

# GALWAY COUNTY LOCAL ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY PLAN

## SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATEMENT & HIGH LEVEL GOALS



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# 1.0 INTRODUCTION TO THE LECP

The purpose of the Galway County Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP), established under the Local Government Reform Act 2014, is to set a framework, objectives and actions needed to promote and support the economic development and the local and community development of Galway County. The LECP acts as the primary mechanism at the local level to bring forward relevant actions arising from national and regional strategies and policies that have a local remit.



The LECP acts as an enabling framework to support Local Government and other key stakeholders to work together to ensure that their initiatives, programmes and projects support an improved quality of life for people living and working in Galway County.

The Local Government Reform Act 2014 requires that the economic elements of the LECP be developed by the local authority Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) for Economic Development and Enterprise and that the community elements of the LECP be developed by the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC).

Figure 1.1 outlines the interactions between the various stakeholders involved in the preparation, implementation, and evaluation of the LECP.

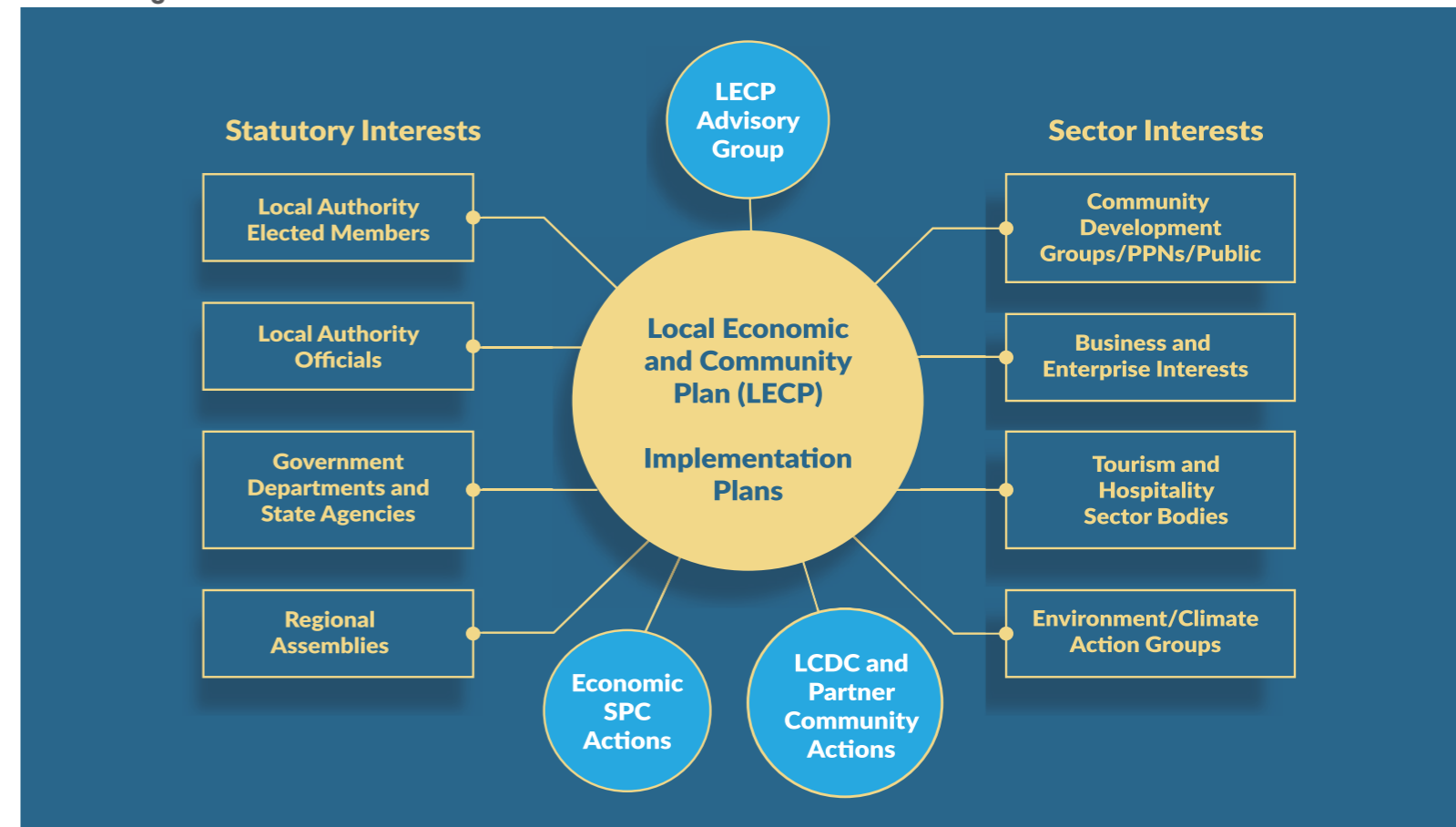
## 1.1 How will the LECP be structured?

The LECP for 2023-2028 will consist of 2 parts:

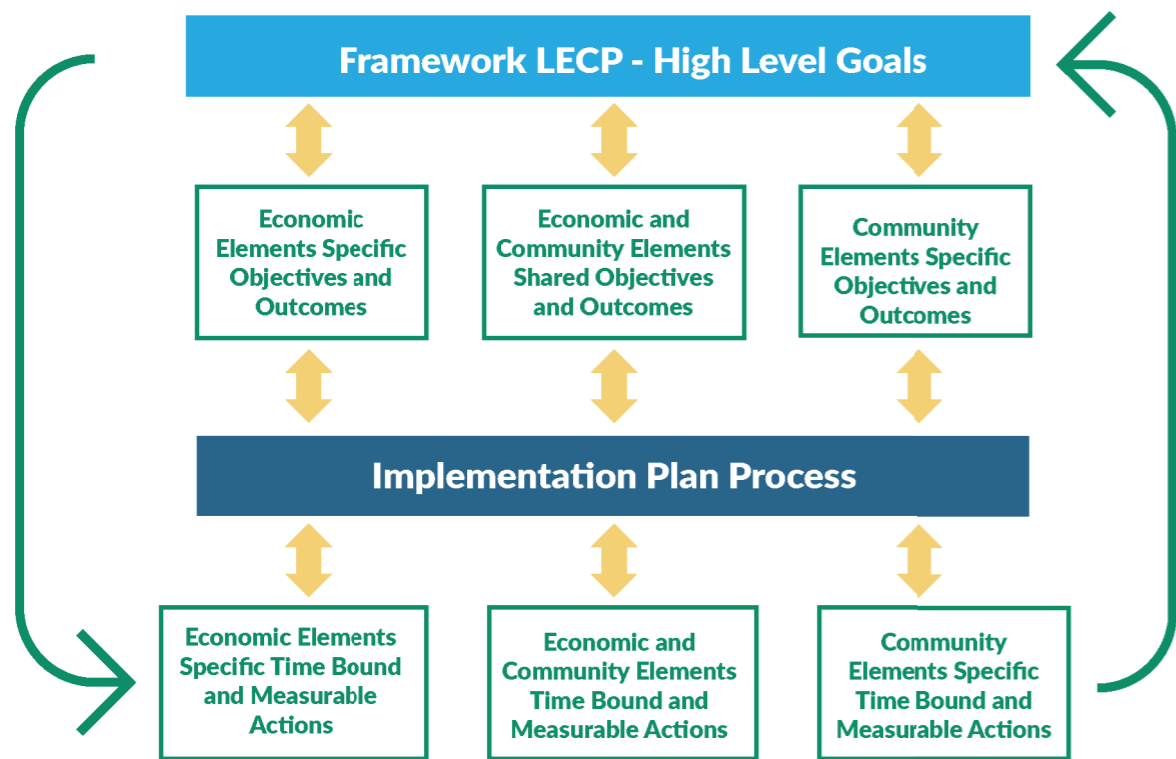
- The development of an overall LECP framework detailing the High-Level Goals and Sustainable Community and Economic Objectives as well as consideration of outcomes and high-level indicators for the 6-year LECP period.
- The development of three Implementation Plans to detail the inputs, actions and resources required for that implementation plan period as well as relevant specific key performance indicators to facilitate evaluation.

This new two-part process provides a more agile and flexible approach to the delivery of initiatives and actions to achieve the High-

Figure 1.1



**Figure 1.2: LECP FRAMEWORK**



Level Goals and Objectives, and allows future Implementation Plans to respond to emerging policy, circumstances and needs.

Figure 1.2 outlines the structure of the strategic framework and implementation plans as part of the LECP process:

### 1.2 What is the process for developing the LECP?

Figure 1.3 outlines the stages which will culminate in the adoption and publication of an LECP for the period 2024 –2030. We are currently at Stage 1 of this process.

### 1.3 What is the purpose of this document?

This document provides an overview of the socio-economic analysis which has been completed

to inform the identification of the draft High-Level Goals. This document will form the basis of the Galway County LECP Public Consultation Process required to develop the LECP. The public consultation process will be used to inform the refinement of the High Level Goals and develop objectives and outcomes and provide the foundation for actions to be determined as part of the Implementation Plan process.

To inform the consultation process the socioeconomic statement is structured as follows;

- Section 2 outlines the values, principles, and cross-cutting priorities which underpin the design, development, implementation and monitoring of the LECP.
- Section 3 outlines the most up-to-date socio-economic analysis to identify the key issues facing our communities and businesses outlines the cross-cutting international,

national, regional, and local policy context and spatial framework which will guide the development of strategic High-Level Goals for a new LECP.

- Section 4 outlines the international, national and regional policy context and spatial framework which will guide the development of strategic High-Level Goals.
- Section 5 contains a SCOT (Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities and Threats) analysis informed by the Socio-Economic profile and Policy Context.
- Section 6 outlines the draft Vision Statement

for Galway County.

- Section 7 contains the draft High-Level Goals for the LECP, the rationale for these goals, and some of the key issues which may form objectives under these goals. It also poses questions to prompt your feedback which will be incorporated into the finalisation of the High-Level Goals and Objectives, and development of the first Implementation Plan.
- Section 8 contains information and details on the public can get involved in the consultation process of this LECP and make their voices heard.

**Figure 1.3 LECP DEVELOPMENT PROCESS**



## 2.0 VALUES, PRINCIPLES & CROSS-CUTTING PRIORITIES



Guided by the LECP Guidelines 2021 and current inclusive engagement best practice, the LECP will be underpinned by several specific Values, Principles & Cross-Cutting Priorities. The values, principles and cross-cutting priorities inform all parts of the LECP development process.

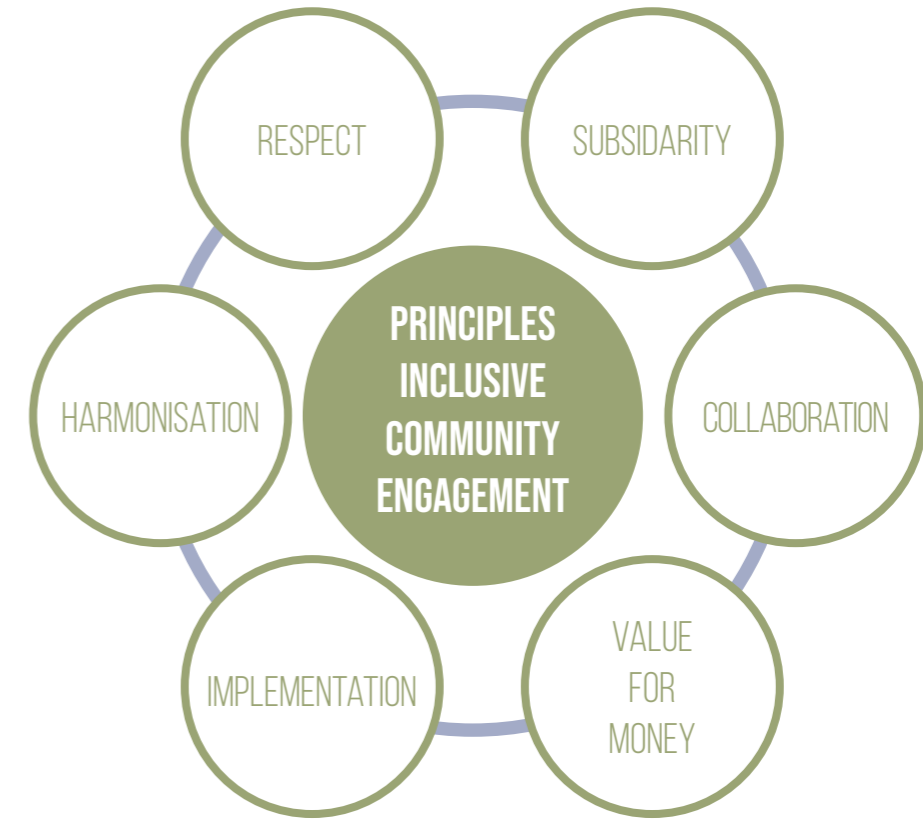


Figure 2.1

### 2.1 What values will underpin the development of the LECP?

The following is a list of the fundamental values that will influence the course and contents of Galway County's LECP:

- **Social Justice** and the belief that everyone is entitled to equal economic, political and social rights.
- **Empowering Communities** by increasing knowledge, skills, consciousness and confidence to enable them to become critical, creative and active participants in society.
- **Sustainable Development** is a commitment to allow development to take place to meet current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This is a continuous, guided

process of economic, environmental and social change aimed at promoting the well-being of citizens now and into the future.

- **Active Participation** of all stakeholders, including citizens and non-citizens. This is essential to ensure that any policies and programmes targeted at communities are effective and successful.
- **Human Rights, Equality and Anti-Discrimination** involves promoting these values in society and committing to addressing the multiple forms of discrimination experienced by many groups.
- **Social Inclusion** prioritises the needs of communities experiencing social or economic exclusion, including rural isolation, and addressing the root causes of these issues to ensure inclusion.

### 2.2 What principles will underpin the development of the LECP?

We have drawn the principles for inclusive community engagement in this guide from several sources, including the Values and Principles for Collaboration and Partnership Working with the Community and Voluntary Sector.

- **Respect** for the diversity of knowledge, skills, views and lived experience being brought to the process by all stakeholders.
- **Subsidiarity**, by recognising and facilitating communities, whether geographic or a community of interest, to influence decisions, take actions, and promote power-sharing.
- **Harmonisation** with existing strategies and standards of good practice relevant to local and community development
- **Value for Money** through a collaborative, whole-of-government ethos that prioritises societal value and community need.
- **Implementation** by leveraging the potential of existing local and national structures which are in place.
- **Collaboration** with relevant stakeholders and communities to support sustainable approaches to policy and programme development and implementation.

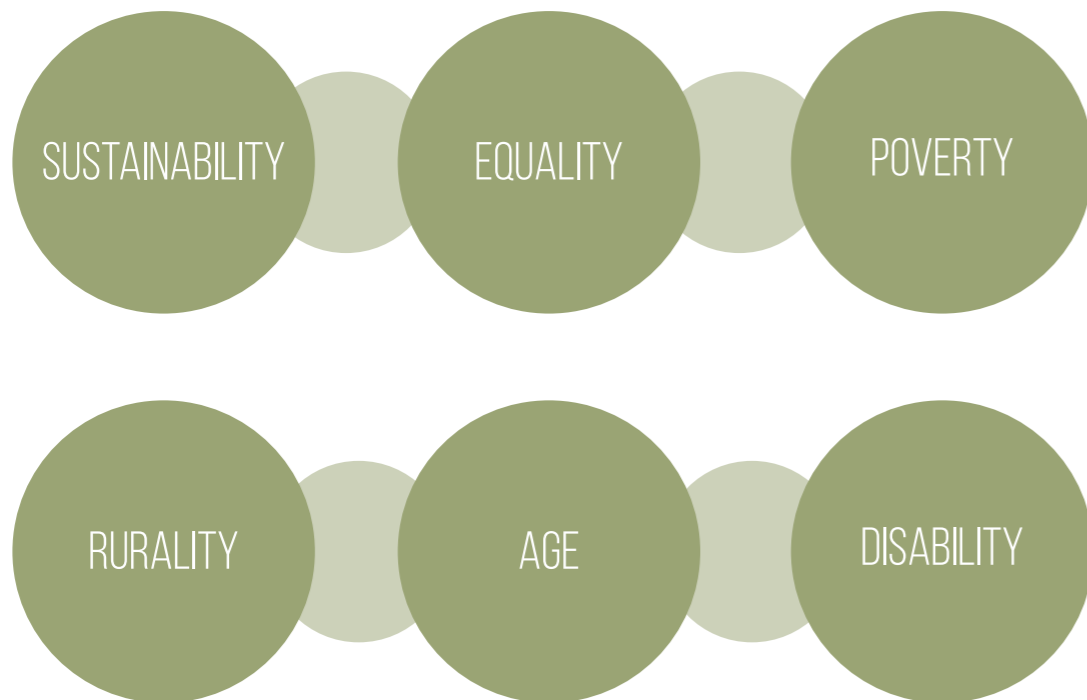
### 2.3 What cross-cutting priorities will underpin the development of the LECP?

In addition to ensuring consistency with the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy and County Development Plan, full consideration must be given to assessing the potential impact of the LECP according to the following cross-cutting priorities:

This section provides a comprehensive analysis of the socio-economic factors influencing County Galway. It offers an overview of the catchment including key community profiles, economic sectors, employment trends, and the environmental profile.



Figure 2.2



## 3.0 SOCIO-ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

**This section provides a comprehensive analysis of the socio-economic factors influencing Galway County. It offers an overview of the catchment including key community profiles, economic sectors, employment trends, and the environmental profile.**



### 3.1 Geographic & Administrative

#### Administrative Profile

The County sits within the North West Regional Assembly (NWRA). The NWRA is a significant component of regional governance in Ireland. Established under the Local Government Reform Act 2014, the NWRA is one of three regional assemblies in Ireland. Its primary role is to coordinate, promote, and support strategic planning and sustainable development in its territory, aiming to enhance the region's overall economic, social, and environmental well-being. Galway County and Galway City, both within the NWR, while geographically contiguous and often discussed in conjunction, have distinct administrative boundaries and governance structures. The LECP for Galway County is specifically designed to address the needs and

development goals of those that live, visit and work in Galway County. From the outset it is important to distinguishing Galway County it from Galway City, which has its own separate LECP. This distinction is crucial for planning and implementing localised strategies that cater to the unique socio-economic and community dynamics of each area. This separation is particularly relevant in the context of LECPs, where tailored approaches to economic and community development are essential. In instances where data encompasses both Galway County and City, the term "Galway City and County" is used to denote the combined catchment area, acknowledging cases where separate data for the two areas is not provided.

The governance structure of Galway County is detailed through its division into five Municipal Districts (MDs): Athenry, Ballinasloe, Conamara,



Loughrea, and Tuam. Each of these districts has unique characteristics and development needs, which are represented by a total of 39 Elected Members within the Galway County Council. These representatives play a pivotal role in shaping and implementing the LECP, ensuring that the diverse needs of their respective districts are addressed, thereby fostering balanced and inclusive development across Galway County.

### Geographic Profile

Galway County has the second largest administrative area in Ireland, second only to Cork County. It has an area of approximately 6,100 square kilometres and a coastline

stretching to almost 2,000 kilometres. The country's four most populated offshore islands, Inis Móir, Inis Óirr, Inis Meáin and Inisbofin, are part of Galway County. The County borders five other counties with Mayo to the north, Clare to the south, Roscommon and Offaly to the east, and Tipperary to the south-east. Per Census 2022, Galway County has the largest Gaeltacht population in Ireland, where 36,687 people speak the Irish language daily.

The County is characterised by a diverse and natural landscape that includes features such as the mountainous Conamara region west of the River Corrib, fertile agricultural lands to the east and a more varied limestone area to the south. These topographical attributes

combine to give Galway its outstanding and widely varied landscape setting. The County has eight Nature Reserves as well as a significant number of EU Natura 2000 designated sites, reflecting the high-quality natural and unique environments found throughout the County. Natural boundaries in the County include Galway Bay to the west, the River Shannon to the east, Lough Derg to the south-east and, at its centre, the County contains the largest inland lake in the Republic of Ireland, Lough Corrib.

### 3.2 Settlement Profile

#### A varying hierarchy of settlements

The Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028 contains a hierarchy of settlement typologies. While the County town of Galway is Galway City, there are several settlements within Galway County which also fall into the Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP). They are Baile Chláir, Bearna, Oranmore, Briarhill and Garraun. The MASP has been identified to accommodate critical mass in population growth within the area that will ensure the vitality and appeal of Galway City and the surrounding towns and villages.

Ballinasloe and Tuam are designated as Key Towns, these are towns that of regional strategic employment centres of significant scale that can act as regional drivers that complement and support the higher order areas within the settlement hierarchy.

Athenry is the only settlement in the County that has been designated as a town of Strategic Potential. It is considered a large economically active service centre that provides employment for the surrounding areas.

Gort and Loughrea are both designated Self-Sustaining Towns due to high levels of population growth and a limited employment base which are reliant on other areas for employment and/or services and which require targeted "catchup" investment to become more sustaining.

There are five settlements in Galway County which are designated 'Small Growth Towns'. They are small Towns with local service and employment potential. There is a need to promote regeneration and revitalisation of towns and support local



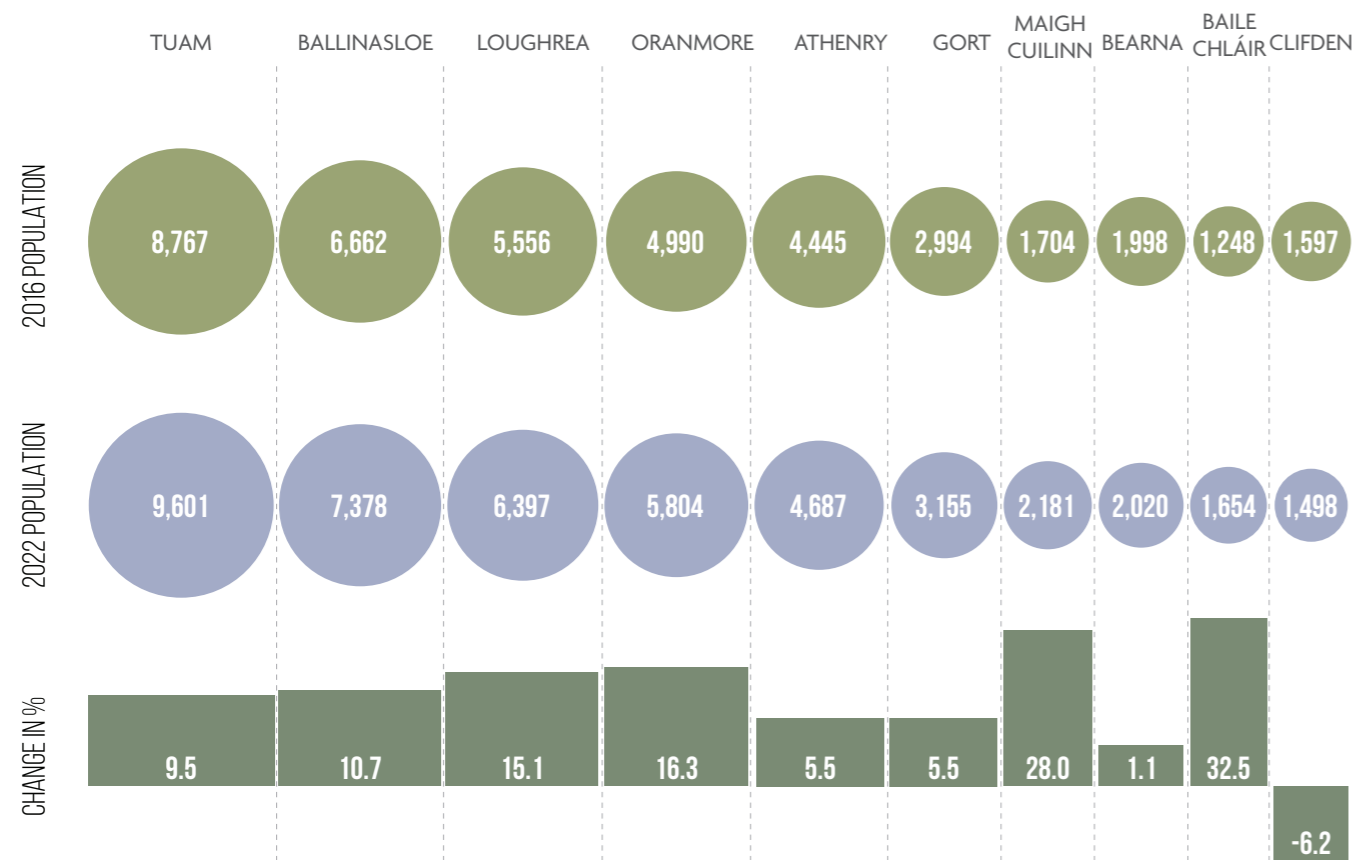


Figure 3.1: Population changes in Galway County Towns between 2016 to 2022

enterprise and employment opportunities to ensure their viability as service centres for surrounding rural areas. Clifden, Maigh Cuilinn, Oughterard, Portumna and Headford are all designated Small Growth Towns.

Small Growth Villages are defined as Small villages with local service and employment potential. An Chearthrú Rua, An Spidéal, Ballygar, Dunmore, Glenamaddy, Kinvara and Moylough are all designated as Small Growth Villages.

### A rural County

In Galway County, 75.6% of the population reside in rural areas, surpassing the NWR's rate of 63% and the State's rate of 36.3%. Of those that live in urban areas in the State, 52% reside in towns exceeding 10,000 residents, contrasting with the NWR's 22.6%. Galway County does not have any settlements with a population in excess of 10,000. This rural population highlights the importance of local community

amenities and service accessibility.

There are now 38 NWR Towns with populations between 1,500 and 10,000, up from 34 in 2016. In Galway County, 3 towns have entered this size category (Oughterard, Portumna, Baile Chláir) while 1 has dropped beneath the threshold (Clifden).

### Increasing population in Urban Settlements

A new method of defining

urban settlements and calculating town populations was introduced for Census 2022 and beyond, Built-up Urban Areas (BUAs). There are now 12 BUAs in Galway County. It should be noted that the new method means that populations are not directly comparable with those from previous Census.

When the Census 2022 and 2016 data is presented based on the old settlement boundaries, it provides a clearer picture of the changes in population across the urban settlements in Galway County. Between 2016 and 2022, most towns recorded an increase of population, with Baile Chláir having the highest increase (32.5%). Of

the included towns, only Clifden showed a decrease in population (dropping 16.2%).

### Higher residential vacancy rates than the State

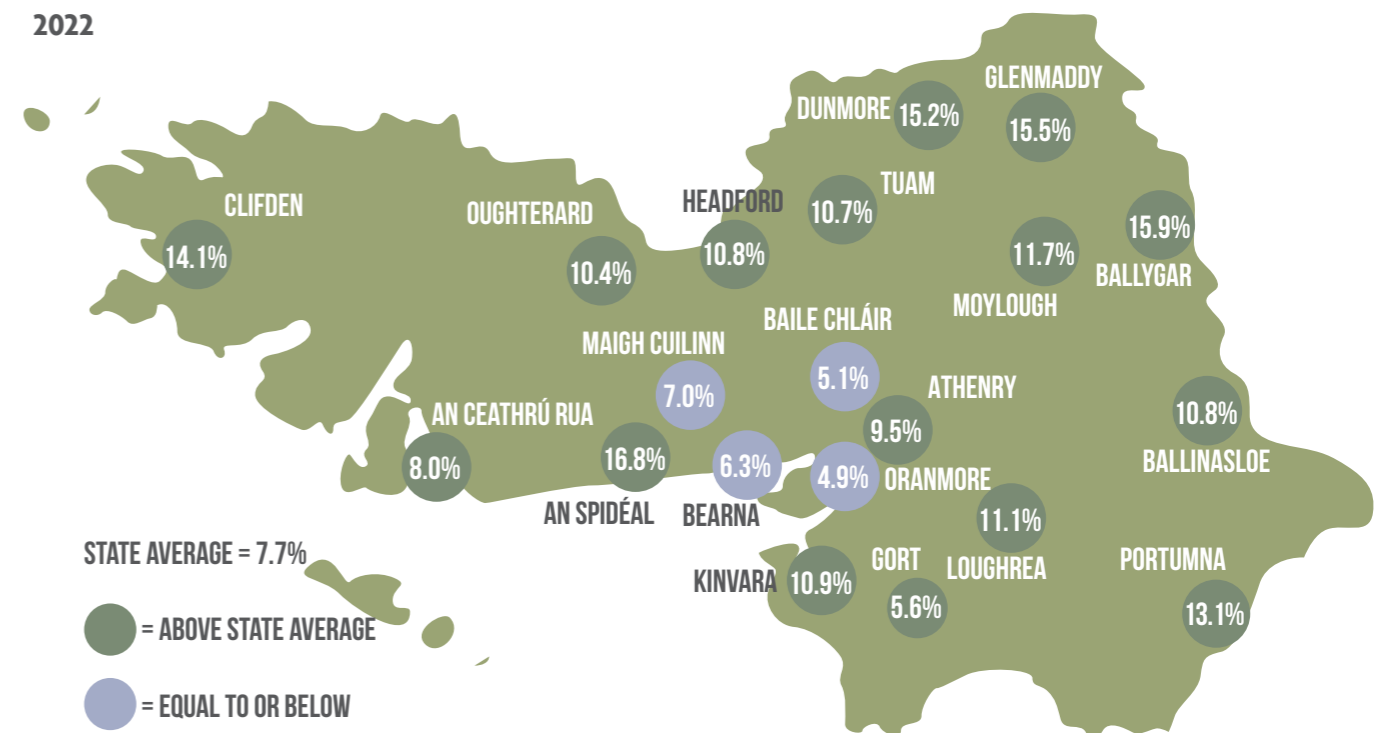
Data from Census 2022 gives a measurement of housing stock, which is occupied households and vacant residential dwellings. It is important to note dwellings under construction and derelict properties are not included in the count of vacant dwellings and that a dwelling classified as vacant for census purposes does not necessarily imply that it is available for re-use. In 2022, the residential vacancy rate in Galway County (10.7%) this was lower than the

Northern and Western Region (NWR) (11.5%), but higher than the State rate (7.7%).

Galway County had an unoccupied holiday home rate of 5.2% in 2022, which showed a rise from the 2016 rate of 4.9%. The figures for both years were lower than the NWR, but higher than the State.

According to the January 2022 analysis of regional vacancy and dereliction by the NWR, the following towns in Galway County were above the State Average of residential vacancy & dereliction of 4.9% (the average rate for Galway City and County was 6.8% in 2020).

Figure 3.2: Galway County Towns with above State Average residential vacancy and dereliction rate 2022





### 3.3 Demographic Profile

#### A growing population

Between 2016 and 2022, Galway County experienced an increase in population, rising from 179,390 to 193,323 residents. This was a growth rate of 7.8%. This growth rate was slightly higher than the combined rate for Galway City and County, which stood at 7.6%. At the MD level, Loughrea MD showed above average population growth with a rate of 10.1%, surpassing the overall growth rate of Galway County. Moreover, the population growth rate in Galway County closely mirrors the expansion in housing stock, which recorded a growth rate of 7.9% over the same period, indicating a balanced provision of housing to accommodate the growing population.

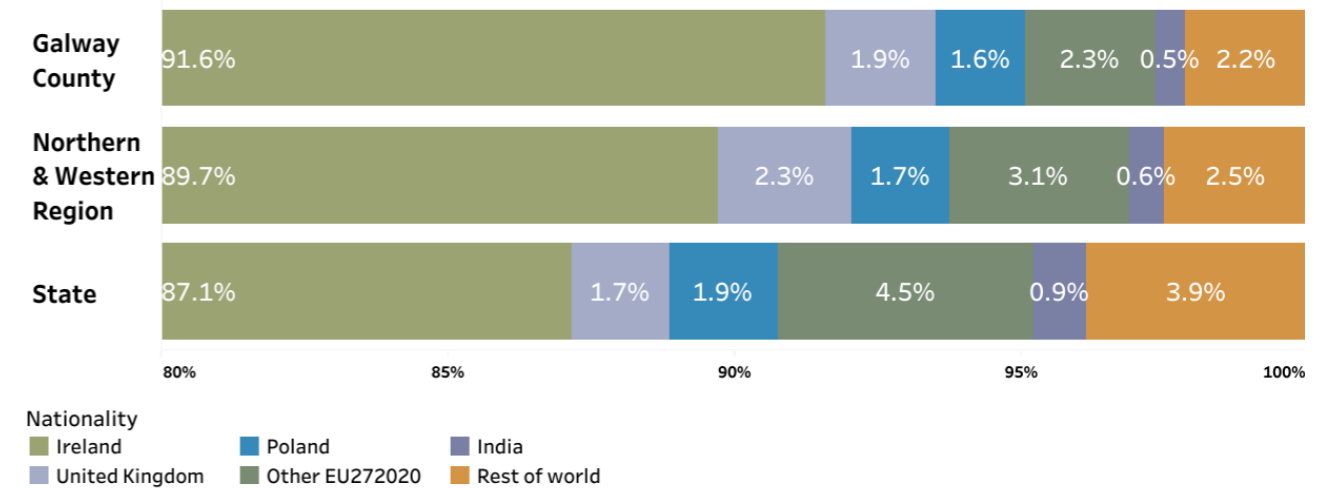
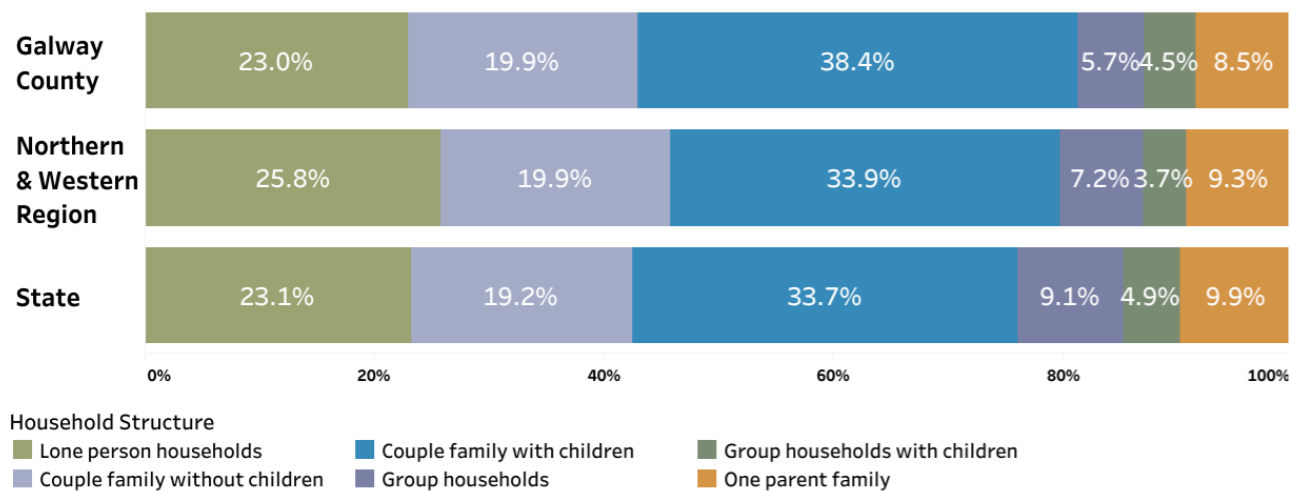
Examining the sources of population growth reveals that 46.0% of Galway County's population increase stemmed from natural increase (births minus deaths). This percentage contrasts with the NWR's average of 37.9%, with Galway City reporting the highest rate at 53.3% and Leitrim the lowest at 24.4%. Inward migration accounted for the remaining 54.0% of population growth in Galway County, lower than the NWR's average of 62.1%.

#### An ageing population

In 2022, Galway County was shown to have varying demographic statistics compared to national and regional averages. With an average age of 39.7, slightly higher than the national mean of 38.8, the County saw an increase from its 2016 figure of 38.1. This demographic shift was accompanied by an age

dependency ratio of 60.3%, or, six dependents for every ten individuals of working age.

Notably, Galway County's Youth Dependency ratio stood at 33.6%, exceeding the State average of 30.1%, with Athenry (35.5%) and Loughrea (34.7%) recording the highest ratios at the MD level. Moreover, Galway County had higher proportions of infants, preschoolers, primary schoolers, and secondary schoolers compared to both the NWR and the State. Conversely, its Old Age Dependency ratio, at 26.7%, was higher than the State average of 23.1%, with Ballinasloe (32.6%) and Conamara (32.1%) emerging as the MDs with the highest ratios. Despite showing lower proportions of certain elderly age groups compared to the NWR, Galway County still recorded higher figures than the State.



#### High proportions of married people and families

While just over half (50.9%) of Galway County reported their marital status as single in 2022, this was lower than the proportions in the NWR (52.0%), and the State (53.9%). Instead, Galway County had a high proportion of married people (40.5%) when compared to the NWR (38.7%), and the State (37.1%).

As would be expected, given the high proportion of married people, the proportion of households that were couple families with children (38.4%) and without children (19.9%) were higher than the State averages (33.7% and 19.2% respectively). Conversely, the proportion of lone person

households (23.0%) and one-parent family households (8.5%) in Galway County were below the State average (23.1% and 9.9% respectively).

#### An increasingly diverse population

In 2022, Galway County exhibited a predominantly White Irish population, accounting for 87.2% of its residents. The remainder consisted of White Irish Travellers (1.4%), Asian or Asian Irish (1.6%), Black or Black Irish (0.6%), Other White (7.8%), and 1.4% identified as another ethnicity. This demographic makeup reflected relatively low diversity compared to the national level, where White Irish comprised 81.6% of the population.

However, over the period from

2016 to 2022, Galway County experienced an increase in the proportions of individuals identifying as Asian or Asian Irish (+0.7%), Black or Black Irish (+0.1%), Other White (+0.3%), and Other ethnicities (+0.3%).

Tuam was the most ethnically diverse MD within Galway County in 2022, with White Irish only accounting for 84.5% of its population. The remaining population comprised of White Irish Travellers (2.5%), Asian or Asian Irish (1.8%), Black or Black Irish (1.1%), Other White (8.8%), and other ethnicities (1.4%).

Galway County had a higher proportion of Irish nationals (91.6%) compared to both the NWR (89.7%) and the State (87.1%) in 2022. Additionally, it had the highest population of Irish Travellers in the State, numbering 2,509 in 2022, albeit down from 2,640 in 2016. This

population represented 7.6% of the Irish Traveller population in the State. Notably, the MDs of Ballinasloe (27.5 per 1,000 total population) and Tuam (23.5 per 1,000 total population) reported the highest proportions of Irish Travellers relative to their total populations.

In terms of nationality, Galway County had a high proportion of Irish Nationals (91.6%) compared to the State (87.1%) in 2022. The remaining nationalities included the UK (1.9%), Poland (1.6%), India (0.5%), Other EU27 (2.3%) and other countries (2.2%).

Additionally, as of the 6th of February 2022, over 3,600 Ukrainian Nationals had been accommodated in over 20 different locations throughout Galway County as Temporary Beneficiaries of Protection, reflecting the County's response to the war in Ukraine.

### A multilingual population

In Galway County, a notable proportion of the population aged 3 and over reported being able to speak Irish, with the figure standing at 50.3%. This surpassed the State's proportion of 40.4%, which is to be expected given that Galway County has the largest Gaeltacht population in the country.

Among those who reported speaking languages other than English at home, Galway County had a large number of Polish speakers, comprising 22.5% of this demographic. This exceeded both the NWA average of 20.7% and exceeded the statewide average of 16.5%, underscoring the County's diverse linguistic landscape.

However, despite the linguistic diversity within Galway County, the proportion of foreign language speakers who reported speaking English 'Not well' or 'Not at all' was 13.2%. This figure matches the State's rate but was lower than the NWR's proportion of 15.4%.

### Relatively good health, and a high proportion of carers

In Galway County, a significant majority of individuals rated their general health as good or very good, comprising 89.3% of the population. This figure surpassed both the NWR's rating of 88.1% and the national average of 88.9%. However, there was a decline of 3% in self-reported health ratings since 2016, a trend consistent with NWR and State levels.

According to Census 2022, the proportion of individuals reporting a disability in Galway

County stood at 20.0%, marking the lowest rate within the NWR and lower than the national rate of 21.5%. At the MD level, Ballinasloe MD exhibited a higher disability rate at 21.9% compared to the State, while the remaining four MDs reported lower disability rates. Additionally, Galway County reported a relatively high percentage of carers within its population, with 6.5% of individuals serving in this capacity, surpassing the State average of 5.8%. This trend was consistent among all rural counties in the NWR, where the carer population ranged between 6.4% to 6.9%.

### A lower proportion of Volunteers than the State

The proportion of people who reported that they took part in volunteering activities related to social, charitable, religious, political, sporting or community organisations across Galway County was 16.2%. This was lower than the State average of 18.0%.

### Relatively Safe County with decreasing crime rate

Across 2022, a total of 3,462 crimes were recorded in the 44 Garda stations in Galway County. This represented 1.7% of the total crimes recorded in the State, a low proportion

given that Galway County represented 3.8% of the population. This represented a short-term increase from 3,038 in 2020, but a much more significant long-term decrease from 5,463 in 2008. Of those

crimes in 2022, the most common offences were theft and related offences (20.5%), attempts/threats to murder, assaults, harassment and related offences (16.5%) and public order and other social code

offences (14.8%). These were same three categories that were most common across the State.

### KEY FINDINGS:

- Galway County's population is growing at a slightly lower rate than the State average, however, Loughrea MD has seen more rapid population growth. This growth is relatively balanced with just over half through inward migration and just under half through natural growth. A similar growth in housing stock suggests the provision of housing has been able to keep up with population growth.
- Galway County had a younger age profile, with high proportions of children and teenagers, however, the population is ageing, shown by an increased average age between 2016 and 2022. These suggest needs for both young family supports such as childcare as well as age-related supports for accessibility and preventing isolation.
- Galway County had relatively low diversity compared to the State, however, the population as a whole did see increases in diversity between 2016 and 2022. Galway County had the largest Traveller population of any administrative county in 2022 however this number has down from 2016. Ballinasloe MD and Tuam MD particularly had high proportions of Travellers. Increasing diversity highlights the need for integration support to ensure that new communities are valued and represented in Galway County.
- Over half of the population in Galway County spoke Irish, significantly higher than the State average. There were also significant populations of foreign language speakers in Galway County, particularly Polish speakers. This shows a need to continue preserving the Irish language within Galway County, but also a make sure important information is available in a range of languages and to support those with limited English-speaking ability.
- Galway County is relatively healthy, with 2022 data showing a higher proportion of people reporting good or very good health and a lower disability rate, compared to the State. Health supports need to be appropriate and targeted to where they will be most effective, particularly with an ageing population.
- While the crime rate in Galway County has significantly decreased since 2008, 2022 had slightly higher numbers of crimes than the pre-COVID years of 2018 and 2019.

### 3.4 Education, Employment and Deprivation Profile

#### A well-educated population

In Galway County, Census 2022 revealed notable educational trends within the population. The data indicated that 2.6% of residents had no formal education, while 8.7% had completed primary education, 13.2% had achieved a lower secondary level, and 19.4% had attained an upper secondary level. These proportions closely mirrored those reported at the national level, suggesting consistency in educational attainment across the State.

However, Galway County demonstrated a higher

prevalence of individuals completing their formal education at 21 years or older, accounting for 43.5% of the population. This figure exceeded both the NWR's rate of 39.7% and the national average of 42.4%, indicating a trend towards people attending third-level education.

Between 2016 and 2022, Galway County experienced an increase in the proportion of individuals holding tertiary education qualifications, rising from 50.4% to 56.1%. This upward trajectory underscores a growing emphasis on higher education attainment within Galway County.

In terms of gender disparities in educational attainment, Census 2022 highlighted a notable gap between females and males. Specifically, 41.3% of females

had achieved a bachelor's level qualification or higher, compared to 30.3% of males with both genders in Galway County exhibiting higher levels of education compared to the State averages.

Recognising the critical role of human capital in driving economic prosperity and social advancement, investments in higher education and

vocational training have been pivotal in shaping Ireland's socioeconomic landscape. According to the Higher Education Authority, a total of 4,835 students originating from Galway City and County graduated from Higher Education Institutes in 2022, marking a 12% increase since 2018. Additionally, data from the Department of Education revealed fluctuations in

enrolment in Further Education and Training (FET) programs within the Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board (ETB). Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, FET beneficiary numbers stood at 21,184 in 2019 but declined to 15,044 in 2020, attributing the decrease to the pandemic's disruptive effects on educational activities.

#### A highly skilled Workforce

Galway County demonstrates a higher proportion of professional, managerial, and technical workers at 44.4%, surpassing both the NWR (40.4%) and the State (44.1%). Notably, Loughrea (53.0%) and Athenry (52.2%) stand out at the Electoral Division level. Conversely, Galway County witnessed a decline in the proportion of farmers by -5.1% from 2016 to 2022, in line with the regional trend of -4.4%.

#### Slightly low labour force participation rates compared to the State

In 2022, Galway County reported a labour force participation rate of 60.6%, slightly below the statewide average of 61.2%. This metric measures the proportion of individuals aged 15 years

and older who are either employed or available for work and excludes students, homemakers, retirees, and those unable to work due to disability. Analysis revealed that while the female labour force participation rate in Galway County (55.7%) closely mirrored the State average (55.6%), the male participation rate was slightly lower, standing at 65.7%, compared to 67% for the State.

#### Lowest unemployment rate in the Region

In 2022, Galway County exhibited a lower unemployment rate (7.2%) than that of the State (8.3%), marking the lowest rate within the NWR. Particularly noteworthy were the low unemployment rates in Athenry MD at 5.7% and Loughrea MD at 6.0%, whereas Conamara MD at 8.9% and Ballinasloe at 8.7% reported rates above the State average. This marked a significant decrease from the unemployment rate of 11.7% recorded in Galway County in 2016.

However, long-term unemployment, defined as a duration of 12 months or more, affected 60.9% of unemployed individuals in Galway County, with 58.8% being female and 62.7% male. This trend closely mirrored the average of 60.2%

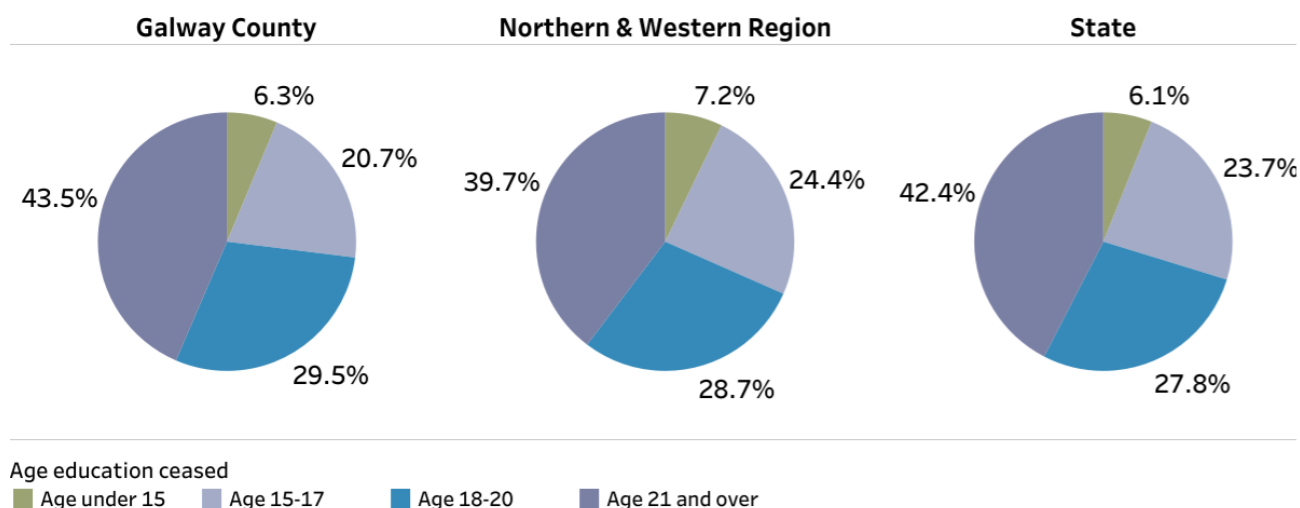
in the State, with 59% female and 61.1% male. As of February 2024, 4,101 people were on the Live Register across the Galway County Social Welfare Offices of Ballinasloe, Clifden, Gort, Loughrea and Tuam. This represents a 25.0% decrease from the total in February of 2019 (5,467).

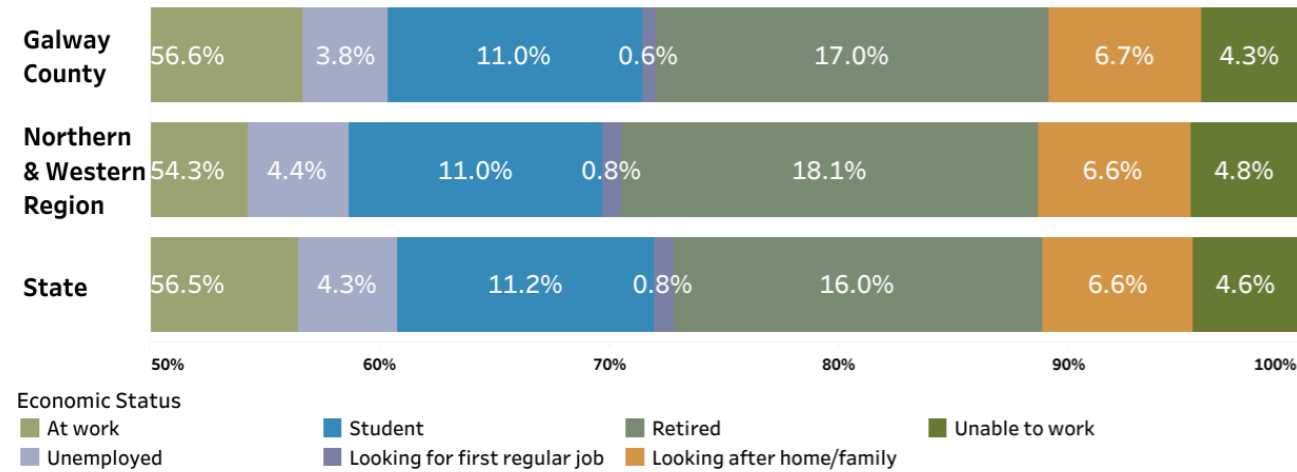
#### Diverse Range of Employment Sectors

Census data from 2022 highlights the prominent employment sectors in Galway County, with Professional Services at 26.7%, Commerce and Trade at 19.3%, and Manufacturing Industries at 16.9%. These sectors serve as vital contributors to the County's economic landscape.

According to the NWRA, key sectors identified through stakeholder consultations and research for the RSES include:

- Tourism
- Renewable Energy and Low Carbon Economy
- Marine and Blue Economy
- ICT and Life Sciences
- Agri-Tech and Agri-Food
- Retail
- Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering.





These sectors are integral to fostering balanced regional development in alignment with national frameworks.

The County Galway Tourism Strategy 2023-2031 targets a 10% increase in overall visitor spend by 2030. Currently, Galway attracts 984,000 domestic trips and 1.7 million overseas visitors, generating €754 million in tourism expenditure. The strategy aims to attract longer-staying visitors who spend more in Galway's towns and villages by further promoting the County's significant tourism potential.

The presence of IDA client companies in Galway City and County has shown substantial growth, increasing from 66 in 2011 to 99 in 2022. These companies provided direct employment to 24,400

individuals in 2022, marking consistent net job growth over the past decade. Additionally, Galway-based client companies now constitute 5.6% of the total IDA stock. Similarly, direct employment in client companies supported by Enterprise Ireland has risen from 6,103 in 2010 to 8,651 in 2022.

Local enterprise development initiatives have also played a significant role in employment generation. In 2022, client companies supported by the Galway Local Enterprise Office employed 1,192 individuals, contributing to the County's economic vibrancy.

A comprehensive analysis conducted by the Western Development Commission in 2019 revealed a thriving enterprise landscape in Galway

County. The report identified 18,003 active enterprises, accounting for 5.3% of the State activity, engaging 104,035 individuals, representing 4.6% of State activity. These findings underscore the robust entrepreneurial ecosystem and employment opportunities within the County.

### SMEs account for the vast majority of enterprises but employ less than 75% of the Workforce

Micro-enterprises, defined as those employing fewer than 10 individuals, made up the majority of active enterprises in Galway City and County, accounting for 91.5% of the total. Despite their prevalence, they represented only 19.9% of the County's workforce. Small to medium enterprises

(SMEs), employing fewer than 250 individuals, constituted 99.8% of all enterprises in Galway and accounted for 74.3% of the workforce. This underscores the significant contribution of SMEs to local employment and economic activity.

Although fewer in number, large enterprises (250+ employees) held substantial influence due to their sizable workforce. Despite accounting for only 0.2% of active enterprises, the thirty large enterprises registered in Galway City and County collectively employed 17,792 individuals, representing 25.7% of the total workforce. Notably, sectors such as construction (19.6%), wholesale & retail (13.9%), and professional, technical, and scientific services (10.4%) emerged as key contributors to the County's enterprise landscape.

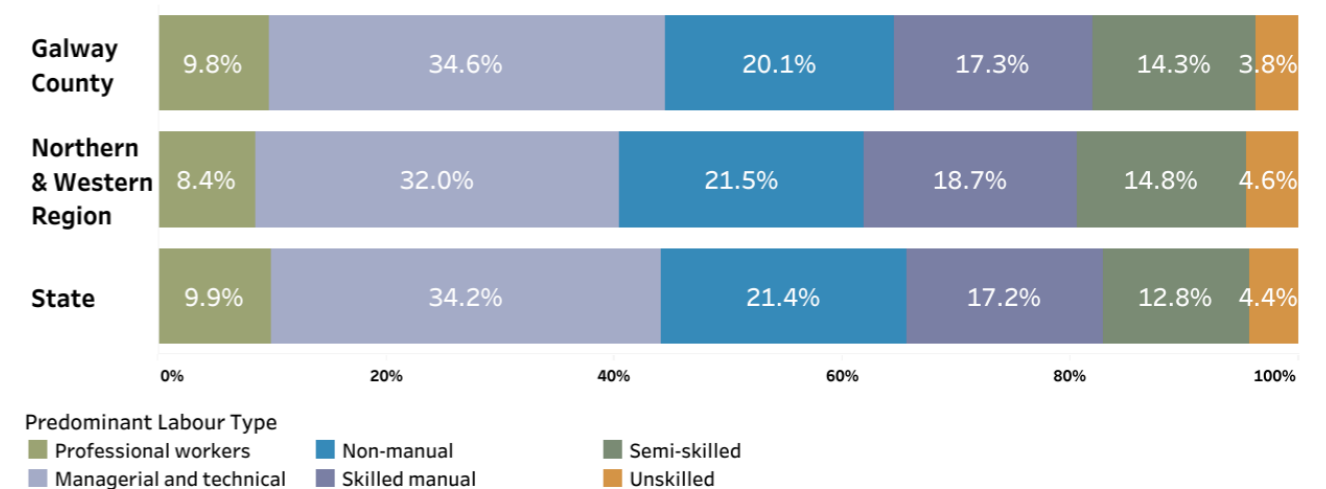
### Disposable Income gap between Region and State Widening

A critical gauge of economic prosperity is the level of disposable income per capita, which serves as a significant indicator of household purchasing power and housing affordability. In 2021, the average disposable income in Galway City and County amounted to €23,495 per person. This figure is slightly below the State Average of €24,376 per capita. Evaluating disposable income levels provides valuable insights into the financial well-being of individuals and households within Galway, informing broader assessments of economic health and standard of living within the region.

### Varying rates of deprivation

The Pobal HP Deprivation Index measures the relative affluence and deprivation of geographical areas. Per Census 2022 data, 4.3% of the EDs in Galway County were Affluent, 49.3% were Marginally Above Average, 41.1% were Marginally Below Average and 5.3% were Disadvantaged.

Despite being classified as Marginally Above Average at a County level overall, certain areas exhibit pockets of high levels of disadvantage. For instance, within Ballinasloe Urban ED, and Tuam Urban ED, there are pockets of areas classified as Disadvantaged and Extremely Disadvantaged. This highlights the need for targeted interventions to address localised deprivation.



### A lower proportion of people working from home compared to the State

The national trend towards remote work saw a significant 173% increase from Census 2016 to 2022. In Galway County, however, a slightly lower proportion of individuals, at 29.8%, reported working from home compared to the State average of 32.2%. Galway City led the NWR with 31.1% of its population engaged in remote work. Notably, residential dwellings in Galway County showed longer distances to remote work hubs, with 43.2% within 5km and 26.2% located 10km or more away, contrasting with the State average of 57.6% within 5km and 17.8% at 10km or more.

### A lower proportion of households connected to the Internet compared to the State

Galway County had a higher proportion of households without internet access (11.3%) compared to the State average (8.7%), and a lower proportion with broadband connectivity (75.2%) compared to the State (79.4%). These findings

reveal disparities in internet access, emphasising the need for efforts to improve digital infrastructure and ensure equitable access to online resources and opportunities.

### Higher Commercial Vacancy Rate than the State

The economic vitality of towns and villages can be impacted by the prevalence of vacant commercial properties.

In Galway City and County, as of September 2020, the number of vacant commercial properties stood at 1,621, with a commercial vacancy rate of 13.4%. This rate exceeds the State Average

of 11.4%. In response to this issue, the NWRA report offers recommendations aimed at revitalising town centres and villages. These recommendations include prioritising initiatives such as Town Centre First and schemes like URDF, RRDF, ERDF, and the Town and Village Renewal Scheme.



### KEY FINDINGS:

- Education rates across Galway County were high, with an increase in the proportion of people with tertiary education between 2016 and 2022. FET data also shows that the number of students from Galway graduating from higher education institutions across Ireland has also increased. Overall, this suggests that education and training is a strength in the Galway County that can continue to be built upon.
- This high education level is reflected in the high proportion of professional, managerial and technical workers across Galway County compared to the State. In terms of industrial sector, the largest employers in Galway County were Professional Services, Commerce and Trade and Manufacturing Industries. This may indicate a growing need for ongoing training and development supports, and for sufficient infrastructure to support the sustainable growth of these sectors.
- The unemployment rate in Galway County is the lowest in the NWR and lower than the State average. Despite this, there are areas of deprivation in Galway County, with almost half of the EDs ranking marginally below average or disadvantaged in the HP Deprivation Index 2022. The County also has two unemployment blackspots, and there is a below average level of disposable income across Galway County. Taken together, these figures may suggest a growing need for targeted employment and financial supports, with particular attention in areas experiencing high deprivation and unemployment.
- Enterprise in Galway County has seen significant growth, with the number of IDA client companies and companies supported by the Galway LEO growing to nearly 10,000 in 2022. The majority of enterprises across Galway were SMEs, with only 30 large companies registered. However, these companies did make up over a quarter of the employees. The presence and success of these 30 large companies suggests the potential for clustering and attracting new enterprises to locate in the County. The relatively high number of SMEs may indicate the potential to provide ongoing innovation and business supports, for example digitalisation services, mentoring, small business start-up programmes, and guidance for scaling up small businesses.

## 3.5 Environmental Profile

### Low litter pollution compared to the State in some areas, but significantly higher in others

The National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC) assesses the environmental performance of Local Authorities, including Galway County, through various surveys. One such survey evaluates litter pollution across different categories. In 2022, 20% of Galway County was

emphasising as unpolluted or litter-free, aligning with the State's proportion. The percentage of slightly polluted areas in Galway County stood at 43%, lower than the national median of 62%. However, 7% of Galway County was classified as significantly polluted, marking a deviation of 6 percentage points from the national median of 1%. These findings shed light on the varying degrees of litter pollution within Galway County, emphasising the need for targeted interventions to address areas of significant pollution and maintain environmental quality across the region.

### Relatively good ecological status of lakes and rivers in Galway County

LECPs offer Local Authorities a platform to enhance and safeguard local ecosystems. In Galway County, these efforts have yielded notable results. According to the EPA's "Water Quality in Ireland 2013-2018" report, Galway County boasts a higher proportion of river water bodies (56%) and lake water bodies (79%) with satisfactory ecological status compared to the State averages of 53% and 50%, respectively. These

findings underscore Galway County's commitment to biodiversity preservation and highlight the effectiveness of local initiatives in maintaining ecological health.

### Overall decline in afforestation since 2007

In Galway City and County, afforestation levels have fluctuated in recent years. Peaking at 561 hectares in 2010, afforestation has since declined, reaching a low of 96 hectares in 2020, with a slight increase to 144 hectares in 2021. As of 2022, the total forest area in Galway City and County stands at 63,795 hectares, representing 10.4% of the total area, according to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. The Figure below displays the total afforestation in Hectares (ha) in Galway for each year between 2007 and 2021.

### A relatively low proportion of households connected to public mains water supply.

In 2022, Galway County had lower rates of households connected to public mains for water supply (57%) compared to the NWR (71%) and the State (82%). As would be expected,

a higher proportion of households in Galway County (29%) were connected to group water schemes compared to the NWR (20%) and the State (5%). According to Uisce Éireann's Water Supply Capacity Register as of June 2023, all 43 water sources in Galway City and County have potential capacity available, but 79.1% of them require improvements to meet projected population targets up to 2031.

### Most Wastewater Treatment plants operating within capacity

Effective wastewater infrastructure is essential for facilitating future population and employment growth in Galway County's towns and villages. According to Uisce Éireann's June 2022 Wastewater Treatment Capacity Register, only four (11.4%) of the 35 settlements in Galway County lack additional treatment capacity. Each of these settlements either had Wastewater Treatment Plant projects planned or underway. Additionally, 61% of households in Galway County rely on individual septic tanks for sewerage treatment, a higher proportion compared to both the NWR (46%) and the State (21%).

### Higher levels of car ownership than the Region

In 2022, 7.9% of households in Galway County did not own a car. This was lower than both the region (11.4%) and the State (14.4%). Additionally, 55.5% of Galway County households owned more than one car, surpassing regional (47.7%) and national (44.7%) averages. Moreover, 80.9% of Galway County residents commuted to work by personal vehicle, higher than the region (78.7%) and the State (68.2%), while only 7.3% used active or public transport, contrasting with the State average of 19.7%. These findings underscore the County's reliance on personal vehicles for commuting and highlight opportunities for promoting alternative transportation methods to enhance sustainability.

### Uptake of EVs is lower than the State but rising

The transition to a low-carbon economy in the NWR heavily relies on the adoption of Electric Vehicles (EVs). In 2021, Galway City and County saw 339 EVs licensed, constituting 4.3% of all new and second-hand private cars licensed for the first time, slightly below the national average of 5.3%. By





January to May 2022, Galway City and County's EV share increased to 9.5%, yet remained slightly below the State average of 10.2%. The availability of EV charging infrastructure is vital to bolstering EV adoption in the region. Real-time data on public and private EV bays/stations is accessible through resources like "Open Charge Map" and the ESB's real-time map, providing valuable information for stakeholders and potential EV owners.

### BER scores lower than State average

Supporting households and businesses in enhancing their Building Energy Ratings (BER) is instrumental in facilitating the region's transition to a low-carbon economy. From 2009 to Q3-2023, 27% of audited

residential dwellings nationwide achieved BERs between "A" and "B". Within Galway County, 23% of audited residential dwellings achieved similar ratings. Conversely, in the non-residential sector, 17% of audited buildings across Ireland achieved BERs between "A" and "B", with 18% of audited non-residential buildings in Galway County attaining these ratings.

### Almost twice as many homes use Renewable Energy Sources for heating as opposed to turf

In the NWR, oil serves as the primary home heating fuel for 59% of households, notably higher than the 34% observed in the rest of the State. This disparity is largely attributed to limited access to natural

gas across most of the NWR, where only 5% of households utilise it, in stark contrast to the 39% in other areas of the State. Peat also features more prominently as a home heating fuel in the NWR, accounting for 11% of households, compared to just 2% in the rest of the State. Peat usage varies significantly between counties, with Galway County and Roscommon exhibiting higher rates (18% and 20% respectively) compared to Clare (5%) and Galway City (1%).

Census 2022 introduced a new question on renewable energy sources for heating, revealing that 34% of households in Galway County utilise renewable energy sources. This rate surpasses the figures for the NWR (28%) and the rest of the State (25%), although Galway City records the lowest rate at 17%. These insights

underscore the regional differences in heating fuel choices and highlight the growing adoption of renewable energy sources in Galway County.

### Wind generates power and revenue

The Climate Action Plan prioritises increasing the share of renewable electricity to 80% by 2030, with a focus on wind and solar energy technologies to achieve this target. Galway County has made strides in wind energy, with an installed

capacity of 326 MW across eight wind farms as of October 2021, contributing 7.5% of the State's total installed wind energy capacity. This significant capacity translates into substantial commercial rates for Galway County Council, with Wind Energy Ireland data indicating that €2.3 million in commercial rates were attributable to the onshore wind energy sector in 2020, comprising 7.3% of the County Council's total rates collection for that year.

### KEY FINDINGS:

- Transportation within Galway County could be more sustainable, with over half of all households having more than one car. In addition to this the uptake of electric vehicles was slower than the state but has seen recent increases. This high car usage ownership was reflected in commuting patterns, with active and public transport usage lower in Galway County than the State. Actions to promote public and active transport as well as other sustainable transport solutions could reduce the environmental impact of transport across Galway County.
- Galway County has both strengths and areas for improvement in terms of energy production and usage. Residentially, Galway County were below State average in the proportion of households with good BERs, meaning the efficiency of energy use was low across the Galway County. However, Galway County was ahead of the State average when it came to households with installed renewable energy sources. Galway County also has significant wind energy capacity installed within the County and off the coast. This suggests that Galway County is progressing towards a sustainable generation of energy, however, there are opportunities to improve how efficiently this energy is used across the County.

# DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS SNAPSHOT

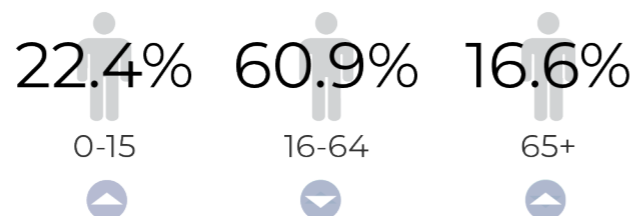
▲ LOWER THAN THE STATE  
▼ HIGHER THAN THE STATE

## POPULATION 2022

193,323

▼ 7.8% 2016-2022 population growth

## AGE STRUCTURE

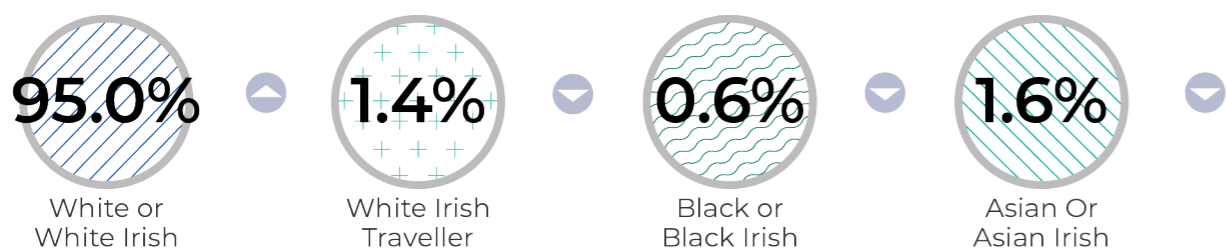


## NATIONALITY

▼ ...less than 1 in 10 residents are Non-Irish nationals



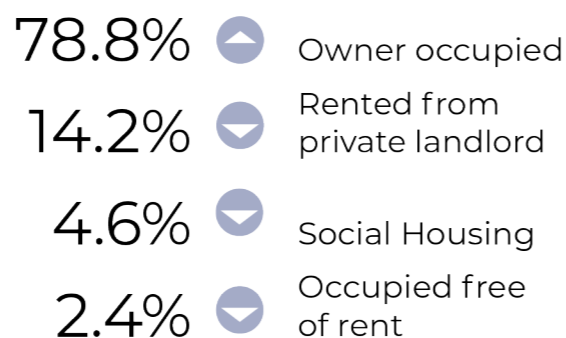
## ETHNICITY



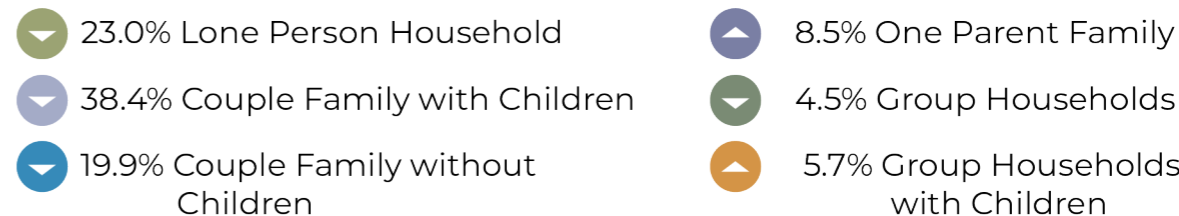
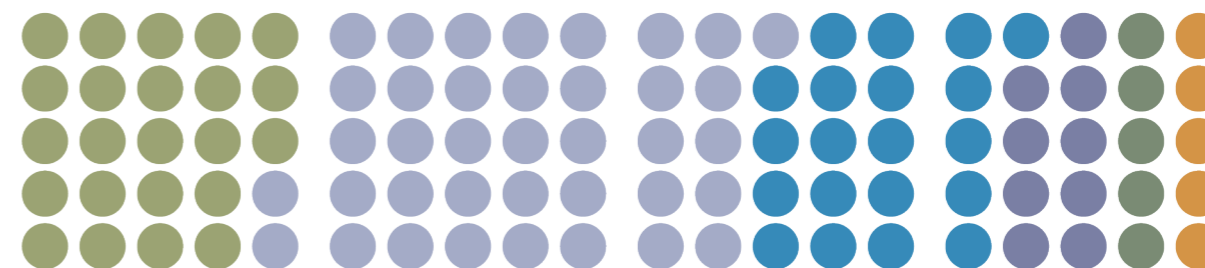
## HOUSING STOCK

82,337

▼ 5.3% housing growth from 2016 - 2022



## HOUSEHOLDS

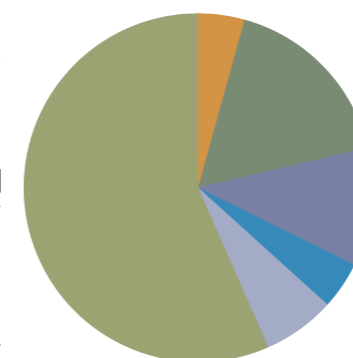


## ECONOMIC STATUS

56.6% ▲ At work

4.4% ▼ Unemployed

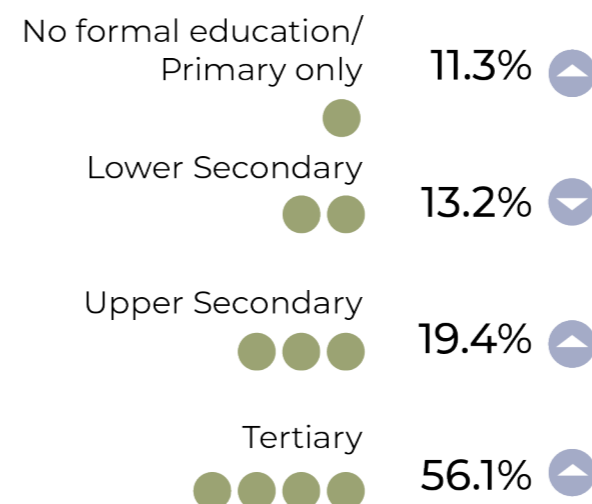
11.0% ▼ Student



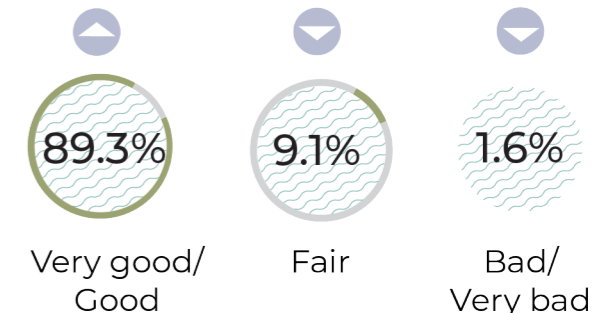
Looking after home or family ▲ 6.7%

Retired ▲ 17.0%  
Unable to work due to sickness or disability ▼ 4.3%

## EDUCATION LEVEL



## HEALTH



## DISABILITY

20% of residents reported having a disability of any extent.



# 4.0 POLICY CONTEXT

The LECP 2023-2029 is the primary mechanism for delivering national and regional goals at the local level. The Table below outlines the national strategies that make up community, economic and environmental policy context and their regional and local counterparts. The LECP is informed by the goals, objectives and best practices outlined in these and other plans and strategies. An important element of the 2023-2029 LECP is an increased focus on climate action

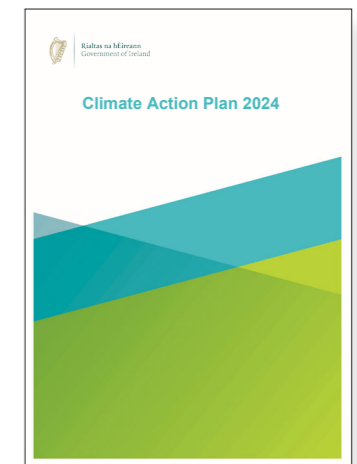
and sustainability. Section 7, which deals with the High-Level Goals, has been guided by National, Regional and Local policies and aligns each goal to the objectives of the SDGs.

Regional & Local Policies

REGIONAL SPATIAL AND ECONOMIC STRATEGY 2020-2032 (NWRA)	WEST REGIONAL ENTERPRISE PLAN TO 2024	GALWAY COUNTY CORPORATE PLAN 2020- 2024	GALWAY COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2023-2029	GALWAY COUNTY TRANSPORT AND PLANNING STRATEGY 2022-2028
COUNTY GALWAY TOURISM STRATEGY 2023-2031	GALWAY COUNTY CULTURE AND CREATIVITY STRATEGY 2023-2027	GALWAY COUNTY 2040	GALWAY COUNTY PPN WORKPLAN 2022	GALWAY COUNTY HERITAGE AND BIODIVERSITY PLAN 2017-2022
GALWAY AGE FRIENDLY ALLIANCE WORKPLAN 2022	GALWAY COUNTY DIGITAL STRATEGY 2020-2023	GALWAY CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAN 2021-2023	TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION PROGRAMME 2019-2024	GALWAY LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 2016 – 2021

National Policies

NATIONAL ECONOMIC PLAN (NEP)	ENTERPRISE 2025 RENEWED	NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2018-2027 (NDP)	OUR RURAL FUTURE: RURAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY 2021-2025
CONNECTING IRELAND RURAL MOBILITY PLAN HOUSING FOR ALL: A NEW HOUSING PLAN FOR IRELAND	CLIMATE ACTION PLAN 2024 (CAP24)	THE NATION STRATEGY FOR MIGRANT INTEGRATION (FORTHCOMING, 2024)	
CONNECTING IRELAND RURAL MOBILITY PLAN HOUSING FOR ALL: A NEW HOUSING PLAN FOR IRELAND	CLIMATE ACTION PLAN 2024 (CAP24)	THE NATION STRATEGY FOR MIGRANT INTEGRATION (FORTHCOMING, 2024)	
PATHWAYS TO WORK STRATEGY 2021 - 2025	ROADMAP FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION 2020-2025	SUSTAINABLE, INCLUSIVE AND EMPOWERED COMMUNITIES 2019-2024	TOWN CENTRE FIRST POLICY
NATIONAL ECONOMIC PLAN (NEP)	ENTERPRISE 2025 RENEWED	NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2018-2027 (NDP)	OUR RURAL FUTURE: RURAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY 2021-2025
THE NATIONAL SME AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP GROWTH PLAN	NATIONAL SOCIAL ENTERPRISE POLICY FOR IRELAND 2024-2027 (FORTHCOMING)	NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2018-2027 (NDP) OUR RURAL FUTURE: RURAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY 2021-2025	



## 5.0 SCOT ANALYSIS

The following section provides a SCOT (Strengths, Opportunities, Challenges and Threats) analysis based on the previously outlined social, economic and environmental profile. This information has been used to identify potential needs and to inform the Vision, High-Level Goals and potential strategic objective areas.

### STRENGTHS

- Rich and diverse physical landscape.
- High proportion of the population live in rural areas.
- Accessible to major cities and employment zones.
- Almost all towns/BUAs experiencing population growth.
- Population and housing stock increasing at similar rates
- Easy access to Galway City and third-level institutions such as NUI Galway and ATU Galway City
- Relatively low crime rates
- County Galway is home to the largest Gaeltacht Irish-speaking region in Ireland
- A diverse, multilingual population
- People are living healthier for longer
- A well-educated, highly skilled workforce
- Increasing employment rates and lowest unemployment in the Region.
- High employment and diverse range of High employment sectors
- The country's four most populated offshore islands, Inis Mór, Inis Óirr, Inis Meáin and Inisbofin, are part of Galway County.
- Sufficient capacity in water and wastewater facilities
- Comparatively high uptake of renewable heating energy in the home

### CHALLENGES

- Relatively higher residential and commercial vacancy rates than the State average.
- An ageing profile with an increasing average age profile
- Relatively low proportions of volunteerism than the State average.
- Slightly lower Labour Force participation rates than the State average.
- Average disposable income low compared to the State average.
- Pockets of relatively high deprivation, particularly in Tuam and Ballinasloe among areas in Galway County.
- The offshore islands, require targeted dedicated supports and services.
- Growth in Ethnic Diversity and highest proportion of Irish Travellers in the State.
- Digital connectivity growing but behind the State average.
- Higher prevalence of areas classified as very polluted.
- Decline in recent afforestation levels (lower rates than average across 2013-2019).
- Less energy-efficient homes than the State average.

### OPPORTUNITIES

- Ensure a balanced approach to community development and infrastructure development that aligns with population growth.
- Promote ongoing community consultation and community engagement to ensure all groups are heard and represented.
- Utilise existing multiagency structures such as the LCDC, SPC, PPN among others to ensure joined up thinking and interagency collaboration.
- Continue to promote healthy lifestyle choices to ensure Galway can maintain its relatively high levels of general health.
- Promote the implementation of the Town Centre First policy to encourage development in urban cores and reduce urban sprawl in expanding BUAs.
- Targeted interventions and resources in areas that are experiencing higher levels of deprivation.
- Promote continued utilisation of Galway's geographical context to sustainably grow and diversify its tourism offering.
- Promote and incentivise adaptive reuse of vacant commercial properties.

### THREATS

- Global inflation rates and cost of living crisis.
- Geopolitical crisis.
- Local effects of climate change.
- Monitor and manage the advances of emerging technologies.

# 6.0 VISION & HIGH LEVEL GOALS

The overall direction of the LECP is guided by High-Level Goals. These main goals provide the core aims of the LECP and represent how Galway

County should grow over the lifetime of the plan. The six draft High-Level Goals below were developed to reflect the socio-economic analysis un-

dertaken (see section 3.0), and to align with existing policies and plans (see section 4.0). The High-Level Goals will be refined through consultation with the

public and key stakeholders. The draft High-Level Goals are below, along with some key questions for consideration.



## Goal 1: Active, Healthy and Safe Communities

Galway County where individuals and communities are supported to improve their health, wellbeing, and sense of safety & security.



## Goal 2: Equal, Inclusive and Engaged Communities

A County that strives to reduce poverty and disadvantage, and fosters social inclusion, through active citizen engagement and participation.



## Goal 3: A Culturally Rich County

A County with a clear sense of identity, reflecting its heritage, language, and culture.



## Goal 4: A County with Vibrant Urban and Rural Settlements

A County that is dedicated to the revitalisation and regeneration of its towns, villages, and islands in a sustainable manner.



## Goal 5: A Sustainable and Climate Resilient County

A County that protects its environment and supports the transformation to a climate-neutral society.



## Goal 6: An Economically Resilient County

A County that promotes sustainable economic and enterprise development and innovation.

The vision statement provides the overarching aim of the LECP. It is designed to support the vision statements of the County Development Plan and the NWR and provide a clear picture of what the LECP hopes to achieve in the long-term.

*"An inclusive County, with a clear sense of identity, where we work together to achieve the full economic, social, community, linguistic and cultural potential of Galway County and its people, through citizen engagement at a local level."*



### KEY QUESTIONS:

- Is the language of these goals accessible and easy to understand?
- Do these goals reflect how you think community and economic development should progress in Galway County?
- Is there anything missing?



# Goal 1: Active, Healthy and Safe Communities

To improve the health, wellbeing, and sense of safety & security, of individuals and communities across Galway County.



## Rationale for this High-Level Goal

Galway County has the lowest unemployment rate in the Region at 7.2%, and also lower than the State rate. However, there are still some areas affected by relatively high rates of social and economic deprivation. This, combined with the growing gap between the County and the State for disposable income may suggest the need for targeted financial and employment supports.

Galway County's high levels of education is a key strength which assists in maintaining its a highly skilled workforce. Galway County also benefits from easy access to Galway City and third-level institutions such as NUI Galway and ATU Galway City. Supporting existing work to keep people in education longer and consistently producing a high number of graduates may help to further employment opportunities and reduce the gap in disposable income. Again, targeting services such as return to education initiatives and FET institutions to areas of lower employment may help reduce levels of deprivation in particular areas.

While Galway County has slightly lower than State levels of ethnic and national diversity, it does have the highest population of Irish Travellers in the State. Ballinasloe and Tuam had particularly high populations of Travellers which may suggest a need for targeted supports and services coupled with supports and services that promote active citizen engagement and community participation.

Galway County has slightly lower levels of volunteering than the State. However, as of March 2024, there were approximately 1,300 active members in the Galway County Public Participation Network (1,298 as of March 2024), providing and availing of volunteering services. There are also a range of policies, plans and organisations in Galway County that the LECP will

aim to complement and support. Some of these include Galway County Age Friendly Alliance Workplan, Galway County Culture and Creativity Strategy and Galway Library Development Programme.

This goal aims to build upon the work of previous and current initiatives to reduce levels of deprivation in Galway County to continue developing an equal and inclusive community where people feel included, represented and able to engage and participate in their community.

## Examples of possible objectives and focus areas:

- Providing freely accessible information on all available community supports across Galway County to the whole community, including resources for job seekers and potential employers.
- Promoting lifelong learning and skills development for all in Galway County, particularly in digital skills.
- Developing training, education, apprenticeships, and labour activation schemes to facilitate progression to employment and self-employment opportunities.
- Enhancing health, community and social care.

## What do you think?

- Do you agree with this goal and the key issues identified?
- What are the primary barriers to an active and healthy lifestyle, and how can they be addressed?
- What would make Galway County feel safer?
- What new initiatives or actions could be included under this goal?



# Goal 2: Equal, Inclusive and Engaged Communities



To reduce inequality, disadvantage and foster social inclusion in Galway County, through active citizen engagement and participation.



## Rationale for this High-Level Goal

Galway County has the lowest unemployment rate in the Region at 7.2%, which is lower than the State rate. However, there are still some areas affected by relatively high rates of deprivation. This, combined with the growing gap between the NWR and the State for disposable income may suggest the need for targeted financial and employment supports.

Galway County's high levels of education is a key strength which assists in maintaining its a highly skilled workforce. Galway County also benefits from easy access to Galway City and third-level institutions such as NUI Galway and ATU Galway City. Supporting existing work to keep people in education longer and consistently producing a high number of graduates may help to further employment opportunities and reduce the gap in disposable income. Again, targeting services such as return to education initiatives and FET institutions to areas of lower employment may help reduce levels of deprivation in particular areas.

While Galway County has slightly lower than State levels of ethnic and national diversity, however, it does have the highest population of Irish Travellers in the State. Ballinasloe and Tuam had particularly high populations of Travellers which may suggest that integration services in these areas could be of benefit to encourage and enable higher levels of and more representative active citizen engagement and community participation.

Galway County has slightly lower levels of volunteering than the State. While there are a number of active groups such as Galway County (1,298 according to the Galway County Public Participation Network) providing easier access to and disseminating information on available volunteering opportunities may be of

benefit to both people providing and availing of volunteering services.

There are already a range of policies, plans and organisations in Galway County that the LECPP will aim to complement and support. Some of these include Galway Age Friendly Alliance Workplan, Traveller Accommodation Programme, Galway County Culture and Creativity Strategy and Galway Library Development Programme.

This goal aims to build upon the work of previous and current initiatives to reduce levels of deprivation in Galway County to continue developing an equal and inclusive community where people feel included, represented and able to engage and participate in their community.

## Examples of possible objectives and focus areas:

- Providing freely accessible information on all available community supports across Galway County to the whole community, including resources for job seekers and potential employers.
- Promoting lifelong learning and skills development for all in Galway County, particularly in digital skills.
- Developing training, education, apprenticeships, and labour activation schemes to facilitate progression to employment and self-employment opportunities.
- Enhancing health, community and social care services and addressing poverty and social exclusion across Galway County.
- Reducing area-based poverty and disadvantage across the vulnerable areas of Galway County.

- Developing Galway County towards an inclusive, equal and integrated place that values and represents all of its communities.
- Celebrating the diversity of Galway County.
- Promoting strong representative structures that enable the voice of communities to be heard in policy development and implementation.

**What do you think?**

- Do you agree with this goal and the key issues identified?
- How do you think equal access to lifelong learning, education and employment can best be achieved?
- What measures can best promote social integration and inclusion at local level?
- How can community engagement through the PPN and other representative structures be strengthened?
- What initiatives or actions would you like to see included under this goal?



## Goal 3: A Culturally Rich County

A County with a clear sense of identity, reflecting its heritage, language, and culture.



### Rationale for this High-Level Goal

The Irish language is intrinsically linked to the culture and heritage of Galway County. Galway (County & City) has the largest Gaeltacht population in the State. Continuing to support initiatives that promote, protect and expand the use of the Irish language in Galway County may help to ensure this aspect of the County's identity is clear and to the fore.

Galway County has an abundance of heritage sites and areas. There are 14 designated Architectural Conservation Areas (ACA) in towns in Galway County which are recognised for their special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest or their contributions to the appreciation of a protected structure, and whose character it is an objective of a development plan to preserve. As well as these, the Galway County Heritage Office has compiled a database recording 429 natural and historical heritage sites throughout the County. Chapter 12 of the Adopted County Development Plan addresses architectural, archaeological and cultural heritage in Galway County. The policy objectives of this should be supported with the aim of preserving and protecting Galway's unique heritage culture and identity.

As well as the County Development Plan, there are many other plans, policies and initiatives which the LECP will aim to support and complement. Some of these include County Galway Tourism Strategy, Galway County Culture and Creativity Strategy, Galway County Heritage and Biodiversity, Galway Library Development Programme.

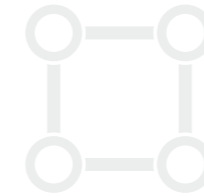
The aim of this goal is to support and build upon the work of other policies, initiatives and organisations to ensure Galway County remains a place with a clear sense of identity which is formed by its heritage, language and culture.

### Examples of possible objectives

- Demonstrating and developing the role of culture and creativity in social integration and positive ageing in Galway County.
- Supporting artists, creatives, and communities in the creative expression of Galway County's cultural identity.
- Encouraging communities and creatives in Galway County to re-imagine and develop places and spaces which contribute to place-making and the expression of our cultural heritage.
- Valuing and protecting the linguistic, cultural and heritage of Gaeltacht communities in Galway County.
- Improving the resilience of the cultural and creative economic sector to attract new investment to Galway County.

### What do you think?

- Do you agree with this goal and the key issues identified?
- How can we act to protect, conserve, and promote our built and cultural heritage?
- How can we broaden participation in, and preserve, the Irish language and build our Gaeltacht Service Towns?
- How can we broaden access to cultural activities, and leverage the cultural and creative sector for economic growth?
- What initiatives or actions would you like to see included under this goal?



## Goal 4: A County with Vibrant Urban and Rural Settlements



A County that is dedicated to the revitalisation and regeneration of its towns, villages, and islands in a sustainable manner.



### Rationale for this High-Level Goal

Approximately three quarters (75.6%) of people in Galway County live in rural settlements, which is higher than the average in the wider NWR and in the State. As population increases, the demand for housing in high-quality neighbourhoods and towns will continue to grow. According to the 2022 Census, Galway County had a higher proportion of vacant homes, and the NWRA established that nine towns in Galway County had higher rate of derelict homes than the State. the 2022 NOAC survey found that 20% of the County was unpolluted and litter-free, matching the State proportion.

There are a number of initiatives and organisations that aim to support vibrant towns in County Galway Tourism Strategy, including the Town & Village Renewal Scheme, Smart Villages, and the LEADER Programme, among others. These local-level initiatives contribute to supporting national aims included in policies like ‘Our Rural Future’ and the ‘Town Centres First Policy’.

This draft High-Level Goal aims to ensure vibrant villages, towns and settlements that provide attractive and accessible public areas and contribute to a high-quality of life for both residents and visitors alike.

### Examples of possible objectives and focus areas:

- Developing and implementing a robust set of community plans, feasibility studies, town and village centre management plans, Town Centre First plans, and masterplans in collaboration with community interests.
- Improving and enhancing the vibrancy and sustainability of the public realm, amenities and facilities which are available for the use

and enjoyment of their communities.

- Providing and maintaining a wealth of green spaces and community play and recreation areas which meet the active and passive recreation needs of Galway County’s communities.
- Sustainably developing outdoor recreation trails and natural networks such as greenways, blueways, and other natural heritage assets with growth potential.
- Enhancing sports, leisure, and multi-purpose community buildings in Galway County that service community needs.
- Creating high-quality public realm and streetscapes that provide a distinctive sense of place for all members of the community.
- Socially and economically rejuvenating towns and villages to generate pride of place for all communities.
- Providing a diverse range of housing options to cater to different needs, locations and area types to ensure that both rural and urban communities across Galway County have access to appropriate high-quality housing.

**What do you think?**

- Do you agree with this goal and the key issues identified?
- How can we best work with communities to achieve this High-Level Goal?
- How can we ensure some communities are not left behind?
- What initiatives or actions would you like included under this goal?



## Goal 5: A Sustainable and Climate Resilient County



A County that protects its environment and supports the transition to a climate-neutral society.





### Rationale for this High-Level Goal

Galway County is a rural area with extensive natural environments. Litter pollution levels are similar to the State, with 20% of Galway County being considered unpolluted. However, this still means that 80% of Galway County is at least partially litter polluted. The waterways of Galway County are in relatively good condition with the proportions of rivers and lakes with satisfactory ecological statuses both higher than the State. Galway County has seen significant afforestation measures taken but the rate of this has slowed slightly in recent times. Transport across Galway County could be more sustainable, with 92.1% of households having at least one car and 80.9% of people commuting to work by private vehicle, both higher than the State average. Along with this the uptake of electric vehicles in Galway County was slow but has seen increases. In addition to only 23% of audited households gaining an A or B Building Energy Rating. However, Galway County does have a significant installed capacity of wind energy production, generating over €2 million in commercial rates were payable to GCC.

The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 established a legally binding framework with clear targets and commitments, such as achieving an average 7% per annum reduction in overall greenhouse gas emissions from 2021 to 2030 and becoming climate neutral by 2050. This High-Level Goal sets out a broad framework for a transition to a low-carbon, climate-resilient society by reducing greenhouse gases, improving energy efficiency, and increasing renewable energy. Communities want and need to step up local climate action. Therefore, capacity building & awareness and local climate-action initiatives will be important elements of becoming a climate-resilient county.

This draft High-Level Goal aims to preserve the natural environment of Galway County. Additionally, the goal seeks to move Galway County towards climate neutrality through renewable energy, energy efficiency and sustainability.

### Examples of possible objectives and focus areas:

- Developing and implementing county-level and local policies to protect and enhance biodiversity and the climate.
- Fostering the knowledge and capacity to sustain low-carbon communities and to develop additional Sustainable Energy Communities
- Committing to local climate and environmental action to protect natural resources, ecological networks and biodiverse green spaces.
- Increasing the energy efficiency of Galway County and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- Implementing community-led solutions to minimise food waste and developing initiatives to support local produce and ‘Shop Local’ campaigns.
- Transitioning Galway County towards a circular economy.
- Increasing the use and production of renewable energy across Galway County.

### What do you think?

- Do you agree with this goal and the key issues identified?
- How can your community protect your local environment and address climate change?
- What initiatives or actions would you like included under this goal?



## Goal 6: An Economically Resilient County



A County that promotes innovation, and sustainable economic and enterprise development.



### Rationale for this High-Level Goal

Galway County has a diverse range of employment sectors. Some of these sectors include tourism, renewable energy, marine, ICT & life sciences, agriculture, retail and advanced manufacturing and engineering. Maintaining and expanding this diverse range of employment sectors may contribute to a more resilient and adaptable economy which could be better equipped to deal with sudden and unexpected threats from a national or global level.

SMEs employ 74.3% of the workforce in Galway County. Ensuring these businesses, as well as any new or potential businesses, have the supports they need to continue to trade in the County and employ such a large majority of the population may help maintain and further reduce Galway County's low unemployment rates.

While there are only 30 large companies in Galway County, they account for over a quarter of the County's workforce. Ensuring these companies are incentivised to stay in the area may help ensure Galway County remains an attractive place to do business and its economy remains resilient. These incentives may include continuing to provide highly skilled, highly qualified graduates to fulfil technical roles, ensuring there is adequate housing stock so employees can live close to work and continuing to provide the infrastructure required for these businesses.

There are several plans, policies and initiatives already delivering much of what is outlined above. The LECP will endeavour to support and build upon them. Some of these plans, policies and initiatives include: Galway County Corporate Plan, West Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024, Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, and Galway County Digital Strategy.

The aim of this draft High-Level Goal is to build upon the initiative mentioned above to ensure Galway County has a resilient and sustainable economy and that it is a place that it continues to encourage and foster enterprise, innovation and development.

### Examples of possible objectives and focus areas:

- Supporting a wide range and scale of enterprises and continuing to be an attractive location for new and established businesses to operate in.
- Developing a high-quality digital infrastructure that can cater to the diverse needs of enterprises within Galway County.
- Promote Galway County as an attractive place to work with adequate levels of high-quality housing and a public transport network that supports the needs of the workforce.
- Continuing to produce a highly skilled and highly qualified workforce to cater to the needs of various sectors.
- Providing a wide range of incentives and supports to help new businesses and startups grow.
- Foster networks and partnerships that promote sustainable innovation and social enterprise in Galway County.

### What do you think?

- Do you agree with this goal and the key issues identified?
- What measures do you believe are required to achieve economic resilience?
- What initiatives or actions would you like included under this goal?
- Regarding areas in which you have a specific interest, what would success of the goal or objective look like to you?

# WE NEED YOUR FEEDBACK



This document has summarised the key challenges and opportunities for the social and economic development in Galway County and presented six draft High-Level Goals for your consideration. Now we want to hear from you!

### Get involved in person.

Come say hello and tell us your ideas for Galway County at one of our in-person drop-in information and feedback sessions at your closest locations. Contact [GalwayCounty@hubplanning.ie](mailto:GalwayCounty@hubplanning.ie) for more information.

### Get involved online

Get involved online! Please take our quick survey to let us know what you want to see for Galway County over the next six years. Head to our social media accounts to find out ways to submit your ideas. Search @GalwayCountyLECP

