

**Standard Report
on
Methods and Quality (v5)

for
<Recorded Crime>**

<Quarterly>

Last edited: <17-01-2016>

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1 Overview

The Recorded Crime release provides figures for the number of offences recorded by An Garda Síochána on a quarterly basis. This release uses a condensed version of the Irish Crime Classification System (ICCS) with elements of Group 4 (Dangerous or Negligent Acts), and all of Groups 14 (Road and Traffic Offences (Not Elsewhere Classified)) and 16 (Offences Not Elsewhere Classified) removed. The data used for this publication originate in the Garda PULSE (Police Using Leading Systems Effectively) system.

The information supplied in this release 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. Other aspects (and other sources of information) are presented in separate CSO releases and publications.

Principle output consists of the number of crime incidents recorded. Data is disseminated both via report, and via Statbank.

The main users of the outputs are Garda policymakers, the Department of Justice and Equality and Law Reform, victim support groups, researchers and the media.

2 General Information

2.1 Statistical Category

Administrative data from Garda PULSE system.

2.2 Area of Activity

Crime and Criminal Justice.

This release, Recorded Crime, replaces the quarterly Headline Crime Statistics release of the Central Statistics Office. It covers crime incidents recorded by An Garda Síochána only.

2.3 Organisational Unit Responsible, Persons to Contact

The Recorded Crime release 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

In July 2004 the Expert Group on Crime Statistics reported to the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform and recommended that the compilation of reported crime statistics should be transferred from the Garda Síochána to a dedicated and independent external statistical unit.

Following discussions with the Director General of the Central Statistics Office (CSO) it was agreed that such a unit should be established within the CSO.

Headline Crime Statistics were first published by CSO in Quarter 3 2006. The release was based on data from the period 2003 to 2006. The Headline Crime Statistics release was replaced by the Recorded Crime release in Quarter 1 2008.

The primary purpose of the Recorded Crime Release is to provide an accurate and objective short-term indicator of the level of recorded crime in Ireland. More generally, used in conjunction with other indicators published by CSO it can be used to give an insight into the crime and justice landscape in Ireland.

2.5 Periodicity

This release is produced on a quarterly basis.

2.6 Client

The release is produced to meet national requirements. There is currently no Eurostat regulation for the data.

2.7 Users

- An Garda Síochána
- Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform
- Houses of the Oireachtas
- Agencies (e.g. RCNI (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

Section 47 of 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 publication provides figures for the numbers of criminal incidents recorded by An Garda Síochána (AGS). Crime counting rules (*see appendix) are applied to all criminal incidents and dictates that the most serious incident only counts for statistical purposes.

3.2 Units of Observation/Collection Units/Units of Presentation

Incident types recorded by An Garda Síochána

3.3 Data Sources

PULSE data supplied by An Garda Síochána

3.4 Reporting Unit/Respondents

All crimes reported to or detected by An Garda Síochána.

3.5 Type of Survey/Process

Administrative Data from the Garda operational recording systems (PULSE) is used to compile this release.

3.6 Characteristics of the Sample/Process

3.6.1 Population and Sampling Frame

Not applicable

3.6.2 Sampling Design

Not applicable

3.7 Survey Technique/Data Transfer

A secure VPN (virtual private network) was created between the CSO and An Garda Síochána for the electronic transfer of data between the two organisations on a regular basis.

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 release covers recorded crime incidents.

3.11 Classifications used

This release utilises a condensed version of the Irish Crime Classification System with elements of Group 4 (Dangerous or Negligent Acts), and all of Groups 14 (Road and Traffic Offences (Not Elsewhere Classified)) and 16 (Offences Not Elsewhere Classified) removed. The ICCS is available on the CSO website

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

3.12 Regional Breakdown of Results

Data in this release is broken down by Garda Region.

The fundamental unit for Garda geography is the level of the Garda Station which encompasses a defined geographical area. Stations are then aggregated to District level, then Division and Region.

4 Production of the Statistics, Data Processing, Quality Assurance

4.1 Data Capture

Most crime incidents are now recorded centrally at the Garda Information Service Centre (GISC) in Castlebar as a result of telephone contact with locally based Gardaí investigating the incident.

The CSO receives a copy of all individual crime data electronically from An Garda Síochána each month as detailed in 3.7 above.

4.2 Coding

Coding of data is based on information received from by An Garda Síochána. SAS formats are used to apply labels to the codes for aggregate data and tables.

4.3 Data Editing

Initial microdata editing is done at source by the Gardaí. Following receipt of the data, checks are carried out to ensure that counting rules have been correctly applied to the data.

e.g. counting primary incidents only, counting of multiple sex and fraud offences in a series where there is the same victim and same offender, checking ages of victims for Abduction offences, etc

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

Not applicable

4.5 Grossing and Weighting

Not applicable

4.6 Computation of Outputs, Estimation Methods Used

Results are aggregated – no estimation is 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 (other than survey register)

PULSE is an operational tool used by the Gardaí and hence is very reliable for certain data fields (the recording of the incident)

Other Quality Issues

The CSO (Central Statistics Office) has carried out two reviews of the accuracy of Garda PULSE data. The most recent review based on 2015 data was published in September 2016. The quality report is available on the CSO website at the following location:

<http://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/releasespublications/documents/crimejustice/2016/reviewofcrime.pdf>

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 quality report referenced in section 5.2.2.1

5.2.2.5 Processing Errors

Checks are carried out to ensure counting rules (see Appendix) have been applied correctly to the data. Necessary changes are carried out on our data extract by the CSO and microdata 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

The release for a certain quarter will be published by the end of the third month succeeding that quarter.

All data recorded on PULSE 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 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 particularly at different times. 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 CSO publication is available on our website, and includes detailed notes on the information supplied. For special analysis, please contact crime@cs0.ie

5.6.2 Revisions

Updates to data in previous quarters will be included in the current release

5.6.3 Publications

5.6.3.1 Releases, Regular Publications

- Garda Recorded Crime Statistics 2008-2014
- Recorded Crime, Quarter 3 2016
- Crime and Victimisation, Quarterly National Household Survey 2015 (including results for 1998, 2003, 2006 & 2010)
- Probation Recidivism Statistics 2010 cohort
- Prison Recidivism Statistics 2010 cohort.

5.6.3.2 Statistical Reports

Garda crime data is also included in national publications such as the Statistical Yearbook of Ireland, Ireland North and South - A Statistical Profile, Measuring Ireland's Progress.

International comparisons are included in publications such as the European Sourcebook of Crime and Criminal Justice Statistics, and the Eurostat, Statistics in Focus reports.

5.6.3.3 Internet

The publication is available on our website:

<http://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/crimeandjustice/>

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

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.

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.