

# STATISTICAL PRESS NOTICE



## EIGHTY-SECOND ANNUAL REPORT OF THE REGISTRAR GENERAL, 2003

**9:30am – Tuesday 16 November 2004**

The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency today published the Eighty-Second Annual Report of the Registrar General. The report provides a wealth of vital statistics on births, deaths and marriages registered in Northern Ireland during the year ending 31 December 2003. The report also includes statistics on adoptions and divorces that took place during the same period.

The 2003 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 published throughout the year along with new reports on "The implementation of ICD-10 for cause of Death Coding" and "The cohort effect in expectation of life statistics".

The remainder of this press release summarises the main results from each section of the report.

## ***POPULATION – Population numbers continue to increase***

The size of the Northern Ireland population continues to increase. The estimated population of Northern Ireland at 30 June 2003 was 1,702,600, which is an increase of 0.4 per cent or 6,000 people on the estimate of the population for mid-2002.

Northern Ireland's population continues to have the youngest age structure of the countries of the United Kingdom. Twenty three per cent 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.

However, in absolute terms the number of children here has fallen from 418,500 in 1993 to 388,100 in 2003. This decrease is also shown in the proportion of the population who are children – 26 per cent in 1993, compared with 23 per cent in 2003.

Contrasting this, the trend of an increasing number of pensioners in Northern Ireland continues – in 2003 it is estimated that 270,600 people are of pensionable age compared with 249,600 pensioners in 1993. This increase is also shown in the proportion of the population who are of pensionable age - 16 per cent in 2003 compared with 15 per cent in 1993.

## ***BIRTHS – A rise in the number of recorded births from the 2002 record low***

The number of live births registered in 2003 was 21,648, a 1 per cent increase on the 2002 figure of 21,385 live births, which was the lowest number of births recorded in Northern Ireland in a single year. In 2001 there were 21,962 births and the 2000 figure was 21,512.

The general fertility rate, which describes the number of live births occurring per 1,000 women of childbearing age, has increased slightly from 58.1 in 2002 to 59.0 in 2003. 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

(107 live births per 1,000 women aged 30-34).

In 2003, over one third of all live births occurred outside marriage (34 per cent). This statistic varies across Northern Ireland, for example in Belfast Local Government District a majority of births (54 per cent) were outside marriage. Contrasting this, in Magherafelt Local Government District under one in five of births (19 per cent) were outside marriage. Across Northern Ireland, nearly three-quarters of all births outside marriage (72 per cent) were however jointly registered by both parents.

### ***DEATHS – Lowest annual number of deaths recorded in Northern Ireland***

The number of deaths registered in Northern Ireland in 2003 was 14,462, the lowest number recorded in a single year, resulting in a death rate of 8.5 deaths per 1,000 population. This compares to 14,586 deaths in 2002 and 14,513 deaths in 2001; and death rates of 8.6 deaths per 1,000 population in both years.

Just under half of all deaths (46 per cent) registered in Northern Ireland can be attributed to two major groups - malignant neoplasm or cancer, 26 per cent of deaths (3,757 deaths) and ischaemic heart disease, 20 per cent of deaths (2,843 deaths).

Deaths related to a non-natural or external cause account for a high proportion of deaths of younger people. In 2003, among people aged 15-44, deaths due to external causes accounted for 49 per cent of male deaths and 22 per cent of female deaths. Of the 235 external cause deaths among people aged 15-44, 86 deaths (37 per cent) were as a result of suicide and 83 deaths (35 per cent) were caused by transport accidents.

Since a peak of 235 deaths registered in 1988, the number of deaths due to road transport accidents has fallen by almost half (49 per cent) to 120 deaths in 2003. More than three-quarters (79 per cent in 2003) of all road transport accident deaths were of males.

### ***STILLBIRTHS AND INFANT DEATHS – Small changes in number of stillbirths***

## ***and infant deaths registered***

The number of registered stillbirths decreased from 122 in 2002 to 108 in 2003. Over the longer term, the number of stillbirths has fallen well below the levels seen twenty years ago.

In total there were 115 infant deaths registered in 2003 compared with 100 in 2002, which was the lowest number of infant deaths registered in one year. The infant death rate for 2003 was 5.2 infant deaths per 1,000 live births; this is a significant decrease in the infant death rate of 47.8 infant deaths per 1,000 live births observed in the late 1940s.

## ***MARRIAGES – Just under 7,800 marriages in Northern Ireland in 2003***

There were 7,757 marriages in Northern Ireland in 2003, 158 more than in 2002, a rise of 2 per cent. However over the long term the marriage rate has fallen from 7.9 marriages per 1,000 population in 1971 to 4.6 marriages per 1,000 population in 2003.

The average age at marriage has increased in recent years. In 2003 the mean age at marriage for bachelors was 30 years and the mean age for spinsters was 28 years, compared to 27 and 25 years respectively, in 1993.

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 last forty years. Twenty eight per cent of marriages conducted in 2003 were by civil ceremony compared to 12 per cent in 1981 and 5 per cent in 1961.

## ***DIVORCES – In 2003, over 2,000 children affected by divorce***

The number of marriages dissolved in Northern Ireland in 2003 was 2,319. 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 2003 there were 2,205 children, under the age of 16, who were directly affected by divorce.

## ***ADOPTIONS***

The number of children recorded in the Adopted Children Register during 2003 was 140. 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 750 in 2003. 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 Eighty-Second 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 Stationery Office, 16 Arthur Street, Belfast. ISBN number 0337-087164 and can be accessed on the NISRA website [www.nisra.gov.uk](http://www.nisra.gov.uk)
3. Corresponding information for England and Wales is published by the Office for National Statistics and for Scotland by the General Register Office for Scotland.
4. Further information can be obtained from:

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Craigantlet Buildings  
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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 Queen's 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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