



Registrar General Northern Ireland Annual Report 2017

Publication Date: 7 November 2018



The General Register Office (GRO) for Northern Ireland is part of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA). NISRA is an Executive Agency within the Department of Finance (DoF) and has been in existence since April 1996.

GRO is responsible for the administration of the marriage and civil partnership law in Northern Ireland along with the registration of births, deaths and adoptions. The Office is also responsible for the maintenance of registration records and the production, on request, of certificates in relation to these events.

NISRA's core purpose is to provide a high quality, cost effective, statistics, research and registration service that informs policy making, the democratic process and the wider public.

The overall corporate aims of NISRA are to:

- provide a statistical and research service to support decision making by Northern Ireland Ministers and Departments and to inform elected representatives and the wider community through the dissemination of reliable official statistics; and
- administer the marriage laws and to provide a system for the civil registration of births, marriages, civil partnerships, adoptions and deaths in Northern Ireland.

NISRA can be found on the internet at www.nisra.gov.uk



Ninety-Sixth
Annual Report
of the
Registrar General
2017

Laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly under:
Section 34 of the Marriage (Northern Ireland) Order, 2003
Article 3(3) of the Births and Deaths Registration (Northern Ireland) Order 1976
Section 154 of the Civil Partnership Act 2004
by the Department of Finance

7 November 2018

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Foreword 2

Introduction.. 4

Population & Migration 6

Births 8

Stillbirths & Infant Deaths 10

Deaths 12

Cause of Death 14

Marriages.. 16

Divorces. 18

Civil Partnerships & Civil Partnership Dissolutions. 20

Adoptions, Re-registrations & Gender Recognition 22

Footnotes.. 24

Foreword by the Registrar General for Northern Ireland



It gives me great pleasure to present the ninety-sixth Annual Report of the Registrar General to the Northern Ireland Assembly.

The report draws on the work of NISRA's General Register Office (GRO) and Demographic Statistics Branch and provides an overview of Northern Ireland through the analysis of key life events such as births, deaths, marriages and civil partnerships that were registered in 2017. Detailed supporting information (both current and historical) continues to be available on the NISRA website, www.nisra.gov.uk. Should you require information that hasn't yet been published our customer services team will be happy to consider any requests you may have.

Following last year's relocation of the General Register Office and NISRA Headquarters to Colby House in Stranmillis Court, the new priority certificate service of '30 mins while you wait' has been welcomed by those that need their certificate in a hurry. We have, however, noted a reduction in the number of visitors to the Public Search Room. This is in part due to the terminals we have installed in the Public Records Office (PRONI) in the Titanic Quarter, where researchers can now look at all of our records and those of PRONI in one location. I'm happy to report, though, that those who do come to Colby House are staying longer and are very positive about the service provided by the GRO staff.

The functions of the Registrar General are often hidden from view but they form an integral part of key events in people's lives. Information from the registration service also plays a pivotal role in terms of supporting evidence-based decision making and the delivery of public services; informing

both regional and international comparisons; and underpinning NISRA's population estimates and projections, which are integral to the policy development evaluation work undertaken by both central and local government.

In presenting this report, my second as Registrar General for Northern Ireland, I greatly appreciate the work undertaken by the team of 11 Registrars and 77 Deputy Registrars located in the District Registration Offices across the eleven councils, and all the NISRA personnel involved in the delivery of civil registration services – without their collective commitment, professionalism and support the production of this important information simply wouldn't have been possible.

I trust that you will find the report both informative and useful. Your feedback on content and format continues to be welcomed.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Siobhan Carey". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Siobhan Carey

Registrar General for Northern Ireland

November 2018

The General Register Office (GRO) is part of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) with the Registrar General having overall responsibility for the work carried out by the GRO. GRO functions are set in legislation, the main areas of responsibility are:

- The administration of the births, deaths, marriage and civil partnership law in Northern Ireland through the District Registration Offices (DRO);
- Policy development, oversight and regulation of the DROs;
- Casework relating to name changes, registration of adoptions and re-registrations;
- The maintenance of and access to the online official registration records; and
- The production, on request, of certificates in relation to these events.

Main Activities in 2017 – January to December

- Over 61,000 life events registered through the DRO offices.
- Between January 2017 and December 2017 the GRO processed 83,377 certificate applications, a decrease of 9.86 per cent on the previous year. Over 35,500 certificate applications related to priority (fast-tracked) certificates, an increase of 24 per cent on the previous year. Just over 107,000 certificates were produced by the certificate production team in 2017. Although the number of applications did reduce it did not return to the pre Brexit vote position as had been expected.
- Different channels are used by the public to submit certificate applications. Online (which includes telephone applications) is now by far the most popular:

- ◆ Postal 4,817
- ◆ Counter 8,781
- ◆ Online 69,779
- Additionally, GRO processed over 2,300 registration related cases including re-registrations, adoptions, name changes and corrections.
- GRO shared information with Business Services Organisation, Electoral Office for Northern Ireland, Department for Work and Pensions, Department for Infrastructure and Department for Communities.
- Over 11,700 new accounts were registered on the GRO Family History website.
- There were almost 1.2 million searches carried out – the most popular being the basic index search¹ which accounted for 1.05 million searches. There were over 1.05 million credits purchased by online

users with almost 484,000 credits used for the enhanced² and full³ index searches.

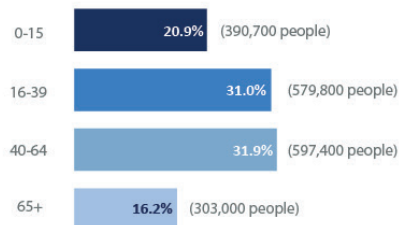
- On 15th February 2017, GRO moved premises from Oxford House in Belfast City Centre to new accommodation in Colby House, Stranmillis. The reception and search room are more welcoming and comfortable for our customers than in the older building. The historic registration books previously stored in Oxford House were moved to an offsite storage facility for safekeeping.
- There were 1,003 visits to the GRO Public Search Room in Oxford House and then in Colby House in 2017.
- In June 2017, there was an interim judgment requiring GRO to facilitate a civil marriage to be solemnised by a humanist celebrant. This was the first legal civil marriage in NI carried out by a humanist celebrant.

*see page 24 for footnotes

Population of Northern Ireland at 30 June 2017

1,870,800

Population by Age



Population by Gender

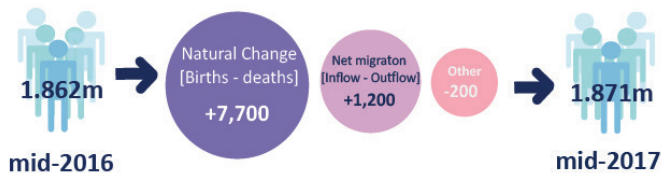


Figures may not always add up to 100% due to rounding
Source: 2017 Mid-year Population Estimates for Northern Ireland

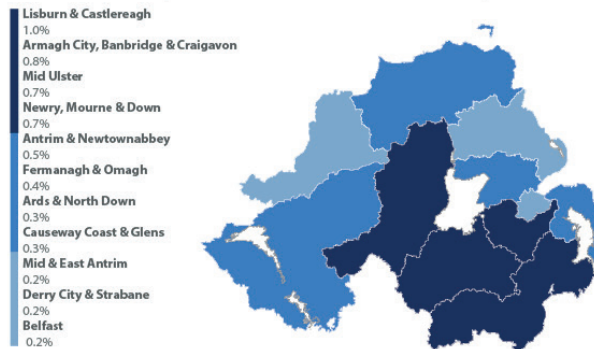
How has the population increased since 30 June 2016?

+8,700 people

(0.5% growth)



Population Change by Local Government District (Mid-2016 to Mid-2017)



In 2017:

- The population of Northern Ireland was estimated to be 1.871 million people, an increase of 8,700 people (0.5 per cent) from mid-2016.
- Natural change was the main driver of population growth, adding 7,700 people (23,600 births minus 15,900 deaths) to the population.
- For a fourth successive year the number of people coming to live in Northern Ireland (22,100) was greater than the number of people leaving (20,900), leading to a net migration gain of 1,200 people.
- The population continues to age with the number of those aged 65 and over increasing by 1.8 per cent to reach 303,000 people (16.2 per cent of the population). In contrast, the number of children aged 0 to 15 years increased by just 0.7 per cent to reach 390,700 children (20.9 per cent of the population).

- Each of the 11 Local Government Districts experienced an increase in population.

2016-based Population Projections:

- The Northern Ireland population is projected to increase by 4.5 per cent to 1.94 million in the next ten years to mid-2026, reaching the 2 million mark by mid-2040.
- Projections also indicate a continued ageing population here, with the number of people aged 65 and over projected to grow by 25 per cent in the 10 year period to mid-2026.
- The number of people aged 65 and over is projected to overtake that of children by mid-2028, with the proportion aged 85 and over projected to double by mid-2041 (up from 2.0 per cent to 4.1 per cent).

Births

23,075

births



11,898 males 11,177 females

Most common birth date



Average age of mothers



30.8 years

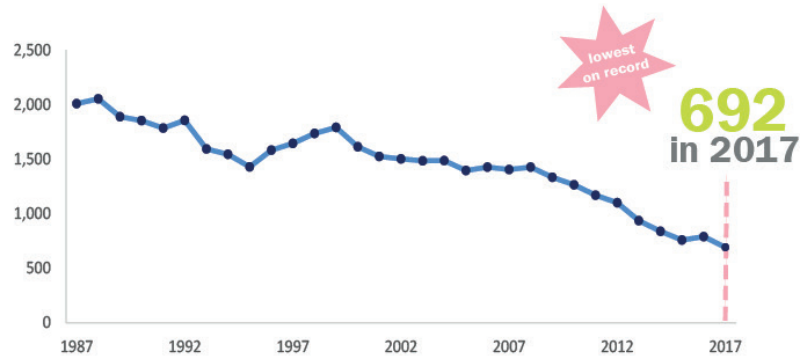
Most popular baby names

James
Emily



40% of births were to first time mothers

Trend in live births to teenage mothers



In 2017:

- There were 23,075 births (11,898 males and 11,177 females) registered to Northern Ireland mothers, 1,001 fewer than in 2016.
- The most popular name for boys registered this year was James whilst for girls it was Emily.
- September 18th was the most common birth date.
- The average age of mothers was 30.8 years. This compares with 30.6 years in 2016 and 27.6 years in 1987.
- 23 per cent of all births were to mothers aged 35 years or over, up from 11 per cent 30 years ago.
- Teenage births decreased from 791 in 2016 to 692. This is the lowest number of teenage mothers on record and is noticeably lower than a decade previously (1,405) and three decades ago (2,008).
- First-time mothers accounted for 2 in 5 of all births. Only 9 per cent of mothers already had three or more live born children. This compares with 15 per cent in 1987, reflecting the trend towards smaller family sizes.
- The average age of first-time mothers was 28.8 years, almost 4 years older than in 1987 (24.9 years).
- 43 per cent of births occurred outside of marriage, compared with 14 per cent three decades ago.
- Of the 22,860 maternities, 1.4 per cent resulted in multiple births with 309 sets of twins and four sets of triplets being born.
- 10 per cent of births were to mothers who were born outside the UK and Ireland. This compares with 2 per cent 20 years ago.

Stillbirths & Infant Deaths




102
Stillbirths

88
Infant Deaths



 This stillbirth rate
has **increased**
from 3.4 in 2016



 **47%**
of infant deaths occurred
in the first day of life

102 stillbirths registered



than the 2016 figure

88 infant deaths registered



than the 2016 figure

In 2017:

- 102 stillbirths (53 males and 49 females) were registered. This was 20 more than in 2016 and equates to a stillbirth rate of 4.4 per 1,000 total births (both live and still).
- Conditions originating in the perinatal period were the cause of 82 per cent of stillbirths, whilst congenital malformations, deformations and chromosomal abnormalities were the cause of a further 17 per cent.
- 88 infant deaths (i.e. deaths in the first year of life) were registered, representing a fall of 21.4 per cent on the previous year (112). This equates to 3.8 infant deaths per 1,000 live births and is the second lowest infant death rate on record.
- Approximately three fifths (63 per cent) of infant deaths occurred in the first week of life.
- 47 per cent of infant deaths occurred during the first day of life.
- Congenital malformations, deformations and chromosomal abnormalities were the cause of 42 per cent of infant deaths, whilst conditions originating in the perinatal period were the cause of a further 35 per cent.

16,036 deaths in 2017

Average age at death



74.0 years
for males



79.8 years
for females



2/3 deaths were of
people aged 75 and over

3.6

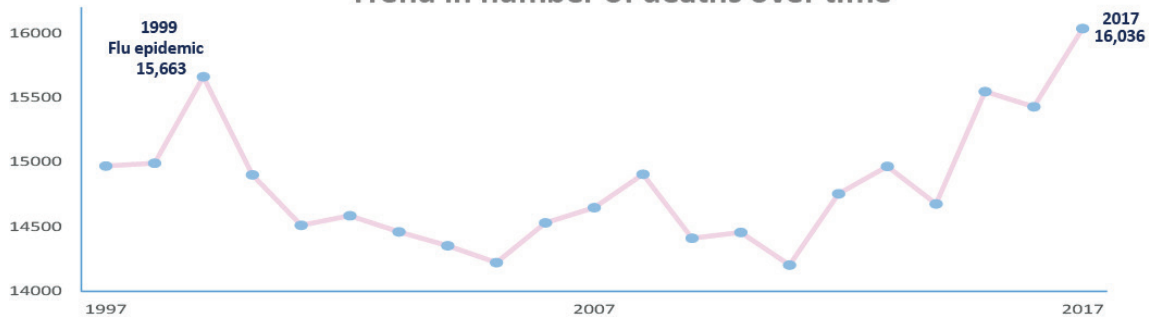
times

as many

CENTENARIANS

as in 1987

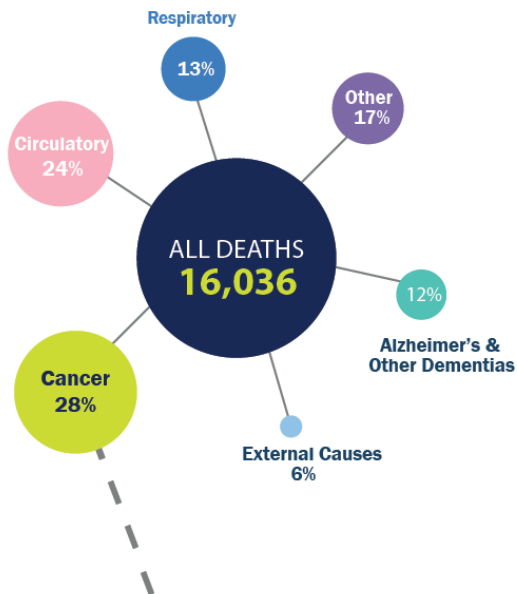
Trend in number of deaths over time



In 2017:

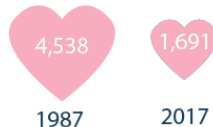
- 16,036 deaths (7,915 males and 8,121 females) were registered, a 3.9 per cent increase on the 2016 figure (15,430) and 2.4 per cent more than in 1999 (15,663) when the severe flu epidemic occurred.
- There were 103 female deaths for every 100 male deaths, matching the female to male ratio in the population as a whole.
- The average age at death for men was 74.0 years and 79.8 years for women. This compares with 68.3 years and 74.7 years respectively three decades ago.
- Approximately 2 out of every 3 deaths were of people aged 75 or over.
- Life expectancy for females (82.3 years) was almost 4 years higher than for males (78.4 years). This gap has however been closing, down from over 6 years three decades before.
- 47 per cent of deaths occurred in NHS hospitals, whilst a further 19 per cent of deaths occurred in other hospitals or nursing homes.
- Approximately 4 out of every 5 deaths in an NHS hospital was a person aged 65 or over.
- There were 144 deaths of people aged 100 or over, 3.6 times the number of 30 years previously (40 in 1987).

Cause of Death



**MOST COMMON
CANCER SITE
WAS THE
BRONCHUS OR LUNG**

Heart disease
↓ **63% over 30 years**

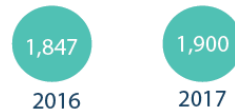


305 deaths from suicide*

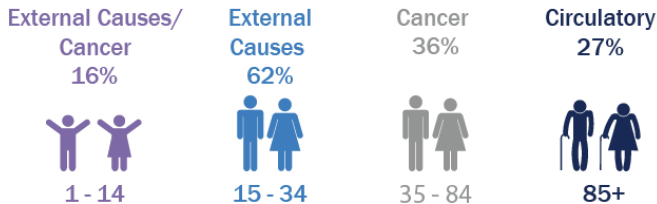
3% ↑

on the 2016 figure (298)

Alzheimer's & other dementias
↑ **3% on the 2016 figure**



Most relevant cause of death by age



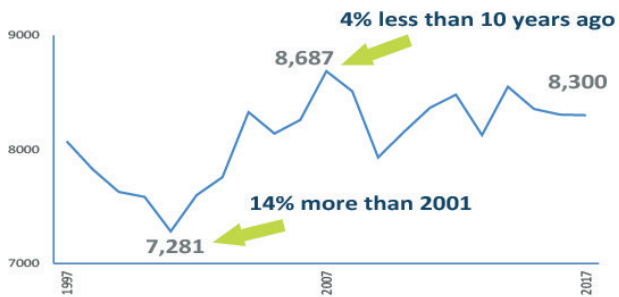
*includes deaths from intentional self harm and events of undetermined intent

In 2017:

- Of the 16,036 deaths, the leading cause of death was cancer (28 per cent), followed by circulatory disease (24 per cent) and respiratory disease (13 per cent).
- For both males and females, the most common cancer site was the bronchus or lung; the breast was the second most common cancer site in female deaths, whereas the prostate was the second most common cancer site in males.
- 63 per cent fewer people died of heart disease than three decades ago - 1,691 compared with 4,538 in 1987.
- There were 305 deaths registered due to suicide (intentional self-harm and events of undetermined intent), a 3 per cent increase on the previous year (298). Males accounted for over three quarters of all suicides (77 per cent).
- The number of deaths due to Alzheimer's and other dementias increased by 3 per cent on the previous year, from 1,847 in 2016 to 1,900.
- External causes of death (for example accidents, suicide) were the leading cause of death in people aged 15-34, accounting for approximately 3 in 5 deaths in this age group.
- Cancer was the leading cause for those aged 35-84, accounting for 36 per cent of deaths in this age group. Circulatory disease was the leading cause for those aged 85 or over.

Marriages

 **8,300** marriages



 **5,357**
RELIGIOUS MARRIAGES

 **2,943**
CIVIL MARRIAGES

Average age at marriage



34.8 years
for males



32.7 years
for females

Most popular dates



Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr
May	Jun	Jul	Aug
Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec



1,128 / 1,127

marriages took place in
July and August 2017, respectively

In 2017:

- 8,300 marriages were registered, equivalent to just under 1 every hour.
- While July and August were the most popular months to get married, Saturday 2nd September and Saturday 16th September were the most popular days to get married, with 102 couples having married on each of these days.
- Grooms were on average 2 years older than brides (34.7 years and 32.7 years respectively). Compared with 30 years previously, the average age of both brides and grooms increased by more than 7 years.
- Four in five marriages were first-time marriages for both partners, while for 7.3 per cent of marriages both partners had been previously married.
- St Eugene's Cathedral, Derry was the most popular religious venue for religious marriages, with 51 marriages having taken place there. The Belfast Registration Office was the most popular venue for civil marriage ceremonies.
- 18.4 per cent of all religious marriage ceremonies were held outside of religious buildings.
- One in two civil marriages (55 per cent) were held in a registrar's office.
- 12.3 per cent of marriages were of couples who both reside outside Northern Ireland.

2,089

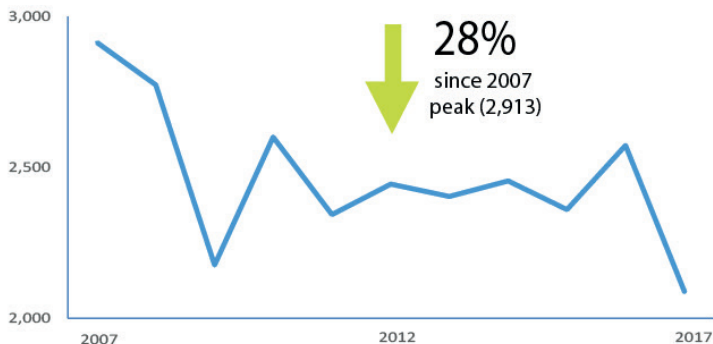
Divorces



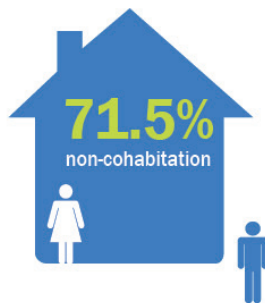
Average length of marriage at divorce



Average age at divorce



Grounds for divorce



Children affected by divorce



In 2017:

- There were 2,089 divorces granted. This was a decrease on the previous year (2,572), and 28 per cent lower than the peak number of 2,913 in 2007.
- Non-cohabitation remained the most frequently recorded reason for divorce accounting for 71.5 per cent of all divorces.
- Those marriages which ended in divorce had lasted an average of 18 years, compared with 14 years three decades previously.
- The average ages of the men and women concerned were 47.4 years and 45.3 years respectively.
- For approximately one in ten men and women who divorced (9.4 per cent), this was not their first divorce.
- 3,577 children/stepchildren were affected by the divorces that were granted, of which 1,500 were under the age of 16.

Civil Partnerships & Civil Partnership Dissolutions



92

civil partnerships



59%
female
partnerships

41%
male
partnerships

Most popular month

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr
May	Jun	Jul	Aug
Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec

16 civil partnerships took place in August 2017

Average age at partnership



36.7 years
for males



35.8 years
for females

Location of civil partnership ceremony



54% registrar's office

46% approved venue



13 civil partnership dissolutions



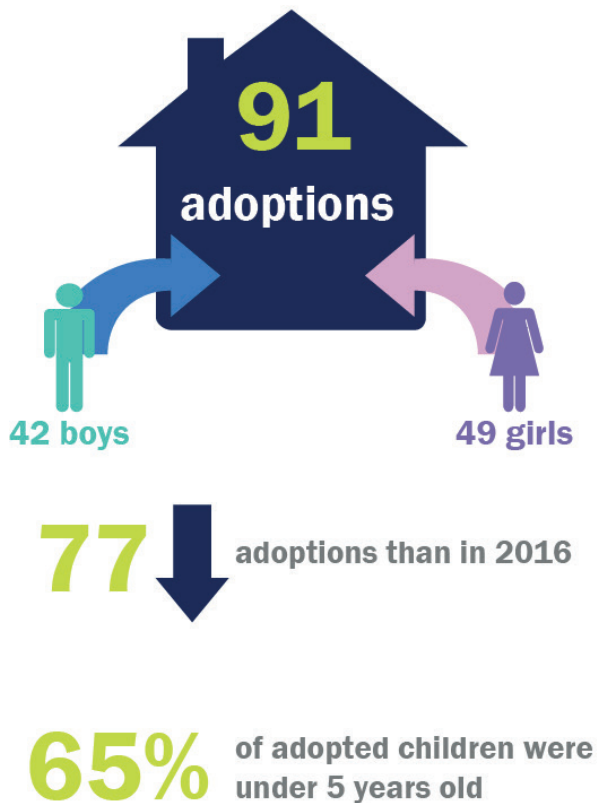
4 male partnerships

9 female partnerships



In 2017:

- There were 92 civil partnerships registered (38 male partnerships and 54 female partnerships), 8 more than in 2016.
- The average age of males entering a civil partnership was 36.7 years, while for females it was 35.8 years.
- Slightly more than half (50) of civil partnership ceremonies were held in a District Registration Office. The remaining 42 ceremonies were held in an approved venue.
- August was the most popular month for civil partnership ceremonies, with 16 being held then.
- 13 civil partnership dissolutions were registered; 4 of male couples and 9 of female couples.
- The average age of all partners dissolving a civil partnership was 43.5 years.



In 2017:

- 91 children (42 boys and 49 girls) were adopted, a decrease of 46 per cent from the 2016 figure of 168.
- The average age of the adopted children was 5 years.
- 59 children adopted this year were aged 5 or under. A further 24 children were aged between 6 and 10, with the remaining eight children aged 11 or over.
- 846 births were re-registered, five per cent more than the 2016 figure of 807.
- There were two adults in Northern Ireland who re-registered their birth with a new gender in the Gender Recognition Register.

¹ **Basic index search:**

Births – displays forename and surname, date of birth, sex, mother's maiden surname, registration number and district of registration.

Deaths – displays forename and surname of deceased, date of death, sex, date of birth or age at death, registration number and district of registration.

Marriages – displays surname of bride and groom, forename of either bride or groom, date of marriage, registration number and district of registration.

Civil Partnerships – displays surname of both partners, forename of either partner, year of civil partnership, registration number and district of registration.

² **Enhanced index search:**

Births – displays basic index information along with date of birth, district of birth, father's forename and surname and mother's forename and surname.

Deaths – displays basic index information along with date of death, date of birth and marital status.

Marriages – displays basic index information along with date of marriage, place of marriage, date of birth of bride and groom and age at marriage of bride and groom.

Civil Partnerships – displays basic index information along with date of civil partnership, place of civil partnership, date of birth of both partners and age at civil partnership of both partners.

³ **Full Index Search:**

View full registration details (image or data).

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All official statistics should comply with all aspects of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. They are awarded National Statistics status following an assessment by the Authority's regulatory arm. The Authority considers whether the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate.

It is NISRA's responsibility to maintain compliance with the standards expected of National Statistics. If we become concerned about whether these statistics are still meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss any concerns with the Authority promptly. National Statistics status can be removed at any point when the highest standards are not maintained, and reinstated when standards are restored.

All of the data in this report are available on the NISRA website www.nisra.gov.uk.

Any queries or requests for further information should be addressed to:

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