

Men in Northern Ireland: Report 5 November 2004

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ARK is a joint project between Queen's University Belfast and the University of Ulster. Its aim is to make material on the social and political life of Northern Ireland available to the widest audience.

www.ark.ac.uk

The Men's Project within Parents Advice Centre aims to increase awareness of the issues facing local men and boys and to promote their social inclusion.

www.mensproject.org

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All reports are available online on the ARK and Men's Project websites.

Men and family life

Key facts

- Most men (98.5%) live in households.
- 58.1% of men live as a couple (married, re-married or co-habiting).
- In 2002, 7,599 men got married (with an average age of 31.8 years); 2,165 men got divorced.
- 85.2% of fathers were present at the birth of their child.
- 60.2% of fathers change a nappy more than once a day.
- In 2001, there were 4,566 lone fathers aged 16-74 years with dependent children.
- In 2001, 9.3% of men were carers, and 23.5% provided 50 hours or more care per week.
- In 2001, there were 2,457 boys aged 5-15 years providing care.

Living arrangements

Data from the 2001 Census of Population indicate that out of 821,450 males, the vast majority (98.5%) lived in households. However, 11,431 males were residents in communal establishments. A further 743 males lived in communal establishments as staff or their families.

The list of communal establishments is broad, ranging from NHS-managed residential care homes (411 men or 3.6%), privately-managed residential care homes (962 men or 8.4%), children's homes (66 boys or 0.5%), prison (573 men or 5%) to religious communities (69 men or 0.6%). Approximately one in thirty male pensioners aged 65 years or over (2,929 men) live in a communal establishment. These figures include non-staff residents only.

Census data also show that of the 605,288 men aged 16 years or over living in households, over one half (58.1%) lived as a couple, either married or re-married (53.6%) or cohabiting (4.5%).

Table 1: Living arrangements

Males aged 16 or over living in households							
Total number	%						
	Living as a couple		Not living as a couple				
	Married or re-married	Co-habiting	Single (never married)	Married or re-married	Separated (but still legally married)	Divorced	Widowed
605,288	53.6	4.5	33.0	0.5	2.5	2.7	3.2

Source: 2001 Census of Population

Marriage

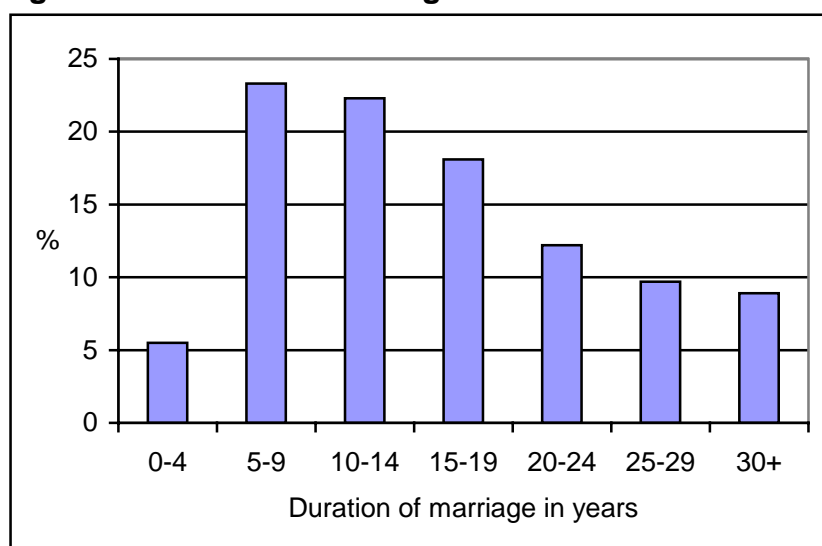
In 2002, 7,599 men got married. Of these, the majority (84.3%) had never been married before, while 13.9% had been divorced and 1.8% were widowers. The mean age at marriage for all men was 31.8 years. For men who had never been married, the mean age was lower (29.4 years), while it was much higher for divorced men (42.8 years) and widowers (58.4 years). For women, the average age at marriage was lower at 29.5 years. The average age at marriage for men has increased over time – for example, in 1948 it was 26.0 years.

Among respondents to the 2002 Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey, there was a general sense that marriage was not an essential part of life, especially among younger respondents. For example, only one in three men (34%), and a similar proportion of women, believed that married people are generally happier than unmarried people, with older men more likely to think so than younger men. Relating to this, more than four out of five men and women disagreed that it is better to have a bad marriage than no marriage at all. More women than men (46% and 37% respectively) agreed that one parent can bring up a child as well as two parents together. However, the question did not specify if this related to a father, a mother or either. Just over half of male and female respondents (54%) thought that it was all right for a couple to live together without intending to get married, and in fact, a similar proportion thought that it is a good idea for a couple who intend to get married to live together first.

Divorce

In 2002, there were 2,165 divorces in Northern Ireland. Nearly three quarters of these (73.2%) were on the grounds of non-cohabitation. As can be seen from Figure 1, nearly one fifth of divorces (23.3%) occurred after 5-9 years of marriage. While 5.5% occurred in the first four years of marriage, 8.9% occurred after 30 or more years.

Figure 1: Duration of marriage before divorce



Source: Registrar General Annual Report, 2002

Fatherhood

Results from the Millennium Cohort Study (also known as the Child of the New Century Study) provide some interesting statistics on the involvement of fathers with their children. The study is based on children born in the first two years of the 21st century in the United Kingdom, and figures presented here relate to the fathers of children aged 9-10 months old in June 2001.

- Most fathers (85.2%) in Northern Ireland were present at the birth of their child. The highest within the four UK regions was Scotland (86%), and the lowest was in Wales (84%).
- The age of the oldest father in Northern Ireland was 58 years, which was the lowest among the four UK regions. The oldest father in England was 69 years.
- The vast majority of fathers in Northern Ireland (96%) had changed a nappy, and six out of ten fathers (60.2%) change a nappy more than once a day. In England, the figures were lower – 93.2% and 55.9% respectively.

Paternity leave

In April 2003, the Employment (NI) Order 2002 included Paternity and Adoption Leave Regulations. New fathers are now allowed two weeks' paid paternity leave. Before this legislation came into being, however, respondents to the 2000 Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey were asked if all men should have the right to some paid paternity leave. Both men and women were extremely supportive: 77% of men and 82% of women agreed with this statement.

Lone fathers

In the 2001 Census of Population, there were 58,782 lone parents aged 16-74 years with dependent children. (A dependent child is either aged 0-15 years or a young person aged 16-18 years in full time study, living as part of a family.) Of these, 4,566 (7.8%) consisted of lone father families. Nearly half (45.5%) of these fathers were working full-time and 6.9% worked part-time. One in ten (10.6%) were unemployed and over one third (37%) were economically inactive (for example, retired, full-time student, permanently sick or disabled, or looking the home or family).

Family roles

Results from the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey indicate that there is support for men being more involved with their children. In 2000, most respondents felt that men can care for children just as well as women can (59% of men and 67% of women supported this statement). However, in 2002, similar proportions (54% of men and 70% of women) agreed that men ought to do a larger share of childcare than they do now. More than half of respondents disagreed that earning money should be a priority for a man rather than bringing up children: 54% of men and 61% of women.

The 2002 Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey also asked married or co-habiting respondents about the amount of time spent on housework. On average, men spent 5.92 hours per week doing housework, compared with 17.15 hours for women. Three quarters (72%) of women and one half of men (52%) agreed that men ought to do a larger share of the housework. Despite this, 44% of respondents said that they never disagreed about the sharing of household tasks.

Figures from the Labour Force Survey (June-August 2004) indicate that the average actual weekly hours of work for men working full-time in their main job is 40.2, compared with 32.8 for women. Relating to this, just over half of respondents to the 2000 Life and Times Survey (56% men and 60% women) agreed that many fathers choose to work such long hours that it damages family life. Similar proportions seem to put some of the blame for this on employers, as 60% of both men and women agreed that most workplaces expect so much of their employees that men can't get enough time to spend with their families.

Carers

In the 2001 Census, respondents were asked if they looked after or gave any help or support to family members, friends, neighbours or others because of long-term physical or mental ill-health or disability, or problems related to old age. Approximately one in ten men (9.3%) provided such care. While the majority of these male carers (61.9%) provided 1-19 hours of care per week, one in four (23.5%) provided 50 or more hours of care per week. Of the 75,112 men who provided care, 10.5% said that they were not in good health.

One in eight male carers were aged 65 years or over, nearly half of whom provided 50 or more hours of care per week. In addition, 2,457 male carers (3.3%) were aged between 5 and 15 years, and 214 of these boys provided 50 or more hours of care per week.

Carers' Allowance is a benefit for people aged 16 and over who spend at least 35 hours a week caring for a disabled person. On 31 May 2004, there were 13,291 male claimants with entitlement to this benefit, of whom 15.7% were aged 65 years or over. The average duration of this benefit was over 4 years (245 weeks).

The 1997 Northern Ireland Health and Social Wellbeing Survey contained a substantial section on caring and carers. Respondents were asked if they looked after or provided special care to someone who was sick, disabled or elderly. All respondents were aged 16 years or over. The key results relating to men and caring include:

- 14% of men were carers, compared with 20% of women.
- 7% of men cared for someone within the same household, and a similar proportion cared for someone outside their household.
- 48% of male carers worked full-time, while a further 41% were economically inactive (that is, not employed or looking for work).
- While most carers cared for only one person, 10% cared for two or more people.
- 39% of men cared for a parent, which is reflected in the fact that 61% of men cared for someone aged 65 years or over.
- 31% of men cared for a spouse or partner, compared with 17% of women. This reflects the fact that the life expectancy at birth for males is 76.1 years, but is 80.5 years for females.
- Three quarters of males cared for another male, while one quarter cared for a female.

Useful sources of information

www.dhsspsni.gov.uk The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety website includes a report on Informal Carers, based on data from the 1997 Northern Ireland Health and Social Wellbeing Survey.

www.nisra.gov.uk The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) is Northern Ireland's official statistics organisation. The NISRA website contains a comprehensive range of official Northern Ireland statistics and survey information, including data from the Registrar General's Office.

www.nisra.gov.uk/census/start.html Background information, as well as data, are available online for the 2001 Census of Population.

www.ark.ac.uk/nilt The 2000 Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey contained a module of questions on men's issues, while the 2002 survey included questions on family and gender roles.