

# STATISTICAL BULLETIN

**Coverage:** Northern Ireland  
**Date:** 8 May 2013  
**Geography:** NI & Local Government District  
**Theme:** Population



## Births in Northern Ireland 2012

### Summary

This bulletin presents statistics on births registered in Northern Ireland during 2012. The statistics include detailed analysis of the overall fertility levels of the population.

Key users of birth statistics are the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and Department of Education to plan maternity services and future school provision. Data are used for example to monitor teenage birth rates which are a key indicator under the Programme for Government. Lobby groups use birth statistics to support their cause, for example, campaigns against school closures or midwife shortages. Special interest groups, such as Birth Choice UK, make the data available to enable comparisons between maternity units to help women choose where they might like to give birth. Organisations such as the United Nations use birth statistics to make international comparisons.

### Key Findings

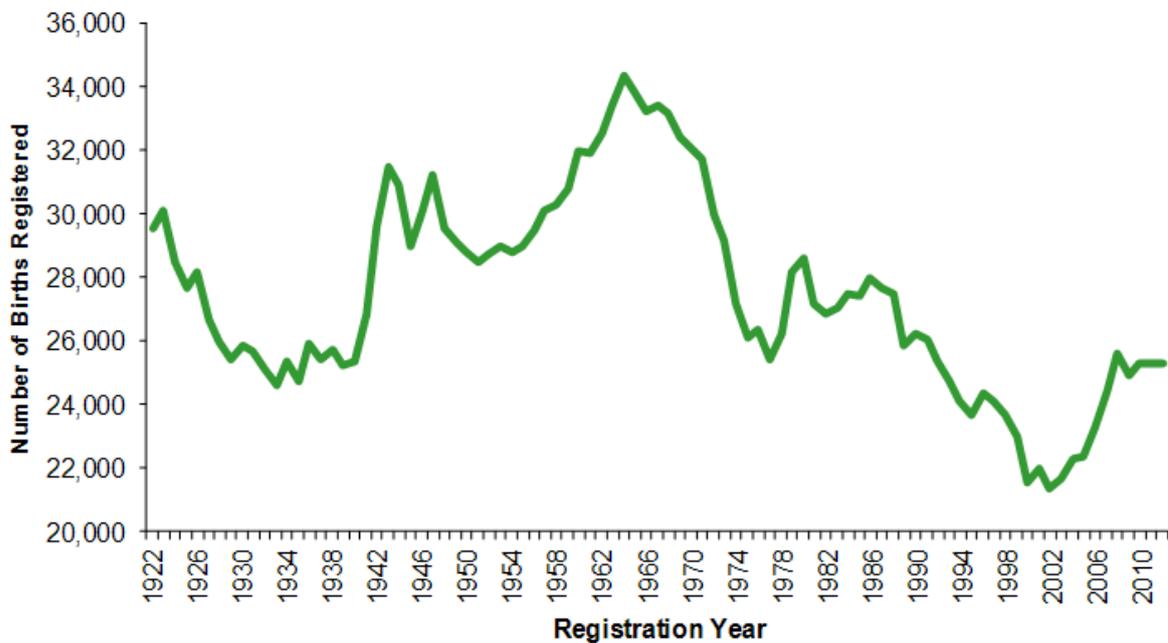
- In 2012, there were 25,269 births registered in Northern Ireland, a similar number to 2011 (25,273 births).
- The Total Period Fertility Rate – the hypothetical average number of children per woman – remained at 2.02 children per woman in 2012.
- Continuing the trend towards later child-bearing, over half (52%) of all babies born were to mothers aged 30 or more.
- The number of births to teenage mothers reached a record low for Northern Ireland at 1,100 births.
- In 2012, 43% of births were to unmarried parents, the highest figure ever recorded.
- Multiple births accounted for 1.5% of all maternities, with 371 sets of twins and six sets of triplets registered last year.

## Overall Number of Births

In 2012 there were 25,269 births registered in Northern Ireland. This is only four less than the 25,273 births registered in 2011. From a record low in 2002 (21,385 births), the number of births registered increased year on year, until 2008. Since 2008, the numbers have remained broadly stable at around 25,000 births per year.

The number of births in the last decade is much lower than the number registered three or four decades ago. In 1982, the number of births registered (26,872 births) was 6% higher than last year. There were also around 9,100 fewer births registered in 2012 than during the baby boom in 1964 (34,345 births). The annual number of births registered is shown in Chart 1.

**Chart 1: Number of Births Registered in Northern Ireland (1922 to 2012<sup>P</sup>): non-zero y-axis**



<sup>P</sup> 2012 statistics are provisional until the publication of the 2012 Annual Report of the Registrar General

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Primary school planners acknowledge that local birth numbers can change by 20% in as few as seven years. As a result, planning services related to births and young children can be challenging.

## **Mother's Age**

More than half of births registered last year (52%) were to mothers who were aged 30 or more. This is in contrast to 30 years ago when less than one third of births (32%) were to mothers in this age group. This indicates that women are delaying child-bearing until later in life, a trend which is apparent throughout the developed world. Women may be waiting to have children for several reasons, including participation in higher education, pursuit of a career, and for financial reasons.

In comparison, the number of births to teenage mothers continues to fall. A new record low of 1,100 births were to teenage mothers in 2012. This number is 6% lower than 2011 (1,170 births) and 27% lower than a decade ago (1,502 births).

The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety monitor birth rates to younger teenage mothers (aged less than 17 years) under the Programme for Government. In the last decade, the number of births to mothers aged less than 17 years has decreased by 26% (149 births in 2002) to 110 births last year.

In 2012, the average age of all mothers was 30.1 years, compared with 29.5 years in 2002, 28.1 years in 1992, and 27.6 years in 1982. The average age of first time mothers continues to increase, and was 28.0 years last year compared with 26.8 in 2002, 25.7 in 1992, and 24.5 years in 1982.

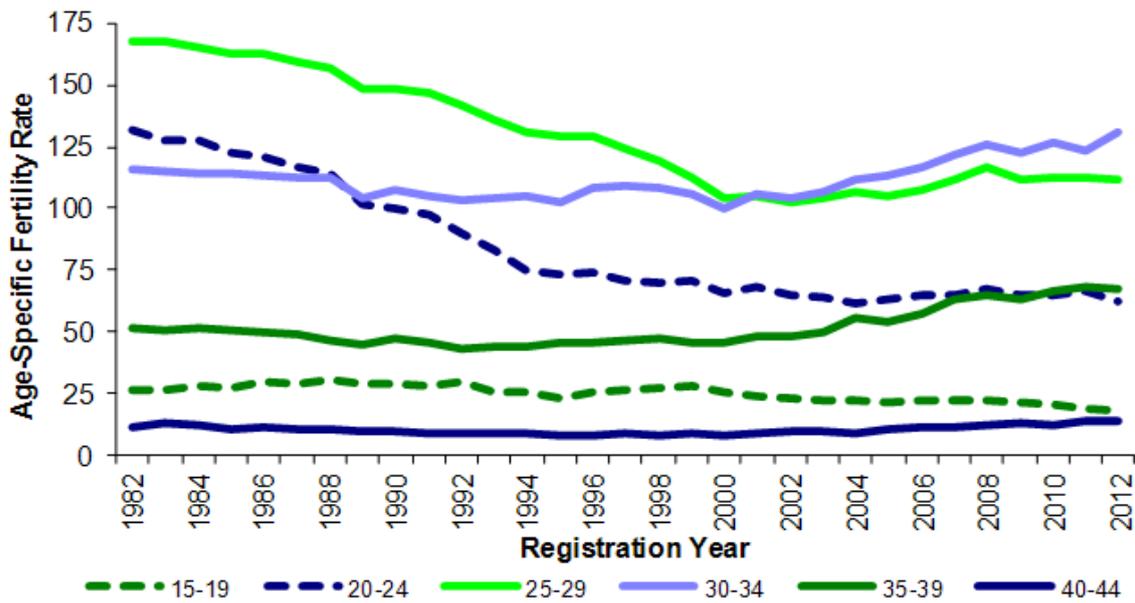
## **Father's Age**

Fathers are on average older than mothers with two-thirds (66%) of all babies registered in 2012 having fathers aged 30 and over (excluding births where no father's details are available). The average age of all fathers was 32.7 years.

## Fertility Trends

The trend to later child-bearing is being driven by falling birth rates of women in their early twenties (see dashed blue line in Chart 2). Over the past 30 years fertility for this age group has more than halved, from 132 births per 1,000 women aged 20-24 years in 1982 to 62 births in 2012. In contrast, fertility for women aged 35-39 years has increased from 52 births per 1,000 women in 1982 to 68 births in 2012. Chart 2 shows the change in age-specific fertility rates by age group of mother over the last three decades.

**Chart 2: Live Births per 1,000 Women by Age Group of Mother (1982 to 2012<sup>P</sup>)**



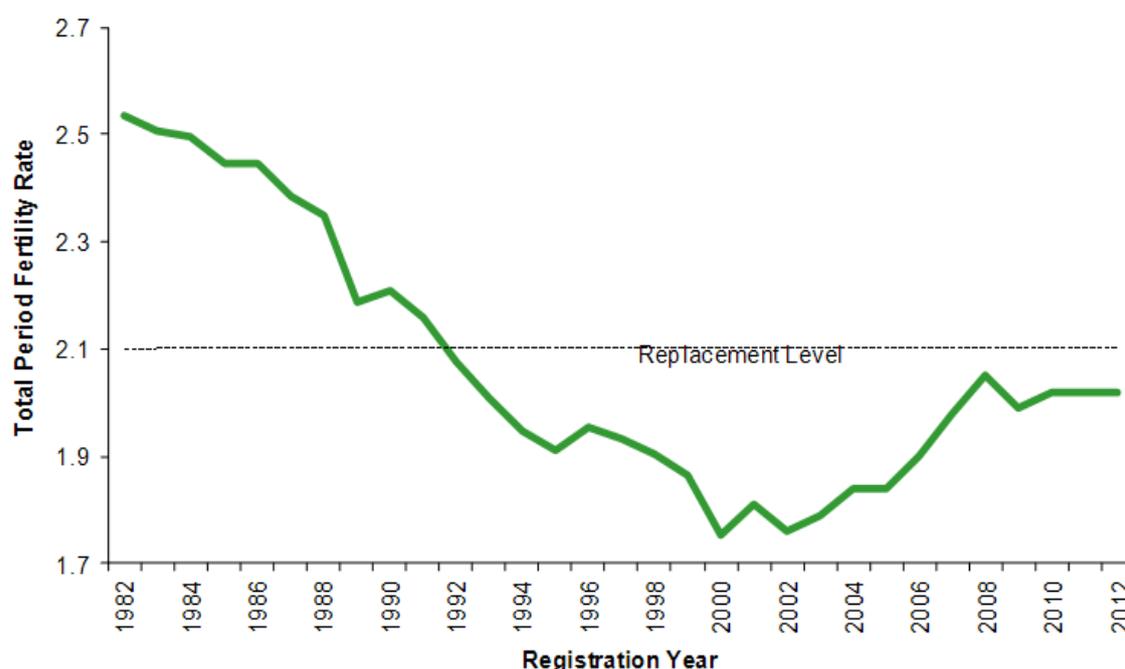
<sup>P</sup> 2012 statistics are provisional until the publication of the 2012 Annual Report of the Registrar General

<sup>1</sup> Rates for 2001-2011 have been revised in line with the revision of population estimates after the 2011 Census.

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The total period fertility rate (TPFR) is the “average” number of children each woman would have during her lifetime. In April 2013, population estimates for 2001-2011 were revised in light of the 2011 Census. TPFRs were subsequently revised and revealed that fertility has not been at replacement level (2.10 children per “average woman”) since 1991. Replacement level is taken to be the level at which the population would replace itself, ignoring migration. In 2012 fertility levels were below replacement level at 2.02 children; however this is still much higher than the record fertility low of 1.75 children in 2000. The TPFR for Northern Ireland since 1982 is shown in Chart 3.

**Chart 3: Total Period Fertility Rate (1982 to 2012<sup>P</sup>): non-zero y-axis**



<sup>P</sup> 2012 statistics are provisional until the publication of the 2012 Annual Report of the Registrar General

<sup>1</sup> Rates for 2001-2011 have been revised in line with the revision of population estimates after the 2011 Census.

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The TPFR varies throughout the UK and Ireland. In 2011 Northern Ireland’s TPFR was 2.02 children, higher than England and Wales (1.93 children) and Scotland (1.73 children), but lower than the Republic of Ireland (2.04 children). Comparable statistics for 2012 are not yet available for all countries.

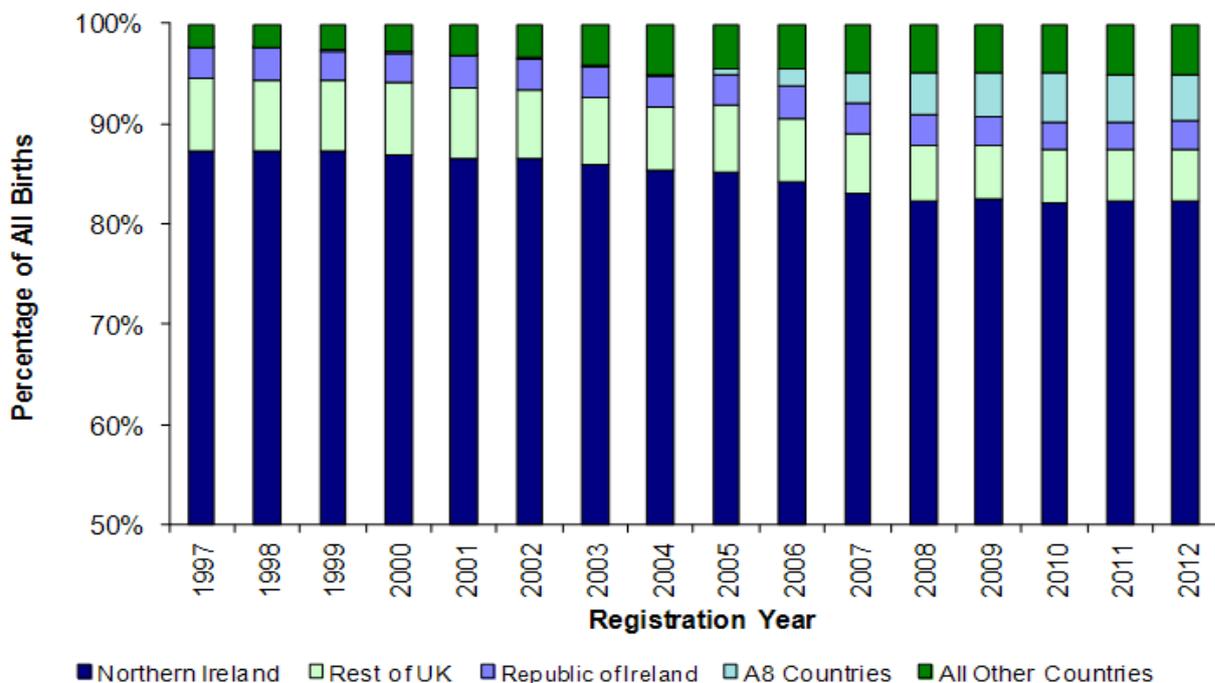
## Country of Birth of Mother

Last year the majority of all births in Northern Ireland were to mother’s who were born here (82%). This statistic has stayed broadly similar over recent years, but is lower than a decade ago (87% in 2002). This shift is related to the increased levels of migration to Northern Ireland.

In 2012, 90% of births registered in Northern Ireland were to mothers who were themselves born in Northern Ireland or elsewhere in the UK or Ireland. This is in contrast to 10 years ago when 97% of births registered in Northern Ireland were to mothers who were born in the UK or Ireland. This change has been partly driven by women from the eight countries that joined the European Union in 2004 – the A8<sup>1</sup> countries – coming to live in Northern Ireland. Just 16 babies were born to A8 mothers in 2002 (0.1% of all births). In 2010 this figure had increased to more than 1,200 (5% of all births), but since then has remained relatively stable.

The decrease in the percentage of births registered to mothers who were born in the UK and Ireland is not only due to mothers from the A8 countries. An increase can also be seen in the number of births to mothers born in other foreign countries, rising from 729 births in 2002 to 1,257 births in 2012. Chart 4 shows the percentage of births by mother’s country of birth.

**Chart 4: Percentage of Births by Mother’s Country of Birth (1997 to 2012<sup>P</sup>): non-zero y-axis**



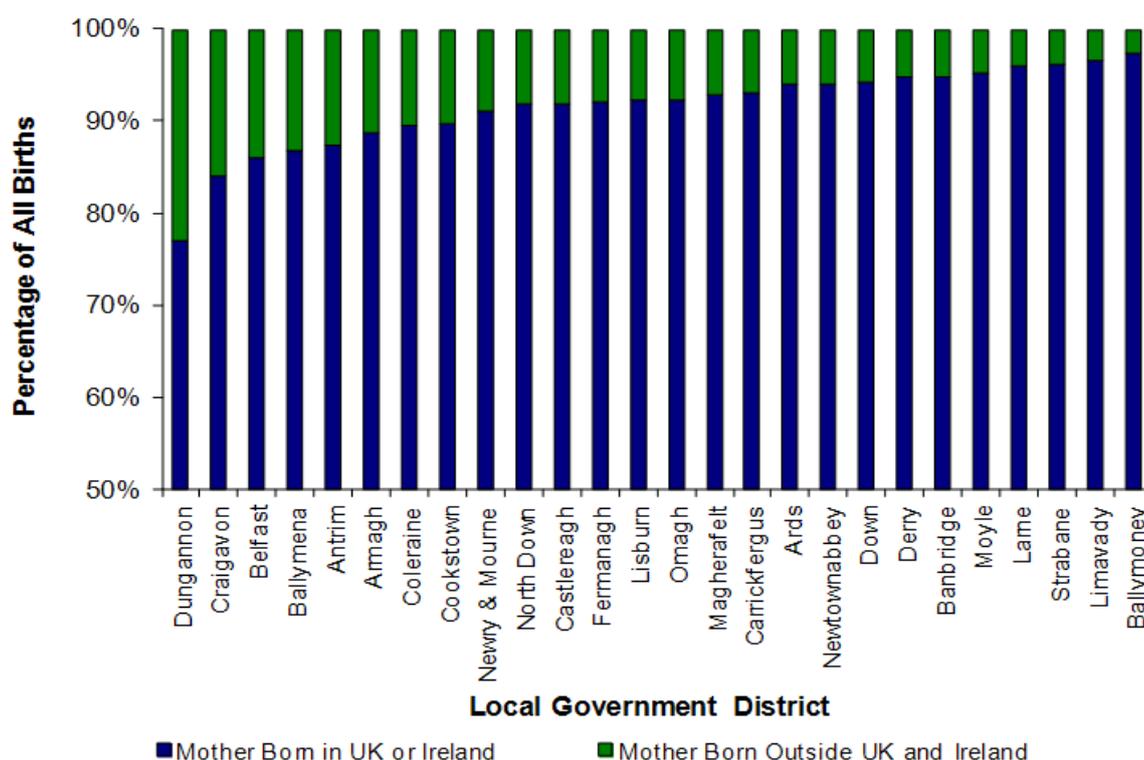
<sup>P</sup> 2012 statistics are provisional until the publication of the 2012 Annual Report of the Registrar General

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<sup>1</sup> The A8 countries are Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia

At Local Government District level, the percentage of births to mothers born outside the UK or Ireland ranged from 3% in Ballymoney (11 births) to 23% in Dungannon (228 births). Belfast, Antrim, Ballymena, Coleraine, Cookstown, Armagh and Craigavon Local Government Districts also had 10% or more of births to mothers from outside the UK or Ireland. These local areas also have higher levels of migration. Chart 5 shows the percentage of births by mother's country of birth at Local Government District level.

**Chart 5: Percentage of Births by Mother's Country of Birth and Local Government District (2012<sup>P</sup>): non-zero y-axis**



<sup>P</sup> 2012 statistics are provisional until the publication of the 2012 Annual Report of the Registrar General

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## Partnership Status of Parents

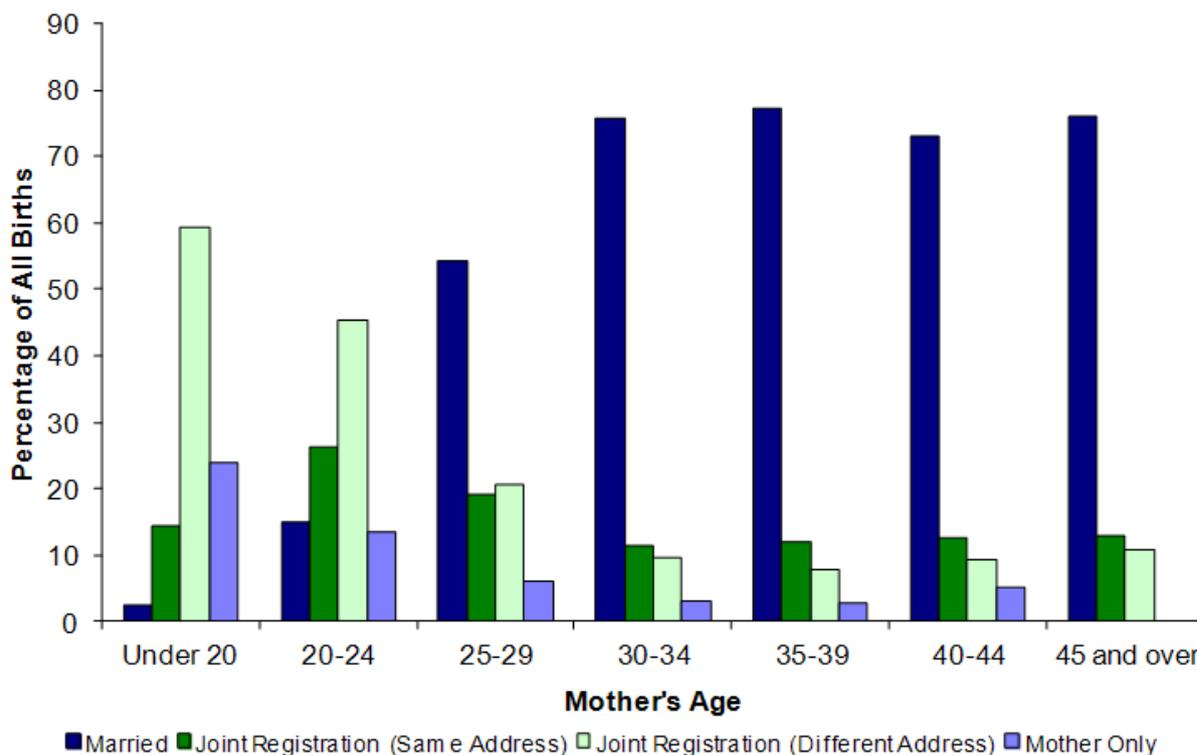
Last year more than half of births in Northern Ireland (57%) were to married couples. However this statistic is considerably lower than 30 years ago when 92% of births were to married parents. Alongside this, the percentage of births occurring outside marriage continues to increase. In 2012, 43% of births occurred outside marriage, the highest figure ever recorded in Northern Ireland.

The percentage of births outside marriage varies by age of mother. Last year the vast majority of births to teenage mothers were outside marriage (98%), while around one quarter of births to mothers aged over 30 were to unmarried mothers.

Births outside marriage can be registered jointly by both parents or solely by the mother. Where the birth is jointly registered and the parents give the same address, it can be inferred that the couple are cohabiting. The percentage of births registered to cohabiting parents has increased in recent years. In 2012, 16% of all births were registered by cohabiting parents, compared to 11% in 2002 and 5% in 1992. This trend is consistent with an increase in the number of couples choosing to cohabit rather than enter into marriage. In contrast the number of births registered by the mother only has fallen slightly from 10% in 1992 and 2002 to 6% in 2012. Chart 6 shows the percentage of births by type of registration and mother's age group for 2012.

The percentage of births outside marriage varies across Northern Ireland. Last year, over half of all births in Belfast (59%), Derry (56%), Larne (51%) and Coleraine (51%) Local Government Districts occurred outside marriage. In contrast, around one quarter of births in Omagh (27%) and Magherafelt (25%) Local Government Districts occurred outside marriage. These differences reflect the trend of higher rates of cohabitation in urban areas in Northern Ireland.

**Chart 6: Births by Partnership Status and Mother's Age Group, 2012<sup>P</sup>**



<sup>P</sup> 2012 statistics are provisional until the publication of the 2012 Annual Report of the Registrar General

[Download Chart](#) (XLS format - 21Kb)

### Births by Place of Birth

In 2012 the Royal Group of Hospitals in Belfast delivered the largest number of babies (5,584 babies), followed by Craigavon Area Hospital and the Ulster Hospital Dundonald with more than 4,000 babies each. There were 582 fewer births in the Erne Hospital last year (624 births) than in 2011 (1,206 births). This fall is related to the opening of the South West Acute Hospital outside Enniskillen which provides consultant-led maternity services.

Almost all births take place in hospital. In total 90 babies (0.4%) were born outside a hospital, 72 (0.3%) of which were born at home. These figures have not changed significantly over recent years.

## **Multiple Births**

Last year, 371 women gave births to twins and six women had triplets. Thus 1.5% of all maternities in Northern Ireland resulted in a multiple birth. This number is higher than 20 to 30 years ago when 1.1-1.2% of maternities resulted in a multiple birth.

The main reason for the higher percentage of maternities resulting in a multiple birth is the increasing number of births to older mothers, as these mothers have a greater chance of a multiple birth. Last year, almost 3% of mothers aged less than 35 years had a multiple birth, while 5% of mothers aged 35 years and over had a multiple birth. As is well known, this difference is related to higher levels of assisted fertility treatment in older mothers.

## **Births to Non-Residents**

The statistics presented in this report only represent births to mothers living in Northern Ireland. However all births occurring in Northern Ireland must be registered here by law. Last year 352 births were registered where the mother lived outside Northern Ireland, 108 fewer births than in 2011 (460 births). The vast majority of these births (94%) were to mothers from the Republic of Ireland giving birth in hospitals near the border with the Irish Republic (Altnagelvin Area and Daisy Hill Hospitals).

## Background Notes

1. Birth figures have been compiled from returns to local Registrars. All 2012 statistics are provisional (P) until final figures are published in the 2012 Annual Report of the Registrar General.
2. The results are based on analysis of all births registered within the 2012 calendar year. This is not necessarily the year these births will have occurred (e.g. a birth that occurs near the end of December 2012 may not be registered until early January 2013).
3. Births are assigned to the usual place of residence of the mother; if this information is unavailable they will be assigned to the place of birth. Statistics exclude births to non-Northern Ireland residents.
4. Northern Ireland level rates for 2012 data are calculated using the mid-year population estimate as at 30 June 2011. Rates at Northern Ireland level have been revised for 2001-2011 using rebased mid-year population estimates that now take into account the 2011 Census. For further information see:  
[Population and Migration Estimates Northern Ireland \(Rebased 2001-2011\) - Statistical Report](#)
5. The section on *Births by Area* has **not** been included as rebased Local Government District mid-year population estimates for 2011 will not be available until later in the year.
6. Further information -

Data tables on resident live births in Northern Ireland in 2012 are available at:

<http://www.nisra.gov.uk/demography/default.asp23.htm>

An interactive mapping tool which enables trends in fertility to be analysed at Local Government District level is available at:

<http://www.ninis2.nisra.gov.uk/InteractiveMaps/Population/Population%20Change/fertility/atlas.html>

The latest birth statistics for England and Wales can be found at:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/taxonomy/index.html?nscl=Live+Births>

The latest birth statistics for Scotland can be found at:

<http://www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/statistics/theme/vital-events/births/index.html>

The latest birth statistics for the Republic of Ireland can be found at:

<http://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/birthsdeathsandmarriages/>

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