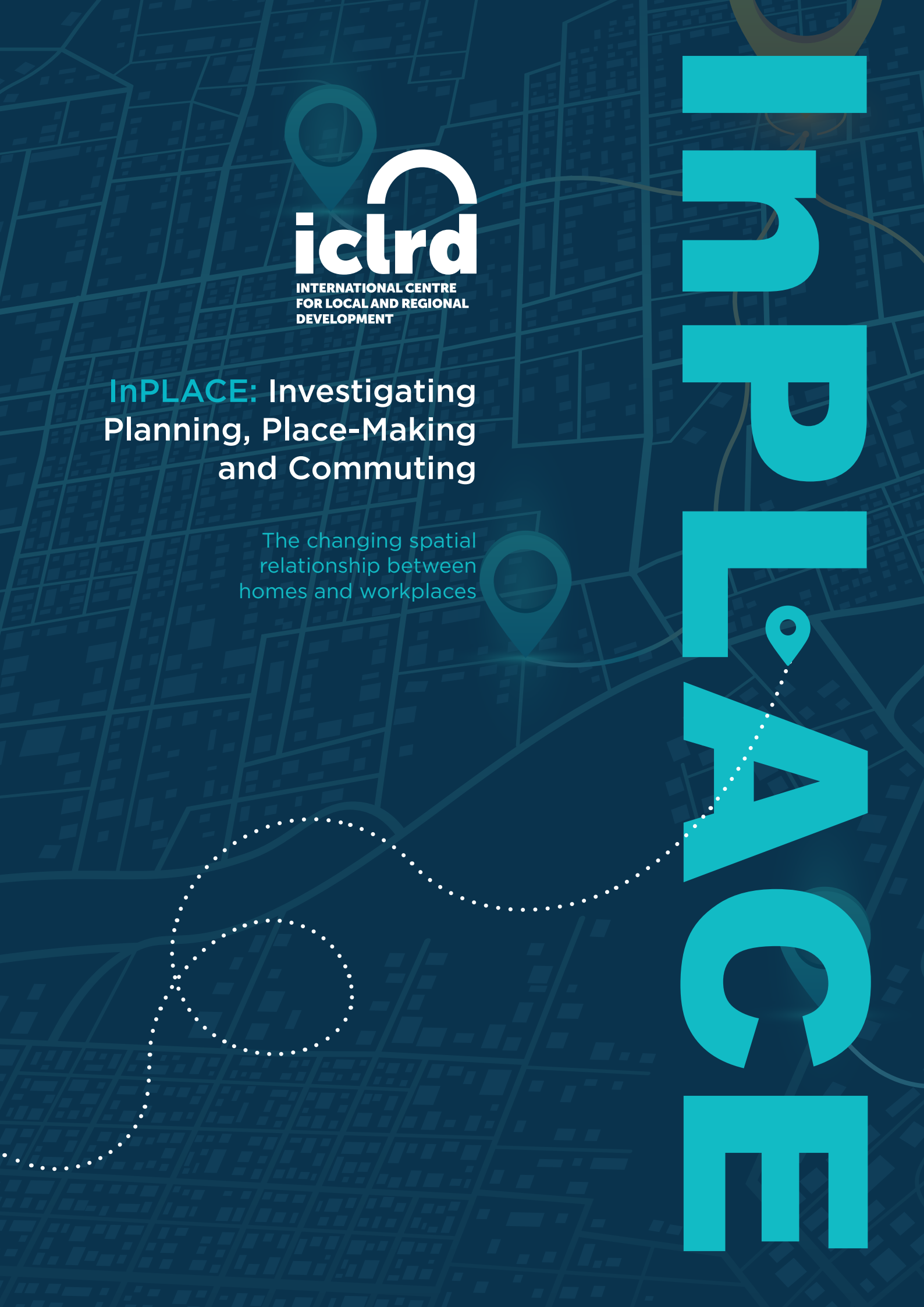
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InPLACE: Investigating
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and Commuting
The changing spatial
relationship between
homes and workplaces
InPLACE

INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR LOCAL AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

# InPLACE: Investigating Planning, Place-Making and Commuting

Final Report

September 2024

Maynooth University
National University of Ireland Maynooth

Ulster University

University of Maryland

UCD Dublin

MIC
Mary Immaculate College
Coláiste Mhuire Gan Smál

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MDOT
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An Roinn Tithíochta, Rialtas Áitiúil agus Oidhreachta
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OPR
Oifig an Rialaitheora Pleanála
Office of the Planning Regulator

Comhairle Contae Chorcaí
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# Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| ABTA | Area Based Transport Assessment |
| ACS | American Community Survey |
| AIRO | All Island Research Observatory |
| ATU | Atlantic Technological University |
| BCP | Broadband Connection Point |
| BPFI | Banking and Payments Federation Ireland |
| CAP | Climate Action Plan |
| Co. | County |
| CDP | County Development Plan |
| CSO | Central Statistics Office |
| DHLGH | Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage |
| DMV | District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia |
| DRCD | Department for Rural and Community Development |
| ED | Electoral District |
| EEA | European Environmental Agency |
| EU | European Union |
| EV | Electric Vehicle |
| FFNI | Full Fibre Northern Ireland Consortium |
| GAA | Gaelic Athletic Association |
| GDA | Greater Dublin Area |
| GhG | Greenhouse Gas |
| ICLRD | International Centre for Local and Regional Development |
| ICT | Information and Communications Technology |
| Km | Kilometre |
| LAP | Local Area Plan |
| LCDC | Local Community Development Committees |
| LDC | Local District Council |
| LECP | Local Economic and Community Plan |
| LGD | Loss Given Default |
| LGMA | Local Government Management Agency |
| LSMATS | Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area Transport strategy |
| LTP | Local Transport Plan |
| MDOT | Maryland Department of Transportation |
| NBP | National Broadband Plan |
| NCSG | National Center for Smart Growth |
| NDP | National Development Plan |
| NEF | New Economic Foundation |
| NI | Northern Ireland |
| NIFTI | National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland |
| NIHE | Northern Ireland Housing Executive |
| NISRA | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency |
| NPF | National Planning Framework |
| NSO | National Strategic Outcomes |
| NSS | National Spatial Strategy |
| NTA | National Transport Authority |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development |

| | |
|---|---|
| OPR | Office of the Planning Regulator |
| PPN | Public Participation Network |
| QUB | Queens University Belfast |
| RCN | Rural Community Network |
| RDS | Regional Development Strategy |
| RRDF | Rural Regeneration Development Fund |
| RSES | Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy |
| RSPB | Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (Northern Ireland) |
| SDGs | Sustainable Development Goals |
| SPPS | Strategic Planning Policy Statement |
| TEN-T | Trans-European Transport Network |
| TfW | Travel for Work |
| TII | Transport Infrastructure Ireland |
| TTB | Travel Time Budgets |
| UK | United Kingdom |
| UMD | University of Maryland |
| UNSDGs | United Nations Sustainable Development Goals |
| WDC | Western Development Commission |
| ÚnaG | Údarás na Gaeltachta |
| UN | United Nations |
| USA | United States of America |
| WFH | Working/Work from Home |

## Executive Summary

Economic changes in developed countries over several decades have led to a growing concentration of jobs in larger urban centres, but the distribution of the population and the labour force has been slow to respond to these changes. This is in part because of house price pressures in the cities and large towns, and in part because of the enduring attraction of rural areas and small towns as places to live and to bring up families. The result has been a widening gap between the locations of jobs and of residences, and, inevitably, the growth of commuting. These tendencies are evident in Ireland, Northern Ireland and the United States of America (USA). The growth of commuting has been increasingly identified as problematical, largely because of its contribution – and that of the transportation sector more widely – to emissions of environmental pollutants and greenhouse gases. The fact that, in both the island-of-Ireland context and the US, the large majority of commutes are by car, as opposed to public transport or 'active' travel modes, exacerbates the environmental impact. There is also a growing awareness of potentially adverse health, personal well-being, social and economic impacts of commuting, especially long-distance and long-duration commuting which has been growing in recent years as commuter belts have extended ever more widely around the major urban centres.

Not surprisingly, therefore, commuting has been of increasing concern to communities, planners and policy-makers. Across the island of Ireland, national, regional and local policy are aligned in their view that long-duration and long-distance commuting is a key challenge for sustainable and balanced development. Both Ireland's *National Planning Framework* and Northern Ireland's *Regional Development Strategy* address the impact of commuting on people, place, communities and significantly, quality of life, and this has now filtered through to local level policy and practice. The COVID-19 pandemic, and the far-reaching changes that it wrought in commuting and the relationship between homes and workplaces, have led to an increased understanding of the importance of quality spaces to both our individual health and community well-being. The concepts of placemaking, liveability, sustainable mobility, and vibrancy are now regarded as central to the planning and development of sustainable places. However, for policy and planning to be translated into effective action it is critical that we first understand the context and function of place, and how commuting is impacting on this.

### The InPLACE Research Project – Purpose and Methods

While commuting has grown rapidly in recent years, research on its impacts has failed to keep pace. The extensive literature review conducted for the study indicated that, although there has been some research on the impacts of commuting on commuters themselves, little attention has been paid to the wider impacts, including those on commuters' families and their places of residence. There is a particular gap in the understanding of commuting in relatively small, rural settlements that are located at greater distances from employment nodes, and in which, therefore, commutes are likely to be longer, in terms of both distances travelled and the duration of travel.

The InPLACE research project (Investigating Planning, Placemaking and Commuting) responds to this gap in our understanding, by examining the effects of out-commuting on small rural settlements using a case-study approach focused on selected communities from across the island of Ireland (Northern Ireland and Ireland) and the State of Maryland, USA. The overall aim of the InPLACE study is to elucidate the impacts of pre- and post-COVID commuting on people and place, by examining the interplay between home, community and workplace across nine settlements that experience varying levels of out-commuting.

The selection of case study areas was based on an analysis of census of population data on commuting, population size, economic activity rates, levels of educational attainment, socio-economic status, and the age of the housing stock. On this basis, seven case study areas were selected on the island of Ireland, and two in Maryland. In addition to having relatively high proportions of the population commuting for 45 minutes or more, the selected places share a number of other characteristics, including younger populations, newer housing, a high

percentage of owner-occupied homes, and a socio-economic profile characterised by a relatively high proportion of the working population in professional occupations.

A mixed methods approach was taken to the fieldwork which consisted of two main elements, an on-line survey of residents, and a series of semi-structured interviews with commuters, community leaders and other local stakeholders. These primary data collection instruments were supplemented by interviews with senior planners from the local authority areas in which the seven island-of Ireland case study areas are located, and a policy workshop which was convened with policy experts from both Ireland and Northern Ireland. The interviews and workshop informed the interpretation of findings and the discussion of their policy implications.

## Key Findings from the Research

The main findings from the research are summarised below, first as they relate to the island-of-Ireland case study areas, and then for the Maryland study towns, focusing on similarities and differences vis-à-vis their Irish and Northern Irish counterparts.

*Residents' Perceptions of Place*

The case study settlements are generally well regarded by residents. In particular, they are highly rated in respect of attributes such as feeling safe, the natural environment, sense of community and community engagement. The least satisfactory aspects of place are public transport, traffic and parking, and facilities and amenities, all items that are linked either directly or indirectly to commuting. In general, change over recent years is regarded benignly, and the settlements are perceived to have improved in more areas than they have disimproved. In residents' assessments of local assets and strengths, natural and social capital are to the fore, while challenges are perceived in respect of infrastructural deficits, a lack of local services and poor public transport connectivity. Almost one-quarter of respondents had moved to their current place of residence from outside the settlement within the last five years, and the primary motivating factor in these moves was housing affordability, followed by family-related considerations, in particular the desire to be located closer to family support networks.

*Commuting Patterns and Trends*

As to be expected, given the rural setting of the InPLACE settlements, a large proportion (45% in the post-pandemic period) of all commutes involved distances of 30 kilometres or more, one-way, though this varied across settlements depending on their location relative to employment centres. Commutes tended to be of long duration also, with 47% taking 45 minutes or more, one way. For comparison, this is more than twice the rate of long-duration commuting recorded for Ireland in the 2022 Census of Population.

There was a widespread switch to remote working – also referred to as telecommuting – during the pandemic, which, in the great majority of cases, meant working from home. As a result, the weekly frequency of commuting decreased. Even after the lifting of pandemic restrictions, commuting frequencies remained well below pre-pandemic levels, and more workers commuted (to work) between one and four days per week than five or more days per week. Lower commuting frequency is associated with hybrid working – when workers travel to the workplace on some but not all days each week and work remotely for the remaining days. This pattern of working has now become well established in the case study areas, with almost one-quarter of respondents classifying themselves as hybrid workers in the post-pandemic period. Interestingly, it is those with the longest duration commutes that have the lowest frequency of commuting, and it is likely that this is due in part to the greater incentive that long-duration commuters have to try to reduce the overall weekly burden of their commute by travelling less often.

Across all seven settlements there continues to be an overwhelming dependence on the car for travel to work and study, though there are significant differences between settlements in the usage of public transport. These differences appear to be related to the availability and range of public transport options. After decreasing during the pandemic, the use of public transport increased again after the pandemic, and in fact showed a marginal increase across the period as

a whole (i.e., from the pre- to the post-pandemic period). Higher levels of public transport use are associated with lower weekly frequencies of commuting, and therefore with hybrid working.

*Impacts of Commuting on Individuals and Families*
The survey results show that respondents are experiencing difficulties fulfilling family responsibilities because of time spent commuting, and these difficulties are an issue for a considerable number of the commuters from the case study towns. In general, the rate at which family-related difficulties are experienced by commuters increases in line with the time spent commuting – both on a daily and a weekly basis. It is also greater for those travelling by public transport, which may be one reason for the low levels of public transport usage. Not surprisingly, therefore, respondents' levels of satisfaction with their commutes are low relative to satisfaction with other aspects of their daily lives such as their housing, 'case study towns' with 'case study settlements'.

For many interviewees, there was a close relationship between working and family activities, and if they were working at a distance from home, then it followed that residential proximity to family was particularly important. For many, the connection with family and being able to raise children in the locality in which one parent had grown-up was a key consideration. Familial linkages form a strong bond to place, and they influence decisions on where interviewees chose to buy a house and settle. In this context, the impact of COVID-19 and the switch to working from home was identified as a game-changer, with interviewees identifying a range of personal and family benefits they had gained from the new working model.

*Commuting, Community Well-being, and Social Capital*
Contrary to findings reported in the international literature, there was no discernible association between commuting burden, as measured by total travel time per week, and levels of participation in voluntary, sports or social activities. However, those with a higher commuting burden (in terms of travel time per week) tend to be more likely to participate in social and sporting activities outside of their place of residence than are those with low commuting burdens. While this finding points to potential leakage of social capital from the case study areas, this tendency was not particularly strong. Moreover, long-distance commuters are as likely to shop locally (in their place of residence) as are other residents, so that one of the more commonly identified economic effects of commuting on place – the leakage of spending from the locality – is not supported by the analysis.

*Attitudes towards Telecommuting*
In general, survey respondents who had experience of home working / telecommuting during the pandemic were positive in their assessment of the experience, and the more experience that respondents had of remote working, the more positive they were in their assessment of it. Three-fifths of those with experience of remote working can see themselves continuing to work remotely in the future, with a further one-fifth open to this possibility. Respondents believe that the extent of future remote working is more likely to be determined by employers' attitudes than by broadband connectivity. The majority of respondents who worked remotely during the pandemic perceive their employers to be favourably disposed towards home working. Concerns about the future of the case study settlements was a dominant theme in the interviews. Despite seeing some evidence of revival, interviewees felt that vacancy and business closures still dominate rural towns. In this context however, there was a strongly held belief (both among both those with experience of home working and those without) that telecommuting in the form of remote working can make a positive and significant contribution to the development of rural and small-town Ireland.

*Commuting and Telecommuting in Maryland*
The survey findings in Maryland in general tend to reinforce those that emerged on the island of Ireland, as described above, with more points of similarity than of difference. One of the differences to emerge was in the reasons for relocating to the case study towns: while housing considerations were to the fore in Ireland and Northern Ireland, the quality of local schools was

the primary reason for movement in Maryland. The similarities hint at broad patterns that apply internationally to commuter towns. In Maryland, as in Ireland and Northern Ireland, residents see their towns as safe places with a pleasing natural environment, but where traffic, parking and public transport are problems. Levels of satisfaction with commuting, especially long-duration commuting, are lower than for other aspects of respondents' circumstances, and respondents report greater difficulties fulfilling family responsibilities when commutes are of longer duration. However, the pandemic created more flexibility around working and commuting regimes, and, with this flexibility, people with longer commutes are now choosing to commute less frequently than those with shorter commutes.

The Maryland and island-of-Ireland datasets showed different patterns of association between gender and remote working, but they are at one in showing that those with a third-level degree were more likely than those without to work remotely. This core similarity seems to indicate the basic socio-economic fact of remote working: that it is tied to certain industries and occupations that require higher education levels.

### Policy Implications and Challenges

The InPLACE research demonstrates that commuting has undergone major changes in recent times and is now a much more varied and diverse phenomenon than it was. The most significant changes have been the rise of telecommuting / remote working and hybrid working, and the decline of the traditional five-day commute to work. The increasing diversity of commuting arrangements means that the task of designing effective policy interventions is now more complex than before.

The nature of commuting as a link between home and work means that the range of policy areas that have a bearing on it is wide, and includes housing, transportation, local economic development and remote working, place-making and community development, and local and spatial planning. Important considerations for each of these policy areas, arising out of the findings of the research, are outlined in the final chapter of the report. The report makes clear that there are initiatives in all of these policy sectors that can help ameliorate, if not eliminate, the many adverse environmental, personal and family impacts of commuting. It is equally clear that, since commuting is a multi-faceted, highly variable and complex phenomenon, tackling it requires co-ordinated action across multiple policy sectors and involving multiple agencies and government departments as well as local authorities. Perhaps that is the most important lesson from the research, and the greatest challenge to the largely sectoral approach to policy-making that continues to characterise the public policy process. Ultimately, addressing the multifaceted issue of rural commuting requires a comprehensive, collaborative, and integrated policy approach that takes into account the characteristics, needs and potential of individual communities.

*New housing developments in Newtownmountkennedy – typical of many commuter towns*

# 1
# Intoduction

## Introduction

One of the most significant transformations in the socio-economic geography of Ireland in recent decades has been evident in the changing geographies of population and of employment, which have brought about a new spatial relationship between homes and workplaces. This transformation has been led by the restructuring of the economy, and the shift in employment towards high technology manufacturing **and** knowledge-intensive services. Jobs in these sectors are predominantly based in urban areas, especially the cities and larger towns, and so, as the sectors have expanded, employment has become more urbanised. In parallel with the increasing concentration of jobs in urban areas, population too has become more urbanised, but this has not happened at the same pace or to the same degree. This is due to a range of factors, including the continuing attraction of rural and low-density settlements for many Irish people, especially families, and housing affordability issues in the cities. The result has been a growing spatial mismatch between the geography of jobs and that of workers (Morgenroth, 2018).

Similar trends are observed in the United States of America (USA), especially since the 2000s when significant economic and demographic changes resulted in the suburbanisation of jobs; with the resulting proximity (or not) to jobs influencing a range of economic and social outcomes (Kneebone and Homes, 2015).

This mismatch, or disjuncture, between the spatial distribution of homes and that of workplaces in turn gives rise to the modern phenomenon of commuting to work, which, in the course of little more than a generation, has emerged as one of the defining characteristics of daily life on the island of Ireland and across both Europe and the United States. The growth of commuting is evident in terms of the numbers of workers involved, the distances that they commute, and the durations, in terms of travel times, of their commutes. Having grown sharply during the economic boom of the mid-1990s to mid-2000s, commuting volumes, distances and travel times decreased following the global financial crisis and subsequent economic recession, but increased again with the economic recovery. Similar trends were evident during the coronavirus (or COVID-19) pandemic between 2020-2022; with volumes once again on the increase – albeit with daily variations due to an exponential growth in remote working policies and practices at the beginning of the pandemic.

On the island of Ireland, substantial increases in car ownership and longer commuting times largely coincided with the economic boom associated with the 'Celtic Tiger' (Vega, *et al.,* 2017). In the Republic of Ireland (heretofore referred to as 'Ireland'), Census of Population returns indicate that in almost every inter-censal period, particularly over recent decades, there has been an increase in travel to work times. This can be observed by looking at the proportion of the workforce commuting more than 45 minutes, which, as indicated in Chapter 2, is often regarded as a critical duration for one-way trips. Between 2011 and 2016, this increased from 17.5% to 20%, with males more likely than females to have commutes of at least 45 minutes: 22.2% and 16.1% respectively. Between 2016 and 2022, the proportion commuting for 45 minutes or more had increased further to 20.9%; and while this seems negligible, it must be remembered that the Census took place during COVID-19 when many were still working remotely, and travel behaviours remained altered. The Northern Ireland census does not record the duration of commutes, but the Trades Union Congress estimates that, between 2010 and 2015, commutes of over two hours duration increased by 57% (TUC, 2016).

Perhaps the most dramatic expressions of commuting in the Irish landscape have been the emergence of ever more extensive commuter belts around the major cities (Horner, 1999), the accompanying development of inter-urban transport infrastructures, particularly roads and motorways which have facilitated commuting, and the rapid increase in the population of commuter-based settlements (Kitchin *et al.,* 2012). To a large extent, urbanisation in Ireland has been expressed in the growth of these commuter settlements (McCafferty, 2019). At the same

time, there has been a hollowing-out of many rural towns as population has increased in their rural hinterlands which have become part of the commuter belts of the larger urban centres.

### 1.1 Purpose of this Report

While commuting has grown rapidly, research on its impacts (as distinct from its drivers or causes) has failed to keep pace, particularly on the island of Ireland. There has been some research, mainly internationally, on the micro-scale effects of commuting on the health and well-being of commuters themselves, and a growing research interest in the macro-scale effects of commuting in terms of its contribution to emissions of greenhouse gases, and hence climate change. In contrast, little attention has been paid, either on the island of Ireland or abroad, to the impacts of commuting at the meso-scale, on the places from which it occurs, many of which are comparatively small settlements that are predominantly rural in character.

This three-year research project, known as InPLACE: Investigating Planning, Placemaking and Commuting, responds to this gap in our understanding, by examining the effects of out-commuting on small settlements, in particular long-distance and long-duration commuting, using a case-study approach focused on selected communities from across the island of Ireland (Northern Ireland and Ireland) and the state of Maryland, US. The genesis for this research programme was influenced by an approach from the community of Newtownmountkennedy in County Wicklow which was concerned by the perceived impact of commuting on not only the town itself but also the people living there, and the longer-term impacts of small towns being transformed by processes of counterurbanisation and large-scale housing development. The research comes at a particularly opportune time following the severe disruption of social and economic life, including patterns of commuting, by the COVID-19 pandemic. The changes in commuting brought about by the pandemic provide a unique opportunity to better understand how contemporary patterns of commuting impact on places, place-making and overall community well-being. The research will help to elucidate many of the questions now being posed about future patterns of working and their consequences for commuter belt settlements.

### 1.2 Research Aim and Objectives

The overall aim of the InPLACE study was to elucidate the impacts of pre- and post-COVID commuting on people and place by considering the changing spatial relationships between home and workplace. Taking a case study approach the research examined the interplay between home, community and workplace across nine settlements that experience varying levels of out-commuting.

To achieve the study's aim of assessing the impacts of commuting on people and place, the research objectives are as follows:

- To understand the impacts of commuting on the demographics, community dynamics and spatial patterns of development in the case study locations;
- To give voice to commuters and to bring their insights to bear on commuting-focused research;
- To assess the impacts on place (economic, social and spatial) of pre- and post-COVID commuting, through engagement with key stakeholders in the case study location;
- To examine good practice examples of place-based interventions (in the case study areas and elsewhere) that promote more resilient and sustainable communities; and
- To consider the implications of the research findings for current and future policy making across the range of policy domains impacting on, and impacted by, commuting.

Delivering on these aims and objectives required a multi-disciplinary research team with expertise in spatial planning, counter-urbanisation trends, placemaking, rural development, community engagement, planning policy, and healthy communities.

For further details on the ICLRD Research Team, see Appendix A.

### 1.3 Methodology

On the island of Ireland, the manifestations of long-distance commuting are most evident in towns and villages that are between 30km and 60km from the major metropolitan centres. Over recent decades, and particularly since the mid-1990s, several former rural and market towns have assumed roles associated with being dormitory settlements. These roles include the provision of housing and services for a growing number of resident workers, who commute to Dublin, Belfast, Cork, Galway and other major urban centres. Consequently, these towns have experienced significant development pressures as their populations have grown – often due to counter-urbanisation (the migration of people from metropolitan zones to intermediate and rural areas) – and in many cases, local infrastructure has struggled to cope with the growing demands. At the same time, however, the commuter-associated changes can bring opportunities, including investments in commercial services, improved connectivity and demographic renewal.

In this context, the InPLACE methodology was designed to capture and document the nature, scale and possible implications of changes associated with the growth of long-distance and long-duration commuting. Seven towns were identified across the island of Ireland, and two in the State of Maryland, which would be the focus of a detailed case-study investigation involving both primary and secondary data collection. A mixed-methods approach was adopted to primary data collection, entailing the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data, using online surveys, semi-structured one-to-one interviews, and focus groups (see Appendix B for details of the fieldwork). COVID-19 and its associated public health guidelines had a significant impact on both the timing of the various strands of the research (see Section 1.3.2), and the ability of the research team to hold in-person interviews and focus groups. The majority of the interviews were consequently conducted on-line. The survey instruments were explicitly devised to explore the themes and issues that have emerged (and continue to emerge) in the international literature (see Chapter 2), and which are manifest in the expanding commuter landscapes across both the island of Ireland and the United States.

#### 1.3.1 A Case Study Approach

The nine settlements which are central to this research on the changing relationships between home and workplace are set out in Table 1.1.

*Table 1.1 The case study locations on the island of Ireland and the State of Maryland, USA*

| | |
|---|---|
| Island of Ireland | 1. Newtownmountkennedy, Co. Wicklow |
| | 2. Dundrum Co. Down |
| | 3. Ennistymon-Lahinch, Co. Clare |
| | 4. Sallins, Co. Kildare |
| | 5. Kanturk-Banteer, Co. Cork |
| | 6. Aghagallon, Co. Antrim |
| | 7. Mountbellew-Moylough, Co. Galway |
| State of Maryland, USA | 8. Middletown, Frederick County |
| | 9. North Beach, Calvert County |

On the island of Ireland, the InPLACE team undertook the selection of the case study settlements based on a spatial and statistical analysis of the scale and manifestations of long-distance and long-duration commuting and associated variables. This analysis, which drew primarily on data sourced from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) and Central Statistics Office (CSO) considered all settlements on the island of Ireland, on the basis of the following variables, each of which is identified in the international literature as being associated with long-distance commuting:

- Percentage of persons commuting 45 minutes or more (relative to other commuter cohorts);
- Modes of travel (with particular reference to car dependency);
- Levels of car ownership;
- Employment rate;
- Levels of educational attainment (associated with new economic opportunities);
- Levels of female participation in the workforce (also associated with economic opportunities and the changing roles / functions of places);
- Age of housing stock (to identify newly built homes); and
- Socio-economic groups (to identify those in the higher income categories).

In undertaking this analysis, the InPLACE research team faced some challenges due to the lack of alignment between datasets on a North / South basis – including the timing of the respective censuses, and the wording of census questions. Nevertheless, the analysis gave the team an objective set of measures to inform the selection of case study settlements. The team was also keen to ensure comparability with Newtownmountkennedy, as the genesis town (see Section 1.1. above) and the decision was made to focus primarily on settlements with a population of between 1,500 and 3,000 people; with the final decision on town selection being made in consultation with the Operational Partnership Group (see Section 1.3.3 below).

The InPLACE research team in the United States, based in the National Center for Smart Growth (NCSG) at the University of Maryland, worked to the same criteria in selecting the two case study settlements in the State of Maryland; the initial starting point being the identification of towns with less than 5,000 residents each and high levels of long-distance (45+ minutes) commuting.

See Chapter 10 for more information on the selection of the Maryland case study towns.

Across all nine towns, fieldwork (including interviews and a detailed questionnaire survey) focused on a set number of overarching themes; namely:

i. Spatial planning;
ii. Well-being / community planning;
iii. Transport;
iv. Environment;
v. Housing / property development; and
vi. Business (and local economic development).

These themes were identified through an initial literature review and policy analysis carried out in the design of the research programme.

### 1.3.2 A Phased Approach

Due to the timing of funding received, the research on the island of Ireland was undertaken in two phases; with the first three settlements, Newtownmountkennedy, Dundrum and Ennistymon-Lahinch, surveyed in Phase 1 (June 2021 – September 2022). The other four settlements were the focus of Phase 2 of the research programme (October 2022 – December 2023; see Figure 1.1 Map of Study Settlement Locations). Six of the seven locations exhibit the characteristics associated with high levels of outbound, long-distance commuting, while one, Ennistymon-Lahinch, acts as a reference point and pilot, as it has relatively low levels of outbound commuting. Experience with the Ennistymon-Lahinch fieldwork enabled the research team to refine the methodology as it was subsequently applied in Phase 1 and fine-tuned for Phase 2.

The same phased approach did not apply to the two Maryland case study locations, North Beach and Middletown (see Figure 10.1), with the fieldwork here spanning both the end of Phase 1 and start of Phase 2 on the island of Ireland. Indeed, insights from the Maryland survey informed a review of the online questionnaire as applied on the island of Ireland, taking cognisance of the fact that Phase 1 was largely conducted in periods of total lockdown during the COVID-19

pandemic while Phase 2 fieldwork took place in a period that could be considered the start of the post-pandemic and 'new normal' period. This review led to the addition of questions to the Phase 2 questionnaire that would better capture changes in commuting behaviour across the entire time period from pre- to post-pandemic. While these additional questions gave greater insights into the effect of the pandemic on commuting, certain analyses – those taking a longitudinal view across the pandemic, as well as those focusing on the post-pandemic situation – could only be conducted for the four settlements surveyed in Phase 2.

### 1.3.3 Project Oversight

To support the ICLRD research team in meeting the core objectives of this study, an independent Research Advisory Group was established to provide critical, but friendly, oversight and advice to the researchers across the breadth of the study. This is standard operational procedure by ICLRD for all its national / all-island scale action research programmes. The main role of the Research Advisory Group was:

- To offer comment and advice on the overall conduct and progress of the research;
- To facilitate the exchange of ideas and information;
- To ensure a balanced approach was taken to the research, raising, as appropriate, critical insights and perspectives during the course of the study (particularly as the research moved from Phase 1 to Phase 2); and
- To consider the final report and advise on its implementation.

In addition, an Operational Partnership Group, involving all the funding agencies and the research team, was established to oversee, guide and review the research findings, and promote the work. The main role of this Group was:

- To ensure the direction of the research was in keeping with Partner objectives;
- To offer comment and advice on the overall conduct and progress of the research at key milestones;
- To offer comment and advice on the research questions, methods, findings and outputs;
- To contribute to the exchanging of ideas and information while ensuring the confidentiality of the research and any other information shared within the meetings; and
- To consider the final report and advise on its implementation.

The membership of both Groups is detailed in Appendix C.

## 1.4 Structure of the Report

The report is structured as follows.

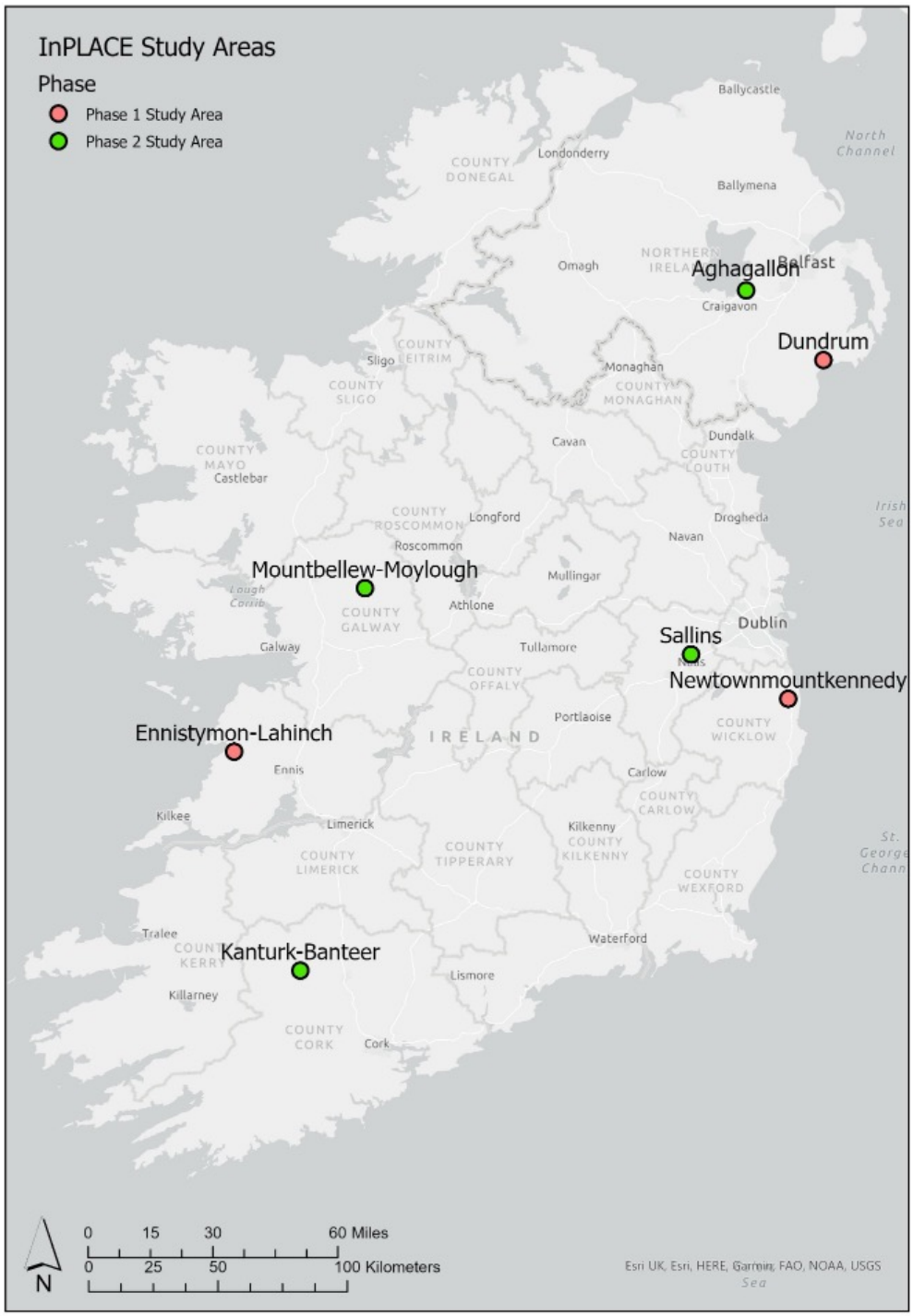
Chapter 2 gives an overview of the extensive international literature on commuting, focusing in particular on research into the impacts of commuting. Chapters 3 to 9 focus on the findings of the InPLACE research as they relate to the seven case study settlements on the island of Ireland. Chapter 3 reviews the key policies that have emerged in recent years in domains that have a direct influence on the volume and nature of commuting in Ireland and Northern Ireland (including, but not limited to, areas such as housing, transportation and spatial planning). This review includes initiatives at European, national and local levels. Chapter 4 presents detailed profiles of the Irish and Northern Irish case study areas based on secondary sources, principally the two censuses of population, the 2021 Northern Ireland census, and the 2022 Ireland census. Chapters 5 to 9 then set out detailed findings from the fieldwork conducted in the seven island of Ireland study areas, drawing on the questionnaire survey, the Place Standard tool (see Appendix D for more information) and the interviews. Chapter 10 presents the main findings for the two settlements that were examined in the Maryland fieldwork, and includes a comparison between the findings from Maryland and those from the island of Ireland.

To conclude the report, Chapter 11 identifies some of the key implications of the InPLACE research for public policy. This chapter is informed in the first instance by the findings from the fieldwork, but also draws on discussions that took place at meetings of the project's Operational

Partnership Group and the Research Advisory Group, as well as at an on-line policy workshop conducted in May 2024. This workshop brought together policy makers and practitioners, from a wide range of areas in both Ireland and Northern Ireland, for whom commuting and its impacts are of central concern. The purpose of the workshop was to consider the implications of the initial draft report for existing policies as well as future policy formation.

Finally, a series of six appendices (Appendix B - G) provide further details on various aspects of the study design and methodology, as well as ancillary data collected during the course of the fieldwork.

*Figure 1.1 Map of study settlement locations Ireland*



# 2
# Literature Review

# Literature Review

This chapter presents a review of academic literature with the intention to: (a) position the research topic within a broader knowledge base and elucidate core concepts and terms, e.g. commuting and well-being; (b) bring clarity and focus to some core research parameters, e.g. identify key arguments and commuting time thresholds; and (c) contextualise the research findings captured from the settlements in the study that will be presented in later chapters.

International literature (Ralph, 2015), anecdotal evidence and observations emanating from the community and voluntary sector, often suggest that there is a decline in volunteerism and in social capital caused by long-distance commuting. Similarly, it is repeatedly heard that commuters are increasingly time poor and lack the time or energy to get involved in community activities. It has also been suggested that, as many commuters are incomers, or 'reluctant' residents, perhaps they do not have the same affinity with their new community as do others who live there. Together, the characteristics of place (where local people work, how they travel to work and for how long, and the mode of transport they use) and the social capital of a place (residents' capacity to participate in community life and their attachment to family, community and place) are likely to impact on an individual's overall well-being. Therefore, and as previously noted, the research examines the extent of commuting impacts on the abovementioned dimensions across a number of settlements on the island of Ireland.

This literature review begins by defining and discussing commuting, before considering the impacts of commuting on both people and place, specifically in relation to health and well-being, and social capital and participation. Then aspects of place-making and well-being outcomes are outlined before debating the changing geography of work and recent adjustments caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

## 2.1 Commuting

Commuting can be defined as "the movement from suburban or rural locations to the place of work and back" (Mayhew, 2009: 94). According to Stein, *et al.* (2022: 2) commuting is "neither an exclusively individual decision nor a direct consequence of spatial or economic conditions. Rather...commuting is continuously (re)produced within a network of social and material arrangements and itself contributes to the maintenance of these arrangement." Therefore, commuting should not be considered in isolation and is better understood when analysed within a wider socio-spatial context.

Commuting tends to be an intrinsic component of modern life associated with a spatial disjuncture between housing and labour markets (Vega, *et al.,* 2017). The spatial disconnection between home and work can cause people to make difficult trade-offs between income and loss of spare time (Stutzer and Frey, 2008), which can have costs to both commuters and a community (of place). The mismatch between the geographies of demand for, and supply of, labour, aided by infrastructural investment, has facilitated an increase in commuting, particularly longer distance commuting (Lyons and Chatterjee, 2008, cited in Cass and Faulconbridge, 2016). Much of the commuting literature focuses on distance, which is important when considering commuting geographies and dynamics. However, equally (if not even more) significant is the time spent commuting, which, due to variations in travel modes and the conditions (such as level of traffic congestion) under which travel occurs, does not map directly on to distance travelled. There has been some focus on the concept of a commuting time threshold or inflexion point in travel commute duration beyond which behavioural and attitudinal preferences change. While there is no consensus in the academic literature on this, a longitudinal study by the Chinese Academy of Sciences, analysing job and housing dynamics, offers valuable insight by identifying that a commute duration of 45 minutes appears to be a 'bearable' threshold before travel behaviour changes occur (Huang, *et al.,* 2018; O'Connell, 2018).

The international literature articulates how long-distance commuting is frequently associated with urban sprawl, suburbanisation and haphazard development on the peripheries of commuter towns and villages (United Nations, 2008; Kitchin, *et al.,* 2012). Emergent travel and residential patterns contribute to a hollowing-out of town and village centres, as commuter locations become dormitory settlements. The literature also notes how long-distance commuting is driven, in part, by property inflation in metropolitan cores. As a result, workers, particularly those on lower and medium incomes, are displaced from urban centres and move ever further out into an expanding commuter belt. While some commuters move away from their places of work, due to lifestyle considerations (e.g., they want a garden for a growing family, or they move to a village in which they have family ties), others are reluctant, and find themselves forced to move to where they can afford to either purchase or rent a home. There is a complex range of locational factors influencing residential selection and, therefore, commuting to work behaviours. Research examining location choice of couples residing in rural areas of Northern Ireland reveals the influence of current familial bonds and future family plans, which can be entangled with other influences, e.g., quality of life, and employment and housing opportunities (Ferguson and Catney, 2023). From a sociological perspective, in addition to the rootedness to place or emotional attachment to place, commuting has been clearly shown to have an impact on the civic life of rural communities (Peillon, *et al.,* 2006; Corcoran, 2010).

### 2.2 Commuting Impacts on People and Place

There has been a substantial body of literature investigating the impact of commuting on the individual. Previous research into commuting shows that not all commuters experience the same social effects – whether positive or negative – to the same extent, and that a key determinant of experience is the duration and distance of the commute (Stein *et al*, 2022). This raises questions about the extent to which distance and duration of commuting impacts on personal (subjective) well-being, or life satisfaction, social capital and volunteerism. Indeed, the quality and quantity of these components, and their relationship to each other and their cumulative effect, shape the dynamics of a place and wider notions of community well-being.

#### 2.2.1 Physical Health and Subjective Well-being

Commuting has been associated with physical health and subjective well-being outcomes. Such outcomes can be either positive or negative depending on commute duration and distance, but also commute mode. For instance, international research has shown that commuting by car tends to be the dominant mode but is the least-liked form of commuting and causes the most stress (Runa and Singleton, 2021; Gatersleben and Uzzell, 2007). Paradoxically, as Montgomery (2015) notes, people tend not to take action even when they are aware of the harms their commutes have on their health and well-being.

Raza, *et al.* (2021) reported that increased commute time is associated with decreased physical activity, although the association did not hold in the highest commute time category. Hoehner, *et al.* (2012) also found associations with adiposity, lower cardiorespiratory fitness, and high blood pressure. A study in Norway (Urhonen, *et al.,* 2016) and another in the UK (Künn-Nelen, 2015) both found that those with long commutes had higher numbers of subjective health complaints. Furthermore, Wang, *et al.* (2019) found that longer commutes were associated with a modest increase in likelihood (0.5% per 10 minutes of commute) of screening positive for depression in eleven Latin American cities.

Active travel modes, typically consisting of walking and cycling, are often considered ways of promoting physical health improvements. Research demonstrates how active commuting (walking or biking) has been shown to be associated with meeting recommended physical activity guidelines (Baker, *et al.,* 2021), and to promote positive physical health outcomes, e.g. lower obesity rates (Bassett, *et al.,* 2008) and decreased cardiovascular risk (Hamer and Chida, 2008). Telecommuting – a process of remotely engaging in work behaviours and activities – has also been shown to promote physical activity, with a study in the USA noting that frequent telecommuting, consisting of four plus times per month, has been associated with 15% more walk trips per week as telecommuters reallocate saved commute time to recreational activities (Chakrabarti, 2018). Those who travel on bicycle or on foot are the most satisfied with their

commute (Friman, *et al.,* 2013; Smith 2017). Martin, *et al.* (2014) found active commuting and public transport use to be associated with better mental health, but they noted that several studies found contradictory results (e.g., Oguz, 2014).

Much has been said about commuting's effect on the subjective well-being of individuals. The research generally finds that longer commute times are associated with negative subjective experience but is unclear about whether this unpleasant emotional state has a long-term negative influence on subjective well-being (Chaterjee, *et al.*, 2020; Zijlstra and Verhetsel, 2021; Stone and Schneider, 2016). Clark, *et al.* (2020) and Dickerson, *et al.* (2014) found a negative association between leisure time satisfaction and commuting. Clark, *et al.* (2020) also found that commuting had a negative relationship with job satisfaction and was associated with increased strain and poorer mental health. According to classical economic theory, individuals should reach an equilibrium between the labour and housing markets wherein they are compensated for the negative effects of commuting by other positive outcomes, such as increased income or better living conditions (Lorenz, 2018; Stutzer and Frey, 2008). Thus, while we would expect that sub-domains of life satisfaction (such as leisure time satisfaction) would be negatively affected by commuting, according to this theory we would expect overall life satisfaction to remain unaffected. A few studies have challenged this assumption in specific contexts (Sun, *et al.,* 2021 in China; Stutzer and Frey 2008 in Germany). Stutzer and Frey (2008) analysed the subjective well-being of commuters in Germany and found that, overall, people with long journeys to and from work are systematically worse off, and they report significantly lower subjective well-being. Chatterjee, *et al.* (2017; 2020) show that longer commute times are linked to lower life satisfaction, even after accounting for compensation from better jobs and higher incomes. The researchers estimated that a 10-minute increase in one-way commute time is equivalent to a £490 per month reduction in gross personal income. The research found that longer duration commutes are associated with a range of effects including: higher levels of strain; lower levels of satisfaction with leisure time availability; and lower levels of job satisfaction.

### 2.2.2 Social Capital and Community Participation

Some insights beyond commuting's effects on the individual can be drawn from work examining social capital. Although 'social capital' suffers from the lack of a concise definition and is multidimensional (Lelieveldt, 2004), measurements of the concept focus on cognitive aspects such as trust or sense of duty, and on structural and behavioural aspects such as participation in community activities or access to certain resources found in relationships (Putnam, 2000; Mattisson, *et al.,* 2015). Putnam (2000: 214) used commuting time as a proxy for the overall effects of sprawl, which not only include the actual time lost to commuting, but also the social segregation and lack of "boundedness" of a community that results from suburbanisation. Putnam (2000: 213) argued for a direct link between commuting and the erosion of social capital, stating that "each additional ten minutes in daily commuting time cuts involvement in community affairs by 10 percent". Significantly, he also noted how increased commute times experienced by a community affected even non-commuters, positing a "synergistic effect" wherein the effects of commuting "spill beyond" those involved to create an overall depressive effect on community participation. This raises questions about the effects of commuting on the social well-being dynamics, place attachment, local infrastructure and liveability, and the overall 'health' of a place.

Other authors have found similar results. For example, Christian (2012) found that increased commute times were associated with decreased time spent with friends by both males and female urban dwellers in the United States, with males also reducing the time spent with children and spouses. Besser, *et al.* (2008) found that higher commute times were associated with not making socially oriented trips in the United States (for entertainment, religious purposes, being with friends, etc). Similarly, Mattison, *et al.* (2015) found that commuting by car in Sweden was associated with low social participation and low general trust, and that this association strengthened with increased commute time (although one group, women commuting by car more than 60 minutes, was not observed to have low social participation). Interestingly, public transit was not associated with low social participation except among those traveling more than 60 minutes, and it was not associated with low general trust. However, more recent research

(Foster, *et al.,* 2019) found that miles travelled to work was associated with only a modest decrease in access to neighbourhood social capital resources. This result was less than might be expected based on the arguments of Putnam (2000) and others that commuting (and associated sprawl) is a major, but certainly not the only, factor in the collapse of American social capital. Foster, *et al.* (2019) also found that increased distance to religious congregations and civic organisations was actually associated with an increase in access to social capital resources at these locations, suggesting that people are willing to travel to access these resources. Foster, et al. (2019: 234) operationalised social capital as the "development of formal and informal ties that provide access to important resources." Thus, Foster, *et al.*'s findings do not necessarily conflict with Putnam's, as Putnam was measuring participation in specific activities rather than access to resources. Both of these findings indicate the complexity of measuring commuting's effects on social capital, but they suggest that in general, commuting is associated with its decline.

It is also possible that commuting's effect on community social capital is stronger than what could be measured by the structural approach; Delmelle, *et al.* (2013) found that those with one-way commutes of 30 minutes or longer in Vienna, Austria had lower levels of social satisfaction. And Mattison, *et al.* 2015 (mentioned above) found a negative relationship between commuting and general trust. Cognitive aspects of social capital such as a sense of duty and a sense of trust have been shown to be positively related to some forms of participation (see Lelieveldt, 2004), and thus commuting's effect on these cognitive variables could indirectly impact structural measures of social capital as well.

Community and political participation are other indicators through which commuting may affect both people and place. A resource model of political participation would suggest that decreased free time, such as might be expected from longer commuting, would result in less participation. Research has confirmed this relationship between free time and political participation (Brady, *et al.,* 1995). However, research that isolates commuting as a variable suggests that commute mode may influence participation, and that commute time has little effect. For example, Hopkins and Williamson (2012) found that the percentage of residents driving to work alone in a census tract was negatively correlated with several forms of political participation, including attending a march, attending a rally, attending a public meeting, and being a member of a political group. Williamson (2002), one of the authors of the aforementioned study, found similar results using a different data set. However, both studies found that aggregate time spent commuting was not a significant predictor of the political activities they tested. These relationships suggest that "driving alone" could be a proxy for placed-based neighbourhood characteristics associated with suburban environments. In fact, Hopkins and Williamson (2012) found that "driving alone" was strongly negatively correlated with having a "traditional street grid" in the census tract and with scores on Ewing's overall index of sprawl (low scores indicate a high level of sprawl). In that vein, recent analysis has found that "interactive" neighbourhood characteristics are associated with increased communication between neighbours, which is in turn associated with increased voting (LeVan, 2020). This lends support to the idea that neighbourhood design characteristics, rather than mode of travel, could be the cause of decreased political participation, although more research needs to be done in this area.

Newman, *et al.,* (2014), on the other hand, challenged the results of Hopkins and Williamson (2012) which negated the importance of commute time. They found that increased commute time (but not increased work time) was associated with decreased political participation in an area defined by a zip code, even when controlling for the percent of residents driving to work alone. They proposed a "commuter strain" hypothesis, where commuting drains psychological resources that work does not. This work was challenged in turn by Gius (2015), however, over methodological issues. He found, using the same data set as Newman, *et al.* (2014), that commuting time had no significant association with political participation. Lindstrom (2006) also found that commuting was not associated with a decrease in political participation in Sweden. Thus, while the debate may continue, the primary reliable finding of the research so far on commuting's effect on political participation is that increased percentages of residents driving

to work alone is associated with a decrease in political participation. This may be a proxy for features in the built environment.

### 2.2.3 Commuting and Income

Walsh (2023) contends that, in Ireland, commuting is associated with a modest reduction in inter-regional disparities and an accompanying convergence in median household incomes between urban and rural areas. In effect, income earned in metropolitan zones is increasingly being expended, in part, in commuters' places of residence - in the surrounding peri-urban areas and burgeoning commuter settlements. Thus, commuting has been a driver of rural demographic vitality and economic development. However, as the spatial analysis produced by Walsh demonstrates, there is a geographical unevenness in the significance of rural-to-urban commuting and in the extent to which commuting is impacting on the development of rural communities.

Drawing on data provided by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) and Revenue Commissioners, Walsh (2023) illustrates how metropolitan suburbs and commuter hinterlands have younger populations and higher income levels than small towns and structurally weak rural areas that are distant from Ireland's cities. Median household disposable incomes vary significantly; 'rural areas with high urban influence' have a median income of €42,176, compared to €32,196 in 'rural areas with moderate urban influence,' and €29,424 in 'highly rural/remote areas. While many areas within and adjoining urban cores also have low levels of median household income, the fringes of metropolitan zones and proximate rural areas tend to have the highest levels of income in Ireland. Walsh (2023: 54) refers to high-income zones, which extend "further beyond the metropolitan boundary into the wider commuter hinterland." In the case of Metropolitan Cork, this geographical area includes settlements such as Carrigaline, Carrigtwohill, Passage West, Crosshaven, Tower and Rathcormac. In the Mid-West Region – around Limerick-Shannon – it includes Castleconnell, Annacotty and Sixmilebridge. Walsh (2023: 55) reports that "comparatively high incomes occur also in towns with significant commuter populations such as Midleton, Mallow and Tramore; this category also includes Ennis."

Research in Switzerland (Robert-Nicoud and Parchet, 2021) reveals similar spatial patterns to those observed by Walsh in respect of spillover income effects from cities into adjoining rural areas, with motorway connectivity being a significant driver thereof. Longitudinal data (since 1960) reveal that "the presence of a highway entrance/exit ramp within 10km of a municipality caused a long-term 24% increase in the share of top-income taxpayers living in the area and an 8% decrease in the share of below-median income earners" (Robert-Nicoud and Parchet, 2021: 1). The researchers observe that commuting allows rural and small-town residents to access labour markets and amenities that are distant from their homes, and it enables workers to access housing markets that are distant from their workplaces.

Walsh's research (2023) on income distribution also makes reference to some of the nuances associated with commuting, and he draws attention to planning-related issues such as housing. Data illustrates that there is a significant difference in median earnings between workers with commuting times of less than thirty minutes and those with commuting times of more than thirty minutes; the latter have higher median incomes (Walsh, 2023). In County Wicklow, for instance, the median earned income for those commuting more than thirty minutes is €14,805 or 53.3% greater than for those with shorter commutes. Similar trends are observed in other counties that have gradually become part of Dublin's ever-expanding commuter belt, including Louth, Westmeath, and Meath. The income disparities between long-distance and short-distance commuters, are driven *inter alia* by lifestyle choices and the extent to which people are willing to trade-off their commuting burden for an attractive place of residence. At the same time, however, many commuters are driven to making long journeys to work, as they are priced out of city housing markets. Over time, long-distance commuters face greater costs than short-distance commuters, particularly as fuel and childcare costs have increased over recent years. Walsh (2023: 104) observes that such households may also incur increased social costs, "in terms of less time for engaging with the local community, which may ultimately result in unsustainable lifestyles for some." Walsh argues that there is a need for further research on the relationships

between commuting and the geography of incomes, and he emphasises the urgency of developing a more sophisticated approach to the identification of a multi-level typology of places that includes both urban and rural areas and the linkages between them.

### 2.3 Place-Making and Well-being Outcomes

While research to date has explored the impacts of commuting on physical health and subjective well-being, it lacks critical interrogation of the impacts on a place, how it functions and how it will evolve. In particular, there remain questions about how long-duration commuting (45 minutes or more) affects commuters' understanding of where they reside and their sense of place, and how their ability (or lack of) to actively contribute to community life and support local assets, services and infrastructure impacts on the quality of place. That said, reflecting on the individual commuter's experience offers a way of considering the implications that long-duration commuting may have on the overall community well-being in a place. The places under investigation in InPLACE are rural settlements, positioned within a commuter belt of metropolitan cores. Rural areas and small to medium sized settlements in particular have specific demographic and spatial challenges. A central vulnerability is the higher proportion of older people living in rural places, coupled with difficulties of access to services and proximity to specialised care (Meredith, *et al.,* 2020; Ranscombe, 2020). Nonetheless, rural economies provide essential goods and services, including food and energy, far beyond their own localities to towns and cities, including to hospitals and health centres (OECD, 2020a). The OECD also identify that rural areas have played a central role in providing safe, temporary homes for urban dwellers during periods of COVID restriction. In the longer term, if there are continued changes in consumption patterns and a move towards remote working, a basis for sustainable rural growth may emerge from this challenging time (OECD, 2020a).

The relationship between the social, the economic, and the built and natural environments, in both urban and rural areas, is a core determinant of health and well-being (Barton and Grant, 2006; Barton, *et al.,* 2015; Dannenburd, *et al.,* 2011) and these are central domains that underpin contemporary place-making processes. A goal of place-making is to "encourage social interaction and environmental stewardship via the development of a positive emotional connection between people and their surroundings (Dash, 2018)", cited in Dash and Thilagam (2023: 6). Consideration of the effects of commuting raises the question to what extent does time spent commuting hinder the encouragement of social interaction and environmental stewardship between people (commuters) and place (where they reside), thereby impeding place-making efforts. Norwegian research has revealed how areas with plenty of local facilities were associated with more frequent remote working during COVID-19 (Mouratidis and Peters, 2022), demonstrating the potential of mixed land use development and local facilities to support remote working and reduce trip generation. Together with the potentially positive effects of reduced commuting on social interaction and environmental stewardship, this suggests that there may be a positive and symbiotic relationship between the quality of place / place-making and remote working. However, other research, conducted in Sicily, Italy, found that remote working can generate secondary trips, chiefly related to leisure, socialising and childcare, that would not normally occur had the employee been physically commuting to work daily (Campisi, *et al.,* 2022). Another finding from Campisi, *et al.* (2022) was the propensity for these individuals to travel for leisure purposes during the weekends more than they would if they were still commuting daily.

Modifications to mobility patterns have the potential to significantly restructure urban and rural settlements and improve people's quality of life. Such matters, along with promoting healthier places, improving quality of life, and advancing social well-being are now of critical concern to spatial planning (Mouratidis, 2021), a key place-making process that manages the land resource and informs spatial development decisions. Accompanying this is an increasing shift by governments away from the assumption that societal progress is primarily connected to economic productivity or material prosperity, towards positioning well-being as the ultimate goal for policy intervention (OECD, 2020b; Atkinson, *et al.,* 2012; Stiglitz, *et al.* 2009; NEF, 2004). Atkinson, *et al.* (2012) argue the need to identify various place-based well-being indicators to inform and monitor public policy. An appreciation of the conditions determining well-being

outcomes is essential for appraising existing policy outcomes and formulating future policy interventions, within which mobility and commuting matters are core. This requires further attention to social connectedness and environmental responsibility (Atkinson, *et al.,* 2012) and a better understanding of the impact commuting has on commuters' subjective well-being, alongside its spillover effect into community well-being, and the cumulative impact on social capital and community participation in a place. While acknowledging the diverse range of discourses of well-being in policy debates and the variation of measurement indicators, Atkinson, *et al.* (2012: 3) strongly argue for considering well-being conditions alongside place, as "wellbeing, however defined, can have no form, expression or enhancement without consideration of place." Place plays an important backdrop as its constitute parts, its built form and natural environment, and the socio-economic activities it generates are the key determinants of health and well-being in local communities. The quality and spatial configuration of a place can dictate human behaviours that cause a deterioration to people's well-being (Meek am Ng, 2016). While place potentially has a profound impact on subjective well-being, particularly in relation to what places mean to people and their emotional attachment to place, Atkinson, *et al*. (2012: 7) claim "much of the research structured through the dominant approach to well-being treats place as something of a given." Therefore, place – its form, qualities and assets – requires greater appreciation in well-being research in general, and for commuting research in particular.

The complexities associated with integrating health and well-being outcomes in contemporary place-making, partly stem from governance structures and interactions that are fragmented. As such, planners and place-makers are part of a wider system responding to and managing the effects of many actors' activities over time (Rydin, *et al.,* 2012). The situation is complicated further by the lack of a consistent approach and uncertainty over any strong evidence base that demonstrates a causal effect of planning on health and well-being outcomes, compounded by a lack of skills required to firmly embed health into policy and decision making (Design Council, 2018). Recent research concludes that there has been an overfocus on infrastructure and housing provision within planning to the detriment of broader community and health outcomes (McKinnon, *et al.,* 2020). This is corroborated by built environment practitioners feeling the promotion of health had relatively low weight in decision making compared to economic and housing development goals (Pineo and Moore, 2021). As well-being outcomes gradually permeate policy discourse, arguably a much richer place-based understanding will emerge to inform future policy pathways for delivering better, more tailored, policy responses that support local health and well-being of both people and place. Positioning place at the heart of these debates is essential.

### 2.4 Geography of Remote Work and COVID-19

The pandemic and associated restrictions produced a dramatic change in commuting patterns (Shibayama, *et al.,* 2021; Barbieri, *et al.,* 2021). The large percentages of people working from home during the pandemic demonstrated how rapid adjustment of work practices and patterns can occur, facilitated by digital technology (Pan and Zhang, 2020; Davison, 2020). Several studies have noted the potential of the COVID-19 disruption to provide an opening for behaviour change (Salon, *et al.,* 2021; Thomas, *et al.,* 2021). The InPLACE research seeks to examine any behavioural changes in commuting and work practices that emerged during COVID, and any early indications of continuation across the case study settlements.

The world of work had been undergoing transformations, even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, associated with technological advances and economic structural changes (Di Marino, *et al.,* 2023; Di Marino, *et al.,* 2024). There are spatial changes in the way that work has been organised and distributed, such as the relocation of industries and business units to the outskirts of cities, alongside teleworking and a proliferation of multilocational working arrangements (Bürgin, *et al.,* 2021; Di Marino, *et al.,* 2023). On the island of Ireland, there is also the introduction of 'digital hubs' that provide an option to work remotely without having to travel to a traditional central office operated by an employer. These new remote work spaces, although fairly recent, are part of wider policy ambitions associated with decentralisation, in relation to public sector reform, and with delivering more balanced regional development.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on the labour market and the geography of work, the expansion of tele-activities precedes the pandemic. Mouratidis and Peters (2022) note the growth of various tele-activities, such as telework, online learning, online shopping, and tele-health or tele-medicine, before and during COVID. There is complexity in the vocabulary emerging to categorise the various tele-activities that have grown exponentially during the pandemic. Zenkteler, *et al.* (2022) note the distinction between *home-based work,* which tends to involve households producing goods or outputs in their place of residence and is often associated with lifestyle choices, and *telecommuting*, which is the practice of making use of digital connectivity to work from home. Recent literature exposes a more nuanced typology associated with working 'beyond the traditional physical office', with Magennis and Desmond (2023: 4) recognising the following permutations:

- *"Remote working:* used here to mean working outside the conventional workplace and can include working from home or from a third space (e.g.: co-working spaces, cafes, etc). This can either be done on a full-time basis or part-time (see hybrid working).
- *Hybrid working:* has come to mean an employee working at least one day per week at home and at least one day per week in the office. It also refers to work being organised / managed by an employer to combine on-site and off-site (or remote) work.
- H*omeworking:* used in some statistical data to mean either 'working at home' or 'working from home as a base' (including travelling to different places to carry out work).
- *Teleworking:* also has a fixed (statistical) meaning, referring to work which can be undertaken in the workplace, but is regularly undertaken elsewhere (including home) because it can be facilitated by technology."

The growth in terminology reflects the expansion of new modes of working that can occur across multiple locations facilitated by enhanced digital connectivity and changing working cultures. Recent research describes such phenomena as 'multi-locality working' (Bürgin, *et al.,* 2021; Di Marino, *et al.,* 2023; Di Marino, *et al.,* 2024). This is particularly characterised by knowledge-based work offering "high degrees of autonomy combined with greater degrees of freedom in terms of choice of work and methods" (Ojala and Pyöriä, 2018, cited in Bürgin, *et al.,* 2021: 84). Like the impacts of uni-locality working behaviours – having to commute to a fixed location, usually by private car or public transport – scholars have found that multi-locality working can have both positive and negative well-being outcomes and impacts on work-life balance. In examining multi-locality working in Switzerland, Bürgin, *et al.* (2021) note how flexible workplaces are becoming increasingly popular, with nearly 50% of all employees in the country not working at a fixed workplace. Bürgin, *et al.* (2021: 12) demonstrates how multi-locality working, splitting time between central urban workplaces and more peripherical locations (mountainous areas in the Swiss context), has "specific benefits and disadvantages for [our] multilocal knowledge workers." In terms of advantages, multi-locality working offers significant benefits in terms of: environmental outcomes, by reducing congestion in urban cores; economic outcomes, by diversifying spending across a range of locations; and social well-being outcomes, by reducing commuting stress, providing a change of scenery and, perhaps, facilitating a better work-life balance.

There have been similar studies across Nordic countries that document the occurrence of multi-locality working and the growth of multi-locality living. Take for example, Finland and Norway, which are among the countries with the highest percentage of remote workers across Europe (Nordregio, 2022). Di Marino, *et al.* (2023) note an increase in rural populations in both Finland and Norway associated with workers remaining for prolonged periods of time in second homes. While this trend predates the pandemic, the authors draw upon external sources to claim that there had been an increased demand for second homes during COVID-19. Evidence is emerging for ways in which policies should be adjusted to take account of increased remote working and multi-locality working (Di Marino, *et al.,* 2023). In parallel, there have been renewed policies in Norway focusing on revitalising rural environments, chiefly sparsely populated regions and distant communities. Di Marino, *et al.* (2024) argue that information- and knowledge- intensive industries are becoming more place-independent, offering a new impetus to, and purpose for, rural development, allowing rural areas to become more attractive and competitive.  This, along

with the various experiences of multi-locality working during the pandemic, offers a potential challenge to the traditional notions and demarcations of functional city-regions. It suggests the likelihood of a further growth in counterurbanisation, and the possibility of achieving more balanced regional development.

The idea that contextual shifts can lead to behaviour change relies on habit theory, which was studied by Walker, *et al.* (2015) in the context of commuting. They surveyed employees' commute modes before and after a corporate relocation in which the company encouraged employees to switch to more sustainable modes, finding that the disruption of the relocation was associated with many commute mode changes by employees. Further, they found that the "automaticity" of the old travel mode took weeks to decay in employees and that during the same period, the automaticity of the new mode was growing. COVID-19 lockdowns arguably produced a similar situation in which governments had encouraged people to work from home, and these lockdowns often lasted for weeks or months, allowing old habits to decay. Salon, *et al.* (2021) documented some indicators in the United States that may prefigure future shifts. For example, they found that 70% of those who were new to regular telecommuting reported that their productivity stayed the same or increased (see also Shamshiripour, *et al.* 2020 for similar results), and that the percentage of those who expected to telecommute at least a few times each week post-pandemic had doubled from pre-pandemic levels. They report that such an increase in telecommuting could result in a 15% decrease in commute-related car vehicle miles travelled, as well as a 40% decline in transit commute trips post-pandemic. They also found that Americans plan to bike and to walk more after the pandemic. Similar research in Northern Ireland revealed that employees strongly believed their productivity had increased when working remotely, which was higher than what employers reported (Magennis and Desmond, 2023). Running contrary to this however, Rubin, *et al.* (2020) found that people reported being less productive and liking work less during pandemic-induced working from home. However, among people that reported changing their opinion about working from home, more people now viewed it more positively than those who changed their opinion to view it more negatively, adding further complexity.

On the question of whether pandemic-induced mobility patterns are persisting, Kim and Kwan (2021) used daily county-level mobility data collected from cell phones in the United States (provided by Descartes Labs) in order to determine the pattern of mobility change during the pandemic. They separated their data into two waves, the first consisting of the time period from March to June 2020, and the second consisting of June to September 2020. They found that during the first wave, mobility dropped significantly but then recovered to pre-pandemic levels. During the second wave, mobility remained largely unchanged despite an increase in the number of COVID cases and the continued presence of state-level mobility restrictions. Given the documented increase in working from home during the pandemic, it is possible that this data is simply confirming what some past research has suggested, which is that working from home is not necessarily associated with less driving (Chakrabarti, 2018). It is also possible that people who telecommute might choose to live further away from their workplace (Van Wee and Witlox, 2021), but this seems unlikely to be an explanation for the findings of Kim and Kwan (2021) because the short time interval between the start of the pandemic and the collection of the data is unlikely to have allowed enough time for people to rearrange the location of their home or work. It seems possible that this data is instead capturing an increase in non-work trips that is compensating for the decrease in work-related trips, whether from COVID-related lockdown fatigue or for some other reason. This would be in line with the much-debated concept of travel time budgets (TTB), which postulates that at an aggregate level, there is an average amount of time that people set aside to travel and that this is stable despite other changes. If some aspect of their daily journey is made shorter (such as by a more efficient highway or because they can work from home) people (in the aggregate) simply spend their travel time allotment on a greater number of activities or on activities that require increased travel time. Mokhtarian and Chen (2004) provide a valuable explanation of this concept and a summary of the research that has been conducted which both supports and contradicts TTB. They find that while there appears to be some stability in travel times at the aggregate level in some studies, these results do not appear to hold over all locations or times.


*Banteer Train Station has recently undergone refurbishment to cater for increased passenger traffic*

As the numbers returning to the workplace grow – even on a part-time / blended model basis – questions have to be asked about the future of commuting, not least in terms of planning, health and well-being, and the environment. What kind of long-term impact this might have on commuting is a matter of debate – and future longitudinal research – and is central to this research into the effects of commuting on place. While there has been an increase in working from home, accompanied by an expansion of more flexible working practices, not all workers have the desire, opportunity or discretion to do so. As the world tentatively transitions out of the pandemic, anecdotal evidence is emerging to indicate a return to commuting, albeit not to pre-COVID levels. There are benefits and challenges to telecommuting, which many workers have experienced during COVID-19. Thinking about well-being outcomes in a place and across communities, multi-locality working locations, and in particular telecommuting, can reduce traffic congestion, infrastructure demand and spending, reduce the probability of road accidents, reduce carbon emissions and raise standards of living (Hambly and Lee, 2019), not forgetting the potential it could offer for more balanced regional and spatial development.

## 2.5 Summary

This literature review demonstrates the complexities and nuances associated with commuting and its impact on the individual commuter's physical health and subjective well-being. In doing so, it tries to outline the relationship between commuting, well-being and place. The discussion reveals how commuting is an expression of a complex socio-spatial relationship between housing and employment market forces, and can be further influenced by emotional attachments to place, familial bonds or the desire to select a suitable, often rural, residential location within which to raise children. Often commuting is, and its social-spatial effects are, poorly understood by policy-makers and planners outside of the transportation profession. In brief, the key findings from the literature review include:

- The geography of work continues to evolve with more nuanced categorisations emerging to better express the various type of multi-locality / remote / tele-working;
- While there is an appreciation of planning's role in promoting health and well-being, these considerations have relatively low weight in decision making that directs spatial outcomes;
- Longer-distance and longer-duration commutes tend to be linked to lower levels of life satisfaction effecting individual subjective well-being, but the long-term impact remains unclear;
- Increased commute times have been found to be associated with low social participation, but the extent of commuting having a negative impact on the more wide-ranging concept of social capital is less certain;
- There is a need for greater consideration of any commuting 'spill-over' effects on wider social well-being, social capital and place attachment; and of
- The extent to which long-duration commuting impacts the quality and future development of a place.

# 3

# Investigating Planning, Placemaking and Commuting - A Policy Analysis

## Investigating Planning, Place-making and Commuting - A Policy Analysis

This chapter offers a brief synopsis of the policy hierarchy landscape – from European level, to national, regional and local – as it relates to place, planning and commuting and their inter-relationships. It aims to position the research within a broad policy context; and provide a lens through which the research findings, as presented in Chapters 5 to 10, should be considered.

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs), adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, including Ireland and the United Kingdom (UK), are increasingly informing national, regional and local policies (see Figure 3.1). *Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030*, published in 2019 as the EU-wide framework for the application of the SDGs, emphasises the urgency of an ecological transition, coupled with social protection (European Commission, 2019). It envisions the policy foundations for a sustainable future that include moving from a linear to a circular economy; ensuring sustainability from farm to fork; future-proofing energy, buildings and mobility; and ensuring a socially fair transition. The EU calls on all sectors and on all tiers of government to play their respective and collective parts in ensuring a Sustainable Europe, and it outlines the importance of policy coherence and partnership approaches.

*Figure 3.1 United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals*


*(Source: https://sdgs.un.org/goals)*

Shortly after the adoption of the SDGs, the EU launched its urban agenda (Pact of Amsterdam) in May 2016. This relates to Europe's metropolitan areas, and to the zones that come under their immediate influence. The EU policy agenda represents a multi-level working method aimed at stimulating growth, liveability and innovation in the cities of Europe, while also identifying and tackling social challenges. It identifies twelve priority themes and associated challenges which include:

- **Housing:** Ensuring affordable, sustainable, and inclusive housing solutions;
- **Jobs and Skills in the Local Economy:** Fostering employment opportunities and skill development;
- **Climate Adaptation:** Developing strategies to cope with climate change impacts;
- **Urban Mobility:** Enhancing transportation systems and reducing congestion; and
- **Digital Transition:** Leveraging technology for urban development.

While none of these challenges specifically reference the phenomenon of commuting and its impacts on place, communities and quality of life, each of them is negatively impacted by the practice of commuting and, in terms of future policy focus, provide a clear sense of direction needed to address its adverse outcomes.

While 2023, the mid-way point in achieving the SDGs, highlighted that the achievement of the Goals is significantly off-track[i], both Ireland and the UK remain committed to their delivery. In Ireland, in particular, this is clearly demonstrated in the significant alignment between the SDGs and the key strategic objectives of national planning policy, namely:

- The National Strategic Outcomes of the *National Planning Framework* (NPF) – also known as *Ireland 2040* (as published in 2018), the government's long-term overarching strategy for balanced and sustainable development; and,
- The Regional Policy Objectives of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSESs) of the three regional assemblies published in 2019/2020.

Ireland's *National Planning Framework* (NPF) represents a commitment from the Irish Government to doing things differently – placing as it does an emphasis on place-making and well-being / quality of life. It promotes a number of cities and towns for strategic investment in an effort to deliver on 'real' effective regional development (thus moving away from the approach of the past which saw public investment spread too thinly and investment decisions which did not align with the NPF's predecessor, the *National Spatial Strategy*). The NPF plans for an extra one million people living in Ireland by 2040; a growth in population that will require hundreds of thousands of new jobs and new homes. To effect balanced regional development, the Framework is committed to enhancing regional connectivity and competitiveness, improving environmental sustainability and building a fairer, more equal Ireland, all the while acknowledging that this must be done in a way that nurtures well-being and quality of life. Ten National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs) are listed in the NPF – and these in turn are embedded in the National Development Plan (NDP) – the funding arm of *Ireland 2040*. As one would expect in a hierarchy of planning strategy and policy, the overall objectives of Ireland's three Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSESs) also focus on effective balanced regional development with a strong emphasis on place-making and overall well-being / quality of life. From a commuting perspective, they note that the growth in long-distance and long-duration commuting (and associated congestion) is the direct result of a mismatch between the locations of jobs and where people live; that commuter catchments are now extending greater distances; and that the commute mode is still dominated by the private car (Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly, 2019; Southern Regional Assembly, 2020; Northern and Western Regional Assembly, 2020); which, taken together, gives rise to a scenario where:

> *long-distance car-based commuting is a key challenge that is leading to congestion of transport networks and negative impacts on people's quality of life and on the environment*
> (Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly, 2019: 17)

In Northern Ireland, the lack of a functioning Assembly for five of the last seven years has resulted in little new policy direction. The 2001 *Regional Development Strategy 2032: Building a Better Future* (RDS) – reviewed in 2012 – and the *Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) for Northern Ireland*, published in 2015, are still the overarching policy documents for regional and spatial development. Central to both is the importance of working towards sustainable development, and they both place an emphasis on reducing dependence on the car and the growing necessity to change travel behaviour; the need for modal shift in transportation and its role, in turn, in reducing congestion; and the critical importance of promoting more sustainable patterns of transport and travel. With regards to the climate crisis, the more recent SPPS speaks to the role of planning in mitigating, and adapting to, climate change. It highlights the need to promote a sustainable pattern of development "which reduces the need for motorised transport, encourages active travel, and facilitates travel by public transport in preference to the private car" (Department of the Environment, 2015, 13: 106).

### 3.1 Commuting - The Socio-Spatial Impacts

Ireland's national planning strategies, both the *National Spatial Strategy* (2002) and the current NPF are, in many respects, seminal documents in that, as overarching government policy frameworks, they each, at a point in time, consider the impact of commuting on place, people, communities and, significantly, overall quality of life. The *National Spatial Strategy* (NSS) recognised that unbalanced development, largely characterised by increasing long-distance commuting – the result of the strong economic performance of some areas and the comparative weakness of others – was affecting quality of life.

> *Long-distance commuting and residential development located at greater and greater distance from where people work, are not sustainable in the longer-term — economically, socially or environmentally*
> (Government of Ireland, 2002: 11).

The fact that over 62% of the commuting travelled by private car in 2000 (Central Statistics Office - CSO, 2000) was already clearly pointing to spatial development challenges and policy deficits as they pertained to the consolidation of dispersed settlement patterns, the distribution of employment (suburban business parks), and the impracticality (not least from a cost perspective) of public transport servicing these patterns (Morgenroth, 2002).

Sixteen years later, the NPF notes the continued growth of commuter settlements within Ireland's city regions and larger towns, recognising that large-scale growth in residential populations has only been met with limited employment opportunities locally, and that commuter-generated housing has affected both the character and cohesion of many settlements. In lamenting the settlement patterns that have emerged, particularly since the late 1990s / early 2000s, and the continued dominance of car-based commuting, the NPF places a strong emphasis on the need to consolidate the development of places that have grown rapidly, not least by redressing the dearth in the provision of essential amenities and services, the creation of local jobs, the advancement of compact growth principles, and the development of sustainable transport links. The NPF also consistently references how future housing development should be primarily based on employment growth, be served by sustainable transport modes and contribute to quality of life - rather than continuing to follow current trends which are generating unsustainable commuting patterns. These trends, as well documented in both the literature and (more recently) policy, are seen to be impacting negatively on quality of life. By adhering to compact growth principles, it is inferred that the volume of commuting as well as commute durations will be reduced.

The RSESs note the presence of 'commuting towns' within their respective regions; characterised by "high rates of population growth but with a weak level of services and functions for their resident populations" and the need for 'catch up' investment in these towns vis-à-vis local employment and services "in order to become more self-sustaining and to improve sustainable mobility, particularly in those places where there are high levels of car dependency" (Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly, 2019, 36). Unsurprisingly, these priorities that focus on addressing legacies of commuter-generated growth – i.e. weak levels of services and functions – are evident throughout Ireland's county development plans (CDPs); with Wicklow County Council for example, noting in the case of Newtownmountkennedy, the need for a place-making project that will concentrate investment in catch-up facilities such as a new community centre and sports facilities as well as regeneration of the town centre through public realm improvements (Wicklow County Council, 2022: 132).

#### 3.1.1 The Liveability of Place

The compact growth agenda as promoted by the NPF, and which extends through the policy hierarchy to the CDPs, necessitates a focus on the 'liveability' of places – how people experience living in cities, towns and villages. This includes the quality of the built environment, including the public realm, traffic and parking issues, access to amenities and public transport, and a sense of personal safety and well-being.

> *The COVID-19 pandemic has made us more aware of the importance of quality public realm, streets, parks and other amenities in towns which provide space for communities to socialise and recreate*
> (Government of Ireland 2022: 5).

As a concept, 'liveability' is linked very closely to quality of life, access to amenities and higher densities. The *Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028* equates the concept of liveability with adhering to the principles of place-making, compact growth and high-quality public realm. The *Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028* elaborates on this further, noting the role of place-making in building sustainable communities which, in turn, recognises the strong inter-relationships at both policy and practice level between "housing, sustainable mobility, healthy town and village centres and economic development" (Wicklow County Council, 2022, 12). The *Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029* acknowledges the increasing emphasis being placed on the idea and importance of 'place' in spatial planning policy, contending that the concepts of 'placemaking' and 'people-centred urban design' are no longer optional add-ons but rather "an essential requirement for the development of sustainable and healthy communities and climate resilient settlements" (Kildare County Council, 2023, 485). Critically, creating liveable spaces "relies heavily on the understanding of context as the starting point for good placemaking and urban design" (Galway County Council, 2022: Chapter 3) and tools such as the Scottish Government's Place Standard Tool are valuable in establishing that context. The Place Standard Tool is returned to in Chapter 5.

In Northern Ireland, while the SPPS does not refer directly to liveability, it speaks to the principles of place-making as a people-centred approach to planning, design and stewardship of place and, within this, the importance of good design.

> *Good design can change lives, communities and neighbourhoods for the better. It can create more successful places to live, bring communities together, and attract business investment. It can further sustainable development and encourage healthier living; promote accessibility and inclusivity; and contribute to how safe places are and feel*
> (Department of the Environment, 2015: 19).

*Sallins Train Station has been a pull factor for commuters*

### 3.1.2 Transportation

As outlined in Indecon's *Review of the Enterprise Agencies Economic Appraisal Model in Ireland*, there is an economic cost resulting from commuting and commuting time, and "The seven regions which constitute the Greater Dublin Area are all in the top ten of Irish regions as ranked by length of commute" (Indecon, 2018: 40). The review further contends that the expansion of the Dublin region has induced significant levels of inter-county commuting, and "given current infrastructure, is resulting in the longest commute times" (Indecon, 2018: 37). The NPF recognises the many challenges surrounding transportation in the context of balanced and sustainable development, noting that Ireland's carbon footprint is currently higher than the EU average, in part due to higher transport and energy demand, mostly based on fossil fuels, that has worked against achieving agreed climate action targets. The Framework is strongly committed to the advancement of sustainable mobility, a priority also deeply embedded in the RSESs for the three regional assembly areas. Growth in sustainable mobility is seen as a key contributor to both the liveability of place and quality of life. Across the spatial planning policy hierarchy, there is also the recognition that transport policy needs to be considered in terms of ageing demographics, rural isolation, improving inter-urban connectivity, improving the TEN-T (Trans-European Transport Network) Routes – as the main arteries of EU transport – and the 'lagging' transition to a competitive low carbon economy by the year 2050.

Unsurprisingly, each of the three RSESs calls for investment in rail services (where they exist), multi-modal and other smart mobility options as alternatives to private car commuting and associated congestion. The Government's rural development policy, *Our Rural Future 2021-2025*, also calls for a multi-modal shift and enhanced digital connectivity to sustain and increase the population of rural areas, revitalise town centres, and reduce commuting times. The Strategy calls for enhancement of the electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure through, for example, the publication of an Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy and the installation of public charging points at remote working hubs. The development and promotion of EV infrastructure will also enable the roll-out of decarbonisation zones as identified under the Climate Action Plan (CAP).

At a local level, each of the county development plans (CDPs) covering the five Irish-based case studies discusses the high dependence of private car-based travel, and the need to transition to more sustainable modes of transport. In the *Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028*, for example, it is noted that the north of the county in particular "has high levels (>50% in most EDs) of commuting to the Greater Dublin Area (GDA)" (Wicklow County Council, 2022: 203) and that much of this commuting is undertaken by private modes of transport. This, in turn, poses challenges for the Council with respect to environmental degradation, energy security, increased housing demand and "also quality-of-life considerations for commuters and their families" (Wicklow County Council, 2022: 204).

To this end, adhering to the principles of compact growth, the consolidation of existing settlements and promoting the "10-minute town" are seen as pre-requisites for a modal shift which, when achieved, will also strengthen the quality of the surrounding public realm, and thus the liveability of place.

> *The more people who can actively be encouraged to both walk and cycle will also result in a reduced number of private cars within our urban areas resulting in a lower demand for parking spaces and street space which could result in enhancements of the public realm in our urban areas*
> (Galway County Council, 2022: Chapter 6).

Similarly, in Northern Ireland, planning policy as it relates to transportation is emphasising the need for a modal shift away from the private car. Importantly, the policy landscape acknowledges the negative impacts of car dependency; noting that "an emphasis on the car in the planning of development increases car dependency as well as influencing the built form and layout of urban areas" (Department for Regional Development, 2005a, 8). Achieving a modal

shift brings multiple benefits – not only to the individual and the place but also to the wider environment and society.

> *Where a modal shift occurs this can contribute to improvements in air quality arising from reduced vehicular emissions and associated health benefits for society*
> (Department of the Environment, 2015: 106).

### 3.1.3 Housing

Within both the NPF and *Our Rural Future*, there is a demand for future housing development that meets the needs of a diverse population. This must be informed by employment growth, and seek to achieve higher densities and access to amenities and sustainable transport modes, in order to make our settlements good places to live, avoid long-distance commuting patterns and improve quality of life impacts. The NPF commits to at least 40% of all new housing being delivered within the existing built-up areas of cities, towns and villages on infill and / or brownfield sites. This commitment to compact growth will contribute to the viability of services, shops and public transport, increase housing supply and enable more people to be closer to employment and recreational opportunities, as well as to walk or cycle more and use the car less. There remain challenges around housing choice and affordability, diversifying transport and mobility options, and improving urban quality. In more rural areas, this will be aided by the Rural Housing Guidelines when published. *Our Rural Future* commits to supporting town centre living with the scale, design and layout of housing in rural towns being proportionate and tailored to ensure that development responds to the character, scale and density of a particular town. Recognising the challenge of changing demographics, there is a commitment to ensuring that housing in town centres will be mixed and will cater for older persons. There is also a commitment, as part of the *Town Centre First* approach, to provide seed capital to local authorities to provide serviced sites at cost in towns and villages, thus allowing individuals and families to build homes in rural centres.

Within Northern Ireland's RDS, housing is recognised as "a key driver of physical, economic and social change in both urban and rural areas", with planning playing a key role in determining the "relationship between the location of housing, jobs, facilities and services and infrastructure" (Department for Regional Development, 2001: 42). It is the weakness of this relationship between housing and jobs that can feed into long-duration commuting. *Planning Policy Statement 12 – Housing in Settlements* speaks to the need to build compact towns and villages, and to support the 'town centre living' concept, and the development of 'walkable communities'. These, in turn give rise to "environmental benefits through reducing the need to use private cars, and community benefits to people such as the elderly and young people who do not have access to a car" (Department for Regional Development, 2005b, 30)

### 3.1.4 Data

Without access to the right data and at the right granularity, there is an ongoing risk that what we know of commuting remains anecdotal. This is a significant challenge for policy-makers across the island of Ireland. From a socio-spatial perspective, it is increasingly clear that data – whether from the Census of Population, national surveys, state-operated transport agencies or private providers, housing agencies, open data sources, or local government planning departments – is critical in highlighting the spatial distribution of population and associated commuting patterns and trends. All three regional assemblies, in their respective RSESs, note the importance of data gathering and building intelligence across all scales of government to both inform and evaluate policy outcomes, including as they relate to commuting and its impacts. To address national shortfalls in this regard, the three assemblies have collaborated on the development of a Regional Development Monitor, in partnership with the All-Island Research Observatory (AIRO) and the GeoHive spatial data hub developed by Tailte Eireann (formerly Ordinance Survey Ireland). This Ireland-only tool provides a monitoring system and an online mapping viewer for key indicators of progress towards the strategic goal of balanced regional development. It will support the implementation of the RSESs, the NPF and *Project Ireland*

*2040* and "provides an active on-line resource of up-to-date data with regular updates to local authorities, public agencies, academia and the general public"[ii].

Across both the community plans of Northern Ireland and the Local Economic and Community Plans (LECPs) for Ireland, the role of data in both informing policy and measuring progress is seen as essential to effective sustainable development. Within the *Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028*, it is noted that "Currently, monitoring of modal shift is largely dependent on Census data which details commuting patterns to work and education. More timely data, ideally in relation to a range of trip purposes, will be required" to build a stronger evidence-base (Cork County Council, 2022: 206). Frustratingly, more timely data does exist – held by Google and the mobile phone operators for example – but is difficult to access, not least because of the prohibitive fees charged. Costs aside, this data does have the potential to provide further insight – and at a greater frequency and granularity – into the movement of people as part of their commute.

Having access to such data, and thus a stronger evidence-base, enables policy to embrace new concepts such as the 15-Minute City or 10-minute settlement and tailor them to the specific needs of place. It is interesting that Cork County Council, similar to the approach of the three regional assemblies, note they may need to undertake their own primary data collection activities to bridge the current gap in both frequency and depth of data available. The InPLACE research, with its extensive primary database, goes some way to addressing the data deficits referenced.

### 3.2 Commuting and Quality of Life

As discussed in Chapter 2 (see Section 2.2.1), it is increasingly acknowledged that specific health risks are attributable to long-duration commuting and resulting congestion and air pollution – these include heart disease, respiratory disease, mental health, obesity and injuries. As noted by Carmichael *et al*, "The built environment, including the composition and shape of human settlements, transport and green infrastructure, has been identified as an important determinant of health worldwide" (2019: 155). Spatial planning practice, which too often can be an enabler of poor design that in turns 'feeds' the phenomenon of commuting, should instead be an enabler of good health. Both the SPPS for Northern Ireland and the NPF for Ireland make initial strides in the alignment of planning and health agendas at both a national and local level. In the SPPS, for example, the inter-relationship between environmental assets, environmental quality and equity in the transportation modal choice is seen as contributing to enhanced living standards, health and well-being and quality of life. Similarly, the NPF argues that the delivery of the National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs), such as compact growth and sustainable mobility, will enhance "public health by encouraging and facilitating more active lifestyles by creating a more walkable and cycling friendly urban environment" (Government of Ireland, 2018: 57). This includes short-distance commuting. Both National Policy Objectives 26 and 27 within the NPF place a strong emphasis on public health improvements through spatial planning and urban design decisions, especially as they relate to active transport, walkable neighbourhoods / communities, housing quality, environmental enhancement and access to services. The RSESs, in turn, speak to healthy placemaking and the role of physical infrastructure and sustainable mobility in this (see Figure 3.2).

*Figure 3.2 The key components of healthy place-making*


*(Source: Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly, 2019, 205).*

At a local level, the *Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029*, tapping into research, recognises that the design of our built environment has a direct impact on our health and well-being, noting that

> *Car-oriented development over the past several decades has resulted in our settlements expanding in a disconnected and dispersed manner. Such a trend which is mirrored across western society, has had knock-on implications on peoples' overall health and wellbeing and is closely linked to rising levels of obesity, chronic disease and social isolation in the population*
> (Kildare County Council, 2023: 488).

With the reform of local government across the island of Ireland in 2014, community planning became an increasingly significant part of the jigsaw that is the planning hierarchy (see Figure 3.3). While the weighting towards community planning is stronger in Northern Ireland, the Irish Local Economic and Community Plans (LECPs) play a key role in promoting a quality of life / well-being agenda. This is particularly the case under the current review.

*Figure 3.3 The spatial planning hierarchy of frameworks, strategies and plans in Ireland*


*(Source: Clare County Council, 2023; https://issuu.com/clarecoco/docs/lecp_portrait_2_)*

The LECPs, produced by each local authority which span a 6-year period, represent an integration of local economic and community objectives. Placing a strong focus on local place-making, with health and well-being as an emerging dominant theme, the LECPs facilitate collaboration between agencies, business and the community and voluntary sector. The first tranche of LECPS, covering the period 2016 to 2022 are currently being revised, with a number currently at revised draft LECP stage. When considering the emerging LECPs which cover the five Irish case study towns as part of this study, it is evident that climate change, connectivity, local employment growth and resilience are core themes across each. Whilst references

to commuting specifically are not to the fore, there are indirect references via the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve public transport options, harness the potential of digitalisation and utilise the existing remote work hubs, and increase the quality of life on offer – to residents and visitors alike.

Community Planning within local government in Northern Ireland is almost ten years old, introduced as part of the local government reform in 2015. Community Planning aims to improve the connection between all the tiers of Government and wider society through partnership working. This, it is argued, will jointly deliver better outcomes for everyone; with the resulting community plans identifying long-term priorities for improving the social, economic and environmental well-being of districts and the people who live there. Within each council area, Community Planning Partnerships have been established, comprising the council, statutory bodies, agencies and the wider community, including the community and voluntary sector; thus ensuring an integrated approach to local strategic planning that is reflective and complementary to the Programme for Government outcomes and the associated delivery plans (see https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/articles/community-planning). The Community Plan for Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough, *Connected 2017-2030*, operates to the three strategic themes of Community, Economy and Place, which in turn are underpinned by the three cross-cutting themes of Connectivity, Equality and Sustainability (see Figure 3.4).

*Figure 3.4 Strategic themes of the Armagh City Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council Community Plan*


*(Source: Connected – A Community Plan for Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough 2017-2030)*

The plan places a strong emphasis on connectivity as being integral to improving quality of life. This includes harnessing the potential of digitalisation, where it recognises there are deficits and a need for initiatives which inform, coordinate and promote digital connectivity.

### 3.3 Commuting and Changing Work Patterns

The coronavirus pandemic – or COVID-19 – "provoked a dramatic increase in the practice of remote working internationally" (Rural Community Network, 2022, 13), and now, post-pandemic, the practice of forms of remote working has become a core part of work practice across many sectors. In 2021, the Irish Government published both *Our Rural Future* and *Making Remote Work: National Remote Work Strategy* which set out pathways for growing and supporting forms of remote work in Ireland. *Our Rural Future* makes a significant commitment to the establishment of remote working hubs throughout the country – aiming to establish a network of over 400 hubs that would not only support the retention of skilled people in rural communities but would also attract mobile talent to rural areas. An added benefit of the hubs to rural settlements is seen as the potential they offer for bringing vacant properties in the centres of rural towns back into use. In terms of supports, *Making Remote Work* highlights different mechanisms to be employed; these include, by way of example, (i) legislating for the right to request remote working, (ii) to make it so that home and remote work should be the norm for 20% of public sector employment, (iii) the mapping and investing in a network of remote working hubs and (iv) the accelerating of broadband roll-out.

*Making Remote Work* identifies a wide range of benefits of remote work, including increasing participation in the labour market, attracting and retaining talent, enabling balanced regional development, alleviating accommodation pressures, improving work / life balance, reducing the amount of time spent commuting, and reducing transport related carbon emissions and air pollution. It further points out the potential of hubs to allow workers to live and work in a place of their choosing, which in turn reduces commuting times and traffic congestion; with benefits to the employers including a chance to reduce their business costs, improve staff retention and access a greater pool of talent. From a commuting and environmental perspective, it is estimated that for each new full-time remote worker, the average daily transport related emissions savings would be approximately 2.6-2.9kg CO2 (depending on petrol/diesel fuel mix).

In 2022, the Irish Government published *Harnessing Digital: The Digital Ireland Framework* to assist in realising the objectives of the *National Remote Working Strategy*. It sets out a roadmap to drive and enable the digital transition across the economy and society, noting digital's key role in delivering on climate targets. In this regard, the Framework speaks of "enabling greater remote working, thereby facilitating greater time for individuals, less commuting and emissions", arguing that for each new remote worker, "an estimated average net saving of up to 10 kWh per day is achieved, reducing commuter transport energy use and carbon emissions" (Government of Ireland, 2022, 16). It reaffirms the Governments' commitment to making connectivity available to everyone, including through the National Broadband Plan, remote working hubs and broadband connection points (BCPs), with a target of having all Irish households and businesses covered by Gigabit network no later than 2028, and all populated areas covered by 5G mobile network no later than 2030.

At a local level, remote working is identified as an opportunity to enhance the vibrancy, liveability and attractiveness of place, particularly to younger generations. Local councils are adopting polices within their respective CDPs that commit to employment creation, across a range of sectors – building on local endogenous potential – with one objective being to reduce long-distance commuting. This includes the development of remote / digital working hubs where, as in the case of *Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028*, such hubs are seen as having the potential to positively impact on commuting patterns. In the *Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029*, the potential of remote working is already being harnessed through the Digi-Clare Initiative and the *Clare Digital Strategy 2023*; the driver behind this being a recognition that:

> *The development of co-working hubs in the form of digital, remote working, co- or creative spaces has the potential to stimulate local economies, offer people more flexible work options, reduce commuting levels, and improve quality of life* (Clare County Council, 2023: 228).

As both employers and employees recognise that "tethering to a location" has evolved since the 2000s, largely as a result of digitalisation (Magennis and Desmond, 2023), the efficient roll-out of the National Broadband Plan (NBP) for Ireland and Full Fibre NI becomes more critical. Spanning 96% of Ireland's land mass, the NBP is the largest infrastructural project in rural Ireland since rural electrification, with implications for government policy in climate change, transport, sustainable growth, jobs and health, and education. When delivered, it is envisaged that it will have brought high speed broadband to over 560,000 premises, 1.1 million people, 65,000 farms, 44,000 non-farm businesses and 679 schools (see https://nbi.ie/) – thus enhancing opportunities for a more sustainable model of remote working to evolve across a broader range of sectors than is currently the case. In Northern Ireland, the roll-out of Full Fibre under Project Stratum is being led by the ten local councils (excluding Belfast City Council) through the Full Fibre Northern Ireland Consortium (FFNI). As of September 2022, gigabit-capable broadband infrastructure was available to over 46,000 premises, over half of the 85,000 eligible premises identified in an initial survey conducted in 2019.


*Ennistymon Digital Hub – Clare County Council*

### 3.4 Commuting and the Environment

The impact of commuting on environmental quality is receiving increased attention across government policy across the island of Ireland; with the main emphasis being on the negative impact of commuting and commuting times on greenhouse gas emissions and air quality[iii]. Within the NPF, National Strategic Outcome 1 – Compact Growth – places a strong emphasis on the role of local government and communities, supported through national funding programmes[iv], in driving the transition to more sustainable modes of travel (walking, cycling, public transport) and energy consumption (efficiency, renewables). This strategic outcome also calls for greater labour mobility to support employment-led growth and creating attractive places through integrated transport modes and green modes of movement.

The Irish Government's *Making Remote Work: National Remote Work Strategy* notes how "A sustained reduction of commuters and commuting time will, over time, bring a reduction in transport carbon emissions" (Government of Ireland, 2021, 9). Ireland's *Climate Action Plan*


*Maintaining green spaces is integral to sustainable communities*

*2019*, and its subsequent annual updates makes a direct connection between opportunities afforded by digital technologies and the NBP roll-out in the low-carbon transition; with digital technologies also seen as a key driver of new economic and employment opportunities that could reduce commuting by (a) reducing the need for business travel, and (b) creating local employment opportunities. Linking back to the NPF, the *Climate Action Plan* (CAP) highlights the importance of better spatial planning policy and practice in committing to development within existing urban footprints. By reiterating the value-added of adhering to the National Strategic Outcome of Compact Growth, the CAP speaks of the need to reduce the demand for commuter travel thereby creating vibrant, people-focused environments that promote a higher quality of life. In the *Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028*, a core objective around smart working / remote working is to:

> *Recognise and promote the need for remote working throughout the County, either from home or from a designated hub/co-working space, which offers employees flexible work arrangements and contributes to a lower carbon output through the associated reduction in commuting*
> (Cork County Council, 2022: 180).

The third annual update of the CAP, *Climate Action Plan 2024*, encourages more sustainable commuting and business-related travel by public sector employees as key elements of public sector transport decarbonisation. This also makes a direct link to the goal of *Harnessing Digital*, whereby 20% of employees in the public sector, colleges, and other public bodies will have the opportunity to work remotely (including at home). Specifically, in terms of commuter journeys, it sets out a target to "Achieve a 20% reduction in commuting private car kilometres, enabled through initiatives such as the Smarter Travel Mark pathfinder programme, and establishing a network of remote working hubs" (Government of Ireland, 2024: 271).

Across local government in both jurisdictions, there is a growing commitment to policy and initiatives that support the transition to a low carbon economy and contribute to clean air and water and more broadly, the protection of a healthy natural environment. Galway County Council, for example, is placing an emphasis on the reduction in energy demand and both carbon dioxide

and greenhouse gas emissions, through climate mitigation and adaptation measures. From a transport perspective this includes commitments to:

- Support construction of green routes / cycleways / pedestrian routes;
- Support car-free developments;
- Strengthen public transport linkages and encourage their use;
- Support localisation of jobs / shops / services to minimise the need for most common travel patterns; and
- Support electric vehicle charging points and electrification of the Council fleet (Galway County Council, 2022, Chapter 14).

The *Clare County Development Plan 2022-2028*, speaks of the need to "decarbonise our lifestyles". Linked to this is greater adoption of the circular economy and roll-out of digitalisation. In addition, through effective transport planning, the aim is to "enhance active and public modes of transport and provide opportunities to improve health and wellbeing, reducing carbon emissions and traffic congestion" (Clare County Council, 2022: 80).

### 3.5 Summary

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs) are increasingly informing national, regional and local policies, noting the importance of policy coherence and partnership approaches. Key priority themes for Europe in the areas of housing, jobs and skills, climate adaptation, urban mobility and digital transition, are each being impacted by the phenomenon of commuting (some more negatively than others). In terms of future policy focus, it is clear that from a spatial planning perspective, their sustainable delivery is intertwined with each other, and with tackling the problem of commuting, especially long-distance and long-duration commuting.

Across the island of Ireland, national, regional and local policy align in their contention that long-duration and long-distance commuting (and associated congestion) is a key challenge for balanced and sustainable development – not only for its impact on settlement patterns but also on health, well-being and quality of life, and also on the environment. The NPF (and its predecessor) and the RDS, as overarching government policy frameworks, consider the impact of commuting on place, people, communities and significantly, quality of life – and this has now filtered through to local level policy and practice.

Commuting towns in both jurisdictions are largely characterised by high rates of population growth, but lack of investment in necessary services and functions to sustain residents locally. Consequently, the focus of local plans – whether development or community plans – is on catch-up investment in local employment and services, and on encouraging a shift from less to more sustainable forms of travel and transportation. Commuting has resulted from, but also contributed significantly to, disconnected and dispersed settlements, a disjuncture between the location of housing and of employment, and car-dependent design practices. This, in turn, impacts on health, social isolation, and identify with place.

COVID-19 undoubtedly made us more aware of the importance of quality spaces to both our individual health and community health and well-being, and made us question the changing relationship between home and workplace – and what is important. The concepts of place-making, liveability, sustainable mobility, and vibrancy are now regarded as central to the planning and development of sustainable places. Spatial planning practice, which too often has been an enabler of poor design and fed the commuting phenomenon, must return to its core role (and founding principle) of being an enabler of good health. To do this effectively, it is critical that we first understand the context and function of place, and how commuting is impacting on this – in terms of services, economy, housing, transportation, and health and well-being.

It is clear that both vertically across the planning hierarchy, and horizontally across different sectors, policies are starting to be better integrated, and through advancements in digitalisation and emerging new work practices, there is scope to tackle the negative impacts associated with commuting. In the context of the climate crisis the need to do so has become more urgent.

# 4

# Profile of the Case Study Settlements – Ireland and Northern Ireland

## Profile of the Case Study Settlements – Ireland and Northern Ireland

As outlined in Chapter 1, seven study settlements were selected in Ireland and Northern Ireland based on a guiding set of criteria, which will be discussed further here. In this chapter, the case study settlements are explored in detail to highlight the commonalities and differences between them, and to discuss the rationale for their selection in the study, as well as providing context for this report. The initial selection of the settlements came either prior to the collection of the Censuses of Population in Northern Ireland (April 2021) or Ireland (April 2022), or prior to the release of data from these. Despite the delay in the collection of Ireland's Census of Population, the release of data from both jurisdictions has been timely for the InPLACE project.

The discussion in this chapter is based in part on the list of criteria used to guide the selection of study areas, such as information of the duration of commuting and the age of the housing stock (see Chapter 1). It also presents information on variables related to commuting that were not available at the time of case study selection, but that have subsequently been made available from the two censuses (e.g., the extent of home working). It should be noted that certain variables were not always mirrored either side of the Border, and not all data was available at similar geographies.

For the first time, both the Northern Ireland 2021 and the Ireland 2022 Censuses of Population identified 'urban areas' or 'towns' (Ireland) or 'settlements' (Northern Ireland) which are comparable in size and scale. In Ireland, previous to 2022, 'urban areas' or 'towns' were called settlements and did not include smaller places with less than 50 dwellings[v]; in the case of Northern Ireland, 'settlements' are defined as an area with a minimum of 20 dwellings or 50 usual residents[vi]. This categorisation has been of great benefit for this study and means that this study can compare like for like from a scale perspective. In addition, broadly, themes across the two jurisdictions' censuses are similar, while variables differ[vii]. This means that this chapter can engage in a meaningful comparative exploration of each of the seven study areas and provide a context for following chapters which explore the primary data collected.

The reality of the settlement pattern of Irish towns made the initial selection of the exact geographic area challenging. For example, in the western part of the island, settlements tend to be less compact than their eastern counterparts. Hence, for the study areas in Counties Galway, Cork and Clare, 'joint settlements' (see Table 4.1) were selected. This selection was done in consultation with the funding agencies and the respective Local Authorities. For detailed maps of each study area, see Appendix E. As highlighted above, with the release of census data at similar times in the two jurisdictions, and the consistent identification of 'towns' or 'settlements', the InPLACE project has been able to clearly identify boundaries for the analysis of the secondary data in this chapter.

*Table 4.1 InPLACE case study settlements and population*

| Case Study Settlement | County/ Local Authority/ Local District Council | Population 2021/2022[viii] | Population At Work | % Pop. at Work |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Phase 1 | | | | |
| Ennistymon-Lahinch | Clare County Council | 2,155 | 891 | 41.3% |
| Newtownmountkennedy | Wicklow County Council | 3,539 | 1,593 | 45.0% |
| Dundrum | Newry, Mourne and Down District Council | 1,538 | 620 | 40.3% |
| Phase 2 | | | | |
| Kanturk-Banteer | Cork County Council | 2,803 | 1,315 | 46.9% |
| Mountbellew-Moylough | Galway County Council | 1,300 | 602 | 46.3% |
| Sallins | Kildare County Council | 6,269 | 3,122 | 49.8% |
| Aghagallon | Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon District Council | 1,179 | 571 | 48.4% |

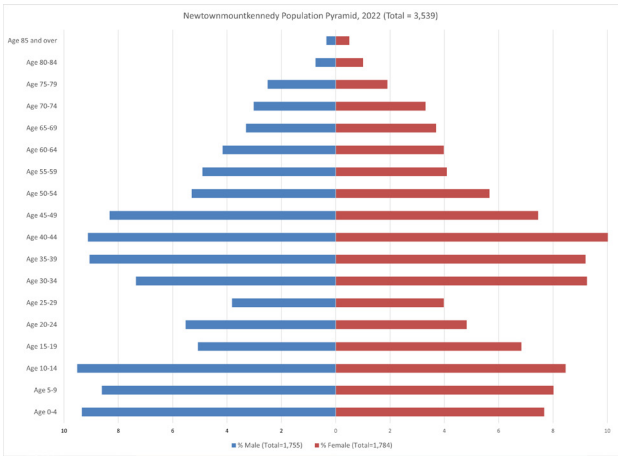
## 4.1 Population

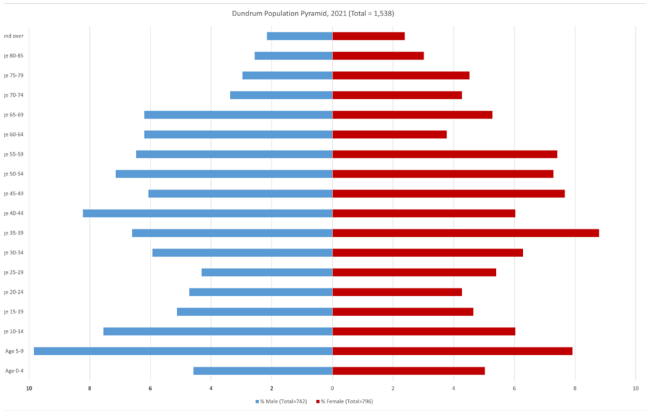
As outlined in Table 4.1, the population of each of the seven settlements varies from Aghagallon as the smallest to Sallins as the largest. Within populations there are variations in the age profile which give the first indication of how different dynamics are at play in these 'rural' towns. In Figures 4.1 and 4.2, the population for each of the study settlements is illustrated with population pyramids, which shows the distribution of ages between male and female members of the population. The graphs start from youngest cohort at the bottom (0-4 years) to the oldest (85 years and older) at the top. The pyramids have been organised into Phase 1 and Phase 2 settlements. Figure 4.3 illustrates combined populations of the case study areas by age band as compared to the age profile of the aggregate population of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Overall, the settlements selected for this study have younger populations than the national averages, highlighting the family stage which the study areas are currently experiencing. In Ireland 15% of the national population is aged over 65 years and over, with Northern Ireland's equivalent population being 17%. At the other end of the spectrum, young dependents (0 to 18 years) now account for 25% of the national population in Ireland, and 24% in Northern Ireland.


When examining the population pyramids, there is a distinct common pattern across five of the seven case study areas. Ennistymon-Lahinch and Aghagallon display what can be described as a box-like or 'stationary' pyramid which is emblematic of low growth. The remaining five towns have 'double triangles' within each pyramid, associated with family cycle stages, in-migration at the family formation stage, and births. This is a pattern associated with rural towns where newly independent cohorts (from 18 years onwards) leave for employment and/or education. The second triangle, which becomes apparent from around the 30 to 40 years cohort represents either returned migrants or newcomers to growth areas at the family formation stage. In simple terms, this means that for the five settlements (Mountbellew-Moylough, Kanturk-Banteer, Sallins,

Newtownmountkennedy, and Dundrum) young adults tend to out-migrate; and that those in the family formation stage (30s, 40s age category) are 'returning' or moving to these rural towns.

*Figure 4.1 Population pyramids for Phase 1 study settlements*



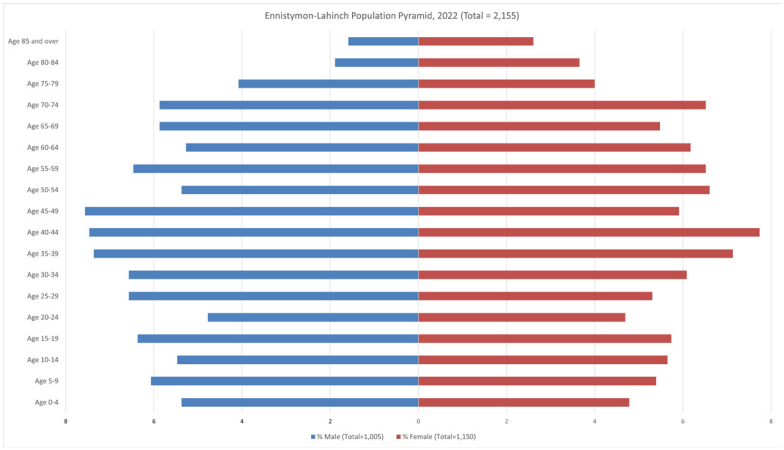
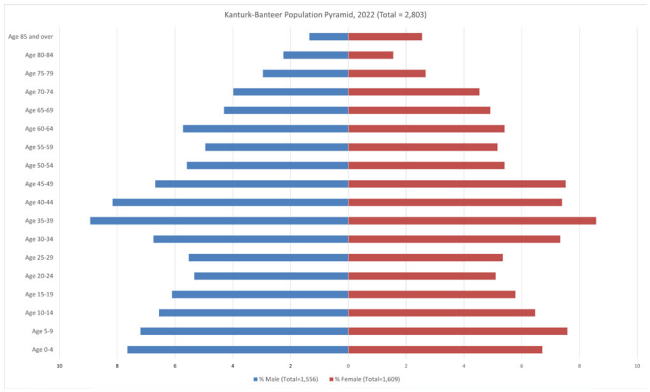
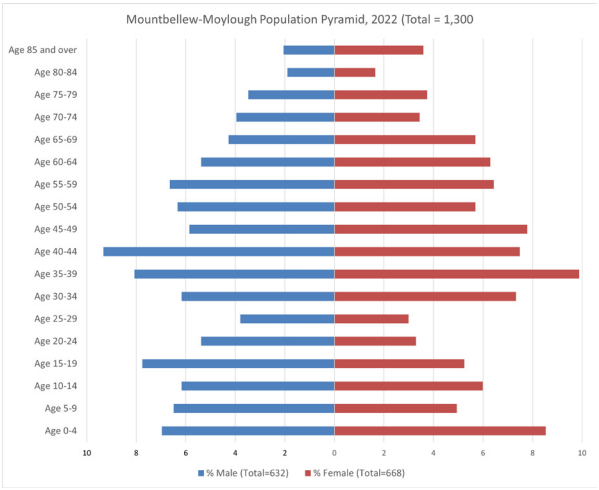




*Figure 4.2 Population pyramids for Phase 2 study settlements*





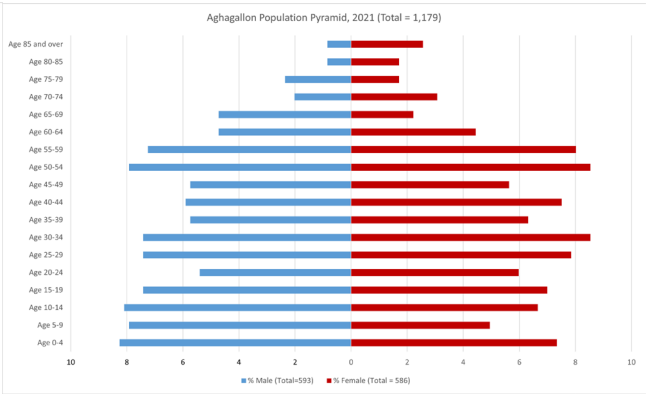
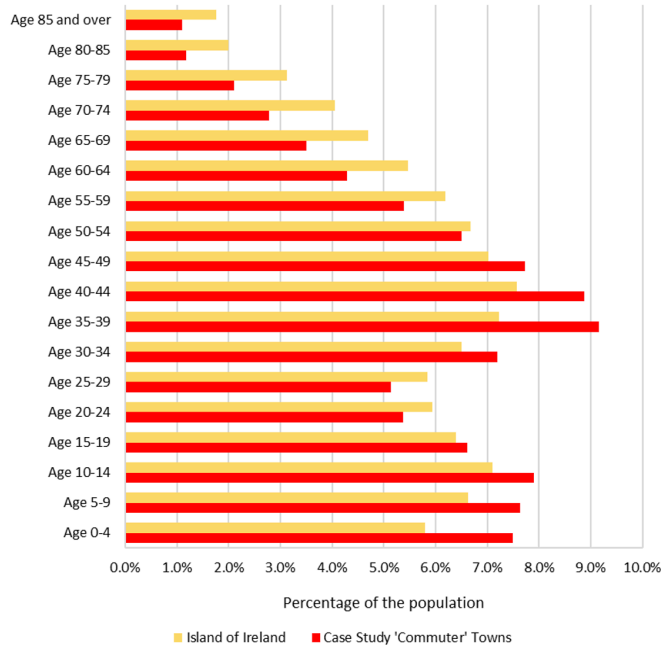



*Figure 4.3 Total population of commuter settlements compared to All-Ireland total (ex. Ennistymon-Lahinch)*

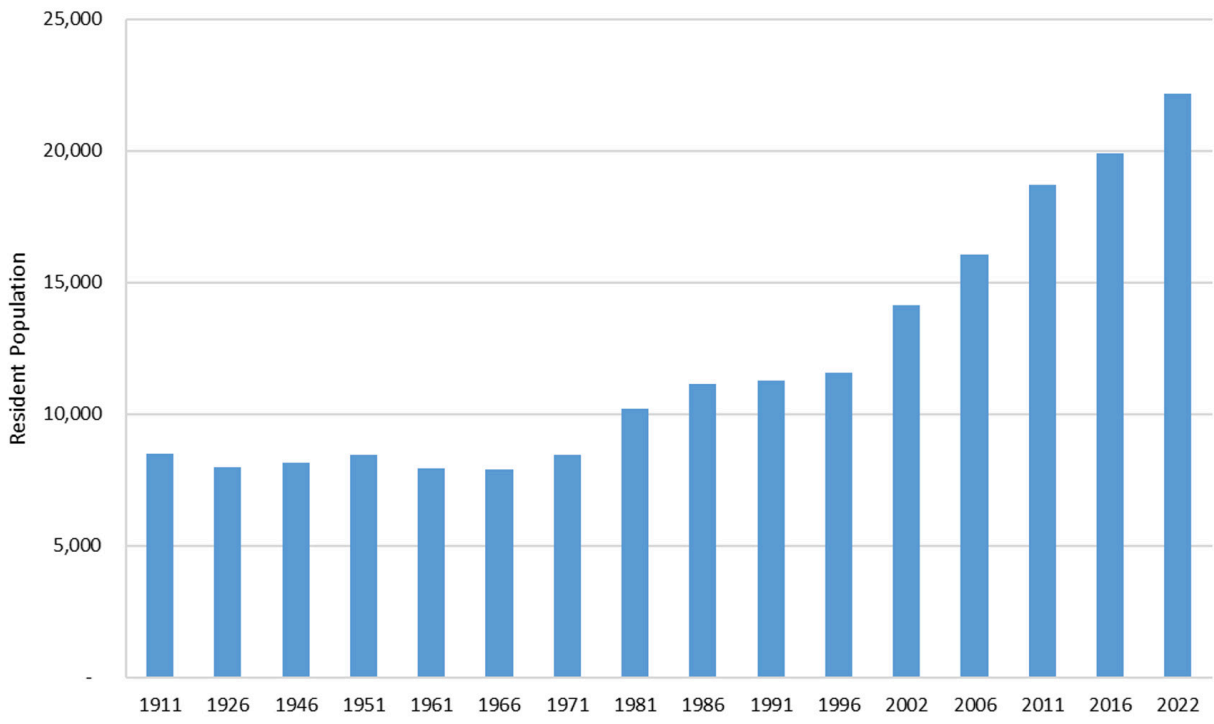


### 4.1.1 Population Change

While current population and future growth is relevant to understanding contemporary dynamics at play in the case study areas, change over time provides important context for understanding how places evolve. For the Census of Population in Ireland, it is possible to track growth since 1911 for the Electoral Divisions within which the study areas are located (this data is not available for Northern Ireland given the changes in census boundaries over time). Examining the combined growth of the 'commuter' towns (excluding Ennistymon-Lahinch due to it being a 'low commuting settlement') highlights how population has increased from 1971 onwards (Figure 4.4), very much in line with the experience of rural towns in Ireland since the development of an urban economy (Walsh, *et al,* 2007; Keaveney, 2009).

Delving into the growth of the individual settlements provides further insight into that change. Figure 4.5 displays this data in comparison to the national growth, which shows a marked difference since 1996, reflecting the rapid expansion of population of towns in the early years of the 'Celtic Tiger' and the largescale housing development that took place at the time (Keaveney, 2009; Kitchin, *et al,* 2012).

*Figure 4.4 Population growth in case study 'commuter' settlements (Ireland only), 1911-2022 (based on Electoral Division geographies)*




What follows now is a series of graphs (Figures 4.6 to 4.9) which illustrate growth at the local level (this is for the Electoral Divisions within which each settlement is located). The larger towns in the study, Newtownmountkennedy and Sallins, have experienced growth at much higher rates than the national change and the average for the commuter settlements. For Newtownmountkennedy that growth began in earnest from 1971 in line with the growing urban economy, and higher densities of population, along the east coast, and as such it is the most established commuter town in this study. For Sallins, strong growth only began to emerge in the 1990s with the Celtic Tiger era, and it took place in tandem with road and rail infrastructure investment at the time, as well as largescale housing development.

*Figure 4.5 Population change in 'commuter' settlements (Ireland only) in comparison to national, 1911-2022*

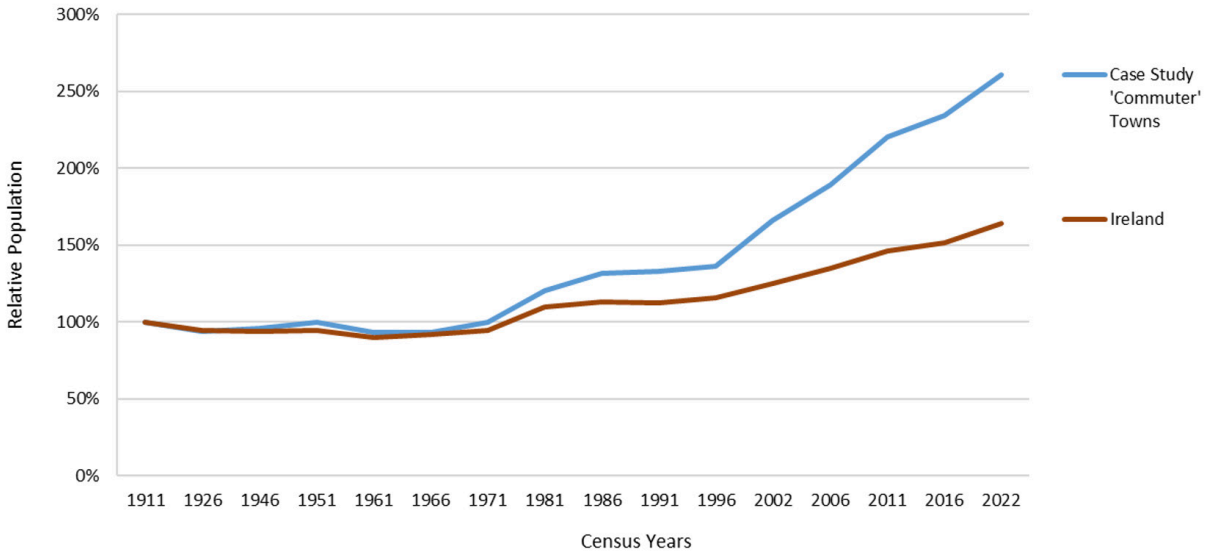



*Figure 4.6 Newtownmountkennedy: population change relative to national change, 1911-2022*

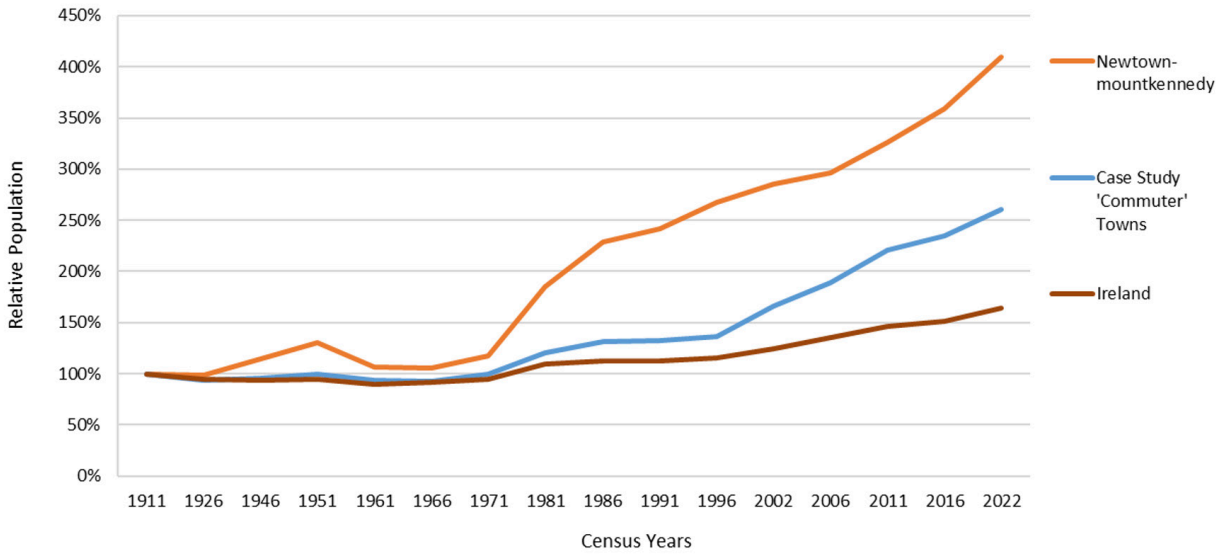


*Figure 4.7 Sallins: population change relative to national change, 1911-2022*

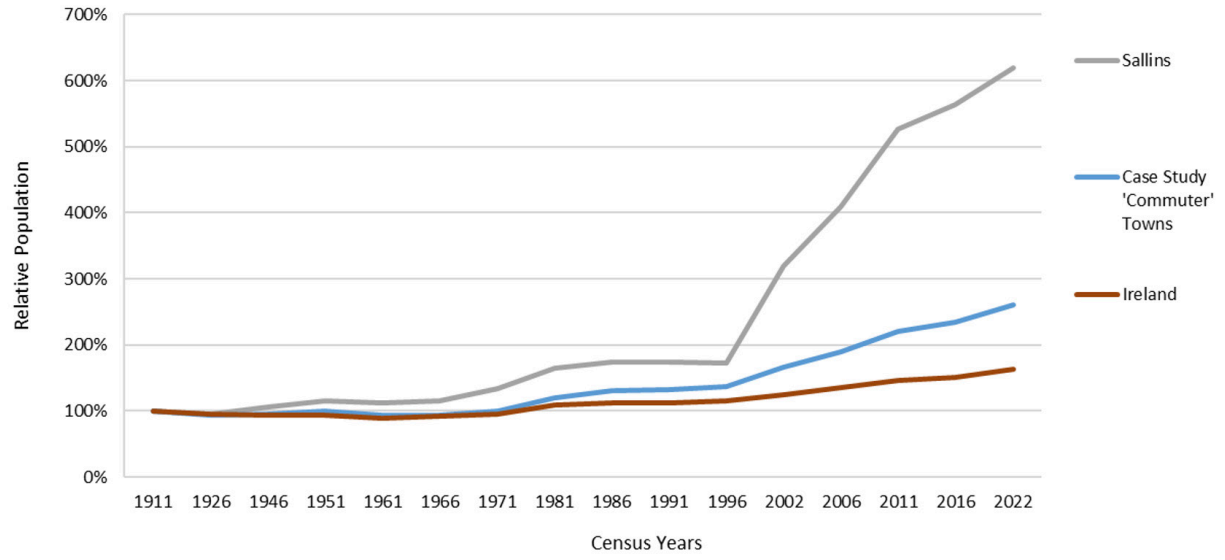
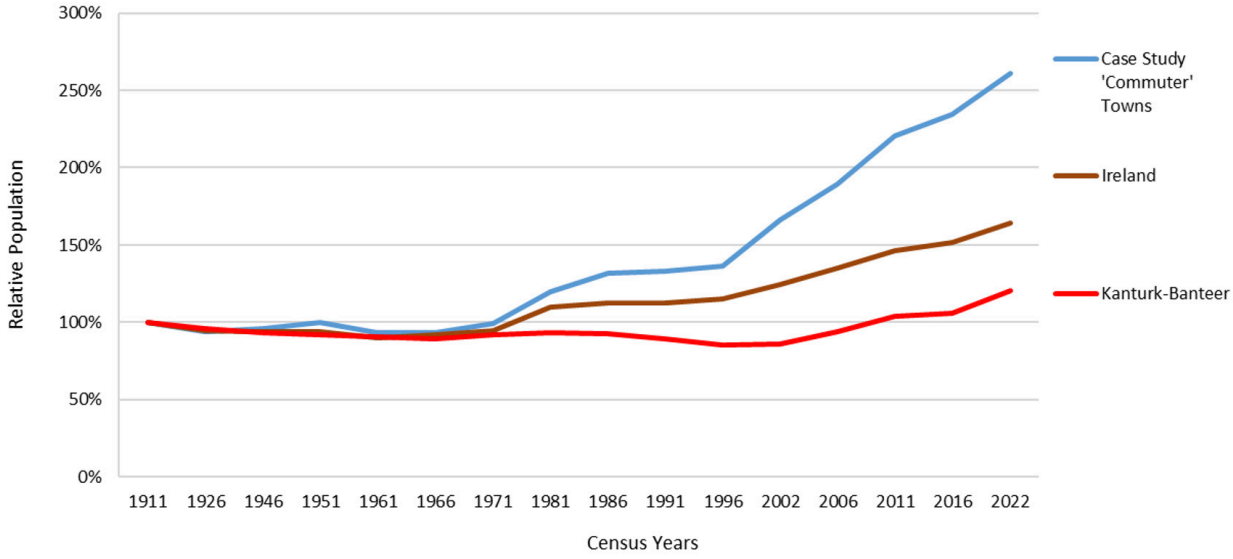
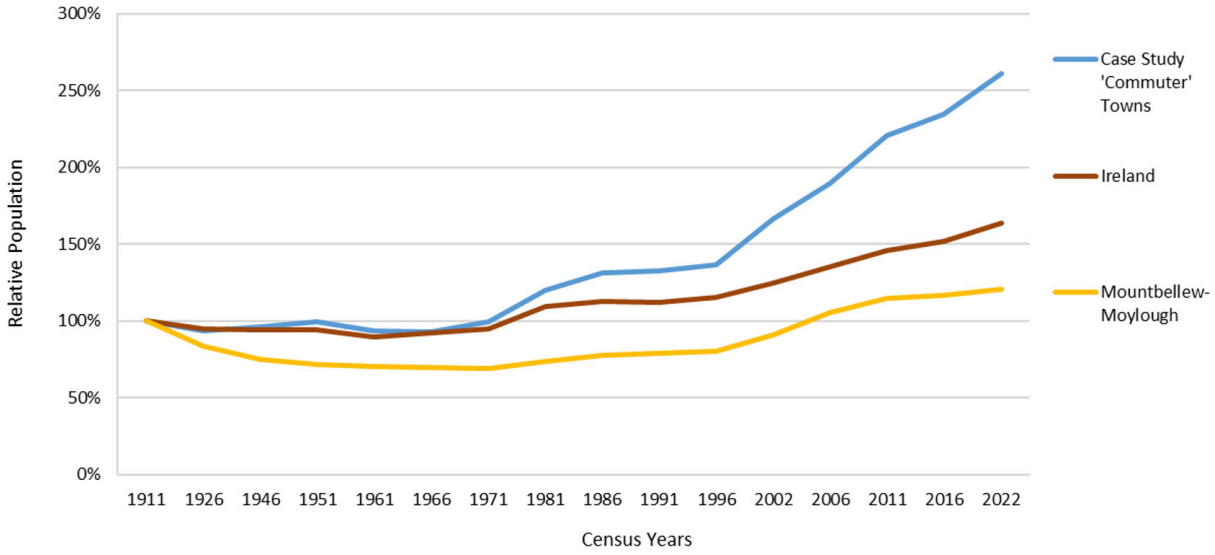



*Figure 4.8 Kanturk-Banteer: population change relative to national change, 1911-2022*




For Kanturk-Banteer and Mounbellew-Moylough, the picture is different. Population growth for these settlements rose in a similar pattern to the national average, but at a lower rate. This reflects the trend for lower density settlements in Ireland, particularly in the western part of the island, where, although there was growth in tandem with the 1990s trends, lower base numbers resulted in slower growth. This is tied with economic opportunities, such as access to employment, being less varied than in the east (Keaveney, 2009).

*Figure 4.9 Mountbellew-Moylough: population change relative to national change, 1911-2022*




## 4.2 Commuting

Given that the central focus of this study is commuting, the selection of settlements based on the percentage of people commuting was a central criterion. In Ireland, data is available on the amount of time the population spends travelling to school, work of college. The international literature on commuting (discussed in Chapter 2) highlights 45 minutes as a critical point in the manageable commute (Huang *et. al.,* 2018; O'Connell, 2018). Together with the criteria listed above, this was a critical selection criterion for InPLACE. It is important to note here, that commuting is one of the variables that differs the most between the two jurisdictions' census. In Ireland, commuting is measured by the time taken or duration; see Table 4.2 as an illustration of this), and in Northern Ireland, commuting is measured by distance travelled (see Table 4.3). Usefully, both censuses include a variable on working from home. Due to the difference in variables across all themes, but in particular in this section on commuting, each jurisdictions' data is displayed separately, but is discussed holistically.

In Ireland, 21% of the population commuting to work take over 45 minutes for their journey (see Table 4.2). Apart from Ennistymon-Lahinch (which was the 'low-commuting' settlement used for comparative purposes in this study), all other case study areas exceed the national average for the percentage commuting in excess of 45 minutes. Those experiencing a longer commute time of over 45 minutes (excluding Ennistymon-Lahinch) range from 25% to 32.5% of those travelling to work. Kanturk-Banteer (29%) and Mountbellew-Moylough (31%) exceed the 21% average of their respective Counties, while Sallins (32.5%) is more in line with its county proportion (30.4%). Newtownmountkennedy, while still higher than the national average, is below the county level at 25%. Hence, approximately one quarter to one third of the commuting population of each of the commuting towns experiences a commute of 45 minutes or over.

For Northern Ireland, given that data on commute time cannot be ascertained, the proxy variable of distance travelled must be used instead (see Table 4.3). The use of distance travelled on a commute is not ideal as it does not account for the variables that impact on commuting time such as mode of travel, traffic conditions, time of day, etc. For the purposes of this chapter, the study examines the proportion of the population that travels more than 30km for their commute (for reference, Aghagallon is approximately 35km to Belfast, while Dundrum is approximately 45km to Belfast). By examining this cohort, it is clear from Table 4.3 that there is a stark contrast between the two study settlements in Northern Ireland. Just less than 20% of Dundrum's working population commutes more than 30km (LGD average of 8.7%), while Aghagallon has a very

low rate of long-distance commuting with only 3.3% commuting more than 30km to work (LGD average is 7.4%). We do not include inter-jurisdictional commuting here as mode and frequency will vary widely, although those commuting to Ireland will do so by land. The scale of Northern Ireland, as the smaller of the two jurisdictions, means that there is a natural limit imposed on distance travelled to work. What would be of greater value for future studies on commuting, would be the inclusion of time spent commuting as this gives a more realistic perspective on commuter experiences.

*Table 4.2 Ireland: Population by journey time to work, 2022*[ix]

| | Under 15 mins | 1/4 hour - under 1/2 hour | 1/2 hour - under 3/4 hour | 3/4 hour - under 1 hour | 1 hour - under 1 1/2 hours | 1 1/2 hours and over | *Total Commuting 45mins+* | Total (exc. Not Stated) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Kanturk-Banteer | 31.1% | 24.4% | 14.9% | 12.1% | 13.9% | 3.0% | *28.9%* | 1,117 |
| Co. Cork | 25.0% | 29.1% | 25.4% | 9.9% | 8.5% | 2.1% | *20.5%* | 128,333 |
| | | | | | | | | |
| Mountbellew-Moylough | 24.1% | 14.7% | 27.3% | 17.3% | 11.9% | 1.9% | *31.0%* | 539 |
| Co. Galway | 22.4% | 28.3% | 27.9% | 10.0% | 8.3% | 3.2% | *21.4%* | 68,310 |
| | | | | | | | | |
| Ennistymon-Lahinch | 45.5% | 19.3% | 18.1% | 5.3% | 9.0% | 2.9% | *17.2%* | 664 |
| Co. Clare | 28.0% | 31.8% | 23.5% | 7.8% | 6.3% | 2.6% | *16.7%* | 43,887 |
| | | | | | | | | |
| Newtownmountkennedy | 21.6% | 25.8% | 27.5% | 10.6% | 11.4% | 3.0% | *25.0%* | 1,335 |
| Co. Wicklow | 22.1% | 23.8% | 23.1% | 11.2% | 14.9% | 5.0% | *31.1%* | 53,222 |
| | | | | | | | | |
| Sallins | 15.3% | 27.1% | 25.1% | 12.7% | 16.3% | 3.5% | *32.5%* | 2,536 |
| Co. Kildare | 18.3% | 27.1% | 24.3% | 11.6% | 14.4% | 4.4% | *30.4%* | 92,052 |
| | | | | | | | | |
| **Ireland** | **23.8%** | **31.8%** | **23.6%** | **8.6%** | **8.8%** | **3.5%** | *20.9%* | **1,801,317** |

*Table 4.3 Northern Ireland: distance travelled to work (excluding those working from home), 2021*

| | Work within Northern Ireland: less than 10km | Work within Northern Ireland: 10km to less than 20km | Work within Northern Ireland: 20km to less than 30km | Work within Northern Ireland: 30km to less than 40km | Work within Northern Ireland: 40km to less than 60km | Work within Northern Ireland: 60km and over | Work outside Northern Ireland: England, Scotland or Wales | Work outside Northern Ireland: Republic of Ireland | Work outside the United Kingdom and Ireland | No fixed place of work | **All usual residents aged 16 and over (excluding full-time students) in employment** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| AGHAGALLON | 27.5% | 20.2% | 13.9% | 1.9% | 1.2% | 0.2% | 0.9% | 0.5% | 0.0% | 16.2% | 568 |
| Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon | 39.3% | 14.7% | 8.5% | 4.7% | 2.3% | 0.4% | 0.5% | 1.4% | 0.2% | 11.9% | 97,704 |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
| DUNDRUM | 27.4% | 14.7% | 3.4% | 15.9% | 2.9% | 0.8% | 0.2% | 0.6% | 0.2% | 15.3% | 621 |
| Newry, Mourne & Down | 34.5% | 11.5% | 7.2% | 4.3% | 3.7% | 0.8% | 0.6% | 4.1% | 0.3% | 15.5% | 77,024 |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Northern Ireland** | **41.4%** | **13.6%** | **6.2%** | **2.8%** | **2.0%** | **1.0%** | **0.7%** | **1.3%** | **0.2%** | **11.9%** | **813,770** |

## 4.3 Working from Home, Travel Mode and Car Availability

While it is apparent that commuting times, as well as distances, may be higher in Ireland, there are also distinctions between the two jurisdictions in the proportion of those working from home. In both Northern Ireland and Ireland, working from home (WFH) is defined as those

'mainly working at or from home' and this includes those with businesses at home such as farms. In Ireland there is also additional information provided on the number of days per week that respondents work from home thereby allowing the number working at home to any degree to be identified . In Ireland, 36% of people in 2022 work from home at least one day a week (see Table 4.4). Exploring in detail the settlements in this study, there is a distinct pattern that the 'more rural' a settlement is, i.e. the more reliant it is on traditional rural employment such as farming, manufacturing or natural resource-based industries (see later sections in this chapter on employment), then the lower the proportion of those able to work from home. Table 4.4 outlines the Ireland study settlements, which show a range of 20.6% (Kanturk-Banteer) to 43.5% (Sallins) working from home at least one day a week. Kanturk-Banteer, Mountbellew-Moylough, and Newtownmountkennedy have lower WFH levels than their county averages; Ennistymon-Lahinch has 33% WFH, the same as Co. Clare as a whole; while Sallins is above the county average with 43% WFH in comparison to 39% in Kildare. Only Sallins has above the national average.

*Table 4.4 Ireland: population aged 15 years and over by working from home at least one day a week, 2022*

| | Persons who work from home | Persons who never work from home | **Total (exc. Not Stated)** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Kanturk-Banteer | 20.6% | 79.4% | **1,315** |
| Cork | 34.1% | 65.9% | **159,598** |
| | | | |
| Mountbellew-Moylough | 26.1% | 73.9% | **602** |
| Galway | 32.9% | 67.1% | **85,065** |
| | | | |
| Ennistymon-Lahinch | 33.6% | 66.4% | **891** |
| Clare | 33.0% | 67.0% | **55,319** |
| | | | |
| Newtownmountkennedy | 32.0% | 68.0% | **1,593** |
| Wicklow | 40.9% | 59.1% | **68,257** |
| | | | |
| Sallins | 43.5% | 56.5% | **3,122** |
| Kildare | 38.6% | 61.4% | **114,032** |
| | | | |
| **Ireland** | 36.1% | 63.9% | **2,293,738** |

When applying the more definitive variable of 'mainly work at or from home' there is a distinction between the two jurisdictions. In Northern Ireland, 19% work mainly from home (see Table 4.5); in Ireland this percentage is 11.3% (see Table 4.6). For Northern Ireland, the two study towns are in keeping with both their Local District Council (LDC) proportion as well as the national average working from home (18.9%). Aghagallon, which has the lowest rate of long-distance commuting in the study, has 17.3% of its working population working from home.; Dundrum has slightly more with 18.7% WFH.

In Ireland, having the generalised definition of working from home at least one day a week (Table 4.4), together with the specific definition of 'working mainly at or from home' (Table 4.5) allows for a more complete understanding of the reality of commuting and place of work. As will be seen later in this report, commuting is nuanced in its frequency, and particularly since the experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic, working from home at least one day a week has become more mainstream than in the past.

Most of the counties in Ireland where the study settlements are located, exhibit similar proportions of those mainly WFH as the national average. Each settlement has distinct differences depending on local employment opportunities, access to employment nearby, and occupations more suitable for remote working such as science, research, engineering and technology areas. Kanturk-Banteer and Mountbellew-Moylough, respectively, have the lowest proportion of the working population who mainly work at or from home (5.7% and 7.5% respectively); Ennistymon-Lahinch (the study's 'non-commuting' settlement has 13% working mainly at or from home, 2% above the county average; Newtownmountkennedy has 11%; and Sallins has 14% working mainly at or from home. All five settlements therefore are experiencing lower rates of working mainly at or from home than those in Northern Ireland, as noted above.

In addition to the working at or from home variable, the census records how the working population travel to work. Driving a car or van to work remains the most common mode of transport, together with being a passenger in a car (or a van). Nationally, in Ireland over 67% of the working population travel to work by this means (aggregate of car driver, car passenger and van); in Northern Ireland this proportion is similar with 68% travelling to work by driving, as a passenger or car-pooling. Driving is the most dominant of these, as illustrated in Tables 4.5 and 4.6 (for further information on public transport use in Dundrum and Aghagallon, see Appendix F).

Most of the other modes are negligible in their representation in each table. However, there are some outliers. For example, in Sallins, over 13% of the working population use the train to travel to work. This reflects the quality of service available in Sallins with a regular train serving stations to Dublin city centre. While other study areas have a train station either in the locality (Kanturk-Banteer) or close to the town (e.g. Woodlawn station is close to Mountbellew-Moylough), relatively less frequent services coupled with geographically dispersed employment locations, results in less use of the train. Notably, buses are more likely to be availed of in some of the settlements, for example, Kanturk-Banteer (3.6% use the bus to travel to work); in Newtownmountkennedy this is higher at 7%; and in Dundrum 2.7% avail of the bus service.

Ennistymon-Lahinch displays a much higher than average percentage travelling to work on foot or by bicycle (17% combined). This reflects the localised nature of employment in the settlement and its selection as the 'non-commuter' town based on this. The finding aligns with another study, namely the Sustainable Mobility Index developed by the Western Development Commission (WDC)[xi].


*Banteer Digital Hub – a community-led response to changing work patterns*

*Table 4.5 Northern Ireland: population by means of travel to work, 2021*

| | Work mainly at or from home | Driving a car or van | Passenger in a car or van | Car or van pool shared driving | Bus, minibus or coach (public or private) | Taxi | Train | Motorcycle, scooter or moped | Bicycle | On foot | Other method | **All usual residents aged 16 and over (excluding full-time students) in employment** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| AGHAGALLON | 17.3% | 70.6% | 5.4% | 0.5% | 0.9% | 0.2% | 2.5% | 0.7% | 0.4% | 1.4% | 0.2% | 571 |
| Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon | 16.2% | 68.1% | 5.4% | 0.7% | 1.3% | 0.9% | 0.9% | 0.2% | 0.7% | 4.8% | 0.8% | 97,705 |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| DUNDRUM | 18.7% | 68.7% | 3.9% | 0.2% | 2.7% | 0.8% | 0.2% | 0.0% | 1.0% | 3.5% | 0.3% | 620 |
| Newry, Mourne & Down | 17.6% | 67.5% | 4.9% | 0.8% | 1.5% | 0.5% | 0.3% | 0.1% | 0.4% | 5.5% | 0.9% | 77,026 |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Northern Ireland** | **18.9%** | **62.7%** | **4.9%** | **0.7%** | **2.8%** | **1.0%** | **0.9%** | **0.2%** | **0.8%** | **6.4%** | **0.8%** | **813,772** |

*Table 4.6 Ireland: population by means of travel to work, 2022*

| | On foot | Bicycle | Bus, minibus or coach | Train, DART or LUAS | Motorcycle or scooter | Car driver | Car passenger | Van | Other (incl. lorry) | Work mainly at or from home | **Total at Work (exc. Not Stated)** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Kanturk-Banteer | 9.9% | 0.4% | 3.6% | 0.7% | 0.1% | 66.4% | 4.9% | 7.6% | 0.8% | 5.7% | **1,315** |
| Cork | 6.0% | 0.6% | 1.6% | 0.6% | 0.2% | 65.0% | 3.9% | 8.5% | 0.8% | 12.7% | **159,598** |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Mountbellew-Moylough | 6.3% | 0.2% | 1.7% | 0.2% | 0.0% | 70.7% | 3.2% | 10.0% | 0.2% | 7.5% | **602** |
| Galway | 4.5% | 0.8% | 1.5% | 0.5% | 0.2% | 66.7% | 3.6% | 9.5% | 0.9% | 11.8% | **85,065** |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Ennistymon-Lahinch | 15.5% | 1.6% | 1.0% | 0.2% | 0.5% | 56.1% | 4.7% | 6.7% | 0.2% | 13.3% | **891** |
| Clare | 5.9% | 1.0% | 1.4% | 0.2% | 0.2% | 66.3% | 4.5% | 8.2% | 0.7% | 11.4% | **55,319** |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Newtownmountkennedy | 4.9% | 0.6% | 7.1% | 1.5% | 0.5% | 62.1% | 4.5% | 6.9% | 0.8% | 11.0% | **1,593** |
| Wicklow | 6.6% | 1.0% | 4.0% | 4.2% | 0.4% | 57.6% | 3.8% | 7.0% | 0.6% | 14.7% | **68,257** |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Sallins | 3.9% | 1.8% | 1.7% | 13.4% | 0.4% | 56.9% | 2.7% | 5.0% | 0.2% | 14.1% | **3,122** |
| Kildare | 5.6% | 1.3% | 4.3% | 4.6% | 0.4% | 60.3% | 4.1% | 6.6% | 0.5% | 12.4% | **114,032** |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Ireland** | **8.4%** | **2.8%** | **5.6%** | **2.9%** | **0.4%** | **56.3%** | **4.0%** | **6.9%** | **0.6%** | **12.2%** | **2,293,738** |

Access to or availability of a car (or in the case of Northern Ireland, a car or a van) was a criterion for the selection of each study settlement. As highlighted in the preceding discussion, across all study areas two thirds of the population use a car or van to travel to work, and most of those are as the driver. Tables 4.7 and 4.8 show the number of households with access to cars: in Ireland this is defined as 'Households with a car'; in Northern Ireland it is recorded as households with car or van availability. Most households have access to one or two cars (through ownership or availability, i.e. one member of the household owning a vehicle or having a company car/van). In Ireland, households with access to one or two cars is 76%; in Northern Ireland this is slightly lower at just under 70%. Interestingly, in Northern Ireland nearly one-fifth of households have no access to a car, while in Ireland this is just under 15%.

*Table 4.7 Ireland: number of households with cars, 2022*

| | No motor car | 1 motor car | 2 motor cars | 3 motor cars | 4 or more motor cars | Total (exc. Not Stated) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Kanturk-Banteer | 15.8% | 47.3% | 30.4% | 4.6% | 2.0% | 1,265 |
| Co. Cork | 8.5% | 36.6% | 41.5% | 9.3% | 4.0% | 127,590 |
| | | | | | | |
| Mountbellew-Moylough | 7.5% | 35.8% | 44.7% | 8.2% | 3.8% | 475 |
| Co. Galway | 7.9% | 36.6% | 43.1% | 8.8% | 3.6% | 67,782 |
| | | | | | | |
| Ennistymon-Lahinch | 16.1% | 50.2% | 28.3% | 4.1% | 1.4% | 808 |
| Co. Clare | 9.6% | 40.2% | 39.0% | 8.2% | 3.0% | 46,441 |
| | | | | | | |
| Newtownmountkennedy | 9.1% | 37.9% | 45.0% | 6.5% | 1.5% | 1,149 |
| Co. Wicklow | 10.1% | 39.2% | 38.5% | 8.5% | 3.7% | 54,059 |
| | | | | | | |
| Sallins | 7.3% | 44.2% | 39.3% | 7.2% | 2.0% | 2,087 |
| Co. Kildare | 8.4% | 37.5% | 42.0% | 8.7% | 3.5% | 82,543 |
| | | | | | | |
| **Ireland** | **14.4%** | **40.9%** | **34.9%** | **7.1%** | **2.7%** | **1,836,728** |

*Table 4.8 Northern Ireland: car or van availability, 2021*

| | No cars or vans available | 1 car or van available | 2 cars or vans available | 3 cars or vans available | 4 cars or vans available | 5 or more cars or vans available | All households |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| AGHAGALLON | 8.3% | 34.2% | 39.6% | 11.2% | 5.4% | 1.4% | 278 |
| Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon | 15.5% | 37.8% | 32.7% | 9.3% | 3.2% | 1.5% | 84,641 |
| | | | | | | | |
| DUNDRUM | 16.0% | 45.8% | 30.1% | 6.2% | 1.3% | 0.6% | 694 |
| Newry, Mourne & Down | 14.5% | 37.2% | 32.3% | 10.0% | 3.8% | 2.2% | 68,397 |
| | | | | | | | |
| **Northern Ireland** | **19.5%** | **39.7%** | **28.9%** | **7.9%** | **2.6%** | **1.3%** | **768,810** |

## 4.4 Employment and Education

Table 4.1 at the beginning of this chapter outlines the numbers at work in each of the study areas. In this section there is a more nuanced exploration of the labour force status of those who are aged 15 years and over in Ireland; or, in the case of Northern Ireland, those who are aged 16 years and over. The Northern Ireland census provides more detail than the Ireland census on the principal economic status of the labour force, and there are some differences in the labour market variables available. Nevertheless, there is still useful comparative data available.

In Ireland in 2022, 56% of those aged 15 and above were at work, which is similar to the 2021 census data in Northern Ireland at 54% at work (an aggregate of Economically Active

Employee and Self-Employed – Part-time and Full-time – aged 16 years and above) (Tables 4.9 and 4.10, respectively). Rates of 'at work' range from 51% in Ennistymon-Lahinch to 65% in Newtownmountkennedy in Ireland, and from 50% in Dundrum to 64% in Aghagallon in Northern Ireland. The rate of 'at work' reflects the wider demographic profile of each settlement. Dundrum, for example, has, unsurprisingly, the lowest rate due to its older population and the higher rate of retired population (22%) in comparison to the rest of the study areas. Ennistymon-Lahinch also has a higher than national average retired cohort (23%). Dundrum and Ennistymon-Lahinch are both coastal settlements which have a tendency to attract migrant retirees (Philip, Macleod and Stockdale, 2013). In the remaining settlements, retired populations range from 6% in Sallins which has a younger, larger family forming population in general, to around 18% in both Kanturk-Banteer and Mountbellew-Moylough reflecting the aging population there.

In addition to general population workforce statistics, the rate of female labour participation has been cited as significant for long-distance commuting. In both jurisdictions, approximately 50% of females aged either 15+ or 16+ years are at work (see Table 4.11). Sallins and Aghagallon stand out in this instance as having the highest rate of females at work – Aghagallon at 61% and Sallins with 60%. This indicates, and reflects, the younger age cohorts in these towns and the widened economic opportunity due to the proximity to city-based employment.

*Table 4.9 Ireland: population aged 15 years and over by principal economic status, 2022*

| | At work | Looking for first regular job | Short Term Unemployed | Long Term Unemployed | Student | Looking after home /family | Retired | Unable to work due to permanent sickness or disability | Other | **Total Pop Aged 15 years & over** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Kanturk-Banteer | 53.2% | 0.8% | 1.8% | 2.8% | 9.1% | 6.5% | 17.5% | 7.8% | 0.6% | **2,498** |
| Co. Cork | 56.8% | 0.6% | 1.2% | 1.8% | 10.9% | 7.4% | 16.0% | 4.4% | 0.7% | **283,550** |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| Mountbellew-Moylough | 57.7% | 0.4% | 1.3% | 1.8% | 10.1% | 5.0% | 18.4% | 4.8% | 0.5% | **1,046** |
| Co. Galway | 56.2% | 0.6% | 1.5% | 2.3% | 10.9% | 6.6% | 16.9% | 4.2% | 0.7% | **152,753** |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| Ennistymon-Lahinch | 51.0% | 0.6% | 2.4% | 2.8% | 8.5% | 6.4% | 22.9% | 4.4% | 0.9% | **1,803** |
| Co. Clare | 54.5% | 0.8% | 1.6% | 2.4% | 11.4% | 6.4% | 17.8% | 4.3% | 0.7% | **102,940** |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| Newtownmountkennedy | 61.2% | 0.7% | 1.4% | 3.2% | 9.4% | 6.7% | 11.7% | 4.8% | 0.9% | **2,626** |
| Co. Wicklow | 55.8% | 0.8% | 1.7% | 2.6% | 10.6% | 7.5% | 16.0% | 4.2% | 0.7% | **123,597** |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| Sallins | 65.9% | 0.7% | 1.4% | 2.4% | 12.9% | 6.5% | 6.1% | 3.5% | 0.6% | **4,757** |
| Co. Kildare | 59.1% | 0.8% | 1.6% | 2.2% | 11.8% | 6.9% | 13.1% | 3.9% | 0.7% | **194,397** |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Ireland** | **56.1%** | **0.8%** | **1.7%** | **2.6%** | **11.1%** | **6.6%** | **15.9%** | **4.6%** | **0.7%** | **4,136,852** |

*Many schools have expanded, and new schools have been built, as here in Kanturk*

*Table 4.10 Northern Ireland: principal economic activity – 16 years and over, 2021*

| | Ec. active: Employee : Part-time | Ec. active: Employee: Full-time | Ec. active: Self-employed with employees : Part-time | Ec. active: Self-employed with employees : Full-time | Ec. active: Self-employed without employees : Part-time | Ec. active: Self-employed without employees: Full-time | Ec. active: Unemployed | Ec. active: Full-time student | Ec. inactive: Retired | Ec. inactive: Student (including full-time students) | Ec. inactive: Looking after home or family | Ec. inactive: Long-term sick or disabled | Ec. inactive: Other | **All usual residents aged 16 and over** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| AGHAGALLON | 11.88% | 42.94% | 0.34% | 1.35% | 2.24% | 5.16% | 1.12% | 3.70% | 13.57% | 5.16% | 4.04% | 5.72% | 2.80% | **892** |
| Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon | 12.82% | 35.80% | 0.38% | 1.62% | 2.45% | 4.27% | 1.95% | 2.49% | 19.05% | 4.60% | 4.84% | 6.85% | 2.89% | **170,416** |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| DUNDRUM | 12.88% | 28.47% | 0.66% | 0.82% | 2.95% | 5.09% | 2.30% | 1.89% | 21.82% | 5.41% | 5.74% | 9.11% | 2.87% | **1,219** |
| Newry, Mourne & Down | 12.82% | 30.56% | 0.44% | 1.93% | 2.88% | 5.62% | 2.30% | 2.43% | 19.23% | 5.39% | 5.75% | 7.32% | 3.33% | **141,993** |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Northern Ireland** | **12.50%** | **32.83%** | **0.37%** | **1.48%** | **2.49%** | **4.05%** | **2.26%** | **2.84%** | **20.21%** | **5.32%** | **5.07%** | **7.43%** | **3.15%** | **1,514,745** |

*Table 4.11 Ireland and Northern Ireland: percentage of female population at work*

| | **Northern Ireland: Females aged 16 and over** | **% of Females At Work, 2021** |
|---|---|---|
| AGHAGALLON | 457 | 61.3% |
| Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon | 86,762 | 52.4% |
| | | |
| DUNDRUM | 647 | 48.1% |
| Newry, Mourne and Down | 72,442 | 49.8% |
| | | |
| **Northern Ireland** | **777,602** | **49.7%** |
| | | |
| | **Ireland: Females aged 15 and over** | **% of Female At Work, 2022** |
| Kanturk-Banteer | 1275 | 47.5% |
| Co. Cork | 143479 | 50.8% |
| | | |
| Mountbellew-Moylough | 538 | 53.5% |
| Co. Galway | 77121 | 51.8% |
| | | |
| Ennistymon-Lahinch | 968 | 47.4% |
| Co. Clare | 52624 | 50.2% |
| | | |
| Newtownmountkennedy | 1353 | 55.5% |
| Co. Wicklow | 63568 | 50.7% |
| | | |
| Sallins | 2435 | 60.5% |
| Co. Kildare | 98560 | 53.4% |
| | | |
| Ireland | **2,110,295** | **51.1%** |


*New flavours in Ennistymon*

*Table 4.12 Ireland: Population aged 15 years and over by highest level of education completed, 2022*

| | No formal education | Primary education | Lower secondary | Upper secondary | Technical or vocational qualification | Advanced certificate/ Completed apprenticeship | Higher certificate | Ordinary bachelor degree or national diploma | Honours bachelor degree, professional qualification or both | Postgrad. diploma or degree | Doctorate (Ph.D) or higher | **Total (exc. Not Stated)** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Kanturk-Banteer | 3.1% | 9.6% | 16.9% | 22.0% | 11.9% | 6.6% | 4.8% | 7.6% | 10.2% | 6.8% | 0.5% | **2,052** |
| Co. Cork | 2.1% | 6.9% | 14.4% | 19.3% | 9.0% | 7.5% | 6.3% | 9.0% | 13.8% | 10.6% | 1.1% | **235,674** |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Mountbellew-Moylough | 1.5% | 6.0% | 10.0% | 21.1% | 7.5% | 7.4% | 6.6% | 11.9% | 14.9% | 12.4% | 0.7% | **890** |
| Co. Galway | 2.6% | 8.7% | 13.2% | 19.4% | 7.8% | 6.4% | 5.9% | 9.0% | 13.8% | 11.8% | 1.4% | **127,388** |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Ennistymon-Lahinch | 2.6% | 5.0% | 13.1% | 22.8% | 7.2% | 6.2% | 5.7% | 9.3% | 15.6% | 11.6% | 1.0% | **1,540** |
| Co. Clare | 2.2% | 7.4% | 14.0% | 21.2% | 8.4% | 7.0% | 6.3% | 9.0% | 13.3% | 10.3% | 1.0% | **85,291** |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Newtownmountkennedy | 3.0% | 8.2% | 15.5% | 18.8% | 8.9% | 6.9% | 6.5% | 9.4% | 12.2% | 9.8% | 0.7% | **2,167** |
| Co. Wicklow | 2.5% | 7.0% | 13.7% | 18.5% | 8.3% | 6.4% | 6.5% | 9.3% | 14.4% | 12.1% | 1.3% | **103,086** |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Sallins | 1.3% | 3.8% | 9.7% | 16.5% | 7.9% | 6.2% | 6.9% | 9.6% | 19.5% | 17.5% | 1.3% | **3,642** |
| Co. Kildare | 2.2% | 6.2% | 13.0% | 19.5% | 7.9% | 6.4% | 6.3% | 9.2% | 15.3% | 12.8% | 1.2% | **156,806** |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Ireland** | **2.6%** | **7.9%** | **14.1%** | **19.4%** | **8.0%** | **6.0%** | **5.9%** | **8.6%** | **14.2%** | **12.0%** | **1.2%** | **3,384,629** |

*Table 4.13 Northern Ireland: highest level of qualifications - aged 16 years and over, 2021*[1]

| | No qualifications | Level 1 qualifications | Level 2 qualifications | Apprenticeship | Level 3 qualifications | Level 4 qualifications and above | Other qualifications | **All usual residents aged 16 and over** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| AGHAGALLON | 21.7% | 4.5% | 15.9% | 6.1% | 18.9% | 31.3% | 1.7% | **895** |
| Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon | 25.2% | 5.8% | 14.1% | 6.5% | 15.5% | 30.4% | 2.4% | **170,413** |
| | | | | | | | | |
| DUNDRUM | 19.4% | 5.5% | 13.5% | 8.3% | 16.2% | 35.4% | 1.8% | **1,219** |
| Newry, Mourne & Down | 23.1% | 5.3% | 13.3% | 8.1% | 16.3% | 31.8% | 2.1% | **141,995** |
| | | | | | | | | |
| **Northern Ireland** | **23.8%** | **5.9%** | **13.6%** | **6.4%** | **16.0%** | **32.1%** | **2.2%** | **1,514,737** |

Due to differences in the way that educational attainment is recorded, it is challenging to compare Ireland and Northern Ireland. Tables 4.12 and 4.13 show the level of educational attainment for the study areas and their relevant regional and national comparators. There is a similar level of achievement nationally at the higher end of attainment, i.e. approximately one-third of both populations have achieved a bachelor's degree (or equivalent) or above. The predominant level of education or qualification is up to Level 3 including apprenticeships in Northern Ireland (50%) and in Ireland up to 'Technical or Vocational Qualification' (52%). Locally, in Sallins 38% of the workforce have an Honours degree or higher. Among the InPLACE settlements, the closest to having this level of educational attainment are the Northern Ireland towns – Dundrum (35%) and Aghagallon (31%). However, it is important to note that there is very little comparability between these measures of educational attainment, as Level 4 in Northern Ireland also includes foundation degrees, for example. In the remaining settlements, the percentage with an Honours Degree or above ranges from 17% in Kanturk-Banteer to 28% in Ennistymon-Lahinch and Mountbellew-Moylough, where the former Agricultural College (now part of the Atlantic Technological University (ATU)), would attract highly qualified individuals into the area for employment.

## 4.5 Households and Housing Stock

This section examines housing stock in the study towns and how that relates to family or life stage for those living there. In Ireland there were 1.84m households in 2022 while in Northern Ireland there were 768,808 households in 2021. In both jurisdictions, the largest household types is 'married couple with children' (this includes civil partnerships in Northern Ireland; either dependent or non-dependent children). Families with children (sole parent or couple, married / civil partnership / co-habiting) account for a half of households in Ireland, and 42% in Northern Ireland (see Tables 4.14 and 4.15). The rate of single person households in Northern Ireland is higher than in Ireland: 30% in Northern Ireland and 23% in Ireland. Overall, the average household size is: 2.74 in Ireland; 2.44 in Northern Ireland.

*Table 4.14 Ireland: household composition - households, 2022*

| | One person | Married couple | Cohabiting couple | Married couple with children | Cohabiting couple with children | One parent family (father) with children | One parent family (mother) and children | Couple and others | Couple with children and others | One parent family (father) with children and others | One parent family (mother) with children and others | Two or more family units | Non-family and relations | Two or more non-related persons | Total No. of households |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Kanturk-Banteer | 30.5% | 11.5% | 4.6% | 22.6% | 6.8% | 2.2% | 12.0% | 1.3% | 1.0% | 0.2% | 0.8% | 0.6% | 2.8% | 3.0% | 1,265 |
| Co. Cork | 22.9% | 15.8% | 3.9% | 34.2% | 4.4% | 1.5% | 7.8% | 1.0% | 2.0% | 0.3% | 0.8% | 0.9% | 1.9% | 2.6% | 127,971 |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Mountbellew-Moylough | 24.6% | 16.8% | 3.6% | 37.5% | 3.6% | 0.8% | 7.4% | 0.4% | 0.6% | 0.2% | 0.4% | 0.2% | 1.3% | 2.5% | 475 |
| Co. Galway | 23.0% | 16.2% | 3.7% | 34.6% | 3.8% | 1.4% | 7.1% | 1.0% | 2.0% | 0.2% | 1.0% | 1.2% | 1.9% | 2.8% | 68,021 |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Ennistymon-Lahinch | 37.5% | 11.5% | 4.8% | 19.9% | 4.2% | 1.4% | 8.6% | 0.9% | 1.2% | 0.2% | 0.9% | 1.2% | 2.2% | 5.4% | 810 |
| Co. Clare | 25.6% | 16.6% | 3.9% | 30.4% | 4.3% | 1.5% | 7.8% | 1.0% | 1.5% | 0.3% | 0.9% | 0.9% | 1.8% | 3.5% | 46,553 |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Newtownmountkennedy | 15.1% | 11.0% | 3.9% | 36.8% | 8.6% | 1.7% | 11.0% | 1.3% | 2.5% | 0.6% | 1.7% | 1.8% | 1.5% | 2.4% | 1,150 |
| Co. Wicklow | 20.4% | 15.8% | 4.0% | 32.6% | 5.0% | 1.6% | 8.9% | 1.3% | 2.5% | 0.3% | 1.4% | 1.8% | 1.6% | 2.9% | 54,211 |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Sallins | 16.2% | 10.7% | 7.8% | 37.8% | 6.1% | 1.0% | 8.8% | 1.8% | 2.1% | 0.2% | 0.6% | 1.1% | 1.3% | 4.5% | 2,111 |
| Co. Kildare | 17.1% | 14.5% | 4.6% | 35.8% | 5.1% | 1.4% | 8.2% | 1.5% | 2.8% | 0.3% | 1.2% | 1.6% | 1.8% | 4.1% | 82,793 |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Ireland** | **23.1%** | **14.9%** | **4.3%** | **29.4%** | **4.3%** | **1.5%** | **8.5%** | **1.5%** | **2.2%** | **0.3%** | **1.2%** | **1.2%** | **2.2%** | **5.4%** | **1,841,152** |

*Table 4.15 Northern Ireland: household composition - households, 2021*

| | One person | Single family household: All aged 66 and over | Married or civil partnership couple | Married or civil partnership couple with dependent children | Married or civil partnership couple: All children non-dependent | Cohabiting couple family: No children | Cohabiting couple with children | Cohabiting couple family: All children non-dependent | Lone parent family (female) with children | Lone parent family (female): All children non-dependent | Lone parent family (male) with children | Lone parent family (male): All children non-dependent | Other family compositions | **All households** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| AGHAGALLON | 18.1% | 4.0% | 13.6% | 25.0% | 11.0% | 3.3% | 5.5% | 0.0% | 8.3% | 5.0% | 0.2% | 1.0% | 5.0% | 420 |
| Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon | 27.7% | 7.9% | 9.7% | 19.9% | 8.8% | 3.7% | 3.6% | 0.4% | 7.2% | 4.2% | 0.6% | 1.3% | 5.1% | 84,643 |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| DUNDRUM | 38.2% | 6.6% | 7.6% | 15.9% | 5.0% | 4.9% | 4.5% | 0.4% | 7.8% | 4.3% | 0.3% | 1.3% | 3.2% | 696 |
| Newry, Mourne & Down | 27.3% | 7.9% | 8.6% | 19.8% | 9.9% | 3.1% | 3.1% | 0.4% | 7.7% | 4.7% | 0.6% | 1.5% | 5.6% | 68,398 |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Northern Ireland** | **30.5%** | **7.9%** | **9.3%** | **16.9%** | **8.1%** | **3.9%** | **2.9%** | **0.4%** | **8.1%** | **4.5%** | **0.6%** | **1.3%** | **5.6%** | **768,808** |

In each of the study areas, age of housing is an important variable for understanding growth of the dwelling stock. In Ireland, one-third of current occupied housing has been built since 2001. The majority of these newer dwellings were built in the period 2001 to 2010 due to the extensive building of homes throughout the country in that period (Keaveney, 2009). Thus, as seen in Table 4.16, a quarter of all dwellings in the state were built between 2001 and 2010. Since 2011, only 8% of dwellings in the state have been built. Forty-five percent of all dwellings in Kanturk-Banteer were built since 2001 (8% since 2011), with a similar proportion seen in Mountbellew-Moylough (45%; 4.3% since 2011). Sallins displays an even higher proportion of new dwellings (56% since 2001), with 16% built in the period since 2011. Notably, one fifth of Newtownmountkennedy's dwellings have been built since 2016, which far exceeds any of the other study settlements.

*Table 4.16 Ireland: permanent private households by dwelling year built, 2022*

| | Pre 1919 | 1919 - 1945 | 1946 - 1960 | 1961 - 1970 | 1971 - 1980 | 1981 - 1990 | 1991 - 2000 | 2001 - 2010 | 2011 - 2015 | 2016 or later | Total No. of households (Exc. Not Stated) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Kanturk-Banteer | 6.5% | 6.0% | 7.8% | 6.0% | 8.5% | 7.2% | 12.3% | 37.8% | 3.2% | 4.7% | **1,265** |
| Co. Cork | 13.1% | 6.1% | 5.2% | 4.6% | 11.2% | 8.7% | 14.3% | 28.2% | 3.4% | 5.3% | **127,590** |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Mountbellew-Moylough | 4.3% | 3.8% | 4.7% | 2.8% | 11.1% | 10.3% | 17.5% | 41.2% | 2.1% | 2.1% | **475** |
| Co. Galway | 6.5% | 6.1% | 5.9% | 4.8% | 11.2% | 10.6% | 15.5% | 31.4% | 3.4% | 4.7% | **67,782** |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Ennistymon-Lahinch | 10.7% | 6.1% | 6.6% | 6.3% | 12.5% | 11.9% | 16.8% | 24.3% | 1.8% | 2.8% | **808** |
| Co. Clare | 8.7% | 5.2% | 5.4% | 7.3% | 13.3% | 11.3% | 16.4% | 26.0% | 2.8% | 3.6% | **46,441** |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Newtownmountkennedy | 3.0% | 6.6% | 3.4% | 4.3% | 22.9% | 3.8% | 4.9% | 20.6% | 8.8% | 21.8% | **1,149** |
| Co. Wicklow | 9.8% | 6.2% | 5.2% | 5.6% | 14.8% | 11.3% | 14.6% | 22.5% | 2.6% | 7.5% | **54,059** |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Sallins | 1.3% | 0.7% | 1.8% | 1.6% | 2.5% | 3.0% | 33.3% | 39.6% | 5.7% | 10.4% | **2,087** |
| Co. Kildare | 3.8% | 3.1% | 4.1% | 4.9% | 12.8% | 10.7% | 19.7% | 28.1% | 3.1% | 9.7% | **82,543** |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Ireland** | **8.6%** | **6.3%** | **7.4%** | **6.8%** | **12.5%** | **10.3%** | **14.9%** | **25.1%** | **2.7%** | **5.2%** | **1,836,728** |

Finally, housing tenure is an important variable in understanding housing dynamics in localities. In both Ireland and Northern Ireland around two-thirds of homes are owner occupied, either with or without a mortgage. While private rented homes account for 18% in both Northern Ireland and Ireland, social rental housing accounts for 15% of homes in Northern Ireland and 10% in Ireland. Exploring the localised situations within the study settlements, in Northern Ireland, 75% of homes in Aghagallon are owner-occupied compared to 60% in Dundrum. In Ireland, while Kanturk-Banteer and Mountbellew-Moylough have had similar characteristics throughout this chapter, there is a differing experience of tenure. Owner-occupied housing is lower in Kanturk-Banteer and Ennistymon-Lahinch than the national average at 58%, compared to 75% in Mountbellew-Moylough, and 76% in Newtownmountkennedy. Where owner-occupancy is lower, rental is usually higher. In the case of Kanturk-Banteer this is 20% private rental and 19% social / cooperative rental. Sallins has the highest rate of private rental accommodation of all the study towns accounting for 23% of tenures.

## 4.6 Socio-Economic Profile

This next section examines the socio-economic profile of each study town. As outlined in Chapter 2, the literature around commuting finds that it is directly related to the economic status, profession and industry of workers. As stated previously, those working in science, technology and research are in a stronger position to work from home, while those working in manufacturing and manual jobs find themselves having to commute to sites of employment. Tables 4.19 and 4.20 highlight the socio-economic classification of the population of each study area. While in Northern Ireland nine categories are provided, in Ireland, the CSO presents the data in seven categories, the most highly represented of which is 'Managerial and Technical' (30.7%). In Northern Ireland, Higher and Lower Managerial categories account for just under

*Table 4.17 Ireland: permanent private households by type of occupancy, 2022*

| | Owned with mortgage or loan | Owned outright | Rented from private landlord | Rented from Local Authority | Rented from voluntary /co-operative housing body | Occupied free of rent | **Total (exc. Not Stated)** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Kanturk-Banteer | 23.4% | 34.3% | 20.4% | 15.9% | 3.3% | 2.7% | **1,265** |
| Co. Cork | 32.0% | 43.3% | 14.6% | 6.5% | 1.3% | 2.3% | **127,590** |
| | | | | | | | |
| Mountbellew-Moylough | 32.3% | 42.4% | 20.1% | 3.3% | 0.2% | 1.7% | **475** |
| Co. Galway | 32.5% | 46.3% | 14.2% | 3.8% | 0.8% | 2.4% | **67,782** |
| | | | | | | | |
| Ennistymon-Lahinch | 19.4% | 38.5% | 22.9% | 13.9% | 1.4% | 3.8% | **808** |
| Co. Clare | 29.8% | 45.6% | 14.6% | 6.6% | 1.3% | 2.1% | **46,441** |
| | | | | | | | |
| Newtownmountkennedy | 50.7% | 25.7% | 6.0% | 13.2% | 3.3% | 1.2% | **1,149** |
| Co. Wicklow | 35.3% | 38.4% | 13.8% | 9.5% | 1.2% | 1.8% | **54,059** |
| | | | | | | | |
| Sallins | 46.2% | 18.9% | 23.1% | 9.5% | 1.7% | 0.5% | **2,087** |
| Co. Kildare | 40.6% | 33.5% | 15.5% | 7.1% | 1.8% | 1.4% | **82,543** |
| | | | | | | | |
| **Ireland** | **30.2%** | **38.7%** | **18.8%** | **8.7%** | **1.7%** | **1.8%** | **1,836,728** |

*Table 4.18 Northern Ireland: tenure - households, 2021*

| | Owner occupied: Owns outright | Owner occupied: Owns with a mortgage or loan | Shared ownership : Part-owns and part-rents | Social rented: Northern Ireland Housing Executive | Social rented: Housing association or charitable trust | Private rented: Private landlord | Private rented: other | Lives rent free | **All households** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| AGHAGALLON | 33.3% | 42.1% | 1.4% | 6.0% | 1.4% | 11.0% | 3.1% | 1.7% | **420** |
| Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon | 35.6% | 32.1% | 1.0% | 8.3% | 2.2% | 14.5% | 4.1% | 2.3% | **84,642** |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| DUNDRUM | 29.5% | 30.5% | 1.3% | 10.5% | 1.9% | 17.6% | 7.1% | 1.6% | **694** |
| Newry, Mourne & Down | 38.2% | 29.9% | 0.6% | 7.6% | 3.1% | 14.2% | 3.8% | 2.6% | **68,398** |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| **Northern Ireland** | **34.7%** | **29.6%** | **0.9%** | **10.8%** | **4.5%** | **12.2%** | 5.0% | **2.3%** | **768,814** |

30% of the population. In Ireland, the next largest group are 'non-manual' workers (16%). For Northern Ireland, the remaining population are categorised approximately evenly across the other categories.

Focusing on employment that may be more amenable to WFH or lower frequency commuting, collectively professional workers and managerial and technical workers and their dependents account for 40% of the population in Ireland. Workers in these categories are also more likely to have long-distance commutes due to employment being based in larger, urban centres. Kanturk-Banteer has the lowest percentage of its population (29%) classified in the professional and managerial classes. In contrast, Sallins and Mountbellew-Moylough have almost half of their respective populations in these categories. In Northern Ireland, the categories are not directly comparable, however, it can be ascertained that the categories of Administrative and Professional, together with the 'Intermediate' socio-economic classification (41% of the

population) indicate a greater likelihood of both working from home and a longer commute due to employment in more centralised areas. This is a broad generalisation, and will be explored in much further detail later in this report with the analysis of primary data.

Tables 4.21 and 4.22 outline the percentage of persons at work or unemployed (i.e., in the labour force) by occupation. Across all study areas 'Professional occupations' dominate, followed by 'Associate professional and technical occupations' and 'Skilled trades occupations'. As would be expected in rural towns, there is a mix of occupations from service industry to processing and elementary occupations. Mountbellew-Moylough stands out somewhat due to a quarter of occupations being in the professional category, the highest rate of all seven settlements, just ahead of Sallins. While geographically both of these towns are strikingly different, the employment base in Mountbellew-Moylough, as previously discussed, results in a different occupational profile to similar rural towns. Sallins' employment base lies largely outside this compact town, and a large proportion of those in professional occupations commute to Dublin and elsewhere.

Finally, Tables 4.23 and 4.24 show persons at work by industry. In Ireland, the two largest sectors, professional services (25%) and commerce and trade (24%), together account for almost half of those at work. Similarly, the two sectors account for over half of workers in each of Newtownmountkennedy, Sallins, and Mountbellew-Moylough, but whereas commerce and trade are more prominent in the former two towns, the largest single sector in Mountbellew-Moylough is professional services, employing just under 30% of workers. This is consistent with the occupational profile of the town, as noted above. Mountbellew-Moylough also has significant employment in manufacturing as has Kanturk-Banteer. In Northern Ireland, categories are displayed in more detail than for Ireland. The two largest categories of 'Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motor cycles' and 'Human health and social work activities' together account for one-third of workers. This is also the case for the two study areas, but whereas Aghagallon has an industrial profile which is very similar to Northern Ireland as a whole, Dundrum has a somewhat higher share of employment in human health and social work activities (19%) and a somewhat lower share in wholesale and retail trade. Based on earlier discussions in this chapter, understanding the nuance of how employment impacts on commuting times and frequency, is vital to providing insights into local dynamics.

### 4.7 Summary

From the analysis in this chapter, there are a number of common characteristics among the Irish commuter settlements. The settlements investigated for the InPLACE study tend to have younger populations compared to national averages. This is due to the influx of families in the family formation stage (30s-40s age group) who move to these areas while still often commuting to urban centres for work. The population pyramids for these settlements often display a "double triangle" pattern, indicating out-migration of young adults (18+ years) for education or employment, followed by in-migration of those in the family formation stage. A large proportion of the population in the student settlements commute for over 45 minutes to work, which is higher than the national average in Ireland. Commuting times and distances can vary, with some settlements experiencing higher rates of long-distance commuting (over 30 km or 45 minutes). There is a noticeable trend of working from home in commuter settlements, although this varies by location. More rural settlements tend to have lower rates of WFH compared to those closer to urban centres. The proportion of people working from home at least one day a week ranges from around 20% to 43.5%, depending on the settlement.

The employment profile of commuter settlements often includes a mix of professional, technical, and manual occupations. Many residents work in sectors like professional services, commerce, and trade, with some commuting to larger urban centres for work. Commuter settlements tend to have a high percentage of the population in managerial and technical roles, which aligns with the trend of commuting to city / urban-based employment.

In the InPLACE study settlements, housing is newer, with a significant proportion built since 2001. The rapid expansion of housing stock during the "Celtic Tiger" years (1990s-2000s) is

particularly evident. These areas typically have a high percentage of owner-occupied homes, with families with children being the most common household type. The settlements also tend to have a higher socio-economic profile, with a substantial proportion of the population working in professional occupations. The socio-economic classification in these areas shows a significant portion of residents in the "Managerial and Technical" category, indicating a population with higher earning potential and professional qualifications.

*Table 4.19 Ireland: population by socio-economic classification 'social class', 2022*

| | Professional workers | Managerial and technical | Non-manual | Skilled manual | Semi-skilled | Unskilled | All others gainfully occupied and unknown | Total Pop |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Kanturk-Banteer | 4.2% | 24.3% | 15.2% | 16.3% | 16.2% | 4.3% | 19.7% | **3,165** |
| Co. Cork | 10.0% | 32.2% | 15.8% | 14.4% | 12.1% | 2.7% | 12.8% | **360,152** |
| | | | | | | | | |
| Mountbellew-Moylough | 10.9% | 36.5% | 15.4% | 11.9% | 12.1% | 2.4% | 10.8% | **1,300** |
| Co. Galway | 10.1% | 32.5% | 15.1% | 13.8% | 11.8% | 3.0% | 13.7% | **193,323** |
| | | | | | | | | |
| Ennistymon-Lahinch | 5.4% | 32.5% | 14.8% | 11.6% | 8.4% | 3.9% | 23.4% | **2,155** |
| Co. Clare | 8.7% | 30.8% | 16.0% | 13.3% | 11.3% | 3.2% | 16.6% | **127,938** |
| | | | | | | | | |
| Newtownmountkennedy | 6.7% | 33.6% | 18.3% | 14.7% | 12.9% | 3.4% | 10.5% | **3,539** |
| Co. Wicklow | 9.4% | 35.1% | 16.2% | 12.8% | 10.5% | 2.8% | 13.2% | **155,851** |
| | | | | | | | | |
| Sallins | 10.7% | 38.2% | 16.9% | 11.8% | 10.7% | 2.1% | 9.6% | **6,269** |
| Co. Kildare | 9.8% | 34.0% | 16.8% | 13.0% | 10.4% | 2.8% | 13.2% | **247,774** |
| | | | | | | | | |
| **Ireland** | **9.3%** | **30.7%** | **16.2%** | **12.9%** | **11.2%** | **3.1%** | **16.6%** | **5,149,139** |

*Catering for young families in commuter towns*

*Table 4.20 Northern Ireland: population by socio-economic classification, 2021*

| | L1, L2, L3: Higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations | L4, L5, L6: Lower managerial, administrative and professional occupations | L7: Intermediate occupations | L8, L9: Small employers and own account workers | L10, L11: Lower supervisory and technical occupations | L12: Semi-routine occupations | L13: Routine occupations | L14.1, L14.2: Never worked and long-term unemployed | Not classified: L15: Full-time students | **All usual residents aged 16 and over** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| AGHAGALLON | 8.9% | 18.1% | 9.5% | 12.7% | 14.0% | 11.2% | 10.2% | 8.5% | 6.9% | **598** |
| Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon | 9.0% | 18.5% | 11.3% | 10.4% | 6.2% | 12.0% | 16.4% | 9.3% | 6.9% | **170,414** |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| DUNDRUM | 10.6% | 20.1% | 11.9% | 10.9% | 6.3% | 11.0% | 10.6% | 11.4% | 7.2% | **1,216** |
| Newry, Mourne & Down | 9.2% | 18.4% | 10.3% | 12.8% | 5.5% | 11.6% | 13.1% | 11.4% | 7.6% | **141,998** |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Northern Ireland** | **10.2%** | **18.7%** | **11.7%** | **9.7%** | **5.4%** | **12.1%** | **13.5%** | **10.7%** | **7.9%** | **1,514,744** |

*Table 4.21 Ireland: persons at work or unemployed by occupation, 2022*

| | Managers, directors and senior officials | Professional occupations | Associate professional and technical occupations | Administrative and secretarial occupations | Skilled trades occupations | Caring, leisure and other service occupations | Sales and customer service occupations | Process, plant and machine operatives | Elementary occupations | **Total (exc. Not Stated)** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Kanturk-Banteer | 6.8% | 14.7% | 9.5% | 8.8% | 16.5% | 11.2% | 7.9% | 12.4% | 12.2% | **1,441** |
| Co. Cork | 8.1% | 21.2% | 12.0% | 9.2% | 18.0% | 8.2% | 6.1% | 9.2% | 7.9% | **169,944** |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| Mountbellew-Moylough | 9.3% | 26.3% | 9.6% | 9.4% | 14.1% | 9.1% | 4.6% | 12.1% | 5.5% | **637** |
| Co. Galway | 8.0% | 23.3% | 11.5% | 9.2% | 17.1% | 8.3% | 5.1% | 10.4% | 7.1% | **91,609** |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| Ennistymon-Lahinch | 11.7% | 19.7% | 14.4% | 8.4% | 15.1% | 9.1% | 6.7% | 3.8% | 11.1% | **1,015** |
| Co. Clare | 8.1% | 20.9% | 12.1% | 10.2% | 17.4% | 8.5% | 6.0% | 8.3% | 8.4% | **60,298** |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| Newtownmountkennedy | 9.7% | 16.9% | 13.8% | 12.1% | 13.4% | 10.9% | 7.6% | 6.3% | 9.4% | **1,728** |
| Co. Wicklow | 10.5% | 21.8% | 14.9% | 10.2% | 14.0% | 8.3% | 6.2% | 6.0% | 8.1% | **74,299** |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| Sallins | 9.4% | 26.1% | 15.1% | 11.4% | 9.8% | 6.7% | 7.3% | 6.9% | 7.3% | **3,317** |
| Co. Kildare | 10.1% | 22.6% | 14.8% | 10.8% | 12.6% | 7.3% | 6.6% | 6.9% | 8.4% | **122,248** |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Ireland** | **8.6%** | **22.5%** | **13.0%** | **10.2%** | **14.0%** | **8.2%** | **6.9%** | **7.7%** | **9.0%** | **2,496,573** |

*Table 4.22 Northern Ireland: persons at work or unemployed by occupation, 2021*

| | Managers, directors and senior officials | Professional occupations | Associate professional and technical occupations | Administrative and secretarial occupations | Skilled trades occupations | Caring, leisure and other service occupations | Sales and customer service occupations | Process, plant and machine operatives | Elementary occupations | **All usual residents aged 16 and over in employment** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| AGHAGALLON | 8.9% | 18.1% | 9.5% | 12.7% | 14.0% | 11.2% | 10.2% | 8.5% | 6.9% | **598** |
| Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon | 8.7% | 18.4% | 8.8% | 10.4% | 13.8% | 10.0% | 8.7% | 10.7% | 10.4% | **101,261** |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| DUNDRUM | 9.5% | 21.8% | 7.8% | 10.5% | 14.6% | 14.1% | 8.1% | 5.9% | 7.7% | **639** |
| Newry, Mourne & Down | 9.4% | 19.6% | 8.6% | 9.8% | 16.8% | 10.6% | 8.4% | 7.8% | 9.1% | **79,958** |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Northern Ireland** | **9.0%** | **20.3%** | **9.6%** | **11.1%** | **12.8%** | **10.4%** | **9.3%** | **7.6%** | **9.9%** | **849,104** |

*Table 4.23 Ireland: persons at work by industry, 2022*

| | Agriculture, forestry and fishing | Building and construction | Manufacturing industries | Commerce and trade | Transport and communications | Public administration | Professional services | Other | **Total** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Kanturk-Banteer | 1.9% | 6.4% | 19.7% | 22.3% | 4.8% | 6.1% | 23.3% | 15.5% | **1,328** |
| Co. Cork | 6.5% | 6.4% | 17.9% | 21.5% | 6.7% | 4.9% | 23.4% | 12.7% | **161,174** |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| Mountbellew-Moylough | 2.0% | 7.9% | 16.6% | 23.0% | 6.1% | 5.3% | 29.6% | 9.4% | **604** |
| Co. Galway | 5.7% | 6.8% | 16.9% | 19.3% | 6.6% | 5.1% | 26.7% | 12.9% | **85,901** |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| Ennistymon-Lahinch | 1.6% | 4.1% | 7.1% | 19.1% | 7.8% | 5.8% | 20.4% | 34.0% | **920** |
| Co. Clare | 5.2% | 5.7% | 16.7% | 18.3% | 7.9% | 6.1% | 24.0% | 16.2% | **56,144** |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| Newtownmountkennedy | 0.7% | 6.8% | 8.2% | 29.1% | 9.4% | 4.0% | 26.1% | 15.6% | **1,607** |
| Co. Wicklow | 3.0% | 6.5% | 9.1% | 26.4% | 9.7% | 4.8% | 24.7% | 15.7% | **68,971** |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| Sallins | 0.7% | 6.4% | 11.4% | 30.5% | 11.5% | 6.3% | 21.7% | 11.5% | **3,135** |
| Co. Kildare | 2.6% | 7.0% | 11.8% | 26.9% | 9.2% | 6.4% | 23.6% | 12.5% | **114,829** |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| **Ireland** | **3.5%** | **5.8%** | **11.8%** | **23.8%** | **9.2%** | **5.7%** | **24.5%** | **15.8%** | **2,320,297** |

*Table 4.24 Northern Ireland: persons at work by industry, 2021*

| | A Agriculture, forestry and fishing | B Mining and quarrying | C Manufacturing | D Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply | E Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities | F Construction | G Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motor cycles | H Transport and storage | I Accomm. and food service activities | J Information and communication | K Financial and insurance activities | L Real estate activities | M Professional, scientific and technical activities | N Administrative and support service activities | O Public administration and defence; compulsory social security | P Education | Q Human health and social work activities | R Arts, entertainment and recreation | S Other service activities | of household as employers; undifferentiated goods and services - producing activities of households | U Activities of extra-territorial organisations and bodies | **All usual residents aged 16 and over in employment** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| AGHAGALLON | 0.84% | 0.34% | 9.56% | 1.01% | 1.68% | 11.41% | 16.44% | 5.54% | 3.02% | 2.01% | 2.68% | 0.50% | 3.36% | 3.36% | 8.72% | 7.89% | 17.45% | 2.35% | 1.68% | 0.17% | 0.00% | **596** |
| Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon | 3.20% | 0.24% | 13.47% | 0.36% | 0.76% | 8.82% | 17.29% | 4.23% | 3.65% | 2.38% | 2.36% | 0.78% | 4.56% | 3.97% | 6.51% | 8.29% | 15.55% | 1.33% | 2.18% | 0.02% | 0.01% | **101,266** |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| DUNDRUM | 0.62% | 0.16% | 6.71% | 0.16% | 0.62% | 12.32% | 12.48% | 3.74% | 5.46% | 3.28% | 3.90% | 0.47% | 5.30% | 2.34% | 6.86% | 10.30% | 19.03% | 2.65% | 3.59% | 0.00% | 0.00% | **641** |
| Newry, Mourne & Down | 3.26% | 0.19% | 8.53% | 0.33% | 0.92% | 13.10% | 16.07% | 3.50% | 4.46% | 2.56% | 2.92% | 0.79% | 5.00% | 3.32% | 5.92% | 9.47% | 15.57% | 1.70% | 2.33% | 0.03% | 0.02% | **79,956** |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Northern Ireland** | **2.52%** | **0.21%** | **8.75%** | **0.49%** | **0.69%** | **8.41%** | **16.15%** | **3.90%** | **4.58%** | **3.50%** | **3.38%** | **1.01%** | **5.28%** | **3.97%** | **7.68%** | **9.02%** | **16.46%** | **1.68%** | **2.31%** | **0.02%** | **0.01%** | **849,112** |


*Moylough Housing Estate*

*Newtownmountkennedy Public Space*

# 5

# Perceptions of Place and Factors in Place-making

## Average scores (out of 7) on various aspects of place across island of Ireland case study locations

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

- Feeling Safe
- The Natural Environment
- Sense of Community
- Community Engagement/Participation
- Care and Maintenance
- Moving Around (on foot/bike)
- Social Contact / Interaction
- Play and Recreation
- Streets and Public Spaces
- Housing
- Work and Local Economy
- Facilities and Amenities
- Traffic and Parking
- Public Transport

Evidence of a strong sense of place and environmental stewardship via the development of a positive emotional connection between people and their surroundings.

# PERCEPTIONS OF PLACE

**30% of respondents believe their areas have improved in respect of the following dimensions of place: 'play and recreation'; 'moving around'; 'sense of community' and 'the natural environment'**

**30%**

Exactly thirty percent believe 'facilities and amenities' are better

**43%**

Over forty percent (43%) of respondents believe their area has dis-improved in respect of 'traffic and parking'

**31%**

Almost a third (31%) of respondents believe their areas has dis-improved in respect of housing

## Local Assets

### Strengths

The responses in respect of assets and strengths tended to focus on:

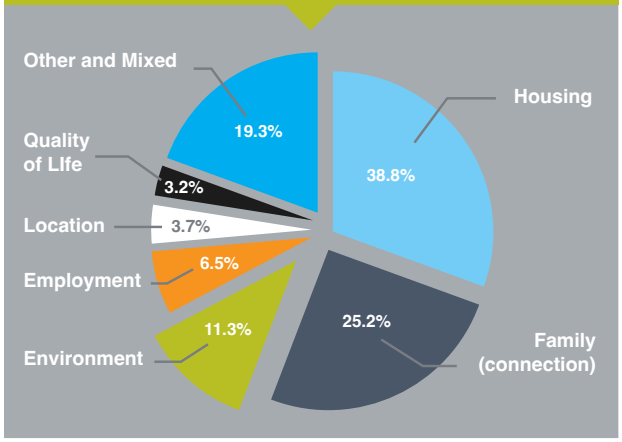
- natural environment
- social capital
- play and recreation
- access to the countryside

### Challenges

The responses in respect of perceived deficits tended to focus on:

- Long-term infrastructure provision
- Pace of housing growth
- Facilities and amenities (accompanying housing growth)
- Public transport
- traffic and parking

## Primary motivating factors for moving to a place

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INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR LOCAL AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

## Perceptions of Place and Factors in Place-making

The literature review (Chapter 2) refers to ways in which commuting can impact on place; commuter towns and villages tend to have experienced more rapid population growth than have other settlements. Commuter towns and villages also tend to have younger populations, relatively more women in the workforce and higher levels of educational attainment among their resident populations than is the case across the population as a whole. These socio-demographic characteristics can put pressure on local services and infrastructure, and commuter settlements can be perceived as being 'under pressure' to keep pace with the demands for services associated with changing demographics. This is particularly the case in respect of childcare, schools and transportation services (Moseley and Owen, 2008; Cloke, 2013; Murphy and Fox-Rogers, 2015; Ahrens and Lyons, 2021; Whelan *et al.,* 2023), and these pressures are well documented in the media in Ireland and Northern Ireland[xiii].

Many of those who live in commuter settlements are likely to have moved there (rather than grown up there), and access to housing and transportation linkages are among the drivers of in-migration (Denham, 2021; Jończy. 2021 *et al.;* van der Merwe, 2021). Elements of the literature on commuting suggest that commuter settlements may be less attractive than towns and villages that have other functions (e.g. market towns, tourist destinations, local economic / employment centres). Yet, other research suggests that commuters bring vibrancy to towns and villages that may have been stagnant or in decline, and there may be opportunities for growth and increased attractiveness associated with being a commuter settlement (Bański, 2021; Majewska *et al.,* 2022).

This chapter presents data on perceptions of place for the seven case study areas on the island of Ireland. Using data from the Place Standard Tool, it outlines how local residents, in each of the case study settlements, assess their locality and community as places to live It presents data on how they perceive their localities and communities to have changed over time, and the chapter also reveals how satisfied or otherwise local residents are with their respective places.

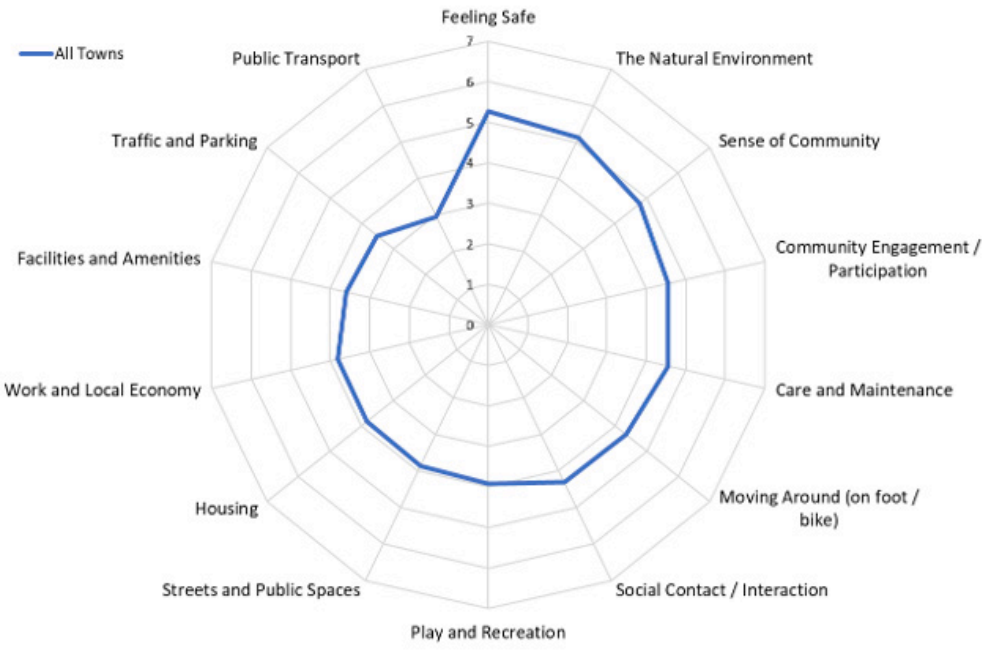
### 5.1 The Place Standard

The International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD) has been using the Place Standard to good effect to support place-making. The tool has been used to garner evidence and to engender conversations among stakeholders (e.g. communities, businesses, local authorities and service providers), thereby enabling them to pursue locally appropriate and collaborative approaches to place-making. The tool, which was developed collaboratively by NHS Health Scotland, the Scottish Government, and Architecture and Design Scotland[xiii], captures people's perceptions of fourteen different aspects of their locality (physical indicators) and community (social indicators). Following the normal Place Standard methodology, survey respondents were invited to score their places of residence on each aspect (or dimension) of place, on a scale from one (the most negative score) to seven (the most positive score). The mean score awarded to each aspect of place provides an indication of how satisfied or otherwise residents are with that particular aspect.

In interpreting scores on the Place Standard, it is important to bear in mind that they represent survey respondents' perceptions, experiences and expectations, rather than being scientific and definitive assessments of particular places. The main strengths of the place standard lie in its application as a planning tool – enabling stakeholders to identify local needs and potential, and to agree priorities and development trajectories. Thus, by comparing the scores assigned to the different aspects of a particular locality, areas where that locality is performing well (in the opinion of respondents) can be identified, as well as those areas where some improvement (and possibly additional investment) may be needed. It is also possible to use the tool as a basis of comparisons between different localities, but a degree of caution is required in doing so, since each place is in effect being scored by a different sub-sample of respondents.

Figure 5.1 depicts the mean scores on each of the fourteen dimensions of place, across all seven case study locations. The overall scores on the Place Standard indicate that 'feeling safe', 'the natural environment', 'sense of community' and 'community engagement / participation' are, in descending order, the dimensions of place that are most positively perceived by residents. At the other end of the scale, residents award their lowest scores to 'public transport,' 'traffic and parking' and 'facilities and amenities'. These lower scores might not be surprising, given the pace of commuter-induced population growth, but the literature and the study's interviews with planners, among other stakeholders, also indicate that commuter settlements are not unique in experiencing such infrastructural challenges.

*Figure 5.1 Mean scores on the Place Standard - all island of Ireland case study locations*

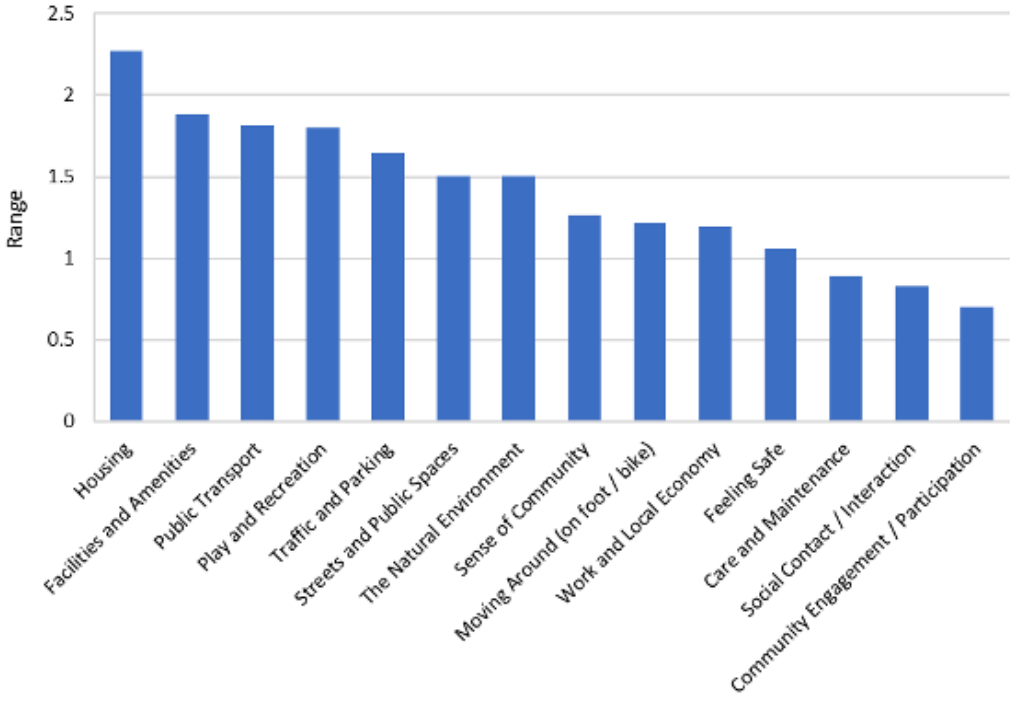


The mean scores on each dimension across all settlements (on which Figure 5.1 is based) are shown in Table 5.1 as well as the mean scores for each individual settlement: see Appendix D.1 for the Place Standard diagram for each settlement. As the table shows, 'feeling safe' and the 'natural environment' are the only dimensions of place to attain mean scores that exceed five (>5) across the cumulative of the seven case study locations. These two dimensions attain scores in excess of five in all but two locations i.e. Newtownmountkennedy and Sallins. Clearly these are prominent assets or advantages of the case study settlements. Table 5.1 also highlights the settlement with the highest score (indicated by a double asterisk) and lowest score (indicated by a single asterisk) on each dimension (i.e. in each column), and the bottom row in the table records the difference between the scores for these two settlements (i.e., the range). This shows the dimensions of place on which there is convergence and divergence in respect of residents' perceptions. The greatest convergence, as indicated by the lowest value in the final row (i.e., the smallest range), is in respect of community engagement and participation; values on this dimension range from 5.01 in Mountbellew-Moylough to 4.12 in Sallins. The greatest divergence is in respect of housing; values range from 5.08 in Aghagallon (highest) to 2.80 in Ennistymon-Lahinch (lowest). This divergence on housing reflects differences in the property market across the case study areas. Figure 5.2 illustrates the range of values (in descending order) for each dimension of place.

*Table 5.1 Highest and lowest mean scores on the Place Standard for each dimension of place*

| Town / Village | Feeling Safe | The Natural Environment | Sense of Community | Community Engagement / Participation | Care and Maintenance | Moving Around (on foot / bike) | Social Contact / Interaction | Play and Recreation | Streets and Public Spaces | Housing | Work and Local Economy | Facilities and Amenities | Traffic and Parking | Public Transport |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Kanturk-Banteer | 5.25 | 5.34 | 4.85 | 4.60 | 4.87 | 4.49 | 4.27 | 4.64 | 4.49 | 3.73 | 3.91 | 4.19 | 3.90 | 2.47 |
| Newtownmountkennedy | ***4.85** | 4.78 | 4.54 | 4.39 | 4.26 | ***3.82** | ***3.88** | ***3.12** | 3.13 | 3.93 | ***3.36** | ***2.75** | 3.22 | 3.19 |
| Ennistymon-Lahinch | 5.44 | 5.07 | 4.91 | 4.49 | 4.55 | 4.04 | 4.60 | 3.56 | 3.69 | ***2.80** | 4.23 | 3.62 | ***2.78** | ***2.13** |
| Sallins | 4.97 | ***4.21** | ***4.27** | ***4.24** | ***4.12** | 4.35 | 4.18 | 3.51 | ***3.05** | 4.18 | 3.48 | 3.11 | 3.07 | 3.86 |
| Aghagallon | ****5.91** | 5.62 | ****5.53** | 4.91 | 4.98 | 4.47 | 4.71 | 4.18 | 4.48 | ****5.08** | 4.03 | 4.09 | ****4.42** | 2.58 |
| Dundrum | 5.07 | ****5.71** | 4.74 | 4.54 | 4.16 | ****5.03** | 4.26 | 3.89 | 4.00 | 3.80 | 3.38 | 3.14 | 3.53 | ****3.94** |
| Mountbellew-Moylough | 5.88 | 5.53 | 4.96 | ****4.95** | ****5.01** | 4.54 | ****4.72** | ****4.92** | ****4.55** | 4.00 | ****4.55** | ****4.64** | 4.25 | 2.93 |
| *All Towns* | *5.27* | *5.12* | *4.78* | *4.55* | *4.55* | *4.34* | *4.32* | *3.93* | *3.86* | *3.83* | *3.81* | *3.59* | *3.52* | *2.96* |
| *All Less 'control'* | *5.23* | *5.13* | *4.75* | *4.56* | *4.55* | *4.39* | *4.26* | *4.00* | *3.90* | *4.02* | *3.73* | *3.59* | *3.66* | *3.12* |
| **Range** | 1.06 | 1.50 | 1.26 | 0.71 | 0.89 | 1.22 | 0.83 | 1.80 | 1.50 | 2.27 | 1.19 | 1.88 | 1.64 | 1.81 |

*Figure 5.2 Range of scores across settlements on each dimension on the Place Standard*



When the scores on the Place Standard are analysed for each case study location, they reveal the significance of local factors in residents' perceptions of place. As noted above, any comparisons between places' scores on the Place Standard are not considered to be definitive, quantitative assessments of their standings relative to one another. Instead, they are presented here as part of the narrative that seeks to gain insights into particular perceptions of place and the factors that contribute to place-making across a range of geographies. This analysis will also be of use to stakeholders in the participating towns and local authorities.

The individual sets of Place Standard scores for each case study location reveal that, relative to the seven case study locations as a whole:

- Kanturk-Banteer attains higher scores in respect of the following dimensions: 'play and recreation', 'streets and public spaces', 'facilities and amenities', 'traffic and parking', 'care and maintenance' and 'moving around (on foot / bike)';
- Newtownmountkennedy attains higher scores in respect of: 'public transport' and 'housing';
- Sallins attains higher scores in respect of: 'public transport', 'housing' and 'moving around';
- Aghagallon attains higher scores on thirteen of the fourteen dimensions – the only exception being 'public transport';
- Dundrum attains higher scores in respect of the following dimensions: 'moving around', 'the natural environment', 'public transport', s'treets and public spaces';
- Mountbellew-Moylough attains higher scores on thirteen of the fourteen dimensions – the only exception being 'public transport'; and
- Ennistymon-Lahinch attains higher scores in respect of the following dimensions: 'work and the local economy', 'social contact / interaction' 'sense of community', 'feeling safe' and 'facilities and amenities.

The Place Standard scores also reveal the dimensions on which each case study location attains lower scores than the entire set of towns. The figures show that relative to the seven case study locations as a whole:

- Kanturk-Banteer attains lower scores in respect of 'public transport', and its scores are marginally below average (<0.1 points) in respect of 'housing', 'traffic and parking', 'social contact / interaction'' and feeling safe';
- Newtownmountkennedy attains lower scores in respect of twelve of the fourteen dimensions of place;
- Sallins attains lower scores in respect of eleven of the fourteen dimensions of place;
- Aghagallon attains a lower score in respect of 'public transport';
- Dundrum attains lower scores in respect of the following dimensions: 'work and the local economy', 'facilities and amenities', c'are and maintenance' and 'feeling safe', and its scores are marginally below average (<0.1 points) in respect of 'sense of community', 'community engagement / participation', 'social contact / interaction', 'play and recreation', and 'housing';
- Mountbellew-Moylough has a lower score in respect of 'public transport' (-0.027) only, and
- Ennistymon-Lahinch attains lower scores in respect of nine dimensions of place, although as indicated earlier (See Figure 5.1), its divergences from the overall means are marginal, except in the case of 'housing' (a divergence of 0.737 points).

Table 5.2 shows the differences between the scores awarded to each town on each dimension of the Place Standard and the overall scores of the seven locations combined. Where values are more than 0.4 points higher than the case study average, the cells are shaded in blue and the values are marked by a double asterisk, and where values are more than 0.4 points lower than the case study average, they are shaded in red and marked by a single asterisk[xiv].

*Table 5.2 Differences between scores for each settlement and the mean values for all case study locations*

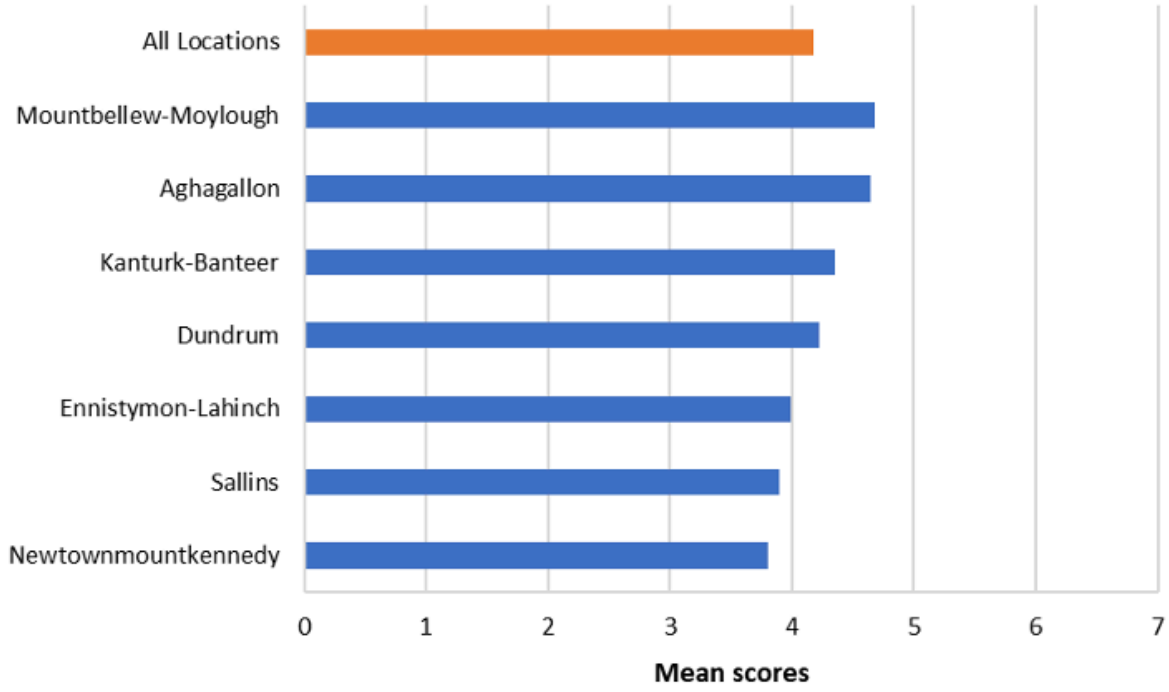
| Dimensions of Place | Kanturk-Banteer | Newtown mount-kennedy | Ennistymon-Lahinch | Sallins | Aghagallon | Dundrum | Mount bellew-Moylough |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Feeling Safe | -0.01 | *-0.42 | 0.17 | -0.30 | **0.64 | -0.20 | **0.62 |
| The Natural Environment | **0.21 | -0.35 | -0.05 | *-0.91 | **0.49 | **0.59 | **0.40 |
| Sense of Community | 0.07 | -0.24 | 0.13 | *-0.51 | **0.75 | -0.04 | 0.18 |
| Community Engagement / Participation | 0.05 | -0.15 | -0.06 | -0.31 | 0.36 | -0.01 | 0.40 |
| Care and Maintenance | 0.32 | -0.29 | 0.00 | *-0.43 | **0.44 | -0.38 | **0.47 |
| Moving Around (on foot / bike) | 0.15 | *-0.52 | -0.30 | 0.02 | 0.13 | **0.70 | 0.20 |
| Social Contact / Interaction | -0.05 | *-0.43 | 0.28 | -0.14 | 0.40 | -0.05 | 0.40 |
| Play and Recreation | **0.71 | *-0.81 | -0.37 | *-0.42 | 0.25 | -0.03 | **0.99 |
| Streets and Public Spaces | **0.62 | *-0.73 | -0.18 | *-0.81 | **0.62 | 0.14 | **0.69 |
| Housing | -0.10 | 0.10 | *-1.02 | 0.35 | **1.25 | -0.03 | 0.17 |
| Work and Local Economy | 0.10 | *-0.45 | **0.42 | -0.33 | 0.22 | *-0.43 | 0.75 |
| Facilities and Amenities | **0.60 | *-0.84 | 0.02 | *-0.48 | **0.50 | *-0.46 | **1.04 |
| Traffic and Parking | 0.38 | -0.30 | *-0.74 | *-0.45 | **0.90 | 0.01 | **0.73 |
| Public Transport | *-0.49 | 0.24 | *-0.83 | **0.90 | -0.38 | **0.98 | -0.03 |

Relative to the means, the three highest scores are as follows:
- 'Housing' in Aghagallon;
- 'Play and recreation' in Mountbellew-Moylough; and
- Public transport' in Sallins.

Relative to the means, the three lowest scores are as follows:
- 'The natural environment' in Sallins;
- 'Facilities and amenities' in Newtownmountkennedy; and
- 'Public transport' in Ennistymon-Lahinch.

Figure 5.3 shows the mean scores, computed across all dimensions, for each of the seven case study locations. Values range from 3.80 in Newtownmountkennedy to 4.67 in Mountbellew-Moylough, while the mean value across all locations is 4.17.

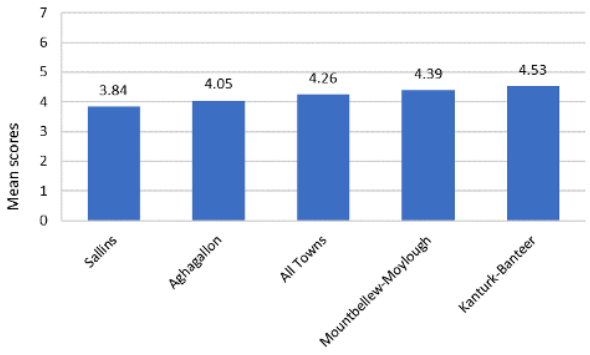
*Figure 5.3 Mean scores across all Place Standard dimensions for each case study location*



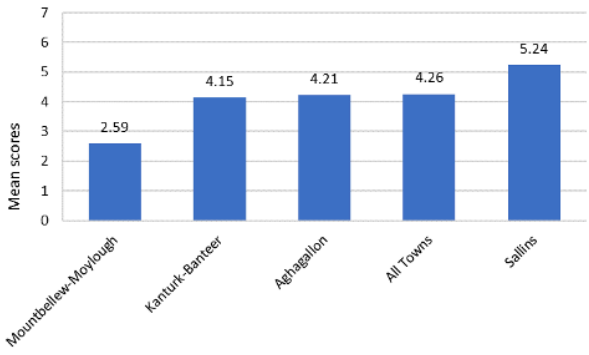

Phase 2 of our research incorporated two additional dimensions into the Place Standard, as these emerged from the qualitative data collection in Phase 1 as having particular relevance to commuting and place. The following bar-graphs show the mean scores, in respect of these two dimensions, for the Phase 2 case study locations (Figure 5.4).

*Figure 5.4 Mean scores on additional dimensions of place for the Phase Two case study locations*

Access to childcare




Broadband connectivity and speed




In addition to capturing residents' current perceptions of their localities and communities, the Place Standard tool enabled them to indicate if they perceive an improvement, dis-improvement or no change over time. Thus, survey respondents were invited to indicate if each dimension of place was either 'better', 'the same' or 'worse' than was the case five years previously. Figure 5.5 presents the findings in respect of perceived changes over the preceding five years.

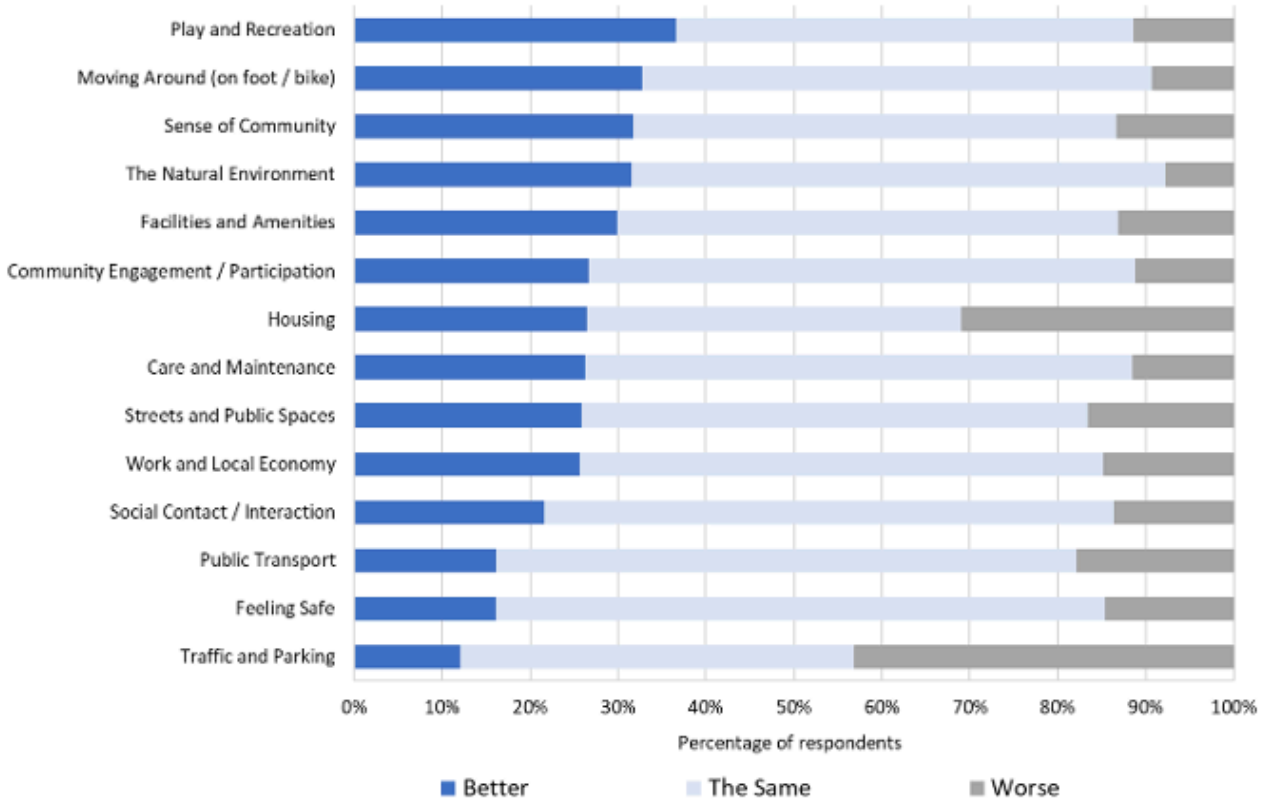
The findings reveal that:

- Over thirty percent (>30%) of respondents believe their areas have improved in respect of the following dimensions of place: 'play and recreation'; 'moving around'; 'sense of community'

and 'the natural environment', while exactly thirty percent believe 'facilities and amenities' are better;
- Between twenty and thirty percent of respondents perceive improvements in respect of the following: 'community engagement / participation'; 'housing'; 'care and maintenance'; 'streets and public spaces'; 'work and the local economy'; and 'social contact / interaction';
- The dimensions that residents are least likely to perceive has having gotten better are as follows: 'traffic and parking'; 'feeling safe'; and 'public transport';
- At least half of respondents do not perceive any change (no improvement or dis-improvement) in respect of all but two dimensions (namely 'traffic and parking' and 'housing');
- Over forty percent (43%) of respondents believe their area has dis-improved in respect of 'traffic and parking'; and
- Almost a third (31%) of respondents believe their areas has dis-improved in respect of housing.

In summary, while residents were more likely to report 'no change' than improvements or dis-improvements, they were more likely, by a factor of 1.56 : 1.00 to indicate that things had gotten better, rather than worse. On all but three dimensions the percentage perceiving improvement outweighs the percentage perceiving dis-improvement. These three dimensions are 'traffics and parking', 'housing', and 'public transport'. On all other dimensions improvement seems to have occurred.

*Figure 5.5 Perceived Changes, in respect of each dimension on the Place Standard, across all locations*




As is the case with the current scores for each dimension of place, geography is a determinant of perceived changes. See Appendix D.2 for a set of graphs that presents the perceived changes, over five years and on all dimensions of place, for each case study location.

### 5.2 Localities' Assets, Strengths and Challenges

In addition to using the Place Standard to gauge perceptions of place, the questionnaire asked 'What three words would you use to describe [name of location]? The responses are summarised in Appendix D.4 in the form of wordclouds with accompanying discussion. Overall, respondents were positive about the places they lived in. As examples from respondents' descriptions of place, the word 'beautiful' is predominantly used in relation to Ennistymon-Lahinch, reflecting its coastal location. 'Friendly' is the word that is most frequently used to describe Newtownmountkennedy. This is also the case in Aghagallon, Kanturk and Mountbellew-Moylough. Residents perceive Newtownmountkennedy as a community and as a place that is growing and has potential. Sallins was the only other case study location in which the word 'potential' came significantly to the fore.

Much of the descriptions of the towns offered in the survey was reflected in the interviews. As is explored further in Chapter 8, connection to people and place was identified as an important factor for interviewees who had 'returned' or recently moved to one of the study settlements. This was a particularly strong talking point for those at family formation stages in their lives. When interviewees spoke positively about their locality, they talked about the strength of connection and the bond to the place and the community:

> *"My older son who lives just down the road from Mountbellew in a place called [x]. And his friends are still guys he grew up with you know and they meet regularly. So I think there's that bond there, it also attracts people, youngsters back into the town as well. So it's a good place to raise children, you know, and I think that's where the well-being comes for parents [...]. There's a good empathy there with the area. So I think that's very, very special".*
> MMA

On the other hand, where there was less legacy connection with an area, and where people are living more rurally, there is potential for loneliness:

> *"There certainly is an isolation aspect and everyone has felt that but when you're in a rural community isolated and you don't have access to transport it can really feel heavy. It can be lonely and you can feel cut off. I am very focused on getting my driving license now".*
> EL19

Statements that centred on the positive changes in the localities, tended to focus on various positive aspects of living in the particular area or town. With less frequency but still well-represented were statements around sense of community, local amenities and the natural environment (see Figure 5.6). As an example from the interviews, one respondent talks about change in Aghagallon:

> *"I would say you see some additional developments going on. You see [...] there's a vibrancy of young families sort of moving into the new developments and that, which is that sort of natural cycle, I suppose of, you know a place being almost reborn".*
> AGH8

While for the most part respondents and interviewees' reflections on their localities were positive, challenges were also identified, particularly for those who had not grown up rurally, and who were used to greater access to services and / or infrastructure:

> *"[...] if I had known how poor the infrastructure was, you know [...] when people move they go, 'oh, this is great'. And then, you know, after a few years, I was feeling if I had known what I know now, I don't know, I don't think I necessarily would have moved here. Because just the infrastructure, my kids, you know, it's just not it's not there [...] the social events [...], they're just not there for my kids.*

*So [...], if they [the government] don't develop the infrastructure in these things for our communities and families, then there is a significantly less incentive for people to live in these areas".*
KB11

In statements about negative change in the different localities, issues highlighted were local amenities (despite there also being a number of positive statements), rural isolation, and concerns around the future of the locality (see Figure 5.7).

The survey questionnaire also invited respondents, in two open-ended questions, to identify their localities' assets & strengths (first question) and challenges (second question). The responses in respect of assets and strengths tended to focus on natural and social capital. Respondents referred, in all case study locations, to the local environment – landscape, amenities, open spaces and access to the countryside. They also referred to the sense of community, and many of their responses combined references to natural and social features. Some also referred to local infrastructure, facilities and amenities, including housing (for emblematic quotes from the survey, see Appendix D). When asked to identify the main challenges facing their locality, respondents tended to focus on perceived deficits in respect of infrastructure, amenities and facilities. As indicated in the graphs presented in this chapter, many residents perceived traffic and parking to be problematic, and many are keen to see improved public transportation and better connectivity. There were also some references to the natural environment and the need to improve social and recreational outlets, especially for young people.


*Access to green spaces is an important consideration for residents*

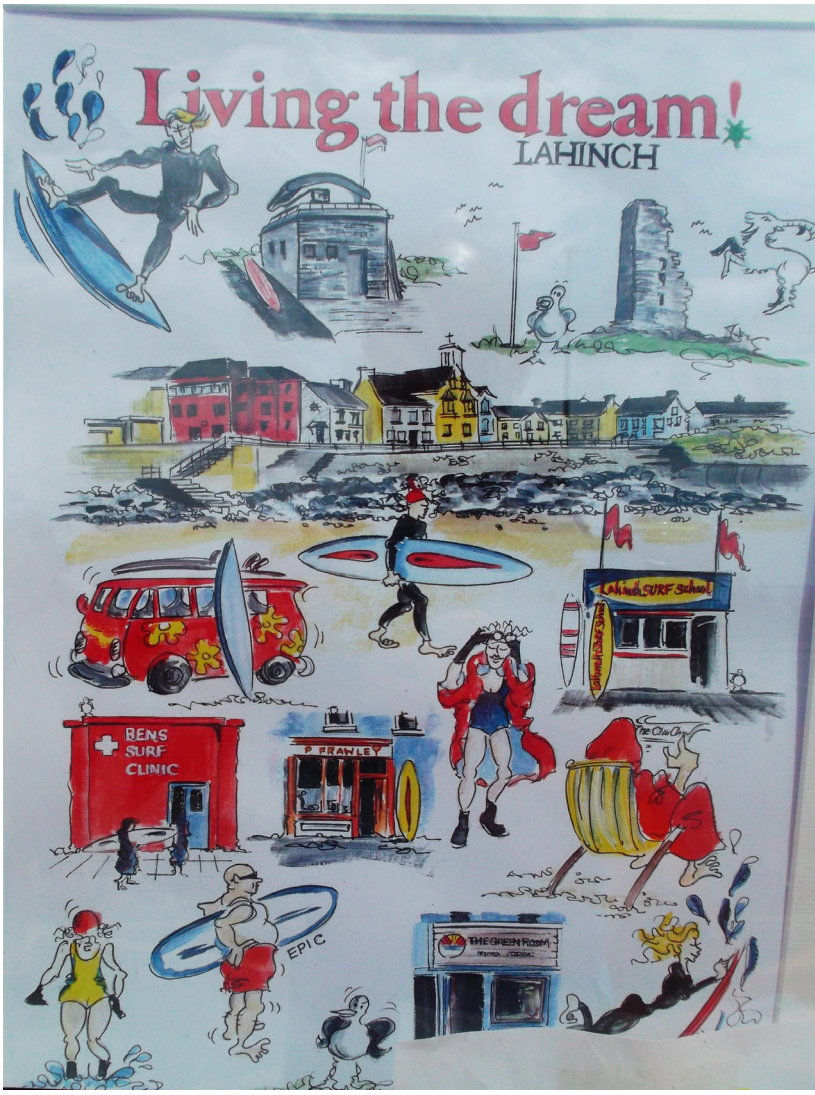


*Figure 5.6 Statements relating to positive change in the town*

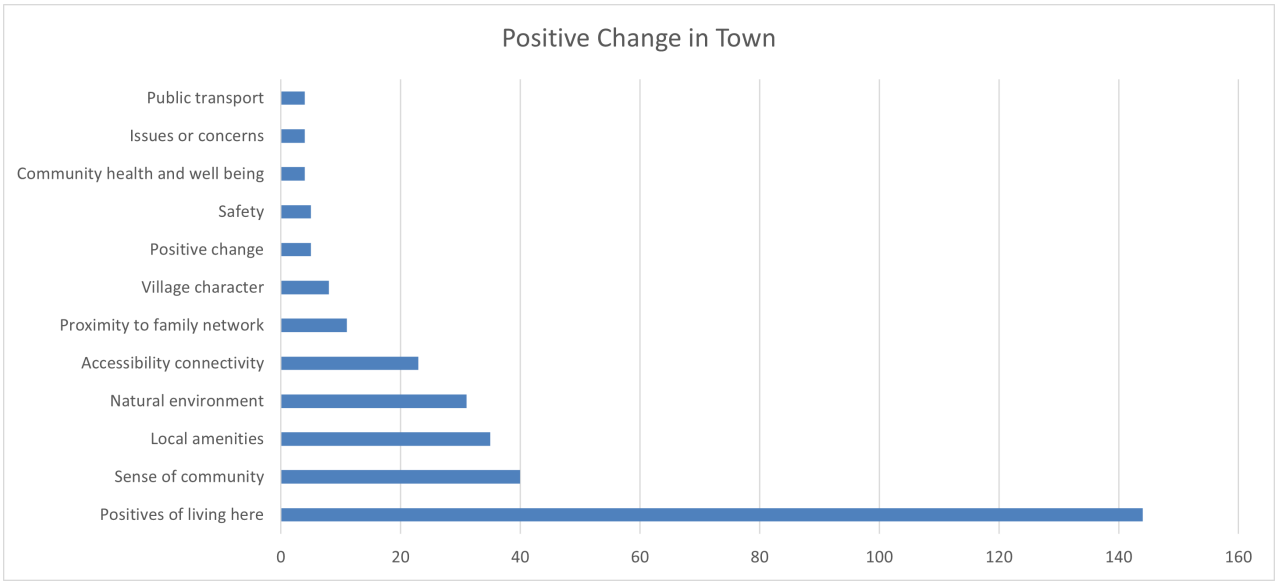
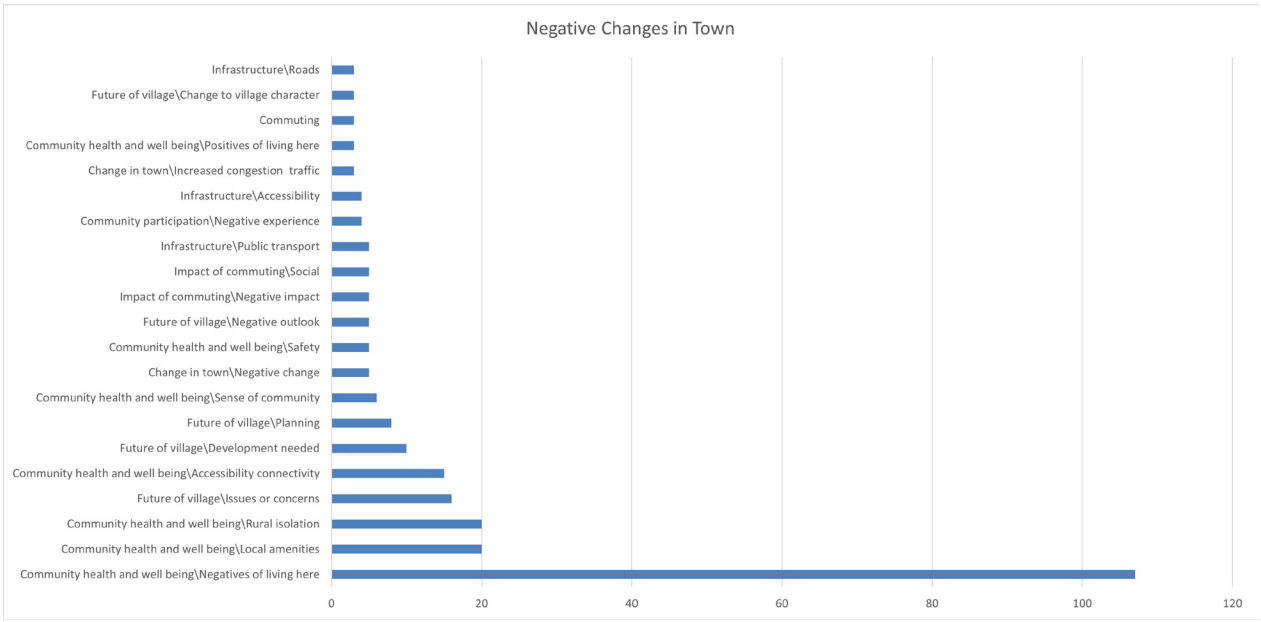



*Figure 5.7 Statements relating to negative change in the town*




## 5.3 Population Movements

As noted in Chapter 2, in-migration is a driver of population growth in many commuter settlements. Table 5.3 presents data in respect of one indicator of in-migration i.e. the number and proportion of the resident population who lived at the same address or at another address one year prior to census night, 2022. These figures indicate that while the proportion of persons residing at the same address in the case study towns and villages is similar to the proportion for the state as a whole, the case study settlements (with the exception of Kanturk-Banteer) have a higher proportion of residents who have moved from another Irish county during the year prior to the census.

## Promoting Liveability – experiences in Cappoquin, County Waterford

The *Waterford City & County Development Plan* (2022-2028) includes strategic actions to promote sustainable mobility through place-making. Initiatives focus on enhancing public spaces, urban design, green infrastructure, and public transport, as well as creating safe pedestrian and cyclist paths.

In Cappoquin, a *regeneration strategy* agreed in 2021 addresses housing, vacancy, public realm improvements, river access, and recreation. Supported by the Tomar Trust, the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD), and Waterford LEADER Partnership, the strategy includes refurbishing derelict properties for modern housing, repurposing buildings, enhancing bus stops and active travel routes, improving access to the Munster Blackwater, and developing a recreational hub. (Waterford City and County Council, 2021).

Over €6 million has been secured for these projects. Recent funding from the DRCD will refurbish a former hotel for commercial and residential use, complementing other rejuvenation efforts like Blackwater House, now a co-working space.

Cappoquin's regeneration is driven by community collaboration, with the Cappoquin Regeneration Company retaining ownership of refurbished buildings and leasing them to residents and businesses – thereby driving local economic development and improving the town's streetscape. Commuting-related improvements include more frequent bus services, new shelters, better signage, lighting, and digital timetables, facilitating easier travel to and from Waterford City.

*Table 5.3 Locations[xv] at which residents lived one year prior to census night, April 2022*

| | Absolute number of residents | | | | | Percentage of residents | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Geography | Same Address | In County | Elsewhere in Ireland | Outside Ireland | Total | Same Address | In County | Elsewhere in Ireland | Outside Ireland |
| Newtownmountkennedy | 3,297 | 80 | 48 | 24 | 3,449 | 95.59% | 2.32% | 1.39% | 0.70% |
| Sallins | 5,653 | 200 | 189 | 76 | 6,118 | 92.40% | 3.27% | 3.09% | 1.24% |
| Mountbellew-Moylough | 1,148 | 63 | 34 | 22 | 1,267 | 90.61% | 4.97% | 2.68% | 1.74% |
| Ennistymon-Lahinch | 1,905 | 87 | 39 | 42 | 2,073 | 91.90% | 4.20% | 1.88% | 2.03% |
| Kanturk-Banteer | 2,850 | 189 | 23 | 39 | 3,101 | 91.91% | 6.09% | 0.74% | 1.26% |
| **All RoI Case Study Towns** | **14,853** | **619** | **333** | **203** | **16,008** | 92.78% | 3.87% | 2.08% | 1.27% |
| All Towns RoI | 3,252,175 | 154,273 | 59,003 | 75,947 | 3,541,398 | 91.83% | 4.36% | 1.67% | 2.14% |
| All RoI | 4,672,993 | 188,415 | 76,683 | 89,512 | 5,027,603 | 92.95% | 3.75% | 1.53% | 1.78% |

A more comprehensive picture of residential mobility can be obtained from our survey questionnaire which asked specifically about the length of time respondents have been residing in the locality. Table 5.4 provides a breakdown of the responses by case study location.

*Table 5.4 Length of time residing in each case study location*

| Length of Residence | Kanturk-Banteer | Newtownmountkennedy | Ennistymon-Lahinch | Sallins | Aghagallon | Dundrum | Mountbellew-Moylough | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Less than one year | 2.98% | 3.13% | 3.96% | 5.10% | 0.00% | 2.38% | 3.90% | 3.19% |
| 1 to 5 years | 17.26% | 30.47% | 21.78% | 22.45% | 10.94% | 21.43% | 18.18% | 20.97% |
| 6 to 10 years | 8.33% | 10.94% | 3.96% | 14.29% | 20.31% | 15.48% | 11.69% | 11.25% |
| 11 to 20 years | 26.19% | 25.00% | 18.81% | 20.41% | 17.19% | 15.48% | 15.58% | 20.97% |
| 20+ Years | 44.05% | 30.47% | 51.49% | 36.73% | 51.56% | 45.24% | 50.65% | 43.19% |
| Other | 1.19% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 1.02% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.42% |

The data shows that almost a quarter of survey respondents have been residing in their current location for less than five years, and a further eleven percent have moved there within the past ten years. Our questionnaire asked: 'If you moved into this locality, what was the primary motivating factor?' Responses were free text (open-ended), and our thematic analysis, as shown in Table 5.5, reveals that 'housing' was cited more frequently than all other factors.

A more detailed breakdown of the motivating factors by location is provided in Appendix D.3. The following are among the comments made by respondents:

- House prices were cheaper than Newcastle;
- Affordability of site to build house on, location - not too far from Lurgan;
- Location, house price;
- Cheaper rent than Dublin;
- More space, bigger house;
- Cheaper house. Quiet place;
- Space, affordability, good place to raise children;
- Built on husband's farm;
- My wife was born and raised here;
- In-laws live close by;
- Returning back home near family;
- The countryside;
- Rural location;
- The peace and country living;
- Ability to commute to my job while living in the country; and
- To get away from busy town life.

*Table 5.5 Primary motivating factors for moving to the case study location*

| Motivating Factors | Percentage of respondents |
|---|---|
| Housing | 30.8% |
| Family (connections) | 25.2% |
| Environment | 11.3% |
| Employment | 6.5% |
| Location | 3.7% |
| Quality of Life | 3.2% |
| Other and Mixed | 19.3% |
| Feeling Safe | -0.01 |

## 5.4 Summary

In summary, the key findings to emerge from the analysis are as follows:

- According to the survey results (using the Place Standard tool), the case study locations are perceived to perform well in respect of 'feeling safe', 'the natural environment' 'sense of community' and 'community engagement'
- The Place Standard scores indicate that the following dimensions of place are the most problematic: 'public transport', traffic and parking' and 'facilities and amenities'.
- Inter-town comparisons are useful with respect to understanding issues and place-based dynamics, and these indicate that the widest divergence, across the case study towns, is in the area of 'housing', followed by 'facilities and amenities' and 'public transport';
- Most residents do not perceive notable changes in their localities / communities over the past five years, while more are likely to perceive improvements, rather than dis-improvements;
- The biggest improvements have occurred in respect of 'play and recreation'. 'moving around (by bike / on foot)', 'sense of community' and 'the natural environment'
- Friendliness is the concept that emerges with greatest frequency among the descriptors of place, and the descriptors are also influenced by rurality and perceptions of rural living;
- Natural and social capital emerge strongly in the descriptors of place, and they are also to the fore among the localities' assets and strengths, as perceived by local residents;
- Infrastructure, connectivity and accessibility are important considerations for local residents, and the ability to commute with ease is seen as a strength / asset;
- Residents perceive challenges in respect of infrastructural deficits, a lack of local services and poor public transport connectivity; and
- Housing affordability was the primary factor in motivating people to move to their current home.

# 6

# Profile of Commuting Behaviour – Distances, Durations, Frequency and Mode of Travel

## Long distances and long durations of commuting are common:

**45%** of one-way commutes were for distances of 30 km or more

**49%** were of 45 minutes or more duration

The car is, overwhelmingly, the dominant mode of transport for journeys to work and college: 82% of respondents travel by car, just 12% use public transport.

# COMMUTING AND MODE OF TRAVEL

Public transport is more likely to be used for longer-distance commutes....

**15%** of commutes where the distance travelled (one-way) is more than 30km are by public transport, as compared to just

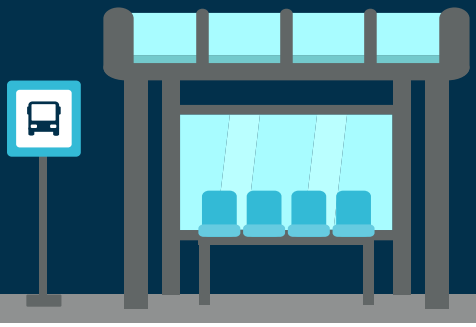
**4%** of commutes of 15 kilometres or less

...and also for longer-duration commutes:

**48%** of commutes taking 90 minutes or more are made by public transport, as compared to just

**2%** of trips that are between 15 and 30 minutes in duration.

## Less frequent commuters and hybrid workers are more likely to use public transport:



32% of once-weekly commuters use public transport, as compared to 18% of those travelling three times per week, and just 6% of those who travel to work five times per week.

37% of hybrid workers (self-declared) use public transport, as compared to 7% of more frequent commuters.

**86%** of journeys by public transport take 45 minutes or more

as compared to **44%** of car journeys

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# Profile of Commuting Behaviour – Distances, Durations, Frequency and Mode of Travel

This chapter delineates some of the key characteristics of commuting in the seven case study settlements on the island of Ireland. The findings reported include results relating to the mode of travel, the distance and duration of commutes, the weekly frequency of travel, and the total time spent commuting per week (which we refer to as the weekly commuting burden). The research describes some of the key changes in these parameters as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, focussing in particular on the switch to telecommuting, in the form of either home or remote working, and to hybrid working, i.e., the combination of telecommuting and conventional commuting on a weekly basis. Where changes in patterns are reported, these are normally based on comparisons of travel behaviour pre-, during and post-pandemic, which means they are based on the Phase 2 survey only, since post-pandemic data are not available for the settlements surveyed in Phase 1. The same restriction applies to the reporting of trip duration, which was only enquired about in the Phase 2 survey. Where Phase 2 data only are used, this is indicated in the text and in any accompanying charts.

As well as comparisons between the settlements, where relevant, the analysis also looks at some of the key socio-demographic correlates of travel behaviour, including gender, age, housing tenure and education level (the latter used in the absence of information on occupation as a proxy measure of socio-economic status). In calculating the percentages giving various responses, respondents who didn't respond are generally excluded. The chapter concludes with some insights into commuters' perspectives on their commutes, as garnered from the commuter interviews.

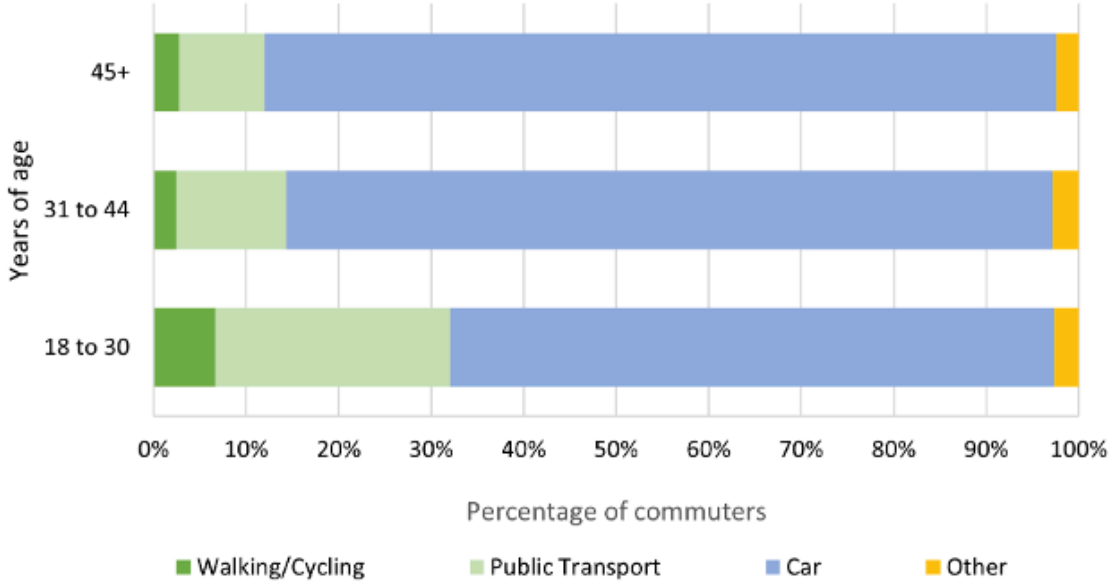
## 6.1 Mode of Travel

Not surprisingly, given the rural setting of all seven settlements, the private car is by far the dominant mode of travel for journeys to work and study. In total, 82% of respondents travelled by car at the time they were surveyed, 80% as car drivers and 2% as car passengers. This compares to 66% nationally travelling to work or study by car in Ireland, 61% as drivers and 5% as passengers as reported in the Census 2022 census of population[xvi]. The dependence on the private car is uniformly high across six of the seven case study settlements, ranging from 93% in Kanturk-Banteer to 80% in Aghagallon. The exception is Sallins, which shows a significantly lower level of car usage at 56%. Conversely, use of public transport is comparatively high at 43% in Sallins, reflecting the fact that Sallins is the only settlement served by commuter train. Elsewhere,

the use of public transport ranges from 14% in Newtownmountkennedy to just 2% in Ennistymon-Lahinch.

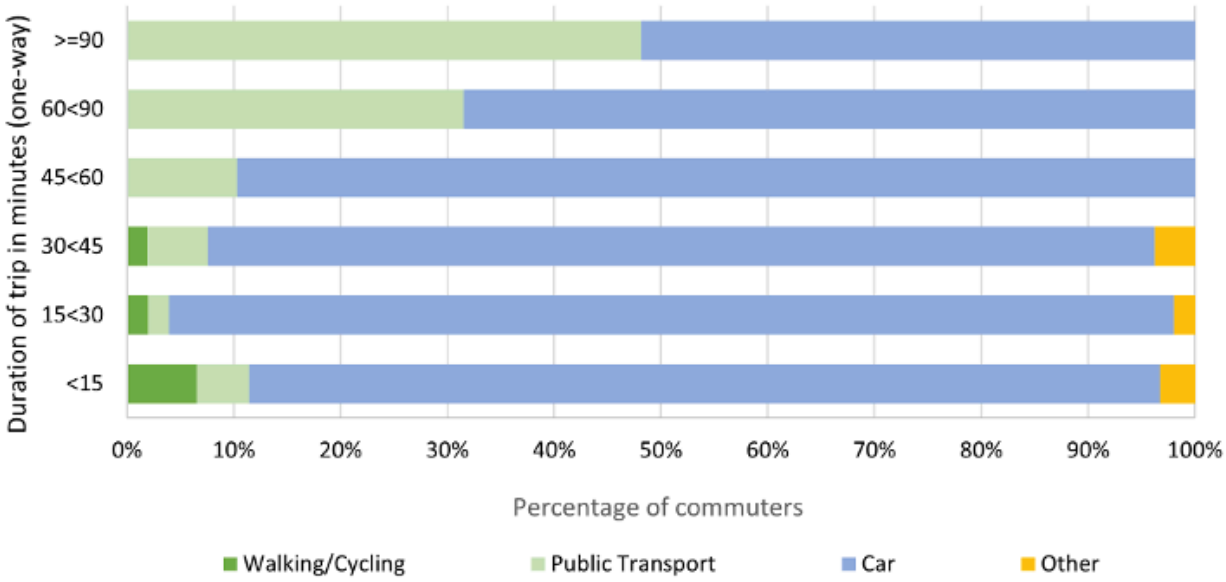
Females (85%) are more likely to travel by car than males (76%), among whom active travel modes and the use of public transport are somewhat greater. There are also differences across age groups, with higher levels of active travel and public transport usage among those aged between 18 and 30 years as compared to older age groups (Figure 6.1). This may reflect a lower rate of car ownership among the younger cohort. In contrast, there are few notable differences in the modal split between car and public transport according to either education level or housing tenure, though respondents renting their home privately show somewhat higher levels of public transport usage (23%).

*Figure 6.1 Mode of travel by age group*



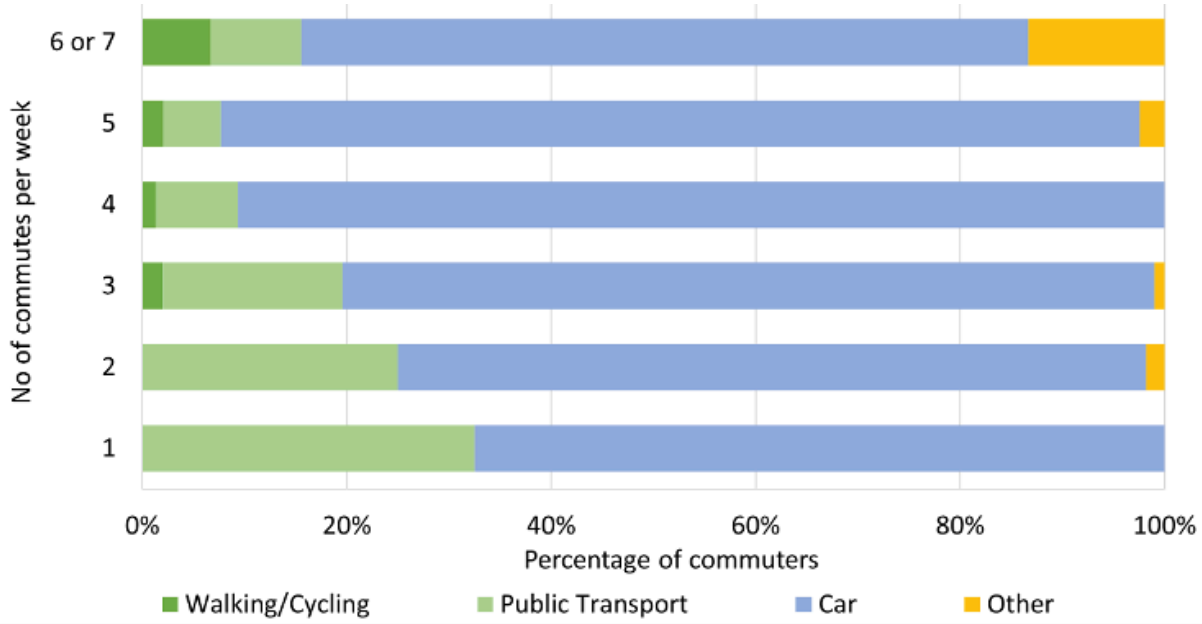

As well as these differences in modal split by demographic cohort, there is evidence of variation in mode according to other characteristics of the commute. There is some tendency for travel by public transport to increase as the distance travelled increases, with public transport used for 15% of commutes where the workplace is more than 30 km distant, as compared to 4% of commutes up to 15 km, and less than 1% of local commutes. Data available from the Phase 2 survey suggest that there is an even stronger association between mode of travel and the duration of the commute. Thus, the public transport share of travel increases as the duration of travel increases, except for very short duration commutes (Figure 6.2). Almost half (48%) of commutes taking 90 minutes or more (one-way) are made by public transport, as compared to just 2% of trips taking between 15 and 30 minutes. The nature of the association between mode and duration of travel is not clear. While it may be that commuters facing longer journeys are more inclined to use public transport, it could also be the case that, for a given distance of journey, public transport takes a longer time than car, due to factors such as the waiting time caused by the mismatch between transport providers' timetables and commuters' work schedules, walking time from stops / terminals to the destination, and in-journey travel stops. In this respect, it is notable that 86% of journeys by public transport take 45 minutes or more as compared to 44% of car journeys.

*Figure 6.2 Mode of travel by duration of commute (Phase 2 only)*




Almost as strong as the association between mode of travel and duration of commute is that between mode and the weekly frequency of travel. Results from the sample as a whole (Phase 1 and Phase 2 combined) suggest that public transport is more likely to be used by commuters who have fewer journeys to work per week. Thus, whereas just 6% of commuters who travel to work five times per week use public transport, this increases to 18% for workers travelling three times per week, and 32% for once weekly commuters (Figure 6.3). This finding is potentially of considerable significance in policy terms, suggesting that the shift to hybrid working arrangements involving home or remote working on a certain number of days per week may help induce the shift from car to public transport which is increasingly a key objective of transportation policy and planning. The shift to hybrid working and telecommuting will be explored further later in this chapter, and also in Chapter 9.

*Figure 6.3 Mode of travel by weekly frequency of commute*

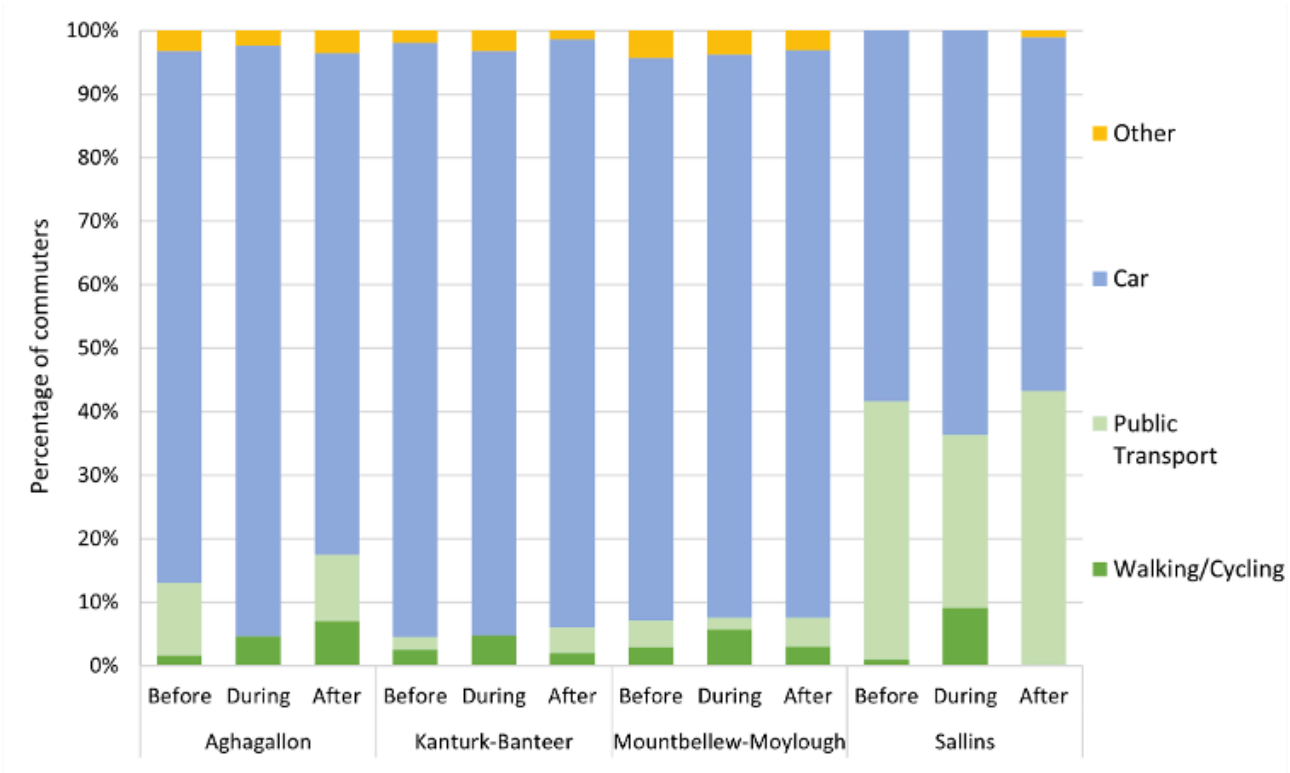


Finally, using data from the Phase 2 survey, we can gain some insights into the changes in mode of travel brought about by COVID-19. Table 6.1 shows the modal split before, during and after the pandemic for the four settlements covered by the Phase 2 survey. The most significant changes were the reduction in the public transport share during the pandemic, and the increase in active travel modes. Taking the four case study areas together, the share of trips to work or college undertaken by public transport halved from 14% before the pandemic to 7% during the pandemic, while the percentage of commuters walking or cycling increased from 2% to 6%. Car-based trips increased from 82% to 85% of all trips. In general, the modal split in the post-pandemic period broadly reverted to the pre-pandemic pattern. However, there was a slight increase in the public transport share (relative to its pre-pandemic level) to 15% of all trips. This resulted from a small net movement of commuters from car to public transport. The pattern of change described above was broadly consistent across all four settlements, though against a background of significant differences in overall public transport share (Figure 6.4). Sallins had by far the highest level of public transport usage at all stages of the pandemic, and it is notable that it also saw the largest increase in the public transport share, from 41% pre-pandemic to 43% post-pandemic.

*Table 6.1 Percentage of commutes by mode of travel, pre-, during and post-pandemic (Phase 2 only)*

| Mode of travel | Before (%) | During (%) | After (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Walking/ cycling | 2 | 6 | 2 |
| Public transport | 14 | 7 | 15 |
| Car | 82 | 85 | 81 |
| Other | 2 | 2 | 2 |

*Figure 6.4 Modal split before, during and after the pandemic (Phase 2 only)*



## Promoting Sustainable Travel – experiences in Athy, County Kildare

The *Athy Local Area Plan* (LAP) (2021-2027) notes that the town of Athy has many of the characteristics of a commuter town, and the plan contains provisions to "achieve a reduction in the levels of commuting from the town by ensuring that lands are appropriately zoned, and a framework is in place to attract greater employment opportunities by fostering competitiveness and innovation within a high-quality physical environment" (Kildare County Council, 2021a: 47). The plan advocates the development of 'live-work units', which it defines as units within buildings that are both a place to live and a place of business or commerce. Furthermore, the LAP has been guided by an area-based transport assessment (ABTA) for Athy, which includes provisions for the development of integrated walking and cycling networks (Kildare County Council, 2021b). The ABTA includes a detailed analysis of commuting modes and volumes, and it quantifies the scale of commuting – noting the significance of destinations such as Dublin City, Carlow, Portlaoise, Naas and Newbridge. With reference to regional trips, the ABTA recommends improving active-mode connectivity to Athy Train Station and developing the town's bus network. When public transport options are not available, the ABTA recommends improving road safety and minimising vehicular traffic's impacts on the town.

### 6.2 Place of Work, Distance and Duration of Commutes

The pandemic brought major changes in the distance and duration of commutes, as workers pivoted to remote working and telecommuting. This section presents findings on each of these aspects of commuting, again looking at the relationship with key socio-demographic variables, and also at changes in patterns over the course of the pandemic.

Before considering the changes in the distances and durations of commuting over the course of the pandemic, the study first focuses on the key cause of those changes, namely the switch to home or remote working during the pandemic. In total, 57% of those surveyed indicated that they had been able, to some degree, to work either at home or from another remote setting during the pandemic, and 44% indicated that they could do so "most or all of the time, as required". Further information from the Phase 2 survey reveals that, in 87% of cases, remote working meant working from home, with less than 1% reporting that they had used a digital hub. There was very little gender-based difference in the ability to work remotely, but there was a stronger and consistent relationship with age, whereby older workers were able to work remotely to a greater extent than younger workers (Figure 6.5). There were also clear differences according to educational attainment and housing tenure. Thus, 52% of those with third level education reported being able to work remotely most or all of the time, as compared to 30% for those without (Figure 6.6), while just 16% of those in social rented accommodation could do so, as compared to 45% for all other tenure categories combined. The differences in ability to work remotely during the pandemic according to age, educational attainment and tenure were all significant, though it should be noted that the numbers in the social renting tenure category were small, as it accounts for less than 5% of the sample as a whole.[xvii]

*Figure 6.5 Ability to work from home/ remotely during the pandemic by age group*

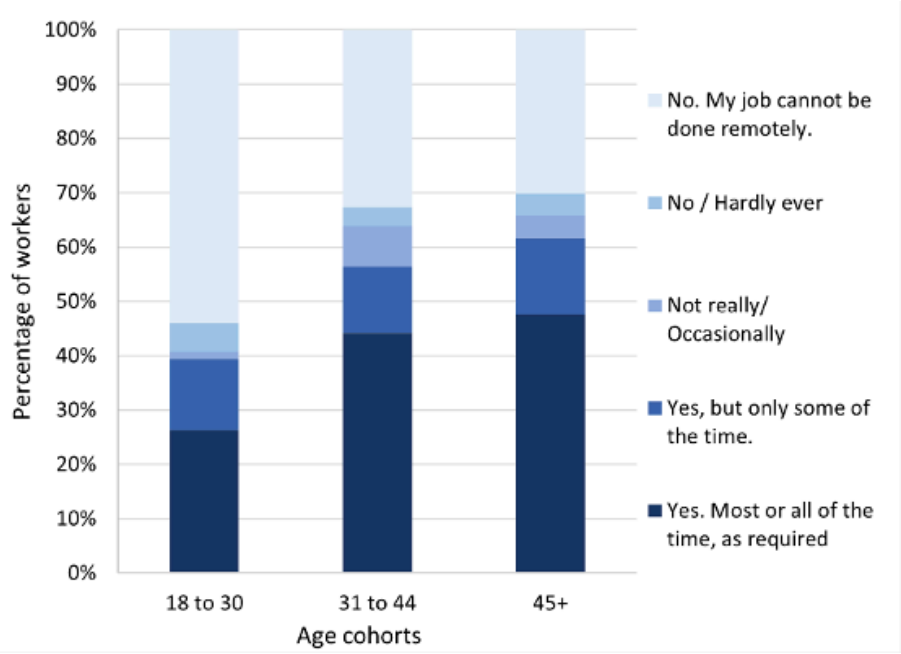
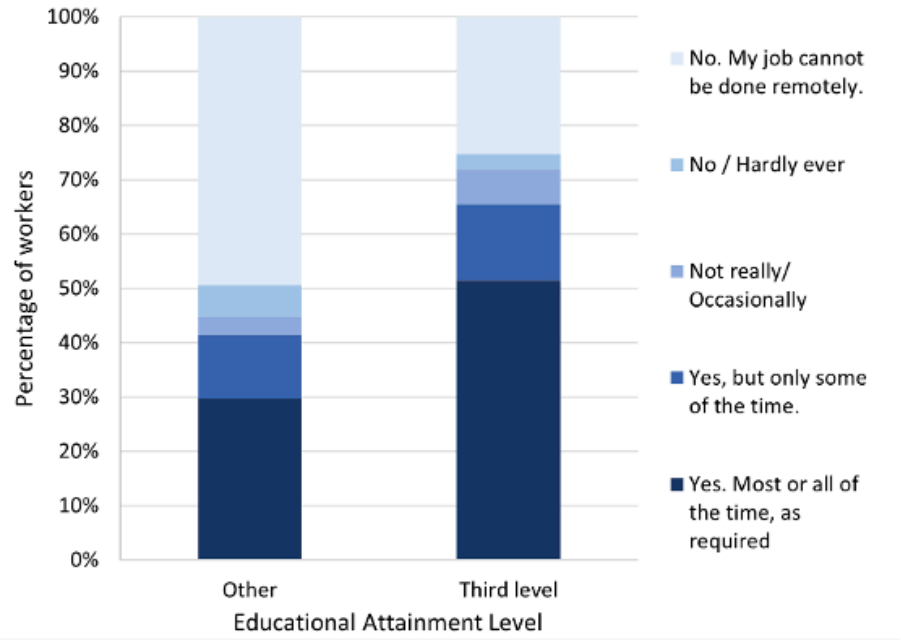


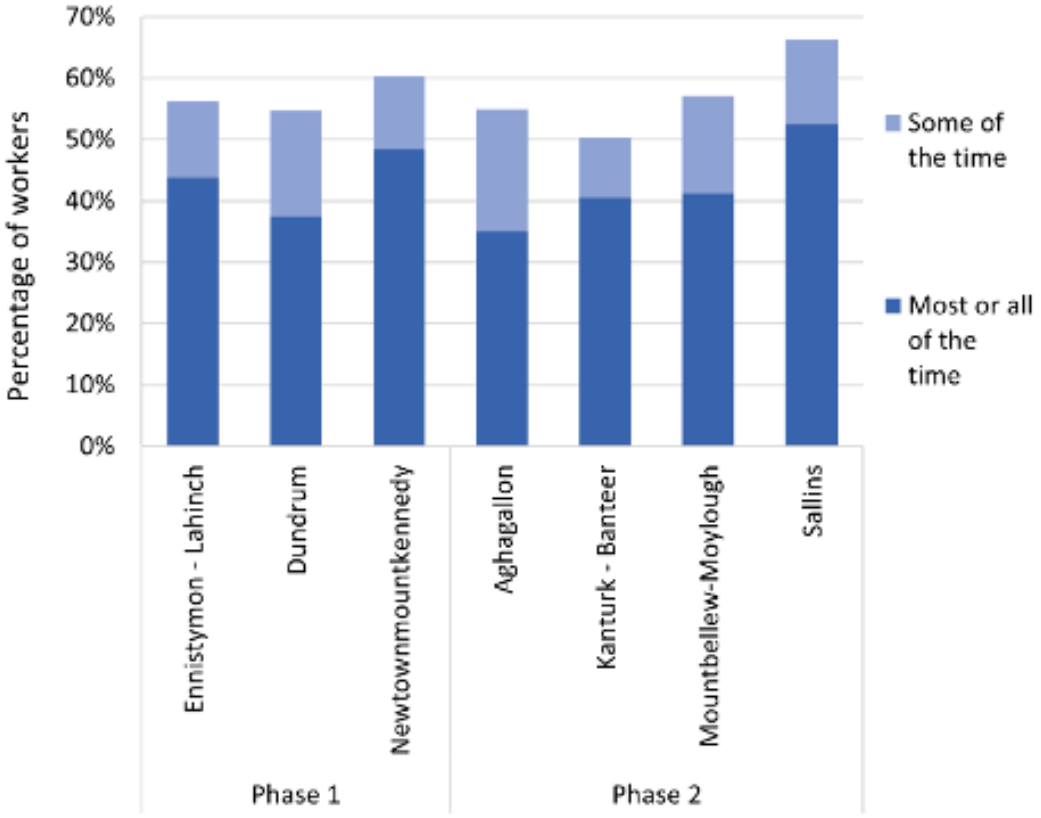

*Figure 6.6 Ability to work from home/ remotely during the pandemic by level of education*




As well as socio-demographic differences in the extent of home / remote working during the pandemic, there were also differences across the case study settlements. The percentage of workers reporting that they could work at home or remotely most or all of the time ranged from 35% in Aghagallon, to 53% in Sallins (Figure 6.7). These differences reflect corresponding differences in the occupational profiles of the settlements, as outlined in Chapter 4, and in the

extent to which home / remote working is possible in different occupations. In general, non-manual occupations in the Managerial, Professional, and Associated Professional / Technical occupational groups are more amenable to remote working, and Sallins has the highest percentage of workers in these occupational groups (48%), as compared to Aghagallon (37%) which has among the lowest. As demonstrated in Chapter 9, which looks in more detail at the post-pandemic situation, these contrasts in home working appear to have persisted.

*Figure 6.7 Ability to work at home or remotely during the pandemic by settlement*

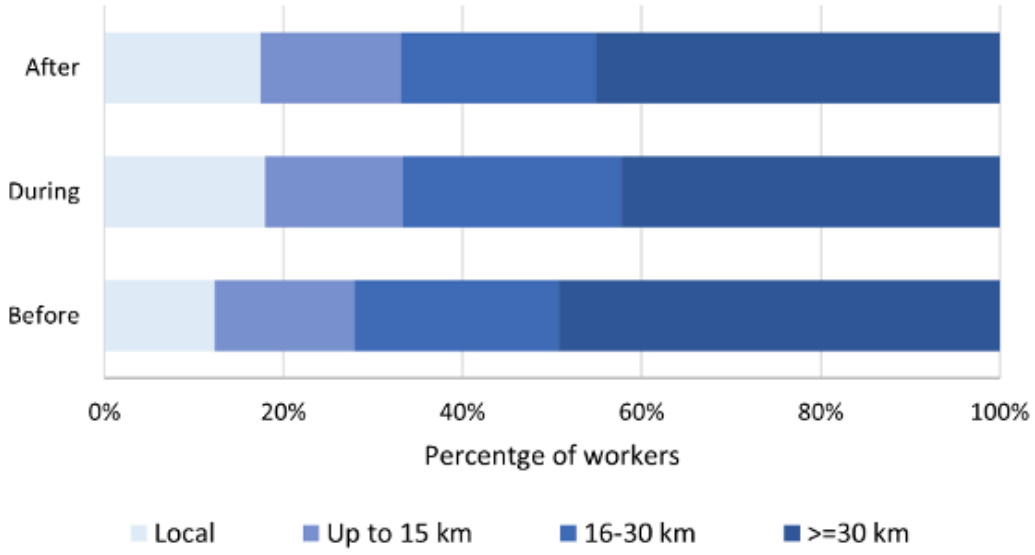



Turning now to the distances travelled to work or study by those working or studying outside the home (i.e., excluding home workers from the analysis), Figure 6.8 shows the distances travelled before, during and after the pandemic, as recorded in the Phase 2 survey. The profile of distance travelled remained fairly stable over time. Reflecting the rural settings of the towns, in excess of 40% of all commutes involved distances of 30 km or more at all stages of the pandemic. Almost half (49%) of those working or studying outside the home travelled 30 km (one way), prior to the pandemic, decreasing to 42% during the pandemic, before increasing again after the pandemic to 45%. The small overall decrease across the period as a whole, reflects the slightly higher rate of switching to (and continuing with) home working among long-distance commuters as compared to others. In general, the rate of continuation with home working increased as distance commuted (prior to the pandemic) increased. For example, 19% of those who had commuted 30 km or more prior to the pandemic were still working at home at the time of the Phase 2 survey, as compared to 16% of those with medium-distance (16-30 km) commutes and just 6% of those with short (less than 15 km) commutes. This can be explained by two factors. First, long-distance commuters obviously have a greater incentive to switch to remote working; and second, longer distance commutes are more common among those in professional and managerial occupations which, as noted above, are more amenable to remote working.

The general pattern of decreasing commuting distances during the pandemic, with a reversion to close to pre-pandemic levels afterwards, holds across all four of the Phase 2 settlements for which full longitudinal data are available. However, there are significant differences between settlements in the rate of long-distance (30 km+) travel, which is highest in Mountbellew-Moylough and Kanturk-Banteer, and lowest in Aghagallon and Sallins (Figure 6.9). Focusing on the post-pandemic period, 54% of commutes from Mountbellew-Moylough were of 30 km or more, as compared to 33% of those from Aghagallon. These differences in commuting distance reflect differences in the location of the case study settlements relative to major employment centres.

There are also socio-demographic differences in the rate of long-distance commutes. Table 6.2 indicates that males, those with higher education, and those aged 31 to 44 years of age were more likely than others to have commutes in excess of 30 km in the post-pandemic period. As noted earlier, males and persons with higher educational attainment are also more likely to have continued working from home post-pandemic, so that commuting distances in these cohorts have become somewhat more polarised as a result of the pandemic-related changes, i.e., there are greater proportions of each cohort with both no commute and with longer commutes. Again, it is likely that differences in rates of long-distance commutes, like those in rates of home working, are due to differences in occupational structures.

*Figure 6.8 Commute distance by pandemic time period for persons working outside the home (Phase 2 data)*




*Note: persons classified as having local commutes are those working in the settlement of residence*

*Figure 6.9 Commuting distances by settlement, before, during and after the pandemic (Phase 2 data)*

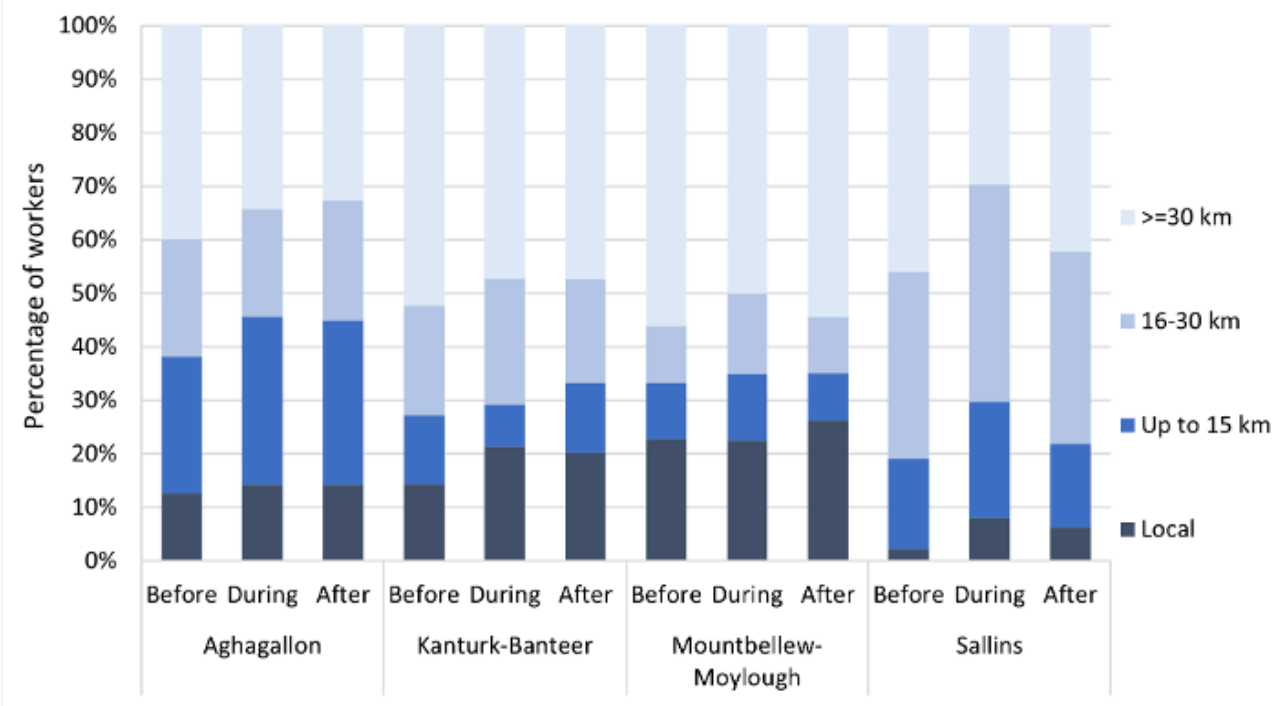
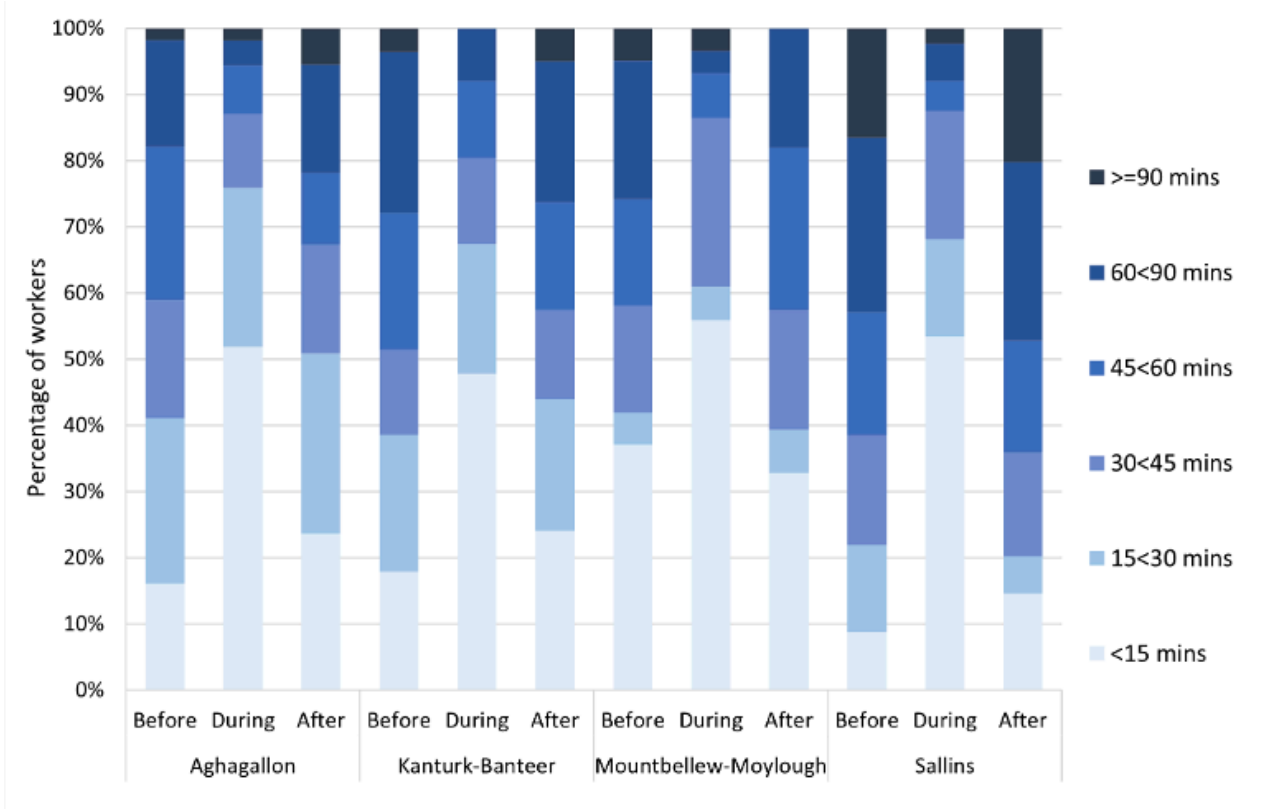



*Table 6.2 Rate of long-distance commutes by cohort in the post-pandemic period (Phase 2 data)*

| Indicator | Cohort | % |
|---|---|---|
| Gender | Females | 40.2 |
| | Males | 60.0 |
| Age | 31 to 44 | 48.9 |
| | All other age groups | 41.4 |
| Education | Third level | 52.0 |
| | Other | 34.8 |

The distance travelled to work or study is a strong indicator of the duration of the commute, information on which is available for the settlements surveyed in Phase 2. Reflecting the relatively long distances travelled, 47% of respondents reported one-way travel times of 45 minutes or more in the post-pandemic period, which, for context is more than double the figure of 21% for Ireland recorded at the 2022 census of population. This is again indicative of the rural settings and strong commuting orientation of the case study areas. There are differences across the four Phase 2 settlements in the duration of commutes, the most notable of which is the considerably greater prevalence of long-duration (45 minutes and over) commuting in Sallins, both before and after the pandemic (Figure 6.10). This is despite the fact that Sallins had the second-lowest rates of long-distance commuting in both time periods. The fact that relatively short-distance commutes do not translate into short-duration commutes in the town may be due in part to congested travel conditions. However, if commutes by public transport take longer for any given distance of travel, then part of the explanation may lie in the fact that, as noted earlier, commuters from Sallins use public transport to a significantly higher degree than in any of the other settlements.

*Figure 6.10 Duration of commutes by settlement and pandemic time period (Phase 2 settlements)*




In terms of socio-demographic differences in commuting durations, similar patterns as observed for commuting distances emerge from the analysis. Thus, longer-duration commutes are more common among males, persons with higher education, and those in the age group 31 to 44 years (Table 6.3). The latter cohort is of particular interest because it is also the family-forming cohort. The fact that this age group has a higher rate of both longer-distance and longer-duration commutes is potentially significant, in that it suggests a greater propensity for adverse impacts of commuting on everyday life in families with young children. These impacts are explored in detail in the next chapter.

*Table 6.3 Rate of long-duration (45 min+) commutes by cohort, post-pandemic (Phase 2 data)*

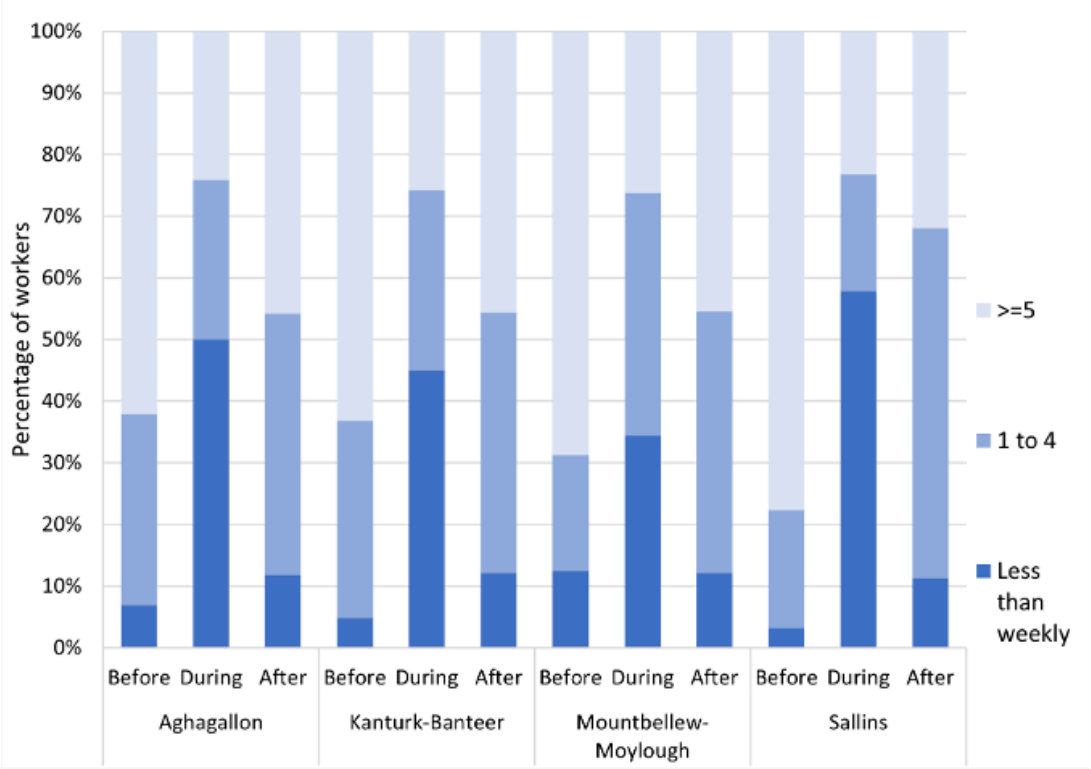
| Indicator | Cohort | % |
|---|---|---|
| Gender | Females | 44.8 |
| | Males | 51.5 |
| Age | 31 to 44 | 48.7 |
| | All other age groups | 44.6 |
| Education | Third level | 53.9 |
| | Other | 34.4 |

## 6.3 Weekly Frequency of Commuting and the Rise of Hybrid Working

One of the most significant changes wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic is that in the weekly frequency of travel. Prior to the pandemic, over two-thirds (68%) of respondents commuted at least five times per week, but this decreased to just one-quarter (25%) of commuters during the pandemic. Almost half of all commuters (47%) travelled to work or study less frequently than weekly during the pandemic. With the lifting of the pandemic restrictions, commuting

frequencies increased again, but not to anything like the pre-pandemic levels. Thus, while the number of commuters travelling to work or study on five or more days per week increased to 42% of the total, this was exceeded by the number of commuters travelling between one and four times per week, which stood at 46% of the total. This pattern of change was broadly similar across the four Phase 2 settlements for which longitudinal data are available (Figure 6.11). However, whereas in Aghagallon, Kanturk-Banteer and Mountbellew-Moylough, weekly commuting schedules (post-pandemic) were approximately equally divided between five-day plus and one- to four-day schedules, in Sallins the latter arrangement dominated, accounting for 57% of all commutes.

*Figure 6.11 Weekly commuting frequency (Phase 2 settlements)*

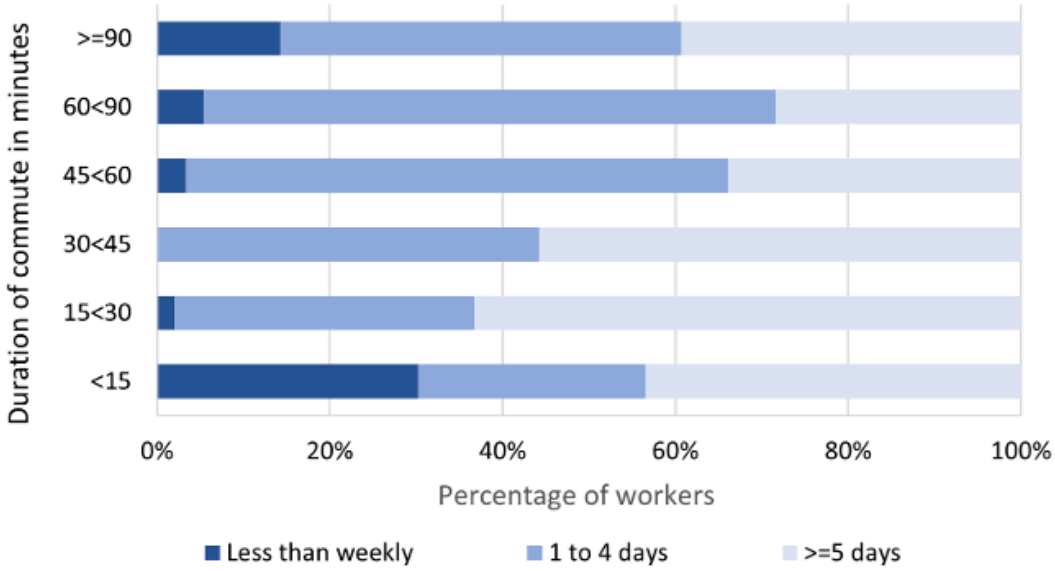



There are no noticeable socio-demographic differences in weekly commuting frequencies, other than for a higher level of five-day plus commutes (60%) amongst those in social rented accommodation. This may reflect a higher incidence of occupations that are not amenable to working from home amongst social renters. However, a degree of caution must be exercised in interpreting this result due to the relatively small numbers in this housing tenure category in the sample, as already noted.

There is some evidence of association between the weekly frequency of commutes and the duration of commutes as recorded in the Phase 2 survey. The nature of this association is that frequency tends to decrease as the duration of the commute increases. Thus, for persons with commutes of 15 to 30 minutes duration the rate of frequent commuting (five or more days per week) is 63%, but this decreases to 28% amongst those with 60-to-90-minute commutes (Figure 6.12). Conversely, the percentage commuting between one and four times per week increases from 35% among respondents with commutes of 15 to 30 minutes duration to 66% among those commuting between 60 and 90 minutes. The data suggest that commuters are trading off the number of trips they take per week against the duration of their commute, as those with longer-duration commutes are incentivised to reduce the frequency of travel. Whether or not they are able to act on this incentive depends of course on a range of other factors, including their employers' attitudes to home working, which will be explored further in Chapter 9. For now, it can be noted that the data on which Figure 6.12 is based are for the post-pandemic situation,

and the relationship which it depicts between commuting frequency and duration does not apply in the pre-pandemic data. This suggests that the enforced switch to telecommuting during the pandemic may have demonstrated the benefits of reduced commuting frequency, in particular for those with the most burdensome commutes, and motivated the retention of the new commuting schedules in the post-pandemic period.

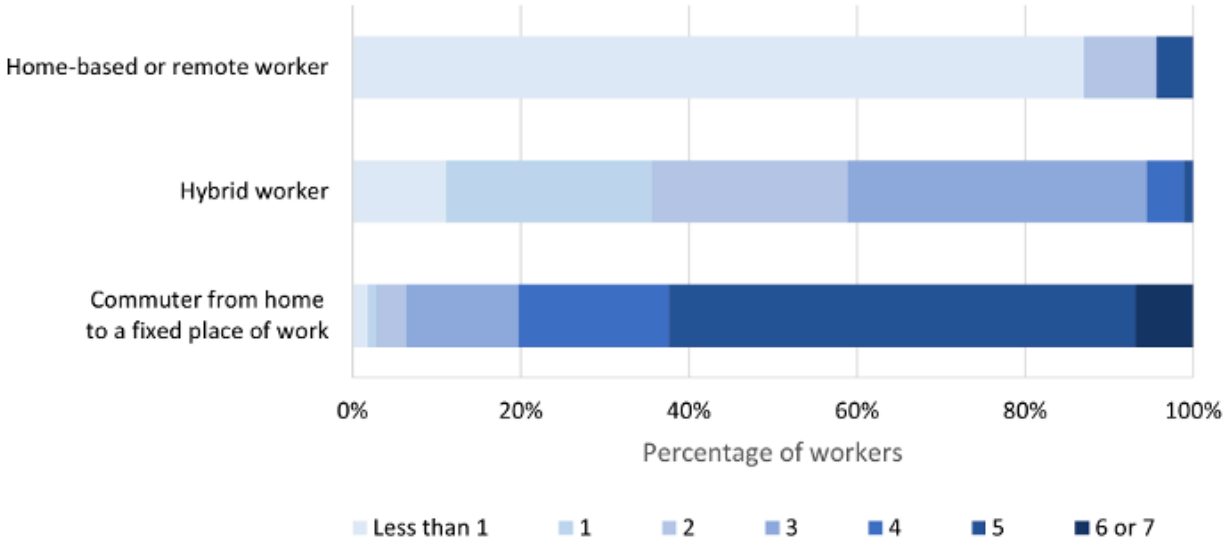
*Figure 6.12 Weekly frequency of commutes and duration of commutes (Phase 2 settlements)*




Changes in the weekly frequency of commuting are linked to the rise of hybrid working, wherein workers work remotely for a certain number of days per week and commute to their place of work on the remaining days. Hybrid working represents a new type of work arrangement, and a new type of home-workplace relationship that is based on the combination of traditional commuting and telecommuting. It is important to note that hybrid working is not the same as commuting less than five days a week, which was the subject of the analysis above. There are several reasons for this, including the fact that the larger category of low-frequency commuters includes not just hybrid workers but also fully remote workers as well as part-time workers who commute on all the days that they work (i.e., with no element of hybridity). As these examples illustrate, hybrid working is essentially a sub-set of low frequency commuting.

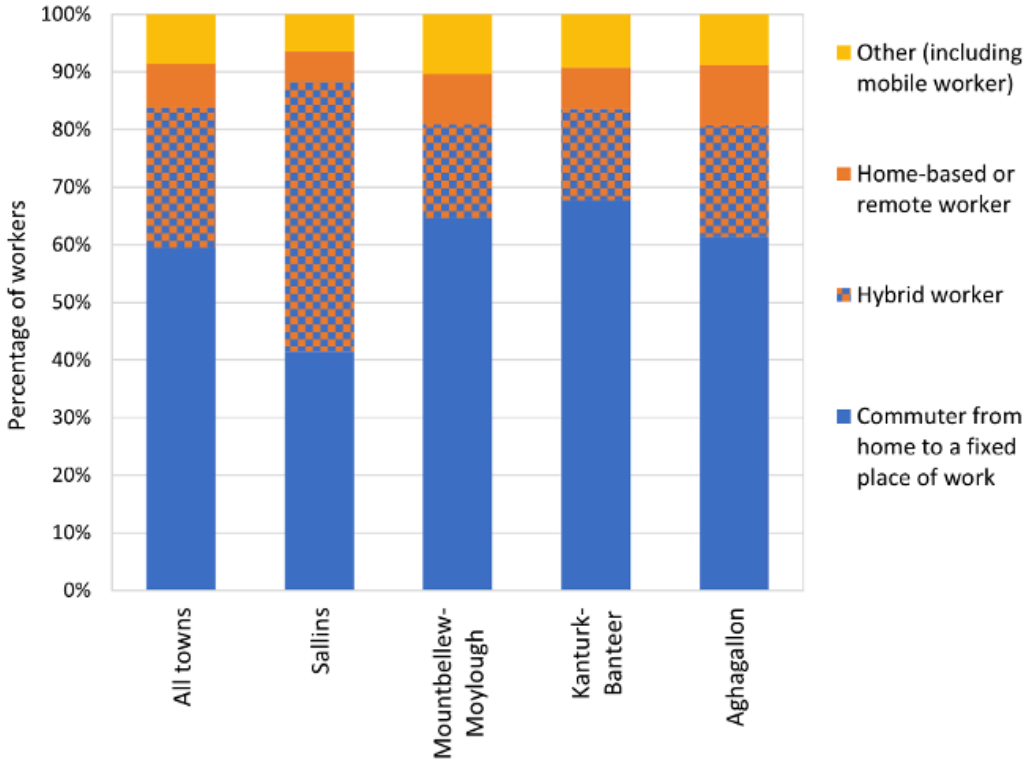
In order to get a clearer picture of hybrid working than can be inferred from information on the frequency of travel, the Phase 2 survey asked respondents to classify themselves according to their working / commuting pattern as either commuters to a fixed place of work, hybrid workers, remote (including home) workers, or other workers (including mobile workers travelling to different places of work). The reference period was the time of the survey (i.e., post-pandemic). Figure 6.13 first explores the relationship between frequency of commute and worker type by showing the commuting frequencies of the three main categories of workers (which together account for 92% of respondents). Those identifying as commuters to a fixed place of work (61% of respondents) mainly commute 5-days per week, hybrid workers (25% of respondents) mainly commute three times per week, though with significant proportions commuting one and two days also, and home-based or remote workers (6% of respondents) overwhelmingly commute less than weekly.

*Figure 6.13 Number of commutes per week by worker/ commuter type (Phase 2 survey)*




With this insight into the commuting frequency of different kinds of worker, we can now proceed to examine variations in worker / commuter type across the settlements, and also according to the main socio-demographic characteristics of workers. Figure 6.14 shows the breakdown of workers by category, for all settlements and for the individual case study areas. Hybrid workers were a significant component of the workforce in all settlements, with roughly comparable levels in Kanturk-Banteer (16%), Mountbellew-Moylough (16%) and Aghagallon (19%). However, the extent of hybrid working in Sallins (47%) is particularly notable, at almost twice the rate for all settlements. It is the largest single category in Sallins, and together with fully remote working (5% of total) it encompasses more than half of all workers in the town. The relatively large number of hybrid workers in Sallins is consistent with the finding, noted earlier, that it is also the town with the highest level of home / remote working in the post-pandemic period.

*Figure 6.14 Worker / commuter type by settlement (Phase 2 survey)*



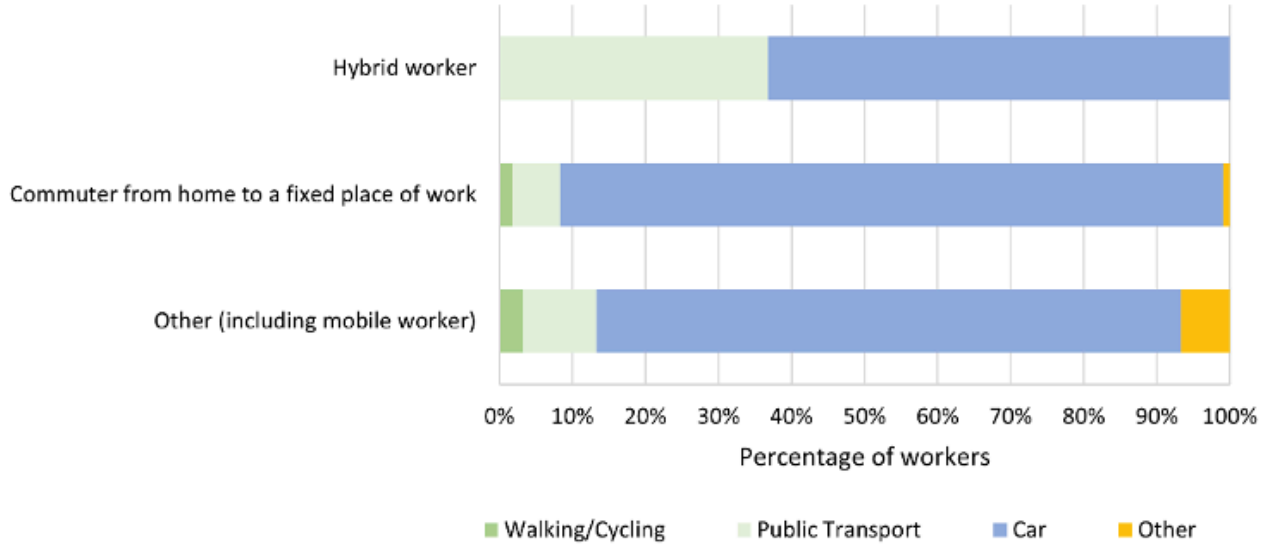

The extent of hybrid working shows some variation across socio-demographic cohorts. The strongest relationship is with level of education, where the rate of hybrid working among those with third-level education (30%) is more than twice that of persons without (14%). There is a less pronounced difference according to gender, where males (28%) are more likely than females (23%) to have hybrid working arrangements. Conversely, female workers are more likely to have retained the traditional pattern of commuting to a fixed place of work (63% as compared to 51%). These gender-based differences in working / commuting arrangements are not due to differences in levels of educational attainment, as the percentage of females with third level education is slightly higher than that of males. Hybridity is also somewhat less common among younger workers, three-quarters of whom are commuters to a fixed place of work, and tends to increase with age of worker, though as with gender age-related differences are not very strong. Levels of hybrid working for selected cohorts are summarised in Table 6.4.

*Table 6.4 Rates of hybrid working by socio-demographic cohort (Phase 2 survey)*

| Indicator | Cohort | % |
|---|---|---|
| Gender | Females | 23.0 |
| | Males | 27.7 |
| Age | 18 to 30 | 18.2 |
| | 31 to 44 | 22.9 |
| | 45 years and over | 27.0 |
| Education | Third level | 30.0 |
| | Other | 14.1 |

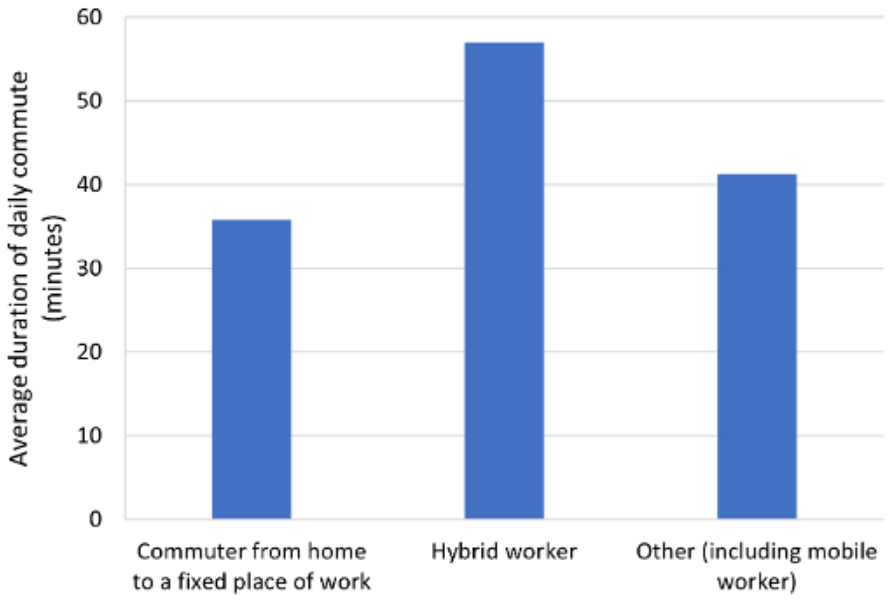
Finally, there are some notable and potentially important differences among worker/ commuter types in other characteristics of their commutes, in particular the mode of travel and the duration of commutes. With regard to mode of travel, hybrid workers commute by public transport to a much greater extent than commuters from home to a fixed place of work, or other workers (home workers are excluded from this comparison). More than one-third of hybrid workers (37%) use public transport when they commute, as compared to just 7% of commuters to a fixed place of work, and 15% of other workers (Figure 6.15). Traditional commuters, in contrast, are overwhelmingly dependent on travelling by car. The tendency of hybrid commuters to use public transport to a greater extent than others echoes the relationship noted earlier between lower frequency of commuting (which is strongly correlated with hybrid working) and travel by public transport. Again, this finding would appear to be of significance in terms of the transport policy goal of shifting commuters (and others) from the car to public transport. The evidence suggests that facilitating and increasing the rate of hybrid working may help to reduce greenhouse gas (GhG) emissions from the transport sector in two ways: first, by reducing the overall amount of commuting taking place through partially substituting telecommuting for commuting; and second, by causing a shift in the remaining commuting trips towards public transport, thereby reducing GhG emissions per person per kilometer travelled.

*Figure 6.15 Mode of travel by worker/ commuter type (Phase 2 survey)*




The potential for hybrid working to contribute to the attainment of climate change targets is reinforced by the fact that, besides the connection with mode of travel, worker / commuter type is also strongly associated with the duration of commutes. Hybrid workers have a significantly higher average duration of commutes than either commuters to a fixed place of work or other workers (Figure 6.16). The average reported commute duration for hybrid workers is 57 minutes (one-way), as compared to 36 minutes for traditional commuters, and 41 minutes for other workers (again home workers are excluded from this comparison). Not surprisingly, given that hybrid working, by definition, entails a lower frequency of commutes, this association between worker / commuter type and duration of commute is consistent with the finding reported earlier that persons with longer-duration commutes travel less often on a weekly basis. Again, it seems likely that these relationships come about because those with longer-duration commutes, who are more likely to be in professional and managerial occupations, have both the incentive and the ability to reduce the number of their trips through the adoption of hybrid working. Hence, in addition to the arguments for facilitating hybrid working that we noted above (fewer commutes in total, and more use of public transport) we can add that hybrid working is likely to differentially reduce the number of longer-duration commutes, thereby augmenting the environmental benefit.

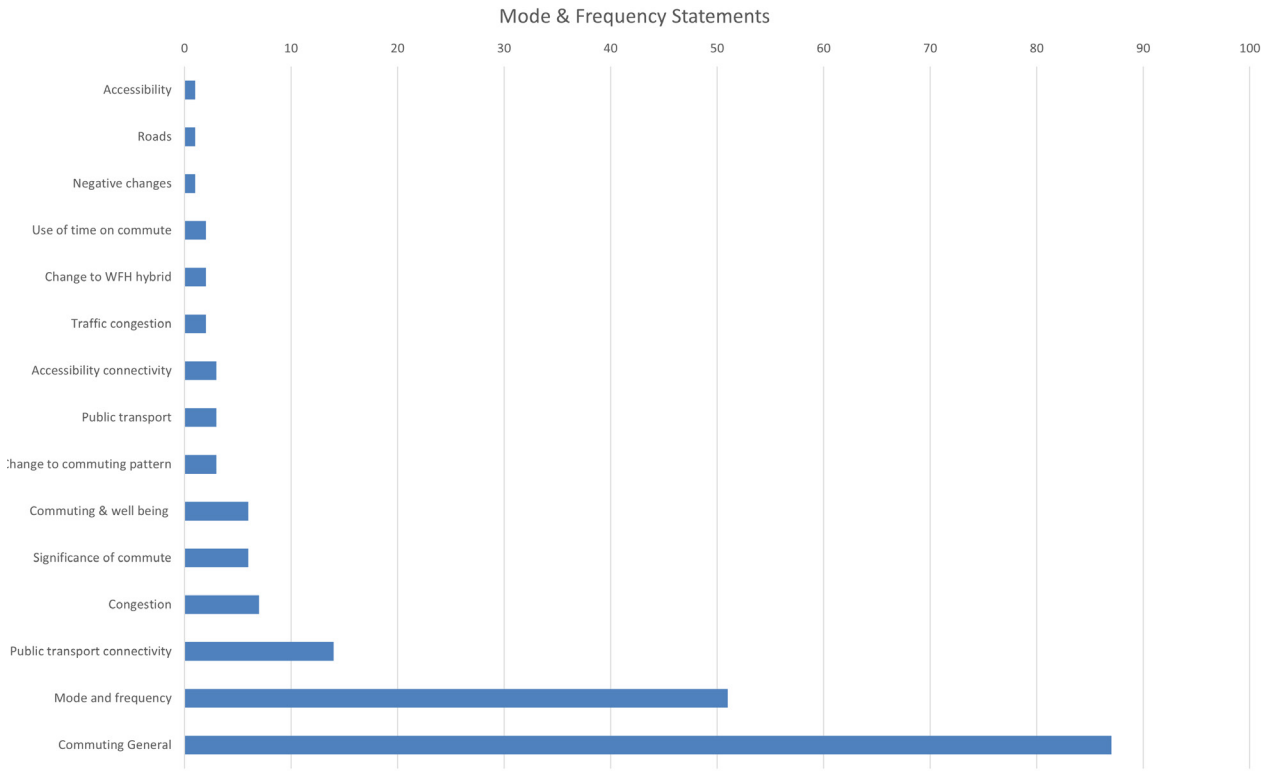
*Figure 6.16 Average duration of commute by worker/ commuter type (Phase 2 survey)*




### 6.4 Commuter Perspectives on Travel Mode and Changing Patterns of Work

This section presents commuters' perspectives on various aspects of their commute, including their mode and frequency of travel to work or study, and on the implications that working from home has had for their commuting patterns. Figure 6.17 illustrates the issues interviewees discussed and highlighted when talking about mode and frequency of travel. These emerged most frequently under the theme of commuting. Overall, 51 direct statements were made on mode and frequency of travel, and these were supplemented by a series of related discussions on commuting in general (87 general statements or referrals not sub-coded), followed by reflections on public transport and connectivity, traffic congestion, changing work and travel patterns since the COVID-19 pandemic, and well-being.

*Figure 6.17 Statements related to discussion on mode and frequency of commute*




#### 6.4.1 Congestion, Commuting and Mode of Travel

Several interviewees spoke about how they alter their work patterns in terms of the time at which they travel in order to adapt to traffic conditions. Traffic congestion was a major deciding-factor in respect of the time they would leave home in the morning:

> *"there's no point in me getting up in the morning, and leaving here at eight o'clock, because it will take me two hours to get to work in the city. So what I generally do is, I get up at six, and I am usually on the road between kind of 20 past 6 and 20 to 7. That way, then, I miss most of the traffic and I take the motorway".*
> MM7

Likewise, the linked decision on when to leave work for home has implications for travel time:

> *"Typically, I'd be leaving work at half five, six, it could be later. But again, I find I suppose if I were to go in earlier, I could leave at maybe four or half four [...] Or if I were to leave at half four or five o'clock, I'm sitting in traffic and it's taking*

> *me over an hour to get home. If I stay in the office until kind of half past five quarter to six I get home in 45 minutes".*
> KB2

As well as the decision on the time to travel, the choice of travel route (among those travelling by car) can also be influenced by traffic congestion, as related by one interviewee in speaking about their spouse's commute:

> *"[...] he leaves before seven, because if he leaves any later, it'll take him longer. So it's only a half an hour if you stay up that way. But he goes up over like back roads because otherwise he'd have to go into [x] and up the main road, and [...] the traffic is [...] quite heavy going that way. So he's able to cut up back roads and stuff like that so that's why it only takes a half an hour then in the mornings".*
> KB3

While the dominant mode of travel to work is driving a car, some interviewees report that public transport could be an option if there was greater access and frequency of service. The opportunity to work while commuting by public transport is identified as beneficial, and a good use of time on the commute:

> *"... I just drive. I wasn't great at phone calls with clients in the car. They don't really appreciate the kind of drive and talk. So in a train, yes (I) work. Up and down on the train".*
> KB11

Among other commuters, there was a frustration with public transport, particularly those who either had no choice but to use public transport or had a desire not to be car-reliant:

> *"... traffic is mad in Cork city. So that really didn't help me much. The buses [...] if they're full, they don't wait for you. [...] if you miss a train, you have to wait a whole hour for the next one. Sometimes during the day they are a little bit more frequent. But in general, yeah, it's about an hour. Between the bicycle and the bus [...] it turns out to be about the same. I mean, I'm not too bad on my bicycle, but like the ride from the train station to [x], it takes you know, good, you know, 20 minutes, 15/20 minutes".*
> KB7

> *"It depends on the day, but mostly like Monday would be like prime rush hour time. And the parking at [x] train station would be like a bit of a problem, I know that loads of people would like... 'if you're not getting [...] one of the first trains out in the morning, then you've basically no hope of getting your car parked'".*
> AGH1

It is strongly apparent from the interviews that commuters strategically assess how their journey will impact them least negatively. This approach varies from choosing to leave at specific times that avoid traffic, or by changing mode of transport, such from as car to public transport, where possible, or the travel route.

### 6.4.2 Commuting Mode and Well-being

Well-being was also something that interviewees discussed when reflecting on their mode of travel. Often they had no choice in how they conducted their commute, and for those who could take public transport, the benefits were identified:

> *"I tended, in recent years, to start taking the train because I found the driving so exhausting, you know, just getting a bit older so I was finding driving a bit exhausting".*
> KB11

Other commuters identified multi-modal travel as positive in terms of health and well-being, for example:

> *"I walk. It's about a seven, eight-minute walk to the station then twenty minutes, thirty-two, thirty-five, and I have a twenty-minute walk after that so takes me fifty-five minutes probably door to door. But I get a bit of exercise; it's a twenty-five-minute walk".*
> SL1

Echoing the findings from the questionnaire survey that hybrid working is more common among those with longer commutes, the opportunity of working from home and thereby reducing the frequency of commute, especially when there is a long commute of over 45 minutes, was a commonly expressed benefit for commuters in the study:

> *"Well I actually work in [x] so my commute is [...] about an hour every day. I probably go [to the office] three or four days a week just with my ability to work from home [...] I wouldn't go over that hour, an hour/ fifty minutes mark, I would be reluctant to do that as a commute".*
> AGH6

Well-being is a strong consideration for those commuting long distances, even if that commute is no longer an everyday occurrence. The fact that working from home is now a more accessible options for interviewees since the COVID-19 pandemic, has allowed commuters to adjust their scheduling and work patterns to ease the strain and stress that commuting can bring.

### 6.4.3 Changing Work Patterns

Particularly in the Phase 2 towns, there was a broad discussion in interviews about changing patterns of work, and the move to working from home, and/or hybrid working. These changes had been more established in the Phase 2 towns because of the later timing of the primary data collection. Commuters highlighted the benefits of changes in work patterns, including the switch to home working. Interestingly 'working from home' should be taken as a literal statement in this section. Interviewees rarely mentioned digital hubs (three mentions in 94 interviewees) or other types of formal remote work spaces as places they used for hybrid working. Some interviewees mentioned working in cafés, but the norm was staying in the home to work. In the Northern Irish settlements, there is less availability of remote working hubs than in Ireland, but notwithstanding the greater number of remote working hubs in Ireland, the interviewees and survey respondents were unlikely to use shared working spaces. From the interviews the rationale for this was well-being considerations and suitability of staying at home to support family life (more on this in Chapter 7).

The switch to hybrid working, which involves a mix of working from home and site-based work varying in the number of days per week, was cited as positive by interviewees:

> *"it's just easier to work from home [...] we got just got rid of desktops and moved to laptops just before COVID and they were starting to talk about, you know, hybrid working and smarter ways of working, you know? It all just kicked in with a big bang rather than phased in".*
> AGH1

> *"I work from the café [interviewee's place of work] three days. Sometimes if I have a lot of work that I needed to work with no distractions then I work from home definitely yeah".*
> AGH5

The implications of hybrid working for their patterns of travel behaviour were discussed by a number of interviewees. As noted in the survey, the use of public transport by hybrid workers


*Access to green spaces is an important consideration for residents*

is higher than among those with more traditional commuting patterns. However, the changing nature of work patterns has implications for travel cost for those travelling by public transport:

> *"Well pre-COVID I always got the bus. There's quite a good park and ride right beside us here. So I would always travel by bus. And since COVID, well, I'm in nine days a month now in the office and I would still travel by bus. Obviously it's more expensive now, the bus fares have gone up. Originally I got yearly tickets, so I got it cheaper but now that I'm only in 9 days a month I kind of buy the ticket on the day".*
> AGH8

> *"I know that there's actually less people getting the train now since COVID. I think a lot of it has to do though with [...] because people can work from home more days a week now it's actually cheaper for people to drive than to pay for a monthly train ticket, [...]. Because if they're down two days a week, they're not really getting value for their money".*
> AGH2

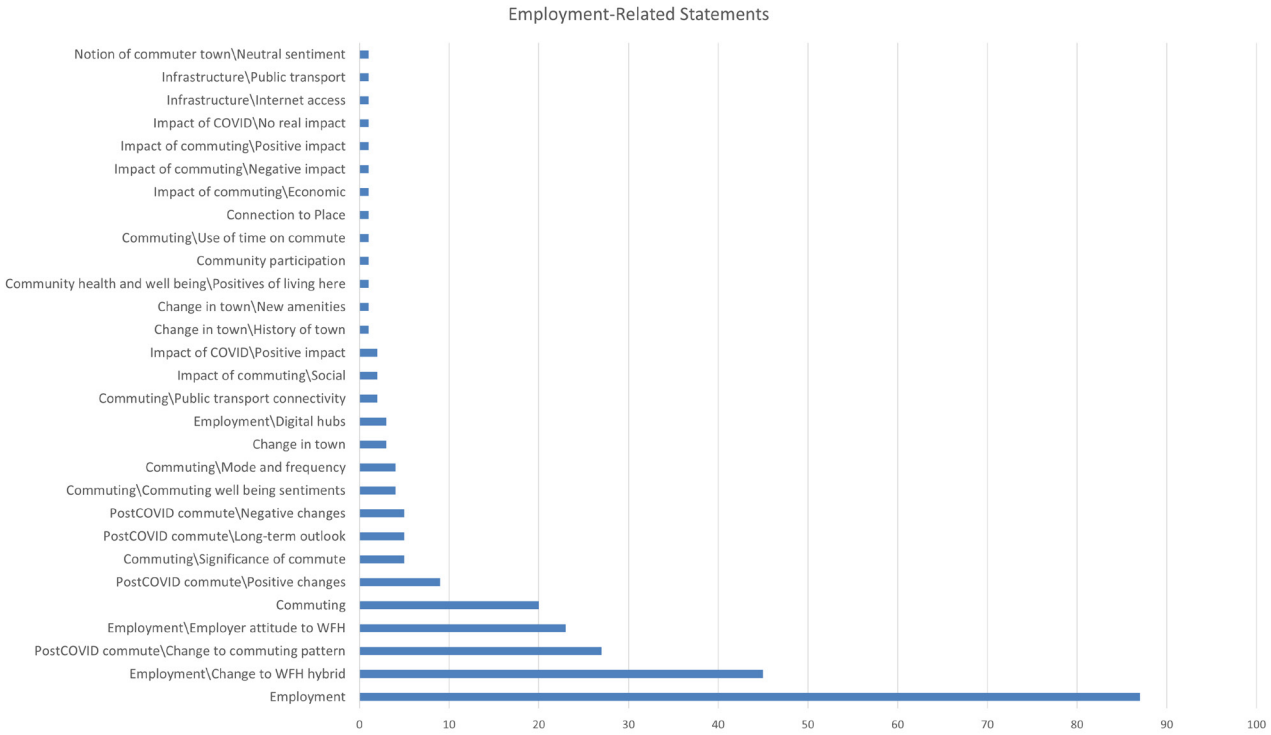
Other interviewees with hybrid working arrangements identified the lack of connectivity and joined-up timetabling as a barrier to the use of public transport. They continued to travel by car, making adjustments in their time of travel in order to avoid some of the problems associated with congestion, as the following quote illustrates:

> *"Typically ... our presence in the office is 50%. Now it varies per company, but with my company, the required presence is 50%. So typically, I should be two days in the office, and typically the two days that I am in, I will travel by car to [x], which is approximately 60 kilometres each way. It will take in or around an hour to get from door-to-door. I don't like traffic. So I will leave here at six or ten past six in the morning, and I will be going through the Jack Lynch (tunnel) at ten to seven, to avoid the traffic and I will try to leave early if I can again to avoid traffic. So if you leave around four which I did yesterday, it was quite a good time to leave. But I do travel by car every day".*
> KB8

Figure 6.18 highlights what interviewees spoke about most when talking about employment and their work. Next to general discussion of their job or employment (87 statements), the most talked about topic was changes due to working from home / hybrid roles (45 statements). Under the theme of the 'post-COVID' commute there were 27 statements directly related to

employment. Following that, recurring themes around commuting (20) in general arose, together with discussion on employer attitudes to working from home (23), the positive impact of COVID on work (9), and then minimal exploration of a range of topics about where the interviewees live and their relationship with the locality (these topics were explored in Chapter 5).

*Figure 6.18 Statements related to discussion on employment*




To complete this section examining perspectives on changing work patterns, and continuing the reflection on trade-offs that commuters make, this interviewee talked about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and gave fresh perspective on quality of life:

> *"it's a good job, so it's worth the commute okay. Like I, if I could find a job that was ten minutes up the road, walking and it wasn't as much well paid. I'd take that. Because COVID has made everybody, a lot of people, realise is the quality of life is more important than the work. So being at home allows you to do more bits and pieces with people around the house. Or go out for a lunchtime walk or go meet up with somebody [...] the flexibility that it has brought makes people think of, well it's not all about the money. It's not all about promotions. Before COVID I would've been very driven from a promotional perspective. And trying to make myself super and then trying to build empires and stuff like that. But since then I don't really, I'm just a lot more relaxed about it. And it's great, it's better you know. So the commute is fine it's worth it for the money. But if I could get a five-minute walking commute for less money I'd snap their hand off, yea".*
> SL5

## 6.5 Summary

This chapter has profiled some of the key characteristics of commuting behaviour in the case study settlements, including the mode of travel used, and the distance, duration and weekly frequency of commuting. As well as outlining the key patterns on each aspect, some of the important interactions between different parameters have been identified. Changes in travel behaviour both during and after the imposition of restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic have been described, including in particular the switch to remote working and the adoption of

new hybrid working / commuting arrangements which combine commuting and telecommuting. While data and trends relating to all seven of the case study areas are described, certain analyses have focused on the four settlements covered in the Phase 2 survey, for which a fuller record of commuting behaviour is available, including data on a longitudinal (pre-, during and post-pandemic) basis.

In brief, the key findings from the survey, as outlined in the chapter, are as follows:

- Across all seven settlements there continues to be an overwhelming dependence on travel to work and study by car, but significant differences between settlements appear to reflect differences in the availability and range of public transport options.
- After decreasing during the pandemic, the use of public transport increased again after the pandemic, and in fact showed a marginal increase across the period as a whole (i.e., from the pre- to the post-pandemic period).
- Higher levels of public transport use are associated with longer-duration commutes. It is not clear what the nature of the relationship is here.
- Higher levels of public transport use are also associated with lower weekly frequencies of commuting, and therefore with hybrid working which reduces the frequency of commutes by partially substituting telecommuting for commuting. This finding suggests that the rise of hybrid working can help to boost usage of public transport.
- There was a strong switch to remote working during the pandemic, which, in the great majority of cases, meant home working.
- A large proportion (45% in the post-pandemic period) of all commutes involved distances of 30 km or more, one-way, though there was variability in this across settlements, which reflected their location relative to employment centres.
- In general, duration of commute correlates closely with distance travelled, and for the seven settlements as a whole the percentage of commutes that are of more than 45 minutes (one-way) is more than twice the average recorded for Ireland in the 2022 Census of Population.
- There was a significant reduction in the weekly frequency of commuting during the pandemic, and most of this reduction was retained in the post-pandemic period, especially in Sallins.
- There is an inverse relationship between duration and frequency of commute i.e., those with the longest-duration commutes are more likely to have a lower frequency of commute.
- At the time of the Phase 2 survey, almost one-quarter of workers classified themselves as hybrid workers, with the level rising as high as 47% in Sallins.
- There is evidence of differences among socio-demographic cohorts in various aspects of commuting behaviour, but in particular in the distance and duration of travel, frequency of travel and rates of home working and hybrid working. The most consistent and strongest associations are with level of education, with the survey showing that workers with third-level education are more likely to work at home and to have hybrid working arrangements.

In the interviews, what becomes apparent is the efforts individuals make to reduce the stress and tiredness that can come with a long commute. It is clear that quality of life can be improved by changing one's mode of travel, or if mode cannot be changed, then adjusting the time at which one leaves or returns home. Throughout the interviews, the impact of COVID-19 and the need to work from home was identified as a game-changer for many. The flexibility that hybrid working has brought has resulted in commuters having reduced frequency of travel and 'home' days where family or local life can be focused on. The next two chapters will examine in more detail the impact of the commuting patterns identified in this chapter on families and on community.

# 7

# Impact of Commuting on Commuters and their Families

Before the pandemic,

**32%**

of commuters indicated that they frequently experienced difficulties fulfilling family responsibilities as a result of time spent commuting.

During the pandemic, this dropped to

**12%**

but it has since increased to

**25%**

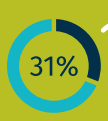
Just

**4%**

of those with commuting times of less than 15 minutes report difficulties with family responsibilities. The rate rises to

**41%**

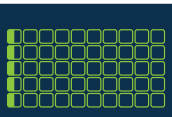
for those commuting for more than 45 minutes.




of those who commute five or more days per week


of those who commute on a less than weekly basis experience frequent difficulties fulfilling family responsibilities

**5%**



of those with the low commuting burdens (ie <300 minutes / week)

and

almost **60%**

of those with high commuting burdens (ie >900 minutes or more / week)

frequently have difficulties

## WELL-BEING, FAMILY AND COMMUTING

**40%**

of those who commute by public transport,

**25%**

of those who commute by car

and none of those who walk or cycle to work indicated that they frequently experienced difficulties fulfilling family responsibilities.

**Average levels of satisfaction (max. 10) according to mode of travel are:**

| Walking/Cycling | Public Transport | Car |
|---|---|---|
| 9.4 | 6.1 | 7.0 |

**Satisfaction with commute by worker / commuter type:**

| Commuter from home to a fixed place of work | Hybrid worker | Home-based or remote worker | Other (including mobile worker) | All workers |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6.7 | 6.4 | 8.8 | 7.3 | 6.8 |

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# Impact of Commuting on Commuters and their Families

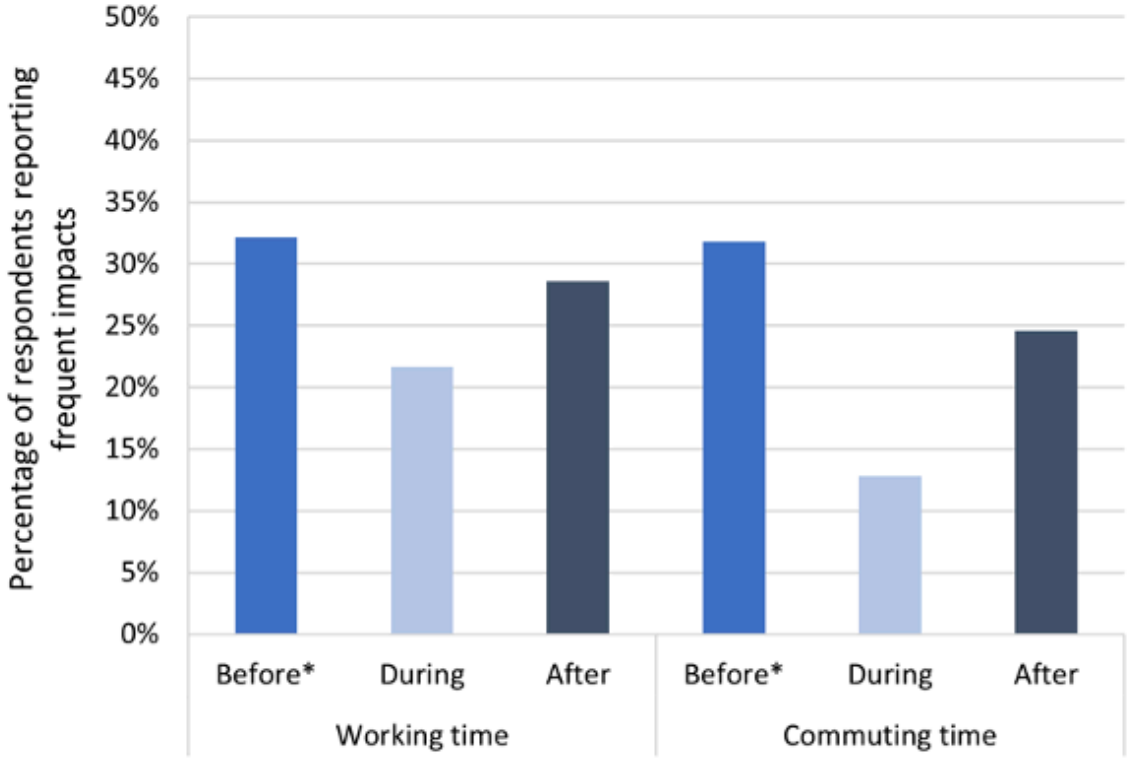
Having delineated the key characteristics of commuting in the previous chapter, this chapter examines the impacts of commuting on commuters' daily lives and relationships, together with practicalities around family-life. Chapter 6 has established that commuting from the case study settlements was characterised by a higher rate of long-duration commuting than in the state as a whole. Thus, in the post pandemic period the percentage of respondents travelling for 45 minutes or more (one-way) was more than twice the rate for Ireland as reported in the 2022 census of population. Inevitably, longer-duration commutes have implications for commuters' daily and weekly time budgets, constraining the time available to engage in other activities outside of work, and to meet non-work obligations and responsibilities. Chapter 8 will examine the impact of commuting on commuters' social engagement and levels of voluntary activity. Before that, this chapter focuses on the question of whether, and to what extent, time spent commuting had negative consequences for commuters' engagement in family life. Such adverse consequences, if they exist, could be expected to impact more widely on commuters' sense of well-being. The analysis initially explores the potential for these well-being impacts by looking at commuters' levels of satisfaction with their commutes as compared to other aspects of their lives, and then delves more deeply into commuting-related well-being considerations through an analysis of interview data relating to the importance to commuters of family, familial connections and associated support networks.

## 7.1 Impacts of Commuting on Home Life and Families

The survey investigated the extent to which commuting negatively impacted family life, before, during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, by collecting data on the frequency with which respondents reported difficulties fulfilling their family responsibilities as a direct result of time spent commuting. Throughout the section, results presented are based on the percentage of respondents indicating that they frequently encountered such difficulties, with *frequently* being defined as either every day or several times a week.

As shown in Chapter 6, the percentage of respondents commuting for 45 minutes or more decreased from 50% before the pandemic to 16% during the pandemic as the pivot to home working meant a reduction, if not an elimination, of commuting for many workers. With the ending of pandemic restrictions, commuting durations returned to close to pre-pandemic levels, with 47% of commuters travelling for 45 minutes or more (data from the Phase 2 survey). The effect of these changes on commuters' engagement with family responsibilities is shown in Figure 7.1. For comparison, the impact of working time on family responsibilities is also shown. Before the pandemic, 32% of commuters indicated that they frequently experienced difficulties fulfilling family responsibilities as a result of time spent commuting, with a similar percentage identifying frequent impacts of working time on family responsibilities. During the pandemic these rates dropped to 12% (for commuting time impacts) and 22% (for working time impacts) respectively, indicating a positive or beneficial effect of the pandemic in respect of family life, and one that operated mainly through the saving in commuting time. In the post-pandemic period, the adverse impact of both working time and family time increased again, though the increase in the rate of difficulties attributed to commuting time was somewhat less than for working time. This is to be expected, given that the benefit of reduced weekly commuting time was retained, to some degree, by hybrid workers. Nevertheless, the reported rate of difficulties is high, considering that the indicator used focuses only on frequent impacts of commuting time.

*Figure 7.1 Impact of working time and commuting time on family responsibilities*



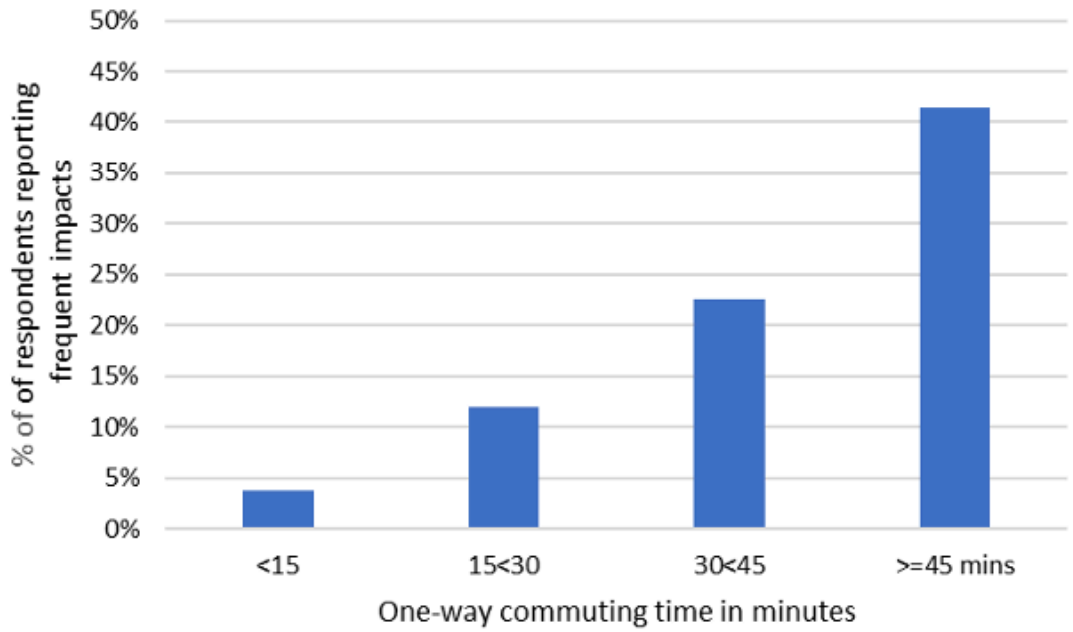

** Before data from Phase 1 survey; During and After data from Phase 2 survey.*

The remainder of this section examines commuters' experience of difficulties with family responsibilities in detail, by looking at the relationship between this issue and characteristics of the commute, as well as key socio-demographic attributes of the commuters themselves. The focus is on the most recent, post-pandemic, period, and therefore the analysis draws on the Phase 2 survey.

Characteristics of the commute have a pronounced and significant effect on commuters' ability to meet family responsibilities. Given that the issue under investigation is the family impact of

commuting time specifically, it is not surprising that there is a particularly strong relationship between duration of commute and the rate of difficulties. This finding is consistent with those that emerge from various European Quality of Life Surveys. Thus, whereas just 4% of those with commuting times of less than 15 minutes report difficulties with family responsibilities, the rate rises to 41% for those commuting for more than 45 minutes (Figure 7.2). Since just under half of the sample report commuting times of 45 minutes and over, this represents a very significant impact of commuting in the Phase 2 case study settlements. Not surprisingly, given that it is highly correlated with travel time, the distance of commute is also strongly associated with difficulties meeting family responsibilities. For persons travelling more than 30 km to work or study, the rate of difficulties is 45% as compared to 4% for those who work in the settlement where they live. Again, it is worth noting that a significant percentage of the sample (38%) are faced with the longer (30 km plus) commutes.[xviii]

*Figure 7.2 Duration of commute and frequent impacts on family responsibilities (Phase 2 survey)*




Difficulties in meeting family responsibilities are also related to the weekly frequency of commuting, though here the effect is less pronounced than for duration and distance of commutes. In general, the rate of difficulties increases as the number of commuting days per week increases. Almost one-third (31%) of those who commute five or more days per week experience frequent difficulties, as compared to just 8% of those who commute on a less than weekly basis. For those who commute between one and four days per week (which includes hybrid workers) the rate is 25%. Interestingly, the rate of difficulties seems to plateau at three commuting days per week, suggesting that the benefits of hybrid working in relation to family engagement are greatest when the number of commuting days is less than three (Figure 7.3). As the next chapter shows, such a plateau effect can also be observed in respect of other indicators, such as participation in sporting and social activities.

The relationship between difficulties with family responsibilities and both the duration and frequency of commutes is attenuated by the fact that, as seen in Chapter 6, these two characteristics of the commute to some extent offset each other, as there is a tendency in the post-pandemic period for those with longer commutes to travel less frequently. Hence, neither variable on its own (one-way duration or frequency) truly represents the commuting burden faced by workers. In order to arrive at a more reliable measure of this, we can calculate the

weekly commuting burden by multiplying the total number of commutes per week (in both directions) by the duration of each commute. The resulting variable, weekly commuting time, shows a very strong relationship with the rate of difficulties meeting family responsibilities (Figure 7.4). Amongst those with the lowest weekly commuting burden the rate of frequent difficulties is just 5%, but this rises to almost 60% among those with the greatest burden, here defined as weekly travel time of 900 minutes or more (fifteen hours). The latter threshold equivalates to the weekly commuting time of a hypothetical worker travelling five-days per week on commutes that take 90 minutes or more one-way, or 180 minutes (3 hours) return.

*Figure 7.3 Frequency of commute and frequent impacts on family responsibilities (Phase 2 survey)*

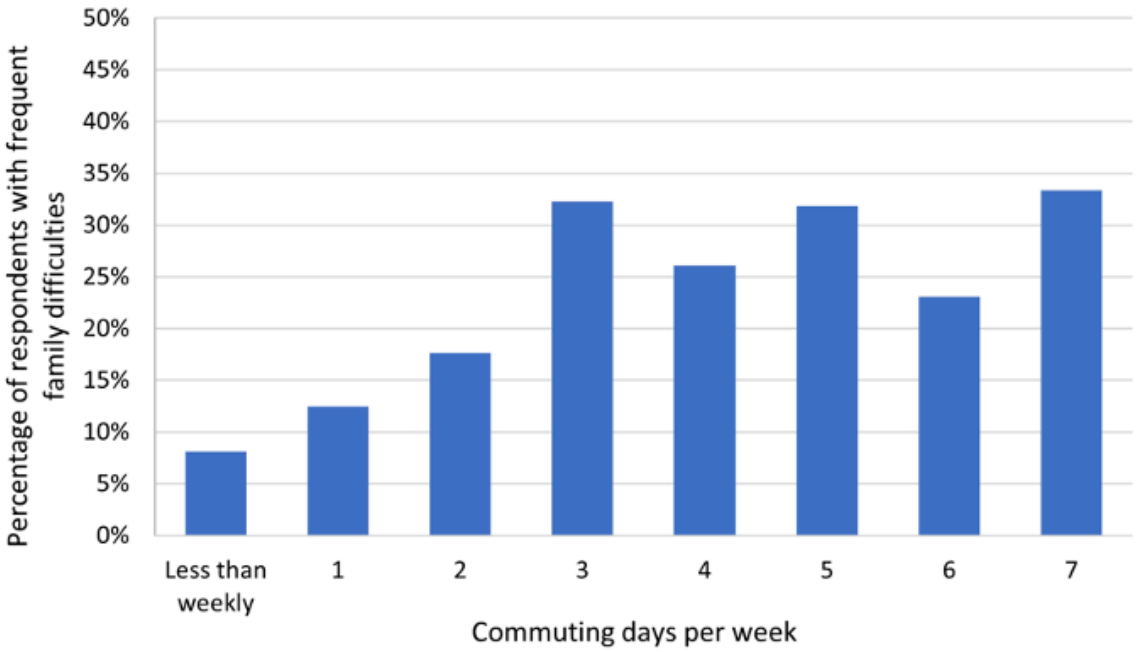
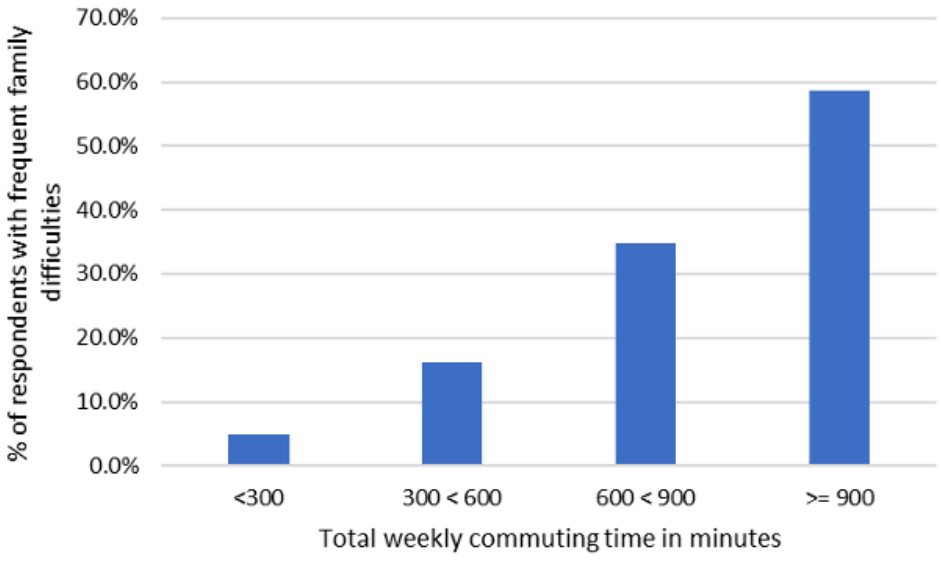


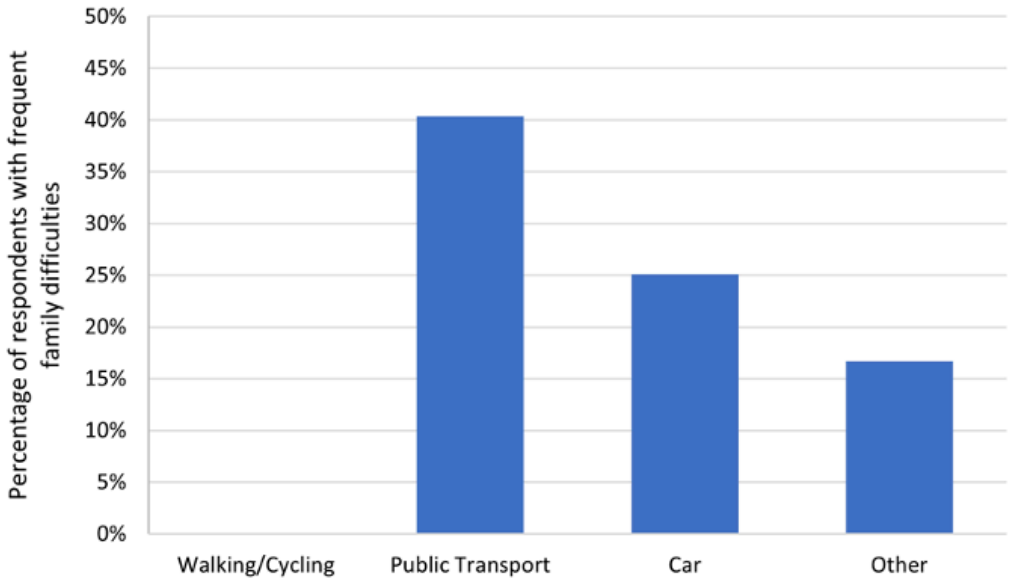

*Figure 7.4 Total weekly commuting time and frequent impacts on family responsibilities (Phase 2 survey)*



In general then, taking into account the duration of daily trips, the distances involved, the number of commuting days per week and the total weekly commuting time, the analysis shows that negative family impacts are consistently and strongly associated with more onerous commuting regimes. The problem for the four Phase 2 settlements from which these data were collected is that significant numbers of people *have* more onerous commuting regimes, with, for example 22% of workers in the category of highest burden commutes.

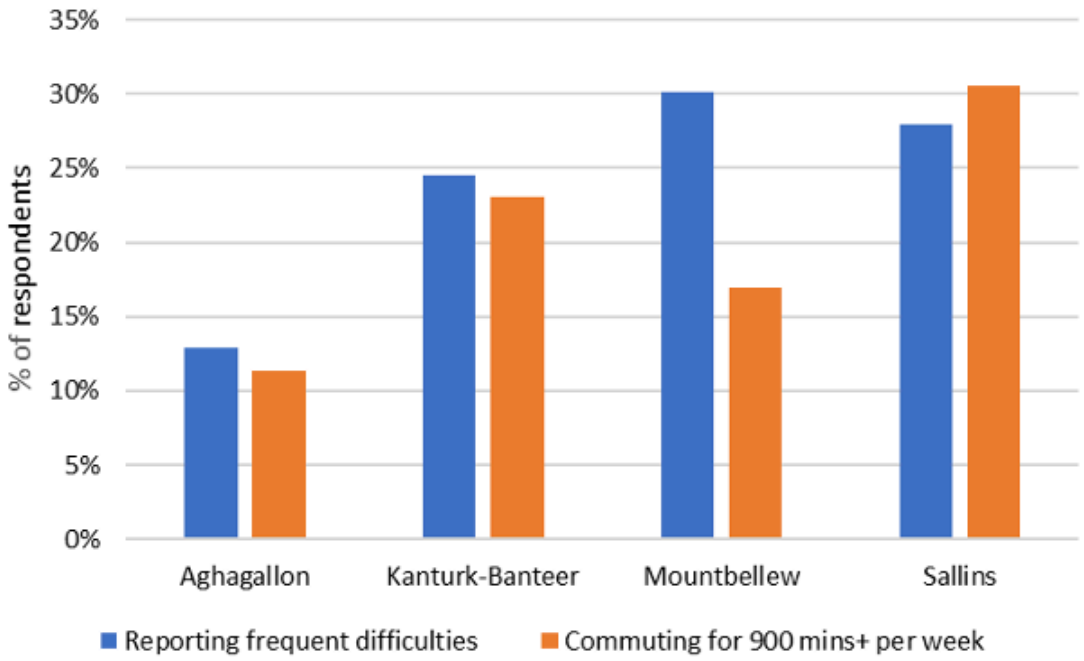
The rate of difficulties meeting family responsibilities as a result of time spent commuting is also correlated with the mode of travel. Commuters who use public transport have a significantly higher rate of difficulties than users of other modes. The rates for public transport users, those who travel by car and by other means of travel are 40%, 25% and 17% respectively (Figure 7.5). None of those who commute by active travel modes (walking or cycling) report frequent difficulties, but it should be noted that the number in this category is very small. The correlation between travel by public transport and difficulties meeting family responsibilities derives in part from the fact that, as noted in Chapter 6, 86% of commutes by public transport have a travel time of 45 minutes or more, as compared to 44% of commutes by car. The finding suggests that one of the disincentives to the use of public transport may be the associated impact on family time.

*Figure 7.5: Mode of travel and frequent impacts on family responsibilities (Phase 2 survey)*




As highlighted in Chapter 6, there is some variation in commuting parameters such as duration, distance, and mode across the commuter settlements. This results in variations also in the extent to which respondents in the four settlements report having frequent difficulties fulfilling family responsibilities. The rate of difficulties correlates strongly with the percentage of commuters facing the highest commuting burdens of 900 minutes or more per week. Thus, commuters in Aghagallon, have the lowest rates of the most onerous commutes and of frequent difficulties, and the general trend is that the higher the rate of high-burden commutes, the higher also is the rate of difficulties with family responsibilities (Figure 7.6). The relationship is not linear, however. Mountbellew-Moylough has the highest rate of difficulties with family responsibilities, at 30%, but a comparatively low rate of commuters there have the most burdensome commutes. There are several factors that could explain this, including differences between settlements in household and family structures, including stage in the family cycle.

*Figure 7.6 Long-duration commuting and frequent impacts on family responsibilities (Phase 2 survey)*




Compared to the impact of the commuting variables examined above, the effect of commuters' personal characteristics on the extent to which they experience difficulties in meeting family responsibilities is relatively small. There is no significant gender-based difference in the rate of commuting-induced difficulties, though women are slightly more likely to report difficulties than are men. There are somewhat larger differences according to age, education and housing tenure, with the highest rates of difficulties experienced by persons aged 18 to 30 years (though the number in this cohort is small), by those without third level education, and by persons in the private rental sector. It is likely that these differences are due to related differences, or co-variation, in family composition and responsibilities.

### 7.2 Satisfaction with the Commute and Commuter Well-being

Given that significant numbers of commuters reported adverse effects of commuting time on their family lives, this section now explores the salience of these family impacts, by examining the extent to which they in turn affected commuters' overall satisfaction with their commutes. Elsewhere (Olsson *et. al.* 2013) it has been shown that satisfaction with the commute is in turn linked to life satisfaction and well-being, though other studies have failed to establish this link. Level of satisfaction is measured on a 10-point scale ranging from 1, 'very dissatisfied', to 10, 'very satisfied', and the overall level of satisfaction expressed by a particular cohort, and / or for a particular time period, is simply the average of the satisfaction ratings for that cohort / time period.

Across the seven case study areas, respondents are less satisfied with their commutes than with other aspects of their situation (Figure 7.7). Respondents' satisfaction levels with their accommodation, their job, and the locality / community in which they live are similar and significantly higher than satisfaction with their commute. Figure 7.7 illustrates the trade-off that commuters make: housing, the locality and the community, which are key reasons why new residents have moved to the case study settlements, are scored highly, while the commute, which is the price to be paid for these benefits, is rated lowest. Amongst the seven settlements, satisfaction with the commute is highest in Ennistymon-Lahinch, as might be expected from the fact that this town has a relatively low rate of outward commuting. The lowest levels of satisfaction are in the two towns with the most rural settings: Kanturk-Banteer and Mountbellew-

Moylough (Figure 7.8). However, these differences in satisfaction ratings among the seven settlements are relatively small.

*Figure 7.7 Satisfaction with aspects of daily life*

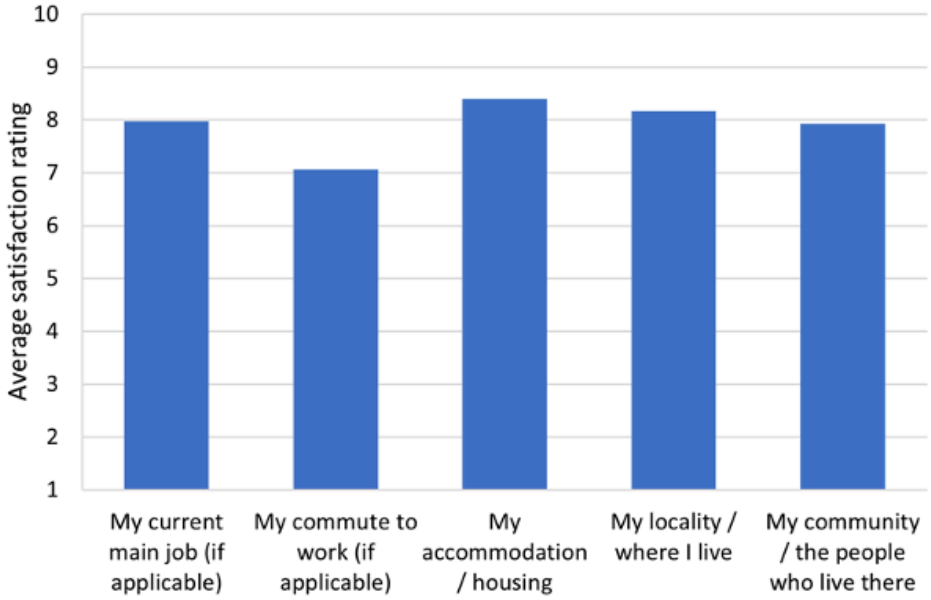
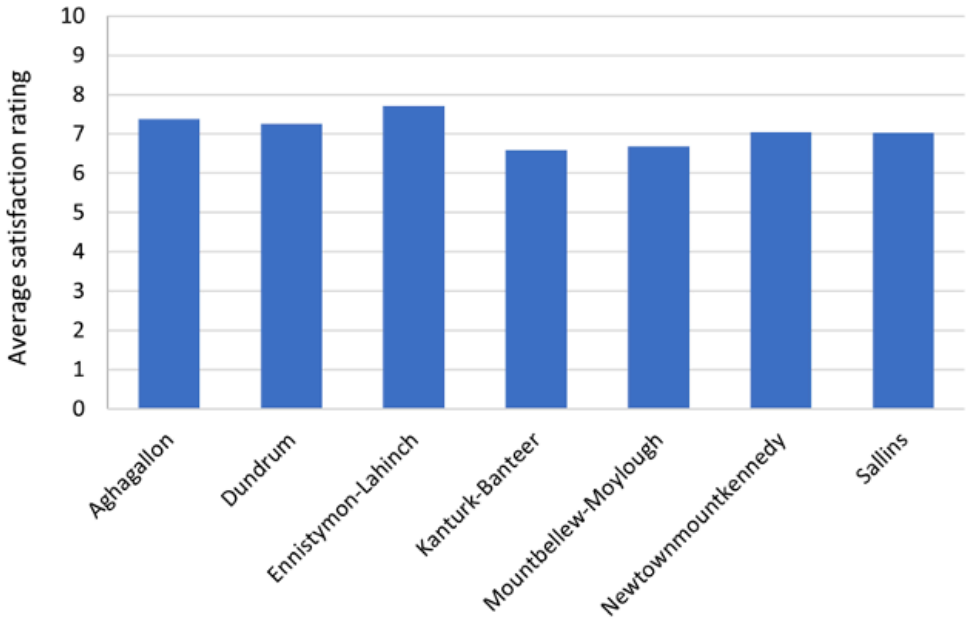
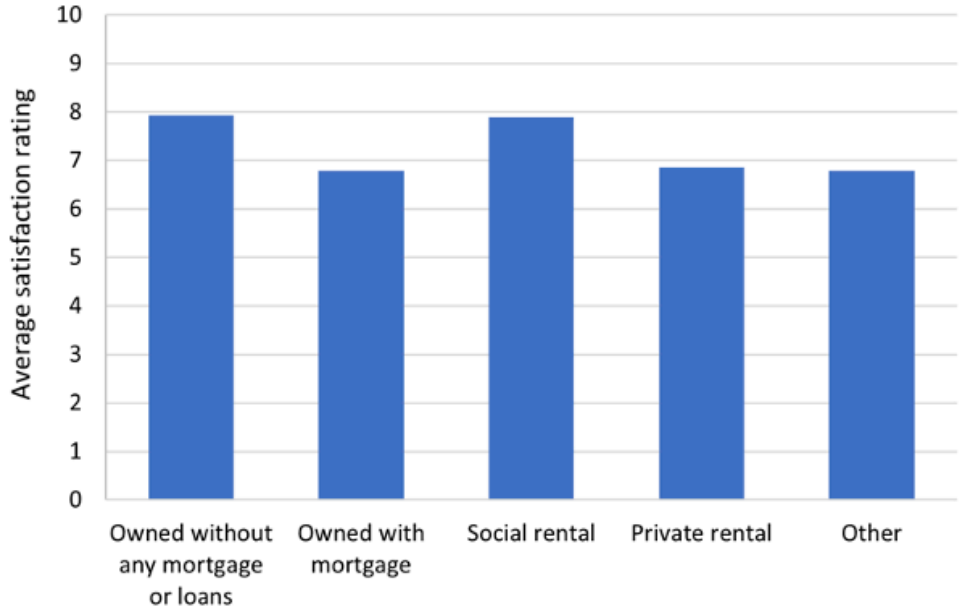



*Figure 7.8 Satisfaction with the commute by settlement*



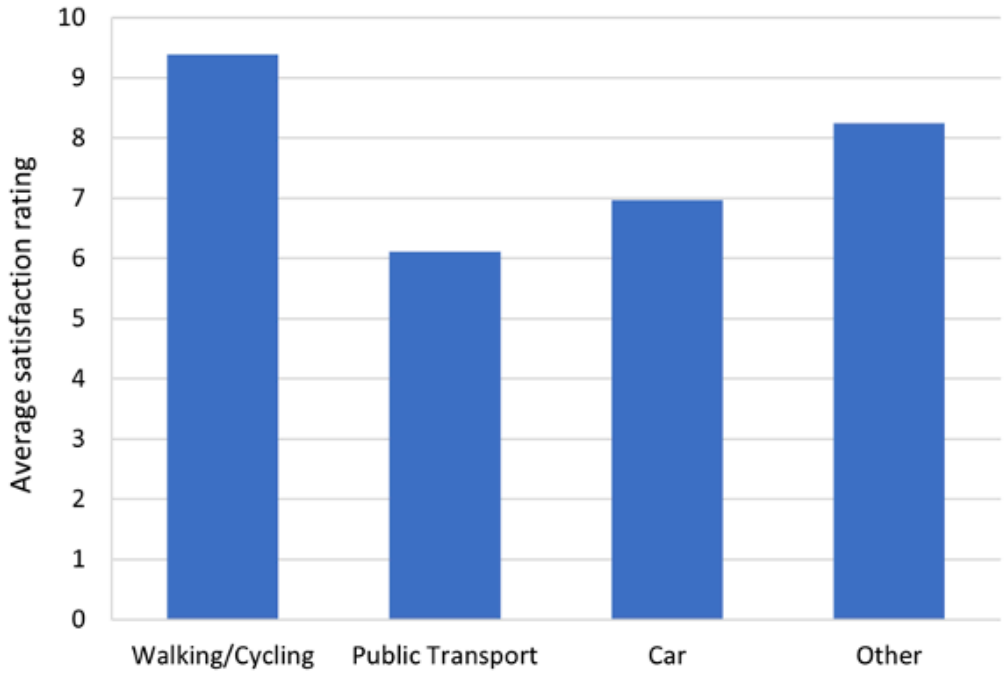
The remainder of this section will now look in more detail at satisfaction with the commute and at how it relates to aspects of the commute, such as duration and mode of travel, as well as key socio-demographic variables. With regard to the latter first, there are no significant differences in commuting satisfaction levels according to gender, age, or level of education. There is a significant difference according to housing tenure, with mortgage holders and private renters the least satisfied and outright owners (with no mortgage) and social renters the most satisfied (Figure 7.9). It may be that mortgage holders and those in private sector rentals are under a higher degree of financial pressure in terms of housing costs, so that the costs of commuting, both pecuniary and non-pecuniary, weigh more heavily upon them. It should also be noted that these two categories account for over two-thirds (68%) of respondents.

*Figure 7.9 Satisfaction with the commute by housing tenure*



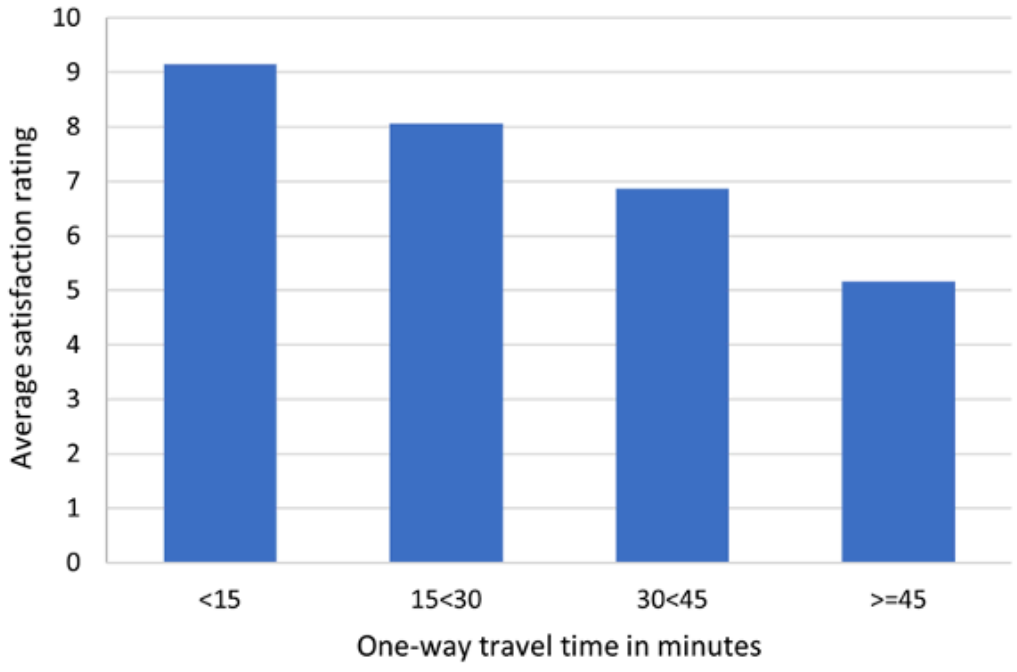

While differences in satisfaction level by socio-demographic variable are relatively small, in contrast there are strong and statistically significant differences in satisfaction according to the key characteristics of the commute, in particular the mode of travel, the distance travelled and the duration of the daily commute. The greatest variation is between users of different modes of travel, with public transport users the least satisfied and those commuting by active travel mode by far the most satisfied (Figure 7.10). This result is not surprising given that, as already noted, long-duration commutes are widely prevalent among public transport users, and the proportion of this group that experiences frequent difficulties in meeting family responsibilities is higher than for all others. Conversely, those travelling by active travel modes have shorter commutes, and none of this group experience frequent difficulties in meeting family responsibilities. Again though, the caveat is that the number in the sample that walks or cycles to work or study is small.

*Figure 7.10 Satisfaction with commute by mode of travel*



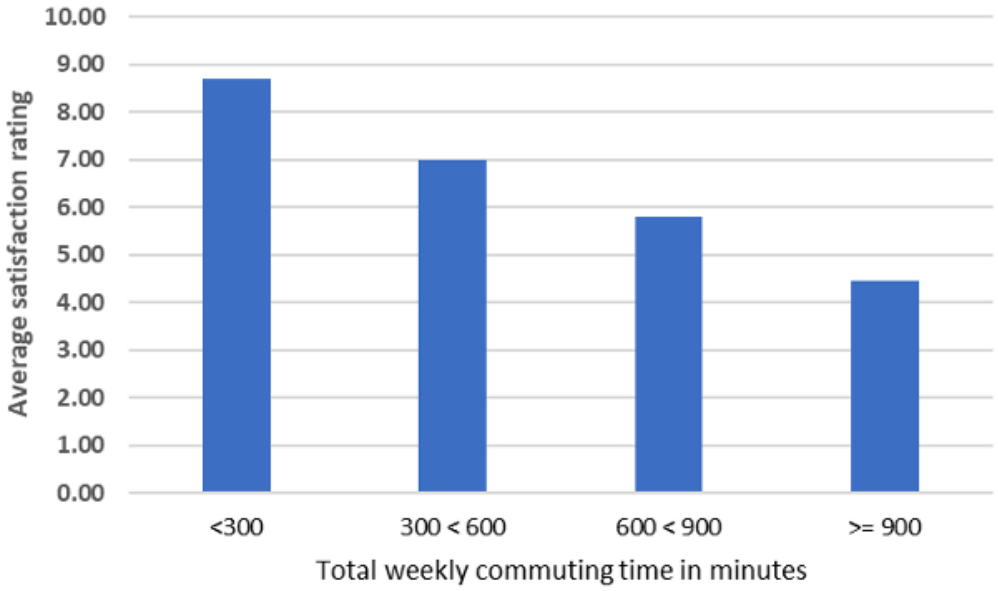

Commuting satisfaction levels also vary according to the distance travelled and the one-way duration of the commute. Only the pattern with regard to duration is shown here (Figure 7.11). but that for distance travelled is very similar, and in both instances the variation is significant. There is a sharp drop in the average satisfaction level among those whose commute is of 45 minutes or more duration, a finding that substantiates the importance attached to the 45-minute threshold in this and in other studies of commuting.

*Figure 7.11 Satisfaction with commute by duration of trip (Phase 2 survey)*



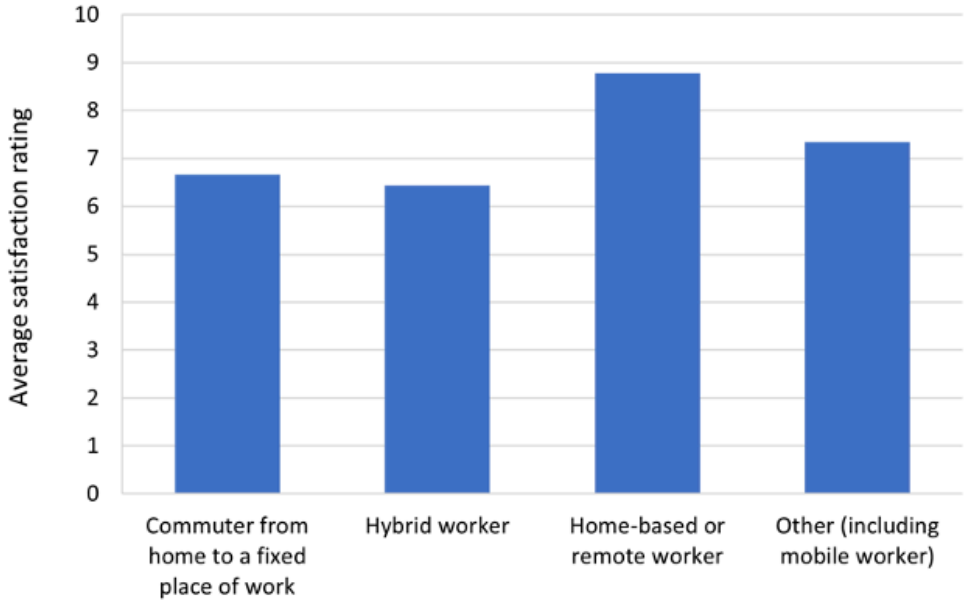
There is no significant, or indeed consistent, relationship between satisfaction ratings and the weekly frequency of commute. This may be because, as already noted, those with the highest frequency of commutes per week also tend to have (compensating) shorter distances and durations of commute. This hypothesis is borne out when the relationship between satisfaction and the total time spent commuting per week is examined (Figure 7.12). The average satisfaction rating for those travelling in excess of 900 minutes (fifteen hours) per week is the lowest of any cohort examined here, whether defined in terms of socio-demographic characteristics, or commuting characteristics. Conversely, the commute satisfaction rating for those with weekly commuting time of less than 300 minutes (five hours hours) is amongst the highest.

*Figure 7.12 Satisfaction with commute by total weekly commuting time (Phase 2 survey)*




Finally, satisfaction levels vary significantly according to the commuter type. Not surprisingly, home-based workers are significantly more satisfied than any of the other categories (Figure 7.13). Perhaps somewhat more surprisingly, hybrid workers express themselves only marginally more satisfied than traditional commuters from home to a fixed place of work. This may be because, as we have seen, commuting distances and durations for hybrid workers are quite long, and indeed these long commutes may be the reason why they have hybrid working arrangements. As with duration of travel and total weekly commuting time, the analysis worker / commuter type is based on the Phase 2 survey, as the relevant information was not collected in the Phase 1 questionnaire.

*Figure 7.13 Satisfaction with commute by worker / commuter type (Phase 2 survey)*



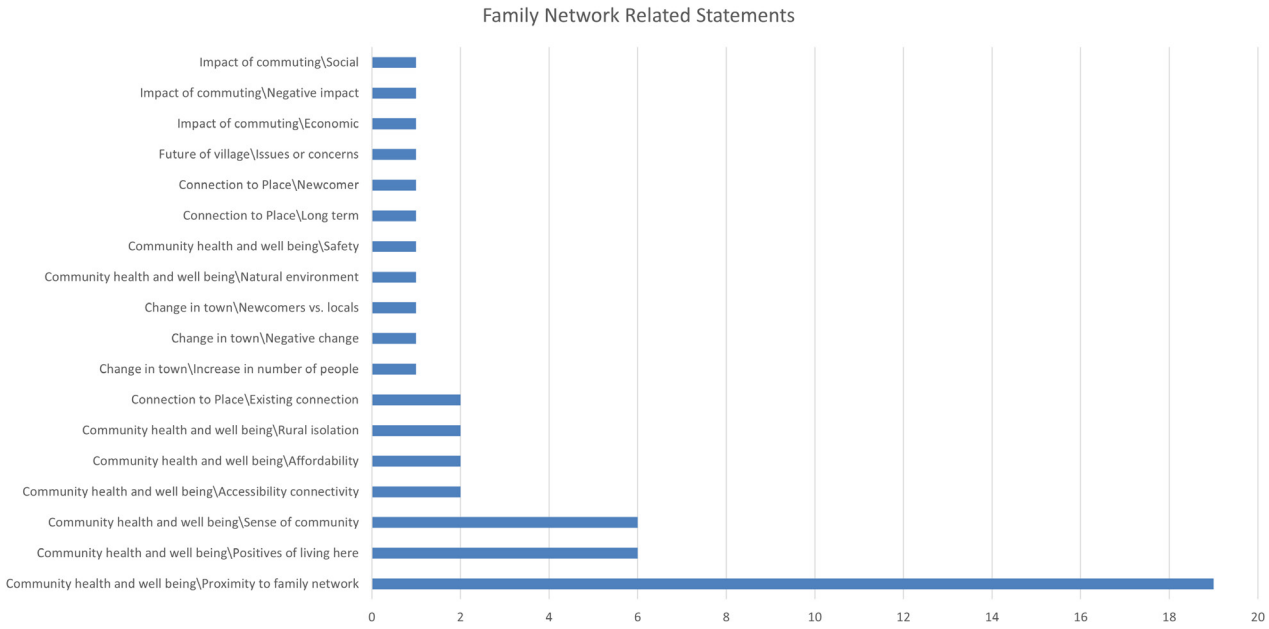

## 7.3 Perspectives on Home, Family, Caring and Connection

In reflecting on family and commuting, interviews tended to focus on the impact of balancing, or in many cases 'juggling', the needs of home with being present for all of life's demands. Often, this balance focused on the practical side of family, such as dependent children's 'pick-ups' and 'drop-offs', be that for childcare, school, or sports and other activities. In the interviews, which were semi-structured allowing for a flow of conversation with each interviewee, no direct question was asked about family and associated responsibilities. There were, however, questions

*Providing new educational spaces – Newtownmountkennedy*

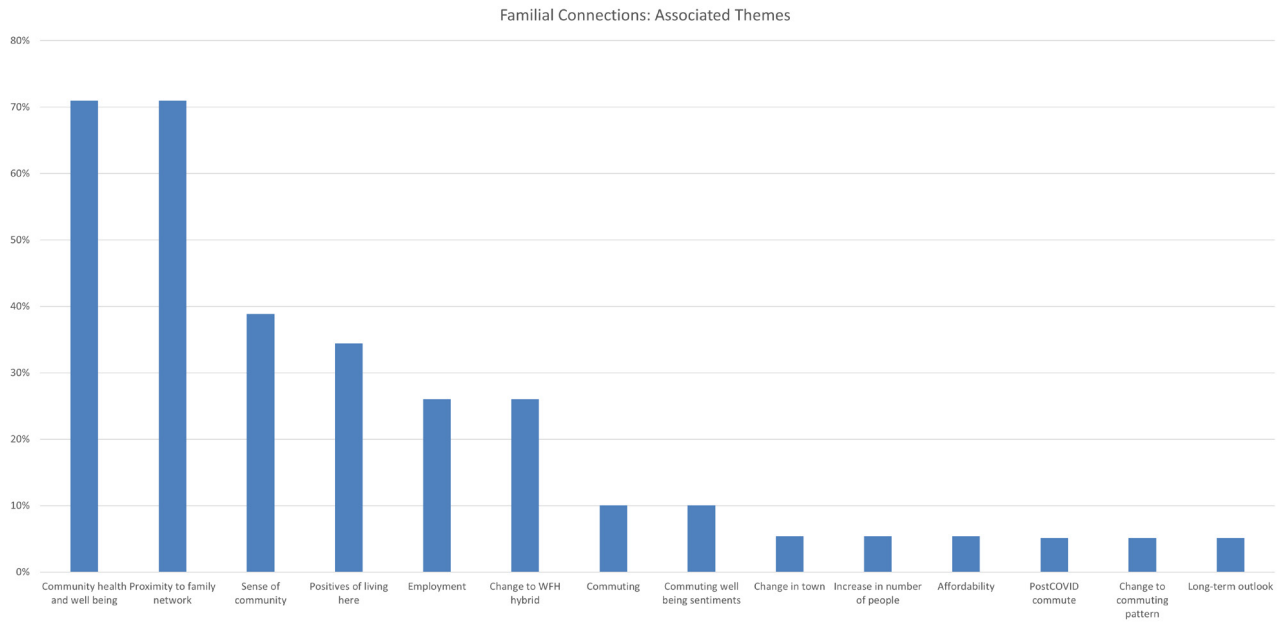
posed about quality of life and the personal impacts of commuting. It was within these questions that participants brought up issues around family, particularly if they had children. To a lesser extent, caring for elderly parents in the locality also appeared in conversation, but not to same extent as childcare and other child-related logistics. 'Proximity of family networks' was among the key themes that emerged during analysis of the interviews; there were 19 directly related statements (see Figure 7.14). Following on from the previous sections based on the survey data, this section adds insight into the wider dynamics at play within families, and it highlights the value of the interviews in delving deeper into lived experiences.

*Figure 7.14 Statements relating to proximity of family network*




In analysing interviews, and in particular examining issues related to family, there was a range of associated themes. Figure 7.15 outlines the dominant associated themes that were discussed. Unsurprisingly, the top two themes are 'Community Health and Well-being' and 'Proximity to Family Network'. Additionally, among the dominant themes are 'sense of community' and the 'positives' of living in their given locality. Interestingly, in analysing data for this section, it is clear that in discussions about the balancing-act that is family life, particularly with young children, the next most dominant themes discussed were around employment generally, working from home, and, of course, commuting. The final dominant themes were how connection with family related to the town or village itself and how it may be changing and growing due to people returning to live close to family. The sections that follow illustrate some of the key consideration for interviewees in the intersection between commuting, home working, family life, and caring responsibilities.

*Figure 7.15 Discussing family connections in interviews, most dominant associated themes*




### 7.3.1 Flexibility with Working from Home

Overall, the support of having extended family nearby, and / or flexibility around place of work were largely seen as positive, and helped people feel more connected to the locality than they may otherwise have felt. There was also discussion in interviews about work-life balance, and the ability to maintain family commitments and relationships while working from home.

In many instances, the flexibility related to the internal dynamics of family life and a sense that parents could be more connected with their children every day, as well as addressing the logistical challenges:

> *"Yeah, so I work from home two to three days per week. […] I come to Mallow the other two days or I'm around the country with work. So I'm probably 50/50 work from home. So the days I work from home I'm basically dropping in, collecting from the local national school. Or transporting up and down to the village to different activities that are on for the kids, or in the sports fields for activities that I'd be involved in or supporting or local groups".*
> KB4

> *"I've just dropped all the children off at school, so it's nice and relaxing. Well, my two older girls go to town, they go to secondary school […] so they get the bus, which is really handy, they get the bus from the end of the road […] we live about a mile from the end of it that brings us on to the [x] road. And so I drop them off at the bus every morning there at 8 and it's brilliant … And then I just drop my youngest girl then, she's at 9 o'clock, she goes to the wee primary school in [x] so yeah, once I get them all out it's peace and quiet".*
> AGH3

Others spoke more generally about relief from the stress of the commute and how it impacts on thinking about the next day:

> *"... today I am working from home so last night I was in a different kind of place. I didn't have to go to bed as early, I was able to get a few more things done around the place. I wasn't as kind of in the zone for this morning in terms of having to be on the road at a certain time: 'where will I get parking?', because parking is at a premium where I work... basically, it was a case of you know, once I'm at the desk, again, for kind of my home desk for about 9:15, that's fine. So, get up, get showered, have breakfast, you know, it's all done in a very short timeframe. And you have no stress, no hassle. And this evening is the same. I will do a very productive day's work. I would be very efficient today".*
> KB2

In addition to the internal dynamics of family life, a number of interviewees mentioned how siblings and other family networks can support each other due to flexible working arrangements and working from home:

> *"[...] two of my nieces and one nephew, are in school, three- or five-minutes' walk from here. And you know, even days I'm working from home, occasionally because their two parents, my brother and his wife are working. So occasionally those children will walk down here, or I'll get a phone call to know 'can I go up and meet them?'. Simple things like. they've a key to my house so they can walk down if they need to do. The eldest is in sixth class. They can walk down here of a day if there was if their mom is running late coming from work to collect them or whatever. So fantastic".*
> KB2

For some interviewees without flexible working arrangements, they highlighted the challenges of having to be based on-site for employment, and that this would be a key criterion in making work changes in the future:

> *"Yes, I would probably say the impact probably in the longer term I would ... from my personal and from my wife's personal view is that the consistent travel to work would probably not extend longer than the next two to five years. So, the chances of us looking at jobs that are more hybrid or flexible would become a higher demand because the travel does, it does take time away from the family".*
> SL2

### 7.3.2 Connection and Belonging

Among interviewees, there was an interdependent relationship between family connections and connection to, or sense of, place. The networks of relatives were very much tied to place, and connections within that place to each other:

> *"I'm the eldest of five. And three of us are married, two are engaged. And we are all within 15 minutes of home. And my parents still live as I said, about two miles from me here. My partner, even though he's from Cork, his sister is married 15 minutes from here, and she's living 15 minutes farther away, and she's commuting to Cork every day for work as well. But she married a farmer in farther Northwest rural Cork, and you're not going to move the farm to Bishopstown! [in Cork City]. She's doing the commute to her job in [x] every day as well. So it contributes hugely to friends, lifelong friends, family all around here".*
> KB2

The sense of 'returning' was strongly apparent in the interviews. Returning was not just about having family support and network, although that was an explicit advantage, but it also helped with connection to home and place:

> *"I would have moved around an awful lot when I was a child, so it was very nice being able to come back to a family base so I'm very aware that my perspective is quite privileged on this".*
> MM4

> *"I think people are in the area for housing, because more likely affordability of housing, probably couldn't buy closer to wherever, and then some of it is because they want to live here, because this is where they grew up. So, you know. I would say there are more people living here that grew up here of my generation say, than there is of my parents' generation. Does that make sense?"*
> MM6

And from the same interviewee:

> *"I lived in a rural area that wasn't my locality. Up till Christmas we lived in rural [x]. I didn't have a network there. So yeah I mean, I was extremely lonely, whereas now living here, among people that I grew up with, among my family, the loneliness is dramatically reduced. And so, my well-being in that way is far better. And then in terms of just, I suppose because I know more people and because I have family support, I'm able to get out and about a bit more, there's more reasons to get out and about. So definitely getting more fresh air. And seeing more people. So yeah, much more positive".*
> MM6

> *From community leaders, there was also a strong sense of pride in seeing people return to the locality, as well as identifying that the existing networks were providing essential support:*
> *"I suppose one of the things [is] this is a lovely place to live, a lot of people who moved away from here, and the younger people of the next generation have moved back here. And built houses here and got houses in the villages, anywhere in Moylough, with a view to be near to their family. To have support for childcare and all the rest of it."*
> MMB

### 7.3.3 Caring Responsibilities

While childcare was one of the most dominant themes in interviews, and there was limited discussion on care for older parents and relatives, this is nevertheless a factor that may come into play as generations grow up:

> *I'm very happy that I made the move because mentally I was just going to be worrying about the future and at least when I'm living there, I'm mentally way more settled. Yes, physically I'm a lot busier but mentally I'm more settled because I'm more in control of, I suppose managing, looking after, I suppose keep an eye out for my parents, I'm able to kind of bring my kids to, you know, and then get involved with them in their different activities and that whereas like I suppose while I was doing was up and down from Westport at the weekend so, yeah, I'm maybe doing more driving during the week but I'm doing less driving at the weekends.*
> MM5

A community leader discussing their experience of providing care for their own family stated:

> *"And it's a beautiful place. But it was a bit remote [where adult child and family lived previously]; no support from immediate family, there was no immediate family living near them. And you know, I pass rural schools on a, well sometimes*

> *a week going different places. And I see a lot of grandparents and families picking up kids you know. So I think it's awful important that you have that kind of support and that kind of community support".*
> MMB

And

> *"And since my daughter and her husband have moved back here, they see that the shop is local, the supermarket is local, the filling station is local. The school is local, the crèche is local. And they can rely on myself and my wife to pick up a child if they're... Like my daughter works for [x]. And she works from home. But any day that the crèche was closed, she couldn't even do that you know. Found it difficult to do that. So you know I think that there is, there's great family support".*
> MMB

Examples of sibling assistance and support were highlighted regularly; this quote, in particular, highlights that decision-making for the location of where to live was influenced by this support:

> *"We had my sister who lives in Naas, had offered to do the child minding so those two reasons coming together made Sallins or Naas the kind of obviously choice really. And I needed to be within twenty-five, thirty minutes of Dublin so I wanted [...] to get the train to work, so Sallins became the obviously choice".*
> SL1

For those without networks of support, such as this interviewee without family support for childcare, there were challenges in balancing life:

> *"I think having a stronger family network around you helps with your well-being" And "So I find that I'm stuck at times, I find if I'm feeling unwell or whatever I've no real back up. It's hard to explain when I'm away from my parents. My parents would not been able to do full time child caring at all but they would help you out if you were stuck".*
> AGH5

### 7.4 Summary

This chapter has investigated difficulties that commuters face in their family lives by looking at the extent to which commuting time impacts on the time available to meet family responsibilities. The results show that such difficulties are a significant issue for a considerable number of the commuters from the case study towns. This reflects the fact that the towns (with the exception of Ennistymon-Lahinch) have been selected because of their significant levels of out-commuting, as there is a strong relationship evident between the rate of such difficulties and various aspects of the commute, in particular the duration of the commute (both daily and weekly) and the mode of travel.

Given that family-related issues arising from commuting have been shown to be significant, it is not surprising that respondents' levels of satisfaction with their commutes are low relative to other aspects of their daily lives. As with the prevalence of family-related difficulties, satisfaction with the commute varies significantly according to the key commuting parameters.

In summary, the key findings to emerge from the quantitative analysis are as follows:

- Having dropped significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic, the rate of difficulties in meeting family responsibilities as a result of time spent commuting has increased again in the post-pandemic period.
- The rate of family-related difficulties is particularly high for those who commute 30 km or more to work, those with one-way commutes of 45 minutes or more duration, and those with

total weekly commuting time of seven and a half hours or more. The numbers of people in these categories are substantial, and therefore this issue is of considerable importance in the case study areas.
- Reflecting issues such as the family impact of commuting, commuters are less satisfied with their commute than with any of the other aspects of their situation about which we enquired: their housing, the locality in which they live, their jobs and their communities.
- Satisfaction levels with the commute vary significantly according to the key parameters related to the commute, in particular the duration of the commute, both daily and weekly, and the mode of travel.
- These are no significant differences in levels of satisfaction with the commute arising from socio-demographic characteristics.

For many interviewees, there was an implicit and explicit positive relationship between flexible working and family activities, and if working at a distance from home, then it followed that geographical residential proximity to family was integral to everyday lived experiences. For many, the connection with family and being able to raise children in the locality in which one parent had grown-up was a parallel theme discussed with 'connection to place' (which was discussed in Chapter 5) and with connection to community (discussed in Chapter 8). The familial linkages form a strong bond to place, and influence decisions on where interviewees chose to buy a house and 'settle', as so many of them mentioned. It is apparent that place and people are determinants of interviewees' decisions about where to reside. Although many respondents to the survey and participants in the interviews do not necessarily have familial connections with their chosen area, connection is key – be that with relatives, friends, the locality and / or the community.

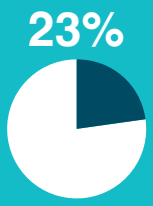
# 8

# Impact of Commuting on Community and Social Capital

# SOCIAL CAPITAL AND COMMUTING

Employment status has an impact on participation in voluntary activities;

**36%** of those who are not in employment



**23%** of those who are in full-time employment

participate in voluntary activities at least a few times per month.

**38%** of those who commute by car and

**47%** of all other commuters participate in voluntary activities on at least a monthly basis.

Volunteerism correlates with a positive perception of place.
Those who volunteer at least a few times per month view their localities more positively than those who do not volunteer in their communities.

Commuting time has a small but not significant impact on participation in sporting and / or social activities; age and gender are more significant.

**72%** of those with short commutes

AND

**65%** of those with long commutes participate in sports at least once per week.

Commuters who travel by public transport are more likely than other commuters to participate in sporting activities;

**44%** of public transport users &

Among car drivers, the rate is **27%**

**48%** of those who are not in employment participate in social activities at least once a week, while the corresponding figure, among full-time employees is **32%**

**50%** of those with short commutes and

**42%** of those with long commutes participate in social activities at least once per month.

*Percentage of commuters who engage in most of their social activities close to where they live.*

| | Pre Pandemic | Post Pandemic |
|---|---|---|
| Those with the shortest commutes | 57% | 51% |
| Those with the longest commutes | 25% | 45% |

**76%** of persons with medium to long commutes

&

**61%** of those with short commutes generally do their weekly shopping locally *(near their place of residence).*

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# Impact of Commuting on Community and Social Capital

This chapter presents data in respect of the impacts of commuting on the following aspects of social and community life in the case study settlements:

- Participation in unpaid voluntary work;
- Participation in sports and social activities;
- Shopping patterns; and
- Schooling.

The literature on social capital and community participation (see Section 2.3.5) reveals how some studies have found that increased commuting time is associated with reduced time spent with family and community. Other researchers have found, however, that differences in community engagement and social capital are more strongly associated with mode of travel than with commuting times: in particular, car drivers have been found to be less likely than other individuals to participate in community, social and / or political events. The literature also indicates that neighbourhood characteristics (i.e., the factors discussed in Chapter 5) can have an important bearing on the extent to which commuters and others contribute to local social capital.

## 8.1 Participation in Unpaid Voluntary Work

The most recent (2022) Census of Population (for Ireland) provides useful and contemporaneous data on the extent of participation in unpaid voluntary work. The Census of Population questionnaire asked 'Do you engage in helping or voluntary work in any of the following activities without pay? A social or charitable organisation / a religious group or church / a sporting organisation / a political organisation / in your community. The 2006 census also included a question on volunteerism, and Table 8.1 presents the results by age cohort for both time periods. This shows that, in 2022, almost one in seven persons engaged in helping or voluntary work, a decrease from the level of one in six recorded in 2006.

*Table 8.1 Participation in voluntary activities by age cohort in Ireland, 2006 and 2022*

| Year | Variables | | All ages | 0 - 14 years | 15 - 24 years | 25 - 44 years | 45 - 64 years | 65 and over | Aged 15+ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2022 | Total persons involved in one or more voluntary activity | Number of volunteers | 711,379 | 30,133 | 73,813 | 209,760 | 270,688 | 126,985 | 681,246 |
| | | *Volunteers as a % of the total population* | *13.8%* | *3.0%* | *11.4%* | *14.7%* | *20.9%* | *16.4%* | 16.5% |
| | Total population | | 5,149,139 | 1,012,287 | 644,771 | 1,422,424 | 1,293,342 | 776,315 | 4,136,852 |
| 2006 | Total persons involved in one or more voluntary activity | Number of volunteers | 553,255 | N/A | 73,749 | 205,016 | 204,550 | 69,940 | 553,255 |
| | | *Volunteers as a % of the total population aged 15+* | 16.4% | N/A | 11.7% | 15.2% | 22.0% | 14.9% | 16.4% |
| | Total population aged 15+ | | 3,375,399 | N/A | 632,732 | 1,345,873 | 928,868 | 467,926 | 3,375,399 |

These data can be used as a comparative basis for assessing levels of volunteering in the five case study settlements in Ireland. As the following table (Table 8.2) shows, the level of volunteerism in the case study areas, as recorded in the 2022 census, is slightly higher than that of the State as a whole, and of all towns in Ireland. The table shows that Newtownmountkennedy is the only case study settlement in which the level of volunteerism is lower than in towns in general. Kanturk-Banteer and Sallins have levels of volunteerism that are below the State level, although only marginally. Both Ennistymon-Lahinch and Mountbellew which are the smallest of the case study settlements also show the highest levels of volunteering.

*Table 8.2 Comparative rates of voluntary activities by case study location, 2022*

| Geography | Number of volunteers | Total population | Volunteers as a % of the population |
|---|---|---|---|
| Sallins | 836 | 6,269 | 13.34% |
| Newtownmountkennedy | 390 | 3,539 | 11.02% |
| Kanturk-Banteer | 421 | 3,165 | 13.30% |
| Ennistymon-Lahinch | 371 | 2,155 | 17.22% |
| Mountbellew-Moylough | 261 | 1,300 | 20.08% |
| **All Case Study Settlements** | **2,279** | **16,428** | **13.87%** |
| All Towns RoI (n=867) | 450,412 | 3,630,501 | 12.41% |
| All RoI | 711,379 | 5,149,139 | 13.82% |

The InPLACE survey questionnaire asked: 'How often did you do unpaid voluntary work through any community-based or charitable organisations in the last 12 months?' The following graph (Figure 8.1) presents the findings in all seven of the case study locations (Ireland and Northern Ireland). It provides more information than the census returns, as it captures data on the frequency with which people engage in voluntary activity. It is notable that there is a consistency between the survey data and the census in that, among the five case study settlements in Ireland, Mountbellew-Moylough and Ennistymon-Lahinch again emerge as those with the highest levels of volunteering. However, the graph shows higher levels of volunteering among survey respondents than in the population as a whole, with between 50 percent and 70 percent of respondents claiming to engage in some level of voluntary activity. This discrepancy is substantial. It may be due in part to the fact that the census of population figure is based on the population as a whole, and therefore includes cohorts such as the young and the elderly who are likely to have low rates of volunteering. The InPLACE survey, in contrast, was completed by persons over the age of 18 years only, and has an over-representation of those aged 45 to 64 years of age; this cohort comprises 42% of our sample. Furthermore, it is likely that, due to the method of dissemination, the survey over-sampled those with a higher level of community engagement, including members of residents' associations, and other voluntary and community organisations. For this reason, it is the relative rates of volunteering / community activity of different groups (defined, for example, by commuting time or mode) that are of most interest in this chapter, rather than the absolute levels of voluntary / community and social activity recorded.


*Ennistymon's retail offering has become more diverse over recent years*

*Figure 8.1 Frequency of participation in voluntary activities in each case study location*

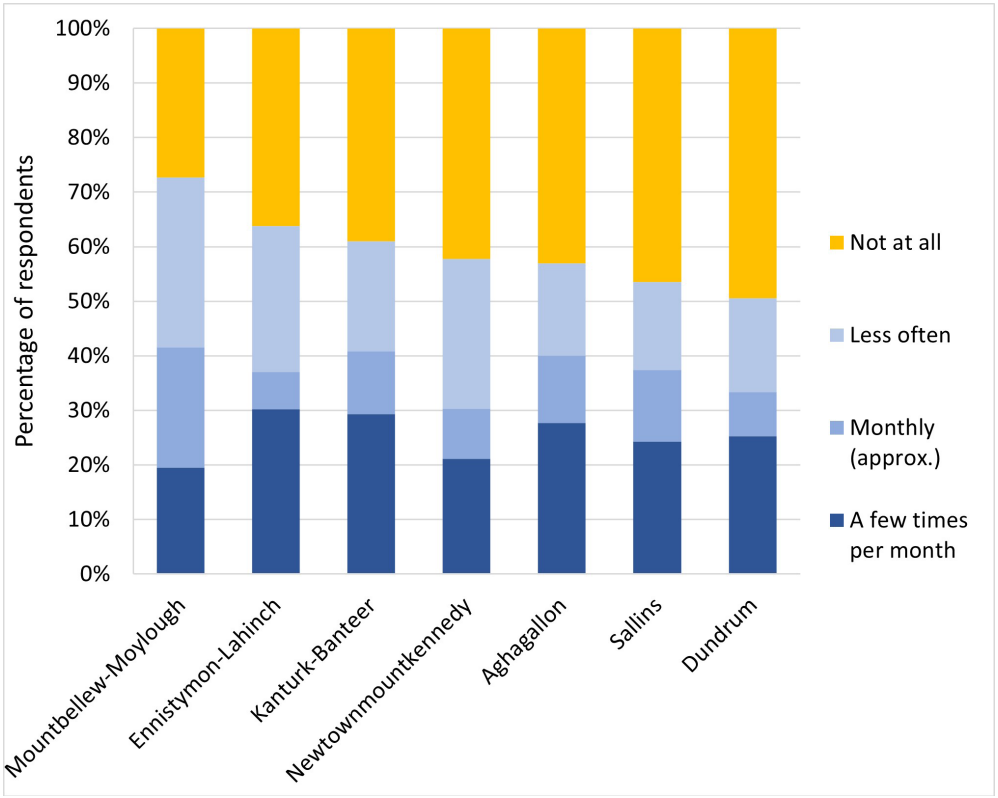
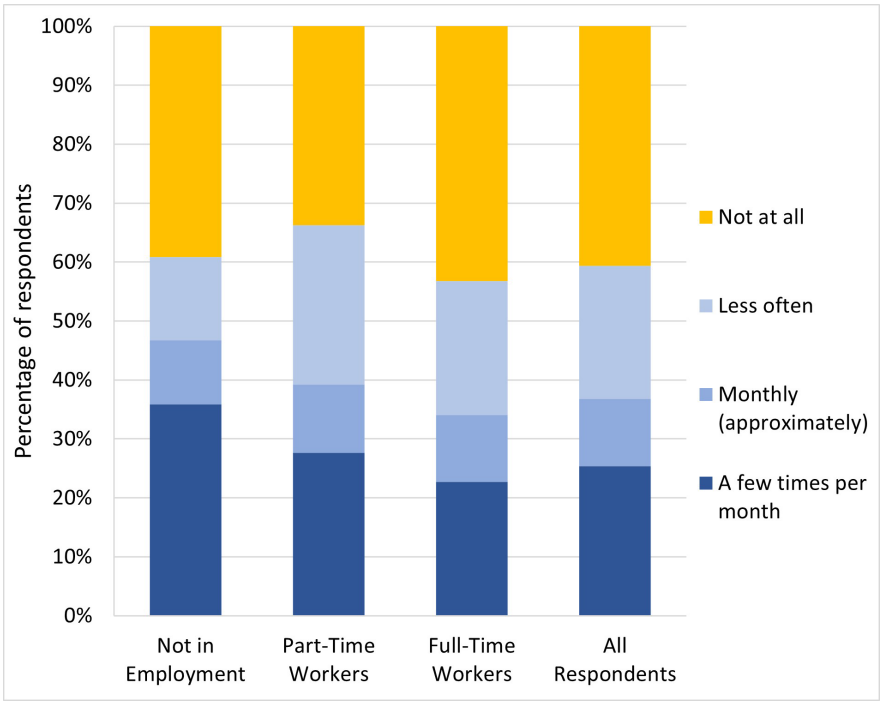



Figure 8.2 shows that while persons who are not in employment are more likely than others to engage in voluntary activities a few times per month, part-time workers are the cohort with the greatest level of participation; the respective figures for participation (with any frequency) are as follows: part-time workers 66.26%; non-workers 60.87% and full-time workers 56.80%).

*Figure 8.2 Frequency of participation in voluntary activities by employment status*

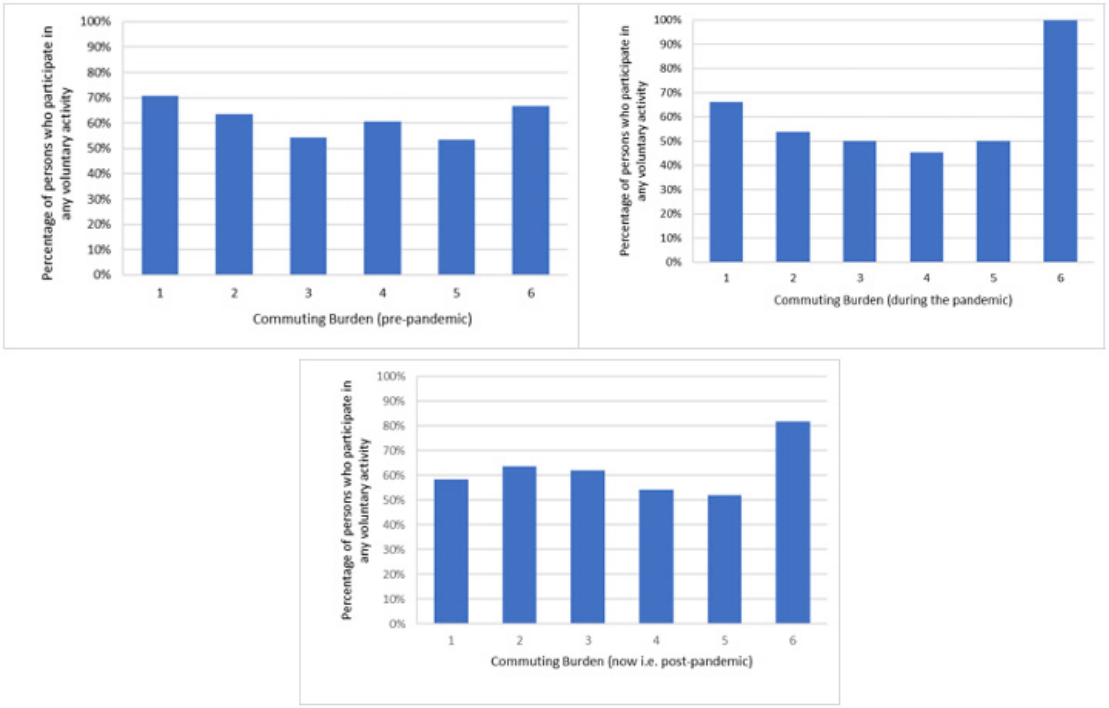


As noted in Chapter 2, the international literature suggests that there is a negative association between time spent commuting and time devoted to community activities. To explore this relationship in our case study settlements, we look at the relationship between commuting time and the extent to which respondents engage in any voluntary activity. Commuting time is the total weekly time spent commuting (or 'commuting burden') and is classified into six categories as indicated in Table 8.3. As the following set of graphs (Figure 8.3) illustrates, there are no notable differences between those who have low commuting burdens and those who have high commuting burdens in this regard, either before, during or after the COVID-19 pandemic.

*Table 8.3 Commuting burden and total weekly commuting time*

| Commuting Burden (Nominal Label) | Total Weekly Commuting Time (Minutes) |
|---|---|
| 1 | < 150 |
| 2 | 150 < 300 |
| 3 | 300 < 450 |
| 4 | 450 < 600 |
| 5 | 600 < 900 |
| 6 | >=900 |

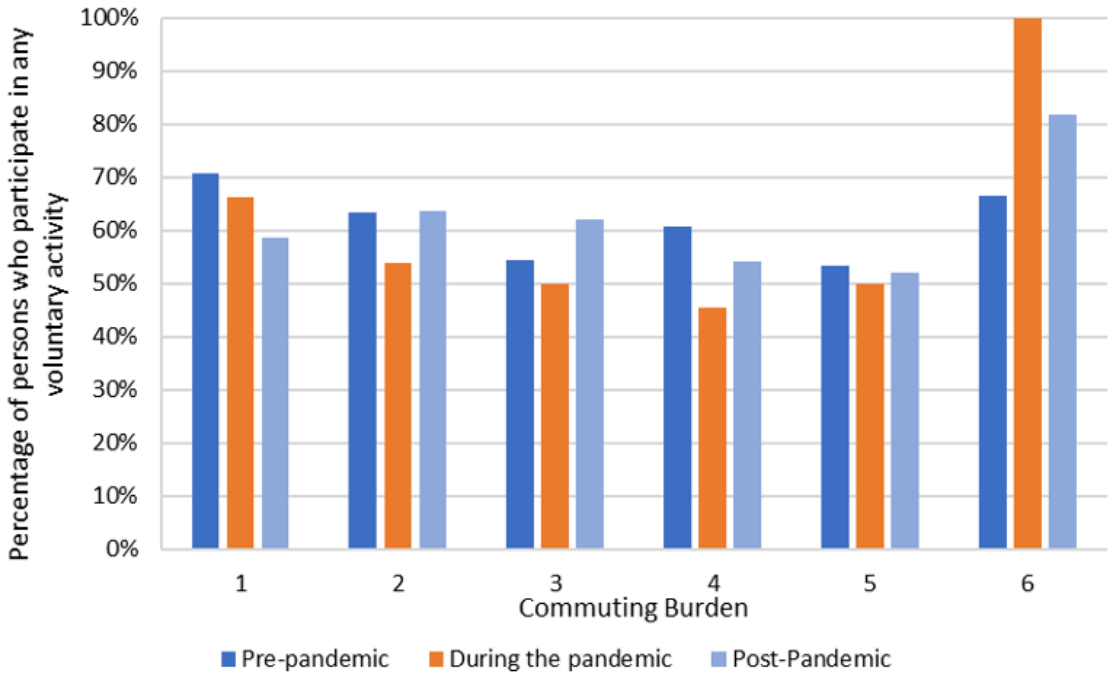
*Figure 8.3 Participation in voluntary activities by level of commuting burden*




Instead, as Figure 8.4 shows, the pandemic itself was a more significant determinant (than commuting time) of participation in voluntary activities. It illustrates that participation levels generally dropped, regardless of commuting burden, during the pandemic. This may reflect the downturn in community activities during periods of lockdown. While volunteering rates have recovered somewhat since the pandemic, they have not returned to pre-pandemic levels, except for those who have low to medium weekly commuting time (categories 2 and 3 on the horizontal axis). The exception to the pattern of decreased voluntary engagement during the pandemic is those with a very high commuting burden (category 6) who experienced a notable increase in participation. There are several factors that could have influenced this. A likely explanation is that the greater level of remote or home working during the pandemic among those with higher

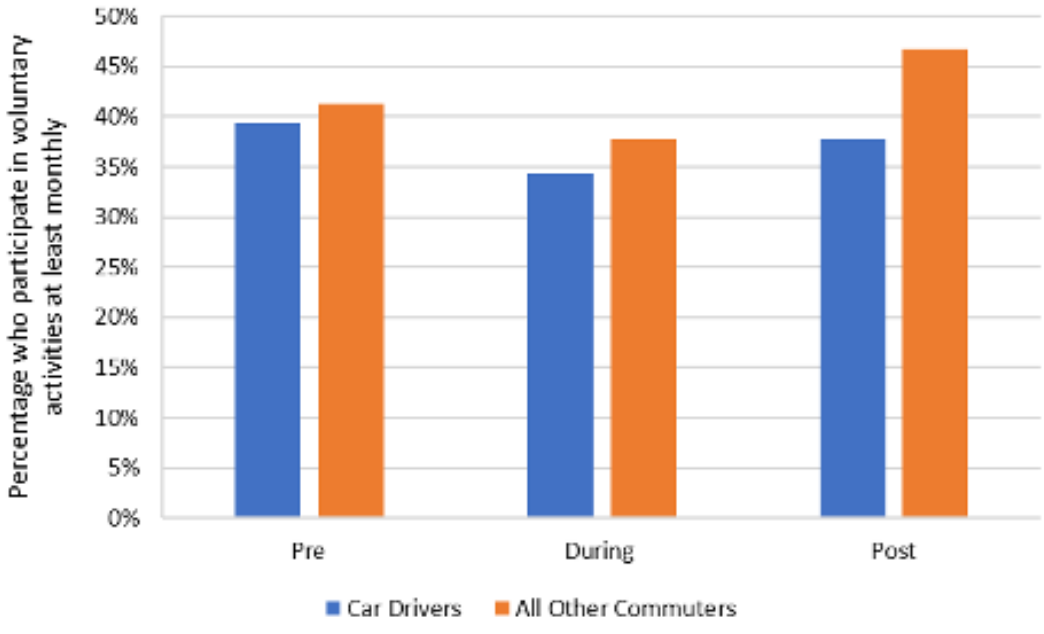
commuting burdens and the consequential saving in commuting time may have freed up this cohort of respondents to engage more in voluntary activities.

*Figure 8.4 Participation in voluntary activities, pre-, during and post-pandemic*




The literature indicates that mode of travel can have a bearing on an individual's willingness or capacity to participate in community activities. The following graph (Figure 8.5) provides some evidence of higher levels of participation in community activities among commuters who are not car drivers (they may be car passengers, public transport users or they walk / cycle). Here participation is defined as engagement in voluntary activities at least once per month. The gap between car drivers and other commuters increased from four percentage points during the pandemic to nine percentage points after the pandemic.

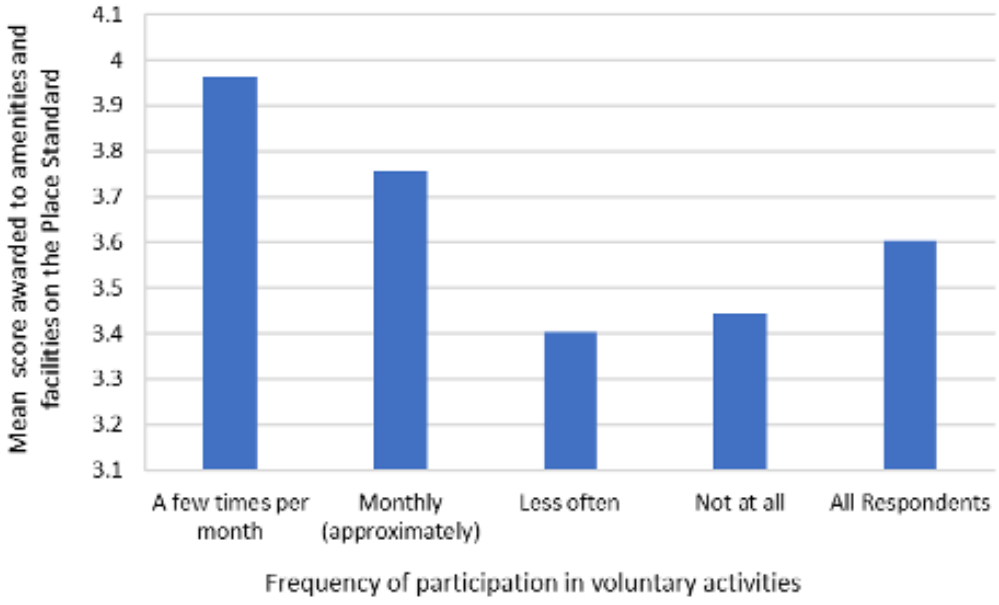
*Figure 8.5 Participation in voluntary activities at least monthly – car drivers and other commuters*



The survey findings also suggest there may be some relationship between participation in voluntary activities and perceptions of place. Persons who participate in voluntary activities at least monthly were more likely to award a higher mean score – across all dimensions on the Place Standard – to their place of residence than was the entire set of survey respondents, as the following graph (Figure 8.6) shows. The data also indicate a positive association between frequent participation in voluntary activities (at least monthly) and a positive perception of local facilities and amenities, as illustrated in Figure 8.7.

*Figure 8.6 Frequency of voluntary activities by mean overall score awarded on the Place Standard*


*Figure 8.7 Frequency of voluntary activities by mean score awarded, to 'Facilities and Amenities' on the Place Standard*



## 8.2 Participation in Sports and Social Activities

Patterns of engagement in sports and social activities generally reflect those for voluntary activity. As Figure 8.8 shows, there is no discernible association between commuting burden (total weekly commuting time – see Table 8.3) and the frequency with which commuters participate in sporting activities. However, as was the case with voluntary activity, mode of travel does show an association with engagement in sports activities. Figure 8.9 indicates that car drivers and those who travel to work by van / lorry have lower level of sports participation than do other commuter cohorts.

*Figure 8.8 Frequency of participation in sporting activities by commuting burden*

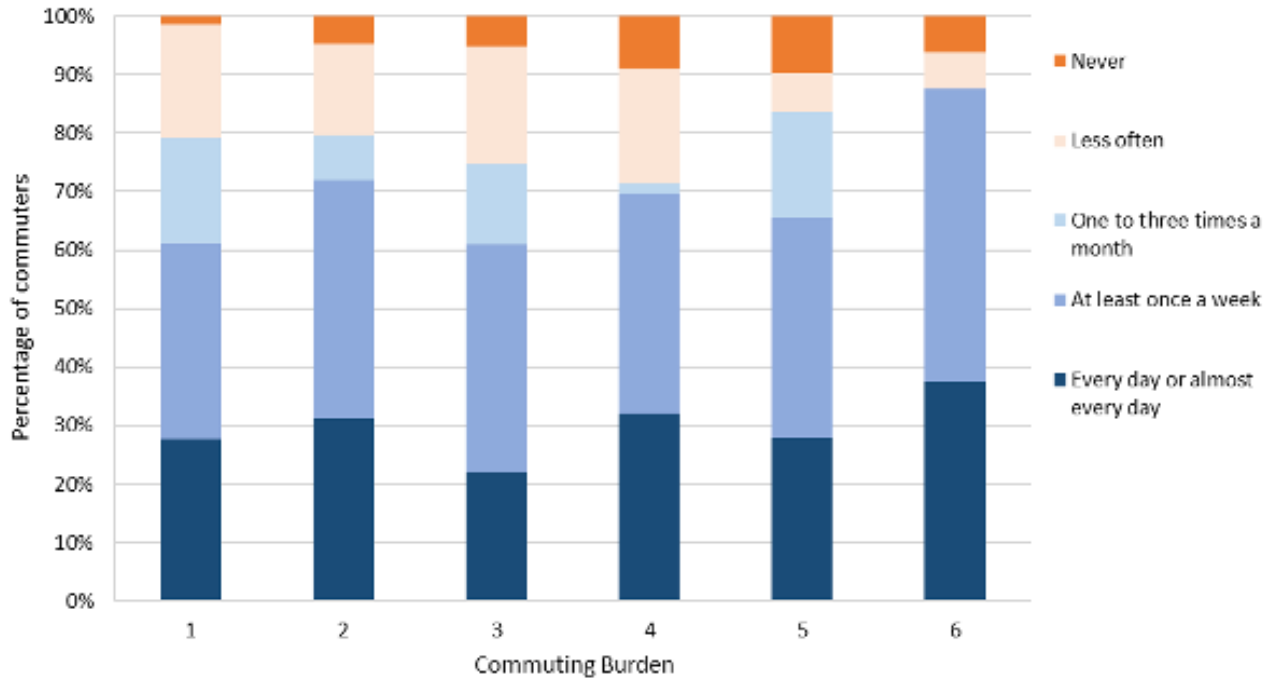
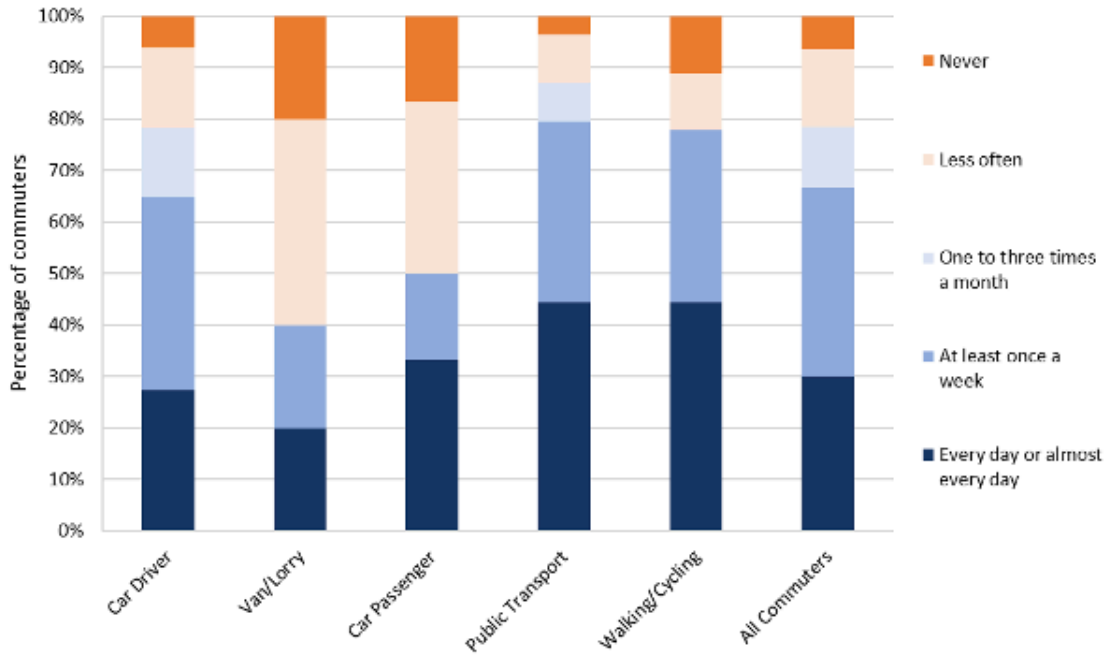



*Figure 8.9 Frequency of participation in sporting activities by mode of travel*



Similar observations may be made in respect of commuters' participation in social activities: There is no discernible relationship between participation in social activities and commuting burden as measured by total weekly commuting time, but those who travel by car and van / lorry have lower levels of participation in social activities than other cohorts of commuters (Figures 8.10 and 8.11).

*Figure 8.10 Frequency of participation in social activities by commuting burden*

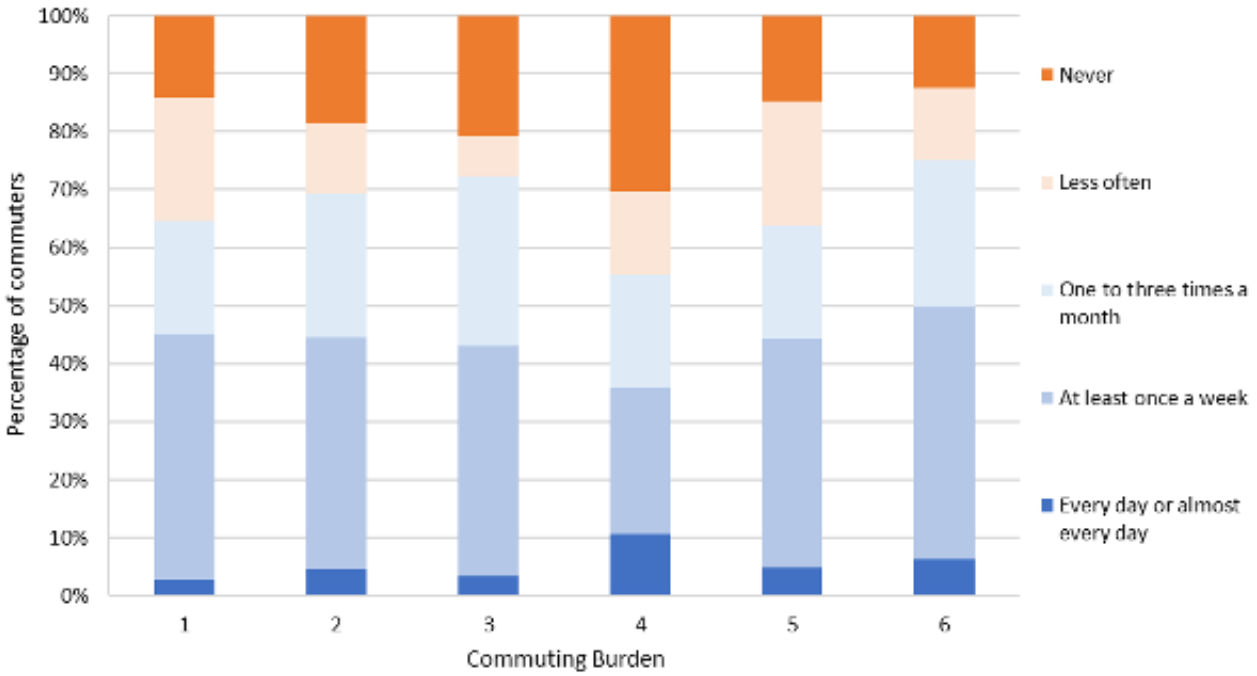
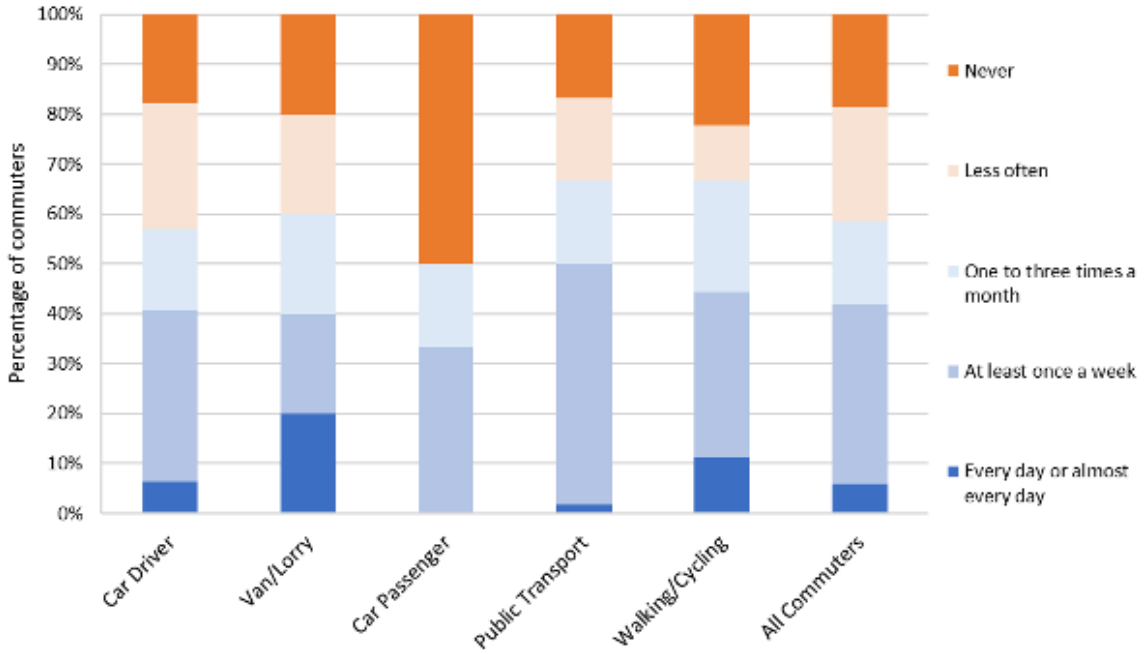


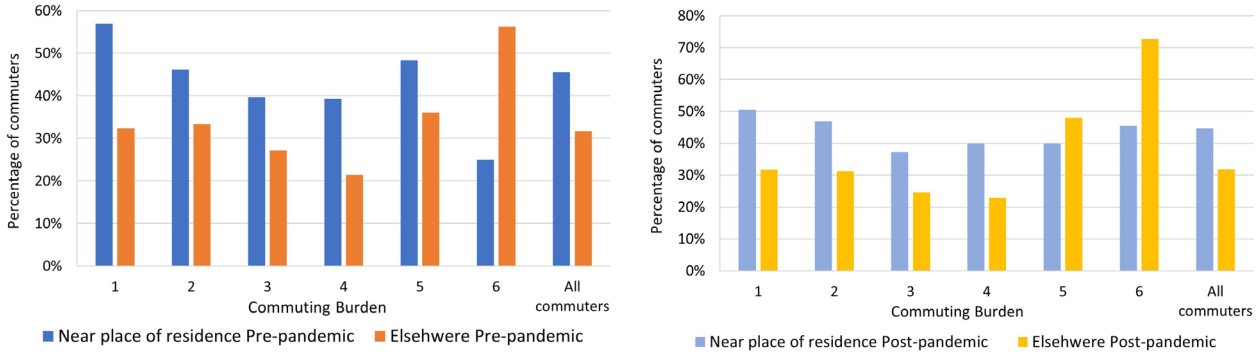

*Figure 8.11 Frequency of participation in social activities by mode of travel*




The data on which Figures 8.10 and 8.11 are based relate to social activities regardless of where they take place. Following an analysis of our Phase 1 data, it was decided to refine the questioning in relation to participation in social activities. Therefore, in our Phase 2 research,

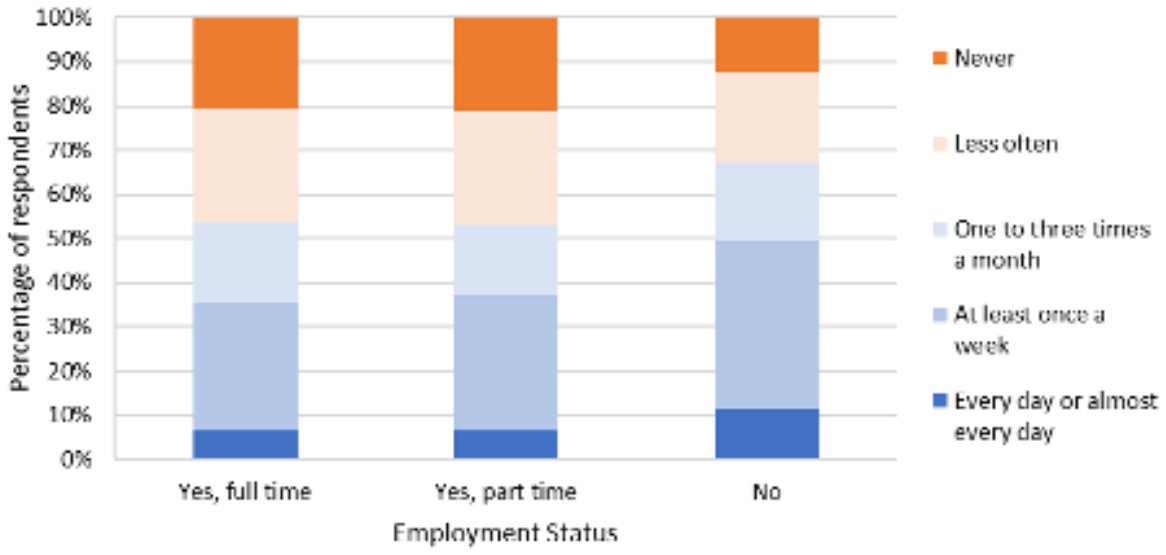
survey respondents were asked to specify *where* they participate in social activities i.e., whether such participation is in or near where they live, or elsewhere. As the following set of graphs (Figure 8.12) indicates, persons with lower commuting burdens were more likely to engage in social activities, at least once a month, in or near where they live, while those with higher commuting burdens were more likely to do so elsewhere. Among those with the lowest commuting burden (weekly commuting time of less than 150 minutes), 57% engaged in social activities locally pre-pandemic, and 51% do so post pandemic, while just over 30% of this cohort does so elsewhere. Among those with the highest commuting burden (900 minutes per week or more), 25% engaged in social activities locally pre-pandemic, and 45% do so post pandemic, while almost 73% of this cohort does so elsewhere.

*Figure 8.12 Monthly or more frequent participation in social activities by location and commuting burden (Phase 2 data)*




When interpreting these results, it is important to take account of other independent variables that are likely to impact on participation levels, such as employment status. As the following graph (Figure 8.13) shows, those who are not in the workforce are more likely to participate in social activities than are those who are in the workforce, but among workers, participation levels are broadly similar among full-time and part-time workers. The survey findings also indicate that age is a determinant of participation in social activities. Those aged 18 to 30 and those aged 65+ have higher levels of participation than do persons aged 31 to 64.

*Figure 8.13 Frequency of participation in social activities by employment status*



### 8.3 Shopping Patterns

While some literature and anecdotal commentaries suggest that long-distance commuters are more likely to spend their money near their place of work, rather than their place of residence, our study found little or no evidence of this. As the following graph (Figure 8.14) shows, there is no relationship between frequency of commuting and main place of shopping. Moreover, as the second graph (Figure 8.15) indicates, a greater proportion of persons with medium to high commuting burdens shops locally (near their place of residence) than those with low commuting burdens.

*Figure 8.14 Percentage of persons who shop locally by frequency of commute*

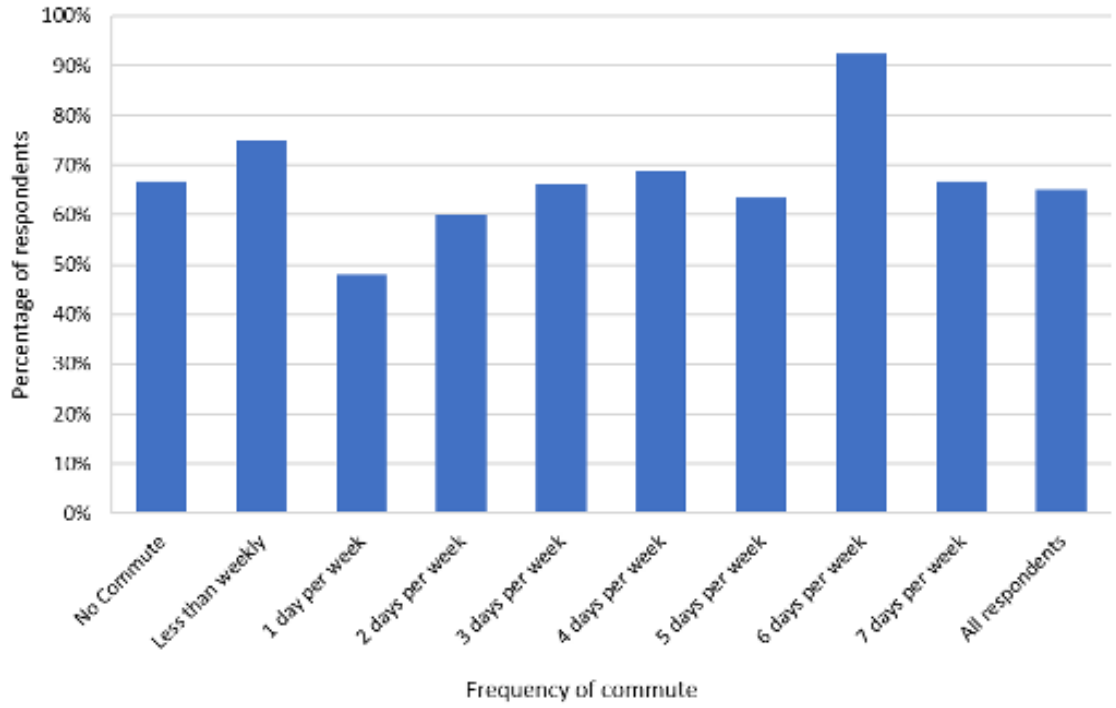
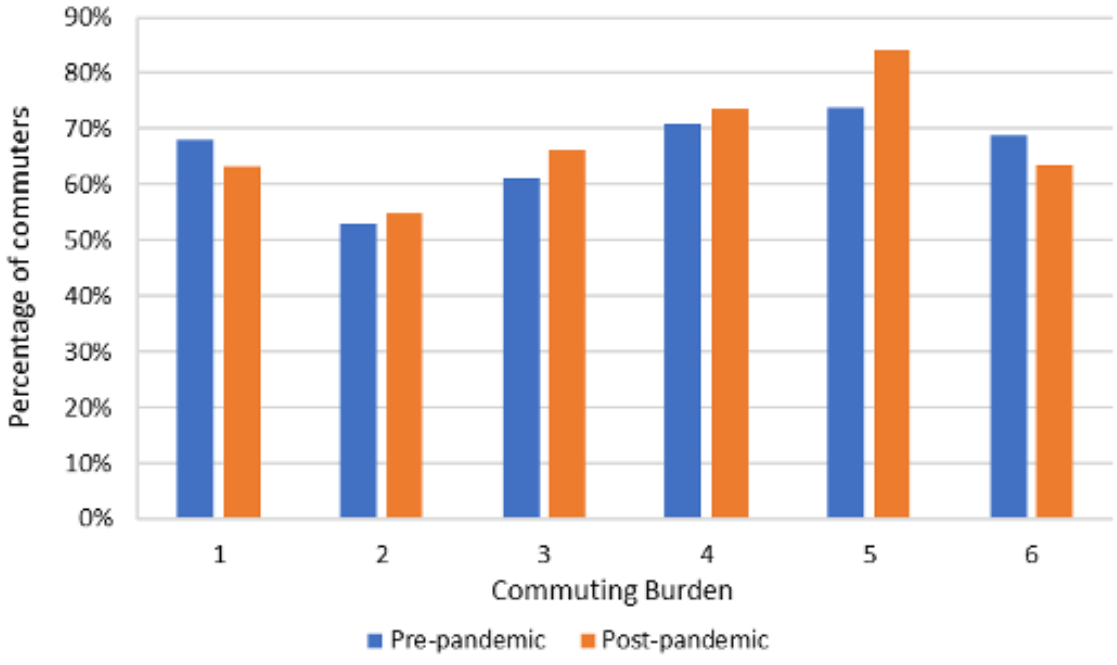



*Figure 8.15 Percentage of persons who shop locally by commuting burden*



### 8.4 Schooling

In February 2024, Ireland's then Minister for Higher and Further Education (now Taoiseach), Simon Harris TD issued a statement in which he told the media that, "demographic changes mean certain identifiable towns in commuter belts will see 'massive population growth'". He also said schools are "bursting at the seams" waiting for extensions to be approved, or for tenders to be awarded for the construction of new buildings. The minister said the department could take those actions quickly, adding: "That would give schools the confidence to be able to assist the department in – quite frankly – a mess that is not of the schools' making". In the scoping work to inform this research, residents in Newtownmountkennedy and Dundrum specifically raised the challenges associated with securing school places, and with children travelling long distances to school. They also suggested that the children of long-distance commuters were more likely to attend schools outside the locality than were other children. In order to investigate this matter, the survey questionnaire included an additional question, in both these case study towns, that asked those with children: 'Where does your child / children attend primary school?' The answers were coded, and they revealed that forty percent of children in both case study towns attend school elsewhere. The subsequent interviews with local stakeholders indicated that many parents have decided to send their children to primary schools that are close to their preferred second-level school, rather than in their own locality, in order to maximise their chances of getting a place in a particular second-level school.

### 8.5 Summary

In summary, the key findings to emerge from the analysis are as follows:

- There is no discernible association between commuting burden as measured by total travel time per week and levels of participation in voluntary, sports or social activities;
- Car drivers have lower levels of engagement in voluntary and social activities than do other cohorts of commuters;
- Those with a high commuting burden tend to be more likely to participate in social and sporting activities outside of their place of residence than are those with low commuting burdens; and
- Long-distance commuters are as likely as are any other residents to shop locally.

# 9

# Future Potential of Remote Working and Telecommuting

## During the pandemic:

57%

57% worked remotely to some degree, including 44% who did so most or all of the time.

65%

65% of those with a third-level degree were able to work remotely to some degree, as compared to 41% of those without a third-level degree.

## After the pandemic:

38%

38% continue to work remotely, including 17% who do so most or all of the time.

45%

45% of those with a third-level degree continue to work remotely, as compared to 26% of those without.

## Frequency of commuting (and the prevalence of the 5-day commute) has declined:

### PRIOR TO THE PANDEMIC

68% of respondents commuted 5 days a week or more and 26% commuted between one and four days per week

### COVID-19 AND THE GROWTH OF TELECOMMUTING

### POST PANDEMIC

just 42% travel 5 days or more, while 46% travel between 1 and four days.

**Post-pandemic, the frequency of commuting is linked to duration of commuting:** those with longer-duration commutes are commuting less frequently than those with shorter-duration commutes.

| | % travelling 1-4 times per week | % travelling 5 or more times per week |
|---|---|---|
| Persons with commutes of 15 to 30 minutes duration | 35% | 63% |
| Persons with commutes of 60 to 90 minutes duration | 66% | 28% |

## Remote working is more common among longer-distance commuters:

19% of those who had commuted 30 km or more prior to the pandemic were still working from home after the pandemic, as compared to 16% of those with medium-distance (16-30 km) commutes, and just 6% of those with short (less than 15 km) commutes.

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# Future Potential of Remote Working and Telecommuting

Chapter 6 examined the extent to which respondents worked at home or remotely during the pandemic, and at the impact of home / remote working on the distances, durations and frequencies of commuting in the case study settlements. Now, with a view to investigating the prospects for retention and continuation of home / remote working into the future, this chapter focuses on workers attitudes towards it, in particular the attitudes of those who had experience of it during the pandemic. The chapter also examines these workers' desire to continue working at home / remotely in the future, as well as some of the potential barriers to doing so. Finally, we look at workers' beliefs about the potential of home / remote working in terms of rural and small-town development, and, more broadly, at their views about the future prospects of the settlements in which they live.

As we have seen already, the vast majority (87%) of remote working was from the home, and so the terms 'home working' and 'remote working' are practically synonymous in the context of the current study. However, for ease of reference, the more inclusive term 'remote working' will be used throughout the chapter to refer to both working from home and working from other facilities, including digital hubs, capturing a range of expressions associated with multi-locality working. The term 'remote worker' refers to someone who works from a remote location for at least part of the week, not necessarily the entire week. In this sense, remote working is synonymous with hybrid working, and with teleworking or telecommuting.

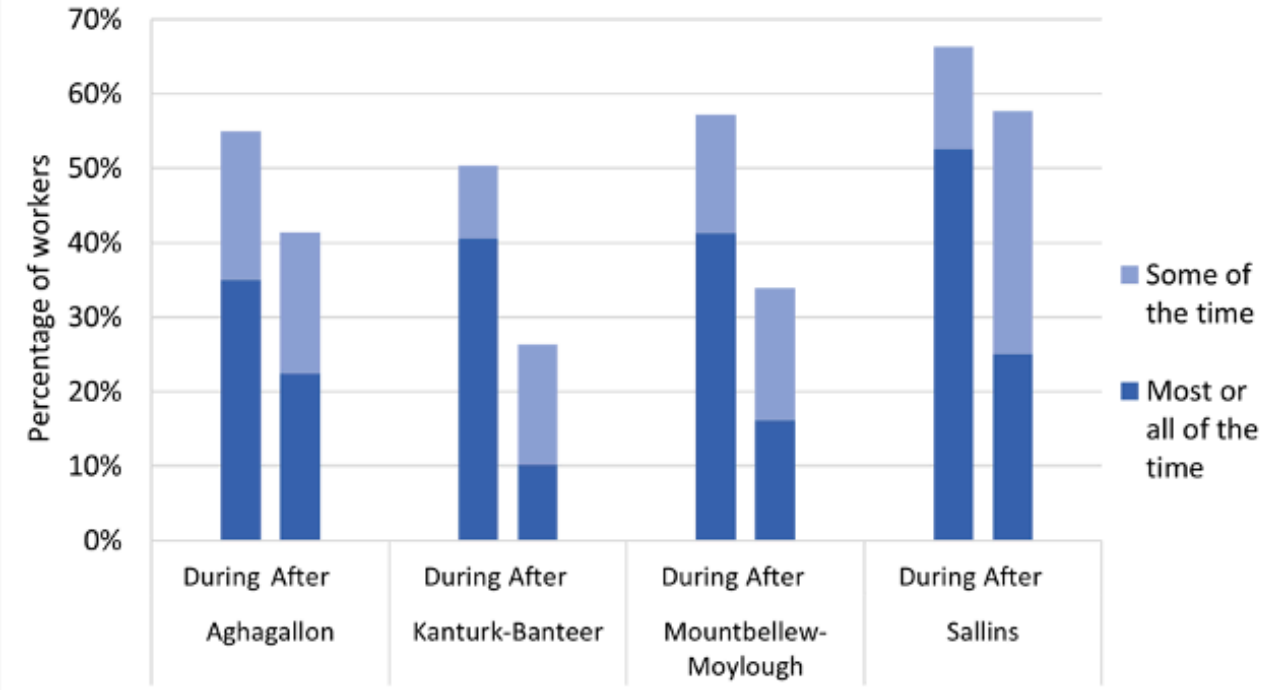
## 9.1 Commuters' Experiences and Perceptions of Remote Working

To begin with, we explore the extent to which respondents continued with remote working after the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the 2022 Census of Population, at national level almost one-third of workers worked at home for at least one day a week at the time of the census, which was approximately three months after the lifting of most pandemic restrictions (April / May 2022). In the Phase 2 case study areas, which were surveyed between seven and eleven months after the census, the proportion of workers indicating that they were still working remotely, at least some of the time, was somewhat higher than this, at 38% (down from 57% during the pandemic). Given the time lag involved, and the anticipated downward trend in home working after the pandemic, as workers returned to pre-pandemic norms, the level of continued remote working in the case study areas can be considered to be relatively high. It is also notable that over 60% of those who worked remotely during the pandemic continued to do afterwards.

Figure 9.1 shows the percentage of workers who were working remotely, either some of the time or most / all of the time, during and after the pandemic, for the four Phase 2 settlements for which data are available, and indicates that levels of remote working varied considerably both by settlement and by period. The main contrast between the pandemic and post-pandemic periods is in the breakdown of workers according to the proportion of working time they spent working remotely. During the pandemic, remote working in all four settlements tended to be most or all of the time, reflecting the pandemic restrictions whereby all workers who were in a position to work at home were required to do so. After the pandemic, remote working was more likely to be some of the time, as workers returned to their places of work at least for some days each week, leading to the emergence of hybrid working as a significant new phenomenon. The highest level of remote working, by far, was in Sallins where close to 60% of workers were still working remotely either some of the

time, or most / all of the time. In contrast, remote working in Kanturk-Banteer, at 26%, was at less than half of the Sallins level.

*Figure 9.1 Home/ remote working during and after the pandemic by type and settlement*



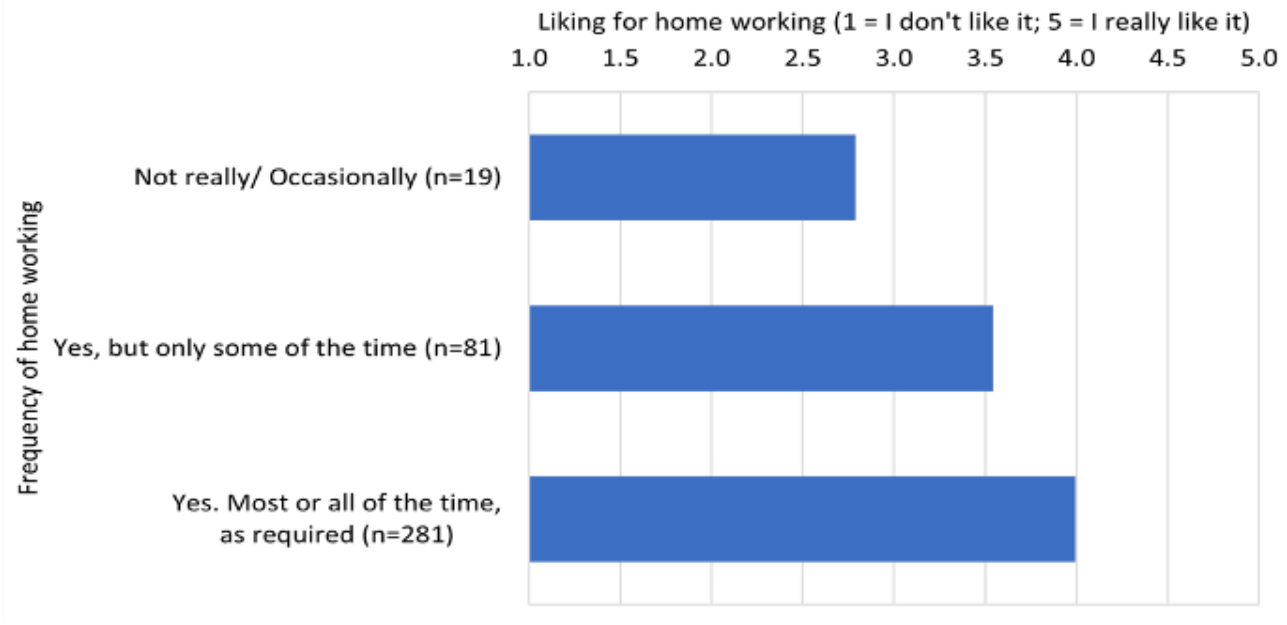

Focusing on the current (post-pandemic) situation with remote working, and taking those who work remotely "most or all of the time" together with those who do so "some of the time", there are no significant differences by gender, though a somewhat higher percentage of males continue to work remotely. Likewise, there are no significant differences according to age, though young people (aged 18 to 30 years) are less likely than those aged 30 years or older to be working remotely. There are more marked and significant differences according to housing tenure, and, even more so, educational attainment level. Home owners with mortgages are more likely to be working remotely than those in other tenure categories, while those with third-level education are almost twice as likely as others to still be working remotely (Table 9.1). The latter finding almost certainly reflects the link between educational attainment and both occupation and industrial sector, with the 2022 census showing marked differences in levels of home working according to sector.

*Table 9.1 Post-pandemic remote working by cohort*

| Indicator | Cohort | Percentage continuing to work remotely |
|---|---|---|
| Gender | Females | 35.6 |
| | Males | 44.3 |
| Age | Aged 18 to 30 years | 29.0 |
| | Aged 30 years or more | 39.0 |
| Housing tenure | Owners with mortgage | 43.1 |
| | Other tenure categories | 30.5 |
| Education | Third level | 44.8 |
| | Other | 25.8 |

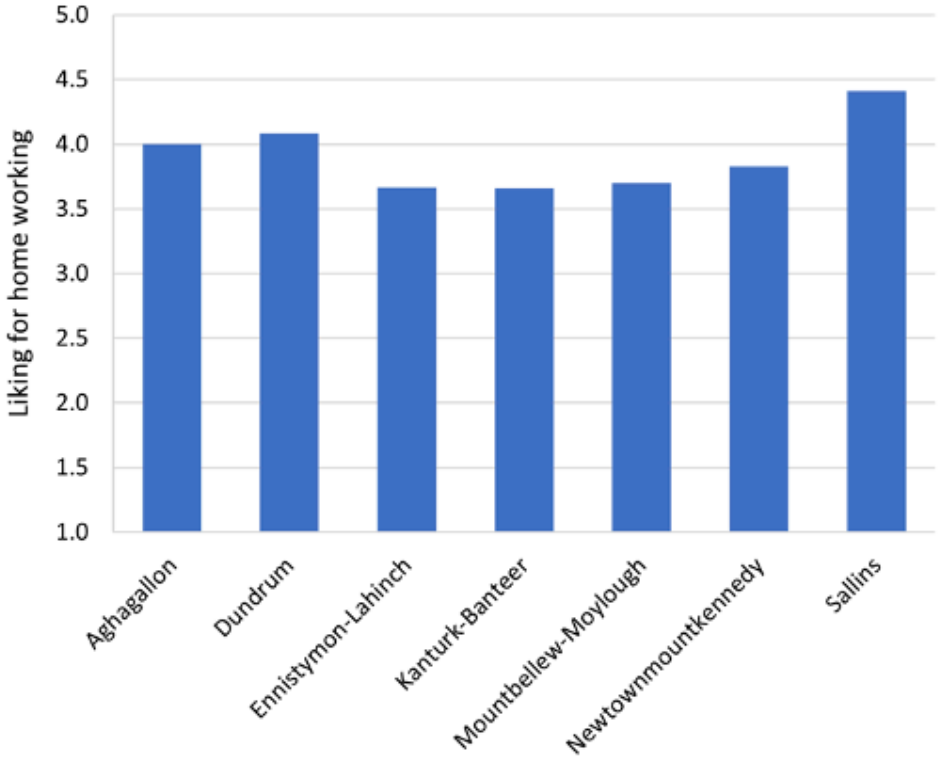
In order to explore attitudes towards remote working, workers who had *any* level of experience with it (including very little) during the pandemic (N=381) were asked to rate it on a five-point scale, where 1 represented the response "It's not for me: I don't like it", and 5 represented the response "It really suits me: I like it". The average scores on this scale for workers classified according to their level of experience of remote working are represented in Figure 9.2, which shows that, while workers with little or no experience of remote working are lukewarm in their appraisal of it, those with more experience of it are more favourably disposed. The low average satisfaction score of the former group may be because these are respondents whose work wasn't suited to remote working: their inclusion here is primarily to establish a reference point or benchmark for attitudes. In any case, the general trend is that endorsement of remote working increases as experience of it increases, and those who could work remotely most or all of the time are particularly positive in their assessment of the experience.

*Figure 9.2 Rating of home/ remote working according to frequency of working at home/ remotely*




Focusing again on those who had more experience of remote working during the pandemic (those working remotely either most / all of the time or some of the time) the rating of the experience varies significantly by town. The strongest endorsement is in Sallins, with an average score of 4.41, while remote working was least liked in Kanturk-Banteer, where it was scored 3.66 on average (Figure 9.3). It is notable that, among the four Phase 2 settlements for which we have data on the continuation of remote working, Sallins and Kanturk-Banteer are the settlements with the highest and lowest continuation rates respectively. There are no significant differences in the rating of the remote-working experiences according to the socio-demographic variables of gender, age, education or housing tenure.

*Figure 9.3 Rating of home / remote working by settlement*




## 9.2 Commuters' Preferences regarding Future Remote Working

The future possibilities for remote working were explored by asking respondents who worked remotely during the pandemic (again, either most / all of the time, or some of the time) whether they could see themselves *continuing* to work in this way in future. Given the positive experience of this group of workers with remote working during the pandemic, it is not surprising that they were well disposed towards remote working in future. In total, 60% indicated that they could see themselves continuing, and a further 20% indicated that "maybe" they could (Figure 9.4). There was little variation in attitudes amongst socio-demographic cohorts defined with regard to age, gender or level of educational attainment, but those in social rented accommodation were significantly less sanguine about the prospects for future remote working than those in other housing tenure categories, while those in private rented accommodation were the most positive. These differences could be due to associated differences in occupational profile or family circumstances, though they may also reflect differences in the suitability of housing for home working. There was also significant geographical variation in attitudes towards future remote working. Amongst the case study areas, the most positive attitudes were in Sallins, and the least positive were in Ennistymon-Lahinch (Figure 9.5).

*Figure 9.4 Attitude to future home / remote working*

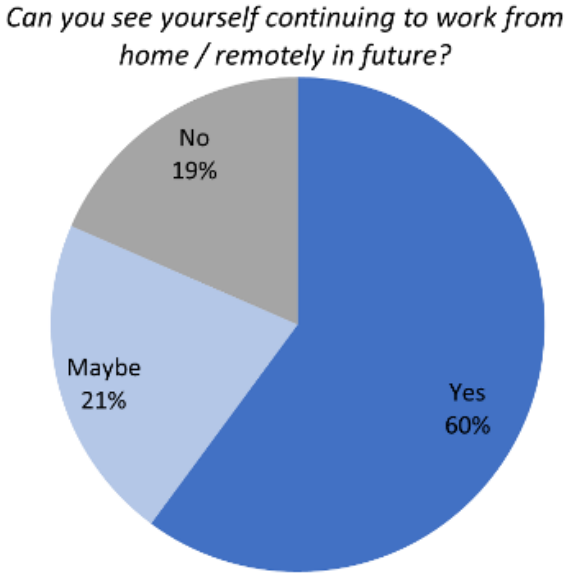
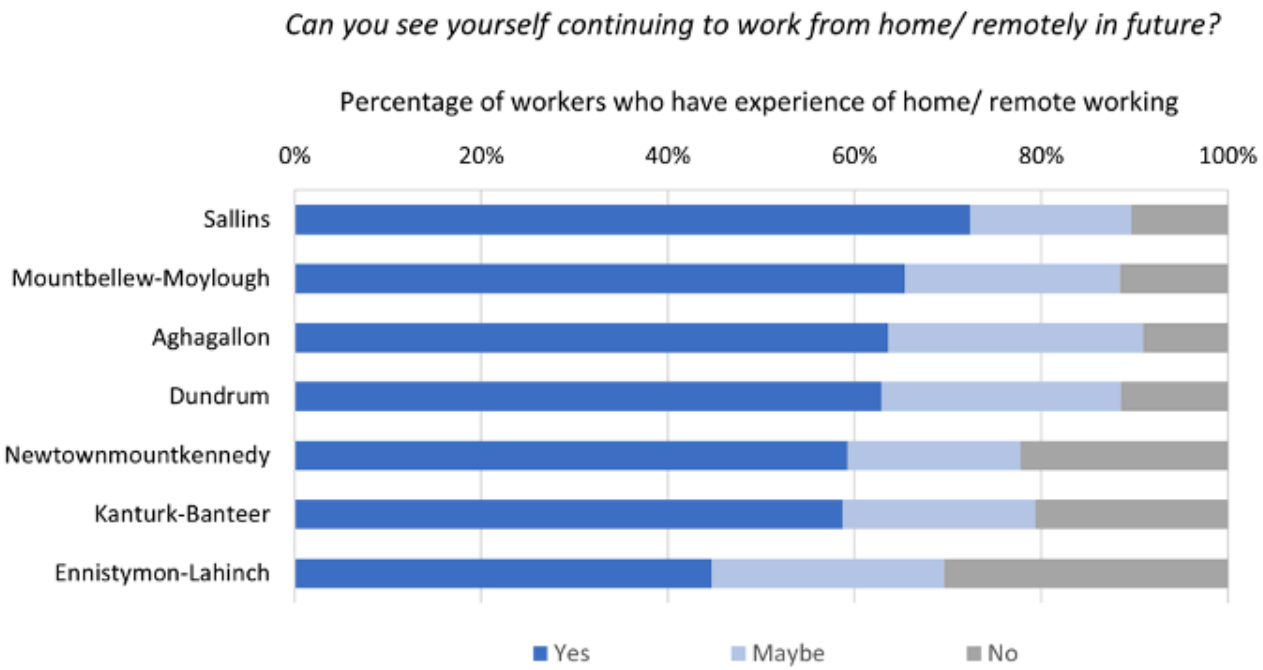


*Figure 9.5 Attitude to future home / remote working by settlement*




Two possible constraints on future remote working were investigated in the survey, namely employers' support (or lack of it) for remote working, and the quality of home broadband. In general, employers are seen as being positively disposed towards remote working: 48% of all workers (both those with experience of home working and those without) indicated that their employer was "very supportive" and a further 41% indicated they were "moderately supportive". Respondents' assessment of their broadband connectivity was not quite as positive as their rating of employers' support for remote working. Asked to rank the quality of their broadband on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 represented 'poor', and 5 represented 'excellent', 58% of all respondents (regardless of experience with remote working) score their connectivity as either a 4 or a 5, while 26% rated it as either a 1 or a 2. The average rating was 3.44.

In order to investigate the extent to which employers' attitudes and broadband quality might act as constraints on future home working, we cross-tabulated both variables against respondents' assessment of the likelihood of future remote working. This analysis is again confined to workers who worked remotely to some degree during the pandemic, since it is only this cohort that was asked about the possibility of continuing with remote working. The analysis reveals that there is a strong relationship between level of employer support and the likelihood of continued remote working. Thus, 76% of workers with very supportive employers could see themselves continuing to work at home in the future, but this decreases to 56% among those with moderately supportive employers, and it falls further to 36% for those who describe their employers as not supportive (Figure 9.6). There is also a significant relationship between broadband quality and the likelihood of continuing with remote working. While 72% of those with excellent connectivity can see themselves continuing to work remotely, the corresponding value for those with poor connectivity is 51% (Figure 9.7). However, the association is not as strong as for the employer's disposition, suggesting that the latter is a more significant constraint on the possibility of future remote working.

*Figure 9.6 Employer's attitude and the likelihood of future remote working*

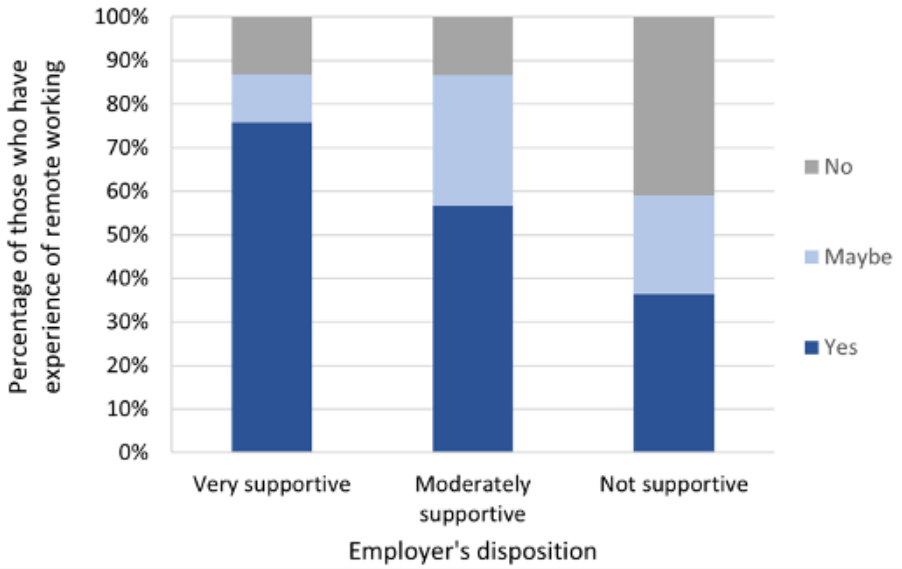
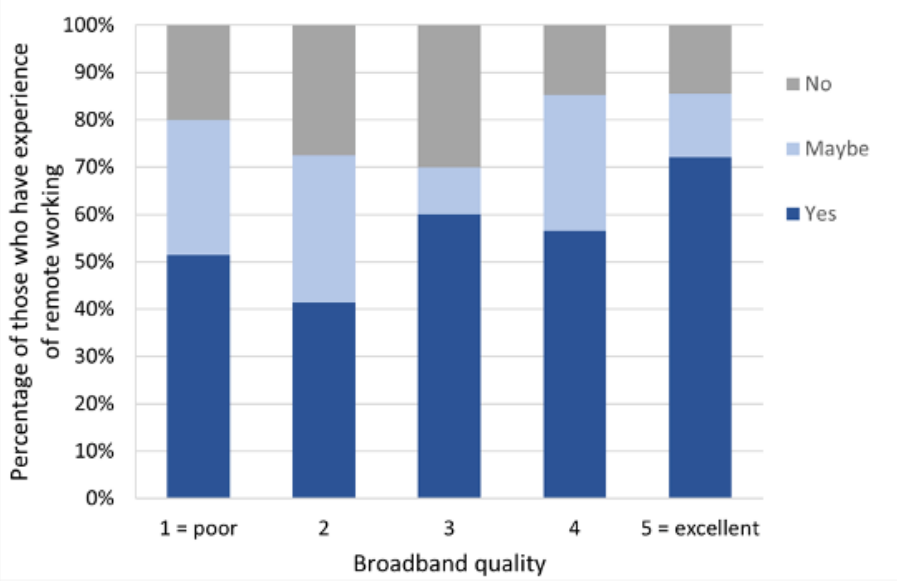



*Figure 9.7 Broadband quality and the likelihood of future remote working*




### 9.3 Beliefs About the Developmental Impact of Remote Working

In order to explore popular attitudes and beliefs about the sustainability and the potential of remote working to contribute to rural development, respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the following three proposition, two of which (A and B) express positive sentiments about home / remote working, with one (C) expressing a more sceptical point of view:

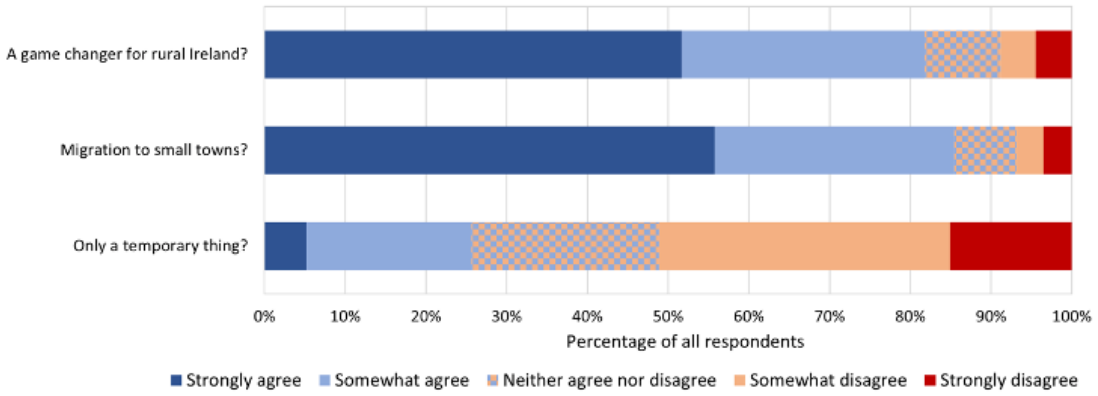
A. "Working from home / remote working could be a 'game-changer' for small towns and rural Ireland."

B. "People are more likely to move to small towns and rural areas if they know they can work from home."

C. "Working from home is only a temporary thing, and we will go back to commuting after the pandemic is over."

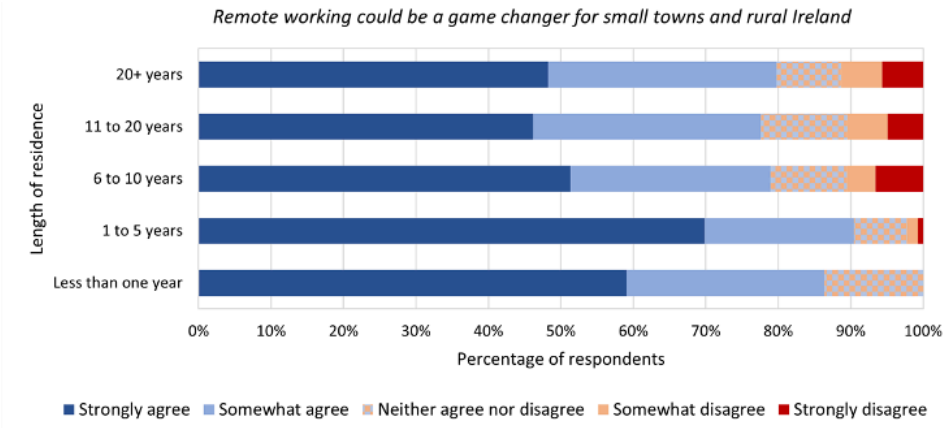
The findings from these questions are illustrated in Figure 9.8. There were high levels of agreement with propositions A and B, with 82% agreeing that home / remote working could be transformative for rural Ireland, and an even higher 85% supporting the contention that the ability to work from home could be a factor in migration to rural areas. In contrast, there was a relatively low level of scepticism about the sustainability or permanency of home working in the long term. Just 25% agreed that home working was only a temporary phenomenon of the pandemic, as compared to 51% who disagreed with this proposition. It is notable also that there was more uncertainty or agnosticism about statement C than about the other two: almost one-quarter (23%) of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement.

*Figure 9.8 Beliefs about the potential of home/ remote working as a catalyst for change in rural Ireland*




In general, this sample of 778 rural / small town residents felt that remote working, whether or not they had experience of it themselves, had the potential to be a transformative influence on rural Ireland, including by attracting workers through the possibility of telecommuting. Interestingly, there is some variation in levels of agreement with the positive propositions according to respondents' length of residence in the case study settlements. While the association is not strong, the tendency is for newer residents to be somewhat more positive in their assessment of the potential impact of home/ remote working. This is illustrated for Proposition A in Figure 9.9, which shows that while 70% of those who have been resident between one and five years strongly agree that remote working could be a game changer for rural Ireland, the corresponding value among respondents resident in the areas for 20 or more years is just 46%. The general trend is that the percentage strongly agreeing decreases as length of residence increases.

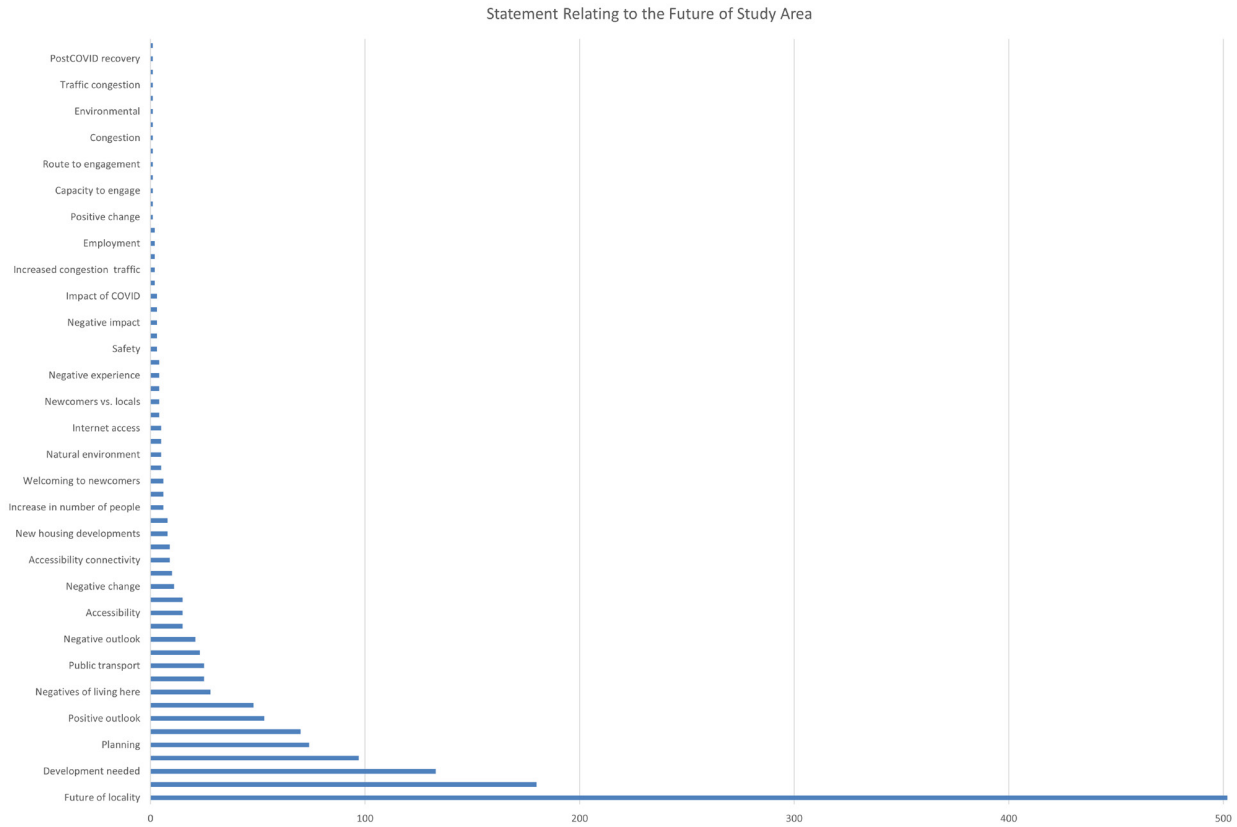
*Figure 9.9 Belief about the impact of remote working on rural Ireland by length of residence*



## 9.4 Qualitative Perspectives on the Future

A key topic of discussion in the interviews with both commuters and local community representatives and leaders, was the future of the settlement in which they lived, and the longer-term implications of changes to patterns of work. Figure 9.10 outlines what participants were most likely to speak about when talking about the future. Five hundred statements on the future of the respective settlements were coded, and in examining overlapping themes, dominant related themes were: development that is needed to support growth, perceived planning issues, public transport and accessibility. It was under the examination of 'the future' that there was most mixed sentiment with both positive and negative outlooks. This section attempts to capture the sentiments around the future of the study towns and how commuting and work patterns impact on the relationship with place.

*Figure 9.10 Statements Relating to the Future of Towns*




### 9.4.1 Changing Relationships with Locality

Particularly in the Phase 2 study towns, when COVID-19 restrictions had begun to be removed, and there was time for reflection on changing patterns, interviewees explored what the implications of these changing patterns and relationships were for their localities. Some considered that people were more willing to remain in their local areas to engage in social activities, with positive impacts on the economy:

> *"And there are people in their twenties and thirties and forties who want to spend money in the local area … they might have kids, but they don't necessarily, like what I would have noticed pre-COVID, a lot of people would have gone into Galway for their entertainment, into the city".*
> MM5

Others refer to the future development of their town based on its function as a commuter town, while also referring to the lack of amenities:

> *"Yeah, it will continue to grow probably residential-wise. It will remain a commuter area because there's nothing else there. There's a school there, a church, a social centre, a shop, GAA team, I mean there isn't even a pub in the town".*
> AGH7

There were concerns on how the locality is to develop, and what supports should be invested in regeneration and sustainability:

> *"Well, in my humble opinion housing is being built in the wrong places because when you have areas like Lurgan and Portadown, planning should be putting people into the town centres to keep those town centres alive, because if you go into any of those towns in the evening after 5 or 6 o'clock, they're dead, they're just empty and businesses have to close down because there's no footfall. And it may well be that in Aghagallon there needs to be some sort of planning to put social activities into the town, into Aghagallon and into the area for people to interact and have some sort of social life without having to travel for it".*
> AGH7

While we have seen that there is a positive attitude to remote working, there remain concerns about the future of towns:

> *"Business-wise, there are some couple of businesses which is just for local things like food and something like that. But if you go through the roads here and look at the shops, most likely most of them are closed. And … when I came here, and look now, most of the shops are still closed, nothing will be done. There is no investment in the town. I do not know, people maybe have either not the money for to buy those kind of things. Or there is no big companies here, which offer work where the people live, get money and spend the money here in Kanturk, leave the money in Kanturk. That is missing here".*
> KB5

### 9.4.2 Infrastructure and Investment

Access to the internet and broadband speed were a recurring theme in interviews, and despite growth in the population with digital access, there are still challenges in the day-to-day reality of working from home specifically, and connectivity in general:

> *"When I moved here first, I had a period of about a month and a half when I didn't know if I could get broadband, and I ended up with satellite, which is disaster. Now I have eventually gotten a supplier and they're perfect, no quibbles with them, but like I've been tracking the national broadband plan, because fibre goes to the end of the road here which spoke two and a half kilometres away".*
> EL16

> *"But broadband I'd say could be improved here. That's probably like, if you're doing a commuter kind of thing, broadband is essential really. And even here I'm on a main road between Kanturk and Banteer and still operating off three-megabyte broadband. My phone is probably faster than the landline you know. So that's probably the biggest problem I'd say".*
> KB1

From the point of view of investment into the locality and amenities, there was some frustration with the role local government has in towns:

*" ... the council is very dormant here, you know, there's councillors, but they don't get in, you know, the county council takes very little involvement in actually the workings of the town. You know the park, there's a lovely park there and they wouldn't take over the management of the park. So there's a park here and they're expecting the community to run the park for them and own the park for them. These are community, the county council should own the park and manage the park. They should own some of the Community Council buildings and get involved and be part of the infrastructure of the town. So the council is totally kind of hands off, 'it's all up to you guys!'. And when you have a community that is not in good shape, that is all commuting and not present".*
KB11

*"There is really literally no bicycle lanes here, I take my bike to Kanturk, I take my bike to Banteer there is barely a place to park the bike. Like the Super Valu in Kanturk they had a couple of parking spaces for bicycles in the parking in the carpark, they remove them to make a space for another car, it's for another car space".*
KB7

## Integrated Transport and Local Area Planning – experiences in County Limerick

Limerick City and County Council exemplifies best practices in integrating transport and local area planning, enhancing both environmental sustainability and quality of life. The *Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy* (LSMATS), published in 2022, provides a framework to improve transport systems, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and promote sustainable travel. Key recommendations include light rail connectivity, increased public transport frequencies, and improved infrastructure for cycling and walking. (National Transport Authority, 2022).

Local transport plans (LTPs), such as those for Newcastlewest and Adare, are aligned with broader regional strategies. The *Newcastlewest LTP*, integrated into the *Newcastlewest Local Area Plan* (2023-2029), emphasises reducing car reliance, enhancing active travel, and improving public transport connections (Limerick City and County Council, 2023c, 2023b). Specific objectives include safer public spaces and strategic cycling and walking projects.

*Castleconnell's Local Area Plan* (2023-2029) promotes remote working, economic development, and sustainable transport, aiming to create a compact, well-connected settlement. It prioritises protecting rail infrastructure, supporting park-and-ride facilities, and enhancing public transport connectivity (Limerick City and County Council, 2023a)

### 9.4.3 Local Amenities

While there were frustrations on the one hand with infrastructure, there was a marked recognition of, and renewed appreciation for, local amenities and the value that they bring:

*"... there are so many organisations that use the space. That has changed over lockdown. We live in the side of Mount Hilary so we were always walking up and down the mountain, and my husband would be mountain biking and everything. But during lockdown, everybody discovered it! And there were some days when the milk lorry couldn't travel down the road because there were so many cars parked. That's how popular it became! So the County Council have put a car park and picnic tables there now at the bottom of Mount Hilary, that's helped*

*with the whole traffic business. But since then, it is used so much, it's used so much yeah. We, we use it with Scouts a lot and different (..) things. So it's, for us it's a great amenity, Mount Hilary, and definitely, I can see it's used so much more. So much more. It's just, it's like day and night the way it's been used. Yeah, massive. So we're very lucky to have it there. And the whole world has discovered it now".*
KB10

*"There was definitely a positive impact in outdoor spaces generally around the country, not just here. And that was a very good example of that. That once people decided okay we only can operate the business if we have an outdoor space. And then people made a proper effort at it. Which I think is brilliant, like I actually, I don't like sitting inside the whole time. Especially in summer, when you're having a drink and being a smoker you'd be lucky if you can (have) one step out the door, you're in the rain and that's the smoking area. You know it's (Laughs), but that aside, it's just better to be, have a space where you can sit outside. Like on a nice sunny day it's nice to just be out, have a beer somewhere in the sun. And before that there was actually nowhere, you had to drive to Galway to be able to do that. So your best option was your backyard you know. So yea I think it's a great addition. And it probably really come into play this summer. Because they've just kept developing it and it's, yea it's in really good shape to do a good summer I think now".*
MMD

In considering the development of, and investment in, local amenities, a number of participants talked about who should be included in the conversations:

*"And so it was really important for me that the voice of the teenagers be heard. Because everybody talks about them. But nobody ever asks them anything".*
KB10

### 9.4.4 Housing and Planning

Housing and planning for residential development or one-off dwellings was a contentious issue throughout all towns. For some the issue was access to affordable housing:

*"There's a younger teacher who just graduated and came straight from college into this school and he can't live near because accommodation is not only so expensive, but it's also hard to come by. Ennistymon and Lahinch areas have no housing. I'm on a few Facebook groups and there's people looking for accommodation left, right and centre with no luck. There's no chance of anyone getting accommodation in Lahinch".*
EL20

*"I suppose what d'you call it, you would worry like down along the line for my kids, you know? Like, will they be able to actually afford to live in this area like that, you know, if they so choose like that".*
KB3

Access to housing was perceived to be directly related to planning, and many cited both national and local rules around permitted development:

*"It is, I suppose access to housing. I'll give you one example again now personally. I tried for five years to get planning permission before I bought this house. I was looking for planning permission on a one-acre site that was owned by my parents, beside my parents. Being the eldest … I was given first dibs at it. It cost me a lot of money, between engineers and architects and so on, trying to get planning and eventually I got planning but the planning … was appealed*

> *to An Bord Pleanála by [x] because it was [x]. And they won the appeal, I lost the appeal. So that was the end of the planning. But long story boring, anyway, is that a lot of people in the area here would have tried to get planning and find it very difficult. So I suppose it is important for Cork County Council to see the importance of sustaining rural communities".*
> KB2

And from the same interview, speaking about housing preferences:

> *"... my preference would not have been to move into an estate in Banteer because I wasn't from the village, I was from outside the village. Having not grown up in an estate, I mean these are all lovely four- and five-bedroom detached houses you know, it's not that it's that it's space related. They all have decent sites, there's a good airy feel here. It's none of that. But just, I suppose I was used to growing up where there was a house planted inside in the middle of a field. And I think, again, for rural areas, for sons and daughters of farmers, people who have land, or for local people who would like to buy a site and build on it, it is essential for these rural communities that the councils are open to giving planning, and especially to people who are from the area".*
> KB2

Another interviewee from the same town also expressed a preference for lower density living:

> *"The less houses near me the better I would say".*
> KB1

Housing, planning and development were the cause of grassroots movements to engage with planning and the growth of the town:

> *"The only thing I'm involved with is the locals here we've put together a group to keep an eye on planning applications because as I said a couple of planning applications have come through which in our opinion would be really detrimental and not appropriate to the area. And in fact I have contacted planning enforcement on two occasions to complain about developments that are going on and both are active enforcement actions at the minute".*
> AGH7

> *"...if people want to live in their home area, whether it's in the village or outside the village they should be entitled to get planning".*
> KBA

> *"... there certainly is great potential there for the town you know. Provided, you know certain things fall in place, you know as I said to you once the upgrade of the treatment system, you know to allow any other developments to go ahead you know. I think on a survey, internet for me is a big one because you know if I don't have a reliable service, I'll end up working away more than I should be, you know. And I certainly don't want that, I'm away from home enough without having to add to that you know".*
> MM1

### 9.4.5 Commuting to Work and Transport

Earlier in this chapter and in Chapter 6 there was discussion of changing commuting patterns as evidenced by the survey. Here we look at findings from the interviews. Figure 9.11 outlines the dominant themes that related to discussion of commuting in the post-COVID-19 era, and it includes reflection on working from home and the positive that can come with it. As highlighted in Chapter 6, there were recurring references to means of transport, and to changes brought about by the pandemic:

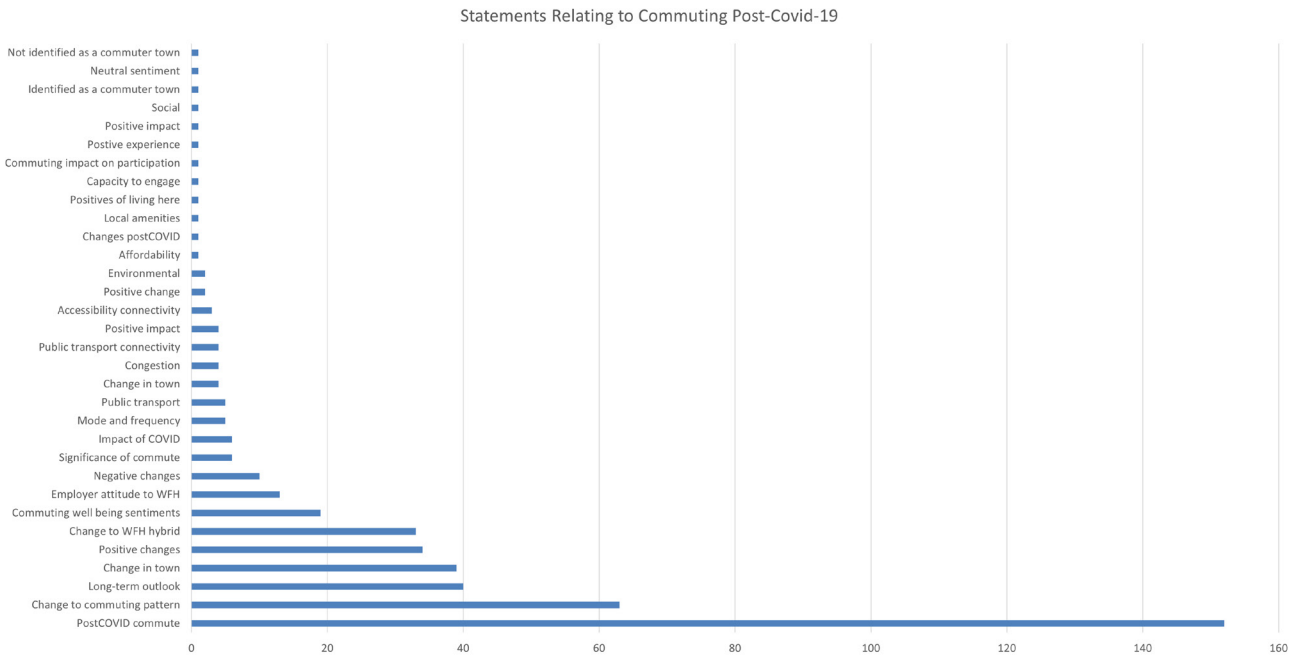
> *"So like the way that I get there hasn't really changed. It's more just it's the capacity that's changed. And even in recent weeks the trains just seem to be much busier, and I don't know if that's because people are going back to work now. Or I don't know, it just seems to be kind of sudden thing".*
> SL10

> *"So beforehand … there was no cycle lanes. There was very few cycle lanes in the actual original village. Now there's barrier cycle lanes all the way up to, I think its even past Lidl, like a lot of the traffic flow management has been, and the lanes have been changed to make it easier for cyclists. And then the Sallins bypass. … The Sallins bypass has massively helped that and then that freed up room for cyclists as well. So yeah, just the cycle network seems to have improved a lot".*
> SL8

The future of work was much reflected on in the interviews. While many favour a hybrid model of work, there was also an appreciation of in-person interaction:

> *"I enjoy many of the days I'm in the office as well, because I'm sociable on those days, and I get to meet people. And I get to solve a lot of problems on the fly, without having to convene Teams meetings and Zoom meetings with people, you meet them in the corridor, and you sort things out. So I think that hybrid works well for me, certainly".*
> KB2

*Figure 9.11 Statements Relating to Commuting Post-COVID-19*




### 9.4.6 Community After COVID-19

Finally, the changing nature of, and future for, community was explored. Figure 9.12 illustrates what interviewees discussed in relation to community health and well-being, including both negative and positive impacts of the pandemic and the recovery from it. There were concerns raised for the long-lasting impact that the COVID-19 restrictions may have on people:

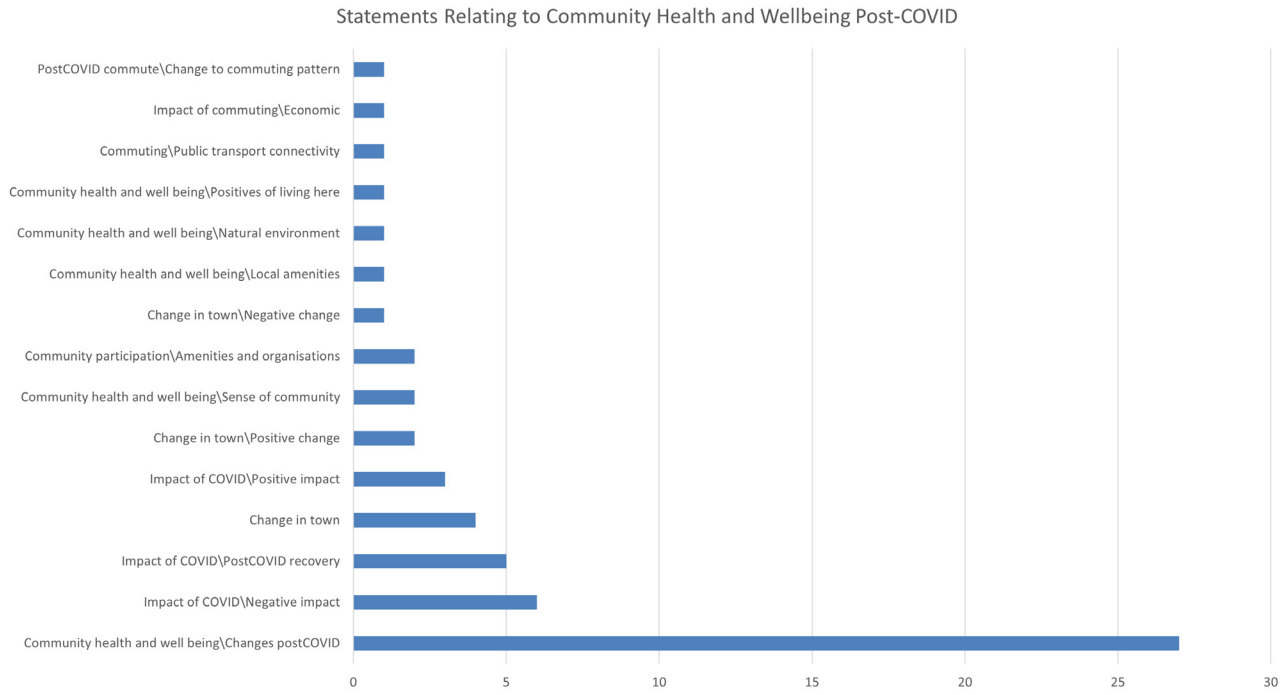
> *"COVID really put a lot of people off. The older people were very scared. I know in the church we have actually lost some of our usual mass goers. But the reason for that was that they got… we supplied tablets for people so they could watch the mass from the webcam, and they started then that they were happy in their houses to do that, which I don't think is always a good thing because it stopped them coming out and socialising".*
> AGH3

> *"Yeah, yeah, we're still suffering the effects of COVID. I know that there's still people working from home. And I know that there's a reluctance from some people to come out and engage with the community again. There's still that apprehension and fear of COVID. So again…I don't know how, it's just probably going to take time. It's still about".*
> AGHB

For some, community got stronger and more inter-connected than before:

> *"I think community got better, like, people got to talking more to each other. Like we know, most of our neighbours, they actually came to visit. I know I have that phone number. So if something happens, they have mine. So it's, I think people just got closer. That way. That community got closer. Yeah, more and more helpful, interacting with each other".*
> KB9

*Figure 9.12 Statements Relating to Community Health and Well-being Post-COVID-19*




## 9.5 Summary

This chapter has painted a broadly positive picture of remote working in the case study areas, the overwhelmingly predominant form of which was working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic. The key findings are as follows:

- Telecommuting in the form of home / remote working remains a significant feature of work in the four case study areas surveyed in Phase 2 of the study, with, for example, higher levels of remote working than in Ireland as a whole as established by the 2022 census of population.

- Those who had experience of home working during the pandemic were positive in their assessment of the experience.
- Three-fifths of these can see themselves continuing to work remotely in the future, with a further one-fifth open to this possibility.
- The extent of future remote working is more likely to be determined by employers' attitudes than broadband connectivity. Amongst those who worked remotely during the pandemic, the majority of employers are perceived to be favourably disposed towards continuation of home working.
- Across all respondents (both those with experience of home working and those without) there is a strong belief that telecommuting in the form of remote working can make a positive and significant contribution to the development of rural and small-town Ireland.

The 'future', both of working / commuting patterns, and of the case study settlements more generally, was a dominant theme in the interviews. While commuters who focused on the benefits of remote working with the support of their employers could easily identify personal and familial benefits (discussed in greater detail in Chapter 7), there were concerns for the wider implications for the town and the community. Despite seeing some revival in places, vacancy and business closures still dominate rural towns. It appears that many of the interviewees were still establishing what the new patterns are, and the future felt somewhat uncertain beyond the internal dynamics of home.

# 10

# An International Lens on Commuting - the Maryland Case Studies

## An International Lens on Commuting - the Maryland Case Studies

The Maryland case studies provide a cross-cultural comparison of the dynamics of commuting examined by the InPLACE project. The towns in the Maryland case studies differ from the Irish and Northern Irish towns in terms of national policy context and culture, but they are similar in terms of their size and their relationship to larger metropolitan areas. Thus, this trans-Atlantic comparison helps to situate the island of Ireland case studies in the broader context of commuting within developed countries, where car dependency and suburbanization are even more prevalent.

The National Center for Smart Growth (NCSG), located at the University of Maryland (UMD), collaborated with ICLRD in order to select two case study locations in commuter towns in the Washington DC / Baltimore area that were comparable in population and commuter characteristics to the towns that ICLRD selected in Ireland and Northern Ireland. A United States version of the survey questionnaire was administered in these towns, receiving 101 responses in each town. Additionally, twenty interviews were conducted across the two towns. The results from the Maryland case studies show similarities that may indicate cross-cultural trends in response to commuting and the COVID disruption.

### 10.1 Commuting in Maryland

Commuting in Maryland is car-dependent, with 69% of commutes made by car and 11% by bus or rail transit, while 17% of workers telecommute (2023 data). In 2022, the year of the Maryland InPLACE survey, only 36% of workers were fully in-person, meaning that they commute each day to work. By 2023, (the year following the InPLACE survey), the percentage of fully in-person workers had recovered to 66%, which is similar to the pre-pandemic rate. Thus, the survey in the case study towns captured a moment in time where commuting patterns were still in flux after the pandemic. However, the 2023 percentage of fully remote workers, at 14%, is nearly three times the pre-pandemic level, and it is possible, therefore, that the pandemic created a permanent shift in the number of people working fully remote (rather than hybrid) schedules. Interestingly, hybrid workers in Maryland are the most likely to use rail modes; hybrid workers also have the highest education and income levels. More than half of Maryland residents who work fully in-person would prefer more remote work (Harvey *et al.,* 2024).

The State of Maryland has several policies that influence commuting patterns. One of these is the Maryland Commuter Tax Credit, a programme that provides tax credits to employers who subsidise their employees' public transit commuting costs. The credit covers up to 50% of the employees' costs up to a designated limit. An NCSG report found that in 2022, use of the credit across the state had fallen dramatically to 13% of 2019 levels, with claims totalling only about $50,000 (Bardsley *et al.,* 2023a). Thus, this policy has a very limited current effect on commuting patterns. Even before the pandemic, the 2019 value of credits claimed (about $600,000) shows the limits of the programme's reach.

The Maryland Transit Authority also provides commuter buses that are targeted at commuter suburbs and exurbs. There are about 36 routes, most of which bring commuters into the DC metropolitan area in the morning and back to suburbs and exurbs in the evenings. An NCSG report found that, as of early 2023, the majority of these routes had not recovered more than 30% of their pre-pandemic ridership (Bardsley *et al.,* 2023b). Before the pandemic, these buses served approximately 3.6 million unlinked passenger trips per year, which is only about 7,200 round trips per working day (National Transit Administration, n.d.).

Thus, state policy in Maryland encourages the use of public transit for commuting, but the success of these programmes so far has been limited.

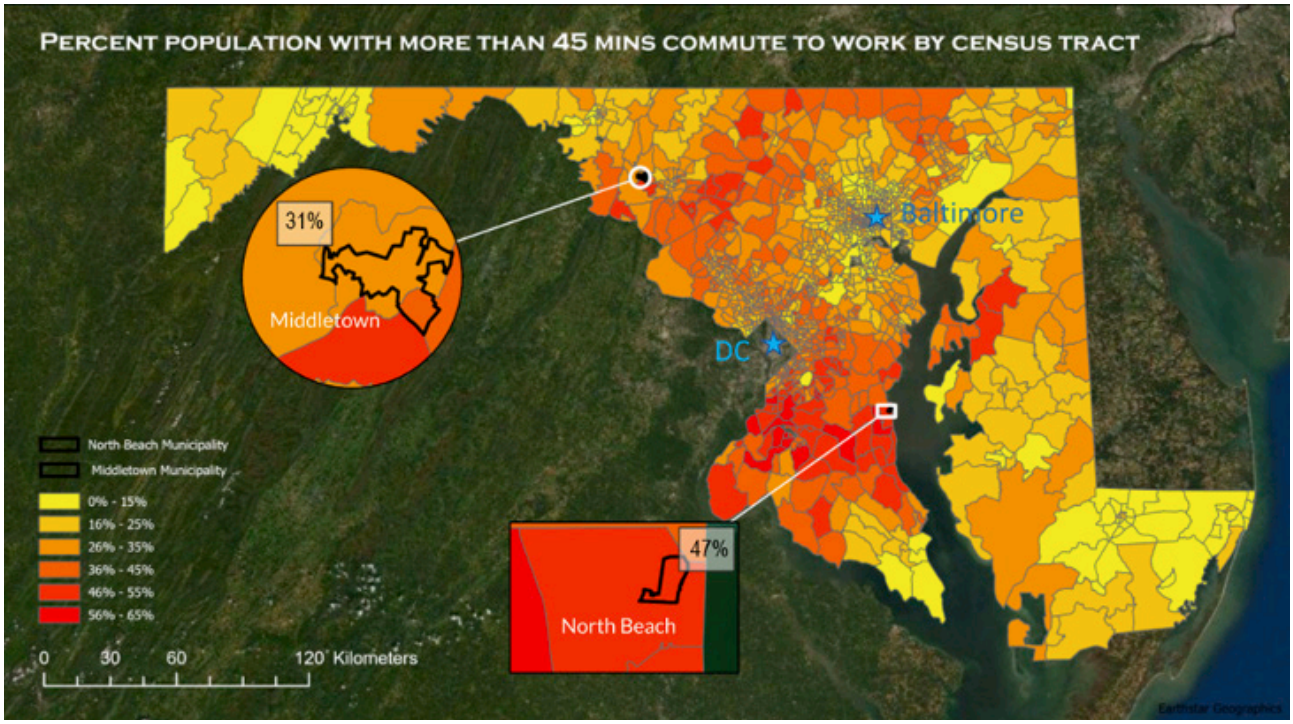
### 10.2 Profile of Case Study Areas

When selecting the case study towns, the Maryland team attempted to select locations comparable to those used by ICLRD. NCSG selected two Maryland towns with less than 5,000

residents each and high levels of long-duration (45+ minutes) commuting as case study locations for the project. These towns were not chosen randomly, as numerous other small municipalities in Maryland meet this criterion. NCSG chose towns that are on the fringes of Central Maryland, but still within the DC and Baltimore Metropolitan area. Furthermore, NCSG chose towns where contacts were easily established through extant relationships with town employees and UMD's Environmental Finance Center.

NCSG selected Middletown in Frederick County (population 4,943; 2020 US Census) and North Beach in Calvert County (population 2,146; 2020 US Census) as case study locations. Both North Beach and Middletown also have high levels of long-duration commuting as shown in Figure 10.1.

*Figure 10.1 Percentage of the population with more than 45 minutes commute to work by census tract*



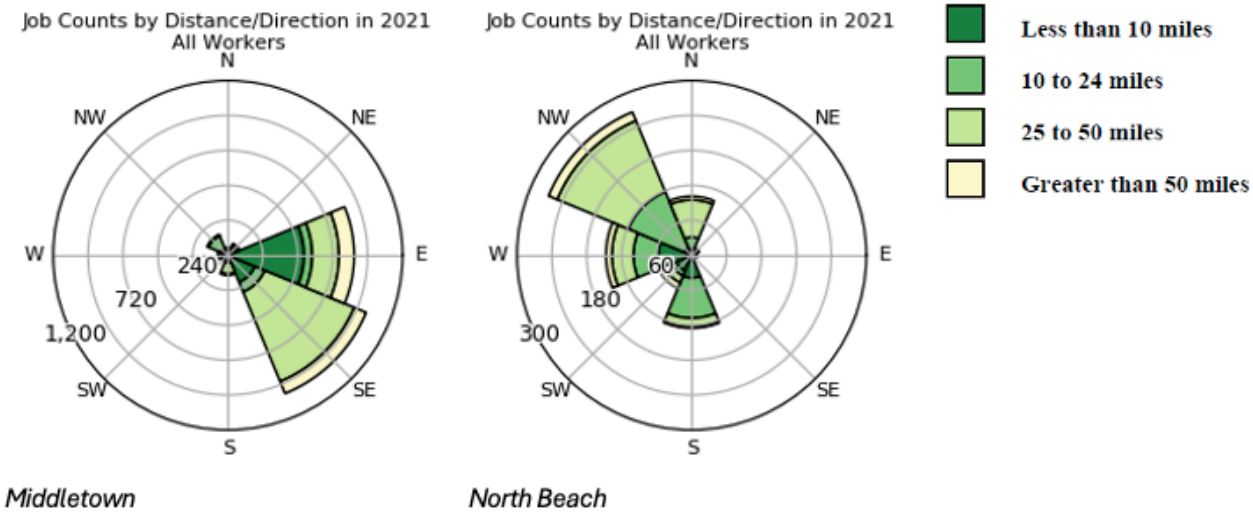

*Using 2019 American Community Survey (ACS) data, this map shows the percentage of employed residents (age 16 and older who did not work from home) who travelled 45 minutes or more to work, organised by census tract. The percentages for residents within the municipal boundaries of North Beach and Middletown are in the popouts.*

North Beach is a coastal town that, according to some interview respondents, has experienced a dramatic transition over the previous decades into more of a commuter town. North Beach's population has grown about 8% since 2010.[xxvi] Currently, the most significant commuting destination for North Beach workers is Washington, DC (6.7%), which lies between 50 and 85 minutes away by car, depending on the traffic (NCSG, 2022). The town has a small but vibrant restaurant scene and a well-known boardwalk. It also hosts a popular outdoor event in the summertime called "First Fridays" that draws large crowds to enjoy the waterfront and street vendors. Employment opportunities are limited, but some additional commercial centres are located in nearby Chesapeake Beach. The town has one Maryland Transit Authority commuter bus route that passes through it, which is intended to bring commuters into the DC metropolitan area in the morning and return them in the evening. This bus route suffered greatly due to the pandemic, and had only recovered to 29% of its pre-pandemic ridership by early 2023 (Bardsley *et al.,* 2023b). North Beach has a median household income of $78,000, which is lower than that of Calvert County at $120,000. The top three industries that employ North Beach workers are "arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services" (17.7%); "educational services, and health care and social assistance" (17.6%) and "public administration" (12.6%). About 25% of employed residents are government workers.[xxiii]


Middletown is a relatively affluent town with a history dating back to the 1700s. It currently serves as a kind of suburb of Frederick, Maryland, where about 20% of its workers commute (NCSG, 2022). Middletown's median income is $168,000, whereas the median income in Frederick County is $119,000.[xxiv] According to interview respondents, Middletown is known for its high-quality schools, which draw people from across the region, including those who commute to DC (2.5%). The top three industries for Middletown workers are "educational services, and health care and social assistance" (24.4%), "professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services" (18.1%), and "public administration" (10.5%). Similar to North Beach, about 25% of employed residents are government workers.[xxv] The population of Middletown has grown about 20% since 2010.[xxvi]

Although the percentages of those who commute to DC proper in North Beach and Middletown appear small at 6.7% and 2.5% respectively, radial charts of commute direction show that the bulk of commutes lie in the direction of the DC metropolitan area, and that commute distances are relatively long. DC is best perceived as a region that includes parts of Maryland and Virginia (known colloquially as the "District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia - DMV"), and thus the percentages of those commuting to Maryland and Virginia cities within the DC metropolitan area is larger than it at first appears (Figure 10.2).

*Figure 10.2 Radial charts showing the direction, distance and number of commutes for each town*[xxvii]




## 10.3 Findings from the Maryland fieldwork

The survey was conducted in May and June 2022 and consisted of 116 questions. By this time, most COVID-related restrictions in Maryland had been lifted. Both surveys received 101 responses. This means that, using 2020 Census numbers, we sampled about 5% of the population in North Beach, and about 2% of the population in Middletown. Due to the method of survey dissemination the sample is not a truly random sample for purposes of statistical analysis. Both of our case study locations over-sampled females and under-sampled those identifying as Black or African American (see Appendix B.2 for further details of survey dissemination and sample composition). In North Beach, the under-sampling of those identifying as Black or African American was particularly significant. It appears that our sampling methods nearly completely missed this group, which makes up 15% of the population of the town. In North Beach, but not in Middletown, we notably over-sampled those who are age 65 years or older. When interpreting the results, these divergences between the sample composition and the background population should be taken into account.

The key findings from the survey have been organised into three themes: Commuting and Telecommuting Trends; Commuting and Perceptions of Place; and Commuting, Community Health and Participation. A summary of the key findings under each theme is presented below, and the findings are illustrated with emblematic quotes from the interviews.

### 10.3.1 Commuting and Telecommuting Trends

Our results are consistent with national trends and also consistent with the hypothesis that the two towns, due to their proximity to the Washington, DC metro area and their high incidence of commuting, would have higher levels of telecommuting / remote working than the state average. Consistent with national trends, telecommuting was viewed positively (Parker, 2023). There is also some evidence that socioeconomic factors are mediating the ability to telecommute, especially in North Beach, where higher education levels – and the impact of this in terms of the occupation profile of the town – meant a higher probability of being able to telecommute.

Interview respondents expressed their attitudes towards telecommuting in various ways. As indicated by the survey, most of these attitudes were positive. “My employer is offering full-time telework as an option,” one North Beach resident said. “So, hell yeah, I’ll go back once a month, just to remind people what I look like, and that’s about it.” One Middletown resident said that she had “made the decision that I will never go back into the office. This job will stay remote. And if it didn’t, I would find another remote position.” A North Beach resident who has a hybrid schedule that requires commuting to Washington, DC also expressed his desire for more telework: “I don’t

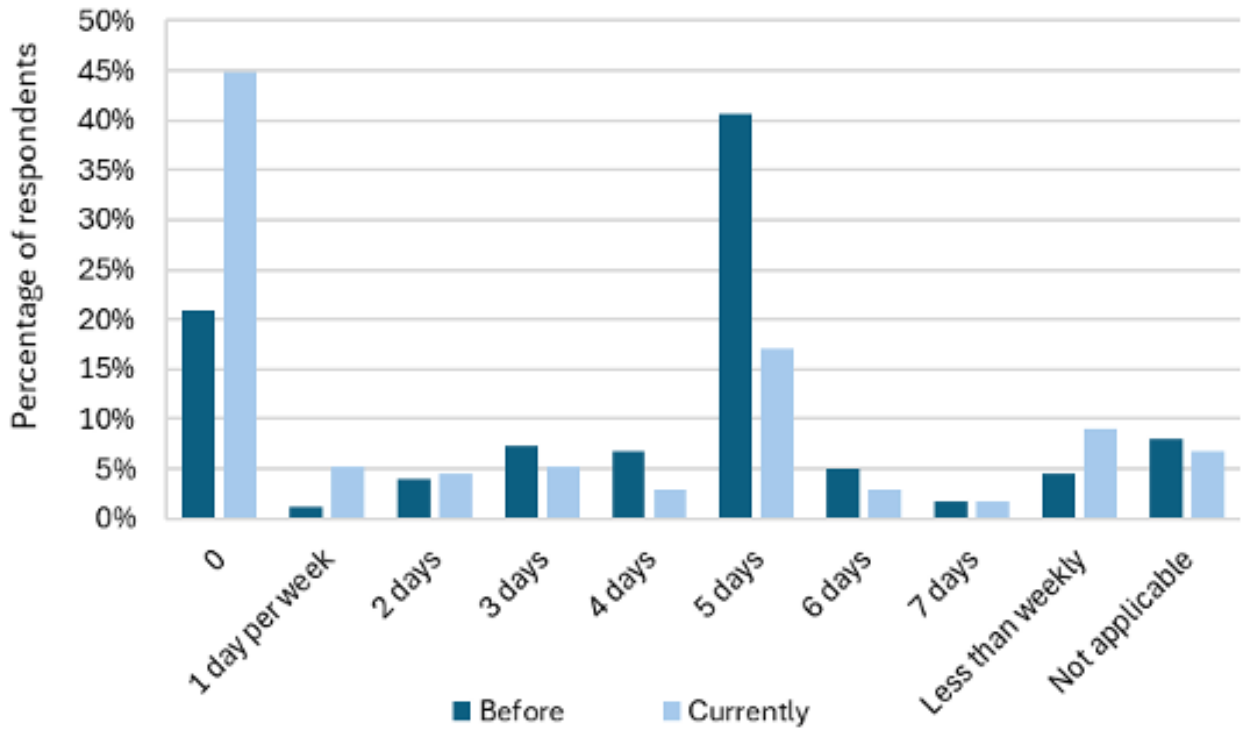
think I need to be going into the office now for three days a week and sit in a cubicle. I mean, I was getting more work done at home not having to commute."

A few residents expressed concerns over loss of social contact in the work setting, but this was tempered by other positive aspects of telework: "I love working remote. I do," a North Beach resident said. "Everybody has people that you're perfectly fine not seeing every day. My best friend works there. So that was a little difficult, but I've gotten used to it…and I honestly feel like I work harder from home." Overall, the interviews contained 17 positive references to telecommuting and seven negative references. Some of the negative references were from respondents who felt positive about telecommuting overall.

Consistent with the island-of-Ireland results, we found that telecommuting increased significantly from pre-pandemic levels. Those with a college degree were more likely to have been able to work remotely during the pandemic in both the Irish / Northern Irish and the Maryland datasets. However, in Maryland the age cohort most able to work from home during the pandemic were those aged 31 to 44, whereas in the island of Ireland it was those aged 45 and above. In the Maryland dataset, renters were much less likely to have been able to work from home most or all of the time (21%) compared to those who owned their home (39%).

Of particular note is the change in the 5-day work week (see Figure 10.3). When aggregated by those who commute 5 days per week or more (as a percentage of all respondents), the Maryland case study locations show a more precipitous drop in the 5-day workweek pre / post-pandemic then the island of Ireland case study areas. Whereas the island of Ireland settlements dropped from 68% pre-pandemic to 42% post-pandemic (a 38% decrease), the Maryland towns dropped from 47% to 27% (a 43% decrease). Still, these percentage drops are broadly similar.

*Figure 10.3 Frequency of commuting before the pandemic and currently (post-pandemic)*

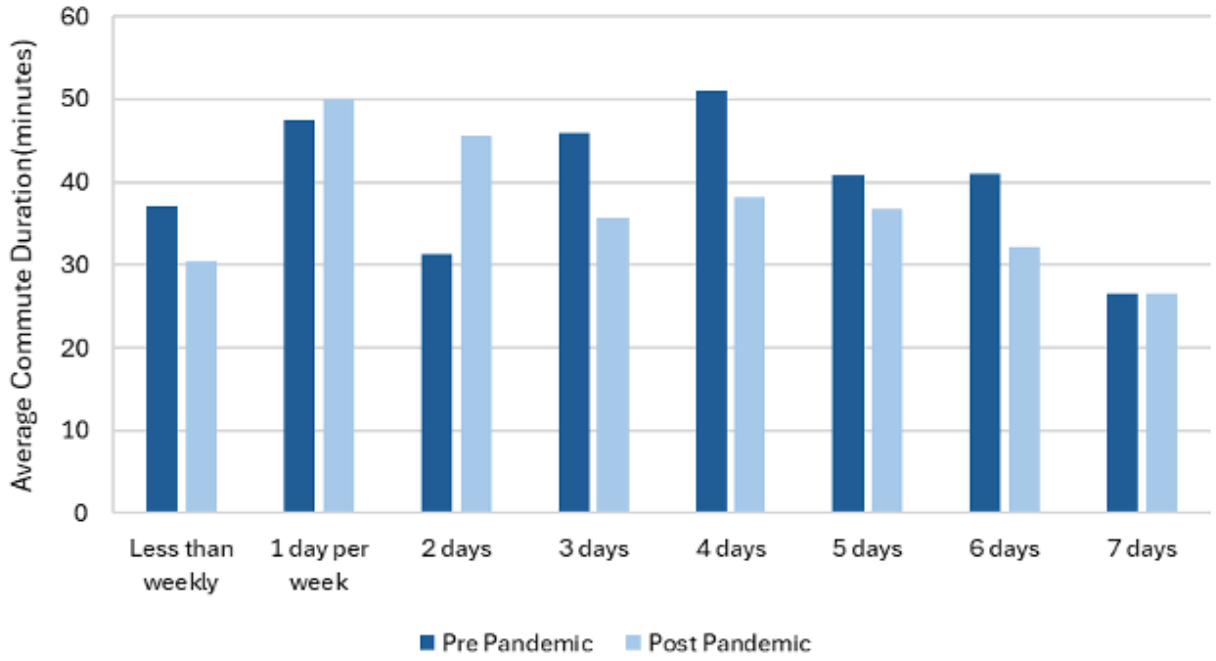



Of those who were able to work remotely during the pandemic, only a portion were able to continue to do so after the pandemic. In the Maryland towns, there was a notable difference between males and females in this group, with 82% of females but only 69% of males saying they

were able to continue remote work. This contrasts with the island of Ireland findings, where 36% of females and 44% of males reported that they were able to continue working remotely.

One interesting finding that appears in both datasets is that those who commute more frequently tend to have shorter commutes. In the NCSG and island of Ireland data, this trend appears more clearly after the pandemic than before the pandemic. Thus, the data suggest that workers are now more able to balance the trade-off between commute duration and commute frequency (Figure 10.4).

*Figure 10.4 Duration of commute by number of commuting days per week, pre- and post-pandemic*



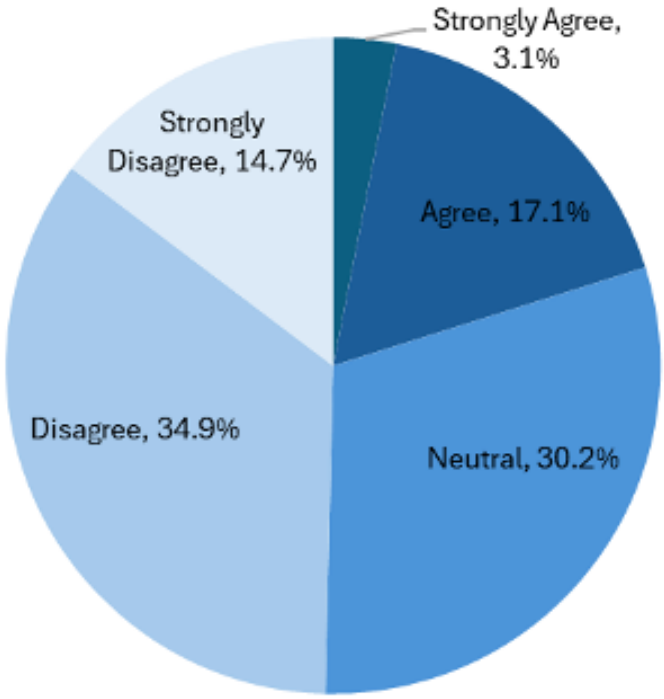

In both the NCSG and Ireland / Northern Ireland towns, males were more likely than females to have commute times greater than 45 minutes. However, the Maryland result showed a larger gender gap than the island of Ireland towns (38% of males vs. 20% of females in Maryland; 52% of males vs. 45% of females in Ireland / Northern Ireland). The age group most likely to have commutes greater than 45 minutes in the Maryland towns were those aged 45 to 64, whereas in the ICLRD towns it was ages 31 to 44. In both Ireland and Maryland, those with a college degree (third level education) were more likely to commute longer than 45 minutes.

As in the Irish / Northern Irish data, it was also observed that those with more experience telecommuting "like" telecommuting more. This was true of both those who were able to telecommute "most or all of the time" during the pandemic (they rated telecommuting higher than those who were only able to telecommute some of the time, 4.7 out of 5 vs 3.4 out of 5) and of those who continued to telecommute after the pandemic (they rated telecommuting higher than those who did not; 4.6 out of 5 vs 3.6 out of 5). Unlike in the ICLRD data, it was observed that females, those with a college degree, and those who owned their home "liked" remote working more than others.

Furthermore, the Maryland team observed that, similar to the island of Ireland findings, most respondents felt that their employers were "very supportive" or "moderately supportive" of telecommuting. In the island of Ireland case study towns, about 89% held this view, whereas in the NCSG data about 75% did so. Of those who could see themselves continuing to work from home in the future, 69% had "very supportive" employers in the Maryland data. In the ICLRD data, the number was 76%. Overall, 76% of those who were able to work remotely during the pandemic in the Maryland towns said that they could see themselves continuing to do so. As

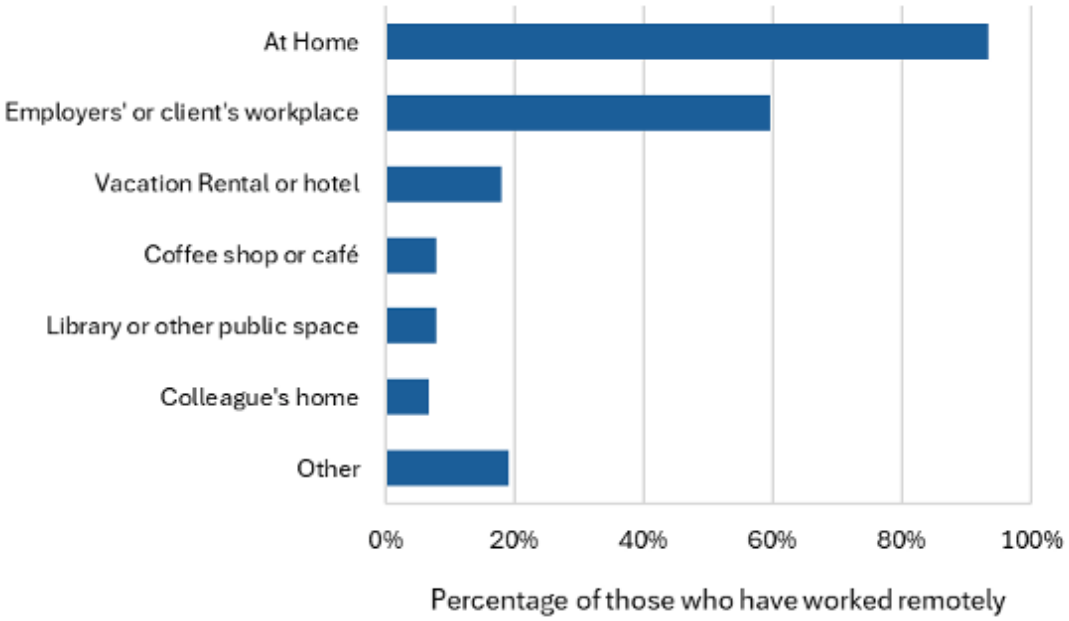
in Ireland / Northern Ireland, few respondents felt that remote work would be temporary thing. Figure 10.5 illustrates levels of agreement with the proposition that "working from home / remotely is only a temporary thing, and we will go back to commuting after the pandemic is over". Approximately half of the sample disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, while just over one-fifth of respondents agreed, to some degree.

*Figure 10.5 Level of agreement / disagreement that home / remote working is temporary*




Finally, it was also observed that very few workers used co-working spaces; when asked to list all the places where they had performed work in the past year, only about 2% included a co-working space / remote work hub in that list. While this speaks to the current low penetration of such spaces into the market, it may not be an indicator of their potential (Figure 10.6).

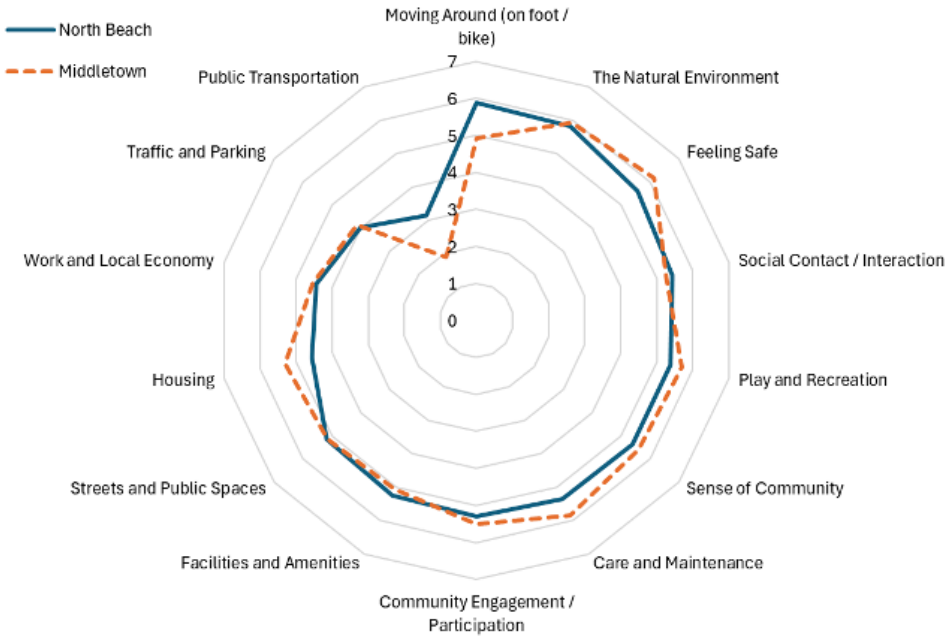
*Figure 10.6 Locations of work (over the past year) for those who worked remotely during the pandemic*




### 10.3.2 Commuting and Perceptions of Place

The Place Standard tool reveals broadly similar patterns for the two Maryland towns. Both rated "public transportation" and "traffic and parking" as the least satisfactory aspects of place, while "feeling safe" and "the natural environment" rate in the top three aspects in both towns (Figure 10.7). These results are closely similar to those for the Ireland / Northern Ireland case studies, and reflect the common characteristic of the towns as commuting settlements. People may move to these places in order to feel closer to nature and because they provide feelings of safety, but yet they face negative externalities related to car dependency (traffic and lack of public transit). The results provide an apt summary of the suburban or exurban trade-off.

*Figure 10.7 Place Standard results for North Beach and Middletown*



One significant difference between the two Maryland towns was that North Beach residents rated "moving around (on foot/bike)" nearly one point higher than did Middletown residents. North Beach displays an interesting relationship between telecommuting and opinions about the town. It appears that those who were able to telecommute during the pandemic had a higher opinion of "moving around on foot/bike," "social contact/interaction," and overall satisfaction with the locality. This was not true of Middletown. It is possible that North Beach provided greater satisfaction to telecommuters who spent their working days at home than Middletown did. Because they spent more time engaging with attributes of the town due to telecommuting, they may have rated them higher. For example, about 73% of total respondents in North Beach rated "getting around on foot/bike" either 7/7 or 6/7. In Middletown, only about 39% of respondents gave their town the same rating. Even among those who could not telecommute, nearly double the percentage of respondents in North Beach rated their town 7/7 on this characteristic as respondents from Middletown. One respondent from the interviews noted that in Middletown, "unless you live in downtown," driving is required. In contrast, one North Beach resident noted that "[the town] is the size of a one cent stamp. You can be anywhere in five minutes on foot, more or less."

North Beach may also have a more attractive local restaurant scene. Nine of eleven interview respondents spoke positively of local restaurants, while only 5 of 9 did in Middletown. Several North Beach residents noted with satisfaction that they can walk to restaurants that they enjoy. "I like Hook and Vine, I love Vaughan Cheese," one resident said. "Yeah, I mean, I can walk to these places. And all of these places are just two, three blocks away from me. And that's wonderful." Towns that provide the types of amenities that telecommuters are looking for, such as walkability, social interaction, or an attractive local business scene may be more likely to foster relationships between people and place.

The survey also asked whether residents perceived improvements, dis-improvement, or no change in the Place Standard categories. Similar to the ICLRD results, most residents in the Maryland towns perceived that things were staying the same. However, in both the ICLRD and NCSG datasets respondents perceived improvement more than dis-improvement (in the NCSG data by a factor of 1:94 to 1:00). Another similar finding is that the only categories where the perceived dis-improvement was higher than the perceived improvement were in "Public Transportation", "Traffic and Parking," and "Housing." "Facilities and Amenities" and "Play and Recreation" were the most likely to be perceived as having improved, with about 40% of respondents perceiving this change. These indicators were rated similarly by the island of Ireland case study settlements, again suggesting that there is a 'perception profile' common to commuter settlements.

In both North Beach and Middletown, newcomers appear to be better educated, more able to telecommute, and younger than those who have lived in the town 11 years or more. In North Beach, newcomers appear to have longer commutes than longer-term residents. Several interview respondents from North Beach described how the town is gentrifying from a blue-collar town with small houses, to a wealthier town with larger houses and more expensive cars. One newer resident, however, felt that the pace of change was not fast enough.

In Middletown, a few respondents reported that they had heard or read concerns from long-term residents about development, or about becoming "Montgomery 2.0" (Montgomery is a higher density suburban Maryland county). However, these respondents did not themselves hold this belief. The one long-term resident in our interview sample who did express such concerns felt that "[the residents'] right to live in a small town is being taken away without our consent." She explained that new residents often don't understand that adding new businesses would change the character of the town. One newer resident and one long-term resident, however, felt that newcomers were adding beneficial diversity to the town.

### 10.3.3 Commuting, Community Health and Participation

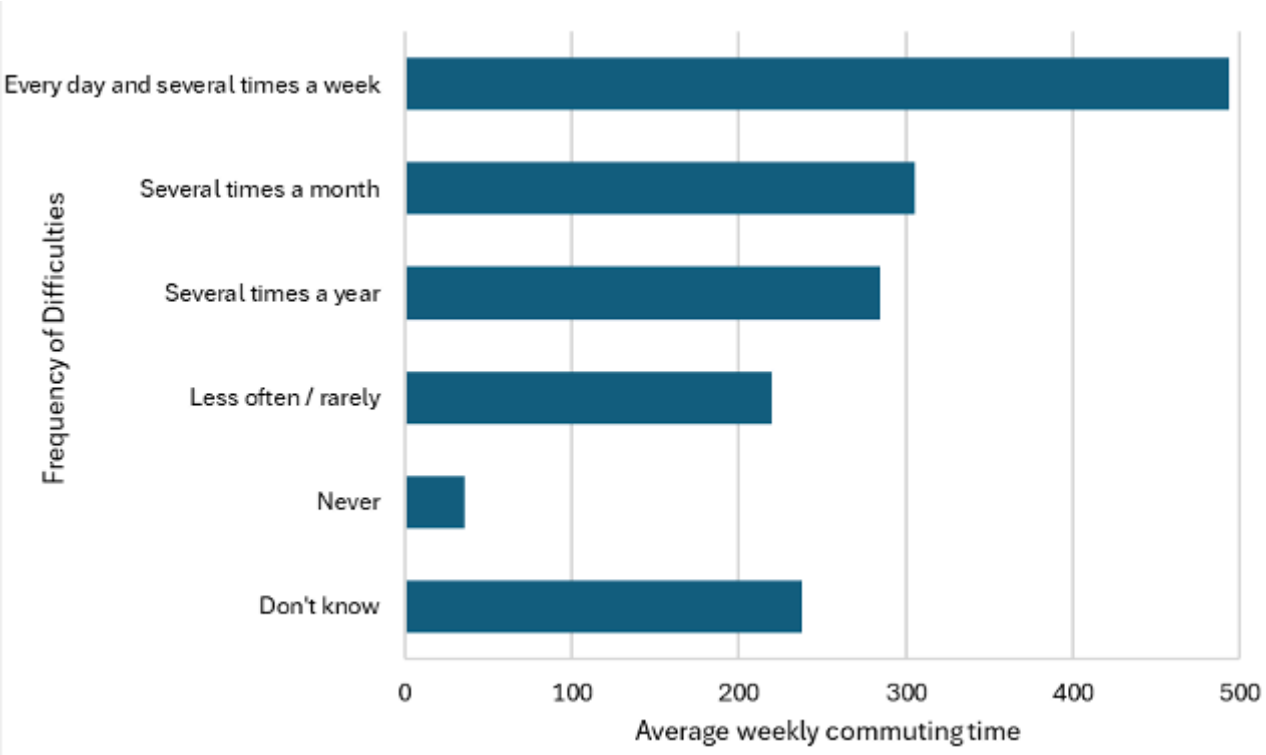
The analysis did not find empirical evidence to support some of the theories about the social effects of commuting emerging from the literature review, such as those of Robert Putnam

(2000) that suggest that social participation would decrease as commute time increased. Overall, the NCSG results agree with the ICLRD finding that no relationship could be established between commuting and measures of community participation, such as volunteerism and participation in social clubs. Unlike the ICLRD findings, however, we did not observe that those who participated in more volunteer work gave higher mean scores to their locality on the Place Standard, and neither did we observe that they gave higher scores on the Place Standard category for facilities and amenities.

Nonetheless, a few residents in the interviews did mention negative social effects of commuting. As one North Beach resident said, social relationships are difficult because "people aren't home." A Middletown resident who used to commute 1.5 hours each way said that "if you wanted to do community type stuff, if you wanted to be involved with the Planning Commission, or you wanted to be, you know, coach your kid in sports, and so you were practicing during the week, for me to be home by six o'clock, was tough." However, he felt that jobs have recently become more flexible to allow workers to leave early to participate in scheduled events.

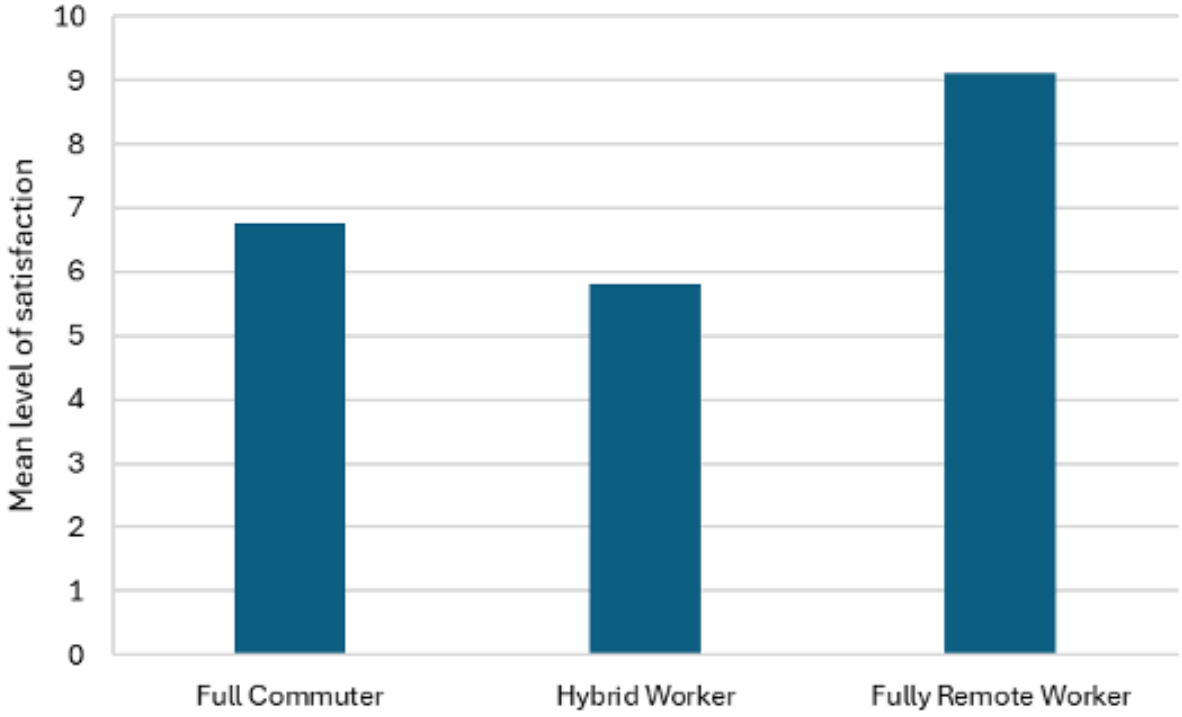
In contrast to the situation with regard to social capital, the effects of commuting on difficulties fulfilling family responsibilities are strongly in evidence in the Maryland survey. More respondents reported frequent difficulties fulfilling family responsibilities before the pandemic (23%) than after the pandemic (11%), and this would appear to be related to changes in commuting times. In general, as commute time increased, higher percentages of respondents reported difficulty "fulfilling family responsibilities" at least once per month. There was a strong relationship between commuting for 45 minutes or more and reporting difficulty fulfilling family responsibilities due to commuting. Thirty-four percent of those who commuted more than 45 minutes reported these difficulties several times per week or more, whereas only 6% of those who commuted less than 45 minutes (but more than 0 minutes) reported difficulties at this frequency. Furthermore, when the total weekly commute time was considered (instead of daily commute duration), this relationship was also strong. As shown in Figure 10.8, the average total weekly commute time increased for each level of increasing frequency of reported difficulty fulfilling family responsibilities due to time spent commuting.

*Figure 10.8 Relationship between commuting time and difficulties fulfilling family responsibilities*



As expected from the literature and the island of Ireland results, commute satisfaction was inversely related to commute duration. We also observed a drop in satisfaction at about the 50-minute mark, which lends credence to the idea that somewhere around 45 minutes is an inflection point. This may relate to some findings of the literature review, such as that commuting is associated with increased strain (Clark, 2020) and with decreased leisure time satisfaction (Dickerson *et al.,* 2014). Furthermore, there is some indication that exercise frequency decreases as commute duration increases, but the relationship was not statistically significant. Such a relationship would be consistent with our expectations from the literature review (Hoehner *et al.,* 2012; Auriba *et al.,* 2021). One interesting difference between the island of Ireland data and the Maryland data was that hybrid workers (here defined as those who work more days than they commute) in the Maryland towns appear to be the least satisfied with their commute, whereas in the island of Ireland towns, those who self-identified as hybrid workers seemed to be about as satisfied as traditional commuters (Figure 10.9).

*Figure 10.9 Levels of satisfaction with the commute and mode of working*




### 10.4 Comparative Analysis of the Maryland and Island-of-Ireland Findings

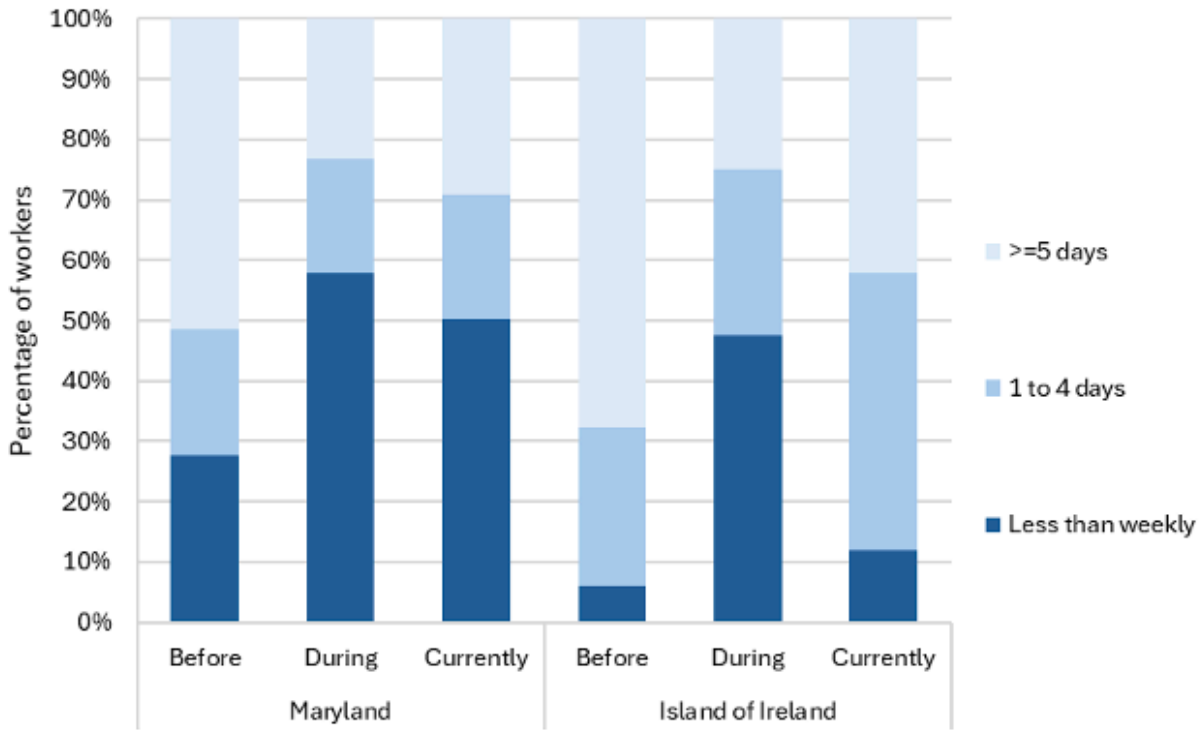
As noted above, the survey findings in Maryland provide some interesting points of comparison and contrast with those that emerged on the island of Ireland. This section provides a systematic analysis of these similarities and differences, looking in turn at: changes in commuter behaviour, including the frequency of travel and telecommuting; respondent relationship to place as indicated by their levels of social engagement and recent migrant' reasons for moving to their town of residence; and respondents' attitudes towards remote working and beliefs about its future potential.

#### 10.4.1 Changing Commuter Behaviour

In both Maryland and the island of Ireland, there was a notable decrease in the frequency of commuting during the period of the COVID-19 pandemic. While commuting frequency has increased over the past two years, it has not returned to pre-pandemic levels. The survey data reveal that home-based working and infrequent commuting (i.e. less than weekly) were, and are, more prevalent in Maryland than on the island of Ireland, but, in both areas, the proportion of remote workers (excluding those jobs that cannot be done remotely) increased significantly during the pandemic – from 28% to 58% in Maryland and from 6% to 47% on the island of Ireland. In Maryland, this figure fell back slightly (to 50%) after the pandemic. On the island of Ireland, since the end of the pandemic, there was a more pronounced decline in the proportion of workers commuting less than weekly – from 47% during the pandemic to 12% post pandemic, though this figure (12%) is twice the proportion that pertained before the pandemic. Thus, while the pandemic has had an effect on the frequency of commuting, in both areas, the survey data indicate that its effects are more sustained in the Maryland context.

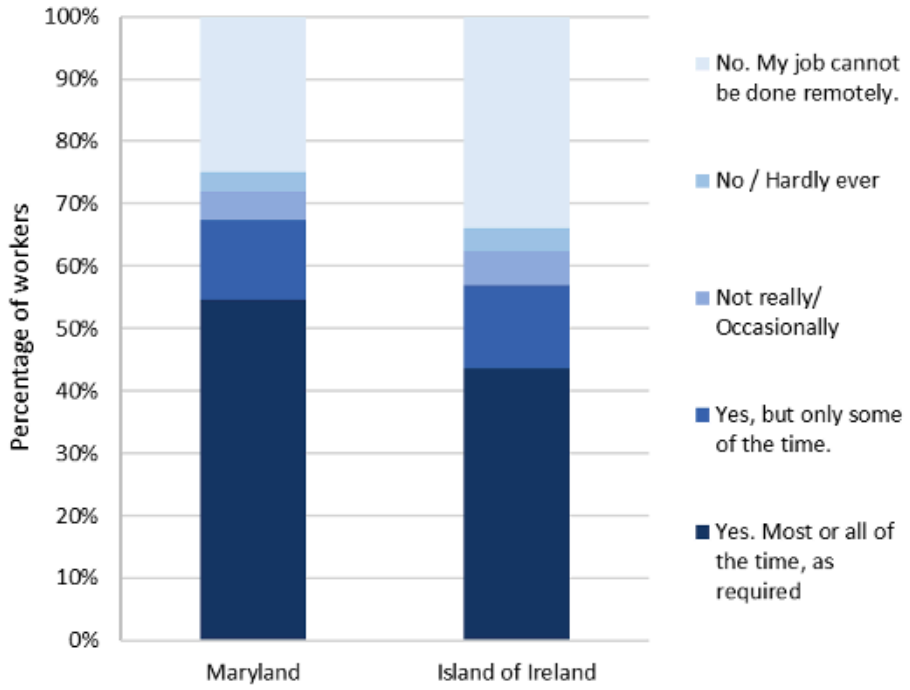
Related to this, the survey data illustrate a notable decline in the proportion of workers who commute five days per week, or more frequently. This cohort declined from 52% to 29% in Maryland and from 68% to 42% on the island of Ireland, where a greater proportion (46%) now commutes one to four days per week. Figure 10.10 illustrates the frequency of commuting before, during and after the pandemic among survey respondents in Maryland and on the island of Ireland.

*Figure 10.10 Weekly commuting frequency – Maryland and island of Ireland (Phase 2 settlements)*



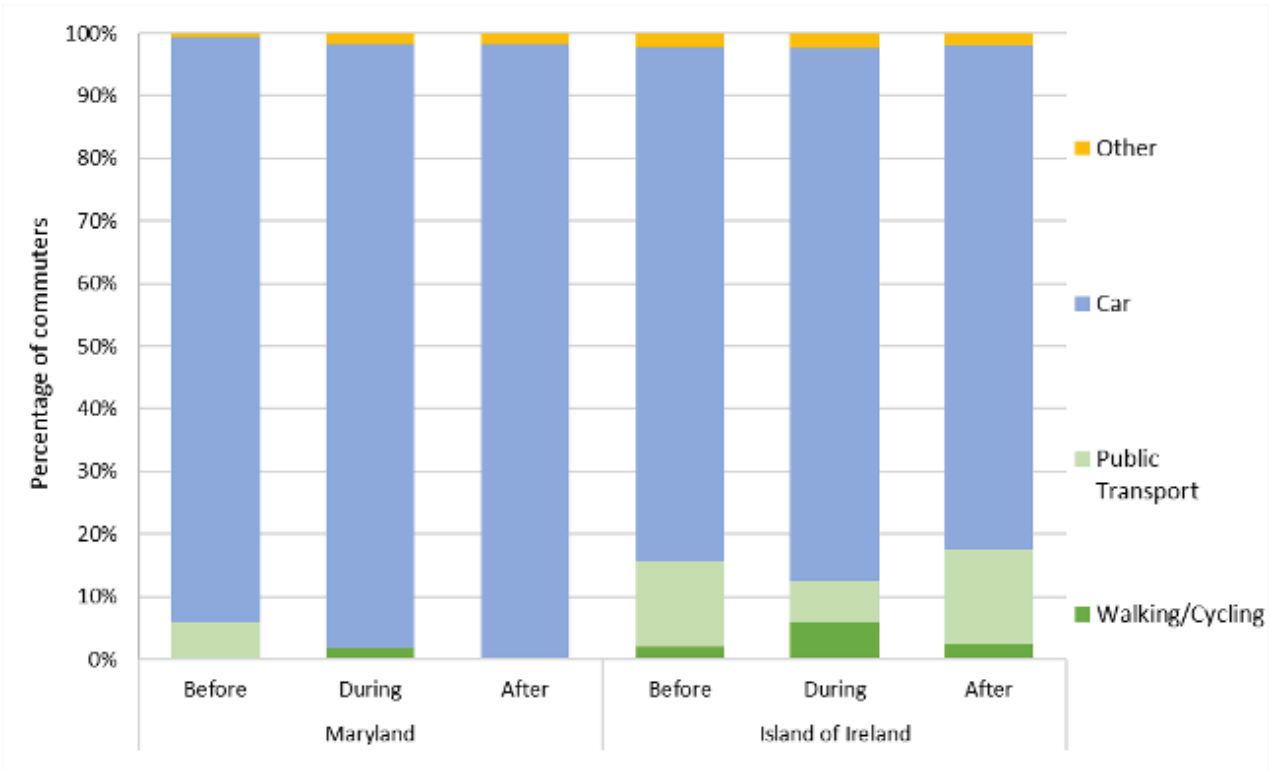
The frequency with which workers commute has been influenced, to a considerable extent, by the ability to work from home. The survey findings reveal that a higher proportion of workers (68%) in Maryland than on the island of Ireland (57%) had jobs that could be done, either fully or partly, from home or another remote location. Figure 10.11 illustrates, however, that over one-third of those on the island of Ireland and over one-quarter of those in Maryland have jobs that cannot be done remotely.

*Figure 10.11 Ability to work at home during the pandemic – Maryland and the island of Ireland*




In both Maryland and the island of Ireland, the pandemic had the effect of reducing public transport usage among commuters; but in Ireland / Northern Ireland public transport had recovered its modal share at the time of the survey. As Figure 10.12 also shows, the proportion of public transport users and those who walk or cycle to work is higher on the island of Ireland than in Maryland. In both contexts, but most especially in Maryland, car-based commuting predominates.

*Figure 10.12 Modal split by time period, Maryland and island of Ireland (Phase 2 only)*




As noted in the literature review chapter, car-based and long-distance commuting are generally associated with personal stresses and strains, and this research has shown that commuters tend to engage in a trade-off between the adverse effects of commuting and the potential benefits, including those of living in a pleasant environment. In both Maryland and the island of Ireland, survey respondents are less satisfied with their commutes than with other aspects of their lives, as the following graph illustrates (Figure 10.13). In both areas, satisfaction with commuting is associated with the duration of one's commute; the longer the travel time, the lower the level of satisfaction (Figure 10.14). On the island of Ireland, those who use active modes of travel (walking and cycling) report the highest levels of satisfaction, while public transport users have the lowest levels of satisfaction. Given the relatively small number of commuters in Maryland who walk, cycle or use public transport, it is not possible to generate comparative data in respect of satisfaction with modes of commuting.

*Figure 10.13 Satisfaction with aspects of daily life – Maryland and island of Ireland*

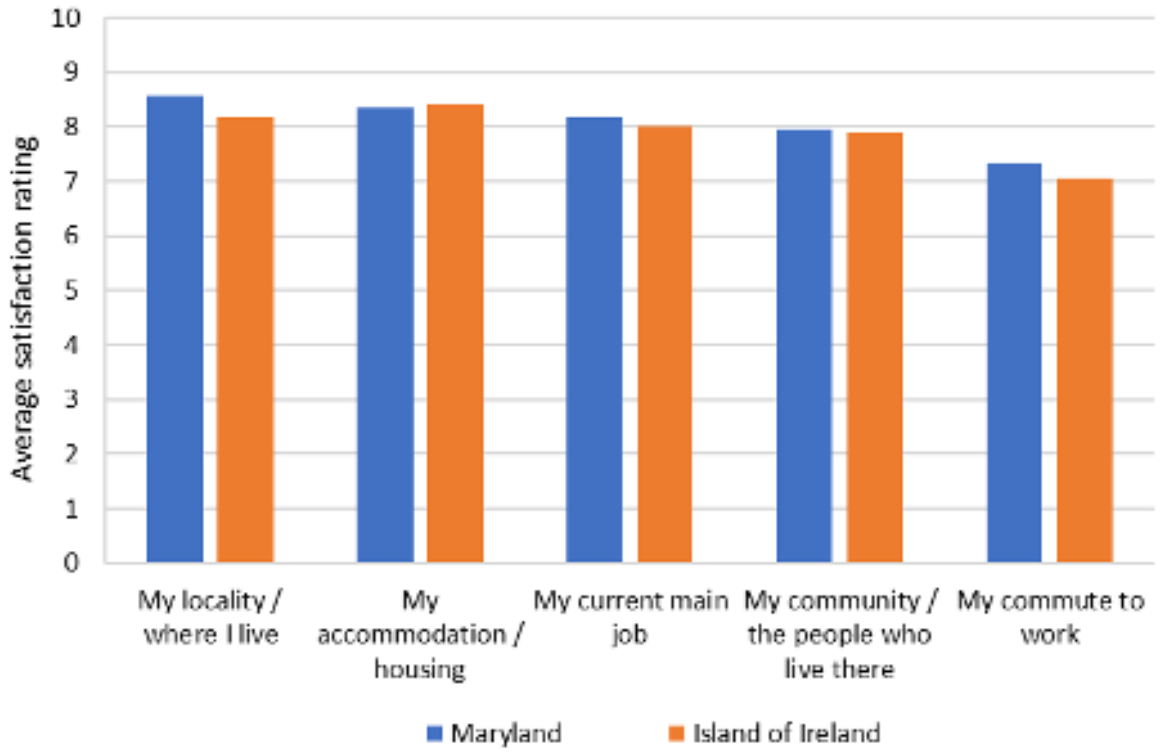
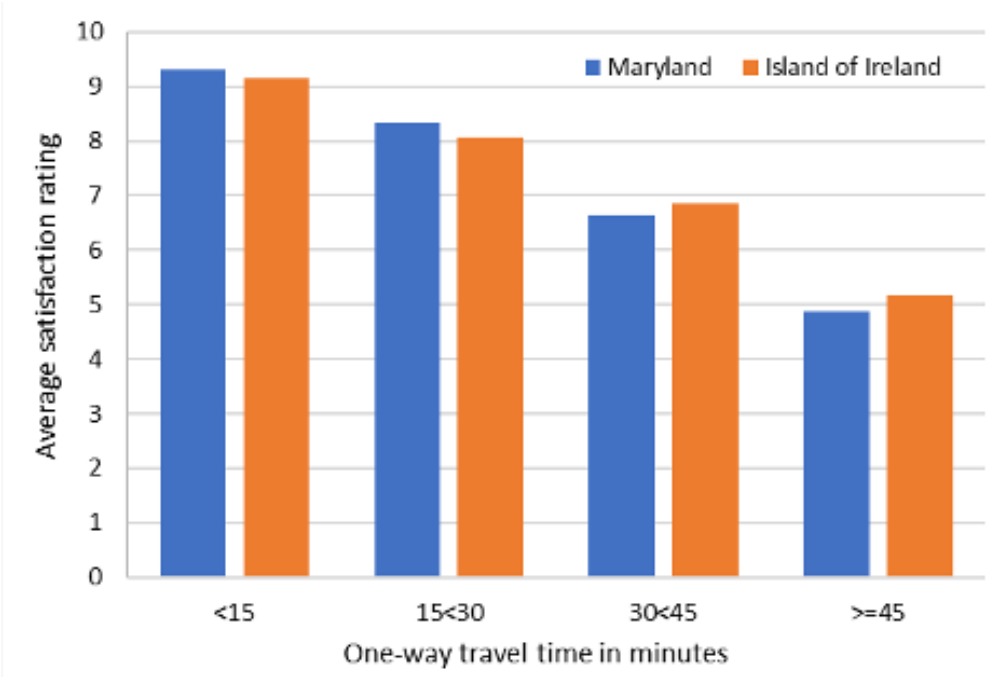



*Figure 10.14 Satisfaction with commute by duration of trip – Maryland and island of Ireland*



### 10.4.2 Commuting and Place

Neither the Maryland nor the island of Ireland findings provide any clear statistical evidence to conclude that commuting has a negative impact on social capital. Thus, there is no clear relationship between the duration of the commute (one-way) and the frequency with which people engage in either sporting or voluntary or activities (Figures 10.15 and 10.16 respectively).

*Figure 10.15 Participation in sporting activities by commuting time – Maryland and island of Ireland*

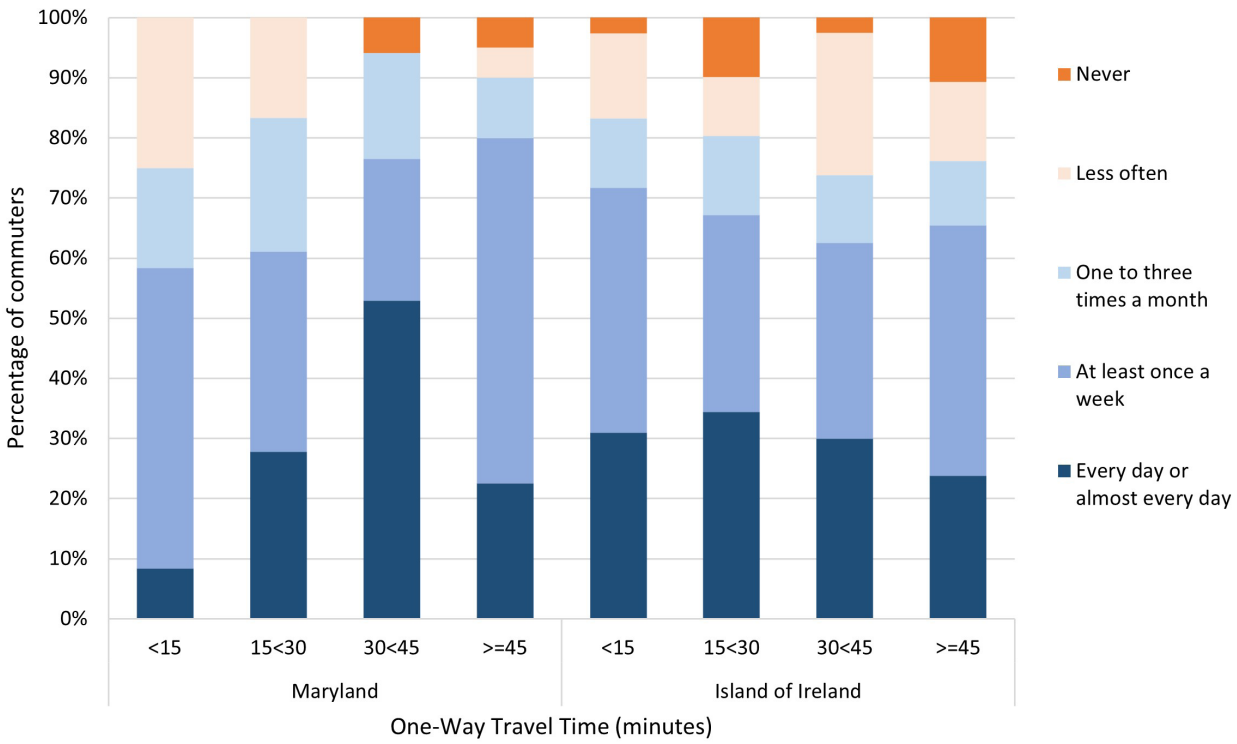
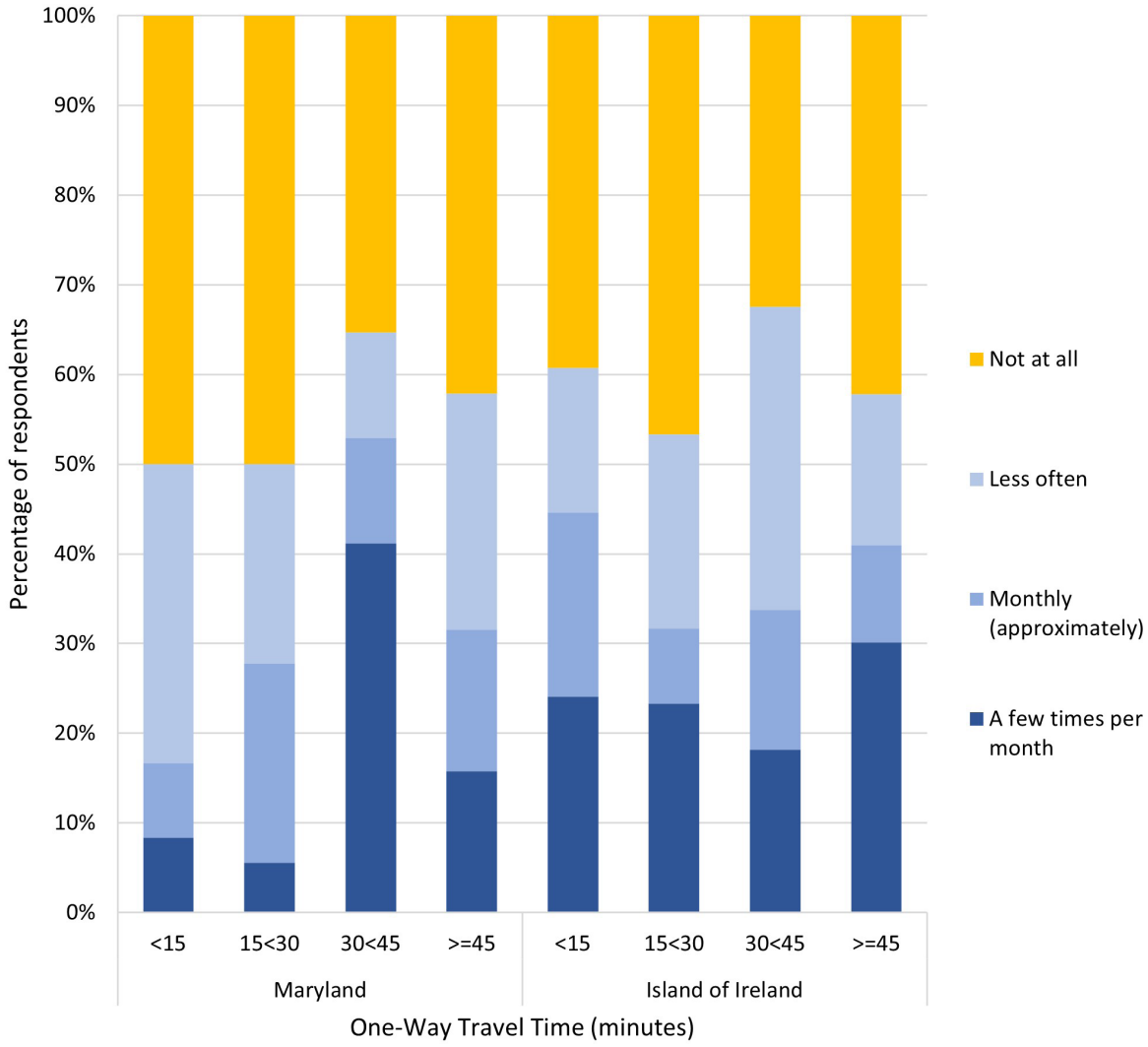



*Figure 10.16 Participation in voluntary activities by commuting time – Maryland and island of Ireland*




Commuter settlements tend to have above-average levels of population growth, due to relatively high levels of in-migration as well as higher levels of natural increase associated with younger age profiles. The surveys indicate particularly high levels of in-migration to the Maryland case study towns, with over 36% of survey respondents living in either Middletown or North Beach for less than five years. The corresponding figure for the Ireland / Northern Ireland settlements is 24%, indicating higher levels of residential mobility in the Maryland towns (Table 10.1).

*Table 10.1 Length of residence in Middletown and North Beach*

| Length of Time | Middletown | North Beach | All Respondents |
|---|---|---|---|
| Less than one year | 4.12% | 6.06% | 5.10% |
| 1 to 5 years | 34.02% | 28.28% | 31.12% |
| 6 to 10 years | 12.37% | 28.28% | 20.41% |
| 11 to 20 years | 17.53% | 14.14% | 15.82% |
| 20+ years | 31.96% | 23.23% | 27.55% |

As noted in the literature review, those moving to commuter settlements are often trade-off commuting time for the perceived benefits associated with their new place of residence. In order to uncover the benefits associated with movement into the case study towns the questionnaires asked: 'If you moved into this locality, what was the primary motivating factor?' Responses were free text (open-ended), and the thematic analysis, is shown in the following table (Table 10.4). It shows that there are both similarities and differences evident in the factors that have influencing residential mobility. Both the Maryland and island of Ireland dataset reveal the significance of housing / accommodation in influencing commuters' decisions when deciding where to reside. However, family, quality of life and education were the three most important determinants of deciding 'where to live' among Maryland respondents. The data reveal that in Maryland, education (access to schools / living in a particular school district) is a much more significant motivating factor than is the case on the island of Ireland. Among those who have moved to Middletown and North Beach, over a fifth refer to 'quality-of-life' factors as the primary drivers of their decision. These respondents mentioned safety and getting away from crime in large urban centres, and they also referred to rural living, a slower pace of life, and social interactions with their neighbours. Housing – including the affordability of homes and the potential for larger spaces (with gardens) is more significant on the island of Ireland than in Maryland. In both contexts, family (including having a spouse / partner from the town, having relatives there, and / or having grown up there) is an important driver of the move to a rural town.

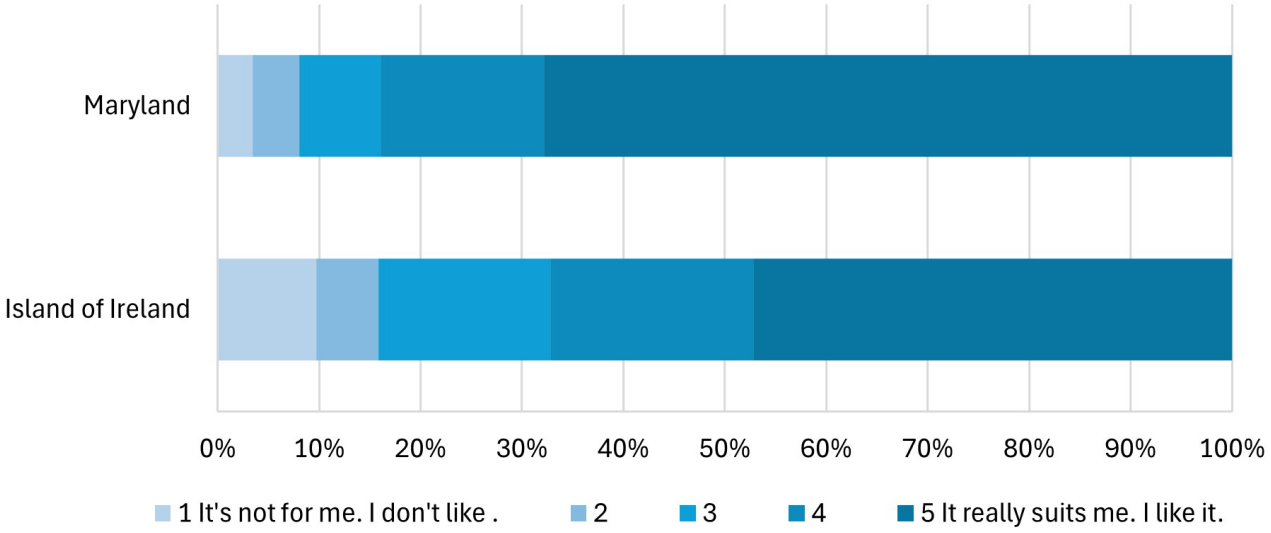
*Table 10.2 Motivating factors for moving to the case study location – Maryland and island of Ireland*

| Factors | Maryland | Island of Ireland |
|---|---|---|
| Family | 23.95% | 25.20% |
| Quality of Life | 22.16% | 3.20% |
| Education | 14.97% | 0.00% |
| Housing | 14.37% | 30.80% |
| Employment | 2.99% | 6.50% |
| Environment | 9.58% | 11.30% |
| Location | 7.19% | 3.70% |
| Other and Mixed | 4.79% | 19.30% |

### 10.4.3 Attitudes to and Beliefs about Remote Working

As noted earlier, both sets of findings reveal that the advent of remote-working has driven change in commuting patterns and behaviours. On both sides of the Atlantic, those who have experience of remote-working and whose jobs can be done remotely (at least in part) exhibit a favourable attitude towards it; they report positively on their experiences of remote-working, as illustrated in Figure 10.17. Over two-thirds of Maryland respondents rated their experience five-out-of-five (on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 = 'It's not for me. I don't like it', and 5 = 'It really suits me. I like it'). While attitudes among the island of Ireland sample were also favourable, they were not as positive as in Maryland. Nevertheless, both sets of findings indicate a favourable disposition towards remote working.

*Figure 10.17 Workers' attitudes to remote-working – Maryland and island of Ireland*




When asked 'can you see yourself continuing at home / remote working in the future?', over three quarters (76%) of Maryland-based respondents said, 'yes', and a further 12.5% replied 'maybe'. The corresponding figures on the island of Ireland are 60% and 21.5% respectively. While the pro-remote working sentiment in the island of Ireland settlements is not quite as strong as in Maryland, the findings suggest that, in both areas, remote working is becoming a well-established feature in the world of work.

The transformative potential of remote-working and its influence on the relationship between place of work and place of residence comes across in survey respondents' beliefs, as well as in their experiences to date. As the following set of graphs shows (Figures 10.18, 10.19 and 10.20), respondents in both Maryland and the island of Ireland perceive remote working as a potential game-changer for rural areas. They also see it as a factor that is likely to motivate people to move to small towns and rural areas, and they tend to believe it is not just a temporary thing that was associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

*Figure 10.18 Levels of agreement / disagreement with the statement, 'Working from home / working remotely could be a game-changer for small towns and rural Maryland / Ireland'*

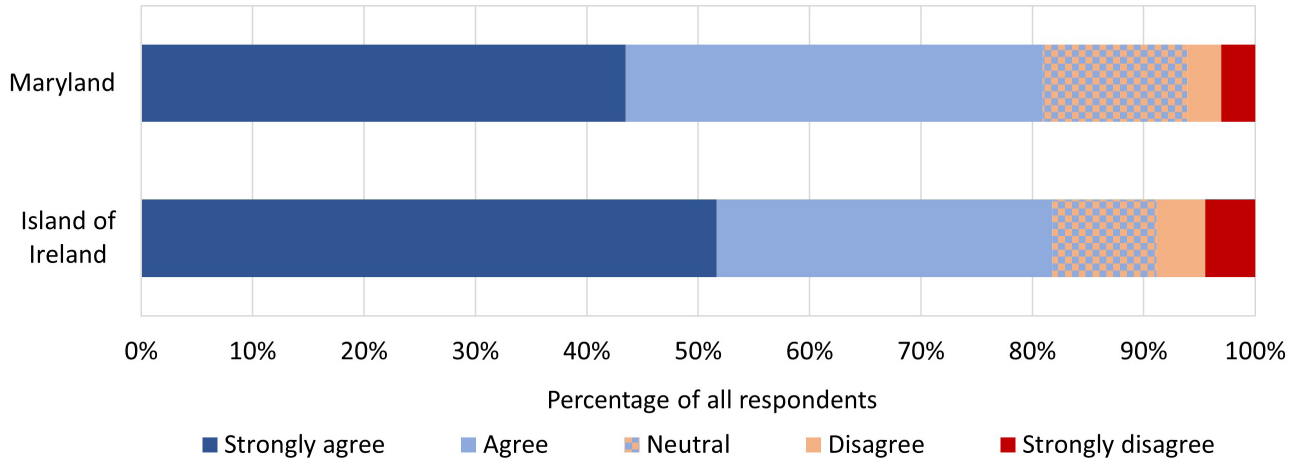
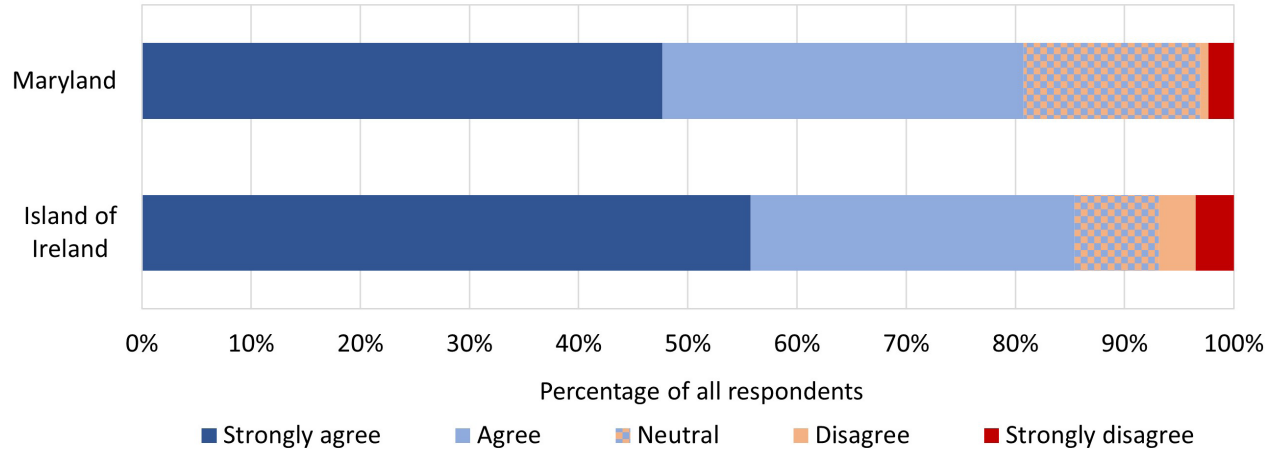



*Figure 10.19 Levels of agreement / disagreement with the statement, 'People are more likely to move to small towns and rural areas if they know they can work from home/remotely' – Maryland and island of Ireland*




## 10.5 Summary and conclusion

The survey findings in Maryland provide some interesting points of comparison and contrast with those that emerged on the island of Ireland as described in Chapters 5 to 9. Both sets of findings show that the pandemic has catalysed notable changes in the behaviour, perceptions and attitudes of commuters, and has affected the relationship between places of work and places of residence. Both Maryland and Ireland / Northern Ireland experienced significant reductions in commuting frequency during the pandemic, and while commuting volumes and frequencies have increased since 2022, they have not returned to pre-pandemic levels. Instead, remote working has become more prevalent. This shift has been more pronounced in Maryland, where a higher percentage of workers continues to work remotely. Factors such as telecommunications infrastructure, the educational attainment of workers, and their occupation / job type affect the extent of the shift to remote working. Workers' attitudes can also influence their commuting behaviours, and the datasets from both sides of the Atlantic reveal low levels of satisfaction with commuting, particularly long-duration commuting, and hence a strong motivation to work remotely.

The data indicate that remote working has not only reshaped commuting patterns, but it may also influence residential choices. The findings reveal that remote working is positively perceived by most workers, and is likely to remain a key feature of the employment landscape, contributing to the appeal of rural and small-town living. That appeal lies in a range of factors. Family ties, quality of life, and the quality of local schools, emerge as significant motivators for relocation, especially in Maryland, while housing (availability, affordability and size) is the predominant driver in Ireland and Northern Ireland.

The results are perhaps more interesting for their similarities than for their differences, in that they hint at broad patterns applicable to commuter towns which may have policy implications. Residents in both Maryland and Ireland / Northern Ireland see their towns as safe places with a pleasing natural environment, but where traffic, parking and public transport are problems. They subjectively feel that they have difficulties fulfilling family responsibilities when they have higher commute times. However, the pandemic created more flexibility around working and commuting regimes, and with this flexibility people with longer commutes are now choosing to commute less frequently than their peers with shorter commutes.

One implication of the newfound flexibility of hybrid working could be an increase in the attractiveness of commuter towns for those who have hybrid-capable jobs. These tend to be people with college degrees, and commuter towns may need to prepare for additional housing demand from this cohort in particular. However, the 2023 data for the State of Maryland indicates that on a state level, fully in-person work has returned to about pre-pandemic levels, with the only enduring change being an increase in those with fully remote positions. Those with fully remote positions might feel less tied to commuter belt towns than hybrid workers.

The similarities that emerged between Maryland and the island of Ireland in respect of the Place Standard results imply that local authorities may need to work to preserve what is perceived to be going well (especially the quality of the natural environment and feelings of safety) while also improving issues with traffic, parking and public transport.

Another implication of the findings is that social policymakers may want to find ways to alleviate the difficulty residents experience fulfilling family responsibilities due to commuting. Since total weekly commute time was shown to be related to this difficulty, reducing it would yield benefits to commuters' families. This could be done by incentivising employers to allow hybrid schedules, since each day that an employer allowed remote work would reduce weekly commute time. However, future research would need to determine whether commuters use this flexibility to move further away, perhaps impelled by higher house prices closer to metropolitan areas, thus neutralising the effect on total weekly commute time.

Furthermore, policymakers should consider the inequality in access to remote working. Though the Maryland and island of Ireland datasets showed different patterns of association between gender and remote working, they are at one in showing that those with a college degree were more likely than those without to work remotely. This core similarity seems to indicate the basic socio-economic fact of remote working: that it is tied to certain industries and occupations that require higher education levels. The association with education level has been noted in the US (Casselman *et al,* 2014) and in Ireland and Northern Ireland at the national / regional scale (Crowley *et al.,* 2021). Finding the same association in commuter towns is not surprising, but it is a reminder to keep these factors in mind while forming policy. For example, if transit services are reduced due to the rise of remote working, it may be those who are already disadvantaged in terms of time spent commuting who pay the price.

# 11

# Policy Implications and Policy Challenges

## Policy Implications and Policy Challenges

The InPLACE research project set out to examine the effects of out-commuting on small rural settlements using a case-study approach focused on selected communities from across the island of Ireland (Northern Ireland and Ireland) and the State of Maryland, USA. The overall aim of the study is to elucidate the impacts of pre- and post-COVID commuting on people and place, by examining the interplay between home, community and workplace. In doing so, the study seeks to contribute to our understanding of the policy challenges generated by commuting.

The research undertaken for the InPLACE project has generated an extensive primary database of 778 questionnaire survey returns from residents, as well as 94 interviews with community representatives and commuters, across seven rural settlements on the island of Ireland. A parallel survey of residents in two settlements of comparable size in the State of Maryland, USA, yielded 202 survey returns, together with 20 interviews. The findings from the analysis of the island of Ireland database have been set out in previous chapters as they relate to: the quality of place (Chapter 5); the characteristics of commuting in the case study settlements (Chapter 6); the implications of commuting for commuters and their families (Chapter 7); the wider social and economic impacts on communities (Chapter 8); and the potential for telecommuting (Chapter 9). This analysis is supplemented by Chapter 10 which explores the findings from the Maryland settlements, and identifies contrasts and similarities with the findings for Ireland and Northern Ireland.

This chapter begins with a summary of the findings of the InPLACE research that have direct relevance for public policy formation, and identifies the key challenges for policy makers and practitioners, if they are to respond effectively to these findings and the issues that they raise. As part of the methodology for the InPLACE study, the research team regularly presented interim findings to the project's Advisory and Operational Groups (see Appendix C). The discussion facilitated within these expert groups influenced the direction of analysis, and the conclusions drawn from the research as presented in this report. In the final stages of the research, two further elements of data gathering took place, both focused on the island of Ireland: (i) a series

of interviews with planners from each of the seven local authority areas in which the case study settlements are located; and (ii) a workshop with policy and sectoral experts from both Ireland and Northern Ireland convened to consider the findings of the research and their policy implications. The feedback received from the interviews and workshop was of further assistance in the interpretation of findings, and the contextualisation of the conclusions drawn. Since the policy-focused component of the research was focused on the island of Ireland, so too is the ensuing discussion, though many of the issues raised are likely to be relevant in the Maryland context also.

### 11.1 Key Findings of Policy Relevance

Before detailing specific findings from the InPLACE research that have implications for particular domains of public policy, two over-arching findings can be identified that need to be taken into consideration by policy makers in all relevant areas. These findings are as follows:

A: Commuting has undergone major changes in recent times, such that it has now become a much more varied and diverse phenomenon than it was heretofore. Some of these changes have been caused, and others accelerated, by the COVID-19 pandemic and the transformative changes that it wrought in living and working arrangements. The most significant changes in commuting have been the rise of telecommuting / remote working, and of hybrid working. The era of the standard 5-day, twice-daily commute from home to work appears to be at an end. The increasing diversity of commuting arrangements means that the task of designing effective policy interventions is now more complex than before.

B: Commuting in the rural settlements that are the subject of this study differs in several respects from commuting as it affects the suburbs of large urban centres. Furthermore, although they were chosen for the study using a common set of criteria, there are important differences among the case study settlements themselves in the type of commuting that they generate. This variation arises from differences in their geographical settings, in their accessibility and connectivity to transportation infrastructure, including public transport, and in the extent and nature of recent population growth. Further research might usefully consider whether it is possible to construct a typology of places based on the scale and nature of commuting from / to them, but it is clear there is no 'typical commuter settlement', and hence there cannot be a 'one-size-fits-all' policy response to the impacts of commuting on place.

Specific findings in relation to commuting, and its impact on people and place, which have salience for policy makers, are as follows:

1. Commuting from the case study settlements represents a trade-off by commuters between housing-related considerations (particularly cost but also space, setting and locality) and travel costs and time.
2. Among those who have moved to the case study settlements, 'Housing' is the most often mentioned reason for moving. The second most often mentioned is 'Family', which reflects the importance for respondents of the material and non-material benefits that proximity to extended family provides, including access to free or low-cost childcare.
3. In general, respondents rate their places of residence highly, and the residents of the case study settlements generally like where they live and wish to be there. On the Place Standard tool, places score particularly well in relation to 'Feeling Safe', 'The Natural Environment', 'Sense of Community' and 'Community Engagement / Participation'.
4. The Place Standard tool also identifies the least satisfactory aspects of place (worst first) as: 'Public Transport', 'Traffic and Parking', and 'Facilities and Amenities'. The first two aspects are directly related to travel, including commuting, and the third to recent population growth, which is also directly related to commuting.
5. The travel mode used by commuters from these rural settlements is overwhelmingly the car – to a higher degree than in Ireland or Northern Ireland generally.
6. Commuters by public transport are less satisfied with their commute than those travelling by car or by active travel means (walking or cycling).
7. As might be expected from the fact that the case study areas are located at greater distances from urban employment centres than typical commuter settlements, a large percentage of commutes are of long duration. In total, 47% of respondents have commuting times of

45 minutes or more (one-way). For comparison, the corresponding figure for Ireland is 21% (Northern Ireland data unavailable).
8. Following the widespread uptake of remote working during the COVID-19 pandemic, levels of remote working post-pandemic remain above the average for Ireland in the study settlements.
9. Across the study settlements, remote working has heretofore meant working from home. Very few of the respondents reported using digital hubs following the pivot to remote working during the pandemic.
10. Home working is popular among those who have experience of it.
11. Hybrid working has grown strongly post-pandemic, though to varying degrees across the settlements. With the increase in hybrid working, the commuting burden is more accurately measured on a weekly, as opposed to daily, basis.
12. Hybrid workers and other low-frequency commuters tend to have longer-duration commutes, and to use public transport more than others.
13. Long-duration commutes and, especially, heavy weekly commuting burdens impact significantly on the family life of commuters and on their satisfaction with their commutes. This study did not examine whether low commute satisfaction translates into dissatisfaction with lifestyle or quality of life, but the conceptualisation of commuting as a housing / commuting trade-off suggests not.
14. There is no discernible association between commuting burden (total time spent commuting per week) and levels of participation in voluntary or social activities, but car drivers have lower levels of engagement in these areas than other commuters.
15. There are important differences in commuting / telecommuting patterns according to the socio-demographic characteristics of the commuter, particularly (and most consistently) with the commuter's level of educational attainment. This is almost certainly due to associated differences in occupation and the industrial sector of employment.

### 11.2 Policy Challenges and Considerations Arising from the Key Findings

As the policy review in Chapter 3 demonstrates, policy frameworks and documents at all levels, from the European to the national, regional, county and local scale seek to bring about a closer alignment between where people live and where they work. This derives largely from environmental concerns and the need to reduce transport-sector demand for energy, emissions of greenhouse gases, and other disbenefits of transportation in terms of noise pollution and accidents. These policy frameworks also recognise the importance of social sustainability, the risk to urban areas of the "doughnut" effect caused by outflows of resident workers to suburban and ex-urban locations, and the need to promote the liveability, accessibility and inclusivity of places, in order to improve health and well-being outcomes.

Interestingly, the literature takes a more nuanced perspective on commuting; arguing that the heterogenous nature of work and workers means that the costs and benefits arising from commuting are by no means uniform. In terms of benefits, and as also borne out by the InPLACE research, the time spent commuting is for some a valued decompression or 'downtime', representing an important interface between the conclusion of the working day and the beginning of another set of responsibilities / tasks at home. Where the literature and policy do largely concur is that rural commuting is more problematical than other forms, environmentally as well as socially, because it typically involves longer distances and longer durations of commuting, and because it is currently overwhelmingly dependent on travel by car.

However, while dissatisfied with their commutes, and with those aspects of their localities that are shaped by commuting, the rural commuters in the InPLACE study, generally speaking, are happy with where they live. The research finds that commuters across the case study settlements trade off benefits such as the availability and price of housing, proximity to friends and family, the friendliness and safety of the local community, and access to natural environments against the costs of their long-distance and long-duration commutes. The research interviews indicate that while some commuters did not actively choose to live in their current place of residence, they have gradually come to appreciate these places' positive attributes, and they report that natural and social capital are contributing to making them feel more at home and part of the community.

## Snapshot of some Policy Measures to Reduce and / or Ameliorate Commuting

In Ireland, the government has introduced the *National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland* (NIFTI) to guide transport policy and investments. This framework is aligned with broader government policies like the *Climate Action Plan* and the National Development Plan. The focus is on reducing single-occupancy car journeys and promoting public transport and active transportation modes such as cycling and walking.

Luxembourg has pioneered free public transport to reduce car dependency, a move followed by several other countries with varying degrees of comprehensiveness. For example, Malta offers fare-free public transport for all residents, while Estonia provides free public transport in several counties and its capital, Tallinn. These measures aim to incentivise public transport use and reduce environmental impacts, though they often come against financial challenges at local authority level.

At the regional and municipal levels, in France, initiatives like Montpellier's free transport scheme and Dunkirk's fare-free city buses have catalysed significant increases in public transport usage. These local efforts are part of broader strategies to achieve ecological transitions and social justice.

Active travel initiatives are also highlighted, with many OECD countries implementing bike-to-work schemes. For instance, Northern Ireland and Ireland offer tax incentives for bicycle purchases through salary sacrifice arrangements. The Netherlands and Belgium provide travel allowances for cyclists, incentivising cycling as a viable commuting option. Infrastructure projects like Norway's *Fyllingsdalstunnelen*, the world's longest pedestrian and bicycle tunnel, further support active travel by making it safer and more convenient.

Spain's *Instituto para la Diversificación y el Ahorro de la Energía* (IDAE) has developed comprehensive guidelines for travel-to-work plans, emphasising collaboration between public and private sectors to promote sustainable commuting. These plans include measures like promoting public transport, carpooling, cycling, telecommuting, and flexible work hours. The public sector's role is crucial in improving public transport offerings and infrastructure for walking and cycling.

For further information about these and other initiatives, please see Appendix G.

If then, commuters wish to remain living in these rural settlements, while their jobs continue to be in the cities and large urban centres, how can the largely adverse environmental and social effects of commuting be mitigated? The findings from the InPLACE research point to the need for co-ordinated measures across a wide range of policy domains. These include:

- Housing;
- Transportation, especially public transportation;
- Remote working and the local economy;
- Place-making, community development and well-being; and
- Local and spatial planning.

Some considerations for policy-makers in these domains, which arise out of this research, are outlined below.

### 11.2.1 Housing

The geography of housing supply and price is a fundamental determinant of commuting patterns. In this study, housing emerges as the main 'push' factor in the relocation of workers to rural areas, and therefore in the commuting to centres of employment that this movement both requires and generates. Consequently, the improvement of housing supply and affordability closer to where people work is a major priority if the trend towards more (and longer-distance / longer-duration) commuting is to be reversed. The parallel and complementary need to support the creation of jobs closer to where people live is discussed in section 11.2.3.

Interviewees' observations in respect of both the push and pull factors associated with housing point to a need to address the disruptive effects that shortages in housing supply and the resulting house price increases have had on individuals and families, so that people have more choice about where they can live, and not feel they are being 'pushed' to commuter settlements. In Ireland a plethora of schemes has been introduced in recent years to improve the affordability of both house prices and rents, including Help to Buy, First Home, and the Cost Rental Homes scheme. However, the acute shortage of supply means that house prices throughout the state, but particularly in the larger centres of population, continue to remain problematical for many. The Banking and Payments Federation Ireland (BPFI) has noted that "price developments are seriously limiting potential buyers' preference, particularly [first-time buyers], to live in areas closer to where they work" (Uğur, 2019, p.4).

As well as the cost to the families themselves, the displacement of urban workers to rural settlements in the expanding commuter belts around the cities represents a significant loss of population and vitality from urban cores, and it runs counter to the policy of compact growth that strategies such as both Ireland's NPF and its associated RSESs, and Northern Ireland's RDS and SPPS seek to promote. In turn, the movement of urban workers to rural settlements can induce a further knock-on displacement of local people in these settlements, who are on lower incomes than the commuters. Such displacement has happened in peri-urban and so-called 'rurban' areas in many parts of Europe and the USA – a phenomenon that appears to be becoming more pronounced in the current post-pandemic period (Gallent *et al.,* 2023).
While commuting can contribute to maintaining population and income in rural areas (a core objective of Ireland's *Our Rural Future: Rural Development Policy 2021-2025* and Northern Ireland's RDS and SPPS) there is a growing awareness that the rapid growth of commuter settlements, through the relocation of young families from larger centres of population, is problematical from the point of view of transportation infrastructure and service provision.
As noted in section 11.1, 'Services and Amenities' was assessed by residents as the third least satisfactory aspect of the case study settlements, and the general sense was that service provision has failed to keep pace with population growth. While the newer residents of the settlements may expect the same level of community infrastructure, such as schools, childcare, health provision and sports facilities, as enjoyed by those living in larger urban settlements, the investment required to meet these expectations is significant, and local authorities and other service providers are challenged to keep pace with infrastructural demands, let alone anticipate future demands. Moreover, given that the age profile of commuter settlements is currently weighted towards younger families with children, the service and infrastructural demands are likely to change over time as these households progress through the family cycle. This raises issues about the long-term viability and sustainability of service provision in rural commuter settlements, as compared to the larger and more diverse settlements from which commuters may have relocated, the demographic structure of which is likely to remain more stable over time. It also highlights the need for a more sophisticated approach to place-making, one which strengthens the relationship between spatial planning processes across the island and service provision / community development instruments, such as community planning in Northern Ireland and local economic and community planning in Ireland (see section 11.2.5).

Market failure in housing is evident not just in urban centres but also in rural areas. While the greatest unmet need currently is for housing close to the main centres of employment, in order to 'intercept' the movement of workers to rural settlements in the extended commuter belt, there is also a need for housing in the commuter settlements themselves to cater for demand

from local people who wish to remain in (or return to) these settlements because of familial ties and local employment. The question is how to meet rural housing needs given current market conditions, and issues in both housing demand and housing supply, while striving towards sustainable rural populations. With regard to the demand side, there is some evidence that housing requirements in rural settlements may be underestimated. For example, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) has suggested that those interested in rural housing do not always register their interest (NIHE, 2024), so that there is a significant element of latent demand which remains undetected (NIHE, 2023). An added difficulty in the estimation of housing need by local authorities is that functional housing market areas "rarely coincide with local authority boundaries" (Housing Commission, 2024, 31). On the supply side, the availability of housing continues to fall short of demand in Ireland as a whole, but there are particularly acute problems in rural area, one aspect of which is the unviability of developer-led housing. Larger-scale housing development in towns is also hindered by deficiencies in water supply and wastewater treatment in towns across Ireland, an issue that was repeatedly referred to in the interviews with planners and which has been identified in development plans.

The above problems in the rural housing market would suggest that there is a prima facie case for local authorities to assume a more proactive role in the provision of appropriate levels of social and affordable housing in rural settlements, and to retain (rather than selling-off) their existing housing stock, as called for by the Housing Commission. To mitigate the possible contribution of such housing development to increased commuting, and to avoid exacerbating the existing problems of public transportation in rural areas, it is important that new developments be located close to existing public transport nodes. The issue of rural transportation is discussed in the next section.

### 11.2.2 Transportation

As noted above, the rapid growth of commuter settlements presents challenges for transportation, and it is in this area that the case study settlements scored lowest on the Place Standard tool, as evidenced by relatively low levels of satisfaction with both the 'Public Transport' and 'Traffic and Parking' dimensions of place. Difficulties in delivering rapid and frequent public transport services over large catchments are reflected in the overwhelming dependence on the private car in six of the seven case study areas (the exception being Sallins), a phenomenon that applies more generally across settlements that are a 45 minute to one hour commute from larger urban centres. In turn, car dependency has created problems in the public realm, with typically large amounts of public space devoted to the car, in the form of streets, roadways and parking spaces. Despite this, traffic bottlenecks and increasing congestion have become a feature of daily life in many of the case study areas.

In addition to these local issues, car dependency is problematical also in terms of the wider issue of environmental sustainability, and the challenges posed by air pollution and climate change. According to the European Environment Agency (EEA), the number of premature deaths attributable to air pollution in Ireland is estimated at 1,300 people annually (EEA, 2020). One of the principal air pollutants is nitrogen dioxide, the main source of which is road transport, in particular diesel and petrol fuelled vehicles. With regard to climate change, policymakers are increasingly cognisant of the urgency of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and this implies, inter alia, decreasing car use by inducing a shift from private to public transportation. Thus, for example, Ireland's *Climate Action Plan 2024* (Government of Ireland, 2024) envisages a 20% reduction in total kilometres travelled, and an equivalent 20% reduction in kilometres commuted by private car by 2030.

In this context there has been a broad national, regional and local policy shift in favour of public transport-oriented development – informed not only by environmental sustainability but also by social equity. One of the prerequisites for the required modal shift is increased investment in public transportation, but, while there has been a very considerable expansion in the rural transport network in Ireland over the past two years (especially in Local Link services), many interviewees noted that deficiencies in existing services left them with no alternative to driving to work. Problems with public transport were particularly noted by those with non-standard

working hours and schedules, e.g., persons finishing work later than 5:00-6:00pm in the evenings.

The practical and operational challenges in providing a strong public transport service in rural areas are well documented. The diffuse nature of travel demand caused by low population density, dispersed settlement patterns, and the predominance of one-off housing, presents a major challenge to the viability of public transport. The result of spatially dispersed travel demand is that, for a given length of journey, travel times tend to be significantly higher than for private transportation, thereby enhancing the competitive advantage of the latter. Added to this, the older age profile of rural populations tends to result in a greater tendency to use private as opposed to public transportation, further depressing the demand for the latter.

To these long-standing challenges in rural transportation, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the changes in working and commuting arrangements that it wrought, have added a further layer of difficulty. In particular, the variety and fluidity of working arrangements resulting from the increase in hybrid working poses a major challenge for transport planners and service providers. With the decline of the five-day commuting week there is likely to be a greater unevenness in travel demand across the course of the week, which in turn will make scheduling of services more complex and difficult. In Northern Ireland, both interviewees and data supplied by Translink indicate that there has been an increase in the demand for public transport to social and recreational destinations, and transport providers are challenged to cater for increasingly diverse passenger needs and preferences. The development of a flexible and responsive service that meets the new pattern of demand will undoubtedly require enhanced public subsidy.

Despite the problems facing public transportation providers in rural areas, and the relative dissatisfaction of respondents with public transport, there has been a small increase in its use by commuters from the case study settlements since the pandemic restrictions were lifted. Moreover, public transport usage is highest among those who work from home some days each week. This appears to be due to a higher level of home working by workers with longer commutes, and the tendency for longer commutes to be undertaken by public transport. In any case, the association of home working with higher levels of public transport usage suggests that, as well as a challenge, the shift to hybrid working may present an opportunity to increase the public transport share of commuting journeys. In this respect, there may be a complementarity between public policy aimed at reducing car dependency and measures to promote home working as discussed in the next section.

### 11.2.3 Remote Working and the Local Economy

If increasing the supply and affordability of housing close to where people work is one way of bridging the gap between the geographies of jobs and of residences, thereby reducing the volume of commuting (section 11.2.1), the other method, in principle, is increasing the number of jobs close to where people live. One of the Place Standard dimensions on which the case study settlements rated relatively poorly was ‘Work and Local Economy’, reflecting the lack of jobs in, or close to, these rural settlements, as well as deficiencies in local services that have not expanded in a way that is commensurate with population growth. It is important, therefore, that policy continues to support the development of the local / rural economy, so as to grow local jobs.

Besides creating new jobs in rural settlements, the equivalent effect can be achieved through the promotion of remote working which, in effect, converts jobs performed for employers located in the cities and large towns into locally performed jobs. With the development of the knowledge economy, jobs are becoming more place-independent, allowing rural areas to become more attractive and competitive, and providing new impetus for rural development, and for balanced regional development. Given the growing scope of footloose jobs, the promotion and facilitation of remote working appears to be a relatively low-cost, but potentially very effective, intervention to mitigate the harmful impacts of commuting (environmental as well as personal and family-related) by replacing traditional commuting with telecommuting. The recently launched *Digital Local Government: Working for Everyone, Ireland’s Local Government Digital and ICT Strategy*

*2030* (Local Government Ireland 2024) highlights how advancements in technology can play a key role in the reduction of transport needs, thus contributing to the delivery of climate action and sustainable development goals. The InPLACE research specifically suggests that remote working can have a direct effect on commuting in three ways, by:

a) Reducing the overall volume of commuting (though there is some evidence that reduced travel for work purposes can lead to an increase in travel for other purposes, thereby mitigating the environmental benefit (Campisi *et al.,* 2022));
b) Differentially reducing the frequency of longer-duration commutes (since the InPLACE research found that remote and hybrid workers are more likely to have longer-duration commutes); and
c) Inducing a modal shift from car to public transport (with the survey evidence suggesting that hybrid workers are more likely to use public transport).

In addition to these primary or direct effects on commuting, remote working can have important secondary effects on the local economy. With regard to services and the local business environment, retaining daytime population in the settlements through the development of remote working can help to retain spending in the locality. The pandemic-related restrictions were a factor in increasing new residents' local knowledge, and the increase in remote- and hybrid-working is causing them to spend more time in their neighbourhoods than was the case prior to the pandemic. These trends present opportunities for smaller settlements, like Mountbellew-Moylough and Kanturk-Banteer, that had been experiencing demographic and economic decline throughout the 1990s, to harness the additional human capital they have gained. Town centre renewal and a series of funding mechanisms to address vacancy and attract new residents is directly supported by Ireland's current national rural development strategy, *Our Rural Future*, and by programmes such as Croí Cónaithe (Towns and Villages) and the Rural Regeneration Development Fund (RRDF), operated across government departments.
Two of the key infrastructural elements that have been identified in policy as essential to the promotion of remote working are home broadband and digital hubs, which are also referred to as telecentres and sometimes as co-working spaces, the latter term usually implying a degree of collaboration between workers in the centre. Few of the respondents in this research referenced problems with digital connectivity at home, and this continues to improve as rural broadband is further upgraded and expanded under initiatives such as Ireland's National Broadband Plan and the Full Fibre Northern Ireland programme. In parallel with the roll-out of broadband for rural communities, there has been strong growth in the number of digital hubs, many located in rural towns and villages, which offer connectivity, workspaces and associated services to remote workers. There are now, for example, 359 hubs in the Irish government-sponsored National Hub Network, including both privately owned hubs and those that are owned by local authorities, community groups and other not-for-profit organisations. These facilities have enabled the growth of multi-locality working in other European countries (see Chapter 2, section 2.4)

The InPLACE research found a very low level of usage of hubs by those working remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic, but this is not surprising given the pandemic restrictions on travel and social contact, and the suddenness of the pivot to remote working. It may be that usage will increase as remote working becomes more established in the post-pandemic period. Co-working spaces potentially offer several advantages over home-based remote working, including overcoming social and professional isolation and the difficulty in maintaining a work-life balance, both of which may arise from home working (Spinuzzi, 2012). As well as these benefits to workers themselves, it has been suggested that co-working spaces are more conducive than home working to worker productivity, and that they contribute to the local economy, particularly when they are located in town centres (Wall and Crowe, 2024).

On the other hand, digital hubs are less effective than home working in reducing commuting, since workers still need to commute from home to the hub, and in rural areas the likelihood of such commutes being made by car is greater than for commutes from home to larger centres of employment which are more likely to be served by public transport. To maximise the environmental benefit of co-working spaces therefore, consideration needs to be given to

improving transport links to digital hubs in rural towns. The development of integrated digital and transport hubs on a pilot basis, whereby significant investment is made in selected centres, should be considered. Prior to such investment, however, more research needs to be conducted on the demand for, and use of digital hubs in Ireland, particularly in smaller settlements, and on the extent to which the potential benefits outlined above – support for networking and collaboration, and contribution to local economies – are being realised.

The InPLACE research has also identified employers' attitudes to remote working as potentially a greater barrier to its uptake than digital connectivity. Although legislation has been introduced in Ireland that gives workers rights in respect of remote / flexible working, more may need to be done in consultation with employer organisations to give effect to these rights, and to ensure that the switch to remote working is sustained in the long term. In particular, there would appear to be scope for greater collaboration between owners of digital hubs and employers in order to ensure that hubs meet employers' requirements for remote working. More generally, in an environment where the relationship between workplace and home is fast evolving, based on the impetus provided by the systemic shock of COVID-19, it is important that hub owners and managers continue to improve the facilities and services that they offer.

Level of educational attainment has a strong bearing on the extent to which workers in the case study towns have been able to continue home-based working after the pandemic; specifically, the findings of the research indicate that workers with third-level education are more likely to have continued working at home to some degree. This is almost certainly due to the link between education and occupation, and the fact that certain occupations, in particular knowledge-intensive occupations, are more amenable to remote working. In contrast, workers in occupations that are public facing, in sectors such as retailing, catering, and caring, are more likely to continue to have to commute, and therefore to need their cars. It is important, in this context, that the policy measures that are increasingly being used by governments to discourage car use, such as increasing taxes on fuels and restricting the circulation of cars in urban environments, are introduced in a way that respects the principles of 'just transition'.

### 11.2.4 Place-making, Community Development and Well-being

Place-making is increasingly seen as central to local planning and local government. At the heart of the concept is the idea of creating places that residents value and identify with, using participative methods of engaging the community in the local planning process (the co-creation of place). In promoting agency and active citizenship, place-making shapes not only the structural layout, buildings and public realm of a locality, but also how it feels to live and work in that area. In doing so, place-making is a people-centred, bottom-up, collaborative, place-based approach with a strong emphasis on local resources and assets to advance improvements.

Place-making is closely entwined with the principles of creating healthy places and promoting community well-being. Initiatives to reclaim public space for pedestrians from traffic – so-called living (or liveable) streets initiatives – feature strongly, motivated and justified by considerations of community well-being, safety and public health. Linked to this, there is an increasing focus on the importance of compact growth and sustainable mobility in place-making, and a growing recognition of the importance to community well-being of behavioural change and a modal shift to active travel modes and public transportation.

Given its primary focus on the public realm, place-making can be challenging in commuter settlements, especially rural commuter settlements, such as those in the InPLACE study, where there is an overwhelming dependence on the private car for all journeys, including commuting to / from work. The dependence on the car for longer-distance travel can militate against the use of active travel modes (walking and cycling) even for local travel, thereby further increasing the dominance of the car. It is not surprising then that, as this research demonstrates, deficiencies in public transport, and traffic and parking issues, are the least satisfactory aspects of the case study settlements, as rated by the survey respondents. Traffic emerged as a major issue in the interviews also. Successful place-making initiatives in the study settlements are only likely to succeed if they are underpinned by measures to reduce the volume of commuting (as

discussed in sections 11.2.1 and 11.2.3) and / or increase the public transport share of commuting journeys (as discussed in section 11.2.2). Such initiatives are central to a growing number of Local Transport Plans being developed in partnership between local authorities and the NTA (see section 11.2.5).

Since successful place-making depends on widely based and inclusive public participation, it goes hand-in-hand with community development, ideally one reinforcing the other. Again, this may present challenges in rapidly growing commuter settlements. As the under-supply and unaffordability of housing in metropolitan areas and other locations with concentrations of jobs 'pushes' workers and their families to move to commuter settlements with more affordable housing, many of the incomers to commuter towns may not have had any prior connection with their current communities of residence and / or a desire to live there. In theory, this can create difficulties of integration, and reduce the contribution to local social capital that population growth would otherwise make. In this situation there may be a need for a proactive approach to getting new residents involved in the local community.

The survey findings and subsequent interviews indicate that commuting, or being a new resident, is not an intrinsic barrier to participation in sporting, social and / or voluntary activities, despite anecdotal or other narratives suggesting that commuters are too 'time poor' to engage with community. There is a need, however, to ensure community leaders and the wider civil society in commuter settlements are aware of the benefits that commuters can confer on civic life, including through the establishment of new clubs and bringing new information and ideas into their adopted communities. Some communities may further benefit from facilitated dialogue and community development to engender conversations and befriending initiatives. The stakeholder interviews indicate that sporting organisations, such as the GAA, have been to the fore among the civil society organisations that are harnessing commuter-associated increases in social capital, and the case study settlements provide some useful pointers with respect to integration.

While the research didn't find that commuting was adversely impacting community engagement, there was clear evidence that it was negatively affecting family life. The importance of child-minding considerations for commuters, which emerged strongly from the interviews, points to the need for enhanced affordable childcare provision, not just in employment centres, where it may help to lessen the pull of rural communities for workers with children, but also in the commuter settlements. Research by Pobal (2022) shows that childcare places are more limited and expensive in commuter communities relative to other areas.

The pull factors associated with more affordable houses that may also offer larger gardens and more green spaces than is the case in densely populated areas can become assets in place-making, provided they are accompanied (ideally pre-dated) by commensurate investments in local infrastructure. Whatever the push or pull factors that determine where to live, the commuter is striving for a better balance of housing, employment access and community facilities. While communities are overwhelmingly welcoming of new residents, the interviews revealed some concerns regarding the infrastructural and environmental strains associated with significant population growth. It is important that planning policy take these concerns into account and ensure that communities are active agents in place-making. The link between place-making and planning is discussed in the next section.

### 11.2.5 Local and Spatial Planning

The planning systems of both jurisdictions on the island of Ireland are admirable in terms of their policy commitments to sustainable development, healthy living, quality of life, and environmental protection. However, delivery of balanced and sustainable patterns of development that are equitable for all citizens, and which address the current climate and biodiversity crisis, is an ongoing challenge. This is, in part, because newer policies such as consolidated and compact growth, density, and liveability of place are not yet being delivered at sufficient scale to make a significant and visible difference, and in part because of the continued development of large-scale legacy permissions that, on reflection, are inappropriate to their location. Planning for the common good is not about encouraging growth everywhere. At its most fundamental, the

planning systems of each jurisdiction must recognise that all settlements are different – with different attributes and different priorities. This means different policy choices must be made for each.

As outlined in section 11.2.4, successful place-making requires active and meaningful engagement of the community in local planning processes, especially local spatial / developmental planning and community planning. In commuter settlements, this requirement applies even more strongly, because of their diverse and fast-growing populations. Community engagement in turn requires two inter-linked things:

1. Enhancing and re-structuring local authority planning functions so that they relate better to localities and communities; and
2. Developing community awareness of all the relevant factors that go into planning, so that communities have a much better impact on the planning process, and there is opportunity of access for diverse population groups, including those defined in terms of age and ethnicity.

In this regard it is notable that the large scale of their local government units, which marks both Ireland and Northern Ireland out from other European countries, poses challenges in terms of mobilising relevant actors in the planning process.

The *Northern Ireland Local Government (2014) Act* empowers Community Planning Partnerships, which can include community groups, to produce Community Plans for each District Council area. While this is not the most appropriate scale for development of place-making initiatives, nevertheless one of the purposes of a council's Community Plan is to give expression to a grass roots approach to plan-making, chiefly for informing better delivery of public services provided by the Community Planning Partnerships. Importantly, there is a statutory requirement for new local development plans to take account of a council's Community Plan (in accordance with Sections 8 and 9 of the *2011 Planning Act*, as amended by the 2014 *Local Government Act*). This is nurturing new working relationships between spatial planners and those involved in community planning, with emerging Local Development Plans beginning to align with some policy outcomes contained within Community Plans.

Community Plans are strategic in nature, but two councils – Fermanagh and Omagh District Council and Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council – have been experimenting with the production of 'Place Plans' that operate at a settlement scale. While these read like small-scale community plans, the intention has been for the Place Plans to be a new hybrid plan at a local level, using an outcome-based approach and collaborative gain logic to promote well-being.

In Ireland, rescaling of planning was evident in the *Planning and Development Act* 2000 which made provision for Local Area Plans (LAPs), and subsequently the *Local Government Reform Act 2014* introduced Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) with a remit to prepare and oversee 6-year Local Economic and Community Plans (LECPs). However, these plans are almost entirely at county, rather than local, level. Furthermore, while the LECPs can potentially contribute to place-making, there is a need to improve the coordination between the LECP process and the traditional planning system focused on the preparation of the City and County Development Plans, and to ensure a more localised and citizen-led approach to planning. The building blocks are there for the LECPs to become a framework to deliver a more holistic approach to place-making and place-shaping. Given their flexibility and agility in response to changing priorities, the LECPs for example offer greater opportunities to citizens to engage in processes of co-creation and co-design than do the county / city development plans (or indeed the RSESs or NPF within the planning hierarchy). Furthermore, the structures are already in place to ensure closer working with other statutory agencies and stakeholders.

As well as strengthening the case for more localised approaches to planning, the growth in commuting increases the need for more collaborative approaches also, both on an inter-local authority and inter-agency basis. Commuter flows often cross local authority boundaries, and

planning policy and approaches need to take due account of patterns and priorities in adjoining local authority areas, and on an all-island basis. The ability to do this effectively is dependent on staff resourcing and access to data within councils. Vertical dialogue between local authorities and regional and inter-regional bodies, such as Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) and Translink NI, will continue to be important in ensuring the rollout of infrastructure that is compatible with more sustainable modes of travel (e.g., train stations, bus stops, bus lanes / corridors, park-and-ride interchanges and green infrastructure).

Given the difficulties in providing transport options to those rural areas where growth is occurring (as noted in section 11.2.2), there is a case for Local Area Plans (LAPs) and Local Transport Plans (LTPs) to be prepared for all commuter settlements, at a local level. A number of local authorities in Ireland are leading the way in preparing these plans for their larger commuter settlements, with this combined approach increasingly being regarded as good practice at a policy level. There is a case for the roll-out of this initiative for all designated commuter settlements, irrespective of size. This would ensure a more holistic approach to provision of housing, access to employment and services, and the design and delivery of sustainable transport options – all key themes in the sustainable development of rural commuter settlements emerging through the InPLACE study. More generally, greater attention now needs to be paid to the alignment of a vast swathe of local spatial strategies – including local area plans, local transport plans, town centre first strategies, local climate plans, and decarbonisation zone plans, which, if properly integrated have the potential to address many of the problems associated with commuting.

## 11.3 Conclusion

The rural communities that were the subject of investigation in the InPLACE project are characterised by particularly high levels of long-distance and long-duration commuting, and a heavy dependence on car-based commuting. This review of the implications of the InPLACE research for policy actions into the future has considered policies that seek to reduce the volume and scale of car-based commuting from home to the workplace by:

- Bringing workers closer to their jobs through better housing policies that have urban affordability and quality at their core;
- Bringing jobs closer to workers through better local development policies;
- Enabling commuters to change their travel modes through transportation policy interventions that take due account of post-COVID commuting patterns; and
- Promoting a much wider substitution of telecommuting for traditional commuting through communications and remote working policies, including mechanisms to better harness the investment made in remote working hubs in rural communities.

The review has also outlined how rural settlements that have become commuter towns and villages can be assisted to overcome some of the negatives associated with commuting through, for example, community development and place-making policies, and local and spatial planning. It is clear that there are interventions in all these policy areas that can help ameliorate, if not eliminate, the many adverse environmental, personal and family impacts of commuting.

It is also clear, from the overlapping nature of the issues identified in discussion of the various policy areas, that commuting is a multi-faceted, highly variable and complex phenomenon, and tackling it requires co-ordinated action across multiple policy sectors and involving multiple agencies and government departments as well as local authorities. Perhaps that is the most important lesson, and the greatest challenge to the largely sectoral approach to public policy-making and implementation. Ultimately, addressing the multifaceted issue of rural commuting requires a comprehensive, collaborative, and integrated policy approach that takes into account the characteristics, needs and potential of each community. This approach should be informed by ongoing research, and be adaptable to the evolving dynamics of work and commuting patterns.

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# Appendix A: InPLACE Project Team

The InPLACE Research Team is multi-disciplinary in nature and draws on expertise from a range of Universities and Research Centres internationally. Core research interests of the team include: spatial planning, regional development, place-making, transportation, settlement geographies, town regeneration, community engagement, economics, governance, housing, data analysis and visualisation, climate change, the future of work, and GIS.

The research team is as follows:

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Concluded in July 2023

# Appendix B: Detailed Methodology

## B.1 A Case Study Approach

The research employed a mixed-methods approach to collecting data from across the selected case study settlements through both quantitative and qualitative means. A case-study approach is different from a national or regional-level study / approach, and it involves selecting a set number of locations that (for this study) exhibit the characteristics associated with long-distance commuting, and from which findings can be extrapolated to wider geographies. Thus, case studies offer efficiencies, while also enabling researchers to explore and interrogate data (quantitative and qualitative) to a greater extent than is possible when working over extensive geographies. Case study research also implies working with sets of stakeholders – actors and parties with a stake (or interest) in the study location(s) – and while the research team is obliged to be detached and objective, co-creation of knowledge frequently characterises case study research, as is the case with InPLACE.

## B.2 Online Questionnaire Survey

The online questionnaire survey enabled the research team to gather a considerable volume of qualitative and quantitative data. It dealt with issues and themes that emerged from the initial literature review, and it gathered data which can be benchmarked against those arising from other studies. The content and scope of the questionnaire is summarised in the table below.

*InPLACE case study questionnaire – content and data outputs*

| Theme (Section in the Questionnaire) | Content | Data Outputs |
|---|---|---|
| Our Place – how I see our locality | Respondents are invited to use the Place Standard[xxxi] to rate their perceptions of environmental, economic and social aspects of their locality, and to assess how these have changed over the past five years. Open-ended questions enabling respondents to comment on their scores (on the Place Standard) and to describe their localities in their own words. | Data on the type of place(s) – contributing to our profiling and understanding of each place and the issues that may affect place-making, including those that relate to commuting (e.g. housing, transport and travel) and those that may be affected by it (e.g. social capital). |
| Quality of Life and Well-being | Scales to enable respondents to assess their levels of satisfaction with the following: their jobs; commutes; standard of living; accommodation; family life; locality; and community. Indicators – based on the European Quality of Life Survey – that capture respondents' perceived well-being and social engagements, pre-pandemic and currently. | Ratio data on perceptions on key variables associated with places of work and places of residence (and the relationships between them). Data on the possible impacts of commuting on perceived quality of life – that can be benchmarked internationally. |

>

| Theme (Section in the Questionnaire) | Content | Data Outputs |
|---|---|---|
| About work | Questions about the types of work (and study) people do and where they do so – including specific questions about remote / hybrid working and the factors that shape places of work (e.g. ICT connectivity, childcare, employers' attitudes, caring duties and disability) | Data on work patterns pre-, during and post-pandemic that give us the ability to track longitudinal change and identify variables that may determine perceptions and experiences of place, quality of life and well-being (as captured in the two opening sections). |
| Commuting | Respondents are presented with a series of questions that enable them to describe their commutes – frequency, length and mode.<br>They are specifically asked about the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on their commutes. | Quantitative and qualitative data on the scale and extent of commuting and how it has changed<br>A perceptions' audit of how commuting relates to, and influences, quality of life and well-being (individually and at community level). |
| Where I live and work | Given that the literature associates the growth of long-distance commuting with in-migration to small towns / villages, the questionnaire seeks to identify those who are incomers, those who have local ties and those who are new to the towns / villages. | Data (in addition to CSO and NISRA statistics) on demographic change and the identification of further potential independent variables. |
| About me | Profile of respondents by gender, age cohort, health status, ethnicity, housing tenure and educational attainment. | |

The survey was advertised through posters and flyers that were displayed in both public and private spaces in each settlement, as well as being distributed online with the help of key contacts, including some of those who were interviewed for the study (see section B.3), and town email lists (Maryland only). In addition, participants were sought through social media, and all respondents were invited to enter a draw for a prize of €100 / £100 / $100. In total, the survey yielded 980 responses across the nine case study settlements. The following table provides the breakdown of responses by case study area.

*Total online questionnaire responses by case study area*

| | Settlement | **Online Questionnaire Responses** |
|---|---|---|
| Island of Ireland | 1. Newtownmountkennedy, Co. Wicklow | 149 |
| | 2. Dundrum Co. Down | 89 |
| | 3. Ennistymon-Lahinch, Co. Clare | 124 |
| | 4. Sallins, Co. Kildare | 102 |
| | 5. Kanturk-Banteer, Co. Cork | 171 |
| | 6. Aghagallon, Co. Antrim | 66 |
| | 7. Mountbellew-Moylough, Co. Galway | 77 |
| **Total** | **Ireland and Northern Ireland** | **778** |
| **State of Maryland, USA** | 8. Middletown, Frederick County | 101 |
| | 9. North Beach, Calvert County | 101 |
| **Total** | Maryland | 202 |
| **Grand total** | **All case study areas** | **980** |

It should be noted that the sample obtained for the survey is a convenience sample, obtained in part by 'snowballing' methods, and is not therefore a random sample for purposes of statistical analysis. Bias is likely to have been introduced into the sample because our advertisements only reached those who frequent the places where the posters were displayed, use Facebook, subscribe to town email lists, or for other reasons. Likewise, the sample is not a proportionally representative sample. The composition of the sample obtained in Ireland and Northern Ireland is unrepresentative with respect to both gender and age, with an under-representation of males and those aged 18 to 30 years, and 65 years or older. The Maryland sample also shows an under-representation of males, and, more significantly of Black or African American ethnicities (especially in North Beach). It has an over-representation of persons aged 65 years and older, again mainly in North Beach. The follow tables illustrate the sample composition with regard to these key demographic variables.

*Island of Ireland survey sample characteristics: Gender*

| Settlement | Gender | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Female | Male | Other / N /S |
| Kanturk-Banteer | 67.3% | 31.0% | 3.4% |
| Newtownmountkennedy | 65.1% | 31.5% | 3.2% |
| Ennistymon-Lahinch | 66.9% | 29.8% | 1.0% |
| Sallins | 63.7% | 35.3% | 1.5% |
| Dundrum | 59.6% | 37.1% | 3.4% |
| Mountbellew-Moylough | 72.7% | 24.7% | 2.6% |
| Aghagallon | 72.7% | 25.8% | 2.4% |
| **All settlements (7)** | **66.5%** | **31.1%** | **1.8%** |

*Island of Ireland survey sample characteristics: Age*

| Settlement | Age Group | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 18 to 30 | 31 to 44 | 45 to 64 | 65+ |
| Kanturk-Banteer | 5.92% | 46.15% | 40.83% | 7.10% |
| Newtownmountkennedy | 17.01% | 52.38% | 26.53% | 4.08% |
| Ennistymon-Lahinch | 10.74% | 27.27% | 54.55% | 7.44% |
| Sallins | 11.76% | 39.22% | 45.10% | 3.92% |
| Dundrum | 10.11% | 29.21% | 47.19% | 13.48% |
| Mountbellew-Moylough | 4.00% | 46.67% | 41.33% | 8.00% |
| Aghagallon | 16.92% | 38.46% | 41.54% | 3.08% |
| **All settlements (7)** | **10.81%** | **40.89%** | **41.67%** | **6.64%** |

*Middletown survey sample characteristics*

| Characteristic | InPLACE Survey | 2020 Census/ACS |
|---|---|---|
| Gender = Female | 64% | 53% |
| Gender = Male | 33% | 47% |
| Gender = Other | 3% | N/A |
| Race = White | 92% | *91% |
| Race = Black or African American | 1% | *4% |
| Race = Other | 7% | *6% |
| Age = 65+ | 19% | 15% |

**Those listing multiple races on the census were excluded for comparability. Our survey only allowed respondents to choose one race.*

*North Beach survey sample characteristics*

| Characteristic | InPLACE Survey | 2020 Census/ACS |
|---|---|---|
| Gender = Female | 67% | 56% |
| Gender = Male | 33% | 44% |
| Gender = Other | 0% | N/A |
| Race = White | 90% | *81% |
| Race = Black or African American | 1% | *15% |
| Race = Other | 9% | *5% |
| Age = 65+ | 37% | 13% |

**Those listing multiple races on the census were excluded for comparability. Our survey only allowed respondents to choose one race.*

### B.3 One-to-One Interviews

The research identified three broad sets of stakeholders in each case study location, namely community representatives, institutional representatives and commuters. Some informants straddled more than one grouping, in particular the community and institutional representatives.

Community and Institutional Representatives
Community representatives who contributed to the research – by participating in interviews and by advising others about the fieldwork – included the following:

- Representatives of umbrella-type civil society organisations (e.g. town team, community forum, village association);
- Representatives of community groups with a wide social reach and those that provide opportunities for civic engagements (e.g. sporting and recreational organisations, community arts, environmental groups);
- Local business community; and
- Local development company personnel.

Institutional stakeholders also promoted the research, and they encouraged local citizens to participate in it. Moreover, they provided specific insights in relation to planning and

development, land use and transportation and the policy milieu. Among the key informants were:

- Local authority councillors (elected representatives);
- Local authority personnel (executive officers); and
- Representatives from statutory agencies (public sector bodies).

Among those who can be classified as both community and institutional stakeholders, and who made major contributions to the fieldwork are the Public Participation Networks (PPNs) and the Rural Community Network (RCN). They advertised the survey questionnaire (and circulated the electronic links to it), and they enabled the research team to identify relevant local informants.

### Commuters

Commuters are arguably the most important cohort in this study, and while the online questionnaire represented the most effective means of garnering data from a large number of commuters, and from which extrapolation is possible, the research team complemented this by undertaking one-to-one interviews with a number of commuters from each case study location. These interviews provided personalised narratives and in-depth insights into commuting experiences, and they generated valuable qualitative data that added significant value to the other datasets. Moreover, engagement with commuters added to the robustness of the data, allowing for triangulation of the perceptions of other stakeholders.

*Total number of interviews with commuters and community representatives by case study area*

| Case Study Area | County/Local Authority/Local District Council | Commuter Interviews | Community Representatives Interviews |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Island of Ireland, Phase 1:** | | | |
| Ennistymon-Lahinch | Clare County Council | 7 | 3 (series of informal, exploratory interviews in addition took place at start of project in 2021) |
| Newtownmountkennedy | Wicklow County Council | 7 | 10 |
| Dundrum | Newry, Mourne and Down District Council | 6 | 8 |
| **Island of Ireland, Phase 2:** | | | |
| Kanturk-Banteer | Cork County Council | 11 | 5 |
| Mountbellew-Moylough | Galway County Council | 7 | 4 |
| Sallins | Kildare County Council | 10 | 3 |
| Aghagallon | Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon District Council | 8 | 5 |
| **Island of Ireland, Totals** | | **56** | **38** |
| **State of Maryland, USA** | | **18** | **2** |
| **Total Number of Commuter and Community Leader Interviews** | | **74** | **40** |
| **Total, All Interviews** | | **114** | |

In addition to the interviews with stakeholders from each of the case study settlements, interviews were conducted with planners or other senior officials from each of the local authorities (County Council or District / Borough Council) with jurisdiction over the settlements. The purpose of these seven interviews was to garner the interviewees' views on the recent development of the settlements and the envisaged future role and function of the settlements in the respective local development plans. In addition, the local authority interviewees' views on some of the findings from the fieldwork were sought, in particular the scoring of each settlement on the Place Standard tool.

### B.4 Focus Groups

Focus groups represented the final element in data collection in Phase 1 only. These took place in Newtownmountkennedy and Dundrum in October 2022, and a focus group preparatory meeting took place in Newtownmountkennedy in July 2022. This provided an opportunity to agree the format for the focus groups and to involve the local community in promoting stakeholder participation. In the original design of the research, it was envisaged that the focus groups would play an important role in triangulating and interrogating data. However, following the Phase 1 focus groups, both of which were held online in keeping with then public health advice and reservations amongst some community groups about attending large in-person gatherings, the research team were of the opinion that they did not aid greatly in generating new data or insights beyond what was available from the other data sources. Consequently, no focus groups were held during Phase 2 or in the Maryland study areas.

### B.5 Qualitative analysis

In total 94 interviews were conducted for this study, 56 with commuters and 38 with community/ local institutional representatives, as detailed above. The method used to analyse the data collected through the interviews was largely inductive, i.e. the themes emerged from the data during initial analysis (coding). Thematic analysis by its nature provides the researcher with a flexible research tool that allows the data to set the framework for analysis and places the interviewee at the centre of the research (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The commuter and community / local institutional representative interviews were coded together due to both the timing of the data collection, and the fact that the interview questions for the two groups largely overlapped. Each interview is identifiable from its coding (see table below), so for example the third commuter interviewed in Dundrum is recorded as DD3 (the numbering/lettering is based on the chronological order of when the interviews took place in each town).

*Coding for Interviewees*

| Case Study Area | Settlement Code | Commuter Code | Community/ Institutional Representative Code |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ennistymon-Lahinch | EL | Numbered: 1,2,3 .... | Lettered: A,B,C ... |
| Newtownmountkennedy | NT | | |
| Dundrum | DD | | |
| Kanturk-Banteer | KB | | |
| Mountbellew-Moylough | MM | | |
| Sallins | SL | | |
| Aghagallon | AGH | | |

In addition to the interviews, qualitative data was generated from the social survey also, which provided respondents with the opportunity to give open-ended responses, usually after a set

of close-ended questions when respondents were asked to insert additional comments if they wished. These statements were also included in the analysis.

For the thematic analysis, the team followed Braun and Clarke's (2006, P. 87) methodology:

| Phase | Description of the process |
|---|---|
| 1. Familiarizing yourself with your data: | Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas. |
| 2. Generating initial codes: | Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code. |
| 3. Searching for themes: | Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme. |
| 4. Reviewing themes: | Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis. |
| 5. Defining and naming themes: | Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme. |
| 6. Producing the report: | The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis. |

### B.6 Mapping/GIS

All maps created for the project were produced using ESRI ArcGIS Online or Pro. Map boundaries are those supplied by Tailte Éireann (formerly Ordnance Survey Ireland) or Ordnance Survey Northern Ireland, as well as embedded ESRI base maps.

# Appendix C: Membership of Research Advisory Group and Operational Partnership Group

The membership of the two bodies with oversight functions in relation to the research was as follows:

### InPLACE Research Advisory Group Membership

| Organisation | Member |
|---|---|
| Independent Chairperson | Prof. Peter Roberts |
| Translink, Northern Ireland | Ian Campbell |
| The Rural Residents Forum, NI | Patricia McQuillan |
| Wexford Local Development | Brian Kehoe |
| Grow Remote | Tracey Keogh<br>John Evoy |
| Western Development Commission (WDC) | Dr Helen McHenry |
| Independent expert / academia – Queens University Belfast (QUB) | Prof. Geraint Ellis |

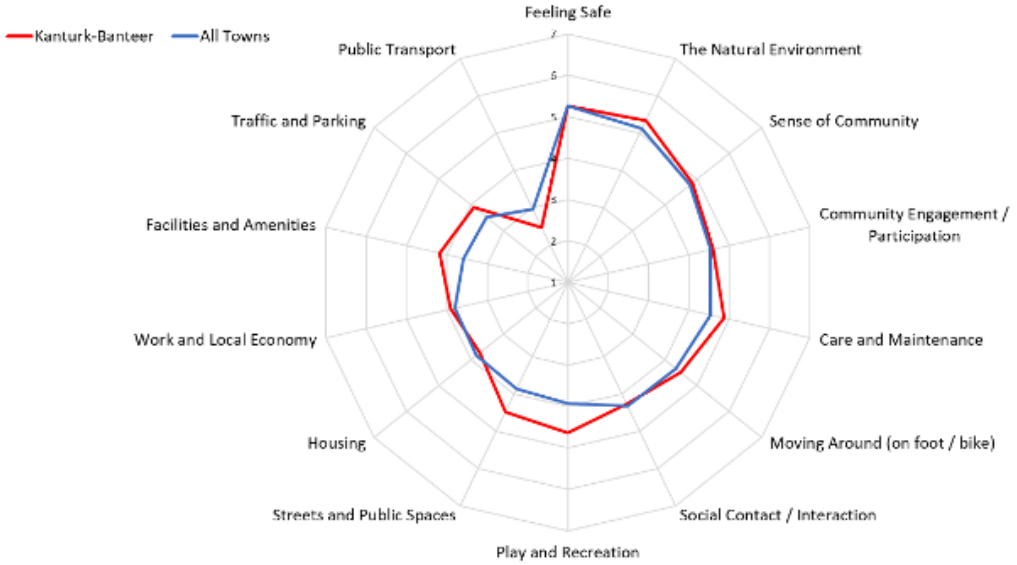
### InPLACE Operational Partnership Group Membership

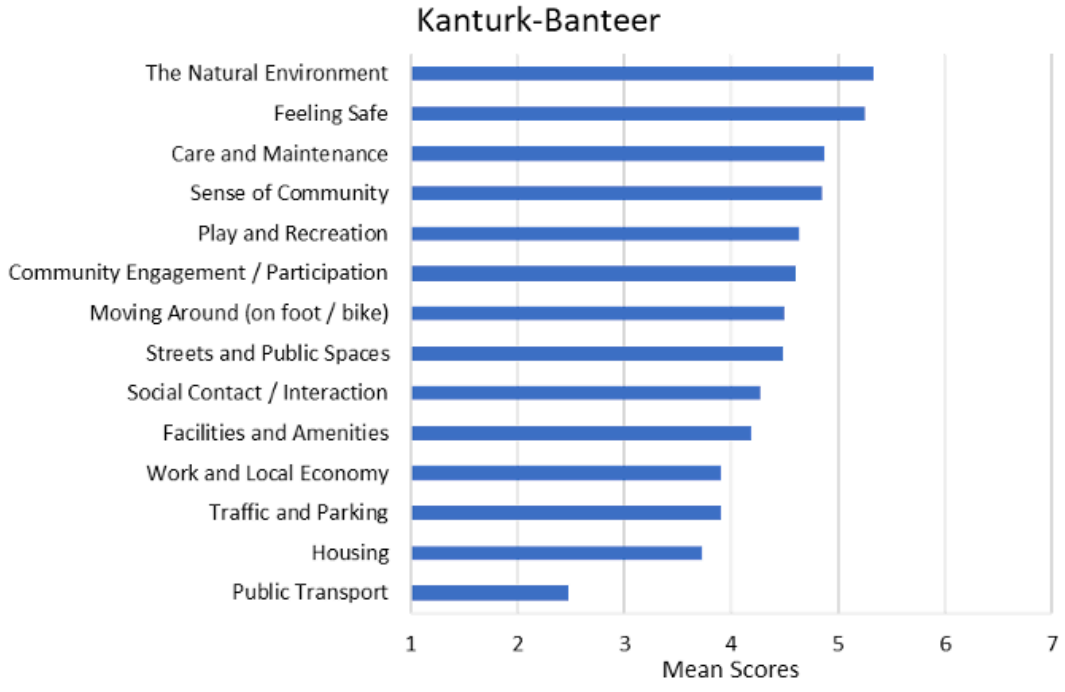
| Organisation | Member |
|---|---|
| Independent Chairperson | Prof. Des McCafferty<br>(Overall Project Co-ordinator) |
| Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) | Mr. Niall Cussen |
| Local Government Management Agency (LGMA) | Dr. Bernie O'Donoghue-Hynes<br>Ms. Holly Morin |
| Department of Housing Local Government & Heritage (DHLGH) | Mr. Stewart Logan<br>Ms. Claragh Mulhern (from September 2023)<br>Ms. Karen Kenny (from September 2023) |
| Department for Infrastructure NI | Ms. Catherine McEvoy |
| Clare County Council | Mr. Liam Connelley<br>Ms. Helen Quinn (from June 2023 onwards) |
| Cork County Council | Mr. Padraig Moore<br>Ms. Lorraine Kennedy |

The Operational Partnership Group, as funders, also had the opportunity to attend meetings of the Research Advisory Group in an observer capacity.
Members of the research team attended meetings of both Groups.

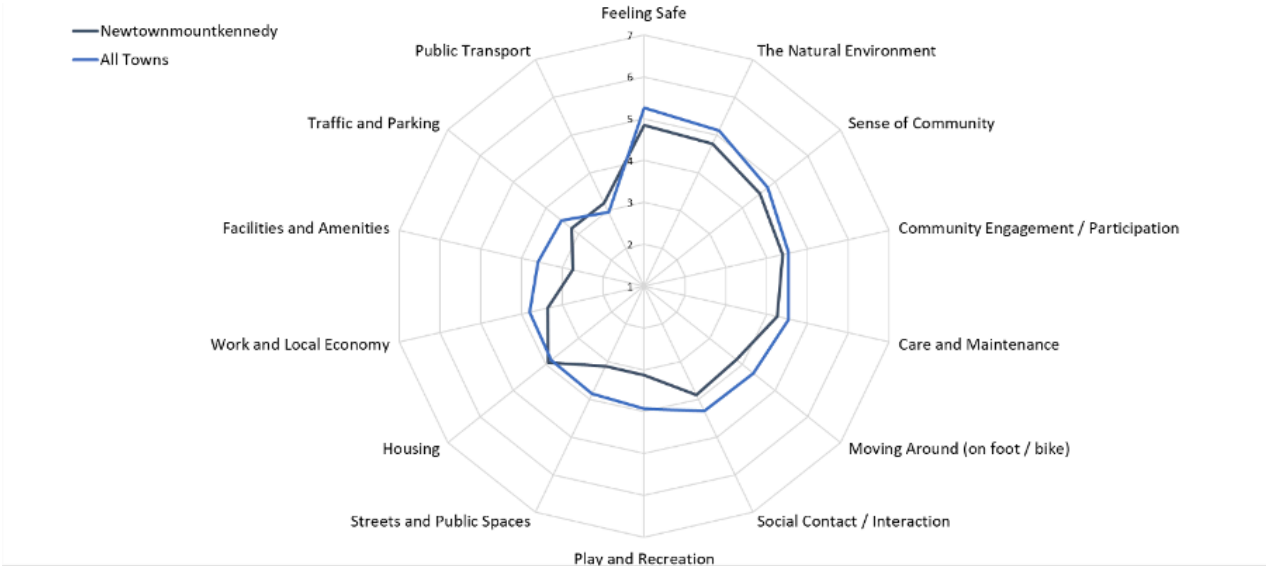
# Appendix D: Respondents' Perceptions of Place – Additional Insights

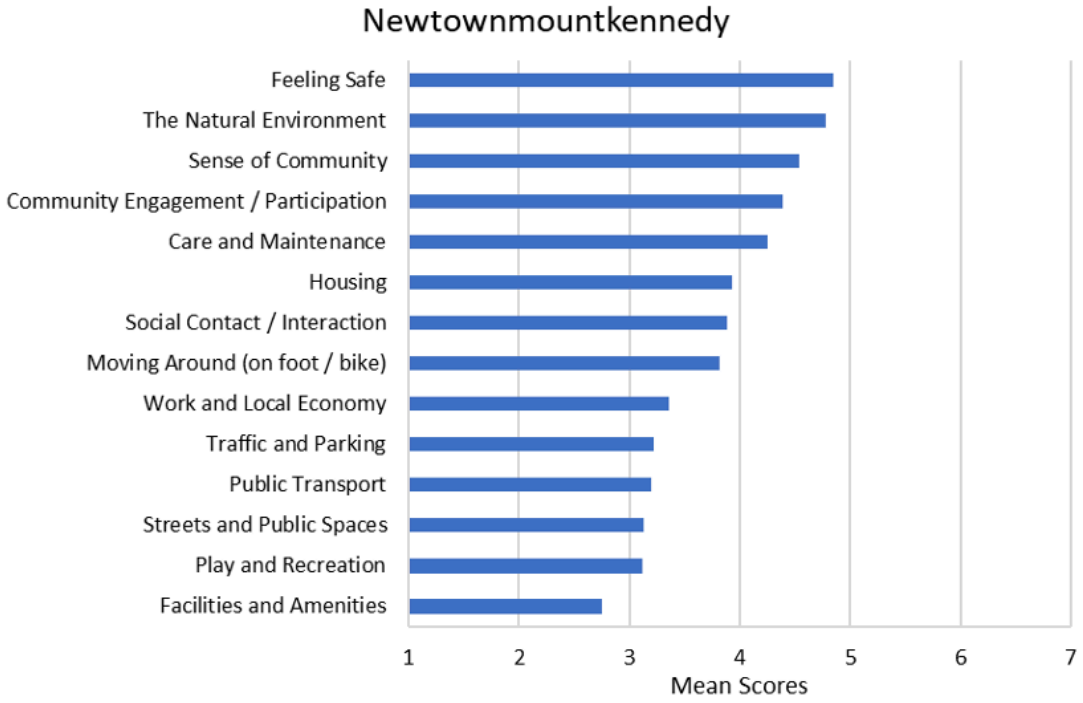
## D.1 Mean Scores on the Place Standard for each case study location



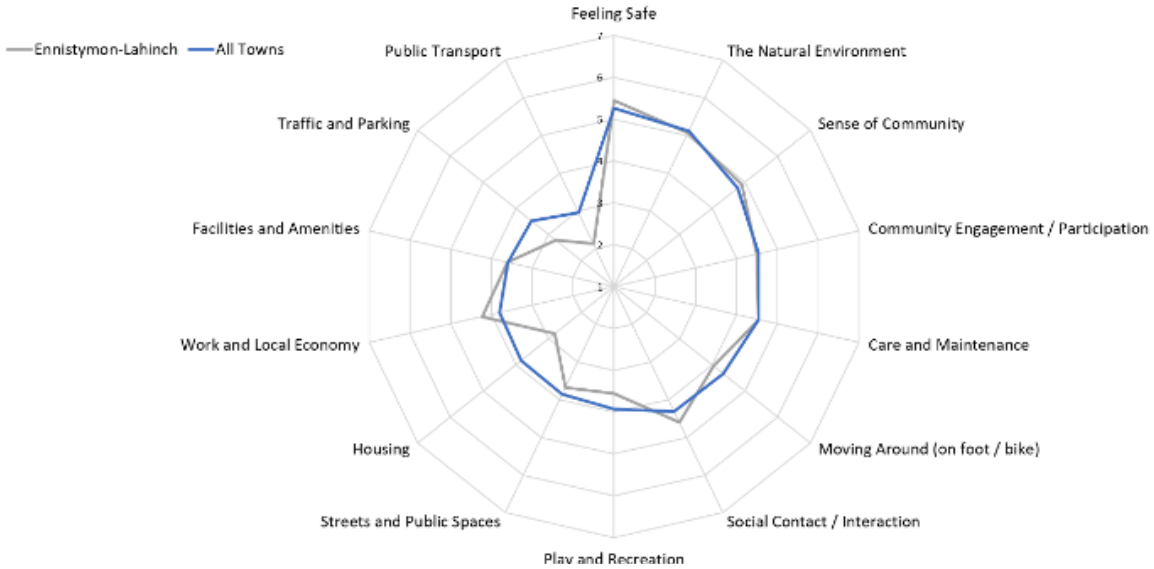



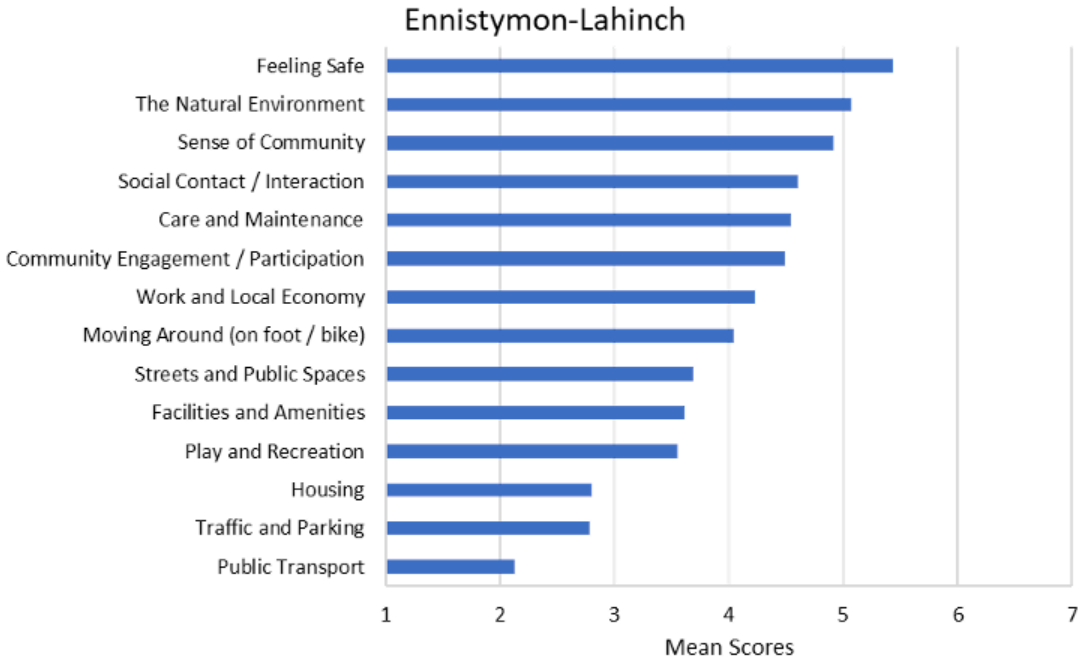
# Appendix D:
# Respondents' Perceptions of Place – Additional Insights



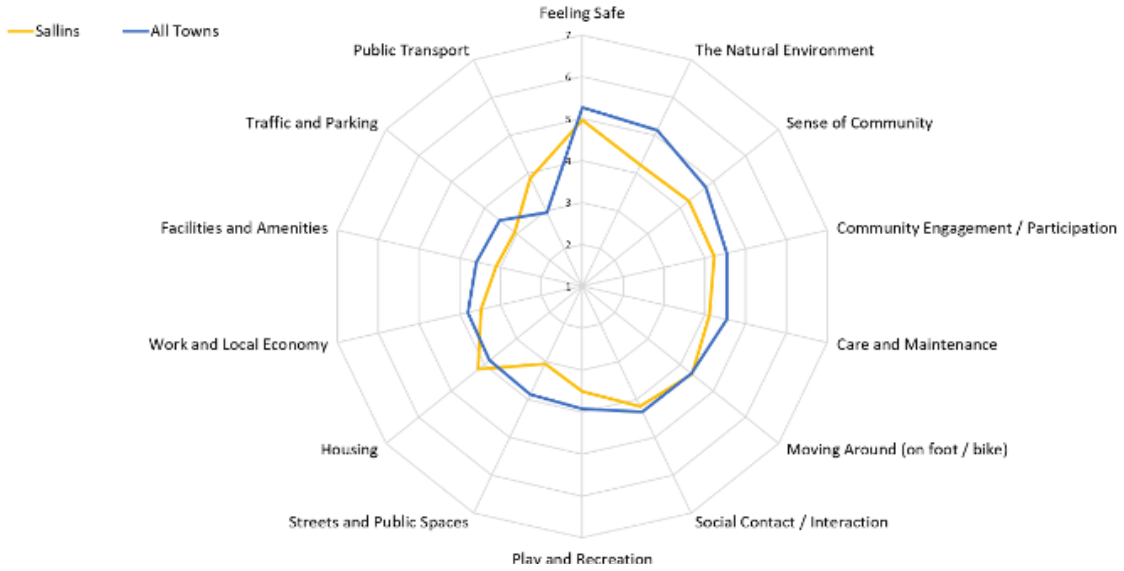



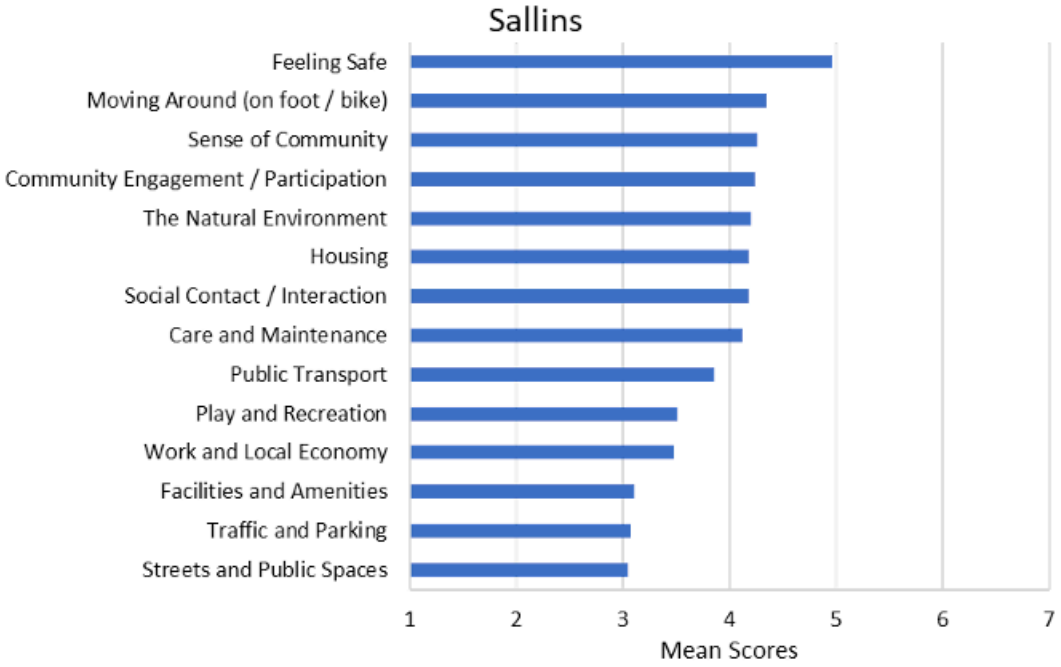
# Appendix D:
# Respondents' Perceptions of Place – Additional Insights



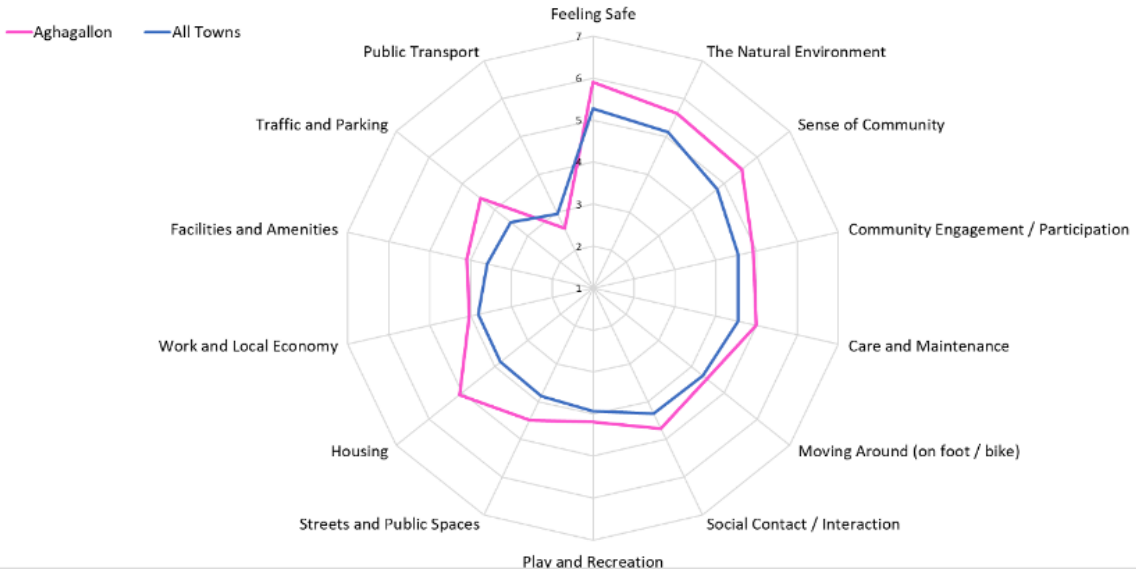



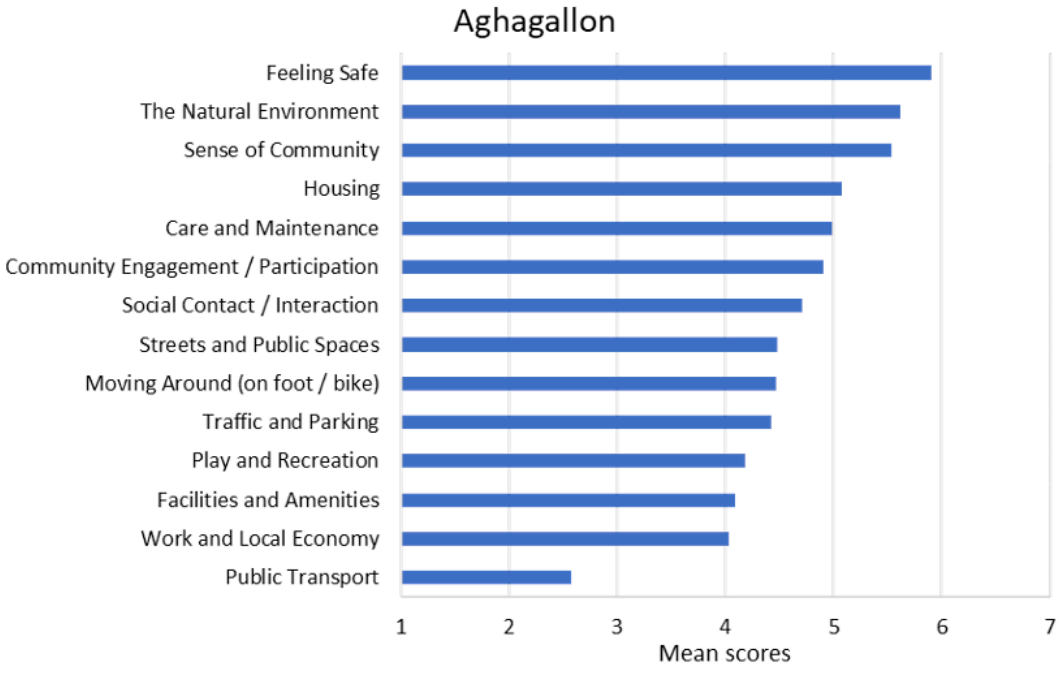
# Appendix D:
# Respondents' Perceptions of Place – Additional Insights



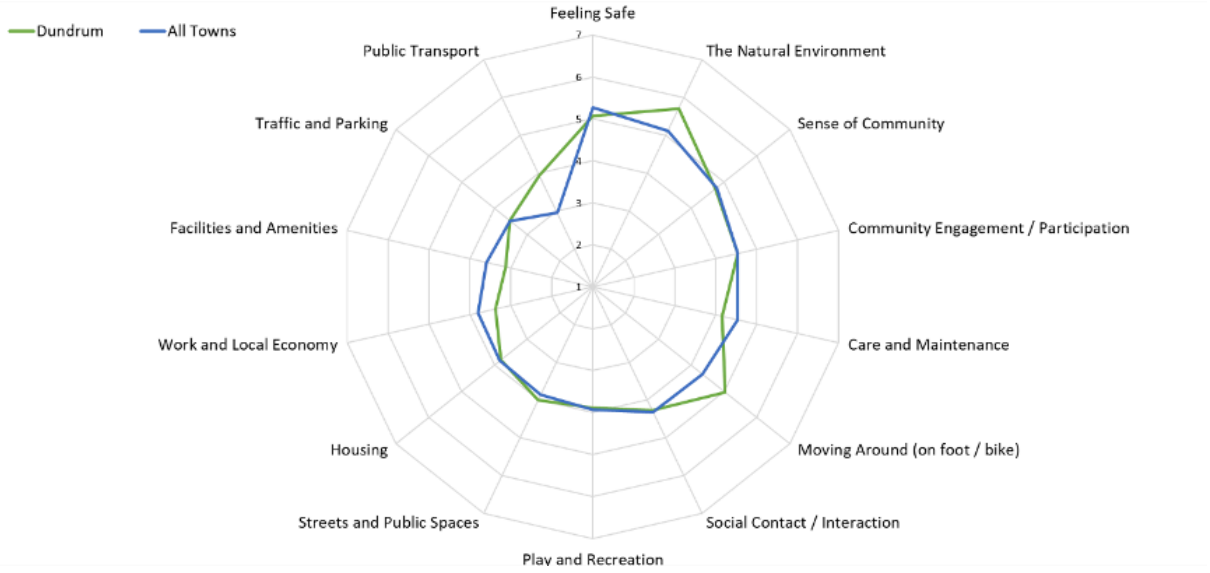



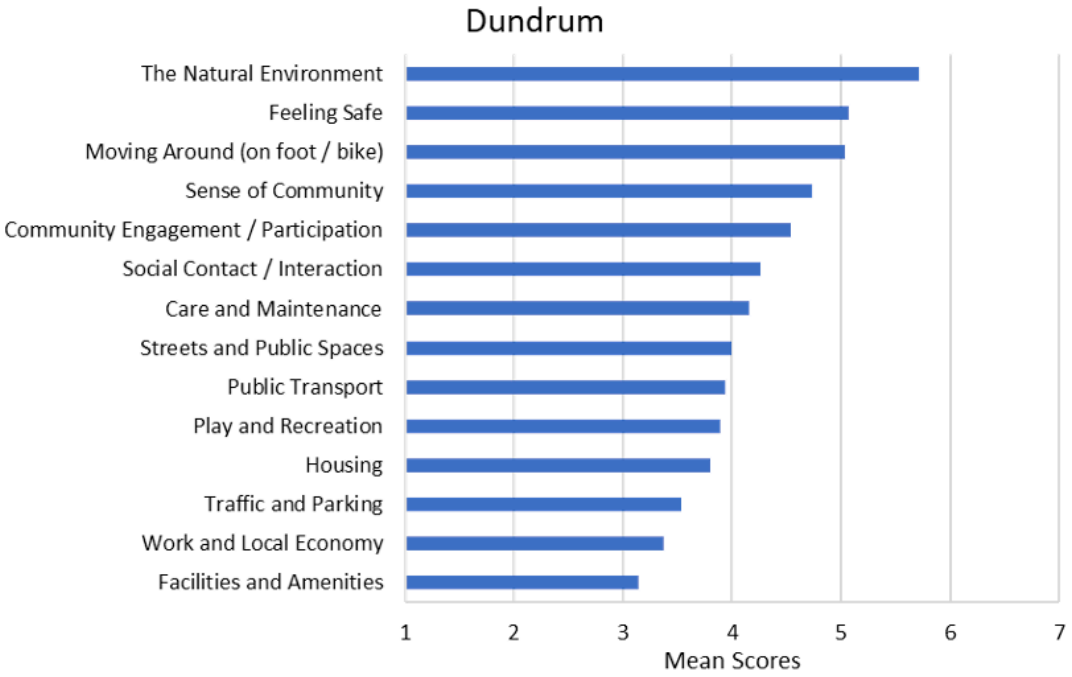
# Appendix D:
# Respondents' Perceptions of Place – Additional Insights



# Appendix D:
# Respondents' Perceptions of Place – Additional Insights



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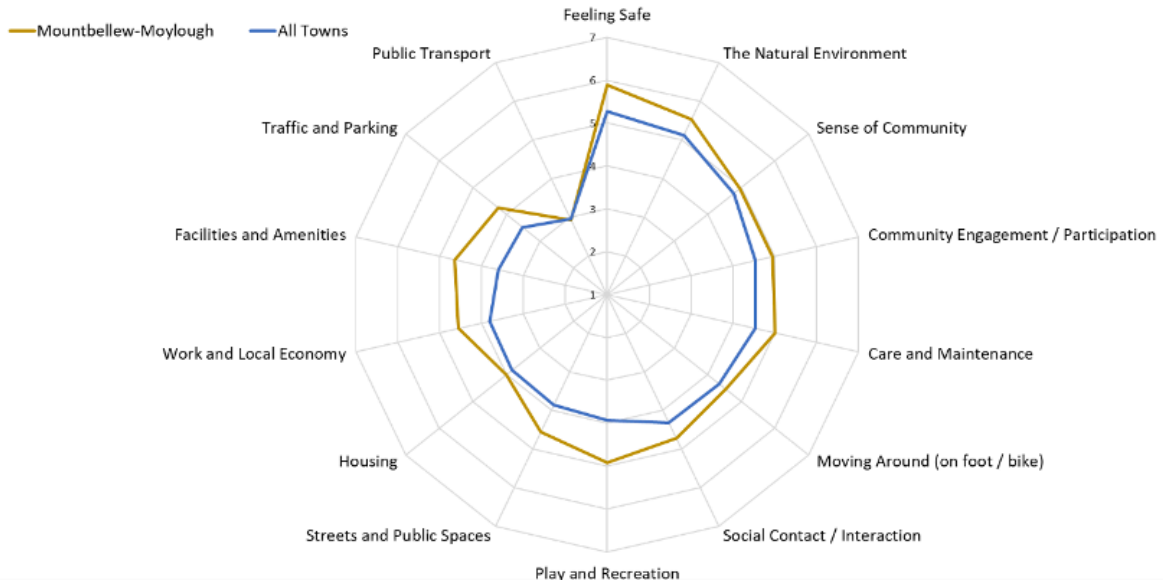
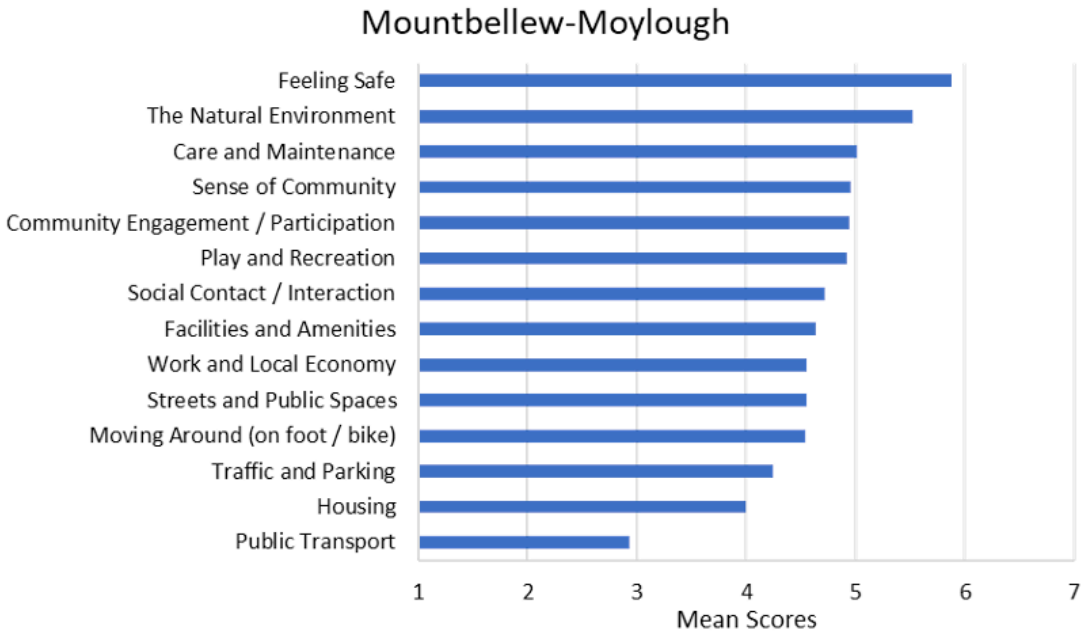
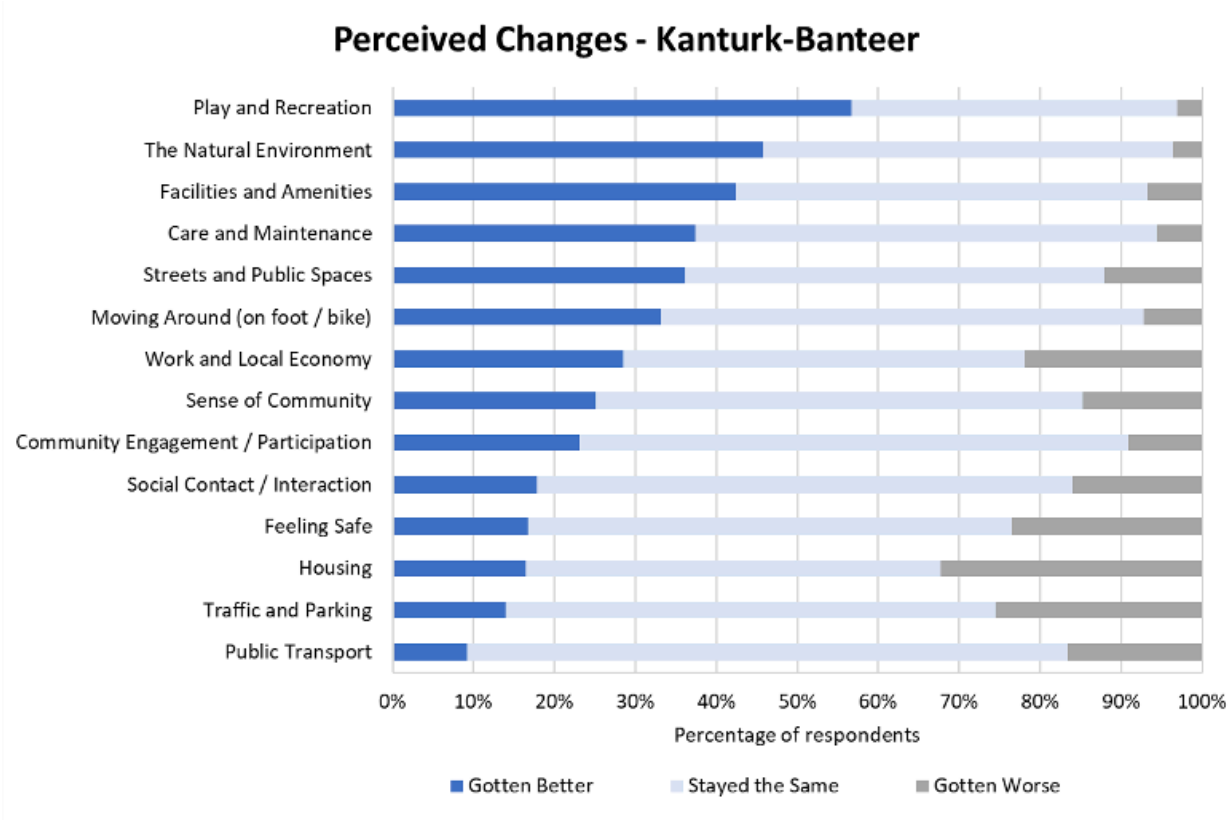
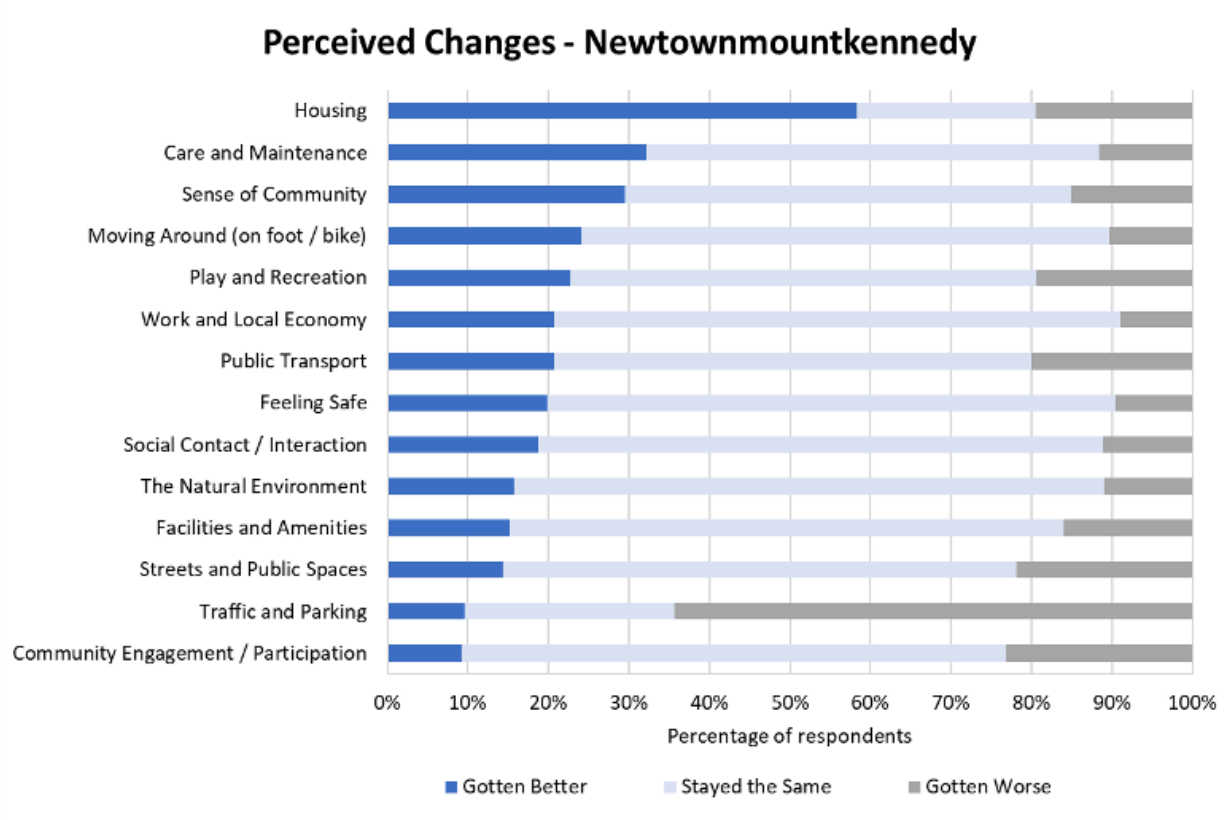
# Respondents' Perceptions of Place – Additional Insights

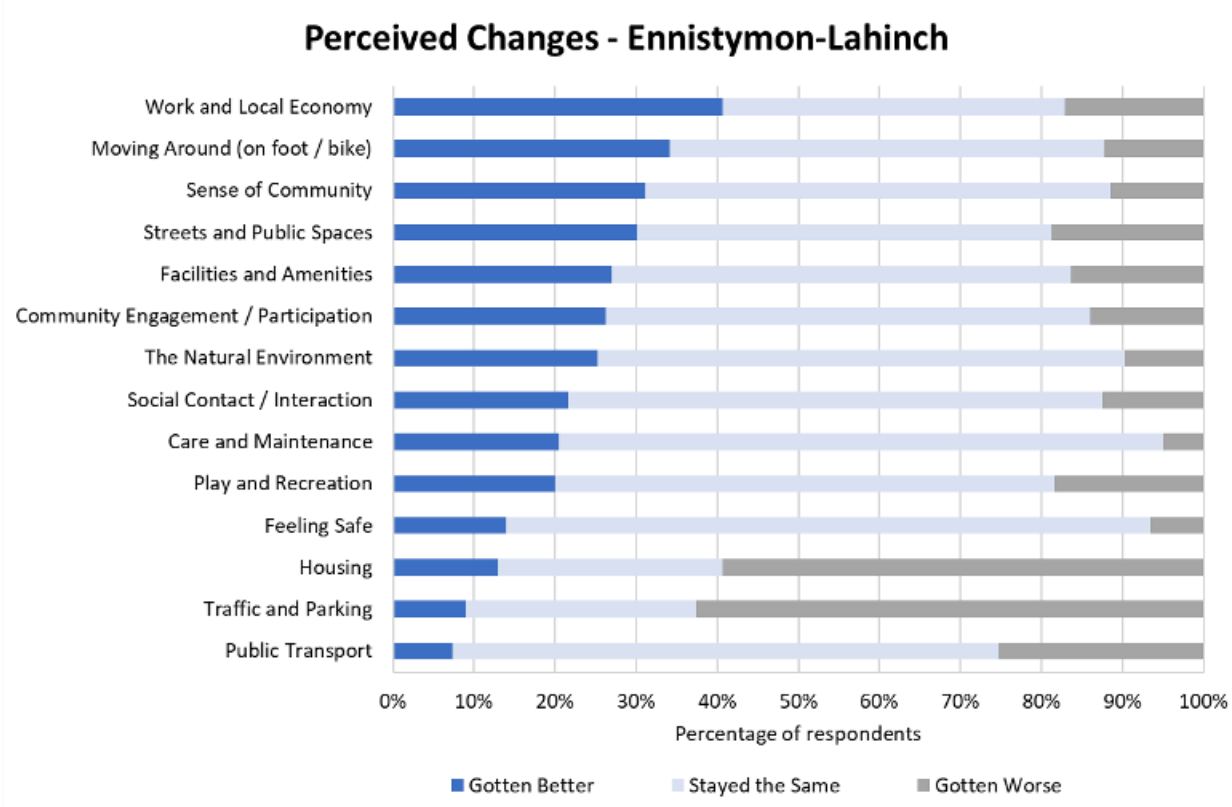


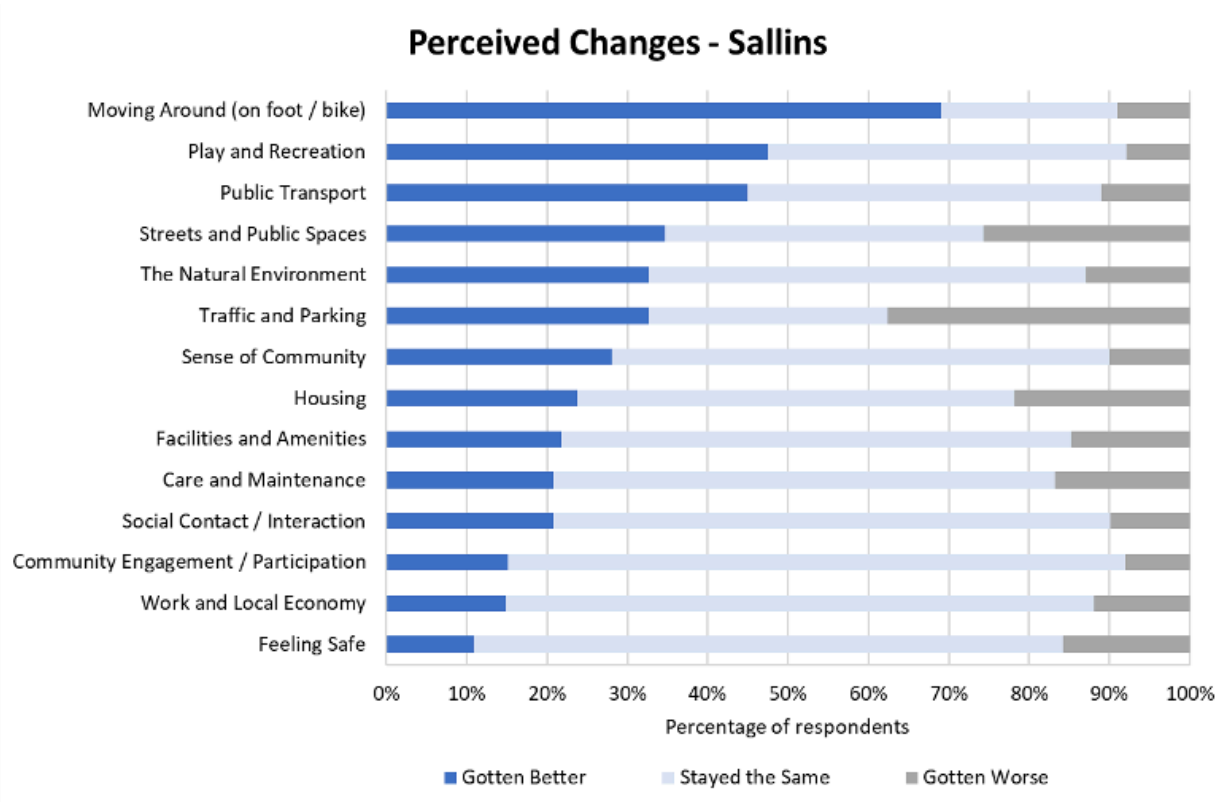



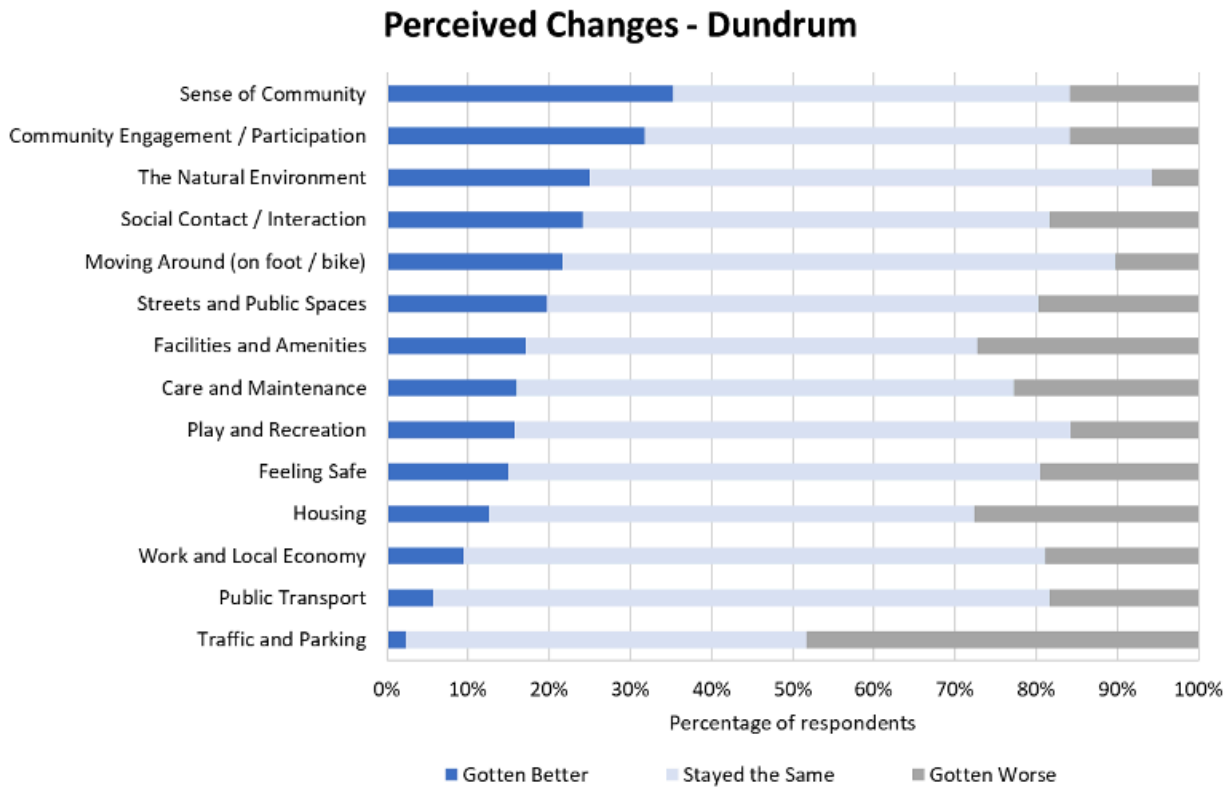
## D.2 Perceived changes (over the preceding five years) in each case study location, in respect of each of the dimensions on the Place Standard

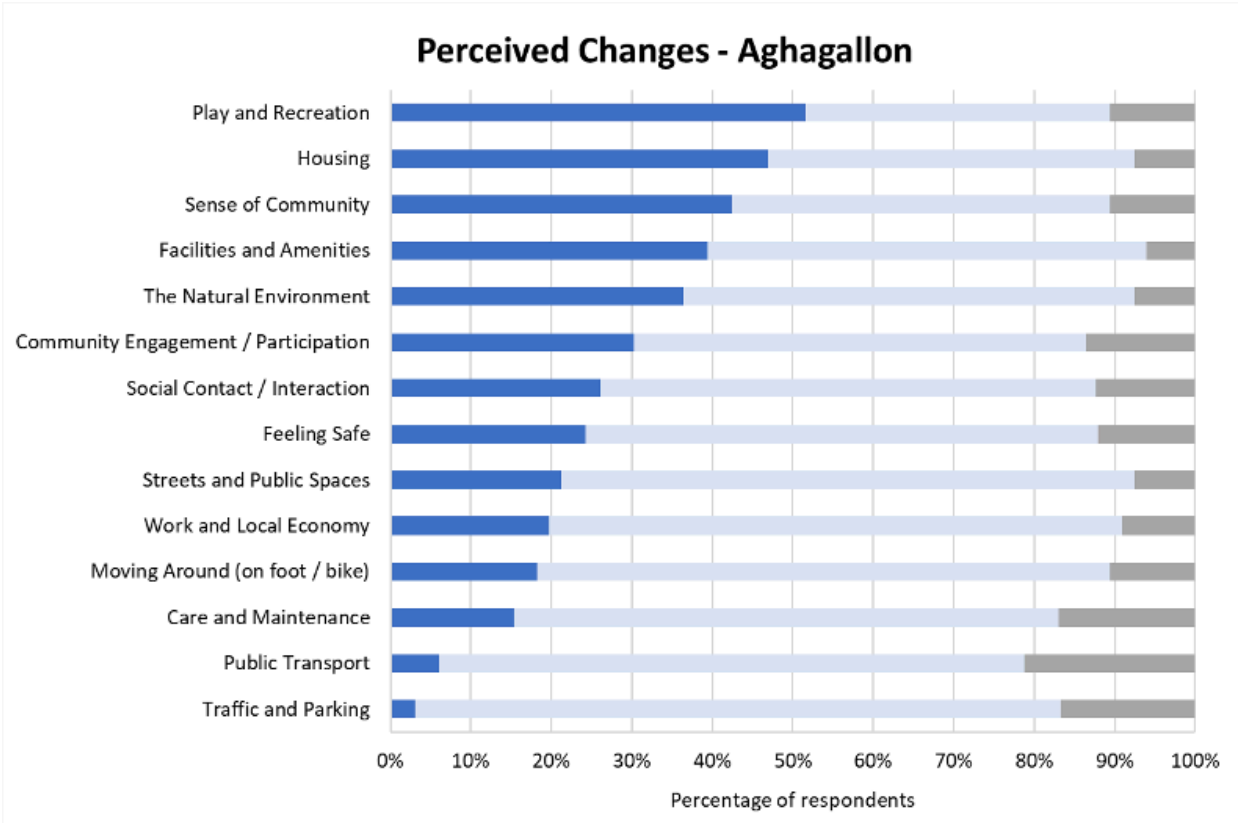


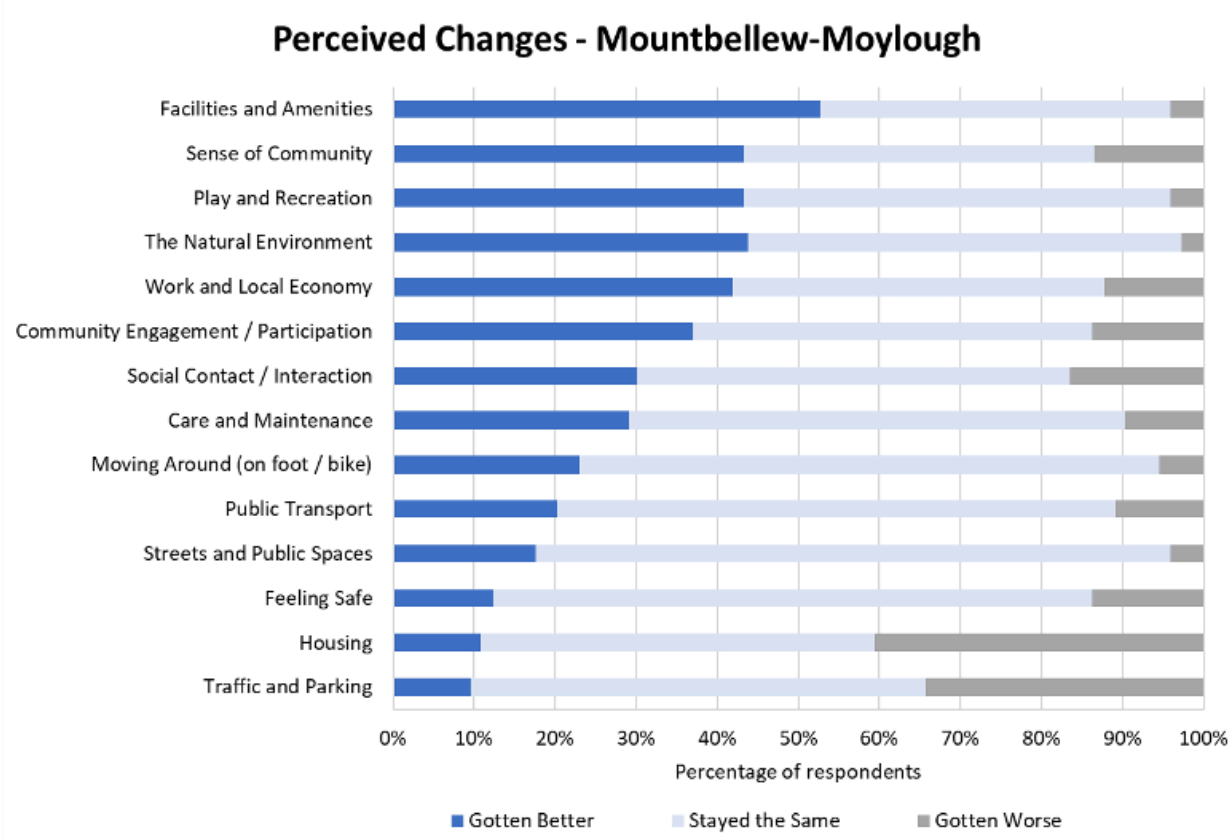




Perceived Changes - Ennistymon-Lahinch
Work and Local Economy
Moving Around (on foot / bike)
Sense of Community
Streets and Public Spaces
Facilities and Amenities
Community Engagement / Participation
The Natural Environment
Social Contact / Interaction
Care and Maintenance
Play and Recreation
Feeling Safe
Housing
Traffic and Parking
Public Transport
0%
10%
20%
30%
40%
50%
60%
70%
80%
90%
100%
Percentage of respondents
Gotten Better
Stayed the Same
Gotten Worse


Perceived Changes - Sallins
Moving Around (on foot / bike)
Play and Recreation
Public Transport
Streets and Public Spaces
The Natural Environment
Traffic and Parking
Sense of Community
Housing
Facilities and Amenities
Care and Maintenance
Social Contact / Interaction
Community Engagement / Participation
Work and Local Economy
Feeling Safe
0%
10%
20%
30%
40%
50%
60%
70%
80%
90%
100%
Percentage of respondents
Gotten Better
Stayed the Same
Gotten Worse


Perceived Changes - Dundrum
Sense of Community
Community Engagement / Participation
The Natural Environment
Social Contact / Interaction
Moving Around (on foot / bike)
Streets and Public Spaces
Facilities and Amenities
Care and Maintenance
Play and Recreation
Feeling Safe
Housing
Work and Local Economy
Public Transport
Traffic and Parking
0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%
Percentage of respondents
Gotten Better
Stayed the Same
Gotten Worse


Perceived Changes - Aghagallon
Play and Recreation
Housing
Sense of Community
Facilities and Amenities
The Natural Environment
Community Engagement / Participation
Social Contact / Interaction
Feeling Safe
Streets and Public Spaces
Work and Local Economy
Moving Around (on foot / bike)
Care and Maintenance
Public Transport
Traffic and Parking
0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%
Percentage of respondents




## D.3 Reasons for moving to the case study location

| Reason for moving | Kanturk-Banteer | Newtown-mountkennedy | Ennistymon-Lahinch | Sallins | Aghagallon | Dundrum | Mountbellew-Moylough | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Housing | 34.52% | 53.85% | 3.77% | 36.84% | 13.79% | 9.26% | 35.56% | 30.79% |
| Family | 30.95% | 14.29% | 26.42% | 13.16% | 37.93% | 40.74% | 28.89% | 25.23% |
| Environment | 8.33% | 3.30% | 15.09% | 6.58% | 31.03% | 27.78% | 4.44% | 11.34% |
| Employment | 4.76% | 4.40% | 20.75% | 2.63% | 3.45% | 3.70% | 8.89% | 6.48% |
| Location | 4.76% | 4.40% | 0.00% | 5.26% | 3.45% | 3.70% | 2.22% | 3.70% |
| Quality of Life | 3.57% | 1.10% | 7.55% | 2.63% | 3.45% | 3.70% | 2.22% | 3.24% |
| Housing and Environment | 1.19% | 4.40% | 3.77% | 3.95% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 2.22% | 2.55% |
| Amenities | 3.57% | 1.10% | 3.77% | 1.32% | 3.45% | 0.00% | 2.22% | 2.08% |
| Family and Environment | 0.00% | 2.20% | 7.55% | 0.00% | 3.45% | 1.85% | 2.22% | 2.08% |
| Train | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 11.84% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 2.08% |
| Family and Housing | 1.19% | 3.30% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 1.85% | 2.22% | 1.39% |
| Family and Employment | 2.38% | 1.10% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 4.44% | 1.16% |
| Housing and Location | 1.19% | 2.20% | 0.00% | 1.32% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.93% |
| Location and Environment | 1.19% | 1.10% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 1.85% | 0.00% | 0.69% |
| Community | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 2.63% | 0.00% | 1.85% | 0.00% | 0.69% |
| Housing and Train | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 2.63% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.46% |
| Location and Train | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 2.63% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.46% |
| Retirement | 0.00% | 0.00% | 1.89% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 1.85% | 0.00% | 0.46% |
| Various | 0.00% | 0.00% | 1.89% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 2.22% | 0.46% |
| Train and Location | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 1.32% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 2.22% | 0.46% |
| Quality of Life and Family | 0.00% | 0.00% | 1.89% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.23% |
| Housing and Quality of Life | 0.00% | 1.10% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.23% |
| Housing and Employment | 1.19% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.23% |
| Housing and Friends | 0.00% | 0.00% | 1.89% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.23% |
| Employment and Environment | 0.00% | 0.00% | 1.89% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.23% |
| Environment and Amenities | 0.00% | 1.10% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.23% |
| Environment and Friends | 0.00% | 0.00% | 1.89% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.23% |
| Environment and Location | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 1.32% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.23% |
| Family and Community | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 1.85% | 0.00% | 0.23% |
| Family and Location | 1.19% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.23% |
| Family and Train | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 1.32% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.23% |
| Family, Housing, Location | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 1.32% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.23% |
| Family, Train, Environment | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 1.32% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.23% |
| Other | 0.00% | 1.10% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.23% |
| **Total** | **100.00%** | **100.00%** | **100.00%** | **100.00%** | **100.00%** | **100.00%** | **100.00%** | **100.00%** |

## D.4 Descriptions of Place

In addition to using the Place Standard to gauge perceptions of place, the questionnaire asked 'What three words would you use to describe [name of location]? The following wordclouds visualise the responses. In each case, the size of the word is proportional to the frequency with which it was used; the larger the word, the more frequently it was used.

**Ennistymon-Lahinch: How Residents Describe where they Live**


The words that are most frequently used to describe Ennistymon-Lahinch are: 'beautiful', 'friendly', 'scenic', 'community', 'vibrant' and 'busy'. These and the other descriptors that are presented in the wordcloud are consistent with the narrative that emerged from the stakeholder interviews there. Residents and other local stakeholders pointed to the area's outstanding natural beauty. In addition to having a renowned blue-flag beach and attractive landscape, Ennistymon-Lahinch is in close proximity to other tourist attractions, including the Cliffs of Moher, the Burren and Spanish Point. The wider locality's attractive natural environment was cited, by several interviewees, among the drivers of in-migration and the underpinnings of the area's expanding artistic and cultural scene. Interviewees reported that Ennistymon has retained its traditional identity, which is associated with its functions as an economic and service centre for a rural hinterland, while embracing diverse contemporary artesian, artistic and creative economy and lifestyle endeavours. Interviewees also referred to the functional complementarities between Ennistymon and Lahinch; the latter offers social and recreational amenities, while the former has a broad range of commercial / economic functions along with services (e.g. county council offices and a second-level school). Successive Clare County Development Plans have designated Ennistymon-Lahinch as one of three joint service towns in the county.

**Newtownmountkennedy: How Residents Describe where they Live**


As the wordcloud shows, 'friendly' is the word that is most frequently used to describe Newtownmountkennedy. This is also the case in Aghagallon, Kanturk and Mountbellew-Moylough.

The wordcloud also reveals that residents perceive Newtownmountkennedy as a 'community' and as a place that is 'growing' and has 'potential'. Sallins was the only other case study location in which the word 'potential' came significantly to the fore. Over the course of their interviews, several local stakeholders referred to the area's potential, and they spoke about improved transport linkages to the Greater Dublin Area (GDA), more businesses on the main street and local employment in the industrial park to the south of the town. They also referred to the area's location 'between the mountains and the sea' and the impending greenway (of that title) from Glendalough to the Irish Sea at Greystones.

While words like 'nice', 'green', 'nature' and 'beautiful' were mentioned, they were not as prominent as in most of the other case study locations. However, interviews, particularly those with commuters, revealed that residents were increasingly coming to appreciate Newtownmountkennedy's natural resources. The lockdowns that applied during much of 2020 and 2021 played a part in enabling people to discover and valorise local assets, particularly the local woodland walks. Interviewees also referred to the area's growing appeal to walkers and cyclists.

The wordcloud captures residents' descriptions of Newtownmountkennedy as both a 'town' and a 'village', and as the interviews revealed, there is some debate locally about which descriptor is most appropriate. The term 'village' is generally favoured by those who would like to see a limit on population growth, which they associate with commuting to Dublin, rather than with local employment and social engagement. On the other hand, there are residents who would like to see Newtownmountkennedy growing and embracing additional service and economic functions.

**Dundrum: How Residents Describe where they Live**


Dundrum's location, at the foot of the Mountains of Mourne and beside the Murlough Shore, is a significant driver of its description as 'beautiful.' The National Trust's Murlough National Nature Reserve adjoins the settlement to the south, and it provides open access to extensive walkways and other recreational spaces. Dundrum is also flanked, to the south, by Dundrum Bay and by the Murlough and Downpatrick Bay Beaches. Dundrum Castle lies on the town's northern fringe, and the castle and surrounding woods are open to the public. This combination of natural and heritage amenities is also associated with other words that are evident in the wordcloud, such as 'historic', 'scenic', 'idyllic', 'relaxed / relaxing', and 'calming'.'peaceful', 'picturesque'. In their interviews, local stakeholders referred to Dundrum's natural assets as factors in attracting people to live locally, even if they worked in Greater Belfast or other locations that are at least 45 minutes driving time away. While they value the locality's high quality of life, they noted that the area has among the most expensive real estate in South Down, and this can make it difficult for local people to access housing, when facing competition from long-distance commuters who are in the higher socio-economic groups.

While there is a strong sense locally that Dundrum has significant potential, some interviewees reported that the local wastewater treatment facilities are at capacity, and that this is preventing further housing development.

**Aghagallon: How Residents Describe where they Live**


As their respective wordclouds illustrate, Aghagallon and Mountbellew-Moylough are described, most frequently, as 'friendly', 'quiet', 'safe', and 'peaceful' rural communities. In Aghagallon's case, the community is also described as being homely and tight-knit. The words 'Irish' 'family', 'faith' and 'parish' come to the fore with greater frequency than in the other case study locations. The perception of Aghagallon as 'quiet' may, as interviews indicated, be associated with quietness relative to the nearby urban centres of Moira and Lurgan – both of which have relatively frequent bus and train connections to Greater Belfast.

In common with other locations, there are also references to the natural environment, and the place is described as 'beautiful', 'pretty' and 'lovely'. Aghagallon Village is located approximately 2.5km from the south-eastern shore of Lough Neagh, and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) NI Montiaghs Moss Nature Reserve lies between the village and the lake. While the area is somewhat scenic, pollution in Lough Neagh may be among the reasons as to why nature does not feature as strongly in the descriptors of Aghagallon as is the case in the other locations.

The Aghagallon wordcloud also conveys some of the challenges associated with rural living, as it includes words such as 'isolated', 'lost', 'boring', 'backward' and 'deteriorating'.

**Mountbellew-Moylough: How Residents Describe where they Live**


The Mountbellew-Moylough wordcloud (above) exhibits many similarities with that of Aghagallon. Both communities are perceived to be 'friendly', quiet', and 'safe'. In addition, Mountbellew-Moylough is perceived to be 'nice', 'pleasant', 'pretty', 'clean', 'welcoming', and 'tidy and the community is described as 'caring' and 'helpful'.

Residents also use other affirmative words to describe Mountbellew-Moylough, including vibrant, progressive and thriving, and as subsequent interviews indicated, these descriptors are associated, *inter alia*, with the locality being 'central' – almost equidistant from Athlone and Galway City, which are significant employment nodes.

As is the case with Aghagallon, the wordcloud captures some of the challenges articulated by residents. Some referred to their locality as 'backward', 'struggling', 'dismal', 'stunted' and 'overlooked'.

The word 'potential' was in the top twelve words used to describe Mountbellew-Moylough. Only in Newtownmountkennedy and Sallins did this word emerge with greater relative frequency.

**Kanturk-Banteer: How Residents Describe where they Live**


In concert with Mountbellew-Moylough, Aghagallon and Newtownmountkennedy, and to a lesser extent Ennistymon-Lahinch and Dundrum, the overriding perceptions of Kanturk-Banteer are of a friendly rural community that is 'safe', 'homely', 'clean' and 'peaceful'. Kanturk-Banteer also exhibits some of the connectivity-related descriptors that were used for Mountbellew-Moylough. These words include 'central, 'convenient' and 'accessible'. As confirmed by the interviews, Kanturk has good connectivity to Cork City, by virtue of being 20km from Mallow train station, which has a regular commuter service, as well as hourly inter-city connections to Dublin. Interviewees noted that while Banteer has a train station, the schedule is not suitable for regular commuting to Cork or Killarney / Tralee. The limited bus service to Cork and the absence of any services to other employment nodes (e.g. Millstreet, Killarney and Tralee), as described by interviewees, may account for the emergence (above) of descriptors such as 'isolated' and 'lacking transport'.

When considered in the light of information garnered from interviews, the wordcloud indicates that while Kanturk-Banteer does not have natural amenities on the same scale as some of the other case study locations (e.g. Ennistymon-Lahinch and Dundrum), it is an attractive place, and recent investments in parks and other amenities enhance its beauty and residents' quality of life.

The wordcloud conveys some of the challenges that were also articulated by residents of the other case study locations outside of Leinster, and these are conveyed in words such as 'boring', 'forgotten' and 'underdeveloped'.

**Sallins: How Residents Describe where they Live**


While many of the descriptions of Sallins echo those of the other case study locations, there are some notable differences too. The similarities are evidenced by words such as ''friendly', 'safe', 'small', 'homely' and 'community'. Sallins is also described as 'beautiful' and 'peaceful', although the relative frequency with which these and other similar words are used is less than in the other cases.

The most striking difference between Sallins and the other case study locations is that 'potential' is the word that was used most frequently to describe it. Sallins' potential also featured in subsequent interviews, with interviewees referring to the potential for further growth associated with its rail connectivity to Dublin, the refurbishment of derelict properties in its main street, and the potential for an improved quality of life and attractiveness associated with the development of new green spaces and recreational amenities. Interviewees also spoke about Sallins' proximity to Naas (Kildare's county town).

While the term 'commuter town' was specifically used in the description of Kanturk, Aghagallon and Newtownmountkennedy, this label was used most frequently in respect of Sallins. Over the course of the interviews, some residents referenced their dislike of the term 'commuter town', and some claimed that it diminished their town or village, and suggested it was subordinate to the main commuter destination or simply a place where people slept, used local facilities, but were not as active in the life of the community as were people who worked locally. However, as other responses to our questionnaire indicated, there is little evidence to support such perceptions, as commuters make notable contributions to the economy and community in their places of residence.

### D.5 Assets and Strengths of, and Challenges faced by, the Case Study Settlements

Respondents to the questionnaire were asked to identify their locality's main assets and strengths, as well as the main challenges in terms of its development. The following are among the emblematic quotes relating to natural and social capital as assets / strengths:

- Proximity to natural amenities is a huge plus for me personally. A good number of young families deciding to live here should be good for the future of the area;
- Friendly, variety of people, great natural beauty;
- Natural amenities, beautiful scenery, existing infrastructure
- Great people & community spirit, beautiful natural surroundings;
- Little commuting / good local services / good mix of leisure facilities / positive view of future / new optimism / good mix of skills / nice mix of local and new people;
- The local, natural environment and safe community;
- Location near the coast, community feeling;
- Beautiful walks, friendly eatery, local great pub, good community involved;
- Housing availability. Scenic walks in nearby towns;
- Dundrum is still a small community and in general looks out for one another. Small enough to know and help and look after those in need;
- Natural surroundings are beautiful. Housing, Becoming a sought-after area;
- Amazing facilities for such a small village. Great community spirit that has seen the village being unafraid to think big;
- Cheaper housing;
- Physical landscape, parks are very good. Area is safe. Good sense of community. Fantastic community council in Kanturk; and
- Good natural areas for recreation, strong community spirit, good sporting facilities.

As the following set of emblematic quotes indicates, physical infrastructure, local services, proximity to transport arteries and accessibility (to workplaces and local amenities) also register among the perceived assets and strengths:

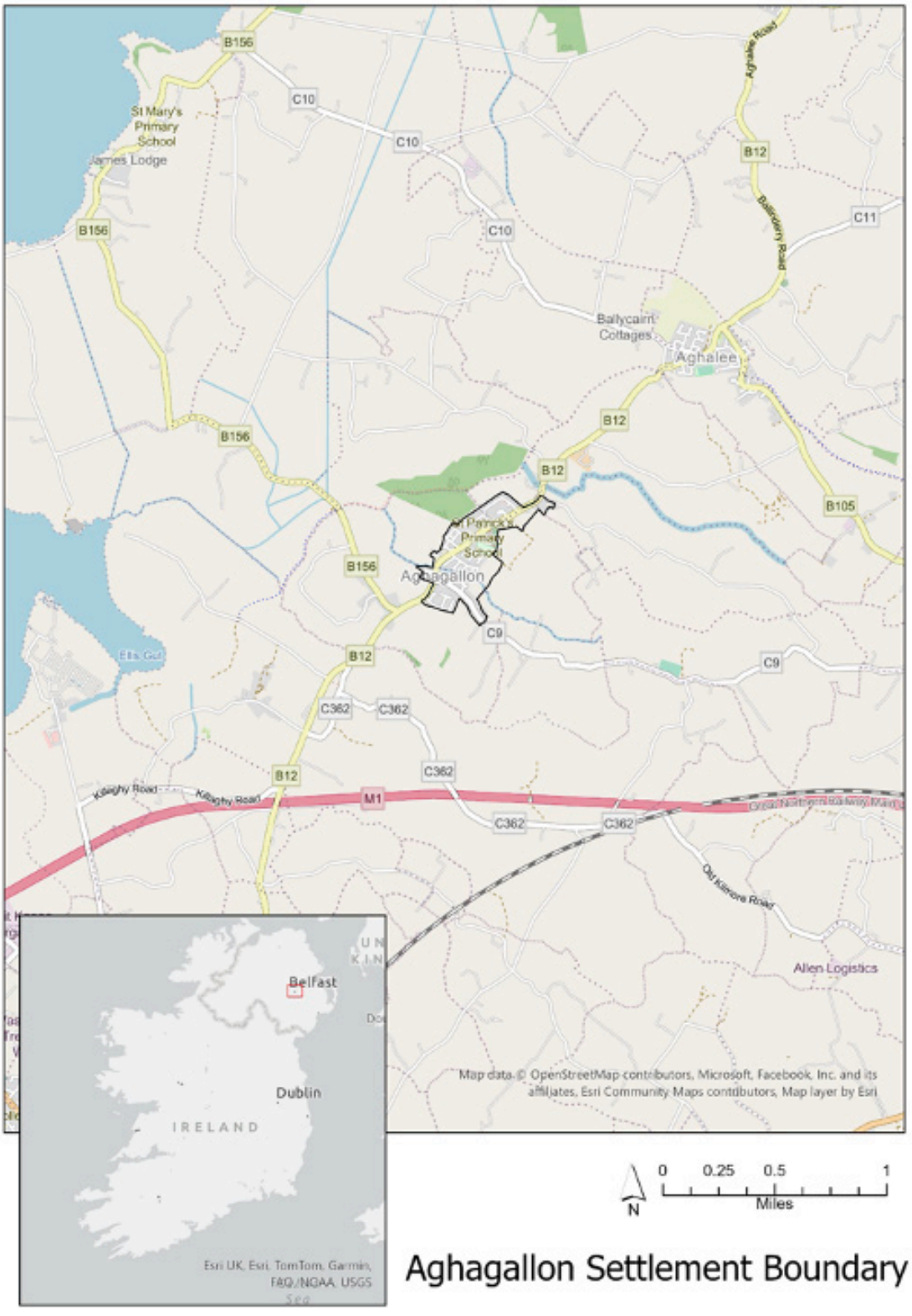
- Rural lifestyle and values with access to services and employment in metropolitan area;
- Its small size while still being close to larger towns and Dublin;
- Proximity to N11, close to many beauty spots;
- Lots of small local businesses. Beautiful forest land. Good bus service. Great location to N11;
- Many key facilities such as a large grocery and ease of access to the N11;
- It is local with a great business community. Excellent access to nature and countryside for recreation and the main road network for business;
- Middle of nowhere but 20mins from everywhere;
- The shops, butchers, bakery, community centre;
- Good sporting facilities. Safe area to live. Central to a number of urban areas;
- Childcare option from 7am to 6.30pm. Within driving distance to Cork, Limerick and Killarney. Has all essential services;
- Centrally located (Athlone, Roscommon, Galway), wonderful forest at town, plenty space for expansion!;
- Canal, walkways, parks, 2cooks, lock13, railway inn, music school, proximity to crèches, community, access to train system; and
- Good sense of community, access to commuter train to Dublin.

The following are among the emblematic quotes regarding challenges:

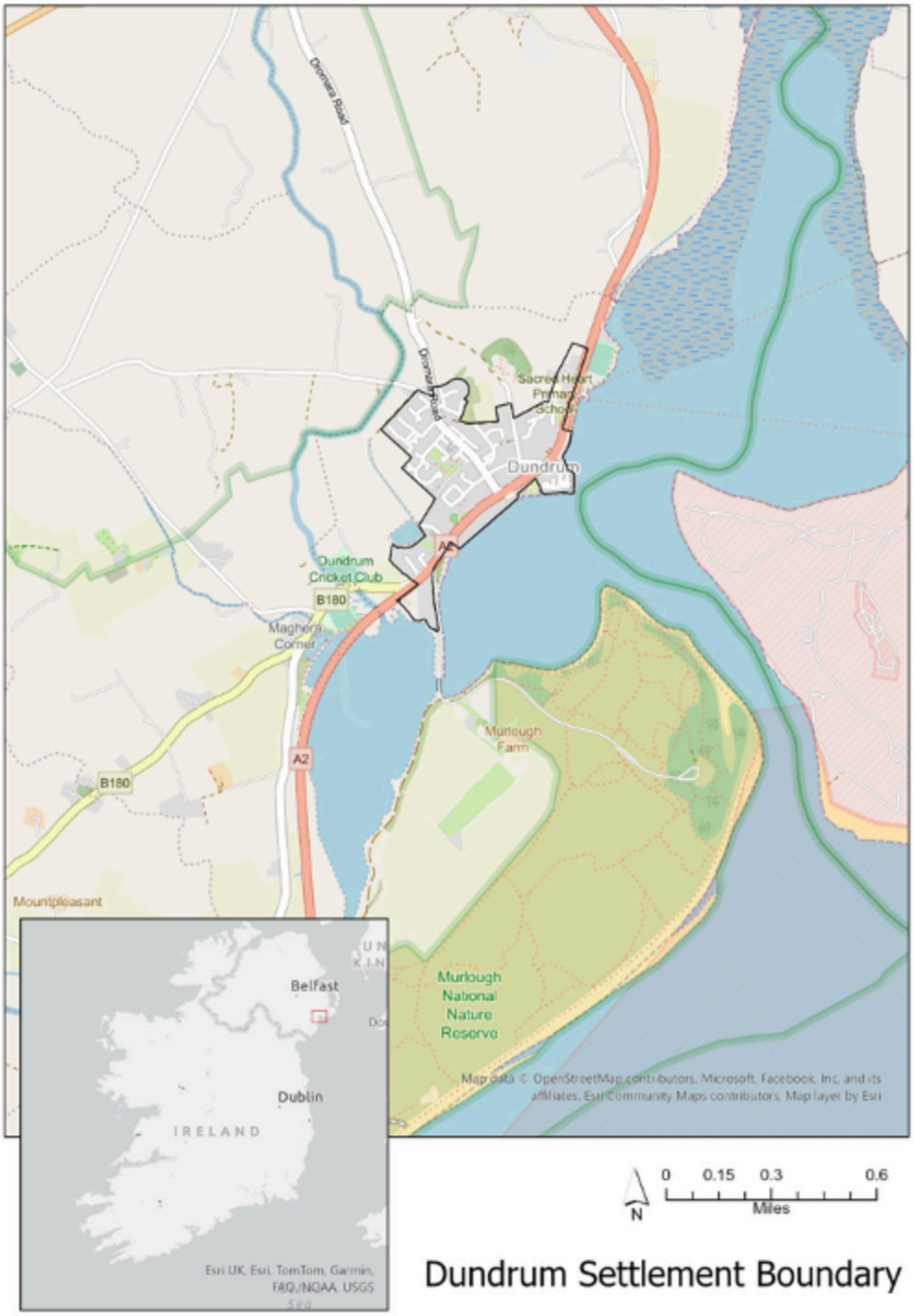
- Lack of commitment to long-term infrastructural improvements including more services for year-round public transport, investment in housing stock and incentives for conserving / refurbishing heritage buildings for use;
- Housing estates popping up all over the town yet zero new infrastructure to support this;

- Making sure there are facilities in place to match the rising population (to remain a town and not just a dormitory suburb);
- Poor internet connection and water connection;
- Too many houses, lack of town centre / square / gathering space. Not enough local / small business support;
- The town is growing so fast, but the amenities remain the same, not many activities for kids and adults, really poor public transport;
- Lack of facilities and public recreational spaces for the growing community. It is a commuter town and traffic to Dublin has gotten so much worse over the years;
- Water and sewerage scheme hinders housing development;
- Traffic and is becoming a problem. Need investment in footpaths and cycle lanes;
- Infrastructure / lack of alternative routes around the town. Employment and housing;
- We need more public transport / better broadband;
- Poor train / bus commute times for people working outside of the locality, poor parking at train station, no safe communal walkway in Dromagh, footpath from church to shop crumbling, brutal mobile network and Wi-Fi, nothing for teenagers outside of GAA;
- Derelict buildings, lack of good broadband which prohibits people working from home, lack of decent job opportunities, all graduates head out of town, this must be addressed; and
- Time and complacency. Many expect that those who are doing this voluntary work will continue doing it, but what will happen when they are too old to do it? High level, professional, local employment is scare and requires many to commute 45-90 minutes to Cork city and suburbs.

# Appendix E: Study Area Boundaries




Aghagallon Settlement Boundary




Dundrum Settlement Boundary


R478
Lahinch Beach
Liscannor
Lahinch
Ennistymon
N67
R481
N85
Tullygarvan
Moybeg
Black Hill
Ballyvaskin
Mooghna Lough
Belfast
Dublin
IRELAND
Esri UK, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS
Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors, Microsoft, Facebook, Inc. and its affiliates, Esri Community Maps contributors, Map layer by Esri
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Kilometers
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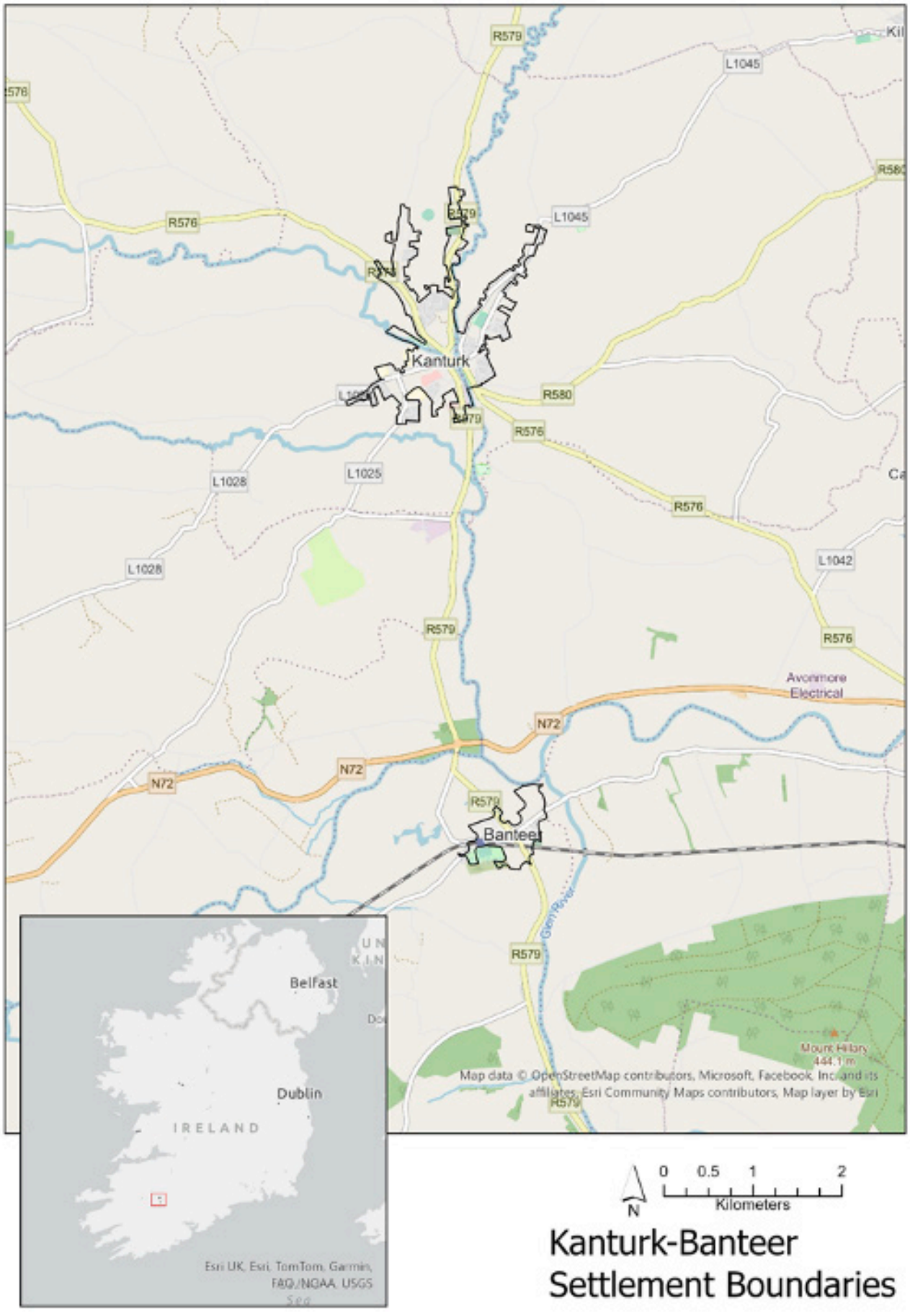
Ennistymon-Lahinch
Settlement Boundaries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L1045
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L1045
Kanturk
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L1042
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R576
Avonmore Electrical
N72
N72
N72
R579
Banteer
R579
Glen River
Mount Hilary 444.1 m
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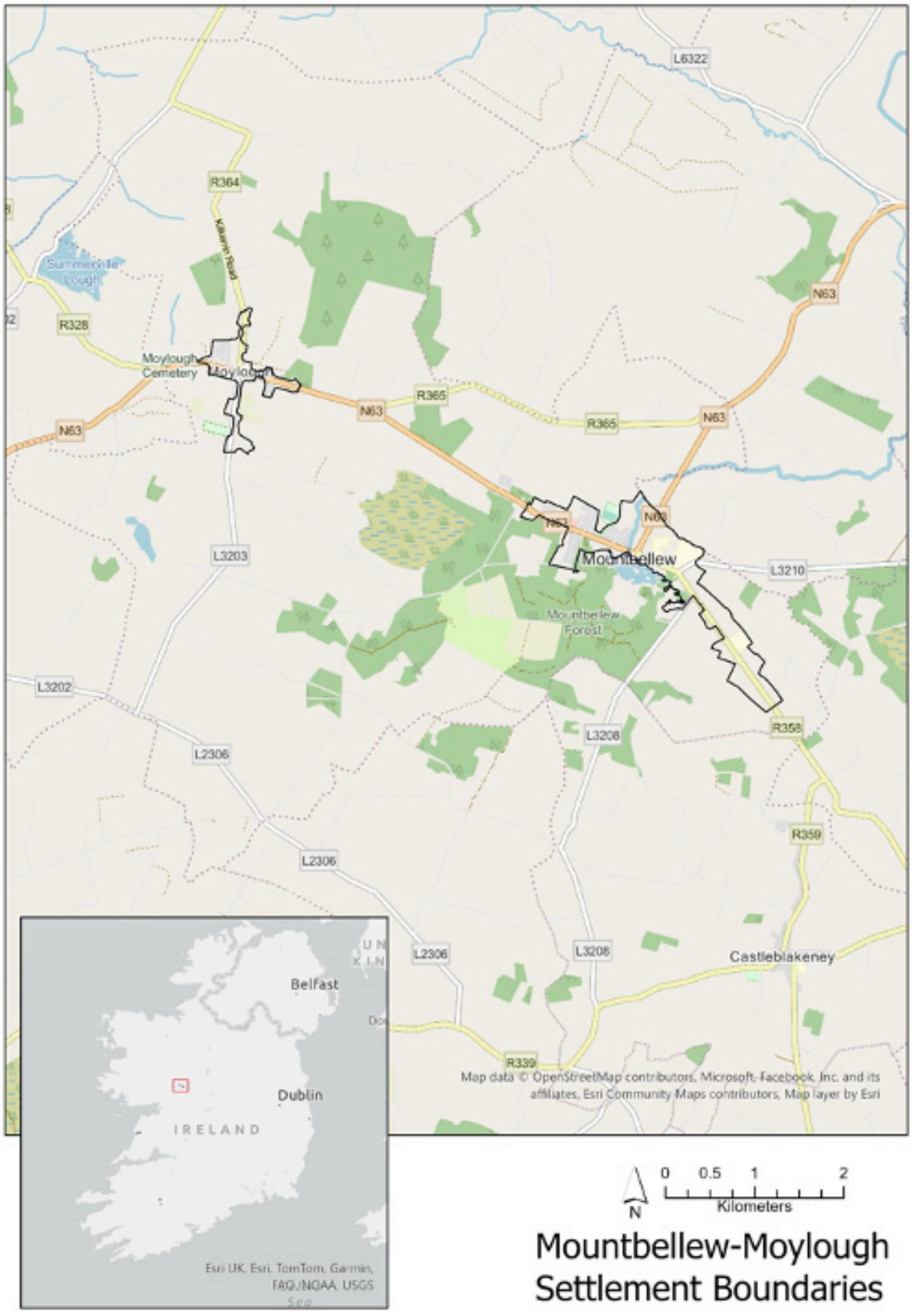
Kilometers
Kanturk-Banteer Settlement Boundaries


L6322
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Summerville Lough
R328
Moylough Cemetery
Moylough
N63
R365
L3203
Mountbellew
L3210
Mountbellew Forest
L3202
L2306
L3208
R358
R359
Castleblakeney
R339
Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors, Microsoft, Facebook, Inc. and its affiliates, Esri Community Maps contributors, Map layer by Esri
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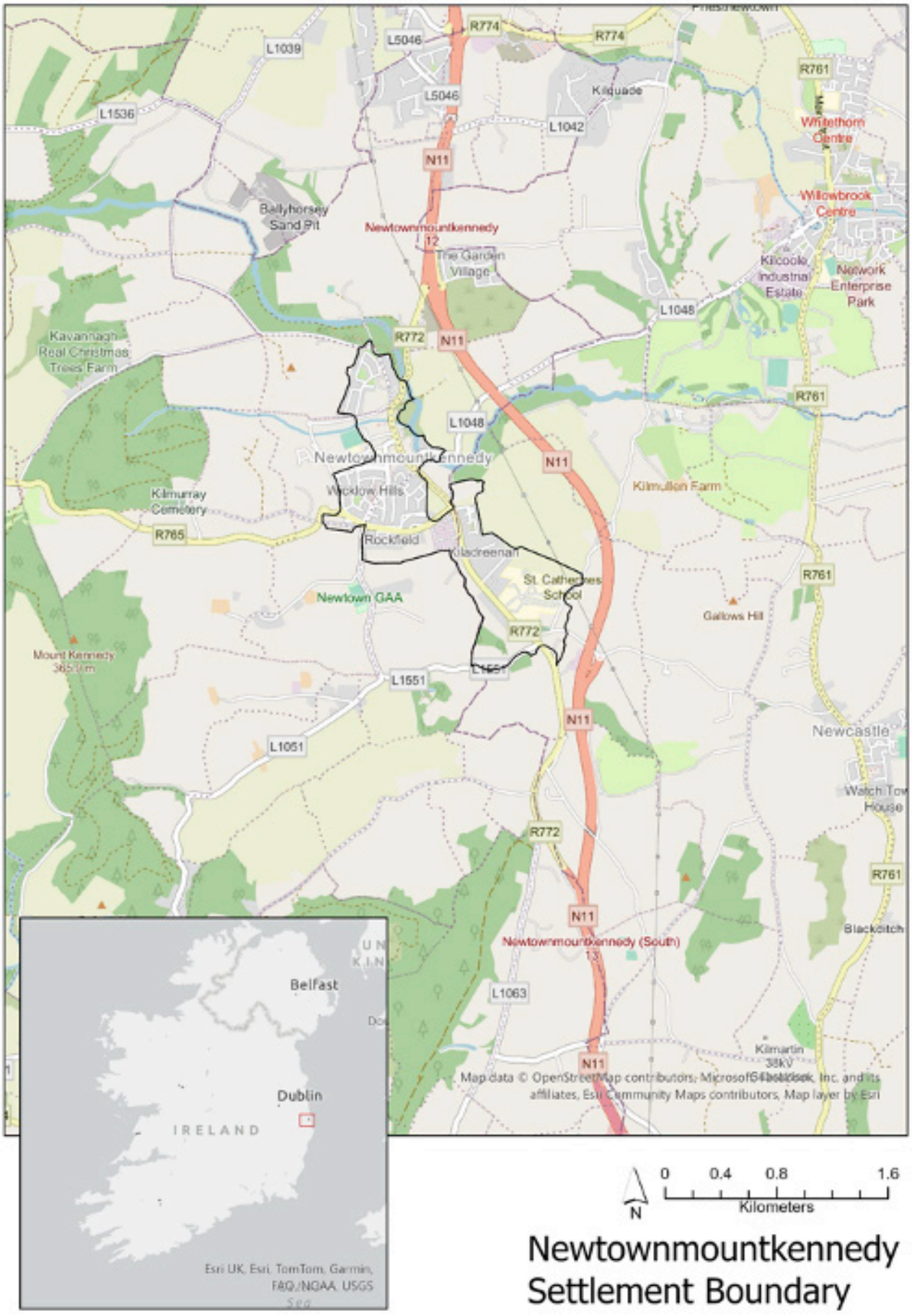
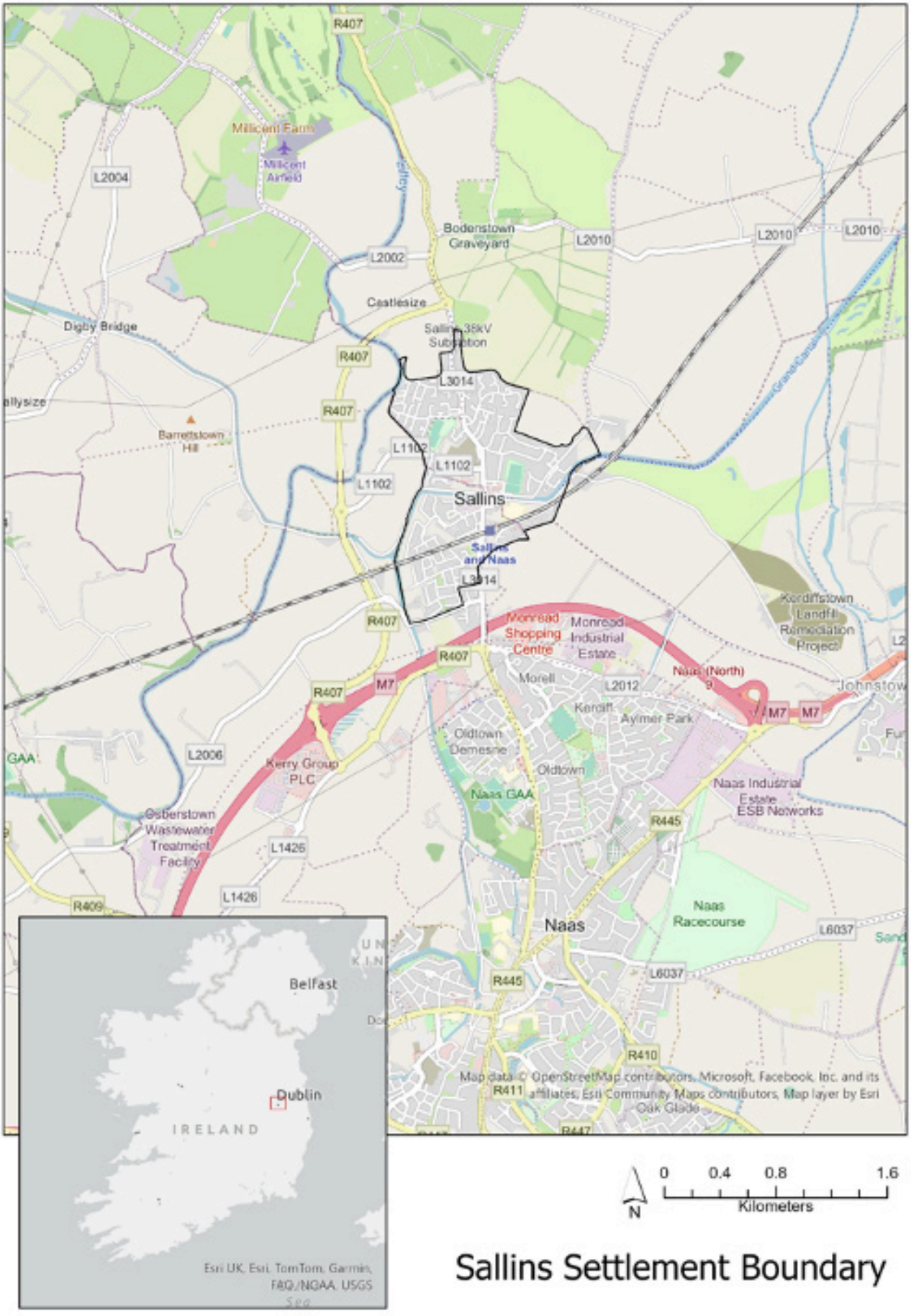
Mountbellew-Moylough Settlement Boundaries




# Newtownmountkennedy Settlement Boundary




Sallins Settlement Boundary

# Appendix F: Public Transport Passenger Volumes, Aghagallon and Dundrum, 2019-2022 (provided by Translink)

This appendix provides a quantitative analysis of data supplied by Translink, Northern Ireland's public transport network, on travel from and to the towns of Aghagallon and Dundrum during the four-year period from 2019 to 2022. The data relate to the month of May (for each of the four years), thereby allowing for longitudinal analysis on the basis of a 'typical' month – outside of summer, Easter and Christmas holiday periods. The four-year timeframe covers the pre-, during and post-COVID periods, thereby allowing for an assessment of the pandemic's impact on travel volumes. The data cover the following variables: number of journeys; the range of ticket types; main destinations; and revenue generated[1]. The data were provided for both Aghagallon and Dundrum, on the basis of persons boarding and alighting from buses in both settlements.

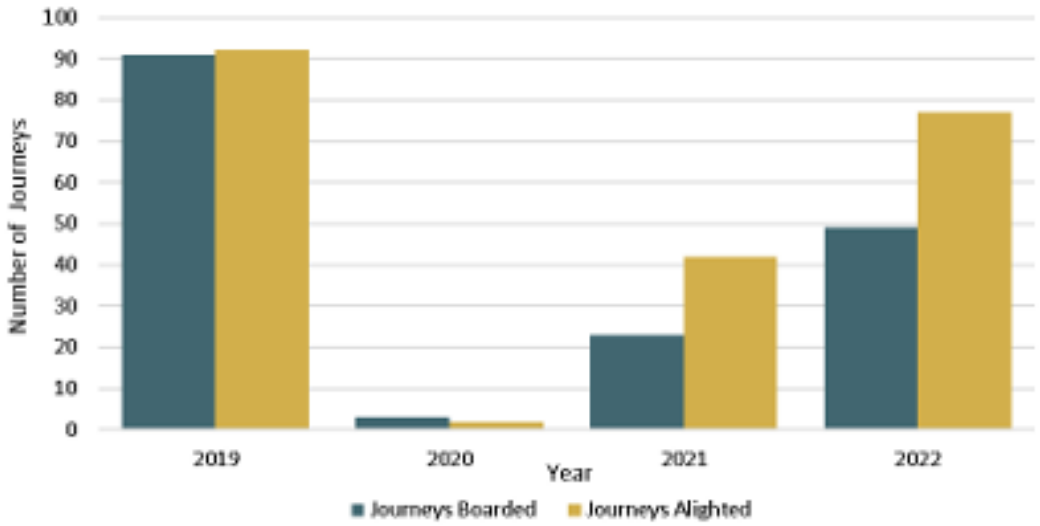
The research team would like to express our sincere gratitude to Translink for this useful contribution to the project. Their readiness to share significant datasets and provide insightful input have greatly enhanced our understanding of passenger flows to and from both Aghagallon and Dundrum.

## F.1 Aghagallon

**Volume of passengers**

The following graph shows the overall volume of journeys made for the month of May, over the course of four years (2019 to 2022), to and from Aghagallon. Journeys are classified as either 'journeys boarded' or 'journeys alighted'.

*Journeys boarded and alighted in Aghagallon by year for the month of May*



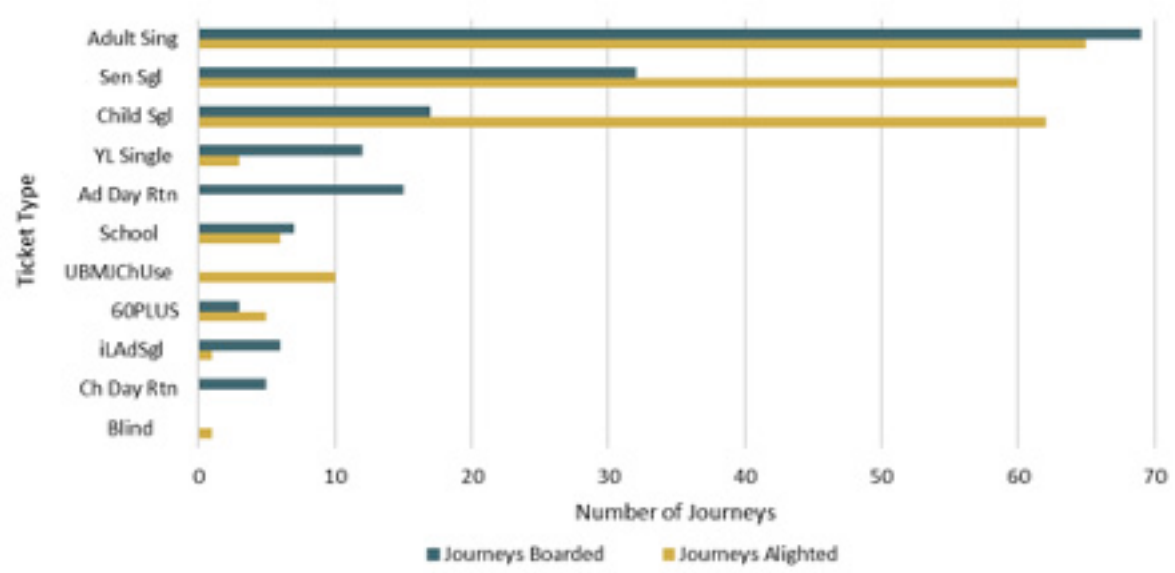

*1 Data on fare revenue were only provided for Aghagallon (not Dundrum).*

As the graph shows, there was a significant reduction in the number of passengers in 2020. This reduction is a direct consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. While there has been an increase in the number of passengers since then, the volume had not returned to pre-pandemic levels by 2022. The graph further illustrates that:

- Pre-pandemic, the number of persons boarding was similar to the number of persons alighting in Aghagallon;
- The total number of persons boarding buses in Aghagallon, in May 2022, was slightly over half (54%) the number who boarded in 2019; and
- There was a stronger post-pandemic recovery in the number of persons alighting in Aghagallon.

The following graph presents the number of tickets (by type) across the four years (2019 to 2022) for both journeys boarded and alighted. It shows that the modal ticket type is 'adult single', which accounted for 42% of all ticket types. The second-most commonly purchased ticket is 'senior single' (20% of sales). In respect of persons boarding the bus in Aghagallon, adult single tickets account for over half of the tickets purchased. However, a different profile of ticket types pertains for those alighting at Aghagallon with 'child single' and 'senior single' tickets being purchased almost as frequently as 'adult single' tickets.

*Number of journeys boarded and alighted in Aghagallon, by ticket type, for the month of May, 2019-2022*[2]

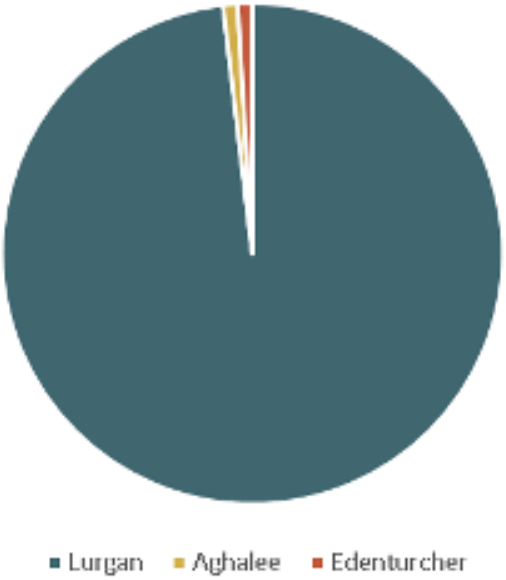



**Passengers' Destinations and Origins**

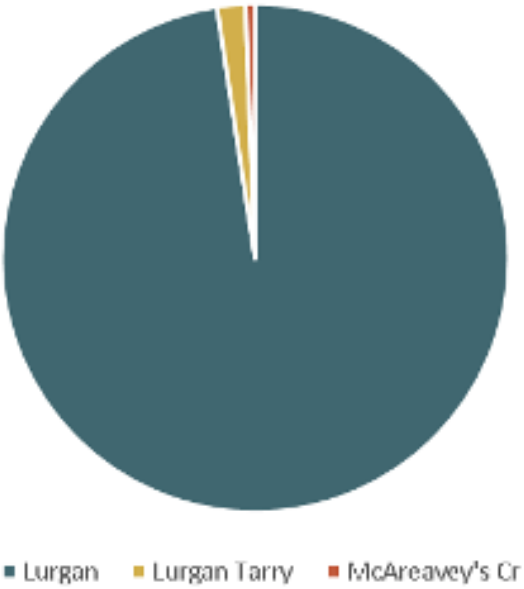
Lurgan is the most frequent destination and origin among those travelling from / to Aghagallon, as represented in the graphs below. Lurgan was the destination for 209 of the 213 journeys. Aghalee and Edenturcher accounted for two alighting stages each. A similar picture pertains in respect of the number of persons who alighted in Aghagallon; the vast majority of those alighting in Aghagallon boarded the bus in Lurgan. For presentation purposes, Lurgan Tarry is shown as a separate boarding stage, which accounts for two journeys. McAreavey's Cross and Tarry Lane both account for a single journey each.

*2 Page 238 of this report provides details of the ticket types. It gives the full names of each ticket type.*

*Proportion of passengers, by alighting stage, who boarded in Aghagallon for the month of May (2019-2022)*




*Proportion of passengers, by boarding stage, who alighted in Aghagallon for the month of May (2019-2022)*



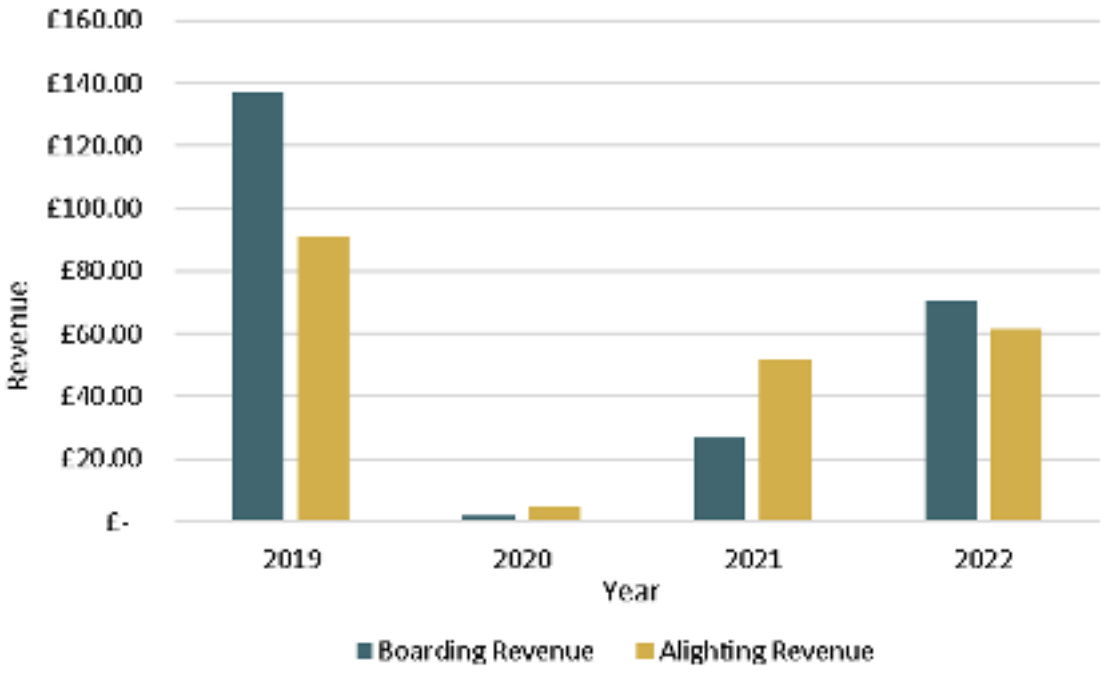

The following map shows the location of Aghagallon and the main origins and destinations of those travelling to and from there by bus.

*Locations of boarding and alighting stages for Aghagallon*


**Fare Revenue**

The patterns in respect of fare revenue reflect those that pertain in respect of the volume of passengers: fare revenue was heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and while it recovered year-on-year after 2020, it had not recovered to pre-pandemic levels by 2022. In both of the low-revenue years, 2020 and 2021 revenue from passengers alighting at Aghagallon was greater than the revenue generated by passengers boarding. However, across the period as a whole revenue generated for boarding was greater than alighting. Data for the fare revenue by ticket type show that the modal ticket type (adult single) generated over half of all revenue from boarding journeys and almost two-thirds of revenue from those alighting.

*Aghagallon passenger journeys - revenue by year for the month of May*

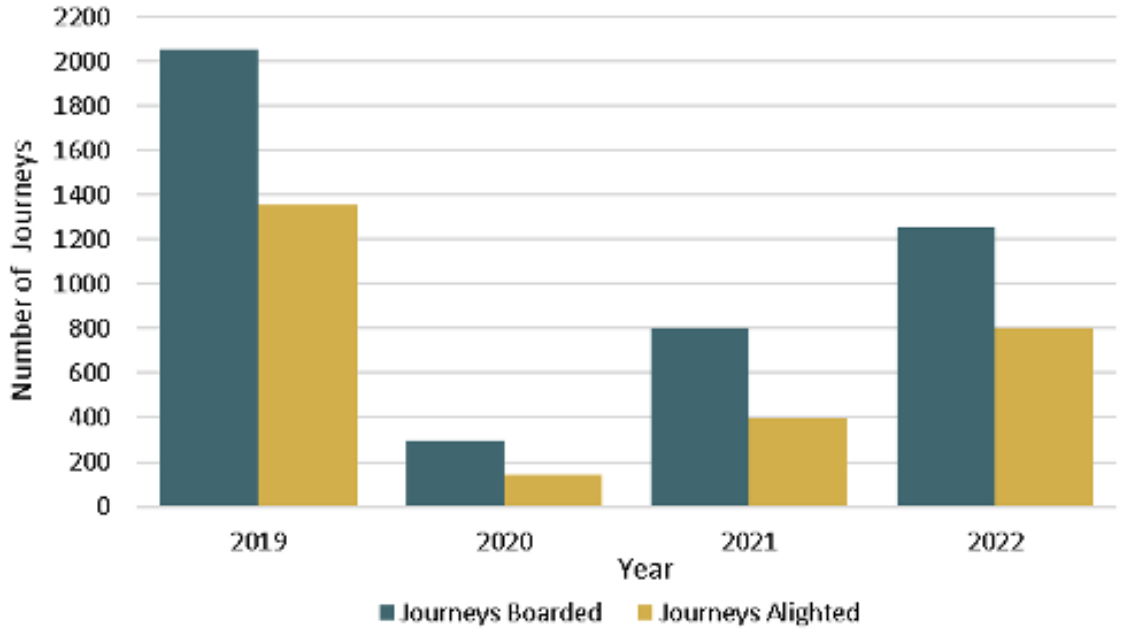


### F.2 Dundrum

The following pages present data on bus journeys to and from Dundrum, over the period 2019-2022. With the exception of data on fares (not provided), the variables and format are the same as those that were applied in the case of Aghagallon.

**Volume of passengers**
The following graph shows the overall volume of journeys made from ('journeys boarded') and to ('journeys alighted') Dundrum, over the course of the four years 2019 to 2022.

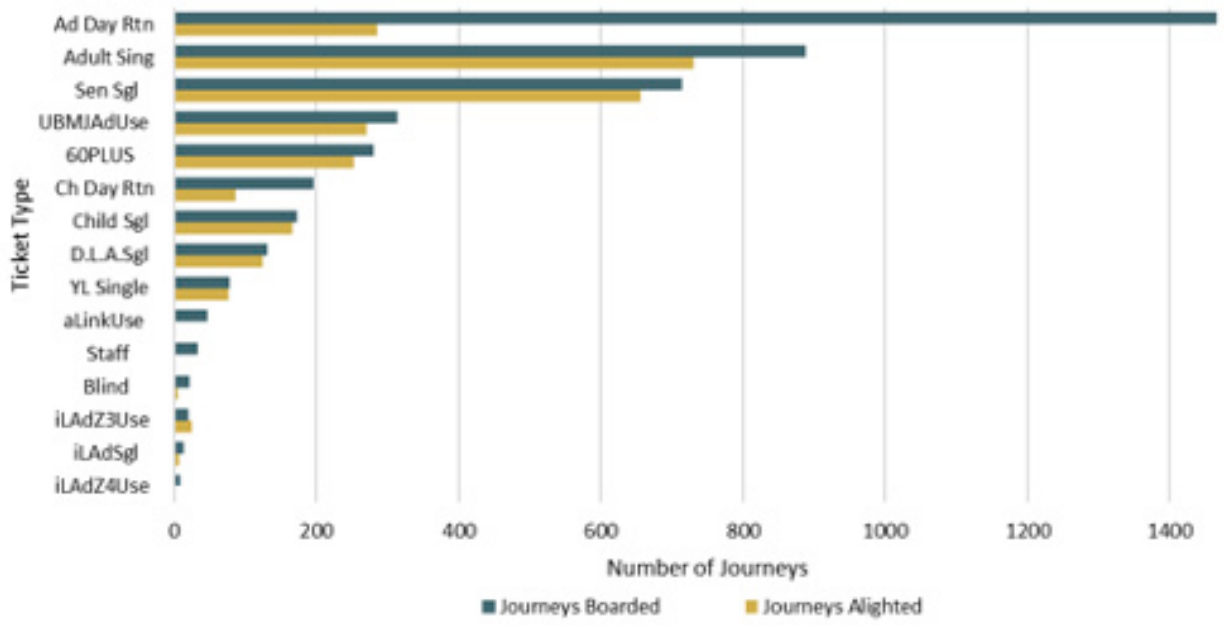
*Journeys boarded and alighted in Dundrum by year for the month of May*




It is noticeable that the volume of journeys both outward and inward is significantly greater in Dundrum than in Aghagallon. As the graph shows, the number of persons boarding buses in Dundrum consistently exceeded the number of persons alighting: across the period as a whole, for every person who alighted from a bus in Dundrum, 1.63 persons boarded one. As in Aghagallon, the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on passenger numbers, with a decline of eighty-six percent (from 2,055 to 295) in the number of passengers boarding the bus in Dundrum between 2019 and 2020. There has been a year-on-year recovery in the volume of passengers since 2020 (lowest number), but values had not returned to pre-pandemic levels by 2022. Thus, while the number of persons boarding increased by a factor of 3.25 between 2020 and 2022, the May 2022 figure was still just sixty-one percent of the number who boarded in 2019.

The following graph presents the number of tickets (by type) across the four years (2019 to 2022) for both journeys boarded and alighted. For all journeys (outward and inward combined), adult day return tickets were the most popular (modal) ticket type purchased; they accounted for almost a quarter (24.8%) of sales. Adult single tickets accounted for a further twenty-three percent of sales. Among those who boarded the bus in Dundrum, one-third purchased an adult return ticket, twenty percent purchased adult single tickets, and sixteen percent purchased senior single tickets. For passengers alighting from a bus in Dundrum, the percentages with these ticket types were respectively eleven percent (adult return), twenty-seven percent (adult single) and twenty-four percent (senior single).

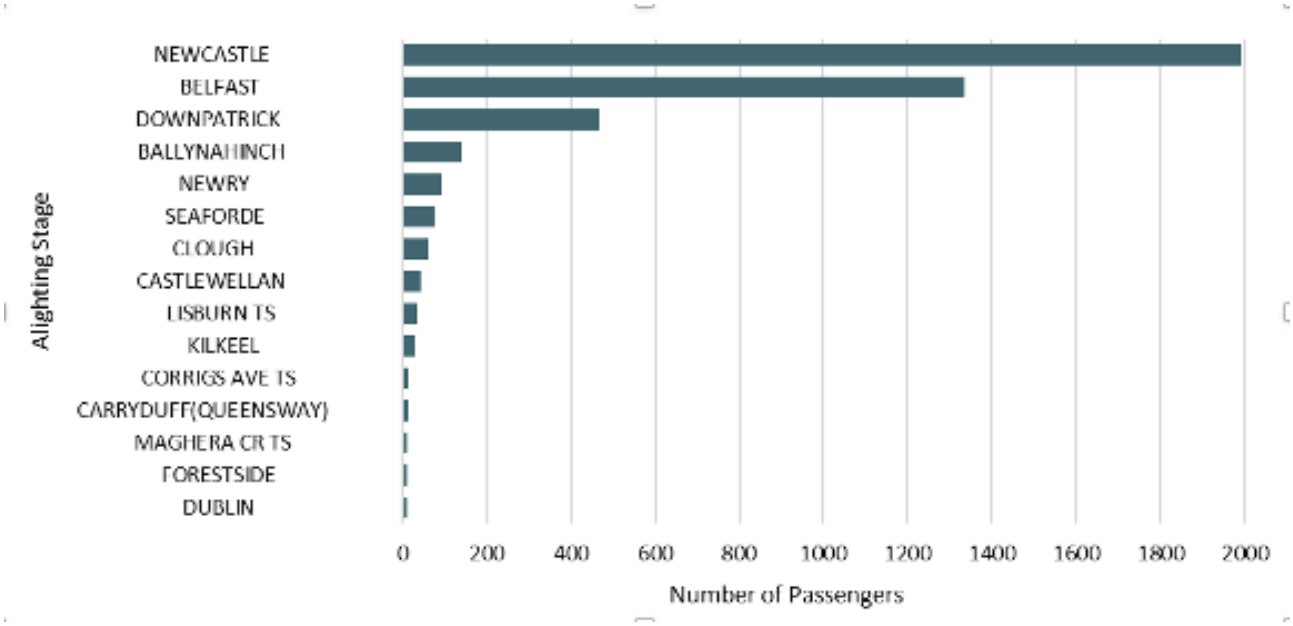
*Number of journeys boarded and alighted in Dundrum, by ticket type, for the month of May 2019-2022*




**Passengers' Destinations and Origins**

Newcastle and Belfast are the most popular destinations and origins among passengers travelling from / to Dundrum. The following graphs and tables quantify the number of passengers by destinations and origins.

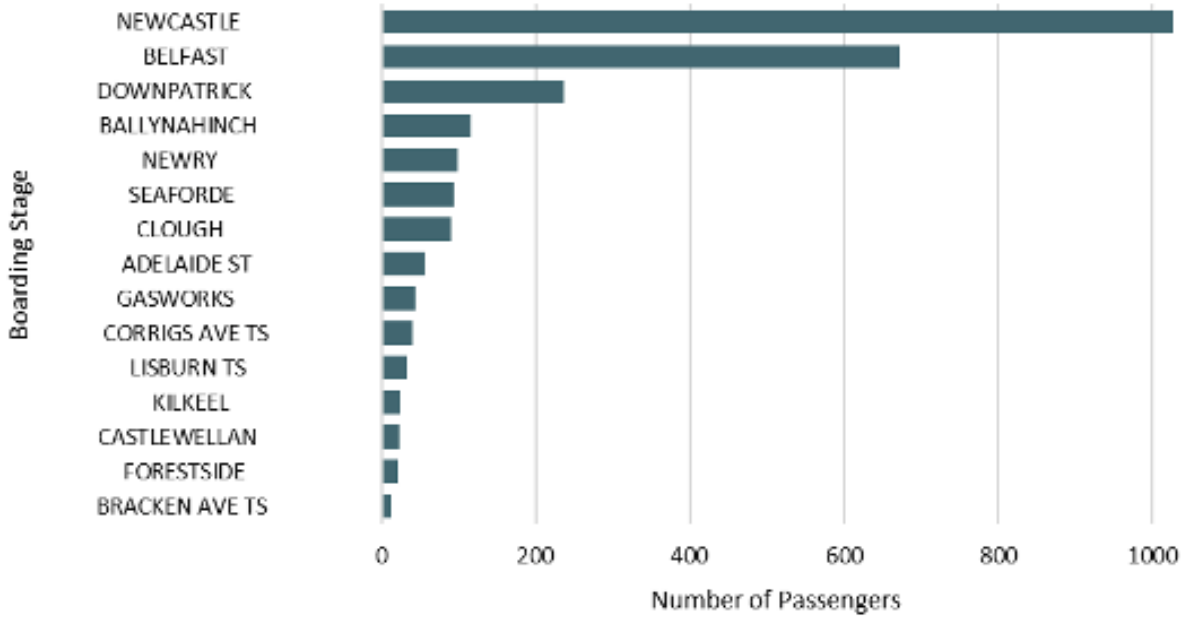
*Number of passengers boarded at Dundrum by the fifteen most frequent alighting stages, for the month of May 2019-2022*



*Alighting stages by number of passengers boarded at Dundrum by year for month of May*

| Alighting Stage | Distance in km | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2022 value as % of 2019 | Total Passengers | % of total passengers by aligthing stage |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| NEWCASTLE | 6.20 | 770 | 182 | 417 | 622 | 81% | 1,997 | 45.28% |
| BELFAST | 46.70 | 791 | 38 | 188 | 318 | 40% | 1,382 | 31.32% |
| DOWNPATRICK | 13.70 | 209 | 31 | 78 | 149 | 71% | 481 | 10.90% |
| BALLYNAHINCH | 18.50 | 85 | 19 | 19 | 18 | 21% | 160 | 3.62% |
| NEWRY | 37.50 | 45 | 10 | 26 | 14 | 31% | 133 | 3.00% |
| SEAFORDE(TEL KIOSK) | 5.80 | 24 | 6 | 11 | 22 | 92% | 69 | 1.56% |
| CLOUGH | 4.00 | 25 | 0 | 14 | 23 | 92% | 66 | 1.50% |
| CASTLEWELLAN | 8.30 | 34 | 0 | 6 | 3 | 9% | 51 | 1.16% |
| LISBURN TS | 36.50 | 15 | 5 | 10 | 6 | 40% | 73 | 1.64% |
| KILKEEL | 27.70 | 16 | 0 | 5 | 8 | 50% | 57 | 1.29% |
| CARRYDUFF(QUEENSWAY) | 31.20 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 15 | 1500% | 46 | 1.05% |
| CORRIGS AVE TS | 5.20 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 100% | 20 | 0.46% |
| MAGHERA CR TS | 111.00 | 3 | 0 | 7 | 2 | 67% | 123 | 2.79% |
| SEAFORDE | 5.80 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 11 | 1100% | 18 | 0.40% |
| DUBLIN | 149.00 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 80% | 159 | 3.60% |
| FORESTSIDE | 37.40 | 4 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 100% | 47 | 1.07% |
| HALFWAY HOUSE,ANNALONG | 18.30 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 3 | 300% | 26 | 0.60% |
| RATHFRILAND | 23.70 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 100% | 32 | 0.72% |
| M'VIEW CAR CAMP ENT TS | 3.70 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 150% | 9 | 0.20% |
| TWELVE ARCHES TS | 2.90 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 100% | 7 | 0.16% |
| **Total** | **n/a** | **2,055** | **295** | **805** | **1,256** | **61%** | **4,411** | |

*Number of passengers alighting at Dundrum by the fifteen most frequent boarding stages, for the month of May 2019-2022*



*Boarding stages by number of passengers alighted at Dundrum by year for month of May*

| Boarding Stage | Distance in km | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2022 value as % of 2019 | Total Passengers | % of total passengers by boarding stage |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| NEWCASTLE | 6.20 | 424 | 75 | 172 | 357 | 84% | 1,034 | 38.33% |
| BELFAST | 46.70 | 424 | 18 | 46 | 178 | 42% | 713 | 26.42% |
| DOWNPATRICK | 13.70 | 109 | 30 | 46 | 52 | 48% | 251 | 9.29% |
| BALLYNAHINCH | 18.50 | 83 | 4 | 13 | 16 | 19% | 135 | 4.99% |
| NEWRY | 37.50 | 56 | 0 | 24 | 19 | 34% | 137 | 5.06% |
| CLOUGH | 4.00 | 20 | 1 | 25 | 44 | 220% | 94 | 3.48% |
| SEAFORDE(TEL KIOSK) | 5.80 | 34 | 1 | 7 | 30 | 88% | 78 | 2.88% |
| ADELAIDE ST | 45 | 34 | 0 | 11 | 11 | 32% | 101 | 3.73% |
| GASWORKS | 40 | 10 | 6 | 10 | 17 | 170% | 83 | 3.09% |
| CORRIGS AVE TS | 5.20 | 30 | 1 | 2 | 8 | 27% | 46 | 1.71% |
| LISBURN TS | 36.50 | 32 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3% | 71 | 2.61% |
| KILKEEL | 27.70 | 11 | 2 | 1 | 10 | 91% | 52 | 1.92% |
| CASTLEWELLAN | 8.30 | 9 | 0 | 5 | 9 | 100% | 31 | 1.16% |
| FORESTSIDE | 37.40 | 10 | 0 | 4 | 8 | 80% | 59 | 2.20% |
| SEAFORDE | 5.80 | 12 | 0 | 6 | 4 | 33% | 28 | 1.03% |
| BRACKEN AVE TS | 7 | 7 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 14% | 20 | 0.73% |
| CURRIE'S CR(DRUMANESS RD) TS | 15 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 38% | 26 | 0.95% |
| CARRYDUFF(QUEENSWAY) | 31.20 | 8 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0% | 40 | 1.49% |
| HALFWAY HOUSE,ANNALONG | 18.30 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 60% | 26 | 0.97% |
| BELFAST GAS WORKS | 40 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 17% | 47 | 1.76% |
| **Total** | **n/a** | **1,357** | **141** | **399** | **801** | **59%** | **2,698** | |

The following map shows the location of Dundrum and the main origins and destinations of those travelling to and from there by bus.

*Locations of main boarding and alighting stages for Dundrum*

*Ticket type descriptions*

| Ticket Types | Long Description |
|---|---|
| 60PLUS | 60 plus Smartpass |
| Ad CB Rtn | Adult Cross Border Return |
| Ad CB Sgl | Adult Cross Border Single |
| Ad Day Rtn | Adult Day Return |
| AdUBMJUp | Ulsterbus MJ Adult Update |
| Adult Sing | Adult Single |
| aLinkUse | aLink Use |
| Annul | Annul |
| Blind | Blind Pass |
| Ch Day Rtn | Child Day Return |
| ChDPUse | Child Dependant Pass Use |
| Child Sgl | Child Single |
| ChngeRecpt | Change Receipt |
| D.L.A.Sgl | Disability Living Allowance |
| Excess | Excess |
| FaultyCard | Faulty Card |
| iLAdSgl | iLink Adult Single |
| iLAdZ2DUp | iLink Adult Zone 2 Day Update |
| iLAdZ3DUp | iLink Adult Zone 3 Day Update |
| iLAdZ3Use | iLink Adult Zone 3 Use |
| iLAdZ4DUp | iLink Adult Zone 4 Day Update |
| iLAdZ4Use | iLink Adult Zone 3 Use |
| iLChSgl | iLink Child Single |
| Jobseeker | Jobseeker Single |
| LearnDisSg | Learning Disability Single |
| PIPS Sgl | PIPS Single |
| ROISenSgl | ROI Senior Single |
| School | School Pass |
| Sen Sgl | Senior Single |
| Staff | Staff Pass |
| Staff Ptn | Staff Partner Pass |
| Tranfr Pch | Transfer Punch |
| UBMJAdUse | UBMJ Adult Use |
| UBMJChUse | UBMJ Child Use |
| YL Single | yLink Single |

# Appendix G: Policy Measures to Reduce and / or Ameliorate Commuting

### G1. Initiatives to reduce car-based commuting

In Ireland and Northern Ireland, as is the case across Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, public authorities have promoted various incentives and initiatives to reduce long-distance commuting and / or to ameliorate its affects. Such projects have met with varying levels of success, but they are increasingly prevalent in policy and practice at national, regional and local / municipal levels. Most initiatives have tended to focus on transportation, and in particular, on reducing the number of single-occupancy car journeys. Policy makers have been motivated and driven by a desire to reduce the economic and environmental costs associated with car-based commuting, and they have sought to encourage modal shifts in commuter behaviour; they used a mix of carrot and stick approaches to encourage commuters to 'leave the car behind' and to use public transport and / or active modes of transportation. Over recent years, and particularly since the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic, public authorities have also sought to encourage and enable remote / hybrid working.

In December 2021, Ireland's Department of Transport published a new transport investment framework to shape, guide and govern transport policy, decision-making and investments in Ireland. The *National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland* (NIFTI) sets out clear principles in respect of future transport investment, and it is closely aligned with government policy priorities and commitments, including the *Climate Action Plan* and the *National Development Plan.* The NIFTI notes that transport investment is a significant driver of population and settlement patterns. It sets out four strategic investment priorities to address the transport challenges ahead, namely decarbonisation, protection and renewal, mobility of people and goods in urban areas, and enhanced regional and rural connectivity. While NIFTI has become an important tool in data capture and decision-making, investment decisions continue to reflect the 2:1 ratio of expenditure between new public transport infrastructure and new roads, as provided for in the *Programme for Government (2020-2025)*, as well as the guaranteed €360m per annum in investment in active travel (Government of Ireland, 2020)

The drivers that are cited in the NIFITI are also evident in the transport policy shifts in other jurisdictions. In Wales, for example, the (Welsh) government announced, in 2023, that no new road-building projects would be undertaken, and some road-building projects that were in the pipeline have either been amended or shelved. Speaking to the press[4], Lee Waters, the deputy climate change minister in the Labour-led Welsh government, described the decisions as "groundbreaking" and green campaigners characterised the administration's approach as "world-leading". "We will not get to net zero unless we stop doing the same thing over and over," he said. The Welsh Government declared that it is diverting its resources from roads to investments in rail, bus, walking and cycling projects.

*4 See Welsh Government press statement,14 February 2023.*

### G2. Commuting by public transport

Some public authorities, at all spatial tiers, have sought to reduce and / or abolish public transport fares, in order to incentivise greater uptake of public transport among commuters. Luxembourg was the first county in the world to introduce free public transport for all residents. In 2020, the Government of Luxembourg declared it wanted to reduce the country's level of car ownership (696 vehicles per 1,000 people, compared with the EU norm of 560) and the number of single-person commutes by car. While this policy move has had positive outcomes, in terms of a modal shift among commuters, these are limited, as the scheme applies only to residents of Luxembourg. It does not extend to the many cross-border workers, who travel (mainly by car) from Belgium, France and Germany to work in Luxembourg each day. Cross-border workers account for almost half of Luxembourg's workforce. Notwithstanding this limitation, the Government of Luxembourg remains committed to the scheme and points out that it has alerted the country's residents to the link between personal behaviour and environmental outcomes.

Other national governments have sought to follow the example set by Luxembourg, but few offer anything as comprehensive. Since October 2022, public transport in Malta has been fare free for all residents. Romania has made public transportation including buses, subways and inter-country trains free for all pre-university students, while university students receive a 50% discount on domestic train travel. In the Netherlands, students with Dutch citizenship get free public transportation country-wide in trains, trams, buses and metros. In all Spanish regions, since December 2022, all multi-trip train journeys on commuter services and medium-distance routes (less than 300 kilometres) are free of charge, for full-time residents.

The Government of Estonia has declared that the country is on a transition to free public transport. Public transport is a municipal level competency, and local authorities are entitled to make public transport free. Between 2018 and 2024, eleven of Estonia's county councils decided that public bus transportation would be free. Public transport in Estonia's capital, Tallinn, has been free to local residents since 2013. These measures have proven costly, in financial terms, and while some local authorities have rowed back on their earlier commitments, all continue to make public transport free for those aged up to 19 years of age and those aged 63 and over.

Regional and local / municipal authorities have also taken steps to incentivise public transport use, and over fifty cities across the EU now offer free public transport for residents. In 2023, Montpellier became the largest French metropolis to boast such a scheme. Local residents can now utilise a free transport pass across the city's bus and tram network. In a tweet to coincide with the scheme's launch the mayor of Montpellier, Michaël Delafosse declared, "by introducing free transport, we are bold in taking a great measure of social justice, of progress, which works for the ecological transition."[5] Montpellier had been experimenting with free transport on weekends since September 2020, and in 2021, it extended this to weekdays for under-18s and over-65s. The further extension of the scheme, in 2023, is part of the city's €150 million push for zero carbon mobility, which also includes investment in cycle lanes and the creation of a low emissions zone.

The rollout of fare-free public transport, in France, is associated with decentralisation and the transfer of many transport-related competencies from central to local government. Evaluations are currently underway to document the effectiveness of these moves in respect of reducing car-based commuting, but municipal authorities' figures reveal significant increases in the number of people travelling by public transport, albeit mainly within metropolitan zones, rather than among rural to urban commuters. In the City of Dunkirk (pop. 200,000), for example, passenger numbers on the city buses increased by 85% between 2018 and 2024.

France has also pioneered some initiatives to encourage rural-, peri-urban- and suburban-to-urban commuters to make the shift from the private car to public transport. These include, inter alia, Tarif Unique - a flat fare system that allows commuters to travel across a region using

*5 Interview with Euronews, 21 December 2023.*

a single ticket, regardless of the distance or number of transfers; subsidised public transport passes for low-income groups; Mobility as a Service (MaaS) Platforms – giving real-time information on public transport, bike-sharing and car-pooling services; and the Forfait Mobilités Durables (Sustainable Mobility Package), whereby French employers can offer up to €500 per year to employees who commute by public transport or other sustainable means. Germany introduced a similar measure between June and August 2023 - with a discounted nationwide public transport pass. This gives travellers unlimited use of local and regional services for just €9 a month.

### G3. Active Travel – walking and cycling to work

Almost all OECD countries have cycle / bike to work schemes in place. In Northern Ireland, for example, the NI Cycle to Work Scheme provides a tax-break which enables employers, through a salary sacrifice arrangement, to provide bicycles for their employees to cycle all or part of their journey to work. The cost is recovered from the employee's salary over an agreed period, usually 12 to 18 months. At the end of the period, the employee can return the bicycle or can arrange to buy it outright from the employer. A similar scheme operates in Ireland; whereby employers can buy a bicycle and safety equipment for any employee, and this benefit will not be taxable. There are three limits, depending on the type of bicycle purchased: €3,000 on cargo and ecargo bikes; €1,500 on pedelecs and ebikes; and €1,250 for other bikes. The purchase can be made in any bicycle shop. For civil or public servants, the cycle shop must be on a list of registered suppliers. Employer participation in the scheme is voluntary. A review of the Cycle to Work scheme, which was published by the Department of Transport, in 2021, noted that while there has been an increase in the number of commuters who cycle, there is insufficient data to quantify the scheme's outputs or the extent to which it has contributed to the attainment of public policy objectives.

Local authorities are making investments to promote uptake of public transport as well as green and active travel. In 2023, the Municipality of Bergen (Norway) opened the world's longest purpose-built pedestrian and bicycle tunnel. This 2.9km tunnel is for the exclusive use of pedestrians and push cyclists, and journey times, on foot, take an average of 30 to 45 minutes. Known as the Fyllingsdalstunnelen, the tunnel cuts through the Løvstakken Mountain, and it cuts the travel distance, for walkers and cyclists to about 35% of the overland route. Both portals are connected to cycle lanes, so that cyclists can continue their journeys to work / home by bike.

The Government of the Netherlands offers a travel allowance to those who commute by bicycle. Cyclists benefit to the tune of €0.19 per kilometre, as the government allows them to deduct from their tax bill in proportion to their length of their journeys by bike. This allowance was previously only available to drivers, who could claim it to cover the cost of fuel. It was expanded to cyclists in 2007 - and since bikes don't require fuel, cyclists can simply pocket the money. A commuter cycling 10 kilometres per day, five days a week, could earn about €450 a year from the scheme.

Belgium offers a similar scheme to the Netherlands, with commuters able to claim €0.24 per cycled kilometre. It is widely adopted - according to the Brussels Times; one in five employees of small and medium-sized Belgian enterprises received a bicycle allowance in the first half of 2022. French commuters can claim up to €0.25 per kilometre they cycle to work, up to a yearly cap of around €200.

### G4. Regional and local authority initiatives

**Pendelfonds,** or Commuter Fund, is a programme established by Regional Authorities in Flanders (Belgium) to encourage commuters to use public transportation and active modes of travel. The following table outlines how Pendelfonds operates in practice.

*Pendelfond's Main Features and Operating Mode*

| Main Features | Operations |
|---|---|
| Funding Support | Provides financial assistance to employers / companies / firms (public, private and NGO), who develop and implement projects that encourage sustainable commuting.<br>Covers up to 50% of the project costs, with a maximum subsidy that varies based on the specific call for projects. |
| Eligible Projects | Initiatives that reduce car usage for commuting, such as promoting cycling, walking, carpooling, or the use of public transport.<br>Infrastructure improvements, such as the creation of bicycle parking facilities or the installation of showers and changing rooms for cyclists. |
| Application Process | Periodic calls for project proposals where employers can apply for funding. Projects are evaluated based on their potential impact on reducing car use, innovation, and feasibility. |

According to Regional Government evaluations, the following are among Pendelfond's achievements:

| Achievement | Evidence of outputs and impacts |
|---|---|
| Reduction in Car Use | Encouraged a significant reduction in single-occupancy car commutes, helping to alleviate traffic congestion and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. |
| Increased Use of Greener Transport Options | Boosted the adoption of cycling, walking, and public transport among employees.<br>Improved infrastructure has made it easier and more attractive for employees to choose greener transport options. |
| Environmental Benefits | Contributed to lower carbon emissions and improved air quality in urban areas.<br>Supported regional and national goals for reducing environmental impact and promoting sustainability. |
| Enhanced Employee Well-being | Periodic calls for project proposals where employers can apply for funding. Projects are evaluated based on their potential impact on reducing car use, innovation, and feasibility. |
| Cost Savings | Lowered commuting costs for employees, offering them financial savings.<br>Potentially reduced the need for extensive parking facilities, saving space and costs for employers. |
| Promotion of Innovation | Encouraged innovative approaches to commuting and mobility management within organisations.<br>Stimulated the development of new technologies and solutions in the field of sustainable transport. |

The following are among the beneficiaries:
**VRT** (Vlaamse Radio- en Televisieomroeporganisatie): Implemented various measures to encourage sustainable commuting among employees, including promoting cycling and public transport usage. The promoters report a 25% reduction in single-occupancy car commutes and a 15% increase in bike usage among its 1,000 employees.

**Colruyt Group:** Focused on reducing car usage by promoting cycling and public transportation, providing infrastructure to support these modes of transport, and offering incentives for

employees to choose sustainable commuting options. Colruyt Group reports having increased the share of employees commuting by bus from 10% to 20%.

### G5. Travel-to-Work Plans

In 2019, Spain's Instituto para la Diversificación y el Ahorro de la Energía (IDAE) – Institute for the Diversification and Saving of Energy published a comprehensive guide that seeks to support governments (at all tiers), employers and citizens in reducing car-based commuting. Specifically, IDAE recommends that stakeholders come together to formulate and implement what it terms 'Travel-to-Work Plans'. Such plans are, in effect, strategies for increasing the use of public transport, carpooling, cycling, and walking among employees. IDAE defines travel-to-work plans as follows:

> *"A transport-to-work plan (PTT) consists, essentially, of creating a set of measures developed through a participatory process and executed by the management of the workplace. These measures are intended to rationalise travel to the place where the activity is carried out, both from its own employees and from clients, suppliers and visitors. These measures are accompanied by awareness and promotion campaigns" (2019: 31[6]).*

IDAE emphasises the role of public and private sectors in facilitating behavioural change through infrastructure improvements, incentives, and regulatory measures.

According to IDAE, the private sector benefits from such plans, due to cost savings for staff, improved health and well-being among employees, and increased productivity. IDAE also contends that implementing mobility plans enhances employee morale and improves firms' reputations and competitive advantage. It argues that investing in a mobility plan is a manifestation of corporate social responsibility.

IDAE envisages benefits for local / municipal authorities associated with the following:

- Reduced infrastructure costs – with fewer vehicles on the road, there is less need for extensive parking facilities and road maintenance;
- Congestion Reduction: Mobility plans aim to reduce traffic congestion in urban areas by encouraging the use of public transport and active travel modes. This can lead to smoother traffic flow and improved urban mobility; and
- Sustainable Urban Development: Integrating mobility plans with urban planning initiatives supports sustainable city development by reducing the environmental impact of transportation and promoting efficient land use.

It also articulates wider public benefits, including:

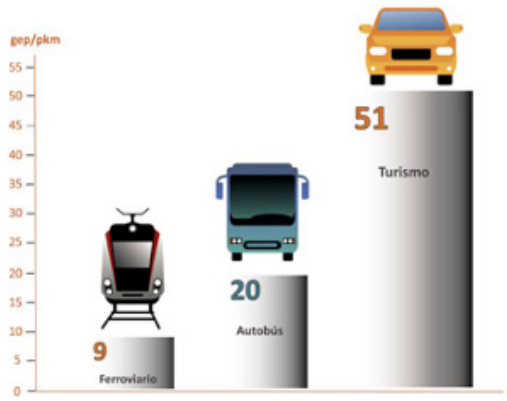
- Reduced greenhouse gas emissions;
- Energy efficiency;
- Improved health and well-being (especially among those who walk and cycle); and
- Safer roads – fewer accidents, injuries and fatalities.

The following images (2019: 14-15) seeks to convey, to infrastructure providers, the merits associated with investing in public transport, relative to roads.

6 Authors' translation.

*Rationale for a travel-to-work plan – environmental and infrastructural costs of car travel*

*Energy consumption per passenger kilometre in Spain, by mode (rail, bus, car), 2016*




*Required carriageway width for trains, buses and cars to move 50,000 people/hour*


IDAE outlines various measures aimed at promoting sustainable transportation for workers, visitors, customers, and suppliers, as well as the role of the public sector in these initiatives.

*Core measures of a travel-to-work plan*

| Target Audiences | Measures |
|---|---|
| Workers / Employees | Information, awareness-raising and experimentation |
| | Promote the use of public transport |
| | Provide private collective transport |
| | Promotion of bicycle use |
| | Promotion of car-pooling |
| | Parking management / behaviour |
| | Measures to reduce the number of trips |
| | Other measures to promote the most sustainable modes |
| | Efficient driving |
| | Participation in associations or user fora / stakeholder engagement |
| Visitors, clients or suppliers | Offer access information about public transport to the workplace |
| | Shuttles for clients or visitors |
| | Require suppliers to adopt sustainability measures in their transportation systems |
| Public sector | Improvement of public transport offer |
| | Regulation and control of public parking |
| | Improvement of pedestrian and cycling infrastructure |
| | Expansion of public bicycle services. Installation of bike parks |

*Adapted from IDEA (2019: 55)*

The following represents an outline of the measures that are presented in the previous table:

**Information, Awareness, and Experimentation**
Workers often lack awareness of alternative transportation options and / or of the impacts of their commuting choices. To address this deficit, several initiatives can be implemented:
- Information Dissemination: Providing detailed information on alternative commuting options like public transportation, company transport, cycling, walking, and carpooling. This information should be readily available to new hires, those changing residences, and when new measures or changes in public transport occur.
- Awareness Campaigns: Conducting campaigns to highlight the importance of sustainable commuting, using simple metrics like annual $CO_2$ emissions or fuel consumption for average commutes.
- Experimentation: Encouraging employees to try alternative commuting modes by offering trial periods or temporary incentives.

**Promoting Public Transport Use** - Among the strategies that can help increase the use of public transportation are:
- Negotiation with Public Transport Authorities: Seek agreements for better services or subsidised fares for employees.
- Employer-provided Public Transport Passes: Providing public transport passes at discounted rates or free of charge.

**Private Collective Transport:**
When public transport options are inadequate, companies can offer private collective transport services e.g. company buses or shuttles and offer financial support for employees using these services.

**Promotion of Bicycle Use** - Encouraging cycling to work through:
- Infrastructure: Providing secure bicycle parking, showers, and changing facilities.
- Incentives: Financial incentives or company-provided bicycles.
- Training and Support: Offering cycling training and support for route planning.

**Carpooling** - Promoting carpooling to reduce the number of single-occupancy vehicles:
- Carpooling Platforms: Implementing systems to help employees find carpool partners.
- Incentives: Offering reserved parking or financial incentives for car-poolers.

**Parking Management** - Managing company parking to encourage sustainable transport:
- Parking Fees: Introducing or increasing parking fees to discourage driving.
- Parking Allocation: Reserving prime parking spots for car-poolers, electric vehicles, or bicycles.

**Reducing the Number of Trips** - Implementing measures to reduce the need for commuting:
- Telecommuting: Encouraging or mandating telecommuting where possible.
- Flexible Hours: Offering flexible work hours to reduce peak-time commuting.

**Other Sustainable Transport Measures** can include the following:
- Efficient Driving Training: Offering training on fuel-efficient driving techniques.
- Participation in Mobility Associations: Collaborating with local or regional mobility associations / fora/ networks to promote sustainable commuting.

**Measures for visitors, clients and suppliers** can include the following:
- Transport Information: Making public transport routes and schedules readily available to visitors.
- Offering shuttle services for visitors or clients.
- Sustainable transport requirements for suppliers - encouraging or requiring suppliers to adopt sustainable transport practices.

Public Sector Measures / Initiatives - Public authorities play a crucial role by:

- Improving Public Transport Offerings: Enhancing the availability, frequency, and reliability of public transport.
- Regulating and Controlling Public Parking: Managing public parking to discourage car use.
- Improving Pedestrian and Bicycle Infrastructure: Developing better facilities for walking and cycling, including public bike-sharing systems and secure bike parking.
- Expanding public bicycle services and infrastructure to support cycling as a viable commuting option through implementing or expanding bike-sharing schemes and increasing the availability of secure bike parking facilities.

IDAE recommends that each workplace should establish a mobility and accessibility committee involving management and employee representatives. This committee would be responsible for assessing the current commuting situation, proposing solutions, and implementing, evaluating, and adjusting measures as needed.

*Example of Objectives and Indicators for a Mobility Plan*

| Objectives | Indicators |
|---|---|
| Increase the use of public transport for commuting | - Percentage of employees using public transport |
| | - Number of monthly subscriptions provided |
| Promote carpooling among employees | - Percentage of employees sharing a vehicle |
| | - Average number of occupants per vehicle |
| Encourage cycling and walking as means of commuting | - Percentage of employees commuting by bicycle or walking |
| | - Number of bicycle parking spaces installed |
| Reduce the use of private cars for commuting | - Percentage of employees commuting by private car |
| | - Number of private car trips avoided |
| Improve road safety in commuting | - Number of traffic accidents involving employees during commute |
| | - Number of employees attending safe driving courses |
| Decrease the overall energy consumption and emissions related to commuting | - Total energy consumption for commuting (in kWh) |
| | - $CO_2$ emissions from commuting (in tonnes) |

*Authors' elaboration, based on IDAE, 2019*

IDAE refers to a number of case studies that incorporate the features of a travel-to-work plan, and it specifically lists the **Travel for Work (TfW) Cambridgeshire** project as a well-regarded initiative aimed at promoting sustainable travel options for commuting. Its key operational elements are as follows:

- **Partnerships and Collaboration:** The TfW project brings together employers, local authorities, and transport providers to work collaboratively towards common goals. Employers join the TfW partnership, gaining access to resources, support, and expertise in promoting sustainable travel among their staff.
- **Development of Travel Plans:** Participating organisations develop customised travel plans tailored to their specific needs and circumstances. These plans include strategies to reduce single-occupancy car use and promote alternative modes of transport such as cycling, walking, public transport, and carpooling.
- **Employee Engagement and Awareness:** The project involves extensive employee engagement activities to raise awareness about sustainable travel options. Workshops, seminars, and promotional events are organised to inform employees about the benefits of sustainable commuting and how they can participate.
- **Incentives and Support:** TfW provides various incentives and support measures to encourage sustainable travel, including the following: Discounted or subsidised public transport passes;

cycle-to-work schemes - offering tax incentives for purchasing bicycles; car-pool matching services to facilitate ride-sharing among employees; infrastructure improvements such as secure bike parking, showers, and changing facilities.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** The project includes regular monitoring and evaluation to track progress and measure the impact of implemented strategies. Surveys and data collection help assess changes in commuting patterns, reductions in car use, and increases in the use of sustainable transport modes.
- **Information and Resources:** TfW provides a wealth of information and resources to participating organisations, including: guidance on developing and implementing travel plans; best practices and case studies from other organisations; access to online tools and resources to support sustainable travel initiatives.

**Specific Examples and Quantitative Outputs** include the following:
- Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust has implemented various measures such as secure cycle parking, bike-to-work schemes, and discounted public transport passes. The Trust has achieved a substantial increase in cycling rates among staff, with reports of up to a 10% increase in employees cycling to work.
- Cambridge Science Park has promoted greener travel through infrastructure improvements and incentives for public transport use. Its investments have resulted in a reduction in single-occupancy car journeys by approximately 15%, contributing to lower traffic congestion in the area.
- ARM Holdings has pursued a comprehensive travel plan that included carpooling, cycling incentives, and flexible working arrangements. It has achieved a 20% reduction in car usage among employees, with corresponding environmental and economic benefits.

### G6. Údarás na Gaeltachta gteic hubs

The promotion of teleworking (also remote / hybrid working) is among the recommendations put forward by IDAE. Since the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic and the widespread adoption and promotion of ICT platforms that enable teleworking, policy makers, public bodies and employers have taken concrete steps to enable employees to work remotely, and work-based travel (e.g. to meetings and conferences) has been drastically reduced. Údarás na Gaeltachta (ÚnaG) is among the public bodies that have invested in teleworking infrastructure; it has established a network of *gteic* remote working hubs in each of Ireland's Gaeltacht communities – from Donegal to West Cork. ÚnaG's investment in the *gteic* network has the potential to further influence the development of the rural economy (in Gaeltacht areas) and to reduce the need for commuting from Gaeltacht communities. Moreover, ÚnaG contends that *gteic* facilities offer a basis for attracting external investment and generating additional employment in Gaeltachtaí.

At present (June 2024) ÚnaG operates[8]:
- 8 gteic in County Donegal;
- 5 gteic in County Mayo;
- 8 gteic in County Galway;
- 4 gteic in County Kerry; and
- 2 gteic in Conty Cork.

These 27 gteic facilities have a capacity to host 865 workers, and as of the end of December 2023, there were 476 persons systematically using gteic facilities. In their enumeration of users, ÚnaG only counts those who have a permanent or semi-permanent bases in a gteic. Occasional and or temporary hot-desk clients are not included in these figures.

Gteiceanna are similar to general remote working hubs; they are equipped with high-speed internet, state-of-the-art workspaces, and meeting rooms that cater to the needs of remote workers and small businesses. They also offer flexible office solutions, including hot desks, dedicated desks, private offices, and meeting rooms. In addition, Gteiceanna offer distinct

*8 Most gteic facilities are operated, at local level, by civil society organisations (mainly Gaeltacht cooperatives) that work closely with Údarás na Gaeltachta.*

features and services tailored to support entrepreneurs / SMEs and communities in Gaeltachtaí. These include the following:

- Irish Language Promotion: Gteic facilities are designed to support the Irish language and culture. They create environments where Irish is the primary language of communication, fostering a unique cultural atmosphere;
- Local Services: They provide support services tailored to the Gaeltacht's businesses, including tailored training, mentoring, one-to-one coaching sessions, and information about funding and grants. ÚnaG has partnered with other bodies e.g. ETBs to offer training;
- Networking: *Gteiceanna* have hosted formal and informal meetings (facilitated by ÚnaG staff) e.g. business networking breakfasts, where local business owners and entrepreneurs can network and discuss potential collaborations. Some have also hosted so-called 'Start-up Pitch Nights' events at which start-ups can pitch their ideas to a panel of judges and an audience, receiving feedback and possibly securing investment. Since May 2024, the gteic network has been hosting a bespoke mentoring programme for female entrepreneurs (https://empowerprogramme.ie);
- Startup Incubation: Some gteic facilities (e.g. Gaoth Dobhair, An Spidéal, An Cheathrú Rua, Béal an Mhuirtead, An Tearmann) offer incubation services for startups, providing resources and support to help new businesses succeed;
- Research and Development: They may also support R&D activities, promoting innovation within the Gaeltacht areas. Gteic users have access to specialised support staff (business development officers), either locally or through the gteic network (in areas such as ICT, training, digital marketing);
- Community and Cultural Activities: Gteic hubs often host cultural events, workshops, and activities that promote the Irish language and culture and enrich the community life (e.g. arts exhibitions, talks, workshops)[9]. They provide a social space for remote workers and locals to interact, enhancing the sense of community and belonging; and
- Youth development: Some *gteiceanna* have hosted workshops teaching young people coding and digital literacy skills, while they have also catered for sessions aimed at helping young people and job seekers with career planning and skills development.

*9 In 2022, Donegal musician, Mairéad Ní Mhaonaigh, became the first gteic-based artist in residence. She is based in gteic@Gaoth Dobhair.*

## Endnotes

i The Global Sustainable Development Report 2023 can be accessed at: Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR) 2023 | Department of Economic and Social Affairs (un.org)

ii see https://www.southernassembly.ie/news/news-article/regional-development-monitor-launch#:~:text=The%20Regional%20Development%20Monitor%20%28RDM%29%20is%20a%20significant,key%20indicators%20of%20progress%20towards%20Balanced%20Regional%20Development for further information.

iii According to the Climate Action Plan 2024 (CAP24), "Emissions from transport account for about 30% of the public sector's overall GHG emissions, the second largest portion after buildings" (2023, 127).

iv These include the Urban Regeneration Development Fund (URDF) and Rural Regeneration Development Fund (RRDF), both of which were established as part of the Irland 2040 financial supports package.

v For further definitions pre-2022, see: https://www.cso.ie/en/census/census2016reports/census2016boundaryfiles/ ; 2022 definitions here: https://data-osi.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/osi::cso-urban-areas-national-statistical-boundaries-2022-ungeneralised/about

vi For further information on current definitions see: https://www.nisra.gov.uk/sites/nisra.gov.uk/files/publications/review-of-the-statistical-classification-and-delineation-of-settlements-march-2015_0.pdf; https://www.nisra.gov.uk/support/geography/urban-rural-classification

vii For further information on changing town boundaries, see https://westerndevelopment.ie/insights/changing-town-populations-in-the-western-region-in-census-2022/

viii Aghagallon and Dundrum populations based on 2021 Northern Ireland Census of Population; all other towns based on Census of Population (Ireland) 2022. Boundaries for these populations are pre-defined by the statistical agencies and based on 'settlements' in the case of Northern Ireland (NISRA) and 'urban areas' or 'towns' in the case of Ireland (CSO).

ix For Table 4.2 the totals for some towns will not add to 100% due to the CSO suppressing responses below a threshold of 6.

x For further information see: https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cpsr/censusofpopulation2022-summaryresults/employmentoccupationindustryandcommuting/

xi For further information, see: https://westerndevelopment.ie/policy/publications/a-sustainable-mobility-index/

xii Level 1: 1-4 GCSEs, O Levels, CSEs (any grades); NVQ level 1; or equivalent qualifications.
Level 2: 5+ GCSEs (Grades A*-C, 9-4), O Levels (Passes), CSEs (Grade 1); 1 A Level, 2-3 AS Levels; NVQ level 2, BTEC General, City and Guilds Craft; or equivalent qualifications. Apprenticeship.
Level 3: 2+ A Levels, 4+ AS Levels; NVQ Level 3, BTEC National, OND or ONC, City and Guilds Advanced Craft; or equivalent qualifications.
Level 4+: Degree (for example BA, BSc), foundation degree, HND, HNC, NVQ Level 4-5, professional qualifications (for example teaching, nursing), or equivalent qualifications.
Other: Any other qualifications, equivalent unknown.

xiii For details of media coverage, please see, for example:
https://www.thejournal.ie/a-commuter-town-bursting-at-the-seams-sallins-4984266-Feb2020/
https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/commuter-belt-buckles-as-new-homebuyers-forced-further-out/38755838.html
https://www.irishnews.com/news/ireland/harris-criticises-department-of-education-as-families-left-without-school-places-ZXPJ46FGJ5DE3KVFRHH25PTWSM/
https://irishcycle.com/2021/02/13/a-commuter-town-comparison-between-the-netherlands-and-ireland-from-baarn-to-naas-part-1/
https://www.thejournal.ie/readme/multiple-school-pick-ups-tripping-up-mums-4701648-Jun2019/
https://www.thejournal.ie/house-buyers-hour-commute-2684200-Mar2016/

xiv For further information on the Place Standard Tool, see: https://www.ourplace.scot/tool
xv The figure of 0.4 does not have any statistical significance. It was chosen as the figure (with one decimal place) that would generate the most even distribution of blue and red shading, thereby facilitating inter-town benchmarking.
xvi The figures for the case study settlements are based on settlement (not ED) boundaries.
xvii For consistency in the comparison, the calculation based on the 2022 census data includes students aged 19 years and over, and excludes those for whom a mode of travel is not stated as well as those working mainly at or from home.
xviii Throughout Chapters 6 to 9, differences are noted as being significant (or not) if they would be assessed as statistically significant in a random sample of comparable size. However, it should be noted that, since our sample is not a random sample, we are unable to definitively test for statistical significance.
xix i This figure differs from the 45% with commutes of 30 kilometres minutes or more quoted in Chapter 6. This is because the latter figure was based only on those actually undertaking a commute, i.e., it excluded persons working at home. Here the context calls for the more inclusive measure – the percentage of all workers, whether home-based or not, who commute for 30 kilometres or more.
xx For further information about the minister's remarks, please see: https://www.breakingnews.ie/ireland/harris-criticises-department-of-education-as-families-left-without-school-places-1586746.html
xxi Data provided by the Maryland Department of Transportion (MDOT)
xxii US Census Bureau. (2010, 2020). Decennial Census Table P1.
xxiii US Census Bureau. (2023). 2022 ACS 5 Year Estimates: Table S1901.
xxiv US Census Bureau (2023). 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates: Table DP03.
xxv US Census Bureau (2023). 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates: Table S1901.
xxvi US Census Bureau (2023). 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates: Table DP03.
xxvii US Census Bureau. (2010, 2020). Decennial Census Table P1.
xxviii US Census Bureau (2019). On The Map. https://onthemap.ces.census.gov/
xxix In both contexts, the responses are filtered to include only those whose jobs can be done either fully or partly from home or other remote location.
xxx Nevertheless, there remains a debate about what exactly constitutes 'affordable' both in the private market and in government-supported schemes. See https://www.irishtimes.com/ireland/dublin/2024/06/25/dublin-city-affordable-homes-in-coolock-priced-at-up-to-475000/ , https://www.rte.ie/news/dublin/2024/0626/1456761-oscar-traynor-woods/
xxxi Recent data from the National Transport Authority (Ireland) indicates that this trend strengthened in 2023 (see https://www.nationaltransport.ie/news/record-highs-for-public-transport-passenger-numbers-in-2023/
xxxii The Place Standard is a fourteen-dimensional tool for measuring perceptions of place. It is widely used in Scotland. For further information, please see: www.placestandard.scot.

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