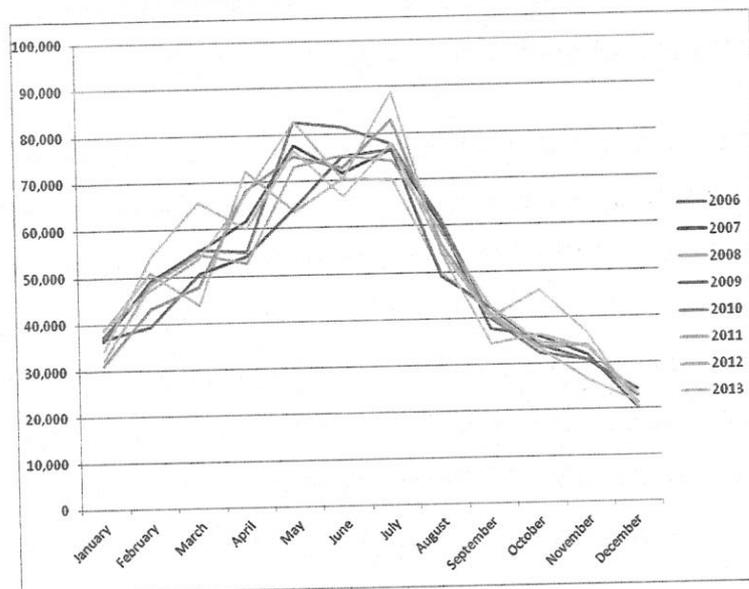


## Passport Services

1. Approximately 630,000 passports are issued annually by the Passport Service. Demand in Ireland has risen from 388,000 in 2000 to 630,000 in 2005 and whereas it has fallen slightly in recent years, it is projected that 2014 demand will again be in the order of 630,000 passports.
2. Passport demand in Ireland is seasonal. Almost 50% of all passport applications are received in the four months April –July.



3. Approximately 85% of passports issued annually are issued here in Ireland, another 7% are issued by the Irish Embassy in London to citizens resident in the UK, and 8% are issued by all other overseas Missions.
4. Passports are processed in four main passport offices, Molesworth Street, Balbriggan, Cork and London.
5. Over 60% of all passport applications within the State are made through the "Passport Express" service (a joint venture with An Post). Application forms and special "Passport Express" envelopes are available at over 1,000 post offices throughout the State. For an extra fee of €9.50 for an individual, customers are

guaranteed a next day delivery and are given a commitment by the PPO that, where the application was properly completed, a passport will be returned to them within ten working days. The outreach of the Passport Express has reduced the need for persons to come in person to the Passport Office and continues to provide the easiest access to the passport services for those citizens in regions where a Passport Office is not located.

6. Passport express applications are currently slightly behind schedule, but the Passport Service is taking action to resolve this position.
7. In June 2013, the Passport Office in Molesworth Street introduced an online appointment service, allowing customers to book guaranteed time slots before travelling into the office. The public have responded very well to this new arrangement and in particular are very welcoming of the fact that the many hours previously spent queuing in the office has been eliminated. Customers are now in and out having lodged their application in approximately 10 minutes. Additionally the office has extended the public opening hours of the office from 09.30-16.30 to 09.00 -17.00. The appointment service has now been extended to the Cork office.
8. Earlier this year a new same day pilot rapid renewal process was introduced in the Molesworth St. office. The new service would allow adults and children, in possession of their existing passport, renew their passport where immediate travel is required.

#### **Passport Fees**

9. The cost for a standard adult passport is €80 with reduced charges for minors. At €8 per year the Irish passport fee for adults compares with approximately €9 per year for a British passport, €9 per year for a French passport, €8 per year for a Danish passport, €10 per year for a United States passport and €15 per year for an Australian passport.
10. Considerable progress has been made in relation to the efficiency of the Passport

Service. Last year, in comparison to 2009, the Passport Service issued 60,000 more passports with fewer staff (-10%) and a much reduced overtime bill (-90%).

### **Passport Fraud**

11. On foot of the detection of internal fraud in the Passport Service in 2013, the Secretary General requested an external group to undertake a review of Passport Service systems, processes and controls including a wider examination of the spectrum of challenges/risks to the integrity of the Irish passport –both internal and external. The report makes a series of recommendations to mitigate the risk of future fraud and improve the level of identity protection with a view to protecting the reputation of the Irish passport. The Secretary General has established a project team tasked with examining the recommendations in the report; evaluating options to deliver on these recommendations; and delivering on the options selected.

12. In addition, the Secretary-General has put in place a programme steering committee to advise on and input into this reform programme

### **Reform Initiatives**

14. Work has progressed on the development of a simplified application process for adults renewing their passports. A new shorter form, dependent on the installation on the new scanning solution, currently underway, will be in place before the 2015 peak season. A downloadable form will be available and the Garda witnessing requirement will be removed. The simplified process will also facilitate faster turnaround times for applications in this category.

15. The development of an online application service has progressed. The removal of the personalisation of the signature on the new passport book is the first step to deliver on this initiative. Few passport agencies worldwide have developed a

comprehensive online service, reflecting the pressures to mitigate the threat of passport fraud. The development of a service for Irish citizens is dependent on the availability of advanced identity verification systems including facial matching which is currently being procured.

16. The new passport book, introduced last October, has been well received by Irish citizens around the world. The new design was also awarded Regional (Europe) ID Document of the Year 2014 by the high security printing industry.

17. The Passport Service has since been working on the introduction of a new passport card. It is envisaged the card would be used for travel within the European Union. Discussions are currently taking place with the European Commission, the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) and airlines flying in and out of Ireland. It is envisaged the passport card would also be much demanded for use by younger citizens for identity verification means and consequently assist in reducing the number of lost passports reported. Discussions with the Department of Social Protection have also taken place to consider opportunities to co-operate with the Public Services Card programme.

**Relocation of the Molesworth Street Office**

18. It is expected the Molesworth Street Passport Office will relocate to Mount Street (close to the canal), possibly towards the end of 2015.