

BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH
ARNA FHOILSIÚ AG OIFIG AN tSOLÁTHAIR

Le ceannach díreach ón
OIFIG DHÍOLTA FOILSEACHÁN RIALTAIS,
TEACH SUN ALLIANCE, SRÁID THEACH LAIGHEAN
BAILE ÁTHA 2.

nó tríd an bpost ó
51 FAICHE STIABHNA, BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH 2.

(Teil: 01-6476000; Faics: 01-6476843)
nó trí aon díoltóir leabhar

DUBLIN
PUBLISHED BY THE STATIONERY OFFICE

To be purchased from the
GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS SALES OFFICE,
SUN ALLIANCE HOUSE, MOLESWORTH STREET,
DUBLIN 2

or by mail order from
GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS,

POSTAL TRADE SECTION,
51 ST. STEPHENS GREEN, DUBLIN 2.
(Tel: 01-6476000; Fax: 01-6476843)
or through any bookseller

€8.00

SBN 0-7557-7172-9

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Report of An Bord Uchtála (The Adoption Board) for 2004

**To: Mr. Brian Lenihan,
Minister of State, Department of Health and Children.**

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Part one

annual report on activity in 2004

Chairman's Opening Remarks

On behalf of the members and staff of the Adoption Board I would like to welcome the publication of the Adoption Board's 50th Annual Report.

Again 2004, like 2003, has been an important transition year for the Board. A very significant event for the organisation in 2004 was the launch of our Corporate Plan 2004 - 2007.

Other significant events during 2004 include the implementation of a bilateral agreement between the Irish and Vietnamese authorities to facilitate people wishing to adopt from Vietnam and the decision of the Belarusian authorities to cease foreign adoptions in order to update their own legislation. The numbers of people choosing to adopt from abroad continues to increase significantly on a year by year basis.

During 2004 the Board accepted the proposals of the National Information and Tracing Advisory Group on how best to establish a National Records Index and the procedures to apply to the proposed National Adoption Contact Preference Register. Arrangements were also put in place with the General Register Office to allow the Adoption Board access to computerised birth, marriage and death records.

The Adoption Board awaits the initiation of the new adoption legislation. When this legislation is enacted many of the Adoption Board's key recommendations set out in earlier Annual Reports will be addressed.

I would like to express the Adoption Board's appreciation of the contributions made by our clients, adoption support groups and local service providers during the course of the year. The continued support of Mr. Brian Lenihan T.D., Minister for Children, and his staff in the Department of Health & Children is much appreciated. Finally, I would like to acknowledge the hard work and commitment of the staff of the Adoption Board.



James O'Sullivan

Chairman.

C.E.O.'s Review of 2004

I am delighted to present the Adoption Board's 2004 Annual Report. 2004 was a year of change and development as the Adoption Board prepares for the forthcoming enactment of new adoption legislation.

Corporate Plan 2004 - 2007

In February 2004 the Adoption Board launched its Corporate Plan 2004 – 2007, which set out challenging objectives for the next four years. This Annual Report includes a detailed review of progress towards the achievement of these key objectives. This fulfils a commitment given at the launch of the Corporate Plan to provide an annual review of progress. This review is attached at Appendix 1.

Domestic Adoption

On the Domestic Adoption side the steady increase in the number of step-parent adoptions has been maintained. While the overall number of domestic adoptions remains low, the increasing complexity of the cases arising is of note. In December 2004 work by the UCD team was completed on the 'Guide for Practitioners based on a Standardised Framework for Domestic Adoption Assessment Procedures'.

Intercountry Adoption

On the 6th of July the Agreement on Mutual Cooperation concerning Adoption between the Irish and Vietnamese authorities was implemented. This agreement provides a formal adoption process for applicants adopting from the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. Without such a bilateral agreement Irish applicants would not be able to adopt from Vietnam. The Agreement is based on the principles of the Hague Convention.

461 Declarations of Eligibility and Suitability were granted in 2004. The revised working arrangements within the Adoption Board for the processing of applications for Declarations of Eligibility and Suitability continued during 2004. As a result the waiting time for a Declaration to be granted remained at under 6 weeks, provided the application was complete upon receipt by the Board.

A total of 250 extensions were granted by the Board during 2004. This reflects the difficulty that many applicants have in adopting within the one year lifespan of the Declaration and is related particularly to the slow down in the processing of applications in Russia and events in Belarus. The Minister's proposed new legislation will allow the Board to grant Declarations which are valid for two years, or longer if deemed reasonable by the Board.

The Minister for Children secured an additional €1m in funding to reduce the assessment waiting times for persons wishing to adopt abroad. This funding will be made available in 2005.

Information & Tracing

2004 was a particularly demanding year for the newly formed Information & Tracing Unit at the Board. A great deal of work was also undertaken by the National Information and Tracing Advisory Group on the proposed National Adoption Contact Preference Register and the proposed Adoption Records Index throughout the year.

The National Adoption Contact Preference Register will facilitate adopted people, birth / natural parents and others who wish to make known their wishes regarding contact by the other party to the adoption. The Adoption Records Index will identify all adoption records throughout the State and ensure they are appropriately secured, stored and maintained.

While it is the case that the establishment of the Information & Tracing Unit at the Board has resulted in an improvement in the timescale for processing information and tracing enquiries made to the Board, I am very conscious and concerned about the long waiting lists for information and tracing services generally. With this in mind, the Minister for Children has secured an additional €1m in funding which will be made available in 2005 to address this issue.

It is also of note that arrangements have also been put in place in 2004 with the General Register Office to allow Adoption Board staff regular access to the Civil Registration Service computer system.

Website

The upgraded Adoption Board website was launched in November. This site provides our web enabled clients with a much more informative site than its predecessor. The site has a very user friendly and comprehensive structure which the general public has found to be of great assistance. Staff of the Adoption Board have also derived considerable benefit from the redevelopment of the site.

I would like to thank our clients, stakeholder groups and service providers for their much valued input and assistance throughout the year. Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to the staff of the Adoption Board for their continued hard work and assistance.



John Collins

Chief Executive Officer.

Section 1

Key developments in 2004:

Domestic Adoption

In the area of domestic adoption, consultants were engaged in 2003 to assist in the preparation of a 'Guide for Practitioners of a Standardised Framework for Domestic Adoption Assessment Procedures'. The contract to undertake this research project was undertaken on behalf of the Adoption Board by the Department of Social Policy and Social Work, UCD. The contractors are due to submit their final report in early 2005 and the Implementation Group overseeing this research will be working towards preparing this guide in 2005. This Practitioner Guide, when completed, will provide a basis for the delivery of all domestic adoption services locally.

The total number of applications for Irish adoption orders received in 2004 was 286. Of these, 212 family adoption applications were received compared to 193 applications in 2003. See Table 1.

The Board made 273 Irish adoption orders in 2004 compared to 263 in 2003. See Table 2. 185 adoption orders were made in respect of family adoptions, 177 of which were made in favour of the child's mother and her husband. 68 adoption orders were made in respect of children placed for adoption by Health Boards and registered adoption societies, and of this figure 22 were children who were in long-term foster care and were being adopted by their foster parents. See Table 4. The Board made 20 Irish adoption orders in 2004 in respect of children who were placed for adoption overseas, 16 of whom were from Guatemala, 2 from the Philippines and 2 from India. Prospective adoptive parents are granted simple adoption orders in Guatemala and, as such adoptions are not recognised under Irish law, the prospective adoptive parents apply to the Board for Irish adoption orders in respect of these children, either with the consent of the birth / natural parent(s) or through the High Court under the Adoption Act, 1988. Couples adopting from India and the Philippines are granted guardianship by the relevant courts and then adopt the children under Irish law.

The Board made nine Irish adoption orders during 2004 with the consent of the High Court under the provisions of the Adoption Act, 1988. A general overview of the functioning of the Adoption Act, 1988 is set out in Section 2.1.8

The Board made one Irish adoption order during 2004 with the consent of the High Court under the provisions of the Adoption Act, 1974, i.e. when the birth / natural mother placing her child for adoption failed to complete the necessary consent papers, after completing the initial consent to the placing of the child for adoption. The applicants can apply to the High Court under Section 3 of the Adoption Act, 1974 for an order to dispense with her consent, thereby allowing the Adoption Board to make the adoption order.

While initiating the measures set out in this section, the Board has been careful to maintain existing levels of service in 2004.

Intercountry Adoption

In relation to intercountry adoption, the time taken by the Board to issue a Declaration of Eligibility and Suitability remains at six weeks. This timeframe does not apply where there is a negative recommendation or there are exceptional circumstances involved.

The Agreement on Mutual Cooperation concerning Adoption between Ireland and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam came into effect in July 2004 thereby allowing adoptions to commence after an 18 month closure. The Agreement is based on the principles of the Hague Convention.

In October 2004 the authorities in Belarus suspended intercountry adoptions to all countries. This was to facilitate a full review of the adoption laws, procedures and practices that apply in intercountry adoption cases in Belarus.

In December 2004 the Belarusian Ambassador to the UK presented his credentials to the President and became the Ambassador to Ireland as well as to the UK. Subsequent to this he visited the Irish Adoption Board where he met with the CEO, a number of children who were adopted in Belarus, and their families.

The Board made 461 declarations of eligibility and suitability to adopt outside the State under the provisions of Section 5(1)(iii)(II) of the Adoption Act, 1991 and it granted 250 extensions to declarations made in previous years. See Table 18. The Board made 375 entries in the Register of Foreign Adoptions during 2004.

The Board received 502 applications relating to intercountry adoption during 2004. This included applications for declarations of eligibility and suitability, applications for a determination of suitability to adopt having regard to a previous or ongoing medical condition, applications for a determination of eligibility to adopt based on the fact that an applicant had previously been granted a divorce in a foreign jurisdiction, and applications from persons resident overseas who wished to have their adoptions recognised under Irish law.

The Board assisted 95 applicants with the preparation of adoption applications packs that were forwarded to the People's Republic of China, Thailand, Belarus and the Republic of the Philippines. 57 adoption applications were sent to China, 6 to Thailand, 30 to Belarus and 2 to the Philippines.

22 sole applicants adopted a child from overseas during 2004 and entries were made in the register of Foreign Adoptions in respect of these children. A total of 66 sole applicants have adopted a child through intercountry adoption since the enactment of the Adoption Act, 1991.

At the end of 2004, the Minister for Children secured an additional 1m in funding to reduce the assessment waiting times for persons wishing to adopt abroad. This funding will be made available in 2005.

During 2004 the Board considered the adoption laws of the States of Minnesota, Missouri and the District of Columbia in the USA, Manitoba and Saskatchewan in Canada, Finland, Georgia and Lesotho. The Board decided that adoptions effected in these places, with the exception of Georgia and Lesotho, qualified for recognition under the terms of the Adoption Act, 1991, as amended by the Adoption Act, 1998, and for entry in the Register of Foreign Adoptions.

The Board heard applicants and representatives of the assessing agencies in relation to 15 cases on various intercountry adoption issues.

Information and Tracing

The Adoption Board's Information and Tracing Unit was established in late 2003 in recognition of the increasing number of adopted people, birth / natural parents and other relatives seeking to trace or to obtain medical or personal information from their files.

The Board is committed to the establishment of a new National Adoption Information and Tracing Service, which will initially function under the current legislative framework. The Advisory Group set up to advise the Board on the establishment of this new service continued to meet throughout 2004 and has made significant progress in this regard.

A priority for the Board in 2004 was the need to identify all adoption records throughout the State so they can be appropriately secured, stored and maintained. A sub-group of the National Information & Tracing Advisory Group was set up to assist the Board in this process and it reported to the Board in July 2004. Work on the microfilming, scanning and indexing of the Boards files commenced in September 2004. A comprehensive list of holders of Adoption related files has also been created. Work has started with local service providers in identifying the precise location, extent and condition of the adoption records they hold. This process will continue during 2005.

Another issue identified as a priority by the Board was the need to establish the National Adoption Contact Preference Register. A commitment to develop such a register was given by the Minister for Children in late 2003 to facilitate adopted people, birth / natural parents and others who want to make known their wishes regarding contact. This Register will be launched in early 2005.

A seminar on the proposed National Adoption Information and Tracing Service was held by the Adoption Board in October 2004 and attended by adoption practitioners, adoption user groups and specialist legal / genealogical searchers. The contributions made by the wide range of stakeholder and service provider groups who attended the seminar will assist the Board in determining how best to structure the proposed new National Information & Tracing service.

Arrangements were put in place in 2004 with the General Register Office to allow Adoption Board staff regular access to the Civil Registration Service computer system. The Board thanks the Registrar General and his staff for their help and cooperation in this regard.

In the next section we review the work of each unit of the Adoption Board in more detail.

Section 2

Overview of the work of the units of the Adoption Board

2.1 Domestic Adoption Unit.

Introduction

The Domestic Adoption Unit processes all applications for domestic adoption orders under Irish law. The Unit processes applications for adoption orders on behalf of step-parents, placements by Health Boards, placements by registered adoption societies and applications from people who have adopted abroad but who have adopted from countries whose adoption law is not compatible with Irish law. Whilst there has been a decline in the number of adoption applications and orders over recent years the complexity of individual applications has increased in line with best practice requirements and the need to fully cater for all parties concerned in the adoption process.

The Unit also provides an advice and referral service for the public. This involves directing enquirers to the appropriate agency / service that meets their needs. It also includes, in most cases, outlining the whole process of making an adoption application right through to the making of an adoption order. This includes explaining what an adoption order means in terms of the transfer of rights and responsibilities from the birth / natural parents to the adoptive parents. The unit also deals with issues of eligibility of children for adoption; these files are prepared for the Board's consideration and the interested parties are promptly informed of the outcome of the Board's deliberations.

The Unit deals directly with queries from members of the public, both from Ireland and from abroad, on a wide range of issues.

Standardised Framework for Domestic Adoption.

The delivery of all domestic adoption services is to be devolved to the Health Boards and registered adoption agencies. With this in mind the Board began the process of developing a standardised framework for domestic adoption during the course of 2003. The Adoption Board commissioned UCD to carry out research towards a 'standardised framework for domestic adoption assessment procedures'. The contractors presented their report to the Adoption Board in December, 2004 and the Implementation Group will now work towards preparing a detailed guide for practitioners for domestic adoption assessment procedures. The provision of detailed guidance in this format should ensure a more homogeneous delivery of service in terms of the assessment process itself, a more comprehensive delivery of the service at the local level, as well as the development of greater opportunities for monitoring and review of the service.

The Unit will review and update literature and address any information gaps as a result of the implementation of the Domestic Adoption Framework.

Trends in Domestic Adoption

The Board made 273 Irish adoption orders in 2004 compared to 263 adoption orders in 2003, an increase of 10 on the previous year. See Table 2. The number of applications received in 2004 was 286, See Table 1; down slightly on the previous year's figure of 298.

Family Adoptions

The number of family adoption applications received by the Board rose in comparison to the previous year. The Board received 212 family adoption applications in 2004 compared to 193 such applications in 2003. See Table 1. Most family adoption applications are made in step-parent situations where a birth / natural mother has a child outside of marriage and she subsequently marries a man who is not the birth / natural father of the child. The birth / natural mother and her husband apply jointly to adopt the child into their marriage. Applications are made in such cases in order that the birth / natural mother's husband can establish legal rights in respect of the child and to ensure the child's inheritance rights within the family unit. In such circumstances the birth / natural mother gives up her sole legal rights in respect of her child and both she and her husband take on joint legal rights and responsibilities in respect of the child.

As noted in recent Annual Reports, it remains the Board's view that adoption is not always the ideal solution in step-parent situations and that some other legal means should be devised to establish the rights and responsibilities of a birth / natural mother's husband without extinguishing the rights and responsibilities of the birth / natural father.

2.1.5 Birth / natural Fathers

In 2004 five birth / natural fathers were heard by the Adoption Board in respect of applications for Domestic Adoption orders relating to their children (this compares to four in 2003, six in 2002 and five in 2001). One birth / natural father was heard with regard to an application being processed under the Adoption Act, 1988.

Birth / natural fathers, when being notified of an adoption application (usually made by the birth / natural mother and her husband), are now offered an additional option of speaking to one of the Board's social workers in relation to their views on the application. They are also issued with the Board's information booklet on step-parent adoption. Frequently their enquiries relate to procedural and legal matters and are not indicative of opposition to the making of an adoption order. The option of a full Board hearing is open to all birth / natural fathers notified of adoption applications. Of the 273 Domestic Adoption orders made in 2004, the Adoption Board advised 164 birth / natural fathers of an application for an adoption order in respect of their child. Of these, 22 birth / natural fathers attended hearings with the Board. (Many of these 22 Board hearings would have taken place up to three years before the application was finalised, thus accounting for the disparity in the figures). See Table 10.

The Board again calls on the Minister to explore the possibility of introducing amending legislation to allow the Board to attach conditions to the making of an adoption order to ensure that a birth / natural father can have continuing access to his child after the making of an adoption order.

Open Adoption

The Board continues to note and welcome the number of non-family domestic adoptions ('agency' adoptions) which are 'open' adoptions i.e. the birth / natural parent or parents retain a degree of contact with the child (usually one or two visits a year) after the adoption order is made.

The Board calls for legal provisions to be put in place to ensure, that where a birth / natural parent wishes to have continued contact with his or her child after the making of an adoption order, such contact can be made a condition of the adoption order and would be legally enforceable. This would, of course, also be relevant to the position of birth / natural fathers in step-parent cases.

Children of Marriage

The Board continued to have enquiries from people wishing to adopt children from a previous marriage into a current marriage.

The Board again calls on the Minister to explore the possibility of introducing amending legislation to allow the Board to process adoption applications in cases where a widow or widower remarries and wishes his / her second spouse to have legal rights and responsibilities in relation to the children of his / her first marriage.

Adoption Act, 1988

The Adoption Act, 1988, provides for the adoption of children of marriage, abandoned children, children whose eligibility for adoption cannot be established and children in long-term foster care where there has been no placement of the child for adoption at the time of reception into care of the child. In such cases the Board processes the application to a point where it cannot proceed any further and then adjourns the application pending a directive from the High Court. The application is then heard in the High Court and the High Court may direct the Board to make an adoption order in respect of the child in each case. Where the birth / natural mother's consent is forthcoming and there is no question regarding the child's eligibility for adoption, such applications can be processed under the Adoption Act, 1952 without recourse to the High Court.

During 2004, the Board made nine adoption orders pursuant to an order of the High Court under the provisions of the Adoption Act, 1988. Seven of these were in respect of children of marriage, one in respect of an extra-marital child, one in respect of non-marital children. The Board also decided that a further five adoption applications would have to be processed under the provisions of the Adoption Act, 1988. By the end of 2004 the Board had before it 18 adoption applications which were being processed under the provisions of the Adoption Act, 1988. These applications for Domestic Adoption orders were either the subject of High Court proceedings or were in the process of proceedings being drafted.

In 2004 the Board made five declarations under the Adoption Act, 1988 and adjourned these applications pending the decision of the High Court in each case. One of the applications was in respect of children of marriage, two applications were in respect of non-marital children and one application was in respect of an extra-marital child. One application was in respect of a child

abandoned in Morocco.

The Board is obliged under the Adoption Act, 1988, to hear the applicants, the child where appropriate, its own welfare officer and representatives of the health board in whose functional area the applicants reside. It also offers a hearing to the birth / natural parents in each case and in 2004 it heard two birth / natural mothers in relation to such cases. The Board heard both birth parents in one other case. The Board also heard the East Coast Area of the Eastern Regional Health Authority on two applications, the Northern Western Health Board, the South Eastern Health Board and the Southern Health Board on one application each.

2.2 Intercountry Adoption Unit

2.2.1 Key Events in 2004

The Agreement on Mutual Cooperation concerning Adoption between Ireland and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam came into effect in July 2004 thereby allowing adoptions to commence after an 18 month closure. The Agreement is based on the principles of the Hague Convention.

In May 2004 advertisements were placed in the national newspapers and on the Adoption Board's website inviting interested parties to apply for registration as an Irish Mediation Agency. As a result of this five applications were received. These are currently under consideration.

In October 2004 the authorities in Belarus suspended intercountry adoptions to all countries. This was to facilitate a full review of the adoption laws, procedures and practices that apply in intercountry adoption cases.

In December 2004 the Belarusian Ambassador to the UK presented his credentials to the President and became the Ambassador to Ireland as well as to the UK. Subsequent to this he visited the Irish Adoption Board where he met the CEO, and a number of children who were adopted in Belarus, and their families.

2.2.2 Trends in Intercountry Adoption

461 Declarations of Eligibility and Suitability were granted in 2004. 21 of these were for twins or two siblings. The overall figure is seven less than for the previous year. See Table 19. The revised working arrangements within the Adoption Board for the processing of applications for Declarations of Eligibility and Suitability continued during 2004. The result of this was that the waiting time for a Declaration to be granted remained at under 6 weeks, if the application was complete upon receipt by the Board.

A total of 250 extensions were granted by the Board during 2004. 204 of these were first extensions and were processed by the Adoption Board. Once again this reflects the difficulty that many applicants have in adopting within the lifespan of the Declaration. The Minister's proposed new legislation, which is currently being drafted, provides for the Board to grant Declarations which

are valid for two years, or longer if deemed reasonable by the Board. It also provides for conditions to be included in Declarations, e.g. regarding the age of the child.

2.2.3 Countries of Origin

(i) Russia

677 entries were made in the Register of Foreign Adoptions during 2002 and 2003. More than one third of these entries (246) were in respect of adoptions effected in Russia. During 2004, 189 entries were made in the Register of Foreign Adoptions in respect of Russian adoptions. This accounted for more than 50% of the total entries in the Register. See Table 16a.

(ii) China

57 applications were submitted to the China Centre of Adoption Affairs during 2004. This was an increase of 16 on the previous year. A total of 60 adoptions effected in China were entered in the Register of Foreign Adoptions during 2004. See Table 16a.

The waiting time for a referral from China dropped significantly during 2004. It now takes approximately six months, from the time the application is received by the China Centre of Adoption Affairs, for a referral to issue.

(iii) Thailand

In December 2003 the Adoption Board received a letter from the Thai authorities stating that, due to their increased waiting lists, only seven applications could be accepted from Irish applicants during 2004. This was based on the number of applications submitted in the two previous years (six per year). This trend continued in 2004 with only six applications being submitted to Thailand during this period. However, there were eight entries made in the Register of Foreign Adoptions in respect of adoptions effected in Thailand.

The Board has been advised that only 12 applications can be submitted during 2005.

(iv) The Philippines

Only two applications were submitted to the Philippines during 2004, and one of these was subsequently withdrawn.

(v) Belarus

In October 2004 the Board was advised that intercountry adoptions to all countries had been suspended pending a full review of the adoption laws, procedures and practices that apply in intercountry adoption cases.

When the new legislation came into effect, on the 4th January 2005, there were 39 applications still in Belarus, 26 for identified children and 13 for unidentified children. The new legislation rendered null and void the register of children that had previously been eligible for adoption. This resulted in the authorities in Belarus being unable to immediately proceed with these 39 cases.

At end 2004 the Belarusian authorities were putting together a new register and were working through the applications that remained in Belarus (some applicants chose to withdraw their file in light of the uncertainty surrounding the recommencement of adoptions). However, they were unable to give a timeframe for this work as the situation was unprecedented.

(vi) Vietnam

The Agreement on Mutual Cooperation concerning Adoption between Ireland and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam came into effect in July 2004. Since then over 50 adoptions have successfully been completed.

2.2.4 Hague Convention

The legislation which will ratify the Hague Convention, bringing it into force under Irish law, is currently being drafted. The legislation will establish the Adoption Board as an independent statutory body known as the Adoption Authority. The Adoption Authority will be the Central Authority for the purposes of the Hague Convention.

Once the legislation has been enacted it will only be possible for Irish applicants to adopt from other countries which have ratified the Convention, or from countries with whom the Adoption Authority has agreements based on Hague principles. There will also be a 'grandfather clause' which will allow adoptions from non-Hague countries in very limited circumstances, i.e. where the applicants have already adopted in that country prior to the legislation being enacted, and where the Adoption Authority believes it to be in the best interests of the child to have a sibling from that background.

The legislation is also going to introduce an age limit for intercountry adoption. The proposal is for an upper age limit of 50. Where a married couple are applying to adopt, they will be eligible for assessment if one of them is under 50.

It has been apparent for some time that in many cases a Declaration which is valid for twelve months is not sufficient to allow applicants complete their adoption. This has been addressed in the proposed new legislation. The legislation provides for Declarations that are valid for 24 months to be issued. It also allows the Board to grant Declarations that are valid for a longer period if this is deemed reasonable. The proposed legislation also provides for the Board to attach conditions to Declarations, e.g. the age of the child or the number of children that can be adopted.

2.2.5 Intercountry Adoption Assessment Waiting Lists

The Minister has allocated 1 million for 2005 to reduce the waiting times for ICA assessments. The Adoption Board is currently in discussion with the Health Services Executive on how to best apply this resource to reduce waiting times.

2.3 Adoption Information and Tracing Unit

The Adoption Information and Tracing Unit was established by the Adoption Board in October 2003 and currently consists of 3.5 full-time equivalent administrative staff and 1.5 full-time equivalent social workers. The establishment of the Unit was recognition by the Board that information and tracing is now a significant aspect of adoption services, with an increasing number of adopted people, birth / natural parents and other relatives seeking to trace or to obtain medical or personal information from the files. The current work and objectives of the Unit are as follows;

- An advice and referral service for enquirers i.e. advising them on the procedures involved in adoption information and tracing and where required referring them to the correct agency for dealing with their enquiries.
- Dealing directly with information and tracing enquiries from people who were placed privately for adoption or where no adoption agency was involved in the placement.
- Liaising with Department of Health and Children, adoption support groups and the adoption agencies and health boards on all Information and Tracing Service matters.
- Ascertaining the volume and nature of adoption records held by the various agencies and institutions nationwide, including records of 'boarded-out' children, residents of children's homes and Irish people adopted in the US and the UK. This will ultimately result in the establishment of a National File Index requiring the scanning and computerisation of all adoption records within the State, beginning with the Adoption Board's own records.
- The establishment of a National Adoption Contact Preference Register.
- The establishment of links to the databases of public bodies such as the General Register Office and the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs to assist the Board, health boards and agencies in relation to search and reunion enquiries.

Prior to the enactment of the proposed new adoption legislation, the Board is committed to the establishment of a new National Adoption Information and Tracing Service, initially functioning under the current legislative framework. The group which was set up to advise the Board on the establishment of this new service continued to meet throughout 2004 and has made progress in this regard. The Group is made up of representatives of all the main adoption support groups, the health boards, adoption agencies, and the Department of Health and Children. The Board very much welcomes the participation of stakeholder and service provider groups in this process.

A priority of the Board for 2004 was the need to identify all adoption records throughout the State and to ensure they are appropriately secured, stored and maintained. A sub-group of the Advisory

Group was set up to assist the Board in this process and it reported to the Board in July 2004. Work on the microfilming, scanning and indexing of the Boards files began in September 2004. A comprehensive list of holders of adoption related files has also been created. Work has started with local service providers in identifying the precise location, extent and condition of the records held. This process will continue during 2005.

An issue also identified as a priority by the Board was the need to establish the National Adoption Contact Preference Register (NACPR) which is intended to facilitate adopted people, birth / natural parents and others who want to make known their wishes regarding contact by the other party to the adoption. Another sub-group of the Advisory Group on the National Adoption Information and Tracing Service was set up to assist the Board in this regard and also reported to the Board in July 2004. The expected launch of the Register in autumn 2004 was postponed until March 2005. This was due to the time needed to finalise the format and content of an application form and explanatory leaflet and subsequent logistical difficulties regarding the printing and nationwide delivery of these leaflets / forms to all households as recommended by the Advisory sub-group. By end 2004 the format and content of the form was agreed, the required database was put in place, the printing of leaflets was under way, and preparations for the NACPR publicity campaign and the distribution of application forms was at an advanced stage.

A seminar on the proposed National Adoption Information and Tracing Service was held by the Adoption Board in October 2004 and attended by adoption practitioners, adoption user groups and specialist legal / genealogical searchers. The contributions made by the wide range of stakeholder and service provider groups who attended the seminar will assist the Board in determining how best to structure the proposed new National Information & Tracing service.

Arrangements are now in place with the General Register Office to allow Adoption Board staff regular access to the Civil Registration Service computer system. The Board thanks the Registrar General and his staff for their help and cooperation in this regard.

The Board were acutely aware of the waiting times for information and tracing services during 2004. The Minister for Children announced in late 2004 that €1 million in extra funding would be made available in 2005 to address this matter.

During 2004 the total number of written enquiries to the Unit was 881 (up 12% on 2003). We received 3000 telephone enquiries (up 75% on 2003) and 600 emails via the Boards website. Since the establishment of the new Unit, there has been a significant improvement in the timescale for processing these enquiries. Throughout the year, the vast majority of requests for information were being responded to within two weeks of receipt. However, because the processing of applications for the release of birth certificates to adopted people requires a report from the health board or agency concerned, progress in this area remains largely dependent on the waiting times in the relevant agency.

Despite the increase in the number of enquiries, the waiting time for tracing enquiries dealt with by the Board's own social work team remains steady at just under 1 year at the end of 2004. This is a small improvement on the waiting times at end 2003. However, the board recognises the need to significantly reduce this waiting period.

Section 3

Summary of Statistics in relation to Adoption in 2004

4.1	Applications for adoption orders received by the Board:	286
4.2	Adoption orders made:	273
4.3	Interim adoption orders made:	0
4.4	Adoption orders made in respect of boys:	135
4.5	Adoption orders made in respect of girls:	138
4.6	Adoption orders made in respect of children born within marriage:	7
4.7	Adoption orders made in respect of extra-marital children:	1
4.8	Adoption orders made in respect of orphans:	2
4.9	Adoption orders made in favour of widows:	1
4.10	Adoption orders made in favour of widowers:	0
4.11	Adoption orders made in favour of an unmarried person, not being a relative of the child or a widow or widower:	1
4.12	Adoption orders made in favour of a deserted spouse:	0
4.13	Adoption orders made in favour of a married person pursuant to Section 10(2) & (4) of the Adoption Act, 1991 with the consent of his / her spouse:	1
4.14	Adoption orders made in favour of a married person pursuant to Section 10(2) & (4) of the Adoption Act, 1991 without the consent of his / her spouse:	0
4.15	Adoption orders made in cases where the Board dispensed with the consent of the birth / natural mother pursuant to an order of the High Court under Section 3 of the Adoption Act, 1974:	1
4.16	Adoption orders made pursuant to and order of the High Court under Section 3(1) of the Adoption Act, 1988:	9

4.17	Adoption orders made in cases where the Board dispensed with the consent of a birth / natural parent or guardian in accordance with Section 14(2) of the Adoption Act, 1952:	1
4.18	Adoption orders refused:	0
4.19	Declarations made by the Board under Section 2(1) of the Adoption Act, 1988:	5
4.20	Cases in which the Board adjourned a decision on the application:	13
4.21	Applications for adoption orders which were withdrawn:	22
4.22	Applications for adoption orders which were not proceeded with:	3
4.23	Children reclaimed by the birth / natural mother:	0
4.24	Children removed from the care of the applicants by the placing agency:	0
4.25	Children returned to the placing agency or the birth / natural mother by the applicants:	0
4.26	Children who died prior to the making of an adoption order:	0
4.27	Intercountry adoptions recognised and entered in the Register of Foreign Adoptions in respect of adoptions effected by persons who were domiciled, habitually resident or ordinarily resident outside the State under Sections 2, 3 & 4 of the Adoption Act, 1991: Entries made under Section 2 of the Adoption Act, 1991 21 Entries made under Section 3 of the Adoption Act, 1991 0 Entries made under Section 4 of the Adoption Act, 1991 87 Entries made under Section 5 of the Adoption Act, 1991 375	
4.28	Total number of intercountry adoptions recognised and entered in the Register of Foreign Adoptions	483
4.29	Applications for recognition and entry in the Register of Foreign Adoptions that were refused	0
4.30	Declarations of Eligibility and Suitability to adopt outside the State made by the Board under the Adoption Act, 1991	461
4.31	Extensions to Declarations of Eligibility and Suitability to adopt outside the State granted by the Board	250
4.32	Applications for the release of original birth certificates processed	96

4.33	Enquiries by adopted people for contact with natural parents processed	316
4.34	Enquiries by natural parents for contact with adopted person processed	76
4.35	Enquiries from Agencies / Health Boards	214
4.36	Information and Tracing telephone enquiries processed	3000
4.37	Information and Tracing office interviews held	33

Notes:

Applications 'not proceeded with' refer to those deemed withdrawn by the Board for various reasons, including failure by the applicants to provide the necessary proofs in support of their application.

The difference between the number of applications received and the number of adoption orders made and applications otherwise disposed of is explained by the carry-over of cases from previous years.

Nil returns have been shown for some activity areas in order that statistical comparisons can be made from year to year.

Part two

statistical tables and charts

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Chart 1 Total Applications by Category

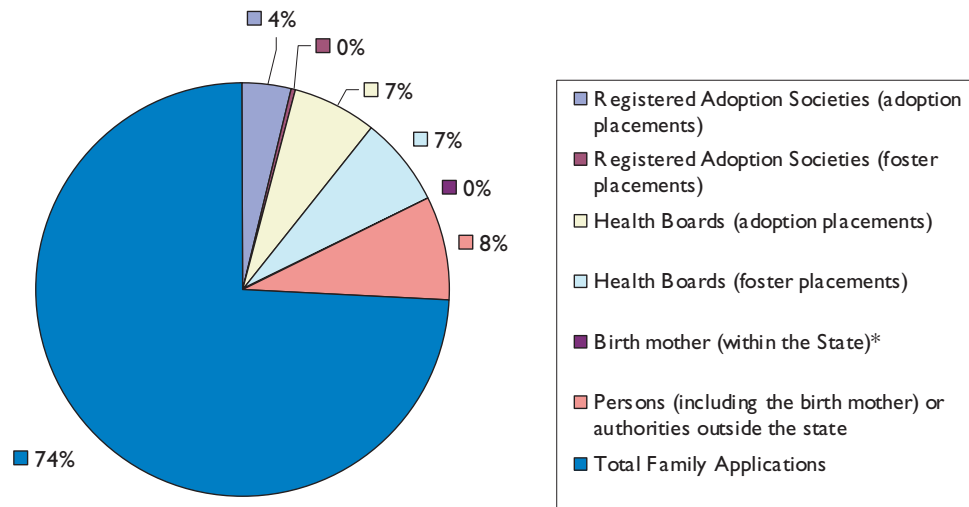


Chart 2 Non-Family Applications by Category

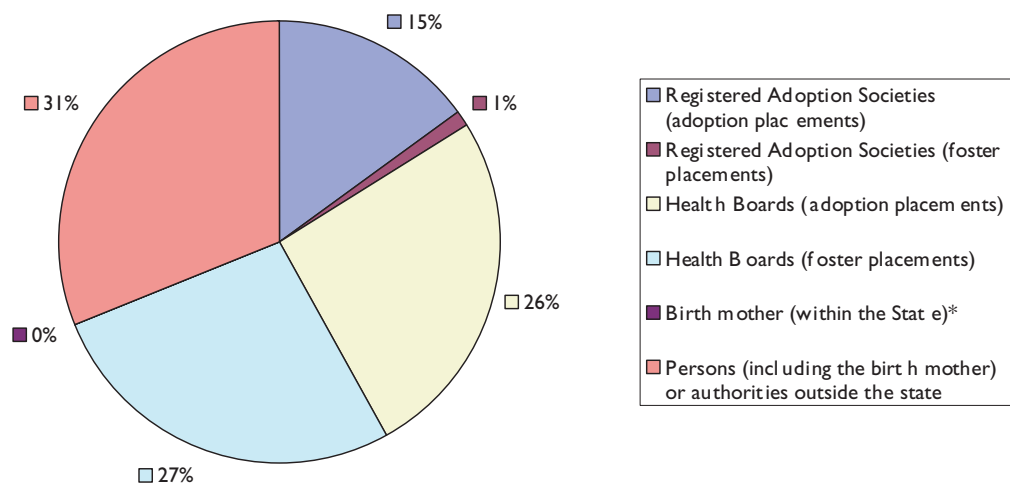


Table 1 Applications for Irish Adoption Orders, 2004

NON-FAMILY APPLICATIONS	<u>Total</u>
Applications received in respect of children placed by:	
Registered Adoption Societies (adoption placements)	11
Registered Adoption Societies (foster placements)	1
Health Boards (adoption placements)	19
Health Boards (foster placements)	20
Birth / Natural mother (within the State)*	0
Persons (including the birth mother) or authorities outside the state	23
TOTAL NON-FAMILY APPLICATIONS	74
*Private adoption placements within the State were prohibited under the terms of the Adoption Act, 1998. The placements referred to here took place before that Act became law.	
FAMILY APPLICATIONS	
Applications received from	
Birth / Natural mother and her husband	200
Birth / Natural mother alone	0
Birth / Natural father alone	0
Birth / Natural father and his wife	1
Grandparents ⁷	
Other relatives	4
	0
TOTAL FAMILY APPLICATIONS	212
TOTAL	286

Table 2 Irish Adoption Orders made, 2004

Orders made in respect of boys	135	49%
Orders made in respect of girls	138	51%
Total	273	100%
<i>ORDERS MADE IN RESPECT OF CHILDREN PLACED BY:-</i>		
Registered Adoption Societies (adoption placements)	26	10%
Health Boards (adoption placements)	20	7%
Health Boards (long-term foster placements)	22	8%
Irish private placements	0	0%
Children placed by persons or authorities outside State	20	8%
Total non-family adoptions	88	33%
<i>FAMILY ADOPTIONS</i>		
Birth mother and her husband	177	64%
Birth mother alone	0	0%
Birth father and his wife	0	0%
Birth father alone	0	0%
Grandparents	5	2%
Other relatives	3	1%
Total family adoptions	185	67%
<i>TOTAL</i>	273	100%

Chart 3 Irish Adoption Orders made, 2004

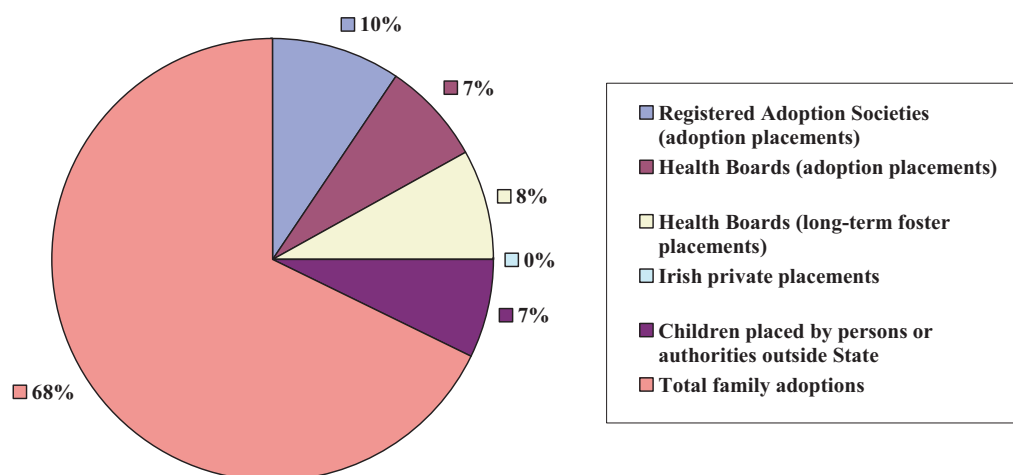


Chart 4 Irish Adoption Orders made, 2004: Non-Family Adopters

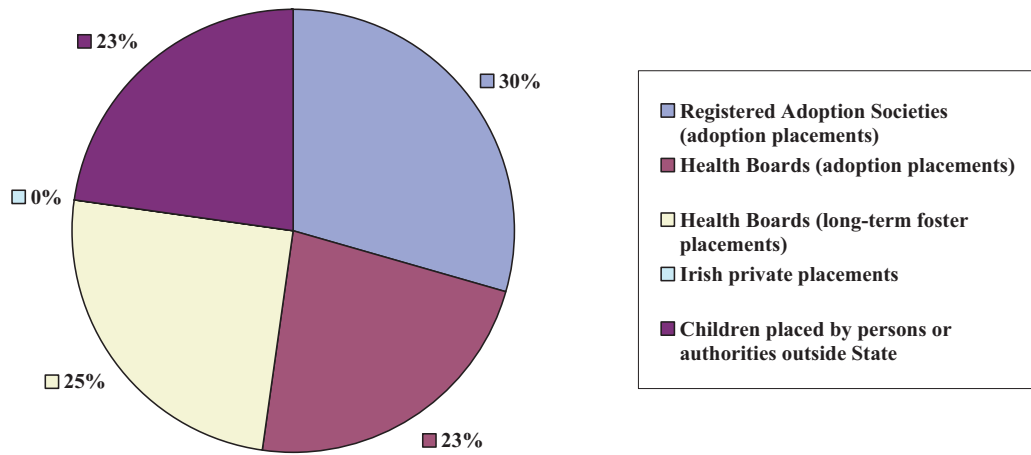


Table 3 Orders made in respect of each health board area

	Family Adoptions	%	Non-Family Adoptions	%	Total	%	Census 2002 % of total population
Eastern (Regional Health Authority Area)	50	27%	30	34%	80	29%	35%
Midland	17	9%	6	7%	23	8%	6%
Mid-Western	23	12%	10	11%	33	12%	9%
North-Eastern	16	9%	8	9%	24	9%	8%
North-Western	8	4%	6	7%	14	5%	6%
South-Eastern	27	15%	9	10%	36	13%	11%
Southern	24	13%	10	11%	34	12%	15%
Western	20	11%	9	10%	29	11%	10%
TOTAL	185	100%	88	100%	273	100%	100%

Chart 5 Orders made in respect of each health board area

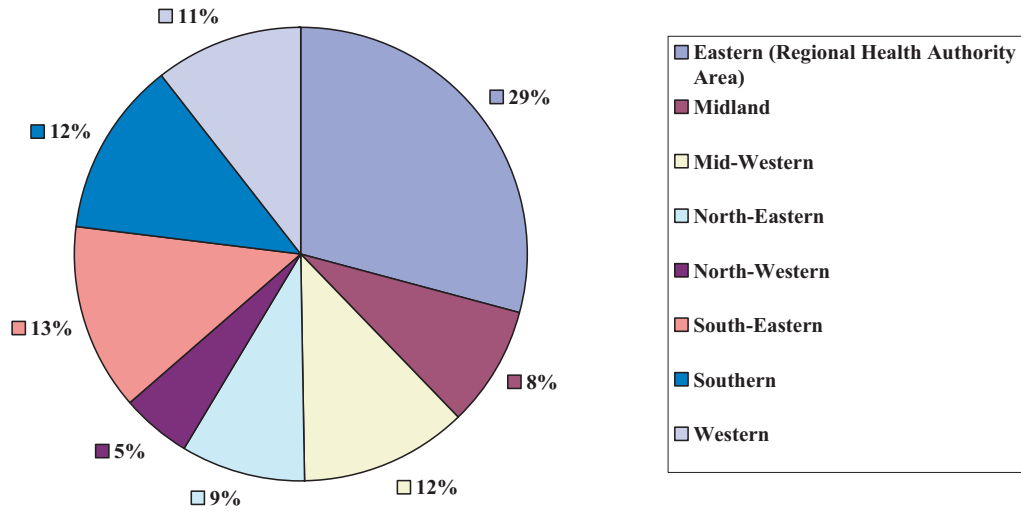


Chart 6 Orders made in respect of each health board area: Family Adoptions

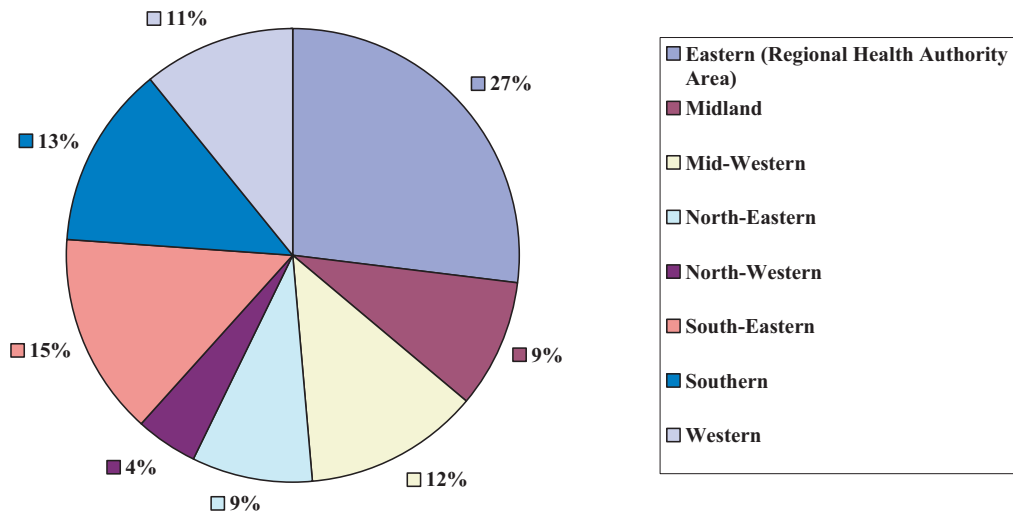


Chart 7 Orders made in respect of each health board area: Non-Family Adoptions

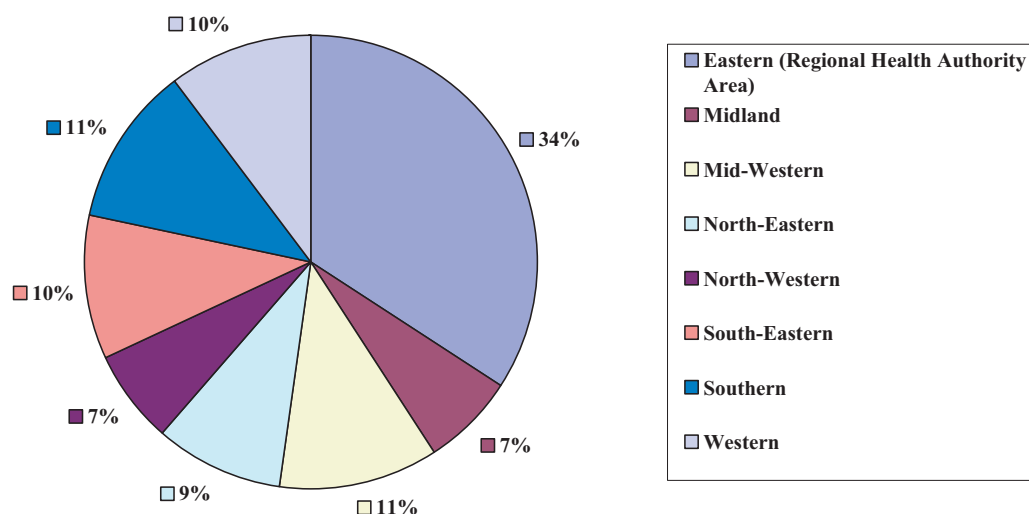


Table 4 Orders made in respect of placements by each adoption society and health board

<u>Society</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>Health Board</u>	<u>2004</u>
Cunamh	13	Eastern	8
PACT	1	Midland	3
St Louise Adoption Society	1	Mid-Western	6
St. Anne's Adoption Society	0	North-Eastern	2
CLANN	5	North-Western	1
St. Catherine's Adoption Society	1	South-Eastern	9
St. Mura's Adoption Society	5	Southern	9
o		Western	4
		o	o
Total	26	Total	42

Chart 10 Orders made in respect of placements by each adoption society and health board

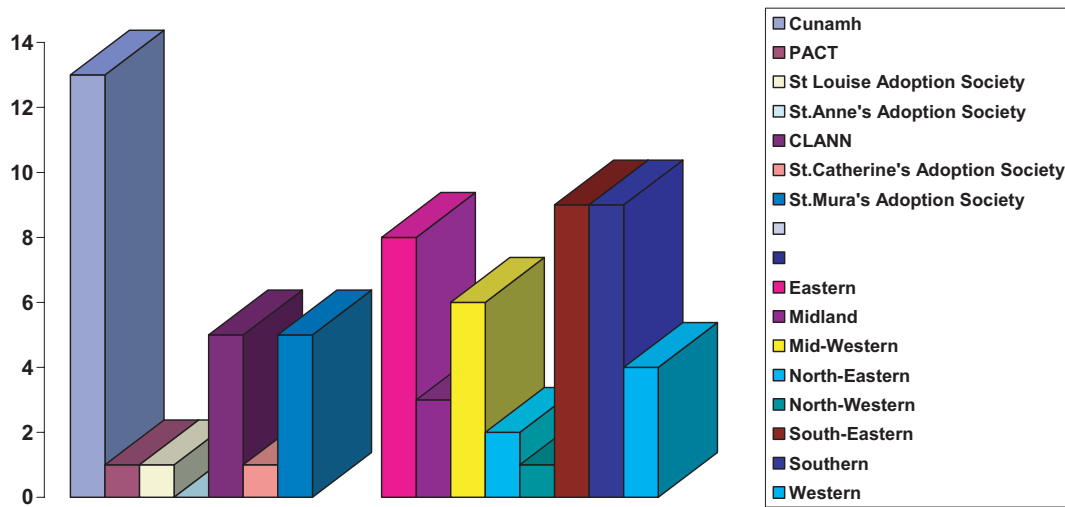


Table 5 Structure of Adoptive Families, 2004

	Family Adoptions		Non-Family Adoptions		TOTAL
No other children	33	17.8%	33	37.5%	66
Natural children only	152	82.2%	13	14.8%	165
Adopted children only	0	0.0%	36	40.9%	36
Natural and adopted children	0	0.0%	6	6.8%	6
Total	185	100%	88	100%	273

Chart 11 Structure of Adoptive Families, 2004

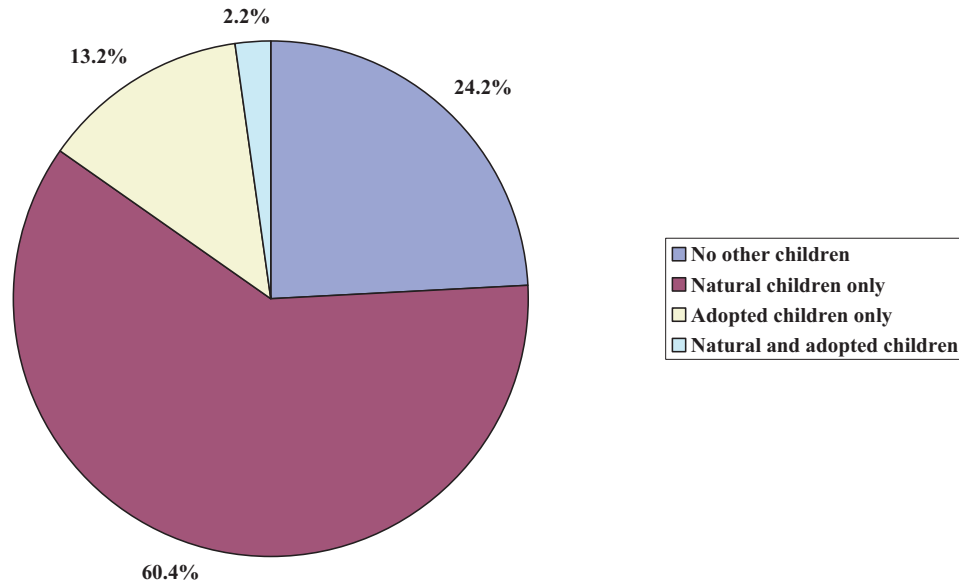


Chart 12 Structures of Adoptive Families: Family Adoptions

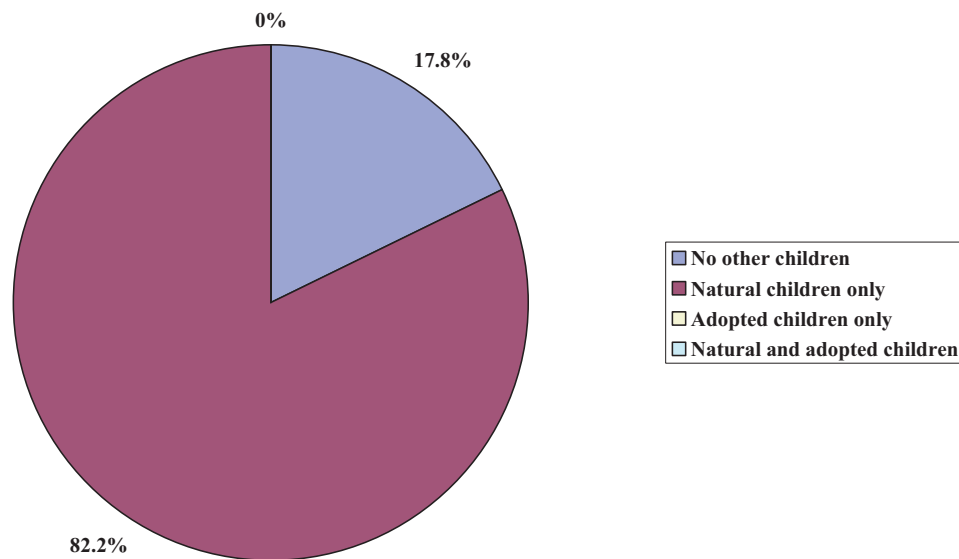


Chart 13 Structure of Adoptive Families: Non-Family Adoptions

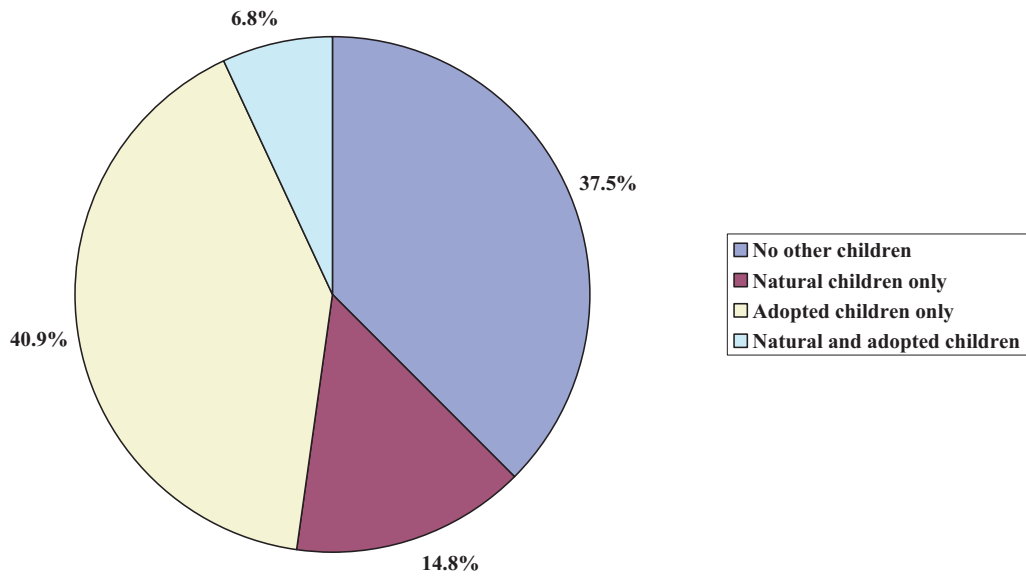


Table 6 Age of child at date of Adoption Order

	Family Adoptions		Non-Family Adoptions		Total
	o	o	o	o	
Under 1 Year	0	0%	7	8%	7
Between 1 and 2 years	3	2%	42	48%	45
Between 2 and 3 years	1	1%	11	12%	12
Between 3 and 4 years	2	1%	6	7%	8
Between 4 and 5 years	11	6%	2	2%	13
Between 5 and 10 years	82	44%	6	7%	88
Between 10 and 15 years	64	35%	5	6%	69
Between 15 and 18 years	22	12%	9	10%	31
o	o	o	o	o	o
TOTAL	185	100%	88	100%	273

Chart 14 Age of child at date of Adoption Order: Overall

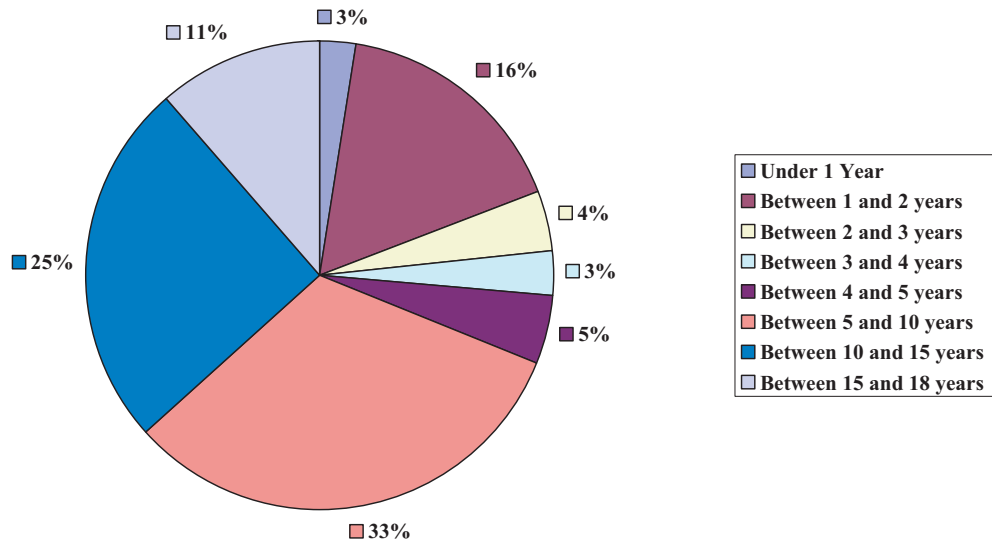


Chart 15 Age of child at date of Adoption Order: Family Adoptions

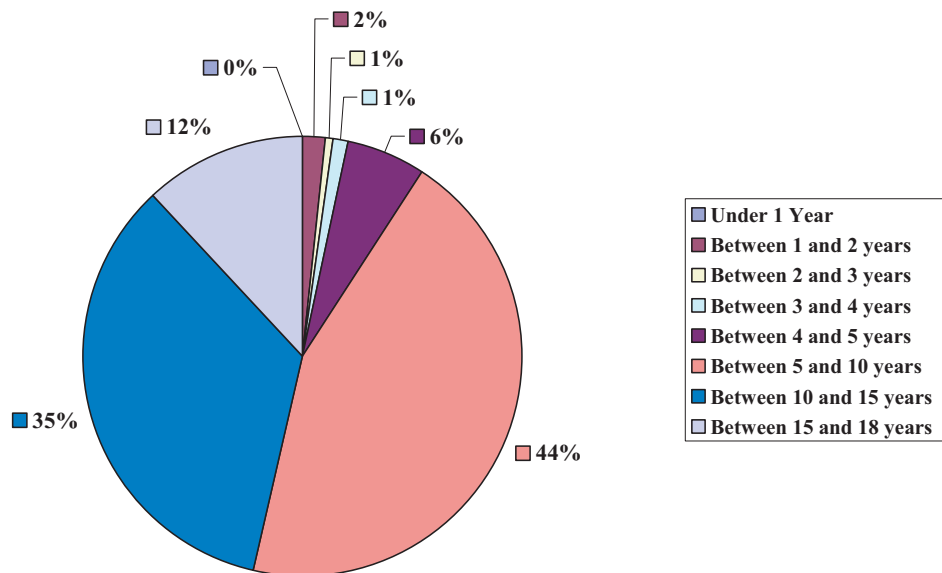


Chart 16 Age of child at date of Adoption Order: Non-Family Adoptions

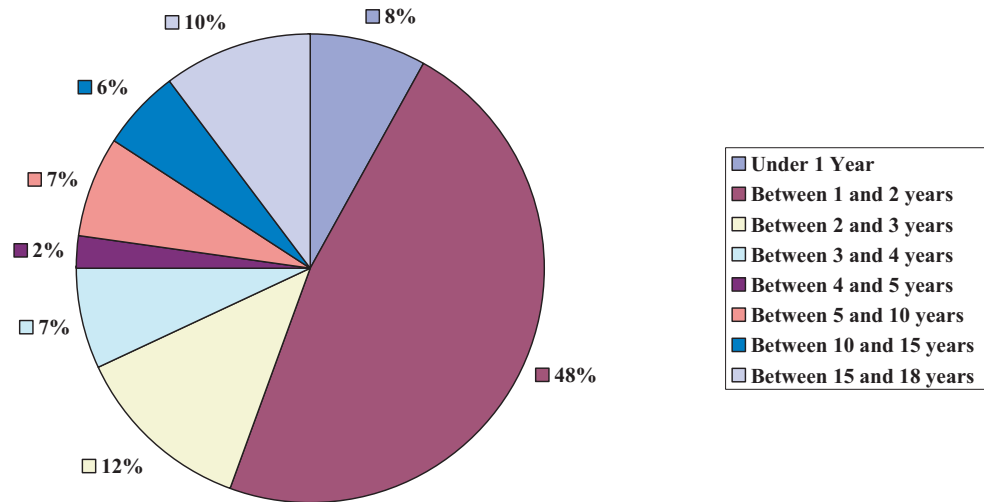


Table 7 Length of time between date of placement and date of order

	< 2 mths	2-6 mths	6-10 mths	10-14 mths	14-18mths	18-24mths	> 2 yrs	> 5 Yrs	Total
	0	0	10	2	0	0	1	0	13
Cunamh	0	0	10	2	0	0	1	0	13
PACT	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
St. Anne's Adoption Society	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
St. Catherine's Adoption Society	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
CLANN	0	0	3	2	0	0	0	0	5
St. Louise Adoption Society	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
St. Mura's Adoption Society	0	0	0	2	1	2	0	0	5
Health Boards	0	1	11	5	1	1	9	14	42
Private Adoption Placements (outside State)	0	0	7	6	2	3	2	0	20
Private Adoption Placements (Ireland)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	0	1	32	18	4	6	13	14	88
°	0%	1%	36%	20%	5%	7%	15%	16%	100%

Chart 17 Length of time between date of placement and date of Order

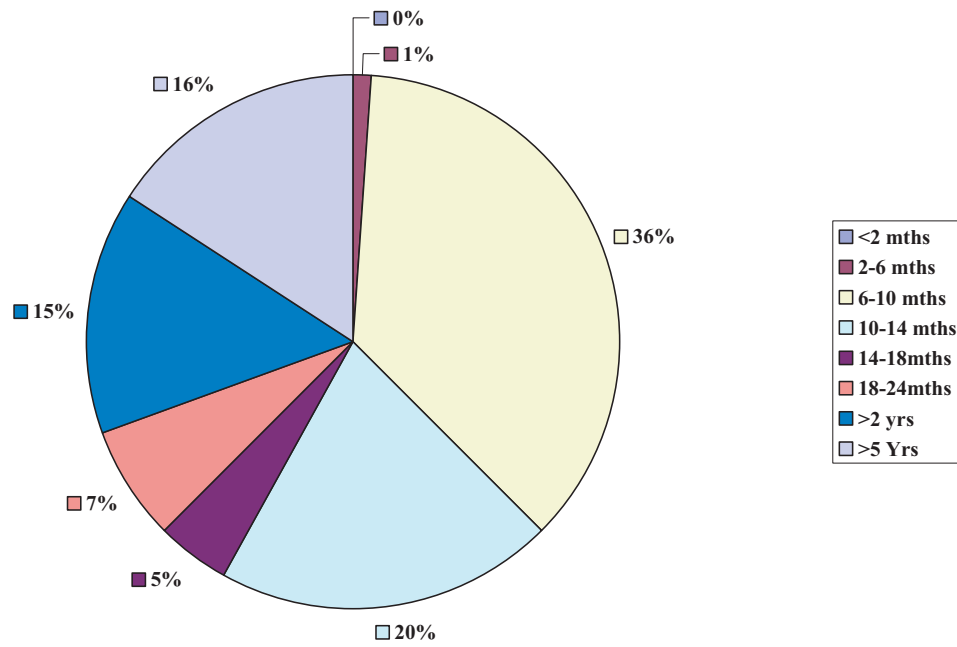


Table 8 Age of child at placement for adoption

	< 2 mths	2-6 mths	6-9 mths	9-12 mths	12-18 mths	18-24 mths	2-5 yrs	> 5 yrs	Total
Cunamh	2	7	4	0	0	0	0	0	13
PACT	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
St. Anne's Adoption Society	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
St. Catherine's Adoption Society	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
CLANN	1	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	5
St. Louise Adoption Society	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
St. Mura's Adoption Society	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
Health Boards	5	11	7	5	7	0	5	2	42
Private Adoption Placements (outside State)	0	2	6	4	3	2	3	0	20
Private Adoption Placements (Ireland)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	9	28	18	10	11	2	8	2	88
	10%	32%	20%	11%	13%	2%	9%	2%	100%

Chart 18 **Age of child at placement for adoption**

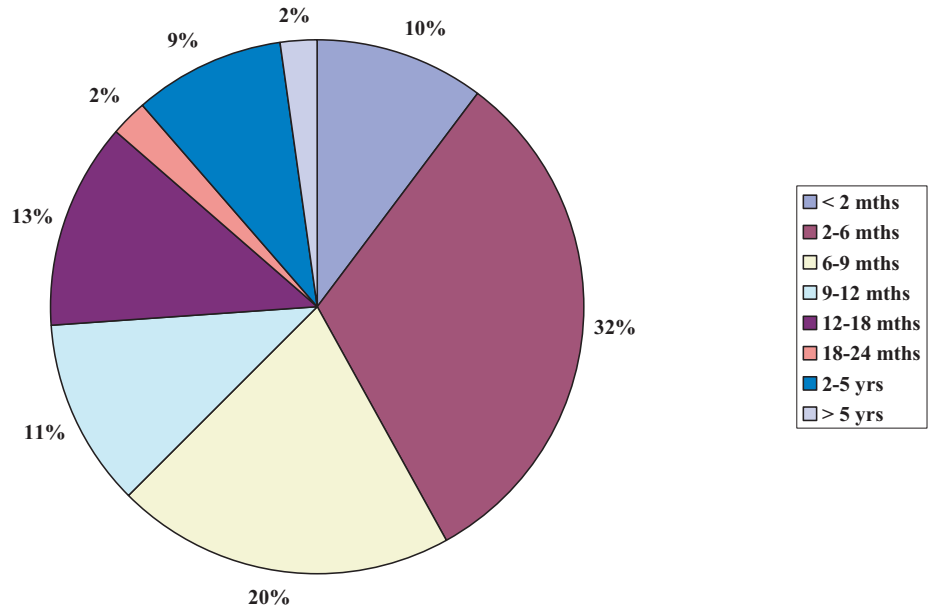


Table 9 Length of time between date of application for Order and making of Order

	<2 mths	2-6 mths	6-10 mths	10-14 mths	14-18mths	18-24mths	>2 yrs	>5 Yrs	Total
Cunamh	0	0	10	2	0	0	1	0	13
PACT	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
St. Anne's Adoption Society	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
St. Catherine's Adoption Society	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
CLANN	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	1	5
St. Louise Adoption Society	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
St. Mura's Adoption Society	0	0	0	2	1	2	0	0	5
Health Boards	0	1	11	5	1	1	9	14	42
Private Adoption Placements (outside State)	0	0	7	6	2	3	2	0	20
Private Adoption Placements (Ireland)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	0%	1%	35%	20%	5%	7%	15%	17%	88
									100%

Chart 19 Length of time between date of application for Order and making of Order

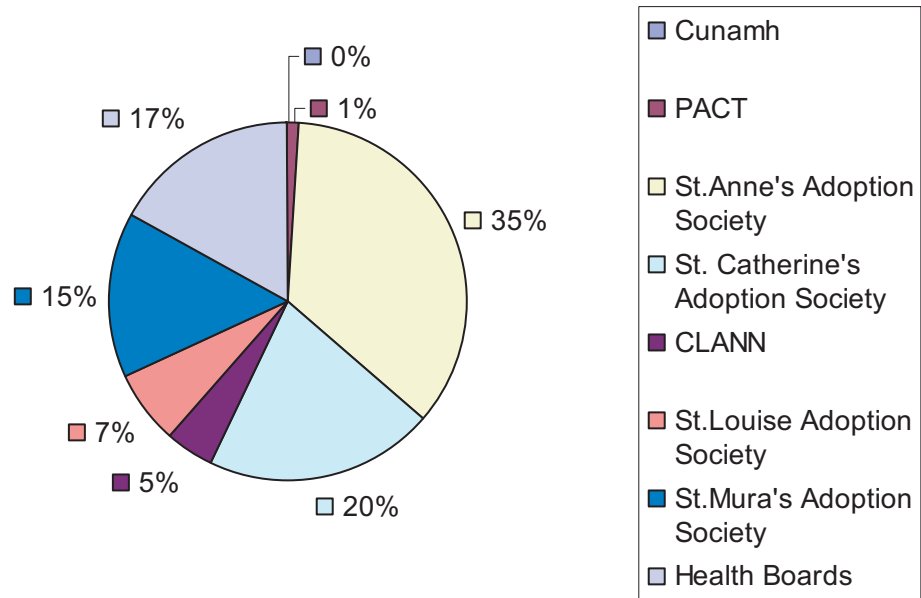


Table 10 Information on Birth / Natural Fathers

	No Identifying Information	Identity Known but not notified of application*	Notified but did not request or did not attend hearing	Heard By Board	Took Proceedings**	Deceased	Total
Cunamh	7	2	0	3	0	1	13
PACT	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
St. Anne's Adoption Society	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
St. Catherine's Adoption Society	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
CLANN	2	0	2	1	0	0	5
St. Louise Adoption Society	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
St. Mura's Adoption Society	4	0	1	0	0	0	5
Health Boards	19	4	9	7	0	3	42
Private Adoption Placements (Irish)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Private Adoption Placements (outside State)	12	5	1	0	0	2	20
Family Adoptions	13	28	127	10	1	6	185
TOTAL	57	39	142	22	1	12	273
	21%	14%	52%	8%	0%	4%	100%

*This figure includes cases where the fathers' identities were known but were untraceable for notification purposes.

**This figure refers to fathers who proceedings in respect of the child subsequent to being notified of the adoption application or being heard by the board

*** The total figure excludes four cases where the birth father himself adopted the child

Chart 20 Information on Birth / Natural Fathers

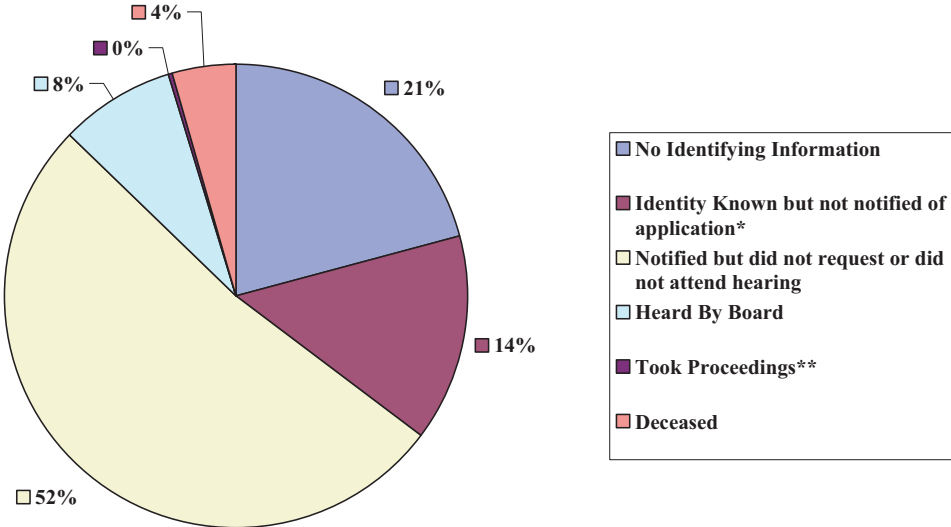


Table 11 Age of adopters at date of Adoption Order

	18-30 YEARS	30-35 YEARS	35-40 YEARS	40-45 YEARS	Over 45	Total
o	o	o	o	o	o	o
Cunamh	0	3	22	1	0	26
PACT	0	0	1	1	0	2
St. Anne's Adoption Society	0	0	0	0	0	0
St. Catherine's Adoption Society	0	0	1	1	0	2
CLANN	0	2	3	3	2	10
St. Louise Adoption Society	0	0	0	2	0	2
St. Mura's Adoption Society	0	1	4	5	0	10
Health Boards	0	8	25	22	28	83
Private Adoption Placements (outside State)	0	7	6	20	6	39
Private Adoption Placements (Ireland)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Family Adoptions	100	166	74	14	13	367
o	o	o	o	o	o	o
TOTAL	100	187	136	69	49	541
	18%	35%	25%	13%	9%	100%

Chart 21 **Age of adopters at date of Adoption Order**

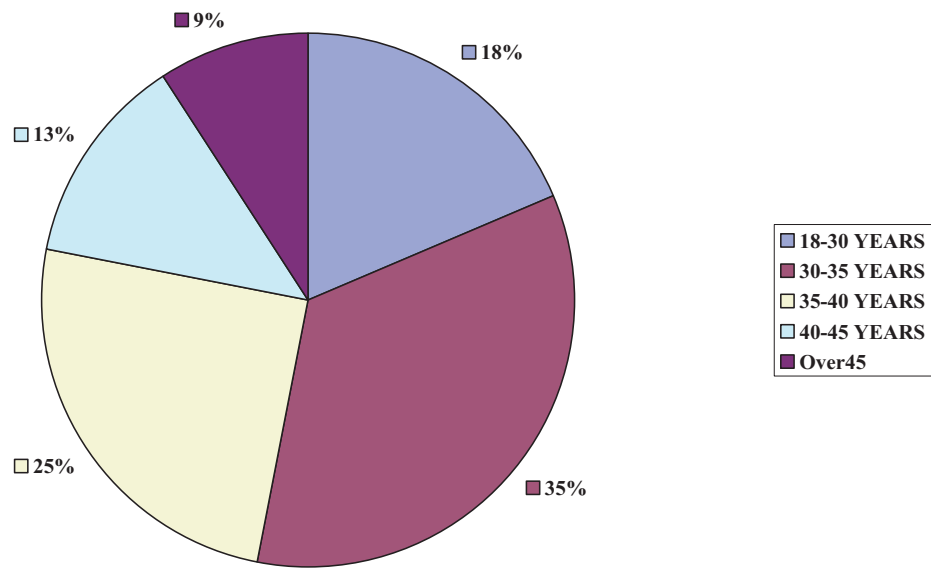


Table 12 Age of Birth / Natural Mother at date of birth of child

	Under 16	16-18	18-21	21-25	25-30	Over 30	Not known	Total
o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
Cunamh	0	2	2	4	3	3	0	13
PACT	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
St. Anne's Adoption Society	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
St. Catherine's Adoption Society	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
CLANN	0	0	1	2	2	2	0	5
St. Louise Adoption Society	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1
St. Mura's Adoption Society	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	5
Health Boards	0	1	10	12	9	6	4	42
Private Adoption Placements (Irish)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Private Adoption Placements (outside State)	1	1	2	6	3	3	6	20
o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
TOTAL	1	5	16	28	28	18	10	88
	1%	6%	18%	32%	20%	20%	12%	100%

Chart 22 Age of Birth / Natural Mother at date of birth of child

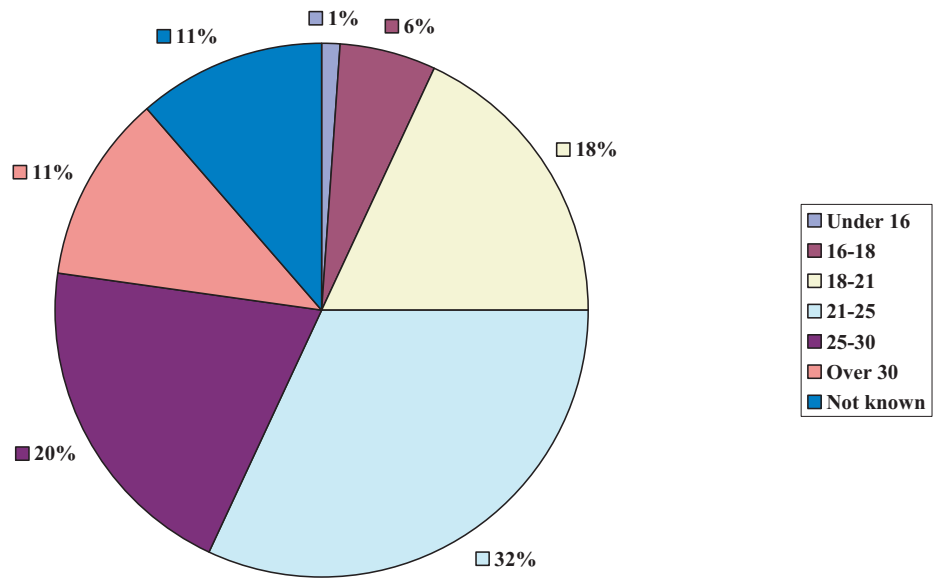


Table 13 Analysis of placements, 1995 - 2004

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Number of applications received	438	407	431	368	367	400	332	329	298	286
Number of orders made	490	405	422	400	317	303	293	266	263	273
Orders made in respect of children placed by:										
Adoption Societies	109 22%	115 28%	95 23%	68 17%	53 17%	46 15%	32 11%	45 17%	23 9%	26 10%
Health Boards	48 10%	26 6%	41 10%	31 8%	37 12%	31 10%	49 17%	31 12%	45 17%	42 15%
Birth mother and others	36 7%	21 5%	36 9%	37 9%	30 9%	19 6%	16 5%	23 9%	24 9%	20 7%
Orders made in respect of family adoptions	297 61%	243 60%	250 59%	264 66%	197 62%	207 68%	196 67%	167 63%	171 65%	185 68%

Graph 1 **Analysis of placements, Family Adoptions as a % of total**

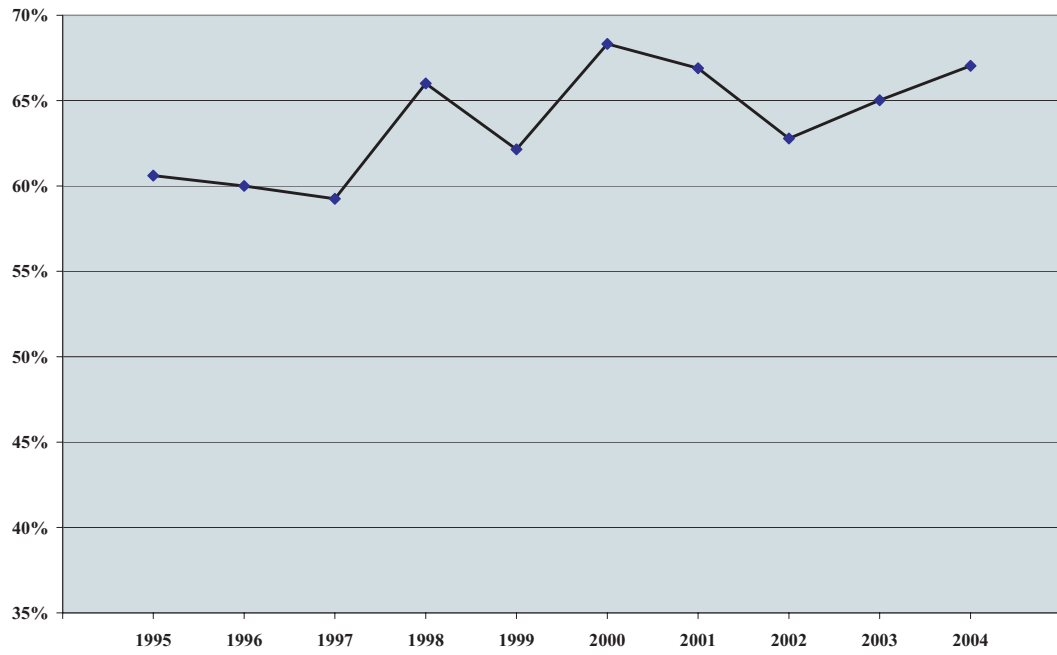


Table 14 Birth and Adoption Trends in Ireland 1953 - 2004

Year	Total Births	Non-Marital Births	% of Total Births	No. of Adoptions	Adoptions as % of Non-Marital Births
1964	64072	1292	2.02%	1003	77.63%
1965	63525	1403	2.21%	1049	74.77%
1966	62215	1436	2.31%	1178	82.03%
1967	61307	1540	2.51%	1493	96.95%
1968	61004	1558	2.55%	1343	86.20%
1969	62912	1642	2.61%	1225	74.60%
1970	64382	1709	2.65%	1414	82.74%
1971	67551	1842	2.73%	1305	70.85%
1972	68527	2005	2.93%	1291	64.39%
1973	68713	2167	3.15%	1402	64.70%
1974	68907	2309	3.35%	1415	61.28%
1975	67178	2515	3.74%	1443	57.38%
1976	67718	2545	3.76%	1104	43.38%
1977	68892	2877	4.18%	1127	39.17%
1978	70299	3003	4.27%	1223	40.73%
1979	72539	3337	4.60%	988	29.61%
1980	74064	3723	5.03%	1115	29.95%
1981	72158	3914	5.42%	1191	30.43%
1982	70843	4358	6.15%	1191	27.33%
1983	67117	4552	6.78%	1184	26.01%
1984	64062	5116	7.99%	1195	23.36%
1985	62388	5282	8.47%	882	16.70%
1986	61620	5946	9.65%	800	13.45%
1987	58433	6347	10.86%	715	11.27%
1988	54600	6483	11.87%	649	10.01%
1989	52018	6671	12.82%	615	9.22%
1990	53044	7767	14.64%	648	8.34%
1991	52718	8912	16.91%	590	6.62%
1992	51089	9211	18.03%	523	5.68%
1993	49304	9826	19.93%	500	5.09%
1994	47928	9904	20.66%	424	4.28%
1995	48530	10788	22.23%	490	4.54%
1996	50390	12484	24.77%	405	3.24%
1997	52311	13892	26.56%	422	3.04%
1998	53551	15133	28.26%	400	2.64%
1999	53354	16461	30.85%	317	1.93%
2000	54239	17235	31.78%	303	1.76%
2001	57882	18049	31.18%	293	1.62%
2002	60521	18815	31.09%	266	1.41%
2003	61517	19313	31.39%	263	1.36%
2004	61684	19935	32.32%	273	1.37%

Sources: Statistical Abstracts, (various years) C.S.O.

Table 15 Total number of children adopted into Ireland between 1991 and 2004 whose adoptions have been entered in the Register of Foreign Adoptions* / who have been or are being processed under the Adoption Acts 1952 and 1988.

Country	No of Children	% of Total
Romania	784	31.09%
Russia	678	26.88%
China	224	8.88%
Vietnam	164	6.5%
Guatemala	163	6.46%
Belarus	142	5.63%
Kazakhstan	96	3.8%
Thailand	63	2.5%
Ukraine	40	1.59%
Ethiopia	33	1.3%
India	25	0.99%
Brazil	17	0.67%
Colombia	16	0.63%
Paraguay	16	0.63%
Mexico	14	0.56%
Taiwan	8	0.32%
Philippines	8	0.32%
Peru	5	0.2%
Bulgaria	5	0.2%
Texas, USA	4	0.16%
Uganda	2	0.08%
Chile	1	0.04%
El Salvador	1	0.04%
Israel	1	0.04%
Japan	1	0.04%
Lebanon	1	0.04%
Massachusetts, USA	1	0.04%
Bolivia	1	0.04%
Sri Lanka	1	0.04%
Venezuela	1	0.04%
Zambia	1	0.04%
Kenya	1	0.04%
Zimbabwe	1	0.04%
Morocco	1	0.04%
Bosnia & Herzegovina	1	0.04%
Malawi	1	0.04%
Total	2522	100%

* Please note that there is not legal requirement for adoptive parents to apply to have an entry made in the register of foreign adoptions.

Table 16a Number of children adopted into Ireland whose adoptions have been entered in the Register of Foreign Adoptions from 2001 to 2004.

Country	2001	2002	2003	2004
Belarus	11	27	39	56
Bosnia & Herzegovina	0	0	0	1
Brazil	0	0	0	1
Bulgaria	1	1	0	0
China	16	51	56	60
Colombia	3	1	1	0
Ethiopia	0	2	7	16
Kazakhstan	19	23	17	9
Kenya	1	0	0	0
Malawi	0	0	0	1
Mexico	1	1	3	3
Romania	48	13	8	2
Russia	45	107	139	189
Taiwan	3	1	1	1
Texas	0	0	1	0
Thailand	5	15	16	8
Ukraine	0	12	14	12
Vietnam	10	81	39	16
Zimbabwe	0	1	0	0
Total	163	336	341	375

Table 16b Number of children adopted whose adoptions have been or are being processed under the Adoption Act, 1952 by year of application for an Adoption Order from 2001 to 2004.

Country	2001	2002	2003	2004
Guatemala	14	18	11	17
India	0	1	2	4
Philippines	0	1	2	2
Total	14	20	15	23

Table 16c Number of children adopted whose adoptions have been or are being processed under the Adoption Act, 1988 by year of application for an Adoption Order from 2001 to 2004.

Country	2001	2002	2003	2004
Paraguay	0	0	2	0
Total	0	0	2	0

Table 16d Summary - Number of children adopted abroad for the years 2001 to 2004 in respect of adoptions entered in the Register of Foreign Adoptions and in respect of applications for an Adoption Order under the Adoption Acts, 1952 and 1988.

	2001	2002	2003	2004
Entries in the Register of Foreign Adoptions under the Adoption Act, 1991	163	336	341	375
Adoption Act, 1952 applications	14	20	15	23
Adoption Act, 1988 applications	2	1	2	0
Total	179	357	358	398

Chart 23 Summary - Number of children adopted into Ireland between 2001 and 2004 whose adoptions have been entered in the Register of Foreign Adoptions or whose adoptions proceeded under the Adoption Acts, 1952 and 1988.

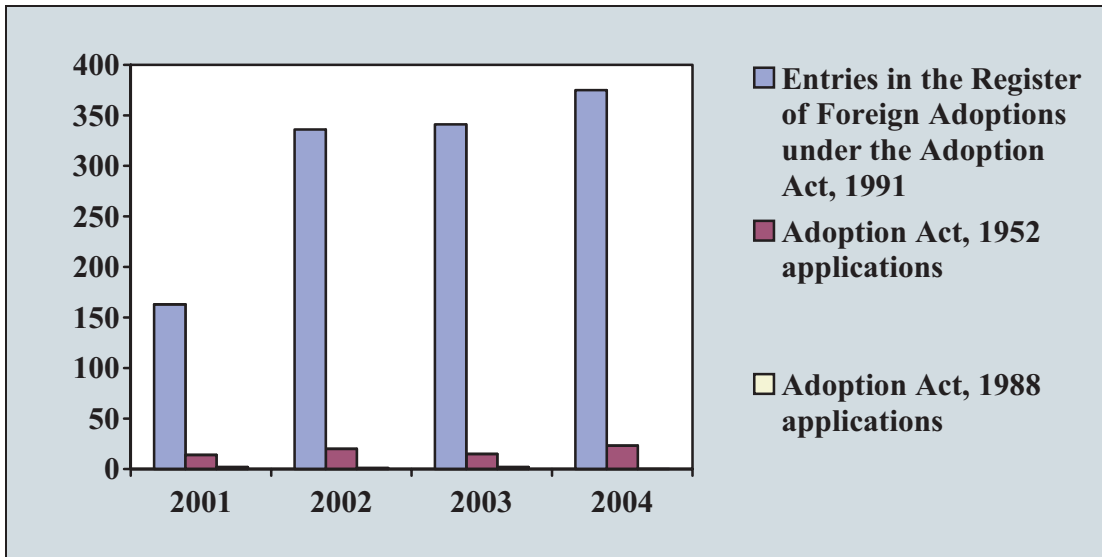


Table 17 Number of Declarations of Eligibility and Suitability granted and refused by the Adoption Board under the Adoption Act, 1991

Year	Number of Declarations Granted	Number of Declarations Refused
1991	4	1
1992	40	1
1993	54	6
1994	63	3
1995	109	4
1996	117	5
1997	176	1
1998	206	3
1999	242	1
2000	282	1
2001	391	1
2002	399	1
2003	468	0
2004	461	0
Total	3012	28

Graph 2 Number of Declarations of Eligibility and Suitability granted and refused by the Adoption Board under the Adoption Act, 1991

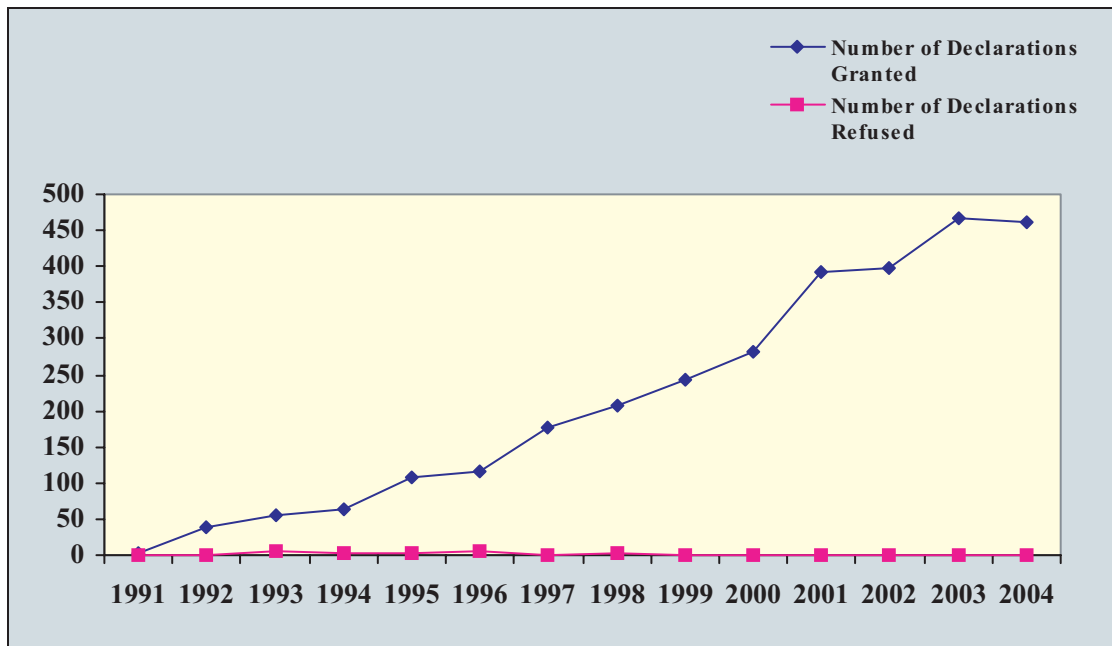


Table 18 **Declarations of Eligibility and Suitability and Extensions granted by the Adoption Board by Health Board and / or Registered Adoption Society in 2004**

Agency	Approval to adopt one child	Approval to adopt one child / 2 siblings	Total declarations granted	Extensions granted	Total declarations granted and extensions granted
ERHA	171	2	173	9	182
MHB	27	0	27	2	29
MWHB	28	3	31	9	40
NEHB	35	3	38	3	41
NWHB	19	2	21	5	26
SEHB	51	8	59	3	62
SHB	64	0	64	11	75
WHB	26	2	28	3	31
Clarecare	13	0	13	1	14
PACT	6	1	7	0	7
Adoption Board	n/a	n/a	n/a	204	204
Total	440	21	461	250	711

Chart 24 **Number of Declarations of Eligibility and Suitability and Extensions granted by the Adoption Board in 2004**

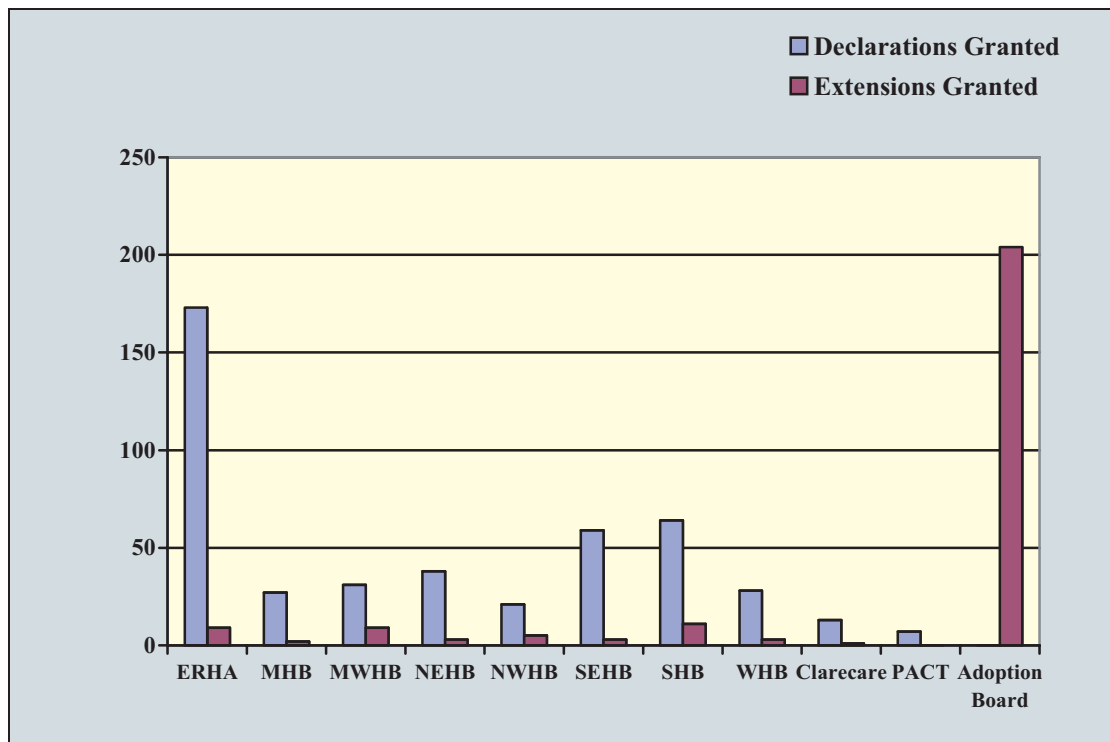


Table 19 Trends in Overseas Adoption 1991-2004

Year	Number of Declarations Granted	Number of Adoptions effected Overseas
1991	4	61
1992	40	301
1993	54	53
1994	63	44
1995	109	52
1996	117	72
1997	176	84
1998	206	147
1999	242	191
2000	282	225
2001	391	179
2002	399	357
2003	468	358
2004	461	398
Total	3012	2522

Graph 3 Trends in Overseas Adoption 1991-2004

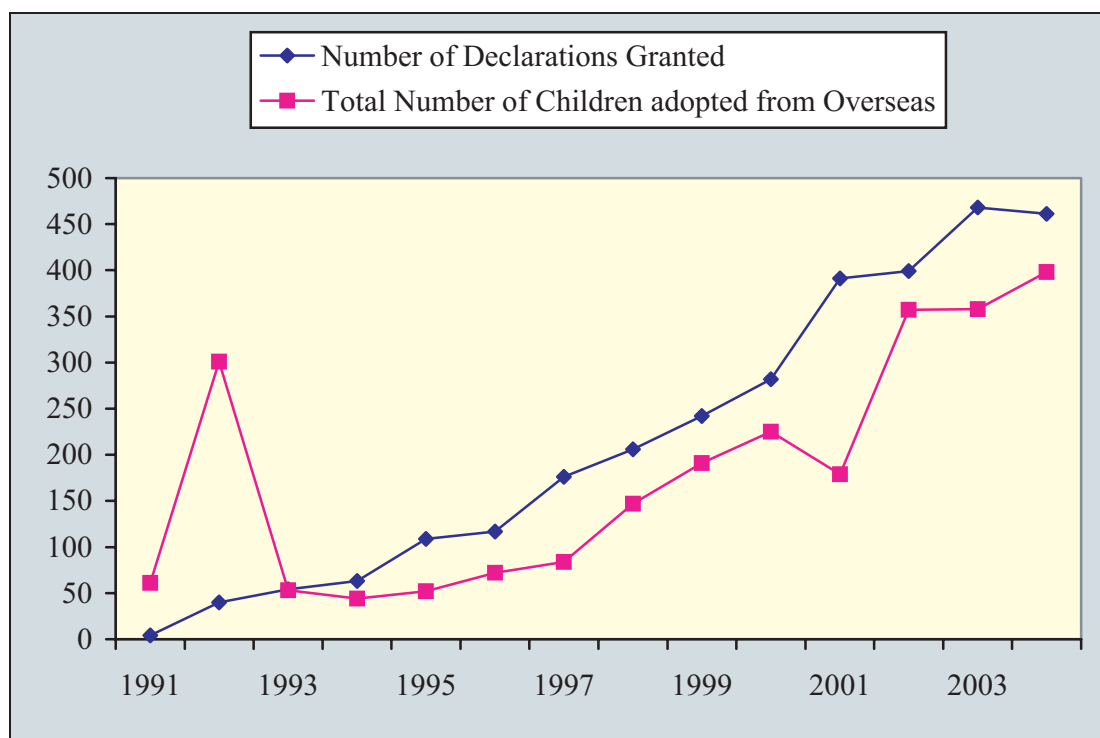


Table 20 Age of applicants on date Declaration of Eligibility and Suitability was granted for the years 2001 to 2004 in respect of adoptions recognised under the Adoption Act, 1991

Age Range	2001		2002		2003		2004		Total number of applicants 2000-2003	
	No of Applicants	%	No of Applicants	%	No of Applicants	%	No of Applicants	%	No of Applicants	%
Under 25 Years	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
25-30 Years	0	0.00	9	1.27	4	0.57	5	0.69	19	0.88
30-35 Years	36	10.68	118	16.69	57	8.15	68	9.34	267	12.4
35-39 Years	89	26.41	208	29.42	174	24.89	193	26.51	603	28.02
39-43 Years	120	35.61	213	30.13	226	32.33	277	38.05	682	31.69
43-47 Years	67	19.88	118	16.69	145	20.74	140	19.23	402	18.68
47-50 Years	14	4.15	30	4.24	56	8.01	33	4.53	115	5.34
50-54 Years	9	2.67	8	1.13	29	4.15	8	1.10	50	2.32
54-57 Years	1	0.30	2	0.28	7	1.00	3	0.41	11	0.51
57-60 Years	1	0.30	1	0.14	1	0.14	1	0.14	3	0.14
60 Years Plus	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
Total	337	100	707	100	699	100	728	100	2152	100

Table 21a Age of child on date adoption was effected by country of origin in respect of entries made in the Register of Foreign Adoptions for year 2004

Country	0<1	1<2	2<3	3<4	4<5	5>6	6<7	7+	Total
Belarus	1	9	15	13	4	3	1	10	56
Bosnia & Herzegovina	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Brazil	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
China	31	26	2	0	0	1	0	0	60
Ethiopia	14	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	16
Kazakhstan	7	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	9
Malawi	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Mexico	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Romania	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Russia	85	68	22	3	5	2	0	4	189
Taiwan	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Thailand	0	0	6	1	1	0	0	0	8
Ukraine	0	9	3	0	0	0	0	0	12
Vietnam	14	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	16
Total	160	115	50	18	10	7	1	14	375
% of Total	42.67%	30.67%	13.33%	4.8%	2.67%	1.87%	0.27%	3.73%	100%

Table 21b Age of child adopted from abroad at time of placement for applications for an Adoption Order under the Adoption Act, 1952 for year 2004.

Country	0<1	1<2	2<3	3<4	4<5	5>6	6<7	7+	Total
Guatemala	14	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	17
India	0	2	1	0	0	1	0	0	4
Philippines	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
Total	15	5	1	1	0	1	0	0	23

Table 22a Sex of child, by country of origin, in respect of entries made in the Register of Foreign Adoptions for the year 2004

Country	Boys	Girls	Total
Belarus	42	14	56
Bosnia & Herzegovina	1	0	1
Brazil	1	0	1
China	0	60	60
Ethiopia	6	10	16
Kazakhstan	6	3	9
Malawi	0	1	1
Mexico	0	3	3
Romania	1	1	2
Russia	110	79	189
Taiwan	0	1	1
Thailand	6	2	8
Ukraine	7	5	12
Vietnam	0	16	16
Total	180	195	375

Table 22b Sex of child for children adopted whose adoptions have been or are being processed under the Adoption Act, 1952 for the year 2004

Country	Boys	Girls	Total
Guatemala	8	9	17
India	0	4	4
Philippines	2	0	2
Total	10	13	23

Table 22c Summary - Sex of child for children adopted into Ireland whose adoptions have been entered in the Register of Foreign adoptions or whose adoptions have been or are being processed under the Adoption Acts 1952 and 1988 for 2003.

	Boys	Girls
Entries in the Register of Foreign Adoptions under the Adoption Act, 1991	180	195
Adoption Act , 1952 applications	10	13
Adoption Act, 1988 applications	0	0
Total	190	208

Table 23 Number of Sole Applicants who adopted children from abroad whose adoptions were (a) recognised under the Adoption Act, 1991 and (b) processed under the Adoption Acts, 1952 and 1988 for the years 1991 to 2004.

Year	Number of Sole Applicants who had adoptions entered in the Register of Foreign Adoptions under the Adoption Act, 1991	Number of Sole Applicants whose applications were processed under the Adoption Act, 1952	Number of Sole Applicants whose applications were processed under the Adoption Act, 1988
1991	0	0	0
1992	7	0	0
1993	2	0	2
1994	1	0	0
1995	0	0	0
1996	0	0	0
1997	0	0	0
1998	2	0	0
1999	2	0	0
2000	7	0	0
2001	1	0	0
2002	7	0	0
2003	15	0	1
2004	22	1	0
Total	66	1	3

Only one sole applicant who had an adoption entered in the Register of Foreign Adoption was male (1992)

Table 24a Adoption Information and Tracing Enquiries, 2004

Information & Tracing - Statistics	2004	%
<i>Applications for Release of Original Birth Certificate</i>		
<i>Approved</i>	53	55.2%
<i>Refused</i>	4	4.2%
<i>Adoptee Referred to Placement Agency</i>	30	31.3%
<i>Withdrawn or Discontinued</i>	9	9.4%
<i>Access Granted by UK Authorities</i>	0	0.0%
Total	96	10.9%
<i>Enquiries by Adoptees for Contact with Natural Parent</i>		
<i>Referred to Placement Agency</i>	277	87.7%
<i>Reunions Organised by Board</i>	4	1.3%
<i>Contact Refused by Birth / Natural Parents</i>	7	2.2%
<i>Adopted persons Counselling by Board</i>	5	1.6%
<i>Search Discontinued</i>	14	4.4%
<i>Search Inconclusive</i>	9	2.8%
Total	316	35.9%
<i>Enquiries by Natural Parents for Contact with Adoptee</i>		
<i>Referred to Placement Agency</i>	65	85.5%
<i>Reunions Organised by Board</i>	2	2.6%
<i>Contact Refused by Adopted person</i>	2	2.6%
<i>Birth / Natural Parents Counselling by Board</i>	0	0.0%
<i>Search Discontinued</i>	4	5.3%
<i>Search Inconclusive</i>	3	3.9%
Total	76	8.6%
<i>Enquiries by Agencies</i>		
<i>Practice Issues</i>	87	40.7%
<i>Information From File</i>	123	57.5%
<i>Referred to Other Agency</i>	4	1.9%
Total	214	24.3%
<i>Sibling Enquiry</i>		
<i>Sibling/Half-Sibling Tracing Adopted person</i>	37	72.5%
<i>Adoptee Tracing Sibling/Half-Sibling</i>	5	9.8%

<i>Reunions Organised by Board</i>	9	17.6%
<i>Contact Refused</i>	0	0.0%
Total	51	5.8%
<i>Other Enquiries Received</i>		
<i>Post Reunion Counselling</i>	0	0.0%
<i>Medical Enquiry</i>	7	5.5%
<i>Adoptive Parents</i>	16	12.5%
<i>Relative of Adopted person</i>	9	7.0%
<i>Relative of Birth / Natural Parent</i>	9	7.0%
<i>Complaints Against Board</i>	0	0.0%
<i>Complaints Against Agencies</i>	6	4.7%
<i>Request to Place Information on File from Birth / Natural Parent</i>	15	11.7%
<i>Request to Place Information on File from Adopted Person</i>	18	14.1%
<i>Cases where 'Matches' were Made</i>	10	7.8%
<i>Others e.g. Inheritance/Citizenship Enquiries</i>	38	29.7%
Total	128	14.5%
Total Tracing & Information Enquiries Received	881	100.0%

<i>Volume per Agency</i>	2004	%
<i>The Adoption Board</i>		
<i>St. Therese's Adoption Society</i>	8	1%
<i>Private Placement</i>	54	6%
<i>Family Adoptions</i>	25	3%
<i>National Maternity Hospital</i>	3	0%
Total Adoption Board	90	10%
<i>Eastern Regional Health Authority (NAHB)</i>		
<i>Eastern Health Board</i>		0%
<i>Dublin Health Authority</i>	3	0%
<i>Dublin Board of Assistance</i>	7	1%
<i>St. Patrick's Home Navan Road</i>		0%
<i>St. Louise Adoption Society</i>	89	10%
<i>Kildare County Council</i>	2	0%
<i>Meath County Council</i>	1	0%

Total ERHA	102	12%
Midland Health Board	2	0%
Mid Western Health Board	4	0%
<i>Limerick Catholic Adoption Society</i>	21	2%
Total Mid Western Health Board	25	3%
North Eastern Health Board	2	0%
<i>St. Clare's Adoption Society Stamullen</i>	50	6%
Total NEHB	52	6%
North West Health Board		0%
<i>Donegal County Council</i>	2	0%
<i>Leitrim County Council</i>	2	0%
<i>Sligo County Council</i>	2	0%
Total North Western Health Board	6	1%
South Eastern Health Board (SEEB)	6	1%
<i>St. John's Adoption Society</i>	25	3%
<i>St. Kevin's</i>	3	0%
<i>St. Canice's Adoption Society Kilkenny</i>		0%
<i>Challenge</i>	1	0%
<i>Wexford County Council</i>	9	1%
<i>Waterford Health Authority</i>	1	0%
<i>Ossory Adoption Society</i>	22	3%
<i>South Tipperary Health Authority</i>	1	0%
Total SEHB	68	8%
Southern Health Board	15	
<i>Kerry County Council</i>	1	0%
<i>Cork Health Authority</i>	17	2%
<i>Catholic Women's Aid Society</i>	5	1%
<i>St. Mary's Adoption Society</i>	14	2%
<i>South Cork Board of Assistance</i>	1	0%
Total Southern Health Board	53	6%
Western Health Board (CLANN)	11	1%
<i>St. Nicholas' Adoption Society</i>	11	1%
<i>Mayo Health Authority</i>		0%

<i>Mayo County Council</i>	5	1%
<i>Galway Health Authority</i>	2	0%
Total WHB	29	3%
Sacred Heart Adoption Society	38	4%
<i>Sean Ross Abbey Roscrea</i>	20	2%
<i>CWASC</i>	3	0%
<i>Sacred Heart Convent Castlepollard</i>	11	1%
Total Sacred Heart Adoption Society	72	8%
Others		0%
<i>C'namh</i>	88	10%
<i>ISPCC</i>		0%
<i>PACT</i>	15	2%
<i>RGAS</i>	54	6%
<i>St. Anne's Adoption Society</i>	37	4%
<i>St. Attracta's Adoption Society</i>	17	2%
<i>St. Brigid's Adoption Society</i>	23	3%
<i>St. Catherine's Adoption Society</i>	6	1%
<i>St. Mura's Adoption Society</i>	15	2%
<i>St. Patrick's Guild</i>	116	13%
<i>St. Vincentis, Navan Road</i>		0%
Total Others	371	43%
Total Agency Volume	870	100%

Table 24b Information and Tracing enquiries during 2004 by Sex and Age Group

	Male	Female
Birth / Natural Parent	14	101
Adopted Person	290	337

Age of Enquirer**	< 18	18 to 24	25 to 29	30 to 39	40 to 49	50 to 64	65 +	Unknown	Total
Birth / Natural Parent	0	0	0	20	33	44	6	12	115
	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	17.39%	28.70%	38.26%	5.22%	10.43%	100.00%
Adopted Person	4	71	66	280	124	79	3	0	627
	0.64%	11.32%	10.53%	44.66%	19.78%	12.60%	0.48%	0.00%	100.00%

adoption board

Review of business plan

High Level Objective 1:

We will introduce major organisational change to ensure that the Adoption Authority is and remains an efficient and effective organisation.

Key Task 1.1:

We will publish a corporate plan every three years, and an annual business plan to report progress

Steps to achieve objective	Progress @ end December 2004: (Completed tasks in bold)
Publish Corporate Plan setting out key objectives for 2004 – 2007	The Authority's Corporate Plan was published in February 2004.
Implement Business Planning cycle in the Adoption Authority	Business Planning cycle initiated with the publication of first annual Business Plan in February, 2004.
Publish Annual Report in new format to report on progress in implementing Corporate Plan & Business Plan	2003 Annual Report printed in mid December, 2004 and published after Government approval in January, 2005.

Key Task 1.2:

We will introduce appropriate governance arrangements for the new Adoption Authority.

Steps to achieve objective	Progress @ end December 2004: (Completed tasks in bold)
Implement revised governance arrangements	New Decision Making Procedures have been circulated by the Board to Adoption Approval Committees for consideration. These new procedures will be finalised in early 2005.
Publish Corporate Governance Manual for Adoption Board	The Adoption Board introduced new corporate governance working arrangements in 2004 and meets every month to consider governance issues. Preparation of a Corporate Governance manual for the Board will be undertaken in 2005.

Key Task 1.3: We will put new organisational structures in place and continue to develop and deploy more efficient and effective organisation management processes.	
Steps to achieve objective	Progress @ end December 2004: (Completed tasks in bold)
Formally establish the following new units: Adoption Information and Tracing; Standards & Inspection; Public Information & Communications; Research, Dissemination & Tracing.	Adoption Information & Tracing and Public Information & Communication Units established and functioning. Standards & Inspection Unit established. The Unit's Social Work staff have commenced preparatory work required for the inspection and standardisation of adoption services. Working document on the process of inspection compiled outlining the aims and tasks of the inspectorate. Research, Dissemination & Training Unit also functioning at operational level.
Upgrade of Adoption Authority I. T. and communications infrastructure	Required general upgrading of phone system to cater for additional staff will be provided as part of general office refurbishment. Installation of new switch and upgrade of link to Hawkins House also completed.

High Level Objective 2:

We will develop as an organisation committed to open and consultative processes. We will facilitate all our clients through the provision of information, advice and other appropriate supports.

Key Task 2.1:

We will establish a public information and communications service to promote awareness of adoption and adoption services among adopted people, natural parents and families, adoptive parents and families and the wider general public.

Steps to achieve objective

Progress @ end December 2004:

(Completed tasks in **bold**)

Public Information & Communications Unit will publish a Communications Strategy.

Public information events in Cork and Sligo successfully undertaken. Head of PI&C Unit is preparing a communications strategy for Senior Management consideration.

We will review and update all Adoption literature and address information gaps

We will review and update all Adoption literature and address information gaps

Information & Tracing booklets and packs and the Adoption Board's Website have been updated as required.

Domestic Adoption booklets will be updated following completion of Standardised Framework for Domestic Adoption.

Adoption Information & Tracing papers on the current legal position and on the procedures applying to the release of birth certificates have been prepared and made available to interested parties.

The three information booklets on intercountry adoption were updated during 2004 and circulated to all Health Boards and Adoption Societies.

The Information Packs for the various countries that the Board has Agreements with were also updated.

We will review and update all Adoption literature and address information gaps

These booklets / Packs are available on the Adoption Board's website.

Information meetings were held in Cork and Sligo. This allowed people living in the local area to come and meet with the staff of the Board, to ask any questions which they had and to obtain information booklets / packs.

Update the Adoption Authority website to provide accessible information	The Adoption Board's new Website has been launched and updated material dealing with each area of the Board's responsibilities is now available on the new Website. Work is currently underway to identify further topics/issues/information to be made available on the Website.
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Key Task 2.2:
We will develop an appropriate level of involvement and other support arrangements with stakeholder groups both as a means of securing their input to the development of our services and supporting them in their activities.

Steps to achieve objective	Progress @ end December 2004: (Completed tasks in bold)
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Establish a grant scheme to assist adoption support groups	Grants commitments made to a number of Adoption Support / Stakeholder groups have been dispersed to the groups concerned.
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Establish arrangements for formal meetings with stakeholder groups and for stakeholder involvement in services / policy development work.	<p>Groups representing Adoptive parents, Adopted People, and Natural Parents are members of the Advisory Group on a National Information and Tracing Service.</p> <p>During 2004 these Groups were also represented on the group discussing legal matters relating to adoption and on the sub-groups on the proposed National Voluntary Contact Preference Register and on proposals to scan and index the Adoption Board's files. These sub-groups have completed their deliberations and provided reports via the main Advisory Group on a National Information and Tracing Service to the Adoption Board.</p> <p>A Conference to consider how best to structure a National Information and Tracing Service was held in October 2004. The Advisory group will meet to further discuss the structure of this National service in the new year.</p> <p>The Board met with the IAA, ICAA, VINAFA, and Viet Irish South groups on several occasions while the bilateral Agreement between Ireland and Vietnam was being negotiated and implemented. All of the groups were given the opportunity to raise matters of concern to their members and were kept fully up to date on developments.</p>
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Establish arrangements for formal meetings with stakeholder groups and for stakeholder involvement in services / policy development work.

When the China Pack was being updated, staff from the Board met with the ICCG. The information they provided was invaluable and ensured that the new Pack was as comprehensive and up to date as possible.

The Adoption Board met with representatives from the new Belarusian support group after it was established. Since Belarus suspended all adoptions the Board have been emailing them with regular updates.

When the Belarusian Ambassador came to the Adoption Board to meet with the CEO in December, 2004, a number of families from the support group met with him. The Adoption Board also arranged for the families to attend a Christmas celebration in Aras an Uachtarain.

Representatives from the Thai Adoption support group met with the Board to discuss the inter-country adoption tracing system which is to be put in place in the future.

Key Task 2.3: We will develop appropriate feedback systems for our clients and stakeholder groups.	
Steps to achieve objective	Progress @ end December 2004: (Completed tasks in bold)
Establish a formal liaison forum for Adoption Service providers.	<p>Members of the Social work team have been involved in formal liaison procedures with stakeholder groups for the purpose of developing adoption services. Two social workers also participated on Information and Tracing Advisory group.</p> <p>Social workers have also been involved in the development of the Domestic Adoption Framework which should be finalised in early 2005. Proposal for similar document on working with Birth Parents is expected to go to tender early in 2005.</p> <p>The Principal social worker worked with other Principal social workers to produce a revised and updated Standardised home study report format for Inter-country Adoption. A first draft of the standards to apply to National adoption practice and procedure has been drawn up and will be elaborated upon by a national committee in 2005.</p> <p>During 2004 the social work team devised a comprehensive questionnaire for service providers which allowed the Board to map adoption services provided throughout the country. Using this information, the social work team is now piloting a review of these services in conjunction with the NEHB. This review will act as a prototype for future standards setting, inspection, monitoring and review of services.</p>
Agree mechanisms for client feedback on service quality	<p>The participation of stakeholder groups is set out in detail at Key Task 2.2 above and provides for comprehensive feedback mechanisms on key areas of development across the adoption field.</p>
Publish a Customer Service Action Plan	See above. Client feedback mechanisms in respect of individuals will be provided for by end 2005.

Key Task 2.4:

We will seek to have our administrative procedures and practices made subject to the Freedom of Information (FOI) Acts and other relevant public accountability legislation.

Steps to achieve objective

Prepare administrative files to comply with FOI requirements

Progress @ end December 2004:

(Completed tasks in **bold**)

Members of PICU have attended FOI training. Initial discussions have taken place between the Adoption Board and Systems Unit in the Department of Health & Children regarding this proposal.

Next steps will involve the assessment of the capacity of the current IT infrastructure to cater for the administration file tracking system under FOI.

High Level Objective 3:

We will develop as a centre of excellence and leadership, which promotes the delivery of quality, accountable, client-focused adoption services.

Key Task 3.1:

We will develop and embed quality standards and systems of inspection for adoption services.

Steps to achieve objective

Develop protocols for inspection process

Develop protocols for inspection of services against standards

Progress @ end December 2004:

(Completed tasks in **bold**)

Standards & Inspection Unit established.

The social work team devised a comprehensive questionnaire for all service providers, which enabled the mapping of adoption services nationwide. Using this information, the social work team is now piloting a review of these services in conjunction with the NEHB. This review will act as a prototype for future standards setting, inspection, monitoring and review of services.

The social work dept has developed the first draft of Standards for national adoption practice, which will be elaborated upon by a national committee in 2005.

A working document on the process of inspection has been compiled outlining the aims and tasks of the inspectorate - together with the results of the pilot review a prototype for future inspections will be finalised in 2005.

Key Task 3.2: We will develop evidence based research programmes and disseminate the findings of best national and international research.	
Steps to achieve objective	Progress @ end December 2004: (Completed tasks in bold)
Undertake research on Intercountry Adoption in Ireland	The Adoption Board signed a contract with the successful tenderer (the Children's Research Centre, TCD) in December, 2004 to undertake this major Intercountry Research project.
Support additional research projects in relation to Domestic Adoption / Adoption Information and Tracing	The Board will undertake additional research in relation to Birth /Natural Parents and related issues during 2005. A research project in the area of information and tracing will also be commissioned in 2005.

Key Task 3.3: We will provide and support training and specialist advisory services for those working in adoption, in order to reinforce best practice	
Steps to achieve objective	Progress @ end December 2004: (Completed tasks in bold)
Hold a series of seminars / information meetings for Adoption practitioners	Information workshops and meetings with practitioners in Adoption are ongoing. A Conference to consider the framework for the proposed National Information and Tracing Service was held on the 18th October 2004. The Advisory group will meet to discuss the service in the new year.

Key Tasks 3.4: We will put in place transparent and accessible appeals procedures in relation to our legal functions, and transparent and accessible complaints procedures in relation to our administrative processes and practices	
Steps to achieve objective	Progress @ end December 2004: (Completed tasks in bold)
Review Adoption Authority formal appeals procedures	New Decision Making Procedures have been circulated by the Board to Adoption Approval Committees for consideration. These new procedures will be finalised in early 2005.
Establish an internal complaints procedure	Formal customer complaints procedures will be established during 2005 and will take into account the provisions in this regard included in the Health Act, 2004.

High Level Objective 4:

We will develop an integrated adoption service which addresses the needs of all parties involved in the adoption process, having regard to available resources.

Key Task 4.1:

We will put in place an integrated set of standardised frameworks for the delivery of adoption services, in order to ensure provision of a uniform and timely service at local level across the country.

Steps to achieve objective	Progress @ end December 2004: (Completed tasks in bold)
<p>Hold discussions with Health Boards / Agencies on organisation of local service and address current delivery issues</p>	<p>Hold discussions with Health Boards / Agencies on organisation of local service and address current delivery issues Health Board Senior Practitioners and Management in Adoption Services have finalised an updated standardised home study form for Intercountry Adoption. They are also looking at Information & Tracing and Domestic Adoption practices. A draft Circular on issues raised has been prepared.</p> <p>Principal Social Worker holding regular discussions with Health Boards/Agencies to discuss practice and service delivery. The social work team devised a comprehensive questionnaire to all service providers, which allowed the mapping of adoption services provided by the Health Boards and Adoption Agencies. Using this, the social work team has begun a pilot review of services in conjunction with NEHB. This review will act as a prototype for future standards setting, inspection, monitoring and review of services.</p> <p>A Conference to set out the framework on the National Information and Tracing Service was held on the 18th October. The Advisory group will meet to discuss the service in the new year.</p>
<p>Develop a Domestic Adoption assessment framework to support devolution of domestic adoption assessment to Health Boards</p>	<p>Work on the Standardised Framework is due to be finalised in mid January, 2005. Consultants have submitted the final draft which will be considered at a meeting of the Implementation Group in January, 2005. It is proposed to hold a workshop prior to publishing the document.</p>

Agree uniform procedures for existing local Adoption Information and Tracing services

Meeting held with all agencies to discuss current practice and service issues in early 2004. Draft circular addressing issues raised by agencies/health boards prepared. Next step will be to agree the circular and implement it as a standard to be used by all agencies & health boards in their day to day work.

Key Task 4.2:

We will introduce, in co-operation with the Department of Health and Children, a number of new services as follows:

- an information and tracing service
- services necessary for the implementation of the Hague Convention
- a range of post-adoption services.

Steps to achieve objective	Progress @ end December 2004: (Completed tasks in bold)
Continue to improve waiting times for Adoption Information and Tracing service	<p>All initial enquiries are responded to within 5 working days. The waiting period for an initial interview with a social worker has reduced to a maximum of three months. The waiting list for initiating a full trace has reduced from 3 years to 12 months.</p> <p>The Board's Adoption Information and Tracing Unit continues to provide assistance to Agencies and Health Boards in clearing their waiting lists.</p>
Agree framework for National Information and Tracing service	<p>A Conference to consider how best to structure the National Information and Tracing Service was held on the 18th October 2004. The Advisory group will meet to further discuss the service in the new year.</p>
Commence work on establishment of National File Index for Adoption Information and Tracing Service	<p>Staff of AIT unit have been trained in CRAFTS system by Records Management Unit in the Department. Methodology to be used in computerising files has been agreed – AIRR project. Indexing and Scanning of Boards files has commenced.</p> <p>GRO allows AITU staff access to computer system in Joyce House. Approval in principal for link to GRO Computerised Registration System obtained from Registrar General.</p> <p>The Audit of Adoption files is ongoing. The possible locations of records relating to 152 of 157 bodies that have been identified to date have been established. The remaining 5 bodies identified are former private nursing homes or individuals. Work is ongoing to establish where any remaining files may be located.</p>

Maintain current level of services in Domestic Adoption and Intercountry Adoption Services

Domestic Adoption: Existing services are being maintained In 2004 273 adoption orders were made, an increase of 10 over 2003. The unit also processed almost 800 applications for police clearances, dealt with 28 Pre-Placement queries and numerous queries on adoption related issues. The social work team has benefited from the employment of additional social worker resources on a temporary contract basis to undertake the assessment of suitability of families to adopt. This has freed up existing permanent staff to work on the modernisation programme. Simultaneously the Social Work team continue to provide a national adoption service which includes assessment of all applicants who apply for a Domestic Adoption Order, some Intercountry Assessments and application reviews, an Information and Tracing Service to clients where no adoption agency was involved in their adoption process, service to birth fathers in step parent applications and a full day duty service.

Intercountry Adoption: The reduced waiting time of six weeks has been maintained throughout 2004 for a Declaration in cases where there is no outstanding documentation or negative recommendation. All extensions are heard by the Board at the next available meeting. Applications for entries in the Register of Foreign Adoptions are also processed without delay.

Over 1160 applications for Garda Clearance were received by the ICA Section during 2004. Even though the number is increasing annually they are still being processed without delay.

Finalise and pilot mediation guidelines to support Intercountry Adoption / Hague Convention

The Board invited applications from Bodies wishing to register as a Mediation Agency for Intercountry adoption purposes. Invitations have been submitted and are currently being considered by the Registrar and the Board. The Board is to decide, early in 2005, which of the applicants will be registered.

<p>Review Intercountry adoption agreements including countries where new agreements may be required in the context of the Hague Convention</p>	<p>Belarus The Belarusian authorities have suspended all Intercountry adoptions including adoptions to Ireland. This will remain the case until the Belarusian authorities have updated their adoption legislation. There is no definite indication as to (i) when this review will be completed or (ii) how it will impact on future Intercountry adoptions from Belarus. However, the Belarusian authorities anticipate that the overall level of adoptions abroad will substantially reduce in future years. We will keep this situation under constant review during early 2005.</p> <p>Vietnam The Adoption Agreement between Ireland and Vietnam officially commenced on the 6th July 2004. The CEO and the head of the ICA Unit traveled to Vietnam in September to meet with officials in the Central Authority and in the local Provinces. They also met with the Facilitator for Vietnamese adoptions and visited some of the orphanages that Irish applicants would be adopting from. Since the Agreement date over 40 adoptions have been finalised in Vietnam with many more currently pending.</p> <p>China The waiting time for referrals dropped to approx 6 months during 2004. This decrease was welcomed by the Board and applicants alike.</p>
<p>Identify current post adoption services. Identify possible areas for development</p>	<p>The social work team devised a detailed and comprehensive questionnaire to all service providers, to map adoption services. The outcome of this process has identified gaps in resources and services. Using this information, the social work team has begun a pilot review of services in conjunction with NEHB. On completion of this review, a prototype for regional services will be developed which will address resource and service needs. This review will act as a basis for future standards setting, inspection, monitoring and review of services.</p>

Key Task 4.3:
We will commit to the continuous review and development of services so that we can plan for changing needs.

Steps to achieve objective	Progress @ end December 2004: (Completed tasks in bold)
Implementation of Vietnam agreement	<p>The Adoption Agreement between Ireland and Vietnam is now operational. Over 40 adoptions have been finalised to date and many more are pending.</p> <p>The CEO and the head of the ICA Unit traveled to Vietnam in September to meet with officials in the Central Authority and in the local Provinces. They also met with the Facilitator for Vietnamese adoptions and visited some of the orphanages that Irish applicants would be adopting from.</p>
Publish an Adult Medical Report form and explanatory circular in relation to the Adoption Authority's new medical service	This task has been completed. The Adult Medical Form and Explanatory Circular have been approved, printed, and circulated to all interested parties.

Key Task 4.4:
We will ensure that services and information about services is more easily accessible.

Steps to achieve objective	Progress @ end December 2004: (Completed tasks in bold)
Update the Adoption Authority website to provide accessible information	<p>The Adoption Board's new Website has been launched and updated material dealing with each area of the Board's responsibilities is now available on the new Website. Work is currently underway to identify further topics/issues/information to be made available on the Website. Training still to be provided to relevant staff by development company.</p> <p>We will review and update all Adoption literature and address information gaps</p> <p>Adoption Information & Tracing papers on the current legal position and on the procedures applying to the release of birth certificates have been prepared and made available to interested parties. An Information & Tracing booklet has also been updated, printed and published.</p>

<p>Update the Adoption Authority website to provide accessible information</p>	<p>The three information booklets on Intercountry adoption have been updated and circulated to all Health Boards and Adoption Societies. The Information Packs for the various countries that the Board has Agreements with were also updated.</p> <p>The new Adult Medical Report form has been printed and circulated to practitioners and interested parties.</p> <p>All of these Booklets / Packs are available on the Adoption Board's website</p> <p>Domestic Adoption booklets will also be updated following completion of Standardised Framework for Domestic Adoption.</p>
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High Level Objective 5:
 We value our staff and with their co-operation we will continue to develop their capacity to deliver a quality service to our clients.

Key Task 5.1:
 We will put in place human resources policies to meet the developmental needs of the staff and the organisation and we will use the Performance Management Development System (PMDS) to support the processes arising from this policy.

<p>Steps to achieve objective</p>	<p>Progress @ end December 2004: (Completed tasks in bold)</p>
<p>Revise P.M.D.S. role profiles to reflect Corporate Plan / Business Plan</p>	<p>Role Profile Forms and Interim Reviews have been completed for all staff. The Annual Performance Review will be completed in early 2005.</p>

Key Task 5.2:
 We will establish a partnership committee to address staff needs and concerns in relation to the transition to the Adoption Authority.

<p>Steps to achieve objective</p>	<p>Progress @ end December 2004: (Completed tasks in bold)</p>
<p>Establish a Partnership Committee</p>	<p>Partnership Committee established with representation across all grades. Committee meets on a bi-monthly basis.</p>

Key Task 5.3: We will provide adequate support services and training for staff, including accommodation, records management, and information technology.	
Steps to achieve objective	Progress @ end December 2004: (Completed tasks in bold)
Provide training for staff working in Adoption Information and Tracing Unit	Staff training needs were identified in Role Profile Forms and staff are availing of formal training as required in co-operation with the DOHC training Unit. . Relevant staff have also been trained in CRAFTS file tracking system.
Identify staff training needs (both formal and on the job)	Identify staff training needs (both formal and on the job) Staff training requirements identified in Role Profile Forms. Training needs are being met in consultation with Change Management Unit in DOHC
Refurbishment of Adoption Authority accommodation to provide better client services	Refurbishment of premises is now expected to commence by mid 2005.

Key Task 5.4: We will commit to providing staff with challenging and rewarding work experience aimed at enhancing their career potential while addressing the needs of the organisation.	
Steps to achieve objective	Progress @ end December 2004: (Completed tasks in bold)
We will review assignments of existing and new staff Review current staffing levels in view of existing services and to provide for developmental work	Since end 2003 the new staff that have been appointed to the Adoption Board are 1 replacement HEO, 1 new EO, 1 new CO and 1 temporary CO. In addition 1.5 contract Social Workers have been appointed on temporary contracts to free up some of the current fulltime Social Worker resource to undertake development work in the context of our forthcoming establishment as a statutory Authority. Simultaneously the Social Work team continue to provide a national adoption service which includes assessment of all applicants who apply for a Domestic Adoption Order, Some Intercountry Assessments and application reviews, An Information and Tracing Service to clients where no adoption agency was involved in their adoption process, Service to birth fathers in step parent applications and a full day duty service.

High Level Objective 6:

We will measure and evaluate our performance during the delivery of our corporate objectives and we will publish the results.

Key Task 6.1:

We will develop internal audit procedures and be subject to external audit in terms of measuring and evaluating our performance against stated objectives.

Steps to achieve objective	Progress @ end December 2004: (Completed tasks in bold)
We will review progress on implementation of Corporate Plan with our stakeholders ²	Board consideration of this end year review for 2004 and its publication is an important part of this implementation process.

Key Task 6.2:

In our annual business plan we will establish performance targets designed to achieve the objectives set out in our Corporate Plan 2004–2007.

Steps to achieve objective	Progress @ end December 2004: (Completed tasks in bold)
The completion dates and outputs have been identified in the 2004 Business Plan	This document reviews progress against targets during 2004. The Board also reviewed progress at end July, 2004 and end September, 2004.

Key Task 6.3:

We will publish an annual report reviewing progress under the Corporate Plan 2004 – 2007.

Steps to achieve objective	Progress @ end December 2004: (Completed tasks in bold)
Revise the structure of the Annual Report to reflect progress on implementation of the Corporate Plan	The format of the 2003 Annual Report was revised and printed in December 2004 and has been submitted to the DOHC for Government approval to publish in January, 2005.

Key Task 6.4:
We will put in place arrangements to measure client satisfaction with the implementation of this corporate plan.

Steps to achieve objective	Progress @ end December 2004: (Completed tasks in bold)
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Agree mechanisms for client feedback on service quality	Procedures to formalise the feedback mechanisms that have developed over the past 12 months will be considered in early 2005. This will include mechanisms for feedback from individuals as well as stakeholder groups.
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