



Trust in the Justice System

Trust in An Garda Síochána (Green traffic light)

Trust in An Garda Síochána is comparatively high in Ireland. According to the OECD, 70% of Irish people reported trusting the Gardaí in 2023, which was higher than the OECD average of 63%. Trust in the Gardaí reduced by 5% between 2021 and 2023. An Garda Síochána's 2023 public attitudes survey found that 89% of people trusted the Gardaí, down from 91% in 2021.

Trust in the Judiciary and Courts (Green traffic light)

Trust in the judiciary and courts is comparatively high in Ireland. OECD data show that 69% of the Irish population trusted the courts in 2023, which was above the OECD average of 54%. Eurobarometer Studies similarly found that the Irish population rated the independence of the judiciary and the courts between 71% and 74% from 2020 to 2025. This was above the equivalent EU average ranges of 52% to 56%.

Confidence in the Effectiveness of the Prison Service (White traffic light)

The available data are insufficient to allow robust analysis of this indicator: there are no measures of public trust, no comparative data, and the most recent figures date from 2022. That year, a Department of Justice Criminal Justice Public Attitudes Survey (2022) found that 51% of respondents had confidence in the Irish Prison Service to provide safe and secure custody. The same survey reported that 34% of respondents were confident in the Irish Prison Service's effectiveness in rehabilitating prisoners.



Policing

Policing Expenditure (Red traffic light)

Ireland's policing budget has increased every year from 2019 to 2026, from €1.79 billion to €2.59 billion. This is an overall increase of €800 million, or 45%. In Budget 2026, policing was allocated 42% of the total justice budget of €6.17 billion. Ireland's per capita spend on policing (€437.44) was 28% higher than the EU average (€342.37) according to the most recent year for which data are available (2023).

Number of Gardaí (Amber traffic light)

The number of Gardaí decreased over the period studied. In 2024, there were 14,191 uniformed Gardaí, compared with 14,307 in 2019. With Ireland's population increasing from 4.92 million to 5.38 million over the same period, the number of Gardaí per 100,000 inhabitants decreased from 291 (in 2019) to 264 (in 2024). That represents a reduction of 27 officers per 100,000 inhabitants, or 9%.

From a comparative perspective, in 2024, Northern Ireland

had 328 police officers per 100,000, while England & Wales had 237. Scotland – similar to Ireland in population size and structure – had 300 officers per 100,000. Overall, Ireland's figure of 264 is above the average of the individual jurisdictions reviewed. Further, Garda recruitment numbers are increasing, with November 2025 seeing the largest single intake of Garda trainees entering the Garda College since 2014.

Homicide and Related Offences (Green traffic light)

In absolute terms, homicides and related offences in Ireland increased from 67 incidents in 2019 to 81 in 2024 (a 21% increase). Crime rates are more useful than absolute numbers when comparing the level of offending in different jurisdictions. Ireland reported lower rates of intentional homicide, which refers to the unlawful killing of a person with intent, than the EU average each year over the period studied: 2019 to 2023. In 2023, Ireland's intentional homicide rate was 0.64 per 100,000 people. It averaged 1.04 per 100,000 across Member States in the EU, meaning the intentional homicide rate was 62.5% higher in the EU than it was in Ireland that year (2023).

Sexual Offences (Red traffic light)

Ireland has a comparatively high rate of sexual offences. Between 2019 and 2023, Ireland recorded an average of 57 sexual offences per 100,000 inhabitants annually, 43% higher than the EU average of 40 per 100,000. Ireland's yearly rate fluctuated between 52 and 62 per 100,000 people, while the EU average ranged from 36 to 45 per 100,000 people.

Theft and Related Offences (Red traffic light)

Ireland's rate of theft and related offences has consistently exceeded the EU average. With an annual average of 1,143 per 100,000 people, this was 14% higher than the EU rate. Recorded incidents rose 11% between 2019 and 2024. They ranged from a low of 46,807 in 2021 to a high of 76,142 in 2024.

Important contextual factors influencing these figures, particularly those relating to sexual offences, are highlighted in the broader analysis in this paper.

Crime Detection Rates (White traffic light)

Cross-jurisdictional comparisons of detection rates are not possible due to methodological limitations, but the data for Ireland show clear differences across offence types during the period studied (2019-2023).

Updated detection rates for homicide offences were high, ranging from 72% in 2019 to 83% in 2020, with an average of 82% between 2019 and 2022.

Sexual offences recorded much lower detection rates. These ranged from a low of 16% in 2022 to a high of 20% in 2019 and 2020. Updated detection rates for theft offences ranged from 33% in 2022, to 38% in 2020 – averaging 35% between 2019 and 2022. Contextual factors that influence the variance between detection rates are referenced in the broader analysis in this paper.



Courts

Court Expenditure (Red traffic light)

The Courts Service's gross budget has risen from €137 million in 2019 to €214 million in 2026. That represents an increase of €77 million, or 56%, compared with 2019. Ireland's per capita spend on the courts in 2022 was €38.23, which was 25% less than the European average of €50.70. Ireland's 2022 figure was also below that of England & Wales (€47.20), Denmark (€48.20), and Finland (€58.10). Ireland's per capita spend on the courts has been lower than the European average every year since 2010.

Average Case Disposition Time (Red traffic light)

Ireland's case disposition times, which refer to the average length of court proceedings, are longer than European benchmarks.

The data indicate that, in 2022, Ireland's average of 541 days was more than three times the average European estimate of 168 days. In 2024, Ireland's average case disposition time was 486 days (16 months), the second-shortest recorded between 2019 and 2024. The longest was 590 days in 2019. This means that the overall average disposition time in the Irish courts reduced by 104 days (approximately three and a half months) from 2019 to 2024. Gaps in court level data limit a full assessment of Ireland's performance under this indicator.

Caseload per Judge (White traffic light)

Ireland has consistently had fewer judges per 100,000 compared with other European countries. According to the Council of Europe, in 2022, Ireland had the lowest number of judges per 100,000 inhabitants among Member States – a finding reaffirmed in the 2025 EU Justice Scoreboard.

Between 2023 and 2024, average caseloads decreased in both the District Court and Circuit Court. The District Court recorded a 6% reduction, while the Circuit Court saw a smaller 3% decrease in caseloads per judge. Caseloads generally increased in the Superior Courts in the period reviewed. The Supreme Court experienced the highest percentage increase, with annual caseloads per judge up 32% from 2023 to 2024. The Court of Appeal recorded a 7% increase, while the High Court recorded a 9% increase in civil matters, but a 7% decrease in criminal matters.

Case Clearance Rates (Red traffic light)

The Irish courts cleared fewer cases than the number of new cases initiated each year from 2019 to 2024. This means that the backlog of unresolved matters increased each year. Based on 2022 Council of Europe data, the 2025 EU Justice Scoreboard identified Ireland as having the lowest clearance rate among EU Member States.

Some of Ireland's courts had clearance rates above 100%. In 2024, for example, the Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court resolved 124% and 104% of new cases, respectively. Civil clearance rates in Ireland provide only a partial view of dispute resolution, since many cases are settled outside formal hearings.



Prisons

Prison Expenditure (Red traffic light)

The Irish Prison Service's gross budget for 2026 is €579 million, an increase of €167 million (62%) since 2019. On a per capita basis, spending on prisons in Ireland increased from €41.84 per person in 2019 to €50.59 per person in 2023. This remains below the EU average, which increased from €50.09 per person to €60.06 per person over the same period.

Prison Occupancy Rates (Amber traffic light)

Ireland's prison occupancy rate was below the EU average until 2021 but moved above the EU average in subsequent years. In 2019, Irish prisons operated at 94% capacity. Prison overcrowding in Ireland has escalated sharply since then. By December 2025, the occupancy rate had surpassed 123%, exceeding official capacity. From 2019 to 2023, Ireland's prison population grew at an average annual rate of 3.12%, while the EU average showed an annual decline of 0.02%.

Remand Rates (Red traffic light)

Ireland's average remand rate between 2019 and 2024 (21%) remained below the Council of Europe average of 28%. Between 2019 and 2024, the proportion of Ireland's prison population held on remand rose from 20% to 21%, while the actual number increased by 34% (from an average of 723 to 967 prisoners). Ireland's remand rate is proportionately higher than that of Slovakia and England & Wales; it is approximate to the remand rate in Scotland; and it is lower than that of New Zealand.

Average Prison Sentence Length (Red traffic light)

From 2019 to 2023, Ireland's average sentence served ranged between five and seven months, while the European benchmark was between 10 and 11 months. In 2023, the average length of time served in Irish prisons was seven months, compared with the Council of Europe average of 10 months. That same year, 12.5% of Ireland's prison population was serving sentences of less than one year, below the EU average of 18%. There was also a high turnover of short-term committals in Irish prisons, with 77% of new admissions in 2024 sentenced to less than a year.

Short sentences in 2024 were most often linked to offences under Government, Justice Procedures, and Organisation of Crime, and theft. Longer sentences included a notable share of life sentences (10%), and terms of ten years or more (9%).

(The figures in the Key Findings section have been rounded for readability. More precise values are provided under each Justice Indicator in the main paper.)