

MAYNOOTH TEAM MAPS OUT FIRST NATIONAL CENSUS ATLAS

The National Census Atlas – a new visual mapping tool developed by a team of researchers in Maynooth University – will now enable local authorities, planners and policymakers to get a detailed view of economic and social trends emerging across the country.

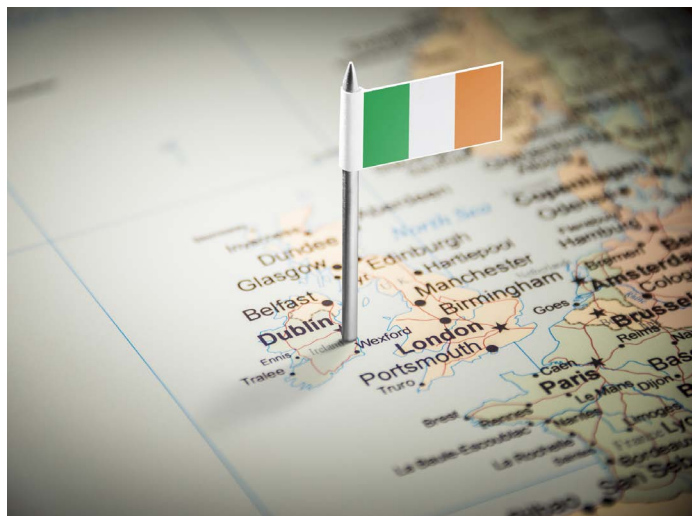
Ireland is the first country to develop a comprehensive national mapping resource of this type. Unique in its scope and detail, the National Census Atlas, developed by the All-Island Research Observatory (AIRO) at Maynooth University in collaboration with Ireland's three Regional Assemblies, now positions Ireland as an example of international best practice.

This innovative approach aims to highlight this country's commitment to leveraging data for sustainable development and inclusive planning. A key advancement will be the ability to allow local authorities to develop their own maps tailored to their counties, cities and towns, local electoral areas and municipal districts. This feature will empower local authorities and elected members to better understand and respond to the unique needs of their communities and help advance regional development.

The census map, which is expected to result in better planning and policy formulation, will provide a view of over 200 social, economic and environmental indicators at neighbourhood level across the country.

It will enable users to explore a wealth of data in an accessible and interactive format, ranging from housing trends and employment statistics to environmental factors and population changes. The atlas is based on data from the CSO Census 2022 results.

For example, the tool shows levels of population change over the last 20 years, highlighting areas of major population growth alongside regions experiencing continual population decline.



The National Census Atlas offers detailed mapping data on local neighbourhoods for informed decision making at local level.

It also gives insights into the clustering of employment in sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing industries, and professional services. While primarily aimed at the planning sector, the atlas will be used as a support tool for government departments and state bodies, local authorities and community groups.

It is also hoped that, in time, the tool will be used by secondary and third-level students to provide insights and a better understanding of the social and economic characteristics of the country.

“GROUNDBREAKING TOOL”

On formally launching the National Census Atlas in Athlone in February, Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment Peter Burke TD described it as “a groundbreaking tool” in providing access to key data.

“It will be instrumental in supporting evidence-based policymaking. We’re the first country to develop such a resource, positioning Ireland at the forefront of international best practice,” he added.

A new section on the Regional Development Monitor (RDM), dedicated to key Smart Specialisation Strategy indicators, was also unveiled by Minister Burke. The Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3) Dashboard was developed in collaboration with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE).

“This tool will help monitor the progress of our National Smart Specialisation Strategy, monitor our regional innovation



David Kelly, SRA Director; Clare Bannon, EMRA Director; Minister Peter Burke TD; Denis Kelly, NWRA Director, and AIRO Director Justin Gleeson at the launch of the National Census Atlas in Athlone on 6 February.

performance and enable regions to focus on their strengths,” according to Minister Burke.
 He described these new tools as “fantastic additions” to the Regional Development Monitor (RDM), which he had launched in November 2022, adding that this will be “crucial to future policy development”.

DEMOCRATISING ACCESS TO KEY DATA

Emphasising the significance of the initiative, Justin Gleeson, Director of AIRO at Maynooth University, said the atlas represents a major step forward in democratising access to data.
 “By providing granular insights at the neighbourhood level, this tool empowers stakeholders across Ireland to identify needs, allocate resources effectively, and plan for a sustainable future. It is a fantastic example of public sector collaboration in Ireland and the use of publicly funded data collection initiatives,” he added.

The project was made possible through direction and funding from the three Regional Assemblies of Ireland – the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly, the Northern and Western Regional Assembly and the Southern Regional Assembly.

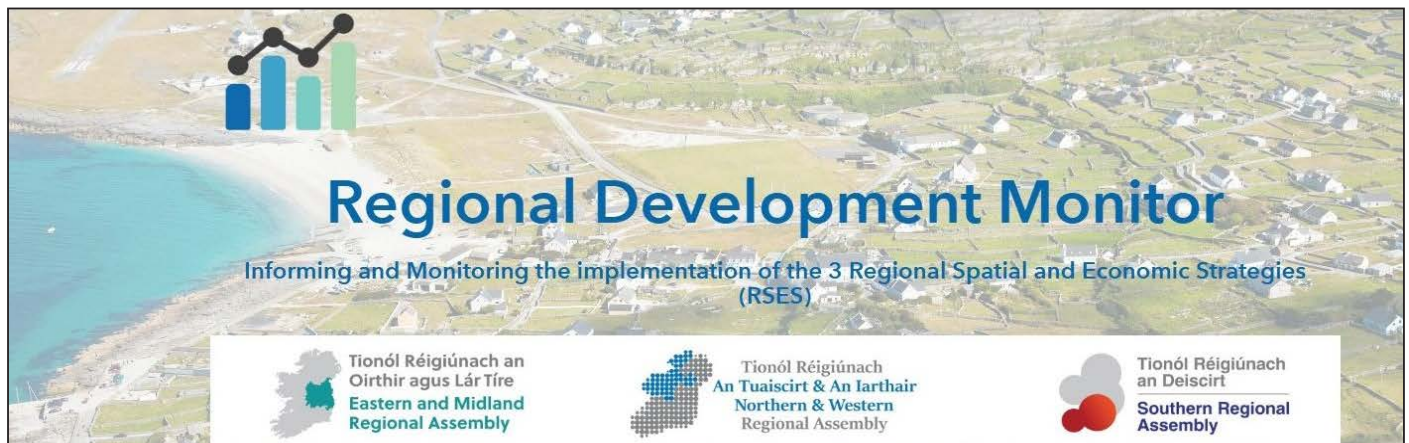
Clare Bannon, Director of the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly, said the project highlights the power of collaboration in advancing regional development goals. “This initiative offers a new perspective on Ireland’s evolving social, economic, and environmental landscape. This tool is a great addition to the Regional Development Monitor, which has become a key resource for local and regional authorities in Ireland.”

Examples of the tool in use

The National Census Atlas illustrates its potential to support current and future policy development for key social issues, such as...

- **Population change:** The tool shows levels of population change over the last twenty years, highlighting areas of major population growth alongside regions experiencing continual population decline.
- **Household heating sources:** The atlas details variations in household heating methods within and across counties, providing essential data for policies aimed at achieving a just transition from fossil fuels.
- **Employment clustering:** Insights into the clustering of employment in sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing industries, and professional services can guide regional economic development strategies.
- **Religious affiliation trends:** The tool reveals differing trends in religious affiliation between urban and rural areas, offering a nuanced understanding of cultural shifts.
- **Commuting patterns:** Detailed data on commuting patterns to cities and large towns helps inform transport and infrastructure planning.

To view the National Census Atlas, visit <https://rdm.geohive.ie/pages/national-census-atlas>



For further information on the census mapping tool visit <https://rdm.geohive.ie/>



Data from the CSO Census 2022 results — <https://rdm.geohive.ie/pages/national-census-atlas>