

Social Change and the Family



[Elective 2: Social Studies]

Today's Topic

The impact on the family of social and economic changes in the last 50 years

We will examine the following social and economics changes that have had a major impact on the family in the last 50 years.

1. Changes in settlement patterns
2. Reduced working hours & increased leisure time
3. Improvements in education
4. Improvements in social welfare payments
5. Changing attitudes to marriage
6. Changes in traditional family roles and parenting within the family
7. Improved pay and working conditions
8. Increased participation of women in the workforce
9. Legislation re. equal pay and employment opportunities
10. Unemployment
11. Emigration - one parent working abroad

Exam question 2011

3.(b) In Ireland, the last 30 years have seen dramatic social and economic changes.

(i) Discuss the impact of social change on family life. (20) *4 points @ 5 marks each*

- e.g. change is settlement patterns between rural and urban areas; reduction in working hours and increase in leisure time; improvements in the provision of education; improvements in provision of social welfare; changing attitudes to marriage, parenting and traditional roles within the family; increased participation of women in the workforce; legislation on equal pay and employment opportunities; unemployment, emigration - one parent working abroad etc.

(ii) Assess the effects of decreasing employment opportunities in Ireland today. (10) *2 points @ 5 marks each*

- e.g. reduced income - difficulty paying mortgage and utility bills; less disposable
- income available - non essential spending reduced; more quality time to spend with children; time for low cost activities as a family; family stresses become evident; effects on the individual seeking employment; financial cost to the state for those unemployed; low morale; decrease in rural population as people leave the area to seek employment; emigration etc.

Exam Question 2006

- 3. (b) "Almost 60% of the Irish population now live in urban areas"
- (i) Discuss how changes in settlement patterns from rural to urban areas has impacted on family life. 3 points @ 6 marks each
Sporting clubs in rural areas may find difficulty in recruiting members. Businesses may close down in rural areas e.g. post offices. Fewer employment opportunities as shortage of labour can be a negative factor. Greater choice and range of services in urban areas. Facilities for leisure and entertainment are closer in urban areas. Overcrowded schools and hospitals in urban areas. Pollution. Crime. Inadequate play areas etc.
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- (ii) Comment on the efforts being made by the Government to reverse this trend and halt population decline in rural areas.
- 2 efforts/ initiatives @ 6 marks each
- Decentralisation of Government departments, Rural resettlement schemes, Building new industries in rural areas. Better transport system. Better roads and infrastructure etc.

1. Change in Settlement Patterns

The urban population has increased dramatically in recent years

Reasons:

- Farming= less labour intensive therefore fewer jobs in rural areas
- More employment in urban areas.
- Better educational opportunities in towns/cities
- Services and amenities are concentrated in urban areas e.g. banking



Impact on Family Life

Rural Areas:

- Pop. imbalance/rural depopulation, sense of isolation (elderly)
- Services e.g. P.O. cut back
- Fewer amenities as social life declines
- Young people leave for employment hence marriage/birth rates fall
- Less government funding therefore a less attractive option for investors. Circle of unemployment continues

Urban Areas:

- Services and amenities concentrated here
- Entertainment- more accessible
- Increase in air/noise pollution & traffic congestion
- Education/health services deteriorate due to rapid pop. growth
- Social problems common e.g. drug abuse, vandalism

Initiatives to Revive Rural Areas

- **Government Redeployment Scheme**- the moving of government departments/state agencies to rural areas.
- **Rural Resettlement Programme**- the moving of families to rural areas to help stop population decline in these areas and revitalise the area by introducing young families

2. Reduction in Working Hours & Increase in Leisure Time

Reasons:

- EU legislation governs the no. of hours one can work a week.
- These hours provide a basic wage... any overtime/shift work=additional financial gain.
- Different work patterns available e.g. flexitime, shift work, part time, job share = more leisure time for friends and family
- Legislation governs min. holidays and paid leave e.g. maternity/sick leave
- Restrictions on underage workers prevent exploitation in the workplace

Impact on Family Life



- Parents should have more time with children. However, Irish workers may have long commutes and arrive home exhausted making family time impossible.
- Leisure pursuits can be done as family bonding activities e.g. cycling, hill walking
- Due to flexi time etc and parents being unemployed due to recession parents are freer to attend important events for their children e.g. sports days, matches, parent teacher meetings.
- Participation in sports improves health of all family members
- Increased physical activity from leisure time results in mental health benefits as activities reduce stress and depression

3. Improvements in the provision of education



Reasons:

- Free education to everyone between the age of 4-18/19 except for books, uniforms etc.. The government invests large amounts of money for buildings, sports facilities staff etc. to make education accessible for all.
- School transport systems to rural areas
- Intro. of range of courses at 2nd level to cater for all abilities e.g. LCA, JCSP. Encourage students to stay in education.
- State financial assistance for college e.g. means tested grants at 3rd level
- Adult night school and second chance education offered in a number of schools.



Impact on Family Life

- Family still remains primary educators
- Improvements in resources and special needs education has eased burdens on families of children with special needs
- The state provides support for families with the back to school allowance to reduce pressure on families
- Parents have a better understanding of the value of their child's education and reward it e.g. by supplying a computer in their home
- Free education means that Irish students have increased opportunities to progress to 3rd level.
- Courses for a wide range of abilities are catered for making education more accessible for all.
- In the current economic climate the government is offering incentives to encourage the long term unemployed to return to education.

4. The Provision of Social welfare payments

- Social welfare payments of 188 euro and the payment of child benefit, family income supplement, supplementary welfare allowance etc. all assist the family in their daily expenses
- However the reduction of social welfare payments in recent years has increased the no. of families who are in debt and unable to pay household bills.
- Old age pensions of between 230euro and 219euro enable the retired to remain independent.



Impact on Family Life

- Family feels less responsible for the retired, disabled etc.
- Family appears to adapt a less caring attitude to these groups
- Old age pensions, living alone allowance etc have reduced hardship among the elderly
- In many cases child benefit has reduced child poverty
- Families dependant on one parent can receive state assistance
- Families on low incomes can avail of social welfare.

5. Changing Attitudes to Marriage



Reasons:

- Decreasing influence of the church, civil ceremonies increasing
- People cohabitating first then marrying later in life.
- Civil partnership for same sex couples introduced
- Women-more educated, capable of pursuing own careers, less financially dependent partners.
- Marital breakdown- more socially acceptable
- Single parents- more common



Impact on Family Life

- Breakdown of traditional family unit
- Increase in no. of single parent families, usually headed by women.
- Fewer marriages taking place-fall in birth rate
- More marital breakdown, divorce
- No longer a stigma attached to children born out of marriage

6. Changing Attitudes to Traditional Roles within the Family



- Formerly
 - ...Childcare-Matriarchal
 - ...Control within House-Patriarchal
- Nowadays
 - ...egalitarian process.
 - Children can spend a lot of time with child carers if both parents are working
 - With more women working and high levels of unemployment (14.3% in 2012) esp in males, stay at home fathers are more common.
 - Maternity and paternity leave is available
 - Corporal punishment is socially and legally unacceptable

Impact on Family Life

- Women encouraged to remain at work...day care facilities at work, paid maternity leave etc. thus child minders have more responsibility for discipline and values
- Discipline does not take the form of corporal punishment.
- Some parents are lenient which may cause an increase in social problems e.g. street violence
- Socially acceptable for men to stay home to look after the children
- Unpaid parental leave available from birth to child's 8th birthday

7 Improved Pay and Work Conditions

- Legislation implemented

Safety, Health and Welfare at work Act 2005

Employment Equality Acts 1998 - 2008

Protection of Young Persons (Employment) Act 1996

- Employers & employees have responsibilities to keep the workplace safe
- Adult workers entitled to min. wage.
- Increased flexibility in working hours
- Better technology- more people can work from home.



Impact on Family Life

- Shorter working days with better hourly rates - more leisure time and most enjoy a high standard of living
- More money for luxuries, reduced in recent years
- Parents happier when work is satisfying and well rewarded, therefore positive knock on effect on family life.



8. Increased Participation of Women in the Workforce

Reasons:

- More acceptable for women to work outside home
- Better educated women wishing to use qualifications
- Increased cost of living requires both partners to work
- Women marrying later in life
- No. of children has decreased
- More flexible work patterns e.g. job sharing

Impact on Family Life

- It is socially acceptable for women to work outside the home
- Smaller families because women want to return to work after childbirth and pursue their careers.
- Higher standard of living (dual income)
- Children spend more time in childcare
- Balancing of roles (work and home) may cause stress.
- Teenagers become more mature and responsible with chores at home.

9. Legislation on Equal Pay and Employment Opportunities

Legislation Protecting Employees

- Maternity Protection Amendment Act, 2004
- **Employment Equality Act, 2004**
- Protection of Employees (Fixed Term Work) Act, 2003
- The National Minimum Wage Act, 2000
- Parental Leave Act, 1998
- Employment Equality Act, 1998
- The Protection of Young Persons (Employment) Act, 1996



Impact on Family Life

- Women-equal pay for equal work
- Some e.g. travellers, disabled may still experience inequality.
- Average pay for women is lower as women are concentrated in low paid jobs in the service sector.
- Women still less likely to hold positions in in management and administration
- Government schemes- back to work, retraining schemes aims to increase employment in employment black spots

Unemployment/Emigration

- Varies depending on the state of the economy
- During the current recession unemployment in Ireland has increased to 14.3% (CSO, 2012)
- There has been an increase in the number of males working abroad during the week and returning home to see the family once a week/month

Impact on family life

- Many families are depending on social welfare payments to live, this can prove very difficult particularly for the long term unemployed
- To maintaining stability for children (school, friends) Many families must live day to day with one parent working abroad, this can put strain on the family.