

Territorial Divisions Census of Ireland, 1901

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“The passing of the Local Government (Ireland) Act, 1898, inaugurated a great change in Irish Census Statistics. Under that Statute the Poor Law areas were adopted as the basis for administrative purposes, and it became necessary in the Townland Census, to arrange the Townlands, in each administrative county, according to Poor Law Unions, Dispensary or Registration Districts, and District Electoral Divisions, instead of according to baronies and parishes as heretofore. This operation was a very laborious one, and had it not been for the assistance obtained from Lists of Townlands by Poor Law Unions prepared in the Office of the Registrar-General, our work would have been seriously delayed by the change. Inside each District Electoral Division the townlands have been arranged according to baronies and parishes, so as to afford means of reference to the publications of former Censuses.

The **Townlands** are the units from which all the other territorial divisions are made up. They are the smallest recognised divisions in the Census Publications and on the Ordnance Survey Maps. There were 60,462 townlands at the date of the Census. Table VII. of the County Books gives statistics of Area, Houses, Population and Valuation for each townland.

There were in Ireland at the date of the Census 3,751 **District Electoral Divisions**, formerly Poor Law Electoral Divisions. In no case does a District Electoral Division extend into more than one County.

The **Dispensary Districts** were created under the provisions of the Medical Charities Act, 14 & 15 Vic., c. 68. They consist of groups of District Electoral Divisions, and were formed with regard to area and population. The Registrars' Districts are, in general, co-extensive with the Dispensary Districts. There were 829 Registrars' Districts in Ireland on 31st March, 1901.

The **Poor Law Unions** originally numbered 130 ; in 1857 they were increased to 163 ; at the date of the Census of 1891 their number was 160 ; and on 31st March, 1901, 159. They are multiples of Townlands, District Electoral Divisions and Dispensary Districts, and are conterminous with the Superintendent Registrars' Districts. They vary in size from 347,820 to 41,205 statute acres. 113 are situated wholly in one county, 38 in two, while 8 extend into three counties.

The **County Electoral Divisions** are the Divisions of the County for the purpose of election of members of the County Council under the Local Government (Ireland) Act, 1898. They consist of a certain number of the District Electoral Divisions, and are arranged with a view to the population of each County Division being, as nearly as may be, equal. - The County Districts which consist of groups of District Electoral Divisions have been formed under the Local Government Act of 1898. They are divided into Urban and Rural Districts, each with a separate Council.

The **Baronies** were generally constituted from the ancient Irish divisions. They are composed of groups of townlands, and heretofore the townlands composing the barony have been grouped in the Census publications according to the parishes or portions of parishes in which they are situated. These areas have now ceased to be used for administrative or fiscal purposes.

The **Civil Parishes** are composed of groups of townlands, but owing to the adoption of the Poor Law areas for administrative purposes, their importance has, from a statistical point of view, been much diminished. As already stated both baronies and parishes have been retained for purposes of reference in the Townland Census on the present occasion, and in addition a Table is given in each of the County Books showing the population of the Civil Parishes according to Religious Profession.

The **Counties** of Ireland as heretofore existing were composed of groups of baronies. Under the operation of the Local Government Act, 1898, the boundaries of several counties have been altered for the purpose of facilitating local government. In our tables, except where otherwise stated, the new areas have been adopted.

Ireland is divided into four **Provinces** consisting of groups of counties, the counties adopted for the Census Tables being those as altered under the operation of the Local Government Act, 1898.

In addition to the above mentioned territorial divisions, there are the **Parliamentary Divisions** which are mainly formed under the "Re-Distribution of Seats 1885, Act," and the **Ecclesiastical Dioceses.**"

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n/ Census of Ireland, 1901, *General Report*, 1902, [Cd. 1190], at 9-10.