



OUR ELDERS

The post-Independence generation in Clare

CLDC Board Members



Seated (from left): Stephen Walsh, Oliver Moylan, P.J. Ryan, Sean Conlan (Chair),
Johnny Flynn, Eamonn Flanagan.

Standing (from Left): Ger Dollard, Seamus Murphy, Claire Thynne, Aine Mellett,
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FOREWORD

As Chair of Clare Local Development Company I am proud to introduce this extremely timely research to the people of County Clare and in particular to the older people who contributed to its content and the organisations that support them. Our Elders offers all of us an opportunity to reflect on the expectations formed in our childhood as to how we would live our later years and to contrast that with the reality that presents itself today. The role of community in supporting people's ageing was central in those formative years.

As we live in a time where life expectancy continues to grow, it is even more important for each of us to reflect on the ways in which our communities actually support their growing numbers of older people. It is also clear that, in this period of radically reduced public spending, we need to re-focus our efforts on locally driven responses to this particular community issue.

Clare Local Development Company is entering a period of significant challenge financially. However, we hope to both continue the valuable work started at local level with groups of older people and incorporate into our work many of the recommendations made in this research. In addition, we hope that other organisations will find the research informative and that it will lead to the creation of support structures for older people that put their well-being at the centre of community-driven responses.

One of the strongest messages coming from the research is that older people find the way that modern society works very confusing and often frustrating. They find it difficult to come to terms with how society has changed, from its localised and personal form, to a distant and impersonal array of state-organised services that are delivered by a number of unrelated organisations. It is not surprising that older people feel confused and, at times, fearful. We cannot justifiably continue to let people live with these feelings.

Clare Local Development Company would like to thank Michael Neylon and Bríd Kirby of the Research Unit in Clare County Council. They have taken a sensitive and holistic approach to the research by collecting personal commentary and reflection and by presenting it in the socio-cultural context of the time, insofar as that can be gleaned from various data of the Central Statistics Office. Many thanks are also due to all who agreed to be interviewed, and to the Steering Group members who assisted in identifying participants and especially to Sue Targett for Chairing the Steering Group and to Christy McNamara for his sensitive and evocative photography.

Dr. Seán Conlan

Chairperson, Clare Local Development Company

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Authors would like to thank the members of the Research Steering Group for guiding the research, identifying participants, reading the drafts and making many useful comments and suggestions.

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A special word of thanks to all of those who participated in the discussion groups, which were organised by both the staff and volunteers of:

- *Ennis Active Retirement Group supported by Clarecare*
- *Daycare visitors supported by District Daycare Centre Clarecastle*
- *Residents of Kilmaley Housing for the Elderly supported by Kilmaley Voluntary Housing Committee*
- *Kilkee Senior Citizens Group supported by Eirí Corca Baiscinn (now Clare Local Development Co.).*

A special word of thanks is due to the Staff of the CSO for the provision of the data relating to older people in the 2006 Census of Population and for their speedy responses to the many queries raised in relation to the earlier Census of Population information.

We acknowledge, in particular, the unique contribution of all of the older generation – our elders, their families and carers who gave of their experiences, insight and wisdom. This is truly their story.

While every effort has been made to incorporate the insights of all the people who were interviewed both individually and in focus groups and while every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the data and analysis, the authors are solely responsible for any errors that may, inadvertently, have occurred.







EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



INTRODUCTION

Love illuminates the inner life of many of the older people who participated in this study. It is often returned in the care and affection of those around them. Yet, the unquenchable desire of older people to express their own innate kindness in acts of love is often frustrated by modern society where such opportunities are rare. These frustrations are further compounded as various social, health and media professionals may pathologise the deep feelings underlying them or may compound older people's frustrations by suggesting that they transfer them to offspring, public celebrities, personalities or various agencies. However, any of these stratagems are doomed to failure since such desires are rooted in social interaction but opportunities for such interactions are generally unavailable today. As a result of these frustrations, older people often feel a deep regret – an unnamed sorrow, a sadness and longing that is sometimes expressed in a low-level anger at modern living. This study is the story of how older people's desires of kindness are frustrated by modern society's denial of the more original pleasures of their youth when opportunities for 'compassion', 'sympathy' and 'fellow-feeling' were built into community-based social practices and interactions.

Consequently, the study examines the extent to which community life today contributes to or frustrates the well-being of its older members. A community development perspective is adopted throughout. This perspective focuses on: the extent and meaning of community-level informal and formal exchanges of friendship and relationship; the range of community organising that underpins possibilities for relationships; the responsive quality of community-controlled goods and services. For these reasons, individual services or public provision are not examined in any great detail.

The study presents the reflections of over eighty older people who were drawn from across County Clare. In addition, information from various Censuses of Population and from the most recent Survey of Income and Living Conditions (SILC 2007) was used to contextualize the study. This information was also used to identify geographic areas in the county where communities may be poorly positioned to provide their older members with the quality of life to which they aspire.

METHODOLOGY

Participants were identified by agencies that worked closely with older people. A range of living conditions and family circumstances were used to identify participants so that they would be generally representative of older people in the county.

In-depth free association narrative interviews and small discussion groups were used to capture participants' perceptions. Participants were encouraged to recall their early life experience of living with older people so that they might reveal their early expectations of





what their own ageing would entail. Those early expectations were compared with their present experience of living as older people.

The socio-demographic profile of the county in the 1920s and 1930s and in the beginning of the 21st. century was drawn from various Censuses of Population. More recent data, relating to older people only, was specifically acquired from the CSO and was used to construct an index of older people's disadvantage at the level of the Electoral District (ED).



PARTICIPANTS AND THEIR REASONS FOR PARTICIPATING

Most of the people who participated in the study were born between 1925 and 1935 and they were evenly drawn from men and women. As the first generation after the struggle for Independence, they grew up at a time when almost 90% of the population of the county was rurally based and 75% of those 'gainfully occupied' were engaged in agriculture. Life was predominantly rural and agricultural. As a result of emigration one in every two of their friends had left the county by 1946. A few of the participants in this study were returned emigrants.

Participants' strongest memories of their childhood included 'the house always full', 'going to school in bare feet', 'having tea in the meadow', 'granny asking if there was any news after coming from school', 'people always coming on cúirt', 'the curfew during the Black and Tans', 'talking about the war', 'going to the bog', 'mother's death', 'climbing trees', 'raucking the orchard', 'making hay', 'threshing', 'Black and Tans at the door', 'footing and turning turf', 'day-dreaming', 'people always talking', 'driving the cows', 'being sickly with an ugly doll that walked', 'bringing in water and turf', 'bringing tea to the meadow', 'milking the cow', 'cutting turf', 'stories of men back from the war', 'selling bogdale', 'selling turf to houses in Ennis', 'mushrooms, apples and nuts', 'riding horses', 'playing rounders', 'Santa Claus', 'making pancakes', 'going to school', 'walking in the country, listening to the birds and watching the animals', 'Christmas', 'being bathed by father', 'traveling with the lantern', 'selling turkeys and eggs', 'butter-making', 'saving hay and turf', 'helping out mother', 'the pony and trap'.

Participants remembered that as they grew older and 'if a few girls were around, the lads would follow them in to the house or they'd wait in the carhouse to be called in and then there'd be a bit of dancing' or 'you'd bring a loaf of bread for the soirees'. They remembered that at the wren dances 'the drinkers would be charged 10 shillings and the temperates 4 shillings and there'd be two half barrels for around £3 and 50 pence each'. They also remembered that there were occasions when 'the odd one of us had to go out the window – and have to make sure you weren't caught and if you woke anyone up when stealing back in, they'd threaten to deal with you in the morning'.

The reasons that participants offered for engaging in the study included their desire: to lessen the isolation of those who 'don't see a single soul from one end of the week to the next'; to share with younger people 'who often don't notice we're around'; to improve the perception of older people since 'these days you're often seen as a nuisance and a cost'; to find new friends because 'there is often no one to talk to'; to identify 'things we could do to improve our life'.

EARLY CHILDHOOD CONTEXT OF 1925-1935

In the period 1925-1935, religious influence, particularly that of the Catholic religion, with almost 500 clergymen and women and the participation of 99% of the county's population, shaped the daily life of most people in the county. The church, whatever its denomination, presided at births, marriages, deaths and attended the sick, organised the education (500 teachers) and hospital system (200 nurses and mental attendants) and 'conveyed, at every opportunity, the social obligations of the family and extended family to care for each other'. This obligation extended to providing for parents or grandparents. The obligation was often formalised in 'the writings where you were guaranteed your own room and food in the family home'. This practice was important since it was taken-for-granted that at least one family member 'would inherit, sometimes marrying, sometimes not – tho' the older people were often slow to hand over'. Because the church seldom directly bestowed material benefit and because the state's contribution to economic and social welfare was minimal, this was a period best typified by an outlook of 'self-sufficiency, ...(when) you never looked to the State for anything or if you did it was the last straw'.

By comparison, the State had a minimal presence in the county with only 580 (1%) of those economically occupied involved in public administration (Civil Service, Local Authority Officials and Civic Guards) – a number similar to that engaged as clergymen and women. Generally, direct state authority in the form of the 250 civic guards (an average of 5 per parish) was only perceived through the 'odd visit to check the licence for the bull or warn about the ragwort and things like that'. The state's presence was often limited to 'a bit of a commotion around election times but that would be it – generally the men', although people were keenly aware that it provided 'the pension even though you had to wait 'til you were 70'. Many didn't qualify as they retained their land to 'hold on to their status and influence within the family and across the community'. This was reflected in the fact that 3,500 of those occupied in agriculture (13% of total so occupied) were 65+ years. On a more fearful note, the State provided the 'final resting place of the destitute – the county home'. It was noticeable that 4,500 of the county's 95,000 population were reported as 'not in private families', suggesting that they were mainly in hospitals and 'mental institutions'.

The participants in the study lived their early life acutely aware of the 'parish' and its more recent connotation – 'the community'. Each community inherited a wide range of





organisations from the pre-independence period. These ranged from cultural organisations (language, dance, music, drama and sport) to economic organisations (mutual help groups, formal co-operatives, etc), political organisations (predominantly the civil war parties and their fractions in rural areas) as well as religious and philanthropic organisations (Legion of Mary, Solidarities, Apostolic Work Societies, etc.). These community-level organisations provided evidence that co-operation and collective action could effectively achieve a range of practical outcomes at the local level. They thus defined the geography of political and social action. As well as their practical effectiveness, these organisations had a healing and unifying impact. They acted as a counter-balance to the more individualistic 'rush for property and money' and 'smoothed the divisions of the civil war' by engaging people who otherwise were 'at loggerheads over land, politics, rights of way, wrongs done in the past, slurs on character ...'. Because of both the numerically small size of the 'parish' (averaging 2,000 people) and its tight geography, people could be mobilized with a minimum of leadership and opinion formation. As a consequence individual's contributions made a difference – they were 'sought after and their absence noted'. While some people could benefit without participating and thus diminish the 'willingness or necessity of others to participate in the future', they were generally 'shamed into helping'. To add a little persuasion, 'their access to benefits was often severely curtailed if not completely prevented'. Participants identified 'tracing' and 'news' as 'the very oxygen of social life'. Respectively, they conveyed a sense of 'who you were' and 'what was generally thought'. The 'news' consisted of 'gossip, superstition, information, success, tragedy, advice, reprimand, approval, disregard, and prediction', by means of which status was acquired or diminished, character acclaimed or decried, virtues extolled and aspirations affirmed or curtailed. Communal norms were often the most formative influences on an individual's identity, motives and behaviour. Reprimands such as 'who does he/she think they are' were directed towards those who aspired to things 'beyond their station', thus acting as a social leveller, creating more uniform patterns of behaviour and thought.

However, communities differed greatly in the extent to which they could mobilise collective action, draw on collective resources, generate co-operative solutions, foster harmony, encourage leadership and co-operate with other communities around wider agendas. As a result communities displayed very different social and economic outcomes although they might share similar resources. In hindsight 'it is obvious that some communities received a better inheritance from the previous generation in terms of organisation and ability to work together'. Communities also differed in the way they exploited the inherited resource that was embedded in their institutions. Some carried on 'doing things the way they were always done' while others decried this approach as indicating a 'stuck-in-a-rut mentality'.

The influence of the church, family and community were central in shaping identity, modeling behaviour, creating expectations and nurturing co-operative and supportive attitudes and practices. Identities, both personal and communal, were predominantly other-

oriented. As a result, offspring were happy to care for both the young and older family members and neighbours. Home was where older people enjoyed a sense of belonging and for those who were not at home, it still remained the place to which they longed to return. The church provided an overarching organisational framework of values, ideas, information and institutional arrangements that encouraged care and respect for others and provided opportunities for expressing such innate desires. For the majority, the best assurance of economic and social success lay in a combination of personal, family and collective action. There was a strong emphasis on the latter at a local level. The state's role was perceived as 'policing' or 'providing institutions of last resort' such as the county home, the asylum or the pension. Consequently it was not surprising that self-sufficiency, at both a family and community level, was seen as the predominant value.

COMPARING 1926 AND PRESENT-DAY CONTEXT OF AGEING

Perhaps contrary to present-day belief, 7.5% of the population was over seventy years of age in 1926, a percentage that has increased only slightly to 8.3% in 2006. However, the average family size has declined from 5 to 2.6 and the percentage of the population living in families of 7+ has declined from 40% to 1%.

As a reflection of the decline in agriculturally-based rural living, the percentage of the labour force engaged in agriculture declined from 75% to 7% and the percentage of the population living in rural areas declined from 90% to 34%. As a result of the decline in institutional care, the percentage of the population living in 'Hotels, Boarding Houses and Institutions' has declined from 5% to 3%. To day it is quite common, that when a spouse dies, their partner continues to live on their own. As a result, the percentage of one-person households has increased from 5% to almost 23%. It is not surprising, therefore, that older people, particularly those who live in the rural areas, feel that, unlike their childhood, there is 'never anyone around' and that 'isolation and desolation is widespread' and that they can live 'without seeing a sinner from one end of the week to the next' and often feel 'locked into the house'. Conversely, those who live in the town 'hanker for the old place' and are 'seldom understood here where there are none of our own'.

The role, status and influence of older people has changed radically as families are more fragmented both socially and geographically with the result that there is little prospect of living in a three-generation family or near to their extended family. It is only on 'the rare occasion that a family member might call or grandchildren might visit'. There is an air of resignation in the attitude of those left on their own as they suggest their offspring have 'enough to worry about'. Many older people feel it 'is not reasonable to expect that they would visit regularly' although they 'would love to have them around'. However, while some older people hand over their property in the hope that their children and their grandchildren will stay around, they 'only seem to be interested in getting their hands on the





place' with the result that some older people have been 'disappointed when the place is sold and strangers move in and we end up with neither family nor income'.

The Church, family and community are no longer the dominant influences shaping people's identities. This role is now filled by media-driven images of consumption and individualism that often have global roots. A 'self-oriented' identity has replaced the 'other-oriented' identity of previous generations. This has led to a significant inter-generational divide, which is only bridged 'by the love older people show towards the younger generation but is seldom reciprocated by them'.

The State has replaced the family as the guarantor of individual welfare, particularly in old age. As a result 'there is a vast number of services and agencies caring for older people' and 'older people are ill-prepared for such a change' because they expected 'to find care within their own family'. In addition, since they 'grew up in a period that valued self-sufficiency' and during which there 'was a negative stigma associated with any form of state support', they are 'unwilling to seek such support'. Since few of the participants in this study had worked professionally and since they generally expected to be 'busy in old age' and to have 'their contribution valued', they had 'little time for pre-retirement preparation' and expected that 'their autonomy was guaranteed'.

The community's all-encompassing identity was clearly connected to their members' identity as a result of which 'people generally thought the same and were willing to act together'. Because of their resources, including their wide range of organisations, communities had the capacity to meet the vast majority of their member's economic and socio-cultural needs and could thus motivate action. However nowadays, global forces such as production, media and fashion shape local identities in a diverse number of ways so that it is more correct to speak of 'multiple identities within a single geographic area'. As a result it is 'hard to get people to work together since they want to achieve different things for different reasons'.

An additional problem faces older people. As the state has become the principal resource for community activity by developing 'national programmes which set out the activities that can be undertaken at local level', 'older people are seen as individual customers with little thought or support for the collective identities and activities that define our social and cultural life'. The role of community groups is often reduced to that of an intermediary whose task is 'to persuade customers to avail of nationally designed services, often delivered in an impersonal manner, with staff changing from month to month'. Because of the decline in the range of community organisations and community controlled resources, most communities are not well-positioned to resource their own activities. The few community groups that exist are seldom effective in motivating collective action around community-based agendas.

CONCLUSION

People in their seventies and older, find it difficult to understand how they can retain the quality of life, which in their childhood, they expected 'would be our lot in old age'.

It is difficult to relate to the impersonal, generic, distanced and constantly-changing qualities of modern society. Church, family and community no longer play central roles in peoples daily lives and are no longer the final guarantor of public welfare. Yet at the very time when the state has taken a central position in service provision, it is increasingly emphasising the responsibility of older people to provide for their own welfare. The state's role is reduced to guaranteeing a limited set of individual rights, the discussion of which is generally confined to financial costs and benefits. Consequently, the community-level provision, that underpinned older people's welfare but is now deeply eroded, has not been replaced by appropriate public provision. In fact the state, at its most cynical, often feels justified in denying the very existence of communities and demands that older people need to become more: self-centred; individualistic; competitive; well-informed; competent lobbyists and negotiators; literate in the use of technology and flexible in dealing with bureaucracy. However, their early formative experiences leave them ill-equipped to act in this radically different social, communal and personal context. There is little basis to expect that, without significant intervention, the community can provide for the well-being of its older members in terms of:

- their relationships with themselves (eg. feelings about their own ageing)
- their relationships with others (family, neighbours, friends, wider community)
- their relationships with their physical environment
- their relationships with those agencies and institutions which mediate their other relationships.

It is clear that a number of actions are necessary to empower communities to underpin the well-being of their older members in achieving the following four goals:

GOAL 1. FOSTERING QUALITY RELATIONSHIPS WITH SELF

Strengthen the awareness of the Art of Ageing.

1. Community organisations to help older people recognise the things that can be changed and reconcile with those, which can't.

Address personal concerns.

1. Identify and train sympathetic community groups who can communicate around confidential issues with older people.
2. Sympathetic community groups to develop an awareness programme setting out for older people, the various options for using and/or disposing of their property.
3. Sympathetic community groups to develop an awareness programme of the various housing and care options for older people.





4. Sympathetic community groups to develop a pre-retirement module for those groups where none currently exist eg. Community Employment workers and Rural Social Scheme workers, construction workers, farmers, etc.
5. Sympathetic community groups to link with relevant employers to deliver pre-retirement module if none currently exists.

GOAL 2. FOSTERING QUALITY RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS

Build communication systems with older people.

1. Sympathetic community groups to introduce the use of Modern Technology eg. webcam, internet and video/phone, to link older people with their community of origin, their family and friends.
2. Sympathetic community groups to increase the awareness among family and neighbours of older people, as to the various community-based activities in which older people could engage.
3. Sympathetic community groups to identify best practice in relating to older people who generally do not avail of community-based supports.
4. Sympathetic community groups to develop outreach befriending activities.

Introduce a range of socio-cultural activities for older people in their own communities, institutional settings. Network these activities where possible.

1. With a view to organising and networking socio-cultural activities develop them within and between:
 - Daycare Centres
 - Community Housing
 - Active Retirement Groups
 - Nursing Homes
 - General Community organisations e.g. GAA, ICA, IFA, Carer's Associations, etc.
2. Network socio-cultural activities with other counties/countries.

Identify and motivate leadership and organisational capacity.

1. Develop a social and political awareness among older people of the current context in which they are growing old. Do this within and between
 - Daycare Centres
 - Community Housing
 - Active Retirement Groups
 - Nursing Homes
 - General Community organisations e.g. GAA, ICA, IFA, Carer's Association etc.
2. With a view to lobbying for change, develop leadership at local and county level and develop a county-level organisation of older people.
3. Build a network of agencies/institutions working with older people so that they are better positioned to lobby each other as well as national Departments.
4. Network County-level organisations of Older People with similar organisations in other counties and countries.

GOAL 3. FOSTERING QUALITY RELATIONSHIPS WITH ENVIRONMENT

Enhance the quality of the home for older people.

1. Sympathetic community groups to develop a number of housing options for older people so that they can avail of communal friendship, support and services as well as good quality homes.
2. Sympathetic community groups to identify and supply a range of maintenance and equipment needed to provide a warm, friendly, and easily-run home where older people can live comfortably.

Enhance the quality of the community for older people.

1. Sympathetic community groups to develop community facilities and amenities and activities that allow for older people's social and cultural enjoyment.
2. Sympathetic community groups to improve the range of public/community transport for older people.
3. Sympathetic community groups to develop community programmes to address anti-social behaviour.
4. Sympathetic community groups to enhance the quality of the visual and physical environment where older people live.

GOAL 4. FOSTERING QUALITY RELATIONSHIPS WITH SUPPORT AGENCIES

Bring agencies and institutions that work with older people closer to the community.

1. Sympathetic community groups to support the link-up with local groups of older people of national agencies who have information on older people's rights and entitlements.
2. Sympathetic community groups to equip personnel in agencies with an understanding of the supports available to older people beyond those of their agency.

Increase the understanding of and respect for older people.

1. Sympathetic community groups to develop an on-going listening programme for agencies/institutions.
2. Sympathetic community groups to conduct regular random customer satisfaction surveys.
3. Sympathetic community groups to adapt the conditions attached to current programmes so that they better reflect the 'local' needs of older people e.g. the travel pass etc.
4. Sympathetic community groups to develop an advocacy service to facilitate older people's relationships with their agencies or institutions.

Create an Inter-agency forum of service providers in the county to:

1. Publish the strategy.
2. Identify how and who will deliver and monitor the strategy.
3. Lobby nationally for the delivery of the county strategy.
4. Ensure that each agency in the county is working to a common agenda and community-development approach in relation to older people.
5. Quantify the resources currently allocated to community development initiatives related to older people.







CHAPTER ONE



1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study examines how best to strengthen the contribution of community life to the well being of its older members. In order to be consistent with this ambition, a community development perspective is adopted where no sharp boundary is drawn between the personal and communal. In fact the person draws on the communal to express her/his innate capabilities in the everyday interactions with self, family, neighbour and neighbourhood. The focus throughout the study remains on the way that communities can empower and/or disempower older people to live a life they have reason to desire. Consequently, little reference is made to the effectiveness or efficiency of the public provision of services.

The community development perspective to research, is based on the recognition that communities exist and that they influence what people, both individually and collectively, think and are motivated to do. In addition, the community development perspective recognises that communities have property, participation and deliberation rights. For these reasons the study focuses on community-level exchange and communication networks, as well as community-owned and controlled facilities, amenities, goods and services, which can be accessed by all, regardless of their ability to contribute towards their costs.

1.2 METHODOLOGY

Ten older people participated directly in free association narrative interviews in their own home or institutional setting. A spouse, sibling or carer sometimes accompanied them. Participants were selected on the basis of a number of criteria, which were considered most representative of older people in the county. For example an equal number of males and females as well as an equal number of rural and urban dwellers were chosen. In addition, multiple social and demographic circumstances were used to identify participants such as:

- living alone, in poor housing and availing of 10 hours of care (2 interviewees);
- living with another 75+ having no transport (2 interviewees);
- living in a household of three people or more where the housing was poor and where there was a high degree of dependency (2 interviewees);
- disabled and living with another person 75+ (2 interviewees);
- living in a statutory residential nursing home (1 interviewee);
- hospitalised and needing constant medical care (1 interviewee).

Different community and statutory agencies, who worked with older people or who knew them personally, identified the participants. These agencies were represented on an advisory group. A special effort was made to contact older people who were known to have little if any formal contact with support agencies or organisations. Two participants were identified through this type of active search.





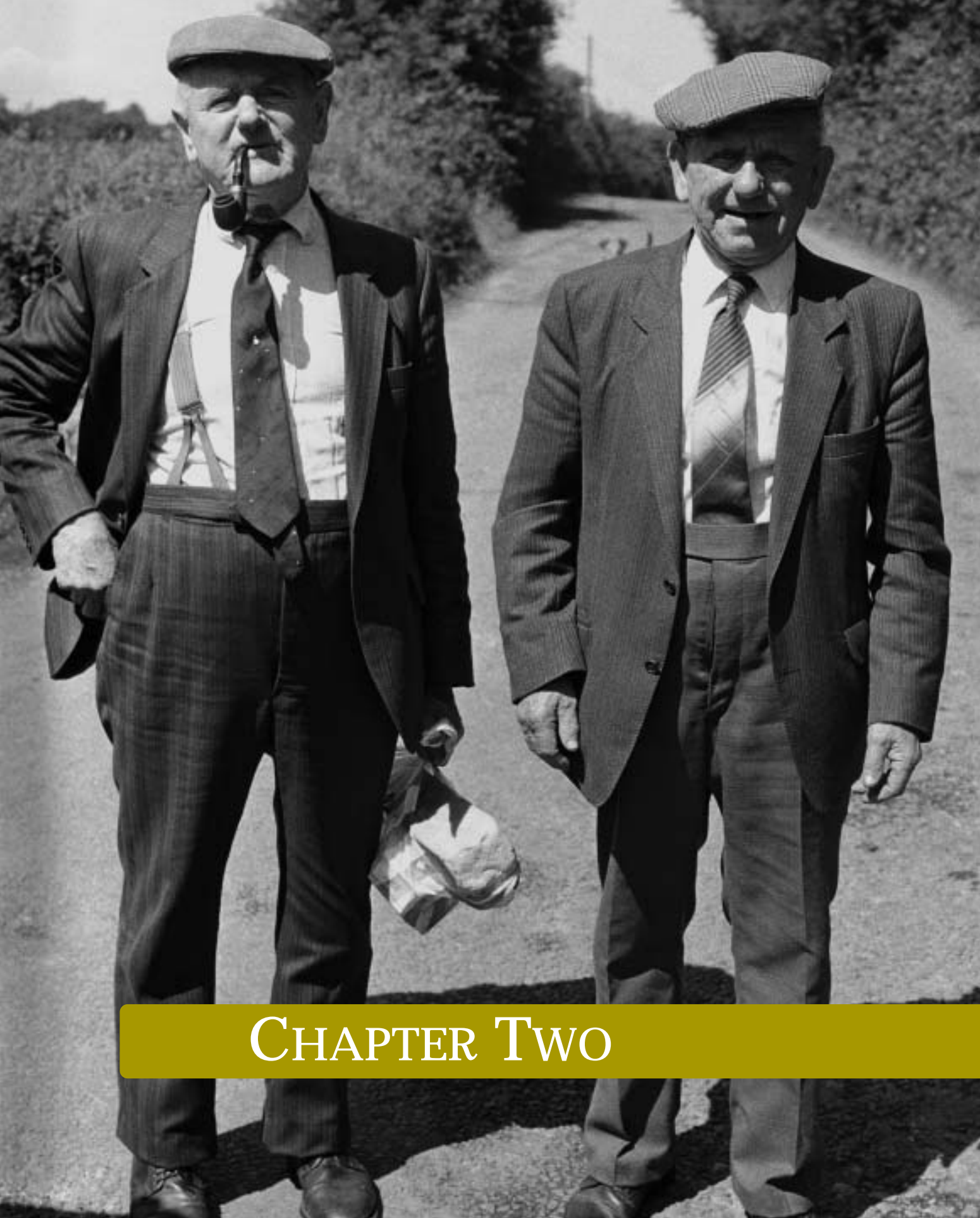
In many instances a contact person introduced the interviewer and the purpose of the study was explained during a very informal preliminary visit. A convenient time was arranged for the follow-up interview. In some cases the preparatory explanations were undertaken by the organisation that contacted the older person. In these cases only a single visit was necessary.



The interview usually lasted two or three hours and was often broken up with a cup of tea. Initially, the interviews were recorded but this was found to be intrusive and was terminated. Notes were taken instead. By way of 'breaking the ice' the early part of each interview involved a conversation between the interviewer and the participant that touched on experiences of early childhood and life in the 1920s and 1930s. Participants then filled in the story of their life to date. The final part of the interview was slightly more formal and focused on participants' current experience of the quality of their community and family life.

After the ten indepth interviews were completed, six focus groups of older people (totaling approximately seventy people) came together at various locations around the county. Again, these groups were chosen because they were seen as representative of older people who 'came together formally or informally'. The focus groups were organised by the community and statutory agencies that regularly facilitated older people coming together. The topics for the focus group discussion were identified through an analysis of the individual interviews. They included the key community-level opportunities for and challenges to older people achieving a life quality commensurate with their expectations. The discussion groups convened for a second time to discuss and decide an agenda for action at community and national level that would beneficially impact on the quality of older people's lives.

Many of those who participated in the indepth interviews and in the focus groups lived at or near where they were born. Some had moved to urban centres in their later years. It was noticeable that only a small number of participants grew up in families 'that didn't have a piece of land'. Consequently, experiences of growing up 'without land' were only reflected in the discussion groups that included a small number of returned emigrants, thus suggesting that this large cohort constituted a 'present but not participating voice'.



CHAPTER TWO



2.1 QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

2.1.1 EARLY CHILDHOOD IN THE 1920s AND 1930s

It was not surprising that so many early memories of the ten people who participated in the indepth interviews reflected farm-based and rural activities since 75% of all those 'gainfully occupied' in Clare in 1926 were engaged in agriculture. It was noticeable that there were very few references to the daily life of children living in 'navvy's' or 'labourers' households¹ although they accounted for 15% of the population at the time. This may be due to the fact that the majority of 'navvy' and 'labourer' households emigrated and seldom returned.

2.1.2 ATTITUDES TO OLDER PEOPLE IN THE 1920s AND 1930s

When discussing how older people were treated in their youth, participants felt that they were: treated well; looked up to; never in hospital; taken care of as no one was put away; treated with respect and kindly; looked after and nursed at home; dowry had to be brought in to marry off the daughter in the house; if the older people were living with the son some didn't get married since they wouldn't dream of bringing in a girl; in-laws walking the land before the dowry was set; living with grandparents; grandparents had their own room, did their own cooking and baking; there might be no agreements (no writings) but no one was thrown out; treated well by the family – the exceptions were always there; the house usually had a room (parlour) where the old couple would move in, if the son got married, the house would have two doors; most of the property was sorted; there could be a lot of silence either when the land was sorted or when it was not sorted; some of the young people were each waiting for the property; the girls were more likely to be interested in the parents – when the will was made and the land gone to the son; the parents had the use of the house but when the son had the land they didn't care (about the older people) after that – the son might say 'its not my problem'; the daughter-in-law would have very little of a say and she usually did the cooking with the older woman looking over her shoulder; if a son-in-law was brought in he got it from both sides.

There was a strong emphasis on being cared for at home and a sense of dread about being 'sent away'. There was detailed awareness of how property was handled in such a way that older people retained their autonomy and dignity, albeit that, if the son married, life for the daughter-in-law might be difficult.

2.1.3 ACTIVITIES OF OLDER PEOPLE IN THE 1920s AND 1930s

Participants noted that in their childhood: men went on cúirt or went out rambling; going gambling; having a few pints; women were knitting, sewing, baking; they were always checking on your whereabouts (discipline); they were babysitting; organising wakes; asking children to do messages; praying; getting water from well; shopping; storytelling; tracing; gossiping; playing music; making wine; having snuff; going to mass.

¹ These were Census categories at the time.





They also noted that there were older people in every house who'd mind the house and keep the fire on; they'd keep a box of sweets that'd often be soft; they were great with the music – flutes, concertinas and an odd fiddle; they used to work; they were very involved in making the ricks of hay, killing the pig; they hadn't a penny to rub together; they told funny and frightening stories – especially the ghost stories.

It was clear that older people continued to be active in the three-generation household and played a significant role within the domestic and agricultural economy as well as the general cultural life of the community.

2.1.4 OCCASIONS OLDER PEOPLE FELT THEY SHOULD ATTEND

When asked what other occasions and events older people felt they should attend they identified: the Meitheal; the Legion of Mary; the Confraternity of the Sacred Heart; the 3rd Order; the union meeting which had a certain secrecy but the picket was sacred; the wake; the ICA; the political parties; the farming organisations; the parish Mission; butter making classes; funerals; hurling and football matches where the parish was playing; cookery classes; the market to sell (eggs, old hens), Croagh Patrick and Lough Derg which were 3 days fast, barefoot, no sleep; St. Vincent de Paul; giving a halfpenny to the black baby who nodded; the races; the sports; the agricultural show; the school sports; the threshing; bridóg (Feb); the straw boys; the Stations; the 'Bocoks'; reading of the church collection; visiting the gypsies when they were around; going to the odd wren dance but if you did you left early around 2.30-3.00.

There was a wide range of events that older people felt they should be engaged in and/or attend, indicating an extensive set of community-based activities and organisations across the religious, social, cultural and economic life of the community. There were always people to organise these events and activities. The subtlety of the dynamics that underlay this way of life emerged more fully from the findings of the indepth interviews.

‘The musical instrument I got was smashed up because it was the devil’s work’.

Peggy is in her early 70s and was born in another County. They ‘had land’. ‘There were eight in the family’. Her grandfather died when she was young. Her grandmother lived with them in the early years. She remembers her own mother as a ‘violent vicious mother’ and the ‘two women were constantly bickering’ and ‘we were made to feel that it was our fault that we were born’. There was ‘nothing but talk about what the neighbours would think’. When her father’s family gave her a musical instrument to learn, ‘it was smashed up. I was told it was the devil’s work’.

At the age of seventeen Peggy emigrated and qualified as a teacher after trying her hand at a number of different jobs. She worked abroad all her life and married and had a family but herself and her husband separated and she became estranged from her two children because of the way they treated her property while she was in hospital. Eventhough her children drove her to the airport ‘they didn’t even kiss me goodbye’. Now ‘they couldn’t care less whether I was dead or alive’. Since her return to Ireland fifteen years ago she had no communication with her ex-husband or her children.

Peggy decided to live in Clare, since ‘it was attractive and I was familiar with it and one of my sisters lived here’. Her other brothers and sisters are spread around the country and there are ‘one or two abroad’. She has little or no contact with them and there is only one ‘who looks after all of us’.

She found it difficult to get accommodation when she returned and had to ‘go through the hoops for years’. She now lives in a Local Authority house on her own. It is a nice neighbourhood and her neighbours are a ‘mixed lot’. Some take a particular interest in how she is doing and ‘do small jobs to help’. However, others ‘get some satisfaction out of being awkward about parking outside my house’, when she wants to keep it clear for the community bus that ‘calls now and again’ to pick her up. Others take ‘some satisfaction out of ‘shouting after me and causing havoc at Halloween’. A home help visits twice a week for two hours at a time. One visit is taken up with the Friday shopping, the other with cleaning and tidying.





She has a disability and 'gets around the town by taxi, community bus and with the help of a walking aid'. Some shops are her favourites, and she has regular drop-off points and 'little occasions that I look forward to'. Peggy takes a lot of medication for her depression. However, she tries to 'fill the days and stay busy'. A number of organisations benefit from her life experiences and they are a source of 'great friends'.



Recommendations

- Strengthen the Cultural awareness of Ageing as an Art so that those things that can be changed are addressed and older people are reconciled with those that can't.
- Develop Community Programmes to address anti-social behaviour.

*'The farming went against me, got the brucellosis,
separated and moved to town'.*

Marty is 'well into his eighties' and was born twenty miles from the town where he is now living. There were nine in the family and many of them got married, although 'most marriages were arranged then'. Most of his brothers and sisters 'are dead now but I go to see the brother in England twice or three times a year and keep in touch with one of my daughters in England who is the best to me'.

His grandmother lived with them in the early years when there 'was no pension so the writings were important'. People that time had a kind of system where men were quite old when they got married and 'fellows were picking up their own' (extended family members) as a 'way of keeping things within the family' so that 'they never looked outside their own ring'. Marty remembers his early years as a time when the 'house was always full'. There was a lot of coming and going and there was 'never a Sunday when there wasn't a sidecar of visitors from ... my mother's place...always the mother's people coming to the house – the cousins and that'.

Marty went away when he was young but 'fell in for the land' after the brother had been working it. This happened because 'I was the one that could be trusted' and 'the other fellow was a bit of a rake'. When Marty married, his mother continued living with them. He was very active developing the farm and expanding the dairy herd. However, when he got sick it was a long time before he was diagnosed with brucellosis. It was longer again before he got effective treatment. He was lucky to meet 'a doctor that had travelled'. All that time his energy, morale and motivation waned. His health never recovered and his farming became 'rakish' and 'went against me'. His marriage 'fell apart' and 'myself and the wife separated – 'twas the talk of the parish'.

Marty moved to town 20 years ago. He lives alone in a two-bedroom house in a small council estate in a 'largish town'. He is happy where he lives as 'there are only a small number of houses here and I know most of my neighbours and no one bothers you'. He knows a lot of the neighbouring children by name and they recognise him.

While Marty claims to have no friends he feels that he has a lot of 'acquaintances' and has 'a mentality younger than my age', which is





mostly due to the fact that 'I don't look forward too much'. There are some organisations with which he has regular contact and where he can contribute what he feels like. One of his sons, who lives abroad, 'has the place behind at home' and any of his four children 'that want a site have one' but 'there is a fella (married to one daughter) that I have nothing to do with'.

Even though he is now living more than twenty miles from where he was farming, he has regular 'news of what is happening around at home'. His own family are mostly away but 'to be honest they have always done their bit'. He feels this is especially the case with one daughter who lives abroad but who's 'very open' and whose work involves her in 'getting people with breakdowns back to work'.

Recommendation

- Use Modern Technology such as internet, webcam and video/phone to link older people with their community of origin, their family and friends.

A caring spouse and a spouse needing care – ‘hoping I go first.’

Josie and Packie are in their late seventies and were married over forty years ago. They live in the countryside ‘a mile or two from the nearest shop’ but ‘happy together’.

Before she married, Josie’s grandmother lived with them. She ‘usually sat in a chair where no else sat without asking her – it was a great privilege’. In the evenings there was ‘a lot of callers – playing cards and music and, of course, the dancing’. There was a concertina in the house and later ‘a gramophone’. There were travellers living ‘over the road’ who terrified them with ‘their stories of witches and ghosts that the grandmother believed in – and of course the bean shí’. However, as her grandmother got older ‘she got more difficult and was always taking the snuff. You’d have to go out with her and as soon as she was back she’d want to go again’. Yet ‘everyone cared for their own. You wouldn’t dream of anything else, since there was a great stigma of failure and rejection associated with sending someone to the ‘County Home’ or the ‘Mental Hospital – ‘twouldn’t be Christian’.

Packie grew up outside a local town on ‘a bit of land’. He regularly brought his grandfather ‘on the horse and cart to collect his pension – you had to be seventy at the time’. He’d help him off of the ‘rider’ of the cart since ‘the bones were bad with him’. Grandparents were shown ‘great respect’ although there was a sense that ‘if you were getting older you were finished’.

Packie ‘moved in’ when they got married. Josie’s mother ‘who lived to be 99’ continued to live in the house with them. Josie nursed her at home when ‘there was no carer’s allowance and it was clear (from the doctor) that nothing extra could be done in hospital’. The ‘bit of land’ was small and Packie always had a job ‘outside’. The work ‘was hard’.

There were many people involved in local organisations since ‘there were a lot of schemes and programmes at the time around the land – drainage and improvements’. There were also a lot of development organisations such as Muintir na Tíre, political organisations, sporting and cultural organisations. Catholic organisations were also active such as the Sacred Heart Solidarity, the Confraternity of the Holy Family and the Legion of Mary. Packie and Josie were active in some of these – ‘often you’d be shamed into it’.





Times have changed and now 'no one cares much and there's no one around to do anything or organise anything'. All of their children (they have seven) 'have their own key' to let themselves in. It can be very lonely – 'no neighbour calls and as most of our neighbours are not from this area they wouldn't know us or know what to talk about'. As Josie puts it 'I'm often afraid and when I'm on my own I feel like a prisoner and won't open the door to anyone unless they come around to the window'.

As they get older they have a growing 'fear of being packed off'. Packie and Josie have noticed that some families fail to honour their parents' wishes. As a consequence some older people have tried to adopt a more independent life. They are not so willing to move out of their home or give up their opportunity to 'earn a few bob or sell a site'. Yet efforts at independence are not supported. For example they can't use their free transport with the local private minibuses or hackneys.

They have lived in the same place all of their married life. Josie admits that she depends a lot on Packie who 'still drives and takes me to mass – my only outing most weeks'. Home is the centre of their life and caring for Josie involves a certain 'sacrifice', such as not being able to go out to the dance that 'he loves'. They make very few requests of their family to help out since 'they have their own life to live and their own worries' and unless it was a special occasion 'we wouldn't ask'.

As Josie puts it 'the phone is a lifeline'. Since Josie is so dependent on Packie she wishes that she'd 'go first'. They haven't discussed what will happen if she doesn't.

Recommendations

- Develop an awareness programme for older people about the options available to them regarding their property.
- Increase awareness of the various community-based activities for older people amongst their family and neighbours.
- With a view to lobbying for change, develop leadership at local and county level and develop a county-level organisation of Older People.

'If you move into one of them places you don't have to give up the place at home'.

Mikey and Sean are brothers in their late seventies and have been living together in the country for the past forty years. Their house was built 'in the twenties when the parents married'. Neither has married. When they were young they 'knew everyone around our area and you'd see the older people at Mass and the women with the Galway shawl of grey'. That was a time when 'men took off their caps going into the church and women had to wear something – a scarf or them little hats'. When Mikey and Sean started going to the local town 'you'd see an odd woman in the snug – a shawl and glass of Guinness'. That was a time when 'we didn't have a radio and we'd gather to hear the match down at Kearney's and Leo Rowsome would be on for a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes'. That was when 'right time' was 'radio time'. After the match on the radio 'there'd be a big crowd above in the field – hurling'. But now 'all of them are gone. They lived to a good age'.

There was a long tradition of 'emigration to the States', where all their mother's sisters were living. However, neither of them 'were ever attracted to it'. Sean went to the States once for a wedding when he was young. He went to work in England in the fifties and came home in the sixties when his father died because his mother 'was done up with arthritis' and 'couldn't get around'. Their sister also helped out at home when their mother was alive and they were more or less self-sufficient 'with the garden, pigs, ducks and drakes'. When he came back from England he got a job 'on the buildings in Shannon where most of us (those that returned from England) were at the time'. Mikey 'kept an eye on the land' and when his mother died he started working in Shannon too. That was the time he took his 'first pint'. After a few years in Shannon they both worked 'on the road for the Council'.

They still have a close relationship with their sister who 'puts us up for a few weeks whenever we came out of hospital – just to get back in form before coming home'. They like where they live as 'it's our home and it's good enough around where we live here – not like up around? with the social² behaviour'. 'The way things are now there's a lack of security – the drugs are involved in that I suppose'.

Neither Sean nor Mikey drive. Sean 'gave up the fags fifteen years ago'. They get to the nearest town after 'walking over the road to get a lift in'

² Referring to anti-social behaviour that was a regular topic on the local radio at the time of the interviews.





or 'one of the neighbours would bring us'. In town they get 'a bite to eat, have a few drinks and get a taxi home, usually'. The taxi costs around €15. When in town they might call in to see a neighbour or friend in hospital. They have plans for the future 'if you can't stay around here any longer you could go to St. Joseph's or to a day-care centre or have a home-help call with a bit to eat in the middle of the day if you didn't feel like cooking for yourself'. The only thing is that 'in St Joseph's you'd have no place of your own, like they have in those places³ where you pay for you own room and you have a little kitchen to cook for yourself and watch television and you can do your shopping and, if you need her, the nurse would call around or the doctor'. In those places 'I think you don't have to give up the place at home'.

Recommendations

- Identify best-practice in terms of relating to older people who generally do not avail of community based supports.
- Develop outreach befriending activities.
- Develop a number of housing options for older people so that they can avail of communal friendship, support and services as well as a good quality home.

³ Referring to the local community housing scheme for older people, which they visit now and again.

‘Often, when it gets dark I go to bed – a country woman living alone, on the verge of town’.

Maggie is in her early seventies and lives on the outskirts of town in poor housing without an indoor toilet and without running water. She married young and ‘moved into town when I got married’. Before that, she lived ‘well out the country on a farm’. That was a time when ‘people were involved in farming and helping each other out ... as everyone had a special skill to share and might be “called out” by neighbours’.

Her brother at home was always on demand ‘for cutting turf with the slán’ and her husband was also ‘good in the bog’. There was no pay then but there was a return with other work on the farm. Some were also involved ‘as church door collectors, others would be involved in parish football or the LDF (Local Defence Forces). My husband was in the LDF and my son in the FCA (gaelic for Local Defence Force)’.

As a young woman, the big events were the fairdays, ‘when myself and my husband were up at three in the morning to bring a few cattle, and we’d meet with the neighbours also and walk all the way to town, wet or dry. It might be dark that night when they got home – hard times’. Other big events were the crossroads dancing, visits to the Holy Wells, the Family Grave, Easter, Christmas and killing the pig ‘as some neighbours also came to help out’.

Maggie feels ‘safe’ in the area where she lives and has ‘no interest in moving anywhere else’. She is clear that from the ‘time I married in here it’s my only home and life now’. The area where she is living has also changed. Many of the young people are moving away to take up jobs and there are only a few older people left. Her husband is dead a long time and two of her four children ‘live a long way away’. Her son ‘drops in on his way to work or when he is going to look after the farm’. However ‘I have a few good friends’. She doesn’t call into the neighbours but might ‘speak to one now and again or if things got bad’. She looks forward to ‘Saturday night Mass and the Holy Wells’.

Life has changed a lot from the time when older people were cared for at home by a family member, a neighbour or nurse since a person had to be ‘very sick before the Doctor was called’. As regards expecting her family to care for her as she gets older, Maggie ‘hopes so’ but is aware that it may not be possible to get much care at home since ‘I’ve no toilet and water is





also from an outside well'. At the moment she visits her sister who is living in a local private nursing home having 'sold up everything at home'. Maggie worries as to what will happen when her sister is no longer able to pay for her care in the nursing home. Maggie is aware that 'visits at home by priest or nurse' would make life better as 'neighbour visiting is almost gone'. But as she says herself 'I'm easy now about things. Maybe to get an indoor toilet but I can't afford it. But I am content now'.

As she is getting older, Maggie is aware that as 'a shy person I say little and I don't complain – no use complaining is there?' and while some neighbours might say 'hello on their way to work, the nights can be lonely so I go to bed when it gets dark'.

Recommendations

- Identify the range of maintenance and equipment needed to provide a warm, friendly, easily run home where older people can live comfortably.
- Develop community facilities and amenities and activities that allow for older people's social and cultural enjoyment.

'Living at a distance from the one I love – something has got to give'.

Mary had fond memories of 'the home place' as 'I nursed my father in his last years – he died young and I couldn't leave 'til my brother had grown up'. She left in her late thirties and never married. Mary was well into her eighties when she returned to Ireland to spend time with and to care for her brother Padraigh. She had looked forward to this, as she knew him pretty well 'having come home to spend my two-week summer holiday with him most years'. She also came home if he was sick – 'I told them (where she worked) that I had to go home'.

When she returned permanently, Padraigh was also in his eighties. She quickly noticed the early signs of Alzheimer's. Little did she expect the 'long, dark, wet, winter nights, with no neighbours, in a house with no sewerage or heating and miles from the nearest village'. The one thing that made the day bearable was that 'he went to bed early and I got a bit of peace'.

Living with Padraigh was very different from living in the city where she had spent the majority of her life. 'He loved the boiled egg, brown bread and strong tea for breakfast and to listen to the radio, walk out the land and sit by himself in the barn – he'd be talking to someone there in his mind'. However, by December, Mary had enough and she moved to the nearest town where she had a 'sad Christmas getting a taxi out and back from Padraigh's place, trying to make the place look nice'. She was quickly out of pocket 'as the taxis cost a fortune'.

Mary decided to prepare a room in her house in the town for Padraigh, 'but he never came to live'. He might come to town 'the odd day, especially if the cattle mart was on'. But even then 'he might say he was walking over to the mart and I would be waiting for him to come back and no sign of him – what could have happened'. As time went on 'he got angrier – especially if I tried to straighten him out'.

She worries about Padraigh. The land was 'let' but the 'forestry was taking over anyway and I don't know what he'll do for his walk. The view from the old houses is gone'. Yet it's clear that 'he's afraid of being put in a home'. Mary's memory 'is giving' and her energy 'isn't great'. Often she finds that 'you'd be doing 40 things at the one time and have no time to go out to his place – it's coming to the stage where something has got to give'.





Mary's money was running out and she tried various sources of help but found little. When her niece was getting married in the States 'I couldn't get anyone to call out to see if he was OK so I didn't go'. In hindsight it may have been 'for the better as I felt light in the head and the Doctor told me to take it easy. I was getting on in years he said'.

Recommendations

- Improve the range of public/community transport for older People.
- Adapt the conditions attached to current programmes so that they better reflect the local 'needs' of older people eg. the 'travel pass', etc.

'Stay at home if possible – we have good people to care for us'.

Patsy is living where he was born – 'my father's place'. He was born during the War of Independence. As a young lad he worked for 'a farmer down near? (a town 15 miles away from where he was born). He worked there 'for many years but that was enough'. In his youth old people were 'well looked after in this area. There was great respect for them and they were great to give advice'. Some were 'great at the turf and the thatching especially – they often shared making hay and cutting turf'. They knew a lot because 'they had to be good learners since there was no radio and no paper – they learned the hard way as a cow might die or something would attack the crops'. While 'they had great brains' they had no chance since most of them 'left school after the primary'. He remembers how women were great 'especially with children – they were very patient and were able at the same time to carry on with their own jobs, making clothes and doing the knitting and sewing'.

If a person was sick 'there was always a gifted woman around or an old nurse – there was a special nurse that the doctor trusted if a baby was being born'. Those were times when the neighbour or the postman might stop for a chat and 'you'd get the parish news'. But now, even the priest has little time for a chat, except maybe 'the 1st. Fridays and the stations in the country houses'. Older people at the time felt that 'they should attend these as well as the Sunday Mass of course. And then there was the market and the fair day and of course Garland Sunday. Confirmation was an important day but few men went to that'.

Older people were fond of their own place. In fact many 'never moved out of it except to go to? (the nearest town) maybe a few times in their life. But sometimes a stranger who married into a farm was slow to mix and locals were slow too'.

Patsy never married and had been very involved looking after his parents. Since they died he 'took life as it came – you see I was the only one at home'. He doesn't notice that he is getting older as he still 'keeps on the go'.

People are good to Patsy. With the help of his sisters in England and locals 'the house was almost re-built and I got in the water in 1988 and built an indoor toilet'. In fact 'there are still two sisters living in England and along with their children come for a few weeks in the Summer. They stay





in the local town. They came last winter when I was sick and I had to go to hospital'. He knows most of his neighbours and 'most of the young people around'. Some neighbour calls in every day and one brings him to mass. Otherwise he gets a taxi to the shops and post office. Nowadays 'young people have new ways, but still have concern for parents and grandparents'.

The neighbourhood is safe and as he puts it 'I have no worries being alone. People like myself have no worries as we have "Neighbourhood Watch" and a community care group in the parish who visit'. The nurse calls often and arranges for visits to the Doctor. Last year when he got sick 'the nurse and doctor arranged for me to go to Ennis. I got on great – so no worries. If I want anything the nurse and my neighbours and friends are there'. Patsy calls to the neighbours 'for football on TV, or to arrange a trip to Ennis for a day out'.

Patsy is clear that he wants to 'stay at home if possible – we have good people to care for us'.

Recommendations

- Equip personnel in agencies with an understanding of the supports available to older people beyond those of their agency.
- Develop an on-going listening programme for agencies and institutions working with older people.

Retiring to a nursing home – 'the day you lose your independence you lose all.'

Joe 'is shoving on to eighty'. He remembers growing up, although he doesn't remember the time when he was only two and a half and his parents brought him to live with his grandmother, two aunts and an uncle. He only came to realise that much later when 'it dawned that the older people in the house weren't my "parents"', who in fact 'lived fifteen miles away'. He remembers that 'sometimes we'd call to out to see them (his parents)'. His grandmother died when he was six. It was 'around the time I went to school when all you'd have was a sceilp of bread – the girls might have a bottle of milk. On the way home you might rauck a few turnips or onions and eat them'.

When he was young, 'the girls (his sisters who were living with his parents) would call to visit and the word would go around that Bridgie (his mother) and the girls were around and there'd surely be a set – always a good few musicians – tin whistles, concertinas, an odd flute and if there were no women they'd dance the buck set'. Of course there was 'the picking of the gander, the wren and persuading some old woman to give us a house for the wren dance – we'd take out the furniture and put in the ladder along the wall for a good wide seat'.

When the uncle in the house died 'the aunts were clear that I couldn't leave them', but at the age of thirty-five Joe left for England and afterwards went to the States. There he worked for the first time with a black man. He kept asking himself 'how am I going to get on with this one, because they'd (the white workers) called you a honkie if you were too friendly with the blacks' They resented the fact that a white man like myself would 'eat or walk' with a black man. Joe had his answer ready 'we're all coloured men and if he's good enough to work with he's good enough to eat with good enough to walk with'.

But Joe was in the States without a visa. As he put it – 'I was always a loner. If I met people I'd fall in with them right away'. After ten years he was found out and was held in detention with 500 others for the 'best part of a month' before being put on a plane. 'All in all 'twas a good life'.

When he came back 'everything was growing wild around the home place and I was told that the jackdaws had broken the windows trying to get out but the glass was on the inside – so I knew the place was being





run down deliberately'. He got a house a mile further on and 'painted it, cut the trees and did it up'. The neighbours might call in but he didn't 'really know them that well'.

Ten years ago Joe had a bypass – 'the house wasn't great for the health so I had to get respite regularly'. He'd go to the local nursing home for a fortnight at a time but when he came home 'the old house was far out and 'twould be cold and you'd miss the company in the morning'.

At the time he hoped to get a house in the local town as there were 'houses in the day-care centre'⁴. When that didn't work out he moved to a nursing home permanently as he put it 'I was on my own so long – 'twas a relief to wake up with others. I don't mind the dormitory. I get €40 back from my pension book and the family bring in bits and pieces. I have lots of clothes since I was a devil for buying – buying a big bundle of clothes together. Sometimes I'd go out for a cup of coffee and roll – just a change – tho' the food here is excellent'.

However Joe is clear that 'when you lose your independence and you need to be taken to the bathroom or have a colostomy bag, life gets difficult because the nurse may be busy when you call – they may be at something'. As he puts it 'the day you lose your independence you lose it all'.

Recommendations

- Develop an awareness programme of the various housing and care options available to older people.
- With a view to organising and networking socio-cultural activities develop them within and between Daycare Centres, Community Housing, Active Retirement Groups Nursing Homes and General Community Organisations.

⁴ Many Older People confused Daycare centres, Residential centres where older people lived communally and Nursing Homes.

'The Services won't walk in the door to you'.

Monica lives close to her daughter and son-in-law. She is approaching her nineties and 'the memory is beginning to go a little'. Having gone to England with her sister for a few years when she was young, they both came back 'when the War broke out (2nd. World War) because my mother would have come for us anyway'. After 'coming back' she married and 'got the place from a cousin' where she 'married-in'. She hasn't 'left the place since'. The place itself wasn't too bad and 'while it was wet there was a good garden'.

There were older people in the house when Monica moved in and while the 'old woman died within a few years he lived on for a long time'. People weren't put into hospital since 'twas common at the time to look after the old ones'. Monica doesn't remember nurses calling but the house 'was known for dancing and music'. They had a gramophone so the place was often full. 'They'd come when it got dark and if they waited for the tea at 11.00 they might wait 'til 1.00 or 2.00 in the night'. As well as the music and dancing the fairs and markets were the main topics of conversation. The local town would be packed on market day and 'you'd have to walk in the street as the animals were lined up along the footpaths'.

Older people often 'conducted matters from the chair' as they established; 'prices to be expected'; 'the time for sowing the garden'; 'the time for cutting the turf'; 'the time for opening the high meadow'. The high meadow was cut first every year and 'they were always anxious to be the first at the hay before the rest of the neighbours'.

Monica feels 'well looked after' and 'feels safe' where she is. She suffered a stroke eight or nine years ago but made a great recovery with the help of a 'very kind physiotherapist'. Having recovered most of her mobility, the 'daycare' bus takes her to the centre 'when the weather is good'. There she can 'meet my friends', 'do the hair'; 'pay a few bills' and 'collect a few small things from the shops'. As she says 'tis a pity there's no other way of getting into town'. The respite in the hospital gives her family a break but 'if the home help can't come there's no one to replace her'. The public health chiropodist has a long waiting list but 'they fix me up (referring to the private chiropodist) when I need it'.





At times she feels lonely, as there are 'very few people left who can visit'. One of her family who lives next door calls first thing in the morning and 'they give me a cup of tea in bed'. The radio is her main companion. She turns it on after the cup of tea. Around three or four in the evening she turns on the television 'til I go to bed again'.

Now that she has got to know her home help, 'her visits break up the day' and the 'Alzheimer's woman comes twice a week' She feels that while the Carers' Association makes a big difference and there are other Associations trying to help, 'more information is needed as the services won't walk in the door to you'.

Recommendations

- Link National Agencies who have information on Older People's rights/entitlements with local groups where older people gather and support those groups in this activity.

'I can do anything – dance, sing, live on my own'.

Danny is 'pushing into the eighties' and has lived where his father and grandfather lived 'before me'. His father and grandfather were very active in farming, hurling and local organisations. He remembers all of the activities in the area – 'the house dances with the cement floors, the best musicians in the country, the old fireplace and all that went on'. But 'once you were sixty you were old and didn't go out after Mass on a Sunday'. Older people dressed in black and 'if they wore neither hat nor coat 'twas because they had a good head of hair'. Generally they didn't go to weddings. Young people didn't want older people's company.

It was a 'moneyless' society and he particularly remembers the time when an 'outbreak of abortion' among the cows left the family 'on their knees'. It happened at a time when neighbours 'couldn't sell anything either'. There was a blockade in place – 'England was charging and Dev wasn't paying'. Since 'stories of the Famine were widely known, people were anxious and wanted to see the war coming as 'twould improve prices'. People were 'well aware of what was happening nationally and internationally – not like now when they couldn't care less'.

Danny is clear that 'now you see situations where we've gone too far in pumping land and getting it to produce what it wasn't meant to'. He feels that there is something wrong 'when some farmers are drawing up to €100,000 in single payments while others in the West of Ireland have only €2,500 out of it'.

He was almost forty when he married. They met in 'Paddy Con's where Mick Delahunty was playing'. They had four children.

His father and mother continued to live with them and had a 'room of their own'. That was the way at the time as 'people were cared for at home' and only went to the 'county home' when things 'became desperate'. If the 'grandmother argued with the new woman in the house the grandmother often left to live with her own daughter'. If this wasn't possible 'there'd be trouble'.

Nowadays, there is strong sense of time being scarce, and while 'people living around know me they are busy'. When it comes to needing some care he 'hates to think of it' and has adopted an attitude of 'letting every day do for itself'. The prospect of becoming dependent is brought home





to him when ‘I spend a day at a nursing home and see them fading away and look into their room – very depressing’.

He also claims it ‘is getting more difficult for the family to look after their own as they are not able to work at home – they’re lucky if they can’. It is important to be active especially with your own age group. He enjoys the fact that ‘we have a bit of a group and with the help of the PP (Parish Priest) we meet up every month or two for a bit of a sing-song and dance and remember those who have passed away’.

He feels lucky because ‘I can do anything – dance, sing, live on my own and there are a few people with a bit of depth who call in and the phone is a major bonus’.

Recommendations

- Develop a social and political awareness among older people of the current context in which they are growing old within and between General Community Organisations, Daycare Centres, Community Housing, Active Retirement Groups and Nursing Homes.
- Network County-level organisations of Older People with similar organisations in other counties and Nationally.

2.1.6 GENERATING RESPECT FOR OLDER PEOPLE 1920 - 1940

Participants in this study had strong childhood memories of the extended family, where ‘visiting’ was common, ‘the family name was everything’, and ‘what the neighbours thought was important’. They grew up in families where obedience and respect were demanded. Only an ‘ungrateful’ son or daughter would ‘seek their inheritance before their parent(s) considered it appropriate’ or would ‘fail to care for them, even if not legally obliged to do so’.

These values were supported by the educational system, which emphasised the ‘sacrifices’ of previous generations as the basis of which they ‘earned the right to be looked after’, having ‘worked all their life’. Those who ‘lived into their seventies’ achieved notoriety and since ‘they retained their property and authority’, they often had ‘good enough reason to go on living with a sense of pride’. Such longevity was noteworthy since the average life expectancy at birth in 1926 was 58 years (male and female) compared to 75 years (male) and 80 years (female) in 2002. Obviously living into your seventies in 1930s, represented ‘a ripe old age’ – the equivalent of living well into your nineties today.

The church engendered 'a sense of authority and unquestioning obedience' as well as 'selfless care'. These were presented as primary family and social values and the religious foundations of the 'respect and care shown for older people'. The church promoted the 'ideal' family as authoritarian and caring, where obedience and respect were demanded, with the father responsible for instilling the former and the mother for fostering the latter.

Against this background, it was considered an 'affront to authority and a blatant lack of respect' to highlight 'intra-family dissent, social divisions or the involuntary nature of emigration'. However there was a downside. The 'unquestioning acceptance of authority was often detrimental' and many grew up with a 'deep sense of inferiority' or an 'unaccountable sense of anger'. For some 'drink became a welcome retreat'.

2.1.7 LIFE FOR OLDER PEOPLE IN THREE-GENERATION HOUSEHOLDS

Many of the participants grew up in households with both grandparents who often 'decided the timing and conditions for transferring the place'. In this way they determined, to a large extent, their own welfare. Within these families, however, there were those who did not 'inherit or receive a good dowry' but who were 'compensated with a good education'. This 'improved their life prospects even if they had to migrate to the nearest city or abroad'. Emigration from propertied families, albeit with a better education did not have a totally negative connotation since it was often associated with 'doing well and sending home some money or the occasional parcel'. In fact they might 'invite you to join them to get on your feet'.

There was a noticeable absence of participants in this study, who grew up in families without 'a piece of land or a good job'. Parents in such families, regardless of their incomes 'had little prospect of family support as they grew older, since most family members would be likely to take the boat'. They had little assurance that there would be a few bob coming into the house. As a consequence 'when their own health went' they faced the prospect of 'being put away' and living out the rest of their life in the 'county home' or the 'asylum'.

2.1.8 OLDER PEOPLE AND THE COMMUNITY 1920 - 1940

Parish and community identities had been developed over a long period prior to Independence. For example they had provided the foundation of early church administration, as well as the basis of political, economic and commercial organisation. Cultural groups identified with them. Such identities were re-enforced by the educational and religious system that promoted the 'local identity and the sense of parish loyalty'.

It is important to note that the parents and grandparents of the people who participated in this study had 'experiences that extended back to the Famine' that included 'founding and fostering many of the family, religious, social, economic, political and legal institutions' that were most vibrant in the post-Independence period. For these reasons their predecessors, who survived both the Famine and the long pattern of emigration, had the power to





determine how social reality would be 'presented and re-presented to subsequent generations'.

Many communal institutions and practices survived and prospered because they facilitated the management of conflict and competition while at the same time promoting community-level co-operation and 'explaining away' the system of inheritance and pattern of emigration that was widespread after the famine'. It even appeared that 'the public servants that joined the State' supported this 'explaining away'. Of course public servants were generally recruited from rural communities and while many moved to live in urban settings, 'they retained a specific rural perspective'. That perspective emphasised the value of property (land or shop), the need to work hard, the inevitability of emigration and the desirability of inter-family and inter-communal co-operation. In other words they saw little reason for the State to intervene in this idealised self-sufficient world. They were also anxious that any such intervention might be seen 'as interfering with the church's business'. Within this perspective there was little time for the property-less, namely 'the labourer' and those who might 'finish up breaking stones' and 'whose emigration was barely perceptible'.

Socially and politically, practices of community-level co-operation 'eased the tensions generated by the more negative effects of the civil war' and intra-family competition. Because of the need to generate cash, farmers were forced to band together in formal co-operatives to purchase inputs, as well as process and market their products. In this way they achieved sufficient scale to maximise returns and minimise costs. However, while these co-operatives were the envy of other countries, 'they were the source of tension within their own community since they competed with the traditional non-farming sources of both credit and agricultural inputs', generally the local shopkeeper/publican.

Community-level economic, social and cultural institutions served other purposes in the post-Independence period. The focus on 'locally-developed and community-level' solutions removed any examination of state policy 'in relation to agriculture and general economic development'. This policy was largely developed to 'project the idea that a single political party was the sole advocate of national self-government and self-sufficiency'. One tactic used to advance this idea was to erect a high import-tariff regime against agriculture products. As might be expected, other countries responded with their own tariffs. Consequently, it was difficult to find markets for Irish exports, both agricultural and industrial. In the absence of competition, there was little dynamic to improve efficiency and 'the country's capacity to sustain its people diminished'.

2.1.9 SETTING THE FINDINGS IN CONTEXT

Broadly speaking these findings are consistent with the general economic and demographic context of the period between 1920 and 1940. The people who participated in this study grew up at a time when according to Census 1926, the county's population (95,000) was

predominantly Catholic (99%), living in rural areas (89%) with 29,300 (67%) of all those 'gainfully occupied' involved in agriculture. These 29,300 were involved as:

- 10,300 men and 1,800 women 'Farmers', with 82% of the male farmers either married or widowed and 50% aged 55 years+. Since there were only 10,300 farms recorded, it was unlikely that many women owned their own farm.
- 7,500 farmers' sons 'engaged in farming', of whom only 3% were married thus suggesting that the inheritance structure of the 10,300 farms was clearly provided for.
- 2,000 men and 3,500 women occupied as 'Assisting relatives'. As only 8% of the men were married, the majority of females had little prospect of marrying or inheriting.
- 3,700 males occupied as 'Agricultural labourers', of whom 60% were married.

Of the 23,500 males involved in agriculture, 8,994 were in the 15-35 years cohort, 7,606 in 35-55 cohort and 6,529 in the 55+ cohort. It was noticeable that only 644 (7%) of the younger cohort were married compared with 54% of the middle cohort and 79% of the 55+ cohort. Late marriage (35-55 years) and very late marriage (55+ years) was a clear feature of agricultural life.

In the twenty years up to 1946, the population declined by 11% (10,000) as did the percentage occupied in agriculture. However agriculture continued to constitute 67% of all gainful occupations compared to 68% twenty years previously. In addition, there was only an 8% decline in the number of males occupied in agriculture. Different age cohorts experienced different percentage declines.

In 1926 there were 15,349 males in the 15 - 34 age cohort and 8,994 (60%) were occupied in agriculture. By 1946 this cohort was reduced to 10,649, reflecting a decline of 31%. In other words every male in this cohort had lost one of every two male friends. However, the decline among those occupied in agriculture was only 23% (2,070) compared to 42% (2,630) for those outside agriculture. It was apparent that agriculture was an effective buffer against emigration but as it continued to dominate the county's economy there was an overall failure to modernise.

The 14,200 engaged outside of agriculture were mostly employed as;

- Navvies (2,050 – of whom 62% were married and of whom 950 worked for the Local Authority).
- Domestic and other servants (2,200).
- Professionals (2,000 – with 60% of the non-clergy males married).
- Shopkeepers (915 of whom 574 were male and 80% of males were married).
- Shop assistants (1,550 of whom 378 were males with 10% of males married).
- Wood workers and metalworkers (1,150 with 46% married).
- Public Administration (600 of whom 29% were married).
- Dressmakers (400).
- Building and general labourers (250).





There were almost 11,000 non-agricultural workers who had no access to the property or security enjoyed by those involved in shop-keeping (900), the professions (2,000) and public administration (600). They also reflected relatively low male marriage rates. This profile of no property and low marriage rates was shared with the 18,000 who were 'occupied' in agriculture but were not property owners. Both groups faced a strong likelihood of emigration and they had an attitude of resignation in relation to it. It was 'taken-for-granted' since they had little status or influence in a predominantly 'land owning/shop-keeping/professional'⁵ rural society.

Emigration was a long-established pattern. One in every three of the 0-20 year cohort of 1926 had emigrated by 1946. In fact emigration wiped out most of the younger cohort of certain occupational groups such as the children of 'navvies' and agricultural labourers'. It is also worth noting that nationally, on average, each year between 1926 and 1936, births exceeded deaths by more than 16,000 but net emigration was almost 17,000. As a result, population remained stagnant. As the participants in this study reached working age in the 1950s, net emigration nationally exceeded natural population growth by an annual average of 12,000 (1951-1956) and 16,000 (1956-1961). As a result depopulation was a major feature of the period.

2.2 QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

2.2.1 INTRODUCTION

This section firstly identifies the specific circumstances, which contribute to a diminished quality of life for older people by drawing on the findings of the *European Survey of Income and Living Conditions*⁶ (EU-SILC). The Irish element of this survey suggests that older people who are at highest risk of poverty and deprivation are, among other things, on low income and live alone, in poor housing and have limited access to transport. However, the Irish element of the survey is unable to provide this information at county or sub-county level (eg. Electoral District-ED). For this reason, similar information was sought from Central Statistics Office (CSO) in relation to:

- The number of older people living in Communal Settings and in Households.
- The number of older people living alone.
- The number of older people living together without others.
- The number of older people with Primary Certificate as their highest award.
- The number of older people in Classes 5 and 6.
- The number of older people in Classes 1 and 2.
- The number of older person houses built pre-1941.
- The number of older person houses being rented.
- The number of older person houses without a Car.

⁵ The functional containment of dissatisfaction achieved through the land owning/shop-keeping dynamic in Clare was thoroughly explored by the American anthropologists Arensberg and Kimball in the mid 1930s.

⁶ Also known as EU-SILC, it is an annual European-wide Survey that measures poverty and deprivation across the European Union. Its findings can be analysed by age group (<15 yrs, 15-64yrs, 65+ yrs).

- The number of older person houses without Central Heating.
- The number of older person houses without Piped water.
- The number of older person houses without a Computer.

In the second sub-section those EDs, which display circumstances indicative of a high risk of poverty and disadvantage among older people, are identified. The final sub-section combines⁷ a number of the features, which influence the level of risk of older people's disadvantage. This analysis identifies two drivers (factors) of older people's disadvantage. These are best described as 'socio-educational' disadvantage and 'family-housing' disadvantage. The first factor influences Low Education, having No Computer and either Living Alone or Solely Together. The second factor influences Poor Housing, lack of Central Heating and Living Alone. These two factors are added to identify those EDs at greatest risk of disadvantage.

2.2.2 INDICATORS OF OLDER PERSONS DISADVANTAGE

The relationship between Low Income and other social and economic features can be examined by means of the European Union Survey on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC). This survey seeks detailed information on income and a number of features, which determine 'deprivation'⁸. In addition information is sought on household composition, educational achievements, housing conditions etc. Individual disposable income was estimated across all people including children. In 2007, the average disposable income per person was €23,610 compared with €18,401 for older people and €16,205 for older people living alone. The full range of per capita disposable income was divided into tenths (deciles) and fifths (quintiles). The lowest fifth of incomes in 2007 was less than €241 per week and the second lowest fifth ranged from €242 to €321. The key findings in relation to Older People are presented in Tables 1, 2, and 3.

Table 1: Comparing Older People's Income, Educational and Medical Profile to the National Average

	The % of the National Population in this Category	The % of all Older People in this category
Lowest fifth of income (<€241)	11%	34%
Second lowest fifth (€242-€321)	18%	35%
Highest fifth (> €773)	26%	4%
Primary Education or less	15%	60%
3rd. Level degree/higher	11%	5%
With Chronic Illness	18%	57%
Covered by Medical card	24.5%	85%
Without Mobile Phone	7%	51%

Source: EU-SILC 2007

⁷ A statistical method known as 'factor analysis' is used to combine a number of different features which best typify disadvantage among older people.

⁸ 11 indicators of Deprivation include ability to afford: meal with meat, chicken or fish every second day; warm, waterproof coat; new clothes; two pairs of strong shoes; to take family or friends for drink or meal once a month; to replace worn out furniture; year-round heating, etc.





Table 1 compares the life characteristics (Income, Education, Illness, Medical Cards, Possession of Mobile Phone) of older people with those of the general population. This shows that 69% of older people were in the lowest two income quintiles compared with 29% of the general population. Only 4% of older people were in the highest income quintile. It is striking that 85% of all older people had a medical card and 51% had no mobile phone. Further analysis of the SILC data showed that of all older people who were living alone, 75% were in the lowest two income quintiles and 24.3% were at risk of poverty.

Table 2: The Percentage of older people by Educational and Medical characteristics by different Income Quintiles

Category	Lowest Income Quintile (<€241)	2nd. Lowest Income Quintile (€242-€321)	Highest Income Quintile (> €773)
% of all Older People with Primary Education or less	43%	37%	3%
% of all Older People with Chronic Illness	38%	34%	3%
% of all Older People with Medical card	39%	36%	2%
% of all Older People with 3rd. Level degree or higher	8%	22%	15%

Source: EU-SILC 2007

While 34% of all older people were in the lowest income quintile, Table 2 shows that this rises to 43%, 38% and 39% respectively, if they have primary education or less, have a chronic illness or have a medical card. The living circumstances of households where an older person is head is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Older people head of households by Income Quintiles and Socio-Economic Characteristics

Category	% Hhlds. Headed by Older person in this Category	In Lowest Income (<€241)	In 2nd. Lowest Income (€242-€321)	In Highest Income Quintile (> €773)
Older Person Head of Household	100%	46%	30%	3%
Older People Living Alone (Households)	49%	81%	13%	0%
Two Older People Living Together (Hhlds.)	41%	15%	52%	3%
Older People Hhlds with No Car	51%	56%	31%	0%
Older People Houses where no Clothes Dryer	52%	57%	29%	2%
Older People Houses built pre-1941	36%	52%	30%	3%
Older People Houses with No Central Heating	17%	65%	26%	0%
Older People Houses with Leaking Roofs, etc	16%	52%	30%	2%
Older People Houses where Rooms too dark	7%	51%	29%	2%
Older People Houses with no Double Glazing	34%	51%	32%	2%
Older People Households can't save regularly	50%	52%	32%	2%
Older Person Households in Urban areas reporting crime, violence and vandalism	18% of all Urban	42%	35%	2%
Older Person Households in Rural areas reporting crime, violence and vandalism	6% of all Urban	48%	34%	1%

Source: EU-SILC 2007

It is apparent from Table 3 that, where an older person was the household head:

- 49% of households were one-person households (81% in Lowest Income Quintile).
- 41% of households consisted of two older people living together.
- 51% of households had no car (56% in Lowest Income Quintile).
- 52% of households had no clothes dryer (57% in Lowest Income Quintile).

In addition, of all houses where an older person was head:

- 36% were built pre-1940 (52% in Lowest Income Quintile).
- 17% had no central heating (65% in Lowest Income Quintile).
- 16% had a leaking roof (52% in Lowest Income Quintile).
- 7% had rooms too dark (51% in Lowest Income Quintile).
- 34% had no double-glazing (51% in Lowest Income Quintile).

It was noticeable that 18% of all households headed by an older person in urban areas, reported 'crime, violence and vandalism', compared with 6% in rural areas. These percentages rose to 42% and 48%, respectively in the Lowest Income Quintile compared with 2% and 1% for the Highest Income Quintile.

In general across the country, solitary living, low education, lack of clothes dryers, lack of a car and poor housing conditions (old, dark, leaking, poor heating, lack of double-glazing), were key features of households headed by an older person. These conditions were exacerbated among those in the lowest income quintile, where in addition, rates of reporting crime, violence and vandalism exceeded 40% both in urban and rural areas.

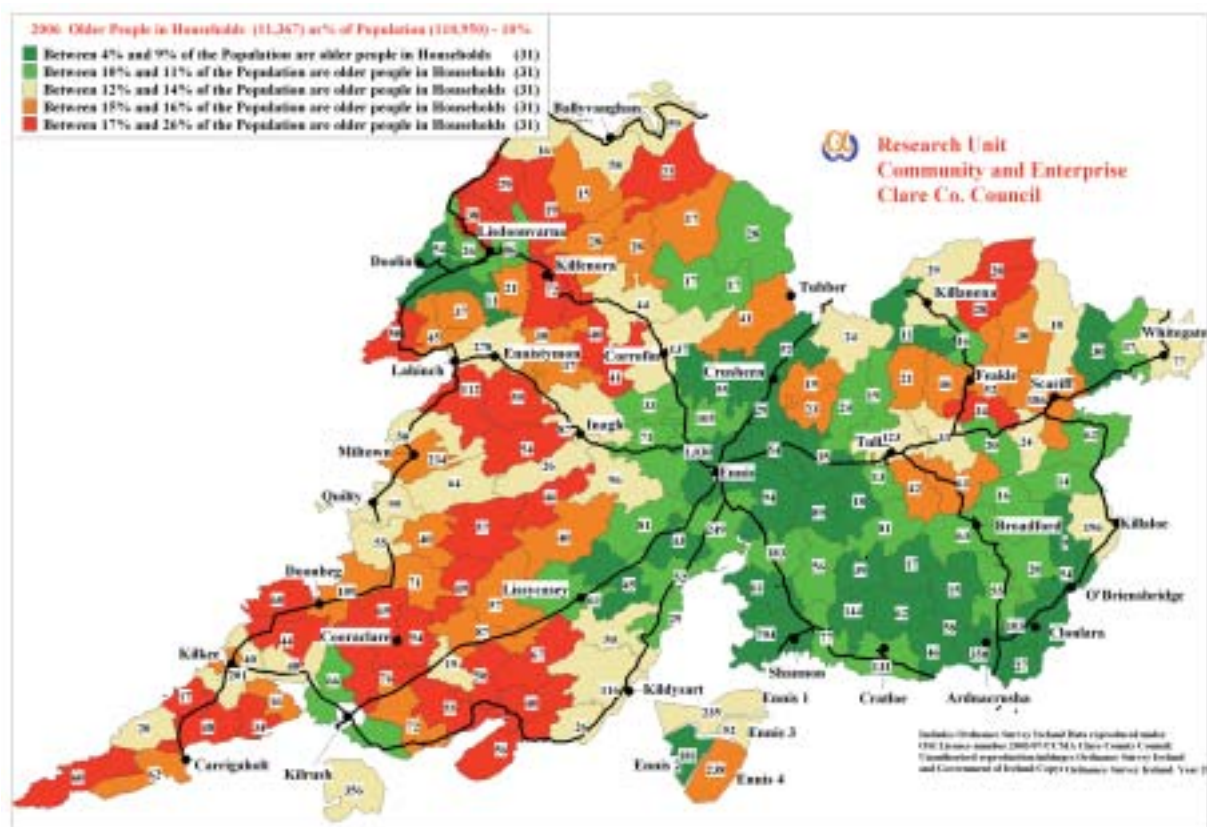
In order to establish the geographic areas (EDs) in Clare where these circumstances are most clearly concentrated, specially acquired CSO data was mapped for the county. These maps display the number of older people and, where relevant, the number of older person households (houses) in the different categories. These Maps are presented in the next sub-section.

2.2.3 SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION OF OLDER PERSONS DISADVANTAGE

The EDs with the **highest concentration** of any particular feature of **disadvantage** are shown in **Deep Red**. For example, Map 1 displays those EDs where older people form the highest percentage of the overall population. The EDs with the lowest concentration of a disadvantage feature are shown in Green.



Map. 1: Older Person Dependency in Clare 2006



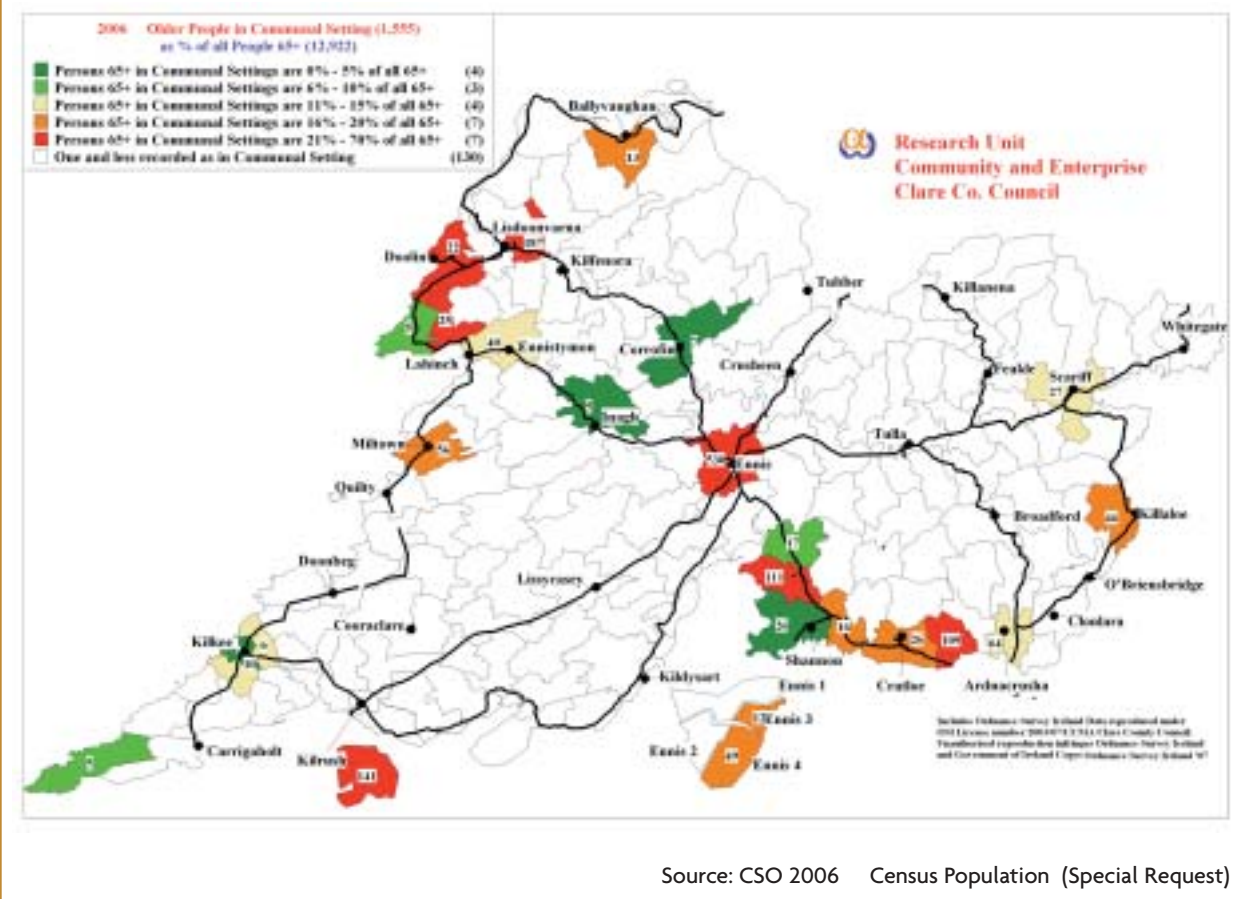
Source: CSO 2006 Census Population (Special Request)

The Census of Population (2006) identified almost 13,000 older people (65+) in Clare. They represented almost 12% of the total population of the County (110,950) and were recorded as living in Households (11,367) or Communal Settings⁹ (1,555). The greatest older people dependency (older people in households as % of the population in that ED) was apparent outside the economic corridor from South East Clare to Limerick through Ennis to Galway as shown by the Deep Red EDs. Those EDs accounted for 1,504 older persons and displayed concentrations between 17% and 26% compared with the county average of 10%. They were especially located in West and North West Clare and in a few pockets of North East Clare.

Older people who were recorded as living in communal settings (1,555) generally reflected those living in hospitals, nursing homes and other communal settings. The highest numbers in any ED were located in Ennis Rural (530), Lisdoonvarna (187), Kilrush (141), Newmarket (111).

⁹ This category also captures people living or staying in hotels, guest houses etc. on Census night.

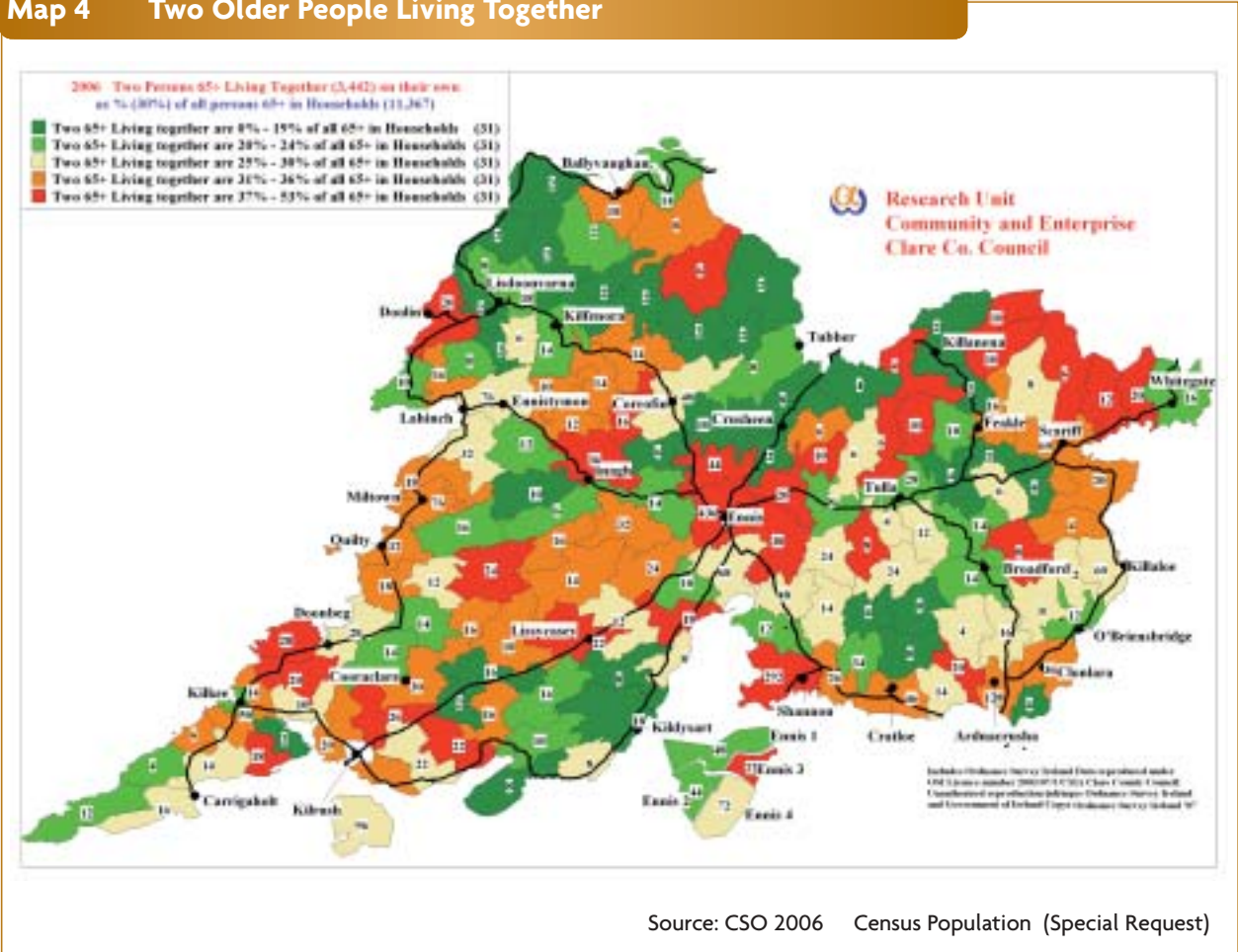
Map. 2: Older People Living in Communal Settings in Clare 2006



It is important to note that if EDs, with a high concentration of older people in communal settings, are included in any spatial analysis of disadvantage, they will skew the results. Consequently they were not considered in this spatial analysis and the CSO only provided data for older people in households. Usually it is not possible to separate those who live in households from those recorded in communal settings, especially if the data is derived from the Small Areas Population statistics (SAPs). For example a previous study of Affluence and Deprivation in Clare¹⁰ noted the presence of extreme disadvantage in Newmarket, even though it lay within the affluent economic corridor already mentioned. The current data indicating 111 older people in communal care in Newmarket may explain this anomaly, especially when it is noted that there are only another 183 older people in households.

¹⁰ "A Community in Transition – A Socio-economic and Spatial analysis of Affluence and Deprivation in Clare" (2006). Neylon, M and B. Kirby: Clare County Development Board, Clare County Council.

Map 4 Two Older People Living Together

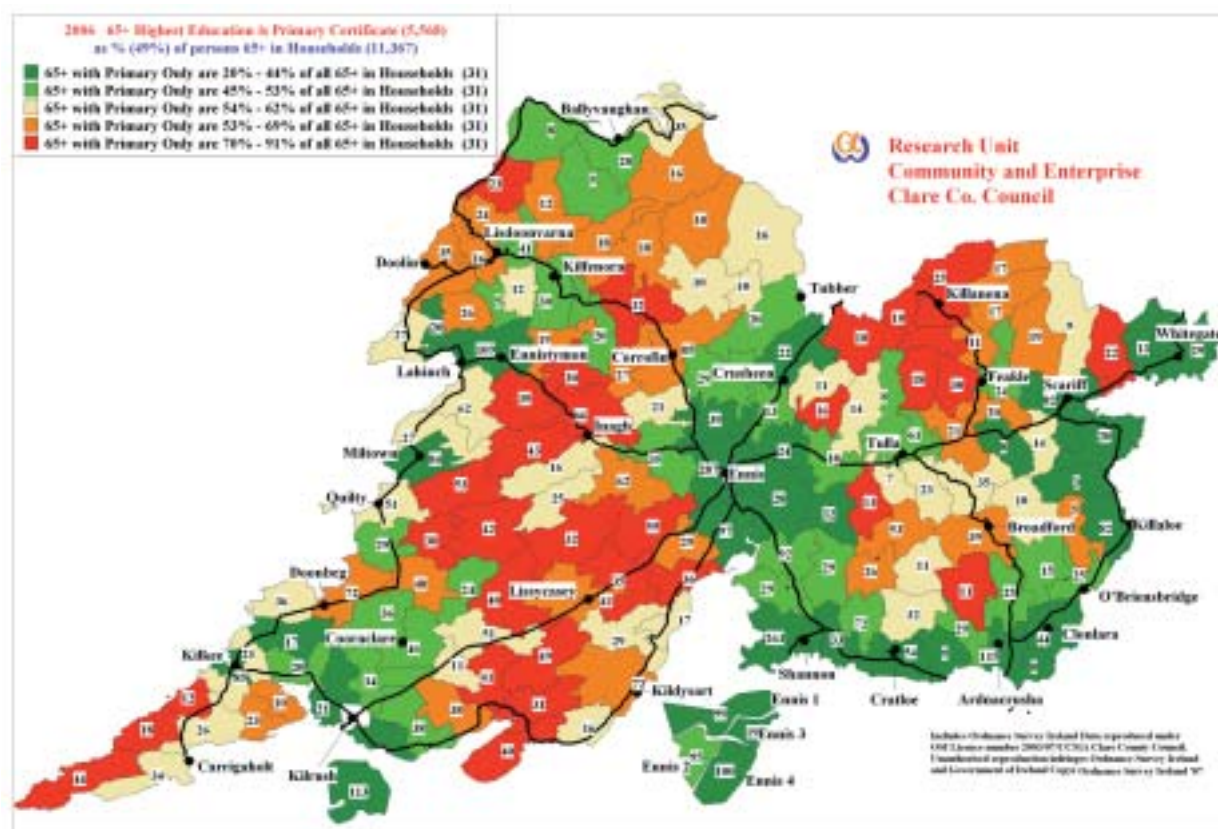


Source: CSO 2006 Census Population (Special Request)

At county level older people living together (3,442) constituted 30% of all older people in households (11,367) and accounted for 1,721 households. Those EDs displaying the highest concentration of 37% to 53% (shown in Deep Red) accounted for 1,244 (36%) of all such people. These EDs were located in pockets around Ennis, Kirush, Kilkee and in other more rural areas around the county.

After accounting for older people living alone and living together, the remaining 40% live in households with at least one person less than 65 years of age who may be a younger spouse, offspring or family member. Consequently, the one-person household can be seen as the weakest family structure, followed by the two older people living together. While two older people living together may offset some of the inefficiencies and personal disadvantages of living alone, they still face a fixed income, ageing housing with increasing maintenance costs, declining personal mobility and increasing difficulties accessing transport. Consequently, living together is also an indicator of disadvantage although not as severe as living alone. Low educational achievement is also a contributor to disadvantage. Map 5 presents Older People whose highest educational award is the primary certificate.

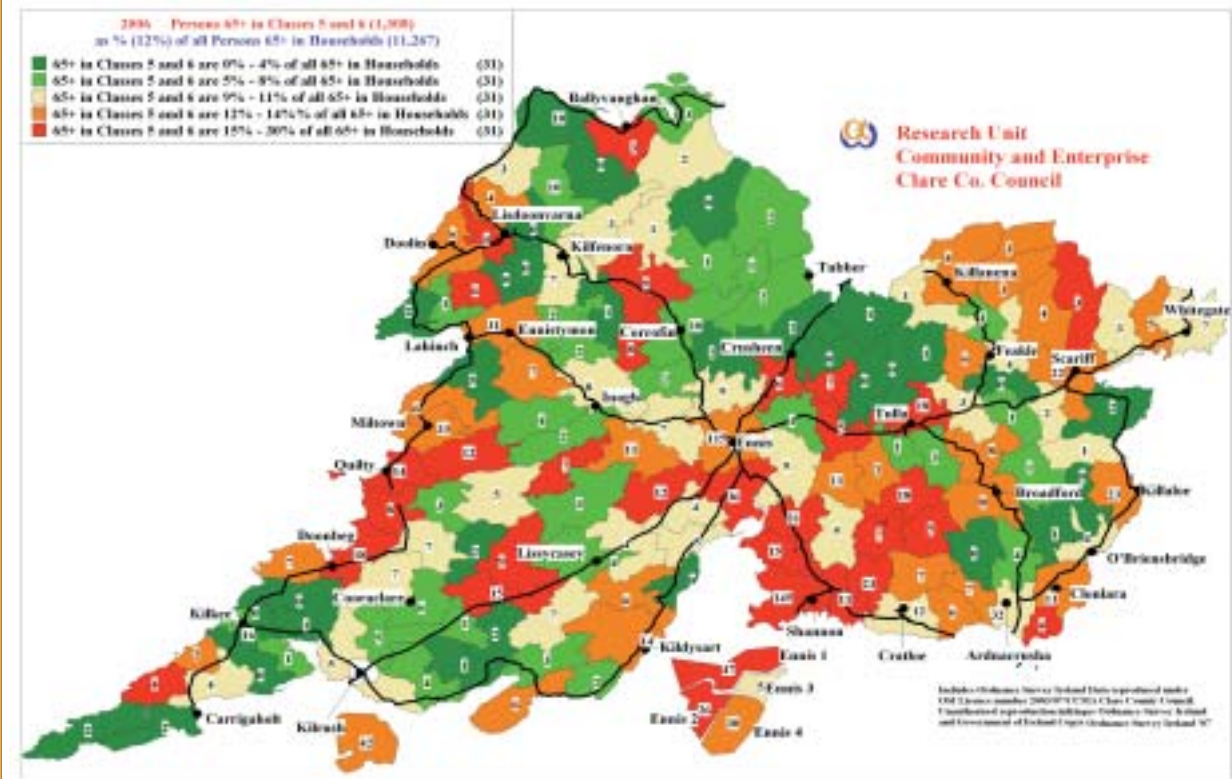
Map 5 Older People with Primary Education or less



Source: CSO 2006 Census Population (Special Request)

At county level older people with primary certificate only (5,568) constituted 49% of all older people in households (11,367). Those EDs displaying their highest concentration of 70% to 91% (shown in Deep Red) accounted for 976 (18%) of all such people. Those EDs were predominantly located in West Clare and North East Clare. National analysis has connected people's class position with the presence of disadvantage (Classes 5 and 6) or the absence of disadvantage (Classes 1 and 2). Consequently Map 6 presents the concentration and location of older people in Classes 5 and 6.

Map 6 Older People in Classes 5 and 6



Source: CSO 2006 Census Population (Special Request)

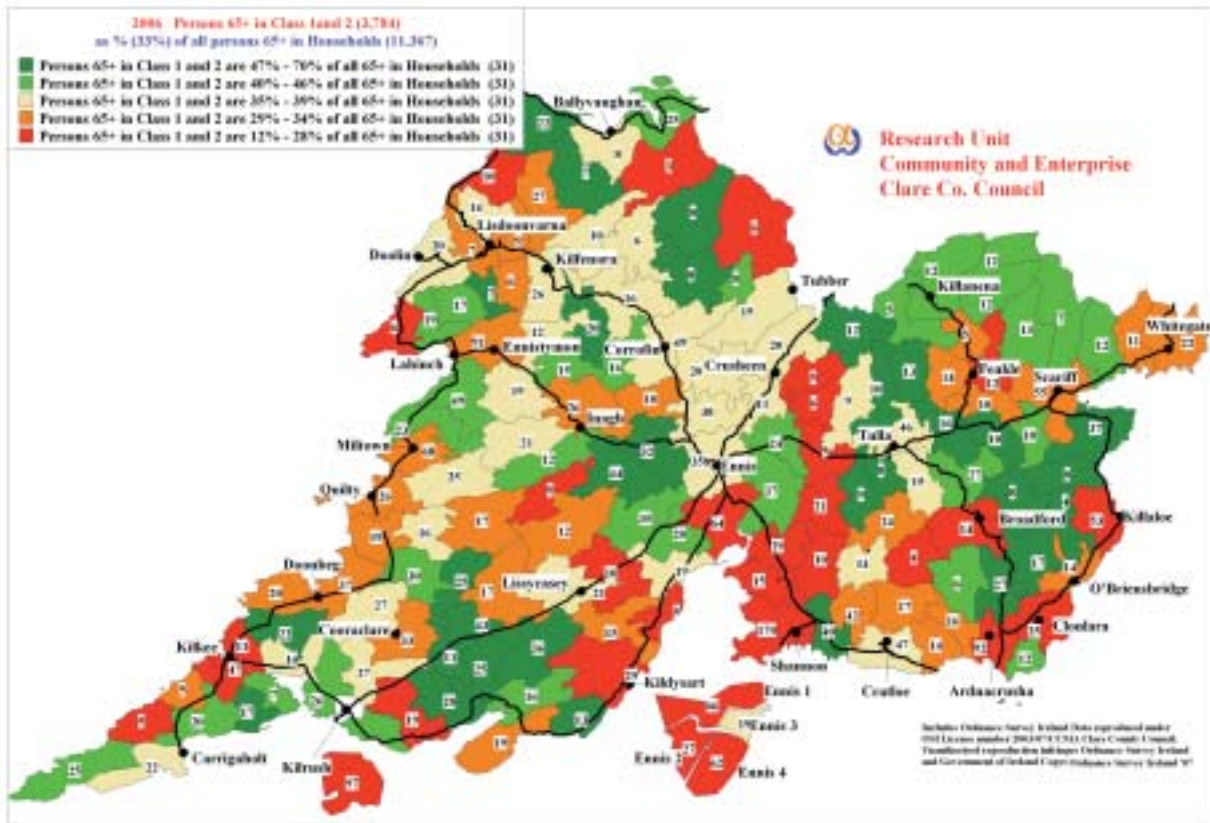
It might be expected that the same EDs that displayed low educational achievement would also display poor class status. However, as Map 6 shows, this is not the case. Firstly, it is noticeable that the number of older people in these two classes is quite small. Secondly, it needs to be noted that class status follows the occupation of the head of household. Older people, who are heads of households, derive their status from their occupation or if they have retired, their occupation prior to retirement. In the case of older people who are or who were farmers or farmers' spouses, their class position is decided by the size of their farm and not its economic performance.

Thirdly, North Clare and parts of West Clare have farm sizes above the county average but these farms deliver incomes, which are below the average for their size¹¹. Fourthly, if a medium-sized farmer (50-100 acres) to whom Class 3 and 4 is ascribed takes up semi-skilled construction work to which class 5 and 6 is ascribed their class position worsens although it can be assumed their income increases since that is one of the rational drivers of such a decision¹². The absence of Classes 1 and 2 are also seen as indicators of disadvantage and their concentration in Clare is presented in Map 7.

¹⁹ Farm Incomes are measured in the Agricultural Census as Economic Size Units (ESUs). The most recent data for 2002 was specially acquired from the CSO for the previously mentioned study of Affluence and Deprivation in the County.

¹² See the previously mentioned study for a full discussion of the distortions caused by relying on farm size as a designation of Class or a proxy of income.

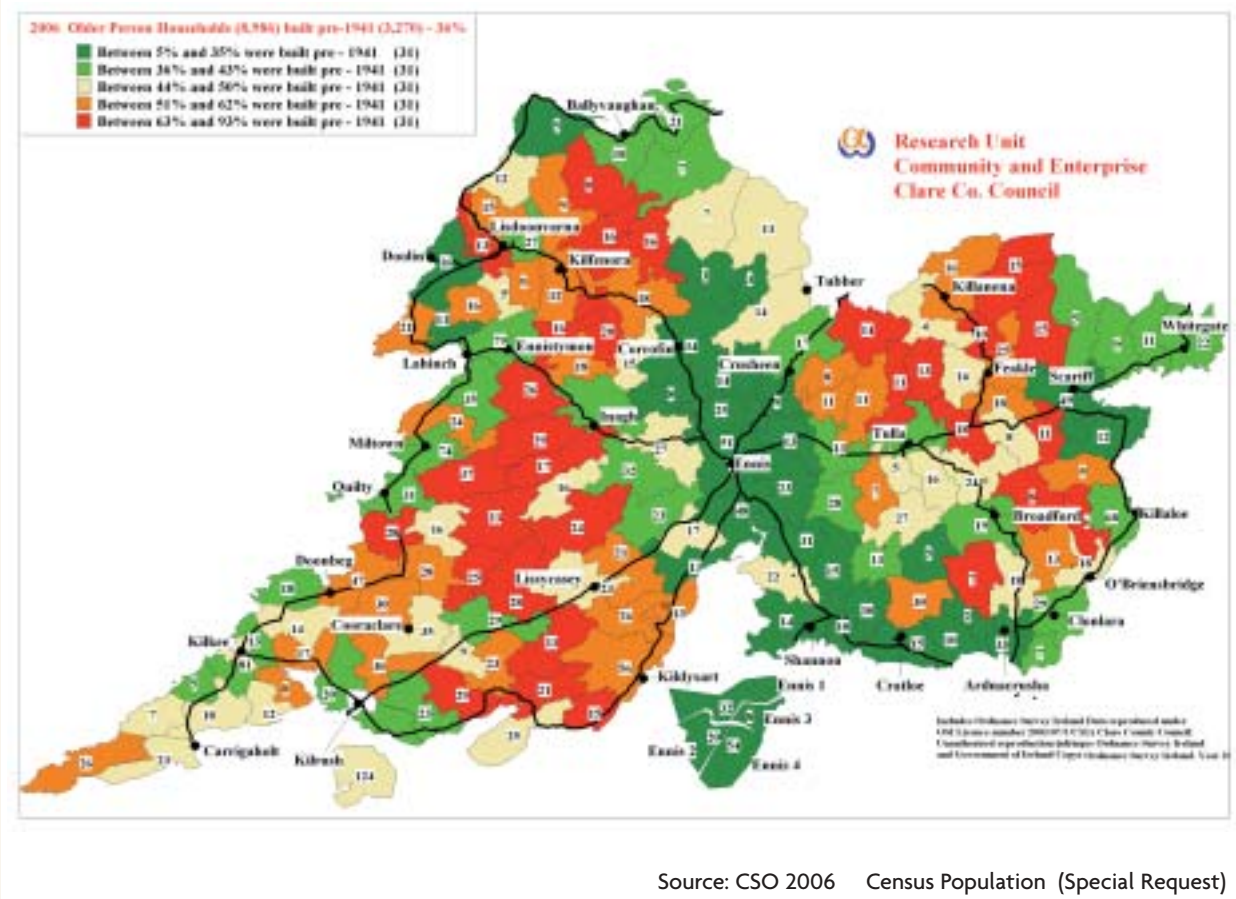
Map 7 Older People in Classes 1 and 2



Source: CSO 2006 Census Population (Special Request)

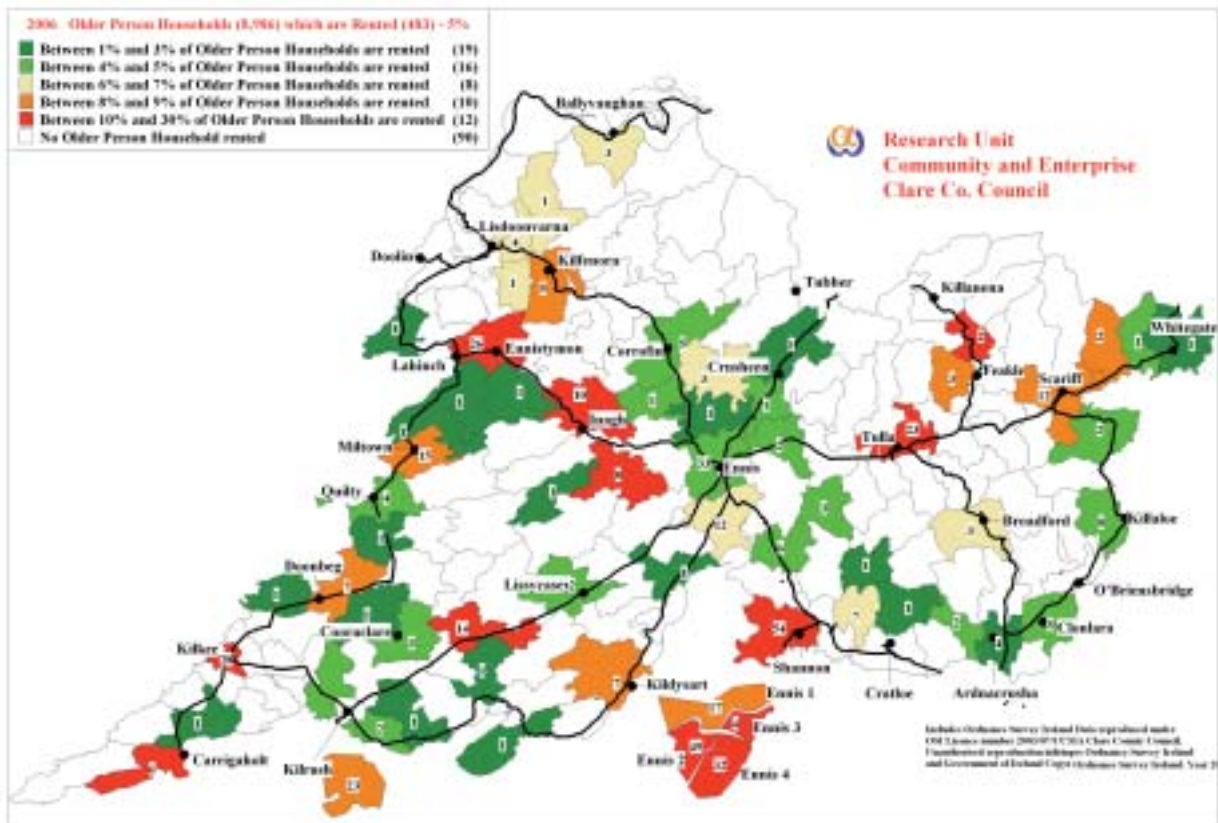
It might be expected that those areas with poor educational achievements would display a low presence of older people in Classes 1 and 2. However the opposite is the case. Many areas with low educational achievement, especially in North and North East Clare indicate a high concentration of older people in Classes 1 and 2. This can be explained by the large farm sizes in those areas since classes 1 and 2 are ascribed to those with farms in excess of 100 acres. However large farm size is not an indicator of above average income since large farms may be located in areas of low productivity such as the mountain region of North East Clare and karst region of North Clare's Burren. Consequently, class is an unreliable indicator of disadvantage and is not used in our later analysis. However as noted in the EU-SILC study older housing is associated with a number of other poor housing features such as poor light, dampness, lack of central heating. The concentration and location of old housing occupied by older people is presented in Map 8.

Map 8 Older People in Houses built pre-1941



More than one third (36%) of all older persons households (8,986) were built pre-1941 and EDs displaying the highest concentration (63% - 93% shown in Deep Red) accounted for 577 (18%) of all such houses. Those EDs were predominantly located in West and North Clare and in pockets of North East and South East Clare. Map 8 also displays the concentration of newer housing stock, occupied by older people, within the economic corridor from Limerick along the Shannon-Ennis corridor to Galway. At a national level the rented housing sector, both public and private, is seen as an indicator of disadvantage since, in a society that fosters home ownership, renting is very much an option for those who cannot afford their own. The total rented housing occupied by older people is presented in Map 9.

Map 9 Older Person Households where their house is Rented

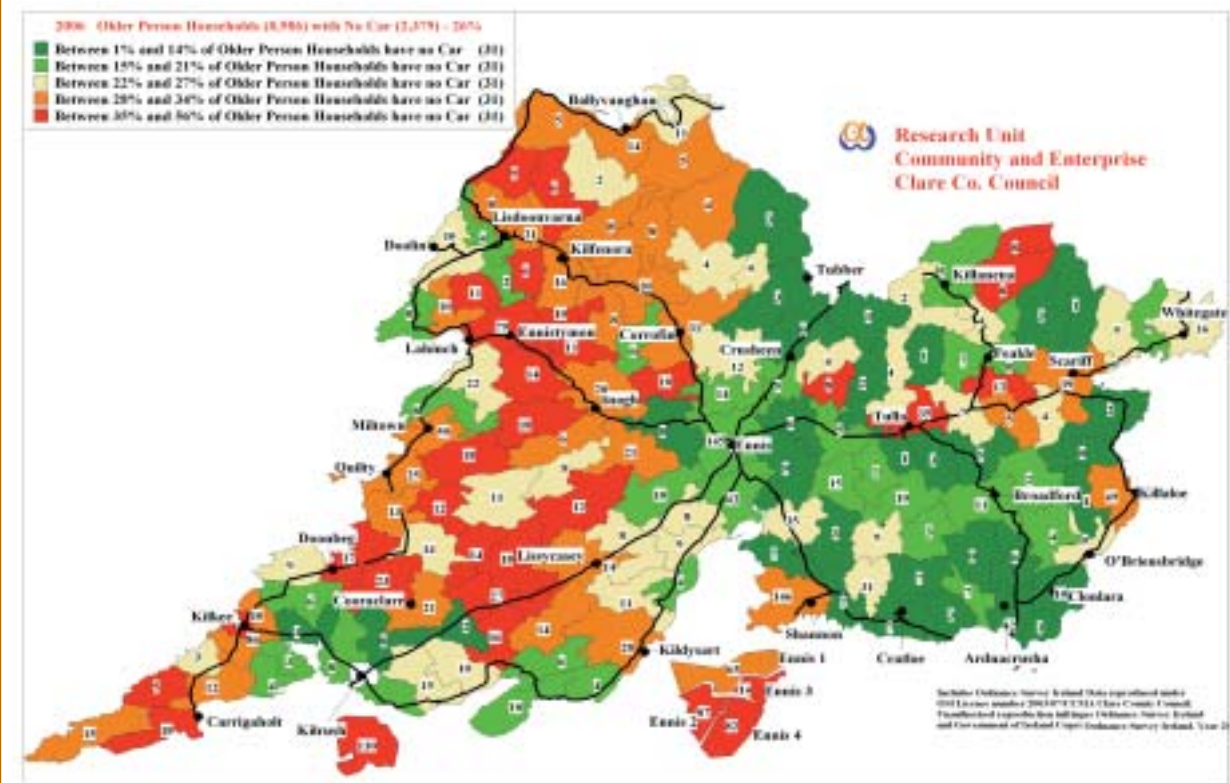


Source: CSO 2006 Census Population (Special Request)

The level of rented housing, occupied by older people, is quite low (483) and is especially concentrated in the towns and small villages. Because so many EDs (90) display no rented housing this indicator was not used in our later analysis.

The public transport system in Clare is quite limited. Part of the deficit is met by the provision of community-based transport service. Transport is essential in ensuring independent living including accessing public services. In addition it is essential for purposes of communicating with family, friends and neighbours as well as engaging in the events of everyday public life such as recreation, social and cultural activities. Those households occupied by older people and which have no car are shown in Map 10.

Map 10 Older Person Households with No Car



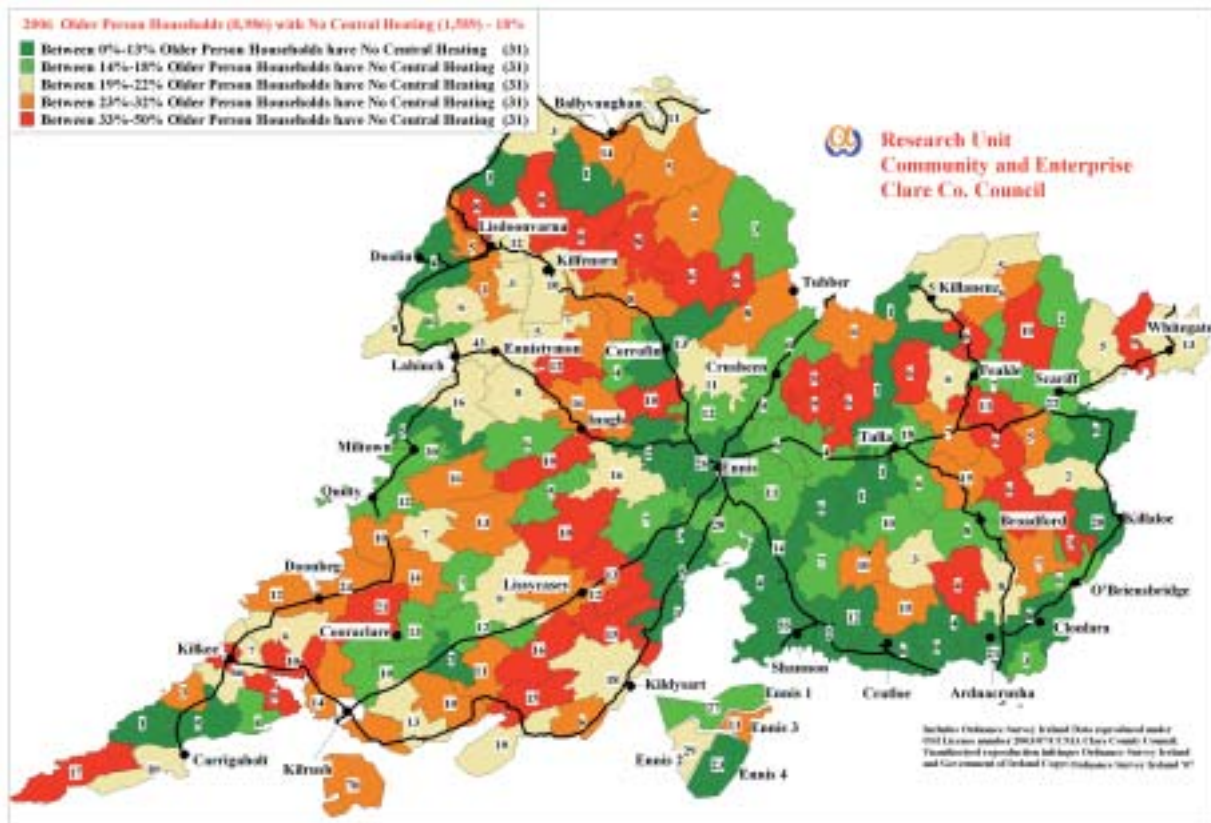
Source: CSO 2006 Census Population (Special Request)

More than a quarter (26%) of all older persons households (8,986) have no car. The EDs with the highest concentration of older people having no car (35% - 56%) are shown in Deep Red. These EDs account for 824 (35%) of all older people households without a car. They are predominantly located in West and North Clare and lie outside a less extremely disadvantaged buffer zone that surrounds the economic corridor whose influence seems to extend into East Clare.

However there is a significant difference between not having a car in the rural countryside and villages and not having a car in the larger towns. Many of the larger towns contain a wide range of public services as well as recreational, social and cultural activities that can be more easily accessed by urban residents.

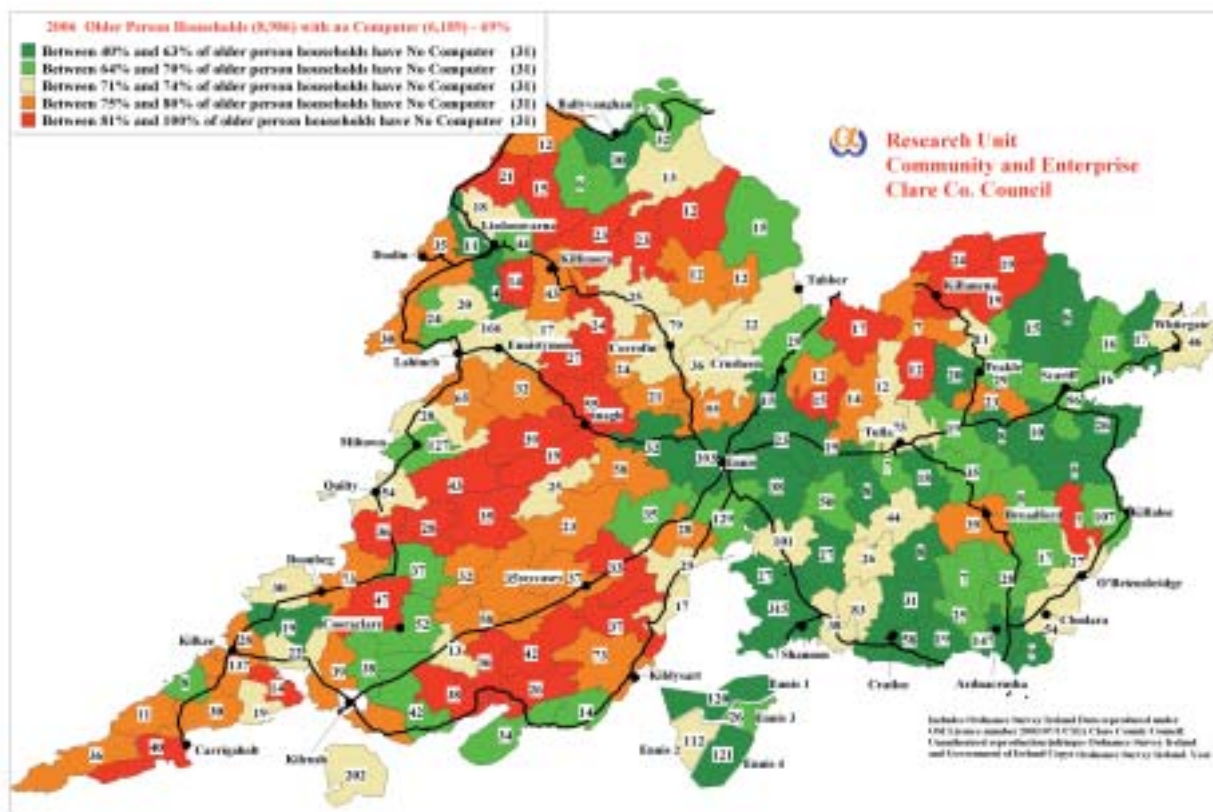
It is noticeable from Map 10 that the lack of a car is a significant feature of life for older people in the towns of Ennis, Killybeg, Ennistymon, Shannon, Tulla and Scariff. Consequently, since lack of a car does not provide a measure of similar disadvantage for urban and rural dwellers, it was decided not to use it in our later analysis. As noted in the Introduction old housing and the absence of central heating are closely related. The concentration and location of older persons households that have no central heating is presented in Map 11.

Map 11 Older Person Households with No Central Heating



Almost one in five (18%) of all older persons households (8,986) have no central heating. There are 31 EDs where this ranges between 33% and 50% (shown in Deep Red). These EDs account for 345 (22%) of all such households. They are located in almost random pockets around the rural parts of the county, with few towns or villages showing an extremely high concentration. However a very different picture emerges in relation to what might be considered as the technological divide. The percentage of older persons' households which don't have a computer is presented in Map 12.

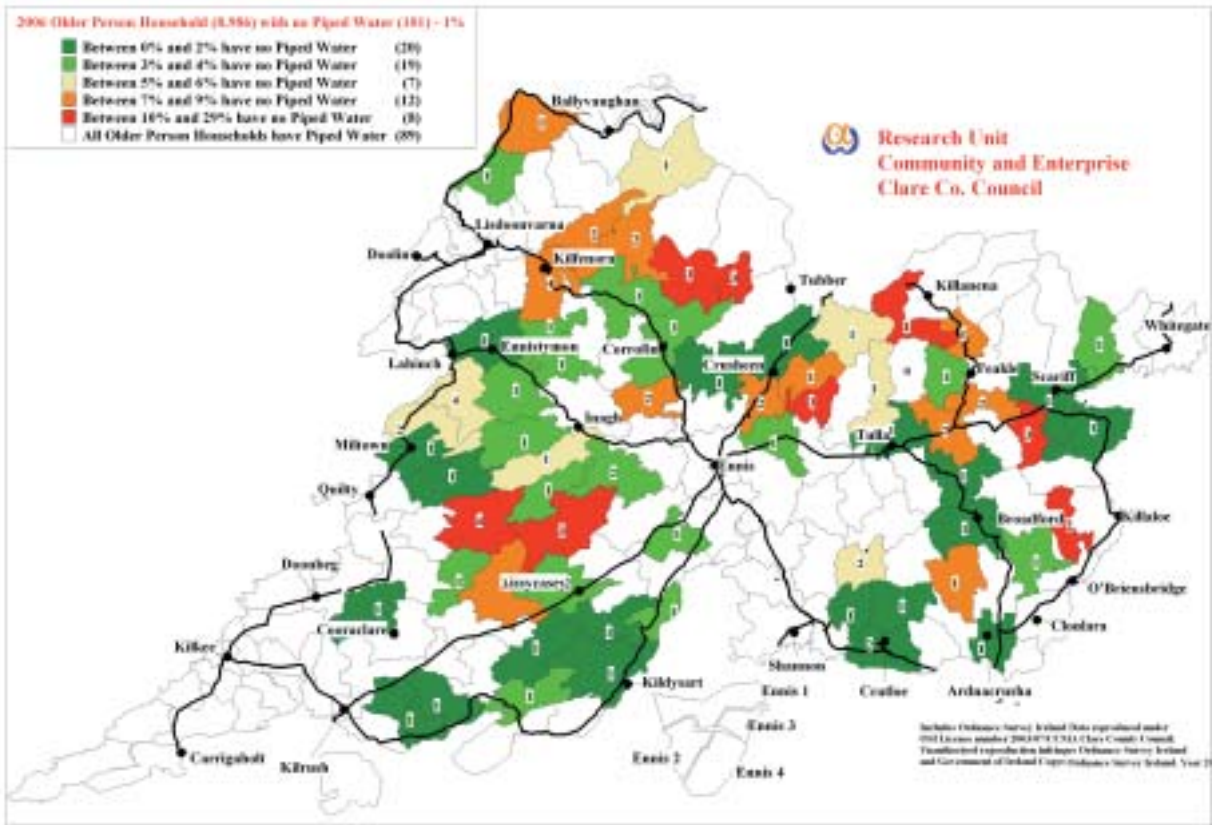
Map 12 Older Persons Households without a Computer



Source: CSO 2006 Census Population (Special Request)

There is a striking similarity between Map 12 and Map 5 (older people with primary Education). It would appear that primary education and lack of a computer in the house are closely associated. Almost three out of every four (69%) of all older persons households (8,986) have no Computer. There are 31 EDs where between 81% and 100% of all older people households are without a computer (shown in Deep Red). These EDs account for 840 (14%) of all such households. They are located in the most rural parts of the county, well away from towns or villages in general. In the absence of immediate family and neighbours, the computer offers an alternative source of information and communication. Its absence, which is so marked in many EDs, is indicative of severe disadvantage and is noticeably associated with low education, which presents further barriers to its introduction. Previous research (based on 1996 data) showed that there were significant numbers of households where no piped water was available. It is apparent from Map 13 that is no longer the case at least in relation to older persons' houses.

Map 13 Older Person Houses without Piped Water



Source: CSO 2006 Census Population (Special Request)

The number of older person houses without piped water is quite small (101) and are scattered in single digits across a number of rurally located EDs. Because so many EDs do not display this feature of Older Person disadvantage this indicator was not used in the later analysis.

Following this discussion of indicators of older person disadvantage the following indicators were chosen for further analysis:

- Older People Living Alone.
- Two Older People Living Together without others.
- Older People holding a Primary Certificate only.
- Older Persons' houses that were built pre-1941.
- Older Persons' houses without Central heating.
- Older Persons' houses without a Computer.

2.2.4 EDs DISPLAYING OLDER PEOPLE DISADVANTAGE

The six chosen indicators of disadvantage (shown in Bold in Table 4) met key statistical requirements. A high proportion of their number was found in the most extremely disadvantaged EDs as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Indicators of Older People disadvantage by number and % in Extreme EDs

Category	Total Number	As % of Total	Numbers in 31 Extremely Disadvantaged EDs	Numbers in Extremely Disadvantaged EDs as % of Total
Older Persons	11,367	100%		
• Living Alone	3,432	30%	766	22%
• Living two together	3,442	30%	1,244	36%
• Primary Education	5,568	49%	976	18%
• Class 5 and 6	1,308	12%	536	41%
• Class 1 and 2	3,784	33%	941	25%
Older Person Households	8,986	100%		
• Built Pre-1941	3,270	36%	577	18%
• Rented	483	5%	256	53%
• Without a Car	2,379	26%	824	35%
• Without C/Heating	1,589	18%	345	22%
• Without a Computer	6,189	69%	840	14%
• Without Piped Water	101	1%	22	22%

Source: CSO 2006 Census Population (Special Request)

The chosen indicators (shown in bold) were well represented in absolute terms with none less than 1,550 or 18% of the total. Similarly, the 31 most extremely disadvantage EDs (20% of all EDs) accounted for no less than 14% of any particular category (no less than 350 approx. in absolute terms).

These indicators were combined using the statistical technique of factor analysis. Two factors were identified and are presented in Table 5.





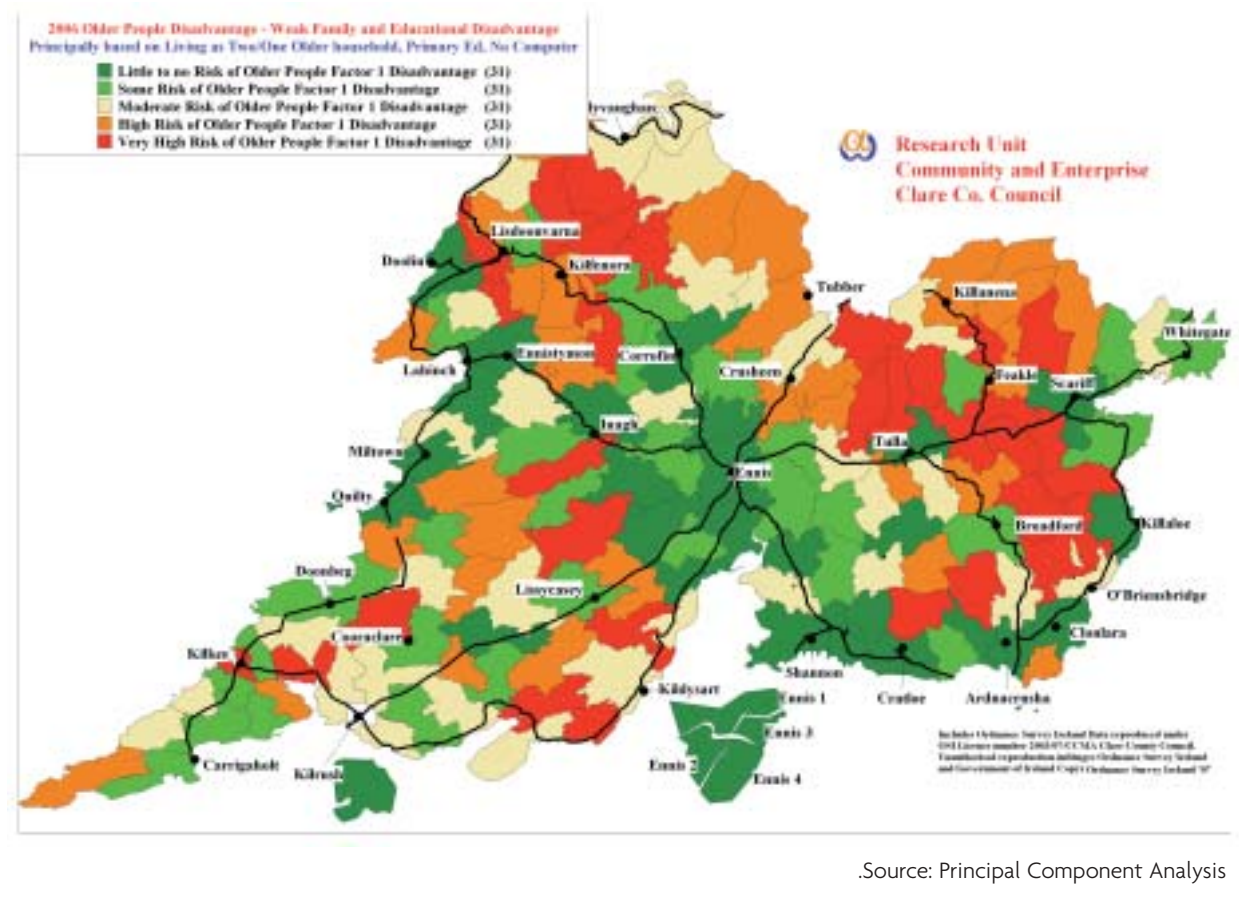
Table 5. Rotated Component Matrix of six disadvantage variables

Category	Component	
	1	2
Two Older People Living Together without others	.972	
Older People holding a Primary Certificate only	.891	
Older Persons' houses without a Computer	.878	
Older People Living Alone	.840	.516
Older Persons' houses that were built pre-1941		.934
Older Persons' houses without Central heating		.844

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

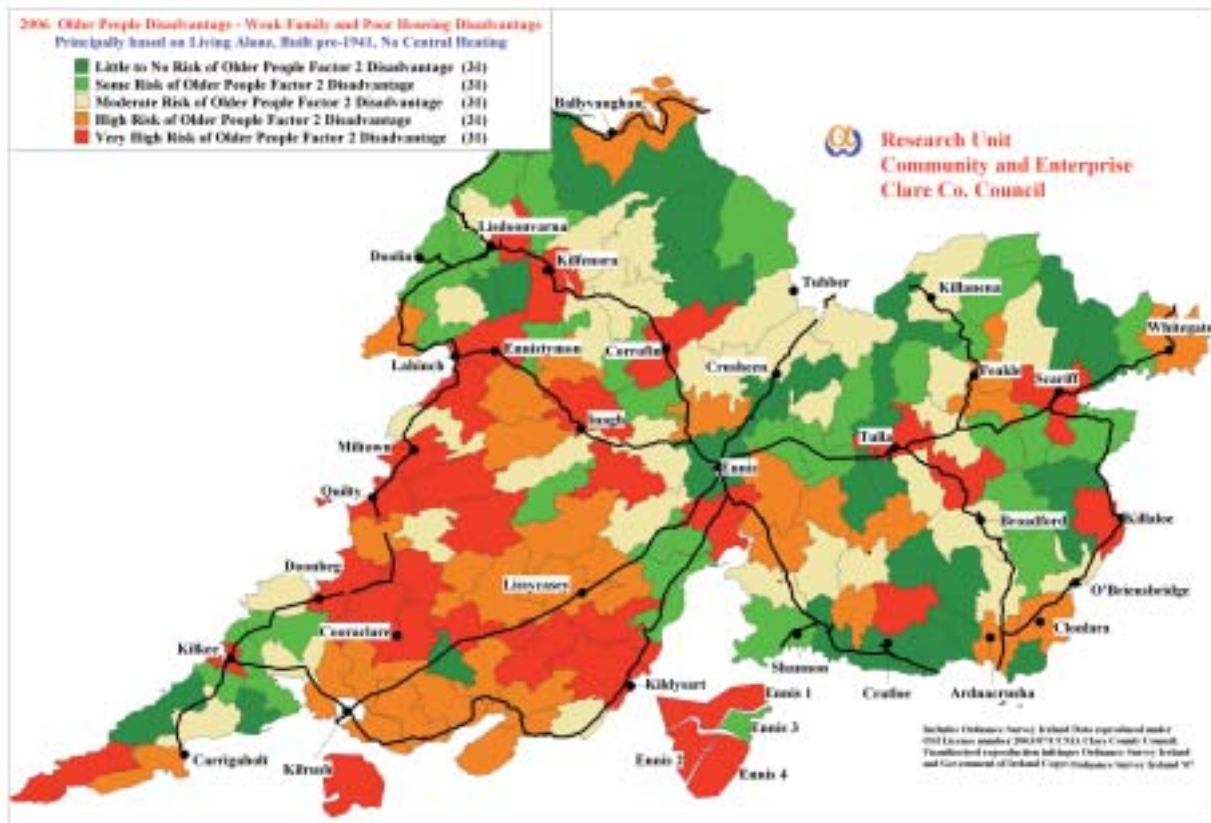
Table 5 displays loadings in excess of 0.5 and the components account for 95% of the total variance. The first component influences 'two older people living together', 'primary education', 'being without a computer' and 'living alone' to a lesser degree. This component could best be described as 'socio-educational' (Map 14). The second component influences 'old housing', 'lack of central heating' and 'living alone'. This component could best be described as 'solitary-housing' (Map 15).

Map 14 Older People ‘Socio-educational’ Disadvantage



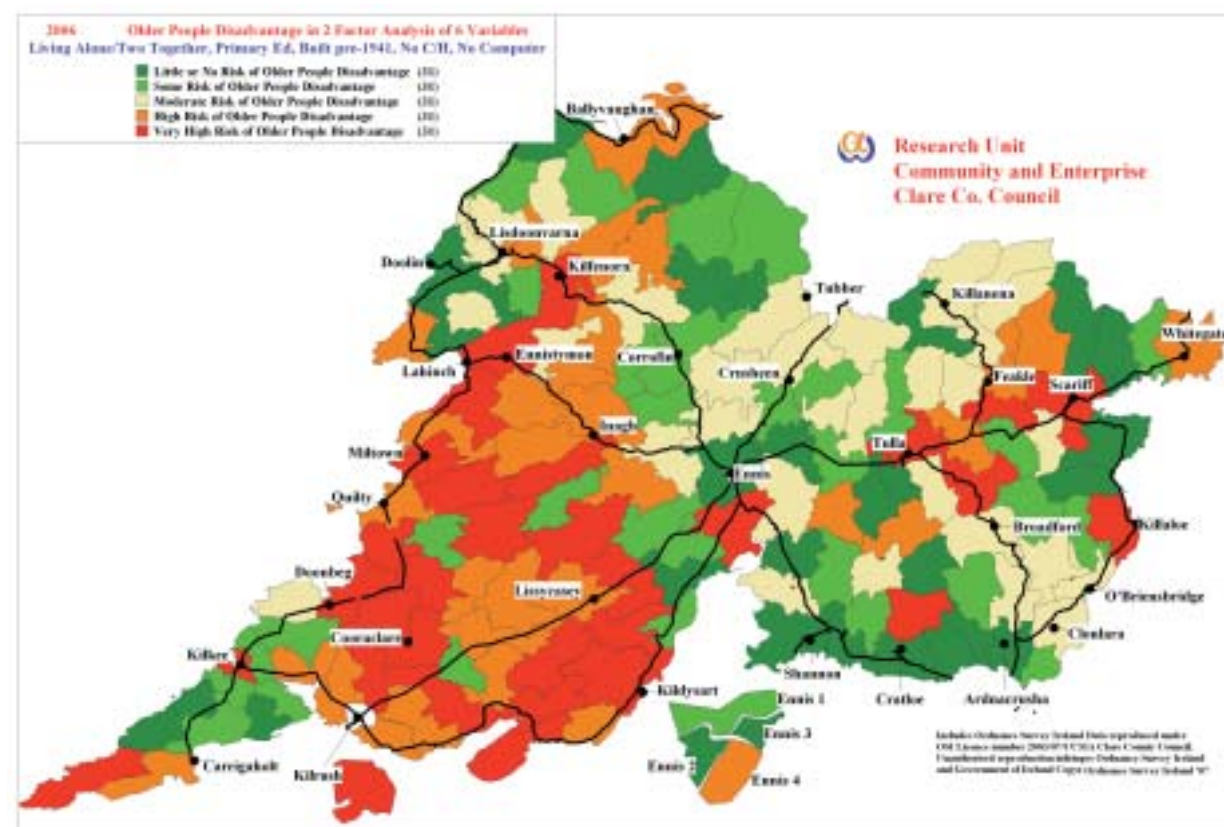
It is apparent that the particular combination of indicators locates the first factor of older people disadvantage around the Economic Corridor from Limerick to Ennis and around the other principal towns of Kilrush, Ennistymon, Milltown, Killaloe and Scariff.

Map 15 Older People 'Solitary-Housing' Disadvantage



The second component of older people disadvantage determines old housing without central heating and a weak family structure resulting in older people living on their own. Most of this disadvantage is apparent in urban areas and in West Clare in particular. When these two components are added together a more complete map of older people disadvantage emerges as displayed in Map 16.

Map 16 Clare 2006 Two Factor Older People Disadvantage



.Source: Principal Component Analysis

It is apparent that there is a major concentration of older people disadvantage in West Clare with some pockets in East Clare. There are very few EDs within the economic corridor from Limerick to Ennis that display high or very high risk of older people disadvantage. The various findings of the quantitative section are summarised in Table 6.

Table 6. EDs at Very High and High Risk of Older People Disadvantage

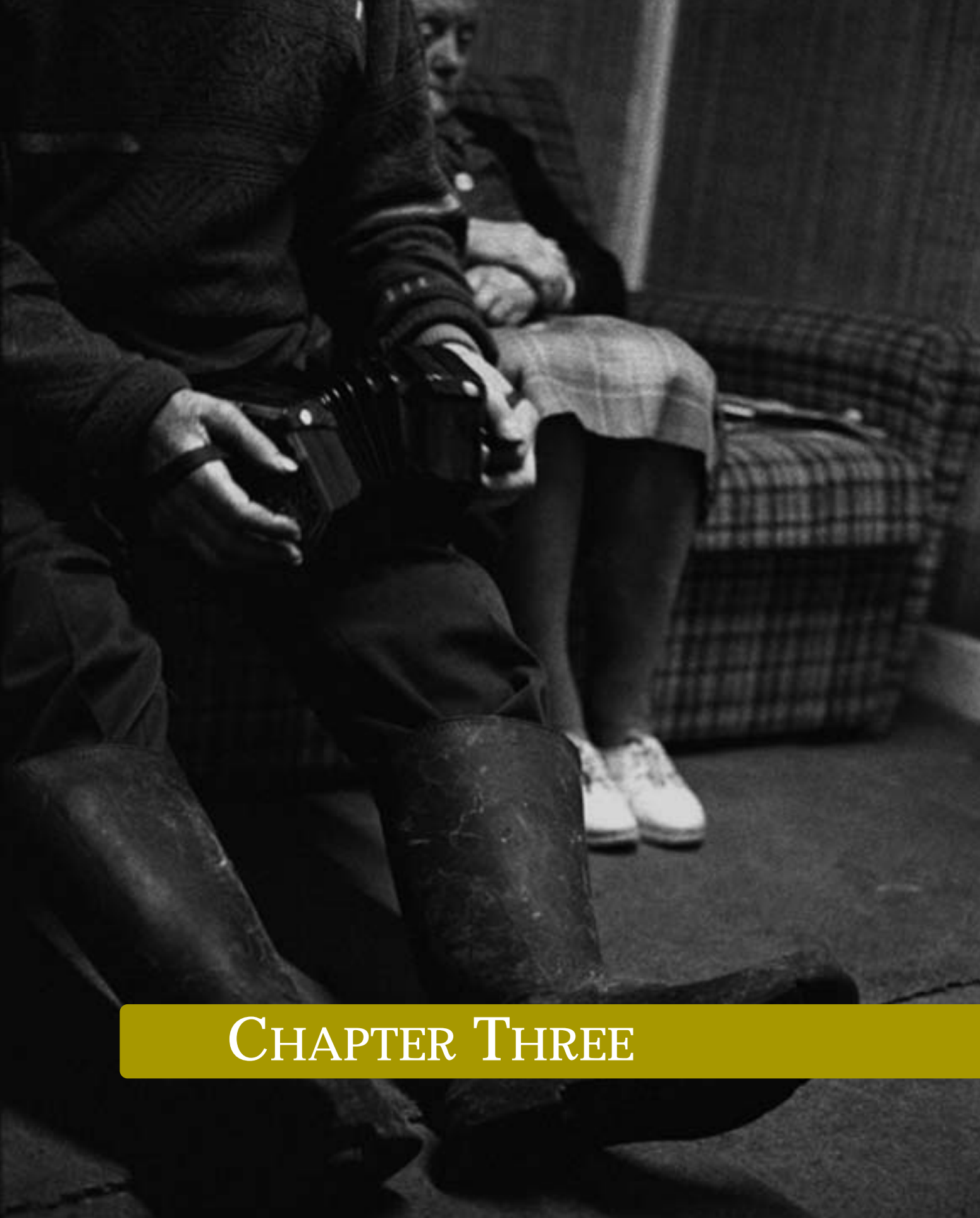
Level of Risk	Population	Older People	Living Alone	Living Together	Primary Ed	Houses Pre-'41	No Central Heating	No Computer
County	110,950	11,367	3,432	3,442	5,568	3,270	1,589	6,189
V. High	22%	29%	33%	26%	29%	38%	39%	32%
High	13%	17%	19%	16%	20%	23%	20%	19%
Total	35%	46%	52%	42%	49%	61%	59%	51%



The EDs at very high risk of older people's disadvantage contain 22% of the county's population, but 29% of the County's older people, 33% of all older people who live alone, 29% of all older people with primary education or less. In addition, these areas account for: 38% of the county's older people's housing, which was built pre-1941; 39% of older people's housing which has no central heating and 32% of older people's houses which have no computer.



It is apparent that targeted interventions in the areas of very high and high risk would be cost efficient as they contain 46% of all older people and generally border each other. Alternatively, a more focused approach on areas of very high risk would have the added benefit of spin-off into those areas of high risk, which generally surround them.



CHAPTER THREE



3.1 CONCLUSIONS

3.1.1 FEELINGS OF GROWING OLD

When participants were discussing how they felt about growing old, they expressed diverse feelings such as; don't like it but resigned to it; hoping to grow old gracefully but feel it will happen disgracefully; don't want to see the family split up and nothing done about the property; hoping we have peace and contentment; am looking forward to the next world; the will in relation to the property is not signed – worries me; want to live away and trust in God; its hard to know who to give the place to; only knew I was old when retirement was mentioned; knew I was old when people gave me their seat; if you do your business right (in relation to the property) you have peace of mind; hoping to die suddenly; don't want to trouble the family; giving the place to one is no solution; hoping I'd be treated with respect by my children – but wouldn't depend on them; I know where the place was given to one child and rest are fighting for it; would like to be sure that I could ask our children if we needed help; be involved in the rearing the grandchildren; that family are concerned about me; not be thrown into homes or hospital; worried that if the children get married they'd want the house to themselves or if they build their own house they'd have little to do with me; you're put into a home and it might be like?¹³; I'm hoping to stay at home; it's very hard to make a will – give it to one rather than another that is hard especially if one of them is going to work it or if it is valuable as a property and worthless as a farm; the parents may make no will – that only makes trouble as there's no way the family could decide; once the property question is dealt with – I'm happy; one of the girls could be widowed and have to work because the property is not sorted out; keep your property and your independence get cash and use it; what happens if you're a returning emigrant and the place was left to someone else and you had nowhere to go; sometimes people tell me to let them (the young people) provide for themselves;

It is apparent that older people face the prospect of ageing, with varying degrees of apprehension, anxiety and resignation. Their main worries centre around their relationships with their family. They expressed mixed views on how to handle the difficult question of inheritance. However, there was almost unanimous agreement that the question needed to be addressed. The scarcity of comments, by the people in the focus groups, about the poor quality of their homes was somewhat at odds with the picture conveyed more poignantly in the case studies. This may have been due to better socio-economic circumstances of focus group members who by and large attend or were resident in social care facilities of one kind or another.

¹³ A private nursing home which received certain notoriety for mistreating the people who stayed there.





3.1.2 FEELINGS ABOUT NEIGHBOURS AND NEIGHBOURHOOD

When discussing how they felt about their neighbours and neighbourhood, participants presented mixed views such as: neighbours help out a lot; had to go to new neighbours first – they didn't come to me; neighbours are ever so good; they have big houses but no one in them; nothing in common with them; have phone-watch at home – it's the only protection – just have to press until someone answers – it rings through to the guards; I meet no one; need safe local walkways; I just see them coming and going; no such thing as neighbours now – one time you'd lift the latch and walk in; last time I saw them was last Xmas eve; 'twas safe here 'til a woman was robbed – they pulled everything out and cut the window to get in; when neighbours move into an area the onus should be on residents to introduce themselves; the blackguarding is every night – even the halo over the Blessed Virgin is gone; staying awake at night it's terrible; short visits at home are preferable – you don't want people to stay all day; can ask the neighbours if you need help; neighbours don't want to know.

The views expressed in relation to neighbours and neighbourhood ranged between: helpful and disinterested; friendliness and isolation; fear of intrusion and a desire that other neighbours could be visited and approached more informally or casually. It was noticeable that there were few comments on the visual quality of the neighbourhood, although the need for safe walkways was noted.

3.1.3 FEELINGS ABOUT AGENCIES AND CARE INSTITUTIONS

When discussing how they felt about the various agencies and institutions that they related to, participants noted that; many of the older people in? ¹⁴ have no visitors; no help from the medical profession, but family/neighbours helped; no offers of help; ambulance took me to hospital and hospital had no bed yet would not take me home; not bad; I get contributions towards the phone, electricity and travel; poor transport since the free pass is of no use; I was sent home from hospital even though they knew there was no one at home to look after me; I'm not allowed to have a travelling partner – you have to be 75; there should be bus in? ¹⁵; when community bus brings you to Ennis it doesn't come back after a few hours – you have to stay until 5.00; there are very few opportunities for social activities; the home help is only coming once a fortnight; in one of the nursing homes you have to pay a bit along with your pension;

Participants also noted that: in the elderly care unit men and women are mixed up – it's a terrible place; you're sent from Billy to Jack to get a simple form filled – need a one-stop shop to deal with everything; I've never seen one of the guards – they should be made live in the village and not somewhere else; service providers assume an over-intimacy by not referring to people with respect; they need to deal with paperwork quicker; could listen to us more; they could communicate better; the bus (CIE) doesn't come down the road and the free pass is useless; with travel we could have activities away from home – use free

¹⁴ A residential facility for older people.

¹⁵ Village within 7/8 miles of Ennis.

travel; could travel to shows in Dublin/ other cities; the private/community hospital, may be OK, but at €80 a day who could afford it; I'm worried about going into the nursing home but you could find that it is a good thing if your health gives up; if you don't get good health it's just as well to go into a nursing home; people living out the country don't avail of good health advice or support – their health often gives up; they're left all alone even if they have a big family that's no guarantee anyone is calling – the winters might get the better of them.

Again agencies and institutions are viewed in a mixed light. The scarcity of social activities and transport is noted as well as inappropriate timetables and inappropriate conditions attached to the 'free pass'. The incapacity to change institutional practices is apparent and the comments portray a sense of powerlessness, an over-riding concern with paperwork on behalf of some agencies. There is a strong desire that agencies listen and communicate better. The uncertainty as to the qualifying conditions for various services is understandable in light of the speed with which many of them change and the fact that in their childhood there were very few agencies and institutions dealing with older people.

3.1.4 IDENTIFIED AREAS OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Many of the participants in this study found modern society difficult to understand as the former role of the family and community has long been diminished, as they are no longer the final guarantors of public welfare. In addition, the state is gradually withdrawing from such a role. There is a growing emphasis on each individual providing for his or her welfare in older age. The state's contribution is reduced to a set of customer rights to limited services. Consequently, the basis for public and community-level provision, to underpin the welfare of older people, is regularly discussed in terms of financial costs and benefits.

There is a failure to recognise communal rights and at its most cynical the state denies the very existence of communities with the result that there is a failure to acknowledge community-based rights of participation and deliberation. In order to become agents of their own welfare in this changed society older people are required to be: self-centred; individualistic; competitive; well-informed; articulate; competent lobbyists and negotiators; literate in the use of technology and flexible in dealing with bureaucracy. However, their early formative experiences leave older people ill equipped to act in this radically different social and personal context. Today there is little basis to expect that, without significant intervention, the community can or will provide for their well-being in terms of:

- their relationships with themselves (eg. feelings about their own ageing);
- their relationships with others (family, neighbours, friends, wider community);
- their relationships with their physical environment;
- their relationships with those agencies and institutions which mediate their other relationships.





The achievement of specific community development goals in relation to older people, requires a range of interventions and actions to empower communities to underpin their well-being. Consequently, this study identifies four goals and a range of actions as necessary to advance the well-being of older people within a community development perspective and also identifies the geographic areas in the county where older people are at greatest risk of disadvantage and where community development approaches should be concentrated.



APPENDIX

THE AUTHORS



Michael Neylon joined Clare County Council from the private sector where he worked as a Social and Economic Planning Consultant. He has written on European Social and Cultural policy and Irish Economic Networking and Clustering. He has prepared reports and evaluations of National, Regional and Local Social and Economic Policies and programmes. He has previously carried out a number of studies of the social and economic trends in County Clare.

His other research interests include performance monitoring and evaluation, particularly the development of social and economic indicators and measures; regional and rural development; socio-cultural integration and institutional co-operation and collaboration.

He holds Masters degrees in Economics, Sociology, Philosophy and Rural Development, having graduated in both the human and natural sciences.



Brid Kirby currently works as a Social Inclusion Analyst with Waterford City Council. Previously she worked with Clare County Council where, with Michael Neylon, she completed a factor analytic study of affluence and deprivation in the County.

She has worked as Policy Analyst with Offaly County Council and with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment supporting the development of SMEs.

Her interests include spatial planning, local and regional development and the construction of indices to measure the socio-economic performance of policies and programmes.

Brid holds a Masters degree in Economics (Policy Evaluation and Planning) and a H.Dip GIS, having graduated with a BA in Public Administration.





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www.christymcnamara.com

Christy Mc Namara is an acclaimed photographer and musician. Born and raised in Crusheen, Co Clare, his work has been exhibited at home and has also been shown in London, Paris, New York and Los Angeles. His work is regarded as an Iconic image of the Living Irish Culture before it vanishes. The photographs shown here come from this body of work.

His ground breaking first Album "*THE HOUSE I WAS REARED IN*" broke new ground in terms of its high production values. It received rave reviews.

His client list includes *U2*, *The Pogues*, *The Department of Education* and *Guinness*.

He has been involved in a number of high profile publications including the much praised book on Irish Music "*THE LIVING NOTE*".