



An Roinn Coimirce Sóisialaí
Department of Social Protection

Annual report of An tArd-Chláraitheoir to the Minister for Social Protection on the operation of the Civil Registration Acts for 2022

June 2023

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Oifig an Ard-Chláraitheora

Ms. Heather Humphreys, T.D.
Minister for Social Protection
Áras Mhic Dhiarmada
Store Street
Dublin 1

June 2023

Dear Minister,

In accordance with the provisions of Section 11(1) of the Civil Registration Act 2004, I hereby submit a report on the activities of the Civil Registration Service for the year ended 31 December 2022.

Yours sincerely,

David Dillon
An tArd-Chláraitheoir
June 2023

1.CIVIL REGISTRATION

Introduction

I am pleased to submit my Annual Report on the operation of the Civil Registration Acts for the period 1 January to 31 December 2022 pursuant to Section 11 (1) of the Civil Registration Act 2004, as amended.

The Civil Registration Service (referred to as the “Service” in the remainder of this report) operates under the aegis of the Department of Social Protection (“the Department”). The General Register Office holds records of life events: births, deaths, marriages, civil partnerships, stillbirths and adoptions in Ireland. It also holds several sets of records relating to life events which are historic in nature.

Under the Act, local registration services are provided by the Health Service Executive (HSE) through the Civil Registration Service with offices located nationally delivering registration services directly to the public.

As well as fulfilling its primary function as an Annual Report to the Minister for Social Protection, I hope that the Report will be helpful to people in providing an insight into the work of the Service.

My predecessor Mr. TJ Fleming held the office of An tArd Chláraitheoir for the period covered by this Annual Report. Mr. Fleming retired in March 2023 and I wish him the very best for his retirement.

The data presented in this report presents the activities of the Service during 2022. Where feasible, the GRO has improved the presentation of data by reflecting both the number of registrations that have been completed in the year and the date in which the life event occurred.

David Dillon

An tArd Chláraitheoir

Summary of registration activity during 2022

During 2022, 118,060 key life events were registered and just over 405,000 certificates of current and historic life events were issued by the Service – Tables 1 and 2 provide an overview.

- The number of births registered in the year decreased by 1.3%.
- The number of deaths registered in the year increased by 8%.
- The number of marriages registered increased by 34% and exceeded pre-pandemic levels.

Section 2 of this report provides more detailed information for each category of life event.

Table 1: Number of Life Event Registrations Recorded 2018-2022

Type	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Births	61,901	60,173	56,145	58,627	57,848
Deaths	32,029	32,084	32,501	34,040	36,778
Marriages	21,052	20,335	9,536	17,231	23,187
Adoptions	81	79	77	103	102
Stillbirths	223	197	153	140	145
Total	115,286	112,868	98,412	110,141	118,062

The Eastern Registration Area, covering counties Dublin, Kildare and Wicklow accounted for around one-third of all life events registered.

Table 2: Life Event registered by Registration Area 2022

Registration Area	Births		Deaths		Marriages	
Eastern	17,999	31.1%	10,692	29.1%	7,502	32.4%
Mid-Western	4,487	7.8%	3,244	8.8%	1,800	7.8%
Midlands	3,481	6.0%	2,124	5.8%	1,283	5.5%
North-Eastern	9,312	16.1%	4,353	11.8%	2,723	11.7%
North-Western	2,821	4.9%	2,266	6.2%	1,598	6.9%
South-Eastern	6,500	11.2%	4,740	12.9%	2,806	12.1%
Southern	7,816	13.5%	5,485	14.9%	3,150	13.6%
Western	5,203	9.0%	3,758	10.2%	2,319	10.0%
GRO & other registrars	229	0.4%	116	0.3%	6	<0.1%
Total	57,848	100%	36,778	100%	23,187	100%

Certificates issued by the Service are important documents for legal and a range of other purposes. The number of certificates issued during 2022 is 3% greater than average in 2019 and 2018, so the 2022 figures are broadly in line with those years.

Table 3: Number of Certificates issued by Life Event Type 2018-2022

Type	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Birth	247,750	245,734	172,169	198,234	249,859
Death	91,289	92,946	88,710	90,259	102,789
Marriage	63,818	63,213	38,533	45,308	62,465
Adoptions	1,723	1,218	759	807	864
Stillbirth	379	419	270	273	382
Civil Partnership	75	74	60	77	86
Total	405,034	403,604	300,501	334,958	416,445

Table 4 presents an analysis of the country of origin of the applicant for certificates. Applicants resident in the UK (England, Scotland, Wales, Isle of Man and Channel Islands) constitute the largest source of applications outside of Ireland.

Table 4: Certificates issued by Applicant Country and Life Event Type 2022

Country	Total	Share	Birth	Death	Marriage	Stillbirth
Ireland	351,472	84.40%	202,303	96,037	52,752	380
Great Britain	34,649	8.30%	25,653	3,791	5,205	0
United States	16,574	4.00%	13,652	1201	1721	0
EU/EEA	5,950	1.40%	4,283	650	1017	0
Australia	2,589	0.60%	1767	313	508	1
South Africa	1,768	0.40%	1191	255	322	0
Canada	1,515	0.40%	1120	120	275	0
Nrn. Ireland	1,463	0.40%	393	383	687	0
New Zealand	464	0.10%	361	39	64	0
All others	11,416	2.70%	7861	1567	1985	3
Totals Issued	427,860	100.00%	258,584	104,356	64,536	384

Notes: Great Britain includes the Channel Islands & Isle of Man: Births includes 864 Adoption Certificates: Marriage includes 86 Civil Partnership Certificates issued during 2022.

Civil registration in Ireland

The civil registers create a legal document 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.

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

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, the management of public health and research.

Ireland has a well-developed and functioning civil registration and identity system which meets European Union and United Nations obligations. Increasingly, digital technology is enabling easier access for people to use and tailor public services to meet their needs. The GRO is committed to the provision of registration services via customer focused online technology. The Government has approved the drafting of legislation to enable online registration of births and deaths and the necessary IT development work to support this expansion is also in train.

Focus of work

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 the planning and design of public policy and services, such as in the health, housing and education sectors; 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 in most societies. Following the registration of a child, the Department of Social Protection will automatically allocate a unique Personal Public Service number (PPSN) to the child. The PPSN is a unique reference number that enables access to social welfare benefits, public services and information in Ireland¹.

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 Benefit², child dependent payments to parents receiving social protection benefit and assistance, other family entitlements, education and health care. As the child grows, they may require a passport or driver licence. Eventually they will want to exercise their franchise to vote and to seek employment.

Credible and verifiable identity enables State authorities to ensure the effective delivery of public, social and legal services and to assist in mitigating the risk of fraud and misrepresentation both domestically and internationally.

Evidence of life events

The provision of certificates of life events to members of the public represents a significant activity for the Service. An average of nearly 370,000 certificates was issued per year over the period 2018-2022.

¹ <https://www.gov.ie/en/service/12e6de-get-a-personal-public-service-pps-number/>

² Child Benefit is a monthly payment made by the Department to support parents and guardians.

Certificates issued in Ireland are accepted domestically and internationally as evidence of the facts stated on them. This has been enhanced by the use of multilingual standard forms issued under EU Regulation ((EU) 2016/1191). This Directive became operational in 2019 and requires that member states of the EU provide citizens with a document in the languages of the EU to explain the contents of Birth, Marriage and Death Certificates and other legal documents.

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 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 and reform of how public services are delivered and the use of unique digital identifiers.

An important feature of the work of the GRO is to 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 Card³ and electronic data-sharing 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, to repeatedly provide identity documentation and minimises the risk of error.

National statistics

The integrity, completeness and quality of life event data are essential for the preparation and publication of national statistics, particularly those related to population. The Central Statistics Office (CSO) (www.cso.ie) has the statutory function of preparing an annual programme of population and vital statistics. Statistics and analysis published by the CSO

³ The Public Services Card (PSC) establishes and fully authenticates a person's identity for the purpose of accessing a range of public services in an easy and safe manner. See <https://psc.gov.ie/> for more information on the PSC.

include quarterly and annual summaries of vital statistics and popular Irish babies' names collected from the registration process during the previous year⁴, death and mortality.

Alongside periodic population censuses, life event statistics form a central input to estimating population size, population 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.

⁴ <https://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/birthsdeathsandmarriages/>

2. ACTIVITY

Births

The Service registered 57,848 births during 2022 – see Table 5. Table 6 provides data on births that occurred in 2022 but were not registered until the first quarter of 2023.

Table 5: Live Births Registered in the Year* - 2018-2022

Year	Total Births	Male		Female	
2017	62,919	32,303	51.3%	30,616	48.7%
2018	61,901	31,737	51.3%	30,164	48.7%
2019	60,173	30,719	51.1%	29,454	48.9%
2020	56,145	28,957	51.6%	27,186	48.4%
2021	58,627	29,922	51.0%	28,705	49.0%
2022	57,848	29,558	51.1%	28,290	48.9%

* Includes late registrations

Table 6: Births Registrations by Month of Birth*

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
January	5,169	5,166	4,977	4,746	4,928
February	4,565	4,438	4,365	4,676	4,242
March	5,128	4,696	4,766	5,093	4,451
April	4,721	4,755	4,496	4,881	4,205
May	5,169	5,008	4,685	4,732	4,273
June	5,020	4,712	4,684	4,918	4,541
July	5,293	5,239	5,079	5,288	4,683
August	5,192	5,278	4,823	5,187	4,705
September	5,249	5,092	4,949	5,334	4,769
October	5,180	5,111	4,828	5,226	4,689
November	5,231	5,015	4,662	5,059	4,442
December	5,130	4,801	4,490	5,218	4,423
TOTAL	61,047	59,311	56,804	60,358	54,351

* Includes registrations 1 Jan to 30 Apr 2023 in respect of births occurring in 2022.

Significant amendments to registrations following enquiry

The GRO conducted 196 enquires under section 65 of the Act in 2022. 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 person registered as the father was not the biological father of the child
- Situations where the forename of a person was not entered in the register at the time the initial birth registration was completed (the majority of these relate to historic cases)
- Cases where the identity of the parents required to be regularised under Irish law, and
- Where the registration particulars, typically historic, required correction to reflect an accurate registration record.

Table 7: Section 65 Enquiries Conducted - Births 2018-2022

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Section 65 enquiries	264	263	233	220	196

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

Registration of Donor Assisted Human Reproduction (DAHR) births

The commencement of certain sections of the Child and Family Relationships Act 2015 has allowed the Service to both register and re-register the births of children born following donor-assisted reproduction, (also known as Donor Assisted Human Reproduction - DAHR).

These changes were introduced from 4th May 2020 and facilitate the recording of a non-biological parent in the register of births as a parent of a child born because of a DAHR procedure. The legal framework enables the non-biological parent to be re-registered as the parent of the child whose birth has already been registered. An application recognising the parent must be accompanied by a Court order naming the person as the legal parent of the child.

Children born as a result of a DAHR procedure carried out after the 4th May 2020 can be registered to include the non-biological parent as a parent along with the mother of the child at the initial birth registration stage.

The number of DAHR re-registration applications received in 2022 was 51 (2021: 129): 47 of these births were re-registered in 2022. Of the remaining 4 were re-registered in early 2023. The number of DAHR registration applications received in 2022 was 322: 311 births were registered in 2022, with 10 of these applications registered in early 2023 and 1 awaiting registration.

Late birth registrations

Section 19 of the Act imposes an obligation on a qualified informant, usually the parents, to register the birth of the child within three months of the child’s date of birth. With few exceptions, this legal requirement is complied with. The majority of late registrations are for historic births where either the individual concerned discovered their birth was not registered or where a descendant sought to register a birth, for example in cases involving claims for Irish citizenship or as a result of genealogical research. The data shown in Table 8 mainly relates to registration of historic births.

Late registrations are defined in Section 20 of the Act as births registered more than 12 months after the birth occurred. The number of late registrations remains at relatively low levels.

Table 8: Late Registration of Births 2018-2022

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Number of cases	358	395	193	203	314

Stillbirths

Stillbirths are defined in the Act as a child who at birth shows no signs of life, weighs at least 500 grammes or has a gestational age of not less than 24 weeks.

The registration of such births is voluntary - that is there is no legal requirement on parents to register. The number of stillbirths registered in Ireland was 145 in 2022.

Table 9: Stillbirths Registered 2018-2022

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Stillbirths Registered	223	197	153	140	145

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 2022 was 104 – an increase of 1 on the 103 orders received in 2021. Further information and the annual reports of the Adoption Authority are available on <https://aai.gov.ie>.

Table 10: Adoptions Registered 2018-2022

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Domestic adoptions registered	81	79	77	103	104
Of which were:					
male children	44	39	37	37	38
female children	37	40	40	66	66

The legal framework for adoptions provides that the partner of a child's biological parent can adopt a child without the need for the biological parent to also adopt the child. 62 of the 104 adoptions registered in 2022 used this legal mechanism to adopt.

Table 11: Details of Adoptive Parents 2018-2022

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Joint adopters (couple)	47	24	21	31	34
Adoption by a partner	28	50	54	69	62
Sole adopter	6	5	2	3	8

Birth Information and Tracing

The Birth Information and Tracing Act was enacted on 30th June 2022, with changes to the Civil Registration Act commencing on the 3rd October 2022. These changes dealt with the issue of illegally registered births and assisting legally adopted persons to request a copy of their birth certificates. The GRO are required to cancel the illegal entries, record the details of the cancellations in a new register (the Register under Part 3B) and to amend or create a registration in the register of births that reflects the correct birth details of the affected person.

GRO continue to work with the Department of Children, Integration, Disability and Youth; Tusla, the Adoption Authority of Ireland and representatives of those affected on ensuring the provision of the Act are fully implemented and support is provided to those impacted by the changes.

The Act also provides that both Tusla and the Adoption Authority of Ireland may provide a tracing service for affected persons. GRO and Client Identity Services of the Department in Carrick on Shannon assist both bodies with any such requests.

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 with the first entries having been made in the register in 2016.

Table 12: New entries in the Register of Gender Recognition 2018-2022

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Entries in register	75	102	71	108	165

Marriages

The number of marriages registered in Ireland during the year 2022 was 23,179 reflecting the continuing public health restrictions. As indicated in previous reports, the proportion of religious marriages registered declined over recent years. Given the continued impact of Covid-19 restrictions, particularly in the earlier part of 2021, it is not clear if the changing share of marriage that were religious, civil or secular in nature during 2022 is reflective of any longer term trends.

Table 13: Marriages Registered 2019–2022– Form of Marriage Ceremony

	2019		2020		2021		2022	
Religious	11,906	58.5%	4,747	49.8%	9,727	56.5%	14,854	64.1%
Civil	6,410	31.5%	4,007	42.0%	5,987	34.7%	6,073	26.2%
Secular	2,019	9.9%	782	8.2%	1,517	8.8%	2,252	9.7%
Total	20,335	100%	9,536	100%	17,231	100%	23,179	100%

Although marriages are registered relatively quickly, those that occur later in the year are not captured in the data presented in Table 13.

Table 14: Marriage by Month of Occurrence 2022*

Month in which marriage took place	Number of marriages registered
January	521
February	548
March	609
April	755
May	883
June	1,498
July	2,366
August	2,551
September	2,379
October	2,126
November	1,370
December	1,841

*Marriages in 2022 registered between 1 January 2022 and 30 April 2023

The data presented in Table 15 provides a breakdown of marriages registered in the State during 2022 with respect to the nationality of the parties.

Table 15: Nationality of Marriage Parties 2020 - 2022

	2020		2021		2022	
Both parties Irish	8,843	93%	13,391	78%	17,836	77%
One party Irish	213	2%	2,638	15%	3,778	16%
Both non-Irish	480	5%	1,202	7%	1,573	7%
Total	9,536	100%	17,231	100%	23,187	100%

The data presented in Table 16 provides a breakdown of registered marriages based on the parties' prior civil status.

Table 16: Previous Civil Status of Marriage Parties in 2020 - 2022

	2020		2021		2022	
Both parties single	7,968	83.56%	14,998	87.04%	20,225	87.23%
One party single the other divorced	1,013	10.62%	1,498	8.69%	1,991	8.59%
Both parties divorced	345	3.62%	461	2.68%	638	2.75%
One party single the other widowed	91	0.95%	120	0.70%	162	0.70%
One party widowed the other divorced	81	0.85%	107	0.62%	125	0.54%
Both parties civil partners	13	0.14%	15	0.09%	12	0.05%
Both parties widowed	19	0.20%	26	0.15%	23	0.10%
One party single other a civil partner	7	0.07%	6	0.03%	6	0.03%
One party divorced other civil partnership dissolved	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	5	0.02%
Total	9,536	100.0%	17,231	100.0%	23,187	100.0%

The Marriage Act 2015 provides for marriage of same-sex couples to be registered in Ireland as marriages. Table 17 gives a breakdown of same-sex marriages by gender.

Table 17: Number of Same-sex Marriages Registered 2017–2022

Year	Total	Female		Male	
2017	767	336	43.8%	431	56.2%
2018	668	294	44.0%	374	56.0%
2019	640	288	45.0%	352	55.0%
2020	314	170	54.1%	144	45.9%
2021	500	248	49.6%	252	50.4%
2022	618	313	50.6%	305	49.4%

Objections to marriage

Section 58 of the Act provides that an objection can be made to a proposed marriage and also sets out how objections are to be managed. Other than objections related to a claim that a marriage may be a marriage of convenience, no objections were made during 2022.

Marriages of convenience

A marriage of convenience is defined as a marriage entered into for the sole purpose of securing an immigration advantage and has the effect of circumventing immigration controls. Section 3(b) of the Civil Registration (Amendment) Act 2014 created a new impediment to a marriage where a marriage would constitute a marriage of convenience. These measures have been operational since August 2015 and have had a significant impact on the number of applications that meet the criteria.

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. The number of notifications that met the criteria set out in the Act is set out in Table 18.

Table 18: Marriages of convenience: Nationality of Parties 2018–2022

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Irish and non-EU citizens	1,363	1,397	1,214	1,110	1,282
EU (non-Irish) and Non-EU citizens	369	426	325	319	306
Total	1,732	1,823	1,539	1,429	1,588

Table 19: Marriages Registered on Foot of Notifications in Table 18 2018–2022

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Irish and non-EU citizens	891	951	677	684	704
EU (non-Irish) and Non-EU citizens	234	293	205	205	183
Total	1,125	1,244	882	889	887
Proportion of marriage concluded	65%	68%	57%	62%	56%

Recognition of foreign divorces

An impediment to marriage exists if a divorce is not recognisable under Irish law as the person is deemed to be still married. Foreign divorces and nullities are not automatically entitled to recognition in the State. The Service examines foreign divorces of persons seeking to re-marry in the State to determine whether the divorce is recognisable under Irish law.

A person with a foreign divorce who wishes to marry under Irish law must have their divorce(s) recognised. Divorces granted in EU member states (excluding Denmark) since 1 March 2001 are recognised in accordance with the Regulation ((EC) No 2201/2003) – known as Brussels II. For divorces covered by the Regulation, the recognition process is relatively straightforward, provided the documentation required by the regulation is in order.

The regulation does not apply to divorces granted in EU member states before they acceded to membership of the EU. Divorces granted outside the EU or before the member state's accession to the EU are recognised in accordance with the Domicile and Recognition of Foreign Divorces Act 1986.

Table 20: Recognition of Foreign Divorces 2018–2022

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Applications received	1,142	1,240	982	939	1452
Finalised	979	1,074	710	823	1244
To be determined	163	166	272	116	208

In cases where the Service cannot decide or concludes that a divorce is not recognisable, the applicant has recourse to the Circuit Family Court for a declaration recognising the divorce under Irish law. Declarations made by a Court are binding on the State where the Attorney General is joined as a notice party to proceedings.

Register of solemnisers

Marriages conducted in the State can only be solemnised by persons appointed under the provisions of section 51 of the Act. Religious and secular solemnisers are nominated by their religious and secular bodies. Civil registrars must be employed by the Health Service Executive. The Act does not provide for the regulation of solemnisers; however, the form of marriage ceremony must be approved by an an tArd-Chláraitheoir. Solemnisers are required to operate within the rules and conventions of their nominating bodies, religious and secular.

The General Register Office is required to maintain and publish a register of solemnisers. The register is updated and published monthly. This register consists of names and contact details of all solemnisers.

Table 19 shows the number of solemnisers by main grouping at the end of December 2022 and at year end for previous years. Additionally, an tArd-Chláraitheoir temporarily authorised a further 200 religious persons to solemnise marriage during 2022. These authorisations are timebound and typically expire shortly after a marriage has been conducted.

Table 21: Solemniser by Type 2018–2022

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Religious Solemnisers	5,674	5,589	5,400	5,412	5,457
Civil Solemnisers	123	114	117	118	125
Secular Solemnisers	31	37	34	43	49
Total	5,828	5,740	5,551	5,573	5,631

Places where marriages are conducted

Section 52 of the Act regulates the places where marriages can be conducted and the requirement that the place of marriage must be open to the public. Religious marriages are conducted at churches and places of worship in compliance with the rules in place for each religious body. Secular marriages are generally held at public places selected by the parties to the marriage and approved in advance by a marriage registrar.

With respect to civil ceremonies, a marriage can be held in a Registry Office or some other venue that is approved by a registrar. Roughly three-quarters of civil marriages are conducted in Civil Registry Offices. Other locations include hotels, places of historic or cultural significance, State properties and civic buildings or sites.

Table 22: Venues used for Civil Marriage Ceremonies 2018–2022

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Registrar's offices	4,268	4,422	3,253	4,617	4,449
Other venues	2,011	1,988	754	1,369	1,618
Total civil marriage ceremonies	6,279	6,410	4,007	5,986	6,067
% at Outside Venues	32%	31%	19%	23%	27%

Research facility

The GRO maintains a family and genealogy research facility at Werburgh Street, Dublin 2 (the Research Room). This office enables members of the public to conduct family research using the indices to the registers. Copies of records identified from the indices are also supplied where required.

A summary of this activity is set out in Table 21.

Table 23: Activities of the Research Room 2018–2022

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
General searches undertaken by the public	757	770	273	549	807
Specified searches undertaken by the public	7,996	6,942	1,881	1,426	1,611
Uncertified copies of register entries issued to the public	20,562	18,370	7,672	10,224	11,555

During the Covid-19 pandemic the research room was closed to the public and an alternative method of allowing access to the indexes had to be provided. A new system via a dedicated email service was created. This service allowed staff of the research room to utilize an electronic version of the registration records ,which is not available to the public, to provide a quicker and more efficient service at no additional cost to the customer.

The new email service allows greater speed and accuracy when dealing with searches, and has proven to be extremely popular. The service is managed 5 days a week, it accesses all of the civil registration records up to present day and customer searches are frequently provided on a same day service.

Through a process of digitisation of historic registers, the Service has, with its partner, the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, continued during 2022 to prepare historic records for public release. Work on preparing the oldest death registration records, those for 1865 to 1871, for online publication continued to be delayed due to priorities associated with managing the impact of Covid-19 on other parts of the service and the availability of technical resources.

Annual tranches of register records for birth, marriages and deaths continue to be made available in January each year 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. Over 16 million civil registration records are now available online for members of the public anywhere in the World to access and research. The service provides free access.

Table 24: Visits to civil records on www.irishgenealogy.ie during 2020 and 2022

Year	Number of Visits Recorded
2020	4,613,493
2021	4,316,112
2022	4,580,247

Source: Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media.

Deaths

The registration of deaths is regulated by Parts 5, 5A and 5B of the 2004 Act. New legislative changes were introduced on 20th November 2020 enabled co-habitants to register and be recognised as qualified informants in the Death Register. The Service was also enabled to issue Certificates showing this relationship. Table 25 shows the number of registrations in the year broken down by the year in which the death occurred.

Table 25: Annual registrations by year in which a death occurred 2017-2022

Total Registrations Completed in Year		Year in Which Death Occurred						
		2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	Earlier
2022	36,778	28,782	6,768	685	223	82	43	195
2021	34,040		27,671	5,375	614	168	46	165
2020	32,501			27,002	4,757	512	65	165
2019	32,087				26,426	4,703	623	334
2018	31,981					26,447	4,658	876
2017	31,302						25,763	5,539
Total Occurrences per Year		28,782	34,439	33,062	32,020	31,912	31,198	

The Central Statistics Office is responsible for the publication of official mortality statistics for Ireland. As deaths can be registered up to three months after the date of death, and as registration of a death may be delayed where the death has been referred to a Coroner for investigation or inquiry, the CSO publishes quarterly deaths approximately five months after the end of a reference quarter. These initial quarterly publications are based upon registration data. The CSO subsequently publishes annual statistics based on deaths by date of occurrence, approximately 22 months after the end of a reference year⁵.

⁵ <https://www.cso.ie/en/csolatestnews/presspages/2022/vitalstatisticsyearlysummary2021/>

Table 26 presents data for deaths which occurred in the year but which were registered in the period 1st January to the end of April of the following year.

Table 26: Death Registered 2018-2022 by Month of Occurrence*

	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018
Total for year	33,352	32,742	32,669	31,895	31,860
January	3,120	3,993	3,061	3,068	3,508
February	2,719	3,204	2,776	2,641	2,878
March	2,936	2,627	2,993	2,713	3,026
April	3,004	2,487	3,665	2,539	2,627
May	2,785	2,549	2,727	2,702	2,436
June	2,641	2,282	2,250	2,446	2,341
July	2,628	2,468	2,276	2,375	2,409
August	2,523	2,437	2,386	2,369	2,315
September	2,469	2,476	2,410	2,467	2,380
October	2,689	2,728	2,762	2,675	2,555
November	2,643	2,758	2,546	2,757	2,628
December	3,195	2,733	2,817	3,143	2,757
<i>Monthly average</i>	<i>2,779</i>	<i>2,729</i>	<i>2,722</i>	<i>2,658</i>	<i>2,655</i>

*Includes registrations completed to 30th April of the subsequent year.

The Coroners Act 1962, as amended, requires that certain deaths are to be referred to a coroner, for example where the death has occurred in suspicious circumstances, was unexpected or unexplained.

The number of deaths registered on foot of a coroner's certificate represented nearly 36.4% of all deaths registered during 2022 – see Table 27.

Table 27: Death Registered 2018-2022 by Qualified Informant/Coroner

Deaths registered as a result of receipt of:	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
• Information from a qualified informant	22,507	22,189	20,940	20,692	23,393
• A coroner's certificate following inquest or post-mortem	5,262	5,513	4,882	5,340	5,835
• A coroner's certificate - no inquest or post-mortem held	4,260	4,382	6,679	8,008	7,550
Total	32,029	32,084	32,501	34,040	36,778

Table 28: Death registered in 2020 and 2022 - Civil Status of Deceased

Civil Status	2020		2021		2022	
Married	12,573	38.68%	13,602	39.96%	14,381	39.10%
Widowed	10,911	33.57%	11,201	32.91%	12,117	32.95%
Single (not married)	7,083	21.79%	7,183	21.10%	7,902	21.49%
Divorced	976	3.00%	1,054	3.10%	1,257	3.42%
Separated	791	2.43%	822	2.41%	909	2.47%
Civil Partner	8	0.02%	16	0.05%	17	0.05%
Unknown	159	0.49%	162	0.48%	195	0.53%
Total	32,501	100.00%	34,040	100.00%	36,778	100.00%

Delays in death registration

It is not always possible for families to register deaths in a timely manner. Although a small number of such deaths relate to registrations of historic deaths, the majority relate to deaths that occurred more recently. Enquiries made by the Service indicate that a significant number of late registrations relate to persons who died and who did not have a close family member, relative or friend who had sufficient knowledge of the deceased to register the death.

Table 29: Number of late death registrations 2018–2022

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Late registrations by qualified informants	1,303	1,472	1,500	1,677	1,864

Multi-lingual standard forms

EU Regulation (EU) 2016/1191 is aimed at promoting the free movement of European citizens by simplifying the circulation and recognition of certain public documents between EU and EEA member states. The use of multilingual standards for form and administrative documents is designed to remove burdens and costs for citizens when they engage with

the authorities of another member state. The Regulation abolished the apostille⁶ requirement between member states and simplifies formalities relating to certified copies and translations removing costs for the user.

This Regulation covers public documents issued by the Service in the form of birth, marriage, and death certificates. Other legal and administrative documents issued by other public bodies within the State are also covered by the regulation.

⁶ An apostille is a legal certification that makes a document from one country valid in another (provided that both are signatories to the 1961 Hague Convention Abolishing the Requirement for Legalization for Foreign Public Documents).

Table 30: Multilingual Standard Forms issued by language and type 2019-2022

Language	Births	Deaths	Marriage	2022	2021	2020	2019
Bulgarian	50	2	4	56	58	8	15
Croatian	497	63	16	576	479	167	181
Czech	64	-	21	85	47	23	36
Danish	6	-	-	6	5	-	1
Dutch	35	2	2	39	29	12	17
Estonian	1	-	1	2	1	-	-
Finnish	-	-	1	1	1	-	-
French	426	57	18	501	366	126	106
German	163	62	18	243	197	99	81
Greek	89	13	10	112	68	24	1
Hungarian	16	2	4	22	23	2	3
Italian	117	32	7	156	144	51	44
Latvian	19	5	8	32	5	2	-
Lithuanian	51	6	8	65	22	7	6
Maltese	-	2	-	2	1	-	-
Polish	282	51	58	391	304	61	32
Portuguese	137	25	6	168	72	44	31
Romanian	1261	92	40	1,393	923	122	74
Slovakian	68	35	9	112	108	34	66
Slovenian	17	4	-	21	2	3	-
Spanish	299	79	51	429	299	136	135
Swedish	2	-	-	2	1	-	1
Totals	3,600	553	261	4,414	3,155	921	830

Public documents issued in any member state must be accepted as authentic in another member state without the need for further authentication or translation from one language to another when accompanied with the translation aid specified by the Regulation. The public documents covered which fall within the remit of the GRO are certificates of births, deaths, marriages, and civil partnerships. The Service has capacity to provide MSFs in 22 EU languages (English excluded).

3. OTHER MATTERS

Department's Strategic Objectives 2020 - 2023

The Department's overall objective for 2020 to 2023 is to continue putting our clients at the centre of all our operations, providing an efficient and effective service and to continue developing our staff, structures and processes.

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 Social Protection and the Government. The strategy 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 2022 with particular focus on how it delivers services and supports its staff.

Governance

Ard Chláraitheoir

The functions of an tArd-Chláraitheoir are specified in the 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 provisions of the Act and other Acts.

Programme Board

The work of the GRO is supported by a Programme Board comprising senior managers of the Department. The Board met at regular intervals during 2022. This Board addresses matters such as project oversight, Departmental co-ordination, policy and strategic development, information technology infrastructure, audit and financial matters. The Board is chaired by a member of the Department's Management Board at Assistant Secretary grade and includes senior staff from across the Department. The GRO reports

to several other Department Boards in respect of procurement, project governance, data protection, internal audit, human resource management and IT development.

Health Service Executive

The HSE is required by the 2004 Act to appoint registrars and a Superintendent Registrar to each registration area (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-Chláraitheoir. The Civil Registration Districts and the Superintendents with responsibility for those areas are listed in the Appendix.

HSE Liaison

A standing committee comprising all Superintendent Registrars and management staff of the GRO meet regularly to discuss and co-ordinate operational matters relating to registration processes, customer support and planning of services. Additionally, the GRO engages with senior HSE management on the strategic matters and the operations of the Service.

Civil Registration Policy

The General Register Office has responsibility for the development and co-ordination of civil registration and gender recognition policy. This role involves research, development and the preparation of legislation and input to other areas of public policy development and discussion where it impacts on civil registration matters.

The key areas of policy development over the course of 2022 focused on the following key matters:

- Examination of aspects of the functioning of the Act to identify where improvements could be made to service delivery.
- Responding to the recommendations of the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes, specifically where these were linked to practices around birth registration and adoption in the institutions covered by the investigation.

- Continuation of work initiated to implement the recommendation of the statutory review of the Gender Recognition Act 2015 (covered in a separate report on the operations of that Act for 2022 prepared by the GRO).

Ombudsman complaints

No complaints were received with respect to the operations of the General Register Office during 2022.

Data Protection

The Act provides that registration data to be made available to a number of Government Departments and bodies for stated purposes. The GRO shares registration data with several public authorities to support their service provision and to comply with statutory provisions. Data relating to birth, marriages and deaths is shared with the CSO under the Statistics Act 1993. Subsequently, the CSO is tasked with the analysis of this data and the publication of population reports on a quarterly and annual basis. All publications and data banks can be accessed on the CSO website under People and Society category.

The GRO reports to the Department's Data Management Programme Board on all data sharing arrangements.

Appendix

HSE Civil Registration Districts and Superintendents with responsibilities for the delivery of services.

Districts	Superintendent Registrar	Address
EASTERN Covering Dublin, Wicklow & Kildare	Mr. Charles McGuinness (Acting from September 2021)	Civil Registration Office Joyce House 8/11 Lombard Street East Dublin 2
MID WESTERN 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. Kate Ferguson	Civil Registration Office Markievicz House Barrack Street Sligo
SOUTH EASTERN Covering Carlow, Kilkenny, Wexford, Waterford & South Tipperary	Ms. Angela Joy	Civil Registration Office Lacken Dublin Road Kilkenny
SOUTHERN Covering Cork & Kerry	Ms. Jennifer O'Neill	Civil Registration Office Adelaide Court Adelaide Street Cork
WESTERN Covering Galway, Roscommon & Mayo	Mr. Sean Cloonan	Civil Registration Office 25 Newcastle Road Galway



Prepared by An tArd-Chláraitheoir

General Register Office

June 2023