

Crisis Pregnancy Agency Statistical Report 2005: Fertility and Crisis Pregnancy Indices

Deirdre McGrath, Stephanie O'Keeffe, Mary Smith



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About the authors

Ms. Deirdre Mc Grath is a Research Assistant with the Crisis Pregnancy Agency.

Dr. Stephanie O’Keeffe is Research Manager with the Crisis Pregnancy Agency.

Ms. Mary Smith is a Research Officer with the Crisis Pregnancy Agency.

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Glossary

Total Period Fertility Rate

The Total Period Fertility Rate (TPFR, sometimes called the total fertility rate) estimates the number of children that would be born to each female over her reproductive lifetime (generally within the range of 15-49 years), if she followed the pattern of fertility for her age group. A value of 2.1 is generally taken to be the level at which the population must reproduce to replace itself in the long run, ignoring migration. The TPFR is based on a series of fertility rates called the age-specific fertility rates.

Age-Specific Fertility Rates

Age-specific fertility rates (ASFRs) look at the number of live births in the childbearing population divided by age groups. These specific age groups are generally divided into groups of five, for example 20-24 years of age. ASFRs can show where there are changes or fluctuations in fertility along the range of ages. Changes in the TPFR reflect changes in ASFR, including the age at which women start to have children and the number of children they have.

Crude Birth Rate

This is the simplest measurement of fertility to calculate. It comprises the number of births per thousand of the population in any given year and is often seen alongside the crude death rate which is the number of deaths per thousand of the population each year. However because in the calculation of the population, it counts everyone and not just women of childbearing ages, it can show only the most general trends. However it is often used in international comparative trends on the shape of a population.

EU-15

The EU-15 refers to the European Union prior to the most recent enlargement in 2004. The countries that comprise the EU-15 are Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

Abortion Rate

The abortion rate is calculated as the number of induced abortions occurring per 1,000 women in different age groups.

Teenage Fertility

The teenage fertility rate is the number of live births per 1,000 females aged 15 to 19. In some reports teenagers aged 15 to 19 are referred to as teenagers under twenty, nevertheless in these reports, rates are calculated using data for teenagers aged 15 to 19.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

This is the first in a series of statistical reports to be produced by the Crisis Pregnancy Agency. The Crisis Pregnancy Agency, established by Statutory Instrument No.446 of 2001, is tasked with three functions that are specified in the Establishment Order. The functions of the Agency are as follows:

To provide for:

- 1) a reduction in the number of crisis pregnancies by the provision of education, advice and contraceptive services
- 2) a reduction in the number of women with crisis pregnancies who opt for abortion by offering services and supports which make other options more attractive
- 3) the provision of counselling and medical services after crisis pregnancy.

This report aims to present, in one document, a range of statistical indices that shed light on reproductive decision making and childbearing in Ireland. The report intends to compare data over time to give a picture of how childbearing and reproductive decision making in Ireland has changed over the years. It also intends to describe in a reader friendly manner how trends in Ireland compare with other countries.

We hope that by presenting these data in a clear way, it will be of use to practitioners, policy makers and researchers interested in crisis pregnancy and reproductive decision making. By compiling statistical data on a range of indicators relevant to crisis pregnancy it will also help to highlight important trends and clarify common myths.

1.2 Description of sub-sections

Section 1 presents statistics in relation to the fertility rate and the birth rate in an effort to highlight changes in fertility in Ireland over time. Fertility patterns are of interest as pattern changes are, in part, associated with a change in contraceptive usage, which is linked to the prevention of crisis pregnancy. Changes in the patterns of fertility over time also indicate changes in the norms of family formation. There are two indicators habitually used when looking at fertility: total fertility rates and crude birth rates. This report examines each of these in turn, looking at both the changes in the birth and fertility rates that have taken place over time and situating Ireland within an international context, particularly with regard to other EU countries. Section 1 also examines changes in the incidence of non marital births in Ireland. Births outside marriage and the average age of women at childbearing are both examined in an international context.

Section 2 documents trends in teenage fertility rates in Ireland and compares these with other EU countries. Geographical variations in the teenage fertility rate in Ireland are also presented. In looking at fertility, the report focuses on teenage fertility as it is often a cause for concern amongst analysts and a focus of policy initiatives in many countries.

Section 3 looks at abortion and adoption statistics. Trends in the number of women giving Irish addresses at UK abortion clinics are examined and the abortion rates for a number of countries are compared. Teenage fertility, that includes birth and abortion rates are also examined in this section. Section 3 profiles trends in non-family adoption in Ireland. Abortion and adoption statistics are often used as proxy indicators of crisis pregnancy.

1.3 Data sources

Data included in the report have been sourced from the Central Statistics Office, Cork and Eurostat, the principle statistics agency of the EU. Unless otherwise stated, data presented are for the Republic of Ireland with figures for international comparisons presented where possible. Every effort has been made to ensure that a variety of countries are included in the comparison groups where possible, including Nordic countries, Southern European countries, English-speaking countries and countries such as the Netherlands that are viewed as progressive in terms of fertility and contraception. In some cases the absence of standard reporting conventions does not allow direct comparisons between countries.

Data are presented mainly in tabular or diagrammatic form with text providing context for the data. Historic data are presented for time periods available and/or considered most relevant to the topic. In general when the European Union is referred to in this report (EU-15), this denotes the EU prior to the most recent enlargement in 2004.

2.0 Fertility

2.1 Introduction

Fertility and changes in fertility over time are interesting as they reflect the changes in social behaviour that have occurred in Ireland in recent decades, particularly as a result of the increased availability and use of contraceptives and the large-scale changes that have taken place in the economic, political and cultural sphere. There are two principle indicators that are used when looking at fertility: the total period fertility rate (TPFR) and the birth rate. In this section each of these indicators will be examined in turn. This section outlines how in Ireland the total period fertility rate (TPFR) has declined since the 1970s but is still high by European standards. This declining fertility can be witnessed across all age categories but is most prominent for women aged 20-24 and 25-29. This section also examines the dramatic decline in the crude birth rate over the course of two decades and contrasts the Irish birth rate with that of other European countries. Changes in family formation are also examined in this section, most notably the increasing incidence of births outside marriage and the average maternal age at which children are born. Changes in family formation in Ireland are compared with changes in family formation internationally.

Total period fertility rate

The Total Period Fertility Rate (TPFR, sometimes called the total fertility rate) estimates the total number of children that would be born to each female over her reproductive lifetime (generally within the range of 15-49 years), if she followed the pattern of fertility for her age group. A TPFR of 2.1 is generally taken to be the level at which the population must reproduce to replace itself in the long run, ignoring migration. The TPFR is based on a series of fertility rates called age specific fertility rates.

Age specific fertility rates

Age-specific fertility rates (ASFRs) look at the number of live births in the childbearing population divided by age groups. These specific age groups are generally divided into groups of five, for example 20-24 years of age. ASFRs can show where there are changes or fluctuations in fertility along the range of ages. Changes in the TPFR reflect changes in ASFR, including the age at which women start to have children and the number of children they have.

Crude birth rate

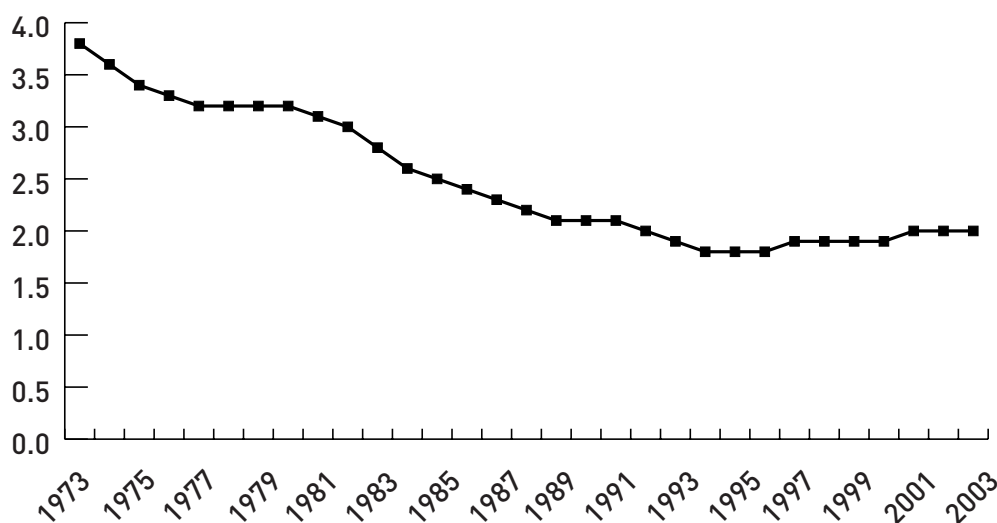
This is the simplest measurement of fertility to calculate. It comprises the number of births per thousand of the population in any given year and is often seen alongside the crude death rate which is the number of deaths per thousand of the population each year. However because in the calculation of the population, it counts everyone and not just women of childbearing ages, it can show only the most general trends. However it is often used in international comparative trends on the shape of a population.

2.2 The TPFR in Ireland

Though still high by EU standards, the TPFR has declined steadily in Ireland since the 1970s, falling from 3.74 in 1973 to 1.85 in 1995 (see Figure 2.1). Since 1995 the TPFR has shown a slight increase; however at 1.98 (2003) the TPFR remains below replacement levels. Changes in the fertility rates reflect changes in the age at which women start to have children and the number of children they have.

- The general trend in Ireland has been of falling fertility rates since the 1970s.
- Ireland's total period fertility rate is currently below replacement level - the level of fertility needed to ensure that the population replaces itself.

Figure 2.1 Total period fertility rates, Ireland, 1973-2003



Source: CSO

2.3 Age-specific fertility rates

An examination of the graph below illustrates that in Ireland, age-specific fertility rates, that is the number of live births in relation to the ages of women, are skewed towards women in the older age groups. Currently, the highest age-specific fertility rate is found amongst those in the 30 to 34 year-old age group (134.5 in 2003), followed by that of women in the 25 to 29 year-old age group (93.6 in 2003). At 81.4, the age-specific fertility rate is also particularly high for women in the 35 to 39 year-old age group. Hence the general trend in Ireland is for higher fertility rates for women in the older age groups. Figure 2.2 below illustrates these age differences

The age-specific fertility of the most fertile age group of women in the 1970s - those between the ages of 25 and 29 - witnessed a dramatic decline over the course of three decades and by 2003 it had fallen below the age-specific fertility rate of women aged 30 to 34. Since 1994 there has been a gradual increase in the age specific fertility rates of women aged 35 to 39.

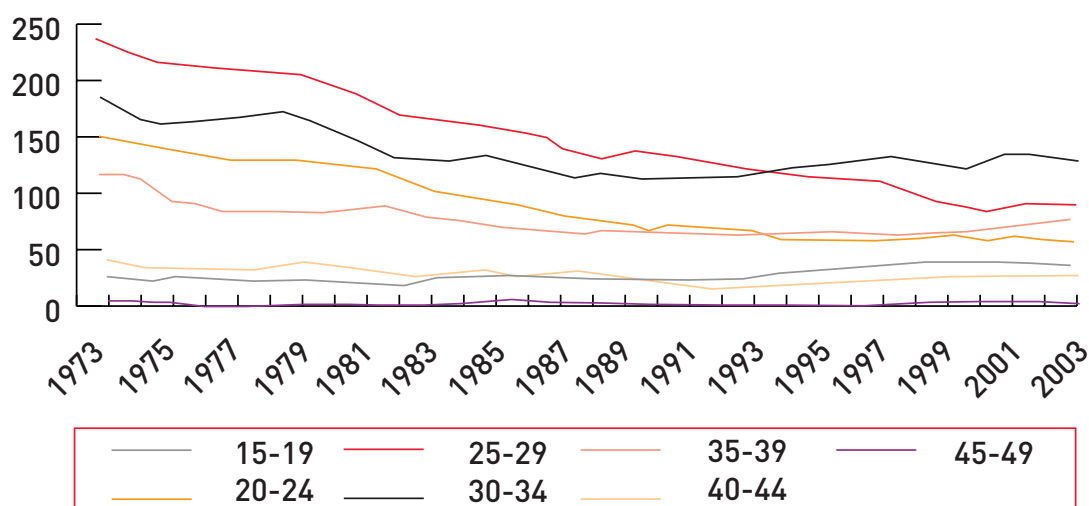
One trend evident in many European countries is the increase in fertility of those in the 30-34 age group, relative to those aged 20 to 24. In many European countries the fertility rates for women aged 30 to 34 have recently exceeded the fertility rates for women aged 20 to 24; this occurred in Sweden in 1985, in France in 1990, in the UK in 1992, in Belgium in 1992, in Germany in 1992, in Portugal in 1995 and in Austria in 2000 (<http://www.coe.int/t/e/social%5Fcohesion/population/demographic%5Fyear%5Fbook/2002%5Fedition/>).

Ireland is very distinctive in this respect, as the fertility of women aged 30 to 34 has been exceptionally higher than that of women aged 20 to 24 during the whole period from the 1970s to 2003.

Another notable trend when looking at the age-specific fertility rates is the stability of the teenage fertility rate throughout the entire time period from 1973 to 2003. The issue of teenage fertility will be addressed again in section 3.0 (page 17).

- In Ireland, fertility is greatest for women in the 30-34 year-old age group.

Figure 2.2 Age-specific fertility rates (number of live births per thousand females of that age) in Ireland 1973-2003



Source: CSO

2.4 Total fertility rates – international comparisons

Despite a rapidly declining age specific fertility rate across most age ranges, Ireland continues to have one of the highest total fertility rates within the EU (see table 2.1). However, Ireland's fertility rate is not exceptionally high compared with countries such as the USA and New Zealand. The total fertility rate in the EU fell from 2.38 in 1970 to 1.48 in 2000. EU countries with the highest fertility at the beginning of the 1970s (Ireland, Spain, and Portugal) are those where it has since fallen most (by 46 to 58 percent in the period from 1970 to 2000).

Table 2.1 International trends over time in total fertility rates

Total Fertility Rate					
	1970	1980	1990	2000	% decrease 1970 – 2000
Austria	2.29	1.65	1.45	1.34	41
Belgium	2.25	1.68	1.62	1.66	26
Denmark	1.95	1.55	1.67	1.77	9
Finland	1.82	1.63	1.78	1.73	5
France	2.47	1.95	1.78	1.88	24
Germany	2.03	1.56	1.45	1.36	33
Greece	2.39	2.21	1.39	1.29	46
Ireland	3.93	3.23	2.11	1.89	52
Italy	2.42	1.64	1.33	1.24	49
Netherlands	2.57	1.6	1.62	1.72	33
Portugal	2.83	2.18	1.57	1.52	46
Spain	2.9	2.2	1.36	1.23	58
Sweden	1.92	1.68	2.13	1.54	20
UK	2.43	1.90	1.83	1.64	33
EU-15	2.38	1.82	1.57	1.48	38
USA*	2.48	1.84	2.08	2.06	17
New Zealand**	3.18	2.03	2.27	1.80	43

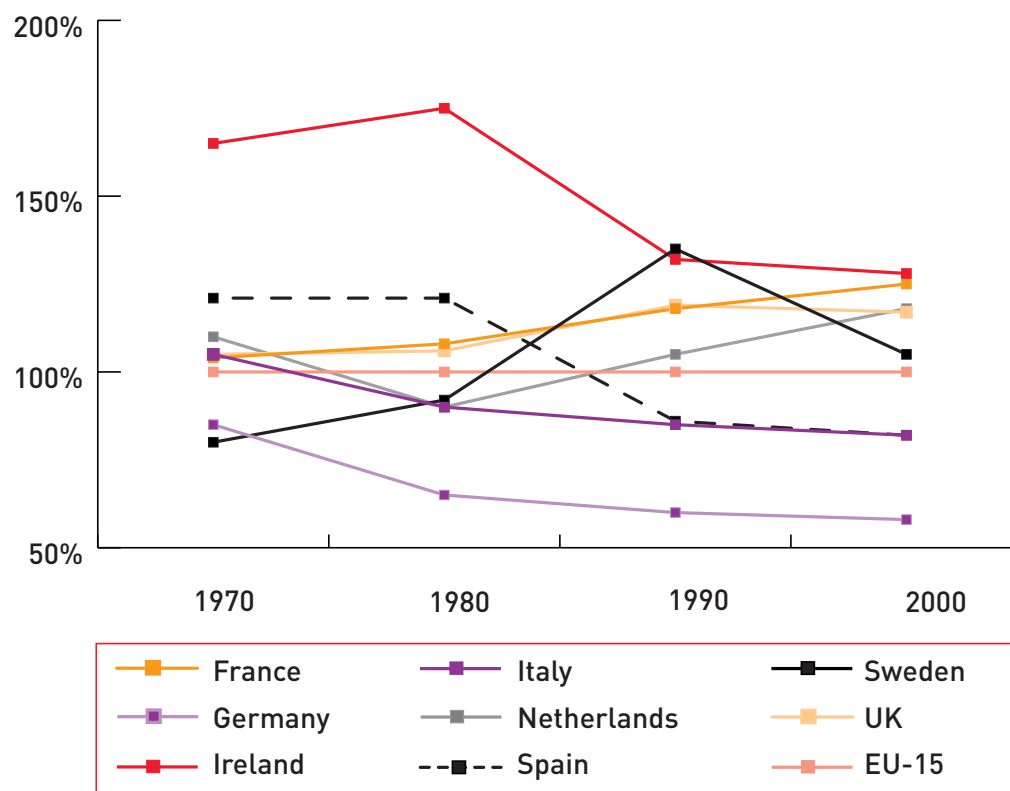
Source: <http://www.wales.gov.uk/keypubstatisticsforwales/content/publication/population/2004/sb43-2004/sb43-2004.pdf> *Fertility Rates for the USA and New Zealand are sourced from the US Bureau of the Census International Database <http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/idbacc.html>

**Fertility rates for New Zealand were available for 1971. Percentage decrease in fertility rates for the USA and New Zealand were calculated by the CPA.

In figure 2.3, the EU-15 total fertility rates are used as a baseline (EU-15=100%) and the total fertility rates of other EU countries are expressed as a percentage of the EU-15 total fertility rates. Figure 2.3 illustrates the dramatic decline in Ireland's total fertility rate over time, in relation to the EU-15 total fertility rate. Countries where the total fertility rate increased between 1970 and 2000, in relation to the EU-15 total fertility rate include France, the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK.

As the fertility rate has fallen below replacement levels (2.1) in EU countries, emphasis has been placed on the provision of stronger and more coherent support for families. With the exception of France, no EU country has an explicit fertility enhancing policy (Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population May 2004). However, many EU countries have family or child-orientated policies that support having and raising children or more general social policies that facilitate the combination of work and parenthood. The provision of supports to the family is viewed as important in achieving a sustainable fertility level.

Figure 2.3 International total fertility rates over time expressed as a percentage of the EU-15 total fertility rates



Source:

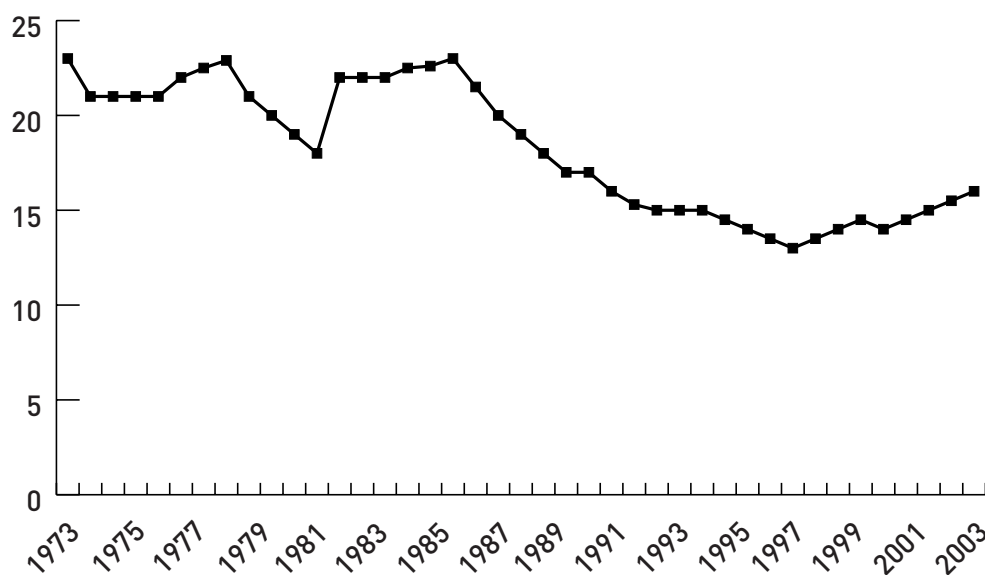
<http://www.wales.gov.uk/keypubstatisticsforwales/content/publication/population/2004/sb43-2004/sb43-2004.pdf>

- Despite a declining fertility rate since the 1970s, Ireland continues to record the highest fertility rate amongst EU countries.

2.5 Crude birth rate

The birth rate is also often used as an indicator of fertility. As illustrated by figure 2.4, the birth rate has witnessed a significant decrease in Ireland over the course of two decades, falling from 21.1 births per thousand of the population in 1974 to 13.5 in 1995. Since 1995, the birth rate has been gradually increasing, with some fluctuations, and reached 15.5 births per thousand of the population in 2003.

- The birth rate witnessed a significant decrease in Ireland since the 1970s.

Figure 2.4 Birth rates per thousand population in Ireland 1973-2003

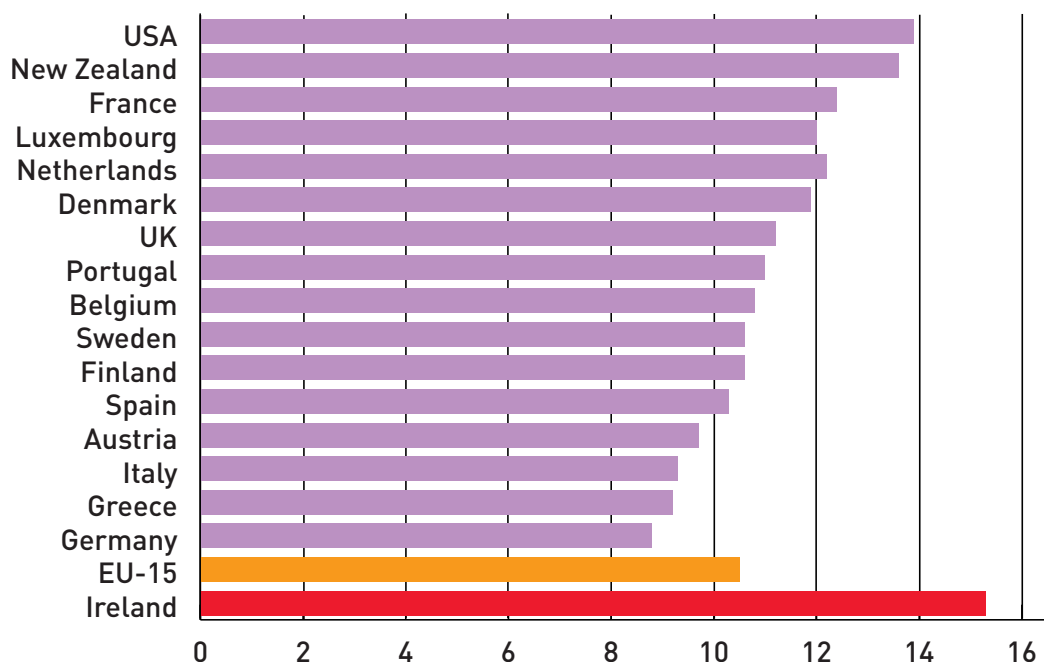
Source: CSO

2.6 Birth rates – international comparisons

Despite a steady decrease in the birth rate over the last two decades, Ireland's birth rate remains the highest in the EU; it stands at 15.4 compared with the EU average of 10.5 (see figure 2.5). Other EU countries with high birth rates include France, with a birth rate of 12.8, and the Netherlands, with a birth rate of 12.5. The birth rate was also high in the USA (13.9) and New Zealand (13.7).

- Despite a general trend of falling birth rates in Ireland over the last two decades, Ireland's birth rate remains the highest in the EU.

Figure 2.5 Birth rates per thousand population, 2002



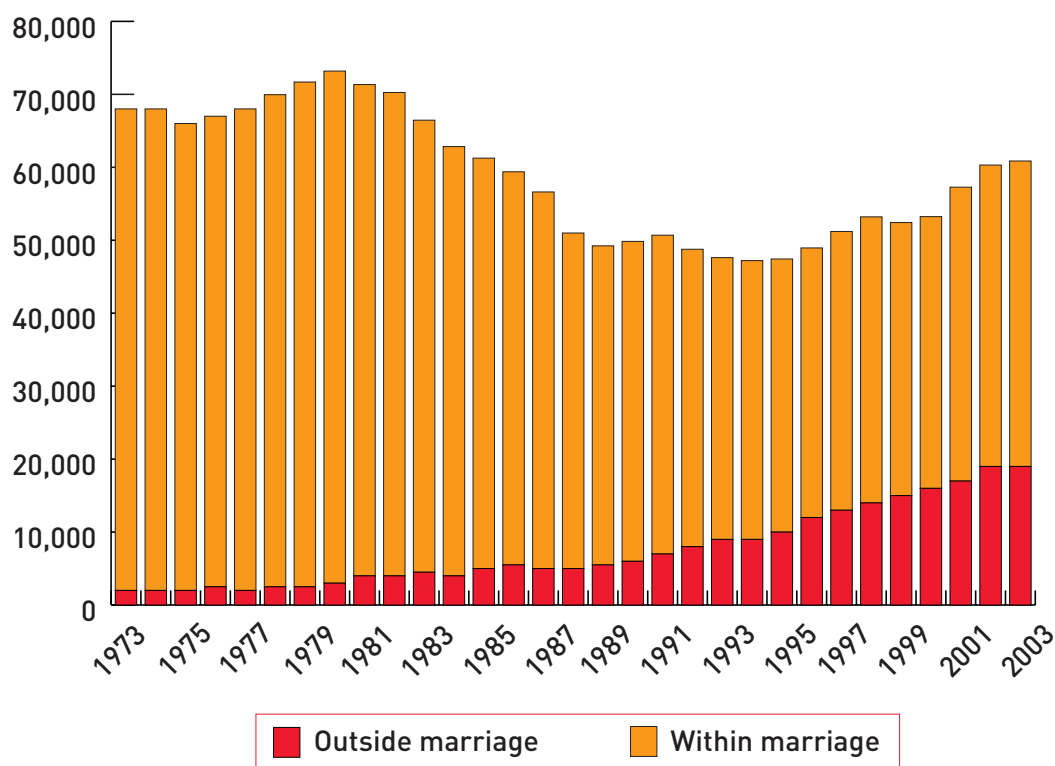
Source: Eurostat; Population statistics 2004. The birth rate for the USA was sourced from the US Department of Health and Human Services

<http://pregnancy.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?site=http://www.hhs.gov/news/press/2003press/20030625.html> The birth rate for New Zealand was sourced from the WHO at <http://64.233.161.104/u/whowpro?q=cache:KPndGjzvAC8J:www.wpro.who.int/chips/chip04/nez.htm+new+Zealand+birth+rate&hl=en&ie=UTF-8>

2.7 Births outside marriage

As shown by figure 2.6, the incidence of births outside marriage in Ireland has increased steadily. In 1973, 3.2% of births were outside marriage, compared with 31.4% in 2003. This is a similar trend to other EU countries, which have witnessed a steady upward trend in non-marital births over time. As noted by Fahey and Russell (2001), the social significance of this trend is difficult to interpret, as there is a lack of information concerning the status of non-marital births i.e. whether they are births to women not involved in stable relationships. However, in analysing the trends in marriages, first births and marital first births in Ireland, Fahey suggests that a significant proportion of non-marital births take place within “quasi-marital unions” (Fahey 2001:175). It is likely, therefore, that the change in births outside marriage reflects postponed marriage and a rise in co-habitation. Murphy-Lawless et al. (2004) suggest that the increase in births outside marriage may reflect a change in the general social climate whereby marriage is no longer forced upon women who become pregnant.

- The proportion of births taking place outside marriage has increased steadily in Ireland since the 1970s.

Figure 2.6 Trends in births by mother's marital status Ireland, 1972-2003

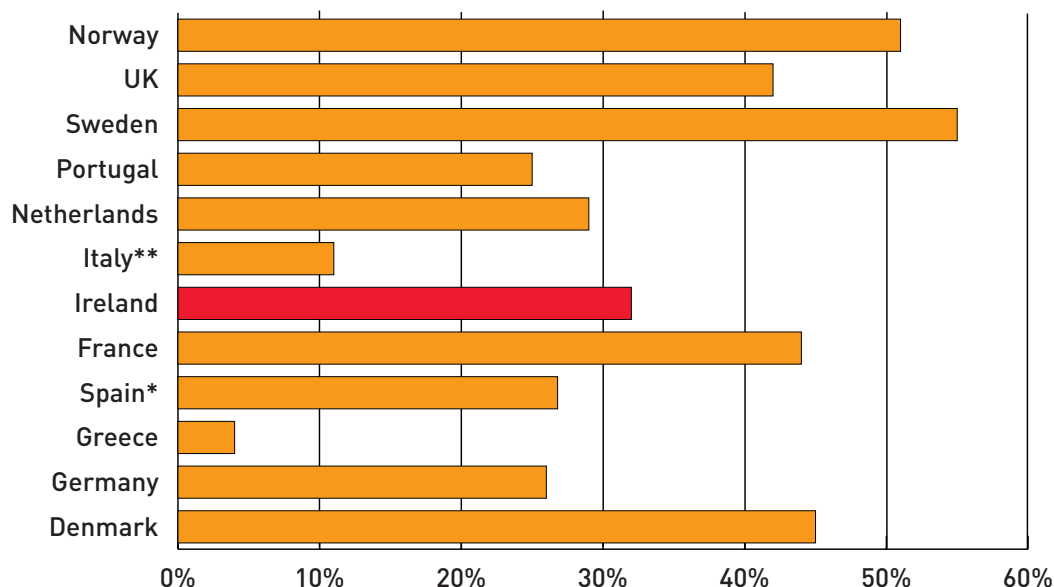
Source: CSO

2.8 Births outside marriage – international comparisons

Births outside marriage are more common in Northern European countries such as Norway and Sweden than Southern European countries such as Italy and Greece (see figure 2.7). More than half of all births in Sweden in 2002 took place outside marriage. This contrasts with Greece, where just 4.4% of births took place outside marriage in the same time period. However, as noted above, non-marital births do not necessarily mean solo births (i.e. births to someone not involved in a stable relationship).

- Births outside marriage are more common in Northern European countries than Southern European countries.

Figure 2.7 EU comparisons for live births outside marriage expressed as a percentage of all births 2002



Source: Eurostat. Data as available is presented.* Provisional value **Estimated value

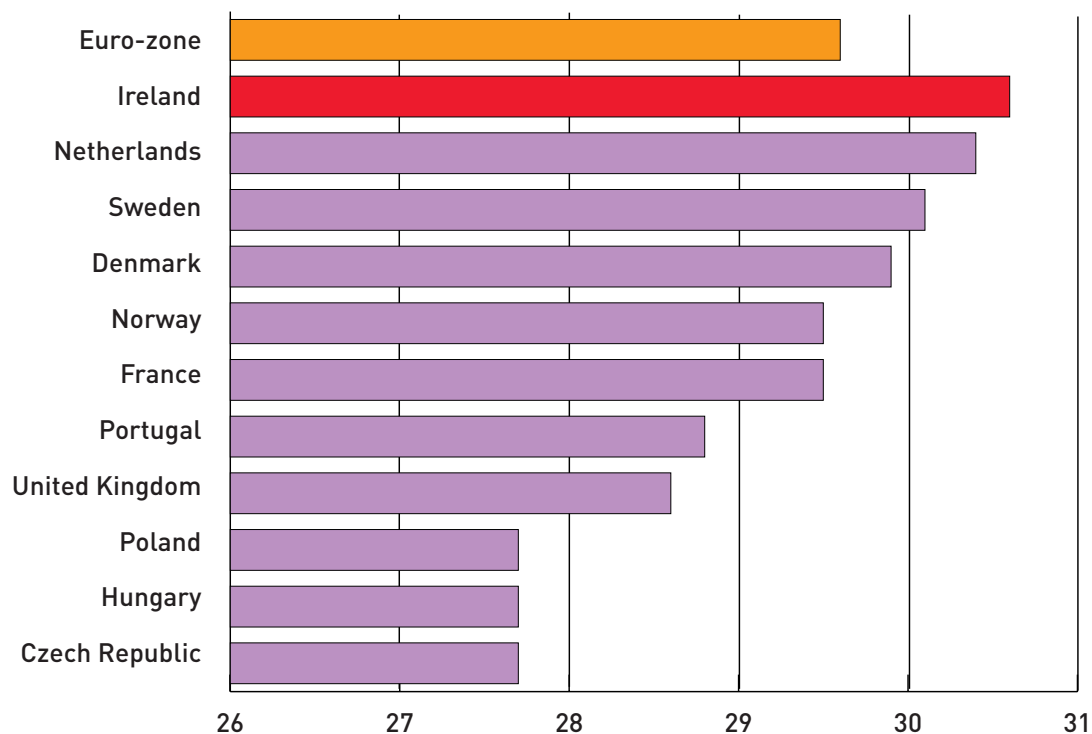
2.9 Average age at maternity

Comparatively, the average age at which women have children is higher in Ireland than in other European countries (see figure 2.8). The average age of women at childbearing in the EU was 29.6 in 2002, while in Ireland the average age of women at childbearing was 30.6. The average age at childbirth was 30.4 in the Netherlands, 29.5 in Norway and 28.7 in the UK.

The average age of women at the birth of their first child was 28 in Ireland in 2003. The average age of married women at birth of their first child was 30 compared to an average age of first birth of 25 for unmarried women.

- The average age at which women have children is higher in Ireland than in other European countries.

Figure 2.8 Average maternal age when children are born* 2002, EU comparisons



Source: Eurostat. *For a given calendar year, the mean age of women at childbearing is calculated using the fertility rates by age as weights (in general, the reproductive period is between 15 and 49 years of age). When calculated in this way, the mean age is not influenced by a specific population structure (number of mothers in each age group) and is therefore better for geographical and temporal comparisons.

3.0 Teenage fertility

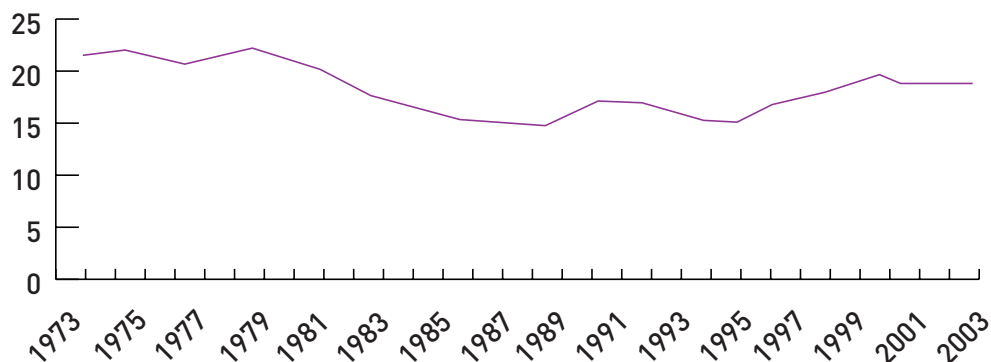
Teenage fertility is often voiced as an area of concern by both analysts and policy makers, and there is a common misconception that teenage fertility is increasing in Ireland. In this section, teenage fertility will be examined. Where used in this section, the term 'teenagers' refers to persons between the ages of 15 and 19. The rate is calculated as the number of births to teenagers per thousand of the population, aged 15-19. A very small number of pregnancies take place to younger aged teenagers, for example in 2003, just 2% of all births (58) took place to teenagers aged 15 and under.

3.1 Teenage fertility rate

The teenage fertility rate is the number of live births per 1,000 females aged 15 to 19. This rate does not include the number of pregnancies aborted, which are accounted for in the teenage pregnancy rate (see section 3.2 below). Notwithstanding a series of fluctuations in the teenage fertility rate over the last thirty years, overall there has been a slight decline in the teenage fertility rate from 22.4 in 1973 to 18.8 in 2003 (see figure 3.1). The teenage fertility rate declined almost continually between 1973 and the end of the 1980s. Since 1995 the rate steadily increased to 20 births per 1,000 in 1999. It has been concluded by Kane and Wellings who examined variations in teenage fertility rates over a 40 year period that Ireland's rate, like that of Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Switzerland has been "consistently low" when compared to other European countries (1999:6). That being said, Ireland's teenage fertility rate has been steadily increasing for the last six years, although it has still not reached the high of 22.4 in 1973.

- The teenage fertility rate in Ireland has been relatively stable over the course of the last 30 years.

Figure 3.1 Fertility rates (number of live births per thousand women) for women aged 15 to 19 in Ireland 1973 – 2003

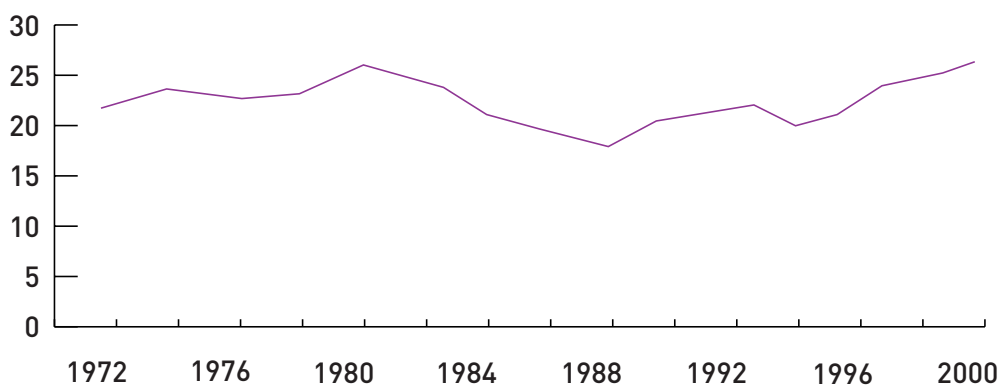


Source: CSO

3.2 Teenage pregnancies

The number of teenage pregnancies per 1,000 females aged 15-19 (the teenage pregnancy rate is an aggregate of the births and abortions¹) has ranged from 17.04 in 1970 to 25.66 in 2001. The teenage pregnancy rate shows a similar pattern to the fertility rates since the 1980s (see figure 3.2). It has been increasing since 1996 and is now at the level it was in 1980.

Figure 3.2 Number of pregnancies to females under 20 per 1,000 females in the population aged 15-19 years (agg. of births and abortions*) 1972 - 2001



Source: Hyde, A. and Howlett, E. (Nov 2000) *Understanding Teenage Sexuality in Ireland*. Dublin: CPA. <http://www.crisispregnancy.ie/pub/No.9-Reportinterior.pdf>

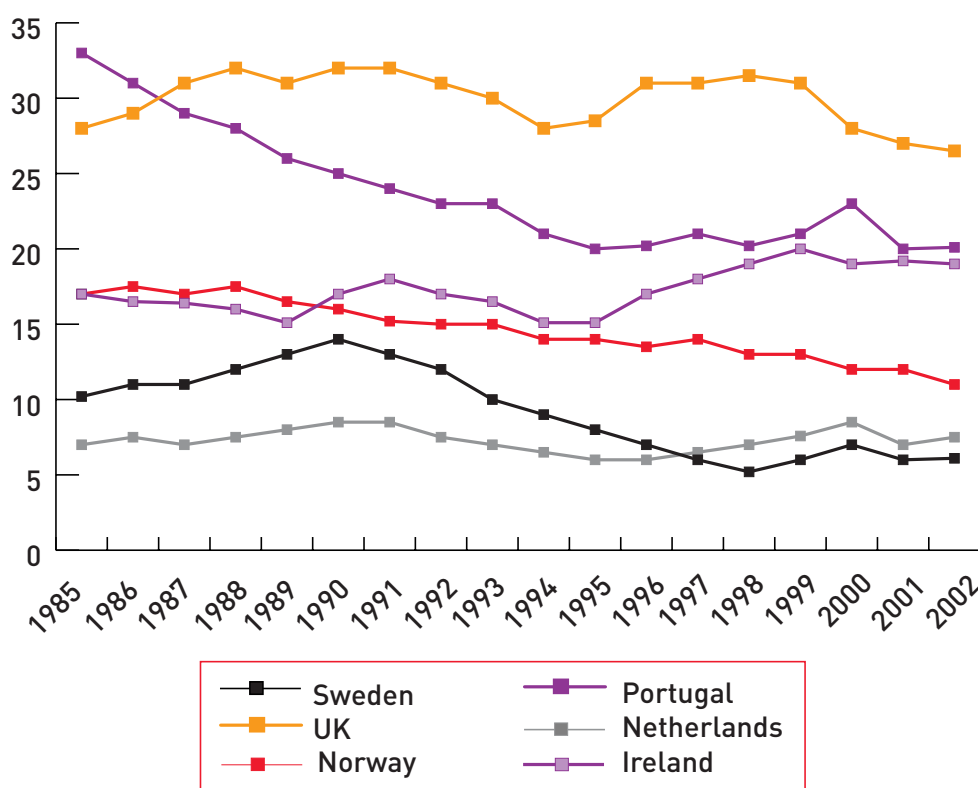
*Pregnancies per 1,000 population are compiled from an aggregate of the births and abortions.

¹ The abortion figures only reflect the number of teenagers giving Irish addresses at UK abortion clinics and thus the data in this regard is incomplete.

3.3 Teenage fertility rate – international comparisons

In 2003 the teenage fertility rate for the 15 EU countries was 13.64. In some countries the teenage fertility rate was low throughout the entire time period between 1985 and 2002 (see figure 3.3). For example, the teenage fertility rate in Sweden decreased from 10.35 in 1985 to 6.9 in 2002. Other countries witnessed a dramatic decline in the teenage fertility rate over two decades; teenage fertility rates in Portugal decreased from 32.87 in 1985 to 20.44 in 2002. The teenage fertility rate in Ireland increased from 17.34 to 20.42 in 2002. The teenage fertility rate in Ireland increased from 17.34 to 20.42 between 1985 and 2001. At 27.34, the teenage fertility rate in the UK remains high. However, it is important to note that the teenage fertility rate does not take account of abortions. For example, the low teenage fertility rates in Norway and Sweden are partly as a result of the high rates of teenage abortion in these countries (*see pages 27-28 for international comparison of the teenage fertility and abortion rates*).

Figure 3.3 International comparative data on teenage fertility rates 1985 – 2002



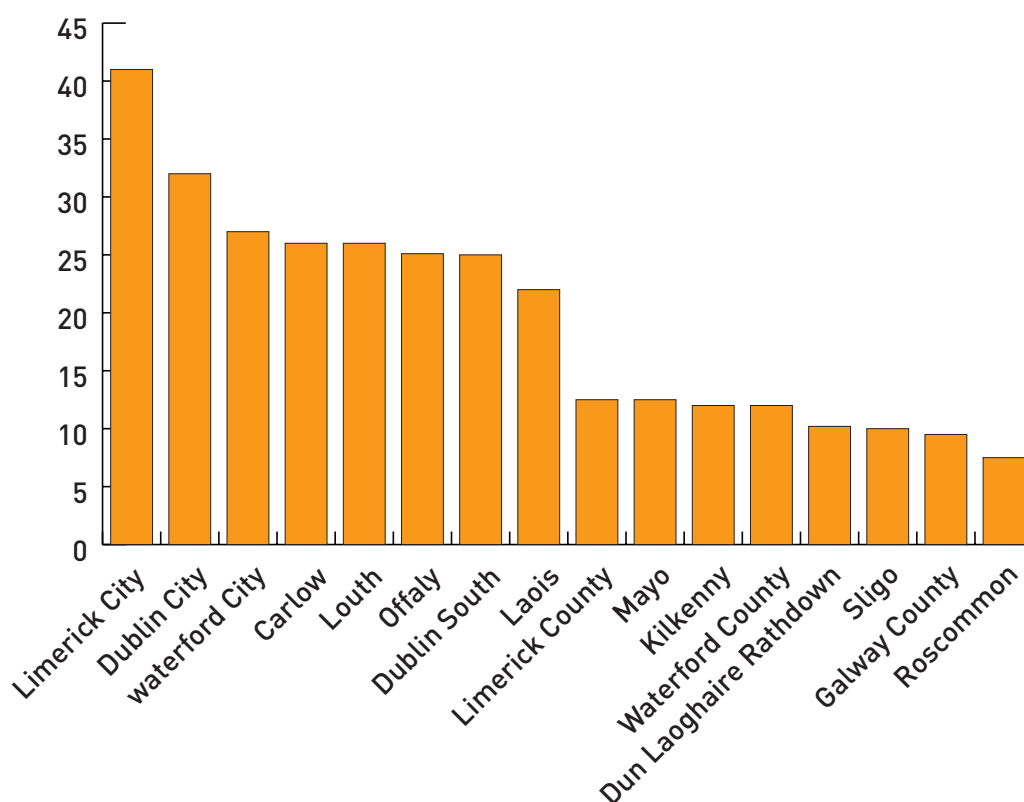
Source: Eurostat ("age in completed years" data)

3.4 Geographical variations in the teenage fertility rate

Geographical variations in the teenage fertility rate in Ireland can be observed. Figure 3.4 shows the age-specific fertility for females under 20 in counties/county boroughs with the highest and the lowest teenage birth rates in 2002. Counties/county boroughs with the highest fertility rates included Limerick City (40.9), Dublin City (32.1), Waterford City (27.2) and Carlow (26.5). Counties/county boroughs with the lowest fertility rates included Roscommon (7.2), Galway County (9.9), Sligo (10.5) and Dun Laoghaire Rathdown (10.7). Research in other countries has indicated a link between teenage pregnancy and deprivation, unfortunately there has been little investigation of this aspect of teenage pregnancy in an Irish context.

- In Ireland, teenage fertility rates are higher in Limerick City than in the rest of the country.

Figure 3.4 Age-specific fertility rates for females under 20 by area of residence of mother in 2002 (counties with lowest and highest fertility rates included in graph)



Source: CSO Report on Vital Statistics 2002.

Data is provided for Counties/County Boroughs with the highest and lowest fertility rates.

4.0 Crisis pregnancy, abortion and adoption

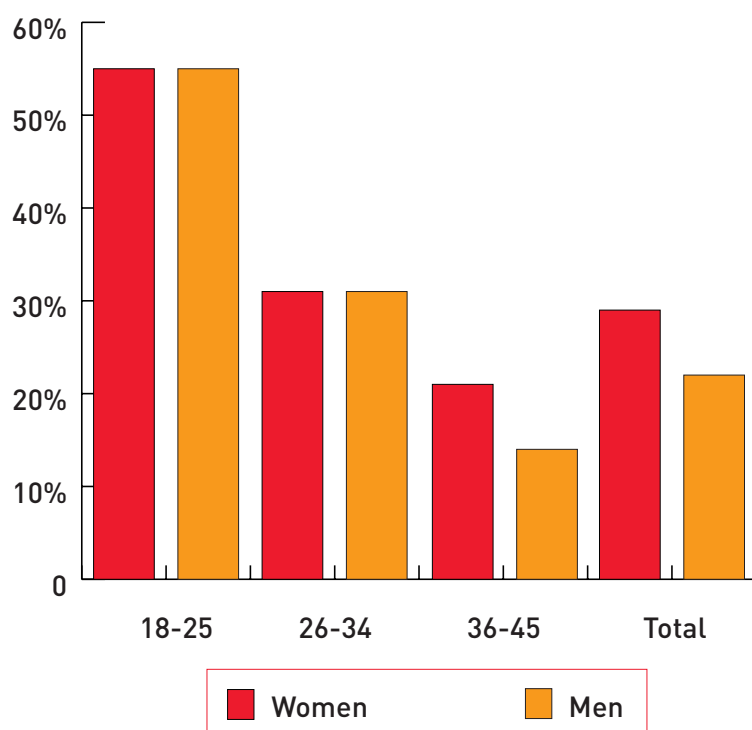
This section outlines current research on crisis pregnancy in Ireland, looking at data gathered by the Irish Contraception and Crisis Pregnancy Study (ICCP) on crisis pregnancy experiences. Abortion and adoption are often used as proxy indicators of crisis pregnancy; that is, they provide an indication of the number of crisis pregnancies experienced and also (along with parenthood) represent the outcomes of crisis pregnancy. Abortion rates are calculated by dividing the number of abortions by the population (in thousands). In this section both abortion and adoption are also examined. Regarding abortion, data on women giving Irish addresses at UK abortion clinics and the findings of the ICCP study regarding abortion are examined. International comparisons of abortion rates and of the teenage fertility and teenage abortion rates are also considered. Regarding adoption, information on adoption trends in Ireland is presented in this section.

4.1 Crisis pregnancy

The Irish Contraception and Crisis Pregnancy Study (ICCP) of persons aged between 18 and 45 (n=3,317) explored the issue of crisis pregnancy, noting that some 12% of all pregnancies experienced by women were defined as a crisis (Rundle, Leigh, McGee and Layte 2004). It was found that 28% of female and 23% of male respondents (with experience of a pregnancy over their lifetime) defined at least one pregnancy experience as a crisis pregnancy.

The ICCP study found that there were significant age group differences, with younger women more likely to have experienced a pregnancy as a crisis than older women (see figure 4.1). 55% of 18-25 year old women compared with 21% of those aged 36-45 with experience of a pregnancy stated that they had experienced a crisis pregnancy. Younger men were also more likely to have experienced a pregnancy as a crisis than older age groups, with 55% of 18-25 year old men but only 14% of 36-45 year old men with experience of a pregnancy stating that they had experienced a crisis pregnancy.

Figure 4.1 Participants who had experienced one or more crisis pregnancies as a percentage of all those experiencing pregnancy



Source: Rundle et al. 2004:126

Extended analysis of the ICCP survey revealed that women were aged 23.41 years on average when they experienced their first crisis pregnancy (Rundle et al. 2004).

The extent of crisis pregnancy in the Irish population was estimated in additional analysis carried out using data from the ICCP survey and CSO population statistics. This extended analysis suggests that, of a total population of 843,000 Irish women aged 18-45, 136,000 (16%) had experienced a crisis pregnancy. Table 4.1 below includes estimates of the number of women in the Irish population aged 18-45 years who have experienced crisis pregnancy at some point over their lifetime to date.

Table 3.1 Estimated total crisis pregnancy experience in Irish women aged 18-45 years

Age	Estimate of number of women with experience of a crisis pregnancy (%)	Total Irish female population (18-45 years)
18-25 years	27,000 (11%)	256,000
26-35 years	59,000 (19%)	311,000
36-45 years	50,000 (18%)	276,000
All women	136,000 (16%)	843,000

Source: Rundle et al. (December 2004)

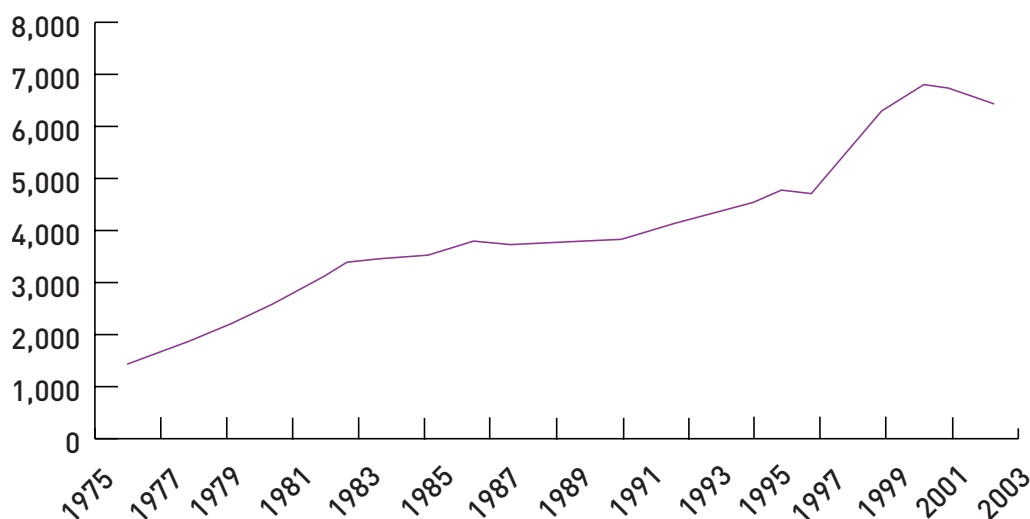
4.2 Abortion

Abortion data are often used as an indicator of unplanned and crisis pregnancy. However abortion is illegal in Ireland, making it difficult to ascertain accurate estimates of abortion for Irish women who must travel abroad to secure an abortion. Nonetheless, data on women giving Irish addresses at UK abortion clinics has been collected in the UK since 1975. Though these data are incomplete, they illustrate a substantial increase in the number of women travelling to the UK for abortions over the last three decades (see figure 4.2). In 2003, 6,320 women giving addresses in the Republic of Ireland had abortions in UK clinics.

The ICCP study (Rundle et al. 2004) examined the outcomes of pregnancy for those with experience of a crisis pregnancy. This study found that abortion was the outcome for 15% of crisis pregnancies experienced by women. 24% of men with experience of a crisis pregnancy stated that this pregnancy resulted in an abortion.

- The number of women travelling to the UK for abortions over the last three decades has increased. In 2003, 6,320 women giving addresses in the Republic of Ireland had abortions in UK clinics.

Figure 4.2 Number of women of all ages giving Irish addresses at UK abortion clinics 1974 – 2003.



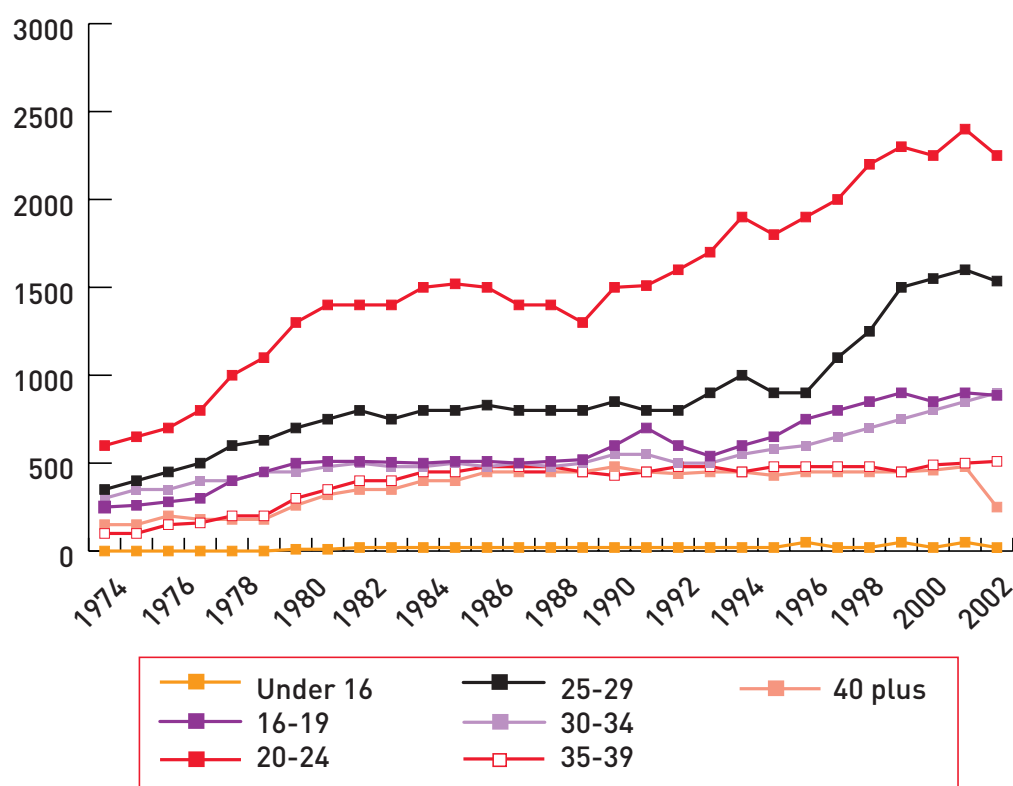
Source: NSO UK

4.3 Age-specific abortion trends

The graph below (figure 4.3) presents the age breakdown of women giving Irish addresses in UK abortion clinics between 1974 and 2002. Throughout this time period the greatest number of abortions occurred for women between the ages of 20 and 24. In 2002, out of a total of 6,522 abortions, 2,258 (34.6%) were to women between the ages of 20 and 24. Just 14.1% of abortions (916) were to women under the age of 20.

- Of women who give Irish addresses at UK abortion clinics, the greatest number are in the 20-24 year old age category.

Figure 4.3 Irish women* having abortions in the UK – age-specific trends 1974 – 2001



Source: NSO UK

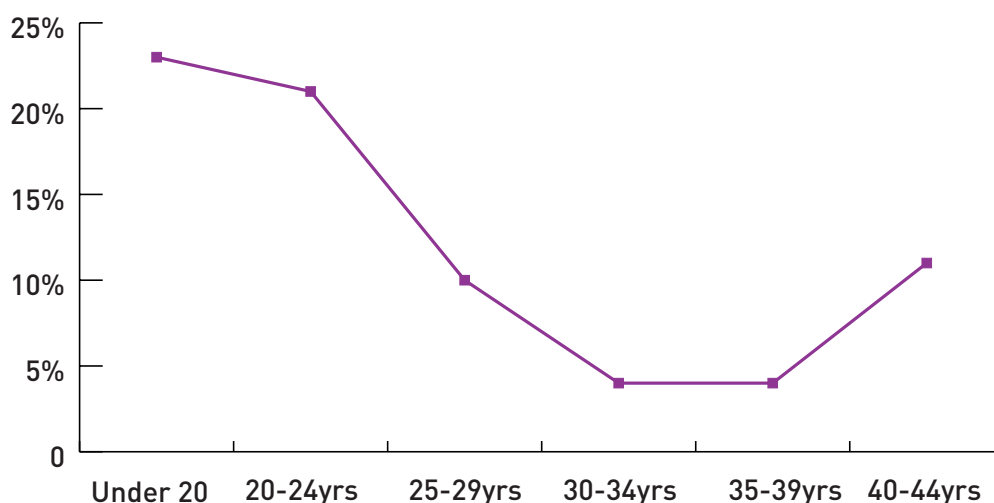
*Refers to women giving Irish addresses in UK abortion clinics; does not include women for whom no age was stated, which since 1985 has been less than two women per year.

Consistently, the greatest proportion of abortions with respect to the total number of pregnancies occurs to women under twenty years of age, to those within the 20-24 age range and to those over 40, a trend which produces a U shaped curve (see figure 4.4). Approximately 22.4% of pregnancies to those under 20 end in abortion, while 20.8% of all pregnancies within the 20 – 24 age range end in abortion. This contrasts with 9.9% of all pregnancies aborted in the 25 to 29 age range and less than 5% of pregnancies aborted amongst women between the ages of 30 and 39.

Findings of the ICCP study also suggest that younger women who experience a crisis pregnancy are more likely to choose abortion than women in older age categories (Rundle et al. 2004). Amongst women with experience of a crisis pregnancy, 22% of those between then ages of 18 and 25 opted for abortion, compared with 7% of 26 to 35 year olds and 8% of 36 to 40 year olds.

- The greatest proportion of abortions with respect to the total number of pregnancies occurs to women under twenty years of age, to those within the within the 20-24 age range and to those over 40.

Figure 4.4 Percentage of pregnancies aborted 2002 by age of mother

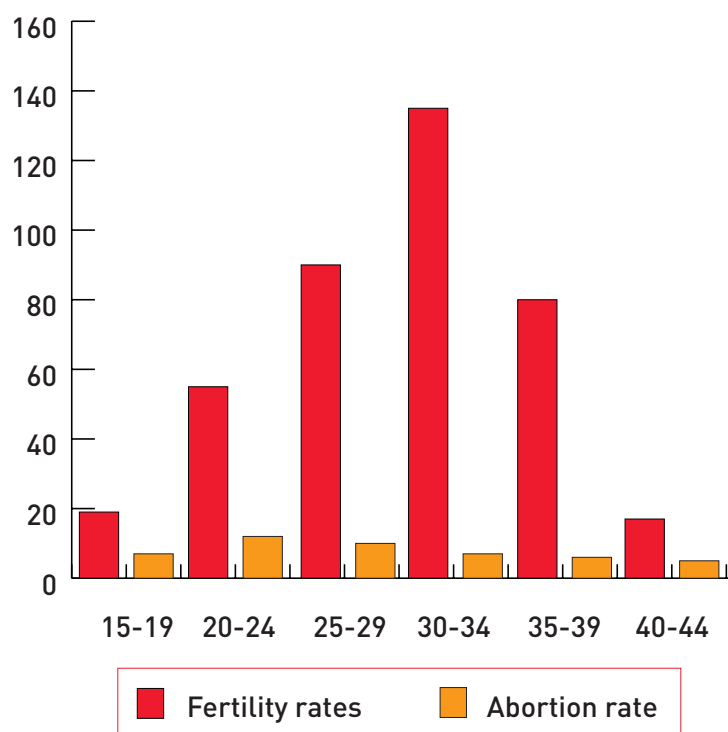


Source: **CPA Statistical Fact Sheet**

4.4 Comparison of age-specific fertility and abortion trends

The graph below illustrates the age specific fertility rates and abortion rates for Ireland in 2002. The abortion rates are calculated as the number of induced abortions occurring per 1,000 women in different age groups. In Ireland, fertility rates are lower for women under the age of 25 than those between the ages of 25 and 39. However, as illustrated below, the likelihood of a pregnancy ending in abortion is greatest for women between the ages of 20 and 24. This suggests that while women aged 20 to 24 are less likely to conceive, when they do conceive they are more likely to terminate the pregnancy than older women (see figure 4.5). The difference between the age-specific fertility rate and the abortion rate is greatest for women between the ages of 30 and 34.

- A comparison of age specific fertility and abortion rates suggests that while women under the age of twenty five are less likely to conceive, when they do conceive they are more likely to terminate the pregnancy than older women.

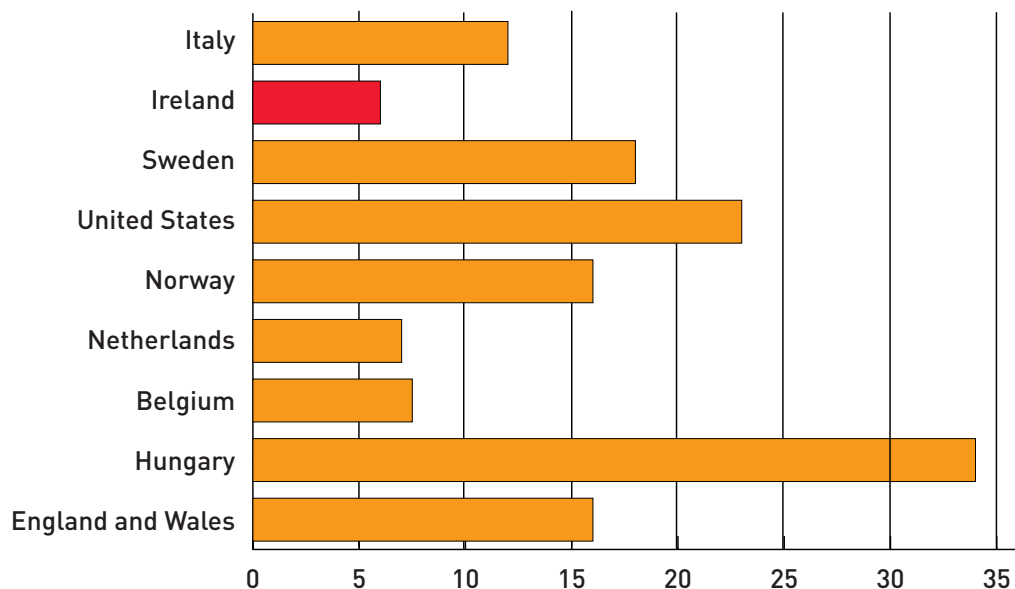
Figure 4.5 Difference between the age-specific fertility rates and abortion rates 2002

Source: Fertility rates have been sourced from the CSO. Abortion rates have been calculated based on the age breakdown of women giving Irish addresses in UK abortion clinics supplied by the NSO UK for 2002 and population data from the 2002 Census of Ireland.

International comparisons of abortion rates are affected by both coverage and laws relating to induced abortion; consequently, comparisons should be interpreted with caution. By international comparisons, Ireland has a low rate of abortion (see figure 4.6). The lowest documented abortion rates are found in Belgium and the Netherlands.

- By international comparison, Ireland has a low rate of abortion.

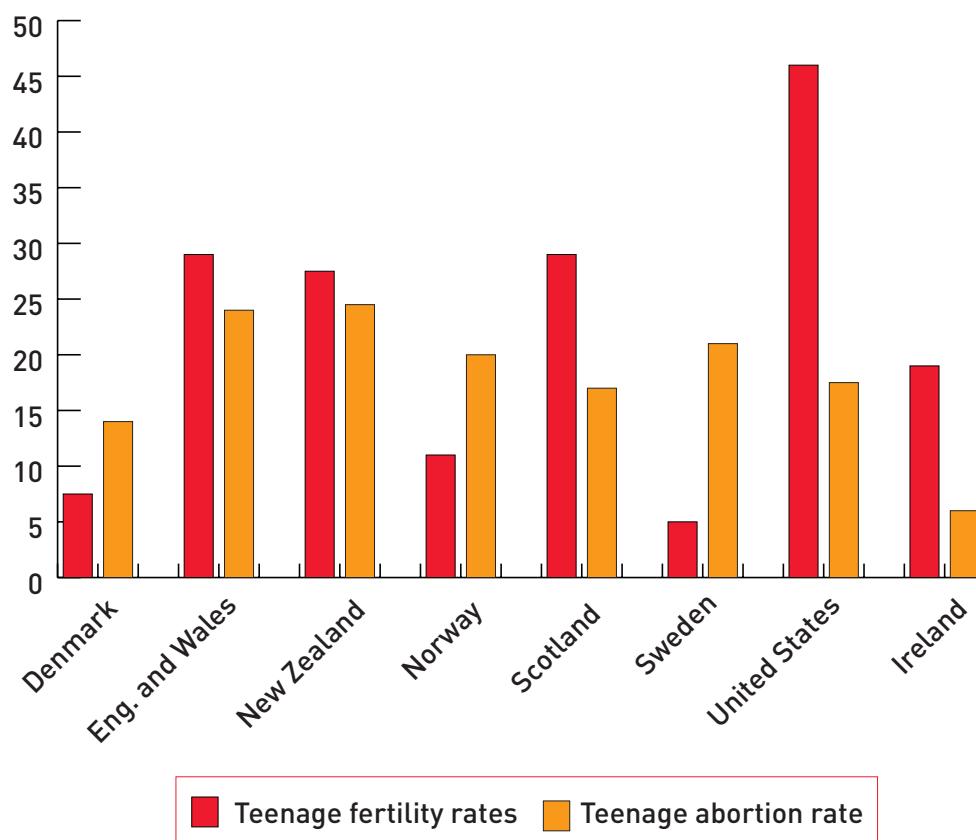
Figure 4.6 International comparison of abortion rates per 1,000 women aged 15 to 44 for 1996



Source: <http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/journals/25s3099.html> Data for Italy and Ireland are less accurate than the data presented for the other countries. The Irish data are based on the number of Irish residents who obtained abortions in England. The data presented can be considered minimum in all cases as it is unlikely that the abortion rates have been overestimated.

As noted above, while teenage fertility rates are low, the likelihood of pregnancy ending in abortion is greater for teenagers than it is for women in older age categories. However by international standards, Ireland has a very low rate of teenage abortion. The graph below (figure 4.7) illustrates that conception is less likely to result in abortion in Ireland than other countries, particularly countries such as Norway, Sweden and Denmark, suggesting that abortion is a likely outcome of teenage pregnancy in these countries.

- By international standards Ireland has a very low rate of abortion amongst teenagers aged 15 to 19.

Figure 4.7 International comparison of teenage fertility and abortion rates

Source: Statistics New Zealand

The teenage fertility rate is the number of live births per 1,000 estimated mean² for females aged 15 to 19. The teenage abortion rate is the number of abortions per 1,000 estimated mean for females aged 15 to 19. Figures are based on available data from 1998 to 2002. The Irish teenage fertility rate is sourced from the CSO for 2002. The Irish teenage abortion rate has been calculated based on the age breakdown of women giving Irish addresses in UK abortion clinics supplied by the NSO UK for 2002 and population data from the 2002 Census of Ireland.

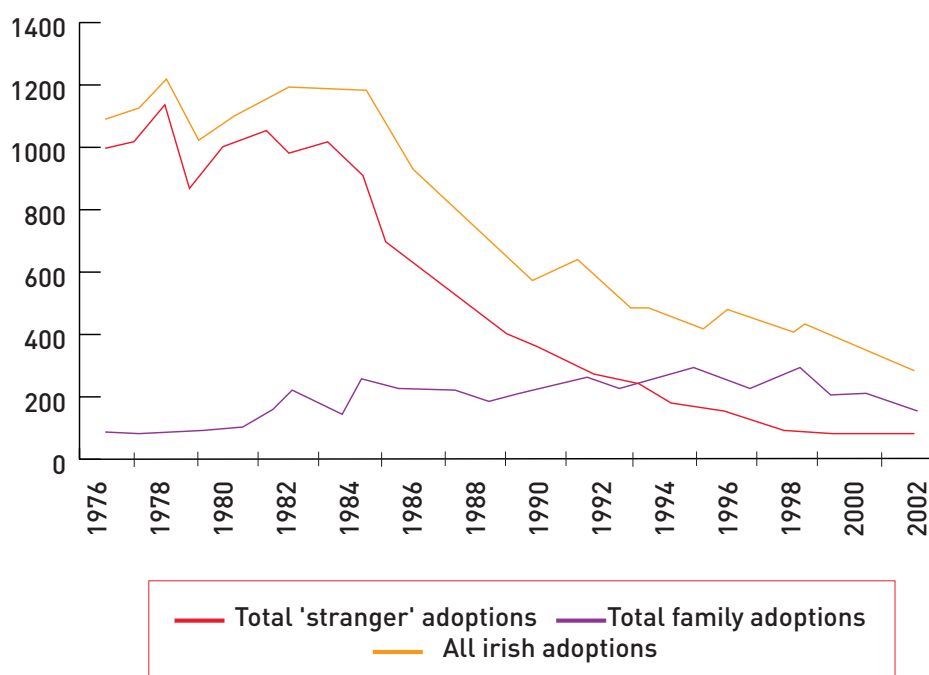
² Estimated mean is defined as the average number of people in an area during a given period, usually a year. This measure may be estimated in terms of a simple or weighted arithmetic mean of monthly or quarterly population during the reference period. If the mean population is unavailable, the population at the midpoint of the period is generally suitable for most purposes.

4.5 Adoption

The number of women who place their child for adoption outside their family ("stranger" adoptions) is often viewed as an indicator of crisis pregnancy. The number of Irish babies placed for adoption with non-family members declined dramatically over the last decades. Figure 4.8 illustrates trends in adoptions in Ireland over time. In 1976, there were 1,005 stranger adoptions in Ireland; by 2002, this figure had fallen to 99.

- The number of women who place a child for adoption outside the family ("stranger" adoptions) has steadily declined over the last few decades.

Figure 4.8 Trends in adoption in Ireland 1976- 2002

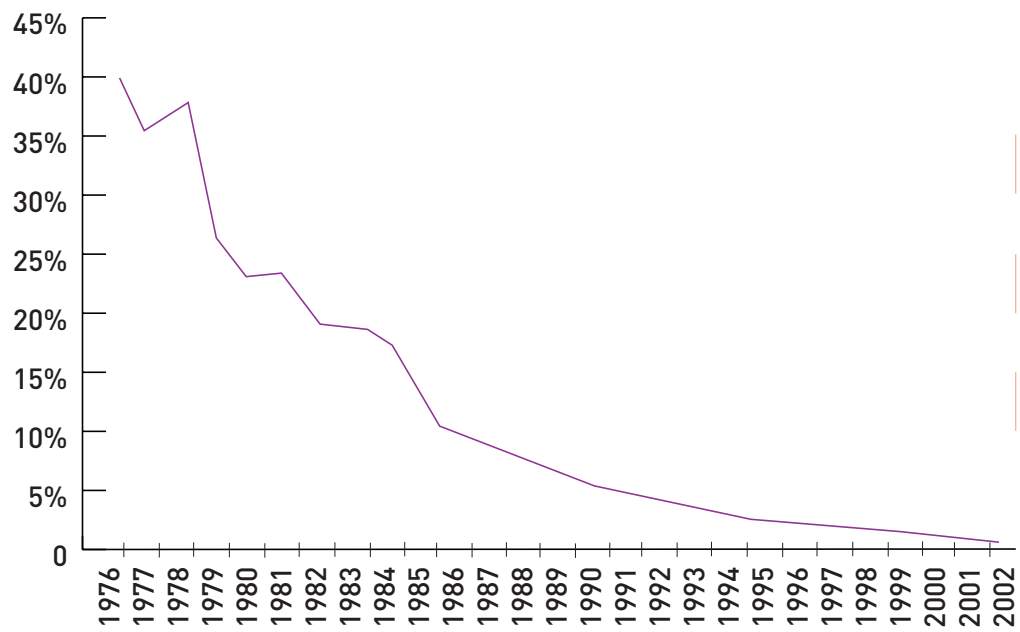


Source: Adoption Board

The proportion of births outside marriage that result in adoption has declined dramatically in Ireland over the last three decades (see figure 4.9). In 1976, 39.5% of births outside marriage resulted in adoption. By 2002, stranger adoptions represented just 0.5% of all births that took place outside marriage. The decline in the number of women having their babies adopted suggests that more and more unmarried women are choosing to keep their babies and that adoption is no longer seen as an expected or real solution to crisis pregnancy.

- The proportion of births outside marriage that result in adoption has declined dramatically in Ireland over the last three decades.

Figure 4.9 The percentage of births outside marriage that resulted in adoption 1976 - 2002



Source: Adoption Board

5.0 Conclusion

While there are a number of limitations associated with use of the statistics presented above, some tentative conclusions can be drawn from the data presented. Though still high compared with other EU countries, fertility has steadily declined in Ireland since the 1970s. Comparatively, the average age at which women have children is higher in Ireland than in other European countries. A greater proportion of births are taking place outside marriage. Trends in fertility, birth rates and family formation suggest that Irish women are having fewer children and are having children later in life than was the case in previous decades. These changing patterns are of interest as they may influence the determination of crisis pregnancy and are associated with the use of contraceptives. For example, delayed childbearing requires effective contraception usage among young women who are sexually active.

Statistics on abortion indicate that there has been a substantial increase in the number of women with addresses in the Republic of Ireland having abortions in UK clinics over the last three decades. The greatest number of abortions occurs to those in the 20 to 24 year-old age group. Abortion is more likely to be an outcome of pregnancy for those under twenty years of age, for those within the 20-24 year-old age range and for over 40s than for women between the ages of 25 and 39. However, Ireland's abortion rate is low by international standards.

The number of women who place a child for adoption outside the family ("stranger" adoptions) has rapidly decreased over the last few decades.

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Crisis Pregnancy Agency
4th Floor
89 - 94 Capel Street
Dublin 1

tel: 353 1 814 6292
fax: 353 1 814 6282
email: info@crisispregnancy.ie
web: www.crisispregnancy.ie

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