

Issued September 2007

# Marriage breakdown and family structure in Ireland

A report based on Census 2006



## Introduction and summary

It is by now a truism that Ireland is changing rapidly. This is reflected not alone in the rapid economic growth of the last decade, but also in rapid social changes. One of the biggest changes has occurred in the family. Until fairly recently, the vast majority of children were born and raised inside intact marriages. Today, a clear majority of children are still raised in the family based on marriage, but a growing number are being raised by lone parents or by cohabiting parents.

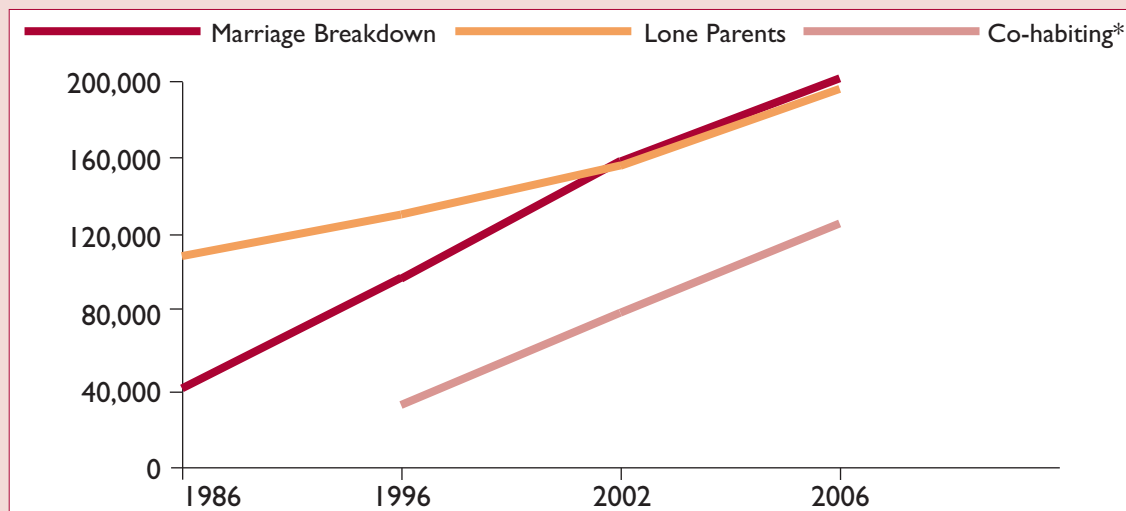
In addition, marriage breakdown in Ireland is increasing fast.

### In Brief:

- There are now 200,000 adults who have suffered a broken marriage. This is five times more than in 1986.
- There has been an increase of 80 per cent in the number of lone parent families since 1986 and the total now stands at almost 190,000.
- There are 121,000 cohabiting couples, up nearly fourfold in just ten years.
- The number of children being raised in non-marital families is now one in four, which is drawing close to American and British levels.

Drawing on Census 2006, and on previous censuses where appropriate, this paper takes a 'photograph' of the modern Irish family and compares it with the family of 10 and 20 years ago.

While the Lona Institute is pro-marriage and regards marriage as being demonstrably the best place, on average, in which to raise children, we offer only brief analysis of the tables, charts and maps presented here. In the main the data are left to speak for themselves. The changes to family life in Ireland, especially the growth in family breakdown, deserve scrutiny and analysis and it is hoped this short paper is a modest step in that direction.



\* Figures for co-habitation begin in 1996



## Marriage breakdown and family structure in Ireland

### Part I: Marriage and marriage breakdown in Ireland

**Table One: Divorce, separation and remarriage**

<b>Year</b>	<b>First Marriages</b>	<b>Total marital breakdown (incl separation, divorce and remarriage)</b>	<b>Marital Breakdown as a percentage of first marriages</b>
<b>1986</b>	1,295,064	40,347**	3.1
<b>1996</b>	1,340,631	94,433	7.0
<b>2002</b>	1,423,884	155,239	10.9
<b>2006</b>	1,523,527	198,592	13.0

\*\* (divorced in other country; divorce in Ireland not legal)

(Remarriage includes only those who remarried after divorce, not following widowhood)

It is clear from table one that marital breakdown has increased enormously in the past 20 years. In 1986, a little over 40,000 people had experienced a broken marriage. In 2006, the figure was just under 200,000. In the region of 10,000 will since have been added to that figure because this is the number of people who currently apply for a divorce or judicial separation each year.

Taking the number of people who have experienced a broken marriage and expressing it as a percentage of the number of people in first marriages, we see that the marriage breakdown rate in 1986 was 3.1 per cent and currently it stands at 13 per cent.

We are aggregating the figures for divorce and separation because only this gives a true picture of the extent of marital breakdown in Ireland due to the fact that divorce was only introduced in 1997. We also add in the number of people who have remarried, other than following the death of a spouse, because in order to remarry you must obviously first divorce.

## Marriage breakdown and family structure in Ireland



**Table Two: Marital breakdown by age group in 2006:**

<b>Age groups</b>	<b>First marriages</b>	<b>Separated, divorced or remarried</b>	<b>Marital breakdown as a % of first marriages</b>
<b>15-19</b>	941	94	10.0
<b>20-24</b>	11,955	790	6.6
<b>25-29</b>	68,685	4,073	5.9
<b>30-34</b>	162,898	11,918	7.3
<b>35-39</b>	200,568	23,898	11.9
<b>40-44</b>	204,324	32,919	16.1
<b>45-49</b>	190,347	35,603	18.7
<b>50-54</b>	173,188	31,656	18.2
<b>55-59</b>	158,265	25,457	16.1
<b>60-64</b>	126,278	15,827	12.5
<b>65-69</b>	92,061	8,775	9.5
<b>70-74</b>	65,973	4,523	6.8
<b>75-79</b>	40,044	1,895	4.7
<b>80-84</b>	19,696	800	4.0
<b>85 and over</b>	8,304	364	4.3



## Marriage breakdown and family structure in Ireland

**Table Three: Percentage of population currently married: by selected age groups**

Year	25-29	30-34	40-44	45-49	All adults
<b>1986</b>	55.8	75.8	82.4	79.4	59.6
<b>1996</b>	32.7	63.6	77.8	78.4	55.9
<b>2006</b>	18.5	47.0	69.8	71.6	50.6

**Table Four: Percentage of adults ever married: by selected age groups**

Year	25-29	30-34	40-44	45-49	All adults
<b>1986</b>	57.2	78.2	85.3	82	61.3
<b>1996</b>	34.4	67.6	84.3	84.9	59.5
<b>2006</b>	19.5	50.0	78.9	82.5	56.1

\*For the purposes of these tables 'adult' means anyone aged 20 and over

The most dramatic finding from tables three and four is the fall in the percentage of people aged between 25 and 29 who are married. In 1986, over half the population in this age cohort was married; today it is less than a fifth. Clearly, people are delaying marriage now in greater numbers than before.

Given this, and given that most married people between the ages of 30 and 35 are only in their first few years of marriage, one would not expect the marital breakdown rate in this age group to be high. Indeed, the figures bear this out. Married people between the ages of 30 to 34 have a marital breakdown rate slightly more than half the average, as shown by table two.

Similarly, those aged 65 and over come from a generation with more conservative attitudes. Married people from this generation are less likely to break up.

Those aged between 40 and 59, on the other hand, are considerably more likely than average to divorce or separate. There are probably two main reasons for the relatively high rate of marital breakdown in this age cohort. The first is that individuals in their 40s and 50s have been married long enough to encounter difficulties in their marriage which they might find insurmountable. However, if this was the only reason, then we would expect the marital breakdown rate among people aged 65 and over to be even higher because they have been married longer.

The second reason, therefore, may be the more liberal values of this generation which tends to value individual freedom and personal fulfillment very highly.

## Marriage breakdown and family structure in Ireland



### Part II: Marital and non-marital families

**Table Five: Number of family units by type**

Year	Married	Cohabiting	Single parents	Married couples as a % of all family units
<b>1986</b>	634,767	N/A	104,713	85.8
<b>1996</b>	646,421	31,298	129,116	80.1
<b>2002</b>	692,985	77,616	153,863	74.9
<b>2006</b>	742,177	121,763	189,240	70.5
<b>% change from 2006</b>	16.9	289.0 *	80.0	

\* Percentage change from 1996

Table five shows the growth in non-marital families. It highlights the rapid growth in lone parent families and in cohabiting couples. Lone parent families now number 189,240, up 80 per cent on 20 years ago.

Cohabitation wasn't even a recognised category in 1986 it was so rare; 20 years later there are 121,763 cohabiting couples, or almost a quarter of a million individuals. The increase in this category in the last four years alone is over 56 per cent. However, it should be noted that some of this increase is driven by immigration. Analysis of Census 2006 shows us that where there are high concentrations of non-nationals, there are also high concentrations of cohabiting couples. For example, 56 per cent of the population of the Rotunda B Electoral District of Dublin city is comprised of non-nationals, and 48 per cent of couples in this same location are cohabiting. This pattern is repeated throughout the country. One explanation for this pattern may be that many non-nationals are young and fall into the age cohort most likely to cohabit.

As the number of adults living in non-marital family forms increases, both in absolute terms and as a percentage of the overall adult population, marriage declines as a percentage of all families.

It should be noted that the slowest growing family type is the family based on marriage. While the number of lone parent families is up 80 per cent in 20 years, the number of families based on marriage is up just 16.9 per cent.

In 1986, married families made up just under 86 per cent of all family units. Today that figure is 70.5 per cent. However, this figure is still high and shows the decline of marriage can be exaggerated, or alternatively, that the increase in family diversity can be exaggerated.



## Marriage breakdown and family structure in Ireland

**Table Six: Percentage of children living in different family units**

<b>Year</b>	Married parent households	Lone parent households	Cohabiting parent household	Children in non-marital family units
<b>1986</b>	87.2	12.8	N/A	12.8
<b>1996</b>	82.0	16.5	1.5	18.0
<b>2002</b>	77.9	18.6	3.5	22.1
<b>2006</b>	74.0	21.0	5.0	26.0

**Table Seven: Percentage of children born outside marriage**

<b>Year</b>	Total number	percentage
<b>1986</b>	5,877	9.6
<b>1996</b>	12,484	24.8
<b>2002</b>	18,815	31.1
<b>2006</b>	21,295	33.1

The fall in the percentage of families based on marriage is reflected in the dramatic increase in the number of children being raised in non-marital family units, and in the number of children born outside marriage. The percentage of children raised by single parents or cohabiting parents has more than doubled in the last 20 years, from 12.7 per cent in 1986 to 26 per cent in 2006. This is approaching British and American rates.

It should be noted, incidentally, that while cohabiting couples make up 11.5 per cent of all families, they comprise just five per cent of families with children showing that most cohabiting couples don't have children.

## Marriage breakdown and family structure in Ireland



**Table Eight: Changing composition of households**

Households	1986	2006	Change (%)
One person households	180,793	329,450	82pc
Husband and wife (no child)	109,590	204,487	146pc*
Cohabiting couple (no child)		65,055	
Husband and wife with children	429,187	477,705	20pc*
Cohabiting couple with children		39,626	
Lone mother with children	66,156	130,853	98pc
Husband/wife/children with others	62,830	28,247	-55pc
Non-family households containing no related persons	28,444	64,144	125pc

\* (In 1986 there were very few cohabiting couples and they were not recorded separately in the Census. In this table, for 1986, therefore, 'husband and wife' is recorded simply as 'couples'. For the purposes of calculating the percentage increase in couple-headed households with/without children, married couples and cohabiting couples in 2006 are added together).

There has been a huge increase in the number of households without children as can be noted from table eight. This is a consequence of two factors. First of all, people, including married couples, are delaying having children. Secondly, and despite the rise until recently in property values, people can better afford to move out of the family home and into a home of their own compared with in the past. This helps to explain the 82 per cent increase since 1986 in the number of one person households.

It was recently and accurately recorded in the media that just one in five households in Dublin city consist of a married couple with children. However, taken on its own, this exaggerates the decline of the traditional family. Nationwide, three-quarters of households with children still consist of married households.

The decline in Dublin of traditional families is probably an indication of how family-unfriendly Dublin has become due to the price of property. It should be noted that in the commuter belt areas of Meath and Kildare there are twice as many traditional family households as in Dublin city.



## Marriage breakdown and family structure in Ireland

**Table Nine: Marital breakdown by region 2006**

<b>Region</b>	<b>Married</b>	<b>Separated, divorced, remarried</b>	<b>Marital breakdown as a % of first marriages</b>
Dublin city	143,723	26,064	18.1
Galway city	19,262	3,253	16.7
Galway county	62,186	5,974	9.6
Limerick city	15,734	3,057	19.4
Limerick county	48,905	5,081	10.5
Cork city	37,533	5,710	15.2
Cork county	139,315	15,651	11.2
Waterford city	15,018	2,576	17.1

### Part III: Marriage breakdown by area

#### Marriage breakdown is mainly urban and strongly associated with social deprivation

As one might expect, urban areas tend to have much higher rates of marital breakdown than those in rural areas. Limerick city, for example, has the highest rate of marital breakdown in the country. Almost one in five marriages there ends in either divorce or separation.

Contrast that with Limerick county, where the rate is just over half that. Similarly, in Cork city, the rate of marital breakdown is higher than that Cork county, although the disparity is less marked than in Limerick. Apart from a marked difference between rural and urban areas, there is also a discrepancy between affluent areas and areas of social deprivation within towns and cities. This will become clear in the map and tables which follow.

They are drawn from the relevant CSO data and the country's 3,400 Electoral Divisions. There are two sets of maps for each of the following: Republic of Ireland, Dublin County, Dublin City Council Area, Cork City Council Area, Galway City Council Area, Limerick City Council Area and Waterford City Council Area.



## Marriage breakdown and family structure in Ireland



The first set of maps show the degree of marital breakdown in the country. The second set shows the number of marital families as a percentage of all families.

In addition there are two tables for each of the above categories showing the electoral districts nationwide with the highest and lowest concentration of marriage breakdown and marital families.

Apart from the differences between rural/urban areas, and affluent/socially deprived, we also note a correlation between some of the family categories and the population of the immigrant community. This is particularly apparent in Dublin City and while marital status census data at Electoral Division level for the immigrant community was not yet released at the time of going to print, the national data corresponds with population clusters in Dublin City.

We will now look briefly at what the various tables have to tell us about the spread of marriage breakdown and marital families around the country.

### Marriage breakdown region by region

In this category the total in each of the 3,400 Electoral Divisions of all divorced and separated persons was calculated. To this was added those who had re-married, excluding those who remarried after widowhood. The resulting total was then compared with the numbers still in their first marriage and the resulting percentage was calculated and mapped.

Outside the cities there are very few areas where marriage breakdown exceeds 30 per cent. The vast majority of the country is below the national average of 13 per cent. Just over 1,700 of EDs (50.5 per cent) are under 10 per cent. Only the larger rural towns reach towards 30 per cent and only Castleblaney in County Monaghan exceeds it. There is also a small pocket in south-west Cork around Ballydehob which exceeds 30 per cent and the explanation for this may well be the comparatively high number of immigrants, particularly UK citizens, in this area.

It is in the cities of Dublin, Cork, Limerick and Waterford that marriage breakdown is a major issue. Every Electoral Division where marriage breakdown or re-marriage exceeds one third of those in their first marriage is in these cities.

The Shannon B ED in Limerick City, admittedly a small district, has 57 people either divorced, separated or re-married compared to 82 in their first marriage, an extraordinary 69.5 per cent. Custom House A in Waterford City has 61.2 per cent. Indeed Waterford City has 4 ED's in the top 11 and 7 overall in those 32 ED's nationally that exceed 33 per cent.

In Dublin all of the high percentage ED's are either in the inner city, Ballymun or in one instance Blanchardstown. The Blanchardstown ED of Tyrellstown is largely a working class area and 25 per cent of its population is non national. In Ballymun non-national levels are less than 10 per cent and the high



## Marriage breakdown and family structure in Ireland

incidence of marriage breakdown relates primarily to the indigenous Irish population. In Ballymun D, there are 506 people in first marriages and 283 who have experienced a broken marriage leading to a breakdown rate of 55 per cent. In the county area of Dublin, Dun Laoghaire has the highest instance of breakdown.

The inner city needs to be considered separately. There are 37 ED's in the inner city area of Dublin. In 23 of these the non-national population exceeds 30 per cent. Five of the 23 exceed 50 per cent and a further 11 are between 40 and 50 per cent. At the time of going to print, detailed, area by area figures were not available in regard to non-national marriage breakdown it cannot be stated definitively that non-nationals are the major contributor to the high instance of marriage breakdown in the inner city. However the national figures available suggest that this is the case, as 23.6 per cent of all non-nationals are either divorced, separated or re-married as a percentage of non-nationals in first marriages. Furthermore 27.5 per cent of all divorced people in the State are non-national. The other relevant factor is the redevelopment of the inner city area, particularly apartments on the Quays. There may be high numbers of separated people living here and these may well be professionals separated, living near their workplace.

The Cork City situation is very similar to Dublin with high levels of non-nationals, working class areas and inner city redevelopment.

In Limerick City the Galvone and Prospect outer city areas are predominately working class with low levels of non-nationals. On the other hand the Shannon, Abbey and Custom House inner city areas have over 30% non national population and heavily redeveloped areas.

### **Marital families region by region**

The analysis in this category was done by calculating the total of husband and wives, with or without children in each ED and taking that figure as a percentage of all families in each ED, as distinct from all households in each ED.

784 (23 per cent) of all 3,400 ED's have less than 50 per cent marital families. The areas with the lowest percentages of marital families are a replica of those that have the highest levels of marriage breakdown. Of the 27 ED's with less than 40 per cent marital families 20 are in Dublin City, four in Limerick City, two in Waterford City and one in Cork City.

While the inner city areas of Dublin appear again, Priorswood, Ballymun and Tallaght-Fettercairn have very low percentages of marital families. These outer city working class areas have low numbers of non-nationals.

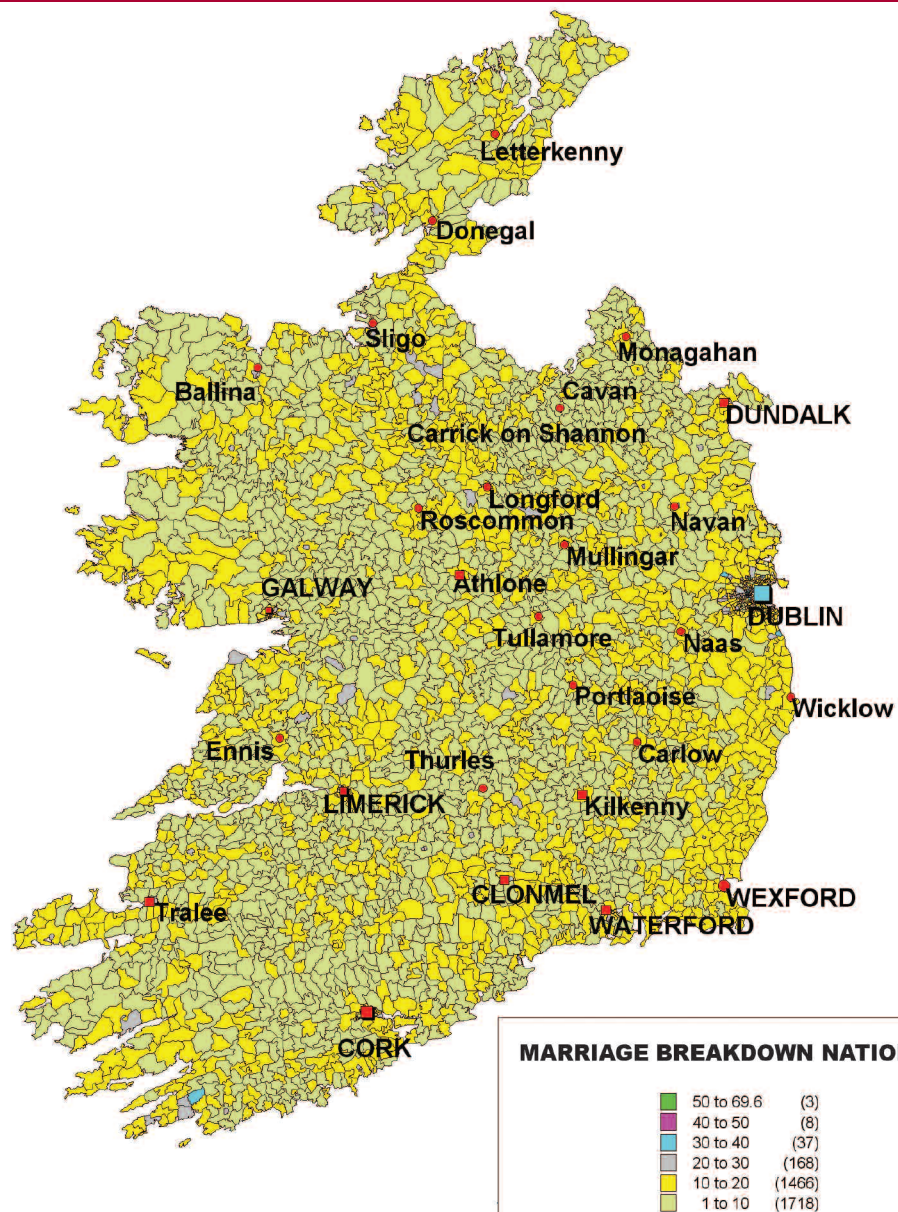
In Limerick and Waterford the same ED's that had high levels of marriage breakdown are in the top 27 with lowest marital families.

There are 33 ED's with marital families accounting for over 90 per cent of all families and every one is in a rural area.

## Marriage breakdown and family structure in Ireland



### MARRIAGE BREAKDOWN % OF THOSE STILL IN FIRST MARRIAGE BY ELECTORAL DIVISION

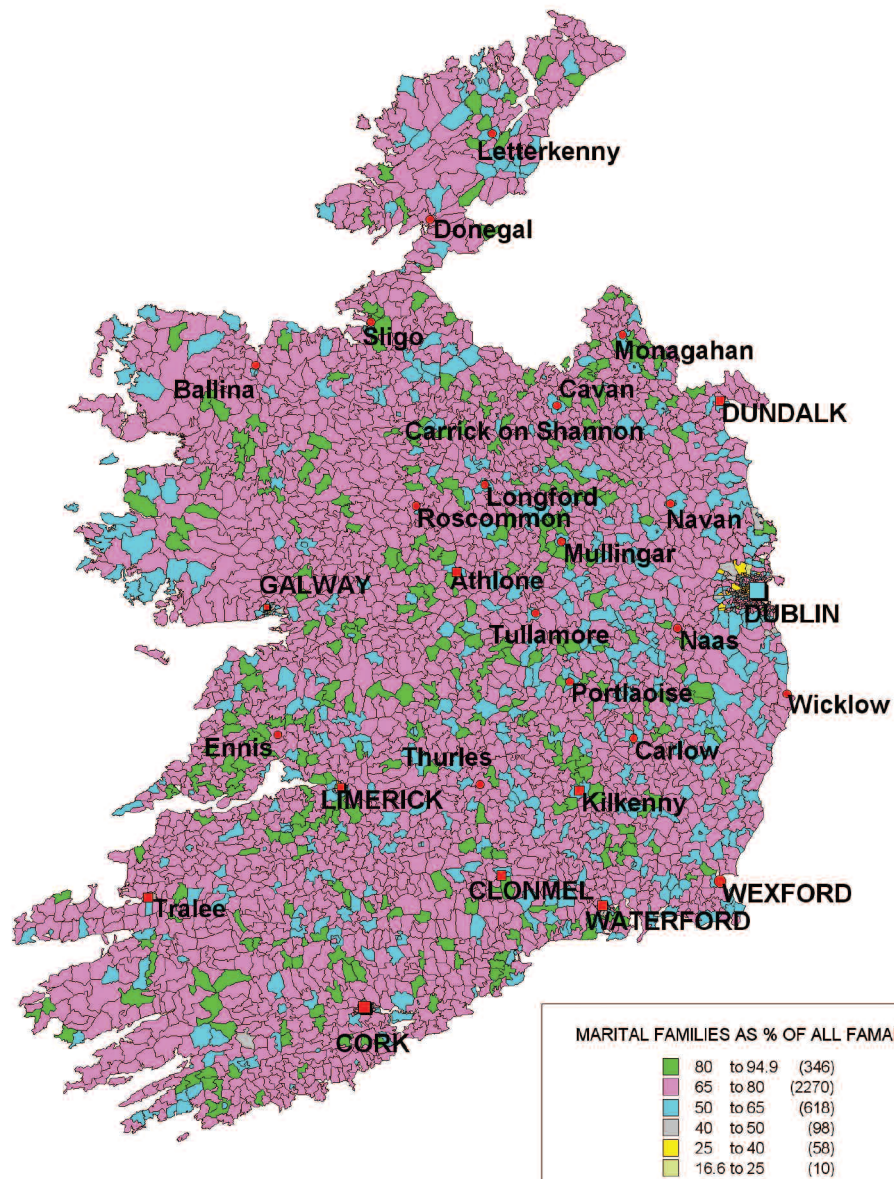


MAPS BY DEMOGRAPHIC SOLUTIONS

BASED ON CSO 2006 CENSUS FIGURES

## Marriage breakdown and family structure in Ireland

### MARITAL FAMILIES AS % OF ALL FAMILIES BY ELECTORAL DIVISION



MAPS BY DEMOGRAPHIC SOLUTIONS

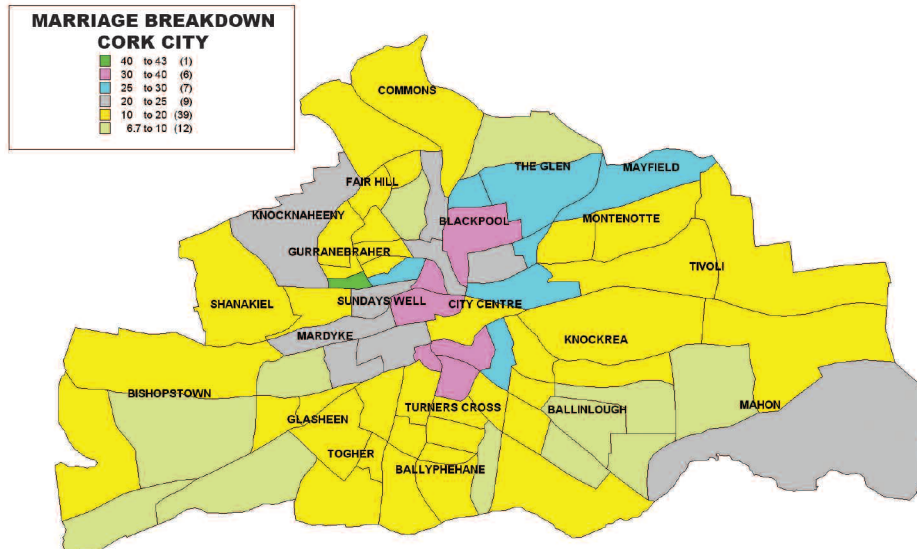
BASED ON CSO 2006 CENSUS FIGURES



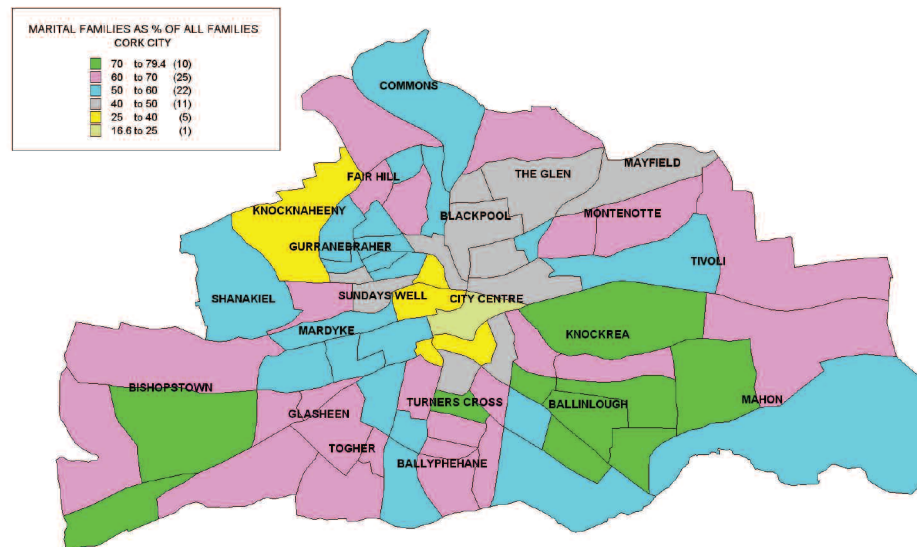
## Marriage breakdown and family structure in Ireland



### MARRIAGE BREAKDOWN AS % OF FIRST MARRIAGES CORK CITY



### MARITAL FAMILIES AS % OF ALL FAMILIES – CORK CITY

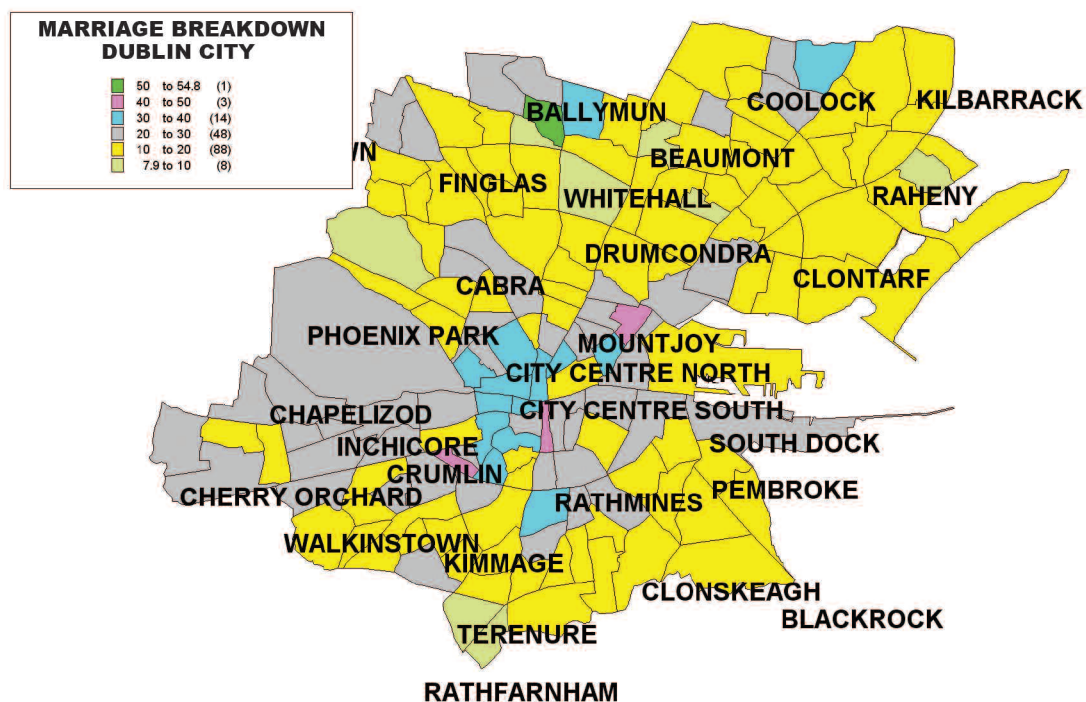


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## Marriage breakdown and family structure in Ireland

### MARRIAGE BREAKDOWN AS % OF FIRST MARRIAGES DUBLIN CITY



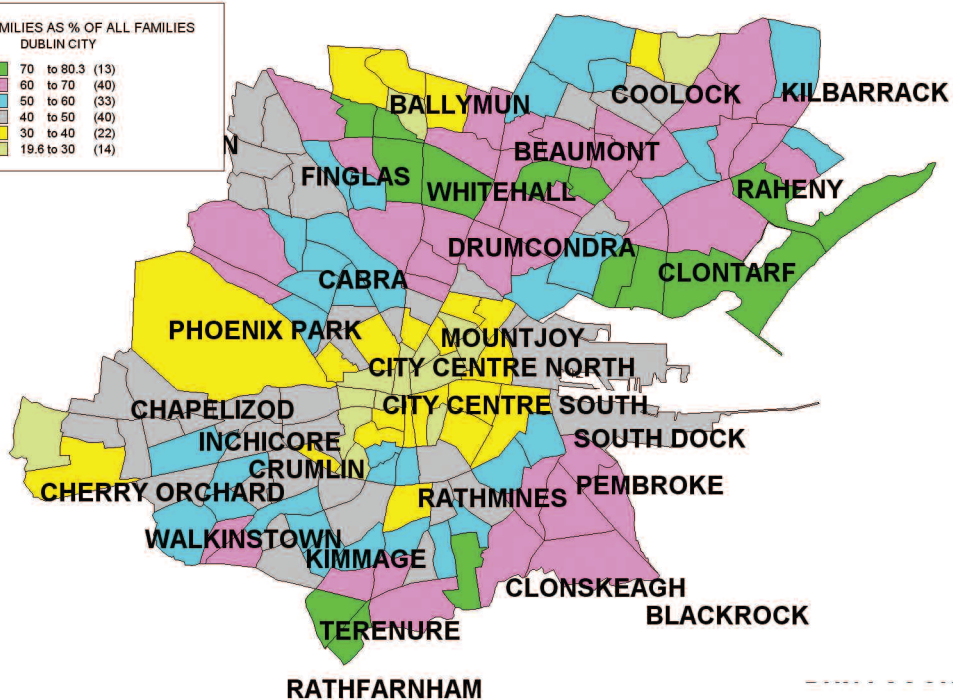
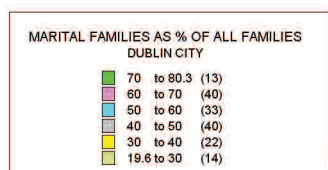
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## Marriage breakdown and family structure in Ireland



### MARITAL FAMILIES AS % OF ALL FAMILIES – DUBLIN CITY



MAPS BY DEMOGRAPHIC SOLUTIONS

BASED ON CSO 2006 CENSUS FIGURES



## Marriage breakdown and family structure in Ireland

## MARRIAGE BREAKDOWN AS % OF FIRST MARRIAGES DUBLIN COUNTY



### MARRIAGE BREAKDOWN DUBLIN COUNTY

50 to 54.8	(1)
40 to 50	(3)
30 to 40	(15)
20 to 30	(62)
10 to 20	(192)
5.8 to 10	(49)

## MAPS BY DEMOGRAPHIC SOLUTIONS

BASED ON CSO 2006 CENSUS FIGURES



## Marriage breakdown and family structure in Ireland



### MARITAL FAMILIES AS % OF ALL FAMILIES – DUBLIN COUNTY



MARITAL FAMILIES AS% OF ALL FAMILIES  
DUBLIN COUNTY

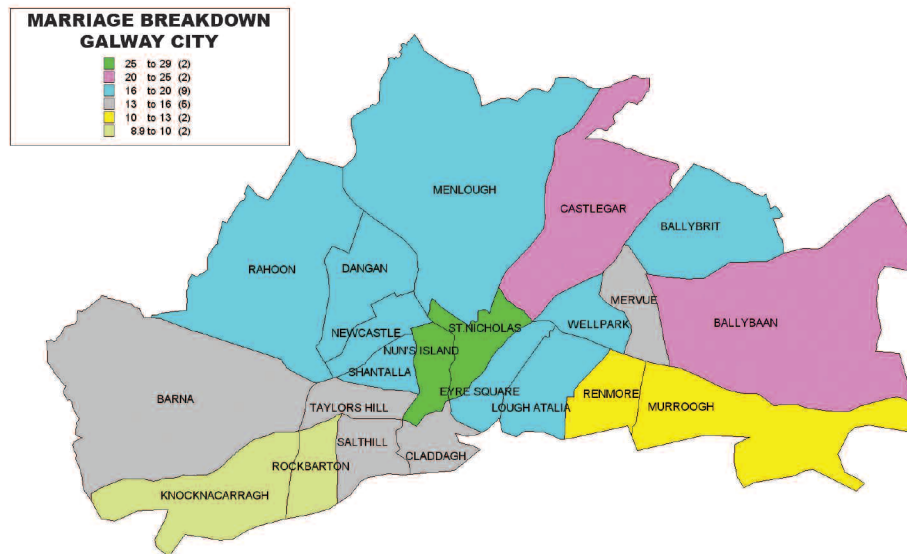
75 to 85.4	(44)
60 to 75	(128)
50 to 60	(55)
40 to 50	(52)
30 to 40	(28)
19.6 to 30	(15)

MAPS BY DEMOGRAPHIC SOLUTIONS

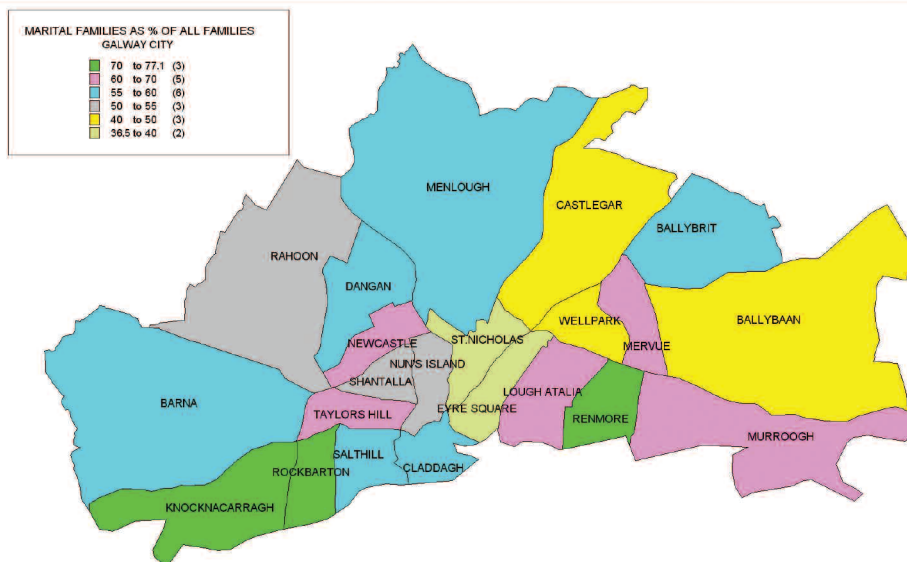
BASED ON CSO 2006 CENSUS FIGURES

## Marriage breakdown and family structure in Ireland

### MARRIAGE BREAKDOWN AS % OF FIRST MARRIAGES GALWAY CITY



### MARITAL FAMILIES AS % OF ALL FAMILIES – GALWAY CITY



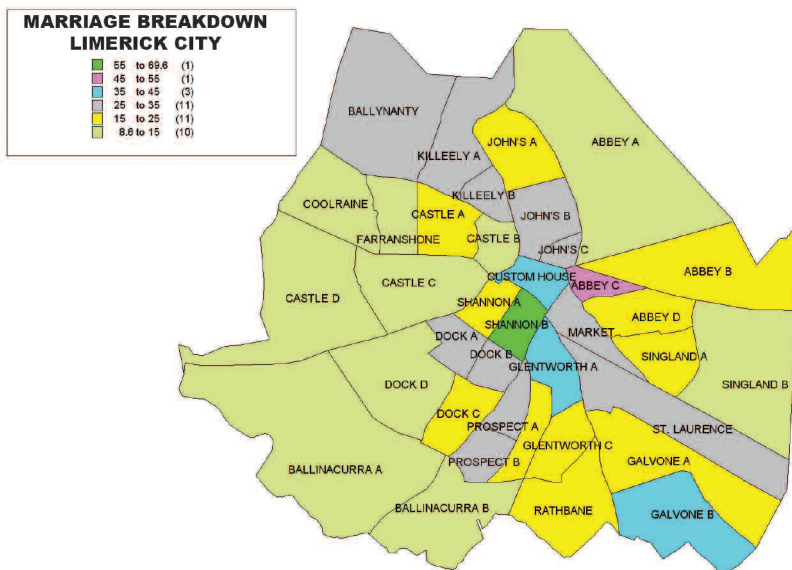
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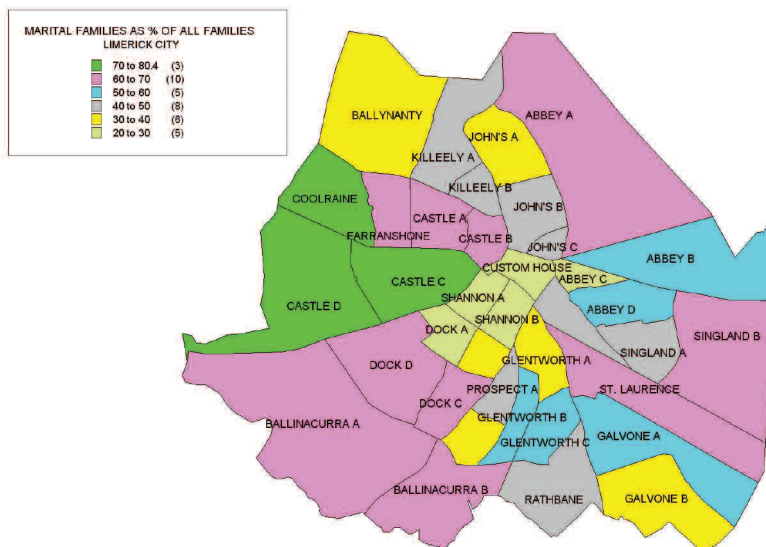
## Marriage breakdown and family structure in Ireland



### MARRIAGE BREAKDOWN AS % OF FIRST MARRIAGES LIMERICK CITY



### MARITAL FAMILIES AS % OF ALL FAMILIES – LIMERICK CITY

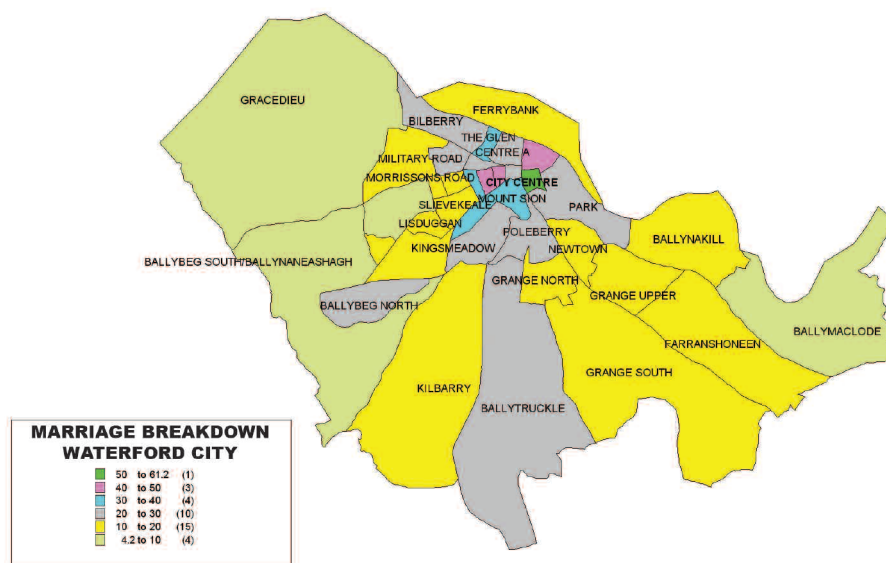


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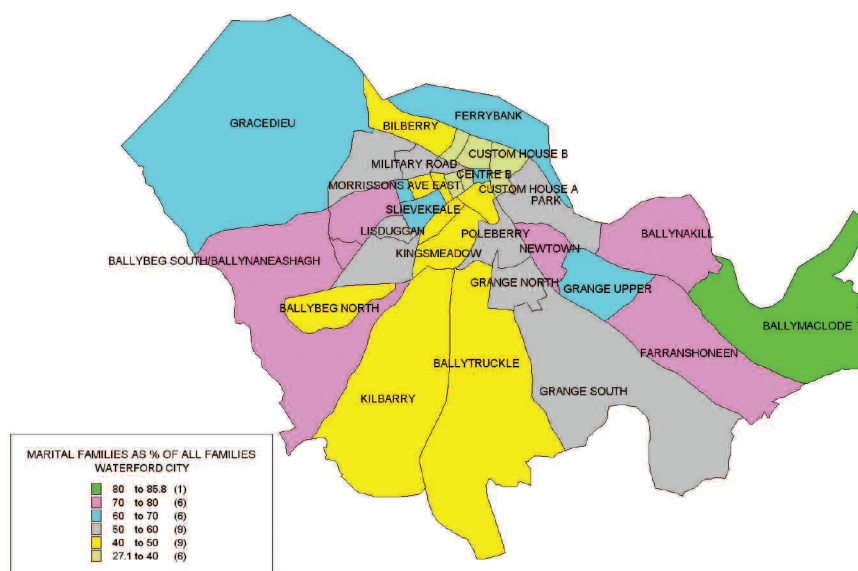
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## Marriage breakdown and family structure in Ireland

### MARRIAGE BREAKDOWN AS % OF FIRST MARRIAGES WATERFORD CITY



### MARITAL FAMILIES AS % OF ALL FAMILIES – WATERFORD CITY



MAPS BY DEMOGRAPHIC SOLUTIONS

BASED ON CSO 2006 CENSUS FIGURES

## Marriage breakdown and family structure in Ireland



### MARRIAGE BREAKDOWN AS % OF FIRST MARRIAGES – OVER 33%

NAME	FIRST MARRIAGE	DIVORCED, SEPARATE RE-MARRIED	% 1st MARRIAGE BROKEN DOWN	CITY/COUNTY
SHANNON B	82	57	69.51	LIMERICK
CUSTOM HOUSE A	67	41	61.19	WATERFORD
Ballymun D	506	277	54.74	DUBLIN
Woodquay A	568	283	49.82	DUBLIN
ABBAY C	103	51	49.51	LIMERICK
NEWPORTS SQUARE	129	63	48.84	WATERFORD
Ballybough A	688	302	43.90	DUBLIN
Ushers E	362	158	43.65	DUBLIN
GURRANEBRAHER B	142	61	42.96	CORK
CUSTOM HOUSE B	57	24	42.11	WATERFORD
SHORTCOURSE	83	34	40.96	WATERFORD
Ushers C	538	215	39.96	DUBLIN
Mountjoy A	671	267	39.79	DUBLIN
Merchants Quay A	268	105	39.18	DUBLIN
CUSTOM HOUSE	123	48	39.02	LIMERICK
SOUTH GATE B	155	60	38.71	CORK
GLENTWORTH A	140	54	38.57	LIMERICK
BRAY NO.1	423	155	36.64	WICKLOW
BLACKPOOL B	323	118	36.53	CORK
THE GLEN	139	50	35.97	WATERFORD
Arran Quay D	730	261	35.75	DUBLIN
GALVONE B	350	125	35.71	LIMERICK
MOUNT SION	160	57	35.63	WATERFORD
Ballymun C	1209	426	35.24	DUBLIN
BALLYBANE	91	32	35.16	CORK
Ushers B	241	84	34.85	DUBLIN
PROSPECT A	225	77	34.22	LIMERICK
Merchants Quay F	436	149	34.17	DUBLIN
Blanchardstown - Tyrrelstown	305	104	34.10	DUBLIN
MORRISONS ROAD	147	50	34.01	WATERFORD
PROSPECT B	231	78	33.77	LIMERICK
SHANDON B	190	64	33.68	CORK

### MARRIAGE BREAKDOWN AS % OF FIRST MARRIAGES – UNDER 3%

NAME	FIRST MARRIAGE	DIVORCED, SEPARATE RE-MARRIED	% 1st MARRIAGE BROKEN DOWN	CITY/COUNTY
SHANMULLAGH	94	1	1.06	MONAGHAN
KILBEACON	77	1	1.30	KILKENNY
CARDTOWN	69	1	1.45	LAOIS
MOHERNAGH	67	1	1.49	LIMERICK COUNTY
COONOGUE	65	1	1.54	CARLOW
DERRYAD	101	2	1.98	OFFALY
MULLAGH	99	2	2.02	CLARE
BRAMBLESTOWN	98	2	2.04	KILKENNY

BASED ON CSO 2006 CENSUS FIGURES



## Marriage breakdown and family structure in Ireland

### MARITAL FAMILIES AS A % OF ALL FAMILIES – BELOW 40%

NAME	FAMILIES	MARITAL FAMILIES	MARITAL FAMILIES %	CITY/COUNTY
Ballymun D	922	187	24.95	DUBLIN CITY
CENTRE A	54	9	25.93	CORK CITY
SHANNON B	87	19	28.74	LIMERICK CITY
Royal Exchange B	214	52	30.37	DUBLIN CITY
Merchants Quay A	379	88	31.40	DUBLIN CITY
Cherry Orchard A	498	135	32.33	DUBLIN CITY
Mountjoy A	620	122	32.58	DUBLIN CITY
Priorswood C	932	279	33.48	DUBLIN CITY
Merchants Quay F	484	144	34.09	DUBLIN CITY
Airport	314	78	34.71	DUBLIN CITY
ABBHEY C	108	26	36.11	LIMERICK CITY
Ushers C	729	216	36.21	DUBLIN CITY
Arran Quay D	711	229	37.27	DUBLIN CITY
Tallaght - Fettercairn	1723	590	37.61	DUBLIN CITY
Rotunda B	326	84	37.73	DUBLIN CITY
Ballybough A	829	254	37.88	DUBLIN CITY
Arran Quay C	627	148	38.12	DUBLIN CITY
Ushers B	263	78	38.40	DUBLIN CITY
Blanchardstown - Tyrrelstown	386	135	38.60	DUBLIN CITY
Ushers E	456	156	38.82	DUBLIN CITY
GALVONE B	441	158	39.00	LIMERICK CITY
Cherry Orchard C	983	330	39.17	DUBLIN CITY
CUSTOM HOUSE A	71	25	39.44	WATERFORD CITY
THE GLEN	114	31	39.47	WATERFORD CITY
Priorswood B	736	251	39.67	DUBLIN CITY
SHANNON A	98	25	39.80	LIMERICK CITY
Ballymun C	1478	527	39.99	DUBLIN CITY

### MARITAL FAMILIES AS A % OF ALL FAMILIES – ABOVE 90%

NAME	FAMILIES	MARITAL FAMILIES	MARITAL FAMILIES %	CITY/COUNTY
KILLYNENAGH	39	37	97.44	MONAGHAN
KILLALLON	56	53	96.43	MEATH
ST MARTIN'S	23	21	95.65	CLARE
KILBARRY	39	33	94.87	WATERFORD COUNTY
FOSSY	35	30	94.29	LAOIS
TAGHBOY	52	46	94.23	GALWAY COUNTY
GRALLAGH	47	41	93.62	WATERFORD COUNTY
KILLERRIG	85	73	92.94	CARLOW
KILCOKE	40	34	92.50	LAOIS
BALLYVOOL	39	33	92.31	KILKENNY
LACKAREAGH	26	24	92.31	CLARE
MERTONHALL	39	34	92.31	TIPPERARY
SHANMULLAGH	51	46	92.16	MONAGHAN

BASED ON CSO 2006 CENSUS FIGURES

## Marriage breakdown and family structure in Ireland



### Conclusion

There is a debate taking shape in Ireland between what might be called the family diversity position on the one side, and the pro-marriage position on the other. The family diversity argument states, broadly, that changes to family patterns are neutral in their effects on people and society, and that the State and society should not encourage one family form over another.

The pro-marriage argument, which The Lona Institute supports, says that marriage is the best way of committing both parents of a child to its welfare and it believes the evidence shows this. Therefore, while all families in need should be helped, there is still a strong, child-centred argument for both State and society to favour marriage.

This paper does not set out the above arguments in any detail. Instead it presents some of the most relevant data from Census 2006 and previous censuses in the hope of encouraging a more informed debate around this vital area.



**The Iona Institute** is a non-governmental organisation dedicated to the strengthening of civil society. It aims to contribute to this purpose in two primary ways. The first is through making the evidence-based case for marriage, and the second is through making the evidence-based case for religious practice. It aims to do this through the commissioning of position papers, through the formulation of social policies, through sponsoring research and opinion polling, and through organising seminars on relevant topics.

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