



SOCIAL DEPRIVATION, POLITICAL ALIENATION AND COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT.

***THE GEOGRAPHY OF VOTER TURNOUT IN IRELAND, 1997-2002, AND
ITS ASSOCIATION WITH SOCIAL DEPRIVATION.***

Adrian Patrick Kavanagh MA

Supervisor: Dr. Dennis G. Pringle

Thesis submitted for the degree of Ph.D.

Faculty of Arts

Department of Geography

National University of Ireland, Maynooth

November 2002

This thesis was funded by the Government of Ireland post-graduate research scheme, being awarded under the auspices of the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences.

An Chomhairle um Thaighde sna Dána agus sna hEolaíochtaí Sóisialta
Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences



ABSTRACT

The Irish political system has become increasingly characterised by declining turnout rates in the past few decades, with this accompanied by very low turnouts in a number of areas and for certain elections types. This thesis addresses this context through analysing turnout variations in recent election using a spatial framework and focussing particularly on how these spatial patterns in turnout are associated with levels of social well being. Other factors were also analysed in terms of their impacts on turnout variations, namely a range of social and political factors. Constituency level and sub-constituency level analyses are used to analyse the extent to which deprivation may influence turnout levels and to determine whether this relationship is stronger in urban or rural areas or for different types of elections. The use of marked register turnout data allows this relationship to be tested using very detailed data for small geographical areas. The ecological modelling of turnout variance is upheld by the use of individual level analyses (through the use of questionnaires and interviews).

Strong associations between turnout and social well-being for urban areas were uncovered in the Dublin study area, with turnouts generally lower in the more deprived areas. There was no evidence of such a relationship in the rural areas for local elections, although there was a pattern in which turnouts were lower in the more deprived areas in general elections and, especially, referenda. Election-specific influences on the relationship between turnout and deprivation were uncovered, with class influences being more pertinent in relation to referendum turnouts. Other socio-economic and demographic influences were shown to have a bearing on spatial variations in Irish turnouts, such as age and residential mobility, with the

effect of such influences being particularly pronounced in certain geographical contexts. Political mobilisation factors were also shown to have a bearing on Irish turnout variations, with local election turnouts in areas being especially determined by the presence, or non-presence, of candidates local to the area in the contest.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shores, so doth this thesis hasten towards its end. Well actually it's at its end, otherwise you wouldn't be reading this now! So, just as you'd get in an Oscars style ceremony...or even a Golden Turkeys ceremony...this is the point in which I would like to say a few thank yous.

First of all, I'd like to acknowledge the support given to me by my family during the three years of the PhD research; thanks to Tony Kavanagh, Anne Kavanagh, Leo Kavanagh, Martina Nathan, Majella Kavanagh and Max Nathan!

I'd like to say thanks also to all the Salesians who have been in Sean McDermott Street and 57 Lower Drumcondra Road during this time of the research, in particular Val Colier, John Quinn, Eunan McDonell, Tom Clowe, Padraig McDonald, Charlie Cunningham, Joe Lucey and Michael Casey. Thanks also to Catriona, Don, Ed, Lisa, Noreen, Martina, Gary, Dave, Declan, Ann Marie, Joan and everyone else in Don Bosco House.

There is a wide range of people that I would like to thank, who were also of assistance to me in terms of providing me with tally figures or other forms of data during the research, or in terms of making themselves available for interviews, or for other reasons. Of these I would especially like to thank Tony Gregory TD, as without his advice I would have been unaware of the existence of the marked register data and much of the analysis in this PhD research would not have been possible! I'd also like to thank Frank Houghton, as well as Alan Kelly of

the Small Areas Health Research Unit of Trinity College, for the provision of the SAHRU deprivation index data. Thanks also to James Barry of the Dublin City Sheriff's office and to the Laois County Sheriff, James Cahill, for the provision of ballot reconciliation data throughout the three years of this work.

Aengus O'Snodaigh (Sinn Féin) TD

Agnes Scully, Portlaoise Community Action Project

Alan Dukes (Fine Gael)

Ben Briscoe (Fianna Fáil)

Brendan O'Keefe, IRD Duhallow

Brian Hayes (Fine Gael), Senator

Brian Lenihan (Fianna Fáil) TD

Cathal Kelly (Labour), Clondalkin

Catherine Byrne (Fine Gael) MCC, Dublin City Council

Charlie Hammond, Maryland Residents Association

Charlie McCreevy (Fianna Fáil) TD

Chris Flood (Fianna Fáil)

Ciarán Cuffe (Green Party) TD

Conor Lenihan (Fianna Fáil) TD

Conor Ó'Raghailaigh, Bills Office, Dáil Éireann

Cyprian Brady (Fianna Fáil), Senator

Dan Neville (Fine Gael) TD

Dublin City Sheriff's Office

Dublin County Sheriff's Office
Eamonn Walsh (Labour Party) MCC, South Dublin County Council
Eithne Fitzgerald (Labour Party)
Eric Byrne (Labour) MCC, Crumlin-Kimmage
Fergal Conlon, Mountmellick Development Association
Fionnula McCarthy, Lucan 2000
Garry Keegan (Fianna Fáil) MCC, South East Inner City
Gay Mitchell (Fine Gael) TD
Gay Murphy and Mary Weld, Geography Department, NUI Maynooth
Gemma McKenna, Fatima Groups United
Helen Maher, Inner City Organisations Network
Laois County Sheriff's Office
Jeannette Cullen, Oliver Bond Residents Association
Jim Mitchell (Fine Gael)
Joanna Tuffy (Labour Party) MCC, South Dublin County Council
Joe Costello (Labour) TD
John Bennett, North Clondalkin Community Development Association
John Curran (Fianna Fáil) TD
John Fennelly (Fianna Fáil) MCC, Borris In Ossory
John Jeffries, Workers Party Head Office
John Moloney (Fianna Fáil) TD
John Salts and the staff of the NUI Maynooth Post Office
Joseph McCormack (Independent), Portlaoise Town Commissioner

Julie Scully, Mountmellick Development Association

Kevin Griffin PhD

Kristina McElroy (Green Party), Dublin South Central

Limerick County Sheriff's Office

Lisa Cronin, IRD Duhallow

Mary Harney (Progressive Democrats) TD

Maurice McQuillan and Dublin Fine Gael

Michael Creed (Fine Gael) MCC, Macroom

Michael Finucane (Fine Gael) MCC, Newcastlewest

Nicky Keogh (Sinn Féin) MCC, Cabra-Glasnevin

Nuala Talbot, An Tánaiste's Office

Paul Gogarty (Green Party) TD

Philip Murphy, South Dublin County Council

Richard Bruton (Fine Gael) TD

Robert Dowds (Labour) MCC, Clondalkin

Rowan Fealy BA, Geography Department, NUI Maynooth

Rúairí Quinn (Labour Party) TD

Sean Ardagh (Fianna Fáil) TD

Sean Fleming TD and Laois Fianna Fáil

Seanie Lambe, Inner City Renewal Group

Tom Brunkard (Fianna Fáil), South West Inner City

Tommy Broughan (Labour) TD

Vincent Ballyfermot Jackson (Independent) MCC, Ballyfermot

Before I conclude this, I would like to say an especial word of thanks to everyone in the South West Inner City Network and the Dublin Inner City Partnership (with whom I worked as a researcher on a voter turnout project during the Summer of 2001, which culminated in the publication of *Unequal Participation – Unequal Influence* in March 2003). I'd like to especially thank Therese, Kay, Charlie, John, Alan and everyone else in the Network as well Pat, Emer and everyone in the DICP. Especial thanks are due to Bernadette McMahon and Margot Delaney of the Vincentian Partnership for Justice, as well as to Paula Brudell of the network, for their advice, insights and assistance during this research, which was also to prove helpful later in the putting together of this PhD dissertation.

I'd like to thank the staff of the Geography Department in NUI Maynooth for all their assistance during the three years, including Jim Walsh, Paddy Duffy, Mary Weld, Gay Murphy, John Sweeney, Shelagh Waddington, Rob Kitchin, Proinnsias Breathnach, Paul Gibson, Ro Charlton, Jim Keenan, Brídín Feeney, Catriona Ni Laoire and Brendan Bartley, who had the 'pleasure' of acting as second supervisor for this research. I'd like to also mention the different postgraduates, past and present, who were in the Department during my period of PhD research: Denise, Nicola, Ann C., Frank, James, Kasey, Jim, Sonja, Therese, Andy, Conor Mc, Conor M., Shelagh, John P., Giovanni, Justin, Celine, Séamus, Karen, Johann, Caroline, Brian, Tom, Matthias, Pat, Martin, Ann N., as well as Mary and Chris (NIRSA) and those that I forgot to mention! Thanks also to the different MA in Geographical Analysis students who were in the Department during the three years.

I'd like to especially thank Martina Roche, Laura McElwain and Una Crowley, three fellow postgraduates, who were 'next door' to me during the final two years of the PhD. It was an

especially honour to be in the same Department as Una, as she is a double All Ireland winner! Martina, in fairness, didn't rub in the fact that Kilkenny were winning All Irelands, as if they were freebies, and Laois...weren't. And in particular, thanks to Rowan Fealy, who had the dubious pleasure of sharing an office with me during the final two years of the research, especially for his innate ability to show me ways of doing things on the computer in a few minutes, when said activities had been taking me three weeks to do prior to this. He also had to endure many a hissy-fit, especially as the end neared, although in fairness he caused most of them himself. So thanks to Una, Martina, Laura and Rowan.

Finally, thanks to Dr. Dennis Pringle, who had the task of acting as supervisor for this research thesis for his advice during the three years, which was always helpful, even at times when he suggested editing out certain sections and it felt as if I was losing a kidney! Dennis's ability to tell me why my submitted work was rubbish in a clear, concise manner was always appreciated! So thanks again Dennis and here's hoping that the process of reading hundreds of pages of work each night during October and November of 2002 was not overtly tiresome.

Adrian Kavanagh

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines spatial variations in voter turnout in the Republic of Ireland, with a specific emphasis on the influence of social marginalisation. The issue of voter turnout, in terms of its political and societal significance, is important for a number of reasons:

"The theoretical importance of electoral participation to democratic politics is well understood. The rate of voter participation has been considered a metric by which to judge the legitimacy of democratic institutions (e.g., Piven and Cloward, 1988), an influence on party vote shares (e.g., Nagel and McNulty, 1996), and a determinant on public policies (e.g., Hicks and Misra, for a review, see Lijphart, 1997). Given the salience of turnout, it is not surprising that scholars have devoted considerable attention to the subject." Radcliff and Davis (2000: 132)

However, there has not been a particularly strong focus on voter turnout in previous Irish political scientific research, especially from a political geographical perspective. Some Irish political scientists have addressed the topic of voter turnout over the past decade, including Marsh (1991), Sinnott and Whelan (1991), Sinnott (1995), Buckley (2000), O'Malley (2001) and Franklin, Lyons and Marsh (2001). Most of this research, however, has involved individual level analyses of turnout issues, although Sinnott (1995) and Sinnott and Whelan (1991) have engaged in ecological analyses of Irish turnouts. Moreover, the lack of accurate turnout data for small geographical areas has meant that a detailed, place-based perspective has been very much lacking in voter turnout research. This thesis will address these gaps in the academic literature by analysing the main influences on turnout levels, particularly those concerning the effect of social marginalisation.

This research will draw on the findings of international research as to what factors are particularly associated with turnout variation and decline, with specific reference to findings that particularly relate to the impacts that social deprivation may have on turnout levels. Such findings may not apply to the Irish context, however, given that the Irish electoral system differs significantly from electoral systems in other countries, particularly those involving “first past the post” systems, as in Britain and the USA. Findings from the literature may also not be applicable to the Irish context, as the party systems in other countries may differ, particularly in terms of the strength of class cleavages in different systems. This factor too may particularly influence the relationship between turnout and social deprivation, as well as other with other influencing factors. Mindful of this, this thesis will determine whether these different international research findings are relevant to the Irish case.

The particular context in which this research takes place is one of exceptionally low turnout levels. The turnout for the 2002 General Election was the lowest turnout for an Irish general election since the end of the Civil War in 1923. As in other western democracies, such as Britain where turnout fell by 12% between the 1997 and 2001 General Elections, voter turnout rates in Ireland have been in steady decline over the past few decades. At the same time, turnouts in certain parts of Ireland – mainly socially deprived urban areas – have fallen to exceptionally low levels. Almost half the electorate failed to turn out to vote in May 2002 in the Dublin South Central and Dublin Mid West constituencies. A record low turnout was registered for the October 1999 Dublin South Central by-election whilst turnouts fell below the 30% level in some Dublin constituencies for the 1999 local and European elections, namely Clondalkin, Ballyfermot and Mulhuddart. This means that various problems centring on turnout issues feature amongst the most significant concerns that the Irish political system

needs to face at present. This fact has been noted by Marsh et al. (2001: 171) who view the issue of electoral participation in Ireland as being "*problematic on all levels*". They conclude, arising from this, that "*an analysis of turnout is a very high priority in any programme of electoral research in Ireland*". Given the observed pattern of particularly low turnouts in socially deprived parts of Dublin and other urban areas, it is obvious that such an analysis would need to particularly take account of the factors influencing participation rates in such areas.

This work aims to analyse the issue of Irish voter turnout to a degree that has not been attempted in any previous work, employing a mix of both quantitative and qualitative analyses. Furthermore, the approach that this thesis will take differs significantly from that of the previous Irish researches on the topic, in that there will be a particular emphasis on spatial aspects of turnout related issues, both in terms of the national picture and in terms of intra-constituency turnout variance. Ecological analyses will form a key aspect of this work, which will also involve data for much smaller areas than those used as the bases in previous ecological analyses of turnouts. Individual level data will also be employed in this analysis, as a means of testing to see if the relationships observed in the ecological analyses are upheld.

The main focus of this research will be on the factors that influence Irish turnout variations, in both temporal and spatial terms. Social deprivation factors will be particularly focussed on in this regard, but other factors that may influence Irish turnouts will also be analysed. These analyses will be engaged in for both urban and rural areas and for different election types, so as to determine whether the relationships between turnout and different influencing factors may be particularly shaped by certain geographical and electoral contexts.

The opening chapters of this thesis will address different themes that emerge from the literature on the topic of voter turnout. Chapter 2 will review the findings of different researchers about the perceived main factors associated with turnout variation and decline. The next chapter will study the main implications of turnout variation and decline, but in particular low turnouts in areas, while it will also review the findings in the literature as to what the most effective means of mobilising voters in low turnout areas are perceived to be. The fourth chapter will discuss the different methodologies that will be employed in this thesis.

Turnout variations, at a constituency level, both in relation to spatial variations and variations between election types, will be studied in chapter five. The sixth chapter will review turnout decline in Ireland over the past few decades at a national level, as well as the spatial dimension of this decline. Constituency-level changes in turnout rates will be looked at for all types of elections. Then, through the use of turnout data for small geographical areas, turnout change at the sub-constituency level between the 1997 and 2002 General Elections will be analysed. There will be an especial focus on the spatial dimensions of this decline and the extent to which the turnout change could be influenced by class considerations.

The next two chapters will focus on an ecological analysis of the potential influences that may have an impact on spatial variations in turnouts in selected areas both urban and rural. The impact that socio-economic marginalisation has on turnout variation in Dublin will be discussed in the first of these chapters, as will the manner in which other influences may account for the residual variance left unexplained by socio-economic factors. This will be

based on a detailed analysis of spatial variations in Dublin turnouts over the past five years, which will employ sub-constituency level turnout data that will be drawn from tally figures, an analysis of the marked registers of electors, and ballot reconciliation data. Similar turnout data will be employed in the following chapter. This chapter will look at the impacts that socio-economic marginalisation may have on turnout variation in Rural Ireland and will attempt to account for the other influences that may account for the residual variance left unexplained by socio-economic factors. The main differences between the urban and rural case studies will also be studied, as well the main variations between the different election types.

Chapter 9 will look at the political aspects of turnout variation and decline. Statistical analyses will determine whether socio-economic biases in Irish turnouts, if shown to exist, can impact on the support, and representation, levels of the different Irish political parties. In line with this, findings from a questionnaire survey of Irish politicians will be analysed so as to determine how their perceptions of turnout issues are reflected by the particular context that they find themselves in.

The final two chapters will involve two individual-level analyses of turnout-related issues. The first of these analyses a range of questionnaire studies that seek to understand the factors that may influence the different respondents' propensity to turn out or abstain at election times. The other focuses on the views of politicians as to what factors influence turnout variations in their constituencies and as to what they perceive as being the likely implications of low turnout in these constituencies. The following chapter will study the insights drawn from interviews with politicians and community development workers. Interviewees' views

on the range of factors that influence turnout variations and cause low turnout will be discussed, as also will their perceptions as to what the implications of low participation rates are for people that live in low turnout areas. Their opinions on the different means of improving turnout in their areas will also be addressed.

The final chapter is a conclusion that will attempt to pull the disparate threads, which make up this thesis, together.

CHAPTER 2

FACTORS INFLUENCING TURNOUT VARIATIONS AND DECLINE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will look at perspectives on issues related to spatial variations in turnout rates and turnout decline, as drawn primarily from research findings in the electoral literature, with a view to determining what the key research issues for this thesis will be. There will be a focus on associations between social deprivation and turnout, as well as on other factors that have a bearing on spatial and temporal variations in turnout rates. These factors include social capital, residential mobility, political mobilisation and partisanship levels, as well as concerns related to the procedures in which elections are held. The influence of geographical context is also studied, with an especial emphasis on rural-urban differentials in turnout variations. Finally, building on the material in this chapter, the main research questions that are to be addressed in this thesis will be identified.

Rose (1974: 8) views electoral behaviour, including the decision to vote, or not to vote, as “*multivariate phenomena*”. A number of factors have been discussed in the literature in terms of their impacts on turnout rates. Miller (1988), for instance, suggests that the most significant factors affecting turnout are age, residential mobility, housing tenure, and the level of one’s interest in the political process. Miller also claims that there does not appear to be evidence of voters who habitually abstain from voting in elections and, hence, suggests that there is no evidence of there being “*any significant element of the electorate which is alienated from the voting process*” (Rallings et al., 1996: 2). However this viewpoint is strongly contested by

other political scientists, who argue that significant groups, characterised by lower than average turnout rates, exist within Western democracies.

Marsh's (1991) study of non-voting in Ireland illustrates this point. This described non-voting behaviour in terms of either being *short term* or *long term*. Short term non-voters essentially abstain for "accidental" reasons, such as holidays, illness, moving house or registration problems, and will generally tend to vote at subsequent elections. Long term non-voters, however, deliberately choose not to vote – a decision that is tantamount to a "*withdrawal from the political system*" – and are either "*uninterested in politics or opposed to the institutions to the extent that they see no benefit in voting*" (Marsh, 1991: 3-4). Marsh refers to findings of opinion polls, held following the 1989 General Elections, where 42% and 44% respectively of those surveyed, who had abstained in the elections, were described as long term non-voters. Given that 33% of the electorate did not vote in that election, this would imply that roughly 14% of the electorate in 1989 were long term non-voters. The EES poll data shows long term non-voters to be "*substantially less middle class, worse off and less well educated*" than voters (Marsh, 1991: 10). By contrast, short term non-voters tend to be more middle class and better educated than both long term non-voters and voters, and appear to be quite similar in most aspects to voters, although they generally tend to be younger.

To understand the dynamics at play in turnout decline and spatial variations in turnout rates, it is necessary to look at the literature on these topics, but with a particular emphasis on the associations between social well being and turnout related issues. Moreover, having noted the possibility that other explanatory factors may influence spatial variations in Irish turnout rates, these other factors also need to be taken into account. Furthermore, there will be a study of the

factors that may determine turnout variations between different types of election. Geographical context too will have a bearing on turnout levels, as different places will have different turnouts regardless of social and demographic characteristics, especially if rural-urban differentials are involved. The influence that place may have on turnout variation will also be studied.

Most of the findings that will be analysed in this chapter are drawn from international literature, given that voter turnout has not been a major theme in Irish political scientific research. The different international contexts that these findings have emerged from will naturally shape what relationships are found between turnout and the different influencing factors. For instance, factors such as constituency marginality will be more important in countries using ‘first past the post’ electoral systems than they will in countries, such as Ireland, that use proportional representation and transferable vote systems. In a similar vein, the importance of social deprivation as a factor may be determined by the strength of the class cleavages within a country’s political system. Thus, some of the findings discussed here may not be relevant to the Irish context. For instance, a large part of the findings discussed here are drawn from the US context, as much of the available literature was concerned with the findings of US-based research. The first-past-the-post electoral system and other aspects peculiar to the US political system mean that there are particular limitations as to the relevance of US-based research findings for the Irish context. The degree to which these findings may prove to be relevant will be discussed in the following chapters.

The main research issues that this research is concerned with will determine the structure of this thesis and the areas discussed in it. These are the associations between turnout and social

deprivation, as well as other socio-economic, demographic and political factors, and the manner in which these relationships are shaped by particular geographical and electoral contexts. Section 2.2 of this chapter will focus on what the electoral literature says about the relationship between turnout and socio-economic marginalisation. Particular emphasis will be placed on certain indicators of socio-economic marginalisation, such as local authority rented housing and educational disadvantage, and the degree to which these factors influence turnout rates in an area. The next section will focus on the impact that demographic factors might have on turnout variations, illustrating how the demographic profile of an area can influence the participation levels in that area. This will be followed by a review of how other societal factors and aspects of the political system may have a bearing on turnout variations. Finally, there will be a discussion of how turnouts may be influenced by the particular geographical context that is involved.

2.2 SOCIO ECONOMIC MARGINALISATION

Many analysts have focused on social marginalisation as a factor that has considerable influence on political concerns such as voting, or non-voting, behaviour, although they do argue that other factors will need to be taken account of. Lijphart (1997) is especially concerned with low turnouts in working class areas, as he argues that these may entail a class bias in representation that will leave under-privileged communities under-represented.

"Unequal participation spells unequal influence – a major dilemma for representative democracy ... and a serious problem even if participation is not regarded mainly as a representational instrument but as an intrinsic democratic good. Moreover, as political scientists have also known for a long time, the inequality of representation and influence are not randomly distributed but systematically biased in favor of more

privileged citizens – those with higher incomes, greater wealth, and better education – and against less advantaged citizens.” (Lijphart, 1997: 1)

In line with this, Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) note that such inequalities in participation are likely to increase where the numbers engaging in civic activities are relative low, or in decline. It could be thus argued that areas where turnouts are low or in decline will be areas in which class differentials in turnout are especially marked.

Rallings et al. (1996) find a greater likelihood of lower turnout rates in deprived, as opposed to affluent, areas in the UK. They do argue, however, that political factors, such as the level of political competition in a constituency, will have as strong a bearing on turnout variations. Denver (1989: 119) also portrays working class populations and the poorly educated as being associated with lower turnout rates in Britain. Denver, however, focuses more on the young, single people, the residentially mobile and those living in private rented accommodation as key predictors of low turnout rather than the influences of educational disadvantage and social class. Highton and Wolfinger (2001: 191) find that the less well off in US society accounted for 30% of the non-voting population in the 1992 Presidential Election and 27% in the 1996 Presidential Election. When the educationally disadvantaged and ethnic minorities were included in this group it accounted for 54% of non-voters in 1992 and 51% in 1996. However the residentially mobile and the young accounted for a larger proportion of non-voters in these elections, with 57% of non-voters in 1992 and 55% in 1996 being either young or residentially mobile or both. Highton and Wolfinger, however, fail to take account of what proportions of the actual US population are accounted for by the poor and the young/transient groups. These findings contrast with Burnham’s (1986, 1987a) claims that the poor were accounting for between two-thirds and three-quarters of non-voters in the USA. One

limitation of Highton and Wolfinger's analysis, however, is that it does not relate the actual proportions of US society that are accounted for by the residentially mobile and young groups, on the one hand, and the poor, on the other. It cannot be claimed that the young and residentially mobile are more likely to abstain in elections than the poor are, based on these figures, given that the young and transient groups are likely to account for a larger proportion of the US population than the poor are.

Schmitt and Mannheimer (1991: 31), in the analysis of turnout at European elections, observe that "*non-voters are peripheral from a social point of view*", with the young and very old, the less well educated and the low paid being over-represented in the non-voting group.

Communities are also discussed in terms of being peripheral in social and political terms.

"It is generally believed that turnout levels are lower in culturally and economically peripheral communities and, in some cases, in geographically peripheral communities as well...In short, conventional wisdom proposes that a peripheral location – be it in socio-economic, cultural or political terms – and a low level of political mobilisation are conducive to electoral abstentionism." (Schmitt and Mannheimer, 1991: 31-32)

US based research by Oliver (1999) argues that increasing levels of economic segregation in a city will have the effect of depressing participation levels in that city.

"Economic segregation has a strong, negative impact on civic participation. By creating politically separated pockets of affluence, suburbanization reduces the social needs faced by citizens with the most resources to address them, by creating communities of homogenous political interests, suburbanization reduces the local conflicts that engage and draw the citizenry into the public realm." (Oliver, 1999: 205)

Increased levels of economic segregation in a city are seen to limit the political conflicts that would characterise more heterogeneous communities, with the effect that city dwellers have

less of an incentive for civic involvement. More affluent citizens are cocooned from the harsher realities of life in the more deprived parts of their cities. People who are trapped in poorer communities will also become increasingly disengaged from the local political system.

"Unable to exit from their social circumstances or to shape city policies from fiscal constraints, residents of poor cities lose interest in politics and drop out of local politics. Economic segregation thus not only distances those with resources from social problems, but limits the capacity of the poor to engage in political life." (Oliver, 1999: 206)

Tocqueville (1969) conceived of a world in which quasi-market mechanisms, rather than the democratic system, will have an increasing level of influence on decision-making processes. Oliver expands on Tocqueville's argument to argue that there will be an eroding of citizenship skills in such a world and that local politics will increasingly take an artificially consensual form, in which the political effects of economic segregation will become particularly accentuated. Such segregation, Oliver argues, may be undermining the health of American democracy, as citizens will become increasingly immobilised and isolated in such a context.

Certain commentators consider the mechanics through which levels of economic well being may impact on turnout levels. Rosenstone (1982: 41), who ranks the "*unemployed, the poor and the financially troubled*" as important low turnout groups, argues that poor, unemployed electors have more stressful, personal, issues to focus on. Hence, the costs of voting for them, both in terms of resources and time, are high relative to other members of society and they will have less of an incentive to turn out to vote on election day, as a result. Adverse economic conditions that have a disruptive role on social relationships, such as unemployment, will also lead to lower participation rates. Unemployment is also associated

with “*low efficacy, low self-confidence and intraversion*”, which are factors that may further promote non-voting behaviour. US research by Lawless and Fox (2001) notes that, even though the urban poor are most directly affected by government policies, this group is less likely to vote or engage in other political activities than other members of society are. They note that there are many dimensions to the debates as to why turnouts are so low amongst the urban poor. For conservative commentators, social welfare spending is the problem, as they argue that it fosters a sense of dependency which reduces levels of personal motivation amongst the poor, reducing their likelihood of voting as a result. Government assistance is also seen to suppress feelings of anger amongst the poor; feelings that might otherwise have encouraged greater political participation amongst this group. Lawless and Fox also argue that low levels of resources, skills and political engagement may in part, account for low turnout rates amongst the poor. They see the poor as being poorly endowed with the participatory factors or civic skills that would facilitate the voting process. Also critical according to Lawless and Fox is the manner in which the political attitudes of poor communities may be formed by the nature of their interaction with ‘street-level’ bureaucrats or low-level government officials. If such interaction proves to be negative in nature, then people living in poorer communities might be even less likely to turn out to vote at elections.

Turnout variations may even exist within underprivileged communities. Factors that may influence turnout variations at a general population level, such as age, education and the political environment, will also shape turnout variations within poor urban communities. Lawless and Fox argue that compositional variations in demographics and material resources may account for differing levels of political engagement within a poor community, or area.

"Additional years of education, even among low levels of schooling, and higher incomes, even near the poverty level, appeared to bolster the likelihood of citizen political engagement. Age was also a positive correlate of voting and political participation within our sample, perhaps because older citizens tend to be more established in the community." (Lawless and Fox, 2001: 371)

Lawless and Fox also find that women are more likely to vote in poor communities, even though men are generally more likely to vote at the national level. They account for this by arguing that men, at the national scale, tend to have higher incomes and education levels, whereas no significant gender differences in economic well being and educational attainment are seen to exist within poor urban communities. They also note that women in these communities are probably more beholden to government policies than men are, due to their role as the primary caretakers of children. Group membership is also shown to increase turnout levels in poor communities, due to the educative and mobilisational influences that groups may have on their membership. One interesting finding of Lawless and Fox was that increased levels of economic hardship appeared to boost the likelihood of people in poor communities becoming active politically. Increasing levels of hardship could have the effect of prompting people to participate politically so as to ensure that candidates, with greater concern for the needs of the poor, were elected, they argued.

Callahan (1998) finds that low turnout is not a factor in all poor inner city areas in the USA, as certain groups and areas within the inner city are shown to have higher participation rates than other groups and areas have. 'Neighbourhood stability' is one factor that is seen to have a bearing on turnout differences within poor areas, as home-owners and long-term residents generally prove to be the more likely to vote in such poor inner city areas. Indeed, the impact of neighbourhood on turnout proved to be more pronounced than that of socio-economic

status in some US inner city areas, with more cohesive and viable neighbourhoods having higher turnouts than unstable neighbourhoods. Greater feelings of efficacy will be engendered in poor areas with a greater sense of community spirit, or where government has sought to involve local people in the decisions affecting them through strong participatory structures. Callahan (1998: 71) also refers to the role that political machines may play in this context, observing how "*contemporary urban political machines are often based in social-services empires and are well poised to mobilise poor supporters*" in US cities. Certain candidates and elections will also be more likely to attract the poor to the polls. Indeed Callahan offers examples of electoral contests in which the poor urban voters have been mobilised in greater numbers than their better-off counterparts. Direct contact by a political party or candidate will also increase the likelihood that people in a poor inner city neighbourhood will vote.

"In sum, non-voting among the urban poor is neither an untreatable disease nor one that can only be mitigated by addressing its root cause, poverty. America's least enfranchised citizens have been, and can be, mobilised in large numbers."
(Callahan, 1998: 71)

In relation to the influence that social well-being has on voting behaviour in Ireland, Hardiman and Whelan (1994: 106-116) observe a strong linkage between interest in politics in Ireland and one's social class, educational attainment or employment status. Age is also highlighted as being an important factor. As noted above, Marsh (1991) suggests that long term non-voters in Ireland are more likely to be under privileged than voters or short term non voters. Marsh also observes a relationship between turnout and the nature of the party system, when analysing the influence of social class on turnout levels. Marsh finds that strong class cleavages in party competition will result in a weaker relationship between social class and electoral participation. Weaker class cleavages in an electoral system will, in turn, result in

social class having more of an influence on turnout rates. Marsh notes that, unlike most of Western Europe, which has a strong class base to political competition, the Irish political party system is not a class based one. Countries such as the USA and the Republic of Ireland that lack a strong socialist party capable of mobilising working class voters, will generally have a more obvious working class bias to their non-voting population.

Housing Tenure and Turnout

There is a strong association in the Republic of Ireland between socio-economic marginalisation and local authority housing. Studies have shown there to be an above average risk of poverty associated with local authority housing, a risk that was seen to increase significantly between 1987 and 1994 (Nolan et al., 1998, 1999).

The percentage of people living in local authority rented housing has a significant influence on spatial variations in turnout rates, based on findings in the literature. Johnston et al. (2001) find a considerable cleavage in England and Wales, in terms of voting behaviour, between owner-occupiers and tenants in local authority housing estates. In terms of voting preference, owner-occupiers are seen to be relatively more likely to be Conservative supporters, with a strong association between local authority tenancy and support for the Labour party. It is also noted, in relation to the 1997 General Election, that there were significantly higher levels of non-voting amongst people living in council estates than there were amongst owner-occupiers. In a similar vein, Whitely et al. (2001: 215) shows that turnouts for the 2001 General Election in Great Britain were generally depressed in areas with high proportions of council estate residents in greatest hardship and with high unemployment. Hoffmann-Martinot et al. (1996) find that home ownership had a positive influence on local electoral turnouts in

both France and Great Britain. Irish research by Sinnott and Whelan (1991) suggests, arising from an analysis of turnouts in Dublin for the 1984 European Elections, that housing tenure, as measured by owner occupancy, was one of the key predictors of turnout variance in that election. The effect of this factor was viewed as a combination of residential stability and a particular aspect of social class, with owner occupancy generally being associated with high levels of residential stability and middle class populations.

Educational Disadvantage

The literature generally shows that increased levels of education will be associated with relatively higher turnouts, whereas educational disadvantage will prove to be a strong predictor of low turnout. Cross-national research by Powell (1986) found that education levels had a consistent effect on turnout. A difference of 10% between the turnouts of the highest and lowest of five educational levels was found, with a consistent increase in turnouts of 2 to 3 percentage points for each higher level. Caldeira et al. (1990) also view education as having an important influence on turnout rates in terms of it being a skill that raises the probability of voting by making learning about politics easier and more gratifying, thus reducing the costs of voting.

Irish research by Sinnott and Whelan (1991: 15-19) suggests, however, that the association between educational disadvantage and low turnout need not be so clear cut. This research found that low educational attainment contributed to increases in the turnout rate in the 1984 and 1989 European Elections, once the factors of unemployment, gender and age were taken into account. Such an anomalous finding was thought to be the result of age-related influences, given that people born prior to 1952 had lower education levels than those born

afterwards due to the introduction of free secondary education in 1967. However further statistical analyses did not find this to be the case. Plutzer (2002), however, has argued that age considerations can determine the strength of the linkage between education attainment and turnout. His developmental theory of turnout suggests that once somebody has developed the habit of voting, usually after the young adult stage, then influencing factors such as education diminish in importance.

2.3 DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS

While socio-economic marginalisation is suggested as an important influence on spatial variances in turnout rates, the fact that elections are a multivariate phenomenon means that other influencing factors need to be considered. Such factors may also impact on associations between turnout and social marginalisation, as was noted above in terms of how age may shape linkages between turnout and educational attainment. These factors are many and varied, but demographic factors, such as age, marital status and residential mobility, have been particularly highlighted in the literature.

Age

Many analysts view age as being one of the key factors in terms of impacts on turnout levels. Caldeira et al. (1990) note that age has figured as a key factor in much of the literature, while Fuchs, Minnite and Shapiro (2000: 13) see it as the “*one demographic variable that stands out*” in terms of influencing turnout, independent of measures of social and political capital. The general belief is that young people are more likely to be non-voters than are older people. Turnout differences between the different age categories have been explained, Henn and

Weinstein (2001) note, either in terms of a generational effect or a life cycle effect. The life cycle effect explains low youth turnout on the basis that political socialisation is an ongoing process and is related to the resources available to individuals, consequent on the stage they are at in their lives. Given that age is linked to social and economic status, turnout levels will be low in young adulthood but will increase with greater age up until the old age stage when turnouts will start to decline again. The generational effect, by contrast, argues that political values will endure over a person's life span, with such values being shaped by historical influences, shared with others in their generation, as experienced in their formative years of political socialisation.

Strama (1998) found an abstention rate of roughly 70% amongst the 18-24 age group in the 1996 US Presidential elections, with this rate being approximately 20% lower than the national average. Low youth turnout is viewed as being rooted more in cynicism rather than apathy. Young voters view the political system as bankrupt and feel that they cannot make a difference through the political system, so they tend to regard the political aspects of issues affecting their daily lives as being inaccessible and intractable. Henn and Weinstein (2001) note that young people in Britain are becoming increasingly disengaged from politics, as the political issues that interest them the most, such as environmentalism and animal rights, generally fall outside conventional understandings of the topic. Conventional political culture, shaped largely by the prevalence of 'spin doctors' and viewed as being increasingly conservative, is not framed in such a way that would engage young people, but, rather, the focus of mainstream political parties and candidates is on middle-aged and "middle-England" issues. In line with this, Strama argues that the lack of interest that politicians show in

mobilising the youth vote will likewise have a bearing on the low turnout rates in this age category.

"Perhaps one of the biggest factors contributing to the difference between youth turnout and general turnout is that politicians tend to ignore the youth vote, targeting their advertising and their messages at older people, who are more likely to vote. Obviously it's a catch-22: politicians ignore young people because they don't vote, and young people don't vote because politicians ignore them." (Strama, 1998: 72)

Young people are more likely to change their residences frequently and hence will have less of a stake in both local issues and local elections. They may also feel they have less of an interest in government decisions as they will have fewer tax obligations. One must also consider the likelihood that some young people may find the prospect of casting their first vote an intimidating prospect. Strama also notes that there are structural barriers to youth voter participation, as indeed is the case for turnout in general. One such barrier is voter registration, which especially proves to be a difficulty for young people who leave home to go to college or for work purposes, as is also the case in Ireland.

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) (1999) has shown that Ireland has one of the lowest turnout rates in Western Europe for the 18-29 age group. France and Portugal are the only other EU countries to have similarly low youth turnout rates. Turnout rates for 'inexperienced' voters in this age category were even lower, with these being 34.6% lower than the turnouts of 'experienced' voters in this age category. The report argued that low youth turnout in Ireland seemed to be "*at least partly, a matter of lack of experience*" (International IDEA, 1999: 29). Research by the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) (1999) found further evidence of low youth turnout rates in Ireland. Turnout

in the referenda on the Good Friday Agreement and Amsterdam Treaty was estimated at 38% for the 18-25 age category, which was considerably lower than the average rate of 56% and that the 75% rate for 55-64 age category. 44.2% of the non-voters surveyed in this report said that they had not been registered to vote at the time that the referenda were held. There were significant differences between urban and rural respondents in terms of their reasons for not voting. Rural respondents were more likely not to vote on the basis of accidental reasons, whereas urban non-voters were more likely not to vote on the basis of political alienation or a lack of information.

Marital Status and Family Structure

Marital status is believed to have a bearing on turnout differentials. Straits (1990) illustrates how one tends to observe higher turnout rates for those who are married, as opposed to single or separated people. In general, he notes, married couples will tend either to both vote, or both abstain, in elections. Pattie and Johnston (1999: 889) extend this notion to observe that the family is the most important of all the social contexts that influence voting behaviour, paraphrasing Miller to note, that in terms of politics, "*families who talk together (more or less) vote together*". Single or separated people are seen to have much lower turnout rates than married people. Crewe, Fox and Alt (1992: 24) note that "*the state of being unmarried or no longer married clearly lessens the likelihood of regularly turning out on election day*". Moreover, some have claimed that turnout rates increase amongst married couples in line with the ages of their children; that is to say, turnout rates may be lower for couples with very young children than for those with older children.

Residential Mobility

Residential mobility or stability often has a significant bearing on turnout rates. Caldeira et al. (1990) and Wolfinger and Rosenstone (1980) note that length of residence in a community has an influence on the likelihood of voting, arguing that mobility has a substantial and statistically significant impact on turnout when other variables are controlled.

"Length of residence in the community goes together with higher rates of participation ... one might argue that those who have lived in a place for a longer time become more integrated and involved and thus participate more." (Caldeira et al., 1990: 194-195)

In the 1980 US Presidential election Squire et al. (1987) found that 48% of 'movers', or residentially mobile members of the electorate, had voted, as opposed to the 65% of 'stayers' who voted in the same election. Despite this, 'movers' and 'stayers' tended to be quite similar in their political outlooks.

"Movers are just as likely as stayers to talk about the campaign, pay attention to political items in the news, think they have a say in politics, deny that politics is too complicated to understand, and assert that public officials care what people like themselves think. They are almost as likely to care about which party wins the presidential election, to be interested in the campaign, and to follow politics most or some of the time. They are equally likely to engage in political activities other than voting". (Squire et al., 1987: 50)

Recent movers, however, tended to be younger, to have higher educational levels and were more likely to be living in rented housing

Low turnouts amongst the residentially mobile contrast significantly with the higher turnouts of 'stayers', especially those who are home-owners. Higher turnouts for the more residentially mobile groups are explained in terms of these groups being more likely to have more of a

stake in society and to feel more connected to their local communities. Squire et al. identify the main cause of the lower turnout rates for residentially mobile electors as largely having to do with the requirement for this group to reregister on moving residence. The residentially mobile were shown to form the largest of three groups (the others being the young and educationally disadvantaged) for which the registration requirement posed an impediment to electoral participation.

"We have established that movers are less likely to vote for no other reason than the need to reregister and the low priority that this action has" (Squire et al., 1987: 57).

2.4 COMMUNITY ACTIVISM AND GROUP MEMBERSHIP

Research shows that levels of social capital in a community may influence the turnout rate of that community. Areas marked by certain factors characteristic of a high level of social capital, such as high levels of group membership and community cohesion, are expected to have higher than average turnout rates. Measures of social capital that have been found to have strong influences on turnout rates include membership of social organisations, length of residence in one's home, and home ownership and church attendance.

Cassel (1999) and Buckley (2000) note that people who are actively involved in non-political voluntary groups and churches are more likely to be voters than people who are not members of such groups. This was illustrated by the 1996 American National Election survey, which showed a constant relationship between turnout and involvement in religious and other voluntary groups. Indeed, Olsen (1972) argues that the influence of group membership on turnout can prove to be greater than the impacts of socio-economic status. Cassel finds that

age and education are the only factors to have a greater bearing on turnout variance in the USA than membership of voluntary groups and churches.

Groups provide members with spaces to discuss politics in, even though such groups may be non-political. The social interactions involved in such groups provides the people involved with outlooks and leadership skills that have the effect of promoting voting (Verba and Nie, 1972, Olsen et al., 1972, Fuchs et al, 2000, and Putnam, 2000). Membership of voluntary groups may also engender increased levels of community and political awareness, which in turn will impact positively on local turnout rates. Cassel also suggests that that increasing levels of community spirit will be associated with a greater propensity to vote.

"One additional theory is that nonreligious and religious groups build social capital by enhancing citizen's sense of belonging to larger communities. Community mindedness mobilizes voters because political elections affect communities and are definite community events. Group participants mobilized by sense of community may be more likely than others to vote in local elections." (Cassel, 1999: 515)

In a similar vein, Pollock (1982) relates the mobilisation effect of group membership to "*an unintentional process of civic attitude change (such as increases in political interest, political efficacy and civic duty to vote)*" (Cassel, 1999: 506). Some of this mobilisation effect may, however, be related to participatory predispositions, with Cassel suggesting that politically involved individuals tend to be more likely, in turn, to be members of groups. Thus the same types of people would be involved in voluntary groups as those who would generally tend to vote in elections. Another means by which social capital can increase turnouts is through community awareness and involvement, with political participation being higher amongst those with the greater levels of attachment to their communities.

Putnam (2000) warns that there are dangers for the democratic system arising from voluntary associations becoming increasingly influential in the face of declining voter turnout rates. Some groups may, he argues, distort governmental decision making by lobbying governments to take decisions that are not in the interests of governmental efficiency. Group membership, he argues, will also prove to be more beneficial to those members who have the resources to organise and make their voices heard, namely the affluent, the educated and the connected, thus offering the prospect of a less egalitarian democratic system. Finally, Putnam notes that the more active members of such groups generally tend to be drawn from the political extremes, especially given that the greater decline in participation in the USA in recent decades has been amongst moderates and those characterised as being “middle of the road” ideologically. This, he argues, may *“trigger political polarisation and cynicism”*, as ideologically homogeneous groups may reinforce members’ views, with the resultant polarisation making compromises difficult to reach and leading to increased levels of cynicism as to government’s ability to solve problems (Putnam, 2000, 340).

Fuchs et al. (2000) find that the decline of social capital has become the preferred explanation for declining turnouts in poor urban communities. In line with this, the social capital theory suggests that the best means for improving participation rates in poor urban neighbourhoods would involve increasing social capital levels amongst such poor communities. Fuchs et al., however, argue that ‘political capital’, rather than social capital, is the key to conceptualising turnout declines over the past few years, arguing that *“while social memberships matter for political participation, memberships in organisations directly involved in politics matter much more”* (Fuchs et al, 2000: 13). The social capital thesis is viewed as having an

inadequate understanding of the forces influencing political participation. Rather than the communal model of participation that the social capital theorists envisage, it is argued that political participation in urban areas has generally tended to be fostered by conflict rather than consensus building. Such adversarial politics is based on motivating political support on the basis of self-interest, whether it be material or communal self interest, and relies on “*institutions which can mobilise individuals around neighbourhood concerns and individual or group interests*” (Fuchs et al., 2000: 4). Hence, the key agents of mobilisation are deemed to be local party organisations, which were particularly strong in most US cities up until the 1960’s, after which they went into decline. This decline is linked to the decline in turnout rates that occurred over the same period. Strong political partisanship, the degree to which one discusses politics with one’s family and friends, union membership and citizenship, as well as political mobilisation and discontent with local services are measures of political capital seen to positively influence turnout rates by Fuchs et al.

2.5 POLITICAL FACTORS

Factors particular to the political system will have a bearing on turnout levels, as was touched up in the section above.

Political mobilisation

Partisan efforts to ‘get the vote out’ can have a significant influence on turnout rates. Turnouts are likely to be higher in areas that have been the focus of intense party activity during election periods. Rallings and Thrasher (1990) argue that high turnouts can be achieved if political parties succeed in conveying the importance of an electoral contest to the electorate.

They predict that turnouts will often exceed statistical prediction by a wide margin in areas “*where a contest is unusual, or characterised by high partisan competition, or features intense competition by one or more parties*” (Rallings and Thrasher, 1990: 89). Against that, Caldeira et al. (1990) observe that, in some cases, parties may prefer to see low turnouts in certain areas, perceiving this to be to the advantage of their candidates, and may choose to act in such a way that the electorate in these areas are demobilised.

“Aware of their mobilizing potential, party leaders may eschew getting out the vote because they know the electoral realities are such that low turnout will advantage their candidates. Parties can conduct campaigns of obfuscation and confusion, intended to demobilize electorates.” (Caldeira et al., 1990: 192)

Research on the recent declines in turnout has strongly emphasised the changing nature of political mobilisation, particularly focusing on the replacement of door-to-door canvassing by more professional, but detached, campaigning methods, such as TV advertising and leafleting. Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) and Green and Gerber (2001a) suggest that a considerable portion of US turnout decline results from a reduction in such face-to-face forms of voter mobilisation, as well being linked to declining levels of party membership. Face-to-face forms of canvassing are seen as having a significant impact in terms of mobilising electorates. This is highlighted by Taylor and Johnson (1979), who argue that the main concern of party organisations at elections lies with mobilising voters – in particular party supporters – to exercise their democratic right, rather than with ‘conversion by conversation’.

Based on a cross-national analysis of turnout variations, Jackman and Miller (1995) argue that participation levels should reflect the structure of political competition. They note that proportional representation electoral systems, such the Irish system, mean that parties will

have the incentive to mobilise support everywhere. This is not the case with other electoral systems, such as the British electoral system, which allow political parties to write off some areas as ‘hopeless’ and other areas as ‘safe’. The political parties will put more organisational effort into marginal constituencies as a result, and turnouts may fall in the other constituencies due to the lower levels of partisan mobilisation in these areas.

The Irish political scene has been marked in recent decades by a decline in the membership of political parties. For instance, Fine Gael membership fell from over 10,000 – from 33,972 members to 23,315 – over the 1982-2001 period (Gallagher and Marsh, 2002a: 57). This has, in turn, led to a decline in political party activism and a reduction in the number of people available for canvassing duty at election time. As a result, political parties are relying increasingly on mass advertising campaigns and mail shots to mobilise support, rather than the traditional door-to-door canvass. Canvassing is still an important aspect of election campaigns, but limited personnel and resources mean that candidates and small parties are unable to reach all electors in their constituencies, especially in condensed campaigning periods. Interviews held with political figures suggest that, in such situations, canvassing will be focussed primarily on high turnout areas of the constituency, as the primary aim of politicians in such campaigns is to maximise their share of the vote (Kavanagh, 2002a: 46-7). In line with this, Highton and Wolfinger (2001) find that non-voters are the least likely to be canvassed during election periods. There may be exceptions of course, in that some campaigns may actually choose to focus on low turnout areas on the basis either of ideology or localism or – in the case of larger parties – on the basis of a strategic division of the constituency between different party candidates.

Partisan influences on voting are clearest in terms of an analysis of localised influences. A useful concept to view such though is that of the “friends and neighbours effect”, in which a candidate is seen to poll strongest in the areas surrounding their home base or bailiwick, with transfer patterns being similarly influenced by such localised factors. A number of studies, such as Parker’s (1982) research on the Galway West constituency, have clearly shown that this friends and neighbours effect has a significant on Irish voting behaviour, especially in rural constituencies. Marsh (2000) also notes that Irish voters – especially those motivated by local considerations – are more likely to vote for a local candidate in an election rather than a candidate from another part of the constituency. One can envisage a “friends and neighbours” influence on turnout, by which higher turnouts will be expected in areas where a local candidate is running, as voters may be motivated to turn out to support a candidate that they know, even if they have no other motivation for voting.

Partisanship and political efficacy

Abramson and Aldrich (1982) suggest that loyalty to political parties and feelings of political efficacy are two factors that will have a significant bearing on turnout rates. Partisan loyalties are seen as having a significant bearing on electoral participation. Abramson and Aldrich argue that strong partisan identification will contribute to higher levels of psychological involvement in politics, will reduce information costs, and hence voting costs, and will determine that voters perceive a greater benefit arising from the election of their preferred party or candidate. They argue that the decline in US turnout since the 1960s can be accounted for by the weakening of partisan loyalties and lowered feelings of political efficacy. Turnout rates among strong partisans were shown to have remained consistently high over the 1950-80 period, whereas participation levels have declined significantly

amongst groups with lower levels of partisan identification. In relation to the Irish context, Marsh et al. (2001) find evidence of a substantial decline in party attachment in Ireland between the late 1970s and the early 1990s and note that Ireland had the lowest levels of party attachment among the twelve EU states in 1994.

People who feel politically effective are also more likely to vote. They will experience higher levels of utility from voting because they perceive governments as being responsive, while feelings of political efficacy will also be related to “*support for democratic political norms that value citizen participation*” Abramson and Aldrich (1982: 511). Abramson and Aldrich find evidence of a significant decline in feelings of political effectiveness in western democracies over the past few decades, which, they argue, has partially accounted for the decline in turnouts over this period.

Ideological differences

Crepaz (1990) argues that the wider the political spectrum of a country, in terms of the choices offered to voters, the greater the opportunity for political self-expression will be, which will, in turn, impact on turnout levels. Higher turnouts are found in countries marked by ‘polarised multipartyism’. Cross-national analysis shows that political systems, which are marked by competition between ideologically different parties, are likely to have higher turnouts as opposed to countries where there are few perceived differences between the main political parties.

“In countries which are characterised by polarized multipartyism such as Italy, France, Belgium or the Netherlands, we find a complex cleavage structure which is characteristic of a centripetal political system. The more cleavage conflicts there are

the more the opportunity and stimuli for the individual voter for political self expression via voting." (Crepaz, 1990: 187)

Hill and Leighley (1996: 787), noting that "*the class composition of the electorate shapes the policy decisions of elected officials*" in the USA, finds that class-biases in turnout are strongly related to the nature of political competition. The Democratic party is seen as an important means of mobilising the working class electorate there, with working class turnouts increasing if the party appears more liberal and likely to actually govern. In a similar vein, Ragsdale and Rusk (1993) argue that dissatisfaction with a lack of candidate choice may be responsible for a specific group of non-voters, termed as 'dissatisfied' or 'negative' nonvoters. This group was shown to have accounted for 41% of non-voters in the 1990 Senate elections in the USA.

In line with this, Sinnott (1995) argues that the weak relationship between the Irish party system and the major social cleavages may partially account for the low turnout rates in Ireland relative to other western democracies. The Community Workers Co-operative (2000) also argue that the decline in ideological differences between major Irish parties, as these parties move to the centre politically, has had a negative effect on turnout rates. Crepaz notes that turnouts will be increased in cases where you have "postmaterialist parties". Parties that address postmaterialist issues, such as the environment, women's rights and civil rights, offer clear alternatives to the existing parties. These parties can have the effect of mobilising 'postmaterialist' voters who might otherwise abstain, as they do not identify with established parties.

2.6 ELECTORAL PROCEDURE

Difficulties with aspects of electoral procedure, such as the registration process, polling station location and polling cards, may dissuade certain electors from engaging in the electoral process. Different aspects of electoral procedure may have the effect of disenfranchising certain groups by imposing added barriers that make these groups less likely to vote in elections. Measures to increase turnouts in an area must, therefore, also conceive of the need for changes to be made to the procedures through which elections are carried out, with the express intent of making voting an easier and more attractive prospect. Such measures should especially apply for certain groups such as the old or the infirm, the educationally disadvantaged and first time voters.

Polling Stations

Rallings, Thrasher and Downe (1996) suggest that issues to do with polling stations – in particular, their location – are of considerable importance in terms of facilitating electoral participation in an area. Polling stations in the UK and Ireland generally tend to be located in community halls and schools, although private homes, mobile polling stations, public houses and even a farm garage have been used by UK authorities in some instances. Electoral authorities are generally restricted in terms of what accommodation they may use for the purposes of housing polling stations, both in terms of the availability of such accommodation and its convenience for voters. The financial costs accrued in relation to the provision of staff to man stations on polling day are also of relevance here, as the desire to minimise such costs may lead the electoral authorities to rationalise the amount of polling stations in their

jurisdiction. Thus polling stations in lightly populated areas may be closed and voters in these areas may in turn be required to travel added distances in order to vote at their newly allocated stations. Controversy about such moves in Co. Kerry early in 2002 are believed to have resulted in depressed turnouts in certain areas for the Abortion Referendum of March 2002.

The rationalisation of polling stations is of specific relevance to this discussion, given that distance to a polling station has been shown to have a significant influence on turnout propensity. Taylor (1973) found a strong association between turnout rates and perceived distance from polling stations in Swansea, although the association with actual journey time to polling stations proved to be a weak one. There was an average turnout of 65% for people who lived within a minute's walk of their polling station, which compared favourably with a 35% turnout rate for those who were over five minutes walking distance away. In relation to this, one English city council concluded that:

"There appears to be an overall correlation between distance and turnout, with more electors turning out in the closest areas and less at the most distance, although the correlation is weak." (Rallings et al., 1996: 26-27)

Another problem related to polling stations concerns the issue of accessibility for disabled voters. Financial constraints have hindered a number of authorities in both the UK and Ireland from making all the necessary alterations to improve access, although temporary polling station ramps have been provided for most stations, with some authorities also providing disabled polling booths. In cases in Ireland where a station is not accessible, disabled voters are permitted to apply to their local authority to have their vote transferred to an adjacent, accessible station.

Rallings and Thrasher (1990) suggest a number of more radical proposals, in terms of facilitating voting, which centre on breaking away from the spatial fixity of polling stations. Some of these allow voters to vote from their homes, such as Internet voting or all-postal voting. Evidence from UK suggests that the use of postal voting does appear to lead to significant increases in electoral participation levels, with higher turnout rates being recorded for postal voters in comparison to those who are required to travel to their allocated polling stations to vote.

Other suggested measures have involved the use of mobile polling stations, the locating of polling stations in supermarkets and allowing voters to go to vote in other polling stations in their constituency. The latter initiative has proved popular when used in pilot studies in the UK, with 5.2% of those voting in the Everton ward in Liverpool doing so at a polling station other than station assigned to them in the 2002 local elections (The Electoral Commission, 2002: 58).

Polling cards

Polling cards also have a key role to play in the process of holding elections. As Rallings et al. (1996) note, the polling card can often prove to be the only notice for voters that an election is taking place, especially in those areas where there is an absence of election leafleting, campaign posters, or other forms of political mobilisation. The appearance of the card is also seen to have a bearing on the manner in which information is conveyed to the voters.

"People are affected by the look of all documents that are sent to them, so if the poll card was more 'user-friendly' and colourful, then it would provide a reason for people to read and retain it". (Rallings et al., 1996: 23)

Debates relating to the appearance of the polling card have centred on whether colour cards should be used and the need to change the wording on cards into 'readable English'. There has also been discussion about the possibility of placing a map that locates the polling station on the polling card, as this is possible now given the availability of the required technology. Such a measure could prove particularly helpful for first-time voters and for people living in urban areas, especially in cases where polling station locations have changed. Most electoral authorities, however, object to such an initiative as they argue that it would prove costly and time-consuming, although some authorities do concede that simple directions to polling stations should at least be provided on the polling card.

The electoral register

Problems with the electoral register will also have an adverse effect on the turnouts in an area. Timpone (1998) notes that registration and electoral administration requirements may create barriers to electoral participation, as has also been reported on in a number of similar studies. The main influences that determine whether people will register to vote or not have to do with education and age, with other significant factors including income, housing tenure, residential mobility and political attitudes. An interesting point noted by Timpone is that education, as a factor, seems to have a less of an impact on turnout amongst registered voters in the USA. This would suggest that the influence of education as an influencing factor on turnout propensity in the USA is very much focused on the registration stage.

Registration levels in the UK have been shown to vary by age, sex, ethnicity and geography, with levels of non-registration as high as 15% of the eligible electorate in some constituencies. Such geographic concentrations of non-registration are viewed as having serious consequences both for democracy and for the areas concerned. Such registration problems especially result from administrative inefficiency, residential mobility, political alienation and the deliberate avoidance of registration as relating to the secondary uses of the register (Russell et al., 2002).

O'Malley (2001) argues that inaccuracies in the Irish electoral register could account for Ireland's low turnout rates relative to those in other western democracies, as well as Ireland's higher than average decline in turnout over the past fifteen years. If the electoral register is not updated systematically then one runs the risk that the official electorate will prove to be larger than the actual number of individuals who are eligible to vote. This is a problem that may be further accentuated by double counting or the inclusion of deceased voters on the register. (Against that, one should expect the number on the register to be under-represented given that not every person who should be eligible to vote will be on the register.) As O'Malley (2001: 216) notes, the electoral register will be continually added to and less often taken away from. Hence there is a risk that the level of this discrepancy may grow steadily over time, if, as one hypothesises, the number of registered electors is higher than the valid adult population on the census.

O'Malley finds that the electorates in general elections held over the 1981-1997 period have, in general, roughly approximated to 107% of the population who would have been eligible to vote in such elections. Hence, the actual turnout rates in these elections were generally

underestimated by a figure ranging between 4.5% and 5.5%. Such inaccuracies raise concerns for comparative forms of research using cross-national turnout data, as inaccuracies in the electoral register will result in the turnouts of some countries being over or under represented relative to other countries in the study. This point is illustrated by the fact that the electorate amounts to roughly 107% of the population that is eligible to vote in Ireland whereas the corresponding figure for the UK is 95% (O’Malley, 2001: 219).

Schemes involving “rolling registration”, in which the register is updated on a monthly rather than an annual basis, or electronic forms of registration, have been shown to lead to higher levels of registration, as well as greater accuracy in the register. Lijphart (2001) finds that the introduction of automatic forms of registration may have the effect of increasing turnouts by a figure in the range of ten to fifteen percentage points. Registration levels may also be increased by specific registration drives, especially in areas of low turnout and high non-registration levels, as illustrated by Purdam et al. (2002) in relation to Operation Black Vote, a scheme to increase registration levels amongst black and ethnic minorities in the UK. Similar registration schemes were engaged in by a number of community groups and similar organisations in Dublin, before the May 2002 General Election. However, the Government made the rules regarding entry on the supplementary register more stringent just months before the election was held. This change in the legislation severely hampered the efforts of these groups and possibly resulted in the disenfranchising of some voters in the more socially deprived neighbourhoods.

2.7 THE IMPORTANCE OF PLACE AS A FACTOR

As a treatment of voting, or rather non-voting, behaviour from a geographical perspective, the approach in this thesis differs somewhat to that of the bulk of political scientific research. This work will place a strong emphasis on the role of place, illustrating how turnout rates are likely to be shaped by a “*variety of influences emanating from a range of geographical scales*” (Agnew, 1996: 130). While this thesis takes cognisance of compositional effects on turnout, in line with the findings from the literature as noted in this chapter, it will also concern itself with spatial variations in turnout at a variety of scales. The influences that local, constituency and national influences might have will also be discussed. Agnew and other political scientists have highlighted the usefulness of an approach that takes account of geographical context.

“*The concept of geographical context can be used to draw attention to the spatial situatedness of human action in contrast to the non-spatial sorting of people out into categories based on census and other classification schemes that inspires most conventional social science.*” (Agnew, 1996: 131).

Agnew (1987: 43) argues that political behaviour can be viewed as “*the product of agency as structured by the historically constituted social contexts in which people live their lives – in a word, places*”. He argues that there is a need for political science to take cognisance of a place perspective, arguing that while the structuration of normal social relations will contain similar elements in different places (such as class relations) these elements will tend to create many different outcomes in those places. The place perspective also allows for the grounding of abstract social scientific categories, such as class and religious affiliation, making these a matter for historical and place-specific analysis and showing that the meaning and content inherent in these may depend on the different ways they are experienced in different contexts.

Moreover, non-economic phenomena (such as cultural concerns) may be expressed in terms other than those dictated by economically derived categories. This creates a context for analysis wherein the "*practical nature of everyday life rather than the abstracted nature of economic organisation is the critical nexus for explaining social organisation*" (Agnew, 1987: 43). In general the place perspective can be looked on as providing for the "*historical specificity and uniqueness of places*" (Agnew, 1987: 42). Agnew (1996) sees context as having an effect on political concerns in three different ways. First of all, he notes that people will approach political issues and concerns differently in different places. Second, the 'real' electoral choices on offer to voters will differ, often radically, between different areas, with this being influenced by the strength of party organisations and local roots of parties and candidates in different places. Third, Agnew (1996: 139) notes that electoral choices will be made in distinctively different social milieu where political choice will be shaped by "*the microdynamics of social segregation, influence networks and local issues*".

Agnew (1996) notes that conventional analyses, based largely on compositional factors, will not succeed in accounting for the totality of electoral behaviour, as the way in which socio-economic and demographic factors have an influence will vary with different geographical contexts. Moreover, spatial variations in terms of electoral behaviour may result from composition influences, but will also be shaped by the manner in which the nature of politics, and the meanings attached to it by individual voters, vary from place to place. In line with this, Agnew argues that various processes associated with the conventional world-economy may enhance the influence that space has on electoral behaviour, as these provide a number of contextual dimensions to politics that need to be taken into account. Such processes include the differential access to communications technologies afforded to different areas, the

presence of social class, ethnic and gender divisions, and the concerns of everyday life, while spatial-economics relationships will have important effects on the character of local politics. This leads Agnew (1996: 133) to claim that political behaviour will be "*inevitably structured by a changing configuration of social-geographical influences as global-local connections shift over time*".

Pattie and Johnson (2001: 296) note that "*individual decisions on whether or not to vote may reflect the local contexts within which voters find themselves*". One manner in which this may be the case, they argue, concerns the impact that constituency marginality might have on turnout levels, with turnouts expected to be lower in "first past the post" electoral systems where results are seen as a foregone conclusion. Another manner in which local context may have a bearing on turnout levels, they note, has to do with differentials in political party campaigning efforts. Pattie and Johnson (2001) show that turnout levels in the 1997 British General Election tended to be highest in constituencies where Conservative campaigning efforts were strongest.

Agnew (1987) highlights a number of ways in which place, or geographical context, can have a bearing on electoral studies, ranging from social historical treatments of political activities in specific localities in past times, to ecological models of voting behaviour, to examinations of why places may be politicised or depoliticised. One such contextual effect, which has been particularly focused on in the political science literature, is the neighbourhood effect. This hypothesises that the particular geographical context into which an individual is inserted will have the effect of shaping the social interaction patterns through which that individual receives political information and on the basis of which political decisions are made

(Huckfeldt and Sprague, 1990, Johnson et al., 2001). Huckfeldt and Sprague hypothesise that the voter's "immediate milieu", or the context into which they are inserted, will interact with constituency level concerns so as to influence that voter's behaviour, often through informal settings or "conversion through conversation" (Johnson et al., 2001: 196). Working class, or socially deprived, voters are seen as more likely to be influenced by the neighbourhood effect, as well as the influence of the wider political environment, leaving Huckfeldt and Sprague (1990: 42) to view social context as "*an interceptor of environmental influence*". Johnson et al. (2001)'s analysis of how housing tenure was related to electoral behaviour in the 1997 British General Election found high rates of non-voting amongst council tenants as opposed to owner occupiers. However, owner-occupiers living in neighbourhoods dominated by local authority housing were found to be more likely to abstain than those living in exclusively private owned housing areas. This offers evidence that local context had a significant influence on electoral behaviour in that the owner-occupiers in these areas were less likely to vote, than were owner-occupiers in other areas, as they were being influenced by the non-voting behaviour of the dominant local authority housing tenure. Such contextual effects were also found to be operating at both large and small geographical scales, with constituency level effects enhancing those of the local context in situations where these had the same influence on voting behaviour (Johnson et al., 2001: 212-214).

Marsh (2002a) notes on the importance of the 'local' in terms of accounting for different forms of electoral behaviour. Local considerations are seen to be especially relevant in the Irish context, where local deviations from national patterns are viewed as being commonplace

and where general elections can be looked on as amounting to “41 local elections”¹ (Marsh, 2002a: 207). Marsh sees contextual effects as being important in a number of ways. First, voters in different constituencies will be facing different electoral choices at general and local elections, with these choices involving different candidates and, in some cases, different political parties. Parties will have higher levels of support in certain areas rather than others, as a political party will generally fare better in “*converting the undecided and mobilising the faithful*” in areas where party organisation is particularly strong (Marsh, 2002a: 208). There may be variations in the nature of political parties and in the meaning attached to different political issues, depending on the geographical context into which these issues are inserted as well as the time period involved. Having highlighted the importance of context, Marsh argues that analyses of political behaviour run the risk of being biased if they fail to take account of this effect. Various means of taking cognisance of this factor, he notes, involve the addition of context-related dummy variables to statistical analyses or the over-sampling of unique, or anomalous, contexts in survey research.

Urban-rural turnout differentials

One way in which differing geographical contexts may be seen to have an influence on turnout rates concerns the evidence of urban-rural differentials in turnout rates in Western democracies, with evidence of higher rural turnouts in the USA, Britain and Ireland (Agnew, 1987, Whitely et al., 2001, Buckley, 2000).

¹ This refers to the fact that there were forty one different general election constituencies in Ireland at the time that the Marsh article was written. This number increased to forty two in the 2002 General Election, with the creation of the Dublin Mid West constituency.

Turnouts were generally considered to be higher in urban, as opposed to rural areas in the USA, as noted by Monroe (1977), while Agnew (1987: 216) shows that turnouts were highest in the more urbanised and industrialised states in the latter part of the 19th century. However, as noted by Verba and Nie (1972), turnouts are now generally lower in the large cities and higher in the isolated, self-contained and closely bounded communities in the more peripheral and sparsely populated parts of the USA. As regards sub-state variations in turnout rates, research by Johnson (1971) found higher turnout levels in the more rural parts of West Virginia, which was confirmed by further such research by Monroe (1977) in Illinois. Monroe found a negative correlation between percentage urbanisation and turnout, with a correlation of -0.71 for the 1970 election and of -0.70 for the 1972 election. This finding is seen as surprising given that the rural parts of Illinois tended to be marked by the "*lowest levels of income, education and socio-economic status*", as well as by "*more of a 'traditionalistic' political culture and therefore less political participation by the general public*" (Monroe, 1977: 76). However, as Monroe notes:

"At any rate, the conclusion is inescapable that it is the areas of Illinois most generally considered 'backward' or 'underdeveloped', characterised by rural isolation, lack of vigorous economic base, whether agricultural or industrial, and an ageing and declining population, which demonstrates the highest degree of participation in the electoral process." (Monroe, 1977: 76)

Monroe discusses a number of rationales that could possibly account for such a relationship. The first relates to the possibility that turnout may decrease with increasing economic development, although Monroe is loath to uphold such an assertion and feels it would be incompatible with the general theory on the subject. The next rationale, Monroe considers, is associated with the degree to which a community is "bounded", suggesting that there is an

increasing likelihood of increased political participation within a community that is well-defined and autonomous in terms of political, social and economic concerns. Monroe, however, feels the “boundedness” argument should suggest increasing turnouts in metropolitan communities, while he notes that the dependency of remote rural areas on other, distant, areas for economic activities, information and entertainment further weakens the “boundedness” contention. The nature of the US registration process, which discriminates against new residents, is seen as a part of the reason behind the higher rural turnouts, given that rural areas are more likely to be marked by out-migration rather than in-migration. Monroe also feels that the prevalence of “job patronage” in Illinois was a key factor behind the higher rural turnouts, given that the rural areas were the most economically disadvantaged and hence were the more reliant on jobs provided by the state or county.

“It requires no great flights of fancy to conceive that a sizeable part of the tiny population of some of the high turnout counties would be interested in electoral outcomes because of the economic consequences for themselves, their acquaintances, and the relatives” (Monroe, 1977: 77).

The final rationale that Monroe considers has to do with the increased levels of engagement in political matters in rural areas. Such high levels, Monroe argues, are because politics proves to be *“one of the few sources of ‘entertainment’ available”* to rural voters, in contrast to the urban voter who is considered as being faced with a *“myriad of competing attractions for his time and interest”* (Monroe, 1977: 77).

Urban-rural turnout differentials are also noted in the Irish context by Buckley (2000), who shows that general election turnouts in the Dublin region have been, on average, roughly 5 per cent lower than the national turnout rate over the past two decades. She suggests that

partisanship may have a bearing on this as, with voter volatility considerably more pronounced in the urban constituencies, political scientists have concluded that party loyalty is strongest in the western and more rural constituencies. Hence the high levels of partisanship in these constituencies act as a strong motivation to encourage people living there to vote.

O'Malley (2001: 215) suggests that urban-rural turnout variations in Ireland could be explained by inaccuracies in the electoral register. He hypothesizes that there are greater deficiencies in urban electoral registers, relative to those in rural areas, and these could be causing urban-rural turnout differentials. O'Malley offers a number of reasons for greater inaccuracies in the urban registers. First, people in rural areas are more likely to be known to the local registering authority, hence they can be easily added to the register, or removed from it if they are deceased. There is also a higher degree of residential stability in rural areas, which helps towards greater accuracy in the rural registers, while there are higher degrees of anonymity amongst urban populations. However, little evidence was found for such a hypothesis using 'estimated real turnout' (ERT) (in which the valid adult population, rather than the number registered at the time of an election, was used as the base to calculate turnouts). However, the findings suggest that register inaccuracies actually underestimated, rather than explained, the urban-rural turnout differentials in general elections held in the 1981-1997 period. For instance, O'Malley estimates that the actual difference between rural and urban turnouts, after having adjusted the electorate, was 7.9% higher than the reported difference. Despite this, the possibility that discrepancies in the register may account for part of the urban-rural turnout differentials is not ruled out, as it is contended that one needs to factor in the likelihood of 'double counting'. This might arise if rural people, who move to Dublin, register at both at their Dublin address and at their original home and then opt to

return home to their rural area to vote, rather than doing so in their Dublin constituency. This would be more pronounced if such voting occurs on a Friday or at the weekend. Furthermore, some of these may opt just to register for their original home address and hence provide the vote down the country whilst increasing the ‘estimated real electorate’ (ERE) in Dublin.

2.8 RESEARCH ISSUES IN THIS THESIS

The key focus of this thesis will be on uncovering the linkages between socio-economic marginalisation and turnout levels in Ireland. The literature generally upholds a strong association between low turnout rates and socio-economic marginalisation. The first aim of this thesis will be to determine whether such an association applies in the case of Ireland. The general aim will be to analyse whether social marginalisation has an influence on Irish turnout rates and whether this association is such that turnouts will be lower where levels of socio-economic marginalisation are higher. This leads one to hypothesise that social well-being will impact on turnout rates in Ireland and that this will involve turnout rates being higher in the affluent areas and lower in the more deprived areas.

H₁: There is an association between socio-economic marginalisation and turnout in Ireland, with higher levels of marginalisation being associated with lower turnout rates.

However, as this chapter illustrates, other factors, such as those related to the demographic characteristics of an area and levels of political and community activism, will also have an impact on spatial variations in turnout levels. This raises the probability that other factors need to be taken account of in an understanding of the causes of Irish turnout variations.

Turnouts may be influenced by demographic factors, such as age or marital status, aspects of the political and electoral process, or by more subjective factors, which would not be picked up in a statistical analysis. These potential influences on turnout variation will also have to be addressed in this thesis, so as to obtain a comprehensive picture of the main influences of turnout variation in the Republic of Ireland.

H₂: The residual turnout variance – once socio-economic marginalisation is taken account of – is explained by a mixture of demographic, political and subjective factors.

The role of geographical context was noted, in relation to its influence on political and electoral behaviour, and it was suggested that this too could have a bearing on turnout rates, as well as on the nature of the relationships between turnout and a range of potential explanatory factors. This also raises the possibility that the manner in which Irish turnouts are influenced by socio-economic marginalisation and other potential explanatory factors will be shaped by the particular geographic context in which these relations are taking place. The literature showed that turnouts will generally be higher in rural, as opposed to urban areas, while it was suggested in Section 2.2 that class inequalities in participation were likely to be more pronounced in areas where turnouts are relatively low, or in decline. It could be hypothesised, arising from this, that class considerations will have a greater bearing on low turnout urban contexts, as opposed to high turnout rural areas. This contention forms the basis of a third hypothesis.

H₃: This association between turnout and socio-economic marginalisation tends to be stronger in urban, rather than rural, areas in Ireland.

Just as the associations between turnout and socio-economic marginalisation will be shaped by geographical context, the type of election that is being held may too influence the nature of these associations. Certain groups in the electorate may be more inclined to vote in certain types of elections and this could mean that class differentials are more enhanced for certain elections, if this relationship also applies in the case of middle or working class electors. This leads to a fourth hypothesis that suggests that the type of election that one is concerned with will shape the degree to which turnouts will be influenced by socio-economic marginalisation.

H₄: The association between turnout and socio-economic marginalisation will differ, depending on the type of election being held.

Finally, while most of the research will be concerned with the factors that influence spatial variations in turnout rates, there is also a need to address the area of turnout decline. There is a need to determine whether declining turnout is an aspect of Irish political life as it is hypothesised to be in other western democracies. Moreover, there is a need to determine whether such a decline in turnouts, if shown to exist, has a significant class dimension to it. If turnout decline is shown to be especially concentrated in socially deprived areas – especially areas that have a low turnout rate – then this will have the effect of further heightening turnout differences between affluent and socially deprived areas, thus making for heightened class biases in turnout rates in Ireland. The final hypothesis, H₅, addresses this area of concern.

H₅: Turnout rates are in decline in Ireland and this decline has a class dimension to it, with turnout decline particularly concentrated in socially deprived areas.

The combined effect of the different hypotheses means that this work will be concerned with identifying the nature of the associations between turnout and socio-economic marginalisation. This analysis will study the degree to which socio-economic marginalisation related factors may impact on turnout variation, if such an association is shown to exist. It will seek to determine whether this relationship is sufficiently robust to infer that high levels of socio-economic marginalisation will always result in low turnout rates and, in turn, that low turnouts in an area can be seen as an indicator that the area is a marginalised one. If such a robust relationship is shown to exist between socio-economic marginalisation and turnout, then this would allow for the turnout rate in an area to be taken as an indicator of socio-economic marginalisation. Low turnout could especially be used as a measure of social deprivation for areas that do not correspond with the area divisions used for statistical purposes by the Central Statistics Office (CSO), namely that of the district electoral division (DED). In some cases, DEDs are so large in population terms that pockets of deprivation that may exist within these DEDs will not be picked in statistical profiles of these areas. If the postulated robust relationship between socio-economic marginalisation and low turnout is shown to exist, then the availability of turnout data for small areas, such as streets or housing estates, would allow one to detect the existence of pockets of deprivation within these DEDs.

The hypothesis, H₂, also suggests that there is a need in this thesis to address the alternative influences on turnout variation. Factors, such as those pertaining to the demographic characteristics of an area and the political culture of such areas, will also need to be addressed in this research, with statistical analyses needing to take account of these factors, as well as those related to socio-economic marginalisation. The third and fourth hypotheses also take

cognisance of the possibility that the type of election involved, or rural-urban factors, may influence relationships between turnout variations and explanatory factors. Given the suggestion in hypothesis, H₃, that socio-economic marginalisation will have a greater bearing on urban, rather than rural, turnout variations, there is a need to analyse whether alternate factors will have a greater bearing on turnout levels in the more rural areas. Mindful of the third hypothesis, there is a need to take account of whether class biases in turnout rates are accentuated when different types of elections are involved. Thus, there is a need to analyse whether class, or other, considerations will have an impact on turnout differentials between different election types.

Finally, the fifth hypothesis highlights the fact that, while the main focus of this research will be on the socio-economic determinants of spatial variations in turnout rates, there is also a need to take account of temporal trends in turnout rates. Thus, the changes in turnout levels for all election types over the past few decades will be analysed to determine whether there is evidence of a sustained decline in Irish turnouts. Further analyses will determine whether there is a class dimension to this decline, should it be shown to exist, and if this turnout decline is especially pronounced in the more socially deprived areas.

The different hypotheses are highly interrelated and so it will not be possible to treat them individually, in the order that they have been put forward in this section. The manner in which the different hypotheses, outlined in this chapter, will be addressed in the empirical chapters (i.e. Chapters 5-11) will be somewhat out of sequence. In general, the different hypotheses relating to spatial variations in turnout will be addressed in part in a number of these chapters, although there will be a specific focus on the issue of turnout decline in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 3

IMPLICATIONS OF TURNOUT VARIATIONS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter analysed the main research findings relating to the factors that influence turnout variation and turnout decline. It was suggested that turnout rates were positively associated with the levels of social well being in an area, with turnouts expected to be lower in areas characterised by high levels of socio-economic marginalisation. Low turnout levels were also associated with younger voters, high levels of residential mobility and low levels of political marginalisation, amongst other factors. But should such findings, showing evidence of significant turnout variations between different areas and groups in society and of sustained declines in participation levels, be of concern to the political establishment? Are the implications of turnout variation and decline of especial concern, given the potential implications for the health of democracy and the representation of marginalised groups? This chapter will address these questions, by highlighting the main findings in the electoral literature as to what the implications of class, and other, biases in turnout rates will be. It will also reviews the research findings on suggested means of improving participation levels in low turnout areas.

3.2 IMPLICATIONS

Concerns in the electoral literature, relating to the impact that turnout variations may have on the political system, focus largely on the likely outcome of socio-economic or demographic biases in the electorate. A key concern relating to declining turnout is the extent to which it

may be occurring in a differential manner between different areas and social groups. Accelerated turnout decline amongst a certain area or group may lead to these being further marginalised, especially in terms of future political decision making. There is a strong likelihood of distortions in political representation if the composition of the voting population differs significantly to that of the non-voting population. In such a scenario, issues of low turnout groups and areas may be increasingly ignored or devalued in policy making and outcomes, as such groups will hence be seen as being of little, or declining, benefit in electoral terms for politicians (International IDEA, 1999: 13). This mirrors the contention of Key (1949) that politicians would be under no compulsion to address the issues of the low turnout classes and groups, as well as Burnham's (1987) claim that "*the old saw remains profoundly true: if you don't vote, you don't count*". The same concern was expressed in an editorial in the *Irish Examiner* on polling day for the 2002 General Election.

"What is clear is that party activists can pinpoint the areas where people vote and where they do not. Therefore, given the nod and wink style of the Irish system, it is easily understood why politicians pay more or less attention, as the case may be, to areas depending on whether people vote or not. That explains why some areas become marginalised as grants are channelled to other districts. It is a damning comment on the system but it is also a most eloquent argument in favour of voting. In the final analysis, if people feel politics are irrelevant and removed from their day-to-day lives, then they will get the politicians they deserve." (Irish Examiner Editorial, 2002: 18)

Lijphart (1997) is especially concerned with socio-economic biases in turnout rates and notes that such class biases will generally tend to be strongest in low turnout countries such as the USA and Switzerland. Where socio-economic biases in turnouts exist, Lijphart argues that these can determine, to some degree, electoral success or failure and the subsequent content of public policies. Highton and Wolfinger (2001), using US National Election Studies (NES) data, contests Lijphart's contentions by arguing that only slight differences exist between the

views of voters and non-voters. Although the voters group was approximately 5%-9% more conservative than non-voters in terms of redistributive economic issues, Highton and Wolfinger claim that the views of non-voters are generally well represented by the voting population. This contention is accounted for by the fact that over half the non-voters in the US Presidential elections of 1992 and 1996 were either in the young or residentially mobile groups, with neither of these groups being particularly marked by politically distinctive characteristics. Lijphart (1997) and Piven and Cloward (1988), however, argue that the NES survey fails to allow for the underdevelopment of political attitudes amongst non-voters and suggest that the views of non-voters would change if they were mobilised to vote. Piven and Cloward (1988: 21) claim that there would be a change in political attitudes amongst the socially marginalised if they were to become the object of partisan competition. They perceive, in such a scenario, that

“politicians would be prodded to identify and articulate the grievances and aspirations of lower-income voters in order to win their support, thus helping to give form and voice to a distinctive class politics.”

Lawless and Fox (2001) observe that there is an association between greater political participation amongst the poor and higher levels of welfare spending in the USA. They argue that increasing turnouts amongst the less well off sections of society is essential to ensure fair representation within the political system. Martinez (1997: 896) claims that increases in turnouts amongst the lower socio-economic classes will generally result, in turn, in increases in the levels of social expenditure by Western governments and more progressive tax policies in US state governments. Thus, he argues that the size and socio-economic composition of the voting population will largely determine whether tax policies will be regressive or progressive

in nature, while also determining the level of concern and resources that governments will afford to issues such as social welfare.

Much research focuses on the impacts that a universal turnout scenario would have. Considerable debate amongst US scholars is focussed on the impact that such scenarios would have on support for the Democrat party. For instance, Highton and Wolfinger (2001: 189) found that a universal turnout scenario would have increased the lead Clinton had over Bush in the 1992 Presidential Election by 4% and the lead he had over Dole in 1996 by 5%. In general, many of these studies provide conflicting results. Addressing this problem, Grofman, Owen and Collet (1999) argue that these conflicting findings are caused by these researchers attempting to answer different questions, and through the use of different types of data sets. They offer a helpful typology for addressing the potential effects of turnout variance, with the suggestion that arguments regarding the likely benefactors of higher turnouts will focus around three possible effects. These include a “partisan bias effect”, which would favour the more left of centre parties, a “bandwagon effect” that would benefit the winning party in an election and a “competition effect”, which generally acts to the disadvantage of incumbent candidates.

Cross-national research by Pacek and Radcliff (1995) contends that increases in turnout will generally mean that left of centre parties will win higher shares of the vote. They note that differences in the strength of this linkage, as well as in the partisan bias effect, exist from country to country. This association tends to be weakest in countries where class-based politics is the least pronounced, while the bandwagon effect tends to be weaker in countries where class cleavages are strongest. Their analysis, based on national elections in 19

industrial democracies for the 1950-90 period, finds that the vote for socialist parties varies directly with turnout, with the left share of the vote increasing by almost one-third of a percentage point for every percentage increase in turnout.

As we have seen researchers differ as to the degree to which turnout differences can engender class, and other biases, in political support and representation levels. However, the evidence seems to strongly suggest that turnout decline and variations, in particular where these are related to socio-economic influences, will skew levels of political support and representation in favour of the more advantaged members of society. Higher turnouts in the more affluent communities means that they will have a greater ability to influence electoral results and representation levels in parliament than low turnout, socially deprived communities will have. Such class biases may be further accentuated if turnout decline proves to be especially pronounced in the poorer areas. Furthermore, declining turnout, in itself, is a concern as it may raise issues about the health of representative democracy. Such concerns are noted by Lijphart (1997), who argues that:

"In short, the overall weight of the evidence strongly supports the view that who votes and how people vote matter a great deal. Indeed, any other conclusion would be extremely damaging for the very concept of representative democracy." (Lijphart, 1997: 5)

3.3 MEANS OF IMPROVING TURNOUT RATES

Having touched on the effects that turnout variations might have in social and political terms, as well as the most likely areas and groups to be affected, it is important to assess the measures that have been put forward to address the problems associated with low and

declining turnout rates. This section will review the measures that have been put forward in relation to voter education, or as regards improving turnouts in socially deprived areas or amongst young voters, while initiatives that have been taken by the Irish government in this regard will also be assessed.

Voter education programmes

Voter education programmes are seen as a key means of improving turnout rates in places where participation rates are low, but especially amongst areas and groups that may be characterised by high levels of social deprivation and educational disadvantage. Such a programme – termed the “Active Citizenship Programme” – has been introduced into a number of disadvantaged Irish communities in the Greater Dublin region by the Vincentian Partnership for Justice (VPJ) group over the past few years. (See Appendix A.) This programme has been largely based on the voter education programme used by NETWORK, a US social justice lobby group, with a number of adaptations made to suit the Irish context.

Participants have generally viewed this, and other similar, voter education programmes positively. They contend that these programmes allow for a greater understanding of the electoral and political system and experience has shown that participants are more likely to vote in elections after having taken part in such programmes. Against that, restrictions on group sizes mean that only small percentages of people in a locality can participate in voter education programmes, although these participants may subsequently act as a catalyst to encourage non-participants in their neighbourhood to vote. One programme in a locality will probably only result in minor increases in the turnout rate of that area. Voter education programmes are also generally reliant on having captive audiences to work with. Experience

has shown that involvement is generally low where participants are drawn from the public at large, rather than being part of a training programme or community enterprise scheme. One community development worker who organised a number of such programmes in the Ballyfermot area noted this.

"We put on seven Active Citizenship programmes that might be done publicly. And they were advertised – a full page in the local Echo newspaper. And they were an absolute, 100% disaster in terms of people turning out. In fact the turnout rate was zero. Now we do have about fifty people doing the Active Citizenship programme, but those were captive audiences as such ... We tried very hard to get people – who wouldn't be interested in voting – interested in going to the Citizenship programme and they're not. People were either saying "I vote already" or else, you know, "politicians are all a load of..." and you know, if they're not interested in voting they're certainly not going to give up their night to go to a programme to tell them why they should vote."

This suggests that, while voter education programmes have a proven ability to increase the turnout propensities of those who participate in them, there are difficulties involved in getting people to participate in them, unless they are part of a 'captive audience'. Such difficulties are largely equivalent to the factors underlying such low turnouts in socially deprived areas. Such programmes will not resolve the problems of low participation levels in low turnout, socially deprived areas on their own, although they can make a valuable contribution towards addressing these problems.

Experimental research on means of voter mobilisation

US research findings suggest that voting is habitual, that is to say, if a person is to vote in one election, then there is an increased likelihood of them voting in subsequent elections (Green and Gerber, 2001b). Habitual voters are expected to receive more attention from politicians than non-voters will, especially where information on those who have voted in previous

elections is widely available through a marked register. This further mobilises voters to participate in future elections. The act of voting for the first time increases a voters' levels of civic obligation and partisanship and changes attitudes that they had about the voting process itself, as the first experience of actually voting makes them more confident in the act of going to a polling station and voting. Green and Gerber (2001b: 19) argue that these processes mean that the habit of voting will ensure that people will come to look on voting simply as an act that people like them will do on election day.

Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) claim that over 50% of the turnout decline in the USA has resulted from a reduction in voter mobilisation. Green and Gerber, mindful of this, focus on different means of mobilising people – especially first time voters – to vote. They find, from engaging in non-partisan “get-out-the-vote” experiments, that “*even a modest stimulus can lead to sizeable increase in the turnout rate of unaffiliated voters*” (Green and Gerber, 2000a: 853), while Republicans and Democrats received sufficient encouragement to vote from their parties. The non-partisan literature, drawing on people’s sense of civic responsibility and patriotism, was found to be a more effective means of mobilising non-aligned voters than the confrontational and divisive nature of the campaign literature.

Philips (2001) finds that the use of e-mail, as part of a voter mobilisation campaign, could increase youth turnouts, although it was noted that such campaigns were especially relevant to more politically aware young voters. Such campaigns were viewed as cost-effective but limited, as there was a need to be mindful of the “*digital divide*” between affluent and poor members of society, as well as the greater familiarity that certain groups (such as college students) have with e-mail technology.

Green and Gerber (2000b: 661) find considerable differences between personal and impersonal means of voter mobilisation, arguing that "*face-to-face interaction dramatically increases the chance that voters will go to the polls*". Professional leaflets proved the second most effective means of voter mobilisation, while telephone appeals proved to be the least successful. Green and Gerber relate the declining turnout rates in western democracies to the declining use of personal canvassing and an over-reliance on mass advertising for mobilisation purposes. Declining turnouts in the USA were related to the declining membership of political groups and changing campaign tactics, in which phone calls are used increasingly instead of door-to-door canvassing.

Mobilising Poor Neighbourhoods

Callahan (1998) argues that direct personal contacts can encourage people in poor inner city areas to vote. The 'Voter Power' group in Boston is seen as a good example of how "*multiple contacts are needed to educate and involve people in politics*" (Callahan, 1998: 73). Results will be achieved through efforts to register, empower and mobilise the urban poor, but, if real transformation is to occur, such efforts must link in with strategies in which politicians consistently reach out to these poor communities.

"There are no silver bullets that can slay electoral estrangement in the inner cities. But this estrangement need not remain an immutable feature of American politics. If political leaders pay attention to neglected urban voters, chances are greater that these voters will pay attention to them. Above all, we need public ideas and candidates who inspire poor people to believe that politics can make a difference in their lives." (Callahan, 1998: 75)

Fuchs, Minnite and Shapiro (2000) argue that the building up of ‘political capital’ is a key element in the process of promoting political participation in poor US neighbourhoods. They find a strong linkage between declining turnouts in US cities and the declining strength of local party organisations and other groups with an explicit political focus, the different institutions that used to facilitate political incorporation.

“The old party organizations provided newcomers with material incentives for participation, making the Irish, Italians and Jews real stakeholders in American politics. There must be organisations that do the same for today’s immigrants ... engagement in politics can best be encouraged by involvement in organizations which consider political activity as part of their agenda.” (Fuchs, Minnite and Shapiro, 2000: 15),

There is, they argue, a need to revive such institutions so as to facilitate the political incorporation of modern day immigrants, as well as other first time voters. They also noted that community groups are important in terms of ameliorating turnouts in poor urban areas, given that it has been shown that members of such groups are more likely to vote than are other sections of the electorate.

Measures to Improve Youth Participation Rates

Young people have been consistently shown to have significantly lower turnout rates than other age groups. Two recent reports have focused on the issue of increasing youth participation levels, namely those of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) and the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI)).

The IDEA (1999: 45) argues that electoral authorities need to take measures to specifically target young people in terms of voter registration. The report also suggests that governments

take measures to address the range of issues relating to low youth turnouts, such as funding research into the causes of these. It suggests that “*task forces, commissions of inquiry and advisory boards*” be created to bring together key actors involved in related areas, as well as allowing for the identification of options and strategies to address turnout related issues (IDEA, 1999: 55). It also stresses that political parties need to reach out more to young people and should incorporate youth concerns into their electoral manifestos to a much greater extent. Voter education is seen as a key prerequisite for increasing youth turnout rates by the IDEA and it suggests that there is role for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to get involved in voter education campaigns.

The NYCI, in line with this, recommends that the Irish Government support any initiatives taken by youth organisations to encourage young people to vote and they argue that such measures should form the basis of a national and ongoing initiative (National Youth Council of Ireland, 1999). The IDEA also advocates the use of the national media to convey information on registering and the electoral process.

Much of the literature focuses on changes to electoral procedures as means of encouraging young, first time voters to participate in elections. Measures suggested by the IDEA include the provision of a sufficient number of conveniently located, well-signed, polling stations, the provision of good election information, the declaration of election days as national holidays, and the simplification of absentee voter procedures. Further measures suggested by the NYCI include an automatic registration process, improvements to polling cards, weekend voting and an extension of the postal voting facility. Henn and Weinstein (2001) argue that youth participation in elections could be increased if voting periods were to be spread over a time

period of more than one day, or if voting took place in supermarkets, by telephone or through the Internet.

However Russell et al. (2000) suggest that changes to electoral procedures will only make a minimal contribution towards solving the problem of low youth turnouts:

"Innovations aimed at making voting easier may bring about small improvements in levels of turnout but cannot resolve the more fundamental problems of disengagement among young people." (Russell et al., 2000: 8)

Russell et al. argue that the key to addressing issues related to low youth turnout lies not simply in changes to electoral procedure but rather in dealing with young people's profound sense of alienation from the political system. An estimated 71% of 18-24 year olds did not vote in the 2001 British General Election (Russell et al., 2002: 6) and research shows that this low turnout was rooted in an increasing sense of unease with formal politics amongst young people. They do not feel represented by the political system and political parties or middle aged politicians are not seen as representing the interests of their age cohort, which leads them to feel 'powerless' in the electoral process. Young people also did not see any significant distinctions between political parties and felt that political parties were not very distinct from each other.

This leads Russell et al. to warn of a cohort effect at work in which the increasing levels of cynicism of young people towards the electoral process will make for an increasingly passive democracy in future decades. Such a scenario will lead to questions about the legitimacy of

democratically elected governments in the future and the danger of politics falling into a further state of disrepute.

These views as to the root causes of low youth turnout, Russell et al. note, could similarly be applied to the sense of alienation in socially deprived communities in relation to the political system. They stress that there is no quick-fix solution to the issue of low turnout amongst socially deprived communities and younger voters. Any long-term solution will have to address the root causes of their alienation from the electoral system, rather than offer an array of short-term measures that will only lead to slight and temporary improvements in turnout rates. Henn and Weinstein (2001: 18) also argue that youth turnout rates are more likely to be influenced by issues of political substance rather than by changes to electoral procedure. The factors they view as being most likely to increase turnout rates have to do with the provision of "*accessible information about the parties, the candidates, and the issues*".

Other suggested initiatives

Compulsory voting

Compulsory voting is seen as a particularly effective, but controversial, means of increasing turnout rates. Such an initiative would almost certainly lead to an increase in turnouts, given that the high turnout countries in Europe, such as Belgium or Italy, generally tend to have compulsory voting systems. There are some objections to this however. Russell et al. (2002: 50) argues that the introduction of such a system "*runs the risk of treating the wrong problem – poor turnout – rather than any of its myriad causes*". The introduction of compulsory voting would not impact on the underlying causes of low voter turnout and would lead to no improvement in the quality of communication between voters and political parties, they argue.

There is also the argument that voters should have the right not to vote, in a similar vein to having the right to vote.

'None of the above'

Research by the UK Electoral Commission suggests that the introduction of a ‘none of the above’ option on ballot papers could boost turnout rates, especially amongst younger voters. Russell et al. (2002) have argued that this might prove to be a useful initiative to at least draw disaffected voters to the polls, but argue that more research is needed in this regard.

“There appears to be some support from young people for ‘none of the above’ candidates (Diplock, 2001), but more rigorous experiments are needed before we can confidently assert that they would improve participation in elections.” (Russell et al., 2002: 51)

The introduction of a ‘none of the above’ option would have especial merit in a system, such as the electronic voting system envisaged for use in Irish elections, where it is not possible to spoil one’s vote, or in a compulsory voting system. This option would act as a ‘safety valve’ which would allow people, who were discontented with the political system or with the range of candidates on the ballot sheet, a means of registering a protest, other than opting not to participate in an election.

Information

Voters often perceive that there is significant lack of information about the candidates standing for election in their constituencies and their election policies. UK research suggests that voters would be more likely to vote in local elections if they had more information about the candidates (The Electoral Commission, 2002). Poor election literature is a particular issue

in local election contests, as candidates generally do not have the same level of resources that general election candidates have. In the 2002 local elections in England, the local authority in Hyndburn addressed this issue by paying for candidates to send one piece of electoral literature to each voter in the area by each local election candidate. This led to a slight increase in turnouts in that local authority, while turnouts there were also slightly higher than the national average (The Electoral Commission, 2002: 58). Further research suggests that the quantity of campaign literature is not important, but rather the provision of information that is relevant to voters in an area. Further pilot studies to examine the effectiveness of different forms of electoral literature have been proposed.

Initiatives taken by the Irish Government.

The Irish government has taken a number of initiatives in recent years to further facilitate the voting process, which they felt would have the effect of improving turnout rates also. A number of these measures were introduced in the 2002 General Election.

Electronic Voting

The Irish Government introduced an electronic voting and counting system for the Dublin North, Dublin West and Meath Dáil constituencies at the 2002 General Election. This system was also used for the October 2002 Nice Treaty Referendum in these constituencies, as well as the other Dublin County constituencies (Dublin Mid West, Dublin South West, Dublin South and Dun Laoghaire). The system will be introduced on a national level for the 2004 local and European elections. The initial use of the electronic voting system encountered some teething problems. These problems did not mean that people who wished to vote were

turned away, although there were some instances in which people chose to leave rather than wait to vote (Kearns, 2002).

The electronic voting system has come in for criticism from a number of sources, but from psephologists in particular. They argue that the system may undermine the secrecy of the ballot and the confidence that ordinary voters have in the electoral process, claiming that the system lacks the security and transparency associated with the counting process for the paper ballot system.

"No recent event better illustrates the importance of paper ballots than Slobodan Milosevic's attempt to retain power despite losing the presidential elections in Yugoslavia. Ordinary voters were able to break in to the counting centres and compare the piles of votes for the two candidates. What could they have done if faced with a pile of "modules" or diskette?" (Quinn, 2002).

Whelan (2002) argues that the replacement of the marathon general election count, as well as the comprehensive two days of television and radio coverage that accompanied it, will reduce the public's interest levels in political and electoral issues. The current regulations for the electronic voting system also mean that information on voting patterns can now be only made only available at the constituency level. There is no longer scope for tally estimates of the votes cast for each polling box to be made given that the counting process will take place within the workings of a computer. Political party organisations and political scientists will no longer have access to tally information as the present legislation prohibits sub-constituency breakdowns of the voting patterns. It is no longer possible for people to spoil their ballots under this system, as a form of positive abstention, and those who have no desire to vote for any of the election candidates may simply decide not to vote instead, thus further depressing

the turnout rate. One alternative would be to put in a facility to allow voters to vote for “none of the above”, as was noted above (White, 2002).

Pilot studies in the English local elections in May 2002 that also used exclusively polling station-based technology found that this system did not make the act of voting more convenient and did not lead to increases in turnout rates. The only advantage perceived in the system was that it increased the accuracy and efficiency, but this was a limited benefit:

“The Commission believes (electronic voting pilots that were exclusively polling station-based) should not be a high priority for future pilots, especially in elections run on a ‘first past the post’ system, where the counting process is not complex.” (The Electoral Commission, 2002b: 7).

These findings would suggest that electronic voting, as it is conceived in Ireland, will not increase turnout rates. This would seem to be supported by the fact that turnouts fell in the three pilot constituencies in which the technology was used. Indeed turnout decline in the three constituencies was greater than the national average, with turnouts down by 2.8% in Dublin West, 3.0% in Dublin North and 4.6% in Meath.

Photos on Ballot Papers

Candidate photos were placed on the ballot papers in 1999 for the European Parliament elections and subsequently, photos were placed on the ballot papers for the 2002 General Election, as well as the logos of the different political parties. A report by Lansdowne Market Research (1999) on the use of photos in the European Elections found that most people were in favour of this initiative. However there was found to be a low level of name or party label recognition for the different European Election candidates. Lansdowne Market Research

suggested that the low levels of knowledge amongst the electorate meant that the photographs would not act as a reliable aid to allow them to choose between different candidates and parties. Moreover, voters with literacy problems – intended as the main beneficiaries of this innovation – were expected to have lower levels of candidate recognition than the general population, given that newspaper exposure has a significant bearing on candidate recognition

Facilities for voters with special needs

There are a number of facilities to assist voters, who may have special needs, to cast their ballots. These include being allowed to vote at accessible polling stations in the same constituency if their allocated station is unsuitable and being allowed to receive assistance in voting from the presiding officer at their polling station or a companion. They may also apply to be placed on the postal voters' list, as can those prevented from voting at their local polling station because of their occupation.

However, most of the people eligible to take advantage of these facilities may not be aware of these. Information about these facilities for voting is not widely available and often is only attained from an intensive search of the Department of Environment website. If these facilities are to have any impact on promoting voter participation in Ireland, then there is a strong need to ensure that they are better advertised than is currently the case.

Funding Opportunities for Voter Education

In the *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* (PPF), the Irish Government advocates that initiatives should be taken to carry out voter education programmes in certain areas and amongst certain groups, with a particular emphasis on marginalised communities and young

people. Voter education has been specified as an important means of promoting social and political inclusion in the *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness*. This suggests the possibility that Government funding may be drawn down for the purposes of carrying out such programmes in low turnout disadvantaged areas.

"A new Electoral Participation Initiative will be instituted with the task of encouraging maximum voter participation in elections, including a voter education programme. The initiative will focus particularly on communities experiencing disadvantage and on young people". (Department of the Taoiseach, 2000: 92).

It remains to be seen whether this will prove to be the case as there has been some anecdotal evidence of disgruntlement amongst members of the more established parties with such schemes. There has been claims that the main impact of existing schemes to mobilise voters in deprived areas has been to increase the support levels of the more left wing parties, and of Sinn Féin in particular.

3.4 DISCUSSION

The chapter has showed that the issues of turnout variation, turnout decline, political support and representation are highly interconnected. The degree to which turnout variations may shape levels of political support was highlighted. Socio-economic bases to the associations between turnout and political support suggest that parties, which are reliant on a low turnout support base, may lose votes and possibly also seats as a result of turnout variations, especially should such variations be further accentuated in line with further turnout decline. Declining partisanship engenders declining turnout and such declines in turnout may further

intensify spatial variations and socio-economic biases in turnouts and in turn influence spatial patterns of political support and, possibly, representation.

This chapter concluded by studying various measures that have been suggested as key means of promoting voter participation, as drawn from a range of different international research findings. The first part was concerned with the area of voter education and the efficacy of the programmes that are dedicated to this. The next section focussed on the area of non-partisan voter mobilisation, in which strategies were suggested as a means of engaging voluntary groups in the process of mobilising people in their localities to turn out at election times. More personal forms of voter mobilisation, such as door to door canvassing, were shown to be the most effective means, as opposed to the current trend in which more stress is put on mass forms of voter mobilisation, which has been associated with declining turnouts. The final part of this section was concerned with the initiatives that the Irish Government has taken as a means of encouraging voter participation, such as the introduction of electronic voting and the use of photographs on ballot papers. It was felt that most of these initiatives would be unlikely to lead to significant increases in turnouts however. The stress placed by the *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* on providing financial assistance for voter education programmes as a means of promoting voter participation was also highlighted, which should have an impact on turnouts if this measure was put into practice.

In general, many of the initiatives that were analysed in this section have centred about making changes to election procedure, so as to facilitate the act of voting. However, other analysts, such as Russell et al. (2002), have argued that long term solutions to low turnout problems must focus on the underlying causes of the low participation rates in socially

deprived areas and amongst young voters. For them, the effects of procedural changes will be both temporary and limited unless the real causes of low turnouts are addressed and dealt with.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The issue of voter turnout, as was noted in Chapter 1, has not been treated in a systematic manner in Irish political scientific research to date, but particularly from the point of view of analyses using aggregate level data. Turnout has been addressed in Irish political scientific research by Marsh (1991), Sinnott and Whelan (1991), Sinnott (1995), Buckley (2000), and Franklin, Lyons and Marsh (2001). Much of this research, however, with the exception of such as Sinnott (1995) and Sinnott and Whelan (1991), has tended to be concerned with individual level analyses of turnout issues.

Mindful of the main objectives of this thesis, as outlined in Chapters 2 and 3, much of the research strategy was effectively predetermined to be quantitative in nature. A large proportion of the key objectives posed by this thesis required the gathering and analysis of data related to turnout rates, as well as socio-economic and demographic measures, and the representation of these data in map form. A large amount of effort was put into working through thousands of pages of marked copies of electoral registers for the 1999 local and European elections, as well as the Dublin South Central by-election. The amount of endeavour involved in this was warranted given the highly detailed data on turnout rates that it produced.

A range of different factors has been hypothesised to have a relationship with turnout variations, as was noted in Chapter 2. Some factors may be hard to measure in quantitative

terms while there may be insufficient area-based data on other variables for the relationship with such factors to be addressed in ecological analyses. There is, henceforth, a need for more qualitative methodologies to be used. This thesis, thus, will employ a mixture of quantitative and qualitative approaches, with Chapters 5-8 using quantitative methodologies and Chapters 10-11 using qualitative methodologies, while Chapter 9 will use both these approaches and hence will act as a ‘bridging’ chapter. The main focus in these chapters is on turnouts in elections held during the 1997-2002 period, with the following elections being particularly focussed on in this research:

- 1997 and 2002 General Elections,
- 1999 Local and European Elections (These elections are studied together as polling for these was held on the same day),
- 1999 Dublin South Central By-Election,
- 2001 Nice Treaty, 2002 Abortion and 2002 Nice Treaty Referenda,

Other elections will also be studied in lesser detail in Chapters 5 and 6, namely the 1997 Presidential Election and the 1996 Bail, 1996 Divorce and 1998 British-Irish Agreement and Amsterdam Treaty Referenda.

This chapter will describe the different methodologies that will be employed in this thesis. The first section will discuss the areas that will be particularly focused on in this work, namely the Dublin and rural case study areas, and explain why these areas were chosen. There will also be a discussion of the different areal units that will be used in this thesis. The next section will discuss the different data sources that will be used in the thesis, namely those pertaining to turnout and socio-economic and demographic data, as well as the insights drawn from questionnaires and interviews. The final section will discuss the different methods of

analysis that will be employed in this thesis, which include the use of computer mapping techniques, regression and correlation analysis, questionnaire analysis and interview analysis.

4.2 SELECTION OF THE CASE STUDY AREAS

This research places a strong focus on uncovering potential linkages between turnout variations and social deprivation, with a specific emphasis on uncovering potential differences between the manner in which this association operates in a rural or urban setting. For the purposes of this research, it was thus decided to analyse the geographies of turnout and influences on the same, with specific reference how these relationships may be shaped differently within a rural or an urban context.

Some of the hypotheses in this thesis, relating to the influences that shape turnout variations and decline, will be addressed at the national level in Chapters 5 and 6. However, the main focus in the research will be on smaller areas in selected case studies, with some of these areas being located in rural Ireland and others in urban parts of the country. These areas are shown in Figure 4.1 and will be discussed in greater depth in the rest of this section.

Dublin Case Study Area

For the urban case studies, it was decided to focus on the Dublin region, given that Buckley (2000) has previously focused on turnout rates in Cork City and especially given the high level of socio-economic variations that characterise the city. Oliver (1999)'s findings as regards the links between lower levels of civic and participation and higher levels of social

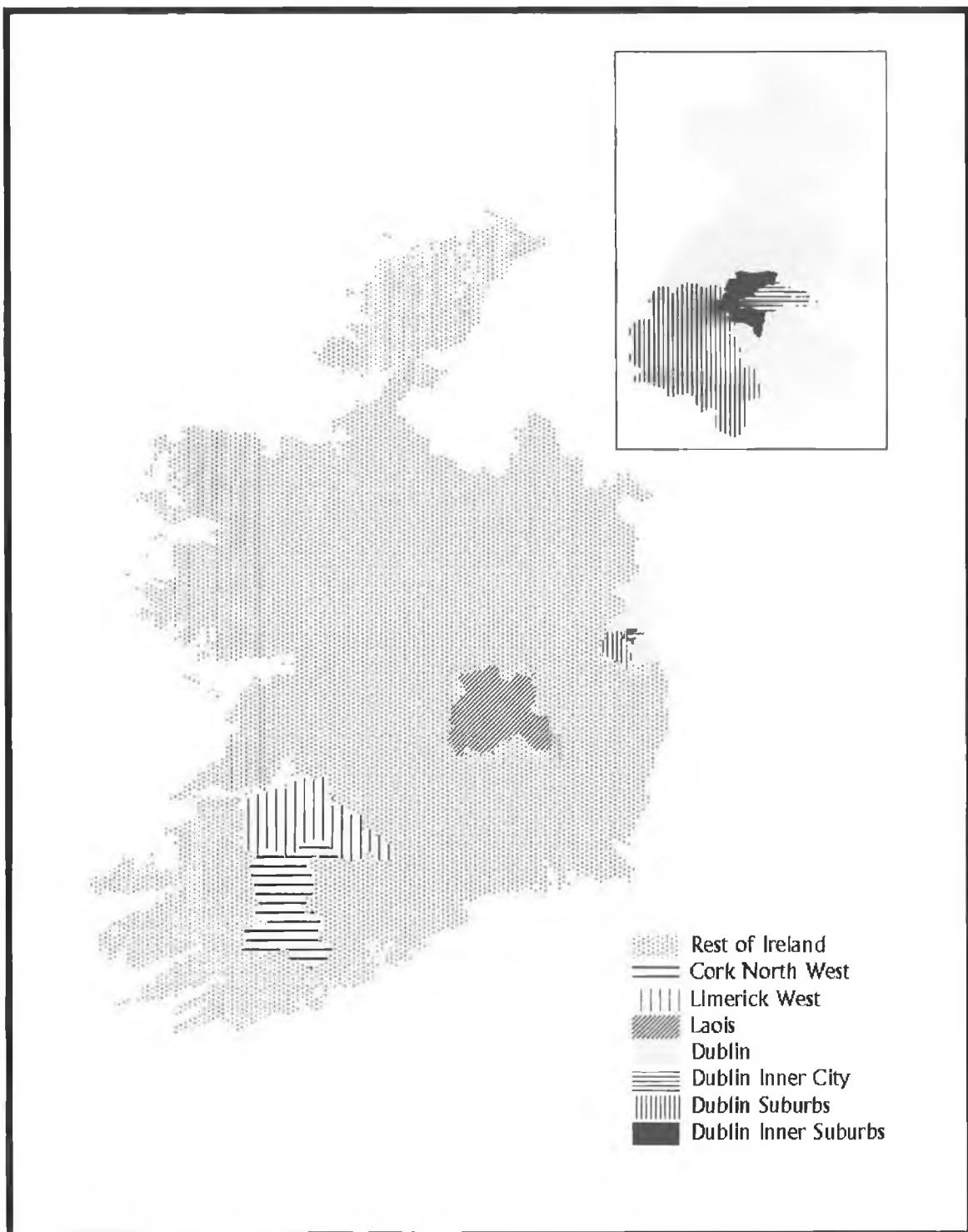


Figure 4.1: Rural and urban case study areas.

stratification appear to be readily applicable to the Dublin context, given the high level of social stratification that marks the city's socio-economic profile.

"It is clear that Dublin is strongly polarised in terms of socio-economic status and that the gap between the two extremes is very considerable." (Brady, 1987: 5)

The most deprived areas in the Dublin region are located in the Dublin Inner City and a number of working class estates in the suburbs of the city, as illustrated by Figures 4.11 and 4.12. This is interesting in the light of research by Oliver (1999), that found that participation levels tend to be relatively lower in socially and economically homogeneous communities. This further highlights the importance of including both inner city and suburban areas in the Dublin case study, given that one would expect turnouts in inner city areas to be relatively higher than turnouts in working class suburban estates. Suburban estates, as a result of the mechanisms of the Dublin housing market, generally tend to be socially and economically homogeneous, tending to be predominantly middle class, owner-occupier estates or working class, local authority estates. By contrast, the Dublin Inner City is characterised by a greater social mix, especially following the gentrification of the area during the "Celtic Tiger" property boom of the 1990s. Moreover, indigenous inner city communities tend to have an older age profile than the suburban estates have – particularly the newer estates.

The case study areas chosen for the Dublin region are the entirety of the Dublin Inner City area and a number of suburban housing areas in the south-western part of the Dublin region, encompassing the Clondalkin, Tallaght and Lucan areas. These areas are of particular interest, given that part of the Dublin Inner City, North Clondalkin and West Tallaght areas rank amongst the most deprived areas in the Republic of Ireland. There are some relatively affluent

areas within these study areas also, such as Lucan village, Clondalkin village, Kingswood, Old Bawn and Firhouse, which allows for the development of a detailed analysis of the impact that socio-economic differentials have on turnout variation.

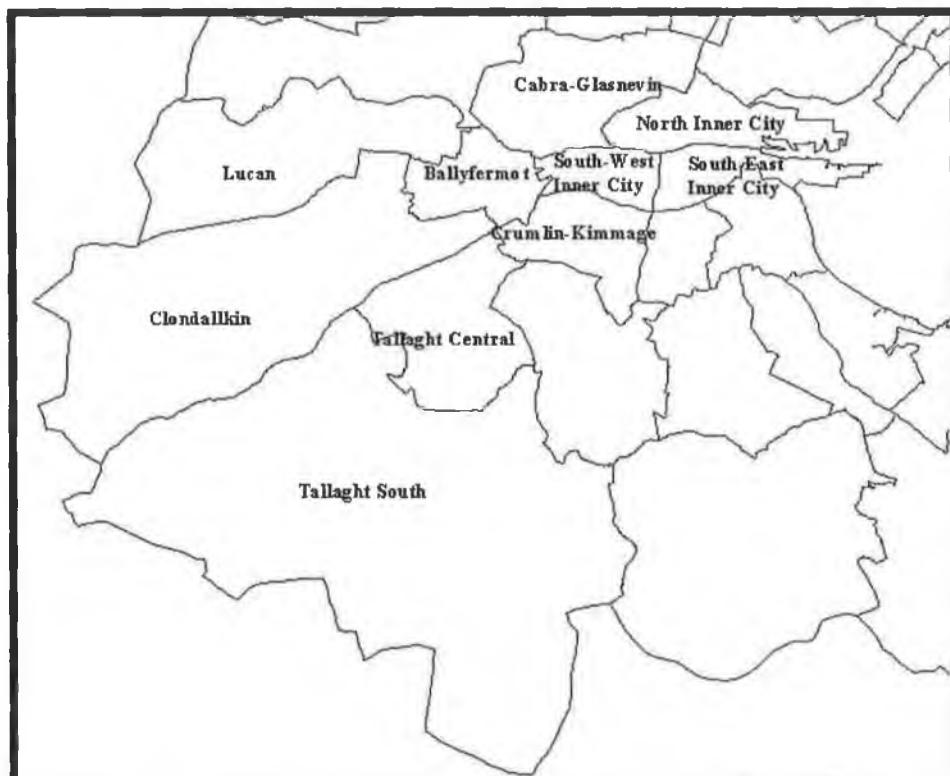


Figure 4.2: Dublin case study area, as divided into local electoral area (LEA).

To ensure that the study area is contiguous, inner suburban areas, such as Ballyfermot, Drimnagh, Kimmage, Walkinstown, Terenure and Crumlin, which separate the South Inner City areas from the south-western suburbs, are also included in this analysis. These areas, as with the outer suburban areas, are also characterised by significant socio-economic variations, with Cherry Orchard and Ballyfermot ranked as socially deprived areas whereas Terenure and

parts of the Kimmage area are relatively more affluent. The Dublin study area is shown in Figure 4.2.

These case study areas are particularly focused on in the thesis researches, in particular in relation to the more detailed, small area analyses of turnout rates as based on the figures drawn from the marked registers of electors. Larger data sets, covering a larger extent in the Dublin City Council and South Dublin County areas, are generally used for the statistical analyses in Chapter 7, where such data are available, as results generally prove more robust where increased numbers of cases involved. In general, the main case study areas were included in these data sets for all the elections studied, with the exception of the Nice and Abortion Referenda, as it was not possible to obtain accurate turnout data for the areas located in South Dublin County.

Rural Case Study Areas

Three different areas were selected in terms of an analysis of spatial variations in turnout in rural Ireland; the Dáil constituencies of Cork North West and Limerick West and the county of Laois.

The areas were selected because they all similar populations, of approximately 60,000, with populations of 59,785 in Cork North West, 64,488 in Limerick West and 58,732 in Laois (Central Statistics Office, 2002). A further reason for selecting all three areas was that these are areas that have not been primarily focused on in previous political geography research,

unlike other areas, or constituencies, such as Donegal North East (Sacks, 1970) or Galway West (Parker, 1982).

Given that the main focus of this thesis is concerned with associations between turnout rates and socio-economic disadvantage, it was important that the case study areas include some areas that would be termed as socially and economically marginalised. A study of the areas termed as disadvantaged by the Trutz Haase deprivation index shows that a number of areas fall within the Cork North West, Limerick West and Laois areas (Haase, 1999). Figures 4.13-4.15 also show evidence of concentrations of relative deprivation within the case study areas, namely the more western parts of the different areas. There are significant level of rural disadvantage within the case study areas, with some areas falling into the category of "*structurally weak*" or "*marginal*" rural areas, namely the rural areas that are "*economically and demographically the most disadvantaged*" (McHugh, 2001a: 479). Such areas have very weak agricultural structures, low levels of service employment, very weak demographic profiles with high levels of age dependency, low levels of education and above average unemployment levels.

Such structurally weak and marginal areas tend to be characterised by significant levels of out migration and population decline. The parts of Laois, Cork North West and Limerick West identified as such by McHugh (2001b: 171) generally correspond with areas that experienced population decline between 1996 and 2002, as illustrated by Figures 4.8-4.10. McHugh's (2001b: 7-9) analysis of population change between 1981 and 1996 and Horner's (1986: 86) study of population change between 1951 and 1981 shows that population has been in decline in many of these structurally weak or marginal areas for (at least) half a century.

Recent population statistics, released by the Central Statistics Office (2002), differentiates Laois from the other two areas. There was a general trend in the 2002 Census in which population increased in most parts of the country, with population in the State increasing by 8.0% between 1996 and 2002. However, there were particularly higher levels of increase in the more eastern parts of the country, including Laois, which had the fifth highest population increase in the State (10.9%) over this period. Population increase was not so marked in the other rural case study areas, with population increasing by just 2.4% in Limerick West and 2.9% in Cork North West.

All three case study areas are characterised as having a mainly rural, underdeveloped western region, with areas becoming increasingly urbanised the further east one goes each. The most urban parts of the constituencies were generally located in their eastern region, which generally tended to form part of the hinterland for an adjacent large city. In the case of Cork North-West, the more south-eastern parts of the constituency fall within the hinterland of Cork city, while the north-eastern parts of Limerick West fall within the western environs of Limerick city. Furthermore, the more north-eastern parts of Laois fall within the commuter zone for the Dublin region, while other parts of eastern Laois fall within the hinterlands of a number of large towns, located just outside the Laois border, such as Carlow town and Athy.



Figure 4.3: The Laois case study area, as divided into local electoral areas (LEAs).

Another manner in which the situations in the different case study areas are paralleled has to do with their political backgrounds. As Section 8.2 illustrates, party politics in these areas are largely dominated by the two main parties, Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, with the combined support of the two main parties being well in excess of the national average, both for local and general elections.

In the past Laois has been referred to as “*the political barometer of the country*”, with the Laois-Offaly Dáil constituency being referred to by Liam Hyland as the Irish constituency in which “*more than any other there is a cross-section of the people of Ireland*” (Gallagher, 1999: 657). As such it makes for an interesting area to study. Moreover, with the widening of

the Dublin commuter belt into parts of the county during the late 1990s, it is an area in which the Greater Dublin region is coming into contact with the more rural parts of Ireland. Cork North West and Limerick West are differentiated from Laois in that they are more western constituencies and distant from the influence of the Greater Dublin region.

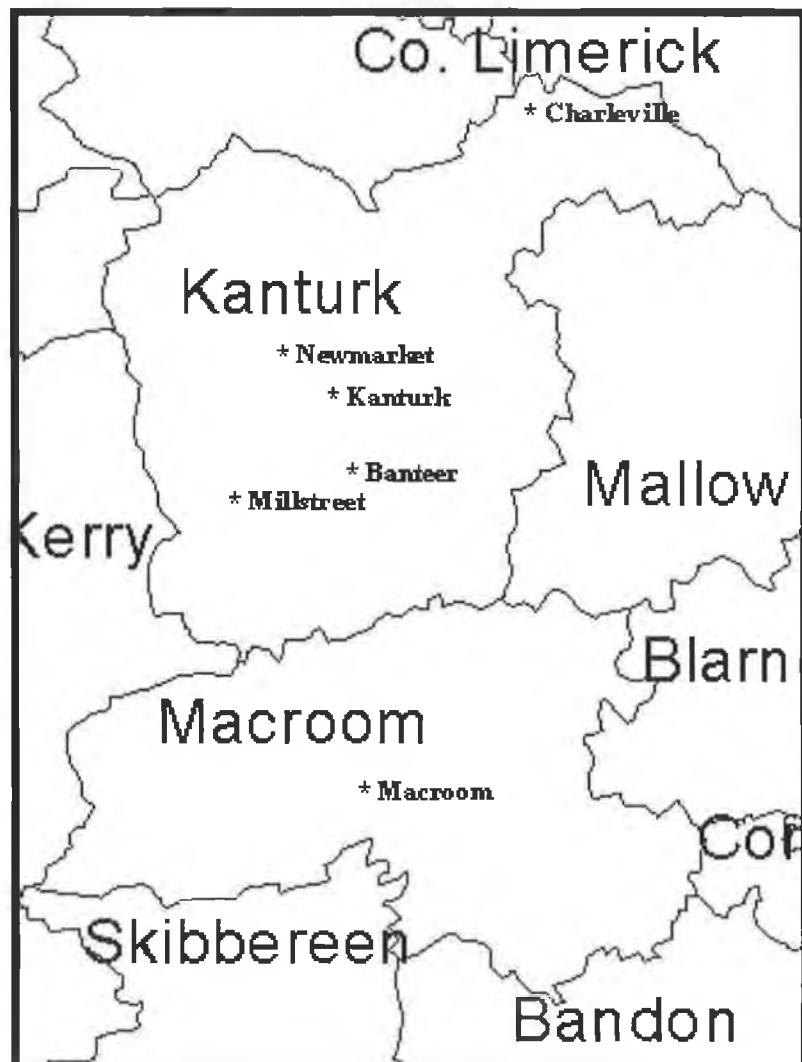


Figure 4.4: The Cork North West case study area, as divided into local electoral areas.

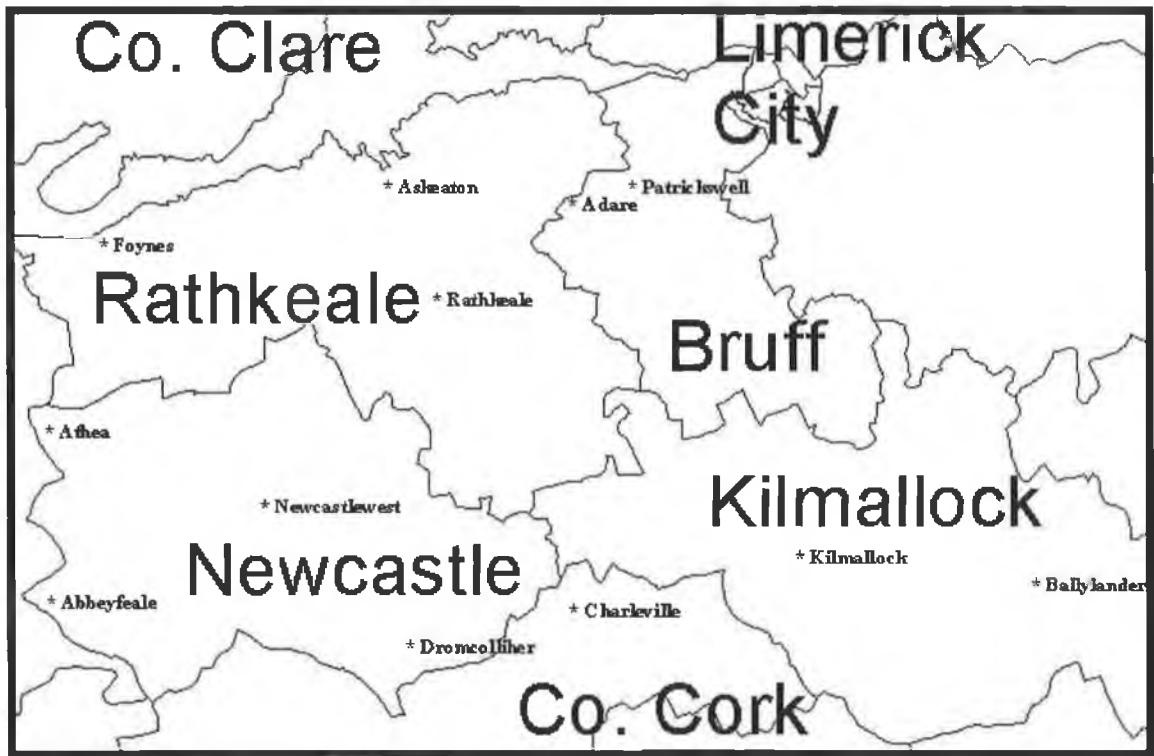


Figure 4.5: The Limerick West case study area, as divided into local electoral areas.

4.3 SPATIAL SUBDIVISIONS

Various spatial subdivisions, for which the different forms of data are made available, will be used in this thesis. This section will look at these different areas and outline how these relate to each other, with specific reference to the rural and Dublin case study areas.

Dáil constituencies

The largest of the different spatial subdivisions that will be used in this thesis is that of the general election, or Dáil, constituency area. The number of constituencies in Ireland is relatively small (42 for the 2002 General Election). The small number of cases places limitations on ecological analyses using constituency data, as does the fact that variations are more likely to exist within, rather than between, constituencies. Dáil constituencies vary in

terms of population size, depending on whether they are three, four or five seat constituencies. Meath, the largest constituency in population terms in the 2002 General Election, covered an area with a population of 133,936 in that election.

The Dublin study area largely approximates to the area covered by four Dáil constituencies, namely Dublin Central, Dublin South Central, Dublin South West and Dublin Mid West, as defined in the 1998 report of the Boundary Commission (Department of the Environment, 1998). Cork North West and Limerick West are themselves Dáil constituencies, while Laois is half of the Laois-Offaly constituency.

Local electoral areas

A local electoral area (LEAs) is the term given to a local election constituency. Local electoral areas tend to vary in size to a greater extent than Dáil constituencies do, with relatively large constituencies in population terms in the Dublin region and smaller constituencies in the rural areas, especially in the low-density areas in western Ireland.

Electoral Area	Dáil constituency	Local Authority
Cabra-Glasnevin	Dublin Central	Dublin City Council
North Inner City	Dublin Central	Dublin City Council
South East Inner City	Dublin South East	Dublin City Council
South West Inner City	Dublin South Central	Dublin City Council
Crumlin-Kimmage	Dublin South Central	Dublin City Council
Ballyfermot	Dublin South Central	Dublin City Council
Lucan ¹	Dublin Mid West	South Dublin County
Clondalkin	Dublin Mid West	South Dublin County
Tallaght Central	Dublin South West	South Dublin County
Tallaght South ²	Dublin South West	South Dublin County

Table 4.1: Study areas for the thesis, as divided into local electoral areas (LEAs).

¹ The Palmerstown and Quarryvale areas in the Lucan LEA were located in the Dublin West constituency for the 2002 General Election.

² The Rathcoole and Saggart areas in the Tallaght South LEA were located in Dublin Mid West in 2002.

Local electoral areas may vary in size within a local authority area, with between 3 and 7 councillors being elected for the different LEAs in Ireland in the 1999 local elections.

Ten LEAs were analysed in the Dublin study area, with six of these being located in the Dublin City Council area and the remainder in the South Dublin County Council area. These local electoral areas are illustrated in Figure 4.2. There was a strong association between local and general election constituency boundaries in the Dublin region, but especially in the Dublin City Council area, arising from the 1998 constituency boundary amendments, as Table 4.1 shows. The 1998 amendments generally attempted to ensure that constituency boundaries for local elections corresponded as much as possible to those for general elections. The Dublin Central Dáil constituency, for instance, is entirely comprised of the North Inner City and Cabra-Glasnevin electoral areas as a result.

Area	Local Electoral Areas	Local Authority
<i>Cork North West</i>	Kanturk Macroom Mallow (part) Skibbereen (part) Blarney (part) Bandon (part)	Cork County Council
<i>Limerick West</i>	Newcastlewest Rathkeale Bruff (part) Kilmallock (part)	Limerick County Council
<i>Laois</i>	Borris in Ossory Mountmellick Portlaoise Emo Luggacurren	Laois County Council

Table 4.2: Rural study areas for the thesis, as divided into local electoral areas (LEAs).

There was less of a correspondence between Dáil constituencies and local electoral areas in the rural study areas, as Table 4.2 shows. While Laois is comprised of the entirety of five LEAs, Cork North West and Limerick West share some LEAs with the neighbouring constituencies of Cork East and Cork South West (in the case of Cork North West) and Limerick East (in the case of Limerick West).

Polling Districts

Dáil constituencies and local electoral areas are divided up into polling districts for polling purposes. These districts, as with local electoral areas, vary in size considerably, with larger polling districts in the more urban areas and particularly in the Dublin region. Polling districts in the rural areas generally cover areas with roughly 300-700 registered electors, while polling districts in the Dublin region generally cover areas with roughly 3,000-5,000 registered electors. Each polling district is allocated its own *polling station*, although some districts in provincial towns may have two or more stations. Depending on the size of the district, a station may have anything from one to over ten *polling boxes* attached to it. Polling boxes generally serve roughly 400-600 registered electors and are the allocated boxes into which these registered voters place their votes into on polling day. In cases where marked register turnout data is not available (see below), the smallest unit for which turnout data is available is the percentage turnout for polling boxes, which is the form in which tally figure and ballot reconciliation data is made available in (see below).

The usefulness of polling boxes as geographical units depends upon the way in which the electoral register is organised by the relevant local authorities. In rural areas, the general

tendency is to organise the register on the basis of geographical contiguity, so that the area covered by a polling box is a geographically contiguous one. In Dublin, however, areas are organised in alphabetical order on the register and so polling boxes do not serve geographically contiguous units, but rather spatially dispersed areas within a polling district. Turnout figures for the Dublin region are only of value in spatial terms when these are amalgamated to the polling district or district electoral division level.

District electoral divisions

District electoral divisions are the smallest geographical unit for which the Central Statistics Office provides census data, encompassing a range of socio-economic and demographic variables.

The availability of turnout data for DEDs was important for the purposes of mapping the turnout figures using ArcView, given that the base map for that program used a digitised set of boundaries, delimiting 3,444 DEDs as supplied by the Ordnance Survey of Ireland. It was also important to have DED level turnout data for the purposes of statistical analysis, in which associations between turnout and census derived variables were being investigated. This was possible where marked register turnout data is available. DED level turnout data was also available for elections held in the Dublin region, as DEDs are taken as the basis for polling districts by the Dublin City Sheriff and there is a strong correspondence between electoral division boundaries and polling districts in the Dublin County area. However, it was not possible to calculate DED levels turnout figures for rural areas, if marked register figures are not available, as there is no association between DED boundaries and polling districts in rural areas. Generally rural polling districts are formed of parts of two, or more, electoral divisions.

It must also be noted that the social characteristics of urban and rural DEDs may vary. In urban areas, but especially in the Dublin region, the high levels of social stratification mean that DEDs tend to be largely homogeneous in social and economic terms and so the main socio-economic differences tend to exist between DEDs. Rural DEDs, however, tend to be rather heterogeneous in social and economic terms and so the main socio-economic differences there tend to exist within DEDs rather than between them. This factor may have some bearing on the findings from ecological models of voting, given that DEDs generally tend to be the spatial units used in these analyses.

4.4 DATA SOURCES

The main sources of data used for this research were:

1. Turnout data
2. Socio-economic and demographic data
3. Questionnaires
4. Interviews

Turnout data

This research was largely dependent on the availability of accurate statistics on turnout. However, the quality of the data available tended to differ with different types of election, as will be outlined below.

Accurate figures on turnout rates for constituencies are widely available for all types of elections, either in a published form or from various election-related web sites on the internet. Data on turnout, or other forms of voting behaviour, are not published for areas below the constituency level in the Republic of Ireland (Parker, 1984: 100). As Sinnott (1995: 129) has argued, aggregate data analyses using constituency level turnout figures can often prove unsatisfactory, as Irish general and local election constituencies generally prove to be relatively heterogeneous, given their sizes. Analyses of spatial variations in turnout rates at the constituency level may prove to be unsatisfactory, as constituencies are too large in size to allow for the identification of relationships when used in ecological analyses.

Thus turnout data for smaller areas than constituencies are required to allow for the identification of more robust relationships between turnout and other potentially related factors. For this research it was possible to attain turnout data for smaller areas than constituencies (usually for polling boxes, unless marked register figures were available) from a number of alternate sources. These included election candidates, political party organisations, a number of county and city sheriffs and the office of the Clerk of Dáil Éireann, as Table 4.3 illustrates.

Election	Data Type	Source
1997 General Election	Tally figures	Election candidates and political party organisations
1999 Local and European elections	Marked register data	Office of the Clerk of Dáil Éireann
1999 Dublin South Central	Marked register data	Office of the Clerk of Dáil Éireann
2001 Nice Referendum	Ballot reconciliation data	Dublin City Sheriff and Laois County Sheriff
2002 Abortion Referendum	Ballot reconciliation data	Dublin City Sheriff and Laois County Sheriff
2002 General Election	Ballot reconciliation data	Dublin City Sheriff, Dublin County Sheriff, Laois County Sheriff, Limerick County Sheriff

Table 4.3: Turnout data used for research and sources of this data.

Table 4.3 also shows that three different types of turnout data were used in this research, namely tally data, marked register data and ballot reconciliation data.

Tally figures

Tally figures are collected by tally-people, who are present at election counts to collect figures on the estimated number of people who have voted for the different election candidates in each polling box in a constituency. The official function of such tally-people is to scrutinise the election count, on behalf of their respective political parties, but the figures that they collect are mainly used to offer insights on their candidates' electoral performances at a more local level. Such figures may then be used to determine electoral strategy in that constituency for future elections. As Parker (1984: 100) notes, tally figures have also been used by political scientists and political geographers for formal academic research into the "*geographical and social components of voting behaviour at the intra-constituency level*".

There are varying levels of inaccuracies generally associated with tally figures. Such inaccuracies are caused by inaccuracies in the estimates made by tally-people in the process of collecting the tally data. The degrees of inaccuracy involved are usually relatively small, usually approximating to inaccuracy levels of five percent or less. Higher levels of inaccuracy are associated with local election tallies than with general election tallies. One reason for this is the smaller size of local election constituencies, which means that the relative weight of one miscalculated vote is greater than on a larger sample size, as one would get in a general election constituency. Interviews with personnel from political party organisations have also suggested that the contesting of local elections by the party's more experienced tally-people means that organisations are more reliant on less experienced personnel to collect local election tallies and hence these are more prone to inaccuracies.

In general, as Parker has noted, inaccuracies with tally figures are relatively small. What differences exist between official figures and tally estimates are caused, somewhat, by the exclusion of postal voters from these figures as well as human error, where votes are occasionally missed by the tally-people. Such inaccuracies are, however, a concern and a reason for using the more accurate forms of turnout data available for the local elections, referenda and 2002 General Election. Where more accurate data are not available, as with the 1997 General Election, then tally figure data is the only source of turnout data available at a sub-constituency level and should be used where available.

"The problem raised by such discrepancies must be outweighed by the advantages accruing from the availability of detailed voting data at such a small geographical scale." Parker (1984: 103)

For the purposes of this research tally figures will be primarily used to estimate sub-constituency turnouts in the 1997 General Election, but also for analyses of associations between political support and turnout in the 1999 local elections and the 2002 General Election. Tally figures were obtained for this research from different election candidates and political party organisations³. For the 1997 General Election, tally figures were obtained for the Cork North West, Limerick West, Laois-Offaly, Kildare North, Dublin Central, Dublin North Central, Dublin South, Dublin South Central, Dublin South East, Dublin South West and Dublin West constituencies. Tally figures for the constituencies of Dublin Central, Dublin Mid West, Dublin North Central, Dublin North West, Dublin North East, Dublin South Central, Dublin South East, Dublin South West, Limerick East and Limerick West were obtained for the 2002 General Election.

To calculate the turnouts for each polling box using these tally figures, the number of votes for each candidate in a polling box were added up to calculate the total number of people who voted in each of the different polling boxes in that constituency. The number of voters in each of the different boxes were then divided by the number of registered voters allocated to those boxes to calculate the percentage turnout for each of the boxes. The number of voters and registered electors were subsequently aggregated so as to calculate the number of voters and registered electors in a polling district, and hence to calculate the percentage turnout for each polling district. It was possible to calculate turnouts figures for DEDs in the Dublin region, based on these, as polling district and DED boundaries are largely coterminous in the Dublin region, as was noted in Section 4.3, but not for rural areas. Percentage party support levels

³ Laois Fianna Fail, Mr. Maurice McQuillan (Dublin Fine Gael), Dan Neville TD, Charlie McCreevy TD, Michael Creed TD, Jim Mitchell TD, Sean Ardagh TD, Ruairí Quinn TD, Brian Hayes TD, Cllr. Eamonn Walsh, Richard Bruton TD, Conor Lenihan TD, Brian Lenihan TD, Eithne Fitzgerald.

were also calculated from these figures and these were used to detect associations between party support and turnout levels (as will be discussed in Section 9.2).

Ballot reconciliation data

Part of the process of counting votes at an election requires the Returning Officer to check if the numbers of votes in a polling box is similar to the number recorded as having voted in that box on the respective register. That is, they are required to reconcile the numbers of votes in a box with the numbers registered as having voted based on the marked electoral registers. The sheet that carries this information is called the “ballot reconciliation sheet”. Copies of this sheet were obtained for the Nice and Abortion referenda, as well as for the 2002 General Election, from the office of the Dublin City Sheriff and from the offices of a number of the County Sheriffs⁴.

The same difficulties, as was the case for tally figures and as was discussed in Section 4.3 regarding the using of polling box data, apply in the case of ballot reconciliation data. However, these data offer accurate turnout figures for the polling box level and so, on that basis, prove to be a more valuable source than tally data are for use in spatial analyses of turnout variation.

Marked Register Data

For the 1999 local and European elections, as well as for the Dublin South Central by-election of that year, it was possible to attain photocopies of the marked registers of electors for those

⁴ Ballot reconciliation data for the 2002 Nice Treaty Referendum was attained from the Dublin City Sheriff's office. Data for the 2001 Nice Treaty and 2002 Abortion Referenda were attained from the Dublin City and

elections. These were photocopies of the actual registers used for those elections, with the markings – illustrating the people who had voted in these elections – evident on them.

“The used voter registers from all constituencies are sent to the Houses of the Oireachtas after each Dáil election. The names of non-voters are clearly visible, though the names of those who did have vote have a line drawn through them.” (Hennessy, 2002, 8).

These materials were attained on application to the office of the Clerk of Dáil Eireann, through a provision in the *Electoral Act*, which makes provision for the release of such materials for Dáil, local and European elections, but not for referenda (Hennessy, 2002). Marked registers were obtained for the local electoral areas (LEAs) of North Inner City, South West Inner City, South East Inner City, Cabra-Glasnevin, Ballyfermot, Crumlin-Kimmage, Clondalkin, Lucan, Tallaght South and Tallaght Central in the Dublin region. For rural Ireland, copies of the marked registers for Co. Laois and the Dáil constituencies of Limerick West and Cork North West were also obtained.

Marked register data has not been used in any previous analyses of Irish turnouts. Thus, this research is particularly novel in that it offers the first example of a marked register analysis of turnout variations within Irish constituencies. British research by Dyer and Jordan (1985) has, however, used marked register data for analyses of turnout rates in two Aberdeen constituencies for the 1979 General Election.

The detail inherent in these data allows one to calculate accurate turnout figures for the smallest units of analysis possible, with it being possible to calculate turnouts by townland, by

Laois County Sheriff's offices. Data for the 2002 General Election were attained from the Dublin City and Laois,

housing estate and even by street, while it was also possible to distinguish turnout by sex. (However, given the large amount of data to be analysed, this study did not undertake a gender analysis of turnout rates.) The analysis does not usually include postal voters. Postal votes are returned centrally to the relevant authorities – usually the returning officer for the constituency – and this means postal voters are not recorded on the register as having voted. Given the high level of spatial detail involved, it is possible to observe differences in turnouts between small areas, as well as between different housing tenures and within these tenures. For instance, it is possible to detect whether turnouts for all local authority housing areas are relatively similar or whether significant differences exist between some of these areas. The marked register figures also allows the possibility of challenging the ‘common wisdom’ about turnout rates in different parts of an area, as Dyer and Jordan (1985: 9) note in terms of their findings on turnouts by housing type in Aberdeen. They show that while turnouts were generally lower than the average in council housing areas in Aberdeen, there was a considerable degree of variability within the council housing tenure.

Socio-economic and demographic data

Data on the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the case study areas were required for the smallest geographical units possible as a means of determining what influence these factors would have had on turnout rates in these areas. As a result, the main source of such data for this research was the Small Area Population Statistics, as supplied by the Central Statistics Office, which provides census data for a range of geographical scales. Data from the Census of Population was selected as the main source of such socio-economic and demographic data because the Census is the most comprehensive source of these data

available, while it also makes data available at a fairly detailed spatial scale, right down to DED level. It is a reliable database, as it contains data for the entire population of the Republic of Ireland, while, for mapping purposes, it is also amenable to geocoding and matching with Ordnance Survey data (McHugh, 2001a).

Socio-economic and demographic data were drawn mainly from the 1996 Census. However, certain themes were not covered in the 1996 Census, such as data concerning housing characteristics or religion, and in these cases data from the 1991 Census had to be used. This meant that there was a significant level of temporal mismatch between data sets in some instances, with the most extreme cases being analyses using 2002 General Election turnout data and data from the 1991 Census. However, given the high levels of residential stability in rural Ireland, as well as the generally entrenched pattern of socio-economic variation in Dublin arising from the high level of social stratification, one could claim that the social characteristics of most areas had not changed dramatically during the 1990s. Thus, for instance, areas with high proportions of owner occupied housing, or local authority housing, in 1991 were still likely to be dominated by same housing type in 2002. The exceptional area in this regard was the Dublin Inner City area. The increasing levels of gentrification in the area, arising in line with the “Celtic Tiger” property boom in the area over the past decade, has resulted in significant changes to the social and demographic composition of the inner city population. The influx of a young, professional population into these areas has increased the proportion of middle class people in the areas, as well as resulting in a significant change to the area’s age profile.

Community Health & General Practice in Trinity College, Dublin. This index is derived from five census-based indicators, which include:

- ◆ The proportion of the economically active population (15-64 year olds) who are unemployed or are first time job seekers,
- ◆ The proportion of the population (excluding those who have been categorised in social class 7) who are in social class 5 or 6,
- ◆ The proportion of permanent private households with no car,
- ◆ The proportion of permanent private households that are rented privately or from a local authority, or in the process of being acquired from a local authority,
- ◆ The average number of rooms per person in permanent private housing units.

This index awards scores ranging from 1 to 5 to different DEDs, depending on the level of relative deprivation in those DEDs. DEDs with scores of 1 were looked on as being relatively affluent and were ranked amongst the 20% least deprived DEDs in the Republic of Ireland, while DEDs with scores of 5 were ranked amongst the 20% most deprived DEDs.

Questionnaires

Ecological or aggregate data sources are limited in some regards, as will be discussed in greater detail in Section 4.5. Analyses involving aggregate level data are only concerned with the social characteristics of areas or constituencies and there is a danger that findings from such analyses may be taken as applying to the behaviour of individual voters. Furthermore, there may not be appropriate data available at the aggregate level to allow certain hypotheses to be tested in an ecological analysis. Given these concerns, there was a need to supplement the ecological analysis with statistical analyses involving data drawn from questionnaire surveys. There was also a need to study whether the existence of different relationships

between turnout and explanatory variables in urban and rural areas was being influenced by the different socio-economic characteristics of rural and urban DEDs, as was discussed in Section 4.3. If the findings of the questionnaire analyses mirror the findings of the ecological models of voting, then the findings in Chapters 7 and 8 will be invested with a greater credence.

For the purposes of this research, three different questionnaire surveys were carried out. The first two surveys were concerned with the perspectives of individual members of the electorate as to why they voted, or didn't vote, in elections. The first survey was carried out in an urban setting, the South West Inner City of Dublin. The second survey dealt with a rural context, that of Co. Laois. The third survey was concerned with politicians' views as to why people did not vote, as well as their opinions as to the implications of turnout variations, politically or otherwise, within their constituency. The politicians surveyed included all the members of Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann in January 2002, the newly elected TDs following the 2002 General Election, the General Secretaries of the political parties and councillors and town commissioners from the different case study areas.

In the three different surveys for this thesis, roughly 1,500 questionnaires were sent out, of which roughly 450 were returned approximating to a 30% response rate. For the two voters' surveys, areas that had been characterised as having unexpectedly high or low turnout rates in the residual analysis were specifically focussed on, with other areas being selected as 'controls'. This was in order to use the questionnaire findings to account for the residual variance that the ecological models were unable to account for. The questionnaires were sent to randomly selected people in the selected areas, through matching randomly selected

numbers, using the facility in Excel, with the numbers assigned to each registered elector in the electoral register for each polling district.

There are a number of problems associated with analyses based on survey data, especially where such data is being used to measure levels of non-voting, as well as determining the causes of such behaviour. *Non-response bias* is one such potential problem, as there is a risk that survey respondents in a questionnaire survey may be self-selecting. In terms of voting behaviour, the likelihood is that non-voters will be under represented in a questionnaire survey, as research has shown that such surveys tend to be over-representative of those who would have voted in elections. One reason for this has to do with civic duty. Civic responsibilities that encourage voting are also likely to encourage participation in social science research. As Russel et al. (2002: 42) note, "*those who hold themselves to be civic-minded are likely to be both voters and respondents*". People who participate in surveys are people who desire to express their views and hence are unlikely to be non-voters in elections. Hence it is inadvisable to rely on such survey data for accurate estimates of turnout, as levels of voter apathy will be generally under-estimated in questionnaire analyses.

Another problem associated with survey data has to do with a *response bias* in which individuals, who wish to present themselves as good citizens, may over-represent their history of voting. Respondents may claim to have voted in an election, even though they did not, as they feel that they should have done so or because they have problems recalling their voting history. There is also a danger that respondents may give inaccurate reasons for voting or not voting, as they may not be able to express reasons for their voting behaviour, especially if questions are not clear or carefully worded. There is a danger that respondents may decide to

give answers that are assumed to be socially responsible rather than their real reasons for their voting behaviour, which may seriously distort the findings of the questionnaire analysis.

Questionnaire surveys, as with all sample surveys, are prone to sampling error. Accurate analysis is made less precise when analyses are dealing with small sample sizes and the margins of error associated with such surveys proves to be larger than would be the case if sample sizes were larger. Mindful of this and the other problems associated with survey data, some have argued that there is a need to place more of an emphasis in research on what people do, rather than what they say. Such would be encompassed in experimental forms of research, similar to what is employed in the research of Green and Gerber (2000a and 2000b), which involved analyses of the voting behaviour of control groups, with these being surveyed before and after an election.

Interviews

A number of interviews were held with people, drawn from the fields of politics and of community development work, for the purposes of attaining a more detailed insight from ‘key witnesses’, or the people most directly related to turnout issues, for this research. During the 3 years of research, 66 interviews have been carried out with a number of political and community development personnel, including Dáil deputies, Councillors or Town Commissioners, election candidates, political agents, council officials and people from the community development sector. These interviews took place between November 1999 and January 2002. The interviews generally lasted for between 30 minutes and an hour and covered topics such as the causes and implications of low turnout and suggested measures for addressing problems.

These interviews were structured to a degree that the following questions were asked in all of the research interviews.

1. What do you perceive to be the main causes of low turnout in your local area are?
2. What do you perceive to be the implications of such low turnout in your area would be?
3. What measures would you suggest to address the problems associated with low turnout in your area and to improve turnout rates in these areas?

Other than that, the questions asked in these interviews were relatively open-ended in that issues related to these questions that were thought pertinent to the research were further investigated.

4.5 METHODS OF ANALYSIS

A range of qualitative and quantitative approaches were being used in the thesis, arising from the need to address the different factors that were suggested as having an influence on turnout variation and decline in the literature review. The four key methods were computer mapping, ecological analysis (regressions and correlations), questionnaire analysis and interview analysis.

A key part of the research had to do with working with the data from the tally figures, ballot reconciliation sheets and the marked register of electors so as to amalgamate these into DED-level figures, which would be suitable for computer mapping or statistical analysis. For the marked registers of electors, the number of markings on the register – indicating that somebody had voted in the election – were counted for each area, townland, street or housing

estate. This figure was then expressed as a percentage of the registered electors for that area, thus giving an accurate percentage turnout figure for that area. These calculations were carried out using Excel. It was also possible to aggregate the voter and elector figures, so that similar figures could be calculated for larger areas. This allowed the calculation of turnout figures at both the polling station and DED level.

Computer mapping

ArcView was used to map turnouts at a DED level for the study areas in question, as well as to map the residuals that emerged from the regression analyses. A more accurate representation of spatial variations in turnout rates is attained through mapping at a detailed scale, such as at a DED level, and hence this was one of the advantages of being able to use data at the level of the DED for this thesis.

One problem with mapping using DED level data was the huge variations in scale contained within this data. The populations of some DEDs are considerably larger than the populations of other, less densely populated, DEDs, yet the maps do not give added significance, visually, to the (usually smaller) high density DEDs, but rather to the larger, low density DEDs. In cases where DED populations are small, this may result in various statistical problems in terms of calculating percentage and ratio values, as small denominators will have the effect of producing extreme values for cases where population densities are low. In terms of mapping, such extreme percentage values could amount to seriously misleading impressions of the spatial variations of percentage variables, such as turnout rates.

The chosen medium for presenting turnout data was the choropleth map. There are a number of options available within the ArcView program to determine what range of values would be allocated to each of the different tonal shadings. The first of these is the *equal count* option, which allocates the same number of cases to each of the ranges involved, regardless of the distribution of the different data values. The *equal range* option divides the different cases across ranges of equal size. The *standard deviation* option involves a middle range at the mean of the values, with the ranges above and below the middle range being one standard deviation above or below the mean. Range breaks are set by the *natural break* option by an algorithm so as to minimise the difference between the data values and their class average. This is the option that is the most likely to accurately represent the geographical variations in the turnout data. A final option would be to define the ranges using the *user-defined* option that is also available in the ArcView package, in which the user can define what cut-offs to set. It was decided for this research to use a mix of the natural break and user-defined options, with the general ranges being set by the natural break option and then rounded off by the user defined option.

Correlation and regression analysis

SPSS and Excel were used for the statistical analysis of the spatial variations in turnout and also for the analysis of questionnaire data. Excel was largely used for the purposes of sorting the data, as well as to carry out certain calculations such as percentages. This package was also largely used for creating graphs. The SPSS package was generally used for statistical investigations, concerning the nature of the relationships between turnout and certain causal variables (correlation analyses), as well as to determine the key variables influencing turnout and the extent of this influence (regression analysis).

As Walford (1984: 277-278) notes, correlation analysis is mainly focused on whether a relationship exists between two sets of variables which have been measured for a single sample of observations. A *correlation coefficient* is used to provide a statistical description of the relationship between these two variables. Correlation analysis was carried out in this thesis to determine the relationships between turnout rates and socio-economic and demographic factors, as well as between turnout and support for political parties, or individual election candidates. Correlations involving socio-economic and demographic data were generally carried out using data that were organised on a DED level, given that DEDs are the smallest geographical unit used for the purposes of the census. Thus it was necessary, as with the mapping section of this research, to transform the turnout data into rates at a DED level. Correlations involving measures of political support for election candidates used data that were organised on a polling station level, as tally data were generally organised in this way.

While correlation analysis is primarily to do with measuring the strength of a linear relationship between two variables, regression analysis extends this further and examines the relationship between a dependent variable and one, or several, independent, explanatory variables. In essence, simple regression analysis has the effect of providing a simplified model of a linear relationship between a dependent and an independent variable and attempts to fit a mathematical equation, or *line of best fit*, to the paired dependent and independent variables (Kitchin and Tate, 2000: 129). However, as Johnson (1978: 84) notes, researchers in empirical studies will generally tend to hypothesise that a number of causal variables may have an influence on the variance in the dependent variable. Hence multiple regression techniques should be employed in cases where more than one variable is thought to affect the dependent

variable. Multiple regression provides a means for assessing which variables have critical causal effects and hence should be included in the regression model and which variables should be excluded.

A multiple (ordinary least squares) regression model was used as a means of predicting and accounting for variations in turnout rates using a number of explanatory variables. In order to develop the optimum, or most efficient, regression model a stepwise method was used. This eliminated variables that had little effect on the dependent variable, turnout, or those variables that were so strongly associated with other significant variables that their partial correlations were small, even though they had significant zero-order correlations with turnout. The effect of this stepwise method was that it established the most efficient model, balancing the level of statistical explanation against the number of predictor terms (Shaw and Wheeler, 1994: 265).

There are a number of problems with correlation and regression analysis that should be acknowledged at this point, many of which are associated with the assumptions that underly these techniques.

The modifiable areal unit problem: The results of statistical analysis that employ spatially aggregated data are sensitive to the definition of the areal units into which the data is categorised. This problem impacts both on correlation and regression analysis and is referred to as the *modifiable areal unit problem*. There are two aspects to this problem, which have been referred to as a *scale effect* and a *zoning effect* by Fotheringham et al. (2000: 237). The scale effect points to the fact that aggregating the areal units, into which the data has been categorised, into larger areal units will result in different results emerging for the analysis.

Indeed Gehlke and Biehl had noted this as far back as 1934, when they argued that larger correlation coefficients tended to emerge in an analysis that used a smaller number of larger units, as opposed to one that involved a larger number of smaller units (Rogerson, 2001: 99-100). In relation to multiple regression analysis, Fotheringham and Wong (1991) found that the size and significance of regression units was very sensitive to the size and configuration of the areal units that were used in research. The zoning effect is related to the fact that the results from analyses will differ depending on where boundaries are drawn to determine the areal units used for the analysis. This has been noted by Openshaw and Taylor (1979), who found that radically different correlation coefficients merged for relationships between age and voting behaviour in Iowa, depending on the ways in which counties were aggregated in their research.

The problem of ecological inference: Kitchin and Tate (2000) note that it is inadvisable to make inferences about relationships at an individual level in cases where the only source of data at an aggregate level. Such would be to run the risk of incorrectly inferring individual level characteristics on the basis of aggregated areal data, a problem that is referred to as *ecological fallacy*.

Non-linearity: Both regression and correlation analysis assume the existence of linear relationships between the data sets, but if the trend in the data is not especially linear, then these analyses will not offer accurate portrayals of the relationships between the different variables. If trends prove to be curvilinear, however, it may be possible to transform these into a linear form by using a transformation – e.g. by transforming one, or both, of the variables as its common logarithm (Johnson, 1978: 38).

Multicollinearity: One assumption that underlies multiple regression analysis is that there will be no multicollinearity amongst the independent variables, meaning that the correlation among the explanatory variables should not be high, otherwise the estimates of the regression coefficients will become unstable. The variance of the coefficient estimates will become inflated and the increased variability of the coefficients may result in insignificant variables appearing to be significant.

Spurious correlations: One problem that exists with correlation analysis is that there is a risk that it may suggest a spurious relationship between variables, that is to say the analysis may indicate that a significant relationship exists between the variables, where no such relationship exists. Such spurious correlations may be caused by an unknown third variable that is linked to two unrelated variables, thereby causing a spurious correlate. Where such spurious correlations appeared to be involved in this research, partial correlations were calculated for those variables, controlling for factors that were thought to have influenced these associations. However, one must always allow for the possibility of an undetected third variable.

Outliers: Regression analysis is concerned with a model that produces expected, or predicted, values of the dependent variable based on observations drawn from the independent variables. These expected variables will differ somewhat from the actual values of the dependent variables, unless the model is a perfect approximation of the causal relationship between the variables. The differences between the actual and predicted values are called residual values. Another way of looking at the notion of residuals is to look on regression analysis as decomposing the variability in the dependent variable into a part that is accounted for by the

regression line and a part that remains unexplained. The part that remains unexplained refers then to the residual values, with the regression analysis being concerned with minimising the sum of these squared residual values. Residuals may indicate deviant cases, in which the residual values for some cases are very large, with these cases known as *outliers*. Outliers may have the effect of weakening the strength of the regression model and it is generally advisable to exclude these cases from a statistical analysis if there are only a few such outliers.

Heteroscedasticity: As Shaw and Wheeler (1994: 212) note, regression analysis assumes that the residual values arising from a regression model will be normally distributed about the line of best fit and that there will be no variation in the variance of the scatter of points about the regression line. This requirement is termed *homoscedasticity* and requires that the standardised residuals will have a unit variance over the entire range of values for the independent variable. If this assumption does not hold, then there is *heteroscedasticity* in the data set and the model must be viewed as unreliable.

Non-independence: Positive serial autocorrelation occurs when positive and negative residuals occur in long runs about the regression line, whereas negative autocorrelation occurs where the positive and negative residual values are alternating in regular succession along the y-axis (Shaw and Wheeler, 1994: 213). Regression analysis assumes the observations are independent and that there will be no such autocorrelation amongst the residuals. Where data are drawn from areally-based categories, where the different units are spatially contiguous, then there is also the need to check for *spatial autocorrelation* in which the residual values tend to be grouped spatially, with clusters of positive and negative residuals in different parts

of the study area. As with serial autocorrelation, evidence of spatial autocorrelation leads to questions regarding the robustness of the regression model.

"The determination of whether autocorrelation is present in a data set to a significant degree is an important precursor for applying statistical techniques which assume that observations are independent of each other." Walford (1994: 366)

However spatial autocorrelation may also point towards ways in which the model may be improved. Spatial autocorrelation may suggest other factors, which might be quantitative or qualitative in nature, that should be taken account of in an attempt to come to a better understanding of the variance in the dependent variable. As with heteroscedasticity, residual autocorrelation is revealed by a scattergraph showing how the residual values are arranged about the residual line. Spatial autocorrelation can be detected through a mapping of the residual scores. Mindful of this, the residual values from the regression models in this research were identified, so as to detect areas with very large positive or negative residuals, namely those areas in which the explanatory factors had significantly under-predicted or over-predicted the turnout rates. These residuals were mapped so as to show the spatial variations in these and so as to highlight the main areas of positive and negative residuals within the different constituency areas. These high or low residual areas were then focused on particularly in subsequent sections of the research, such as the questionnaire analysis or the interviews.

Questionnaires

The questionnaires were analysed statistically using Excel and SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Questionnaires were coded and these values were input into Excel, with

this file subsequently being exported into SPSS. Cross-tabulations and frequencies were carried out in SPSS, so as to identify whether certain factors, such as group membership or newspaper readership, for example, were related to turnout propensity. Graphs and tables were produced in Excel and Word so as to convey some of the key findings from the questionnaire analysis. Comparisons were also made between the findings for the different questionnaire surveys, so as to identify the parallels and differences between respondents' views in the Laois voters, South West Inner City voters and politicians surveys. These findings are reported in Chapter 10 and the latter part of Chapter 9.

Interviews

Interviews were usually recorded, unless the interviewee requested otherwise. Interviews were held to get the insights of politicians and community development personnel as to their opinions on the issues related to turnout in their areas, especially in relation to low turnout in these areas. The interviews were also proved useful in that they provided information on areas, or issues, that the ecological analysis or questionnaire surveys were incapable of dealing with. For instance, certain areas were shown to have higher or lower than expected turnout rates arising from the residual analysis in Chapters 7 and 8. The questionnaire analysis shed some light on the unaccounted turnout variance. However it was the interviews that were particularly relied on to provide an in-depth analysis as to which factors – potentially qualitative in nature and peculiar to the area in question – were causing turnouts to be higher or lower than would have been expected, based on the areas' social characteristics.

These interviews were transcribed. The material drawn from these various interviews was then analysed, so as to identify what common themes ran through them. Special emphasis was

placed on where these interviews shed particular light on factors that may account for higher, or lower, than expected turnouts in certain areas. Attention was also focussed on the interviewee's perceptions as to the likely impacts of turnout variation, or low turnouts, in their local area, as well as their suggestions as to how turnout rates in low turnout areas could be improved. The analysis of these research interviews is reported on in Chapter 11 of this thesis.

4.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter has outlined the key aspects of the research methodologies that were employed in this research, as well as the rationale as to why such methods were employed. Much of the methodology is quantitative in nature. A considerable proportion of the effort involved was devoted to collecting turnout data for a variety of geographical scales, to aggregating these data for small areas into DED level figures and to engage in statistical analyses using this data. Certain gaps in the aggregate data, or arising from the ecological analyses, also require the use of individual level data and hence questionnaire surveys were used to explore turnout and related issues. However, there is also a significant qualitative component to the research, mirroring the fact that voting behaviour is multivariate in nature. As some of these qualitative concerns are not readily measurable in quantitative terms, other means of addressing these concerns had to be reverted to and hence a component of this research is devoted to carrying out interviews with key personnel in the fields of politics and community development. This provided "key witness" insights as to the impacts that cultural and other qualitative factors might have on turnout variation in various areas, as well as on the influence that local factors might have on participation rates. As well as looking at the causes of turnout variation, these

interviews also examine the likely implications of such variations, both in social and political terms, as well as explaining means of improving participation rates in low turnout areas.

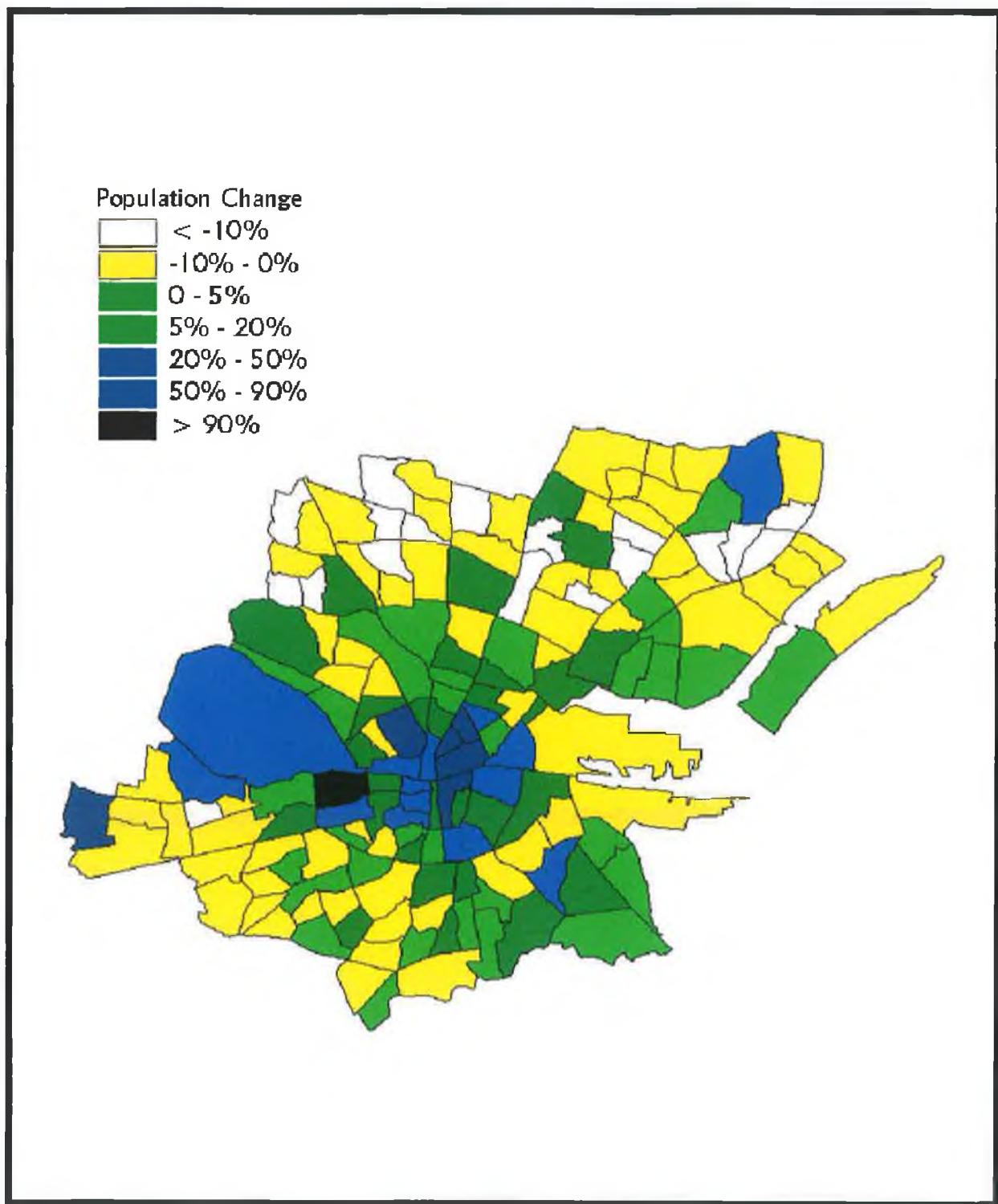


Figure 4.6: Population change in Dublin City Council area, 1996-2002, by district electoral division. (Central Statistics Office, 2002)

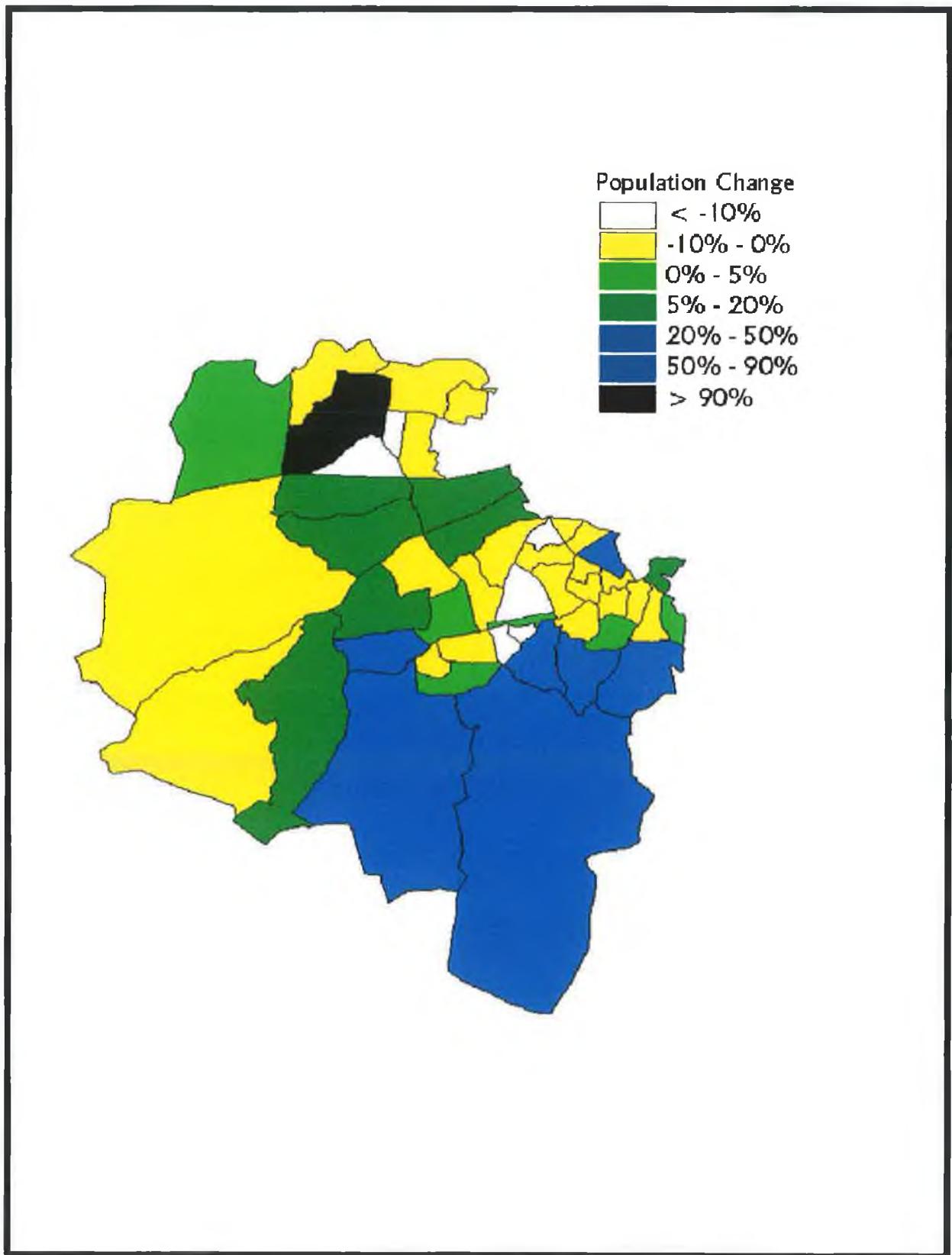


Figure 4.7: Population change in South Dublin County, 1996-2002, by district electoral division. (Central Statistics Office, 2002)

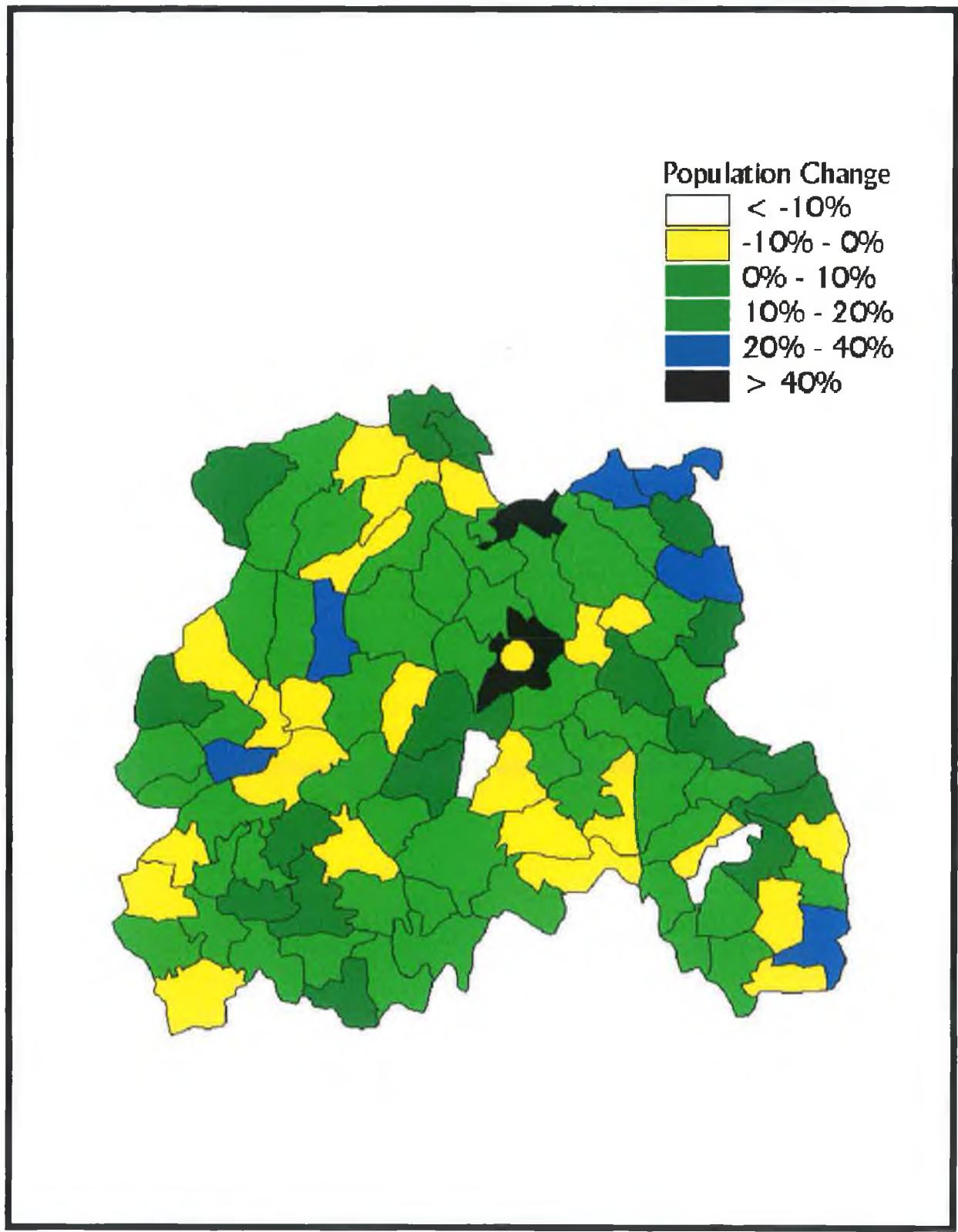


Figure 4.8: Population Change in Co. Laois, 1996-2002, by district electoral division.
(Central Statistics Office, 2002)

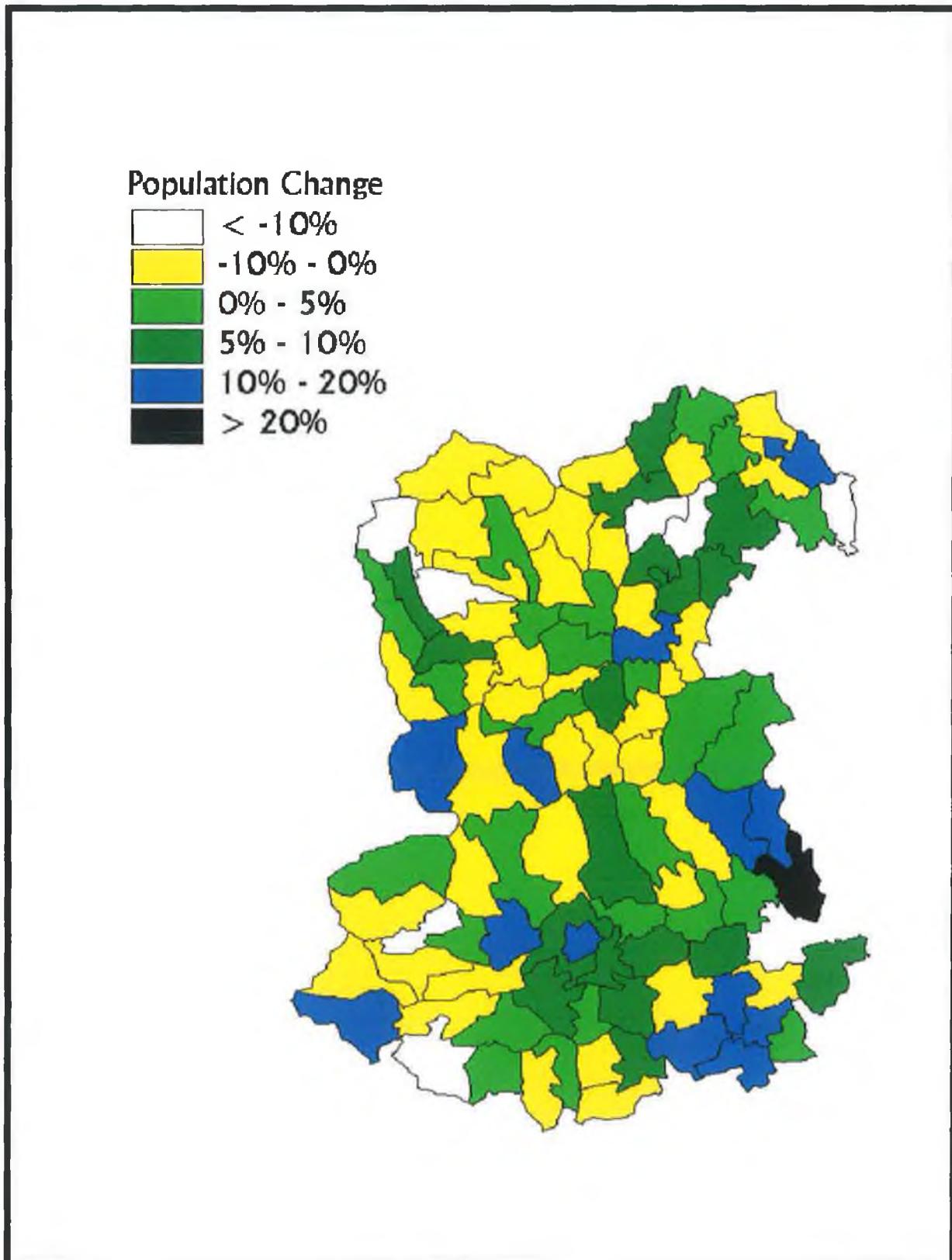


Figure 4.9: Population change in Cork North West, by district electoral division, 1996-2002. (Central Statistics Office, 2002)

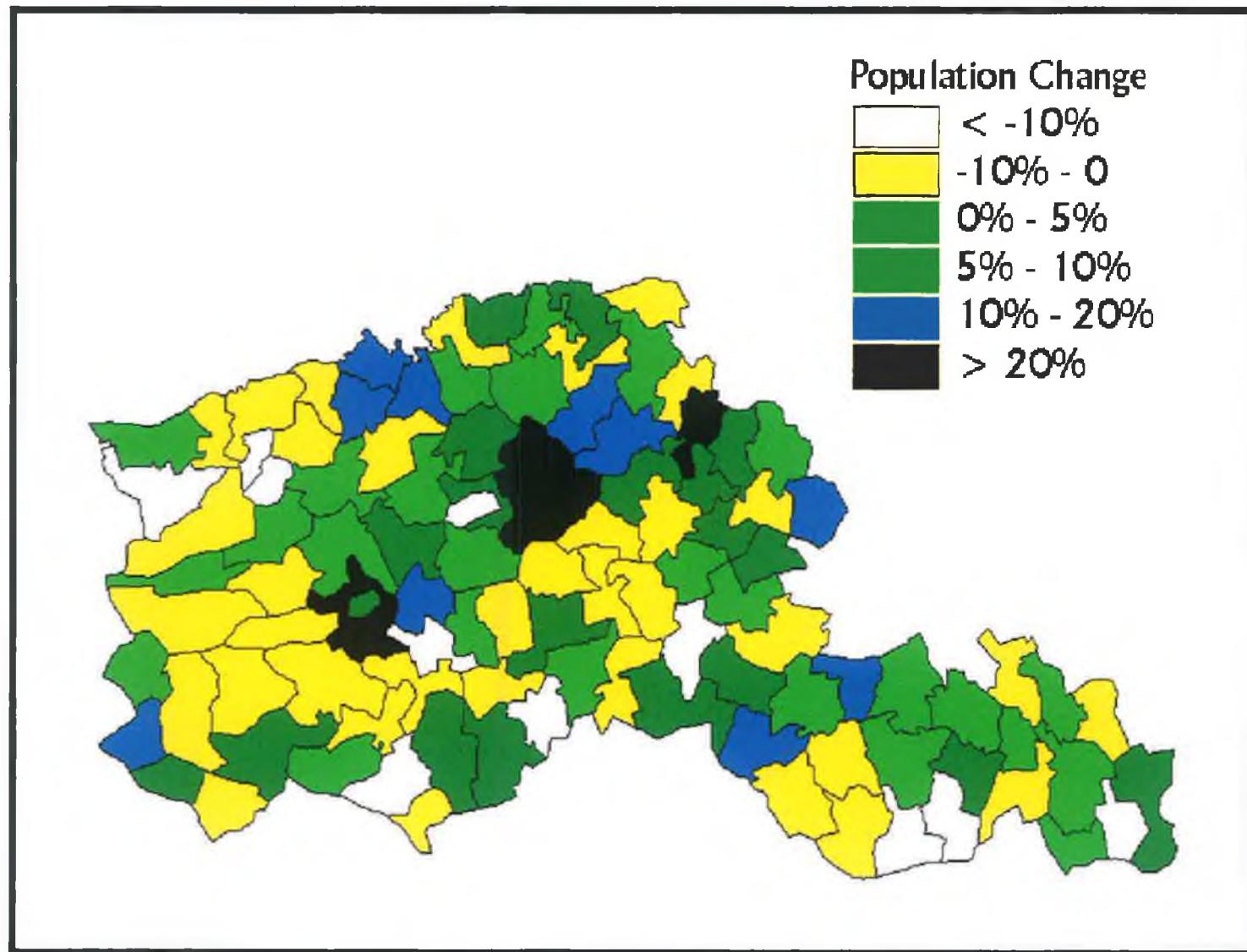


Figure 4.10: Population change in Limerick West, 1996-2002, by district electoral division. (Central Statistics Office, 2002)

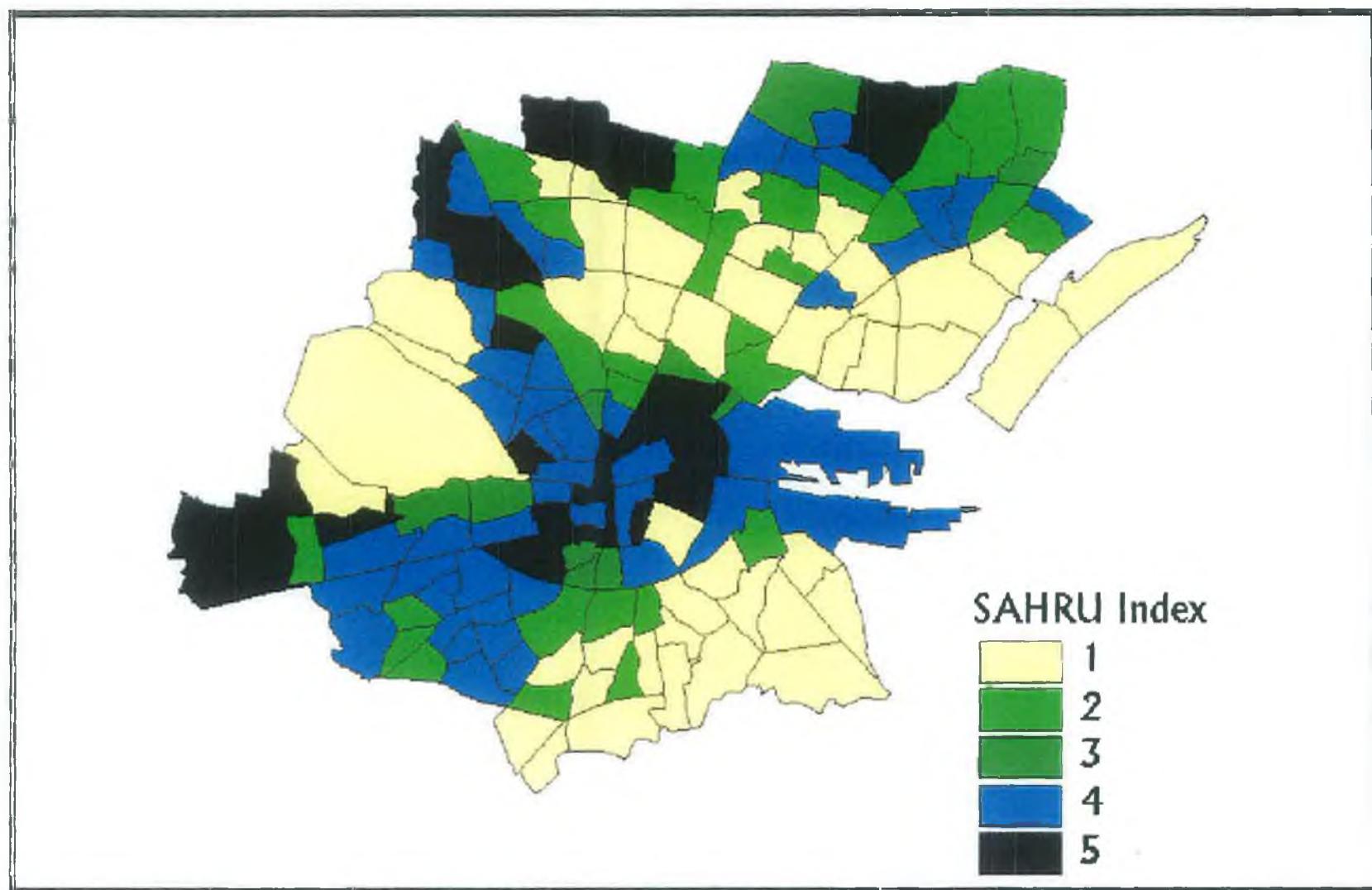


Figure 4.11: Electoral divisions in Dublin City Council area by SAH RU deprivation index.

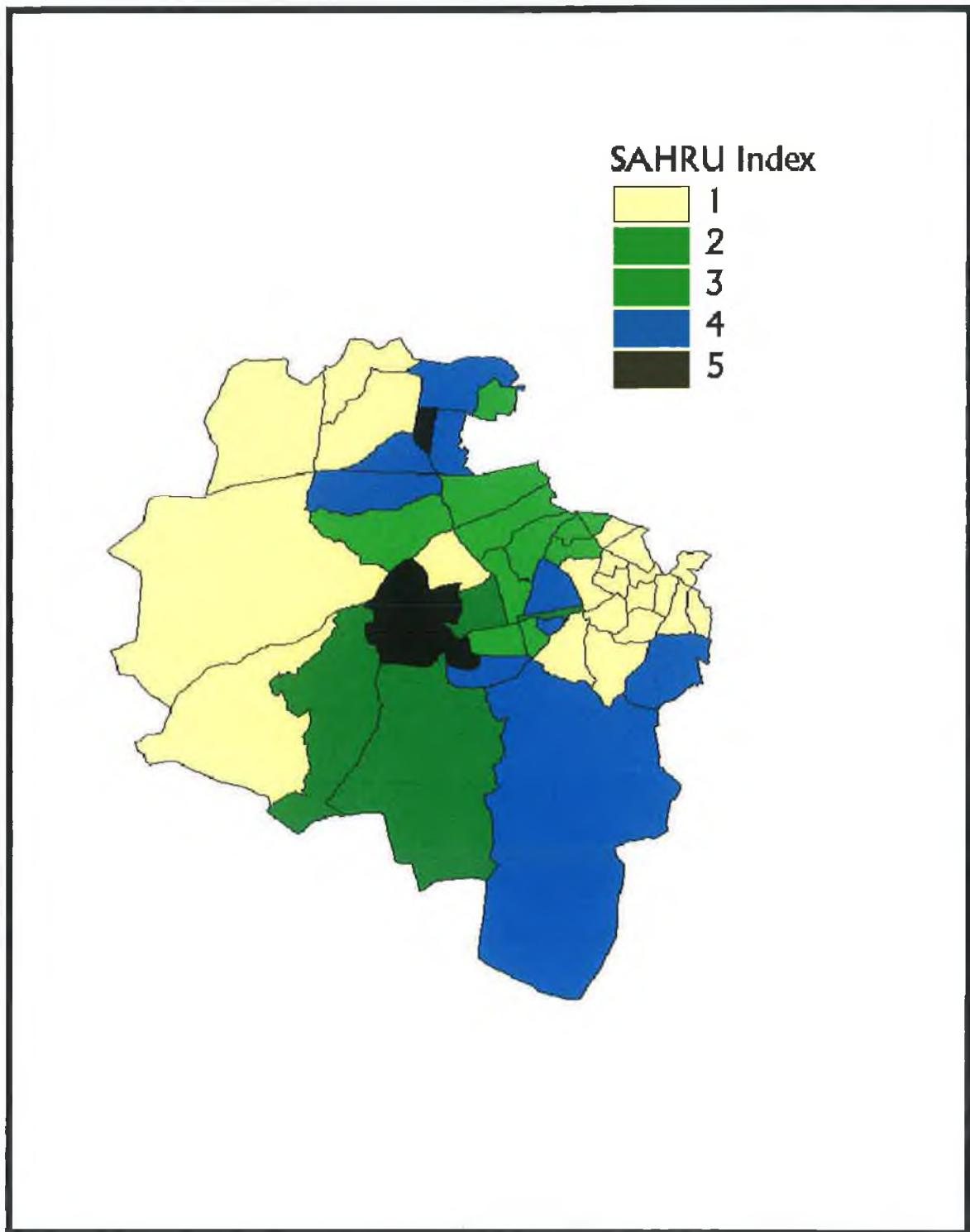


Figure 4.12: Electoral divisions in South Dublin County area by SAH RU deprivation index.

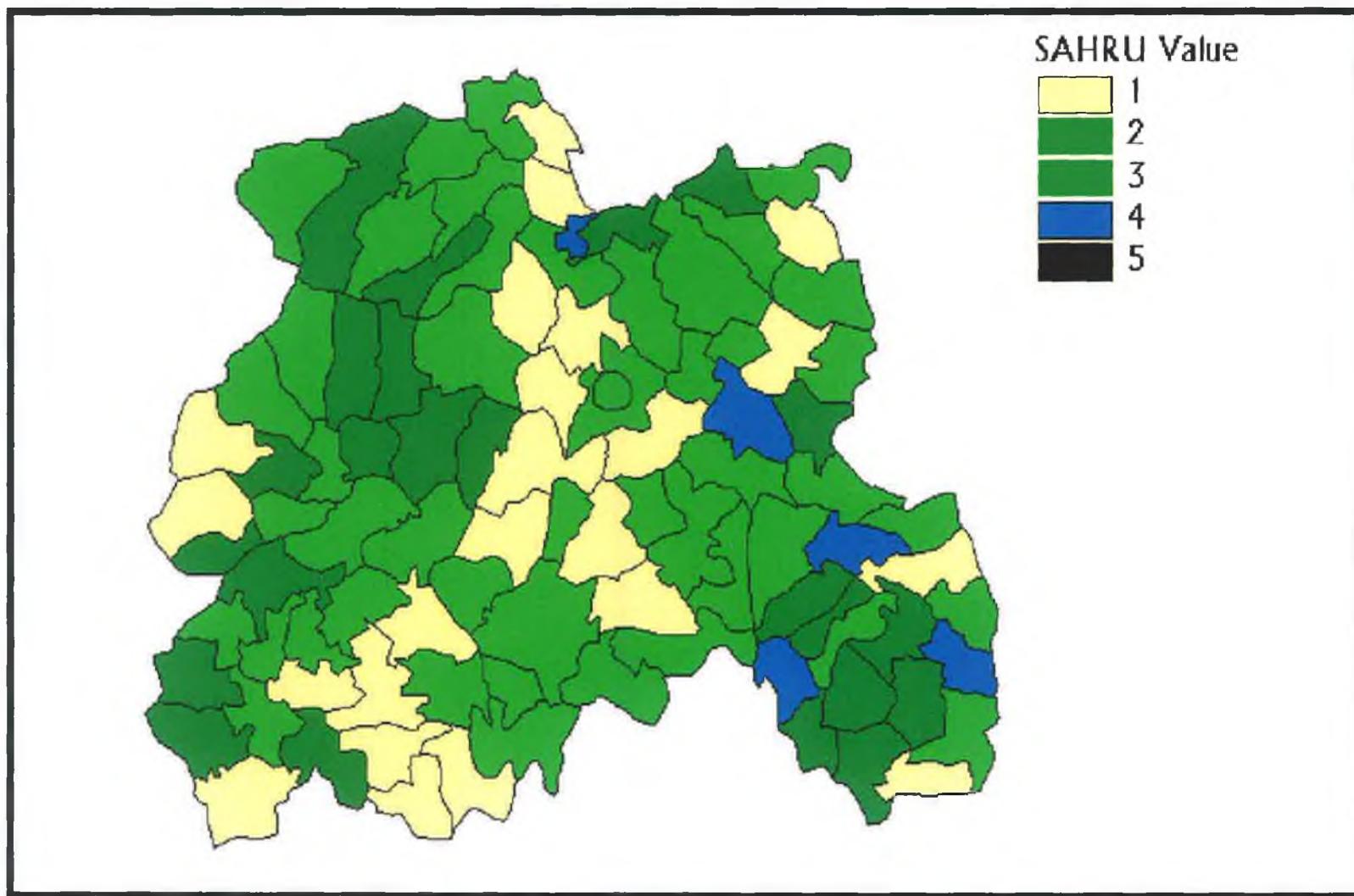


Figure 4.13: Electoral divisions in Laois by SAHRU deprivation index.

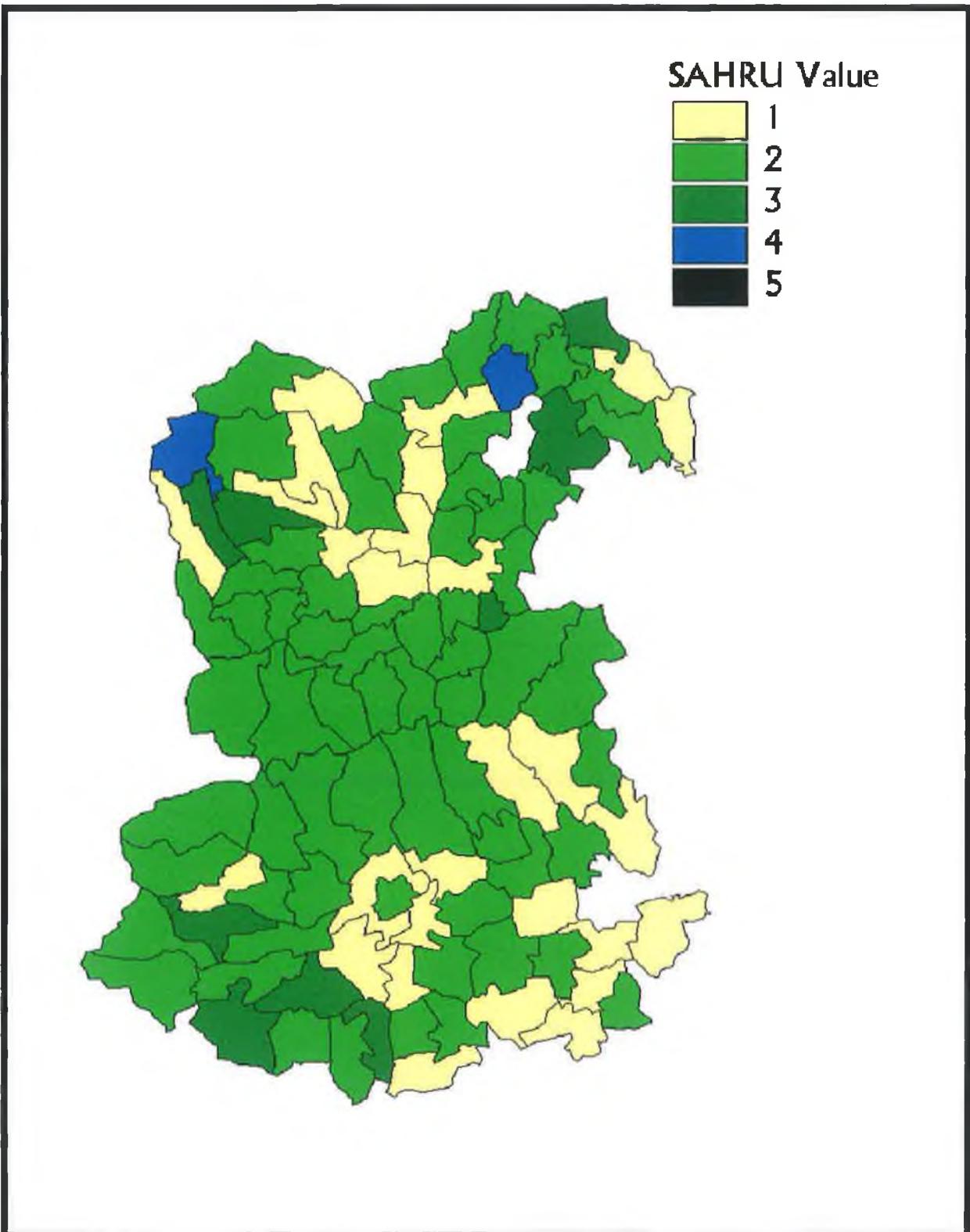


Figure 4.14: Electoral divisions in Cork North West by SAHRU deprivation index.

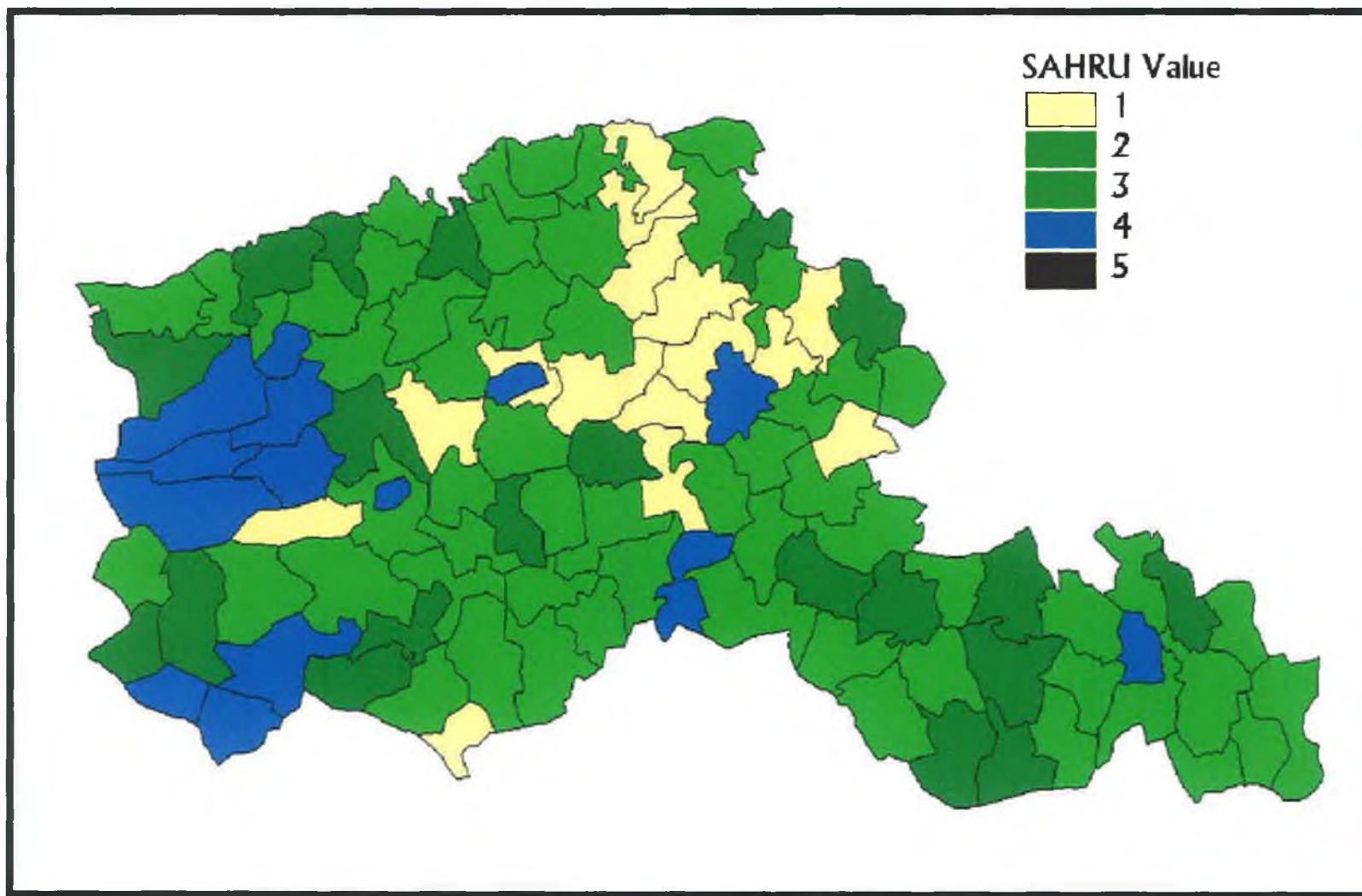


Figure 4.15: Electoral divisions in Limerick West by SAHRU deprivation index.

CHAPTER 5

ELECTION TYPES

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis is mainly concerned with analysing the relationship between low turnout and social deprivation, with especial regard to the influence that urban-rural turnout differentials may have on such a relationship. This chapter will look at spatial variations in turnout rates in Ireland at a constituency level and will address these themes, although the main function of this chapter will be to set the scene for the sub-constituency of analyses of turnout variations in later chapters. As such this chapter will be mainly concerned with providing background information on Irish turnout variations, although the material covered in it will be of direct relevance to three hypotheses, namely H₁, H₃ and H₄.

There is a general pattern, as observed in the literature, that turnouts for what are termed first-order elections (e.g. general elections) will tend to be higher than those for second-order elections (e.g. referenda, sub-national and European elections). Electors perceive that there is less at stake in second-order elections and may opt to abstain in these, while voting in first-order elections. There may be exceptions to this, as envisaged by the “turnout twist” concept of Horiuchi (2001) that observes higher turnouts for sub-national elections than for general elections in France, Japan and Canada.

This pattern of higher turnouts in “first order” elections applies to Ireland also. Figure 5.1 shows that turnouts in the general elections of 1997 and 2002 were higher than for all the types of elections held during this period. There was one exception to this pattern, in that

turnout for the 1998 referenda on the British-Irish Agreement and Amsterdam Treaty was marginally higher in the Dublin region than the turnout in that region for the 2002 General Election. Another striking feature of Figure 5.1 is that turnouts are shown to have been significantly lower in the Dublin region than the rest of the country for the general, presidential and, in particular, the 1999 local and European elections, whereas referenda turnouts were generally lower in the other regions. These striking contrasts are evidenced in the fact that Connacht-Ulster had a 25.6% higher turnout than Dublin for the 1999 local and European elections, but had a 10.4% lower turnout for the 2002 Abortion Referendum.

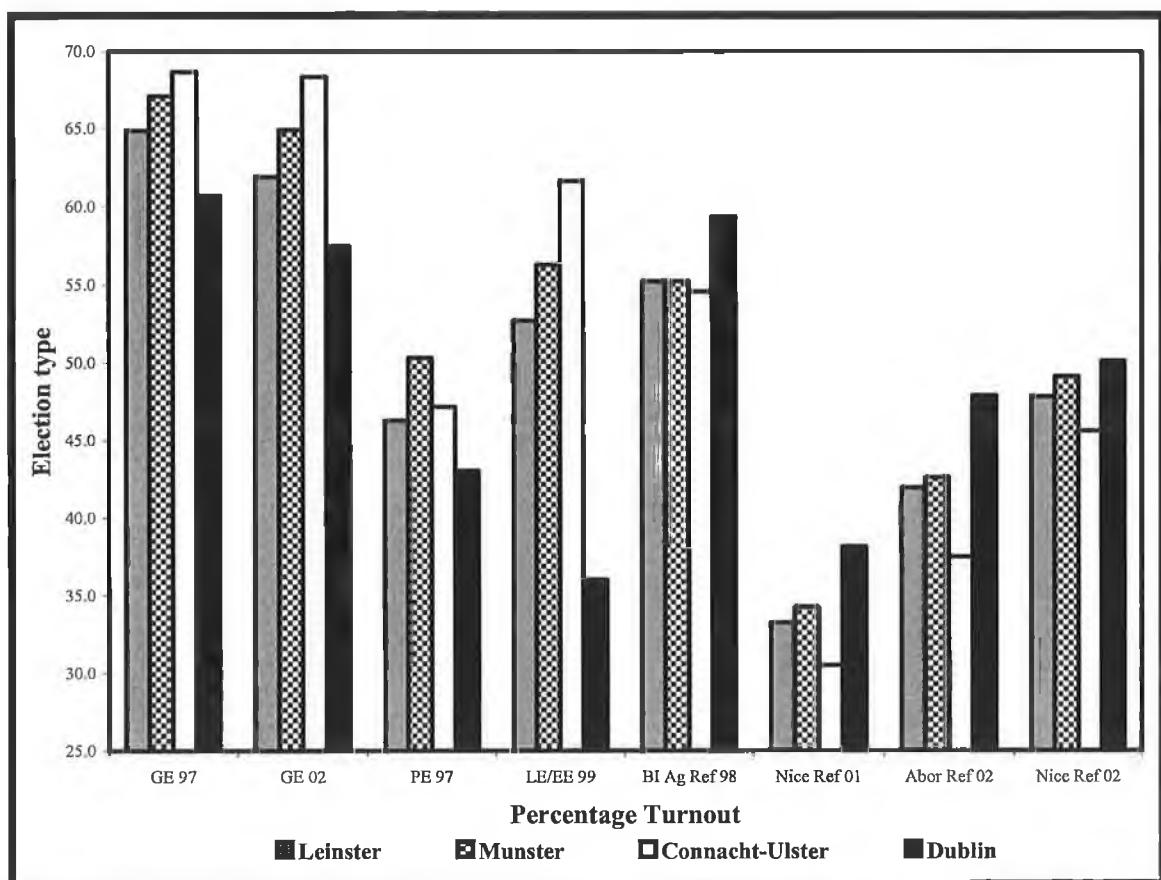


Figure 5.1: Turnouts in Ireland by region between 1997 and 2002.

[*GE: General Election, PE: Presidential Election, LE/EE: Local and European elections, BI Ag Ref: British Irish Agreement Referendum, Nice Ref: Nice Referendum, Abor Ref: Abortion Referendum.*]

This chapter will analyse the spatial variations in turnout rates for the different types of election held in Ireland, with especial reference to the 1997-2002 period. Turnout variations between general elections and referenda will be analysed. Potential socio-economic influences on constituency turnouts will be noted, as a means of detecting whether there is evidence that socio-economic marginalisation influences turnout rates at this level. The chapter will also analyse whether such socio-economic influences on turnouts have the same degree of influence in rural and urban areas.

5.2 GENERAL ELECTIONS

General elections tend to have the highest turnout rates of all election types in Ireland, as was noted above and as Figure 5.1 illustrates. Figure 5.1 also shows that general election turnouts tend to be significantly higher in the rural parts of Ireland than they are in Dublin, which is further evidenced by the turnout maps for the 1992, 1997 and 2002 General Elections (Figures 5.4, 5.5 and 5.6).

Figure 5.5 shows that turnouts in Dublin were lower than for the rest of the country in the 1997 General Election, with the Dublin turnout rate (61.3%) being 6.4% lower than the average for the rest of the country (67.7%). Apart from Dublin North Central (65.5%), turnouts in the Dublin constituencies were below the national average of 65.9%, with turnouts of lower than 60% in three Dublin constituencies: Dublin South West (55.9%), Dublin Central (56.6%) and Dublin South East (57.7%). The highest turnouts in 1997 were in Longford-Roscommon (74.8%), Tipperary North (74.8%), Cork North West (74.6%) and Kerry South

(74.3%), with Donegal South West (63.9%) the only rural constituency outside of the Greater Dublin area to have a turnout below the national average.

There were even more pronounced rural-urban variations in turnout for the 2002 General Election. Turnouts in the Greater Dublin region were again lower than those for the rest of the country, with the difference in turnouts between Dublin (57.4%) and the rest of Ireland (65.2%) widening to 7.8%. Nine Dublin constituencies, the two Kildare constituencies, Meath and Louth had turnouts of lower than 60%, with the lowest turnouts nationally in Dublin South Central (52.0%) and Dublin Mid West (52.00%). Cork North West (73.4%) had the highest turnout nationally, followed by Sligo-Leitrim (72.4%), Cavan-Monaghan (71.6%), Kerry South (71.5%), Kerry North (71.3%), Longford-Roscommon (71.2%) and Cork South West (70.3%).

Turnout differences between Dublin and the rest of Ireland, however, were not so pronounced in the 1992 General Election, in which turnout in Dublin (66.2%) was only marginally lower than the national average (68.5%), as Figure 5.4 shows. Indeed turnouts had increased in the Dublin region for this election, relative to other parts of the country, but particularly Connacht-Ulster. This was, probably, partially due to the fact that a number of referenda on the Abortion issue were being held on the same day. The surge in Labour Party support in 1992 from 9.5% to 19.3% nationally and from 9.5% to 26.1% in Dublin probably had the effect of mobilising the Dublin working classes to vote to a greater extent than had been the case in previous general elections.

There was evidence of a significant class effect in relation to Dublin turnouts for all of these elections. Turnouts in 1997 were lowest in the working class constituencies of Dublin South West and Dublin Central and highest in middle class constituencies, such as Dublin North Central, Dublin North and Dublin South. Turnouts in 2002 were also lowest in the more working class constituencies of Dublin South Central and Dublin Mid West, while turnouts were again somewhat higher in the more middle class constituencies. (Boundary changes meant that Dublin South Central, Dublin Mid West and Dublin North West became more working class, while other constituencies, such as Dublin Central and Dublin South West became more middle class.) However, there was not such a clear association between deprivation and low turnout in the rural parts of Ireland. Indeed, turnouts appeared to be highest in a number of constituencies that took in some of the most deprived areas in rural Ireland, namely Cork North West, Sligo-Leitrim, Longford-Roscommon and Cavan-Monaghan. By contrast, turnouts in rural Ireland tended to be lowest in the relatively more advantaged Meath and Kildare constituencies, located in the Greater Dublin region.

5.3 LOCAL ELECTIONS

Rallings et al. (2000) find that many of the factors that influence general election turnout will also have a significant influence on local election turnouts. Factors that are particularly relevant, they note, are the importance of local issues, the strength of political party campaigning activities, marginality at the last election, the size of the electorate in a ward and certain socio-structural factors, such as age, council tenancy, and unemployment. They also find that turnout amongst those who voted using a postal vote was often twice as high as that for people who went to polling stations to vote. Relatively high turnouts in local election

constituencies were particularly linked to the existence of a strong local identity within an area, as well as the role played by local media.

"In some case study authorities the continued existence of a well-read, community based local paper which gave coverage to local issues and to elections was felt to boost public interest and participation. In other authorities the media were less localist in orientation and penetration. Similarly, the findings for 1991 on the positive relationship between population stability and turnout were supported by these case studies. Authorities whose population had become more mobile, and those that had reason to think that levels of identity with the local council were weak, believed that such factors had adversely affected turnout." (Rallings et al., 2000: 105)

The "turnout twist" phenomenon of Horiuchi (2001) points to situations in which turnouts are higher in lower-level elections, encompassing the examples of Canadian provincial, French municipal and Japanese municipal elections. Horiuchi attempts to account for the anomalous findings in Japan, France and Canada on the basis of their social and cultural backgrounds and queries the basis of the second order election model; that lower-level elections will produce lower turnouts as there is less at stake in such elections. Instead, he argues that, in accounting for the relative level of voter turnout in sub-national as against national elections, one needs to take account of

"Not only how much is at stake (measured by the size of government expenditure or tax revenue) but also how much citizens' votes count (measured by the number of popularly elected representatives per capita) in subnational vs. national elections." (Horiuchi, 2001: 24)

Horiuchi suggests that the different observations of the second-order election model and the "turnout twist" phenomenon can be accounted for by a model that relates a *voter turnout ratio*¹ to two independent variables, a *tax revenue ratio*² and an *elected representatives ratio*³.

¹ This is defined as the ratio of voter turnout in a sub-national election to voter turnout in a national election.

This model offsets the fact that more tends to be at stake for voters in national elections against the fact that votes tend to count more in local elections due to the higher ratio of elected representatives to voters in these elections.

Gallagher (1989: 29) observes that local election turnout in Ireland tends to be lower than general election turnouts – a “*consequence of the unimportance of local elections to the Irish electorate*” – although the drop in turnouts for local elections is not as marked in Ireland as in other countries. Sinnott (1995) accounts for the relatively high turnouts in Irish local elections by suggesting that this resulted from these elections being quite party-competitive. Local elections are seen as important to political parties as they are used as a means of recruiting candidates for future Dáil elections, while those elected to county and borough councils in these elections will form a large part of the electoral college in Senate elections.

Gallagher (1989) and O’Shea (2000) observe a greater drop in turnouts between general and local elections in Dublin compared with the rest of Ireland. They related this to the higher ratio of councillors to electors in the rural constituencies. This means that rural voters feel they have a greater influence on the outcome of local elections than Dublin voters do, while also allowing for a greater identification of rural voters with their local representatives.

“*There is a much greater chance of knowing your local representative with a ratio of 1:1,014 in Leitrim County Council in comparison to 1:6,935 in Dublin County Borough.*” O’Shea (2000: 146)

² This measures the ratio of total government expenditure in sub-national governments to total government expenditure in national governments.

³ This measures the ratio of the total number of popularly elected seats in subnational elections against the number of popularly elected seats in national elections.

As Figure 5.7 illustrates, the rural-urban turnouts that marked the general election turnout patterns were even more pronounced in the case of the 1999 local and European elections. Turnouts in most of the larger urban areas were generally below the 40% level, while turnouts in rural Ireland were significantly higher, with turnouts of over 70% in the north-western parts of the country. The average turnout in the Dublin region (36.0%) was 19.8% lower than the average for the rest of the country (55.8%). The constituencies with the highest turnouts in the 1999 elections were, as Table 5.1 illustrates, predominantly associated with the north-western counties of Leitrim, Sligo, Longford, Roscommon and Cavan. The low turnout constituencies were all located in the Dublin region and generally tended to be associated with working class or socially deprived areas in the Dublin Inner City or the western suburbs.

<i>Highest Turnout Constituencies</i>			<i>Lowest Turnout Constituencies</i>		
<i>Constituency</i>	<i>County</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Constituency</i>	<i>County</i>	<i>%</i>
1. Tobercurry	Sligo	81.2	1. Clondalkin	South Dublin	28.3
2. Dromahaire	Leitrim	76.5	2. Ballyfermot	Dublin City	28.6
3. Ballinamore	Leitrim	74.5	3. Mulhuddart	Fingal	29.7
4. Ballymahon	Longford	74.4	4. North Inner City	Dublin City	30.7
5. Dromore	Sligo	74.1	5. South West Inner City	Dublin City	31.1
6. Manorhamilton	Leitrim	73.8	6. Tallaght Central	South Dublin	31.1
7. Strokestown	Roscommon	73.0	7. South East Inner City	Dublin City	31.7
8. Boyle	Roscommon	70.9	8. Lucan	South Dublin	32.3
9. Granard	Longford	70.6	9. Tallaght South	South Dublin	32.3
10. Belturbet	Cavan	70.2	10. Artane	Dublin City	32.6

Table 5.1: Local electoral areas with ten highest and lowest in terms of turnout in the 1999 local elections⁴.

This pattern amounts to, in socio-economic terms, an accentuation of the pattern established for the general elections, in which Dublin turnouts tended to be lowest and rural turnouts tended to be highest in the more marginalised constituencies.

⁴ The turnout rate in the Kilbeggan EA was 29.9% for the European Elections and 29.8% for the Referendum, but no Local Government election was held here as only 4 candidates were nominated for election in this 4-seat constituency. (Data provided by Westmeath County Registrar.)

5.4 BY-ELECTIONS

By-elections are in essence elections to the national parliament, but they generally conform to the second-order election model as there is usually little at stake in these contests, unless they take place in the context of an unstable government.

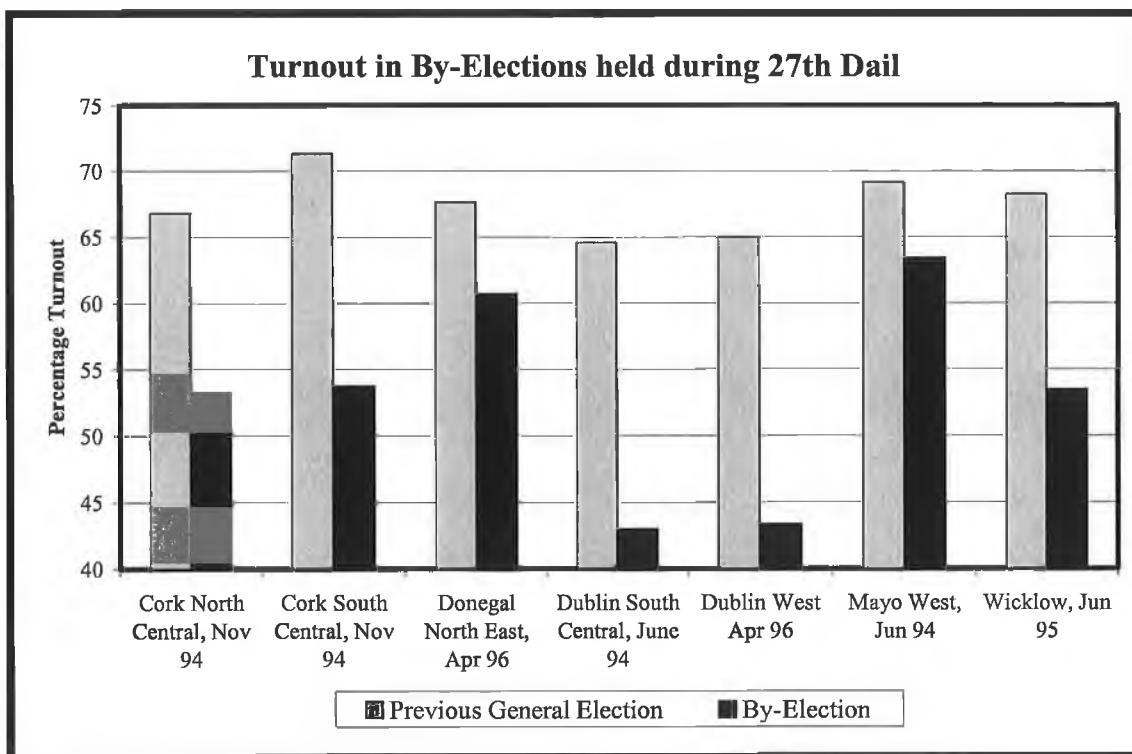


Figure 5.2: Turnouts in by-elections held during the 27th Dáil (1992-1997).

Gallagher (1996) suggests that declines in by-election turnout in Ireland are possibly due to the fact that by-elections generally have little influence on the formation, or survival, of governments. He also contends that abstention can prove a safe means for supporters of the government to express displeasure at their party's performance, without having to support another party. Gallagher notes that there has been an average decline of 7.0%, since the

foundation of the state, in by-election turnouts relative to the turnouts for the same constituencies in the previous general elections. Turnout decline for by-elections tends to be especially marked in the Dublin area, with an average decline of 16.4% relative to the previous general election being registered for the thirty by-elections held in the Dublin area over the 1923-96 period. Turnout decline, by contrast, tends not to be as marked in the more rural constituencies.

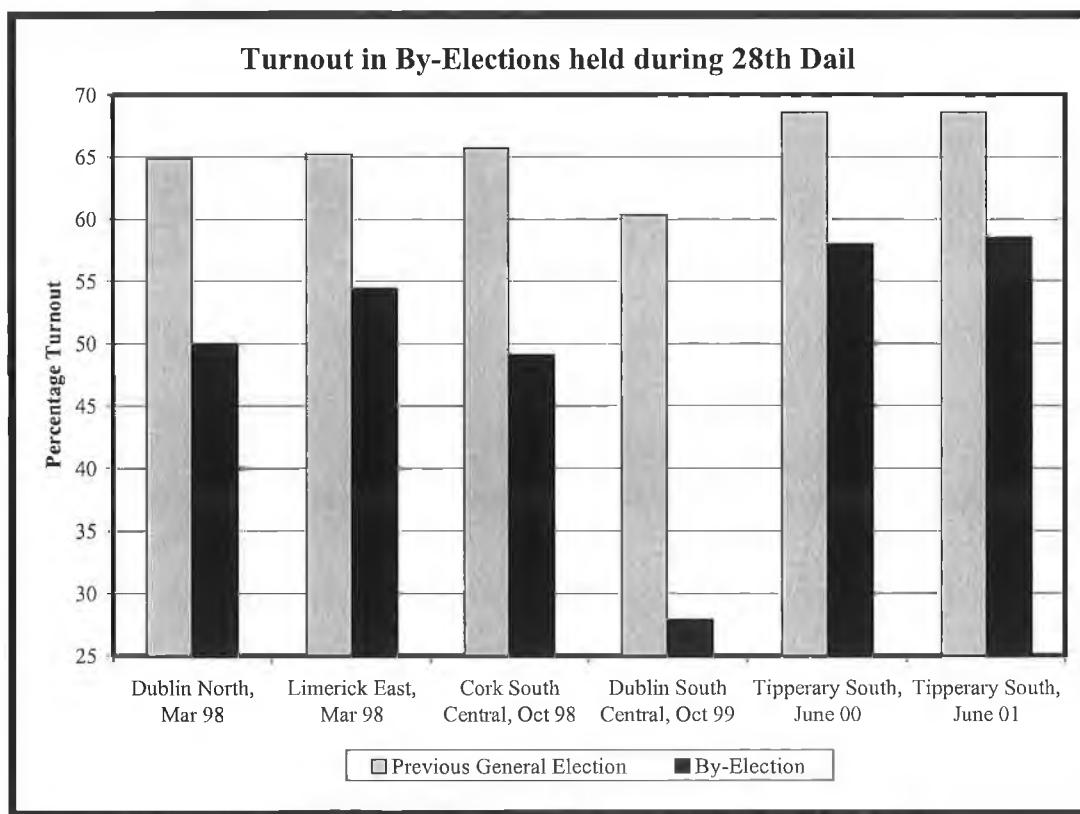


Figure 5.3: Turnouts in by-elections held during the 28th Dáil (1997-2002).

Figures 5.2 and 5.3 show that by-election turnouts during the 1992-2001 period were consistently lower than the turnouts in the relevant constituencies for the preceding general elections. The greatest declines in turnout were associated with the Dublin constituencies,

with declines of 32.5% for the 1999 Dublin South Central by-election and 21.6% for the 1996 Dublin West (21.6%) by-election. Turnout decline was relatively high for the three by-elections held in the Cork city constituencies (Cork North Central and Cork South Central) but these declines were not as large as for the Dublin constituencies. Turnout decline was relatively lower in the more rural constituencies, such as Mayo West (5.7%), Donegal North East (6.9%) and Tipperary South (10.1% for the 2001 by-election).

The relatively smaller decline in Dublin North in relation to the other, more working class, Dublin constituencies of Dublin South Central and Dublin West could suggest a class dimension to by-election turnouts in Dublin. However, there are too few cases involved to make any useful inferences here. The class dimensions of by-election turnouts will be discussed in greater detail in the sub-constituency analysis of turnouts in the 1999 Dublin South Central in Chapter 7.

5.5 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

Turnouts in Irish presidential elections are lower than for general elections, with less importance being invested in these by the electorate and fewer campaign resources and workers are generally involved. On average turnouts in presidential elections were 8% lower than those for preceding general elections (Marsh, 1999: 229), although the turnout in the 1997 Presidential Election amounted to a decline of 20% on the preceding general election (Marsh, 1999). This contrasted with the relatively high turnout in the 1990 Presidential Election. Marsh accounts for the low turnout in 1997 by the bad weather on the day as well as the expectation of a comfortable victory for Mary McAleese. Marsh notes that the low turnout

had little impact on the result, although he does point to evidence that the percentage share of the vote won by Rosemary Scallan may have increased as a result of the declining turnout.

As with the general and local elections, there were quite defined rural-urban variations in the 1997 Presidential Election turnout rates, albeit not to the same extent as for the other elections, with the average turnout for the Dublin region (43.0%) somewhat lower than the national average (46.7%). As Figure 5.8 illustrates, the lowest turnouts were registered in the more working class constituencies of Dublin Central (34.5%), Dublin South West (34.6%) and Dublin North West (39.7%). Class differentials in turnout were again noticeable in Dublin, with the highest turnouts in the middle class constituencies of Dublin South (50.1%), Dun Laoghaire (48.5%) and Dublin North Central (47.2%). The highest turnouts nationally were generally in the Munster region, in the contiguous rural constituencies of Cork North West (60.0%), Cork South West (57.8%), Cork East (53.0%) and Tipperary South (52.4%).

5.6 EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS

Turnouts for European Parliament elections in Ireland generally tend to be lower than the European Union average. For instance, the Irish turnout in 1999 of 50.2% was lower than the EU average of 52.8% (Gilland, 2000: 129). This turnout represented a considerable increase on the rate of 44% for the 1994 European Elections, which Gilland accounts for by the holding of it on the same day as a referendum on local government and the first local elections since 1991. Blondel et al. (1998) suggest that a greater sense of disengagement amongst the Irish electorate from European issues relative to voters from other European countries can partially explain the low turnouts in Ireland relative to the European average. Irish people are

viewed as having a heightened sense of national identity and low levels of interest in European politics. Blondel et al. (1998: 194) note an “*extensive non-engagement with EU issues*” and that Irish people “*do not have a commensurate sense of being European*”. This, they suggest, can help account for Ireland’s relatively low turnouts in European elections, as well as for the declining turnouts for European-related referenda.

5.7 REFERENDA

The spatial pattern of turnout variations for Irish referenda is somewhat different to the patterns in other elections, as noted by Sinnott (1995). Turnouts for referenda are often as high, or higher, in Dublin than they are in rural Ireland. This contrasts with the general pattern wherein turnouts are lowest in urban areas for other types of elections. Sinnott finds that the key predictors of turnout variance between referenda and general elections in the 1980s are the proportions of farmers and working class people in the population. Farmers, usually associated with higher turnout rates in general elections, are strongly linked with relatively lower turnouts in the case of referenda, as is the case for the working class population also. Sinnott concludes that there is evidence of less interest in referenda, whether for referenda on moral issues or the European Community, amongst farming and working class electors. Sinnott (1995) also observes considerable variations between the turnouts for the different referenda held in Ireland, ranging from the highest ever turnout of 71% rate for the 1972 referendum on membership of the EU to the lowest of 29% rate for the 1979 referenda on adoption and university representation. This is linked to the different estimations that the electorate has regarding the importance of the issues involved in the different referenda.

Garry et al. (2001) find that younger voters and people who were dissatisfied with the government accounted for a significant proportion of electoral abstention in the 2001 Nice Referendum. Given the parallels between this and the determinants of the No vote in the Nice referendum, Garry et al. suggest that the high levels of non-voting in that election had the effect of reducing the margin of victory for the No vote.

Figures 5.9-5.14 show significant urban-rural turnout variations for the different referenda held during the 1995-2002 period. These include the referenda on the Divorce issue (November 1995), on the Bail issue (November 1996), the British Irish Agreement and Amsterdam Treaty (May 1998), the Nice Treaty (June 2001), the issue of Abortion (March 2002) and the Nice Treaty (October 2002). The spatial patterns of turnout for these referenda were very different to those observed for the general, presidential, local and European elections. Rather than having the lowest turnout rates nationally, Dublin had higher than average turnout rates for these referenda. There was 5.3% of a difference between turnouts in Dublin (38.1%) and the rest of the country (32.8%) for the June 2001 Nice Referendum and 7.1% of a difference between Dublin (47.9%) and the rest of Ireland (40.8%) for the 2002 Abortion Referendum. Turnouts were especially high in the more middle class Dublin constituencies of Dun Laoghaire, Dublin South and Dublin North Central. There were lower than average turnouts, however, in the more working class Dublin South West and Dublin Central constituencies. The lowest turnouts nationally were in the rural constituencies of western Ireland, which, by contrast, tended to have the highest local and general election turnouts. Turnouts were especially low in the two Donegal constituencies, with turnouts of 27.1% in Donegal North East and 28.2% in Donegal South West in the 2001 Nice Treaty referendum. The highest turnouts outside of Dublin were in Wicklow, which falls in the

Greater Dublin region as well as a number of constituencies in south Munster, but particularly the Cork North West constituency. Given that these constituencies would tend to be relatively more advantaged than those in the west, there may be some basis to claim that low referenda turnouts were associated with socio-economic marginalisation in rural Ireland.

Urban-rural turnout variations were not as sharply defined in the case of the October 2002 Nice Treaty Referendum, however, as Figure 5.14 illustrates. While turnouts, on average, were still higher in the Dublin region (50.2%) than in the rest of the country (47.8%), the degree of variation was not as defined as for the previous referenda, with a difference of just 2.4% involved. There had been 5.3% of a difference between Dublin (38.1%) and the rest of the country (32.8%) in terms of turnout rates in the June 2001 Nice Referendum. The main reasoning for the narrowing of the urban-rural turnout differences in this case was the fact that the most significant turnout increases between the June 2001 and the October 2002 Nice Referenda had occurred in the more rural parts of Ireland, as Figure 5.15 shows. This shows that the most significant turnout increases occurred in the South Midlands and Munster constituencies, in particular the Longford-Roscommon and Tipperary constituencies. Turnouts increased by 18.9% in Longford-Roscommon, 18.4% in Tipperary North, 18.1% in Tipperary South, 17.2% in Laois-Offaly, 17.2% in Cork North West and 17.1% in Kerry North.

5.8 DISCUSSION

This chapter has shown that the general pattern noted in the literature, of there being higher turnouts in first order (as in general elections) than in second order (as in local and European

Parliament elections, referenda) elections, applies strongly to the Irish case. General election turnouts tend to be higher than all other election types and to be considerably higher than local election turnouts in the Dublin region and referenda turnouts in the rural constituencies in the west.

Rural-urban turnout variations were associated with all the different types of elections, with turnouts generally higher in the rural areas for general and, especially, local elections and higher in the urban areas for referenda. Figures 5.16 and 5.17 highlight the effect that these contrasting rural-urban influences have on variations between general election and referendum turnouts. Not surprisingly, as illustrated by Figure 5.16, the greatest variations in turnout between the 1997 General Election and the 2002 Abortion Referendum were associated with the more rural constituencies, particularly those in the north-west and south west⁵. Turnout declines of over 35% were associated with three constituencies, namely Mayo (36.0%), Longford-Roscommon (35.5%) and Kerry South (35.4%). The smallest degree of turnout variation was in the Dublin region, where turnouts dropped by less than 10% in the Dun Laoghaire (9.0%) and Dublin South East (9.4%) constituencies. A similar pattern emerges when turnouts in the May 2002 General Election and the October 2002 Nice Treaty Referendum are contrasted, as Figure 5.17 shows. The greatest turnout decline in the Nice Referendum, relative to the preceding general election, occurred in the more western constituencies, with turnouts down by 25% in Donegal North East (28.5%), Donegal South West (26.6%), Kerry North (25.7%) and Sligo-Leitrim (25.1%). Turnout decline was relatively small in some of the more middle class Dublin constituencies, with turnouts down

⁵ While the 2002 General Election would be preferable for comparative purposes to the 1997 General Election from the temporal perspective, the constituency configuration for this was slightly different to the Abortion Referendum, which used the same boundary scheme as the 1997 General Election.

on the general election figure by just 4.3% in Dun Laoghaire, 5.3% in Dublin South and 6.1% in Dublin South East.

	GE97	GE92	PE97	NR02	AR02	RF01	RF98	RF96	RF95
General Election 02 (GE02)	.92	.74	.68	.15	-.43	-.30	-.15	-.23	-.17
General Election 97 (GE97)		.87	.76	.17	-.31	-.19	-.01	-.06	-.00
General Election 92 (GE92)			.82	.50	.07	.15	.22	.33	.43
Presidential Election 97 (PE97)				.51	.09	.18	.18	.35	.41
Nice Ref. 02 (NR02)					.78	.76	.61	.84	.26
Abortion Ref. 02 (AR02)						.93	.75	.83	.86
Nice Ref. 01 (RF01)							.80	.86	.82
British-Irish Ref. 98 (RF98)								.59	.62
Bail Ref. 96 (RF96)									.92
Divorce Referendum 95 (RF95)									-

Table 5.2: Simple correlations between turnouts (by constituency) in elections held in 1992-2002 period.

The correlations in Table 5.2 illustrate the degree to which the spatial pattern of turnouts in referenda differs from those for those in the other types of elections. There are significant positive correlations between the turnouts for general and presidential elections, but the associations between turnouts in these elections and those in the referenda held during this period generally tend to be inverse in nature. The only exceptions to this are the associations with turnout in the 1992 General Election and the 2002 Nice Referendum. The positive associations between turnouts in the referenda and the 1992 General Election are probably accounted for by the fact that three referenda on the Abortion issue were held on the same day as the general election. Positive associations with turnout in the Nice Referendum resulted from a greater mobilisation of the rural electorate by the political parties and the Irish Farmers Association (IFA) in that contest, which meant that urban-rural turnout differences were not as pronounced as they were in other referenda.

Evidence of a class dimension to turnouts was uncovered for the Dublin constituencies, with turnouts generally lowest in the more working class constituencies. There did not appear to be a similar pattern to turnouts in the rural constituencies, however, as the more disadvantaged constituencies in western Ireland tended to have the highest turnouts nationally for all types of elections, apart from referenda. Turnouts in the more disadvantaged rural constituencies were very low for referenda, which could suggest some degree of an association between low turnout and socio-economic marginalisation in rural Ireland for these contests.

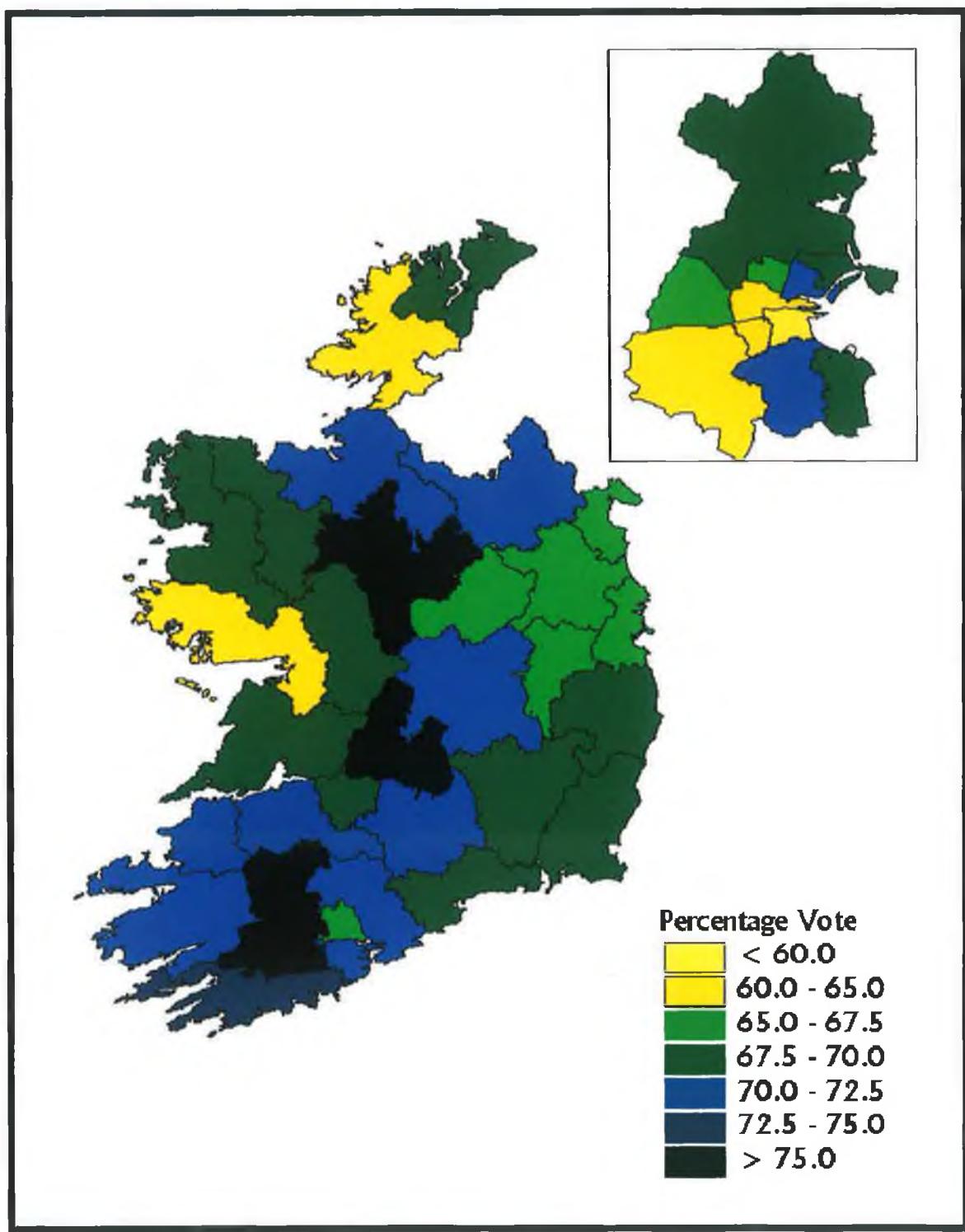


Figure 5.4: Voter turnout in the General Election, November 1992.

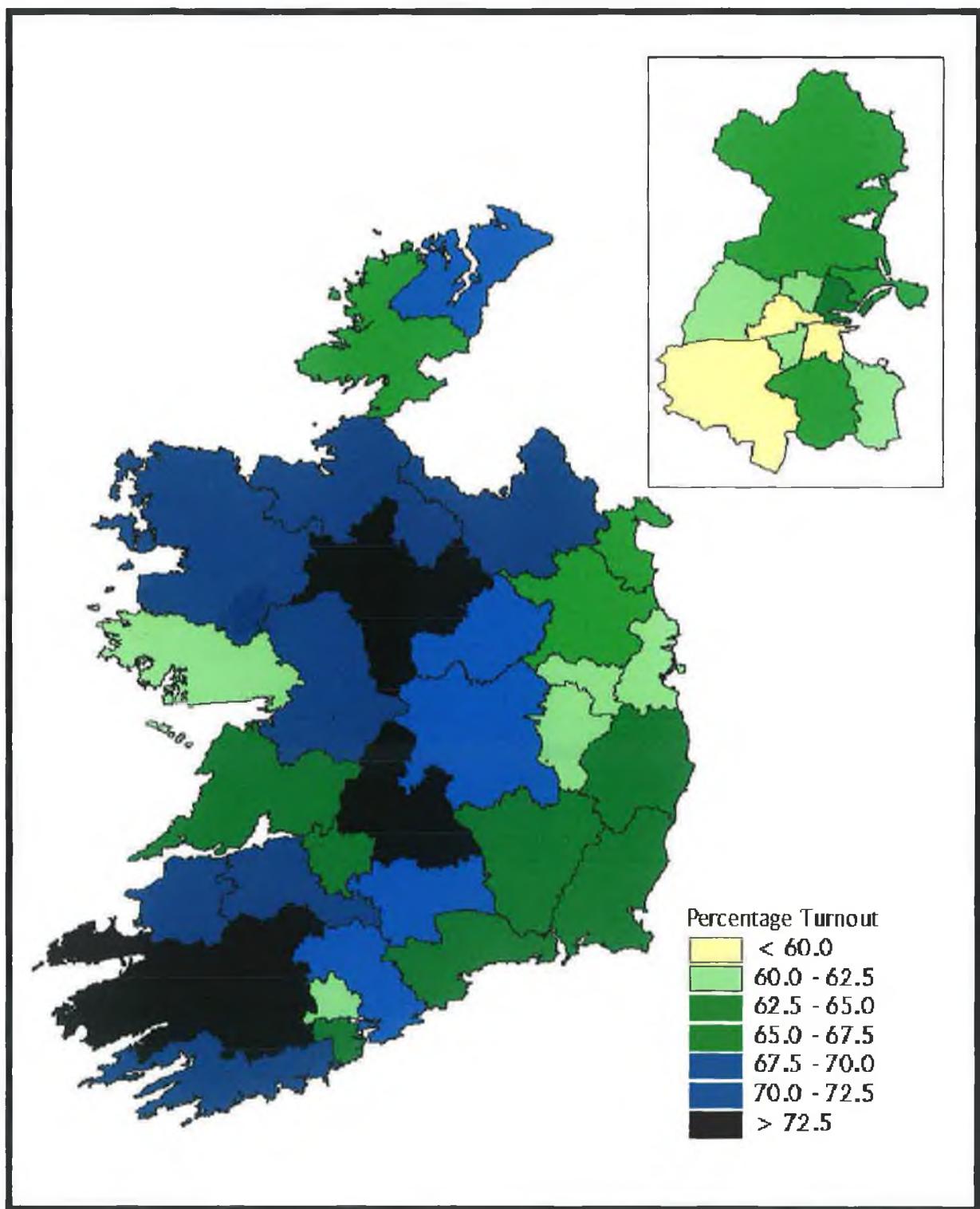


Figure 5.5: Turnout in the General Election, June 1997.

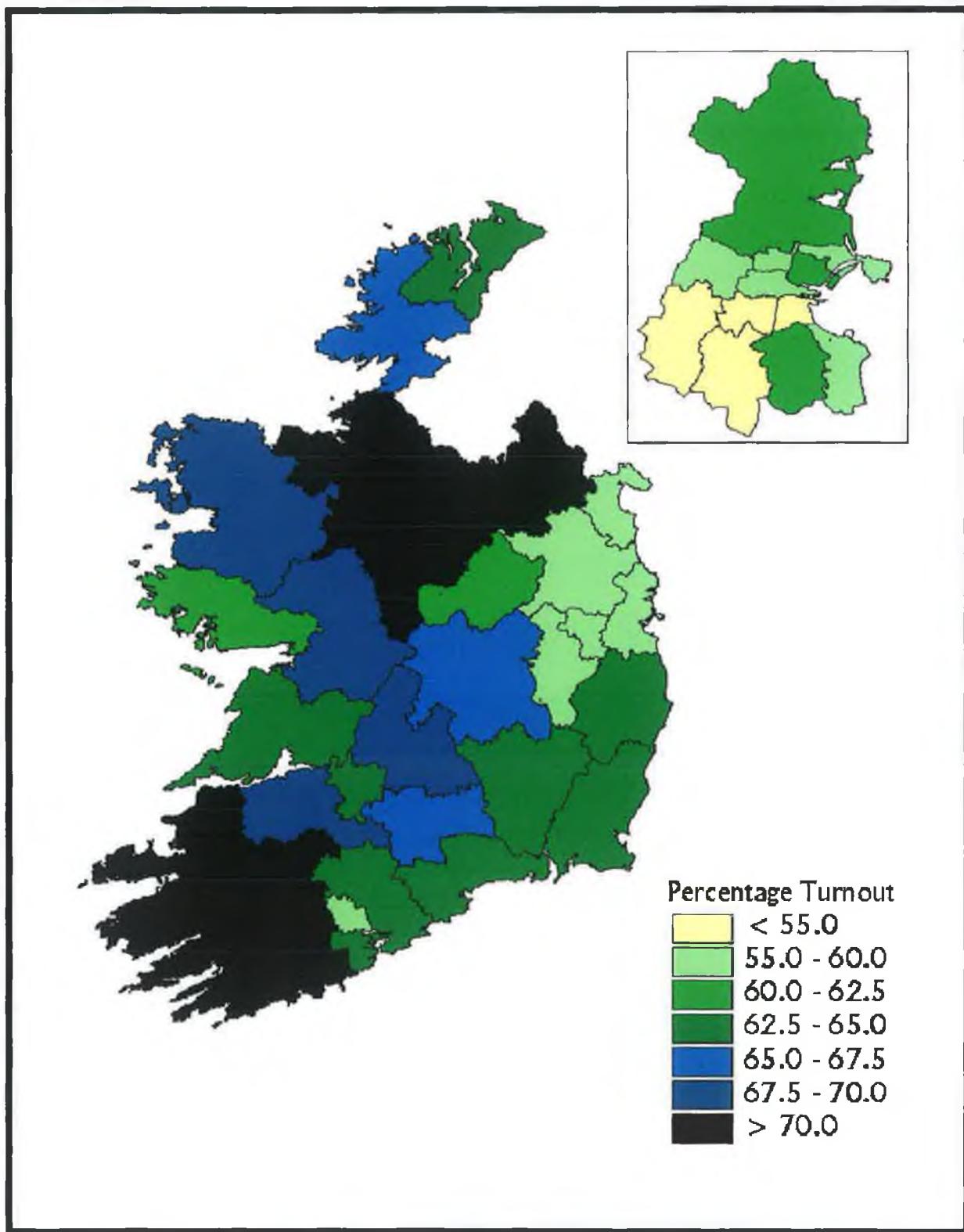


Figure 5.6: Turnout in the General Election, May 2002.

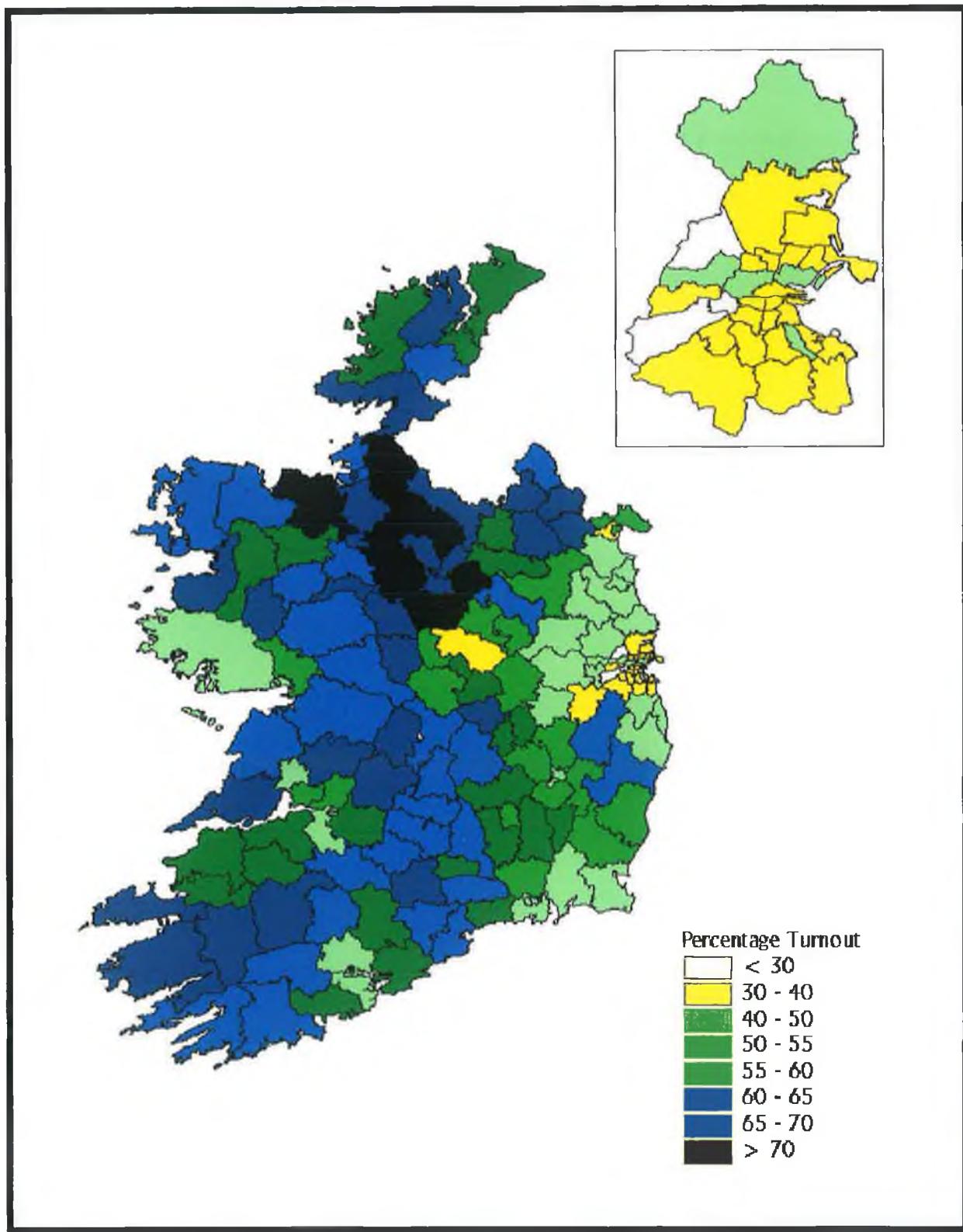


Figure 5.7: Voter turnout in the Local and European Elections, June 1999.

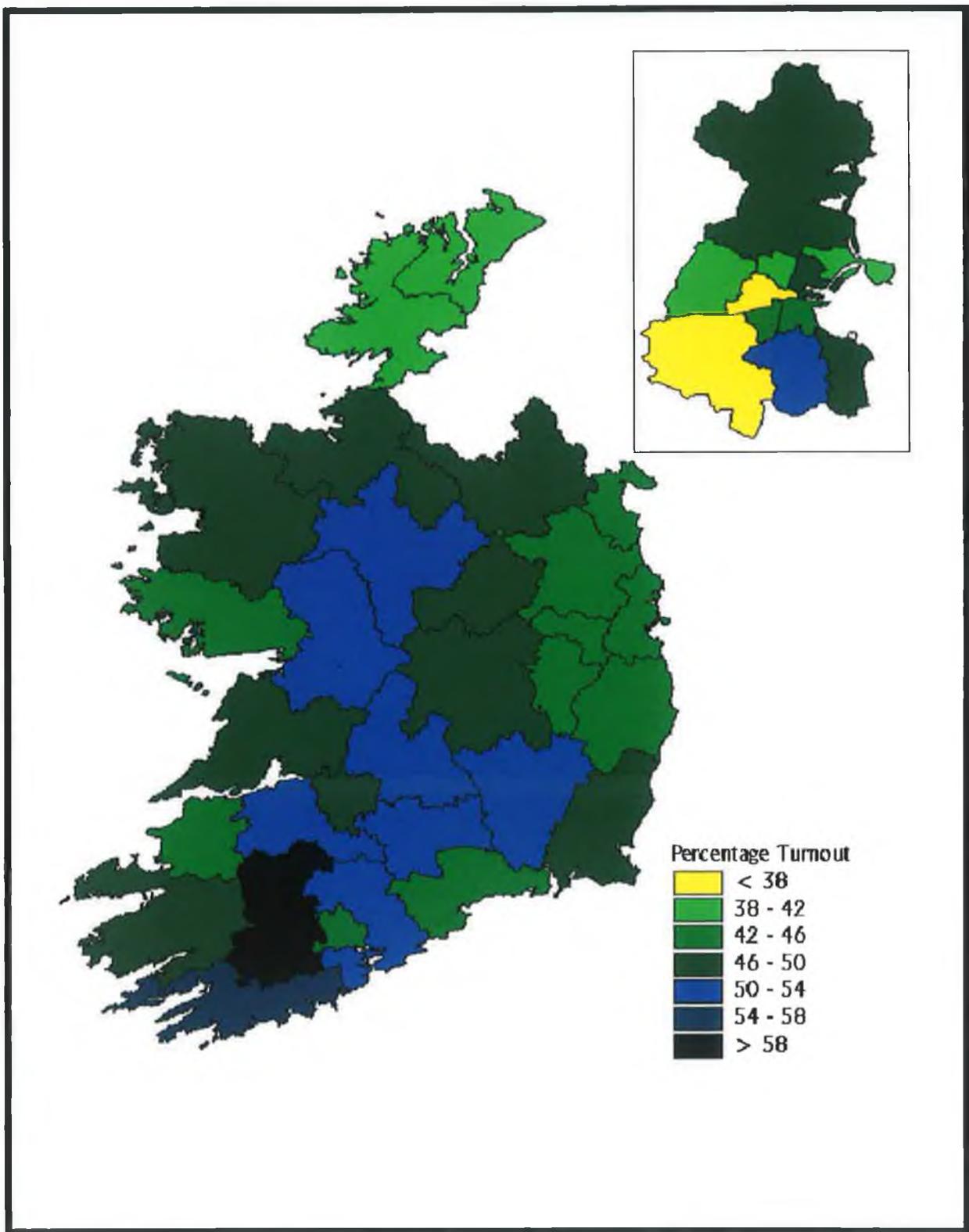


Figure 5.8: Turnout in the Presidential Election, November 1997.

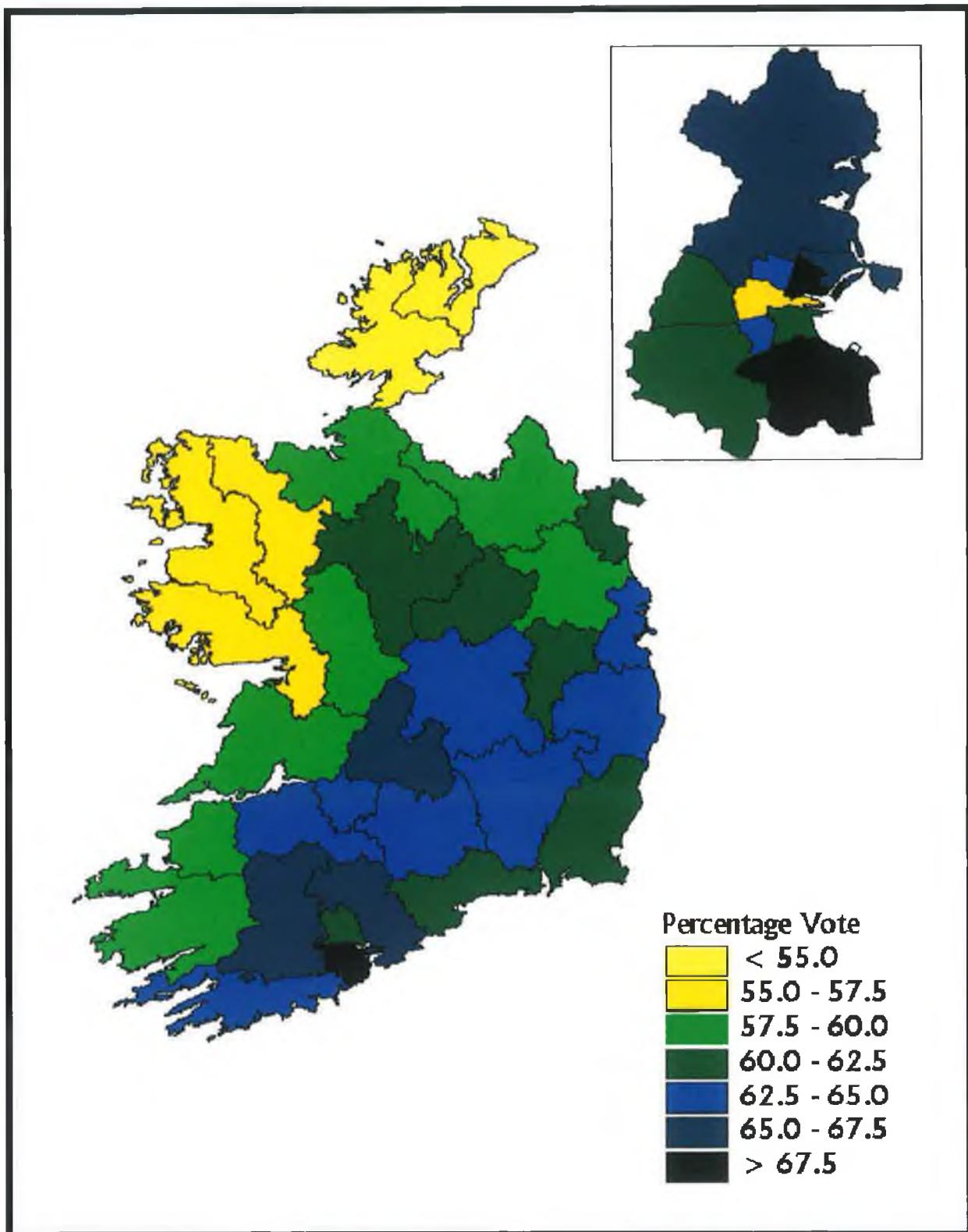


Figure 5.9: Voter turnout in the Divorce Referendum, 1995.

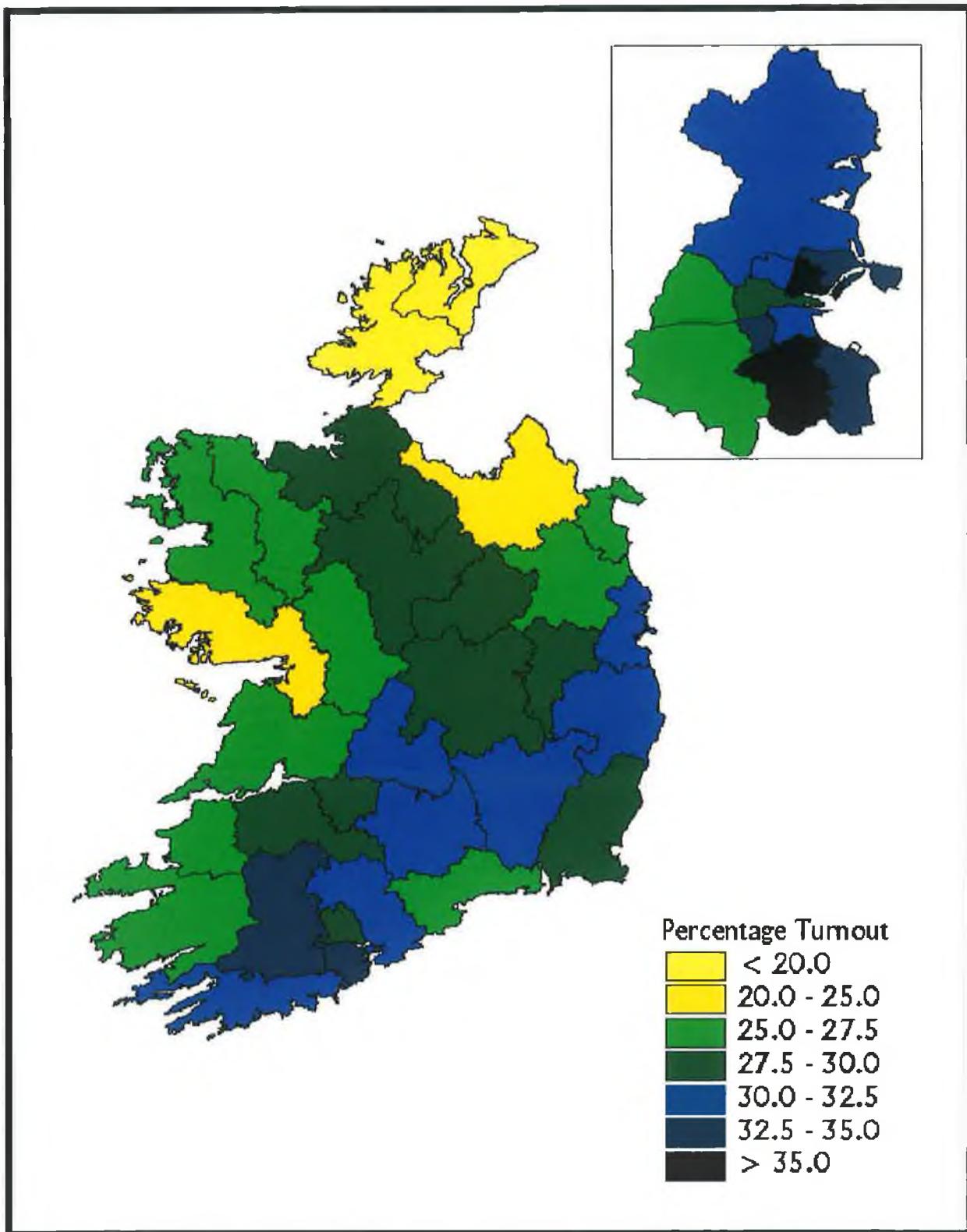


Figure 5.10: Voter turnout in the Bail Referendum, 1996.

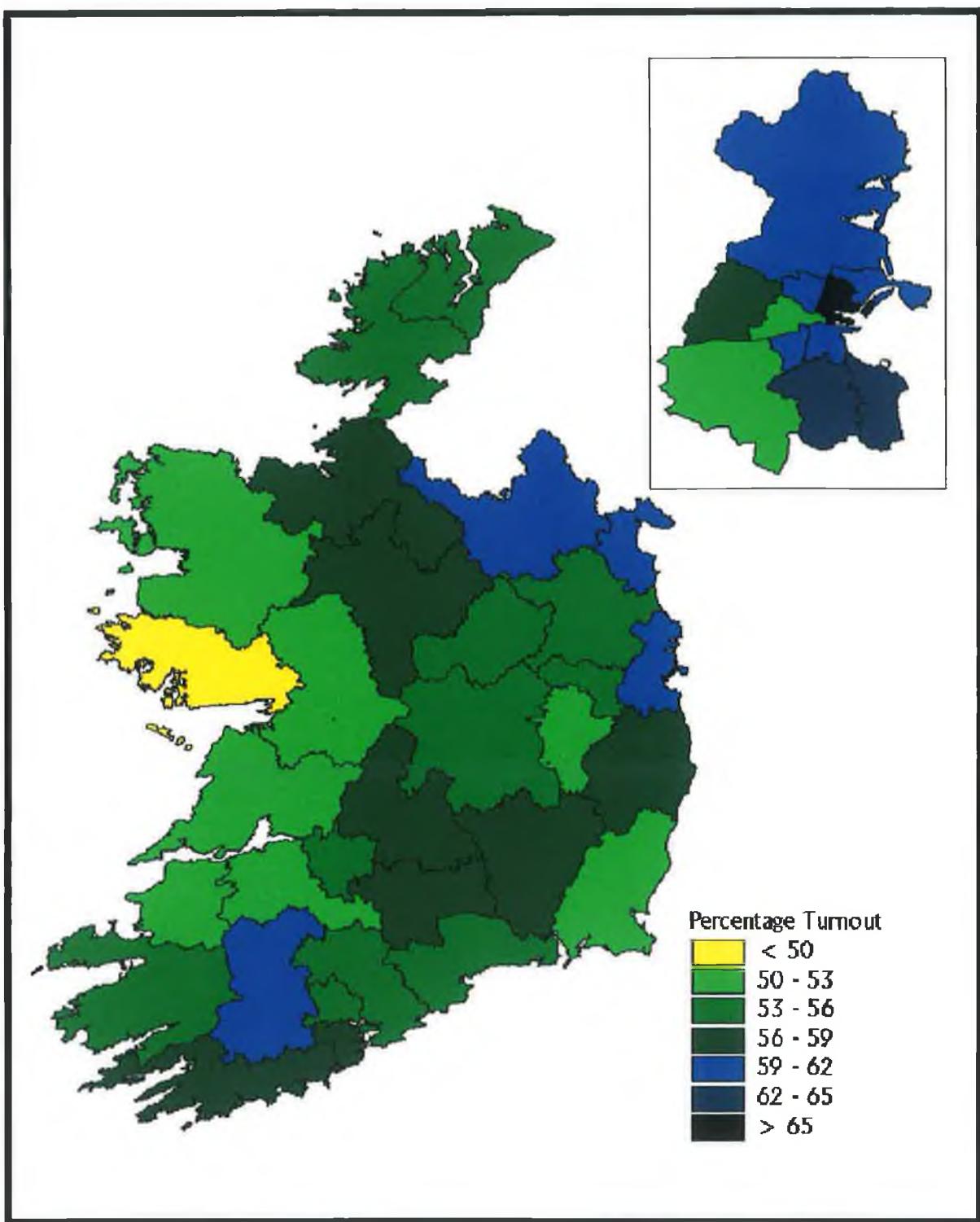


Figure 5.11: Voter turnout in the Referenda on the British-Irish Agreement and Amsterdam Treaty, May 1998.

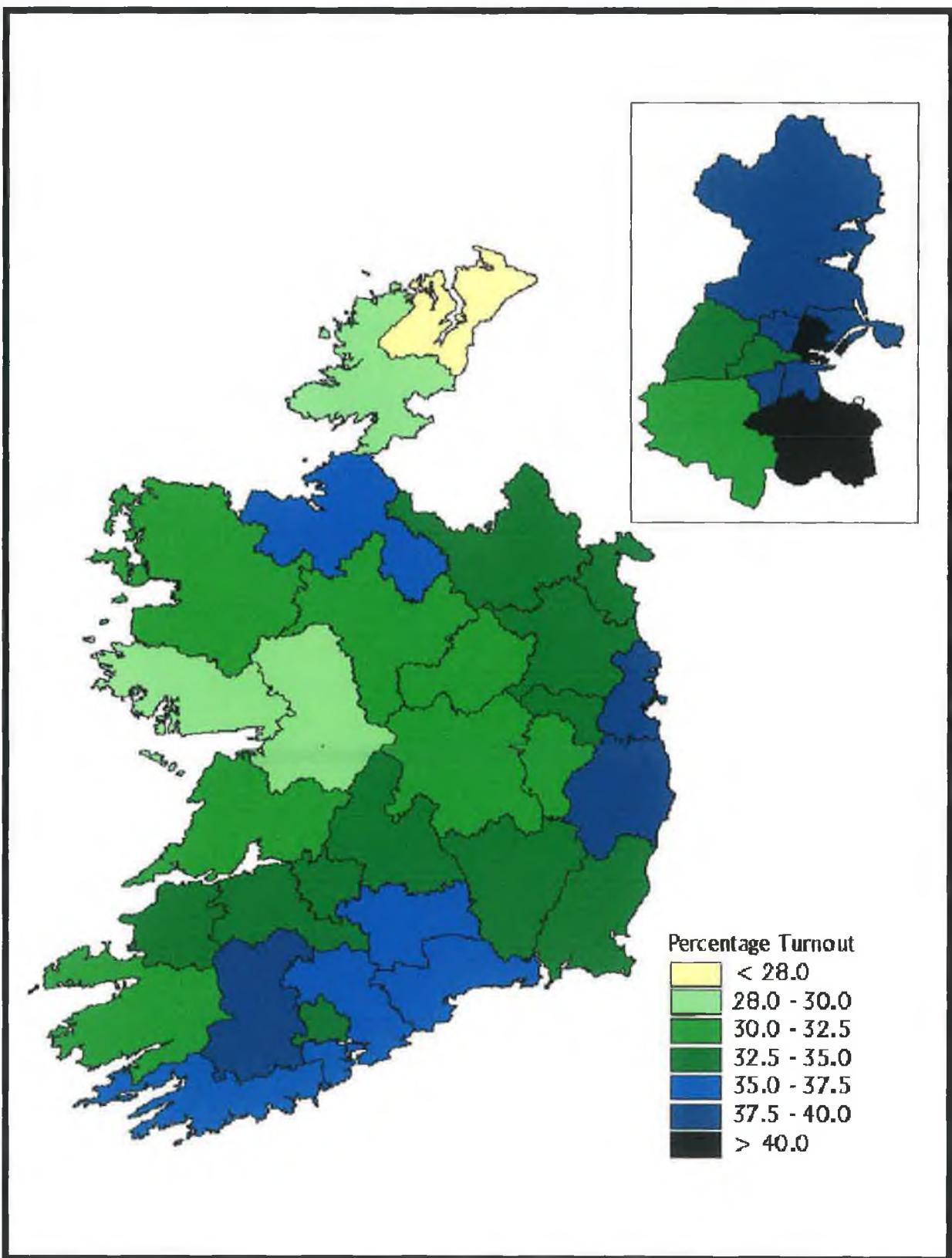


Figure 5.12: Voter Turnout in the Referendum on the Nice Treaty, June 2001.

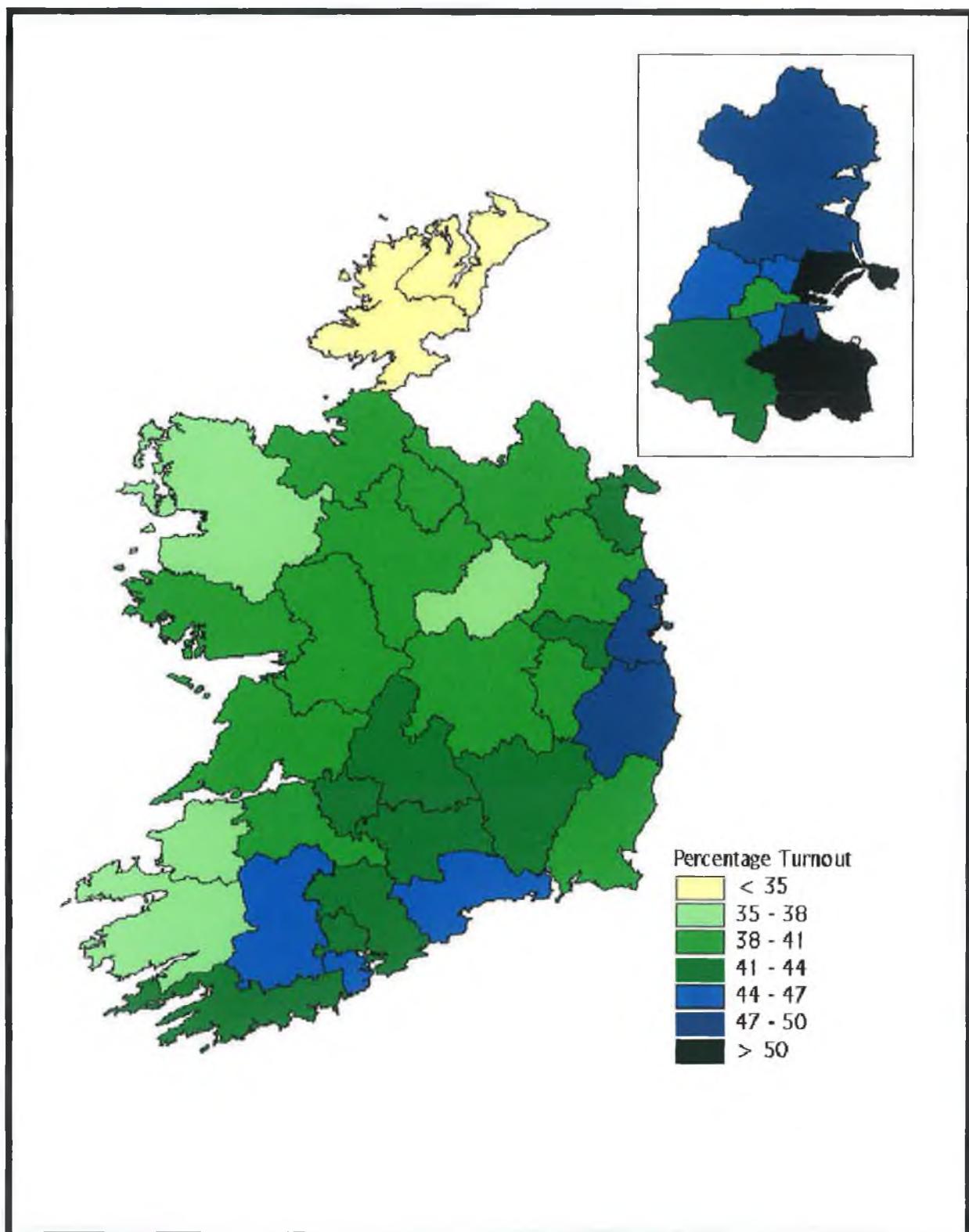


Figure 5.13: Voter Turnout in the Abortion Referendum, March 2002.

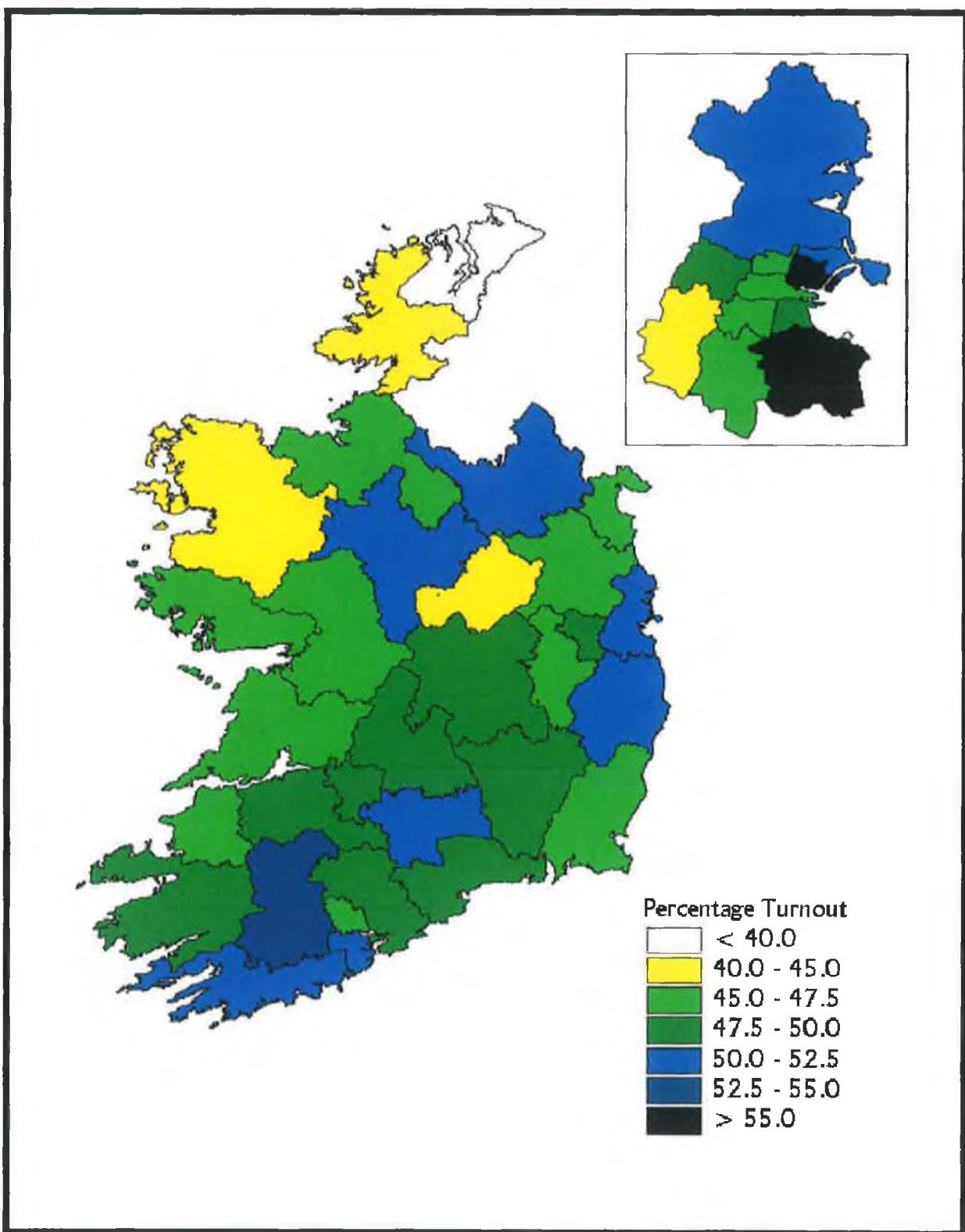


Figure 5.14: Voter Turnout in the Nice Treaty Referendum, October 2002.

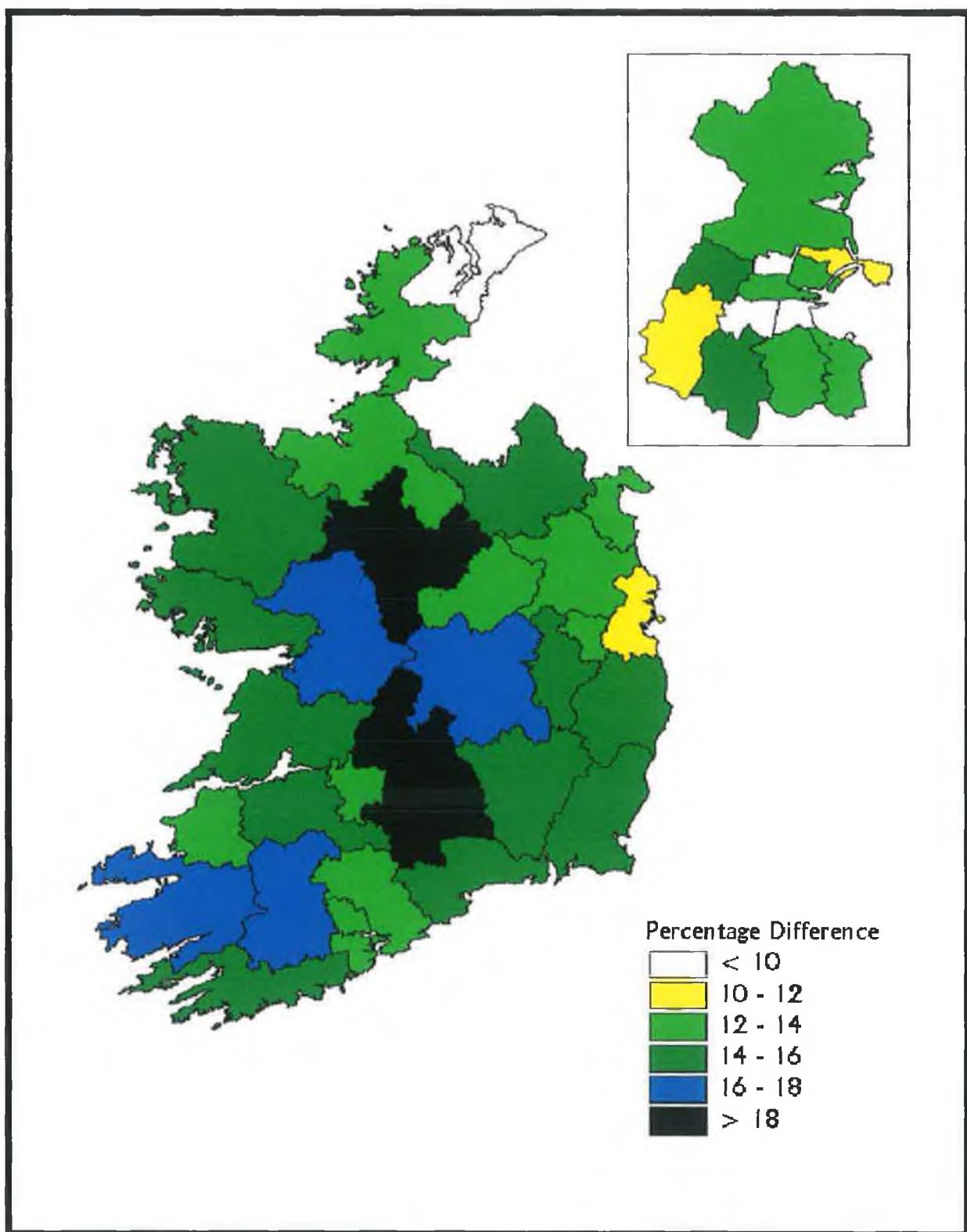


Figure 5.15: Turnout increase between the June 2001 Nice Treaty Referendum and the 2002 Nice Treaty Referendum.

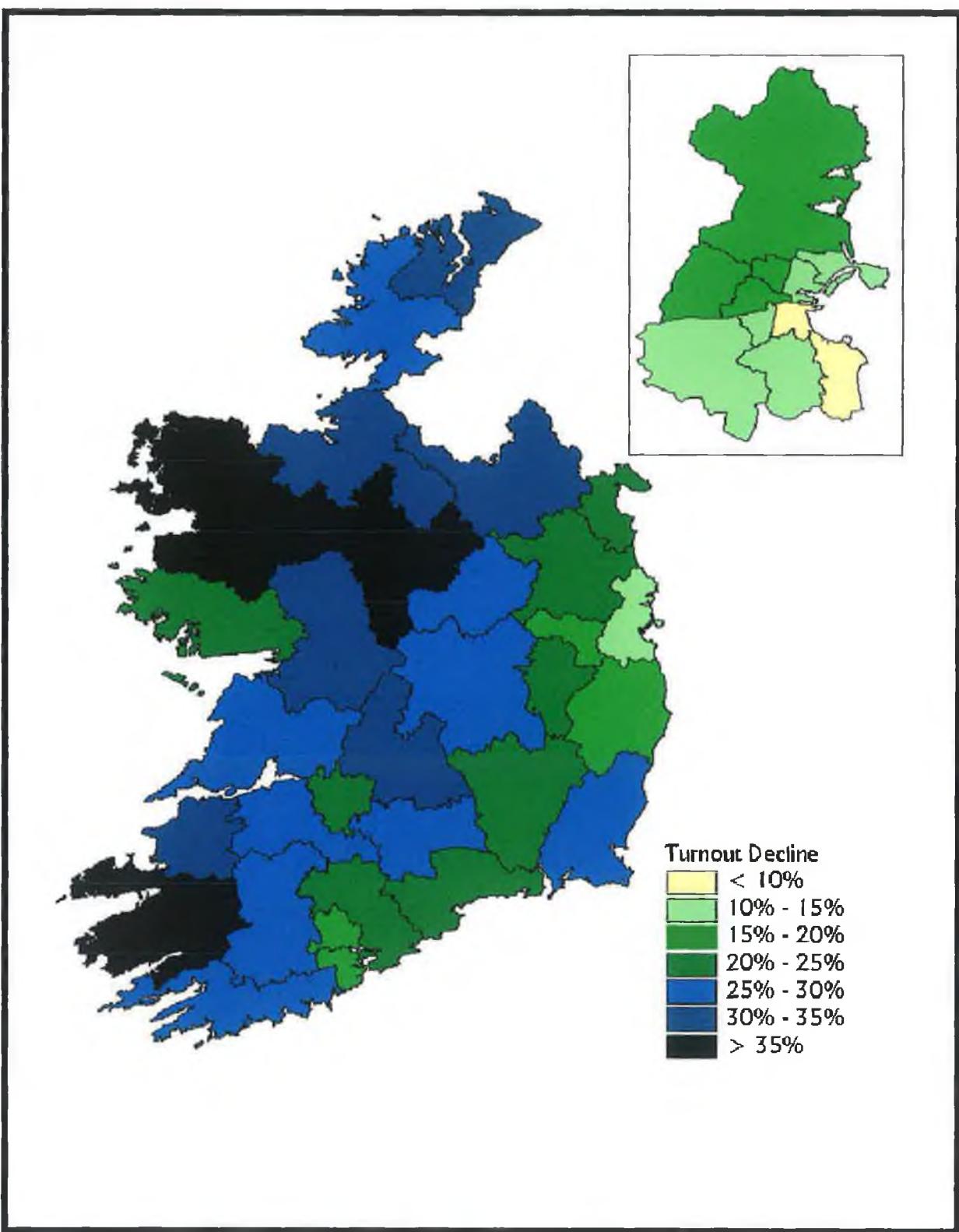


Figure 5.16: Turnout variations between the 1997 General Election and 2002 Abortion Referendum.

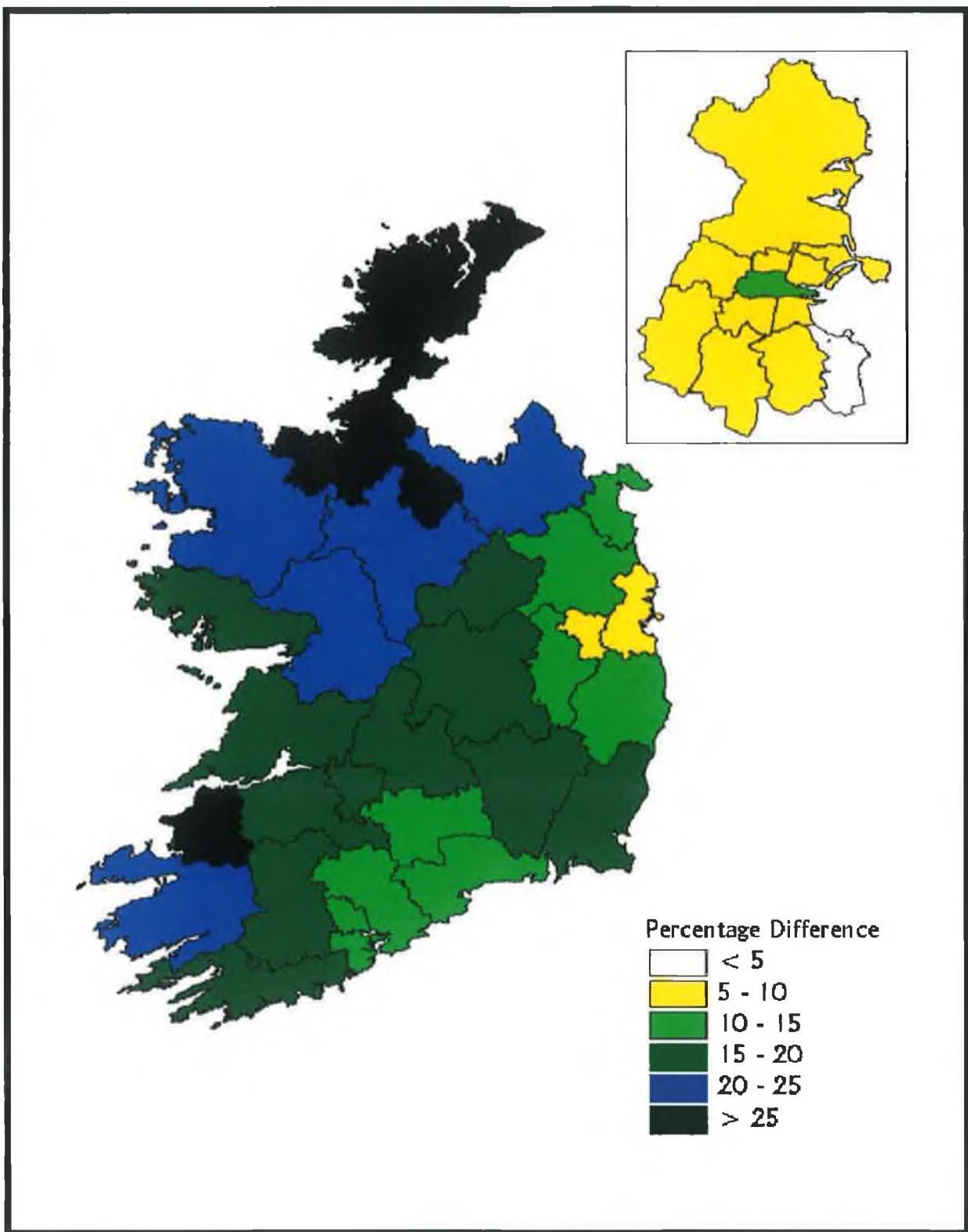


Figure 5.17: Turnout variations between the May 2002 General Election and October 2002 Nice Treaty Referendum.

CHAPTER 6

TEMPORAL TRENDS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The literature on voter turnout, as illustrated by the material in Chapters 2 and 3, generally shows that turnouts in most western democracies have been in decline over the past few decades. Turnouts were shown to have been in decline in Britain and the USA during this period, although turnouts have remained high in some European countries, such as Italy, Belgium and Malta, during the same period. This chapter will analyse whether turnouts have been in decline in Ireland over this same period. Turnout changes, at a sub-constituency level, between the 1997 and 2002 General Elections will be studied for both the Dublin and Laois case study areas, to establish whether there was a class dimension to these changes. There will be a similar discussion of turnout changes, at a sub-constituency level, between the 2001 and 2002 referenda on the Nice Treaty for the Dublin City Council area.

6.2 TEMPORAL TRENDS BY ELECTION TYPE

General Elections

Figure 6.1 shows the temporal variations in general election turnout rates that have occurred over the past two decades. This provides evidence of a sustained decline in general election turnouts since the 1981 General Election, with turnouts having fallen by 13.5% in little more than two decades. Turnouts nationally fell by 3.2% between the June 1997 and May 2002 elections. This is a small decline relative to that between the 1997 and 2001 British general

elections, in which turnout fell from 71.4% to 59.4%, but it is more serious when placed in the context of the sustained decline since 1981.

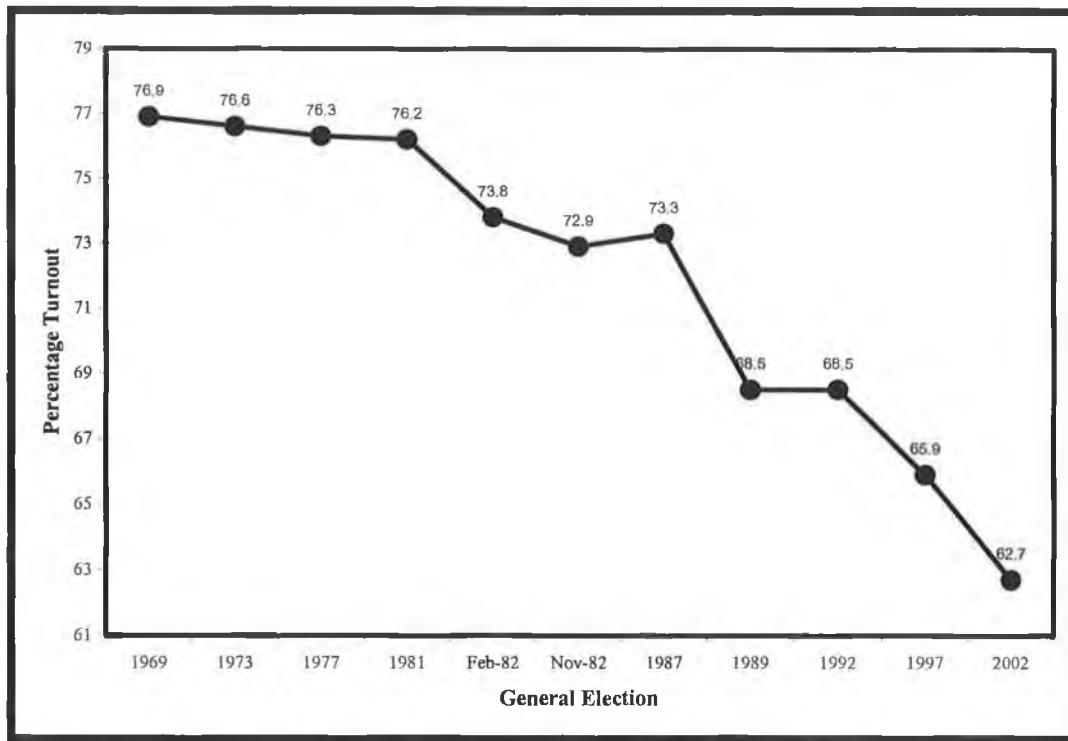


Figure 6.1: Turnouts in Irish general elections, 1969-2002.

Turnouts have declined in different rates in the different regions of Ireland, as Figure 6.2 shows. The most significant declines in turnout between 1981 and 2002 were associated with the Leinster region (16.3%). Turnouts have declined in a consistent manner in Leinster and Munster over this period, while turnout levels fluctuated in Dublin between 1981 and 1992, before declining rapidly over the 1992-2002 period, in which Dublin turnouts fell by 8.8%. There was a significant decline in turnouts in Connacht-Ulster in the 1980s, but this tapered off in the 1990s and turnouts have remained fairly constant at around 69% in the last four elections.

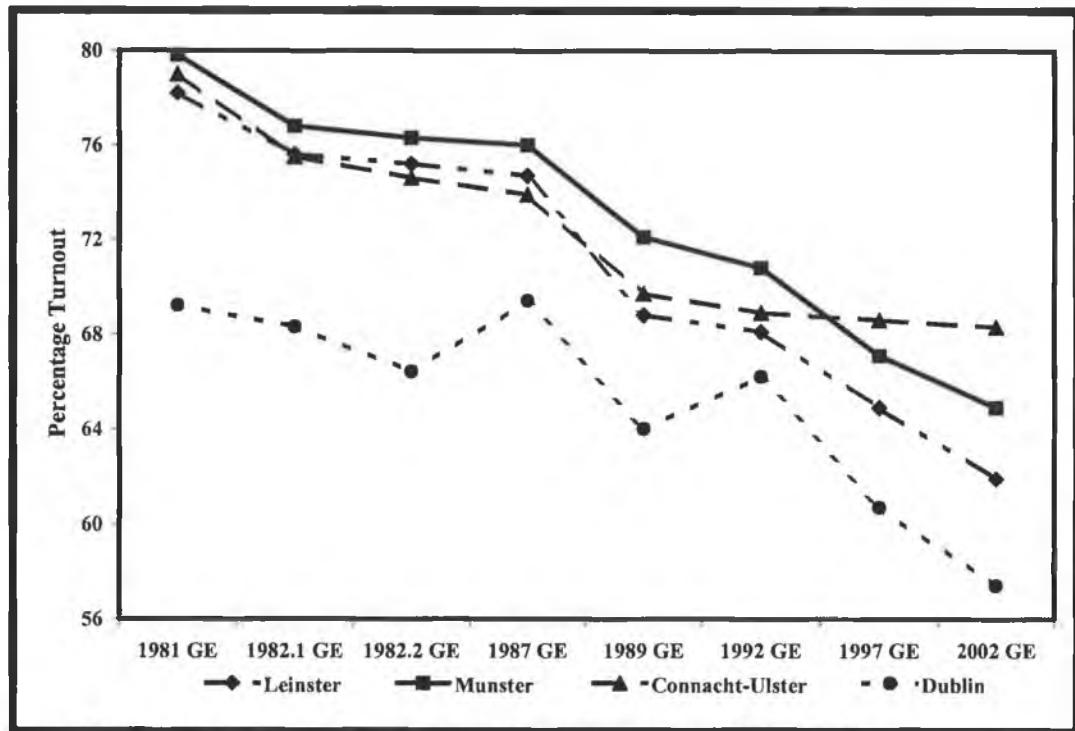


Figure 6.2: Turnouts in Irish general elections by region, 1981-2002.

Figure 6.2 suggests significant differentials between Dublin and the rest of Ireland, but particularly the Connacht-Ulster region, in relation to turnout changes between the most recent general elections. This is shown to be the case for turnout variations between 1992 and 1997, as Figure 6.4 shows, with evidence of a strong rural-urban dimension to these turnout variations. The greatest decline in turnout between these elections occurred in the more urban constituencies, with turnout down by 4.5% in the Dublin region, while it was up by 0.9% in Connacht-Ulster. The largest decline, constituency-wise, occurred in Dun Laoghaire where turnout was down by 6.5%, with large declines in Dublin North East (6.3%), Dublin North Central (6.2%) and Dublin South West (6.1%) also. By contrast, turnouts increased in a number of the more western constituencies, such as Kerry South (2.9%), Mayo (2.5%),

Galway East (1.8%), Cavan-Monaghan (1.7%), Donegal South West (1.1%) and Donegal North East (0.8%).

Turnout decline was again mainly concentrated in the Eastern and Dublin regions for the 2002 election, as Figure 6.5 shows. Turnouts were down by over 5% in a number of constituencies, with a concentration of these in the Greater Dublin region. Turnout fell by 8.4% in Dublin South Central, with significant declines in Dublin North East (6.4%), Dublin North West (5.9%) and Louth (5.3%) also. Boundary changes seemed to have played a key role in the turnout variations between the general elections, as the Dublin and Kildare constituencies had been subject to quite significant boundary changes. Dublin South Central lost the high turnout Templeogue area in the boundary changes and gained the low Cherry Orchard, Ballyfermot and South West Inner City turnout areas, with these changes being estimated to account for half of the turnout decline in the constituency. In general, the decline in turnouts tended to be smaller outside of the Eastern region, as Figure 6.5 illustrates, with turnouts increasing in a number of western constituencies, such as Donegal South West (3.4%), Sligo-Leitrim (1.9%) and Kerry North (1.0%). The overall decline in turnouts nationally in this election is reflected by the fact that fourteen constituencies had turnouts of lower than 60% in 2002, while just three had turnouts of lower than 60% in 1997.

The culmination of the turnout changes over the past decade has been to highlight a sustained decline in turnouts in the Greater Dublin region. Over the 1992-2002 period turnouts have fallen by over 10% in a number of Dublin constituencies, such as Dublin North East (12.7%), Dublin South Central (12.6%) and Dublin South (10.3%). Dublin South East was the only Dublin constituency in which turnout decline was lower than 7.5% during this period.

(Against that, turnout rates had increased in the Dublin region between the 1989 and 1992 elections, as was illustrated by Figure 6.2.) Turnouts did not decline as sharply in the more rural and western constituencies over the 1992-2002 and turnouts actually increased in Sligo-Leitrim (1.1%), Kerry North (0.9%), Cavan-Monaghan (0.9%) and Kerry South (0.2%).

Local Elections

Turnouts in local elections have also experienced a similar decline in the past few decades. Turnout has declined consistently over the past few decades, with a decline in turnout in all the local elections held since 1967. Figure 6.3 shows that the turnout rate of 50.2% in 1999 marked a decline of 5.4% on the 1991 level and a decline of almost 19% on the highest ever local election turnout, which was recorded in 1967.

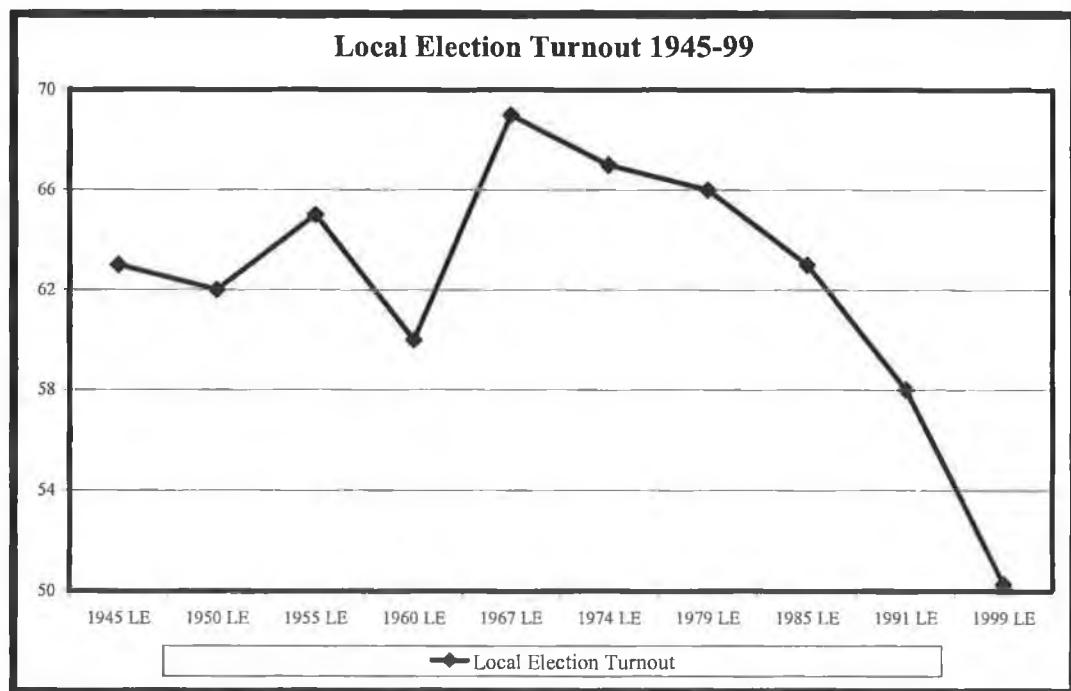


Figure 6.3: Turnout rates in Irish local elections, 1945-99.

Turnout decline in the 1999 elections was especially accelerated in Dublin and the other County Borough areas. Turnouts were down by 7.9% in Dublin, and were also down significantly in Cork (5.7%), Limerick (10.0%), Galway (5.0%) and Waterford (16.5%). In all these areas apart from the Galway CB, turnout decline was in excess of the national average and quite significantly so in the cases of Waterford CB and Limerick CB. Particularly marked declines were experienced in some of the Dublin constituencies (Mulhuddart (18.0%), Lucan (16.9%), Ballyfermot (15.6%) and North Inner City (13.9%)), as well as in the three Waterford County Borough constituencies, where turnout decline was in the 15%-16% range. Such accelerated turnout decline in urban areas made for enhanced rural-urban differences in local electoral turnouts, especially as the decline in turnouts was less marked in the western counties. Indeed turnouts increased by 0.4% in Donegal, while there were only marginal declines in Monaghan (0.1%) and Sligo (0.2%).

Referenda

There have also been significant declines in turnouts in European and Presidential elections (Marsh et al., 2001: 172), as well as in voting in referenda over the past two decades, as is clearly illustrated by Figures 6.4, 6.5 and 6.6. Figure 6.4 shows the changes in turnout rates for European Union and moral issue related referenda over the past three decades. The turnout of 34.8% for the 2001 Nice Referendum is seen to mark a significant decline on previous European Union related referenda, comparing unfavorably with the turnouts for the referenda on accession to the EEC in 1972 (70.9%) and the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 (57.3%). In a similar vein, the 42.7% turnout rate for the March 2002 Abortion Referendum was down on

turnouts in previous referenda on moral issues, such as the 1995 Divorce Referendum (62.2%) and the 1983 Abortion Referendum (53.7%)¹. What differentiates the turnout decline for referenda from that for general and local elections is the oscillating pattern of the turnout rates, as Figure 6.4 illustrates.

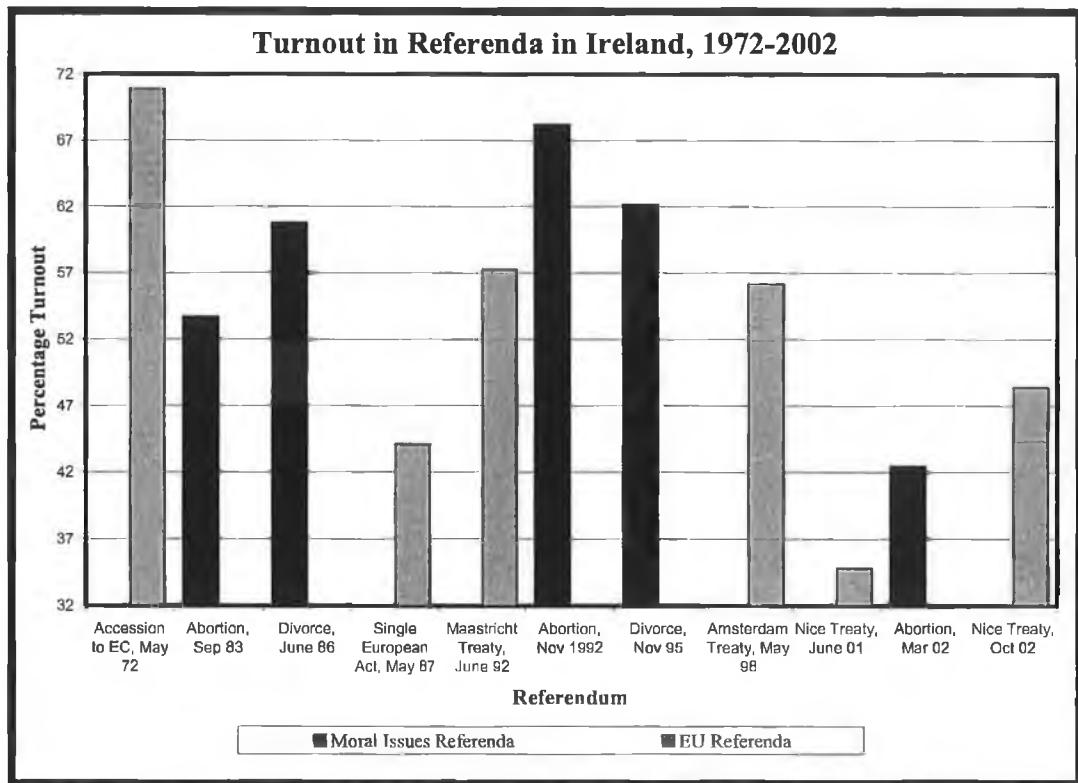


Figure 6.4: Turnout rates in referenda (European Union and moral issues), 1972-2002.

There are a number of reasons for this. First, turnouts in referenda related to moral issues are generally higher than in those that are related to EU issues, as evidenced in the 7.9% increase in turnouts between the June 2001 Nice Treaty and March 2002 Abortion referenda. Second, referenda turnouts generally increase when they are held on the same day as other types of elections.

¹ The 68.2% turnout for the 1992 Abortion Referenda marked the highest turnout for a referendum since the 1972 referendum on accession to the European Community, but this high turnout was due to this vote occurring

The increase in turnouts between the 2001 and 2002 referenda on the Nice Treaty from 34.8% to 49.5% appears anomalous in terms of the overall pattern of decline for referenda turnouts. Sinnott (2002) and Marsh (2002b) account for this increase in terms of there having been a concerted effort on the part of the Government to increase turnout in 2002, given that the defeat of the original referendum had been largely seen as being due to the low turnout in 2001.

Sinnott (2002: 6) suggests that the increased turnout resulted from the electorate having had a greater grasp of the referendum issues in 2002, which had the effect of mobilising the "*potential or latent majority in Irish public opinion in favour of European integration*". Sinnott notes opinion poll evidence that shows that the percentage of the electorate who were confident that they understood the Nice Treaty was to increase from 37% at the start of the first Nice campaign to 64% a few days before the end of the second campaign.

Marsh (2002b) argues that the decision to hold the second referendum on a Saturday was important, as was the use of campaign tactics that were typically employed in general and local elections only. The intensified efforts by the main political parties in 2002 to mobilise the vote, relative to their low levels of activity in 2001, were largely responsible for the large increase in turnouts, especially in the rural areas, as was illustrated by Figure 5.15. The efforts of groups such as the Irish Farmers Association (IFA) and the Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC) to mobilise the vote also had a positive effect on turnouts.

on the same day as the 1992 General Election.

European Parliament elections

Turnout in European Elections oscillates even more dramatically than referenda turnouts, as illustrated by the almost ‘saw-tooth’ pattern in Figure 6.5. Turnouts are strongly influenced by whether a general or local election is held on the same day as a European Election.

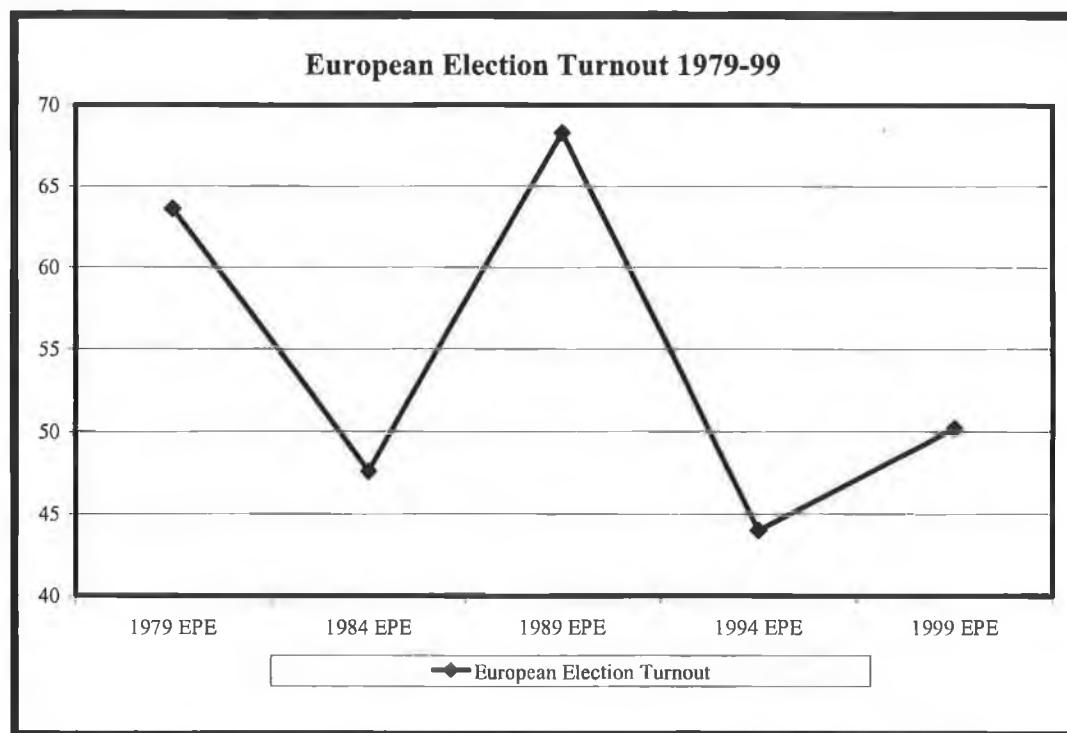


Figure 6.5: Turnout rates in European Parliament elections, 1979-99.

There was a significant increase in turnouts for the 1989 election, relative to those in 1984, as this was held on the same day as a general election. There was a similar, although less pronounced, turnout increase in 1999, relative to the 1994 elections, as that was held on the same day as the local elections. The most recent “stand alone” European Parliament election was held in 1994, in which the turnout rate was only 44.0%.

Presidential Elections

The turnout rate of 47% for the 1997 was the lowest ever turnout for an Irish Presidential election and marked a decline of 17% on the 1990 turnout rate, as Figure 6.6 illustrates. This was an unusually low turnout, as turnouts for presidential elections, prior to 1997, have generally fallen in the 60-65% range.

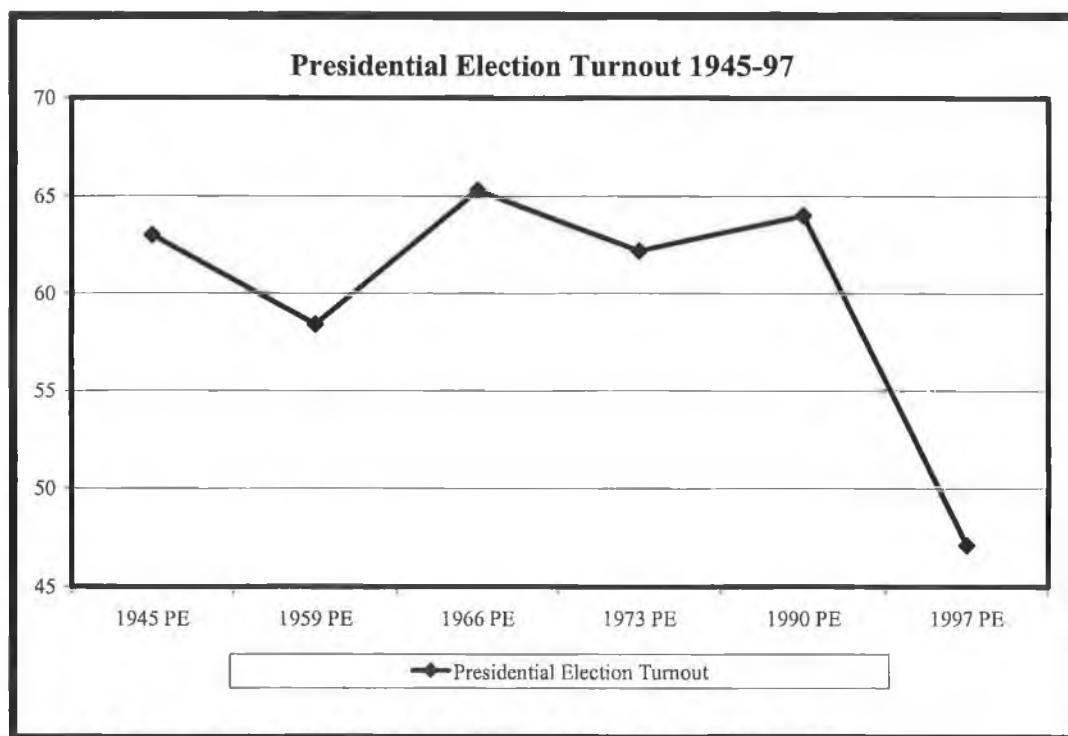


Figure 6.6: Turnout rates in Irish Presidential Elections, 1945-97.

There were a number of possible reasons for the low turnout in 1997. First, the election was held soon after a general election and election fatigue may have been involved. Second, as argued by Marsh and Mitchell (1999), the 1990 turnout had been unusually high, reflecting the competitiveness of that election, whereas the pre-election polls in 1997 had all predicted a comfortable victory for the eventual winner, Mary McAleese. Finally, the polling day weather

in 1997 had been bad, which is likely to have discouraged electors from turning out to vote, especially given the common consensus that McAleese would win.

The general pattern, as gleaned from the analyses in this section, is that turnouts have been in decline in Ireland over the past few decades. This is quite notably the case for general and local elections, as was illustrated by Figures 6.1 and 6.3, but there is also evidence of turnout decline in terms of European and presidential elections and referenda. Thus, the weight of the evidence proves that Irish turnouts have been in decline, especially over the past two decades. There has been an urban-rural dimension to turnout changes for general and local elections in the 1990s, as the most significant turnout declines for these elections have generally been associated with Dublin constituencies. Turnout decline in the more rural, western constituencies has been decidedly less marked and indeed turnouts have actually increased in some constituencies in the South West, North West and Border regions.

6.3 TEMPORAL VARIATIONS AT SUB-CONSTITUENCY LEVEL

This section will analyse turnout variations between the general elections of 1997 and 2002 at a sub-constituency level, with specific reference to the Dublin and Laois case study areas, the areas for which sub-constituency level turnout data was readily available for the 1997 and 2002 elections. Turnout change in the Dublin City Council area between the 2001 and 2002 Nice Referenda will also be analysed. This will involve a detailed spatial analysis that will pinpoint the particular areas in which turnouts declined significantly between these elections. DED figures for turnout decline between 1997 and 2002 are available for the Dublin area, thus allowing these figures to be mapped and to be analysed through correlation and

regression analyses. The figures for Laois are not available for this degree of detail, being only available at a polling district level. This meant that mapping and statistical analyses involving CSO data are not possible for Laois. The analysis of turnout variations in Laois, instead, primarily focussed on a description of the spatial aspects of these turnout changes, with a specific reference to whether turnout variations were particularly pronounced in the more marginalised parts of the county.

General election turnout change in Dublin

Spatial Perspectives

Turnouts in the Dublin region fell by 4.5% between the general elections of 1997 and 2002. Figure 6.9 shows that this decline was even more pronounced in some parts of the Dublin region, most notably in the inner city areas. Against that, turnouts actually increased in other parts of the city, with turnouts increasing by over 2.5% in twelve of the DEDs.

DED	Increase
Mansion House A <i>Dublin South East</i>	6.7%
Merchants Quay D <i>Dublin South Central</i>	6.2%
Cabra West B <i>Dublin Central</i>	5.9%
Pembroke West A <i>Dublin South East</i>	5.9%
Walkinstown B <i>Dublin South Central</i>	5.5%
Botanic B <i>Dublin Central</i>	5.3%
Arran Quay C <i>Dublin Central</i>	5.2%
Cabra West A <i>Dublin Central</i>	4.4%
Inns Quay A <i>Dublin Central</i>	4.4%
Tallaght Avonbeg <i>Dublin South West</i>	3.3%
Cabra West C <i>Dublin Central</i>	3.2%
Ballybough A <i>Dublin Central</i>	2.7%

Table 6.1: Ten DEDs with the largest increases in turnout rates in the Dublin region between the 1997 General Election and the 2002 General Election.

There was a concentration of turnouts increases in certain parts of the Dublin region, namely the western parts of Tallaght, the West Cabra area, the Docklands area and the Drumcondra area, as is further illustrated by Table 6.1. The turnout increases in the Tallaght, Cabra and Docklands areas were strongly linked to a Sinn Féin mobilisation effect. Working class people in these areas, who probably would not have voted otherwise, were mobilised to turn out in support of their local Sinn Féin candidates; Sean Crowe in Tallaght, Nicky Kehoe in Cabra and Dáithí Doolan in the South East Inner City. This is reflected in the tally estimates of Sinn Féin support in these areas, with Kehoe winning almost 40% of the West Cabra vote and Doolan winning almost 25% of the vote in Mansion House A.

DED	Decrease
<i>North City Dublin Central</i>	13.8%
<i>Ushers A Dublin South Central</i>	11.9%
<i>Rathmines West B Dublin South East</i>	11.5%
<i>Crumlin C Dublin South Central</i>	10.6%
<i>Mountjoy B Dublin Central</i>	10.4%
<i>Mansion House B Dublin South East</i>	10.0%
<i>Clondalkin Moorefield Dublin Mid West</i>	9.7%
<i>Phoenix Park Dublin Central</i>	9.5%
<i>Whitehall D Dublin North Central</i>	9.4%
<i>St. Kevin's Dublin South East</i>	9.3%
<i>Rotunda A Dublin Central</i>	9.2%
<i>Inns Quay C Dublin Central</i>	9.0%

Table 6.2: Ten DEDs with the largest declines in turnouts in the Dublin region between the 1997 General Election and the 2002 General Election.

In some parts of the city there were very significant declines in turnout rates. As Figure 6.9 illustrates, the area that was most marked by turnout decline was the inner city, or more particularly the South West Inner City and North Inner City areas. Table 6.2 shows that a number of DEDs in the inner city experienced declines of approximately 10% between the two elections, including Ushers A, Mansion House B, North City and Mountjoy B. The high

levels of population mobility associated with the inner city, which has intensified with the property boom of the past few years, probably accounts for a large proportion of the turnout declines in this area. Turnouts remained fairly stable, or actually increased, in some parts of the inner city where Sinn Féin support was strong. Three other areas in the Dublin region, as Figure 6.9 and Table 6.2 show, had high levels of turnout decline. These included the Phoenix Park/Chapelizod area, located to the north-west of the Inner City area, North Clondalkin and Lucan.

A factor common to these three areas was that they were all subject to boundary changes between the two general elections. Lucan and North Clondalkin were transferred from Dublin West to the new constituency of Dublin Mid West and Chapelizod was transferred from Dublin Central to Dublin South Central. It is possible that boundary confusion, or a lack of familiarity with the candidates running in these new constituencies, may have proved a significant disincentive to voters, which may have discouraged some people in these areas from voting in 2002. Politicians would also be less likely to invest much effort in areas, such as North Clondalkin and Ballyfermot, which are constantly ‘migrating’ between constituencies, especially if these were low turnout, socially deprived areas. This in turn would further depress turnouts in these areas due to the lower levels of political mobilisation relative to other areas.

Statistical Analyses

Correlation and regression analysis were used to detect what factors had a bearing on turnout decline between the general elections of 1997 and 2002.

	Correlation coefficients
Demography	
Male	-0.04
Married	-0.15
Single	0.16*
Lone Parent Families	0.07
25-44 as % of electorate	0.13
45-64 as % of electorate	-0.18*
65+ as % of electorate	0.04
Education	
No Formal, Primary or Lower Secondary	-0.18*
Upper Secondary	-0.04
Third Level	0.22**
Housing	
Owner Occupied	-0.14
Local Authority Rented	0.02
Private Rented	0.22**
House built before 1960	0.07
House built after 1980	0.04
Religion	
Catholic	-0.19*
Social Class	
Social Class 1	0.05
Social Class 2	0.05
Social Class 5	-0.04
Social Class 6	0.02
Occupational	
Manufacturing	-0.20*
Building	-0.10
Clerical	-0.03
Administration	0.10
Transport	-0.19*
Sales	0.06
Professional	0.24**
Services	-0.03
White Collar	0.14
Blue Collar and Services	-0.17*
Unemployment	
Unemployment Rate	-0.01
Population Change	
Population change between 1997 and 2002	0.25**

Table 6.3: Correlations between socio-economic and demographic factors and turnout decline between the 1997 and 2002 General Elections. (Note **: p<0.05, *: p<0.01)

The correlation analysis in Table 6.3 suggests that there was not a significant deprivation dimension to this turnout decline, as the associations with social marginalisation related variables were weak. There were significant associations, however, with the occupational categories, with significant, negative correlations with the blue collar and services occupational categories, as well as with the manufacturing and transport categories, while there was a positive association with professional employees.

The association with blue-collar employment could prove spurious, however, as the likelihood is that the turnout changes are being influenced by a factor that is related to both variables, namely Sinn Féin mobilisation. Sinn Féin's electoral strategy for the 2002 General Election strongly emphasised the socially deprived and working class parts of the Dublin region and as a result would have pushed up turnouts in these areas, hence accounting for the negative association between blue collar employment and turnout decline.

Residential stability appears to have the strongest influence on turnout decline between these elections, with negative correlations for married people and those in the 45-64 age category, both of which factors would be associated with high levels of residential stability. There are, by contrast, significant, positive associations between turnout decline and the population change, rented housing tenancy and single people variables. High levels of residential mobility would be associated with these factors. The correlation analysis thus infers that turnouts in the 2002 General Election would have fallen to the greatest extent in areas with the highest levels of residential mobility.

Table 6.4 shows associations between turnout decline between the 1997 and 2002 General Election and the percentage share of the vote won by different political parties, as well as change in the support levels of these parties over the 1997-2002 period. There were significant associations between turnout decline and support for Sinn Féin (a negative association) and Fine Gael (positive). These findings suggest that turnouts would have increased, or decreased by very small levels, in areas of strong Sinn Féin support. This would appear to have been the case with Fianna Fáil and Workers Party support, based on their negative correlations with turnout decline. Turnouts would be expected, based on the correlation analysis, to have fallen by significant levels in the areas where Fine Gael support was highest, as would have been the case for Green Party and Labour support also.

	GE 2002 Turnout	Turnout Decline 97-02
Number of cases	204	162
Percentage share of the vote won by political parties in 2002 General Election		
Fianna Fáil	0.32**	-0.14
Fine Gael	0.41**	0.19*
Labour Party	0.01	0.06
Progressive Democrats	0.27**	-0.08
Green Party	-0.03	0.14
Sinn Féin	-0.48**	-0.19*
Workers Party	-0.42**	-0.09
Independents	-0.10	-0.07
Change in party support, 1997-2002		
Fianna Fáil	0.04	0.06
Fine Gael	-0.12	0.04
Labour Party	0.26**	0.15
Progressive Democrats	-0.18*	0.15
Green Party	0.05	0.23**
Sinn Féin	-0.19**	-0.35**
Workers Party	0.13	0.03
Independents	0.08	-0.07

Table 6.4: Correlations between party support and turnout decline between the 1997 and 2002 General Elections. (Note **: p<0.05, *: p<0.01)

There were significant associations between turnout decline and change in the support levels for some of the political parties, with positive associations with changes in Green Party, Labour and Progressive Democrat support and a negative association with changes in Sinn Féin support. In relation to change in Sinn Féin support, the statistical findings infer that turnouts increased, or at least turnout decreases were minimal, in areas where Sinn Féin made significant gains in support. This could suggest that increasing Sinn Féin strength in certain areas might have mobilised people in these areas, who may not have voted in the 1997 election, to turn out to vote in the 2002 General Election. The positive association with changes in Green Party, Labour and Progressive Democrat support infers a tendency for gains made by these parties to be in areas in which turnouts declined significantly and losses to be in areas where turnouts increased.

A regression analysis, entering the factors listed in Table 6.3, selected population change and rented housing as the key socio-economic predictors of turnout decline, with both these inferred to increase the proportion of turnout decline between the two elections. However, this model did not satisfy the assumption of no multicollinearity, as the correlation between population change and private rented housing is significant ($p=0.18$). As this model proved unsatisfactory, the political support related variables listed in Table 6.4 were included in a new model, with the percentage change in Sinn Féin support (or Sinn Féin gains) and owner occupied housing selected as the key predictors in this new model, as illustrated by Table 6.5.

The strength of the original model was increased significantly (from $R^2 = 0.07$), with the combined effect of the two variables accounting for 18% of the total variance. This suggests that owner occupied housing and Sinn Féin gains were the main influences in determining

turnout decline. The negative b-coefficients for these variables infers that turnouts would have been expected to remain stable, or even increase, in owner occupied housing areas where Sinn Féin made substantial gains, while significant declines would be expected in rented housing areas, where Sinn Féin made relatively little impact in 2002.

	Turnout Decline
<i>Number of Cases</i>	156
<i>Constant</i>	7.93 (8.67)
<i>Owner occupied housing</i>	-0.04 (-5.65)
<i>Change in Sinn Féin support, 1997-2002</i>	-0.26 (-3.60)
<i>Adjusted R²</i>	0.18

Table 6.5: Aggregate data analysis of turnout decline between the 1997 and 2002 general elections in Dublin.

[Note: The main entry for each variable is the b coefficient, the italicised figure beside it (in brackets) is the t-value. T-values in excess of 2.02 are significant at p=0.05.]

General election turnout change in Laois

In Laois, the average turnout at the county level was down from 71.4% to 67.8% between the 1997 and 2002 General Elections, amounting to a decline of 3.6%. However, as Table 6.6 illustrates, there were differences across the county in terms of the extent to which turnouts changed between the general elections of 1997 and 2002. Turnouts actually increased in some parts of the county, including the Cuffsborough, Kyle, Castletown, Barrowhouse and Abbeyleix polling districts. In general, increases or marginal decreases in turnout rates were generally associated with low-density rural areas in the south-western parts of the county. Turnout decline was greater than the county average in other parts of the county, but especially in the more urban areas.

Polling District	1997 Turnout	2002 Turnout	Turnout Change
Cuffsborough	70.0	74.5	4.5
Kyle	76.4	78.7	2.4
Castletown	75.2	76.8	1.6
Barrowhouse	68.3	69.7	1.4
Abbeyleix	66.4	67.6	1.2
Errill	71.5	71.8	0.3
Vicarstown	73.6	73.7	0.1
Rathdowney	69.9	69.8	-0.1
Arles	67.2	66.6	-0.6
Ballybrittas	65.6	64.9	-0.8
Ballylinan	68.2	67.4	-0.8
Clonaslee	79.7	78.5	-1.3
Raheen	69.8	68.5	-1.3
Marymount	68.8	67.4	-1.3
Ballyfin	80.0	78.4	-1.5
Killaban	69.7	68.0	-1.7
Newtown	66.4	64.7	-1.7
Durrow	65.9	64.0	-1.9
Kilmurray	68.9	66.9	-2.0
Rosenalis	80.7	78.6	-2.0
Timahoe	76.6	74.2	-2.4
Ballinakill	75.7	72.9	-2.8
Clash	78.9	76.0	-2.9
Cullohill	73.1	70.1	-3.0
Sallyford	68.7	65.6	-3.1
Portarlington South	68.5	65.2	-3.3
Borris In Ossory	78.7	75.3	-3.4
Emo	69.4	65.8	-3.5
Blandsfort	78.6	74.8	-3.7
Graigue Rural	63.8	59.9	-3.9
Cappalough	78.4	74.3	-4.1
Mountnagh	73.7	69.5	-4.2
Ballyroan	76.8	72.5	-4.3
Ballybrophy	75.7	71.2	-4.5
Caher	80.5	75.8	-4.7
Portlaoise Urban	67.9	63.1	-4.7
Mountmellick Rural	82.1	77.2	-4.9
Mountmellick Urban	75.5	70.3	-5.2
Brisha	73.9	67.2	-6.8
Portlaoise Rural	73.4	65.7	-7.7
Rathaspick	72.5	64.8	-7.7
Killermogh	81.1	73.2	-7.9
Ballyadams	69.1	60.5	-8.6
Stradbally	70.9	61.3	-9.6
Graigue	59.1	48.8	-10.3

Table 6.6: General Election turnout change, by polling district, in Co. Laois, 1997-2002.

Turnouts fell by more than the county average in the urban centres of Portlaoise, Mountmellick, Stradbally and Mountrath, as well as in the Graiguecullen area, which encompassed the western environs of Carlow town.

Turnouts at a polling station level fell by even more considerable levels, especially in Portlaoise, Mountmellick and Graiguecullen. Turnout fell by 15.6% in Polling Station 55, which covered an area in the northern part of the Portlaoise Rural polling district (the Kilnacash, Kilmainham and Shaen areas). The polling station for this area had been moved from Emo village to Portlaoise town in the period between the elections, which may help account for this significant decline in turnout rates. Turnouts fell by more than 10% in two other polling stations in the Portlaoise Rural area, namely Polling Stations 54 and 63.

Given the large population increase in the Portlaoise Rural DED between 1996 and 2002, the likelihood is that the declining turnouts in these areas were linked to a population mobility effect. There was no evidence of a significant association with social marginalisation. Turnout decline was only marginal in a number of polling stations attached to socially deprived parts of the county, such as those attached to the Clonminan (1.8%) St. Brigid's Place (2.2%) and Knockmay (2.9%) areas in Portlaoise, while turnouts actually increased in the station attached to the Doonane area (0.7%). These relatively small decreases were probably due to a Sinn Féin mobilisation effect, as the Sinn Féin candidate in the Laois-Offaly constituency was based in Portlaoise. Much larger turnout declines were associated with the local authority housing estates in Mountmellick, Kirwan Park and Pattison estate, where the Sinn Féin mobilisation effect was not as marked.

In all, the general trend was that turnout decline was marginal in the more rural areas and relatively high in the more urban areas. There were admittedly some rural areas in which turnouts fell significantly in this period, such as the Ballacolla, Ballyadams and Wolfhill, although these were often declining from very high levels in 1997. The greatest turnout decline was associated with the more urban areas and with the areas of newer housing within these urban areas. So, residential mobility appears to have been the strongest influence on turnout variations between these elections. Where populations remained stable in this period, namely in the more rural areas, turnout decline was relatively marginal, while turnout decline was significant in the areas of greatest population change, such as the new housing areas on the outskirts of the towns of Portlaoise, Mountmellick and Carlow (the Graiguecullen area).

Referendum turnout change in the Dublin City Council area

Figure 6.10 shows the extent to which turnouts increased in the Dublin City Council area between the 2001 and 2002 referenda on the Nice Treaty. This shows that there were very significant increases in the Beaumont, Drumcondra, Ashtown, Chapelizod, Terenure, South East Inner City and Ringsend areas, as is also illustrated by Table 6.7. This suggests somewhat of a class dimension to the turnout differences, given that a number of these areas would be generally middle class.

The smallest increases in turnout, as Figure 6.10 shows, were particularly associated with the Dublin Inner City, Darndale, Ballymun, Drimnagh and Ranelagh areas, which again underlines a significant class dimension to the turnout changes, given that a number of these areas were either working class or socially deprived.

DED	Increase
Beaumont D <i>Dublin North Central</i>	18.7%
Terenure D <i>Dublin South Central</i>	18.4%
Cabra West A <i>Dublin Central</i>	17.2%
Ballygall D <i>Dublin North West</i>	15.5%
Priorswood A <i>Dublin North East</i>	15.5%
Ashtown A <i>Dublin Central</i>	14.9%
Kilmore D <i>Dublin North Central</i>	14.9%
Rathmines East C <i>Dublin South East</i>	14.9%
Clontarf West B <i>Dublin North Central</i>	14.8%
Pembroke East A <i>Dublin South East</i>	14.8%
Cabra West C <i>Dublin Central</i>	14.7%
Ballybough A <i>Dublin Central</i>	14.6%

Table 6.7: Ten DEDs with the largest increases in turnout rates in the Dublin City Council area between the 2001 and 2002 Nice Treaty Referenda.

Table 6.8 and Figure 6.7 also underlined this suggested class dimension. Table 6.8 shows that a large number of the electoral divisions, with the smallest turnout increase, were located within the Dublin Inner City area. Figure 6.7 also suggests a class dimension to the turnout increase, associating the smaller turnout increase with the more deprived electoral divisions, based on their SAHRU deprivation indices.

DED	Decrease
Rotunda B <i>Dublin Central</i>	1.7%
Mansion House B <i>Dublin South East</i>	2.1%
Mountjoy A <i>Dublin Central</i>	3.5%
Rathmines West C <i>Dublin South East</i>	3.8%
Royal Exchange B <i>Dublin South East</i>	3.9%
Inns Quay A <i>Dublin Central</i>	3.9%
Kimmage C <i>Dublin South Central</i>	4.0%
Rotunda A <i>Dublin Central</i>	4.3%
Arran Quay B <i>Dublin Central</i>	5.1%
Merchants Quay F <i>Dublin South Central</i>	5.3%
Ushers E <i>Dublin South Central</i>	5.6%
St. Kevin's <i>Dublin South East</i>	6.1%

Table 6.8: Ten DEDs with the smallest increases in turnout in the Dublin City Council area between the 2001 and 2002 Nice Treaty Referenda.

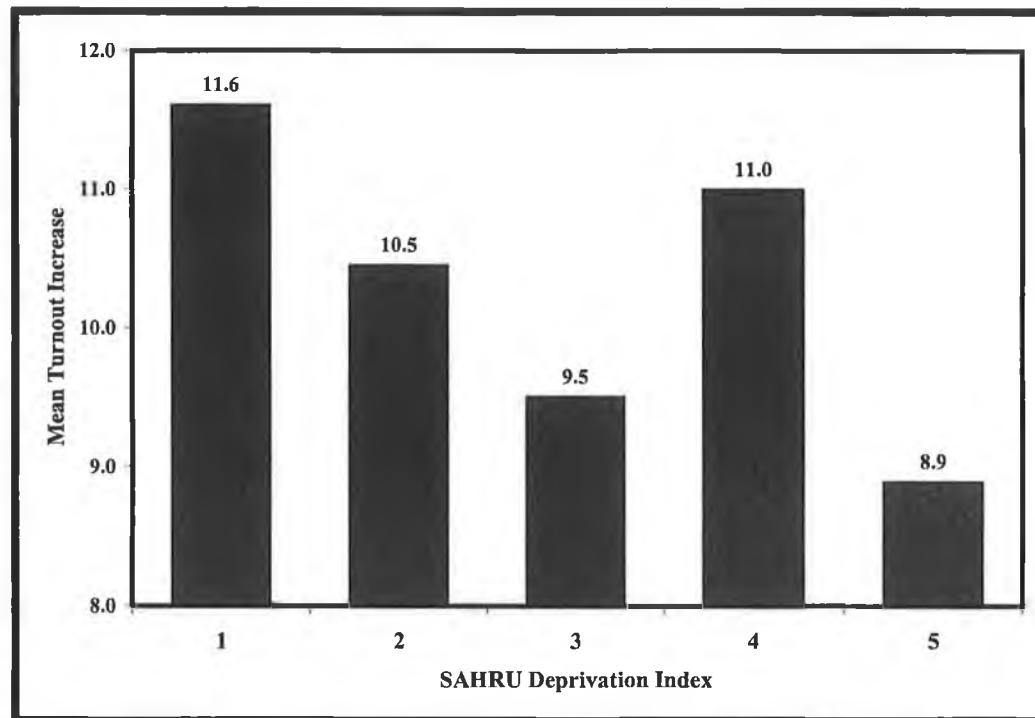


Figure 6.7: Mean turnout increase between 2001 and 2002 Nice Referenda by SAHRU score.

Statistical analyses

The spatial pattern of turnout increase, as Figure 6.10 illustrated suggested that the largest turnout increases were associated with the more middle class areas, as did Figure 6.7. The correlation analysis, as detailed in Table 6.9, further suggests significant socio-economic influences on the turnout increase between the 2001 and 2002 Nice Referenda. Turnouts are inferred to have increased significantly in areas characterised by higher proportions of married people and older voters, based on the correlations between turnout increase, on the one hand, and age and marital status on the other. Residential mobility was also associated with smaller turnout increases, based on the negative correlations with turnout increase for population change and rented housing.

	Turnout Increase, Nice 2001-02
<i>Number of Cases</i>	<i>165</i>
Demography	
Male	-0.08
Married	0.62**
Single	-0.58**
Lone Parent families	-0.60**
15-24 as % of electorate	-0.24**
25-44 as % of electorate	-0.27**
45-64 as % of electorate	0.45**
65+ as % of electorate	0.08
45+ as % of electorate	0.33**
Education	
No Formal, Primary or Lower Secondary	-0.01
Upper Secondary	0.32**
Third Level	-0.15
Housing	
Owner Occupied	0.48**
Local Authority Rented	-0.36**
Private Rented	-0.42**
House built before 1960	-0.14
House built after 1980	-0.03
Religion	
Catholic	0.22**
Social Class	
Social Class 1	-0.03
Social Class 2	-0.00
Social Class 5	-0.06
Social Class 6	-0.03
Occupational	
Manufacturing	0.16*
Building	-0.25**
Clerical	0.27**
Administration	0.13
Transport	0.22**
Sales	0.12
Professional	-0.23**
Services	-0.28**
White Collar employees	-0.03
Blue Collar & Services employees	0.03
Population Change	
Population Change, 1996-2002	-0.30**
Unemployment	
Unemployment Rate	-0.37**

Table 6.9: Correlations between turnout increase between 2001 and 2002 Nice Referenda and socio-economic and demographic variables in Dublin. (Note **: p<0.05, *: p<0.01)

Social deprivation related factors were generally associated with smaller turnout increases, as evidenced by the negative correlations for unemployment, lone parent families and local authority housing, although there were no significant associations with educational disadvantage and blue collar and services employment. There was no cleavage between white-collar and blue-collar employment, with different occupations from each category being significantly associated with higher turnout increases, as with manufacturing, clerical and transport employees. Others were negative correlated with turnout increase (professional, services and building employees).

A stepwise regression analysis of the turnout increase, using the socio-economic variables listed in Table 6.9, as well as the political support variables listed in Table 6.4, associates the turnout increase with variables related to social deprivation, residential mobility, education and political support. The stepwise analysis selected lone parent families, private rented housing, Sinn Féin gains between 1997-2002 and third level education as the predictors. To ensure there was no multicollinearity amongst the independent variables, third level education was removed due to its strong association with private rented housing ($p= 0.72$). This variable had only increased the adjusted R^2 value by 0.01.

	Turnout Increase
<i>Number of Cases</i>	123
<i>Constant</i>	14.02 (18.19)
<i>Lone parent families</i>	-0.18 (-9.34)
<i>Private rented housing</i>	-0.21 (-4.86)
<i>Change in Sinn Féin support, 1997-2002</i>	0.07 (2.30)
<i>Adjusted R²</i>	0.52

Table 6.10: Aggregate data analysis of turnout increase between the 2001 and 2002 Nice Treaty Referenda in Dublin.

[Note: The main entry for each variable is the b coefficient, the italicised figure beside it (in brackets) is the t-value. T-values in excess of 2.02 are significant at p=0.05.]

The R^2 value for this model is larger than that for the model predicting turnout decline between the general elections of 1997 and 2002 (Table 6.5) and infers that these three factors accounted for over half of the turnout increase in Dublin. The negative b-coefficients for lone parent families and private rented housing suggest that the smallest increases in turnout would have been associated with areas characterised by high levels of residential mobility and social deprivation. The negative b-coefficient for lone parent families is, however, tempered by the positive coefficient for Sinn Féin gains, which suggests that higher than expected turnout increases in socially deprived and working class areas could have been associated with a Sinn Féin mobilisation effect.

6.4 DISCUSSION

This chapter provides evidence of a consistent decline in turnout rates in Ireland in recent decades. Turnouts have fallen significantly for general and local elections over the past two decades, as well as for European and presidential elections and referenda over the same period. There was also evidence of a greater decline in urban areas for local and general elections during the 1990s, with the most significant declines being generally found in the Dublin region. It would be presumptuous to take this as part of a more long term trend, however, given that turnouts increased in Dublin and declined in the rest of Ireland between the 1989 and 1992 General Elections (Gallagher and Laver, 1993).

There was a general decline in turnouts between the 1997 and 2002 general elections, at a sub-constituency level, in the two case study areas that were analysed in this chapter. This

was especially the case with areas within the Dublin region, which had an average decline of 4.5% over the 1997-2002 period. There were, however, some areas in which turnouts increased over this period, with some of these increases associated with a Sinn Féin mobilisation effect (West Tallaght, West Cabra and South East Inner City).

At first glance, there was did not appear to be any evidence that factors related to social deprivation figured amongst the main causes of turnout decline over this period, with the spatial trend in turnout decline appearing to be more influenced by population mobility rather than social well-being. The regression analysis, however, suggests that there were two opposite class-related trends involved in determining turnout decline, rather than there being a weak relationship between social deprivation and turnout decline. The selection of owner occupied housing as a predictor variable suggested, on the one hand, that there was class-bias to the turnout change, particularly associating turnout decline with the more deprived areas, given the strong negative relationship between owner occupied housing and social deprivation. Against that, the inclusion of Sinn Féin gains in the model suggested an opposite relationship, in which smaller turnout declines were associated with the working class areas in which Sinn Féin gains were most pronounced.

The increase in turnouts between the 2001 and 2002 Nice Referenda appears somewhat anomalous in the context of the overall trend of turnout decline. However this largely resulted from the higher profile that political parties and other agencies, such as the IFA, attached to the 2002 contest, with intensified political mobilisation and concerted efforts to ‘get out the vote’. These efforts lead to significant turnout increases all over the country, but particularly in the rural areas. The decision to hold the second referendum on a Saturday undoubtedly also

had an impact in pushing up the referendum turnouts. Observers such as Sinnott (2002) viewed this turnout increase as the main reason for the success of the second referendum.

Sub-constituency level analyses of the turnout increase between the 2001 and 2002 Nice Referenda in the Dublin City Council area suggests that socio-economic influences had more of a bearing on this, than on the turnout decline between the 1997 and 2002 General Elections. The analysis found that the turnout increases tended to be greater in middle class and residentially stable areas, while the increases were smaller in the more socially deprived and working class areas. However Sinn Féin mobilisation also had a bearing on the turnout increase and this factor was seen to result in significantly larger turnout increases in working class areas, such as Cabra and the South East Inner City.

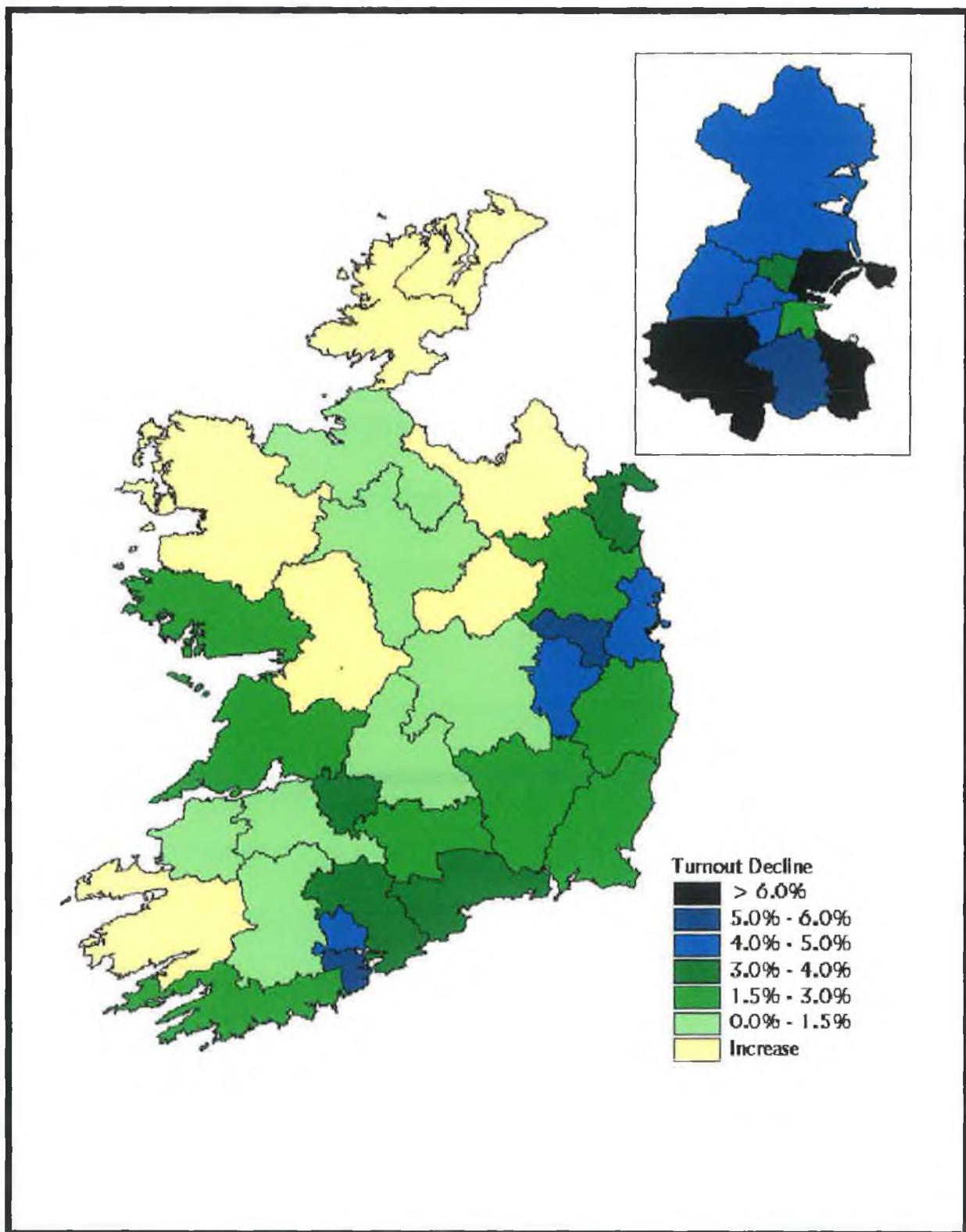


Figure 6.8: Turnout changes between the 1992 General Election and the 1997 General Election.

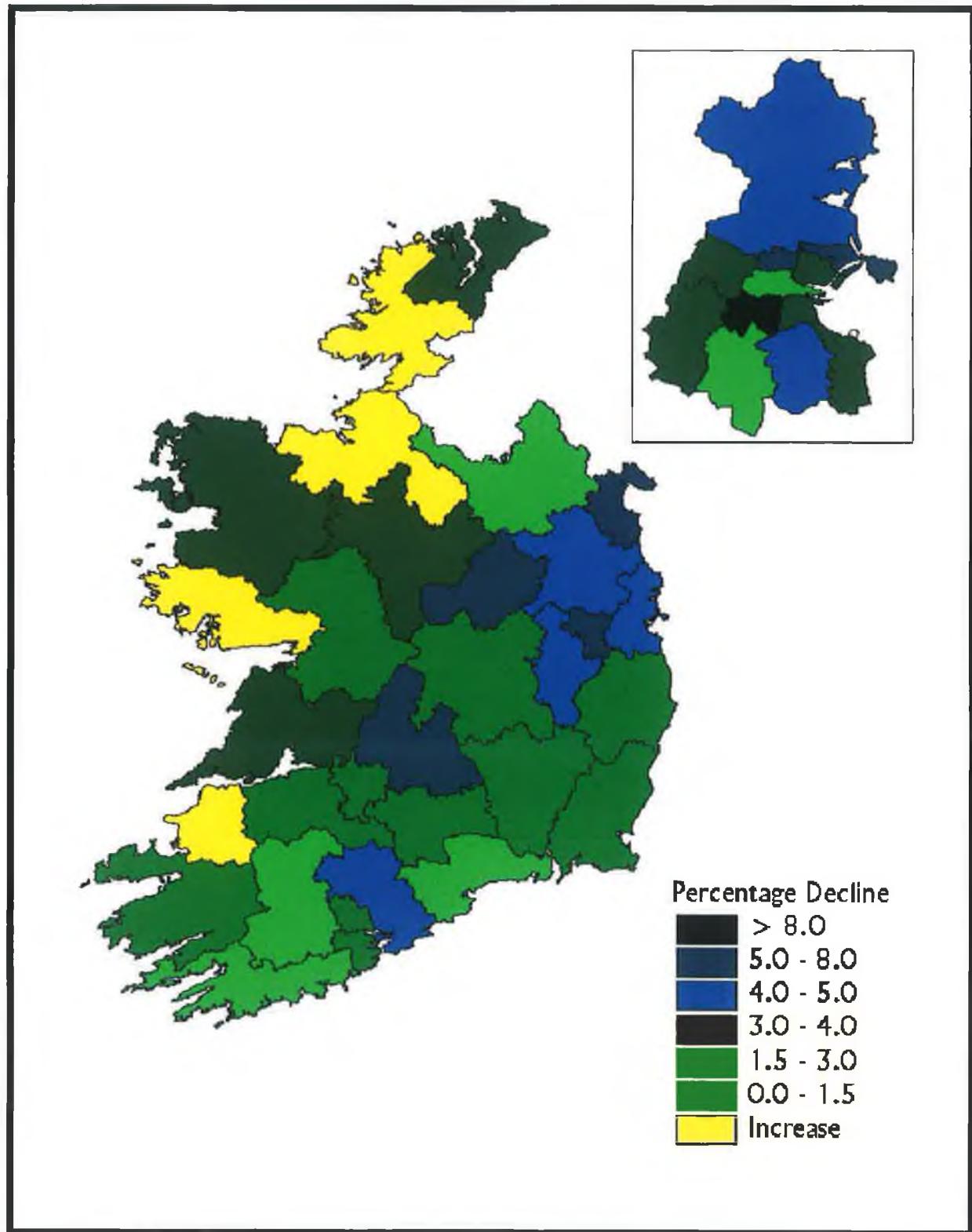


Figure 6.9: Turnout changes between the 1997 General Election and the 2002 General Election.

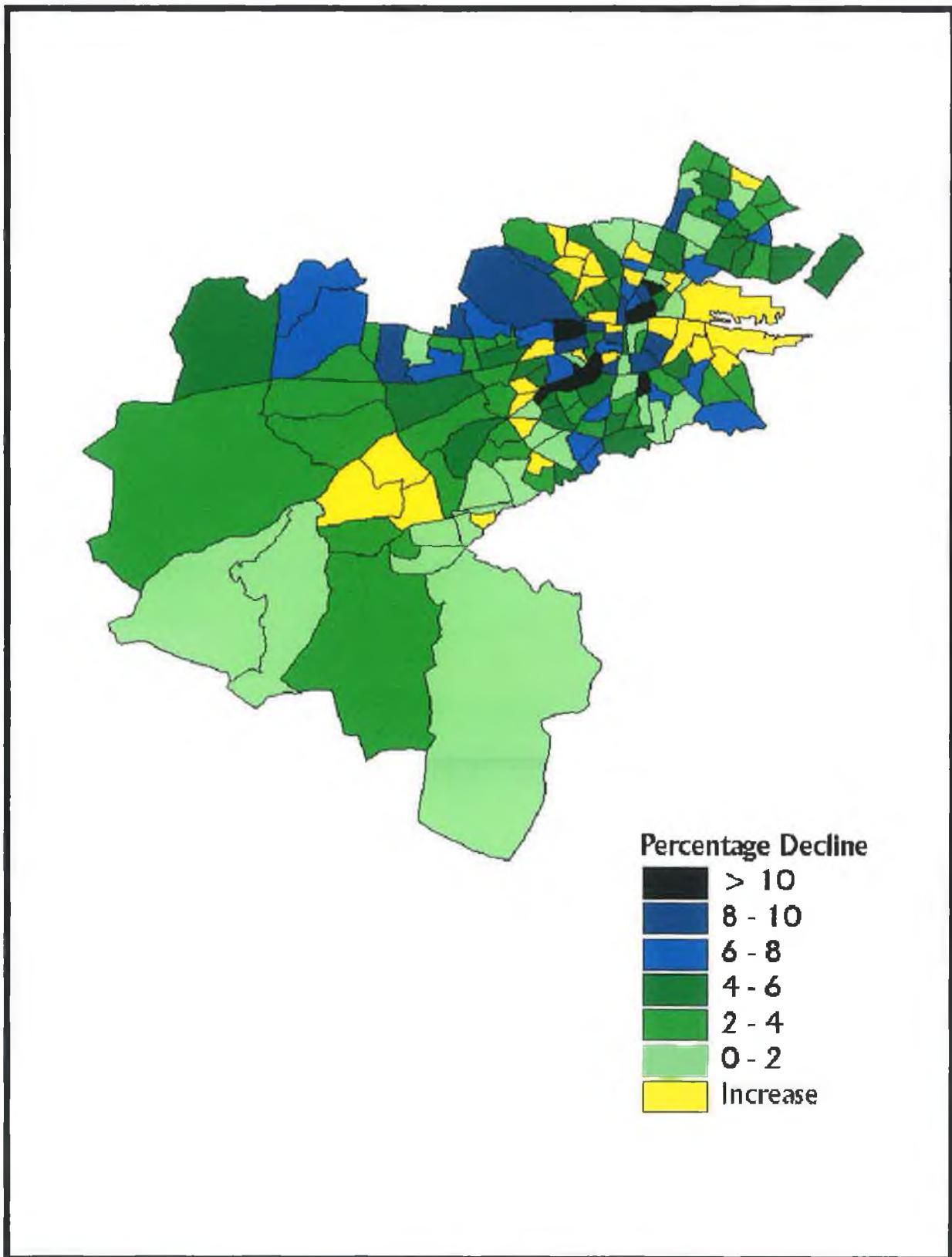


Figure 6.10: Turnout decline, by electoral division, in the Dublin region between the 1997 General Election and the 2002 General Election.

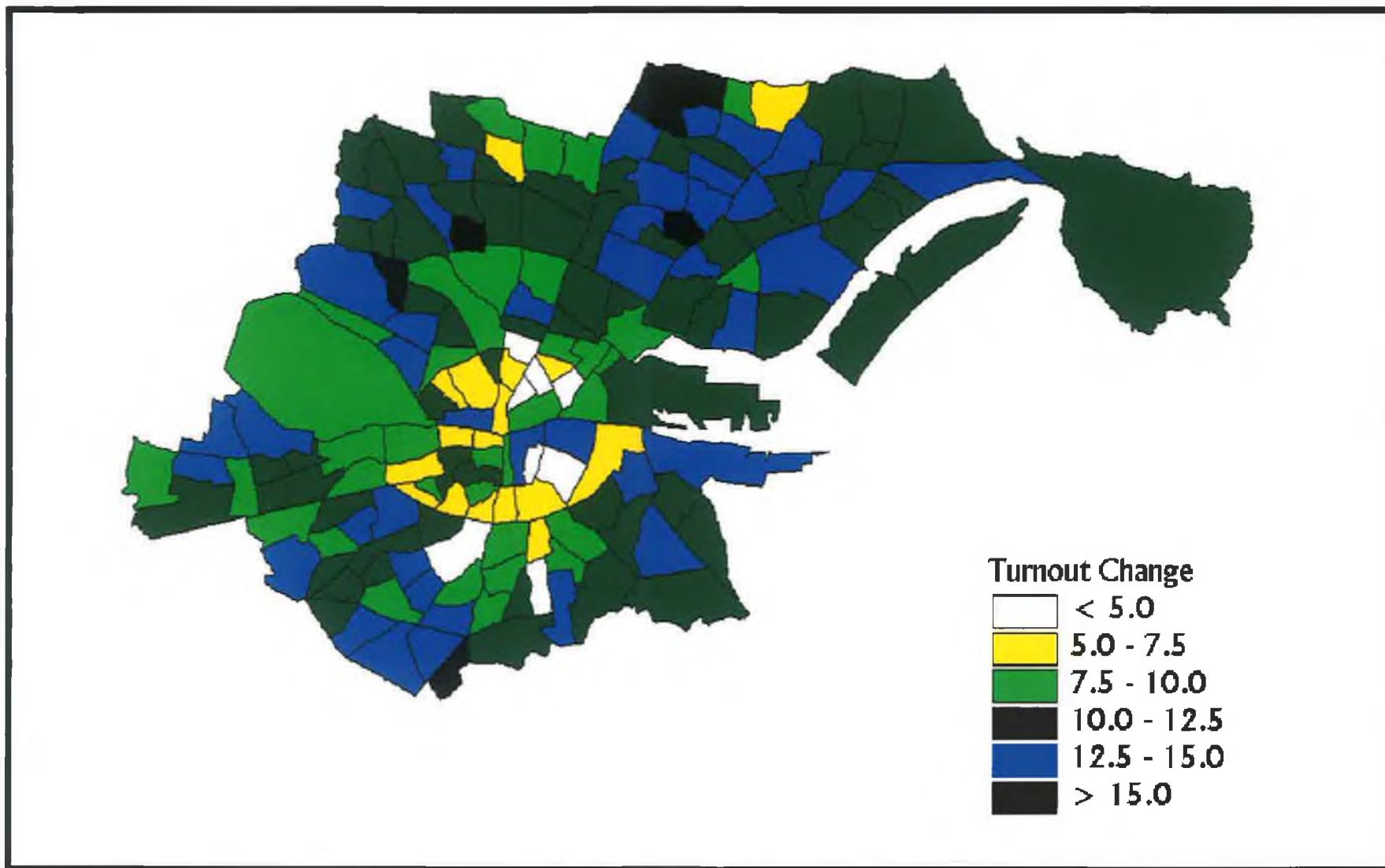


Figure 6.11: Turnout increase, by electoral division, in Dublin City Council area between the 2001 and 2002 Nice Treaty Referenda.

CHAPTER 7

URBAN TURNOUTS IN IRELAND: TURNOUTS IN DUBLIN, 1997-2002.

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will look at the different factors that influence turnout variations in the Dublin area – in particular assessing the extent to which factors related to social marginalisation may impact on these variations. Chapter 2 offered strong evidence, from the literature, of there being an association between low voter turnout and socio-economic marginalisation. The treatment of constituency turnouts in Chapter 5 also supported this, observing that the lowest turnouts in the Dublin region were generally associated with the more working class constituencies. There was, in that chapter, a suggestion, however, that a relationship between low turnout and deprivation did not apply to all geographical scales and Irish contexts, as the highest turnouts in general and local elections were generally associated with the more marginal rural areas. Given the apparently different mechanics at play at a constituency level in Dublin, on the one hand, and rural Ireland on the other, in terms of the relationship between turnout and socio-economic marginalisation, both these areas will be treated separately. This will, thus, offer the potential for comparisons between these two specific areas.

One difference between urban and rural areas related to the relative importance of the local media in the different areas. As will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter 8, most of the rural areas studied had at least one local newspaper in circulation in their areas (*The Corkman* in Cork North West, *The Limerick Leader* in Limerick West and *The Leinster Express* and *The (Laois) Nationalist* in Laois). By contrast, there were relatively few local newspapers to cover the Dublin region, with the exception of such papers as *The Echo* (which covers the

south-western parts of the region). The Dublin Inner City area had no local newspaper, although some local issues were addressed in some free newspapers, such as *The Southside News*. The lack of a widely circulated local newspaper in many parts of Dublin has the potential for arresting the development of a politicised culture amongst many Dublin communities. They would henceforth lack the same level of information about local issues and political personalities that their counterparts in the rural areas would have.

This chapter will begin with a detailed analysis of turnout variations in Dublin between 1997 and 2002, encompassing the general elections of 1997 and 2002, the referenda of 2001 and 2002 and the local and European elections of 1999, as well as the 1999 Dublin South Central by-election. There will then be a statistical analysis to detect what the key socio-economic and demographic influences on Dublin turnout variation are and to assess the relative importance of social exclusion related variables in this regard. Turnout variations between election types will also be considered to assess whether the influence of socio-economic variables is more pronounced in certain types of elections.

7.2 POLITICAL BACKGROUND OF THE CASE STUDY AREAS

Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael generally win smaller shares of the first preference votes in Dublin than they would in rural areas, which is in part accounted for by the relatively higher level of party competition and left-wing support in the Dublin constituencies. The combined share of the vote won by Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael in the case study constituencies in the 2002 General Election ranged from 43.6% in Dublin Mid West to 51.3% in Dublin South West, as

Table 7.1 shows. Both these figures compared unfavourably with the combined share of the national vote that these parties won (64.0%).

	Dublin Central	Dublin Mid West	Dublin South Central	Dublin South West
Fianna Fáil	39.6	32.1	34.3	38.7
Fine Gael	11.1	11.5	16.9	12.6
Labour	12.2	9.0	19.7	19.8
Prog. Democrats	-	20.1	3.1	-
Green Party	4.3	12.3	5.2	3.1
Sinn Féin	14.6	6.5	12.7	20.3
Independents	17.2	6.8	4.7	0.8

Table 7.1: Political support in 2002 General Election in case study constituencies.

The main reason for the small of the vote won by the main parties was the poor performance of Fine Gael in these constituencies. Fine Gael's share of the vote fell by 8.1% in Dublin South Central, 3.4% in Dublin Central and 2.9% in Dublin South West, while their incumbent TDs lost their seats in Dublin Central (Jim Mitchell), Dublin Mid West (Austin Currie) and Dublin South West (Brian Hayes). Labour won seats in three of the constituencies (Dublin Central, Dublin South West and Dublin South Central), although Labour support was down in Dublin South West (2.1%) and Dublin South Central (2.0%) relative to the combined support of Labour and Democratic Left in these constituencies in 1997. (Labour and Democratic Left had amalgamated in 1999.) Sinn Féin and the Green Party made the biggest gains in these constituencies, with Sinn Féin winning seats in Dublin South Central and Dublin South West and the Green Party winning a seat in Dublin Mid West. Sinn Féin support was up by 7.9% in Dublin Central, by 7.9% in Dublin South Central and by 11.4% in Dublin South West.

The Progressive Democrats did not contest Dublin Central and did poorly in Dublin South Central. Party leader, Mary Harney moved from Dublin South West to the new Dublin Mid

West constituency and Dublin South West was not contested by the Progressive Democrats. Harney polled strongly in Dublin Mid West and comfortably took the second seat there, after Fianna Fáil's John Curran. Independent candidates again made little impression in these constituencies, apart from in Dublin Central where Tony Gregory comfortably took the second seat there on the fourth count.

	North Inner City	South East Inner City	South West Inner City
Fianna Fáil	24.8	27.0	26.4
Fine Gael	4.5	14.2	27.7
Labour	12.4	16.5	16.8
Green Party	4.6	14.4	9.2
Sinn Féin	11.9	13.4	11.7
Independents	39.7	3.4	8.1

Table 7.2: Political support in 1999 Local Elections in inner city areas in Dublin.

Political support for the parties in the case study areas for the 1999 local elections generally mirrored their support levels in the general elections. Fianna Fáil's support levels were, however, generally lower for the local elections than their support in the general elections, with their share of the vote generally being in the 20-30 percent range, with the exception of Cabra-Glasnevin, where it was 43.1%. Fine Gael support was relatively low in these areas, with the exception of the Crumlin-Kimmage and South West Inner City electoral areas, ranging from as low as 4.5% of the vote in the North Inner City to 31.7% in Crumlin-Kimmage. Labour support, by contrast, was generally higher in these areas, with their support level tending to fall in the 10-20 percent range, with their highest support registered in the Ballyfermot electoral area (25.1%).

Smaller parties and independent candidates generally tended to do quite well in some of the electoral areas. Sinn Féin, in particular, was relatively strong in these areas and was to win

seats in four constituencies, North Inner City, Cabra-Glasnevin, Tallaght South and Tallaght Central. The party also won over 10% of the vote in the South East Inner City and South West Inner City electoral areas.

	Ballyfermot	Cabra-Glasnevin	Crumlin-Kimmage
Fianna Fáil	24.0	43.1	28.7
Fine Gael	11.4	14.7	31.7
Labour	25.1	12.7	20.3
Progressive Democrats	-	2.7	3.6
Green Party	3.7	9.5	6.4
Sinn Féin	-	17.3	7.0
Independents	27.3	-	-

Table 7.3: Political support in 1999 Local Elections in inner suburban constituencies in the Dublin County Borough area.

The Green Party contested all the constituencies in the case study area, with their best performances in the Lucan and South East Inner City electoral areas, in which the party won seats. Most of the Progressive Democrat support was concentrated on the South Dublin areas, especially Clondalkin and Tallaght South, while they failed to contest any of the inner city constituencies. Independent support levels were especially concentrated in areas where certain independent candidates were especially strong, such as Tony Gregory in North Inner City, Vincent Ballyfermot Jackson in Ballyfermot and Colm McGrath in Clondalkin.

	Clondalkin	Lucan	Tallaght Central	Tallaght South
Fianna Fáil	27.4	20.7	28.1	33.3
Fine Gael	17.7	12.5	17.7	10.7
Labour	9.7	14.6	21.9	23.2
Progressive Democrats	14.9	3.5	5.2	9.6
Green Party	3.1	14.7	3.4	3.6
Sinn Féin	7.9	-	14.3	17.7
Independents	16.0	27.6	1.1	2.1

Table 7.4: Political support in 1999 Local Elections in South Dublin county.

7.3 SPATIAL VARIATIONS IN DUBLIN TURNOUTS, 1997-2002

As was noted above, there were a number of elections held in the Dublin region during the five years that encompassed the period between the general elections of June 1997 and May 2002. This section will analyse the degree to which spatial variations in turnout rates existed in the different types of elections. There will also be an attempt to detect whether class influences on turnout rates were identifiable at this level.

The material used for this research was largely dependent on the availability of turnout data and hence the part of Dublin studied varies between the different types of elections. For the 1997 General Election, the area studied involved the southern and north-eastern parts of the Dublin County Borough area and most of South Dublin county, encompassing the constituencies of Dublin Central, Dublin North Central, Dublin South Central, Dublin South East, Dublin South West and Dublin West. The marked register analysis of local and European election turnout covers an area that approximates largely to the area analysed for the 1997 General Election. Areas covered here include the local electoral areas of Cabra-Glasnevin, Crumlin Kimmage, North Inner City, South East Inner City and South West Inner City in the Dublin County Borough area, as well as the Clondalkin, Lucan, Tallaght Central and Tallaght South electoral areas in South Dublin county. The Dublin County Borough area is the area that is studied in the analysis of turnouts in the 2001 Nice Referendum and 2002 Abortion Referendum. Finally, the analysis of turnout variations in the 2002 General Election involves the areas of Dublin County Borough and much of South Dublin county. This area takes in the Dáil constituencies of Dublin Central, Dublin North Central, Dublin North East,

Dublin North West, Dublin Mid West, Dublin South Central, Dublin South East and Dublin South West.

General Election 1997

Figure 7.3 illustrates the turnout rates in the Dublin area for the 1997 General Election, as calculated from tally figures for various constituencies. There were significant variations in turnout across the Dublin area. Turnouts generally ranged from rates of 40%, or lower, in a number of working class areas, such as North Clondalkin, West Tallaght, Cherry Orchard and the Inner City, to rates of higher than 65% in a number of areas, which tended to be more middle class or settled. Such areas, in particular, included Glasnevin, Drumcondra, Donnycarney, Clontarf, Lucan village, Terenure and Templeogue.

Table 7.5 illustrates that the low turnout DEDs in the 1997 General Election were located in the Cherry Orchard, North East Inner City, South Inner City and West Tallaght areas. A study of the high turnout DEDs in Table 7.6 shows that these approximated largely to settled, middle class areas, taking in areas such as Clontarf, Drumcondra, Ashtown and Lucan village.

DED	Turnout
Cherry Orchard A <i>Dublin Central</i>	30.7%
Rotunda B <i>Dublin Central</i>	34.6%
Mansion House A <i>Dublin South East</i>	37.4%
Tallaght-Fettercairn <i>Dublin South West</i>	37.7%
Merchants Quay A <i>Dublin South East</i>	37.9%
Cherry Orchard C <i>Dublin Central</i>	39.5%
Arran Quay C <i>Dublin Central</i>	39.8%
Royal Exchange B <i>Dublin South East</i>	40.1%
Ushers B <i>Dublin South Central</i>	40.2%
Ushers D <i>Dublin South Central</i>	42.3%

Table 7.5: Ten lowest DEDs in terms of turnout in the 1997 General Election.

DED	Turnout
Terenure D <i>Dublin South Central</i>	73.1%
Clontarf East C <i>Dublin North Central</i>	73.0%
Terenure C <i>Dublin South Central</i>	72.3%
Clontarf East D <i>Dublin North Central</i>	71.6%
Ashtown B <i>Dublin Central</i>	71.5%
Clontarf East E <i>Dublin North Central</i>	71.1%
Beaumont D <i>Dublin North Central</i>	70.2%
Clontarf East B <i>Dublin North Central</i>	70.1%
Drumcondra South C <i>Dublin North West</i>	69.9%
Lucan Heights <i>Dublin West</i>	69.6%

Table 7.6: Ten highest DEDs in terms of turnout in the 1997 General Election.

Seven DEDs had turnouts of lower than 40%, as Table 7.6 shows and a further seven had turnouts of between 40% and 45%. Table 7.7 shows that eight DEDs had turnouts of greater than 70%.

Local and European Elections 1999

A similar pattern of spatial variation in turnout rates emerged for the 1999 local and European elections, as Figure 7.2 illustrates. The areas with the lowest turnouts (as calculated from an analysis of the marked registers of electors) tended to be located in the Inner City, North Clondalkin, Tallaght, and Cherry Orchard areas, while the highest turnouts were in the Ashtown, Glasnevin, Terenure and Templeogue areas.

Figure 7.4, as well as Tables 7.7 and 7.8, show evidence of significant class differences in terms of local and European election turnouts. Most of the low turnout DEDs tended to be working class or socially deprived areas, while the higher turnout DEDs were generally

located in the more middle class areas. However, a number of working class DEDs, such as Cabra West B, had relatively high turnouts in these elections.

DED	Turnout
North City <i>North Inner City</i>	15.2%
Cherry Orchard C <i>Ballyfermot</i>	17.1%
Rotunda B <i>North Inner City</i>	17.5%
Clondalkin-Rowlagh <i>Clondalkin</i>	18.3%
Arran Quay C <i>North Inner City</i>	18.8%
Cherry Orchard A <i>Ballyfermot</i>	18.8%
Ushers B <i>South West Inner City</i>	20.6%
Merchants Quay C <i>South West Inner City</i>	21.6%
Lucan Esker <i>Lucan</i>	22.1%
Tallaght-Fettercairn <i>Tallaght South</i>	22.1%
Mansion House B <i>South East Inner City</i>	22.1%

Table 7.7: Ten lowest DEDs, in terms of turnout in the 1999 Local and European Elections.

DED	Turnout
Ashtown B <i>Cabra-Glasnevin</i>	48.2%
Walkinstown C <i>Crumlin-Kimmage</i>	48.0%
Terenure D <i>Crumlin-Kimmage</i>	47.4%
Botanic A <i>Cabra-Glasnevin</i>	47.3%
Drumcondra South C <i>Cabra-Glasnevin</i>	46.9%
Botanic B <i>Cabra-Glasnevin</i>	46.4%
Terenure C <i>Crumlin-Kimmage</i>	45.3%
Cabra West B <i>Cabra-Kimmage</i>	44.7%
Templeogue Village <i>Terenure-Rathfarnam</i>	44.5%
Cabra East B <i>Cabra-Glasnevin</i>	44.4%

Table 7.8: Ten highest DEDs, in terms of turnout in the 1999 Local and European Elections.

The DEDs, with particularly low turnouts, were mainly concentrated in the North East Inner City, South Inner City, Cherry Orchard, North Clondalkin/South Lucan and West Tallaght areas. Table 7.7 shows that the Inner City electoral areas were over-represented in terms of low turnout DEDs, accounting for six of those listed in the table as having the lowest turnouts in the region. The exceptionally low turnouts in parts of the inner city suggest that factors,

unique to the Dublin Inner City, were at play in determining some of these low turnouts. The increasing levels of residential mobility in the Dublin Inner City is probably a strong factor here, as the recent property boom in terms of inner city private apartment developments has lead to an influx of a highly mobile, mainly young and middle class, population in these areas.

Table 7.8 shows that, as with the general election, most of the high turnout areas involved here tended to be mainly middle class areas such as Walkinstown, Terenure, Drumcondra and Lucan. A notable feature of this election, however, was the relatively high turnouts in the working class West Cabra area, which included the Cabra West B and Cabra East B electoral divisions. The high turnouts in this area resulted, in part, from a Sinn Féin mobilisation effect on the part of Sinn Féin's, Cabra-based candidate, Nicky Keogh.

Marked Register Analysis

An analysis of the marked registers of electors for the local and European elections gives more detailed information about local electoral turnout variations at a sub-constituency level in the Dublin region. This allows for the provision of turnout data on much smaller areas than is possible in analyses using tally figures or ballot reconciliation data. Thus it was possible to calculate turnout rates for housing estates, streets and apartment complexes in this analysis. So as to exclude the possibility of extreme values based on low population sizes, only areas with populations of greater than one hundred were included.

Table 7.9 shows the areas with the highest and lowest areas turnout in the parts of the study area that fell inside the Dublin County Borough (now the Dublin City Council) boundaries. This took in an area approximating to the newly redrawn Dáil constituencies of Dublin

Central and Dublin South Central, as well as the South East Inner City electoral area in the northern part of Dublin South East. (Note that all the areas in Table 7.10 all have at least one hundred registered electors. Significantly higher and lower turnouts would exist for areas with smaller populations.)

High Turnout Areas	%	Low Turnout Areas	%
Moeran Road, Crumlin Village	65.9	Bru Chaoimhinn, Cork Street	0.0
Kirwan Street/Cottages, Arran Quay	64.8	St. Brendans Hospital, Grangegorman	1.0
Ardpatrick Road, Ashtown	64.3	McKee Barracks, Arran Quay	1.9
Gairdini Phairc an Bhailtin, Ashtown	63.7	Grand Canal View, Rialto	6.1
Offaly Road, Cabra	62.3	Iveagh Hostel, Bride Road	7.7
Connolly Avenue, Inchicore	61.9	New Street Gardens, SW Inner City	8.6
Annaly Road, Cabra	61.5	Custom House Harbour, North City	8.8
Parkmore Drive, Terenure	61.0	Bachelor's Walk Apts., North City	9.0
St. Mary's Park, Walkinstown	60.9	Blackhorse Grove, Cabra	9.0
Whelan House, Pembroke	60.6	Harold's Bridge Court, Kimmage	9.1
Park Road, Ashtown	58.4	King's Court, Parnell Street	9.6
Crotty Avenue, Crumlin Village	57.6	Clifden Drive, Ballyfermot	10.2
Anner Road, Inchicore	57.4	Cherry Orchard Drive, Cherry Orchard	10.9
Sperrin Road, Outer Crumlin	57.3	Islandbridge Court Flats, SW Inner City	10.9
Bulfin Road, Inchicore	56.1	The Steeples, Chapelizod	11.8
Bothar Mobhi, Botanic	56.1	Fisherman's Wharf, Pembroke	11.9
Dowland Road, Crumlin Village	55.5	Shelbourne Village, Pembroke	12.3
Kilkieran Road, Cabra	55.5	Colepark Avenue, Ballyfermot	12.5
Canon Mooney Gardens, Pembroke	55.4	The Northumberlands, SE Inner City	12.7
Primrose Street/Avenue, Inns Quay	55.2	Our Lady's Hospice, Harold's Cross	13.0

Table 7.9: Turnouts by area in the Dublin County Borough area, as calculated from the marked register of electors¹.

In general, the high turnout areas in Table 7.9 tend to be areas with settled and middle or upper working class populations. Many of these high turnout areas are also located within the bailiwicks of different local election candidates. Connolly Avenue, Anner Road and Bulfin Road fall within the Inchicore base of Fine Gael candidate, Catherine Byrne. The high turnout Ardpatick Road, Gairdini Phairc an Bhailtin and Park Road areas in Ashtown are associated

¹ For the local electoral areas of Cabra-Glasnevin, North Inner City, South West Inner City, South East Inner City, Ballyfermot and Crumlin-Kimmage.

with the bailiwicks of Fianna Fáil candidate, Dermot Fitzpatrick, and Labour's Brendan Carr. Similarly, the high turnout Offaly Road, Annaly Road and Kilkieran Road areas are located in Sinn Féin's Nicky Kehoe Cabra base, which was a mainly working class area. As noted already, these areas were generally strongly working class areas. The bailiwick of Fianna Fáil candidate, Sean Ardagh, takes in the Walkinstown and Crumlin Village areas listed in Table 7.9.

The ability of Sinn Féin candidate, Nicky Kehoe, to mobilise high turnouts in the West Cabra area was mirrored by a similar pattern in other working class parts of the city, such as the South West Inner City and South East Inner City. For instance, the contesting of the local elections by a South West Inner City based Sinn Féin candidate and 'independent' Sinn Féin candidate meant that some Dublin Corporation flat complexes in the area had relatively high turnout rates. Such flat complexes included Michael Mallin House (47.9%), Oliver Bond House (40.7%), St. Teresa's Gardens (40.3%) and Marrowbone Lane D.C. Flats (39.1%).

One would imagine, given the strong association between low turnout and working class areas uncovered at the DED level, that the areas listed in Table 7.9, as having the lowest turnouts, would tend to be Dublin Corporation flat complexes or housing estates. A number of such complexes or estates were included as low turnout areas in Table 7.9, namely New Street Gardens and Cherry Orchard Drive. There were also low turnouts in a number of other Dublin Corporation housing areas, such as Raheen Park (13.7%), Cherry Orchard Avenue (16.1%), Gallanstown (16.4%), Fatima Mansions (16.9%) and Mountain View Court (17.5%).

A large proportion of the low turnout areas listed in Table 7.9 were accounted for by a number of large institutions, including Bru Chaoimhin, McKee Barracks, Iveagh Hostel and St. Brendan's Hospital. Moreover, many of the areas with particularly low turnouts tended to be new, "yuppie", private apartment complexes in the Dublin Inner City. These apartment complexes were characterised by high levels of residential mobility, young populations and low levels of engagement with their particular locality. There was a strong likelihood that some apartment residents may have opted to 'go home' to their country base vote rather than vote at their Dublin addresses, given that many would have also been registered to vote at their original home addresses in rural Ireland. The large list of low turnout private apartments identified in Table 7.9 above included such complexes as Grand Canal View, Custom House Harbour and the Bachelor's Walk apartments. Other such apartment blocks with low turnout rates included The Maltings (13.4%), Old Kilmainham Village (14.5%), West Gate (16.2%) and Viking Harbour (16.8%) in the South West Inner City. A number of new housing estates in the inner suburban parts of the Dublin County Borough area also fell into this category, including Church Park (16.9%) and Mount Argus Court (19.6%) in the Kimmage area.

Table 7.10 shows the areas with the highest and lowest turnouts for the parts of the study area that fell within the boundaries of South Dublin county, encompassing an area that largely approximates to the Dublin Mid West and Dublin South West constituencies. As with Table 7.9, only areas with at least one hundred people registered as living there were included in Table 7.10 to eliminate the possibility of extreme percentage values that one would get if smaller population sizes were involved.

There was a greater association between social deprivation and low turnout in the South Dublin county area. Many of the low turnout areas listed in Table 7.10 were working class housing estates in the North Clondalkin area, namely the Oldcastle, Kilmahhudrick, Greenfort, Woodavens, Whitehorn, St. Mark's and Shancastle estates. Average turnout in the Quarryvale area, the only part of North Clondalkin located in the Lucan electoral area, was just 14.5%.

High Turnout Areas	%	Low Turnout Areas	%
St. Brigid's estate, Clondalkin Village	67.5	Oldcastle estate, Dunawley	0.0
Greenogue Drive, Rathcoole	57.1	Kishogue/Lynch's Lane Halting Sites	1.1
Newlands estate, Clondalkin Village	57.0	Colthurst estate, South Lucan	11.1
Woodfarm estate, Palmerstown Village	55.0	St. Brigid's Home, Saggart	11.3
Lucan Heights, Lucan	54.4	Abbeydale estate, South Lucan	11.7
Ashgrove estate, Springfield	54.0	Kilmahhudrick estate, Dunawley	12.8
Beechpark, Lucan	52.8	Earlsfort estate, South Lucan	13.2
Coolamber estate, Rathcoole	52.8	Greenfort estate, Quarryvale	13.4
Floraville estate, Clondalkin Village	51.9	Whitebrook Park, Springfield	15.2
Hollyville estate, Palmerstown West	51.7	Belgard Green, Cookstown Road	15.3
Saggart Village	50.9	Woodavens, Rowlagh	15.5
Beech Grove, Lucan	49.6	Ferncourt estate, Firhouse Village	15.7
Redgap, Rathcoole	48.3	Hazelwood estate, Clondalkin Village	16.1
Turret Road, Palmerstown	48.3	Foxsborough estate, South Lucan	16.2
Manor estate, Palmerstown	46.7	Abbeywood, South Lucan	16.6
Springbank, Saggart	46.5	Whitehorn Estate, Quarryvale	16.6
Glenaraneen, Brittas, Saggart	46.3	Cairnwood estate, Springfield	16.7
Pairc Mhuire, Saggart	46.0	St. Mark's estate, Rowlagh	16.8
Mountain Park, Milbrook	46.0	Shancastle estate, Quarryvale	16.8
Roselawn, Lucan	45.9	Rochfort estate, South Lucan	17.0

Table 7.10: Turnouts by area in South Dublin county, as calculated from the marked register of electors².

It was not possible to detect the low turnout in Quarryvale at a DED level, as this area forms part of the Palmerstown West DED, along with a relatively high turnout area that takes in the western environs of Palmerstown village. A large number of other South Dublin Council

² For the local electoral areas of Lucan, Clondalkin, Tallaght Central and Tallaght South.

estates had turnouts of lower than 20%, such as the Kilmartin (17.1%), Glenshane (19.6%) and Drumcairn (19.9%) estates in the Tallaght area and the St. Ronan's (17.6%), Foxdene (7.7%), Harelaw (18.2%) and Glenfield (19.0%) estates in the Clondalkin area.

Residential mobility was strongly associated with a number of the low turnout areas in South Dublin, with especial regard to the South Lucan area. New, usually private, housing estates in South Lucan tended to have very low turnout rates, with prime examples of these including the Colthurst, Abbeydale, Earlsfort, Foxsborough and Abbeywood estates. Many of these estates would be atypical “starter homes” estates, with a high percentage of people living there being ready to move on from there after a couple of years. Other examples of such low turnout “starter home” estates in the Lucan area included Esker Woods (20.5%), Castle Riada (25.8%) and the Willsbrook estate (26.5%).

	Voters	Registered	Turnout
Dublin City Council			
Labre Park, Kylemore, Ballyfermot	4	80	5.0
St. Oliver's Park, Cherry Orchard	0	30	0.0
Emmett Road, Inchicore	0	4	0.0
Grand Canal Harbour, South West Inner City	0	24	0.0
South Dublin County Council			
Lynch's Lane, Esker, Lucan	1	71	1.4
Kishogue, Esker, Lucan	0	21	0.0
Oldcastle Park, Bawnogue, Clondalkin	0	91	0.0
St. Aidan's Park, Brookfield, Tallaght	9	41	22.0
Ballyowen Lane, Lucan	12	37	32.4
Belgard Road, Tallaght	0	17	0.0
St. Maelruan's Field, Belgard Square, Tallaght	2	42	4.8

Table 7.11: Voter turnout in Traveller halting sites for the 1999 Local and European elections.

The association between low turnout and social deprivation is further underpinned by the low turnouts for Traveller halting sites in the South Dublin and Dublin City Council areas, as

illustrated by Table 7.11. Only 6.1% of those registered in these areas voted in the elections, with nobody voting in some of the halting sites, such as Oldcastle, Kishogue, St.Oliver's Park. The actual turnouts in these sites was probably even lower than Table 7.11 shows, as the number of registered Travellers was probably well below the number that should have been eligible to vote, due to the high levels of non-registration amongst the Traveller population.

The main high turnout areas in the South Dublin county area generally tended to be associated with the more residentially stable parts of the area, namely the village cores of Lucan, Rathcoole, Palmerstown, Lucan and Saggart. A number of these high turnout areas also proved to be the home areas of various local election candidates. There were high turnouts in the bailiwicks of three successful Lucan-based candidates. Turnout in Beechpark, the home estate of Independent candidate, Derek Keating, was 52.8%, one of the higher turnout rates in South Dublin county in that election. Moreover, the turnout in the home estate of Labour's Joanna Tuffy (Esker Woods) was 51.5%, while the turnout in the home estate of the Green Party's Paul Gogarty (Cherbury Park) was 41.2%.

1999 Dublin South Central By-election

As was referred to in Chapter 5, turnouts for second order elections such as by-elections are generally lower than those for first order elections, such as general elections. By-election turnouts over the 1992-2002 period were lower than in preceding general elections and turnout declines tended to be largest in Dublin and the other urban areas. This was especially evidenced in the turnout of 28.2% for the Dublin South Central by-election of October 1999, which was the lowest turnout recorded for a Dáil election in the history of the Irish State. This

compared unfavourably with the 42.8% turnout for the 1994 Dublin South Central by-election, as well as the 59.6% turnout in the 1997 General Election.

Dublin South Central is an interesting constituency in terms of its socio-economic profile. The constituency boundaries for the by-election involved significant variations between the working class and socially deprived areas of the South West Inner City in the northern part of the constituency and the more affluent and settled Terenure and Templeogue areas in the southern part. The political scene in Dublin South Central prior to 2002 was very much dominated by Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and Labour, as the analysis of local election support, over the 1985-99 period, in Table 7.12 reveals.

<i>Party</i>	<i>Ballyfermot</i>	<i>Crumlin-Kimmage</i>	<i>South West Inner City</i>
1985			
Fianna Fáil	34.4% (2)	42.2% (2)	32.3% (2)
Fine Gael	16.3% (1)	25.5% (1)	15.6% (1)
Labour	7.9% (0)	13.9% (0)	10.2% (0)
Total	58.6% (3-4)	81.5% (3-4)	58.0% (3-5)
1991			
Fianna Fáil	27.4% (1)	27.5% (1)	25.9% (2)
Fine Gael	12.1% (0)	24.7% (1)	11.3% (0)
Labour	18.7% (1)	14.9% (1)	11.4% (1)
Total	58.2% (2-4)	67.1% (3-4)	48.6% (3-5)
1999			
Fianna Fáil	24.0% (1)	28.7% (2)	26.4% (1)
Fine Gael	11.4% (0)	31.7% (2)	27.7% (1)
Labour	25.1% (1)	20.3% (1)	16.8% (1)
Total	60.5% (2-3)	80.8% (5-5)	71.0% (3-3)

Table 7.12: Percentage performances in the Ballyfermot, Crumlin-Kimmage, South West Inner City and Terenure-Rathfarnam LEAs. (The number of seats won is in brackets.)

Figure 7.5 reveals a significant north-south gradient in the by-election turnouts, as calculated from an analysis of the marked registers of electors. The lowest turnout rates were associated with the inner city areas in the north-east, with significantly higher turnouts in the Walkinstown, Terenure and Templeogue areas in the south. This pattern strongly mirrored the socio-economic geography of the area.

Table 7.13 further supports the association of low by-election turnout with the South West Inner City area, with DEDs in this area accounting for the eight lowest turnouts in the election. The only South West Inner City DED to have a relatively high turnout in this election was Merchants Quay D (30.1%), which was distinguished from the rest of the South West Inner City on the basis of its socio-economic profile, with high levels of owner occupancy and low unemployment levels.

DED	Turnout
Ushers B	11.7%
Merchants Quay C	14.6%
Kimmage C	18.6%
Ushers C	19.2%
Merchants Quay E	19.3%
Ushers D	19.5%
Merchants Quay B	21.7%
Merchants Quay F	21.8%
Crumlin B	21.8%
Kimmage D	23.0%

Table 7.13: Ten lowest DEDs in terms of turnout in the 1999 Dublin South Central by-election.

Table 7.14 generally associates the highest by-election turnouts with the Walkinstown, Terenure and Templeogue areas, although these turnouts were much lower than general elections turnouts would be.

DED	Turnout
Walkinstown C	38.8%
Terenure-Greentrees	37.1%
Templeogue Village	36.9%
Templeogue Kimmage	36.1%
Terenure Cherryfield	35.3%
Terenure D	33.7%
Walkinstown B	33.0%
Terenure C	32.8%
Terenure B	32.3%
Crumlin F	31.4%

Table 7.14: Ten highest DEDs in terms of turnout in the 1999 Dublin South Central by-election.

Table 7.15 shows the areas with the highest and lowest by-election turnouts, as drawn from an analysis of the marked registers of electors for that election. As with the local election analysis, only areas with at least one hundred registered electors were considered.

Moeran Road had the highest turnout rate for the by-election, as was also the case in Table 7.9. St. Mary's Park, Crotty Avenue and Dowland Road also figured as high turnout areas in the local elections and the by-election. These high turnout areas were located exclusively in settled, mainly middle class, areas in the south of the constituency, taking in the Greenhills, Templeogue, Walkinstown, Crumlin Village and Terenure areas. The highest turnouts in Table 7.15, however, were lower than those registered in Tables 7.9 and 7.10. The lower by-election turnout relative to the local and European elections turnout accounts for this to some degree. A more pertinent factor was the lack of a local candidate-related mobilisation effect in the by-election. None of the main candidates were living in the constituency at the time of the election. (Byrne of Fine Gael and O'Snodaigh of Sinn Féin were living in areas that were

being moved into Dublin South Central for the 2002 General Election. Their parties obviously took cognisance of this factor when selecting them to stand in the by-election.)

High Turnout Areas	%	Low Turnout Areas	%
Moeran Road, Crumlin Village	57.6	Bru Chaoimhin, Cork Street	0.0
Greenlea, Terenure	49.7	Harold's Bridge Court, Kimmage	1.0
Bothar ChillenaManagh, Walkinstown	49.5	Grand Canal View, Rialto	2.8
Hazelbrook Road, Terenure	47.8	Fatima Mansions, Rialto	5.3
St. Teresa's Road, Crumlin Village	45.6	Viking Harbour, Victoria Quay	7.3
Templeville Road, Templeogue	44.4	Church Park, Kimmage	8.9
Crotty Avenue, Crumlin Village	43.8	Newmarket Street, The Coombe	9.2
Cherryfield estate, Greenhills	43.3	New Row, The Coombe	9.9
Parkmore Drive, Terenure	43.2	Harold's Cross Road	11.7
Muckross, Greenhills	42.8	Basin Street, South West Inner City	12.0
O'Brien Road, Crumlin Village	42.5	Braithwaite Street, The Coombe	12.4
College Park, Kimmage Manor	42.5	Thomas Court, Thomas Street	12.5
Rockfield, Greenhills	42.4	Weavers Street, The Coombe	13.2
Greentrees Road, Greenhills	42.1	Knocknarea Avenue, Outer Crumlin	13.3
Fortfield Road, Templeogue	42.1	Dolphin Road, Drimnagh	13.6
Balfe Road, Walkinstown	41.9	Old County Glen, Outer Crumlin	14.3
Dowland Road, Crumlin Village	41.6	Galtymore Drive, Outer Crumlin	15.0
St. Mary's Park, Walkinstown	41.2	Grosvenor Court, Templeogue	15.6
Larkfield, Terenure	40.8	Kildare Park, Outer Crumlin	15.7
Cromwellsfort Road, Crumlin Village	40.5	Benbulbin Road, Drimnagh	15.9

Table 7.15: Turnouts by area for the October 1999 Dublin South Central by-election, as calculated from the marked register of electors.

Table 7.15 shows that Brú Chaoimhín had the lowest turnout, as was the case for the local elections, while Harold's Bridge Court and Grand Canal View had also figured amongst the low turnout areas in those elections. A number of Dublin Corporation housing estates and flat complexes in the South West Inner City, Drimnagh and Outer Crumlin figured amongst the low turnout areas also. There was a concentration of low turnout areas around The Coombe in the South West Inner City, taking in such areas as Newmarket Street, New Row and Braithwaite Street. Private apartment complexes and new housing estates, also figured

amongst the low turnout areas, including Harold's Bridge Court, Viking Harbour and Church Park.

Turnout in the by-election was lower than the local and European elections, held four months prior to it, as well as the 1997 General Election. Turnout decline was also evident at a DED level, with the decline relative to the 1997 General Election ranging from 10.8% for Crumlin F to 39.6% for Terenure C. The largest declines in turnout were associated with the high turnout, middle class DEDs in the south of the constituency, suggesting that the election failed to capture the imagination of the middle class electorate to the same degree as the general election had. The turnout decline in Templeogue was partly caused by the awareness that this area would be transferred into Dublin South West for the 2002 General Election, which could have confused Templeogue electors as to whether they were eligible to vote in the by-election. Templeogue voters would also have been less motivated to turn out to vote for someone who would not be representing their area after 2002, especially as the elected candidate would effectively be focusing on the areas remaining in Dublin South Central in the lead up to the next general election.

A comparison of marked register figures for the local and European elections and the by-election show that most areas in Dublin South Central experienced a decline in turnouts between these elections. Figure 7.1 shows that some considerable turnout declines occurred in Dublin Corporation flat complexes in the South West Inner City. Turnouts fell by 27.3% in the Pimlico Terrace complex, with significant declines also in St. Teresa's Gardens (23.6%), Emmett Buildings (18.2%), Michael Mallin House (16.0%), Fatima Mansions (15.5%) and Chamber Court (13.0%). Turnouts in these complexes had been relatively high for the local

elections, due to the mobilisational effect of local candidates in these elections. The lack of such candidates in the by-election was one of the reasons for the significant decline in turnouts, relative to those for the local elections, in these flat complexes.

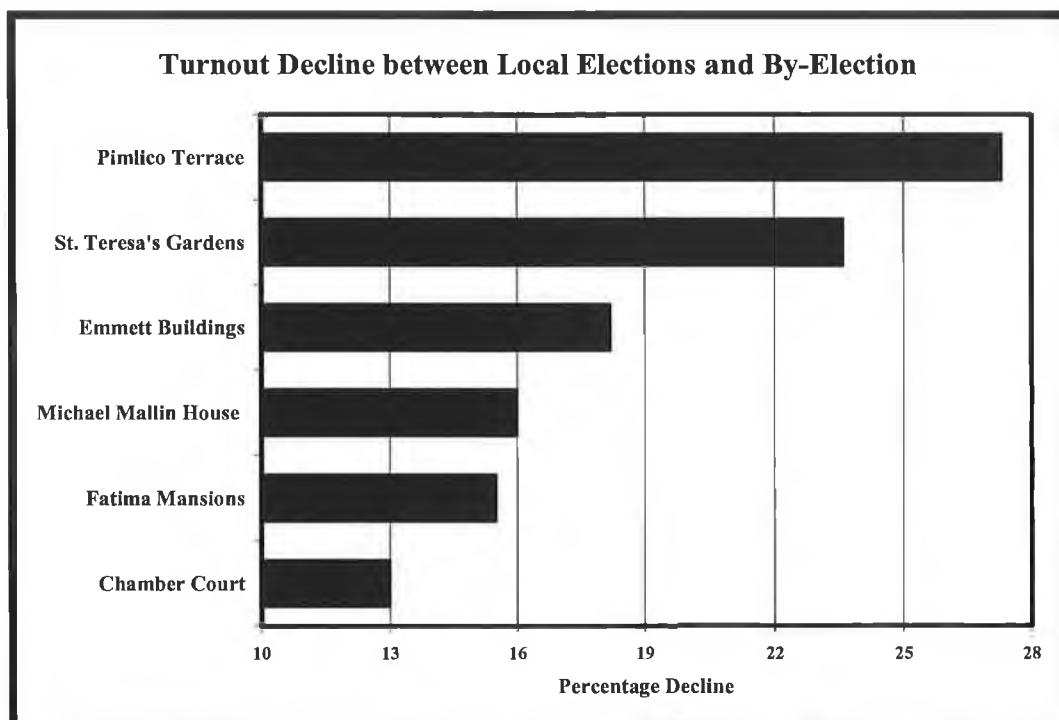


Figure 7.1: Decline in turnout rates between June 1999 local and European elections and October 1999 Dublin South Central by-election for South West Inner City flat complexes.

Referenda

Nice Referendum 2001

Figure 7.6 shows that turnouts in the 2001 Nice Referendum tended to be higher in the more middle class, or settled, areas, and lower in the more working class, or socially deprived areas. Turnouts in the Dublin County Borough areas were highest in Clontarf, Glasnevin and Templeogue and lowest in the working class, or socially deprived, areas, of Darndale, Ballymun, Finglas, Cherry Orchard and the Dublin Inner City.

Table 7.16 further illustrates the association of low turnout with socially deprived or working class parts of Dublin. The very lowest turnouts in the area are shown to have been in the Dublin Inner City (Rotunda B, Ushers B, North City and Mountjoy A), Darndale (Priorswood B and C), Cherry Orchard and Ballymun. There was no evidence of high turnouts in any working class area in Dublin, as opposed to the local and European elections in which West Cabra had one of the highest turnout rates. The average turnout in West Cabra for the Nice Referendum was 35.1%, which was 3.0% lower than the average Dublin turnout for this referendum. However the turnout in West Cabra was above the national average (34.8%).

DED	Turnout
Cherry Orchard A <i>Dublin Central</i>	14.6%
Rotunda B <i>Dublin Central</i>	16.3%
Cherry Orchard C <i>Dublin Central</i>	16.7%
Ballymun A <i>Dublin North West</i>	16.8%
Ushers B <i>Dublin South Central</i>	17.2%
North City <i>Dublin Central</i>	19.5%
Priorswood B <i>Dublin North East</i>	19.5%
Priorswood C <i>Dublin North East</i>	19.5%
Mountjoy A <i>Dublin Central</i>	19.9%
Ballymun B <i>Dublin North West</i>	20.1%

Table 7.16: Ten lowest DEDs in terms of turnout in the 2001 Nice Referendum.

DED	Turnout
Templeogue Village <i>Dublin South Central</i>	54.7%
Raheny-St. Assam <i>Dublin North East</i>	53.0%
Drumcondra South C <i>Dublin North West</i>	52.5%
Clontarf East C <i>Dublin North Central</i>	52.2%
Botanic A <i>Dublin North West</i>	51.7%
Templeogue-Orwell <i>Dublin South Central</i>	51.5%
Botanic B <i>Dublin North West</i>	51.1%
Clontarf East E <i>Dublin North Central</i>	52.0%
Clontarf East A <i>Dublin North Central</i>	50.4%
Whitehall A <i>Dublin North West</i>	49.9%

Table 7.17: Ten highest DEDs in terms of turnout in the 2001 Nice Referendum.

The areas with the highest turnouts, as Table 7.17 shows, were predominantly associated with the more middle class parts of Dublin County Borough, including Templeogue, Raheny, Drumcondra, Clontarf and Whitehall. Turnout in the Templeogue Village DED was almost 20.0% higher than the national average.

Abortion Referendum 2002

Figure 7.7 shows that the spatial variations in turnout rates for the Abortion Referendum in March 2002 were almost identical to those for the 2001 Nice Referendum. There was again significant turnout variations between the high turnout Terenure, Raheny, Walkinstown and Clontarf areas and the low turnout Dublin Inner City, Cherry Orchard, Ballymun, Darndale and Finglas areas. Turnout differences were quite substantial, with a difference of 44.6% between the highest and lowest DEDs, namely Terenure D and Rotunda B, as a comparison of Tables 7.18 and 7.19 shows.

DED	Turnout
Rotunda B <i>Dublin Central</i>	18.6%
North Dock C <i>Dublin Central</i>	19.6%
Mountjoy A <i>Dublin Central</i>	20.3%
Ushers B <i>Dublin South Central</i>	20.9%
Cherry Orchard C <i>Dublin Central</i>	24.3%
Cherry Orchard A <i>Dublin Central</i>	24.3%
North City <i>Dublin Central</i>	24.4%
Ballymun B <i>Dublin North West</i>	25.3%
Ballymun A <i>Dublin North West</i>	25.9%
Mountjoy B <i>Dublin Central</i>	26.4%

Table 7.18: Ten lowest DEDs in terms of turnout in the 2002 Abortion Referendum.

Table 7.18 shows that the DEDs with the lowest turnouts were associated with the Dublin Inner City, Cherry Orchard and Ballymun areas, with less than a quarter of the registered voters turning out to vote in seven of these. Reflecting the national trend, however, turnouts in

most of these were up on the figures for the 2001 Nice Referendum. The highest turnouts, as Table 7.19 shows, were in the mainly middle class Terenure, Raheny, Walkinstown and Templeogue areas, with turnouts here being well above the national average of 42.7%.

DED	Turnout
Terenure D <i>Dublin South Central</i>	63.3%
Raheny-St. Assam <i>Dublin North East</i>	62.6%
Clontarf East C <i>Dublin North Central</i>	62.6%
Walkinstown B <i>Dublin South Central</i>	62.0%
Clontarf East A <i>Dublin North Central</i>	61.0%
Botanic B <i>Dublin North West</i>	61.0%
Templeogue-Orwell <i>Dublin South Central</i>	60.7%
Terenure Cypress <i>Dublin South Central</i>	60.5%
Templeogue-Kimmage Manor <i>Dublin South C'tral</i>	60.3%
Beaumont A <i>Dublin North Central</i>	60.0%

Table 7.19: Ten highest DEDs in terms of turnout in the 2002 Abortion Referendum.

Nice Referendum 2002

Figure 7.8 shows that, as with the previous referenda, turnouts for the 2002 Nice Referendum were generally higher in the more middle class parts of the city, such as Clontarf, Drumcondra and Rathmines. They were lower in the more socially deprived areas, such as Darndale, Ballymun and Cherry Orchard, with a particular concentration of low turnout in the Dublin Inner City.

Tables 7.20 and 7.21 further underpin the class bias to Nice Referendum 2002 turnouts in Dublin. The high turnout areas were generally associated with the middle class Clontarf, Terenure, Raheny, Templeogue and Whitehall areas. There was a particular concentration of low turnout areas in the Dublin Inner City, with half of the low turnout electoral divisions

listed in Table 7.20 coming from this area. The Cherry Orchard, Darndale and Ballymun areas were also represented in Table 7.20.

DED	Turnout
Rotunda B <i>Dublin Central</i>	18.0%
Mountjoy A <i>Dublin Central</i>	23.4%
Cherry Orchard A <i>Dublin South Central</i>	23.6%
Ushers B <i>Dublin South Central</i>	24.6%
Priorswood C <i>Dublin North East</i>	26.0%
Cherry Orchard C <i>Dublin South Central</i>	27.3%
Priorswood B <i>Dublin North East</i>	27.4%
Ballymun B <i>Dublin North West</i>	28.1%
North City <i>Dublin Central</i>	28.1%
Royal Exchange B <i>Dublin South East</i>	28.2%

Table 7.20: Ten lowest DEDs in terms of turnout in the 2002 Nice Referendum.

DED	Turnout
Clontarf East C <i>Dublin North Central</i>	66.3%
Terenure D <i>Dublin South Central</i>	65.7%
Raheny-St. Assam <i>Dublin North East</i>	65.5%
Botanic B <i>Dublin Central</i>	65.3%
Clontarf East A <i>Dublin North Central</i>	63.1%
Beaumont C <i>Dublin North Central</i>	62.7%
Templeogue-Kimmage Manor <i>Dublin South Central</i>	62.5%
Whitehall A <i>Dublin North West</i>	62.3%
Ballymun E <i>Dublin North West</i>	62.0%
Terenure Cherryfield <i>Dublin South Central</i>	61.8%

Table 7.21: Ten highest DEDs in terms of turnout in the 2002 Nice Referendum.

The areas with the highest turnouts, as Tables 7.20 and 7.21 show, were predominantly associated with the more middle class parts of Dublin County Borough, including Templeogue, Raheny, Drumcondra, Clontarf and Whitehall. Turnout in the Templeogue Village DED was almost 20% higher than the national average.

General Election 2002

Turnouts were generally in the 40-65 percent range for the 1997 election, as was noted above. In the 2002 election, however, turnouts fell below 30% in two DEDs, Rotunda B (26.9%) and Cherry Orchard A (28.9%), while twenty-one DEDs had turnouts of lower than 40%, as opposed to just seven DEDs in 1997. This reflects the general decline in general election turnouts between the 1997 and 2002 elections, as has been touched upon in Section 7.3.

Figures 7.9 and 7.10 show the spatial variations in turnout rates in the Dublin County Borough and South Dublin County areas respectively. Figure 7.9 shows that the high turnout areas in the Dublin County Borough area were associated with the Terenure and Rathgar areas in the south, the Clontarf and Raheny areas in the north-east and the Ashtown, Glasnevin and Drumcondra areas in the north. The main low turnout areas were the Dublin Inner City in the central part, Cherry Orchard in the west, Ballymun in the north-west and Darndale in the northern part of the map. The main high turnout area in South Dublin County, as Figure 7.10 illustrates, was the Templeogue area in the eastern part of the map, with other high turnout areas including Lucan in the north, Rathcoole in the south-west and the Clondalkin Village area in the central part of the area. North Clondalkin, in the northern part of the map, and West Tallaght, in the central part, were the main low turnout areas in South Dublin, as shown by Figure 7.10.

Half of the ten DEDs with the lowest turnouts, as shown by Table 7.22, were located in the Dublin Inner City, namely Rotunda A and B, Ushers B, North City and Merchants Quay C. The other areas referred to in this table included Ballymun, Cherry Orchard and the Phoenix

Park. None of the ten lowest DEDs were located in the South Dublin county area, where Clondalkin-Rowlagh (38.8%), Tallaght-Fettercairn (39.0%) and Clondalkin-Moorefield (39.9%) were the only DEDs to have turnouts of lower than 40%.

DED	Turnout
<i>Rotunda B Dublin Central</i>	26.9%
<i>Cherry Orchard A Dublin South Central</i>	28.9%
<i>Ushers B Dublin South Central</i>	31.9%
<i>Cherry Orchard C Dublin South Central</i>	32.7%
<i>Phoenix Park Dublin Central</i>	34.0%
<i>North City Dublin Central</i>	34.2%
<i>Ballymun D Dublin North West</i>	35.4%
<i>Ballymun B Dublin North West</i>	35.4%
<i>Rotunda A Dublin Central</i>	36.9%
<i>Merchants Quay C Dublin South Central</i>	36.9%

Table 7.22: Ten lowest DEDs in terms of turnout in the 2002 General Election

DED	Turnout
<i>Botanic B Dublin Central</i>	70.7%
<i>Clontarf East C Dublin North Central</i>	69.5%
<i>Drumcondra South C Dublin Central</i>	69.2%
<i>Templeogue-Orwell Dublin South West</i>	69.2%
<i>Raheny St. Assam Dublin North East</i>	68.9%
<i>Ballymun E Dublin North West</i>	68.4%
<i>Clontarf East A Dublin North Central</i>	68.3%
<i>Beaumont A Dublin North Central</i>	68.1%
<i>Botanic A Dublin Central</i>	67.8%
<i>Whitehall A Dublin North West</i>	67.7%

Table 7.23: Ten highest DEDs in terms of turnout in the 2002 General Election

The North Clondalkin area had been particularly highlighted as a low turnout area in *The Irish Times* prior to the election. The Neilstown area in North Clondalkin, described as “*a wilderness of local authority housing*” and “*one of the most socially neglected (areas) in the State*” was predicted to have one of the lowest turnouts in the election (Holland, 2001: 11).

The general sense of apathy in the area was conveyed by the scarcity of election posters, the lack of interest in the contest and the poor canvass of the area.

"Crossing the green, one of the most noticeable features to anyone who has just come from the city centre is the almost total absence of election posters ... In Carroll's newsagent no one talks about the election ... Most residents asked could not remember the last time a candidate had called to their home canvassing for their vote. And among those that did intend voting there was a sense that this was despite the fact that 'it's probably useless'..." (Holland, 2002: 11).

However, a contrast with the turnout variations for the 1997 General Election (Figure 7.3) seems to suggest that low turnout in Dublin is increasingly becoming an inner city. General election turnouts in areas such as West Tallaght, West Cabra, Darndale and Finglas increased relative to those in the Dublin Inner City between the 1997 and 2002 elections.

Table 7.23, as well as Figures 7.9 and 7.10, show that there was a stronger concentration of high turnout areas on the northside of the Dublin City Council area. Templeogue-Orwell was the only electoral division that was located to the south of the Liffey to figure amongst the ten highest DEPs that were listed in Table 7.23. The areas with the highest turnouts, as listed by Table 7.23, were located in the Drumcondra, Clontarf, Raheny, Glasnevin and Whitehall areas, as well as Templeogue.

Turnout variations within Dublin constituencies

Significant variations in turnout also existed within individual Dublin constituencies. Most of the Dublin constituencies had one or two areas of particularly low turnout, with rates in these areas being some 30-35 per cent below those of the high turnout areas in the same constituencies. For instance, the main low turnout area in Dublin Mid West was North

Clondalkin, while West Tallaght was the main low turnout area in Dublin South West. These turnout variations, especially considering the strong socio-economic influences involved, were likely to result in distortions in levels of political support and, in some cases, representation within these constituencies. Politicians with bailiwicks in high turnout areas were the more likely to be advantaged, while those candidates whose support was mainly drawn from low turnout areas were likely to be disadvantaged.

Figure 7.11 shows that turnout variations in the new Dublin Central constituency involved the North East Inner City having significantly lower rates than the rest of the Dublin Central constituency, especially the high turnout Ashtown, Glasnevin and Drumcondra areas in the northern part of the constituency. There was 43.7% of a difference between the turnouts in the Botanic B and Rotunda B electoral divisions, while turnouts in the North Inner City area tended to be 30-35% lower than in the high turnout areas in the northern part of the constituency. These turnout variations were reflected in the election results, with candidates based in the northern part of the constituency winning 69.6% of the first preference votes.

Figure 7.12 shows two significant low turnout areas in Dublin South Central. There was a very defined pattern to turnout in the constituency, as was the case for the 1999 by-election (Figure 7.5), with turnouts highest in the southern part of the constituency and generally lower in the more northern parts. The main low turnout areas were in the north-west, encompassing the area covered under the Ballyfermot URBAN initiative – in particular the Cherry Orchard area – and the South West Inner City in the north-east. The high turnout areas were the Walkinstown, Terenure and Templeogue areas in the south, although there were relatively high turnouts in the Kilmainham and Inchicore areas in the north.

The overall turnout in the South West Inner City area was 44.4% and in the Ballyfermot URBAN area was 44.9%. The South West Inner City accounted for 18.9% of the registered electors, or 1.1 quotas, but the area just accounted for 15.6% of the total voters, approximating to 0.9 quotas. The Ballyfermot URBAN area accounted for 16.8% of the registered electors in the constituency, or 1.0 quotas, but for just 14.3% of total voters, or 0.8 quotas. Low turnouts in the Ballyfermot URBAN and South West Inner City areas meant that they had less of an influence on the election result than they should have, based on their population size.

Turnout Variations Between Elections

	1999 LE	1999 BE	2001 RF	2002 AR	2002 GE	2002 NR
1997 General Election	0.78**	0.81**	0.88**	0.88**	0.86**	0.87**
1999 Local/European		0.92**	0.86**	0.86**	0.90**	0.89**
1999 By-Election			0.93**	0.92**	0.95**	0.94**
2001 Nice Referendum				0.96**	0.92**	0.96**
2002 Abortion Referendum					0.92**	0.97**
2002 General Election						0.95**
2002 Nice Referendum						-

Table 7.24: Correlations between turnouts of elections held in the Dublin region between 1997 and 2002.

The correlations in Table 7.24 shows that there was a considerable consistency in the turnout patterns of the different elections held in the Dublin region over the 1997-2002 period, as evidenced by the array of significant, positive correlations. These correlations underpin the

general trend in this section, in which different parts of the Dublin region tended to be high or low turnout areas in the different types of elections.

Significant variations existed between the turnouts for different election types during the 1997-2002 for each area in Dublin. The general pattern was that general election turnouts tended to be the highest, with turnouts declining on general election levels when other types of elections were involved. As illustrated in Chapter 5, average turnouts in the Dublin region during the 1997-2002 period varied from a high of 61.3% for the 1997 General Election to a low of 36.0% for the 1999 local and European elections. The degree of variation between general election and referendum turnouts in Dublin was not as pronounced as that between general and local election turnouts – indeed, the turnout rate for the 1998 referenda on the British-Irish Agreement and Amsterdam Treaty was actually higher than the 2002 General Election turnout. Within the city however, there were differences in the level of variations between turnouts for different election types, with these often depending on factors such as the social class characteristics of an area and the candidates contesting the local and general elections in that area.

General Election 2002 and Abortion Referendum 2002

In terms of investigating contrasts between turnouts for general elections and referenda in Dublin, perhaps the most useful examples to study were contrasts between the Abortion Referendum and 2002 General Election turnout. These elections were held in March and May of 2002 respectively and, hence, only a very short time span separated these two electoral contests.

There was 9.0% of a difference between the average Dublin turnouts for these elections. Within the city, there were significant spatial variations in terms of the degree to which the turnouts for these elections differed in different parts of the city, as illustrated by Figure 7.13. The extent of the turnout variations was quite large in some parts of the city, with general election turnouts being over 20% higher in some areas. Areas that experienced particularly high levels of turnout variation included the North East Inner City and North Docklands, Ballymun and, most notably, the Finglas and West Cabra area in the north-west part of the Dublin County Borough. The DEDs with the highest levels of turnout variation included North Dock C (25.8%), Cabra West B (21.9%), Cabra West A (21.3%), Finglas North B (21.2%) and Mountjoy A (21.1%). Most of the areas tended to be working class or socially deprived areas. The reason for the high general election turnouts relative to the referendum turnouts in these areas was probably related to a Sinn Féin mobilisation effect for the general election, or to lower than expected referendum turnouts, caused by a lack of interest in referendum issues in working class areas. This is reflected in research in the South West Inner City that found that 72.0% of working class respondents had a clear or adequate understanding of general election issues, but only 55.3% has a similar understanding of referendum issues (Kavanagh, 2001, 2002a: 68).

The degree of variation between turnouts in the two elections was marginal in other parts of the city. Indeed, the referendum turnout actually exceeded the general election turnout by 3.6% in Walkinstown B. DEDs in which the general election turnout was only slightly higher than the referendum turnout included Terenure D (2.3%), Pembroke West C (2.8%), Priorswood A (3.4%) and Rathmines West E (3.5%). Figure 7.13 shows that the areas that experienced only marginal variations between the general election and referendum turnouts

generally tended to be middle class in character, such as Terenure, Rathgar and Clonskeagh. Some parts of the South Inner City also fell into this category.

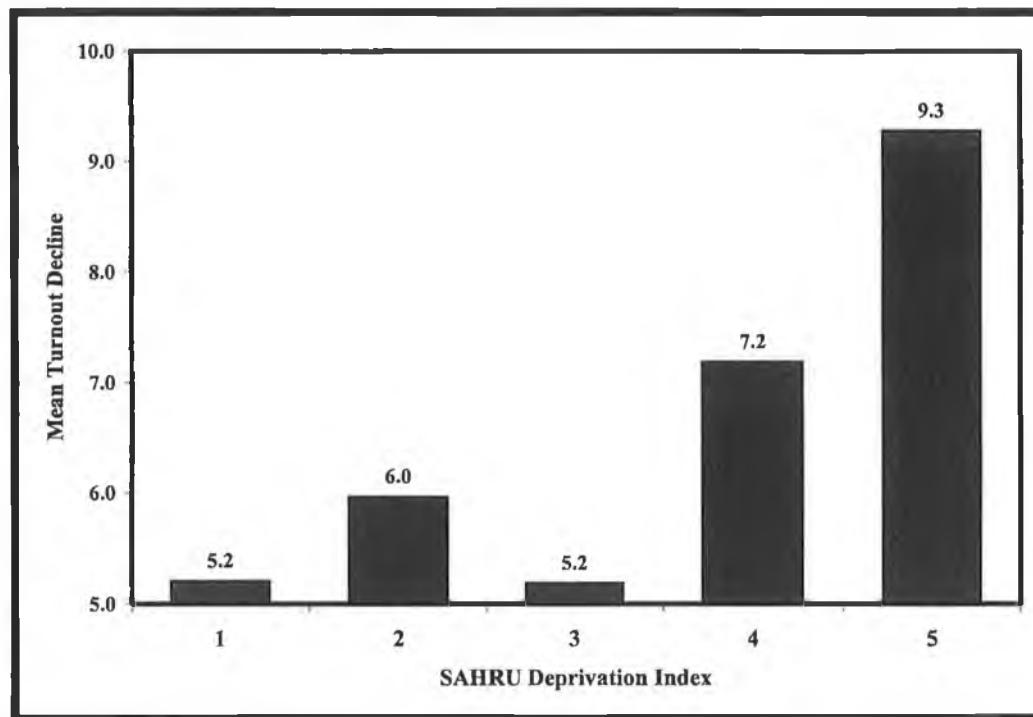


Figure 7.2: Mean turnout decline between 2002 General Election and 2002 Nice Referendum by SAHRU score.

The turnout decline between the 2002 General Election and the 2002 Nice Treaty Referendum, held on 15 October 2002, largely mirrors this pattern, as Figure 7.14 shows. This shows that general election turnouts were particularly high in the North East Inner City, Cabra, Finglas and Darndale areas, thus suggesting that referendum turnouts tended to be relatively lower in the socially deprived areas. The greatest turnout declines, at an electoral division level, occurred in Mountjoy A (18.0%), Finglas North A (16.7%), Cabra West B (16.4%) and North Dock C (15.4%). Turnouts fell by less than 5% in a number of areas, with these being particularly concentrated in the Clontarf, Howth, Drumcondra, Crumlin, South West Inner City, Terenure, Rathmines and Donnybrook areas. Turnouts actually increased in

the Phoenix Park (4.4%) and Terenure D (0.1%) electoral divisions, while there were relatively small decreases in the Priorswood A (1.7%) and Botanic C (2.2%) electoral divisions.

The class dimension to general election-referendum turnout variations is further illustrated by Figure 7.2. This shows that mean turnout decline between the 2002 General Election and the 2002 Nice Referendum was substantially higher in the more deprived electoral divisions (higher SAH RU score).

General Election 2002 and Local and European Elections 2002

Figure 7.15 shows that there was significant spatial variations within the Dublin region in terms of differences between the turnouts for the 2002 General Election and the 1999 local and European elections. There were two main areas in which there were very large variations between the turnouts for these elections, namely an area in the west, encompassing Newcastle and the environs of Lucan, and an area in the east, taking in the Terenure, Templeogue, Tallaght, Walkinstown areas. The DEDs with the greatest level of turnout variation included Templeogue-Orwell (33.3%), Clondalkin-Ballymount (29.7%), Lucan-Esker (29.6%), Tallaght-Kilnamanagh (28.6%) and Templeogue-Osprey (28.3%). Other areas that experienced relatively high levels of turnout variation between the general and local elections included Chapelizod, Ashtown, Drumcondra and Bluebell.

In other parts of the Dublin region the level of variation between the turnouts for the general and local elections was relatively small. There were two particular concentrations of these areas in two parts of the Dublin region, namely the Inner City and West Tallaght. In West

Tallaght, turnouts in the 2002 General Election only increased on the 1999 local electoral turnout levels by 5.9% in Ballinascorney and by 11.1% in the Tallaght-Jobstown. In Inner City there were minimal turnout variations associated with the DEDs of Merchants Quay F (5.5%), Rotunda B (9.4%), Royal Exchange B (10.9%), Merchants Quay A (11.1%), Ushers B (11.3%) and Ushers F (11.6%). Small turnout variations were also associated with the Phoenix Park and Cherry Orchard areas. A factor common to all of these areas was that they were generally low turnout, socially deprived areas and the level of difference involved here could be a function of the low general election turnouts. Candidate effects may also have had an impact. The presence of local candidates in certain areas for the 1999 local elections probably had the effect of pushing up local electoral turnouts in these areas to higher levels than would have been expected.

7.4 STATISTICAL ANALYSES OF DUBLIN TURNOUTS

Correlation Analysis

The literature review in Chapter 2 listed a number of factors that were hypothesised to have an influence on turnout rates. Certain factors, such as age, marriage and home ownership were found elsewhere to be associated with higher turnout, while turnouts were predicted to be lower in areas characterised by high levels of social exclusion, residential mobility and young voters. This section will analyse whether such patterns applied to the Dublin region, with a specific focus on the associations between turnout variation and social exclusion related factors. The generally consistent pattern of higher turnouts in settled, middle class areas and lower turnouts in working class or socially deprived areas, as outlined in Section 7.3, suggest that socio-structural factors have a significant impact on the Dublin turnout rates.

	GE 97	LE 99	DSC BE	GE 02
Number of Cases	174	134	34	200
Demography				
Male	-0.32**	-0.34**	-0.08	-0.26**
Married	0.49**	0.40**	0.80**	0.51**
Single	-0.43**	-0.41**	-0.71**	-0.46**
Lone Parent families	-0.66**	-0.50**	-0.73**	-0.68**
15-24 as % of electorate	-0.40**	-0.45**	-0.50**	-0.41**
25-44 as % of electorate	-0.27**	-0.36**	-0.66**	-0.37**
45-64 as % of electorate	0.45**	0.45**	0.56**	0.48**
65+ as % of electorate	0.24**	0.38**	0.52**	0.33**
45+ as % of electorate	0.45**	0.54**	0.71**	0.52**
Education				
No Formal, Primary or Lower Secondary	-0.48**	-0.35**	-0.37*	-0.40**
Upper Secondary	0.74**	0.55**	0.69**	0.72**
Third Level	0.23**	0.16	0.17	0.16*
Housing				
Owner Occupied	0.80**	0.71**	0.87**	0.82**
Local Authority Rented	-0.74**	-0.65**	-0.77**	-0.75**
Private Rented	-0.13	-0.19*	-0.29	-0.19**
House built before 1960	0.16*	0.25**	0.02	0.25**
House built after 1980	-0.25**	-0.27**	-0.05	-0.29**
Religion				
Catholic	-0.05	-0.02	-0.02	0.02
Social Class				
Social Class 1	0.07	0.21*	-0.05	0.03
Social Class 2	0.28**	0.33**	0.20	0.18*
Social Class 5	-0.34**	-0.36**	-0.29	-0.22**
Social Class 6	-0.37**	-0.36**	-0.38**	-0.25**
Occupational				
Manufacturing	-0.33**	-0.28**	-0.27	-0.27**
Building	-0.62**	-0.47**	-0.53**	-0.59**
Clerical	0.73**	0.61**	0.71**	0.72**
Administration	0.58**	0.51**	0.44*	0.56**
Transport	-0.24**	-0.21*	-0.14	-0.16*
Sales	0.39**	0.26**	0.48**	0.37**
Professional	0.21**	0.16	0.07	0.12
Services	-0.64**	-0.54**	-0.58**	-0.67**
White Collar ³ employees	0.49**	0.39**	0.36**	0.42**
Blue Collar ⁴ & Services	-0.48**	-0.40**	-0.36**	-0.41**
Population Change				
Population Change, 1996-2002	-0.33**	-0.37**	-0.42**	-0.37**
Unemployment				
Unemployment Rate	-0.69**	-0.55**	-0.69**	-0.69**

Table 7.25: Correlations between general, local and by-election turnouts and socio-economic and demographic variables in Dublin. (Note **: p<0.05, *: p<0.01)

³ Percentage of Clerical, Administration, Sales and Professional employees combined.

⁴ Percentage of Manufacturing, Building and Transport employees combined.

	Nice Ref 01 168	Abor Ref 02 168	Nice Ref 02 165
Number of Cases			
Demography			
Male	-0.36**	-0.34**	-0.36**
Married	0.42**	0.52**	0.53**
Single	-0.35**	-0.42**	-0.46**
Lone parent families	-0.67**	-0.75**	-0.75**
15-24 as % of electorate	-0.43**	-0.38**	-0.47**
25-44 as % of electorate	-0.40**	-0.39**	-0.40**
45-64 as % of electorate	0.33**	0.38**	0.38**
65+ as % of electorate	0.44**	0.35**	0.43**
45+ as % of electorate	0.55**	0.50**	0.57**
Education			
No Formal, Primary or Lower Secondary	-0.55**	-0.54**	-0.47**
Upper Secondary	0.81**	0.83**	0.79**
Third Level	0.31**	0.28**	0.22**
Housing			
Owner Occupied	0.85**	0.89**	0.88**
Local Authority Rented	-0.81**	-0.82**	-0.81**
Private Rented	-0.02	-0.09	-0.13
House built before 1960	0.22**	0.17**	0.19**
House built after 1980	-0.25**	-0.22**	-0.24**
Religion			
Catholic	-0.15	-0.13	-0.07
Social Class			
Social Class 1	0.08	0.09	0.05
Social Class 2	0.19*	0.20*	0.13
Social Class 5	-0.21**	-0.22**	-0.16*
Social Class 6	-0.23**	-0.22**	-0.18*
Occupational			
Manufacturing	-0.44**	-0.38**	-0.32**
Building	-0.70**	-0.69**	-0.67**
Clerical	0.81**	0.81**	0.77**
Administration	0.69**	0.66**	0.62**
Transport	-0.34**	-0.29**	-0.21*
Sales	0.45**	0.47**	0.40**
Professional	0.30**	0.25**	0.19*
Services	-0.74**	-0.75**	-0.71**
White Collar employees	0.58**	0.54**	0.48**
Blue Collar & Services	-0.57**	-0.54**	-0.47**
Population Change			
Population Change, 1996-2002	-0.38**	-0.43**	-0.41**
Unemployment			
Unemployment Rate	-0.78**	-0.80**	-0.78**

Table 7.26: Correlations between referendum turnouts and socio-economic and demographic variables in Dublin. (Note **: p<0.05, *: p<0.01)

Tables 7.25 and 7.26 shows that many socio-economic and demographic variables had significant associations with turnout in the Dublin region. However, it is important not to attribute a causal relationship between turnout and these factors based on significant correlations, as one must be mindful of the ecological fallacy and the possibility of a spurious relationship caused by a third, unknown, factor.

Turnouts for all election types are associated with age, gender and marital status. The correlations in Table 7.25 and 7.26 shows a positive association between the percentage female, married and aged 45, and over, populations in Dublin and a negative association with the percentage male, single and young voter populations, as well as with the proportion of lone parent families. These mirror the findings of other researchers, as noted in the review of the literature in Chapter 2. They also mirror Whitely et al.'s (2001) ecological analysis of turnout variance for the 2001 General Election in Britain, which found a strong negative relation between turnout rates and the proportion of lone parent families in a constituency. This factor was expected to seriously depress turnout rates given that "*lone-parent families are generally more deprived than other types of families*" (Whitely et al., 2001: 215).

The correlation analysis found a strong, positive, association between educational attainment and turnout, also reflecting the findings of the electoral literature. There was also a strong relationship between turnout and the housing characteristics of an area. Mirroring Whitely et al.'s (2001) analysis of the 2001 British General Election, the correlates of turnout in Tables 7.25 and 7.26 associate low turnouts with high proportions of local authority rented housing, newer housing and private rented housing. Turnout is positively associated with high proportions of owner occupancy and older housing.

The correlation analysis suggests that the social class characteristics of an area will have some influence on turnout rates. While the relationship between turnout and Social Class 1 is weak, there is a strong positive relation between turnout and Social Class 2 and a significant negative relation between turnout and Social Classes 5 and 6. There are negative associations between turnout and the proportion of blue-collar employees and unemployed people, while there is a significant positive association between turnout and the white-collar occupational categories.

Regression Analysis

Regression analysis, modelling the influence that socio-economic or demographic variables may have had on turnouts in the elections held in the 1997-2002 period, suggests that a considerable amount of turnout variance in these elections may be accounted for by such socio-structural variables. The type of regression used for this analysis was a stepwise regression model, in which the variables were entered in a stepwise manner and then removed from the model if these factors were not proven to be significant. Separate regression analyses were carried out for each of the different elections that were held during the 1997-2002 period. The factors entered into the stepwise regression models were the factors listed in Table 7.25 and 7.26 for the correlation analysis.

A number of different factors were selected for the different models. These were the proportion of single people, people with upper secondary education and white collar employees in the population, the proportion of people aged 45, and over, and aged 65, and

over, in the electorate, and the proportion of people living in owner occupied housing and new housing. However, there is a high degree of multicollinearity amongst the different independent variables in these models, with significant correlations between the most significant variable, owner occupied housing and single people ($p = -0.53$), voters aged 45, and over ($p = 0.42$), upper secondary education ($p = 0.83$) and white collar employment ($p = 0.45$). This raises the possibility of the coefficient estimates in the different models becoming inflated.

Further regression analyses were built using independent variables that were not themselves strongly correlated with one another. Owner occupied housing and the percentage of voters aged 65, and over, were kept as independent variables, with a third variable, population change between 1996 and 2002, added to all these models, apart from the 1997 General Election model.

	General Elect. 97	Local Elect 99	Nice Ref 01	Abort Ref 02	General Elect 02	Nice Ref 02
Number of Cases	174	134	168	168	200	165
Constant	39.44	18.94	18.18	24.16	40.00	26.49
	(36.16)	(15.45)	(17.7)	(22.39)	(35.40)	(24.52)
65+ as % of electorate	0.14	0.31	0.25	0.12	0.21	0.23
	(2.73)	(5.96)	(4.87)	(2.20)	(4.40)	(4.21)
Owner Occupied housing	0.25	0.17	0.25	0.31	0.25	0.29
	(18.49)	(11.58)	(17.47)	(21.03)	(18.81)	(19.10)
Population change between 1996-2002	-	-0.05	-0.06	-0.08	-0.07	-0.08
		(-2.70)	(-2.77)	(-3.57)	(-4.43)	(-3.72)
Adjusted R²	0.69	0.63	0.76	0.81	0.72	0.80

Table 7.27: Aggregate data analysis of turnouts in Dublin, between 1997 and 2002.
[Note: The main entry for each variable is the B coefficient, the italicised figure beside it (in brackets) is the t-value. T-values in excess of 2.02 are significant at p=0.05.]

The revised models again shows that adjusted R² values tended to be higher for the models predicting referenda turnout variance, which suggests that socio-structural factors have a greater bearing on turnouts in referenda than they do in general and local election contests. This is probably because candidate factors have a separate bearing on turnouts in general and local elections, whereas they do not have a bearing in relation to referenda turnouts. The smallest adjusted R² value was for the 1999 local and European elections. It could be suggested that the relatively large number of candidates in the local elections had the effect of dampening the influence that socio-structural factors had on turnout for these elections.

The models suggest that housing tenure, age and residential mobility were the key factors influencing turnout variance in Dublin for these elections. The positive b-coefficients in Table 7.27 suggests that areas with higher proportions of owner occupied housing and voters aged 65, and over, will have higher turnout rates. The negative b-coefficient for population change, in turn, infers that turnouts decreased in line with population increases in an area.

Social Exclusion Regression Modelling

None of the three independent variables selected in the regression models in Table 7.27 were specifically related to socio-economic marginalisation. Owner occupied housing is however, significantly and inversely associated with local authority rented housing, which is one of the key measures of marginalisation. To specifically focus on the impact that socio-economic marginalisation had on Dublin turnouts, five exclusion-related variables were entered into a regression model to detect the influence that social exclusion factors, on their own, had on turnout variations in the Dublin region. These variables were local authority housing,

unemployment, blue collar and services employees, educational disadvantage and lone parent families.

	General Elect. 97	Local Elect 99	Nice Ref 01	Abort Ref 02	General Elect 02	Nice Ref 02
<i>Number of Cases</i>	174	134	168	168	200	165
<i>Constant</i>	67.99	40.36	46.95	57.98	63.50	59.04
	(17.46)	(18.57)	(27.26)	(30.20)	(32.72)	(30.27)
<i>Local authority rented housing</i>	-0.17	-0.13	-0.19	-0.17	-0.15	-0.17
	(-5.41)	(-4.17)	(-6.36)	(-4.95)	(-4.45)	(-4.98)
<i>Unemployment rate</i>	-0.10	-0.09	-0.24	-0.31	-0.21	-0.34
	(-1.02)	(-0.84)	(-2.62)	(-3.09)	(-2.12)	(-3.39)
<i>Blue collar and service employees</i>	-0.37	-0.54	-0.37	-0.27	-0.37	-0.35
	(-3.56)	(-4.61)	(-3.75)	(-2.52)	(-3.58)	(-3.22)
<i>Educational disadvantage⁵</i>	0.30	0.47	0.30	0.24	0.37	0.35
	(3.44)	(4.57)	(3.70)	(2.67)	(4.24)	(3.97)
<i>Lone parent families</i>	-0.21	-0.12	-0.05	-0.20	-0.24	-0.21
	(-2.78)	(-1.50)	(-0.69)	(-2.56)	(-3.12)	(-2.65)
<i>Adjusted R²</i>	0.64	0.50	0.72	0.74	0.62	0.73

Table 7.28: Aggregate data analysis of turnout in Dublin, elections between 1997 and 2002.

[Note: The main entry for each variable is the B coefficient, the italicised figure beside it (in brackets) is the t-value. T-values in excess of 2.02 are significant at p=0.05.]

Table 7.28 illustrates that these exclusion related variables accounted for a considerable degree of turnout variance in the Dublin region, accounting for over half the turnout variance in all these elections. The highest levels of predictive power were associated with referenda turnouts, as with the more general regression models in Table 7.27, with adjusted R² values of 0.72 for the 2001 Nice Treaty, 0.74 for the Abortion Referenda and 0.73 for the 2002 Nice Treaty models.

⁵ Educational disadvantage here is taken to be the percentage of people in the 15+ age category with no formal education, primary education or lower secondary education.

The b-coefficients for the different social exclusion variables tended to be negative in all of the models, with the exception of the educational disadvantage variable. The positive coefficient for educational disadvantage was mirrored by a previous study by Sinnott and Whelan (1991:15-19), which also uncovered a positive coefficient for educational disadvantage when included in a model with other variables. The reason for this could be the higher proportion of older voters in the educationally disadvantaged category, given that free secondary schooling was not introduced in Ireland until the late 1960s. The inverse relationship between educational attainment and age⁶ is probably a key factor, given the strong positive association between age and turnout levels.

The models in Table 7.28 are unsatisfactory, given the small t-values for some variables and the fact that the assumption of no multicollinearity does not hold, given the strong positive correlations between the independent variables. Stepwise regression analyses, which selected local authority rented housing, unemployment and blue collar and services employment as independent variables, also proved unsatisfactory, on the basis of the multicollinearity amongst the independent variables. The only option was to do the analyses with a single variable, local authority housing, which was the most significant of the exclusion-related variables.

Table 7.29 shows that local authority housing, as an indicator of social disadvantage, accounted for between 42% and 67% of turnout variance in the different elections. The adjusted R² values for these models were all smaller than the values for the general models

⁶ There were significant negative correlations between electors aged 45-64 and those who left school aged 17 or 18 ($p = -0.25$), aged 19 or 20 ($p = -0.20$) or after 20 ($p = -0.39$). By contrast, there were positive correlations with those who left school before 15 ($p = 0.16$) or when aged 15 or 16 ($p = 0.23$).

(Table 7.27), which suggests that some proportion of turnout variance for these elections was accounted for by socio-economic and demographic factors, other than those related to social exclusion.

	General Elect. 97	Local Elect 99	Nice Ref 01	Abort Ref 02	General Elect 02	Nice Ref 02
<i>Number of Cases</i>	174	134	168	168	200	165
<i>Constant</i>	61.84 <i>(112.87)</i>	37.06 <i>(55.55)</i>	42.23 <i>(78.87)</i>	50.80 <i>(45.86)</i>	58.98 <i>(103.17)</i>	53.36 <i>(86.54)</i>
<i>Local authority rented housing</i>	-0.27 <i>(-15.60)</i>	-0.19 <i>(-9.82)</i>	-0.30 <i>(-17.75)</i>	-0.35 <i>(-5.08)</i>	-0.28 <i>(-15.76)</i>	-0.34 <i>(-17.56)</i>
<i>Adjusted R²</i>	0.59	0.42	0.65	0.67	0.55	0.65

Table 7.29: Aggregate data analysis of turnout in Dublin, elections between 1997 and 2002.

[Note: The main entry for each variable is the B coefficient, the italicised figure beside it (in brackets) is the t-value. T-values in excess of 2.02 are significant at p=0.05.]

The adjusted R² values for the referendum models declined by 0.11 for the Nice Referendum and 0.14 for the Abortion Referendum turnout, while the R² values fell by 0.21 for the 1999 local elections and 0.17 for the 2002 General Election. The greater declines for the local and general elections, relative to the referenda, suggest that socio-economic and demographic factors, other than those with a specific relation to social exclusion concerns, had a greater bearing on turnout variance in these elections.

The b-coefficients for the local authority rented housing variable were negative for all the elections, suggesting the increasing proportions of council tenancy in an area will depress turnout rates in that area. The most striking example of this is for the Abortion Referendum, where the b-coefficient suggests that an increase of 1% in the proportion of local authority rented housing in an DED would have resulted in a 0.35% decrease in referendum turnouts in that area.

Residual Analysis

The residuals for the different models in Table 7.27 were analysed. The residuals for the different models were mapped so as to determine if there was evidence of spatial autocorrelation amongst the residuals. As noted in Chapter 4, evidence of spatial autocorrelation can lead to questions regarding the robustness of these models, but it can also point towards other factors that need to be taken account of in terms of influences on turnout variance.

1997 General Election

Figure 7.16 shows the residual values for the model predicting turnout variance in the 1997 General Election (as in Table 7.27). There are concentrations of high residual values in different parts of the Dublin region. There is a large concentration of positive residuals in the northern part of the area, encompassing the Glasnevin, Drumcondra, Cabra, Navan Road and North East Inner City areas. High residual DEDs in this area included Botanic C (5.6), Drumcondra South C (5.5), Botanic A (6.3) in the Drumcondra area, as well as Arran Quay D (5.4) and North City (6.2) in the North Inner City. This could be tantamount to an “Ahern-effect”, given that most of these areas fell within Bertie Ahern’s Dublin Central constituency in the 1997 election, while parts of the Glasnevin area fell within the bailiwick of his brother, Noel Ahern. There was another concentration of high positive residual values in the north-eastern part of the region, encompassing the Clontarf areas, which was the bailiwick of Fianna Fáil candidate, Ivor Calelly, with high turnout DEDs here including Clontarf East C (7.8) and Clontarf East D (7.8).

In the southern part of the map, there was concentration of positive residuals in the Rathgar and Milltown areas, taking in the bailiwick of Michael McDowell of the Progressive Democrats. High residual DEDs here included Rathmines East D (8.7), Rathmines East C (8.2) and Rathmines West C (6.0). There were also concentrations of high residuals in the Lucan area in the north-west of the map and the Ringsend and Sandymount areas in the south east. These areas, again would be associated with the bailiwicks of different election candidates, namely Austin Currie (Fine Gael) and Liam Lawlor (Fianna Fáil) in the Lucan area and Ruairí Quinn (Labour), John Gormley (Green Party) and Eoin Ryan (Fianna Fáil) in the Ringsend and Sandymount areas.

There were particular concentrations of negative residuals in different parts of the map, namely the Tallaght, Clondalkin and South West Inner City areas. South West Inner City DEDs, for which the model over-predict turnouts, included Ushers A (-12.2), Ushers D (-10.8), Ushers F (-7.5) and Merchants Quay C (-7.2). DEDs with particularly high negative residual values in the Tallaght and Clondalkin areas included Ballinascorney (-13.7), Clondalkin Village (-14.9), Tallaght-Glenview (-12.1) and Tallaght-Springfield (-10.8).

1999 Local and European Elections

Figure 7.17 contains the map of residuals based on the regression model for the 1999 local elections. This map shows that there was a particularly large cluster of positive residuals in the most southerly parts of the map, taking in the Rathcoole (6.4), Bohernabreena (5.9), Ballyboden (5.9), Ballinascorney (5.1) and Saggart (4.1) areas. Also in the southern part of the map, turnouts were under-predicted by 10.6% in Tallaght-Jobstown and by 5.3% in

Tallaght-Killinardan in the West Tallaght area. Here it can be surmised that the mobilising efforts of local candidates in the elections had the impact of getting higher than expected turnout rates in the local authority estates of West Tallaght. The presence of popular and local left wing candidates in the election would have encouraged more people out to vote in socially deprived, or working class, areas such as Jobstown and Killinardan, than the regression model would have predicted. In particular, the campaigns of Sean Crowe – who was also a candidate in the European Elections – and Mark Daly (both of Sinn Féin) and Mick Billane (then of Labour) appear to have particularly mobilised people West Tallaght to turn out for these elections.

High residual scores were associated with other parts of the Dublin area, namely West Cabra, Inchicore, Lucan village, Ringsend and Drumcondra. All of these areas were the political bailiwicks of one, or more, local election candidates. The West Cabra area was similar to West Tallaght in that the campaign of locally based Sinn Féin candidate, Nicky Kehoe, appears to have mobilised people in this mainly working class area to turn out, over and above the levels predicted on the basis of the area's social characteristics. Actual turnouts exceeded the model's predictions by 10.7% in Cabra West B and by 9.9% in Cabra West A. The higher than expected turnout in Inchicore was related to the campaign of locally based Fine Gael candidate, Catherine Byrne, with turnouts there 7.6% higher than the model predicted. The presence of Drumcondra-based Chris Giblin and Maurice Ahern amongst the candidates in the Cabra-Glasnevin electoral area also pushed up turnouts this area. This is evidenced in the high positive residuals for Botanic B (9.7), Botanic A (9.2) and Drumcondra South C (6.4).

There were particular concentrations of negative residuals in the South West Inner City, Phoenix Park/Chapelizod, Drimnagh and Kimmage areas, as well as in parts of the Clondalkin and north Tallaght areas. Two common factors generally characterised these areas, namely a high degree of population mobility and the lack of a strong local election candidate. Areas with high levels of population mobility, such as the South West Inner City, Kimmage and Chapelizod areas, would have been especially unmotivated in terms of voting in local elections. New people in these areas would have been unaware of local issues and political personalities, while registration problem would have been particularly accentuated in such areas. Most of the negative residual areas did not have any strong, locally based candidates contesting these elections, which meant that campaigning in these areas was less intense than it would have been otherwise. Moreover, local people in these areas would have no candidate that they knew personally and could identify with, which could have encouraged non-voters in the area to turnout.

DEDs with large negative residuals in the Dublin County Borough area included Ushers A (-11.2), Merchants Quay C (-8.8) and Ushers F (-5.7) in the South West Inner City, Crumlin B (-9.3), Crumlin D (-6.4) and Kimmage C (-5.5) in the Drimnagh and Kimmage areas and Chapelizod (-8.0). Tallaght Glenview (-12.0), Clondalkin Village (-7.7), Tallaght-Springfield (-6.8), Clondalkin Rowlagh (-5.9) and Tallaght-Kilnamanagh (-5.3) figured amongst the DEDs in South Dublin that had lower turnouts than those predicted by the regression model.

Nice Treaty Referendum (2001) and Abortion Referendum (2002)

Figures 7.18 and 7.19 illustrate the residual values based on regression analyses of turnouts in the 2001 Nice Treaty and Abortion referenda. The spatial patterns of the residuals in these

maps are quite similar. In general, there are concentrations of positive residuals in the Drumcondra and Clontarf areas on the northside of the city and in the South East Inner City, Sandymount, Rathgar, Clonskeagh and Terenure areas on the southside of the city. Referendum turnouts were under-predicted in Botanic B by 10.4% for the Nice Referendum and 13.3% for the Abortion Referendum. Similarly high residual values were found in Rathmines West C (12.5% for the Nice and 9.1% for the Abortion referenda respectively) on the southside of the city.

Areas in which referenda turnouts were significantly lower than the regression models predicted included Coolock, Donnycarney, Kimmage, Drimangh, Chapelizod, Ballyfermot, the North Docklands and South West Inner City areas. One DED with particularly high residual values was Ushers A, where turnouts were over-predicted by 11.4 % in the Nice Referendum and by 11.0% in the Abortion Referendum. Just as the positive residual areas generally tended to be associated with the middle class parts of the city, a number of these negative residual areas tended to be mainly working class or socially deprived areas. It could be suggested, therefore, that the models did not sufficiently capture the class dimension to the turnout variations in these referenda.

General Election 2002

Figure 7.20 illustrates the spatial patterning of the residuals drawn from the 2002 General Election model, which shows particular concentrations of high and low residuals in different parts of the Dublin area. There were concentrations of positive residuals in Ashtown, West Cabra and Drumcondra in the Dublin Central constituency, Lucan in Dublin Mid West, Rathgar and Sandymount in Dublin South East, Jobstown in Dublin South West, Finglas in

Dublin North West and Clontarf in Dublin North Central. The higher than predicted turnouts in the West Cabra area was linked to the campaign of local Sinn Féin candidate Nicky Kehoe. Turnouts were higher than expected by 9.3% in Cabra West A, by 9.0% in Cabra West B and by 5.6% in Cabra East B. The Drumcondra area was located in the bailiwick of Bertie Ahern, with high residual DEDs in this area including Botanic B (13.3), Botanic A (8.0) and Drumcondra South C (6.9). Ahern won over 40% of the vote in these three DEDs in 2002. Another DED with a particularly high positive residual value in the same constituency was North Dock C (8.0) in the North Docklands area. This was Kehoe's stronghold in the North East Inner City – the bailiwick of Sinn Féin councillor for North Inner City, Christy Burke – and he won 38.3% of the votes there. There was also a concentration of high positive residuals in the northern part of Dublin County Borough, in the Finglas area in the north west of the map, with turnouts higher than predicted by 8.6% in Finglas North A and 8.5% in Finglas North B. This area was associated with the constituency base of Fianna Fáil candidate, Pat Carey, in Dublin North West, who won 42.3% of the vote there. The other major concentration of positive residuals in the northside of Dublin County Borough was in the Clontarf area in the north-eastern part of the maps, with high residual DEDs including Clontarf East A (6.9), Clontarf East C (6.7) and Clontarf East D (5.7). These areas were associated with Dublin North Central bailiwick of Ivor Callely.

In the southside of the city there was a particular concentration of positive residual values in the Rathmines, Milltown and Rathgar area, including DEDs such as Rathmines East C (10.8), Rathmines West C (8.4), Rathmines East D (5.8) and Rathmines West D (5.3). This area was the constituency bailiwick of Michael McDowell in Dublin South East. In the same constituency there were concentrations of positive residuals in the Sandymount, Ringsend and

South East Inner City areas. These areas were associated with the constituency bailiwicks of Eoin Ryan, John Gormley, and Ruairí Quinn, as well as Daithí Doolan of Sinn Féin. Pembroke East A (11.9), Pembroke East B (6.1) and Pembroke East C (5.2) were the high turnout DEDs in the Ringsend and Sandymount areas, while high turnout DEDs in the South East Inner City included Royal Exchange A (6.8) and Mansion House A (6.1). Doolan won 21.4% in Pembroke A, 20.1% in Royal Exchange A and 24.6% in Mansion House A, although he just won 7.4% of the total constituency vote. It is likely thus that the presence of a Sinn Féin candidate, with a South East Inner City base, in the constituency encouraged working class people in these areas, who would otherwise have abstained, to vote in this election. Sinn Féin had not contested Dublin South East in the 1997 General Election.

In South Dublin County there was a concentration of positive residuals in the West Tallaght area, with turnouts higher than the model predicted by 5.1% in Jobstown, by 3.1% in Fettercairn and by 2.3% in Killinardan. These higher than predicted turnouts in the West Tallaght DEDs are believed to be a direct result of the campaign of local Sinn Féin candidate, Sean Crowe, in the Dublin South West constituency, which would have mobilised people in these working class areas to vote in the election. Many of these people probably would not have voted had Crowe, or Sinn Féin, not contested Dublin South West and indeed a number of people in the area were reported not to have voted in any election prior to this contest.

Another concentration of positive residuals was associated with the Lucan area, with Lucan-Esker (13.3) and Lucan-St. Helen's (5.3) the high turnout DEDs in this area. This area was a very competitive one, with a number of Lucan based candidates trying to maximise their local vote in the area, namely Paul Gogarty, Joanna Tuffy and Austin Currie, while Mary Harney

also polled well in the area. Gogarty won 22.9% of the votes in these areas, while Harney won 17.3%, Currie won 13.0% and Tuffy won 9.7%. The two Fianna Fáil candidates, John Curran and Des Kelly, both of whom had links to the Lucan area, accounted for 29.2% of the votes there.

There were concentrations of negative residual values in different parts of the Dublin region. In South Dublin County there were two areas with substantial concentrations of negative residuals. The first of these was in the south-western corner of the Dublin region, including Ballinascorney, where turnout was 11.5% lower than was predicted, and parts of east Tallaght, including the Tallaght-Glenview (turnout 8.9% lower) and Tallaght-Springfield (turnout 7.0% lower). There was also a very strong concentration of negative residual values in the Clondalkin area, including the DEDs of Clondalkin Village (-14.0), Clondalkin-Monastery (-7.2), Clondalkin-Moorefield (-8.2) and Clondalkin-Rowlagh (-4.8).

In the Dublin County Borough area, there main concentration of negative residual scores was in the South West Inner City. Turnouts were over-predicted by 14.3% in Ushers A, by 12.8% in Ushers F, by 9.6% in Merchants Quay C, by 5.3% in Ushers B, by 7.3% in Merchants Quay F and by 6.3% in Merchants Quay E. Some DEDs in the North Inner City also had high negative residual values, namely Rotunda B (-8.5) and Arran Quay B (-8.1). There was a concentration of negative residual values also in the extreme north-east of the Dublin County Borough area, encompassing the Donaghmede area, including the DEDs of Grange C (-8.5), Grange A (-7.2) and Grange E (-4.0).

The other major concentrations of high negative residuals in the Dublin County Borough were the Drimnagh and Kimmage area to the south of the Grand Canal and the Ballyfermot and Cherry Orchard area in the west of the Dublin County Borough area. DEDs with particularly high residual values included Crumlin D (-9.5) and Crumlin C (-8.7) in the Drimnagh area and Kylemore (-6.7), Cherry Orchard A (-5.7) and Cherry Orchard C (-5.6) in the Ballyfermot area.

A number of the areas that were marked by high negative residual values tended to be characterised by high levels of residential mobility, with notable examples of this including the Dublin Inner City and Kimmage areas. Most of these areas also lacked a strong local candidate and political mobilisation in these areas, as a result, as it was in the positive residual areas. This meant that turnouts in these areas were lower than they would have been had strong candidates, local to these areas, contested the general election.

Discussion

The likelihood is that a number of factors may be involved in terms of accounting for low residual values and that these different factors may be election-specific. For instance, candidate effects only had a bearing on residual values for the general and local elections. Thus the spatial patterning of the residual values in Figures 7.16–7.20 differs for each of the election types, although there was a strong similarity between the residual maps for the two referenda, as evidenced in a comparison of Figures 7.18 and 7.19. Some DEDs had negative residuals in certain elections and positive in others and these changes usually reflected changes in the nature of political competition in an area. Mansion House A, in the South East Inner City, for instance, had a negative residual score for the 1997 General Election (-5.8).

Locally based, Sinn Féin candidate, Daithí Doolan contested the subsequent local and general elections, and residual values for these elections were positive in Mansion House A (7.8 for the local elections and 6.1 for the 2002 General Election).

There is, that said, some consistency in the residual maps for the different elections, as certain areas were positive residual areas for most of these elections, whereas other areas tended to be associated with negative residuals in all of the contests. Drumcondra, Clontarf, Sandymount, Rathgar and Lucan generally figured as high positive residual areas for all the elections held in this period, whereas the South West Inner City, North Clondalkin, Donaghmede, Drimnagh and Kimmage areas generally tended to be associated with negative residuals in these areas. It could be suggested that there may be aspects of the political cultures of these areas that particularly predisposes them to have higher or lower turnouts than would be expected, based on the social and demographic characteristics of these areas.

Analysing Turnout Variations Between Election Types

The previous section suggested that socio-structural factors had a greater bearing on turnout variance in referenda than in general and local elections, based on a comparison of the R^2 values for the different models. Section 7.3 also showed that significant turnout variations existed between different types of elections, as Figures 7.13, 7.14 and 7.15 illustrate, with a suggestion that referenda turnouts were relatively higher in the more middle class parts of Dublin. This section will analyse turnout variations between the different election types, so as to determine whether these were being influenced by socio-economic and demographic factors, but particularly those with a relation to socio-economic marginalisation.

	Local Elect – Av Refer	General Elect – Av Refer
Demography		
Male	0.09	0.12
Married	-0.26*	0.25**
Single	0.12	-0.30**
15-24 as % of electorate	0.05	-0.04
25-44 as % of electorate	0.19	-0.06
45-64 as % of electorate	-0.20	0.21**
65+ as % of electorate	-0.04	-0.08
Education		
No Formal, Primary or Lower Secondary	0.56**	0.49**
Upper Secondary	-0.60**	-0.26**
Third Level	-0.45**	-0.47*
Housing		
Owner Occupied	-0.48**	-0.10
Local Authority Rented	0.54**	0.21*
Private Rented	-0.19	-0.43**
House built before 1960	0.16	0.23**
House built after 1980	0.03	0.01
Religion		
Catholic	0.32**	0.44**
Social Class		
Social Class 1	-0.02	-0.25*
Social Class 2	-0.17	-0.22**
Social Class 5	0.15	0.19*
Social Class 6	0.07	0.07
Occupational		
Manufacturing	0.37**	0.49**
Building	0.48**	0.36**
Clerical	-0.55**	-0.28**
Administration	-0.53**	-0.35**
Transport	0.40**	0.51**
Sales	-0.41**	-0.34**
Professional	-0.33**	-0.52**
Services	0.56**	0.29**
White Collar	-0.50**	-0.49**
Blue Collar and Services	0.49**	0.49**
Population Change		
Population change, 1996-2002	0.16	0.12
Unemployment		
Unemployment Rate	0.61**	0.35**

Table 7.30: Correlations between turnout variations between elections (1999-2002) and socio-economic and demographic factors in Dublin. (: p < 0.01, *: p < 0.05)**

Table 7.30 shows a correlation analysis of turnout variations between election types. This involves (a) the difference between turnout in the 1999 local and European elections and the average turnout for the Nice Treaty and Abortion referenda, and (b) the difference between turnout in the 2002 General Election and the average turnout for the Nice Treaty and Abortion referenda.

Table 7.30 offers some evidence that the socio-economic composition of voters in referenda differed somewhat to that for general and local elections, with some socio-economic factors inferred to have decidedly election-specific influences on Dublin turnout rates. Age, gender, population change and social class were not significantly correlated with turnout variations between election types, but housing tenure, religion, educational standards and employment status were. Positive associations between turnout variation and the factors of local authority rented housing, unemployment, educational disadvantage and blue-collar employment infers that general and local electoral turnouts will be considerably higher than referenda turnouts in the more working class and socially deprived areas. By contrast, negative correlations for owner occupied housing, high educational levels and white collar employment infer that referendum turnout will be higher than local election turnout and only slightly lower than general election turnout in the more middle class areas.

This would appear to suggest that there are different motivations at play in determining working class and middle class turnout levels for specific electoral contests. The higher local and general election turnouts, relative to referenda turnouts, in working class areas could suggest that working class voters are more likely to be encouraged to vote on the bases of political personalities or local issues. The relatively higher referenda turnouts, relative to local

election turnout, in middle class areas may suggest that personalities and local, or national, "bread and butter" issues do not excite this section of the electorate to the same degree. Rather, larger, more complex issues, which would be addressed in referenda, appear to offer higher levels of motivation to the middle class electorate in terms of encouraging them to vote.

Regression analysis was used to detect the major influences on differences between turnouts in referenda and those in general and local elections. Stepwise regression selected upper secondary election and unemployment as predictors of local election-referenda turnout variations and blue collar and services employment and private rented housing as predictors of general election-referenda turnout variations. However, there were significant correlations between upper secondary education and unemployment ($p = -0.80$) and between blue collar and services employment and private rented housing ($p = -0.51$). The least significant variables in the two models were deleted to ensure there was no multicollinearity between the independent variables. This left unemployment as the sole predictor for the local election-referenda turnout variation model and blue collar and services employment as sole predictor for the model concerned with general election-referenda turnout variation, as Table 7.33 illustrates.

The positive b-coefficients for unemployment and blue collar and services employment suggests that increasing proportions of these were associated with higher local, or general, election turnout relative to referenda turnouts in the Dublin area. Thus, the higher the unemployment rate the higher local election turnout would be relative to those for referenda,

while higher proportions of blue collar and services employment were associated with higher general election turnouts relative to referenda turnouts, based on Table 7.31.

	LE turnout – Ref. Turnout	GE turnout – Ref. turnout
<i>Number of Cases</i>	91	168
<i>Constant</i>	-11.00 (-0.00)	8.77 (12.75)
<i>Unemployment Rate</i>	0.26 (7.3)	-
<i>Blue collar/services</i>	-	0.11 (7.3)
<i>Adjusted R²</i>	0.37	0.24

Table 7.31: Aggregate data analysis of turnout variations between elections in Dublin.
[Note: The main entry for each variable is the B coefficient, the italicised figure beside it (in brackets) is the t-value. T-values in excess of 2.02 are significant at p=0.05.]

The higher adjusted R² value for the model concerned with local election-referenda turnout variations infers that socio-economic factors had more influence in determining variations between local election and referenda turnout than for general election-referenda variations. This could suggest, in some cases, that working class populations were relatively more susceptible to be motivated by local election issues and personalities than they were by general election issues and personalities. Many working class areas did not have a strong general election candidate hailing from their area in 2002, with such areas including the South West Inner City, Ballymun and North Clondalkin. People in working class areas might also have been more *au fait* with the more concrete local issues than they were with some of the general election issues.

Friends and Neighbours Effect on Turnout

In Chapter 2, it was suggested that, just as there could be a friends and neighbours effect on voting preferences (Parker, 1982 and Taylor and Johnson, 1979), it was also likely that this effect could lead to increased turnout rates in areas in which a local candidate was contesting

an election. This suggests that the residual variance, left unaccounted for by the regression models in Table 7.27 and 7.29, could be, in part, accounted for by this effect. The analysis of the residuals for the local and general elections between 1997 and 2002 would seem to suggest this, given the strong association between DEDs with high residual scores and DEDs in which election candidates were based. Of course, the friends and neighbours effect would have no influence on referendum voting. However, it is likely that voters within a politician's bailiwick might be more likely to vote if political parties were making a sustained effort to get out the vote in such contests, as was the case with the October 2002 Nice Treaty Referendum.

To test whether the friends and neighbours effect had a bearing on turnout variance, over and above those of the socio-economic and demographic factors selected in Tables 7.27 and 7.29, a dummy variable was created in which DEDs with local candidates were awarded a score of 1 and DEDs with no candidates were given a score of 0. However the inclusion of this variable in a regression model, predicting general election turnout in 2002, does not improve the predictive power of this model, as Table 7.32 illustrates.

	General Election 2002	Nice Referendum 2002
Number of Cases	207	165
Constant	36.01 (36.53)	26.39 (26.61)
65+ as % of electorate	0.20 (4.32)	0.23 (4.16)
Owner Occupied housing	0.25 (19.18)	0.29 (19.02)
Population change, 1996-2002	-0.07 (-4.35)	-0.08 (-3.64)
Friends and Neighbours dummy	0.63 (0.75)	0.81 (0.91)
Adjusted R²	0.72	0.80

Table 7.32: Aggregate data analysis of turnouts in Dublin, 2002, including friends and neighbours dummy variable as fourth predictor.

[Note: The main entry for each variable is the B coefficient, the italicised figure beside it (in brackets) is the t-value. T-values in excess of 2.02 are significant at p=0.05.]

The R² values remain the same as in the original model in Table 7.27 at 0.72 for the general election and at 0.80 for the referendum. The b-coefficients for the friends and neighbours dummy are positive for both of the elections, inferring that the effect does involve an increase in turnout rates, but these increases are minimal, ranging from 0.6% for the general election to 0.8% for the referendum.

	General Election 2002	Nice Referendum 2002
<i>Number of Cases</i>	209	165
<i>Constant</i>	58.80 (96.61)	52.87 (78.90)
<i>Local authority rented housing</i>	-0.28 (-16.18)	-0.33 (-17.52)
<i>Friends and neighbours dummy</i>	1.07 (1.03)	2.10 (1.81)
<i>Adjusted R²</i>	0.56	0.66

Table 7.33: Aggregate data analysis of turnout in Dublin, 2002, including friends and neighbours dummy variable.

[Note: The main entry for each variable is the B coefficient, the italicised figure beside it (in brackets) is the t-value. T-values in excess of 2.02 are significant at p=0.05.]

The social exclusion-based regression models, as listed in Table 7.29, are slightly improved by the addition of a friends and neighbours dummy variable, with the R² values for the general election model increasing from 0.55 to 0.56 and for the referendum model increasing from 0.65 to 0.66. This would seem to suggest that the presence of a local candidate in socially deprived, or working class, local authority housing areas, will have an influence on turnout levels. However, the improvement is marginal.

The generally weak results arising from the inclusion of the friends and neighbours dummy in these models suggest that the friends and neighbours effect has not a significant influence on Dublin turnout levels, once socio-economic and demographic factors are accounted for. The weakness of this result, however, may be a result of the mismatch between the boundaries of

DEDs and those of politicians' bailiwicks. In some of the larger electoral divisions, such as Clondalkin Village or Lucan Heights, the bailiwicks of Dublin-based politicians often amount to areas smaller than those of DEDs and thus assigning the friends and neighbours effect linked to an individual politician to an entire DED, as is the case with the dummy variables, probably over-estimates the influence of this effect. This, in turn, makes for weaker statistical findings. Against that, in other parts of the city bailiwicks may amount to areas greater in size than individual DEDs and thus the use of dummy variables may under-estimate the extent of the effect.

7.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter has shown that very significant spatial variations in the turnout rate existed within the Dublin region for all elections held in the 1997-2001 period. Moreover, the statistical analyses engaged in strongly infer that such variations may have been strongly influenced by the social characteristics of areas within Dublin.

The chapter opened with an analysis of the political background to the case study areas that this research was particularly focusing on. High levels of political competition were observed for these constituencies, with Independents and small political parties faring much better in these areas than in the rural parts of Ireland, which were largely dominated by Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, as Section 8.2 will illustrate. The literature on voter turnout suggests that, in general, turnouts should be higher in areas with stronger levels of political competition, yet, as Chapter 5 illustrated, turnouts for general and local elections generally prove to be higher in rural constituencies. Such a finding directly conflicts with the findings of the electoral

literature, although the particular concentration of the Irish electoral system on competition between candidates, rather than political parties, may partially account for this.

The lower turnouts in the Dublin region may result from higher levels of residential mobility in the city, as well as the higher level of social-stratification in the Dublin area, which concentrates disadvantage in certain parts of the city. This may exacerbate a sense of alienation from the political system in these areas, as well as mirroring Oliver's (1999) theory that increasing levels of economic segregation in a city results in lower levels of civic participation. There may also be a more politicised culture in rural Ireland, relative to Dublin, arising from the heightened importance of the local media, which conveys information about local political issues and personalities, in the more rural constituencies.

There were significant spatial variations in turnouts across the Dublin region for all election types, as the analysis of the geography of Dublin turnouts illustrated. Differences in turnout rates, ranging to as high as 30-35 percent, existed between the areas with the highest and lowest turnouts, at a DED level. Naturally, even greater variations existed when smaller areas were used in the marked register analyses. Turnout differences were strongly associated with the social structure of the city, with higher turnouts generally associated with the more middle class or settled areas and lower turnouts with the more working class or socially deprived parts of the city.

There were some exceptions to this relationship, as illustrated by the relatively high turnouts for the 1999 local elections and 2002 General Election in some working class areas, such as West Cabra. The presence of a strong local candidate – usually from Sinn Féin – often had the

effect of mobilising previously disaffected electorates in a number of working class areas in these elections. The residual analyses in Section 7.4 suggested that the presence of locally based Sinn Féin candidates had the effect of boosting turnouts in working class areas, such as West Tallaght, West Cabra and the South East Inner City in these elections. The marked register analyses also showed that there were exceptions to the association between low turnout and socio-economic marginalisation. Relatively high turnouts were found for some working class areas, including West Cabra and some Dublin Corporation flat complexes in the South Inner City, in the local elections. These higher than expected turnouts, again, resulted from a local candidate contesting these elections. The marked register analysis found that some of the lowest turnout rates in Dublin were often new housing areas, populated mainly by middle class people. Low turnouts were found for a number of the new private, ‘gated’, apartments in the Dublin Inner City, as well as for the “starter home” housing estates in suburban parts of Dublin, such as South Lucan. These low turnouts were a result of the higher levels of residential mobility in these areas, which also had implications for the accuracy of the electoral register in these areas. The resultant higher proportion of younger voters in these areas also depressed turnouts in these areas, as did the low level of interaction between the new residents and the local community, with this factor being particularly important in terms of influencing local electoral turnouts.

There were significant variations between the turnouts in the different types of elections. In general, turnouts were highest for general elections. General election turnouts were significantly higher than referendum turnouts in the working class parts of Dublin, but were only slightly higher in the more middle class areas.

Turnouts were also higher for general elections than for local elections, with the difference in the turnouts being more significant, in this case, for the more middle class areas. Local election turnouts were generally higher than referenda turnouts in the more working class areas, but referenda turnouts were higher than local election turnouts in the more middle class areas and significantly so in some cases. These findings were supported by the statistical analyses, which associated relatively higher local election turnouts with the more working class areas and higher referendum turnouts with middle class areas. The relatively higher turnouts for local elections in the more working class areas was probably because local issues and personalities proved more of a draw for working class voters than the more complex issues in referenda. Referenda issues, however, were more likely to motivate middle class electors, who might be turned off by the more clientilistic politics associated with local elections, to vote.

The statistical analyses show that socio-economic and demographic factors had very strong influences on turnout variations in the Dublin region. Based on the correlation and regression analyses, turnouts were inferred to be higher in areas with higher proportions of older voters, married people, educational attainment, affluence, white collar employment and owner occupied housing. Turnouts, by contrast, were inferred to be lower in areas characterised by higher levels of younger voters, social deprivation, educational disadvantage, rented housing, unemployment and blue collar employment. Based on the regression analyses, referendum turnouts were more likely to be influenced by socio-economic factors, while these factors were less important in determining general, and especially local, election turnout variance. Owner occupied housing appeared to be the most important factor in terms of influencing on

turnout rates, with increased levels of owner occupancy being generally associated with higher turnout rates.

When only social exclusion factors were included in the regression analyses, these factors were shown to have a significant influence on turnout variance for all election types, but especially for referenda. The smaller R^2 value for local electoral turnout variance meant that social exclusion factors had less of an influence on local election turnouts, with the remainder of the turnout variance being accounted for by other factors, such as candidate effects and other more qualitative factors.

Thus the general trend was that significant turnout variations existed within the Dublin region for all election types, with turnouts generally higher in middle class areas and lower in working class areas. This trend was strongly supported by the correlation and regression analyses. There were however some deviations from this trend. Some of the more middle class areas, namely the private apartment complexes in the Dublin Inner City and starter home estates in the suburbs, had very low turnouts for some elections, but particularly for the local elections. By contrast, some socially deprived and working class areas had relatively high turnouts in the local and general elections, largely as a result of strong local candidates, usually representing Sinn Féin, contesting these elections, which had the effect of pushing up turnouts in these areas. Such patterns were also picked up by the residual analyses.

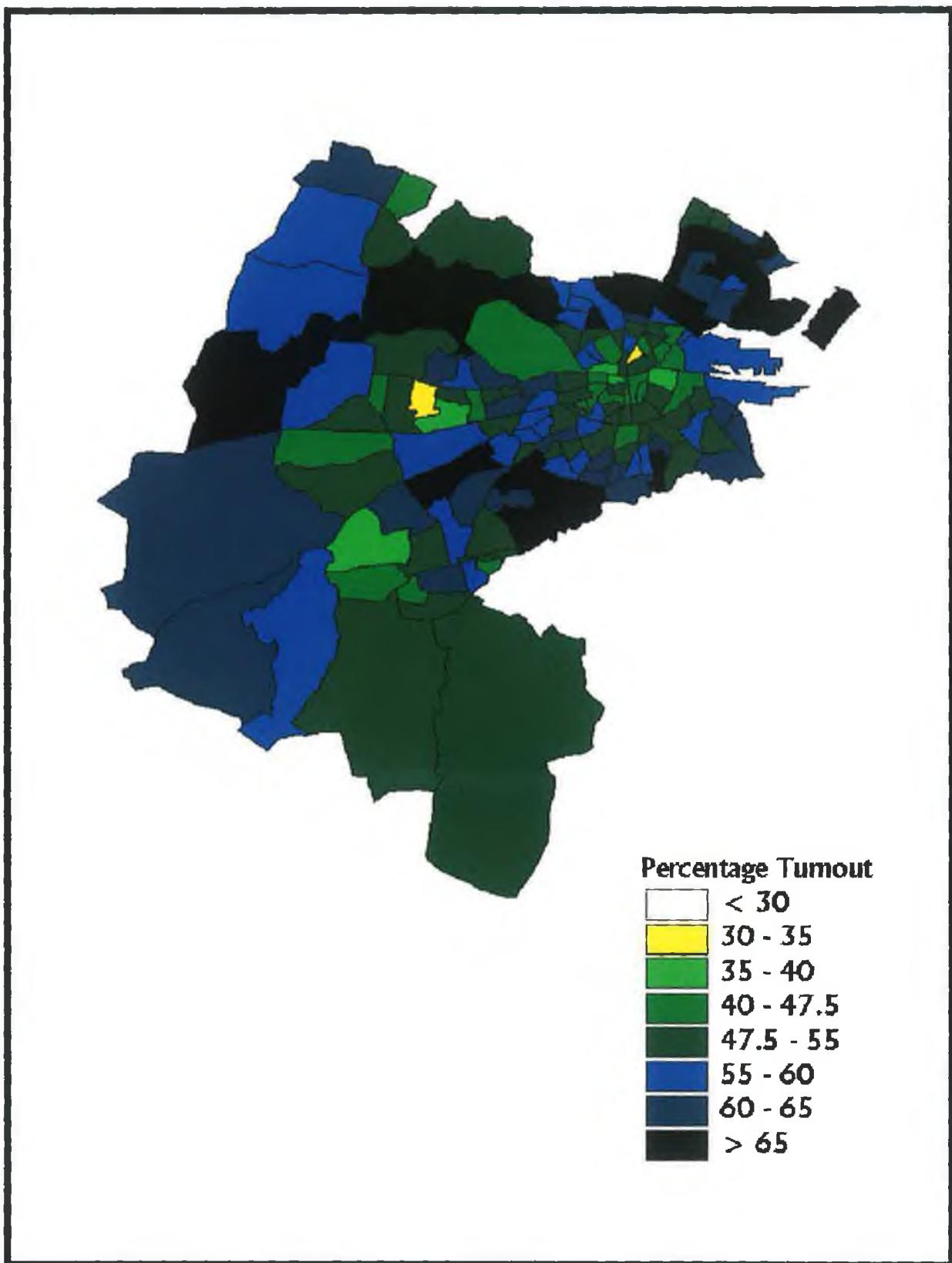


Figure 7.3: Voter turnout in the Dublin region, by district electoral division, for the 1997 General Election.

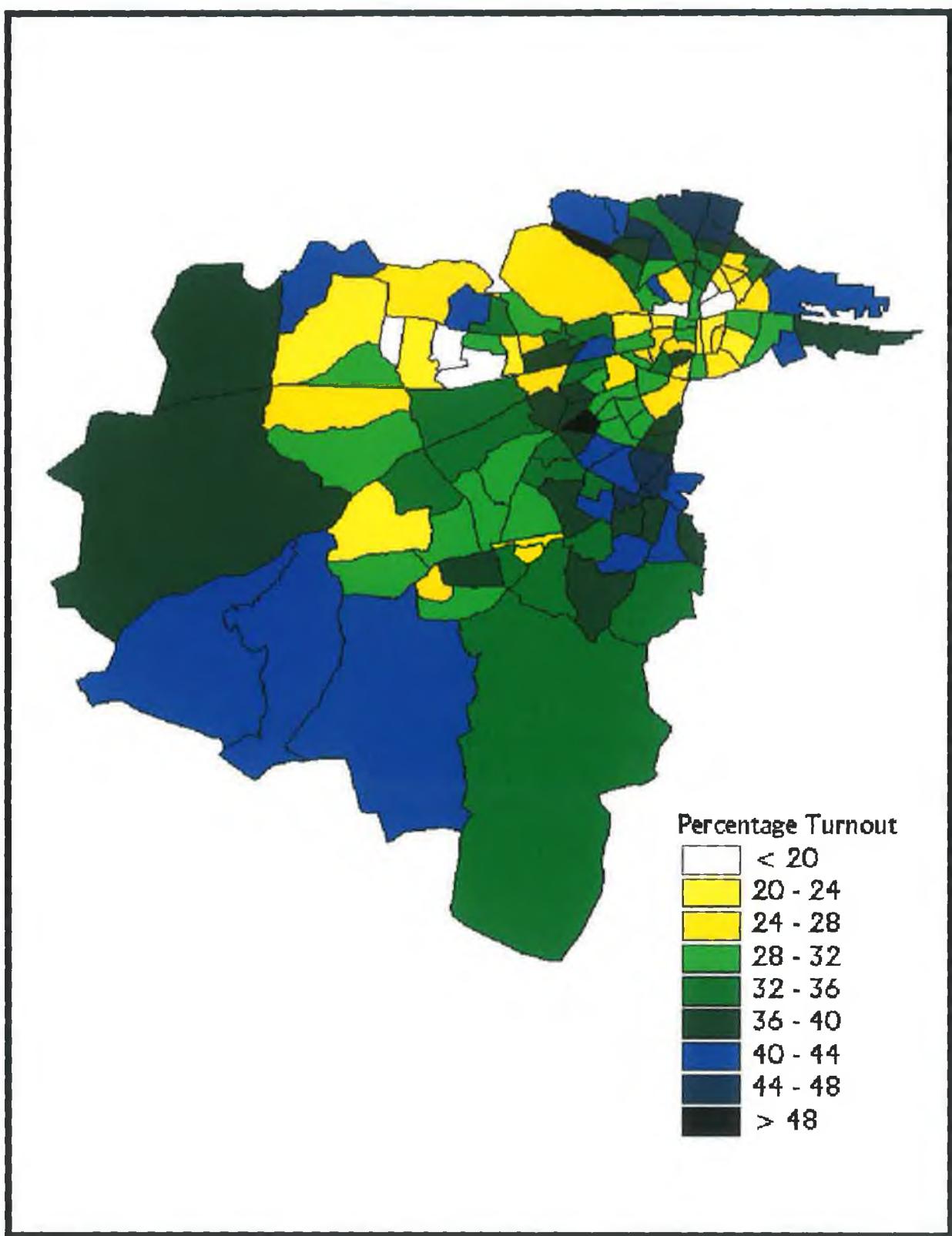


Figure 7.4: Voter Turnout in Dublin, by electoral division, for the 1999 Local and European Elections.

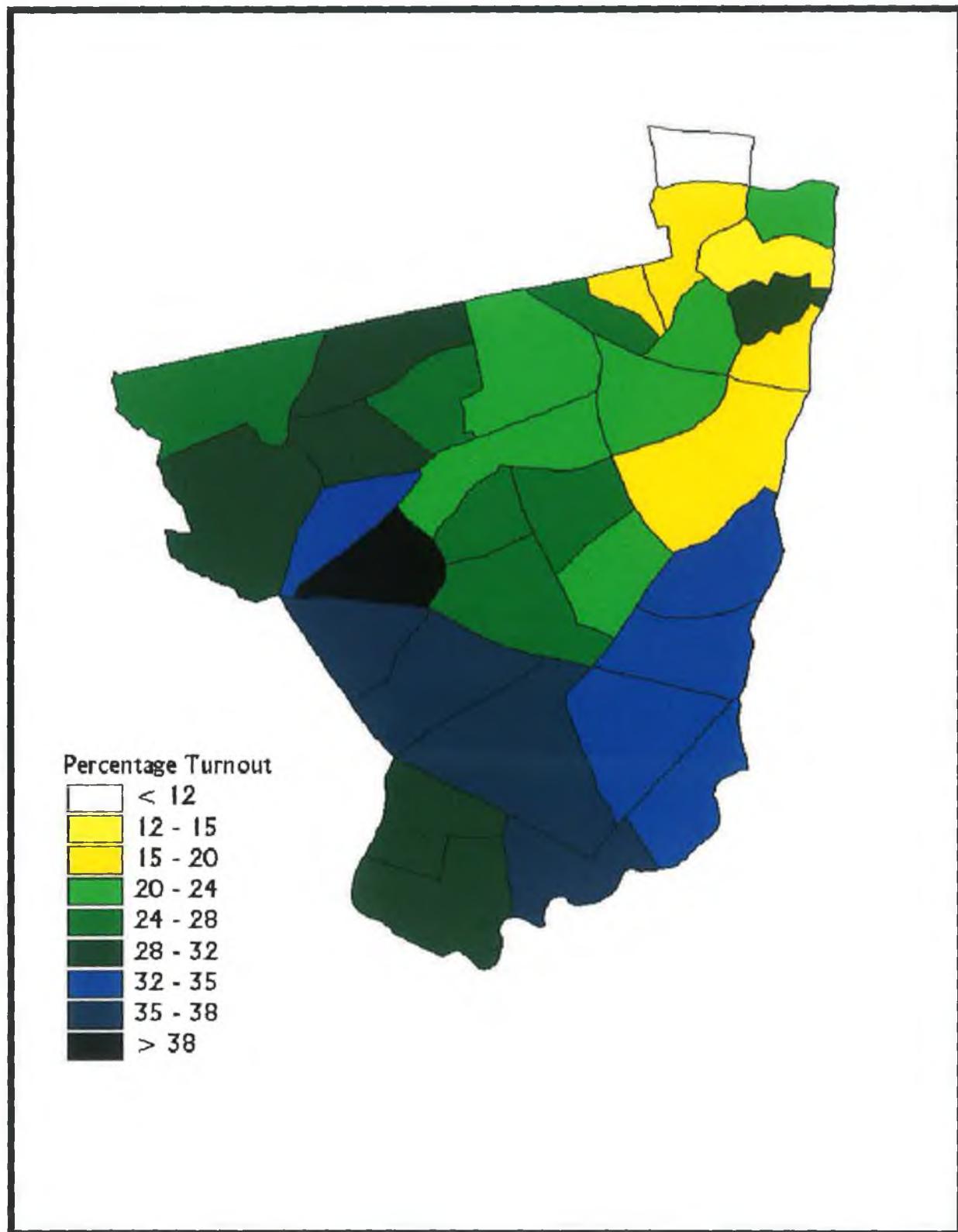


Figure 7.5: Voter turnout, by district electoral division, in the October 1999 Dublin South Central By-election.

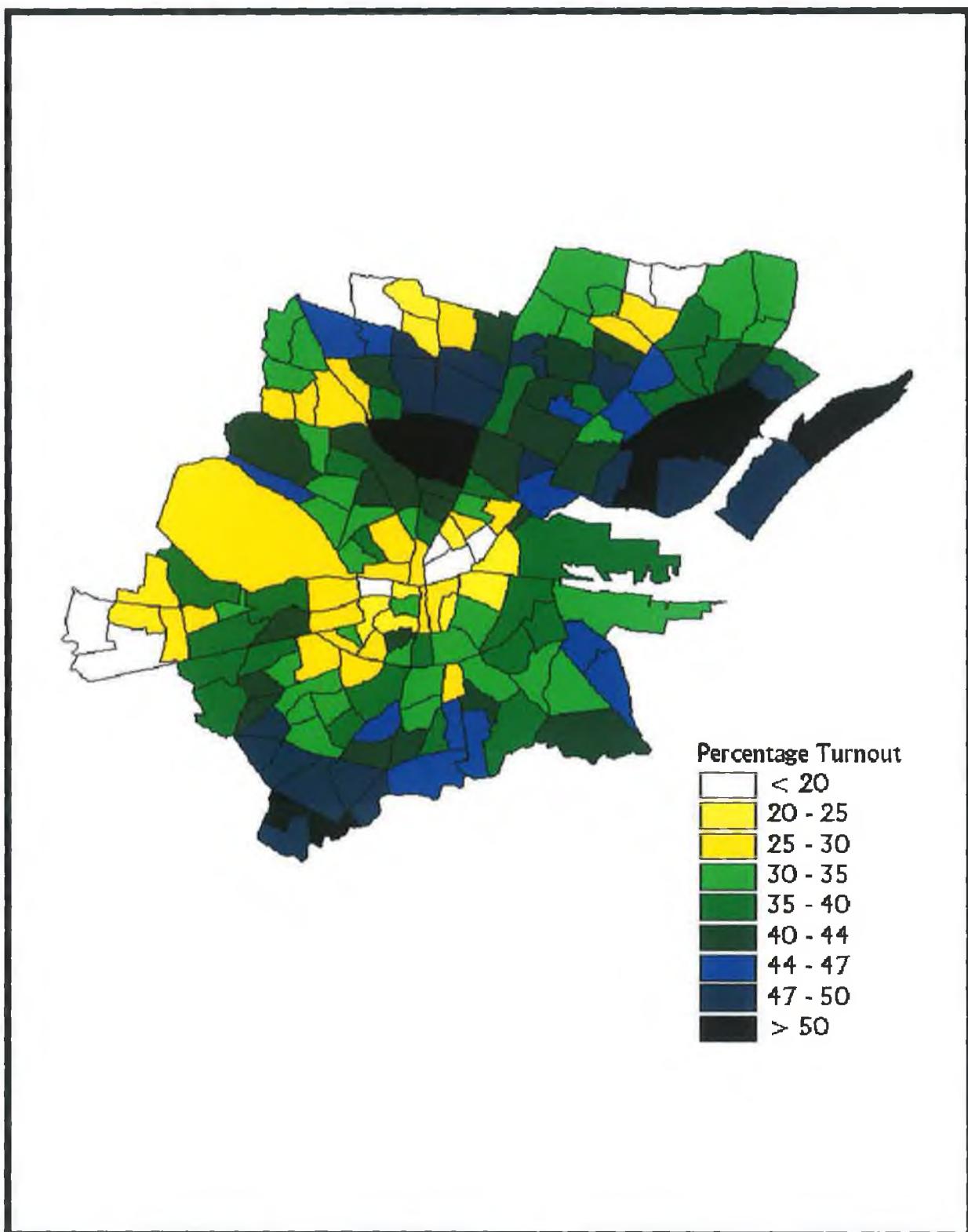


Figure 7.6: Voter turnout, by district electoral division, in Dublin County Borough for the June 2001 Nice Referendum.

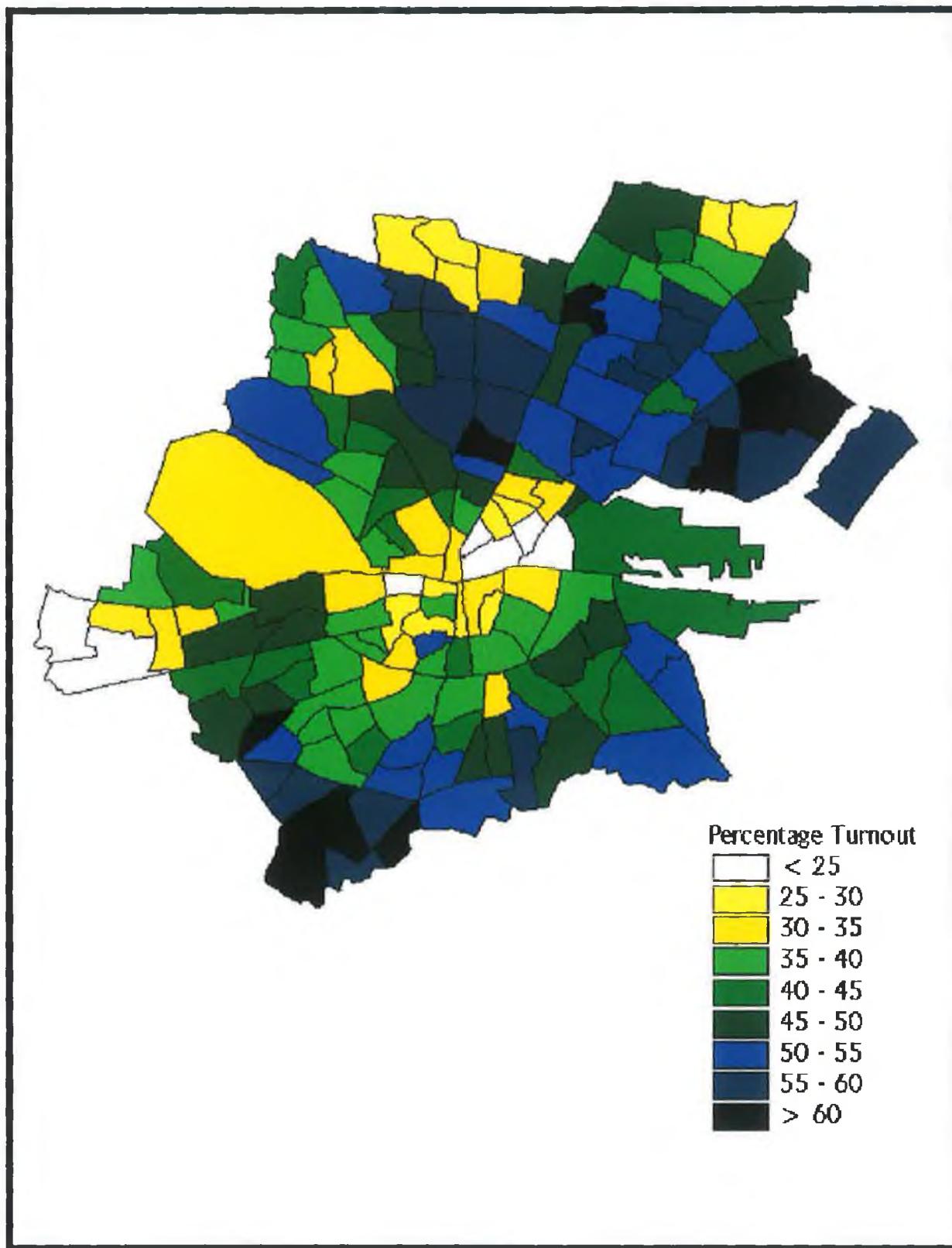


Figure 7.7: Voter turnout, by district electoral division, in Dublin County Borough for the Abortion Referendum, March 2002.

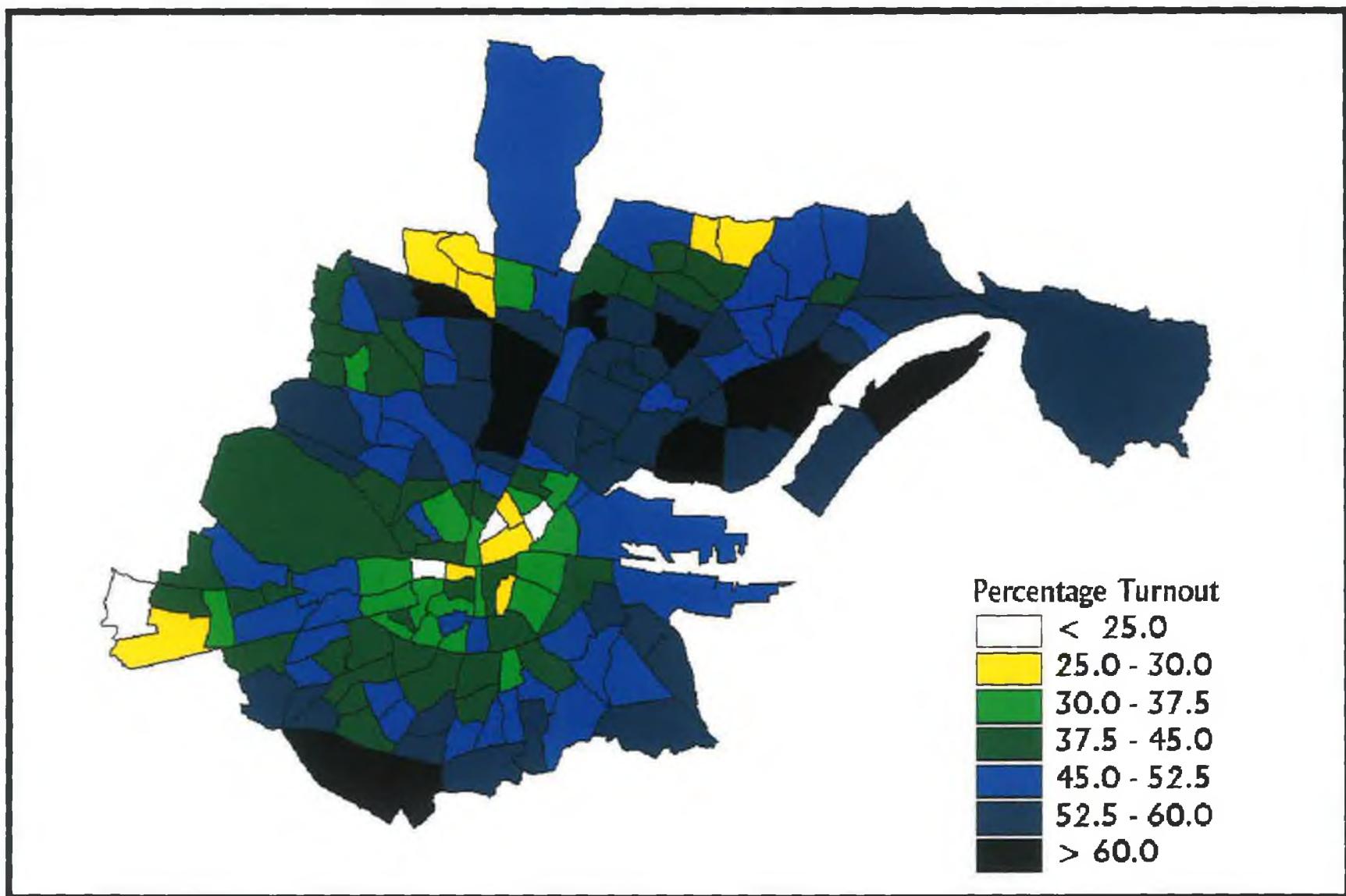


Figure 7.8: Percentage turnout, by electoral division, in the Dublin City Council area for October 2002 Nice Treaty Referendum.

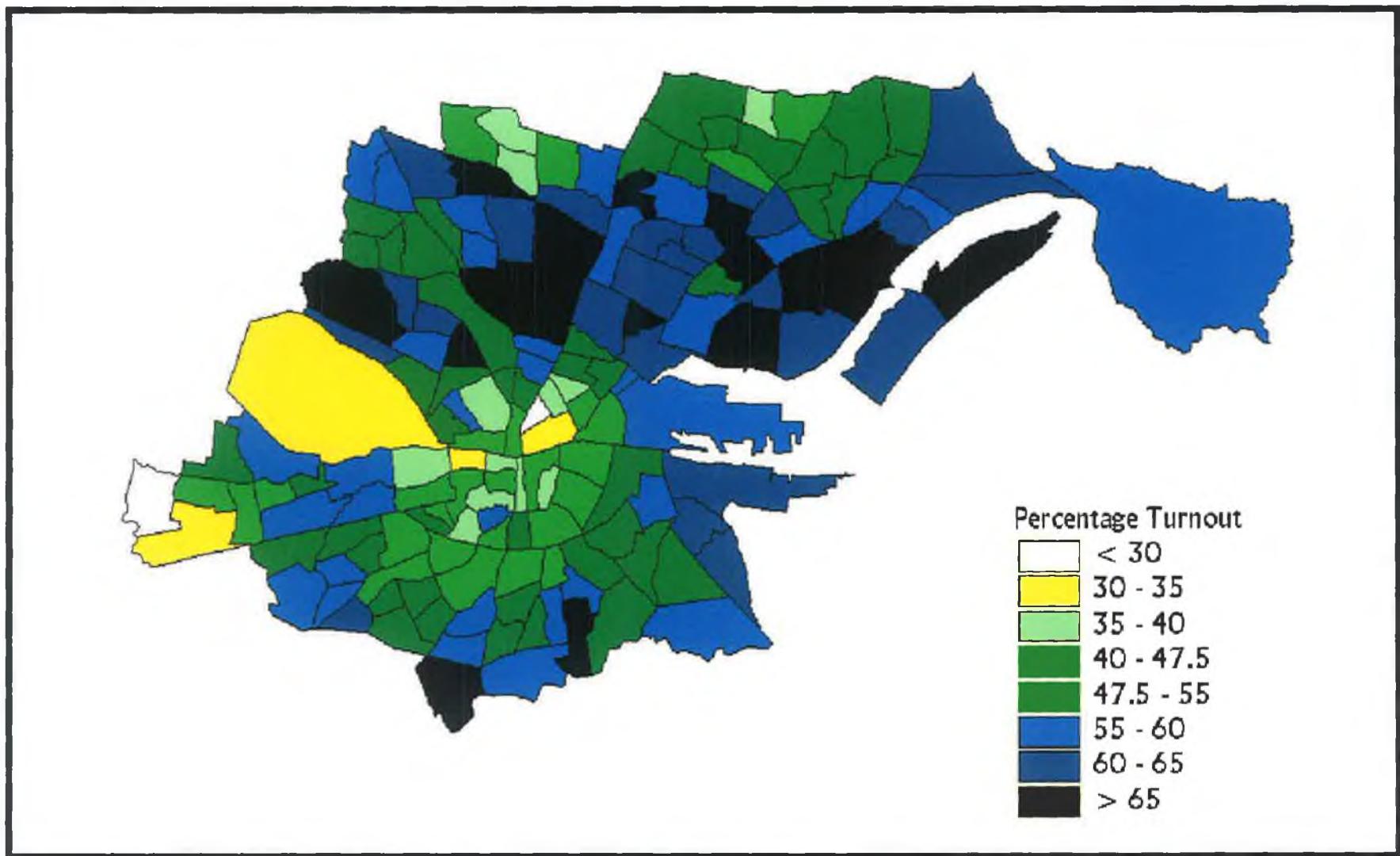


Figure 7.9: Voter turnout, by district electoral division, in Dublin County Borough for the 2002 General Election.

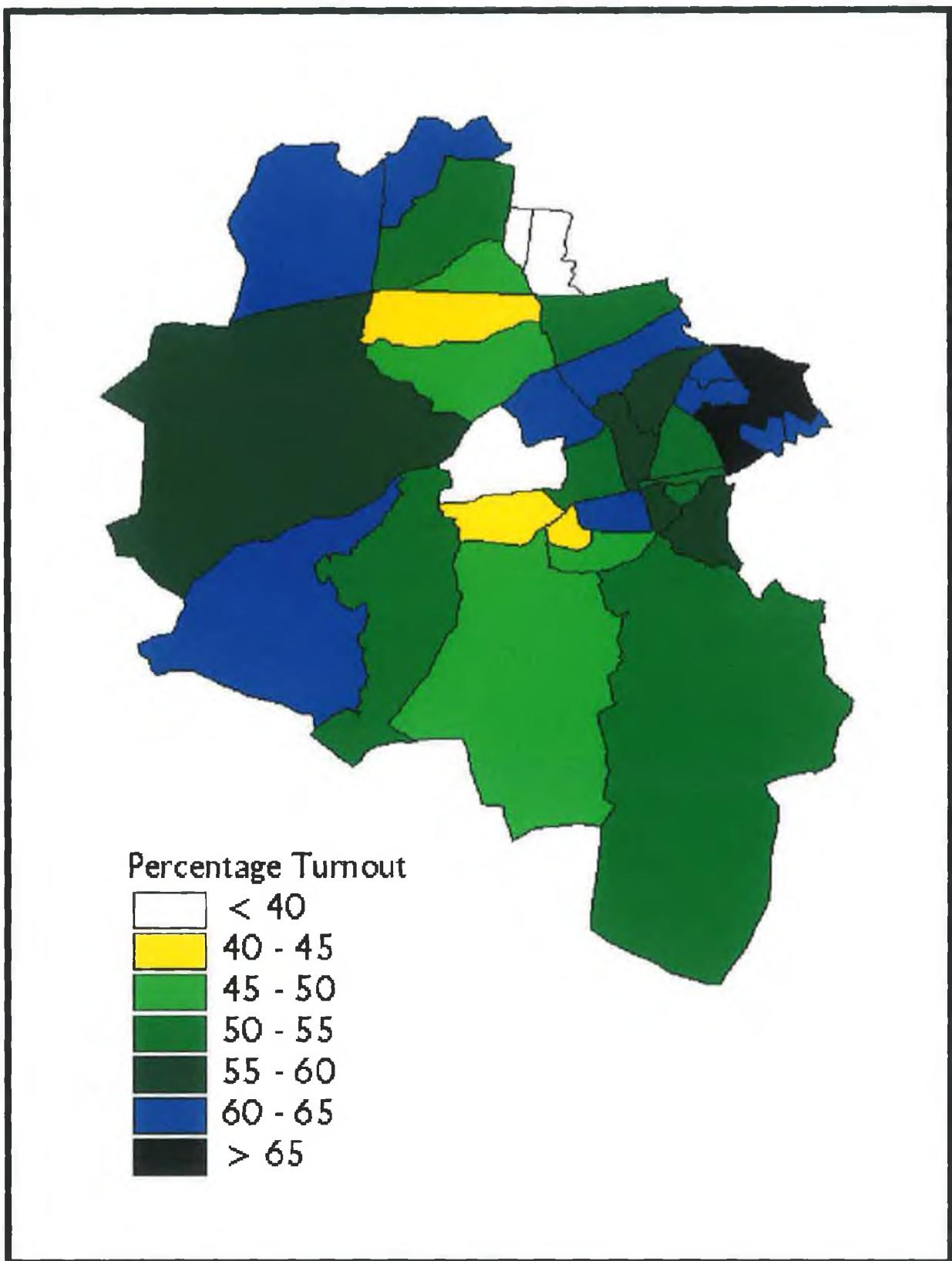


Figure 7.10: Voter turnout, by district electoral division, in South Dublin County for the 2002 General Election.

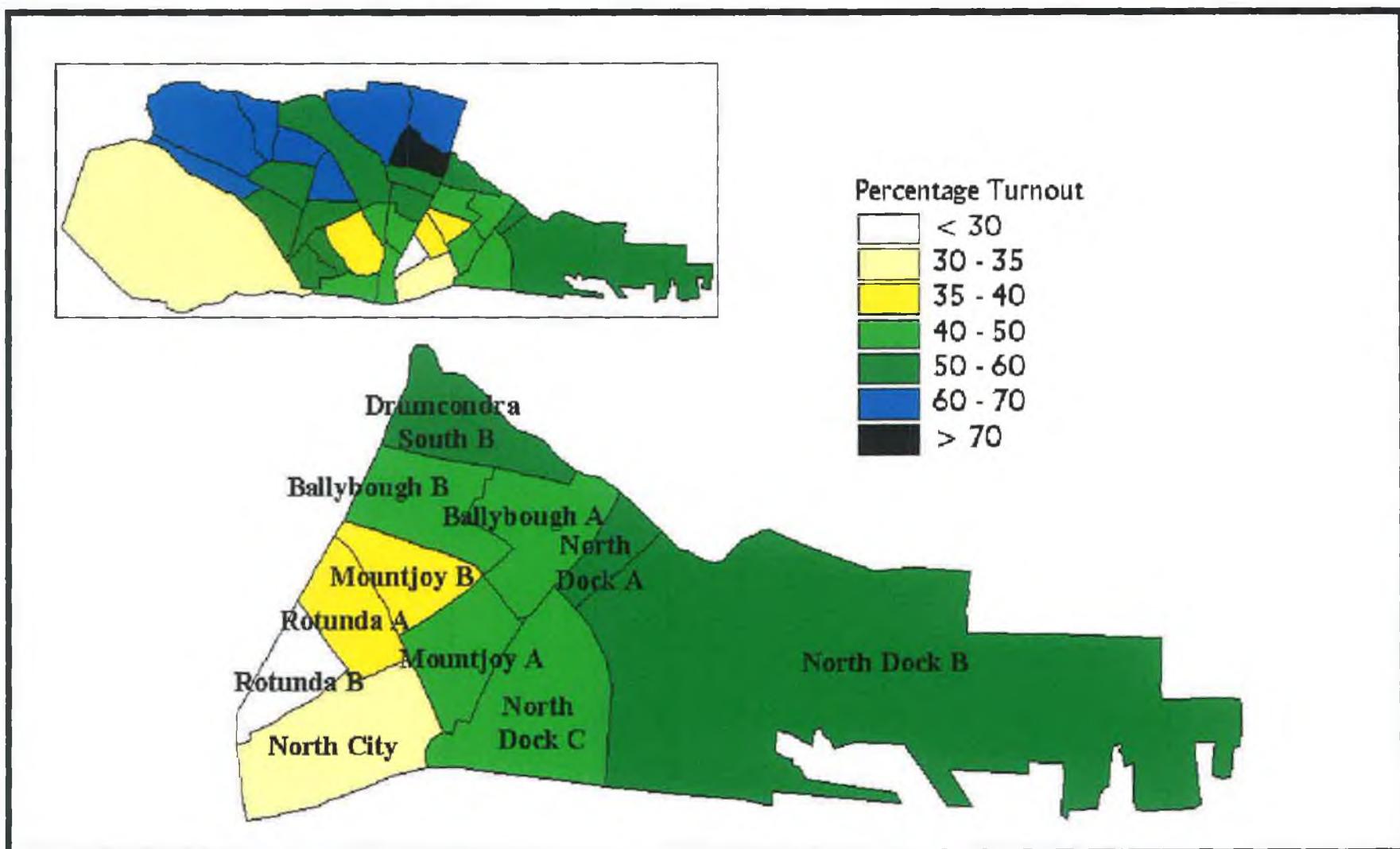


Figure 7.11: Voter Turnout in the North Inner City, by district electoral division, for the 2002 General Election.
(Inset: Voter turnout in the Dublin Central constituency.)

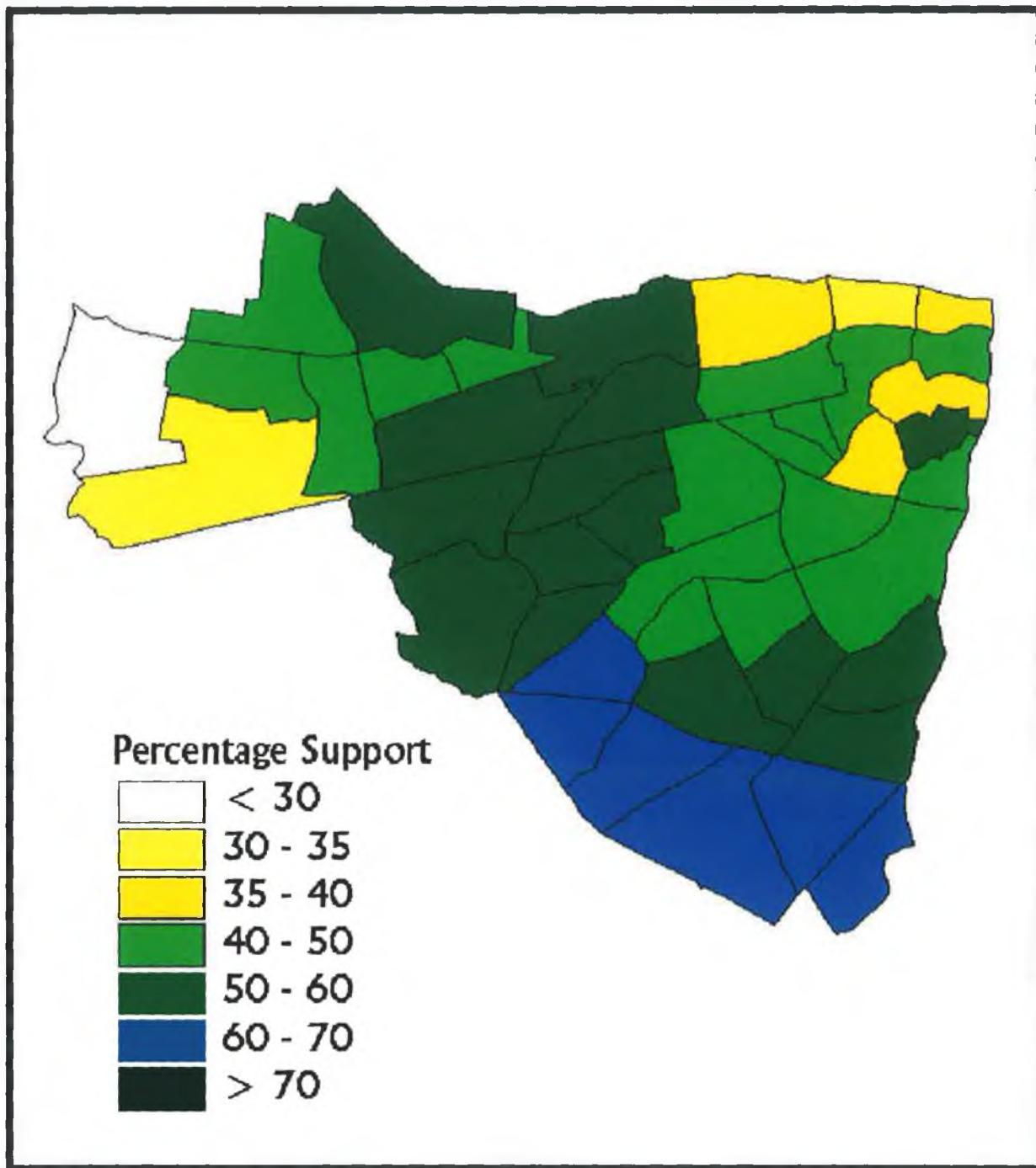


Figure 7.12: Voter turnout, by district electoral division, in the Dublin South Central constituency for the 2002 General Election.

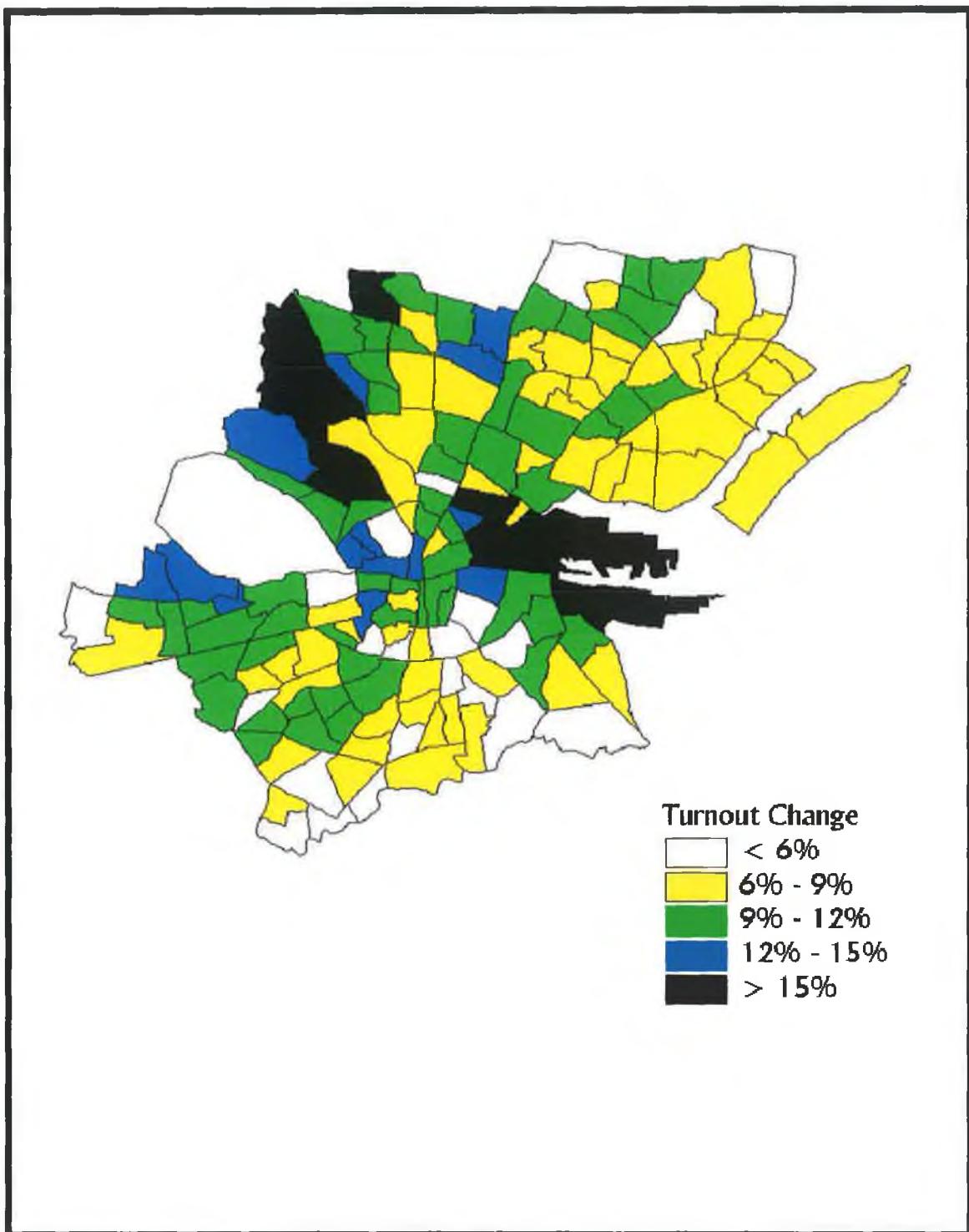


Figure 7.13: Turnout increase, by district electoral division, between March 2002 Abortion Referendum and May 2002 General Election.

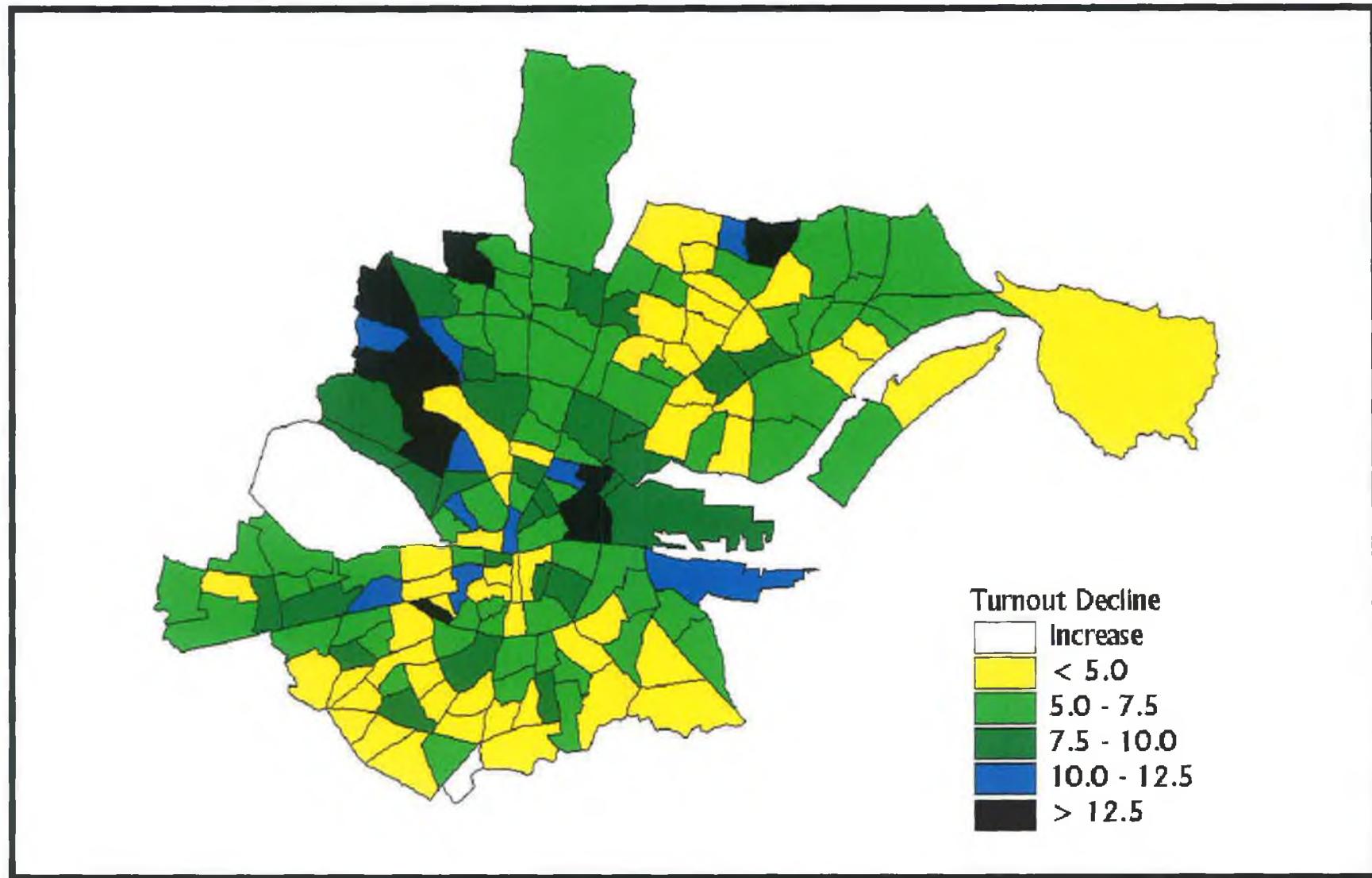


Figure 7.14: Turnout decline, by district electoral, between May 2002 General Election and October 2002 Nice Treaty Referendum in Dublin City Council area.

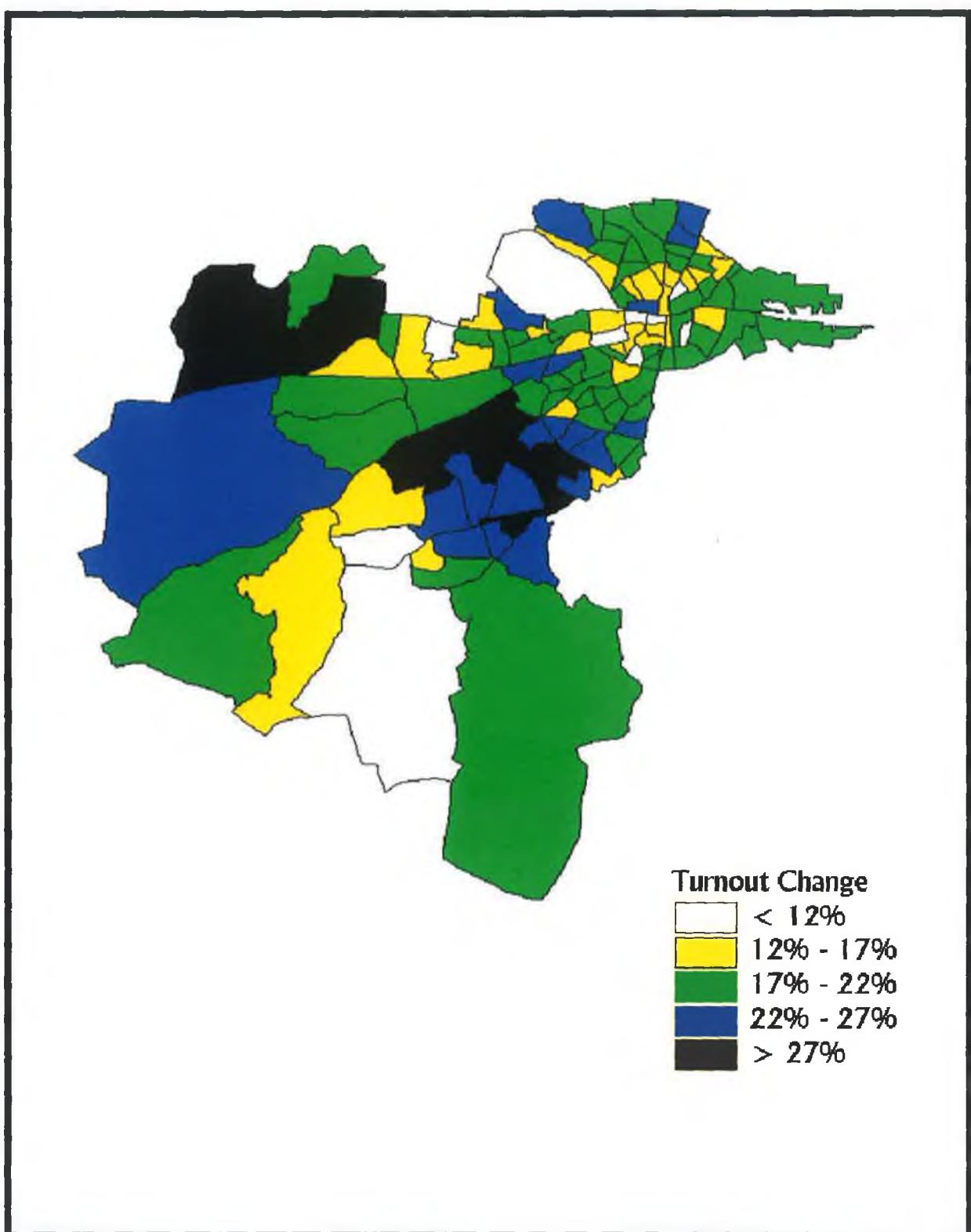


Figure 7.15: Turnout variations, by district electoral division, between May 2002 General Election and June 1999 Local and European Elections.

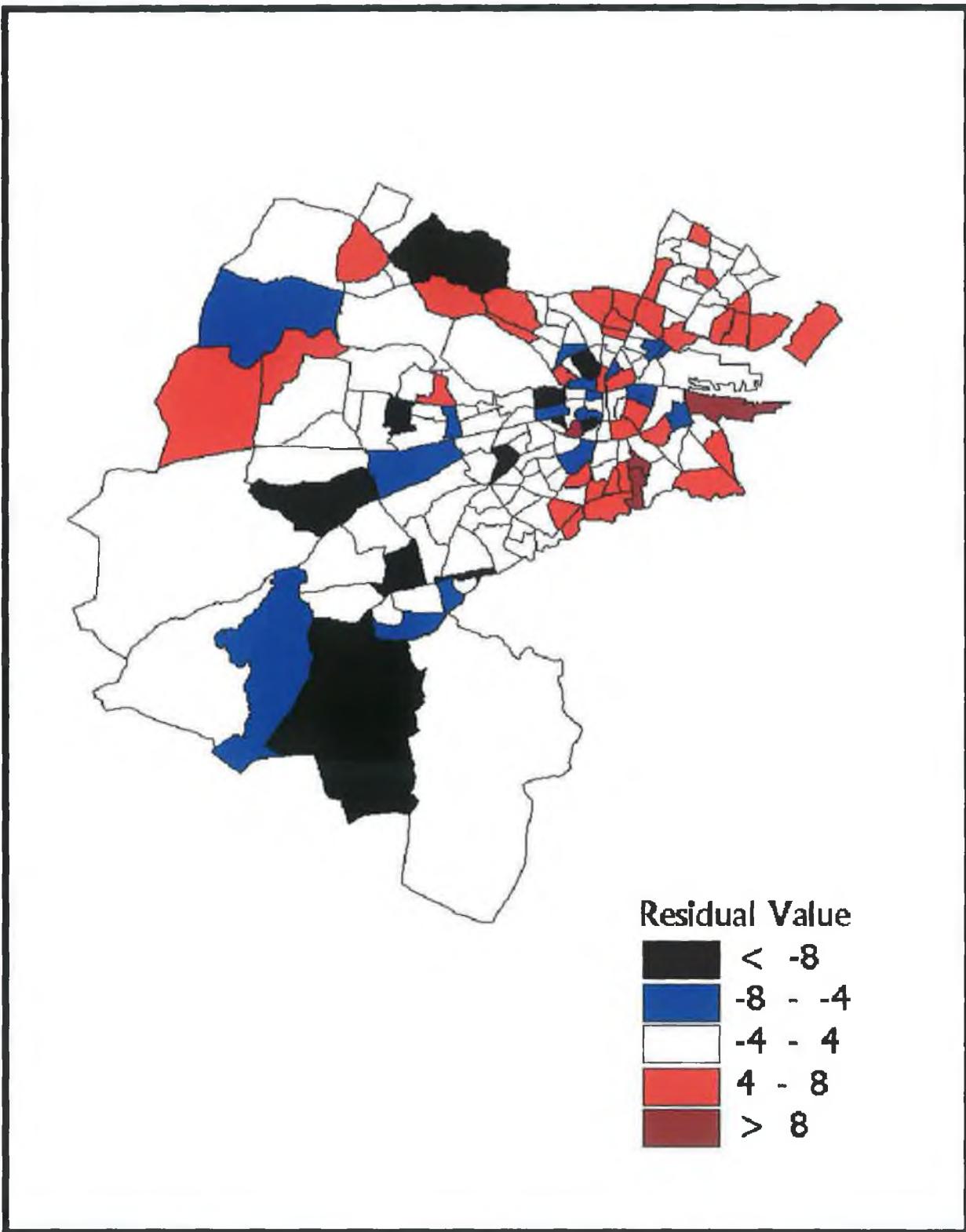


Figure 7.16: Residual values by electoral division, based on model predicting turnout variance in the 1997 General Election in the Dublin region.

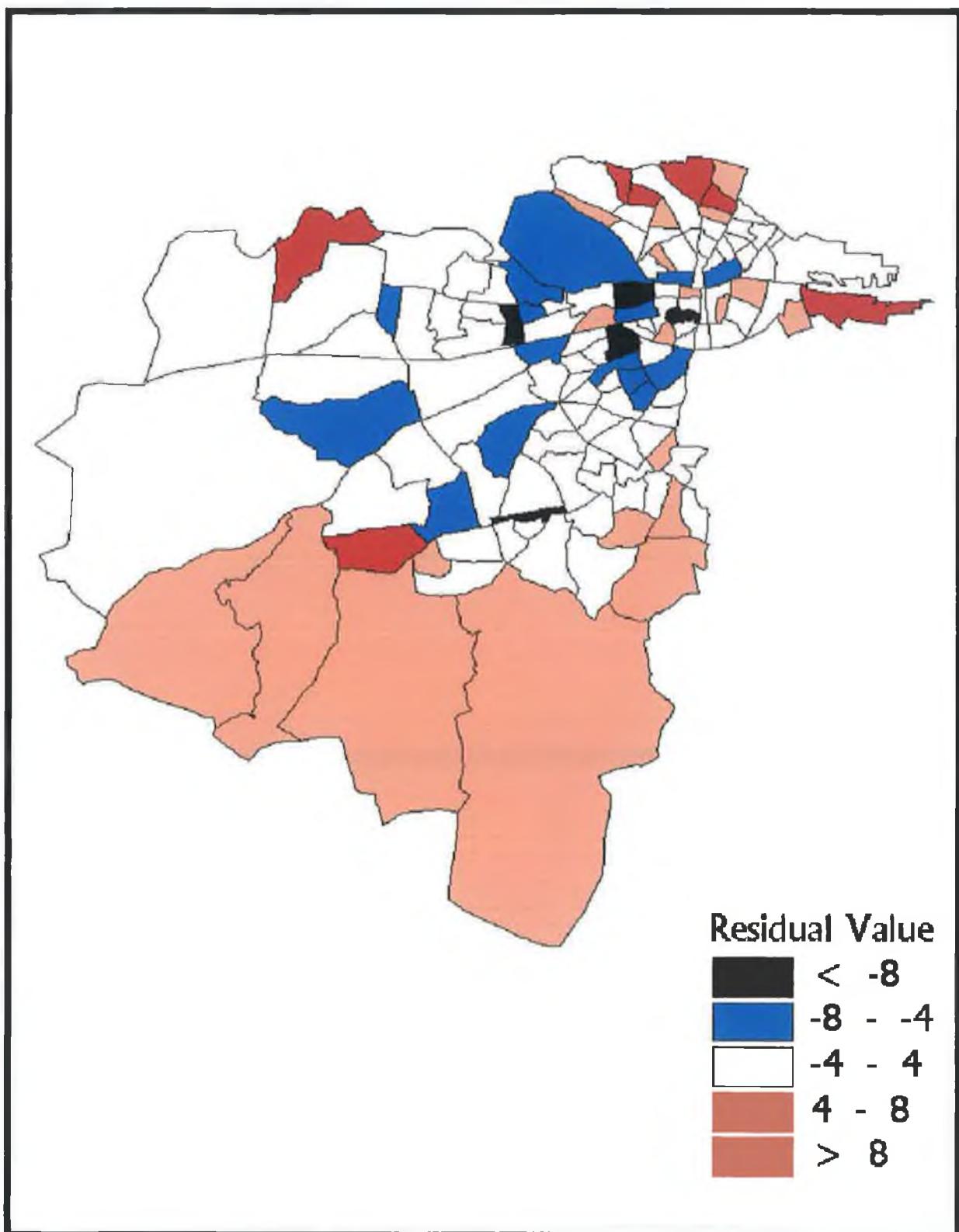


Figure 7.17: Residual values by electoral division, based on model predicting turnout variance in the 1999 Local and European Elections in the Dublin region.

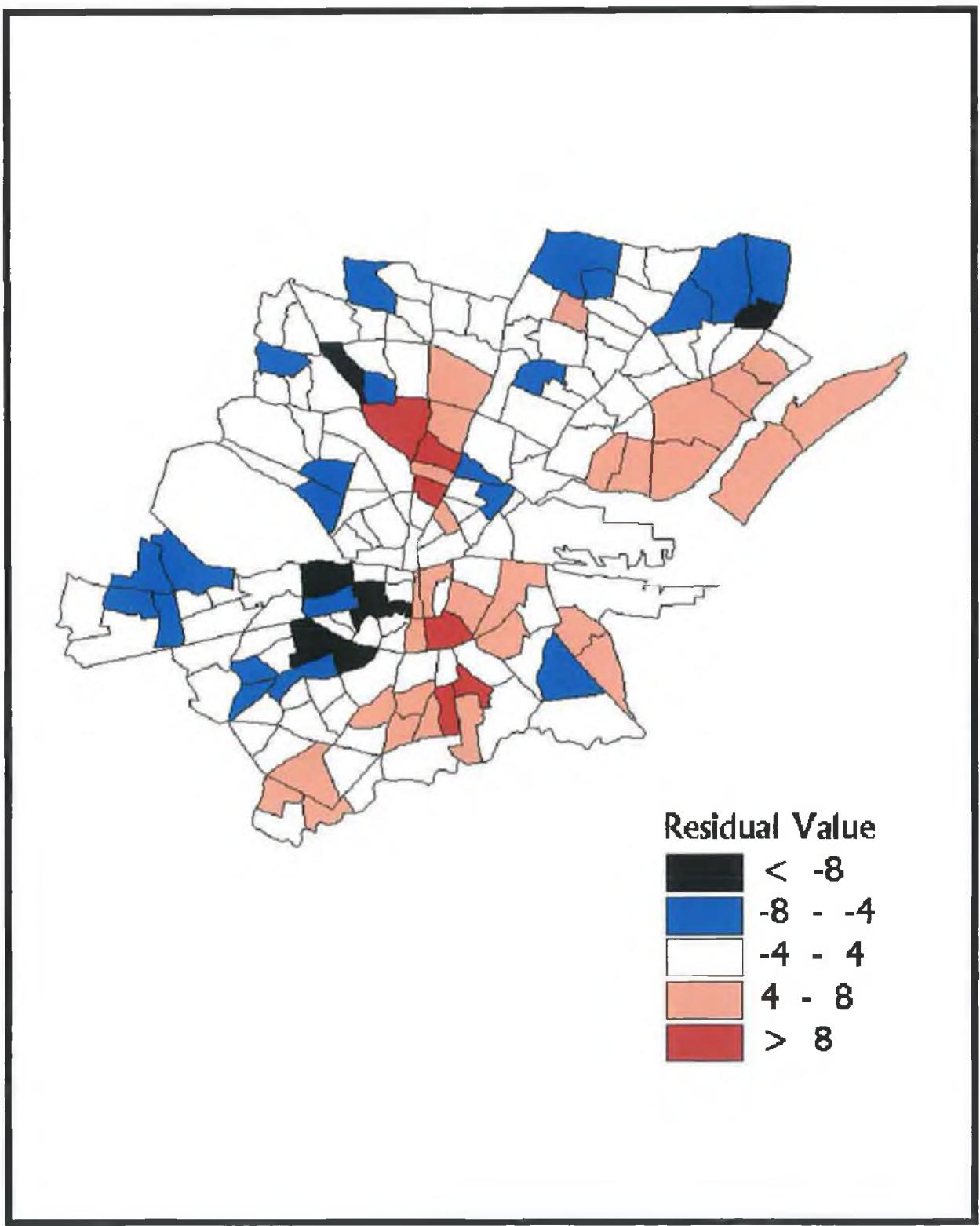


Figure 7.18: Residual values by electoral division, based on model predicting turnout variance in the 2001 Nice Treaty Referendum in the Dublin region.

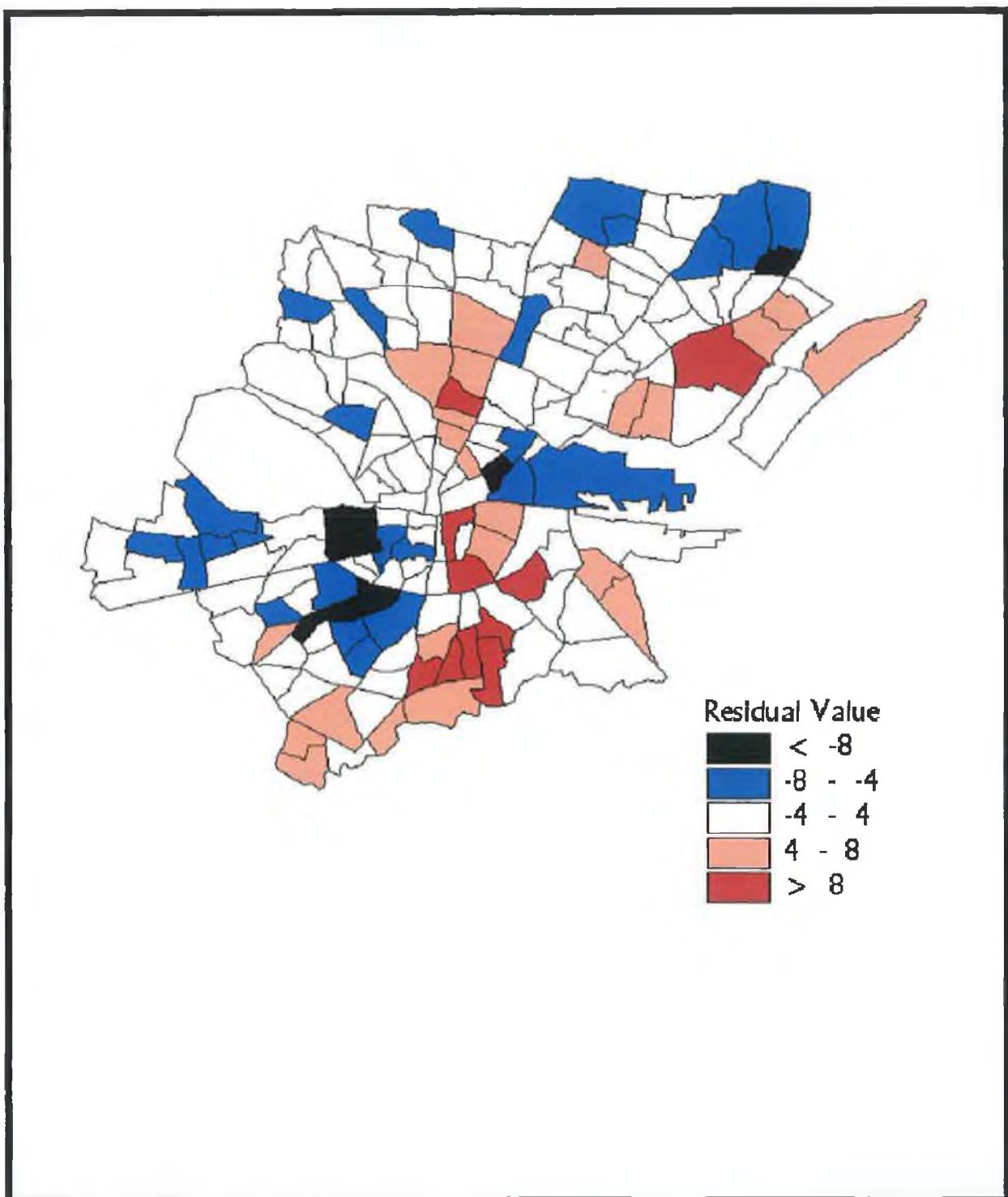


Figure 7.19: Residual values by electoral division, based on model predicting turnout variance in the 2002 Abortion Referendum in the Dublin region.

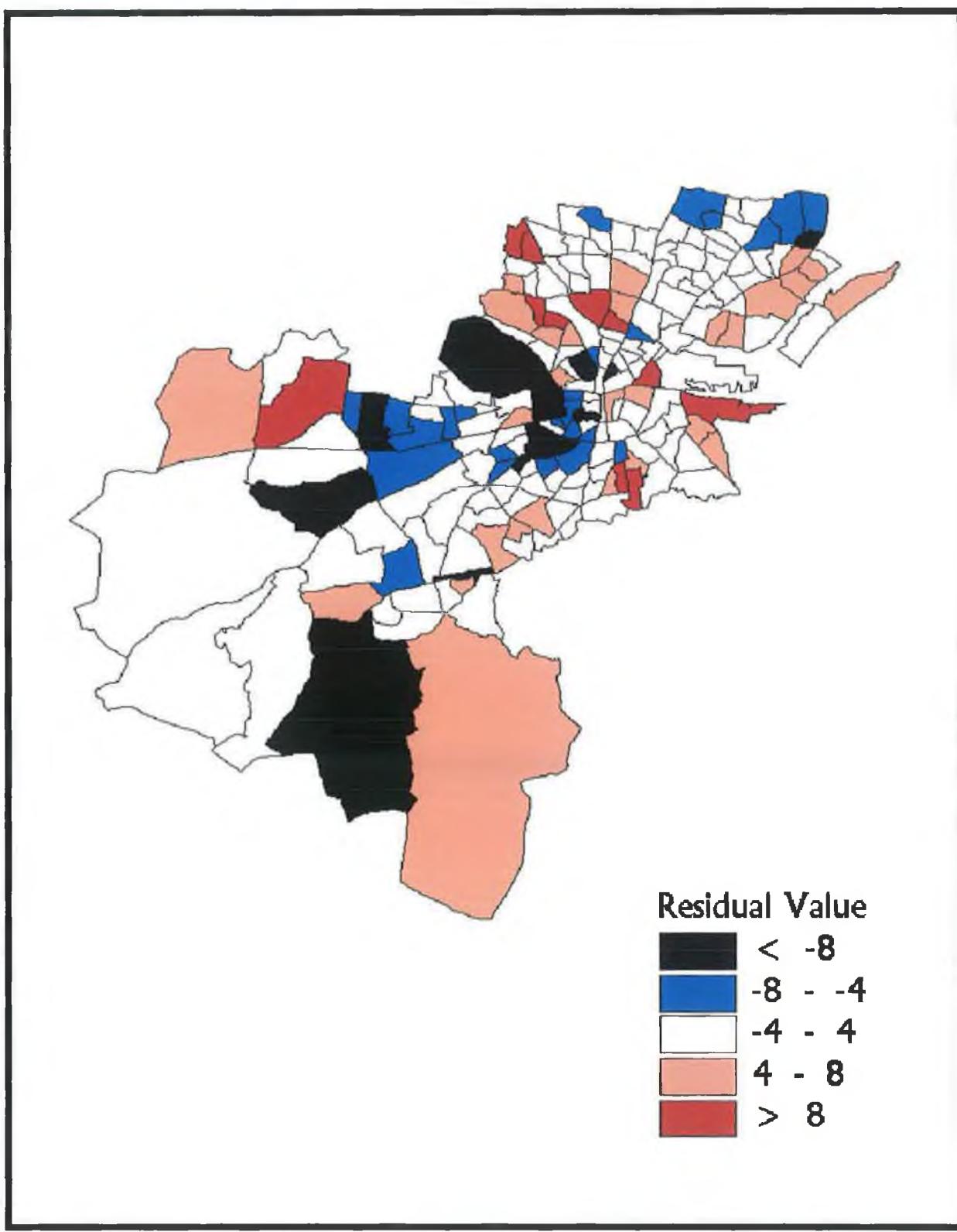


Figure 7.20: Residual values, by electoral division, based on model predicting turnout variance in the 2002 General Election in the Dublin region.

CHAPTER 8

VOTER TURNOUT IN RURAL IRELAND

8.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapters, there was strong evidence to suggest that there were significant associations between socio-economic marginalisation and low voter turnout. Chapter 7 showed that such associations existed in the case of Dublin with extremely low turnouts in a number of Dublin Corporation or South Dublin County housing estates and flat complexes, although in some cases turnouts were even lower in private, mainly middle class, apartment complexes. Such low turnouts are however not a feature in other, more rural, parts of the country. Chapter 5 detailed the urban-rural turnout variations that marked the most recent Irish elections. Turnouts were shown to be significantly higher in rural areas for general, and especially local, elections. Indeed rural constituencies in the South West and North West regions continue to record exceptionally high electoral participation rates for local and general elections, which offers strong evidence of distinct rural-urban differentials in turnout patterns. However, the highest turnouts for referenda tended to be in urban constituencies, in particular in the more middle class urban constituencies. Yet even within these rural areas significant spatial variations in turnout rates can be likewise observed.

Part of the reason for the turnout variations in the general election of 2002 probably had to do with the effect of the media, both the national and local, in this election. The general sense in the national media was that the election was a foregone conclusion, a sense that was underpinned by the series of opinion polls held prior to the election, all of which predicted a comfortable Fianna Fáil victory. For instance, more than a week before the election was held

a headline in the *Irish Independent* claimed that the election was “*All over – bar the voting*” (Glennon, 2002: 1). By contrast, there was a strong emphasis on the importance of voting in local newspapers in the rural constituencies, which was further underpinned by the large amount of coverage given to the election in these newspapers. Local newspapers were generally few and far between in Dublin, by contrast. The editorials of the, mainly rural, local newspapers in the run up to the election were in stark contrast to those of the national newspapers. Editorials in local newspapers, such as *The Corkman*, *The Nationalist*, *The Leinster Express* and *The Limerick Leader*, strongly exhorted their readership to turnout to vote in the election, with editorials such as “*Democracy is in our hands*” in *The Corkman* and “*Democracy demands that we vote*” in *The Nationalist*. The editorial in *The Leinster Express* on the week of polling, in a similar vein, stressed the importance of using the vote.

“Cynics would argue that if the outcome is so inevitable why vote at all as it makes no difference. Cynicism and self-satisfied smugness serve only a needless and self-destructive apathy. The truth is that voting does make a difference. Those who would argue against it would become very concerned about their democratic rights should they find themselves disenfranchised.

Those who abstain are giving a double weight to those who do vote. It can also be argued that by not voting people are forfeiting their right to complain and engage in debate. Exercising the right to vote is a valuable and valid opportunity.” (*The Leinster Express*, 2002: 16).

Moreover, *The Leinster Express* ran a twenty-four page election special the week that the election took place. By contrast, the editorial in the *Evening Herald*, one of the papers with the highest Dublin readership, on the evening before polling was “*Election: glad it’s all over*”. The editorial in the nationally-distributed *Irish Examiner* on polling day, “*Use your vote to make a difference*”, did however stress the importance of people using their vote.

In this chapter, the issue of turnout in rural areas will be studied, focusing mainly on Co. Laois, which is half of the Laois-Offaly Dáil constituency, and two contiguous rural constituencies (Limerick West and Cork North West). As social exclusion is postulated to be a key determinant of low turnouts, the degree to which social marginalisation indicators are linked to low turnouts will be analysed for these areas, in particular for local electoral contests. One will attempt to outline where discrepancies in this social exclusion-low turnout relationship occur and account for these in turn. As Rose (1974: 8) notes, "*an election is a multivariate phenomenon*" and other factors can influence the degree to which turnout in an area is determined by social exclusion. As well as other socio-economic and demographic factors, this chapter will also address the impact of candidate related factors, through a discussion of the "friends and neighbours" effect on turnout rates.

This chapter will commence with a study of the political background of the three different case study areas. The next three sections will study the spatial variations in Laois, Cork North-West and Limerick West, respectively, for various elections held during the 1997-2002 period, with a specific reference to how these variations may be related to the socio-economic geography of these areas. The following section statistically analyses turnout variations in the rural case study areas for the 1999 local and European elections, as there was DED-level turnout data available for these elections, thanks to the availability of marked register turnout data. This will involve correlation and regression analysis to detect which factors have a particular influence on rural turnout variations. Residual analysis will also be engaged in to point towards other factors that may have a bearing on turnout variation, but which may not be suitable for quantitative analyses.

8.2 POLITICAL BACKGROUND OF CASE STUDY AREAS

As with other rural constituencies, the case study constituencies tend to be less party competitive than their urban counterparts. Sinn Féin, the Green Party and the small socialist parties either failed to contest these constituencies, or did poorly in them, in the 2002 General Election. As illustrated by Table 8.1, Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael were very strong in these constituencies, with their combined support rates ranging from 74.3% in Laois-Offaly to 95.1% in Limerick West.

	Cork North West	Limerick West	Laois-Offaly
Fianna Fáil	50.1	53.4	51.3
Fine Gael	42.1	41.7	23.0
Labour	6.9	-	2.5
Progressive Democrats	-	-	14.4
Green Party	-	-	-
Sinn Féin	-	-	4.1
Independents	-	1.9	3.6

Table 8.1: Political support in 2002 General Election in case study constituencies.

Strong performances by the Progressive Democrats in Laois-Offaly, as well as – to a lesser extent – by Sinn Féin (4.1%), meant that the combined vote of the two main parties there just amounted to less than three-quarters of the first preference votes, that is 74.3% of the first preferences.

Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael dominance also extended to the 1999 local electoral contests. In Laois, Fianna Fáil was to win 51.2% of the vote in these elections, with Fine Gael winning 33.0%. Independents won 9.9% of the vote there also, but most of these were disaffected Fine Gael members, who had split with the party due to disgruntlement over the selection process

for these contests. The main parties accounted for 84.2% of the vote in Laois and could have accounted for an even larger share, but for the Fine Gael defections. The Borris In Ossory (where Labour won 7.7% of the vote) and Portlaoise (where Sinn Féin won 7.5% and Labour won 6.0%) LEAs were the only electoral areas in which any of the smaller parties made an electoral impact in Laois. Limerick West was even more dominated by the main parties. In the two main LEAs in that constituency, the two main parties won 86.1% in the Newcastle LEA and were the only ones to contest the Rathkeale LEA, hence accounting for 100.0% of the vote there. As regards the two key local electoral areas in the Cork North West Dáil constituency area, the combined vote of the two main parties accounted for 95.1% of the Kanturk LEA first preference votes and for 85.0% of the Macroom first preference votes.

8.3 TURNOUT IN LAOIS 1997-2002

Chapter 7 showed that significant spatial variations in turnouts existed in the Dublin area, with these variations being strongly related to levels of socio-economic well being. This section will investigate whether the same degree of spatial variation exists as regards rural turnout rates, with relation to the Laois, Cork North West and Limerick West areas. There are varying levels of turnout data available for the different constituencies, with general election, local elections and referendum turnout data available for Laois, general and local election data available for Limerick West and just local election figures available for Cork North West.

The first area that will be analysed will be Co. Laois. Since the foundation of the State, Co. Laois has generally been combined with Co. Offaly to form a five-seat Dáil constituency. An *Irish Times* profile of the constituency, prior to the 2002 General Election, described the

constituency as “*a constituency of contrasts*”. Such contrasts existed between the prosperous urban centres of Tullamore and Portlaoise and the situation in the smaller towns, which “*are finding it increasingly difficult to retain traditional services and (in which) job opportunities are few*”. Economic concerns in the constituency were seen to be particularly focused on state enterprises and it was noted that “*uncertainty about the future of the State-owned utilities (was) an issue*” for the 2002 election (Brady 2002: 9).

In terms of turnout, the Laois-Offaly turnout rate has generally been above the national average, but not excessively so. In the 1992 General Election the Laois-Offaly turnout rate was 70.4%, while the national average was 68.5%, in 1997 the Laois-Offaly rate was 69.5% while the national rate was 65.9%, while in 2002 the Laois-Offaly turnout was 67.0%, which was 5.9% higher than that the turnout rate nationally.

General Election 1997

As for the Dublin area, one was reliant on tally figures from the political party organisations in order to calculate turnouts in the 1997 General Election. Tally data for Laois-Offaly was made available and hence it was possible to glean a picture of the spatial variations in turnout there, albeit not to a DED level as was the case for the local and European elections.

Figure 8.5 shows the spatial variations in the Laois-Offaly turnout rate at a local electoral area for the 1997 General Election. The north-western corner of Co. Laois, the Mountmellick electoral area, had the highest turnout in the constituency (76.3%) followed by the Borris In Ossory electoral area (71.9%), which was located in the south-western part of the constituency. Turnouts in the Emo (69.9%) and Portlaoise (69.5%) were roughly similar to

the constituency average. Turnout in the Luggacurren electoral area (68.0%), in the south-east, was slightly lower, but still higher than the turnouts for the Tullamore (67.1%) and Ferbane (67.0%) electoral areas in the northern part of the constituency.

At a polling district level, the Pike of Rushall area (Caher polling district) had a turnout of 80.5%, while there was a turnout of 81.1% in Ballacolla. Ballacolla was the home area of Liam Hyland MEP, who was the sitting Laois Fianna Fáil TD at the time of the 1997 election. Although he was not standing, it is likely that his ‘machine’ would have been active in the area on behalf of the other Laois-based Fianna Fáil candidates and pushed up the turnout rate. The Pike of Rushall area was very much in the bailiwick of Fianna Fáil candidate, Sean Fleming, and so a “friends and neighbours effect” may have been involved there and in his home village of Castletown, where there was a 75.2% turnout.

The highest turnouts in Laois, however, were generally in the north-western corner of the county, encompassing Mountmellick, Clonaslee and Rosenallis, and their hinterlands. There were turnouts of 82.1% in Mountmellick Rural, 80.7% in Rosenallis, 79.7% in Clonaslee and 75.5% in Mountmellick Urban, all of which were well in excess of the constituency average. These high turnouts appear to be symptomatic of a “friends and neighbours” effect on the turnouts on the part of local Fianna Fáil candidate, John Moloney, who was based in Mountmellick town and won 70.2% of the vote in Mountmellick, 66.7% in Rosenallis and 57.2% in Clonaslee. The successful Fine Gael candidate, Charles Flanagan, was originally from Mountmellick town also.

There were relatively low turnouts in some polling districts, but not to the same extent as in Dublin. The only station to have a very low turnout was St. Vincent's Hospital, Mountmellick (32.4%), which is the county hospital for elderly people. There was a high degree of residential mobility there, mainly due to a high number of deceased people there between the compiling of the electoral register and the election itself. Only Graigue Rural (54.7%) in the south-eastern corner of the county, had a turnout below 60%. A number of polling stations in Portlaoise town, encompassing large areas of Laois County Council housing estates, had relatively low turnout rates, somewhat mirroring the association between social deprivation and low turnout in the Dublin region. These included the Knockmay National School station (60.9%), serving the Lake Glen and O'Moore Place housing estates, and the CBS, Borris Road, No. 4 station (61.0%), which just served the St. Brigid's Place estate. The Doonane area in the south of the county, referred to in an interview as "*the Ballymun of Laois*", had a similarly low turnout rate (64.5%). It must be noted of course that, while turnouts in these areas were a few per cent lower than the constituency average, the participation levels were well in excess of those in the socially deprived parts of Dublin, as noted in Chapter 7. Furthermore, the area with the highest levels of rural deprivation, namely the north-west of Laois, and Mountmellick town, which had the second highest level of male unemployment for towns in the Republic of Ireland with populations between 1,500 and 5,000 (Cooke et al., 1998), all had high turnouts.

Local and European Elections 1999

Most of the analysis of rural turnouts in this chapter will involve a study of the local and European election turnouts, as the turnout data for these elections, drawn from an analysis of

the marked registers of electors, was in a more detailed form than for the other electoral contests.

In urban areas, such as Dublin, a DED will generally be divided up into a number of polling districts or stations. In rural areas, however, a polling district will often consist of parts of two, or more, DEDs, apart from the larger towns, in which one DED will be divided into a number of polling stations. Marked register data allows one to disaggregate the parts of the different DEDs that may form part of a polling district area and then to re-aggregate them so as to obtain an exact percentage turnout for each DED in the study area. Such an analysis was carried out for Laois, using the marked register turnout figures, as it also was for the Cork North West and Limerick West case study areas.

As Table 8.2 and Figure 8.6 illustrate, there were significant spatial variations in turnout rates within Laois. The highest turnout was in Timahoe and the lowest in Trumera, with 38.4% of a difference between the turnout rates in these areas.

DEDs WITH HIGHEST TURNOUTS	%	DEDs WITH LOWEST TURNOUTS	%
1. Timahoe	80.4	1. Trumera	42.0
2. Castlecuffe	79.1	2. Graigue Rural	44.9
3. Tinnahinch	78.0	3. Rossmore	45.3
4. Vicarstown	76.9	4. Shrue	47.3
5. Nealstown	76.4	5. Emo	47.9
6. Ballyroan	76.3	6. Durrow	48.8
7. Clonaslee	75.8	7. Jamestown	49.0
8. Meeleek	75.5	8. Barrowhouse	50.2
9. Blandsfort	74.4	9. Kilmullen	50.3
10. Moneenalassa	73.2	10. Clonkeen	50.3

Table 8.2: DEDs with the highest and lowest voter turnouts in Co. Laois in the 1999 local and European Elections.

Figure 8.6, illustrating the spatial variations in Laois turnouts for the local elections, shows that high turnout areas were particularly concentrated in four distinct parts of the county. The largest was located in the north-western corner of Laois, comprising the Rosenallis-Clonaslee area and extending eastwards towards Mountmellick town itself. There was another, albeit smaller, high turnout area on the western border, which took in the Slieve Bloom mountains and was focused on the Nealstown electoral division. In the south of Laois, there was a major high turnout area, extending southwards from Ballyroan and Timahoe to take in the Ballinakill, Abbeyleix and Ballacolla areas. Finally there was a small area of high voter turnout in the east of the county, which took in the Vicarstown area. One could conclude from Figure 8.6 that – apart from the two later cases – the main high turnout areas tended to be located in the western part of the county.

Figure 8.6 showed that the main low turnout areas tended to be located along the eastern boundary of Laois. One major low turnout area was located in the south-eastern corner of Laois, focusing on the Graiguecullen area and other areas in the hinterland of Carlow town and extending northwards towards the Barrowhouse area. There was another low turnout area in the north-eastern corner of the county, taking in areas such as The Heath, Emo and Ballybrittas which were located adjacent to the Dublin Road. Generally, low turnout areas in the eastern part of Laois formed the hinterlands of towns that were located just outside the Laois border: Monasterevin in the north-east, Carlow in the extreme south east and Athy to the north of Carlow.

The other main low turnout areas were the Durrow area in the south of Laois and a rural area located to the south-west of Portlaoise, encompassing the Trumera and Clonkeen electoral

divisions. The low turnout in Durrow was probably explained by the town not having a local candidate for the local elections, as well as there being a sense in Durrow that the Laois County Council was ignoring the needs of the town, as was detailed in an *Irish Times* article.

"Durrow has a population of approximately 2,000 people and is located close to the Kilkenny border on the main Dublin to Cork road. "We often feel the county council think we are living in Co. Kilkenny. Laois stops as far as the council are concerned" Ms Vaugh (secretary of Durrow community council) said" (Donnellan, 2002: 2).

Figure 8.6 reveals that the voter turnout geography in Laois duplicates in microcosm the west-east turnout gradient that also characterised the national geography of voter turnout for the local elections. It also shows that turnouts in the towns of Portlaoise, Mountmellick, Portarlington and Abbeyleix tended to be higher, if only slightly so in some cases, than the turnouts in the rural areas that formed their immediate hinterland. This phenomenon of major towns forming “islands of slightly higher turnouts” tends to go against the general pattern in which turnouts in rural areas are expected to exceed those of urban areas. This pattern may result from a greater access to polling stations for people living in the towns or else, as with Portlaoise and Mountmellick, resulted from increased levels of political competition there due to Town Commission elections being held on the same day as the local and European elections.

The marked register analysis allowed turnouts to be calculated for very small areas, such as townlands, housing estates and streets. Table 8.3 shows the main high and low turnout areas in the county, based on this analysis and restricted to areas with forty or more people on the register to avoid spurious extremes. There is a good degree of correlation between these areas and those that figured as high and low turnout areas at the DED levels.

HIGHEST AREAS	%	LOWEST AREAS	%
Cashel, Ballyroan	88.4	St. Vincent's Hospital, Mountmellick	23.1
Cremorgan, Timahoe	85.7	Killeshin Road, Carlow	34.0
St. Joseph's Terrace, Mountmellick	85.7	Ballyadams, Ballylinan	34.0
Garoon, Mountmellick	82.9	Elmlawn, Portlaoise	34.7
Chapel Street, Clonaslee	82.1	Rossmore View, Graiguecullen	36.1
Ardateggle, Ballickmoyler	85.7	Tinweir, Durrow	37.0
Tentore, Ballacolla	81.3	Cloonanny, Portarlington	38.7
Tinahinch, Rosenalis	80.4	Emo Park, Emo	38.8
Drummond, Rosenalis	80.4	Fisherstown, Ballybrittas	40.0
Main Street, Clonaslee	80.0	Trumera, Mountrath	40.2
Ironmills or Kilrush, Ballinakill	80.0	Clogrennane, Carlow	40.9
Cardtown, Mountrath	79.2	Oakley Park, Graiguecullen	41.2
Coolagh, Clonaslee	79.0	Ballybrittas Village	41.7
Vicarstown Cosby, Vicarstown	79.0	Summerhill, Portlaoise	41.9
Timahoe Village	78.9	Rathshronin, Ballybrittas	41.9
Lord Edward Street, Mountmellick	78.8	Pine Villas, Portarlington	42.2
Irishtown, Mountmellick	77.8	Parnell Crescent, Portlaoise	42.6
Chapel Street, Ballyroan	77.6	Knockanina, Mountrath	42.7
Church Street, Rathdowney	76.2	Moneyquid, Killeigh	42.9
Church Lane, Stradbally	75.8	Killimy, Emo	43.3
Brockley Park, Stradbally	75.0	Killeshin Road, Carlow	43.3
Crubbin, Ballyroan	75.0	Coolnavarnogue/Coolagh, Clonaslee	43.4
Gash, Castletown	75.0	Marian Hill, Portarlington	43.6
Slatt Lower, Wolfhill, Athy	74.4	Townparks, Durrow	44.1
Derrycloney, Mountmellick	74.3	Fielbrook, Portlaoise	44.5

Table 8.3: High and low turnout areas in Co. Laois in the 1999 local and European elections.

Table 8.3 shows that there were no areas with extremely low turnouts, comparable to those in Dublin, although there were some very high turnouts registered in some areas, most notably the Cashel area, near Ballyroan. As in Dublin, where large institutions such as hospitals and hostels had the very lowest turnouts, the lowest turnout in the county was in St. Vincent's Hospital.

There is little evidence from Table 8.3 to suggest that social deprivation had an influence on low voter turnout in these elections. None of the large council housing estates in Co. Laois

featured amongst the areas with the lowest turnouts. Indeed some council estates, especially those in Mountmellick town, had higher turnouts than the county average, including Davin Park (72.6%), Kirwan Park (70.7%), Twomey Park (66.7%) and Pattison's Estate (61.7%). Turnouts in the four estates in Portlaoise, that were identified as being the most deprived by the Portlaoise Community Action Project, also compared favourably to the county average: O'Moore's Place (63.1%), Knockmay (61.4%), St. Brigid's Place (57.7%) and Lakeglen (56.5%). The Doonane area in south Laois also had a relatively high turnout of 57.5%. The evidence also suggests that the highest turnouts generally tended to be in the more agriculturally marginalised areas, such as the mountainous north western corner of the county, adjacent to the villages of Clonaslee and Rosenalis. Turnouts in the five most deprived DEDs in Laois (based on SAHRU deprivation scores) of Doonane, Shrue, Ballylinan, Stradbally and Mountmellick Urban were, on average, relatively high. (These DEDs had deprivation scores of 4, ranking them amongst the 40% most deprived DEDs in Ireland.) The average turnout for these five DEDs was 62.3%, with Shrue (47.3%) and Ballylinan (53.5%) the only DEDs to have lower turnouts than the Laois average. On average, turnouts in the more deprived parts of Laois were equivalent to, or rather higher than, the county average. There is little evidence to suggest that social deprivation pushed down local electoral turnouts rates in Laois and indeed there may be even some scope to suggest that greater levels of social deprivation may have been associated with slightly higher local election turnouts.

High turnouts appear to have been a consequence of a “friends and neighbours effect”, where the presence of one or more local candidates had a significant effect in pushing up turnout rates. There were high turnouts in Timahoe, Ballyroan and Abbeyleix in south Laois and Clonaslee and Rosenalis in the north west, all mainly rural areas which had at least two local

candidates contesting the local elections. The highest turnout areas in the county, identified in Table 8.3, were generally drawn from these areas, suggesting that these high turnouts may have been largely due to a desire of people living there to support a local candidate.

Figure 8.1 illustrates a strong association between higher turnouts and candidates' homes in Co. Laois, with the exception, mainly, of the larger towns of Portlaoise and Portarlington. Indeed, the "islands of relatively higher turnout" effect, referred to above, could be partially explained in such a context, in that more people may have been enticed out to vote in Laois towns as generally there will be a number of candidates local to such towns contesting local electoral contests. Hence, turnouts in such towns may be higher than in adjacent rural areas, which may have no local candidates competing in the election to support. Areas which had no local candidates running, such as the Durrow, Cullahill, Trumera or Clonkeen areas, had very low turnouts in relation to those for the rest of the county.

The importance of the candidate effect is further underpinned if one takes the turnouts in the Kyle polling district into account. This district had the highest turnouts in Laois for the 2001 Nice Referendum, 2002 Abortion Referendum and the 2002 General Election. However, the local election turnout in Kyle (63.5%) was only slightly higher than the county average. There was no local candidate in Kyle contesting these elections, which illustrates that even an area that is highly predisposed towards voting, such as Kyle, could be de-motivated from voting in the local elections as a result of the lack of such a candidate.

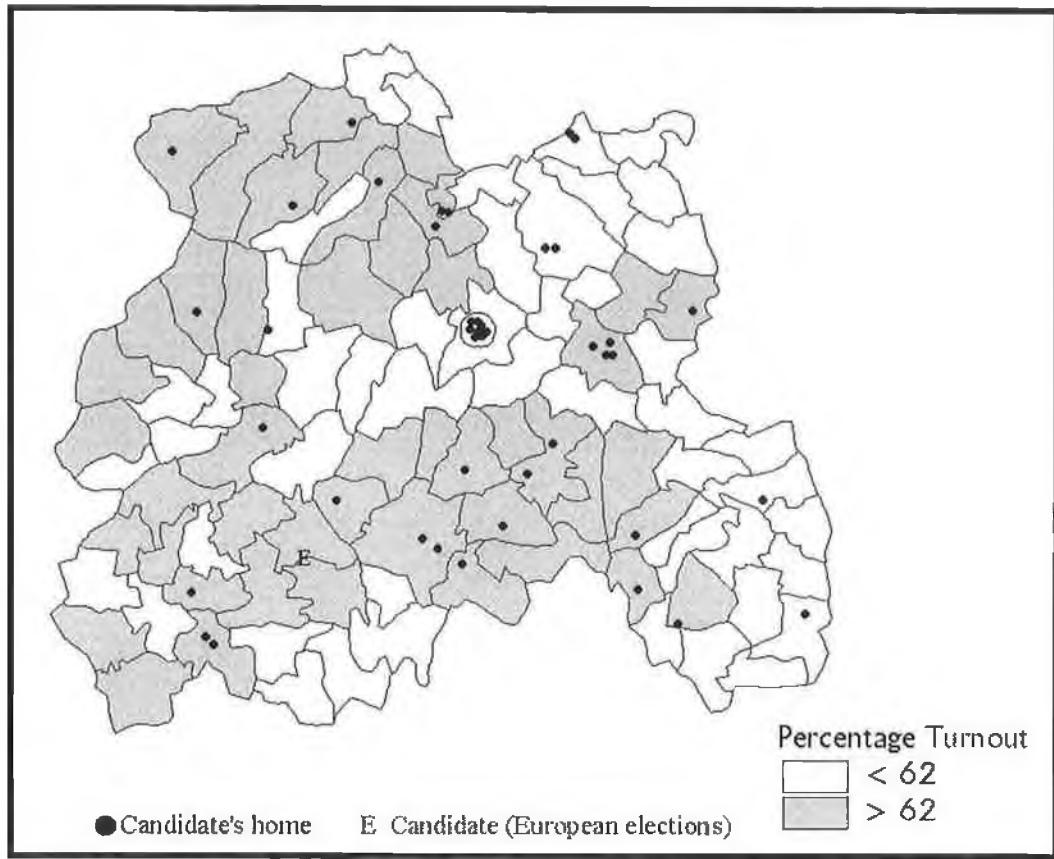


Figure 8.1: Homes of local election candidates as related to turnout rates in Co. Laois for the 1999 local and European elections.

Nice and Abortion Referenda

Turnouts in the 2001 Nice and 2002 Abortion Referenda were much lower than the turnouts in the 1997 and 2002 General Elections and the 1999 Local and European elections. In some parts of Laois, especially the north-western parts of the county, turnouts fell by nearly 50%, relative to the 1997 turnout levels, for the 2001 Nice Referendum and by over 40% for the Abortion Referendum.

Nice Referendum 2001

Some parts of Laois had very low turnout rates in this election, albeit not as low as turnouts in socially deprived parts of Dublin, such as Cherry Orchard. Average turnout in the county, at 32.1%, was lower than the national average. The lowest turnout, at a polling district level, was registered in Stradbally (21.9%) in the eastern part of the county, with other low turnout areas including Camross (25.0%), Newtown (25.9%) and The Heath (26.1%). Low turnout areas were generally dispersed around the county and there appeared to be no great spatial patterning involved in terms of the location of the high turnout areas either. The Ballaghmore area, in the west of the county, had the highest turnout rate (41.6%), while the other high turnout areas included Barrowhouse (40.7%), Ballacolla (39.8%) and Spink/Blandsfort (38.9%).

The main urban areas in Laois, such as Portlaoise town (30.7%), Portarlington (31.1%), Abbeyleix (29.9%), Rathdowney (29.0%) and Graiguecullen (31.8%), tended to have lower turnouts than the county average. The only major urban areas to have higher than average turnouts were Mountrath (33.9%) and Mountmellick (37.1%). There does seem to have been an association between urban social deprivation and low turnout in Laois for this election. Areas marked by high concentrations of Laois County Council housing tenants tended to have very low turnout rates. There was a turnout of just 23.9% for the Doonane area in south Laois. Turnout in the Knockmay area in Portlaoise, encompassing the Knockmay, Lake Glen and O'Moore Place council housing estates was 23.4% and the turnout rate in the St. Brigid's Place estate was 22.2%. There also appears to have been a linkage between low turnout and rural deprivation, as areas in the more marginalised and mountainous western parts of the

county had relatively low turnouts in this election, including Clonaslee (30.6%), Paddock (27.3%) and Camross (25.0%).

Abortion Referendum 2002

Turnouts for the 2002 Abortion Referendum were higher in Laois than those for the 2001 Nice Referendum, held nine months prior to it. The average turnout for Laois (40.8%) increased by 8.7% on the 2001 Nice Referendum but was still down significantly on the turnouts for the 1997 General Election (71.4%) and the 1999 local and European elections (59.9%).

The area with the highest turnout in Laois was again Ballaghmore (51.6%), the only part of the county where more than half the registered voters opted to participate in the election. Other high turnout areas included Ballyroan (47.6%), Barrowhouse (47.4%), Cullahill (46.4%) and Ballacolla (46.4%). Although such areas were generally located in the south of the county, there was no strong geographical aspect to the turnout pattern. The lowest turnout in the county was in Paddock (30.3%), with other low turnout areas including Graiguecullen (34.8%), Raheen (36.2%), Newtown (36.5%) and Rath (37.1%).

As with the Nice Referendum, turnouts in the more urban parts of the county tended to be lower than the county average. As noted already, there was a low turnout in the Graiguecullen area, but turnouts were also low in Portlaoise (37.6%), Portarlington (39.2%), Rathdowney (39.2%) and Abbeyleix (40.1%). Mountrath (43.2%) was the only town to have a higher turnout than the county rate. Turnout in Doonane (32.6%) was significantly lower than the county average, as were the turnouts in St. Brigid's Place (31.3%) and the Knockmay area

(22.7%) in Portlaoise town. These low turnouts in such deprived urban areas again could suggest a link between low referendum turnout and urban deprivation in Laois.

Average Referendum Turnout

In terms of average turnouts for the Nice and Abortion referenda, the highest turnouts were in the Kyle/Ballaghmore (45.6%), Barrowhouse (44.1%), Cuffsborough (42.7%), Killermogh (42.7%), Blandsfort (42.6%) and Caher (42.4%) areas. Average turnouts were lowest in the Paddock/Brisha (28.8%), Stradbally (30.3%), Newtown (31.3%), Camross / Marymount (32.3%), Kilmurray / The Heath (32.3%), Sallyford / Rath (33.3%) and Graiguecullen (33.3%) areas. Low turnouts were particularly associated with the more deprived urban areas, such as Knockmay (23.0%), St. Brigid's Place (26.6%) and Doonane (28.3%). The more socially deprived areas in Laois seem to have been more likely to have lower turnouts in these elections, which was not the case for the local elections, as noted above.

General Election 2002

The turnout rate in Laois-Offaly for the 2002 General Election was 67.0%, being 3.3% above that of the national average. Laois (67.8%) had a higher turnout than Offaly (66.9%) based on ballot reconciliation figures. Offaly (33,237) however had a higher number of actual voters in the election than Laois (29,630), not including postal voters, due to its larger population.

Turnouts in most parts of Laois were relatively high, with Graiguecullen the only area to have a turnout of lower than 60%. As Figure 8.7 shows, the highest turnouts, as with the 1997 General Election, were in the Mountmellick electoral area, with turnouts in the high seventies

in the Rosenalis (78.6%), Clonaslee (78.5%), Mountmellick Rural (77.2%) and Ballyfin (78.5%) polling districts. All the polling districts in this electoral area had turnouts of higher than 70%. Turnouts in the south-west of the county were relatively high also, with high turnouts in Borris in Ossory (75.3%), Caher (75.8%) and Castletown (76.8%), while Ballaghmore (78.7%) had the highest turnout in the county. The high turnouts in these areas probably resulted from two sitting deputies, and also election candidates, being based in these areas, John Maloney in Mountmellick and Sean Fleming in Castletown. Such evidence of a “friends and neighbours” effect on turnout is further underpinned by the fact that the highest turnout in the constituency was Coolderry (81.0%) in Co. Offaly, which was the home base of successful Progressive Democrat candidate, Tom Parlon. The south-western parts of Laois were also proximate to the bailiwicks of the two South Offaly based candidates, Olwyn Enright (Birr) and Tom Parlon. Outside of the western part of the county, turnouts were also high in the areas adjacent to Ballyroan village, including the Blandsfort (74.8%), Timahoe (74.2%) and Ballyroan (72.5%) polling districts.

The Graiguecullen area in the south-east of the county had the lowest turnouts in Laois, encompassing the Graigue Urban (48.8%) and Graigue Rural (60.0%) polling districts. Other low turnout polling districts included Ballyadams (60.6%), Stradbally (61.3%), Portlaoise Urban (63.1%) and Durrow (64.0%). Three polling boxes in Portlaoise town had turnouts of lower than 60% however, namely Knockmay NS Booth No.1 (55.2%), CBS, Borris Road, Booth No.4 (58.9%) and Convent NS, Booth No.6 (59.3%). The relatively low turnout in the Knockmay area (52.8%) suggests that social deprivation may have had a depressing influence on turnout, given that, as noted already, some of the more deprived estates in Portlaoise, including Lakeglen and O’Moore Place, were located in this area. Turnout in the St. Brigid’s

Place estate (58.9%) was also relatively low, further suggesting an association between urban turnout and deprivation in Laois, although turnout in the deprived Doonane area (65.2%) was relatively high.

Turnouts in some towns, such as Abbeyleix (67.6%), Mountrath (69.5%), Rathdowney (69.8%) and Mountmellick (70.3%), were higher than the constituency average, somewhat at variance with the general pattern of higher general election turnouts in rural areas. Turnouts in the other main urban areas were only marginally lower than the constituency average, including Portarlington (65.2%) and Portlaoise (64.0%), with the only urban areas to have especially low turnouts being the aforementioned low turnout areas in Portlaoise and Graiguecullen.

Turnout Variations Between Elections

Significant variations existed between the turnouts for different types of elections in terms of their turnout rates. As in Dublin, the highest turnouts in Laois tended to be for general elections. Local election turnouts were generally lower, but not to the same extent as in the Dublin area, as in general there was a difference of roughly 10% between the turnouts in these elections, with the difference even smaller in areas where local candidates were contested the local elections. Local election turnouts were actually higher than the 2002 General Election turnouts in some polling districts, such as Rathaspick (4.6%), Timahoe (2.8%), Stradbally (1.0%) and Ballyroan (0.9%). All of these polling districts had locally based candidates contesting the 1999 elections, as did a range of other polling districts in which general election turnout was only marginally higher than local election turnout, namely

Killermogh/Ballacolla (1.0%), Vicarstown (1.1%), Blandsfort / Spink (1.2%), Ballinakill (1.4%), Clonaslee (2.1%) and Mountmellick (2.4%). Wider variations in turnouts existed, however, in parts of the county that did not have local candidates contesting the 1999 local elections. The most striking examples of these included Emo (18.4%), Ballyfin (18.1%), Barrowhouse (16.1%), Castletown (15.9%), Ballylinan, Kyle / Ballaghmore (15.2%) and Durrow (15.0%).

There were significant variations between general election and referendum turnouts in Laois, with turnout in the 2002 General Election higher than turnouts in the Nice and Abortion referenda by 35.7% and 27.0% respectively. The greatest differences occurred in the north-western part of the county, with a difference of 39.0% between general election and average referendum turnouts in the Mountmellick electoral area. The greatest differences, at a polling district level, between turnouts in the Nice Referendum and 2002 General Election turnouts were in Clonaslee (47.8%), Borris in Ossory (44.1%), Mountmellick Rural (42.5%) and Rosenalis (42.2%). The smallest turnout differences were in Graigue Urban (17.1%), Graigue Rural (24.1%) and Ballyadams (25.9%). The largest differences between Abortion Referendum and 2002 General Election turnouts were in Brisha/Paddock (36.9%), Clonaslee (36.2%), Castletown (34.6%) and Mountmellick Rural (34.3%), while the slightest differences were in Graigue Urban (14.6%), Graigue Rural (17.8%), Emo (21.6%) and Ballybrittas (22.3%).

The greatest degree of spatial variations in turnouts for a single election was associated with the 1999 local and European elections, with 36.7% of a difference between the polling districts with the highest turnout, Timahoe (77.0%), and lowest turnout, Graigue Urban

(40.3%). The election with the next highest level of turnout variations was the 2002 General Election, with 29.9% of a difference between turnouts in the polling districts with the highest (Kyle, 78.7%) and lowest (Graigue Urban, 48.8%) participation rates. Spatial variations in turnout were even less pronounced in the 1997 General Election, with just 23.0% of a difference between polling districts with the highest and lowest turnouts, Mountmellick Rural (82.1%) and Graigue Urban (59.1%). The lowest level of spatial variations occurred in the 2001 Nice Referendum and the 2002 Abortion Referendum. There was 20.3% of a difference in turnouts between the highest and lowest districts, Kyle (51.6%) and Brisha (30.3%), for the Abortion Referendum, as well as 19.6% of a difference in turnouts between the highest and lowest districts, Kyle (41.6%) and Stradbally (21.9%), for the Nice Referendum.

The higher degree of spatial variation for the local elections is probably due to candidate effects having a much larger influence on the turnout rate for these elections. There were a large number of candidates contesting these elections in Laois and their influence would have been to raise turnout rates in certain parts of the county, over and above those in areas that did not have a local candidate contesting these elections. Candidate factors had less of an influence on turnout variations in the general election, as there were much fewer Laois-based candidates involved, while they were of no relevance in the 2001 Nice and 2002 Abortion referenda.

8.4 TURNOUT IN CORK NORTH WEST

Cork North West, as well as being a strong area of support for the two main political parties (Section 8.2), is the constituency that had the most consistently high turnout rates in the

country during the 1997-2002 period. This was especially evidenced in the 2002 General Election, where Cork North West (73.4%) had the highest turnouts nationally, 1.0% higher than that of the next highest constituency, Sligo-Leitrim. This constituency has also had some of the highest turnouts nationally for the different referenda held over the 1997-2002 period, with it usually having the highest turnouts in the rural parts of Ireland. Turnout data was only available for the local and European Parliament elections in Cork North West and so the main focus of the Cork North West analysis will be on these elections.

One problem involved in Cork North West was that there was a significant mismatch between election boundaries for the general and local elections. While the entirety of the Kanturk and Macroom electoral areas formed the core area of the constituency, the peripheries of Cork North West was formed of small parts of other electoral areas, which were adjacent to Macroom and Kanturk. These included Mallow in the north, Bantry and Skibereen in the south, and Blarney in the west. People located in the southern and eastern peripheries of Cork North West would have been voting for one set of general election candidates and a different set of local election candidates, as a result.

Local and European Elections 1999

Turnout data, at a sub-constituency level, was only available for the 1999 local and European elections for the Cork North West. There was a definite spatial pattern to turnout variations for the 1999 local and European elections in Cork North West, as Figure 8.8 and Table 8.4 illustrates, with significant differences between the high and low turnout DEDs in the constituency. The main high turnout areas were concentrated in certain parts of Cork North

West, with a particular concentration of these in the north-western parts of the constituency. This area comprised the extreme north-western corner of the constituency, extending southwards towards the towns of Newmarket and Banteer and the rural areas in their immediate hinterland. Other high turnout areas in Cork North West included the rural area located to the west of Charleville in the north-east, focussing on the village of Milford, and the rural area to the west of Macroom, including Ballymakeery village.

By contrast, the main low turnout areas were largely focused on the south-eastern of the constituency. There was a particularly large low turnout area in the western environs of Ballincollig in the extreme south-eastern corner of the constituency, while another low turnout area encompassed areas in the vicinity of Inchigeelagh and Ballingeary in the southern part of Cork North West. Other low turnout areas included the extreme eastern part of the constituency, a mainly rural area extending southwards from the southern hinterlands of Mallow to the western hinterland of Blarney town, as well as the rural area located to the south-east of Charleville.

Mirroring the national trend, as well as that noticed for Co. Laois, for the 1999 local and European elections, a distinct turnout gradient existed within Cork North West, with turnouts generally declining as one moved from the north-west towards the south-east of the constituency. This pattern would appear to reflect underlying rural-urban turnout differentials, as the low turnout south-eastern part of the constituency lies in the hinterland of Cork City. This mirrors the turnout pattern nationally for the 1999 local elections in which the highest turnouts were recorded in the more remote rural areas in the west, with turnouts declining the further east one went. It also mirrors the geography of turnouts in Laois, where turnouts were

highest in the west, but especially the north-west, and lowest in the east, but particularly the south-east.

DEDS WITH HIGHEST TURNOUTS	%	DEDS WITH LOWEST TURNOUTS	%
1. Milford	80.3	1. Matehy	47.0
2. Candroma	78.5	2. Ballygroman	50.6
3. Kilnamartery	77.9	3. Ballymurphy	50.9
4. Cleanrath	77.1	4. Streamhill	52.3
5. Crinaloo	76.1	5. Brinny	52.8
6. Dromina	75.4	6. Gowlane	53.1
7. Nad	74.0	7. Ardskeagh	53.3
8. Templemary	73.9	8. Dromore	54.2
9. Clonmeen	73.8	9. Coolmountain	54.3
10. Keale	72.6	10. Bealock	54.3

Table 8.4: DEDs with the highest and lowest voter turnouts in Cork North West in the 1999 Local and European Elections.

Table 8.4 shows that there were a number of DEDs with very high turnouts, with a turnout rate of over 80% for the Milford DED in the north-east of the constituency. There was 33.3% of a difference between the turnouts in Milford and Matehy, the DED with the lowest turnout. Matehy was the only DED in the constituency to have a turnout rate of lower than 50%, while twenty-one DEDs had turnout rates of over 70%. These included Allow, Tullylease, Banteer, Gortnatubbrid, Inchigeelagh, Newmarket, Clonfert East, Kilcorney, Newtown, Bealangeary and Tincora, other than those listed in Table 8.5. The low areas, other than Matehy, listed in Table 8.4 all had turnouts in the 50-55 per cent range, with these turnouts higher than the highest turnout DED in Dublin, Ashtown B (48.2%).

The high turnout areas in Cork North West, as listed in Table 8.5, are predominantly located in the Kanturk electoral area in the north, with fifteen of the twenty areas of highest turnout

located there. The high turnout areas were generally proximate to the homes of local election candidates.

HIGHEST AREAS	%	LOWEST AREAS	%
Beechwood Drive, Ballyhea, Rathluirc	88.1	St. Patrick's Hospital	0.0
Coolageela, Kanturk	85.4	Sleaveen East, Macroom	1.6
Village of Milford, Charleville	84.8	The Willows, Classes Lake, Ovens	1.7
Main Street, Newmarket	83.3	Nazareth House, Dromore, Mallow	10.3
Church Street, Newmarket	83.0	St. Patrick's, Upton	17.1
Garrane, Banteer	82.9	Laurestown, Tower, Blarney	20.6
Tullylease, Charleville	81.6	Coolmountain, Dunmanway	22.1
Ballymakeery, Macroom	81.4	Fairways, Cloghroe, Blarney	26.7
Percival Street, Kanturk	81.0	Dromin, Blarney	28.0
West End, Millstreet	81.0	Seancloc, Tower, Blarney	29.3
Glenakeel, Rockchapel	80.5	Hillview Drive, Charleville	31.9
Lackendarragh, Lombardstown	80.5	St. Brendan's Drive, Charleville	32.7
Freemount Road, Curragh, Newmarket	80.0	Eamonn De Valera Place, Charleville	34.3
Killarney Road, Millstreet	80.0	Abbey Road, Ovens	37.5
Glashaboy, Bweeng	79.2	Batt Donegan Place, Charleville	38.1
Clonbannin, Mallow	79.2	Woodlands, Cloghroe, Blarney	38.7
Gortroe, Lombardstown, Mallow	78.7	Kilnacranagh, Enniskeane	38.8
Egmont, Churchtown, Mallow	78.7	Fr. Patrick Sheehan Place, Coachford	38.8
Carrangraigue, Rathcool, Mallow	78.7	Wyndham Downs/Lane, Ballincollig	39.5
Garaunawarrig Lower, Newmarket	78.6	Mountrivers, Rylane	40.7
Lisboy, Kilnamartyra, Macroom	78.1	Aylsbury, Ballincollig	41.4
Rathcoole, Mallow	77.9	Coolflush, Blarney	41.4
Ballydaly, Millstreet	77.7	Bunkilla, Dunoughmore	41.5
Kiskeam, Mallow	77.6	Dromin Drive, Coolflush, Blarney	41.8
Glenacarney, Rockchapel	77.5	Gowlane, Donoughmore	42.3

Table 8.5: High and low turnout areas in Cork North West in the 1999 local and European elections.

The high turnout areas near Charleville (such as Beechwood Drive, Tullylease and Milford village) were proximate to the bailiwicks of Billy Biggane and Ted Bradley, as well as Michael Donegan who hailed from the nearby Milford area. Bill Cashin, Frank Crowley and Laurence Kelly all hailed from the Kanturk area and hence their campaigning efforts would have played a role in pushing up turnouts in the Coolageela and Percival Street areas. Banteer had a successful candidate, Patrick Buckley, contesting the elections, which could account for

the high turnouts in Garrane. The successful campaign of Gerard Murphy from Newmarket, who was subsequently to win a seat in the 2002 General Election, accounted, in part, for high turnouts in Garaunawarrig Lower, and Main Street and Church Street in Newmarket. The candidature of Jack Roche from Rockchapel was associated with the high turnout Glenakeel and Glenacarney areas, whereas high turnouts in Keale, Ballydaly, Killarney Road and West End, in the Millstreet area, were in large part due to Millstreet based candidates, PJ Murphy and Marie Murphy, contesting the elections.

There was a strong predominance of low turnout areas in the south and east of the constituency. The likelihood is that rural-urban turnout differentials are at play here, as noted earlier, as a number of these areas would be located in the commuter belt of Cork City. The mismatch between general and local election boundaries, which was noted earlier, might have been also responsible. Voters located in the small portions of the Blarney, Bandon and Skibbereen electoral areas in the southern and south-eastern parts of Cork North West would have found themselves generally voting for one set of candidates in general elections and an entirely different set in local elections. Political party election strategy would have generally located candidates in more central parts of those electoral areas, generally from within the constituency boundaries of the adjacent Cork South West Dáil constituency. Thus there was less of a likelihood of a “friends and neighbours” effect that could have pushed up turnouts in the southern and south-eastern parts of Cork North West.

It must be noted that a number of institutions were also part of this group of low turnout areas, including St. Patrick’s Hospital, Nazareth House and St. Patrick’s, Upton.

There is no evidence of there being an association between low turnout and social marginalisation in Cork North West. Indeed, a comparison between Figure 8.5 and McHugh's (2001b: 171) rural typology map shows that the most marginal areas in Cork North West, located in the western part of constituency, tended to have the highest turnouts in these elections. The relatively high turnouts in Dromina (75.4%) and Clonfert West (68.5%), the two DEPs with the highest SAHRU deprivation scores in Cork North West, further underlines this point. The general trend seems to suggest that, if anything, the higher turnouts were associated with increasing levels of marginalisation.

8.5 TURNOUT IN LIMERICK WEST, 1999-2002

Turnout data at the sub-constituency level was available for the 1999 local and European elections and the 2002 General Election. Turnout in the Limerick West constituency is generally relatively high by national standards, albeit not to the same extent as in Cork North West. Turnout for the 2002 General Election was 67.1%, a 4.4% higher turnout than the national average for that election. Turnout in 1997 had been 71.0%, a 5.9% higher rate than the national average. Turnout in the 2002 Nice Referendum (49.4%) was, however slightly lower than the national average in that election.

Local and European Elections 1999

A different spatial pattern emerges for Limerick West to that of the national trend, or Laois or Cork North West, as is illustrated by Figure 8.9. The pronounced western-eastern turnout gradient that characterised these does not emerge to the same degree in Limerick West.

Indeed the main area of high turnout was located in the extreme south-eastern corner of the area, encompassing Ballylanders and its immediate hinterland. The general pattern was one of a number of pockets of relatively high and low turnout, clustered in different parts of the constituency area.

The other main high turnout areas in Limerick West, apart from Ballylanders, included Askeaton and its rural hinterland, including Ballysteen village. Another high turnout area was located in the west of the constituency, including Athea and its immediate hinterland and extending northwards to reach the Shannon Estuary at Loghill. There was another area of high turnout in the south, encompassing Dromcolliher, Boola and their immediate hinterlands. The other main high turnout area was located in the central part of the constituency, extending westwards from Athlacca, on the eastern boundary of the constituency, towards Croom, Croagh and the rural hinterland of Rathkeale town. These “islands of high turnout” were generally associated with the bailiwicks of local election candidates. These included John Gallaghuie in Ballylanders, Seamus Ahern in Athea, John Cregan in Dromcolliher, Kevin Sheahan in Askeaton, David Naughton in Ballysteen, and Dan Neville in Croagh.

DEDS WITH HIGHEST TURNOUTS	%	DEDS WITH LOWEST TURNOUTS	%
1. Cullane	77.8	1. Dunmoylan East	37.2
2. Anglesborough	77.4	2. Fedamore	38.9
3. Ballylanders	75.7	3. Newcastlewest Urban	39.6
4. Boola	73.9	4. Cleanglass	42.7
5. Feenagh	71.1	5. Shanagolden	43.7
6. Griston	70.7	6. Crecora	44.9
7. Iveruss	70.3	7. Shanid	46.0
8. Rathronan	70.1	8. Danganbeg	46.5
9. Broadford	69.4	9. Mahoonagh	47.0
10. Glenagower	69.4	10. Aughnish	48.3

Table 8.6: DEDs with the highest and lowest voter turnouts in Limerick West in the 1999 Local and European Elections.

One of the main areas of low turnout in Limerick West was the town of Newcastlewest, as shown by Table 8.6. There was a concentration of low turnout in a rural area, encompassing the south-eastern environs of Newcastlewest and extending southwards towards the southern border of Limerick, including the villages of Mahoonagh, Ballagh and Strand. The DEDs of Mahoonagh (47.0%) and Newcastlewest Rural (50.5%) fell within this area. In the north-west of the constituency, there was a concentration of low turnout areas along the Shannon Estuary, encompassing the Foynes and Aughnish areas and extending southwards to take in Shanagolden and its environs. Some of the DEDs with the lowest turnouts in Limerick West were included in this area, as Table 8.6 shows, including Shanagolden, Shanid and Aughnish. Finally, there was a low turnout area along the eastern boundary of the constituency, which took in the villages of Fedamore and Crecora, and included the low turnout DEDs of Fedamore and Crecora, as listed in Table 8.6, as well as Croom (51.8%) and Patrickswell (51.8%). In all, eleven DEDs in Limerick West had turnouts of lower than 50%, including those listed in Table 8.6 and Ballynoe West (49.1%).

The marked register analysis reveals further degrees of variations between the turnouts in different parts of Limerick West. As with the Laois and Cork North West analyses, the areas highlighted in Table 8.7 all had a registered electorate of at least fifty people, so as to rule out the extremes variation one would have with smaller populations.

There was a high degree of association between the high and low turnout areas in Table 8.7 and the high and low turnout DEDs, as listed in Table 8.6. The main high turnout areas in Limerick West, as listed in Table 8.7, were generally associated with a number of high

turnout towns in the area, such as Ballylanders, Athea, Abbeyfeale and Dromcolliher. There were a number these high turnout areas in the Ballylanders area, including Oliver Plunket Terrace, the Main Street, Spittle and Glenahoglisha, as well as Cullane South and Athlacca, while Ballinastona and Bresheen were areas of high turnout in the adjacent Kilmallock area.

HIGHEST AREAS	%	LOWEST AREAS	%
St. Joseph's Park, Carroward East	82.6	St. Ita's Hospital, Gortboy	0.0
Cullane South, Glenroe, Kilmallock	82.6	Bruree House, Bruree	18.4
Anglesborough, Kilmallock	80.8	Pound Lane, Rathkeale	22.6
Oliver Plunkett Terrace, Ballylanders	80.8	Chapel Close, Boherbui	23.1
Crean, Athlacca, Kilmallock	80.0	Enaghroe, Fedamore, Kilmallock	26.2
Ballinastona, Sherin's Cross	79.3	Fairhill, Rathkeale	26.6
Bresheen, Kilmallock	78.7	Ballincolly, Charleville	27.7
Athea Village	78.5	Shanagolden	30.4
Glenahoglisha, Ballylanders	78.4	Sharwood Estate, Newcastle West	30.7
Ballymacshaneboy, Kilmallock	78.4	Churchtown, Newcastle West	29.3
Main Street, Ballylanders	75.8	Ballyea, Fedamore, Kilmallock	32.9
Knocknagornagh, Athea	75.7	Ballygeale, Patrickswell	34.4
Ballynort, Askeaton	75.5	Walshestown, Castlemahon	34.7
Ballycannon, Croagh, Rathkeale	74.5	Ahawilk, Feohanagh	35.2
Chapel Street, Abbeyfeale	74.0	Cahernagh, Ballyhahill	35.3
Con Colbert Street, Athea	74.0	Glenduff, Ballagh, Charleville	35.4
Spittle, Ballylanders	73.7	Mitchelstowndown, Garryspillane	35.5
Dromard Desmesne, Rathkeale	73.5	Gortnaclohy, Ballagh	37.1
Ballinruane, Kilmeedy, Limerick	73.2	Durnish Avenue, Foynes	38.0
Carroward, Dromcolliher	72.4	Assumpta Park, Newcastle West	38.2
Ballyagran, Kilmallock	72.3	Kilgobbin, Adare	38.3
Coolrus, Bruree	72.1	Ballycormick, Shanagolden	38.9
Cool West, Athea	71.6	Beechwood Gardens, Newcastle West	39.0
Carrig, Clarina	71.6	Roche's Road, Rathkeale	39.2
Adamswood, Croagh, Rathkeale	71.4	Rathnaneane, Newcastle West	39.6

Table 8.7: High and low turnout areas in Limerick West in the 1999 local and European elections.

High turnouts in the Athea area included Athea village itself, Chapel Street, Knocknagornagh, Cool West and Con Colbert Street, while high turnout areas in the Rathkeale and Croagh area included Adamswood, the Dromard Desmesne and Ballycannon. High turnout areas, listed in Table 8.7, that were located in the Dromcolliher area included St. Joseph's Park and

Carroward, Chapel Street in Abbeyfeale and the Ballynort area, near Askeaton, also figured amongst the high turnout areas listed in Table 8.7.

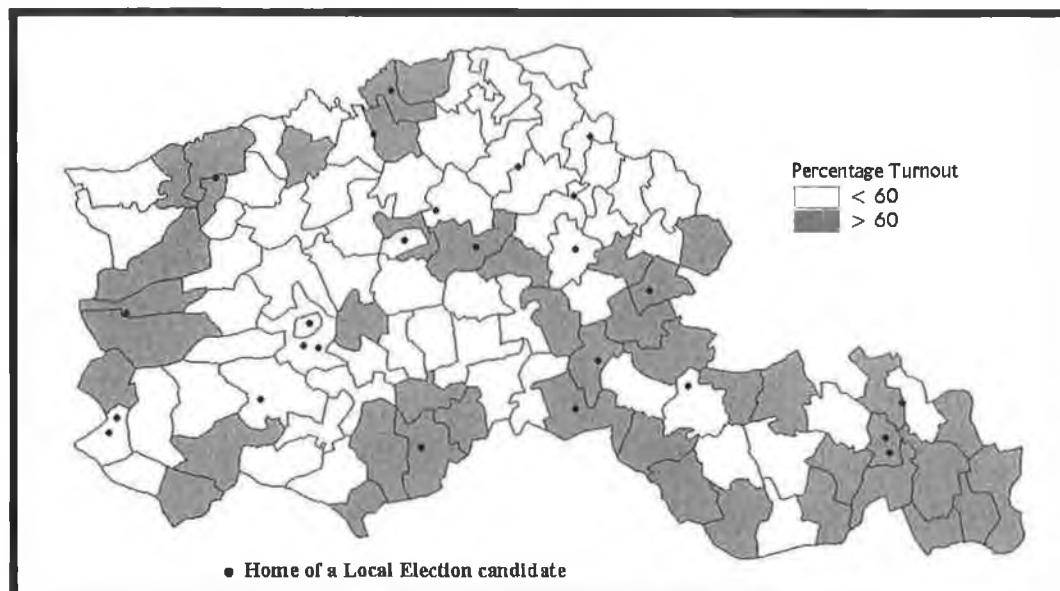


Figure 8.2: High turnout areas in Limerick West for the 1999 local and European elections, as mapped against candidates' homes.

There was a strong association between high turnouts and the homes of local electoral candidates. This association is illustrated by Figure 8.2 above, which shows a relationship between the high turnout areas in Limerick West and local election candidates' homes. (Some candidates' home bases were not located in high turnout areas admittedly, especially those in the Newcastlewest area or the hinterland of Limerick City in the north-eastern part of Limerick West.) Most of the high turnout areas had a local candidate based there, suggesting that Limerick West turnouts were influenced by a "friends and neighbours" effect, as was the case in Cork North West and Laois.

Based on Table 8.7, the most striking examples of the “friends and neighbours” effect on turnouts were the influences that candidates such as John Cregan (Dromcolligher) and John Gallahue (Ballylanders) had on turnouts in their local areas. For instance, there were a number of high turnout areas in the south-eastern parts of the county, centring on Gallahue’s Ballylanders bailiwick, including the areas in Ballylanders town and its surrounding hinterland, as listed in Table 8.7 above. Unsuccessful Fianna Fáil candidate, Mary O’Brien was also based in Ballylanders.

There was not the same spatial concentration in terms of low turnout areas as there was for the high turnout areas, with the low turnout areas listed in Table 8.7 being generally dispersed around the constituency, with the exception of the Newcastlewest and Rathkeale areas. There was a particular concentration of low turnout areas in Newcastlewest, the largest town in Limerick West, and its rural hinterland, including Assumpta Park, Beechwood Gardens, Sharwood Estate, Rathnanneane and Churchtown. There was another concentration of low turnout areas in Rathkeale and the areas that scarred the Rathkeale turnout landscape included Roche’s Road, Fairhill and Pound Lane. As with Laois, Cork North West and Dublin, large institutions, such as St. Ita’s Hospital and Bruree House, accounted for some of the lowest turnouts in Limerick West.

There was somewhat of a linkage between social deprivation and low turnout in Limerick West, based on the findings of Table 8.7. Some of the lowest turnouts in Limerick West were associated with the council housing estates of Assumpta Park and the Sharwood estate in Newcastlewest. Similarly the large population of Travellers that were located in the Fairhill area in Rathkeale accounted for the low turnout in that area. The average turnout for the most

deprived DEDs, based on the SAH RU deprivation scores, was 54.8% and was 2.0% lower than the Limerick West average, which further suggests an association, albeit weak, between lower turnout and socio-economic marginalisation. (The most deprived DEDs, with a SAH RU score of 4, included Ballyagran, Ballylanders, Caher, Croom, Dunmoylan West, Glenagower, Glengort, Glensharrold, Kilmoylan, Mount Collins, Newcastlewest Urban, Rathkeale Urban, Rathronan and Rooskagh.) However this average was strongly shaped by the low turnout in Newcastlewest and the relatively low turnout in Rathkeale and the average turnouts of the deprived DEDs increased to 61.3%, 4.5% higher than the Limerick West average, when the town of Newcastlewest and Rathkeale were excluded. This could suggest that there was a relationship between urban social deprivation and low turnout in Limerick West, but this did not apply to the relationship between rural disadvantage and turnout in that constituency.

Residential mobility also had a bearing on low turnouts in Limerick West for the local elections, given that some of the lowest turnouts in the constituency were associated with the new housing estates in Churchtown, Rathnaneane and Beechwood Gardens in Newcastlewest.

General Election 2002

Turnout in Limerick West (67.1%) was above the national average for the 2002 General Election, while significant variations in the turnout rate within the constituency. The spatial variations in turnout largely mirrored those of the local elections, with high turnout areas in the south-east (Ballylanders and Kilmallock), in the south (Dromcolliher and Broadford) and the west (Athea and Glengort). Turnouts in these areas were often in the high seventies and, in some cases, the eighties.

Some of the highest turnouts in Limerick West were in the south of the constituency, encompassing the Broadford (83.05), Dromcolliher (81.2%) and Feenagh (84.3%) polling districts. High turnouts were recorded in Bruree (80.8%), Dromin (78.0%), Athlacca (76.8%), Ballylanders (75.8%), Clarina (74.3%), Kilbeheny (73.4%), Effin (71.8%) and Granagh (71.1%) in the south-eastern and eastern parts of the constituency, with all these areas, apart from Clarina, located in the Kilmallock electoral area. A number of districts in the west also had high turnouts, including Kilmeedy (78.9%), Ashford (76.3%), Athea (73.9%), Ballingarry (75.3%), Glengort (73.0%), Mount Collins (72.5%), Ardagh (71.7%), and Abbeyfeale (70.8%).

The exceptionally high turnouts in the Dromcolliher, Broadford and Feenagh areas were suggestive of a strong “friends and neighbours” effect at play here, working to the advantage of Dromcolliher-based Fianna Fáil candidate, John Cregan, who subsequently topped the poll in the constituency. As well as winning a large proportion of the vote – based on tally figures published in the *Limerick Leader*, Cregan took 76.8% of the vote in Dromcolliher, 62.7% in Broadford and 44.7% in Feenagh – Cregan’s presence in the contest also pushed up the turnouts in these areas. The most striking example of this was for the Dromcolliher National School, Booth 1, where there was a turnout of 83.1% and Cregan won 81.8% of the first preference votes. There was a relatively high turnout in Abbeyfeale (70.8%), the original base of Cregan’s running mate, Michael Collins, but turnouts were not especially high in his current Patrickswell base (64.2%). There was not a strong “friends and neighbours” turnout effect acting to the advantage of Fine Gael candidate, Michael Finucane either, as his Newcastlewest base (58.3%) had the lowest turnout in Limerick West. There was, however, a

“friends and neighbours” effect associated with the other Fine Gael candidate, Dan Neville, with a 75.0% turnout in his Croagh base.

Rural-urban variations in the turnout rate were strongly evidenced in Limerick West. The lowest turnouts were recorded in the larger towns in the constituency, Newcastlewest and Rathkeale (59.3%). Other low turnout districts included the Aughnish / Foynes area in the north-west (58.6%) and Fedamore (58.5%) in the east. Some individual polling boxes registered turnouts lower than 50%. One of these was for Croom National School, Booth 3, (49.3%), which served parts of Croom and the adjacent townland of Kylefea, which had a 47.0% turnout in 1999. Two boxes in Newcastlewest had turnouts of below 50% also. These were Courtney National School, Booth 1 (46.1%), which served the Garryduff townland and parts of the town, including St. Ita's Hospital, and Courtney National School Booth 6 (47.2%), mainly serving the Castleview estate, which had a turnout of 40.4% in 1999.

The urban-rural variations in turnout, noted above, would have been further underpinned if figures for the adjacent Limerick East constituency were included in the analysis. The average turnout in Limerick City was 60.3%, which was lower than the rural parts of Limerick West, as well as the rural part of the Limerick East constituency, albeit actually higher than the Newcastlewest and Rathkeale turnouts. (See Appendix B.) The urban-rural turnout differentials within Limerick are illustrated by Figure 8.10, which shows the general election turnouts for all the local electoral areas in the Limerick West and Limerick East constituencies. The lowest turnouts were registered in the City Council areas, as well as the adjacent Bruff electoral area, which included the outskirts of Limerick City, while the highest turnouts were in the more rural Newcastlewest and Kilmallock electoral areas in the southern

part of Co. Limerick. An interesting aspect of the Limerick East turnouts was the manner in which the very low turnouts in working class parts of Limerick City, such as the Moyross area (28.7%) and the Limerick Inner City (39.5%) mirrored the similarly low turnouts in socially deprived areas in Dublin (Chapter 7).

8.6 STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The study of the spatial variations in turnouts in the case study constituencies shows that there were some differences in the turnout rates within these regions. In general, however, these variations were not as dramatic as had been the case for the Dublin region. While turnouts were higher than the highest Dublin rates in a number of areas, there was nowhere in the rural study areas where turnouts fell to as low a level as those identified in parts of the Cherry Orchard, Inner City and North Clondalkin areas in Dublin, for instance.

Given these observations, the next stage is to determine which factors had the most bearing on rural turnout variations. However, because of the mismatch of DED and polling district boundaries in the rural constituencies, in contrast to the Dublin region where DEDs form the basis for polling districts, this section shall only focus on the correlates of local electoral turnout variations. The availability of marked register data, as noted in Chapter 4, allows for the grouping of this data into DED-level divisions, permitting analyses using census data organised on a DED-level basis.

	Local Elections
Number of Cases	306
Demography	
Male	0.10*
Married	-0.26**
Single	0.25**
Lone parent families	0.07
15-24 as % of electorate	-0.17**
25-44 as % of electorate	-0.20**
45-64 as % of electorate	-0.09
65+ as % of electorate	0.25**
Education	
No formal, primary or lower secondary	0.34**
Upper secondary	-0.19**
Third level	-0.26**
Housing	
Private, conventional household	0.21**
Flat/bedsit household	-0.14*
Owner occupied	0.12*
Owner occupied: mortgaged	-0.40**
Owner occupied: no loan/mortgage	0.45**
Local authority rented	-0.06
Private rented	-0.18*
House built before 1960	0.32**
House built after 1980	-0.20**
No flush toilet	0.23**
Social Class	
Social Class 1	-0.12*
Social Class 2	0.03
Social Class 5	0.08
Social Class 6	-0.05
Occupational	
Farmers	0.40**
Manufacturing	0.00
Clerical and Administration	-0.34**
Professional	-0.23**
White Collar employees	-0.41**
Blue Collar and Services	-0.13*
Population Change	
Population growth, 1996-2002	-0.18**
Unemployment	
Unemployment rate	-0.13*

Table 8.8: Correlations between turnouts and socio-economic and demographic variables in the rural case study areas.

Correlation Analysis

This section will look at the correlates of local electoral turnout in the combined rural areas, involving turnout figures and census data for the 306 DEDs in the different rural case study areas.

Table 8.8 shows that there was a positive and significant association between turnout and age in the rural case study areas. The correlations suggest that one would expect lower turnouts in areas with a younger population and higher turnouts in areas characterised by older populations. There was a positive and significant correlation between turnout and the proportion of males in the population, which suggests that areas with higher percentages of males were the more likely to have higher turnouts. A more surprising result was the positive correlation with single people and a negative correlation with married people, suggesting an association between higher turnouts and areas with higher proportions of single people. Generally the electoral literature would suggest the opposite. However, such findings are usually based on areas in which single people tend to be in the younger age categories. However, given the high ratio of bachelors and spinsters to the single people in the rural case areas, there were high percentages of younger people in the married category and older people in the single category. The associations between turnout and marital status here are thus partly reflective of the strong association between age and turnout noted above.

Higher education levels, generally, are expected to be associated with higher turnout rates in the electoral literature and this was shown to be the case for the Dublin case study area in Chapter 7. The opposite proves to be the case within the rural case study areas. The correlates of local electoral turnout in Table 8.8 above suggest that the higher the degree of educational

attainment that an area has, the lower the turnouts in that area will be. Areas with high levels of early school leavers, by contrast, are expected to have higher turnout rates, arising from the positive and significant correlation between turnout and early school leavers. Lower turnouts are associated with areas with higher percentages of people with either upper secondary or third level qualifications, based on the negative and significant correlations between turnout and higher educational standards.

Such findings appear to infer that greater educational attainment will lessen the likelihood of a rural elector deciding to vote. However there is a possibility that other factors, particularly those related to age, might be influencing this result and hence this correlation could be largely spurious in nature. To test this hypothesis, partial correlations, controlling for age and housing tenure (loan/mortgaged or no loan/mortgage), were calculated. (The cleavage between mortgaged and non-mortgaged housing was used as this also captures an age effect – mortgaged housing being generally associated more with younger people.) The partial correlations calculated, as listed in Table 8.9, suggest that these factors largely account for the anomalous correlations between turnout and education.

	Local Elections
No Formal, Primary or Lower Secondary	0.08
Upper Secondary	0.01
Third Level	-0.06

Table 8.9: Partial correlations between turnouts and educational attainment in the rural case study areas, controlling for age and housing tenure.

Turnout is strongly associated with private, conventional housing and flat/bedsit households in the rural areas, with areas with higher proportions of private, conventional housing expected to have higher turnouts and lower turnouts expected in areas with high percentages

of flat or bedsit households. The strong negative correlation for private rented housing underpins the association in the literature between rented housing and lower turnout. However, there is no evidence of a cleavage between local authority rented and owner occupied housing in terms of their influence on turnout, as opposed to the association of high turnout with owner occupied housing and low turnout with local authority housing in Dublin. There is only a weak association between turnout and the local authority housing. There is a significant, positive, association between owner occupied housing and turnout, but there is an even more significant cleavage within the owner occupier population, between those with mortgages and those with no mortgages. There is an association between high turnouts with the proportion of the population who own their houses outright, while lower turnouts are associated with those whose houses are mortgaged. There is an age dimension to this relationship in that the mortgaged population tends to be younger, which may account for much of the low turnout amongst owners of mortgaged property.

Age of housing appears to be strongly associated with turnout rates, with the correlations inferring that higher turnout rates will be expected in areas with older housing and lower turnouts in areas of newer housing. Higher turnouts are also to be expected in areas with high proportions of housing without a flush toilet.

There is not an especially strong association between social well-being and local election turnout in the rural case study areas. There is a significant, inverse association between turnout and unemployment. But other social exclusion indicators do not emerge as important predictors of low turnout, based on the findings of the correlation analysis. The correlation with local authority housing is negative, but weak, as was illustrated by the correlation

analysis in Table 8.8, while that for educational disadvantage is a significantly positive one, with a similarly positive, if weak, correlation with lone parent families.

As regards social class, there is no significant association between turnout and the semiskilled or unskilled social classes. The only significant correlation observed is a negative one with the professional social classes, implying that lower local election turnouts would be expected in areas with high percentages of a professional population. There is an inverse correlation between local electoral turnout and blue collar and services employment, mirroring the Dublin findings, but there is an even stronger negative association with white collar employment, which was not the case for Dublin. This contrasts with a very strong positive correlation between turnout and the agricultural workforce, which is in keeping with the common wisdom that ‘farmers vote’.

Finally, as in Dublin, there was a negative association between population growth and turnout, inferring that turnout was lowest in the areas in which population growth was most pronounced. This suggests a residential mobility effect on turnouts, as well as being linked to urban-rural turnout variations, given that population growth was especially pronounced in the urban parts of these areas.

Regression analysis

A stepwise regression analysis was used to detect what the main predictors of turnout variation in the rural case study areas would be, using the same list of socio-economic and demographic variables that were used for the Dublin case study areas in Chapter 7. This

analysis selected three variables as key predictors of local electoral turnout variance in the rural case study areas. These were the percentage of white-collar employees, the unemployment rate and the percentage living in owner occupied housing (no loan or mortgage).

	Coefficient
<i>Number of cases</i>	306
<i>Constant</i>	62.55 (<i>13.78</i>)
<i>White Collar employees</i>	-0.23 (<i>-3.56</i>)
<i>Unemployment Rate</i>	-0.20 (<i>-2.41</i>)
<i>Owner Occupied (No Loan/Mortgage)</i>	0.15 (<i>3.38</i>)
<i>Adjusted R² value</i>	0.20

Table 8.10: Aggregate data analysis of turnout in the rural case study areas, local and European elections 1999.

[Note: The main entry for each variable is the b coefficient, the italicised figure beside it (in brackets) is the t-value. T-values in excess of 2.02 are significant at p=0.05.]

These three variables combined to account for a fifth (20%) of turnout variance in the rural case study areas, arising from an adjusted R² value of 0.20. This compares unfavourably with the large adjusted R² value of 0.63 for the Dublin model¹ in Chapter 7. The larger number of cases in the rural study areas can account for part of this difference (306 DEDs, as opposed to 134 DEDs in the Dublin area).

Another factor involved here was the sharper divisions in socio-economic well being between areas in Dublin. Most of the Dublin DEDs tended to be relatively homogenous in a socio-economic sense, being largely populated by either a mainly middle class or a mainly working class or socially deprived population. The social structure of populations in the rural DEDs,

¹ This model selected population change, owner occupied housing and the proportion of the electorate aged 65 and over. When these same three models were entered as predictor variables for the rural case study areas, the calculated R² value only amounted to 0.10.

however, tended to be more heterogeneous and as a result it was more difficult to pick up differences between areas in the rural constituencies.

Based on the b-coefficients in Table 8.10 above, higher levels of unemployment are expected to be associated with lower turnout and higher levels of home ownership (without a mortgage) are associated with higher turnout. The negative b-coefficient for white collar employees suggests that turnouts will be lower in areas with high proportions of these, further underpinning the association of white-collar employment with low local electoral turnouts, as was noted in the correlation analysis in Table 8.8.

Social exclusion

To focus in on the effect that socio-economic marginalisation had on turnout levels in the rural case study areas, a stepwise regression model was employed in which only social exclusion related factors were entered as the predictor variables.

	b-coefficient
<i>Number of Cases</i>	306
<i>Constant</i>	44.21 (10.74)
<i>Local authority rented housing</i>	-0.07 (-0.57)
<i>Unemployment rate</i>	-0.34 (-3.27)
<i>Blue collar and service employees</i>	-0.05 (-0.83)
<i>Educational disadvantage</i>	0.38 (6.27)
<i>Lone parent families</i>	0.14 (1.39)
<i>Adjusted R²</i>	0.13

Table 8.11: Aggregate data analysis of turnout in the rural case study areas, local and European elections 1999, using social deprivation related variables.

[Note: The main entry for each variable is the B coefficient, the italicised figure beside it (in brackets) is the t-value. T-values in excess of 2.02 are significant at p=0.05.]

In the Dublin case study, the adjusted R^2 value for the equivalent model, containing these variables, was 0.50, implying that these variables accounted for half the variance in local election turnouts. The adjusted R^2 value for the rural case study model, however, is just 0.13, a much smaller value than for the Dublin case. The larger number of cases (307 DEDs as opposed to 134 DEDs for Dublin) would admittedly explain some level of this difference. One, however, is still left with the conclusion that social exclusion factors have a greater bearing on urban local electoral turnout variance than they do on rural local electoral variance. It is quite possible that deprivation affects turnout in rural areas, in the same manner as it affects urban turnouts, but that the main variations in deprivation are within rather than between DEDs, so the relationship remains undetected.

For the Dublin case study, all the variables, bar educational disadvantage, had negative b-coefficients, inferring that they had the effect of pushing down turnout rates there, while the most significant factor was local authority rented housing. The most significant influencing factor on turnout in the rural case study was educational disadvantage. This factor, however, had a positive b-coefficient, inferring that higher levels of educational disadvantage in an area would be expected to increase turnout rates. The only significant factor to have a negative impact on turnout levels is unemployment. Small t-values for the other factors infer that they have little impact on turnouts in the rural study areas, once unemployment and educational disadvantage is accounted for.

This is reflected in the stepwise regression involving these variables, as illustrated by Table 8.12, which excludes blue collar and services employees, local authority rented housing and lone parent families. The adjusted R^2 value for the stepwise model is identical to the previous

model, thus indicating that the three excluded variables appear to have had little influence on local electoral turnout variance in the rural study areas. Educational disadvantage and unemployment were selected as the explanatory variables in the model, with the b-coefficients for unemployment negative and for educational disadvantage positive. The general influence of these variables appears to push up turnout rates. The b-coefficient for the constant factor is considerably lower than the average turnout for the local elections in each of the case study areas. Moreover, the b-coefficient for educational disadvantage is larger than that for unemployment, while higher proportions of the rural population would have fallen into the educational disadvantage category, as opposed to the unemployed category.

	<i>b-coefficient</i>
<i>Number of Cases</i>	306
<i>Constant</i>	43.42 (<i>13.15</i>)
<i>Unemployment rate</i>	-0.38 (-4.36)
<i>Educational disadvantage</i>	0.39 (6.49)
<i>Adjusted R²</i>	0.13

Table 8.12: Aggregate data analysis of turnout in rural case study areas, 1999 local and European elections.

[Note: The main entry for each variable is the b coefficient, the italicised figure beside it (in brackets) is the t-value. T-values in excess of 2.02 are significant at p=0.05.]

Based on this regression analysis, one can conclude that, at least for local elections, social exclusion related factors, and indeed socio-economic and demographic factors in general, appear to have little influence on rural turnouts. The likelihood is that candidate influences appear to be the strongest influence on local election turnouts in these areas. As was illustrated in Sections 8.3, 8.4 and 8.5, turnouts were considerably higher in areas that had a local candidate contesting the elections and lower in areas that did not have a local candidate. Where social exclusion factors did appear to have an influence, that influence appeared to be

to push up turnout rates, as opposed to leading to a decline in turnout rates, which was the case in the Dublin study area and which would have been expected based on the literature.

Friends and neighbours effect

A regression model was used to determine the extent, statistically, to which the “friends and neighbours” effect accounted for local election turnout variance in Laois. This model is based on the premise that local candidates will generally top the poll and win exceptionally high percentages of the vote in their immediate home area. By contrast, there will be a greater sharing of the vote between candidates in areas that have no local candidate competing in the elections and which are further away from the bailiwicks of individual candidates. Moreover, this takes account of the fact that partisan competition in rural areas, such as Laois, is generally characterised by the presence both of a local Fianna Fail and Fine Gael candidate.

Thus, the percentage vote won by the strongest two candidates in an area proves to be a useful measure for this “friends and neighbours” effect. By regressing local electoral turnout against this measure, one finds a distinctly linear relationship between the two variables, as illustrated by. Turnouts are shown to be higher in areas in which two strong, local, candidates win high percentages of the vote, as illustrated by Figure 8.3. This graph shows that turnouts were expected to be higher in areas where the two strongest candidates won a higher share of the first preference votes in the 1999 local elections.

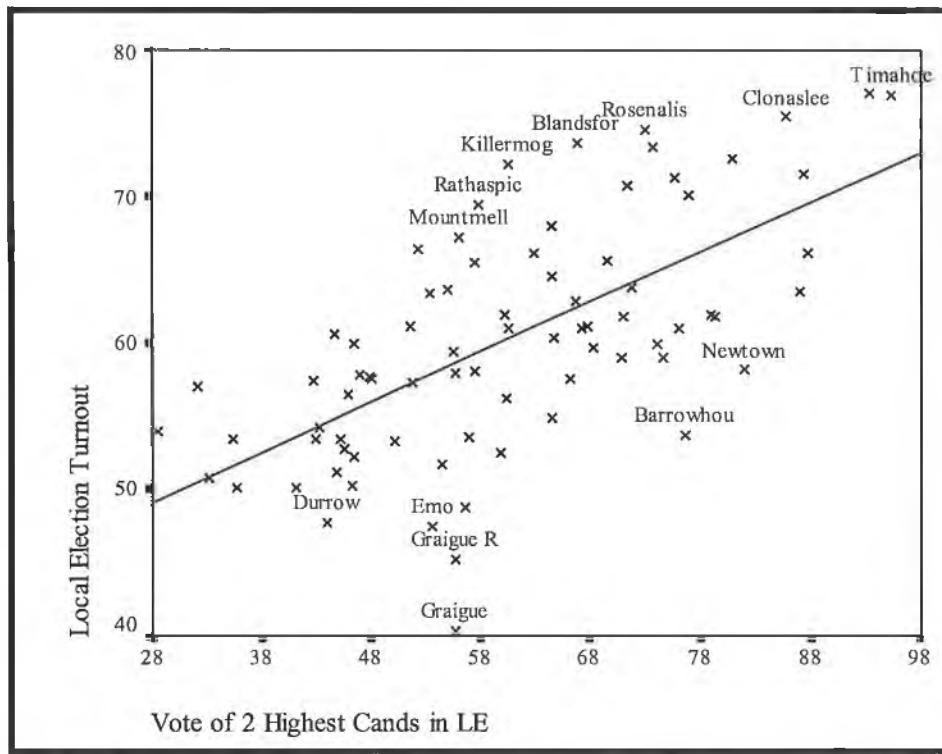


Figure 8.3: Regression of turnout against percentage vote of strongest two candidates, by polling station, for Co. Laois in 1999 local elections.

The adjusted R^2 value for this model is 0.46, inferring that the “friends and neighbours” effect accounted for 46% of the turnout variance in Laois for those elections, a much higher proportion than was accounted for by the models using socio-economic and demographic variables as the predictor variables.

The scattergraph (Figure 8.3) shows that the model under predicts turnouts in areas, such as Rosenalis, Timahoe and Clonaslee, where the strongest two candidates were especially strong, while it over predicts turnouts in areas where there were no strong local candidates, such as Graiguecullen, Barrowhouse, Emo and Durrow.

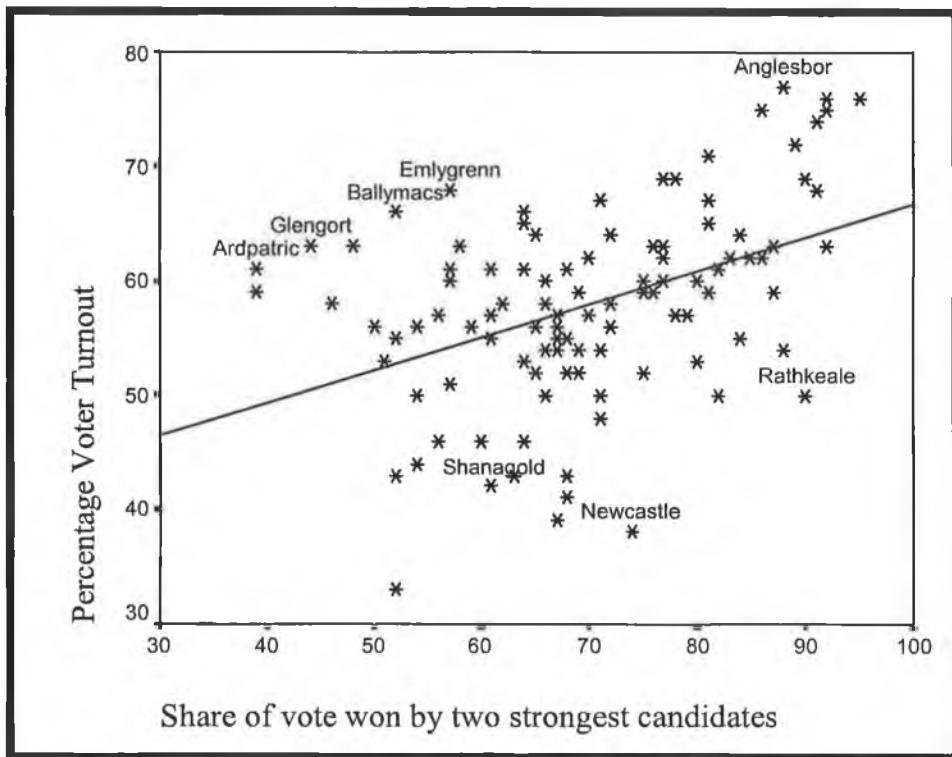


Figure 8.4: Regression of turnout against percentage vote of strongest two candidates, by polling station, for Limerick West in 1999 local elections.

A similar analysis was carried out for the Limerick West study area and a similar finding emerged, in which voter turnout was positively associated to the percentage share of the vote won by the two strongest candidates, by polling box, as shown by Figure 8.4. There was a smaller adjusted R² value for this model, 0.18, which infers that the “friends and neighbours” effect did have an influence on turnout rates in Limerick West, but this was not as pronounced as it had been in the case of the Laois study.

The strength of the different models, using this measure of the “friends and neighbours” effect as a predictor variable, were equivalent to the model using socio-economic predictor variables (Table 8.10) in the case of Limerick West, or much stronger in the case of Laois. These findings suggest that, at least for some cases, candidate effects could have a greater bearing on local election turnout variance in rural areas than socio-structural factors did have.

A second model, similar to that used for the Dublin analysis in Chapter 7, was used to investigate the extent to which the friends and neighbours effect may have determined turnout variations in the rural case study areas, as well as improving the socio-economic model outlined in Table 8.10 above. A friends and neighbours dummy variable was added to this model, in which DEDs with local candidates contesting the 1999 local elections were given a score of 1 and DEDs with no local candidates were given a score of 0. Mindful that urban effects might dampen the results, as in large towns like Portlaoise and Newcastlewest having relatively low turnouts due to the influence of urbanity, an urban dummy variable was also included with this model. With this the Portlaoise Urban, Portlaoise Rural, Newcastlewest Urban and Newcastlewest Rural DEDs were all awarded scores of 1 and all the others DEDs were given scores of 0.

	Coefficient
<i>Number of cases</i>	<i>306</i>
<i>Constant</i>	<i>60.00 (13.74)</i>
<i>White Collar employees</i>	<i>-0.24 (-3.95)</i>
<i>Unemployment Rate</i>	<i>-0.21 (-2.64)</i>
<i>Owner Occupied (No Loan/Mortgage)</i>	<i>0.19 (4.35)</i>
<i>Friends and Neighbours dummy</i>	<i>5.56 (5.35)</i>
<i>Urban dummy</i>	<i>-7.24 (-1.98)</i>
<i>Adjusted R² value</i>	<i>0.29</i>

Table 8.13: Aggregate data analysis of turnout in the rural case study areas, local and European elections 1999.

[Note: The main entry for each variable is the b coefficient, the italicised figure beside it (in brackets) is the t-value. T-values in excess of 2.02 are significant at p=0.05.]

Table 8.13 shows the results of this regression analysis. The friends and neighbours dummy is inferred to increase turnouts significantly, suggesting that local election turnouts in DEDs with a local candidate will be 5.5% higher, on average, than turnouts in DEDs with no local

candidates contesting the elections. The urban dummy variable has a negative b-coefficient and would appear to suggest that turnouts in major towns, such as Newcastlewest and Portlaoise, will be roughly 7.2% lower than in the rest of the rural case study areas.

The R^2 value for the model in Table 8.13 is **0.09** higher than that for the model using just socio-economic and demographic data, as outlined in Table 8.10, thus suggesting that this model was 9% stronger in terms of its predictive capacity than was the model in Table 8.10. (Similarly, when the dummy variables were added to those included Table 8.12 in a new regression model, the R^2 value increased by **0.06** to 0.19.) However, given the strong associations already noted between turnout and candidates' homes, this result must be seen as disappointing, as it does not involve a very significant increase in predictive power. One reason for is probably the differences in turnouts between the three different case study areas, meaning that even the improved model is likely to under-predict turnouts in the high areas of Laois and Cork North West and to over-predict turnouts in the low Limerick West area. Single analyses for the different areas were carried out. For an analysis involving just the Laois DEDs, including the friends and neighbours increased the R^2 value by 11% (up from 0.17 to 0.28), while the inclusion of this dummy variable increased the R^2 values in Cork North West by 3% (up from 0.20 to 0.23) and Limerick West by 2% (up from 0.19 to 0.21). This would seem to imply that the friends and neighbours effect had a particularly significant effect on turnouts in Laois, compared with the other two areas.

One possible explanation is the fact that, with the exception of candidates with bases in the larger towns, the area in which a rural candidate may expect to draw higher than expected numbers to the polls from will generally be decidedly larger than a single district electoral

division. Thus, it could be argued that the inclusion of dummy variables for just the home DED in this model is decidedly under-estimating the influence of the friends and neighbours effect on local election turnout variance in these areas. To test this, a modified version was used in a regression analysis of Laois local election turnouts, in which the home DED of a local election candidate was given a score of 2, all DEDs bordering the a candidate's home DED and within the same local election constituency were awarded a score of 1 and the remaining DEDs were given a score of 0. This revised model did improve the predictive power of the Laois model, increasing the R^2 value to 0.30. A further stepwise regression analysis, which selected different socio-economic predictors to those in Table 8.10 (replacing owner occupied housing with the percentage of the electorate in the 65, and over, age category), further improved the predictive power of the model to 0.35, as can be seen from Table 8.14 below.

	Coefficient
<i>Number of cases</i>	306
<i>Constant</i>	64.02 (<i>12.63</i>)
<i>White Collar employees</i>	-0.30 (<i>-3.52</i>)
<i>Unemployment Rate</i>	-0.33 (<i>-2.79</i>)
<i>Electorate aged 65, and over</i>	0.41 (<i>2.45</i>)
<i>Friends and Neighbours dummy</i>	4.04 (<i>4.39</i>)
<i>Adjusted R² value</i>	0.35

Table 8.14: Aggregate data analysis of turnout in Laois, local and European elections 1999.

[Note: The main entry for each variable is the b coefficient, the italicised figure beside it (in brackets) is the t-value. T-values in excess of 2.02 are significant at p=0.05.]

This model suggests that turnout in a DED with a local candidate would be over 8% higher than the model would have predicted and 4% higher in DEDs neighbouring the home DEDs of local election candidates. However, this model just accounts for little over one third of turnout variance in the 1999 local elections, indicating that the inclusion of a friends and

neighbours dummy in the models will increase the predictive power of the models but not to a very large extent. This suggests that:

- (a) The friends and neighbours effect does have an influence on turnout variations in rural Ireland but it is not as strong as had been suggested earlier in this chapter.
- (b) There is still a large proportion of turnout variance that remains unaccounted for. This may be the result of factors such as differential mobilising of areas by political party organisations, the influence of contentious local issues, and other such factors that cannot be easily quantified.
- (c) The relatively low R^2 value could be caused, in part, by the socio-economic composition of rural areas. These generally tend to be relatively heterogeneous in socio-economic terms, so analyses of turnout variations will generally be less likely to pick up on contrasts between areas as a result of this. The manner in which DED boundaries have been drawn is probably another factor here, as there is a significant discrepancy between DEDs and the areas covered within politicians' bailiwicks.

Residual Analysis

The rural regression model, detailed in Table 8.10, accounted for a smaller proportion of local electoral turnout variance than the Dublin model did. The residual values were naturally larger for the rural case study area, as a result, than they had been for the Dublin study. These residuals were mapped for the three case study areas. The general pattern for all of the areas was that the positive residuals were often associated with the bailiwicks of election candidates. This is further underpinned by the positive, and significant, correlation between the residual values and the friends and neighbours dummy, as was referred to in the above

section ($r=0.26$). Generally more qualitative factors, such as an area having a particularly politicised culture, or lacking the same, are involved in these large residual scores, as are more procedural concerns, such as distance to the polling station.

Laois residuals

The residuals for the regression model were mapped for the Laois county area, as Figure 8.11 illustrates. There were concentrations of positive residuals in two distinct parts of Laois. The first of these areas was in the north west of the county, comprising of much of the Mountmellick electoral area, including Mountmellick, Clonaslee, Rosenallis and their rural hinterlands, as well as the Slieve Bloom area. There was another concentration of positive residuals in the southern parts of Co. Laois, including Timahoe, Ballyroan, Ballinakill, Abbeyleix and Ballacolla. There were a number of smaller areas, characterised by positive residuals, in other parts of the county, such as Vicarstown and Stradbally in the east, Castletown and Borris In Ossory areas in the south-west, as well as the towns of Portlaoise, Portarlington and Rathdowney. The highest positive residual values were for Timahoe (19.0), Clonaslee (17.2), Vicarstown (16.9) and Ballyroan (16.0), where the presence of local candidates in these areas pushed up local electoral turnouts by over 15%. A comparison with Figure 8.1 shows a strong association between candidates' homes and positive residuals, inferring that turnouts were generally higher than the regression model expected, based on the social characteristics of the DEDs, where local candidates were contesting the election.

Negative residuals were found in various parts of the county. There was a particular concentration of these in eastern Laois, where there was a continuous band of negative residuals along the Carlow and Kildare border, with the exception of Vicarstown. There was

another concentration of negative residuals in the south, along the Kilkenny border, encompassing the Durrow and Cullohill areas. Another concentration of negative residuals took in the rural area between the towns of Portlaoise and Mountrath. The largest negative residual scores were for Trumera (-19.7), Clonmore (-11.7), Clonkeen (-11.7), Jamestown (-11.6), Emo (-10.5), Rossmore (-10.2) and Ballyadams (-10.2). Turnouts were, thus, at least 10% lower than the model predicted in these areas.

All the negative residual areas lacked a local candidate, while a number of these DEDs were located a number of miles away from their allocated polling station. This was the case with Trumera, where the polling station in Trumera village had been closed some years previously and people there had to travel for up to four miles to go to their allocated stations in either Mountrath or Raheen village. Similarly, people in parts of the Clonkeen DED had to travel over six miles to vote in Portlaoise town, despite there being a polling station located little more than a mile away in Raheen village.

Cork North West residuals

Residual scores were also mapped for the Cork North West area. Turnouts in Cork North West were the highest of all the case study areas, so there was a higher proportion of DEDs with positive residual scores in this constituency, as Figure 8.12 illustrates. Positive residuals were particularly concentrated in the western part of the constituency. There were concentrations of positive residuals in different areas in the north west of the constituency, encompassing the Milford, Newmarket, Rockchapel, Banteer and Millstreet areas. There was another concentration of positive residuals in the south west, taking in Macroom and

extending westwards to take in the Bealangeary and Kilnamartery areas. The DEDs with the highest positive residual scores in Cork North West were Milford (19.7), Clonmeen (15.1), Kilnamartery (13.4), Cleanrath (13.1), Dromina (12.7), Candroma (12.1), Newmarket (12.0) and Banteer (11.8). All of these areas fell within the bailiwicks of local election candidates, as is shown by Figure 8.12, which also plots the homes of local election candidates.

The main concentrations of negative residuals were in the extreme south and the eastern part of Cork North West, as well as a rural area in the north east, located to the south of Charleville. The areas in the east of the constituency fell within the commuter belt of Cork City and it is quite probable that these population structures of these areas may have changes as a result of commuters moving into these areas, so as to have a base near to Cork City. The only DEDs in Cork North West to have residual values of below 10% were Bealock (-11.7) and Kinneigh (-11.6).

Limerick West residuals

The map of residual scores for Limerick West, Figure 8.13, shows concentrations of positive residuals in different parts of the constituency, with these being generally associated with the home of one, or more, local election candidates, as illustrated by a comparison with Figure 8.2. Two such areas were located in the eastern part of the constituency, encompassing rural areas in the hinterlands of Kilmallock and Ballylanders. There was another concentration of positive residual scores in the south of Limerick, taking in the Boola and Dromcolliher areas, which fell within the bailiwick of election candidate, John Cregan. There was another

concentration of positive residuals in the west in the Athea area, as well as in the northern part of the constituency, taking in Askeaton and the rural areas located to the west of the town. The DEDs with the highest positive residual were Ballylanders (15.5), Anglesboro (13.6), Boola (11.4) and Cullane (10.5), areas which fell within the bailiwicks of either John Gallaghue or John Cregan, which explains why turnouts in these areas were 10% higher than the regression model predicted.

There was a very large concentration of negative residuals in the western part of the constituency. The higher values were found in the rural areas to the south of Newcastlewest, to the east of Rathkeale and in the north of the constituency, along the Shannon estuary, taking in the Aughnish, Foynes and Shanagolden areas. There was another concentration of negative residuals in the eastern part of the constituency, encompassing Fedamore and the rural areas located to the west of this town. The DEDs with particularly large negative residual scores were Dunmoylan East (-22.6), Cleanglass (-21.1), Danganbeg (-16.4), Fedamore (-15.3), Shanagolden (-15.1), Shanid (-15.0), Ballynoe West (-14.3), Mahoonagh (-14.0) and Aughnish (-12.5).

8.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Chapter 5 showed that, with the exception of referenda, turnouts in rural parts of Ireland generally tended to be significantly higher than in the urban parts of the country. Moreover, turnouts in rural Ireland tended to be higher in the more economically marginal constituencies, with the highest general and local election turnouts found in the South West and North West regions. This association led one to question whether socio-economic

marginalisation in rural areas would be associated with higher turnouts, rather than with lower turnouts, as was the case for the Dublin case study area and was stressed in the literature on voter turnout.

The spatial analysis of turnouts in Laois, Limerick West and Cork North West illustrated a considerable degree of turnout variations within these areas, albeit not to the same degree that marked the Dublin area. The highest level of variation, in cases where a comparison between election types was possible, occurred for local electoral contests. Less pronounced turnout variations existed for referenda in Laois and for general elections in both Laois and Limerick. The variations in turnouts for the local elections was strongly influenced by candidate considerations, as turnouts were generally highest in areas where one or more local candidates were contesting the elections and lowest in areas which had no local candidate running in the local elections.

Turnout variance for elections in the Dublin region, for all election types, was strongly influenced by socio-structural factors, with factors related to social exclusion being generally associated with areas of lower turnout. Such socio-economic and demographic factors did not have the same degree of influence on turnout variance in the rural case study areas however. Part of the reason for this is because rural populations are generally more heterogeneous in socio-structural terms than Dublin populations are, given the high levels of social stratification that marks the Dublin region. This higher degree of heterogeneity means that differences are more difficult to detect in the rural case study area, than would be the case for Dublin, and hence individual level data will be particularly valuable in determining influences

on rural voting behaviour. Such individual level analyses shall be the focus of Chapters 10 and 11.

Some factors, such as age, unemployment, age of housing and agricultural employment, did have the same degree of influence on turnout rates that the electoral literature hypothesised. Turnout in the rural case study areas were found to be higher in areas with higher proportions of older voters, farmers and older housing, while they were expected to be lower in areas marked by higher unemployment levels. Other socio-structural factors, such as local authority housing, social class or blue collar employment, generally had little influence on turnout rates, while the associations for other factors, such as education levels and marital status, were opposite to what the literature predicted. However, such associations were shown to be somewhat spurious in nature, as the association of high turnout with higher proportions of educationally disadvantaged and single people was seen to be largely determined by the age structure of the population.

The regression analyses supported the pattern of socio-structural factors having less of an impact on rural turnouts. The smaller adjusted R^2 values for the regression models in the rural case study areas suggest that such factors accounted for a lower level of local election turnout variance than they did in Dublin. The analysis of the residuals from these models, especially when mapped against the homes of the different candidates, suggested that the presence of a local candidate in an area might account for why certain areas had higher than expected turnout rates. The general trend seemed to suggest that socio-economic and demographic variables had less impact on local electoral turnout variance in rural areas than they did in the Dublin area. The general sense was that candidate-related effects were much more important

in determining local electoral turnout variance in the rural areas. This is supported by the analysis in the previous section in which the “friends and neighbours” effect on turnout was seen to account for a significant proportion of local electoral turnout variance in areas such as Laois. The analysis also suggested that other, probably more qualitative, factors might be influencing turnout variance in the rural areas. The analyses of the questionnaires and interviews, carried out for this research, will attempt to identify such qualitative factors for both the rural and Dublin case study areas later in this thesis.

Social exclusion factors on their own were shown to account for only a very small proportion of turnout variance in rural areas for the 1999 local elections. Indeed, to the degree that these factors had any influence on turnouts the general effect was to push up turnout rates in these areas, as indicated by the positive association between turnout and the most significant of these factors, educational disadvantage. However, the analyses of polling district data for the 2001 Nice and 2002 Abortion Referenda and the 2002 General Election in Laois and Limerick suggested that socio-economic factors appeared to be more important in these elections, where the ‘background’ noise of candidate effects was less important or irrelevant. In Laois, for instance, a number of areas, with high proportions of council tenancy, had relatively low turnouts for these elections.

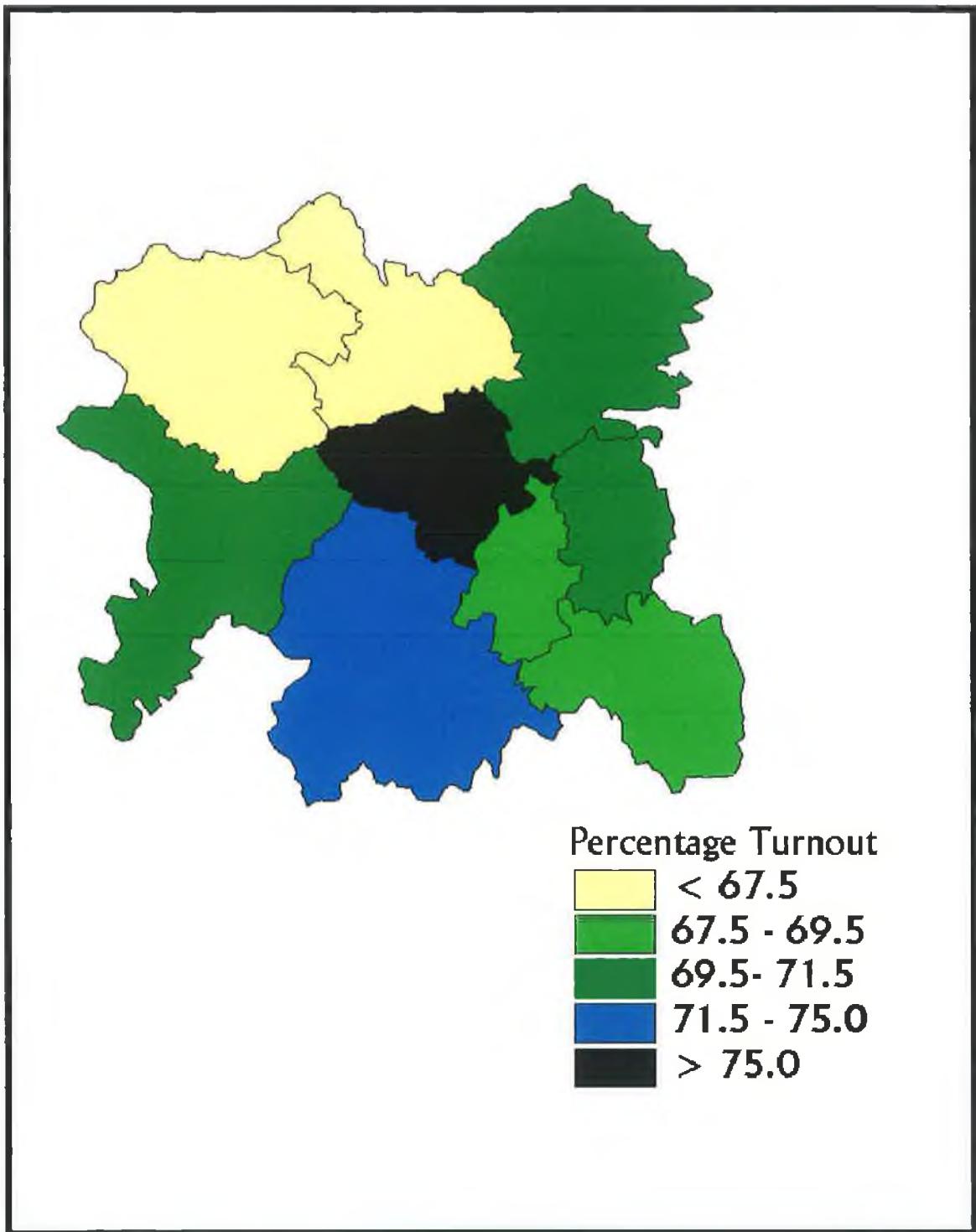


Figure 8.5: Voter Turnout in the Laois-Offaly constituency in the 1997 General Election.

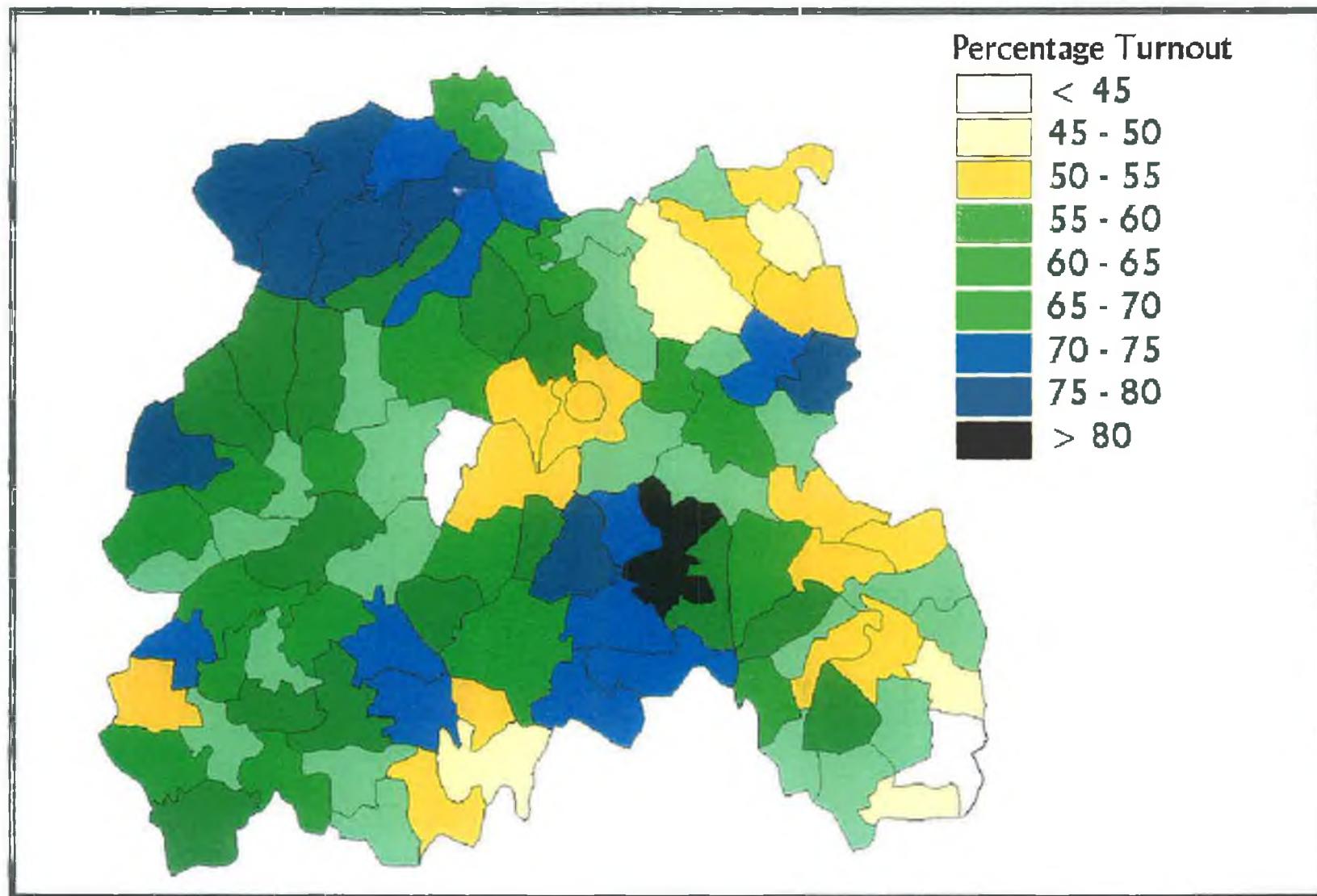


Figure 8.6: Voter turnout in Co. Laois, by district electoral division, for the local and European elections, June 1999.

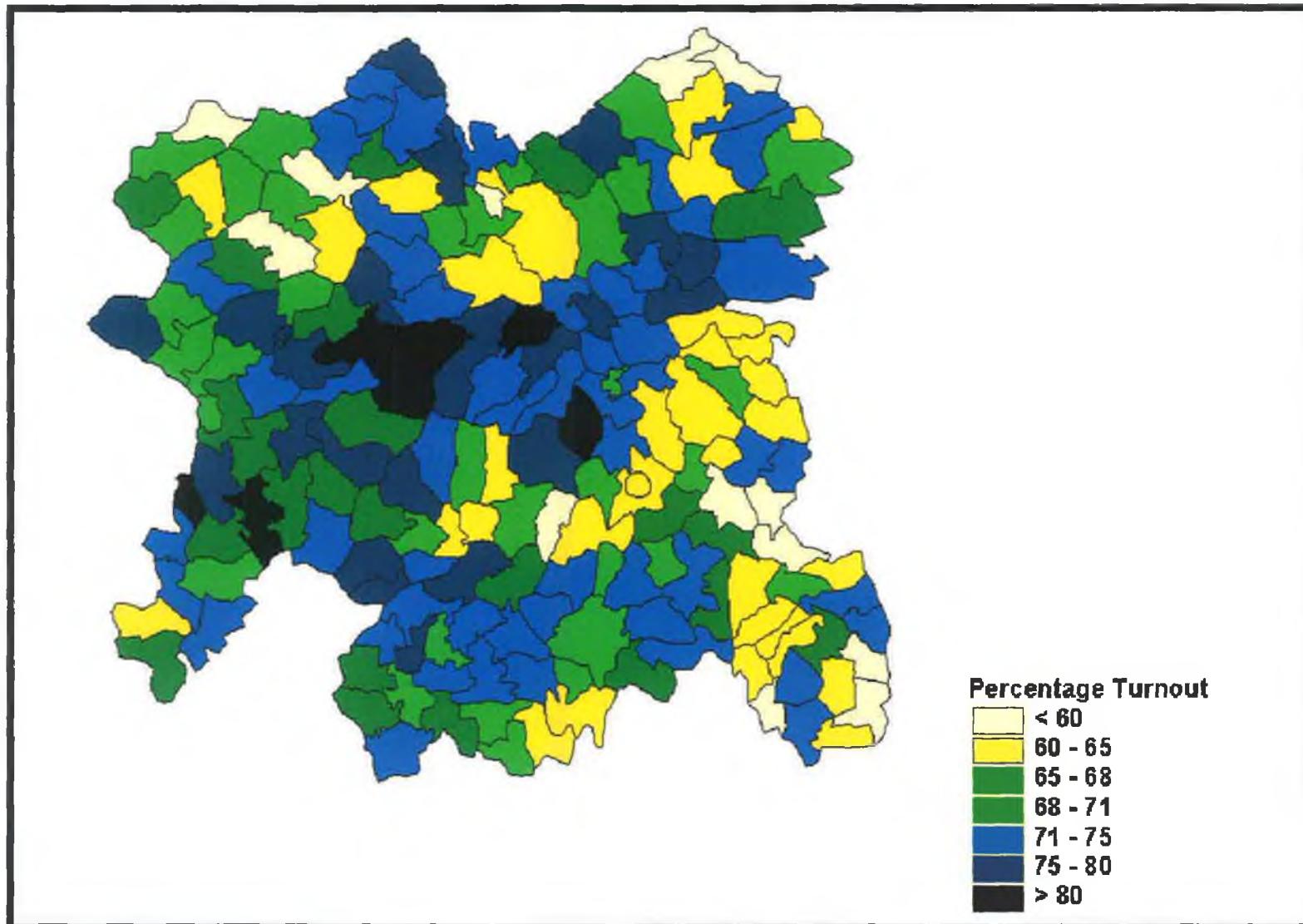


Figure 8.7: Voter turnout in the 2002 General Election, by district electoral division, in the Laois-Offaly constituency.

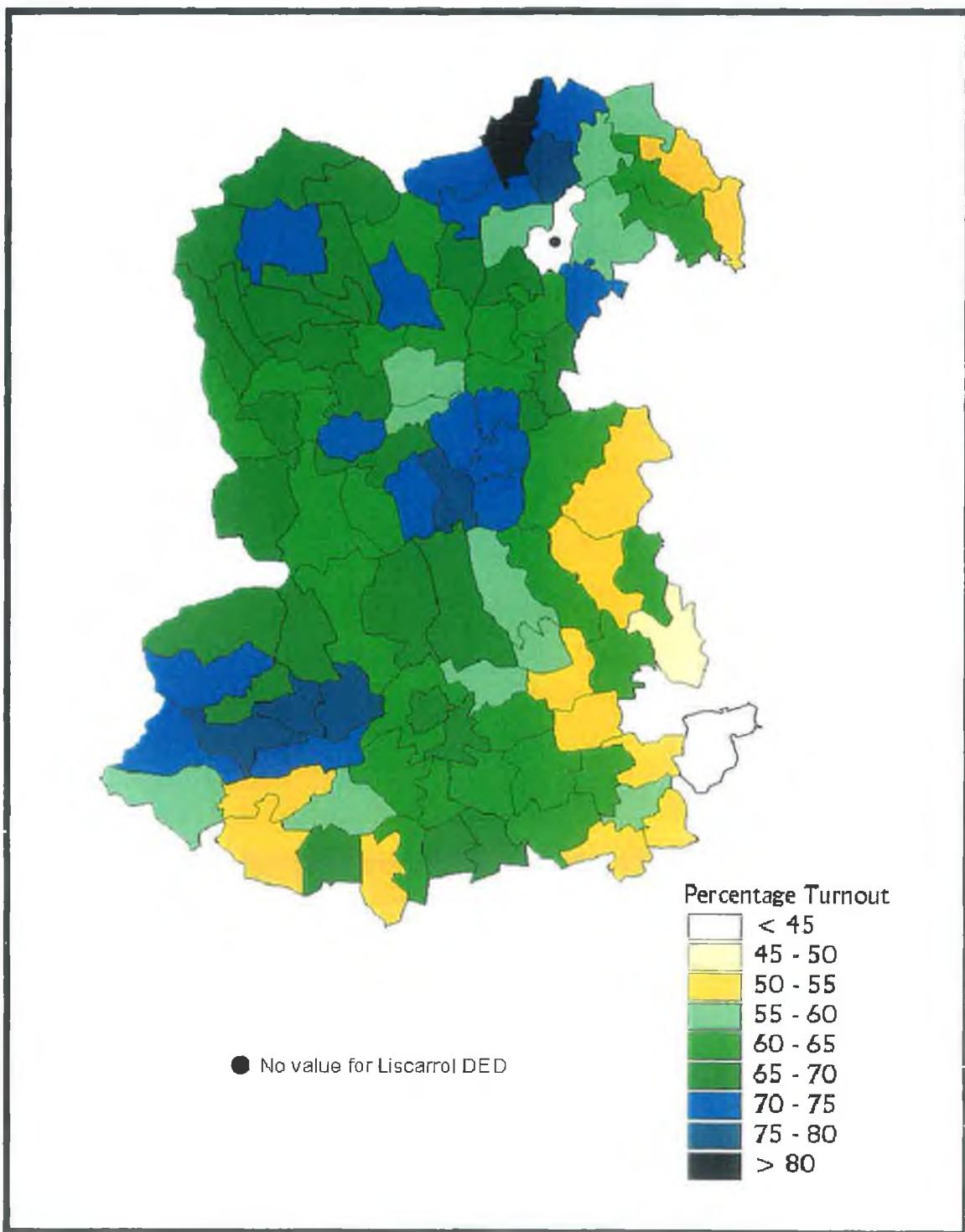


Figure 8.8: Voter turnout in Cork North West by electoral division for the 1999 local and European elections.

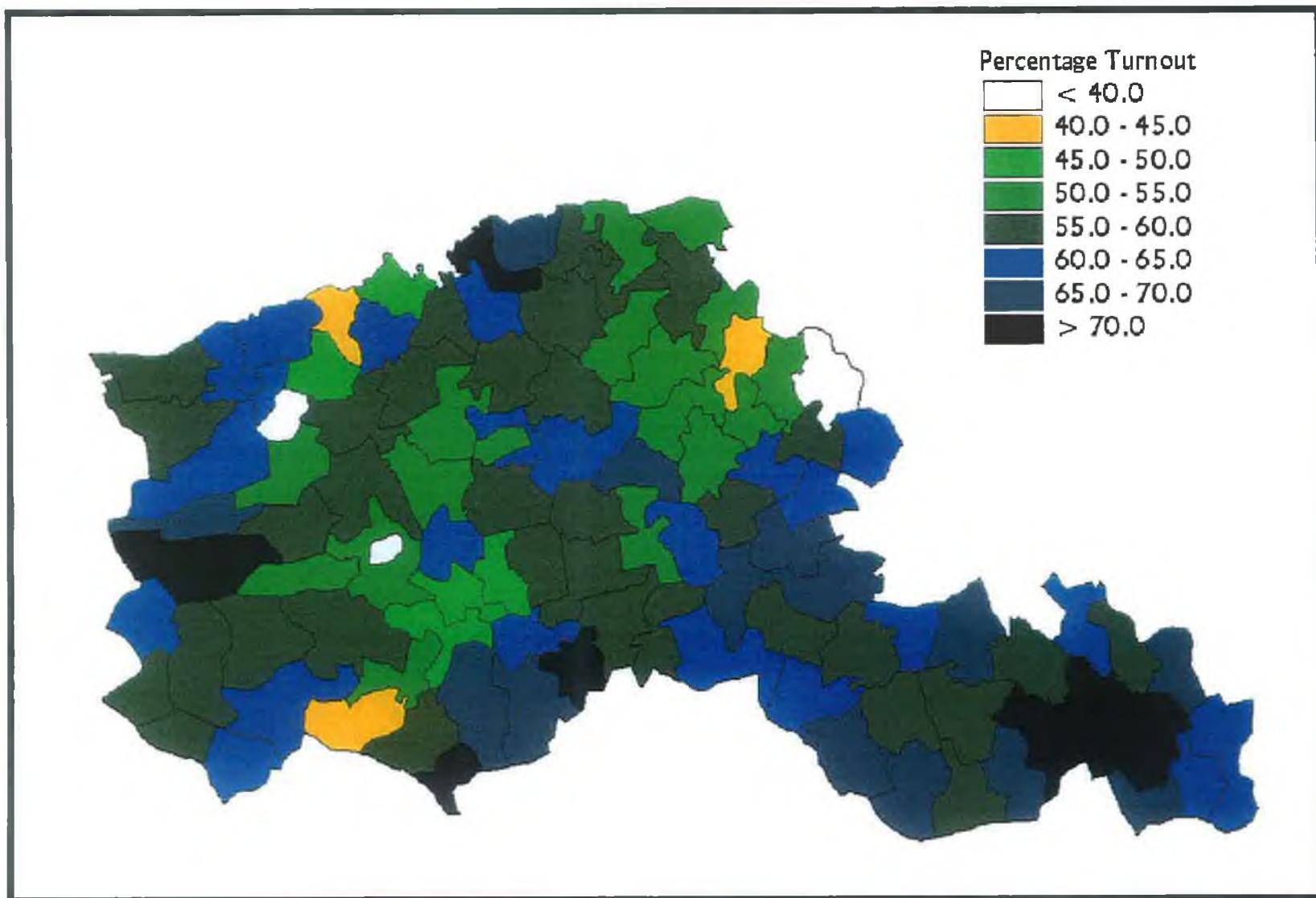


Figure 8.9: Voter turnout in Limerick West, by electoral division, for the 1999 local and European elections.

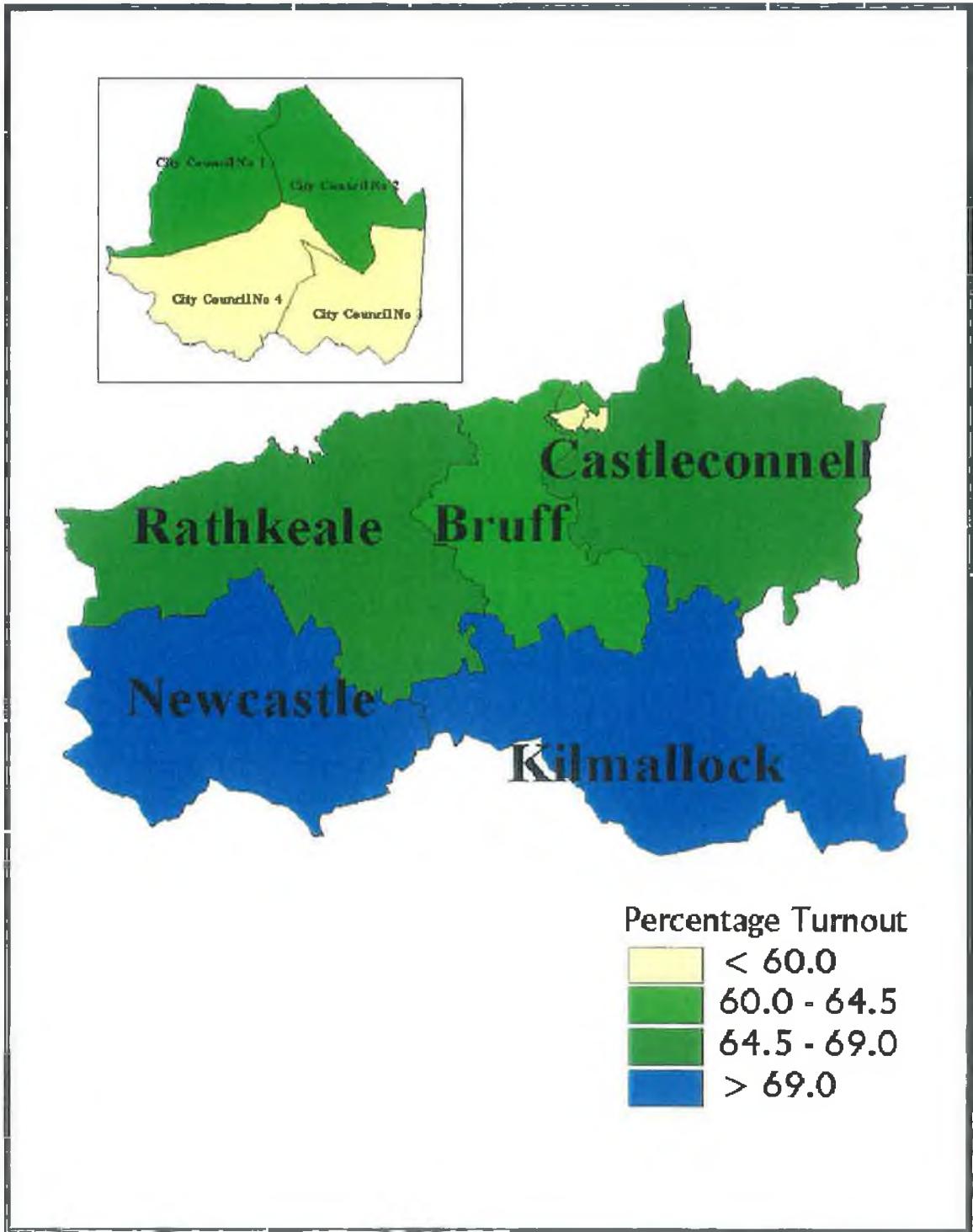


Figure 8.10: Voter Turnout, by local electoral area, for the Limerick East and West constituencies in the 2002 General Election.

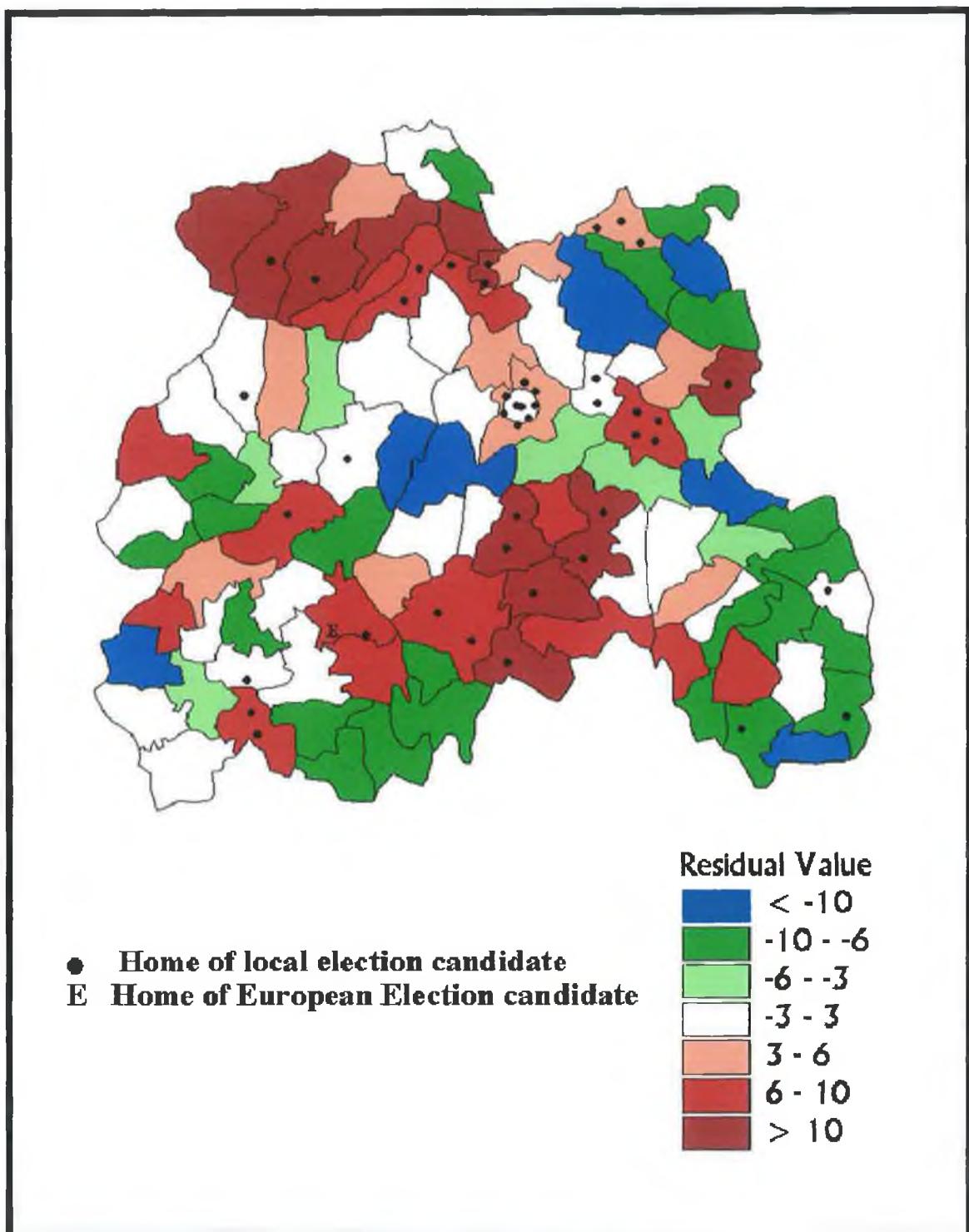


Figure 8.11: Residual scores for Laois, by electoral division, based on regression modelling of turnout in the 1999 local and European elections

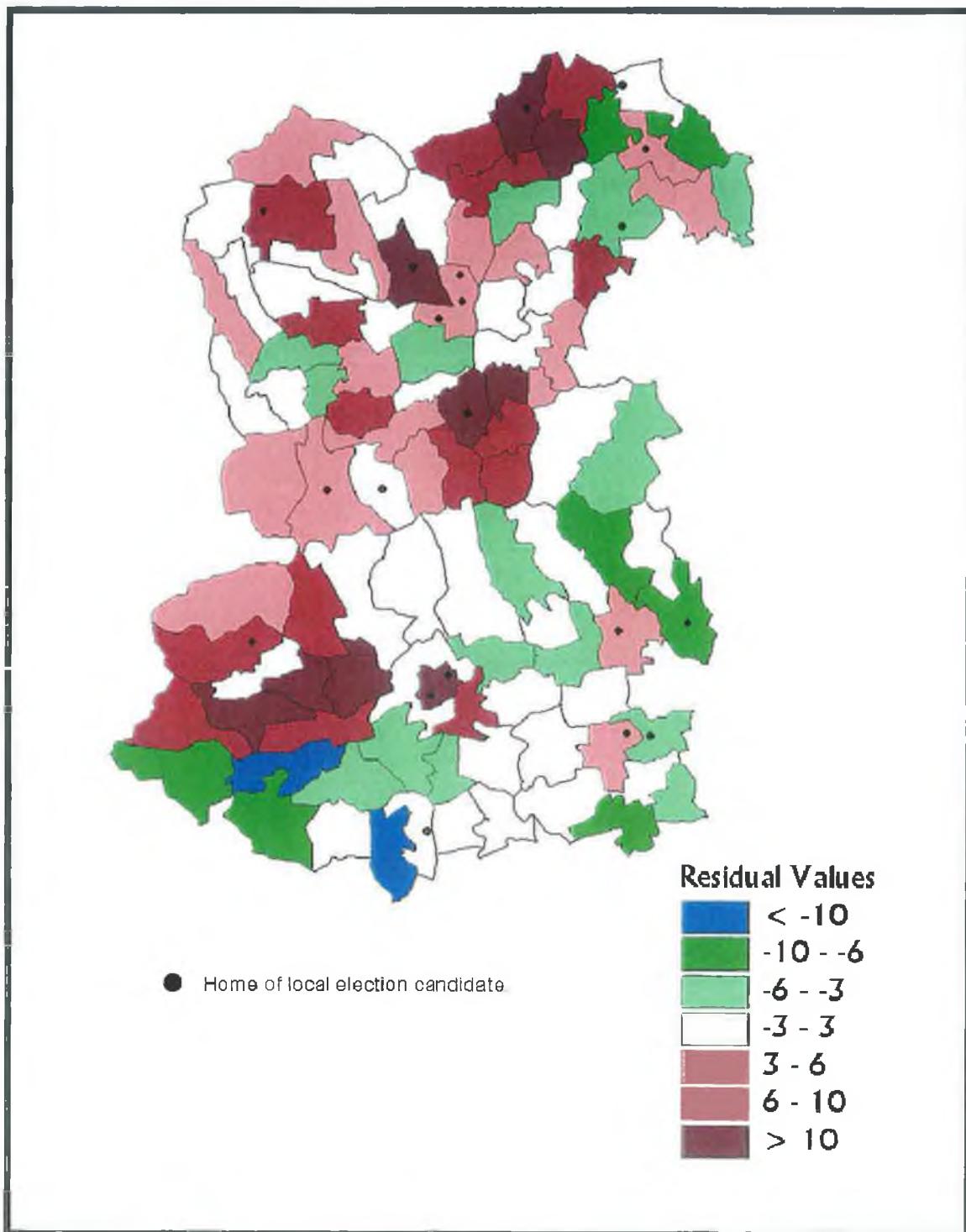


Figure 8.12: Residual scores for Cork North West, based on regression modelling of turnout in the 1999 local and European elections.

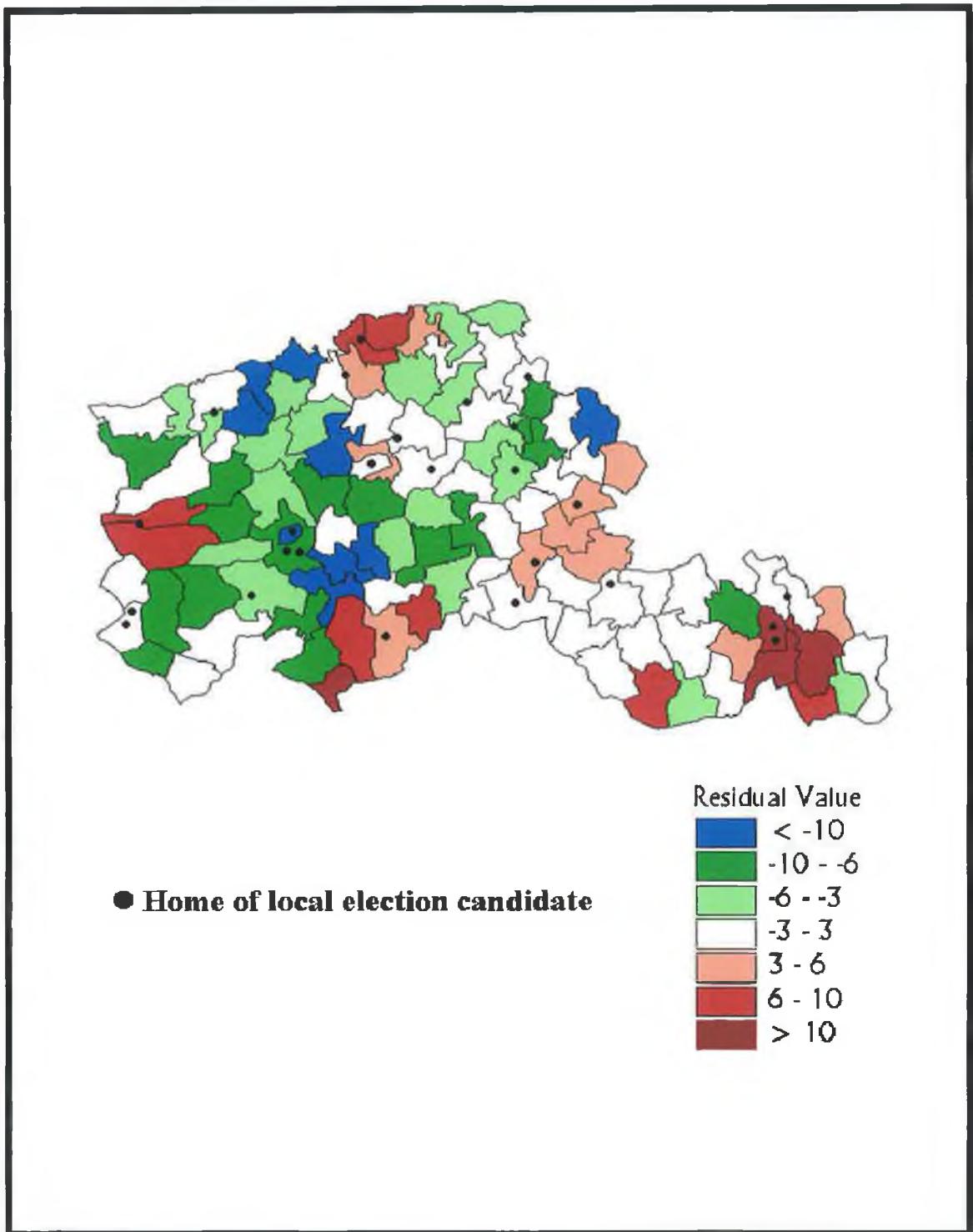


Figure 8.13: Residual scores for Limerick West, by electoral division, based on regression modelling of turnout in the 1999 local and European elections

CHAPTER 9

POLITICIANS, POLITICAL SUPPORT AND TURNOUT

9.1 INTRODUCTION

The empirical research that formed the basis of the previous two chapters, looking at the key influences of turnout variance in the Dublin and rural case study areas, was strongly linked to the material reviewed in Chapter 2. This chapter, which will analyse the associations between turnout rates and political support in Ireland, can be thought of as the empirical counterpart of Chapter 3, which reviewed literature on the potential implications of turnout variations and decline. This chapter will determine, through the use of correlation and regression analysis, whether certain political parties in Ireland are associated with high or low turnout bases and, if so, how this will impact on their levels of support and representation. It especially relates to the socio-economic biases in turnout that were discussed in Chapter 3, in that this chapter will illustrate potential cleavages between the parties in terms of whether they are strong in high turnout, middle class, or low turnout, socially deprived areas.

Mindful of what will emerge from this analysis, this chapter will also focus attention on what the attitudes of politicians towards turnout issues will be, as to whether they are aware of turnout variations and, if so, whether their canvassing activity and constituency work takes cognisance of these. This will be based on a survey of politicians, in relation to attitudes on turnout related issues that was carried out in the first half of 2002. As such, this chapter forms a bridge between the ecological and individual level components of the analysis for this thesis, blending analyses using aggregate level data, in the first section, with material arising from individual level research. Findings from the questionnaire survey will also be noted with

a view to setting up a comparative framework with what will emerge from the analysis of the different voters' surveys in the following chapter.

9.2 TURNOUT AND POLITICAL SUPPORT IN IRELAND

The Irish electoral system – the PR/STV¹ system – differs significantly from other systems, such as the first past the post system, as used in the United Kingdom, or the List system, as used in many European countries. Perhaps one of the most significant ways in which the Irish system differs from first past the post systems relates to the use of multi-member constituencies. This means, as noted by Sinnott (1995: 114), that Irish general elections, in effect, do not amount to one single contest but rather to forty-two separate elections, each with their own peculiar circumstances and being influenced by national and constituency factors to varying degrees. This has resulted in high degrees of localism in Irish electoral contests, as well as a strong degree of marginality, as measured by the narrow margins that usually determine who wins the final seats in constituencies, which means that all Irish elections are competitive.

There was an especially high level of marginality in the 2002 General Election, with less than a hundred votes separating the final two candidates in seven constituencies. These included Limerick West (1 vote), Cork South Central (6 votes), Cork South West (35), Cork North West (47), Wicklow (47), Longford-Roscommon (54), Dublin Central (74) and Wexford (78). There were also close electoral contests in Cavan-Monaghan (121 votes), Kildare North (135), Kildare South (187), Kerry South (203) and Cork East (207). These low margins place

¹ PR stands for Proportional Representation and STV for Single Transferable Vote.

the relevance of turnout for politicians into particular focus, as the likelihood is that the destinations of final seats in these constituencies could have changed, had the losing candidates proved more successful in mobilising their support within these constituencies.

Table 9.1 illustrates the nature of the associations between party support and turnout, at a constituency level, for the 1999 local elections and the 2002 General Election. Support for Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael is positively associated with turnout for the 2002 General Election, with the Fine Gael correlation being statistically significant. Support for Labour, the Progressive Democrats, Sinn Féin and the Green Party, by contrast, was inversely associated with turnout. These findings appear to discount a clear-cut association between class based political support and turnout at the constituency level, with the negative association for the right-of-centre Progressive Democrats being at variance with the expected pattern. However, these associations are highly influenced by rural-urban turnout differentials, which associates those parties who do best in rural areas with high turnout and those who do best in urban areas with low turnout.

In general, the small number of cases (42 cases, or fewer) does not allow for particularly robust associations between party support and general election turnout, although such associations are largely mirrored for the local elections, which involves a larger number of constituencies (up to 179 cases). There were significant positive correlations between local election turnout and Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael support and significant negative correlations between turnout and support for Labour and the Green Party. The associations for the Progressive Democrats and Sinn Féin are weak, due to the balancing of the middle class

Progressive Democrat support base by its higher urban support levels and the working class

Sinn Féin base by its strong support in the high turnout Monaghan and North Kerry areas.

Party	General Election 2002	Local Elections 1999
Fianna Fáil	0.25	0.41**
Fine Gael	0.66**	0.51**
Labour	-0.35	-0.30**
Progressive Democrats	-0.43	0.03
Sinn Féin	-0.14	-0.06
Green Party	-0.39	-0.40**

Table 9.1: Correlations between turnout and party support, by constituency, in the 2002 General Election and the 1999 local elections. (Note **: p<0.05, *: p<0.01)

Associations between turnout and party support at a national level offer little information regarding the potential implications of turnout variations for political support, and hence representation. It is largely irrelevant, in terms of representation levels, whether parties do best and win seats in high turnout constituencies, or whether they do so in low turnout constituencies. Indeed, parties who attain the bulk of their support, and hence representation, in low turnout constituencies could be seen to be advantaged to some degree, as they will generally be gaining representation with fewer votes, since quotas tend to be smaller in low turnout constituencies. In the 1997 General Election, for instance, the quota in the high turnout Mayo constituency was 3,334 votes larger than the quota in Dublin South West, which had the lowest turnout nationally in that election. Fianna Fáil, who won two seats in both of these constituencies, was to win these with 12,529 votes in Dublin South West and with 26,571 votes in Mayo. They won just the same number of seats in both constituencies, even though in Mayo they won over twice the number of votes that they had won in Dublin South West.

For the purposes of detecting differences between turnout and party support, it is more instructive to look at associations between turnout and political support at a sub-constituency level, as the larger data sets allow one to detect significant statistical associations more readily. Associations at this level are also more important in that turnout variations within constituencies, rather than between constituencies, will have the more impact on political representation levels, given that seats are won and lost within constituencies. Furthermore, the more striking differences in party support levels will usually occur within, rather than between constituencies, and so analyses using sub-constituency level data will tend to more accurately portray the associations between party support and the turnout characteristics of different areas.

Table 9.2 shows correlations between turnout and party support, at a polling station level, for the 1997 General Election, as based on tally figures for nine Dáil constituencies². This allows for sample sizes of as high as 1,178 cases for some of the political parties, as well as allowing for anomalous associations in individual constituencies that might otherwise skew the results. The analysis uncovers significant, positive correlations between turnout and support for Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and the Progressive Democrats, the main centrist, or right-of-centre parties. Significant, negative associations with turnout emerged for the parties of the left, namely Labour, Democratic Left, Sinn Féin, Workers Party, Socialist Workers Party and the Socialist Party, as well as for the Independents. The Green Party was the only party to have no significant association with turnout.

² The constituencies of Laois-Offaly, Kildare North, Dublin Central, Dublin North Central, Dublin South, Dublin South Central, Dublin South East, Dublin South West and Dublin West.

Party	Correlation	Share of Vote	Share of Seats	Difference
Fianna Fáil	0.29**	38.1%	44.7%	+6.6%
Fine Gael	0.37**	23.7%	28.9%	+5.2%
Labour	-0.09**	11.4%	10.5%	-0.9%
Progressive Democrats	0.08**	7.1%	5.3%	-1.8%
Independents	-0.15*	4.9%	2.6%	-2.3%
Green Party	0.02	4.4%	2.6%	-1.8%
Democratic Left	-0.38**	3.5%	2.6%	-0.9%
Sinn Féin	-0.52**	2.6%	0%	-2.6%
Socialist Party	-0.16**	2.5%	2.6%	+0.1%
Socialist Workers Party	-0.23**	0.7%	0%	-0.7%
Workers Party	-0.29**	0.3%	0%	-0.3%

Table 9.2: Correlations between support and turnout in the 1997 General Election for nine Dáil constituencies and comparisons of vote shares and representation levels within those constituencies. (Note **: p<0.05, *: p<0.01)

A comparison between the directions of the correlations and the difference between support and representation levels for each party suggests that the ability of parties to translate votes into seats could be, in part, related to the turnout characteristics of their support bases. Based on Table 9.2, parties with positive correlations with turnout, such as Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, won more seats than they should have, based on their support levels in these constituencies. Parties that were negatively associated with turnout, such as Labour, Democratic Left and Sinn Féin, generally tended to win fewer seats than their support levels warranted. Thus one could infer an association between turnout and the ability of parties to translate support levels into seats.

However, there are two anomalies in this relationship. The Progressive Democrats, with a significant, positive, association with turnout, won a smaller share of the seats than their support levels would warrant, while the Socialist Party, negatively correlated with turnout, won a slightly higher level of representation than support. (The very small level of Socialist Party support outside of the Dublin West constituency probably accounts for this particular

anomalous result.) The main reason for the difference between support and representation levels is probably because smaller parties, such as the small socialist parties, will tend to be eliminated earlier in election counts. Larger parties, such as Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, tend to remain in the contest longer and hence are more likely to attain transfers as a result.

Table 9.3 shows the correlations between turnout and party support, at a polling station level, for the 2002 General Election. These were based on tally figures for eight Dáil constituencies³, allowing for sample sizes of as large as 1,469 cases.

Party	Correlation
Fianna Fáil	0.22**
Fine Gael	0.42**
Labour	-0.06*
Progressive Democrats	0.21**
Green Party	-0.05*
Sinn Féin	-0.41**
Socialist Workers Party	-0.20**
Workers Party	-0.34**
Independents	-0.11**

Table 9.3: Correlations between support and turnout in the 2002 General Election for twelve Dáil constituencies. (Note **: p<0.05, *: p<0.01)

Again, there were significant, positive correlations between turnout and Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and Progressive Democrat support. Significant, negative associations with turnout emerged for the parties, or candidates, of the left, namely Labour, Sinn Féin, the Green Party, Workers Party, Socialist Workers Party and the Independents, as had been the case for the 1997 election. (Independent candidates are generally drawn from all sides of the political spectrum, but in urban constituencies they tend to be leftist, while those in rural constituencies

³ The constituencies of Dublin Central, Dublin Mid West, Dublin North Central, Dublin North East, Dublin North West, Dublin South, Dublin South Central, Dublin South East, Dublin South West, Dún Laoghaire, Limerick East and Limerick West.

tend to be either centrist or right of centre⁴. For the constituencies in this particular analysis, many of the stronger Independent candidates, such as Tony Gregory, tended to be leftist in their political orientation.)

There is, thus, a general pattern in which support for centrist, or right of centre, parties, such as Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and the Progressive Democrats, is positively associated with turnout, which suggests that support levels for these parties will be higher in areas where turnouts are higher. The general pattern of inverse correlations between turnout and support for left-wing parties, by contrast, implies that these parties will tend to win higher shares of the vote in low turnout areas.

Influence of class on Irish voting patterns

Significant associations have been shown to exist between turnout and the support levels of Irish political parties at a sub-constituency level. Mindful that the main stress of this section of the chapter is to determine whether socio-economic biases in turnout levels have an influence on political representation, such associations will only be of relevance to this debate if these parties, in turn, have defined socio-economic bases to their support levels.

There has been an amount of debate as to the degree to which class cleavages have impact on the Irish electoral system. Some commentators, such as Whyte (1974), have argued that the Irish political system is largely without social bases, while other analysts, such as Laver (1986), have pointed to much stronger links between socio-economic factors and party support. Sinnott (1995) accounts for the discrepancies between these findings in terms of

⁴ The strongest Independents in rural constituencies generally tend to be former Fianna Fáil or Fine Gael party

these being determined somewhat by the spatial units used as the bases for the various ecological analyses involved. He notes that most of these studies generally involve data for the county or constituency level, whereas it is actually variations at a sub-constituency level that will probably be of greater salience to such analyses.

Associations between party support and various socio-economic variables, based on census and tally figures for six Dublin Dáil constituencies⁵, as illustrated by Tables 9.4(a) and 9.4(b), suggest a class basis to party support in Dublin, at least.

	Turnout	Fianna Fáil	Fine Gael	P. Democrats
Early School Leavers	-0.40**	0.29**	-0.64**	-0.61**
Local Authority Rented	-0.75**	-0.20**	-0.48**	-0.38**
Social Class 5	-0.22**	0.16**	-0.29**	-0.47**
Social Class 6	-0.25**	0.02	-0.23**	-0.40**
Lone Parent Families	-0.68**	-0.31**	-0.33**	-0.36**
Blue Collar employees	-0.33**	0.29*	-0.66**	-0.54**
Unemployment Rate	-0.69**	-0.12	-0.56**	-0.53**

Table 9.4(a): Simple correlations between socio-economic variables and turnout/support for centrist/right-of centre parties in 2002 General Election. (Note **: p<0.05, *: p<0.01)

Table 9.4(a) shows that support for the right-of-centre parties, Fine Gael and the Progressive Democrats, is negatively associated with the different exclusion-related variables, with associations for Green Party support mirroring these to a large degree (Table 9.4(b)). Associations between Fianna Fáil and the different variables are what would be expected of a “catch-all” party. Fianna Fáil support was positively associated with some exclusion related variables, such as early school leavers, Social Class 5, and blue collar employment, but negatively associated with others, such as lone parent families and local authority tenancy.

member, who decide to run as Independents after failing to be selected to run at their party's election convention.

Support for socialist parties in the 2002 General Election was generally associated with higher levels of social exclusion and working class populations, as shown by Table 9.4(b), with Sinn Féin and Workers Party support positively, and significantly, associated with the different exclusion related variables. The association with Labour support is somewhat less defined however, being positively correlated with Social Classes 5 and 6 but the associations with other variables are largely insignificant.

	Labour	Green Party	Sinn Féin	Workers Par
Early School Leavers	0.00	-0.66**	0.72**	0.57**
Local Authority Rented	-0.06	-0.19**	0.70**	0.55**
Social Class 5	0.13	-0.38**	0.34**	0.33**
Social Class 6	0.20**	-0.22**	0.28**	0.27*
Lone Parent Families	0.06	0.01	0.43**	0.33**
Blue Collar employees	-0.06	-0.63**	0.74**	0.59**
Unemployment Rate	-0.02	-0.34**	0.73**	0.59**

Table 9.4(b): Simple correlations between socio-economic variables and support for left-of centre parties in 2002 General Election. (Note **: p<0.05, *: p<0.01)

There is strong evidence of a class basis to Dublin turnout rates, as presented by the associations in Tables 9.4(a), which is in keeping with findings in Chapters 5 and 7. There is sufficient evidence to suggest that, at least for Dublin, parties associated with low turnout areas will also be characterised by markedly higher support levels in working class and underprivileged areas. There is evidence to suggest a socio-economic bias to the association between turnout and party support. Socialist parties reliant on support from low turnout, underprivileged areas, may be unable to mobilise their support to the same extent that other parties, with support bases in high turnout, middle class areas, can.

⁵ Dublin Central, Dublin Mid West, Dublin North East, Dublin North West, Dublin South Central, Dublin South

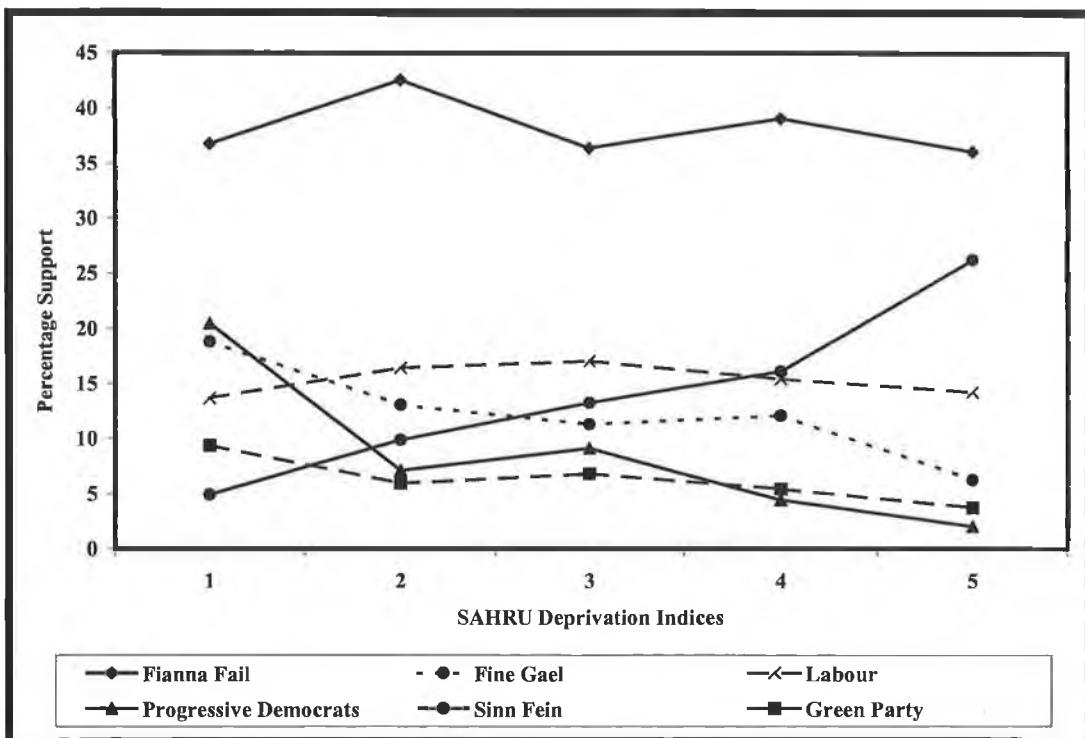


Figure 9.1: Mean support for political parties in 2002 General Election by SAH RU Deprivation Index

Figure 9.1 further underlines the class dimension to political party support in the Dublin region. Fianna Fáil and Labour are to all intents and purposes “catch-all” parties, winning roughly similar amounts of support in affluent and deprived electoral divisions. Indeed Fianna Fáil is the strongest party in all of the different groupings, although its hegemony in the most deprived electoral division (SAH RU Index 5) grouping is challenged strongly by Sinn Féin. All the other parties have significant class dimensions to their Dublin support. Fine Gael, the Progressive Democrats and the Green Party strongest in the more affluent electoral divisions and declining in strength in line with increasing levels of deprivation. Indeed, the Progressive Democrats are the second strongest party in the most affluent electoral divisions (SAH RU Index 1), with a mean support level of 20.4%, but are the weakest party in the most

deprived electoral divisions with a mean support level of 2.0%. Sinn Féin, by contrast, is the weakest party in the most affluent electoral divisions, with a mean support level of 4.9%, but second strongest in the most deprived electoral divisions with a mean support level of 26.2%.

Political implications of an equal turnout scenario

An “equal turnout” simulation model was employed, using tally figures for the 1997 and 2002 General Elections, to analyse the degree to which socio-economic biases in turnout influenced results in recent general elections. This model was concerned with whether an equal turnout scenario, in line with the universal turnout scenarios referred to in Chapter 3, would have resulted in certain candidates, particularly those with leftist political orientations, gaining larger percentage shares of the vote. This model is outlined and discussed in more detail in Appendix C, especially in relation to its applicability to the case study constituencies of Dublin South East and Laois-Offaly for the 1997 General Election and Dublin Central, Dublin South Central and Limerick West for the 2002 General Election. In general it was found, arising from the different simulations, that left-of-centre candidates gained larger shares of the vote in equal turnout scenarios, but particularly in the Dublin constituencies. This infers, therefore, that turnout variation means that left-of-centre candidates are winning smaller shares of the vote than they would if no such variations existed.

It was also found that the destination of the final seat in Dublin Central in the 2002 General Election would have been different had an equal turnout scenario existed within the constituency. Socialist candidates in Dublin Central would have gained another 1.4% of the total first preference votes, according to this scenario, while the Sinn Féin candidate, Nicky Kehoe, would have gained an extra 318 votes, relative to Dermot Fitzpatrick’s (Fianna Fáil)

vote. Thus, in an equal turnout scenario, Kehoe would have been 244 votes ahead of Fitzpatrick on the final count, whereas in the actual count Fitzpatrick had finished 74 votes ahead of Kehoe and taken the final seat in Dublin Central, as a result. This infers that turnout variation in Dublin Central accounted in large part for Fitzpatrick winning the final seat ahead of Kehoe, as well as for centrist and right-of-centre candidates taking a higher share of the vote. Thus, at least in this case, turnout variation had an impact on political representation, as well as on political support levels.

This scenario has many limitations, as is detailed in Appendix C, largely due to it being based on assumptions about the behaviour of non-voters that are unlikely to be replicated in a real world situation. However, it does succeed in pinpointing the manner in which spatial variations in turnouts may act to favour certain parties or candidates in a disproportionate manner.

9.3 POLITICIANS' SURVEY

The statistical analysis in the previous section has shown that there are significant associations between political support levels and turnout rates. A number of issues arise from this analysis that will need to be addressed through individual level analyses of politicians' outlooks on turnout related issues, to determine the level of awareness that politicians have about such issues and whether political activities may be shaped by this. To address these questions and to set up a comparative framework with voters' questionnaires in the next chapter, politicians were surveyed as to their perspectives on an array of turnout related issues.

Survey respondents

The questionnaire survey was sent to all members of the Houses of the Oireachtas, namely all the members of Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann, as well the General Secretaries of the political parties. (A copy of this questionnaire is included in the appendices – Appendix D.3.) Questionnaires were also forwarded to a selection of councillors, town commissioners and election candidates, who were based in the different case study constituencies. 275 questionnaires were sent out in January 2002 and, as a follow up, a further 42 questionnaires were forwarded to the newly elected members of Dáil Éireann after the May 2002 General Election. The number of additional respondents that were sent questionnaires in June 2002 came to 32, once former members of Seanad Éireann who had not responded to the previous questionnaire were excluded. This meant that 307 questionnaires, in total, were sent out, with 97 questionnaires returned, amounting to a response rate of 31.6%.

The constituencies that the politicians represented were divided into three groups, a high turnout group approximating to the fourteen constituencies with the highest turnout in the 2002 General Election, a low turnout group consisting of the fourteen with the lowest turnout, and an average turnout group comprising the rest. 43.3% of respondents came from the group of low turnout constituencies, 38.3% from the average turnout group and 17.8% from the high turnout group. The regional breakdown of the respondents was as follows; 11.1% from Connacht-Ulster, 22.2% from Munster, 37.8% from Dublin and 28.9% from the rest of Leinster. One could term the Dublin constituencies, along with Cork North Central, Cork South Central, Limerick West and Galway West, as “urban” and the other constituencies as “rural”. There was almost a 50-50 divide between the different groups, with 49.4% hailing from urban constituencies and 50.6% from the rural.

68.0% of the respondents were TDs, 51.5% were county, or city, councillors, 16.5% were senators, 3.1% were town commissioners or urban district councillors and 9.3% were involved in politics in other ways.

Political Party	High	Average	Low
Fianna Fáil	43.8%	34.3%	33.3%
Fine Gael	37.5%	25.7%	17.9%
Labour	6.3%	17.1%	25.6%
Progressive Democrats	0.0%	8.6%	10.3%
Green Party	0.0%	8.6%	5.1%
Sinn Féin	6.3%	0.0%	2.6%
Independents	6.3%	5.8%	5.1%

Table 9.5: Respondents by party and turnout characteristics of constituency.

33.0% of the respondents were members of Fianna Fáil, with 23.7% from Fine Gael, 18.6% from Labour, 8.2% from the Progressive Democrats, 5.2% from the Green Party and 2.1% from Sinn Féin. 9.3% of respondents were Independents, with 4.1% styling themselves as Socialist Independents and 5.2% as Centrist Independents. Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael members figured prominently in the high turnout group, with higher proportions of Labour, Progressive Democrat and Green Party respondents in the average and low turnout groups.

Turnout characteristics	Constituency	Bailiwick
Very high	4.3%	12.0%
Fairly high	13.8%	29.3%
Slightly above average	31.9%	31.5%
Average	26.6%	10.9%
Slightly below average	12.8%	6.5%
Fairly low	4.3%	5.4%
Very low	5.3%	3.3%
Do not know	1.1%	0.0%

Table 9.6: Respondents perceptions as to the turnout characteristics of their constituencies and local bailiwicks.

As Table 9.6 shows, politicians varied in terms of what they perceived the turnout characteristics of their constituencies and bailiwicks to be. Politicians were generally likely to look on their constituencies as having an average turnout, with 71.3% of respondents terming the turnouts in their constituency as being slightly above average, of average, or slightly below average. The politician respondents were generally likely to look on their local bailiwicks as having a high turnout, with 72.8% viewing their local bailiwicks as having high turnout, fairly high turnout or slightly above average turnout.

Rural respondents were more likely than urban respondents to view their constituencies and bailiwicks as having higher than average turnouts, as illustrated by Table 9.7. Urban respondents were more likely to perceive their first preference vote as being prone to turnout variations than rural respondents were. 42.2% of rural respondents felt that an equal turnout would make no difference to their vote, as opposed to 20.9% of urban respondents.

Reasons	Urban	Rural
Constituency turnout higher than average	20.0%	71.1%
Constituency turnout lower than average	44.2%	2.2%
Bailiwick turnout higher than average	58.1%	84.4%
Bailiwick turnout lower than average	30.2%	2.2%
Vote will increase in equal turnout scenario	58.1%	55.6%
Vote will decrease in equal turnout scenario	21.0%	8.9%

Table 9.7: Respondents perceptions as to turnout characteristics of their constituencies and local bailiwicks, by urban and rural respondents.

The politician respondents were asked about how aware they were about turnout variations within their constituencies. 35.1% of politician respondents said that they were extremely aware of turnout differences within their constituency, while 35.1% said that they were very

aware, 27.7% were fairly aware and 2.1% said that they had no awareness about turnout differences within their constituency.

Reasons	Constituency	Nationally
Big Impact	26.1%	26.3%
Some Impact	42.4%	46.3%
Slight Impact	18.5%	24.2%
No Impact At All	9.8%	2.1%

Table 9.8: Politicians' perceptions as to what impact of turnout variations would be on election results, both in constituency and nationally.

Based on their levels of awareness, the respondents were asked as to what they thought the impact of turnout variations would be on election results, both in their constituencies and nationally, in the 2002 General Election. Over a quarter of respondents, as illustrated by Table 9.8, felt that turnout variations would have a big impact on election results, both nationally and in their own constituencies, while nearly half the respondents felt such variations would have some impact.

17.6% of respondents claimed that politicians could have a big impact, in terms of raising turnout rates at a general election. 58.2% felt that they could have some impact, 20.9% felt that they would have just a slight impact and 1.1% believed that they would have no impact at all.

Reasons for voting

Politicians were asked as to what were the main reasons why people voted at election time. They were also asked to rank these reasons in terms of how important they were perceived as

being. Table 9.9 shows the proportion of respondents who awarded these as the most, second most or third most important reasons in terms of encouraging people to vote.

Reasons	Percentage
Support a political party	77.3%
Civic duty	46.2%
Reward a politician for assistance	45.2%
Support a local candidate	44.1%
Have a say in the election of government/council	38.7%
Family tradition	27.4%
Remove the Government/Protest	12.9%

Table 9.9: Politicians' perceptions as to which reasons are very important in terms of explaining why people vote.

As Table 9.9 shows, politician respondents were more likely to see political factors as the most important motivations in terms of why people choose to vote. They saw the most important reason explaining why people vote as being the desire to support a political party, followed by a wish to reward a politician for assistance afforded to a voter and a wish to support a local candidate. The only politically related reason not to figure amongst the more important reasons as to why people do not vote was related to a protest vote.

Reasons for not voting

The politician respondents were asked to rank reasons for not voting in order of how important they perceived them as being. Table 9.10 shows the percentage of respondents who ranked these various reasons as the most, second most or third most important reasons for not voting. This table shows that those surveyed were more likely to rank political reasons for non-voting behaviour as very important, as opposed to sociological and, especially, procedural concerns.

Reasons	Percentage
Procedural Difficulties	
Lack of time or opportunity to vote	8.7%
Polling station problems ⁶	6.5%
Problems with the electoral register	4.3%
Poor information on the voting card	3.3%
Problems with the ballot paper	1.1%
Political Factors	
Sense that elections would not involve any change	55.4%
Apathy	54.3%
No real differences between politicians	45.7%
Political corruption	28.3%
Sense that politicians do not keep promises	16.3%
Lack of a local candidate	7.6%
People did not know their election candidates	1.1%
Sociological	
Laziness	23.9%
Complacency linked to “Celtic Tiger” economy	22.8%
Social exclusion	14.1%
Media	5.4%

Table 9.10: Politicians' perceptions as whether reasons are very important in terms of explaining why people do not vote in elections.

The most important reasons given for non-voting were related to voter apathy, a sense that there were no real differences between politicians and a sense that the act of voting would not effect any real change. Candidate related factors, as well as more negative perspectives relating to the political system, such as corruption or a feeling that politicians did not keep promises, were not ranked as highly. Non-political factors that were ranked highly were laziness and a sense of complacency associated with the ‘Celtic Tiger Ireland’ economy. Social exclusion was seen as being a relatively unimportant cause of non-voting behaviour, being ranked as a very important cause of low turnouts by less than one sixth of all those surveyed.

⁶ Polling station too far away or problems in finding the polling station.

Low turnout groups and strong supporters

Groups	Low turnout groups	Strong supporters
Young voters	84.5%	40.0%
Elderly voters	2.1%	83.2%
Professional classes	3.1%	60.0%
The poor	53.6%	33.7%
The educationally disadvantaged	59.8%	21.1%
The unemployed	57.7%	21.1%
Owner occupiers	2.1%	60.0%
Council tenants	53.6%	55.8%
Private apartment dwellers	32.0%	8.4%
New residents in an area	46.4%	25.3%
Migrants	28.9%	6.3%

Table 9.11: Percentage of respondents viewing different socio-economic groups as (a) low turnout groups and (b) strong supporters of them within their constituencies.

Those surveyed were asked as to whether certain social groups were amongst the key low turnout groups in their own constituency, and also whether such groups were amongst their strongest supporters in that constituency.

Table 9.11 shows that the respondents distinguished between the groups on the basis of demography and social class in terms of who they saw the main low turnout groups in the constituency as being. Young voters were viewed as a low turnout group by a large proportion of the respondents. Over half the respondents saw the poor, the educationally disadvantaged and council tenants as low turnout groups, with relatively high proportions also viewing new residents, private apartment dwellers and migrants as low turnout groups. There were relatively higher proportion of respondents from low turnout constituencies ranking the unemployed (73.7%), educationally disadvantaged (63.2%), the poor (57.9%) and council tenants (57.9%) as low turnout groups.

There was a general pattern in Table 9.11 that respondents were more likely to list groups, which were not perceived as being low turnout groups, amongst their strong supporters. Senior citizens, professionals and owner-occupiers were ranked as strong supporters by high proportions by respondents, with council tenants the only low turnout group to be listed by a significant proportion of the respondents. Other low turnout groups were listed as strong supporters of politicians by relatively small proportions of the respondents.

Approaches to low turnout areas

Respondents were asked if they differed in their treatment of areas, both in terms of the level of assistance offered and the level of canvassing engaged in at elections, based on the turnout characteristics of these areas. A considerable proportion said that turnout considerations were not important for them in terms of what areas they gave most assistance to or focussed most of their canvassing activity on during election times. 62.5% said that turnout considerations were not important for them in terms of deciding what areas to canvass at election time. 46.2% said that the areas they spent most time assisting were neither unusual in terms of being mainly low turnout areas or in terms of being mainly high turnout areas.

In cases where politicians were influenced by turnout characteristics, there was a higher stress on low turnout areas in terms of giving political assistance and a greater stress on high turnout areas, as regards canvassing, as Figure 9.2 shows.

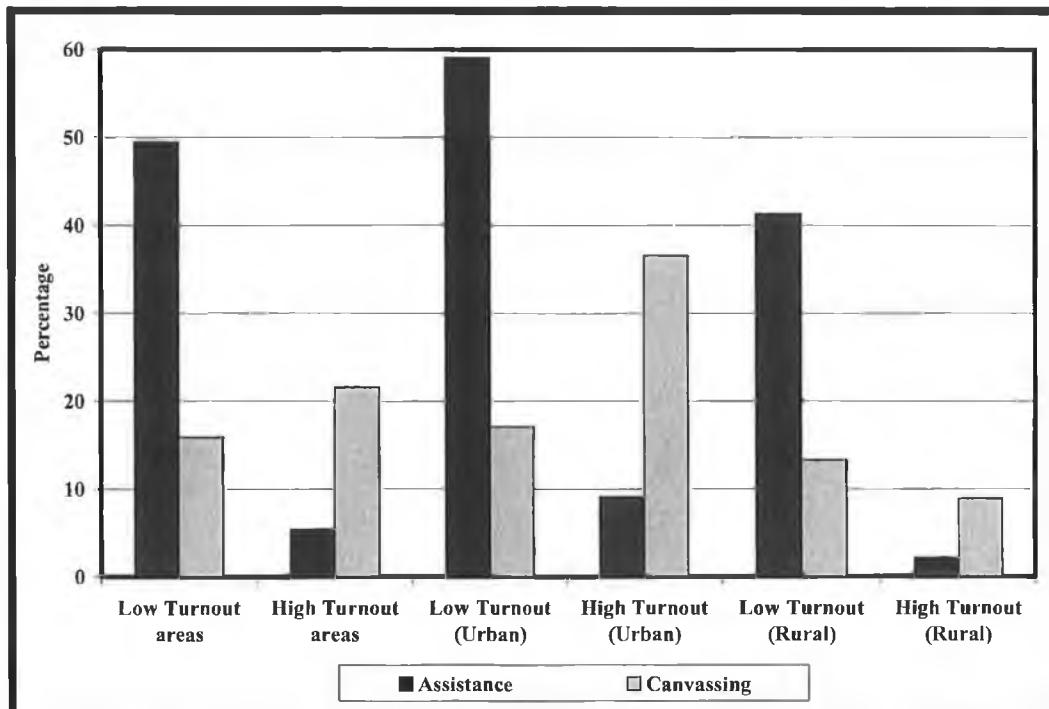


Figure 9.2: Approaches to high and low turnout areas in terms of canvassing activity and political assistance by politicians, based on whether they are based in urban or rural constituencies.

Turnout considerations had a greater bearing on the urban-based respondents, with 68.2% claiming these had a bearing on the areas they gave the most assistance to, and 53.7% saying that they took turnouts into account in terms areas that they canvassed in elections, as Figure 9.2 shows. Low turnout areas were the more likely to be focussed on, by urban respondents, in terms of assistance (59.1%), while high turnout areas received more attention in terms of canvassing (36.6%). Turnout had less of a bearing on the canvassing strategies of rural based respondents, with rural respondents proportionally more likely to target low turnout (13.3%) as opposed to high turnout (8.9%) areas, in contrast with their urban counterparts.

Politicians in high turnout constituencies (5.9%) were considerably less likely to take account of turnout considerations when planning canvassing strategies at election time, than those

representing low turnout constituencies (52.8%) were. 43.7% of politicians from high turnout constituencies said that turnout considerations had a bearing in terms of the areas they assisted the most, as opposed to 52.8% of politicians from average turnout constituencies and 61.5% of respondents from low turnout constituencies.

Political Party	Right of Centre	Centrist	Left of Centre
Canvassing			
Favour high turnout areas	27.6%	12.1%	26.9%
Favour low turnout areas	10.3%	11.1%	26.9%
Constituency assistance			
Favour high turnout areas	10.0%	0.0%	6.9%
Favour low turnout areas	33.3%	48.6%	65.5%

Table 9.12: Approaches to high or low turnout areas, based on political orientations of respondents.

There were also differences between the respondents in relation to their approaches to high and low turnout areas, based on what political parties they represented. The different parties were classified into three different groupings, based on political ideology; left-of-centre (Labour, Sinn Féin, the Green Party and Socialist Independents), centrist (Fianna Fáil and Centrist Independents) and right-of-centre (Fine Gael, Progressive Democrats and Conservative Independents). Respondents from left-of-centre parties were generally the more likely to favour low turnout areas, both in terms of constituency assistance and canvassing, as Table 9.12 shows. The right-of-centre group, by contrast, was the more likely group to favour the high turnout areas, both in terms of canvassing and political assistance.

Labour (33.3%) and Sinn Féin (50.0%) respondents particularly focussed on low turnout areas in canvassing, while Progressive Democrat (71.4%) and Green Party (80.0%) respondents were more likely to target high turnout areas. Fianna Fáil (71.9%) and Fine Gael (72.7%)

respondents were the more likely to say that turnout considerations had no influence on what areas that they canvassed at election times.

Issues	Very Important	Fairly Important
Health	89.1%	5.5%
Crime	45.7%	30.4%
Housing	34.8%	32.6%
Public transport	31.5%	19.6%
Traffic management	30.4%	26.1%
Education	17.4%	33.7%
Environment	14.1%	30.5%
Unemployment	8.7%	16.3%
Farming	6.5%	18.5%
Drug abuse	5.4%	19.6%
Estate management	3.3%	11.9%
Leisure facilities	3.3%	10.8%
Youth issues	2.2%	14.1%
Abortion	0.0%	3.3%

Table 9.13: Percentage of politician respondents ranking election issues as very important or fairly important.

Election Issues

Politician respondents were asked to rank a list of election issues in terms of how important they perceived these as being for the 2002 General Election. Table 9.13 shows the percentage of respondents who ranked these issues as very important (ranked 1, 2 or 3) or fairly important (ranked 4, 5 or 6).

The issue that was seen as most important for the general election was health, which was seen as a very important or fairly important issue by over 95% of respondents. The next most important issue was crime, ranked as very or fairly important by 76.1% of the respondents. Other issues that were ranked as very or fairly important by high proportions of respondents were housing (67.4%), public transport (51.1%), traffic management (56.5%) and the

environment (44.6%), as well as farming, ranked as very or fairly important by 46.0% of rurally based politicians.

Issue	Low	High
Crime	84.2%	75.0%
Housing	78.9%	43.8%
Traffic management	60.5%	37.5%
Public transport	52.6%	25.0%
Education	36.8%	68.7%
Drug abuse	34.2%	12.6%
Unemployment	15.8%	43.8%
Farming	5.3%	62.5%

Table 9.14: Percentage ranking electoral issues either as “very important” or “fairly important” election issues by turnout characteristics of constituencies.

As illustrated by Table 9.14, politicians based in low turnout constituencies placed stronger emphasis on certain issues than did others in the survey. Factors such as housing, drug abuse, traffic management, public transport and crime were more likely to be viewed as important by respondents from low turnout constituencies than they were to be ranked as so by those from high turnout areas.

Respondents from high turnout areas were significantly more likely to view unemployment, education and farming as important. The high ranking awarded unemployment by politicians from high turnout, rural constituencies is related to the regional disparities in unemployment in ‘Celtic Tiger Ireland’, in which high, and indeed increasing, levels of employment tend to be located in the more urban parts of the country, in particular the Dublin region.

Agencies to address electoral issues

The politician respondents were asked as to which particular groups or agencies would prove the most effective in addressing the election issues that they had viewed as important in Table 9.13.

Agencies	Very Important	Fairly Important
Representative		
TDs	81.3%	12.1%
Government	80.2%	11.0%
Councillors	44.0%	32.9%
Non representative		
Statutory agencies	47.3%	29.3%
Community groups	19.8%	47.2%
Clergy and religious	9.9%	15.4%
Business	8.8%	0.0%
LEADER/SWINC	5.5%	34.1%

Table 9.15: Percentage ranking different agencies as very important in terms of addressing election issues.

The most important group for addressing election issues, as identified in the survey and outlined in Table 9.15, was the TD group, seen as very or fairly important group by 93.1% of the respondents, with the Government (90.8%) close behind, followed by Councillors (78.2%). The high ranking afforded these agencies is not overtly surprising given that the survey respondents were all linked to the representative system of politics. Another group that was ranked as important by a significant proportion of the respondents was statutory agencies (77.0%), with the next most important, in order, being community groups (66.7%), Partnerships and LEADER groups (39.1%), business people (31.0%) and clergy and religious (26.4%).

Means of Helping People to Vote

The politician respondents were asked to decide which a list of suggested measures would prove the most useful means of facilitating the voting process.

Measure	Percentage
Weekend voting	71.1%
Voter education programmes	62.9%
Courses about voting in schools	61.9%
Photographs on the ballot paper	60.8%
Longer polling hours	52.6%
Making links between politics and needs of area more transparent	50.5%
Maps on the polling card	32.0%
Better information from the political parties	28.9%

Table 9.16: Percentage ranking various measures as useful means of facilitating the voting process.

Weekend voting was the highest ranked means of facilitating the voting process, being selected by nearly three quarters of the respondents, with education, both community based and in schools, also being ranked as useful means by high proportions of the respondents, as Table 9.16 shows. Other highly ranked measures included placing photographs on the ballot paper, as well as having longer polling hours. Some of the suggested measures were more likely to be ranked as helpful by urban-based politicians. Placing maps on photographs was seen as a useful measure by 51.2% of urban respondents, as opposed to just 11.1% of rural respondents. Other suggested measures involved significant variations between the responses of urban and rurally based respondents. These included better information from political parties (37.2% of urban respondents as against 17.8% of rural), longer polling hours (55.8% as against 42.2%), courses about voting in schools (67.4% as against 55.6%) and voter education programmes (65.1% as against 55.6%).

Newly elected TDs were proportionally more likely to select maps on polling cards (46.2%) and longer polling hours (61.5%) as important measures to facilitate the voting process. They also placed a greater stress on the importance of education, with 84.6% arguing that courses about voting in schools would be helpful, while 69.2% stressed the usefulness of community based voter education programmes.

9.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Turnout variation, political support and representation are highly interconnected in regard to the Irish context. The degree to which turnout variation may shape political support levels was highlighted. Associations between turnout and support for different political parties were investigated and then related in turn to socio-economic influences. This analysis showed that support patterns for a number of smaller socialist parties were strongly rooted in areas of low turnout and high levels of social exclusion. This suggests there is a socio-economic bias to the manner in which turnout influences political support levels, at least within Dublin. This mirrors the findings of previous research in which social exclusion is seen to have a strong influence in determining low turnout areas in the Dublin region. This socio-economic basis to the associations between turnout and political support suggests that parties, which are reliant on a low turnout support base, may lose votes and possibly also seats as a result of turnout variations. The findings of equal turnout simulation models suggest that turnout variations within constituencies reduce the share of the vote won by such parties, to the point that it may cost them representation.

The linkages between turnout, partisanship and patterns of support and representation are strong. Declining partisanship engenders declining turnout, as was illustrated in Chapter 2. Such declines in turnout may further intensify spatial variations and socio-economic biases in turnouts – although this was not seen to be the case in the 2002 General Election as Chapter 6 illustrated – and in turn influence spatial patterns of political support and, possibly, representation. Given the concerns expressed about how declining partisanship may result in a further demobilisation of low turnout, often working class, areas, attention should be focussed on vicious cycles of turnout decline. With these, low turnouts amongst certain groups and areas may, mindful of the need for parties and candidates to maximise support in the face of declining partisanship, lead to such areas being further ignored by canvassing strategies at election times. As less effort is put into canvassing such areas, hence turnouts there will fall even more, given the linkage between mobilisation and turnout that was noted in Chapter 2. Thus declining turnout may, in itself – especially given the weakening of partisanship – bring about even further declines, which will in turn result in greater socio-economic biases in turnout and make for greater distortions in levels of support and representation.

The attitudes of politicians to turnout issues were investigated in the second section of this chapter, building on the associations between political support and turnout variation that were observed. Politicians sensed that political factors had a large bearing on turnout rates, with significant proportions sensing that that politicians themselves had some bearing on turnout levels within their constituencies, while political factors were generally viewed as the most important factors influencing voting and non-voting behaviour. Against that, they generally perceived that turnout considerations had a significant influence on election results within their constituencies.

Respondents generally saw their main sources of political support within their constituencies as being drawn from the groups that they had identified as having high turnouts within their constituencies. However, a large proportion of them, especially amongst those based in the high turnout, rural constituencies, felt that turnout considerations did not shape the way that they approached their constituencies. Of those who were influenced by turnout considerations, significantly higher levels of political assistance were awarded to low turnout areas, but a significantly higher amount of canvassing efforts were carried out in high turnout areas. Politicians representing left-of-centre parties were the more likely to favour low turnout areas in terms of canvassing strategies and especially political assistance, while right-of-centre politicians focussed more of their canvassing efforts on high turnout parts of their constituency.

The issues that were stressed by politicians as being most important for the 2002 General Election were health, crime and infrastructural concerns (housing, public transport and traffic management), with health being ranked as an important election issue by nearly all of the respondents. Some issues were awarded a higher ranking by politicians based in low turnout constituencies, namely housing, public transport, traffic management, drug abuse and crime, while unemployment, education and farming were seen as relatively more important by politicians from high turnout constituencies. In terms of the most effective measures for encouraging people to vote, the politician respondents stressed the importance of changing the context in which elections were held, as well as voter education, both community and school based.

CHAPTER 10

VOTERS' SURVEYS

10.1 INTRODUCTION

As outlined in the methodology chapter outlined, three separate questionnaire surveys were carried out for the purposes of this research, one of which was discussed in the previous chapter. The other surveys focussed on the views of voters in the South West Inner City of Dublin and Co. Laois to allow for the uncovering of urban-rural contrasts in viewpoints on voter turnout related issues. These questionnaires were largely identical, save for some minor changes to take account of the different contexts involved, with copies of these included in Appendices D.1 and D.2. The format and scope of the Laois questionnaire was similar to the South West Inner City survey, with some slight amendments made to some of the questions to take account of the rural setting and to make refinements based on the experience of the earlier survey. The third questionnaire, discussed in Chapter 9, dealt with the views of politicians on a number of issues related to voter turnout. This covered topics that had been addressed in the other questionnaires, but with the significant difference that the politicians were being asked for their views on why people chose to vote or not to vote, rather than on their own personal reasons for voting.

10.2 SURVEY DETAILS

South West Inner City survey

The South West Inner City questionnaire survey was carried out in the summer of 2001. The questionnaire was concerned with electors' reasons for voting, or not voting, in elections held

over the 1997-2001 period, as well as involving demographic profiles of the respondents. Parts of the South West Inner City area were located in two different constituencies, Dublin South Central and Dublin South East. Some adjustments were made to the questionnaires to take account of people being from these different electoral areas, mainly involving questions that were concerned with candidate recognition in the local and general elections.

530 questionnaires were distributed throughout the South West Inner City. 140 questionnaires were returned, which amounted to an average response rate of 26.4%. Questionnaires were forwarded to randomly selected respondents – randomly selected from the register of electors, matching elector numbers in the marked registers with random numbers that were selected using Excel – in a number of specifically selected areas. These areas were chosen to ensure an ample mix of both high and low turnout areas and as wide a geographical spread as possible within the South West Inner City area. There was a particular focus on areas that the residual analysis in Chapter 7 identified as having significantly higher, or lower turnouts, than the regression analysis predicted. The areas that were surveyed included: Aungier Street, Bride Street, Clarence Mangan Road, Crampton Buildings, The Coombe, Cork Street, Essex Street, Grand Canal View, Harrington Street, Heytesbury Street, Lourdes Road, Lord Edward Street, Maryland, The Maltings, Mary Aikenhead House, Michael Mallin House, Mountshannon Road, New Street/Gardens, O'Curry Road, Old Kilmainham Village, Oliver Bond House, Raymond Street, Rialto Cottages, Rothe Abbey, Synge Street and St. Teresa's Gardens.

Laois survey

The Laois questionnaire survey was carried out in November 2001. Parts of Laois were located in five different local election constituencies, Portlaoise, Mountmellick, Emo, Luggacurren and Borris in Ossory. There were some alterations to the questionnaire in relation to the question on the recognition of local election candidates to take account of the respondents being located in different constituencies.

600 questionnaires were distributed to respondents in different parts of the county. 172 questionnaires were returned, amounting to a response rate of 28.6%. Questionnaires were forwarded to randomly selected respondents in different parts of Co. Laois, with these names being randomly selected from the register of electors through the use of random numbers. Areas were selected to ensure a mix of both high and low turnout areas in the survey, specifically targeting on areas with high and low residual scores arising from the residual analyses in Chapter 7. The questionnaires were divided up between the five local election areas in the county, with the county's three main towns, Portlaoise, Portarlington and Mountmellick, included amongst the areas covered. The areas covered were Trumera, Camross, Borris in Ossory and Durrow (Borris in Ossory EA), Portlaoise and its rural environs (Portlaoise EA), Mountmellick and Clonaslee (Mountmellick EA), Timahoe, Ballinakill, Wolfhill and Graiguecullen (Luggacurren EA), Ballybrittas, Portarlington and Stradbally (Emo EA).

10.3 VOTERS AND NON-VOTERS

Exactly half of the respondents claimed that they had voted in every election held during the 1997-2001 period, including the 1997 General Election, the 1999 local and European elections and the 2001 Nice Referendum. There was a higher proportion of consistent voters in Laois (54.6%) than in the South West Inner City (44.5%). 21.9% of the Inner City respondents said that they did not vote in any of these elections, as opposed to just 10.4% in the Laois survey.

Election specific turnouts

1997 General Election and 1999 Local Elections

Voted in	Laois	South West Inner City
Both elections	68.7%	60.6%
General Election only	11.0%	11.7%
Local and European elections only	8.8%	2.2%
Neither election	11.7%	25.5%

Table 10.1: Percentage who voted in the 1997 General Election and 1999 local and European elections.

Table 10.1 shows that nearly two-thirds of the respondents voted in both the general and local elections. A higher proportion voted in the general election only, as opposed to those who just voted in the local election. There was a higher proportion of persistent non-voters in the South West Inner City.

1997 General Election and 2001 Nice Referendum

Table 10.2 shows that slightly over half the respondents voted in both the general election and the referendum. A significant proportion just voted in the general election, amounting to almost a quarter of the respondents, while a small proportion only voted in the referendum.

As with Table 10.1, a larger proportion of Inner City respondents said that they did not vote in either election.

Voted in	Laois	South West Inner City
Both elections	57.7%	47.4%
General Election only	22.1%	24.8%
Nice Referendum only	6.7%	4.4%
Neither election	13.5%	23.4%

Table 10.2: Percentage who voted in the 1997 General Election and 2001 Nice Referendum.

1999 Local Elections and 2001 Nice Referendum

Voted in	Laois	South West Inner City
Both elections	60.1%	45.3%
Local and European Elections only	17.2%	17.5%
Nice Referendum only	4.3%	6.6%
Neither election	18.4%	30.7%

Table 10.3: Percentage who voted in the 1999 local and European elections and 2001 Nice Referendum.

Slightly over half the respondents voted in both the referendum and the local elections, with a significantly higher proportion in the Laois survey, as illustrated by Table 10.3. A much higher proportion of habitual voters just voted in the local elections than those that just vote in the referendum. As with Tables 10.1 and 10.2, the highest level of consistent non-voting was in the South West Inner City survey.

These analyses of election specific turnouts highlight the higher levels of habitual voting amongst the Laois respondents and of habitual non-voting amongst Inner City respondents. They also highlight a considerable degree of occasional voting.

Reasons for voting

84.3% of respondents said they had voted in at least one election during the 1997-2001 period, with 89.6% and Laois respondent and 78.1% of Inner City respondents claiming to have voted in at least one elections.

Reasons	Laois	South West Inner City
Civic duty	77.4%	65.1%
Have a say	58.9%	47.7%
Family tradition	32.9%	19.8%
Support a local candidate	30.8%	16.8%
Support a political party	21.2%	29.6%
Reward a politician for assistance	11.0%	3.7%
Remove the Government	6.8%	11.2%

Table 10.4: Reasons for voting in elections held over the 1997-2001 period.

The highest ranked reason for voting, as selected by the respondents, was that they did so on the basis of civic duty, with almost three-quarters of the voting respondents giving this as a reason for voting. The next most important reason, based on the responses to the survey, was that people wanted a say in the election of their government or local council. Political reasons were relatively important, but significantly less important than the “civic duty” and “have a say” reasons. There were some differences between the Laois and Inner City respondents in terms of which of the political reasons for voting were stressed in the different areas. Laois respondents were proportionally more likely to have voted on the basis of supporting a local candidate or to reward a politician for assistance that the politician had afforded them. A higher proportion of Inner City respondents claimed to have voted on the basis of supporting a political party, or of registering a protest vote.

The general trend was that a higher proportion of rural voters attributed more personal, local or idealistic factors as their reasons for voting. This may result from there being a more politicised culture in rural areas, in which the process of being “socialised” to vote is made decidedly easier than in the more urban contexts. The importance of a family tradition of voting is stressed here, with this tradition of voting having more of an influence in encouraging Laois voters to turn out. It could be hypothesised that the family tradition of voting is even less important in the more suburban parts of Dublin than in the more traditional Inner City areas. Local candidates were also a more important factor in drawing Laois voters to the polls, which may be a result of rural communities being more closely knit than urban communities are. A higher proportion of South West Inner City respondents gave protest as a reason for them voting, which is reflective of the political culture of the area, in which support for small, left-of-centre, candidates is well above the national average.

The responses given by the voters, as to why they voted, differed somewhat from the perceptions of the politician respondents as to what motivated people to vote, as was detailed in Table 9.9. The politician respondents were significantly more likely to attribute a political basis to people’s decision to vote, with the desire to support a political party emerging as the most important reason in that survey. They were also proportionally more likely to look on the desire to support a local candidate and the wish to reward a politician for help given as reasons for voting than were the voters of Laois and South West Inner City.

Reasons for not voting

Reasons for not voting in elections are many and varied, as was illustrated by Chapter 3. Marsh’s (1991) concept of differentiating between “short-term” and “long-term” non-voters is

particularly helpful here. Short-term non-voters are seen to abstain on the basis of accidental reasons, such as being unavoidably away from home on polling day or not being registered. Long-term non voting is seen as symptomatic of a deep sense of disillusion with, or rather alienation from, the political system. The reasons for not voting in the different elections held during the 1997-2001 period, as drawn from the questionnaire findings, were looked at through this framework.

General Election

26.9% of respondents said that they did not vote in the 1997 General Election, with 22.8% of Laois and 31.9% of Inner City respondents being non-voters in this election.

Reasons	Laois	South West Inner City
Short Term		
Sick or away	29.7%	23.3%
Not registered	13.5%	11.6%
Unsure who candidates were	10.8%	11.6%
Polling station problems ¹	8.1%	4.7%
No local candidate	2.7%	7.0%
Long Term		
Politicians not seen in area	32.9%	34.9%
Vote irrelevant – nothing changes	27.0%	37.2%
Politicians do not keep promises	20.4%	25.6%
Political corruption	16.2%	20.9%

Table 10.5: Reasons for not voting in the 1997 General Election.

Table 10.5 suggests that long term reasons for not voting were substantially more important, suggesting that a sense of alienation from the political system was at the root of much of the non-voting behaviour. Long-term reasons for not voting were more common amongst the South West Inner City respondents, whereas a higher proportion of the Laois respondents

¹ Polling station too far away or problems in finding the polling station.

gave short-term reasons for not voting. It could be inferred that habitual non-voting was more common amongst the South West Inner City respondents, which mirrors the earlier finding that 21.9% of respondents there did not vote in an election between 1997 and 2001, as opposed to just 10.4% of Laois respondents.

Respondents in both areas were generally more likely to select political causes for why they did not vote in the general election, which mirrors the perceptions of the politician respondents, as detailed in Table 9.10, as to why people do not vote. However, the politician respondents put a greater stress on factors related to apathy, whereas a greater stress was placed in the two voters' surveys on factors related to discontent with the political system and individual politicians.

Local Elections 1999

The reasons for not voting in the 1999 local and European elections were similar to those listed in Table 10.5, as regards reasons for not voting in the general election. As with the general election, a substantial proportion of non-voting respondents gave long terms reasons for not voting. 34.8% of the non-voting respondents said that they did not vote in the local elections because they felt nothing would change anyway, while 29.7% said they never saw their local politicians and hence felt that politicians were not interested in their area. 22.0% said they did not vote because politicians never kept their promises and 13.2% gave political corruption as a reason for not voting.

The most important of the short term reasons for not voting, as with the general election, was being sick or away from home on polling day, which was given by 26.4% of non-voting

respondents. 17.6% said they did not vote because they were not sure which candidates were standing, 9.9% said they were not registered and 4.4% said they were too young on polling day. 3.3% said that they did not vote because there was no local candidate running in the election. 8.8% said they did not vote because they had problems getting to the polling station on time, 2.2% said they had problems finding the polling station and 5.1% said their polling station was too far away. Finally, 3.3% said that they did not vote in the elections was because they had forgotten that the elections were being held.

Nice Referendum 2001

Reasons	Laois	South West Inner City
Short Term		
Sick or away	36.2%	19.4%
Not registered	3.4%	21.0%
Polling station problems	6.9%	1.6%
No local candidate	2.7%	7.0%
Forgot to vote / Not informed that election was being held	3.4%	11.3%
Long Term		
Referendum not important	25.9%	14.5%
Did not understand the issues	37.9%	46.8%

Table 10.6: Reasons for not voting in the 2001 Nice Referendum.

40.4% of those surveyed said that they did not vote in the 2001 Nice Referendum, with 35.8% of Laois and 45.9% of South West Inner City respondents not voting in this election. A lack of awareness about the issues involved in the Nice Referendum – as indeed about the actual holding of the referendum – appear key to an understanding of why South West Inner City did not vote. There was a stronger emphasis on apathy in the Laois survey, with over a quarter of the non-voters claiming the election was not important to them. A much higher proportion of Laois non-voters gave being sick or away as a reason for not voting than was the case in the South West Inner City survey.

Electoral Register

Registration details	Laois	South West Inner City
Present address	84.6%	69.4%
Both present and previous addresses	4.3%	6.0%
Previous address only	6.8%	11.2%
Not sure if registered	3.7%	9.0%
Not registered	0.6%	6.0%

Table 10.7: Registration details of survey respondents.

Table 10.7 shows the registration details of the different respondents in the Laois and South West Inner City surveys. It shows that, while a substantial proportion of respondents (82.8% on average) said that they were registered to vote at their present address, there was a relatively high proportion of respondents, especially in the South West Inner City, who were not registered to vote there. Nearly a quarter (24.6%) of Inner City respondents fell into this category, whereas just over a tenth (11.1%) of Laois respondents did. This suggested that there was a significantly higher likelihood that Inner City residents would not be registered to vote at election times.

Naturally, there were higher turnouts amongst those who said they were registered to vote. 80.4% of those who were registered at their present address – including those also registered for their previous address – voted in the 1997 General Election, 75.9% voted in the 1999 Local and European elections and 65.7% in the 2001 Nice Referendum. Just 45.8% of respondents, who were not registered or not sure whether they were registered, voted in the 1997 General Election, while 33.3% voted in the local elections and 0.0% in the referendum.

Voting by Occupation

Respondents were categorised into eight different occupational groups for the purposes of the analysis; white collar (professional, managerial and clerical), blue collar (skilled, semi or unskilled manual), services, farmers, retired, housewives and students.

Occupational Category	GE	LE	BE	REF
White Collar (Professional, managerial and clerical)	68.8	59.6	55.9	53.2
Blue Collar (Skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled manual)	64.3	53.6	63.6	50.0
Services	80.0	82.5	80.0	65.0
Farmers	91.7	83.3	N/A	75.0
Retired	95.6	91.1	83.3	73.3
Housewives	69.8	62.8	23.1	60.5
Unemployed	70.0	70.0	37.5	30.0
Students	14.3	42.9	N/A	14.3

Table 10.8: Turnout rates for different occupational groups in elections held between 1997 and 2001. [GE: General Election 1997, LE: Local and European Elections 1999, BE: Dublin South Central By-Election 1999, REF: Nice Referendum 2001.]

The analysis of the linkages between one's occupation and the number of times one voted uncovered some significant variations between the different occupational groupings. The groupings with the highest turnouts were the farmer and retired groupings, with 75.0% of all farmers and 71.1% of all retired respondents surveyed claiming to have voted in every election between 1997 and 2001. The next highest turnouts were for the services employees and housewives occupational categories, although there was a relatively high proportion of consistent non-voters amongst the housewives grouping (23.3%). There were relatively similar proportions of consistent voters in the white collar (42.4%) and blue collar (46.4%) categories.

There was a higher proportion of consistent non-voters amongst the manual employee respondents, as 38.5% of skilled and 26.7% of semiskilled or unskilled employees did not

vote in an election during this period. Apart from the unemployed respondents, the white collar grouping was the most likely to be occasional voters, with 45.4% voting in one or two, but not all, of the elections held over the period. The pattern of voting, or non-voting, amongst manual employees seems more ‘black and white’ than for white collar respondents. Manual employees generally tended to be habitual voters or habitual non-voters, while there were higher levels of occasional voting in the white collar occupational categories. The highest level of consistent non-voting was amongst the student respondents, with 50.0% of these failing to vote in any election, although this figure is not very instructive as there was only a small number of cases (n=8) involved.

	All	GE	LE	BE	REF
Laois					
White Collar and Students	34.4	67.2	65.6	N/A	50.8
Blue Collar, Services or Unemployed	57.9	78.9	81.6	N/A	65.8
Farmers, Housewives and Retired	72.1	93.4	85.2	N/A	77.0
South West Inner City					
White Collar and Students	47.8	78.3	63.0	55.9	63.0
Blue Collar, Services or Unemployed	38.0	68.0	62.0	59.5	42.0
Farmers, Housewives and Retired	51.3	69.2	66.7	58.1	53.8

Table 10.9: Turnout rates for different occupational group in elections held between 1997 and 2001.

Table 10.9 shows variations between the Laois and South West Inner City surveys regarding associations between occupation and turnout for the different elections during the 1997-2001 period. There were generally higher turnouts amongst the white collar/student category in the Inner City case study than in the Laois survey, approximating to about 10% of a difference, with the exception of local election turnouts. The relatively lower local electoral turnout for Inner City white collar respondents is probably to do with this group being a highly mobile

one, and they are, thus, unaware of local issues and political personalities and do not feel part of the local community.

There were higher turnouts amongst Laois blue collar and services employee respondents than amongst those in the Inner City survey, with 10-20 percent of a difference between the two areas in terms of the turnouts for this occupational category. Turnouts were also significantly higher in the Laois survey for the other, more home-based, occupational groupings than amongst the Inner City respondents in these occupational categories, with approximately 20 percent of a difference involved. The high turnouts for the farmers' category in the Laois survey explained a large part of the turnout variation here.

This analysis offers some pointers as to why rural turnouts tend to be higher than turnouts in urban areas. A high turnout for the farmer category is one factor involved here. Another is the fact that turnouts for blue collar employees and unemployed people were significantly higher in the Laois survey than in the Inner City questionnaire. This suggests that working class and socially deprived populations are more likely to turn out to vote in rural areas than in urban areas. The higher turnout amongst white collar and student respondents for the Nice Referendum in the Inner City survey, in turn, suggests one reason for higher referendum turnouts in urban areas. This is particularly relevant, given that the ecological analysis in Chapter 7 suggested that class cleavages were of greater importance for influencing referendum turnouts.

Age

The lowest turnout levels were associated with respondents in the younger age categories, with roughly 20% of a difference in turnouts between those in the under 35 age category and those in the older age categories. 47.1% of respondents in the 18-24 age category and 21.7% in the 25-34 age category did not vote in any of the elections held in the 1997-2001 period. Habitual non-voting in the other age categories was, by contrast, relatively small, amounting to 11.6% of respondents in the 35-44 age group, 7.7% in the 45-54 age group, 9.1% in the 55-64 age group and 5.8% in the 65 and over age group. Naturally, there were higher proportions of consistent non-voters in the older age categories, with 66.4% of respondents in the 45 and over age group voting in every election during this period, in contrast with 22.3% of respondents in the under 35 age category.

Some of the members of the 18-24 age group would have been unable to vote in all the elections simply by virtue of being too young at the time that the elections in 1997 and 1999 were held. This problem was not as evident in the case of the more recent election, the 2001 Nice Referendum. Just 26.5% of the 18-24 and 45.0% of the 25-34 age groups voted in this referendum, with only 18.2% of 18-24 year respondents in the Inner City survey voting. By contrast, turnouts amongst respondents in the older age categories were relatively high, with 67.2% of respondents in the 45, and over, age category voting. The findings of the questionnaire analysis strongly support those of the ecological analysis and the arguments of the literature review, as well as the politicians' questionnaire, in which 84.5% viewed young voters as a low turnout group (Table 9.11). There is a concrete basis for arguing that age concerns have a strong influence on turnout in Ireland.

Education

The electoral literature generally associates higher educational levels with increased turnout propensity and this was also found to be the case in the Dublin case study in Chapter 6. In a similar vein, the previous chapter showed that 59.8% of respondents in the politicians' questionnaire survey viewed the educationally disadvantaged as a low turnout group. However, there was a significantly, negative association between education and turnout levels in the rural case study areas, as illustrated in Chapter 8.

Age at which education concluded	Consistent Voters	Consistent Non Voters
Under 14	47.1%	17.6%
14 years	56.9%	10.6%
15-16 years	52.9%	20.0%
17-18 years	47.5%	15.3%
19, and over	44.4%	13.3%

Table 10.10: Voting behaviour by age at which education ended.

The questionnaire findings suggest an inverse relationship between education levels and turnout, in that early school leavers were the more likely to be consistent voters during this period, as Table 10.10 illustrates. There were roughly similar proportions of consistent non-voters in the different age categories, with a slightly higher proportion in the early school leavers' categories.

Those who remained in school until 17 years of age, or over, were more likely to be 'short-term' non-voters than were the early school leavers. 38.7% of those who left school at 17, or over, voted in one or two of the elections held in this period, whereas just 28.2% of those who left school between 14 and 16 years of age voted in one or two of the elections. In general, there was a strong association of either habitual voting or non-voting with lower educational

standards, while people with higher educational standards were significantly more likely to be occasional voters.

The inverse relationship between education levels and turnout was especially sharp in Laois. There were high proportions of consistent voters in the early school leavers categories, approximating to 100.0% in the under 14 age category, as well as 77.8% for the 14 years and 66.7% for the 15-16 years age categories. By contrast, just 47.2% of the 17-18 years and 44.1% of the 19 years and over age categories were consistent voters in this period. Just 3.6% of Laois respondents who left school before 17 years were consistent non-voters in this period, as opposed to 13.2% of those who remained in school until 17 years of age, or after.

However, these findings need to take account of the strong relationship between age and early school leaving in Laois. 73.4% of those who left school at 16 years, or under, being accounted for by the 45, and over, age category, while the 18-44 age category accounted for 71.7% of those who left school at 17 years of age, or later. Thus, the association between turnout and education in the Laois survey is strongly influenced by the age factor.

No distinct pattern emerged in terms of a linkage between education and turnout in the South West Inner survey. As with the Laois survey however, this relationship was strongly influenced by age considerations. When age was controlled for, the survey analysis found that all the consistent non-voters amongst those who left school at 14, or under, were in the 35-54 age category and 83.3% of consistent non-voters amongst those who left school at 15 or 16 years were in the 18-44 age category.

Thus the relationship between age and educational levels in the surveys generally does not confirm the findings of the electoral literature. Turnout rates in the Laois survey were inversely related with educational levels while there was no evidence of any relationship in the South West Inner City survey. However further analyses illustrated that age was a strong influencing factor in this regard and, in general, higher educational levels were associated with higher turnouts when the analysis was restricted to the younger age categories.

Election issues

Table 10.11 shows the percentages who ranked an array of election issues as very important in the surveys, with respondents being grouped as Laois voters, Laois non-voters, Inner City voters and Inner City non voters.

Issues	Laois Voters	Laois Non Voters	Inner City Voters	Inner City Non Voter
Unemployment	35.9%	31.3%	30.5%	50.0%
Crime	51.7%	37.5%	47.4%	46.7%
Youth issues	7.9%	0.0%	18.0%	13.4%
Traffic	20.2%	30.3%	17.0%	13.4%
Housing	12.5%	16.8%	25.5%	41.3%
Estate management	7.8%	0.0%	6.8%	6.8%
Drug abuse	40.5%	25.0%	45.8%	55.1%
Education	35.9%	37.5%	35.6%	41.4%
Health	73.0%	81.3%	57.7%	48.3%
Public transport	6.7%	25.0%	18.7%	17.2%
Leisure facilities	3.3%	6.3%	3.4%	20.6%
Environment	21.3%	12.6%	30.5%	27.6%
Farming	16.8%	18.8%	NA	NA

Table 10.11: Percentage of voter respondents ranking election issues as very important.

The election issue that was seen as most important was health, which was ranked as very important issue by 60.3% of those surveyed, followed by crime (45.4%) and drug abuse (41.4%). The other issues were ranked as follows: unemployment (37.6%), education

(34.6%), housing (27.5%), environment (22.0%), public transport (15.8%), youth issues (11.5%), estate (7.1%), estate management (7.1%) and leisure facilities (5.4%).

As Table 10.11 illustrates, some issues were more important to consistent non-voters than they were to consistent voters, namely housing, unemployment, leisure facilities and public transport. Some issues were more significant for consistent voters, namely health, crime and the environment.

Given the stress placed on the latter issues in the run up to the 2002 General Election and the fact that the other issues were largely sidelined, it could be suggested that politicians were more aware of the issues of voters than of the issues of non-voters. Some issues were seen as significantly more important in the different areas. Inner City respondents were proportionally more likely to rank youth issues, housing, drug abuse, the environment, public transport and leisure facilities as very important election issues, while Laois respondents were more likely to rank health, traffic and farming as very important.

Some of the issues, such as unemployment and leisure facilities, that were ranked as very important by a higher proportions of non-voters than consistent voters, ranked relatively lowly in terms of the politicians' rankings of election issues (Table 9.13).

Issues that had figured high on the list of politicians' rankings, namely health, crime and the environment, were issues that were more important to consistent voters than to non-voters. Hence there is some evidence to suggest that politicians are taking on board the issues of

voters to a greater extent than they are concerning themselves with the issues of the non-voting group.

Agencies to address electoral issues

Agencies	Laois Voters	Laois Non Voters	Inner City Voters	Inner City Non Voters
Representative				
Government	26.4%	18.8%	18.6%	15.3%
TDs	63.2%	37.5%	51.8%	34.6%
Councillors	57.4%	43.8%	40.3%	46.1%
Non representative				
Statutory agencies	37.9%	43.8%	35.7%	50.0%
Business	11.4%	25.1%	10.7%	19.2%
LEADER/SWICN	24.1%	25.1%	28.1%	31.3%
Community groups	54.0%	50.0%	68.5%	61.6%
Clergy and religious	19.5%	25.0%	14.1%	0.0%

Table 10.12: Percentage of voter respondents ranking different agencies as very important in terms of addressing election issues.

The most important groups, as identified by the survey respondents, for addressing election issues were TDs and community groups, which were both identified by 54.4% of respondents, followed closely by County or City Councillors (50.5%) and statutory agencies (41.5%). The rest of the groups were ranked as follows: LEADER and SWICN (24.7%), the Government (19.9%), clergy and religious (15.0%) and business-people (13.6%).

As Table 10.12 illustrates, a number of groups were more likely to be ranked as very important by consistent non-voters than by consistent voters. These included non-representative agencies, such as community groups, statutory agencies and business people, as well as LEADER and SWICN. The Government, TDs and Councillors were more likely to be ranked as very important by consistent voters, apart from the higher ranking awarded to Councillors by Inner City non-voters. The general pattern was that agencies related to the

representative system were held in greater regard by consistent voters, as well as by Laois respondents. This suggests that there is an association between greater trust in representative bodies and higher turnout propensity, while it may also account for higher rural turnouts in local and general elections.

The relatively low rankings awarded to representative agencies and high rankings given to community groups by the non-voter respondents, particularly those in the South West Inner City, were contrasted with the perceptions of the politician respondents, as to who the more effective agencies would be. As was illustrated by Table 9.15, politicians were significantly more likely to rank the government and TDs as important agencies as regards addressing the key general election issues, while less than one in five saw community groups as being very important in this regard. However, councillors were generally more likely to be viewed as very important in addressing general election issues by the voter respondents. Higher proportions of the non-voting category in the South West Inner City, for instance, viewed this group as very important than did the politician respondents.

Residential Stability

8.4% of respondents were living at their present residence for 2 years or less, 13.8% for between 3 and 5 years, 17.1% for between 6 and 10 years, 21.1% for between 11 and 20 years and 39.6% for over 20 years. There were much higher levels of residential mobility amongst the South West Inner City respondents, with 12.4% living in their present house for 2 years, or less, as opposed to 5.0% of Laois respondents. Nearly half (46.7%) of Inner City respondents had lived at their present address for 10 years, or less, as opposed to just 33.0% of Laois respondents.

Election	0-2 years	3-5 yrs	6-10 yrs	11-20 yrs	20+ yrs
1997 General Election	64.0%	65.9%	74.5%	82.5%	80.5%
1999 Local Elections	52.0%	68.3%	68.6%	68.3%	78.0%
1999 Dublin SC By-Election	33.3%	25.0%	56.5%	72.0%	70.3%
2001 Referendum	48.0%	56.1%	58.8%	61.9%	60.2%

Table 10.13: Turnout rate of respondents by length in present house.

Table 10.13 shows an association between residential mobility and turnout rates, with the highest abstention rates for those living at their current address for the shortest period of time. Local election and referendum turnouts for those in the 2 years, or less, category were significantly lower than turnouts in the other age categories. There were turnout differences of over 20%, in some cases, between those who had been living at their present address for 30 years, or over, and those who had been living at their present address for 5 years, or less.

The strong, positive association between increasing levels of residential stability and turnout rates in Table 10.13 mirrors the findings of the politicians' questionnaire, in which 46.4% of respondents viewed new residents in an areas as a low turnout group (Table 9.15).

Housing Tenure in the South West Inner City

46.6% of the South West Inner City respondents were living in council housing, 36.6% were owner-occupiers and 13.5% were living in private apartments.

Relatively few respondents in the politicians' questionnaire had viewed owner occupiers as a low turnout group (2.1%), while relative high proportions had viewed council tenants (53.6%) and private apartment dwellers (32.0%) as such. Table 10.14 mirrors these findings, as it shows that Dublin Corporation housing estate and flat complex tenants had the lowest general

election and referendum turnouts of the different housing tenures. Private apartment dwellers were, by contrast, the least likely to vote in the local elections and by-election. Owner-occupiers had the highest turnout rates for all the elections. 31.1% of Dublin Corporation tenant respondents did not vote in any election during this period, as opposed to 22.7% of private apartment dwellers and just 8.5% of owner occupiers.

Election	Corporation	Apartments	Owner Occupied
1997 General Election	59.0%	73.6%	91.5%
1999 Local Elections	54.1%	40.9%	80.9%
1999 By-Election	52.0%	35.7%	75.0%
2001 Referendum	36.1%	50.0%	72.3%

Table 10.14: Turnout rate of respondents by housing tenure in the South West Inner City.

Council tenants also differed from other respondents in terms of their motivations for voting, as illustrated by Table 10.15. They were less likely to vote on the basis of civic duty or to ensure a say in the election of the government or council, but more likely to vote on the bases of supporting a political party or local candidate, rewarding a politician for help received, or family tradition. This seems to imply that council tenants are more likely to be motivated to vote on the basis of political, local and personal factors, rather than issues or ideals.

Reason	Corporation	Apartments	Owner Occupied
Civic duty	48.8%	52.9%	83.7%
Support political party	33.3%	31.3%	22.7%
Politician helped me	4.9%	0.0%	4.5%
Family tradition	31.7%	0.0%	14.0%
Ensure local candidate is elected	24.4%	12.5%	11.4%
Remove present Government	14.6%	6.3%	9.1%
Have say in electing Government	41.5%	43.8%	52.3%

Table 10.15: Reasons for voting, by housing tenure, in South West Inner City.

There were also variations between council tenants and other respondents as regards their reasons for not voting in the 2001 Nice Referendum, as Table 10.16 shows. Council tenants were significantly more likely to have abstained on the basis of not understanding the issues involved in the Nice Treaty, as well as because they did not see the referendum as being important. Owner occupiers were more likely to have abstained on the basis of being sick or away on polling day, while the main reason for private apartment dwellers abstaining was that they were not registered to vote.

Reason	Corporation Housing	Private Apartments	Owner Occupied
Referendum not important	20.0%	0.0%	15.4%
Did not understand issues	68.6%	9.1%	23.1%
Problems finding/getting to Polling Station	0.0%	9.1%	0.0%
Sick or away on polling day	5.7%	27.3%	46.2%
Not registered to vote (in area)	8.6%	45.5%	30.8%
Forgot to vote / did not hear about Referendum	11.4%	18.2%	7.7%
Other	2.9%	27.3%	7.7%

Table 10.16: Reasons for not voting in Nice Referendum, by housing tenure, in the South West Inner City.

Table 10.17 shows that there were significant differences between the different housing types in terms of interest in politics and understanding of election issues. Higher proportions of council tenants were not interested at all in national politics than respondents from other housing tenures were. However, council tenants had the highest levels of interest in local politics. Similar percentages of council tenants said they were not interested at all in national and local politics (19.7%), which suggests that approximately one-fifth of council tenants were disaffected by politics of any kind.

Council tenants had the lowest levels of understanding of general election and referendum issues, with 44.6% having little, or no, understanding of referendum issues for instance. They did appear to have a greater grasp of local election issues however, with 75.4% having a clear, or good, understanding of these.

Factor	Council Housing	Private Apartments	Owner Occupied
Interest in National Politics			
<i>Very Interested</i>	29.5%	22.7%	40.4%
<i>Fairly Interested</i>	41.0%	54.5%	44.7%
<i>Not Much Interested</i>	9.8%	9.1%	6.4%
<i>Not Interested At All</i>	19.7%	13.6%	8.5%
Interest in Local Politics			
<i>Very Interested</i>	39.3%	22.7%	29.8%
<i>Fairly Interested</i>	32.8 %	31.8%	38.3%
<i>Not Much Interested</i>	8.2%	22.7%	17.0%
<i>Not Interested At All</i>	19.7%	22.7%	14.9%
Understanding of General Election Issues			
<i>Clear Understanding</i>	50.9%	63.6%	80.5%
<i>More or Less</i>	21.1%	18.2%	7.3%
<i>To Some Extent</i>	15.8%	4.5%	9.8%
<i>Not At All</i>	12.3%	13.6%	2.4%
Understanding of Local Election Issues			
<i>Clear Understanding</i>	49.1%	45.5%	58.5%
<i>More or Less</i>	26.3%	13.6%	17.1%
<i>To Some Extent</i>	12.3%	18.2%	19.5%
<i>Not At All</i>	12.3%	22.7%	4.9%
Understanding of Referendum Issues			
<i>Clear Understanding</i>	33.9%	50.0%	68.3%
<i>More or Less</i>	21.4%	18.2%	9.8%
<i>To Some Extent</i>	21.4%	13.6%	12.2%
<i>Not At All</i>	23.2%	18.2%	9.8%

Table 10.17: Interest in politics and understanding of election issues, by housing tenure, in the South West City.

Thus a pattern emerges in which there is, generally, a lower interest in politics and understanding of political issues in council housing areas, but not in the case of local elections and politics. This builds on the findings of the ecological analysis in Chapter 7, which offered evidence of higher local election participation rates amongst the working classes as opposed

to the professional classes in rural Irish constituencies. An insight by Rallings and Thrasher (1990: 89) also throws light upon this issue:

"Where a contest is unusual, characterised by high partisan competition, features intense competition by one or more parties, or occurs in an area where local government has, for whatever reason, been elevated to high prominence, then turnout often exceeds statistical prediction by a wide margin"

For the South West Inner City, there was intense competition for votes between local candidates in certain flat complexes for the local elections, resulting in high degrees of mobilisation in these places. Council tenants were also more likely to seek assistance from local politicians at clinics or otherwise (39.0% for council tenants contrasting with 20.3% for others) and this could have been an added factor that mobilised them to participate in local elections. Furthermore, local authority related issues were more likely to be ranked as important in the surveys by council tenants, with 38.0% ranking housing as a very important issue, while 9.6% ranked estate management and 9.7% ranked the provision of leisure facilities as very important issues. The proportions ranking these issues as very important amongst the other respondents were 31.3% for housing, 8.6% for estate management and 5.7% for leisure facilities.

Group Membership

26.6% of respondents said that they were members of local groups, with 33.3% of Laois respondents and 18.5% of South West Inner City members of such groups, with the vast majority of Inner City respondents being members of tenants associations.

Election	Group Member	Not a Group Member
General Election 1997	84.8%	73.9%
Local Elections 1999	82.3%	67.0%
Dublin SC By-Election 1999	72.7%	55.3%
Nice Referendum 2001	64.6%	56.9%

Table 10.18: Voter Participation by Group Membership.

Table 10.18 shows that survey respondents, who were group members, were the more likely to turn out to vote in all types of elections. The turnout rates of group members were generally 10-15 percent higher than for respondents who were not group members. This was especially the case in the Inner City survey, where the average turnout rate of group members who voted in two, or more, elections during the 1997-2001 period was 92.0% a considerably higher turnout than for non-group members (60.4%).

Assistance from Politicians

29.8% of respondents said that they had received assistance from a politician at a clinic, or otherwise, with 31.1% of Laois and 28.4% of Inner City respondents having received assistance. Respondents who received assistance from politicians were significantly more likely to vote, with a higher proportion having voted in all the elections held during the 1997-2001 period. Turnout rates for Laois respondents who received assistance from politicians were exceptionally high for general and local elections, with 94.0% voting in the 1997 General Election and 92.0% voting in the 1999 local and European elections.

	Group Member	Not a Group Member
General Election 1997	89.8%	71.0%
Local Elections 1999	84.1%	65.2%
Dublin SC By-Election 1999	79.3%	51.3%
Nice Referendum 2001	65.9%	55.6%

Table 10.19: Voter participation by assistance from politicians.

There was roughly 20% of a difference between the turnouts of those who had received assistance and those who had not for all the elections, apart from the 2001 Nice Referendum. The relatively smaller difference (10.4%) for this election was probably due to issues rather than political personalities being involved in this electoral contest.

10.4 BARRIERS TO VOTING

Difficulties in Voting

46.6% of respondents said that they experienced some difficulties with the voting process. 51.9% of South West Inner City and 42.2% of Laois respondents had difficulties.

Difficulties	Percentage
Did not know candidates standing in constituency	21.3%
Not enough information on a voting card	18.9%
No time to vote	8.4%
Problems in registering	6.8%
No voting card	6.4%
Polling station too far away	5.6%
Problems in finding polling station	3.4%

Table 10.20: Difficulties in voting

As Table 10.20 shows, the main difficulties that people experienced with the voting process was that they did not know what candidates were standing in their constituency and that they felt that there was not enough information on the voting cards, sent out before the election. 8.4% listed other aspects as problematic. Some of these also referred to the voting card, with it being suggested that voting times should be put on the voting card and that there was a need for cards to be sent out to voters at least two weeks before an election. Others felt that they

had not enough information on candidates' policies, while others argued that voting was inconvenient and that online voting should be used instead.

Means of Helping People to Vote

Difficulties	Percentage
Greater linkage between politics and local issues	53.9%
Weekend voting	47.5%
Better information from political parties	38.9%
Photos on ballot papers	38.7%
Courses about voting in schools	35.0%
Voter education programmes (community based)	28.7%
Longer polling hours	28.3%
Maps on polling cards	7.7%

Table 10.21: Means of helping people to vote

Survey respondents were asked what they felt the best means of assisting people in the voting process would be. The main means centred about enabling voters to be better able to see the linkages between politics and local issues, with over half the respondents viewing this as a useful means of assisting the voting process. Nearly half the respondents selected weekend voting as a useful means of assisting the voting process, making this the second most popular means selected by survey respondents.

Other means, in addition to those listed in Table 10.21, suggested by the survey respondents included the option of having polling stations located near where people work rather than their homes, the use of door to door voting, Internet voting and the introduction of mobile polling stations. One respondent suggested advertisements on TV to make voting look "cool" to young people, while another suggested that candidates be categorised on the ballot sheet in terms of their political ideology ("Left" or "Right").

There were significant differences between the voters' and politicians' questionnaires in terms of the rankings that they awarded the different suggested measures. A comparison with Table 9.16 shows that politicians were significantly more likely to highlight the procedural measures as uses means of facilitating the voting process, in particular weekend voting (71.1%), longer polling hours (52.6%) and maps on photographs (32.0%). They also attached a greater importance to voter education, with 62.9% selecting community-based voter education programmes and 61.9% selecting courses about voting in schools as useful means. However, they were significantly less likely to claim that voting would be facilitated if political parties took measures to improve their means of communicating with voters. 50.5% felt that voting would be facilitated if the links between politics and the needs of local areas were made more transparent, a smaller proportion than was the case for the voters' questionnaires. This measure was ranked as the sixth most important means of facilitating voting amongst the politician respondents, while voter respondents saw it as the most important measure. The proportion of politician respondents who saw the need for better information from political parties (28.9%) as a useful means was also significantly smaller than the proportion of voter respondents who saw it thus.

10.5 THE MEDIA

Newspapers

89.8% of respondents said that they read a newspaper, with 62.0% reading a national broadsheet newspaper. 70.8% of Laois respondents and 51.5% of Inner City respondents said they read a national broadsheet, with 36.0% of Inner City and 18.6% of Laois respondents reading *The Irish Times* and 60.2% of Laois and 29.4% of Inner City respondents reading the

Irish Independent. There were variations in the South West Inner City survey between the different housing tenures in terms of national broadsheet readership, with, for instance, 11.3% of Corporation tenants, 53.2% of owner-occupiers and 68.2% of private apartment dwellers reading *The Irish Times*. 25.4% of those surveyed said that they read tabloid newspapers, with 29.2% of Laois and 20.9% of Inner City respondents doing so. 21.7% of those surveyed said that they read a local newspaper, with 37.3% of Laois and just 3.0% of Inner City respondents saying that they read a local newspaper.

	1997 GE	1999 LE	1999 BE	2001 N.REF
Read newspaper	78.5%	71.7%	61.8%	60.0%
Did not read newspaper	63.3%	66.7%	47.1%	50.0%
Read national broadsheet	80.3%	74.3%	62.0%	62.1%
Read <i>The Irish Times</i>	77.2%	70.9%	54.5%	69.6%
Read <i>The Irish Independent</i>	82.5%	75.9%	76.7%	64.2%
Read tabloid	74.7%	66.7%	65.2%	44.0%
Read local newspaper	78.1%	78.1%	66.7%	60.9%

Table 10.22: Newspaper readership by the percentage that voted in elections, 1997-2001.
[GE: General Election, LE: Local and European Elections, BE: Dublin South Central By-Election, N.REF: Nice Referendum.]

Table 10.22 shows that readers of newspapers, and especially of national broadsheet and local newspapers, were more likely to vote in elections than respondents who did not read newspapers. There was also a significant association between readership of local newspapers and turnout in local elections. 77.6% of Laois respondents said that they voted in the local elections, but 78.3% of *Leinster Express* and 90.9% of *Nationalist* readers said they voted in these elections. (*The Leinster Express* and *The Nationalist* are the main local newspapers in Co. Laois.) Turnouts for readers of tabloid newspapers tended to be relatively low in comparison to turnouts for the readerships of other types of newspapers, but especially in the case of the 2001 Nice Referendum.

Television News

96.3% of respondents said that they either watched, or listened to, the news on TV or radio daily, while 94.3% said that they watched, or listened to, Irish news broadcasts. There were higher percentages of voters tuning into Irish news broadcasts (94.9% of one-time voters, 96.9% of two-time voters and 94.6% of consistent voters), as opposed to the percentage amongst non-voting respondents (88.4%). With higher percentages of consistent voters reading newspapers and tuning into national news broadcasts, one would hence expect that a key factor here was that this group was better informed on current affairs and Irish politics than consistent non-voters were.

10.6 POLITICAL AWARENESS

Interest in Politics

National politics

29.3% of respondents said that they were very interested in national politics, while 47.1% were fairly interested, 12.6% were not much interested and 10.9% were not interested at all.

Table 10.23 shows a strong association between levels of interest in national politics and turnout propensity for all types of elections, with an almost linear relationship between interest in national politics and turnout propensity. There was a significant variation in turnouts between the fairly or very interested group, on the one hand, and the not much or not at all interested group, on the other.

Interest in Politics	1997 GE	1999 LE	1999 BE	2001 N.REF
Not interested at all	50.0%	34.3%	20.0%	21.9%
Not much interested	56.8%	56.8%	55.6%	48.6%
Fairly interested	79.0%	71.7%	59.6%	58.7%
Very interested	91.9%	88.4%	75.0%	75.6%

Table 10.23: Interest in national politics by percentage that voted.

Local Politics

26.4% of respondents said that they were very interested in local politics, while 40.1% were fairly interested, 18.2% were not much interested and 15.4% were not interested at all, approximating to slightly lower levels of interest than for national politics.

Table 10.24 shows that those respondents, which had the higher levels of interest in local politics, were the more likely to vote. There was approximately 20-30 percent of a difference between the turnouts of those who were very or fairly interested in local politics, on the one hand, and those who were not much or not at all interested, on the other hand.

Interest in Politics	1997 GE	1999 LE	1999 BE	2001 N.REF
Not interested at all	55.6%	33.3%	26.3%	26.7%
Not much interested	60.4%	60.4%	35.7%	56.6%
Fairly interested	84.6%	79.5%	62.2%	61.5%
Very interested	88.3%	85.7%	81.1%	72.7%

Table 10.24: Interest in local politics by percentage that voted.

Understanding of Election Issues

General Elections

56.6% of respondents said that they had a clear understanding of general election issues, while 26.2% more or less understood the issues, 10.0% understood the issues to some extent and 7.2% did not understand the issues at all.

A stronger understanding of general election issues was generally associated with higher levels of voting in elections, as Table 10.25 illustrates. There were considerably higher turnouts amongst those respondents that had the greatest understanding of general election issues.

Understanding of Issues	1997 GE	1999 LE	1999 BE	2001 N.REF
Not at all	50.0%	30.0%	0.0%	25.0%
To some extent	53.6%	60.7%	54.5%	46.4%
More or less	76.7%	68.5%	53.8%	54.8%
Clear understanding	83.5%	78.5%	65.1%	65.8%

Table 10.25: Understanding of general election issues by the percentage that voted.

Local Elections

45.7% of those surveyed said they had a clear understanding of local election issues, while 31.8% more or less understood the issues, 14.2% understood the issues to some extent and 8.2% did not understand the issues at all.

Table 10.26 shows that higher levels of understanding of local election issues, as with general election issues, were generally associated with increased turnout propensity, regardless of what election type was involved.

Understanding of Issues	1997 GE	1999 LE	1999 BE	2001 N.REF
Not at all	52.2%	26.1%	0.0%	34.8%
To some extent	67.5%	57.5%	40.0%	47.5%
More or less	73.0%	68.5%	52.9%	52.8%
Clear understanding	85.9%	83.6%	73.6%	68.8%

Table 10.26: Understanding of local election issues by the percentage that voted.

Referenda

44.4% of respondents claimed to have a clear understanding of referendum issues, as opposed to 20.8% who said they more or less understood the issues, while 21.1% understood the issues to some extent and 13.6% did not understand the issues at all.

There was, thus, a lower level of understanding about referendum issues than there was about local, and especially general, election issues.

Understanding of Issues	1997 GE	1999 LE	1999 BE	2001 N.REF
Not at all	63.2%	52.6%	41.2%	23.7%
To some extent	72.9%	64.4%	53.3%	42.4%
More or less	75.9%	75.9%	38.5%	62.1%
Clear understanding	82.3%	76.6%	67.3%	72.4%

Table 10.27: Understanding of Referendum issues by percentage that voted.

Table 10.27 shows higher levels of voting amongst those with the greatest understanding of referendum issues. There is a relationship between the understanding of referendum issues and turnout propensity and this relationship applies to all the election types. The degree of the turnout difference between groups based on their understanding levels was especially accentuated for the Nice Referendum, with almost 50% of a difference between the turnouts of those with a clear understanding of referendum issues and those with no understanding at all.

Interest levels in politics were similar in both surveys. 77.2% and 67.6% of South West Inner City respondents were very, or fairly, interested in national and local politics respectively, as opposed to 76.3% and 65.6% of Laois respondents. However, Laois respondents had higher levels of understanding of election issues, with 84.4%, 81.3% and 65.0% of respondents

having fairly high levels of understanding of general, local and referendum elections issues, as opposed to 72.1%, 66.2% and 59.6% of South West Inner City respondents.

Candidate recognition

Number recognised	Laois GE	Inner City GE	Laois LE	Inner City LE
None at all	11.7%	33.6%	12.4%	35.0%
One candidate	11.1%	13.1%	8.1%	28.5%
Two candidates	8.6%	26.3%	8.7%	19.0%
Over half candidates	23.5%	5.8%	40.4%	7.3%

Table 10.28: Number of general and local election candidates recognised in study areas.

Respondents were asked if they recognised candidates who had stood in their constituency in the 1999 local elections and candidates who had been confirmed as standing for the 2002 General Election at the time that the questionnaires were carried out. There were, as Table 10.28 shows, much higher levels of candidate recognition in the Laois survey for both general and local election candidates, while over a third of Inner City respondents failed to recognise any of their general or local election candidates.

There was a strong association between candidate recognition and turnout propensity, with a higher level of candidate recognition usually being linked to higher turnout rates. For instance, 83.1% of Laois respondents, who recognised more than half their local election candidates, voted in the 1999 local elections, as opposed to 63.6% of those who recognised no local election candidate, or just one candidate. 79.2% of Inner City respondents, who recognised three or more local election candidates, voted in the local elections, while just 51.7% of those who recognised no local election candidates, or just one candidate, voted in these elections.

More information on voting

44.7% of survey respondents said that they would like more information on voting and the election process, with similar percentages in both the South West Inner City (45.2%) and Laois (44.3%) surveys. Early school leavers had a proportionally higher wish for more information, with 52.7% of those who had left school at 16 years, or earlier, wishing for further information about voting, as opposed to just 38.4% of those who left school at 17 years, or later. The highest levels of interest in further information on voting, in terms of occupational categories, were amongst the unemployed (76.2%), housewives (53.7%) and clerical (46.3%) occupational groupings. The highest levels of interest in further information, in terms of housing tenure in the South West Inner City, came from Dublin Corporation tenants (58.3%), with lower levels of interest amongst owner-occupiers (31.9%) and private apartment dwellers (45.5%).

10.7 CONCLUSIONS

The findings of the questionnaire analysis in this chapter largely reflect the findings of the research literature, as well as those of the Dublin and rural ecological analyses. These findings also offer some interesting contrasts with the views of politicians on the topic of voter turnout, as outlined in the previous chapter.

Voters generally selected more idealistic factors, such as civic duty and wanting to have a say, to explain why they voted in elections, with these being selected by higher proportions of Laois and Inner City Owner Occupier respondents. This contrasted with the politicians'

survey, in which there was a greater stress placed on political factors, such as supporting a political party. A greater stress was placed on family tradition and local candidate factors in the Laois survey, while the Inner City respondents were the more likely to have voted on the basis of protest or support for a political party.

Non-voters generally based their decision not to vote on their sense of discontent with the political system and politicians, although accidental reasons for non-voting, such as being sick or away on the day of polling, were ranked highly in the Laois survey. Such accidental reasons also figured high amongst the reasons for not voting in the 2001 Nice Referendum, while significant proportions of non-voters also said that they did not vote in that election because of their difficulty in comprehending the issues involved and their sense that the referendum was not important. Politician respondents had also highlighted political influences, above other potential factors, in terms of explaining what causes electoral abstentionism. However, they were significantly more likely to see non-voting behaviour as being rooted in apathy, rather than a sense of alienation from, or discontent with, the political system, as was the case in the voters' survey.

Sociological and demographic characteristics of the Inner City and Laois respondents were also associated with turnout behaviour and these generally mirrored the findings of previous research in terms of the associations noted with age, residential mobility and housing tenure. However the associations uncovered between turnout and educational levels were somewhat at variance with the findings of the literature. Educational levels were shown to have little effect on South West Inner City turnouts, while they were inversely related with turnout in the Laois survey. Further investigations showed that these relationship were strongly influenced

by age considerations however, as both the consistent voter and early school leaver groups were generally drawn from the older age categories.

Occupation was another important factor with higher turnouts observed amongst certain occupational categories. Farmers and retired people tended to have the highest turnout rates of all the respondents, while student respondents had the lowest and unemployed and blue collar respondents generally had lower than average turnout rates. However, blue collar and services employees and unemployed people were relatively more likely to turn out to vote in the Laois study, with turnout differentials between white and blue collar respondents being decidedly more pronounced in the Inner City survey.

Political factors, such as interest in, and awareness of, political issues, were also associated with turnout propensity, with higher levels of interest and awareness being generally associated with higher turnout rates. These higher levels of interest were, in part, due to the higher readership of national broadsheet newspapers by habitual voters, relative to lower levels of readership amongst non-voting respondents. Voters were also much more likely than non-voters were to recognise their local and general election candidates. Laois respondents were significantly more likely to understand election issues, while they were more likely to recognise the general, and especially their local, election candidates. Laois people had a greater understanding of election issues, probably because they were more likely to read national broadsheet and local newspapers, and were more likely to recognise their election candidates. The national trend of higher rural turnouts in local and general elections could be related to this.

There was some evidence of election specific turnout rates also, especially amongst certain groups. In the South West Inner City questionnaire, for instance, Dublin Corporation tenants had the lowest turnouts of all the housing tenures for general elections and referenda. However, they had a much higher turnout than private apartment dwellers for the local elections, as well as having the highest level of interest in local politics of all the tenures in the South West Inner City survey.

There were strong similarities between voters and non-voters in their perceptions as to what the most important issues for the 2002 General Election were and as to which were the agencies that would prove most likely to address these issues. Health was seen to be the most important election issue by both groups, followed by crime and drug abuse. Voters were proportionally more likely to see health, crime and the environment as important election issues, while non-voters were more likely to rank housing, unemployment, public transport and the provision of leisure facilities as very important. Non-voters were also more likely to see area-based partnerships, community groups and business people as important in terms of addressing election issues, while voters invested more importance in agencies related to the representative political system, such as TDs, councillors and the Government. As the previous chapter showed, politicians generally placed more stress on the issues and agencies that voters, rather than non-voters, had perceived as being important. This raises the issue of whether politicians are especially responsive to voters' concerns and whether non-voters' concerns are being relatively ignored because they abstain in elections.

In terms of measures to improve turnout rates, voters placed a greater focus on improvements to the manner in which politicians and the political system engages with voters, while there

had been a greater focus on procedural matters in the politicians' survey. This raises the question, in line with Russell et al. (2002), of whether the politicians and authorities are 'missing the boat' by focusing on changes to electoral procedures in order to improve turnout rates. The general sense from the voters' questionnaire is the main changes should focus on the political system itself and the manner in which it engages with communities, particularly with socially deprived communities.

CHAPTER 11

INTERVIEWS

11.1 INTRODUCTION

During the course of the research, a number of local politicians and community development personnel were interviewed as regards their opinions on the causes of low turnout in their local area, the implications of such low turnout and suggested means for increasing these electoral participation rates in the future. The insights from this research are presented in this chapter. Initially, there will be a focus in Sections 11.2-11.6 on what the interviewees perceived as the main causes of low turnouts in an area, with an especial focus on the linkages between social deprivation factors and such low turnouts. The next section will then outline their views regarding the likely implications of turnout variations in a constituency, with a stress on their thoughts as to the potential impacts for an area, political or otherwise, of it having very low turnouts. The final section will then analyse the interviewees' opinions as to what they perceive as being the key means of encouraging people in such low turnout areas to vote, so as to increase the turnout rate in such areas.

11.2 SOCIAL DEPRIVATION AND LOW TURNOUT

A range of different concerns emerged in the range of interviews carried out with the different political and community development figures in the area. A central theme that emerged in these interviews was that social deprivation was seen as a strong influence on turnout variation, especially in terms of a linkage with low turnout. As one interviewee argued,

"Unless there's some special circumstances – the poorer you are, the less likely you are to

vote". In a similar vein it was argued that one would find lower voter turnouts in areas "where you have very low educational attainment, lots of overcrowding, low incomes".

"You have to look at it this way. Currently 75% of prisoners in Mountjoy come from 5 identifiable areas of Dublin. The participation rate in 3rd Level education – and I'm not talking about necessarily right up to degree – but participating in 3rd Level education is as low as 5% in parts of the inner city. What human being would feel identified with a system of government when that goes on? After that, the fact that many of these people lived in, and some still live in, very poor housing conditions."

There was less of a stress placed on the linkage between social deprivation and low turnout by interviewees from rural areas, with marginalisation being generally seen as a cause of low turnout, but not as important a cause as other factors, such as low turnouts among young voters. Indeed, in rural areas, some observers suggested that local election turnouts might be higher amongst the working classes, as opposed to the professional classes. The rural working class were seen as likely to "*relate more to issues which the local authorities deliver to them, for example local authority housing, local authority housing loans, shared ownership issues*".

While professional voters were seen as "*deeply interested in the political process*", it was felt that they were "*inclined to be more interested in national politics than in local politics*" because they did not have "*the same access or the same contact with the services of local authorities*". At a wider scale it was noted that rurally socially excluded counties like Leitrim and Sligo, which have some of the highest turnouts in Ireland, "*have an affinity with farming interests – that sort of cuts across the class divide*".

A number of reasons as to why people in socially deprived areas were less likely to vote were put forward in a number of the interviews. A number of respondents felt that people from socially and economically deprived areas tended not to vote because they did not see any

benefit in it. They looked on politicians as having nothing to offer to them, perceiving that they would make promises that they would subsequently fail to deliver on, while it was also felt that politicians simply did not care about such areas. It was noted that poor people did go to politicians at clinics to look for favours, but did not vote in return or else conceive of their politicians as having a role to play in the regeneration of their communities.

"I genuinely believe people don't feel that politics means anything to them and yet, while saying that, they are the people who are down at my clinics every weekend."

The general sense of apathy in these areas, as a community worker from Laois noted, was mirrored in the general sense that the response of people in these areas to most forms of intervention, political or otherwise, was very low. In a similar vein, one local TD noted that people in council housing estates felt that the level of involvement by the political system in their way of life was minimal and they saw the "*same things going to the same people all of the time*". He felt that politicians would have a job of work to get people in these estates involved in the political system. In line with this, most of the council housing estates had no county councillor resident in their area and – as with other areas that have no local public representatives – they lacked sufficient political clout as a result. These problems, in addition to growing sense of remoteness from local and statutory agencies arising from frustrations over poor estate management, fed into a situation in which people in these areas had a low esteem in politicians. This resulted in these areas having low voter turnout levels at election time, which had the effect of creating a vicious circle of low turnout, as politicians would then choose to ignore these areas as there were no electoral benefits in helping them out – there were "*no votes in it*". Politicians were seen as paying less attention to socially marginalised

areas than they did to high turnout areas, as “*politicians don't like working in deprived and challenging communities*”, which had the effect of pushing down turnouts in these areas.

There a sense of “*an overwhelming feeling of disenfranchisement*” in many areas, especially in relation to local government elections, and many felt that elected representatives could do little to address the key issues in those areas. “*Does it make any difference whoever you elect, I think is the overwhelming feeling that people had*”. This sense of disenfranchisement went more deeply in the poorer areas: “*It's not just being disenfranchised in the usual sense, they just don't have a sense that they can actually get things done*”. There was a sense that people in socially deprived areas were becoming alienated because the political structures was not meeting their needs, as well as it being felt that politicians did not understand the problems of people in the area. As one person argued, “*if you feel that the system's not there for you then you're not going to take much interest in the system*”. While the middle classes had “*a vested interest in politicians, the political process, because they see it as furthering their own life style, improving schools and roads*”, socially deprived communities did not “*have a sense that they can actually get things done*”. Political corruption was seen to have further alienated the socially deprived communities, having “*created a corrosive mentality that politics is not for them*”.

The sense of alienation in these areas was furthered exacerbated by a feeling that they had failed to benefit from the “Celtic Tiger” economy, while they Government, in turn, was “*cutting back on services all the time*”, and hence were less likely to vote, arising from such a context.

Others argued that more marginalised people and communities were less equipped to engage in the electoral process because of economic reasons or other problems, such as drug addiction, which meant that they had too many pressures to deal with to allow them to focus on political issues. As one person put it, "*poor people have far more on their plate to contend with than well-off middle class people*", which was enlarged on by other interviewees:

"There's a lot of single parents as well, you know who would have other problems. They might have to be working during the day and then at night they'd have to mind the child."

"Their life just revolves around sustaining their body and soul and rearing their kids; they've got so many pressures on them that it's difficult for them to focus in on political issues."

The social welfare system was also seen as helping to maintain a sense of political exclusion in socially deprived areas; "*There's something about being inculcured into expecting something to be handed to you and thinking that you don't count and so in your own mind you opt out*".

The sense of alienation from the political system that people in poor communities experienced was looked on as being further exacerbated by the fact that they were not clued in to current political issues. Research in the South Inner City of Dublin, a number of interviewees noted, showed that there were very few *Irish Times* and *Irish Independents* sold in this area, while people generally did not listen to current affairs programmes on RTE Radio 1. This contrasted with people in the more middle class parts of their Dáil constituencies (Dublin South Central and Dublin South East), who were generally "*more informed*". In these parts of the city, as

opposed to the socially deprived areas, it was noted that there were also “*more ‘stakeholders’ – in other words they’ll own their own houses and they’d have more at risk*”.

Travellers were identified as a low turnout group by a number of interviewee, who noted that this group would probably not be registered to vote and would not be likely to vote anyway. It was noted that they have no concept of governance and hence would not see any direct impacts as ensuing from voting.

Educational Disadvantage

Educational disadvantage was one indicator of social deprivation that emerged as a strong indicator of low turnout in a number of interviews. High levels of illiteracy in certain areas – in particular local authority housing estates and flat complexes – was seen as a factor that was particularly associated with low turnouts, especially as many felt that the voting system was very intimidating for people with low levels of education.

“In this area and a lot of working class areas – the unemployed areas or the formerly unemployed areas – there is a huge illiteracy rate, a lot of people functionally illiterate. They might be able to read and write to a degree, but forms, officialdom and all that turn them off. Just there is that fear there. How do you overcome that?”

“I think a lot of people don’t understand how to vote, they really don’t. Like a lot of the younger ones, they don’t know what goes on at a polling station, how they’re going to vote, who they’re going to vote for ... In general terms you have to read up on stuff, but they don’t ... The younger ones just don’t know how to vote and they don’t know what way to vote. And I know in the case of one young one she gave everybody a number 1.”

One interviewee noted that a scheme to get more people out to vote in one estate in their area had found that a number of functionally illiterate people in the estate did not know how to vote and were intimidated by the polls and the process of voting. These people did not want to

be embarrassed because they did not know what goes on in polling booths and generally opted to remain as habitual non-voters as a result. The functionally illiterate were also, it was noted, going to have problems with the registration process, while they also tended to have much lower levels of interest in political matters.

There appeared to be evidence that people with lower educational standards might be the more likely to vote in local elections in rural areas. One rural politician argued that the "*lower your education the more access you make of the services of local authorities; health boards, county councils, urban councils and whatever*". People with lower educational levels were more reliant on local authority services than people with higher levels of education were and so had a greater motivation to vote in local elections. This tied in with the views of another interviewee who argued that "*people who look to the political system to solve their problems (were) more likely to vote than those who don't have a care in the world*".

11.3 COMPOSITIONAL AND SOCIETAL INFLUENCES

Age and low youth turnout

Many interviewees spoke of there being a strong association between age and turnout. While one politician argued that older people from the more established and affluent areas tended to be the most likely to vote in elections, another interviewee argued that the age dimension actually "*runs across the class distinctions*" in terms of its influence on turnout rates.

Many of the interviewees noted that, in general, young people did not seem to be interested in turning out to vote, with a number of factors being related to such low turnouts. One was

political corruption. It was noted that there was a tendency amongst the young to see all politicians as corrupt, even though this was not the case.

"They say, "Why should I bother? They're all the same. They're all crooks". And they're convinced they're all crooks. Now whether they're really convinced they're all crooks or they're just too bloody lazy, I don't know which. But it's an easy cop-out to say that they're all tarred with the same brush and they're all crooks. That's a cop-out, kind of they don't have to make the effort to go down to a polling station and vote. By and large politicians don't serve us well, but I wouldn't say they are crooks."

Cynicism was seen as another factor feeding into low youth turnout rates, with such cynicism seen to have its roots in the present educational system.

It was also noted that there were certain procedural barriers that prevented young people, in particular, from engaging in the electoral process. One such barrier related to electoral registration, with some politicians observing – to their surprise - that a lot of young people did not really know about being registered to vote. As one politician noted, "*unless their parents did it for them, younger people weren't registered to vote*". It was also noted that "*voting opportunity was denied*" young people, who were from rural areas but now working or studying in Dublin or elsewhere, because most of them were registered to vote at home and hence unable to vote, especially if elections were held on weekdays.

Especially in a "Celtic Tiger" economy, where there were no hard core political issues to focus on, young people were generally uninterested in politics and felt that voting was not for them. There was even a strong sense of apathy towards voting amongst young voters in a high turnout constituency, such as Cork North West. A number of reasons were offered for the low youth turnouts in Cork North West. First, political acts were not transparent on the ground,

given that Cork North West has very little political clout, especially in comparison with neighbouring constituencies, such as Kerry South, that strong and influential political figures. This meant that the area received less funding than the more powerful constituencies, which fed into a sense in the area that "*rural voices are not being heard*". It was also felt that older members of political and community-based bodies were resistant to bringing in younger people.

New Residents and Private Apartments

Very large transitory populations have become associated with a number of urban areas, such as the Dublin Inner City and a number of suburban housing areas, in recent years. Many observers point to these residentially mobile populations being characterised by low turnout rates, such as the residents of the new apartment blocks that developed in the inner city over the past decade. These apartment dwellers generally tend to be younger than average and to have very little engagement with the local community in which their apartment blocks were located. Some inner city dwellers spoke of these apartment blocks as not being part of the inner community, describing them as being "*built with their back towards the local community*" as if "*they are going to become communities on their own*".

"It is a phenomenon this apartment effort. They're like oases in an area. You've got people locked in. they don't form part of the community. They're usually a couple. They're not married and they're not having children. Maybe they'll move out to the suburb and have children at a later stage in their life. But at this point of time they're young people who are not interested in what happens outside or otherwise."

"If communities living in private apartment blocks haven't as yet identified with their communities – and the arguments often made by the indigenous community is that these apartment block dwellers don't want to know them – until such time that private rented market set-ups and people living in them partake as real citizens in their own

community, then they won't be provoked into voting, at local government elections particularly".

In general, apartment dwellers did not relate to issues that were important to the indigenous local community, while a local candidate from an adjacent flat complex would not “necessarily relate to the apartment block that is backed up against it”. The low levels of engagement amongst the apartment dwelling population meant that they were not seen as a group that would have a large impact on the result of future elections and on political issues in the area. It was also difficult to mobilise people living in these “gated” apartments to vote in elections, as it was practically impossible to canvass these apartments, or to drop registration forms and election leaflets into them

“It’s impossible to get to the apartment blocks at all, so there’s a huge swathe of young people who are living in apartment blocks who are being disenfranchised because nobody can get to them ... These places are like Fort Knox, if you don’t know the code you can’t get in. So they don’t get canvassed by people and, as far as I’m aware, unless the caretaker is really good and makes sure that the Dublin Corporation person gets in around, then they’re not going to get the registration form, so they don’t turn out because of that.”

Most people living in the apartments were working during the day and might not be back until late in the evening, which often meant that they would not be back in time to vote if elections were held on weekdays.

The result of high levels of non-voting in apartment blocks meant that overall turnouts in areas, such as the Dublin Inner City, could be reduced by a significant number of percentage points, given the large populations living in these complexes. The turnout rate in a number of these areas, which were often socially deprived areas, would be considerably lower as a result

than would have been the case if the turnout of the indigenous community was considered. This lead to false impressions being developed about exceptionally low turnouts and significant declines in participation amongst working class populations.

This phenomenon was not just restricted to Dublin. One TD in Laois noted that there was a new commuter population moving into the area, especially into the new housing estates in the larger provincial towns, and that these tended not to vote, especially in local elections. This was largely for the same reasons as the low turnouts amongst the inner city private apartment population.

Commuting

One interviewee suggested that new working practices, which involved increasing levels of commuting, could be another factor accounting for low and declining turnout rates. Large numbers of people were travelling distances of over 100km daily from towns in provincial Leinster to go to the Greater Dublin region to work. Even a relatively small town such as Mountmellick had upwards of a hundred residents in the town travelling to work in Dublin and other towns like Naas and Newbridge daily. If elections were held on weekdays, then these commuters might have little or no time to vote, given the late hours at which people might be returning home from work. The increased levels of commuting were also impacting on turnouts in the more suburban parts of Dublin, as noted by one interviewee:

"There are also added difficulties for those living in the suburbs and driving into work in the City Centre; most of these will leave the house at 7.30am and not return home until around 7.30pm. Thus their window of opportunity to vote is 1-1½ hours, which also has to be filled with other activities, and hence their opportunity to vote is much more limited."

Celtic Tiger Economy

A number of interviewees argued the improving economic conditions, associated with the “Celtic Tiger” economy, meant that people felt less of a need for government and had less interest in politics as a result.

“One of the extraordinary things is when people feel that things are going well, they sort of sometimes think that it doesn’t matter who is in government. Whereas if there is a problem, they’ll go out to turf out the government.”

It was also argued that the present economic climate meant “people having busier lifestyles these days than they were in the past” and so had less free time to devote to political affairs or even voting. One observer noted that many of the “nouveau riche”, who had emerged in the “Celtic Tiger” economy, were beginning to build high walls with electronic gates about their properties, and had become “so arrogantly independent because of their wealth, they think democracy is not even important to them”.

Urban-Rural Turnout Variations

One interviewee linked the lower turnout rates in Dublin, relative to the rest of the country, to the fact that Dublin had only 140 councillors, spread over a heavily populated area, thus amounting to a small number of councillors per population in the area. By contrast, the higher ratio of councillors to voters in rural areas meant that politicians tended to be far closer to the people. It was noted that there were over fifty councillors and thirty five town commissioners in the Laois-Offaly constituency alone, whereas there might be fewer than ten councillors in a similarly sized Dáil constituency in Dublin. Hence, there tended to be much more local

political activity in rural areas, with a far greater connection between the electorate and the political system, with people usually having “*direct, immediate access to a politician*”. The interviewee observed that the same degree of local representation for the Dublin area – say forty councillors per Dáil constituency – would mean that you would practically have a councillor on every street in Dublin.

Political patterns of voting patterns were seen to still exist in rural areas. This meant that political parties in these areas were in a much better position to get people to register, in the first place, and then turn out to vote, than they were in more urban settings, such as Dublin. Rural areas were also seen as being more community oriented and as having a much higher dependency on agriculture in economic terms, which were significant given the strong associations observed between voting and group membership, on the one hand, and farming, on the other. Urban areas, by contrast, tended to be more “*anonymous*”. Furthermore, a large number of jobs in rural areas, such as Co. Laois, were state jobs, with a perception existing that such jobs would tend to be won through the assistance of local elected representatives.

Geographical peripherality

As well as the association of low turnout with socially and economically marginal areas, low turnouts were also associated with areas that were peripheral, in geographical terms, to other parts of their constituencies. One such area, identified in one of the interviews, was Graiguecullen in the extreme south-eastern corner of Co. Laois. Graiguecullen forms the western environs of Carlow town, but is located inside the Laois county borders. Turnouts were low in Graiguecullen, relative to the rest of Laois and this was seen to result from the fact that no one cared about the area because it was right on the periphery of the county. This

sense of peripherality was further exacerbated by confusion about election boundaries. In local elections some people in the area were voting in the Carlow Urban District constituency, hence voting in Co. Carlow, while others in the area voted in the Luggacurren electoral area and were hence voting for Laois-based candidates. Further complicating the issue, the polling station for the area has changed a lot in recent times, moving from Killeshin to Graiguecullen National School to St. Fiac's Hall. Moreover, there is a lot of new housing in the area, with a further 2,000 new housing units planned for Graiguecullen, which would be expected to make for even lower turnouts there in future elections.

Cultural factors

One politician in Dublin argued that low turnout in parts of their area – especially the more deprived areas – were largely a cultural, arguing that voter turnout was "*not a matter of geography, but rather is a matter of culture*". It was contended that young people living in these areas would not vote because of the cultural environment they were brought up in; one in which apathy and a sense that "*politicians are all the same*" was prevalent. Children in such areas were not being educated about the political system in schools and were not getting this from their homes either. The interviewee argued that problems with low turnouts in such areas could only be changed slowly, as a result.

Weather

Weather, as one rural politician noted, can be another factor that has an influence on turnout rates in an area – "*you can get relatively low turnouts in farming areas during the summer when the evenings are good*".

11.4 POLITICAL INFLUENCES ON TURNOUT

Change in Political Culture

A number of interviewees noted that the tradition of families and people consistently supporting a political party was gone and this decline in partisanship levels had resulted in decline in political interest and also in turnout levels. One interviewee also noted that there had been a tradition that all family members would vote together and the younger family members would maintain this voting habit in their later adult life. This was a tradition that had developed soon after the Civil War, a period in which “*there were still people who swore by De Valera, others who swore by Collins*”. People in this period would have constantly voted Fianna Fáil or Fine Gael and handed that tradition down to their kids, but now, the interviewee noted, the voting tradition appears to be no longer handed down.

Fewer people were involved in politics and canvassing than in the past, with less effort being made to get people to the polling stations, as a result; “*Years ago there used to be loads of cars – that still happens but not to the same extent.*” The tradition of holding public meetings at election time had also largely disappeared. In the past, as well as canvassing door to door, politicians would have held public meetings.

“In parts of the area, there would be the hustings, as they called it, people going on the backs of lorries. And as a kid you’d kind of at least be aware there was an election coming up, you’d see the activity around the place, and you’d go up and listen”.

This had created a sense of occasion about the holding of elections, as well as informing people as to what candidates were standing in their area. This tradition was now gone, which meant that people have to make the effort to read newspapers or look at television to know about what is happening politically. People, especially in working class areas, were usually not sufficiently interested to go to this amount of effort and as a result were not sufficiently politically informed to be motivated to vote.

Election Specific Turnouts

Turnouts in certain elections tended to be even lower than in other election types, due to the nature of these electoral contests and the way in which voters in different areas perceived them. General election turnouts were seen as being higher than other types of elections, which were not seen as being important by a number of people. Local and general elections had a competition factor that was not present in other types of elections, namely referenda, whereas "*big issues in the local area*" could have a particular influence on turnouts in local elections. Against that, a lack of interest in and knowledge about local government issues had the effect of pushing down local electoral turnouts, as one observer noted:

"What is it that my councillors do? I don't think most people could answer that question. I think, without doubt, most of them couldn't tell you who their councillors were."

By-elections and referenda were seen as being even less relevant than local elections to the lives of working class voters.

"Local elections, well you're looking at local candidates, local issues. The more distant it becomes from people the less inclined they are going to vote. So therefore you have

the by-election, the candidates weren't from a block of flats, they weren't necessarily from – in fact there was none of them – from the area. And then you have the next level, (referenda), which is more abstract again because it is not a personality".

Higher levels of interest in local elections, relative to general elections, were observed amongst voters in a number of local authority flat complexes. As one candidate noted, "*local conditions and local candidates were deemed to be of importance to the people living in the complexes*", while they did not relate to "*the national political scene to the same extent as they would to a local candidate, local issues*". One politician felt that they were "*tragically barking up the wrong tree*", given that "*there was no power at local government level*" and that there was a far greater concentration of power at the national level.

One interviewee argued that the low turnouts in the 1999 local elections had resulted from the poor way in which these elections had been advertised, claiming that it was almost as if "*the government deliberately did not want people to vote*". The result of this had been that a large proportion of voters had not been aware that the elections were being held; "*I remember at the start of the campaign when I was knocking on people's doors and they said "what election?"*"

Local candidates and issues

In a number of areas, but particularly the more rural areas, local election turnouts were strongly influenced by local issues and local personalities. Local issues, such as to do with roads and potholes, as well as the fact that a voter might know one, or more, of their candidates, were key means of getting people to the polls on election day. If a local issue was not involved, or if voters did not know any of the candidates, the likelihood was that people

would not think that it was important to vote. It was also found that people, who normally would vote for the same party at every general election, might choose not to vote at a local election, or might change their vote to support a local candidate who was running for another party.

"I think in a local election, while if you don't know your local candidate you're not going to go out and vote for him, whereas in a general election you might turn out to vote for one the parties".

Electoral Boundaries

Some observers related the declining turnouts in the Dublin region to constantly changing electoral boundaries, especially in areas such as the inner city, with one interviewee referring to an "*ongoing ... never-ending cascade of changes*". Such changes were seen to cause confusion amongst voters and hence offered a significant disincentive to vote, as some voters did not know who their election candidates were and were not able to identify with their constituencies.

"It's bad when people don't know who their TD is and you find that quite a lot there. It's easy for me, as I'm involved in politics, to know. But for the ordinary punter, that doesn't help. Usually boundaries are made by rivers or railway lines or canals or something like that, but it's very hard to work that one out!"

Mismatches between local and general election boundaries also added to this sense of confusion;

"In 1991 I actually at a local level represented parts of three Dáil constituencies, which was incredibly confusing. And in fact I think that areas that lie along those boundaries suffer paradoxically from a lack of representation and from confusion."

Certain parts of the inner city were especially prone to problems with changing election boundaries, such as the Oliver Bond area and the Ushers A and Ushers F electoral divisions in the South Inner City. One area that was especially effected in this regard was the Mary Aikenhead House flat complex “*where, certainly for a long time, three constituencies, Dublin Central, Dublin South Central and Dublin South East, collided*”. The nearby Kilmainham area, encompassing the Ushers A and Ushers F electoral divisions, was likened to “*Belgium in European history*” due to the sheer volume of boundary changes that had impacted on the area in recent elections, with these changes seen to have negatively impacted on turnouts in the areas.

“It’s a terrible area for mucking around there, you know, being a boundary area...this Kilmainham area here...yes, they definitely would be a reason for a fall off of votes.”

The most recent electoral boundary changes in the area, involving a move from Dublin Central to Dublin South Central, meant that most of the candidates running in 2002 were generally new to the area, leading one interviewee to doubt whether they were “*going to pull out a vote in the area*”.

“I don’t see an improvement in the turnout in the next general election, I see it going down. And also the extra apartments in the area – and the tribunals and all that – definitely there’ll be a decline in voting in the area ... I’d say that a lot of the army personnel have moved out of the barracks there too.”

Confusion about electoral boundaries was naturally greatest along the boundaries themselves, in places such as the Clanbrassil Street and Patrick Street areas. Interviewees noted a number of instances in which people from such areas arrived at the polling station on election day to

find that the people standing in their area was different to whom they had been expecting. It was also noted that boundary revisions had involved a division of communities in these areas.

"Sometimes what have now become boundaries were a unifying force traditionally, such as streets. Clanbrassil Street was a place where there was commercial life, social life, and community life. It's now much more of a traffic artery and it now has a Dáil constituency boundary running down the middle of it. So that's more of a radical change in what a particular space or area meant to people and means to people now. The gathering place for community life has now become a boundary and that worries me".

With a continuous rate of boundary changes people become unsure as to exactly who their TDs are, to the extent that “chances were that 50% of the electorate would not know who the TDs for their area would be unless you had particularly reactive candidates”. The only solution, it was argued, was for the politicians involved to get out and work their new constituency area.

The Clondalkin area, prior to the 2002 General Election, had been split between two constituencies, Dublin South West and Dublin West and had been generally looked on as the periphery of both constituencies. The fact that, historically, the area had been perceived as being on the edge of other constituencies meant that it was not seen as core to electoral success, and was thus “left out of the loop” and looked on as an area with “not a strong enough voice”. Changing electoral boundaries has always effected the marginalised North Clondalkin area, as one local community worker noted – “it was always a sort of an add-on to another greater constituency”. Indeed, the 1998 boundary revisions has meant that the Quarryvale and Greenfort areas have been cut off from the rest of North Clondalkin, a fact that a lot of people in these areas were very unhappy about. It was felt that this was crazy as,

resulting from this, the area was now a very small part of a “Blanchardstown / Castleknock constituency”, which the new Dublin West in effect was.

Consensus Politics

The present consensus style of politics was seen as unhelpful in terms of motivating people to vote, as many voters did not see any differences between the main parties;

“A lot of politics has drifted very much to the centre. And I think in that scenario you have apathy centring around the fact that it makes no difference if you go out and vote”.

A number of politicians saw this as regrettable, with one arguing that *“politics is supposed to be about the dynamic competition between political parties who have got political philosophies and political programmes that are diverse”*. The main parties were *“not seen as parties that are proposing a radical alternative that would incite the marginalised communities out to vote”*, a fact that left such communities in a *“no win situation”*. As one interviewee argued:

“It's hard to educate them as to the power of their vote when in the main the candidates they're going to have to choose between won't be necessarily proposing policies that will be so fundamentally different that they will impact sufficiently on their lives”.

A rural politician argued that a decade of coalition governments had resulted in a *“sameness”* about the main political parties, given that all of the main parties had been in government with one or more of the other parties over the previous ten years. Moreover, the big issues in the current Irish political scene were no longer being decided by the results of elections, as

politicians were now sharing responsibility for Government with the “National Partners”. This has resulted in a “*social consensus*” and the electorate feels that their vote does not count.

Political Corruption

Anger over political corruption, especially in the wake of recent revelations from the Tribunals, were a significant factor in encouraging non-voting behaviour, which in turn, it was felt, was favouring the more conservative parties.

“I think corruption has created a corrosive mentality that politics is not for them, which tragically means the less provoked into partaking they are, the more successful will be their ‘political enemies’ or those of the conservative sources, who won’t ever address the issues that are in the forefront of their minds in the marginalised communities.”

A number of politicians observed that political corruption was increasingly becoming an issue on the doorsteps while they were canvassing.

“What I found was that people have become disaffected with politics in general: ‘you’re all the same’, ‘a shower of wasters’, ‘I’m never voting again’...”

Lack of Local Working Class Dáil Deputy

The lack of a local, working class, Dáil deputy, “*who was from the area and of the area*”, was seen as a factor that helped account for low turnouts in areas such as the South West Inner City and North Clondalkin. The need of a “*Tony Gregory*” type candidate for these areas was stressed;

“I reckon if you had two Tony Gregory’s in this side of the city that we would be an awful lot better off. They can say what they like, but on the north-side of the city I think they’re about five years ahead of us both in their political awareness, their community

awareness and the way they have got into trying to work the system. And I think that's down to people like Gregory."

It was argued that it would be much easier to mobilise people in these areas to vote, if you had a local person with a good track record contesting elections. If not, then people in such areas would feel that their concerns were not being addressed by the election candidates and hence be less likely to turn out to vote on polling day.

"I suppose people feel that the politicians, when elected, don't represent their interests ...after generations of people experiencing this, I suppose, the generations of not having your expectations met has brought about this situation."

11.5 ELECTION PROCEDURE

Polling Stations

One politician noted that there had never had been an election in which people were not complaining either about the distance to the polling station. It was felt that the tendency to centralise polling stations was increasing the distances to the stations, which was leading to further decreases in turnout rates, especially amongst the more apathetic members of the electorate.

"There has been a trend to centralise polling stations, which makes more of an obstacle. If people aren't too bothered then they're not going to go out of their way but the closer it is to them, the more accessible it is to them, the more likely they're going to vote."

The moving of polling stations in rural areas meant that people living in areas where their polling station had been closed were less likely to vote as a result of this. In certain areas,

because of the way in which polling district boundaries were drawn, people had to travel distances to vote, even though the station for a neighbouring polling district was located nearby.

"People in James Street have to go down to Carman's Hall to vote and there's a polling booth beside them. There's a polling booth in Basin Lane convent, which covers this area here ... and anyone actually living in Basin Lane would actually have to walk down to Carman's Hall ... and they're beside two polling booths!"

One politician, who was based in suburban Dublin, argued that the poor signposting of polling stations in certain parts of his constituency had an adverse effect on voter turnout. This tended to occur to a greater degree where constituency revisions were involved, as such revisions usually involved changes in the locations of polling stations. The interviewee argued that problems concerning polling stations had a disproportionate effect on areas, depending on their socio-economic and demographic characteristics. Older, more settled, areas were not going to be overtly effected by the poor signposting of polling stations, unlike new housing areas in the suburbs.

Electoral Register

The accuracy of the electoral register was seen to influence the accuracy of turnout statistics in an area. As one politician noted, "*your register is drawn up at a certain time of the year and obviously the further the election is from that time, the less accurate the register is*". Problems with the electoral register were greatest in areas with high levels of population mobility, such as new housing estates, flat complexes or apartment buildings. People living in these areas were often not on the electoral register. Other, who might have moved out of that area some years previously, might still be on the register, by contrast.

"I'd say part of the problem is that the registers are probably not as up to date as they are in other parts because there might be a more transient population, high turnover, a lot of flat complexes in the inner city ... They may not be as quick to register when they are eighteen, and you'll find people moving address quite a lot".

Registration problems could involve serious repercussions for the overall turnout in certain parts of Dublin, such as the inner city or "starter home" estates in the Dublin suburbs, given the large populations resident in these new housing units. As one inner city resident noted; "*in this area, because there's a huge number of apartments and a lot more going to be built – if those apartment blocks don't come out and vote, all of a sudden you could have 5 or 10 per cent drop in turnouts*". A similar situation was noted for the south Lucan area.

"In Lucan South there is a lot of rented housing so the people on the register mightn't be the people living in the house, which will obviously skew the turnout figures anyway.

It was further noted that a number of people in socially deprived areas were not registered to vote because of their social welfare situation, including people who were living in flats or houses, but who should not have been there according to the official records.

"They fear that if they register, their partner will lose her 'book' or whatever else, because they're living illegally, from a Corporation point of view or from a social welfare point of view, with their partners. Those people are excluded. They don't know what way to come around that."

11.6 MOBILISING VOTERS

Political Parties

Political parties were seen as a key mechanism for drawing voters to the polls. A number of interviewees felt the onus was on the public representatives themselves to get the people out to vote. This was expressed by one figure in the Fianna Fáil party who argued that "*it is up to Fianna Fáil to ensure we get the turnout that is necessary for us*".

Campaigning was seen as an important means of drawing people out to the polls. Turnouts often proved to higher than expected in areas in which activists had put a lot of effort into organising the canvass. One canvasser in the Oliver Bond area in the South West Inner City, which had been characterised by a higher than predicted local election turnout, stressed the importance of this means of mobilising voters. The need to follow up to ensure that those who promised you a vote did so on polling day was stressed; "*if people promise you a vote, you need to go down and collect them and bring them to vote*".

"What we did, when we did the door-to-door we just took note of who gave a definite "yes" and then just went back and checked on the day did they go down to vote. And if they didn't then we brought them down. And I know the people out canvassing for another candidate did exactly the same as us."

A Fianna Fáil councillor in the Mountmellick electoral area, in Co. Laois, argued that voter turnout had helped the party to win three of the four seats there. The party had felt that they would succeed in doing do if they "*could get the Fianna Fáil vote out*". Such a campaign, he noted, depended on an active organisation that knew exactly who to get out. He argued that in election time it is not policies that will win you seats but rather organisation. There had been a very high turnout in Mountmellick because there was a very strong Fianna Fáil organisation

in the town. He observed that, on the day of the election, Fianna Fáil activists were going around the housing estates in Mountmellick, asking if people had voted and offering transport to the polling station, if required. Mountmellick was also a very "*political town*", which had been represented by a local TD for the previous fifty years.

It was noted that turnout levels tended to increase in working class housing areas when people representing non-establishment parties, such as Sinn Féin, were involved and actively canvassing these areas. Such candidates could point out the deficiencies in the system and promise radical solutions to solve these and the involvement of such candidates created the impression that there was now a reason to vote amongst the usually non-interested electorate of local authority housing estates. In Dublin South West one interviewee observed that Sinn Féin mobilisation efforts had the effect of increasing turnouts in the more marginalised areas in the constituency. This was the role that the Workers Party had played in the elections of the 1980s. It was noticeable that there were quite low voter turnouts in Brookfield and Fettercairn in recent elections, but that there was an improved turnout in the Killinarden area and this was due to the Sinn Féin presence there.

Local Candidates

As one rural politician noted, it is a "*natural rule of thumb*" that if an area has a local candidate, then there will be a high degree of local interest in the election in order to vote for that local candidate or even, in some cases, to vote against them.

"What happens in local elections is turnouts are high in areas where there is a candidate. Local elections are very candidate orientated, rather than party orientated, you know, to a large extent. So where you have a candidate sitting, or especially where

you have an outgoing candidate seeking re-election, the area tend to want to keep what they have, or in certain circumstances obtain the presence of a local government representative. So turnouts tend to be around candidates."

One politician from the Borris in Ossory electoral area in Co. Laois noted that this had been quite strikingly underlined by the turnouts in the 1999 local elections. On the one hand, voter turnout in the town of Abbeyleix had actually been higher than the turnouts in the preceding general election, arising from the fact that two candidates from the town were contesting the local elections. Moreover, there had been no councillor based in Abbeyleix between 1991 and 1999 and the townspeople had felt ignored during this eight years and believed that it was now time to change things. The town of Durrow, by contrast, had a sitting councillor prior to the 1999 local elections, but as he decided to take early retirement rather than contest the elections this meant that no candidate from the Durrow area was running in the elections. This probably accounted for the very low voter turnout in Durrow in those elections.

Clinics

One politician noted that the way in TDs learnt about what were the real issues and problems facing people in their constituencies was by "*being on the ground*". Clinics were seen to be important in this regard, although, in themselves, they were not perceived as being important in terms of earning politicians any extra votes, given that there was a high failure rate linked to whatever political interventions emerged from clinics anyway.

One rural politician claimed that clinics were "*gone*" and that the telephone had largely replaced the clinic, leaving clinics as just a "*public relations exercise where you get one or two people coming to them and sometimes none*". One inner city based politician, by

contrast, argued that clinics could have a role in pushing up turnout rates both in their area and other such low turnout areas.

"In the short term, if you have a popular person who has clinics in the area and works it hard in the old fashioned way, that certainly would bring out an improvement."

Issues

Issues had an important role in encouraging people to vote in election and also in pushing up turnouts in specific communities, which were dealing with issues that were very important and unusual to that area. Where a community was facing an important issue, this often had the effect of increasing electoral participation rates in that area, especially for local elections. This proved to be the case in the 1999 local elections, in which there were significant differences between the turnouts in the traditional communities of Lucan village and Clondalkin village. Turnouts in Lucan were significantly higher than in Clondalkin because the Lucan community was dealing with specific issues, such as anger over corruption in the planning process and the manner in which that had impacted on the local community.

Politicised communities

Areas with specifically politicised cultures were seen to be more likely to turn out to vote, while the importance of a vibrant community sector was also linked to this. The higher local election turnouts in parts of the West Tallaght area, especially Jobstown, relative to those in North Clondalkin in 1999 were seen to be a result of the more politicised and vibrant communities in the Jobstown area.

"Take North Clondalkin and West Tallaght; although these areas are quite similar with most of their residents being originally from the Inner City, the two areas operate in different ways. West Tallaght has a vibrant community sector, but Clondalkin doesn't, even though both areas are quite similar and have had similar levels of resources and interventions from various agencies."

"Jobstown is a more politicised community than would be the others. As well as the unsuccessful candidate, Marie Hennessey, the successful Labour candidate, Mick Billane, lives in Jobstown. He was Cathaoirleach of South Dublin County Council and as a result there was a big focus on him in the area."

"Brookfield and Fettercairn feel themselves to be the lost communities in West Tallaght and hence they tend to be the least politicised."

The importance of identifiable community cores was related to the development of strong and politicised communities and, by extension, turnout considerations. The development of a village core was seen to be a huge issue "*as there is a need for a place for people to interact*". The presence of developed village cores in Lucan and Clondalkin villages were seen to be responsible for the relatively higher turnouts in these areas relative to areas in their hinterland, such as North and South West Clondalkin and South Lucan. The higher turnouts in Jobstown and Killinarden, relative to other parts of the West Tallaght area, were also due, in part, to the more developed community sectors in these areas.

"As a community both Jobstown and Killinarden have an identifiable, if not impressive, village core. There is no such village core in Brookfield or Fettercairn, with there being no shopping, commercial or other community infrastructure around the church or school."

"Developing a village core is a huge issue. In this manner, there are huge problems in South West Clondalkin as due to the lack of commercial shops, there is nowhere to congregate."

11.7 IMPLICATIONS OF LOW TURNOUTS

Another area of concern that emerged in the interviews was the implications that spatial variations in turnouts would have for areas that were marked by especially low turnouts.

Irish politics and politicians

Irish politics was seen to be "*at a very dangerous low ebb*" in terms of motivating people out to vote. It was argued that low turnouts would lead to more consensus politics, as one could interpret the low turnouts as indicating "*that those who are happy with the consensus politics come out and vote, those that aren't stay at home*". It was felt that nothing would happen to address the issue of low turnouts "*until the system becomes frightened enough and recognises that the establishment must address low voter turnout, until something happens that they get very concerned.*"

A number of politicians were frustrated when people and areas, that they had assisted prior to elections, did not turn out to vote in elections. One such politician in Co. Laois noticed that some people, whom he has helped in clinics, did not turn out to vote at election time and said that he found this particularly frustrating.

"For there to be honesty in politics, both the people and elected representatives will have to be fair and honest with each other".

A number of Dublin based candidates also expressed disappointment that their work in socially excluded areas was not being rewarded in terms of votes.

"Most of the work that I'd do would be for people in deprived areas but you wouldn't expect to get a vote from them. It's not that they wouldn't like you. It's just that they're not motivated enough".

One politician noted that there used to be a feeling that a low voter turnout favoured the established parties such as Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael. However he felt there was evidence to show that this conception was wrong today, as he felt the present decline in turnout was mainly linked to those who are prosperous and hence have less of a reason to vote. Sinn Féin however was managing to get its vote out as the electorate was still seeing it as having a distinctively different message. For TDs, in order to survive politically, it was incumbent on them to be most active in the areas where the turnout was high. Hence low turnout, protest areas would lose out.

Finally, one politician argued that the result of low voter turnout in socially deprived areas was that you would get "*a Dáil where the interests of wealthy people are represented and not those of the poorer in society*". Politicians, mindful of the low turnouts in the poor areas, would feel that there were more electoral gains to be made from pursuing middle class issues rather than those related to the more marginalised areas. In a similar vein, it was noted that farmers' issues generally caused the most excitement in the Dáil as "*the politicians all know that the farmers vote en masse*". By contrast, a politician could do a number of months of work on a Social Welfare Bill and not get a similar electoral return for their efforts in working on this. Low voter turnouts in socially deprived areas were seen as resulting in a "*no change situation*", as these meant that the interests of the status quo would be maintained and hence no real change would be effected.

Socially excluded areas

It was felt socially excluded areas would prove to be the “*net losers*” of low turnouts, as politicians would have less incentive to engage with such areas because “*the bottom line for them is a vote*”. As one community worker noted, “*if they’re not going to vote, it’s a hen and chicken situation. No vote, no politician. No politician no resources.*”

One politician argued that low voter turnout was “*contributing to the neglect of disadvantaged areas*”, as they felt that “*a number of politicians are beginning to believe that there is no point in doing anything for these areas as they will get no electoral return from such acts*”. They noted that people in socially deprived areas often did not vote because they had the idea that “*if you don’t vote then this will be a strike against the politicians*”. However, in actuality by not voting “*what they were effectively doing was voting for Fianna Fáil by default*”. It was claimed that non-voters were “*effectively disenfranchising*” themselves for the lifetime of a Dáil as politicians could tell percentage turnouts in each area from tally returns and now with the availability of the marked register of *electors* “*they can know who exactly has voted and who hasn’t*”.

A significant number of the politicians, who were interviewed for the research, argued that they would get much more votes if they put the same effort that they put in deprived areas into other parts of the constituency. One politician said that he sometimes wondered why he should get involved in trying to help people in council housing estates, as he felt that in general people in these estates would only complain in return and not reward him by turning out to vote for him at election time. None of the politicians interviewed for this research, however, said that they themselves would ignore low turnout areas as they believed it to be

part of their duty as politicians to serve these areas and they also wanted to have a presence in the area. However they noted that there was a general tendency for other politicians to ignore low turnout areas.

"The return, in terms of electoral support, that I get is totally disproportionate to the effort. Whereas if I spent that time in other parts of my constituency, simply walking around and meeting people, I'd get a huge dividend on it. But I believe I've got an obligation to be there".

"What happens in areas of low turnout...and I haven't become cynical enough myself to do it...it is to walk away and leave them to stew...It is very, very dangerous, because the less that they turn out, the less inclined that the politicians, even the sympathetic politicians are, to put in the time and effort on their behalf".

"The net effect is there is an alienating corrosiveness that if the public in the marginalised or the deprived or the disadvantaged areas don't turn out, the politicians are not inclined to return any political energies on their behalf. So it's a vicious scenario".

One politician noted that the main impact of low turnout in an area would be that such an area would get "*less from the authorities*" in the long run. It was felt that politicians and the political system would be more inclined to do more for high turnout areas because "*they know that they're going to use the vote*". In line with this, another interviewee felt that this process had the effect of creating a political vacuum in certain socially deprived area, which would not be to the benefit of these areas:

"I think another implication of it is that it allows what is a marginalised people to become even more marginalised. Because they become preyed upon by what I might call the parties of the margin, who try to sort of take them over...I think that's an implication that's often missed. Locally, most people don't want that. But that sort of thing holds them back as a community and sort of stigmatises some flat complexes."

One area in which politician interviewees admitted to personally favouring high turnout areas over low turnout was to do with their priorities in canvassing at election time, especially if they were dealing with scarce resources and personnel.

"We know we are only in a position to run one candidate each time. So you've got to maximise the votes right across. So you go for areas where you're strongest, you go for where you've got the local connections and then you just keep trying to hit the others areas. And it's difficult. So, the obvious thing, you do start with the highest areas."

"The place I didn't even bother canvassing or dropping leaflets was Quarryvale. That kind of reflected in my vote there. Because I didn't have the resources or people, I would have had to sacrifice somewhere else to go into Quarryvale. Even if I trebled my vote in Quarryvale by campaigning there for a week, it still would have been to the detriment of elsewhere. That doesn't mean that I don't work hard on behalf of the people of Quarryvale, but you have to be pragmatic when you're trying to get votes."

"North Clondalkin would get a free post leaflet. If I had the people to canvass it, I would, but because I don't then you have to say where are you more likely to make your work count. And you have to be ruthless and say, whatever about the problems there and the need for political representation there, I can't do anything about that until I get elected ... the people there won't elect me, so there's no point in wasting my time. If I get elected I can start making inroads because I'll have more resources, but you have to be pragmatic."

One politician argued that low turnout in areas should further motivate politicians to canvass such areas and to work even harder there, as he felt that you would be dealing with people there who either felt too complacent or felt ignored by the politicians. Sinn Féin were particularly highlighted in this regard, as they were seen as the one political party that did invest resources into mobilising people in socially excluded, low turnout areas.

"It's sad really because I don't think TDs bother with an area that doesn't vote, you know, they'll only bother where they're going to get a return, I suppose. And that's where Sinn Féin are trying to make the inroads in on that basis, 'we're the only ones who will do any good for you'"

Turnout considerations were generally seen to have more of a bearing on canvassing strategies in urban areas. Politicians based in rural areas generally claimed that turnout did not have much, or indeed any, bearing on the areas that they canvassed at election times. Concerns about the marginal nature of elections were a strong factor here, with one Dáil deputy from Limerick stressing that this was a good reason not to ignore areas in canvassing simply on the basis of these being low turnout areas.

"If you're talking about ignoring a low turnout area, [the votes you need to win a seat] could be in there. So politicians don't ignore these areas. I don't anyway. I think, you put that thing totally out of your mind. You're talking about marginality stuff anyway. No, because every politician knows that elections are won and lost by one or two votes, ten votes, twenty votes, in many, many instances. Even Dáil elections have been lost by one vote.¹"

11.8 MEANS TO INCREASE TURNOUT RATE

Finally, interviewees were asked to identify means by which turnouts in their areas could be improved.

Electoral procedure and process

Improvements in voting procedure were one of the means put forward as a suggestion for improving turnouts in low turnout areas. It was stressed that there was a need to "*make voting more exciting and more immediate*". Weekend voting was one such measure, which, it was argued, would allow people who worked or studied away from home during the week, but were at home at weekends, to vote. It was also argued that people would have more spare time

to vote at weekends. The need to check electoral registers in areas, with high population mobility, on a more regular basis was also stressed, so as to chop off the names of people who would have left the area, thus avoiding an over-inflation of the non-voting rate in these areas. It was also noted that in socially deprived areas there was a number of people living there who may not have registered, because of concerns about being found out for breaking the social welfare laws. To encouraging these to register and vote, it was suggested that they either be encouraged to register at a relative's address, or else for it to be made legal "*that the electoral register would be sacred and confidential and wouldn't be used for anything else*".

Politics and politicians

It was felt that that politicians needed to show support for low turnout, socially deprived communities and groups, if turnouts were to be increased in these areas. The role of Sinn Féin in pushing up turnouts in socially deprived areas, such as the inner city, South Finglas, Darndale, West Cabra, West Tallaght or Ballyfermot areas in Dublin and the council housing estates in the provincial towns, was particularly highlighted. Commentators felt that one valuable impact of Sinn Féin working these areas was their success in increasing turnout rates in those areas.

"If Sinn Féin do nothing else around here... You know I don't agree with some of the things they do, but they're there and they're credible and they're in the flats and they're in the areas. They can make a contribution – and it mightn't be the one they intend – but they could make the others stand up and do a bit more. And if they did that then it would be a good thing."

¹ Coincidentally the same politician was to actually win the last seat in his constituency in the 2002 General Election, held over a year subsequent to this interview, by a margin of just one vote!

Voter education

It was felt that participation rates would improve with investment in, and improvements in, the educational system. Moreover, voter education was seen to be an important means of facilitating the voting process in low turnout areas, in particular areas with high illiteracy rates. There was a particular need, it was stressed, to engender a greater sense of awareness of the political system amongst the electorate in these areas and “*to strongly focus in on civic education*” to help “*citizens to realise, particularly in the poorer quarters, that their vote is as powerful as the middle class vote*”. In line with this, it was argued also that “*people needed to be able to meet the candidates more*”, as it was felt that politicians needed to communicate to the electorate what they did, as well as the importance of them using the vote.

Involvement of community organisations

It was felt that ‘get out the vote’ campaigning by voluntary groups in the more socially deprived areas in Ireland, similar to campaigns in the USA, would be helpful. It was suggested that such groups should hold public information meetings about election related issues, as well as encouraging people to vote by getting the message across to their communities that “*yes, you do count, your votes count, you can make a difference*”. There was a need for community groups to uncover novel means of engaging with new residents in their area, as groups could play a role in increasing turnout rates through trying to involve new residents in the community.

“*Community leaders for the rest of area should be trying to involve those living in apartment blocks more and more in that community. They have a role to play and many of them have energy and good ideas*”.

One interviewee argued for the creation of a task force to address the issue of low turnouts in socially deprived areas and contended that community groups should form part of such a body.

"I think there's a case that community organisations, the churches, the voluntary sector, the local government structure and the school education officer would have a responsibility with working with a view to setting up a task force or sense of direction in voter education."

Social well-being

One key mechanism for improving turnout rates in socially deprived areas, as identified by a number of interviewees, involved the improvement of the well being of people in these localities. As one interviewee noted, "*we have got to remove the causes of alienation by giving people a fair chance, access to education in particular and decent housing*". It was felt that if the lot of people in these localities were improved, then people would, as a result, have more of a "*stakehold*" in their area, which would have the effect of increasing turnouts in these areas.

"I think it would certainly improve the turnout if people feel they have long-term roots in that community and you know, they're getting a fair shake."

This is a more radical perspective on how to improve turnout rates in low turnout, socially deprived areas than are the others discussed in this section. It is also broader in scope than the other suggestions and more directed towards solving the problem of long-term non voting, in that it addresses the underlying causes of low turnouts in these areas, namely experience of social deprivation and the resultant alienation from the political system. The other measures,

particularly those related to procedural means, could be viewed as being perhaps more suited to combating the extent of short-term non voting.

11.9 CONCLUSIONS

Common themes emerged in the course of the research interviews. Issues relating to social deprivation were shown to have a significant bearing on turnout levels, with the general sense being that turnout rates would be lower in the poorer communities. There was, however, a sense amongst interviewees from the rural areas that, to some degree, working class people in these areas might prove to be more likely to vote in local elections than professional electors would. Geographic peripherality was, however, almost as big an issue in the rural areas as socio-economic marginalisation was. Some communities, located on the edges of rural constituencies or counties, often had lower than average turnouts in elections due to border confusion, as well as a sense that the needs of their area was not being properly addressed by the relevant local authorities. In many cases such areas were looked on as being neither inside nor outside of the county area.

Age was viewed as having a strong influence on turnout rates by a number of interviewees, as was residential mobility and commuting practices. In particular, the large size of the new resident and commuter groups meant that their particularly low turnout levels often had the effect of significantly pushing down turnouts in their new areas, which was an especial concern when these areas were low turnout working class areas. Thus, due to the effect of these groups, turnouts amongst indigenous, working class communities, such as those in the Dublin Inner City, often appeared to the casual observer to be much lower than they actually

were. This could prove to be an especial concern if these apparently very low turnouts dissuaded politicians from engaging with working class communities. Urban-rural differentials in turnouts were also analysed, with specific reference to the higher ratio of councillors to voters in the more rural constituencies, which meant that most rural people would have "*direct and immediate access to a politician*", which was not the case for the urban electorate.

Election specific turnouts were referred to, with higher turnouts for local elections, relative to referendum turnouts, observed for rural areas and some working class areas in Dublin. Relatively high turnouts for the 1999 local election in some Dublin Corporation flat complexes and housing estates underpinned these claims, as did the very high turnouts in some rural areas. Against that, changes and resultant confusion over electoral boundaries were seen to dissuade people from voting.

Electoral procedure also had some degree of influence in determining turnout rates. Distances to polling stations were seen to be increasing in line with the tendency of local authorities to centralise polling stations into certain locations, and the closing of local polling stations often had a negative impact on turnouts in the localities involved. Another area of concern with relation to polling stations had to do with the poor signposting of these, especially in reference to the more suburban parts of Dublin. Inaccuracies with the electoral register were another concern, especially in areas with high levels of residential mobility or illiteracy, or where many people who were in irregular living conditions, in terms of social welfare regulations, were not registering for fear of drawing attention to their position.

Political parties were seen to have an important role in getting people to vote, with higher than average turnouts usually registered in rural areas, such as Co. Laois, where certain political parties had very strong organisations. Sinn Féin voter mobilisation strategies, moreover, lead to higher than expected turnouts in socially deprived parts of Dublin and in some provincial towns. Local candidates could also boost turnouts in areas as they often had the effect of engendering a high degree of local interest in an election, whether these were general or local elections.

Low turnout was seen to have very serious implications for the legitimacy of the democratic system, as well as helping to maintain the status quo, in that it was argued that the more established parties would generally gain most advantage from turnout variations. It was noted that low turnouts in the more socially deprived areas meant that there was less of an incentive for politicians to engage with these areas. Hence, there was a strong possibility of the disengagement of politicians from low turnout, socially deprived, areas, as well as the even greater likelihood that less effort would be put into canvassing these areas, could result in further turnout declines in these areas. Such areas, it was felt, could end up receiving less from the authorities, who would be more likely to look out for people in the high turnout areas, while issues important to these areas were going to receive little attention in terms of political debate and policy making.

Measures were suggested to combat problems associated with low turnouts and turnout decline. The importance of ensuring that people had more of a stakehold in their local community was stressed, as was the importance of improving the lot of people in marginalised communities. The importance of politicians showing solidarity for socially

deprived, low turnout areas was highlighted, with the success of Sinn Féin in mobilising people in a number of such areas being particularly highlighted. A number of improvements to electoral procedures were suggested and the importance of voter education highlighted, particularly for first time voters and the educationally disadvantaged. Finally, community organisations were seen as important in terms of acting as a non-partisan means of mobilising people in their localities to vote. In line with this, a voter turnout task force was suggested for socially deprived, low turnout areas, which would involve these organisations, as well as local politicians and the relevant statutory agencies.

CHAPTER 12 **CONCLUSIONS**

12.1 INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

This thesis has analysed turnout change in Ireland, both in terms of temporal variations and especially variations across space, and determined the degree to which these are associated with socio-economic marginalisation. Various hypotheses were put forward as to the manner in which turnout variations are impacted by socio-economic marginalisation. This chapter will review the degree to which one proved or disproved these hypotheses.

These hypotheses were not treated, throughout the thesis, in the order that they were listed in Chapter 2 throughout the thesis, as many of the key areas that the different hypotheses addressed were highly interconnected. Indeed many of the different analyses engaged in addressed aspects related to two or more of the different hypotheses, given the complex linkages between them. This concluding chapter will attempt to draw all the findings from these analyses together, by specifically relating these to the five hypotheses in Chapter 2, as well as addressing the concerns in Chapter 3 regarding the implications of, and measures to combat, the problem of low turnout.

To recap, the five hypotheses listed in Chapter 2 were:

- H_1 : There is an association between socio-economic marginalisation and turnout in Ireland, with higher levels of marginalisation being associated with lower turnout rates.
- H_2 : The residual turnout variance – once socio-economic marginalisation is taken account of – is explained by a mixture of demographic, political and subjective factors.

- H₃: This association between turnout and socio-economic marginalisation tends to be stronger in urban, rather than rural, areas in Ireland.
- H₄: The association between turnout and socio-economic marginalisation will differ, depending on the type of election being held.
- H₅: Turnout rates are in decline in Ireland and this decline has a class dimension to it, with turnout decline particularly concentrated in socially deprived areas.

This chapter will deal with these hypotheses in the order that they were listed in Chapter 2. The first section in this chapter will determine whether social deprivation was linked with low turnout in Ireland and the extent to which turnout variations were impacted on by deprivation influences. The following section will identify the other factors that were found to influence Irish turnout variations and that explained the turnout variance that the social deprivation related factors did not account for.

The next two sections will determine whether associations between social deprivation and turnout variation are shaped by the influences of geographical and electoral context. There will be a discussion of whether turnout variations are more likely to be influenced by social deprivation in urban or rural areas and to determine what factors may account for whatever differences may occur. Mindful that variations exist between the turnouts for different election types, the following section will determine whether these variations are shaped by class influences. The following section will study the general trend of turnout decline and how this applies to the Irish context, with specific reference to determining whether this turnout decline is class biased and most pronounced in the more deprived parts of the country.

The final sections of this chapter will address the issues that emerged in Chapter 3. These are concerned with the likely implications of low turnout and the measures that should be taken to combat the problems associated with such variations, with specific reference to those associated with the impacts that turnout variations might have on low turnout areas. Specific reference will be made to the current practice regarding measures taken to improve participation rates in low turnout areas in Ireland.

12.2 SOCIAL DEPRIVATION AND TURNOUT

The main concern in this thesis was to analyse whether social deprivation was associated with turnout variation in Ireland. A number of different methodologies were used to examine this relationship.

The literature suggests a strong relationship between turnout and social well-being and that socially deprived areas will generally have lower turnouts, with Marsh (1999) suggesting that such a relationship would be particularly pronounced in the Irish context. Marsh's contention that political systems, in which class cleavages were relatively weak, would generally be characterised by class-biased turnout levels was seen to be readily applicable to Ireland, given the dominance of centrist parties within the Irish party system. The literature further suggests that such associations between turnout and deprivation might be expected to be strongest in the Dublin region, given the association of greater class biases in turnout with lower levels of participation. Oliver's (1999) association of increased urban economic segregation with lower participation levels suggests that turnouts will be relatively low in Dublin, given the high level of social stratification associated with that city.

The empirical evidence suggests that socio-economic marginalisation has a significant influence on turnout variation in Dublin. There were generally differences of 25-30 per cent between the turnouts in middle class and socially deprived areas for all the elections held during the 1997-2002 period. Figure 12.1 underlines this by showing significant discrepancies between general election turnouts in the more affluent electoral divisions and those in the more deprived electoral divisions.

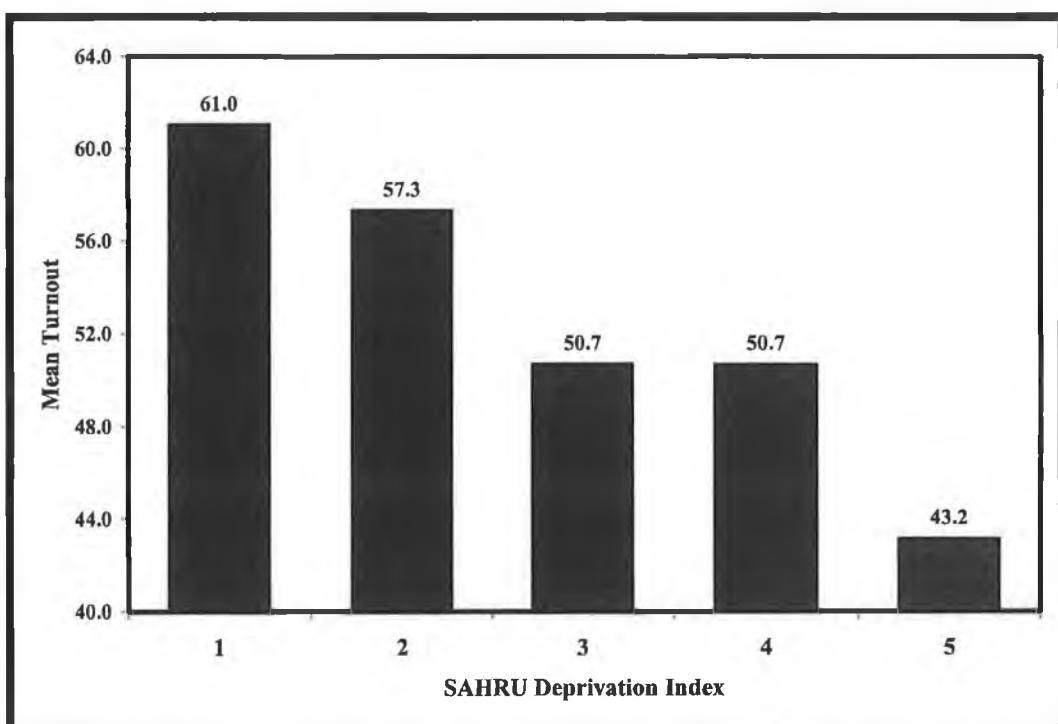


Figure 12.1: Mean turnout in the 2002 General Election by SAH RU deprivation index in Dublin.

Statistical analyses showed that social exclusion related factors, such as local authority housing, lone parent families and unemployment, accounted for over half the turnout variance in elections held during the 1997-2002 period, with the general effect of these variables being to push down turnout rates. These largely mirror Whitely et al.'s (2001) findings as to the

main determinants of turnout variance in the 2001 British General Election. The impact that social deprivation had on low turnouts was also picked up on in the interviews with most of the Dublin based interviewees viewing social deprivation as a key factor accounting for low turnouts in their constituencies. Moreover, the general trend in the questionnaires was for social deprivation related factors to be generally associated with lower turnouts, with turnouts for respondents living in local authority housing areas being significantly lower than for those for owner occupiers. Similarly, there was a relationship between early school leavers and low turnouts rates, once the age factor was controlled for, while white collar employees were significantly more likely to vote than were unemployed or blue collar and services employee respondents.

There were higher than expected turnouts in working class areas in a number of cases, however, with these usually occurring in the 1999 local elections or the 2002 General Election. An analysis of the residuals for the turnout models for these elections showed significant associations between high positive residual values for socially deprived areas and Sinn Féin mobilisation. The general trend for Dublin appears to be that turnout in socially deprived areas will generally be much lower than in middle class areas, unless mobilisation by a socialist party (usually Sinn Féin) pushes turnouts up in these areas. Even then, however, turnouts will still be 10-15 per cent lower than in the more middle class parts of the city.

An analysis of turnout variations between very small geographical areas, using marked register data for the 1999 local elections and Dublin South Central by-election, showed that the lowest turnouts in the study areas did not in fact occur in the most socially deprived areas. In general, turnouts in socially deprived areas were low (especially for the by-election), but

the very lowest turnouts in the Dublin County Borough area were associated with private apartment complexes in the inner city. Similarly, some of the lowest turnouts for the local elections in South Dublin County were associated with a number of “starter home” estates in new housing areas, such as South Lucan. (That said, local authority estates, primarily in the North Clondalkin area, accounted for a large proportion of the low turnout areas in South Dublin.) This means that there is no basis for using turnout as a surrogate measure of social deprivation, as was suggested in Chapter 2. Low turnout in an area could result from a residential mobility effect, as with the private apartment complexes and “starter home” estates, rather than from social deprivation.

There was not as clear cut a relationship between exclusion and low turnout in the rural case study areas. The analysis of the spatial variations in turnout rates, in particular for the local elections, suggests that social deprivation did not have a significant influence on rural turnout variations. In some cases turnouts were actually higher in the more marginalised parts of the rural study areas, such as the north western parts of Laois and Cork North West. However, there were instances in which there were some relatively low turnouts in some local authority housing estates in towns, such as Newcastlewest and Rathkeale. The general trend was that candidate effects, rather than socio-economic influences, had the greater bearing on rural turnout variations. There does seem to be somewhat of a relationship for general elections and especially for referenda between social deprivation and low turnout in the rural areas, however.

The individual level analyses mirror this general trend, further suggesting that social deprivation factors did not have the same influence on rural turnouts that they had in urban

areas. The higher importance attached to candidate effects rather than socio-economic influences in accounting for turnouts in rural areas, especially local election turnouts, was underlined by the interviews. Moreover, there was a suggestion that, in some cases, working class voters might be more likely to turn out for local elections than professional electors were. This trend was reflected in the questionnaire analysis, where blue collar employees in the Laois survey were seen to be more likely to turn out to vote than white collar respondents were. Moreover, the general trend was for higher turnouts to be associated with lower educational levels, although subsequent analysis showed that age influences had a large bearing on this relationship.

Of the individual social deprivation related factors that influenced turnout variation, housing tenure was the most significant in the Dublin region, whilst lone parent families and unemployment also have a significant bearing. The strong association between housing tenure and turnout variation in Dublin mirrors previous findings by Sinnott and Whelan (1991), Johnson et al. (2001) and Whitely et al. (2001) in that owner occupied housing was associated with high turnout and local authority and private housing with lower turnout. The strong association between housing tenure and turnout variation was linked to the high degree of social stratification in the city and the general association of middle class areas with owner occupancy and working class areas with council tenancy there. In general, the different deprivation related factors were associated with lower than average turnout rates in Dublin unless other factors such as mobilisation by left-wing parties, such as Sinn Féin, were involved.

Local electoral turnout variation in rural areas was influenced by housing tenure, with owner occupancy associated with higher turnouts and private rented housing with lower turnouts. There was no association between local authority housing and turnout, however, and the main cleavage in the rural study areas was within the owner occupancy sector, between mortgaged housing and housing that was not mortgaged. The most significant deprivation related factor in the rural study areas, in terms of influencing local election turnouts, was educational disadvantage, but the effect of this factor was to push turnouts up, based on the finding of the regression analysis. This, however, is thought to be mainly an age effect. Unemployment was the only deprivation-related factor in the rural case study areas to be significantly associated with lower turnout rates.

Thus, the basic conclusion of the various studies in this thesis is that social deprivation and low turnout are strongly linked in Dublin, but no such association has been shown to exist for the rural study areas, although there does seem to be an association for referenda. Social exclusion factors in Dublin account for a large degree of the spatial variations in turnout there, although they do not determine the totality of these, as other factors such as demography, residential mobility and candidate effects also have a bearing.

12.3 OTHER INFLUENCES

The different analyses used in this research showed that socio-economic and demographic factors, other than those directly related to social deprivation, as well as political and more subjective factors, also have an impact on turnout variations in Ireland.

Socio-economic and demographic factors

Age was seen to have a significant influence on turnout variation, with turnouts being lowest for younger electors and increasing with age, mirroring the findings of a number of researchers, such as Henn and Weinstein (2001) and Fuchs, Minnite and Shapiro (2000). This relationship was observed in both rural and urban contexts. A relationship was also noted between marital status and turnout, with high turnouts associated with married people and lower turnouts associated with single and separated people in Dublin. The relationship between marital status and turnout in rural areas however was different to that in Dublin or that suggested by the literature. There was a positive association between turnout and single people and a negative association between turnout and married people. As with the anomalous association of higher turnouts with educational disadvantage in rural areas, as noted above, this relationship was largely influenced by age, however, with relatively higher proportions of single people in the older age categories in these areas.

In line with the findings of Caldeira et al. (1990) and Squire et al. (1987), residential mobility was shown to have a significant effect on turnout levels in Ireland. Areas characterised by highly mobile populations, such as the Dublin Inner City area, the “starter home” estates in the Dublin suburbs and the new housing estates located on the outskirts of provincial towns, had relatively low turnouts. High levels of population growth were associated with lower turnout rates in the statistical analyses, in both the Dublin and rural study areas, with statistical analysis identifying population change as a key predictor of turnout variance in elections for the Dublin region over the 1999-2002 period. Findings of the questionnaire and interview analysis also supported these associations, with an almost linear relationship

between length of residence and turnout propensity observed based on an analysis of the survey findings.

The analysis shows that socio-structural factors, other than those related directly to social deprivation, had a significant bearing on turnout variation in both of the study areas. Factors that proved to be especially important, based on the different analyses, were age and residential mobility. However, the R^2 values from the regression analyses show that, while other socio-economic and demographic factors can account for further amounts of turnout variance, over and above that accounted for by social deprivation factors, these do not account for all of the remaining unexplained variance.

Political factors and subjective influences

Socio-economic influences were shown to account for differing amounts of turnout variations in the different case study areas, but they were especially important in the Dublin area. However significant proportions of turnout variance were left unaccounted for after these analyses and thus political and other, more subjective, factors also need to be considered.

Political factors were seen to have a significant level of influence on turnouts, particularly for local and general elections and particularly for the more rural areas. Large proportions of turnout variations in the rural study areas were associated with candidate influences, with the highest turnouts for the 1999 local elections in these areas being generally associated with the bailiwicks of the different local election candidates. This “friends and neighbours” effect on turnouts also had a bearing on general election turnouts in the rural study areas. There were generally higher turnouts in the home areas of general election candidates, although the

“friends and neighbours” effect did not have the same influence as for the local elections, due to the smaller number of general election candidates.

The effect was also associated with areas of positive residuals in the Dublin area for the local and general election, particularly those residuals that were associated with the more working class areas of the city. This shows that higher than expected turnouts in working class areas, such as West Cabra, West Tallaght or the South East Inner City, were generally associated with the impact that a local, usually left-wing, candidate had in drawing out the vote in these areas. Statistically, however, the effect was not shown to account for an increased proportion of turnout variance in the Dublin study area, over and above that which socio-economic factors accounted for. By contrast, the inclusion of the “friends and neighbours effect” in regression models for the rural case study area improved these models by approximately 7%.

Political parties, in themselves, also had a significant influence on turnouts. Areas with a strong attachment to political parties, or with strong party organisations, were often associated with high turnout rates. The higher levels of partisanship in rural Ireland were related to the higher turnouts for general and local elections in rural Ireland, reflecting Rallings and Thrasher (1990), who contend that turnout levels will strongly reflect the intensity of party activity in an area at election times. The impact that party activity can have on turnout was especially evidenced in the two referenda on the Nice Treaty in 2001 and 2002. There was a low level of party activity in the 2001 Nice Referendum and turnouts were low as a result. Party activity was intensified for the campaign for the 2002 Nice Referendum and this was generally regarded to have had a large bearing on the significant increase in turnouts for the second referendum, particularly in rural areas.

Levels of political interest and awareness were also linked to turnout propensity, as was candidate recognition, as the survey analysis showed. People with higher levels of interest in politics, as well as with higher levels of understanding of election issues, were more likely to vote, as were people who could recognise high proportions of their candidates.

There was a range of other factors that also influenced people's decision as to vote, or not. For instance, survey analysis showed that respondents, who were members of voluntary and community organisations, were significantly more likely to vote in an election than those respondents who were not. This finding was strongly paralleled the literature, as Fuchs et al. (2000), Cassel (1999) and Putnam (2000) also upheld a strong association between turnout propensity and group membership.

There was also a linkage between newspaper readership and turnout propensity, as was illustrated by the voters' surveys. Newspaper readers were more likely to vote than those who did not read newspapers and there were especially high turnouts registered for those respondents who read broadsheet newspapers and local newspapers. The relationship between local newspaper readership and turnout was especially pronounced in relation to participation in local elections, as readers are more aware of local issues and hence more easily mobilised to vote on the basis of these. The relatively high readership of local newspapers in the rural areas, relative to the Dublin region, could be another reason accounting for the urban-rural differentials in local election turnouts.

Other factors relating to the manner, or the particular context, in which elections are held have an influence on turnouts. Factors, relating to electoral procedure, such as distance from polling stations or the day of the week an election is held, or to factors such as the weather on the polling day, have a bearing on turnout also. For instance, the decision to hold the second Nice Referendum on a Saturday had a positive impact on the turnouts for that election. In a similar vein, the adverse weather conditions in parts of Ireland on the day of the 2002 General Election undoubtedly caused turnouts to be lower than they would have been otherwise.

Thus, a heterogeneity of factors contribute to explain the residual variance left unaccounted for by social deprivation related factors. Some of these are particularly influential, such as residential mobility and age, as well as candidate influences and political mobilisation, while other factors will have relatively small effects that may be particular to specific geographical contexts.

12.4 URBAN AND RURAL INFLUENCES

A significant aspect of the spatial patterning of Irish turnouts was the significant variations that existed between turnouts in urban and rural areas for all election types. The analysis in Chapter 5 shows that general, local, European and presidential turnouts were generally higher in rural areas than they were in urban areas. By contrast, referendum turnouts were generally higher in Dublin – in particular in the more middle class parts of Dublin – than they were in the rest of the country. This pattern was generally mirrored at the sub-constituency level. General and local election turnouts in the rural polling districts was generally higher than in the urban polling districts, with the lowest turnouts in rural areas generally equivalent to the

higher urban turnouts for the general, and especially the local, elections. Middle class areas in Dublin, however, had the highest referendum turnouts at a sub-constituency level and turnouts in these areas were approximately 10-15 per cent higher than those in the high turnout areas in Laois for the 2001 Nice and 2002 Abortion Referenda.

The empirical analyses showed that social deprivation related factors had a significantly greater bearing on turnout variation in the Dublin area than in the rural study area. This was found to be the case for the local elections, for instance. The statistical analyses found that socio-structural factors accounted for a large proportion of turnout variance in the Dublin region and for a small proportion of the local electoral turnout variance in the rural study area. The findings of the empirical analyses suggested that other socio-structural factors – in particular, age – and candidate influences had a greater bearing on local election turnout variations in the rural study areas. Other more intangible influences could be involved, namely those related to levels of community stability, in explaining the higher propensity of the rural working class to participate in elections. Monroe's (1977) "boundedness" concept, which associates community stability with higher turnout rates, is important given that rural communities tend to be more stable, which means that people in these communities will be more aware of local issues and more likely to want to vote on the basis of these.

This could suggest that the more politicised culture in rural areas had the effect of mobilising higher proportions of working class rural people to vote in general and local elections. This would seem to have been the case for the local elections. The higher councillor to elector ratio in rural areas meant that there was a greater likelihood of rural voters being mobilised to vote, particularly by local candidates, whom they might have known personally or been assisted by

in a clinic. Moreover, there are higher levels of partisanship in Irish rural areas. The large number of branches of political parties in the rural areas, especially relative to the amount per head of population in the Dublin region, means that there are larger numbers of personnel available in rural areas to canvass at election times and to mobilise the rural electorate to vote. As class differences are not as pronounced in spatial terms in rural areas, canvassers will not bias their activity towards the rural middle classes to the extent that canvassers in urban areas would mainly focus on high turnout, middle class areas. The combination of these factors mean that the rural working classes are much more likely to be personally canvassed at election time than the urban working classes are, linking in with Green and Gerber's (2000a, 2000b, 2001a) findings that door-to-door canvassing is the most effective form of voter mobilisation. This factor accounts for the relatively low referendum turnouts in rural areas, as party organisations in rural areas generally do not make a concerted effort to get the vote out for these. The impact that this has was especially evidenced in the 2002 Nice Referendum where an unusually high level of mobilisation by party organisation resulted in very large increases in turnout in the rural parts of Ireland.

The differing social and demographic compositions of urban and rural electoral divisions might have had a bearing on these findings. As was noted in Section 4.3, urban DEDs generally tend to be relatively homogeneous in socio-economic and demographic terms, arising from the high level of social stratification in the Dublin region that generally clusters local authority and owner occupied housing in different parts of the city. Rural DEDs, by contrast, are generally socially and economically heterogeneous. Thus socio-economic differences in urban areas was between DEDs, whereas the main differences in rural areas occurred within DEDs. This is underlined by the SAHRU deprivation maps (Figures 4.11-

4.15), which shows dramatic differences in well-being within the Dublin region (Figures 4.11-4.12), but shows relatively little difference between the rural DEDs. The more striking differences between urban DEDs, as opposed to those between rural DEDs, meant that statistical analyses were more likely to detect significant associations between turnout and predictor variables in the urban areas. Furthermore, the particular concentration of social deprivation, and by extension, of deprivation-induced low turnout into certain areas in Dublin will have the effect of discouraging socially deprived people living in these areas from voting to a greater extent than socially deprived people in socially heterogeneous rural communities. This is tantamount to a neighbourhood effect (Johnson et al., 2001), as the highly alienated culture of the social deprivation ‘black-spots’ in Dublin will ‘convert’ people living there to non-voting behaviour, whereas the more politicised culture in rural communities will generally encourage the rural socially deprived to vote.

This required the use of individual level analyses to disentangle the influence that the different social structures of urban and rural DEDs had on the empirical analyses. These generally appear to support the findings of the ecological models. The Laois surveys show a weak association between social well-being and turnout propensity, for instance, with slightly higher turnouts recorded for blue collar employee and the educationally disadvantaged relative to those for white collar employees and people with high levels of educational attainment. The Dublin surveys, by contrast, showed a strong association between lower turnout propensity and educational disadvantage (once age was controlled for), blue collar employment and local authority housing. This trend was further supported by insights from interviews with rural politicians and community development who suggested that the rural

working class were relatively more interested in local politics and that class concerns were weaker than the influences of age and political mobilisation.

Agnew (1987) suggested that geographical context could shape political behaviour and the way in which different factors may influence this. Agnew's findings are particularly key to an analysis of Irish turnout rates, in that this research has shown that there are significant differences in the voting, or non-voting, behaviour of the rural and urban electorates. Rural areas are generally more likely to have higher turnout rates, except for referenda. Social deprivation and other socio-economic influences have a greater bearing on turnout propensity in the urban areas, being mindful that the different socio-economic profiles of urban and rural DEDs may sharpen the statistical associations for urban areas between turnout and deprivation, to some degree.

12.5 TURNOUT VARIATIONS BETWEEN ELECTION TYPES

Significant variations existed between the turnout rates for different election types. The highest turnouts were generally registered for general elections in all the case study areas, although there were some isolated cases where local election turnouts were higher in the rural study areas and where referendum turnouts were higher in middle class urban areas. Generally, there was an urban-rural dimension to the differences in local election and referendum turnouts compared with general election turnouts. There were very large differences between general election and referendum turnouts in the rural study areas, with turnouts down by nearly 50 per cent in the referenda in some areas. Variations between general and local election turnouts were generally small, especially relative to those in the

more urban areas and especially in areas that had one or more local candidates contesting the local elections. By contrast, there was a significant degree of variation between general and local election turnouts in the urban areas, with less variation between general election and referendum turnouts.

There was also a significant class dimension to the manner in which turnouts varied between elections. The low turnouts for referenda in working class areas and the high referenda turnouts in middle class areas meant that turnout variations between general elections and referenda were especially pronounced in the more working class and socially deprived areas, as was found to be the case for Dublin. In a number of cases, as with a comparison of turnouts in the 1999 local elections and the 2001 Nice Referendum, local election turnouts were higher than referendum turnouts in the working class areas. By contrast, referendum turnouts were significantly higher than local election turnouts in the more middle class areas. Comparisons between turnouts in the 2002 Nice Referendum and the 1999 local elections showed higher referendum turnouts in all of the electoral divisions in the Dublin City Council, apart from the working class Merchants Quay F electoral division. (This DED is located in the South West Inner City and the large St. Teresa's Gardens local authority flat complex accounts for a large proportion of its population.) In some of the more middle class areas, such as Rathmines, Terenure, Clontarf and Drumcondra, turnouts were 15-25 per cent higher for the referendum. Turnouts were only marginally higher in working class areas, such as West Cabra and parts of the Inner City, however.

There was a similar pattern noted in the rural study areas. Referenda turnouts in the more deprived areas of Laois were generally lower than those in other parts of the county and

significant differences existed between local and general election turnouts, on the one hand, and referendum turnouts, on the other, in these areas. Local election turnouts were over 35 per cent higher than turnouts for the 2002 Abortion Referendum in a number of stations in Laois, namely those attached to marginal rural areas in the north-west and south-east of the county and working class housing estates in Portlaoise town. At the county level, local election turnout had been 18.9% higher than the Abortion Referendum turnout. A similar pattern emerged in terms of comparisons between general election and referendum turnouts, with the greatest differences in turnouts again associated with the more deprived areas in the county.

Thus, differences between turnouts in referenda and other types of elections were generally larger in the more working class areas in both Dublin and the rural parts of Ireland, based on the findings of the ecological analyses. These findings were also supported by the interview and questionnaire analyses. The questionnaire analyses showed that the relative difference in turnouts between middle class and working class respondents were generally smaller for local elections and larger for referenda. Low referenda turnouts in working class areas were shown in the surveys to result from people in these areas having difficulties with understanding the issues involved in these. In rural areas, referendum turnouts were low because these contests were not perceived as important by the rural electorate, while the low levels of political mobilisation associated with these contests was another factor that lead to low referenda turnouts in rural areas.

There was also evidence of relatively high local election turnouts in working class urban areas, as well as in the rural areas. The marked register analyses in Chapters 7 and 8 found high local election turnouts in local authority housing areas in areas such as the South West

Inner City and West Cabra in Dublin and estates in provincial towns such as Mountmellick. The individual level analyses (interviews and questionnaire surveys) also were suggestive of such a relationship, with evidence of high levels of interest in local politics and understanding of local election issues amongst working class respondents in the surveys. The interviews with rural politicians and community development workers also made reference to working class voters in rural areas having higher levels of interest in local elections than amongst the professional classes.

Thus there is strong evidence of there being a class dimension to turnout variations between elections, especially when referenda turnouts are contrasted with local and general election turnouts. People in working class or socially deprived communities were more likely to be mobilised to vote on the basis of “bread and butter” concerns, such as local issues and local personalities, than on the basis of the complex national issues that characterise referendum contests. There was significantly more interest in referenda in the more middle class areas, probably because people there were more motivated to vote on the basis of complex, national issues and less motivated by the more clientilistic concerns that dominate general, and especially, local elections.

12.6 TEMPORAL TRENDS IN TURNOUT RATES

One of the hypotheses put forward in Chapter 2 was the turnouts were in decline in Ireland and that there was a class dimension to this decline. Chapter 6 focused on the experience of turnout change at a constituency level in Ireland over the past few decades, as well as turnout

change at a sub-constituency level in Dublin and Laois between the 1997 and 2002 General Elections.

Evidence of a sustained decline in general elections over the 1981-2002 period was presented, with turnouts having fallen by 13.2% during this period and by 3.2% between the 1997 and 2002 elections. There was also evidence of similar declines in turnouts for other types of elections, but most especially local electoral contests, for which turnouts at a national level had fallen by 16% between the 1979 and 1999 contests. Turnouts in presidential and European elections and referenda generally declined during this period also, although there was more of a fluctuation involved in the temporal trends of these, as turnouts were strongly influenced by the context in which these elections took place.

Regional variations in the manner in which turnouts declined during this period were also noted. The Dublin region was shown to have experienced the greatest decline in both general and local election turnouts during the 1990s. This, admittedly, was not tantamount to a sustained trend over the 1981-2002 period, as general election turnouts in Dublin had fallen at a slower rate than the turnouts in the rest of the country during the 1980s. Indeed, it was the Leinster region rather than Dublin that had experienced the greatest decline in turnouts over the 1981-2002 period. Turnout decline was not as marked in the Connacht-Ulster region, but especially during the 1990s in which turnouts remained fairly constant between the 68% and 69% levels.

At first glance, there did not appear to be a significant class dimension to turnout decline in Dublin between 1997 and 2002 General Elections. The spatial patterns, as illustrated by

Figure 6.10, suggested that population change, or residential stability, had a large bearing on these variations, with significant declines in turnout being particularly located in residentially mobile areas, such as the Dublin Inner City. Turnouts fell significantly in a number of socially deprived areas, such as North Clondalkin and the South West Inner City, but there were increases in turnouts in a number of other working class areas, such as the South East Inner City, West Cabra and West Tallaght. These increased turnouts were due to these areas being the focus of intensive Sinn Féin mobilisation efforts in the period leading up to the 2002 General Election. This general trend was also replicated in the Laois study, albeit not to the same extent as for Dublin, where higher than average declines were associated with new housing areas in the larger towns, while Sinn Féin mobilisation efforts arrested the turnout decline in the council housing areas in Portlaoise.

The statistical analysis selected owner occupied housing and Sinn Féin gains as the key predictors of general election turnout decline in Dublin over the 1997-2002 period, with both these factors seen to push turnouts up, or at least being associated with relatively small declines in the turnout rate. Owner occupied housing is strongly associated with higher levels of social well-being in the Dublin region and the inclusion of this as a predictor variable suggests a class basis to the turnout decline. This is offset somewhat by the Sinn Féin gains factor, given the strong association between Sinn Féin support and higher proportions of working class or socially deprived people. Thus two trends are evident, although operating in opposite directions: a class dimension in which turnout decline is particularly concentrated in socially deprived areas and a political mobilisation factor in which turnouts are higher than expected in these areas because of Sinn Féin mobilisation.

The class dimension to turnout change was more evident when turnout increase between the 2001 and 2002 Nice Treaty Referenda was analysed. Figure 6.11 suggested that turnout increases were generally higher in the more middle class areas, although there were also significant increases in some working class areas, such as West Cabra and the South East Inner City. The strongest predictor of turnout change, as selected by the regression analysis, was the proportion of the population living in a lone parent family, which is strongly associated with increased levels of social deprivation. This variable was inversely associated with turnout increase, suggesting that the smallest turnout increases between the two elections were generally associated with the more deprived parts of the Dublin region. Against that, Sinn Féin gains were again selected as a predictor variable, with this factor positively associated with turnout increase. This variable, to some extent, offset the lone parent family factor and accounted for the higher than average turnout increases in some working class areas, such as West Cabra and the South East Inner City, where Sinn Féin support was particularly strong in the 2002 General Election.

There is a strong suggestion, based on the different analyses, that there is a particular class bias to temporal variations in the turnout rate. The findings of the Dublin research infer that turnout decline would be particularly associated with the more working class and socially deprived areas, in the absence of a Sinn Féin mobilisation effect. Residential mobility also appears to have a bearing on temporal variations in turnout rates, with this factor being negatively associated with temporal variations in turnouts over the 1997-2002 period.

12.7 IMPLICATIONS OF TURNOUT VARIATIONS

The different analyses in the thesis suggest that turnout variation, declining turnout and, in particular, low turnouts have a range of implications, both political and social. The main implications are the threat that low and declining turnouts pose for democracy and the impacts that class inequalities in turnout will have on socially deprived areas.

One of the most pertinent implications of low and declining turnout rates is its impact on the health of democracy, with the danger being that turnouts might fall so low that they could undermine the electoral system and the legitimacy of the government. If the representative system is weakened then the political vacuum that is left as a result, particularly in the low turnout areas, will have to be filled by other agencies in order to pursue the interests and concerns of the communities involved. There was a suggestion in the interviews that, increasingly, this vacuum is being filled by voluntary organisations, such as those attached to Area Based Partnerships. Such bodies, however, have their limitations, primarily because of their lack of a democratic basis and their overt concentration on their local areas, at the expense of engaging their communities with the wider concerns of their region and their country.

There is a danger that such a vacuum, created by a growing sense of political alienation, may lead to other profoundly non-democratic forces coming to the fore in low turnout communities and even on a national level. It further raises the possibility that such non-democratic forces or extremist groupings may form political parties and manage to get out the vote in deprived areas, thus increasing the turnout in these areas. This, on the one hand, would

be a good thing in that it is encouraging more people in socially deprived to vote and express their voice and it could mark the start of a mobilised ‘class’ politics in Ireland. On the other hand, this could prove to be an undesirable development if the parties concerned are not committed to democratic politics.

This would suggest that it is incumbent on the government to act to prevent dramatic declines in turnout in order to maintain a strong democracy. However, the government may prove slow in combating problems with low turnout, given that class influenced turnout variations tend to act to their electoral advantage as Irish governments generally tend to be dominated by centrist parties that have political bases in high turnout areas. Taylor and Johnson (1979) argued that the main concern of political parties in terms of voter mobilisation is for them to mobilise their own supporters to turn out to vote, rather than being concerned with trying to encourage unattached voters to vote. In ‘professional’ terms, centrist political parties will consider that they have little to gain from encouraging higher participation rates in socially deprived, low turnout areas, as voters in these areas would be more likely to vote for left-of-centre candidates and parties.

Significant associations exist between turnout and the support patterns of the different Irish political parties. The general pattern is that, based on sub-constituency level data, the main support bases of centrist or right-of-centre political parties are associated with high turnout areas and those of left-wing parties are associated with low turnout areas. Equal turnout simulation models underline the fact that socio-economically based turnout variations lead to left-wing parties winning smaller shares of the vote than they would if turnouts were similar in all parts of a constituency, mirroring similar findings from cross-national research by Pacek

and Radcliff (1995). In some cases turnout levels were shown to influence election results. The simulation model suggested that the destination of the final seat in one of the analysed constituencies (Dublin Central in 2002) would have been different had there been no turnout variations within that constituency. Moreover, it has been argued that the different results in the 2001 and 2002 referenda on the Nice Treaty were influenced by the different turnouts in the two contests. The low turnout in the 2001 Nice Referendum was seen to be largely responsible for the defeat of that amendment, whereas the significantly higher turnouts for the 2002 Referendum were a key factor in its success.

The findings suggested that, in some cases, candidates' canvassing strategies were cognisant of turnout variations in their constituencies. Although the politician questionnaire analysis suggested that a large proportion of candidates (especially in rural areas) did not take turnout into account in their canvassing strategies, there was evidence that a number of candidates focused especially on high turnout areas in their election campaigning. This was supported by some insights from the interviews, in which some politicians said that they tended to invest more effort into canvassing high turnout, rather than low turnout, areas. This suggested that low turnout areas were not receiving the same attention during election campaigns as high turnout areas were, largely due to election candidates focussing on the areas where they can win the most votes so as to maximise their tally of votes. This was reflected in the case of North Clondalkin, where there was little evidence of an election campaign in swing during the run up to the 2002 General Election (Holland, 2002). This trend in Irish politics, particularly in urban areas, may be contrasted with the trend in Britain, where low turnout areas in marginal constituencies sometimes prove to be the focus of intensive campaigning by parties at election time.

There was a suggestion in the interviews that politicians might choose to focus more of their constituency interventions on high turnout areas, seeing that there was ‘no vote’ in trying to assist low turnout communities. Against that, most of the politicians interviewed argued that the bulk of their constituency work was concerned with assisting people from low turnout areas and this was underlined by the findings of the surveys. However, the issues of high turnout groups do seem to get more priority in policy matters than the concerns of low turnout areas receive, as was noted in a number of the interviews. The surveys also found that politicians tended to be more cognisant of the issues that voters had, over and above those of non-voting respondents.

Political outcomes may be influenced by rural-urban turnout differentials and age biases in turnouts. Rural issues may take more precedence in national politics, as was noted in relation to the stress placed on farmers’ issues in Chapter 11, in recognition of the high rural turnout rates in general elections. Different turnouts for different age groups might have an impact on canvassing strategies and policy issues, as well. This was stressed in the interviews, where it was found that less emphasis was being placed on mobilising young people in election campaigns while young people’s issues were seen to receive less attention in policy making.

Turnout considerations might shape candidate selection by political parties, as they might be more likely to select candidates who would hail from high turnout areas, as they would see these as being more likely to mobilise a strong personal vote. They are also more likely to select older candidates. As a result, low turnout areas – as was the case with the North Clondalkin and South West Inner City in the 2002 General Election – may not have strong

local candidates contesting elections, which in turn may depress turnouts in these areas. Against that, there will be fewer people actively involved in politics in low turnout areas and thus parties may not select candidates from these areas due to the lack of personnel from these areas.

Relatively lower levels of political mobilisation during campaigns, as was shown, as well as a sense that the political system is not taking account of their concerns, are likely to further deflate turnouts in areas where rates are already low. This suggests the possibility of a "*vicious circle of turnout decline*". This envisages that politicians start to place less emphasis on certain areas, in terms of canvassing activity, as well as constituency work and policy making, because of their low turnouts relative to other areas in the constituency. This in turn leads to a further decline in turnouts in these areas and a further disincentive for politicians to 'work' these areas. As a result turnouts continue to decline and politicians further disengage themselves from the area. The empirical studies support this contention for the Dublin region at least, as they show that the greatest turnout decline was in the more deprived areas, once the Sinn Féin mobilisation effect was controlled for. Thus areas, such as North Clondalkin, where Sinn Féin support was low relative to other deprived parts of the Dublin region, experienced large declines in turnout over the 1997-2002 period. The very low turnouts in generally middle class, private apartment complexes in parts of the Dublin Inner City was a further complicating feature. Such low apartment turnouts meant that average inner city turnouts were pushed down by about 5-10 per cent in some cases. This, in turn, meant that politicians, who were relying on just polling district or constituency level turnout data, would be left with the impression that turnouts amongst the indigenous inner city population were

lower than they actually were. This could lead to further political disengagement from the inner city area, as a result, as envisaged by the vicious circle of turnout decline scenario.

This vicious circle of turnout decline may continue until some group acts to break it. Such efforts may be made on the part of people in low turnout communities voting in greater numbers or on the part of the political parties once again re-engaging with low turnout, socially deprived areas.

12.8 MEANS OF IMPROVING TURNOUT RATES

One way in which the cycle of turnout decline could be broken is through increased political party mobilisation in low turnout, socially deprived areas. The success of the Sinn Féin party machine in getting out the working class vote in different parts of Dublin city and in local authority housing estates in provincial towns has shown that relative increases in turnouts can be achieved if these areas are ‘worked’. There were higher than expected local and general election turnouts in some working class areas (e.g., West Cabra and West Tallaght), which were areas in which Sinn Féin had particularly concentrated their efforts in the lead up to these elections and made a strong effort to ‘get the vote out’ on polling day. This reflects Callahan’s (1998) findings that the contesting of elections by certain left-wing candidates could have the effect of increasing turnouts in poor US inner city communities, particularly in relation to other poor communities where such mobilisation was not in evidence. The success of Sinn Féin in mobilising the vote in these areas could encourage other political parties to further engage with these areas, leading to further turnout increases in future elections, as formerly low turnout areas become the focus of increasing levels of political mobilisation. It

could, in turn, ‘locally radicalise’ the other parties in the socially deprived areas, but particularly the left-wing parties such as Labour and the Green Party, as a means of preempting further Sinn Féin gains in these areas.

That said, centrist parties would probably prove less successful in mobilising the vote in deprived areas than Sinn Féin have proved to be in recent elections. The Sinn Féin message, due to its left-wing, nationalist ideology and anti-establishment message, is more likely to win support in socially deprived areas than more centrist parties. Centrist parties, therefore, would probably not gain as much electorally from ‘working’ socially deprived areas as Sinn Féin and other left wing parties would. That said, Fianna Fáil won the highest levels of support of any of the political parties in the more deprived areas, as was shown by Figure 9.1 (page 348). Other left-wing parties could prove more successful in mobilising the electorate in socially deprived areas, particularly if parties such as Labour and the Greens ‘locally radicalise’, as was suggested above, or move further to the left in national terms. Smaller socialist parties, such as the Workers Party, Socialist Workers Party, or the Socialist Party, might also have an impact in mobilising poor areas, although their efforts are likely to be quite localised, given the small level of resources and personnel these such parties have.

It must be noted, however, that turnouts in even Sinn Féin’s most successful areas still tend to be some 10-15 per cent lower than those in the more affluent areas. This could be a function of time, in that increased mobilisation over time might eventually mobilise higher proportions of people in these areas. However, it could suggest that the underlying sense of political alienation in these communities is continuing to prevent them from participating in the

democratic process to the same extent that middle class communities do, even in the face of intensive Sinn Féin mobilisation.

The other means of breaking the cycle is through increasing turnouts in socially deprived areas, independent of political party mobilisation, so as to act as a means of encouraging, or even forcing, political parties to increase their levels of engagement with such communities. Voter education has been suggested as a means and has been shown to have some success in encouraging people living in socially deprived areas to vote, although the small scale of voter education schemes preclude them from leading to massive turnout increases in the low turnout, socially deprived areas. There is no doubt that voter education schemes should be further utilised in low turnout, socially deprived areas and that government funding should be directed towards such schemes. However, although the *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* suggests the possibility of government funding for such measures (Department of the Taoiseach, 2002: 92), the Irish Government has largely focused on procedural measures in its efforts to improve turnouts. Some interviewees have argued that the government parties are disgruntled with voter education schemes because they perceive these as “*acting to the benefit of Sinn Féin*”.

The measures that the government have particularly focused on are the placing of candidate photographs on ballot papers and the use of electronic voting. The advantage of placing photographs on ballot papers, however, is somewhat debatable given that these presuppose a certain level of political awareness on behalf of the voters, which might not prove to be the case, especially amongst the educationally disadvantaged voters to whom this initiative is particularly directed. Electronic voting, in its current poll-based form, has not been shown to

improve turnout rates and may actually dissuade technophobes from voting, although this has not been proven. Turnouts were down more than the national average in these constituencies, but no more so than in other constituencies in the Greater Dublin region, where turnout decline was greater than in the rest of the country.

The measures that have perhaps proven most successful were the decision to have longer polling hours for the 2002 General Election and, in particular, the decision to hold the 2002 Nice Referendum on a Saturday. The particular success of the latter initiative, especially in the light of similar success when the 2001 Tipperary South By-Election was held on a Saturday (Figure 5.3), leads one to question as to why all elections – especially general elections – are not held on a Saturday.

A major limitation of procedural measures are that they will not act to erode the strong class base to Irish turnout rates, as such measures are just as likely, or even more likely in some cases, to facilitate middle class voters. Thus, focussing on such measures to promote voter participation will maintain class differences in turnout rates and could, in fact, act to further exacerbate them. In general, such procedural measures are more likely to combat short-term or accidental, rather than long-term, non-voting behaviour and middle class non-voters are relatively more likely to be short-term non-voters, whereas working class non-voters will more often be long-term. The government's continued stress on such measures, as well as its holding of the recent general election on a weekday, leads one to question whether it is really sincere in its efforts to increase turnout rates, especially in socially deprived areas.

Procedural measures will make no impact on the underlying class differentials in Irish turnout, while increased political mobilisation on the part of political parties, such as Sinn Féin, and voter education schemes will have a limited impact. The general sense is that, in line with Russel et al.'s (2002) contention, long term solutions to the problem of low turnout in socially deprived areas will only be found through addressing the causes of such low turnout. This was supported by the different analyses in the thesis. Political mobilisation was shown to make a contribution in determining levels of turnout and turnout decline by the statistical analyses, but social deprivation and related factors accounted for a larger proportion of turnout variance, especially in the Dublin region. Only through measures to combat the levels of deprivation that characterise these communities will their sense of political alienation be lessened and only through redressing this alienation from the political system will long-term improvements in turnouts come about.

12.9 FINAL WORDS: SOCIAL DEPRIVATION, POLITICAL ALIENATION AND COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

This research has shown strong associations between social deprivation and political alienation, particularly in the Dublin region. Turnouts are generally lower in the more socially deprived areas and, once Sinn Féin mobilisation is accounted for, there is a class dimension to temporal variations in turnout levels. This in turn, in the *vicious circle of turnout decline* scenario, leads to even further decreases in turnout as politicians disengage from these areas as they do not perceive any electoral advantage from working these areas. The complex nature of the associations between turnout and social well-being may exacerbate this process, as other influences interact to further push down turnouts in socially deprived areas. The most

notable example was the very low turnouts for private apartment complexes in the Dublin Inner City for the 1999 local elections, which meant that turnouts in parts of this area were some 5-10 per cent lower than they would have been for the indigenous, working class population. The relationship between turnout and social well-being was further influenced by geographical context. Thus, the complexity of the forces impacting on the relationship between turnout and deprivation must also be taken account of.

Allowing for the complexity of the issues involved, social deprivation and political alienation are strongly linked in the Irish context, especially in the more urban areas. Various measures have been put forward to redress the issue of low turnouts in socially deprived areas, but these have met with only limited success, probably because these measures do not address the underlying social deprivation underlying these low turnouts. The key means to treating the issue of political alienation in the poorer communities involves combating the deprivation that causes this, so that people in these communities will increasingly feel that they are stakeholders in their local community and society at large. Thus, the concepts of social deprivation, political alienation and community empowerment are strongly linked. Political alienation will only be redressed, and long-term increases in turnouts will only ensue, if and when the poorer communities are empowered by means of comprehensive measures to address the deprivation that blights them.

APPENDIX A

"ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP PROGRAMME" (VINCENTIAN PARTNERSHIP FOR JUSTICE).

The "Active Citizenship Programme" is a voter education programme that has been used with a number of groups in socially deprived area in the Greater Dublin region over the past few years. Feedback from participants on this programme has been widely positive. It has been proven that it encourages participants from socially deprived areas to vote in elections. Some of the comments made by the participants are noted below (Onyenemezu, 2001: 3-4):

"(The Programme) has made us realise that we can make a change in our society by our vote and that every vote counts".

"I can make more connections and realise we are responsible for the kind of politicians we get. I have never voted before but now I will always vote".

"It made politics sound interesting, it increased my knowledge of the voting system and how important it is to vote. It gave me the feeling that I have a choice, that it might make a difference and that asking questions prompts politicians to listen".

The programme is comprised of a number of units (Vincentian Partnership for Justice, 1997), a summary of which is included here.

Unit 1 – Our Voices, Our Votes

This unit focuses on a number of issues related to the voting process in Ireland. It focuses on the history of voting in Ireland, the reasons why one should vote, the means by which one can register to vote and one can cast a vote, as well as looking at political parties in Ireland. A number of learning tasks are used, relating to these issues, which include practical exercises on how to register to vote and the process involved in going down to a polling station to vote.

Unit 2 – Issues

The issues of greatest importance at election times are addressed in this unit. The unit focuses on helping participants to make more informed choices in relation to these issues, especially those issues that are particularly related to social justice concerns. Participants are invited to highlight the issues that would be important to them at election time and to discuss the way they would like things to be in their community and society at large. They also learn how to make informed decisions as to how they will stand on the different election issues.

Unit 3 – Candidates

This unit looks at who the candidates are, how to decide who one will vote for and how to hold those elected accountable after the election. The first of the tasks has to do with the participant's views of politicians and how these perceptions can influence their voting patterns. The next task focuses on the candidates in the participants' area and their policies, initiatives and achievements. The next task, "The Power Cycle", is a two-part process, in which the participants are helped to select candidates who are most like them, in terms of issues and their vision of a just society. This process aims to help participants in making a decision on which candidate to vote for, with the final task outlining the means of holding one's local elected representatives accountable.

Two additional units have also been included in this programme, with these focusing specifically on issues concerning European and local elections.

APPENDIX B

TURNOUT IN LIMERICK EAST IN THE 2002 GENERAL ELECTION

The Limerick East constituency in 2002 was comprised of Limerick City and the part of Limerick County that was not located in Limerick West, as well as a small portion of Co. Clare, encompassing the northern environs of Limerick City. The Limerick East constituency is a more urban one than Limerick West is, being largely dominated by Limerick City, although it also contained a rural area, comprising of the north-eastern part of Co. Limerick.

In some ways Limerick East could be viewed as a microcosm of the national political scene, especially mindful of the constituency being divided up into rural and urban areas. The constituency turnout in Limerick East was 62.4%, which just slightly below that of the national average. Moreover, the share of the vote between the four main parties in Limerick East roughly mirrored that which they won nationally, with Fianna Fáil winning 40.8% of the first preference votes, Fine Gael taking 28.4%, Labour winning 9.5% and the Progressive Democrats winning 10.0%.

There was a significant difference in turnout rates between the urban and rural areas in Limerick East. The average turnout in the Limerick City Council area was 60.3% and the average turnout for the part of the constituency that fell inside the Limerick County Council area was 65.6%. The difference in turnouts between the urban and rural areas, in reality, was even more pronounced than this, given that part of the environs of Limerick City fell inside the County Council's territory. Turnouts in such areas were relatively low, which in turn had the effect of pushing down the average turnout in the County Council area. Once the environs of Limerick City were excluded, turnouts for the more outwardly rural parts of the County

Council area rose to 72.7%. This left an average turnout of 61.0% in the rest of the constituency, that is the more urban parts of Limerick East. The turnout in the part of Co. Clare that fell inside the Limerick East constituency boundary was 63.7%.

The highest turnouts in Limerick East were generally registered in the more rural parts of the constituency. Cloverfield NS had the highest turnout in the constituency, with an 82.0% rate. Other high turnout areas in the rural parts of Limerick East included Doon (76.1%), Caherline (76.0%), Herbertstown (75.6%), Bilboa (73.9%), Kilteely (73.7%), Bruff (73.2%), Oola (73.0%), Murroe (72.9%) and Caherelly (72.2%). Some urban areas within the constituency also had relatively high turnouts. Such areas included the Corbally area (74.7%), the South Circular Road / Ballinacurra area (73.4%), Hassetts Cross (72.0%) and the Ennis Road area (70.9%).

The lower turnouts in the constituency were registered in the more urban parts of the constituency, either in the inner city parts of Limerick City or in the working class housing estate areas on the outskirts of the city. The lowest turnout in Limerick East was for the polling station serving St. Camillus' Hospital, which had a turnout rate of 25.5%. Moyross had the lowest non-institutional turnout rate in the constituency, with a turnout rate of just 28.7% for the areas in Moyross that were located inside the borders of the County Council area. Estates that were located in this area included Creaval Park and Delmege Park, which had a combined turnout of 28.1%, as well as Pineview Gardens, which had a turnout rate of 29.4%. Such low turnouts were as low as those found in the very low turnout areas of Dublin City, as were identified in Section 4.2. The part of Moyross that fell inside the City Council area had a higher turnout rate of 44.5% and the overall turnout for the Corpus Christi NS,

Moyross, polling station was 38.7%. The lowest turnout area in the City Council area of Moyross was the 40.4% turnout for the area comprised of Dalgaish Park, Hartigan Villas, Sarsfield Gardens and White Cross Gardens. The area with the next lowest turnout in Limerick East was the area served by the Presentation NS, Sexton Street, polling station, which had a turnout of 39.5%. This station served the inner city areas of Limerick City, with a 35.8% turnout for Presentation NS Booth 1, which served an area that included O'Connell Street, Arthurs Quay, Shannon Street and Lower Mallow Street.

Two other polling stations in Limerick East had turnouts of lower than 50%, both of which served working class areas in the north-eastern suburbs of Limerick City. The first of these was the Our Lady of Lourdes Club polling station, encompassing the Rosbrien area, which had a turnout of 47.6%, with a turnout of 45.0% for the booth serving an area that included Ballyclough Avenue, Garryglass Gardens, Hyde Road and Beechgrove Avenue. The other polling station to have a turnout rate of below 50% was the Southill NS, O'Malley Park, polling station, which had a 49.1% turnout rate. Within the area covered by this station, the Salvia Court, Southill House, Sunny Heights and Valley View areas had a combined turnout of 48.0%. There was a turnout of 50.1% for the area comprising of O'Malley Park, Larkin Drive and Roseview Drive, as well as a turnout of 48.7% for the area comprising of Bawnmore View, Galtee Drive and Avondale Court.

APPENDIX C

EQUAL TURNOUT SIMULATION MODEL

To simulate an equal turnout scenario, each of the polling stations were allocated the exact number of voters that they would have had if all stations had the same turnout as the constituency average. These votes were then distributed between the different candidates for that polling station, in the same proportion that the original votes for that polling station had been divided between the candidates. The methodology for this model is outlined as follows.

Let X_{ij} be the votes won by candidate i in polling station j.

Let X_i be the total votes won by candidate i.

Let T_c be the percentage turnout for the constituency.

Let T_j be the turnout for polling station j.

To create an equal turnout scenario, the total number of votes in station j is multiplied by T_c/T_j , thus ensuring that $T_c = T_j$ for all polling stations. In turn, the votes won by candidate i in polling station j, X_{ij} , are multiplied by T_c/T_j .

These simulated votes for each of the candidates in the different polling stations were then added together to produce a new, simulated, total vote for each of the candidates involved, termed X_{i*} .

$$X_{i*} = \sum_{j=1}^n X_{ij} \bullet \frac{T_c}{T_j}$$

Using these new simulated votes for the different candidates, the election was then rerun on a count-by-count basis, involving the same transfer patterns as in the original election, until the final seat was filled. The Electoral Database¹ programme was used to carry out these transfer patterns.

Case Studies

The equal turnout simulation was used for five different case study constituencies, covering the 1997 and 2002 General Elections. These models were based on tally figures for the 1997 General Election in the constituencies of Laois-Offaly and Dublin South East and for the 2002 election in the constituencies of Limerick West, Dublin South Central and Dublin Central. Case study constituencies were generally chosen on the basis of the closeness of the result or on the basis of a competition for the last seat between two ideologically different candidates. It was also important to include at least one rural and urban constituency for each of the two general elections as a case study.

The Dublin South East case is of especial interest in that it involved the closest contest in the 1997 election, with a margin of just 27 votes separating John Gormley (Green Party) and Michael McDowell (Progressive Democrats) on the final count. Laois-Offaly is a rural constituency, in which a Labour candidate, Pat Gallagher, lost out on the final seat, offering the possibility of investigating whether socio-economic biases in the turnout rate may have determined the destination of the final seat there. The Limerick West case for the 2002 election involved an even closer contest than was the case in Dublin South East in 1997, with Dan Neville of Fine Gael winning the last seat by a margin of just one vote over his party

¹ Copyright Ciaran Quinn, Dublin, accessed from <http://election.polarbears.com>

colleague, Michael Finucane. The Dublin Central and Dublin South Central cases involved situations in which candidates with high turnout bases in the constituency won the last seat just ahead of other candidates whose main support bases were in areas with significantly lower turnouts. In South Central the last seat was won by Mary Upton of Labour, whose bailiwick was in the high turnout southern part of the constituency, ahead of her party colleague, Eric Byrne, whose main support base had a lower turnout there. Dermot Fitzpatrick of Fianna Fáil won the final seat in Dublin Central by a margin of 74 votes ahead of Nicky Kehoe of Sinn Féin.

Dublin South East, 1997 General Election

The turnout map of Dublin South East in Figure C.1 shows that there was a defined spatial pattern to general election turnout variations there. Turnouts were lowest in the inner city areas, especially in the north west of the constituency, and they were highest in the more southerly parts of the constituency.

Moreover, support for the left of centre candidates was generally inversely related with the turnout rate, as was the case for Quinn ($r = -0.319$), Crilly ($r = -0.275$), O'Grady ($r = -0.248$) and Gormley ($r = -0.063$), inferring that their support levels were highest in the low turnout areas in the constituency. As a result the "equal turnout" simulation predicted that these candidates would have gained votes in such a scenario, as is illustrated by Table C.5. Quinn would have gained an extra 0.32% of the total vote (116 votes), Crilly an extra 0.18% (67 votes), O'Grady an extra 0.04% (15 votes) and Gormley an extra 0.04% (16 votes). This infers that spatial variations in general election turnouts in Dublin South East meant that the share of the vote won by socialist candidates was down by 0.6%, simply as a result of turnout variations. By contrast, McDowell gained an extra 0.47% (160 votes) of the total vote due to

turnout variations, reflecting the positive associations between turnout and McDowell support ($r=0.421$) in the constituency.

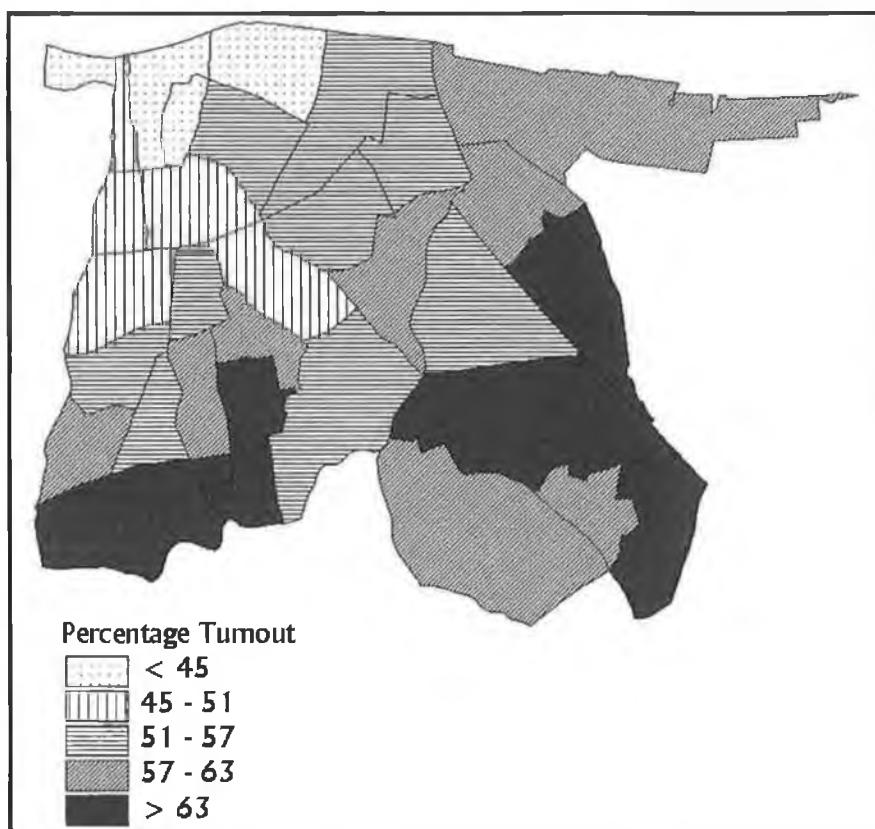


Figure C.1: Voter Turnout, by electoral division, in Dublin South East in the 1997 General Election.

The simulation predicts that, in an equal turnout scenario, Gormley would have gained an extra 175 votes on the first count relative to McDowell. The modelling of the count process, though the use of the Electoral Database programme, infers that Gormley would have increased his lead over McDowell on the Final Count from 27 votes to 314 (7,204 votes for Gormley and 6,890 for McDowell). Rather than involving a change of personnel for the final

seat, the equal turnout scenario in this instance simply involves a more comprehensive victory for Gormley and, subsequently, a less dramatic count in the constituency.

Laois-Offaly, 1997 General Election

Turnout variations in Laois-Offaly were not as pronounced as was the case in Dublin South East. Variations did exist between the counties themselves, as was noted in Section 8.3, with turnout in Laois (71.1%) somewhat higher than in Offaly (68.4%). Turnouts were generally lower than the constituency average in Tullamore, Portlaoise, north Offaly and south east Laois and higher in the north and west of Laois, as well as south-west Offaly. Mirroring research findings that suggested a weaker class dimension to turnout variations in rural constituencies in the 1999 local elections, the class dimension to the party structure in Laois-Offaly was weak relative to Dublin South East, with Labour the only left of centre party involved. Support for Labour candidate, Gallagher, was inversely correlated with turnout ($r=-0.337$), although the relatively low turnout in his Tullamore bailiwick, rather than socio-economic biases, may dictate this.

The equal turnout simulation envisages that the Laois-based candidates would have lost votes at the expense of candidates from Offaly, with the two Offaly-based Fianna Fáil candidates, Cowen and Killally, predicted to take an extra 0.82% (475 votes) share of the vote, as shown by Table C.6. It was also predicted that Gallagher would have gained 212 votes (an extra 0.37% share of the vote) in this scenario.

Re-running the election using the new simulated votes, however, resulted in no change in representation, although Gallagher would have gained some ground on his closest rival,

Flanagan, with the gap between them on the final count reduced from 1,213 votes to 846 in the simulation.

Dublin South Central, 2002 General Election

As noted in Section 7.3, there was a very defined spatial pattern to turnout variations within the Dublin South Central constituency in the 2002 General Election (Figure 7.12). Turnouts were highest in the southern part of the constituency and tended to be lower in the more northern parts, with the exception of the Inchicore and Chapelizod areas. The main low turnout areas were the Ballyfermot and Cherry Orchard areas in the north-west of the constituency and the South West Inner City area in the north-east, while the high turnout areas in the south included Walkinstown, Terenure and Templeogue.

There was a very strong socio-economic basis to the turnout variations and the housing characteristics of an area would especially appear to have had a strong bearing on the turnout rates, based on a statistical analysis. Table C.1 shows that significant associations existed between turnout and an array of demographic and socio-economic factors. High turnout in Dublin South Central was associated with areas having high percentages of female, married people, older voters, owner occupied housing and white collar employment. This suggests that the atypical high turnout area in Dublin South Central would be a settled, middle class area, as indeed would usually be the case for the Dublin region at large, as emerged in the analyses in Section 7.4. By contrast the correlations infer that an atypical low turnout area would be characterised by relatively high percentages of males, single people, younger voters, blue collar and services employees, unemployed people and Dublin Corporation rented housing.

Factor	Correlation
Male	-0.38*
Single	-0.53**
Married	0.62**
25-44, as percentage of electorate	-0.64**
45-64, as percentage of electorate	0.58**
Over 65, as percentage of electorate	0.63**
No Formal, Primary, or Lower Secondary education	-0.44**
Upper Secondary education	0.74**
Third Level education	0.24
Private Rented housing	-0.08
Rented from local authority	-0.74**
Owner Occupied housing	0.83**
Unemployment Rate	-0.69**
Blue Collar and Services employees	-0.41**
White Collar employees	0.42**

Table C.1: Correlations with turnout in Dublin South Central in the 2002 General Election. (Note **: p<0.05, *: p<0.01)

As regards potential influences on turnout change in the constituency, correlations with this measure were generally weak, suggesting that there was no major class based dimension to turnout change in the constituency. The only variable to have a significant association with turnout change was private rented tenancy ($p=-0.32$). This is somewhat to be expected given the high concentration of turnout decline in the South West Inner City, as this area would have the highest levels of private rented housing in Dublin South Central.

Regression analysis suggests that the strongest influencing factor on turnout appeared to be owner occupied housing. A model using this as the only predictor of Dublin South Central turnout variance had an adjusted R^2 value of 0.69, suggesting that owner occupied housing alone accounted for 68.7% of turnout variance in the 2002 election. A b-coefficient of 0.32 for this variable infers that a DED with only owner occupied housing would have a higher turnout, by 32.4%, than a DED with only rented housing. When two other predictors were included in this model, namely married people and white collar employees, the adjusted R^2

value increased to 0.76, thus inferring that these three variables alone combined to account for over three quarters of the turnout variance in Dublin South Central. A residual value of -17.5 for Ushers A suggests that this aberrant case was skewing the result somewhat, so the regression model was run again, with the Ushers A case excluded and the adjusted R² value increased to 0.83.

The b-coefficients and t-values for this model are illustrated in the Table C.2, with all of these coefficients being positive.

	Dublin South Central turnout
<i>Constant</i>	15.507 (3.14)
<i>Owner Occupied Housing</i>	0.22 (4.70)
<i>Married</i>	0.36 (3.2)
<i>White Collar employees</i>	0.14 (2.22)
<i>Adjusted R² value</i>	0.832

Table C.2: Aggregate data analysis of general election turnout in Dublin South Central, 2002. [Note: The main entry for each variable is the B coefficient, the italicised figure beside it (in brackets) is the t-value. T-values in excess of 2.02 are significant at p=0.05.]

Thus turnout in Dublin South Central would have been expected to increase in line with increasing levels of owner occupied housing, married people and white collar employees.

Having established a strong socio-economic basis to general election turnout variance in Dublin South Central, the next step is to analyse whether there were similar associations between turnout and party support in the constituency. Table C.3 shows that there were significant positive associations between turnout and Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and Progressive Democrat support in the constituency. There were weak, positive associations between turnout and Labour and Green Party support. Support patterns for Sinn Féin, the Workers

Party and the Socialist Workers Party were, by contrast, inversely associated with turnout, thus inferring that these parties did best in areas with lower than average turnout rates.

Party	Correlation	Share of Vote
Fianna Fáil	0.16**	34.4%
Labour	0.14	19.7%
Fine Gael	0.47**	16.9%
Sinn Féin	-0.60**	12.7%
Green Party	0.05	5.2%
Independents	-0.22*	4.7%
Progressive Democrats	0.38**	3.1%
Workers Party	-0.29**	1.9%
Socialist Workers Party	-0.28**	1.4%

Table C.3: Correlations between political support and turnout in Dublin South Central in the 2002 General Election. (Note **: p<0.05, *: p<0.01)

Within the different political parties that had more than one candidate contesting the election, the different candidates generally had different statistical associations with the turnout pattern. In the Fianna Fáil case support for their successful candidates, Sean Ardagh ($p=0.30$) and Michael Mulcahy ($p=0.24$), was positively associated with turnout, while support for the unsuccessful Fianna Fáil candidate, Marian McGennis ($p=-0.18$), was inversely associated with turnout. There was a positive association between turnout and support for the two Fine Gael candidates, Gay Mitchell ($p=0.48$) and Catherine Byrne ($p=0.13$). For Labour, support for Mary Upton ($p=0.42$) was positively associated with turnout, while there was a negative association between turnout and support for her running mate, Eric Byrne ($p=-0.16$). Support for the two Workers Party candidates, Linda Kavanagh ($p=-0.26$) and Shay Kelly ($p=-0.06$), was negatively associated with turnout.

In the election Gay Mitchell of Fine Gael, Sean Ardagh and Michael Mulcahy of Fianna Fáil, Aengus O'Snodaigh of Sinn Féin and Mary Upton of Labour won the five seats in the

constituency. Eric Byrne of Labour lost out on the Final Count, being 1,119 votes behind his running mate, Mary Upton, on that count.

The statistical association between Upton support and high turnout and Byrne support and low turnout suggests that there was a possibility that turnout considerations could have determined whether Upton or Byrne won the final seat. However, the margin of victory appears to be sufficiently large to ensure Upton would have won the seat even within an equal turnout scenario.

In an equal turnout scenario for the constituency, as outlined in Table C.7, many of the more left wing candidates would have been expected to increase their share of the vote. The candidate who would have gained the most in such a scenario would have been O'Snodaigh of Sinn Féin as he would have gained an added 1.1% share of the first preference votes (or an extra 474 votes). This would have mean that he would have topped the poll, rather than Ardagh, and that he would have reached the quota two counts earlier than he did in the actual election. Eric Byrne would have gained another 60 votes, or 0.1% share of the vote, in this scenario. McGennis, the Ballyfermot based Fianna Fáil candidate would have received an added 0.3% share of the first preference vote, amounting to 116 votes in total. Other candidates would have won a smaller share of the vote in the equal turnout simulation. Ardagh would have lost 0.4% of the vote, or received 156 fewer votes, Upton would have lost 0.4% of the vote, or 191 fewer votes, Mulcahy would lost 0.3% of the vote, or 131 fewer votes and Mitchell would have lost 0.7% of the vote, or 284 fewer votes. The equal turnout scenario would have entailed no change in terms of who was elected for the constituency, although the order in which candidates would have been elected would have changed. The

margin of Upton's lead over Byrne on the Final Count would have decreased from 1,119 to 740 votes, a decrease of 340 votes in the margin of victory.

Dublin Central, 2002 General Election

As with the Dublin South Central case study constituency, there were significant spatial variations in turnout rates within the Dublin Central constituency, as was discussed in Section 7.3 and illustrated by Figure 7.11. Parts of the constituency had some of the highest turnouts in Dublin for the general election, namely Drumcondra, Glasnevin and parts of the Cabra area, whereas there were very low turnouts in parts of the North Inner City, as well as the Phoenix Park area. As with Dublin South Central, socio-economic and demographic factors would appear to have had a strong bearing on turnout variation in this constituency. General election turnout was positively associated with married people ($p=0.78$), older² voters ($p=0.44$) and owner occupied housing ($p=0.89$). Turnout was inversely associated with single people ($p=-0.68$), young³ voters ($p=-0.45$), local authority rented housing ($p=-0.78$), private rented housing ($p=-0.43$), unemployment ($p=-0.52$) and lone parent families ($p=-0.70$).

The Dublin Central constituency was one of the most competitive constituencies in the Dublin area for the 2002 General Election, with just 74 votes separating the remaining candidates on the Final Count. The seats in the constituency were filled by Bertie Ahern, who topped the poll and was elected on the First Count, Tony Gregory, who was elected on the Fourth Count, Joe Costello, who was elected on the Fifth Count, and Dermot Fitzpatrick, who was elected on the Seventh Count. Nicky Kehoe of Sinn Féin lost narrowly on the Final Count. With

² Taken here to be the percentage of the electorate aged 45, or above.

³ Taken here to be the percentage of the electorate aged 24, or under.

just 7.6% of the first preference votes, in contrast with Kehoe's 14.6% share of the first preferences, Fitzpatrick was heavily reliant on Ahern and Mitchell transfers.

Candidate	Correlation	Share of Vote
Bertie Ahern FF	0.15	32.0%
Tony Gregory IND	-0.46**	16.7%
Joe Costello LAB	-0.24**	12.2%
Dermot Fitzpatrick FF	0.34**	7.6%
Nicky Keogh SF	-0.09	14.6%
Jim Mitchell FG	0.24**	11.1%
Tom Simpson GP	-0.17	4.3%
Fianna Fáil	0.48**	39.6%

Table C.4: Correlations between support and turnout in Dublin Central in the 2002 General Election. (Note **: p<0.05, *: p<0.01)

Table C.4 shows that there was a positive correlation between turnout in Dublin Central and support levels for the two Fianna Fáil candidates, Ahern and Fitzpatrick, as well as for Mitchell. There were inverse associations between turnout and the support levels of Gregory, Costello, Simpson and Kehoe, with these associations being significant for Costello and Gregory support levels. These correlations reflect the geographies of support in the constituency. The Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael candidates were strongest in the high turnout area in the north of the constituency, whereas Costello and Gregory were strongest in the low turnout inner city areas.

The equal turnout simulation, as illustrated by Table C.8, shows that the two Fianna Fáil candidates, Ahern and Fitzpatrick, would have both lost votes in such a scenario, as would the Fine Gael candidate, Jim Mitchell. In the simulation Ahern would have won 50 fewer votes (0.1% of the first preference votes), Fitzpatrick would have won 202 fewer votes (0.6% of the total first preferences and 7.8% of Fitzpatrick's first preference vote) and Mitchell would have

won 212 fewer votes (0.6% of the first preferences). By contrast, the left-wing candidates would have won a higher share of the first preference vote. Gregory would have won an extra 204 votes (or 0.6% share of the first preferences), Costello would have won an extra 162 votes (0.5% of first preference votes) and Keogh would have won an extra 83 votes (0.2% of the first preferences). If the gains of Green Party candidate, Tom Simpson (25 votes), were also taken account of, then the socialist candidates in Dublin Central would have taken another 472 votes (1.4% of the first preferences) in Dublin Central, had the turnout rate been the same for every area in the constituency. This is a rather significant number, given the narrow margin that existed between Fitzpatrick and Keogh on the Final Count.

Running through the different counts, using the *Electoral Database* programme, the simulation suggests that Keogh, and not Fitzpatrick, would have won the final seat, had there been no spatial variations in turnouts in Dublin Central in this election. The number of Keogh votes in the Final Count is increased from 6,350 to 6,422, while the number of Fitzpatrick votes declines from 6,424 to 6,178. This means that Keogh, in the equal turnout simulation, wins the final seat by a 244-vote margin. There is one other difference between the actual count and the count in the equal turnout scenario, in that Gregory exceeds the quota on an earlier count in the simulated count. Thus, the simulation shows that turnout variation did determine the destination of the final seat in Dublin Central in the 2002 election and also had the effect of increasing Fianna Fáil's Dáil representation at the expense of Sinn Féin. This is one clear example of where turnout variation in an Irish constituency acted to the advantage of the right-wing or centrist political parties and to the disadvantage of more left-wing parties.

Limerick West, 2002 General Election

The spatial pattern of turnouts in the Limerick West constituency was discussed in detail in Section 8.5. This showed that turnout variations were not as sharply defined for Limerick West in this election (as was the case for Laois-Offaly also) as they were for the more urban constituencies, such as Dublin Central, Dublin South Central and Limerick East. However, there were some areas of very high turnout within the constituency, the most notable being the Dromcolliher area in the south of the constituency, an area that largely approximated to the constituency bailiwick of Fianna Fáil candidate and subsequent poll topper, John Cregan. There were some areas with notably lower than average turnouts, with the most striking of these being Newcastlewest, the largest town in the constituency. Newcastlewest was also the constituency base of incumbent Fine Gael candidate, Michael Finucane. These turnout patterns were reflected in a correlation analysis of associations between turnout and candidate support in the constituency. The correlates for most candidates were generally negative and weak, including those for Collins ($p=-0.09$), Neville ($p=-0.06$) and Finucane ($p=-0.05$) support. However, there was a strong and positive association between turnout and Cregan support ($p=0.18$). The association between turnout and Fianna Fáil support was positive ($p=0.13$), while that between turnout and Fine Gael support was negative ($p=-0.12$). This infers that Fianna Fáil support was highest in areas of high turnout, whereas Fine Gael received higher shares of the vote in the lower turnout areas.

Given these turnout patterns, one would expect Cregan's electoral prospects to have been significantly assisted by the turnout pattern in the constituency, while one would have expected this pattern to have a deleterious effect on Finucane's electoral prospects. As it transpired, Cregan was to top the poll in Limerick West, while Finucane was to lose out on

the Final Count by a margin of just one vote to his party colleague, Dan Neville, with Neville on 8,564 votes and Finucane on 8,563. The third candidate elected for the constituency was Michael Collins of Fianna Fáil, who was elected on the Second Count on the Cregan transfers.

The equal turnout scenario, as illustrated by Table C.9, would have involved no major change to the vote share of any of the candidates, with the exception of the Fianna Fáil candidates. Cregan would have won 224 fewer votes, thus losing a 0.63% share of the vote. Cregan's party colleague, Collins, who was based in the lower turnout eastern part of the constituency, would have gained an added 0.51% of the vote (181 votes). Both the Fine Gael candidates would have made marginal vote gains, with Neville gaining another 26 votes and Finucane another 25 votes. The narrow margin for Finucane implies that, while he would have lost out on votes due to the low turnout in his Newcastlewest bailiwick, he would in turn have gained from taking the bulk of the Fine Gael vote in the high turnout southern parts of the constituency. On the Final Count Neville's lead over Finucane would have increased from the one vote margin to a seven-vote margin, largely arising from Cregan's reduced surplus, of which Finucane won a larger share than Neville did.

Concluding remarks

The equal turnout simulation was employed here for general election turnouts for five different constituencies, two for the 1997 election and three for the 2002 election. These models showed that certain candidates would have gained or lost significant shares of the vote had turnouts been similar for all areas of the constituencies in question. In one case, that of Dublin Central in 2002 election, the destination of the final seat in the constituency would

have changed. In general, the simulations predicted that socialist candidates would have increased their share of the vote in an equal turnout scenario, whereas candidates from the centrist or right-of-centre parties would have generally received a smaller share of the vote. This pattern suggests, by extension, that one impact of turnout variations within a constituency is that socialist candidates will generally receive smaller shares of the vote and centrist, or right-of-centre, candidates will receive larger shares of the vote than they would had turnouts been the same across the constituency. The use of transferable votes in the Irish electoral system further disadvantages the more left-wing candidates, given that they will usually be reliant on transfers from other left-wing candidates, who in turn will have low turnout support bases. This pattern is not as important in the rural constituencies, where geographical factors, such as urban-rural influences, rather than socio-economic concerns have a greater bearing on turnout variation.

The “equal turnout” simulation employed here has many limitations, mainly because it is based on a number of assumptions that assign political preferences to non-voters. (A clearer view of such preferences may arise from analyses based on the upcoming national election study (Marsh et al., 2001) however.) One assumption is that voting patterns for each polling station would remain the same, even if the total number of votes was increased or decreased, as envisaged in the simulation. However, increases in turnout in low turnout stations may prove to be of greater advantage to left of centre candidates to an even greater extent than the simulation envisages, thus suggesting that the simulation makes for overtly conservative inferences. By contrast, it could be argued also that these small socialist parties have already attained as many votes as they can mobilise. This view would argue that any turnout boost would be in the form of a bandwagon effect, benefiting the winning party nationally. The

model also assumes that the transfer patterns would be similar to those of the actual election, which would be unlikely to be replicated in a real life situation. However, the model, as such, does succeed in pinpointing the manner in which spatial variations in turnout rates may act to favour certain parties or candidates in a disproportionate manner, in terms of their overall share of the vote. Finally, the small margins involved in certain electoral contests mean that such simulations could envisage the destination of final seats being influenced by turnout concerns. This could especially prove to be the case if, as the simulations suggest, turnout variations are resulting in gains, or losses, of a hundred votes, or more, for certain candidates in a constituency.

Names of Candidates	1st Number of Votes	2nd Harpur	3rd Gorman & Guerin	4th Daly and O'Grady	5th Crilly's votes	6th Kirrane's votes	7th Whelan's votes	8th Ryan's Surplus	9th Doyle's votes	10th Fitzgerald's Surplus	11th Quinn's Surplus
Tom Crilly WP	761 <i>694</i>	762 <i>695</i>	773 <i>707</i>	915 <i>848</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mary Daly NLP	229 <i>231</i>	232 <i>234</i>	247 <i>249</i>	-		-	-	-	-	-	-
Joe Doyle FG	4,416 <i>4,541</i>	4,416 <i>4,551</i>	4,433 <i>4,558</i>	4,459 <i>4,585</i>	4,547 <i>4,667</i>	4,677 <i>4,799</i>	4,714 <i>4,835</i>	4,768 <i>4,886</i>	-	-	-
Frances Fitzgerald FG	5,399 <i>5,501</i>	5,400 <i>5,502</i>	5,422 <i>5,524</i>	5,444 <i>5,547</i>	5,467 <i>5,569</i>	5,549 <i>5,652</i>	5,601 <i>5,703</i>	5,654 <i>5,753</i>	9,375 <i>9,567</i>	ELECTED	
William D.J. Gorman	100 <i>99</i>	102 <i>101</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
John Gormley GP	4,312 <i>4,296</i>	4,314 <i>4,298</i>	4,356 <i>4,340</i>	4,618 <i>4,598</i>	4,948 <i>4,904</i>	5,141 <i>5,100</i>	5,268 <i>5,223</i>	5,558 <i>5,493</i>	5,787 <i>5,728</i>	7,179 <i>5,994</i>	7,204 <i>6,801</i>
Joe Guerin	114 <i>110</i>	119 <i>115</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
John Harpur	30 <i>29</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Maire Kirrane NP	1,154 <i>1,169</i>	1,155 <i>1,170</i>	1,161 <i>1,177</i>	1,186 <i>1,202</i>	1,219 <i>1,233</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-
Michael McDowell PD	3,862 <i>4,022</i>	3,864 <i>4,024</i>	3,886 <i>4,047</i>	3,908 <i>4,069</i>	3,936 <i>4,095</i>	4,156 <i>4,318</i>	4,444 <i>4,595</i>	6,023 <i>6,059</i>	6,233 <i>6,275</i>	6,880 <i>6,450</i>	6,890 <i>6,774</i>
Peadar O'Grady SWP	425 <i>410</i>	428 <i>413</i>	439 <i>425</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ruairí Quinn LAB	6,229 <i>6,113</i>	6,232 <i>6,116</i>	6,254 <i>6,139</i>	6,346 <i>6,231</i>	6,534 <i>6,406</i>	6,575 <i>6,448</i>	6,695 <i>6,564</i>	6,918 <i>6,771</i>	7,387 <i>7,252</i>	ELECTED	
Eoin Ryan FF	6,545 <i>6,494</i>	6,547 <i>6,496</i>	6,562 <i>6,511</i>	6,596 <i>6,545</i>	6,711 <i>6,652</i>	6,958 <i>6,902</i>	9,537 <i>9,377</i>	ELECTED			
Noel Whelan FF	3,095 <i>2,962</i>	3,096 <i>2,963</i>	3,113 <i>2,980</i>	3,131 <i>2,999</i>	3,166 <i>3,032</i>	3,290 <i>3,158</i>	-	-	-	-	-
Non Transferable		4 <i>3</i>	25 <i>14</i>	68 <i>47</i>	143 <i>113</i>	325 <i>294</i>	415 <i>374</i>	415 <i>374</i>	556 <i>514</i>	556 <i>514</i>	573 <i>1,091</i>
Total	36,671	36,671	36,671	36,671	36,671	36,671	36,671	36,671	36,671	36,671	36,671

Table C.5: Simulated Count for 1997 General Election for Dublin South East constituency in an equal turnout scenario. (Actual votes received for each count are in italicised form underneath the simulated figure.)

Names of Candidates	1st Number of Votes	2nd Cowen's surplus	3rd Fennelly, McCormack, McNamee & Seery	4th Honan	5th Killally
Brian Cowen FF	11,237 <i>10,865</i>	ELECTED	-	-	-
Tom Enright FG	8,331 <i>8,375</i>	8,466 <i>8,478</i>	8,713 <i>8,760</i>	9,133 <i>9,192</i>	9,511 <i>9,588</i>
Sean Fennelly	409 <i>516</i>	420 <i>525</i>	-	-	-
Charles Flanagan FG	7,986 <i>8,104</i>	8,022 <i>8,132</i>	8,242 <i>8,384</i>	8,837 <i>8,995</i>	9,117 <i>9,266</i>
Sean Fleming FF	5,378 <i>5,481</i>	5,810 <i>5,810</i>	6,117 <i>6,160</i>	6,841 <i>6,904</i>	10,420 <i>10,367</i>
Pat Gallagher LAB	6,953 <i>6,741</i>	7,092 <i>6,847</i>	7,314 <i>7,101</i>	7,743 <i>7,542</i>	8,271 <i>8,053</i>
Cathy Honan PD	3,673 <i>3,778</i>	3,787 <i>3,865</i>	3,984 <i>4,090</i>	-	-
Gerard Killally FF	4,431 <i>4,328</i>	4,929 <i>4,707</i>	5,096 <i>4,899</i>	5,619 <i>5,436</i>	-
Joe McCormack	356 <i>378</i>	357 <i>379</i>	-	-	-
Peter McNamee NP	1,013 <i>1,099</i>	1,020 <i>1,105</i>	-	-	-
John Moloney FF	8,208 <i>8,271</i>	8,385 <i>8,406</i>	8,644 <i>8,702</i>	9,713 <i>9,800</i>	ELECTED
Paddy Seery NLP	95 <i>134</i>	98 <i>137</i>	-	-	-
Non Transferable			281 <i>295</i>	505 <i>522</i>	1,359 <i>1,347</i>
Total	58,070	58,070	58,070	58,070	58,070

Table C.6: Simulated Count for 1997 General Election for Laois-Offaly constituency in an equal turnout scenario. (Actual votes received for each count are in italicised form underneath the simulated figure.)

Names of Candidates	1st Number of Votes	2nd Ahern surplus	3rd O'Loughlin, Prendergast, O'Donnell	4th Simpson	5th Mitchell	6th Costello surplus	7th Gregory surplus
Bertie Ahern FF	10,841 <i>10,896</i>	ELECTED	-	-	-	-	-
Joe Costello LAB	4,311 <i>4,149</i>	4,670 <i>4,513</i>	4,708 <i>4,553</i>	5,221 <i>5,060</i>	7,901 <i>7,885</i>	ELECTED	-
Dermot Fitzpatrick FF	2,390 <i>2,592</i>	4,624 <i>4,857</i>	4,735 <i>4,970</i>	4,967 <i>5,046</i>	5,457 <i>5,563</i>	6,174 <i>6,270</i>	6,178 <i>6,424</i>
Tony Gregory IND	5,879 <i>5,675</i>	6,682 <i>6,489</i>	6,827 <i>6,637</i>	ELECTED <i>7,254</i>	-	-	-
Nicky Kehoe SF	5,062 <i>4,979</i>	5,386 <i>5,308</i>	5,427 <i>5,351</i>	5,736 <i>5,495</i>	6,051 <i>5,827</i>	6,437 <i>6,188</i>	6,422 <i>6,350</i>
Jim Mitchell FG	3,554 <i>3,768</i>	3,758 <i>3,976</i>	3,842 <i>4,063</i>	4,049 <i>4,268</i>	-	-	-
Patrick O'Donnell IND	97 <i>89</i>	102 <i>95</i>	-	-	-	-	-
Paul O'Loughlin CSP	345 <i>366</i>	355 <i>377</i>	-	-	-	-	-
Tom Prendergast IND	107 <i>97</i>	112 <i>103</i>	-	-	-	-	-
Tom Simpson GP	1,495 <i>1,470</i>	1,569 <i>1,546</i>	1,673 <i>1,653</i>	-	-	-	-
Non Transferable			52	467	1,031	1,031 <i>374</i>	1,031
Total	34,081	34,081	34,081	34,081	34,081	34,081	34,081

Table C.8: Simulated Count for 2002 General Election for Dublin Central constituency in an equal turnout scenario. (Actual votes received for each count are in italicised form underneath the simulated figure.)

Names of Candidates	1st Number of Votes	2nd Kelly	3rd Smith	4th Kavanagh	5th Ni Conaill	6th Quinn (Jackson)	7th Jackson (Quinn)	8th Catherine Byrne	9th McElroy	10th McGennis	11th Ardagh's Surplus
Sean Ardagh FF	5,875 <i>6,031</i>	5,877 <i>6,033</i>	5,891 <i>6,047</i>	5,911 <i>6,066</i>	5,975 <i>6,131</i>	6,157 <i>6,202</i>	6,242 <i>6,399</i>	6,313 <i>6,472</i>	6,436 <i>6,595</i>	8,096 <i>8,207</i>	ELECTED
Catherine Byrne FG	1,977 <i>2,012</i>	1,980 <i>2,015</i>	1,990 <i>2,025</i>	2,027 <i>2,059</i>	2,058 <i>2,091</i>	2,163 <i>2,146</i>	2,227 <i>2,259</i>	-	-	-	-
Eric Byrne LAB	4,219 <i>4,159</i>	4,251 <i>4,188</i>	4,328 <i>4,265</i>	4,437 <i>4,365</i>	4,507 <i>4,436</i>	4,591 <i>4,568</i>	4,738 <i>4,659</i>	4,915 <i>4,839</i>	5,515 <i>5,438</i>	5,740 <i>5,658</i>	5,931 <i>5,844</i>
Vincent B. Jackson IND	1,252 <i>1,142</i>	1,257 <i>1,147</i>	1,313 <i>1,203</i>	1,444 <i>1,323</i>	1,531 <i>1,411</i>	1,531 <i>-</i>	-	-	-	-	-
Linda Kavanagh WP	613 <i>553</i>	768 <i>692</i>	858 <i>782</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Shay Kelly WP	301 <i>270</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kristina McElroy GP	2,286 <i>2,299</i>	2,299 <i>2,311</i>	2,388 <i>2,400</i>	2,487 <i>2,491</i>	2,570 <i>2,575</i>	2,758 <i>2,771</i>	2,979 <i>2,974</i>	3,117 <i>3,115</i>	-	-	-
Marian McGennis FF	4,216 <i>4,085</i>	4,216 <i>4,085</i>	4,241 <i>4,110</i>	4,295 <i>4,160</i>	4,333 <i>4,199</i>	4,479 <i>4,423</i>	4,729 <i>4,581</i>	4,822 <i>4,676</i>	4,973 <i>4,827</i>	-	-
Gay Mitchell FG	5,160 <i>5,444</i>	5,173 <i>5,456</i>	5,186 <i>5,469</i>	5,227 <i>5,507</i>	5,330 <i>5,612</i>	5,546 <i>5,708</i>	5,660 <i>5,941</i>	6,979 <i>7,280</i>	7,408 <i>7,709</i>	ELECTED	-
Michael Mulcahy FF	4,859 <i>4,990</i>	4,863 <i>4,994</i>	4,876 <i>5,007</i>	4,894 <i>5,024</i>	4,971 <i>5,102</i>	5,135 <i>5,165</i>	5,211 <i>5,342</i>	5,259 <i>5,391</i>	5,364 <i>5,497</i>	7,287 <i>7,364</i>	7,765 <i>ELECTED</i>
Aine Ni Conaill IND	914 <i>926</i>	918 <i>930</i>	937 <i>949</i>	955 <i>966</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Aengus O'Snodaigh SF	6,065 <i>5,591</i>	6,096 <i>5,619</i>	6,236 <i>5,759</i>	6,367 <i>5,879</i>	6,584 <i>6,099</i>	6,635 <i>6,376</i>	6,937 <i>6,431</i>	7,026 <i>6,522</i>	7,396 <i>6,892</i>	ELECTED <i>7,282</i>	- <i>7,523</i>
Bob Quinn PD	1,331 <i>1,337</i>	1,335 <i>1,381</i>	1,349 <i>1,395</i>	1,359 <i>1,405</i>	1,425 <i>1,472</i>	- <i>1,534</i>	-	-	-	-	-
Brid Smith SWP	619 <i>617</i>	636 <i>633</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mary Upton LAB	4,329 <i>4,520</i>	4,339 <i>4,529</i>	4,403 <i>4,593</i>	4,495 <i>4,677</i>	4,566 <i>4,749</i>	4,795 <i>4,863</i>	4,929 <i>5,110</i>	5,147 <i>5,332</i>	6,101 <i>6,286</i>	6,501 <i>6,675</i>	6,671 <i>6,963</i>
Non Transferable		8 <i>3</i>	20 <i>14</i>	118 <i>47</i>	166 <i>113</i>	226 <i>294</i>	364 <i>374</i>	438 <i>374</i>	954 <i>514</i>	1,718 <i>514</i>	1,719 <i>1,091</i>
Total	44,016	44,016	44,016	44,016	44,016	44,016	44,016	44,016	44,016	44,016	44,016

Table C.7: Simulated Count for 2002 General Election for Dublin South Central constituency in an equal turnout scenario. (Actual votes received for each count are in italicised form underneath the simulated figure.)

N a m e s o f C a n d i d a t e s	1st Number of Votes	2nd Cregan's surplus	3rd Collins' surplus	4th O'Riordan, MacDomnaill and Briody
Marcus Briody GP	942 <i>948</i>	989 <i>1,002</i>	1,131 <i>1,138</i>	-
Michael Collins FF	8,417 <i>8,236</i>	9,555 <i>9,526</i>	ELECTED	-
John Cregan FF	10,599 <i>10,823</i>	ELECTED	-	-
Michael Finucane FG	7,435 <i>7,410</i>	7,676 <i>7,684</i>	7,867 <i>7,867</i>	8,558 <i>8,563</i>
Michael MacDomnaill IND	641 <i>662</i>	683 <i>710</i>	765 <i>789</i>	-
Dan Neville FG	7,472 <i>7,446</i>	7,676 <i>7,678</i>	7,869 <i>7,101</i>	8,565 <i>8,564</i>
Patrick O'Riordan CSP	162 <i>144</i>	168 <i>151</i>	194 <i>177</i>	-
Non Transferable		3	6	709 <i>806</i>
Total	35,669	35,669	35,669	35,669

Table C.9: Simulated count for 2002 General Election for Limerick West constituency in an equal turnout scenario. (Actual votes received for each count are in italicised form underneath the simulated figure.)

APPENDIX D.1

QUESTIONNAIRE ON VOTING BEHAVIOUR IN THE SOUTH WEST INNER CITY¹

In some parts of Dublin many people vote and their areas are developed as a result. In other parts of Dublin, many people don't vote and so their areas are at risk of being ignored.

It's very important for people to vote for their area to get attention. Many people in the South West Inner City don't vote and we would like to know why.

We in the South West Inner City Network would ask you to kindly take the time to answer the questions in this questionnaire. This will take about 5-10 minutes.

CONFIDENTIALITY IS ASSURED.

So we would invite you to answer these questions as honestly as possible. Thank you for your assistance.

Where do you live?

Please Give the Name of your Street or Housing Estate:

.....

Q. 1 Are you Male or Female? (Tick one box)

Male

Female

Q. 2 Which of the following age categories are you in? (Tick one box)

15 to 24 years old

25 to 34 years old

35 to 44 years old

45 to 54 years old

55 to 64 years old

65 years or over

Q. 3 How many years have you been living in your present house? (Please write in number)

For Years.

¹ There were some differences between the questionnaires forwarded to the western and eastern parts of the South West Inner City, as these areas being located in different general and local election constituencies. Such differences applied to three of the questions and they are noted on where relevant.

Q. 4 What is your current occupation? (Please state below.)

.....

Q. 5 What age were you when you finished Full Time Education (Primary or Secondary school)? (Please write in number)

..... years old.

Q. 6 Have you been involved in Adult Education courses. If so, please state how many years you have spent on these. (Write in number)

..... years.

Q. 7 The last General Election was held in June 1997. The last Local and Europeans Elections were held in June 1999. A By-Election for Dublin South Central was held in October 1999. A Referendum was held in June 2001. Which of these elections did you vote in? (Tick either the Yes or No box for each Election)

- 1997 General Election
- 1999 Local and European Elections
- 1999 Dublin South Central By-Election
- June 2001 Referendum Vote

YES	NO

Q. 8 If you voted in any of these Elections, then why did you do so? (Please tick any of the boxes below)

- I always vote in elections, as part of my civic duty
- I want to support a certain political party
- Because a politician helped me (at a Clinic or otherwise)
- My family always voted and as a result so do I
- I want to make sure that a local candidate is elected
- I did not like the Government, so I voted to get them out
- To make sure I have a say in electing the Government/Council

If You Have Other Reasons or Comments; Please State Here:

.....

Q. 9 If you did not vote in the 1997 General Election, then why did you not do so? (Please tick any of the boxes that apply)

- Saw no point in voting – nothing ever changes.
- Was sick or away from home on voting day
- Politicians have no interest in the area – I never see them
- Not sure about who were the candidates in my constituency
- Politicians don't keep promises – no point in voting
- Not registered to vote at the time of the Election
- Was no local candidate running in the Election
- Political corruption
- Too young to vote at the time
- Had problems getting to Polling Station on time
- Had problems finding the Polling Station

If You Have Other Reasons or Comments; Please State Here:

.....

Q. 10 If you didn't vote in the 1999 Local Elections/European Elections, why did you not do so? (Please tick any of the boxes that apply)

- Saw no point in voting – nothing ever changes.
- Was sick or away from home on voting day
- Politicians have no interest in the area – I never see them
- Not sure about who the candidates were in my constituency
- Politicians don't keep promises – no point in voting
- Not registered to vote at the time of the Election
- Was no local candidate running in the Election
- Political corruption
- Too young to vote at the time
- Had problems getting to Polling Station on time
- Had problems finding the Polling Station
- Forgot to vote, or did not hear about the Election

If You Have Other Reasons or Comments; Please State Here:

.....

Q. 11 If you didn't vote in the 1999 Dublin South Central By-Election, why didn't you do so?² (Please tick any of the boxes that apply)

- Saw no point in voting – nothing ever changes.
- Was sick or away from home on voting day
- Politicians have no interest in the area – I never see them
- Not sure about who were the candidates in my constituency
- Politicians don't keep promises – no point in voting
- Not registered to vote at the time of the Election
- Was no local candidate running in the Election
- Political corruption
- Too young to vote at the time
- Had problems getting to Polling Station on time
- Had problems finding the Polling Station
- Forgot to vote, or did not hear about the Election

If You Have Other Reasons or Comments; Please State Here:

.....

Q. 12 If you didn't vote in the June 2001 Referendum, why did you not do so? (Please tick any of the boxes that apply)

- Did not see Referendum vote as important
- Did not understand the issues
- Had problems in finding the Polling Station
- Had problems getting to Polling Station on time
- Sick or away from home on voting day
- Was not registered to vote in this area
- Forgot to vote/ Didn't hear about the Referendum

If You Have Other Reasons or Comments; Please State Here:

.....

² This question did not appear on the questionnaires sent to the eastern part of the South West Inner City.

Q. 13 Is your name on the Electoral Register now? (Tick one box)

- YES; for my Present Address
- YES; but for my Previous Address
- I am not sure
- NO
- YES; both for my Present and Previous Addresses

Q. 14 Which of the following issues do you see as being of great importance for the next General Election? (Please rank the issues you see as being important, putting 1 in the box for your most important issue, 2 in box of your second most important issue, and so on.)

- Unemployment
- Crime
- Youth Issues
- Traffic Management
- Housing
- Estate Management
- Drug Abuse
- Education
- Health
- Public Transport
- Leisure Facilities
- Environment
- Other (Please State Below)

If Other; Please State Here:

Q. 15 Which of the following groups are the most likely to address the area's needs?
Please rank these groups, putting 1 in the box for the group you see as being most likely, 2 in the box of the second most likely group, and so on.

- Local TDs
- The Government
- Health Board/FAS/Gardai
- Business People
- Local Councillors
- South West Inner City Network
- Local Community Groups
- Local Clergy and Religious

Q. 16 Have you ever received assistance from a local TD, local Councillor, or other local politician, at a Clinic or otherwise? (Tick one of the boxes)

YES
NO

Q. 17 Which of the following aspects of the voting process do you have difficulties with?
(Tick any of the boxes that apply)

- Finding the Polling Station
- Not enough information on Voting Card
- Filling in the Ballot Paper
- Registering to Vote
- No Voting Card sent in post
- No time to vote
- Knowing who the Candidates are
- I have no difficulties
- Other (Please State Below)

If Other; Please State Here:

.....

Q. 18 Which of the following do you think could help people, who don't vote, to vote ?
(Tick any of the boxes that apply)

- Photographs beside names on Ballot Paper
- Polling Stations stay open longer (until 10pm)
- Courses about voting in Schools
- Weekend Voting
- Seeing better links between politics and the area's needs
- Better information from political parties
- Maps, showing where Polling Station is, on Voting Cards
- Voter Education programmes

If Other; Please State Here:

Q. 19 Are you a member of a Group, or Groups,(e.g. Tenants Associations, Political Parties...) in your locality, and if so, which one(s)? (Please state.)

.....

Q. 20 Do you read a Newspaper, and if so, which one(s)? (Please state.)

.....

Q. 21 Do you watch the News on either RTE, Network 2, TV3 or TG4, or listen to it on Radio?

If so, how often do you? (Please state.)

.....

Q. 22 What is your level of interest in National Politics? (e.g. to do with the Government, General Elections...) (Tick one box)

Very Interested

Fairly Interested

Not Much Interested

Not Interested At All

Q. 23 What is your level of interest in Local Politics? (e.g. to do with Local Elections, Dublin Corporation, Tenant's Associations...) (Tick one box)

Very Interested

Fairly Interested

Not Much Interested

Not Interested At All

Q. 24 Do you have a clear understanding of the issues at stake in the following elections?
(Tick one box for each election.)

General Elections

Yes

More or Less

To Some Extent

No

Local Elections

Yes

More or Less

To Some Extent

No

Referendums

Yes

More or Less

To Some Extent

No

Q. 25 Do you know (to see or to talk to) any of the following candidates who stood in the 1999 Local Elections for South West Inner City? Please indicate all those you knew. (Tick any box that applies)

Catherine Byrne

John Gallagher

Tom Brunkard
Denis Murphy
Mary Mooney

Kristina McElroy

Ken Fitzgerald
Karl Rock
Martina Kenna

Note: For the eastern part of the South West Inner City, this question appeared as:

Do you know (to see or to talk to) any of the following candidates who stood in the 1999 Local Elections for South East Inner City? Please indicate all those you knew. (Tick any box that applies)

Ciaran Cuffe

Kevin Humphries

*Mark Henry
Tom Crilly
Daithi Doolan*

Shay Ryan

*Gary Keegan
Gabrielle Weaver Arnold
Eoin Ryan*

Q. 26 Do you know (to see or to talk to) any of the following candidates who are standing in Dublin South Central in the next General Election? Please indicate all those you know.
(Tick any box that applies)

Vincent "Ballyfermot" Jackson
Catherine Byrne
Eric Byrne
Linda Kavanagh

Gay Mitchell
Marian McGennis
Sean Ardagh
Michael Mulcahy

Aengus O'Snodaigh
Kristina McElroy
Shay Kelly
Mary Upton

Note: For the eastern part of the South West Inner City, this question appeared as:

Do you know (to see or to talk to) any of the following candidates who are standing in Dublin South Central in the next General Election? Please indicate all those you know. (Tick any box that applies)

*Tom Crilly
John Gormley
Daithi Doolan*

*Ruairí Quinn
Frances Fitzgerald
Eoin Ryan*

Q. 27 Would you like more information about voting and the election process? (Tick either the YES or NO box)

YES
NO

Q. 28 What makes you, or would make you, want to vote? (Please state here.)

.....
.....

Thank you very much for taking the time to fill in this questionnaire.

**ONCE AGAIN, PLEASE BE ASSURED THAT THE CONTENTS OF THIS WILL BE
TREATED IN A CONFIDENTIAL MANNER.**

APPENDIX D.2

QUESTIONNAIRE ON VOTING BEHAVIOUR IN CO. LAOIS¹

It's very important for people to vote for their area to get attention. Some people in Co. Laois don't vote and this questionnaire aims to find out why.

CONFIDENTIALITY IS ENSURED.

So please answer these questions as honestly as possible. Thank you for your assistance.

Where do you live?

Please Give the Name of your Townland or Village or (if a Town) Street or Housing Estate:

.....

Q. 1 Are you Male or Female? (Tick one box)

Male

Female

Q. 2 Which of the following age categories are you in? (Tick one box)

15 to 24 years old

25 to 34 years old

35 to 44 years old

45 to 54 years old

55 to 64 years old

65 years or over

¹ This is the questionnaire that was distributed throughout the area of County Laois in November 2001. There were some differences between the questionnaires forwarded to the different parts of the county, due to these areas being located in different election local election areas. Such differences applied particularly to Q.24 as is noted on in that section of the questionnaire.

Q. 3 How many years have you been living in your present house? (Write in number)

For Years.

Q. 4 What is your current occupation? (Please state below.)

.....

Q. 5 What age were you when you finished Full Time Education (Primary or Secondary school)? (Write in number)

..... years old.

Q. 6 Have you been involved in Adult Education courses. If so, please state how many years you have spent on these. (Write in number)

..... years.

Q. 7 The last General Election was held in June 1997. The last Local and Europeans Elections were held in June 1999. A Referendum was held in June 2001. Which of these elections did you vote in? (Tick either the Yes or No box for each Election)

1997 General Election
1999 Local and European Elections
June 2001 Referendum Vote

YES	NO

Q. 8 If you voted in any of these Elections, then why did you do so? (Please tick as many boxes as required)

- I always vote in elections, as part of my civic duty
- I want to support a certain political party
- Because a politician helped me (at a Clinic or otherwise)
- My family always voted and as a result so do I
- I want to make sure that a local candidate is elected
- I did not like the Government, so I voted to get them out
- To make sure I have a say in electing the Government/Council

If You Have Other Reasons or Comments; Please State Here:

.....

Q. 9 If you did not vote in the 1997 General Election, then why did you not do so? (Please tick as many boxes as required)

- Saw no point in voting – nothing ever changes.
- Was sick or away from home on voting day
- Politicians have no interest in the area – I never see them
- Not sure about who were the candidates in my constituency
- Politicians don't keep promises – no point in voting
- Not registered to vote at the time of the Election
- Was no local candidate running in the Election
- Political corruption
- Too young to vote at the time
- Had problems getting to Polling Station on time
- Had problems finding the Polling Station
- Polling Station too far away

If You Have Other Reasons or Comments; Please State Here:

.....

Q. 10 If you didn't vote in the **1999 Local Elections/European Elections**, why did you not do so? (Please tick as many boxes as required)

- Saw no point in voting – nothing ever changes.
- Was sick or away from home on voting day
- Politicians have no interest in the area – I never see them
- Not sure about who the candidates were in my constituency
- Politicians don't keep promises – no point in voting
- Not registered to vote at the time of the Election
- Was no local candidate running in the Election
- Political corruption
- Too young to vote at the time
- Had problems getting to Polling Station on time
- Had problems finding the Polling Station
- Polling Station too far away
- Forgot to vote, or did not hear about the Election

If You Have Other Reasons or Comments; Please State Here:

.....

Q. 11 If you didn't vote in the **June 2001 Referendum**, why did you not do so? (Please tick as many boxes as required)

- Did not see Referendum vote as important
- Did not understand the issues
- Had problems in finding the Polling Station
- Had problems getting to Polling Station on time
- Polling Station too far away
- Sick or away from home on voting day
- Was not registered to vote in this area
- Forgot to vote/ Didn't hear about the Referendum

If You Have Other Reasons or Comments; Please State Here:

.....

Q. 12 Is your name on the Electoral Register now? (Tick one box)

- YES; for my Present Address
- YES; but for my Previous Address
- I am not sure
- NO
- YES; both for my Present and Previous Addresses

Q. 13 Have you ever received assistance from a local TD, local Councillor, or other local politician, at a Clinic or otherwise? (Tick one of the boxes)

- YES
- NO

Q. 14 Which of the following issues do you see as being of great importance for the next General Election?

Please rank the issues you see as being important, putting 1 in the box for your most important issue, 2 in box of your second most important issue, and so on.

- Unemployment
- Crime
- Youth Issues
- Traffic Management
- Housing
- Management of Housing Estates
- Drug Abuse
- Education
- Health
- Public Transport
- Leisure Facilities
- Environment
- Farming
- Other (Please State Below)

If Other; Please State Here:

Q. 15 Which of the following groups are the most likely to address the area's needs?
Please rank these groups, putting 1 in the box for the group you see as being most likely, 2 in the box of the second most likely group, and so on.

- Local TDs
- The Government
- Health Board/FAS/Gardaí
- Business People
- Local Councillors
- Laois LEADER
- Local Community Groups
- Local Clergy and Religious

Q. 16 Are you a member of a Group, or Groups,(e.g. LEADER Groups, GAA, ICA, Macra, Parish Councils, Political Parties...) in your locality, and if so, which one(s)? (Please state.)

.....

Q. 17 Do you read a Newspaper, and if so, which one(s)? (Please state.)

.....

Q. 18 Do you watch the News on either RTE, Network 2, TV3 or TG4, or listen to it on Radio?

If so, how often do you? (Please state.)

.....

Q. 19 Which of the following aspects of the voting process do you have difficulties with?
(Please tick as many boxes as required)

- Finding the Polling Station
- Not enough information on Voting Card
- Filling in the Ballot Paper
- Registering to Vote
- No Voting Card sent in post
- No time to vote
- Knowing who the Candidates are
- Polling Station too far away
- I have no difficulties
- Other (Please State Below)

If Other; Please State Here:

.....

Q. 20 Which of the following do you think could help people, who don't vote, to vote ?
(Please tick as many boxes as required)

- Photographs beside names on Ballot Paper
- Polling Stations stay open longer (until 10pm)
- Courses about voting in Schools
- Weekend Voting
- Seeing better links between politics and the area's needs
- Better information from political parties
- Maps, showing where Polling Station is, on Voting Cards
- Voter Education programmes

If Other; Please State Here:

.....

Q. 21 What is your level of interest in National Politics? (e.g. to do with the Government, General Elections...) (Tick one box)

Very Interested

Fairly Interested

Not Much Interested

Not Interested At All

Q. 22 What is your level of interest in Local Politics? (e.g. to do with Local Elections, Laois County Council, Tenant's Associations...) (Tick one box)

Very Interested

Fairly Interested

Not Much Interested

Not Interested At All

Q. 23 Do you have a clear understanding of the issues at stake in the following elections? (Tick one box for each election.)

General Elections

Yes

More or Less
To Some Extent

No

Local Elections

Yes

More or Less
To Some Extent

No

Referendums

Yes

More or Less
To Some Extent

No

Q. 24 Do you know (to see or to talk to) any of the following candidates who stood in the 1999 Local Elections in Portlaoise? Please indicate all those you knew. (Please tick as many boxes as required)

Fred Bannan

Sean O'Gorman

Brendan Tynan

Tom Phelan

Kathleen O'Brien

Joseph McCormack

Anthony Lodge

Tom Jacob

Jerry Lodge

Brian Stanley

Mary Sweeney

Charles Flanagan

Catherine Fitzgerald

Joe Dunne

[Note: Given that there were five different local election constituencies and two town commission constituencies encompassed in the study area, there were seven versions of this question, with different versions of this questionnaire forwarded to respondents in the different local election constituencies. this is the question that appeared in the version forwarded to respondents in the rural parts of the Portlaoise constituency.]

Q. 25 Do you know (to see or to talk to) any of the following candidates who are standing in Laois-Offaly in the next General Election? Please indicate all those you know. (Please tick as many boxes as required)

Olwyn Enright

John Dwyer

Brian Cowen

John Moloney

Charlie Flanagan

Sean Fleming

Gerard Killally

Q. 26 Would you like more information about voting and the election process? (Tick either the YES or NO box)

YES

NO

Q. 27 What makes you, or would make you, want to vote? (Please state here.)

.....
.....
.....

Thank you very much for taking the time to fill in this questionnaire.

**ONCE AGAIN, PLEASE BE ASSURED THAT THE CONTENTS OF THIS WILL BE
TREATED IN A CONFIDENTIAL MANNER.**

If you are returning this by post, please forward the completed questionnaire (in the Stamped Addressed Envelope provided) to:

Laois Voting Questionnaire,
c/o Adrian Kavanagh MA,
Geography Department,
NUI Maynooth, Co. Kildare.

APPENDIX D.3

POLITICIANS' QUESTIONNAIRE ON VOTING BEHAVIOUR¹

Increasing percentages of Irish people are not voting in elections. I am currently in the final year of a PhD research project on this issue. This questionnaire seeks the views and approaches of politicians towards the issue of low and declining turnouts in Ireland.

CONFIDENTIALITY IS ENSURED.

Hence, it would be greatly appreciated if you could kindly answer the following questions as honestly as possible. Thank you for your assistance.

Q. 1 Which constituencies do you represent, or belong to?

Please give the name of your Dáil/General Election and Local Election constituencies in the spaces below and tick the box relating to your European Election constituency.

Dáil/General Election constituency:

.....

Local Election constituency:

Q. 2 Are you Male or Female? (Tick one box)

Male

Female

¹ This is the questionnaire that was forwarded to respondents in January 2002. A second version was forwarded to newly elected Dáil deputies in June 2002, which was essentially the same questionnaire, only that some questions were rephrased to be asked in the past tense.

Q. 3 Which of the following parties do you represent? If you are an Independent, please tick a box to identify yourself as either being socialist, centrist or conservative in political outlook. (Tick one box)

Fianna Fáil		Fine Gael		Labour	
Progressive Democrats		Green Party		Sinn Féin	
Socialist Party		W.U.A.G.		Workers Party	
Independent (Socialist)		Independent (Centrist)		Independent	

Q. 4 Which of the following occupations do you have in the political scene? (Please tick any box that applies)

TD		Senator	
Councillor		Town Commissioner	
Member of European Parliament		General Election 2002 Candidate	
Election Agent		Other	

If "Other", please state here:

Q. 5 How would you classify the turnout rate of your Dáil constituency, as a whole, in relation to the national average? (Please tick box)

Very High		Fairly High	
Slightly Above Average		Average	
Slightly Below Average		Fairly Low	
Very Low		Do Not Know	

Q. 6 How would you classify the turnout rate of your bailiwick – area you, or your candidate(s) achieve your highest levels of support – in relation to the average for your constituency? (Please tick box)

Very High	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fairly High	<input type="checkbox"/>
Slightly Above Average	<input type="checkbox"/>	Average	<input type="checkbox"/>
Slightly Below Average	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fairly Low	<input type="checkbox"/>
Very Low	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do Not Know	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q. 7 Usually, there may be considerable differences in turnout rates between different parts of a Dáil constituency.

If turnout rates were, however, to be the same in all parts of your constituency, what effect do you think this would have on your (or your candidate(s)'s) share of the vote in that constituency? (Please tick box)

Significant Increase	<input type="checkbox"/>
Slight Increase	<input type="checkbox"/>
Slight Decrease	<input type="checkbox"/>
Significant Decrease	<input type="checkbox"/>

Moderate Increase	<input type="checkbox"/>
No Change	<input type="checkbox"/>
Moderate Decrease	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do Not Know	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q. 8 Which of these factors or motivations do you think will have a role in **encouraging people to vote** in your constituency in this year's General Elections?

Please rank these in order of importance. (Please put "1" in box of most important factor, "2" in box of second most important factor, and so on.)

- Civic duty
- Supporting a certain political party
- Rewarding a politician for help received (at a clinic or otherwise)
- Family tradition
- Ensuring that a local candidate is elected
- Protest vote: against Government
- Protest vote: against politics in general
- Ensuring one has a say in electing the Government
- Other

<input type="checkbox"/>

If "Other", please state here:

Q. 9 Which of these factors do you think will play a role in **discouraging people from voting** in your constituency in this year's General Elections?

Please rank these in order of importance. (Please put "1" in box of most important factor, "2" in box of second most important factor, and so on.)

- Polling Station difficulties – too far away, difficulties finding station, etc.
- People having difficulties with filling in the ballot paper
- Insufficient information on voting card or people not receiving a voting card
- Problems with the electoral register
- Insufficient time/opportunity to vote – stations close too early, working away from home
- Perception that there are no real differences between political parties
- Recent revelations about political corruption in the tribunals and the media
- Lack of a candidate running from one's local area
- Sense that result of election will make no changes to people's lives
- Sense that politicians do not keep the promises they make at election time
- People not knowing who their election candidates are
- The media
- Apathy
- People feeling satisfied with their lot in Celtic Tiger Ireland
- Social exclusion
- Laziness
- Other

If "Other", please state here:

.....

Q. 10 Which of these groups would you expect to have **low turnout rates** in your constituency in the coming General Election? (Please tick any box that applies.)

- The Young (18-34 age group)
- The Poor
- Council/Corporation Housing Tenants
- Residents of Private 'Gated' Apartments
- Educationally Disadvantaged People
- Migrants (those that are registered)

- Senior Citizens
- The Professional Classes
- New Residents in Area
- Owner Occupiers
- Unemployed
- Other

If "Other", please state here:

.....

Q. 11 Which of these groups would you see as being **strong supporters of you (or your candidate(s)/party)** in your constituency? (Please tick any box that applies.)

The Young (18-34 age group)
The Poor
Council/Corporation Housing Tenants
Residents of Private 'Gated' Apartments
Educationally Disadvantaged People
Migrants (those that are registered)

Senior Citizens
The Professional Classes
New Residents in Area
Owner Occupiers
Unemployed
Other

If "Other", please state here:
.....

Q. 12 How aware would you be of turnout rates for different areas within your Dáil election constituency? (Please tick as many boxes as required)

Extremely Aware – To the level of knowing, roughly, turnouts for individual housing estates, streets, villages or townlands.

Very Aware – To the level of knowing, roughly, turnouts for relatively small areas (made up, say, of small numbers of housing estates, streets or townlands).

Reasonably Aware – To the level of knowing, roughly, turnouts for individual local elections constituencies within your Dáil constituency

Not Aware At All

Q. 13 Which of the following issues do you see as being of greatest importance for the next General Election in your constituency?

Please rank the issues you see as being important, putting 1 in the box for your most important issue, 2 in box of your second most important issue, and so on.

- Unemployment
- Crime
- Youth Issues
- Traffic Management
- Housing
- Management of Housing Estates
- Drug Abuse
- Education
- Health
- Public Transport
- Leisure Facilities
- Environment
- Farming
- Abortion
- Other (Please State Below)

If Other; Please State Here:

.....

Q. 15 Which of the following groups are the most likely to address your constituency's most important needs, as were identified above?

Please rank these groups, putting 1 in the box for the group you see as being most likely, 2 in the box of the second most likely group, and so on.

- Local TDs
- The Government
- Health Board/FAS/Gardaí
- Business People
- Local Councillors
- Partnerships/LEADER
- Local Community Groups
- Local Clergy and Religious

Q. 16 How would you characterise the level of your engagement as a politician or political activist with low turnout areas and groups within your constituency? (Please tick the box that applies.)

- Most of my time is spent working with these low turnout areas and groups.
Much of my time is spent working with these low turnout areas and groups.
Spend slightly more time working with these low turnout areas and groups.
It depends – Spend more time working with some low turnout groups and areas.
Makes no difference – I give the same level of service to all, regardless of turnout.
Spend slightly more time working with high turnout areas and groups.
Very little of my time is spent working with these low turnout areas and groups.
Hardly any of my time is spent working with these low turnout areas and groups.
Other (Please State Below)

.....

Q. 17 When canvassing at elections, how would the fact that certain areas in your constituency have low turnouts influence your canvassing strategy in the weeks leading up to the election? (Please tick any of the boxes that apply)

- Mainly target low turnout areas: Most of my supporters would hail from low turnout areas.
Mainly target low turnout areas: It is important to encourage people in these areas to vote and canvassing is the best way of doing so.
Mainly target low turnout areas: Party strategy divides my constituency and it has allocated a mainly low turnout area to me.
Makes no difference. I treat all parts of my constituency the same while canvassing, regardless of turnout rates.
Makes no difference. Turnout rates for different areas in my constituency are relatively similar.
Makes no difference. Elections are closely fought, so I cannot afford to ignore any area, whether it has a low or high turnout.
Makes no difference. Canvassing strategy in my constituency is dictated instead by party strategy.
Mainly target high turnout areas: Party strategy divides my constituency and it has allocated a mainly high turnout area to me.
Mainly target high turnout areas: Most of my supporters would hail from high turnout areas.
Mainly target high turnout areas: Personnel and financial resources are limited, so have to go where one will get the highest return for ones efforts.
Mainly target high turnout areas: People in low turnout areas don't bother voting so why should I make the effort when I will get no electoral gain?

Q. 18 What impact will differing turnout rates between areas and groups have on the election result in **your constituency** in the General Election (Tick one box)

Big Impact: One or more candidates will win (lose) a seat because they are mainly supported by areas and groups with high (low) turnout rates.

Some Impact: Some candidates will win (lose) considerable numbers of votes (200 plus) – but not to the point of making a difference in terms of who wins or loses seats

Slight Impact: Some candidates will win (lose) small numbers of votes (50-200) – and will make no difference in terms of who wins or loses seats

No Impact: Only very small numbers of votes (less than 50) will be won or lost as a result of turnout differences between areas and groups.

Q. 19 What impact will differing turnout rates have on the election results **nationally** in the General Election (Tick one box)

Big Impact: More than 10 seats will be won or lost on the basis that certain parties are supported by areas and groups with high (low) turnout rates.

Some Impact: 5 to 10 seats will be won or lost on the basis that certain parties are supported by areas and groups with high (low) turnout rates.

Slight Impact: Less than 5 seats will be won or lost on the basis that certain parties are supported by areas and groups with high (low) turnout rates.

No Impact: No seats will be won or lost on the basis that certain parties are supported by areas and groups with high (low) turnout rates.

Q. 20 What impact can politicians have in terms of raising turnout levels at the upcoming General Election? (Tick one box)

Big Impact
Some Impact
Slight Impact

No Impact
Negative Impact
Don't Know

Please elaborate on why you chose the answer you did in the space provided below.

I chose this because:

.....
.....

Q. 21 Which of the following **changes to the electoral process** do you think could help people, who don't vote, to vote? (Please tick as many boxes as required)

- Photographs beside names on ballot paper
- Polling stations stay open longer (until 10pm)
- Courses about voting in schools
- Weekend voting
- Seeing better links between politics and the area's needs
- Better information from political parties
- Maps, showing where the polling station is, on voting cards
- Voter education programmes

If Other; Please State Here:

.....

Q. 22 What do you think are the key approaches to be taken – in addition to those you may have noted in Q. 21 above – to encourage non-voters in your constituency to vote? (Please state here.)

.....

Q. 23 How important is the aim of improving turnout to you, and why? (Please state here.)

.....

Thank you very much for taking the time to fill in this questionnaire.

**ONCE AGAIN, PLEASE BE ASSURED THAT THE CONTENTS OF THIS WILL BE
TREATED IN A CONFIDENTIAL MANNER.**

Please forward the completed questionnaire to:

Adrian Kavanagh MA,
Geography Department,
NUI Maynooth,
Co. Kildare.

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