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Over 12,000 Donegal people are divorced, separated or widowed:

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The latest census figures show that there is a shift towards living in towns in Donegal, and our population is getting older. Gerard Gallen reports.

A clear insight into the change in attitudes to marriage and the way of life in Donegal has been emphasised in Volume 2 of the 2006 Census covering age and marital status. In total there is in the region of 40,000 people living in Donegal within the 18-39 age bracket, with a total of 77,801 single people in the county.

In terms of marriage there are 55,814 people in the county in their first marriage of 57,159 marriages, with 3,431 separated, 1,885 divorced and 6,988 people widowed. In terms of the sexes a total of 27,884 men are in their first marriage against 27,884 females with 1,465 separated males and 1,968 separated females.

There are also more female divorcees living in Donegal at 1,046 with 5,558 widows where as there are 839 divorced males and only 1,430 widowers.

The clear difference in the number of people to have lost their husband or wife illustrates the high life expectancy rates for females, in comparison to the male population nationally.

In Donegal a total of 2,127 people are aged over 85, with men making up only 714 of this total. Of those aged over 65 there are 8,551 males and 9,860 females.

While people in Donegal are living longer, the number of children aged under the age of one in 2006 was 2,122 with 1,168 males and 1,046 females. Stranger still the number of females aged one or under in the county is exactly the same as the number of divorced females, although its doubtful baby girls are to blame.

For the upcoming election, there are a total of 2,138 people in the county aged 18 at the time of the census for parties to persuade.

Another clear change in terms of the census figures is the movement of people in the 20-39 age brackets to larger towns. In total there are 9,594 people of 36,585 aged 20-39 living in town areas of the county as opposed 28,785 of 110,679 in rural areas.