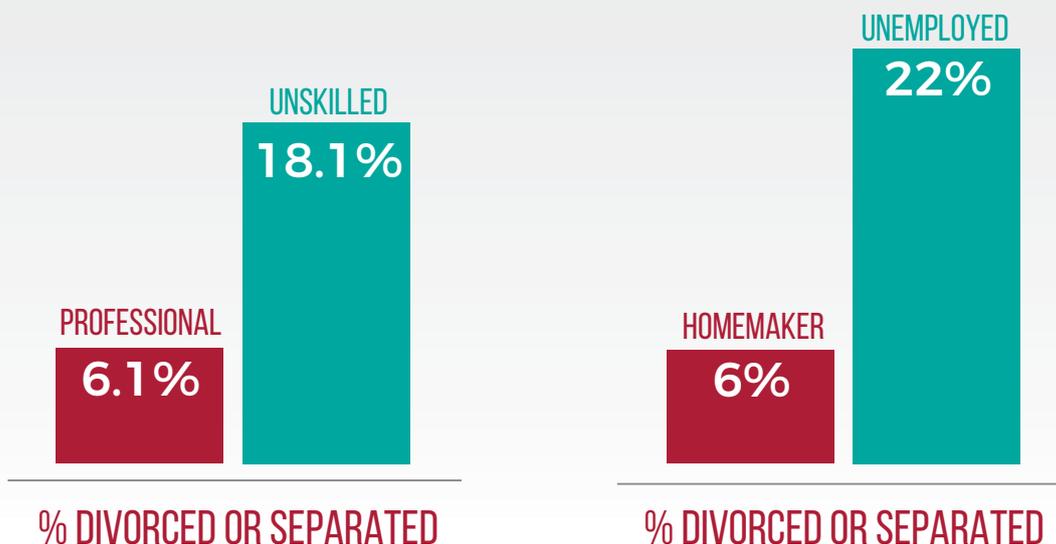


MIND THE GAP II

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY BY SOCIO-ECONOMIC GROUP



THOSE IN THE MOST DISADVANTAGED SOCIAL CLASS ARE THREE TIMES AS LIKELY TO HAVE SUFFERED A BROKEN MARRIAGE AS THOSE IN THE HIGHEST



MARRIAGE BREAKDOWN AND SOCIAL STATUS

Introduction and summary

This report is a companion to 'The Marriage Gap' report, which we published in 2016. Using Central Statistics Office data, that document highlighted the fact that a person in the highest social class is twice as likely to be married as someone in the most disadvantaged class (66pc vs 33pc).



Our latest report examines the prevalence of divorce and separation by social class, and also by other demographic groups. Drawing on Census 2016, this time we find that the prevalence of marriage breakdown in the most disadvantaged social class is three times that of the highest social class (18pc vs 6pc).

Putting those two facts together, the marriage gap becomes even more yawning; a person in the lowest social class is only half as likely to be married as someone in the top group and is three times more likely to have suffered a broken marriage. This is a double blow.

We don't have to search far to find a major reason why the gap exists. It is obvious that economic disadvantage is a big contributor, although there is more to it than that, because economic disadvantage has always existed, and these rates of marriage breakdown have not. This report also shows that Indian nationals living here have the lowest level of marriage breakdown (1.9%) compared with Lithuanians living here who have the highest at 28.1%. This difference almost certainly shows that cultural factors also play a part in influencing divorce and separation rates.

But we need to examine why the existence of such a large marriage gap is so little known and so unremarked upon in this country. If the situation was reversed, and it was the most affluent groups that were half as likely to marry and three times as likely to divorce or separate, it would be a matter of far greater attention and public debate.

As we said in our previous report, one reason we ought to be concerned about this gap is because children are more likely to grow up in poverty if raised outside marriage than within marriage.

Methodology and overall picture

In analysing the level of marriage breakdown among the different elements of society, the report uses the following methodology.

It calculates the number of persons recorded as married for Census 2016 and adds to that figure the number of people who were listed as separated or divorced. It then calculates the percentage that are currently separated or divorced by dividing this total by all currently married people plus those currently separated/divorced.

Figures are compiled for the following categories;

1. Marriage breakdown by **social class**.
2. Marriage breakdown by **economic status**.
3. Marriage breakdown by **educational standard**.
4. Marriage breakdown by **occupancy**.
5. Marriage breakdown by **disability**.
6. Marriage Breakdown by **nationality**.



The complete analysis reveals a very clear picture. You are far less likely to have suffered a broken marriage if you have a good education, if you have a job, if you are from a high social class, than if you are at the other end of these scales.

Overall there are 2,009,998 persons in the State who are either married or separated/divorced as at Census 2016. There were 1,787,925 married people in the country. The number separated was 118,178 and the number divorced was 103,895 adding up to 222,073. Separated equates to 5.9% while divorced is 5.1% giving a combined figure of 11% for marriage breakdown.

However, this does not give the full picture of marital breakdown in Ireland because the 11% figure counts only those who are currently divorced or separated. It does not include those who previously divorced and have since remarried. This would add tens of thousands to the figure. A total of 61,729 people in Ireland are re-married and the big majority of these were previously divorced and remarried following the death of their first spouse.



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1. ANALYSIS BY SOCIAL CLASS

TABLE 1

Social class	Currently married	Separated /divorced	All married	% Separated /divorced	Designations used for Census data
A	142,442	9,265	151,707	6.1	Social class A Professional workers
B	536,525	47,830	584,355	8.2	Social class B Managerial and Technical
C1	317,639	39,023	356,662	10.9	Social class C1 Non-manual
C2	295,979	32,793	328,772	10.0	Social class C2 Skilled manual
D	204,753	28,995	233,748	12.4	Social class D Semi-skilled
E	290,587	64,167	354,754	18.1	Social Class E Unskilled
TOTAL	1,787,925	222,073	2,009,998	11.0	
TOTAL ABC1	996,606	96,118	1,092,724	8.8	

Social Class A (professional workers) has just one third of the level of marriage breakdown (6.1%) that is found in Social Class E (18.1%). Social Class E are unskilled workers. The only slight anomaly in the progression from Social Class A through to Social Class E is that C2 (Skilled Manual) at 10% is slightly lower than C1 which has a figure of 10.9%.

As the table shows the overall ABC1 figure is 8.8% which is 2.2% points less than the national average.

2. ANALYSIS BY ECONOMIC STATUS

TABLE 2

	Currently married	Separated/divorced	All married	% Separated/divorced
Homemaker	216,295	14,151	230,446	6.1
Persons at work	1,082,139	120,276	1,202,415	10.0
Retired	311,124	34,705	345,829	10.0
Student	12,276	2,888	15,164	19.0
Others not in labour force	5,120	1,253	6,373	19.7
Unemployed	97,068	27,353	124,421	22.0
Unable to work sick/disabled	63,903	21,447	85,350	25.1
TOTAL ABC1	1,787,925	222,073	2,009,998	11.0

This table gives another clear indication of the socio-economic influences on marriage breakdown.

If you are unemployed you are more than twice as likely to suffer marriage breakdown (22%) than if you are employed (10%). It is even more likely if you are permanently unable to work through sickness or disability with a quarter of all in that category either separated or divorced.

Although the marriage breakdown figure for students is high at 19%, this is because the vast majority in this category are mature students going back to study.

Females account for 72.2% of all marriage breakdowns among those categorised as students. This suggests that many women feel they need to get better qualifications in order to re-enter the workforce at the desired level following their marriage breakdown.

3. ANALYSIS BY EDUCATIONAL STANDARD

TABLE 3

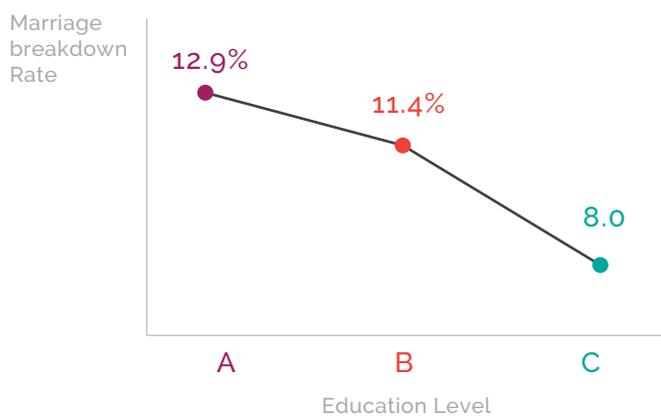
	Currently married	Separated /divorced	All married	% Separated /divorced
A	447,773	66,472	514,245	12.9
B	642,024	82,669	724,693	11.4
C	492,234	42,602	534,436	8.0
TOTAL	1,582,031	191,743	1,773,374	10.8

The above table shows figures for three broad educational levels.

Category A represents those who had no formal education, or only primary or lower secondary education.

B represents those with upper secondary education up to just below degree level.

C represents all those with a degree up to and including a Doctorate (Ph.D.).



Quite clearly these tables show that the prevalence of marriage breakdown reduces considerably as the standard of education increases.

Marriage breakdown rates are 61% higher in category A (12.9%) compared to category C (8%) while category B (11.4%) is much closer to A than C.



When we go deeper into the figures we find that in every single age group bar one the highest percentage of breakdown is still found in those in category A, followed by category B and the lowest is in Category C.

It is only in the 65 and over age group that the ranking is reversed albeit the differential between A and C is only 1.1% points.

It is in the older age groups, 45-54 and 55-64 that the highest percentages of breakdown occur. While A remains the highest and C is the lowest in both age groups, it is the only instance where all three categories i.e. A, B and C have breakdown percentages of more than 10%.

4. ANALYSIS BY TYPE OF OCCUPANCY

TABLE 4

	Currently married	Separated/divorced	All married	% Separated/divorced
Owner occupied with mortgage	723,775	60,726	784,501	7.7
O.O. with mortgage repaid	676,842	60,991	737,833	8.3
Rented from private landlord	206,256	49,579	255,835	19.4
Rented from local authority	74,928	32,067	106,995	30.0
Rented from voluntary body	6,555	3,590	10,145	35.4
Occupied free of rent	14,860	3,809	18,669	20.4
TOTAL	1,703,216	210,762	1,913,978	11.0
Total owner occupied	1,400,617	121,717	1,522,334	8.0
Total rented accommodation	302,599	89,045	391,644	22.7



We can see very sharp differences in the table above. Those who own their homes (with or without a mortgage) have a breakdown rate of close to 8% which is 3% points below the national average. However those living in rented accommodation have a breakdown rate of 22.7%. The rate for those renting from local authorities is 30% and that increases to 35.4% when the landlord is a voluntary body.

These variations will be linked to socio-economic status (those who can afford a mortgage are typically likely to be better off than those who can't), but it will also be due to the fact that following a marriage breakdown, one or both spouses are likely to end up in rented accommodation or local authority housing.



5. ANALYSIS BY DISABILITY

TABLE 5

	Currently married	Separated/divorced	All married	% Separated/divorced
TOTAL	239,328	52,009	291,337	17.9

The overall rate of breakdown among those with a disability is 17.9% which is almost 7% points above the average for the population as a whole.

The rate is particularly high for those aged between 45 and 64 ranging between 22.7% and 26%.

6. ANALYSIS BY NATIONALITY

TABLE 6

	Currently married	Separated/divorced	All married	% Separated/divorced
Indian	6,678	130	6,808	1.9
Irish	1,518,297	177,659	1,695,956	10.5
USA	4,730	583	5,313	11.0
Italian	3,481	471	3,952	11.9
Polish	53,343	8,134	61,477	13.2
UK	51,432	10,615	62,047	17.1
Lithuanian	14,073	3,901	17,974	21.7
Latvian	6,258	2,451	8,709	28.1

The average rate of marriage breakdown of all nationalities in Ireland other than Irish is 17.6% which has the effect of increasing the national rate by 0.5% to 11%.

The Indian community has a remarkably low rate of breakdown at just 1.9%.

At the other end of the scale is the Latvian community at 28.1%, with Lithuanians recording a rate of 21.7%.

The huge variation is surely partly explained by cultural factors as distinct from purely socio-economic ones and shows that socio-economic factors alone do not explain a high marital breakdown rate. Some cultures still frown on divorce while others have so few cultural and attitudinal barriers that it can be the first resort in some cases when a marriage runs into difficulty.



About the Iona Institute

The Iona Institute promotes the place of marriage and religion in society. We defend the continued existence of publicly-funded denominational schools. We also promote freedom of conscience and religion.



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