www.hotline.ie
watching · guiding · protecting

Overview of the Third Report
Full report online at www.hotline.ie/thirdreport
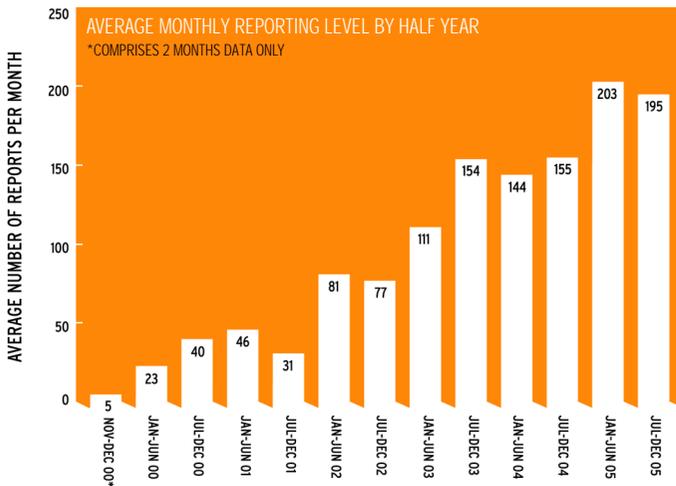
INTRODUCTION

This is the 3rd Report of the ISPAI www.hotline.ie Service which was established in November 1999 to combat illegal child pornography on the Internet. The service provides a secure and confidential environment where the public may anonymously report such content encountered while using the Internet. The Internet Service Providers Association of Ireland (ISPAI) funds and operates the Hotline. It is primarily through the resolve of its responsible users that the Internet can be made a safer medium especially for children. The ISPAI requests the public never to ignore Internet content they suspect to be illegal. Please use the confidential "Report Online" facility on www.hotline.ie.

OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES OF THE HOTLINE

The Hotline processes reports under strict procedures which have been agreed by the Government's Internet Advisory Board, An Garda Síochána and the ISPAI. It works closely with these organisations and INHOPE (the global network of Government recognised Internet Hotlines). All reports received are followed up. Where the content is assessed as probably illegal, the Hotline traces the jurisdiction in which it appears to originate. Transmission procedures exist to forward content and technical details to authorities in that country.

Details of these procedures are given in the full report at http://www.hotline.ie/thirdreport.

AVERAGE MONTHLY REPORTING LEVEL BY HALF YEAR
*COMPRISES 2 MONTHS DATA ONLY

AVERAGE NUMBER OF REPORTS PER MONTH

| Period	Value
NOV-DEC 00*	5
JAN-JUN 00	23
JUL-DEC 00	40
JAN-JUN 01	46
JUL-DEC 01	31
JAN-JUN 02	81
JUL-DEC 02	77
JAN-JUN 03	111
JUL-DEC 03	154
JAN-JUN 04	144
JUL-DEC 04	155
JAN-JUN 05	203
JUL-DEC 05	195

REPORTING ANALYSIS
Numbers of reports received

In the 30 month period from 1 July 2003 to 31 December 2005 the Hotline received 5102 reports. This is more than double the 1792 reports received in the second reporting period (24 months, 1 July 2001 to 30 June 2003) even when this is adjusted up to represent a 30 month period. As can be seen from the graph on the left the number of reports the Hotline received monthly in each 6 month period has been increasing steeply.
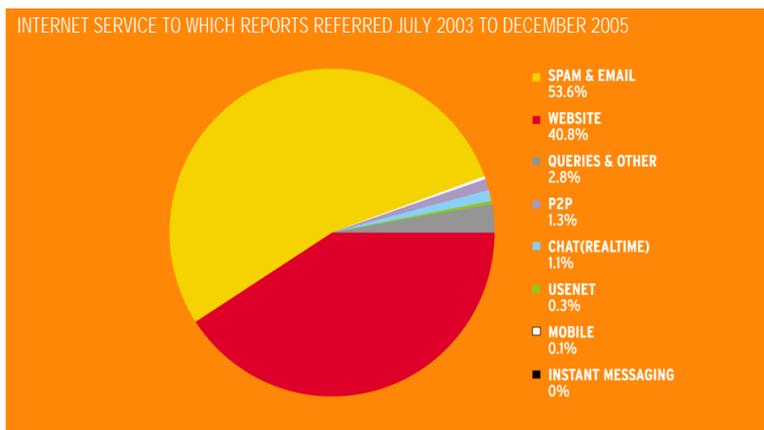
Full Report online at www.hotline.ie/thirdreport

Reports of illegal content forwarded to other Hotlines and Law Enforcement for action

Since 2000 the incidence of unique reports (i.e. excludes duplicates) assessed by the Hotline and determined as being probably illegal child pornography, under the Irish Child Trafficking and Pornography Act (1998) has increased year on year. All reports, where the content was confirmed as probably illegal child pornography, were traced to locations outside of Ireland and passed for action to other INHOPE Hotlines or to An Garda Síochána to be routed through police channels.


REPORTS OF ILLEGAL CONTENT FORWARDED TO OTHER HOTLINES AND LAW ENFORCEMENT FOR ACTION
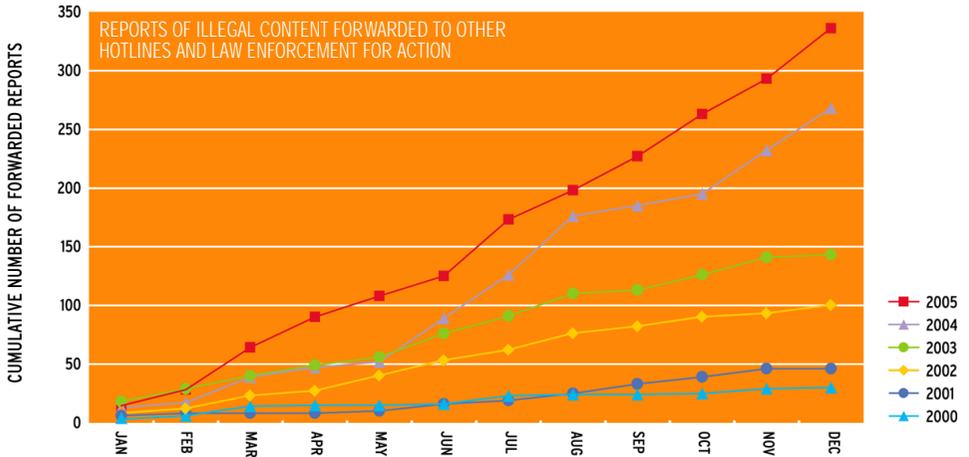
Internet service to which reports referred

Of the 5102 reports received by the Hotline in this reporting period, 53.6% related to spam email apparently advertising illegal content. Websites are the second most reported Internet service generating 40.8% of reports. While the proportion of websites reported is similar to the previous reporting period, there has been a significant shift in the content assessed. Wording within the sites has generally become more offensive and the level of child abuse displayed in openly accessible images has increased in severity. For a detailed description of these findings go to the full report site at: www.hotline.ie/thirdreport

INTERNET SERVICE TO WHICH REPORTS REFERRED JULY 2003 TO DECEMBER 2005

SPAM & EMAIL 53.6%
WEBSITE 40.8%
QUERIES & OTHER 2.8%
P2P 1.3%
CHAT(REALTIME) 1.1%
USENET 0.3%
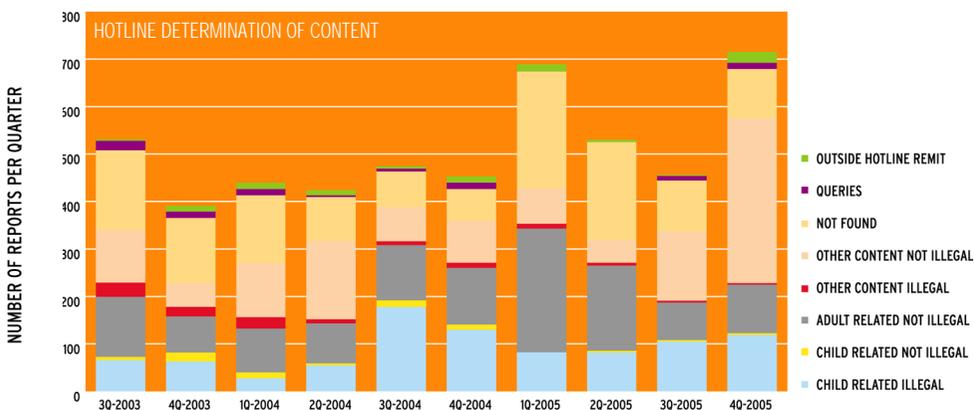MOBILE 0.1%
INSTANT MESSAGING 0%

Suspicion described or implied in reports received

In 87.6% of reports submitted the suspicion given or implied was child pornography. This high figure is expected as the Hotline was set up to handle reports of child pornography. The Hotline also accepts reports of other illegal material (e.g. financial scams and racist content) which comprised 1.5% of reports. 9.5% of the reports were other content, which includes general queries, no categorisation or insufficient detail for categorisation of the suspicion.

SUSPICION DESCRIBED OR IMPLIED IN REPORTS RECEIVED

Legend: OTHER CONTENT, COMPUTER RELATED, ADULT RELATED, OTHER ILLEGAL, CHILD RELATED ILLEGAL
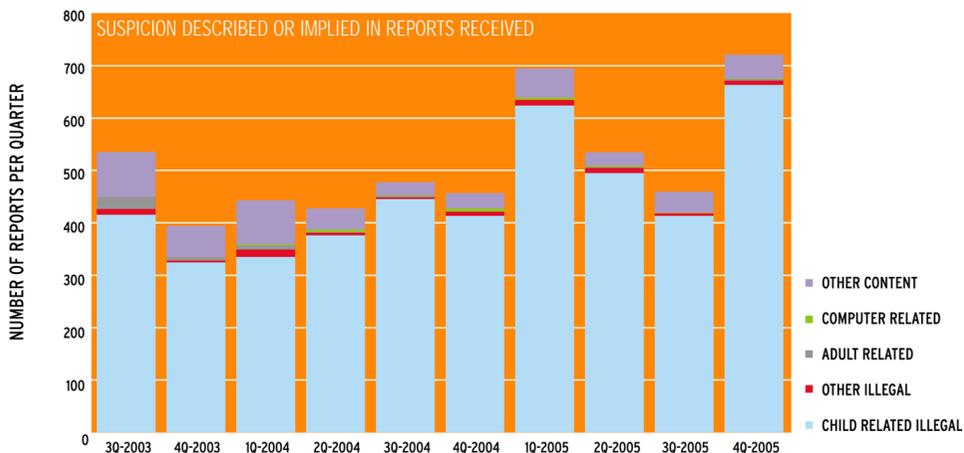
Hotline determination of content to which reports referred

Analysis of reported content, as determined by the Hotline, is given in the bar chart below. A large proportion of reports suspected as being child pornography were determined as adult pornography which is not illegal in this jurisdiction. That is, the subjects in the images were assessed as over 17 years old, the age limit specified in the Child Trafficking and Pornography Act (1998). A small number of reports referred to images of children that were assessed as not illegal. Most of the reports determined as "other illegal content" were financial scams. Only two reports were confirmed as being racist material breaking Irish law.

HOTLINE DETERMINATION OF CONTENT

Legend: OUTSIDE HOTLINE REMIT, QUERIES, NOT FOUND, OTHER CONTENT NOT ILLEGAL, OTHER CONTENT ILLEGAL, ADULT RELATED NOT ILLEGAL, CHILD RELATED NOT ILLEGAL, CHILD RELATED ILLEGAL

Of concern is the number of reports where the Hotline could not find the content to which the reporter was referring. 4.8% of all reports had insufficient detail to begin the assessment process. In many cases when an access attempt was made the location was simply not active. More positively, even though most reports received by the Hotline are processed within 24 hours, in 6.6% of cases the ISP had already removed the content prior to the Hotline's access attempt. For further detail of these findings please visit: www.hotline.ie/thirdreport

REVIEW

In early 2004 the Hotline was successful in attracting continued European Commission funding under the Safer Internet Programme. Providing 50% of operational costs, this has been crucial to the development of the Hotline. It has allowed two part-time Analysts to be hired to deal with the increased levels of reporting, greater interaction with stakeholders and support of additional events to promote the Hotline to the public. The confidentiality of the public making reports is of paramount importance to the Hotline. In the reporting period, the Hotline has applied considerable resources to improving the security and usability of its reporting process. The reporting forms were redesigned and the security technology behind them improved. The Hotline database does not record any data about the originator of anonymous reports. Personal information when provided is erased within 90 days of their report being closed. Notices and information relevant to Internet safety are regularly updated on the Hotline's home page.

In the second half of 2004 a new phenomenon appeared on illegal web-sites to disrupt the systems of organisations combating child pornography. This required that the Hotline service completely redesign the systems used to access and trace the servers hosting illegal content. The Hotline website was also transferred to a new hosting service provided by Blacknight Internet Services.

Membership of INHOPE is vital to the Hotline's effectiveness by providing a cooperating network of trusted International partners. This is a two way process and the Hotline has been highly involved in INHOPE's development. The Hotline General Manager was elected INHOPE Treasurer for 2004/2005. The Hotline developed an application internally to record report processing and extract statistical information such as that presented in this report. This has now been licensed to INHOPE to provide to members around the World and will expedite the start-up of operations in new Hotlines.

The Hotline has run events to promote understanding of the issues and the importance of making reports to combat the prevalence of illegal content on the Internet. Seminars have been run for ISPs, An Garda Síochána, commercial associations and concerned parents. It is vital that all relevant agencies work together to promote Internet safety and protect children using the Internet. The Hotline has provided support and speakers for events run by child welfare organisations, industry associations and educational organisations. The Hotline has also provided training to staff of other INHOPE member hotlines and hosted fact finding missions from foreign law enforcement and government representatives.

The Hotline appreciates the donation of software licenses from Microsoft Ireland received in the period. The Hotline is very grateful for the support of the Government and An Garda Síochána who promote the Hotline through their websites and within the Garda pages in the National telephone directories.

The Hotline would not exist without the commitment of the ISPAI members. These are ISPs providing public Internet services in Ireland who take the interests of their customers and Internet safety seriously by financially supporting the Hotline. At the time of writing there were 21 members: BT, eircom, O2, Vodafone, HEAnet, Irish Broadband, UTV-Internet, Irish Domains, Meteor, Verizon Business, NTL, Smart Telecom, EuroKom, Novara I.T., Clearwire, Blacknight, Strencom, Protocol, ICE Comms, Bitbuzz and Newbay.

CONCLUSIONS

The ISPAI www.hotline.ie service is indebted to the public who used the service as it is they who make it work. The fact that the Hotline has not received any verified reports from other Hotlines around the world, or reports from the public that have proved to be hosted or distributed directly from Ireland, is testament to the effectiveness of ISP self-regulation in cooperation with An Garda Síochána and other Irish stakeholders. It sends out a clear signal that Ireland is not a safe location for criminals wishing to misuse Irish Internet facilities to host or distribute illegal content. In the period the Hotline has contributed over 671 unique reports to the global fight against child pornography and other illegal content. However, we can not afford to be complacent otherwise criminals will start to exploit Irish Internet services and this is a scenario that ISPAI members will not entertain.