (inner city around Catherine Street, Glentworth Street) (+13%).

The number of vacant dwellings in Limerick City and County in 2022 was 6,643 – as reported above. This is a vacancy rate of 7.7% (national average 7.8%). Bringing vacant dwellings back into use as housing is an important agenda at national and local level.

### Housing Tenure

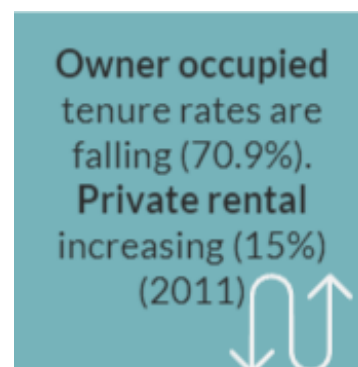
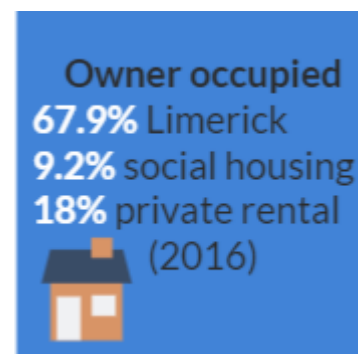
Home ownership rates in Ireland are high by European standards. In Limerick City and County, 67.9% of housing is owner-occupied either owned outright or with a mortgage, 9.2% is social housing (local authority housing and housing cooperatives) and 18% private rental housing (2016). The trend has been towards falling owner-occupied tenure (from 70.9% in 2011 to 67.9% in 2016) and increasing private rental tenure (15% in 2011 to 18% in 2016) for Limerick City and County.

The proportion in different types of tenure varies by sub-area.

There are higher rates of home ownership in the former Limerick County (67.9% in 2016) with the highest rates in the rural Metropolitan Districts (81.3% in Adare-Rathkeale, 79.7% in Cappamore-Kilmallock and 73.4% in Newcastle West MD) compared with Limerick Metropolitan Area (59.4%). Home ownership rates in older working class communities in the city are relatively high, reflecting the policy of local authority housing tenants becoming home owners under Tenant Purchase Schemes.

Private rental and social housing tenure rates are higher in the city and wider Metropolitan Area. Social housing tenure rates are highest in the former Limerick City Council area (12%) and Limerick Metropolitan (10.9%) compared with rural Metropolitan Districts: Adare-Rathkeale MD (6.2%), Newcastle West MD (8.4%) and Cappamore-Kilmallock MD (7%).

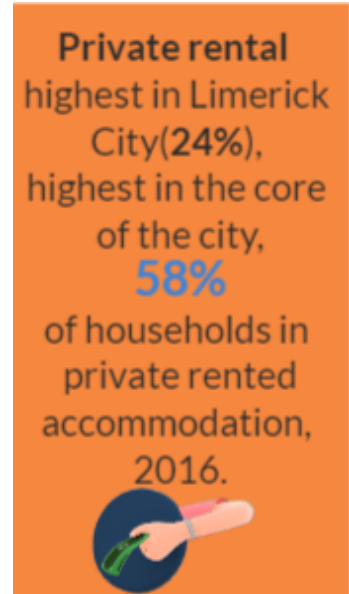
Social housing rates in the most disadvantaged areas of the city are higher than average rates for Limerick urban area - highest in the more recently constructed social housing estates (Moyross, 64%) compared with older estates (41% for St. Mary’s Park and 25% for Ballinacurra Weston).



In the former Limerick City, private rental accommodation accounts for just under one-quarter of all tenure types in 2016. Rates of private rental accommodation are highest in the city centre. For instance, in the core of the city (with a population of just under 10,000), 58% of households are private rental accommodation. It should be noted that some of those households in private rented accommodation are supported by the state under rent subsidy / support schemes (the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) and the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP)). These state schemes subsidise rents when social housing is not available in the current stock (as is the situation at present).

This means that some of the private rental market is in fact quasi social housing.

In local residential areas, tenure / income and social mix is considered important in building sustainable communities. This principle informs current developments in and allocations to social housing.



#### Future Housing Need Limerick

Based on a study to assess future housing needs and demand in Limerick conducted in 2020, to input to the preparation of the *Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028*, housing demand over the six-year plan period to 2028 is determined to be 15,591 housing units, or 2,598 units per annum.<sup>36</sup> Housing



supply will need to be developed to meet different requirements in terms of the physical locations of new housing, and be consistent with overall spatial planning policies. These requirements include: achieving compact growth or housing development within the footprint of the city to achieve population growth for the inner city area (the “living city”) and within towns and village settlements. Investment in waste water and water infrastructure / services capacity and other infrastructure are essential to allow for housing development as there

is a lack of capacity in such infrastructure in many settlements in Limerick.

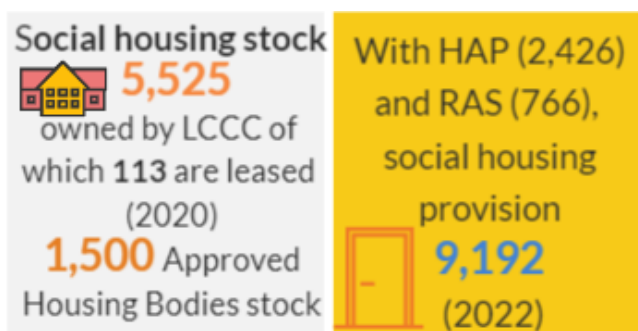
Increase in housing supply will need to take into account climate change considerations in terms of access transport / transport services, locations of work and recreation and energy efficiency of building and environment. Social aspects include consideration of needs of people with different levels of income, at different stages of the life course including young people, new families and older people downsizing, people with disabilities (physical, sensory and with specific health conditions) and Traveller accommodation. Size and types of unit and tenure mix (private, social, affordable) are further relevant considerations in the creation of sustainable communities. There are significant challenges associated with delivery of this level of supply and complexities associated with different types of need.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>36</sup> See *Volume 6 Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028, Limerick City and County Housing Strategy and Housing Need Demand Assessment 2022-2028* <https://www.limerick.ie/sites/default/files/media/documents/2022-07/Housing-Strategy-and-Housing-Need-Demand-Assessment.pdf>

<sup>37</sup> See *Limerick City and County Council’s Housing Delivery Action Plan 2022-2026*, setting out details of planned social and affordable housing delivery under Government’s *Housing for All*. <https://www.limerick.ie/council/services/housing/housing-delivery/housing-delivery-action-plan>

### Limerick’s Social Housing Stock & Targets for Social & Affordable Housing

Data for Q4 2020 indicates that Limerick City and County Council owns 5,525 housing units, of which 113 are leased. Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) - voluntary and communities bodies that respond to housing need – operate in Limerick (52 AHBs in 2022). The total AHB stock in Limerick is approximately 1,500 units. Social housing need is also addressed through the private rental market under the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) (766 Private RAS properties at end of year 2021) and the Housing Assistance Payment (2,426 at end of year 2021). Across the different social housing options, the number of households in these forms of social housing provision in Limerick in 2022 is 9,191.<sup>38</sup>



Each local authority in the state is set targets for the period 2022-2026 for delivery of social and affordable housing units under government’s strategy, *Housing for All*. The social housing target for Limerick City and County by 2026 is 2,693 homes, of which approximately 60% are to be delivered directly by the local authority (1,615) and 40% by AHBs (1,077). The Council’s approach to this is to deliver new build social housing (rather than buying existing housing for long-term lease). Currently, 1,220 housing units have been approved and 1,616 are at pre-approval stage. In 2022, 474 new social housing units are underway. Between the years 2022-2026, the Council’s target for affordable housing is 1,264 units, approximately 253 per year. Of this target, 264 units are for direct delivery by the local authority. Other delivery agencies are the Land Development Agency and Approved Housing Bodies.



### Social Housing Need & the Housing “Waiting List”

Limerick City and County Council carries out assessments of social housing need and follows a process to qualify applicants for social housing. The number approved or qualified for social housing in Limerick in 2022 is 2,238. This is the “net” housing need as it excludes those households awaiting transfers and those in private rented accommodation supported under the HAP/RAS. The “gross” number on the “housing waiting list” is 5,863 including those awaiting transfers and on HAP/RAS.

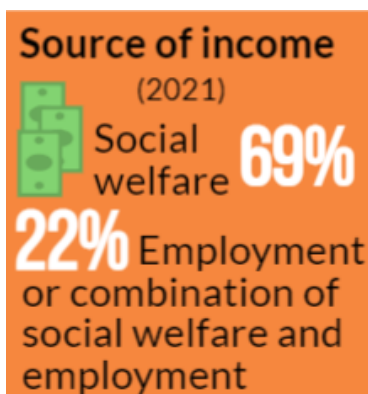
Current demand for social housing based on the housing waiting list for Limerick City and County shows highest demand in the city and within the city, stronger in the electoral area of Limerick City

<sup>38</sup> Data from the Housing Agency Data Hub. <https://www.housingagency.ie/data-hub/welcome-housing-agency-data-hub>

East. One and two-bed units are the most sought after in all areas. There is little demand for 4+ bed unit types.



In terms of characteristics of those qualified for housing support in Limerick, based on 2021 data, 69% are dependent on social welfare as their only source of income while 22% have income from employment only or a combination of employment and social welfare income. The percentage reliant on social welfare income only is significantly smaller compared with 10 years ago where this was at 80%. This situation reflects changes in the labour market (more jobs) and in social welfare schemes as well as the significant difficulties in the current housing market.



In terms of basis for the need, only 16% state reliance on rent supplement while half (50%) state unsuitable household circumstances (37%) or requirement for separate accommodation (13%). This is consistent with analysis of current living arrangements of qualifying applicants where 41% are either living with their parents or relatives and friends in over-crowded or unsuitable conditions. Over half (53%) have a household size of only one adult and 4% an adult couple. This is consistent with strongest demand for one-bed or two-bed units. Just under one-quarter of qualifying applicants are under 30 years, while 30% are aged 30-39 years.



More than two-thirds (68%) of qualifying applicants have no specific accommodation requirements. However, 15% are homeless, 11% have an enduring physical health, mental health or intellectual issue, 5% require Traveller accommodation and 1% is old age-related (65 years and over).

In terms of the length of time on the housing waiting list, one-quarter of qualifying applicants are over seven years on the waiting list while over one-third (36%) are over five years on the waiting list.

### Homelessness

In the last week of September 2022, in Limerick there were 330 homeless adults accommodated in emergency accommodation funded and overseen by housing authorities. The trend in homelessness in the state and in Limerick is upwards. Across Limerick and Clare County, there were 91 families homeless in emergency accommodation in the same period (September 2022). Three-quarters of these were single parent families. Within these families, there were 124 adults and 180 dependent children.<sup>39</sup>



<sup>39</sup> <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/3d034-homeless-report-september-2022/>

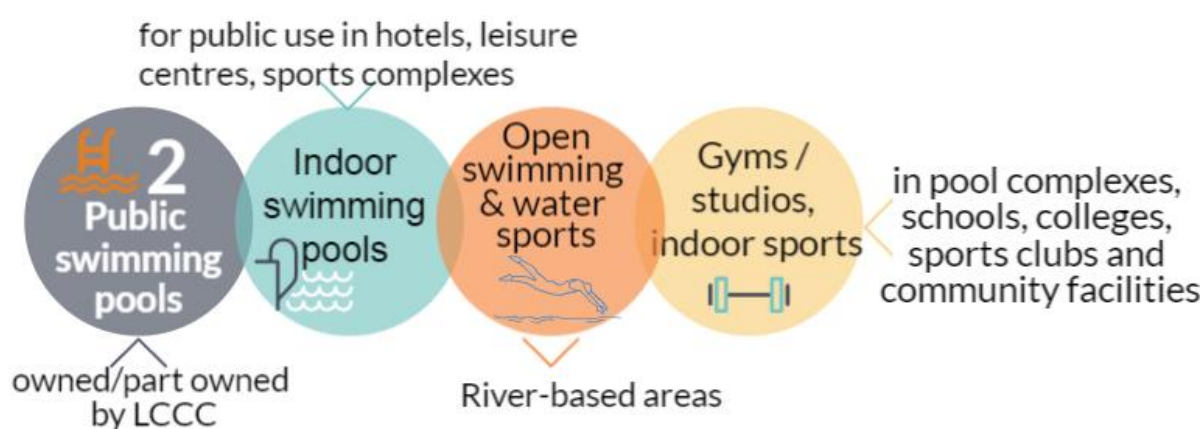


## 2.23 Sports, Recreation and Community Facilities

The presence of sports and recreation facilities and accessibility to such social infrastructure is important for quality of life. Provision of such facilities must not only take into account the existing population base but also projected population growth.

### Swimming and water sports

Limerick has two swimming pools for public use in the ownership of, or part owned by, the Council (Grove Island in the city and Askeaton Pool and Leisure in rural Limerick). Additional pools for public use are: the UL Arena at the University of Limerick's main campus in Plassey, the Brothers of Charity Pool at Bawnmore in the southern suburbs and the West Limerick Sports Complex, Newcastle West. The hydrotherapy pool at St. Gabriel's Dooradoyle, initially for children with disabilities in St. Gabriel's services, is now available to the wider community across the Mid-West region. There are also private pools at hotels with leisure centres and many of these are available to the public on a membership basis.



The rivers and the Estuary are used for water sports including Open Water Swimming – for instance, in areas of the city, Castleconnell and Askeaton. Other areas used as traditional swimming include, for instance, Glin Pier, Kiltteery Pier, along the Plassey Walk at UL, O'Briensbridge on the County Clare side of the river Shannon and the Clare Glens in east Limerick. Kayaking, canoeing and rowing club facilities are found in city locations (e.g., Athlunkard Boat Club, St. Michael's Rowing Club, Curragower Boat Club) and in Castleconnell (e.g., Castleconnell Boat Club, Limerick Kayaking Academy).

There is potential for expansion and improvement of recreation facilities drawing on the resource and natural landscape of the rivers (Shannon, the Estuary, the Deel and the Mulcair). As well as growing interest in the local population in such activities, they are also important in developing activity-based tourism.

### Indoor Sports / Gyms

Gyms and exercise studios are available across the local authority area but mostly in private or membership-based facilities. They are available within the complexes that host swimming pools – the local authority-owned / part-owned pools at Askeaton Pool and Leisure Centre and Grove Island, UL Arena and West Limerick Sports Complex.

Indoor sports facilities are developed in some schools and community centres / sports complexes. Based on an audit of community facilities undertaken by the local authority in 2019/2020, indoor sports facilities can be found in sports clubs (with gyms), schools which make their facilities available for wider community use and community centres. Within clubs and community facilities, local demand for such activities has increased. This generates additional sources of income / revenue for community

/ voluntary operations where facilities are available. Investment is needed for re-design of space to allow for indoor sports / physical activity programmes, expansion of the footprint of community centres to add indoor sports facilities, upgrading of toilet / shower and changing areas including improvements to support participation and access by people with disabilities.

### Athletics Facilities

There are three dedicated athletics facilities in Limerick - at the University of Limerick Arena, Bilbao Athletics Club in east Limerick and a new state-of-the art Regional Athletics Hub, Newcastle West (due to open in 2023). The facility at Newcastle West has been developed by the Council, co-funded by the Council and the Large-scale Sports Capital Fund, Department of Sport. The development of the Athletics Hub at Newcastle West responds to demand from athletics clubs in west and south Limerick within a broad catchment area of Newcastle West. It will operate as a municipal facility. In addition, athletics is integrated into sports facilities developed for other purposes or within multi-use facilities.



Some clubs use athletics-specific facilities in adjacent counties in County Clare, north Kerry, Cork and north Tipperary.

### Play Areas, Parks, Open Spaces and Greenways

In recent years, recreation facilities for children and youth – in particular, Multi-Use Games Area (MUGSs) (eight) and skate parks (four) have been developed by the Council. These are located in areas with significant residential populations and families. Going forward, further provision of such facilities will be integrated into masterplanning of larger-scale developments (residential areas) and within major parks as part of planning for compact growth and population growth.

Limerick has 12 major parks which combined cover an area of 378.03 Hectares (1.94 HA per 1,000 population), the largest Curraghachase (225.24 HA). Other major parks include Lough Gur and Clare Glens in the east of the County, Baggott Estate, Shannon Fields and Westfields in the city, Castletroy Park, Plassey Bank Walk and Mungret Park. Across the city and county, there are a number of smaller parks and open spaces such as the Castle Demesne Newcastle West, Adare Town Park, Croom Community Park and the People's Park in the city. In preparing a *Green and Blueway Infrastructure (GBI) Strategy for the City and Environs (2022)*, significant areas of unused or passive green space are identified that could be designed / developed as recreation space, natural play areas, nature areas and bio-diversity corridors. This will be an important agenda going forward and is incorporated into many objectives of the *Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028*.

Limerick has 32 playgrounds distributed across the city and county and six of those are within other open spaces / parks.<sup>40</sup> With population growth and shifts in population in some areas, there may be

<sup>40</sup> See Background Papers, Community & Recreation, *Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028*  
<https://www.limerick.ie/council/services/planning-and-property/limerick-development-plan/how-do-you-see-limerick-2028>

deficits in playground provision in certain areas of the city and metropolitan area and parts of rural Limerick. There is a general need for improvement / upgrading works to many existing playgrounds. With support from funding programmes including CLÁR in rural areas suffering from population decline, LEADER in rural Limerick, the Limerick Regeneration Programme in the most disadvantaged areas of the city and other funding streams in local community development, community groups are developing new and improving play provision – e.g., adding sensory gardens, improving play areas adjacent to schools and pre-schools.

Limerick has the 40km Limerick Greenway with a state-of-the art macadam surface traversing west Limerick, running through the main towns of Abbeyfeale, through Newcastle West and into Rathkeale. A number of additional routes (e.g., to expand the Limerick Greenway into Adare and city environs) are at different stages of feasibility assessment and planning. The Limerick Greenway is extending into north Kerry, with the Limerick City and County Council and Kerry County Council working together in expanding the greenway route all the way through to the north Kerry coast. The Castletroy Urban Greenway, opened in 2021, is a 1.3km off-road greenway linking local schools, playground, shops and home in sub-urban Castletroy.



### Sports Pitches

There is large number of soccer clubs and pitches across the local authority area. The number of pitches is estimated at approximately 130 pitches including a small number of Artificial Grass / All Weather pitches. However, this is an evolving situation as clubs work to improve and expand their facilities – pitches, lighting, club houses and associated facilities - drawing on funding such as the Sports Capital programme and with support from the FAI Development Unit.

Rugby pitches are developed in the city / suburban areas and parts of rural Limerick. There is a number of well-established clubs including: Garryowen RFC, Shannon RFC, Young Munster’s RFC, UL Bohemians RFC and Newcastle West RFC and Bruff RFC in rural Limerick. There is considered to be a need for additional pitches / pitch improvement and club house / hub facilities for rugby.

In relation to GAA, 83 GAA pitch sites including hurling and Gaelic Football are identified across the city and county on the GAA Pitch Locator.<sup>41</sup> Some of these have more than one pitch available. A small

<sup>41</sup> [https://gaapitchlocator.net/provinces/munster/limerick/#lmm\\_c38754d4](https://gaapitchlocator.net/provinces/munster/limerick/#lmm_c38754d4)

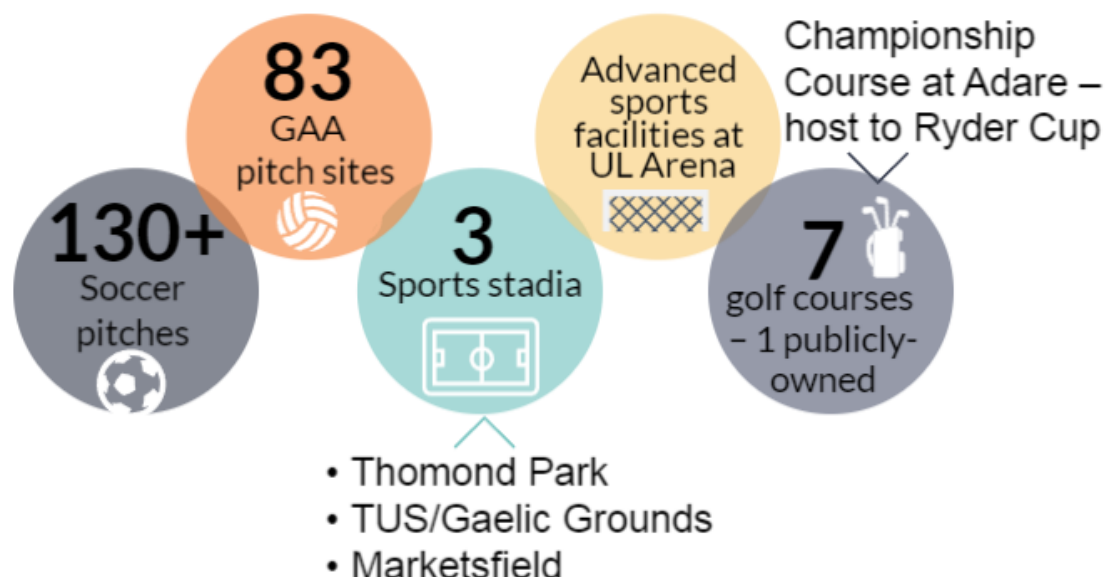
number have Artificial Grass / All Weather pitches. Again, this is an evolving situation as clubs work to develop their facilities locally.

Pitches and associated facilities can benefit from improvement works, flood lighting, pitch expansions (including All Weather Facilities), improvement to club houses / new club houses / dressing room facilities disability / vulnerable user access and other works. These types of works are undertaken by clubs through fund-raising and grant funding from Sports Capital and programmes such as LEADER in rural Limerick, CLÁR in rural areas suffering depopulation, the Limerick Regeneration Programme in the regeneration areas of the city and small-scale funding from the Community Enhancement Programme.

There are three major sports stadia in Limerick City – Thomond Park (rugby), GAA/TUS Gaelic Grounds and the Marketsfield (soccer) – as well as advanced facilities at UL Arena and sports pitches at Mary Immaculate College.

In terms of other sports provision, tennis sites in Limerick are mostly in the city and suburbs – Limerick Lawn Tennis Club, Ennis Road, the Catholic Institute Ballinacurra Gardens, Monaleen Tennis Club and Hospital Tennis Club in east Limerick. There is a small number of pitches on artificial surface for hockey in the city, located within educational facilities / schools and available for wider use (e.g., Crescent Sports Grounds, Laurel Hill, Villiers School, Catholic Institute Athletics and University of Limerick).

There are seven (7) golf courses in Limerick, all have 18 holes and pro shops and options of driving ranges. One facility, Rathbane, is owned by Limerick City and County Council, and operates under commercial management offering membership options and pay and play. The other six (Castletroy, Ballyneety, Newcastle West, Adare Manor, Limerick Golf Club) are private facilities but offer membership access and pay and play. Adare Manor has a championship course with Adare selected to host the prestigious Ryder Cup in 2027. There are also golf facilities in adjacent counties – Tipperary, north Cork, Clare.



Linked to the agenda to create compact settlements and the 10-minute neighbourhood, expansion / improvement to facilities accessible to residential populations is an important agenda going forward. Having such facilities in place is also important to community well-being and quality of life.

## Libraries, Community and Cultural and Arts Facilities

Limerick City and County Library Services has 16 branch offices across the city and county. It hosts a vast catalogue of books, e-books, audio-books, newspapers, magazines and electronic materials available in physical library settings and through online services. The Library Service provides for culture, education, information, learning, recreation and study needs of people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities. It provides information for businesses, promotes and supports health and well-being (books and other resource materials, campaigns, events) and literacy / reading as well as hosting cultural and art exhibitions and other activities. Library spaces also provide meeting places for groups / community and some have special resources such as a sensory room space for people with autism (at Watch House Cross branch) and assistive technologies for reading for people with dementia and other impairments. Development of a new central library for Limerick is included in the overall plan for Opera Square in the Limerick city centre.

A study to audit community facilities / buildings and community cultural facilities across Limerick City and County was undertaken during 2020.<sup>42</sup> This identified 257 such facilities widely distributed across the local authority area - in the city, in towns and villages and remote rural areas. There are some geographic “gaps” in provision, mostly in established and populous areas in the suburbs and wider Metropolitan Area with an average or above average socio-economic profile, and some need for community facilities in / close to the city centre. In rural Limerick, there are clusters of facilities generally available in the larger towns and some villages. Small villages tend to have at least one centre available for community use and there also facilities in some remote rural locations.

There are concentrations of cultural and arts facilities in the core of the city (mostly older buildings being re-used for these purposes), and a mix of buildings for community use across the city including community centres, parish and scout halls, schools, youth and family service centres, education and training facilities, churches and libraries. Specific-purpose community centres are located, predominately, in the disadvantaged areas of Limerick City. Schools and sports clubs are used in the suburbs / parts of the Metropolitan Area which lack specific-purpose community centres.

Facilities in rural Limerick are predominately buildings where the primary purpose is community use, with the majority owned and managed by local voluntary and community groups. In some areas, schools and sports clubs are also used for community meetings and other activities. In the larger towns and some villages, cultural and arts buildings are present including small theatres and arts and heritage centres which, in addition to their core cultural activities, make space available for wider community use.



The community and cultural facilities comprise a mix of old stock and new / modern buildings – mostly constructed in the period from the 1970’s through to the 1990’s and some involved the renovation and re-use of older heritage buildings for community use. A small number of new community centres

<sup>42</sup> See summary findings at <https://www.limerick.ie/council/services/community-and-leisure/community-development/audit-community-cultural-and-arts>

in rural Limerick and the urban / Metropolitan Area are being delivered currently or at the planning, design and fund-raising stages. Mostly the buildings used are fit for purpose with the majority rated by organisations running them as “Good” or “Excellent”. However, the majority of buildings operate with “Fair”, through “Poor” to “Very Poor” energy efficiency and are reliant on older energy systems.

A wide range of services for communities and specific groups are delivered from community facilities across the city and in rural Limerick – e.g., training, education and learning, arts and cultural activities, physical activity classes, information / advice, childcare, services to older people, community shop, social enterprise and hospitality. There is reliance on volunteers across urban and rural areas to run and manage the operations and on staff on temporary employment programmes using unemployed or under-employed people on active labour market programmes such as CE/Tús and RSS. This can present difficulties in maintaining services and upkeep of the buildings and outdoor areas while lack of personnel to run operations is a constraint on expansion of activities.

Key areas for public investment identified in the study include: improved energy efficiency of buildings such as replacement of old energy systems, installation of electric car charging points, sustainable travel (community / public transport, walking and cycling); re-design of space for new / alternative uses (e.g., remote working, catering services, after-schools), upgrading works (improvements to kitchen areas, toilets, showers, disability access) and better utilisation of outdoor space. There is a need to plan for succession, to expand the volunteer base, especially to attract younger people into volunteering and to improve the financial sustainability of many of the operations.

## 2.24 Local Services & Distance to Everyday Services

CSO, in 2022, issued data related to the average distance from dwellings to everyday services which includes analysis of the average situation by urban and rural areas and by county, across the state.<sup>43</sup> This covered a range of private services (supermarket, convenience shop, pharmacy, bank), GP, Post Office, schools, public services including HSE adult emergency department and HSE maternity hospital, library, garda station, fire station as well as the primary and secondary road transport network, train station and bus stop, outdoor sports facility and swimming pool.

### Accessibility of Everyday Services: Limerick

The findings showed that most everyday services were within 10km distance at the level of state (all areas) with the exception of a HSE maternity hospital (average distance 22km), a HSE adult emergency department (average distance 20 km) and a train station (average distance 8 km). A Primary School was the service with the shortest average distance to dwelling place (1.5km), followed by outdoor sports facility (1.7 km), supermarket / convenience shop (2.3 km) and Post Office (2.5 km).

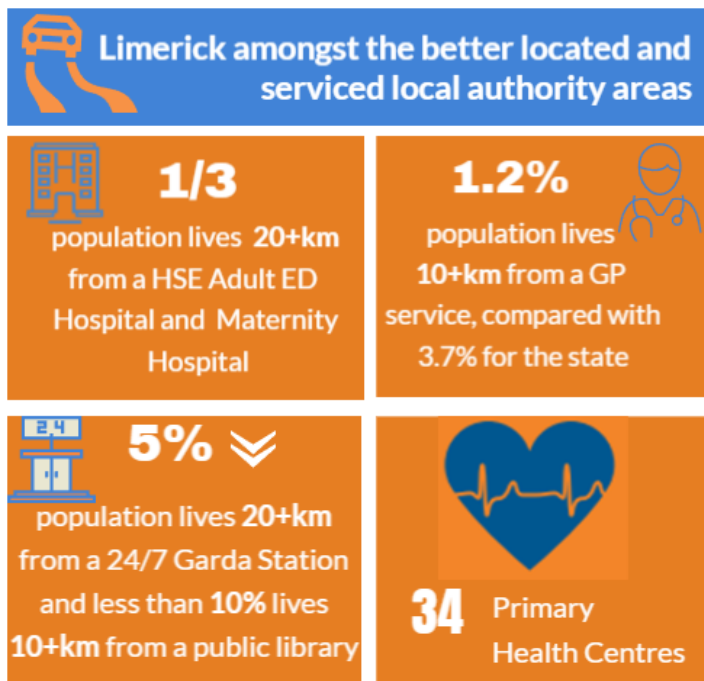
There are significant differences between urban and rural areas, with urban areas having much shorter average distance to all services. Services which show the largest differences between urban and rural areas are: train station (21 km average further distance for rural compared with urban), HSE adult emergency department hospital (+20km further for rural areas), a HSE maternity hospital (+19.6 km further for rural) and a garda station open 24/7 (+11.2 km further for rural). A primary school is the service where there is the least difference between urban and rural areas (+1.5km further in rural).

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<sup>43</sup> CSO Measuring Distance to Everyday Services in Ireland.

<https://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/othercsopublications/measuringdistancetoeverydayervicesinireland/>

In relation to average distances by county, Limerick is amongst the counties where the average distance to everyday services is shorter than the state averages. Average distance to a HSE Adult Emergency Department hospital and HSE Maternity Hospital is 16.9km, a 24/7 garda station 7.5km, a supermarket / shop 2.1km, a Post Office 2.4km and a library 4.1km.



If access to HSE hospital services based on the percentage of the population living in dwellings that are more than 20km from a HSE Adult Emergency Hospital Department or a HSE Maternity Hospital is considered, Limerick is also amongst the better counties - just over one-third of the population of Limerick is living more than 20km from such services. Only 1.2% of the population is 10km or more from a GP service (compared with 3.7% of the state as a whole) and 20% is 5km or more from a GP service. In terms of other services, Limerick is amongst the best served local authority areas in terms of the percentage of the population living 20km or more from a 24/7 Garda

Station (3.9%) and living 10km or more from a public library branch (less than 10%).

#### Access to Public Transport and National Road Network: Limerick

Focusing on the extent to which local authority areas are well-served by public transport, Limerick is amongst the better serviced counties (but not amongst the best, which are all highly urbanised local authority areas). Average distance of dwellings from a bus stop is 2km and to a national primary or secondary road network 4.2km.

Thirty-five percent (35.2%) of the population of Limerick City and County is serviced by less than 10 departures at their closest public transport stop. In relation to distance of the population to national primary and secondary road network, Limerick is amongst the best served counties. Just under 25% of the population (24.5%) are over 5km distance from the national road network.

It should be noted that distance from services is not the same as access to services. There can be many barriers to access – awareness and information, referral process and waiting times, physical mobility issues, trust in services etc.

### 3. Economic and Community SWOT Analysis

A SWOT (Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats) Analysis is presented below. This informs the preparation of the draft Socio-Economic Statement for Limerick and the High Level Goals and objectives of the LECP.

**Figure: Economic and Community SWOT Analysis**

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
<p><u>Social / education</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Good education infrastructure at primary, secondary &amp; tertiary level</li> <li>- Low rates of early school leaving and high rates of progression to third level education</li> <li>- Presence of third level institutions (UL/TUS/MIC), ensures a supply of graduates &amp; research capacity (SFI centres)</li> <li>- Third level education institutions located in Limerick facilitates access to 3<sup>rd</sup> level education</li> <li>- Highly educated and skilled workforce</li> </ul> <p><u>Economic / Jobs &amp; sectors</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Significant growth in jobs</li> <li>- New job announcements and investment in recent years</li> </ul>	<p><u>Social / education</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Significant number of adults with low education across city and county</li> <li>- Early school leaving has reduced to approximate the national average, but a cohort of young people with certain characteristics still leave school early</li> <li>- Gap in progression rates to third level education between schools serving disadvantaged areas (DEIS schools) and non-DEIS schools</li> <li>- Gap in retention of students graduating from third level colleges in Limerick remaining in Limerick / the region when they progress to employment</li> </ul> <p><u>Physical decline / vacancy</u></p>	<p><u>Strategic plans, structures &amp; sites</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- New Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028 focused on achieving an inclusive, resilience and sustainable “green” city and county</li> <li>- Limerick Twenty Thirty sites in public ownership and re-development progressing, including Opera Square (in construction), Mungret and Cleaves Riverside Quarter (masterplan completed, planning)</li> <li>- National and Regional Planning Frameworks in place &amp; significant national funding available for regeneration and development in urban and rural Limerick</li> <li>- National level policies &amp; frameworks to support social inclusion, anti-discrimination, equality and social justice</li> </ul> <p><u>Building on strategic economic resources</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Established centres of employment in strategic locations continuing to expand including Plassey National Technology</li> </ul>	<p><u>External influences &amp; economic</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Changes to international corporate tax reduce Ireland’s competitiveness for attracting FDI</li> <li>- Strong competition from other areas (Dublin, other cities and other local authority areas in the state) for investment and R&amp;D and Innovation more established in other centres</li> <li>- Risk that economic recovery does not continue / recession ensues and difficulties of adaptation in the local economic due to faster cycles of economic growth and decline in the global economy</li> <li>- Supply chains bottlenecks, continued cost inflation in commodities, energy, food supplies impact on cost structures in all industries and services and increased cost of living</li> <li>- Continuation of the war in Ukraine, onset of other international crises resulting in uncertainties and new challenges (migration, housing, health care)</li> <li>- COVID-19 pandemic is followed by new variants dampening growth during 2020s</li> </ul>



Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Low overall unemployment</li> <li>- Established high-tech sectors in ICT, Medi-Tech, Pharma, Advanced Manufacturing &amp; Engineering, Food &amp; Drink</li> <li>- Strong agricultural sector / system of farming &amp; agri-industries including artisan food</li> <li>- New and emerging sectors (film) &amp; cultural industries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Decline and loss of vibrancy in streets in Limerick City Centre and county towns</li> <li>- Commercial, retail &amp; residential vacancy rates high in the city centre, county towns &amp; villages</li> <li>- Movement of retail away from City Centre</li> <li>- Increasing online retail platform affecting “bricks and mortar” stores, retail trade &amp; footfall into the city and towns</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Park, Raheen Industrial Estate, Troy Film Studios &amp; Academy in Limerick City Centre</li> <li>- Strong presence and range of multinational and national employers creating a diversified &amp; resilient base &amp; significant job expansion potential</li> <li>- Strong base in ICT, Life Sciences (Med Tech/ Pharma) and advanced manufacturing supporting stronger clustering and expansion</li> <li>- Strong third level presence in Limerick with R&amp;D Innovation profile, links to industry and enterprise &amp; with potential for niche industries development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Workforce not expanding to meet labour market demand &amp; skills not meeting employer / industry needs impacting negatively on FDI and business expansion</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Strategic economic projects / in place</u></b></p>	<p><b><u>Social &amp; economic deprivation</u></b></p>	<p><b><u>Social diversity, social and economic inclusion</u></b></p>	<p><b><u>Vacancy &amp; dereliction &amp; regeneration</u></b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Limerick Twenty Thirty Company strategic projects completed including Gardens International &amp; sites for redevelopment in Limerick City Centre</li> <li>- Established economic centres / industrial parks in Plassey &amp; Raheen</li> <li>- “Gateway city” of strategic importance in the national &amp; regional context</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Large numbers (20,000) and proportion of Limerick City population living in disadvantaged areas &amp; greater extremes of social inequality in the city</li> <li>- High unemployment &amp; unemployment blackspots in disadvantaged city areas and parts of the county</li> <li>- Pockets of deprivation in the county, in social housing areas of towns and villages &amp; “hidden” deprivation in rural areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increasing social diversity expands &amp; enriches our culture, brings new knowledge, talents, skills and potential to expand the labour force &amp; enterprise</li> <li>- Pool of people currently in economic &amp; social deprivation provide a potential source of skills, workforce and enterprise</li> <li>- Increasing life expectancy, older population in good health with potential to contribute to family, community life, volunteering and the economy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- High level of commercial and retail vacancy in Limerick City and main County towns remains to “blight” progress in city / town centre regeneration</li> <li>- Key employers roll-back on remote working arrangements &amp; social, economic and climate change benefits of this work pattern not being achieved</li> <li>- Remote working / Digital Hubs in rural towns and villages do not develop a sufficient user base to make them self-sustaining and impact on village / town renewal is not achieved</li> <li>- Complexity of dealing with issues of vacancy and dereliction including ownership / legal issues and re-development of protected structures are difficult to resolve, resulting in delays in delivery and significant cost increases</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Connectivity &amp; Transport</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Global and national trade and tourism connectivity via Shannon Airport,</li> </ul>			<p><b><u>Housing supply / demand &amp; key social infrastructure delivery</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Insufficient housing supply to meet existing need and challenges in meeting future demand act as a barrier to growth</li> </ul>

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<p>Shannon Foynes Tier 1 port, Shannon Estuary and Limerick Docklands</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Motorway accessibility to other urban centres especially Dublin &amp; planned N/M20 to Cork to enhance connectivity</li> <li>- Key infrastructure developments including the N21/N69 Foynes to Limerick Road Improvement Scheme including Adare Bypass, LNDR Limerick North Distributor Route connect N18 to M7 and Newcastle West Bypass, Abbeyfeale Bypass &amp; re-instatement of Limerick-Foynes rail for freight</li> <li>- New broadband BCPs and WiFi initiatives throughout the County</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Community / Quality of Life</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Generally short commuting times to work/school/college</li> <li>- High levels of community safety linked to community policing and CCTV</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Social and economic deprivation deeply embedded in areas of the city (e.g. long-term unemployment, low education, poor health, youth offending, poorer outcomes for children)</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Social groups at highest risk of exclusion</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Presence of social groups that are at highest risk of social exclusion and more difficult to reach and engage (migrants in / leaving Direct Provision, migrants lacking English language skills, Travellers, people with disabilities, people with mental health difficulties, older people living in isolation and families under pressure)</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Digital exclusion</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Evidence of digital exclusion affecting certain social groups – people on lowest incomes, people with low education, older people, people living in rural areas</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Locational, Competitiveness &amp; Quality of Life Advantages</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Limerick is a cost competitive environment compared with other larger urban areas in Ireland especially Dublin</li> <li>- Limerick amongst the best located counties in national access transport &amp; connectivity</li> <li>- Limerick County well located in terms of distance from key public (schools, hospitals, public libraries) &amp; private / consumer services</li> <li>- Learning, training, research and development and innovation reputation established and expected to expand</li> <li>- Further potential for start-ups &amp; development of micro- &amp; small enterprises in urban and rural Limerick (tourism, services, cultural and creative industries, artisan food)</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Agriculture &amp; related industries</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Agricultural sector with resources, technologies and capacity to adapt to green production and spin-offs (green energy), expand local food production and improve food security</li> <li>- Established local markets (Milk Market) and local farmers market</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Negative social and community effects of lack of housing supply (migration of young people from Limerick, lower growth in population, social and financial pressures on young people and families, imbalance social structure in communities, additional issues in addressing accommodation needs of people arriving under International Protection)</li> <li>- Lack of capacity in water infrastructure and waste water treatment is a current constraint to population growth in certain towns and villages in Limerick &amp; needs significant public investment</li> <li>- Slow roll-out / delays in key strategic infrastructure projects – National Broadband Plan, road and rail, public transport, active travel, housing</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Childcare, health &amp; social services</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Access to &amp; cost of childcare may act as a barrier to labour market participation</li> <li>- Increasing demand for social care, elderly care and other types of social and health services not met with increased resources</li> <li>- Larger numbers in the population living with chronic illness and requiring services in communities and health settings put increased pressure on services</li> <li>- Lifestyle-related factors associated with poorer health not reducing (obesity,</li> </ul>

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Historic, heritage, recreational and cultural tourism assets in the city &amp; county &amp; tourism networks</li> <li>- Natural assets including the River Shannon &amp; Ballyhoura mountains</li> <li>- Strong sporting culture (Munster Rugby, GAA and soccer), sports science facilities and services and education and sporting facilities</li> <li>- Amenities for recreation and play have expanded in Limerick</li> <li>- Greater cultural diversity in the population</li> <li>- Large young population</li> <li>- High percentage of people in good or very good health</li> <li>- Well-developed community organisations, strong community spirit and attachment to local areas</li> <li>- Clubs, activities and facilities for young people with a profile of disadvantage in the city &amp; county towns</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;">lacking broadband infrastructure and connectivity</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Challenging social problems</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Concerns related to high levels of substance misuse in the population</li> <li>- Increase in offences related to possession of drugs for personal use and for sale of supply &amp; in other crimes associated with drug use (theft)</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Housing &amp; responding to housing need</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Limited housing availability for purchase or rent especially in and close to the urban area</li> <li>- High and increasing costs of house purchase and rents</li> <li>- Housing supply deficits in Newcastle West</li> <li>- Large numbers in social housing need</li> <li>- Strong dependence on private housing rental market to address social housing need (HAP/RAS)</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Transport / active travel</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Investment in active travel and public transport started and expected to increase considerably including new / extended of Greenways into the urban and sub-urban areas and inter-county</li> <li>- Limerick Greenway (40km) fully developed and operational, expanding into north Kerry &amp; showing significant increase in use by locals and visitors</li> <li>- Castletroy Greenway operational and other greenways planned</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Tourism resources &amp; unrealised tourism potential</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Limerick Greenway opens up opportunities for expansion of rural tourism into west Limerick &amp; on-going public and private investment in tourism infrastructure</li> <li>- Wild Atlantic Way Gateway designation for Limerick supports expansion of tourism in the city and sub-region</li> <li>- Tourism assets being developed further &amp; marketed in the City including Thomond Park, King John's Castle, The Hunt Museum, The Limerick City Gallery of Art, the International Rugby Experience</li> <li>- Under-used historic &amp; physical assets in City Centre &amp; important heritage,</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;">substance misuse, high risk behaviours) putting pressure on health services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Difficulties in access to health, special education, social care and other social services (family support, addiction services) increases pressures on families and results in social exclusion</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Social and health inequalities widen</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Disadvantaged areas and social groups do not close the gap with the mainstream, social inequalities remain as people and groups are left behind, affecting social cohesion</li> <li>- Inequalities in access to health care / new developments in health and management of chronic illness increase health inequalities</li> <li>- Some local areas characterised by health inequalities, low education, long history of unemployment and welfare dependence resulting in deep structural problems which make successful revitalisation complex and difficult to achieve</li> <li>- Continued increases in certain types of crime (e.g., drug crime, and drug-related crime) that impact negatively on community and personal safety and fear</li> <li>- Social and cultural barriers to building integration across diverse communities in the city and the county not being</li> </ul>

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<p><b><u>Tourism</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tourism assets including Munster Vales and Ballyhoura Country, Lough Gur, Curraghchase Park, Limerick Greenway and Shannon Estuary Way</li> <li>- Distinctive City Centre environment including Georgian character</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Additional pressures linked to accommodation needs of refugees / people arriving under International Protection</li> <li>- Significant numbers and increase in number of adults and children homeless and in emergency accommodation</li> </ul>	<p>cultural sites, natural landscapes &amp; recreational potential in rural Limerick</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Designated Activity Company for spearheading tourism developed established by Limerick City and County Council and operational</li> </ul>	<p>progressed and negatively affecting social cohesion</p>
<p><b><u>Energy resources</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Availability of renewable energy resources and technologies to contribute to Ireland's commitments to climate change (targets), creation of low carbon communities and centres of learning and commerce</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Settlement structure &amp; population dispersal</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Large number of settlements, predominance of low settlement size and highly dispersed population in rural Limerick makes it more costly to deliver infrastructure &amp; services, provide recreation based on population catchments &amp; difficult to deliver climate action measures</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Culture &amp; creative industries</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Culture and the night time economy further developing</li> <li>- Artistic &amp; creative profile in film, fashion, music, literature of Limerick with strong potential for expansion</li> <li>- Potential for building on / growth in festivals and events</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Digitalisation of economy, social life &amp; services</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cyber security, cyber safety and increase in cyber-crime present social challenges (protecting children) and economic costs (people, households, businesses, public services)</li> <li>- Digital divide is not closed resulting in widening gaps in opportunities to access information, learning / education, public services and employment</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Institutions &amp; partnership</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A number of important "anchor" institutions located in Limerick City including third level colleges (UL, TUS) &amp; HSE University Hospitals</li> <li>- Collective approach and partnerships across key stakeholders in public,</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Transport &amp; the "green" challenge</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strong reliance on the car for everyday commuting (work, school, college) &amp; car-centred society</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Digital connectivity &amp; services &amp; potential impact</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Development of Broadband Connection Points (BCPs) and Connected Hubs in rural areas and increased opportunities for remote working improves potential for regeneration of rural towns and villages</li> <li>- Expansion of broadband infrastructure and connectivity across rural areas and in other communities increases opportunities for learning using online platforms</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Green transition and targets behind</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Continued occurrence and frequency of extreme weather events with negative effects on the economy, areas affected / households / business / infrastructure and increase public costs</li> <li>- Continued loss of bio-diversity and depletion of scarce resources (water)</li> <li>- Climate change outturn deteriorates in 2020s, requiring faster and deeper adaptation and mitigation measures</li> <li>- Climate change action fails to achieve just transition approach with certain sectors and people taking a disproportionate negative impact, affecting buy-in and social cohesion</li> </ul>

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<p>community / voluntary and private sector</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Insufficient investment in public transport, low frequency of services across rural Limerick, lack of routes / services, difficulties in cross-commuting to locations of work across the city neighbourhoods</li> <li>- High level of energy inefficient buildings and dependence on fossil fuels in the domestic and non-domestic stock of buildings</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Sustainability and climate change</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of societal awareness on sustainable development challenges and what actions can yield best results in mitigation and adaptation</li> <li>- Lack of development of the circular economy</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Recreation &amp; Sports</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Deficits in certain recreation facilities in different parts of city and county including swimming, access to smaller parks and</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Area-based regeneration &amp; placemaking</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Government focus on compact growth &amp; public funding for reduction in vacancy and dereliction creates conditions for re-use of existing buildings for residential, economic and community uses &amp; regeneration</li> <li>- Landbanks and buildings in public ownership including derelict / vacant buildings in the ownership of the Council provides opportunities to re-design area / re-purpose city / town and village centres for 21<sup>st</sup> Century living</li> </ul> <p><b><u>“Green” transition opportunities</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Transition to a low carbon society and economy creates opportunities for increased investment (FDI/indigenous) in energy generation and energy security</li> <li>- Retrofitting and improving energy efficiency of buildings offers opportunities for up-skilling and re-skilling, new job opportunities for unemployed people and for social enterprise</li> <li>- Circular economy, local grow your own food and markets offer opportunities for urban and rural community enterprise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mis-match in location of jobs and where people live together and lack of development of “green” transport solutions affecting achievement of targets</li> <li>- Societal and community awareness of climate change, adaptation and mitigation measures remains insufficient and the necessary changes in behaviours are not achieved</li> <li>- Costs of transition – e.g., retrofitting, businesses and jobs with high levels of emissions – considered prohibitive or not realistic (e.g., sustainable travel)</li> <li>- High risk of energy poverty for households on low incomes including older people, people from ethnic minority backgrounds, households with children</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Placemaking &amp; community &amp; voluntary organisation</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Amenities, recreation infrastructure and civic space development and maintenance not keeping pace with community needs and expectations</li> <li>- Amenities and recreation infrastructure accessible within walking &amp; active travel distances very difficult to achieve with population dispersal</li> <li>- Ageing of volunteers in community and voluntary organisations, weaknesses in building new sources of community leadership impact on sustainability of</li> </ul>

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
	<p>recreation space, playgrounds</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improvements needed to enhance much of the existing sports and recreation infrastructure</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Sport &amp; Recreation</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Opportunities to activate passive green space for recreation and play and create nature areas</li> <li>- Opportunities to develop bio-diversity corridors along walkways and cycleways</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Community &amp; voluntary sector – building out from current strengths</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Community and voluntary groups with capacity for further development, enriching civic life</li> <li>- Potential to build on successes of voluntary and community groups in development and running of community centres, social enterprise and services</li> </ul>	<p>community and voluntary operations in urban and rural Limerick</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of diversity in volunteering roles – youth, migrants – and in boards and decision-making structures engaging communities</li> </ul>