

STATISTICAL PRESS NOTICE

EMBARGOED UNTIL 9.30am ON 13 DECEMBER 2002

EIGHTIETH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE REGISTRAR GENERAL, 2001

The Eightieth Annual Report of the Registrar General was published today. The Report provides details of vital statistics on births, deaths and marriages registered in Northern Ireland during the year ended 31 December 2001, and on adoptions and divorces which took place during the same period. The 2001 Report contains eight subject chapters - Population, Births, Deaths, Stillbirths and Infant Deaths, Causes of Death, Marriages, Divorces, and Adoptions and Re-registrations. A further summary chapter at the beginning of the Report highlights the main statistics, while each individual chapter provides more detail on the subject area. A section on the work of the General Register Office is also included, as is a glossary of notes and definitions. This year's report also contains articles on "Rebasing the annual mid-year population estimates for Northern Ireland" and "Changes in Cause of Death Coding".

POPULATION

The estimated population of Northern Ireland at 30 June 2001 was 1,689,300. The mid-year population estimates for the years 1992 to 2000 were revised following the publication of the 2001 Census population in September this year and the new 2001 figure represents an increase of 6,400 on the revised figure for June 2000 of 1,682,900.

Northern Ireland's population continues to have the youngest age structure of the countries of the United Kingdom. Almost one quarter of the Northern Ireland population is aged under 16 and 36 per cent aged under 25; compared to 20 per cent aged under 16 and 31 per cent aged under 25 in the United Kingdom as a whole.

BIRTHS

The number of live births registered was 21,962, which was a 2 per cent increase on the 2000 figure of 21,512; this slight increase in the number of births for 2001 is in contrast to the recent downward trend.

The general fertility rate, which describes the number of live births occurring per 1,000 women of childbearing age, has increased slightly from 58.7 in 2000 to 59.7 in 2001. This is significantly lower than the rates exhibited in earlier years, for example the 1974 rate was 93.8 and as recently as 1990 the rate was 76.5. Fertility levels vary with age, with the 30-34 age group exhibiting the highest level of fertility (106 live births per 1,000 women aged 30-34).

In 2001 almost 33 percent of all live births occurred outside marriage. The majority of births outside marriage (69%) were jointly registered by both parents.

DEATHS

The number of deaths registered in Northern Ireland was 14,513 resulting in a death rate of 8.6 per 1,000 population.

The majority of deaths registered in Northern Ireland can be attributed to three major groups - circulatory disease, malignant neoplasm (cancer) and respiratory disease. In 2001 these three groups accounted for 11,500 deaths or 79 per cent of all deaths.

Apart from the first year of life, most causes of death exhibit a pattern of increasing rates with age. Deaths rates due to external causes (i.e. non-natural causes) account for a high proportion of the absolute numbers of deaths of younger people; deaths due to external causes accounted for 51 per cent of male deaths and 21 per cent of female deaths among people aged 15-44 in 2001.

Since a peak of 235 deaths in 1988, the number of deaths due to transport accidents has fallen by more than a third (37 per cent) to 148 deaths in 2001. More than three-quarters (78 per cent in 2001) of road transport accident deaths were of males.

In 2001, the General Register Office changed cause of death coding from the ninth to tenth revision of the International Statistical Classification of Diseases, Injuries and Causes of Death. This change has introduced new protocols for determining cause of death which has resulted in an increase in the number of deaths classified to strokes, neurological diseases and certain chronic conditions and a reduction in the number of deaths classified to pneumonia.

STILLBIRTHS AND INFANT DEATHS

The number of registered stillbirths increased from 93 in 2000 to 112 in 2001. It is important to note that over the longer term, the number of stillbirths has fallen well below the levels seen twenty years ago.

The infant death rate for 2001, 6.0 per 1,000 live births, shows an increase on the 2000 rate of 5.0 deaths per 1,000 live births. Over the longer term there had been a significant decrease in the infant death rate from 47.8 per 1,000 live births in the late 1940s.

MARRIAGES

There were 7,281 marriages in Northern Ireland in 2001, 303 fewer than in 2000. The marriage rate has fallen from 7.9 marriages per 1,000 population in 1971 to 4.3 marriages per 1,000 population in 2001.

The average age at marriage has increased in recent years. In 2001 the mean age at marriage for bachelors was 29 years and the mean age for spinsters was 27 years compared to 26 and 25 years respectively, in 1991.

The majority of marriages continue to be solemnised by religious ceremony, although the percentage of civil ceremonies taking place in Register Offices has risen over the years. Twenty six per cent of marriages conducted in 2001 were by civil ceremony compared to 12 per cent in 1981 and 5 per cent in 1961.

DIVORCES

The number of marriages dissolved in Northern Ireland in 2001 was 2,365. The number of divorces granted in Northern Ireland has increased gradually, from just over 100 per year in the early 1960s to around 2,300 in 1991. Since then there have been about 2,300 divorces per year. In 2001 there were 2,392 children under the age of 16 who were affected by divorce.

ADOPTIONS

The number of children recorded in the Adopted Children Register during 2001 was 189. The number of adoptions has been falling steadily since 1970 when over 500 children were recorded in the Adopted Children Register.

RE-REGISTRATIONS OF BIRTH

Since the early 1940s, the number of births authorised to be re-registered has increased from 165 in 1942 to 753 in 2001. The most common reason for a re-registration is to add the father's name to a birth entry.

NOTES TO EDITORS

- 1) This is the Eightieth Annual Report of the Registrar General for Northern Ireland. It is a National Statistics Publication.
- 2) The report is available, at a cost of £25, from The Stationary Office, 16 Arthur Street, Belfast. ISBN number 0-33-940114-1 and can be accessed on the NISRA website www.nisra.gov.uk
- 3) Corresponding information for England and Wales is published by the Office for National Statistics. Corresponding information for Scotland is published by the General Register Office for Scotland.

- 4) Further information can be obtained from:

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- 5) Statistical queries should be addressed to:

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- 6) In addition, Dr Dermot O'Reilly, Senior Lecturer, Department of Epidemiology and Public Health, The Queens University of Belfast, is available to comment on the Report from the user perspective. Dr O'Reilly can be contacted directly at:

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