

POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHY

The population of Sligo town over the last 400 years distinguishes the Borough as a clearly functioning urban centre, distinct from its vast rural hinterland. The lack of any other sizable urban centres within a twenty-five mile radius attests to Sligo's historic position as the economic and market centre of the region.

Early population estimates from the 1600s, suggest that the county had between 16,000 and 20,000 inhabitants, with Sligo town home to about 600 souls. By 1659, the population of the town had been estimated at upwards of 1,000, an indication of growing prosperity. Between 20 and 40 per cent of the adult population are believed to have been English and Scottish settlers, including numerous soldiers.

The population of County Sligo appears to have fluctuated in the first half of the 18th century, declined significantly in 1750, when the county experienced a brief period of famine, but after that grew considerably. The county population was estimated at 35,000 in 1732, with Sligo town home to about 1,700 people. By 1749, the town had grown to 2,468 inhabitants, and calculations for the 1770s indicated a population of around 2,800, rising significantly to over 7,000 by 1795. The town had a substantial protestant population by the 1750s, with Synge's census recording 314 protestant households in the Borough, over 47 per cent of the total. Population estimates for the county in 1790s were in the region of 70,000 people.

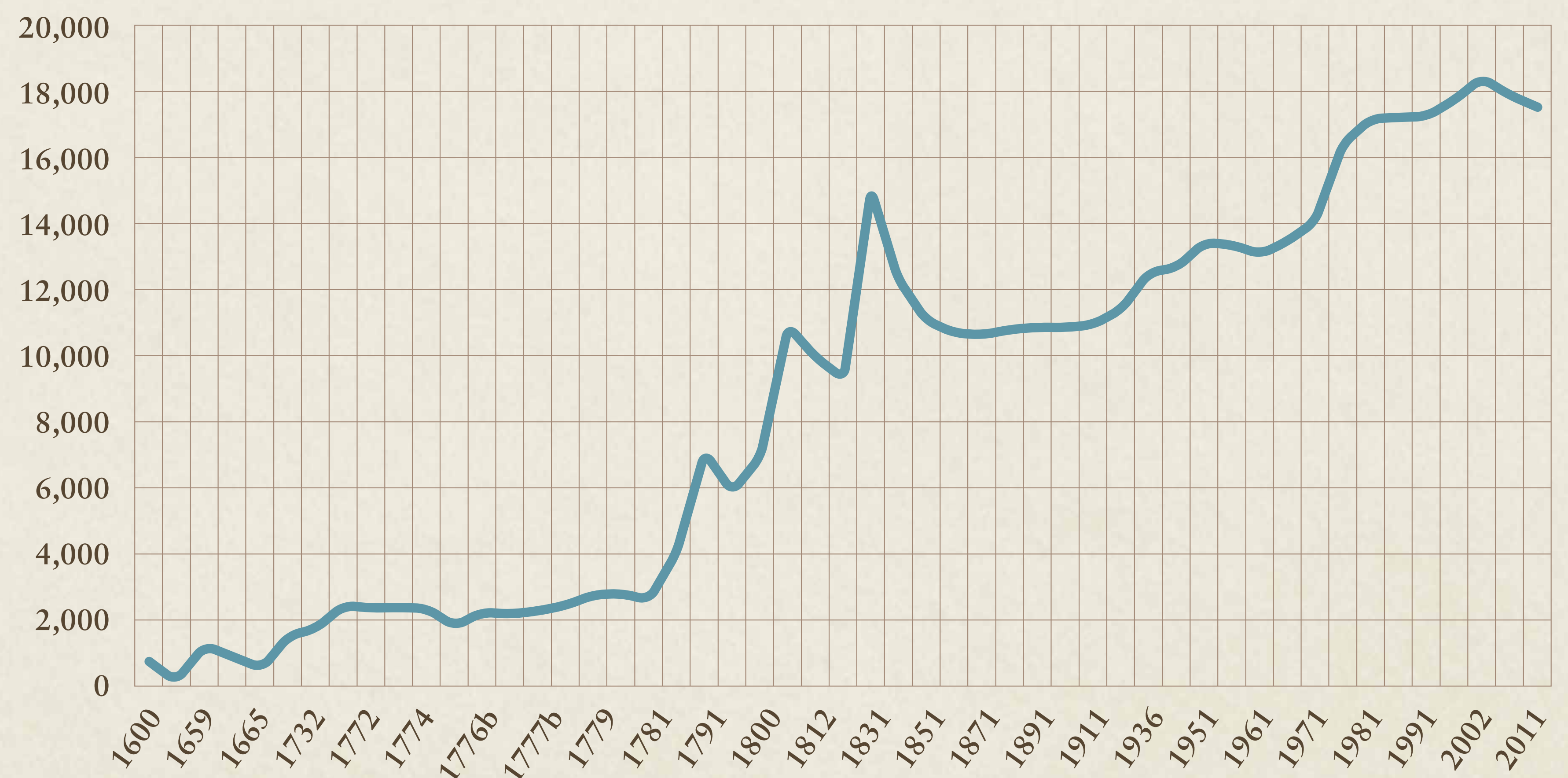
At the dawn of the 19th century, Sligo was the second largest urban centre in Connacht, after Galway, but was small in comparison to the urban centres along the east and south coast, and the rapidly developing towns of the north-east.

The population of the town in 1801 was about 10,000. In 1805 there were 1,036 houses in the town, the majority of which were cabins. Official census figures exist from 1821 onwards, and show that the town's population was hovering around the 10,000 mark in that year, about 7 per cent of the total county population of 146,000; A decade later the inhabitants of the town numbered over 15,000, a 50 per cent leap.

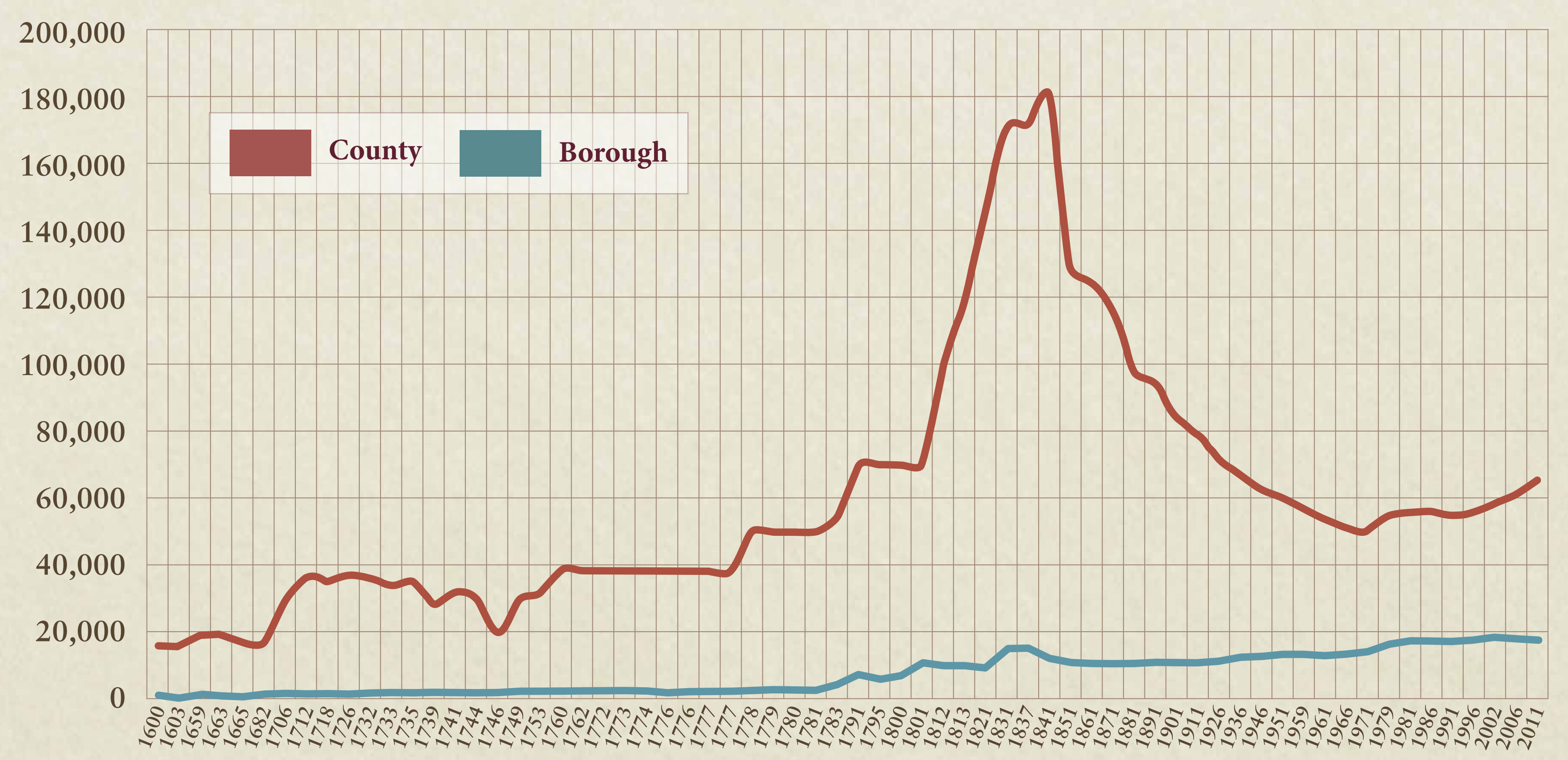
The census of 1841 saw the highest ever population recorded in County Sligo, over 180,000 people, with 12,271 or almost 7 per cent of them living within the Borough. However, the decimation caused by the Famine and its aftermath, resulted in the decrease of the county population by almost half between 1841 and 1891.

In contrast, Sligo town did not suffer the same decline. The population of the municipal borough remained stagnant over the following decades, but dropped to just over 10,000 by 1871. The extension of the Borough's boundaries by 1871 resulted in a modest addition of numbers, enough to stabilise the decline in the urban population, which reached 10,900 by the dawn of the 20th century. In 1841, the town held just 7 per cent of the county's population; by 1901 that percentage share had increased to 13 per cent.

Population of Sligo Borough 1600-2011



Population Sligo Borough compared to Sligo County, 1600-2011

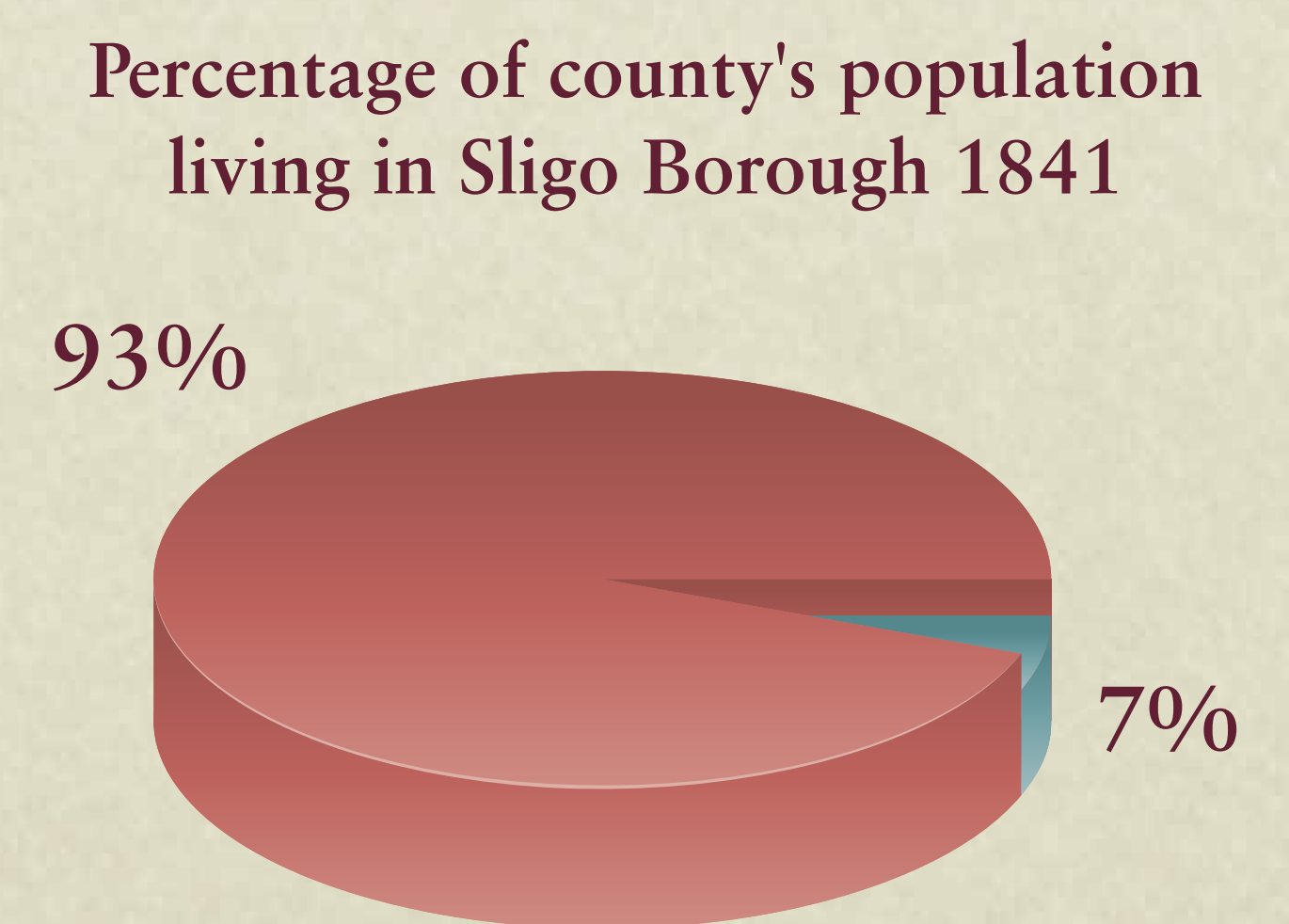


At the time of the 1936 census, Sligo was ranked as the eighth largest town in the Free State, with a population of 12,565, almost 20 per cent of the total population of the county. Subsequent economic decline resulted in the population of County Sligo dropping by over 25 per cent between 1936 and 1971.

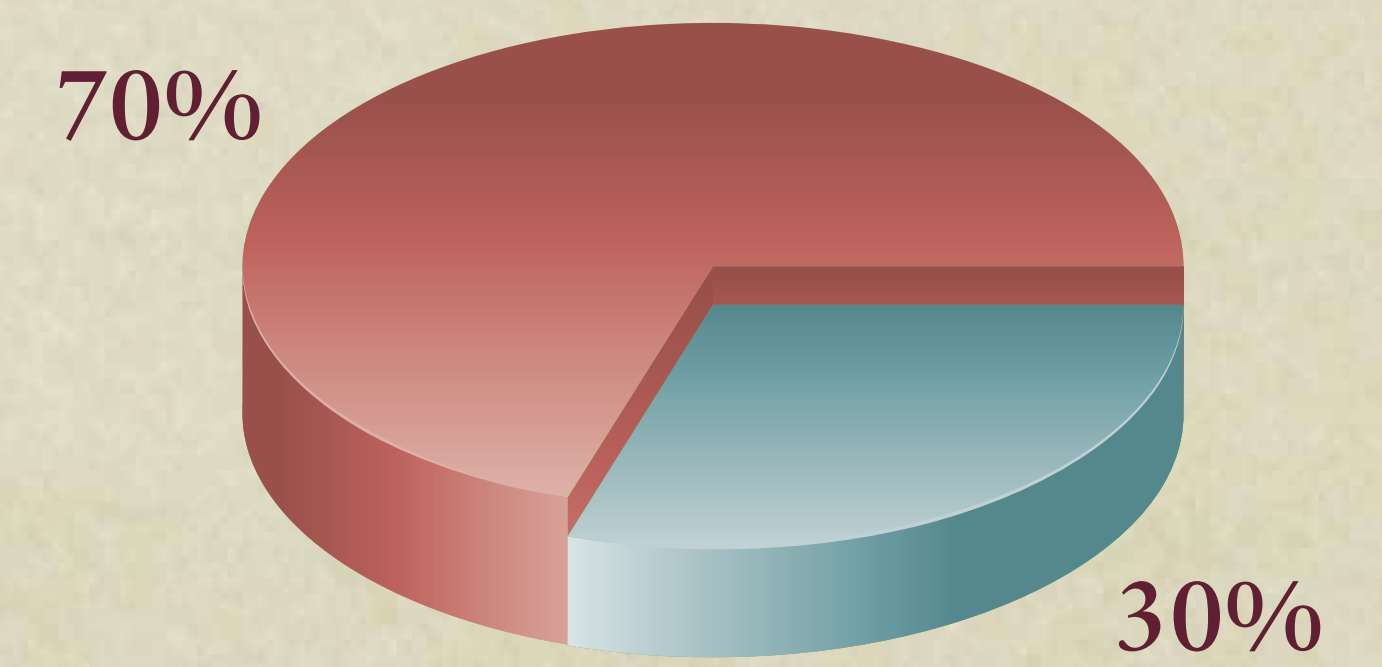
The population of the Borough of Sligo held steady, increasing to 14,100 in 1971. In the following decade, a demographic movement resulted in a 17 per cent increase in the town's population to 16,500 by 1980, and at the dawn of new millennium, it stood at 18,500.

By 2011 Sligo town accounted for over 27 per cent of the county's population. In fact the population of the immediate hinterland of the Borough, including the commuter areas of Ballisodare, Collooney and Rosses Point, is slightly in excess of 30,000, emphasising Sligo's prime economic position in the region, a role that it has enjoyed for over seven centuries.

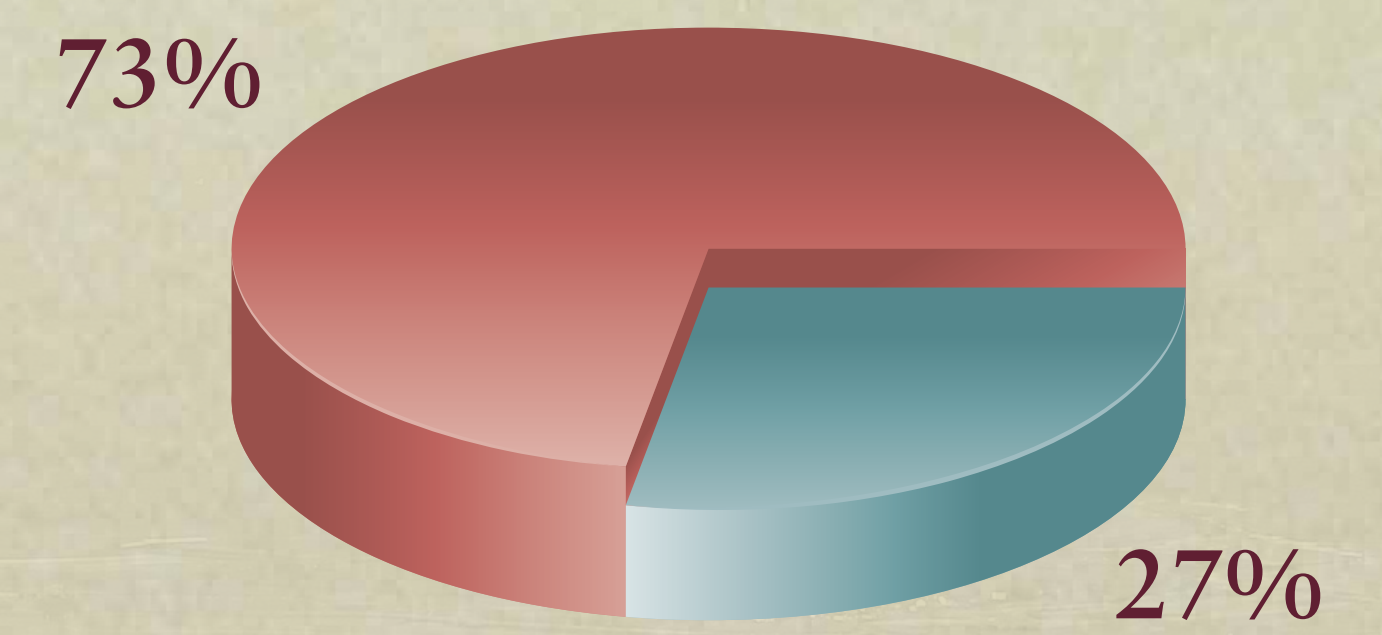
Percentage of county's population living in Sligo Borough 1841



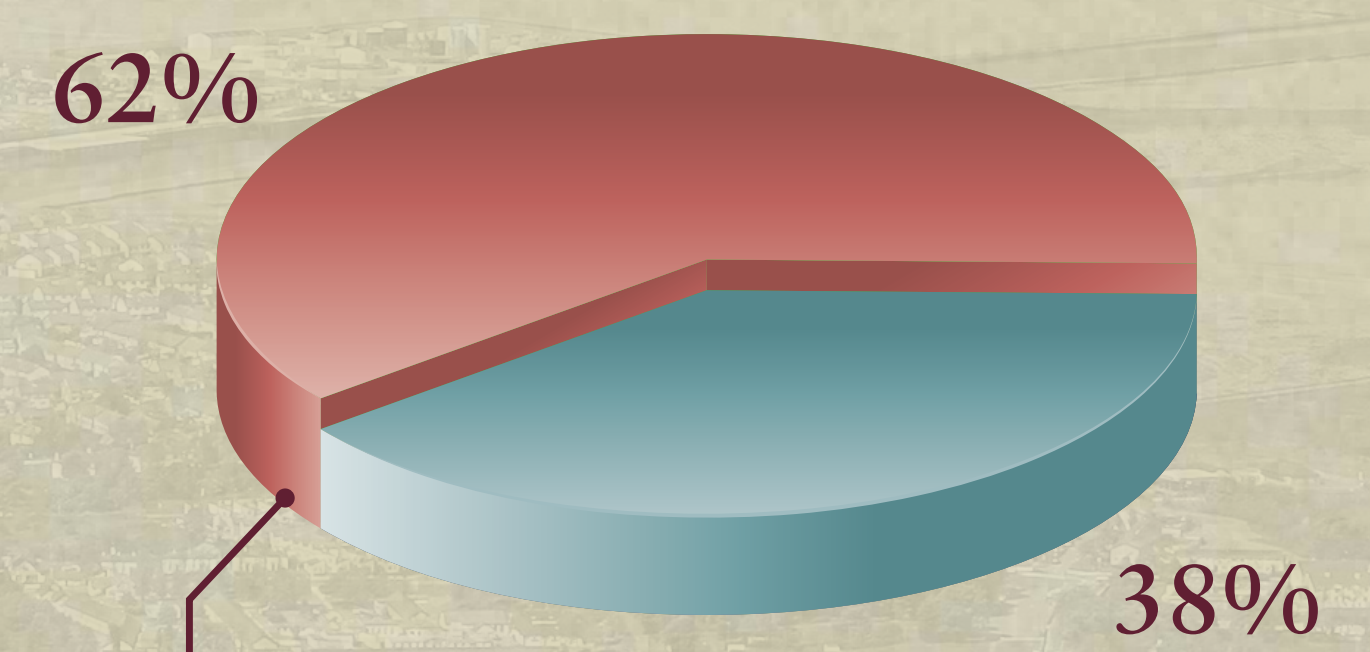
Percentage of county's population living in Sligo Borough 1979



Percentage of county's population living in Sligo Borough 2011



Percentage of county's population living in Sligo Borough and the adjacent Electoral Divisions of Calry Kilmacowen and Knocknarea 2011



Sligo Borough	17,568
Calry	1,806
Kilmacowen	2,230
Knocknarea	3,557
Total	25,161
(County)	40,232
(Total)	65,393

Map of Sligo and Environs showing Local Electoral Areas (LEAs)

