Social needs for transport and gaps in transit service: Enniscorthy and other parts of County Wexford, Ireland

Dr James Reynolds

2025-05-22

Introduction

The CONUNDRUM project relates to sustainable transport, community mobility and co-creation, and is using Enniscorthy in County Wexford, Ireland, as a test bed. However, assessments and mapping of social needs for transport, and public transport supply provided in Enniscorthy, and how these compare to other places in Ireland, do not appear to be publically available.

Currie et al[1] developed a methodology for assessing spatial gaps between social needs and transit supply An R package[2] has recently been developed that facilitates the calculation of the transit supply levels from General Transit Feed Specification (GTFS) datasets.

This note presents results obtained by applying the gtfssupply index R package to Ireland's GTFS dataset, with an emphasis on Enniscorthy in county Wexford.

Background

Transit supply

The social needs-gap analysis methodology involves calculating a Supply Index (SI) based on the number of transit service arrivals at stops in and around each area of interest. Adjustments are made for the amount of each area that is within a typical walking distance of each stop, according to the following formula:

$$SI_{area,time} = \sum \frac{Area_{Bn}}{Area_{area}} SL_{n,time}$$

where:

- $SI_{area,time}$ is the Supply Index for the area of interest and a given period of time;

- $Area_{Bn}$ is the buffer area for each stop (n) within the area of interest[3];

- $Area_{area}$ is the area of the area of interest; and

- $SL_{n,time}$ is the number of transit arrivals for each stop within the given time period.

[1] "Quantitative Approaches to Needs Based Assessment of Public Transport Services: The Hobart Transport Needs Gap Study," Journal Article, 2003, https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/2c049091cafb56c66efc532ad2bdd774d8efc0eb; "Gap Analysis of Public Transport Needs:measuring Spatial Distribution of Public Transport Needs and Identifying Gaps in the Quality of Public Transport Provision," *Transportation Research Record* 1895 (2004): 137–46, doi:10.3141/1895-18; "Identifying Spatial Gaps in Public Transport Provision for Socially Disadvantaged Australians: The Melbourne 'Needs Gap' Study," 2007; Graham Currie, "Quantifying Spatial Gaps in Public Transport Supply Based on Social Needs," *Journal of Transport Geography* 18, no. 1 (2010): 31–41.

[2] See https://github.com/James-Reynolds/gtfssupplyindex

[3] In Currie, "Quantifying Spatial Gaps in Public Transport Supply Based on Social Needs" this was based on a radius of 400 metres for bus and tram stops, and 800 metres for railway stations. The same definition is used here.

As such, the SI combines coverage (accessibility to transit) and service frequency (accibility by transit). The SI is a relative index, allowing comparison between different areas of interest, based on transit supplied over a specific time period. In the results reported in Currie[4] transit supply was assessed based on an entire week, and compared across Census Collection Districts (CCDs) within Greater Melbourne. CCDs were clasify into seven groups based on SI scores[5].

Transport needs

Transport needs were similarly assessed using a index score, based on various metrics available from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). These included the Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantage/Disadvantage (IRSAD), which is reported directly by the ABS based on 31 weighted indicators and data collected during the census. A transport-specific need index, based on eight weighted indicators[6] was also included, with scores categorised based on three groups below and three groups above the average score across all of Melbourne.

Clearly, the approach used to assess social needs for transport might need to be adjusted to reflect different data availability in different locations or from different editions of a census.

Needs-gaps

The final step was to compare social needs for transport with the amount of transit supplied in each area of interest. A key finding was that "8.2% of Melbourne residents ha(d) 'very high' needs but 'zero', 'low' or 'very low' public transport supply", reflective of areas of greater need often being in places on urban fringes or otherwise often remote from transit infrastructure and services.

More broadly, it was suggested that the developed methodology might be "substantially more useful than the presentation of anecdotal evidence which is the most common means of identifying transport needs in local transport studies throughout the world"[7].

Methodology

Supply Index

This analysis used the all-Ireland GTFS dataset, downloaded on April 23, 2025 and reporting scores for transit services provided on that same date (the first Wednesday after Easter). The "Small Area" National Statistical Boundaries from 2022 were adopted as the areas

[4] Ibid.

[5] being those with: zero supply; very low, low, or below average supply; and above average, high or very high supply.
CCDs with above and below average SIs were evenly split into each of the three sub-groups, respectively.

[6] Adults without cars (0.19), distance to the Melbourne Central Business District (0.15), persons aged over 60 years (0.14), persons on a disability pension (0.12), low income households (0.10), adults not in the labour force (0.09), students (0.09) and persons 5-9 years (0.12).

[7] Currie, "Quantifying Spatial Gaps in Public Transport Supply Based on Social Needs."

of interest, with the indexing of supply based on the average score
across the County of Wexford.

Needs

The Irish Census (2022) reports various indicators for "Small Area",
but these do not match those used in the Currie (2007) or other pre-
vious needs-gap analyses. However, there are some that are similar[8],
but there does not appear to be a IRSAD or similar socio-economic
indicator available.

   As such, this analysis adapts the Currie (2007) approach and uses
the same weighting for the following indicators: households with-
out cars (0.19); distance to Wexford (0.15); persons aged 60 years and
over (0.14), persons unable to work due to permant sickness or dis-
ability (0.12), those aged 15 years or older who are not at work; stu-
dents (0.09) and people aged 5-9 years (0.12). Each of these indicators
were normalised across all of the Small Areas in County Wexford,
weighted as indicated to develop an combined value that was then
weighted by the total population in each Small Area to produce the
combined indicator of social need for transport used in this analysis.

Results

County Wexford

Figure 1 shows Small Areas across County Wexford, categorised by
transit supply and social need for transport. There are 134,542 people
living in Small Areas with transit supply below the average across all
Small Areas in County Wexford, representing some 82% of the total
163,919 population. This includes the 52,946 people (32%) living in
Small Areas with no transit supply at all, which mostly appear to be
in rural areas. In general, transit appears to be mostly supplied in
Wexford (town), Einnscorthy,

[8] Item T15_1_NC is the number of households without a motor car. Items T1_1_AGE60-64T, T1_1_AGE65-69T, ... T1_1_AGE80-84T and T1_1_AGE85T report persons aged 60 years and older; T8_1_UTWSDT reports the total number of people unable to work due to permanent sickness or disability; T8_1_TT reports the total population aged 15 years and over, while T8_1_WT reports the total at work, thereby allowing calculation of the number of adults (15+) not in the labour force; T8_1_ST reports the number of people aged 15 years and over who are students; and T1_1AGE5T, T1_1AGE6T ... T1_1AGE9T report the number of people aged 5 through 9. There does not appear to be any data available about low income households at the "Small Area" geographic area.

Table 1: County Wexford, population in each Transit Supply grouping by urban area name

| Urban area | Transit Supply category | | | | | | | Total |
	Very High	High	Above average	Below average	Low	Very Low	Zero Supply	
Adamstown	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.4% (326)	0.4% (326)
Arthurstown	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.2% (149)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.2% (149)
Ballycanew	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.3% (277)	0.3% (267)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.7% (544)
Ballycullane	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.3% (230)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.3% (230)

Ballyhack	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.3% (211)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.3% (211)
Ballyhogue	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.3% (255)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.3% (255)
Ballymurn	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.8% (607)	0.8% (607)
Ballysimon	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.4% (331)	0.4% (331)
Barntown	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.2% (170)	0.4% (335)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.6% (505)
Blackwater	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.2% (157)	0.4% (328)	0.0% (0)	0.6% (485)
Bree	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.4% (316)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.4% (316)
Bridgetown	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.3% (269)	0.3% (275)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.7% (544)
Bunclody	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	1.1% (869)	0.9% (690)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	2.0% (1,559)
Camolin	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.6% (470)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.6% (470)
Campile	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.5% (371)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.5% (371)
Carrig on Bannow	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.5% (391)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.5% (391)
Castlebridge	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.3% (278)	0.8% (611)	0.3% (255)	0.0% (0)	0.9% (706)	2.3% (1,850)
Clongeen	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.3% (263)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.3% (263)
Clonroche	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.4% (329)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.4% (329)
Coolgreany	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.5% (395)	0.5% (395)
Courtown	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	3.9% (3,108)	1.3% (1,073)	0.2% (184)	0.0% (0)	5.5% (4,365)
Duncannon	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.4% (281)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.4% (281)
Duncormick	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.2% (191)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.2% (191)
Enniscorthy	1.3% (1,045)	1.8% (1,420)	3.0% (2,406)	6.0% (4,781)	3.3% (2,658)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	15.4% (12,310)
Ferns	0.0% (0)	0.2% (158)	0.3% (249)	1.1% (910)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	1.6% (1,317)
Fethard	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.5% (363)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.5% (363)
Gorey	0.7% (569)	1.3% (1,012)	2.6% (2,100)	1.7% (1,364)	1.4% (1,152)	0.9% (754)	5.7% (4,566)	14.4% (11,517)
Killinierin	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.3% (270)	0.3% (270)
Killurin	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.3% (223)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.3% (223)
Kilmore	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.2% (194)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.2% (194)
Kilmore Quay	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.3% (235)	0.3% (212)	0.0% (0)	0.6% (447)
Kilmuckridge	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	1.0% (792)	1.0% (792)
Monamolin	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.3% (250)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.3% (250)

Murntown	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.4% (342)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.4% (342)
New Ross	0.0% (0)	2.0% (1,598)	1.5% (1,234)	4.9% (3,918)	1.6% (1,299)	0.0% (0)	0.3% (213)	10.3% (8,262)
Newbawn	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.2% (183)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.2% (183)
Oilgate	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.5% (401)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.5% (401)
Oulart	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.5% (362)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.5% (362)
Piercetown	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.4% (308)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.4% (308)
Rosslare	0.2% (156)	0.4% (340)	1.2% (940)	0.4% (359)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	2.2% (1,795)
Rosslare Harbour	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.7% (559)	1.0% (814)	0.9% (687)	0.2% (187)	0.0% (0)	2.8% (2,247)
Taghmon	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.9% (740)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.9% (740)
Tagoat	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.6% (507)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.6% (507)
The Ballagh	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.4% (285)	0.0% (0)	0.3% (275)	0.7% (560)
Wexford	8.8% (7,008)	5.9% (4,712)	4.0% (3,192)	4.8% (3,854)	1.7% (1,384)	0.3% (203)	1.5% (1,171)	26.9% (21,524)
Total	11.0% (8,778)	11.6% (9,240)	14.2% (11,359)	30.7% (24,531)	18.1% (14,454)	2.3% (1,868)	12.1% (9,652)	100.0% (79,882)

Table 1 summarises the share of the population living in Small Areas in each transit supply category in the various urban areas within County Wexford.

Table 2: County Wexford, population in each Transit Supply and Combined Needs grouping

	Combined Needs Index Category						
Supply	Very High	High	Above average	Below average	Low	Very Low	Total
Zero Supply	8.3% (13,678)	7.0% (11,480)	4.5% (7,394)	6.2% (10,092)	4.0% (6,509)	2.3% (3,793)	32.3% (52,946)
Very Low	5.1% (8,367)	4.0% (6,530)	1.9% (3,091)	2.8% (4,565)	2.2% (3,651)	1.6% (2,571)	17.6% (28,775)
Low	3.3% (5,362)	3.6% (5,898)	2.9% (4,810)	2.9% (4,734)	2.8% (4,590)	1.1% (1,867)	16.6% (27,261)
Below average	3.5% (5,799)	1.4% (2,250)	2.8% (4,613)	2.8% (4,517)	2.7% (4,405)	2.4% (3,976)	15.6% (25,560)
Above average	1.6% (2,594)	0.6% (1,024)	1.4% (2,265)	1.5% (2,516)	1.4% (2,360)	0.4% (600)	6.9% (11,359)
High	0.2% (369)	0.6% (945)	1.4% (2,326)	1.2% (1,920)	0.9% (1,465)	1.4% (2,215)	5.6% (9,240)
Very High	0.8% (1,283)	0.4% (654)	0.7% (1,162)	0.6% (959)	1.0% (1,626)	1.9% (3,094)	5.4% (8,778)
Total	22.8% (37,452)	17.6% (28,781)	15.7% (25,661)	17.9% (29,303)	15.0% (24,606)	11.1% (18,116)	100.0% (163,919)

Differences in the share of Small Areas in each transit supply category across the different social need for transport groups were statis-
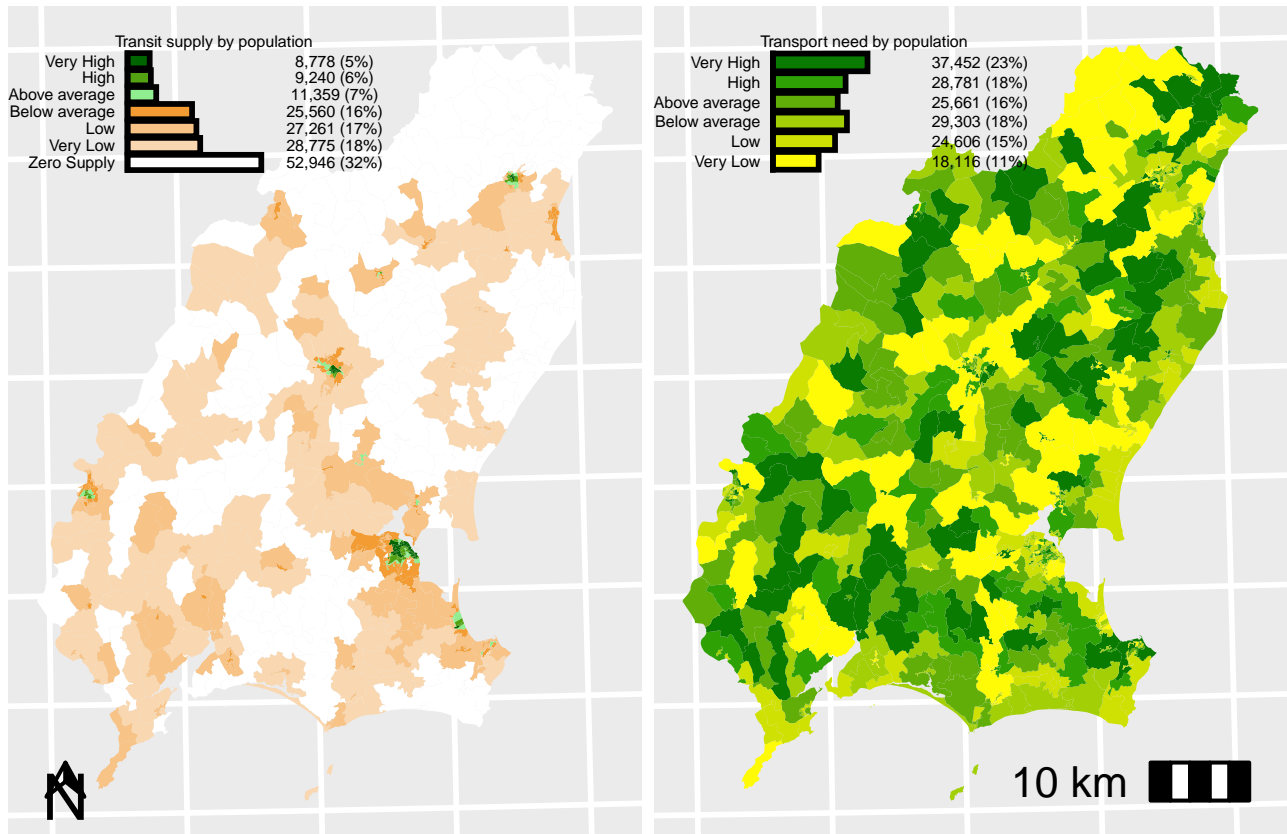
Figure 1: County Wexford: transit supply (left) and social need for transport (right) by Small Area

tically significant ($\chi^2(30) = 69.11$, $p < .001$). In general, those living in Small Areas with higher social needs for transit appeared to be more likely to also have lower levels of transit supply. For example, 89% of those living in Small Areas with Very High social needs for transport had below average transit supplies, compared to just 67% of those living in Small Areas with Very Low social needs for transport. Out of the total 163,919 population of County Wexford, some 32,552 (20%) live in Small Areas with social needs for transport that are above the County average, but where there is no transit supply at all.
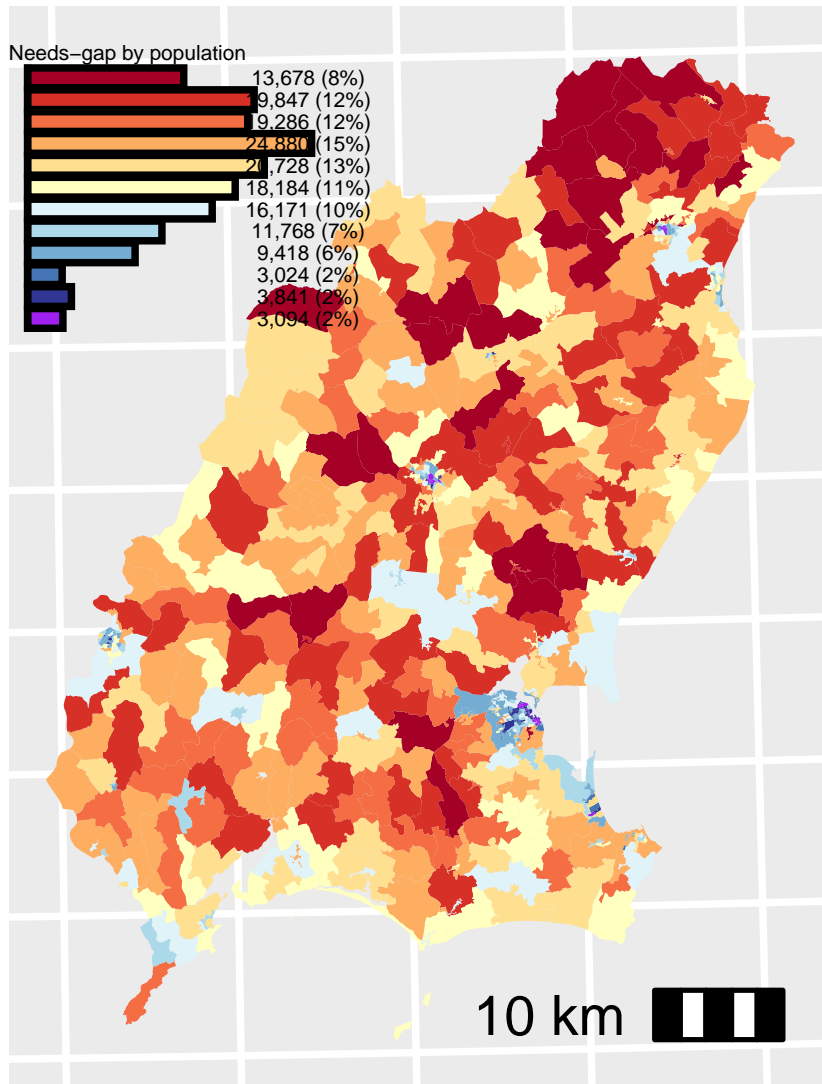

Figure 2: County Wexford, Needs-gap by Small Area

Very High

13,678 (37%)
8,367 (22%)
5,362 (14%)
5,799 (15%)
2,594 (7%)
369 (1%)
1,283 (3%)
0 (0%)
0 (0%)
0 (0%)
0 (0%)

High

0 (0%)
11,480 (40%)
6,530 (23%)
5,898 (20%)
2,250 (8%)
1,024 (4%)
945 (3%)
654 (2%)
0 (0%)
0 (0%)
0 (0%)

Above average

0 (0%)
0 (0%)
7,394 (29%)
3,091 (12%)
4,810 (19%)
4,613 (18%)
2,265 (9%)
2,326 (9%)
1,162 (5%)
0 (0%)
0 (0%)

Below average

0 (0%)
0 (0%)
0 (0%)
10,092 (34%)
4,565 (16%)
4,734 (16%)
4,517 (15%)
2,516 (9%)
1,920 (7%)
959 (3%)
0 (0%)

Low

0 (0%)
0 (0%)
0 (0%)
0 (0%)
6,509 (26%)
3,651 (15%)
4,590 (19%)
4,405 (18%)
2,360 (10%)
1,465 (6%)
1,626 (7%)
0 (0%)

Very Low

0 (0%)
0 (0%)
0 (0%)
0 (0%)
0 (0%)
3,793 (21%)
2,571 (14%)
1,867 (10%)
3,976 (22%)
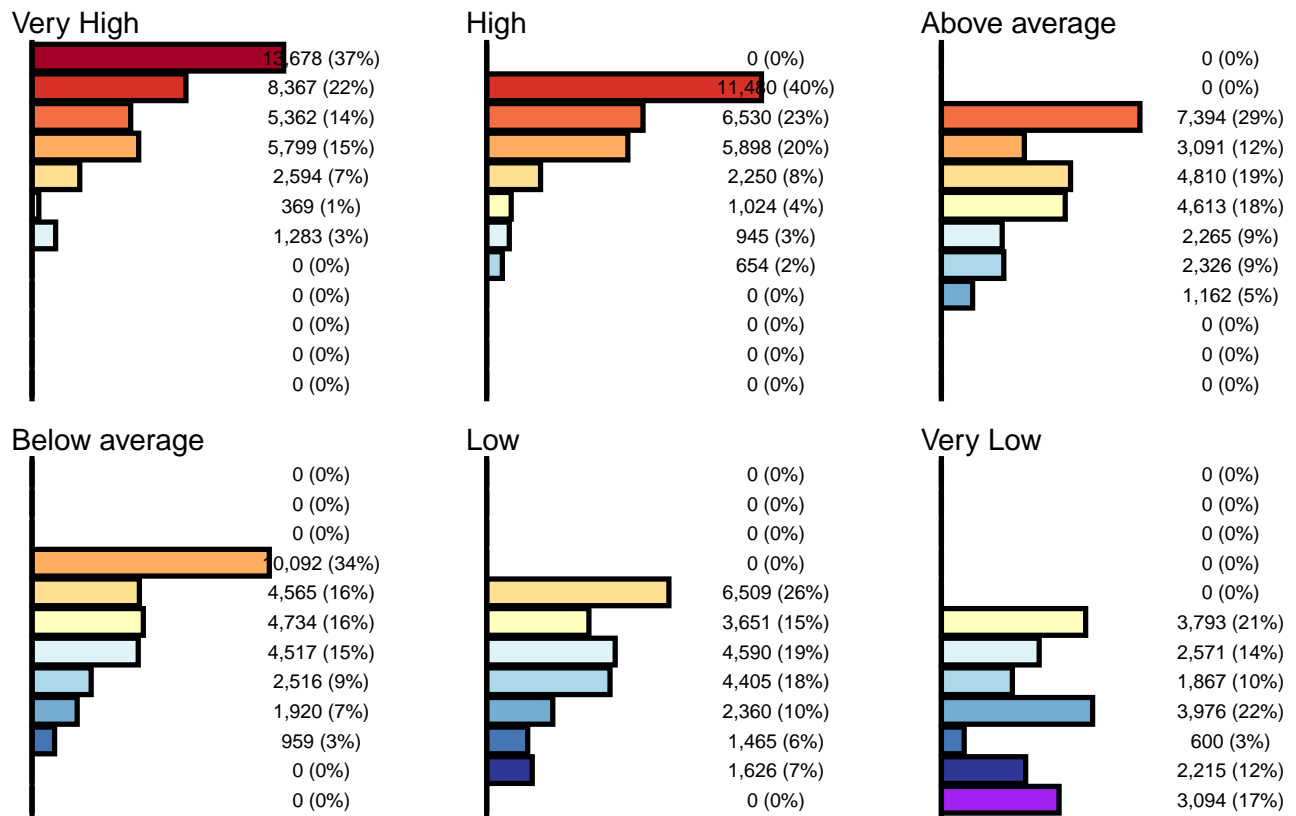600 (3%)
2,215 (12%)
3,094 (17%)

Figure 3: County Wexford, Needs-gap by population, split by social needs for transport category