

Standard Report
on
Methods and Quality (v3)
for
<Garda Recorded Crime Statistics>

<2008-2012>

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1 Overview

This publication, *Garda Annual Crime Statistics 2008-2012*, 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 uses the Irish Crime Classification System (ICCS). 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 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.

2 General Information

2.1 Statistical Category

Administrative data

2.2 Area of Activity

Crime

2.3 Organisational Unit Responsible, Persons to Contact

Social and Demographic Statistics Directorate –Social Analysis Division- Crime and Criminal Justice Statistics Section

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2.4 Objectives and Purpose; History

This publication, *Garda Annual Crime Statistics 2008-2012*, replaces the Crime Statistics section of Garda Annual Reports.

The tables in this report are not exhaustive and are indicative of the potential of PULSE (in particular) 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 much other relevant information are also included.

2.5 Periodicity

It is proposed that the report for the year 2013 will be published in April 2015. It will be based on data as it exists in January, 2015. This is part of a regular annual cycle of reports, within which trend information will be shown prominently for the various groupings within ICCS. To deal with timing issues, January 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 April of each year (based on data as it existed in the previous January) with a reference period of the calendar year ending 13 months before the January datapoint.

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

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 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 and FCPS data – supplied by An Garda Síochána
Appendix Information relating to The Diversion Programme supplied by the Director of the Garda National Juvenile Office

3.4 Reporting Unit/Respondents

Garda statistics can only reflect crimes that become known, or are reported to the Gardaí. Many crimes are not reported.

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 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.

3.5 Type of Survey/Process

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

We have a secure VPN (virtual private network) set up between the CSO and An Garda Síochána 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. The data are also broken down by more detailed geography as well as by useful information on location of incident occurrence. Offender characteristics and much other relevant information are also included.

PULSE has the potential and does record further information, however there are data quality issues with data that is not specifically required for operational purposes.

3.11 Classifications used

This publication uses the Irish Crime Classification System (ICCS) has been used. 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

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.

Certain data is available at garda district level on request depending on confidentiality etc.

4 Production of the Statistics, Data Processing, Quality Assurance

4.1 Data Capture

Most incidents are now recorded centrally at the Garda Information Service Centre (GISC) in Castlebar as a result of telephone contact with locally based Gardaí (introduced in 2006).

Previously, and in certain situations currently, the local Gardaí enter the incidents and updates in the relational database (PULSE) themselves.

The change from a paper-based system to the PULSE environment in 1999 was a huge change in recording environment.

We receive a copy of this data electronically from the gardaí each month.

4.2 Coding

We receive details from the gardaí, again through the secure VPN, in relation to all coded variables. We use SAS formats for applying labels to the codes for aggregate data and tables etc.

4.3 Data Editing

Data editing is done at source by the gardaí. For our report we perform a number of checks. For e.g. we ensure 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 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 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)

Not applicable at unit level

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

Information is not given in certain instances where data is missing.
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 flagged as “detected”. Within the PULSE system, however, the flagging of an incident is largely independent of any other data in the system – there is no action that is automatically triggered because of the entry made for detection status. It is therefore possible that an offence, which has in fact been detected, may, through omission, not be flagged as detected within the system.

However, the situation is less clear with regard to 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. Therefore, this complication arises because of the sophistication of PULSE as used as an operational policing tool – which is its main purpose.

Information on offences detected is presented on an “as-was” basis according to their status as at January 2014. 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

A court proceeding is sometimes one of the final events in the life cycle of a recorded criminal offence. There are, however, 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. 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 www.cso.ie.

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)

Certain data is excluded from the report, as there are questions over the quality of fields where there is no set requirement for the data to be entered.

5.2.2.4 Measurement Errors

The PULSE system is primarily an invaluable 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

5.3.1 Provisional Results

Not applicable

5.3.2 Final Results

It is proposed that the report for the year 2013 will be published in May 2015. It will be based on data as it exists in early January 2015.

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. revenue, local authorities etc).

Also, many crimes do not get reported and survey data is used to try to capture the extent to which this happens.

As can be seen from information in our “Crime and Victimization” release, 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. About 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 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.

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@csso.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 2008-2012
- Recorded Crime, Quarter2 2014
- Crime and Victimization, Quarterly National Household Survey 2010 (including results for 1998, 2003 and 2006)
- Probation Recidivism Statistics 2007-2008

- Prison Recidivism Statistics 2007-2008.

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

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

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. 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.