



# Registrar General Northern Ireland Annual Report 2019

Publication Date: 16 December 2020



The General Register Office (GRO) for Northern Ireland (NI) is part of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA). NISRA is an executive agency within the Department of Finance (DoF) and has been in existence since April 1996.

GRO is responsible for the administration of the marriage and civil partnership law in NI along with the registration of births, deaths and adoptions. The Office is also responsible for the maintenance of registration records and the production, on request, of certificates in relation to these events.

NISRA's core purpose is to support decision makers in the formulation of evidence-based policy and inform public debate through the production and dissemination of high quality, trusted and meaningful analysis; facilitate research and deliver the decennial population census and every day civil registration services.

**The overall vision of NISRA is to aspire to:**

- be the go-to organisation for an accurate and insightful account of life in Northern Ireland, informing decision making and recognising that our people are our strength;
  - provide comprehensive registration and genealogy services that give our customers what they need; and
  - be motivated and valued people doing excellent work together; innovating, growing, proud of our Agency and our impact.
- The NISRA corporate plan for 2019-2024 is available online at:  
[www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/NISRA-Corporate-Plan-2019-24](http://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/NISRA-Corporate-Plan-2019-24)



Ninety-Eighth  
Annual Report  
of the  
Registrar General  
2019

Laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly under:  
Section 34 of the Marriage (Northern Ireland) Order, 2003  
Article 3(3) of the Births and Deaths Registration (Northern Ireland) Order 1976  
Section 154 of the Civil Partnership Act 2004  
by the Department of Finance

16 December 2020

A National Statistics Publication © Crown Copyright 2020



|  |    |
|--|----|
| Foreword .....   | 2  |
| Introduction.....                                      | 4  |
| Population & Migration .....                           | 6  |
| Births .....   | 8  |
| Stillbirths & Infant Deaths .....                      | 10 |
| Deaths .....   | 12 |
| Cause of Death .....                                   | 14 |
| Marriages.....   | 16 |
| Civil Partnerships .....                               | 18 |
| Adoptions, Re-registrations & Gender Recognition ..... | 20 |
| Footnotes.....   | 22 |

### Foreword by the Registrar General for Northern Ireland



I am pleased to present the ninety-eighth Annual Report of the Registrar General to the Northern Ireland Assembly.

The report draws on the work of the General Register Office (GRO) and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) Vital Statistics Unit and provides an overview of Northern Ireland through the analysis of key life events such as births, deaths, marriages and civil partnerships that were registered in 2019. Detailed supporting information (both current and historical) continues to be available on the NISRA website, [www.nisra.gov.uk](http://www.nisra.gov.uk). Should you require information that has not yet been published our customer services team will be happy to consider your requests.

The functions of the Registrar General are often hidden from view but they form an integral part of key events in the lives of people and businesses in Northern Ireland. Information from the registration service plays a pivotal role in supporting evidence-based decision making and the delivery of public services, informing both regional and international comparisons, and underpinning NISRA's population estimates and projections that are integral to policy development and evaluation as undertaken by both central and local government.

In presenting this report, my fourth as Registrar General for Northern Ireland, I greatly appreciate the work undertaken by the team of 11 Registrars and 71 Deputy Registrars located in the District Registration Offices across the eleven councils, and all of the GRO and NISRA personnel involved in the delivery of civil registration services. While this report relates to registrations during the calendar year 2019, at the time of writing, the Covid-19 pandemic continues to present unprecedented challenges for the work of these teams. Without their collective commitment, professionalism and support, the production of this important information simply would not have been possible.

I trust that you will find the report both informative and useful. Your feedback on content and format continues to be welcomed.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Siobhan Carey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

**Siobhan Carey**

Registrar General for Northern Ireland  
December 2020

The General Register Office (GRO) is part of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) with the Registrar General having overall responsibility for the work carried out by the GRO. GRO functions are set in legislation, and the main areas of responsibility are:

- the administration of the births, deaths, marriage and civil partnership law in Northern Ireland through the District Registration Offices (DRO);
- policy development, oversight and regulation of the DROs;
- casework relating to name changes, registration of adoptions and re-registrations;
- the maintenance of and access to the online official registration records; and
- the production, on request, of certificates in relation to these events.

## Main Activities in 2019 – January to December

- Almost 46,495 life events registered through the DRO offices.
- Between January 2019 and December 2019 the GRO processed 93,000 certificate applications, an increase of 12.8 per cent on the previous year. Over 41,000 certificate applications related to priority (fast-tracked) certificates, an increase of 24.3 per cent on the previous year. Just over 123,000 certificates were produced by the certificate production team in 2019, representing an increase of 15.0 per cent.
- Different channels are used by the public to submit certificate applications. Online (which includes telephone applications) is by far the most popular. The number of certificates produced from applications received by the different channels were:



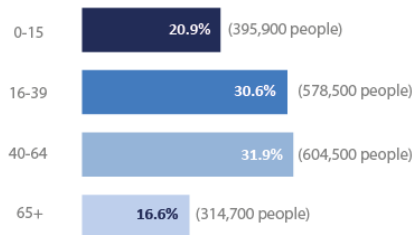
- ◆ GRO Postal - 6,090
  - ◆ Counter - 13,405
  - ◆ Online - 103,795.
- Additionally, GRO processed over 3,000 registration related cases including re-registrations, adoptions, name changes and corrections.
  - GRO shared information with Business Services Organisation, Department of Health, Electoral Office for Northern Ireland, Department for Work and Pensions, Department for Infrastructure and Department for Communities.
  - Nearly 17,000 new accounts were registered on the GRO Family History website, which is an increase on the 14,000 new accounts registered in 2018. There were over 1.2 million searches carried out – the most popular being the basic index search which accounted for 1 million searches. There were over 1 million credits purchased by online users with almost 461,000 credits used for the enhanced and full index searches.
- There were 1,179 visits to the GRO Public Search Room in Colby House in 2019.

# Population & Migration

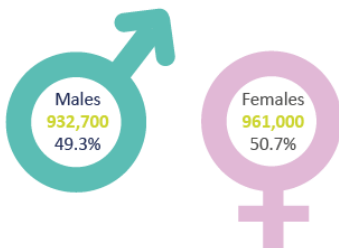
## Population of Northern Ireland at 30 June 2019

# 1,893,700

### Population by Age



### Population by Gender

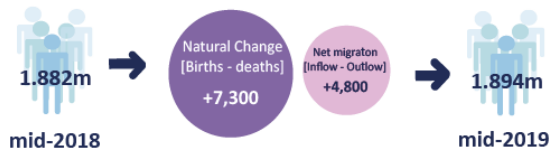


Figures may not always add up to 100% due to rounding  
 Source: 2019 Mid-year Population Estimates for Northern Ireland

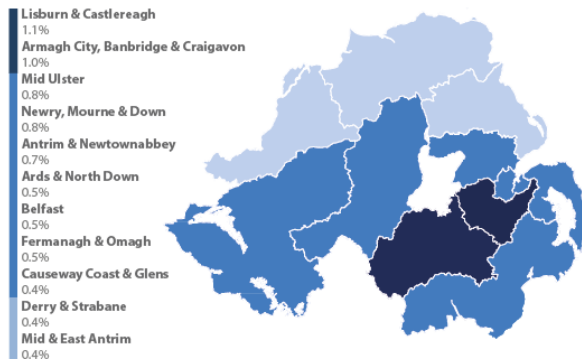
## How has the population increased since 30 June 2018?

# +12,000 people

(0.6% growth)



### Population Change by Local Government District (Mid-2018 to Mid-2019)



## In 2019:

- The population of Northern Ireland was estimated to be 1.89 million people, an increase of 12,000 people (0.6 per cent) from mid-2018.
- Natural change was the main driver of population growth, adding 7,300 people (22,600 births minus 15,300 deaths) to the population.
- For a sixth successive year the number of people coming to live in Northern Ireland (25,600) was greater than the number of people leaving (20,800), leading to a net migration gain of 4,800 people\*.
- The population continues to age with the number of those aged 65 and over increasing by 2.1 per cent to reach 314,700 people (16.6 per cent of the population). In contrast, the number of children aged 0 to 15 years increased by just 0.6 per cent to reach

\* Figures may not add back due to rounding  
<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/2019-mid-year-population-estimates-northern-ireland>

395,900 children (20.9 per cent of the population).

- Each of the 11 Local Government Districts experienced an increase in population over the year, with Lisburn and Castlereagh experiencing the largest increase (1.1 per cent).

## 2018-based Population Projections:

- The Northern Ireland population is projected to increase by 3.7 per cent to 1.95 million in the next ten years to mid-2028, reaching the 1.99 million mark by mid-2043.
- Projections also indicate a continued ageing population here, with the number of people aged 65 and over projected to grow by 25.1 per cent in the 10 year period to mid-2028.
- The number of people aged 65 and over is projected to overtake that of children by mid-2028, with the proportion aged 85 and over projected to double by mid-2043 (up from 2.0 per cent to 3.9 per cent).

# Births

**22,447**  
births



11,666 males    10,781 females



**113**  
Home Births



**40.7%** of births were to  
first time mothers

## Most common birth dates

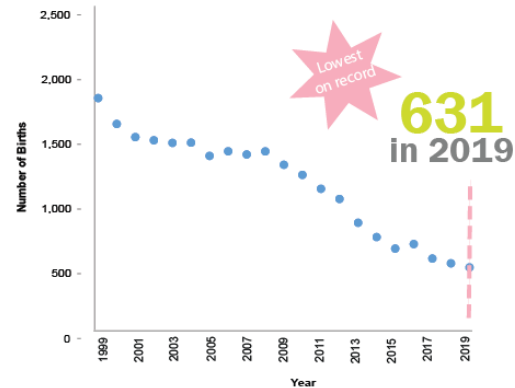


## Average age of mothers



**30.9** years

## Trend in live births to teenage mothers\*



\*Teenage mothers are defined as mothers who are under the age of 20

## In 2019:

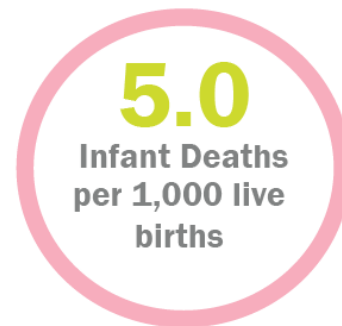
- There were 22,447 births (11,666 males and 10,781 females) registered to Northern Ireland mothers, 382 fewer than in 2018.
- May 30th, July 11th and September 19th were the most common birth dates, with 87 babies born on each of those days.
- The average age of mothers was 30.9 years, a slight increase on 2018. By way of comparison, in 1989 the average age of mothers was 27.7 years.
- 24.0 per cent of all births were to mothers aged 35 years or over, up from 9.8 per cent 30 years ago.
- Births to mothers under 20 years of age (teenage mothers) decreased from 659 in 2018 to 631. This is the lowest number on record and is noticeably lower than a decade previously (1,334) and three decades ago (1,888).
- First-time mothers (i.e. mothers with no previous live born children) accounted for 40.7 per cent of all births.
- Only 8.7 per cent of mothers already had three or more live born children. This compares with 13.0 per cent in 1989.
- The average age of first-time mothers was 28.9 years, almost four years older than in 1989 (25.2 years).
- 44.9 per cent of births occurred outside of marriage/civil partnership, compared with 16.0 per cent three decades ago.
- Of the 22,191 maternities, 1.4 per cent resulted in multiple births with 313 sets of twins and five sets of triplets being born.
- 10.7 per cent of births were to mothers who were born outside of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. This compares with 2.5 per cent 20 years ago. Note: This data is not held for 1989.

# Stillbirths & Infant Deaths



**67**  
Stillbirths

**112**  
Infant Deaths



This stillbirth rate  
has **decreased**  
from 3.4 in 2018

**46.4%**  
of infant deaths occurred  
in the first day of life

67 stillbirths registered

**15.2%**

than the 2018 figure

112 infant deaths registered

**15.5%**

than the 2018 figure

## In 2019:

- 67 stillbirths (37 males and 30 females) were registered. This was 12 less than in 2018 and equates to a stillbirth rate of 3.0 per 1,000 total births (both live and still).
- This stillbirths number is the lowest on record for Northern Ireland since records began. By way of comparison, in 1979, there were 246 stillbirths registered.
- Conditions originating in the perinatal period were the cause of 80.6 per cent of stillbirths, whilst congenital malformations, deformations and chromosomal abnormalities were the cause of the remaining 19.4 per cent.
- 112 infant deaths (i.e. deaths in the first year of life) were registered, representing a rise of 15.5 per cent on the previous year (97). This equates to 5.0 infant deaths per 1,000 live births.
- This is a return to the number of infant deaths registered in a year in NI to above 100. The lowest number on record is 88, registered in 2017. By way of comparison, in 1979 there were 417 infant deaths registered.
- 46.4 per cent of infant deaths occurred during the first day of life.
- Almost two thirds (65.2 per cent) of infant deaths occurred in the first week of life. The first week of life is considered to be between zero and six days.
- Conditions originating in the perinatal period were the cause of 52.7 per cent of infant deaths, whilst congenital malformations, deformations and chromosomal abnormalities were the cause of a further 33.9 per cent. The remaining 13.4 per cent of infant deaths were due to other factors.

# 15,758 deaths in 2019

## Average age at death



74.2 years  
for males



79.4 years  
for females

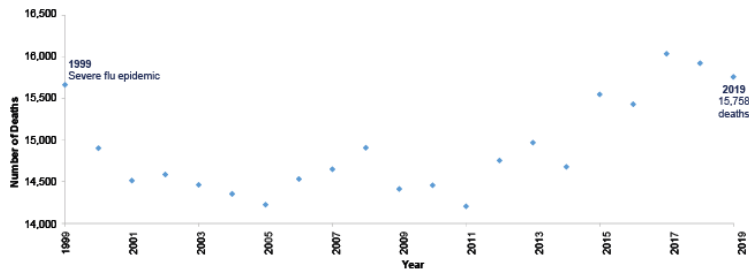


**2/3** deaths were of  
people aged 75 and over

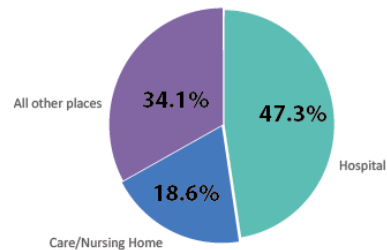
# 133

deaths  
were of people  
aged 100 and over

## Trend in number of deaths over time



## Place of Death



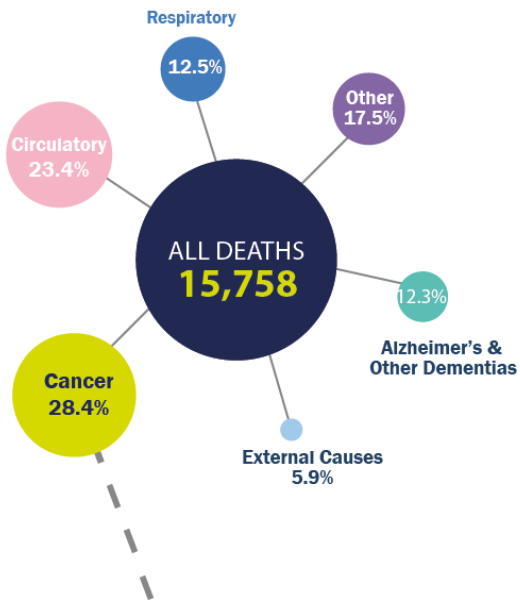


## In 2019:

- 15,758 deaths (7,790 males and 7,968 females) were registered, a 1.0 per cent decrease on the 2018 figure (15,922) and 0.6 per cent more than two decades ago when the severe flu epidemic occurred in 1999 (15,663).
- There were 102 female deaths for every 100 male deaths, slightly less than the female to male ratio in the population as a whole (103 females for every male).
- There were 133 deaths of people aged 100 or over, 13.1 per cent lower than last year (153) but almost 2.8 times higher than over 30 years previously (48 in 1989).
- The average age at death for men was 74.2 years and 79.4 years for women. This compares with 69.3 years and 75.8 years respectively three decades ago.
- Approximately two out of every three deaths (65.1 per cent) were of people aged 75 and over.
- 47.3 per cent of deaths occurred in HSC hospitals, whilst a further 18.6 per cent of deaths occurred in care homes or nursing homes. The remaining 34.1 per cent of deaths occurred at home and in other places.
- Approximately four out of every five deaths (82.3 per cent) in an HSC hospital was a person aged 65 and over.
- 88.5 per cent of deaths were of people born in Northern Ireland and 9.6 per cent were born in the rest of the UK and the Republic of Ireland. The remaining 1.9 per cent were born in the rest of the world, including the United States of America (0.2 per cent), Germany (0.1 per cent) and Italy (0.03 per cent).
- Life expectancy\* for females (82.6 years) was almost four years higher than for males (78.7 years). This gap has however been closing, down from over six years three decades before.

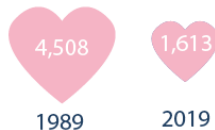
\* These figures have been produced by the Office for National Statistics. Official life expectancy figures for Northern Ireland are produced by the Department of Health, NI, with 2017-2019 estimates due for release in January 2021.

# Cause of Death

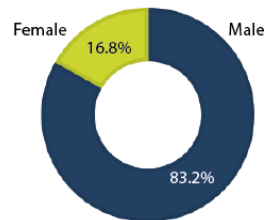


**MOST COMMON  
CANCER SITE  
WAS THE  
BRONCHUS OR LUNG**

**Heart disease**  
↓ **64% over 30 years**



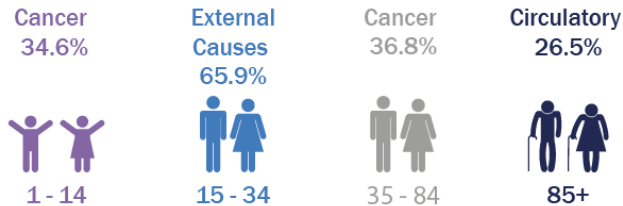
## Self inflicted injuries by sex



**Alzheimer's & other dementias**  
↓ **5.2% on the 2018 figure**



## Most prevalent cause of death by age



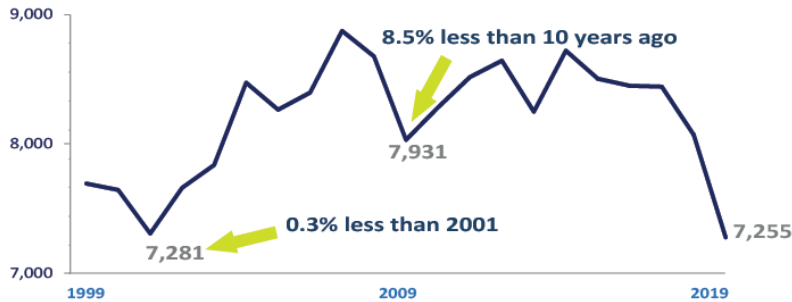
\* NISRA is currently reviewing 2015-2018 suicide figures and suggest in the meantime that users refer only to self-inflicted injury figures, for comparison purposes.

**In 2019:**

- Of the 15,758 deaths, the leading cause of death was cancer (28.4 per cent), followed by circulatory disease (23.4 per cent) and respiratory disease (12.5 per cent). These have been the three leading causes of death since 2012.
- For both males and females, the most common cancer site was the bronchus or lung (23.2 per cent of all cancers); the breast was the second most common cancer site in females (14.5 per cent of all cancers in females), whereas the prostate was the second most common cancer site in males (12.6 per cent of all cancers in males). The least common cancer site was the cervix (0.6 per cent of all cancers).
- 64.2 per cent fewer people died of heart disease than three decades ago with 1,613 deaths compared with 4,508 deaths in 1989. However, this is a 6.0 per cent increase from last year (1,522).
- Tragically, there were 192 registered deaths due to self-inflicted injury in Northern Ireland in 2019, compared with 184 in 2018. Males accounted for three quarters of all deaths due to self-inflicted injury (149).
- There were 173 deaths registered due to accidental poisoning, an 82.1 per cent increase on the previous year (95). Males accounted for almost three quarters of these deaths (128); this figure alone is higher than the total number of accidental poisonings from the previous year.
- External causes of death (for example accidents and suicides) were the leading cause of death in people aged 15-34, accounting for 65.9 per cent of deaths in this age group. External causes accounted for 5.9 per cent of all deaths.
- Cancer was the leading cause of death for those aged 35-84, accounting for 36.8 per cent of deaths in this age group. Circulatory disease was the leading cause for those aged 85 and over, accounting for 26.6 per cent of all deaths in this age group.
- Deaths related to mental and behavioural disorders was the second leading cause of death in people aged 90 and over (477). This is a 12.5 per cent decrease on the previous year (545). Females accounted for almost three quarters of these deaths (351).
- The number of deaths due to Alzheimer's disease and other dementias decreased by 5.5 per cent from 2,048 in 2018 to 1,942.

# Marriages

 **7,255** marriages



## Average age at marriage



**35.4 years**  
for males



**33.3 years**  
for females

## Most popular dates

|     |     |     |            |
|-----|-----|-----|------------|
| Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr        |
| May | Jun | Jul | <b>Aug</b> |
| Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec        |



**1,094**

marriages took place  
in August



## In 2019:

- 7,255 marriages were registered, equivalent to just under 1 every hour.
- August was the most popular month to get married. Saturday 24th of August was the most popular day, with 105 couples having married on this day.
- Grooms were on average two years older than brides (35.4 years and 33.4 years respectively). Compared with 30 years previously, the average age of both brides and grooms increased by more than seven years (27.9 and 25.8 respectively).
- Four in five marriages (80.4 per cent) were first-time marriages for both partners while for 7.6 per cent of marriages both partners had been previously married.
- 12.7 per cent of marriages were of couples who both resided outside NI. Of these couples, 96 were both born in NI and returned to get married.
- Four in five religious marriages (80.1 per cent) were held in a religious building. St Columb's Cathedral, Derry was the most popular religious venue for religious marriages, with 62 marriages having taken place there over the year.
- The remaining 19.9 per cent of all religious marriage ceremonies were held outside of religious buildings, in approved venues.
- Just over half of all civil marriages (51.7 per cent) were held in a registrar's office. The Belfast Registration Office was the most popular venue for civil marriage ceremonies.
- The remaining 48.3 per cent of civil marriages were held in approved venues.
- There were 175 civil marriages conducted by humanist celebrants.

# Civil Partnerships



**55.3%**  
female  
partnerships

**44.7%**  
male  
partnerships

## Average age at partnership



## Most popular month

|            |     |     |     |
|------------|-----|-----|-----|
| Jan        | Feb | Mar | Apr |
| May        | Jun | Jul | Aug |
| <b>Sep</b> | Oct | Nov | Dec |

**18** civil partnerships took place in September

**103**

civil partnerships

## Location of civil partnership ceremony



**61.2%** registrar's office

**38.8%** approved venue

## In 2019:

- There were 103 civil partnerships registered (46 male partnerships and 57 female partnerships), five fewer than in 2018.
- The average age of males entering a civil partnership was 37.9 years, while for females it was 37.0 years.
- Almost two-thirds (61.2) of civil partnership ceremonies were held in a District Registration Office. The remaining 40 ceremonies were held in an approved venue.
- September was the most popular month for civil partnership ceremonies, with 18 being held then.



**↑ 20** more  
adoptions than in 2018

**59.2%** of adopted children were  
aged between 0 and 5 years

**721**  
re-registrations

Reasons for re-registering  
a birth include:



Parents  
getting  
married



Adding  
father's  
details

**44** fewer re-registrations  
than in 2018



## In 2019:

- 125 children (63 boys and 62 girls) were adopted, an increase of 19.0 per cent from the 2018 figure of 105.
- The average age of the adopted children was five years.
- 74 children adopted this year were aged five or under. A further 34 children were aged between six and ten, with the remaining seven children aged 11 and over.
- 721 births were re-registered, 5.8 per cent fewer than the 2018 figure of 765.
- There were six adults in Northern Ireland who re-registered their birth with a new gender in the Gender Recognition Register.

## <sup>1</sup> **Basic index search:**

**Births** – displays forename and surname, date of birth, sex, mother's maiden surname, registration number and district of registration.

**Deaths** – displays forename and surname of deceased, date of death, sex, date of birth or age at death, registration number and district of registration.

**Marriages** – displays surname of bride and groom, forename of either bride or groom, date of marriage, registration number and district of registration.

**Civil Partnerships** – displays surname of both partners, forename of either partner, year of civil partnership, registration number and district of registration.

## <sup>2</sup> Enhanced index search:

**Births** – displays basic index information along with date of birth, district of birth, father’s forename and surname and mother’s forename and surname.

**Deaths** – displays basic index information along with date of death, date of birth and marital status.

**Marriages** – displays basic index information along with date of marriage, place of marriage, date of birth of bride and groom and age at marriage of bride and groom.

**Civil Partnerships** – plays basic index information along with date of civil partnership, place of civil partnership, date of birth of both partners and age at civil partnership of both partners.

## <sup>3</sup> Full Index Search:

View full registration details (image or data).

This is a National Statistics publication © Crown Copyright 2020

National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the National Statistics Code of Practice. They are produced free from any political interference and undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs.

National Statistics status means that official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value.

All official statistics should comply with all aspects of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. They are awarded National Statistics status following an assessment by the Authority's regulatory arm. The Authority considers whether the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate.

It is NISRA's responsibility to maintain compliance with the standards expected of National Statistics. If we become concerned about whether these statistics are still meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss any concerns with the Authority promptly. National Statistics status can be removed at any point when the highest standards are not maintained, and reinstated when standards are restored.

All of the data in this report are available on the NISRA website [www.nisra.gov.uk](http://www.nisra.gov.uk).

Any queries or requests for further information should be addressed to:

## **Customer Services**

Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency  
Colby House  
Stranmillis Court  
Belfast BT9 5RR

Telephone: +44 (0)300 200 7836

e-mail: [info@nisra.gov.uk](mailto:info@nisra.gov.uk)

The map in this report is Crown Copyright and reproduced with the permission of Land and Property Services under the delegated authority from the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office

© Crown Copyright and database rights NIMA MOU207.2





**Copies available from:**

Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency (NISRA)  
Colby House, Stranmillis Court, Belfast, BT9 5RR  
<http://www.nisra.gov.uk>

Published and printed by DoF, Central Print Unit,  
Craigantlet Buildings, Stoney Road, Belfast BT4 3SX  
Tel: 028 9016 3397

978-1-912313-47-1



9 781912 313471 >