

Standard Report
on
Methods and Quality (v1)

for
<Recorded Crime>

<Quarterly>

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1 Overview

This release, *Recorded Crime*, replaces the quarterly Headline Crime Statistics release of the Central Statistics Office.

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. Full details of the ICCS are available via the CSO homepage at www.cso.ie. The ICCS replaces the Headline/Non-Headline classification, with its various sub-groupings, as used for annual statistics up to the 2005 reference year.

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) will be presented in separate CSO releases and publications.

Principle output consists of the number of crime incidents recorded. Data is given at national level only.

Main users of the outputs would be Garda policymakers, the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, victim support groups, other interested parties etc.

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. The data are given at national level only.

2.3 Organisational Unit Responsible, Persons to Contact

Social and Demographic Statistics Directorate – Crime and criminal justice division

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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, *inter alia*, 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. The necessary legal, technical and organisational arrangements were completed to enable the transfer to proceed. The CSO established an Advisory Group to assist it in the development of Crime and Criminal Justice statistics. The purpose of the Advisory Group was to review the then current methodology and to make recommendations for the development and presentation of crime statistics. A new robust classification of offences/incidents to be used in the future was developed and was first introduced in this publication.

2.5 Periodicity

This release is produced on a quarterly basis

2.6 Client

General national requirement

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
- Eurostat

2.8 Legal basis

The Garda Síochána Act 2005 makes provision for information concerning offences 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. Crime counting rules (*see appendix) are applied to all criminal incidents and dictates that if two or more incidents are disclosed in the same episode, only the most serious incident is counted for statistical purposes.

3.2 Units of Observation/Collection Units/Units of Presentation

- The number of crime incidents recorded by An Garda Síochána by incident type
- Some units of observations are aggregated and relabelled for presentation in the report

3.3 Data Sources

PULSE - supplied by An Garda Síochána

3.4 Reporting Unit/Respondents

Garda statistics reflect crimes that have become known or are reported to the Gardaí. Data from individual Garda stations and districts are collated centrally at the Garda Information Services Centre (GISC) in Castlebar. The main point of contact between CSO and the Gardaí are contacts at Garda HQ, from which the data is transferred to CSO.

3.5 Type of Survey/Process

Use of administrative data from the Garda operational recording systems used (PULSE)

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) is set up 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 report covers crime incidents recorded by An Garda Síochána. A simple aggregation of results is used.

3.11 Classifications used

This release utilises a condensed version of the new 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. Full details of the ICCS are available via the CSO homepage at www.cso.ie. The ICCS replaces the Headline/Non-Headline classification, with its various sub-groupings, as used for annual statistics up to the 2005 reference year.

3.12 Regional Breakdown of Results

Results for the quarterly release are only published at national level.

4 Production of the Statistics, Data Processing, Quality Assurance

4.1 Data Capture

Most crime incidents are now recorded centrally by An Garda Síochána at the Garda Information Service Centre (GISC) in Castlebar as a result of telephone contact with locally based Gardaí (introduced in 2006). This process was introduced to make data entry more uniform across the country. Previously, and in certain situations currently, local Gardaí enter the crime incidents and updates in the PULSE system themselves.

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

The data captured by An Garda Síochána is initially coded by them. On receipt by the CSO, these coded observations are formatted and given labels using SAS.

4.3 Data Editing

Initial microdata editing is done at source by the Gardaí. Following receipt of the information, a number of different checks are performed.

- For example, it is ensured that homicide incidents have been classified correctly according to the court data.
- Certain missing data has to be obtained from associated narratives or from the Gardaí.
- 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 the Gardaí are notified.
- Consistency checks are also carried out by the CSO, e.g. it is ensured that detected incidents have a suspected offender, incidents marked as having proceedings commenced have associated charges or summons, etc.

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

Not applicable at unit level.

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

This data is extremely useful, interesting and highly relevant for citizens and those working in an area of the crime and justice systems.

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

There will always be some quality issues when dealing with recorded crime data. In this instance, most of the other quality issues arise because of incomplete data values within individual records. This problem is decreasing over time and is the subject of ongoing work within An Garda Síochána, as well as between the CSO and An Garda Síochána.

Where elements of data records are not complete, they are included in the report in a way that reflects their incomplete nature.

5.2.2.2 Register Coverage

PULSE data, along with the FCPS data contains all criminal incidents recorded by An Garda Síochána.

5.2.2.3 Non-response (Unit and Item)

Currently no information is available on the extent of item non-response.

5.2.2.4 Measurement Errors

The PULSE system is primarily an operational tool for the Gardaí in their day to day business and does not exist simply for statistical reporting. For this reason there are not as many hard rules around the data entry that may exist otherwise.

The move to a centralised recording environment has led to considerable opportunities from a statistical perspective. The Gardaí and the CSO are working together to maximise these opportunities.

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 the Gardaí are notified. Microdata is amended accordingly.

5.2.2.6 Model-related Effects

Not applicable

5.3 Timeliness and Punctuality

t+1 month

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 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 there is other crime types, which are processed by organisations other than the Gardaí (for e.g. taxation offences with the Revenue Commissioners, television licence offences with An Post, offences captured by local authorities etc).

Also, many crimes do not get reported and survey data independent of An Garda Síochána statistics are used to try to capture the extent to which this happens.

As can be seen from information in the "Crime and Victimisation" release,

http://www.cso.ie/releasespublications/documents/crime_justice/current/crimevictimisation_qnhs2006.pdf, the reporting of crimes is influenced by a number of factors. Perceived seriousness of the crime, the financial loss involved and beliefs around whether the Gardaí are in a position to do anything about the crime incident are among these factors. Reporting rates can (and do) change over time and can vary depending on the geographical location in which the crime occurs. Many other factors influence the reporting rate, such as the need to report for insurance purposes, perceptions about the likely success of criminal proceedings and the severity of sentence. Approximately 30% of burglaries are unreported as are nearly four in ten incidents of theft with violence (robbery). Other crimes are reported even less to the Gardaí.

International (and Irish) experience suggests that offences of a sexual nature and incidents of domestic violence are grossly under-recorded in police statistics.

Therefore, even when comparing two periods in which the levels of crime remained identical, changes in reporting rates would suggest that the number of recorded crimes would not be the same.

5.5 Comparability

Changes in Garda priorities and activities have an influence on the number of crimes recorded. A change in Garda practices in detecting speeding will affect the number of speeding incidents recorded. Changes in the law with regard to random breath testing influences Garda activity and hence influences the number of offences detected and recorded. A change in shop-owners' approaches to dealing with shoplifters, for example, will also influence the number of crimes reported and recorded. If a shop owner changes policy and decides that all incidents of shoplifting must be reported to the Gardaí, then this will be reflected in the statistics.

Increased Garda activity in the area of drug searches will have a similar effect. What would otherwise be considered as successful policing (increasing the number of persons found in possession of illegal drugs) will result in the number of recorded crimes increasing.

The above are just some examples whereby changes in policy and activities by Gardaí and others result in increases in recorded crime, even if the number of crimes actually occurring remains the same.

Changes to Garda station boundaries over time will also affect comparability.

Differences in laws and definitions will greatly affect comparisons with other countries.

The CSO series is comparable from 2003 onwards. Should users want historical data they should contact the Gardaí directly.

International comparisons are included in publications such as the European Sourcebook of Crime and Criminal Justice Statistics, <http://www.europeansourcebook.org/>, and the Eurostat's Statistics in Focus reports. However, at the moment certain incidents are not comparable across countries due to different definitions of crime types. A study is currently underway to develop an EU classification of criminal offences in order to benchmark Member States' systems of classification. This shall hopefully be completed within the next few years.

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 the previous years data will be supplied along with the current years data

5.6.3 Publications

5.6.3.1 Releases, Regular Publications

- Recorded Crime, Quarter 4 2008
- Garda Recorded Crime Statistics 2003-2007
- Crime and Victimization, Quarterly National Household Survey 2006 (including results for 1998 and 2003)

5.6.3.2 Statistical Reports

Garda crime data also included in national publications such as the Statistical Yearbook of Ireland, Ireland: North 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.cs0.ie/releasespublications/pr_crimejust.htm

EU level data is available via the Eurostat website:
http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page?_pageid=3073,67701349,3073_67745354&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL

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

The entry for this statistic under StatCentral (the portal to Ireland's official statistics) is at <http://www.statcentral.ie/viewStat.asp?id=176>

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.

The counting rules dictate that the most serious incident only counts for statistical purposes – this is known as the Primary Offence Rule. (Seriousness here is determined by reference to the primary offence, which is the one with the severest potential penalty.) 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. In this case only one crime is counted.

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. 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.