

## Bouncing back as baby boom reaches record 75,000 births

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DESPITE grim reports of rising unemployment and growing debt, people in Ireland are still looking for ways to lift the gloom.

Statistics revealed that, while in the midst of a recession, the country was also in the grip of a baby boom with a record high 75,065 births registered in 2008.

Almost a third of newborns were delivered outside marriage and Jack and Ava were the most popular babies' names.

Many people still managed to escape the doom and gloom as Irish residents made more trips abroad, up to 7.8 million, than the year before.

People are also living longer, the Central Statistics Office (CSO) said.

In its 2008 Yearbook it stated that assuming similar trends continue into the future, male life expectancy in Ireland may be approaching 87 years by the year 2042, with women living until 88.

Elsewhere it showed just one in 10 jobs were left in construction.

The average annual number claiming benefits last year jumped to 227,000 -- from 162,000 in 2007 -- and is continuing to soar.

Workers fighting for better rights in work lost 4,179 days due to 12 industrial disputes.

And those still employed were paid an average €37,726, with women taking home just 73pc of male earnings.

The CSO said a sixth of adults, and a fifth of young people, were still at risk of falling into poverty last year.

And although the overall rate of inflation fell slightly, households paying water, energy and fuel bills were hit with the highest rate of price increase, at 9.6pc.

The numbers of new cars fell by a fifth, the most popular models still Toyota, followed by Ford and Volkswagen.

There were 22,243 marriages registered and 3,360 divorces granted, both slightly down.

The statistical yearbook provided detailed information, tables and graphs across a wide range of topics, including the population, labour force, education, crime, the economy, agriculture, industry, services, prices, housing, knowledge economy and the environment.