



# Registrar General Northern Ireland Annual Report 2023

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The General Register Office (GRO) for Northern Ireland (NI) is part of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA). NISRA is an executive agency within the Department of Finance (DoF).

GRO is responsible for the administration of marriage and civil partnership law in NI 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 central purpose is to provide trusted and independent insight on life in Northern Ireland.

In delivering on this purpose, NISRA has become the principal source of statistics, analysis and research on the economy, population and society of Northern Ireland. Our outputs support decision makers in government, businesses, academia and among the general public by providing them with the best possible information on which to make important judgements.

The NISRA corporate plan for 2019-2024 is available online at:

[www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/NISRA-Corporate-Plan-2019-24](http://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/NISRA-Corporate-Plan-2019-24)



One Hundred and  
Second Annual  
Report of the  
Registrar General  
2023

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

21 November 2024

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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
Civil Partnerships.....	18
Adoptions, Re-registrations & Gender Recognition.....	20
Footnotes .....	22

## Foreword by the Registrar General for Northern Ireland



I am pleased to be able to present the one hundred and second Annual Report of the Registrar General to the Northern Ireland Assembly.

This report draws on the important work of the General Register Office (GRO) and the NISRA Vital Statistics Unit (VSU). It paints a rich picture of life in Northern Ireland as depicted in the vital life events registrations which took place during 2023. This report shows many of the key trends evident in these registrations, while detailed supporting information (both current and historical) continues to be available on the NISRA website, [www.nisra.gov.uk](http://www.nisra.gov.uk).

In the course of 2023, GRO – working in collaboration with the 11 Registrars and 72 Deputy Registrars in the District Registration Offices – registered more than 45,000 life events relating to people from across Northern Ireland.

I want to recognise the work and effort of all those involved in the Registration Service for the important contribution which they made during this period. I am particularly grateful to the GRO and NISRA personnel who provide direct support to me as Registrar General, and who have produced the statistics contained in this report. I would also like to welcome Aoife Rooney as the new Deputy Registrar General, who took up post following Kathie Walker’s retirement at the beginning of 2024.

Registration services are a critical civic and statutory function: helping individuals to establish their identity, as well as providing information to plan for and support the delivery of public services. But the lens which they provide on life in Northern Ireland can help us to understand how our population and society are evolving. They have the capacity to confirm our priors, and to challenge our assumptions in equal measure.

I trust that this report will be useful to you: as ever, your feedback on the content and format of this release is very welcome.

**Dr Philip Wales**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "PD Wales". The letters are cursive and fluid, with the "P" and "D" being particularly prominent.

Registrar General for Northern Ireland

21 November 2024

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, and 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 and access to the online official registration records; and
- production, on request, of certificates in relation to these events.

## Main activities in the calendar year 2023.

- Over 45,000 life events were registered through the DRO offices.
- GRO processed over 97,000 certificate applications. Almost 37,000 certificate applications related to priority (fast-tracked) certificates.
- Just over 112,000 certificates were produced by the GRO certificate production team in 2023. Demand for applications and certificate numbers has remained steady following the removal of pandemic restrictions.
- Different channels are used by the public to submit certificate applications. Online and telephone applications is by far the most popular. The number of certificates



produced from applications received by the different channels were:

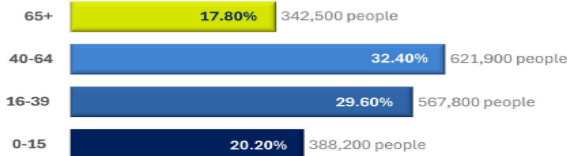
- ◆ Postal – 4,347
- ◆ Counter – 6,744
- ◆ Online and telephone – 100,996
- Additionally, GRO processed over 3,700 registration related cases including re-registrations, adoptions, name changes and corrections. Over 900 of these were made at the public counter and over 2,800 by post.
- GRO shared over 68,000 records with a number of organisations including Business Services Organisation, Department for Work and Pensions, Department for Infrastructure, Department for Communities, Department for Justice, Northern Ireland Local Government Officers Superannuation Committee (NILGOSC), HMRC, Troubles Permanent Disablement Payment Scheme and the Victim and Survivors Services.
- Over 14,000 new accounts were registered on the GRO Family History website. There were close to 915,000 searches carried out – the most popular being the basic index search which accounted for almost 792,000 searches. There were over 417,000 credits purchased by online users with almost 376,000 credits used for the enhanced and full index searches (Notes 1 to 3 for more information on searches).
- More than 750 people used the GRO Public Search Room in Colby House in 2023.

# Northern Ireland Population Estimates (2023)

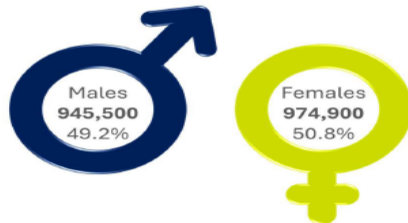
Population of Northern Ireland  
at 30 June 2023

**1,920,382**

### Population by Age



### Population by Sex



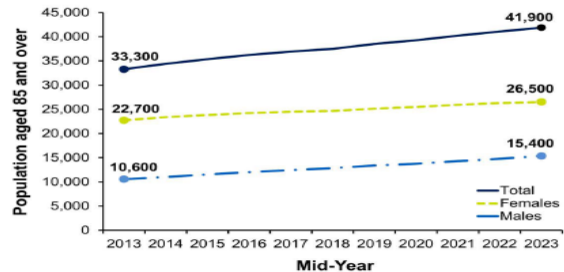
Figures may not always add up to 100% due to rounding.

How has the population increased  
since 30 June 2022?

**+9,800 (0.5% growth)**



### Population aged 85+ over 10 years



## In mid-2023:

- The population of Northern Ireland was estimated to be 1.92 million people, an increase of 9,800 people (0.5 per cent) from mid-2022.
- Net migration was the main driver of population growth over the year with an estimated gain of 7,500 people (30,500 people came to live in Northern Ireland and 23,000 people left).
- Natural change contributed to the population growth, adding 2,500 people (20,100 births minus 17,600 deaths) to the population.
- The population continued to age. The number of those aged 65 and over increased by 2.1 per cent to reach 342,500 people (17.8 per cent of the population). In contrast, the number of children aged 0 to 15 remained stable at 388,200 children (20.2 per cent of the population).
- More men are surviving into very old age. Between mid-2013 and mid-2023, the percentage increase in the number of males aged 85 and over (45.5 per cent) has been noticeably higher than that among females (16.6 per cent).

# Births

**19,962**  
births



10,203 males



9,759 females

Most common birth month



Average age of mothers



**31.4** years



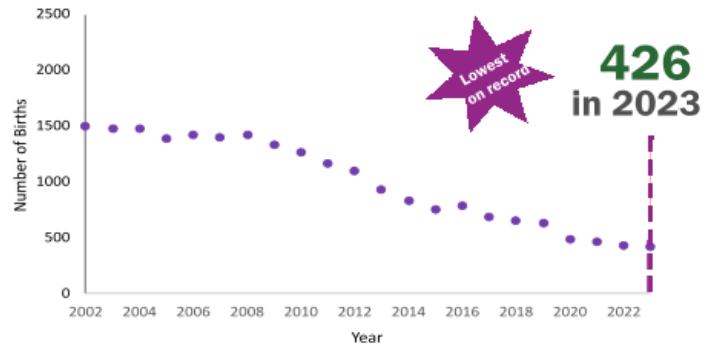
157

Home Births



**41.7%** of births were to first time mothers

Trend in live births to teenage mothers\*



\*Teenage mothers are defined as mothers who are under the age of 20

## In 2023:

- There were 19,962 births (10,203 males and 9,759 females) registered to Northern Ireland mothers, 875 less than in 2022.
- August was the most common month in 2023 for births taking place.
- The average age of mothers was 31.4 years, the same as last year, 2022. By way of comparison, in 1993 the average age of mothers was 28.3 years.
- 26.0 per cent of all births were to mothers aged 35 years or over, up from 11.4 per cent 30 years ago.
- The proportion of births to mothers under 20 years of age (teenage mothers) remained the same, at 2.1 per cent (436) in 2022 and 2.1 per cent (426) in 2023. This is the lowest proportion on record and is noticeably lower than a decade previously (3.9 per cent) and three decades ago (6.4 per cent).
- First-time mothers (i.e. mothers with no previous live born children) accounted for 41.7 per cent of all births.
- 8.6 per cent of mothers already had three or more live born children. This compares with 11.6 per cent in 1993.
- The average age of first-time mothers was 29.5 years, almost four years older than in 1993 (25.9 years).
- 46.4 per cent of births occurred outside of marriage/ civil partnership, compared with 22.0 per cent three decades ago.
- Of the 19,720 maternities, 1.6 per cent resulted in multiple births with 303 sets of twins and three sets of triplets being born (including births to non-resident mothers).
- 12.1 per cent of births were to mothers who were born outside of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. This compares with 4.1 per cent 20 years ago.
- The proportion of births taking place at home has increased slightly over the last decade from 0.4 per cent (105 births) in 2013 to 0.8 per cent (157 births in 2023).

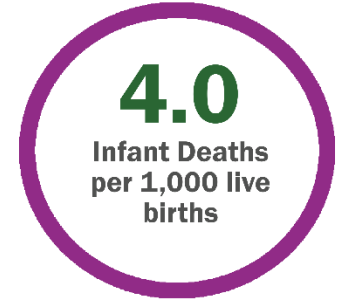
# Stillbirths & Infant Deaths



This stillbirth rate  
has **decreased**  
from 3.4 in 2022

**67**  
Stillbirths

**80**  
Infant Deaths



**36.3%**  
of infant deaths occurred  
in the first day of life

67 stillbirths registered

**5.6%**

than the 2022 figure

80 infant deaths registered

**10.1%**

than the 2022 figure

## In 2023:

- 67 stillbirths (35 males and 32 females) were registered [Note 7]. This was 4 less than in 2022 and equates to a stillbirth rate of 3.3 per 1,000 total births (both live and still) which is a decrease from the 2022 rate of 3.4 per 1,000 births.
- Conditions originating in the perinatal period were the cause of 76.1 per cent of stillbirths, whilst the remaining 23.9 per cent were due to congenital malformations, deformations and chromosomal abnormalities.
- 80 infant deaths (i.e. deaths in the first year of life) were registered, representing a decrease of 10.1 per cent on the previous year (89). This equates to 4.0 infant deaths per 1,000 live births.
- 2023 had the lowest number of infant deaths registered in one year and the third lowest rate, on record. Although there can be some variability in the numbers, the general trend in infant deaths has been a decreasing one. In 1993 a total of 176 infant deaths were registered, and fifty years ago, in 1973, 610 infant deaths were registered.
- 36.3 per cent of infant deaths occurred during the first day of life.
- Over half (56.3 per cent) of infant deaths occurred in the first week of life. (The first week of life is considered to be between zero and six days.)
- Conditions originating in the perinatal period were the cause of 58.8 per cent of infant deaths, whilst congenital malformations, deformations and chromosomal abnormalities were the cause of a further 25.0 per cent. The remaining 16.3 per cent of infant deaths were due to other factors\*.

\*Numbers may not add due to rounding

# 17,254 deaths in 2023

## Average age at death



75.3 years  
for males

79.9 years  
for females

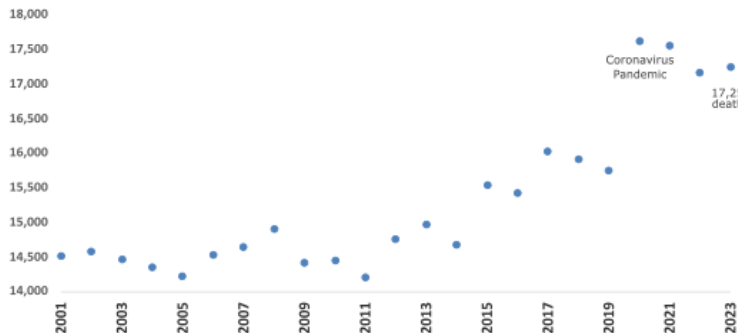


**2/3** deaths were of  
people aged 75 and over

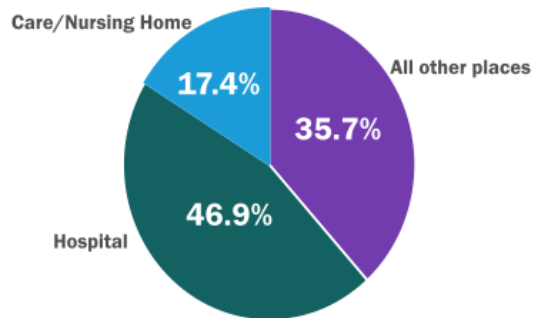
# 162

deaths  
were of people  
aged 100 and over

## Number of deaths over time



## Place of Death



May not sum due to rounding



## In 2023:

- 17,254 deaths (8,571 males and 8,683 females) were registered, a 0.6 per cent increase on the 2022 figure (17,159).
- While the number of deaths has generally been increasing over time, this is primarily accounted for by the growing and aging population. Age-standardised mortality rates (ASMRs) put the number of deaths into context of the size and age structure of the population. They do this by adjusting for age and showing deaths as a rate per 100,000 population. Over the last decade there has been some variation in ASMRs but an overall decrease from 1,054.2 deaths per 100,000 in 2013 to 992.6 in 2023.
- There were 101 female deaths for every 100 male deaths, less than the female to male ratio in the population as a whole (just over 103 females for every 100 males).
- There were 162 deaths of people aged 100 or over, 10 more than the previous year (152) but almost 3 times higher than over 30 years previously (59 in 1993).
- The average age at death for men was 75.3 years and 79.9 years for women. This compares with 71.8 years and 78.4 years respectively in 2003.
- Approximately two out of every three deaths (66.7 per cent) were of people aged 75 or over.
- 46.9 per cent of deaths occurred in NHS hospitals, whilst a further 17.4 per cent of deaths occurred in care homes or nursing homes. The remaining 35.7 per cent of deaths occurred at home or in other places.
- 88.8 per cent of deaths were of people born in Northern Ireland and 9.0 per cent were born in the rest of the UK and the Republic of Ireland. The remaining 2.2 per cent were born in the rest of the world, including Poland (0.3 per cent), Germany and the United States of America (0.2 per cent each).

## Broad Causes of Deaths in Northern Ireland



## Leading Cause of Deaths

All Persons



Dementia and Alzheimer's Disease  
11.7% (2,026)

### Males

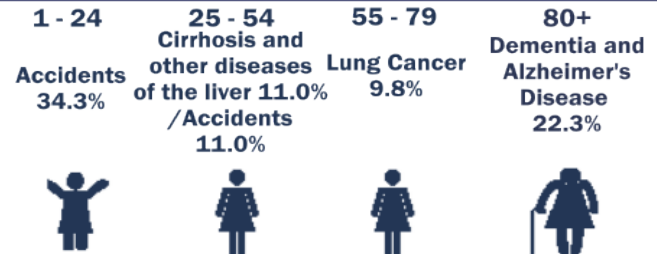
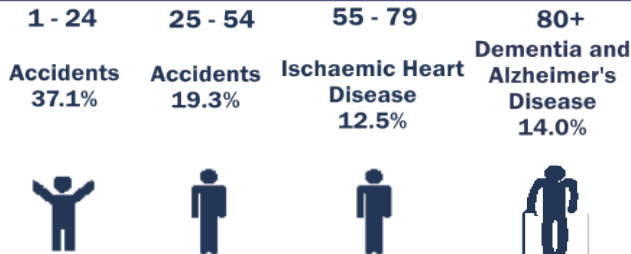


Ischaemic Heart Disease  
11.4% (975)

### Females



Dementia and Alzheimer's Disease  
15.4% (1,333)



May not sum due to rounding

## In 2023:

- Looking at cause of death at the broadest level, the most frequent cause of death was cancer (27.0 per cent), followed by circulatory disease (22.6 per cent), and respiratory disease (excluding deaths from Covid-19) (11.9 per cent).
- For both males and females, the most common cancer site was the bronchus or lung, commonly known as lung cancer (22.7 per cent of all cancer deaths in males and 19.7 per cent of all cancer deaths in females). The breast was the second most common cancer site in females (14.1 per cent of all cancer deaths in females), whereas the prostate was the second most common cancer site in males (12.2 per cent of all cancer deaths in males).
- Drilling down into more specific leading causes of death, for all persons in 2023 the leading cause was dementia and Alzheimer's disease accounting for 11.7 per cent (2,026) of all deaths. This changes when looking at the leading causes for each sex; for males only, the leading cause of death was ischaemic heart disease (11.4 per cent), while for females, it was dementia and Alzheimer's disease (15.4 per cent).
- The number of deaths due to Alzheimer's disease and other dementias showed little change from the previous year, 2,017 in 2022 and 2,026 in 2023.
- The breakdown by age shows that external causes of death were the most common cause among the younger age groups for both males and females. More specifically accidents were the leading cause of death particularly among people aged 1 to 24, accounting for 37.1 per cent of deaths of males and 34.3 per cent of deaths of females in this age group.
- Ischaemic heart disease was the leading cause of death for males aged 55 to 79, accounting for 12.5 per cent of deaths in this age group. Lung cancer was the leading cause of death for females aged 55 to 79, accounting for 9.8 per cent of deaths in this age group.
- Dementia and Alzheimer's disease was the leading cause for both males and females aged 80 or over, accounting for 14.0 per cent and 22.3 per cent of male and female deaths in this age group respectively.
- Tragically, there were 221 registered deaths due to suicide (including self-inflicted injury and events of undetermined intent) in Northern Ireland in 2023, compared with 203 registered in 2022. Males accounted for over three quarters of all deaths due to suicide (171).

# Marriages

## Most popular Month

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

\*May not sum due to rounding



**1.7%**  
Male  
Marriages



**2.5%**  
Female  
Marriages



**95.8%**  
Opposite-Sex  
Marriages

## Average age at marriage



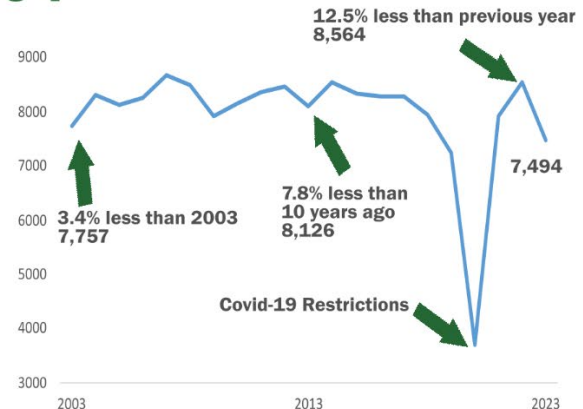
**Males**  
36.1 years



**Females**  
34.1 years



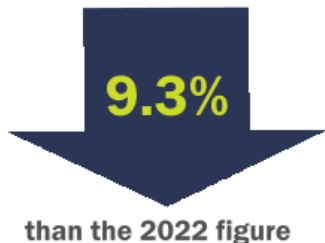
**7,494** marriages



Note: Total number of marriages includes both new marriages and conversions completed in 2023 from civil partnerships

## In 2023:

- In 2023, 7,494 marriages were registered, around 1,070 less than the 2022 total (8,564). Same-sex marriage in Northern Ireland has been legal since 13 January 2020, following the enactment of the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation etc.) Act 2019, therefore, this figure includes both opposite-sex and same sex-marriages.
- From the 7 December 2020 to 6 December 2023 the Marriage and Civil Partnership (NI)(No2) Regulations 2020 allowed a same-sex couple to convert a previous civil partnership to a marriage. The regulations also permitted opposite-sex couples to convert a previous marriage to a civil partnership. The number of marriage registrations in 2023 therefore also includes civil partnership conversions that were registered in 2023.
- August was the most popular month to get married in 2023.
- Men were on average almost two years older than women getting married in 2023 (36.1 years and 34.1 years respectively). Compared with 30 years ago, the ages of both grooms and brides increased by approximately seven years (29.4 and 27.3 respectively).
- The majority of marriages (81.4 per cent) were first-time marriages for both partners, while in 7.1 per cent of marriages both partners had been previously married.
- 84.0 per cent of marriages were of couples who both resided in NI.
- Around 3 in every 5 religious/belief marriages (60.3 per cent) were held in a religious building. The remaining 39.7 per cent of all religious/belief marriage ceremonies were held in approved venues.
- Two thirds of all civil marriages (66.5 per cent) were held in a registry office. The remaining 33.5 per cent of civil marriages were held in approved venues.



## Average age at partnership



**57.9 years**  
for male partnerships  
**50.3 years**  
for female partnerships  
**42.1 years**  
for opposite-sex  
partnerships



## Most popular month

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr
May	Jun	Jul	Aug
<b>Sep</b>	Oct	Nov	Dec

**7** civil partnerships took place in September



**15.4%**  
Male  
partnerships



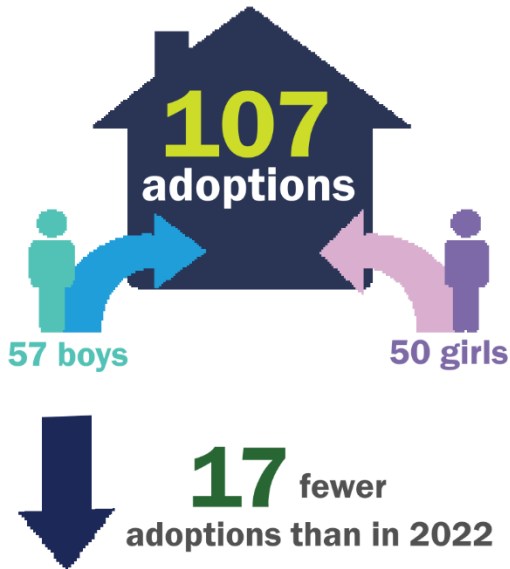
**10.3%**  
Female  
partnerships



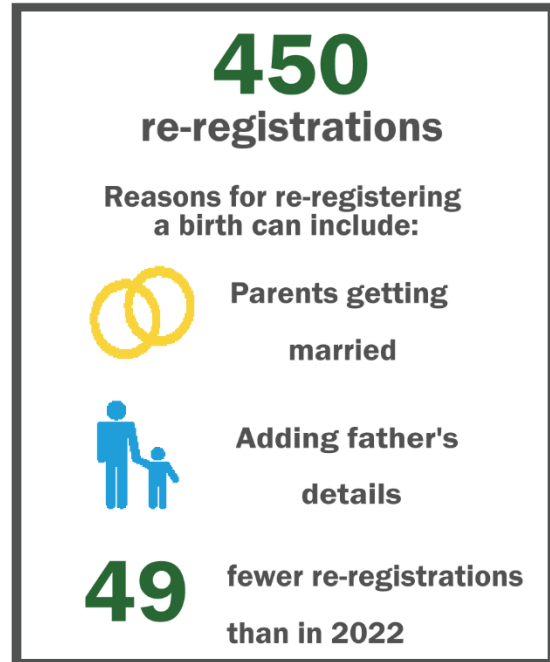
**74.4%**  
Opposite-Sex  
partnerships

## In 2023:

- There were 39 civil partnerships registered (6 male partnerships, 4 female partnerships and 29 opposite-sex partnerships), 4 less than in 2022.
- The average age of males entering a male-male civil partnership was 57.9 years, while for females entering a female-female partnership, it was 50.3 years. The average age of a partner in an opposite-sex civil partnership was 42.1 years.
- September was the most popular month for civil partnership ceremonies, with a total of seven held in this month.
- The Northern Ireland (Executive Formation etc.) Act 2019 enabled opposite-sex civil partnerships to take place through the Civil Partnership (Opposite-sex Couples) (NI) Regulations 2019. The regulations came into force on 13 January 2020; therefore, totals for civil partnerships registered in Northern Ireland in 2023 includes both opposite-sex and same-sex partners.
- From the 7 December 2020 to 6 December 2023 the Marriage and Civil Partnership (NI)(No2) Regulations 2020 allowed a same-sex couple to convert a previous civil partnership to a marriage. The regulations also permitted opposite-sex couples to convert a previous marriage to a civil partnership. No conversions from a marriage to a civil partnership have been registered. However, historical totals for civil partnerships include ceremonies where the couple have since converted to marriage. Therefore, totals for civil partnerships and marriages should not be combined to avoid double counting.



**74.8%** of adopted children  
were aged  
between 0 and 5 years



**20** Gender changes  
in the Gender  
Recognition  
Register





## In 2023:

- 107 children (57 boys and 50 girls) were adopted, a decrease of 13.7 per cent from the 2022 figure of 124.
- The average age of the adopted children was five years [Note 8].
- 80 children adopted were aged five or under. This represented approximately three quarters of all children adopted during this year. A further 19 children were aged between six and ten, with the remaining 8 children aged 11 or over [Note 8].
- 450 births were re-registered, 9.8 per cent less than the 2022 figure of 499.
- In addition to these 450 birth re-registrations, there were 20 individuals who re-registered their birth with a new gender in the Gender Recognition Register. This is an increase from 6 registrations under the Gender Recognition Register in 2022.

## Note 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.

## Note 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.

**Note 3: Full Index Search:** View full registration details (image or data).

**Note 4:** Figures may not add due to rounding to the nearest 100.

**Note 5:** The 2022 mid-year populations estimates can also be found at <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/2022-mid-year-population-estimates-northern-ireland>.

**Note 6:** All figures in this section are based on 2023 Mid-year population estimated and refer to the mid-year (the period from 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023). Figures may therefore differ to annual 2023 registration figures included elsewhere in this report.

**Note 7:** The Stillbirth (Definition) Act 1992 redefined a stillbirth, from 1 October 1992, as a child which had issued forth from its mother after the 24th week of pregnancy and which did not breathe or show any other sign of life.

**Note 8:** From 2023, a revision in methodology has been used to calculate average age and totals in age groups based on exact age of child rather than a rounded age in years.

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The full assessment of Demography and Vital Events Statistics for Northern Ireland can be viewed online (<https://uksa.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/publication/statistics-on-demography-and-vital-events-in-northern-ireland-letter-of-confirmation-as-national-statistics/>).

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