

**Standard Report**  
**on**  
**Methods and Quality (v1)**  
**for**  
**<Garda Recorded Crime Statistics>**

**<2003-2006>**

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## **1 Overview**

This publication, *Garda Annual Crime Statistics 2003-2006*, replaces the Crime Statistics section of Garda Annual Reports. An Garda Síochána ceased including this section in their annual reports from 2006, in recognition that the CSO was to assume this responsibility.

This publication also marks the first time that the new Irish Crime Classification System (ICCS) has been used. A condensed version of this classification system (ICCS<sub>c</sub>) is also used in this report. Full details of the ICCS are available via the CSO homepage at [www.cso.ie](http://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 most of this publication originate in the Garda PULSE (Police Using Leading Systems Effectively) and the FCPS (Fixed Charge Penalty System) systems.

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. Other aspects (and other sources of information) will be presented in separate CSO releases and publications.

Even though data for four years is given, there is little by way of trend analysis included in this report. This publication, however, is very much seen as introducing the ICCS and setting the baseline for future work.

Principle outputs include the number of crime incidents recorded, detection rates, court proceedings and court outcomes. Data is disaggregated at more detailed Garda geographical areas. Offender characteristics, victim characteristics, location of incident occurrence and other relevant information is also included in the report

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 and FCPS.

### **2.2 Area of Activity**

Crime and Criminal Justice.

This publication, *Garda Annual Crime Statistics 2003-2006*, replaces the Crime Statistics section of Garda Annual Reports. An Garda Síochána ceased including this section in their annual reports from 2006, in recognition that the CSO was to assume this responsibility. The tables in this report are not exhaustive of the information available from PULSE, and are indicative of the potential of PULSE to generate useful, interesting and highly relevant information for citizens and those working in any area of the crime and justice system.

This report covers crime incidents, detection rates and details of court proceedings and outcomes. The data are also broken down by more detailed geography as well as by useful information on location of incident occurrence. Offender characteristics and other relevant information are also included.

### 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

It is proposed that the report for the year 2007 will be published in December 2008. It will be based on data as it exists in early-October, 2008. This will mark the beginning of a regular annual cycle of reports, within which trend information will be shown prominently for the various groupings within the ICCS. To deal with timing issues, October has been chosen as a suitable reference point on which to base an “as was” publication. Given that some time will be needed to prepare a report, it is intended to publish annual statistics in December of each year (based on data as it existed in the previous October) with a reference period of the previous calendar year.

### 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, 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. 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, those detected, those with proceedings and court outcomes
- Persons convicted of relevant/any offences for incidents recorded by sex and age
- The number of incidents recorded, incidents per 1,000 population, detection rates and proceedings by Garda region and division
- Characteristics for selected incident types, e.g. location type, weapons used
- Victims of selected crimes by sex, age, nationality and weapon used
- Proceedings for possession, supplying, obstruction and other drug offences by Garda region and division and by drug type
- Particulars of drugs seized, the number of cases and quantity by drug type
- The number of referrals to the Child Diversion Program by Garda region and division, case decisions, sex and principal offences
- Restorative justice events per Garda region and division
- Background demographic information by Garda region and division
- Some units of observations are aggregated and relabelled for presentation in the report

### **3.3 Data Sources**

PULSE and FCPS data – supplied by An Garda Síochána  
Information relating to The Diversion Programme - supplied by the Director of the Garda National Juvenile Office. The Diversion Programme can be described as a package of measures for dealing with children under the age of 18 who commit an offence or offences.

### **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 and FCPS)

### **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, detection rates and details of court proceedings and outcomes. The data are also classified by more detailed geography as well as by useful information on location of incident occurrence. A simple aggregation of results is used. Offender characteristics and much other relevant information are also included.

### **3.11 Classifications used**

This publication marks the first time that the new Irish Crime Classification System (ICCS) has been used. A condensed version of this classification system (ICCS<sub>c</sub>) is also used in this report. Full details of the ICCS are available via the CSO homepage at [www.cso.ie](http://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**

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

An Garda Síochána have made a strategic decision to, and have begun the process of, moving to county-based geography. This will, in time, facilitate the examination of recorded crime data in the context of data held by, among others, Local Authorities.

Data is published at level of Garda division and higher. On request, certain data can be provided at Garda district level, once confidentiality considerations are met, e.g. not publishing data that can identify persons especially for crimes of a sensitive nature.

## **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.

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

Imputation is not carried out for certain variables as information is not available to derive the missing data, e.g. nationality, occupation.

The procedures are carried out in SAS.

#### **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). Some fields are not useable and there are questions over the quality of fields where there is no set requirement to enter the data. In relation to the data supplied in the report, the following are issues to be aware of :-

#### **Detection Status**

Detailed guidelines exist within An Garda Síochána regarding whether a crime incident may be marked as “detected”, i.e. if there is a suspected offender. Within the PULSE system, however, the detection status of an incident does not depend on any other data in the system, i.e. the detection status field does not automatically update as a consequence of other entries in PULSE. It is therefore possible that an offence, which has in fact been detected, may, through omission, not be marked as detected within the system.

However, the situation is also complicated by incidents which consist of more than one criminal offence and are recorded as such. This can also be the case when different events are grouped together on the system as an “investigation case”. In these situations, it is not always clear from the raw data, which offences are to be considered as detected and which are not. This complication is a by-product of PULSE’s sophistication as an operational policing tool. This is its main purpose – not statistical analysis.

Information on offences detected is presented on an “as-was” basis according to their status as at the following October of a typical year. However, the information is subject to an additional caveat – 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**

Proceedings commence when a suspected offender is charged or summonsed with an offence and as a consequence court proceedings commence. There are issues around the interpretation of the proceedings, when seen in the context of the originally recorded criminal offence.

The first issue is that the offence the suspected offender is charged with 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. Also, numbers of “any proceedings” (i.e. whether relevant or not) are also shown in appropriate tables.

The mapping of chargeable offences to relevancy status for ICCS detailed codes is available via [http://www.cso.ie/surveysandmethodologies/survey\\_crime.htm](http://www.cso.ie/surveysandmethodologies/survey_crime.htm).

### **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. 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. Microdata is amended accordingly. Also, it is ensured that homicide incidents have been classified correctly according to the court data.

#### **5.2.2.6 Model-related Effects**

Not applicable

### **5.3 Timeliness and Punctuality**

t+12 months

#### **5.3.1 Provisional Results**

Not applicable

#### **5.3.2 Final Results**

It is proposed that the report for the year X will be published in December X+1. It will be based on data as it exists in early-October, X+1.

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 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 Victimization” release,

[http://www.cso.ie/releasespublications/documents/crime\\_justice/current/crimevictims2006.pdf](http://www.cso.ie/releasespublications/documents/crime_justice/current/crimevictims2006.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@cs.ie](mailto:crime@cs.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

- Garda Recorded Crime Statistics 2003-2006
- Recorded Crime, Quarter1 2008
- 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.cso.ie/releasespublications/pr\\_crimejust.htm](http://www.cso.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](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](http://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=177>

## 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.

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 and as result they are included in the report on an as-is basis.