



CATHOLIC MARRIAGE CARE SERVICE

  
**amárach**  
**research**



# Marriage & Families

## An Amárach Research Briefing

Delivered 10<sup>th</sup> February 2015



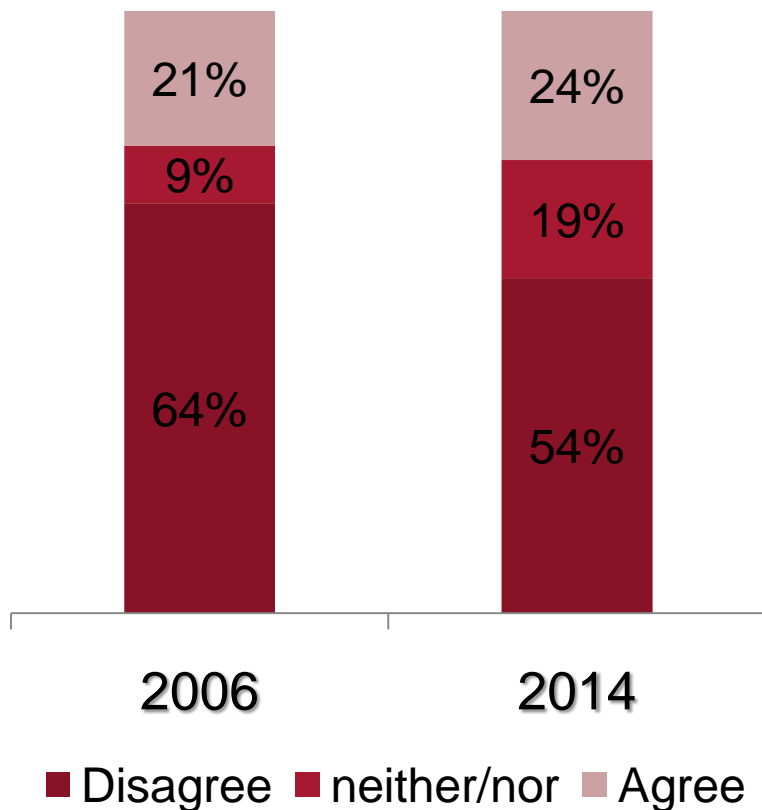
- Amárach conducted a nationwide poll on attitudes to marriage and the family for ACCORD in late 2006, eight years ago.
- Much has changed at a societal, cultural and economic level in Ireland in the intervening period, and so Amárach has updated some of the findings from 2006 to gauge just how much change and continuity there has been.
- This research briefing sets out the main findings and comments on their implications, especially for the work of ACCORD.
- Furthermore, we have also examined perceptions and experiences in relation to ACCORD, which are reported in the final section.



## *The Meaning of Marriage*

# Institution of Marriage

% of 18+ Irish adults who *agree/disagree*\* with the statement:  
**“marriage is an old-fashioned, out-moded institution”**



\* excludes 'don't knows'

- Marriage as an institution still has strong support in Ireland, though the share of 'waverers' (i.e.: don't neither/nors) has increased significantly.
- Men are much more likely to 'agree' with the statement than women, while under 35s are more likely to agree than over 35s.
- The gap between men and women has increased significantly since 2006 in terms of perceiving marriage as old fashioned (up from 23% of men in 2006 to 28% in 2014).

# Institution of Marriage II

➤ % of Irish adults who *agree/disagree*\* with the statement (by sex, age, class, has children):  
**“marriage is an old-fashioned, out-moded institution”**

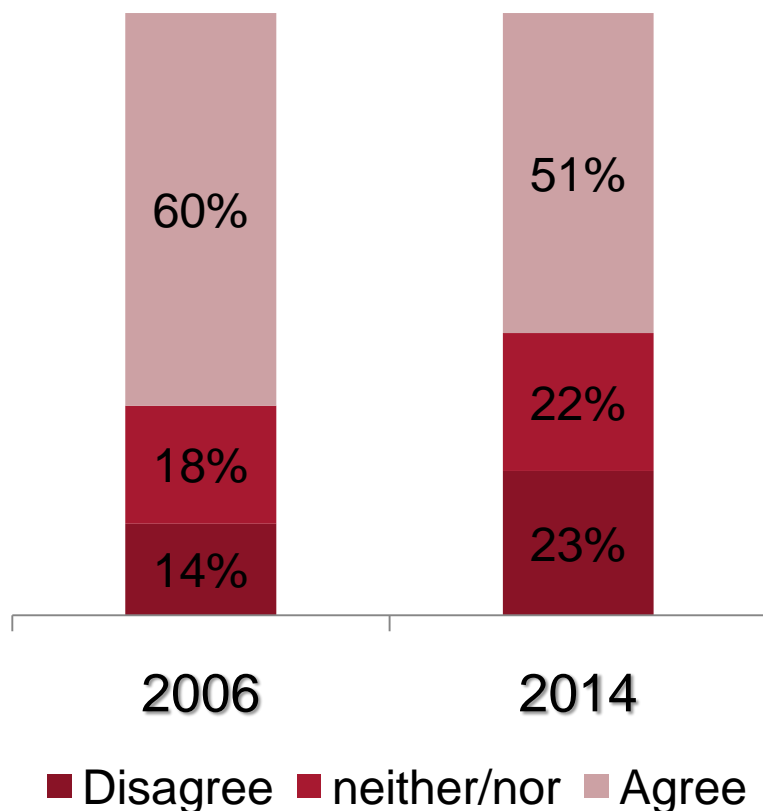
April 2014	TOTAL	Male	Female	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+	ABC1 F50+	C2DE F50-	Has Child'n
	990	490	500	159	223	187	156	265	472	519	593
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	29%	28%	30%	21%	22%	26%	28%	44%	30%	29%	32%
<b>Slightly Disagree</b>	25%	22%	28%	25%	23%	24%	27%	26%	27%	23%	24%
<b>Neither/Nor</b>	19%	20%	18%	19%	21%	23%	21%	15%	18%	20%	18%
<b>Slightly Agree</b>	17%	18%	16%	20%	22%	18%	16%	10%	15%	19%	17%
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	7%	10%	5%	10%	9%	8%	7%	4%	7%	7%	7%

\* excludes 'don't knows'

Source: Amárach Research, April 2014

# Happy Marriages

% of 18+ Irish adults who *agree/disagree*\* with the statement:  
**“most married couples I know have happy, healthy marriages”**



- Although twice as many people agree most married couples they know are happy as disagree, the balance has shifted significantly since 2006.
- Women are more likely than men to disagree about most couples they know, as in 2006.
- The biggest proportionate increase in the % disagreeing that most married couples are happy is among older age groups (though it has also gone up among younger age groups).

\* excludes 'don't knows'



# Happy Marriages II

🔍 % of Irish adults who *agree/disagree*\* with the statement (by sex, age, class, has children):  
**“most married couples I know have happy, healthy marriages”**

April 2014	TOTAL	Male	Female	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+	ABC1 F50+	C2DE F50-	Has Child'n
	990	490	500	159	223	187	156	265	472	519	593
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	5%	4%	6%	7%	3%	5%	6%	4%	4%	5%	5%
<b>Slightly Disagree</b>	18%	17%	19%	14%	16%	19%	22%	20%	16%	20%	20%
<b>Neither/Nor</b>	22%	24%	21%	24%	24%	22%	23%	20%	22%	22%	20%
<b>Slightly Agree</b>	33%	35%	30%	31%	35%	34%	31%	32%	35%	30%	33%
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	18%	17%	19%	17%	16%	18%	15%	22%	18%	18%	19%

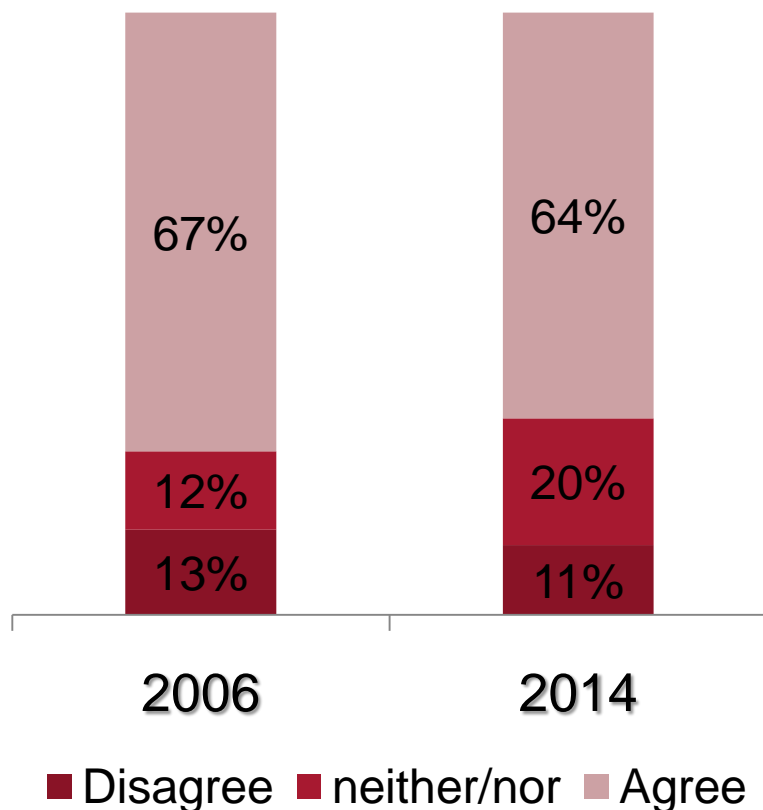
\* excludes 'don't knows'

Source: Amárach Research, April 2014

# Trial Cohabitation

% of 18+ Irish adults who *agree/disagree*\* with the statement:

**“couples should live together first in order to decide if they would suit being married”**



\* excludes 'don't knows'

- There has been a slight decline in agreement with the idea of cohabitation as a 'trial arrangement', though again the 'waverers' – neither/nors – have increased their share.
- Women are more likely than men to approve the 'trial' concept, more so than in 2006 (when attitudes were quite similar).
- There is less of a 'generation gap' in attitudes to cohabitation than in 2006, though levels of agreement are still highest among under 35s in 2014 as in 2006.



# Trial Cohabitation II

➤ % of Irish adults who *agree/disagree*\* with the statement (by sex, age, class, has children):  
**“couples should live together first in order to decide if they would suit being married”**

April 2014	TOTAL	Male	Female	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+	ABC1 F50+	C2DE F50-	Has Child'n
	990	490	500	159	223	187	156	265	472	519	593
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	5%	5%	4%	3%	5%	5%	5%	6%	5%	4%	5%
<b>Slightly Disagree</b>	7%	7%	7%	2%	6%	8%	8%	8%	6%	7%	7%
<b>Neither/Nor</b>	20%	21%	20%	15%	17%	15%	21%	30%	20%	21%	22%
<b>Slightly Agree</b>	28%	29%	27%	28%	29%	25%	29%	29%	27%	29%	30%
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	36%	33%	39%	43%	40%	44%	34%	25%	37%	35%	33%

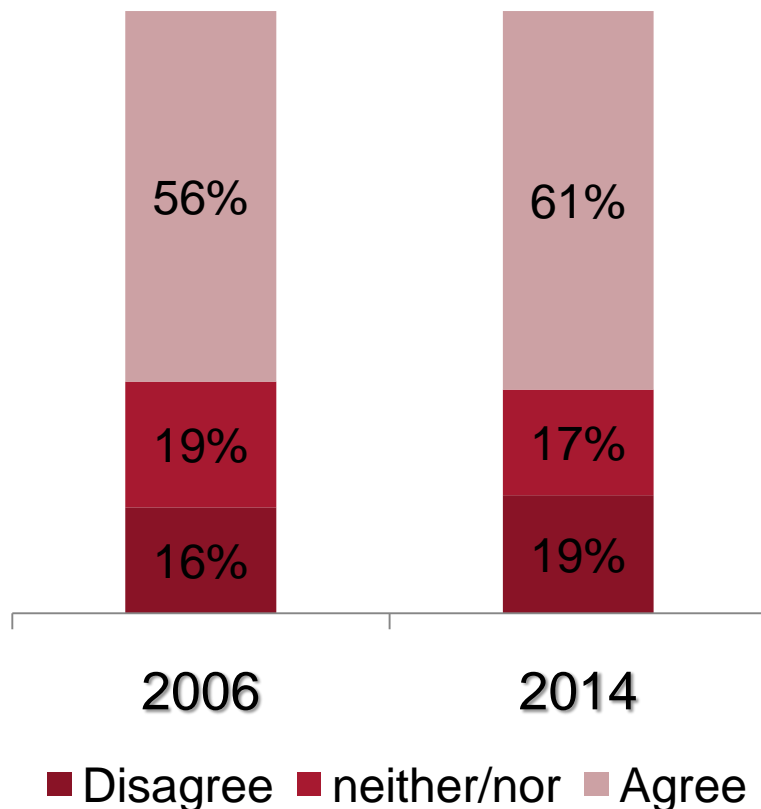
\* excludes 'don't knows'

Source: Amárach Research, April 2014

# Lifelong Commitment

% of 18+ Irish adults who *agree/disagree*\* with the statement:

**“couples who marry should make a lifelong commitment to one another, to be broken only under extreme circumstances”**



\* excludes 'don't knows'

- Despite evidence of uncertainty and even rejection by some in relation to marriage, nevertheless the % who see marriage as a lifelong commitment has *gone up* since 2006.
- Indeed, men are more committed to 'marital commitment' than women in 2014, even though both were equally committed in 2006.
- Agreement with the lifelong commitment is actually higher among 25-34s than among several older age cohorts.

# Lifelong Commitment II

☛ % of Irish adults who *agree/disagree*\* with the statement (by sex, age, class, has children):  
**“couples who marry should make a lifelong commitment to one another, to be broken only under extreme circumstances”**

April 2014	TOTAL	Male	Female	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+	ABC1 F50+	C2DE F50-	Has Child'n
	990	490	500	159	223	187	156	265	472	519	593
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	10%	8%	11%	8%	7%	11%	14%	10%	9%	11%	10%
<b>Slightly Disagree</b>	9%	7%	12%	12%	8%	12%	8%	9%	10%	9%	8%
<b>Neither/Nor</b>	17%	20%	15%	14%	19%	18%	22%	14%	17%	17%	17%
<b>Slightly Agree</b>	27%	27%	26%	32%	28%	26%	27%	23%	25%	28%	25%
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	34%	36%	33%	27%	36%	32%	25%	43%	36%	32%	37%

\* excludes 'don't knows'

Source: Amárach Research, April 2014 11



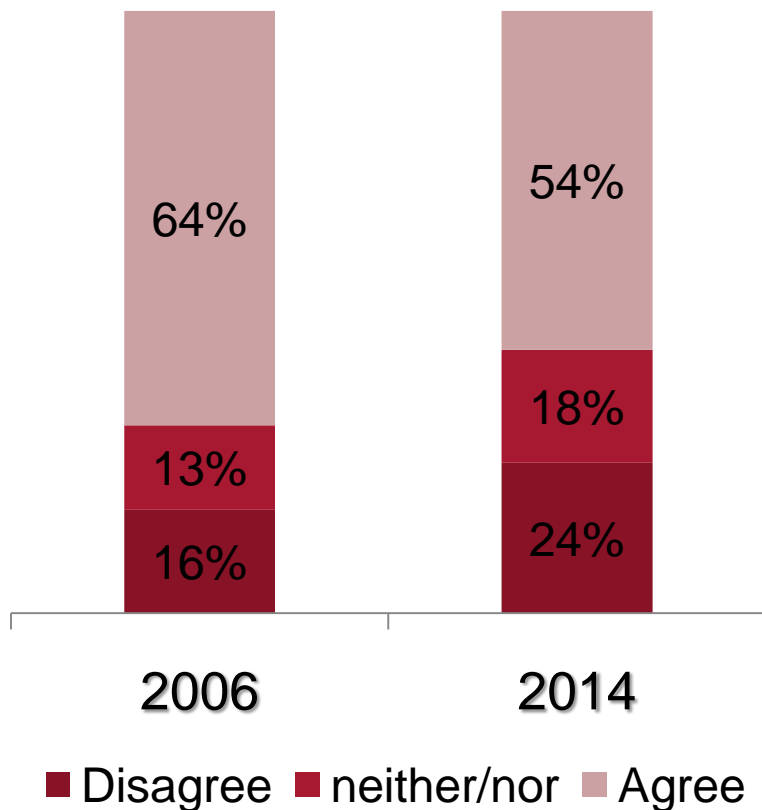
- The institution of marriage has been adversely affected in the eight year period between 2006 and 2014.
- The rising incidence of births outside marriage, cohabitation, divorce/separation and debate about same sex marriage has undoubtedly affected perceptions about marriage as a choice and commitment.
- However, marriage remains a desirable outcome for most people, and most expect it to be for life.



## *Families & Children*

# Family Matters

% of 18+ Irish adults who *agree/disagree*\* with the statement:  
**“the importance of family is decreasing in Ireland”**



\* excludes 'don't knows'

- Maybe it's a rare 'benign' effect of the recession, but family has become, for some, a little more important in recent years (although half of adults feel it's still decreasing).
- Men are much more likely than women to 'agree' there is a perceived decline in the importance of the family in 2014, the reverse of 2006.
- One thing that hasn't changed since 2006 is that under 25s are more likely to disagree about the family's decreasing importance than all other age groups.

➤ % of Irish adults who *agree/disagree*\* with the statement (by sex, age, class, has children):  
**“the importance of family is decreasing in Ireland”**

April 2014	TOTAL	Male	Female	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+	ABC1 F50+	C2DE F50-	Has Child'n
	990	490	500	159	223	187	156	265	472	519	593
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	9%	8%	10%	9%	9%	11%	10%	6%	10%	8%	9%
<b>Slightly Disagree</b>	15%	13%	16%	20%	11%	16%	18%	12%	13%	16%	14%
<b>Neither/Nor</b>	18%	16%	19%	23%	22%	17%	15%	12%	17%	18%	15%
<b>Slightly Agree</b>	35%	36%	34%	29%	37%	31%	38%	37%	33%	36%	37%
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	19%	23%	16%	9%	13%	22%	17%	30%	21%	18%	23%

\* excludes 'don't knows'

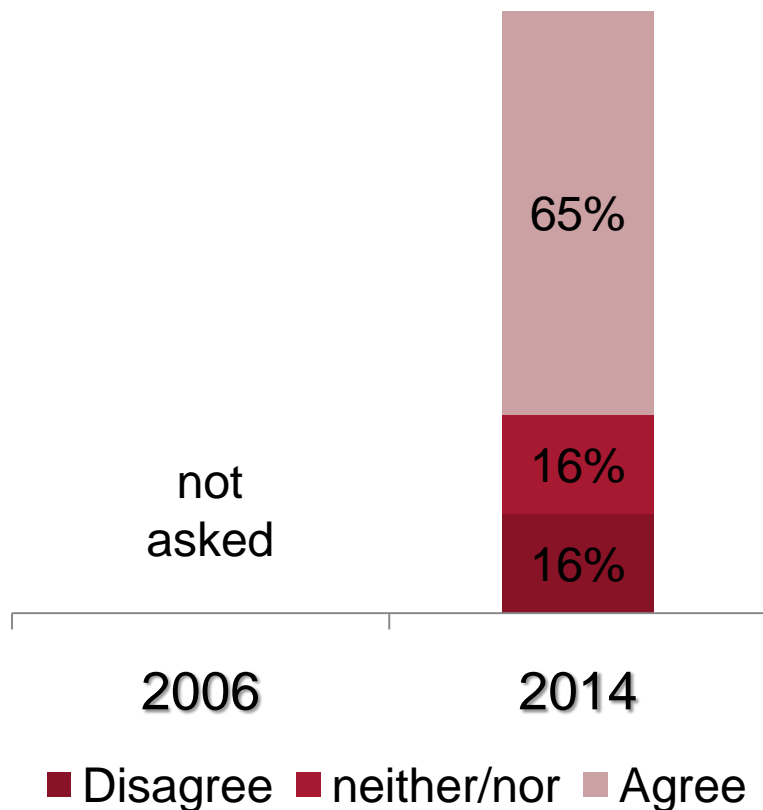
Source: Amárach Research, April 2014



# Happy Children

% of 18+ Irish adults who *agree/disagree*\* with the statement:

**“a child is more likely to grow up happy if raised in a home with a loving mother and father”**



\* excludes 'don't knows'

- Despite the fragmentation of family types in recent decades, the vast majority of people agree that the love of both parents is conducive to the happiness of children: then again, 16% disagree and another 16% are wavering.
- Agreement tends to rise with age, but even among under 35s, nearly 6 in 10 agree.
- Those with children are more likely to agree about the importance of loving parents, though those with older children are more likely to agree than those with younger children.

➤ % of Irish adults who *agree/disagree*\* with the statement (by sex, age, class, has children):  
**“a child is more likely to grow up happy if raised in a home with a loving mother and father”**

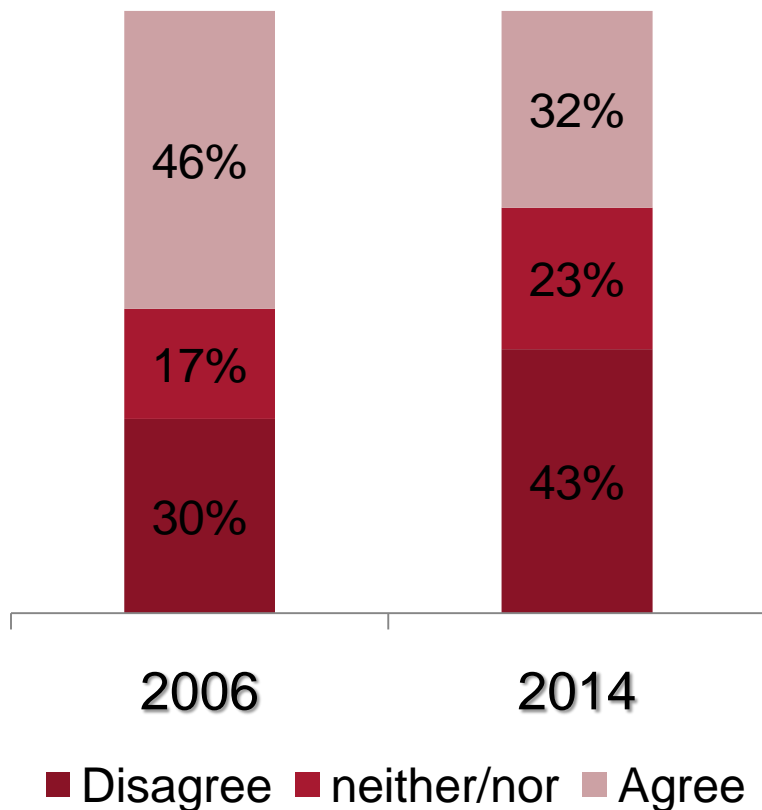
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	990	490	500	159	223	187	156	265	472	519	593
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	8%	5%	10%	10%	9%	10%	6%	4%	9%	7%	7%
<b>Slightly Disagree</b>	8%	7%	9%	7%	11%	7%	10%	6%	9%	7%	8%
<b>Neither/Nor</b>	16%	17%	15%	19%	18%	18%	15%	11%	16%	16%	15%
<b>Slightly Agree</b>	21%	18%	23%	28%	24%	17%	24%	14%	20%	21%	17%
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	45%	49%	40%	30%	35%	44%	41%	64%	42%	47%	51%

\* excludes 'don't knows'

Source: Amárach Research, April 2014

# Married Parents

% of 18+ Irish adults who *agree/disagree*\* with the statement:  
**“couples who have children ought to be married”**



\* excludes 'don't knows'

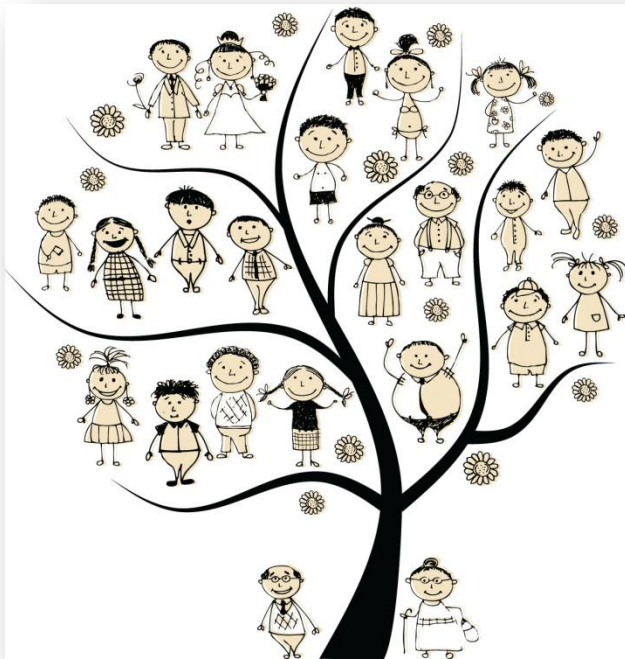
- Attitudes in relation to marriage as the best arrangement for children have effectively reversed since 2006.
- The biggest change has been in the attitudes of women, who are significantly more likely than men to disagree that parents ought to be married.
- There have also been large changes across all age groups under 55 – over 55s continue to be more in agreement with the need for parents to be married: crucially, over half of 35-44s – the key young family cohort – disagrees with the statement.

➤ % of Irish adults who *agree/disagree*\* with the statement (by sex, age, class, has children):  
**“couples who have children ought to be married”**

April 2014	TOTAL	Male	Female	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+	ABC1 F50+	C2DE F50-	Has Child'n
	990	490	500	159	223	187	156	265	472	519	593
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	26%	23%	29%	27%	25%	37%	27%	19%	27%	25%	27%
<b>Slightly Disagree</b>	17%	16%	18%	22%	18%	15%	19%	13%	16%	17%	14%
<b>Neither/Nor</b>	23%	23%	22%	19%	26%	21%	27%	20%	21%	24%	22%
<b>Slightly Agree</b>	18%	17%	18%	18%	20%	15%	13%	21%	18%	18%	17%
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	14%	18%	10%	7%	8%	12%	12%	26%	15%	13%	18%

\* excludes 'don't knows'

Source: Amárach Research, April 2014



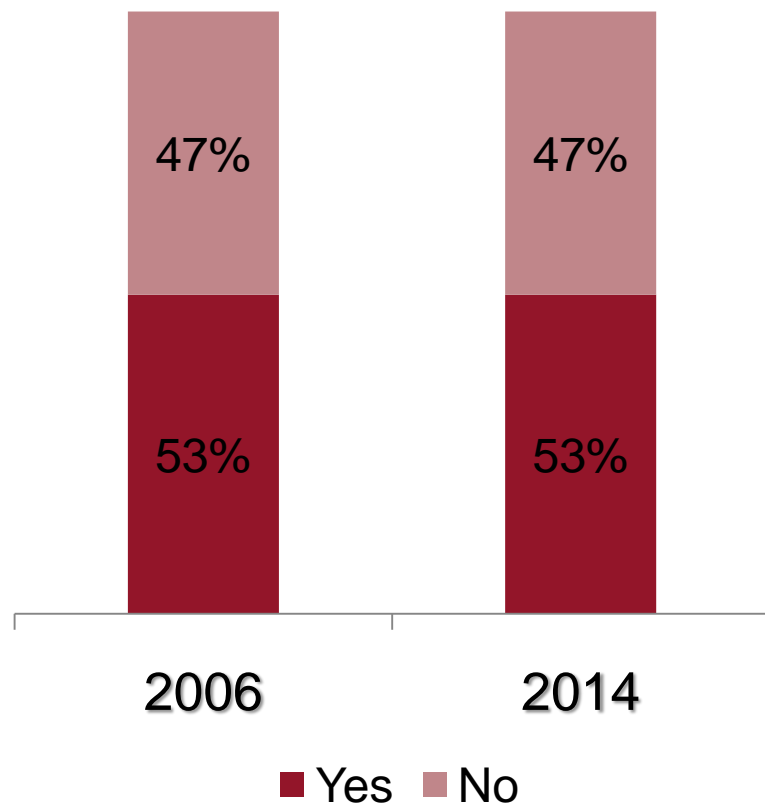
- Family still matters to the Irish – and there is some evidence it matters more for many than it used to.
- Most still value the ideal arrangement of children being raised in homes with loving parents, despite rapid change in household composition including a growing number of lone parent households.
- However, the ties between parenthood and marriage have been severely weakened in the past eight years – signalling a growing disconnect in communities and in the wider culture between this historic ties between marriage and parenthood.
- There is though strong support for the natural parenting arrangement tied to the happiness of children.



## *Perceptions of ACCORD*

# Awareness of ACCORD

Q. Have you heard of an organisation called ACCORD: the Catholic Marriage Care Service?  
*based all aged 18+*



- There has been no change in awareness of ACCORD in the past eight years.
- Women are more likely than men to be aware of ACCORD (as they were in 2006), but the gap has narrowed as awareness has risen among men.
- As in 2006, in 2014 awareness rises with age, and is highest among older age groups – and has actually risen in the case of some cohorts.

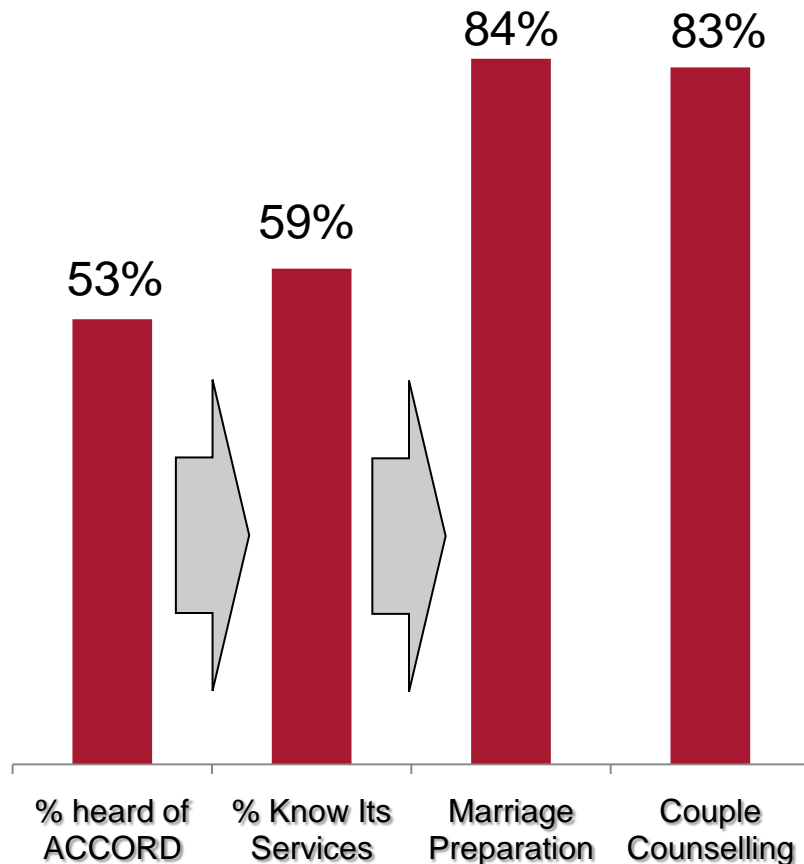


➤ Have you heard of an organisation called ACCORD: the Catholic Marriage Care Service?  
*based all aged 18+*

April 2014	TOTAL	Male	Female	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+	ABC1 F50+	C2DE F50-	Has Child'n
	990	490	500	159	223	187	156	265	472	519	593
Yes	53%	51%	55%	23%	42%	61%	65%	67%	57%	49%	61%
No	47%	49%	45%	77%	58%	39%	35%	33%	43%	51%	39%

# ACCORD's Services I

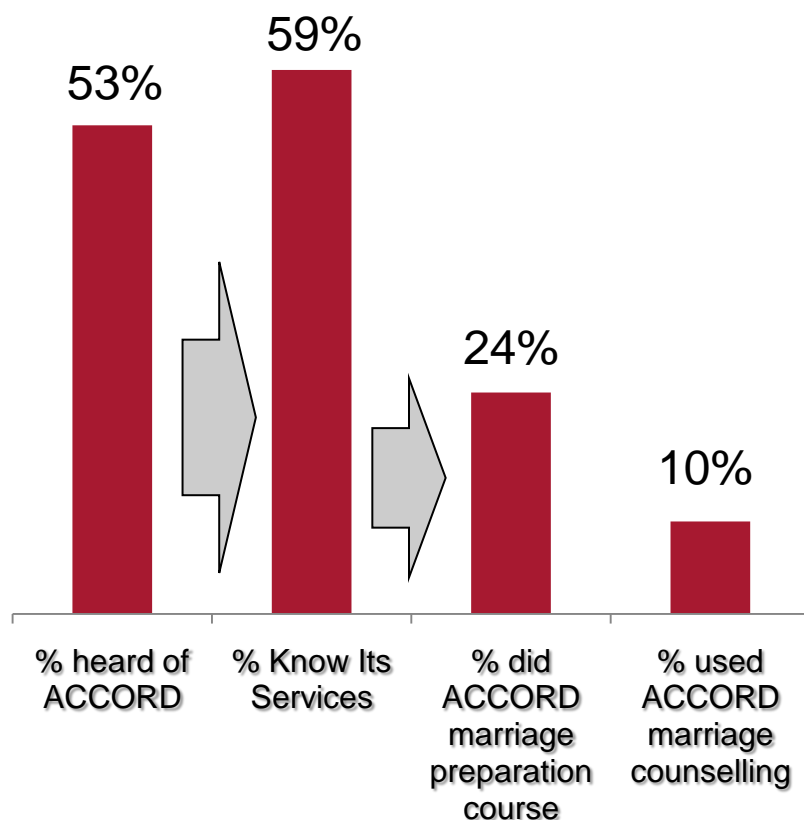
Knowledge of ACCORD Services  
based all aged 18+  
**then** on % who know its services



- Among those who have heard of ACCORD (53% of adults), some 59% say they know what services it provides.
- Among those who claim to know what services ACCORD provides, over eight in ten associate it with marriage preparation and counselling for couples and individuals.
- Women are somewhat more likely than men to be aware of ACCORD's services (62% vs 55%).

# ACCORD's Services

Use of ACCORD Services  
based all aged 18+



- Among those who know what services ACCORD provides (59% of those who have heard of ACCORD or 31% of all adults), 24% say they have completed an ACCORD marriage preparation course (equates to 8% of ALL adults – same percentage as in 2006).
- Some 10% of those who know what ACCORD does have used its counselling services for couples and/or individuals.
- 25-44s are, perhaps not surprisingly, among those most likely to have participated in a marriage preparation course – while over 45s predominate among use of counselling services.

Have you heard of an organisation called ACCORD: the Catholic Marriage Care Service?  
*based all aged 18+*

April 2014	TOTAL	Male	Female	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+	ABC1 F50+	C2DE F50-	Has Child'n
% of ALL adults	990	490	500	159	223	187	156	265	472	519	593
Has heard of ACCORD	53%	51%	55%	23%	42%	61%	65%	67%	57%	49%	61%
Knows what ACCORD offers	31%	28%	34%	11%	28%	41%	35%	37%	37%	26%	36%
Has used ACCORD marriage preparation	8%	7%	8%	1%	13%	13%	6%	4%	10%	6%	10%
Has used ACCORD counselling services	3%	4%	2%	1%	2%	4%	4%	5%	3%	3%	4%

- Would you recommend ACCORD to a friend in the same circumstances as you?  
*based all who have used either marriage preparation or marriage counselling services*

April 2014	TOTAL	Male	Female	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+	ABC1 F50+	C2DE F50-	Has Child'n
<i>NB: small sample</i>	95	46	50	4	29	28	15	19	53	42	72
Yes – would recommend	72%	71%	73%	79%	77%	71%	59%	75%	68%	78%	75%
No – would not recommend	17%	17%	18%	0	12%	29%	20%	10%	22%	12%	15%

- Overall, these findings indicate a very positive experience on the part of users of ACCORD services given the fact that the vast majority would recommend them to friends in similar circumstances to themselves that required the service.



- » The 2014 survey was included in Amárach's monthly online omnibus poll of 1,000 adults aged 15 and over.
- » The most recent omnibus fieldwork was conducted during 14<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> April 2014 inclusive.
- » The Accord questions were asked of those aged 18 and over in the survey (990 adults).
- » The 2006 survey used a different, face-to-face methodology (since fewer than half of all adults used the internet back then versus 82% today).
- » However weighting was used in both surveys to make them representative of the total adult population in Ireland, thus enabling us to make direct comparisons.



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