

Foreword

Accurate and impartial information is essential to a modern democracy. A key aspect of keeping the public fully informed is the production of objective statistics which people trust. Official statistics should also be easy to access and be made available in a timely manner. The Central Statistics Office (CSO) meets these needs.

The Office is committed to delivering the statistics needed by Government and the public, to the highest possible standards. This updated Customer Service Action Plan sets out in detail how we aim to fulfil this commitment.

The plan describes what the CSO does and how we publish our statistics, with a growing emphasis on electronic dissemination. Our website (www.cso.ie) was re-designed this year and all of our statistical reports and publications are issued simultaneously on paper and online. The website will continue to play a greater role in how we make statistics available and accessible.

The plan builds on our Customer Charter by setting out specific commitments to quality customer service. One of the most important challenges for the Office is to develop the statistical potential of administrative records, to meet new information needs and to help minimise the burden on our data providers.

This plan also recognises the needs of our internal customers, the staff of the CSO. The delivery of a high-quality statistical service depends on the performance, motivation and involvement of all our staff.

I am personally committed to continuing to develop our organisational capability, so that we can continue to deliver the best possible customer service to our internal and external customers.



Donal Garvey
Director General

August, 2005.

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Statistics for a Modern Ireland

*The efficient and timely provision
of high quality information
needed by a
changing society*

What the CSO does

The Central Statistics Office (CSO) collects and compiles statistical information relating to the economic and social life of Ireland. We publish more than 300 statistical releases and reports every year. All the information we publish is available simultaneously on our website (www.cso.ie).

Main responsibilities

The functions, authority and responsibilities of the CSO are set out in the Statistics Act, 1993. The Office is mandated to:

- Collect, compile, extract and disseminate statistical information relating to the economic, social and general activities of the State.
- Decide independently on statistical methodology and standards, and on the content, timing and methods of disseminating statistics.
- Protect the confidentiality of the information collected and to ensure that it is used only for statistical purposes.
- Maintain close and regular contact with the principal users and suppliers of statistics.
- Co-ordinate the statistics compiled by other public authorities to ensure adherence to statistical standards and classifications.
- Realise the statistical potential of the records maintained by public authorities.

In addition to our statutory mandate we also have an ethical statistical mandate which embraces impartiality, integrity, and the requirement to apply the best

statistical standards and methodology. In this regard we fully subscribe to the U.N. *Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics*. Copies may be obtained from our Information Section (see page 28).

We serve the needs of Government and the wider community for impartial and relevant statistics on social and economic conditions. There are many and varied uses for our statistics. The community of users includes all sectors of society - Government Departments and other Public Bodies, universities and research institutes, the media, businesses, trade unions, other sectoral groups and the general public. There is also an important international dimension to our work, providing statistics which are internationally comparable, particularly at EU level. Our statistics are used by Eurostat, other EU Commission Departments, the UN and other international organisations, and by other national statistical offices.

Delivering Quality Service

The CSO is committed to you our customer.

As an output-focussed organisation, we are committed to providing high-quality statistical services to all our customers across the whole range of our activities. Our goal is to be the first port of call for statistics about Ireland - about the economy, social conditions, population etc. We are continuously improving and expanding our statistical outputs. Customer service is part and parcel of the work we do throughout the Office. This is reflected in the implementation of our *Statement of Strategy 2004-2006*.

Within the overall framework of the National Statistics Board's *Strategy for Statistics 2003-2008*, we are committed to promoting the use of official statistics to support evidence-based decision-making and to developing the statistical potential of administrative records. This involves a "whole system" approach to statistics, with each Department preparing a formal data/statistics strategy. The CSO is working closely with Departments: to help identify their data needs; to assess the statistical potential of their data holdings; and to provide the necessary technical support and advice.

Key Publications

We publish over 300 statistical releases and publications each year. All of these contain a commentary written, insofar as possible, in clear accessible language to explain the statistics and related terminology to a general readership.

Some of our key publications include:

- The annual *Statistical Yearbook of Ireland*, our most comprehensive publication.
- *Measuring Ireland's Progress* which contains a wide range of economic, social and environmental indicators and comparative data for the other 24 EU Member States.
- *Women and Men in Ireland*, a report first published in 2004 presenting social and economic comparisons of the lives of women and men in Ireland, together with comparative EU data.
- *Ireland, North and South - A Statistical Profile*: This includes a selection of statistics for the Republic of Ireland and for Northern Ireland, prepared jointly with the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency.

CSO Website

The website (www.cso.ie) plays an ever-increasing role in the dissemination of statistics. All CSO releases and publications are issued simultaneously on paper and on the internet. The website was re-designed at the start of 2005, to improve the way that we provide statistics to the public.

The site contains statistics organised within the following themes:

- People and Society.
- Labour Market and Earnings.
- Business Sectors.
- Economy.
- Environment and Climate.

It also contains links to information about the Census of Population and the Quarterly National Household Survey. The Census pages of the website include extensive information about how the census is conducted, as well as the full results of the 2002 Census.

In relation to each statistical theme, the following services are available:

- *Statistics* on that theme.
- *Database Direct*: This gives access to a wide range of CSO statistics, in a user-friendly format. Statistics can be selected and displayed in the form of tables or graphs and can easily be downloaded for further analysis.
- *Releases and Publications* relevant to the statistical theme.
- *Surveys and Methodology*, giving technical information and contact details in relation to each survey.

A Release Calendar gives an advance schedule of when statistical reports are due to be published.

The website also contains general information about the CSO (organisation chart, strategy documents etc.), links to the National Statistics Board website (www.nsb.ie) and links to the websites of other national statistical offices and relevant international bodies.

Finally, the Students Corner contains useful statistical information and examples for use by schools and colleges. There is no charge for access to any of the statistics on our website.

Points of contact

There are many points of contact for our customers. These include our Information Section, which is the first point of contact for many callers to the

Office, the External Trade Helpdesk, Census Inquiries Section, and Quarterly National Household Survey Section. Full details are given on pages 27 to 29.

Our Commitment to our Customers

Customer Action Plan

In this chapter we outline our commitments to our customers based on the Twelve Principles of Quality Customer Service.

These Principles are:

- Setting Quality Service Standards.
- Provision of Information.
- Being timely and courteous in our dealings with customers.
- Ensuring physical access to our buildings is available to all.
- Recognising customer's rights under equality/diversity legislation.
- Implementing the provisions of the Official Languages Act.
- Better co-ordination (internal and external).
- Recognition of the internal customer.
- Measuring our performance through constant monitoring.
- Provision of a complaints mechanism.
- Provision of an appeals mechanism.
- Continually consulting and evaluating to improve our performance.

Quality Service Standards

We are committed to providing the best possible service standards to all our customers. This plan sets out the service standards we aim to meet. To ensure these standards are met we will put measures in place to monitor our progress and we will be flexible enough to alter the plan if necessary.

Our Customer Charter (see page 23) sets out in general terms our commitments in relation to:

- Collection of statistics.
- Contacting the Office.
- Service through Irish.
- Receiving feedback.
- Monitoring our performance.
- Dealing with complaints.

The Charter is available on our website or from any contact points listed on page 28.

We will monitor the commitments made in the Charter and Action Plan and will report on progress in our Annual Report.

These are the standards you should expect when contacting the CSO

If you contact the Office by telephone

- You will be answered courteously and promptly.
- The person answering the call will identify their business area and themselves by name.
- The information you require will be given clearly and concisely and without undue delay.
- If the information is not readily available you will be informed of this and also of when it is likely the information will be available.
- If the person you make initial contact with cannot provide the information they will take your details and ensure that the information will be provided with minimum delay.
- If your call is being transferred to another person or area of the Office you will be given that person's name and telephone extension.

If you contact the Office by letter or email

- We will provide clear and concise information without delay.
- If this is not possible we will acknowledge receipt of your correspondence and provide the information within 2 working days for emails and 5 working days for letters. If your query will take longer to answer we will inform you of this and let you know when you can expect a full reply.
- We will use clear language, avoiding jargon and technical terms, whenever possible.

If you call to our Office

- You will be met promptly and courteously.
- If you have an appointment you will be collected from reception within 10 minutes of arrival.
- If the person you wish to speak to is unavailable, we will get somebody else to help you.
- Your business will be conducted in private if you wish.

Information

We will provide all our customers with the most up to date information about the services we provide. We will ensure this information is available at all points of contact and that the information is clear, concise and meets the requirements of people with specific needs.

- The opening hours for our offices will be 9.15 to 5.30 Monday to Thursday and 9.15 to 5.15 on Friday.
- All our literature e.g. Customer Charter, Customer Services Action Plan, customer service leaflets, will be made available at all points of contact for our external customers.
- We will continue to update information on our website (www.cso.ie) as required.
- The Customer Service Working Group will continue to work under the framework of the CSO Partnership Committee.

Timeliness and Courtesy

The CSO is committed to treating all our customers with courtesy, sensitivity and with the minimum of delay.

- We will continue to provide statistical information in accordance with our timeliness monitor.
- Each customer will be dealt with courteously.
- Contact names and numbers will appear on each survey form issued from the Office.
- Customer service training will be provided to each staff member.

Physical Access

We are committed to ensuring that all our offices are clean, safe and comply with all Health and Safety legislation. We will as far as possible facilitate access for people with disabilities and others with specific needs.

- We will ensure that all our buildings conform to the best health and safety standards. An up to date safety statement will always be available.
- Access is available for people with disabilities.
- Buildings will be maintained to a standard acceptable to both the external and internal customer.

Equality/Diversity

The CSO is committed to treating all our customers, both external and internal, equally. Our services will take full cognisance of all rights established under equality legislation.

- The CSO is an equal opportunities employer.
- Identify any special needs that are required by staff members.
- Place no barriers in the way of people with disabilities when recruiting or promoting.
- Integrate disabled people into the total workforce across the Office.
- Mobility and access to the full range of work experience for people with special needs.

Official Languages

The CSO is committed to providing a quality service in accordance with the Official Languages Act 2003.

- Any customer wishing to conduct their business with us through Irish will be facilitated.
- A scheme outlining our commitments under the Official Languages Act will be devised during the lifetime of this plan.
- Training courses will be provided for staff to improve their Irish skills sufficiently to enable them to provide a good quality service to the customer.

Better Co-ordination

We will continue to foster a more co-ordinated and integrated approach to the delivery of our services.

- We will continue to explore the statistical potential of the administrative records of other Government departments and agencies.
- We will utilise our business register to spread the survey burden insofar as possible.
- We will extend the use of electronic completion of survey forms.
- We will increase consultation with data providers and business representative bodies to identify ways of increasing co-operation and reducing the reporting burden.
- We will continue to review design and content of statistical enquiry forms.

Internal Customers

We recognise that our staff are our internal customers. We will support our staff to ensure good quality service is provided both internally and externally.

- Train and educate staff about the requirements under the Customer Charter and the Action Plan. We will continue to allocate 4% of our overall budget to training and development needs.
- Continue to implement the Civil Service Performance Management and Development System (PMDS).
- Develop the use of partnership in implementing the work of the CSO.
- Progressively implement our Human Resources Strategy.
- Continue and promote our staff input suggestion scheme.

- We will continue the process of consultation with our staff through section and divisional meetings.

Monitoring our Performance

This Customer Service Action Plan sets out the high standard of service delivery that our customers can expect from us. It is not enough just to set out these standards and apply them. We must always strive to develop and improve upon these standards. We can only do this by a process of consultation with our customers and by evaluating our performance against the standards set. To achieve this we will:

- Monitor standards set in relation to telephone, correspondence and personal contact with the Office.
- Carry out telephone surveys.
- Make comment cards available at all points of contact with our customers and encourage their completion. Feedback questionnaires will accompany selected survey forms.
- Conduct customer satisfaction surveys in association with the National Statistics Board.

Complaints

We always aim to provide a high quality service to all our customers. However, in the event that we do not meet the standards we have set, we have put in place a complaints procedure (see page 31).

- A well-publicised, accessible and simple-to-use system of dealing with complaints will be maintained.
- The Customer Services Officer will act as a Complaints Officer for the CSO.
- All legitimate complaints will be treated with the utmost seriousness and sensitivity.

Appeals

If any customer is unhappy with the outcome of their complaint an appeal procedure is in place (see page 31).

Consultation and Evaluation

We actively seek and welcome feedback from our customers. We are conscious of the needs of our customers and will continue to be involved in consultative processes to try to improve our services.

- Through the National Statistics Board we will carry out a survey of our statistical users, present a report and act on its findings to improve the quality of our customer services.
- We will continue to consult with various user groups e.g. QNHS Advisory Group, Energy Statistics Co-Ordinating Group, EU Working Groups and many more to ensure best quality practice in the collection and dissemination of our statistics.

- We will seek feedback by means of comment cards at all points of contact and by customer attitude responses attached to selected statistical survey forms.

Customer Charter

This charter sets out our commitments to providing a high quality customer service.

Quality, timeliness and range of our statistics

- We publish quarterly, monthly and weekly calendars of our statistical publication schedule.
- We set challenging deadlines for the publication of our statistics and maintain a timeliness monitor to measure the achievements of these deadlines.
- We publish all of our statistics simultaneously on-line (at www.cso.ie) and on paper.
- We are developing and enhancing our on-line statistical publication services.
- Where possible we provide additional statistical analysis as requested by our customers.
- Our statistical releases show the contact name and direct contact number should you require further information.
- We will prepare and elaborate a set of quality standards for our statistics.

Collection of statistics

- In order to compile statistics we must collect information with the co-operation of our data providers.
- A basic principle of our work is respect for our data suppliers.

- We aim to balance, in so far as possible, the need to collect statistics and the burden on our survey respondents.
- We are developing technologies to simplify and, where possible, reduce the task of responding to surveys.
- Our survey forms contain the contact phone number for the issuing area.
- In accordance with the Statistics Act 1993, your details are kept strictly confidential and are used only for statistical purposes.

Contacting the office

By telephone

- We will answer 90% of your calls within 20 seconds.
- We will identify ourselves to you when answering the telephone.
- If we cannot give an immediate answer to your query we will take the details and call you back.
- If the nature of your query requires us to take time in putting an answer together we will advise you of this and the length of time it will take.

By letter

- We will reply to your letters within 5 working days. If we cannot give you a full reply within this time we will advise you of this and we will let you know when we can provide a full reply.
- Our correspondence will contain the name and contact number of the person dealing with you.

By email

- For general queries you should contact the office at information@csso.ie.
- We will respond to emails to this address within 2 working days. If we cannot give you a reply within this time we will advise you of this and we will let you know when we can provide a full reply.

Personal callers

- You will be collected from reception within 10 minutes of your arrival.
- You will be able to conduct your business in private.
- If the person you wish to speak to is unavailable, we will get somebody else to help you.

Service through Irish

- We are developing a scheme for provision of a bilingual service in accordance with the Official Languages Act, 2003.
- If you contact us in Irish we will arrange to answer you in Irish.
- We will make all our survey forms available in Irish and English.
- We will make our major corporate documents (Statement of Strategy etc.) available in Irish and English.
- Tá leagan Gaeilge den cairt seo ar fáil.

Your Feedback

We welcome your feedback on our services and invite feedback from the public in the following ways:

- Regular contact with users of statistics and data providers in statistical liaison groups.
- Readership survey forms with our publications.
- Comment boxes on selected survey forms.
- Provision of comment cards in our reception and library areas.
- Regular customer satisfaction surveys in conjunction with the National Statistics Board.
- A feedback form on our website at www.cso.ie.

Monitoring our performance

- Our Customer Services Area will put measures in place to monitor our commitments in this Charter.
- In our Annual Report we will give information on the implementation of this Charter.

How to contact us

Locations

The CSO has offices in both Dublin and Cork at:

Ardee Road	and	Skehard Road
Rathmines		Cork
Dublin 6		

Tel: LoCall 1890 313 414

All our extensions can also be contacted through either our Dublin or Cork phone numbers which are: 01-498 4000 or 021-453 5000 or you can dial extensions directly by replacing the last four digits of these numbers with the appropriate extension number.

Information Services

Our Information area is located in the Cork office. We will be happy to deal with your statistical queries. You can write, email, telephone or call in person. Our "Guide to CSO Publications and Releases" is available on request. This booklet lists and gives a brief description of all our publications and releases.

Our internet site at www.cso.ie contains a broad range of information and statistics. All our statistical releases are published on the site at 11 am on day of publication.

You are welcome to use the CSO library in the Dublin and Cork offices where a wide range of Irish and international statistical publications are available. A monthly acquisitions list is available on request.

You can purchase CSO Publications directly from Information Section. You can also subscribe to statistical releases. A full list of publications and releases and their prices is available on request.

Weekly and four month in advance calendars of releases and publications are available on request. We can email, post or fax calendars to you or you may view them on our internet site.

You can address your queries to any of the following:

Written	See addresses on page 27
Telephone	Amelia Murray ext 5028
email	information@csso.ie
Fax	021 453 5555
Internet site www.cso.ie	Jim Linehan ext 5015 Webmaster@csso.ie
Subscriptions	Hugh O'Neill ext 5011
Sales of publications	Hugh O'Neill ext 5011
Cork Library	Anna Donegan ext 5017
Dublin Library	Lorna Brennan ext 4142

Census Inquiries

Detailed inquiries on population statistics may be addressed to the Census Inquiries Section based in the Dublin Office. The results of each census are published in detailed volumes covering topics such as age, sex, marital status, occupations, household composition etc. Small Area Population Statistics for

urban districts, rural districts, towns and district electoral divisions are available on a fee basis.

Contact: Bernie Ryan ext 4285

Fax 01 498 4268

email census@csso.ie

Trade Helpdesk

Trade statistics provide a wealth of information ranging from aggregates such as total imports and exports to the most detailed statistics at commodity by country level. Apart from the regular published results, detailed commodity results are available on printout or diskette.

Contact: Martin Galvin ext 4236
Deborah Quinton ext 4244

Fax 01 498 4240

email trade@csso.ie

CSO Database Direct

Online interactive access to CSO databases is available via the Database Direct link

Contact: Jeremy Crowley ext 5646

Fax 021 453 5555

email databank@csso.ie

Research Support

The Irish Social Science Data Archive (ISSDA) will hold, process and harmonise machine-readable data from surveys, census material, geographical databases, election results and so on, and will make them readily available to users in the academic, public and commercial sectors.

The CSO datasets currently available through the archive consist of anonymised micro-data from the Quarterly National Household Survey (and its predecessor the annual Labour Force Survey), the Household Budget Survey and the Census of Population. These datasets are available for non-commercial social research purposes only and users are required to sign a contract in advance covering the conditions under which they may use the data. The ISSDA has its own website (www.ucd.ie/issda/).

Freedom of Information

Queries under the Freedom of Information Act can be addressed to:

Pauline Reynolds ext 4231

email foi@csso.ie

Fax 01 496 6242

Complaints

Initially your complaint can be addressed to the relevant section within the office. The staff there will try to find a speedy remedy.

If you are not happy with their response we will arrange for your complaint to be officially investigated by the Customer Relations Officer:

Mr Eamonn Dorney
Customer Relations Officer
Central Statistics Office
Skehard Road
Cork

LoCall 1890 313 414
Phone +353 21 453 5036
Fax +353 21 453 5555
email cro@csa.ie

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the review by the Customer Relations Officer the matter can be appealed to:

Mr Liam Hogan
Head of Administration and Finance Division
Central Statistics Office
Skehard Road
Cork

LoCall 1890 313 414
Phone +353 21 453 5089
Fax +353 21 453 5555
email liam.hogan@csa.ie

If the matter is still not resolved you may refer it to the Ombudsman at:

The Ombudsman
18 Lower Leeson St.
Dublin 2

Phone +353 1 639 5600
Fax +353 1 639 5674
email ombudsman@ombudsman.irlgov.ie
Website www.ombudsman.ie