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# Limerick after the Downturn: Contemporary Demographic & Socio-Economic Geography of the Urban Area

Prepared for Limerick City Council

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# Introduction



# Introduction

This is the third in a series of census atlases of Limerick produced over the course of the last decade by the Department of Geography in Mary Immaculate College, under commission by Limerick City Council. The latest version of the atlas uses data from the 2011 census of population to once again present a comprehensive profile of the demographic, economic and social geography of the Limerick urban area. The previous profile, based on the 2006 census of population, provided a snapshot of the urban area at the 'high water mark' of the Celtic Tiger boom, following an extended period of economic expansion characterised in its latter stages by a major building boom<sup>1</sup>. Much has changed since then in the national economy and in the public finances. In terms of the economic fundamentals, the years 2006-2011 constituted a very difficult period for the country as a whole. Gross national product contracted by 7 per cent<sup>2</sup>, while the number of persons on the live register increased by 184 per cent to 440,000<sup>3</sup>, and estimated emigration by 124 per cent to 80,600<sup>4</sup>. The economic downturn was associated with (though not the main cause of) a major crisis in the public finances, with government spending reduced by 8 per cent between 2006 and 2011<sup>5</sup>. The scale of the reduction has been such that every area of public spending has been affected. While the downturn has continued beyond 2011, and indeed may persist for some time yet, the census of that year nevertheless provides us with the first chance to establish a comprehensive overview of the local effects of the crisis as it has played out in the individual neighbourhoods and communities that make up the city.

The period 2006-11 has also been one of significant change for Limerick in the institutional environment within which public policy is promulgated and delivered. With the need for spending cuts forcing a major rationalisation of the public service, the Limerick Local Government Committee (also known as the Brosnan Committee) in 2010 recommended the amalgamation of the City and County authorities to form the new Limerick City and County Council. While the first elections to form the new authority took place this year (2014), the associated organisational re-structuring has been underway for some time. The period between the last two censuses also witnessed the establishment in 2007 (following the recommendations of the Fitzgerald Report) of the Limerick Regeneration Agencies. With the winding up of the agencies in 2012, responsibility for regeneration has passed to the Office of Regeneration in the new local authority, which launched the Limerick Regeneration Framework Implementation Plan in September 2013. Although the original Masterplan, which envisaged €3.1 billion of public and private investment in designated disadvantaged areas of the city, has been considerably scaled back, the regeneration programme has nevertheless impacted significantly on the target estates during the time period covered by this report.

In the new era of austerity, the challenge of effective public policy making is more acute than ever. As "doing more with less" has become the mantra for public service reorganisation, there is a greater need than ever for good quality data on which to base evidence-informed policy making. The economic downturn and the cuts in both public and private spending have impacted on every local community in the country, but given the differences between localities in economic resources, in social capital and resilience – differences that have been documented for Limerick by previous profiles – it can be expected that the impacts have been greater in some communities than in others. For the various public and voluntary bodies delivering services at the local scale there remains a need for information that can depict the nuance of local variation within the wider urban area. This atlas is intended to help meet that need.

Although the thematic approach of the atlas is similar to previous editions, there are a couple of methodological innovations in the current version that, we hope, will make it even more informative and useful to policy makers and service providers. First, having produced a small number of maps in the 2006 atlas at the level of Enumeration Areas, we have adopted the principle of mapping at the lowest possible spatial scale throughout the current profile, using data for the new "Small Areas" first introduced in the 2011 census. Small Areas are sub-divisions of the units that formed the main framework for previous profiles, the Electoral Divisions, and in some cases they enable almost a street-by-street level of analysis. By mapping at this scale we are able to reveal the true complexity of the socio-economic geography of the city. Second, we have adopted a new methodology for the classification of areas which makes it easier to compare the city profile on the various indicators with the corresponding national profile. As a result, we are more readily able to identify indicators on which the city either lags behind, or indeed leads, the rest of the country: in other words, we are better able to get an idea of the aspects of demography or of socio-economic development in which Limerick is unusual or, occasionally, exceptional to some degree. Further detail on these methodological innovations is provided in section 3.

As in previous years, the 2011 profile commences (Section 2) with an overview of the role and recent performance of the city as regional capital and gateway city. Particular attention is given to the main areas that impact on the competitiveness of the city, including population trends, economic performance, transportation and communications connectivity, and quality of life. Section 3 describes the key elements of the methodology used to define the urban area and to produce the thematic maps. The following Sections 4 to 11 examine the spatial patterns of an array of demographic and socio-economic indicators derived from the 2011 census data for the new Small Areas. In all 55 maps are provided, covering the City and its suburbs. The profile concludes (Section 12) by identifying ongoing as well as emerging issues in the city's development that must be addressed if Limerick is to reach its full potential as a gateway city providing a high quality and sustainable living environment for its present and anticipated future population.

1 McCafferty, D. and O'Keeffe, B. (2009) *Facing the Challenge of Change: A Spatial Perspective on Limerick* (Limerick: Limerick City Council)

2 CSO *National Income and Expenditure 2011*

3 CSO Statbank. Live Register, Table LRM07, April to April comparison

4 CSO Statbank. Annual Population Estimates, Table PEA10

5 CSO *National Income and Expenditure 2011*

An aerial photograph of a bridge spanning a wide river in Limerick, Ireland. The bridge is a multi-lane road bridge with a central section that is currently closed to traffic, indicated by orange traffic cones and barriers. People are walking across the bridge. In the background, the city of Limerick is visible, including a prominent church spire and various urban buildings. The sky is clear and blue, suggesting a bright day. The river reflects the sky and the surrounding city.

# Limerick in its Regional & National Context

# Limerick in its Regional & National Context

In 2002, Limerick – Shannon was designated as one of Ireland’s Gateway Cities under the National Spatial Strategy (NSS). Gateways were accorded very important roles in promoting inter-regional connectivity and driving regional competitiveness. The NSS emphasised that the Mid-West Region’s contribution to balanced regional development would require enhancement of the performance of the Limerick –Shannon Gateway at the national and international levels. In this context, the Mid-West Regional Authority produced a set of Regional Planning Guidelines in 2004, which were updated in 2010 to apply the objectives of the NSS in Counties Limerick, Clare and North Tipperary<sup>6</sup>. The Guidelines cover the period 2010 to 2022, and outline how the region can capitalise on its various strengths, including Shannon International Airport, the Shannon Estuary, third-level institutions, its cultural heritage and unique landscapes, among other resources. They note the need to improve water quality in the region, secure more sustainable sources of energy, upgrade and integrate public transport, and improve connectivity to other parts of Ireland and beyond. With respect to economic development, the Regional Planning Guidelines advocate a more vibrant city centre in Limerick, stronger linkages between education providers and industry, improved transport links to Galway and Cork, and a more diversified economic base, which would be enabled through adequate provision of land and facilities to support enterprise development. The Guidelines specify that “The planning system must play its role in ensuring that future development needs are planned for in a strategic, plan-led, infrastructure delivery friendly and coordinated manner, which takes account of the needs of the people and communities of the Region” (2010, page 40). Adherence to the Regional Planning Guidelines, and the implementation of the recommendations arising from the micro-level geographical analysis of the Limerick urban area presented in this profile, will serve to promote regional competitiveness and a better quality of life for the citizens of Limerick.

Since the advent of the NSS, and through the implementation of the National Development Plans (2000-2006 and 2007-2013), both the Mid-West Region and Limerick have experienced significant infrastructural, economic and social changes. Infrastructural improvements that were begun in the economic boom, particularly in terms of the national primary road network, have been completed, and, as noted below, have contributed to improved connectivity, though with some continuing deficits. Improvements in knowledge capital have also taken place, with the three third-level institutions continuing to develop their research capabilities. On the economic front, the difficulties at national level noted in the Introduction have impacted severely at local and regional level, with high levels of job losses and rising unemployment. The loss of almost 2,000 manufacturing jobs from Dell Computers dealt a particularly severe blow to the city and the region as a whole. On the social side perhaps the most significant development has been the regeneration programme. Although, the originally planned expenditure has been significantly scaled back in the Limerick Regeneration Framework Implementation plan launched in September 2013, activity funded under the plan, such as the demolition and relocation programme, has had significant implications for the regeneration areas themselves, the wider city and the region beyond.

Change has been the order of the day too in terms of governance, with the creation of a new local authority and proposals for the reform of local government which pose challenges and opportunities. The amalgamation of Limerick City and County Councils represents a mechanism to ensure greater co-ordination in planning, and to overcome the difficulties that have arisen in the past from sometimes detrimental competition between the city and the county. The formation of a new Limerick Metropolitan District which includes the City and Suburbs, and has a population of 100,000 represents an important advance in aligning local government boundaries with those of functional areas, despite the exclusion of Westbury and Shannon Banks. It is essential that the new Limerick City and County Council has a focus on the micro-geographies within its remit, and acknowledges and supports all parts of the city and county in developing their potential, in line with local needs and priorities. Elements of the proposed reforms, would, if implemented as initially proposed, threaten the independence of community-led local development, and undermine a partnership approach among communities and agencies, which has proven to be successful at local level in Limerick.

The profile presented here is of a city that is grappling with a legacy of underdevelopment, social polarisation and fractured governance. Limerick has, however, key strategic assets, clear blueprints (e.g. the Mid-West Area Strategic Plan, 2012-2020 and Limerick 2030: An Economic and Spatial Plan for Limerick) and a growing willingness among local stakeholders to advance the development of the City and its Metropolitan Area for the benefit of the entire region.

<sup>6</sup> Mid-Western Regional Authority (2010) *Mid-West Regional Planning Guidelines, 2010 – 2022*.



## 2.1 Human Resources

The 2011 Census of Population shows Limerick City and Environs with a population of 91,454, having increased by 4.5 per cent since 2002. The rate of growth lags considerably behind the rate of population growth in both the state (17.1 per cent) and the Mid-West Region (11.7 per cent) over the same period. Moreover, Limerick continues to experience very rapid suburbanisation at the expense of its urban core – a feature highlighted in our previous reports. While the population of the suburbs grew by 29 per cent, the population of the City declined by 6.3 per cent between 2002 and 2011. The following table presents the absolute population numbers for Limerick City and Suburbs in 2002 and 2011, and it shows how the suburbs account for a very substantial and increasing proportion of the total urban population.

**Table 2.1: Population of Limerick City and Environs, 2002 and 2011**

	Population 2002	% of City and Environs Total	Population 2011	% of City and Environs Total
<b>Limerick City</b>	60,946	69.66	57,106	62.44
<b>Limerick Environs</b>	26,548	30.34	34,348	37.56
<b>Limerick City and Environs</b>	87,494		91,454	

**Note:** To facilitate comparison, the City is defined for both years on the basis of the 2008 boundary extension to include Limerick North Rural ED. The environs are located in the EDs of Ballyglass (Co Clare), Ballycummin, Ballysimon, Ballyvarra, Limerick South Rural and Roxborough.

Between 2002 and 2011, the population of Limerick County (which includes most of the city's suburbs) grew by 17.8 per cent, which is broadly in line with the national trend. However, most of this population growth occurred within 10km of Limerick (mainly along the N/M7) and around Newcastlewest, such that rural parts of the county continue to exhibit demographic weaknesses. Similar observations can be made with respect to Clare and North Tipperary. Population growth in these counties was in the order of 13.5 per cent and 15.3 per cent respectively, and was largely driven by economic activity in the Limerick-Castletroy-Shannon triangle. The overall population of the Mid-West Region increased from 339,591 in 2002 to 379,336 in 2011 – an increase of 11.7 per cent, which is six percentage points below the national average. The following graph presents the levels of population change in Limerick in a regional and national context.

7 Limerick City and Environs (or Suburbs) is the contiguous built-up area of Limerick settlement as defined by the CSO for census purposes. This definition changes from census to census, as the built-up area extends due to new suburban development. It is a slightly smaller entity, both in terms of land area and population, than Limerick urban area, as defined in Section 3, which forms the basis of the detailed mapping. Throughout this report 'Limerick City' (capital 'C') refers to the legally bounded entity as enlarged in 2008; 'Limerick city' (lower case 'c') is used to refer to the urban area without specific reference to a defined area.

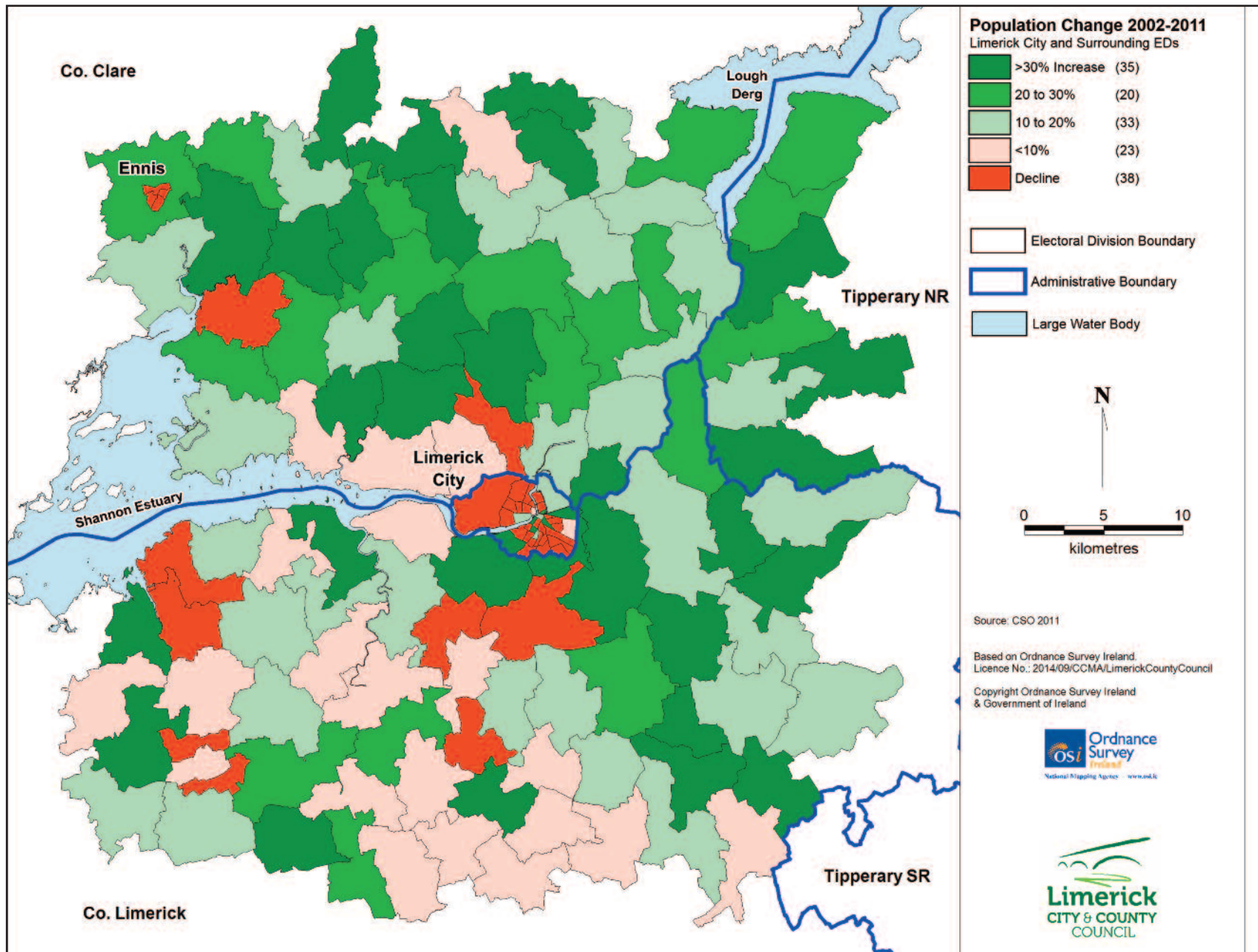
Fig. 2.1: Population Change in Limerick in a Comparative Context, 2002 - 2011



As the graph shows, the City's population decline stands in marked contrast to the experience elsewhere. The data presented in this graph are not a new phenomenon, but are indicative of a trend that has developed over a considerable period of time, and which has implications for local authorities and for citizens. Local authorities are challenged to manage spaces and facilities (in the city and in rural areas and villages) that become underutilised as people migrate to the suburbs. Meanwhile, they also have to provide infrastructure and enhanced services for a burgeoning suburban population. The mismatch between the location of pre-existing infrastructure and facilities (e.g. second level schools in Limerick City; primary schools, Garda stations and post offices in rural areas and villages) and the emerging settlement pattern (focused on the suburbs) is neither financially nor environmentally sustainable. The Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010, which made Regional Planning Guidelines binding on local authorities, represents a welcome step forward in bringing about a more co-ordinated approach to planning and development in Ireland. However, the current government proposals to abolish the eight regional authorities and two regional assemblies, and to replace them with three regional assemblies, will introduce a re-configuration of the land-use and planning framework that will pose particular challenges for the Mid-West and for other regions outside of the Greater Dublin Area.

Within the Mid-West, there is also a need for greater efforts, in line with the Regional Planning Guidelines, to promote a more sustainable settlement pattern, as population growth over the past two decades has been driven by demographic expansion along the Limerick-Ennis and Limerick-Nenagh corridors, and by economic activities in a concentrated area therein, rather than by a more broadly-based regional development. The Region would be stronger were it to consolidate its existing settlements – urban and rural – rather than permitting the type of sprawl that has come to characterise the landscape, particularly in the immediate environs of Limerick. The extent of the suburbanisation that Limerick is experiencing can be revealed by examining the pattern of population growth in the last decade within the immediate catchment area of the City (**Map 1**). The spatial pattern shown is very similar to the corresponding map for the period 1996 to 2006 that was presented in the previous edition of the profile, and indicates that the trend towards suburbanisation at the expense of the City (and rural communities) has not been arrested, but rather has intensified. As the map shows, the most extensive area of population growth is within 20km of Limerick and in particular along the roads to Nenagh and Ennis.

# Map 1 | Population Change 2002 - 2011 Limerick City & Surrounding EDs



In our previous report, we noted the potential of the then new Limerick-Galway rail line in enabling more sustainable commuting patterns. While the rail link, and, in particular, the opening of the station in Sixmilebridge, as well as the improved services to Castleconnell, Birdhill and Nenagh, represent positive developments, commuters have a greater need to travel to Shannon, Raheen and Plassey rather than to Colbert Station. This geographical mismatch underscores the need to implement in full the recommendations of the MWASP (Mid-West Area Strategic Plan). Moreover, as the map also shows, the population growth to the south of Limerick City has occurred in a haphazard pattern, rather than along the Limerick to Limerick Junction rail line, which would be more sustainable and offer a better quality of life for citizens. In other West European cities of comparable size, stations at Boher and Dromkeen would be operational to facilitate commuter flows.

Within the wider Mid-West Region there are very clear contrasts in rates of recent population growth between the Limerick-Shannon-Ennis and Limerick-Nenagh axes and the rest of the region (**Map 2**). Most of Limerick City has undergone a similar demographic experience to peripheral rural areas in West Clare and West Limerick. There is evidence that the so-called 'donut' effect evident in Limerick has also emerged in Ennis, where the once vibrant core is losing population to the outskirts, with the nearby ED of Quinn experiencing a 70 per cent increase in population between 2002 and 2011. The other two main towns in the region, Nenagh and Newcastlewest, perform better, and while they have experienced considerable population growth in their suburbs and environs, their urban cores remain demographically solid. Ballina, Crusheen and Newport were the fastest-growing towns in the Mid-West.

As noted in our previous profile "The spatial pattern of demographic change in the Mid-West Region since 1996 shows an association between high levels of interurban accessibility and population growth, and between rural peripherality and population decline". This observation still holds true in 2014. Population growth is mainly concentrated in the environs of Limerick, but as we noted in previous profiles, this growth has been occurring, and is continuing to occur, to the north and east of the city, rather than to the west and south. As the following pie-chart (Fig. 2.2) shows, the largest proportion of EDs that experienced a population increase in excess of 40 per cent since 2002 are in County Clare, with the second largest proportion in North Tipperary. Of the 410 EDs (Electoral Divisions) in the Mid-West Region, 101 EDs (24.6 per cent) experienced population decline, and 39 of these lost 10 per cent of their respective populations. While most of those are in peripheral rural areas that are very much in need of investment and support to enable them to realise their development potential, EDs in Limerick City feature strongly among those that are demographically weak (Fig. 2.3). Since Limerick City contains just 38 of the Regions EDs (i.e. 9.2 per cent) it is clearly over-represented among the EDs that have experienced population decline.

8 McCafferty, D. and O'Keeffe, B. (2009) *Facing the Challenge of Change: A Spatial Perspective on Limerick*, (Limerick: Limerick City Council), p.5.

9 The ED with the highest level of population growth is Cappavilla, Co. Clare. Its population increased from 372 to 1,038 (an increase of 179%) – driven largely by the construction of student accommodation on the Co. Clare Campus of UL, adjacent to its medical school.

## Map 2 | Population Change 2002 - 2011 Mid-West Region

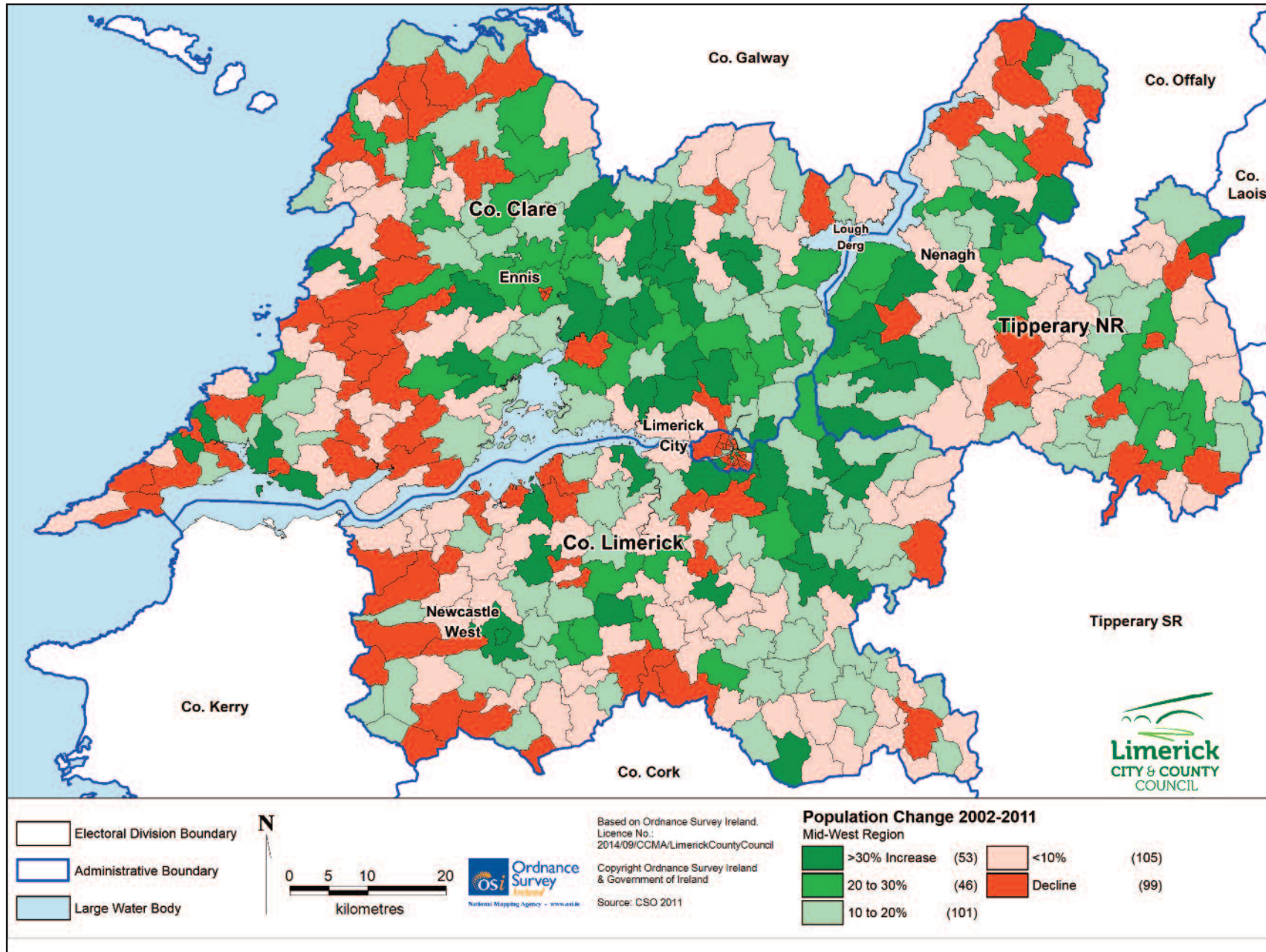


Fig. 2.2: Location, by Local Authority Area, of Electoral Divisions in the Mid-West Region that Experienced over 40 per cent Increase in Population, 2002 – 2011

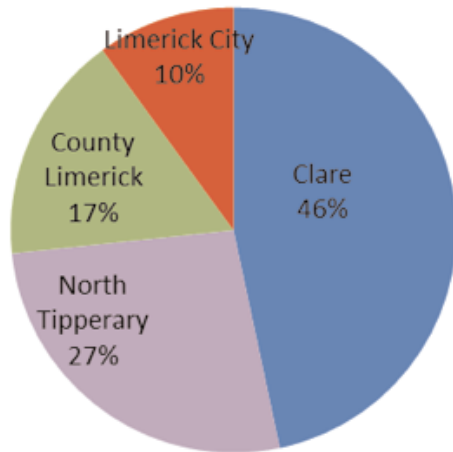
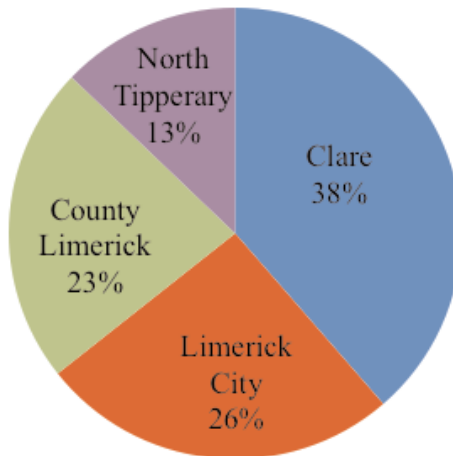
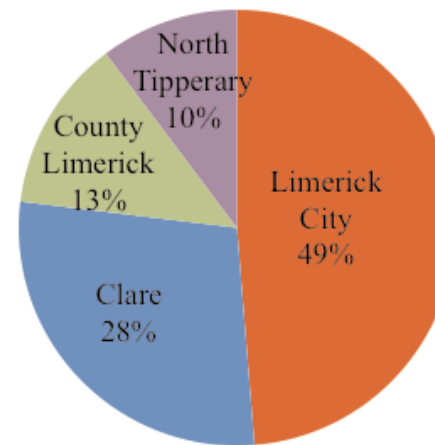


Fig. 2.3: Location, by Local Authority Area, of Electoral Divisions in the Mid-West Region that Experienced Population Decline, 2002 – 2011

EDs that experienced Population Decline



EDs that experienced Population Decline in Excess of 10%



## 2.2 Economic Activities

The effects of the economic downturn on Limerick City are readily discernible from a comparison of numbers at work by broad industrial group in 2006 and 2011 (Table 2.2). The total number at work in the City decreased by 23 per cent over the five year period, and while the labour force also contracted by 7 per cent, the number unemployed increased by 85 per cent. Within this, the number of first time job seekers (which is one component of the total number unemployed) actually declined, possibly reflecting the effects of withdrawal from the labour market and / or emigration. However, the number unemployed due to job loss more than doubled over the period.

Job losses were spread widely across most sectors, but there were particularly large decreases in employment in manufacturing (-53 per cent) and construction (-63 per cent). In total, these two sectors account for about two-thirds of the net decrease in employment over the period. Together they employed 27 per cent of those at work in 2006; by 2011 they provided employment for just 16 per cent of the much smaller total at work. The manufacturing sector alone, which has traditionally been a major source of employment in the City, shed 2,500 jobs, in the process contracting from employing 20 per cent of those at work to just 12 per cent in 2011. The loss of almost 2,000 assembly line jobs in Dell in 2009 was undoubtedly a major contributor to this decline, because, although not all workers in Dell came from the City, the cessation of computer assembly led to job losses in related manufacturing enterprises. The precipitate decrease in the construction sector (-1,061 jobs) of course reflects the property crash, as does the linked decrease of 23 per cent (-586 jobs) in real estate, renting and business activities. Jobs in both manufacturing and construction (particularly in Limerick) tend to be of a lower skilled nature, and former employees may therefore face significant problems in finding alternative work. This in turn raises concerns that the sharp increase in unemployment may feed into long-term unemployment. Many of the city's social problems are linked to past problems in finding replacement jobs for workers in lower skilled occupations.

The downturn in the manufacturing sector is of concern because of the importance of the sector to the city's economic base, which consists of all those activities that are sustained by demand from outside the city and from abroad. It is vital to the city's economic performance, because it brings in the income (in wages, salaries and companies' expenditure on goods and services) that in turn sustains demand for the non-basic sectors (such as retail trade and other consumer services). Some indication of the strength of the economic base in the wider Mid-West Region can be obtained from an examination of employment in so-called 'agency-assisted' companies. These are companies, both Irish and foreign-owned, which receive support from IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland or the other industrial development bodies because of their importance as exporters. Table 2.3 shows that, in the Mid-West Region as a whole, employment in such companies decreased by 4,697 between 2003 and 2012. There was a small increase in employment in Irish-owned companies, but this was outweighed by a decrease of 4,875 in the foreign-owned sector. Of further concern is the fact that permanent employment bore the brunt of the decline, with a total loss of almost 5,000 such jobs.

**Table 2.2: Employment by Broad Industrial Group, 2006 and 2011, Limerick City<sup>10</sup>**

<b>Industrial Group</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>% Change</b>
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	69	68	-1.45
Mining, quarrying and turf production	21	17	-19.05
Manufacturing industries	4,803	2,281	-52.51
Electricity, gas and water supply	99	88	-11.11
Construction	1,690	629	-62.78
Wholesale and retail trade	3,839	3,382	-11.90
Hotels and restaurants	1,692	1,595	-5.73
Transport, storage and communications	1,737	1,214	-30.11
Banking and financial services	587	521	-11.24
Real estate, renting and business activities	2,532	1,946	-23.14
Public administration and defence	921	861	-6.51
Education	1,640	1,692	3.17
Health and social work	2,029	1,861	-8.28
Other community, social and personal service activities	1,042	893	-14.30
Industry not stated	1,197	1,371	14.54
<b>Total at work</b>	<b>23,898</b>	<b>18,419</b>	<b>-22.93</b>
Unemployed - looking for first regular job	653	606	-7.20
Unemployed - having lost or given up previous job	3,351	6,788	102.57
<b>Total unemployed</b>	<b>4,004</b>	<b>7,394</b>	<b>84.67</b>
<b>Total in labour force</b>	<b>27,902</b>	<b>25,813</b>	<b>-7.49</b>

<sup>10</sup> The industrial classification used by the CSO changed between 2006 and 2011, rendering comparison between these two census years difficult. In recognition of this the CSO has produced a small number of tabulations using the 2006 classification scheme for both years. Table 2.2 is derived from the only such comparative table available for Limerick, which is for Limerick City only.



**Table 2.3: Employment Change in Agency-Assisted Companies, Mid-West Region, 2003-2012**

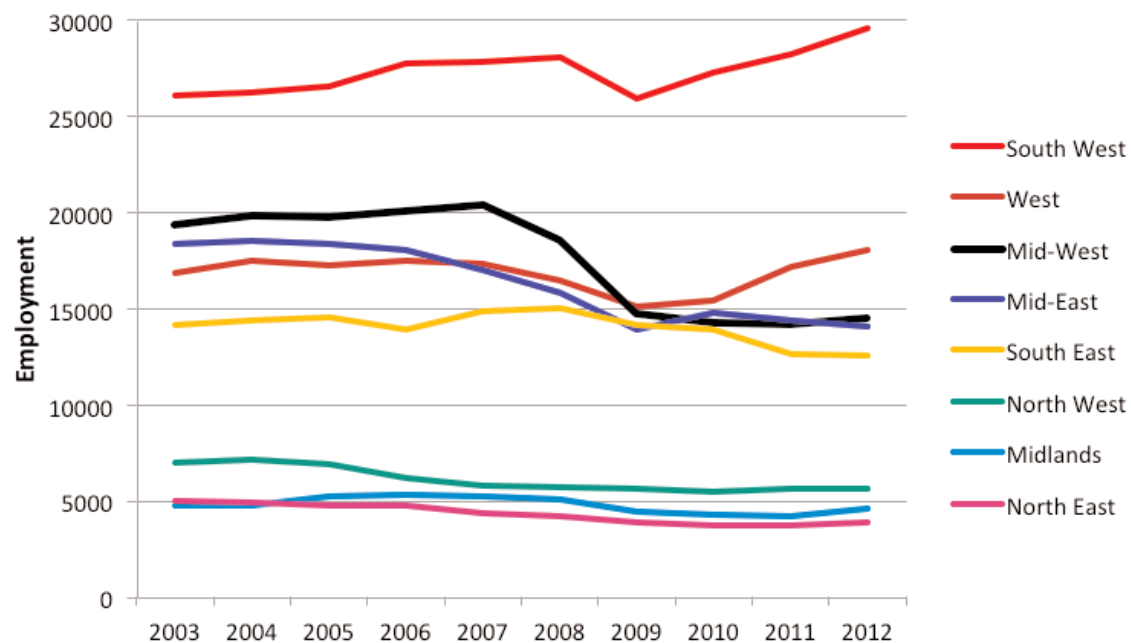
	Permanent Full-Time	Temporary or Part-Time	Total Employment Change
Irish-owned	-577	755	178
Foreign-owned	-4,346	-529	-4,875
<b>Total</b>	<b>-4,923</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>-4,697</b>

Source: Forfás Annual Employment Survey

The decrease in total employment (permanent as well as temporary) in the foreign-owned sector of the economy in the Mid-West Region is the largest of any region in the country, both in absolute terms and in relative terms, where the decrease of 25 per cent in the period 2003-2012 compares to a national average of just 0.4 per cent. Further context is provided in Figure 2.4 which shows the trend in total employment (permanent as well as part-time or temporary) in the foreign sector for all regions other than Dublin. The regions with relatively high levels of employment in foreign companies are mainly the regions containing cities: the South West (Cork), West (Galway), Mid-West (Limerick) and South East (Waterford). This is not co-incidental: most of the agency-assisted employment in these regions is in fact in the cities, as foreign direct investment (FDI) in Ireland has become increasingly urban-focused in recent years. The effects of the economic downturn in 2007-08 are evident in decreased levels of foreign employment in all four of the 'city-regions', but the sharpest decline was in the Mid-West, which, unlike the West and South West, failed to recover. The graph suggests that Limerick has been performing much less effectively as driver of FDI in the Mid-West Region than the other cities have been in their respective regions. This is consistent with evidence in Keenan (2014) which suggests that the Limerick-Shannon gateway has lagged behind both Cork and Galway throughout the period 1993-2011<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> Keenan, E. (2014) *Foreign Direct Investment, Agency-Assisted Employment and the Economic Development of Ireland's Atlantic Gateway Cities*. Unpublished M.A. Thesis. Department of Geography, Mary Immaculate College.

Figure 2.4: Trends in Total Employment in Agency-Assisted Foreign Companies



Source: Forfás Annual Employment Survey

The data on industrial performance reviewed here point to the need to expand and diversify the economic base of the Mid-West Region, and of Limerick in particular, by attracting foreign direct investment as well as nurturing indigenous enterprise. The problems caused by the Dell downsizing underline the dangers of over-reliance on a single company or activity. In the longer term the best prospects for diversification lie in up-skilling the workforce and developing the region's attractiveness to investment. International best practice suggests that regional and territorial development is achieved by an integrated and collaborative approach among public bodies to provide and support accessibility, variety, proximity, and decentralisation.<sup>12</sup> In the short term there is a need to generate employment opportunities for the lower-skilled segment of the labour market that has been most severely affected by the economic downturn. This challenge is one that will be particularly difficult following the winding-up of Shannon Development as the only dedicated regional development agency in the country.

12 McCafferty, D. and Walsh, J.A. eds. (1997) *Competitiveness, Innovation and Regional Development in Ireland*. Dublin: The Regional Studies Association.  
 OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (2005) *Building Competitive Regions*. OECD: Paris.  
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## 2.3 Accessibility and Connectivity

Over the past ten years, there have been significant improvements to the connectivity of the Mid-West Region. Our previous profile welcomed the improved transport links to Galway and Dublin, and these have been further enhanced since then with the completion of the M18 to Gort and the M7 to Dublin. As noted earlier, the Limerick-Galway rail link has been re-established, although there is considerable need to modernise the rolling stock and increase train speeds. However, linkages to Cork and Kerry remain weak, and the failure to commence the Adare by-pass, to upgrade the N20 as planned under *Transport 21*, and to provide direct train services to Cork are major blockages to inter-regional connectivity, and impediments to regional development, that need to be redressed.

In order to capitalise on Limerick's strategic infrastructure and in particular the deep water port at Foynes, it is essential to integrate Foynes into the national primary road and rail networks. The on-going development of Shannon Airport, which serves as an international gateway to the Mid-West Region, is essential, and its independence from the Dublin Airport Authority increases the ability of airport management to ensure that the development priorities of Shannon Airport are aligned with those of the Mid-West and West Regions.

Inter-regional connectivity nowadays has to be underpinned by an efficient information superhighway. The on-going upgrading of broadband infrastructure and the ICT capacity of the population are essential in ensuring that Limerick and the Mid-West are able to avail of economic opportunities on a global scale.

The Mid-West Regional Authority has specified a number of strategic infrastructural projects at a local level that are essential to improving Limerick's connectivity. Their delivery will also improve circulation within the urban area and increase its capacity to generate economic development. Among the investment priorities are the additional Shannon Crossing, the Northern Ring Road, better management of wastewater and protection of watercourses and groundwater aquifers.

## 2.4 The Urban Fabric and Quality of Life

In addition to ensuring accessibility and connectivity, public bodies in Limerick and the Mid-West Region are tasked with bringing about regional competitiveness and local / territorial development, by promoting what international experts have termed 'variety' and 'proximity.' Along with accessibility and connectivity, these are essential ingredients in enabling Limerick to realise its development potential.

Variety refers to the range of amenities – social, health, educational, environmental, heritage, community and recreational – that a location provides. Investment in each of these not only improves the quality of life and well-being of local citizens, it delivers indirect economic benefits, because regions and territories with a well-protected natural environment, good quality public services, guarantees of citizen safety and a varied range of local amenities are the most successful in attracting external investment and in generating higher quality jobs from their own indigenous resources.

Over the past ten years, Limerick has made some notable strides in this respect. Amenities such as the Lime Tree Theatre at Mary Immaculate College, the City Gallery of Art, the refurbished Milk Market and projects associated with Limerick Smarter Travel and the Limerick Civic Trust, among other civil society bodies, all contribute to Limerick's variety. The City Council's development plans, which provide for increased pedestrianisation and traffic management, are welcome developments on this front also. The introduction of additional quality bus corridors along key arteries, which has been proven to be successful in other similar-sized cities (such as Limerick's twin city in Brittany, Quimper) is essential in enabling Limerick to project itself in a more progressive, enterprising and business-like manner.

Civil society has a key role to play in promoting variety, and throughout Ireland, vibrant community and voluntary groups are providing local services and amenities. In Limerick, a range of community-based and voluntary bodies delivers essential local services in sport, youth development, adult education, employment support, inter-culturalism, gender equality, health promotion, heritage and environmental conservation and the social economy among others. Community-led local development is essential for addressing many of

the social issues and economic inequalities highlighted in this profile, and in enhancing Limerick's attractiveness as a place in which to live, work and feel part of community. The Council has a key role to play in supporting civil society, and initiatives such as the Volunteer Fair, Estate Management Projects and the recent work of cataloguing the heritage of Mount St. Laurence are but some of the many ways in which local government enables bottom-up development and a more attractive Limerick. Such approaches need to be continued and expanded. In tandem with these, the provision of additional green spaces and play and recreation areas within the city will prove to be more effective in retaining families and promoting mixed neighbourhoods than have past approaches that have tended to emphasise building over more positive and creative approaches to ensuring a living and vibrant city.


The other ingredient in regional development referred to above is 'proximity'. This implies that local stakeholders work together and pursue collaborative approaches to addressing the issues highlighted in this report. It also implies that bodies in Limerick forge alliances with relevant actors in other regions, so as to promote exchanges of ideas and the furthering of innovation. The recent alliance between the University of Limerick and the National University of Ireland, Galway represents an important advance in this respect. Bodies such as the Limerick Chamber of Commerce and PAUL Partnership have a lead role to play in promoting collaboration among commercial and civil society organisations, and all are charged with enabling new and stronger alliances between communities and businesses.

The attainment of proximity requires that Limerick's stakeholders have spaces and fora in which they can meet and engage with one another. Spaces such as City and County Hall need to become real civic spaces characterised by citizen access and multi-use, including at week-ends. Likewise, the premises of public bodies, and those of the third-level colleges, have significant potential in this regard. Proximity requires more than physical space however; it requires that political representatives, decision-makers, public bodies, the social partners, local development bodies and civil society engage with one another in a collaborative spirit that is characterised by openness, information-sharing and integrated, inter-agency and multi-sectoral approaches to addressing Limerick's problems and to promoting its development. While Limerick has a strong tradition in community action, levels of volunteerism remain low, and there are still significant obstacles to inter-agency sharing of power, information and resources. The re-organisation of local government in Limerick and the fusion of the City and County authorities presents an opportunity to take a territorial rather than a traditional sectoral approach to local issues, and as Limerick progresses on this trajectory, it is essential to encourage all agencies to embrace new ways of working and to put citizens before agency interests or agendas.

## 2.5 Concluding Remarks

This section has identified some of the overall features and trends in Limerick and the Mid-West Region. The following sections expand on these and provide a micro-level analysis of the human geography dynamics in the Limerick urban area. The maps and accompanying text identify many of Limerick's positive features and resources, which are essential to enabling it to fulfil the role envisaged for it under the National Spatial Strategy and associated Regional Planning Guidelines. However, this report also identifies a number of key issues that need to be addressed – not in piecemeal or once-off manner, but through holistic approaches. These issues include low levels of educational attainment, persistent deprivation, social polarisation, poor environmental quality and demographic weaknesses. The extent of decline in Limerick City is such that unless current trends are arrested and a more strategic and co-ordinated approach to planning is pursued, and supported by all agencies, Limerick City will account for less than half the population of Limerick urban area by Census 2021, if not sooner.

In seeking to highlight ways forward, it is essential to identify current issues and establish baselines. Agencies and responsible bodies need to see the data provided herein as providing a basis for targeted responses, the more focused delivery of services, and the management of public resources in ways that are consistent with responding to the needs of communities, families and individuals. As well as providing a rich data set, this profile points up way in which agencies can better respond to local needs and work collaboratively to achieve the aims and objectives of the Mid-West Area Strategic Plan.



# Mapping Limerick's Socio-Economic Geography

# Mapping Limerick's Socio-Economic Geography

The central part of this profile (comprising sections 4 to 11) looks in turn at demographic, economic and social aspects of Limerick's internal geography, focusing on key indicators that are representative of each dimension. The commentary is based on a series of maps showing the variation of these indicators (or variables) across what we term Limerick urban area, consisting of the City and its adjacent suburbs. This section of the report describes how this area was delimited and its relationship to various other territorial entities, and explains the procedure used for constructing the maps, which are based on a different spatial framework and mapping methodology from previous atlases.

## 3.1 Defining the Urban Area

As indicated in the Introduction, the basis of the mapping is the Small Areas delimited for the first time in the 2011 census of population. Small Areas (SAs) are sub-divisions of Electoral Divisions (EDs), designed to correspond better to neighbourhoods or local communities. To illustrate their relative size, the 38 EDs that constitute the administrative City of Limerick are divided into 258 SAs, with an average population of just 221 persons, as compared to an average population of 1,503 per ED. The use of SAs rather than EDs as the framework for the mapping allows for very fine-grained maps of spatial variation that are more faithful to the complex realities on the ground.

The SAs also confer a significant advantage in terms of the delimitation of Limerick urban area, which differs in the current profile from previous reports. In the profiles based on the 2002 and 2006 censuses the urban area was defined as Limerick City together with five surrounding EDs (four in Co Limerick and one in Co Clare<sup>13</sup>). The latter were included as they contained significant components of the City's suburbs, and the intention was to delimit an area that matched as closely as possible the boundary of "Limerick City and Environs" as defined by the CSO<sup>14</sup>. Doing so proved difficult, however, because the EDs in question all include some rural population, as well as large areas of predominantly rural land. This meant that the urban area as defined was somewhat larger in population, and considerably larger in area, than the City and Environs, and this, in turn, created challenges for the construction of the maps. In the present analysis, following consultations with the City Council it was decided to again define the urban area with reference to the CSO definition of City and Environs, but to adjust the definition slightly so as to match as closely as possible the "enlarged Limerick city area" proposed by Limerick Local Government Committee in its 2010 report to the then Minister for Environment, Heritage and Local Government. Using the SAs as the building blocks for the delimitation of the urban area gave a close fit, in terms of both population and area, to the latter entity and also to the CSO definition compared to which it is somewhat larger in area and contains slightly more population (Table 3.1). We believe that it is a much more satisfactory definition of the urban area than previous versions. In total it contains 390 SAs, 132 of them located in the environs and 258 located in the City. The term 'Limerick urban area' in the remainder of this report refers in all cases to the SA-based definition.

**Table 3.1: Alternative Definitions of Limerick Urban Area**

Entity	Population 2011	Approximate Area (sq. kms)
Limerick City (2008 boundary)	57,106	28
Limerick City and Environs (CSO definition, 2011)	91,454	59
Limerick Urban Area 2006 (ED-based definition)	96,790	123
Limerick Urban Area 2011 (SA-based definition)	92,989	65

<sup>13</sup> The EDs in question were Ballycummin, Ballysimon, Limerick South Rural and Roxborough in Co Limerick and Ballyglass in Co Clare.

<sup>14</sup> The term 'settlement' is also used by the CSO to refer to legally defined towns and cities and their environs.

One consequence of the decision to base the mapping on the SAs is that, since SAs were not delimited for previous censuses, we are restricted in the number of maps showing the geographical pattern of change through time that we can produce. This mapping is confined to the Pobal HP Affluence-Deprivation Index and one variable (population change) used in its calculation, where 2006 data are publicly available for the SAs. Neither is it possible to report change at the level of the urban area as a whole (defined as the 390 SAs together). Where we wish to report change at this level, therefore, we do so based instead on data for the CSO-defined Limerick City and Environs. This entity is also used whenever we wish to compare Limerick to the other city-based urban settlements (Dublin, Cork, Galway and Waterford). Since there is a very close match between the City and Environs and the 390-SA urban area this is not a significant problem. It is of course a problem that will not obtain for analyses of future censuses, for which the 2011 mapping will provide a baseline for the measurement of change.

## 3.2 Interpreting the Maps

As in previous profiles, spatial variation in the socio-economic indicators considered here is depicted by means of choropleth maps. These are constructed by classifying the spatial units (SAs) into a number of pre-determined categories, on the basis of their 'scores' on whichever variable is under consideration. In a map depicting the unemployment rate, for example, the categories might be delimited as 0-5 per cent, 5.1 to 12 per cent, 12.1 to 20 per cent, 20.1 to 30 per cent, and finally 30.1 to 50 per cent (where the highest unemployment rate is somewhere below 50 per cent). Different colours, or shades of the same colour, are then used to indicate all areas that belong to a particular category, e.g., all those with unemployment between 0 and 5 per cent.

In the 2002 and 2006 profiles the number of categories was set at five, and the boundaries of each category were determined by identifying so-called 'natural breaks' in the data. Given that all classification involves simplification and generalisation, the use of natural breaks gives as faithful a representation as possible of the pattern of variation, for the given number of categories. One weakness of this methodology is that assignment of areas to map categories is based entirely on the local (Limerick) context. Once the number of categories is determined, there will always be areas in each category, from lowest to highest; in other words spatial variation is always identified in the variable being mapped. However, in some cases the local variation may in fact be quite insignificant. For example, a variable that ranges nationally between 2 and 82 per cent, with, say, an average value of 40 per cent, might only range between 2 and 16 per cent in Limerick. Despite this, the pre-determined number of categories will still be separately identified, ranging from a lowest category (say 2 to 4 per cent), to a highest category (perhaps, 14 to 16 per cent). When the map is interpreted the latter category is taken as indicative of high values on the variable, even though all the areas in this category score relatively low in comparison to the national average.

In order to overcome this problem of de-contextualised local variation a different classification procedure has been employed for the maps in this profile. This involves categorising each area according to how it ranks in relation to national 'benchmarks' for the variable in question. The first stage in this procedure involved an examination of the distribution of each variable across all 18,488 SAs in the State as a whole, and the identification of key parameters for each distribution. These were the 10th, 25th, 50th, 75th and 90th percentiles of the distribution, where the 10th percentile is the value such that 10 per cent of all SAs in the State have a lower value, and 90 per cent have a higher value<sup>15</sup>. These parameters or benchmarks were then used to classify SAs in Limerick into six different categories, as set out in Table 3.2.

<sup>15</sup> Percentiles (including the median) are preferred to the use of the mean and standard deviation because many of the variables that we map have quite highly skewed distributions.

**Table 3.2: Standard Classification for Mapped Variables**

Category	Map Label	Descriptive Label	Expected Number of SAs
Above the 90th percentile	> 90P	Very high	39
Between the 75th and 90th percentiles	75-90P	High	58
Between the 50th and 75th percentiles	50-75P	Above the median	98
Between the 25th and 50th percentiles	25-50P	Below the median	98
Between the 10th and 25th percentiles	10-25P	Low	58
Below the 10th percentile	<10P	Very low	39


The advantage of this procedure is that it allows us to identify which SAs, if any, have high values by national standards, and which, if any, have low values. It also tells us something about how the distribution of values in Limerick compares to the distribution nationally, since we can use the national percentage of SAs in each category to work out the number we would expect to find in the same category in Limerick, if the city were to mirror the national distribution. Thus, on the basis of proportionality, 39 of the 390 SAs in Limerick would fall into the highest and lowest categories on each variable, if Limerick is a microcosm of the national pattern. The more the actual number of SAs in each category in Limerick differs from this hypothetical or expected number, the more distinctive the urban area can be said to be, with the nature of that distinctiveness depending on the particular distribution pattern. A pattern where Limerick has higher than expected numbers of SAs in the higher value categories indicates that the urban area scores highly (leads) in national terms; one where Limerick SAs are mainly concentrated at the lower end of the scale is indicative of the opposite (Limerick lagging in national terms). Also of interest are indicators where there are higher than expected numbers of SAs at both the upper and lower ends of the scale. Such distributions, which are associated with a high degree of local variation, are sometimes characterised as ‘polarised’ distributions.

Following from the above, it should be noted that there are instances where there are no Limerick SAs in certain categories, with the result that the maps have fewer than six categories. This can arise when particular indicators have a highly ‘skewed’ distribution, either locally or indeed nationally. The indicator that expresses the number of persons in the Travelling Community per 1,000 population is an extreme example: more than 80 per cent of SAs nationally have no resident members of the Travelling Community and so score zero on this indicator. The result is that the 10th, 25th, 50th and 75th percentiles are all zero, and there are just two non-zero categories on the map identifying SAs that fall into either the ‘high’ category (75th to 90th percentile) or the ‘very high’ category (above the 90th percentile). SAs with zero value form the third category.

Note that, on all of the maps, the upper limit of the highest value category is the maximum value found in Limerick urban area on the indicator in question. In most, but not all instances, the national maximum value lies above this local maximum value.

As a final note in relation to the interpretation of the maps which follow, the reader is once again reminded of the dangers of the so-called ‘ecological fallacy’. It should be borne in mind at all times that the descriptions accompanying the maps are profiles of areas and not of individuals: it must not be assumed that a person, family or household that is resident in an area will necessarily exhibit the aggregate characteristics of the area.



A large crowd of runners at a marathon, many wearing 'Great Limerick' t-shirts and race bibs. The runners are of various ages and are running on a paved road. The text 'Demographics: Population Change and Age Structure' is overlaid on the image in a white serif font.

# Demographics: Population Change and Age Structure

# Demographics: Population Change and Age Structure

## 4.1 Population Change 2006-11

Between 2006 and 2011 the population of Limerick City and Environs increased by 0.8 per cent, by far the lowest rate of growth of any of the country's five urban settlements. The population of the City itself decreased by 4.5 per cent, and Limerick and Cork (-0.2 per cent) were the only Cities to register decline in population over the period: Waterford City (2.2 per cent), Dublin City (4.2 per cent) and Galway City (4.5 per cent) all showed increase in population. As has been the case for some time, the pattern of change within the urban area was highly differentiated, with SAs found in all six of the map categories, ranging from those with growth rates that place them in the top 10 per cent of SAs nationally to those with negative growth rates and in the bottom 10 per cent nationally (Map 3). Among the former are areas in the city centre, Rhebogue and Westbury, but the most extensive areas of very high population growth are to the east of the city in Singland and to the south in the Mungret-Ballykeeffe area and Ballyclough. It should be borne in mind that in some of these areas population growth is from a low base.

Areas of very high population growth notwithstanding, the main story of **Map 3** is that Limerick is lagging in terms of population growth, with two-thirds of all SAs below the median growth rate nationally, and 43 per cent in the low and very low categories, all of them in fact showing population decrease. Large areas of the north side of the city, including parts of the Ennis Road and North Circular Road are in decline, as are parts of the city centre, including some of the newly built areas that showed strong population growth in the previous profile. Other areas of sharp population decrease are all four of the regeneration estates: Moyross, St. Mary's Park, Ballinacurra Weston and Southill.

## 4.2 Age Structure

Population change is caused by natural increase or decrease (i.e., the balance between births and deaths) and by net migration patterns (the balance of inflows and outflows). At the level of the urban area as a whole, the latter factor is dominant, and the geography of inward migration and mobility is explored in more detail in Section 5 below. Here we examine the effects of net migration on the age structure of the population, effects that arise because of the fact that migration tends to be a highly age-selective process. In its tendency towards constriction at the base, the 2011 population pyramid for Limerick City and Environs (**Figure 4.1**) reflects the continued ageing of the population that has been brought about by the long-term decline in the birth rate (although the somewhat larger cohort aged under 5 years of age is evidence of a recent recovery in the birth rate). This decline dates from the mid- to late-1980s, and with the passage of time its effects are registered in the contraction of ever older age cohorts. Thus, compared to the 2006 age-sex profile, the 2011 population pyramid shows a reduction of about 2,400 in the numbers aged between 20 and 24 years (i.e., those born between 1987 and 1991). As a result of ageing, the estimated median age of the population increased from 30.3 years to 32.6 years between 2006 and 2011.

The effects of the reduced birth rates of the 1980s on the number aged 20 to 24 years in 2011 is only part of the story of the dynamics of Limerick's population age structure. In fact if the ageing effect alone had applied, this reduction would have been much greater: roughly 3,700 persons. That it was not, is due to in-migration to the City and Environs of persons in this age cohort. The effects of net migration can be seen more clearly by calculating the difference between the actual numbers in each age cohort in 2011 (from the 5-9 years cohort upwards) and the projected number for that cohort, based on the number in the immediately preceding age cohort in 2006<sup>16</sup>. These differences, which are illustrated in **Figure 4.2**, can only be attributed to the effects of migration and mortality, but among the younger age groups migration is always the dominating factor. The diagram demonstrates that the numbers aged between 15 and 24 years in 2011 were almost 3,000 higher than expected on the basis of the 2006 population. This can be attributed to net in-migration caused by the influx of students to third-level education in the city, once again underlining the importance of the student population to the City and Environs.

<sup>16</sup> The method of analysis employed here is a simplified version of cohort-survival analysis.

## Map 3 | Population change 2006 - 2011

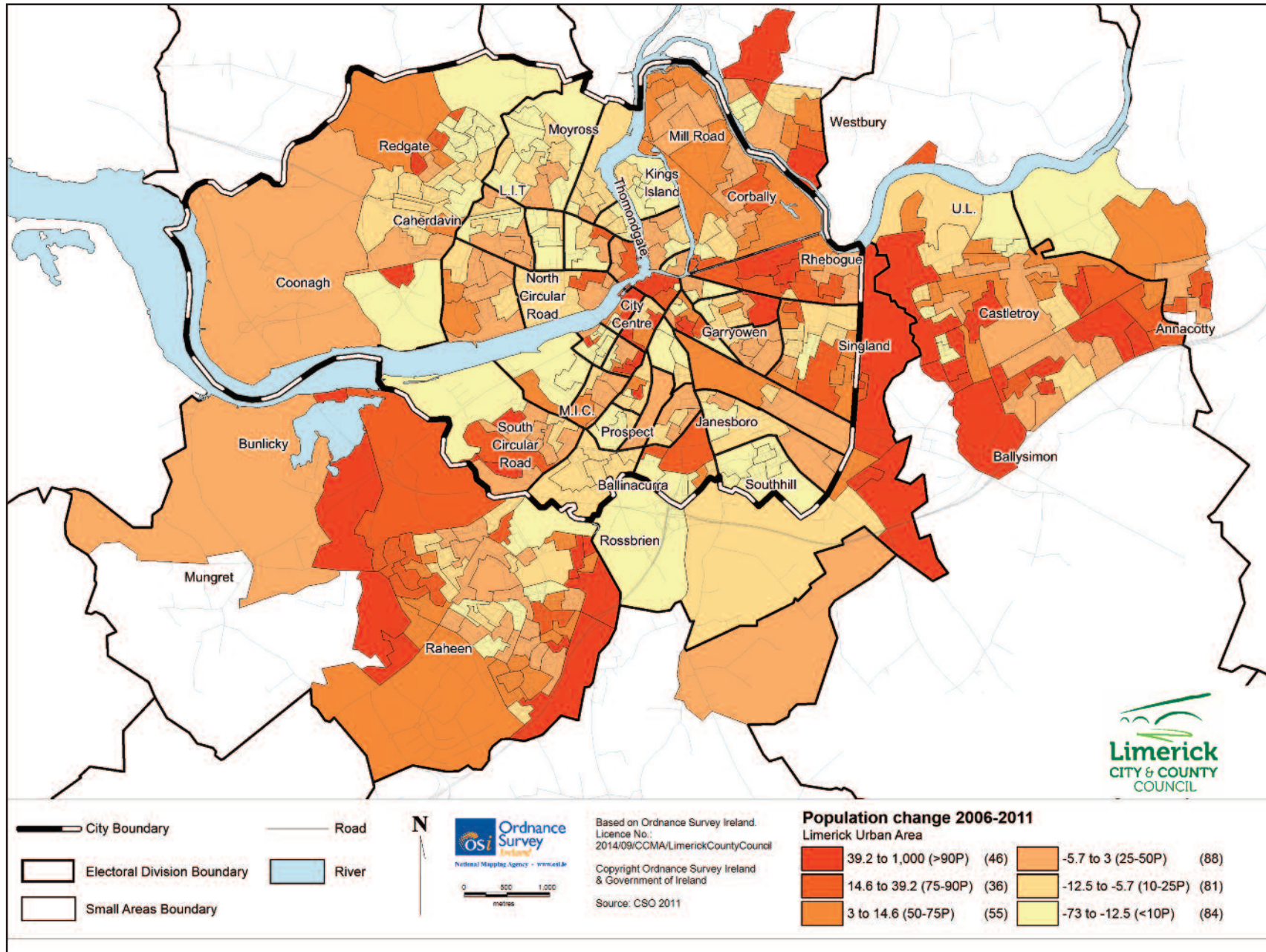


Figure 4.1: Population Pyramid Limerick City and Environs 2011

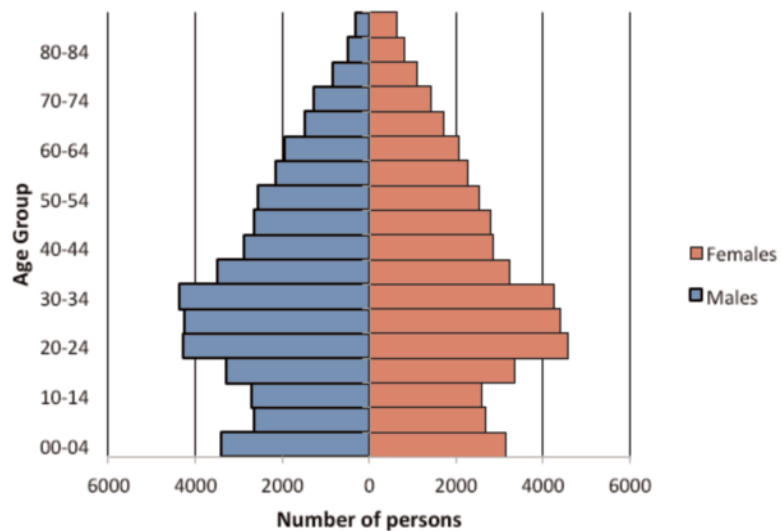
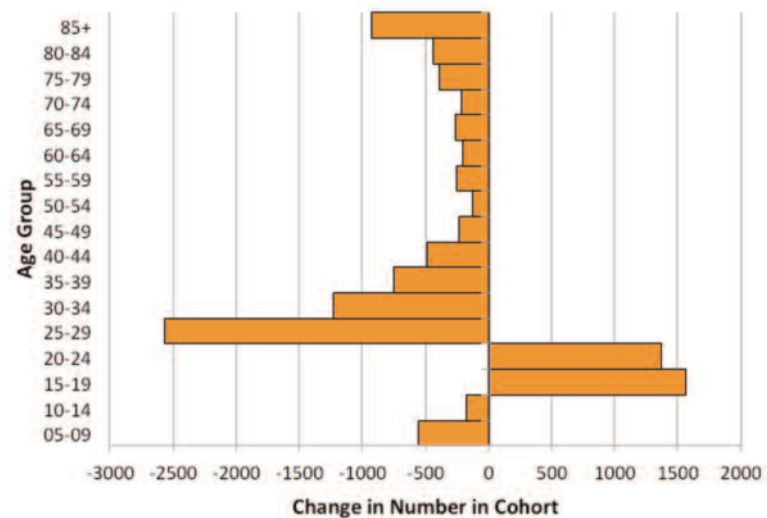


Figure 4.2: Actual minus Projected Population by Age Cohort 2011

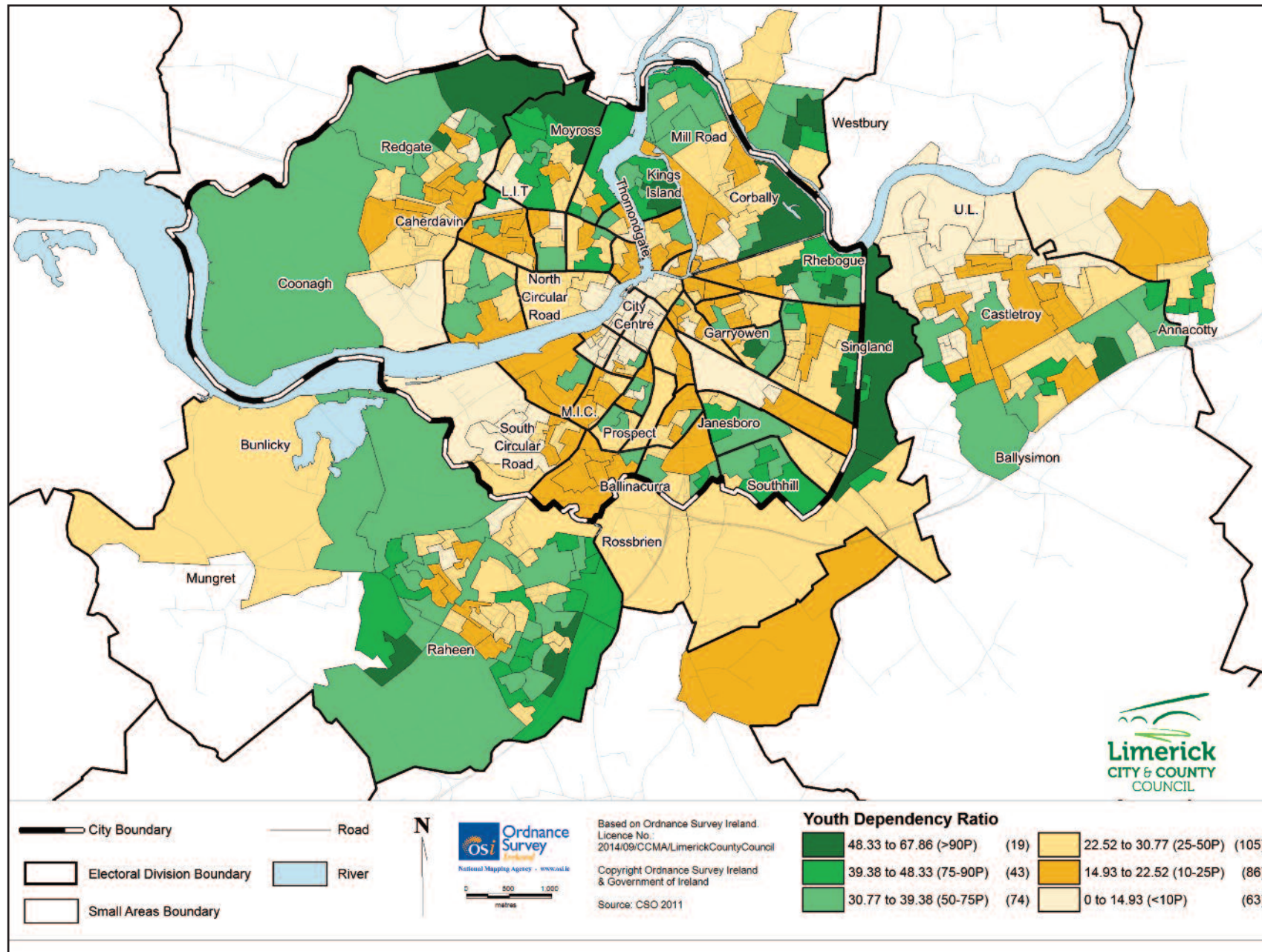


Surprisingly, the college-going cohorts are the only cohorts where the effects of migration and mortality were positive: for all other age groups these effects were negative. Decline is particularly marked for the cohort aged 25-29 years, which was reduced by roughly 2,500 persons in the five-year period, due to out-migration. Almost one-quarter of this cohort left the city between 2006 and 2011, a particularly high proportion when it is borne in mind that this is the net outflow (i.e., out-migration minus in-migration): since there was also some in-migration of young people it can be concluded that the gross out-flow was even larger. This outflow reflects in part the large numbers of young adults leaving Limerick on completion of third level education. In other words it is the opposite side of the coin to the influx for educational purposes in the younger cohorts. Two points need to be made about this, however. First, the return outflow of students upon ceasing education should not be seen as automatic. Rather, it might be expected that some of the graduating students from the city's third-level colleges would find employment in the city or contribute to enterprise development through establishing their own companies. That there is little evidence of the city being able to retain its graduates is disappointing and a cause of concern. Second, the magnitude of the numbers leaving in their mid-20s suggests that it is not just graduating students that are involved but also perhaps those who had, but subsequently lost, jobs. In other words the outflow should be viewed as largely the result of the depressed state of the economy, rather than some kind of 'natural' re-adjustment. It is likely that economically induced out-migration is the primary explanation for the lower than expected numbers in the cohorts aged 30 to 45 years also. For older age cohorts, mortality becomes a more significant factor.

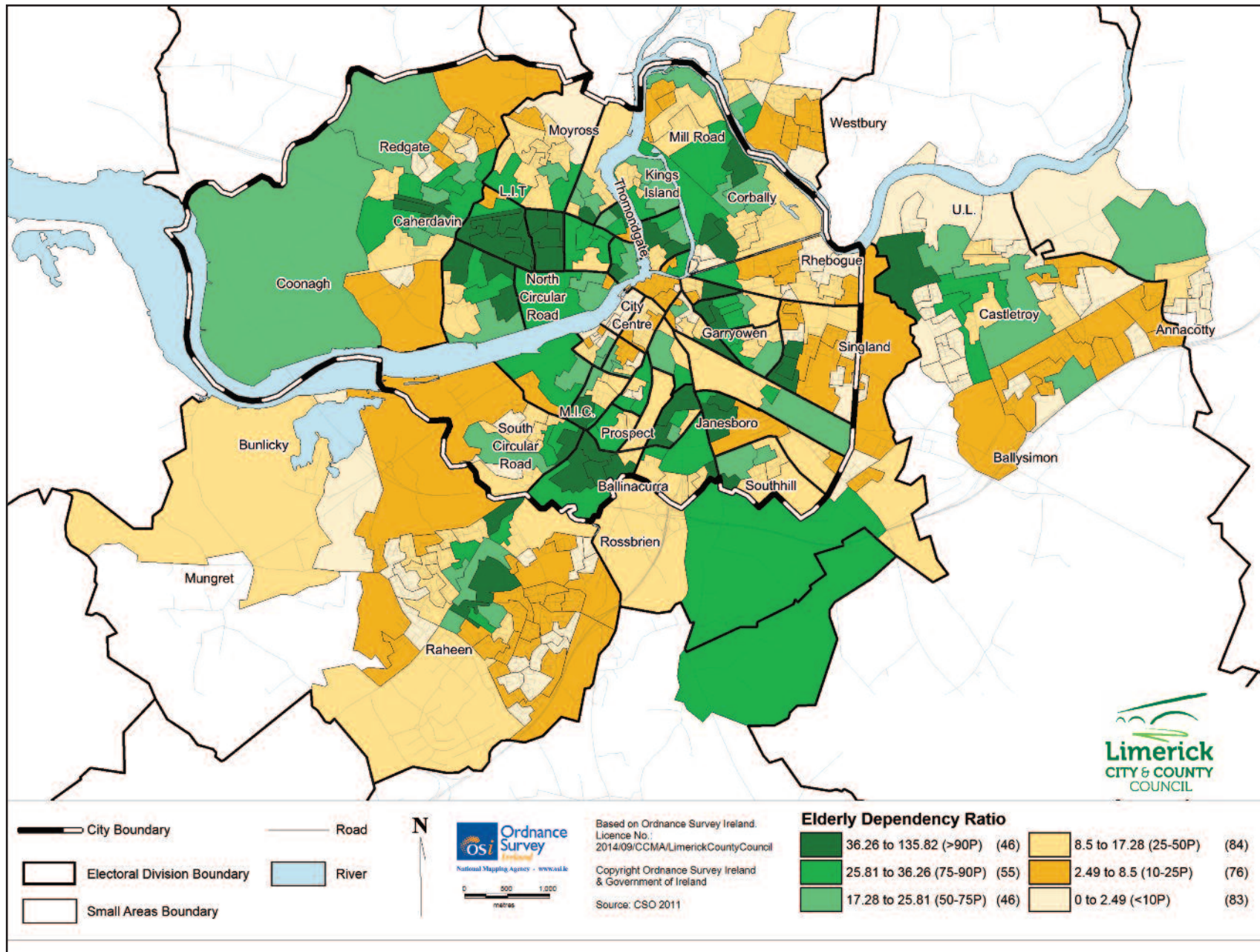
Spatial variations in the age profile can be explored by mapping the youth and elderly dependency ratios for the urban area. **Map 4** illustrates the youth (or child) dependency ratio, measured as the number aged less than 15 years of age per 100 persons aged 15 to 64 years. Areas of high child dependency include the northern end of Moyross, parts of St Mary's Park, Westbury, the Carrabullawn area of Corbally, and the Singland area where rapid population growth (identified above) is associated with new housing. However, consistent with the general picture of low population growth or actual decline, and the maturing of the age profile, there are relatively few areas with high child dependencies, and two-thirds of all SAs have values below the national median. **Map 5** depicting the elderly (or aged) dependency ratio (number of persons aged 65 years and over per 100 aged 15 to 64) shows highest values in the Lansdowne-Greystones area on the north side, Ballinacurra Weston, Janesboro, parts of Garryowen and the College Court area of Castletroy. Although broadly similar to the national pattern, the distribution of this indicator shows a slight skew towards lower values, with one-fifth of all SAs in the very low category (as compared to one-tenth nationally). This pattern in turn translates into relatively low values of the total dependency ratio through most of the urban area (**Map 6**). In total, more than two-thirds of SAs have total dependency ratios below the national median and there are relatively few areas showing very high dependency ratios. High ratios, such as those found in the Lansdowne-Greystones area, are mainly due to high elderly dependency ratios.

These variations in patterns of dependency have implications for the reproductive capacity of the population, one measure of which is the vitality ratio, defined as the number of persons aged 20 to 39 years relative to the number aged 60 years and older. **Map 7** reveals that vitality ratios in the city centre are generally quite high, reflecting the young adult population that has moved into this area in recent years. However, the highest vitality ratios are generally found in suburban areas, in particular the Mungret-Ballykeeffe area, Raheen, Westbury, and the Castletroy area. In the latter case the high vitality ratios can be explained by concentrations of students in areas with dedicated student accommodation. As noted above, the large scale movement of young persons out of Limerick following graduation from college means that the reproductive potential of population in these areas is unlikely to actually translate into future population growth: rather these areas are likely to retain their studentified population profile, with relatively few children and elderly.

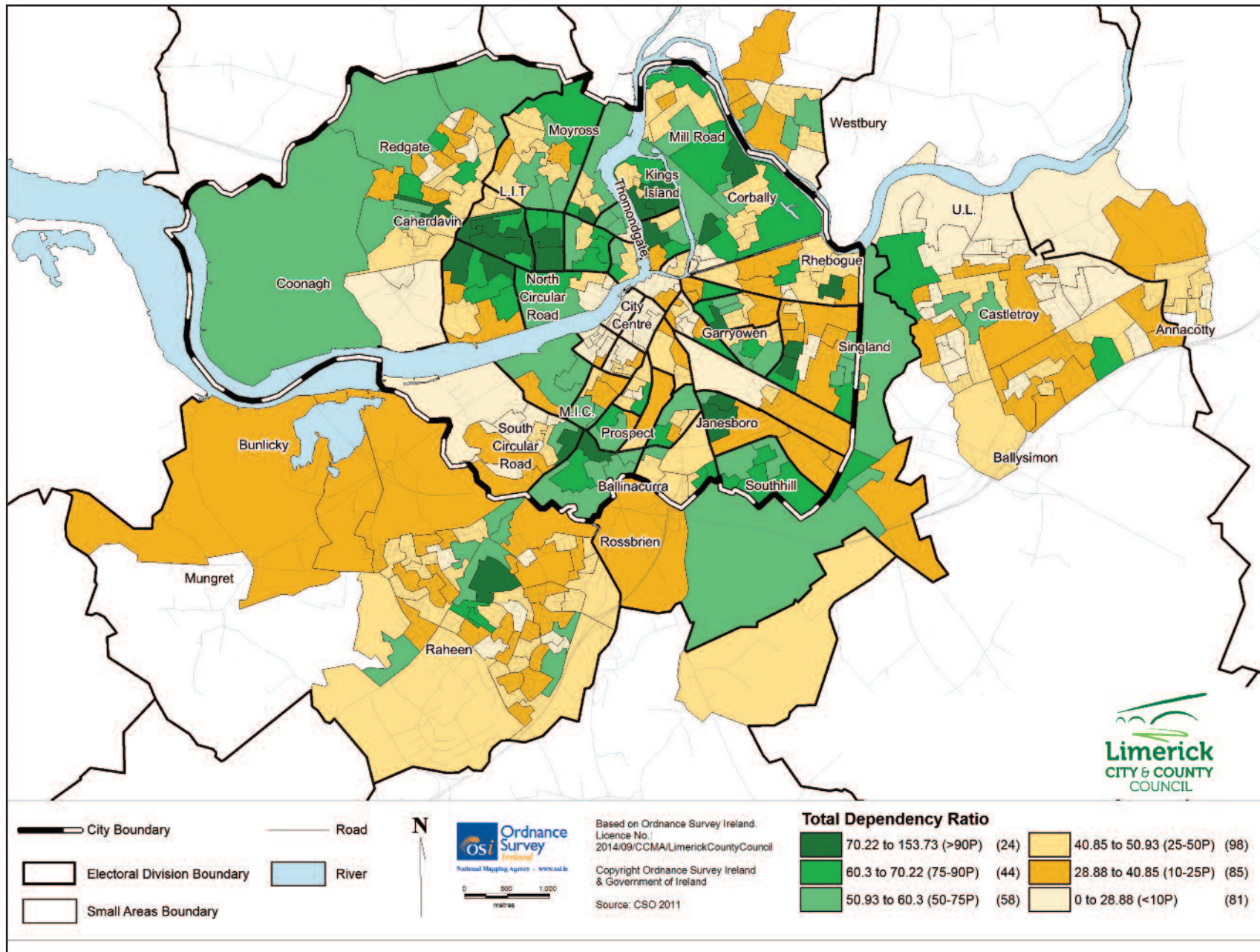
## Map 4 | Youth Dependency Ratio



## Map 5 | Elderly Dependency Ratio

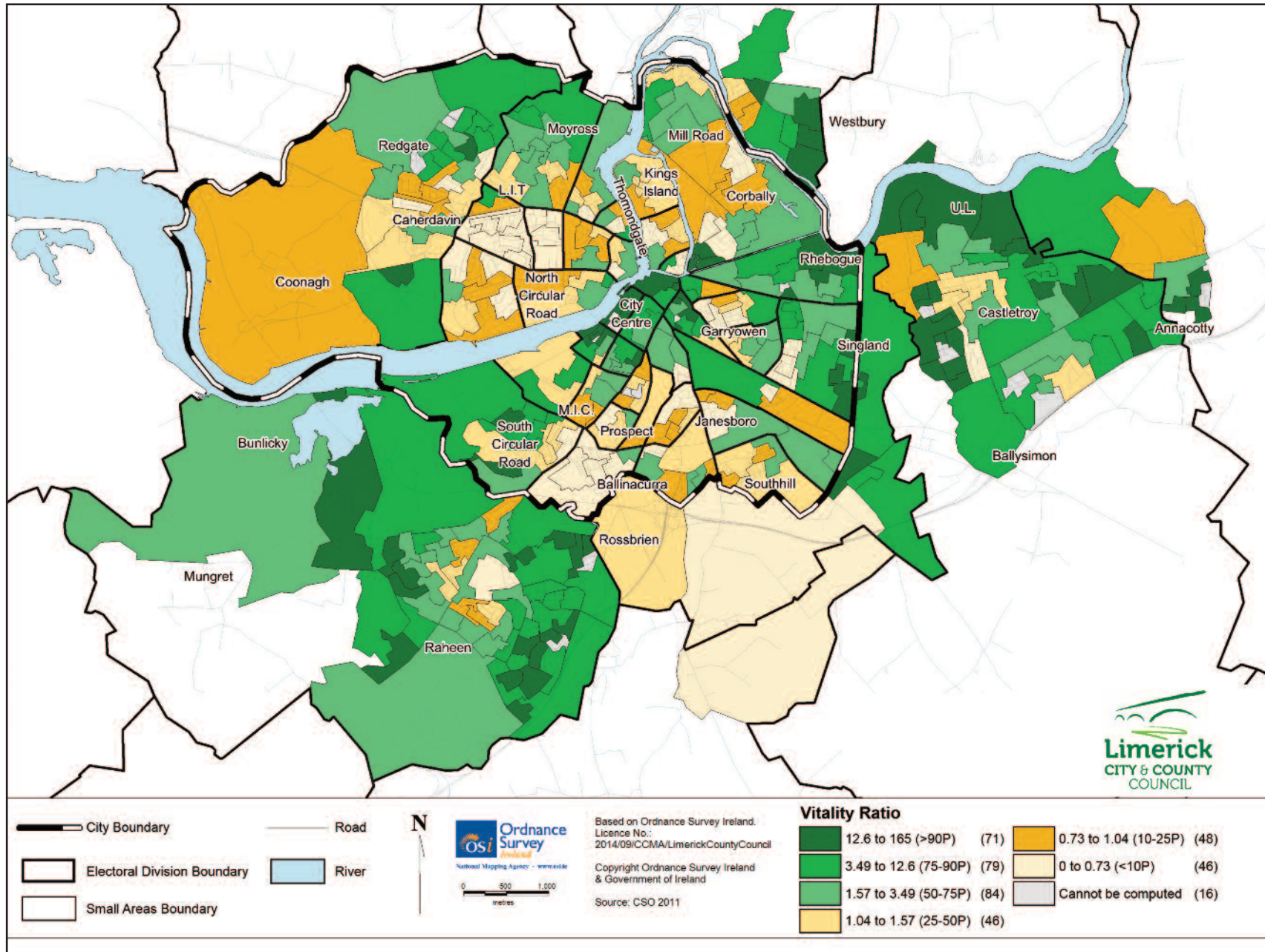


## Map 6 | Total Dependency Ratio





# Map 7 | Vitality Ratio



# Migration, Nationality and Culture



# Migration, Nationality and Culture

This section looks at population movement, migration, language and cultural identity in Limerick urban area. It deals with the mobility of the population, and notes that the third-level institutes are significant drivers of population movement. The text and the accompanying maps present the spatial patterns associated with in-migration, and these reveal the persistent concentration of most foreign national groups in the city centre relative to other neighbourhoods. One of the consequences of the ethnic segregation that arises from this is that migrants may have difficulties gaining fluency in English, and the data presented here show where this problem is most acute. Migration has affected Limerick's religious profile, and introduced greater diversity, albeit to a lesser extent than in other Irish cities. Limerick urban area has attracted proportionally more Polish nationals than Ireland as a whole, and relative to other nationalities, Poles are becoming slightly more dispersed throughout Limerick rather than being concentrated in particular streets. While Poles may be becoming more integrated, the same cannot be said for Irish Travellers, who continue to live apart from the majority population.

## 5.1 Mobility of the Population

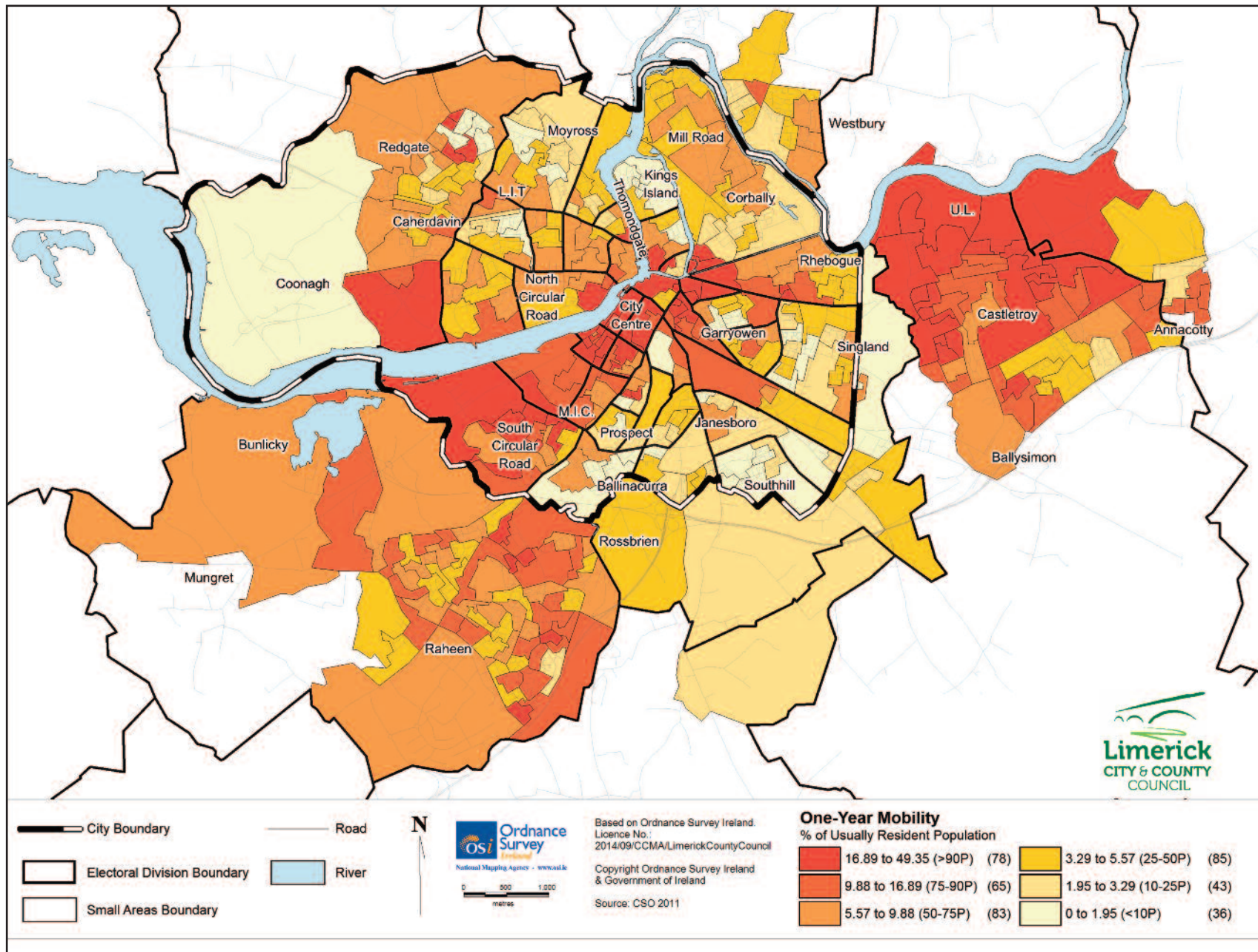
The level of mobility in the population, as measured by the proportion of people changing address, has several different components, including immigration from abroad and migration from elsewhere in Ireland, as well as migration within the locality. Among the more significant influences on all forms of mobility are the availability of employment in different locations, the housing supply, the level of services and amenities present, and the social composition of the population (the age groups present, the social class profile, the ethnic and cultural groups etc.). In Limerick urban area 9.7 per cent of the population reported that they had moved to a new address within the twelve months prior to the census. Although this figure has fallen considerably since 2006, it is somewhat higher than the national level of 7.3 per cent. This is reflected in the map of recent mobility, in that proportionally exactly twice as many SAs in Limerick feature in the very high mobility category as is the case nationally (78 SAs or 20 per cent of the total, as compared to 10 per cent nationally). As **Map 8** shows, the greatest levels of mobility are in the city centre. In some streets in the general vicinity of O'Connell Street and Henry Street over 40 per cent of the resident population moved in within the pre-census year. There are also high levels of mobility in the neighbourhoods adjacent to the University Hospital and in Castletroy, where the University of Limerick's student population of 11,000 is a very significant driver of the area's demographic and socio-economic profile. The area around Mary Immaculate College similarly emerges as having a high proportion of recent movers. However, the values there are lower than in Castletroy, because, with the exception of City Campus on Lord Edward Street, Mary Immaculate College students are more likely to reside in neighbourhoods alongside local long-term residents, in other words they are a more 'diluted' population sub-group. In Castletroy, in contrast, there is a greater number of dedicated student residences, and student-dominated estates such as Elm Park and College Court. The map also suggests that students of the Limerick Institute of Technology – another transient population cohort – are likely to be dispersed across the city centre and north side of the City, rather than to be concentrated in the vicinity of the Moylish campus. Third-level students account for 15 per cent of the resident population of Limerick urban area, and, as this report demonstrates, their presence has several impacts on the city.

In contrast to the areas mentioned above, some parts of the City have very low levels of inward mobility. Less than 2 per cent of persons resident in St. Mary's Park, much of Southill, Garryowen and Ballinacurra Weston have moved there within the past year. This reflects the fact that, as other maps in this report demonstrate, these neighbourhoods are experiencing considerable out-migration and are demographically very weak.

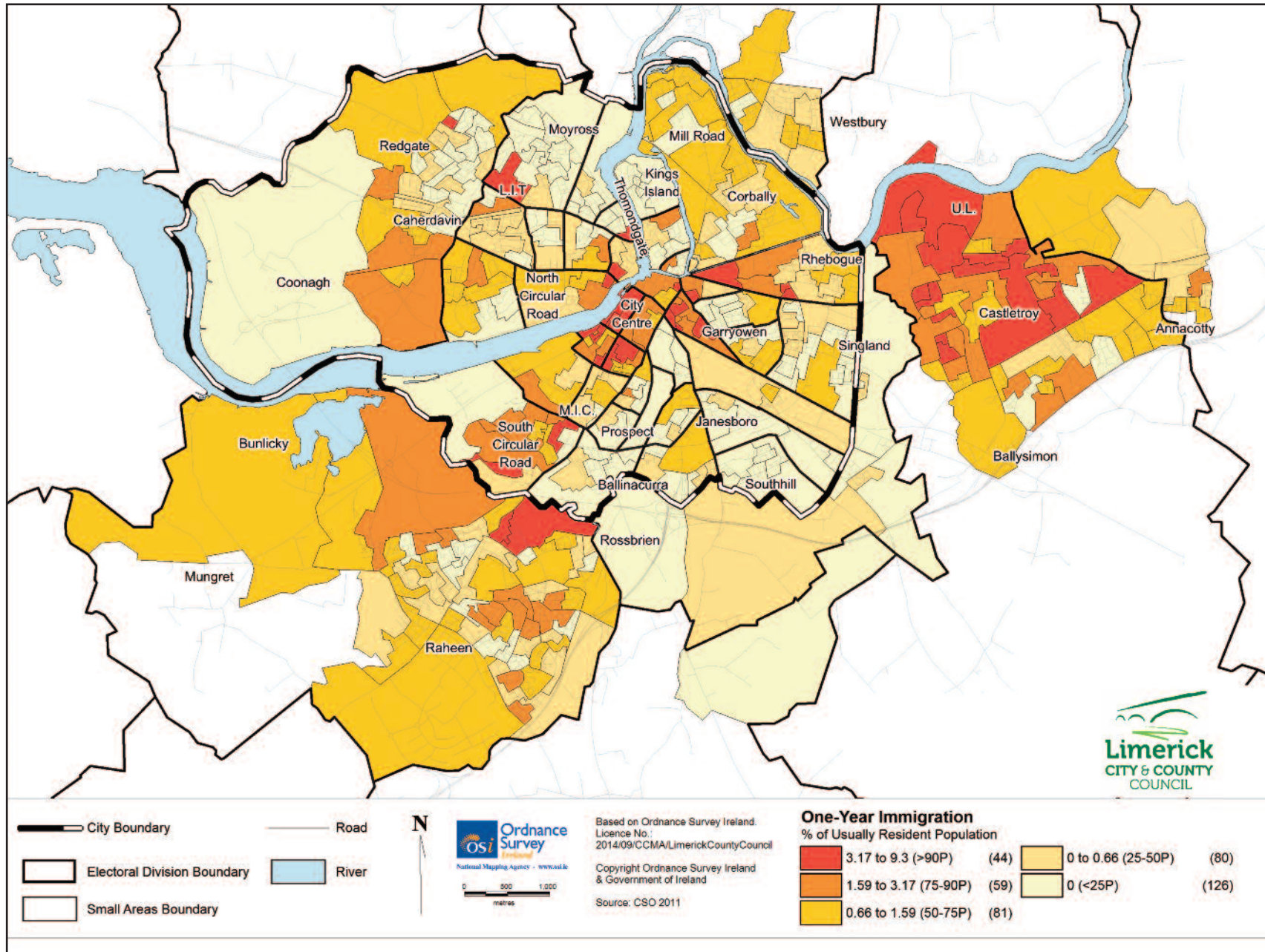
Our previous profiles of Limerick (based on the censuses of 2002 and 2006) noted that in-migration from abroad was a significant driver of mobility, with immigrants making up over one-quarter of those who had recently moved. In the city centre in particular, immigrants accounted for the majority of residents in many of the new apartment blocks, particularly in and around the Dock Road. The 2011 census shows that this phenomenon is less significant now, with immigrants accounting for just 12 per cent of recent movers. Apart from the city centre, which has the greatest ethnic variety of any part of Limerick, as is the case with most cities internationally, immigration as a driver of mobility is most associated with the three third-level education institutes and, to a lesser extent, with the University Hospital. This pattern is illustrated in **Map 9**. It shows that those who moved to Limerick from outside the State within the pre-census year came, in the main, to reside in Castletroy, the South Circular Road, Dooradoyle and the city centre.<sup>17</sup> In contrast, there are few recent migrants residing in areas such as Moyross, St Mary's Park and Southill. In part this is due to the fact that a significant component of the housing stock in these areas is local authority rented housing for which recent migrants may not satisfy eligibility requirements in relation to length of residency.

<sup>17</sup> It may be noted that the normal six categories collapse down into five on Map 6. This is due to the fact that the distribution of this variable is highly skewed nationally, with a large number of SAs having no one-year immigration). As a result, both the 10th percentile and the 25th percentile are zero and so the bottom two categories become one which can simply be labelled 'zero value'. The interpretation of the other categories remains as before – very high, high, etc.

## Map 8 | One Year Mobility



# Map 9 | One Year Immigration



## 5.2 Migration and Communication in Spoken English

As Limerick's population has become more diverse over the past two decades, a number of initiatives have emerged to promote inter-culturalism and to give effect to a contemporary expression of the welcoming traditions associated with Ireland. A number of community-based organisations such as Doras Luimni, Limerick Justice Network, and PAUL Partnership, and inter-agency bodies such as the Integration Task Force have highlighted the importance of migrants' fluency in English in enabling them to feel more at ease in Irish society, access services and gain employment. A number of organisations have taken initiatives to organise English language courses and other inter-cultural events. The census returns provide data on the extent of the need for further work in this area. As **Map 10** shows, there are very high concentrations (relative to the situation nationally) of persons who have 'poor English' in the city centre, especially in the Dock and Shannon Wards, and in the newer housing developments in Clare Street. There are also high rates in parts of Castletroy and Dooradoyle. While no SA in Limerick matches the SA with the highest rate in the country (36 per cent with poor English) rates in excess of 20 per cent are found in four of the City SAs. Anecdotal evidence suggests that those who have language problems are more likely to be older and female. In many cases they have come to Limerick to accompany a male relative who has secured employment, or in other cases they are the parents of migrant workers. Schools, civil society organisations and public service providers report that persons with poor English often rely on their children to act as interpreters when they are dealing with Irish people.

The census data reveal that there are over 13,000 people living in Limerick urban area for whom English (or Irish) is not a first language. Of these, 43 per cent claim that they can speak English 'very well' and a further 35 per cent report that they can speak it 'well'. However, 19 per cent (n=2,542) acknowledge they cannot speak English well or at all.<sup>18</sup> Among those who speak a language other than English at home, Polish is the most-frequently used, followed by French and Lithuanian. Over half (53 per cent) of all non-English speakers, use a variety of languages including Romanian, Russian, Urdu and several African languages.

## 5.3 Ethnic and Religious Minorities

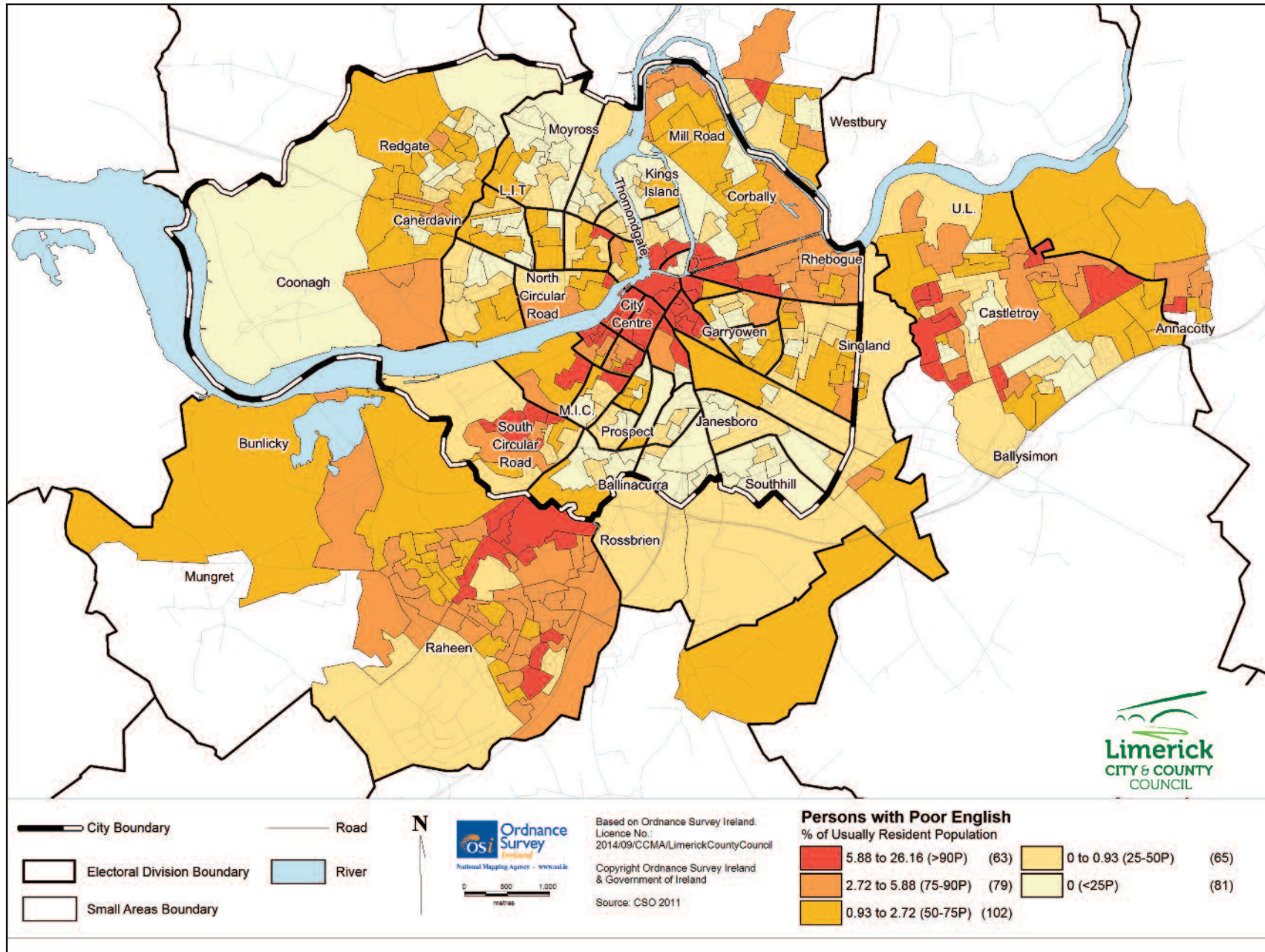
In terms of the ethnic composition of the population, Limerick is somewhat more diverse than Ireland as a whole. Nationally, 12 per cent of the population declared themselves as non-Irish nationals in the 2011 census, as compared to 13.6 per cent in Limerick urban area. **Map 11** shows the distribution of all non-Irish nationals in Limerick. The pattern presented here is consistent with that shown in the two previous profiles of the City: foreign nationals show the highest relative concentration in the city centre and in Dooradoyle. The housing stock in the city centre is a factor in attracting foreign nationals, while proximity to the University Hospital is also a consideration, particularly for non-EU nationals, many of whom are medical professionals. The University of Limerick also attracts some foreign nationals as students and staff.

The relative concentration of non-Irish nationals in Limerick city centre, which was highlighted in previous profiles, has consolidated over the past five years. Non-Irish nationals account for over 50 per cent of the population in 22 of the Small Areas in Limerick city centre and a further three in Ballycummin. In contrast, the City's regeneration areas have very few, if any, foreign nationals. Indeed it is notable that there is a degree of polarisation evident in the distribution of foreign nationals in the city. While there is a higher than expected number of SAs with very high levels of foreign nationals, there are also a lot more SAs than expected with very low levels of foreign nationals: 21 per cent of Limerick SAs are in the bottom 10 per cent nationally. This polarisation is indicative of a highly uneven distribution of foreign nationals within the city.

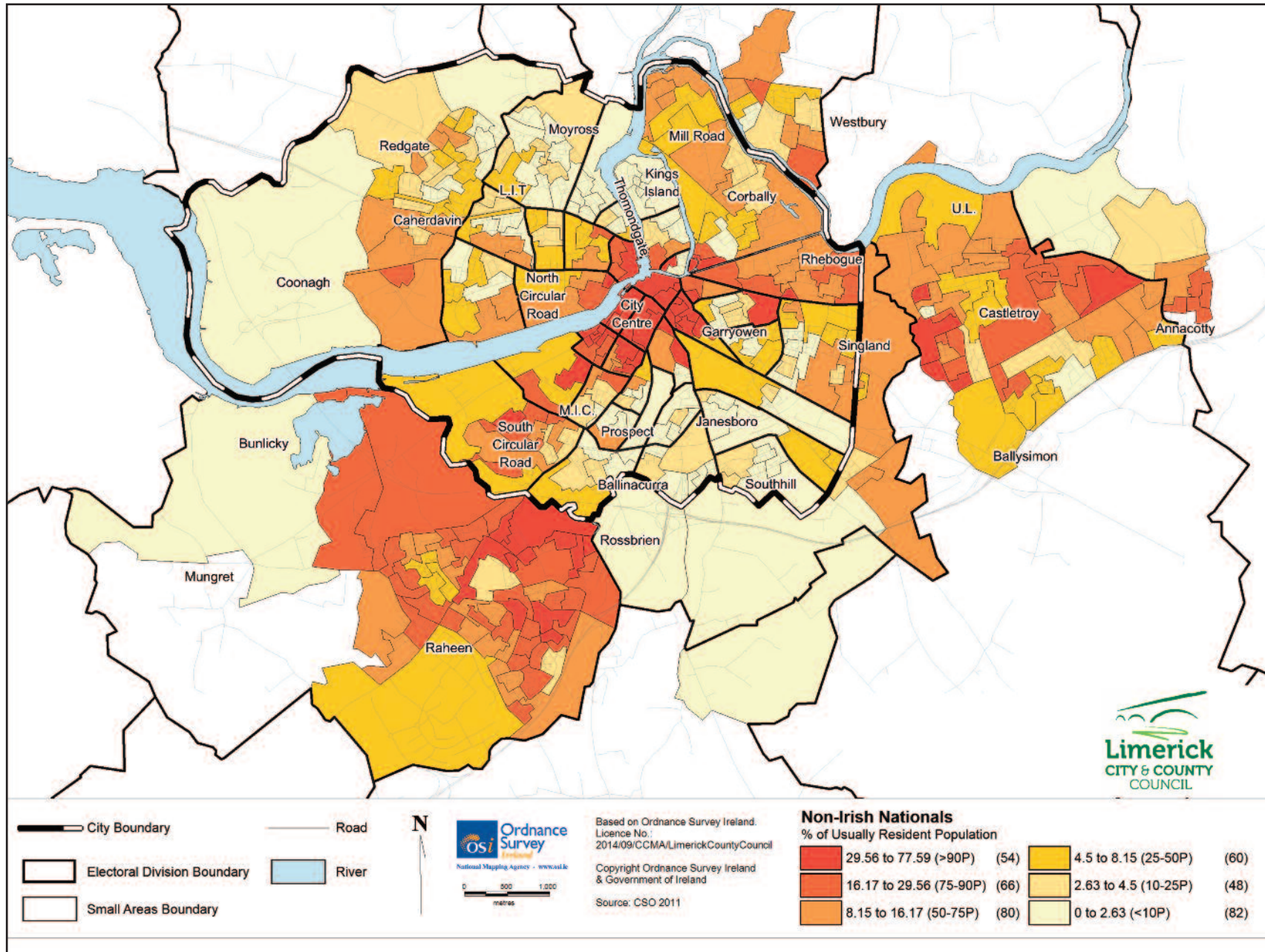
While Limerick has proportionately fewer UK and Lithuanian nationals than Ireland as a whole, it has proportionately more Poles and more people from outside the EU. Polish nationals account for 5.1 per cent of the population in Limerick urban area, while the corresponding figure for Ireland is 2.7 per cent. **Map 12** shows the presence of Poles in Limerick. The spatial pattern here is very similar to that shown in the previous map, with the highest 'densities' of Polish nationals in the city centre and Dooradoyle. Once again too there is a degree of

<sup>18</sup> The remaining 3 per cent consists of persons who didn't state their level of proficiency in English.

# Map 10 | Persons with Poor English

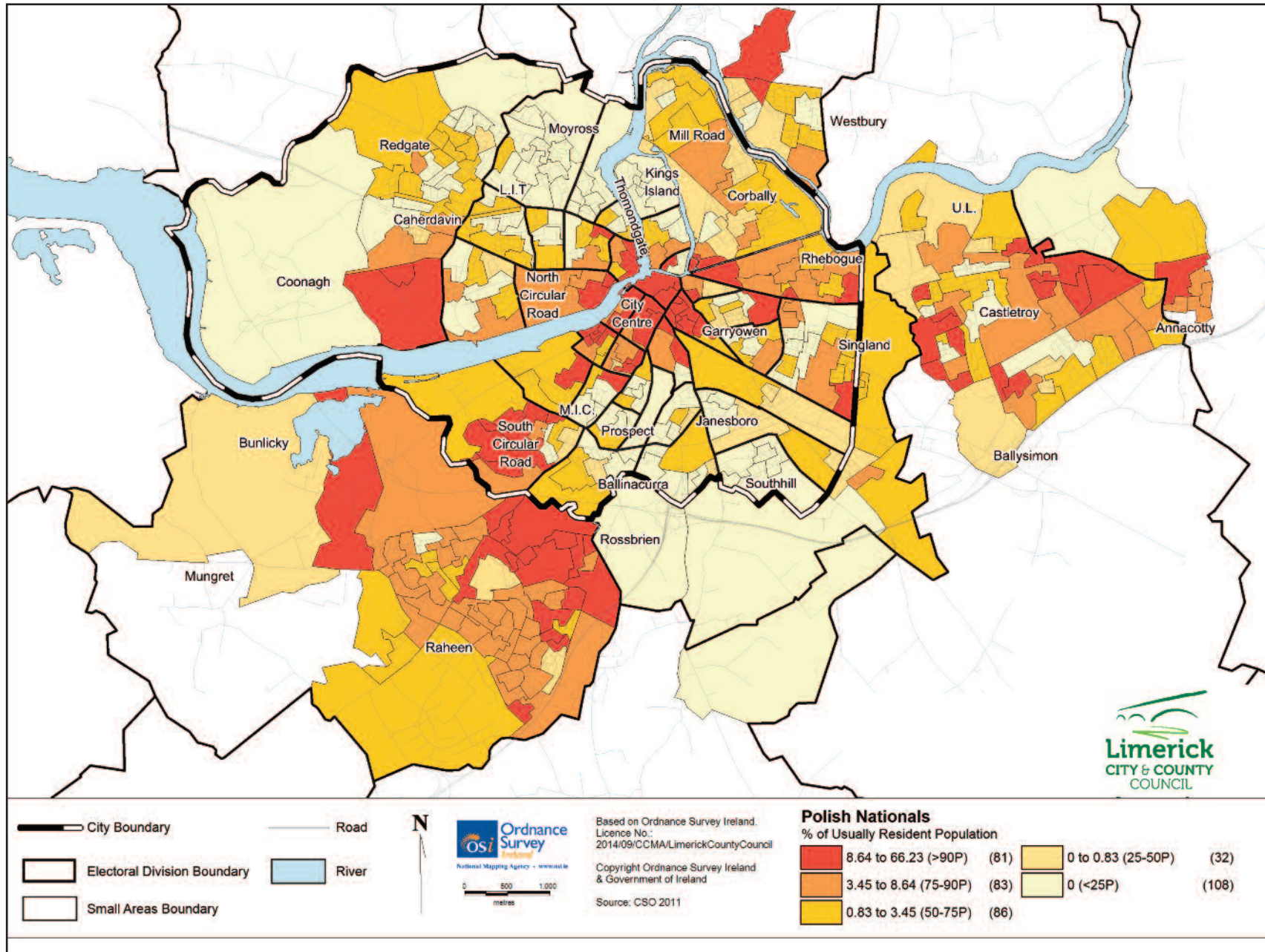


# Map 11 | Non-Irish Nationals





# Map 12 | Polish Nationals



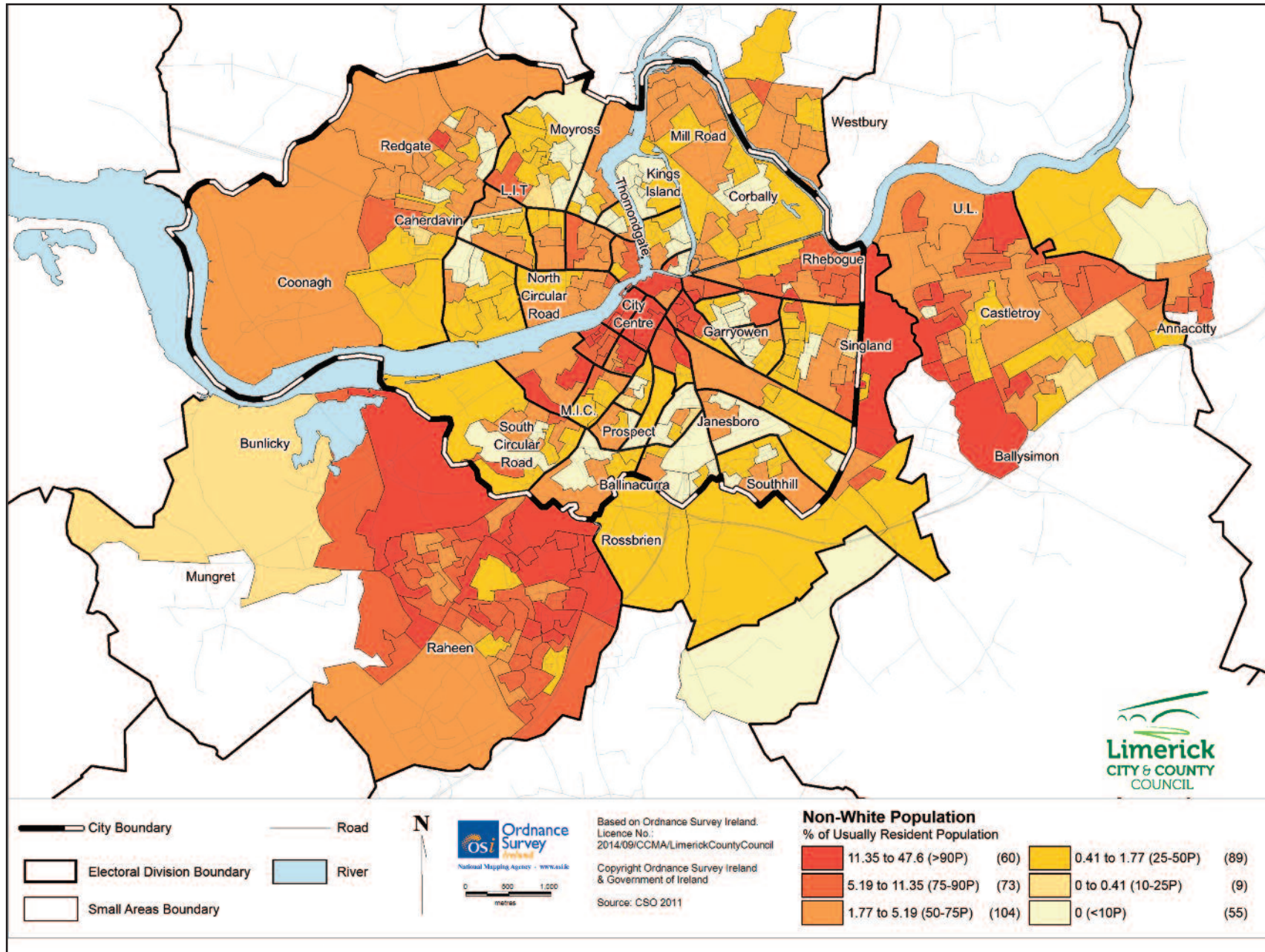
polarisation evident: 21 per cent of Limerick SAs have very high levels of Polish nationals (in national terms) while at the same time 28 per cent of SAs have no Polish nationals at all. As with other foreign nationals, there is virtually no Polish presence in any of the regeneration areas. Where the distribution of Polish nationals differs from that of all foreign nationals is that there is a greater geographical spread of the high concentration areas, and in particular there are more suburban SAs in the top 10 per cent nationally. In addition to Dooradoyle, these are found in Raheen and Castletroy and in some areas around the South Circular Road and Rhebogoe.

The presence of non-EU nationals in a greater proportion in Limerick than in Ireland as a whole, and the number of black people who are Irish citizens, combine to give Limerick urban area an ethnic profile in which 5.3 per cent of the population is non-white. As **Map 13** shows, the most extensive area with very high rates of non-white population is in Raheen and Dooradoyle – driven by the University Hospital. Very high concentrations of non-white people are also to be found in the vicinity of the University of Limerick, but moreso in the newer developments in the valley of the Groody River than in the more established or student-dominated neighbourhoods in Castletroy.

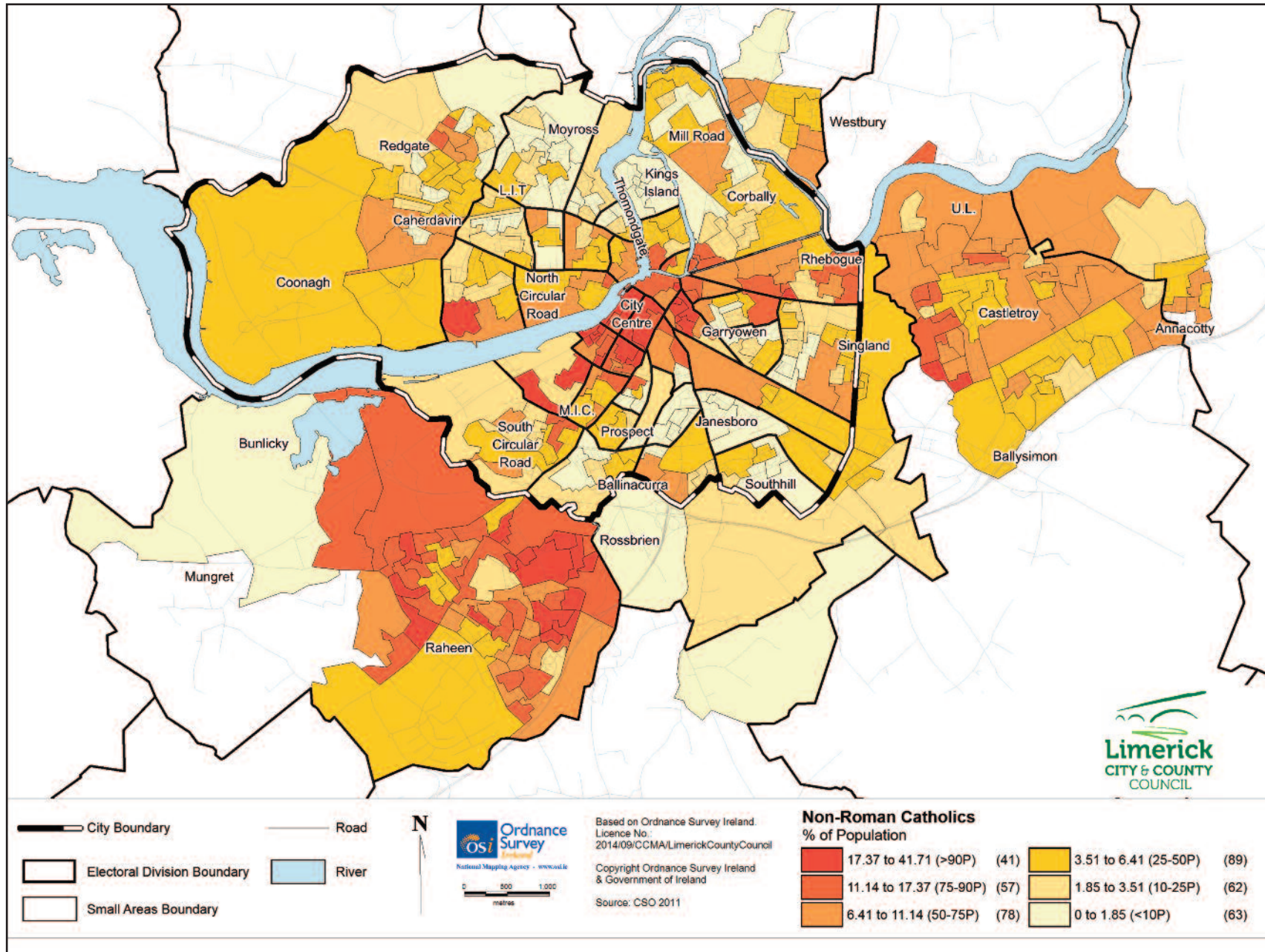
In Ireland generally, the increase in the number of Catholics brought about by in-migration (in particular from Poland) has failed to keep pace with the number of Irish people leaving the Catholic Church. Thus, while the number of Catholics in the country has remained almost static over the past ten years, the proportion of Catholics in the population (84 per cent) is at its lowest ever, and one of the fastest growing cohorts is made up of people who declare themselves as 'having no religion.' Agnosticism and / or atheism are however less evident in Limerick than in other urban centres, and due to the above average presence of Polish nationals, Limerick City and Environs continues to have the highest proportion of Roman Catholics of any city in Ireland (85 per cent). As **Map 14** shows, Limerick's non-Catholic minority has its most extensive presence in the Raheen and Dooradoyle areas. This is partly attributable to the fact that many of the non-EU nationals recruited to work in the health services are Muslims. Indeed, Limerick's largest mosque is located in Dooradoyle. The presence of non-Catholics in the city centre is also associated with in-migration, as many of those of African origin adhere to evangelical churches, while Romanians practice Orthodox Christianity – the fastest growing religion in Ireland.

The Irish Travelling Community represents one of the longest-established expressions of cultural and ethnic diversity in Ireland. Census 2011 recorded that there were 559 members of the Travelling Community in Limerick urban area, accounting for 0.61 per cent of the population – slightly below the national average of 0.65 per cent. Unlike other ethnic minorities, that have a presence, however limited, in most parts of the city, Irish Travellers are concentrated in a small number of neighbourhoods: only 60 of the 390 SAs (15 per cent) have any Travellers and 37 per cent of these (6 per cent of all SAs) have Traveller populations that place them in the top 10 per cent nationally. **Map 15** illustrates where Travellers reside. The pattern shown here is strongly associated with the locations of halting sites, such as in Raheen, The Dock Road, the Long Pavement, Plassey and Singland. In addition, the map shows where Travellers live in houses – mainly in Janesboro and parts of Southill. The overall spatial pattern presented in this map is the starkest in this report in terms of the segregation of any population cohort.

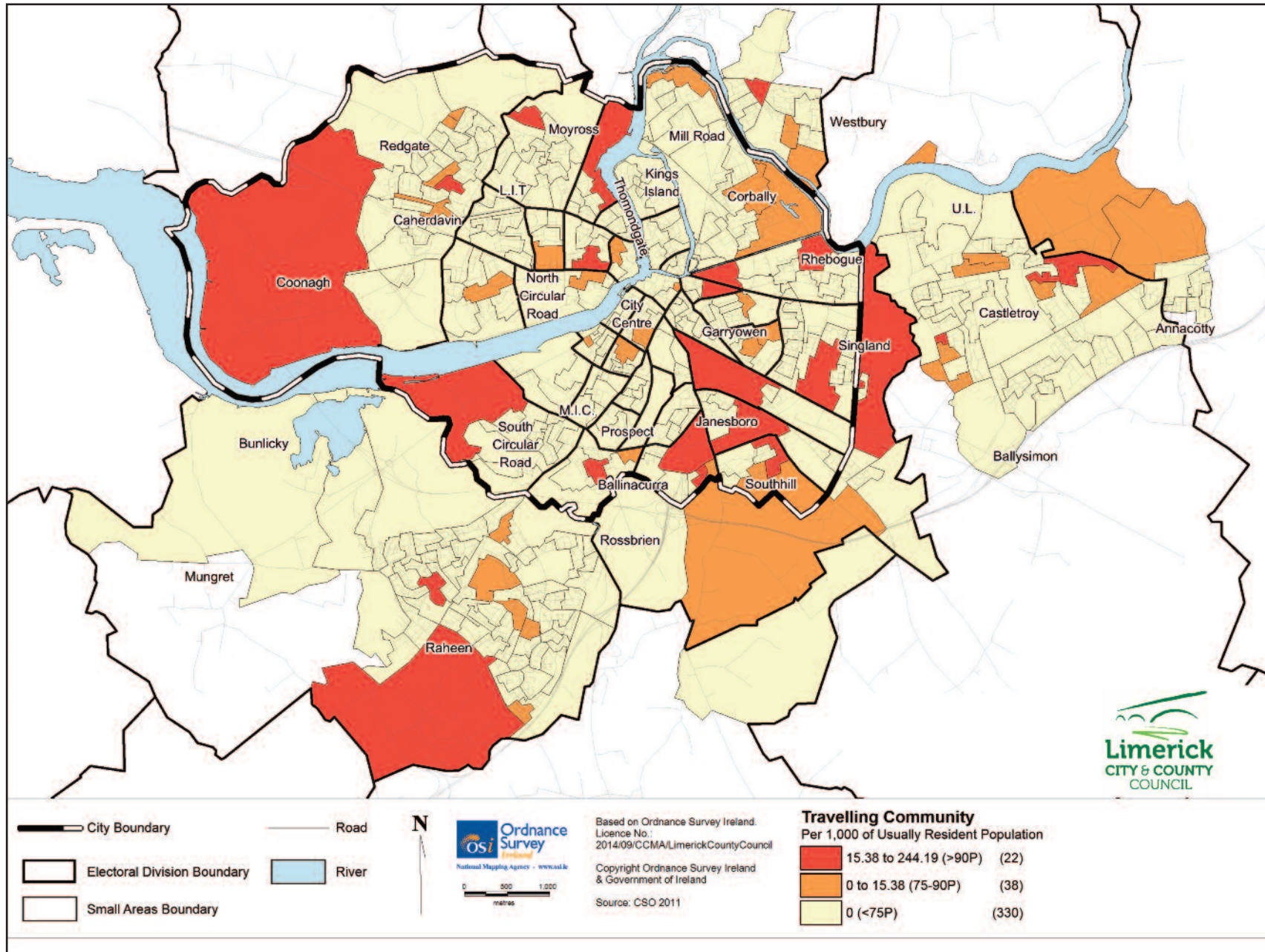
# Map 13 | Non-White Population



# Map 14 | Non-Roman Catholics



# Map 15 | Travelling Community



# Households and Families



# Households and Families

In recent years Ireland has undergone significant change in the composition and size of households and families. These changes are of interest in themselves and also because of their influence on both labour markets and housing markets. It is in the larger urban areas that new household and family forms tend to be most in evidence, with consequently greater household and family diversity in these areas. Such diversity is one of the key dimensions of the concept of 'urbanism', as developed in the literature of urban social geography.

## 6.1 Household Composition and Size

Patterns of population growth or decline, ageing, out- and in-migration, as described in the previous sections, all have implications for household and family structures. We begin our review of this topic by looking at some aspects of household composition, and specifically at non-family households, a category that, while traditionally small, has been increasing in Irish society in recent years. Between 2006 and 2011 the number of non-family households increased by 13 per cent nationally, slightly higher than the growth in the total number of households, of which they now constitute 30 per cent. It would be expected that the urban areas would generally have higher rates of non-family households and this is certainly the case in Limerick urban area, where they account for 37 per cent of all households. Rates of non-family households in excess of 50 per cent are found in three distinct parts of the urban area (**Map 16**). These are the city centre, much of Castletroy, and the area around Mary Immaculate College. High levels in the city centre are associated with the younger, more transient population in the area as noted earlier. The other two areas score highly due to the concentrations of student households.

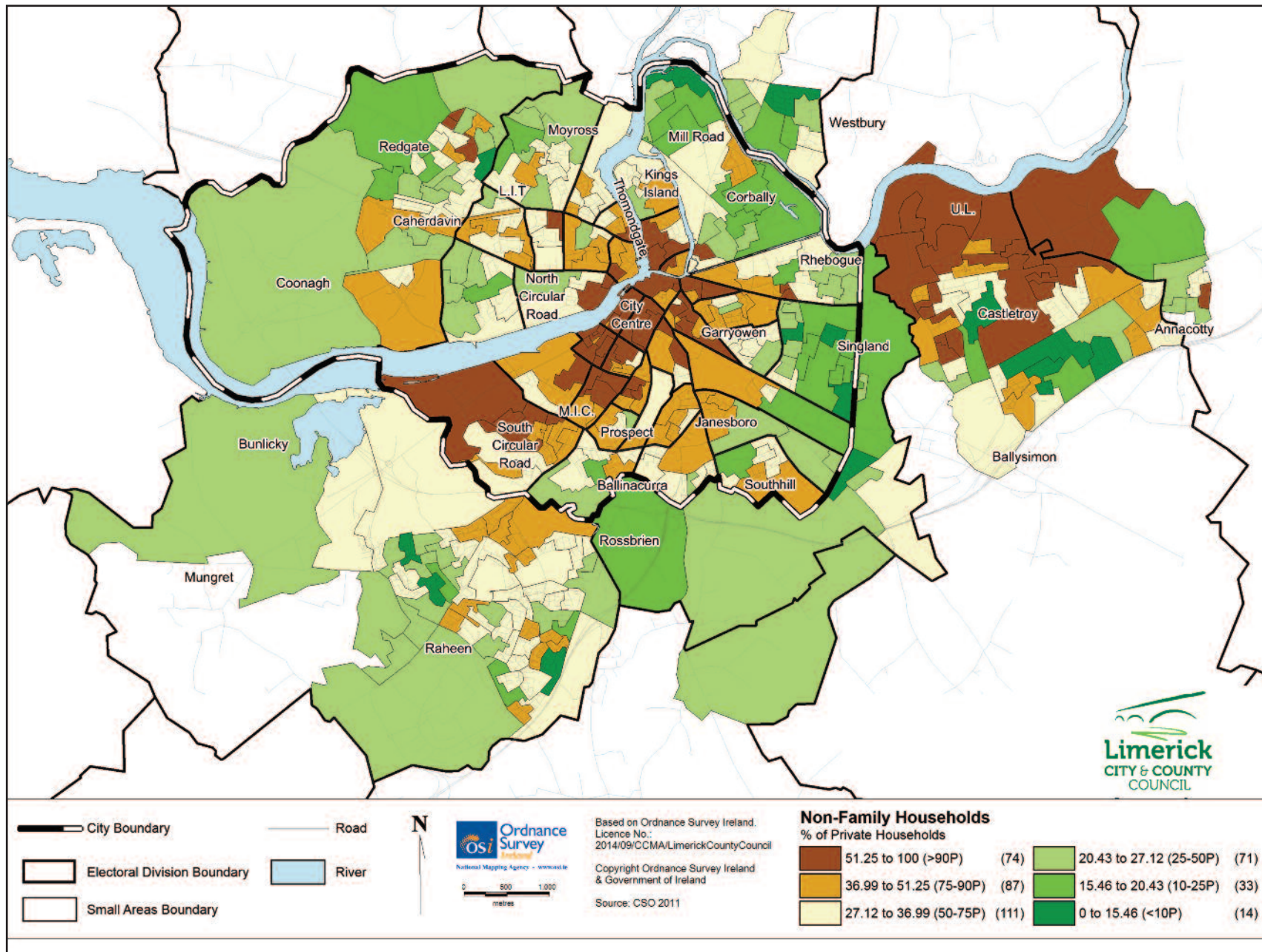
The most common type of non-family household is that consisting of a single person. Nationally such households grew by 19 per cent between 2006 and 2011 and they now constitute 24 per cent of all households. In Limerick urban area the rate of occurrence is higher again, at 26 per cent, but with particularly high rates in the city centre and inner city areas such as Janesboro, Garryowen, Thomondgate and the southern half of King's Island, including the area around Nicholas Street (**Map 17**). The type of single person household varies, as between the city centre and the more residential inner city areas: in the city centre most such households consist of young people who have recently moved in to the area and are living in rented accommodation; in the inner city single person households are associated with elderly persons living alone, including widows and widowers. There is just one outlying area featuring in the very high category: the area around the university in Castletroy where, as noted above, the households in question are student households.

The increased numbers of non-family households and single person households have been associated with a decrease in the average household size over time. Nationally the average household size (for all private households) decreased from 2.8 to 2.7 persons in the five years to 2011. The average for Limerick urban area is currently 2.6, and more than three-quarters of SAs in the urban area are in the bottom half of all SAs nationally. The spatial pattern of the variable remains quite regular, as noted in the 2006 profile, and is characterised by increasing household sizes as distance from the city centre increases (**Map 18**). The areas with the largest household sizes correspond closely to those identified earlier as having the highest rates of population increase 2006-2011, and high child dependency ratios, namely, Moyross, Westbury, the Carrabullawn area of Corbally, and Singland.

## 6.2 Family Size, Stage in Life Cycle and Composition

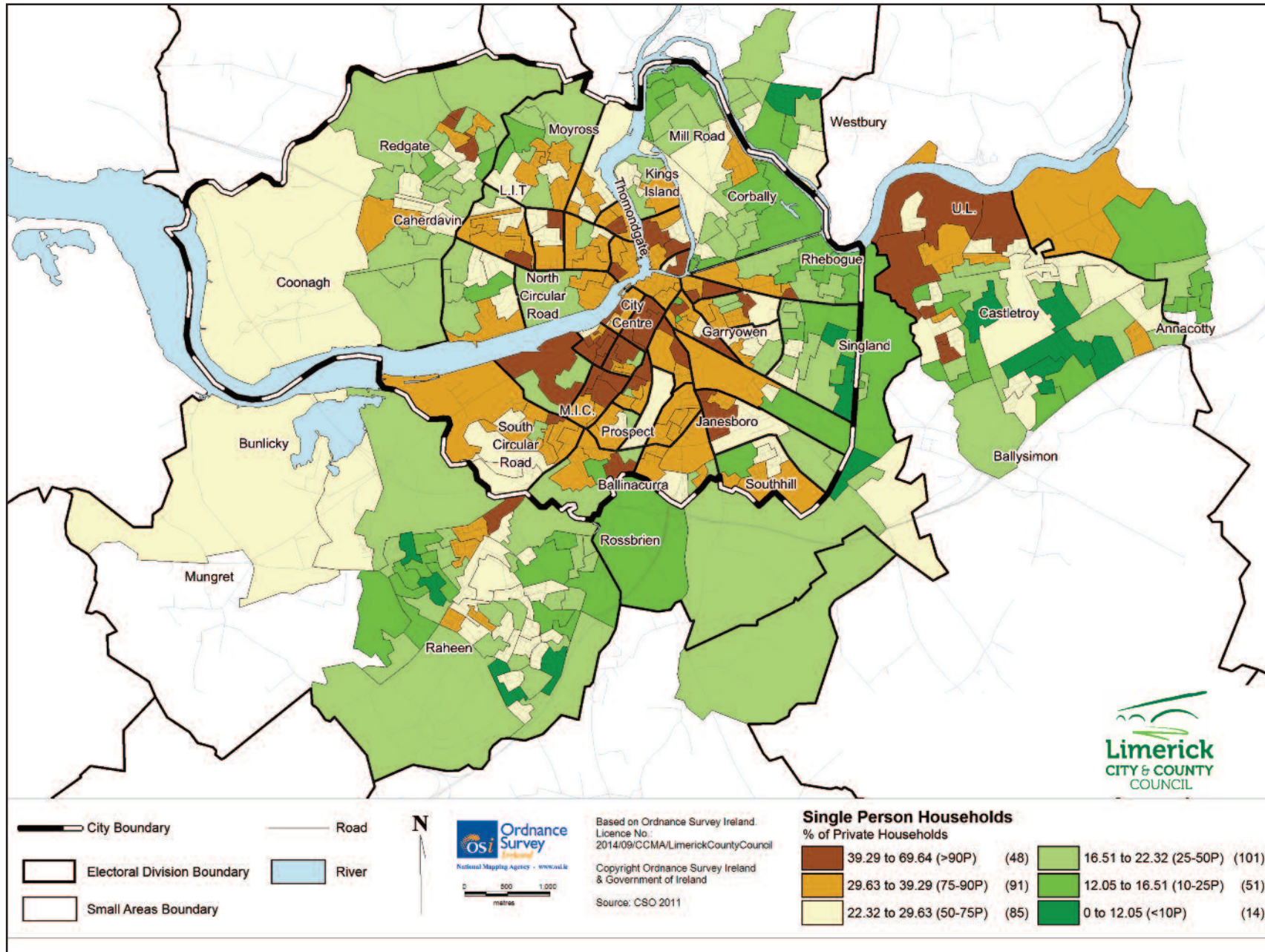
Family-based households still constitute the majority of households in Limerick, and within these a number of family types are of particular interest in terms of housing policy and/or social policy. The first of these is large families, defined as those where there are six or more persons present. Nationally such families constitute just 4.8 per cent of all families, and an even lower 3.4 per cent of families in Limerick urban area. This is consistent with the relatively low average household size in the city, and translates into a situation where the majority of SAs record low scores on this indicator: there are just half as many SAs in the top two categories as expected, and two-and one-half times as many in the very low category. Again mirroring the map of average household size, the city centre and older areas in Caherdavin and on the North and South Circular Roads have very few large families (**Map 19**). In contrast large families constitute much higher than average proportions of all families in Moyross, St Mary's Park, part of Janesboro and Castletroy. The latter area, however, has few families in total, and so the number of large families here is also quite low.

# Map 16 | Non-Family Households

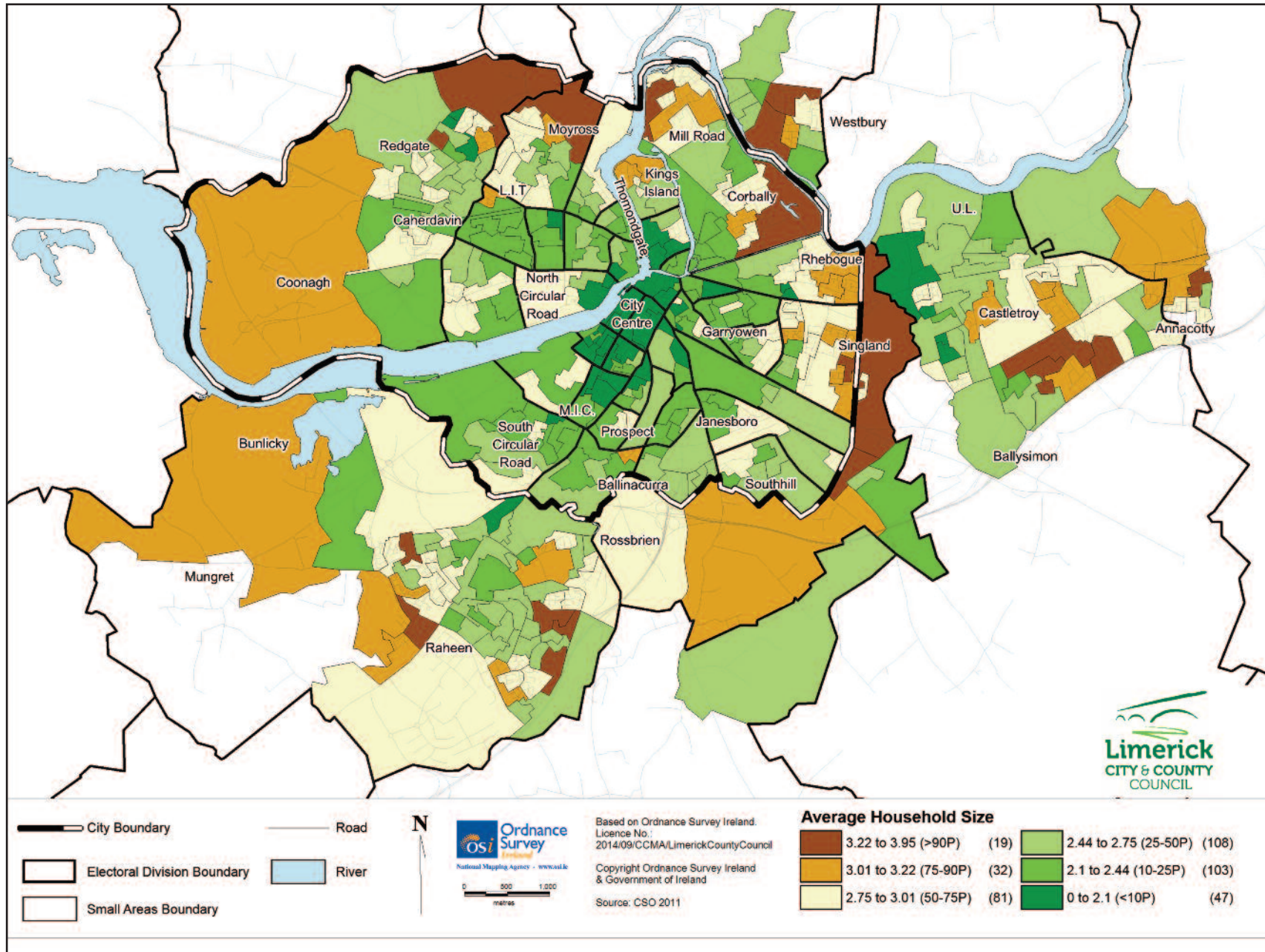




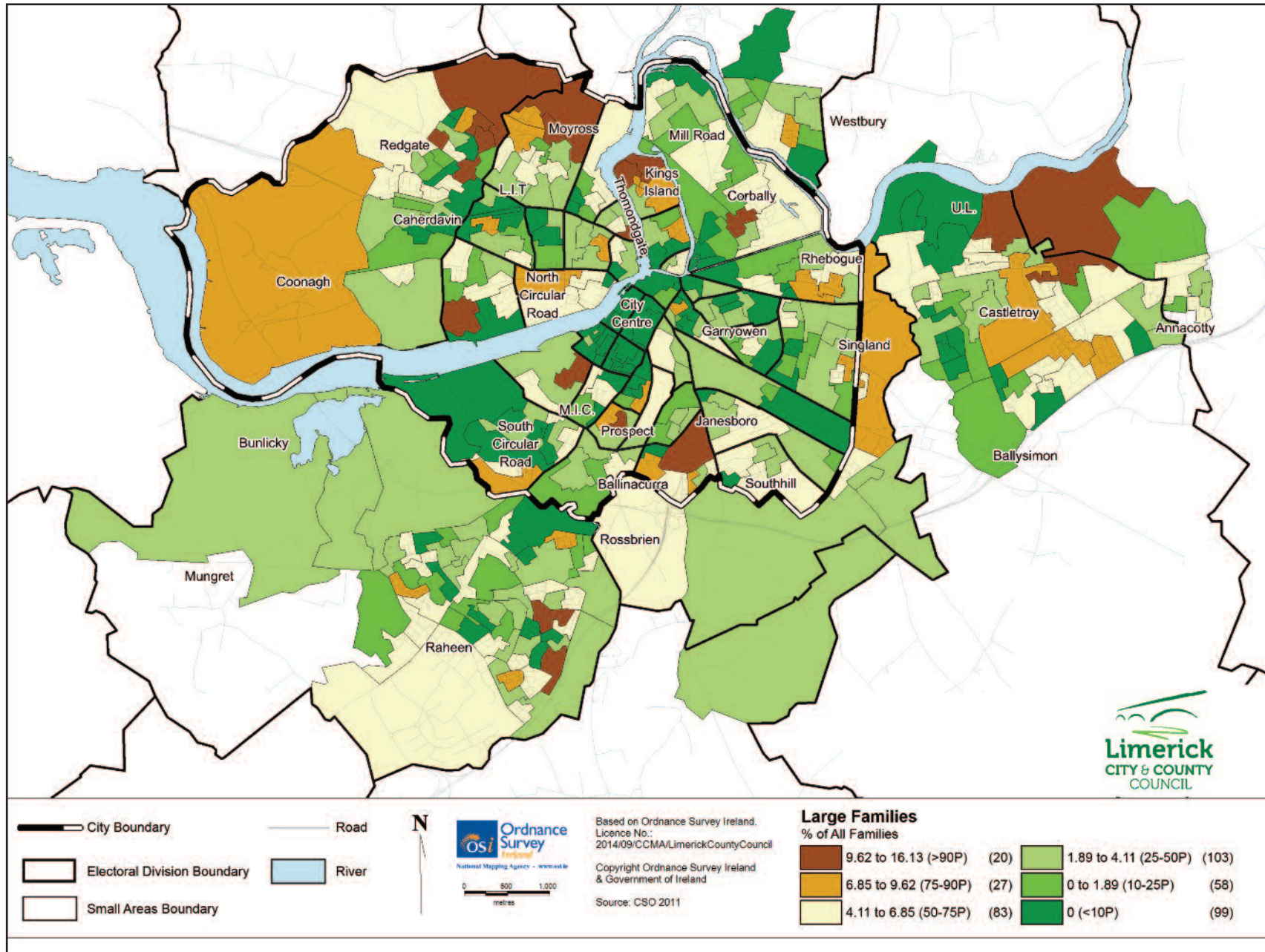
# Map 17 | Single Person Households



# Map 18 | Average Household Size



# Map 19 | Large Families



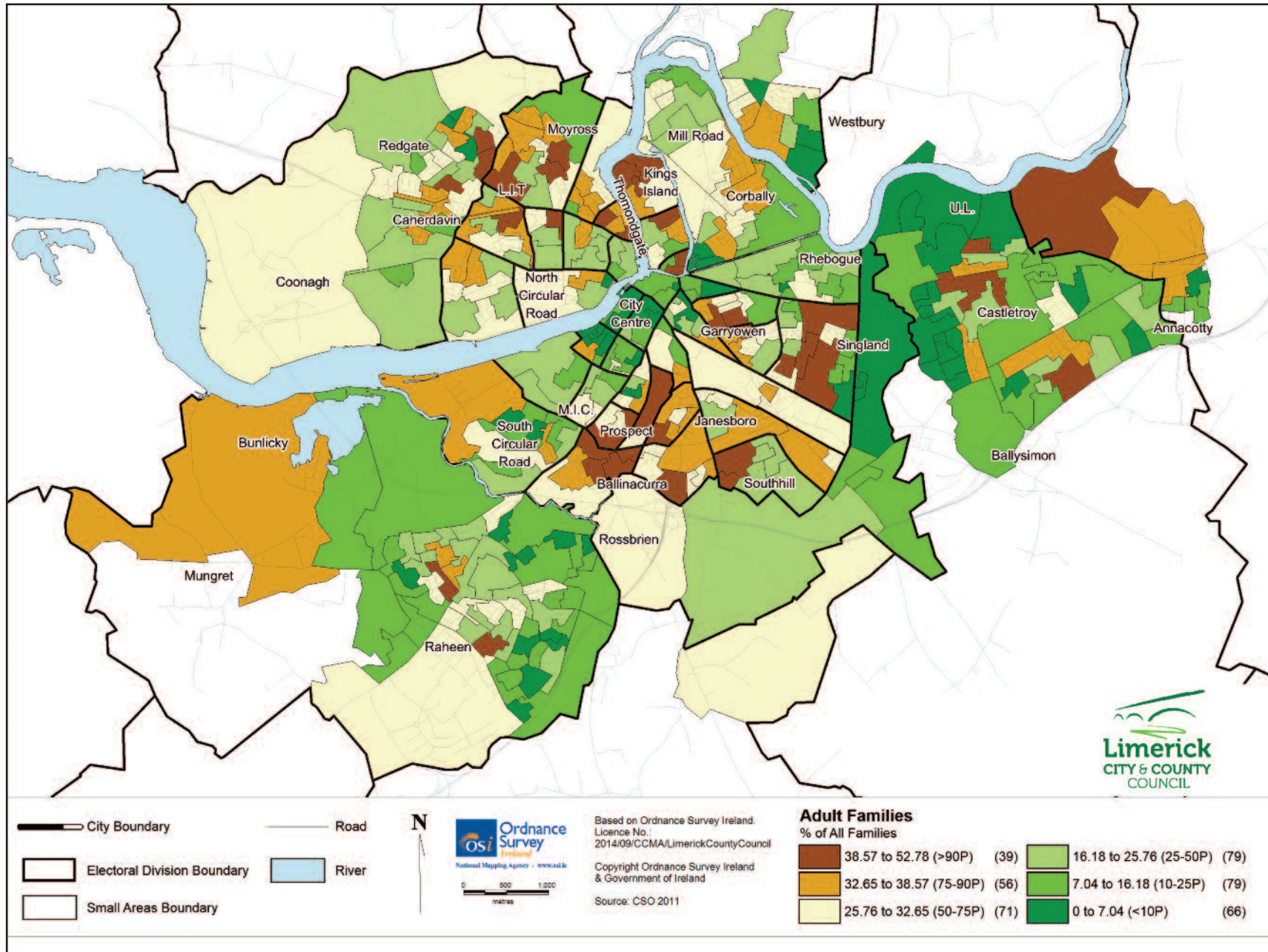
One of the factors that may maintain larger family sizes is the tendency for adult children to remain in the family home. As we noted in the 2006 profile, there are several reasons for this phenomenon, including unemployment and disability (of either the parent(s) or child). High rates of adult families have also been taken as indicative of problems with housing supply and /or housing finance that result in adult children being unable to acquire their own accommodation. Surprisingly, therefore, given the near collapse in the housing market, the rate of occurrence of these families decreased slightly nationally, from 26 per cent in 2006 to 25 per cent in 2011. In Limerick urban area the 2011 rate of occurrence is slightly lower than this, at 24 per cent, and the distribution of SAs across the variable is skewed downwards; in other words there is a higher proportion of SAs with very low or low rates than is the case nationally. SAs with rates of adult families that place them in the top 10 per cent nationally are found in Caherdavin, parts of Moyross, St Mary's Park, Singland and parts of Garryowen, Keyes Park, Janesboro and Ballinacurra Weston (**Map 20**).

So-called empty nest and retired families are those without children at home and where the female parent is aged 45 years of age or older. The distribution of this variable in Limerick is somewhat polarised, in that there are higher than expected proportions of SAs in both the very high and very low categories. The SAs with very high rates of empty nest and retired families are found mainly on the north side of the city, in Corbally, along Mulgrave Street, Janesboro, the Ballinacurra area, the South Circular Road area and Ballyclough (**Map 21**). In these areas, rates range upwards from about one-third of all families to as high as 60 per cent of all families (which occurs in the Janemount Park / College Park area of Corbally). Not surprisingly, this map is quite similar to that depicting the elderly dependency ratio. Depending on the age of the parents in these families, these could be interpreted as areas where there is some capacity for volunteerism and social economy activity. In some cases too empty nest families can find that their accommodation is no longer suitable for their needs. There may be problems, for example, in heating and maintaining over-large houses.

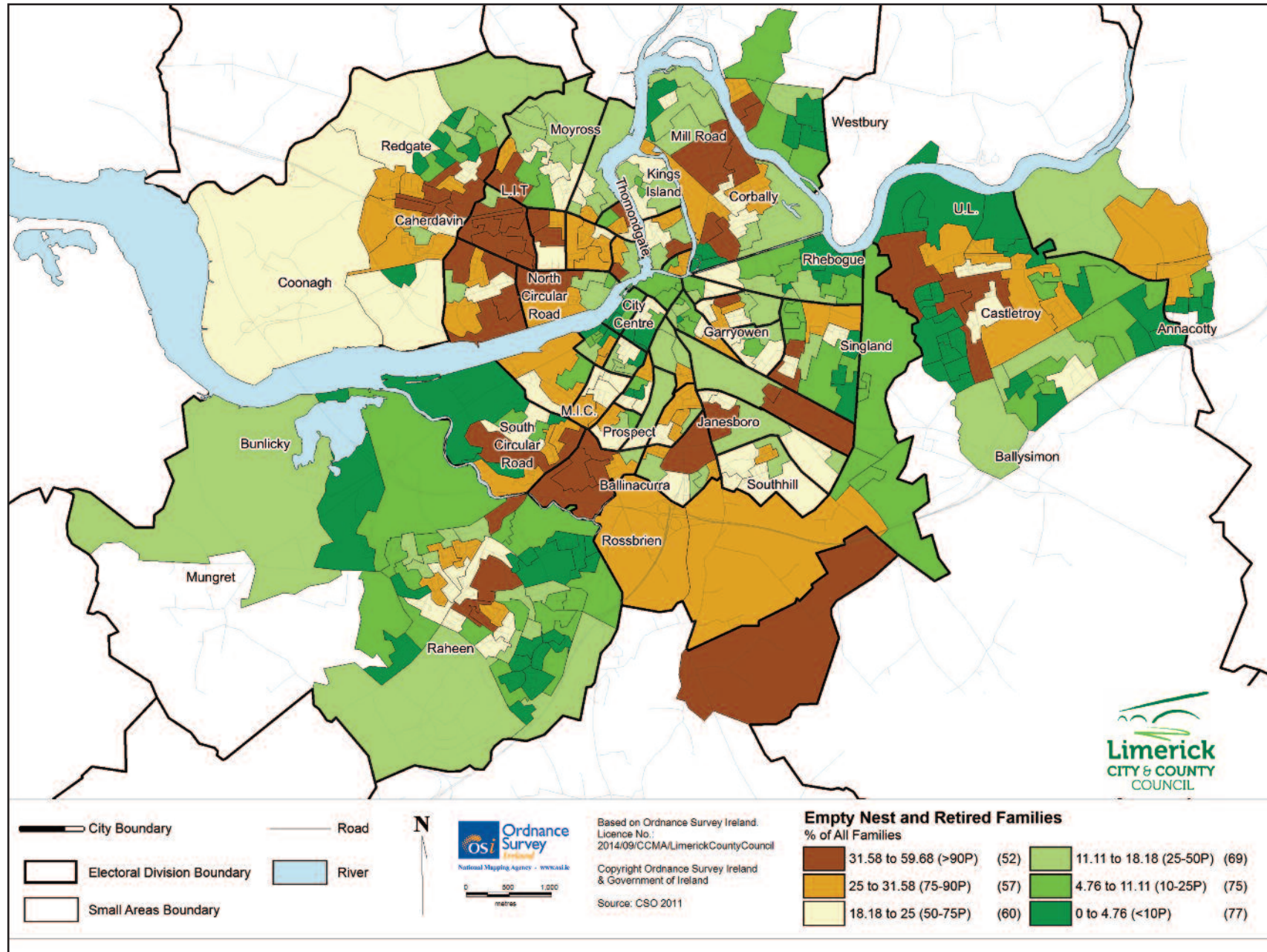
Finally we look at the issue of family composition, and specifically the occurrence of lone parent families. Again we focus on this category because of its importance in social policy debates, amid evidence of relatively high rates of poverty and material deprivation in lone parent families. In the State as a whole the rate of lone parent families remained roughly constant at 18 per cent between 2006 and 2011. In Limerick the rate in 2011 was approximately 23 per cent. However, when we look at the pattern across the 390 SAs in the urban area we find a distribution that is strongly skewed upwards towards high rates of occurrence. Thus, 22 per cent of SAs have rates above roughly one-third, and are therefore in the very high category (as compared to 10 per cent nationally). These SAs stretch from Moyross, Ballynanty and almost all of King's Island on the north side of the city, to Garryowen, the Mulgrave Street area, Janesboro, Southill and Ballinacurra Weston (**Map 22**). The high concentrations of lone parent families in these areas is largely due to the fact that they are mostly areas of local authority housing, and it is upon the public sector that many lone parents depend for their accommodation. The exceptions are Janesboro and Garryowen, where much of the housing stock has been privatised through tenant purchase over the years.

Arguably the lone parent rate as calculated for **Map 22** is underestimated. This is because quite a high proportion of all families have no children – 29 per cent in the State as a whole, and 30 per cent in Limerick urban area in 2011 – and these should therefore be excluded from the denominator in calculating the rate of lone parent families. This is the calculation underlying the final map in this section of the report, which looks at lone parent families as a percentage of families with children. The recalculation causes the rate of lone parenthood to increase for all areas, and it now ranges upward from 47 per cent for the very high category. Interestingly, the number of SAs in this category also increases (to 96, or 25 per cent of all SAs, as compared to an expected 10 per cent). A significant number of the new additions are SAs in the city centre (**Map 23**) indicating that, while many families in this part of the city do not have children, those that do are frequently headed by a lone parent. Otherwise the spatial pattern on this indicator is broadly similar to the previous map, with the public housing estates featuring strongly in the very high category.

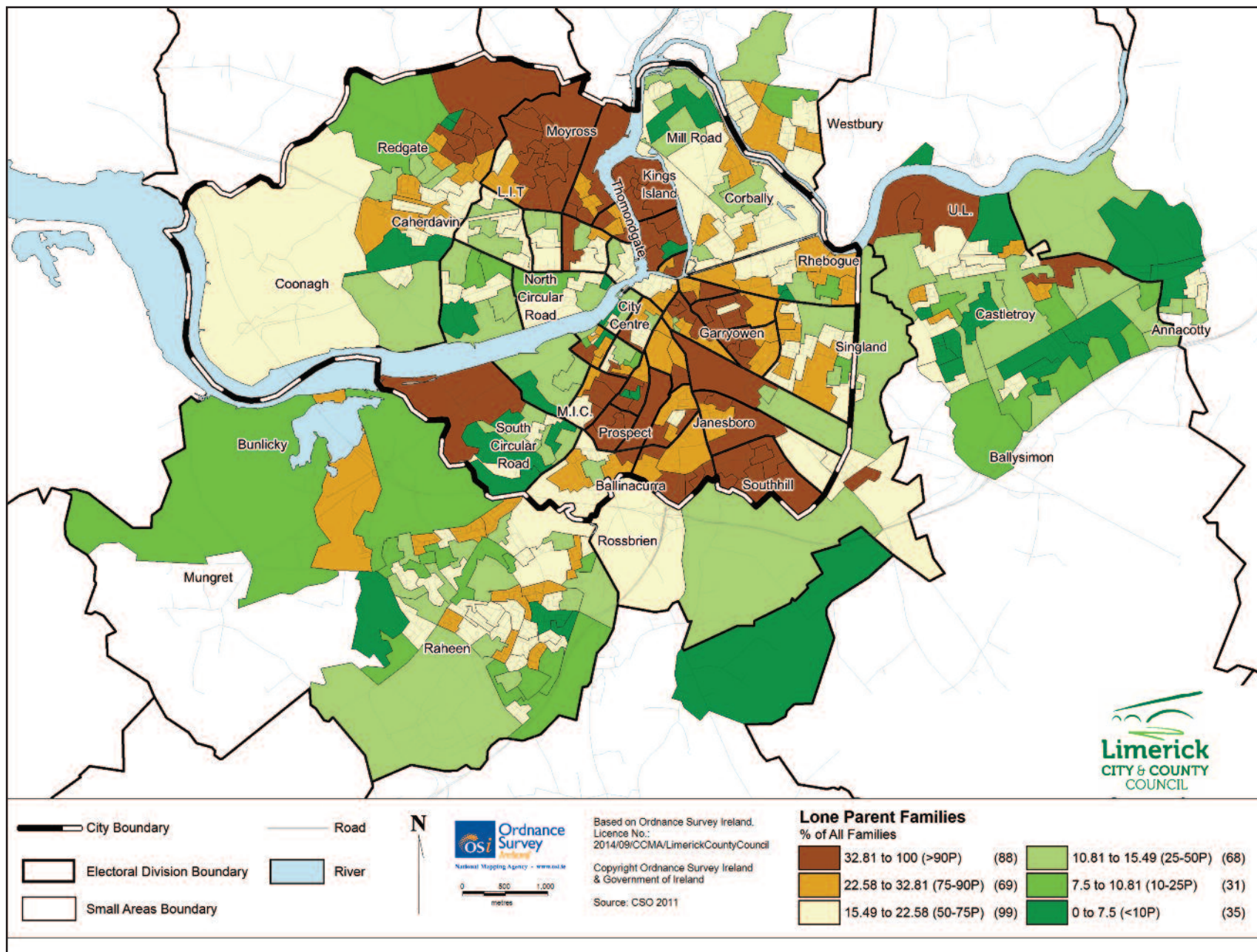
## Map 20 | Adult Families



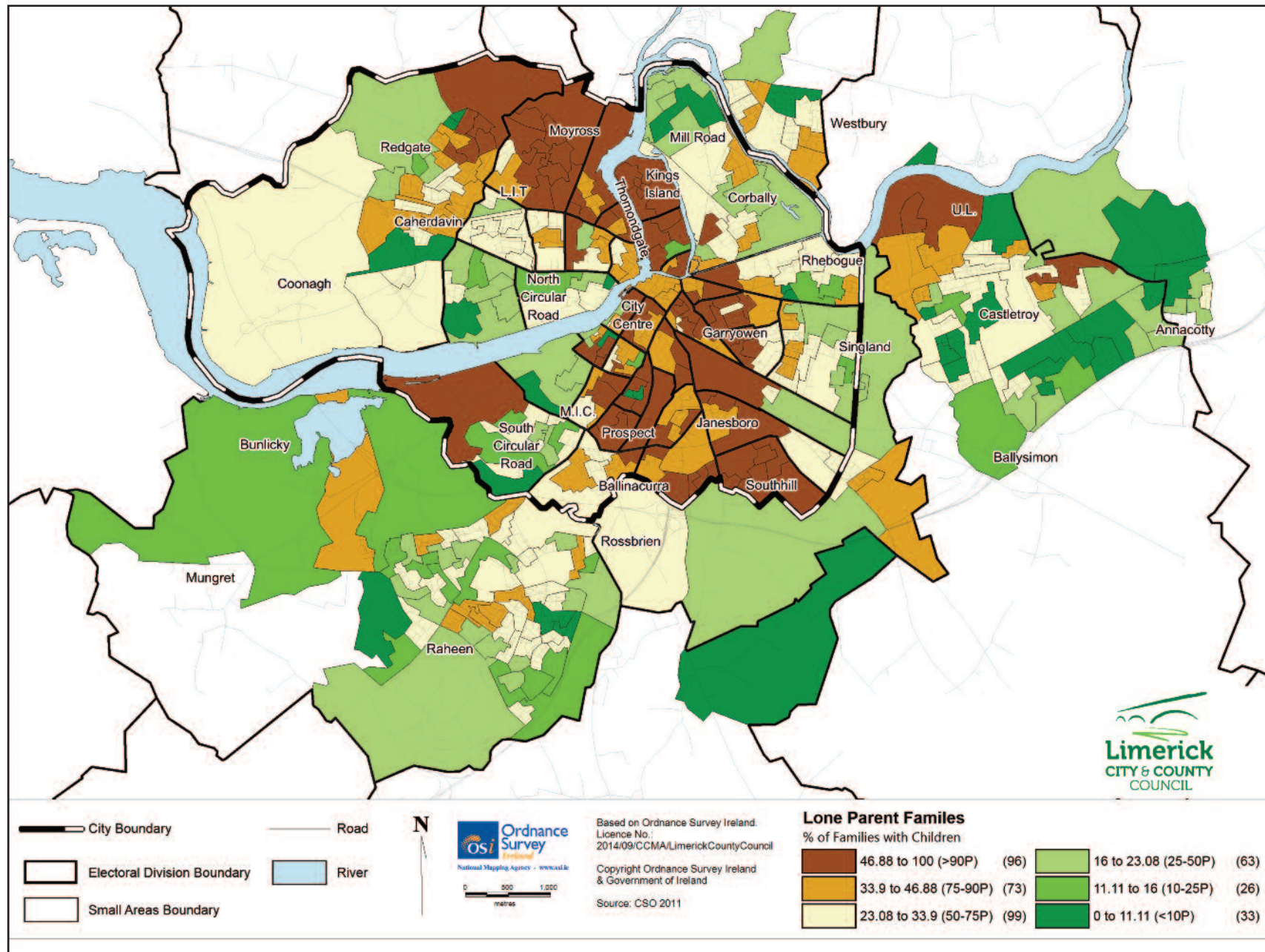
## Map 21 | Empty Nest or Retired Families



## Map 22 | Lone Parent Families



## Map 23 | Lone Parent Families as Percentage of Families with Children





# Housing



# Housing

This section presents a profile of housing in Limerick. It looks specifically at some of the most pertinent aspects of contemporary housing, including the number of vacant units, the presence of flats and apartments, the age of the housing stock and the extent of the private and local authority rented sectors. Limerick's housing profile distinguishes itself from that of the State in a number of respects. The proportion of homes being rented is above average, and while vacancy rates are lower than the national average, the very high concentration of vacant and abandoned buildings in some parts of the City gives cause for concern. The maps presented in this section reveal that vacant units are most prevalent in the city centre and in areas of Local Authority housing. However, the approaches to housing pursued over the past decade have neither alleviated housing problems in Limerick nor delivered socially-mixed neighbourhoods, but rather have resulted in the concentration of new housing stock in the city's periphery and in its extensive commuter belt. Thus, a considerable mis-match has emerged between what has been happening in Limerick and the principles of good planning that seek to promote the consolidation of settlements, the incorporation of ample green and recreation spaces, and the reduction of carbon footprints. It is evident that a more holistic and joined-up approach to housing is required.

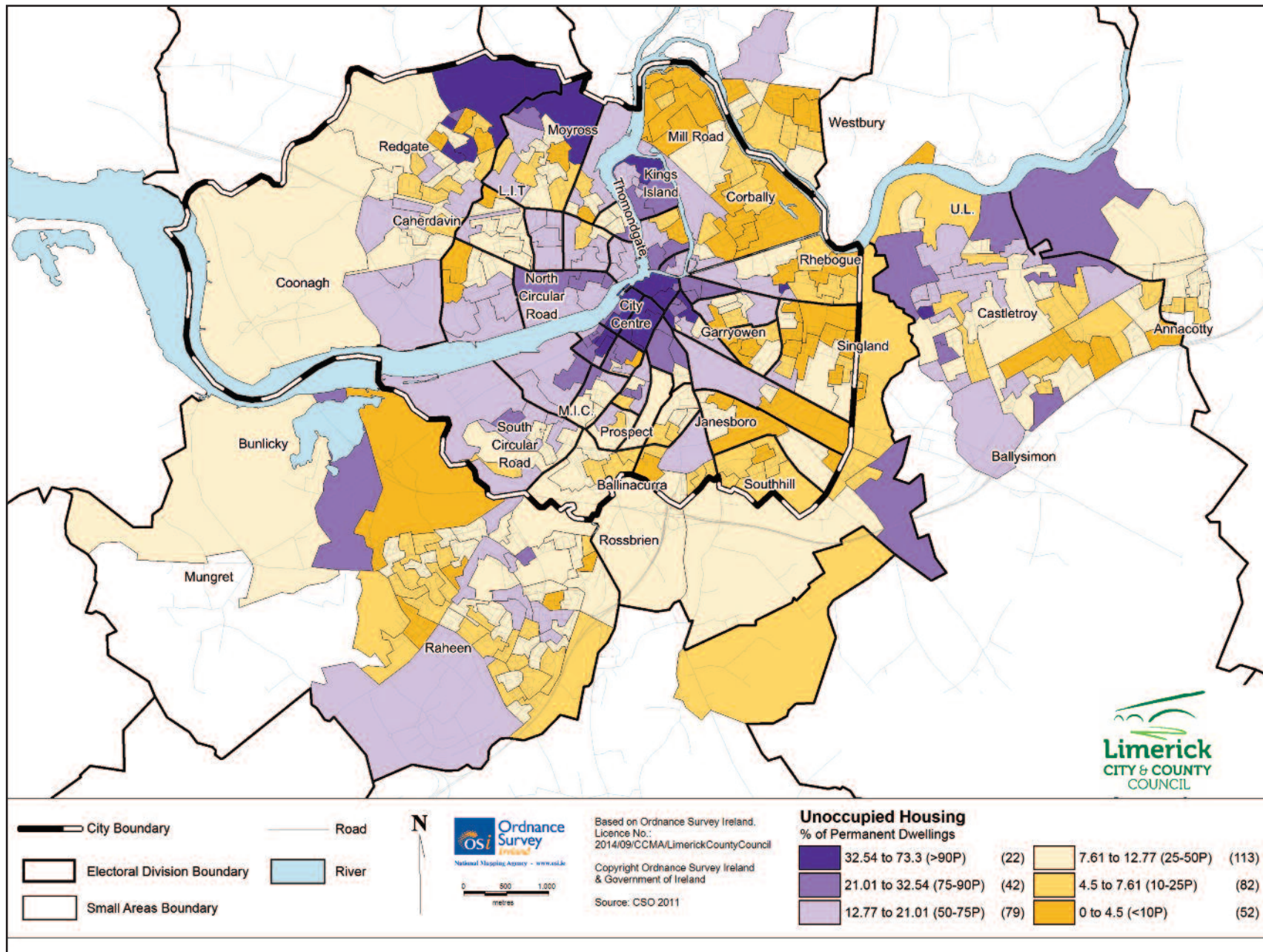
## 7.1 Vacant Housing Stock

While Limerick has had more than its fair share of high profile spatial planning problems, mainly associated with the under-bounding of the city and sporadic developments in the periphery, the levels of vacant housing stock in the city and in the surrounding environs are below the national average. Moreover, there are no major ghost estates in the urban area. Of the total housing units in the State, 16.8 per cent were classified as unoccupied, while the corresponding figure for Limerick urban area was 13.7 per cent. While the latter figure can be viewed in a positive light, one has to bear in mind that the national figure is inflated by areas that have extensive holiday homes. Indeed, in Limerick, there are several neighbourhoods in which vacancy is clearly problematic. There are 30 SAs in Limerick in which over 30 per cent of all houses are vacant. As **Map 24** shows, the most extensive area of vacant housing can be found in Moyross. Indeed in one part of Moyross, 79 per cent of all houses are vacant. There are also several vacant houses in St. Mary's Park. In both areas vacancy may be attributed, at least in part, to the Limerick regeneration programme, which has involved the systematic closure of houses as the first step in preparing areas for the construction of new housing stock. As long as such vacant housing units remain, the affected neighbourhoods have very limited prospects of recovering from the deprivation and severe social problems that have blighted them for decades. Therefore, it behoves city authorities to address the betterment of the physical environment in addition to, and in tandem with, supporting and promoting community development.

**Map 24** also shows above average levels of vacant housing units in the city centre and between Castletroy and Singland. Vacancy in the former is due to an over-supply of non-diversified units, mainly two bedroom apartments, and concerns among potential residents over the quality of the built environment. It is also associated with the City Council's attempts to bring about urban renewal. The map shows the very high levels of vacancy in Patrick Street and the general area between Arthur's Quay and the Milk Market – the site of the proposed 'Opera Centre.' This area has been adversely affected by the protracted process of securing suitable redevelopment, as the originally planned retail complex was subjected to delays arising from the development and planning system as well as from the economic downturn and change in the ownership of the development company, prior to the City Council's acquisition of ownership in 2011. Pending the implementation of the provisions of the City Development Plan as reviewed and adopted in 2010 or the location of a part of the University of Limerick to this area, the intervening result has been an extensive area of dereliction, with a number of Georgian and other period buildings on Patrick Street abandoned and / or boarded-up. While there is no doubting the need for investment in this part of the City, one has to question an approach that has allowed a significant part of Limerick's built heritage to be threatened, and how an area has come to need 'renewal' within twenty years of an urban renewal scheme having already been introduced in the city (the scheme in the early 1990s produced Cruises Street and an overhaul of Ellen Street and Denmark Street). Clearly, the prominent location of such a large cluster of neglected potential heritage buildings detracts from a positive image of Limerick.

19 Limerick City Council (2010) Limerick City Development Plan, 2010 – 2016, adopted by Limerick City Council, 25th November 2010.

# Map 24 | Unoccupied Housing



## 7.2 Flats and Apartments

Living in flats and / or apartments has been part of the way of life for most people in cities of Limerick's size elsewhere in Europe, and generations of families have been raised in apartments. In Ireland however, flats were often constructed by local authorities as a means of providing accommodation for the maximum number of persons in the minimum amount of space. Consequently, this approach to social housing, as typified by Fatima Mansions and Ballymun in Dublin, for example, has given many Irish people a negative perception of living in a flat or apartment.<sup>20</sup> In Limerick, social housing was generally not provided in flats, but in large housing estates on the then (1930s to 1960s) periphery of the city, in areas lacking the appropriate social services and infrastructure. The first significant developments with respect to apartment-living came with the private developments that emerged through urban renewal tax incentive schemes in the 1990s. Thus, most of Limerick's flats and apartments have been built by the private sector rather than by local authorities, and are predominantly located along the quays on the southern bank of the Shannon from Sarsfield Bridge westward to Limerick Docks. These developments add to the more established apartments, flats and bedsits in Limerick city centre, where Georgian and other multi-storey buildings have been sub-divided and let to tenants. **Map 25** shows this pattern very clearly. It also shows the locations of smaller clusters of apartments such as on the site of the former Good Shepherd Convent on Clare Street, O'Callaghan Strand, Clonmacken and in some estates in Dooradoyle and Raheen. In these suburban locations and on the northern banks of the Shannon, the apartments tend to be larger than those in the city centre and their design, with the incorporation of communal spaces and green areas, is more in line with the norms for apartment design in Western European countries. As a result, the populations are more stable and less transient than in the city centre / Dock Road.

Map 25 also shows a significant number of flat / apartment units around the University of Limerick. These are in purpose-built student accommodation, and became a notable feature on the suburban landscape during the 2000s as the student population expanded. As in the city centre, tax incentives were a major driver of such developments, and while they meet an important housing need in Limerick, they do not fit well into the local landscape and in some cases, particularly in Singland, sites have an abandoned and semi-finished appearance.

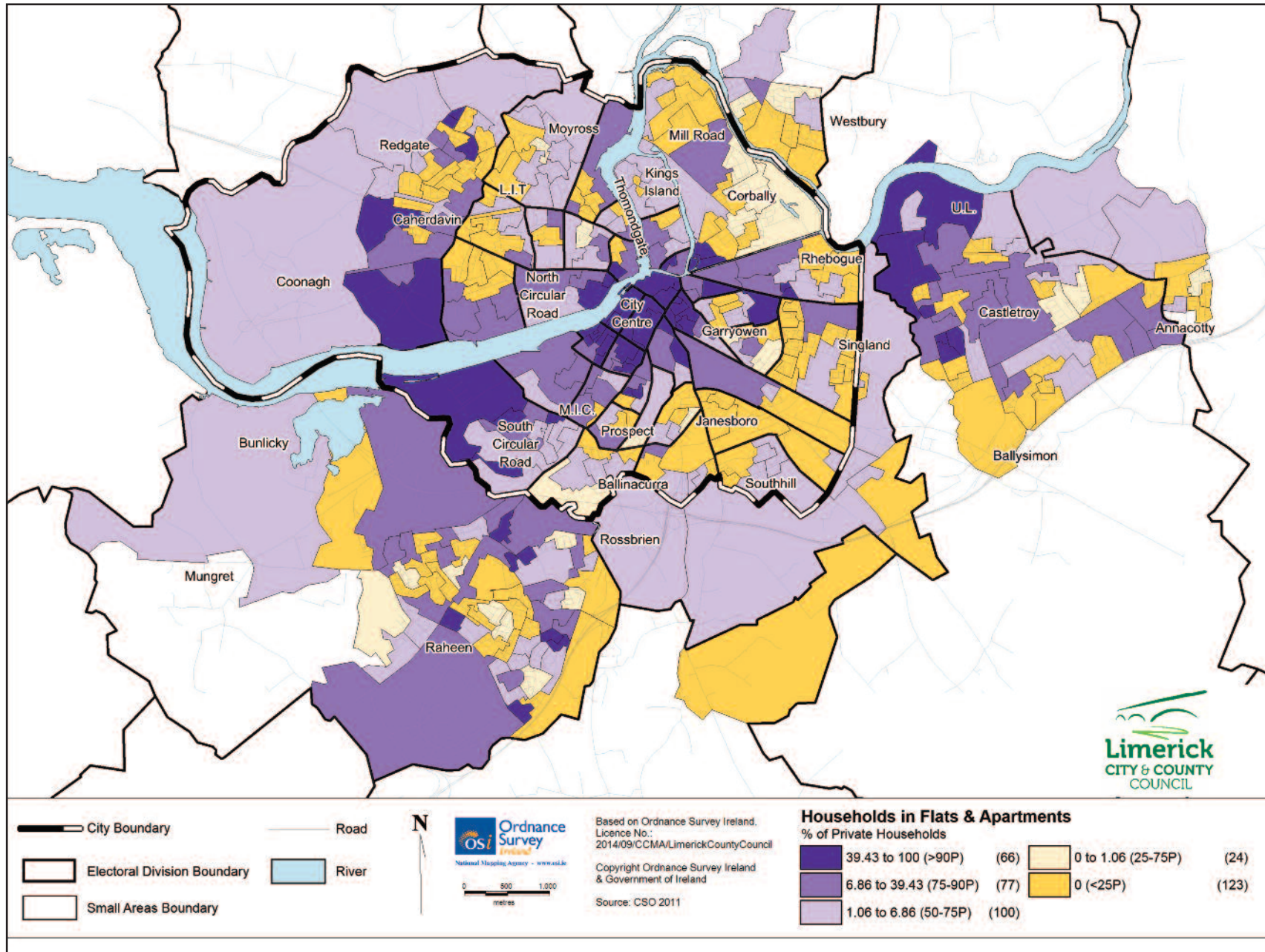
The census returns show that there are 91 bedsits in Limerick urban area. These provide homes to 152 people. The proportion of bedsits in the overall housing stock within Limerick is similar to the national average, and the highest concentrations are associated with the sub-division of 18th and 19th century buildings in the city centre. This is presented in **Map 26**. While the sub-division of these buildings into bedsits has helped to maintain the population in the city centre, and has met an accommodation need for a section of the population, it is not a use that has generated a large amount of re-investment, and consequently many of the buildings in question have not been well maintained.

## 7.3 Age of the Housing Stock

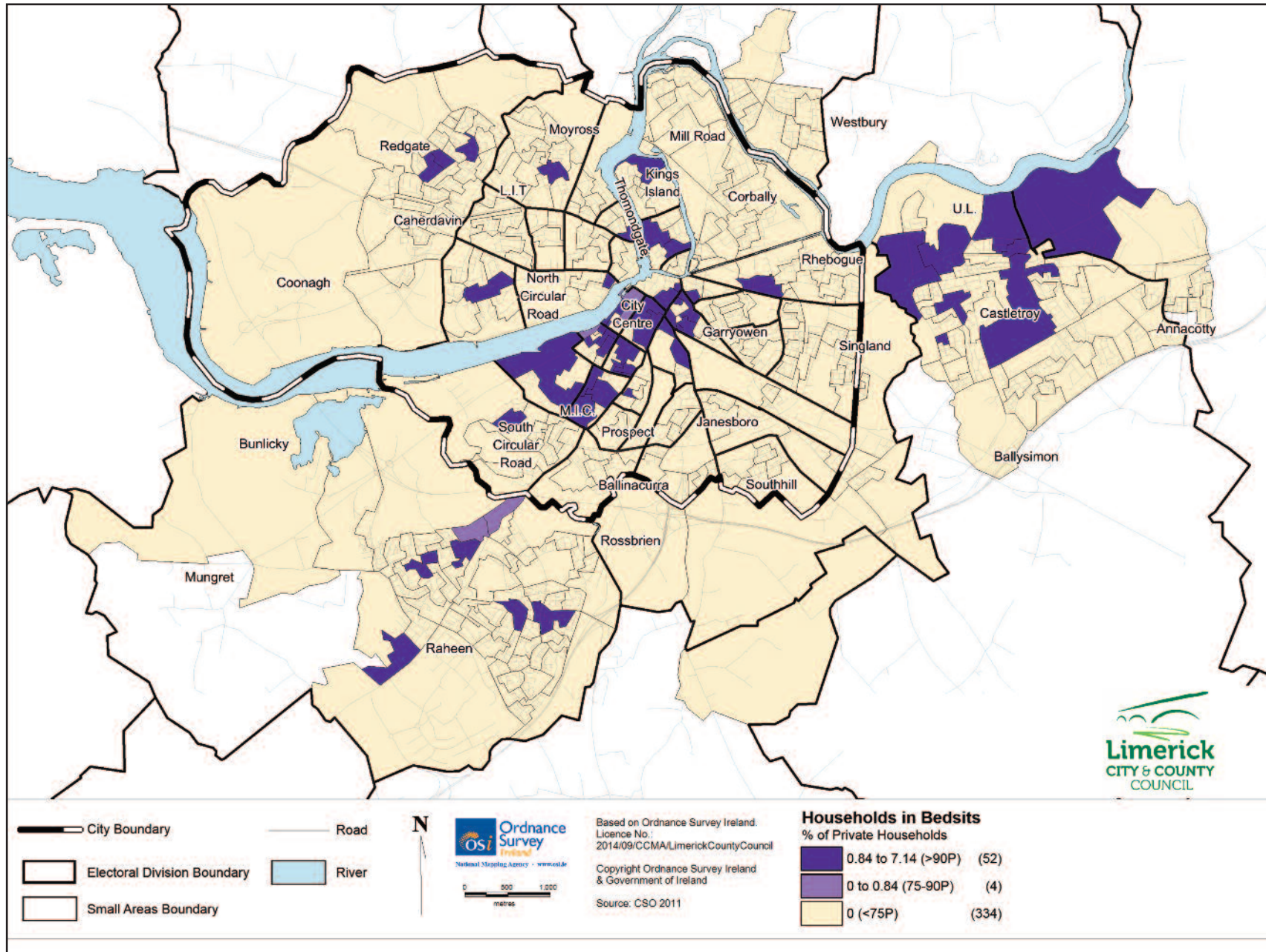
The following bar graph (Figure 7.1) compares the age of Limerick's housing stock with that of the State as a whole. As the graph shows, there are considerable variations between Limerick and the rest of Ireland. The proportion of houses built before 1919 across the State is almost double the proportion in Limerick. Thus, in that respect, Limerick can be said to have a newer housing stock. As **Map 27** shows, Limerick's pre-1919 houses are concentrated in the south inner city, along O'Connell Avenue and towards the South Circular Road. There are also some clusters of older houses on the North Circular Road, in Thomondgate and in the southern part of King's Island. These older houses are of two main types: firstly those houses along O'Connell Avenue and the North and South Circular Roads, and some of those in Thomondgate, are associated with persons in the higher social classes and owner-occupancy; secondly much of the housing stock in the south inner city and around King John's Castle is associated with the sub-division of buildings into flats, apartments and bedsits for tenant occupancy. Houses in the latter category are more likely than others to face challenges in terms of energy efficiency and the preservation of historical features. The latter is particularly important given the worrying erosion of Limerick's Georgian heritage over recent decades.

20 Limerick City Council (2010) Limerick City Development Plan, 2010 – 2016, adopted by Limerick City Council, 25th November 2010.

# Map 25 | Households in Flats & Apartments



## Map 26 | Households in Bedsits



# Map 27 | Households in Pre-1919 Housing

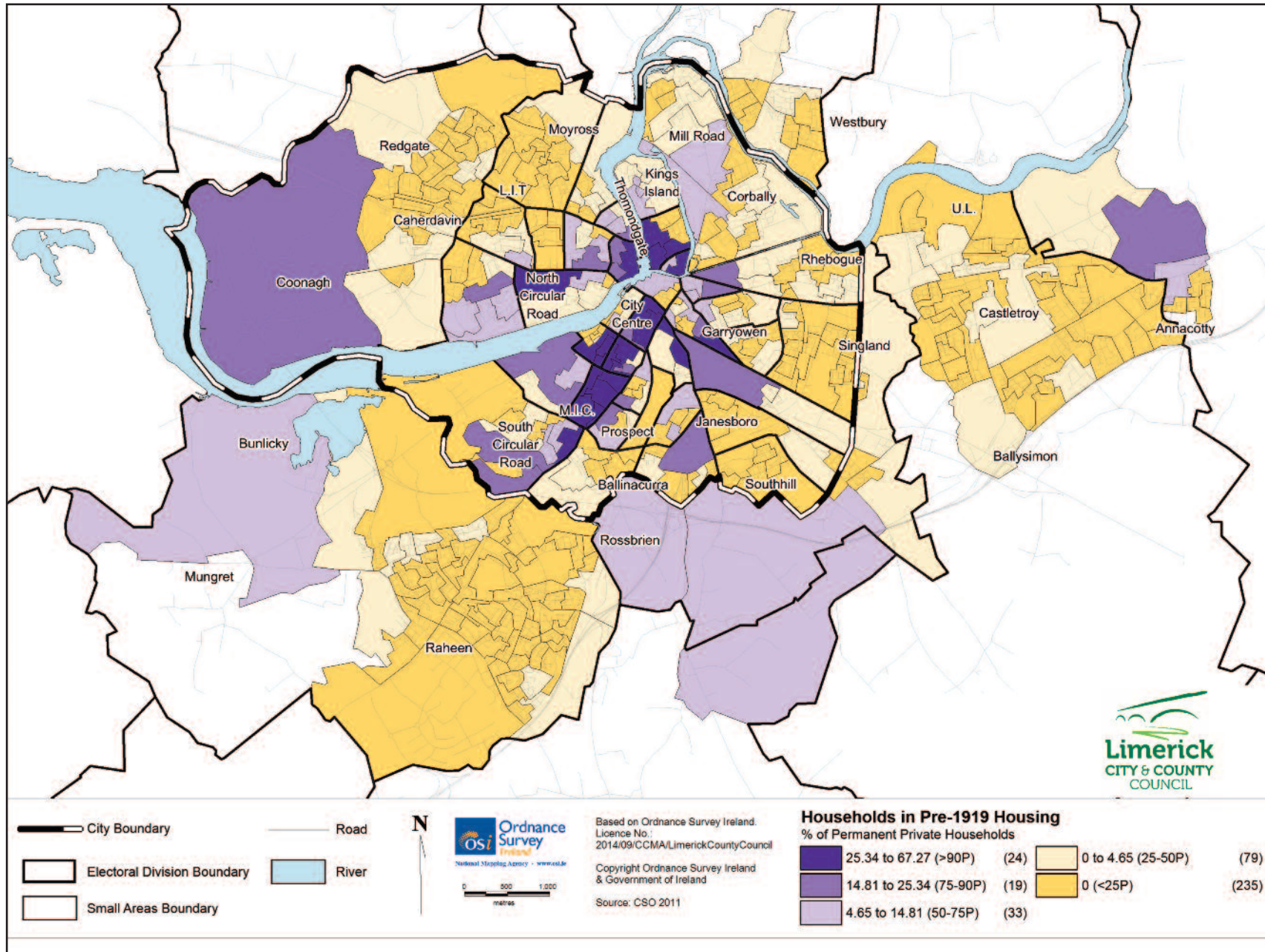
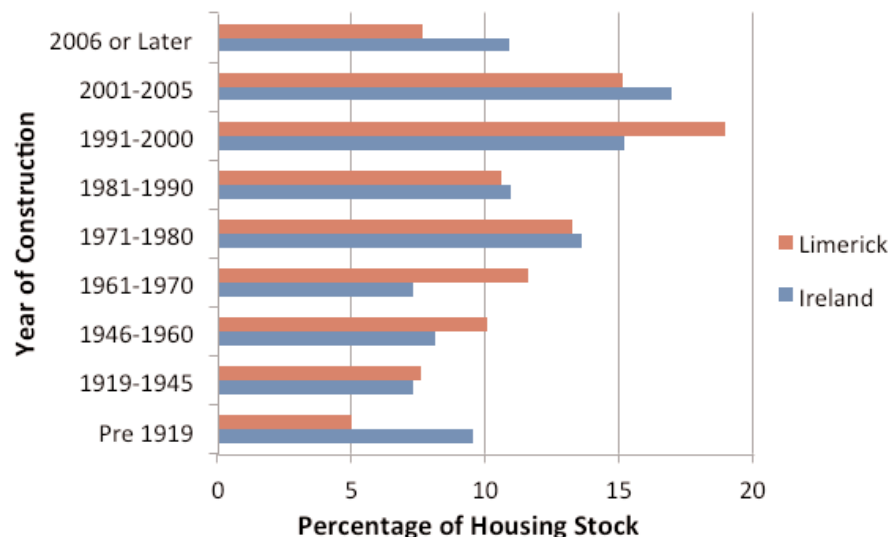


Figure 7.1: Period of Construction of the Housing Stock in Limerick and the State



As Figure 7.1 indicates, the 1990s saw very high levels of house construction in Limerick. As a result, 18 per cent of all households in the urban area live in housing built between 1991 and 2000. This report has already made reference to the various urban-renewal and tax incentive schemes that led to the construction of sizeable apartment blocks on the southern banks of the Shannon and in the city centre more generally. Since 2001 the rate of house-building in Limerick has been slower than the national average, and, as **Map 28** shows, the vast bulk of recent house-building has taken place outside the former City Boundary. The highest concentrations are in the area of Fr. Russell Road, where a mixture of semi-detached, terraced and duplex housing schemes have been constructed for family living, and in the Singland / Castletroy View area, as well as the Ballysimon area. There is also a considerable amount of newly-built dwellings in Annacotty and Newtown, driven by a demand for both student and family accommodation. This map provides further evidence of the extent to which Limerick continues to experience very extensive suburbanisation. Thus, while vacant properties are more likely to be found in the city centre than in the suburbs, recent construction has been focused on the periphery.

The distribution of rented homes in Limerick is driven by a number of factors already mentioned in this report, including studentification and in-migration. In both Limerick City and the wider urban area roughly 36 per cent of all households are renting from either the local authorities or a private landlord (Table 7.1). This is ten percentage points higher than the national average. The composition of the rented sector varies as between the City and the urban area, with a greater proportion of City households renting from the local authority, reflecting the very low levels of local authority housing in the suburbs. Nevertheless, in all areas private renting is considerably more common than renting from the council.



# Map 28 | Households in Post-2000 Housing

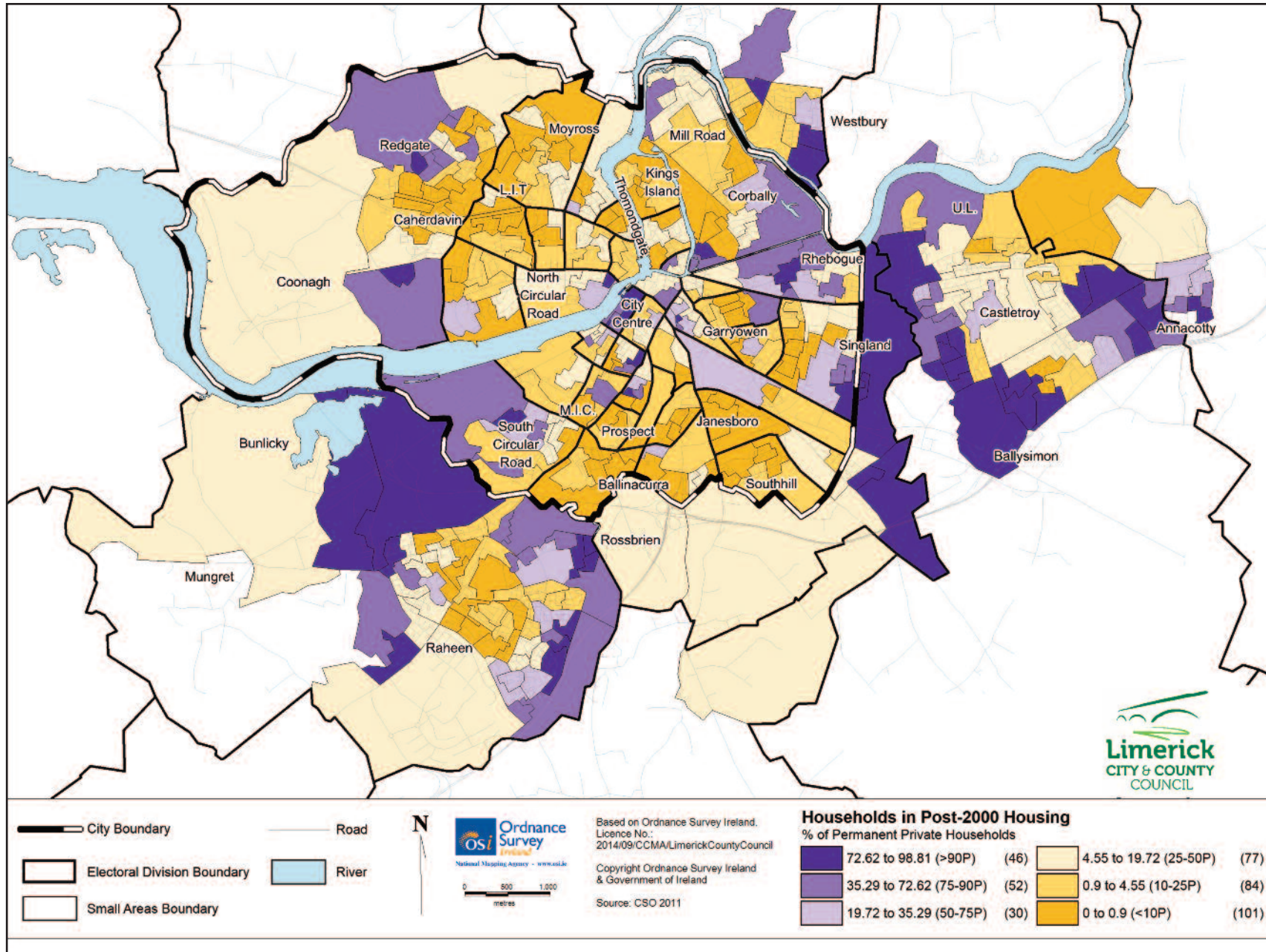


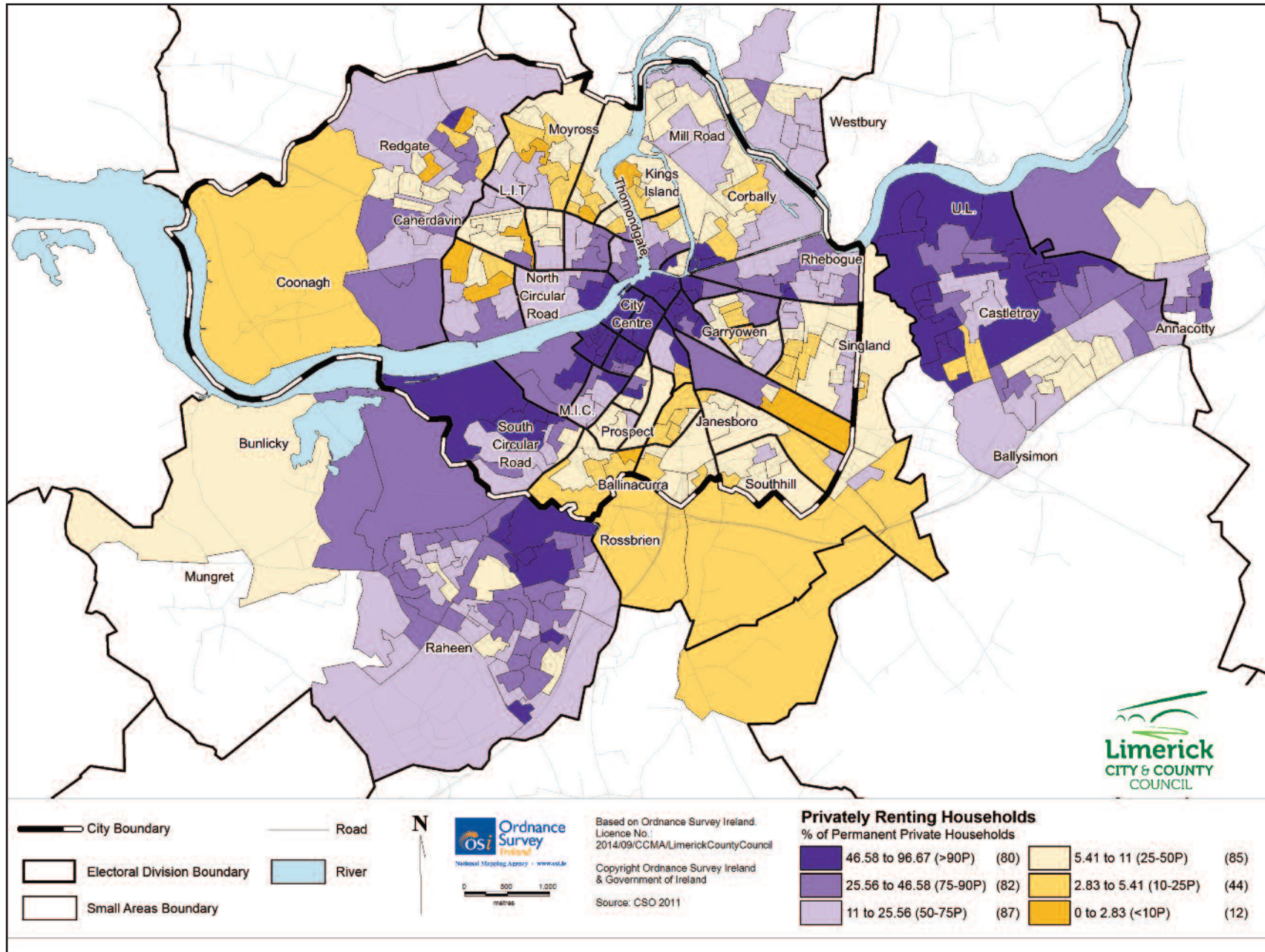
Figure 7.1: Proportion of Households Renting (Public and Private)

	Renting from Local Authority	Renting Privately	Households Renting as a Percentage of All Households
Limerick City	12.3	24.3	36.6
Limerick Urban Area	8.9	26.6	35.5
Ireland (State)	7.8	18.5	26.3

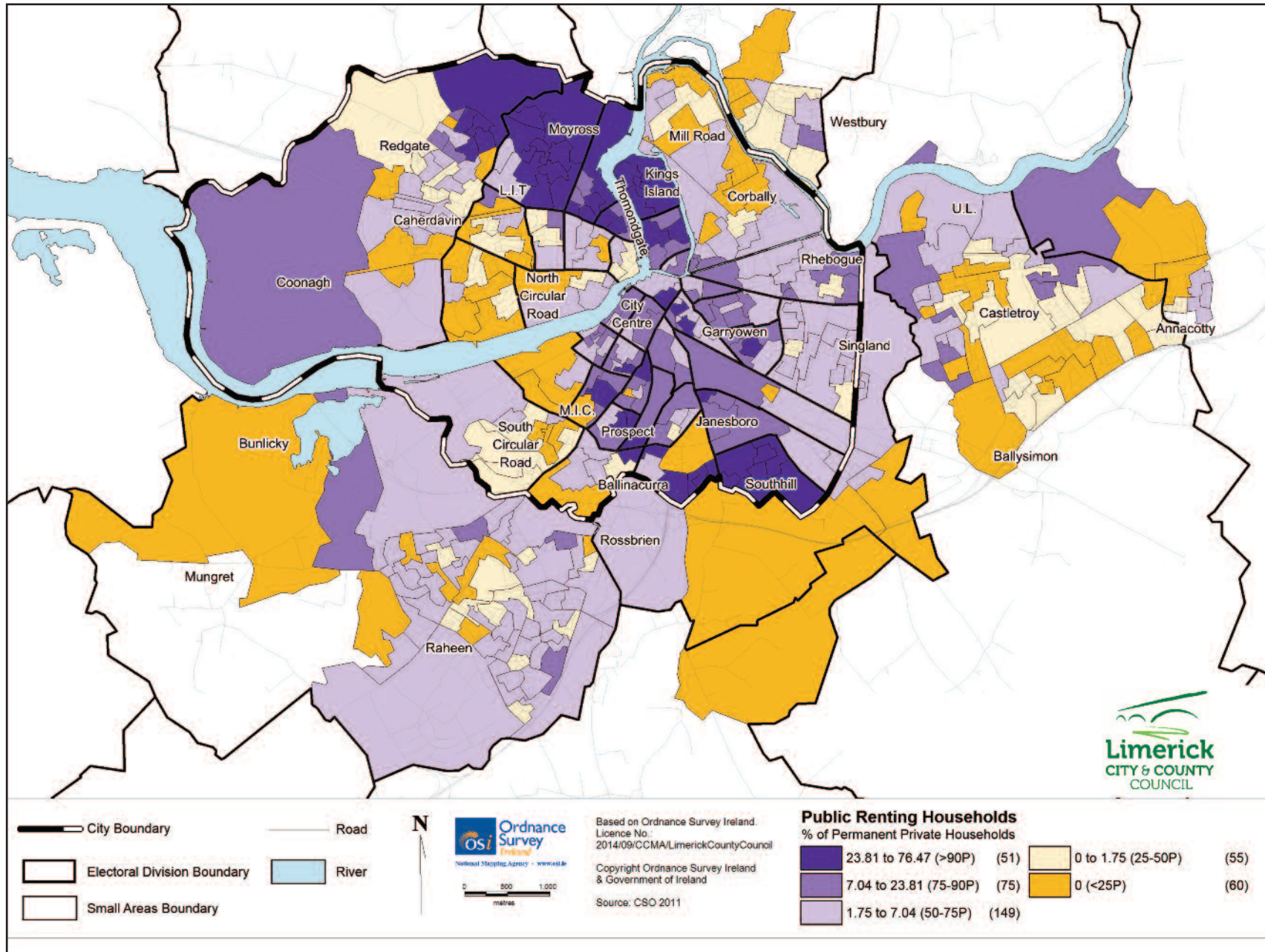
Map 29 shows the distribution of privately-rented households. These are predominantly in the vicinity of the University of Limerick and Mary Immaculate College (driven by studentification), and in the city centre (driven by in-migration), providing a housing supply that was enabled by tax incentives. The private-rented market in Dooradoyle is associated to some extent with Mary Immaculate College, but also with the Mid-Western University Hospital.

Map 30 shows the distribution of houses that are rented from Limerick’s local authorities. Despite the comparatively low level of public renting across the City and Environs as a whole, over 50 per cent of households in 14 of Limerick’s SAs, and over 40 per cent of households in a further 10, depend on it for their accommodation. In fact, 13 per cent of all SAs in Limerick are in the top decile (10 per cent) nationally with respect to the extent of local authority housing. As the map shows, the most extensive concentration of local authority housing is in Moyross. As map 24 has already shown, this part of Limerick is in the top decile nationally in terms of the level of vacant housing units. These two indicators alone provide an insight into the extent of social and environmental problems in Moyross. Similar observations can be made in respect of St. Mary’s Park, O’Malley Park in Southill and parts of Galvone and Ballinacurra Weston.

# Map 29 | Privately Renting Households



# Map 30 | Public Renting Households



# Principal Economic Status and Industries



# Principal Economic Status and Industries

This section of the report is based on data relating to what the census terms the principal economic status (PES) of the population aged 15 years of age and older. This distinguishes between persons considered to be part of the labour force, whether currently employed or not, and those outside the labour force for whatever reason, e.g., students, persons engaged in home duties and the retired. Based on this breakdown we can derive some key economic indicators, including the labour force participation rate (sometimes referred to as the activity rate), the unemployment rate, and the economic dependency rate. This section also looks at the proportions of those who are at work in selected industries.

## 8.1 Labour Force Participation

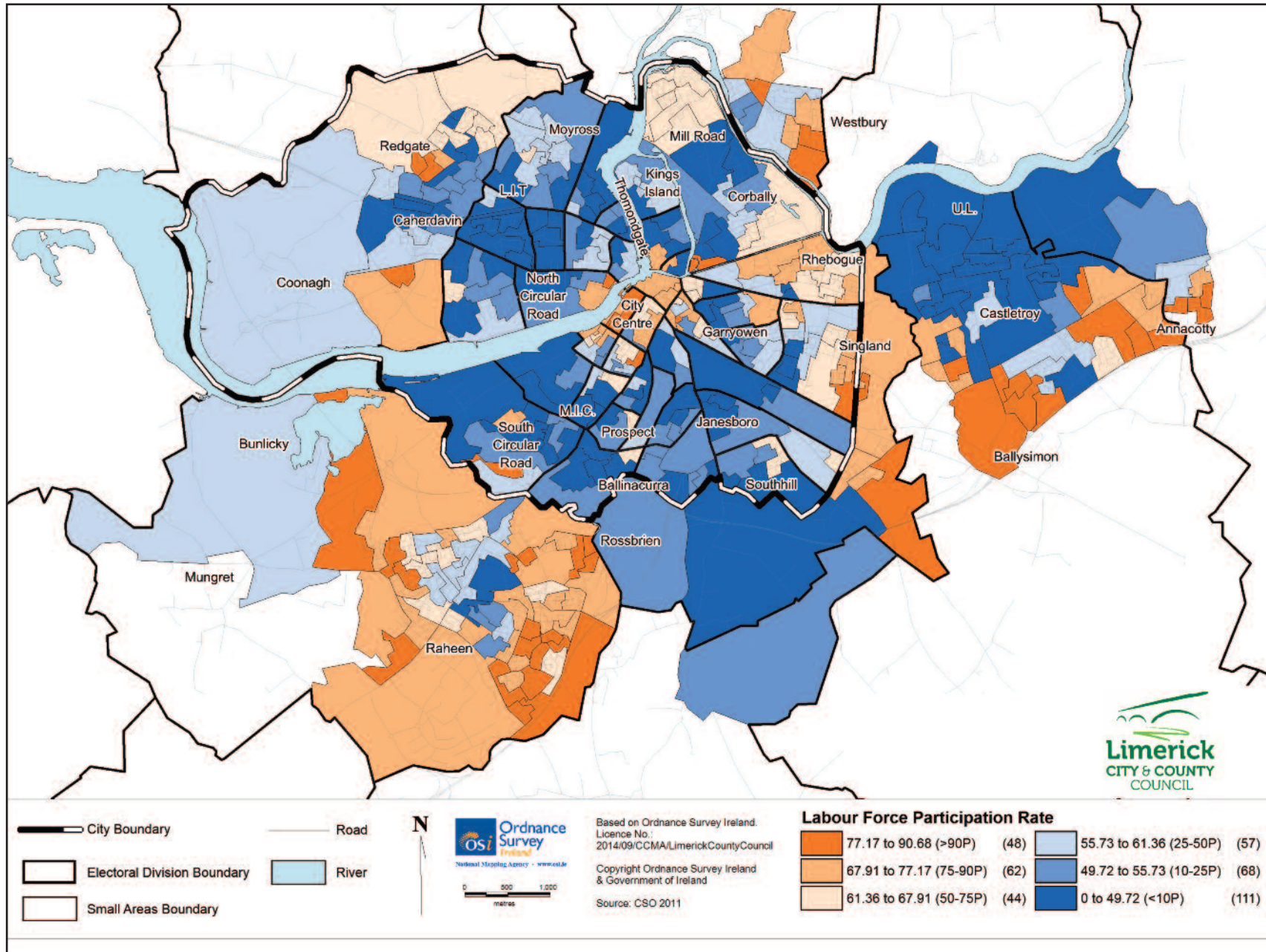
The period 2006-2011 saw a continued expansion of the labour force in Ireland, though at a considerably slower rate than in previous years where the labour supply grew through a combination of high levels of immigration and the maturing age profile of the population. The return to net out-migration meant a decrease from a growth rate of 17 per cent (4.3 per cent per annum) between 2002 and 2006, to 6 per cent (1.2 per cent per annum) between 2006 and 2011. In Limerick City and Environs, uniquely among the State's cities, the labour force actually contracted (-3.6 per cent over the five year period). One of the main causal factors in this was the high level of net out-migration (including emigration) which was identified in Section 4. In addition, there was a large increase in the number of retired persons, which grew by almost one-quarter – the highest rate of growth amongst the State's five cities, and higher than the rate for the State as a whole. Rather than the effect of demographic change, this would appear to be due to a surge in early retirements, including those from the public sector that were incentivised under various schemes as a means of reducing the public sector pay bill.

The result of contraction in the labour supply was a decrease in the labour force participation rate (LFPR) to 56.7 per cent, which is the lowest across the five cities and also below the LFPR for the State (61.9 per cent). The map of the LFPR in Limerick reflects this, with 111 of the 390 SAs (28 per cent) classified into the very low category (i.e., they rank among the bottom 10 per cent nationally). The geographical pattern is one in which most of the City SAs as well as those in Castletroy near the university have LFPRs in the bottom two categories, i.e., low and very low by national standards (**Map 31**). The low rates near UL are due of course to the large student population. Interestingly, the City areas with low LFPRs include middle class areas such as the Ennis Road, North Circular Road and Caherdavin, as well as working class communities such as Janesboro and Southill. It is also notable that, despite the low overall LFPR for the urban area, there is a slightly higher than expected proportion of SAs in the very high category – 12 per cent. These are mainly located either in the city centre, or in parts of the suburbs such as Monaleen, Newtown and Kilbane in the Castletroy area, Church Hill Meadows, Ballycummin Village and Slugaire in Dooradoyle / Raheen and Westbury. These areas are now the main suppliers of labour in the urban area.

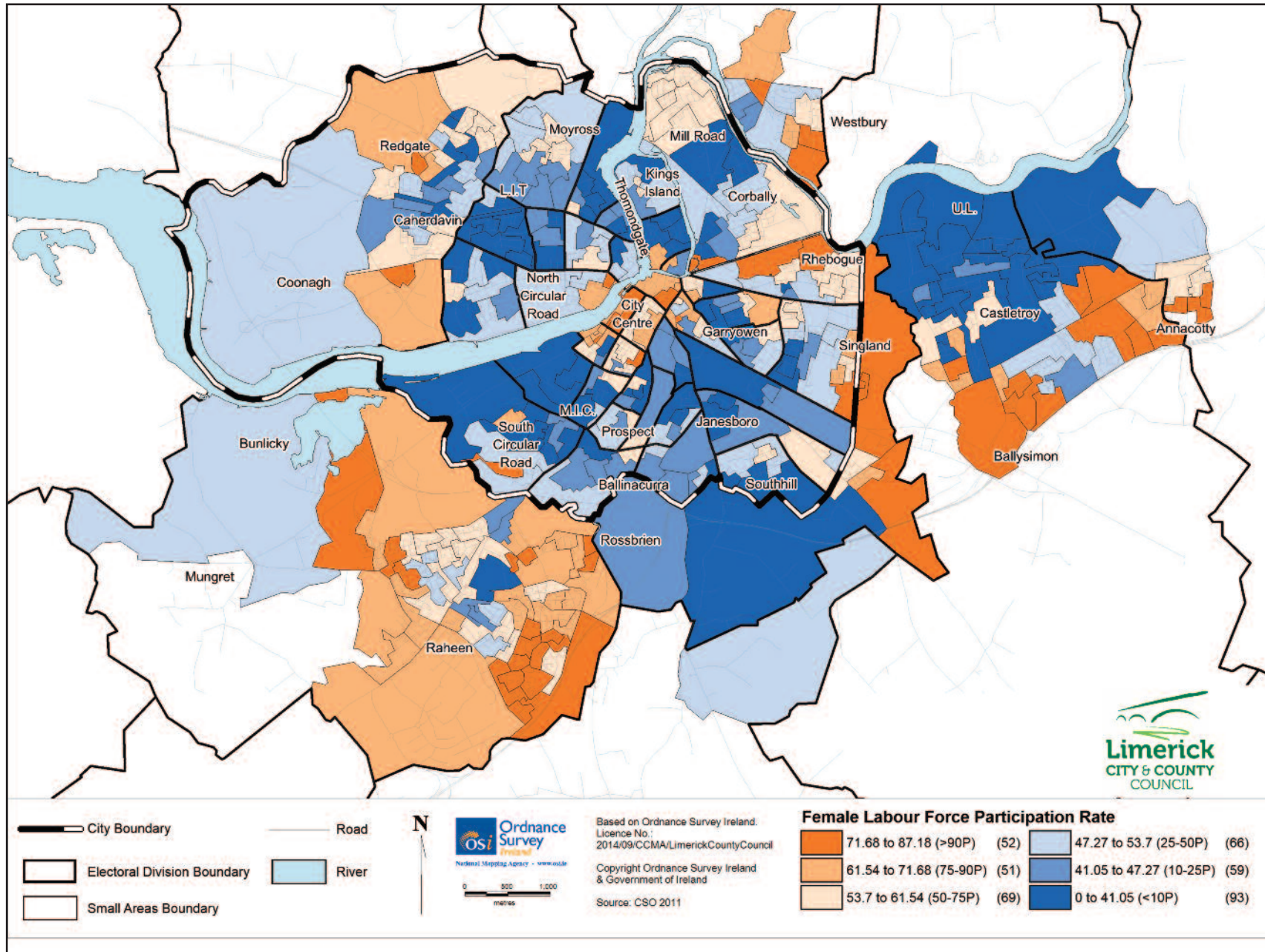
In contrast to the overall trend, the female labour force in Limerick City and Environs expanded slightly in the 2006-2011 period (1.0 per cent) and this translated into a marginal increase in the female participation rate to 50.8 per cent. The geographical pattern of female participation is broadly similar to that for all workers. As well as the city centre and suburban areas noted above as having high overall LFPRs, female participation rates are relatively high in areas such as Clonmacken, Rhebogue and Singland (**Map 32**).

The CSO classification of the principal economic status of persons aged 15 years and over who are not in the labour force has a number of categories, the most important of which (in terms of numbers) are the retired, followed by students or pupils. The growing importance of students to Limerick's demography has already been noted, and it is therefore not surprising that, in Limerick City and Environs, students outnumber the retired, accounting for 17 per cent of persons aged 15 years and over, compared to 12 per cent for retirees. The spatial pattern of students as a PES category is strongly influenced by the location of second- and third-level colleges and their associated student residences, with particularly high rates in almost all of the Castletroy area, as well as along the South Circular Road near Mary Immaculate College, and on the north side of the city near LIT (**Map 33**). Similarly high rates in Westbury, the Mill Road area of Corbally, Rhebogue, and the city centre are associated with pupils or students living at home, rather than in purpose-built student accommodation. Altogether 43 per cent of SAs have student rates that are in the very high or high categories, in other words they fall in the top 25 per cent of SAs nationally. Many of these areas, especially those near the third-level colleges, are undergoing processes of 'studentification' in sectors such as retail provision and the private rented segment of the property market. While studentification of an area can give rise to tensions with the local community it is also true that students contribute significantly to the local economy.

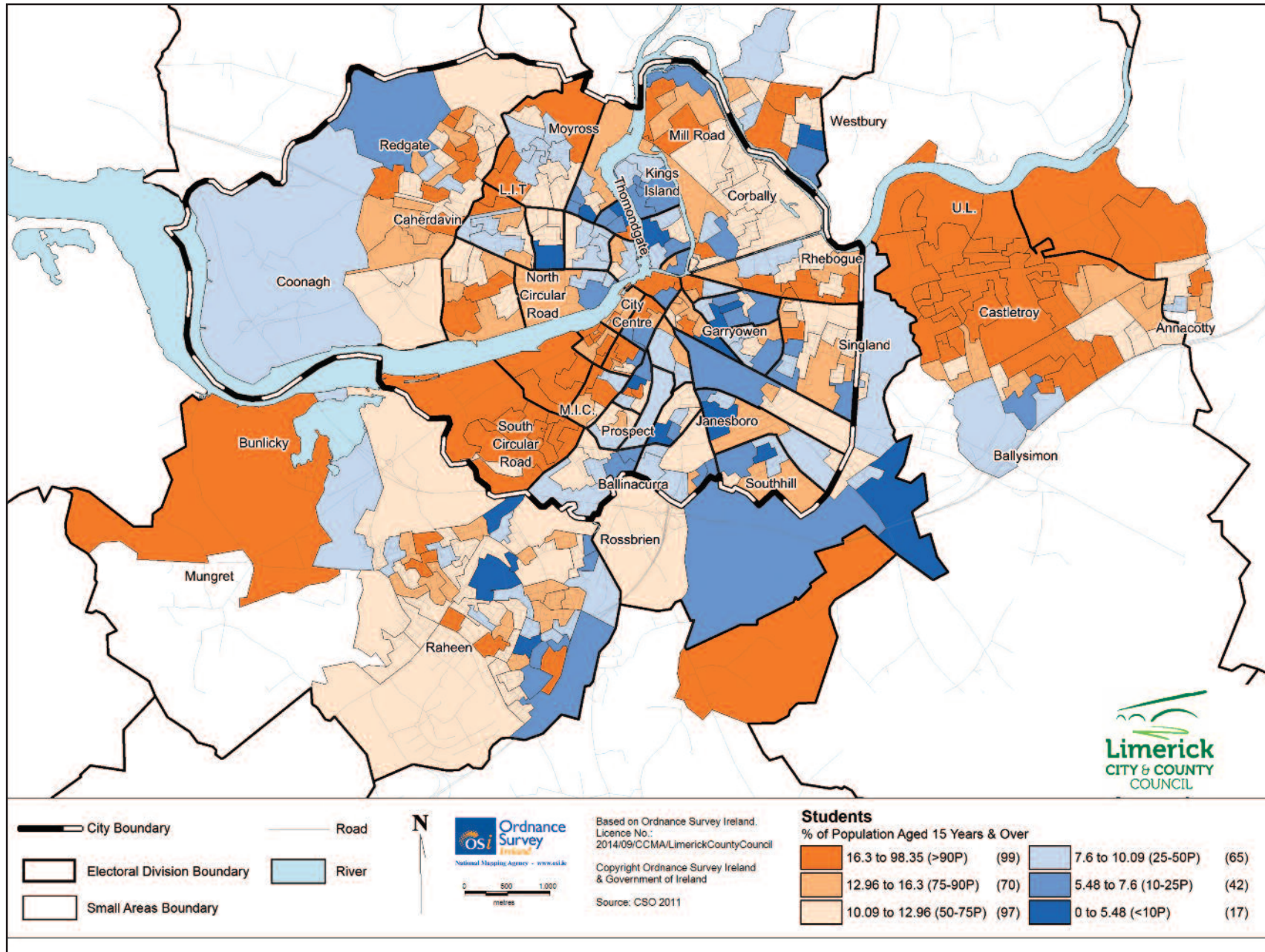
## Map 31 | Labour Force Participation Rate



# Map 32 | Female Labour Force Participation Rate







## 8.2 Unemployment and Economic Dependency

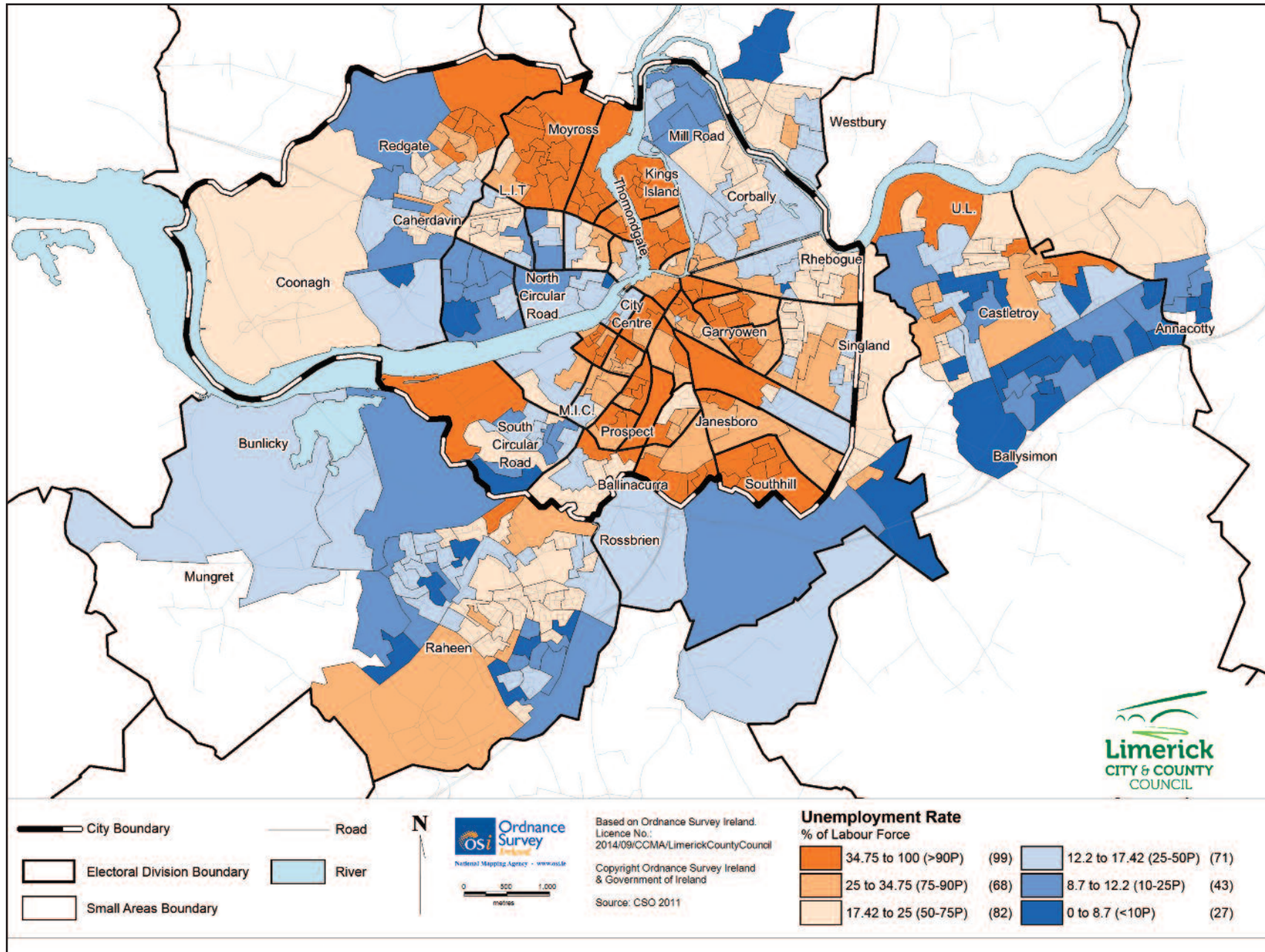
The effect of the downturn in terms of the rise in unemployment has already been noted for the country as a whole (Introduction) and for Limerick City (Section 2). A similar surge in unemployment is also evident in Limerick City and Environs where the number describing their principal economic status as unemployed increased by 103 per cent between 2006 and 2011. In line with this, the rate of unemployment more than doubled, from 11.3 per cent to 23.8 per cent, which was the second highest unemployment rate across the five cities (plus environs), only Waterford showing a higher rate, at 24.6 per cent (Table 8.1). The map of unemployment in 2011 indicates that the problem was widespread throughout the urban area, but with marked variations in rates of unemployment also evident. More than one-quarter of all SAs experienced rates above 35 per cent of the labour force, placing them in the most badly affected 10 per cent of SAs nationally. These SAs were found mainly in the local authority housing estates stretching from Moyross, Ballynanty, Kileely and the King's Island estates, through parts of the city centre and Garryowen to Prospect, Ballinacurra Weston and Southill on the south side of the city (Map 34). At the opposite end of the scale, with unemployment rates still below 9 per cent, are areas such as Monaleen, Newtown and Annacotty, but it is notable that only 6 per cent of SAs in Limerick fall into this category which accounts for 10 per cent of all SAs nationally.

**Table 8.1: Unemployment and Economic Dependency in Cities and their Environs**

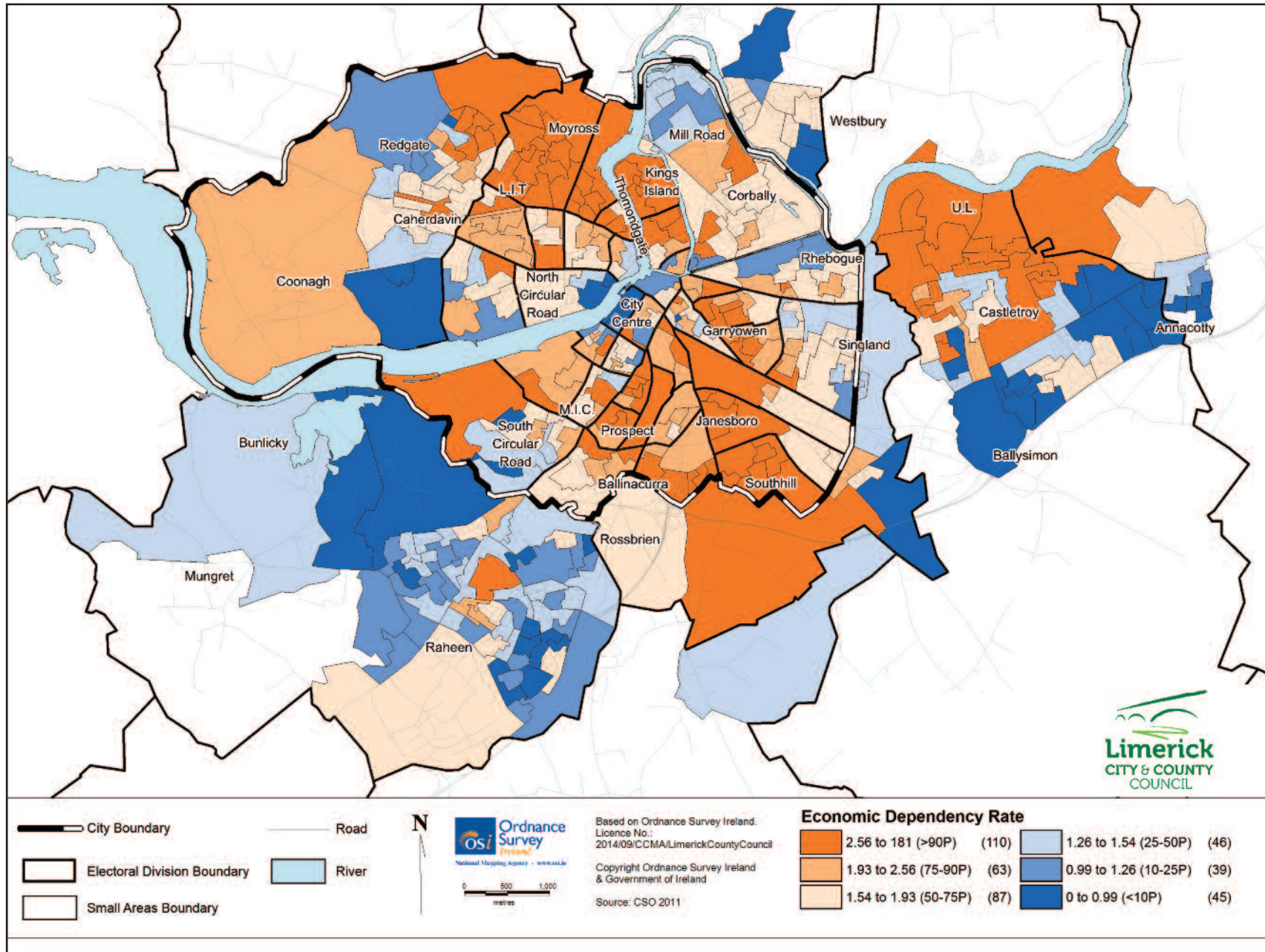
	Dublin	Cork	Limerick	Galway	Waterford
<b>Unemployment rate</b>					
2006	9.26	9.15	11.32	10.54	12.26
2011	17.43	18.04	23.80	18.59	24.58
<b>Economic dependency rate</b>					
2006	1.08	1.28	1.34	1.14	1.33
2011	1.36	1.54	1.85	1.39	1.75

As serious as the unemployment problem is in Limerick, the next map paints an even starker picture. This is the map of the Economic Dependency Ratio (EDR), which distils into a single measure the combined effects of unemployment, low labour force engagement and an unfavourable age structure. The measure is defined simply as the ratio of those not at work, for whatever reason, to those at work: the higher the value, the greater the average number of dependents per worker. Areas will tend to have a high economic dependency ratio if they have any, or all, of: a high unemployment rate; a low labour force participation rate; a high age dependency ratio. The national EDR in 2011 was 1.54, and it was at or below this level for the cities (plus environs) of Dublin, Cork and Galway. However in Limerick and Waterford it was substantially higher, with Limerick the highest of the five cities at 1.85, approximately 20 per cent above the national average. This high overall value is reflected in the map of economic dependency by SA. In total 28 per cent of SAs in the urban area (110 in total) have an EDR in the very high category – almost three times more than the national average. The SAs in question comprise almost the entire City area (Map 35). A degree of polarisation is evident, with a slightly higher than expected number of SAs in the very low category also: these are found in parts of the city centre, in particular O'Callaghan's Strand and the area directly opposite on the south side of the river, Clonmacken, the Mill Road, and Rhebogoe. A high EDR doesn't necessarily translate into economic difficulties in an area: for example an area with a large population of retired wealthy persons will show a high EDR. Nevertheless, as an indicator it is closely linked to the per capita income in an area. Bearing this in mind, the extensively high EDR in Limerick may be related to a low level of disposable income and hence low purchasing power. This in turn would help to explain the difficulties being experienced by the retail sector, especially in the city centre.

# Map 34 | Unemployment Rate



# Map 35 | Economic Dependency Rate

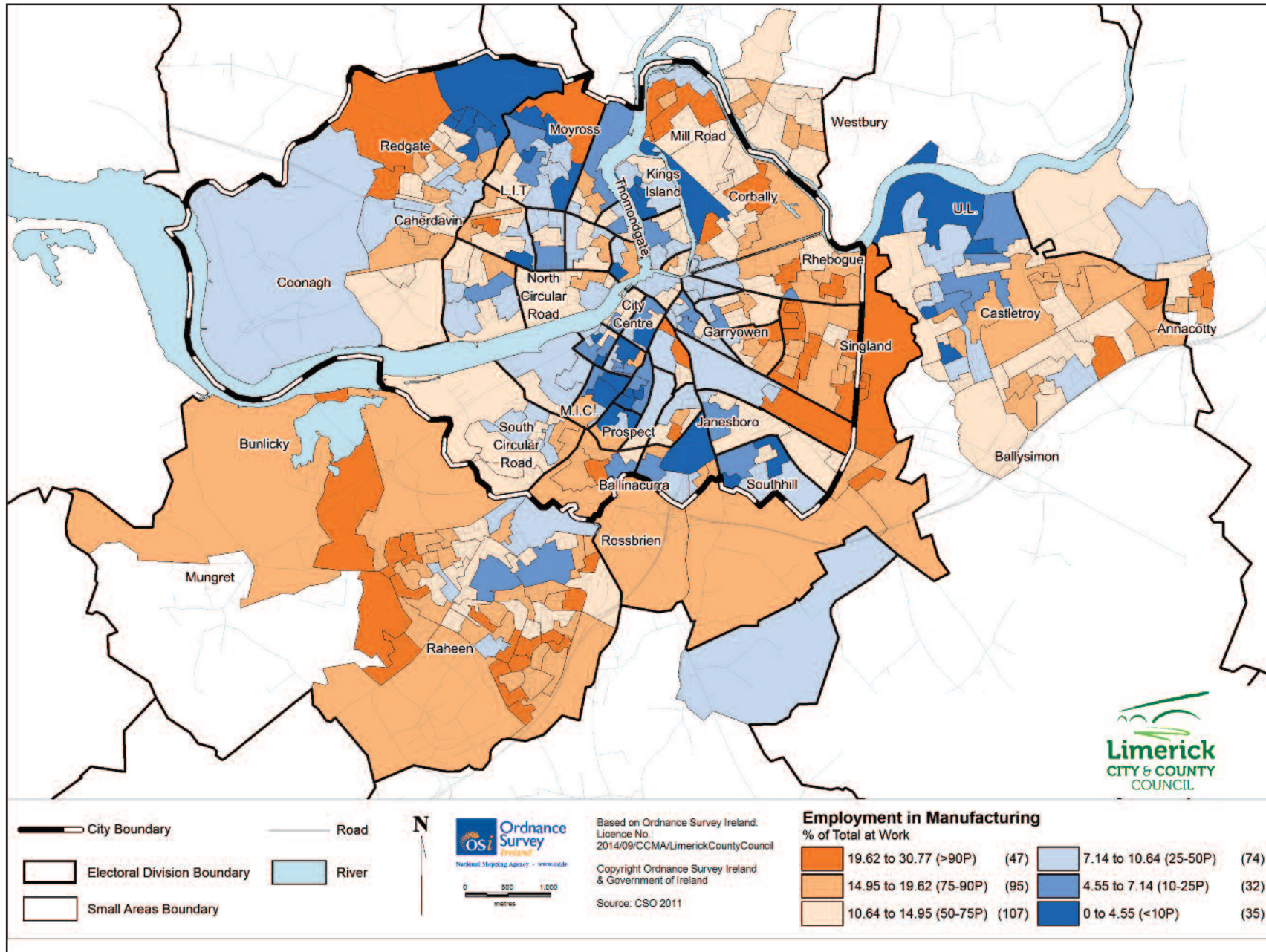


## 8.3 Industries

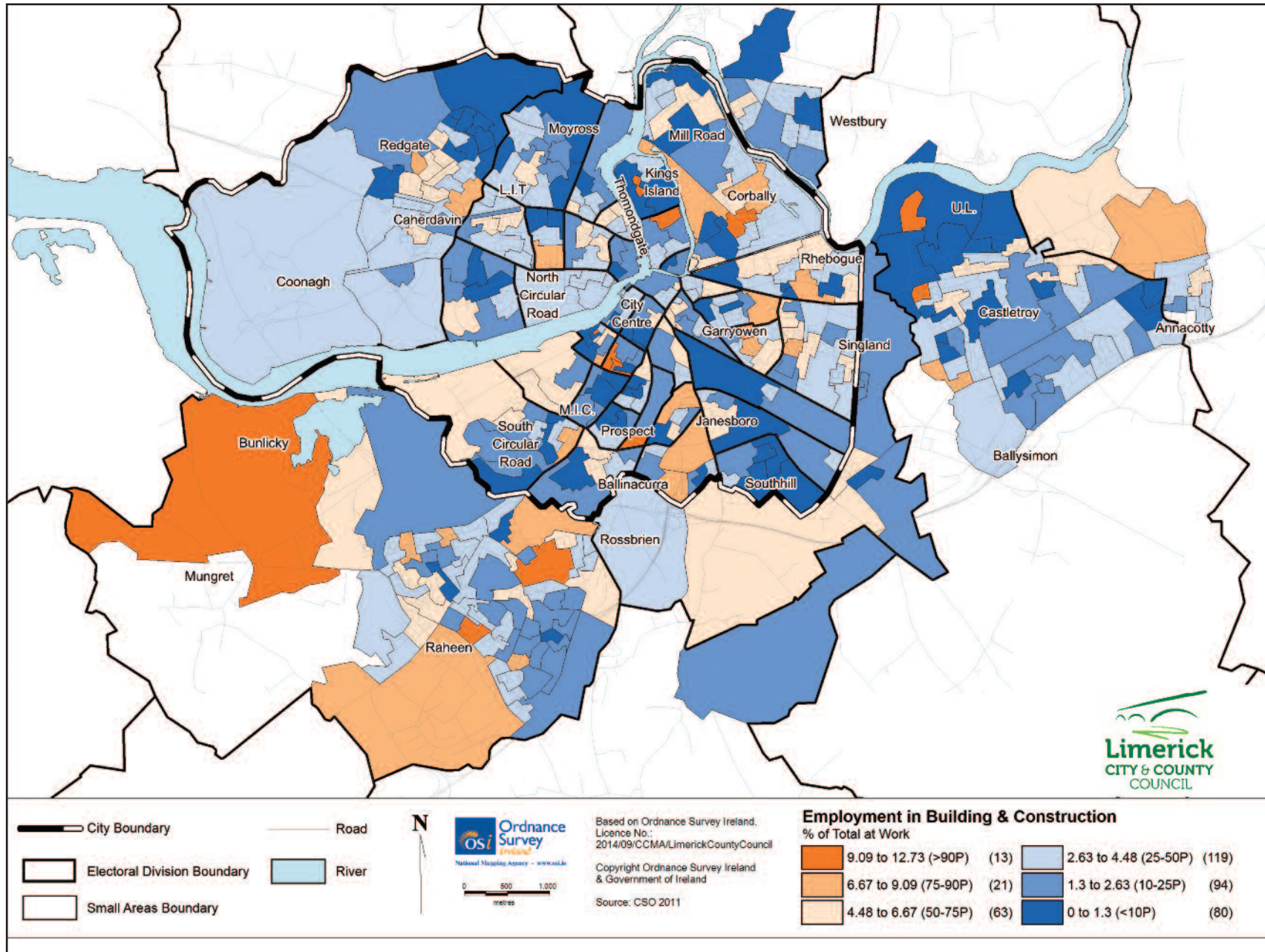
Finally in this section we look at the industries in which city workers are employed, including the sectors identified earlier (Section 2) as having undergone rapid decline in the post-2008 crash. The first of these is manufacturing, which, in the Small Area Population Statistics, is defined to include mining as well as the utilities (water, gas and electricity supply). Despite the loss of manufacturing jobs in the urban area noted earlier, this group of industries continued to be of greater importance locally than nationally, accounting for 14.2 per cent of workers in Limerick urban area, as compared to 11.6 per cent nationally. More than 2 out of every 5 SAs in the urban area had a dependence on manufacturing jobs that placed it in the top 15 per cent of all SAs nationally. Within the City, manufacturing provided employment for 20 per cent and more of workers in the Moyross, parts of Corbally and Singland, and likewise in suburban areas such as Gouldavoher, parts of Raheen and Annacotty (**Map 36**). Clearly, manufacturing remains important as a component of the city's industrial base and as an employer in localised areas.

The same does not apply to the construction sector, which in 2011 employed just 3.4 per cent of workers in Limerick urban area, as compared to 4.8 per cent nationally. In total two-thirds of SAs in the urban area had employment rates in the industry that were below the national average, and very few areas in the City showed above average employment in construction (**Map 37**). With the decline in manufacturing and construction, professional services is now one of the main employers in the urban area, accounting for 26 per cent of those at work, as compared to just under 24 per cent nationally. The proportion of SAs with very high levels of employment in this sector is more than twice the national average, and these SAs are widely spread throughout the urban area. Among these areas are most of the suburbs, from Castletroy in the east, to Dooradoyle / Raheen in the south, and Clonmacken - Caherdavin in the north (**Map 38**). Given the generally white-collar nature of occupations in this sector it may be considered surprising that some parts of Moyross and indeed the Southill area also show very high levels of employment in professional services. In part this may be due to workers in health, educational and social services in these areas residing locally; however, it should also be borne in mind that the numbers at work in these areas are relatively low.

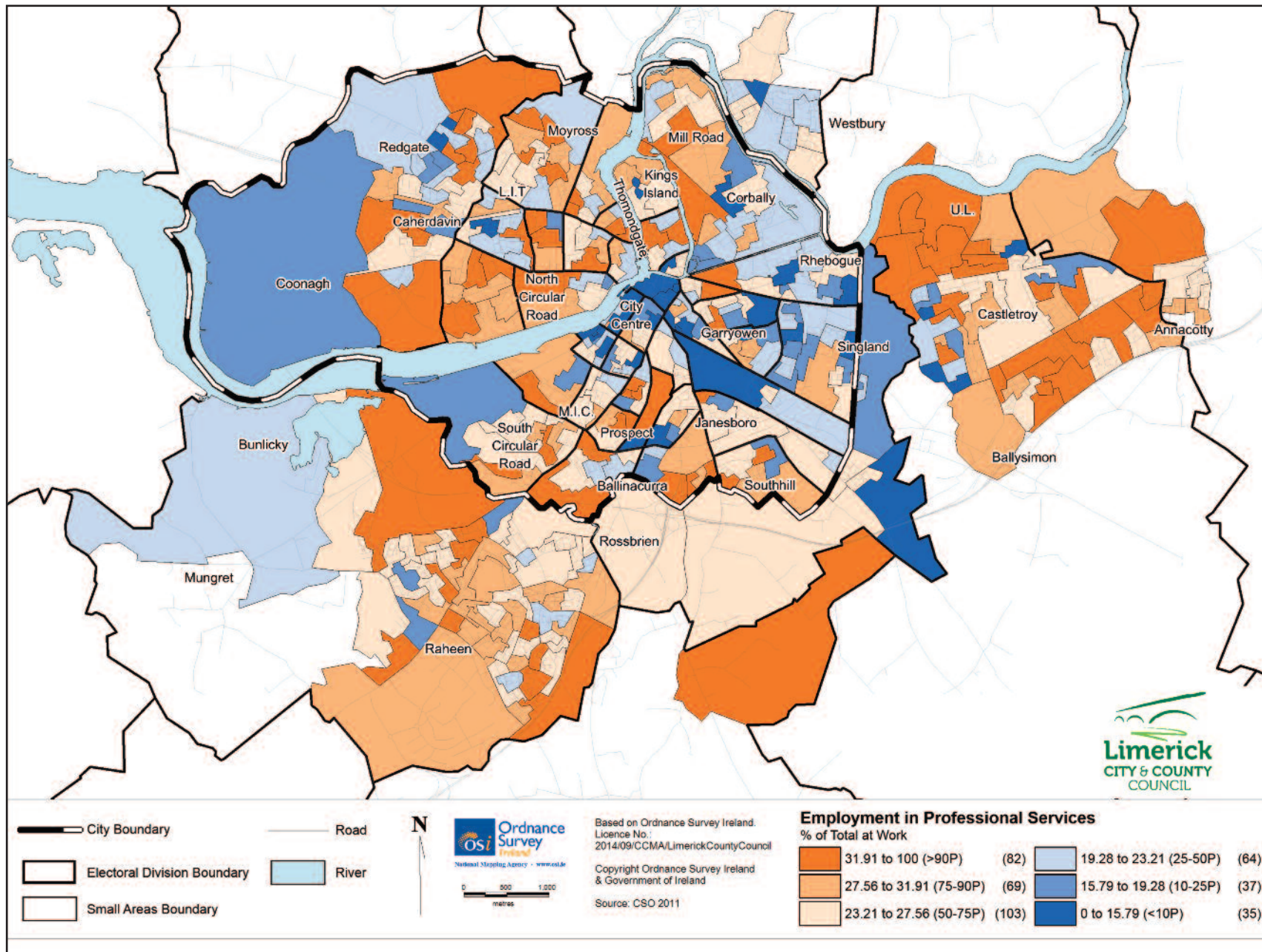
# Map 36 | Employment in Manufacturing



# Map 37 | Employment in Building & Construction



# Map 38 | Employment in Professional Services





A group of graduates in black gowns holding rolled-up white diplomas tied with red ribbons. The focus is on the hands and the diplomas, with the faces of the graduates blurred in the background.

# Education and Social Class

# Education and Social Class

The maps presented in this section of the report are probably the starkest in terms of highlighting the divisions and social polarisation that have unfortunately come to characterise Limerick, and which do not appear to be getting better. Relative to the rest of Ireland, Limerick is more polarised, and manifests greater variance on educational attainment and social class variables. Moreover, the City exhibits persistently high levels of educational disadvantage, associated with limited social mobility and concentrations of socio-economic deprivation.

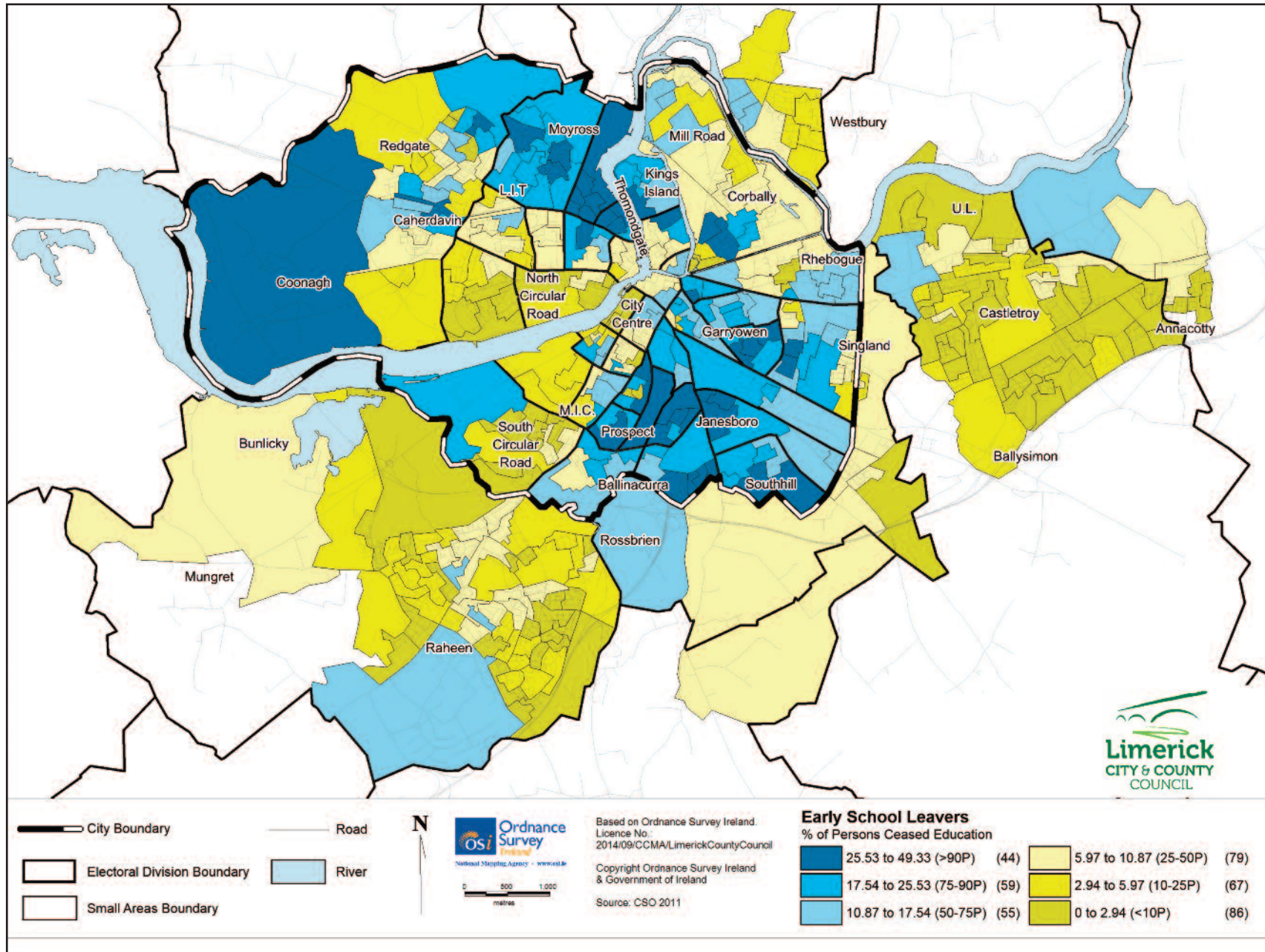
## 9.1 Educational Attainment

The correlation between education attainment and socio-economic status has been well established and extensively documented; the higher one's level of educational attainment, the better one's chances of securing continuous employment and belonging to higher socio-economic groups. The overall census returns show that Limerick is the only city in Ireland with an educational attainment level that is below the national average; Limerick has a greater proportion of early school leavers and a smaller proportion of degree-holders than the rest of Ireland. These features exist despite the presence of three third-level colleges, and the fact that Limerick has a greater proportion of its population in the 20 to 39 year old age category, which nationally, is the age cohort with the highest level of educational attainment. In the State as a whole, among those who are aged over 15 years and who have completed formal education, 15.2 per cent have no qualification above primary school level. In Limerick City, the corresponding figure is 18.9 per cent. Nationally, 24.6 per cent of persons who have completed formal education hold a third level degree or higher qualification. In Limerick City, 18.2 per cent of the population come into this category.

The contrast between Limerick and other areas is emphasised when one compares it with other Irish Cities. It is appropriate to make this comparison as urban areas generally attract more qualified persons than do rural areas. Moreover, Limerick - Shannon, as a Gateway City under the National Spatial Strategy is envisioned as driving regional connectivity and promoting innovation, and a supply of graduates is consistent with these objectives. As Table 9.1 shows, Limerick City has the lowest proportion of third-level degree holders across the Cities, and the highest proportion of persons with no formal education or primary education only. This profile testifies to high levels of educational disadvantage in the City. It is also a barrier to attracting investment and to generating employment and economic development. While Limerick's student population exceeds that of Galway, the fact that Galway has more graduates suggests that Limerick is less successful in retaining the people that it educates – see also the discussion of this in Section 4. Thus, Limerick needs to continue to tackle educational disadvantage while also putting in place strategies to retain its graduates, and in so doing the City needs to provide an urban environment with at least the same level of attractiveness as other cities.

The maps presented in this report illustrate that persons living in Limerick's suburbs are more likely to hold educational qualifications than are those who live within the former City boundary. While this compensates to some extent, for the deficit in the City, it cannot be used as an excuse to discount the difference between Limerick and other Irish Cities. Indeed, all the Cities tend to exhibit a profile in which the periphery has a more educationally-qualified population than the core. As **Map 39** shows, there are particular blackspots in Limerick with respect to low levels of educational attainment. These neighbourhoods tend to have an older age profile, and are characterised by high levels of unemployment and deprivation. Persistently low levels of educational attainment in these communities suggest that deprivation is inter-generational. The areas most affected include parts of Prospect, Janesboro, Southill, Ballynanty and King's Island, as well some estates in Garryowen. In other parts of Limerick, such as Coonagh and in the Dock Road Area, early school leaving may be associated with membership of the Travelling Community. Indeed, the proportion of Traveller children making the transition from primary to second level education is unacceptably low by any standards, and the closure of St. Enda's School is likely to further disadvantage the Travelling Community. The Limerick Diocesan Office and Catholic Schools' Federation have renewed efforts in recent years to ensure all schools promote a balanced intake of students with respect to their socio-economic backgrounds, and initiatives such as theirs will be essential in ensuring that Limerick addresses the causes of inter-generational educational disadvantage.

# Map 39 | Early School Leavers



**Table 9.1: Highest Level of Educational Attainment in Irish Cities<sup>21</sup>**

	No Formal Education or Primary Only	Lower Secondary Education <sup>22</sup>	Third Level Degree or Higher
Limerick	18.87	20.02	18.20
Dublin	17.11	14.15	31.57
Belfast	N/A <sup>23</sup>	12.17	29.48
Cork	16.55	18.64	24.31
Waterford	14.67	19.95	19.85
Galway	9.29	10.57	37.44

Data Source: Census of Population, 2011, Central Statistics Office, Dublin and NISRA (Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency). Note that the percentages in this and the following table are based on the population aged 15 years and older that has ceased formal education.

**Map 40** provides further data on the extent of educational disadvantage in presented here relate to persons who have no formal education, primary education only, or a Group or Intermediate / Junior Certificate only. It shows a similar spatial pattern to the previous map, but the negatively-affected area is more extensive. There is also a high degree of polarisation evident on this indicator: the tendency is for above average proportions of SAs to be found at both ends of the classification, showing either very low levels of educational disadvantage, or very high levels. Thus, 18 per cent of all SAs are in the lowest decile nationally, but 19 per cent are in the highest decile. A pattern in line with that obtaining nationally would entail just 10 per cent of SAs in each category.

In sharp contrast, the next map (**Map 41**) describes a spatial pattern that is almost the mirror image of the previous two. It depicts those who hold a degree or higher qualification as a percentage of those who have ceased education, and reveals that degree-holders are most likely to reside in the North Circular Road, Ballycummin, Castletroy, Monaleen and Annacotty. Once again a degree of polarisation is evident: Limerick contains relatively high numbers of SAs that have high levels of attainment on this indicator, and also relatively high numbers of SAs with very low attainment.

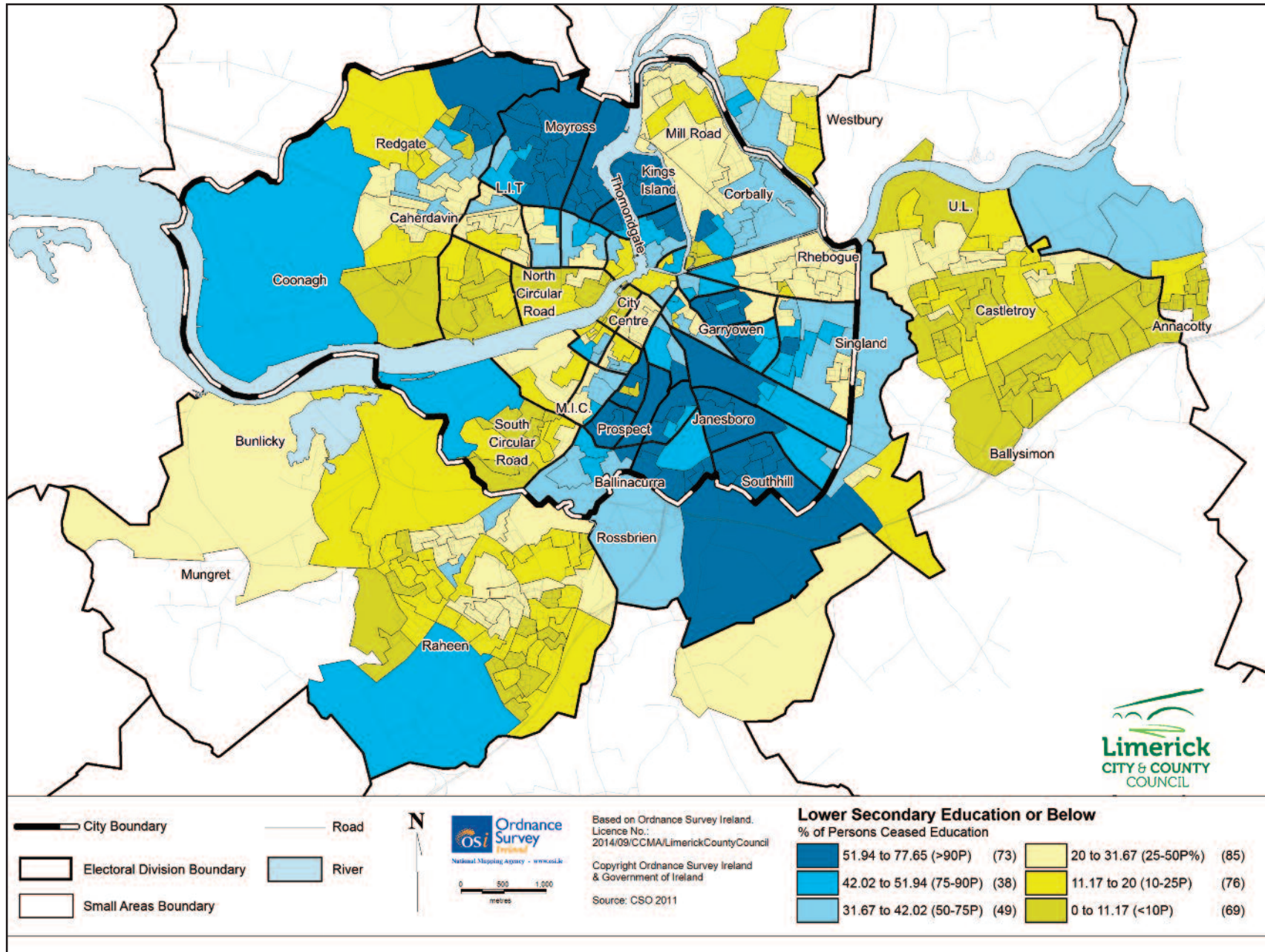
Taken together the three maps (39 to 41) further underscore the extent of social segregation in Limerick. The areas that are characterised by high levels of early school leaving are almost devoid of degree-holders. Consequently, young people in these neighbourhoods lack role models and adults who can motivate them to engage with school and to secure qualifications. In order to fill this void and to promote retention in formal education, several community-based education programmes have been introduced. In addition, the third-level colleges have taken steps to promote greater access to third-level education, and Mary Immaculate College's Foundation and Access Programmes provide examples of initiatives that have successfully empowered individuals to develop their potential. These community-based and university initiatives have certainly made inroads into alleviating educational disadvantage, and any further cutbacks to their operational budgets would represent setbacks to the promotion of equality, employability and social inclusion.

21 For comparability purposes, the data presented here refer only to the areas within the City boundaries.

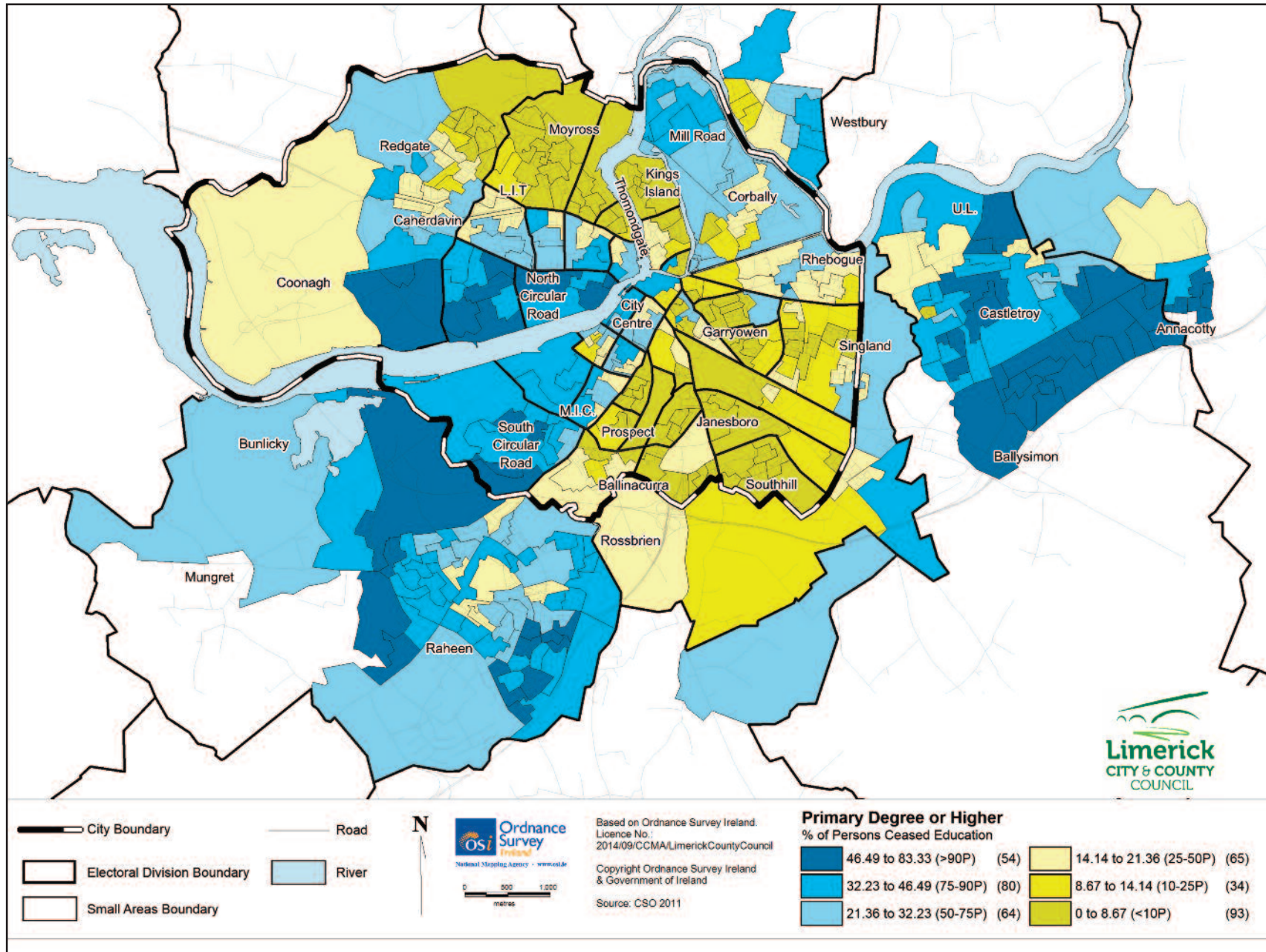
22 Group, Junior or Intermediate Certificate, Republic of Ireland. Up to Level II Northern Ireland.

23 The 2011 census of Northern Ireland records that there are 201,969 persons in Belfast aged 16 years of age and older who are not full-time students. Census NI does not have a specific category for persons with 'No Formal or Primary Education Only'. Instead, it records the number of persons with 'No Qualifications', which in Belfast's case is 69,498 persons or 34.4 per cent of the non-student population aged 16+.

# Map 40 | Lower Secondary Education or Below



# Map 41 | Primary Degree or Higher



The 2011 census also reveals some patterns with respect to gender and educational attainment, as the following data indicate (Table 9.2). Locally as well as nationally, male educational attainment lags behind that of females. These data indicate a need for schools and communities to pay particular attention to boys and young men in order to prevent early school leaving. Meanwhile, they emphasise the need for third level education providers to be conscious of, and promote equal opportunities.

**Table 9.2: Highest Level of Educational Attainment by Gender and Location<sup>2</sup>**

	Gender	Lower Second Level or Below	Degree or Higher
Limerick City	Males	39.34	17.64
	Females	38.46	18.74
Ireland (State)	Males	31.46	22.17
	Females	30.65	25.95

## 9.2 Social Class

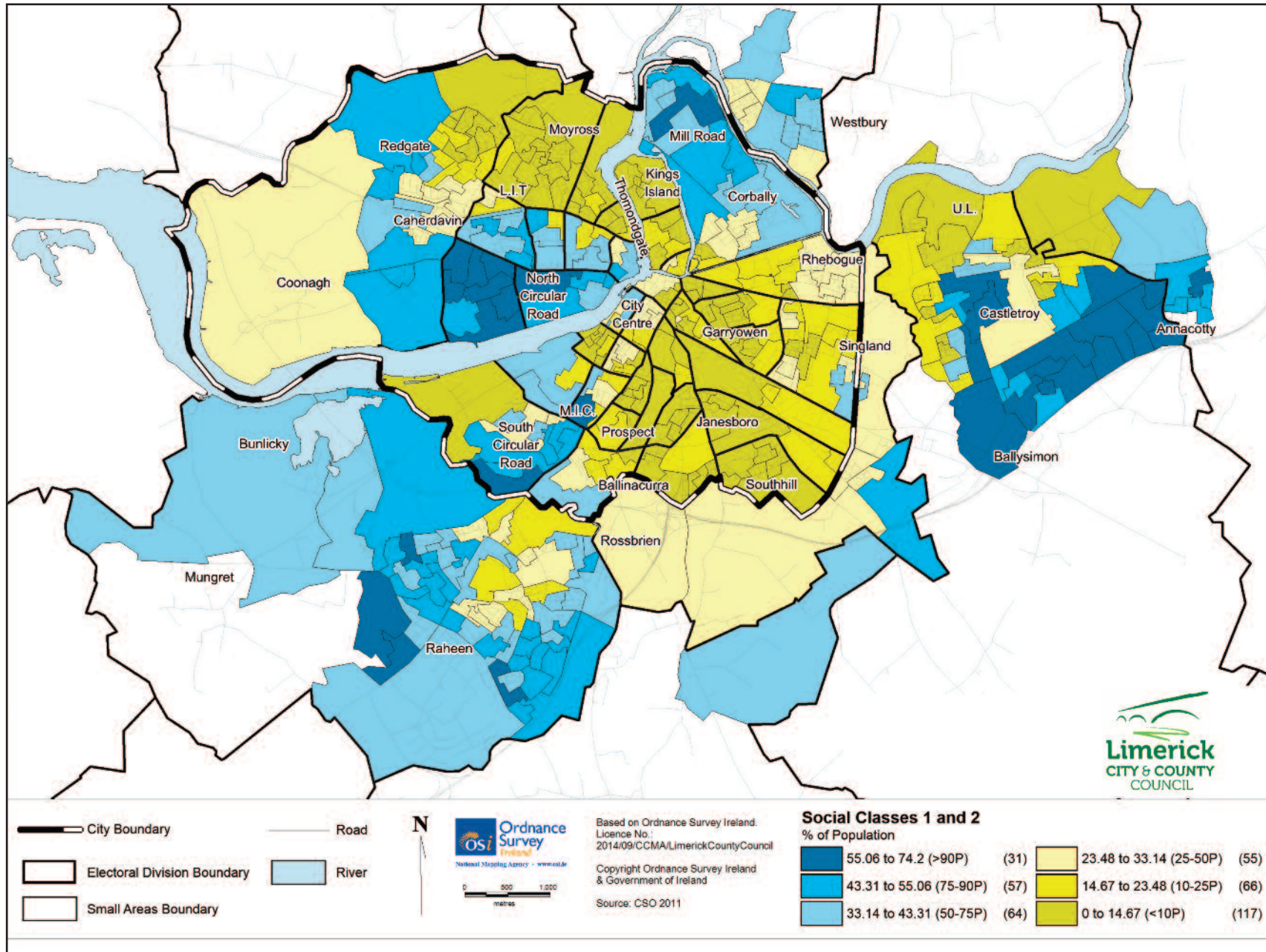
Previous work by McCafferty<sup>24</sup> has highlighted the extent of social polarisation and segregation in Limerick, and the city's unfavourable position relative to other Irish cities with respect to the divisions between rich and poor. These spatial divisions along social class lines, and the extent and persistence of social class segregation, are clearly illustrated in **Maps 42** and **43**. As **Map 42** shows, members of social classes one and two (the professional and managerial social classes) are concentrated in the North Circular Road and in the eastern suburbs of the City in Ballysimon, Monaleen, Newtown and Annacotty. The latter neighbourhoods are among the most popular places of residence of staff at the University of Limerick. In contrast, most of Limerick City has a negligible proportion of people in the higher social classes, which is reflected in the fact that 30 per cent of all SAs (117 out of 390) are in the very low category on this indicator, i.e., they are in the bottom decile of SAs nationally. The only areas with some evidence of mixed social class are in Dooradoyle and Raheen, Caherdavin, and to a lesser extent in Corbally, the latter being predominantly middle-class.

**Map 43** presents the counter pattern to this, showing that, with the exception of Corbally and the North and South Circular Road areas, most of Limerick City has percentages in the unskilled and semi-skilled manual social classes (classes five and six) that exceed the national median. Like the education maps, this map reveals a degree of polarisation, with considerably more SAs at the top and at the bottom end of the scale. This pattern suggests that in Limerick the lower social classes tend to live in predominantly lower social class areas (as opposed to in middle class areas) to a greater extent than in the country as a whole.

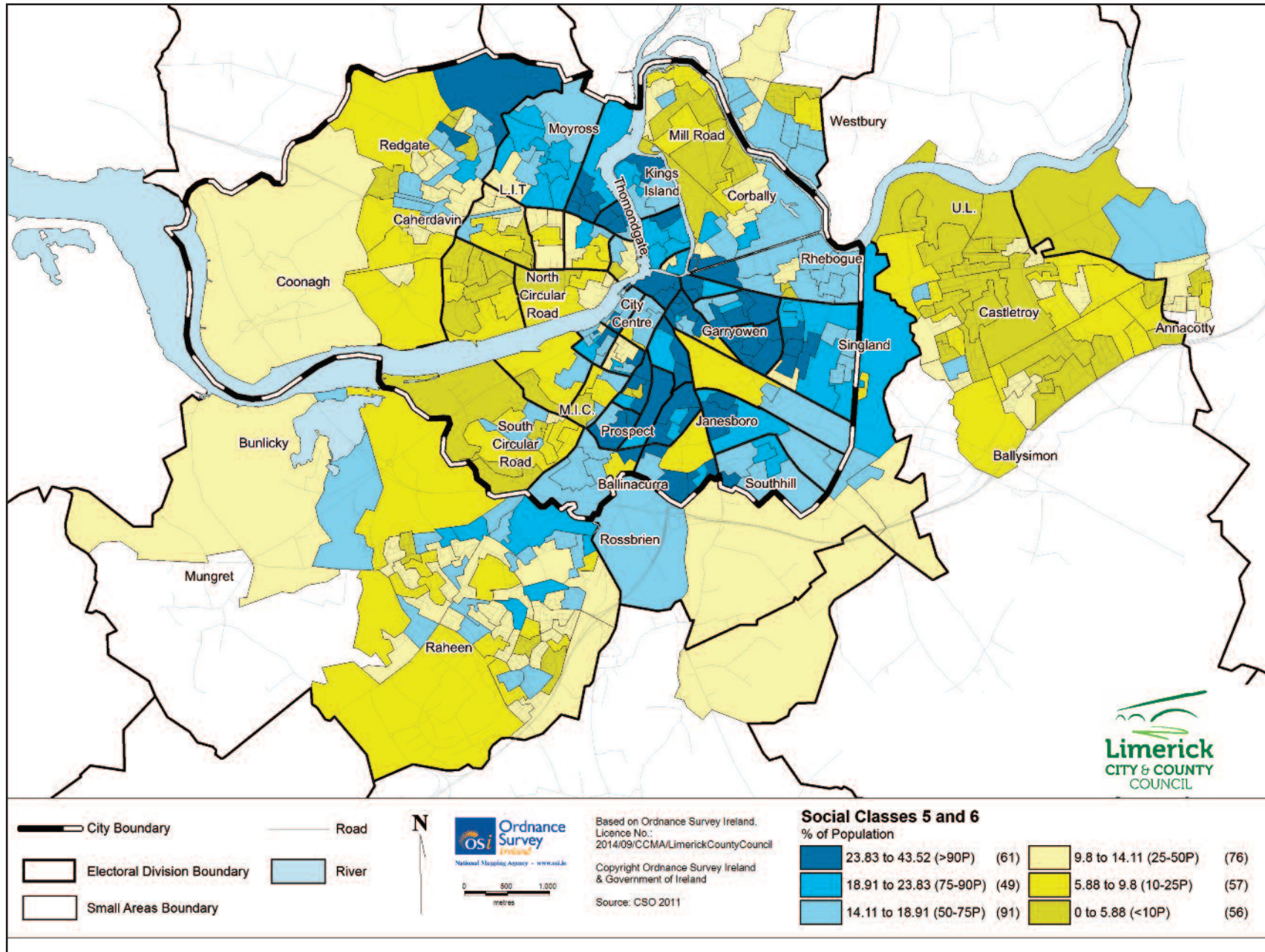
In summary, two features of the social class geography of Limerick are evident from these maps. First, Limerick is disadvantaged by national standards, in that it has proportionately more areas of lower social class and fewer areas of higher social class. Second, this position of relative disadvantage is in addition to relatively high levels of segregation, thereby underscoring the overdue need to promote a more holistic approach to addressing inequality in Ireland, and to enabling communities in Limerick to realise their development potential.

<sup>24</sup> McCafferty, D. (2011) "Divided city: the social geography of post-Celtic Tiger Limerick", in Hourigan, N. (ed.) *Understanding Limerick – Social Exclusion and Change*. Cork University Press.

# Map 42 | Social Classes 1 & 2







# Travel and Communications



# Travel and Communications

The movement of people around a city in the course of the day has been likened to the circulation of the blood in the body – the vital process that makes a city a living entity, by rendering possible the multifarious interactions and exchanges that are essential to the economic and social life of the city. This section of the report considers the process of travel in the city, whether for purposes of commuting to work, or to educational facilities (primary, secondary and third-level). Modes of travel are examined, and then the travel time (i.e., duration of the journey). One of the main controls on both travel mode and travel time is access to various modes, in particular private transportation, and so we look at patterns of car ownership, which, as a measure of consumption, also serves to give some insight into households’ economic well-being. The section concludes with a look at digital connectivity in the form of households’ access to the Internet via Broadband.

## 10.1 Purpose of Travel, Mode of Travel, and Travel Time

Daily travel in urban areas takes place for a range of reasons, most significantly for purposes of commuting to work and to school or college, but also for the purpose of travel to shops, and for social and leisure purposes. The census does not collect information on travelling for shopping, social or leisure purposes (as this tends to be less regular on a daily basis). Furthermore, the Small Area Population Statistics do not provide separate data tabulations for travel to school or college as opposed to work travel, so the maps presented in this section refer to travel for all these purposes. However, separate tabulations by purpose are available at the level of the City and Environs and these data are collated in Figure 10.1 for the State, Dublin, Limerick and the other Cities combined (Cork, Galway and Waterford). The figure shows that persons travelling to work constituted a smaller share of the total travelling (61 per cent) in Limerick than any of the comparator areas. Conversely education-related travel was more significant than elsewhere, with, in particular, persons travelling to third-level institutions accounting for a somewhat greater share of daily commuters in Limerick than in the other areas. The impact of the third-level institutions on the city, which we have already noted in terms of demography, housing and the labour market, is once again evident in these data on travel in the city.

Figure 10.1: Travellers Classified by Destination of Travel; State and Cities and Environs



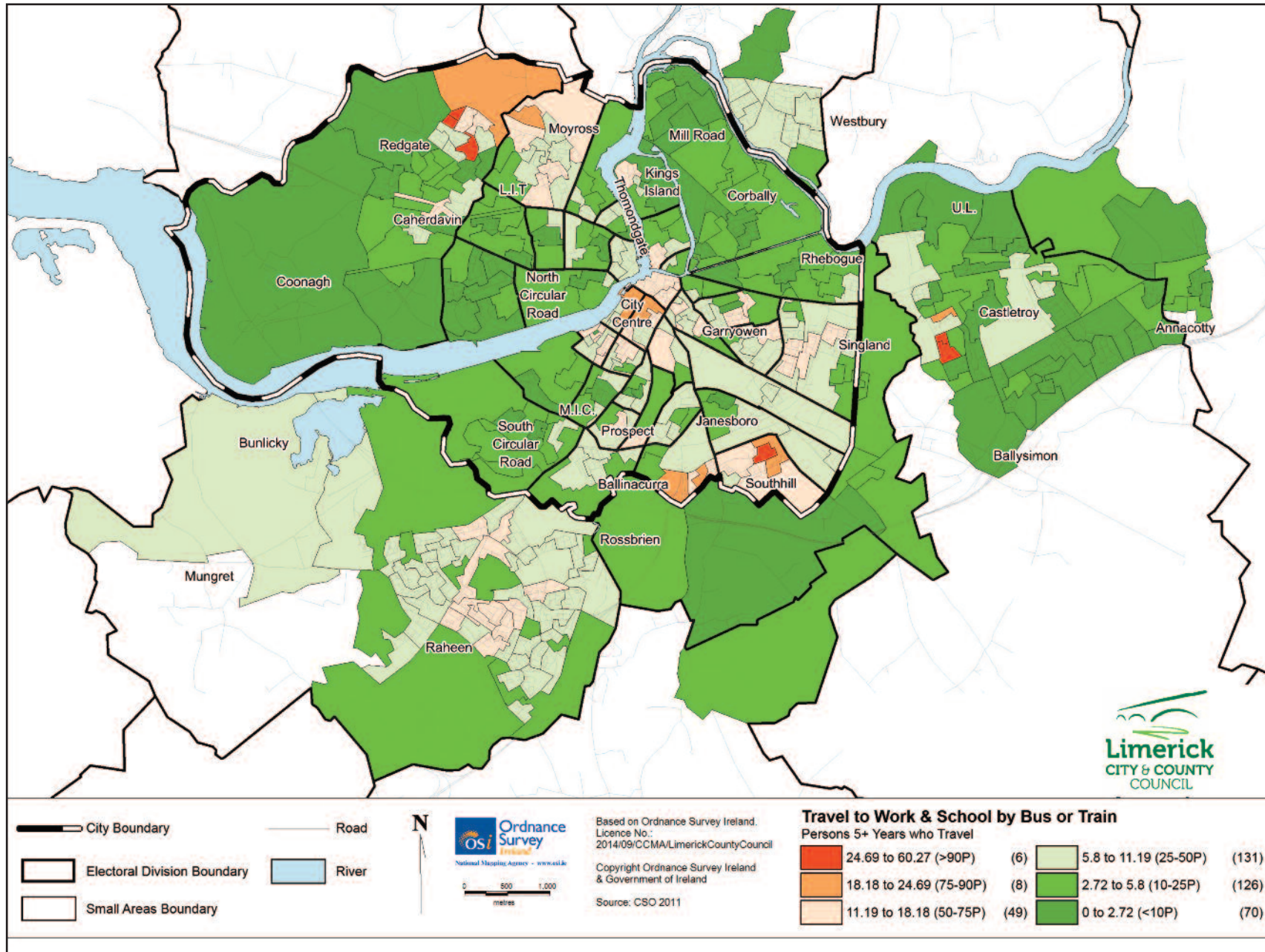
From the point of view of transportation planning, one of the most significant aspects of urban travel is the mode of travel. In order to contextualise the maps of travel by mode we first present a graph to show how Limerick compares with the same comparator areas as above, i.e., the State as a whole, Dublin, and the other three Cities combined. Figure 10.2 shows that the 'modal split' in Limerick City and Environs is broadly similar to the other Cities and their Environs, except Dublin, and is characterised by a relatively heavy dependence on the car as the mode of travel: the percentage travelling by car (either as driver or passenger) exceeds that in both the capital city and the less urbanised areas of the country. Conversely, the public transport share in Limerick City and Environs is lower than in all the comparator areas. The very low utilisation of public transport compared to the car in Limerick and the other medium sized cities may be due to deficiencies in demand, or in the service supplied, or to some combination of both, but it raises important issues about transport and land use policy in the urban centres that, under the National Spatial Strategy, are intended to act as counter-magnets to Dublin in terms of securing inward investment and enterprise.

Figure 10.2: Persons Travelling to Work, School or College by Mode; Cities and Environs

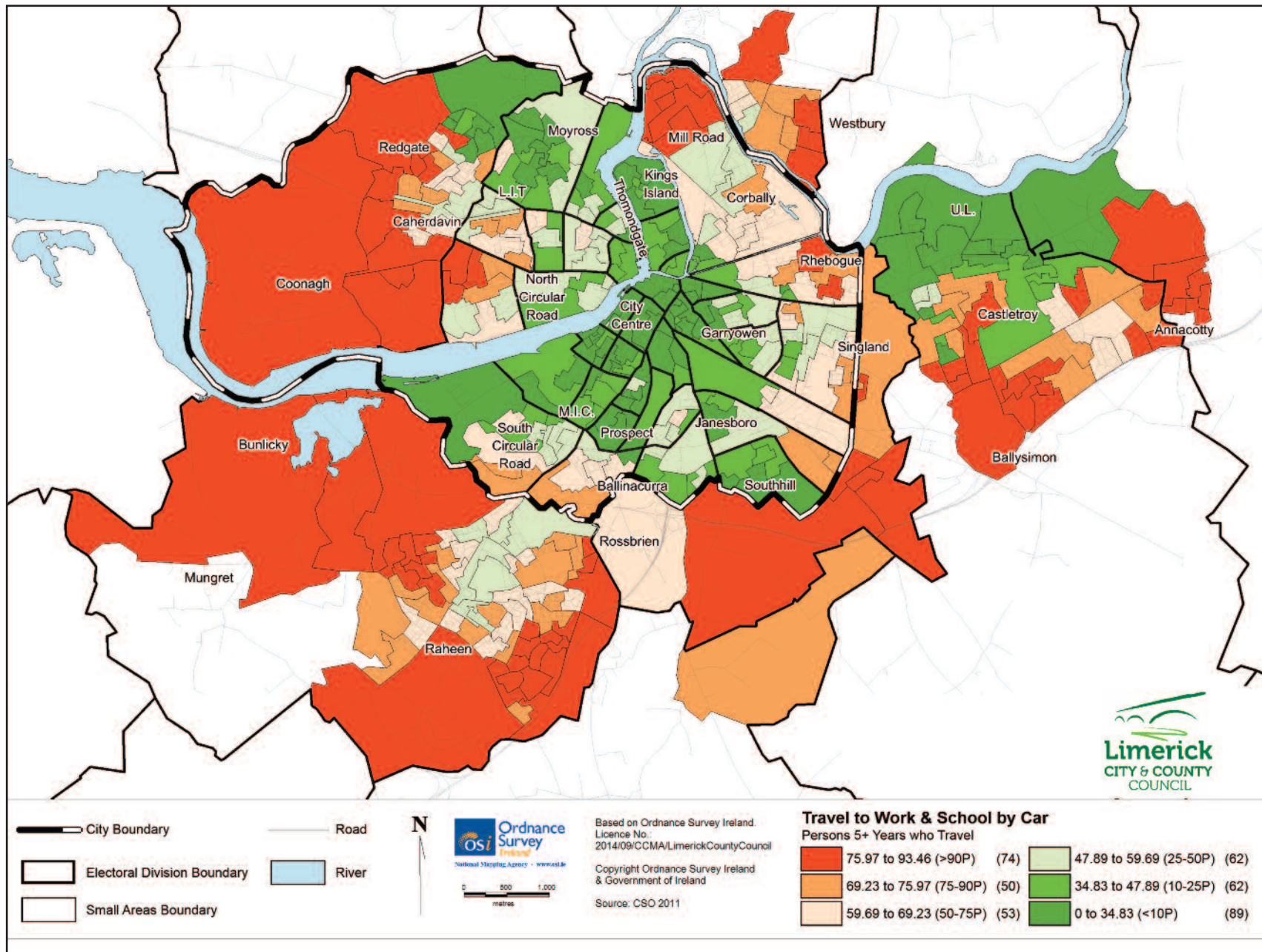


The low level of public transport usage in the city emerges even more strongly when we map usage against national norms (Map 44). The great majority of areas fall into the low or very low categories, recording percentages travelling by public transport below 6 per cent. In total 85 per cent of SAs have levels of usage below the national median, and less than 2 per cent are in the very high category. This is the lowest percentage in the very high category for any of the maps in this report. Use of public transport is notably low in large areas of the suburbs, especially in Ballyclough, Ballysimon, Monaleen, Annacotty, Coonagh, Clonmacken and Parteen. These areas tend to depend heavily on the car instead, as illustrated in Map 45 which shows that almost all of the suburbs have levels of car use above 75 per cent, the only significant exception being the area around UL where large numbers of students walk to college. Overall 19 per cent of SAs in Limerick are in the very high category on this indicator, almost twice the proportion nationally and surprisingly high in an urban setting.

# Map 44 | Travel to Work & School by Bus or Train



# Map 45 | Travel to Work & School by Car



Also somewhat surprising in an urban setting is the relatively low proportion of the travelling population whose journeys can be considered of short duration (less than 15 minutes travelling time). While the areas around UL and MIC show high percentages of travellers making short duration journeys, there are a lot of areas in the city where less than one-third of the population have low travel times (**Map 46**). The largest single category, accounting for 50 per cent of all SAs, consists of areas that are somewhat above the median on this indicator (i.e., between the 50th and 75th percentiles nationally). This may be linked back to mode choice – the strong bias towards car based transport means higher volumes of vehicles on the road for a given number of commuters, hence more congestion, and longer average journey times. In part too it reflects the fact that relatively high numbers of workers commute to work outside the city, including in areas such as Shannon Airport and industrial estate. In recent years too there has been a growing trend of children travelling out of the city to secondary school.

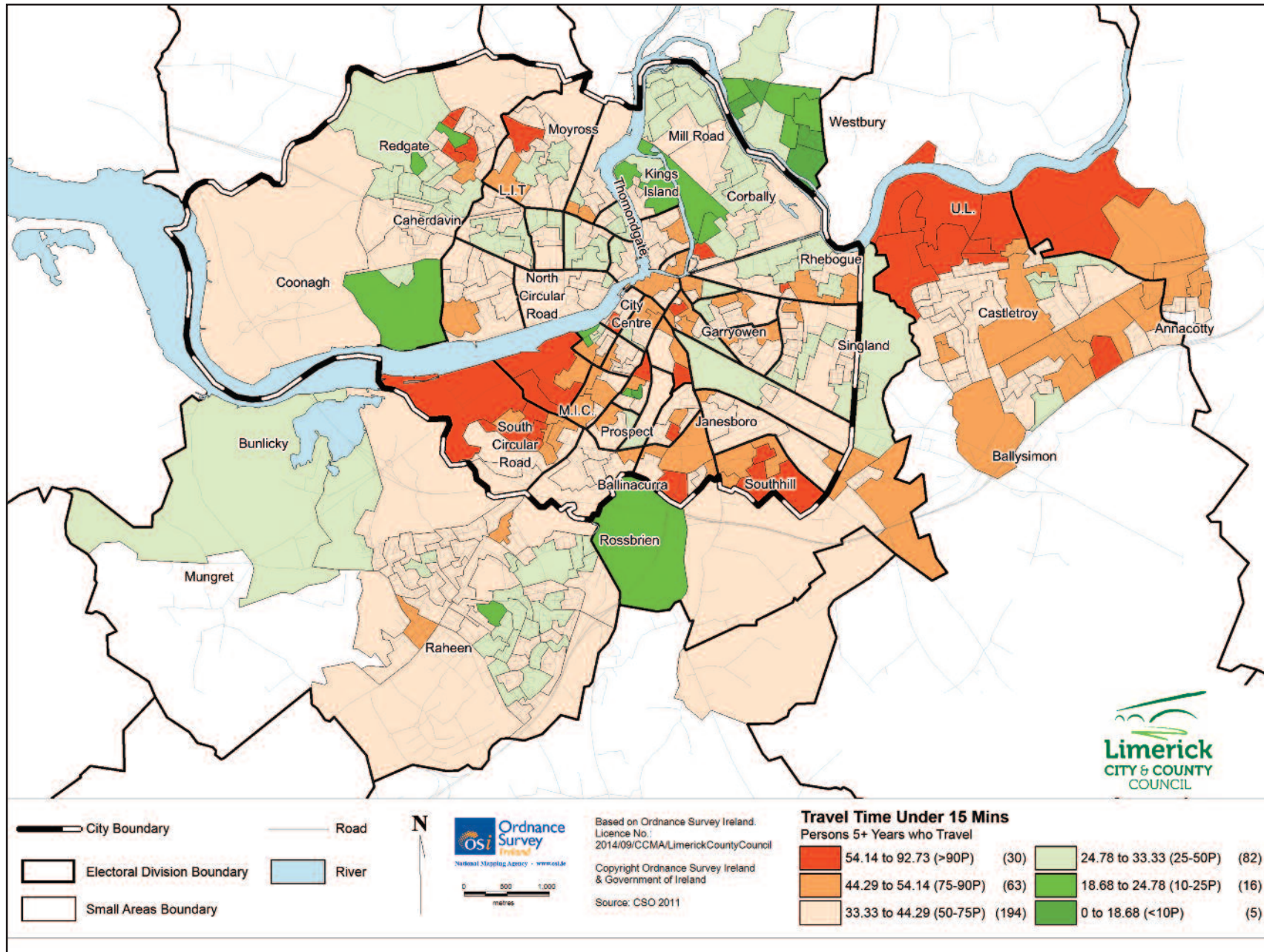
## 10.2 Car Ownership

The high levels of travel by car in Limerick urban area are in spite of comparatively low levels of car ownership as depicted in **Maps 47 and 48**. The percentage of households with no car has a distribution across the SAs that is strongly skewed upwards, with 29 per cent of all SAs classified into the very high category. These are areas in which at least two-fifths of households have no car, and they are located mainly in the city centre and the area around the university, as well as in the large public housing estates including Moyross and Southill. In the city centre and the UL area, low levels of car ownership reflect lower need: travel distances (and times) are generally lower in these areas due to the nearby location of workplaces and educational establishments. Low levels of car ownership in the local authority estates, on the other hand, are linked to affordability issues. In contrast, the percentage of households with two or more cars is skewed downwards, with 26 per cent of all SAs in the bottom decile nationally, and just 6 per cent in the top decile. The latter are among the more affluent areas of the city such as the North Circular Road (Revington Circle, Kyleglass, Sunville), Golf Links Road, Monaleen, and Newtown in Castletroy, Ballyclough, the Hermitage and Brookhaven Walk area of Corbally, parts of Raheen and Gouldavoher.

## 10.3 Digital Connectivity

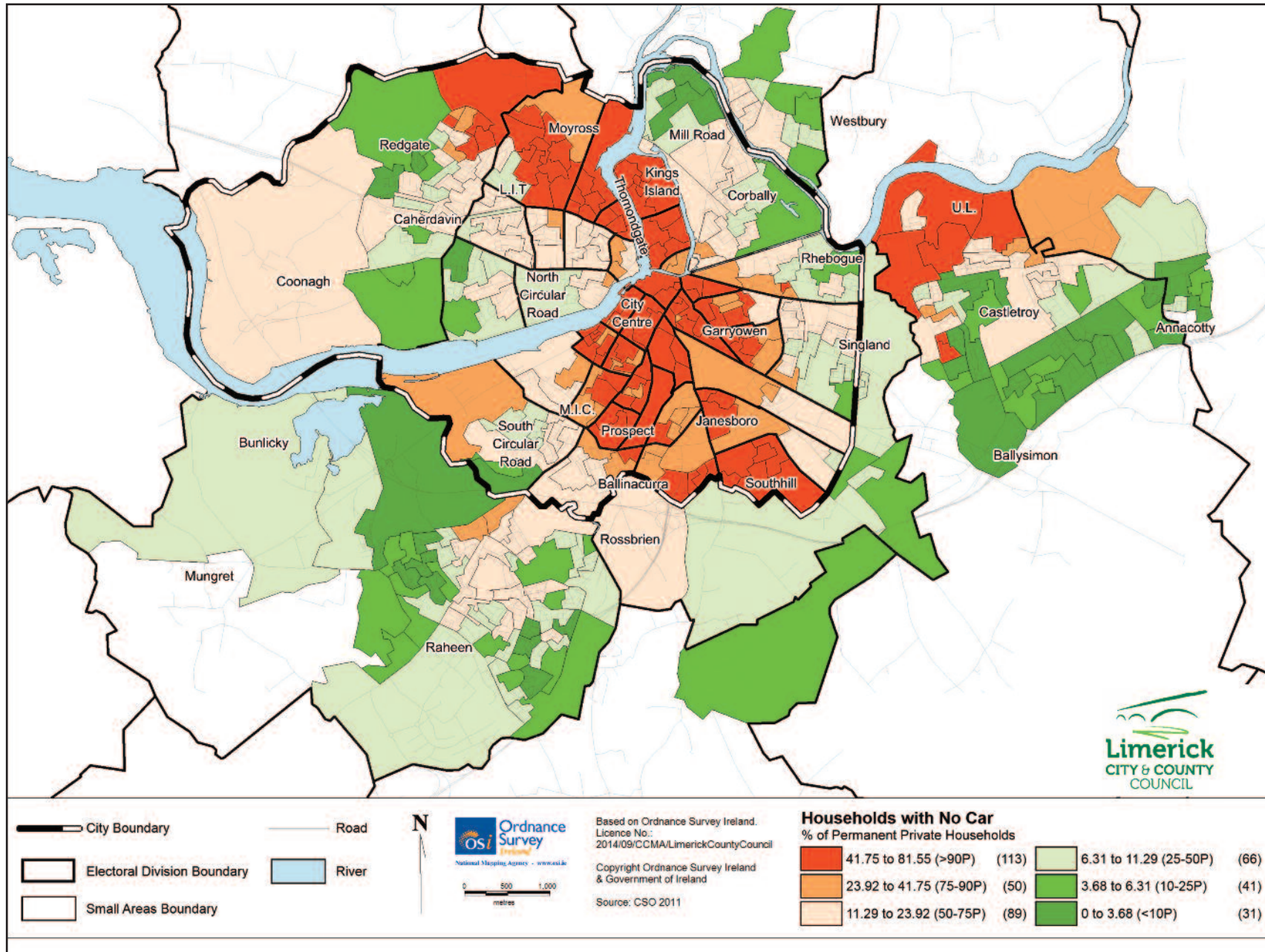
Finally, we look at the percentage of households with access to the Internet, specifically the percentage of households reporting that they have Broadband access at home. As pointed out in the previous profile, Broadband access is important not just for the enhanced access to services and entertainment that it provides, but also because it enables home working and therefore has potential for reducing the amount of travel in the city. In general, Limerick enjoys a relatively high level of broadband access: one-third of all SAs are classified in the top 25 per cent nationally in terms of the percentage of households that have home Broadband. In these SAs at least three-quarters of households have Broadband. However, there is still evidence of a digital divide in the city, with a very clear-cut geographical pattern on this indicator (**Map 49**). This pattern closely replicates that evident in the maps of car ownership. Thus, levels of Broadband access are generally high or very high in areas such as the North Circular Road, the estates on the Mill Road, Westbury, Annacotty-Newtown-Monaleen, Rossbrien and Raheen. On the other hand they are very low in Moyross, St. Mary's Park, Janesboro, Prospect and Southill. Given the rapid diffusion of smart phones offering mobile Broadband in the last few years, it is entirely possible that levels of Broadband access are currently considerably above those indicated in the 2011 census. Whether the digital divide has been significantly reduced or not is another matter entirely.

# Map 46 | Travel Time under 15 Minutes

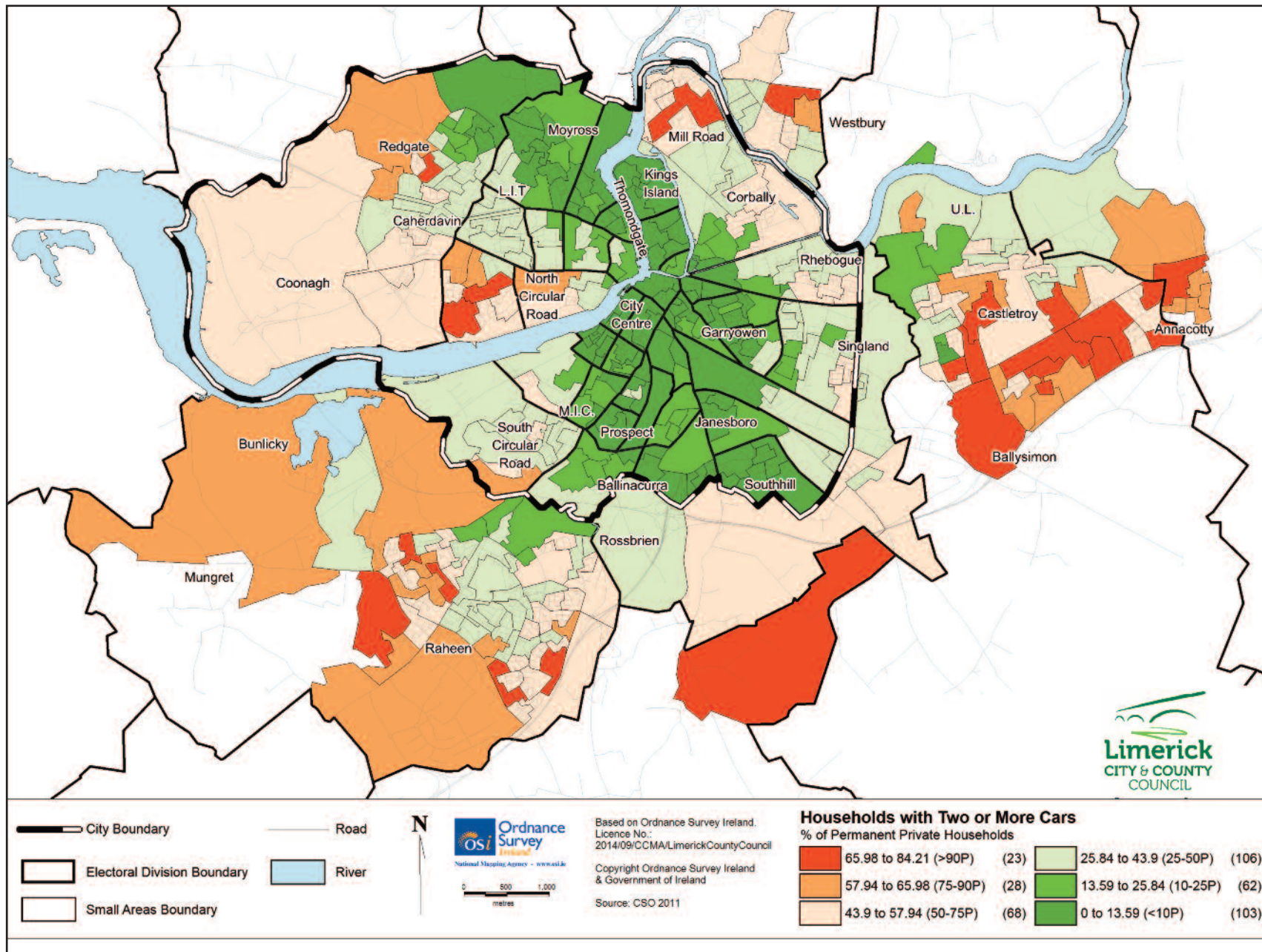




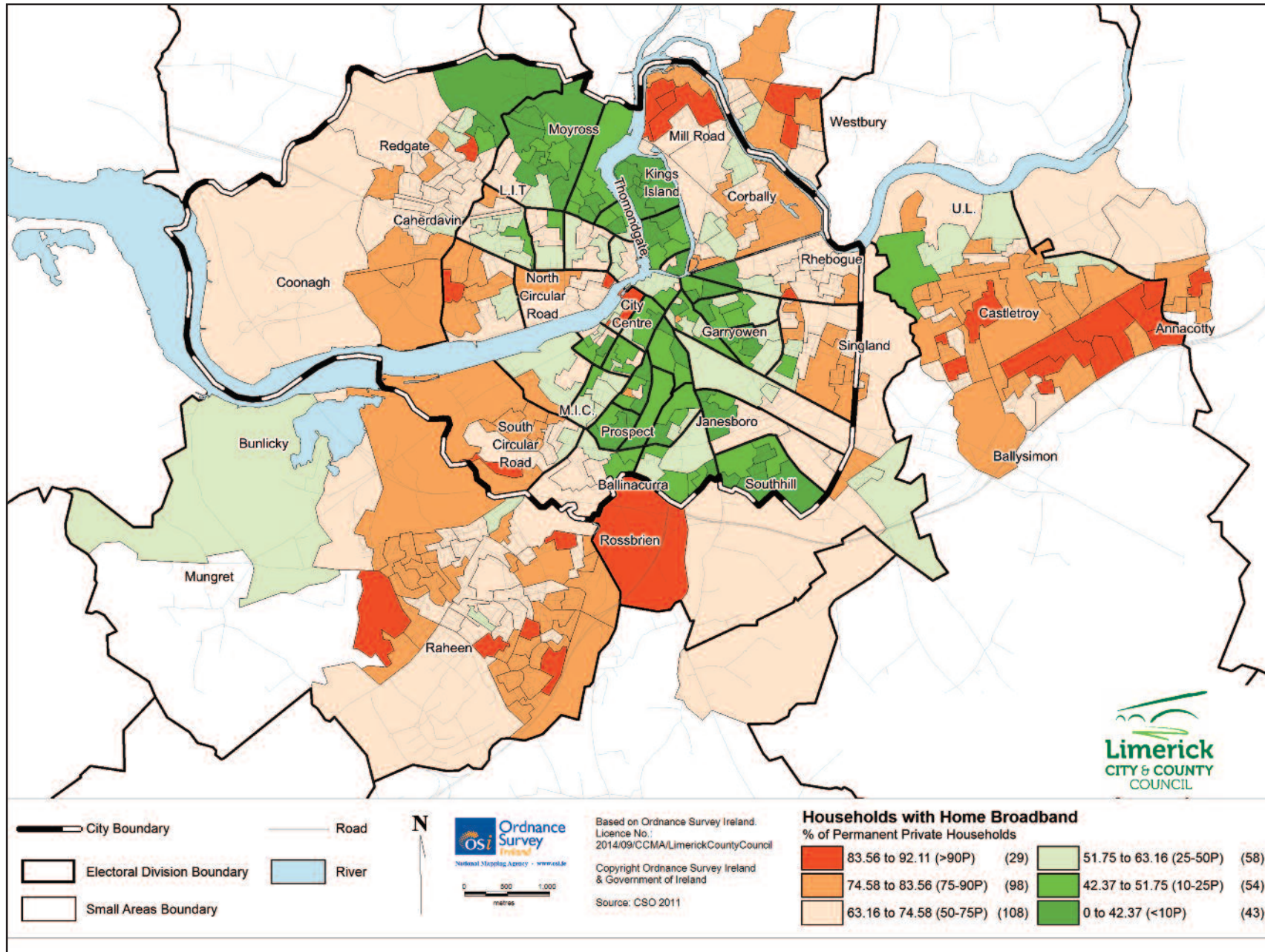
# Map 47 | Households with No Car



# Map 48 | Households with Two or More Cars



# Map 49 | Households with Home Broadband



# Social Well-Being



# Social Well-Being

The 2011 Census of Population returns reveal that Limerick City has the highest proportion of persons affected by disability and bad health of any local authority area in Ireland. Moreover, there are particularly acute problems in a number of neighbourhoods. Positive steps have been taken over recent years to promote a healthier population in Limerick. These include health promotion in schools and among civil society groups, the opening of multi-purpose health centres, and the provision of allotments. These initiatives need to continue, and be further resourced. Other complementary initiatives are also needed, such as the enhancement and extension of cycle lanes, playgrounds and designated walks, and the safeguarding of accessible green spaces.

## 11.1 Disability and Health

While disability and ill-health are universally associated with ageing, in Limerick they are also associated with social deprivation, as the maps presented in this report clearly illustrate. People who live in the most deprived parts of Limerick are more likely than the rest of the population to have a disability, all other factors being equal. Moreover, people in these same communities also have a greater likelihood of being afflicted by poor general health.

Over 18 per cent of the City's population has a disability, while the national level is just less than 13 per cent. When Limerick's more youthful suburbs are enumerated in the appraisal, a healthier picture emerges, with a disability rate of 15 per cent in the wider urban area. As **Map 50** shows, there are, however, several parts of Limerick in which the proportion of persons with a disability exceeds one-fifth of the population. Excluding the areas with hospitals and nursing homes, the areas most affected are Thomondgate, Ballynanty, Garryowen, Prospect, Ballinacurra and Southill. While most of these areas tend to have an older population, which is associated with disability, this is not universally the case. **Map 4**, which presented the level of youth dependency in Limerick showed that parts of Ballynanty, Garryowen and Southill have relatively young populations. The fact that the same areas have above average levels of disability suggests that disability there is affecting young people and parents with young families.

The 2011 census was the first in Ireland to measure the health of the population, and as such it complements the data collection efforts of bodies such as the HSE and Health Research Board. In responding to the census question, people were asked to rate their health on a scale from 'very good' to 'very bad,' with intervening options being 'good,' 'fair' and 'bad.'<sup>25</sup> Whereas there is, obviously, a degree of subjectivity in data collected in this manner, international research has shown that self-assessed health is in fact a good and robust indicator of objectively assessed health. The overall returns reveal that Limerick City amongst all local authority areas (i.e., Cities and Counties) in the State had the highest proportion of people who declared themselves as having either 'bad' or 'very bad' health. Correspondingly, the proportion of people with 'very good' or 'good' health is below the national average as the following table (Table 11.1) shows.

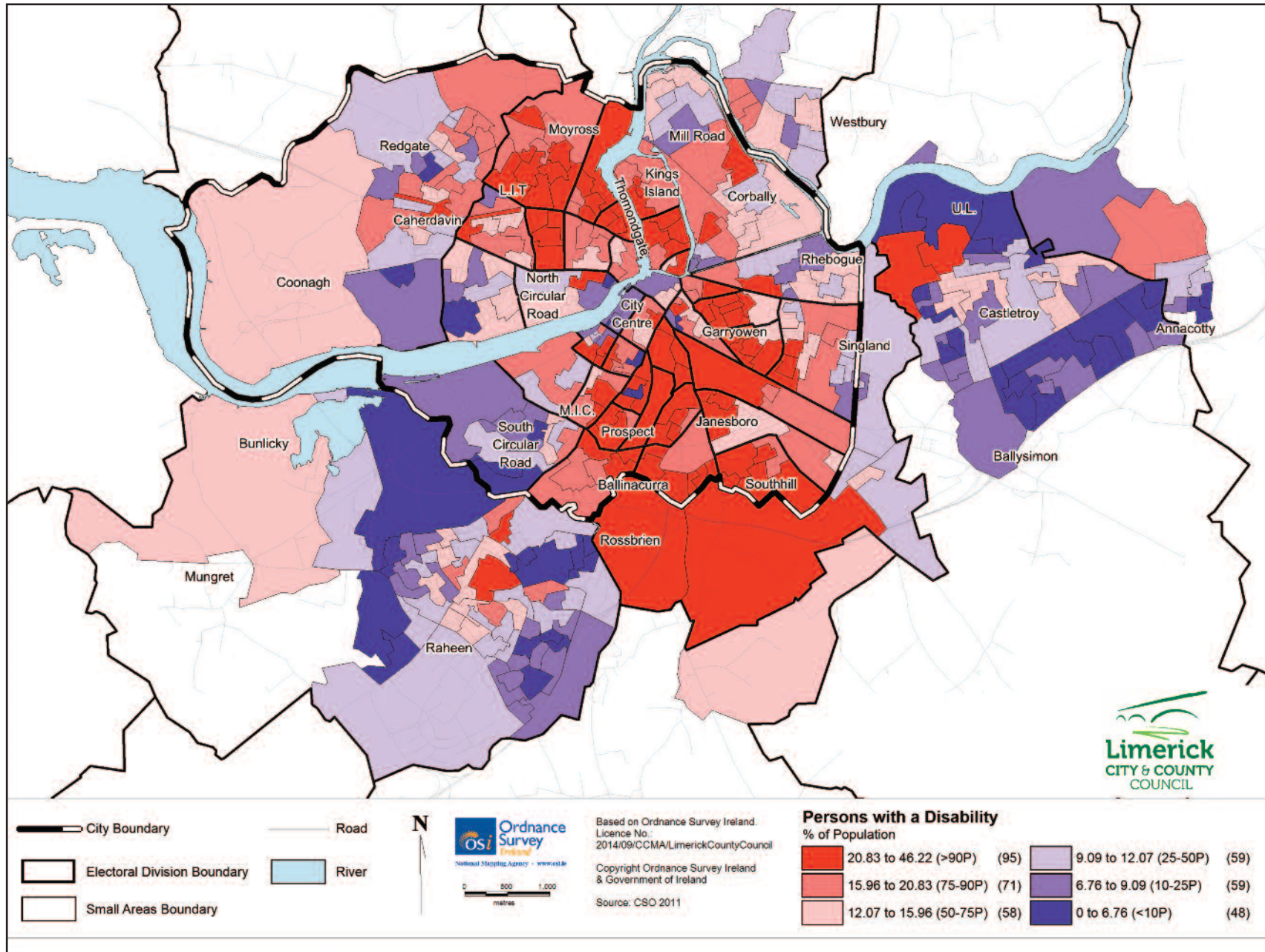
**Table 11.1: Self-rated Health Assessment by Selected Locations 2011<sup>26</sup>**

	Very Good	Good	Fair	Bad	Very Bad
Limerick City	53.36	30.23	9.45	1.72	0.38
Limerick Urban Area	58.22	29.98	9.26	1.70	0.37
Mid-West Region	59.70	29.91	8.75	1.36	0.28
Ireland	61.66	28.58	8.20	1.28	0.28

<sup>25</sup> The person completing the census form in each household was asked to make this determination for all members of the household.

<sup>26</sup> Data exclude non-respondents.

# Map 50 | Persons with a Disability



The indications of health deficits in Limerick contained in Table 11.1 translate into a spatial pattern in which persons in poor health (i.e., declaring either 'bad' or 'very bad' health) are spread almost city-wide (**Map 51**). The only exceptions are those areas populated by students, in-migrants (e.g., South Circular Road and City Centre) and persons in the two highest social classes (North Circular Road and Corbally). Outside the city boundary, the population is generally healthier, with the lowest proportions of persons with poor health being in the neighbourhoods of Monaleen, Newtown, Annacotty and Westbury as well as in Raheen and Dooradoyle. These areas of better self-rated health notwithstanding, the overall health profile of the urban area is poor, with almost 24 per cent of all SAs in the very high (i.e., most problematical) category.

## 11.2 Carers

Caring – as an occupation, or in response to a family need – is generally associated with the aforementioned variables of disability and health. Not surprisingly, therefore, carers constitute a somewhat larger proportion of the population in Limerick than the country as a whole: there are 41.8 carers per 1,000 population in Limerick urban area as compared to 40.8 / 1,000 nationally. When full-time carers are considered (defined as those who provide 43 or more hours of caring per week) the rates drop to 9.1 per 1,000 population in Limerick urban area and 8.7 / 1,000 nationally. Both nationally and locally most full-time carers are women.

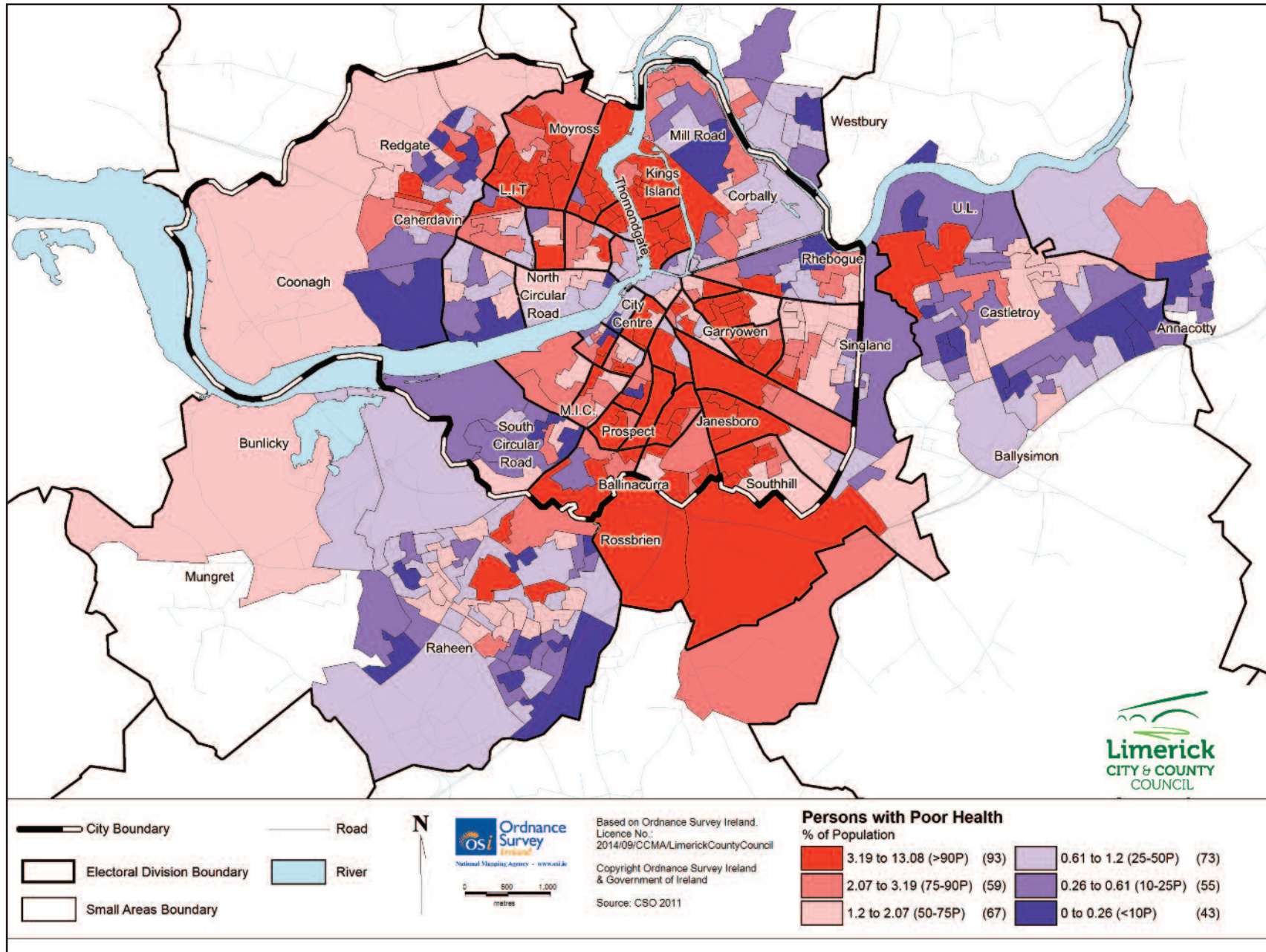
**Maps 52** and **53** depict the spatial variations across Limerick urban area in the rates per 1,000 population of all carers and of full-time carers respectively. It is notable that, while the maps of disability and ill-health depicted these as issues that are widespread throughout the urban area, and, in particular, the City, care giving appears as a more concentrated or localised phenomenon. The rates of all caring (i.e., regardless of the number of hours per week) are broadly in line with the national pattern, but for full-time caring there is a large number of SAs – 25 per cent of the total – that have no full-time carers. In general the maps are influenced by the locations of nursing homes and care institutions e.g. in Castletroy, Annacotty and on the Ennis Road & South Circular Road. However, high levels of caring are also associated with areas of socio-economic deprivation and low levels of participation in the workforce, as evidenced by the high proportion of full-time carers in Galvone, Ballinacurra Weston, and Moyross, and with higher proportions of retired people as is the case in Corbally and along the Ennis Road.

## 11.3 Affluence and Deprivation

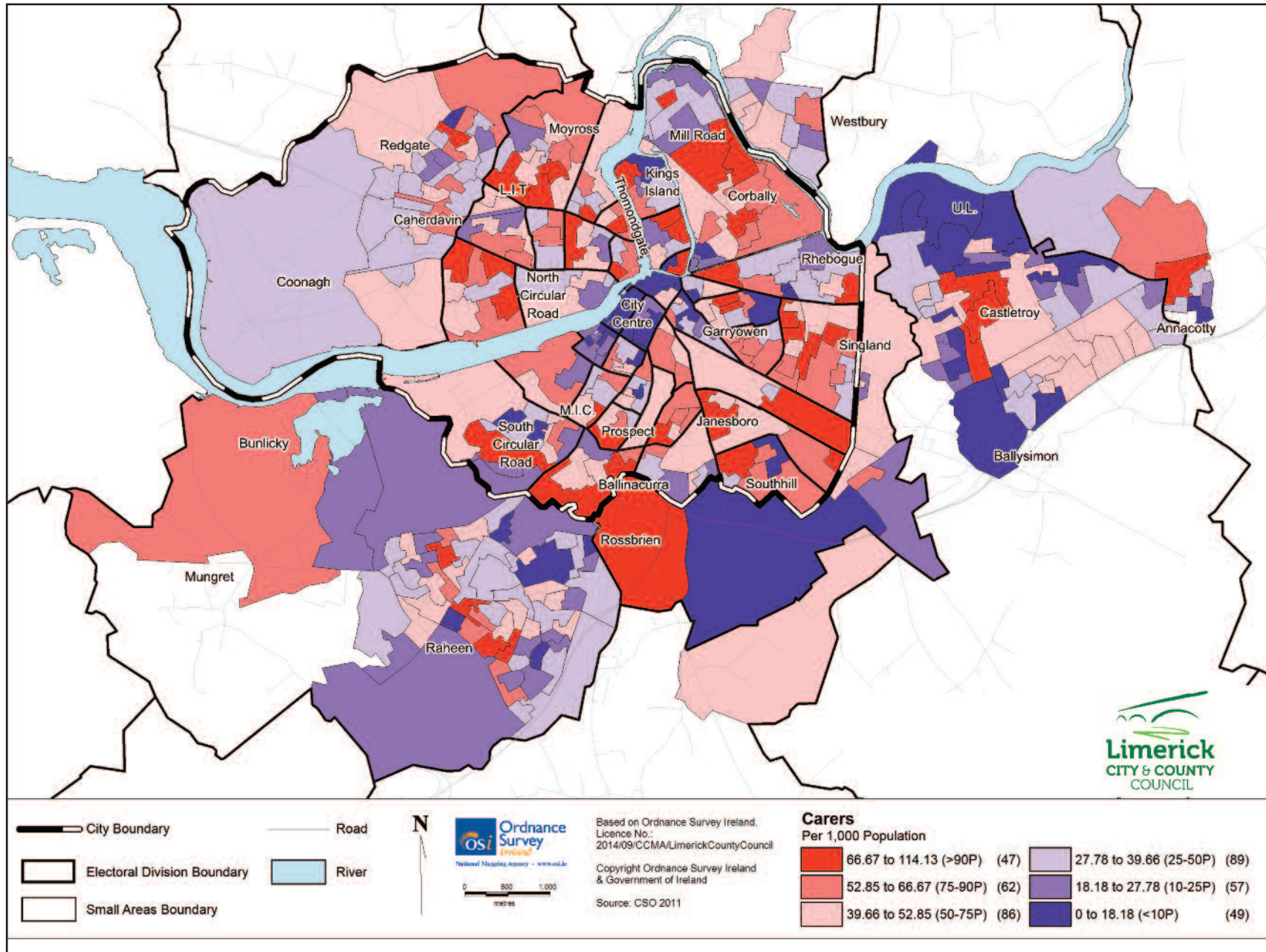
The profiles based on the 2002 and 2006 censuses of population have depicted patterns of affluence and deprivation for the EDs in Limerick urban area and have shown: (i) that Limerick urban area as a whole shows high levels of deprivation vis-à-vis the rest of the country; and (ii) that there are, nevertheless, wide variations in affluence and deprivation within the urban area, with Limerick EDs ranging from 'very affluent' to 'extremely deprived' as referenced to national norms. The composite measure of affluence-deprivation used for this purpose, now known as the Pobal HP Affluence-Deprivation Index, has been calculated for the 18,488 SAs in the State based on both the 2006 and 2011 census data, and we are therefore able to see the geography of affluence-deprivation at a much finer spatial scale than previously, and also the change in the pattern over the course of the economic downturn.

Not surprisingly, the country as a whole showed a significant disimprovement in terms of absolute affluence-deprivation scores in the five year period following 2006. In total 92 per cent of all SAs in the country had a lower score in 2011 than 2006. In Limerick disimprovement was even more widespread: 94 per cent of SAs (367 out of 390) were less well-off in 2011. Changes in the pattern of socio-economic well-being are depicted in **Map 54**, which is based on the change in the relative affluence-deprivation scores; in other words it shows how individual SAs have fared relative to the country as a whole. The map reveals that almost two-thirds of the SAs in Limerick urban area disimproved in terms of their relative affluence –deprivation score: in other words, even allowing for the general reduction in socio-economic well-being caused by the downturn, most Limerick SAs fell back relative to the rest of the country. The spatial pattern of change in relative affluence-deprivation is notable. In general the SAs experiencing the greatest (most adverse) adjustment are located in middle-class areas such as large areas of Dooradoyle-Raheen, as well as Westbury, parts of Corbally (Irish Estates, Siúl na hAbhann on the Mill Road), Rhebogoe, Brookville Avenue in Clareview and parts of Caherdavin, and parts of Castletroy including Kilbane. The deterioration in these areas reflects the impact of the downturn on the middle-classes among whom unemployment (one of the key indicators underlying the Index) has increased significantly.

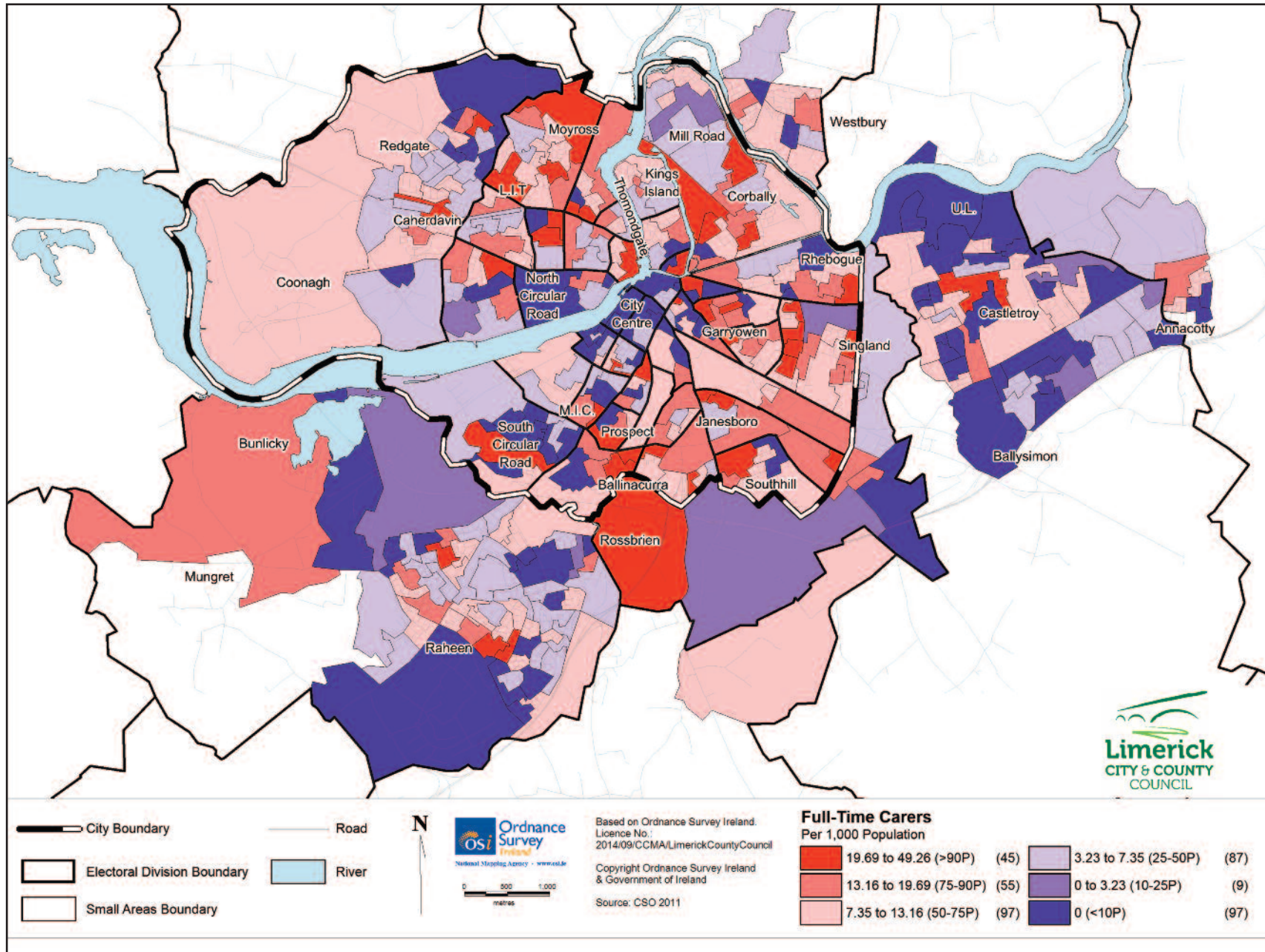
# Map 51 | Persons with Poor Health



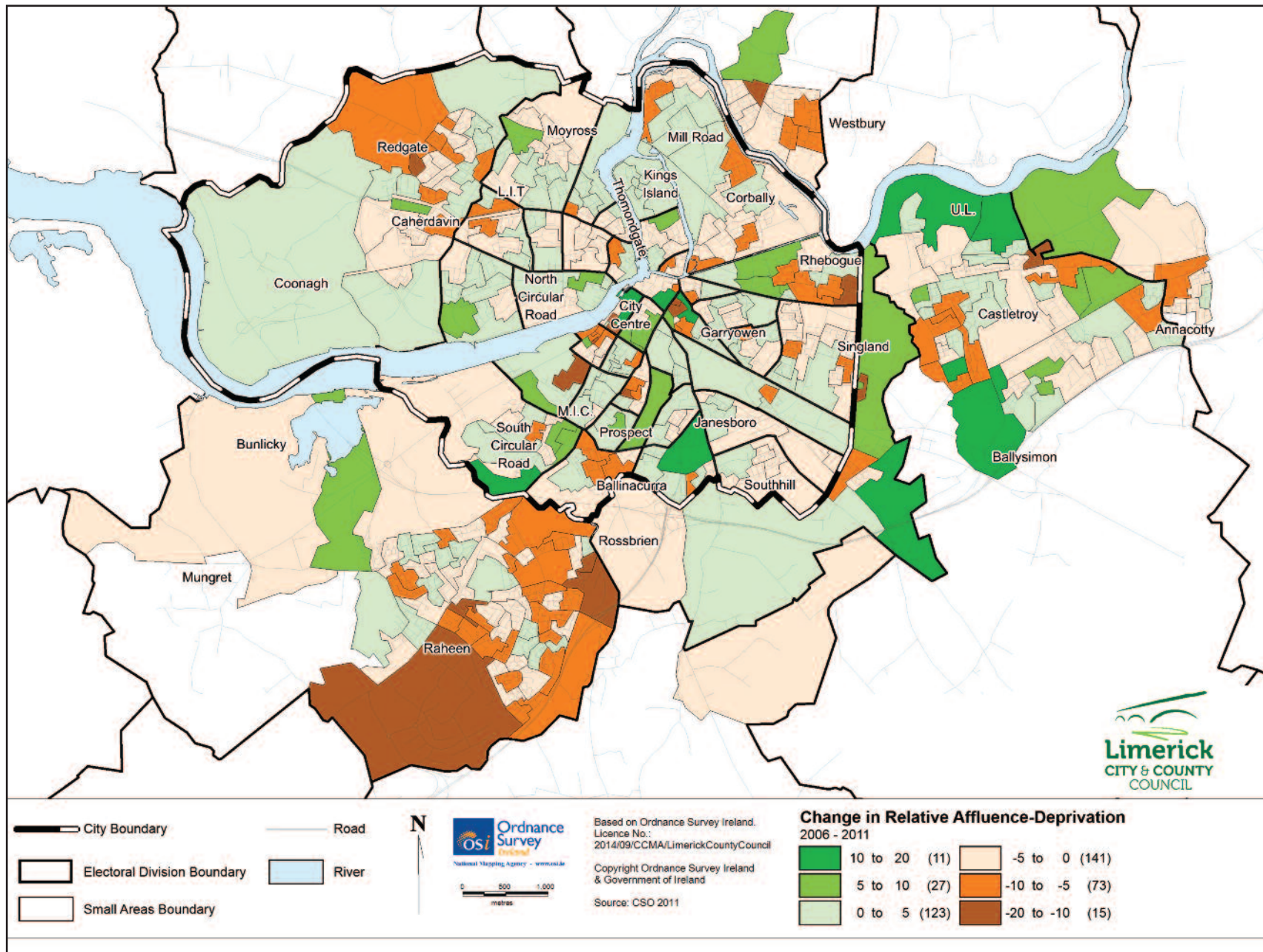




# Map 53 | Full-Time Carers



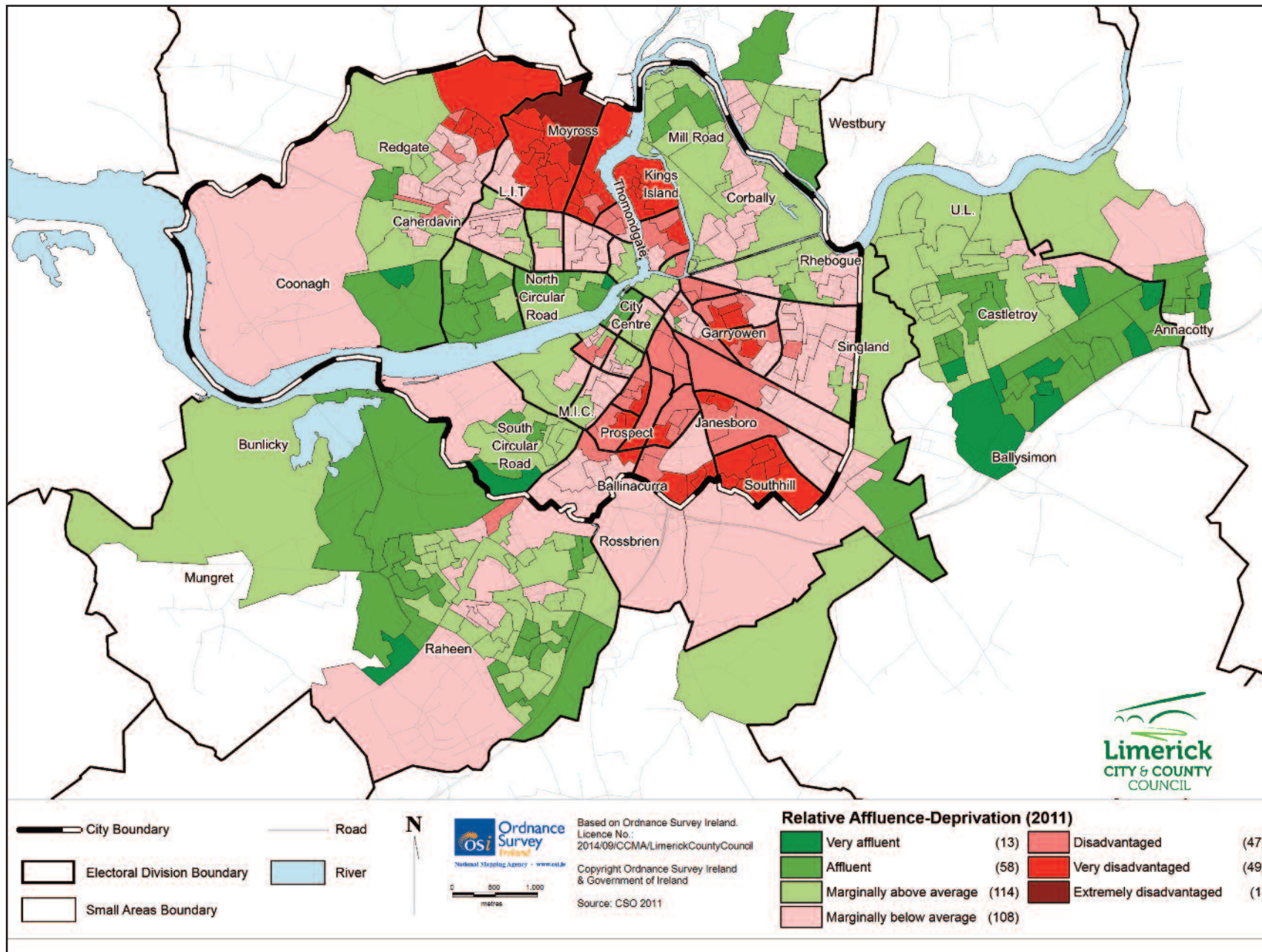
# Map 54 | Change in Relative Affluence-Deprivation



The outcome of these adjustments is depicted in terms of the overall relative affluence-deprivation measure in **Map 55**. The map shows that the basic spatial pattern of affluence and deprivation remains much as before, with areas classified as either 'extremely deprived' or 'very deprived' (in national terms) located to the north of the city centre in the Moyross-Ballynanty-Killeely-St. Mary's Park area, and to the south of the city centre in the Southill and Ballinacurra-Weston areas. If we broaden the definition of disadvantage to include areas designated as 'deprived' (the category with scores in the range -20 to -10) then there is a broad, contiguous band of disadvantaged SAs stretching all the way from the north-west boundary of the City to the south-east boundary – the area described in a previous profile as a 'corridor of disadvantage'. In total, one in four SAs in Limerick urban area can be described as deprived to some degree, as compared to just 15 per cent of all SAs nationwide. The single most deprived SA in the urban area is that containing the former Glenagross area of Moyross, which ranks jointly as the most deprived in the country (alongside part of Clondalkin in Dublin). The very low score in this area may be partly explained by the fact that it lost a large amount of population between 2006 and 2011 as a result of house demolition under the regeneration programme. Population change is one of the indicators underlying the index.

The 2002 and 2006 profiles noted that not all categories on the Affluence-Deprivation scale were represented in Limerick: no ED in the urban area ranked as 'extremely affluent'. This remains the case at SA level, but there are 13 SAs classified as 'very affluent'. Most of these are located in the suburbs, particularly the eastern suburbs, and include areas such as Kilbane and the upper Golf Links Road, as well as Newtown and parts of Annacotty. Together affluent and very affluent SAs constitute 18 per cent of all SAs in the urban area, which is slightly above the national percentage of 16 per cent. One final noteworthy aspect of the map of relative affluence-deprivation is that the middle class areas identified above as having disimproved significantly, such as in Corbally, Rhebogoue and Caherdavin, are now classified as 'marginally below average', where previously these were 'marginally above average'.

# Map 55 | Relative Affluence-Deprivation (2011)



# Conclusions: Future Prospects



## Conclusions: Future Prospects

The profile of Limerick urban area emerging from the 2011 census data is one that gives cause for concern. While most, if not all, areas of the country have suffered in the current recession, in terms of both economic performance and social development, Limerick has been particularly badly affected. At first glance this could be seen as surprising. In so far as the geography of the downturn in Ireland is understood, the picture emerging is that the areas worst affected in general are rural areas (especially remoter rural areas) and small towns; in general the larger urban areas have performed better, and this has been attributed in part to the greater resilience to economic 'shocks' that comes with size. Limerick might therefore have been expected to fare better. However, a more considered appraisal might conclude that the problems described here could well have been anticipated on the basis of trends identified in the profiles of the city prepared by Mary Immaculate College following the 2002 and 2006 census. In the 2002 profile, which charted progress over the period from 1996, we were seeing some positive signs for the city, including a closing of the gap between better-off and poorer areas, and a significant revival in the city centre brought about by the building boom and the movement of younger population back into the centre. In truth though, it was probably the case even then that the city had not benefited from the boom to the extent, or in the manner, that might have provided a sustainable basis for future development. In the 2006 profile there were some signs of the downturn, and of erosion of the gains of the late 1990s. The effects of the downturn are now very apparent, made even starker by the adoption of national referencing for all the census-based maps in the current edition of the profile.

The challenge that faces the city is considerable, as it struggles to emerge from recession and to improve its position amongst the larger urban centres in the country. Nevertheless, there are grounds for optimism on several fronts. In terms of the economic base, the announcement in December 2013 that the US biopharmaceuticals firm Regeneron is to establish a facility in Limerick in the old Dell assembly plant in Raheen is, without doubt, highly significant, and a milestone in the industrial transition of the city. While the number of long-term jobs promised by the firm itself (300) is relatively modest by the scale of previous industrial projects in the city, the significance of the project lies in the nature of the activity to be undertaken and the skills level of the jobs, and also in the fact that the project will plug Limerick in to Ireland's emerging biopharmaceutical industry, which, until now, has been largely focused on Dublin and Cork. In these respects the project is potentially a 'game changer' for the city, allowing it to break out from the dependence on relatively low value-added manufacturing that goes back decades, if not indeed a century or more. Although Limerick made the transition from indigenous manufacturing in traditional sectors such as food and clothing to attract foreign investment in new sectors such as microelectronics and computers many years ago, it remained the case that the new activities were relatively low-skilled operations that were vulnerable to closure or relocation under competitive pressures from lower-cost locations abroad. The Regeneron project offers the city the prospect of an activity that is likely to be much more embedded in the region and in Ireland, and consequently more likely to remain for the long term. For the project to fulfil this goal, however, there is a need to build on it, rather than seeing it as a one-off investment. Also, while the higher-skilled scientific and engineering jobs promised in Regeneron are very much to be welcomed, there remains a need – which in the short term is quite pressing – to generate employment that is accessible to those without high levels of qualification.

It is now widely recognised that one of the key factors in attracting mobile investment is the quality and performance of local government. In this respect Limerick has suffered for some time from coordination issues arising from the fact that the urban area spanned the jurisdictions of three different local authorities. The establishment of a new City and County Council should help to overcome these issues and provide better, more strategically-focused planning for future development. In this respect the newly delimited metropolitan electoral area represents a welcome step forward, in that it unites city and suburbs, albeit with the exclusion of the northern suburbs of Shannon Banks, Westbury and Parteen. However, this exclusion aside, the metropolitan area appears to be somewhat too extensive, incorporating as it does large rural areas that are not well integrated in to the city's daily urban system. Moreover, the wording of the Local Government Act (2014) relative to the 2012 White Paper on Local Government is somewhat ambiguous on the role of the metropolitan electoral area as a spatial planning unit. The absorption of the Mid-West Regional Authority into a larger Regional Assembly Area is likely to lead to a loss of knowledge capital, and will place an additional onus on the new City and County Council to continue collaborations with the adjoining local authorities to continue to give effect to the vision articulated in the regional authority guidelines.

## Conclusions: Future Prospects

Also on the local government side, the re-focusing and re-launch of the regeneration project should re-energise the commitment to the city's disadvantaged public housing estates. There is undoubtedly a need to deliver more than demolition and clearance to these areas, which, as the maps presented above show, remain among the most deprived in the country. The new Framework Implementation Plan correctly identifies the creation of a stable community as requiring significant economic and social inputs if the associated physical regeneration measures are to lead to improvements that are sustainable in the long term. It is vital that the various social and economic interventions identified in the plan are implemented. The re-position of regeneration within the local government system should help to secure the effective and on-going inter-agency cooperation that is required for this. Initiatives such as the Mid-West Area Strategic Plan, Limerick Smarter Travel and the recently-announced revamp of Colbert Station are indicative of the positive role public authorities and inter-agency collaboration can play in stimulating economic development and improving citizens' quality of life.

In tandem with measures to help the disadvantaged areas, the problems of the city centre must also be a priority for the future. For some time now Limerick has had the least vibrant central shopping and business area of all the cities, and indeed even in comparison to many of the country's larger towns. This has undoubtedly detracted from the city's attractiveness as a tourist destination. The recent redesign and landscaping of the quays area has been a significant improvement in this respect, and the prospects for the long-dormant Opera site are also good, with the acquisition of the site by the Council. Careful consideration needs to be given to the switch from predominantly retail to cultural and educational activity in the area, in order to get the development of this strategically important site right. Models of similar developments elsewhere should be critically examined. In this respect the National College of Ireland campus in Dublin Docklands can perhaps provide a blueprint, not just for the physical development of this extensive site but for how that development can help to serve the community in which it is located.





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