

Standard Report
on
Methods and Quality (v1)
for
<Probation Reoffending Statistics >

<2015 reference year>

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CENTRAL STATISTICS OFFICE

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Table of Contents

1 Overview

2 General Information

- 2.1 Statistical Category
- 2.2 Area of Activity
- 2.3 Organisational Unit Responsible, Persons to Contact
- 2.4 Objectives and Purpose
- 2.5 Periodicity
- 2.6 Client
- 2.7 Users
- 2.8 Legal basis

3 Statistical Concepts, Methods

- 3.1 Subject of the Statistics
- 3.2 Units of Observation/Collection Units/Units of Presentation
- 3.3 Data Sources
- 3.4 Reporting Unit/Respondents
- 3.5 Type of Survey/Process
- 3.6 Characteristics of the Sample/Process
 - 3.6.1 Population and Sampling Frame
 - 3.6.2 Sampling Design
- 3.7 Survey Technique/Data Transfer
- 3.8 Questionnaire (including explanations)
- 3.9 Participation in the Survey
- 3.10 Classifications used
- 3.11 Regional Breakdown of Results

4 Production of the Statistics, Data Processing, Quality Assurance

- 4.1 Data Capture
- 4.2 Coding
- 4.3 Data Editing
- 4.4 Imputation (for Non-Response or Incomplete Data Sets)
- 4.5 Grossing and Weighting
- 4.6 Computation of Outputs, Estimation Methods Used
- 4.7 Other Quality Assurance Techniques Used

5 Quality

- 5.1 Relevance
- 5.2 Accuracy and Reliability
 - 5.2.1. Sampling Effects, Representativity
 - 5.2.2. Non-Sampling Effects
 - 5.2.2.1 Quality of the Data Sources used
 - 5.2.2.2 Register Coverage
 - 5.2.2.3 Non-response (Unit and Item)
 - 5.2.2.4 Measurement Errors
 - 5.2.2.5 Processing Errors
 - 5.2.2.6 Model-related Effects
- 5.3 Timeliness and Punctuality
 - 5.3.1 Provisional Results
 - 5.3.2 Final Results
- 5.4 Coherence
- 5.5 Comparability
 - 5.5.1 Comparability over time
 - 5.5.2 Comparability across Jurisdictions
- 5.6 Accessibility and Clarity
 - 5.6.1 Assistance to Users, Special Analyses
 - 5.6.2 Revisions
 - 5.6.3 Publications
 - 5.6.4 Confidentiality

1 Overview

The Probation Reoffending Statistics publication provides information on the level of recorded reoffending by offenders placed under the management of the Probation Service. The information in the most recent publication relates to the cohorts of individuals who entered the Probation Service in the years 2013, 2014 and 2015.

The reoffending rate is the percentage of people who were convicted of a crime incident that was recorded within one to three years of the date of their probation order. The conviction must be obtained within two years of the date the crime was recorded. For example, if an offender was sentenced to probation on December 31st, 2013 and they committed an offence on December 31st, 2016 for which a conviction was obtained on or before December 31st, 2018 they would be included as a reoffender. Shorter reoffending windows are considered for more recent cohorts¹.

This publication supersedes the Probation Recidivism Statistics Publication.

2 General Information

2.1 Statistical Category

Administrative data

2.2 Area of Activity

Crime

2.3 Organisational Unit Responsible, Persons to Contact

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2.4 Objectives and Purpose

This report provides information on the proportion of individuals sentenced to probation who reoffend. An individual is deemed to reoffend if they receive a conviction for an offence committed within the reoffence window.

2.5 Periodicity

The publication is produced annually.

2.6 Client

General national requirement

2.7 Users

- The Irish Probation Service (IPS)
- An Garda Síochána (AGS)

¹ The reoffending window is the period during which a further crime incident is committed. The longer this period, the more likely that an individual we reoffend.

- Department of Justice and Equality
- Researchers and members of the public

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

The cohort of individuals who received a probation sentence during the reference year(s) under consideration.

3.2 Units of Observation/Collection Units/Units of Presentation

Data is analysed at individual record level. The data is presented in tables aggregated by age, gender and probation order type.

3.3 Data Sources

Irish Probation Service operational data
PULSE data – supplied by An Garda Síochána

3.4 Reporting Unit/Respondents

Not applicable

3.5 Type of Survey/Process

Administrative data provided to the CSO from the Irish Probation Service and Garda operational recording systems

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

Secure VPNs (virtual private networks) set up between the CSO and the Irish Probation Service 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 Classifications used

This publication uses the Irish Crime Classification System (ICCS)

3.11 Regional Breakdown of Results

An analysis of reoffending rates by regional authority and county is provided in the publication. The analysis is based on the address at which the individual resides or their last known address on the Probation Service dataset. The analysis excludes those individuals with addresses outside the jurisdiction.

4 Production of the Statistics, Data Processing, Quality Assurance

4.1 Data Capture

The Probation Service dataset is a subset of the operational dataset that is recorded by members of the Service.

Crime incidents are recorded on the PULSE dataset by civilian staff at the Garda Information Service Centre (GISC) as a result of telephone contact with Gardaí. Convictions by the District and Circuit courts associated with crime incidents are automatically on to the PULSE dataset. Convictions by the higher courts are entered on the PULSE system by the investigating officer.

4.2 Coding

In many instances probation orders are granted in respect of a number of recorded crime incidents. The most serious offence (MSO) is used when compiling aggregate data. The Probation Service are responsible for identification of the MSO for individuals in their dataset.

SAS formats are utilised to apply labels to the codes for aggregate data and tables etc.

4.3 Data Editing

Data is edited at source by AGS and the IPS. Checks are carried out by CSO during processing to ensure that data is internally consistent and consistent over time.

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

There are no missing variables in the dataset received from IPS. PULSE records that are missing a first name, surname or date of birth are not included in the analysis.

4.5 Grossing and Weighting

Not applicable

4.6 Computation of Outputs, Estimation Methods Used

Results are aggregated, there is 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 utilised by IPS and the Department of Justice and Equality for decision making and to assess the impact of programs targeted at subgroups within the population.

5.2 Accuracy and Reliability

5.2.1. Sampling Effect & representivity

This publication is not based on sample data. A minimum of 95% (and up to 99%) of all individuals in the population (cohort under consideration) are included when data is aggregated.

5.2.2. Non-Sampling Effects

5.2.2.1 Quality of the Data Sources used (other than survey register)

- These statistics are produced using a combination of Garda Síochána and Probation Service records. All statistics produced by the CSO that utilise the PULSE dataset are classified as Under Reservation. The classification has been applied to reflect the concerns of the CSO as to the completeness and accuracy of PULSE data.

Further information on the rationale for, and the implications of, the Under Reservation classification may be found here:

<https://www.cso.ie/en/methods/crime/statisticsunderreservationfaqs/>

5.2.2.2 Register Coverage

The IPS dataset contains records for all individuals in the service.

5.2.2.3 Non-response (Unit and Item)

Not applicable

5.2.2.4 Measurement Errors

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. This “reporting gap” is one which is not unique to this jurisdiction. Survey data is used to try to capture the extent of the gap in the CSO Crime & Victimization Survey.

5.2.2.5 Processing Errors

Checks are carried out to ensure counting rules (see Appendix) have been applied correctly to the data.

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

There is a substantial time lag between the reference cohort and the publication of data. This gap is inevitable due to the necessity to have a time window during which the subjects may reoffend and to allow sufficient time for any offences committed to progress through the criminal system. It

is also necessary to allow sufficient time for convictions to appear in the PULSE dataset. The extension of the publication to include an analysis of the reoffending behaviour of more recent cohorts over shorter timeframes addresses the difficulties that a long time lag presents to users to some degree.

5.4 Coherence

The information supplied in this report refers only to crime incidents known to An Garda Síochána and recorded as such. Some crime types are processed by organisations other than the Gardai (for e.g. revenue, local authorities etc).

Furthermore, not all crimes are reported. Survey data is used to try to capture the extent to which this happens. International experience would suggest that the reporting gap differs across different crime types but is greatest in the cases of sexual offences and crime incidents where the offender and the victim are known to each other. The Crime and Victimisation Survey completed by CSO may be used to gain an understanding of the extent of this gap. Sexual offences are not included in this survey due to their very sensitive nature. CSO will be undertaking a specialist survey that will measure the extent of sexual violence in 2022.

5.5 Comparability

5.5.1 Comparability over time

There are many factors that can potentially influence the comparability of Crime Statistics over time.

- 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 over a specific financial threshold.

The above are just some examples of situations whereby changes in policy and activities by Gardai and others may result in changes to the number of crimes recorded although the number of crimes that occurred may not have changed. It is important that users take these factors into consideration when comparing recidivism levels over time.

5.5.2 International comparability

The definitions used in reoffending studies are not standardised internationally. The period after the Probation Order during which reoffences are considered varies across jurisdictions. There are also variations as to what constitutes a reoffence. In some countries a custodial sentence is necessary whereas others consider rearrest to be an appropriate measure.

It is extremely difficult to compare reoffending rates across jurisdictions due to differences in definitions, data quality, legal systems, legal culture and justice policy. Controlling for these differences would be a complex, but essential, process to draw meaningful conclusions from comparisons.

5.6 Accessibility and Clarity

5.6.1 Assistance to Users, Special Analyses

The publication is available on our website
https://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/crimeandjustice/probation_recidivism/

For special analysis, please contact crime@cso.ie

5.6.2 Revisions

Data is not revised except in exceptional circumstances

5.6.3 Publications

- Probation Reoffending Statistics 2013 cohorts on
- Probation Recidivism Statistics (2008 – 2012 cohorts inclusive).

5.6.4 Confidentiality

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