



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

## Research and Information Service Briefing Note

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# Census 2011 – A Preliminary Report

## 1 Introduction

This Briefing Note, which is the first in a series of reports on Census 2011, outlines preliminary findings from the first data release (16 July 2012). The paper begins with some key statistics from the current census, followed by a comparison with the past 10 years, and across the last century (1911 – 2011). The paper proceeds with a series of further comparisons with the Republic of Ireland, England and Wales, and the EU 27.

## 2 Census 2011: Key Findings

- The population on Census Day was 1,810,900 – the highest ever recorded in Northern Ireland. This represents an increase of 125,600 (7 per cent) on the previous census in 2001<sup>1</sup>.
- Females represented 51 per cent of the population in 2011, compared with 51.3 per cent in 2001.
- The population of Northern Ireland is getting older. In 2001, the median age was 34 years: by 2011 this had increased to 37 years.
- Despite the increase in the overall population of 7 per cent, the number of children has fallen by 18,700 (5 per cent) since the 2001 Census. However,

<sup>1</sup> NISRA (2012) **Statistical Bulletin, Census 2011: Population and Household results for Northern Ireland**. Available at: [http://www.nisra.gov.uk/Census/pop\\_stats\\_bulletin\\_2011.pdf](http://www.nisra.gov.uk/Census/pop_stats_bulletin_2011.pdf)

while the number of primary school age children (aged 4 – 10 ) and secondary school age children (aged 11 – 15 ) have both fallen by 9 per cent, the number of pre-school children (aged 0 - 3) has increased by 10 per cent. This reflects a recent increases in fertility.

- The population aged 16 – 64 increased by 103,900 (10 per cent) between 2001 and 2011. In absolute numbers, the biggest increases have been among the older working ages – there are 93,400 more people aged 40 to 64 (19 per cent) than ten years ago.
- Compared with 2001, the population aged 65 + has grown by 40,400 (18 per cent). Within this group, the numbers of the most elderly (85+ years) have seen the greatest proportionate increase – from 23,300 in 2001 to 31,400 in 2011, a rise of 35 per cent.
- Household size has changed dramatically over recent decades. In 1961, 50 per cent of the population lived in households containing 5 or more people; by 2011 only 22 per cent of the population lived in such households. In contrast, single person households now represent 28 per cent of all households, compared with only 12 per cent in 1961.
- The Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland have the highest proportion of children (aged 0 – 14) in the EU 27.

### 3 Population Trends over Time

This section will examine changes in the population across two time periods, namely: the past ten years (2001), and the last century (1911 – 2011)

#### 3.1 The Past Ten Years

Continuing the trend of recent decades, the population has become older over the past 10 years, with the median age increasing from 34 years in 2001 to 37 years in 2011 <sup>2</sup>.

Figure 1 (overleaf) presents the age distribution of the population in 2001 and 2011. While the population as a whole has grown by 7 per cent, the number of children (aged under 16) has declined from 398,100 to 379,300, a fall of 5 per cent. The fall in the overall number of children, however, masks the finding that the number of pre-school children ( aged 0 – 3) rose by 10 per cent over the decade (from 90,000 to 100,300) <sup>3</sup>.

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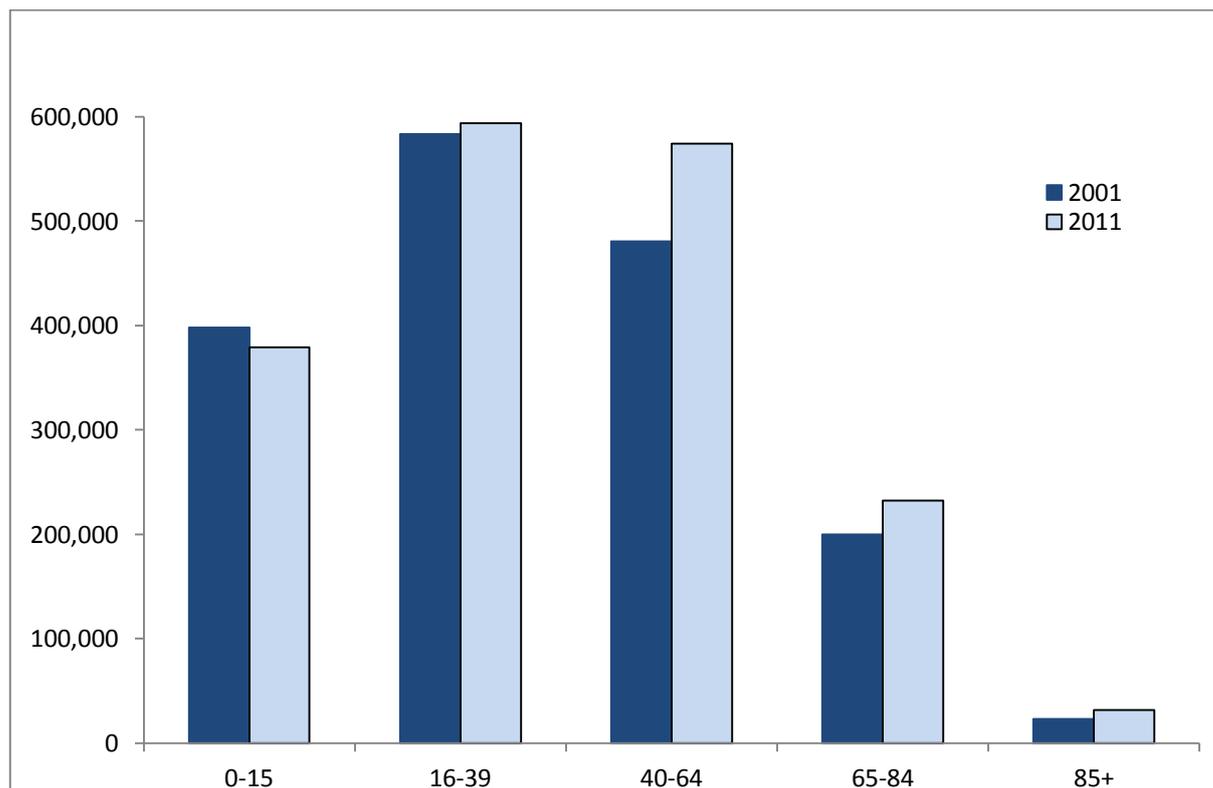
<sup>2</sup> The **median** represents the 'middle' value in a distribution, whereby half the population are younger than this value and half the population are older.

<sup>3</sup> The number of live births has risen gradually since 2004 (22,318) to a figure of 25,273 in 2011 (provisional). The increase in births is partially accounted for by migrants from the EU A8 countries. A decade ago, just 12 babies were born to A8 mothers. By 2011, this had risen to 1,210 or 5% of all births. For a detailed analysis of birth statistics, see NISRA (2012) **Statistical Bulletin: Births in Northern Ireland 2011**. Available at: [http://www.nisra.gov.uk/archive/demography/publications/births\\_deaths/births\\_2011.pdf](http://www.nisra.gov.uk/archive/demography/publications/births_deaths/births_2011.pdf)

The working age population (aged 16 – 64) has increased by 103,900 (10 per cent). As Figure 1 reveals, this increase has been uneven. While the 16 – 39 cohort has grown by only 2 per cent (a rise of 10,500), the 40 – 64 age band has increased by 19 per cent (93,500).

The number of persons aged 65 – 84 rose by 16 per cent, from 200,100 to 232,400. However, those aged 85 + have increased by a larger proportion than any other age group, from 23,300 to 31,400, a rise of 35 per cent.

Figure 1: Age Distribution of Northern Ireland Population, 2001 and 2011



Source: Figure 6a, NISRA (2012) *Op cit.*

### 3.2 Population by Gender

There was no significant change in the gender composition of the population during the past decade. Table 1 presents the population by gender and broad age bands, 2001 and 2011. Examining the population as a whole, the proportion of females rose by 0.3 percentage points, from 51.0 per cent in 2001 to 51.3 per cent in 2011.

The only significant change in composition occurred in the older age group (65+), where the female percentage increased from 56.5 per cent in 2001 to 59.1 per cent in 2011. There was a corresponding fall in the male proportion, from 43.5 per cent to 40.9 per cent.

Table 1 – Population by broad Age Bands and Gender, 2001 and 2011

	Male		Female	
	2001 (%)	2011 (%)	2001 (%)	2011 (%)
0-15	51.3	51.3	48.7	48.7
16 - 44	49.5	49.5	50.5	50.5
45 - 64	49.5	49.3	50.5	50.7
65 and over	43.5	40.9	56.5	59.1
All Persons	49.0	48.7	51.0	51.3

Source: NISRA, Census 2001 and Census 2011

### 3.3 Household Size: 1961 and 2011

Table 2 illustrates how the household structure of the population has changed since 1961<sup>4</sup>. There are no comparable statistics from the 1911 Census.

In 1961, 12 per cent of households were single occupancy and, at the other end of the scale, approximately 29 per cent were occupied by at least 5 people. In 2011, the reverse was broadly the case, with 28 per cent of households having only one resident and 10 per cent having 5 or more residents.

Table 2– Household Structures in 1961 and 2011

Household Size	1961		2011	
	Number of Households	%	Number of Households	%
1	42,900	12%	196,400	28%
2	84,300	23%	212,300	30%
3	73,800	20%	117,900	17%
4	64,500	17%	103,100	15%
5+	107,400	29%	73,500	10%
Total	372,800	100%	703,300	100%

### 3.4 The Past Century

Table 3 shows that the population of Northern Ireland increased by an estimated 45 per cent between 1911 (1,250,500) and 2011 (1,810,900) – an increase of 560,300 people.

Despite this growth in the overall population, there are now fewer children in Northern Ireland than was the case a century ago (404,400 in 1911 compared with 379,300 in 2011). In contrast, the number of people aged 16 – 64 has increased by 59 per cent from 735,200 in 1911 to 1,063,800 in 2011.

<sup>4</sup> NISRA (2012) **Table 2: Households and Average Household Size**. Available at: [http://www.nisra.gov.uk/Census/pop\\_table2\\_2011.xls](http://www.nisra.gov.uk/Census/pop_table2_2011.xls)

*Table 3: Northern Ireland Census Population Estimates by broad Age Band (1911 and 2011)*

Age Band	1911		2011	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
<b>0-15</b>	404,400	32%	379,300	21%
<b>16-64</b>	735,200	59%	1,167,800	64%
<b>65-84</b>	106,900	9%	232,300	13%
<b>85+</b>	4,100	0.3%	31,400	1.7%
<b>Total</b>	1,250,500	100%	1,810,900	100%

Source: NISRA (2012)

The population in the older age category (aged 65 – 84) has more than doubled in the past century, rising from 106,900 in 1911 to 232,300 in 2011 – an increase of 117 per cent. Although the absolute numbers are relatively small, there are almost eight times as many people in the 85 + age category than was the case 100 years ago (4,100 in 1911 compared with 31,400 in 2011 – an increase of 669 per cent).

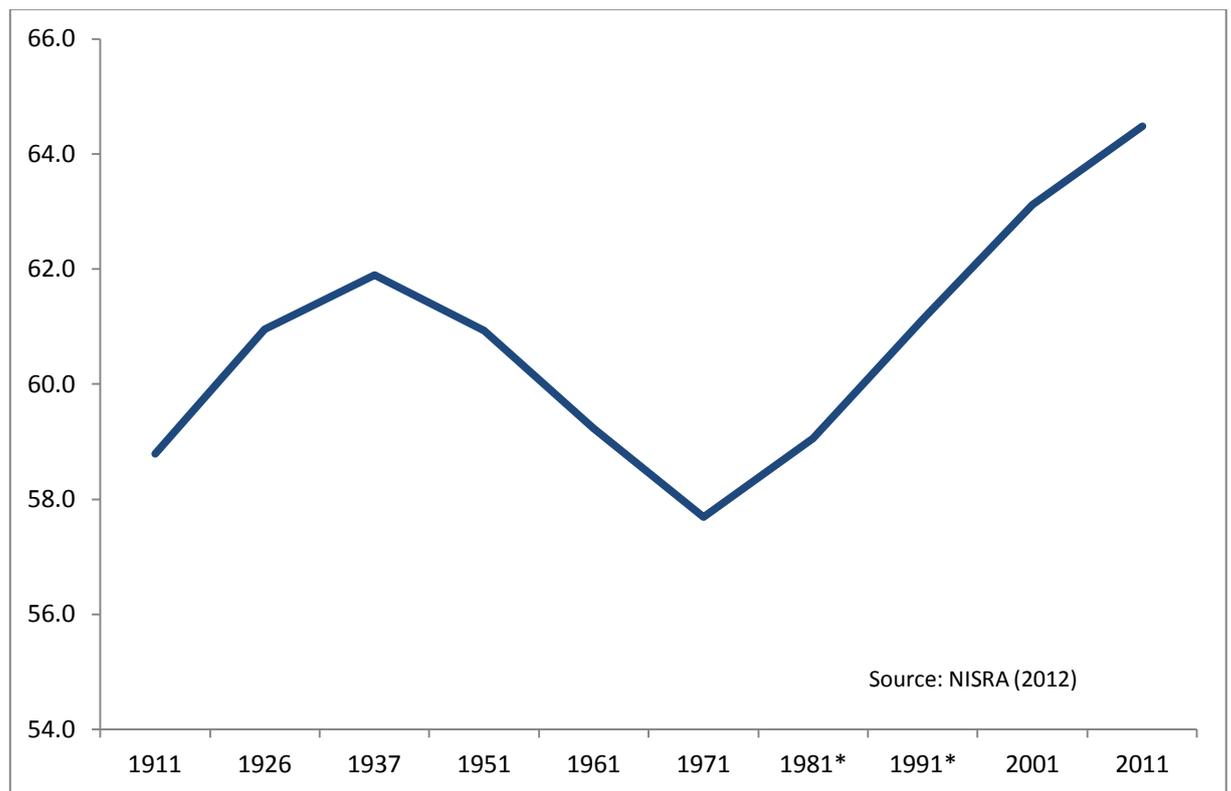
All of this points to an ageing population, with the proportion of children in the population declining from 32 per cent in 1911 to 21 per cent in 2011. The ageing of the population over the last century can be illustrated through the median age. In 1911, the median age of the Northern Ireland population was 25 years. By 1971, this figure had risen to 28, and now (2011) stands at 37 years of age.

#### Working Age Population (aged 16 – 64) , 1911 - 2011

Figure 2 shows that the proportion of the Northern Ireland population aged 16 – 64 years fluctuated between 1911 and 1971, reaching a low of 57.7 per cent in 1971<sup>5</sup>. Since then, the working age population has been on an upward gradient, reaching a peak of 64.5 per cent in 2011. Numerically, the 16 – 64 age group increased from 735,200 in 1911 to 886,200 in 1971 and 1,167,800 in 2011.

<sup>5</sup> Important to note that the under-enumeration of the population in Census 1981 and 1991 may be partially implicated in the findings. In 2001, adjustments for Census under-enumeration were built into the process.

Figure 2: Northern Ireland Population of Working Age (aged 16 – 64), 1911 – 2011



## 4 Comparisons with Other Jurisdictions

This section compares the Census 2011 Northern Ireland findings to that of other jurisdictions, notably the Republic of Ireland, England and Wales, and the EU 27. Please note that, as the Republic of Ireland and EU 27 use the 15 – 64 age band to represent working age, I have adopted this age cohort for all comparisons.

### 4.1 Republic of Ireland, 1926 - 2011

Demographic trends in the Republic of Ireland in recent decades exhibit similar characteristics to those of Northern Ireland. That is, an increasing population, a falling proportion of children, and a growing percentage of older persons. There are, however, some differences.

A comparison between Census 2002 and Census 2011 reveals that the Irish population increased by 17 per cent over the decade, from 3,917,200 in 2002 to 4,588,250 in 2011. Proportionately, this is more than twice the rate of increase in the Northern Ireland population (7 per cent) over a similar time period (2001 – 2011).

Population change is driven by four elements - births, deaths, immigration and emigration. Births minus deaths are known as natural increase. During the period 2006 to 2011, very high births combined with falling deaths, was the main driver of

population growth in Ireland. Total births for the 5 years were 365,000 and deaths were 140,000, leading to a combined natural increase of 225,000, the highest ever recorded for an inter-censal period<sup>6</sup>. Net inward migration, particularly but not exclusively from the EU A8 countries, was also a contributory factor<sup>7</sup>.

Looking at census data over a longer period, Table 4 reveals that the population of the Republic of Ireland rose by an estimated 54 per cent between 1926 (2,972,000) and 2011 (4,588,300) – an increase of 1,616,300 persons<sup>8</sup>.

*Table 4: Republic of Ireland Census Estimates by broad Age Band (1926 and 2011)*

Age Band	1926		2011	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
0-14	867,900	29	979,600	21
15-64	1,832,400	62	3,073,300	67
65+	271,700	9	535,400	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,972,000</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>4,588,300</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: CSO Ireland (2012)

The growth in the overall population was reflected in all three broad age categories. There are now more children (aged 0 – 14) in the Republic of Ireland than was the case eighty five years ago (979,600 in 2011 compared with 867,900 in 1926, an increase of 13 per cent). In contrast, the number of people aged 15 – 64 increased by 68 per cent, from 1,832,400 in 1926 to 3,073,300 in 2011. The population in the older age category of 65+ years almost doubled in the past eighty five years, rising from 271,700 in 1926 to 535,400 in 2011 – an increase of 97 per cent.

All of this points to an ageing population, with the proportion of children in the population declining from 29 per cent in 1926 to 21 per cent in 2011. In contrast, the proportion of the population aged 65 and over increased from 9 per cent to 12 per cent over the same time period.

#### Working Age Population (15 – 64) , 1926 - 2011

Figure 3 (overleaf) shows that the proportion of the Irish population of working age (15 – 64 years) fell from 1936 onwards, reaching a low point of 57.6 per cent in 1966. This was mainly due to the effects of high emigration in the early decades of the state's existence. The proportion of the working age population rose steadily from 1971

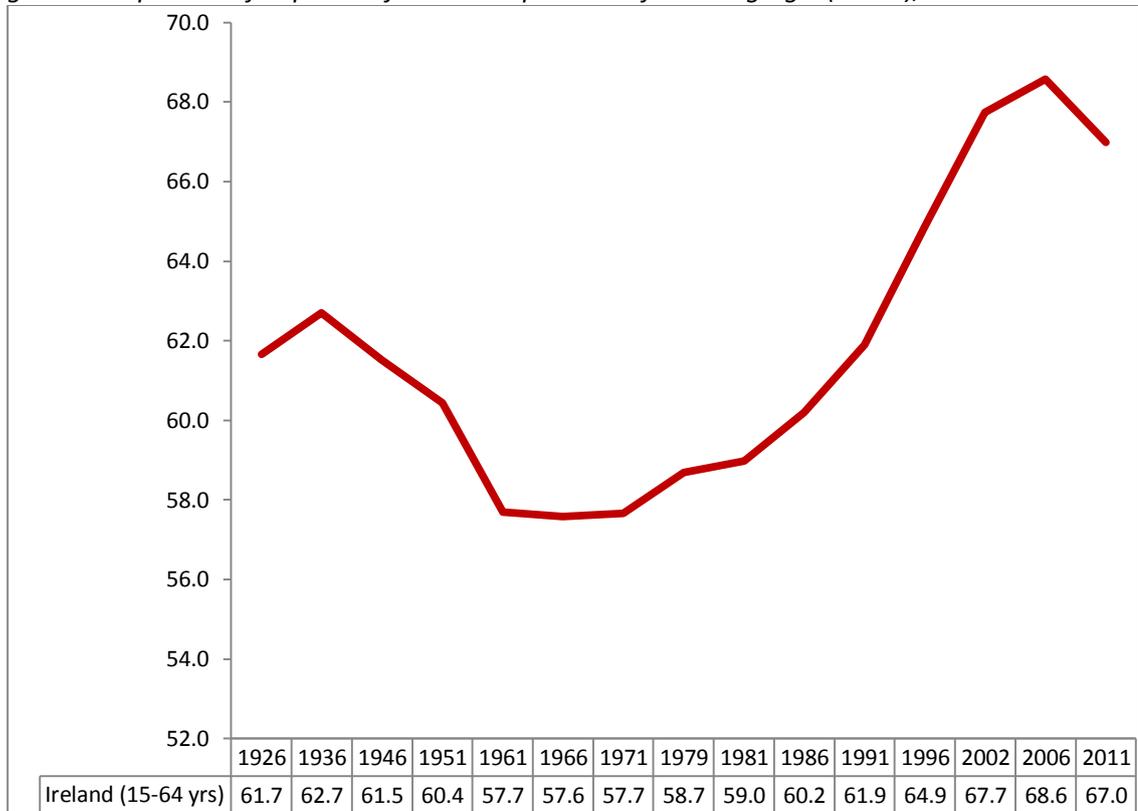
<sup>6</sup> CSO (2012) **This is Ireland, Highlights from Census 2011, part 1**. Available at: <http://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/census/documents/census2011pdr/Table%20of%20Contents.Foreword%20and%20Appendices.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> The number of residents born outside Ireland stood at 766,770 in 2011, an increase of 25 per cent on 2006, and accounting for 17 per cent of the population. Over half a million (514,000) Irish residents spoke a foreign language at home. Polish was the most common, followed by French, Lithuanian, and German. Source: CSO (2012) **Press Statement: Census 2011 Results**. Available at: <http://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/census/documents/census2011pdr/ENGLISH%20This%20is%20Ireland%20National%20Press%20Release%20Version%201%20290312.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> CSO (2012) **Census 2011: Statistical Tables and Appendices**. Available at: <http://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/census/documents/census2011pdr/Tables%20and%20Appendices.pdf>

(58.7%), reaching a peak of 68.6 per cent in 2006. Numerically, the number of those aged 15 – 64 years climbed from 271,700 in 1926 to 323,000 in 1966. By 2011, the total had reached 535,400 <sup>9</sup>.

Figure 3: Proportion of Republic of Ireland Population of Working Age (15-64), 1926 – 2011



## 4.2 England and Wales

The population of England and Wales rose by 7.1 per cent over the past decade, from 52.4 million in 2001 to 56.1 million, an increase of 3.7 million <sup>10</sup>. This was the largest percentage increase in the population of England and Wales since census taking began in 1801 <sup>11</sup>.

Table 5 presents the population of England and Wales, 1911 – 2011, by three broad age bands. The table illustrates an ageing population, with the proportion of children (0 – 14 years) in the population declining from 31 per cent in 1911 to 18 per cent in 2011. In contrast, the proportion of the population aged 65 and over has increased from 5 per cent to 16 per cent over the same time period. The working age population (aged 15 - 64), which reached a low of 62.9 per cent in 1971, recovered to 65.9 per cent by 2011.

<sup>9</sup> CSO (2012) *Op cit.*

<sup>10</sup> ONS (2012) **2011 Census – Population and Household Estimates for England and Wales, March 2011**. Available at: [http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778\\_270487.pdf](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778_270487.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> The first Census 2011 release for Scotland has been delayed until December 2012. This means that the overall UK and GB figures cannot be compiled until after this date..

Table 5: Census Year Population (%) for England and Wales by broad Age Band, 1911 – 2011

Age Band	1911	1921	1931	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
0-14 years	30.6	27.7	23.8	22.1	23.0	23.7	20.5	19.0	18.8	17.6
15-64 years	64.1	66.2	68.7	66.8	65.2	62.9	64.5	65.1	65.3	65.9
(65+ years	5.2	6.0	7.4	11.0	11.9	13.3	15.0	15.9	15.9	16.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: ONS (2012)

The median age of the population in England and Wales was 39 years in 2011, compared with 25 years in 1911<sup>12</sup>.

### 4.3 EU27

In common with the remainder of the EU 27, the population of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland are getting older. This is largely a consequence of consistently low birth rates and growing life expectancy. However, considering the EU as a whole, Table 6 reveals that Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland still have relatively young populations.

In the EU 27, 16 per cent of the population is aged 0-14, compared with 20 per cent in Northern Ireland and 21 per cent in the Republic of Ireland. Conversely, 17 per cent of the EU 27 is aged 65 or older, compared with 15 per cent and 12 per cent in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland respectively. Compared with Northern Ireland, England and Wales have a smaller proportion of children than Northern Ireland, a larger share of older persons (65+), and a higher median age (39 years)<sup>13</sup>.

Table 6: Population Structure in Northern Ireland compared with Other Jurisdictions.

	0 – 14 years	15 - 64 years	65+ years	Median Age
EU 27	16%	67%	17%	40.9 *
Eng and Wales	18%	66%	16%	39.0
Northern Ireland	20%	66%	15%	37.0
Republic of Ireland	21%	67%	12%	36.1

Source: Eurostat, ONS, NISRA, CSO

\* Median data for EU 27 refers to January 2010.

<sup>12</sup> ONS (2012) *Op cit.*

<sup>13</sup> Northern Ireland remained younger in 2011 compared to England and Wales, largely because Northern Ireland's fertility rate has remained higher than in other parts of the UK over the past 25 years. England, Wales and Scotland have all experienced below replacement level fertility since the mid-1970s, whereas Northern Ireland's fertility only fell below replacement level in the early 1990s. See ONS (2012) **2011 Census – Population and Household Estimates for England and Wales, March 2011**. Available at: [http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778\\_270487.pdf](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778_270487.pdf)

## **5 Summary**

This Briefing Note has presented the key findings, plus comparisons with other jurisdictions, from the first release of Census 2011.

The salient trends to emerge from Census 2011 are an ageing population combined with a move towards smaller households. However, when compared with England and Wales and the EU 27, the populations of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, are still relatively young.