

# Facts and Figures on Sexual Behaviour and Teenage Pregnancy (2)

For anyone reporting on or working in the area of sexual health, crisis pregnancy, or contraception.

## WHAT IS THIS RESEARCH SUMMARY ABOUT?

This summary is part of a series designed to bring the latest statistics and Crisis Pregnancy Agency research findings to key audiences in a concise, easy-to-read format. Research summaries are designed to inform groups that play a role in crisis pregnancy prevention and support, and other interested parties.

Research is a key element of the Crisis Pregnancy Agency's work. We are committed to the use of research as a basis for understanding behaviour, assessing need, building on previous work and promoting the use of evidence-based practice. This summary is based on CSO statistics as well as four survey and study reports by the Crisis Pregnancy Agency, available online. Please see the 'Want to read more?' section for full details of the research reports.

The back page of the summary lists how you can find out more information on sexual behaviour and crisis pregnancy in Ireland. It also lists a range of useful resources for professionals working in the field and people who come into contact with women experiencing a crisis pregnancy, their partners and their families.

*This is a summary of facts and figures on fertility, sex and pregnancy, designed especially for anyone needing the latest figures on these subjects.*

## WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH TELL US?

Some of the main points from the research are:

- Ireland's fertility rate is currently below replacement level – the level of fertility needed to ensure the population replaces itself. *(CSO)*
- 28% of women and 23% of men (with experience of a pregnancy over their lifetime) have had a crisis pregnancy. *(ICCP Survey)*
- Most crisis pregnancies end in birth (75%), with the child being parented by its birth mother. *(ICCP Survey)*
- Over 90% of people support sex education for young people on sexual intercourse, sexual feelings, contraception, safer sex and homosexuality. *(ISSHR Survey)*
- The age of first sex has fallen in Ireland: for 18-24 year olds the average age of first sex is 17; for 35-39 year olds the average age is 19 for women and 18 for men. *(ISSHR Survey)*

## SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR IN IRELAND

### Who has experienced sexual intercourse?

- In a general population survey 94% of participants aged 18-64 had experienced sexual intercourse. *(ISSHR Survey)*

### When do people have first sexual intercourse?

- The median age for first sex among women was 19 and the median age for men was 18 in a study of people living in Ireland aged 18-64. *(ISSHR Survey)*
- Age of first sex is falling in Ireland. Among respondents born between 1981 and 1985 the median age of first sex was 17 for both men and women. For those born between 1956-60 the median age of first sex was 19 for men and 20 for women. *(ISSHR Survey)*

## CONTRACEPTION

### Who uses contraception and what do they use?

- Most participants (71%) said they had always used a method of contraception or precaution in the past year. *(ISSHR Survey)*
- Those who had first sex at a younger age were less likely to use condoms in the last year, as were those with low education levels or low economic status. *(ISSHR Survey)*
- Condoms and the contraceptive pill were the most common methods of contraception used at most recent sexual intercourse. *(ISSHR Survey)*

### Why don't people use contraception when they don't want to become pregnant?

- The most common reasons for not using contraception were not being prepared or unplanned sex. *(ICCP Survey)*
- 20% of participants under the age of 25 said that alcohol/taking drugs had contributed to them having unprotected sex in the past. *(ISSHR Survey)*

### Emergency contraception – who knows about it and what do they think about it?

- 96% of respondents had heard of emergency contraception ('the morning-after pill') in one study but only 21% of men and 42% of women knew the correct time limit for its use. *(ICCP and ISSHR reports)*
- 90% of adults in Ireland believe that emergency contraception should be available. *(ISSHR Survey)*
- In a survey of women requesting emergency contraception, 64% said they used contraception when having sex but their contraception failed. In 76% of these cases condoms were used. *(Crisis Pregnancy Agency Report No. 14)*

## EDUCATION AND SEXUAL HEALTH KNOWLEDGE

- Lots of people do not know when a woman's most fertile time in her cycle is. Only 31% of men and 56% of women knew a woman's most fertile time. *(ISSHR Survey)*
- 92% of adults in Ireland support sex education for young people on sexual intercourse, sexual feelings, contraception, safer sex and homosexuality. *(ISSHR Survey)*

% of ISSHR respondents who received sex education on safer sex/STIs

AGE	%
18-24	68
25-29	47
30-34	39
35-39	23
40-44	12
45-49	9
50-54	4
55-59	3
60-69	3

- The ISSHR report found that when parents talk to their children about sex and relationships they increase the likelihood that their teenagers will delay their first sexual experience and that they will use contraception.
- The research shows that men and women with low levels of education are:
  - Less likely to have received sex education in school or at home
  - Less likely to use contraception at first intercourse and on the most recent occasion of intercourse
  - More vulnerable to becoming sexually active before 17, which is in turn linked to a series of negative outcomes (*ISSHR Survey*)

## FERTILITY, TEENAGE BIRTHS

### **What is the fertility rate in Ireland compared to the EU?**

- Ireland's fertility rate of 1.90 is one of the highest in the EU (*CSO*); the average rate for the EU 15 is 1.5
- Ireland's fertility rate is currently below replacement level
  - the level of fertility needed to ensure the population replaces itself.
- The average age for mothers in Ireland to have their first child is 28 (30 years for married women and 25 years for unmarried women). (*CPA Statistical Report 2005*)

### **How many teenagers give birth in Ireland?**

- In 2006 there were 2352 births to teenagers (15-19 years) equivalent to 0.4% of total births that year. (*CSO*)
- The teenage birth rate in Ireland has been relatively stable over the last 30 years. (*CPA Statistical Report 2005*)
- The majority of teenage births occur in females aged 18 to 19. For example in 2006, 76% of all births to females under 20 years were to 18 and 19 year olds (1785 of 2362). 48 births were to girls aged 15 and under (*CSO*)
- The majority of births that take place to teenagers are first births (89% in 2006).

### **Marriage and family formation**

- 33% of all births occurred outside marriage in 2006. This includes lone parents and parents in long-term and/or cohabiting relationships.
- The number of births outside marriage has increased since the 1970s: in 1973 only 3.2% of births were outside marriage.
- In Ireland most crisis pregnancies end in live birth. Of all women who had a crisis pregnancy, 75% gave birth and parented the baby, 6% had a miscarriage, 15% had an abortion and 1% experienced a stillbirth. (*ICCP Survey*)
- 11% of the population lives in one-parent families - an increase of 24.5% since 1996. Just under a quarter of persons in the state experiencing consistent poverty live in lone-parent-headed households. (*CPA FGS Report*)

*Number of births to women under 20*

YEAR	NO
2000	3116
2001	3087
2002	2948
2003	2828
2004	2493
2005	2427
2006	2362

## CRISIS PREGNANCY

- An estimated 136,000 women had experienced a crisis pregnancy in their lifetime, based on a 2003 analysis of CPA and CSO figures. *(ICCP Survey)*
- In a population survey, 28% of women and 23% of men (with experience of a pregnancy over their lifetime) defined at least one pregnancy experience as a crisis pregnancy. *(ICCP Survey)*
- Evidence from several sources tells us that most people who experience a crisis pregnancy are in their early twenties.

### **Why do women conceal pregnancies and how common is concealed pregnancy?**

- Fear of upsetting or disappointing parents or fear of parents' reaction were the most common reasons women gave for concealing their pregnancies. *(Crisis Pregnancy Agency Report No. 15)*
- A recent Irish study estimates that the prevalence of concealed pregnancy is 1 concealed pregnancy per 625 births in a Dublin hospital and 1 in every 403 births in a rural hospital. *(Crisis Pregnancy Agency Report No. 15)*
- When a woman conceals or denies a pregnancy until a late stage it places a heavy emotional toll on her and creates difficulties for medical staff during her antenatal care and the delivery of the baby. *(Crisis Pregnancy Agency Report No. 15)*

### **How many women choose adoption when faced with a crisis pregnancy?**

- In 2005, 62 Irish babies were placed for adoption with non-family members ('stranger adoptions'). In 1976 there were 1,005 stranger adoptions. *(Adoption Board)*
- Just 0.5% of births outside marriage ended with the baby being placed for adoption in 2002. In 1976 39.5% of births outside marriage ended in adoption.
- The decline in adoption mirrors the rise in the proportions of births outside marriage over a similar period. *(CPA Statistical Report 2005)*

### **How many women go to the UK for an abortion from Ireland?**

- Most women from Ireland who decide to terminate a pregnancy travel to clinics in the UK.
- 5042 women giving addresses in the Republic of Ireland had abortions in UK clinics in 2006 *(UK Dept. of Health)*.
- The number of abortions in UK clinics to women giving Irish addresses has increased over the past 30 years.
- The number of abortions in UK clinics to women giving Irish addresses has decreased in the last 5 years; this may be due to women travelling to other EU countries where the financial cost of having an abortion is lower than in the UK.
- By international comparison Ireland has a low rate of abortion.
- The lowest documented abortion rates are in Belgium and the Netherlands.

Number of women giving Irish addresses in UK abortion clinics 2001-2006

YEAR	NO
2001	6673
2002	6522
2003	6320
2004	6217
2005	5585
2006	5042

## OUR RESEARCH

The Crisis Pregnancy Agency is a key source of information for anyone reporting on or working in the area of crisis pregnancy, sexual health or contraception in Ireland. Since 2002 the CPA has published over 20 research reports on subjects ranging from adoption, teenagers and the media, sexual behaviour and contraceptive use, to counselling and support services, as well as two large general population surveys on crisis pregnancy and its prevention.

To download our publications and research reports or to keep up to date with the work of the Agency check out our website – [www.crisispregnancy.ie](http://www.crisispregnancy.ie). For regular updates on the work of the Crisis Pregnancy Agency, and the latest news and research, sign up to receive our free e-newsletter [www.crisispregnancy.ie/newsletter.html](http://www.crisispregnancy.ie/newsletter.html)

## WANT TO READ MORE?

This summary draws on the following research reports, available through the CPA website at [www.crisispregnancy.ie/research3.php3](http://www.crisispregnancy.ie/research3.php3):

Crisis Pregnancy Agency Report 7 (ICCP Survey) involved a survey of over 3000 people between the ages of 18 and 49 and living in Ireland on all aspects of their sexual behaviour. 245 people answered in-depth questions about their personal experience of crisis pregnancy.

*(2004 Rundle, Leigh & McGee, Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland; Layte, ERSI)*

Crisis Pregnancy Agency Report 14 explored patterns of alcohol use among a sample of women requesting emergency contraception (EC) at one clinic and the reasons and circumstances causing women to seek EC. The focus of the research was the relationship between unsafe sex and alcohol consumption.

*(2005 Loxley & Cahill, TCD; O'Keeffe, CPA)*

Crisis Pregnancy Agency Report 15 examined the factors contributing to and processes entailed in the concealment of pregnancy. The research involved analysis of case-notes relating to women presenting with a concealed pregnancy and interviews - with women who concealed their pregnancy and with health professionals who work with women concealing their pregnancy.

*(2006 Conlon, Women's Education, Research and Resource Centre, UCD)*

Crisis Pregnancy Agency Statistical Report 2005 examined a range of statistical indices that shed light on reproductive decision-making and child bearing in Ireland. The report presents statistics on the changing patterns of fertility over time and the outcomes of crisis pregnancy, such as adoption and abortion.

*(2005 McGrath, O'Keeffe & Smith, Crisis Pregnancy Agency)*

The Agency commissioned a report entitled: The Economic Factors Affecting Women's Decision-Making in Crisis Pregnancy Situations. The objective of the project was to incorporate into one analysis the range of economic and policy factors that potentially affect women's decision-making in crisis pregnancy and to quantify such factors in financial and "societal value" terms.

*(2005 FGS Consulting & Professor Gerry Boyle)*

The Irish Study of Sexual Health and Relationships, commissioned by the Crisis Pregnancy Agency and the Department of Health and Children, was published in 2006. The study surveyed 7,441 adults, aged 18-64. Topics addressed included sexual knowledge, attitudes and behaviours; heterosexual and homosexual partnerships and practices; risk-reduction practices; experience of crisis pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.

*(2006, Layte, McGee et al, Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) and Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI))*

## USEFUL INFORMATION AND CONTACTS

### Crisis Pregnancy Agency

4th Floor  
89-94 Capel Street  
Dublin 1

Tel: 01 814 6292  
Fax: 01 814 6282  
Email: [info@crisispregnancy.ie](mailto:info@crisispregnancy.ie)  
Web: [www.crisispregnancy.ie](http://www.crisispregnancy.ie)

### Keep up to date with the Crisis Pregnancy Agency

Check out the **Crisis Pregnancy Agency's** website: [www.crisispregnancy.ie](http://www.crisispregnancy.ie)  
You can see the latest Irish research on crisis pregnancy and related areas and find out about resources available to those in a crisis pregnancy situation. Sign up to receive our free newsletter, which has information on new research and useful resources. [www.crisispregnancy.ie/newsletter.html](http://www.crisispregnancy.ie/newsletter.html)

### Resources for parents

The **'You can talk to me'** booklet and DVD assist parents in communicating with their children on sexual health and relationships. They are available free from the **Crisis Pregnancy Agency**, or download the booklet at [www.crisispregnancy.ie](http://www.crisispregnancy.ie)

### Contraception and sexual health

**Think Contraception** - The 'Think Contraception' leaflet and website provide information for young men and women who want to learn more about sexual and reproductive health, especially contraception. The leaflet is available from the **Crisis Pregnancy Agency**, or log on to [www.thinkcontraception.ie](http://www.thinkcontraception.ie)

**Contraception 35-55** is a leaflet on fertility, sexual health and contraception for women aged 35-55. It gives information on choosing contraception, fertility and contraceptive options. Leaflets are free from the **Crisis Pregnancy Agency** or download a PDF at [www.crisispregnancy.ie/33-55.pdf](http://www.crisispregnancy.ie/33-55.pdf)

### Resources for clients with a crisis pregnancy

Positive Options is a directory of agencies skilled in the area of crisis pregnancy counselling. The Positive Options leaflet is available from the **Crisis Pregnancy Agency**, or log on to [www.positiveoptions.ie](http://www.positiveoptions.ie) Agencies are listed by region, to allow easy identification of local services.

### Resources for service providers

**Key Contact** - The Crisis Pregnancy Agency has commissioned a range of information resources for individuals or organisations that may encounter women experiencing a crisis pregnancy.

**Key Contact - Responding to Crisis Pregnancy: Information and Service Directory for Community and Health Professionals** gives information on how to support a client with a crisis pregnancy and includes a directory of agencies and support services for those experiencing crisis pregnancy.

**Key Contact - Directory of Supported Accommodation for Women Experiencing Crisis Pregnancy** provides information on supported accommodation services for women experiencing crisis pregnancy and their children.

**Key Contact - Reproductive Health Information for Migrant Women** is a crisis pregnancy information booklet and CD-ROM with information in six languages for members of ethnic groups.