

# 3

## Baseline Conditions And Analysis

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Limerick City, the fourth largest city in the State, has a population of 57,106 persons.<sup>1</sup> The defined regeneration areas occupy almost 3% of the land area of Limerick City<sup>2</sup> and accommodate 11% of the total population of the city. The LRFIP aims to eliminate the poor physical and, in particular, housing conditions currently prevalent in many parts of the regeneration areas. However, a suite of social and economic interventions is also needed to address the deeply embedded socio-economic problems of the areas. Such interventions will continue to be required long after the completion of physical regeneration and sustaining the outcomes once programme funding ends depends on developing an effective exit strategy that secures commitment and funding from mainstream providers.

This chapter provides an overview and analysis of the existing physical, economic and social conditions within and affecting the regeneration areas. This information is used to devise and frame subsequent chapters in the LRFIP in particular the Framework Implementation Plan. Data are drawn from analysis of the census data, official statistics, Limerick City Council housing databases and other sources including recent research on social / socio-economic conditions in the city, with a specific emphasis on the city's regeneration areas. Whilst this chapter provides an overview of the pertinent conditions applicable at this time further detail and relevant background information, including the approach and data sources are contained in Appendix 1 of this document.

### 3.1 Existing Conditions

Limerick City is facing serious economic challenges, in part linked to the deep economic crisis. All areas of the State have been affected negatively by the economic crisis. The analysis of the spatial distribution of affluence and deprivation in the state shows that the main urban centres – the five cities - have fared better than other areas of the country, showing resilience in the face of deep crisis. While Limerick City has fared better than the average for the State in terms of absolute change in affluence / deprivation, it has fared the worst of the five cities.

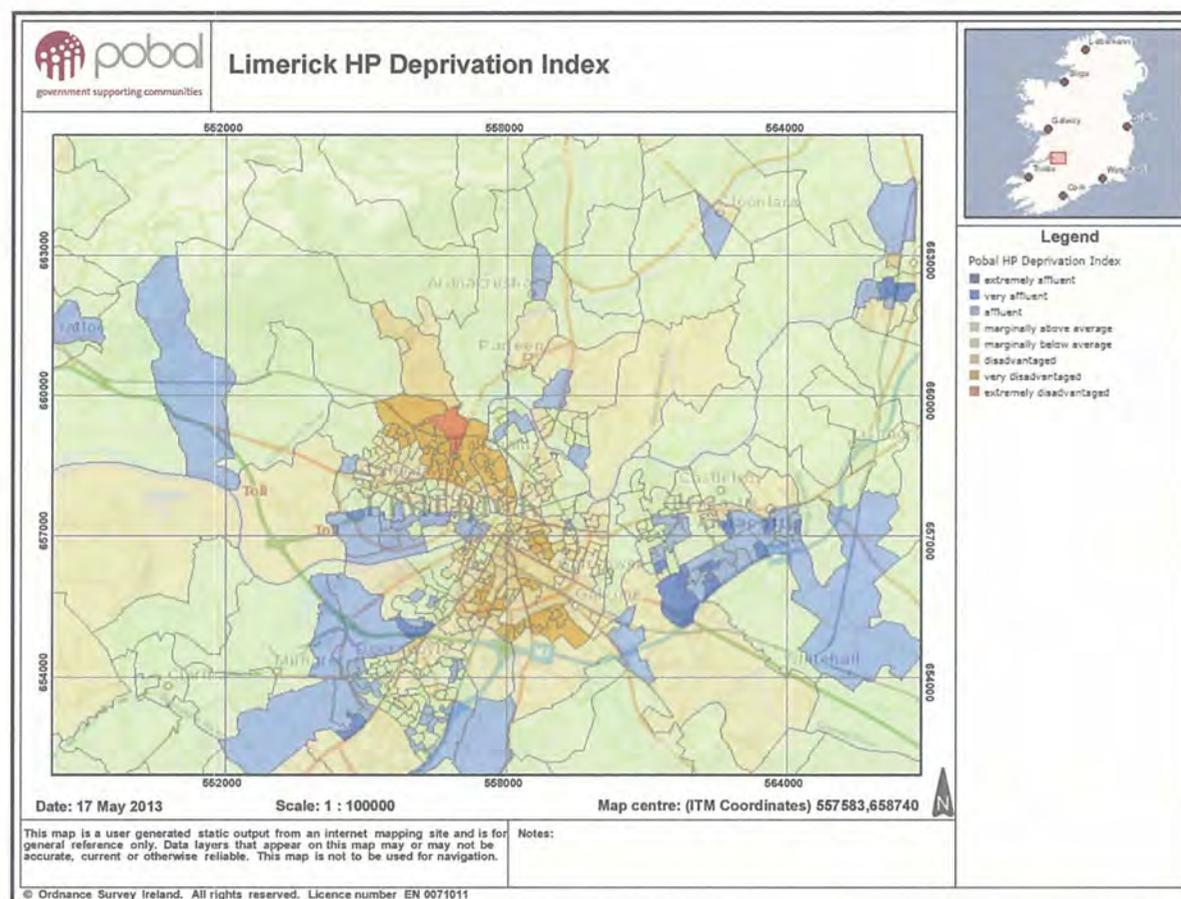


Figure 1.1: Pobal HP Relative Affluence / Deprivation Index Map: Limerick

<sup>1</sup> This relates to the administrative area of Limerick City. In other parts of this analysis, different units of territory are used where relevant, namely Limerick City and Suburbs / Limerick Metropolitan Area.  
<sup>2</sup> Limerick City is defined as per the area (28.4sqkm) provided in the Census of Population 2011.

### 3.1.1 Population Change and Age Structure

The trend in population change in Limerick City (not including the suburbs) since the mid 1990's has been one of population loss. The population of the city decreased by almost 4.5% in the preceding five year period and nationally this decline was the most significant amongst the five major urban centres<sup>3</sup>.

The economic crisis has impacted in terms of change in the structure of the local economy and loss of jobs in sectors that, traditionally, have been very important in the city (e.g., manufacturing). The impact of the crisis is especially reflected in the large numbers out of the work and the high unemployment rates in the city for both males and females. Job losses have affected various sectors of the economy especially manufacturing, construction, technical / scientific and business services and, based on analysis of the overall national situation, have occurred at higher and lower occupational skill levels. Young people have been particularly badly affected by unemployment with those in the youngest age cohorts in the labour force showing extremely high rates of unemployment.

Youth unemployment rates in Limerick City are higher than the national average. The profile of the local economy and its history indicates the need to focus on creating new sources of jobs generally in the city and to focus this effort at various levels of qualification and skill in order to create new opportunities for those people out of work. This includes the creation of entry level jobs for young people, to enable their transition into the world of work. In line with higher than average trends across the city, over 16% of the total population in the four regeneration areas is aged between 15 and 24 years, highlighting the significant

potential to direct a large proportion of the population into gainful employment over the next ten years. The regeneration areas have a higher than average (32%) Youth Dependency Rate (St. Mary's Park 39%; Southill 35%; Moyross 39%) with the exception of Ballinacurra Weston which has a rate of 29%. In contrast the Elderly Dependency rate is somewhat different and is particularly varied across the regeneration areas.

Whilst the Elderly Dependency Rate in Southill and Ballinacurra Weston (18%) is slightly below that for the city (19%) the rate in St. Mary's Park is high at 21%. When examined in conjunction with the Youth Dependency Ratio, the overall dependency ratio in St. Mary's Park is highest overall at 60%. Moyross, in contrast to the other three regeneration areas and in marked contrast to the city and national rates, has an extremely low Elderly Dependency Ratio of only 8.4% demonstrating the presence of a strong working age population.

The dominant population within the Regeneration Areas is of Irish origin. Whilst Southill comprises primarily an Irish population (98.5%) it has the largest Traveller population of all of the Regeneration Areas (2.8%) followed by Moyross (1%). This demonstrates the 'closed nature' of the population type in the regeneration areas in contrast to the structure of the wider metropolitan area where non-Irish residents account for over 15% of the total population.

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### 3.1.2 Economic Structure and Change

The economic problems of the city have an important impact on the social context. Of the five cities and suburbs, Limerick has the lowest labour market participation rate (56.7%) while Dublin City and suburbs has the highest (63%), followed by Galway City and suburbs (61.6%). Unemployment, especially long-term unemployment, is one of the highest risk factors of poverty and social exclusion. The analysis of the current situation and trends in the most disadvantaged areas of the city, especially the regeneration areas, is indicative of deeply structural economic and social problems. Analysis of trends shows that these problems have been in evidence for a long time. In the most disadvantaged areas of the city, a very high proportion of the population has no recent history of work.

Age Group	St. Mary's Park	Southill	Ballinacurra Weston	Moyross
Under 15	212	573	110	622
15 – 24 years	130	372	88	419
25 – 64 years	408	1213	293	1193
65+ years	113	283	70	137

Table 1.2: Age Structure in Regeneration Areas at Small Area Population Statistics (SAPS) level

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The proportion of people over 15 years of age at work in the regeneration areas is significantly lower than the proportion of the population over 15 years of age at work in the city (39%) and the State (58%). In terms of actual numbers at work, the overall unemployment rate stands at 52%. Unemployment rates are highest in St. Mary's Park (58%) and Moyross (57%), followed by Southill (47%) and Ballinacurra Weston (43%).

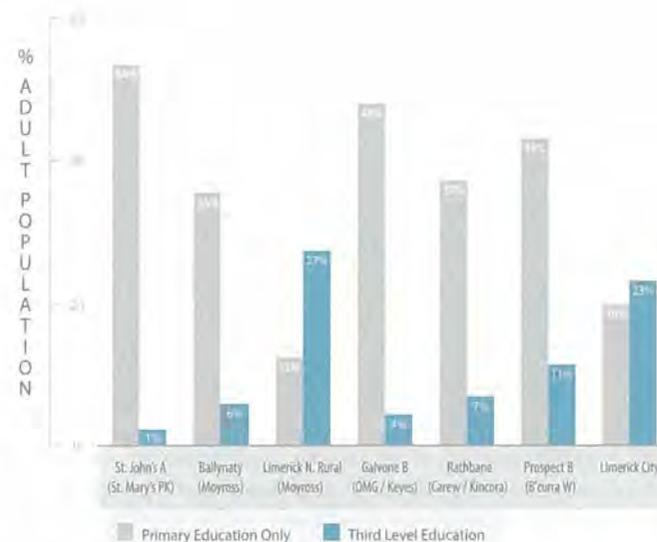
The most disadvantaged estates currently are characterised by an extremely high level of dependence on social welfare rather than salaries / wages from work as the main source of income. Recent research to map baseline conditions in types of neighbourhoods in the city included a focus on the income base of households (2010 data). The findings confirm that social welfare payments, by far, are the largest source of household income in the regeneration areas.

#### 3.1.3 Educational Attainment

The low level of educational qualification of the adult population in the most disadvantaged estates is a serious structural problem, affecting access to opportunities in many areas of social, civic and economic life including employment. Low education of parents also negatively impacts on aspirations and children's educational attainment as well as other outcomes including health.

In direct contrast to the State figure of 16%, over half the adult population in St. Mary's Park, (55%) has primary level education as their highest level of qualification while this is just under 50% in O'Malley / Keyes Park, Southill. At the other end of the spectrum, the proportion of the adult population with third level education in the regeneration areas is extremely low – lowest in St. Mary's Park (1%) followed by O'Malley / Keyes Park Southill (4%) - and much lower than the average for the State (31%).

There are further specific problems in evidence in the school population and education of children and young people. Declining enrolments, for instance, is a characteristic of schools in the most disadvantaged areas of the city (DEIS schools) along with high rates of absenteeism. Retention rates in school for young



**Figure 1.2: Adult population with primary level only education and with third level education: Regeneration Areas, Limerick City and the State 2011**

Source: Haas Pratschke Index, 2012 drawn from Census 2011

Sector	St. Mary's Park	Southill	Ballinacurra Weston	Moyross	City	State
At work	24%	27%	32%	26%	39%	51%
Looking for first regular job	0.6%	1.4%	2%	2.3%	1.20%	0.9%
Unemployed	31%	24%	22%	32%	14%	11%
Student	8%	10%	11%	10%	14%	11%
Looking after home/family	9.80%	12%	8%	12%	9%	9.5%
Retired	16%	12%	12%	7%	14%	12%
Unable to work due to permanent sickness or disability	10%	13%	12%	11%	7%	4%
Other	0.7%	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%	0.80%	0.2%

**Table 1.3: Labour force structure: Limerick Regeneration Areas (based on Small Area Population Statistics, SAPS), 2011**

Source: CSO 2011

people to Junior Cert and Leaving Cert qualification are significantly lower in schools in Limerick City compared with Limerick County and all counties in the State. Progression rates to third level education post Leaving Cert from schools in the disadvantaged areas (DEIS schools) are also significantly lower than those from schools in average and more affluent areas of the city (non DEIS schools). Unless young people leaving school early transfer to alternative education and training options, these young people are most at risk of social exclusion.

### 3.1.4 Health and Well Being

In terms of population health, residents of areas that are relatively more disadvantaged show a profile of poorer physical and mental health compared with residents of average and more affluent areas. This applies across all age groups in the population – children and young people, adults (parents) and older people and can have a direct economic impact. There is a significant number of people over 15 years in the regeneration areas that cannot work due to sickness/disability. The percentage of people that cannot work in Southhill due to sickness / disability (13%) is over three times that of the State figure, followed by Ballinacurra Weston (12%), Moyross (11%) and St. Mary's Park (10%).

Rates of long-standing illness and psychological or emotional conditions are considerably higher in regeneration areas compared with average areas of the city. The difference or gap in mental health status between residents of the most disadvantaged areas and the average population is particularly large. Poor mental health is associated with wide-reaching negative impacts on individuals and families – for instance, on physical health and well-being but also on capacity to engage in social, civic and economic life. The direction of causality can work both ways and there are strong inter-dependencies. Poor parental (maternal) mental health is associated with negative outcomes for children including poorer level of educational attainment as well as emotional and behavioural problems in children.

The regeneration areas also exhibit higher levels of disability amongst its population particularly when compared to the national figure of 13%. Southhill has the highest disability figure at just over 23% of its population followed by Moyross and Ballinacurra Weston at 21% and St. Mary's Park at 20%. Whilst the

Elderly Dependency Rate in Southhill and Ballinacurra Weston (18%) and St. Mary's Park (21%) may somehow justify the levels of disability in those areas, the low elderly dependency ratio of only 8.4% in Moyross is completely at odds with its disability figure of 21%.

Children living in the most disadvantaged areas of the city have a profile of significantly higher rates of emotional / behavioural and attention difficulties compared with an average population of children. While the detailed analysis was not presented here, children from these areas have more exposure to childhood traumas, the families have a greater intensity of problems (including financial difficulties, addictions, etc.) and there are greater deficits in parenting practices compared with children living in average areas of the city. The families also live in less safe and poorer quality social and physical environments including more exposure to anti-social behaviour.

In terms of social capital, neighbourhoods in Limerick City, including those that are most socially disadvantaged, show many positive aspects including a strong sense of belonging to community and networks of social support from extended family, friends and neighbours. The most disadvantaged communities in the city, however, show weaknesses in certain aspects of social capital reflected in deficits of trust in people in general, negatively affecting cohesion of the communities and the city in general.

### 3.1.5 Justice / Criminality

Of course community safety is a key issue particularly in the southside regeneration areas of the city. With the additional Garda resources allocated to the city (100) under the regeneration programme, there has been a positive impact on addressing the problem of serious criminality in the city, bringing the city to a level of "normal" policing. The data on incident statistics across a range of incidents of crime with reference to the regeneration areas show a reduction in reported crime, while other relevant statistics (e.g., search of premises, person) show higher levels of policing particularly drug-related policing. There has been a drop in all incidents of recorded crime in the regeneration areas, especially in the most serious crimes. Gardai issued more anti-social behavioural orders in 2009/10 compared with 2007/08. Lower level criminality and especially anti-social behaviour, harassment / abuse, intimidation, joy riding and crimes to property remain as serious problems on the regeneration estates.

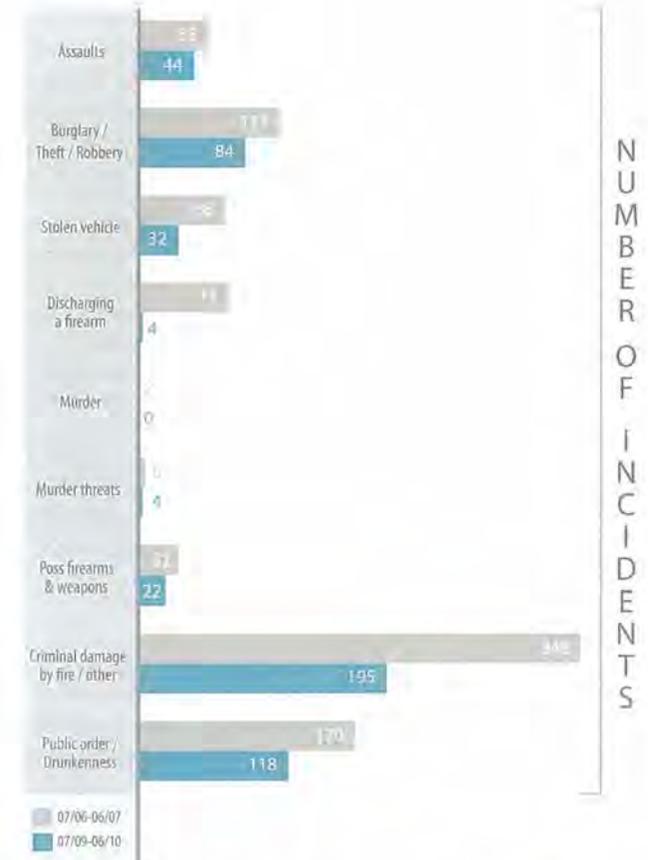


Figure 1.3: Selected incidents of crime 2006/07 and 2009/01: All Regeneration Areas  
Source: An Garda Síochana, Southern Region

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#### 3.1.6 Housing and Households

Limerick City is known to have strong concentrations of social housing constructed as large housing estates in certain parts of the city. This has produced the strong concentrations of poverty and social disadvantage which has proved to be a particularly difficult problem for the city. Over time, the proportion of housing in local authority ownership has decreased but the problems of the larger local authority estates did not reduce over time.

In comparison to housing nationwide, Limerick City has an ageing house stock and this is particularly evident in the regeneration areas. The 2011 Census figures confirm that just under 4% of all housing has been constructed since 1990 and 25% of the housing stock was constructed prior to 1960. It also confirms that St. Mary's Park has the oldest housing stock followed by Ballinacurra Weston. Moyross in contrast has a relatively new housing stock with 65% of its houses constructed between 1971 and 1990. However it is important to note that the CSO information does not necessarily correlate with the actual data on house construction retained by Limerick City Council which confirms that St. Mary's Park was constructed between 1935 and 1937 with two additions in 1998 and 2002 and all development occurred in Moyross between 1975 and 1986. Thus housing within the regeneration areas is in fact a lot older than the figures presented in Census 2011.

The age of housing within the regeneration areas has a bearing on the ownership status of the properties. Owner-occupied houses within the four regeneration areas are generally comparable with the citywide figure of 60%, but well below the State figure of 69%.

The areas with the highest rates of home ownership, however, are also amongst the most deprived. As such, tenure mix is not always a good indicator of social mix. In contrast private landlord rentals within the regeneration areas are more on a par with the State figure of just over 8%, compared to the exceptionally high figure in the city of 24%. The other dominant form is local authority-rented housing which is well above the State figure of almost 8% and the citywide figure of just over 12%. Moyross has the highest number of local authority rented houses within the four regeneration areas (64%) almost double that of St. Mary's Park and Southill. Ballinacurra Weston has significantly lower rate of local authority rented housing at 24%.

House type is generally one of the main factors underpinning household and family structure although this is not always the case within the regeneration areas as the analysis below indicates. With the dominant type of construction in the regeneration areas of house format one would expect the family size to comprise three to four people. However, almost 50% of the total households comprises two persons or under with almost 24% in single occupancy. Whilst the average household size within the regeneration areas (2.4) is slightly below the national figure of 2.7, these figures suggest under occupancy of houses within the regeneration area and as a result under-utilisation of valuable and scarce urban land.

Another significant contrast in the social geography of urban areas relates to household structure. Across the regeneration areas the single parent family dominates the household type with the exception of Ballinacurra

Weston where there is a significant proportion of one person households (29%).

These statistics need to be correlated with the housing need within the regeneration areas. With housing vacancy levels in the city (12%) less than the State (15%), the absolute numbers in housing need are also higher (2,669 in 2011). With higher than average houses in single occupancy, needs arising from the elderly population and single parent families, the household formation estimates would be for smaller dwelling types. An analysis of data from the Limerick City Council Housing List would also suggest that overcrowding<sup>4</sup> within the regeneration areas is generating a need for additional houses although this data appears to conflict with the CSO data on household structure and under – occupancy referred to earlier. The Limerick City Council housing waiting list database as of May 2013 estimates that there is a need for over 160 houses within the regeneration areas arising from existing overcrowding.

#### 3.1.7 Transport

Access to reliable and economic means of transportation has become increasingly important for individuals and households. As the regeneration areas have relatively low labour force participation rates, a high proportion of travel is not work-related, but rather involves school children, thereby resulting in short travel distances.

The relatively short distance travelled to work / school each day is reflected in the high percentage of the population that travels on foot or by bicycle with figures in the regeneration areas well above the citywide figure of 33% and more than double the

House Ownership	St. Mary's Park	Southill	Ballinacurra Weston	Moyross	City	State
Owner Occupied	55%	64%	59%	33%	59%	69%
Renting from Private Landlord	5.1%	7.5%	10%	5%	24%	8%
Rent from Housing Body	0.6%	0.5%	0.4%	3%	1.3%	0.9%
Local Authority	35%	35%	24%	64%	12%	8%

**Table 1.4: House ownership in Regeneration Areas (based on Small Area Population Statistics, SAPS), 2011**

Source: CSO 2011

<sup>4</sup> The estimate of over-crowded households is derived from Limerick City Council's Housing Waiting List (as at May 2013). For the purposes of this analysis, a household is considered overcrowded if a person currently resident within the regeneration areas applies for housing in the regeneration area where they reside.



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national figure of 17%. Of course these figures are also supported by the high number of households with no cars (St. Mary's Park 57%, Southill 43%, Ballinacurra Weston 58% and Moyross 50%). The use of public transport is generally higher in the regeneration areas than the city-wide figure of almost 7% but generally falls below the national figure of 13% with the exception of Southill (14%). The high level of public transport usage (bus) in Southill may be explained by the regular bus service operating in the area and may provide some evidence to suggest that supply side improvements in the bus service may help to induce a greater level of usage.

#### 3.2 Key Emerging Issues

The foregoing analysis has highlighted a number of key issues in terms of structural economic deficiencies, extensive social problems, and physical planning across the regeneration areas which are exacerbating an already challenging economic situation. It also provides an analysis of the context of the most disadvantaged areas of the city, particularly focused on the regeneration areas. A number of key issues have emerged from the analysis which will directly influence the overall direction of the LRFIP and which will require targeted measures to mitigate against further problems.

The following is a summary of data which is described in detail in Appendix 1. Key emerging issues to consider with specific reference to the regeneration areas include:

- With above average rates of population in the 15 to 24 age category there is significant potential to direct a large proportion of the population into gainful employment over the next ten years.
- The number of people at work (over 15 years of age) in the regeneration areas is significantly lower than the number of those at work in the city (39%) and the State (58%). Unemployment rates in the regeneration areas are well above (more than double) those of the city, on average.
- The percentage of people that cannot work in Southill due to sickness / disability (13%) is over three times that of the State figure, followed closely by Ballinacurra Weston (12%), Moyross (11%) and St. Mary's Park (10%).
- Only 10.5% of the workforce is engaged in vulnerable sectors (manufacturing and construction), well below the national figure (16%).
- With only 3% of the population over the age of 15 with a Higher Certificate, Degree or Postgraduate Degree qualification, the regeneration areas have a very low educational qualification base. This will present serious challenges in the "tight" and competitive local labour market and in the modern economy in general.
- The regeneration areas have an ageing house stock and according to the CSO under 4% of all housing has been constructed since 1990 and 25% of the housing stock was constructed prior to 1960.
- Private landlord rentals within the regeneration areas are more on a par with the State figure of just over 8%, compared to the exceptionally high figure in the city of 24%. This could indicate potential for an increase in this type of house ownership in the regeneration areas.
- Almost 50% of the total households in the regeneration areas comprises two persons or under with almost 24% in single occupancy which suggests under occupancy of houses within the regeneration areas and as a result under-utilisation of valuable and scarce urban land.
- In contrast to the previous statistics, the Limerick City Council Housing Waiting List confirms that as of May 2013 there is a need for an additional 162 houses within the regeneration areas arising from existing overcrowding.
- The single parent family dominates the household type at 26% of all households in the regeneration areas, well above the State figure of 13% and the 14% of population in Limerick City. Over 60% of any households with children under 15 years in the regeneration areas are lone parent households.
- Almost 73% of the population within the regeneration areas travels less than two miles (30 minutes) to work/school/college thereby highlighting the availability of employment and educational establishments in proximity to the regeneration areas.
- The relatively short distance traveled to work / school each day is reflected in the high percentage of the population that travels on foot or by bicycle which is more than double the national figure of 17%.



