The 'Irish' Family

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'The Family': Key issues

- The constitutional definition of the family for society

- How the family in Ireland has changed over time

- Recognising family diversity and new types of families/family in society – blended, cohabiting, separated, re-constituted, one parent, same sex families

- The family and gender – differences between and within families

The 1937 Constitution

BUNREACHT NA hÉIREANN
CONSTITUTION OF IRELAND

- Under Article 41.1 the State promises to 'protect the Family' and recognises the family as having *'inalienable and imprescriptible rights, antecedent and superior to all positive law.'*

- Women were accorded a very specific familial role

The Traditional Irish Family protected in 1937… was…large, extended, premised on lifelong, heterosexual marriage
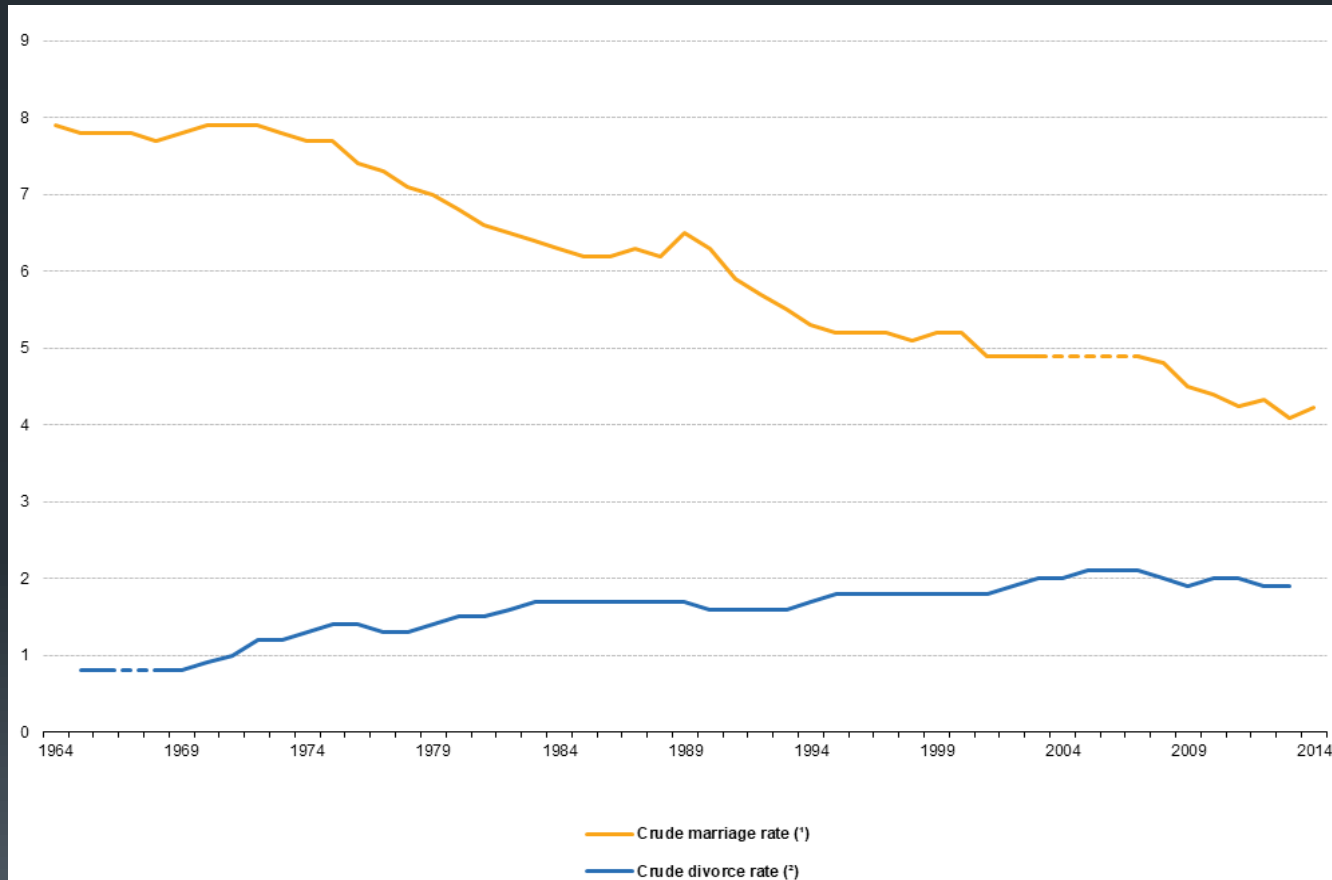
Understanding Families now

What has changed over time in Ireland and how does Ireland compare with other European societies in relation to key historical and recent trends in family life?

Crude marriage and divorce rates, EU-28, 1964-2014 (per 1,000 inhabitants), Eurostat

(¹) 1998 and 2003: breaks in series. 2004-2006: linear estimation for missing values. 2014: estimate.
(²) 1964 and 2014: not available. 1967: linear estimation for missing value. 1998: break in series.
Source: Eurostat (online data codes: demo_nind and demo_ndivind)

The crude divorce rate in the Republic of Ireland is however extremely low

0.6% a year for every 1,000 people compared with 1.9% for the UK and 3.2% for the US, (Eurostat)
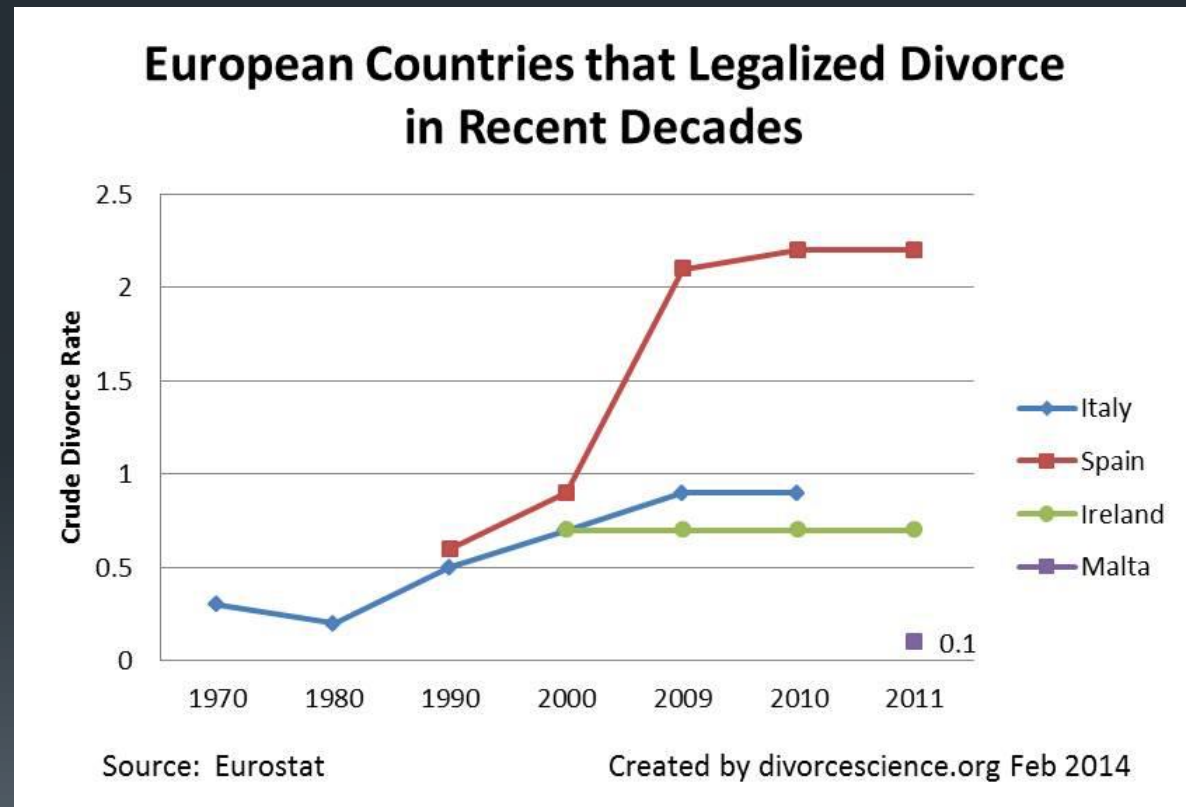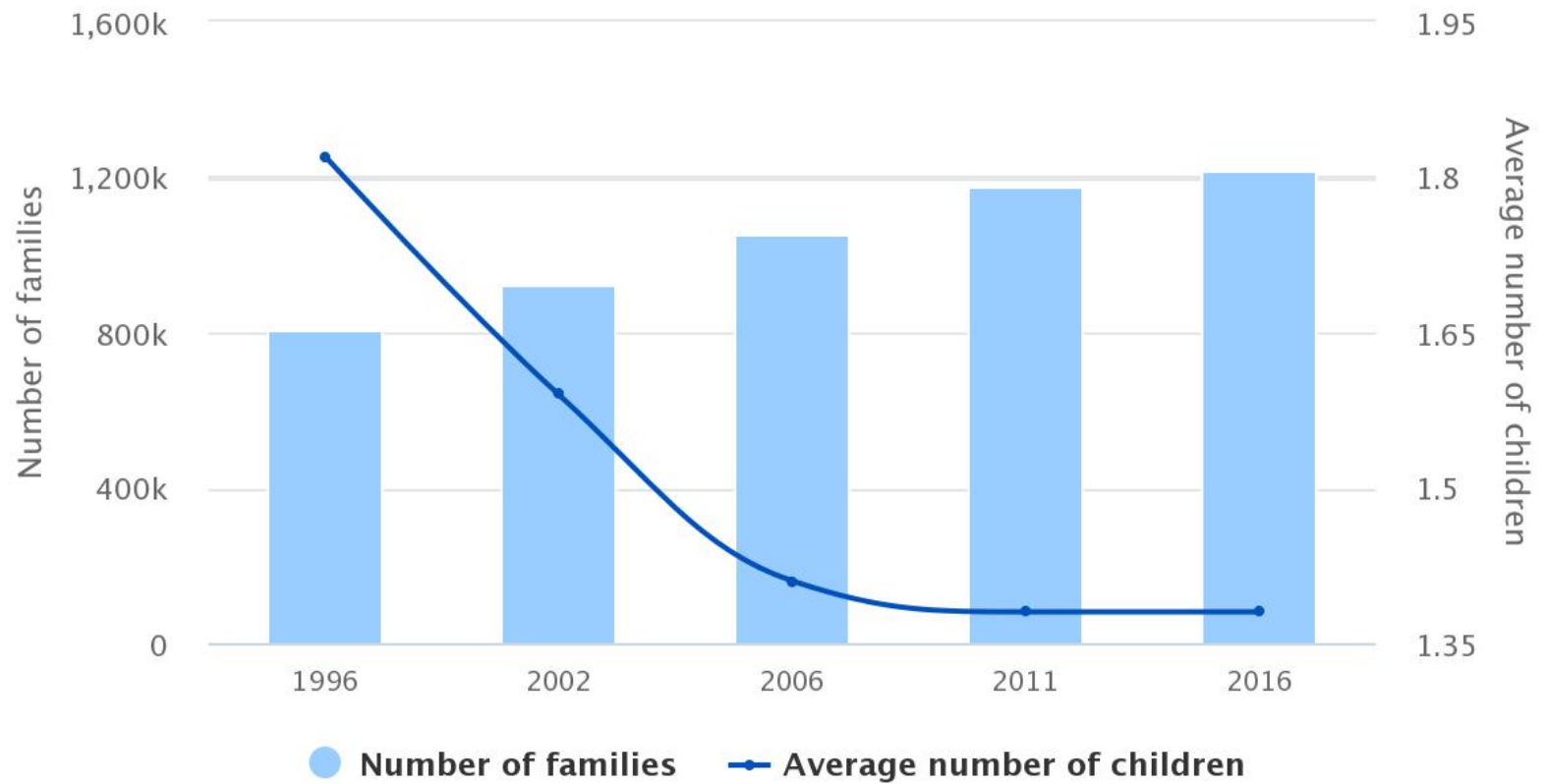
Figure 2.1 Number of families and average number of children per family, -2016

Source: CSO Ireland

Birth Rates

- There were more than 61,000 babies born in Ireland in 2018, a slight decrease on the previous year.
- There were 61,016 births in 2018 compared to 62,053 in 2017.
- The CSO figures show the average age of Irish mothers is 33.
- A total of 980 teenagers had babies in 2018 - 22 of them were under 16.
- In 2019 here were 6,046 **births** registered as **outside marriage**/civil partnership accounting for 38.0% of all **births** in quarter 1 **2019**.
- The highest percentage of **births outside marriage**/civil partnership was in Limerick City at 53.9% and the lowest was in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown with 24.9%.
- The figure is approximating to half of all births in the main cities of Dublin, Cork and Limerick
- In eight **EU** Member States in 2016 there were more live **births** registered **outside marriage** than within **marriage** eg in France (60%),

Mothers in Ireland

o Having less children/smaller families than their own mothers did – but are on average more positive towards childbearing than other Europeans, are more likely to work inside and outside the home than in the past, and are older at birth of first child than in most other EU countries

o Different position of mothers in Ireland is influenced by social and economic factors – such as, socio-economic status and social class, family status, sexualities, and housing

CARE

Nearly all of the people (98%) who were looking after home or family in 2016 were women although the number of men in this grouping nearly doubled in the ten years up to 2016, rising from 4,900 to 9,200

91 % of Lone Parents in Ireland were women in 2016 according to the Census

➢ 98% of recipients of the one-parent family payment in 2016 were women

➢ A much higher percentage of men than women in this category were widowed and on average they were older

FATHERS IN SOCIETY

According to Census 2016, there were 673,609 fathers in Ireland

Of the 67,295 births in 2014, 51,038 or 75.8% were born to Irish fathers – a quarter were born to non-Irish fathers

Of the 673,609 fathers in Ireland, 84% were part of a married couple with children, 11%)were part of a cohabitating couple with children and 5% were one parent fathers with children

OVERALL TRENDS….

Irish family patterns today are clearly converging closely to European trends in *some* arenas
(for instance, the rate of non-marital births and the crude marriage rate which was traditionally lower in Ireland for much of the twentieth century has recently converged towards the EU average)

but …

maintaining a distinctive trend in *others*
(the divorce rate remains low and the overall fertility rate is comparatively higher, for instance)

THE CONSTITUTIONAL DEFINITION OF FAMILY?

- The changes outlined imply that we can no longer deal with a single entity called 'the family'

- Traditional forms of family life (such as, the life-long, nuclear family based on heterosexual marriage and the persistence of an unequal gender based division of labour and care in the home that is continually reiterated in social research) continue and sustain alongside new, more diverse family forms and households emerging in contemporary Ireland (such as one parent families, 'reconstituted' families post separation/divorce, cohabitees and same sex couples).