

Stats show disturbing marriage trends in Ireland

One in four marriages in Ireland now ends in separation or divorce, new figures from the Courts Service Annual Report reveal. More than 4,000 couples filed for divorce through the courts in 2008, a 22 percent increase since 2001. Combined with 1,965 separations, the figures show a 15.6 percent surge in marital breakdowns since 2001.

The report paints a different picture of marriage in Ireland than the one that figures from the Central Statistics Office (CSO) did this month. Those showed more people getting married. Compared to the 22,544 marriages that took place in 2007, the latest year for which such figures are available, the numbers show a divorce rate of 18.8 percent, with an overall marital breakdown rate of 27.5 percent when one includes separation figures.



David Quinn, director of the pro-family Iona Institute, said the Courts report was a truer indicator of the state of marriage in Ireland: “People say marriage is in great shape in Ireland because people are still getting married, but the real measures are the divorce rate, [and] the fact that a third of all births are outside marriage. By these measures marriage is in very poor shape”.

Compared to the rest of Europe, Ireland’s divorce rate is relatively low—about half that of Britain and Sweden, for example. But the rise in divorce, which became legal in 1996 (a 500 percent increase in marital breakdown between 1996 and 2006), is the highest in Europe, with 200,000 people in Ireland now divorced or separated.

Other trends in family law were a 25 percent increase in applications by unmarried fathers for guardianship of children, while 66 percent of maintenance orders in District Court were made in favour of unmarried applicants.

“All these problems would be solved if people got married before having children—if marriages were the legal structure in which you have children”, Mr Quinn noted. Women begin fifty-eight percent of divorce proceedings and 72 percent of judicial separation proceedings. The Irish Catholic. August 6.