

Ireland - Human Rights Scorecard ¹

The Republic of Ireland occupies most of the island of Ireland, off the coast of England and Wales. The state shares its only land border with Northern Ireland, a part of the United Kingdom. It is otherwise surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean. The people of Ireland have had a long and tempestuous relationship with England, but most of the island was included in the Republic of Ireland which was officially declared in 1949.²

Official language: Irish, English

Ethnic groups: 84.5% Irish; 9.8% Other White; 1.9% Asian; 1.4% Black Irish/Black African; 2.5% Other

Government: Unitary parliamentary republic

- President: Michael D. Higgins
- Taoiseach (Prime Minister): Enda Kennedy
- Tanaiste (Deputy Prime Minister): Frances Fitzgerald

Death penalty: Abolitionist for all crimes

Population: 4.59 million

Life expectancy: 80.9 years

Under-5 mortality: 4 per 1000

Adult literacy: There are no statistics available



Section 1: Respect for the Integrity of the Person

Respect for the integrity of the individual is the most fundamental of human rights groupings. It guarantees protection of the person to ensure the right to life, and freedom from torture. It also prevents arbitrary detention, and disappearances, and ensures the right to a free and fair trial when accused.

Freedom from arbitrary or unlawful deprivation of life



Respected ³

There are no reports of arbitrary or unlawful killings carried out by the government or its forces.

Freedom from disappearance



Respected ⁴

There are no reports of politically motivated disappearances.

Freedom from torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment



Partially respected ⁵

The law prohibits such practices, and there is no record of government officials engaging in them. However, the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture reported several allegations of mistreatment, such as punches, slaps, and kicks, at the time of arrest.

Freedom from arbitrary arrest or detention



Respected ⁶

The government generally respects the constitution and does not engage in such activities.

Freedom from denial of fair public trial



Respected ⁷

The constitution provides for an independent judiciary that exercises judicial independence from the government.

Freedom from arbitrary interference with privacy, family, home or correspondence



Respected ⁸

The constitution prohibits such actions. There is no record of arbitrary government interference.

Section 2: Respect for Civil Liberties

Civil liberties are a basic category of internationally recognized human rights. They include the freedoms of expression, assembly, association, education, and religion. These are inalienable rights which should not be breached by government, and should ensure the rights of all, including women and minority groups.

Freedom of speech and press (*Reporters Without Borders Press Freedom Index*)⁹



Score: 12.40, Rank: 9 / 179 – Largely free, diverse, and independent¹⁰

While Ireland is one of the freest countries in the world, it still struggles with the autonomy of the media. The constitution guarantees media freedom, however defamation charges are common. In addition, police must gain authorization to speak with journalists.

Freedom from academic censorship



Respected¹¹

There are no reports of government restrictions on academic freedom.

Freedom of peaceful assembly and association



Respected¹²

The government respects the constitution, which guarantees freedom of assembly and association.

Freedom of religion



Respected¹³

While Ireland is predominantly Catholic, the constitution promises freedom of religion and condemns religious discrimination.

Protection of refugees and stateless persons



Partially respected¹⁴

The government has established a system to provide protection to refugees and asylum seekers. However, NGOs and the UN Human Rights Committee expressed concern over the length of the application processes.

Overall protection of civil liberties (*FreedomHouse Civil Liberties Index*)^{15 16}



1/ 7 – Free¹⁷

The media is independent and presents a variety of viewpoints. However the state may interfere in cases of material deemed indecent. Discrimination based on gender or sexual orientation is illegal. Overall, Ireland has protected civil liberties.

Section 3: Respect for Political Rights

Political rights ensure all members of society are able to influence the political process. The assessment of political rights includes an examination of the electoral process and the selection of representatives, the political empowerment of the general public, the tolerance of dissent, the accountability of government, etc..

Overall protection of political rights (*FreedomHouse Political Rights Index*)¹⁸



1/ 7 – Free¹⁹

According to Freedom House, Ireland scores one point from perfect in respect to political rights. Their political system provides proportional representation through a fair electoral system. However, despite Ireland's effective political policies, corruption is a recurring problem.

Section 4: Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

The civil, political, economic and social rights exercised within a country are often modulated by the degree of transparency and freedom from corruption. Various international metrics assess transparency and corruption, including the OECD anti-bribery convention, the Bribe Payers Index, and the Open Budget Index.

Transparency and freedom from corruption (*Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index*)²⁰



Score: 75%, Rank: 18 / 175 – Limited corruption²¹

Despite Ireland's relatively low rate of corruption, Transparency International claims that 66% of Irish people believe corruption in the country has increased over the past decade, particularly in regards to political corruption.

Section 5: Governmental Response to Criticism

This section deals specifically with the response heads of state have to civil society or international human rights reports.

Governmental attitudes vis-à-vis independent investigations of alleged human rights violations



Respected²²

Many domestic and international human rights organizations operated within Ireland, publishing their findings, without government intervention. The law obliges public bodies to ensure human rights are being respected. Thus, Ireland has its own Human Rights and Equality Commission.

Section 6: Discrimination and Societal Abuses

Legal and social discriminatory practices related to sex, race, creed or sexual orientation, are violations of human rights. Countries with strong civil liberty traditions should have a fair legal system that ensures the rule of law, allows free economic activity, and ensures equality of opportunity for all.

Rights of women (World Economic Forum Gender Gap Index)²³



Score: 80.7%, Rank: 5/ 142 – Almost equal rights²⁴

Women in Ireland have the same legal status as men. However, despite it being against the law, women still get paid less than men; they face discrimination in both public and private sectors.

Rights of Children (KidsRights Index Overall Score)²⁵



Score: 93.8%, Rank: 7 / 165 – Protected²⁶

Ireland is within the top ten countries that preserve children's rights and protection.

Rights of persons with disabilities



Respected²⁷

The law prohibits discrimination against disabled persons. While there are a few exceptions, most disabled people do not feel discriminated against. The National Disability Authority ensures that laws regarding infrastructure, education, and communications are effectively implemented.

Rights of national/racial/ethnic minorities (e.g. discrimination, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism etc.)



Partially respected²⁸

The law prohibits any form of discrimination. Nevertheless, societal discrimination and violence against ethnic minorities is still a problem. The country's African population in particular is often targeted. Indigenous Irish people also face significant discrimination.

Freedom from abuse and discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity



Respected^{29 30}

In 2015, Ireland legalized gay marriage after conducting a referendum. The same year, Parliament enacted the Gender Recognition Act, which allows transgendered persons to receive full legal recognition of their preferred gender.

Section 7: Workers' Rights

Workers' rights are a group of legal rights relating to labour relations between workers and their employers. At their core are things like the ability to negotiate pay, benefits, terms of employment, and safe working conditions. These rights often devolve from the right to unionize and access to collective bargaining.

Rights to freedom of association and to collective bargaining



Respected³¹

The constitution guarantees freedom of association and collective bargaining for all. Workers freely exercise their rights without government interference.

Freedom from forced or compulsory labour



Partially respected³²

Despite the fact that the law prohibits forced labour, there are reports of forced labour in Ireland. In 2015, the Workplace Relations Commission was created to ensure employment rights. The law considers forced labour akin to human trafficking, which is punishable with life in prison.

Freedom from forced labour for children, and a minimum age of employment



Respected³³

Children under 16 are not legally able to work fulltime. Children under 18 must not work in hazardous occupations. There are no reports of child labour.

Right to acceptable conditions of work



Respected³⁴

There is a national minimum wage with a standard workweek of 39 hours. The law provides several paid leaves, and limits overtime work. Violations of occupational safety laws can result in fines and/or imprisonment.

Right to employment



13% - High unemployment³⁵

The unemployment rate has tripled in the past decade.

¹ A hybrid human rights and freedoms model, leveraging both legal principles and intuitive classifications, has been used for this human rights assessment. The CJPME Foundation has sought to integrate as many independent sources and metrics into its summary analysis as possible. In many cases, for qualitative material pertaining to the respect for a particular right in a country, the CJPME Foundation has drawn on material from Human Rights Watch and the US State Department country reports. Human Rights Watch (HRW) publishes a World Report which assesses the respect for human rights in each country. HRW uses a methodology of local reporting and interviewing, combined with research and analysis to assess the level of respect of human rights. The U.S State Department keeps an updated publication on the state of human rights internationally. Their system of research and accountability draws from the research of official US State Department officials, as well as local civil-society and international human rights organizations.

² Commonly-known information on the country is drawn from various Internet sources, including Google country pages, and Amnesty International. For death penalty see: "Death sentences and executions in 2013." Amnesty International. Accessed July 6, 2016. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/act50/001/2014/en/>.

³ "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2015 Ireland." U.S Department of State. Accessed July 6, 2016. <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/253071.pdf>.

⁴ Ibid. U.S Department of State. For purposes of the present analysis, a "disappearance" is different than simple arbitrary detention because a "disappearance" is considered permanent.

⁵ Ibid. U.S Department of State.

⁶ Ibid. U.S Department of State.

⁷ Ibid. U.S Department of State.

⁸ Ibid. U.S Department of State.

⁹ The Press Freedom Index published by Reporters Without Borders ranks the level of freedom of information in 180 countries. This is determined through the polling of local NGOs and freedom of expression civil society organizations across the globe. This index is also determined by local correspondents and follow-up work done on reports of infringement to press freedom where ever it takes place. Their methodology looks at six different indicators: 1) Media pluralism, 2) Media independence, 3) Media atmosphere and self-censorship, 4) the Law around media, 5) Media transparency, and 6) Media infrastructure. The score from these six indicators is combined with a rating for the violence against journalists in the country to create an overall score. The CJPME Foundation classifies the Press Freedom Index as follows: 0 – 14.99 (16 countries), Largely free, diverse and independent; 15 – 24.99 (37 countries), Mostly free, diverse and independent; 25 – 29.99 (31 countries), Partially free, diverse and independent; 30 – 39.99 (39 countries), Partially controlled, limited or intimidated; 40 & higher (57 countries), Highly controlled, limited or intimidated.

¹⁰ "World Press Freedom Index." Reporters Without Borders: For Freedom of Information. Accessed July 6, 2016. <https://rsf.org/en/ranking>.

¹¹ "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2015 Ireland." U.S Department of State. Accessed July 6, 2016. <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/253071.pdf>.

¹² Ibid. U.S. Department of State.

¹³ "Ireland." International Religious Freedom Report for 2014. Accessed July 6, 2016. <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/238604.pdf>.

¹⁴ "Ireland 2015/2016." Amnesty International. Accessed July 6, 2016. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/europe-and-central-asia/ireland/report-ireland/>. See also Ibid. U.S. Department of State.

¹⁵ Freedom House is an internationally recognized NGO based in the U.S which documents and rates the quality of democratic practice in a given country. Freedom House splits its grading system between the two areas of civil and political rights in a country. On each scale, the Freedom House rating is 1-2.5 (free), 3-5.5 (partly free) and 6-7 (not free).

¹⁶ Freedom House's Civil Liberties index measures things such as a) freedom of expression and belief, b) associational and organizational rights, c) the rule of law, and d) personal autonomy and individual rights. Freedom House rates countries as 1-2.5 (free), 3-5.5 (partly free) and 6-7 (not free). Accessed July 6, 2016 <https://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world-2014/methodology#.VldwWzHF98F>

¹⁷ "Ireland." Freedom in the World 2016: Ireland. Accessed July 6, 2016. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2015/ireland>.

¹⁸ See footnote about the Freedom House organization above. The Freedom House Political Rights assessment looks at a) the electoral process, b) political pluralism and participation, and c) the functioning of government. Accessed July 6, 2016. <https://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world-2014/methodology#.VldwWzHF98F>

¹⁹ "Ireland." Freedom in the World 2016: Ireland. Accessed July 6, 2016. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2015/ireland>.

²⁰ Transparency International (TI) publishes a "Corruption Perceptions Index" annually, which is based on independent research and polling. The main categories of corruption are broken down within the index to provide particulars on issues including things such as perceptions of corruption, control of corruption, and financial secrecy. A country receives a score on 100; the higher the score, the less corrupt the society. The CJPME foundation has classified them into categories as follows:

80-100 (11 countries): Very limited corruption; 60-79 (27 countries): Limited corruption; 40-59 (41 countries): Some corruption; 20-39 (80 countries): Highly corrupt; corrupt;co0-19 (15 countries): Extremely corrupt

²¹ "Ireland." Corruption by Country. Accessed July 6, 2016. <https://www.transparency.org/country/#IRL>.

²² "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2015 Ireland." U.S Department of State. Accessed July 6, 2016. <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/253071.pdf>.

²³ This metric is based on the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Index. 0.00 denotes inequality between the sexes, and 1.00 denotes fully equality between the sexes. This index looks at four subdomains: economic participation and opportunity; educational attainment; health and survival; and political empowerment. Each country is given a percentage score; the higher the percentage, the better the protections. The CJPME Foundation classed the percentages as follows: 80-100% (5 countries): Almost equal rights; 70-79% (60 countries): Somewhat unequal rights; 0-69% (77 countries): Very unequal rights

²⁴ "Ireland." World Economic Forum. Accessed July 6, 2016. <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2015/economies/#economy=IRL>.

²⁵ This metric is based on the KidsRights Index Overall Score. This index has five subdomains: life expectancy and maternal mortality; health; education; protection; and child rights environment. Each country is given a percentage score; the higher the percentage, the better the protections. KidsRights classes the countries according to these percentages, and the CJPME Foundation has given each class a term as follows: 70-100% (77 countries): Protected; 60-70% (29 countries): Somewhat protected; 45-50% (33 countries): Slightly vulnerable; 30-45% (12 countries): Highly vulnerable; Lower than 30% (11 countries): Extremely vulnerable

²⁶ "The KidsRights Index: Overall Ranking." The KidsRights Index. Accessed July 6, 2016. <http://www.kidsrightsindex.org/>

²⁷ "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2015 Ireland." U.S Department of State. Accessed July 6, 2016. <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/253071.pdf>.

²⁸ Ibid. U.S Department of State.

²⁹ "ILGA World Map." International Lesbian Gay and Intersex Association. January 1, 2014. Accessed July 6, 2016. <http://ilga.org/>. See also Ibid. U.S Department of State.

³⁰ ILGA, the International, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association, was founded in 1978 on the principle of highlighting state sponsored homophobia where it exists around the world. ILGA annually publishes a map with an accompanying report on sexual and gender based harassment, which focuses on both the legal and non-legal acts of state sponsored discrimination.

³¹ "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2015 Ireland." U.S Department of State. Accessed July 6, 2016. <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/253071.pdf>.

³² Ibid. U.S Department of State.

³³ Ibid. U.S Department of State.

³⁴ Ibid. U.S Department of State. See also a well-done Wikipedia comparison of wage, income and work week metrics across countries at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_minimum_wages_by_country

³⁵ "Global Employment Trends." International Labour Organization. Accessed July 6, 2016. http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/multimedia/maps-and-charts/WCMS_233936/lang-en/index.htm.