

Chapter 7:**Sources and Methodology for Statistical Analysis****Summary:**

The Committee, with the assistance of the Central Statistics Office, conducted a full statistical analysis of all available data on the girls and women who were admitted to and worked in the Magdalen Laundries.

This Chapter sets out the sources from which it drew the relevant data, as well as the methods used for its analysis.

A. Purpose and scope of statistical analysis

1. In the course of its work, the Committee conducted a comprehensive statistical analysis of all available information concerning the women who lived and worked in the Magdalen Laundries.
2. The Central Statistics Office (CSO) provided invaluable expertise and assistance in carrying out this task, for which the Committee is grateful.
3. This analysis enabled the Committee to build profiles of the women who were admitted to the Magdalen Laundries, and the routes by which they did so. It was also possible to extract other information from this analysis, which may provide answers to some commonly asked questions. This material forms the basis of part of the intended legacy of the Committee, which is to place in the public domain anonymised data concerning those who were admitted to and worked in the Laundries, which may be of value to future researchers.

4. This Chapter sets out the sources and methodology used in this analysis, and Chapter 8 details the results of that analysis. This Part of the Report and the accompanying Appendices are not confined to statistics on State involvement with the Magdalen Laundries, but also include wider ancillary and consequential information such as the background and profile of all women known to have lived and worked in the Magdalen Laundries, their routes of entry to the Laundries (including non-State routes of entry), duration of stay, and routes of exit from the Laundries.
5. The information which underpins these statistics was taken primarily from the records of the Religious Congregations and in particular the Entry Registers described in Chapter 4. The information contained in these Registers and the accompanying electronic databases compiled by each Religious Order was verified and supplemented by the Committee through independent searches and extensive cross-checking with official records (court records, prison records, probation files, electoral registers and industrial and reformatory school records). These searches and cross-checks were carried out with a dual purpose, both to verify those records, and also fill gaps, where possible, on the ways by which the registered women entered the Magdalen Laundries.

B. Verification of the records of the Religious Congregations

6. The following steps were taken to verify and supplement the records of the Religious Congregations.
7. First, all original source documents were examined by the Committee. The Entry Registers for the Magdalen Laundries, described at Chapter 4, are in general large hardcover ledgers, some with printed headings on each page, others with headings hand-written in (e.g. “name”, “date entered”, “native of”, “by whom referred”, and so on) The time-period covered by each ledger is as follows:

Institution	Number of Registers	Time-period covered by each Register
Good Shepherd Limerick	4 bound hardback ledgers	1837-1871 1871-1910 1910-1948 1948-1984
Good Shepherd Cork	3 bound hardback ledgers	1872 – 1903 1903 – 1938 1938 - 1974
Good Shepherd Waterford	2 bound hardback ledgers	1842 – 1943 1943 – 1984
Good Shepherd New Ross	2 soft back notebooks	1860 – 1913 1901 – 1967 (entries from 1901-1913 re-entered)
Order of Our Lady of Charity High Park	3 bound hardback ledgers	1853- 1904 1904 – 1936 1936 – 1990
Order of Our Lady of Charity Sean McDermott Street	1 bound hardback ledger	1887 – 1967
Religious Sisters of Charity Donnybrook	1 bound hardback ledger (plus record cards)	1796-1967 Record cards used from 1967 onwards
Religious Sisters of Charity Peacock Lane, Cork	1 bound hardback ledger	1846-1997
Sisters of Mercy, Galway	1 soft-back notebook	1944-1959 (no entries recorded for the period November 1949 to June 1954)
Sisters of Mercy, Dun Laoghaire	No surviving Register	-

8. In each case, the entry of girls and women to the Laundries was recorded by hand in the ledgers, in order of date of arrival. As the ledgers are bound and consist of entries recorded by date of entry, it would have been possible for the Committee to identify the removal or insertion of additional pages. There was no indication in the ledgers examined that they had been interfered with.
9. The Religious Congregations confirmed to the Committee that, during the period of operation of the Laundries, one Sister in each institution would have been responsible for the registration of new entrants and that she alone would have been privy to the information on the manner in which a girl or woman had entered the institution. Reviewing the Registers, it is possible to identify consistent handwriting, changing only periodically - presumably as one Sister replaced another in this role.
10. It should be noted that two of the Registers – for the laundry operated in New Ross by the Good Shepherd Sisters and the laundry operated in Galway by the Sisters of Mercy – were recorded in less formal soft copy books. However, in common with the other laundries, it appears that no pages have been removed or added to these Registers and similarly, the handwriting of the persons recording the entries can be tracked over time.
11. Following this review and assessment of the authenticity and content of the original source Registers, it was necessary for the Committee to verify the accuracy of the electronic database for each Institution. Verification was carried out in two ways. First, all cases in the databases which suggested a State-related route of entry were examined and verified back by hand to the underlying Register. Second, cases recorded in the Registers were searched and matched to official state records, as detailed below.
12. To permit verification and cross-checking, it was necessary to extract for further investigation all Register entries from all four Religious Congregations which, on the face of the record, suggested State involvement in the referral of a girl or woman to a Magdalen Laundry.

Although time-consuming, this was necessary to allow each case to be investigated and cross-checked to all available State records. For instance, where a Register identified a girl or woman as having entered a Magdalen Laundry from prison, all available records for that period - Court and prison records, Probation Service files, Garda records and Department of Justice and Equality files - were searched for corresponding records to verify, clarify or supplement the facts of the case. As set out in Chapter 4, the vast majority of these official records are held in paper copy only, with the result that verification of any given case could and ordinarily did require extensive hand searches in Departments and National Archives.

13. Similarly, any case which suggested a girl had entered a Magdalen Laundry from an Industrial or Reformatory school was checked against all surviving case-files of the Department of Education and Skills. Additionally, any case which suggested entry through the actions of any of the range of historic health and social service authorities were cross-checked to the records of the Department of Health, the Health Service Executive and (depending on the time-period concerned) or Local Authorities. Cross-checks of this kind were carried out across all categories of possible State referrals, the results of which are detailed in Part III of this Report. Other cases were then individually cross-checked against official records (justice, health, education systems and so on).
14. These extensive searches confirmed to the satisfaction of the Committee that the records of the Religious Congregations, where they indicated a particular route of referral, were accurate. In many cases, the Committee identified the official “matching” record relating to such entries (for instance, among court records, industrial and reformatory school records, and so on), which verified these records from official sources.
15. These searches also, consequently, in certain cases identified official records which supplemented the information contained in the Congregation’s records. These searches also identified additional cases of

State involvement in referrals and generally provided a fuller picture of the facts of State involvement with the Magdalen Laundries.

16. On the basis of these steps, the Committee was wholly satisfied as to the authenticity and reliability of the Registers and accompanying electronic records of the Religious Congregations.
17. The verification and search process outlined above was additional to the independent searches – both general and targeted – carried out across all relevant State bodies and agencies and detailed further in the individual Chapters of Part III.

C. Merged record of all women known to have entered the Magdalen Laundries

18. On completion of the above verification processes, the Committee created a merged list of all known entries to the Magdalen Laundries to enable reliable statistical analysis.

i. Inclusions and exclusions from the merged database

19. This total dataset consisted of 14,607 known admissions to the Magdalen Laundries from 1922 until closure of the last Magdalen Laundry in the State in 1996. It was built from the records of the Religious Congregations (with two exceptions detailed below), supplemented by data extracted from:
 - Central Criminal Court, District Court and Circuit Court minute books;
 - prison files;
 - probation case-files;
 - Industrial and Reformatory School records;
 - local authority records;
 - historic electoral registers; and
 - records of the General Register's Office.

20. The Committee was conscious that there are some gaps in available information, which means that the merged list does not represent all admissions to the Magdalen Laundries.
21. First, as set out in the table above, the records of the Magdalen Laundry operated at Dun Laoghaire by the Sisters of Mercy did not survive. Further, only 132 entries to the Magdalen Laundry operated in Galway by the same Congregation were recorded in the surviving Register for that institution. Information was also available on some other cases where women entered the Galway Magdalen Laundry prior to 1922 and died there after 1922 (33 cases).
22. However, these records are not comprehensive (in the sense that they do not represent all admissions to the Magdalen Laundry from 1922 onwards) and further, even in those cases where records were available, they were quite incomplete, in many cases not recording the routes of entry of the girls or women concerned or alternatively the relevant dates of admission and departure.
23. These records were therefore of limited use and their inclusion in the merged list would have given a misleading picture, as they cannot be said to represent the totality of admissions to Magdalen Laundries operated by the Sisters of Mercy. Further, as they represent less than 0.9% of the total known entries to the other 8 Magdalen Laundries, their exclusion from the merged list would be highly unlikely to significantly alter the conclusions drawn. On this basis they were excluded from the merged list and overall statistical analysis carried out thereon.
24. Instead, a separate analysis was conducted on the known entries to the Magdalen Laundries operated in Galway by the Sisters of Mercy and the results of that analysis are included in Chapter 8. For clarity it can also be noted that all these cases were also included in all other substantive investigations carried out by the Committee.

25. The records of the Religious Congregations also included considerable detail on the entries to the Magdalen Laundries of girls and women prior to the establishment of the State in 1922. The vast majority of these women - the earliest of whom entered an institution in 1828 - were no longer living in the Magdalen Laundries at the time of foundation of the State and were therefore also excluded from the statistical analysis.
26. The Committee also considered the appropriate handling of what might be called “legacy” cases – that is, the girls or women who entered the Magdalen Laundries *prior* to the establishment of the State, but who continued to live and work there *after* the foundation of the State.
27. On the basis of available records, it appears that 762 women entered the Laundries prior to 6 December 1922 and continued to live and work there after that date. These women whose time in a Magdalen Laundry straddled both sides of 6 December 1922 represented a combination of two types of cases:
- Women who entered prior to the establishment of the State and who remained as long-term residents of the Magdalen Laundries; and
 - those girls and women whose time in a Magdalen Laundry simply coincided with the period around the establishment of the State.
28. The two extremes in this regard are demonstrated by the two cases which occurred in the same Magdalen Laundry:
- the woman who, on 6 December 1922, had been in a Magdalen Laundry for the longest period until that date had entered the Laundry in 1868 as a self-referral; and remained there until her death in 1931.
 - By contrast, the woman who, on 6 December 1922, had been in a Magdalen Laundry for the shortest period, entered that same Laundry

3 days prior to foundation of the State on 3 December 1922; and left at her own request six days later on 9 December 1922.

29. Despite such a variety of circumstances, a consistent approach to all such legacy cases was necessary, in order to avoid any bias in the data analysed.
30. In light of the different context of referrals prior to the establishment of the State, the Committee decided to separate these legacy cases from the general statistical analysis detailed in this Part of the Report. As a result, a separate statistical analysis was carried out on these legacy cases. The results of that analysis is included in this Part of the Report and sets out the profile of girls and women who entered a Magdalen Laundry prior to 1922 and continued to live and work there after foundation of the State.

ii. Overview of structure and content of merged database

31. Taking the above into account, the total dataset created consisted of 14,607 known admissions to the Magdalen Laundries from 1922 until closure of the last Magdalen Laundry in the State in 1996.
32. The data was analysed to identify cases where a girl or woman entered a Magdalen Laundry more than once. This enabled the Committee to estimate the approximate number of women represented by this overall figure of total entries to the Magdalen Laundries.
33. As the records held by the four Religious Congregations had never previously been combined for examination, this exercise represented the first attempt to determine, on the basis of primary records, the number of girls and women who were admitted to the Magdalen Laundries since 1922.
34. The Committee found that at least 3,409 of the 14,607 known admissions related to women who entered the Laundries more than once. Further, at least 1,186 additional admissions were by way of transfer of a woman from another Magdalen Laundry. Taking this into account (and bearing in mind

the gaps in data reflected above), it is estimated that 10,012 or fewer women are known to have entered the Magdalen Laundries between 1922 and 1996.

35. Subject to the above, the merged dataset consisted of a database of all known entries to the Magdalen Laundries, including all available information in the following fields:

- Institution
- Name
- Date of entry
- Age on entry
- County of origin
- Route of entry
- Date of exit
- Duration of stay
- Route of exit
- Family profile (parents living or dead)

36. Not every field is known or complete for every entry, but all available information on each case – from all sources - was included in the merged list.

37. To facilitate closer analysis, the routes of entry to and routes of exit from the Magdalen Laundries were then broken down into a number of categories. The categories assigned for each of these were as follows:

Routes of entry:

- Self
- Family
- Priest
- Transfer from another Magdalen Laundry
- Industrial and Reformatory Schools
- Other congregations

- County Homes and City Homes
- Court
- Prison
- Probation
- Remand
- Gardaí
- Mother and Baby Homes
- Health and social service authorities
- Psychiatric hospitals and institutions for the intellectually disabled¹
- Hospitals, doctors, nurses
- Legion of Mary
- NSPCC
- Other

38. Of this list of routes of entry, the following were categorised for the purposes of statistical analysis as referrals made or facilitated by the State:

- Industrial and Reformatory Schools;
- County Homes and City Homes;
- Court;
- Prison;
- Probation;
- Remand;
- Gardaí;
- Mother and Baby Homes;
- Health and social service authorities; and
- Psychiatric hospitals.

39. The categories of Court, Prison, Probation, Remand and Gardaí were for some purposes grouped together as “Criminal Justice system”.

¹ The Committee was required to combine these two categories, in light of the fact that, for many decades, psychiatric institutions also housed people with intellectual disabilities. It was accordingly difficult to distinguish between these two categories in the early records of the Religious Congregations.

40. The entry route “Hospitals” presented some challenges in categorisation. Regardless of the public or private status of any particular hospital, on the basis of available information, the Committee came to the view that the vast majority of cases of referrals to a Magdalen Laundry from a hospital would not have been referrals of hospital patients. Rather, the most common referral path for a girl or woman registered in the records of the Religious Congregations as having entered a Magdalen Laundry from a named hospital is likely to have been referral of a girl or woman *in employment* in that hospital. As set out more fully in Part III of this Report, at least some of these girls and women are likely to have been so referred during the period of supervision which followed their discharge from an Industrial or Reformatory School.
41. The entry routes of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (“NSPCC”²) and the Legion of Mary also presented some challenges in designation. In both cases, a referral which is identified on its face as being by the NSPCC or the Legion of Mary may, in fact, represent a referral made or facilitated by the State. The reasons for this are set out more fully elsewhere throughout this Report, but in short are as follows:
- officers of the Legion of Mary (along with the Salvation Army and Society of St. Vincent de Paul) historically served as Voluntary Probation Officers in the Courts. As a result, members of the Legion of Mary may have in some cases accompanied women to a Magdalen Laundry in their capacity as a voluntary probation officer (which would constitute a Court or probation referral), rather than as part of the general social or “Good Samaritan” work of the Legion. As set out more fully in Part III of the Report, officers of the Legion of Mary (along with other organisations) may historically also have acted as agents in the supervision of girls following their discharge from Industrial or Reformatory School.

² Re-named as the Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (“ISPCC”) in 1956

- Similarly in respect of the NSPCC, certain cases involving a woman being brought to a Magdalen Laundry by an NSPCC Inspector in fact arose following criminal cases. This occurred for instance, where an NSPCC Inspector accompanied a woman to a Magdalen Laundry following court proceedings against her in respect of neglect or abuse of her child or children. Again, these cases would constitute a State (Court or probation) referral. By contrast, in other cases, NSPCC inspectors simply brought a girl to a Magdalen Laundry at the request or with the consent of her parents (which would not constitute a State referral).
42. The Mother and Baby Homes referred to in this Section were operated by a variety of Religious Congregations. These Homes were funded, but not operated, by the State. However, the Committee was of the view that they should be included in the narrative of this Report among the category of State referrals to the Magdalen Laundries because of their relevance to health policy. Further detail on the reasons for this is included in Chapter 11.
43. In many cases it has not been possible to identify whether a particular referral registered in the records of the Religious Congregation as being by the NSPCC or the Legion of Mary is in fact a State referral as set out above. As a result, the Committee decided that the statistical findings in relation to both organisations would not be listed as either State or non-State, but rather shown separately in tables providing break-downs of State and non-State referrals.
44. For the same reason of facilitating statistical analysis, the Committee identified a number of different routes of exit from the Magdalen Laundries. The categories created for all departures were as follows:

Routes of exit

- Left
- Returned to family or friends

- Dismissed
- Ran away
- Gardaí or Courts
- County Homes and City Homes
- To a job
- To psychiatric hospital
- To a Mother & Baby Home or maternity ward of other institution
- To hospital
- Transfer to another Magdalen Laundry
- Legion of Mary Hostels or homeless shelters
- Other

45. Of these routes of exit, the following were categorised as departure of the girls or women concerned from a Magdalen Laundry to a State organisation or institution:

- County Homes and City Homes
- Gardaí or Courts
- Psychiatric hospital

46. The exit category of 'Hospital' again presented some challenges of interpretation. In some cases, the records indicate that the women who left a Magdalen Laundry and went to a hospital did so in order to take up (live-in) employment in that hospital, rather than admission as a patient. In others, it is simply not specified whether the woman was entering the hospital as an employee or as a patient.

47. This was also the case for some of the (small number of) transfers to Mother and Baby Homes, other than in the very small number of cases where the records indicate transfer of a woman who had, within a short period of time after entry to a Magdalen Laundry, been discovered to be pregnant. These small numbers of cases were therefore discharged from the Magdalen Laundry, as pregnant women were not permitted in any of the Magdalen Laundries. In such cases, the exit field in the Register of the

Religious Order typically identifies the institution to which she was transferred, along with a comment such as “maternity case” or “circumstances necessitated her departure”.

48. A rigorous statistical analysis was carried out on the database created in this way. The Central Statistics Office carried out this analysis, at the request of the Committee, to ensure the highest levels of professionalism and accuracy in analysis. The results of this analysis are included in Chapter 8 and associated Appendices.