



NEWS RELEASE

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**Hanafin launches new study charting changing
nature of Irish family structures**

“This new study of family structures provides a detailed description of the changing nature of families across Ireland over the past 20 years, showing increases in births outside marriage, lone parenthood, marital breakdown and a sharp rise in co-habitation. It also charts the decrease in more traditional forms, such as very large families and three generation households. All this information will help policymakers develop services into the future” said Mary Hanafin T.D., Minister for Social and Family Affairs today.

The Minister was launching a new ESRI study *Family Figures: Family Dynamics and Family Types in Ireland, 1986- 2006* undertaken by Dr. Pete Lunn of the ESRI, Prof. Tony Fahey of UCD and Dr. Carmel Hannon of University of Limerick.

Some of the key findings of the study are:

- Across all social classes, marriage rates have fallen among those aged in their 20s and risen among those aged over 30.
- The marital breakdown rate increased rapidly in the 1990s but has levelled off in recent years and remains low by international standards. There is no evidence that the introduction of divorce in 1997 affected the trend in marital breakdown.
- Married couples with one child have a 25-30% higher risk of marital breakdown than those with no children or with more than one child.
- Religious affiliation, ethnicity and nationality have a stronger impact on likelihood of marriage than socio-economic position.
- Most women now delay having children beyond 30 years of age, with the majority now having two or three children. Over 1 in 6 women now have no children at age 45.
- The higher a woman’s educational attainment, the longer she is likely to delay having children and the fewer children she is likely to have. There is a very strong relationship between lone motherhood and low educational attainment.



Department of Social and Family Affairs

- It is estimated that for 1 in 8 that undergo marital breakdown, the children stay with their father.

Minister Hanafin went on to say **“every family in Ireland will at some stage benefit from funding from the Department of Social and Family Affairs. This year the Government will be spending over €21billion on the social welfare budget, particularly supporting families through payments such as Child Benefit, Maternity Benefit, One Parent Family Payment, Family Income Supplement, and other primary payments such as jobseekers, illness and disability payments.”**

Additional support is provided by the Department to families and communities through the 107 Family Resource Centres network of centres throughout the country.

The study was funded by the Department of Social and Family Affairs through the Family Support Agency.

Minister Hanafin concluded by thanking the authors of the report - Dr. Pete Lunn, Prof. Tony Fahey and Dr. Carmel Hannon. **“This report will be a valuable resource for policy makers, researchers and those interested in how families are developing and changing in Ireland.”**

PRESS RELEASE ENDS