

## EIGHTY-FIRST ANNUAL REPORT OF THE REGISTRAR GENERAL, 2002

**9:30am - Friday 5 December 2003,**

The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency today published the Eighty-First 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 2002. The report also includes statistics on adoptions and divorces that took place during the same period.

The 2002 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 "Mid-year population estimates for Northern Ireland", "Total Period Fertility Rates and Standardised Mortality Ratios at Electoral Ward Level" and "The implementation of ICD-10 for Cause of Death Coding"

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 2002 was 1,696,600, which is an increase of 0.4 per cent or 7,300 people on estimate of the population for mid-2001.

Northern Ireland population continues to have the youngest age structure among the constituent countries of the United Kingdom. Twenty three per cent of the Northern Ireland population are children (aged under 16), compared to 20 per cent in the United Kingdom as a whole. However, in absolute terms the number of children here has fallen from 418,000 in 1992 to 393,000 in 2002. This decrease is also shown in the proportion of the population who are children - 25.7 per cent in 1992 compared with 23.2 per cent in 2002.

Contrasting this, the trend of an increasing number of pensioners continues – in 2002 it is estimated that 266,200 people are of pensionable age compared with 248,300 pensioners in 1992. This increase is also shown in the proportion of the population above pensionable age - 15.7 per cent in 2002 compared with 15.3 per cent in 1992.

## ***BIRTHS – Lowest number of recorded births ever***

In 2002, there were 21,385 births registered to Northern Ireland resident mothers. This is the lowest number of births recorded in Northern Ireland in a single year. In 2001 there was 21,962 births and the 2000 figure was 21,512, which was the previous lowest number of births recorded.

The trend of a falling fertility rate continues. The general fertility rate, which describes the number of live births occurring per 1,000 women of childbearing age, has decreased slightly from 59.7 in 2001 to 58.1 in 2002. 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 (104 live births per 1,000 women aged 30-34).

In 2002 over one third of all live births occurred outside marriage, however the majority (69%) of births outside marriage were jointly registered by both parents.

### ***DEATHS –Cancer and Heart Disease remain the biggest killers***

The number of deaths registered in Northern Ireland in 2002 was 14,586 resulting in a death rate of 8.6 deaths per 1,000 population. This compares to 14,513 deaths in 2001 and 14,903 deaths in 2000; and rates of 8.6 in 2001 and 8.9 in 2000.

A sizeable number of the deaths registered in Northern Ireland can be attributed to two major groups - malignant neoplasm (cancer) and ischaemic heart disease. In 2002 malignant neoplasms accounted for 25 per cent of all deaths while ischaemic heart disease accounted for 20 per cent of all deaths.

Deaths 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 52 per cent of male deaths and 25 per cent of female deaths among people aged 15-44 in 2002. Just under 40 per cent of external cause deaths to young persons were as a result of suicide and 32 per cent were caused by transport accidents.

Since a peak of 235 deaths in 1988, the number of deaths due to road transport accidents has fallen by more than a third (39 per cent) to 144 deaths in 2002. More than three-quarters (76 per cent in 2002) of all road transport accident deaths were of males.

### ***STILLBIRTHS AND INFANT DEATHS - Lowest ever number of infant deaths registered in one year***

The number of registered stillbirths increased from 112 in 2001 to 122 in 2002. Although over the longer term, the number of stillbirths has fallen well below the levels seen twenty years ago.

In total there were 100 infant deaths registered in 2002 compared with 134 in 2001 – this is the lowest number of registered infant deaths on record in one year. The infant death rate for 2002, 4.6 infant deaths per 1,000 live births, shows a decrease on the 2001 rate of 6.0 infant deaths per 1,000 live births. Over the longer term there had been a significant decrease in the infant death rate from 47.8 infant deaths per 1,000 live births in the late 1940s.

### ***MARRIAGES – Just over 7,500 marriages in Northern Ireland in 2002***

There were 7,599 marriages in Northern Ireland in 2002, 318 more than in 2001. The marriage rate has fallen from 7.9 marriages per 1,000 population in 1971 to 4.5 marriages per 1,000 population in 2002.

The average age at marriage has increased in recent years. In 2002 the mean age at marriage for bachelors was 29 years and the mean age for spinsters was 28 years compared to 27 and 25 years respectively, in 1992.

### ***DIVORCES – Just over 2,000 couples get divorced in 2002***

The number of marriages dissolved in Northern Ireland in 2002 was 2,165. 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 throughout the 1990s. In 2002 there were 2,034 children under the age of 16 who were affected by divorce.

## ***ADOPTIONS***

The number of children recorded in the Adopted Children Register during 2002 was 174. 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 718 in 2002. 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-First 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 033708654-0 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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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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