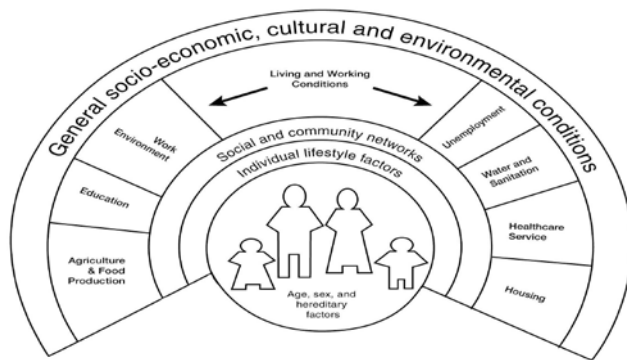


Section Six Health

Health is an issue that affects every member of the population. According to the World Health Organisation health is *a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. The enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition*¹.

It is now widely accepted that socio-economic factors, including poverty, are key in determining health status. According to the Combat Poverty Agency, people experiencing poverty become sick more often and die younger than those who are better off (CPA, 2004). For example, the death rate from cancers is over twice as high among working age men from the unskilled manual groups as it is among working-age men from the professional categories; the low birth weight (babies born weighing below 2,500 grams) among unskilled manual groups is twice that of the professional groups²; the total death rate of the lowest occupational group was 100 to 200 per cent higher than in the highest occupational groups between 1989 and 19983. In acknowledging this, the Institute of Public Health in Ireland are developing an Irish Health Poverty Index that will focus attention on health inequalities, the determinants of those inequalities, and the need for services to reduce the impact of poverty at local and regional levels. This suggests that health is more than the absence of illness and that the responsibility for health promotion is shared amongst all the organisations working and providing services to people at risk of poverty and disadvantage. The following taken from Dahlgren and Whitehead 1991 illustrates this point.

Figure 6.1 The Determinants of Health



1 Constitution of the World Health Organisation, http://www.who.int/governance/eb/who_constitution_en.pdf

2 Cullen (2002) Report on the Perinatal Statistics 1999, Dublin ESRI and the Department of Health and Children quoted in CPA, 2004

3 The Institute of Public Health in Ireland (2001) Inequalities in Mortality 1989-1998: A Report on All-Ireland Mortality Data, Dublin: The Institute of Public Health in Ireland quoted in CPA, 2004

6.1 Factors that Negatively Impact on Health

Table 6.1 shows the numbers of people in some of the categories that are at higher than average risk of ill health and poverty.

Table 6.1 Rural Areas, Leitrim and the State by Categories that are at Higher than Average Risk of Ill Health and Poverty, 2002 & 2006

	Total Population	People with a disability		65 years & over		Combined semi-skilled & unskilled workers (Social Classes 5 & 6)	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
2002							
Ballinamore Rural Area	3,059	244	8.0%	482	15.8%	500	16.4%
Carrick-on-Shannon Rural Area	6,669	687	10.3%	989	14.8%	1,080	16.2%
Kinlough Rural Area	1,912	180	9.4%	281	14.7%	346	18.1%
Manorhamilton Rural Area	6,769	743	11.0%	1,134	16.8%	1,489	22.0%
Mohill Rural Area	7,390	797	10.8%	1,260	17.1%	1,228	16.6%
Leitrim	25,799	2,651	10.3%	4,146	16.1%	4,643	18.0%
State	3,917,203	323,707	8.3%	436,001	11.1%	647,001	16.5%
2006							
Ballinamore Rural Area	3,161	270	8.5%	467	14.8%	465	14.7%
Carrick-on-Shannon Rural Area	8,210	809	9.9%	1,071	13.0%	1,206	14.7%
Kinlough Rural Area	2,423	234	9.7%	282	11.6%	385	15.9%
Manorhamilton Rural Area	7,535	817	10.8%	1,158	15.4%	1,381	18.3%
Mohill Rural Area	7,621	786	10.3%	1,229	16.1%	1,197	15.7%
Leitrim	28,950	2,916	10.1%	4,207	14.5%	4,634	16.0%
State	4,239,848	393,785	9.3%	467,926	11.0%	649,691	15.3%

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

Similar to the situation in 2002, compared to the national average, Leitrim has a higher proportion of people in the risk categories for poverty and ill health. For example, 10.1% people in Leitrim have a disability compared to 9.3% of people in the State, though while this number increased in the State from 8.3% in 2002, it decreased slightly in Leitrim from 10.3%. In relation to older people, 14.5% are aged 65 years and over in Leitrim compared to 11.0% in the State, though the figure in Leitrim decreased significantly from 16.1% in 2002. A total of 16% of people in Leitrim are in the lowest social classes compared to 15.3% of people in the State, though again this figure decreased from 18% in 2002. At sub-county level, the proportion of people in these categories is higher in most rural areas and EDs.

Table 6.2 Leitrim by Ages and Type of Medical Card. 2006

	0-18 years			Over 18 years			Over 65 years			Total
	MC*	DVC**	Total	MC*	DVC**	Total	MC*	DVC**	Total	
Males	1,263	58	1,321	4,073	75	4,148	1,925	5	1,930	7,399
Females	1,186	49	1,235	4,839	80	4,919	2,251	3	2,254	8,408
Total	2,449	107	2,556	8,912	155	9,067	4,176	8	4,184	15,807

Source: Health Services Executive West, July 2006 * Medical Card ** Doctor Visit Card

There are a total of 15,807 medical card or doctor visit card holders in Leitrim. This accounts for 54.6% of the overall population.

6.2 Community Hospitals, Nursing Units and Health Centres

Our Lady's Hospital in Manorhamilton has 35 beds for older people, with access to therapists, a 21 bedded Rheumatology unit, an out patients department and x-ray services. Arus Brefni in Manorhamilton has 31 beds for older people and a day service. St Patrick's Community Hospital in Carrick-on-Shannon has 113 beds for older people and a day hospital with access to therapists. Arus Carolan in Mohill has 40 beds for older people and a day hospital. There are health centres in the following areas:

Table 6.3 Health Centres in Leitrim

Ballinaglera	Drumkeerlin	Blacklion	Carrigallen	Dowra
Ballinamore	Drumshanbo	Carrick on Shannon	Dromahair	Dromod
Glangevlin	Glenfarne	Kiltyclogher	Kinlough	Manorhamilton
Mohill Primary Care Centre	Newtowngore			

Source: Health Services Executive West, 2006

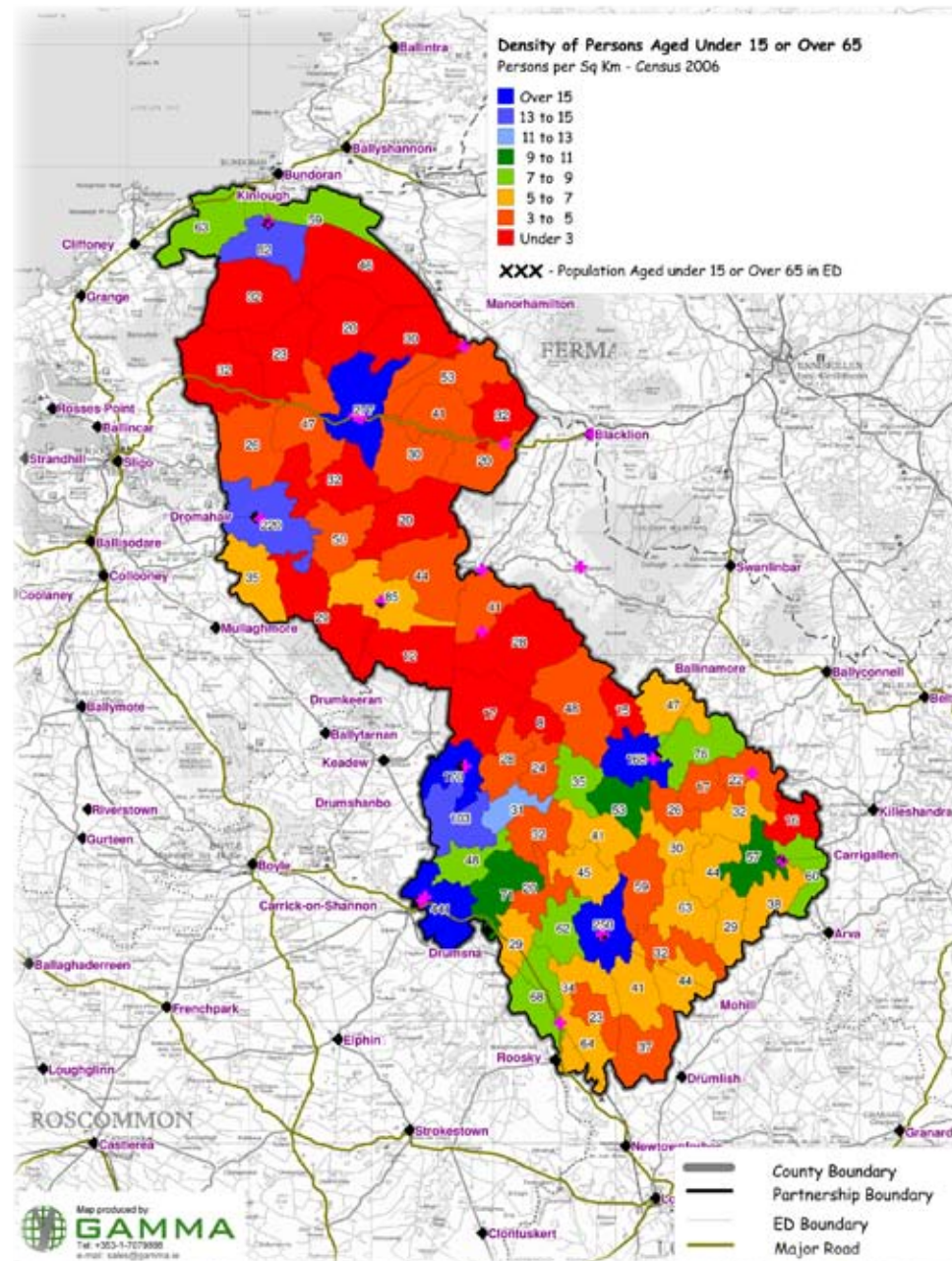
Table 6.4 Numbers of People with a Disability in Leitrim by Disability, Age and Gender, 2006

	National Physical and Sensory Disability Database		National Intellectual Disability Database		Total
	Female	Male	Female	Male	
0-17 years	20	15	33	43	111
18-65 years	67	72	34	45	218
Total	87	87	67	88	329

Source: The National Physical and Sensory Disability Database and the National Intellectual Disability Database, 2006

Table 6.4 shows the numbers of people in Leitrim that are included in the National Physical and Sensory Disability Database, and the National Intellectual Disability Database. According to this information, 329 people in Leitrim are registered as having a physical, sensory or intellectual disability - 174 people have a physical or sensory disability and 155 have an intellectual disability. These figures are clearly different from those presented by the 2002 census of population in which 2,651 people reported having a disability. The difference may be somewhat explained by the fact that in order to be included in the national disability databases a person must be assessed as having the disability in question. In the census, people are asked to assess themselves and their families according to the level of disability and the term disability is used in a much broader sense.

Map 6 Density of Age Dependent Population vs. Health Care Locations, 2006



6.3 Conclusion and Commentary

There are a number of key factors to consider in relation to health in an area like Leitrim. Leitrim has a higher incidence of some of the socio-economic factors that determine health status. For example, there is a higher than average number of older people living in Leitrim. Age is a determining factor in health status in a number of ways. First older people have a higher risk of poverty than the overall population and living in poverty increases the risk of ill health. In addition, the older a person is the more likely he or she will have a disability or long-term illness and thus require more health services. Leitrim, with the oldest population in the State can expect to have a higher than average demand on health services from this sector of the population.

In addition, there is a higher than average level of people in the lower socio-economic categories in Leitrim. People in these categories have a much higher risk of both poverty and ill health. These factors can have a mutual reinforcing effect where poverty can exacerbate the risk of ill health and ill health can exacerbate the risk of poverty. There is also a higher than average number of people with a disability living in Leitrim and this will have an impact on the level of need for health services.