

Proposal Summary

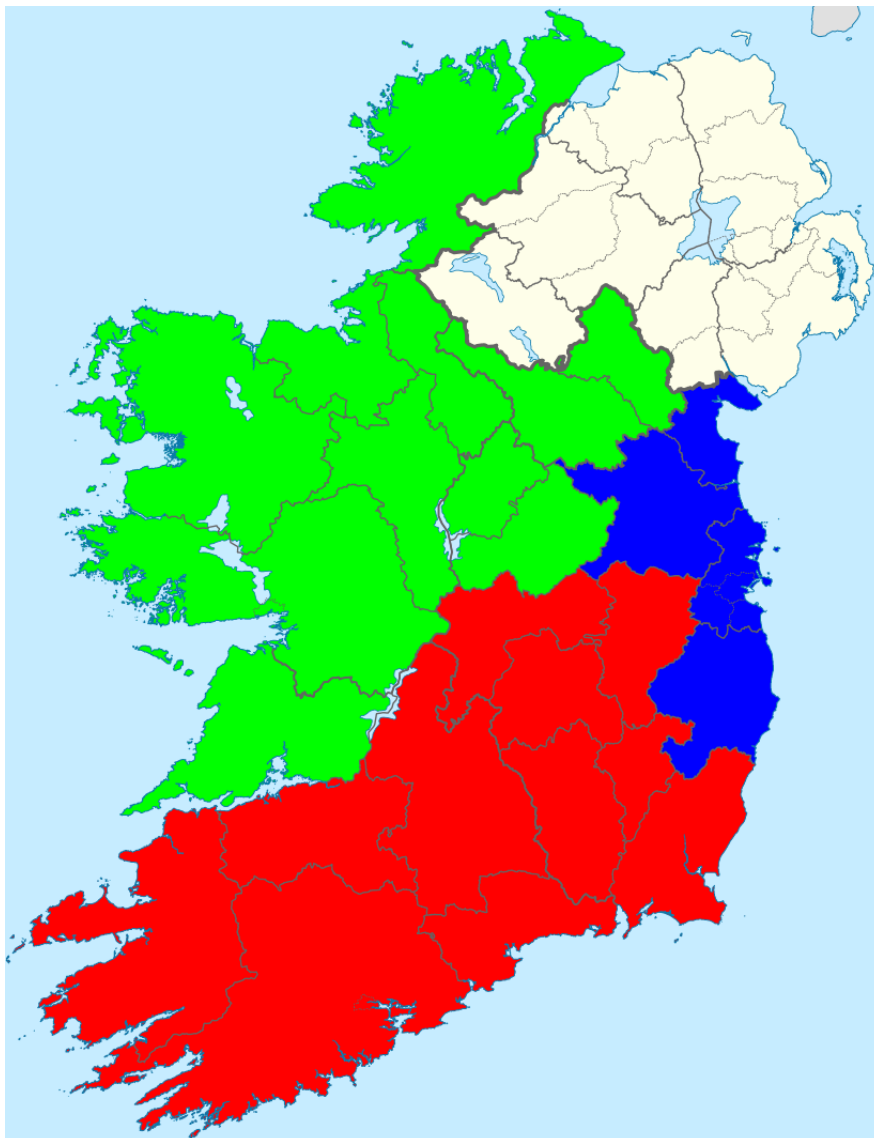
Three constituencies – East (5 seats), North-West (3 seats) and South (5 seats).

East – Dublin, Louth, Meath, Wicklow

North-West – Cavan, Clare, Donegal, Galway, Leitrim, Longford, Mayo, Monaghan, Roscommon, Sligo, Westmeath

South – Carlow, Cork, Kerry, Kildare, Kilkenny, Laois, Limerick, Offaly, Tipperary, Waterford, Wexford

	Area Population	Seats	Population per seat	Deviation from average population per seat
East	1,811,051	5	362,210	-1%
South	1,852,230	5	370,446	1%
North-West	1,095,259	3	365,086	0%
Total	4,758,540	13	366,042	



Benefits of Proposal

- This proposal would only result in a small number of changes from the present geographic boundaries. Clare, Louth, Meath and Wicklow would be the only counties to change constituency. Louth was chosen to be added to “East” as if it was kept within “North-West” but Meath was not, it would be very isolated and only connected through a small perimeter with Monaghan. Also, people in Drogheda generally have much more day to day contact with Dublin than Letterkenny. To be in line with the terms of reference, Meath must also be part of the “East” region to ensure that Louth and Dublin are connected in a contiguous manner.
- The usage of the Shannon river as a dominant geographical feature would be preferable and in line with the terms of reference as it is possibly the most significant boundary feature in the state. The North-West constituency would thus return to the border of the previous North-West constituency from between 2004-2014 with the re-addition of Clare.
- An added benefit of this proposal is that all defined electoral areas are connected to each other in a triple point between Offaly, Westmeath and Meath. If required, this would maximise adaptability and leave available the possibility of easier movement of counties in future boundary revisions to other areas depending on however the geographic distribution of Irelands population changes in the future. Thus, minimising the likelihood of future drastic changes in boundary perimeters in the event of population changes or changes to the number of EU MEPs assigned to the state.

Addressing potential alternative approaches

- An alternative argument could be to keep the existing Dublin boundaries similar to how it is currently. The issue with this that of the allowable seats that could be allocated to this area, every population per seat percentage wildly deviates from the national average. The best-case scenario is that there is an eight percent deviation which is quite unrepresentative.

	Area Population	Seats	Population per seat	Deviation from average population per seat
Dublin	1,345,402	3	448,467	23%
Dublin	1,345,402	4	336,351	-8%
Dublin	1,345,402	5	269,080	-26%

- If the North--West region is remains at 4 seats as it is today, but Meath and Louth are moved to the “East” region, many extra counties will have to be added to this region to complete the balance. Most likely candidates would be counties in the center of the state (eg. Offaly, Laois or Tipperary) which have lower population densities than Meath or Louth. This implication directly results in the sheer area of this region to increase and compounds the already known issues with the sheer area of the region that makes it difficult to canvas.
- On another aspect, if Kildare (Population: 222k) is swapped with Wicklow (Population: 142k) the population per seat of the Dublin region increases to 4% above the average, and the South region drops to 7% below the average. Due to the ongoing population increase in the Dublin region, this disparity will only intensify in the coming years. This 4% based on the 2016 data should ideally be the lower bound of deviation. We should endeavour to improve equal representation in the state, not degrade it.

Reference

Population data from the 2016 census used to calculate the population figures above:

County	2016 Population	% change 2011-2016	Proposed Area
Dublin	1,345,402	▲ 5.70%	East
Cork	542,196	▲ 4.50%	South
Galway	258,552	▲ 3.20%	North-West
Kildare	222,130	▲ 5.60%	South
Limerick	195,175	▲ 1.80%	South
Meath	194,942	▲ 5.90%	East
Tipperary	160,441	▲ 1.10%	South
Donegal	158,755	▼ -1.50%	North-West
Wexford	149,605	▲ 2.90%	South
Kerry	147,554	▲ 1.40%	South
Wicklow	142,332	▲ 4.20%	East
Mayo	130,425	▼ -0.20%	North-West
Louth	128,375	▲ 4.50%	East
Clare	118,817	▲ 1.20%	South
Waterford	116,401	▲ 2.30%	South
Kilkenny	99,118	▲ 3.90%	South
Westmeath	88,770	▲ 2.90%	North-West
Laois	84,732	▲ 5.20%	South
Offaly	78,003	▲ 1.70%	North-West
Cavan	76,092	▲ 4.00%	North-West
Sligo	65,357	▼ -0.10%	North-West
Roscommon	64,436	▲ 0.60%	North-West
Monaghan	61,273	▲ 1.30%	North-West
Carlow	56,875	▲ 4.10%	South
Longford	40,810	▲ 4.60%	North-West
Leitrim	31,972	▲ 0.50%	North-West

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