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# Republic of Ireland

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

*This article is about the modern state. For the revolutionary republic of 1919–1922, see *Irish Republic*.*

*For other uses, see *Ireland (disambiguation)*.*

**Ireland** (/ˈaɪrələnd/ or /ˈɑːrlənd/; Irish: *Éire*, pronounced [ˈeː.ɾʲə] (listen (help·info))), also known as the **Republic of Ireland** (Irish: *Poblacht na hÉireann*), is a **sovereign state** in Europe occupying about five-sixths of the island of **Ireland**. The capital is **Dublin**, located in the eastern part of the island. The state shares its only land border with **Northern Ireland**, one of the **constituent countries** of the **United Kingdom**. It is otherwise surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean, with the **Celtic Sea** to the south, **Saint George's Channel** to the south east, and the **Irish Sea** to the east. It is a **unitary, parliamentary republic**<sup>[10]</sup> with an elected **president** serving as **head of state**. The **head of government**, the **Taoiseach**, is nominated by the **lower house** of parliament, **Dáil Éireann**.

The modern Irish state gained effective independence from the United Kingdom—as the **Irish Free State**—in 1922 following the **Irish War of Independence**, which resulted in the **Anglo-Irish Treaty**. Northern Ireland exercised an option (called the **Ulster Month**) to remain in the United Kingdom. Initially a **dominion** within the **British Empire** (later the **Commonwealth of Nations**), the Free State was granted full legislative independence by the **Statute of Westminster 1931**. A **new constitution** was adopted in 1937, by which the name of the state became *Ireland*. In 1949 the remaining duties of the king—defined by the **Executive Authority (External Relations) Act 1936**—were removed and Ireland was declared a republic under the **Republic of Ireland Act 1948**. The state had no formal relations with Northern Ireland for most of the twentieth century, but since 1999 the two have co-operated on a number of policy areas under the **North-South Ministerial Council** created under the **Good Friday Agreement**.

Ireland today ranks among the wealthiest countries in the world in terms of GDP per capita.<sup>[11]</sup> Long one of Europe's poorest states, economic **protectionism** had further weakened the economy during the early 20th century before being dismantled in the late 1950s. Ireland joined the **European Economic Community** (later the EU) in 1973, which along with **liberal economic policies** beginning in the late 1980s, resulted in rapid economic

<span><span><span></span></span></span> Ireland <sup>[a]</sup> <div>Éire</div>	
<div> <div> <div><span></span></div> <div>Flag</div> </div> <div> <div><span></span></div> <div>Coat of arms</div> </div> </div>	
<b>Anthem:</b> <span> </span> " <i>Amhrán na bhFiann</i> " <div>"The Soldiers' Song"</div> <div><div><span><span></span></span></div></div> <div>Sorry, your browser either has JavaScript disabled or does not have any supported plugins. You can <a href="#">download the clip</a> or <a href="#">download a player</a> to play the clip in your browser.</div>	
<div><div><span></span><span>Location of<span> </span><b>Ireland</b><span> </span>(dark green)</span></div><div><span>–<span> </span>in Europe<span> </span>(green &amp;<span> </span>dark grey)</span></div><div><span>–<span> </span>in the European Union<span> </span>(green)<span> </span> —<span> </span><span> </span><span>[</span>Legend<span>]</span></span></div></div>	
Capital <div>and largest city</div>	<div>Dublin</div> <span><span><span><span><span>53°20.65′N</span> <span>6°16.05′W</span></span></span><span><span>﻿</span> / <span>﻿</span></span><span><span></span><span></span></span></span></span>
Official <span> </span> languages	<div><div><span>Irish<sup>[1]</sup></span></div><div><span>English</span></div></div>
Ethnic <span> </span> groups <div> (2006<sup>[2][3]</sup>)</div>	<div> <div><div>87% Irish</div></div> <div><div>13% others / unspecified</div></div> </div>
Demonym	<div>Irish</div>
Government	<div>Unitary parliamentary constitutional republic</div> <div><div><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <span>President</span> <span>Michael D. Higgins</span></li><li>- <span>Taoiseach</span> <span>Enda Kenny</span></li><li>- <span>Tánaiste</span> <span>Eamon Gilmore</span></li></ul></div></div>
Legislature	<div><i>Oireachtas</i></div>

<span>Deutsch</span>
<p><span>Diné bizaad</span></p> <p><span>Dolnoserbski</span></p> <p><span>Eesti</span></p> <p><span>Ελληνικά</span></p> <p><span><span><span><span></span></span> <span>Español</span></span></span></p> <p><span>Esperanto</span></p> <p><span>Estremeñu</span></p> <p><span>Euskara</span></p> <p><span>Evegbe</span></p>
<p><span>Fiji Hindi</span></p> <p><span>Føroyskt</span></p> <p><span>Français</span></p> <p><span>Frysk</span></p> <p><span>Furlan</span></p> <p><span>Gaeilge</span></p> <p><span><span><span>★</span></span> <span>Gaelg</span></span></p> <p><span>Gagauz</span></p> <p><span>Gàidhlig</span></p> <p><span>Galego</span></p> <p><span>贛語</span></p> <p><span>Хальмг</span></p> <p><span>한국어</span></p> <p><span>Hawai`i</span></p> <p><span>Հայերէս</span></p>
<p><span>Hornjoserbsce</span></p> <p><span>Hrvatski</span></p> <p><span>Ido</span></p> <p><span>Ilokano</span></p> <p><span>Bahasa Indonesia</span></p> <p><span>Interlingua</span></p> <p><span>Interlingue</span></p> <p><span>Ирон</span></p> <p><span>IsiZulu</span></p> <p><span>Íslenska</span></p> <p><span>Italiano</span></p> <p><span>עברית</span></p> <p><span>Basa Jawa</span></p> <p><span>Kalaallisut</span></p>
<p><span>Карампangan</span></p> <p><span>Къарачай-малкъар</span></p>
<p><span>Kaszëbsczi</span></p> <p><span>Қазақша</span></p> <p><span>Kernowek</span></p> <p><span>Kinyarwanda</span></p> <p><span>Kirundi</span></p>

expansion, particularly from 1995 to 2007, during which it became known as the **Celtic Tiger**. An unprecedented **financial crisis** beginning in 2008, coinciding with the **global economic crash**, halted this era of rapid economic growth.<sup>[12][13]</sup>

Nevertheless, Ireland remains one of the world's most prosperous countries. In 2011 and 2013, it was ranked as the seventh most developed countries in the world by the United Nations' **Human Development Index**.<sup>[14]</sup>

Ireland also performs well in several metrics of national performance, including **freedom of the press**, **economic freedom** and **civil liberties**!. Ireland is a member of the **European Union** and is a founding member of the **Council of Europe** and the **OECD**. It pursues a policy of **neutrality** through non-alignment and is consequently not a member of **NATO**, although it does participate in **Partnership for Peace**.

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<span></span>	
<span> </span> - <span> </span> Upper house	<i>Seanad Éireann</i>
<span> </span> - <span> </span> Lower house	<i>Dáil Éireann</i>
<b>Independence</b> from the <b>United Kingdom</b> <div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Declared</b></li> <li><b>Ratified</b></li> <li><b>Recognised</b></li> <li><b>Constitution</b></li> <li><b>Left the Commonwealth</b></li> <li><b>European Union Membership</b></li></ul> </div>	<p>24 April 1916</p> <p>21 January 1919</p> <p>6 December 1922</p> <p>29 December 1937</p> <p>18 April 1949</p> <p>1 January 1973</p>
<b>Area</b> <div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Total</li> <li>Water<span> </span>(%)</li></ul> </div>	<p>70,273<span> </span>km<sup>2</sup> (<b>120th</b>)</p> <p>27,133<span> </span>sq<span> </span>mi</p> <p>2.00</p>
<b>Population</b> <div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>2013 estimate</li> <li>2011 census</li> <li>Density</li></ul> </div>	<p><span>▲</span> 4,593,100<sup>[4]</sup></p> <p>4,588,252<sup>[5]</sup> (<b>121st</b>)</p> <p>65.3/km<sup>2</sup> (<b>142nd</b>)</p> <p>168.8/sq<span> </span>mi</p>
<b>GDP</b> (PPP) <div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Total</li> <li>Per capita</li></ul> </div>	<p>2012 estimate</p> <p>\$192.223 billion<sup>[6]</sup> (<b>56th</b>)</p> <p>\$41,920<sup>[6]</sup> (<b>15th</b>)</p>
<b>GDP</b> (nominal) <div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Total</li> <li>Per capita</li></ul> </div>	<p>2012 estimate</p> <p>\$210.416 billion<sup>[6]</sup> (<b>42nd</b>)</p> <p>\$45,888<sup>[6]</sup> (<b>14th</b>)</p>
<b>Gini</b> (2011)	29.8 <sup>[7]</sup> <span>low</span>
<b>HDI</b> (2013)	<span>▬</span> 0.916 <sup>[8]</sup> <span>very high</span> · <b>7th</b>
<b>Currency</b>	<b>Euro</b> (€) <sup>[note 1]</sup> (EUR)
<b>Time zone</b> <div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Summer (DST)</li></ul> </div>	<p><b>WET</b> (UTC+0)</p> <p><b>IST</b> (WEST) (UTC+1)</p>
<b>Date format</b>	dd/mm/yyyy
<b>Drives on the</b>	left
<b>Calling code</b>	+353
<b>ISO 3166 code</b>	IE
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.ie <sup>[b]</sup>
a. <span><span>↑</span></span> <span>Article 4 <span><span><span></span></span></span> <sup>[<i>dead link</i>]</sup> of the <b>Constitution of Ireland</b> declares that the name of the state is <i>Ireland</i>; <b>Section 2</b> <span><span><span></span></span></span> of the <b>Republic of Ireland Act 1948</b> declares that <i>Republic of Ireland</i> is "the description of the State".<sup>[9]</sup></span>	
b. <span><span>↑</span></span> <span>The <b>.eu</b> domain is also used, as it is shared with other European Union member states.</span>	

Kiswahili  
 Коми  
 Kreyòl ayisyen  
 Kurdî  
 Кыргызча  
 Ladino  
 Лезги

Latgaju  
 Latina  
 Latviešu  
 Lëtzebuergesch  
 Lietuvių  
 Ligure  
 Limburgs  
 Lingála  
 Lojban  
 Lumbaart  
 Magyar  
 Македонски  
 Malagasy

Malti  
 Māori

Bahasa Melayu

Mirandés  
 Монгол

Nāhuatl  
 Dorerin Naoero  
 Nederlands  
 Nedersaksies

日本語  
 Нохчийн  
 Nordfriisk  
 Norfuk / Pitkern  
 Norsk bokmål  
 Norsk nynorsk  
 Nouormand  
 Novial  
 Occitan

O‘zbekcha

Pangasinan

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## Name [edit]

*Main article: Names of the Irish state*

The **Constitution of Ireland** provides that "[t]he name of the State is *Éire*, or, in the English language, *Ireland*". Under Irish **statute law**, Republic of Ireland (or *Poblacht na hÉireann* in Irish) is "the description of the State"<sup>[15]</sup> but is not its official name. This official description was provided for in the **Republic of Ireland Act 1948**, which transferred the remaining duties of **monarch** to an elected president. However, the name of the state in English remained *Ireland*. A change to the name of the state would require a constitutional amendment. In the UK however, the **Ireland Act 1949** provided that *Republic of Ireland* may be used as a name for the Irish state (although it did not make use of that term mandatory).<sup>[16]</sup>

Although initially accepted by the British government,<sup>[17]</sup> the name *Ireland* became a source of contention between the United Kingdom and Ireland. These concerns arose because part of the island of Ireland is in the United Kingdom and so the United Kingdom regarded the name as inappropriate. In a 1989 case, a majority of the **Irish Supreme Court** expressed the view that Irish authorities should not enforce extradition warrants where they referred to the state by a name other than *Ireland* (in this case the warrants had used the name *Éire*). Judge **Brian Walsh** said that, "if the courts of other countries seeking the assistance of this country are unwilling to give this State its constitutionally correct and internationally recognised name, then in my view, the warrants should be returned to such countries until they have been rectified."<sup>[18]</sup> As part of the 1998 **Good Friday Agreement**, which resolved issues relating to **Northern Ireland**, the state **dropped its claim** to jurisdiction over the entire island of Ireland. Since that agreement, the United Kingdom has accepted and uses the name *Ireland*.

**Irish republicans**, and other opponents of **partition**, often refer to the state as the *Twenty-Six Counties* or *26 Counties* (with Northern Ireland as the *Six Counties* or *6 Counties*) and sometimes as the *Free State* (a reference to the pre-1937 state). Speaking in the Dáil on 13 April 2000, **Sinn Féin**'s **Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** explained it as follows:<sup>[19]</sup>

"In the republican political tradition, to which I belong, the State is often referred to as the 26-County State. This is a conscious response to the **partitionist** view, prevalent for so long and still sadly widespread, that Ireland stops at the Border. The Constitution says that the name of the State is *Ireland*, and *Éire* in the Irish language. Quite against the intentions of the framers of the Constitution, this has led to an identification of Ireland with only 26 of our 32 counties in the minds of many people".

*Republic of Ireland* is often used for the state, especially to distinguish it from the island or when discussing **Northern Ireland**. *Irish Republic* is also sometimes used by the international, particularly British, press.<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup> This was the name given to the **revolutionary republic** which declared its independence in the **Irish War of Independence**.

## History [edit]

*Main article: History of the Republic of Ireland*

*For the history of the entire island, see History of Ireland.*

## Home-rule movement [edit]

From the **Act of Union** on 1 January 1801 until 6 December 1922, the island of Ireland was part of the

Papiamentu

Перем Коми

Picard

Piemontèis

Tok Pisin

Plattdüütsch

Polski

Повτιακά

Português

Qaraqalpaqsha

Română

Romani

Rumantsch

Runa Simi

Русиньскый

Русский

Саха тыла

Sámegiella

Sardu

Scots

Seeltersk

Shqip

Sicilianu

Simple English

SiSwati

Slovenčina

Slovenščina

Ślůnski

Soomaaliga

Српски / srpski

Srpskohrvatski / српскохрватски

Suomi

Svenska

Tagalog

Tarandíne

★ Татарча/tatarça

Tetun

Тоҷикӣ

Tsetsêhestâhese

Türkçe

Türkmençe

Удмурт

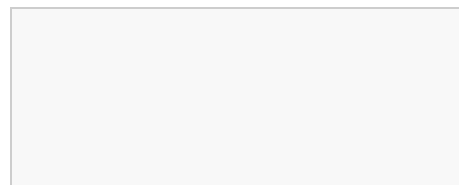
**United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland**. During the **Great Famine**, from 1845 to 1849, the island's population of over 8 million fell by 30%. One million Irish died of starvation and/or disease and another 1.5 million emigrated, particularly to the United States.<sup>[20]</sup> This set the pattern of emigration for the century to come, resulting in a constant population decline up to the 1960s.

From 1874, particularly under **Charles Stewart Parnell** from 1880, the **Irish Parliamentary Party** moved to prominence through widespread agrarian agitation, via the **Irish Land League**, that won improved tenant **land reforms** in the form of the **Irish Land Acts**, and with its attempts to achieve **Home Rule**, via two unsuccessful Bills which would have granted Ireland limited national autonomy. These led to the "grass-roots" control of national affairs under the **Local Government Act 1898** previously in the hands of landlord-dominated **grand juries** of the **Protestant Ascendancy**.

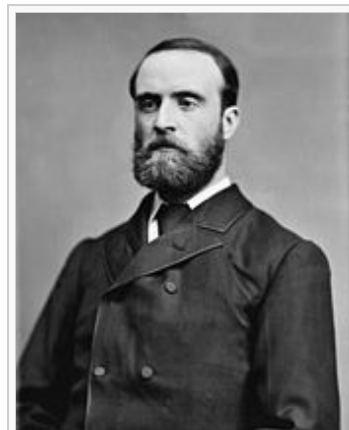
Home Rule seemed certain when the **Parliament Act 1911** abolished the veto of the **House of Lords**, and **John Redmond** secured the **Third Home Rule Act 1914**. However, the **Unionist movement** had been growing since 1886 among Irish Protestants after the introduction of the first home rule bill, fearing discrimination and loss of economic and social privileges if **Irish Catholics** achieved real political power. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century unionism was particularly strong in parts of **Ulster**, where industrialisation was more common in contrast to the more agrarian rest of the island. It was feared that any tariff barriers would heavily affect that region. In addition, the Protestant population was more prominent in Ulster, with a majority in four counties. Under the leadership of the Dublin-born **Sir Edward Carson** of the **Irish Unionist Party** and the northerner **Sir James Craig** of the **Ulster Unionist Party**, unionists became **strongly militant** in order to oppose *the Coercion of Ulster*. After the Home Rule Bill passed parliament in May 1914, to avoid rebellion with Ulster, the British Prime Minister **H. H. Asquith** introduced an **Amending Bill** reluctantly conceded to by the Irish Party leadership. This provided for the temporary exclusion of Ulster from the workings of the bill for a trial period of six years, with an as yet undecided new set of measures to be introduced for the area to be temporarily excluded.

## Revolution [edit]

Though it received the **Royal Assent** and was placed on the statute books in 1914, the implementation of the **Third Home Rule Act** was suspended until after the **First World War**. For the prior reasons of ensuring the implementation of the Act at the end of the war, Redmond and his Irish **National Volunteers** supported the **Allied cause**, and 175,000 joined **Irish regiments** of the **10th (Irish)**, **16th (Irish)**, while Unionists joined the **36th (Ulster)** divisions of the **New British Army**.<sup>[21]</sup> In January 1919, after the December **1918 general election**, 73 of Ireland's 106 **MPs** elected were **Sinn Féin** members who refused to take their seats in the **British House of Commons**. Instead, they set up an Irish parliament called **Dáil Éireann**. This **Dáil** in January 1919 issued a **Declaration of Independence** and proclaimed an **Irish Republic**. The Declaration was mainly a restatement of the **1916 Proclamation** with the additional provision that Ireland was no longer a part of the United Kingdom. The new Irish Republic was recognised internationally only by the **Russian Soviet Republic**.<sup>[22]</sup> The Republic's **Aireacht** (ministry) sent a delegation under **Ceann Comhairle Seán T. O'Kelly** to the **Paris Peace Conference** of 1919, but it was not admitted.



After the **War of Independence** and truce called in July 1921, representatives of the **British government** and the Irish treaty delegates, led by **Arthur Griffith**, **Robert Barton** and **Michael Collins**, negotiated the Anglo-Irish Treaty in London from 11 October to 6 December 1921. The Irish delegates set up



The Irish Parliamentary Party was formed in 1882 by Charles Stewart Parnell (1846–1891).

Українська

Vahcuengh

Vèneto

Vepsän kel’

Tiếng Việt

Volapük

Võro

Walon

West-Vlams

Winaray

Wolof

Xitsonga

Yorùbá

粵語

Zazaki

Zeêuws

Žemaitėška

中文

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In 1922 a new parliament called the **Oireachtas** was established, of which **Dáil Éireann** became the **lower house**.

headquarters at **Hans Place** in **Knightsbridge** and it was here in private discussions that the decision was taken on 5 December to recommend the Treaty to Dáil Éireann. The Second **Dáil Éireann** **narrowly ratified** the Treaty.

In accordance with the Treaty, on 6 December 1922 the entire island of Ireland became a self-governing British dominion called the **Irish Free State** (*Saorstát Éireann*). Under

the **Constitution of the Irish Free State**, the **Parliament of Northern Ireland** had the option to leave the Irish Free State exactly one month later and return to the United Kingdom. During the intervening period, the powers of the **Parliament of the Irish Free State** and **Executive Council of the Irish Free State** did not extend to Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland exercised its right under the Treaty to *opt out* of the new dominion and rejoined the United Kingdom on 8 December 1922. It did so by making an Address to the King requesting, "that the powers of the Parliament and Government of the Irish Free State shall no longer extend to Northern Ireland."<sup>[23]</sup> However, the Irish Free State was a **constitutional monarchy** over which the British monarch reigned. It had a **Governor-General**, a **bicameral** parliament, a cabinet called the "Executive Council" and a prime minister called the **President of the Executive Council**.

## Irish Civil War [edit]

The **Irish Civil War** was the consequence of the creation of the Irish Free State. Anti-Treaty forces, led by **Éamon de Valera**, objected to the fact that acceptance of the Treaty *abolished* the **Irish Republic** of 1919 to which they had sworn loyalty, arguing in the face of public support for the settlement that the "people have no right to do wrong". They objected most to the fact that the state would remain part of the **British Commonwealth** and that members of the **Free State Parliament** would have to swear, what the Anti-Treaty side saw as, an oath of fidelity to the British King. Pro-Treaty forces, led by **Michael Collins**, argued that the Treaty gave "not the ultimate freedom that all nations aspire to and develop, but the freedom to achieve it".

At the start of the war, the **Irish Republican Army** (IRA) split into two opposing camps: a pro-treaty IRA and an **anti-treaty IRA**. The pro-Treaty IRA disbanded and joined the new **Irish Army**. However, through the lack of an effective command structure in the anti-Treaty IRA, and their defensive tactics throughout the war, Michael Collins and his pro-treaty forces were able to build up an army with many tens of thousands of World War I veterans from the 1922 disbanded **Irish regiments** of the British Army, capable of overwhelming the anti-Treatyists. British supplies of artillery, aircraft, machine-guns and ammunition boosted pro-treaty forces, and the threat of a return of Crown forces to the Free State removed any doubts about the necessity of enforcing the treaty. The lack of public support for the anti-treaty forces (often called the *Irregulars*) and the determination of the government to overcome the Irregulars contributed significantly to their defeat.

## 1937 Constitution [edit]

On 29 December 1937, the new **Constitution of Ireland** (*Bunreacht na hÉireann*) came into force, which replaced the **Constitution of the Irish Free State** and called the state *Ireland*, or *Éire* in Irish.<sup>[24]</sup> The former Irish Free State government had taken steps to formally abolish the Office of **Governor-General** <sup>[25]</sup>



Éamon de Valera (1882–1975)

some months before the new Constitution came into force. Although the Constitution established the office of [President of Ireland](#), the question over whether Ireland was a republic remained open. Diplomats were accredited to the King, but the President exercised the internal functions of a Head of State.<sup>[26]</sup> For instance, the President gave assent to new laws with his own authority, without reference to [King George VI](#). George VI was only an "organ", that was provided for by statute law.

[Ireland remained neutral](#) during World War II, a period it described as *the Emergency*. The link with the monarchy ceased with the passage of the [Republic of Ireland Act 1948](#), which came into force on 18 April 1949 and declared that the state was a republic. Later, the Crown of Ireland Act was formally repealed in Ireland by the Statute Law Revision (Pre-Union Irish Statutes) Act, 1962. Ireland was technically a member of the British Commonwealth after independence until the declaration of a republic on 18 April 1949. At the time, a declaration of a republic terminated Commonwealth membership. This rule was changed 10 days after Ireland declared itself a republic, with the [London Declaration](#) of 28 April 1949. Ireland did not reapply when the rules were altered to permit republics to join.

## Recent history [\[edit\]](#)

Ireland became a member of the [United Nations](#) in December 1955, after previously being denied membership due to its [neutral stance](#) during the Second World War and not supporting the [Allied cause](#).<sup>[27]</sup> At the time, joining the UN involved a commitment to using force to deter aggression by one state against another if the UN thought it was necessary.<sup>[28]</sup>

Interest towards membership of the [European Economic Community](#) developed in Ireland during the 1950s, with consideration also given to membership of the [European Free Trade Area](#). As the United Kingdom intended on EEC

membership, Ireland formally applied for membership in July 1961 due to the substantial economic linkages with the United Kingdom. However, the founding EEC members remained skeptical regarding Ireland's economic capacity, neutrality, and unattractive [protectionist](#) policy.<sup>[29]</sup> Many Irish economists and politicians realised that economic policy reform was necessary. The prospect of EEC membership became doubtful in 1963 when French President General [Charles de Gaulle](#) stated that France opposed Britain's accession, which ceased negotiations with all other candidate countries. However, in 1969 his successor, [Georges Pompidou](#), was not opposed to British and Irish membership. Negotiations began and in 1972 the Treaty of Accession was signed. A referendum held in 1972 confirmed Ireland's entry, and it finally succeeded in joining the EEC in 1973.<sup>[30]</sup>

The economic crisis of the late 1970s was fueled by [Fianna Fáil](#)'s budget, the abolition of the car tax, excessive borrowing, and global economic instability. There were significant policy changes from 1989 onwards, with economic reform, tax cuts, welfare reform, an increase in competition, and a ban on borrowing to fund current spending. This policy began in 1989–1992 by the [Fianna Fáil/Progressive Democrat](#) government, and continued by the subsequent [Fianna Fáil/Labour](#) government and [Fine Gael/Labour/Democratic Left](#) government. Ireland became one of the world's fastest growing economies by the late 1990s in what was known as the [Celtic Tiger](#) period, which lasted until the global [financial crisis of 2007–2010](#).

In the Northern Ireland question, the British and Irish governments started to seek a peaceful resolution to the violent conflict involving many [paramilitaries](#) and the [British Army](#) in Northern Ireland known as "[The Troubles](#)". A peace settlement for Northern Ireland, the [Belfast Agreement](#), was approved in 1998 in referendums north and south of the border. As part of the peace settlement, Ireland dropped its [territorial claim to Northern Ireland](#).



In 1973 Ireland joined the [EEC](#) along with the United Kingdom and Denmark. The country signed the [Lisbon Treaty](#) in 2007.

## Geography [edit]

*Main article: [Geography of Ireland](#)*

Ireland extends over an area of approximately five-sixths (70,273 km<sup>2</sup> or 27,133 sq mi) of the island of [Ireland](#) (84,421 km<sup>2</sup> or 32,595 sq mi), with [Northern Ireland](#) constituting the remainder. The island is bounded to the north and west by the Atlantic Ocean and to the northeast by the [North Channel](#). To the east, the [Irish Sea](#) connects to the Atlantic Ocean via [St George's Channel](#) and the [Celtic Sea](#) to the southwest.

The western landscape mostly consists of rugged cliffs, hills and mountains. The central lowlands are extensively covered with glacial deposits of clay and sand, as well as significant areas of [bogland](#) and several lakes. The highest point is [Carrauntoohil](#) (1,038 m or 3,406 ft), located in the [Macgillycuddy's Reeks](#) mountain range in the southwest. The [River Shannon](#), which traverses the central lowlands, is the longest river in Ireland at 386 km in length. The west coast is more rugged than the east, with numerous islands, [peninsulas](#), [headlands](#) and [bays](#).


 Deciduous woodland in [County Kerry](#) with the ground covered in [ramsons](#) (wild garlic)

Preceding the arrival of the first settlers in Ireland approximately 9,000 years ago, the landscape was extensively covered by forests of [oak](#), [ash](#), [elm](#), [hazel](#), [yew](#), and other native trees.<sup>[31]</sup> The growth of [blanket bog](#) and the extensive clearing of woodland to facilitate farming are believed to be the main causes of [deforestation](#) during the subsequent centuries. Today, approximately 12% of Ireland is forested, of which a significant majority is composed of mainly non-native [coniferous](#) plantations for commercial use.<sup>[32]</sup> Ideal soil conditions, high rainfall and a mild climate give Ireland the highest growth rates for forests in Europe.

[Hedgerows](#), which are traditionally used to define land boundaries, are an important substitute for woodland habitat, providing refuge for native wild flora and a wide range of insect, bird and mammal species.<sup>[33]</sup>

[Agriculture](#) accounts for approximately 64% of the total land area.<sup>[34]</sup> This has resulted in limited land to preserve natural habitats, in particular for larger wild mammals with greater territorial requirements.<sup>[35]</sup> The long history of agricultural production coupled with modern agricultural methods, such as [pesticide](#) and [fertiliser](#) use, has placed pressure on [biodiversity](#).<sup>[2]</sup>

### Climate [edit]

*Main article: [Climate of Ireland](#)*

The [Atlantic Ocean](#) and the warming influence of the [Gulf Stream](#) affect weather patterns in Ireland.<sup>[36]</sup> Temperatures differ regionally, with central and eastern areas tending to be more extreme. However, due to a [temperate oceanic climate](#), temperatures are seldom lower than −5 °C (23 °F) in winter or higher than 26 °C (79 °F) in summer.<sup>[37]</sup> The highest temperature recorded in Ireland was 33.3 °C (91.9 °F) on 26 June 1987 at [Kilkenny Castle](#) in Kilkenny, while the lowest temperature recorded was −19.1 °C (−2.4 °F) at [Markree Castle](#) in Sligo.<sup>[38]</sup> Rainfall is more prevalent during winter months and less so during the early months of summer. Southwestern areas experience the most rainfall as a result of south westerly winds, while [Dublin](#) receives the least.


 The [Cliffs of Moher](#) on the Atlantic coast

[Glendalough valley](#) in [County Wicklow](#)

Sunshine duration is highest in the southeast of the country.<sup>[36]</sup> The far north and west are two of the windiest regions in Europe, with great potential for **wind energy** generation.<sup>[39]</sup>

## Politics [edit]

*Main article: [Politics of the Republic of Ireland](#)*

Ireland is a **constitutional republic** with a **parliamentary system** of government. The **Oireachtas** is the **bicameral** national parliament composed of the **President of Ireland** and the two Houses of the Oireachtas: **Seanad Éireann** (Senate) and **Dáil Éireann** (House of Representatives).<sup>[40]</sup> **Áras an Uachtaráin** is the **official residence** of the President of Ireland, while the houses of the Oireachtas meet at **Leinster House** in **Dublin**.

The President serves as **head of state**, and is elected for a seven-year term and may be re-elected once. The President is primarily a **figurehead**, but is entrusted with certain constitutional powers with the advice of the **Council of State**. The office has absolute discretion in some areas, such as referring a bill to the Supreme Court for a judgement on its constitutionality.<sup>[41]</sup> **Michael D. Higgins** became the ninth President of Ireland on 11 November 2011.<sup>[42]</sup>

The **Taoiseach** serves as the **head of government** and is appointed by the President upon the nomination of the Dáil. Most *Taoisigh* have served as the leader of the political party that gains the most seats in national elections. It has become customary for **coalitions** to form a government, as there has not been a single-party government since 1989.<sup>[43]</sup> **Enda Kenny** assumed the office of Taoiseach on 9 March 2011.



Government Buildings [edit]

The Seanad is composed of sixty members, with eleven nominated by the Taoiseach, six elected by two universities, and 43 elected by public representatives from panels

of candidates established on a vocational basis. The Dáil has 166 members (*Teachtaí Dála*) elected to represent multi-seat **constituencies** under the system of **proportional representation** and by means of the **single transferable vote**.

The **Government** is constitutionally limited to fifteen members.

No more than two members can be selected from the Seanad, and the Taoiseach, **Tánaiste** (deputy prime minister) and **Minister for Finance** must be members of the Dáil. The Dáil must be dissolved within five years after its first meeting following the previous election,<sup>[44]</sup> and a general election for members of the Dáil must take place no later than thirty days after the dissolution. According to the **Constitution of Ireland**, parliamentary elections must be held at least every seven years, though a lower limit may be set by statute law. The current government is a coalition administration led by **Fine Gael** with Enda Kenny as Taoiseach, supported by the **Labour Party** with **Eamon Gilmore** as Tánaiste. Opposition parties in the current Dáil are **Fianna Fáil**, **Sinn Féin**, the **Socialist Party**, the **PBPA**, the **WUAG**, as well as a number of **Independents**.

Ireland has been a **member state of the European Union** since 1973, but has chosen to remain outside the **Schengen Area**. Citizens of the United Kingdom can freely enter the country without a passport due



President **Michael D. Higgins** [edit]



Taoiseach **Enda Kenny** [edit]

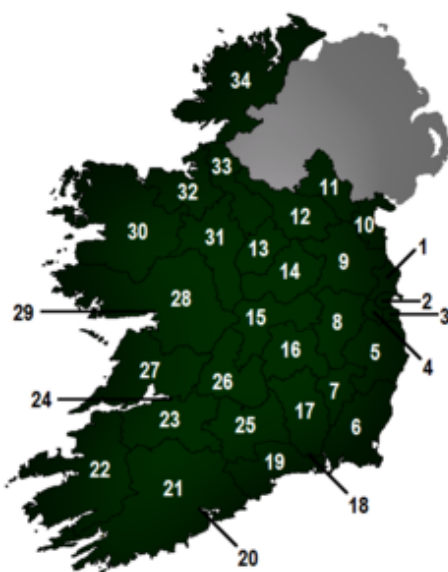


to the [Common Travel Area](#), which is a passport-free zone comprising the islands of Ireland, Great Britain, the [Isle of Man](#) and the [Channel Islands](#). However, some identification is required at airports and seaports.

## Local government [edit]

*Main article: [Local government in the Republic of Ireland](#)*

The [Local Government Act 1898](#) is the founding document of the present system of local government, while the [Twentieth Amendment to the constitution](#) of 1999 provided for its constitutional recognition. The twenty-six traditional [counties of Ireland](#) are not always coterminous with administrative divisions although they are generally used as a geographical frame of reference by the population of Ireland. [County Tipperary](#) was divided into [North Tipperary](#) and [South Tipperary](#) in 1898, while [County Dublin](#) was divided into [Dún Laoghaire–Rathdown](#), [Fingal](#), and [South Dublin](#) in 1994. The [Local Government Act 2001](#) established a two-tier structure, with the top tier consisting of twenty-nine [county councils](#) and five [city councils](#). The five cities of [Dublin](#), [Cork](#), [Limerick](#), [Galway](#), and [Waterford](#) are administered separately by their own city councils.



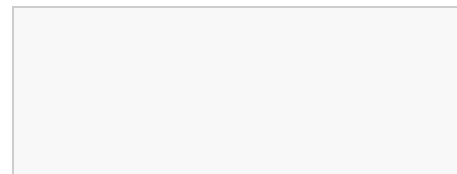
- |   |                                     |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| 1. <a href="#">Fingal</a>                 | 18. <a href="#">Waterford City</a>  |
| 2. <a href="#">Dublin City</a>            | 19. <a href="#">Waterford</a>       |
| 3. <a href="#">Dún Laoghaire–Rathdown</a> | 20. <a href="#">Cork City</a>       |
| 4. <a href="#">South Dublin</a>           | 21. <a href="#">Cork</a>            |
| 5. <a href="#">Wicklow</a>                | 22. <a href="#">Kerry</a>           |
| 6. <a href="#">Wexford</a>                | 23. <a href="#">Limerick</a>        |
| 7. <a href="#">Carlow</a>                 | 24. <a href="#">Limerick City</a>   |
| 8. <a href="#">Kildare</a>                | 25. <a href="#">South Tipperary</a> |
| 9. <a href="#">Meath</a>                  | 26. <a href="#">North Tipperary</a> |
| 10. <a href="#">Louth</a>                 | 27. <a href="#">Clare</a>           |
| 11. <a href="#">Monaghan</a>              | 28. <a href="#">Galway</a>          |
| 12. <a href="#">Cavan</a>                 | 29. <a href="#">Galway City</a>     |
| 13. <a href="#">Longford</a>              | 30. <a href="#">Mayo</a>            |
| 14. <a href="#">Westmeath</a>             | 31. <a href="#">Roscommon</a>       |
| 15. <a href="#">Offaly</a>                | 32. <a href="#">Sligo</a>           |
| 16. <a href="#">Laois</a>                 | 33. <a href="#">Leitrim</a>         |
| 17. <a href="#">Kilkenny</a>              | 34. <a href="#">Donegal</a>         |

The second tier consists of five [borough](#) councils and seventy-five [town councils](#). The five boroughs of [Kilkenny](#), [Sligo](#), [Drogheda](#), [Clonmel](#), and [Wexford](#) have a certain level of autonomy within their counties, but have no additional responsibilities.<sup>[45]</sup> While Kilkenny is a borough, it has retained the legal right to be referred to as a city.<sup>[46]</sup> Local authorities are responsible for matters such as planning, local roads, sanitation, and libraries. [Dáil constituencies](#) are required to follow county boundaries as much as possible. Counties with greater populations have multiple constituencies, some of more than one county, but generally do not cross county boundaries. The counties are grouped into eight [regions](#), each with a Regional Authority composed of members delegated by the various county and city councils in the region. The regions do not have any direct administrative role as such, but they serve for planning, coordination and statistical purposes.

## Law [edit]

*Main articles: [Law of Ireland](#), [Courts of Ireland](#), and [Law enforcement in Ireland](#)*

Ireland has a [common law legal system](#) with a written constitution that provides for a [parliamentary democracy](#). The court system consists of the [Supreme Court](#), the [Court of Criminal Appeal](#), the [High Court](#), the [Circuit Court](#) and the [District Court](#), all of which apply the [law of Ireland](#). Trials for



serious offences must usually be held before a [jury](#). The High Court and the Supreme Court have authority, by means of [judicial review](#), to determine the compatibility of laws and activities of other institutions of the state with the constitution and the law. Except in exceptional circumstances, court hearings must occur in public. The [Criminal Courts of Justice](#) is the principal building for the criminal courts.<sup>[47][48]</sup> It includes the Dublin Metropolitan District Court, Court of Criminal Appeal, [Dublin Circuit Criminal Court](#) and Central Criminal Court.<sup>[47]</sup>



The [Four Courts](#), completed in 1802, is the location of the [Supreme Court](#), the [High Court](#) and the [Dublin Circuit Court](#).



The [Criminal Court of Justice](#) is the principal building for criminal courts.

[Garda Síochána na hÉireann](#) (*Guardians of the Peace of Ireland*), more commonly referred to as the [Gardaí](#), is the state's civilian police force. The force is responsible for all aspects of civil policing, both in terms of territory and infrastructure. It is headed by the Garda Commissioner, who is appointed by the Government. Most uniformed members do not routinely carry [firearms](#). Standard policing is traditionally carried out by uniformed officers equipped only with a [baton](#) and [pepper spray](#).<sup>[49]</sup>

The [Póilíní Airm](#) (*Military Police*) is the corps of the [Irish Army](#) responsible for the provision of policing service personnel and providing a military police presence to forces while on exercise and deployment. In wartime, additional tasks include the provision of a traffic control organisation to allow rapid movement of military formations to their mission areas. Other wartime roles include control of [prisoners of war](#) and refugees.<sup>[50]</sup>

Ireland's [citizenship laws](#) relate to "the island of Ireland", including islands and seas, thereby extending them to [Northern Ireland](#), which is part of the United Kingdom. Therefore, anyone born in Northern Ireland who meets the requirements for being an Irish citizen, such as birth on the island of Ireland to an Irish or British citizen parent or a parent who is entitled to live in Northern Ireland or the Republic without restriction on their residency,<sup>[51]</sup> may exercise an entitlement to Irish citizenship, such as an [Irish passport](#).<sup>[52]</sup>

## Foreign relations [edit]

*Main article: [Foreign relations of the Republic of Ireland](#)*

Foreign relations are substantially influenced by membership of the European Union, although bilateral relations with the United States and United Kingdom are also important.<sup>[53]</sup> It held the [Presidency of the Council of the European Union](#) on six occasions, most recently from January to June 2013.<sup>[54]</sup>



Ireland has been a [member state of the](#)

Ireland tends towards independence in foreign policy, thus the country is not a member of [NATO](#) and has a [longstanding](#) policy of military neutrality. This policy has helped the [Irish Defence Forces](#) to be successful in their contributions to peace-keeping missions with the United Nations since 1960, during the [Congo Crisis](#) and subsequently in [Cyprus](#), [Lebanon](#) and [Bosnia and Herzegovina](#).<sup>[55]</sup>

Despite [Irish neutrality during World War II](#), Ireland had more than 50,000 [participants in the war](#) through enlistment in the

European Union since 1973.

British armed forces. During the Cold War Irish military policy, while ostensibly neutral, was biased towards NATO.<sup>[56]</sup>

During the Cuban Missile Crisis, Seán Lemass authorised the search of Cuban and Czechoslovak aircraft passing through Shannon and passed the information to the CIA.<sup>[57]</sup> Ireland's air facilities were used by the United States military for the delivery of military personnel involved in the 2003 invasion of Iraq through Shannon Airport. The airport had previously been used for the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, as well as the First Gulf War.<sup>[58]</sup>

Since 1999, Ireland has been a member of NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) program, which is aimed at creating trust between NATO and other states in Europe and the former Soviet Union.<sup>[59][60]</sup>

## Military [edit]

*Main article: Defence Forces (Ireland)*

The Irish Defence Forces (Irish: *Fórsaí Cosanta* or *Óglaigh na hÉireann*) is made up of the Army, Naval Service, Air Corps and Reserve Defence Force. It is small but well equipped, with almost 10,000 full-time military personnel.<sup>[61]</sup> Ireland is a neutral country,<sup>[62]</sup> and has "triple-lock" rules governing the participation of Irish troops in conflict zones, whereby approval must be given by the UN, the Dáil and Government.<sup>[63]</sup> Daily deployments of the Defence Forces cover aid to civil power operations, protection and patrol of Irish territorial waters and EEZ by the Irish Naval Service, and UN, EU and PfP peace-keeping missions. By 1996, over 40,000 Irish service personnel had served in international UN peacekeeping missions.<sup>[64]</sup>



Irish Army Mowag Piranha AFV at 2006 Easter Military Parade in Dublin

The Irish Air Corps is the air component of the Defence Forces and operates sixteen fixed wing aircraft and eight helicopters. The Irish Naval Service is Ireland's Navy, and operates eight patrol ships, and smaller numbers of inflatable boats and training vessels, and has highly trained armed boarding parties capable of seizing a ship and a special unit of frogmen. Although the Naval Service has no heavy warships, all Irish vessels have significant firepower. The military includes the Reserve Defence Forces (Army Reserve and Naval Service Reserve) for non-active reservists. Ireland's special forces are the elite Army Ranger Wing, which trains and operates with international special operations units. The President is the formal Supreme Commander of the Defence Forces, but in practice he answers to the Government via the Minister for Defence.

## Economy [edit]

*Main article: Economy of the Republic of Ireland*

### Development [edit]

The Irish economy has transformed since the 1980s from being predominantly agricultural to a modern knowledge economy focused on high technology industries and services. Ireland adopted the euro currency in 2002 along with eleven other EU member states.<sup>[2]</sup> The country is heavily reliant on Foreign Direct Investment and has attracted several multinational corporations due to a highly educated workforce and a low corporation tax rate.<sup>[65]</sup>

Companies such as Intel invested in Ireland during the late 1980s, later followed by Microsoft and Google. Ireland is



The International Financial Services Centre in Dublin, with the Famine memorial

ranked as the ninth most economically free economy in the world, according to the [Index of Economic Freedom](#). In terms of [GDP](#) per capita, Ireland is one of the wealthiest countries in the [OECD](#) and [EU](#). However, the country ranks below the OECD average in terms of [GNP](#) per capita. GDP is significantly greater than GNP due to the large number of multinational corporations based in Ireland.<sup>[65]</sup>

Beginning in the early 1990s, the country experienced unprecedented economic growth fuelled by a dramatic rise in consumer spending, construction and investment, which became known as the [Celtic Tiger](#) period. The pace of growth slowed during 2007 and led to the burst of a major [property bubble](#) which had developed over time.<sup>[66]</sup> The dramatic fall in property prices highlighted the over-exposure of the economy to construction and contributed to the [Irish banking crisis](#). Ireland officially entered a [recession](#) in 2008 following consecutive months of economic contraction.<sup>[67]</sup>

The country officially exited recession in 2010, assisted by a strong growth in exports.<sup>[68]</sup> However, due to a significant rise in the cost of borrowing and bank recapitalisation, Ireland accepted an €85 billion programme of assistance from the EU, [International Monetary Fund](#) (IMF) and bilateral loans from the United Kingdom, Sweden and Denmark.<sup>[69]</sup> Following three years of contraction, the economy grew by 0.7% in 2011 and 0.9% in 2012.<sup>[70]</sup> In July 2013, the unemployment rate stood at 13.5%, down from a peak of 15.1% unemployment in February 2012.<sup>[71]</sup><sup>[[dead link](#)]</sup>

## Trade and energy [\[edit\]](#)

Although multinational corporations dominate Ireland's export sector, exports from other sources also contribute significantly to the national income. The activities of multinational companies based in Ireland have made it one of the largest exporters of pharmaceutical agents, medical devices and software-related goods and services in the world. It's exports also relate to the activities of large Irish companies (such as [Ryanair](#), [Kerry Group](#) and [Smurfit Kappa Group](#)) and exports of mineral resources: Ireland is the seventh largest producer of zinc concentrates, and the twelfth largest producer of lead concentrates. The country also has significant deposits of [gypsum](#), [limestone](#), and smaller quantities of copper, silver, gold, [barite](#), and [dolomite](#).<sup>[2]</sup> [Tourism in Ireland](#) contributes about 4% of GDP and is a significant source of employment.



A wind farm in [County Wexford](#)

Other exports include agri-food, cattle, beef, dairy products, and aluminum. Ireland's major imports include data processing equipment, chemicals, petroleum and petroleum products, textiles, and clothing. The difference between exports (€89.4 billion) and imports (€45.5 billion) resulted an annual trade surplus of €43.9 billion in 2010, which is the highest trade surplus relative to GDP achieved by any EU member state.<sup>[72]</sup>

The EU is by far the country's largest trading partner, accounting for 57.9% of exports and 60.7% of imports. The United Kingdom is the most important trading partner within the EU, accounting for 15.4% of exports and 32.1% of imports. Outside the EU, the United States accounted for 23.2% of exports and 14.1% of imports in 2010.<sup>[72]</sup>

[ESB](#), [Bord Gáis](#) and [Airtricity](#) are the three main electricity and gas suppliers in Ireland. There are 19.82 billion cubic metres of proven reserves of gas.<sup>[2]</sup><sup>[73]</sup> Natural gas extraction previously occurred at the [Kinsale Head](#) until its exhaustion. The [Corrib](#) gas field is due to come on stream in 2013/14. In 2012 the [Barryroe](#) field was confirmed to have up to 1.6 billion barrels in reserve, with between 160 and 600 million recoverable.<sup>[74]</sup> That could provide for Ireland's entire energy needs for up to 13 years, when it is developed in 2015/16. There have been significant efforts to increase the use of renewable and sustainable forms of energy in Ireland, particularly in [wind power](#), with a large number [wind farms](#) being constructed, some for the purpose of export.<sup>[75]</sup> The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) have estimated that 6.5 percent of Ireland's 2011 energy requirements were produced by renewable

sources.<sup>[76]</sup>

## Transport [edit]

*Main articles: [Transport in Ireland](#), [Rail transport in Ireland](#), and [Roads in Ireland](#)*

The country's three main [international airports](#) at [Dublin](#), [Shannon](#) and [Cork](#) serve many European and intercontinental routes with scheduled and [chartered flights](#). The London and Dublin route is the busiest international air route in Europe, with 4.5 million people flying between the two cities in 2006.<sup>[77][78]</sup> [Aer Lingus](#) is the flag carrier of Ireland, although [Ryanair](#) is the country's largest airline. Ryanair is Europe's largest low-cost carrier,<sup>[79]</sup> the 2nd-largest in terms of passenger numbers, and the world's largest in terms of international passenger numbers.<sup>[80]</sup>


 Terminal 2 at [Dublin Airport](#)

 InterCity train at [Heuston station](#)

Railway services are provided by [Iarnród Éireann](#), which operates all internal [intercity](#), [commuter](#) and [freight](#) railway services in the country. Dublin is the centre of the network with two main stations, [Heuston station](#) and [Connolly station](#), linking to the country's cities and main towns. The [Enterprise](#) service, which runs jointly with [Northern Ireland Railways](#), connects Dublin and [Belfast](#). Dublin has a steadily improving public transport network including the [DART](#), [Luas](#), [Dublin Bus](#), and [dublinbikes](#).

[Motorways](#), [national primary roads](#) and [national secondary roads](#) are managed by the [National Roads Authority](#), while [regional roads](#) and [local roads](#) are managed by the local authorities in each of their respective areas. The road network is primarily focused on the capital, but motorways have been extended to other cities as part of the [Transport 21](#) capital investment programme, as a result motorways have been completed between Dublin and a number of other major Irish cities including Cork, Limerick and Galway.<sup>[81]</sup>

Dublin has been the focus of major projects such as the [East-Link](#) and [West-Link](#) toll-bridges, as well as the [Dublin Port Tunnel](#). The [Jack Lynch Tunnel](#), under the [River Lee](#) in Cork, and the [Limerick Tunnel](#), under the [River Shannon](#), were two major projects outside Dublin. Several by-pass projects are underway at other urban areas.

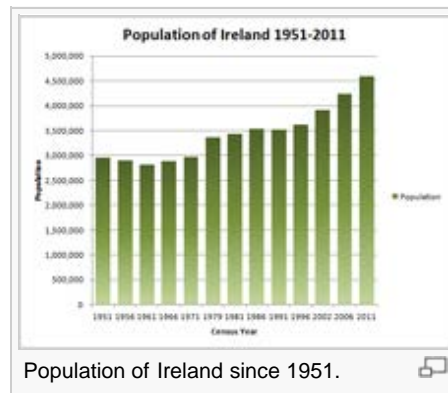
## Demographics [edit]

*Main article: [Demographics of the Republic of Ireland](#)*

*See also: [Irish Population Analysis](#)*

Genetic research suggests that the earliest settlers migrated from [Iberia](#) following the most recent [ice age](#).<sup>[82]</sup> After the [Mesolithic](#), [Neolithic](#) and [Bronze Age](#), migrants introduced [Celtic](#) language and culture. Migrants from the two latter eras still represent the genetic heritage of most [Irish people](#).<sup>[83][84]</sup> [Gaelic](#) tradition expanded and became the dominant form over time. Irish people are mainly of Gaelic and [Norse](#) ancestry, with a significant number having [Anglo-Norman](#), English, Scottish, French, and Welsh ancestry.

The population of Ireland stood at 4,588,252 in 2011, an <sup>[85]</sup>



Population of Ireland since 1951.

increase of 8.2% since 2006. As of 2011, Ireland had the highest birth rate in the European Union (16 births per 1,000 of population).<sup>[86]</sup> In 2011, 33.7% of births were to unmarried women.<sup>[87]</sup> Annual population growth rates exceeded 2% during the 2002-2006 intercensal period, which was attributed to high rates of **natural increase** and immigration.<sup>[88]</sup> This rate declined somewhat during the subsequent 2006-2011 intercensal period, with an average annual percentage change of 1.6%. At the time of 2011 census, the number of non-Irish nationals was recorded at 544,357, comprising 12% of the total population. The five largest non-national cohorts were Polish (122,585), UK (112,259), Lithuanian (36,683), Latvian (20,593) and Nigerian (17,642) respectively.<sup>[89]</sup>

Although Ireland has a number of foreign nationals resident in the country there is an increasingly hostile attitude towards minority groups.<sup>[90]</sup><sup>[*not in citation given*]</sup><sup>[91]</sup><sup>[92]</sup>

Largest urban centres by population						
	#	Settlement	Population	#	Settlement	Population
	1	<b>Dublin</b>	1,110,627	11	<b>Ennis</b>	25,360
	2	<b>Cork</b>	198,582	12	<b>Kilkenny</b>	24,423
	3	<b>Limerick</b>	91,454	13	<b>Tralee</b>	23,693
	4	<b>Galway</b>	76,778	14	<b>Carlow</b>	23,030
	5	<b>Waterford</b>	51,519	15	<b>Newbridge</b>	21,561
	6	<b>Drogheda</b>	38,578	16	<b>Naas</b>	20,713
	7	<b>Dundalk</b>	37,816	17	<b>Athlone</b>	20,153
	8	<b>Swords</b>	36,924	18	<b>Portlaoise</b>	20,145
	9	<b>Bray</b>	31,872	19	<b>Mullingar</b>	20,103
	10	<b>Navan</b>	28,559	20	<b>Wexford</b>	20,072

## Languages [edit]

*Main articles: [Languages of Ireland](#), [Irish language](#), [Hiberno-English](#), and [Mid Ulster English](#)*

Irish is the "national language" according to the Constitution, but English is the dominant language. In the 2006 census, 39% of the population regarded themselves as competent in Irish. Irish is spoken as a community language only in a small number of rural areas mostly in the west of the country, collectively known as the **Gaeltacht**. Except in Gaeltacht regions, road signs are usually bilingual.<sup>[93]</sup> Most public notices and print media are in English only. Most Government publications are available in both languages, and citizens have the right to deal with the state in Irish. Media in Irish exist on TV (**TG4**), radio (e.g. **RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta**) and print (e.g. **Foinse**). In the **Irish Defence Forces**, all foot and arms drill commands are given in the Irish language.

As a result of immigration, Polish is one of the most widely spoken languages in Ireland after English and Irish. Several other Central and Eastern European languages are also spoken on a day-to-day basis. Other languages spoken in Ireland include **Shelta**, spoken by Irish Travellers, and a dialect of **Scots** is spoken by some descendants of **Scottish settlers** in Donegal.<sup>[94]</sup> Most secondary school students choose to learn one or two foreign languages. Languages available for the Junior Certificate and the Leaving Certificate include French, German, Italian and Spanish; Leaving Certificate students can also study Arabic, Japanese, Swedish, Finnish and Russian. Some secondary schools also offer **Ancient Greek**, **Hebrew** and **Latin**. The study of Irish is compulsory for Leaving Certificate students, but some may qualify for an exemption in some circumstances, such as learning difficulties or entering the country after age 11.<sup>[95]</sup>

## Healthcare [edit]

*Main article: [Healthcare in the Republic of Ireland](#)*

Although the Irish healthcare system comes under constant criticism from politicians and the public, Ireland has one of the most developed systems of healthcare in the world and healthcare professionals who are highly trained. Healthcare in Ireland is provided by both public and private healthcare providers.

The [Minister for Health](#) has responsibility for setting overall health service policy. Every resident of Ireland is entitled to receive health care through the public health care system, which is managed by the [Health Service Executive](#) and funded by general taxation. A person may be required to pay a subsidised fee for certain health care received; this depends on income, age, illness or disability. All maternity services are provided free of charge and children up to the age of 6 months. Emergency care is provided to patients who present to a hospital Emergency Department. However, visitors to Emergency Departments in non-emergency situations who are not referred by their [GP](#) may incur a fee of €100. In some circumstances this fee is not payable or may be waived.<sup>[96]</sup>

Anyone holding a [European Health Insurance Card](#) is entitled to free maintenance and treatment in public beds in Health Service Executive and voluntary hospitals. Outpatient services are also provided for free. However, the majority of patients on median incomes or above are required to pay subsidised hospital charges. Private health insurance is available to the population for those who want to avail of it.

The average [life expectancy](#) in Ireland in 2012 is 81 years ([OECD](#) average life expectancy in 2012 was 80 years), with 78.2 years for men and 83.6 years for women.<sup>[97]</sup> It has the highest birth rate in the EU (16.8 births per 1,000 inhabitants, compared to an EU average of 10.7)<sup>[98]</sup> and a very low infant mortality rate (3.5 per 1,000 [live births](#)). The Irish healthcare system ranked 13th out of 34 European countries in 2012 according to the [European Health Consumer Index](#) produced by [Health Consumer Powerhouse](#). The same report ranked The Irish healthcare system as having the 8th best health outcomes but only the 21st most accessible system in Europe.

## Education [edit]

*Main article: [Education in the Republic of Ireland](#)*

Ireland has three levels of education: primary, secondary and higher education. The education systems are largely under the direction of the Government via the [Minister for Education and Skills](#). Recognised primary and secondary schools must adhere to the curriculum established by the relevant authorities. Education is compulsory between the ages of six and fifteen years, and all children up to the age of eighteen must complete the first three years of secondary, including one sitting of the [Junior Certificate](#) examination.<sup>[99]</sup>

The [Leaving Certificate](#), which is taken after two years of study, is the final examination in the secondary school system. Those intending to pursue higher education normally take this examination, with access to third-level courses generally depending on results obtained from the best six subjects taken, on a competitive basis.<sup>[100]</sup> Third-level education awards are conferred by at least 38 Higher Education Institutions - this includes the constituent or linked colleges of seven universities, plus other designated institutions of the Higher Education and Training Awards Council.

The [Programme for International Student Assessment](#),



[RCSI Disease and Research Centre at Beaumont Hospital in Dublin city.](#)



[University College Cork](#) was founded in 1845 and is a *constituent university* of the [National University of Ireland](#).

coordinated by the [OECD](#), currently ranks Ireland's education as the 20th best among participating countries in science, being statistically significantly higher than the OECD average.<sup>[101]</sup> In 2006, Irish students aged 15 years had the second highest levels of reading literacy in the EU.<sup>[102]</sup> Ireland also has 0.747 of the World's top 500 Universities per capita, which ranks the country in 8th place in the world.<sup>[103]</sup> Primary, secondary and higher (University/College) level education are all free in Ireland for all EU citizens.<sup>[104]</sup> There are charges to cover student services and examinations.

## Religion [edit]

*Main article: [Religion in the Republic of Ireland](#)*

Religious freedom is constitutionally provided for in Ireland. [Christianity](#) is the predominant religion, with the [Roman Catholic Church](#) as the largest church. In 2006, 86.8% of the population identified themselves as Roman Catholic, 4.8% as Protestant or another Christian religion, 0.8% as Muslim, and 4.4% as having no religion – making the non-religious group the second largest group after Roman Catholic.<sup>[105]</sup> According to a [Georgetown University](#) study, the country has one of the highest rates of regular [Mass](#) attendance in the Western World.<sup>[106]</sup> While daily attendance was 13% in 2006, there was a reduction in weekly attendance from 81% in 1990 to 48% in 2006, although the decline was reported as stabilising.<sup>[107]</sup> In 2011, it was reported that weekly Mass attendance in Dublin was just 18%, with it being even lower among younger generations.<sup>[108]</sup>



**Saint Finbarre's Cathedral** is a cathedral of the [Church of Ireland](#) in [Cork](#) city.

The [Church of Ireland](#) is the second largest Christian denomination. Membership declined throughout the twentieth century, but has recently experienced an increase, as have other small Christian denominations. Significant Protestant denominations are the [Presbyterian Church](#) and [Methodist Church](#). Immigration has contributed to a growth in [Hindu](#) and [Muslim](#) populations. In percentage terms, [Orthodox Christianity](#) and [Islam](#) were the fastest growing religions, with increases of 100% and 70% respectively.<sup>[109]</sup>

Ireland's patron saints are [Saint Patrick](#), [Saint Bridget](#) and [Saint Columba](#). Saint Patrick is the only one commonly recognised as the patron saint. [Saint Patrick's Day](#) is

celebrated on 17 March in Ireland and abroad as the Irish national day, with parades and other celebrations.

As with other predominantly Catholic European states, Ireland underwent a period of legal secularisation in the late twentieth century. In 1972, the article of the Constitution naming specific religious groups was deleted by the [Fifth Amendment](#) in a referendum. Article 44 still remains in the Constitution: *The State acknowledges that the homage of public worship is due to Almighty God. It shall hold His Name in reverence, and shall respect and honour religion.* The article also establishes freedom of religion, prohibits endowment of any religion, prohibits the state from religious discrimination, and requires the state to treat religious and non-religious schools in a non-prejudicial manner.

[Religious studies](#) was introduced as an optional Junior Certificate subject in 2001. Despite many schools being run by religious organisations, a secularist trend is occurring among younger generations.<sup>[110]</sup> Religious schools cannot discriminate against pupils concerning religion. A sanctioned system of preference does exist, where students of a particular religion may be accepted before those who do not share the ethos of the school, in a case where a school's quota has already been reached.

Religion	Percent
<a href="#">Roman Catholicism</a>	84.2%
<a href="#">No religion</a>	6.2%
<a href="#">Protestantism</a>	4.6%
<a href="#">Islam</a>	1.1%
<a href="#">Other</a>	2.8%



## Culture [edit]

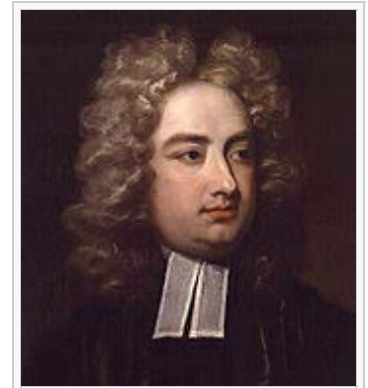
*Main article: [Culture of Ireland](#)*

## Literature [edit]

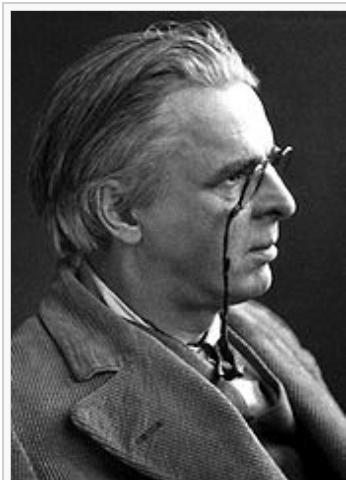
*Main article: [Irish literature](#)*

Ireland has made a significant contribution to world literature in both the English and Irish languages. Modern [Irish fiction](#) began with the publishing of the 1726 novel *Gulliver's Travels* by [Jonathan Swift](#). Other writers of importance during the 18th century and their most notable works include [Laurence Sterne](#) with the publication of *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* and [Oliver Goldsmith's](#) *The Vicar of Wakefield*. Numerous Irish novelists emerged during the 19th century, including [Maria Edgeworth](#), [John Banim](#), [Gerald Griffin](#), [Charles Kickham](#), [William Carleton](#), [George Moore](#), and [Somerville and Ross](#). [Bram Stoker](#) is best known as the author of the 1897 novel *Dracula*.

[James Joyce](#) (1882–1941) published his most famous work *Ulysses* in 1922, which is an interpretation of the *Odyssey* set in Dublin. [Edith Somerville](#) continued writing after the death of her partner [Martin Ross](#) in 1915. Dublin's [Annie M. P. Smithson](#) was one of several authors catering for fans of romantic fiction in the 1920s and 1930s. After the Second World War, popular novels were published by, among others, [Brian O'Nolan](#), who published as [Flann O'Brien](#), [Elizabeth Bowen](#), and [Kate O'Brien](#). During the final decades of the 20th century, [Edna O'Brien](#), [John McGahern](#), [Maeve Binchy](#), [Joseph O'Connor](#), [Roddy Doyle](#), [Colm Tóibín](#), and [John Banville](#) came to the fore as novelists.



[Jonathan Swift](#) (1667–1745)



[W. B. Yeats](#) (1865–1939)

[Patricia Lynch](#) (1898–1972) was a prolific children's author, while [Eoin Colfer](#) has been particularly successful in this genre in recent years. In the genre of the short story, which is a form favoured by many Irish writers, the most prominent figures include [Seán Ó Faoláin](#), [Frank O'Connor](#) and [William Trevor](#). Well known Irish poets include [Patrick Kavanagh](#), [Thomas McCarthy](#), [Dermot Bolger](#), and Nobel Prize in Literature laureates [William Butler Yeats](#) and [Seamus Heaney](#) (born in Northern Ireland but resided in Dublin). Prominent writers in the Irish language are [Pádraic Ó Conaire](#), [Máirtín Ó Cadhain](#), [Séamus Ó Grianna](#), and [Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill](#).

The history of [Irish theatre](#) begins with the expansion of the English administration in Dublin during the early 17th century, and since then, Ireland has significantly contributed to English drama. In its early history, theatrical productions in Ireland tended to serve political purposes, but as more theatres opened and the popular audience grew, a more diverse range of entertainments were staged. Many

Dublin-based theatres developed links with their London equivalents, and British productions frequently found their way to the Irish stage. However, most Irish playwrights went abroad to establish themselves. In the 18th century, [Oliver Goldsmith](#) and [Richard Brinsley Sheridan](#) were two of the most successful playwrights on the London stage at that time. At the beginning of the 20th century, theatre companies dedicated to the staging of Irish plays and the development of writers, directors and performers began to emerge, which allowed many Irish playwrights to learn their trade and establish their reputations in Ireland rather than in Britain or the United States. Following in the tradition of acclaimed practitioners, principally [Oscar Wilde](#) and Literature Nobel Prize laureates [George Bernard Shaw](#) (1925), and [Samuel Beckett](#) (1969), playwrights such as [Seán O'Casey](#), [Brian Friel](#), [Sebastian Barry](#), [Brendan Behan](#),

[Conor McPherson](#), and [Billy Roche](#) have gained popular success.<sup>[111]</sup> Other Irish playwrights of the 20th century include [Denis Johnston](#), [Thomas Kilroy](#), [Tom Murphy](#), [Hugh Leonard](#), [Frank McGuinness](#), and [John B. Keane](#).

## Music and dance [edit]

*Main articles: [Irish music](#) and [Irish dance](#)*

[Irish traditional music](#) has remained vibrant, despite globalising cultural forces, and retains many traditional aspects. It has influenced various music genres, such as American country and roots music, and to some extent modern rock. It has occasionally been blended with styles such as rock and roll and punk rock. Ireland has also produced many internationally known artists in other genres, such as rock, pop, jazz, and blues.

There are a number of classical music ensembles around the country, such as the [RTÉ Performing Groups](#).<sup>[112]</sup> Ireland also has three opera organisations. Opera Ireland produces large-scale operas in Dublin, the Opera Theatre Company tours its chamber-style operas throughout the country, and the annual [Wexford Opera Festival](#), which promotes lesser-known operas, takes place during October and November.

Ireland has participated in the [Eurovision Song Contest](#) since 1965.<sup>[113]</sup> Its first win was in 1970, when [Dana](#) won with *All Kinds of Everything*.<sup>[114]</sup> It has subsequently won the competition *six more times*,<sup>[115][116]</sup> the highest number of wins by any competing country. The phenomenon *Riverdance* originated as an interval performance during the [1994 contest](#).<sup>[117]</sup>

Irish dance can broadly be divided into [social dance](#) and [performance dance](#). Irish social dance can be divided into *céilí* and set dancing. Irish [set dances](#) are [quadrilles](#), danced by 4 couples arranged in a square, while *céilí dances* are danced by varied [formations](#) of couples of 2 to 16 people. There are also many stylistic differences between these two forms. Irish social dance is a living tradition, and variations in particular dances are found across the country. In some places dances are deliberately modified and new dances are choreographed. Performance dance is traditionally referred to as [stepdance](#). [Irish stepdance](#), popularised by the show *Riverdance*, is notable for its rapid leg movements, with the body and arms being kept largely stationary. The solo stepdance is generally characterised by a controlled but not rigid upper body, straight arms, and quick, precise movements of the feet. The solo dances can either be in "soft shoe" or "hard shoe".

## Architecture [edit]

*Main article: [Architecture of Ireland](#)*



[Poul nabrone dolmen](#) in [County Clare](#) was built during the [Neolithic](#) period.

Ireland has a wealth of structures,<sup>[118]</sup> surviving in various states of preservation, from the [Neolithic](#) period, such as *[Brú na Bóinne](#)*, [Poul nabrone dolmen](#), [Castlestrange stone](#), [Turoe stone](#), and [Drombeg stone circle](#).<sup>[119]</sup> As the Romans never conquered Ireland, architecture of [Greco-Roman](#) origin is extremely rare. The country instead had an extended period of [Iron Age](#) architecture.<sup>[120]</sup> The [Irish round tower](#) originated during the [Early Medieval](#) period.

Christianity introduced simple [monastic houses](#), such as



[The Frames](#)



[Clonmacnoise](#), [Skellig Michael](#) and [Scattery Island](#). A stylistic similarity has been remarked between these [double monasteries](#) and those of the [Copts](#) of Egypt.<sup>[121]</sup> Gaelic kings and aristocrats occupied [ringforts](#) or [crannógs](#).<sup>[122]</sup> Church reforms during the 12th century via the [Cistercians](#) stimulated continental influence, with the [Romanesque](#) styled [Mellifont](#), [Boyle](#) and [Tintern](#) abbeys.<sup>[123]</sup> Gaelic settlement had been limited to the Monastic proto-towns, such as [Kells](#), where the current street pattern preserves the original circular settlement outline to some extent.<sup>[124]</sup> Significant urban settlements only developed following the period of Viking invasions.<sup>[122]</sup> The major Hiberno-Norse [Longphorts](#) were located on the coast, but with minor inland fluvial settlements, such as the eponymous [Longford](#).



The ruins of [Monasterboice](#) in [County Louth](#) are of early Christian settlement.

Castles were built by the [Normans](#) during the late 12th century, such as [Dublin Castle](#) and [Kilkenny Castle](#),<sup>[125]</sup> and the concept of the planned walled trading town was introduced, which gained legal status and several rights by grant of a [Charter](#) under [Feudalism](#). These charters specifically governed the design of these towns.<sup>[126]</sup> Two significant waves of planned town formation followed, the first being the 16th and 17th century plantation towns, which were used as a mechanism for the [Tudor](#) English kings to suppress local insurgency, followed by 18th century landlord towns.<sup>[127]</sup> Surviving Norman founded planned towns include [Drogheda](#) and [Youghal](#); plantation towns include [Portlaoise](#) and [Portarlington](#); well-preserved 18th century planned towns include [Westport](#) and [Ballinasloe](#). These episodes of planned settlement account for the majority of present day towns throughout the country.



[Dublin Custom House](#) is a [neoclassical](#) building from the late 18th century.

[Gothic](#) cathedrals, such as [St Patrick's](#), were also introduced by the Normans.<sup>[128]</sup> [Franciscans](#) were dominant in directing the abbeys by the Late Middle Ages, while elegant tower houses, such as [Bunratty Castle](#), were built by the Gaelic and Norman aristocracy.<sup>[129]</sup> Many religious buildings were ruined with the [Dissolution of the Monasteries](#).<sup>[130]</sup> Following the Restoration, [palladianism](#) and [rococo](#), particularly [country houses](#), swept through Ireland under the initiative of [Edward Lovett Pearce](#), with the [Houses of Parliament](#) being the most significant.<sup>[131]</sup>

With the erection of buildings such as [The Custom House](#), [Four Courts](#), [General Post Office](#) and [King's Inns](#), the [neoclassical](#) and [Georgian](#) styles flourished, especially in [Dublin](#).<sup>[131]</sup> Georgian townhouses produced streets of singular distinction, particularly in [Dublin](#), [Limerick](#) and [Cork](#). Following [Catholic Emancipation](#), cathedrals and churches influenced by the French [Gothic Revival](#) emerged, such as [St Colman's](#) and [St Finbarre's](#).<sup>[131]</sup> Ireland has long been associated with [thatched roof](#) cottages, though these are nowadays considered quaint.<sup>[132]</sup>

Beginning with the American designed [art deco](#) church at [Turner's Cross](#) in 1927, Irish architecture followed the international trend towards modern and sleek building styles since the 20th century.<sup>[133]</sup> Recent developments include the regeneration of [Ballymun](#) and an urban extension of Dublin at [Adamstown](#).<sup>[134]</sup> Since the establishment of the [Dublin Docklands Development Authority](#) in 1997, the [Dublin Docklands](#) area underwent large-scale redevelopment, which included the construction of the [Convention Centre Dublin](#) and [Grand Canal](#)

**Theatre.**<sup>[135]</sup> Completed in 2008, the **Elysian** tower in Cork is the tallest storeyed building in Ireland, at a height of 71 metres (233 feet), surpassing **Cork County Hall**. The **Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland** regulates the practice of architecture in the state.<sup>[136]</sup>

## Media [edit]

*Main article: [Media of the Republic of Ireland](#)*

**Raidió Teilifís Éireann** (RTÉ) is the **public service broadcaster** of Ireland, funded by a **television licence fee** and advertising.<sup>[137]</sup> RTÉ operates two national television channels, **RTÉ One** and **RTÉ Two**. The other independent national television channels are **TV3**, **3e**, and **TG4**, the latter of which is a public service broadcaster for speakers of the Irish language. These channels are available on **Saorview**, the national **free-to-air digital terrestrial television** service.<sup>[138]</sup> Additional channels included in the service are **RTÉ Two HD**, **RTÉ News Now**, **RTÉjr**, and RTÉ One +1. Subscription-based television providers operating in Ireland include **UPC** and **Sky**.

Supported by **An Bord Scannán na hÉireann**, the Irish film industry grew significantly since the 1990s, with the promotion of indigenous films as well as the attraction of international productions like ***Braveheart*** and ***Saving Private Ryan***.<sup>[139]</sup>

A large number of regional and local radio stations are available countrywide. A survey showed that a consistent 85% of adults listen to a mixture of national, regional and local stations on a daily basis.<sup>[140]</sup> **RTÉ Radio** operates four national stations, **Radio 1**, **2fm**, **Lyric fm**, and **RnaG**, alongside two independent national stations, **Today FM** and **Newstalk**.

Ireland has a traditionally competitive print media, which is divided into daily national newspapers and weekly regional newspapers, as well as national Sunday editions. The strength of the British press is a unique feature of the Irish print media scene, with the availability of a wide selection of British published newspapers and magazines.<sup>[139]</sup>

## Cuisine [edit]

*Main article: [Irish cuisine](#)*

*Further information: [List of Irish dishes](#)*

Irish cuisine was traditionally based on meat and dairy, supplemented with vegetables and seafood. The **potato** eventually formed the basis of many traditional Irish dishes after its introduction in the 16th century.<sup>[141]</sup> Examples of popular Irish cuisine include **boxty**, **colcannon**, **coddle**, **stew**, and **bacon and cabbage**. Ireland is famous for the **full Irish breakfast**, which involves a fried or grilled meal generally consisting of bacon, egg, sausage, pudding, and fried tomato. Apart from the significant influence by European and international dishes, there has been a recent emergence of a new Irish cuisine based on traditional ingredients handled in new ways. This cuisine is based on fresh vegetables, fish, oysters, mussels and other shellfish, and the wide range of hand-made cheeses that are now being produced across the country. Shellfish have increased in



The Elysian tower in Cork is the tallest storeyed building in Ireland.





popularity, especially due to the high quality shellfish available from the country's coastline. The most popular fish include [salmon](#) and [cod](#).

Traditional breads include [soda bread](#) and [wheaten bread](#). [Barmbrack](#) is a [yeasted bread](#) with added [sultanas](#) and [raisins](#).

Popular everyday beverages among the Irish include [tea](#) and [coffee](#). Alcoholic drinks associated with Ireland include [Poitín](#) and the world famous [Guinness](#), which is a [dry stout](#) that originated in the brewery of [Arthur Guinness](#) at [St. James's Gate](#) in Dublin. [Irish whiskey](#) is also popular throughout the country, and comes in various forms, including single malt, single grain and blended whiskey.<sup>[142]</sup>

## Sports [edit]

*Main article: [Sport in Ireland](#)*

[Gaelic football](#) and [hurling](#) are the traditional sports of Ireland as well as most popular [spectator sports](#).<sup>[143]</sup> They are administered by the [Gaelic Athletics Association](#) on an [all-Ireland](#) basis. Other [Gaelic games](#) organised by the association include [Gaelic handball](#) and [rounders](#).<sup>[144]</sup>

[Soccer](#) is the third most popular spectator sport and has the highest level of participation.<sup>[145]</sup> Although the [League of Ireland](#) is the national league, the English [Premier League](#) is the most popular among the public.<sup>[146]</sup> The [Republic of Ireland national football team](#) plays at international level and is administered by the [Football Association of Ireland](#).<sup>[147]</sup>

The [Irish Rugby Football Union](#) is the governing body of [rugby union](#), which is played at local and international levels on an all-Ireland basis, and has produced players such as [Brian O'Driscoll](#) and [Ronan O'Gara](#).<sup>[148]</sup> The success of the [Irish Cricket Team](#) in the [2007 Cricket World Cup](#) has led to an increase in the popularity of [cricket](#), which is also administered on an all-Ireland basis by the [Irish Cricket Union](#).<sup>[149]</sup>

[Golf](#) is another popular sport in Ireland, with over 300 courses countrywide.<sup>[150]</sup> The country has produced several internationally successful golfers, such as [Pádraig Harrington](#) and [Paul McGinley](#).

[Boxing](#) is Ireland's most successful sport at an olympic level. Administered by the [Irish Amateur Boxing Association](#) on an all-Ireland basis, it has gained in popularity as a result of the international success of boxers such as [Bernard Dunne](#), [Andy Lee](#) and [Katie Taylor](#).

Some of Ireland's highest performers in [athletics](#) have competed at the [Olympic Games](#), such as [Eamonn Coghlan](#) and [Sonia O'Sullivan](#). The annual [Dublin Marathon](#) and [Dublin Women's Mini Marathon](#) are two of the most popular athletics events in the country.<sup>[151]</sup>

[Rugby league](#) is represented by the [Ireland national rugby league team](#) and administered by [Rugby League Ireland](#) (who are full member of the [Rugby League European Federation](#)) on an all-Ireland basis. The team compete in the [European Cup \(rugby league\)](#) and the [Rugby League World Cup](#). Ireland reached the quarter finals of the [2000 Rugby League World Cup](#) as well as reaching the semi finals in the [2008 Rugby League World Cup](#).<sup>[152]</sup> The [Irish Elite League](#) is a domestic competition for rugby league teams in Ireland.<sup>[153]</sup>

The profile of [Australian rules football](#) has increased in Ireland due to the [International rules](#) series that take place annually between Australia and Ireland. [Baseball](#) and [basketball](#) are also emerging sports in Ireland, both of which have an international team representing the island of Ireland. Other sports which retain a strong following in Ireland include [cycling](#), [greyhound racing](#), [horse riding](#), [motorsport](#), and [softball](#).

## Society [edit]



Croke Park stadium is the headquarters of the [Gaelic Athletic Association](#).

See also: *Abortion in the Republic of Ireland* and *LGBT rights in the Republic of Ireland*

Ireland ranks fifth in the world in terms of [gender equality](#).<sup>[154]</sup> In 2011, Ireland was ranked the most charitable country in Europe, and second most charitable in the world.<sup>[155]</sup> Contraception was controlled in Ireland until 1979, however, the receding influence of the Catholic Church has led to an increasingly secularised society.<sup>[156]</sup> In 1983, the [Eighth Amendment](#) recognised "the right to life of the unborn", subject to qualifications concerning the "equal right to life" of the mother. The case of *Attorney General v. X* subsequently prompted passage of the [Thirteenth](#) and [Fourteenth](#) Amendments, guaranteeing the right to have an abortion performed abroad, and the right to learn about "services" that are illegal in Ireland but legal abroad. The prohibition on divorce in the 1937 Constitution was repealed in 1995 under the [Fifteenth Amendment](#). Divorce rates in Ireland are very low compared to European Union averages (0.7 divorced people per 1,000 population in 2011) while the marriage rate in Ireland is slightly above the European Union average (4.6 marriages per 1,000 population per year in 2012).

[Capital punishment](#) is constitutionally banned in Ireland, while discrimination based on age, gender, sexual orientation, marital or familial status, religion, race or membership of the travelling community is illegal. The legislation which outlawed homosexual acts was repealed in 1993.<sup>[157][158]</sup> In 2010, the Dáil and the Seanad passed the [Civil Partnership and Certain Rights and Obligations of Cohabitants Act](#), which recognised civil partnerships between same-sex couples.<sup>[159]</sup> It permits same-sex couples to register their relationship before a registrar.<sup>[160]</sup> A *Sunday Times* poll carried out in March 2011 showed that 73% of people believe that same-sex couples should be allowed to marry, while 60% believe that same-sex couples should be allowed to adopt children.<sup>[161]</sup> In April 2012, the [Constitutional Convention](#) voted overwhelmingly in favour of extending marriage rights to same-sex couples.<sup>[162]</sup>

Ireland became the first country in the world to introduce an environmental levy for [plastic shopping bags](#) in 2002 and a public [smoking ban](#) in 2004. [Recycling in Ireland](#) is carried out extensively and Ireland has the second highest rate of packaging recycling in the [European Union](#). It was the first country in Europe to ban [incandescent lightbulbs](#) in 2008 and the first EU country to ban in-store tobacco advertising and product display in 2009.<sup>[163][164]</sup> Under current plans, Ireland will also become the second country in the world to introduce [plain cigarette packaging](#) in 2014.<sup>[165]</sup>

## State symbols [edit]



This section **does not cite any references or sources**. Please help improve this section by [adding citations to reliable sources](#). Unsourced material may be challenged and [removed](#). *(August 2013)*

*Further information:* [National symbols of Ireland](#)

The state shares many symbols with the [island of Ireland](#). These include the colours green and [blue](#), animals such as the [Irish wolfhound](#) and [stags](#), structures such as [round towers](#) and [celtic crosses](#), and designs such as [Celtic knots](#) and [spirals](#). These symbols are used by state institutions as well as private bodies in the Republic of Ireland. This section only describes the official symbols of the state: official flags, arms, anthems and trademarks.

The [flag of Ireland](#) is a [tricolour](#) of green, white and orange. The flag originates with the [Young Ireland](#) movement of the mid-19th century but was not popularised until its use during the [Easter Rising](#) of 1916. The colours represent the [Gaelic](#) tradition (green) and the followers of [William of Orange](#) in Ireland (orange), with white representing the aspiration for peace between them. It was adopted as the flag of the Irish Free State in 1922 and continues to be used as the sole flag and ensign of the state. A [naval jack](#), a green flag with a yellow harp, is set out in Defence Forces Regulations and flown from the mast head of ships in addition to the national flag in limited circumstances (e.g. when a ship is not underway). It is based on the unofficial [green ensign](#) of Ireland used in the 18th and 19th centuries and the traditional green flag of Ireland dating from the 16th century.

Like the national flag, the national anthem, [Amhrán na bhFiann](#) (English: A Soldier's Song), has its roots

in the Easter Rising, when the song was sung by the rebels. Although originally composed in English in 1912, the song was translated into Irish in 1923 and the Irish-language version is more commonly sung today. The song was adopted as the national anthem of the Irish Free State in 1926 and continues as the national anthem of the state. The first four bars of the chorus followed by the last five comprise the **presidential salute**. *An Amhran Dochais* (English: The Song of Hope), set to a traditional air called Mor Chluana (English: More of Cloyne), collected by **Patrick Weston Joyce**, and once a potential national anthem, is played as a salute on the Taoiseach's (Prime Minister) arrival at formal occasions.

The **arms of Ireland** originate as the arms of the monarchs of Ireland and can be is recored was being the arms of the King of Ireland in the 12th century. From the **union of the crowns** of **England**, **Scotland** and **Ireland** in 1603, they have appeared **quartered** on the **royal coat of arms of the United Kingdom**. Today, they are the personal arms of the President of Ireland whilst he or she is in office and are flown as the **presidential standard**. The harp symbol is used extensively by the state to mark official documents, Irish coinage and on the **seal of the President of Ireland**.

**Shamrock**, a type of **clover** or **trefoil**, is a national symbol of Ireland since the 17th century when it became customary to wear it as a symbol on **St. Patrick's Day**. Both the harp and shamrock are registered by the state as trademarks of Ireland. St. Patrick's Day, the 17th of March, is the national holiday.

## See also [edit]

- Outline of the Republic of Ireland
- List of Ireland-related topics
- Celtic languages
- Celts
- Ethnic groups in Europe



## Notes [edit]

## Footnotes [edit]

- ↑ Prior to 2002, Ireland used the **punt** (Irish pound) as its circulated currency. The euro was introduced as an accounting currency in 1999.

## Citations [edit]

- ↑ "Official Languages Act 2003" ↗. Office of the Attorney-General. Retrieved 18 February 2012.
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- Michael J. Geary, *An Inconvenient Wait: Ireland's Quest for Membership of the EEC, 1957–73* (Institute of Public Administration, 2009) (ISBN 978-1-904541-83-7)

## External links <sup>[edit]</sup>

### Government

- <sup>Irish State</sup>  – Official governmental portal
- <sup>Áras an Uachtaráin</sup>  – Official presidential site
- <sup>Taoiseach</sup>  – Official prime ministerial site
- <sup>Tithe an Oireachtais</sup> <sup>[*dead link*]</sup> – Houses of Parliament, official parliamentary site
- <sup>Discover Ireland</sup>  - Official Website of Tourism Ireland
- <sup>Chief of State and Cabinet Members</sup>

### General information

- <sup>Ireland</sup>   <sup>entry at</sup> *The World Factbook*
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- <sup>Ireland profile</sup>  from the   <sup>BBC News</sup>
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