hotline.ie

Hotline.ie annual report
ANALYSIS 2012

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Preface

By Alan Shatter, T. D., Minister for Justice, Equality and Defence

I welcome this report and I express my thanks to hotline.ie for another year of solid achievement.

Communications by the internet or other electronic means has become common place. The benefits are well known. However, reading this report reminds us of the harm that can be done by those who misuse this great resource. We are reminded that technological skill and expertise must be accompanied by wisdom, an acceptance of personal responsibility, good judgement and maturity if we are to benefit from the vast potential presented by the internet. We must look out for those who, due to their youth or for other reasons, are not yet able to call on those qualities and teach them to use the internet as intended.

I would like more people to be aware of Hotline.ie. It empowers every citizen, it allows them an opportunity to participate in the fight against illegal content and in particular against child pornography online.

I thank those who submitted reports, those who processed the reports, those who support the service financially or in any other way, especially the ISPAI and the EU Safer Internet Programme, and I wish the hotline.ie another successful year in 2013.

Foreword

At the end of 2012, the ISPAI Hotline.ie service completed its twelfth year of operation. In this period there have been enormous changes in both the number of people using the Internet and the way they are using it. Instant access to information through the Internet which, twelve years ago was a promise of technologists, is now taken for granted in society. This is particularly true with the explosion of access through "smart phones".

Every new technology, whatever its benefits, will also be misused by some in society. The Internet proved no different but its global nature brought new complexities of jurisdiction and notification for deletion, particularly of child sexual abuse content (CSAC). Hotline.ie was the response in Ireland and similar Hotlines were appearing around the world but these were national islands. To work effectively International hotline cooperation is essential. The European Commission responded by co-funding development of the INHOPE network (Hotline.ie is a member) so allowing rapid relaying of CSAC notifications to the correct jurisdiction for action by police and industry. I am proud to be part of this initiative which so far has stood the test of time.

However, the way the Internet is used and misused is rapidly evolving and these changes are reflected in the trends described in this Hotline.ie Annual Report. It is encouraging that open web services are apparently not being misused for the distribution of CSAC to the extent they were in the past. The INHOPE network has played a significant part in achieving this. However, there is no room for complacency just because abuse of the open Web is decreasing. Regrettably, new Internet services are coming on stream and being misused. It is vital that the public continue to report suspect material irrespective of where on the Internet it is encountered – Web, Peer-to-Peer, etc.

As the Internet is now so much a part of society, it is vital that, despite the economic downturn, public reporting continues as an effective disruption to CSAC distribution. This requires support of an enlarging and clearly focused INHOPE network. My concern is that if EU co-funding decreases this network will start to crumble and there is no one to step into the worldwide coordination gap.

Paul Durrant
CEO
Internet Service Providers Association of Ireland

Executive Summary

Number of Reports Submitted during 2012

Month	Reports
JAN	209
FEB	154
MAR	210
APR	166
MAY	363
JUN	392
JUL	377
AUG	247
SEP	268
OCT	217
NOV	222
DEC	125
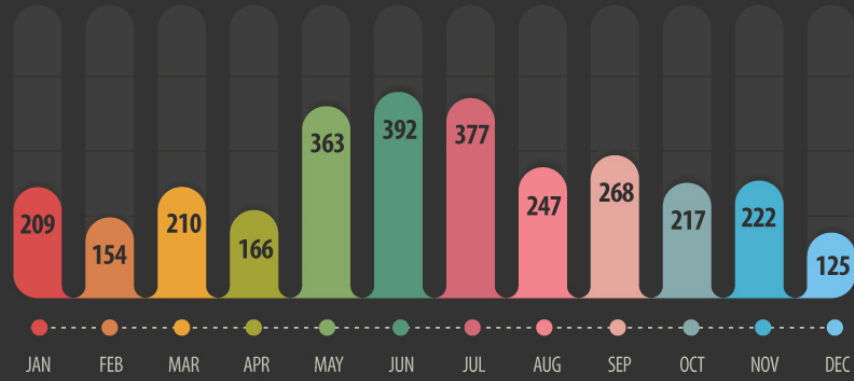
Total number of reports submitted: **2950**

Submission Method

2826

- WEBSITE **2826**
- PHONE **32**
- EMAIL **33**
- DERIVED **58**
- REPORTS VIA INHOPE **1**

Suspicion Reported

2357

- CHILD PORNOGRAPHY **2357**
- CHILD GROOMING **24**
- FINANCIAL SCAM **93**
- RACISM **28**
- OTHERS **448**

Not Assessed

414 reports where content assessment by Hotline Analysts was either not possible or not required

- ALREADY REMOVED **12**
- QUERIES **26**
- NOT FOUND **89**
- INSUFFICIENT INFORMATION **117**
- OUTSIDE REMIT **99**
- NOT ACCESSIBLE **71**

2419

- 697 OTHER NOT ILLEGAL
- ADULT PORNOGRAPHY 1672
- 12 CHILD NUDITY
- 24 CHILD EROTICA
- 14 EXTREME ADULT PORNOGRAPHY
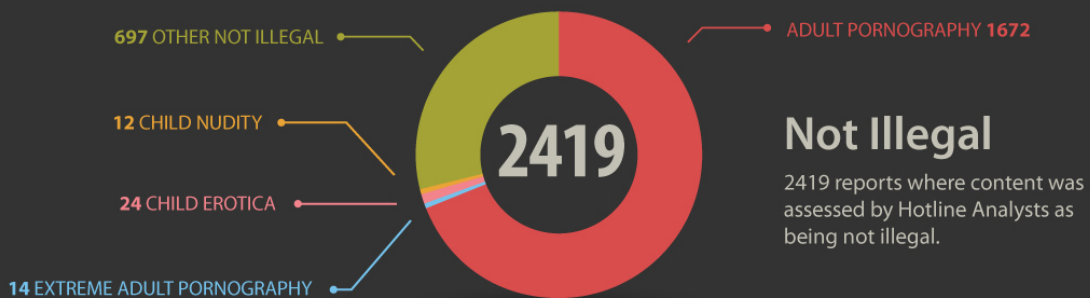
Not Illegal

2419 reports where content was assessed by Hotline Analysts as being not illegal.

Executive Summary

Location of Child Sexual Abuse Content Traced by Hotline.ie

Canada *3*
Russia *10*
UK *1*
Holland *5*
Ireland *4*
Germany *1*
USA *52*
France *1*
Kazakhstan *2*
Japan *5*
UAE *1*
Vietnam *10*

INHOPE Countries

Non INHOPE Countries

⊙ Location not determined *1*

Types of Illegal Content Found

117 reports where content was assessed by Hotline Analysts as probably illegal.

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY 97
of which 1 report was a duplicate

DRUGS RELATED 5

FINANCIAL SCAMS WITH IRISH CONNECTION 15

Summary of Statistics

Reports to Hotline

2,950 reports processed

A **20%** increase on reports processed in **2011**
117 illegal content (includes 1 duplicate)
2,833 not illegal or could not be assessed

Illegal Content

116 unique illegal reports processed:
96 child sexual abuse content
5 drugs related
15 financial scams with an Irish connection

Tracing and Forwarding

43 INHOPE Hotlines exist in **37** countries around the world

96 child sexual abuse content reports forwarded by Hotline where:
4 traced to Ireland (**3** were the same content - cloud services)
78 forwarded by IHRMS to countries with INHOPE presence
13 forwarded via Garda/Interpol to non-INHOPE countries
1 where source could not be determined
NB: IHRMS is the INHOPE Report Management System

Success

In Europe **90%** of all illegal content reported through INHOPE is removed from the Internet within 72 hours.

Worldwide **56%** of all illegal content is removed within 72 hours and 95% within 11 days. *(Source: INHOPE Annual Report 2012)*

Analysis of Hotline Activities During 2012

Input – The Reports Received

The objective of Hotline.ie is to have illegal content, particularly child pornography, expeditiously removed from Internet facilities located in Ireland and, through international cooperation with other Hotlines, to have such content removed irrespective of the jurisdiction in which it is hosted.

The Hotline.ie achieves this by acting on reports of suspected illegal content received from the public and from other INHOPE member Hotlines. In this publication these are referred to as "external" reports.

Under the procedures agreed with Government, the Hotline is not permitted to proactively search for illegal content. Therefore, the ISP industry through Hotline.ie relies totally on the public in Ireland to notify us of suspected illegal content that may be encountered while using the Internet.

Reporting Volume

In the period from 1st January 2012 to 31st December 2012, **Hotline.ie processed 2,950 reports** about suspected illegal content. This is the highest number of reports processed in one year since Hotline.ie was established in 1999.

External and derived reports

Sometimes Hotline Analysts when assessing content referred to in an external report find that the reported location provides links to, or other references to, locations where further illegal content is suggested to exist. In such cases, the Hotline analyst will follow these links and examine the content present. If it is found to be illegal the analyst creates a new report for each separate location found. These will then be acted on using the same procedures as for external reports. These created reports are referred to as "derived" reports.

As this "derived" content is discovered in the course of processing a report from the public it is not proactive searching and is in line with the procedures agreed with Department of Justice and An Garda Síochána. For more information on the different types of reports please see www.hotline.ie.

In 2012 there were 2,892 external reports and 58 derived reports. External reports received from other INHOPE Hotlines are very likely to be illegal (as they have been assessed as illegal under another country's law). However, they must be checked by Hotline.ie analysts that are actually hosted in this country and also illegal under Irish law.

Monthly reporting patterns

As can be seen from Figure 1, the number of reports received each month can be highly variable. **On average just over 245 reports per month** were dealt with by Hotline.ie during 2012.

The lowest number of reports received in one month was 125, in December 2012. At 392 June had the highest number in a month.

Analysis of Hotline Activities During 2012
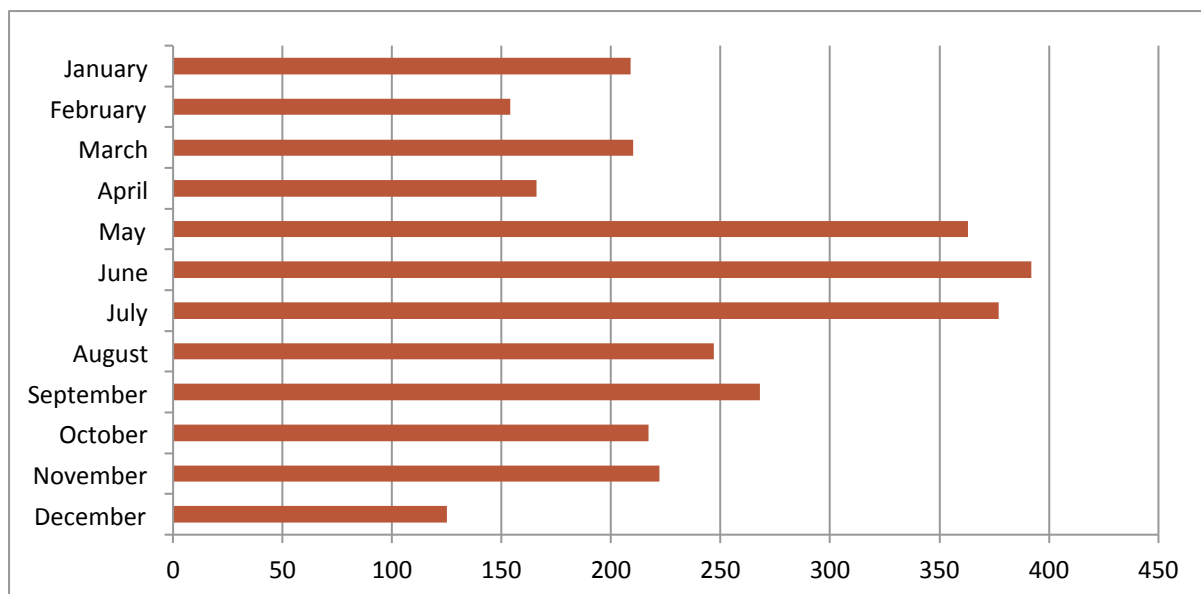
Figure 1: Monthly distribution of reports handled in 2012

The range of reports (the difference in number received from the highest to the lowest month) for the year 2012 was 267, an increase on 2011 which had a range of 233. The range of reporting volumes and unpredictability of same poses some difficulty in applying analyst resources to meet the target of, on average, processing all reports received within one working day.

Comparison to previous years

As was expected, from the establishment of the Hotline in 1999 reports grew steadily with increasing public use of the Internet. Then in 2006, to much surprise it appeared to peak despite the number of Internet connections in Ireland continuing to grow until it reached its current near saturation level. Since 2005, the total reports per year have fluctuated around an average of 2,468 per annum (Figure 2).
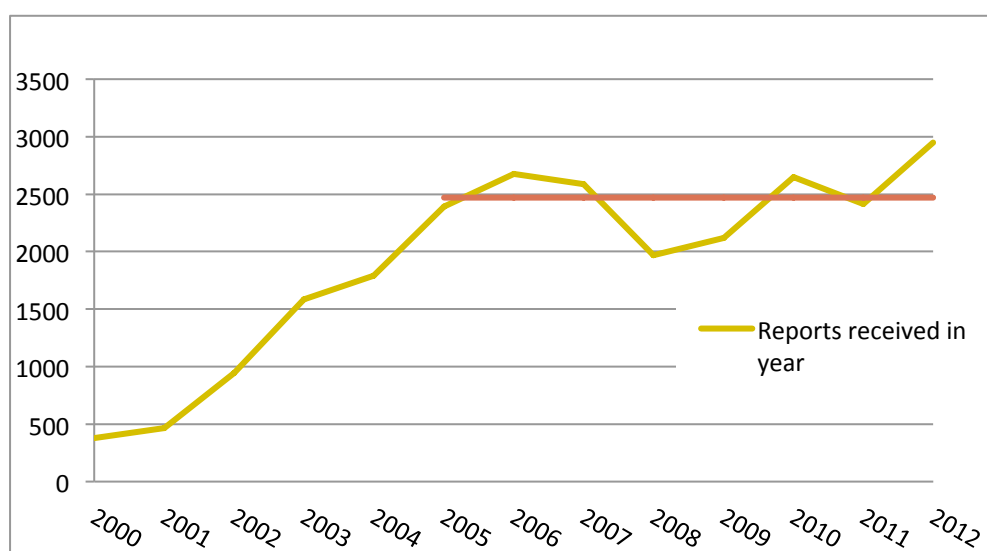
Figure 2: Number of reports received each year since 2000

Over the last eight years (2005 to 2012 inclusive) average number of reports processed has been 206 per month. However, monthly reporting levels have a considerable variation which appears to be

almost random. The lowest recoded in the eight year was 62 in June 2008 and the highest was 504 recorded in July 2010.

The distribution of reporting throughout the year is also highly variable between years. As can be seen from Figure3, some years summer months have the highest levels of reporting, other years it's the winter months. However, the annual highs do not generally fall in either the spring or autumn.
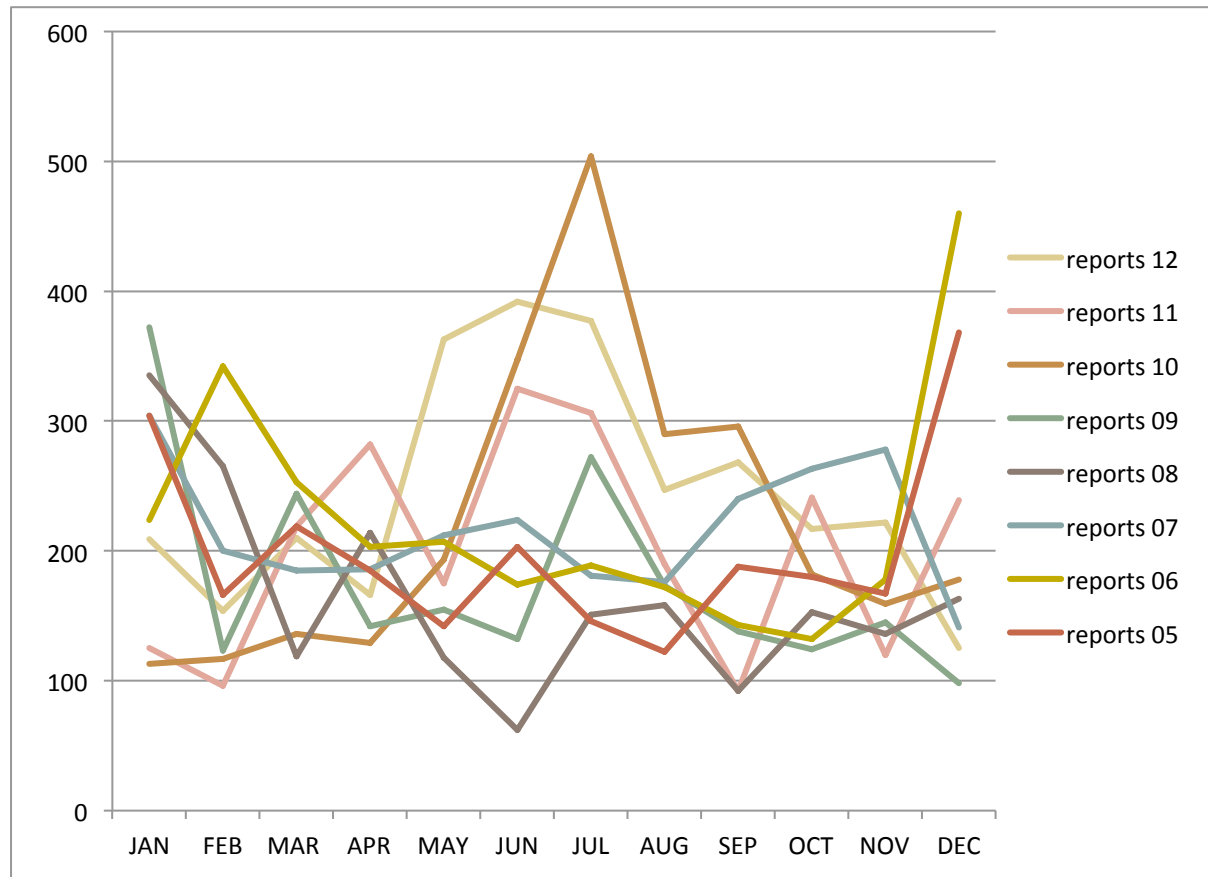
Figure 3: Monthly distribution of reports in the last 8 years

It appears that the distribution of reports throughout the year is largely random, which is probably to be expected if the population of Internet users who will report encounter such material randomly.

Report Source

Hotline.ie provides a number of ways in which reports can be made by the public, though our preference is to receive reports through the web forms provided on the Hotline.ie website. These are accessed by clicking the large button "Make a Report" which can be found prominently positioned on the Home Page (and all pages) of the www.hotline.ie website. Reports may also be submitted by e-mail, telephone, letter and the automated "Lo-Call" answering service at 1890 610710.

Analysis of Hotline Activities During 2012

	Website	Email	TAM	Phone	Post	Derived	IHRMS
■ Report Source	2826	33	30	2	0	58	1
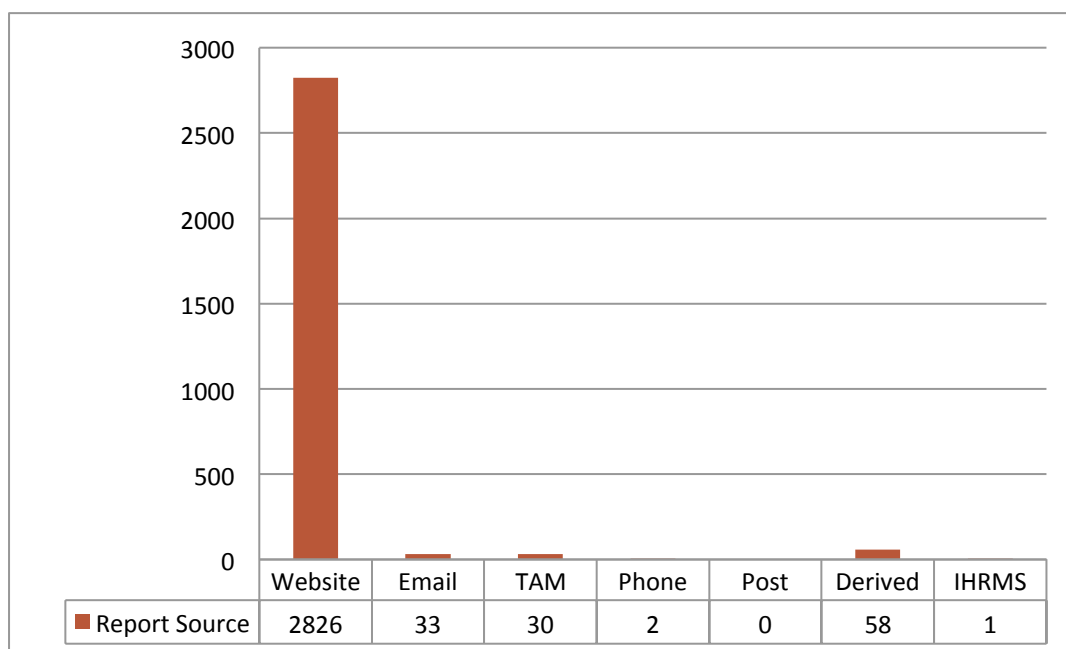
Figure 4: Reports handled by Hotline by report source

The proportion of reports submitted in 2012 through each channel is displayed in Figure 4. Reports from other INHOPE members to the Hotline are usually received via the INHOPE Report Management System (IHRMS)[1]. As can be seen from figure 4, one report was forwarded via IHRMS to Hotline.ie which they assessed as illegal in their country and traced to Ireland.

The number of reports received by Hotline.ie via IHRMS versus those processed annually by INHOPE members (1,059,758 in 2012[2]) is a clear indication that content assessed to be illegal CSAC (or racial hate speech) found through other INHOPE country hotlines, is rarely traced to Ireland.   This corroborates the experience of reports received from the public direct to Hotline.ie – that is, **Ireland is not a location** favoured by criminals 's to store illegal content online.

Suspicion Quoted in Reports

Reports made to Hotline.ie via the web form contain a mandatory "Suspicion" field. Reports made by other methods e.g. email or phone are assigned to the appropriate category by the Hotline Analyst if the nature of the suspicion is indicated by the reporter. The suspicion is set to "Other" if the reporter's suspicion is not evident.

The suspicion for all derived reports in 2012 was child pornography. Figure 5 shows the breakdown of reports received based on the suspicions of the reporter.

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[1] INHOPE Report Management System (IHRMS) is a secure facility provided by INHOPE to all its members for the secure forwarding of notices of illegal content between Hotlines. This centralised system is also designed to provide improved statistics on the exchange of reports and also to track how quickly reported content is removed from the Internet.

[2] INHOPE Annual Report 2012

Analysis of Hotline Activities During 2012

Reports received from the public represent suspicions about possible illegal content. These must
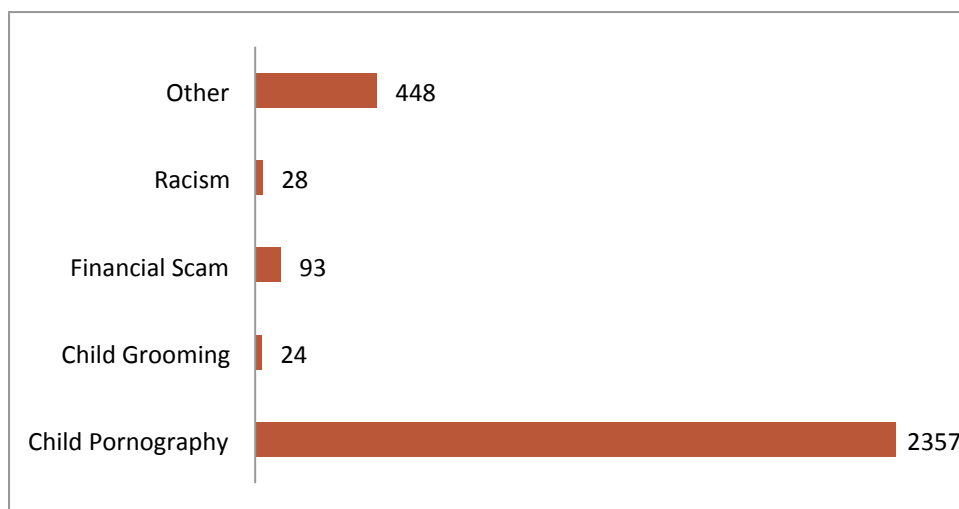

Figure 5: Reports by suspicion

then enter the assessment process where the Hotline.ie Content Analysts validate whether the content is probably illegal or not.

Report Assessment Process

Of the 2,950 reports logged during 2012 there were 2,536 reports that entered into the full content analysis process, leaving **414 reports which could not be assessed** for various reasons. In order for a report to be processed the report must be about content that is (or was) actually on the Internet and the reporter must also have given a reasonable indication as to where, or how, the Analyst may find the content in question so an assessment can be made.

Reports Which Could Not Be Processed

There are two broad reasons for reports failing to enter the analysis process, one is they are not really a report referring to specific content or, while they refer to content, the Hotline Analyst could not obtain the content for assessment at the time of processing the report. These are examined below.

Reports where content was unobtainable for assessment

As shown in Figure 6, of the 414 reports that could not complete the Hotline analysis process, **289 referred to content that could not be assessed** by the Hotline for one of the reasons given below:

Insufficient information: **117 reports** could not be processed because the reporter did not provide sufficient information for the Hotline Analyst to work out where on the Internet the suspected illegal content could be accessed. If the reporter has provided contact details, the Hotline Analyst will attempt to contact the reporter and try to get further details that could assist in locating the content in question. Often the reports are made anonymously so no follow up is possible and in many cases where the reporter is contacted they don't have the necessary information.
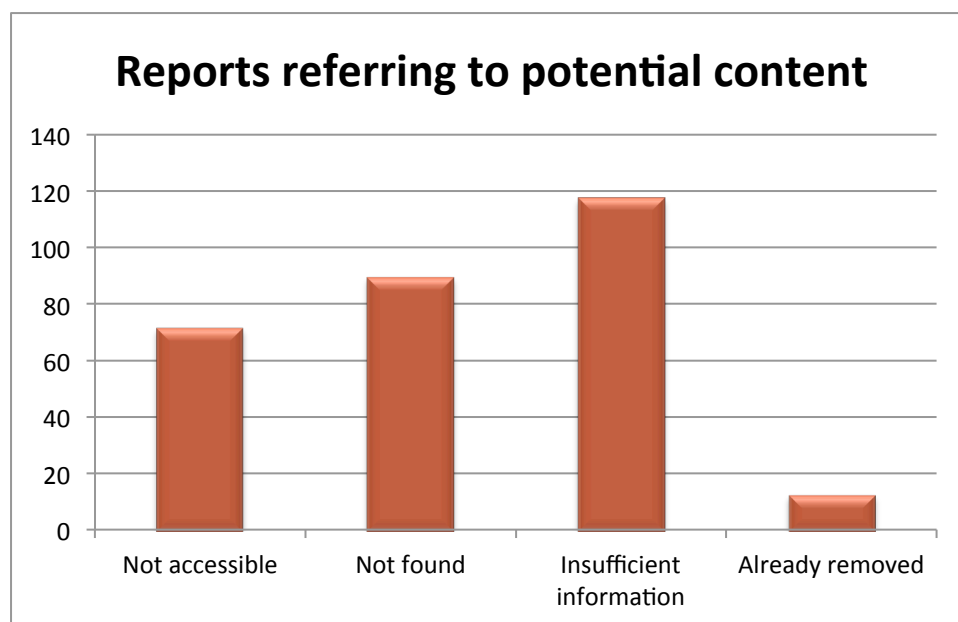
Reports referring to potential content

Figure 6: Reports where content could not be assessed

An example of insufficient information is where a person reports only the home page of a very large website comprising of user generated content. The Hotline Analyst may well be presented with hundreds of topic links each with hundreds if not thousands of postings. The Analyst has no idea in which area the alleged illegal image or posting may reside. It is simply impossible for the Analysts to spend hours on what might be "a wild goose chase".

Not accessible: There were **71 reports** which were not accessible at the time the Hotline Analyst processed the report. This does not imply that the reporter did not encounter the content, but one of the following applied when the Hotline Analyst tried to access the reported content to assess it:

- The domain name does not exist.
- The domain resolves (showing it exists) but the server is no longer functioning.
- The site requires payment for registration (username and password) to the area reported and these have not been provided.
- In the case of P2P it might be that a file is no longer being shared.

Not found: There were **89 instances** where reports referred to a specific location but at the time of processing the Hotline Analyst could not find any content of the nature described in the report at that location (or linking from it) and there is nothing to suggest that it had been removed by the ISP or authorities. Put more technically, the domain name resolves and the server is responding but the content served is not as described by the reporter. Examples of how this might arise are:

- The reporter has typed in the URL (rather than copying and pasting) into the report and made an error. (Typically a 404 error "page not found" is returned).
- The author/owner of the site has removed or altered the page so the content as described is not present.

Already removed: This outcome is only recorded by the Hotline Analysts when there is a clear message, displayed at the reported location, stating that content has been removed. There were **12 such cases** in 2012. Usually this message will refer to the content having broken the terms and

conditions of the ISP. Hence, the Analyst cannot state for sure that the content would have been contrary to Irish law.

Reports not requiring content analysis

Of the 414 reports that could not complete the Hotline analysis process, **125** were deemed as not requiring an analysis of online content. (Figure 7).
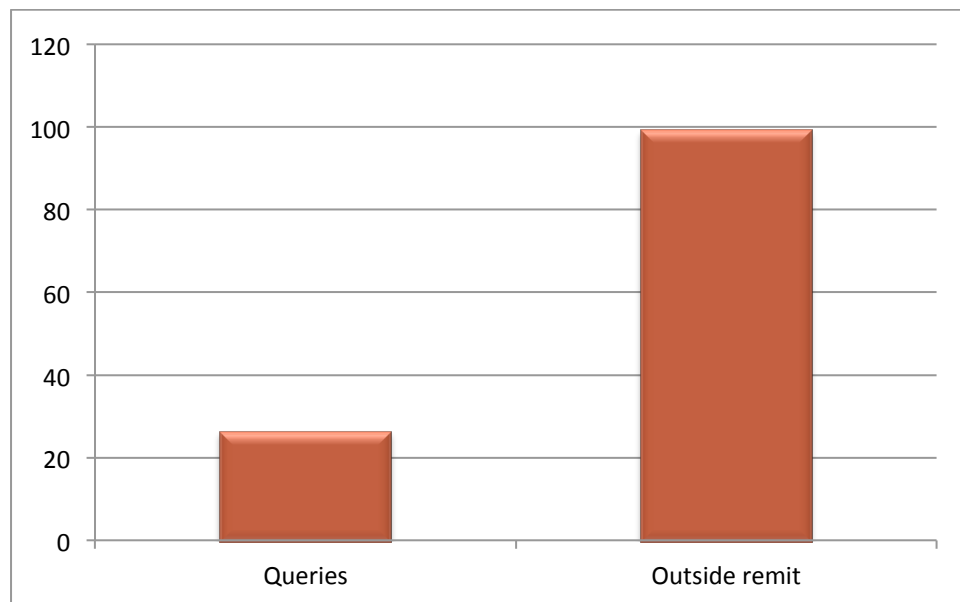
Figure 7: Reports not involving content access and assessment

These were **26 queries** which related to the work of the Hotline and **99 reports** which concerned issues or content types which are outside the Hotline's remit. Such reports can take up a considerable amount of the analysts' time as, where possible, the analyst will provide an explanatory response as to why the report is outside the Hotline's remit, and if possible, will suggest the appropriate body to deal with the reporter's concern.

In many cases queries coming in to the Hotline may progress to a full report, the content of which is then assessed as illegal or not (these reports are then counted in the appropriate category and not these figures). If this is not the cas, the report is closed as "Outside Hotline Remit" or "Query" as applicable. It should be noted that Hotline.ie cannot and does not offer legal advice and as such people with queries or making reports outside the Hotline's remit are often referred to other agencies.

Reporters quite often make the mistake of asking a question but then submit a report anonymously. This happens on both the automated telephone answering service and on the web forms. Members of the public wishing to submit a question which is within the Hotline's remit or require a response on a report should ensure to include contact details so that the Content Analyst can respond.

Reports that entered the full assessment process

These are reports where the Hotline Analyst was able to obtain the content to which the reporter referred and undertake an assessment of the content present at that location at the time of processing. Of the **2,536 reports** which could enter this assessment phase, **2,419** were assessed as

referring to content that was legal (i.e. not specifically illegal) under Irish law and **117** were found to be "probably illegal" under Irish law. One case of illegal content was reported twice (duplicate report) leaving **116 unique cases** where the content was assessed as "probably illegal" under Irish law.

Of these 117 reports **58 were derived** from the external reports. This means that **only 59 external** reports were themselves directly assessed as probably illegal.

Assessment criteria

Hotline.ie assesses content solely in relation to applicable Irish laws. Hotline.ie is not a censorship board and does not make moral judgements as to what type of material should and should not be on the internet. Hotline.ie is a shared service acting on behalf of ISPAI members to assess reports and notify them of illegal content they may be hosting so they can in turn act to remove the content as required by law.

Reports are often received from the public where they suspect content as being "illegal" because it refers to an activity which, if it occurred as a real world incident (as opposed to a staged portrayal of that activity with consenting adults), may be a prosecutable offence. However, if the content "in itself" is not contrary to law it is assessed as not illegal and Hotline.ie will not take any action.

The Hotline's Analysts are trained to assess content referred to the service solely on the basis of whether it is "probably illegal" under the letter of the applicable Irish law. The assessment is based purely on the image (still or video), text or sound track as it is presented on the screen or speakers. The Hotline cannot forward notices of content for action to other jurisdictions unless it is assessed as "probably illegal" in this jurisdiction.

Only a Court of Law can make a judgement as to whether something is definitively illegal under the law. However, under the transposition of the EU Directive on electronic commerce, ISPs must take action within a reasonable time where illegal material is brought to their attention, hence ISPAI Hotline Analysts who are acting on behalf of the ISPAI membership, make a best assessment on whether content is probably illegal and if so, take appropriate action. Where "probably illegal" content is notified to ISPs it is simultaneously notified to An Garda Síochána who may then choose to initiate a criminal investigation.

Reports assessed as not being illegal

Adult pornography: As can be seen from figure 8, of the 2,419 "non-illegal" assessments, the majority of reports suspected to be child pornography actually proved to be adult pornography. In many cases the report proves to refer to "teen porn" websites where the models are assessed as over 17 years of age (the age specified in the Child Trafficking and Pornography Act, 1998). The Hotline similarly receives a vast amount of reports where pornography videos have titles or tags which suggest that they depict schoolgirls, young maids, or similar. These are staged scenarios containing actors, and while they may be dressed in pseudo school uniforms with their hair in pigtails, the clearly observable stage of body development shows that they are adults. These are not assessed as breaking the law which requires that the image "….relates to a person who is or is depicted as being a child", and so these cases are categorised as adult pornography. If the dominant characteristics of any actor in the photo or video under examination were those of a child then the

content would be assessed by the Hotline Analyst as child pornography and action taken as such on that report.

Extreme adult pornography: Some reports of adult pornography are categorised as "Extreme". These involve portrayals of activities which may be considered illegal (e.g. bestiality) or websites that purport to capture rape, incest, etc., where the act, if it were not a staged consensual performance, would be classed as a criminal offence. This concept is no different than that for main stream TV programmes, where murders, assaults, robberies, etc., are common place. If portraying an action
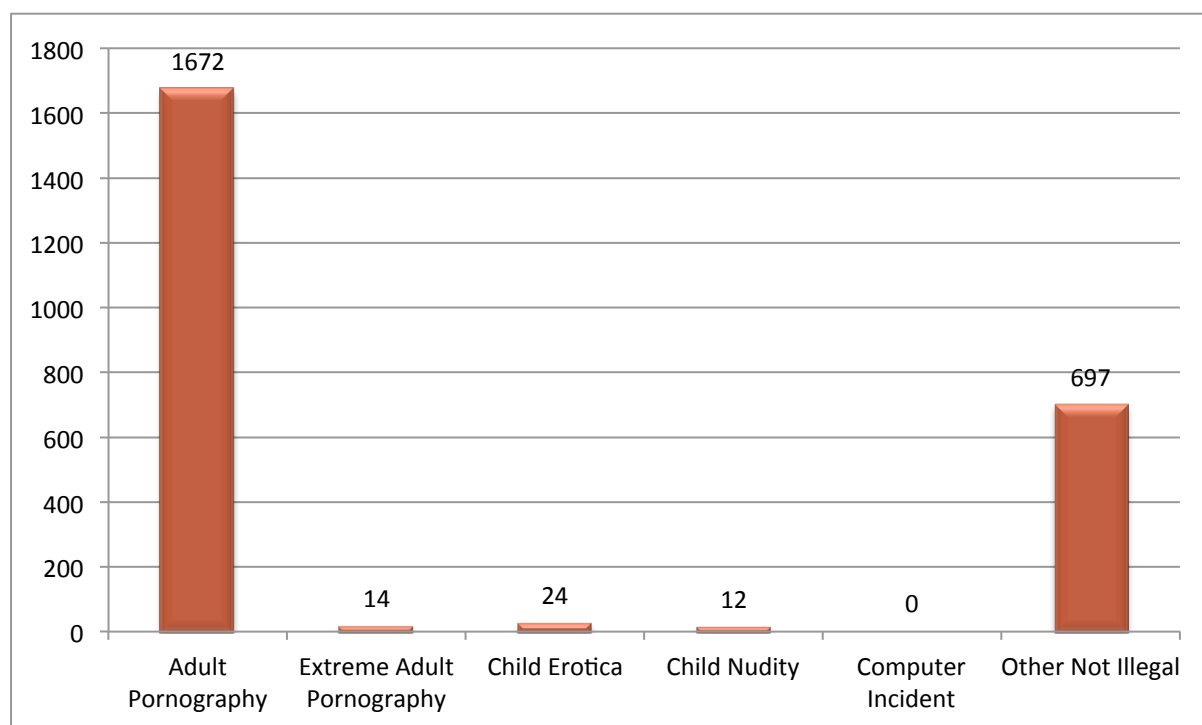
Figure 8: Reports where content was assessed as not being illegal

which is an offence made the video content illegal, much of our T.V. and cinema would be rendered illegal! The Hotline's role is only to give notice in cases where the Analysts deem the content itself likely to be illegal. Hence, these images are assessed as to the apparent age of the actors (i.e. less than 17 years of age) or whether they are depicted as a child, that is, the dominant characteristics are that of a child. Only where these criteria are met and the "child" is engaged in or witnessing sexual activity is content classified as illegal and further action taken.

While the Hotline would stress that members of the public should not be deterred from reporting anything which they even suspect could possibly be illegal, it is important to note the distinction between actual illegal content and content which is not outlawed by the legislation.

Child erotica: These are images judged to have been taken of children posed in an inappropriately sexual manner but are not illegal as they do not meet the criteria set in law. In all cases these were hosted abroad and Hotline.ie cannot forward a report for action unless the material is assessed as probably illegal. (If they were found to be hosted in Ireland on an ISPAI member's facilities, though to-date this has never happened, Hotline.ie would notify the ISP to consider removing the content under the ISPAI Code of Practice.)

Analysis of Hotline Activities During 2012

Child nudity: This refers to images where the children may be naked but the photo or video was not produced for pornographic purposes. Examples include pictures of naked children in famine or war zone situations, naturist sites where pictures are taken in family contexts, or images taken for diagnostic reasons which are presented in a medical context.

Computer incident: These are cases where the report turns out to be an issue due to a computer virus, hacking or similar that may for example redirect the user to unintended websites (usually trying to sell lifestyle drugs or subscriptions to fake anti-virus packages). In these cases, while the reporter may have been seriously inconvenienced and the Hotline may provide advice on where to seek assistance to remove the malware, as it does not involve illegal media content, the report is closed. If an ISPAI member is hosting a website that is placing malware on users' computers a notification will be sent for their information so they might act under their terms of service and have the owner remove the offending executable files.

Other not illegal: These are instances where the content found by the Hotline Analyst at the location specified cannot be interpreted as, for example, having been mistaken for child pornography, is simply an opinion that is not inciting to hatred, or other subjects which are simply not illegal. Sometimes links or filenames can have names that imply illegal content but when it is accessed it is just an advertisement for so called lifestyle medications or the like. There were some other categories of content leading to mistaken reports which are described below.

Misguided reporting

During the year Hotline.ie has received a significant number of reports which allege child pornography but are assessed as other not illegal content. For example, reports have been received about articles on discussion boards or online encyclopaedias which are merely discussing the dangers of child pornography or defining what constitutes child pornography under various jurisdictions. Some are written by victims relating what has happened to them and how it affected their lives. These are not assessed as child pornography as they do not breach the legislation and no action is taken and are closed as "Other Not Illegal".

We also tend to receive a large number of reports relating to animated pornographic content. The legal status of cartoon pornography depicting minors is a difficult subject which interacts in some countries with obscenity laws and specific laws against child pornography. The law in Ireland criminalises "any visual representation" depicting a child as being engaged in sexually explicit activity. Some argue that obscene fictional images portray children as sex objects, thereby contributing to child sexual abuse. Almost every instance of cartoon pornography, which was reported to the Hotline, depicted characters with fully developed adult body parts even though their faces may have big eyes and button noses giving what can be interpreted as a young looking face. The portrayal of their bodies clearly show they are not intended to be children and these are classified as probably not illegal under Irish law by our Analysts.

The Hotline's role is to give notice about material which the Analysts deem likely to be illegal. While the Hotline would stress that members of the public should not be deterred from reporting anything which they even suspect could possibly be illegal, it is important to note the distinction between actual illegal content and content which merely provides information on the problem or content which is not outlawed by the legislation, such as adult pornography.

Analysis of Hotline Activities During 2012

Illegal Content

Of the 117 reports referring to content that was assessed as probably illegal there was 1 duplicate report, leaving 116 unique illegal reports. The breakdown of these is shown in the table below.

Table 1: Categories of illegal content reported in 2012

Category	All illegal	Duplicates	Unique illegal
Child pornography	97	1	96
Incitement to hatred	0	0	0
Child grooming activities	0	0	0
Financial scams with Irish connection	15	0	15
Drugs Related	5	0	5
Totals	117	1	116

Child sexual abuse content: CSAC (termed Child Pornography in legislation) remains by far the leading category of illegal content reported to the Hotline. However, the number of reports so assessed by the Hotline has fallen dramatically over the last number of years. When found it typically is of a severe nature, involving predominantly girls but also boys of quite young age being abused. Disturbingly, ages of the children generally range from 5 to 12 years old, though there have been younger. However, the severity as per the 1 to 5 level system (developed by the UK courts), does not seem to have changed over the last few years.

Racist and xenophobic content: Racist material, which in Ireland equates to content that is illegal under the "Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 1989", is very rarely reported. In most cases received, the material does not constitute illegal content under this Act and more often are defamatory remarks that fall under civil law where the Hotline is unable to take any action. This Act is very clear that the content must be directed against a group in the State (or elsewhere) and must be "intended, having regard to all the circumstances, are likely to stir up hatred". However, it must be said that in most cases material reported has been hosted in the U.S.A. where there is little possibility of having the content removed due to the very wide application of the 1st Amendment upholding freedom of speech.

It is for these reasons that in 2012, the 28 reports where the suspicion was given as "racism", on assessment by the Hotline, converted to zero cases where the content was deemed contrary to the "Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 1989".

Financial scams: The number of financial scams reported to Hotline.ie remains low despite the level of phishing and other e-mail scams that prevail on the Internet. It may be considered that the Internet population has become so inundated and annoyed by these scams that they simply ignore and delete them. The Hotline only deals with those that might be hosted in Ireland through our membership.

Analysis of Hotline Activities During 2012

However, where the reported scam purports to be from a legitimate company in Ireland and is attempting to fraudulently obtain credit card details or similar, we try to notify the company and/or the ISP in the jurisdiction where it is hosted so they may remove it but we cannot state that action will always be taken. This is because there is no international network equivalent to INHOPE (where all members must deal with child sexual abuse content) which deals with financial scams. Other reported scams, for example emails claiming you have won an online lottery draw, or have inherited a deceased foreign banker's estate, etc. that do not have any connection with Ireland, are categorised as "Outside Hotline Remit".

During 2012 Hotline.ie received a number of reports from people about their computers being disabled where a message purporting to come from An Garda Síochána is displayed. This accuses the user of having used the computer to illegally view child pornography (and other possible offences) and attempts to extract payment of a "fine" in return for "unlocking" their PC. This is a European wide "ransomware" scam and is caused by the user's PCs becoming infected with a virus. Hotline.ie has responded by issuing a warning on our website and explaining the issue to those who have reported giving their contact details.   An Garda Síochána do not have any such initiatives and anybody who has been deceived into paying money should make a report to the Gardaí.

Report Tracing

Having assessed a report as probably illegal, the Analyst then uses a suite of tools and services to
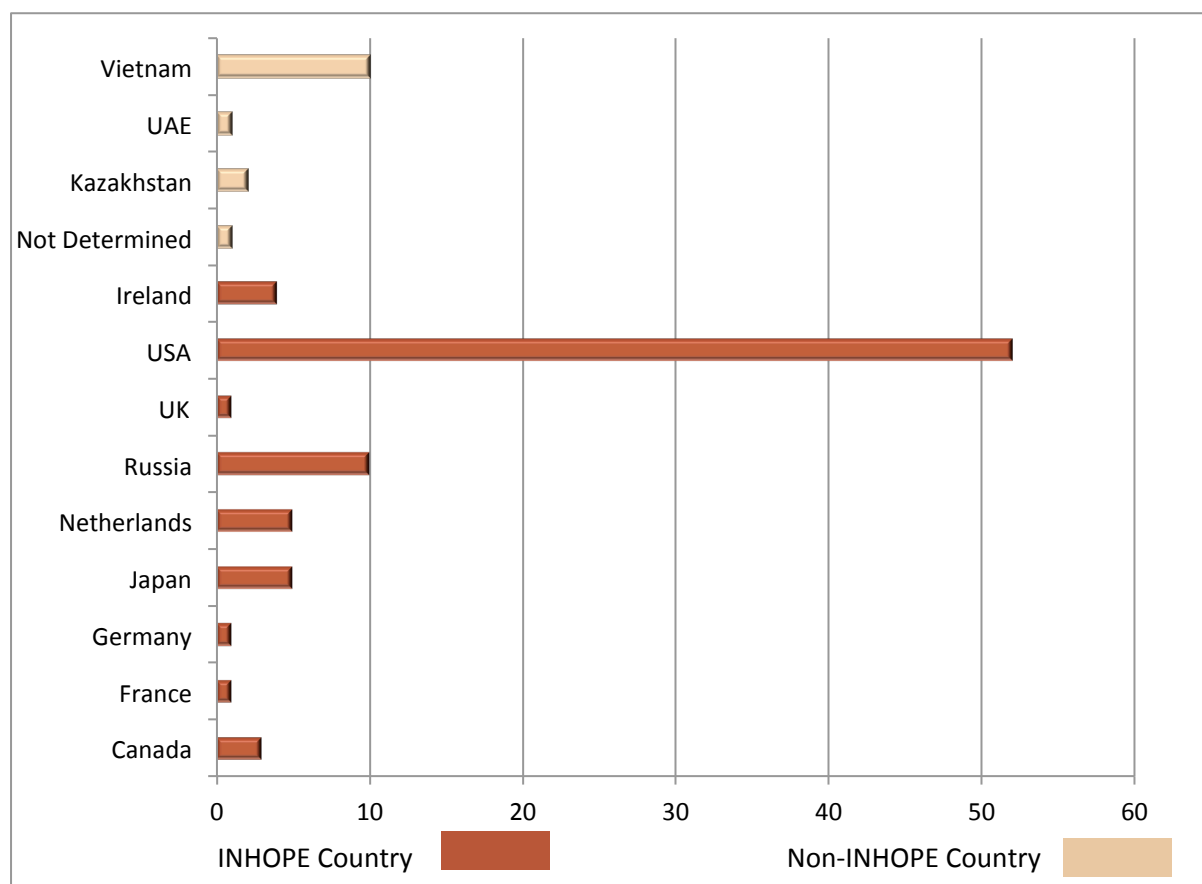

Figure 9: Apparent location of traced child sexual abuse content

trace the apparent location of the content. Only content that is assessed as "probably illegal" is traced – no tracing is done on any other category of content. In the case of a website, a trace

includes finding its IP address, identifying the hosting ISP and establishing the applicable jurisdiction. For e-mail it consists of identifying the IP address which was allocated to the sender of the e-mail, the ISP who provided that account connection and the applicable jurisdiction. Similarly for P2P file sharing and other services the objective is to trace the ISP who provided the account connection.

In 2012 the results of tracing the 96 unique illegal CSAC reports are shown in Figure 9.

Unfortunately tracing is not always successful and in some cases the analysts cannot always tell with any degree of certainty which jurisdiction was the source. Also some ISPs' networks straddle borders so the best estimate is used. This is why Hotline.ie always uses the term "apparent location". In one case we were simply not able to find where the content was located. Technical analysis of traces proved that it was not in Ireland but we could not ascertain its location before it had been removed.

Note in the above bar chart (Figure 9) INHOPE countries where no reports were forwarded in the year have been omitted. There are now 43 INHOPE hotlines in 37 countries around the world.

Report Forwarding

The next stage in the process is to make a "forwarding report" to notify authorities in the apparent location. Hotline.ie tries to avoid multiple reports being sent about illegal content. Therefore only unique illegal reports are forwarded (i.e. duplicates have been removed). As mentioned previously, in 2012 there were 96 "unique illegal reports" which could potentially be forwarded.

National forwarding

In 2012, there were 4 cases of illegal content hosted in Ireland. This is the largest ever in one year. Since the establishment of Hotline.ie in 1999, there have previously been only three verified reports of content hosted in Ireland. (These comprised of one report in 2009 and two in 2010). This must be taken in proportion; Ireland has an excellent record in comparison to most other developed countries.

The first case in 2012 related to misuse of a foreign based webcam service by someone utilising an IP address located in Ireland to stream video of child pornography. Hotline.ie forwarded this report to the Garda for action. As it did not involve content hosting in Ireland the ISPAI member was not required to effect take-down and Hotline.ie closed the report. This became a matter of international police investigations.

The second case was a report made by Meldpunt, the Netherlands Hotline via IHRMS (see next section) of images of child pornography which were hosted on a cloud service which has servers based in Ireland. Our Content Analyst found that it was being "mirrored" on two other servers belonging to the same operator and so two reports were derived. This means three reports refer to the same content but held on three different servers. Put another way, there were only two reports of different content being distributed from Ireland in 2012.

This cloud operator is not a member of ISPAI and the three reports were forwarded to the Garda for action. As it happens, this cloud service is operated from the USA. Following international police notification, the US operators took down the material within a short period of being notified. As we have mentioned in previous reports, the situation is becoming more complex with the advent of

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cloud services and the fact that these straddle jurisdictions, not just adjacent countries, but around the globe.

International forwarding

The majority of the 96 reports were forwarded via INHOPE; of which Hotline.ie is a long standing member. A new version of INHOPE's Report Management System (IHRMS), which was originally introduced in 2010, went live in January 2013. This new system will ease international forwarding along with improved tracking and statistical analysis of reporting data.

Forwarding procedures

Where an INHOPE hotline exists in the country to which the apparent location was traced, the report is forwarded to that hotline via IHRMS. If there is no INHOPE hotline in the jurisdiction, it is forwarded to An Garda Síochána so they can send it through police channels to Interpol, who in turn passes this to police in the jurisdiction of the apparent location. An entry is also made in IHRMS for statistical record purposes even though the report cannot be forwarded by IHRMS.

If illegal content is traced to Ireland, it is forwarded to An Garda Síochána and the ISPAI member and there is close cooperation to speedily act on the report. It is also entered in to IHRMS.

Information forwarded

Hotline.ie only forwards details about content which is at the target of a report. The details forwarded along with a unique case reference number are as follows:

- The date and local time the report was made to the Hotline and, where it is provided, the date and time the reporter encountered the illegal material.
- The URL or other identifier where the content reported may be accessed.
- A very brief description of what was observed that resulted in the assessment that the content was probably illegal under Irish law.
- Up to three unique identifiers (e.g. URLs) of specific illegal images at, or referenced in, the location reported and a terse description of the image or video, etc. at these locations.
- The date and local time that the Hotline Analyst accessed the content retrieved from the reported location.
- The technical tracing information obtained by the analyst that apparently shows the ISP/Hosting Provider in the country (jurisdiction) which is the source of the content.

The actual illegal images or files are never forwarded. The Hotline does not retain any illegal images, etc. once the report is closed. If downloading of files was necessary to assess content, on closing the report the downloaded files are securely deleted. Under the terms of operation agreed with the Government, Hotline.ie does not hold a database of illegal content.

Information about the reporter (if it has been supplied) is never passed on. If law enforcement investigations in the other jurisdiction can be assisted by the reporter and that jurisdiction requests to make contact, the Hotline will only provide the reporter's details having first contacted them to obtain their express permission. If the reporter refuses or they cannot be contacted their details will not be provided.

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Once the report is forwarded, whether through INHOPE or Police, to the correct jurisdiction, Hotline.ie's role is completed and the report is closed.

The establishment of additional INHOPE hotlines worldwide has meant that the majority of CSAC reported to Hotline.ie can be forwarded directly to the jurisdiction to which it is traced. In 2012 the majority of reports assessed as containing illegal material were dealt with via the INHOPE network, just 12.5% of reports were forwarded directly to law enforcement as they were traced to countries which did not have an INHOPE hotline. The INHOPE network saves considerable amounts of police time, both An Garda Síochána and Interpol, as in the absence of an INHOPE Hotline in a recipient country reports are routed through multiple bodies to the appropriate jurisdiction. Regardless of the location to which content is traced or the presence of an INHOPE hotline An Garda Síochána are sent copies of all forwarding notifications of CSAC for their records.

Resulting international action

Since the inception of IHRMS in 2010 figures have been gathered which show the scale of reports dealt with by the network of INHOPE hotlines. 1,059,758 reports were processed by member hotlines worldwide. 37,404 reports of CSAC were forwarded via IHRMS in 2012. The time taken from reporting a suspicion of CSAC to the subsequent removal from the internet of confirmed CSAC is also recorded. In Europe, **90%** of CSAC forwarded for action through INHOPE was removed from the Internet within **72 hours** and approximately 97% after 11 day **.** Worldwide **56%** was removed within 72 hours and approximately 95% within 11 days.[3]

INHOPE's annual report is available on www.inhope.org.

Hotline.ie Traffic Analysis

It is important to emphasise that Hotline.ie does not track visitors. We do not use "cookies" and we do not capture on IP addresses of individual reports made. The following are observations taken from the standard Websites statistics provided by the hosting provider.

Visitor dynamics

There are some interesting visitor dynamics which are mostly unexplainable but it does help to demonstrate the visibility and usage the site receives. During 2012 the hotline.ie website received roughly the same amount of visitors and website hits every month from January through August. This was about 2300-2400 unique visitors on average, with the total number of visits being around 4500.

However, in September 2012 there was a significant drop in the number of visits to just above 1000 in the month. This is only slightly more than 20% of that previously observed. It appears to be difficult to explain the sudden drop in visitors, it may be influenced by the start of the academic year to an extent, but it is unlikely that it could be the reason for such a formidable drop.

However, the following month (October) a huge increase in the number of visits was recorded. In the months up to December, there were over 8300 visits a month, which is almost a 100% increase compared to the pre-September levels. (In fact this increase has been maintained into the new year, with visitors figures for the January 2013 having a comparable volume to the three months before.

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[3] INHOPE Annual Report 2012

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Again, we can only guess at the cause of this sudden change. It may be related to the Irish media attention at the time given to the tragic events surrounding the suicide of a girl in Donegal which allegedly involved cyberbullying. This appears to have increased the interest of the public to the topic of Internet Safety which in turn brought more traffic to our website.

This assumption is made on the basis that the most common file downloaded from the Hotline.ie website is called "Cyberbullying.pdf" which is a copy of the pamphlet produced by the Office for Internet Safety on these issues. While Hotline.ie is unable to deal with cyberbullying reports as in most cases the content is not illegal, it is reassuring to know that there is more awareness within the general population of the existence of the hotline website where illegal content can be reported.

Correlation between visitors and reports

Interestingly, the number of visitors that we get on the website does not seem to have a strong correlation with the number of illegal reports, or reports in general received daily. Apparently, while the number of hits was on the rise at the end of the year, as just discussed, the number of reports we have been getting at the hotline has been reducing.

Geographical origin of visits

Geographical dispersion of visitors is different to what one would expect. As of December, the highest number of visitors recorded came from the U.S.A. with the number of hits being five times greater than those recorded as coming from Ireland, which follows in second place. Yet interestingly, judging by non-anonymous reports only a fraction of the reports to Hotline.ie are made by American visitors to our website.

Search visibility

"Hotline" appears to be the top keyword search that leads visitors to the hotline website from search engines like Google. That means that the page is highly ranked by the services and is easy enough to find by whoever needs it.

 In fact a Google search with the "hotline" keyword ranks the link to our website as the first in the result list when searched from our office in Dublin; however it likely be different for users located in other parts of the world.

OBSERVATIONS, TRENDS & SUCCESSES

Report levels and illegal content

The number of reports received in 2012 overtook the previous highest level recorded in2006, making 2012 the peak year so far for reporting since the Hotline was established. However, as shown in figure 10, inexplicably, the occurrence of reports assessed as referring to illegal content continues to decline as a percentage of overall reports.

Concern about reduction in validated reports

While we are pleased that there appears to be a very low occurrence of illegal content being hosted in Ireland, the ISPAI is concerned about the fall in reports that are validated as illegal, particularly when this comes to child pornography. As responsible public communication providers we absolutely do not want our infrastructure abused for the distribution of this abhorrent and illegal material. However, legalities of privacy of communications and the practicalities of sheer scale of the

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Internet means that community self-policing (i.e. reporting) is the only effective means of acting against this highly dynamic issue. The public are our "eyes and ears" on the Internet. If the public are encountering child pornography on the Internet and do not report it, neither the industry nor law enforcement will not know about it and therefore will not be in a position to act against this material.
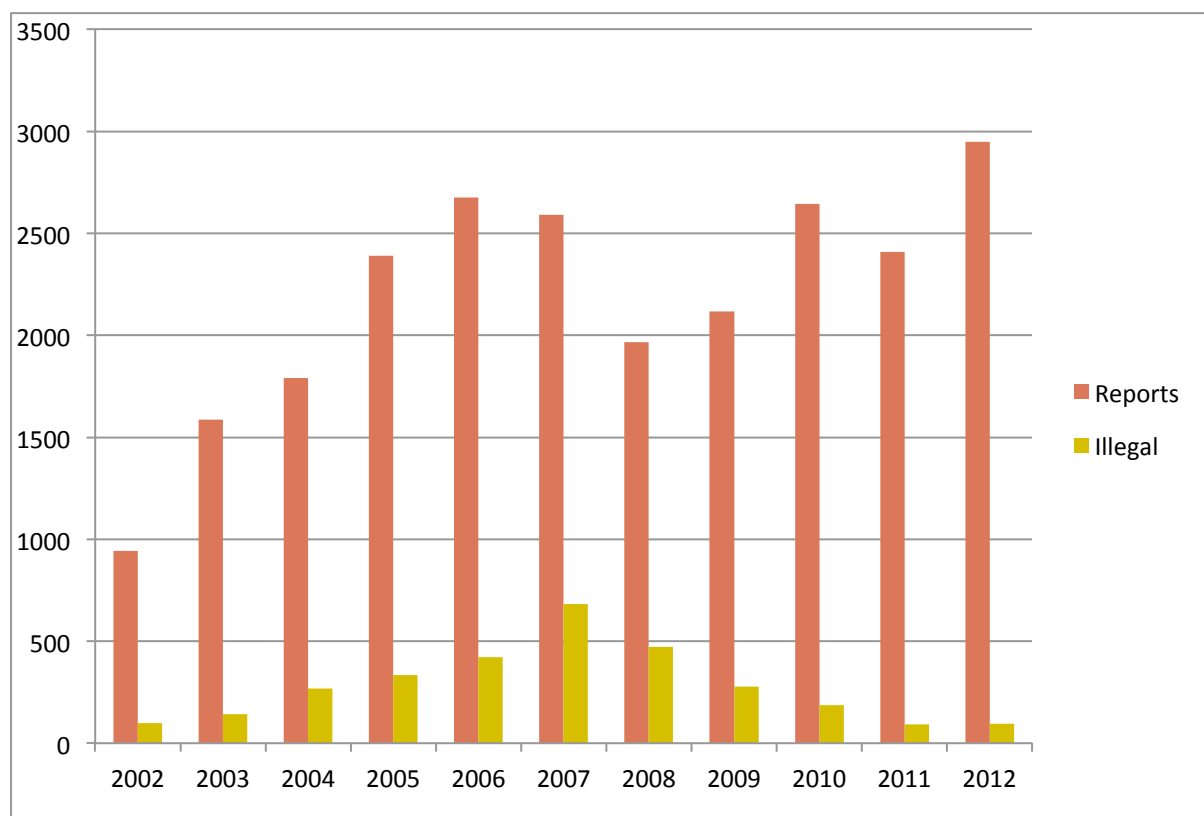

Figure 10: Reporting and assessment trends 2002 to 2012 inclusive

However, we do not believe that Irish Internet users are no longer as prepared to report such material as they were in 2006, 2007 and 2008; when we experienced the maxima in reports verified as illegal content. We believe it has probably more to do with the way Irish people (particularly the vast numbers who have come online in the last five years) are using the Internet.

Explanatory hypotheses
Social Networking: It is of note that the Irish public were found, in the Eurobarometer Cybercrime Poll conducted by the European Commission in 2012, to have a higher than average social networking usage as compared to their European counterparts. These habits have transitioned the way in which the average user in Ireland accesses the Internet and we must acknowledge that this may be part of the reason why CSAC is being encountered less often by the average Internet user. There is anecdotal evidence and website usage statistics which suggest that people are going online via popular social networks. If usage is largely taking place within the confines of such networks there is a significantly reduced chance of happening upon CSAC. That is not to say that social networks are not also misused but such misuse would tend to be in private groups that can only be accessed by invited profiles.

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Spam e-mails: Spam distributed by criminal organisations advertising commercial CSAC sites used to be a considerable driver of reporting. There were no reports of spam emails advertising CSAC in 2012. Emails containing this type of material constituted a considerable proportion of reports received in the mid-2000s however Hotline.ie has not received any reports of this nature since 2010.

Willingness to report: In last year's annual report we published findings of a nationwide survey conducted on our behalf that showed 69% of respondents in Ireland agreed that if they came across suspected illegal content they would be likely report it. Indeed 34% stated they "would definitely" report. This rose to 48% of respondents with children.

A similar study was recently conducted by the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) in the UK. Their findings show that there is a concern amongst the general public about the availability of CSAC online, with 83% of those polled saying they were "concerned" about child pornography. However over half of people said they either wouldn't know how to report it (40%) or would ignore it (12%) if they came across it.[4]

It would therefore appear that people in Ireland are more ready to report than their UK counterparts. This corroborates that the reduction is not due to a lack of willingness to report.

Mistaken view of what constitutes CSAC: The high number of reports citing suspected child pornography that when assessed convert to a Hotline determination of adult pornography, shows that people are willing to report. However, in the absence of encountering true child pornography they are reporting a lot of "borderline" adult pornography (i.e. persons over 18 who look possibly younger). There is a vast difference between this consenting material and the "true" illegal content which depicts for example, the sexual abuse of 6 to 10 year olds and much younger which can in no way be considered consensual.

Conclude public more rarely encountering CSAC in Web use: It is therefore tentatively concluded that whatever dynamics are at play in Ireland, it appears that the Web using public simply are not encountering CSAC to the same degree as they were in the past. This does not mean that ISPAI implies that there is less illegal content on the Internet being distributed around the world. We are concerned that paedophiles are using the Internet in ways that avoid the eyes of general Web users in Ireland. However, we believe that peer-to-peer services are increasingly being abused and we appeal to users of those services to report anonymously using the Hotline if they encounter filenames that imply they might contain videos or images of child sexual abuse.

Child Exploitation Directive

The European Union "Directive on combatting the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child pornography" (Child Exploitation Directive) was signed into the official journal on the 18th December 2011 and must be transposed into national law by 18th December 2013. Hotline.ie welcomes this and calls on Government and other EU Member States to improve systems to facilitate the rapid takedown of illegal content at source when notification is received. The self-regulation practices and procedures which are currently in place in Ireland between Hotline.ie, industry and law enforcement already meet the needs of this Directive, which advocates removal at source as the best way to combat CSAC online.

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[4] ComRes poll conducted on behalf of the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF), March 2013

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Cloud service challenge

Ireland must encourage the development of cloud services if we are going to sustain jobs and international ICT investment. However, the availability of these services which operate and attract custom at a global level, does increase Ireland's exposure to abuse of these services from criminals around the world. The fact that servers here are controlled from other jurisdictions present new challenges. We hope that all cloud providers operating components of their global services from Ireland will join ISPAI and support the Hotline, so if any illegal content is detected on their systems, on being made aware, Hotline.ie has the necessary relationship with the cloud provider to have the content expeditiously removed.

Other Hotline.ie activities at home and abroad

Hotline.ie is involved in more than the processing of reports of suspected illegal content. Some activities from 2012 are outlined below:

- As published in last year's annual report Hotline.ie ran a national survey, conducted by an independent survey company to elicit public attitudes to illegal content on the Internet and to gauge Hotline visibility. The results of the survey were analysed and utilised during 2012 and based on these data a number of targeted press campaigns were run. The aim being to raise visibility of the Hotline to aid reporting.
- Hotline.ie was involved in contributing to meetings of the Internet Safety Advisory Committee and presented summary statistics and trend observations throughout the year.
- Hotline.ie staff continued to meet with a number of ISP companies' management to promote support for self-regulation; which Hotline.ie is integral to. We are pleased that during the year, three new wireless broadband providers became members of ISPAI and so are signed up to accepting notices issued by Hotline.ie, should they arise.
- Our legal analyst interacted with Mary Mitchell O'Connor TD on issues related to websites that promote eating disorders online. The legal position of the Hotline being unable to process reports on such material as it is not illegal was explained. Details of Hotline.ie's activities were presented along with information on the content that Hotline could act on; such as content which contravenes legislation e.g. racism and CSAC.
- Hotline.ie attended the launch of Vodafone's SafetyNet and UPC's Magic Desktop. Respectively, these marked initiatives to make mobile usage safer for children and promoted of parental control capabilities and, to provide a "walled garden" with captivating positive content for young children.
- Hotline.ie held a number of meetings during 2012 with online security and safety practitioners who advise companies on these matters. It is intended that by reaching out to these professionals awareness of the Hotline and its objectives will be raised among IT security professionals.
- Hotline.ie held a series of presentations on Internet Safety for parents' groups with the multinational financial services corporation "Statestreet" who have multiple office locations in Dublin SJRQ, Naas, Carrickmines, Drogheda and Kilkenny. This promoted the Hotline.ie service while providing an overview of challenges to parents managing their children's use of the Internet and safety advice as developed in conjunction with the awareness partners in the Safer Internet Ireland project coordinated by the Office for Internet Safety.

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- On an international level Hotline.ie has continued its work with INHOPE and is actively involved in its working groups which strive to continually improve methods of dealing with illegal content (CSAC and Racist material) online and share expertise.

Highest number of reports processed

In 2012, Hotline.ie processed 2,950 reports This comprises reports from all sources to the Hotline and reports which Hotline.ie derived from these.

Compared to 2,411 in 2011, Hotline.ie has seen a small rise in reports assessed as referring to illegal child sexual abuse content (CSAC) this year. CSAC reports rose from 83 unique illegal reports in 2011 to 96 in 2012. While this figure represents a 15% increase in the number of reports relating to material assessed as CSAC it represents a decrease in CSAC as a the percentage of total reports processed. The number of unique reports confirmed as referring to illegal CSAC, as a percentage of overall reports received, is at its lowest since 2001.

In 2012 4 reports, included in the total count of CSAC, were traced to sources in Ireland. 3 of these related to the same content being hosted on cloud services. The other was a case of CSAC being streamed from an IP address traced to Ireland. This brings the total number of verified reports of CSAC traced to Ireland to 7 since November 1999 when Hotline.ie was established.

Reporting illegal use on all Internet services

97% of reports to Hotline.ie in 2012 referred to content encountered on websites, less than 1% of reports were reporting content being shared on peer to peer (P2P) services. It is important that the public using P2P services report files they find which either suggest CSAC by their filename or appear to contain such material when downloaded. These incidents can be reported anonymously via the website's web form. The same applies to UseNet, mobile apps or content sent or linked to in emails.

Notable successes

All reports to Hotline.ie where CSAC is found, its source traced and details forwarded via approved channels to that country, are considered a success. Unfortunately due to the volume of reports being dealt with by some countries feedback and outcomes from specific cases are rare. Statistics gathered via INHOPE show the level of CSAC reported and the rate at which it is removed from the internet.

In 2012 Hotline.ie learned that a report received in 2011 which was forwarded for action to Bulgaria, led to the conviction in court of the person who had distributed the illegal child sexual abuse content. This is one case which demonstrates the benefit of international Hotline cooperation through the INHOPE network. ***(? Include this was included in last year's report but happened in 2012)***

Ireland has maintained an excellent record of rarely having incidents of child sexual abuse material being hosted by an ISP within the country. An incident of CSAC being hosted on cloud services in Ireland in 2012 occurred however overall very few cases exist where other INHOPE Hotlines have found it necessary to forward reports to Hotline.ie. This corroborates the trend of direct reports from the Irish public to Hotline.ie which, when they do prove to refer to illegal content, are found overwhelmingly to be hosted outside the Irish Jurisdiction.

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The necessity to report

Hotline appeals to all members of the public, that if you want a safer Internet where CSAC is rapidly eliminated, it depends on you.

If you suspect something you encounter on the Internet (the World Wide Web, a peer to peer network, or other services) may be illegal, or appears to point to where CSAC may be located, please do not ignore it - report it using the forms at www.hotline.ie.

Hotline.ie is part of the Safer Internet Ireland project consortium coordinated by the Office of Internet Safety within the Department of Justice and Equality. As part of this project, the Hotline receives part-funding from the European Union through the Safer Internet Programme. For more information on Hotline.ie, its structure, stakeholder relationships and operations, please visit the www.hotline.ie "about pages".

Conclusion

We're encouraged to see that in its fourteenth year of operation the public's use of the Hotline.ie service continues to increase. Thanks to the vigilance of the public and their willingness to report a significant amount of CSAC has been removed expeditiously from the internet with take down times continuing to improve year on year. The growing INHOPE network, which now has 43 member hotlines in 37 countries, is ensuring that content hosted abroad is being addressed in an effective and efficient manner. From the perspective of Hotline.ie, Ireland continues to remain virtually free of CSAC hosting with only 7 confirmed reports of CSAC hosted in Ireland since 1999.

From the viewpoint of Irish users it now appears that CSAC is no longer being as widely distributed on the open web, and that criminals are using more sophisticated technologies to distribute this illegal content. For whatever reason the phenomenon of commercial CSAC websites advertised by spam email which drove a lot of reporting in the mid-2000s, is thankfully a thing of the past. Therefore unfortunately the positive figures reported by the Hotline in 2012 cannot be said to reflect the levels of this content which are available on the entire global Internet which includes not only the world-wide-web but also on other less open networks. We now need to ensure that we adapt to meet this challenge and strive to have the same successful effect that we have had thus far, on other less familiar services such as Usenet, peer-to-peer and the challenges presented by cyber-lockers.

Fortunately, the constantly growing network of hotlines which exists worldwide as part of the INHOPE organisation, which intends to extend its reach with more member hotlines in the pipeline, means that now more than ever, there is a concentrated international effort which is at the very least dissuading criminals from sharing this material on the open Internet. It is thus essential that the on-going collaboration between the Hotline, ISPAI members, the Garda Síochána and the Government is maintained in order to ensure that Internet hosting services in Ireland continue to be avoided by those who might attempt to use them for the distribution of illegal content. However, as Ireland's Internet facilities are just part of a larger global network, it is essential that we continue to cooperate with our European and International counterparts in order to continue in our endeavours to make the Internet a safer place for its users.

Some additional notes on reporting...

Please Report!

If you suspect something you encounter on the Internet may be illegal child sexual abuse content (CSAC); whether that is on the web, a peer to peer network, or any other service, or something appears to point to where CSAC may be located, please do not ignore it – report it. Hotline.ie appeals to all members of the public: if you want to have a safer internet where all CSAC is rapidly eliminated please report using the form at www.hotline.ie.

Hotline also deals with criminally illegal hate speech – that is Internet content (words or pictures) that is likely to stir up hatred of an identifiable group of people in Ireland.

In The Details.

414 reports received by Hotline.ie in 2012 could not be processed due to insufficient information given by the reporter. For Web please provide a full and exact URL to the suspect content. For Peer-to-Peer" please give the sharing program name, the search term used and the full filename. Also, a brief description assists our Analysts to identify the content being reported.

Our Members

The Hotline.ie service is run by socially responsible members of the industry who do not want the infrastructural services we provide used to access or distribute illegal content – especially child sexual abuse content (otherwise known as child pornography).
It is as a measure to counter such misuse in Ireland, and to support international cooperation to act against CSAC, that ISPAI members fund and operate the Hotline and pay membership fees to INHOPE. (See www.inhope.org).
Hotline.ie operations are overseen by the Department of Justice and Equality, Office for Internet Safety and procedures are approved by An Garda Síochána.