



**An Roinn Gnóthaí Fostaíochta
agus Coimirce Sóisialaí**
Department of Employment Affairs
and Social Protection

Annual report of An tArd-Chláraitheoir on the operation of the Civil Registration Acts for 2018

June 2019



Oifig an Ard-Chláraitheora

Ms. Regina Doherty T.D.
Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection
DÁIL ÉIREANN

Dear Minister

In accordance with the provisions of Section 11(1) of the Civil Registration Act 2004, as amended, I have prepared a report on the operation of the Act for 2018.

The Act provides that a report should be furnished to you and that copies should be laid before each House of the Oireachtas.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'T J Fleming', is placed below the 'Yours sincerely' text.

T J FLEMING

An tArd-Chláraitheoir

June 2019

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1 Civil registration

Overview

Section 11(1) of the Civil Registration Act 2004, as amended, (referred to as “the Act” in this report) provides that an tArd-Chláraitheoir will prepare a report annually on the operation of the Act and provide a copy to the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection.

This report has been prepared to comply with this provision.

The Civil Registration Service (referred to as the “Service” in the remainder of this report) operates under the aegis of the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (“the Department”). The Service has its headquarters in Roscommon Town – known as The General Register Office - was supported by an average staffing level of 37 during 2018.

The local registration service is provided by the Health Service Executive (HSE) at 61 locations nationally with 170 staff providing services directly to the public. A public research office operates in central Dublin supported by eight staff members.

Registration service

Civil registration is the system by which the State records the vital life events (including births, marriages, adoptions, and deaths) of its citizens and residents. The repositories or databases are called the civil registers. The Service is responsible for the registration process, maintaining the registers and providing certificates of entries to members of the public.

The civil registers create a legal document that can be used to establish and protect the identity and rights of the person. Birth registrations automatically result in the allocation of a Personal Public Service Number (PPSN) unique to each person which becomes the basis for identity and all other services delivered by the Department and other public bodies.

Registration data collected and recorded by the Service allows for the compilation of vital statistics and the making of population and related projections by the Central Statistics Office. Data is used for economic, social and infrastructural planning, as well as providing a reliable and consistent data source for other Government Departments, public bodies and institutions engaged in the provision of services and research.

Life event data is used within the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection for the operation and control of social welfare schemes and the development and provision of services.

There is a legal requirement on every person to notify the Service of certain life events, such as births, marriages and death and to do this in a timely manner.

Ireland has a well-developed and functioning civil registration and identity system. Increasingly, digital technology is enabling easier access for people to use and tailor public services to meet their needs. Our registration system meets our European Union and other international obligations such as those set out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child which requires that every child should be registered immediately after birth.

Purpose of civil registration

The Service, and the registration data it collects, compiles, stores and shares, is responsible for, or is a key contributor to:

- Creating a person's official identity through the birth registration process and ensuring integrity through the registration process;
- Providing ongoing evidence of life events by means of supplying certificates and verification of events registered and by validating certain life event records to a legal standard;
- Ensuring that current and historic records are preserved for future enquiry, enabling research and preserving the value of records for future generations;
- Ensuring the quality of registration data for use in national planning; and
- Supporting the process of providing greater access to digital public services.

Identity

The registration of a birth is a fundamental legal act and the subsequent issue of the birth certificate gives identity to a child in Ireland and most societies. Registration ensures that rights such as an identity, citizenship and travel can be recognised and facilitated as well as providing access to services such as child benefits, family entitlements, education and health care. As the child grows they may require a passport or driver licence. Eventually they may want to exercise their franchise to vote and to seek employment.



Ensuring credible and verifiable identity supports State authorities to tackle forms of fraud, allows for the integration of services and supports for persons who wishes to own property, access and use public, social, legal and financial services.

Following registration, the Department will automatically allocate a unique Personal Public Service number (PPSN) to the child and process the payment of Child Benefit to the mother. The PPSN is a unique reference number that enables access to social welfare benefits, public services and information in Ireland¹.

Evidence of life events

The provision of certificates of vital events to members of the public represents a significant activity for the Service. An average of 407,000 certificates were issued per year over the period 2015-2018.

Certificates of vital events issued in Ireland are accepted domestically and internationally as evidence of the facts stated on them. This is due to the independence and integrity of the system of civil registration which has accrued since the mid-1800s in Ireland and which continues to be maintained.

Life event certificates are required for a multitude of purposes both public and private. In certain circumstances, the actual certificate provides a legal basis to verify certain facts concerning a person and their family, particularly where personal, legal and financial matters are concerned.

The requirement to produce actual certificates for access to public services, particularly social welfare services, continues to decline as improved digital services are deployed. The nature of

¹ <http://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/PPSN.aspx>

how life events are verified without putting additional burdens on the service user to provide paper certificates continues to evolve with the development of digital services.

Sometimes it is necessary to also provide proof that an event did not occur, for example, where proof is required that a person did not marry within the State.



The widespread adoption of the Public Services Card and electronic data transfers between public bodies provides further opportunities to improve how services can be accessed more effectively and securely by members of the public. This has the additional benefit of significantly reducing the burden on members of the public having to attend public body offices. It also reduces workload, and improves opportunities to focus on better quality and more immediate services required by the public, thus ensuring greatest choice and convenience.

Enquiry and research

Registration of marriages commenced in 1845 and of births and deaths in 1864. The system of registration remained paper-based and manual until it was computerised over the period 1996 to 2005. All registration processes are now digital.

Through a process of digitisation of historic registers, the Service has, with its partner, the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, continued during 2018 to prepare historic records for public release. The current timeline for completion of all remaining records to be digitised suggests that the remaining historic records will be available to the public during the latter part of 2019. When completed, all historic marriage, birth and death records will be available online.

18 H. Marriage solemnized at the Roman Catholic Church of St. Nicholas in the Registrar's District of Barrowdown in the County of Down

No.	When Married	Name and Surname	Age	Condition	Rank or Profession	Residence at the Time of Marriage	Father's Name and Surname	Rank or Profession of Father
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
103	April 26 1938	Henry Orange	46 yrs	Bachelor	Cycle Repairs	Barrowdown	Edward Orange	Goldsmith
		Harriet Mable	44 yrs	Spinster		Barrowdown	William Mable	Bookbinder

Married in the Roman Catholic Church of St. Nicholas according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Roman Catholic Church by me, John Walsh CC

This Marriage was solemnized between us, Henry Orange and Harriet Mable in the Presence of us, John Walsh and Agnes Hennock

Historic birth, marriage and death records will continue to be made available free of charge to the public and researchers on www.irishgenealogy.ie. Annual tranches of register entries will continue to be made available as they reach the legal threshold for release (designed to protect the privacy of the living). The thresholds are: 100 years for births, 75 years for marriages and 50 years for deaths.

Plans for the digitising of a number of smaller registers maintained by the Service were advanced in 2018 with our partners and a contract to enable this work to be undertaken will be offered in 2019. The aim is to make these additional records publicly available by mid-2020 at the latest.

Section 20 of the Social Welfare and Pensions (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2013 and section 27 of the Civil Registration (Amendment) Act 2014 provide that the Minister for Culture, Heritage & the Gaeltacht may make historic civil registration records available for public searching.

National planning

The integrity, completeness and quality of life event data are essential for national planning. The Central Statistics Office (www.cso.ie) has the statutory role of preparing statistics on population.

The CSO published Population and Migration Estimates in August 2018. In addition, as part of its annual programme, the CSO published quarterly and annual summaries of Vital Statistics, including popular Irish Babies' Names collected from the registration process during the previous year.



Along with periodic population censuses, life event statistics form a central input to estimating population size, dispersal, family composition and trends considered essential to economic and social planning and the management of public services.

Data recorded in the event of a person's death contributes to identifying trends in diseases and injuries enabling planning of preventive services and contributing to a better understanding of mortality. A key challenge for registration services is to ensure that good quality, complete and consistent data is collected, stored for posterity and made available in a timely manner to inform current and future design and implementation of public policy.

Digital services

The EU eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020 sets targets that by 2020, public administrations and institutions of the European Union should be open, efficient and inclusive, providing borderless, personalised, user-friendly, end-to-end digital public services to all citizens and businesses in the EU.

This imposes challenges on public sector bodies to be innovative in how they design and deliver current and future services that respond to, and meet, the demands of citizens and businesses. The work of the Department in rolling out digital solutions is ongoing and will see a shift in how the Department and the Service deliver its services in the future.

'MyGovID' gives citizens a secure "single sign on" to their public services which can be used to access Revenue's 'myAccount' and 'MyWelfare.ie' online services from the Department. Planning is ongoing to reposition the life event registration process to take advantage of this new technology and to better meet the customer service standards expected.



2 Activity



Summary

During 2018, over 115,000 life events were registered and some 405,000 certificates of current and historic life events were issued by the Service – Tables 1 and 2 provide an overview.

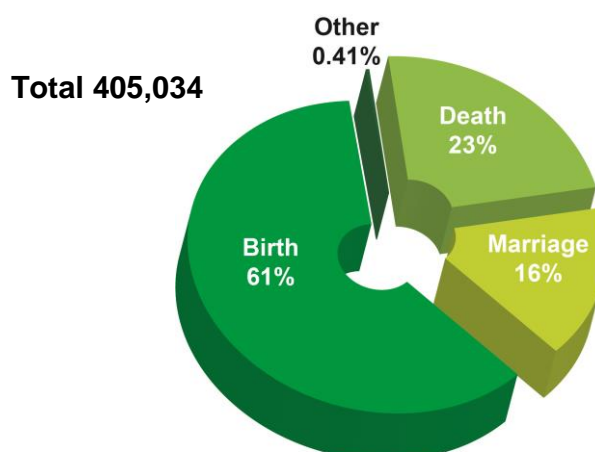
Table 1: Number of Registrations Recorded 2015-2018

	2015	2016	2017	2018
Births	66,522	64,758	62,919	61,901
Deaths	30,573	31,232	31,385	32,029
Marriages	22,112	22,620	22,018	21,052
Adoptions	88	102	63	81
Stillbirths	232	213	208	223
Total	119,527	118,925	116,593	115,286

Table 2: Number of Certificates Issued – by Type 2015-2018

	2015	2016	2017	2018
Birth	256,479	259,402	246,672	247,750
Death	89,661	91,843	89,365	91,289
Marriage	62,652	65,144	64,104	63,818
Adoptions	2,087	2,033	1,969	1,723
Stillbirth	258	290	336	379
Civil Partnership	500	144	77	75
Total	411,637	418,856	402,523	405,034

Figure 1 - Share of Certificates Issued 2018



Births

The Service registered 61,901 births during 2018. This was a decrease of 1,018 on the 62,919 births registered during 2017 - a decrease of 1.6%. There continues to be a steady decrease in the number of births registered from the most recent peak year of 2008 when over 75,000 births were registered. Births registered in 2018 were some one-fifth less than the number registered in 2008.

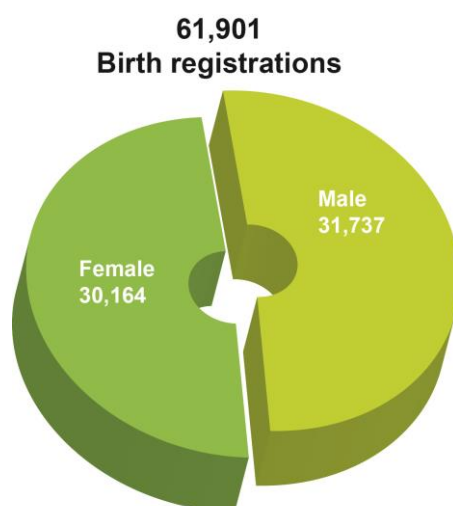
Table 3: Live births registered* 2015 to 2018.

	2015		2016		2017		2018	
Total	66,522	100%	64,758	100%	62,919	100%	61,901	100%
Male	33,930	51.01%	33,259	51.36%	32,303	51.34%	31,737	51.27%
Female	32,592	48.99%	31,499	48.64%	30,616	48.66%	30,164	48.73%

* Includes late registrations shown in Table 7.

The CSO published an analysis of births in 2018 in May 2019. The publication can be accessed on the CSO website - <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-vsyst/vitalstatisticsyearlysummary2018/>.

Figure 2 – Gender of births registered in 2018



Correction of birth register entries

It is essential that we ensure the integrity of the particulars recorded in the birth register (as with all other registers). Where information is incorrectly entered in the register it can be amended. The errors that require corrections can be clerical in nature or as simple as including a *síneadh fada* on a forename or ensuring a correct spelling.

Until 2004, register entries involved manual paper-based processes which were susceptible to damage, loss and minor error - particularly with respect to the spelling of forenames or the representation of Irish or foreign language forms of spelling.

The growth of family research and the making available for open public searching of historic records has also contributed to a demand for register entries to be corrected. It was not unusual practice in the late 19th Century and early 20th Century for register entries to be made without the inclusion of forenames. Where incomplete or incorrect information is identified and the correction brought to the attention of a registrar, a correction to the register can be made.

The engagement by family members and researchers has contributed enormously to the quality of the historic records maintained and is also ensuring the integrity of more recent register entries. The number of minor birth registration errors corrected during 2018 was 3,842. The corrections related to births registered since 1864.

Table 4: Correction made to the register of live births 2015 to 2018.

	2015	2016	2017	2018
Corrections made	3,711	3,767	3,897	3,842

However, more significant corrections may be needed.

In addition to the corrections noted in Table 4, 264 additional birth records were amended following a statutory enquiry conducted under section 65 of the Civil Registration Act 2004. Statutory enquiries are undertaken where an error, omission or other difficulty with a registration is identified which cannot be corrected under any other provision of the Act. The following types of cases accounted for the majority of the matters determined:

- Applications to remove the father's details as it was proven that the man registered as the father was not the biological father of the child;
- Cases where the identity of the parents requires to be regularised under Irish law; and
- Where the registration particulars, typically historic, require correction.

Table 5: Section 65 enquiries conducted- Births 2015 to 2018.

	2015	2016	2017	2018
Section 65 enquiries	258	294	270	264

Amendments to a father's particulars will usually be made on the basis of DNA evidence and statutory declarations made by the persons involved and/or on foot of Family Court orders granted in paternity, custody and maintenance proceedings.

Re-Registrations of a father's details

Re-registration of birth particulars involves the addition of a father's name and other details relating to the child, usually some years after the original birth registration. The number of birth re-registrations to add the father's details where the parents remain unmarried has decreased over recent years and numbered 644 in 2018 (2017: 722).

Section 24 of the Act provides for the re-registration of the birth of a child where their parents were not married at the time of the initial registration. Where the child's parents subsequently marry each other and wish to regularise the birth registration of their child(ren) they can apply to do so. During 2018, 975 corrections of this nature were made (2017: 1,035).

Table 6: Re-registrations by adding father's details - 2015 to 2018.

	2015	2016	2017	2018
Where parents remain unmarried	756	690	722	644
Where parents married after the birth	992	1,027	1,035	975

Late registrations

Section 19 of the Act imposes an obligation on a qualified informant to register the birth of the child within three months. With few exceptions, this legal requirement is complied with. Every year a small number of births are not or cannot be registered within this timeframe.

Late registrations are defined as births registered more than 12 months after the birth occurred – section 20 of the Act. Delays in the registration process, where they arise, are due to a number of reasons, including where there are disputes over parentage and names and simply because parents do not fulfil their statutory obligations in a timely

manner. However, the number of recent births where a late registration is necessary is in the single digits.

Table 7: Late registration of births 2015 to 2018.

	2015	2016	2017	2018
Number of cases	288	367	374	358

Late registrations of Historical Births

A significant number of late birth registrations relate to older people and to historic register entries. Births registered in the past did not always match the current level of compliance. In many cases, older citizens requiring a public services card or birth certificate to access a service, discovered that their birth was not registered. The Act provides legal mechanisms to register these births and ensure that the person is issued with a birth certificate.

Additionally, as a result of genealogical research, the descendants of person's whose births were not registered seek to have the register details regularised and in some cases to enable claims for Irish citizenship to be made.

The number of late registrations declined slightly in 2018 after a significant rise during 2016 and 2017 but still remain at relatively low levels.

There was also an upswing in applications to regularise birth records in the run up to and following the UK's decision to exit the European Union following the referendum in June 2016.

Stillbirths

Section 28 of the Act sets out the requirements in respect of the registration of stillbirths. Stillbirths are defined as a child who at birth shows no signs of life, weighs at least 500 grams or has a gestational age of not less than 24 weeks.

The number of stillbirths registered in Ireland was 223 in 2018, an increase of 15 or 7% on 2017 but was generally in line with the average for the five year period ending 2018. Seventy-seven of the 223 stillbirths registered in 2018 were in respect of stillbirths which occurred in 2016 or earlier.

Table 8: Stillbirths Registered 2015 to 2018.

	2015	2016	2017	2018
Stillbirths Registered	232	213	208	223

Domestic adoptions

Under the Adoption Acts, an Adopted Children Register is required to be maintained by an tArd-Chláraitheoir. This register contains particulars of all domestic adoptions notified since the Adoption Act 1952 commenced. This register is maintained in accordance with section 22 of the Adoption Act 1952 and section 84 of the Adoption Act 2010.

Entries in the register refer to children, who have not reached eighteen years of age, are resident in Ireland and who were adopted by a person or couple also resident in Ireland. The nature and effect of an Irish adoption order is that the child becomes the child of the adopter(s) with all the rights and responsibilities transferred from the birth parents to the adoptive parent(s).

The number of notifications sent by the Adoption Authority of Ireland to be registered during 2018 was 81 – an increase of 28% on the 63 orders received in 2017. Of these 81 adoptions registered in 2018, eight children were aged under three and 33 were aged 17 when the adoption order was made.

Adopting a child who is resident in Ireland is called a domestic adoption. If the child is living abroad, the process is called an intercountry adoption. The Adoption Authority of Ireland maintains a Register of Intercountry Adoptions (RICA) and certificates are issued from that register by the Adoption Authority.

Further information and the annual reports of the Adoption Authority are available on <https://aai.gov.ie>.

Table 9: Adoptions Registered 2015 to 2018.

	2015	2016	2017	2018
Domestic adoptions registered	88	102	63	81
Of which were:				
male children	56	53	34	44
female children	32	49	29	37

Table 10: Details of adoptive parents 2015 to 2018

	2015	2016	2017	2018
Joint Adopters (Couple)	85	101	58	47
Adoption by a Partner	-	-	-	28
Sole Adopter	3	1	5	6

The Adoption (Amendment) Act 2017, allows the partner of a child's biological parent to adopt the child without the need for the biological parent to also adopt the child. Twenty-eight of the 81 adoptions registered in 2018 availed of this new legislation.

Gender Recognition

The Gender Recognition Act 2015 provides that a person can obtain a Gender Recognition Certificate from the Department. A person whose birth has been registered and/or whose adoption is registered in Ireland and has been issued with a Gender Recognition Certificate may apply to the Service for this recognition to be entered in the Register of Gender Recognition.

Subsequently, a person can be issued with a copy of their birth or adoption certificate reflecting the entry in the Register of Gender Recognition. The register was established in September, 2015. The number of new entries in the register in 2018 was 75. Two of these related to persons who were under 18.

Table 11: New entries in the Register of Gender Recognition 2015-2018

	2015	2016	2017	2018
Entries in register	56	77	60	75

Marriages

Registration of marriages is governed by Part 6 of the 2004 Act. The provisions were subsequently amended by the Civil Registration (Amendment) Act 2012 which extended the range of bodies enabled to solemnise marriages. In addition, the Civil Registration (Amendment) Act 2014 made provision for objections to a marriage on the basis that it might be a marriage of convenience and the Marriages Act 2015 removed the impediment to marriage of the parties being of the same sex and made related provisions.

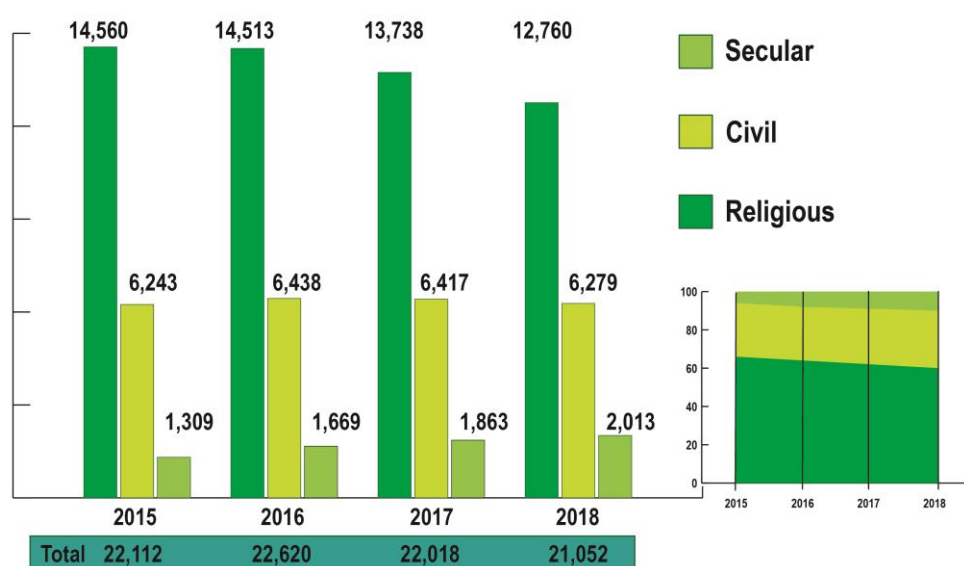
All couples are required to give at least three months' notice of their intention to marry. They must attend in person before a marriage registrar and obtain a marriage registration form from the registrar prior to the marriage proceeding.

The number of marriages registered in Ireland during 2018 was 21,052 – a reduction of 4.4% on the previous year and on the average for the previous three years. The proportion of religious marriages registered have dropped from two-thirds of all marriages registered in 2015 to 61% in 2018; while the proportion of marriages conducted by the local civil marriage service has increased in each year since 2016 to stand at 30% in 2018. Ten percent of all marriages registered in 2018 were conducted by a secular body - a more than doubling of the proportion of such marriages registered in 2014.

Table 12: Marriages Registered 2015-2018

	2015	2016	2017	2018
Religious	14,560	14,513	13,738	12,760
Civil	6,243	6,438	6,417	6,279
Secular	1,309	1,669	1,863	2,013
Total	22,112	22,620	22,018	21,052

Figure 3 - Proportion of marriages registered by form of ceremony



Some 92% of all marriages registered in the State during 2018 involved a party who was an Irish national.

Table 13: Who married who in 2018? Nationality of parties

	Number	Proportion
Both parties were Irish	15,759	75%
One party was Irish	3,686	17%
Both parties were Non-Irish	1,607	8%
Total	21,052	100%

Just over 87% of all couples whose marriages were registered during 2018 were never previously married. When all parties who were single at the time of marriage are considered, the number of marriages involving a party who was single is over 95.5% of all marriages registered in 2018 – see Table 14. There were 66 marriages of parties during the year who previously concluded a civil partnership. The number of same-sex marriages registered during 2018 was 664 - Table 15.

Table 14: Previous status of parties getting married in 2018

	Total	Proportion
Both parties single	18,330	87.1%
One party single the other divorced	1,790	8.5%
Both parties divorced	572	2.7%
One party single the other widowed	136	0.7%
One party widowed the other divorced	124	0.6%
Both parties civil partners	66	0.3%
Both parties widowed	24	0.1%
One party single other a civil partner	10	0.0%
Total	21,052	100.0%

Table 15: Number of same-sex marriages registered 2015-2018

	2015	2016	2017	2018
Same-Sex Marriages	-	1,056	759	664

Objections to marriage

Section 58 provides that an objection can be made to a proposed marriage and how objections are to be managed. Other than objections related to a claim that a marriage may be a marriage of convenience; no other objections to marriage were received during 2018.

Marriages of convenience

A marriage of convenience is defined as a marriage entered into for the sole purpose of securing an immigration advantage. Such marriages circumvent immigration controls and have been an issue in many jurisdictions for many years. Section 3(b) of the Civil Registration (Amendment) Act 2014 created a new impediment to a marriage where a marriage that would constitute a marriage of convenience is invalid. The measures to prevent marriages of convenience were introduced in August 2015 and have had a significant impact on the number of applications to marry received from non-Irish EU citizens wishing to marry non-EU citizens.

Section 18 of the 2014 Act provides that where a registrar forms an opinion that an intended marriage would constitute a marriage of convenience, the registrar is obliged to make a report of the matter to the Superintendent Registrar. If the Superintendent Registrar decides that the proposed marriage would constitute a marriage of convenience they are required to notify the Minister for Justice and Equality.

A significant element of work relates to dealing with appeals to the Courts of decisions made by Superintendent Registrars that a proposed marriage should not proceed because it would constitute a marriage of convenience.

Since implementation, the number of marriage notifications involving a non-Irish EU national and a non-EU national has fallen from 1,584 in 2014 to 369 in 2018 – a drop of three-quarters with similar reductions in the number of marriages subsequently concluded - Table 16 and Table 17.

Table 16: Notifications of intention to marry: Nationality of parties 2015 to 2018.

	2015	2016	2017	2018
Irish and non-EU citizens	1,518	1,655	1,368	1,363
EU (non-Irish) and Non-EU citizens	1,584	702	442	369
Total	3,102	2,357	1,810	1,732

Table 17: Marriages registered on foot of notifications in Table 16: 2015 to 2018.

	2015	2016	2017	2018
Irish and non-EU citizens	1,288	1,233	1,012	891
EU (non-Irish) and Non-EU citizens	860	416	298	234
Total	2,148	1,649	1,310	1,125
Proportion of marriage concluded	70%	70%	72%	65%

Recognition of foreign divorces

An impediment to marriage exists (section 2(2)(b) of the 2004 Act) if a divorce is not recognisable as the person is deemed to be still married. The Service examines foreign divorces of persons seeking to re-marry in the State to determine whether the divorce is recognisable under Irish law.

Foreign divorces and nullities are not automatically entitled to recognition in the State. A person with a foreign divorce who wishes to marry under Irish law must have their divorce recognised. Divorces granted in EU member states (excluding Denmark) since 1 March 2001 are recognised in accordance with the Brussels II Regulation ((EC) No 2201/2003).

The regulation does not apply to divorces granted in EU member states before they became members of the EU. These, and all other divorces wherever obtained, are recognised in accordance with the Domicile and Recognition of Foreign Divorces Act 1986.

Some 1,142 cases where one of both parties to a proposed marriage was divorced were examined during 2018. Of those, 979 (86%) were recognisable enabling the person to re-marry in the State. The remaining 163 cases did not proceed.

In cases where the Service cannot determine if the divorce should be recognised, the party requiring a divorce to be recognised applies to the Circuit Family Court for a declaration under Section 29(1) of the Family Law Act 1995 that their foreign divorce could be recognised under Irish law. Declarations made by the Court are binding on the State where the Attorney General is joined as a notice party to proceedings.

For divorces covered by the Brussels II Regulation, the recognition process is relatively straightforward, provided the documentation required by the regulation is in order.

Table 18: Recognition of foreign divorces 2015-2018

	2015	2016	2017	2018
Applications received	1,249	1,299	1,167	1,142
Divorces recognised	1,033	1,119	981	979
Status not determined	216	180	186	163

The recognition process for other divorces can be highly complex and turns on the domicile of either of the parties to the marriage at the time the divorce proceedings commenced, and on the nature of the divorce itself. Particular challenges arise in

respect of divorces granted in the United States where each state is treated as a separate jurisdiction under Irish law.

Further complexities also arise in recognising divorces granted in some jurisdictions. This is particularly the case for divorces granted under the laws, religious practices and customs of some African and Asian countries. Inevitably, such complex cases need to be determined by the Courts under the Family Law Act 1995.

Register of solemnisers

Section 51 of the Act provides that a marriage may only be solemnised by a registered solemniser and sets out the marriage procedures to be followed. Section 52 regulates the places where marriages can be conducted and the requirement that the place of marriage must be open to the public. A civil ceremony can be held in a Registry Office or some other venue that is approved by a registrar.

As required under section 53 of the 2004 Act, a register of solemnisers is maintained by an tArd-Chláraitheoir. This register consists of solemnisers nominated by religious and secular bodies who are approved to preside at marriage ceremonies and registrars who are staff members of the Service. Religious and secular solemnisers are nominated by their religious and secular bodies. Civil registrars are employed by the HSE.

Some 5,828 solemnisers were included in the register in 2018. Further details of these entries are provided in Table 19.

Table 19: Solemniser by type 2015 to 2018

	2015	2016	2017	2018
Religious Solemnisers	5,604	5,630	5,672	5,674
Civil Solemnisers	107	113	120	123
Secular Solemnisers	19	23	27	31
Total	5,730	5,766	5,819	5,828

Of the 6,279 civil marriage ceremonies conducted during 2018, nearly one-third took place at venues such as hotels, stately homes, civic buildings and restaurants. The remainder were conducted at registry offices.

Table 20: Venues used for civil marriage ceremonies 2015 to 2018

	2015	2016	2017	2018
Registrar's offices	4,158	4,324	4,294	4,268
Other venues	2,086	2,114	2,123	2,011
Total marriage ceremonies	6,244	6,438	6,417	6,279
% at Outside Venues	33%	33%	33%	32%

Research facility

The General Register Office maintains a family and genealogy research facility at Werburgh Street, Dublin 2. At this office members of the public, for a prescribed fee, may search the indices to the registers and purchase photocopies of the records identified from the indices.

The number of uncertified copies issued by the Research Room has decreased by 59% approximately since 2014. This is largely due to our historic records being made available online for free to the public via www.irishgenealogy.ie. Research staff facilitated the activities set out in Table 21 and Table 22 during 2018.

Table 21: Activities research room 2015-2018

	2015	2016	2017	2018
General searches undertaken by the public	1,453	950	860	757
Specified searches undertaken by the public	14,004	9,961	9,857	7,996
Uncertified copies of register entries issued to the public	51,493	36,259	26,700	20,562

Table 22: Type and number of research events facilitated during 2018

	2018
Medical relating to cause of deaths	32
Family research, mainly related to adoptions	115
Total	147

Deaths

The registration of deaths is regulated by Part 5 of the 2004 Act. In 2018, the number of deaths registered was 32,029. Of these, 16,211 were male while 15,818 were female. The number of deaths has shown a slight increase in each of the years since 2015.

Further details are published by the CSO in their annual publication of vital statistics – see <https://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/population/>.

Table 23: Death registration data 2015 to 2018

	2015	2016	2017	2018
Deaths Registered	30,573	31,232	31,385	32,029
As a result of:				
Information from a qualified informant	21,878	21,901	22,273	22,507
Receipt of a coroner's certificate following an inquest or post-mortem	5,026	5,427	5,306	5,262
Receipt of a coroner's certificate where no inquest or post-mortem held	3,669	3,904	3,806	4,260

The number of deaths registered on foot of a coroner's certificate has risen significantly over the years and now represents 29% of all deaths registered. Deaths are referred to a coroner where the death has occurred in suspicious circumstances, was unexpected, unexplained, or for other reasons as may be requested by a coroner.

The increase in the number of deaths referred to coroners in recent years is mainly as a result of coroners requesting that deaths due to hospital-acquired infection and deaths occurring in nursing homes are referred to them as a matter of course.

Correction of death register entries

As with all register entries, efforts are continually being made to ensure the quality and integrity of the particulars recorded in the death register. Where information is provided to indicate that a previous entry is incorrectly recorded or included in the register, this information can be amended. Such corrections tend to be minor in nature and can relate to the spelling of names and other particulars recorded.

The first death register entries date from 1864. As mentioned earlier, until 2004, register entries were manual paper-based processes which were susceptible to damage, loss and minor error. The minor errors related in the main to the spelling of a forename or the representation of Irish forms of spelling.

Table 24: Correction made to death registration data 2015 to 2018

	2015	2016	2017	2018
Registry entries corrected	1,309	1,455	1,489	1,480

The growth of family research and the making available for open public access of historic records has contributed to a demand for register entries to be corrected. Where incomplete or incorrect information is identified and evidence to support a change is brought to the attention of a registrar, a correction to the register can be made.

The engagement by family members and researchers has contributed enormously to the quality of the historic records maintained and is also ensuring the integrity of more recent register entries. The number of minor death registration errors corrected during 2018 was 1,480 for all deaths registered since 1864.

It is not always possible to ensure that deaths are registered in a timely manner. During 2018, 1,303 new registrations were made which were more than 12 months after the death of the person. Some of these registrations are due to the inclusion of deaths that occurred some time ago due to the public's engagement with family research. However, a significant number relate to persons who died and who did not have a family member, relative or friend who was able to register the death.

Table 25: Late death registration data 2015 to 2018

	2015	2016	2017	2018
Late registrations by qualified informants	1,058	1,248	1,313	1,303



3 Other matters

Department's Strategic Objectives 2017 - 2020

The Department's Statement of Strategy 2017-2020 was published in 2017. The Service operates under this Strategy and contributes to the delivery of the objectives. The Department's mission, high-level objectives and key actions are in delivering the policies and priorities set down by the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection and the Government. The Department's overall objective for 2017 to 2020 is to promote active participation and inclusion in society through the framework of employment rights and the provision of income supports, employment services and other services.

It identifies three Strategic Objectives for the Department for the period in order to achieve its overall mission:

1. Put the client at the centre of policy and service delivery
2. Drive cost, efficiency and effectiveness
3. Develop staff, structures and processes.

The General Register Office contributed to the delivery of this strategy during 2018 with particular focus on how it delivers services and supports its staff

Governance

Ard Chláraitheoir

The functions of an tArd-Chláraitheoir are specified in 2004 Act. These are to maintain, manage and control the system of civil registration in the State, and to maintain the registers, indexes and other records required to ensure an effective and efficient system. Other functions are assigned under individual provisions of the Act and other Acts (see Appendix II). The Act provides for the function to be exercised by a deputy on behalf of an tArd-Chláraitheoir.

Health Service Executive

The HSE is required by the 2004 Act to appoint registrars and a Superintendent Registrar to each of the registration areas (often referred to as "districts").

Each Superintendent Registrar is required to exercise functions to manage, control and administer the Service in each registration area, under the overall management, control and supervision of an tArd-Chláráitheoir. The Civil Registration Districts and the Superintendents with responsibility for those areas are listed in Appendix I.

Legislation

The Service operates and has obligation under 14 Acts of the Oireachtas. A list of the principal legislation governing civil registration during 2018 is contained in Appendix II.

Programme Board

The work of the General Register Office is supported by a Programme Board comprising senior managers of the Department and the Service. The Board met at regular intervals during 2018. The terms of reference of the Board address issues of Departmental co-ordination, support for policy development, information technology infrastructure, audit and financial matters.

HSE Liaison

A standing committee comprising all Superintendent Registrars from the HSE and management staff of the General Register Office meet regularly to discuss and co-ordinate operational matters relating to registration processes, customer support and planning of services.

Business Improvement Review

In December 2017, a business improvement review was commissioned to examine the current and future work requirements of the General Register Office and to report on the challenges and opportunities facing the service and its staff.

The Business Improvement Unit (within the Department) supported by staff of the Department and the General Register Office jointly undertook an examination of the separate business processes, including the mapping of services, service delivery and customer service. This examination included staffing, work flows and loads, expected developments, linkages, liaisons and communications between the General Register Office and the Department.

A number of recommendations were made for consideration by management. These recommendations were accepted in late 2018 with planned implementation to be progressed during 2019.

Civil Registration Policy

This is a separate unit within the Department focused on civil registration policy development and the preparation of legislation. A number of significant pieces of civil registration legislation, which amend the Civil Registration Act, have been enacted in recent years.

During 2018, amendments were made to the terms and conditions applying to an tArd-Chláraitheoir and the deputy position (Social Welfare, Pensions and Civil Registration Act 2018). The Unit drafted legislation which was enacted by the Oireachtas in early 2019 related to the registration of births that result from donor-assisted human reproduction and to make arrangements for the registration of the parents of children born as a result of donor-assisted human reproduction.

This Unit provides policy and related advice to the Minister on matters that impinge on civil registration generally, and the Service.

Ombudsman complaints

Two customer complaints were made to the Ombudsman during 2018. One complaint related to a refusal of a registrar to change particulars of a birth registration. The second complaint related to the demands placed on a person who was seeking recognition of a foreign divorce where they were unable to contact their ex-spouse and were able to provide evidence despite extensive efforts having been made.

Following the intervention of the Ombudsman, both complaints were resolved to the satisfaction of the complainants. The General Register Office undertook to introduce revised guidance to reflect the outcome of both complaints.

Data Protection

The coming into force of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) on 25th May 2018 heralded increases in the obligations and responsibilities on the Department and Service in how we collect, use and protect personal data. The Data Protection Act 2018 amended section 66 of the 2004 Act to reflect the GDPR and to give greater legal

certainty to the arrangements in place for the sharing of registration data with a number of other Government Departments and public bodies.

At the centre of the new law is the requirement to be fully transparent about how we are using and safeguarding personal data, and to be able to demonstrate accountability for all of our data processing activities.

Specific statutory provision is made for the Central Statistics Office to compile vital statistics. The Act also makes it lawful for registration information to be made available to the following Government Departments and bodies for the purposes mentioned.

- Minister for Defence for Army pension purposes;
- The Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government in respect of the registration of electors;
- The Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade for the purposes of processing applications of, and managing identity data for, passports;
- The Minister for Justice and Equality for the purposes of determining matters relating to immigration and citizenship;
- The Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection for the purposes of determining entitlements to benefits and control of social welfare schemes;
- The Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport for the purposes of managing driver licences;
- The Minister for Health for the purposes of managing and supporting a range of service provision;
- The Minister for Education and Skills for the education planning purposes;
- The Revenue Commissioners for the administration of the Taxes Acts;
- The Health Service Executive in respect of entitlements to medical cards and other services; and
- Local authorities in respect of their functions for housing.

Multi-lingual standard forms

Staff were heavily involved in preparations for the introduction in early 2019 of the EU Regulation ((EU) 2016/1191) simplifying the circulation of certain public documents between EU countries. The EU's aim is to reduce red tape and costs for citizens when they need to present a public document issued by the authorities of an EU member state to the authorities of another EU member state.

Ireland met its commitment to have this service available when the Regulation of documentation related to civil status (including births, deaths and marriages) came into force.

Under the Regulation, public documents issued in any EU member state must be accepted as authentic in another EU member state without the need for such documents to bear an authentication stamp (the apostille). The public documents covered where the Service has a role are birth, death, marriage, registered partnership, and adoption certificates. Other public documents are also covered by the regulation.

The Regulation also abolishes the obligation to, in all cases, provide certified copies and certified translations of public documents issued in another EU member state. The Regulation introduces optional multilingual, standard forms that can be attached to the public documents to avoid translation requirements.

Staff of the Service served on the Commission's ad-hoc working group on implementing the regulation and multi-lingual standard forms are being made available by the General Register Office since the coming into force of the Regulation in February 2019.

A look back at 100 years ago

The 56th Report of the Register-General for Ireland, the forerunner of the current position, was sent to the Lord Lieutenant for Ireland covering details of birth, marriages and deaths registered in Ireland during 1918 . The report noted that there were 61,092 births, just 810 fewer than for 2018, 14,773 marriages compared with 21,052 in 2018 and 53,682 deaths, some 21,653 more deaths than registered in Ireland in 2018.

That report also covered vital statistics as we know them today (now separately published by the Central Statistics Office). The number of twins registered in 2018 at 2,161 was more than double the number registered in 1918 – 1,073 - while the number of triplets registered in 2018 at 75 was a six-fold increase on the 12 registered in 1918.

That 1918 Report mentioned the impact the “Spanish Flu” was having. The 1918 mortality rate in Ireland was exceptionally high due to the epidemic. Spanish Flu was responsible for many more deaths than the War of Independence, Easter Rising and Civil War combined. There were 10,651 deaths in the whole of Ireland caused by Influenza in 1918 which accounted for 14% of all deaths registered that year. It was the highest cause of death that year followed by tuberculosis disease.

Child mortality was high in 1918. The number of deaths of children under 5 in the whole of Ireland in 1918 was 13,398 which accounted for 17% of all deaths registered. In 2018, 276 children under five died representing 0.9% of all deaths registered in the State.

The majority of couples who married in 1918 were in the 21-24 age group whilst in 2018 the majority were in the 31-35 age group.

TABLE 1: Births, deaths and marriages registered in Ireland (excluding Northern Ireland) 1918 & 2018

	Births	Deaths	Marriages
Registered 2018	61,522	32,029	21,052
Registered 1918	61,092	53,682	14,773



4 Appendices



Appendix I

Civil Registration Districts and Superintendents with responsibilities for the delivery of services in those districts.

Districts	Superintendent Registrar	Address
EASTERN Covering Dublin, Wicklow & Kildare	Ms Lara O'Dwyer	Civil Registration Office Joyce House 8/11 Lombard Street East Dublin 2
MID WESTERN Covering Limerick, Clare & North Tipperary	Ms. Geraldine McCarthy	Civil Registration Office St Camillus Hospital Shelbourne Road Limerick
MIDLAND Covering Westmeath, Offaly, Longford & Laois	Ms. Breege Doherty	Civil Registration Office Arden Road Tullamore Co. Offaly
NORTH EASTERN Covering Louth, Cavan, Monaghan & Meath	Ms. Geraldine Noonan	Civil Registration Office Old St. Mary's Hospital Dublin Road, Drogheda Co. Louth
NORTH WESTERN Covering Donegal, Leitrim & Sligo	Ms. Louise Mulcahy	Civil Registration Office Markievicz House Barrack St Sligo
SOUTH EASTERN Covering Carlow, Kilkenny, Wexford, Waterford & South Tipperary	Ms. Ann Boyle	Civil Registration Office Lacken Dublin Road Kilkenny
SOUTHERN Covering Cork & Kerry	Mr. Thomas Walsh	Civil Registration Office Adelaide Court Adelaide Street Cork
WESTERN Covering Galway, Roscommon & Mayo	Mr. Sean Cloonan	Civil Registration Office 25 Newcastle Road Galway

Appendix II

Principal legislation under which the Civil Registration Service performs its functions

I Primary Legislation

1. Civil Registration Act 2004 (as amended)
2. Civil Registration (Amendment) Act 2012
3. Civil Partnership and Certain Rights and Obligations of Cohabitants Act 2010
4. Civil Registration (Amendment) Act 2014
5. Social Welfare, Pensions and Civil Registration Act 2018
6. Marriage Act 2015
7. Gender Recognition Act 2015
8. Adoption Act 2010
9. Registration of Births Act 1996
10. Family Law Act 1995
11. Status of Children Act 1987
12. Domicile and Recognition of Foreign Divorces Act 1986
13. Vital Statistics and Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1952
14. Legitimacy Act 1931

II Regulations

1. Civil Registration Act, 2004 (Section 27) (Commencement) Order 2004
2. Civil Registration Act, 2004 (Section 65) (Commencement) Order 2004
3. Civil Registration Act, 2004 (Commencement) Order 2005

4. Civil Registration (Reduced Fees) Regulations 2005
5. Civil Registration (Short Birth Certificate) Regulations 2005
6. Registration of Adoptions and Marriages (Abridged Certificate) Regulations 2005
7. Civil Registration Act, 2004 (Commencement) Order 2007
8. Health Act, 2007 (Commencement) (No3) Order 2007
9. Register of Solemnisers (Correction of Errors) Regulations 2007
10. Civil Registration (Fees and Allowances) Regulations 2007
11. Civil Partnership and Certain Rights and Obligations of Cohabitants (Commencement) Order 2010
12. Civil Registration (Delivery of Notification of Intention to Marry) (Prescribed Circumstances) Regulations 2010
13. Civil Registration (Marriage Registration Form) Regulations 2010
14. Civil Registration (Register of Marriages) (Correction of Errors) Regulations 2010
15. Civil Registration (Delivery of Notification of Intention to Enter a Civil Partnership) (Prescribed Circumstances) Regulations 2010
16. Civil Registration (Register of Civil Partnerships) (Correction of Errors) Regulations 2010
17. Civil Registration (Civil Partnership Registration Form) Regulations 2010
18. Adoption Act (Section 85) (Fees) Regulations 2010
19. Adoption Act 2010 (Abridged Certificate) Regulations 2011
20. Civil Registration (Amendment) Act 2012 (Commencement) Order 2013
21. Civil Registration (Certified Extract of Register of Deaths) Regulations 2014
22. Civil Registration (Amendment) Act 2014 (Commencement) Order 2015
23. Gender Recognition Act 2015 (Commencement) Order 2015
24. Marriage Act 2015 (Commencement) Order 2015
25. Civil Registration (Amendment) Act 2014 (Commencement) Order 2016
26. Civil Registration (Births, Deaths, Marriages and Civil Partnerships) (Fees) (No. 2) Regulations 2016



Prepared by An tArd-Cláraitheoir

General Register Office

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