



An Phríomh-Oifig Staidrimh Central Statistics Office

Preas Ráiteas Press Statement

Director General, Central Statistics Office, Pádraig Dalton, discusses the role of statistics and a changing Ireland

Speaking at the 2016 MacGill summer school, Pádraig Dalton, Director General, Central Statistics Office (CSO) discussed the changing nature of Ireland and the value of statistics in identifying these changes:

“Census data is vital in that it provides a baseline that underpins almost all of our official statistics including employment, unemployment, income and poverty. It is essential for future planning and a crucial decision making tool in relation to where to build houses, roads, new schools, healthcare provision or where to locate businesses.

The 2016 preliminary Census data demonstrates that changes in migration patterns drive our population change and that there is significant growth in urban areas which contrasts with a decline in population in rural areas. On Census night, Sunday 24th of April 2016, the population of Ireland was 4,757,976 – an increase of 169,724 persons since 2011 or 3.7 per cent. The population change varied widely across the country, ranging from a high of over 8 per cent in Fingal to a low of -1.5 per cent in Donegal. Among the fastest growing counties were the four administrative areas of Dublin, along with the commuter belt counties of Meath, Kildare and Laois and the cities of Cork and Galway.

Much of the real value of the Census is in local area planning. While most counties experienced some level of population growth, three counties witnessed population decline over the five years, namely Donegal (-1.5%), Mayo (-0.2%) and Sligo (-0.1%). Taking Donegal, for example, we can see that the population of Glenties has reduced by 4.7% - an actual reduction of 71 persons.

Net migration is estimated to be -28,558 over the five years 2011 to 2016. This compares with net inward migration of 115,800 over the previous five years. Net migration varied across Ireland from a low of -6,731 in Donegal to a high of 7,527 in Dublin city.

Interestingly, the preliminary data also shows that household formation has increased by just 3 per cent and has fallen behind population growth. We also know that the number of vacant dwellings has dropped by almost 14% but the real question here is whether they are located in areas where they could be used to tackle homelessness.”

Commenting further on the theme of a changing Ireland, Pádraig Dalton referred to the recent debate following the publication of an unprecedented increase in GDP for 2015 of 26.3%:

“Reporting of GDP is a requirement under EU law and must be compiled strictly in accordance with international rules. The revisions published were based on hard data and attributable to the globalisation activities of a very small number of companies.

However, the CSO is bound by strict confidentiality rules and that created a significant communications challenge. This meant that we were limited in our ability to fully explain the revisions and we were obliged to suppress certain detail which, understandably, was an issue for many users.

The core issues of course relates to the insights on our changing domestic economy that can be gained now from the key economic indicators of GDP and GNP in a small, open and highly globalised economy – perhaps the most globalised in the world.

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An Phríomh-Oifig Staidrimh
Bóthar na Sceiche Airde
Corcaigh
T12 X00E
Éire

Oifig i mBaile Átha Cliath
+353 1 4984000

Central Statistics Office
Skehard Road
Cork
T12 X00E
Ireland

Dublin Office
+353 1 4984000



LoCall 1890 313 414 (ROI)
0870 876 0256 (UK/NI)
+353 21 453 5000



+353 21 453 5555

information@csso.ie
www.csso.ie

GDP and GNP, although required internationally, no longer provide a sufficient understanding of the domestic economy and we need to supplement these internationally agreed indicators with a broader suite of indicators that can provide the necessary insights. A group of experts is being convened to undertake this work and they will be tasked with preparing a report which will be published later this year”, he added.

For further information, contact:

Elaine O’Mahoney 087 1308799

Central Statistics Office

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