

## Section Three Principal Economic Status, Economic Dependency & Social Class

This section of the report looks at the issues of employment and unemployment. In doing this it examines the principal economic status of the population which indicates the labour force participation rate and the unemployment rate. This section also looks at the social class of the population and the economic dependency ratio.

### 3.1 Principal Economic Status

By analysing the principal economic status of those aged 15 and over it is possible to identify the labour force participation rate and the unemployment rate<sup>1</sup> for Leitrim. For the purposes of calculating the Unemployment Rate, the CSO classifies the population aged 15 years and over as either inside or outside the labour force<sup>2</sup>. The labour force participation rate is calculated as the sum of those at work, seeking their first job and unemployed as a percentage of the overall population aged 15 years and over. The Unemployment Rate is calculated as the sum of those unemployed and those seeking their first job as a percentage of the labour force. Table 3.1 shows the principal economic status of those aged 15 years and over in Leitrim.

---

1 The Quarterly National Household Survey is the usual method used to measure the level of unemployment. However, because of the sample size used, it is only possible to disaggregate the QNHS to regional level and therefore not very useful for a profile of poverty and disadvantage at local level. The census is the only method that measures unemployment at ED level and is therefore a basic but useful indicator of unemployment at the local level.

2 The Labour Force consists of those who are at work, unemployed or seeking regular work for the first time. Those outside the Labour Force are those who are students, those looking after home/family, those who are retired, those who are unable to work and those not in the Labour Force for other unspecified reasons.

Table 3.1 Principal Economic Status of those Aged 15 years and Over in Leitrim and the State, 2002 & 2006

	2002				2006			
	Leitrim		State		Leitrim		State	
Total population aged 15+	20,377		3,089,775		23,052		3,375,399	
	N	%*	N	%*	N	%*	N	%*
Total in Labour Force (Labour Force Participation Rate)	10,939	53.7%	1,800,933	58.3%	13,781	59.8%	2,109,498	62.5%
At work	9,990	49.0%	1,641,587	53.1%	12,669	55.0%	1,930,042	57.2%
First time job seeker	120	0.6%	21,147	0.7%	164	0.7%	29,372	0.9%
Unemployed	829	4.1%	138,199	4.5%	948	4.1%	150,084	4.4%
Unemployment Rate	10,939	8.7%	159,346	8.8%	1,112	8.1%	179,456	8.5%
Total not in Labour Force	9,438	46.3%	1,288,842	41.7%	9,271	40.2%	1,265,901	37.5%
Student	2,045	10.0%	350,774	11.4%	1,985	8.6%	349,596	10.4%
Home duties	3,027	14.9%	438,986	14.2%	2,728	11.8%	387,014	11.5%
Retired	2,893	14.2%	333,255	10.8%	3,176	13.8%	377,927	11.2%
Unable to work	1,242	6.1%	130,255	4.2%	1,301	5.6%	138,382	4.1%
Other	231	1.1%	35,572	1.2%	81	0.4%	12,982	0.4%

Source: CSO, National Census of Population, 2002 & 2006 \*% of total population aged 15 years and over

In Leitrim, the labour force increased by 2,842 people or 26% between 2002 and 2006, a substantially greater increase than that of the State overall which was 17%. Between 2002 and 2006, the labour force participation rate in the State increased by 4.2% from 58.3% to 62.5%. In Leitrim, the labour force participation rate increased by 6.1%, from 53.7% to 59.8%, almost one and a half times the national rate of increase. The gap between the labour force participation rates in Leitrim and the State has also narrowed from 4.6% in 2002 to 2.7% in 2006. In 2002 Leitrim had the third lowest labour force participation rate in the State, but by 2006, though there were still proportionately fewer people participating in the Labour Force in Leitrim than in the State, the relative position of Leitrim has improved to the tenth lowest labour force participation rate in the State.

The proportion of people who described themselves as at work increased from 49% in 2002 to 55% in 2006 and the gap between the figures for Leitrim and the State in this category decreased from 4.1% in 2002 to 2.2% in 2006. The unemployment rate in Leitrim fell between 2002 and 2006, from 8.7% in 2002 to 8.1% in 2006.

The proportion of people who describe themselves as not being in the labour force remained higher in Leitrim than in the State at 40.2% and 37.5% respectively, though there were fewer people in this category in Leitrim than in 2002 (46.3%). A total of 19.4% of people described themselves as retired or unable to work in Leitrim compared to 15.3% in the State.

Table 3.2 Leitrim and the State by Numbers of Males and Females in the Labour Force, 2002 & 2006

	2002				2006			
	Leitrim		State		Leitrim		State	
Total aged 15 years and over	20,377		3,089,755		23,052		3,375,399	
Labour Force	10,939		1,800,933		13,781		2,109,498	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Population aged 15 years and over	10,524	9,853	1,522,120	1,567,655	11,853	11,199	1,678,127	1,697,272
Population at work	6,140	3,850	963,253	678,334	7,506	5,163	1,107,234	822,808
Percentage at work	58.0%	39.0%	63.3%	43.3%	63.3%	46.1%	66.0%	48.5%
Labour Force	6,789	4,150	1,063,511	737,422	8,181	5,600	1,213,867	895,631
Gender breakdown of the Labour Force	62.1%	37.9%	59.1%	40.9%	59.4%	40.6%	57.5%	42.5%
Labour Force Participation Rate	64.5%	42.1%	69.9%	47.0%	69.0%	50.0%	72.3%	52.8%
Unemployment Rate	9.6%	7.2%	9.4%	8.0%	8.3%	7.8%	8.8%	8.1%

Source: CSO, National Census of Population, 2002 & 2006

Between 2002 and 2006, the labour force participation of males in the State increased by 2.4% from 69.9% to 72.3%. In Leitrim, the labour force participation of males increased by 4.5% from 64.5% in 2002 to 69.0% in 2006, almost twice the State average increase for males. In the same period, the labour force participation of females in the State increased by 5.8% from 47% in 2002 to 52.8% in 2006. In Leitrim, the labour participation of females increased by almost 8% from 42.1% in 2002 to 50.0% in 2006, almost one a half times the State average increase for females.

The gender gap between the labour force participation rates is narrowing in Leitrim. In 2002 the gender breakdown of the labour force in Leitrim was 62:38 compared to the gender breakdown for the State which was 59:41. In 2006 the gender breakdown in Leitrim was 59:41, similar to the State breakdown in 2002. In 2006 the State breakdown was 57.5:42.5.

Table 3.3 Principal Economic Status of those Aged 15 years and Over at Rural Area Level, 2002 & 2006

	Ballinamore Rural Area		Carrick-on-Shannon Rural Area		Kinlough Rural Area		Manorhamilton Rural Area		Mohill Rural Area	
<b>2002</b>										
Total population aged 15+	2,386		5,363		1,499		5,318		5,811	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Total in the labour Force (Labour force participation rate)	1,272	53.3%	3,003	56.0%	838	55.9%	2,816	53.0%	3,010	51.8%
At work	1,148	48.1%	2,783	51.9%	728	48.6%	2,583	48.6%	2,748	47.3%
First time job seeker	18	0.8%	34	0.6%	7	0.5%	33	0.6%	28	0.5%
Unemployed	106	4.4%	186	3.5%	103	6.9%	200	3.8%	234	4.0%
Unemployment rate	124	9.7%	220	7.3%	110	13.1%	233	8.3%	262	8.7%
Total not in Labour Force	1,114	46.7%	2,360	44.0%	661	44.1%	2,502	47.0%	2,801	48.2%
Student	249	10.4%	523	9.8%	123	8.2%	534	10.0%	616	10.6%
Home duties	356	14.9%	748	14.0%	225	15.0%	714	13.4%	984	16.9%
Retired	355	14.9%	666	12.4%	220	14.7%	816	15.3%	836	14.4%
Unable to work	127	5.3%	353	6.6%	87	5.8%	369	6.9%	306	5.3%
Other	27	1.1%	70	1.3%	6	0.4%	69	1.3%	59	1.0%
<b>2006</b>										
Total aged 15 years and over	2,519		6,619		1,868		5,946		6,100	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Total in the labour Force (Labour force participation rate)	1,437	57.0%	4,185	63.2%	1,151	61.6%	3,500	58.9%	3,508	57.5%
At work	1,346	53.4%	3,875	58.5%	1,013	54.2%	3,222	54.2%	3,213	52.7%
Looking for first regular job	16	0.6%	73	1.1%	7	0.4%	39	0.7%	29	0.5%
Unemployed having lost or given up previous job	75	3.0%	237	3.6%	131	7.0%	239	4.0%	266	4.4%
Unemployment Rate	91	6.3%	310	7.4%	138	12.0%	278	7.9%	295	8.4%
Total not in the labour force	1,082	43.0%	2,434	36.8%	717	38.4%	2,446	41.1%	2,592	42.5%
Student	249	9.9%	510	7.7%	144	7.7%	540	9.1%	542	8.9%
Looking after home/family	313	12.4%	731	11.0%	211	11.3%	626	10.5%	847	13.9%
Retired	351	13.9%	793	12.0%	261	14.0%	952	16.0%	819	13.4%
Unable to work due to permanent sickness or disability	149	5.9%	383	5.8%	92	4.9%	311	5.2%	366	6.0%
Other	20	0.8%	17	0.3%	9	0.5%	17	0.3%	18	0.3%

Source: CSO, National Census of Population, 2002 & 2006

When compared to the figures for 2002, the labour forces in all rural areas increased. The largest increase, 1,182 people or 39%, was in the Carrick-on-Shannon Rural Area, followed by the Manorhamilton Rural Area, 684 people or 24%. The labour force participation rates also increased in all rural areas and Carrick-on-Shannon Rural Area continues to have the highest labour force participation rate at 63.2%. Mohill and Ballinamore Rural Areas have the lowest labour force participation rate at 57.5% and 57% respectively.

Kinlough Rural Area continued to have the highest unemployment rate at 12%, marginally lower than the 13.1% in 2002. Ballinamore Rural Area now has the lowest unemployment rate at 6.3% and the rate in Carrick-on-Shannon Rural Area increased slightly from 7.3% in 2002 to 7.4% in 2006. Manorhamilton and Ballinamore Rural Areas have the highest proportion of people who describe themselves as retired and unable to work.

Table 3.4 People on Unemployment Benefit and Unemployment Assistance in Leitrim, 2006

	Short-Term (< 15 months)	Long-Term (> 15 months)	Total
Unemployment Benefit	437	24	461
Unemployment Assistance	352	430	782

Source: Department of Social and Family Affairs (July 2006)

Table 3.5 Leitrim by Persons on the Live Register Classified by Sex, Age Group and Local Office of Registration, 2008

County and Local Office				Males			Females		
	February			February 2008			February 2008		
	2007	January 2008	February 2008	Under 25 years	25 years & over	Total	Under 25 years	25 years & over	Total
Total Leitrim	1,193	1,514	1,575	173	820	993	90	492	582
Carrick-on-Shannon	883	1,133	1,158	126	589	715	69	374	443
Manorhamilton	310	381	417	47	231	278	21	118	139

Source: CSO Live Register, March 2008

Tables 3.4 and 3.5 present information from the Department of Social and Family Affairs (DSFA) and the Central Statistic Office. According to the DSFA, there were 1,243 people in receipt of Unemployment Benefit or Unemployment Assistance in Leitrim (July 2006). A total of 789 people were on short-term payments and 454 on long-term benefit. The information from the Central Statistics Office shows that there was a slight increase in the Live Register figures between February 2007 and February 2008.

When labour force participation is examined (based on 2006 census) at ED level it emerges that 53 of the 78 EDs have a lower labour force participation rate than the State average. Oughteragh in Ballinamore Rural Area had the lowest labour force participation rate in Leitrim at 45.6%, followed by Glenfarn in Manorhamilton Rural Area at 45.9%. Cloonclare in Manorhamilton Rural Area has the highest labour force participation rate at 68.3% followed by Kinlough in Kinlough Rural Area at 67.6%.

When the unemployment rate is examined at ED level it emerges that 28 of the 78 EDs have an unemployment rate that is higher than the national average, however this is fewer than the number of EDs in 2002 (36), and the overall levels of unemployment have reduced slightly. Melvin/Aghavoghill in Kinlough Rural Area has the highest unemployment rate at 18.5% but the overall population is low. Gubacreeeny in Kinlough Rural Area continues to have a significant unemployment rate at 16.3%, though there is a reduction on the 2002 unemployment rate of 19.5%. Mohill in Mohill Rural Area also continues to have a significant unemployment rate at 14.9%, the same rate as in 2002.

## 3.2 Economic Dependency Ratio

The Economic Dependency Ratio (EDR) is calculated as the ratio of the total inactive population (children 14 and under, unemployed, first time job seekers, those engaged in home duties, those retired, students, and those unable to work) to those at work. The resulting ratio is the number of inactive persons to every one active person. Therefore the higher the EDR, the more inactive people are dependant on the active population. The EDR helps to highlight those areas with smaller numbers of income earners relative to the economically dependent population of the area or the extent to which those who are economically active are supporting those who are inactive. The EDR is regarded as one of the most reliable indicators of disadvantage in an area.

Table 3.6 Economic Dependency Ratios in Rural Areas, Leitrim and the State, 2002 & 2006

	2002		2006	2006
	EDR	Total inactive population	At 15 + work	EDR
Ballinamore Rural Area	1.7	1,815	1,346	1.3
Carrick-on-Shannon Rural Area	1.4	4,335	3,875	1.1
Kinlough Rural Area	1.6	1,410	1,013	1.4
Manorhamilton Rural Area	1.6	4,313	3,222	1.3
Mohill Rural Area	1.7	4,408	3,213	1.4
Leitrim	1.6	16,281	12,669	1.3
State	1.4	2,309,806	1,930,042	1.2

Source: CSO, National Census of Population 2006

In 2006, the EDR in Leitrim, at 1.3, was significantly lower than the rate of 1.6 in 2002. The gap between the EDRs in Leitrim and the State narrowed from 0.2 in 2002 to 0.1 in 2006. At rural area level the EDRs decreased in all the rural areas, most significantly in the Ballinamore and Mohill Rural Areas. Kinlough and Mohill Rural Areas had the highest EDRs at 1.4.

At ED level, 48 of the 78 EDs in Leitrim have an EDR that is higher than the national average. Only one ED has an EDR of 2 or higher compared to twelve EDs in 2002. Kilyclogher in Manorhamilton Rural Area and Oughteragh in Ballinamore Rural Area had the highest EDRs. Killygar, Drumreilly North and Newtowngore in Ballinamore Rural Area had the lowest EDRs.

### 3.3 Social Class

Based on the census information returns, the Central Statistic Office assigns every person in the State a social class. The social class of all persons aged 15 years and over is determined by their occupation and additionally, in some cases, by their employment status. The social class of family dependants is derived from the social class of the parent with the highest social class. Farmers are assigned to social class categories according to the number of acres farmed. Small farmers (less than 30 acres) are assigned to the semi-skilled manual category and large farmers (with 200 or more acres) are assigned to the higher professional category. In Ireland, social class is measured by an ordinal scale with '1' being the highest social class<sup>3</sup>.

Social class is a good indicator of the concentrations of relative affluence and poverty in a geographic area. As everyone in the population is assigned a social class it is possible to view the profile as a percentage of the entire population of the area. A large proportion of the population in the higher social classes suggests good educational attainment and earning potential, while a large proportion of the population in the lower social class indicates lower levels of educational attainment, fewer qualifications and lower income generating potential. Research has shown that social class is both deeply-rooted and extremely resistant to change and is therefore resistant to cyclical variations<sup>4</sup> such as economic growth. This section of the report looks at the concentrations of lower and higher social classes, the former as an indicator of disadvantage, and the latter as an inverse indicator of disadvantage.

---

3 1 = Professional workers; 2 = Managerial and technical; 3 = Non-manual; 4 = Skilled Manual; 5 = Semi-skilled; 6 = Unskilled; 7 = All others gainfully occupied.  
4 Haase and Pratschke, 2005, p.14

Table 3.7 Rural Areas, Leitrim and the State by Percentage of the Population in each Social Class, 2002 & 2006

Area	Total all ages	Social Class 1: Professional Workers		Social Class 2: Managerial and technical		Social Class 3: Non-manual		Social Class 4: Skilled manual		Social Class 5: Semi-skilled manual		Social Class 6: Unskilled manual		Social Class 7: All others gainfully occupied	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>2002</b>															
Ballinamore Rural Area	3,059	107	3.5%	704	23.0%	528	17.3%	584	19.1%	311	10.2%	189	6.2%	636	20.8%
Carrick-on-Shannon Rural Area	6,669	282	4.2%	1,579	23.7%	1,207	18.1%	1,192	17.9%	741	11.1%	339	5.1%	1,329	19.9%
Kinlough Rural Area	1,912	84	4.4%	439	23.0%	296	15.5%	443	23.2%	216	11.3%	130	6.8%	304	15.9%
Manorhamilton Rural Area	6,769	293	4.3%	1,598	23.6%	1,037	15.3%	1,139	16.8%	980	14.5%	509	7.5%	1,213	17.9%
Mohill Rural Area	7,390	183	2.5%	1,568	21.2%	1,313	17.8%	1,500	20.3%	845	11.4%	383	5.2%	1,598	21.6%
Leitrim	25,799	949	3.7%	5,888	22.8%	4,381	17.0%	4,858	18.8%	3,093	12.0%	1,550	6.0%	5,080	19.7%
State	3,917,203	237,511	6.1%	1,000,615	25.5%	645,761	16.5%	672,892	17.2%	426,158	10.9%	220,843	5.6%	713,423	18.2%
<b>2006</b>															
Ballinamore Rural Area	3,161	110	3.5%	908	28.7%	558	17.7%	629	19.9%	326	10.3%	139	4.4%	491	15.5%
Carrick-on-Shannon Rural Area	8,210	389	4.7%	2,090	25.5%	1,566	19.1%	1,640	20.0%	862	10.5%	344	4.2%	1,319	16.1%
Kinlough Rural Area	2,423	143	5.9%	588	24.3%	434	17.9%	485	20.0%	297	12.3%	88	3.6%	388	16.0%
Manorhamilton Rural Area	7,535	308	4.1%	2,042	27.1%	1,289	17.1%	1,354	18.0%	1,007	13.4%	374	5.0%	1,161	15.4%
Mohill Rural Area	7,621	233	3.1%	1,941	25.5%	1,523	20.0%	1,679	22.0%	876	11.5%	321	4.2%	1,048	13.8%
Leitrim	28,950	1,183	4.1%	7,569	26.1%	5,370	18.5%	5,787	20.0%	3,368	11.6%	1,266	4.4%	4,407	15.2%
State	4,239,848	277,062	6.5%	1,117,986	26.4%	721,731	17.0%	725,938	17.1%	469,320	11.1%	180,371	4.3%	747,440	17.6%

Source: CSO, National Census of Population, 2002 & 2006

Tables 3.7 A and B show the social class of the population in Leitrim and the State in 2002 and 2006. In 2002, 3.7% of the population in Leitrim was made up of professional workers, just over half the State figure of 6.1%. The largest proportion of the population in Leitrim (22.8%) was made up of managerial and technical workers. There were higher percentages of people in the manual social classes (skilled manual, semi-skilled and unskilled manual) in Leitrim (36.8%) than nationally (33.7%). At rural area level, there were lower proportions of population than nationally in the higher social classes in all areas. Manorhamilton Rural Area has the highest percentage of population made up of unskilled manual workers at 7.5%.

In 2006, 4.1% of the population in Leitrim was made up of professional workers, an increase of 0.4% on the 2002 figure of 3.7%, though it remains significantly lower than the State average of 6.5%. Similarly to the case in 2002, the largest proportion of the population in Leitrim (26.1%) was made up of managerial and technical workers, and there continues to be higher percentages of people in the manual social classes (skilled manual, semi-skilled and unskilled manual) in Leitrim (36%) than nationally (32.5%). At rural area level, there were lower proportions of population than nationally in the higher social classes in all areas. Manorhamilton Rural Area continues to have the highest percentage of population made up of unskilled manual workers at 5%.

### 3.3.1 Combined Social Classes

Table 3.8 Rural Areas, Leitrim and the State by Percentage of the Population in the Combined Higher and Lower Social Classes, 2002 & 2006<sup>5</sup>

	2002							2006						
	Total Population	Combined professional and managerial & technical workers (Social Classes 1&2)		Combined non-manual and skilled manual workers (Social Classes 3& 4)		Combined semi-skilled & unskilled workers (Social Classes 5 & 6)		Total Population	Combined professional and managerial & technical workers (Social Classes 1&2)		Combined non-manual and skilled manual workers (Social Classes 3 & 4)		Combined semi-skilled & unskilled workers (Social Classes 5 & 6)	
		N	%	N	%	N	%		N	%	N	%	N	%
Ballinamore Rural Area	3,059	811	26.5%	1,112	36.4%	500	16.4%	3,161	1,018	32.2%	1,187	37.6%	465	14.7%
Carrick-on-Shannon Rural Area	6,669	1,861	27.9%	2,399	36.0%	1,080	16.2%	8,210	2,479	30.2%	3,206	39.0%	1,206	14.7%
Kinlough Rural Area	1,912	523	27.4%	739	38.7%	346	18.1%	2,423	731	30.2%	919	37.9%	385	15.9%
Manorhamilton Rural Area	6,769	1,891	27.9%	2,176	32.1%	1,489	22.0%	7,535	2,350	31.2%	2,643	35.1%	1,381	18.3%
Mohill Rural Area	7,390	1,751	23.7%	2,813	38.1%	1,228	16.6%	7,621	2,174	28.5%	3,202	42.0%	1,197	15.7%
Leitrim	25,799	6,837	26.5%	9,239	35.8%	4,643	18.0%	28,950	8,752	30.2%	11,157	38.5%	4,634	16.0%
State	3,917,203	1,238,126	31.6%	1,318,653	33.7%	647,001	16.5%	4,239,848	1,395,048	32.9%	1,447,669	34.1%	649,691	15.3%

Source: CSO, National Census of Population, 2002 & 2006

<sup>5</sup> Table 3.8 shows the combined figures for social classes 1 and 2 (professional workers and managerial and technical workers), social classes 3 & 4 (combined non-manual and skilled manual workers) and social classes 5 and 6 (semi-skilled and unskilled workers). These combinations are used to give a summary of affluence and disadvantage in areas.



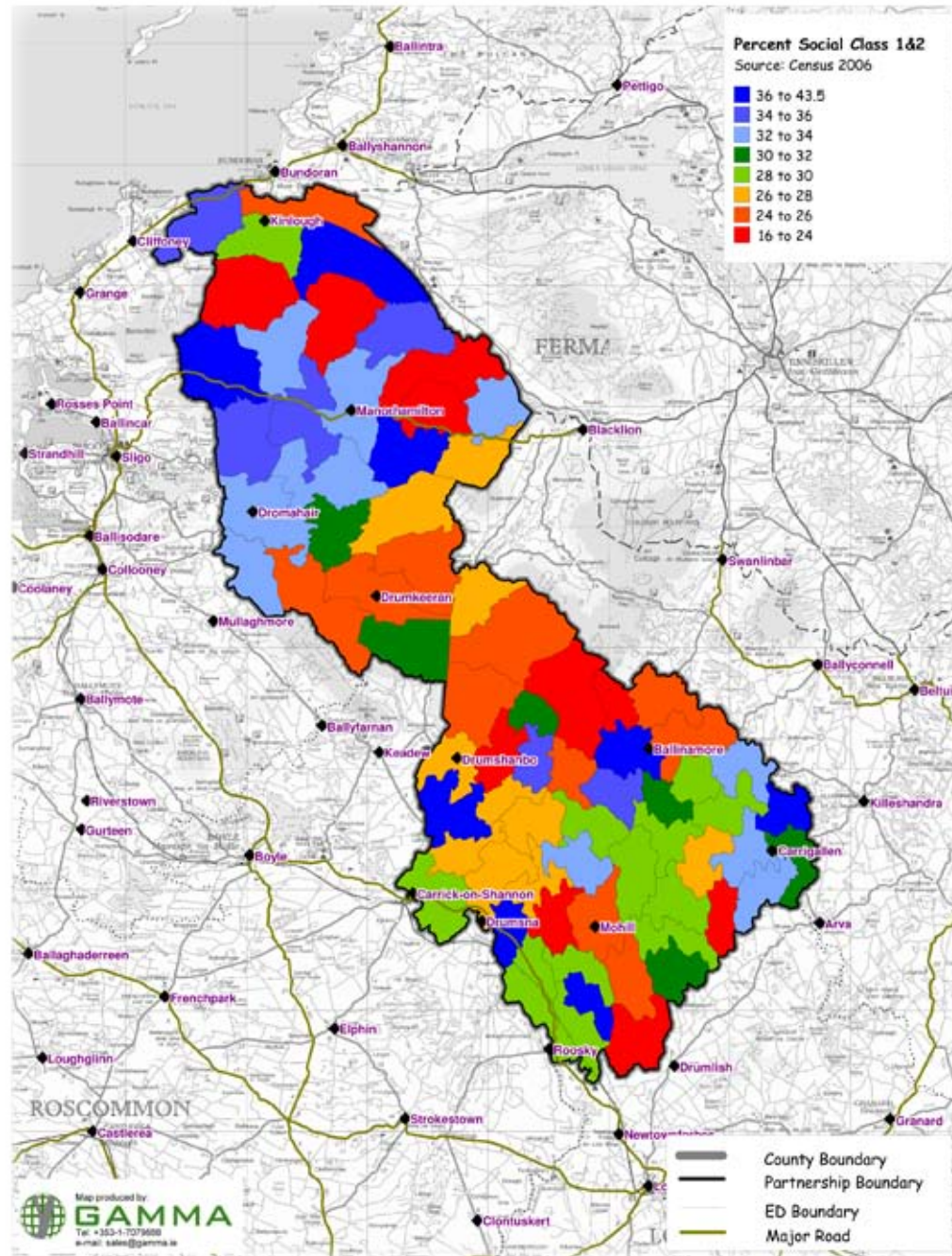
Table 3.8 shows that proportionally, there are fewer people from the combined higher social classes and more people from the combined lower social classes in Leitrim than nationally, though the gap between the State and Leitrim has narrowed significantly since 2002. In 2002, 31.6% of the national population was made up of people in the highest social classes in the State, compared to the substantially lower figure of 26.5% in Leitrim. In 2006, the figure for the State increased by 1.3% to 32.9% but the figure for Leitrim increased by 3.7% to 30.2%, almost three times the national increase. There continues to be more people in the middle social classes in Leitrim (38.5%) than nationally (34.1%) and more people in the lowest social classes (16%) than nationally (15.3%), though the latter figure decreased by almost twice the national decrease in Leitrim between 2002 and 2006.

At rural area level, the proportions of population in the higher social classes increased in all rural areas between 2002 and 2006, though all the rural areas continued to have lower proportions than the State average in these categories. The highest proportions of the higher social classes are concentrated in Ballinamore Rural Area (32.2%), which had one of the lowest proportions of population in this category in 2002, and Manorhamilton Rural Area (31.2%). Mohill Rural Area continues to have the lowest concentration of population in these social classes. The highest proportions of the middle social classes are concentrated in Mohill Rural Area. The highest proportions of the lower social classes are in Manorhamilton (18.3%), Kinlough (15.9%) and Mohill (15.7%) Rural Areas.

At ED level 56 of 78 EDs have lower proportions of people in the higher social classes than nationally. Corriga in Mohill Rural Area, Greaglass/Stralongford in Ballinamore Rural Area, Munakill in Manorhamilton Rural Area and Moher in Carrick-on-Shannon Rural Area have the lowest proportions of their populations in the higher social classes. Ballinamore in Ballinamore Rural Area, Glenboy in Manorhamilton Rural Area and Leitrim in Carrick-on-Shannon Rural Area have the highest proportions of their populations in the higher social classes.

A total of 51 of the 78 EDs have higher proportions of their populations in the lower social classes than the national average. Killarga and Garvagh/Arigna in Manorhamilton Rural Area have the highest proportions of their populations in the lower social classes. Gortermone in Mohill Rural Area and Sramore in Manorhamilton Rural Area have the lowest proportions of their populations in the lower social classes.

# Map 3.1 Percentage Social Class 1 & 2, 2006



## 3.4 Conclusion and Commentary

The labour force and labour force participation rate in Leitrim increased at significantly higher rates than those in the State between 2002 and 2006. In Leitrim, the labour force increased by 26% between 2002 and 2006 and the labour force participation rate increased by 6.1% - almost one and a half times the national rate of increase. The rate of increase was higher for females than males and was higher than the State average for both genders. The gap between the labour force participation rates in Leitrim and the State also narrowed from 4.6% in 2002 to 2.7% in 2006.

In 2002, Leitrim had the third lowest labour force participation rate in the State but by 2006, this position had improved to tenth lowest, though there are still proportionately fewer people participating in the labour force in Leitrim than in the State. The number of people who described themselves as at work increased from 49% to 55% between 2002 and 2006, again a higher rate of increase than the State average. The unemployment rate remains slightly lower in Leitrim than in the State<sup>6</sup>. The proportion of people who describe themselves as not being in the labour force remained higher in Leitrim than in the State, though there were fewer people in this category than in 2002. At sub-county level, when compared to the figures for 2002, the labour forces and labour force participation rates increased in all rural areas. Ballinamore and Mohill Rural Areas have the lowest labour force participation rates.

In 2006, the Economic Dependency Rate in Leitrim, at 1.3, was significantly lower than the rate of 1.6 in 2002 and the gap between the EDRs in Leitrim and the State narrowed considerably between 2002 and 2006. At rural area level the EDRs decreased in all the rural areas, most significantly in the Ballinamore and Mohill Rural Areas. Kinlough and Mohill Rural Areas had the highest EDRs.

The largest increase in social class between 2002 and 2006 in Leitrim was in the combined professional social classes, which increased at almost three times the national average. However, though the gap between the State and Leitrim narrowed significantly since 2002, proportionally, there are still fewer people from the combined higher social classes and more people from the combined lower social classes in Leitrim than nationally. In the same period, there was an increase in the combined middle social classes, and a decrease in the number of people in the combined lower social classes. At rural area level, all the rural areas have lower proportions than the State average of people in the higher social classes, though the gaps in all areas are narrower than in 2002.

<sup>6</sup> Whilst the unemployment rate of an area is one of the most commonly used and accepted indicators of disadvantage, it is not the most reliable indicator in rural areas. Work carried out by some (for example Haase and Pratschke 2005) indicates that there is no necessary connection between the level of employment and the degree of disadvantage in rural areas.