

People Are Having Less and Less Sex

Birth rates in Western countries have been falling for some years now for a variety of reasons and part of the reason is that people are engaging in sex less often than their parents and grandparents. Figures released by the HSE earlier this year show that almost 62,000 babies were born in Ireland in 2017 compared to 76,000 in 2009, a reduction of 18 per cent. Also this year, The Irish Times conducted a professional survey involving almost 13,000 people, 54 per cent male and 46 per cent female.



In The Times survey, a total of 7 per cent said they had not had sex in the past year. People who had sex less than once a week amounted to 27 per cent; less than once a month, 22 per cent; once to twice a week, 30 per cent and three times or more a week, 14 per cent. These figures strongly suggest less people are having sex than in previous times. Of course, the reduction in the birth rate can only be partly attributed to that fact. For lots of personal, economic and social reasons many who are engaging in sex are using contraception to limit the size of their families. And underlining the Irish trend come new figures from a massive study in the United States that show huge numbers of Americans are simply not having sex.

A survey undertaken by the National Opinion Research Council at the University of Chicago shows that the number of people engaging in sex once a week has fallen by almost 10 per cent. In particular, young people in their 20s are abstaining from sex in serious numbers and the sharpest drop was the most recent, in the years 2014 to 2016. Nearly 20 per cent of 18 to 29-year-olds reported having no sex at all in 2016, an almost 50 per cent rise over those who were celibate in 2000. Teenage sex has also been on a downward trend in the US for many years and the sale of condoms has dropped by seven per cent since 2015. The birth rate has dropped to that recorded during the Great Recession of 2007/9.

In fact, the downward trend is worldwide. The figures for people in their 20s not having sex at all are even higher in Britain than in the US while, in Japan, more than 40 per cent of 18 to 34-year-old singles claim they are virgins. The incidence of married people having sex has also fallen across the developed world. Experts say there are many complicated reasons for the situation but they are all agreed that technology in the bedroom is a definite factor. Apart from watching television in bed, many couples are busy on their laptops and mobile phones until they fall asleep. "Sadly, we turn to technology instead of to people," said Dr Lori Brotto, an Obstetrics Professor at the University of British Columbia and a sex therapist.