

Standard Report
on
Methods and Quality (v5.1)
for
<Garda Recorded Crime Statistics>

<2010-2014>

Last edited: <14-02-2017>

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1 Overview

Garda Recorded Crime Statistics 2010-2014 is the ninth annual CSO statistical report on crime in Ireland.

The release is based on administrative data recorded on An Garda Síochána's PULSE (Police Using Leading Systems Effectively) and FCPS (Fixed Charge Penalty System) systems as extracted in summer 2016, and relates to crime and fixed charge notice offences reported to An Garda Síochána between 01 Jan 2010 and 31 Dec 2014.

The release contains detail on the volume of crime incidents in each group of the Irish Crime Classification System (ICCS). The report contains detail on the number of recorded crime incidents which are recorded as having been detected, those with relevant criminal proceedings and court outcomes, and statistics on the ages and genders of individuals who have been convicted for crimes reported in 2014.

The current release focuses on crime incidents reported only up until the end of 2014 to allow a reasonable period for investigations to reach conclusion as well as for criminal proceedings to be initiated and reach conclusion. All such statistics are provisional and will change as more incidents and court proceedings reach conclusion.

Regular up-to-date statistics on recorded crime offences only is provided in the CSO's quarterly Recorded Crime release.

Information in this release refers only to crime incidents known to An Garda Síochána and recorded as such. Not all crimes are reported to An Garda Síochána. The CSO provides additional information on estimating non-recorded crime through its Crime and Victimisation surveys.

2 General Information

2.1 Statistical Category

Administrative data

2.2 Area of Activity

Crime

2.3 Organisational Unit Responsible, Persons to Contact

The Crime and Victimisation survey falls under the remit of the Social and Demographic Statistics Directorate, headed by Richard McMahon, Assistant Director General. Paul M. Crowley is the Senior Statistician with responsibility for Social Analysis

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2.4 Objectives and Purpose; History

This release, *Garda Annual Crime Statistics* series replaced the Crime Statistics section of Garda Annual Reports. Information on crime incidents recorded, detection rates and details of court proceedings and outcomes is included in the release.

2.5 Periodicity

The release is produced annually.

2.6 Client

The release is produced to meet National requirements. There is currently no Eurostat regulation for this data.

2.7 Users

- An Garda Síochána
- Department of Justice and Equality
- Houses of the Oireachtas
- Agencies (e.g. Rape Crisis Network Ireland, COSC (The National Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence))
- General Public
- Researchers

2.8 Legal basis

The Garda Síochána Act 2005 makes provision for information concerning offences, criminal proceedings etc. to be made available to the CSO. Activities of the CSO are governed by the Statistics Act 1993.

3 Statistical Concepts, Methods

3.1 Subject of the Statistics

This release provides data for the numbers of criminal incidents recorded by An Garda Síochána, the detection rates for these crimes, information on court proceedings and convictions.

3.2 Units of Observation/Collection Units/Units of Presentation

The unit of observation is the crime incident as recorded by An Garda Síochána. Crime counting rules are applied to all criminal incidents. Further information on crime counting rules is provided in the Appendix.

3.3 Data Sources

PULSE and FCPS data – supplied by An Garda Síochána.

3.4 Reporting Unit/Respondents

All Crimes reported to or detected by An Garda Síochána must be recorded in the PULSE or FCPS.

3.5 Type of Survey/Process

Administrative Data is used to compile this release. This data is obtained from the operational recording systems used by An Garda Síochána (PULSE and FCPS)

3.6 Characteristics of the Sample/Process

Not applicable

3.7 Survey Technique/Data Transfer

A secure VPN (virtual private network) between the CSO and An Garda Síochána was created for the transfer of data

3.8 Questionnaire (including explanations)

Not applicable

3.9 Participation in the Survey

Not applicable

3.10 Characteristics of the Survey/Process and its Results

This report covers crime incidents, detection rates and details of court proceedings and outcomes.

3.11 Classifications used

This release uses the Irish Crime Classification System (ICCS). The ICCS is available to view here

<http://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/releasespublications/documents/crimejustice/current/crimeclassification.pdf>

3.12 Regional Breakdown of Results

An Garda Síochána uses its own unique geographical boundaries. The fundamental unit for Garda geography is the level of the Garda Station. Stations are then aggregated to District level, then Division and Region.

Data in this release is published at level of Garda division or higher depending on confidentiality etc.

4 Production of the Statistics, Data Processing, Quality Assurance

4.1 Data Capture

Most incidents are now recorded on the PULSE system by staff in the Garda Information Service Centre (GISC) as a result of telephone contact with the Garda investigating the incident. Previously, and in certain situations currently, the local Gardaí enter the incidents and updates in the relational database (PULSE) themselves.

CSO receive a copy of this data electronically from AGS.

4.2 Coding

Coding of data is based on information received from AGS via the secure VPN. SAS formats are used to apply labels to the codes for aggregate data and tables etc.

4.3 Data Editing

Checks are carried out to ensure counting rules have been applied correctly to the data. Consistency checks are also carried out in relation to the presence of suspected offenders with incidents flagged as detected, the presence of a charge or summons and incidents marked as having proceedings commenced.

4.4 Imputation (for Non-Response or Incomplete Data Sets)

No imputation is done at unit level.

At item level, missing data is sometimes requested from AGS or entered based on the narrative for the incident. In a small number of cases, sex may be assumed based on a name.

4.5 Grossing and Weighting

Not applicable.

4.6 Computation of Outputs, Estimation Methods Used

Results are aggregated – no estimation used.

4.7 Other Quality Assurance Techniques Used

Quality is the subject of ongoing work within An Garda Síochána, as well as between the CSO and An Garda Síochána.

5 Quality

5.1 Relevance

The information in the Garda Recorded Crime Statistics Release is used by policymakers to assess the effectiveness of spending decisions and to facilitate evidence based policy making.

This data is accessed and relevant to:

- An Garda Síochána
- Department of Justice and Equality

- Houses of the Oireachtas
- Agencies working in the field such as Rape Crisis Network Ireland, COSC etc.
- Members of the public
- Researchers

5.2 Accuracy and Reliability

5.2.1. Sampling Effect & representivity

Not applicable.

5.2.2. Non-Sampling Effects

5.2.2.1 Quality of the Data Sources used

PULSE is an operational tool used by An Garda Síochána. Some fields are not useable and concerns in relation to the quality of some fields exist. CSO completed a “Review of the Quality of Crime Statistics” in 2016. The review which is based on crime data in 2015 is available here <http://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/releasespublications/documents/crimejustice/2016/reviewofcrime.pdf>

In addition, the following issues specifically relating to the Garda Recorded Crime Statistics need to be considered:

- Detection status

It may not always be the case that it is the primary offence within an incident (the one that “counts”) that has in fact been detected. This feature of the data is known to An Garda Síochána and is receiving attention.

- Proceedings

There are some issues around the interpretation of the proceeding(s), when seen in the context of the originally recorded criminal offence.

The first issue is that the charged offence may never have been recorded as an offence on the PULSE system. It can (and does) happen that, at the time of a decision whether to charge, the evidence is such that a different offence is charged to the one originally recorded. Sometimes the offence charged is more serious than the original recorded offence. Sometimes it is less serious.

A further presentational issue concerns a criminal event (incident) with more than one recorded offence. Presenting the number of proceedings, linked to the initiating “counting” offence, might be read as meaning that the charge was closely related to the labelling of the “counting” offence. This may, or may not be the situation. For instance, if an offence of murder has been recorded, it might be reasonable to assume that any proceedings linked to this offence include a charge of homicide. This, however, is not always the case.

To overcome the above difficulties, this report introduces the concept of “relevant proceedings”. Decisions have been taken as to which proceedings are relevant to the original “counting” offence. These decisions have been taken by CSO.

The mapping of chargeable offences to the ICCS detailed codes is available to download here <http://www.cso.ie/en/methods/crime/>

5.2.2.2 Register Coverage

Not applicable.

5.2.2.3 Non-response (Unit and Item)

Not applicable.

5.2.2.4 Measurement Errors

The issue of measurement errors is discussed on page 14 of the Review of the Quality of Crime Statistics

5.2.2.5 Processing Errors

Checks are carried out to ensure counting rules (see Appendix) have been applied correctly to the data. Changes are carried out as required by CSO on the data extract received from AGS and micro data is amended accordingly.

5.2.2.6 Model-related Effects

Not applicable

5.3 Timeliness and Punctuality

5.3.1 Provisional Results

Not applicable

5.3.2 Final Results

A time lag between the reference year and the date of release is allowed to ensure that sufficient time has elapsed to allow for proceedings to take place.

All data recorded on PULSE (and FCPS) have the potential to be revised. This is because of the nature of criminal incidents, the nature of the reporting of same by members of the public, follow-up investigations and characteristics of consequential activities by the broader justice system.

5.4 Coherence

The information supplied in this report refers only to crime incidents known to An Garda Síochána and recorded as such. This is only one part of a picture of criminal behaviour in Ireland. It should be remembered that some crime types are processed by organisations other than the Gardaí (for e.g. revenue, local authorities etc).

The CSO also conduct a [Crime and Victimisation release](#). One of the purposes of this release is to capture the extent to which crime is under reported. As can be seen from information in the [Crime and Victimisation release](#), the level of reporting of crimes is influenced by a number of factors.

The Crime and Victimisation survey does not include questions on sexual assaults or domestic violence, as these questions were considered too sensitive and personal for inclusion in a general household survey such as the QNHS. However, international experience suggests that offences

of a sexual nature and incidents of domestic violence are grossly under-recorded in police statistics.

5.5 Comparability

There are a number of factors that have the potential to influence the comparability of Crime Statistics over time and across Garda divisions.

These include but are not limited to:

- Changes in Garda priorities and activities have an influence on the number and type of crimes recorded. For example, a change in Garda practices in detecting speeding will affect the number of speeding incidents recorded.
- Changes to legislation influence Garda activity and hence influence the number of offences detected and recorded.
- A change in the levels of crimes reported by victims would influence the levels of recorded crime. An example of this would be if a retailer decided to adopt a zero tolerance policy to shop lifting where they previously had a policy of only reporting thefts in excess of a specific financial threshold.
- Changes to Garda station boundaries over time

The above are examples of situations whereby changes in policy and activities by Gardaí and others result in increases in recorded crime although the number of crimes that actually occurred may not have changed. It is important that users take these factors into consideration when comparing crime levels.

Differences in legislation, definitions and recording procedures in different countries will greatly affect international comparisons

5.6 Accessibility and Clarity

5.6.1 Assistance to Users, Special Analyses

The *Garda Annual Crime Statistics 2010-2014* release is available on the CSO website, and includes detailed notes on the information supplied. For special analysis, please contact crime@cs0.ie

5.6.2 Revisions

Updates to information provided in previous years' releases will be supplied in certain tables.

5.6.3 Publications

5.6.3.1 Releases, Regular Publications

- Garda Recorded Crime Statistics 2010-2014
- Quarterly Recorded Crime, Quarter 2 2016
- Crime and Victimisation 2015 (including results for 1998, 2003, 2006 & 2010)
- Probation Recidivism Statistics 2010 cohort
- Prison Recidivism Statistics 2010 cohort.

5.6.3.2 Statistical Reports

Crime data is included in national publications such as the Statistical Yearbook of Ireland, Ireland: North South, a statistical profile, Measuring Ireland's Progress.

International publications that contain Irish data include the European Sourcebook of Crime and Criminal Justice Statistics, and the Eurostat, Statistics in Focus reports.

5.6.3.3 Internet

The release is available on our website: http://www.cso.ie/releasespublications/pr_crimejust.htm

EU level data is available via the Eurostat website:
<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/crime/database>

5.6.4 Confidentiality

All data are treated as strictly confidential in accordance with the Statistics Act, 1993.

6 Additional documentation and publications

Eurostat is the official statistical office of the European Union. Among its regular publications are the thematic *Statistics in Focus* bulletins, some relating to police records in the EU.

Additional information relating to An Garda Síochána can be obtained from their website
www.garda.ie

APPENDIX

Crime Counting Rules –

Crime counting rules have been the subject of debate over the years. However, from an information/statistical perspective, crime counting rules should be applied in accordance with established criteria.

To fully appreciate this, it is useful to consider a criminal event which consists of more than one offence. For instance, a burglary and a homicide offence can occur within one event. Furthermore, there could be offences of trespass, criminal damage and arson occurring as part of the same event. For this event, the homicide would be recorded, as well as some other offences. It would be unreasonable to suppose that all offences should be recorded (especially if there was more than one victim, see below), as some would be considered to be trivial in the context of the homicide. So in this case, for practical purposes and on reasonable grounds, not all offences would be recorded.

The counting rules dictate that the most serious incident only counts for statistical purposes. (Seriousness here is determined by reference to the primary offence, which is the one with the severest potential penalty.) This is achieved by flagging, within PULSE, one offence which should “count” for that event. This practice promotes consistency. Counting only the primary incident is thus a good way of ensuring that there is consistent treatment of criminal events – and consistency is paramount when it comes to comparison of data across geographic boundaries or over time. Without the primary offence rule, there would be no basis to compare these data over any boundaries - be they geographic or time-based.

In general, one offence counts per victim for any crime incident (i.e. criminal event). Therefore, a sexual event with one offender and two victims counts as two offences. Conversely, an event with two offenders and one victim counts as one offence (or crime incident) in the recorded crime statistics. (In this latter case it is useful to remember that this one crime incident is the one that counts, regardless of how many offenders are prosecuted or subsequently convicted.)

An exception to these general rules applies for repeat incidents involving the same victim and the same offender. Again, it is useful to look at sexual offences to illustrate this point. It may be the case that there are numerous crime incidents perpetrated by the same offender against the same victim stretching back for many years (and often reported many years after the last incident). It would be unreasonable to expect the same level of detail to be recorded about every individual offence that occurred throughout the series. Moreover, some victims may not, for a variety of reasons, be in a position to remember all of the incidents involved in the series. Therefore, applying the rule of one incident counts per victim for a series like this promotes consistency in approach for comparative purposes. That is not to say that more information cannot be provided on the numbers of such incidents. It can. It is simply a case of interpretation being subject to some extra caveats. (For this type of incident series, it is open to debate whether the clustered nature of the offences (in time and/or place) renders them outside the scope of normal statistical comparison.)

There are two other exceptions to the *one offence counts per victim* rule. One is a series of incidents involving credit/debit card/cheque card fraud where the financial loss is sustained by an institution (for instance a bank). In this case the victim is the bank and so it is akin to a series of incidents against one victim. For historical reasons, there are monetary thresholds involved in determining whether the institution bears the loss, which render the counting mechanism a function of the size of the losses incurred. Where there is more than one victim, normal rules apply and one offence does count per victim.

The final exception is that of burglary, where there is more than one victim (in the normal sense of the word). This occurs when, for instance, items belonging to more than one person are taken. It is useful to think of the burglary as being a crime against a household for statistical reasons. Counting one offence per individual (person) victim would affect comparability. This is because the number of burglaries recorded would become a function of the total population of burgled households. This is a useful quantity from a victimisation perspective, but not from a crime counting perspective.

Data from the Fixed Charge Penalty System (FCPS) is a large component of *Dangerous or Negligent Operation of a Vehicle* (ICCS 041) and *Road and Traffic Offences* (ICCS 14). There are no counting rules applied to these offences.