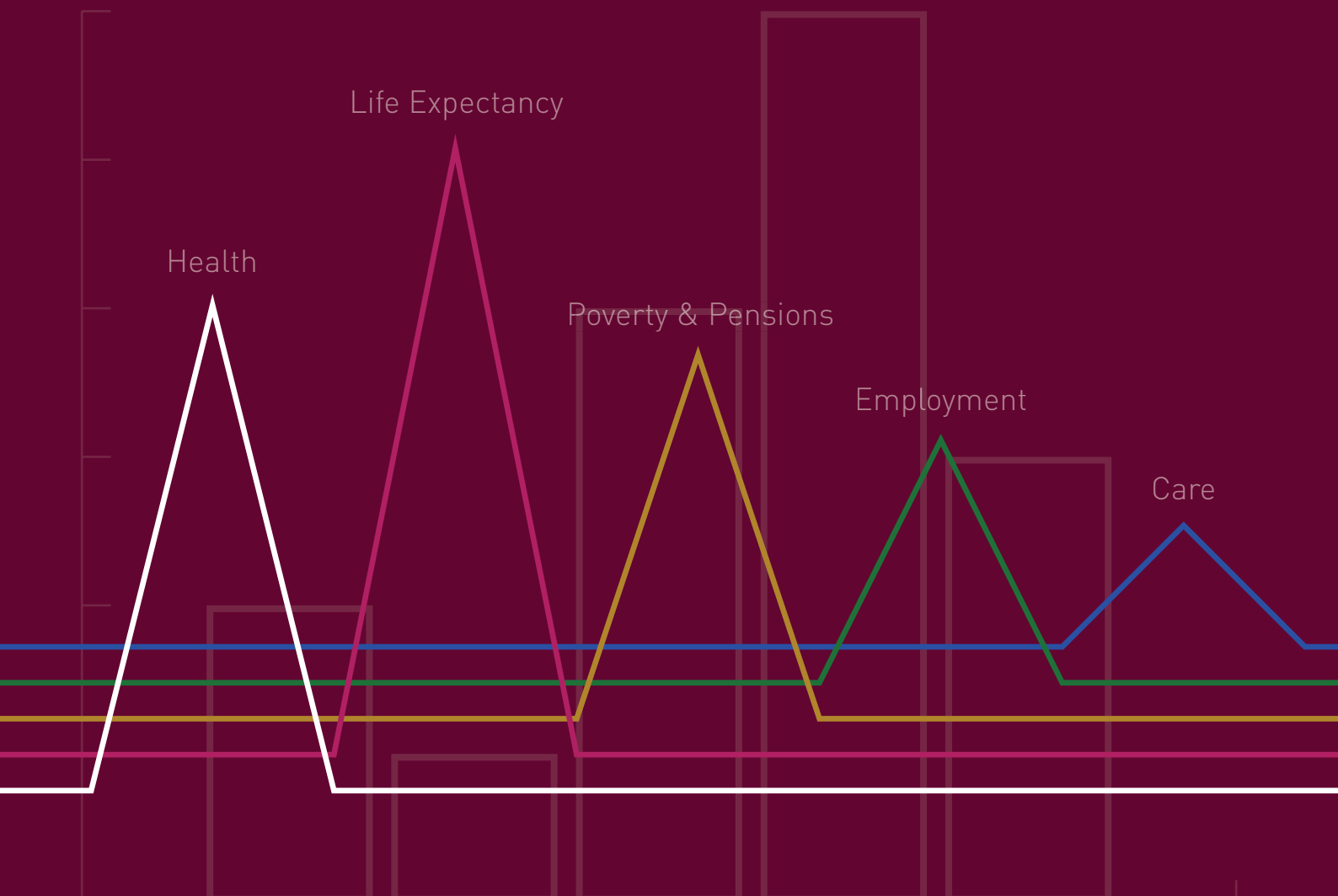


C|A|R|D|I

Centre for Ageing Research
and Development in Ireland



Illustrating Ageing in Ireland North & South

Key Facts and Figures

Compiled by Paul McGill

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What is CARDI?

The Centre for Ageing Research and Development in Ireland (CARDI) is a not for profit organisation developed by leaders from the ageing field across Ireland (North and South). Operating at a strategic level and in an advisory capacity, CARDI focuses on promoting research cooperation across sectors and disciplines and influencing the direction of research on ageing and older people.

CARDI has been strategically positioned around the following four areas:

- Identifying and establishing ageing research priorities relevant to policy and practice in Ireland (North and South);
- Promoting greater collaboration and co-operation on ageing research in order to build an ageing research community in Ireland (North and South);
- Stimulating research in priority areas that can inform policy and practice relating to ageing and older people in Ireland (North and South);
- Communicating strategic research issues on ageing to raise the profile of ageing research in Ireland (North and South) and its role in informing policy and practice.

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Abbreviations in this report:

Rol means Republic of Ireland

NI means Northern Ireland

Ireland refers to the entire island

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Foreword

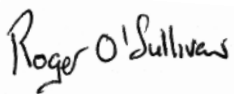
It is one of the great achievements of our times that we are living longer than ever before and over forthcoming decades the proportion of older people will continue to grow. While there is a growing realisation that we are living in an ageing world, there is less of a discussion on the type of research required to help plan for that world. Demographic change arising from our increasing longevity will require new thinking and ways of working for governments across the world as well as on both parts of the island of Ireland.

Increasing life span is often seen as a problem for successful societies and talked about only in terms of a burden and cost. However, we need to reconsider our views of age and what we expect for ourselves in latter life. Focusing only on the cost of health and social care and pensions, important as they are, means the immense contribution that older people make to society as carers, consumers and community members is lost. Older people need to be recognised for their important contribution to economies and communities, their role as consumers and their expectations as citizens. These needs are diverse and must be understood to a much greater degree across the spectrum of issues: work, leisure, culture, sport, transport, income and housing as well as health and care services.

This publication, mapping statistical information on ageing across the island of Ireland, will be of interest to older people and their organisations, researchers of all disciplines, policy-makers and service providers. It is part of a portfolio of publications which maps existing research, policy and government structures relating to ageing across Ireland, north and south (see www.cardi.ie). By providing this statistical comparison on a range of aspects of the lives of older people in Northern Ireland (NI) and the Republic of Ireland (RoI), this report will help to identify and highlight both similarities and differences across the Island of Ireland. It also emphasises the need for increased focus on comparable datasets and definitions across the island of Ireland

I would like to thank Paul Mc Gill, Strategic Research Officer with CARDI, for his work in compiling this report and adding to the existing body of knowledge on ageing research.

Finally, I am delighted to present you this report as a starting point for discussion and reflection in analysing and planning for ageing across the island of Ireland.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Roger O'Sullivan". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Roger O'Sullivan
Director

Context

Increased years to life is the good news story of the 20th Century. We experienced a greater extension of years during the 20th century than in the past five thousand years. With a million people aged 60 and above now living on the island of Ireland (rising to 29% of the total population in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland by 2041) the significance of longevity cannot be underestimated. The greatest growth will be in the number of people aged 85+. This cohort will rise almost fivefold, from 74,000 to 356,000 by 2041.

We need to understand more fully the implications of an ageing society and what it means for policies and services for older people. There is no threat to our society from a growing number of older people because they contribute to that society as citizens, consumers and, increasingly, as workers. We do, however, need policy makers and researchers to work closer with older people themselves to plan the changes that are needed. In Ireland we can best do this through sensible co-operation, sharing good practice, resources and expertise to the advantage of all older people north and south.

Aims

This paper, which provides a statistical summary on aspects of the lives of older people in Northern Ireland (NI) and the Republic of Ireland (RoI), aims to

- compare and contrast aspects of the lives of older people from an island of Ireland analysis,
- highlight some areas which merit further research, analysis and co-ordinated data collection north and south.

Methodology

This report is drawn from three main sources of general data on older people in Ireland:

1. *Ageing in Ireland 2007*, a statistical bulletin produced by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) for RoI.¹

¹ www.cso.ie/releasespublications/ageinginireland2007.htm

2. *Older People in Northern Ireland*, an updated 2008 compilation of statistics about older people by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (hard copy only).
3. *Ireland North and South: A Statistical Profile 2008 Edition*, a joint publication of the CSO and the Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency.²

One of the difficulties in comparing the two systems is that the first two volumes were produced independently of one another, often using varying definitions or different time intervals or classifications to report data. These difficulties have been minimised, but not eliminated, in the third publication but it has very few tables about older people.

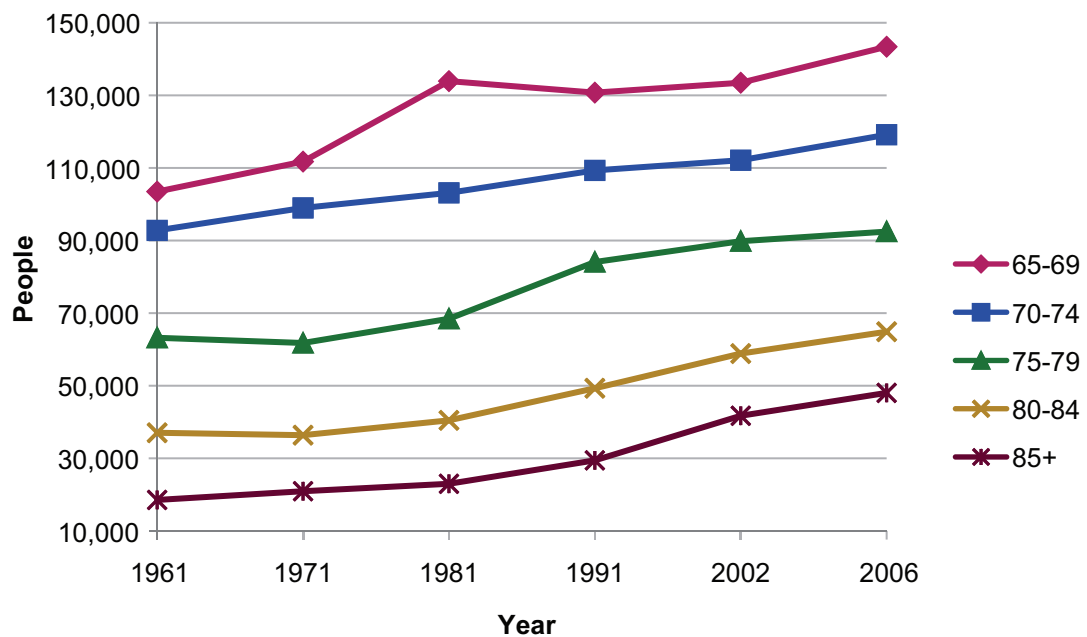
This document has drawn on other sources for data, which are referenced and listed. The areas covered are, firstly, those which appear to be particularly important to the research agenda on ageing and older people and, secondly, issues on which comparable data are available; for some other important topics few or no north-south data are available.

² www.cso.ie/releasespublications/ireland_statistical_profile_2008.htm

1. Population

- 1.1 In the Republic of Ireland (RoI) 468,000 people were aged 65 year or more at the time of the last Census in 2006. This represented 11.1% of the population, the lowest proportion in the European Union (average 16.9%) and well below countries such as Germany (19.8%) or Italy (19.9%).³ The low proportion of older people is due to the lower average age of immigrants and a relatively high birth-rate. The proportion of older people (65+) is higher in Northern Ireland (NI): 249,000 people, which made up 14% of the population in 2008 (compared with 16% in the UK as a whole).
- 1.2 Whilst both parts of Ireland are relatively young compared with the EU average, the number of older people living in them has grown substantially in recent decades.

Figure 1a: RoI older population 1961-2006

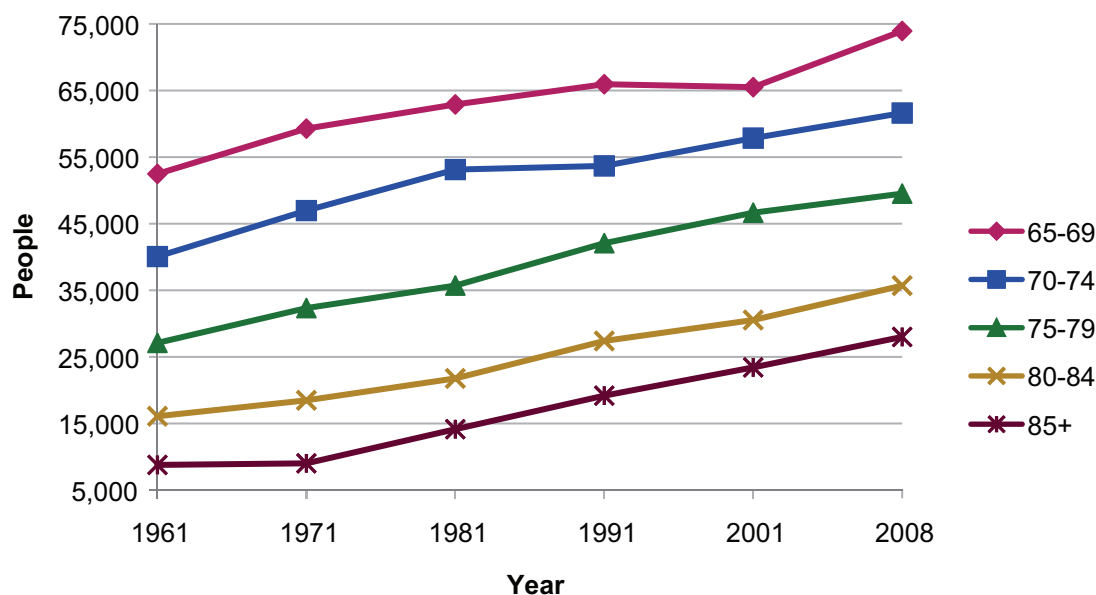


Note: the Irish 2001 Census was postponed for a year due to the outbreak of foot and mouth disease.

³ <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu>

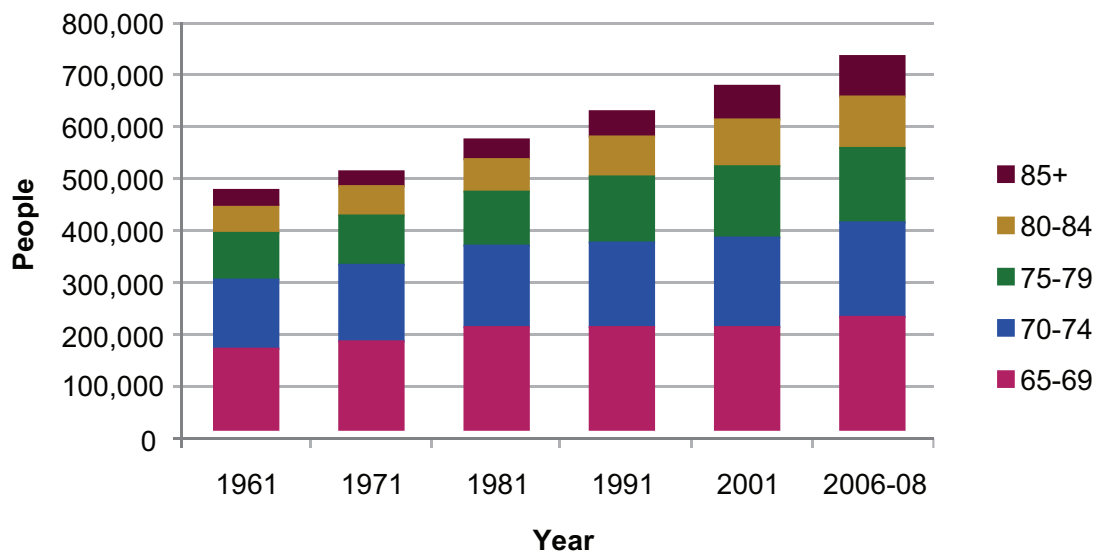
- 1.3 Figure 1 shows marked growth in all the older age groups in RoI. Taking all people aged 65+, there has been an expansion of 153,000 (from 315,000 to 468,000) between the Censuses of 1961 and 2006, which works out at an increase of 48.5%. The numbers of older old remain relatively small but are rising rapidly. For example, people aged 80-85 have grown by 75% and the 85+ cohort has expanded by 159% from 18,500 in 1961 to 48,000 in the latest Census.
- 1.4 In Northern Ireland the changes have been in the same direction but the upward curves have been much steeper, as illustrated in Figure 1b. The total number of people aged 65+ rose by 104,000 between 1961 and 2008 (mid-year estimate), a rise of 72% compared with the 1961 older people population of 144,500. The 80-84 age group went up by nearly 20,000 (122%) and the number of people aged 85 or older more than tripled from 9,000 to 28,000.

Figure 1b: NI older population 1961-2006



- 1.5 There are now 717,000 people aged 65+ (and a million aged 60+) living on the island of Ireland and the breakdown by age group is given in Figure 1c. Since 1961, the population of all ages has risen by 42% to just over six million but the number of people aged 65+ has increased more rapidly by 56% - there are now a quarter of a million more people aged 65+ than in 1961. It follows that the older population now represents a larger proportion of the total population (11.9%) than it did in 1961 (10.8%). The number of people aged 80-84 has expanded by 47,500 (up 89%) and aged 85+ by 49,000 (up 178%). Another feature of recent change is that, after two decades of stagnation, the 65-69 year-old cohort has expanded rapidly since 2001; this will generate larger numbers of older old in future years.

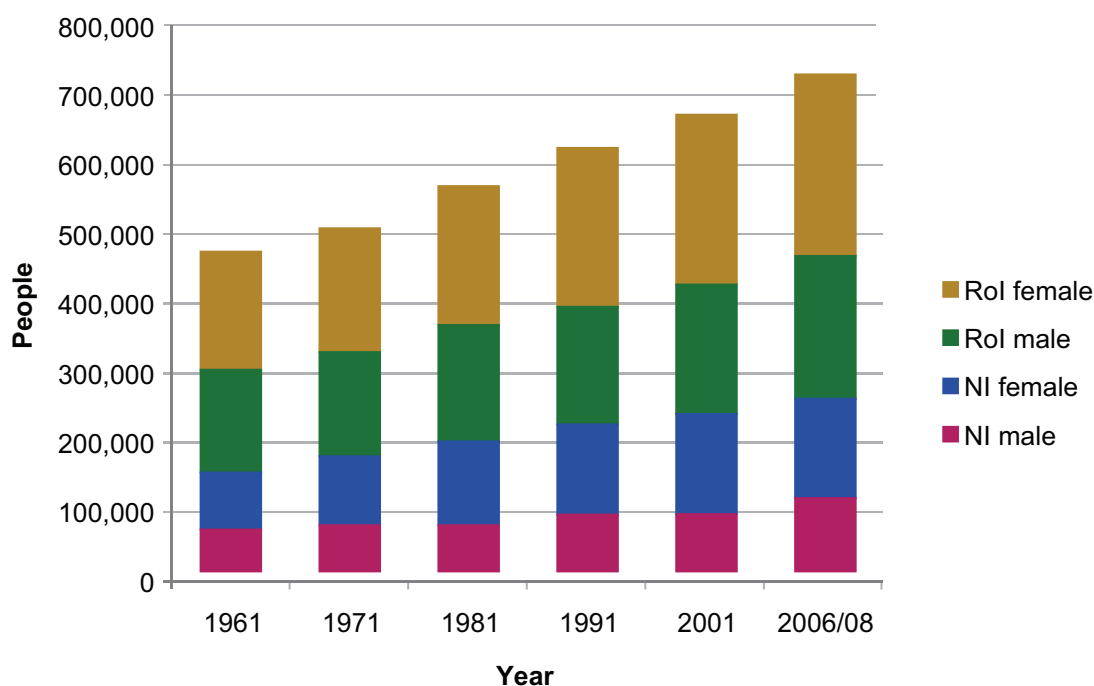
Figure 1c: All Ireland older population



Population by sex

1.6 If we look at the 65+ age group by jurisdiction and sex, as in Figure 1d, we see that Republic of Ireland women were the largest group in 1961; as might be expected this group increased the most in absolute terms, adding 95,000 by 2006. There was a rise of 58,000 older men in the Republic. In Northern Ireland the number of women was boosted by 60,000 and men by 44,000 between 1961 and 2008. In 2006/08 there were 106,037 men and 142,742 women in NI and 207,095 men and 260,831 women in RoI.

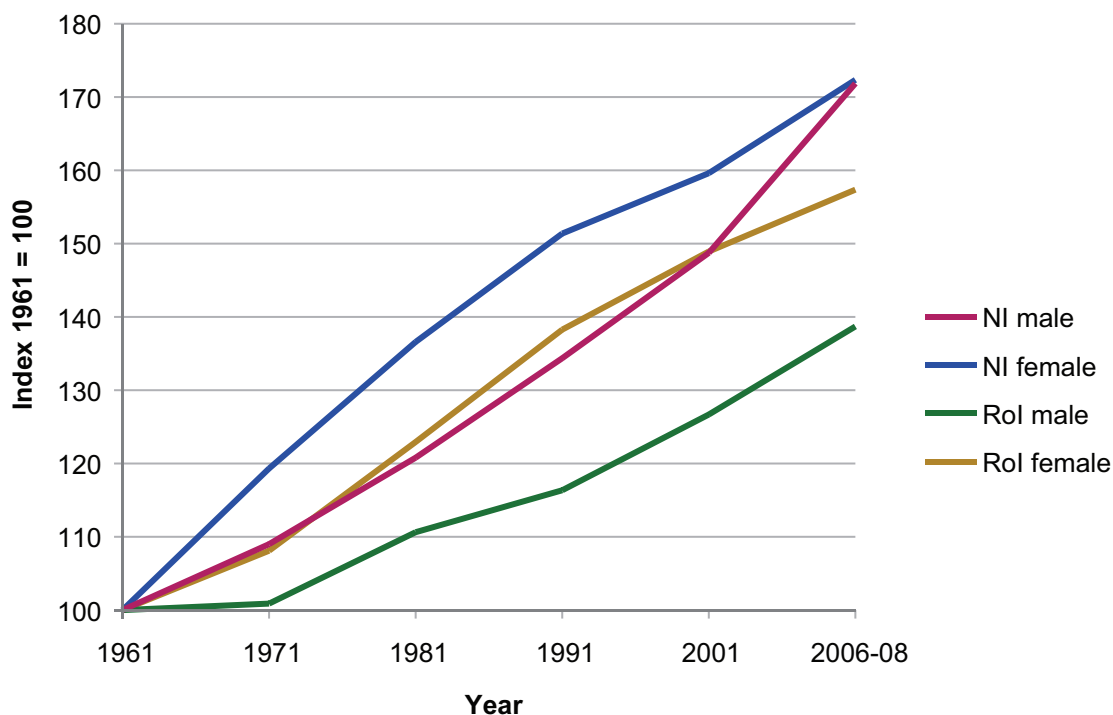
Figure 1d: All Ireland number of people aged 65+ by sex



1.7 What these numbers disguise are the relative changes. As indicated above, there has been more rapid growth in relative terms in NI than in RoI. In addition, between 1961 and 2006/08, the proportion of women on the island as a whole rose by 2.2 percentage points and the share of men fell correspondingly. However, the only group whose share fell was RoI men – their proportion of the total 65+ cohort fell by 3.6 percentage points (from 32.5% to 28.9% of the total). By contrast the share of 65+ people on the island of Ireland represented by NI men increased by 1.4 percentage points, RoI women rose fractionally by 0.3 points and NI women more substantially by 1.9 percentage points.

- 1.8 Figure 1e shows more clearly the quite low growth in the number of older RoI men compared with either women in the Republic or men in Northern Ireland. It does this by indexing 1961 as 100 and examining the growth of all four groups. This shows several features very clearly. The first has already been referred to ie the faster growth in numbers of people aged 65+ in NI compared with RoI. More interestingly the increase in the number of older men and women in NI has been very similar between 1961 and 2008, only 0.4% apart; the total number of men rose by 71.9% and women by 72.3%. The pattern has been markedly different in RoI where the number of older women increased by 57.4% but the number of men lagged behind with expansion of only 38.7% between 1961 and 2006.

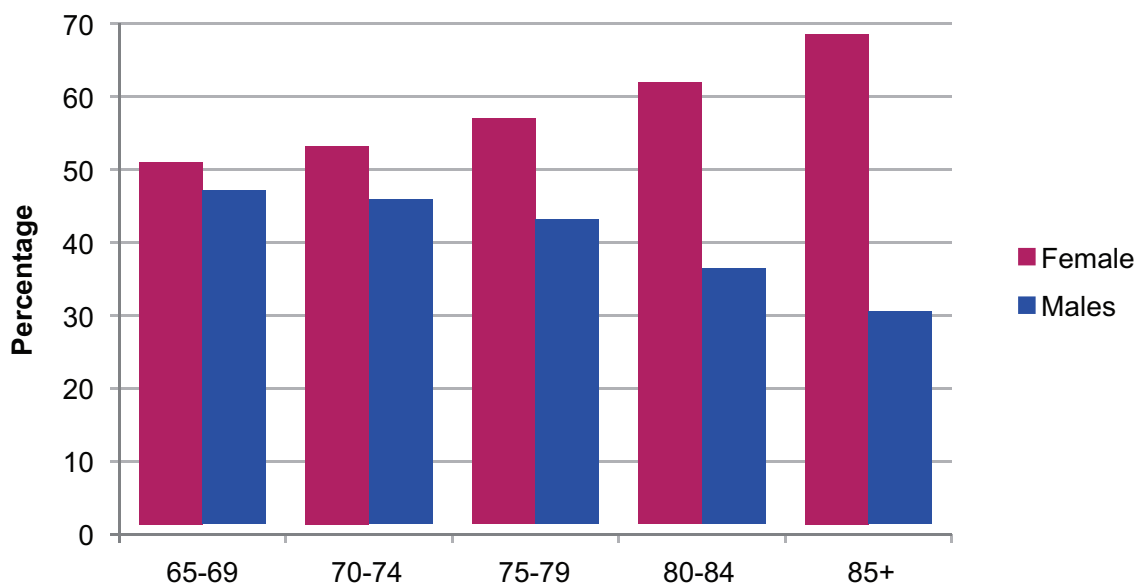
Figure 1e: All Ireland change in 65+ population by sex



- 1.9 So far we have looked only at the total number of people aged 65+ but an important feature of ageing is that men tend to die younger, with the result that women make up an ever increasing proportion of the population as we move up the age groups. On this score there are no major differences between NI and RoI, though the proportion of RoI males compared with RoI females falls slightly more than is the case for NI men and women.

- 1.10 The picture for Ireland as a whole in 2006/08 is presented in Figure 1f. It shows that in the 65-69 groups the number of men and women is almost equal (51:49 in favour of women) but the proportion of women grows steadily so that they make up nearly seven in ten of the 85+ group

Figure 1f: All Ireland ratio of men to women by age group 2006/08

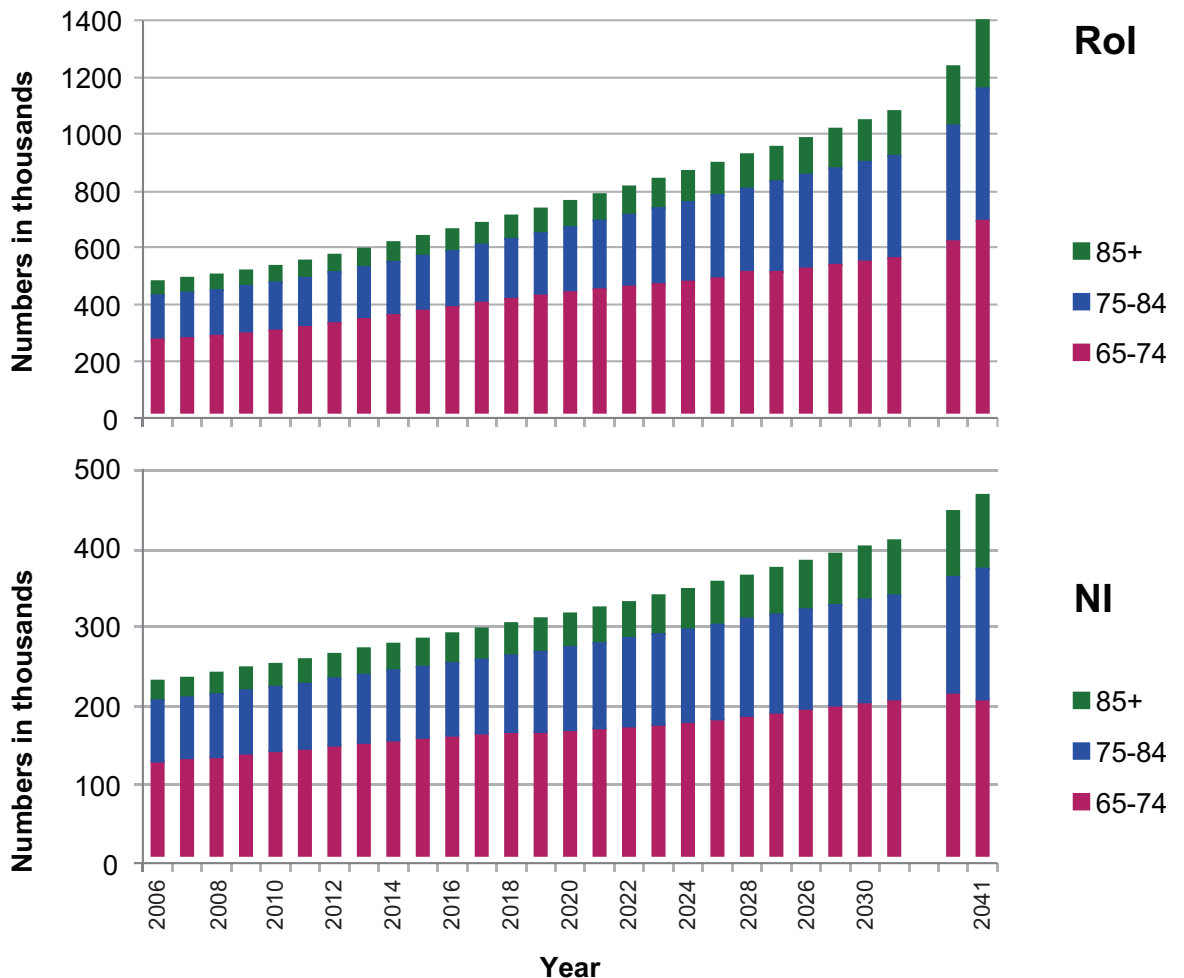


Note: the graph shows the proportions of men and women, so each pair of columns always equals 100. However the numbers fall as age groups increase eg there are 217,000 people aged 65-69 but only 76,000 aged 85+.

2. Population projections

2.1 Looking to the future a huge increase is expected in the number of older people in Ireland, continuing the expansion in recent decades (Figure 2.1). Here too the pattern in NI and RoI is the same, though the relative increases in RoI will be steeper than in NI from a lower base. As documented in greater detail below, the expansion of the older old will be particularly dramatic.⁴

Figure 2.1: Projected rise by age group 2006-2031 (2036 & 2041 added)

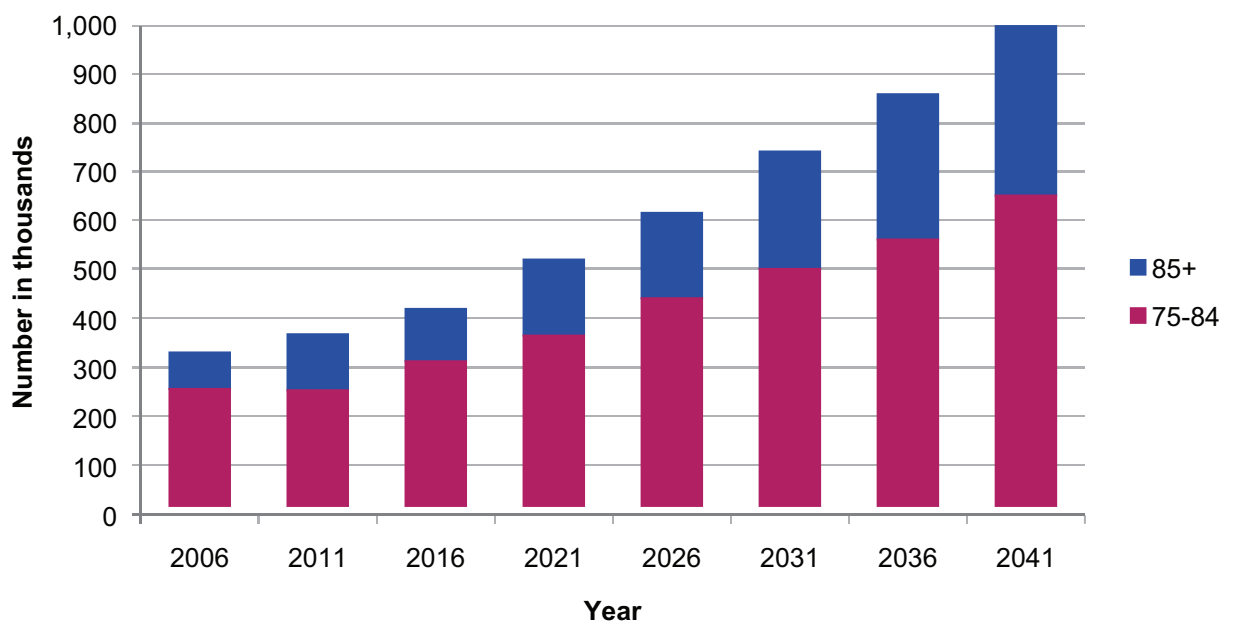


⁴ Projections for both NI and RoI are 2006-based so some of the population figures for NI will be lower than those in Section 1, which used the 2008 mid-year estimates. Sources: <http://www.nisra.gov.uk/demography/default.asp20.htm> and http://www.cso.ie/surveysandmethodologies/surveys_populations.htm (accessed 9 July 2009)

- 2.2 There will be 1.4 million people in ROI aged 65+ in 2041, three times more than the 462,000 living now. This older group is projected to make up more than 22% of the total population, a notable change since 2006 when the 65+ group made up only 11% of the population.
- 2.3 In NI, between now and 2041 the 65+ population is projected to make up nearly one third of the total population (24%), compared with less than 14% now. Numbers are likely to rise from 239,000 now to 493,000 in 2041.
- 2.4 Taking Ireland as a whole, the number of people aged 65+ is projected to rise from just over 700,000 now to 1.89 million in 2041, an increase of 169%. This will boost the older people's share of the total population from 12% in 2006 to 23% in 2041. If we define the older population as everyone over 60 instead of 65, the number is due to reach 2.43 million, compared with one million now; by 2041 the 60+ population will make up nearly three in ten of all people living in Ireland.
- 2.5 A final feature of the graphs for both parts of the island is that there is an inexorable increase in the older population year on year. It is not a case of a post-War baby boom passing through the age range to be followed by a dip. On the contrary, the older population will continue to rise for more than half a century. Projections for NI suggest a levelling off in expansion in the 2070s but, after that, growth in numbers aged 65+ is projected to resume.

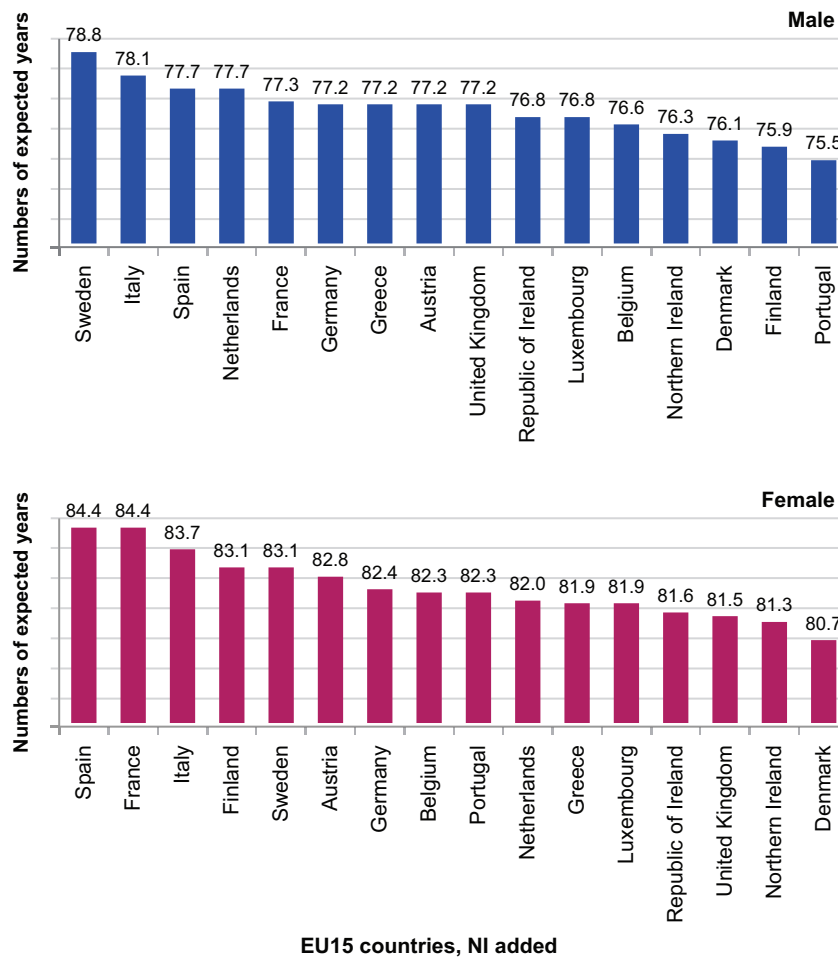
- 2.6 An expansion in the number of very old people is a crucial feature of the new demography, as shown in Figure 2.2. It shows that by 2041, the number of people aged 75+ is projected to reach almost one million by 2041, three times the number living now. Even more dramatic is the change in the 85+ population, which will rise almost fivefold, from 74,000 in 2006 to 356,000 in 2041. The above graph does not separate out the 620 centenarians in Ireland in 2006 which are projected to top 8,500 by 2041.

Figure 2.2: All-Ireland population aged 75+ 2006-2041



Life expectancy: EU comparisons

- 2.7 Among the reasons why the older population has grown so much in recent years is that death rates at birth and infancy have been cut dramatically and living and working standards have improved, with the result that people generally are living much longer than in earlier generations. These trends are expected to continue in Europe and other developed countries, though death rates are still very high in places like sub-Saharan Africa – life expectancy is a good measure of a country's wealth, nutrition, quality of health services and the extent of inequality.
- 2.8 In very many countries, including Ireland, there has been a remarkable transformation of life chances in just two generations. Both parts of Ireland, however, lagged behind the 15 states that formed the European Union before the two recent enlargements. Beginning with life expectancy at birth, Figure 2.3 shows ROI in tenth place for males and NI three places lower, nearly a year below the average UK figure and 2.5 years behind the leader, Sweden.

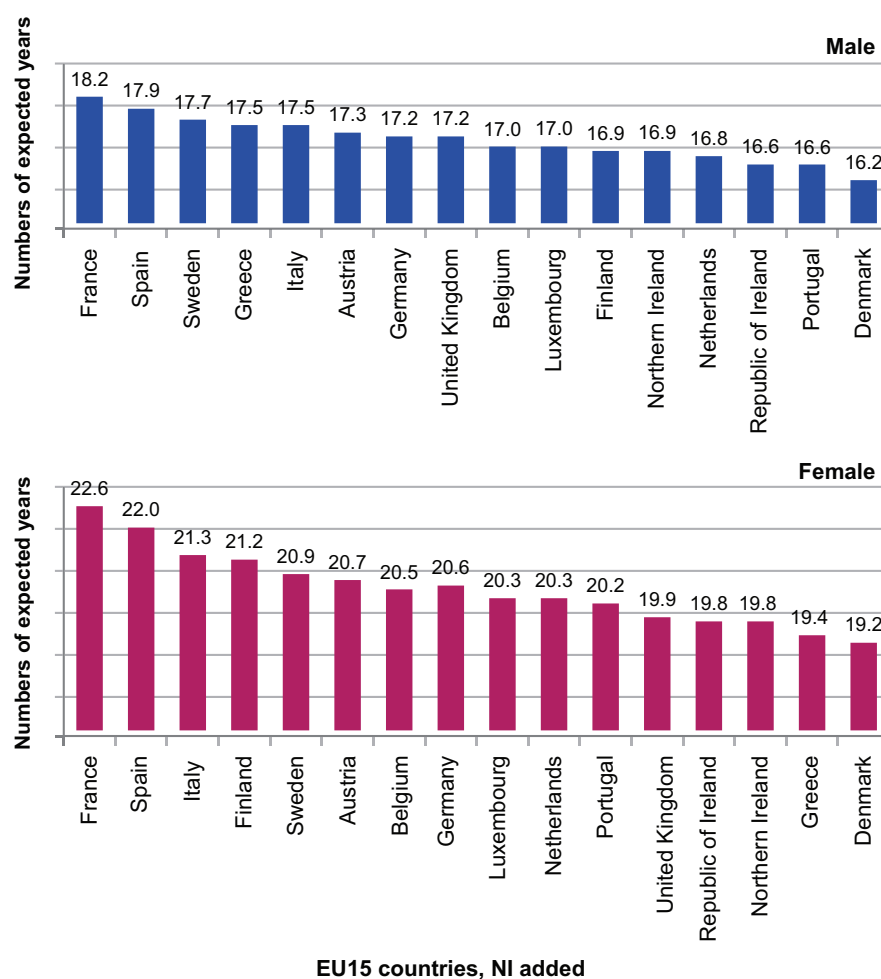
Figure 2.3: Life expectancy at birth in EU15, 2006

Source: Irish Life Tables No 15, CSO, Jan 2009; NI data supplied by NISRA in October 2009

- 2.9 In the case of female life expectancy at birth, RoI is in 13th place, with the UK slightly behind, followed by Northern Ireland and Denmark. Baby girls in Ireland generally have a life expectancy almost three years lower than the two top countries, Spain and France.

2.10 Ireland compares favourably with the 12 most recent EU member states, which are mostly poor countries⁵, with the result that it is around the middle of the table in life expectancy at birth. Cyprus and Malta have better life expectancy for males than Ireland and Cyprus, Malta and Slovenia have better rates for females. As a result, ROI is ranked 12th for males and 16th for females in life expectancy at birth in the EU27 league table in 2006, with NI remaining slightly lower.

Figure 2.4: Life expectancy at age 65 in EU 15, 2006



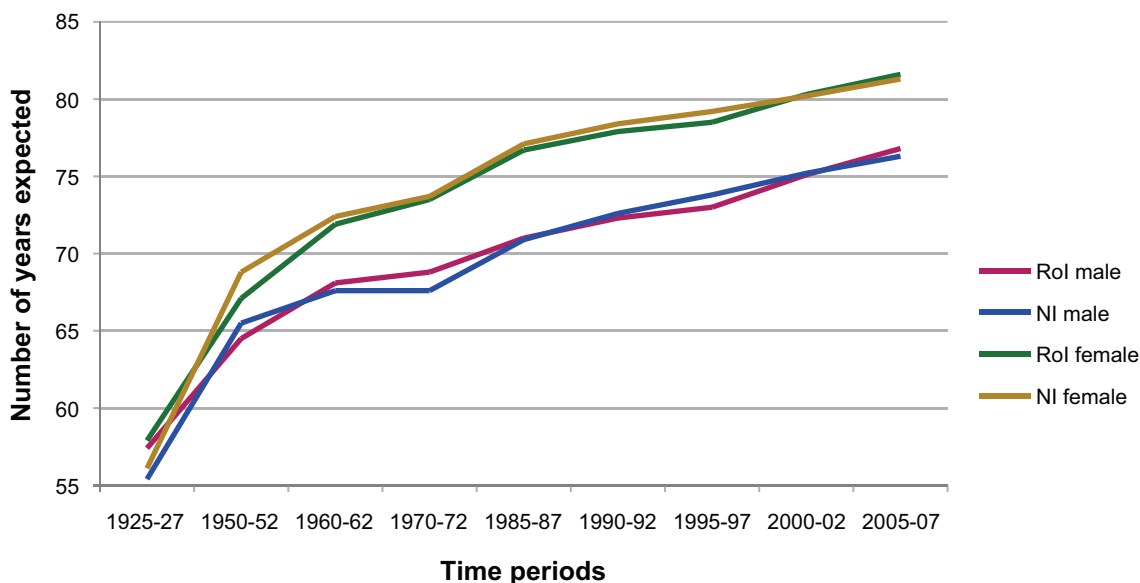
⁵ The more recent accession states are: Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia.

- 2.11 Life expectancy at 65 strips out issues like infant mortality and focuses on the factors that affect life at older ages. In this case RoI fares somewhat worse in comparison with other EU15 countries and NI does slightly better – see Figure 2.4. RoI is in joint 13/14th place along with Portugal in male life expectancy at age 65 or one place lower if we add in NI with a marginally better score. Ireland generally is about 1.5 years behind France, which tops the league. France also has the highest female life expectancy at age 65. A woman there may expect to live on average an additional 23 years. This is almost three years more than in Ireland, where NI and RoI are on level pegging at 19.8 years expected at age 65, sharing 13/14th place among the EU15 countries.

Life expectancy: all-Ireland comparisons

- 2.12 In the 1920s, men were not expected to live much beyond the age of 55 (NI) or 57 (RoI) and women's life expectancy was only one year higher in each case. Over the last 80 years the trend in life expectancy for both men and women has been quite similar on both sides of the border but there are some other interesting differences.⁶
- 2.13 Looking first at life expectancy at birth, there have been very impressive gains over the last 80 years, reflecting a range of factors, such as reduced infant mortality rates (Figure 2.5).

Figure 2.5: All-Ireland life expectancy at birth



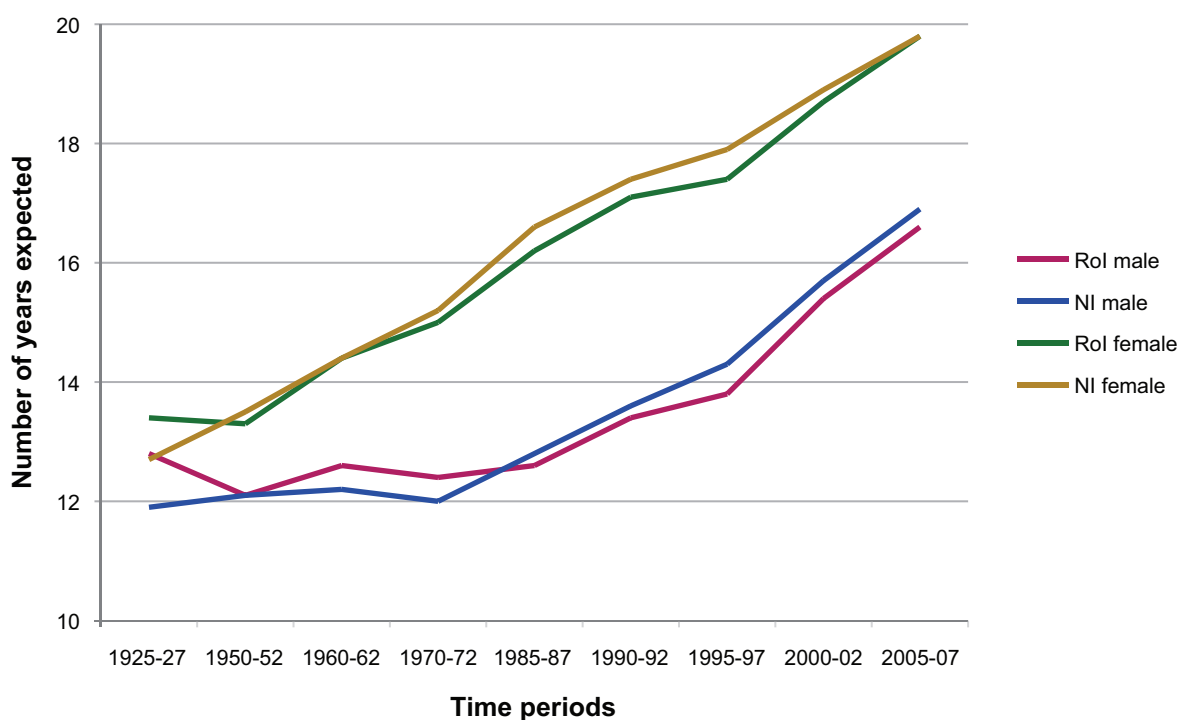
⁶ Northern Ireland data from www.gad.gov.uk/demography_data/life_tables/eoltable06.asp

- 2.14 Interestingly, life expectancy in the 1920s was about two years higher in RoI than in NI for both males and females but the cross-border rates are now similar for men (76.3 in NI and 76.8 in RoI) and for women (81.3 in NI and 81.6 in RoI). Over the 80-year period, males in NI added an average 20.9 years to life compared with 19.4 years in RoI. Female babies born in the last few years in NI can expect to live an extra 25.2 years compared with the 1920s; this is somewhat more than the increased life expectancy of RoI women of 23.7 years.
- 2.15 There is one important exception to this long-term trend. NI until the mid 1990s, added 2.8 extra years to male life expectancy and 2.5 years to female expectancy compared with RoI. In the latest decade, however, RoI has boosted female life expectancy by a year more than NI and male expectancy by an additional 1.3 years. Since these gains were made during the years of the Irish boom, the next set of figures will reveal if the recent gains in RoI compared with NI have been maintained through the recession. Because these relatively small changes are masked in Figure 2.5, they are set out in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland life expectancy by sex (in years)

Life expectancy for people born in:	At birth				At 65 years			
	RoI male	NI male	RoI female	NI female	RoI male	NI male	RoI female	NI female
1925-27	57.4	55.4	57.9	56.1	12.8	11.9	13.4	12.7
1950-52	64.5	65.5	67.1	68.8	12.1	12.1	13.3	13.5
1960-62	68.1	67.6	71.9	72.4	12.6	12.2	14.4	14.4
1970-72	68.8	67.6	73.5	73.7	12.4	12.0	15.0	15.2
1985-87	71.0	70.9	76.7	77.1	12.6	12.8	16.2	16.6
1990-92	72.3	72.6	77.9	78.4	13.4	13.6	17.1	17.4
1995-97	73.0	73.8	78.5	79.2	13.8	14.3	17.4	17.9
2000-02	75.1	75.2	80.3	80.2	15.4	15.7	18.7	18.9
2005-07	76.8	76.3	81.6	81.3	16.6	16.9	19.8	19.8
Increases in years								
Overall	19.4	20.9	23.7	25.2	3.8	5.0	6.4	7.1
1924-27 to 1995-97	15.6	18.4	20.6	23.1	1.0	2.4	4.0	5.2
1995-97 to 2005-07	3.8	2.5	3.1	2.1	2.8	2.6	2.4	1.9
2000-02 to 2005-07	1.7	1.1	1.3	1.1	1.2	1.2	1.1	0.9

Sources: Irish Life Tables No 15, CSO, Jan 2009 and email from NISRA, Oct 2009

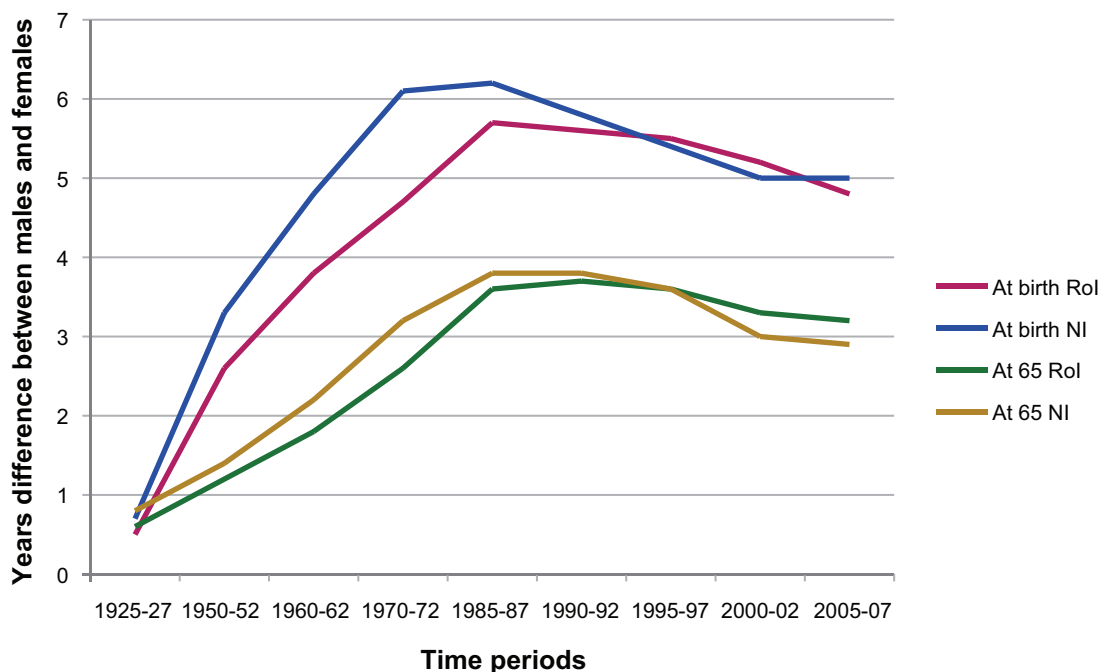
Figure 2.6: All-Ireland life expectancy at age 65

2.16 We can strip out factors such as death rates at birth and in infancy by looking solely at life expectancy at 65 ie the additional number of years a person who has survived until that age can expect to live (Figure 2.6 and Table 2.1). Several features are clear from the lines of the graph. One is that the life expectancy of 65-year old women in NI improved steadily over the 80 years covered, amounting to a gain of seven years of expected life. Women in Rol had no improvement at all for the first 25 years or so. Since then the line has moved up in parallel with that for NI women and they can both expect a life span of 85 years compared with their great grandparents, who could have hoped to live to 78. As with life expectancy at birth, the increases in NI were greater up until 1995-97 whereas the gains have been slightly higher for women in Rol in the latest decade.

2.17 Another feature is that men's life expectancy at 65 did not improve for the first 50 years covered by the graph either north or south but they have made good gains since the 1970s. Men in NI who reached pension age in recent years can expect to live five years more than their great grandfather in the 1920s and men in Rol have an average of nearly four years more. Compared with women at age 65 and both males and females at birth, 65-year old men have not made the same sort of jump in life expectancy in the last decade compared with their counterparts in NI; over the last few years, the two lines have been running in parallel, with NI men fractionally ahead.

- 2.18 Gender differences are very marked on the island of Ireland and it is largely an issue that arose in the 20th century, as can be seen in Figure 2.7. In the 1920s the life expectancy gender gap at birth was less than a year in the north and south.⁷ By the mid 1980s it had peaked at nearly six years in NI and more than six years in NI but the difference has now declined by about one year in both parts of the country. Likewise at age 65, the gap between women and men increased to nearly four years in the early 1990s and has since fallen to around three years.
- 2.19 The male life expectancy gap in NI (compared with NI women) was highest during the height of the Troubles. Statistically, however, the higher number of male deaths due to violence explains less of the difference than the higher rates of smoking among men; lower male smoking rates relative to women may explain part of the recent narrowing of the life expectancy gap.

Figure 2.7: All-Ireland life expectancy gender gap

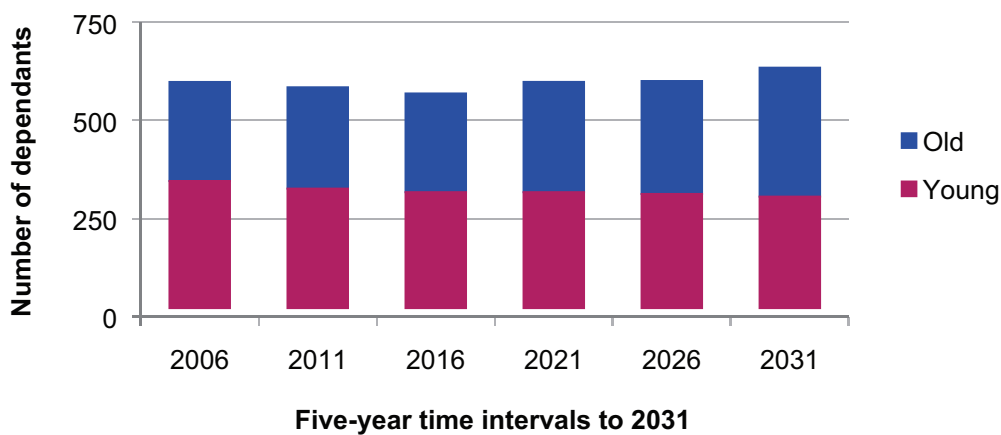


⁷ The life expectancy gender gap is obtained by subtracting the expected life span of men from that of women at birth and at age 65 in both NI and RoI.

Dependency

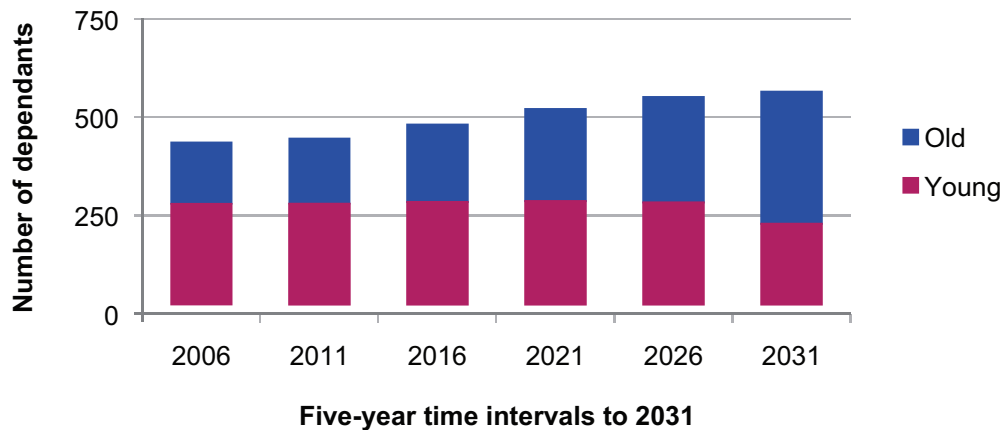
- 2.20 Since the number of older people is rising faster than the general population, it follows that the age dependency ratio – the number of older people as a proportion of the number of people of working age – is increasing. However the statistics do not indicate a position where there are so few people working and so many people depending on them that it becomes impossible to sustain a viable economy or society. Section four (Labour Market) shows that many people over retirement age are still employed
- 2.22 Figures 2.8 and 2.9 show the trends in dependency but they come with the caveat that population projections must be treated with caution. Although the people who will be 'older' in 2031 are already alive and we can estimate future numbers on the assumption that there will not be a major change in mortality rates, the children will not be born for another decade. Therefore this is based on assumptions made about fertility and, even more so, about the extent and direction of migration and the ages of people who come and go.

Figure 2.8: NI dependants per 1000 working age



- 2.23 NI's population of pensionable age will increase by more than 70,000 between 2006 and 2031, raising the dependency ratio from 26.4% to 33.7%. However there will be a decline of almost 40,000 children in the next 25 years. The overall dependency ratio will rise more moderately as a result, from 61.6% now to 65.1% in 2031; it will then continue growing and is due to reach 71.7% in 2061.

Figure 2.9: Rol dependants per 1000 working age



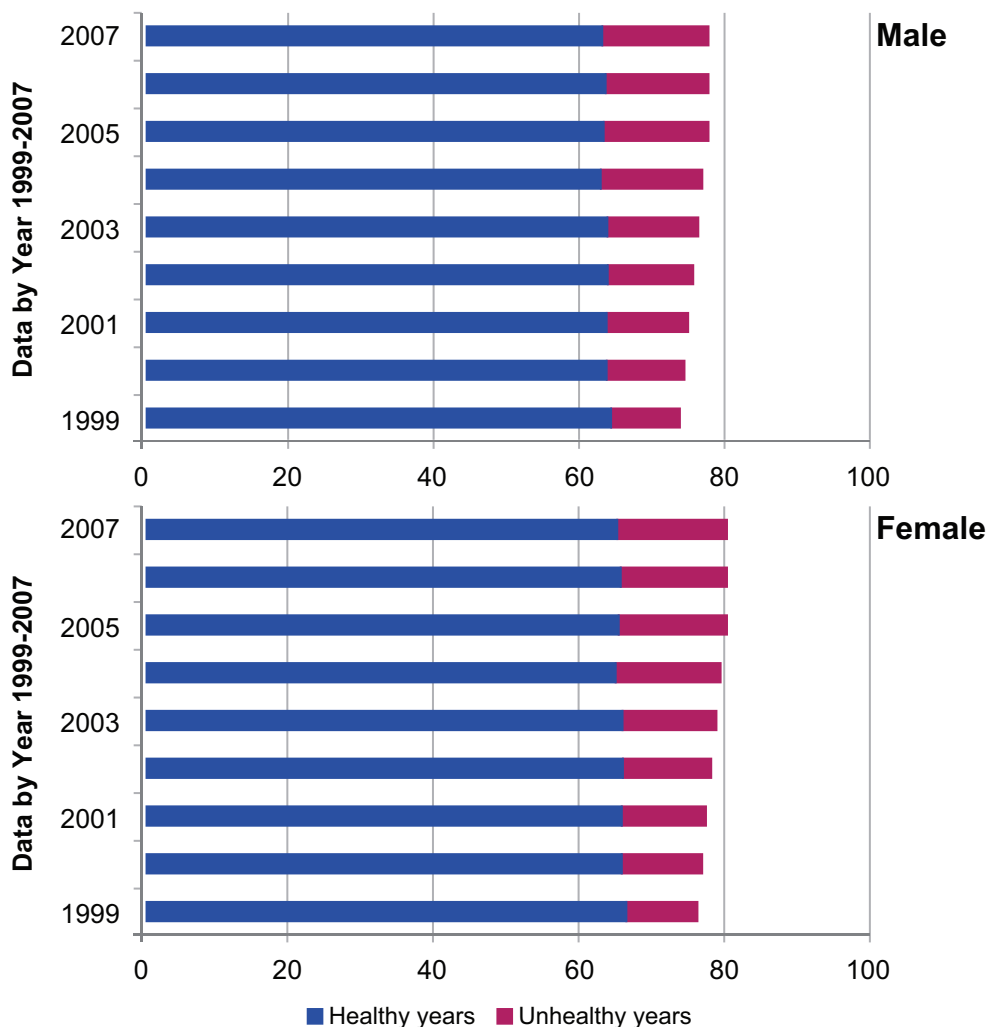
- 2.24 As Figure 2.9 shows, the dependency rate in Rol is lower and will remain so in the coming decades. An important difference is that the number of children is expected to continue rising compared with the population of working age for the next 15 years. Combined with a rising older population the overall dependency ratio will increase more sharply than in NI, from 45.7% in 2006 to 52.8% in 2021 and then 56.3% in 2031. However the larger number of births will boost the working age population in later years.

3. Health and Well Being

Healthy life expectancy

3.1 Life expectancy has improved enormously over the last century, but in recent years there has been greater focus on the concept of healthy life years or disability free life expectancy (DFLE) ie the number of years lived free from limiting ill-health and disability. There is evidence in the Republic of Ireland that longer lives have not been matched by good health. This DFLE indicator is collected by Eurostat but only for EU member states; other data for NI are presented below.⁸

Figure 3.1: ROI total life and healthy years at birth

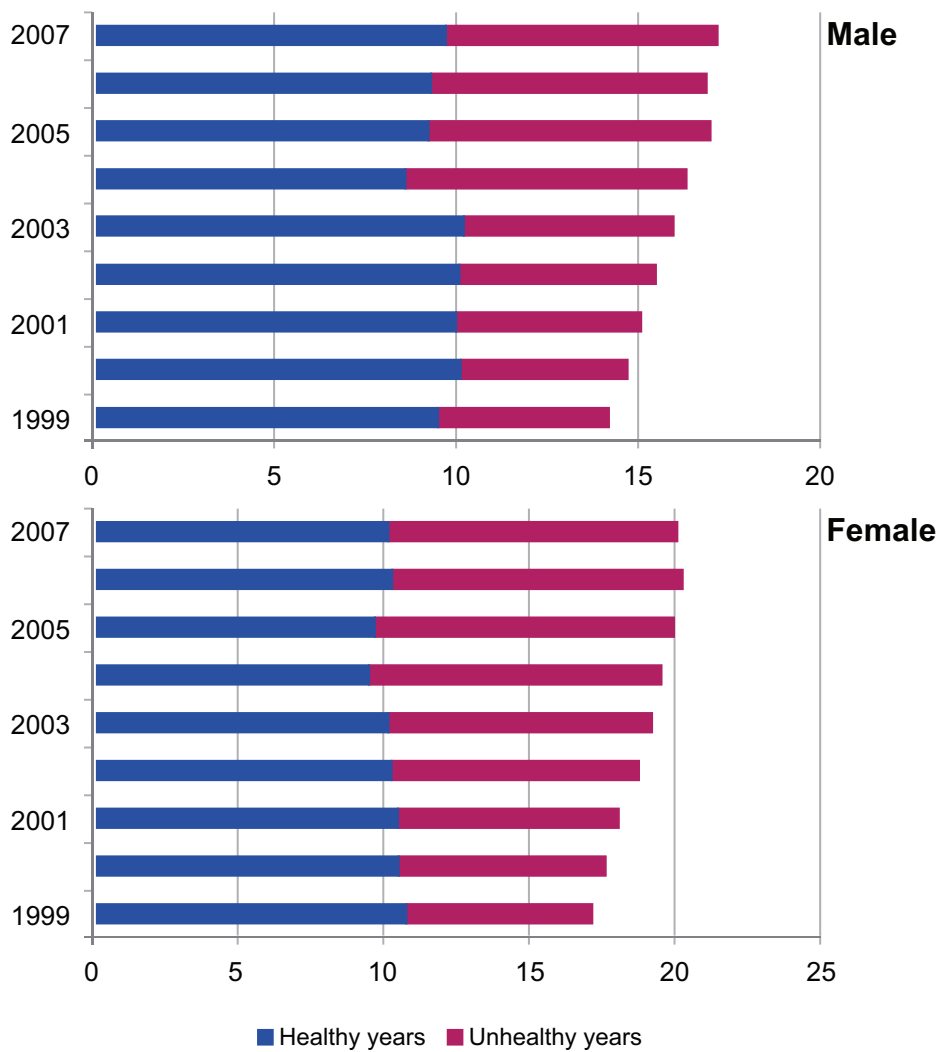


⁸ Source: <http://nui.epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=tsdph220&lang=en>

- 3.2 Figure 3.1 shows that over the last eight years (the Eurostat data for women begin in 1999) male total life expectancy in RoI has increased by four years but healthy life expectancy has fallen by more than a year. This means the number of years a male baby can expect to live in poor health has risen by 5.2 years (from 9.5 to 14.7). Female life expectancy has been boosted by 3.2 years but healthy expectancy has declined by 2.3 years, to 5.5 years. This means a baby girl can expect to spend 16.8 years with a limiting illness or disability compared with 11.3 years in 1999. In the UK, by contrast, DFLE rose by nearly four years for men and five years for women between 1999 and 2006, larger increases than for overall life expectancy.⁹
- 3.3 Eurostat also provides data at age 65 for many European countries; the results for RoI are illustrated in Figures 3.2. Here too we can see the number of years that people can expect to live 'not in good health' increasing over the last eight years. In 1999, Irish men aged 65 could expect to live for another 14 years, of which two thirds would be in good health and one-third (4.7 years) not in good health. By 2007 their life expectancy had risen to 17 years but they could expect to experience limiting ill-health or disability for 7.5 of these years, an increase of 2.8 years.
- 3.4 At this age too, women seem to face deteriorating health. In 1999 their life expectancy at 65 was 17.6 years, of which 11 could be expected to be in good health and 6.6 in poor health. By the year 2007, a woman could expect to live for another 20 years but 9.7 of them can now be expected to be in bad health or disability, an increase of three years.

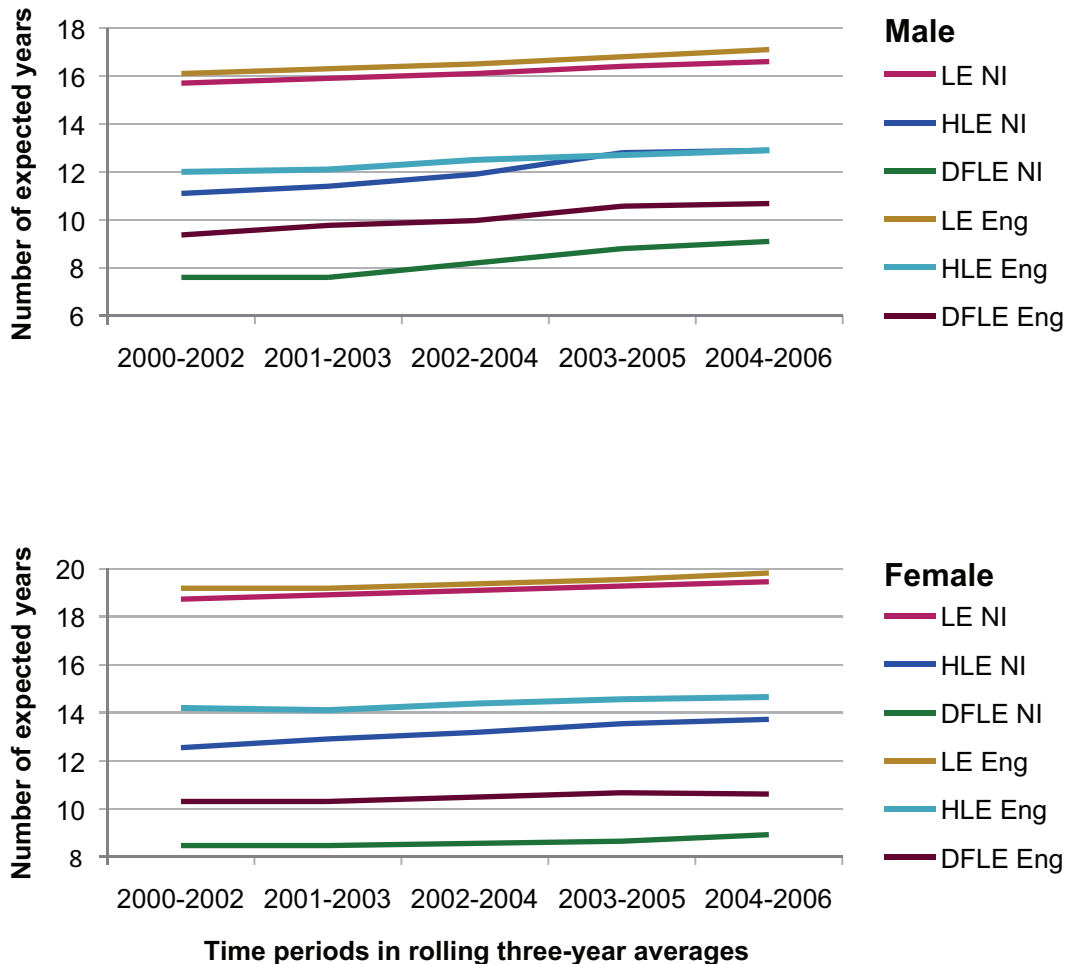
⁹ See National Statistics Online (www.statistics.gov.uk) which explains that a new methodology applied to data up to 2004 led to improvements in healthy life expectancy.

Figure 3.2: Rol life expectancy and healthy years at 65



3.5 NI statistics are published in a dataset for the UK by the Office for National Statistics¹⁰, which gives three sets of figures: life expectancy (LE), healthy life expectancy (HLE) and disability free life expectancy (DFLE). Figure 3.3 sets out the NI position at age 65 and gives England for comparison.

Figure 3.3: Expectancy of life (LE), healthy life (HLE) and disability free life (DFLE) in NI and England at age 65



¹⁰ www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_health/Health-Expectancies-2000-2006.xls

- 3.6 The lines for overall life expectancy have been running in parallel for the last few years (using moving three-year averages), with NI about half a year lower than England. Healthy life expectancy for men in NI was a year lower than in England at the beginning of the period but has made greater gains and by 2004-06 was exactly the same (12.9 years). NI has not made similar gains in disability free life expectancy and, at the end of the period covered, was a full year behind England, 9.1 compared with 10.2 years. Life expectancy for women at age 65 is about three years higher than for men and in this case too NI is about half a year below England. In the case of healthy life expectancy, NI women have cut the gap with England by half but remain almost a year lower. The biggest difference is in female DFLE, where NI women are 1.7 years lower than women in England, having managed to close the gap only marginally.

Health and well being

- 3.7 An important factor in increased life expectancy at birth has been the improvement in survival rates at birth and infancy in both parts of Ireland. There has also been a big decline in deaths of older people in RoI, especially from circulatory diseases, between 1980 and 2004; however the number of people aged 65+ dying from cancer has increased slightly whereas it has fallen a little in the EU15. The number of people dying from respiratory diseases has fallen for both Ireland and EU15 but it remained higher in Ireland in 2004. No similar statistics are given in the NI volume or the joint volume of statistics.
- 3.8 The incidence of disability rises sharply with age. In RoI 29.5% of people aged 65+ have a disability compared with 9.3% of all ages and 5.4% in the 15-44 age group. Among those 85+ the rates are 51.4% (male), 61.8% (female) and 58.6% (all). The gender distribution is striking: men are more likely to be disabled among those 65-69 but the female disability rate rises faster at older ages.¹¹

Table 3.1 Gender and Disability

	All 65+	65-69	70-74	75-79	80-84	85+
Male	26.6	19.4	22.2	29.2	38.1	51.4
Female	31.9	18.0	23.0	32.7	44.9	61.8

¹¹Ageing in Ireland 2007 (CSO), Table 2.8; data are drawn from Census 2006

- 3.9 Older people tend to have healthier lifestyles than younger people as judged by cigarette smoking and alcohol drinking (Figures 3.4 and 3.5). Only about 17-18% of people in Ireland as a whole aged 55+ smoked in 2006/07 compared with 29-30% of people in the 35-54 age range.¹² Moreover there has been a decline in cigarette smoking in this older age bracket, especially among NI men, whose rate of smoking fell from 22% to 15%. There was also a sizeable drop in smoking among older Rol men but much smaller declines in smoking among older women north and south. In the long-term these trends may have an impact on male and female rates of life expectancy and healthy life years.

Figure 3.4: Cigarette smoking by people aged 55+

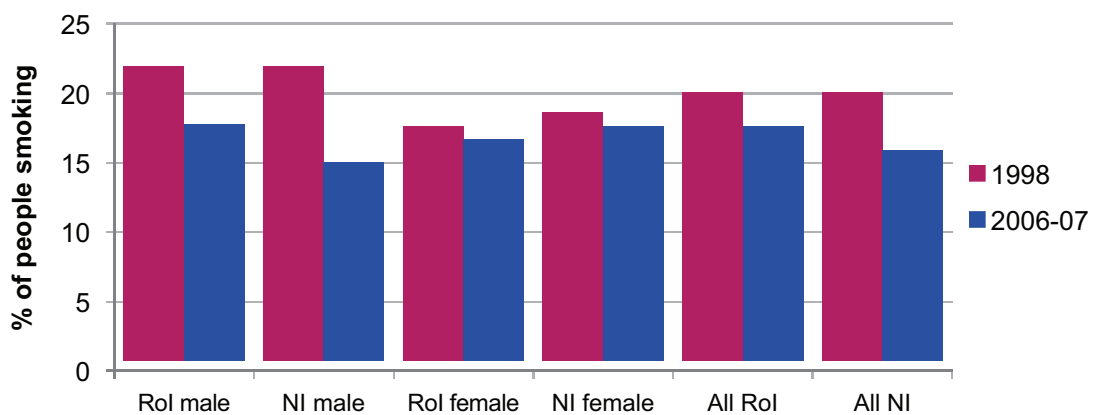
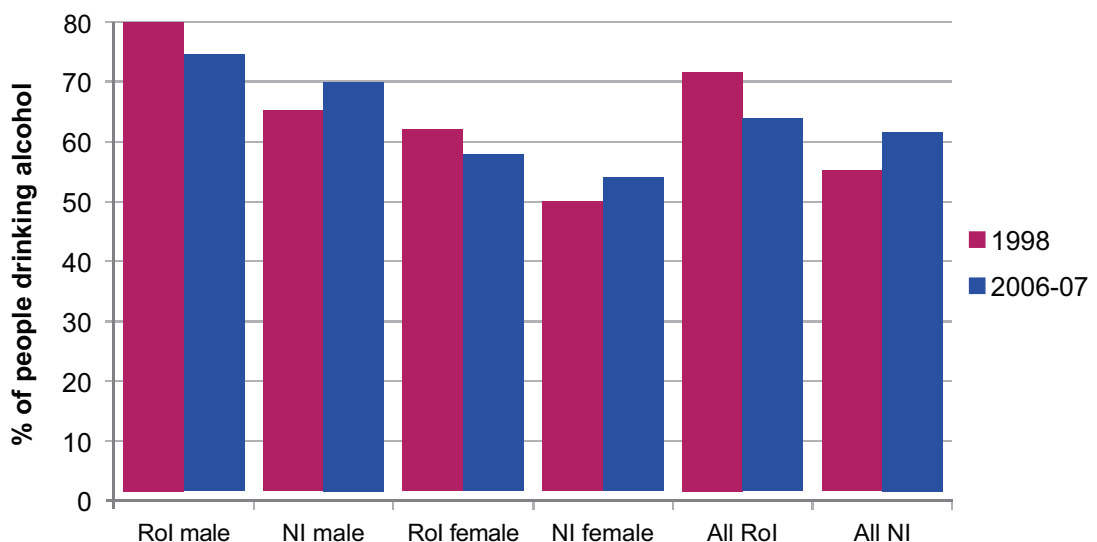


Figure 3.5: Alcohol drinking by people aged 55+



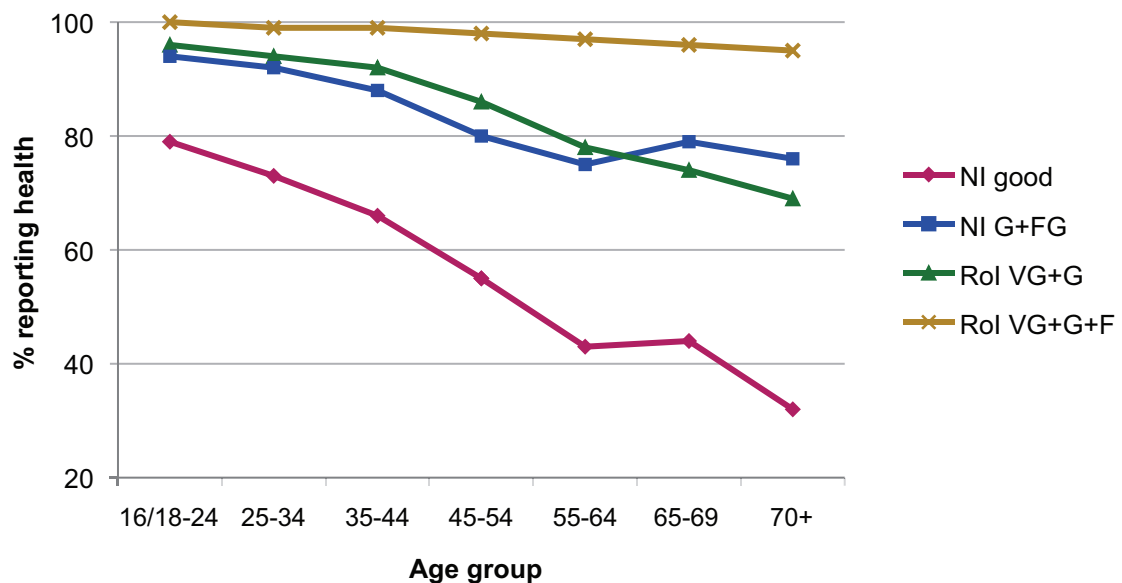
¹² 2005-06 Health and Wellbeing Survey

- 3.10 In NI men may be giving up smoking but Fig 3.5 suggests a slightly greater rate of alcohol consumption, from 68% to 70% between 1998 and 2006; drinking by NI women went up more, from 50% to 55%. Over roughly the same period the proportion of both RoI men (down from 80% to 74%) and RoI women (64% falling to 59%) who drink has declined but both sexes remain a bit more likely to consume alcohol than their northern counterparts. The survey did not ask about the amount that people drank so it is not possible to draw firm conclusions about possible health consequences of the varying levels of alcohol consumption.
- 3.11 The only other set of data in *Ireland North and South: A Statistical Profile 2008* that covers health by age is body mass index, but this comes with the proviso that it is self-reported in RoI and independently assessed in NI. The latest data show that 21% of RoI men aged 65-74 reported themselves to be obese, but this fell to 10% of men aged 75+. In the case of women, 13% aged 65-74 and 10% of older women said they were obese; at the other end of the scale, 7% of women over 75 reported themselves as under-weight.
- 3.12 Independent measurement in NI produced higher obesity rates: 27% and 17% respectively for men in the 65-74 and 75+ groups and 25% and 20% for women of the same ages. The tests found that 5% of the oldest women were under-weight.

Self-reported health

3.13 Comparisons of self-reported health are difficult because the categories used north and south are different: NI asks people in 2008/09 if their health was good, fairly good or not good whereas RoI reported in 2007 according to the categories very good, good, fair and bad/very bad. However it is possible to make broad comparisons, as in Figure 3.6.¹³

Figure 3.6: Self-reported health in Ireland by age



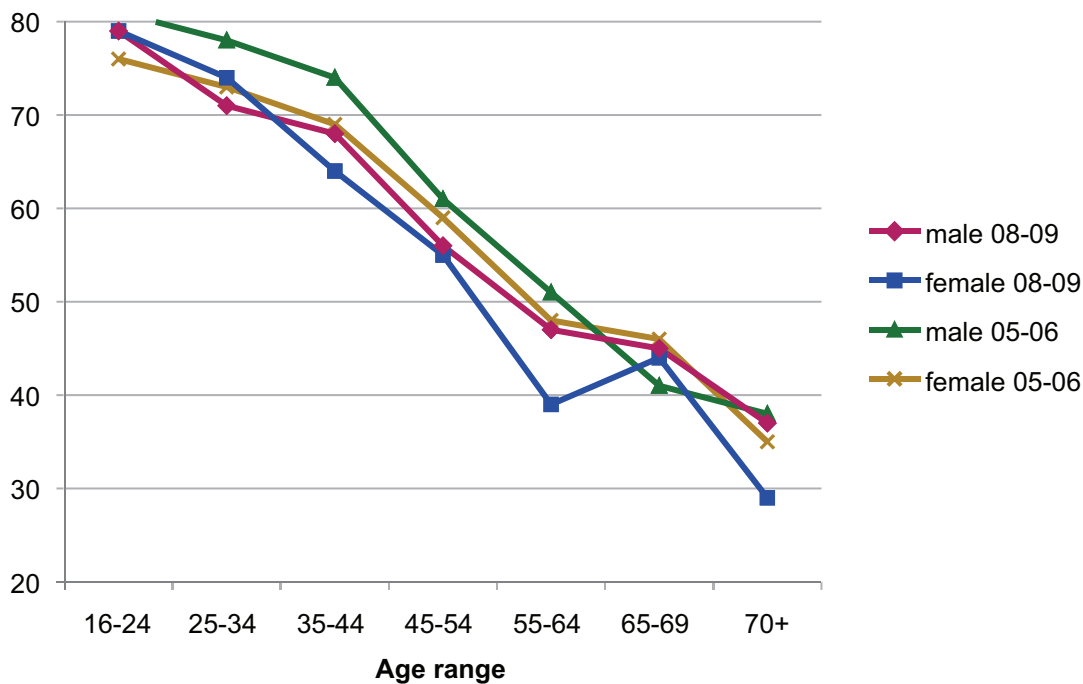
Note: the NI data are for all people aged 16 and above; in RoI it is 18+

- 3.14 We can see a general trend that people in NI are less likely to report their health as good as they get older. In RoI, however, a remarkably high 95% of both men and women aged 70+ rated their health as very good (19%), good (50%) or fair (26%). Indeed, a positive finding is that older people in Ireland generally see their health in positive terms, with about two-thirds or more seeing it as fair or better.
- 3.15 There is one exception to the trend of falling perception of health with age, but only in NI where both men and women seem to get a retirement boost during which they report on their health more positively. We can also see from Figure 3.6 that the closest comparisons across Ireland are for good and fairly good in NI and very good and good in RoI because the lines are close together at all ages.

¹³ Sources: The Health and Wellbeing survey 2005/06; The Continuous Household Survey 2008/09 for NI and the Quarterly National Household Survey, Q3 2007, for RoI.

3.16 Figure 3.7 looks at the proportions in NI reporting good health in both 2005/06 and 2008/09. Here we can see the retirement health boost, but only for women in the most recent survey; 79% of women aged 65-69 reported their health as good or fairly good compared with 75% of those aged 55-64.¹⁴ We also see that women of all ages reported their health less positively in 2008/09 than they did in 2005/06, down six percentage points in the case of women aged 70+. The pattern for men is different because younger men reported worse health in the latest survey but older men were slightly more positive than they were three years earlier.

Figure 3.7: NI % reporting good health



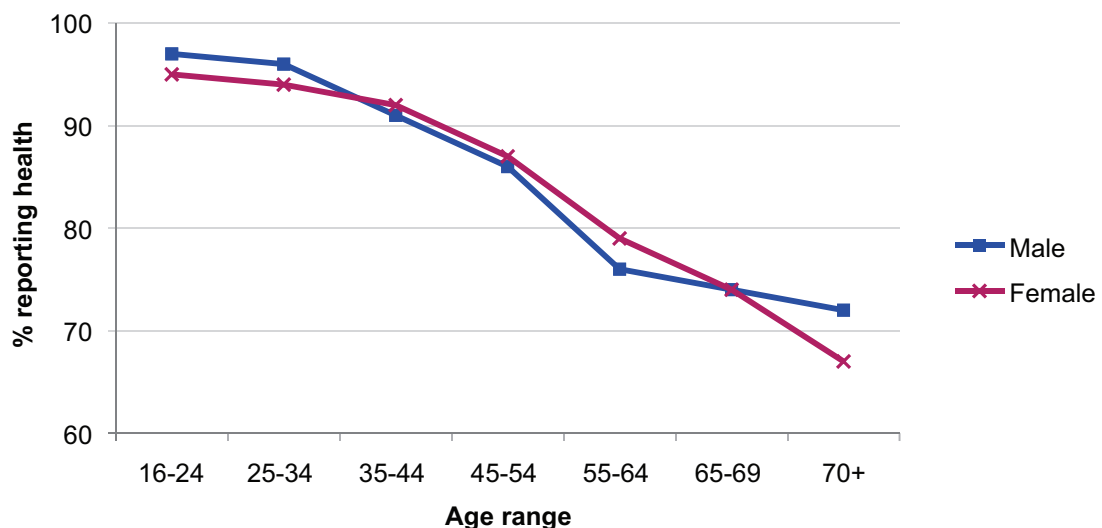
¹⁴ There is a male health bonus at retirement age if we include fairly good as well as good.

3.17 In NI 41% of 65-74 year olds and 35% of people 75+ rated their general health as good. In the same age groups a quarter said it was not good (34% and 41% said fairly good).¹⁵ Among people aged 65-74, 42% reported a limiting long-standing illness and this figure rose to 53% among those aged 75+. The survey also asked people aged 65+ how they could manage a range of tasks:

- 90% could dress themselves and 98% could feed themselves on their own
- 88-89% could get about the house and get in and out of bed without help
- 71% could use the stairs on their own, another 16% could do so with difficulty and 13% needed help
- 36% could use public transport on their own and another 3% with difficulty, but 62% could not manage without help.

3.18 Finally, Figure 3.8 shows the male-female comparison of self-reported health in Rol in 2007. It shows that there are only relatively small differences at most ages but in the 70+ age group, a five percentage point gap opens up to the advantage of men. However, even among this oldest cohort, more than two thirds report their health to be very good or good (67% of women and 72% of men).

Figure 3.8: Rol adults reporting health as very good or good



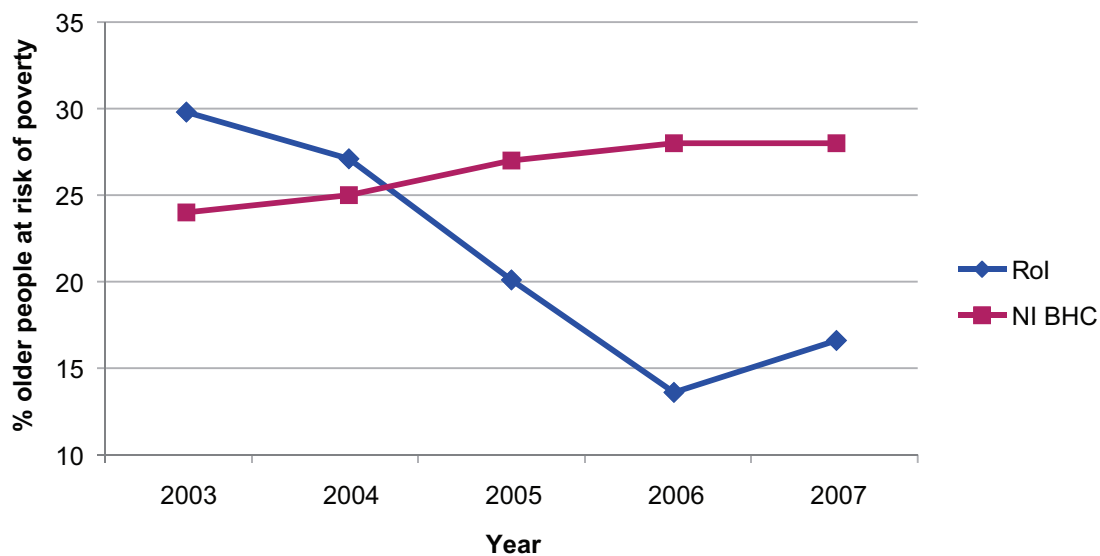
Income and poverty

3.19 The proportion of older people at risk of poverty, based on 60+ of median equivalised incomes, has followed different patterns north and south for the last few years (see Figure 3.9), though the comparative figures must be treated with

¹⁵ 2005-06 Health and Well Being Summary

caution since they are from different sources.¹⁶ The proportion of older people at risk of poverty in RoI fell from 30% (the first year of the European Union Survey of Incomes and Living Conditions, known as EU-SILC) to 13.6% in 2006 but then changed direction and went up to 16.6% in the latest year. In 2007, incomes were still rising rapidly in RoI so the 60% median figure increased by 12.5%. In Northern Ireland the trend has been steadily upwards over the last few years, bringing the proportion of older people at risk of poverty from 24% to 28% between 2003 and 2007.

Figure 3.9: All Ireland risk of poverty of older people (60% median)



- 3.20 There are variations among different groups. For example, in NI the risk of poverty for single pensioners (30%) was somewhat higher in 2007 than for pensioner couples (26%). However, there is a bigger fault line depending on whether the pensioners live alone or with others. For example, single pensioners living alone have a 37% risk of poverty, compared with the 15% risk if they live with others (eg family members). In RoI the risk of poverty for pensioners living along was 24.3% (compared with 19.3% a year earlier).
- 3.21 Both north and south the risk of poverty of female pensioners is higher than for men (a difference of just over two percentage points in RoI and five in NI).
- 3.22 Eurostat provides data on the risk of poverty of people aged 65+ in the 27 European Union countries plus Iceland and Norway. Ireland was sixth from the bottom in this league in 2007 with a rate of 29%, well above the EU average of 19%. In the UK 30% of older people were at risk of poverty. Only Cyprus and the three Baltic states were worse.

¹⁶ RoI figures are from EU-SILC, first collected in 2003, published by the CSO; NI data come from the Pensioners' Income Series, published annually by the Department for Social Development, see http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/index/stats_and_research

4. Labour market

4.1 The employment rate of people aged 65+ in RoI was twice the EU27 average in 2006. Labour force participation was also significantly higher than in NI that year: 14.5% compared with 6.7% (see Figures 4.1 and 4.2). In RoI participation dipped in 2003-04 but then picked up again to just below the level of 1996. In NI the dip in 2004 was more severe but participation then rose again to a little bit above the 1996 level of 6.0%.

Figure 4.1: Labour force participation by people 65+

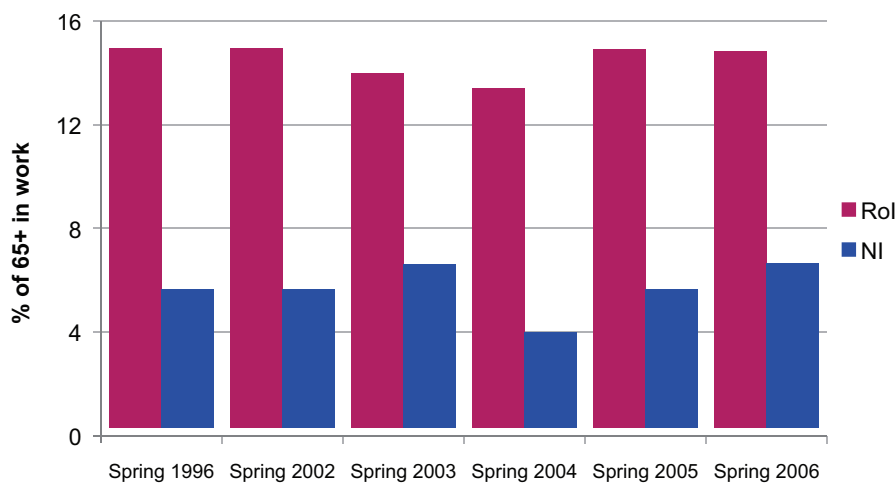
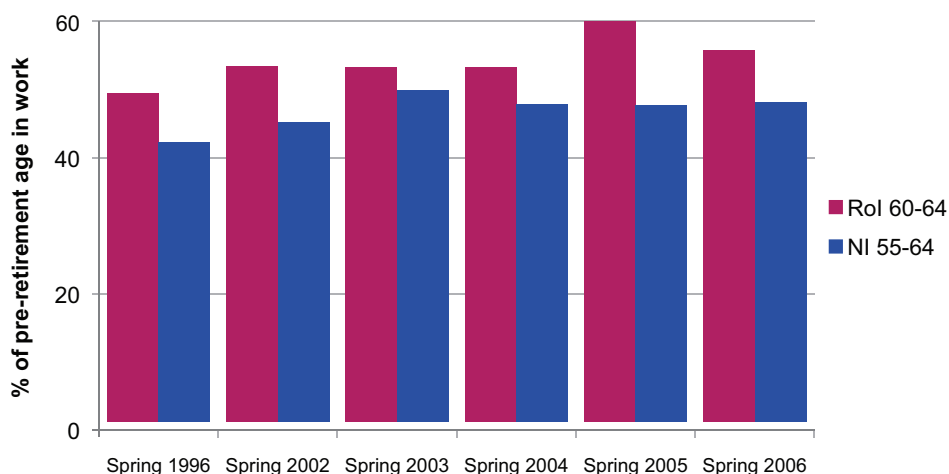
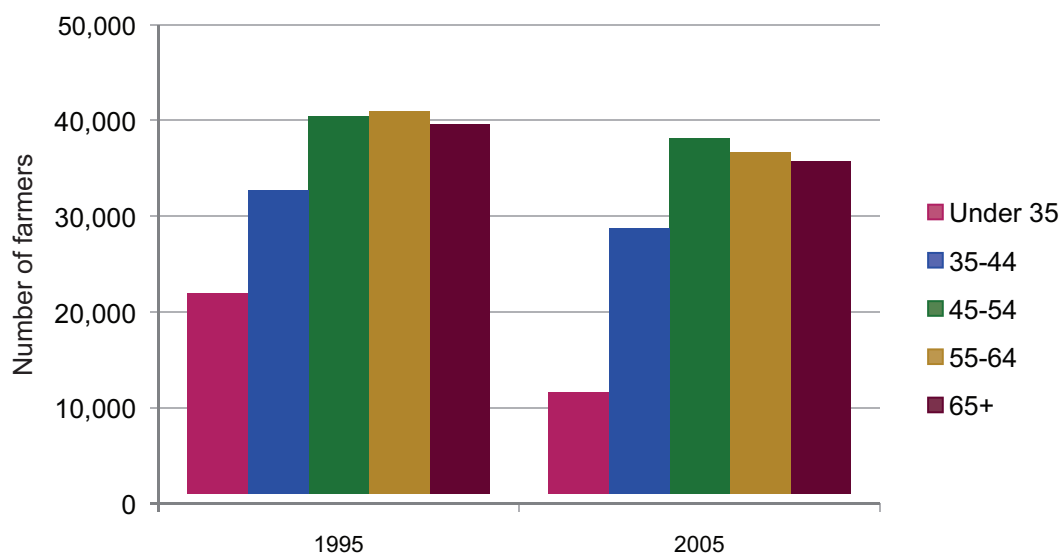


Figure 4.2: Labour force participation by pre-retirement group



- 4.2 It is difficult to make direct comparisons of the age group coming up to 'normal' retirement age.¹⁷ Figure 4.2 shows slightly different patterns but in both NI and RoI the trend is upwards. In RoI labour market participation among people aged 60-64 reached 58.3% in 2006 compared with 51.9% ten years earlier. In NI the participation of 55-64 year olds reached a peak of 51.0% in 2003 and it has remained slightly below that level for the latest three years at around a steady 49%.
- 4.3 Just as some people over retirement age are working, some people under that age have already retired, especially in RoI. In spring 2006, 83,000 people of working age there (58,000 men and 25,000 women) were no longer in the labour force due to retirement. In NI the figure was much lower at 16,000, of whom 14,000 were male.
- 4.4 These figures may mask much larger numbers of people, especially women, who are classified elsewhere, such as people close to retirement age who are not in the labour force due to home or family duties or because of sickness or disability. However we do know that in Ireland as a whole 100,000 people have retired early.
- 4.5 Agriculture accounts for almost half of the older men in employment in RoI and a substantial number in NI, though in both cases the number is falling. There are a lot more farmers in RoI: 130,400 compared with 23,900 in NI in 2005; there are also five times more farmers aged 65 or more: 30,600 in RoI and 6,200 in NI. However, the total number of farmers has declined four times more sharply in RoI than in NI over the ten years from 1995 to 2005.

Figure 4.3: All Ireland number of farmers



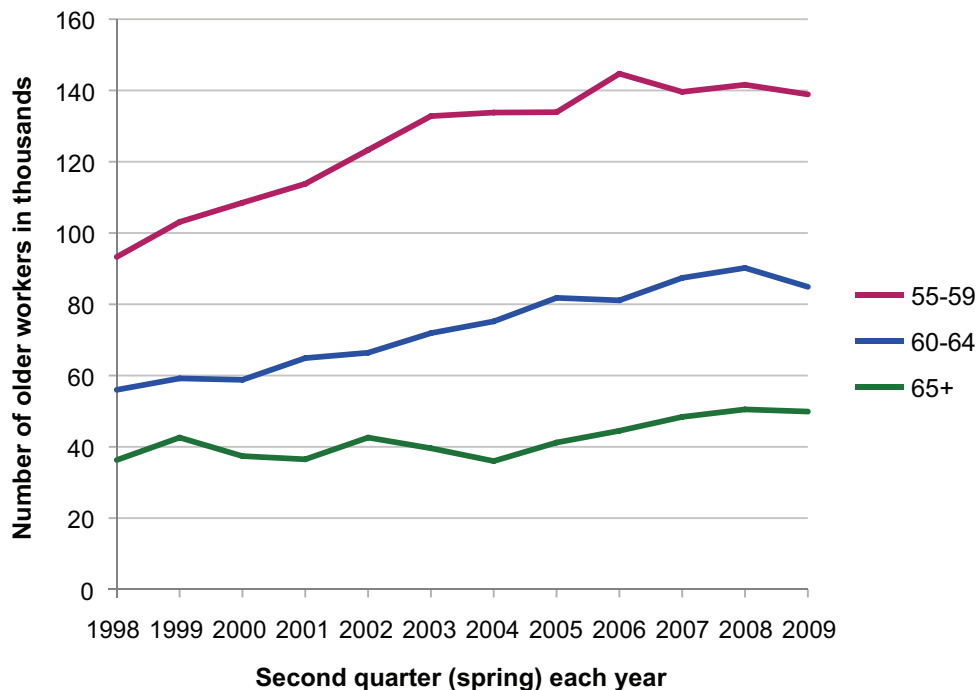
¹⁷ The published data give different age ranges for the north and south. In addition the normal retirement age for women in NI is 60, though this will increase in steps to 65 between 2010 and 2020.

4.6 Figure 4.3 explores the farming population in more detail. An immediate feature is that the number of young farmers in Ireland as a whole is falling rapidly, down by nearly half in the last decade. The number of farmers over the age of 65 has declined much less steeply, (from 39,050 to 36,800, less than 6%), with the result that they now outnumber farmers below the age of 35 by three to one. Although the farming population is ageing more rapidly in RoI, the age profile is still a bit younger, with 23% of all farmers aged 65 or older compared with 26% in NI.¹⁸

Labour market, second quarter 2009

4.7 Data over the last decade reveal a large growth in the number of older people in employment in Ireland (Figure 4.4). In 2009, using figures that go up to the second quarter, there were 88,000 more workers aged 55+ than in 1989. Increases of around 50% were recorded for workers aged 55-64, but the number aged 65+ also increased by 37% to 50,000, representing an extra 13,600 employees over the 11-year period.¹⁹

Figure 4.4: All Ireland older people in work (2nd quarter)

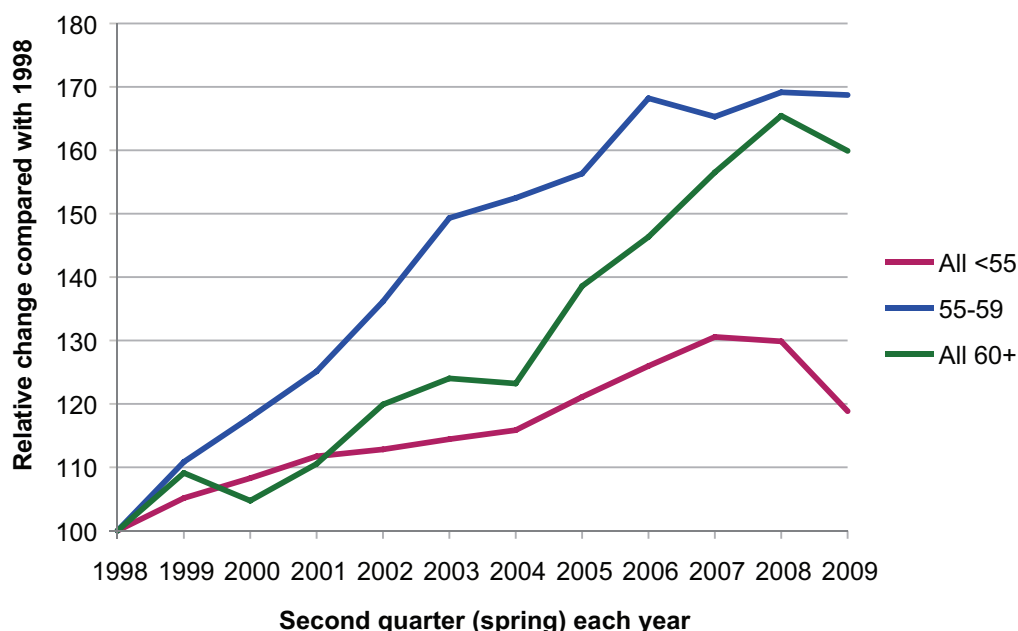


¹⁸ The data in paragraphs 4.1 – 4.6, extracted from *Ireland North and South: A Statistical Profile 2008 Edition* refer to the years 2005 and 2006. The rest of this section updates the picture.

¹⁹ NI data are from the Labour Force Survey Historical Supplement 1995-2008, updated by email from DETI Statistics Branch, Sep 2009. RoI data are from the Quarterly National Household Survey, Tables 9 and 11.

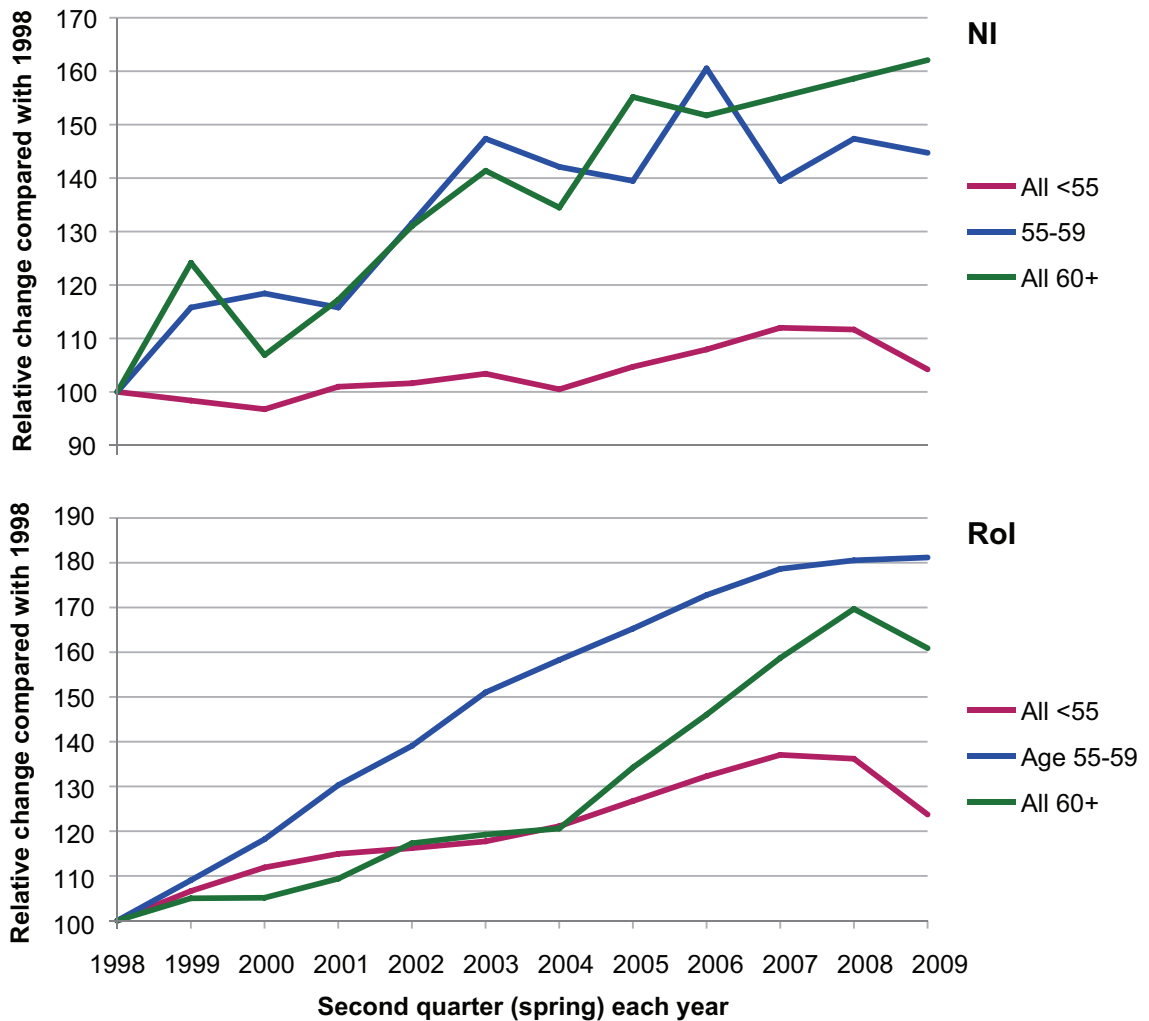
- 4.8 Over the 11-year period, most of the employment growth for all ages was in RoI, where the number of people in work expanded by 430,000 (29%), compared with much more modest growth in NI of 60,000 (9%). However the picture for older people is different. The expansion in employment for people over the age of 55 was almost identical (fractionally higher in NI). RoI employment for older workers increased by 53,000 (up 44.8%) while in NI it expanded by 35,000 (44.9%).
- 4.9 There are important differences within the older age group. Among workers aged 55-59, expansion in RoI (up 64,000 or 81%) was higher than in NI (up 17,000 or 45%) and the same was true to a lesser extent among people aged 60-64 (growth in the number of workers in RoI was 52.5% and in NI 50%). Among the 65+ group expansion in NI was 8,000, a rate of increase of 89% from a relatively low base of 9,000; in RoI, the number of workers aged 65+ expanded by 5,600 from 27,000, a rise over the 11 years of 21%.
- 4.10 The figures suggest that the number of older workers has expanded more rapidly than the workforce generally over the last decade or so. This is borne out in Figure 4.5, which looks at relative changes (since the quite small number of older workers would be lost in statistics for the entire workforce). Pre-recession, the number of workers below the age of 55 in Ireland north and south expanded by 30% but the number of workers aged 55-59 grew by 69% and the 60+ group in work also increased strongly by 65%. It seems that people are keener than before to hold onto employment into older age and better able to do so, resulting in very rapid growth in the older workforce.

Figure 4.5: All-Ireland numbers in work by age group (1998=100)



4.11 Figure 4.5 tells another important story apart from the big expansion in the older workforce. Inevitably statistics that extend to the second quarter of 2009 include a period covering the worst recession for many decades. The graph shows that the loss of jobs affecting older people came slightly later than for the under-55s, continuing to increase until the second quarter of 2008. Taking the whole of Ireland, all ages have felt the impact of the recession in the latest year, though to very differing degrees. In the last year, for example, the total workforce in Ireland has fallen by 220,000 people; decline has been faster in RoI, where the number of people in employment dropped by 174,000 (8.2% compared with second quarter 2008); in NI the decline amounted to 46,000 people (down 5.8%).

Figure 4.6: Numbers in work by age group (1998=100)



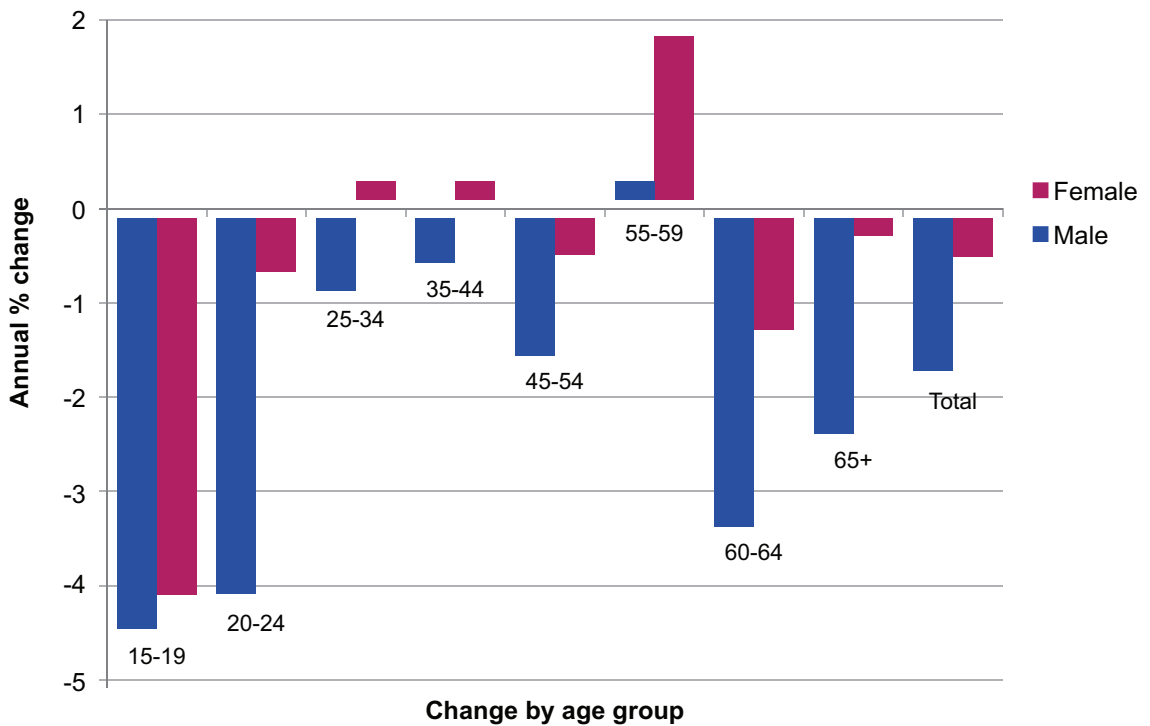
- 4.12 As Figure 4.6 shows, there are also differences in Ireland between north and south by age group. In the case of workers aged 60 and above, notably, people in Northern Ireland have weathered the recession so far but their counterparts south of the border have not. In NI numbers have fluctuated over the last 11 years but with a clear upward trend that has continued unbroken from spring 2006 (44,000) until second quarter 2009, when the number of 60+ people in work reached its highest ever figure of 47,000.²⁰ This has not been the case in RoI, where the number of people aged 60+ in work rose every single year in the decade since 1998, but then dropped by more than 7,000 in the latest year, a decline of 5.2% (or nine points using an index based on 1998 = 100).
- 4.13 On the other hand, workers aged 55-59 fared somewhat better in RoI; their numbers nudged up just under half of one per cent in 2008-09 whereas in NI the number of employees aged 55-59 declined by almost 2%.

²⁰ The ending on the requirement to retire at 60 from the public sector in NI may have helped counteract a decline that might otherwise have occurred.

Labour market participation

4.14 Labour force participation rates for the working population have been rising in Ireland for quite a few years but the factors outlined above have meant that participation by older workers has risen more than for younger ones. It is useful to look at the period of the recession in more detail because it highlights differences by sex as well as by age.

Figure 4.7: RoI changes in participation rates 2008-09 by age and sex



4.15 Taking RoI first, Figure 4.7 illustrates starkly that the biggest decline in labour force participation from second quarter 2008 to second quarter 2009 has been among young people. People in the 25-59 age range have experienced much smaller declines in participation but this is only because many of the 92,000 who have lost jobs have registered as unemployed and looking for work (and thus economically active).

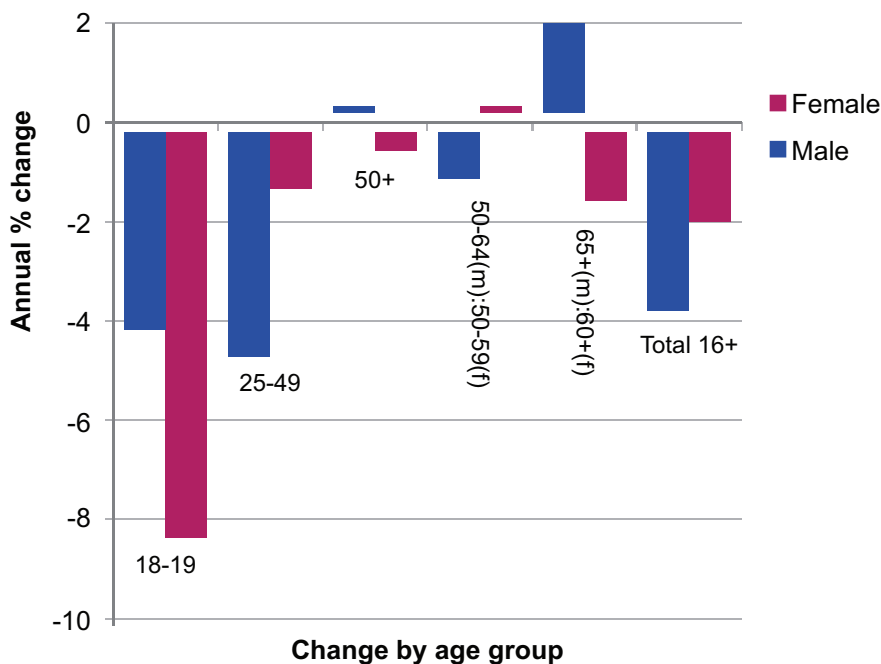
4.16 The older group in RoI has also experienced a marked decline in economic activity but, unlike the young workers, they are unlikely to have left the labour market to promote their education or skills; rather they will have signed on the Live Register (the Republic’s name for the number of unemployed people) or,

Note: the 16-17 age group is excluded because the numbers were too small

more probably, taken early retirement. In the year to April 2009 the number of people aged 60-64 added to the Live Register was lower both in numbers and in rate of increase than for any other age group.

- 4.17 Figure 4.7 also shows clearly that women have fared better than men in every single age group over the last year; in some cases their rate of decline in labour market participation has been less severe than for men (as in the 60-64 and 65+ age ranges), or they have increased their participation whereas men have declined (25-44 age range) or increased their rate more than men have (ages 55-59).

Figure 4.8: NI changes in participation rates 2008-09 by age and sex



- 4.18 Northern Ireland is similar to ROI insofar as the biggest drop in economic activity over the last year was the youngest workers (Figure 4.8). Among those aged 50+ there was very little change in economic activity. One important difference is that the impact on men and women is much more varied. In the youngest age group, for example, female economic activity declined twice as much as male activity whereas in the large 25-49 age range, men fared much worse. Women's economic activity rates have held up slightly better than men's in the pre-retirement group but men have performed better in the group above pension age; however, it is notable that women above 60 are eligible for a state pension and cannot claim unemployment benefit.

5. Miscellaneous data

5.1 Carers

Quite a small number of older people are defined as carers in RoI. The numbers of carers aged 65+ are 7,143 men and 11,009 women, a total of 18,152 (3.4% of men and 4.2% of women). The proportions fall with age eg among those aged 85+ only 2.5% of men and 1.5% of women are defined as carers. (The definition in the Census is limited to care for a friend or family member 'with a long-term illness, health problem or disability').

5.2 The number of hours of care provided in 2006 varied considerably; 37% of older carers did 1-14 hours per week, 8.2% did 15-28 hours, 6.2% for 29-42 hours but 48.6% gave 43 or more hours of caring time.²¹

5.3 NI statistics are structured differently, giving the total number of carers as 184,434, of whom 12% are aged 65 or over (approx 22,000) and a quarter are 60+ (around 46,000). In the 2001 Census the definition was: "giving help or support to family members, friends, neighbours or others because of long-term physical or mental health or disability, or problems relating to old age".

5.4 In the 65+ group, 32% offered care for less than 10 hours per week, 17% for 10-19 hours, 12% for 20-49 hours and 36% provided 50 hours or more of care per week; 15% reported that they are not in good health themselves but there is no health by duration analysis.²²

5.5 Living arrangements

In 2006, 6.8% of people of 65 years or older in RoI lived in communal establishments, 26.7% lived alone and 66.5% lived with others. However the proportion living in communal establishments rose to 11.5% aged 80-84 and 24.6% of people 85+.

5.6 In 2006, 4.1% of men and 6.7% of women aged 65+ were in nursing homes or hospitals (all = 5.5%). Among those 85+ the figure rose to 22.7% (16.4% of men and 25.5% of women). These proportions are much higher than the EU norm; for example among people aged 65+ only the Netherlands is higher and among 85+ year-olds only three countries had a higher rate.

²¹ Census 2006

²² Other studies have provided a more detailed picture of caring, one of which (McGee et al) was a cross-border study. See CARDI's briefing Care and Caring in Ireland, North and South: Older People as Both Recipients and Givers of Care for further details:
<http://www.cardi.ie/publications/careandcaringinirelandnorthandsoutholderpeopleasbothrecipientsandgiversofcare>

- 5.7 Of the people aged 65+ in long-stay units in 2005, 36.3% were in public units (down from 41.4% in 2001), 16.1% were in voluntary units (up from 13.6%) and 47.5% were in the private sector (up from 45.0%).
- 5.8 NI statistics for 2004-05 do not give the proportion of older people living alone but show that people aged 65-69 make up 9% of all single adult households; 70-74 represent 11% and people aged 75+ make up 23%; so in total people aged 65+ make up 43% of all those living alone. The number of single person households in the 75+ age range is expected to increase from 41,000 in 2001 to 76,000 by 2025.
- 5.9 There were 14,840 care packages for NI people aged 65+ in 2005-06. Of these, 3,031 were for residential care (up 3% since 2000-01), 6,345 were in nursing homes (up 26%) and 5,464 were domiciliary care (up 15%). The private sector provides 92.5% of nursing care and 44.6% of residential care, or 77% overall. The second largest contributor is the statutory sector, providing 14% of all residential and nursing places; the voluntary sector provides the remaining 9%.
- 5.10 Crime**
In 2006, 63.0% of people aged 65 or higher believed there was a very severe problem with crime in ROI and 28.3% that there was a serious problem (total 91.3%). However, only a very small percentage were victims of crime, with 1.1% of both men and women reporting being victims of a theft without violence and 0.7% of men and 0.9% of women victims of theft with violence. Zero women and 0.2% of men were victims of physical assault. Taking men and women together, 54.8% felt safe or very safe walking alone in their neighbourhood after dark and 88.3% felt the same about being alone at home after dark.
- 5.11 The risk of older people in NI being a victim of crime (1% for age 65-74 and 0.2% for 75+) is lower than in Britain but fear is higher, according to NI Crime Survey 2005. Age is based on head of household.

Table 5.1: Crime in Northern Ireland

High level of worry about	Burglary	Car crime	Violent crime
65-74	20	16	25
75+	23	17	22
Victimisation rate			
65-74	1.0	2.7	0.6
75+	0.2	1.0	0.0

5.12 Education

In 2006 nearly half (48.1%) of people aged 65+ in RoI had only primary education or no formal education, compared with 13.2% of the 25-64 group. At the other end of the spectrum, 16.5% of older group had third level education, much less than the 42.4% graduation rate of the younger age group.

5.13 In NI, 79% of people from pension age (60 for women and 65 for men) up to 74 had no qualifications at the time of the 2001 Census. In 2005-06, people of 65 or more made up 3% of further education enrolments on vocational courses and 21% on non-vocational courses. People aged 65-74 are slightly more likely than other age groups to use public library services (including mobile libraries) regularly, but usage falls off among those aged 75+. However older people of all ages are less likely to go to an arts performance, visit a museum or attend a sporting event as a spectator than younger people.

5.14 Travel

Older RoI people were twice as likely to travel in 2006 as they were in 2002, making an average of 1.4 international and 1.8 domestic trips (0.7 and 1.0 four years earlier); those aged 65-69 were most likely to travel, making 1.6 international and 2.4 domestic trips.

5.15 Voting

In the May 2002 election in RoI 86.3% of people aged 65 and over voted compared with 74.0% of people aged 18-64; but the voting rate fell from 90% among those aged 65-74 to 79% of people aged 80+.

5.16 Communications

In RoI, older people had less access to broadband in 2006 (24.5%) than younger households (53.0%). In NI there has been a large increase in people aged 60-69 accessing the internet from 10% in 2001-02 to 34% in 2005-06; in the 70+ group it is just under 10%.

5.17 Volunteering

Around 15% of people aged 65+ in RoI were involved in voluntary work in 2006, ranging from about 19-21% in the 65-69 group to 4-6% of people 85+. In NI it has been estimated that 17% of people aged 65+ serve as formal volunteers and 27% are informal volunteers.²³

²³ Source: *It's all about time: Volunteering in Northern Ireland* (2007), Volunteer Development Agency.

6. Areas for further research

- 6.1 As mentioned on page 4, one of the aims of this paper is to highlight some areas which merit further research or analysis. Further discussion will be particularly useful to CARDI in deciding priorities for 2010 and 2011 but it may also be helpful for the ageing research community generally. This section sets out briefly in note form some research and data collection issues that arise from the compilation and analysis of the statistics in this report. CARDI sees these issues as fitting in the broader context of ageing research priorities, including the most recent UN Research Agenda.²⁴
- 6.2 When the Central Statistics Office and Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency next update Ireland North and South: A Statistical Profile it would be beneficial to extend the compendium eg to offer comparable and up-to-date data on healthy life expectancy and disability free life expectancy in NI and RoI.
- 6.3 It might be useful for researchers, especially in the statutory and academic sectors, to consult with policy-makers and others on data collection on an all-Ireland basis and some of the conceptual and methodological issues that arise eg to refine concepts such as 'people of working age' and dependency ratios.
- 6.4 In compiling this report a number of areas emerged that merit exploration for the purposes of analysing and planning an ageing society. These include:
- The factors behind the greater progress on life expectancy in NI, the steady rise in female life expectancy and the more recent improvement for men, north and south.
 - What explains the growing periods of years spent in poor health and disability and why do women seem to be faring worse than men? What are the implications for policies and services?
 - Why does the female disability rate rise so rapidly with age compared with men?

²⁴ Research Agenda on Ageing for the 21st Century, 2007 Update, United Nations, New York.

- What factors influence people's perception of their own health?
- The low proportion of older people able to use public transport, the implications for social inclusion and the psychological, design and management issues involved.
- Why have older age poverty rates in Ireland, north and south, been so high in recent years and what policies are likely to improve matters?
- The reasons why many people in Ireland retire before pension age and whether this trend is likely to be reversed.
- Why was there such a large growth in the number of older people in work? Are there any industries that have experienced particularly large increases? What can we learn about good practice in recruiting and retaining older staff?
- What can we say about the impact of the recession? In the context of relative poverty, will there be an apparent decline in poverty among older people?
- How can we measure the contribution older people make to the economy and communities?

6.5 We welcome your views on these topics and others you may consider to be priorities for research. Please send comments to info@cardi.ie

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