

Baby boom to see population soar

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A fresh baby boom is set to drive Northern Ireland's population past the two million mark by 2030, new research has indicated.

Birth rates in the region are now at their highest level for 17 years, with around 25,600 new-borns last year - up five per cent on the number in 2007.

With births exceeding deaths by more than 10,500 in 2008, the population is expanding at its fastest rate for almost two decades.

It grew by nearly 1% in 2008, according to latest demographic snapshot, and now sits at around 1.775 million.

If trends set out the Annual Report of the Registrar General continue as projected, the population will hit 1.8 million next year and 1.9 million by 2019.

That will bring the two million mark into range as the 2030s approach.

While deaths are also up - 14,900 last year compared to 14,650 in 2007 - they are not increasing at the same pace as births.

And long term, death rates are on a downward trend, according to the report, which was published by the Statistics Research Agency. Of those that died last year, cancer was the cause in around one in four cases (3,970).

Last year there were 8,510 marriages registered in Northern Ireland, a decrease of 177 on the previous 12 months. The most popular day to get married was August 8th, with 139 couples tying the knot on that date. There were 2,773 divorces last year - down 140 from the record high of 2007.