

**PUBLIC SECTOR TRENDS**  
2022

28

STATE OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE SERIES

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## FOREWORD

This report examines trends in public sector development and is the thirteenth in our annual series. The intention is to help inform the debate on Ireland's public sector and public administration, and its role in Irish society.

Here we try to bring some evidence to bear on the important debate on the future shape, size and direction of the public sector. Using data gathered from a number of sources, information on the size and cost of the public sector, the quality of public administration, efficiency and performance, and levels of trust and confidence is presented in a simple but rigorous manner.

In the *State of the Public Service* research series, we seek to provide evidence-informed research and commentary on key aspects of contemporary Irish public administration. The authors of these reports bring their considerable expertise and practical knowledge to the topics selected to provide evidence, insights and recommendations to support future development. Our aim is that these reports will not only inform, but also challenge current thinking about how the Irish public service performs. We intend that these short research reports will be of relevance and use not only to public servants, but also to policy makers and the wider public.

Helen Brophy  
Director General  
Institute of Public Administration

## SELECTED FINDINGS

### The size, cost and inputs of the public sector

- Average government spending per person was €21,134 per head in 2021. This is up significantly from 2019, reflecting the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- The public sector accounts for about 14.4 per cent of the labour force in 2022, down from 15.6 per cent in 2021. This is towards the lower end of European levels.
- Spending on public service pay and pensions has increased each year since 2014. Spending stands at almost €24.5bn in 2022.
- Applicants from within the civil service continue to fill nearly all top-level civil service posts: 85 per cent in 2021. This despite just over 50 per cent of all applicants coming from outside the civil service, with 30 per cent coming from the private sector.
- The proportion of top-level posts filled by women has increased significantly in recent years.
- The quality and efficiency of public administration
- Just under 60 per cent of all people surveyed said that the provision of public services in Ireland was good. This was an improvement of 10 per cent on 2021, but is still a lower level than in many European countries.
- People in Ireland have a high expectation compared to other European countries that applications for government benefits or services will be treated fairly.
- Ireland ranks highest amongst European countries surveyed with regard to people feeling they can easily find information about administrative procedures.
- People in Ireland are less likely than others to believe that public services would improve if people complained.
- Individual use of the internet to interact with public authorities in Ireland is very high by European standards.

## Sectoral performance

### Education

- Irish students score well in reading with socio-economic background being less of an influence than in many European countries.
- Ireland's executives perceive the primary and secondary education system relatively highly in terms of it meeting the needs of the economy.

### Health

- Ireland performs well compared to most European countries with regard to life expectancy at birth (82.6 years) and healthy life expectancy at birth (66.2 years).
- Ireland shows a low level of length of stay in hospitals (5.8 days in 2018), suggestive of a relatively high level of efficiency.

### Environment

- Irish responses to an EU survey indicate that climate change is considered the most serious issue facing the world.
- A global environmental index indicates that Ireland's performance in the areas of climate change policy and ecosystem vitality policy is below the EU average.

## Trust, satisfaction and confidence in public administration

- Trust in public institutions in Ireland is comparatively high compared to other European countries.
- Trust in local authorities has risen above the European average and counter to the general European trend in 2022.
- While citizen satisfaction with the education system is above the European average, satisfaction with healthcare is below the European average.
- Complaints to Ombudsman offices increased sharply in 2021: 9,046 complaints in 2021, an increase of just over 25 per cent on the 2020 figure.





## 1. INTRODUCTION

There are no clear or agreed definitions for comparative ranking of public administrations. However, there is widespread agreement that a number of elements should be included in any assessment:

- *The size, cost and inputs of the public sector.* While size of the public sector, its cost and its inputs are not the sole or even main determinants of good public administration, nevertheless in terms of value for money in the delivery of public services, keeping check on the size, cost and other inputs of the public sector and public service is an important consideration.
- *The quality and efficiency of public administration.* Public administration includes policy-making, policy legislation and management of the public sector. Such dimensions of public administration are frequently measured by subjective indicators of quality, which give a sense of how good the public administration is. There is also an onus on public administration to deliver services efficiently.
- *Sectoral performance.* The delivery of social, economic and environmental outcomes in an efficient manner is central to an effective public administration.
- *Trust, satisfaction and confidence in public administration.* The public ultimately must have trust, satisfaction and confidence in the public administration of a country if it is to be effective.

In this study, we examine indicators for each of these four elements of public administration. Where possible and appropriate, data is included for other European countries, in order to enable comparisons. In addition, where data are available, we have provided trend data going back over the last decade. The intention is to provide a snapshot of trends in public administration performance in Ireland, to highlight where we are doing well, what challenges are present, and where improvements can be made.

In a number of charts, as well as showing Ireland's rating relative to the European Union (EU) plus the UK averages, the top ranked and bottom ranked country as at the time of the most recent data gathering are included for comparative purposes.

In its style and content, the format for the report, which has remained largely unchanged since 2010, drew on a number of efforts to benchmark and compare public sector efficiency and performance. These

include a European Central Bank (ECB) international comparison of public sector efficiency<sup>1</sup>, a study by the Netherlands Social and Cultural Planning Office (SCP) of comparative public sector performance<sup>2</sup>, the World Bank governance indicators project<sup>3</sup>, the OECD Government at a Glance project<sup>4</sup>, and an IPA study comparing public administrations<sup>5</sup>.

Climate change and environmental degradation represent significant existential threats to how we all live. The European Green Deal sets out to address these challenges, and how we tackle these challenges here in Ireland will also have a significant bearing on how successful we are in delivering social and economic outcomes which are both effective and sustainable. For this 2022 report we have therefore included some new indicators to try and assess performance across climate and the broader environment.

### A word of caution about data limitations

The data presented here should be interpreted with great care. First, there is the issue of whether the indicators used to represent public administration provision and quality really captures what public service is about. Indicators, by their nature, only give a partial picture. Second, much of the international comparative data in this report is qualitative data derived from opinion surveys. Some of this survey data comprises small-scale samples of opinion from academics, managers and experts in the business community. The survey data is thus limited in terms of both its overall reliability and the fact that some surveys represent the views of limited sections of the community. Third, the point scores arrived at on some indicators (for example, on a scale from 1–10 for the IMD data and between –2.5 and +2.5 for the World Bank governance indicators) should not be interpreted too strictly, as there are margins of error associated with these estimates. Fourth, changes over short periods should be viewed cautiously. Many of the indicators assessed represent 'snapshots' at one particular point in time. Small shifts in annual ranking are not particularly meaningful.

In all, when interpreting the findings set out in this paper, these limitations should be borne in mind. In particular, small variations in scores should be interpreted cautiously. These may be no more than random variations to be expected given the data being used. What is of interest is to identify broad patterns and trends emerging from the data.

1 Afonso et al (2003)

2 Social Cultural and Planning Office (2004)

3 See <https://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/>

4 See <http://www.oecd.org/governance/govatag glance.htm>

5 Boyle (2007)

## 2. THE SIZE, COST AND INPUTS OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR

Here we present a range of indicators that show the size, cost and other inputs of the public sector and public service<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> In this study, the public service is defined as the public sector minus the commercial state-sponsored bodies.

## Government expenditure as a share of the economy in Ireland is below the EU average and decreased in 2021

FIGURE 1 GENERAL GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE AS SHARE OF GDP/GNI\*

Sources: Eurostat and Central Statistics Office.



- Internationally, a commonly used indicator of public spending in the economy is government expenditure as a percentage of GDP (gross domestic product).
- From 2011 to 2019, as spending reductions introduced by the government came into effect, and the economy recovered from the effects of the global financial crisis, expenditure as a percentage of GDP fell considerably below the European average.
- In recent years, the reliability of GDP data for Ireland for comparative purposes is open to question, due to the effects of the large scale of multinational company activity in Ireland<sup>7</sup>. In 2017, the Central Statistics Office developed a new indicator, GNI\*, or modified GNI (gross national income). Using this indicator, general government expenditure as a share of the economy is still below the European average.
- The effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on government spending and the economy is evident in the figures for 2020. Government expenditure as a percentage of GDP/GNI\* increased both in Ireland and across Europe. However, for 2021, Government expenditure as a percentage of GDP/GNI\* has fallen in Ireland and across the EU.

<sup>7</sup> John Fitzgerald (2016), Problems with the Irish National Accounts and Possible Solutions, Dublin: Central Statistics Office.

## Government expenditure per head of population is increasing

**FIGURE 2 GENERAL GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE PER HEAD OF POPULATION**

Source: Eurostat



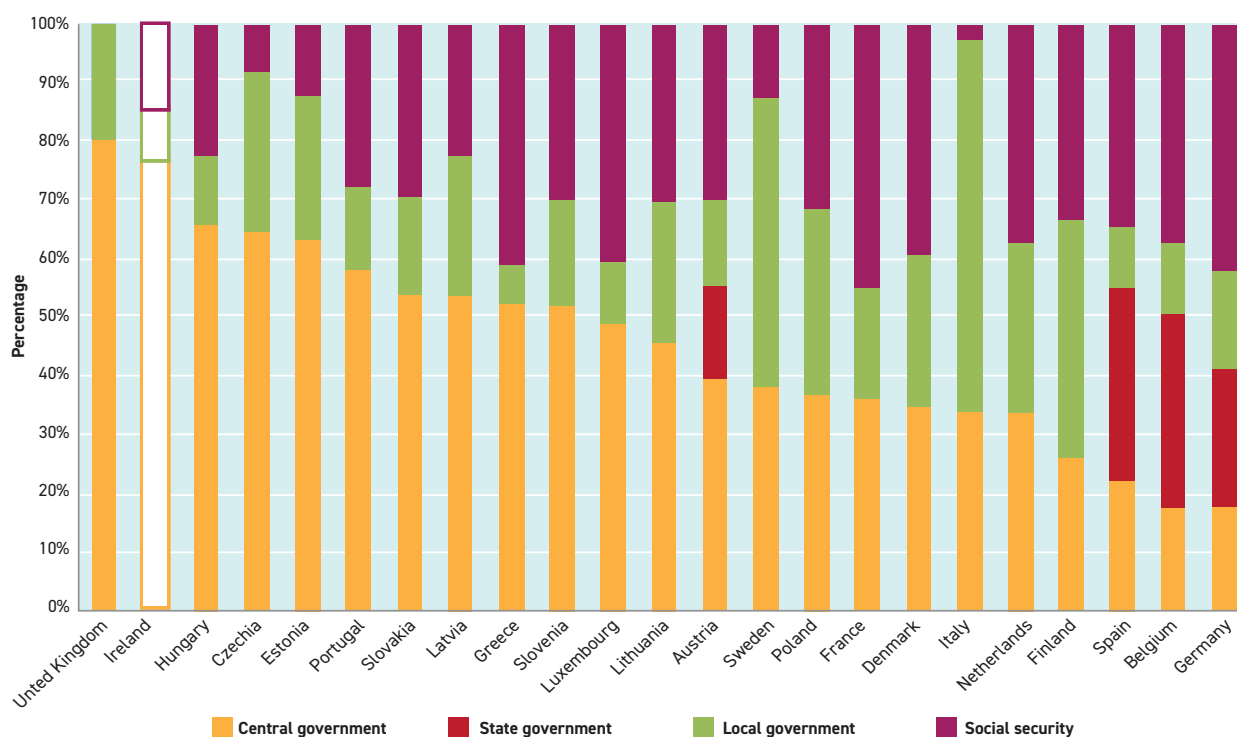
- Expenditure per head of population grew faster in Ireland than the EU average up to 2010 and then fell back somewhat.
- From 2013 to 2017 government expenditure per head remained relatively constant. It has been increasing gradually in recent years. Between 2019 and 2020 there was an increase of 18 per cent in government spending per person; the largest yearly increase in recent years. This notable increase in spending per person primarily shows the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- The expenditure per person in 2021 was €21,134 which represents a 2 per cent year on year increase.
- Government expenditure per person in Ireland in 2021 was the ninth highest in the EU27 (excluding Luxembourg). Denmark, shown on the chart, is one of the highest spenders on this indicator, while Bulgaria has the lowest level of government expenditure per head of population in the EU<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> Luxembourg has by far the highest level of general government expenditure per head of population, at €48,863 in 2021, but is atypical. Denmark is more representative of countries that have a high level of government spending per head of population.

## Irish government expenditure is one of the most centralised in Europe

**FIGURE 3 DISTRIBUTION OF GENERAL GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE ACROSS LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT 2021**

Source: OECD Government at a Glance yearly updates

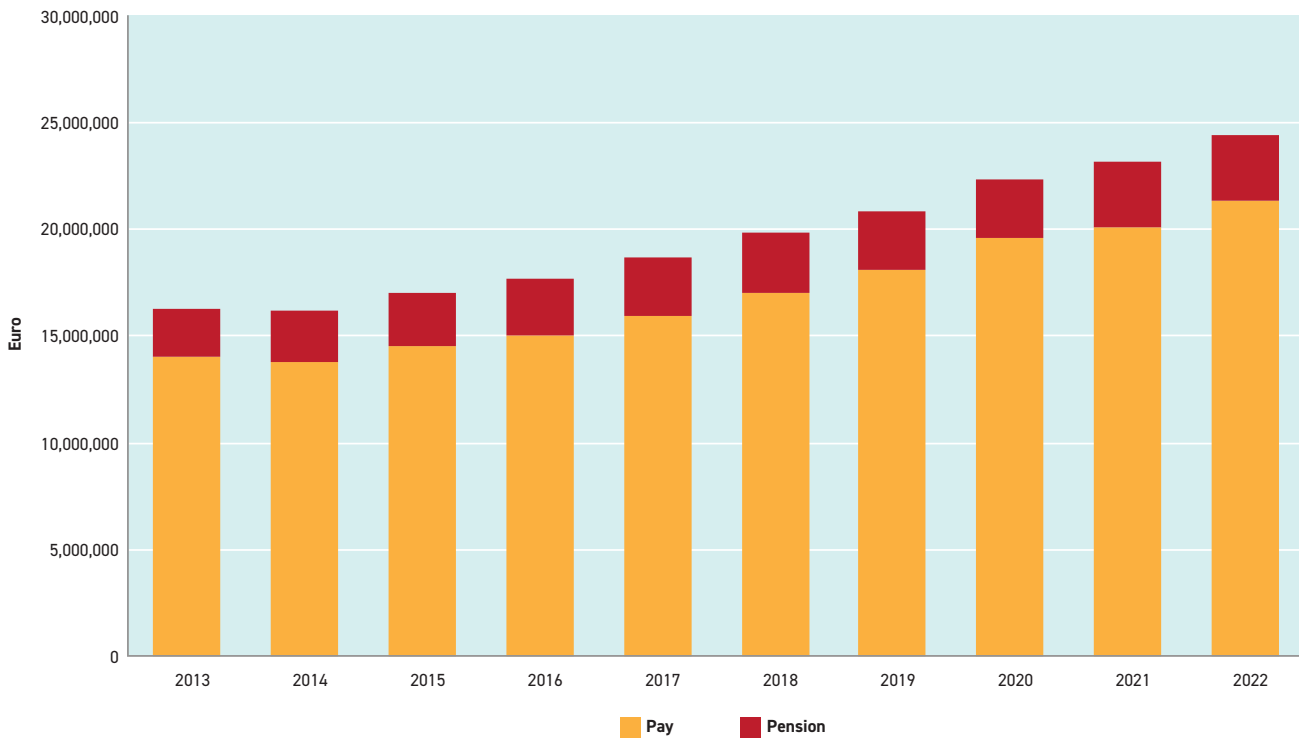


- The tasks of government are shared between different levels of government. The nature of this share-out varies markedly between countries.
- Ireland has a very high share of general government expenditure allocated at national level in the OECD in 2021, with 77 per cent of expenditure undertaken by central government.
- Towards the other extreme, in Denmark only a third of general government expenditure is the responsibility of central government, with local government being responsible for just over 60 per cent.

## Expenditure on public service pay and pensions continues to grow

**FIGURE 4 PUBLIC SERVICE PAY AND PENSIONS**

Source: Department of Public Expenditure and Reform Databank.

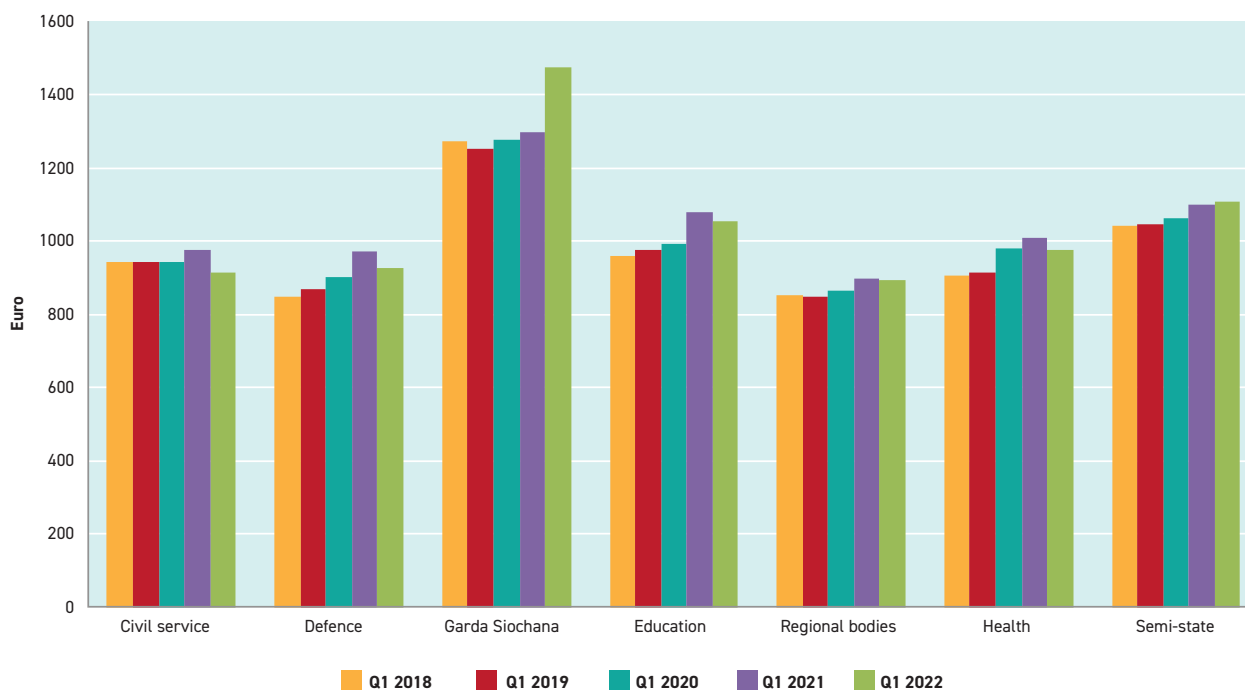


- The public service pay and pension bill reached €18.7bn in 2008. From 2008 to 2014, as cutbacks in numbers and pay introduced by the Government took effect, expenditure on public service pay and pensions decreased to €16.2bn in 2014.
- Spending on public service pay and pensions has increased each year since 2014. Spending stands at almost €24.5bn in 2022, its highest ever total.
- Pensions account for just over €3bn (13 per cent) of the total pay and pension bill in 2022.

## Average weekly earnings in the public sector fell for many sub sectors in 2022

**FIGURE 5 PUBLIC SECTOR AVERAGE WEEKLY EARNINGS**

Source: CSO. Figures are for Q1 each year.

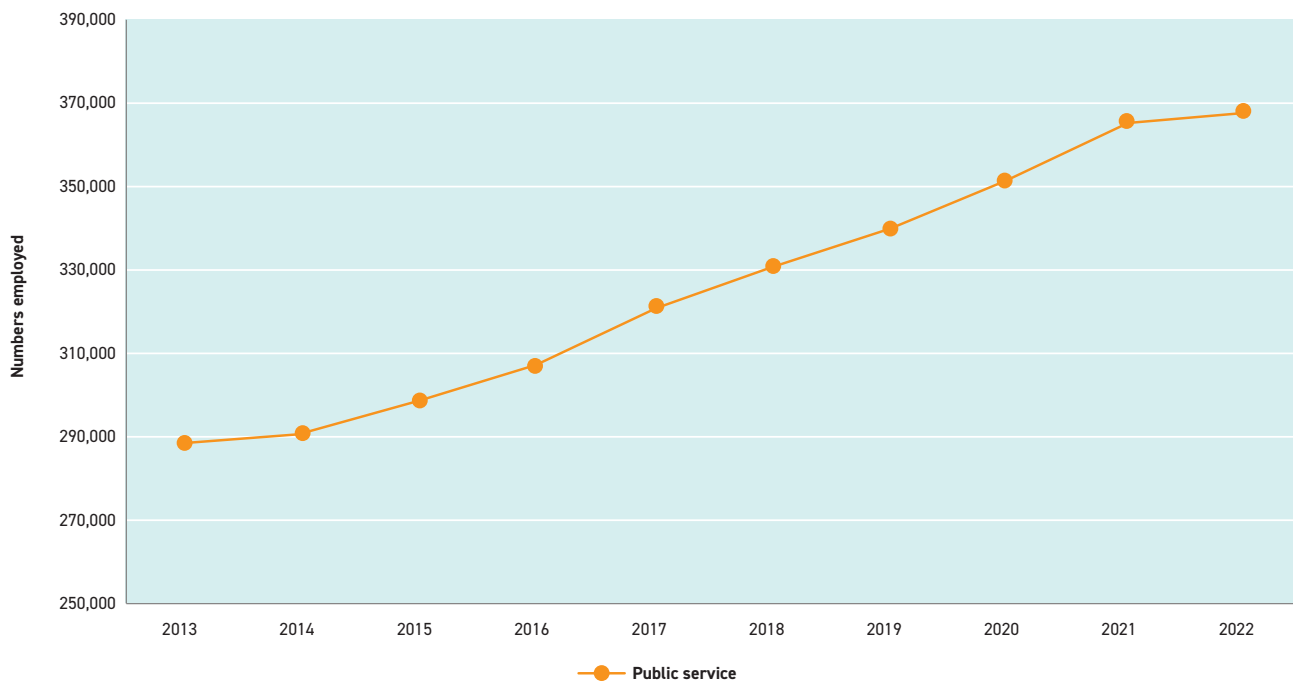


- These are gross earnings figures before deductions for PRSI, tax and other levies. The CSO note that this is particularly relevant to the public sector since March 2009 when the pension levy was introduced.
- Average weekly earnings fell in several subsectors for 2022, probably largely reflecting the impact of Covid-19; however, average earnings for An Garda Síochána increased by 13 per cent between 2021 and 2022.
- Overall, apart from for the civil service, average weekly earnings have increased between 2018 and 2022.

## There is a continuing trend of growth in the numbers employed in the public service

**FIGURE 6 NUMBERS EMPLOYED IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE**

Source: Department of Public Expenditure and Reform Databank<sup>9</sup>



- From its then peak in 2008, the total number of people employed in the public service dropped from 320,000 to 288,000 in 2013, a drop of 10 per cent.
- The number of people employed in the public service has risen since 2013, and there are now almost 25 per cent more employed than there were in 2013.
- In 2022, the numbers employed in the public service stood at 368,000.

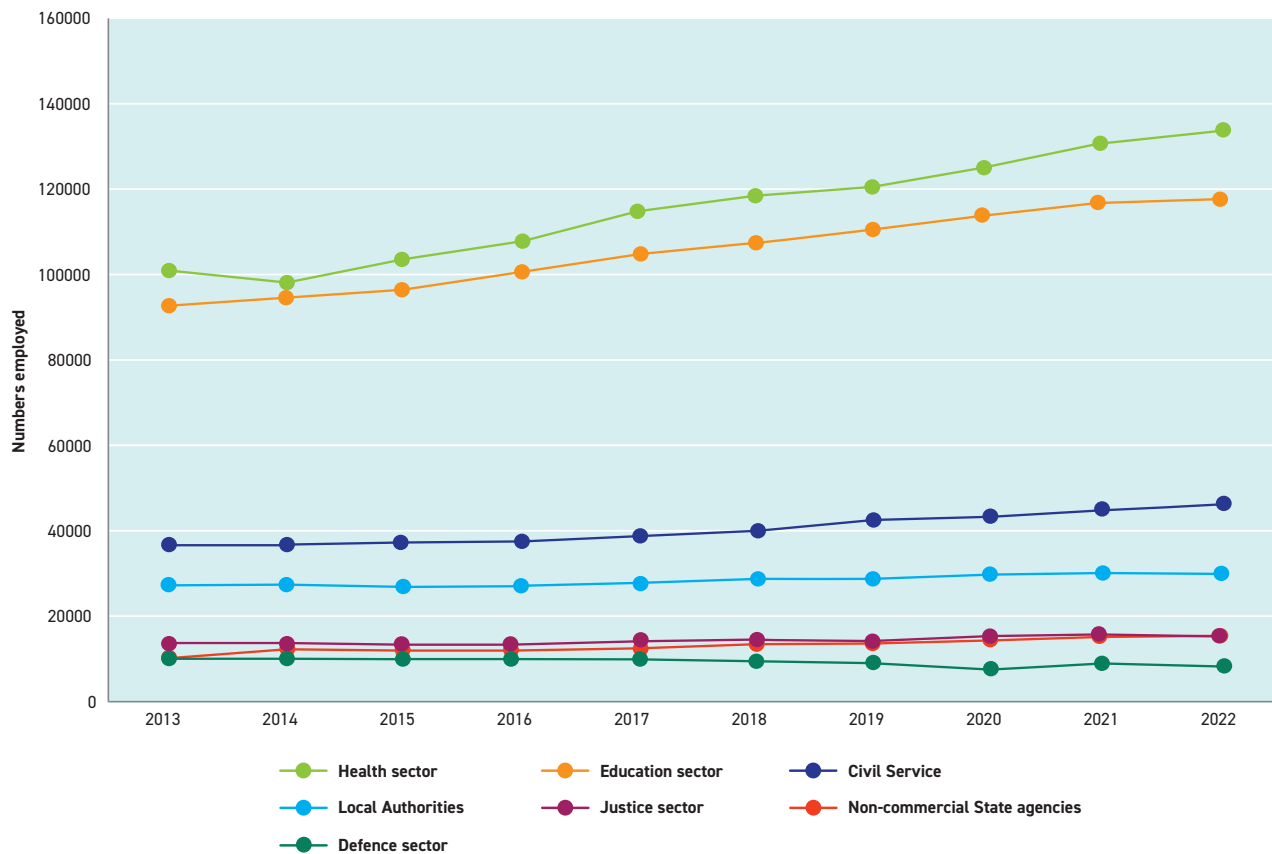
<sup>9</sup> Figures are for end of year, apart from 2021, which is for Q1. Figures are for full-time equivalents rather than actual numbers of people.



## The health and education sectors account for the vast majority of public service jobs

**FIGURE 7 PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYMENT BY SECTOR**

Source: Department of Public Expenditure and Reform Databank<sup>10</sup>



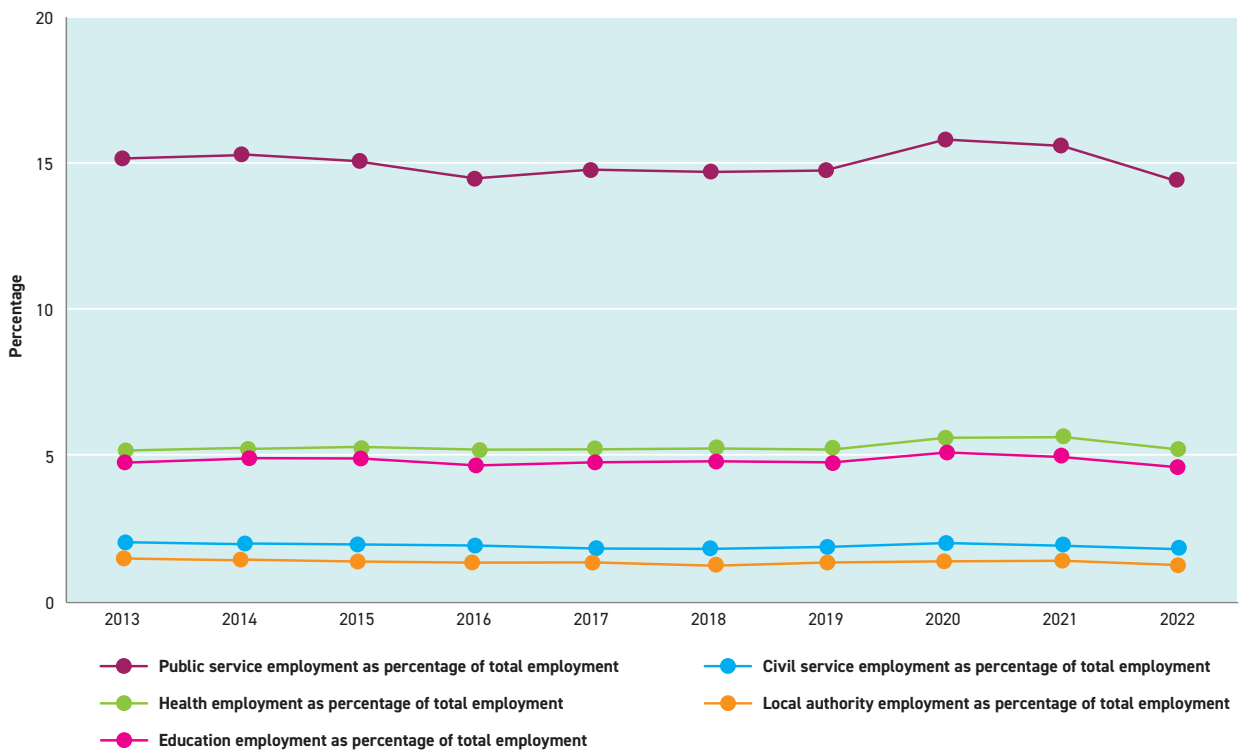
- 68 per cent of people employed in the public service work in either health or education. This is up from 66 per cent in 2013
- In 2022, there were approximately 134,000 people employed in the health sector and 117,000 people employed in the education sector.
- The defence and local authority sectors are the only sectors where employment remains lower than in was back in 2008, before the cutbacks arising from the global financial crisis.

<sup>10</sup> Figures are for end of year, apart from 2022 which is for Q1, the most recent available.

While numbers employed in the public service have increased over the last decade, as a proportion of the total workforce they have remained relatively constant but decreased in 2022

**FIGURE 8 PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYMENT AS PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL EMPLOYMENT**

Source: Department of Public Expenditure and Reform Databank<sup>11</sup>, CSO



- Over the past decade, public service employment has generally remained around 15 per cent of total employment<sup>12</sup>. However, for 2022 the figure fell to 14.4 per cent from 15.6 per cent the previous year; this change probably reflects the strong employment growth in the private sector, and brings it back more in line with the situation pre pandemic.
- For 2022, 5.3 per cent of all those in employment are employed in the health sector, and 4.6 per cent in education. 1.8 per cent of those in employment are civil servants, and 1.2 per cent are in local authorities.

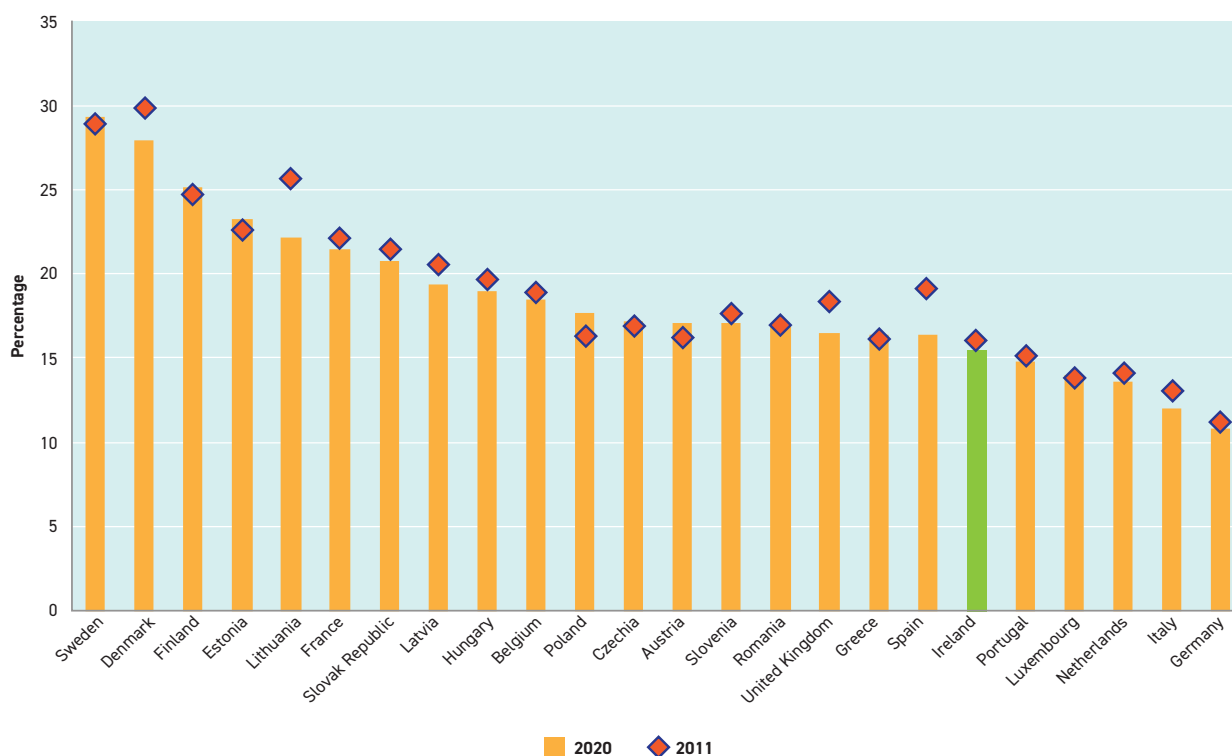
<sup>11</sup> Figures are for end of year, apart from 2022 which is for Q1, the most recent available.

<sup>12</sup> Much of the public service data provided refers to full-time equivalents rather than actual numbers of people. So public service employment as a percentage of total employment is in reality larger than that reported. The size of the difference is unknown, though Foley (2009, p.86) estimated it at around 1 per cent in 2007.

## Employment in government as a percentage of the labour force remains at the lower end of European practice

FIGURE 9 EMPLOYMENT IN GENERAL GOVERNMENT AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL EMPLOYMENT

Source: OECD Government at a Glance 2021

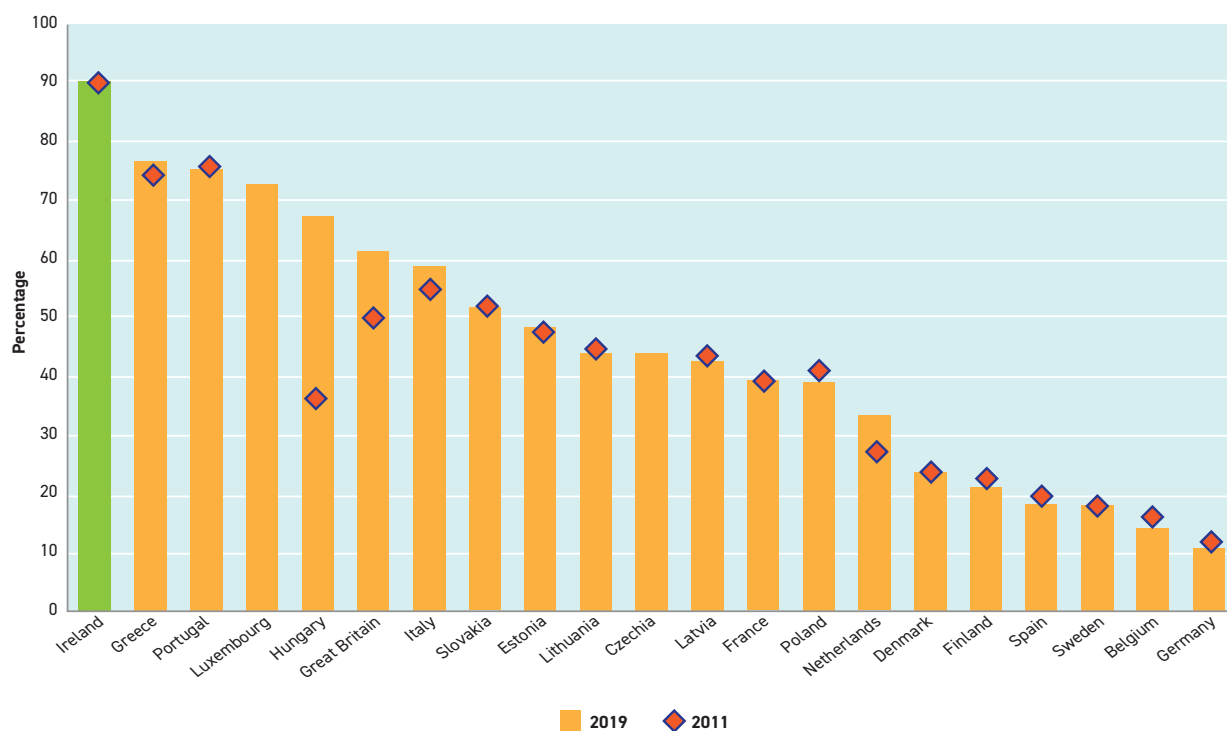


- The size of government employment varies significantly amongst European countries, from 29.3 per cent of the labour force in Sweden to 10.8 per cent in Germany in 2020.
- In Ireland in 2020, employment in general government services accounted for 15.5 per cent of the labour force, towards the lower end of countries surveyed. This proportion has remained steady in recent years.

## Ireland has the highest proportion of staff employed at the central level in Europe

FIGURE 10 PERCENTAGE OF GENERAL GOVERNMENT STAFF EMPLOYED AT THE CENTRAL LEVEL 2019

Source: OECD Government at a Glance 2021

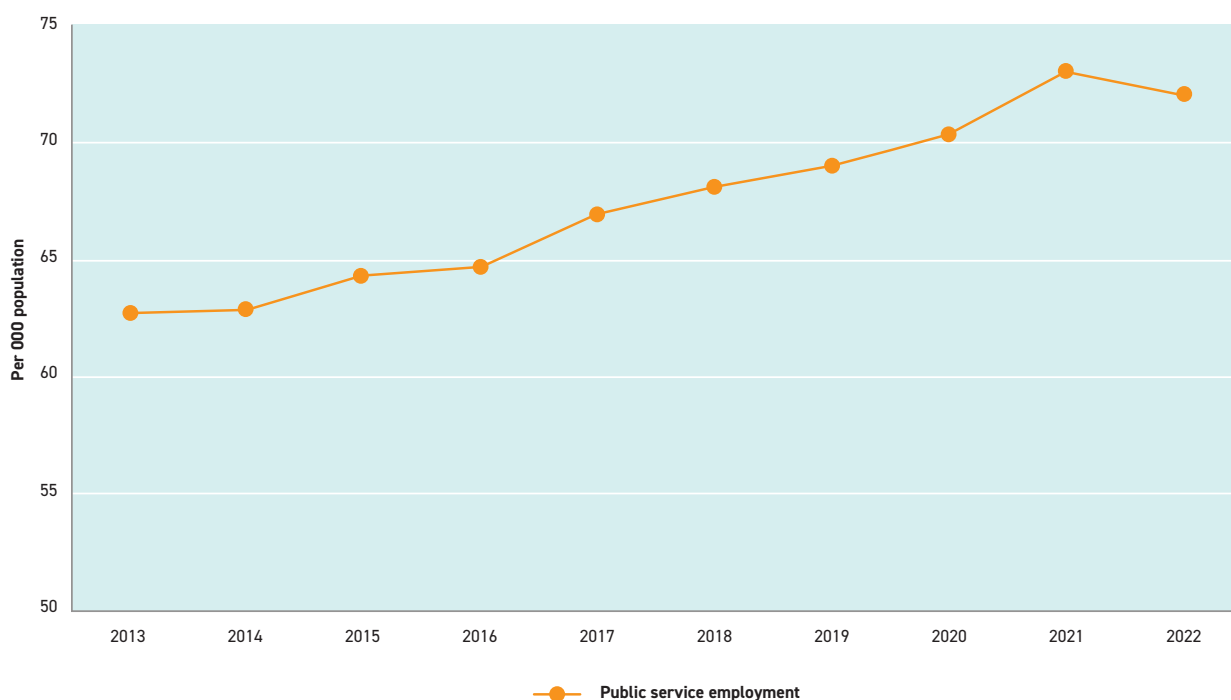


- Between 2011 and 2019, the percentage of general government staff employed at the central level remained relatively stable in most countries.
- Ireland has the highest percentage of general government staff employed at the central level, as opposed to at state, regional or local government level, at 90 per cent. This reflects the highly centralised nature of Irish government.

## Public service employment relative to the total population decreased slightly in 2022

**FIGURE 11 PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYMENT PER 000 POPULATION**

Source: Department of Public Expenditure and Reform Databank<sup>13</sup>, CSO



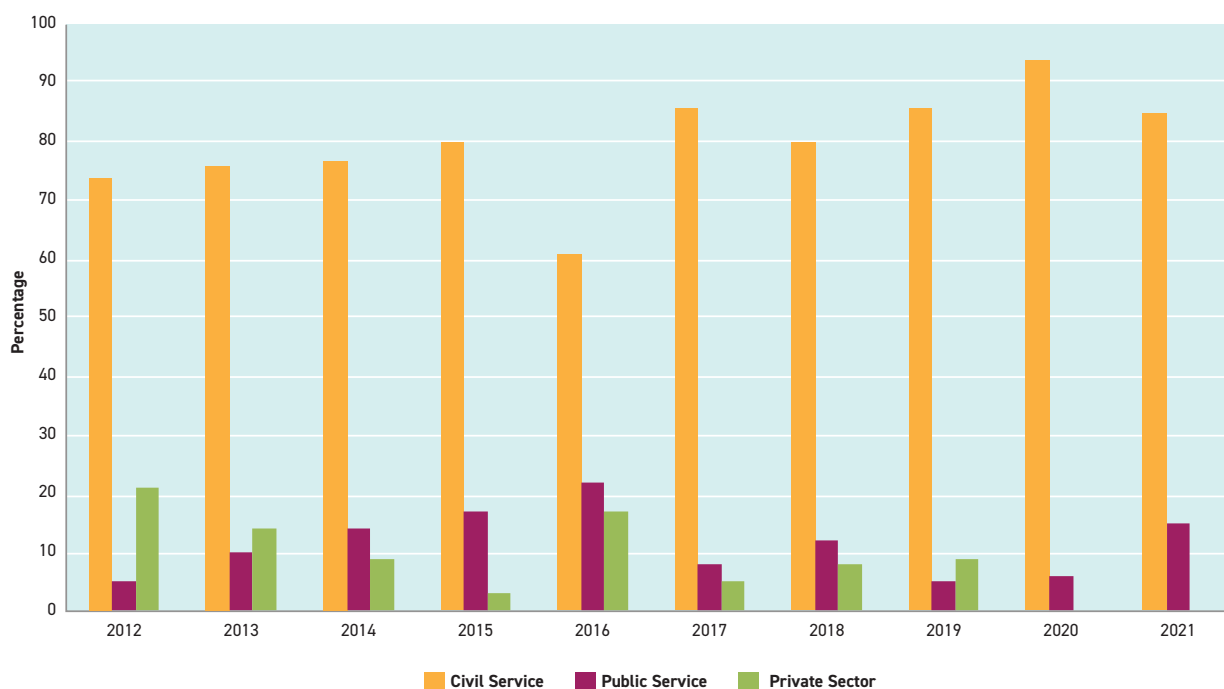
- While public service employment levels have been changing, the population has continued to increase.
- Public service employment relative to the population was relatively stable at between 70 and 73 public service employees per 000 population up to 2008, but dropped rapidly from 2008 until 2013 when it was at 62.8 public service employees per 000 population.
- From 2013 to 2021 the number of public service employees per 000 population gradually increased, to 73 per 000 population.
- The number of public service employees per 000 population fell to 72.1 in 2022, a slight reduction on the 2021 figure.

<sup>13</sup> Figures are for end of year, apart from 2022 which is for Q1

## Applicants from within the civil service continue to fill nearly all top-level civil service posts

**FIGURE 12 PERCENTAGE OF SUCCESSFUL TOP LEVEL APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE (TLAC) CANDIDATES RECOMMENDED TO MINISTER/GOVERNMENT BY SECTOR**

Source: Top Level Appointments Committee (TLAC) Tenth Report to the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, 2021 Developments & Trends



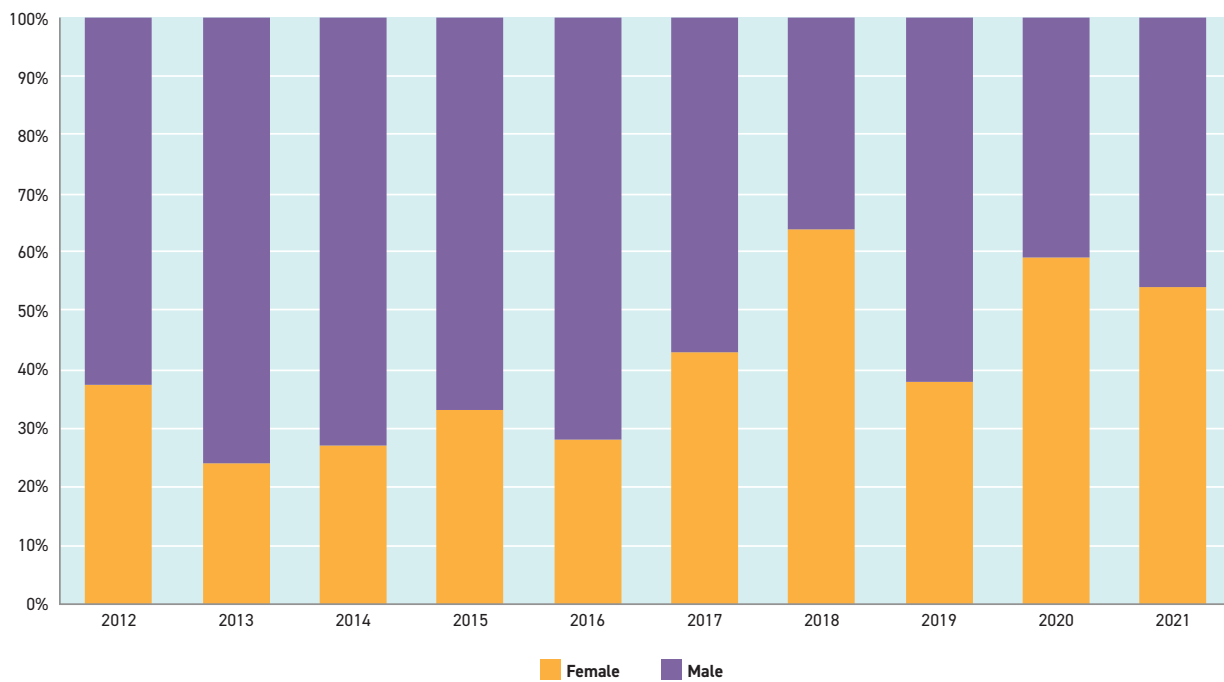
- Over 80 per cent of top-level appointments<sup>14</sup> have been filled by applicants from within the civil service in recent years.
- The proportion of top-level appointments filled by private sector applicants reached a high of 21 per cent in 2012 but has been lower each year since then. There have been no private sector appointments in the last two years.
- The proportion of top-level posts filled from the wider public service rose from 5 per cent in 2012 to 22 per cent in 2016, but has dropped back since then. It increased to 15 per cent in 2021.
- In 2021, 85 per cent of those recommended for employment came from the civil service, 15 per cent from the wider public service, and none from the private sector. This despite just over 50 per cent of all applicants coming from outside the civil service, with 30 per cent coming from the private sector.

<sup>14</sup> Top-level appointments covers the most senior positions in the civil service – at assistant secretary general level and upwards.

## Women have filled the majority of top-level posts in recent years

**FIGURE 13 TOP LEVEL APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE (TLAC) SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATES BY GENDER**

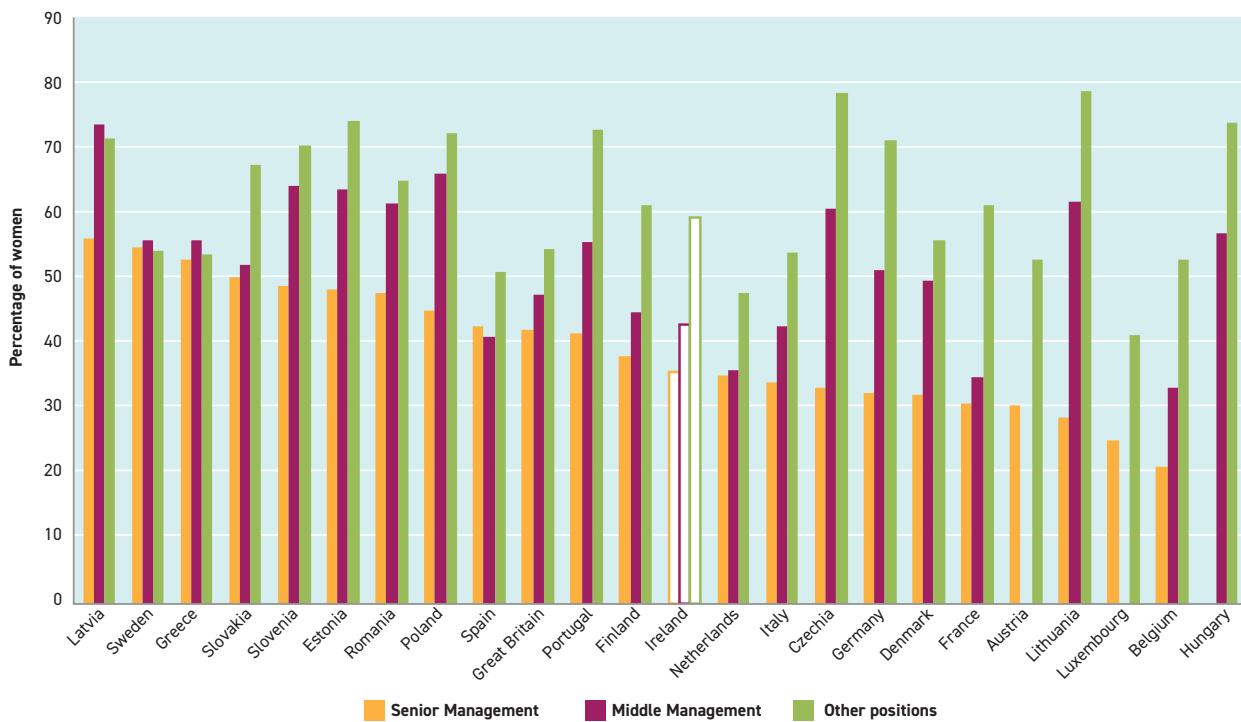
Source: Top Level Appointments Committee (TLAC) Tenth Report to the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, 2021 Developments & Trends



- The proportion of top-level posts filled by women varied between roughly a quarter and a third of all posts up to 2017.
- There has been a notable increase in recent years in the proportion of top-level posts filled by women, with 64 per cent recorded in 2018, the first time this figure went over 50% and after a drop to 38 per cent in 2019, it increased again to 59 per cent in 2020, and dropped back to 54% in 2021.
- There has been a notable increase in recent years in the proportion of top-level posts filled by women, with a figure of 64 per cent recorded in 2018, the first time this figure has gone over 50 per cent. After a drop to 38 per cent in 2019, it increased again to 59 per cent in 2020, and dropped back to 54 per cent in 2021.

The proportion of women in management positions in central government in Ireland is around the average for Europe

**FIGURE 14 GENDER EQUALITY BY POSITIONS IN CENTRAL GOVERNMENT 2020**  
Source: OECD Government at a Glance 2021



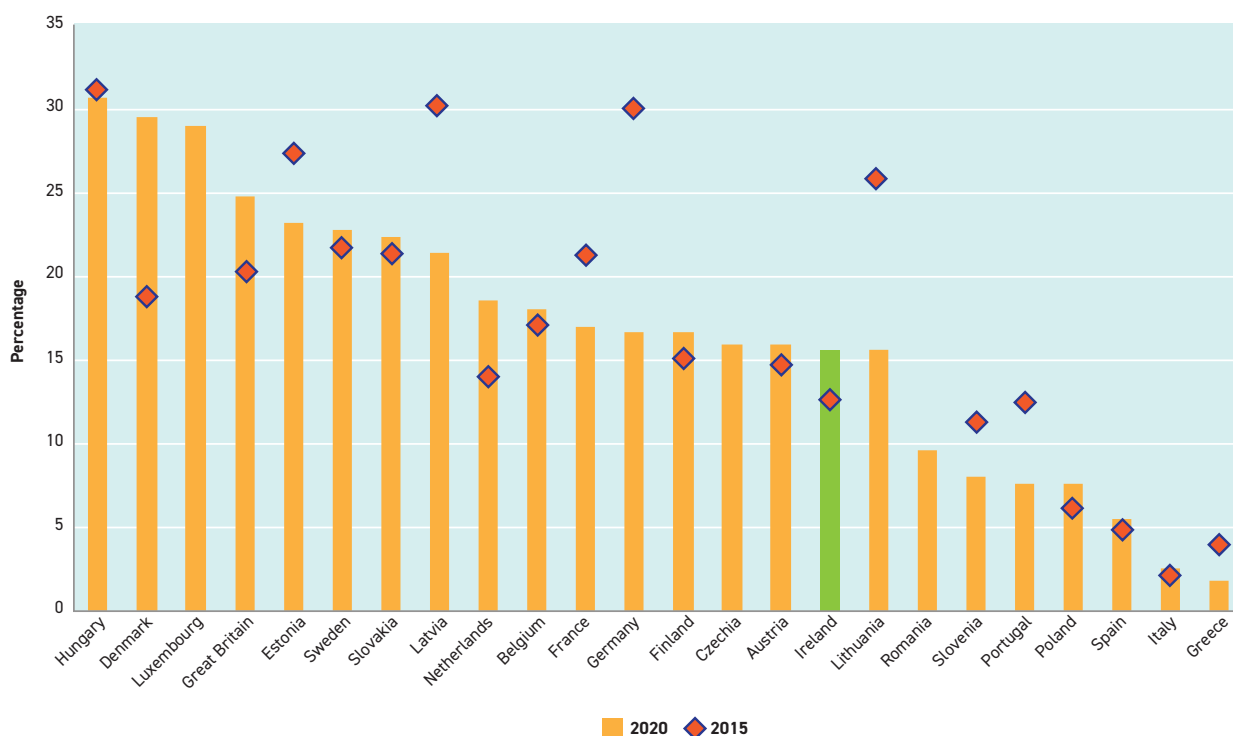
- Equal representation of women and men in the public sector is a key indicator of progress towards gender equality and diversity.
- The share of women in senior and middle management positions in central government in Ireland is at around the average for Europe. For example, women fill just over one-third of senior management positions. This is some way below the level of just over half of positions filled by women in Latvia, Sweden and Greece.



## Irish central government has a low proportion of younger workers

FIGURE 15 PERCENTAGE OF CENTRAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES AGED 18-34

Source: OECD Government at a Glance 2021

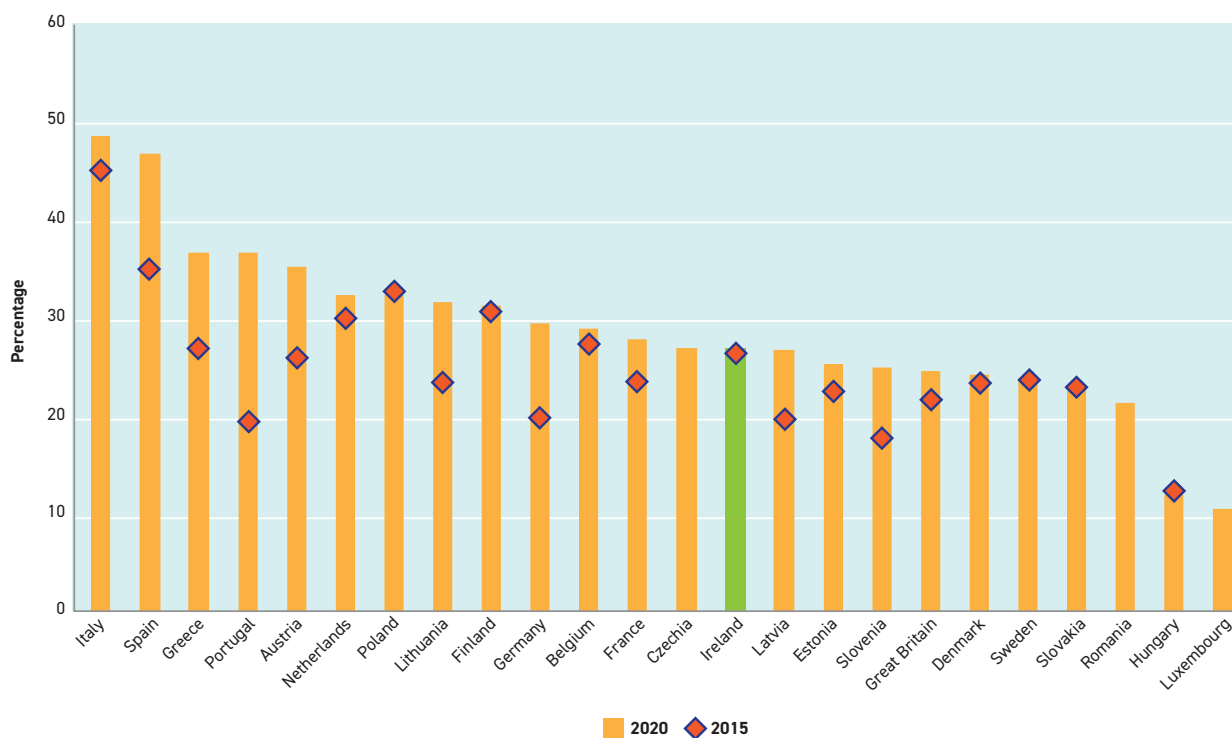


- The age profile of the central government workforce can determine workforce management challenges.
- Ireland has a relatively low proportion of young central government employees. 16 per cent of employees were aged 18-34 in 2020. This is up slightly from 2015 when the percentage was just under 13 per cent. This low proportion of younger workers to some extent reflects the impact of the restrictions on employment introduced in the aftermath of the global financial crisis, which have only been eased in recent years.

## Ireland has a relatively low share of central government employees aged 55 or older

**FIGURE 16 PERCENTAGE OF CENTRAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES AGED 55 OR OLDER**

Source: OECD Government at a Glance 2021

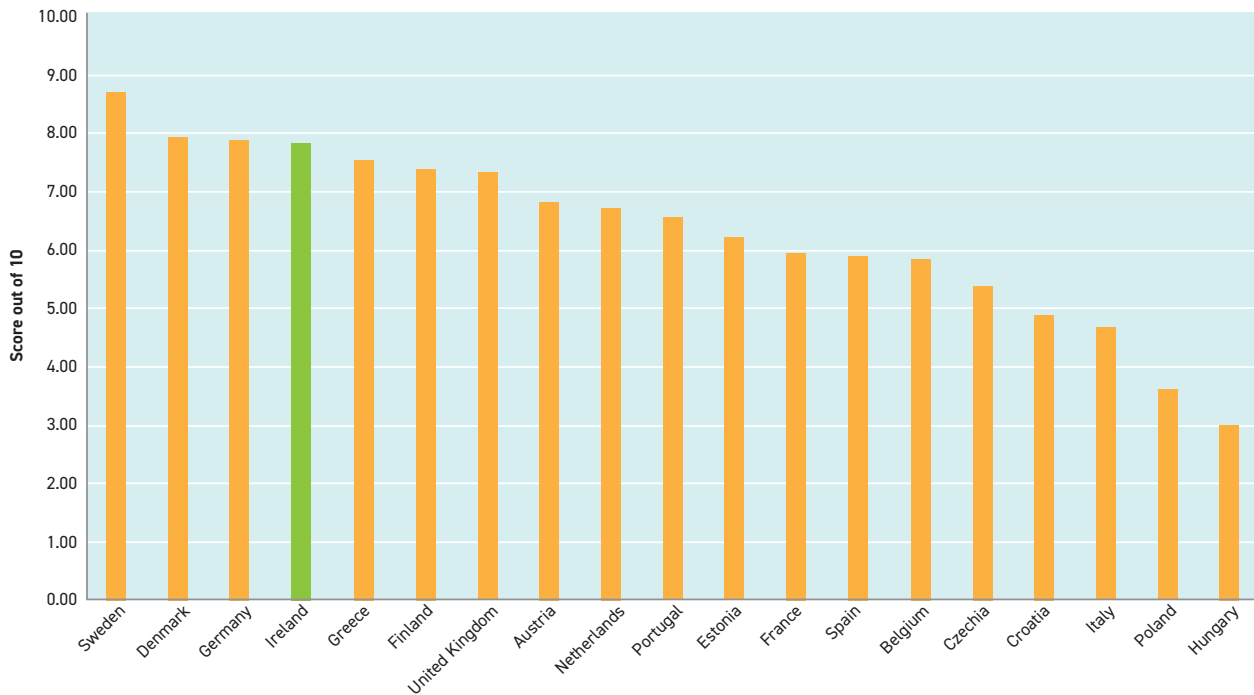


- The age profile of the central government workforce can determine workforce management challenges.
- Ireland has a relatively low share of workers (27 per cent) in central government aged 55 or older in 2020. This share remains the same as it was in 2015. To some extent, this relatively low proportion reflects Ireland's younger age profile in European terms, but also the lingering effects of the global financial crisis, when older employees were offered incentives to leave before their retirement age.

Ireland's governance was seen as relatively resilient in the context of the Covid-19 crisis compared to other European countries

**FIGURE 17 RESILIENCE OF GOVERNANCE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE COVID-19 CRISIS**

Source: Bertelsmann Stiftung Sustainable Governance Indicators 2021 special study



- In assessing the resilience of governance arrangements, the Bertelsmann Stiftung institute scored countries against several criteria under three headings: executive preparedness, executive response, and resilience of executive accountability.
- Ireland was seen to perform well, with a score of 7.83 out of 10, behind only Sweden, Denmark and Germany.

### **3. THE QUALITY AND EFFICIENCY OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND PUBLIC SERVICES**

An indicator of the quality of public administration, based on work undertaken by the Social and Cultural Planning Office (2004) in the Netherlands and taken further by Boyle (2007) is used to assess the quality of public administration. Eight indicators derived from the International Institute for Management Development (IMD) executive opinion survey are combined to make up an aggregate public administration quality indicator (see Appendix 1 for details). It is complemented by two subsets of this indicator, one of which shows trends in perception about the application of traditional public service values in public administration, the other showing perceptions of the type of competitive and regulatory regime fostered by public administration.

These quality indicators are supplemented by a range of other indicators of aspects of quality and efficiency.

## Executives see the quality of Irish public administration as above the European average

**FIGURE 18 QUALITY OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION SCORE**

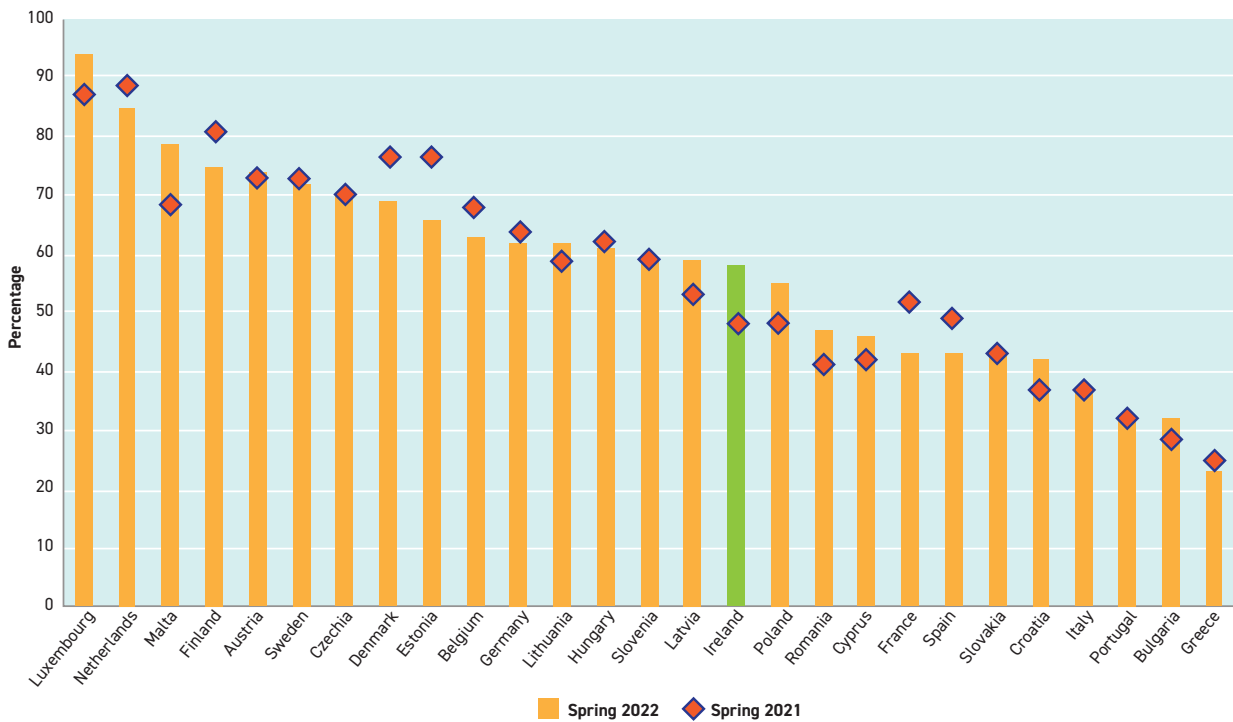
Source: IPA analysis based on IMD World Competitiveness yearbook data



- This quality indicator measures executives' opinions of the quality of public administration as assessed by a range of indicators covering issues such as the existence of bribery and corruption, and transparency of decision making (see Appendix 1 for full list).
- After falling slightly over the previous two years, Ireland's score on the quality of public administration index stabilised in 2022. Ireland came fifth of the EU27+UK on this indicator in 2022.

The provision of public services in Ireland is rated less well than in many European countries

FIGURE 19 TOTAL POSITIVE FEELINGS TOWARDS - PROVISION OF PUBLIC SERVICE  
Source: Eurobarometer

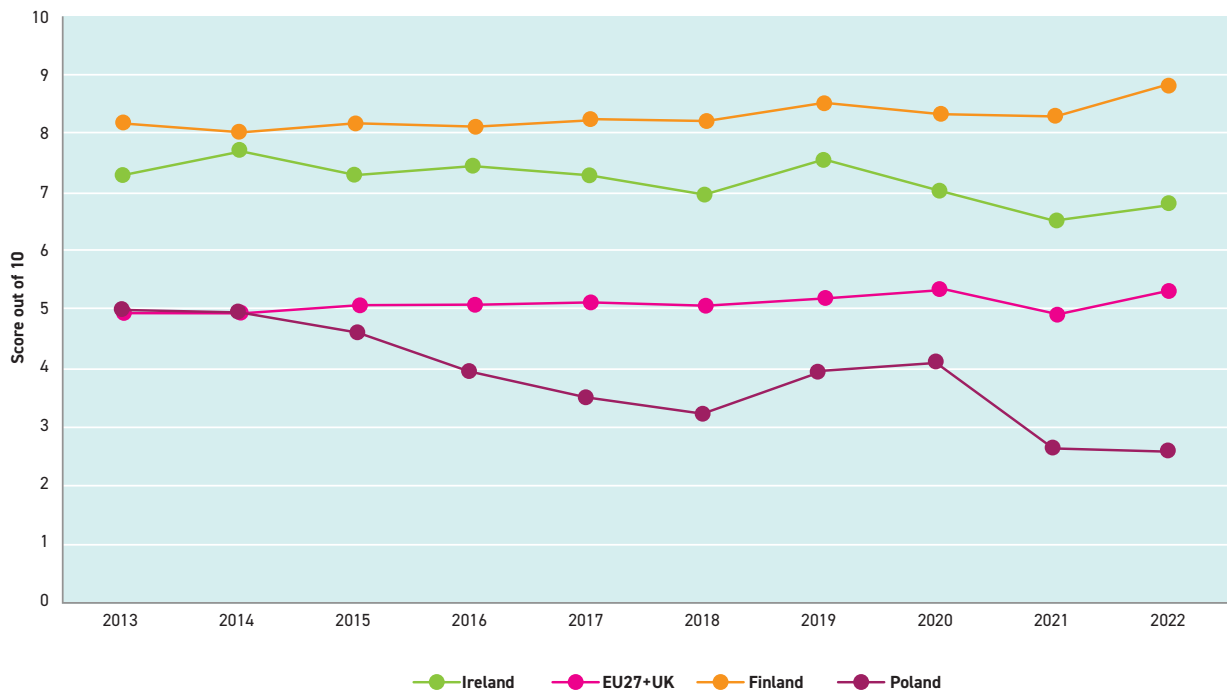


- In spring 2022, just under 60 per cent of all people surveyed said that the provision of public services in Ireland was good. This was an improvement of 10 per cent on 2021.
- Luxembourg and the Netherlands receive the highest rating, at 94 per cent and 85 per cent respectively rating public service provision as good.

## Irish maintenance of traditional public service values is above the European average

**FIGURE 20 TRADITIONAL PUBLIC SERVICE VALUES INDICATOR (TPSVI)**

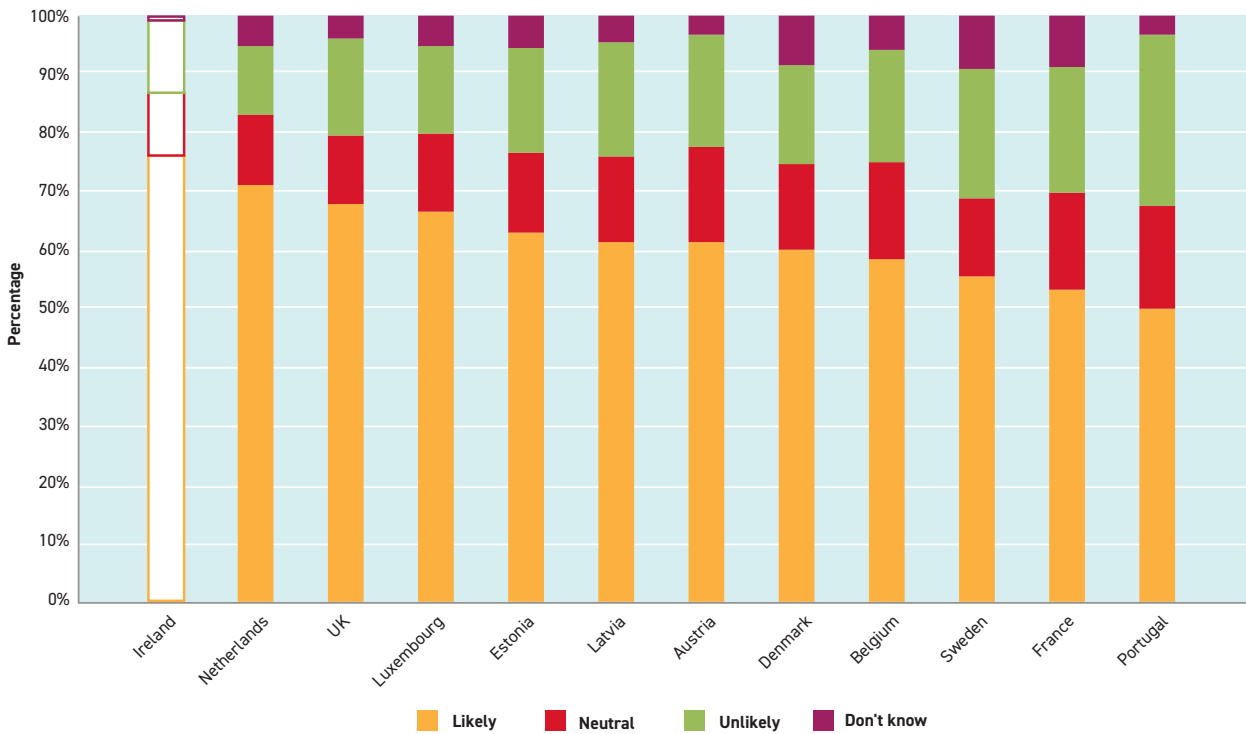
Source: IPA analysis based on IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook data



- A sub-set of the quality of public administration indicators can be used to assess what might be termed the 'traditional' public service values such as independence, freedom from bribery and corruption, transparency, reliability and administrative fairness.
- Ireland's ranking on this traditional public service values indicator has generally been well above the EU average. Ireland ranked seventh of the EU27+UK on this indicator in 2022. Its score improved after having reduced slightly in recent years.
- Finland, Denmark and Sweden score highest on this indicator.

**People in Ireland have a high expectation that applications for government benefits or services will be treated fairly**

**FIGURE 21 EXPECTATION THAT APPLICATION FOR GOVERNMENT BENEFIT OR SERVICE WOULD BE TREATED FAIRLY**  
Source: OECD Trust Survey 2022



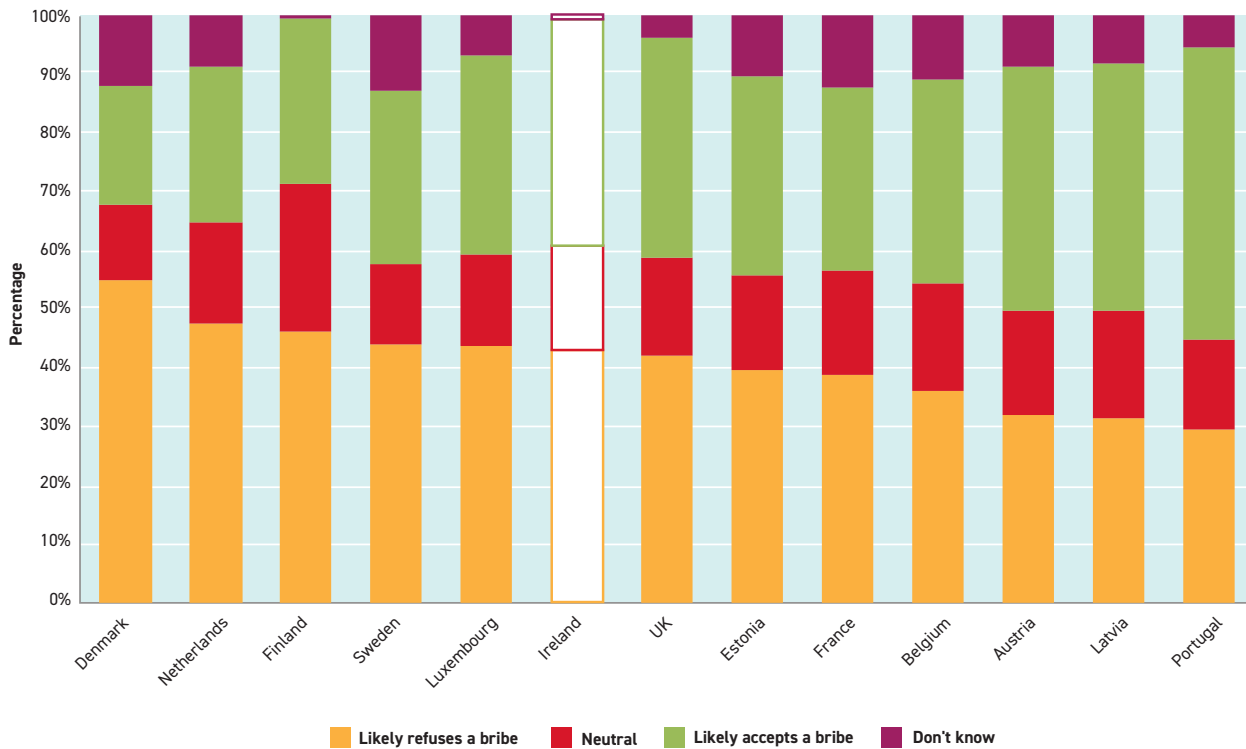
- The OECD published a report based on a survey of the drivers of trust in public institutions in 2022.
- Ireland had the highest expectations amongst the European countries surveyed that an application for a government benefit or service would be treated fairly. 76 per cent felt that such an application was likely to be treated fairly.



## People in Ireland are relatively likely to think that public employees will accept bribes

FIGURE 22 LIKELIHOOD THAT A PUBLIC EMPLOYEES WOULD ACCEPT A BRIBE

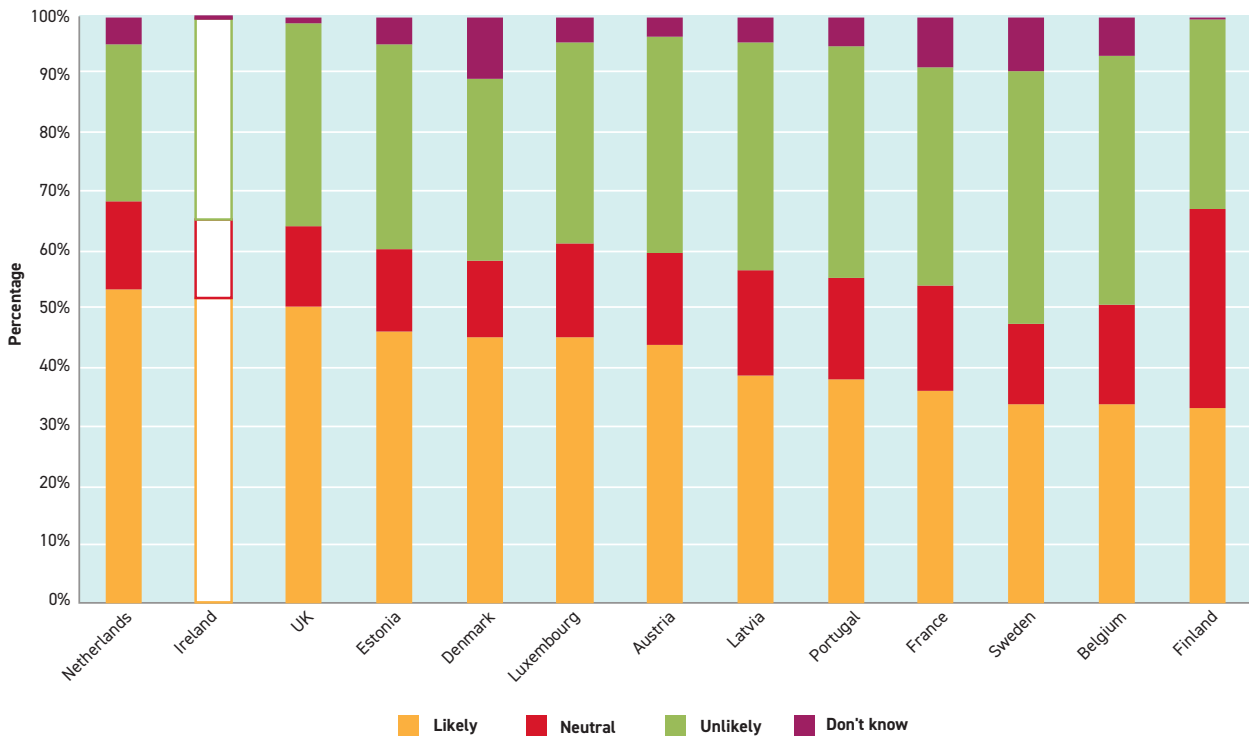
Source: OECD Trust Survey 2022



- The OECD published a report based on a survey of the drivers of trust in public institutions in 2022.
- 39 per cent of people surveyed felt that a public employee in Ireland was likely to accept a bribe. This was the fourth highest amongst the countries surveyed.

**People in Ireland feel more likely than most that they have opportunities to voice their views on local government decisions**

**FIGURE 23 OPPORTUNITY TO VOICE VIEWS ABOUT LOCAL GOVERNMENT DECISION AFFECTING THE COMMUNITY**  
Source: OECD Trust Survey 2022

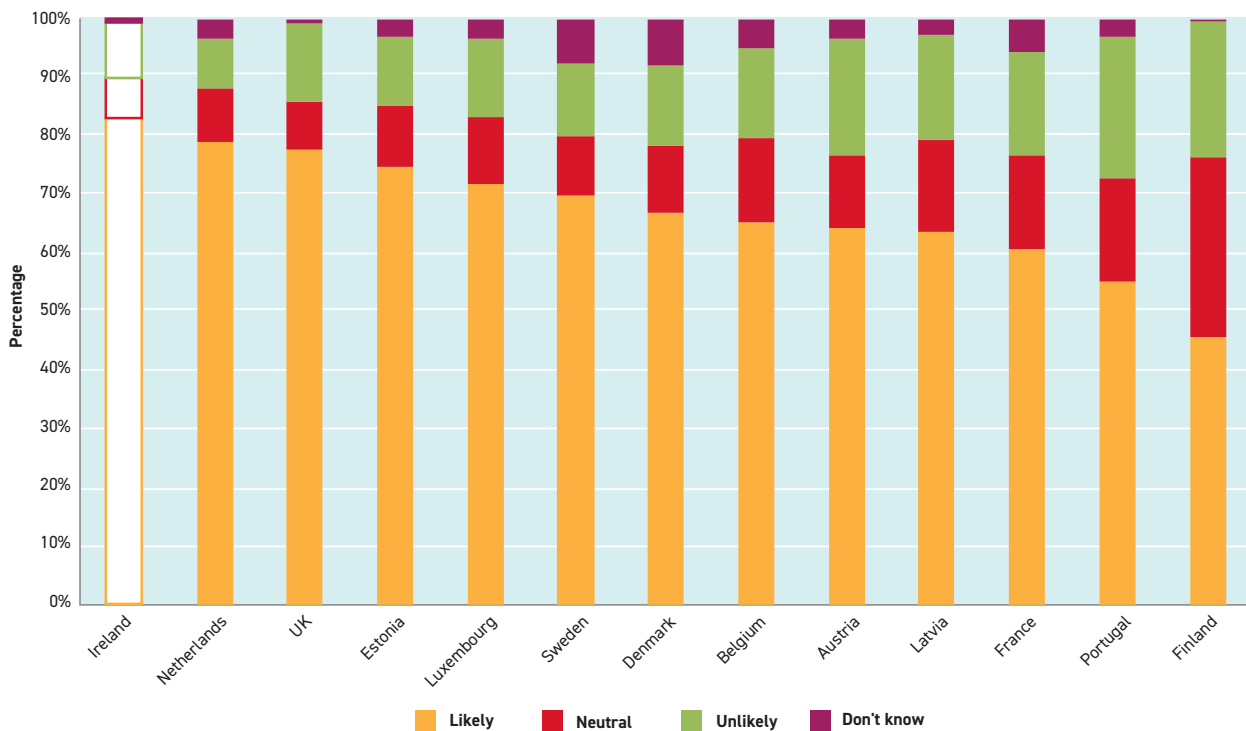


- The OECD published a report based on a survey of the drivers of trust in public institutions in 2022.
- With 52 per cent saying it is likely, people in Ireland feel more likely than most countries surveyed that they have opportunities to voice their views on local government decisions affecting their local community.
- Almost a third of those surveyed feel it is unlikely that they would have an opportunity to voice their views.

## Ireland ranks highest with regard to people feeling they can easily find information about administrative procedures

**FIGURE 24 RESPONDENTS FEELING THEY CAN EASILY FIND INFORMATION ABOUT ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES**

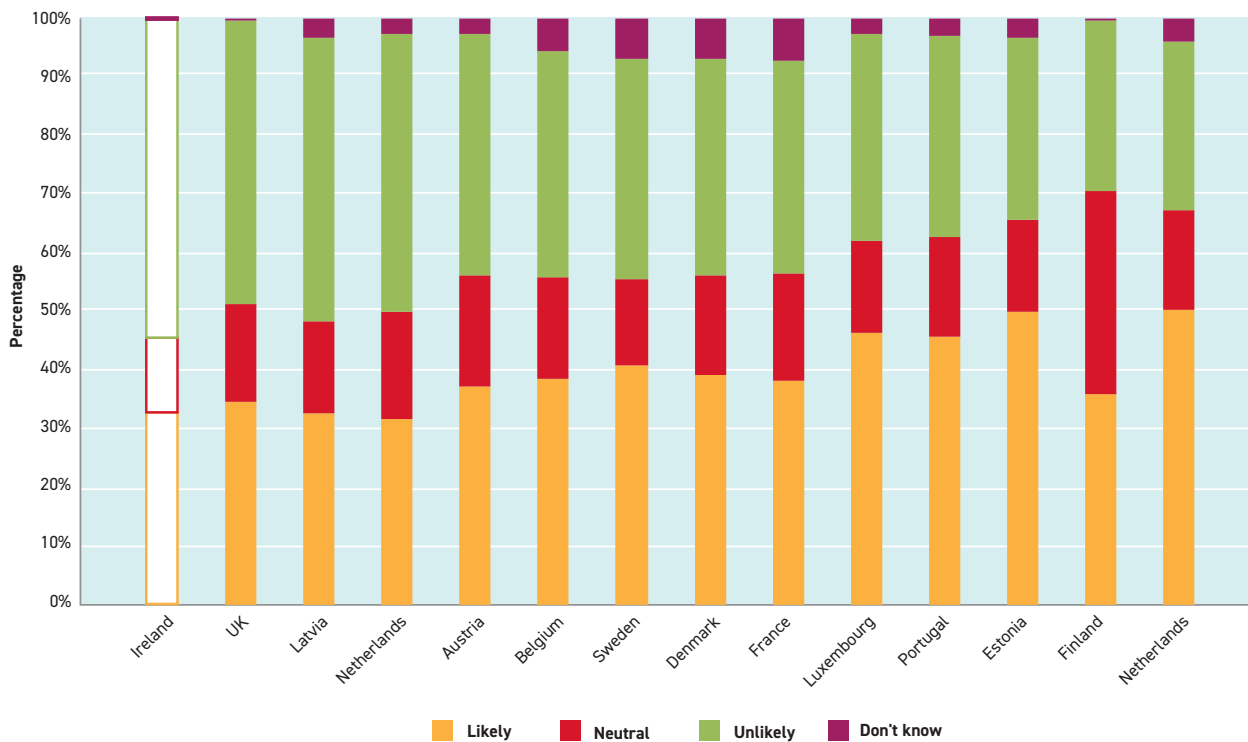
Source: OECD Trust Survey 2022



- The OECD published a report based on a survey of the drivers of trust in public institutions in 2022.
- People were asked how easily they could find information about administrative procedures. Ireland ranked best on this question of the countries surveyed, with 83 per cent feeling it was likely they could find the information easily.

**People in Ireland are less likely than others to believe that public services would improve if people complained**

**FIGURE 25 RESPONDENTS SAYING LIKELIHOOD OF PUBLIC SERVICE IMPROVING IF PEOPLE COMPLAINED**  
Source: OECD Trust Survey 2022

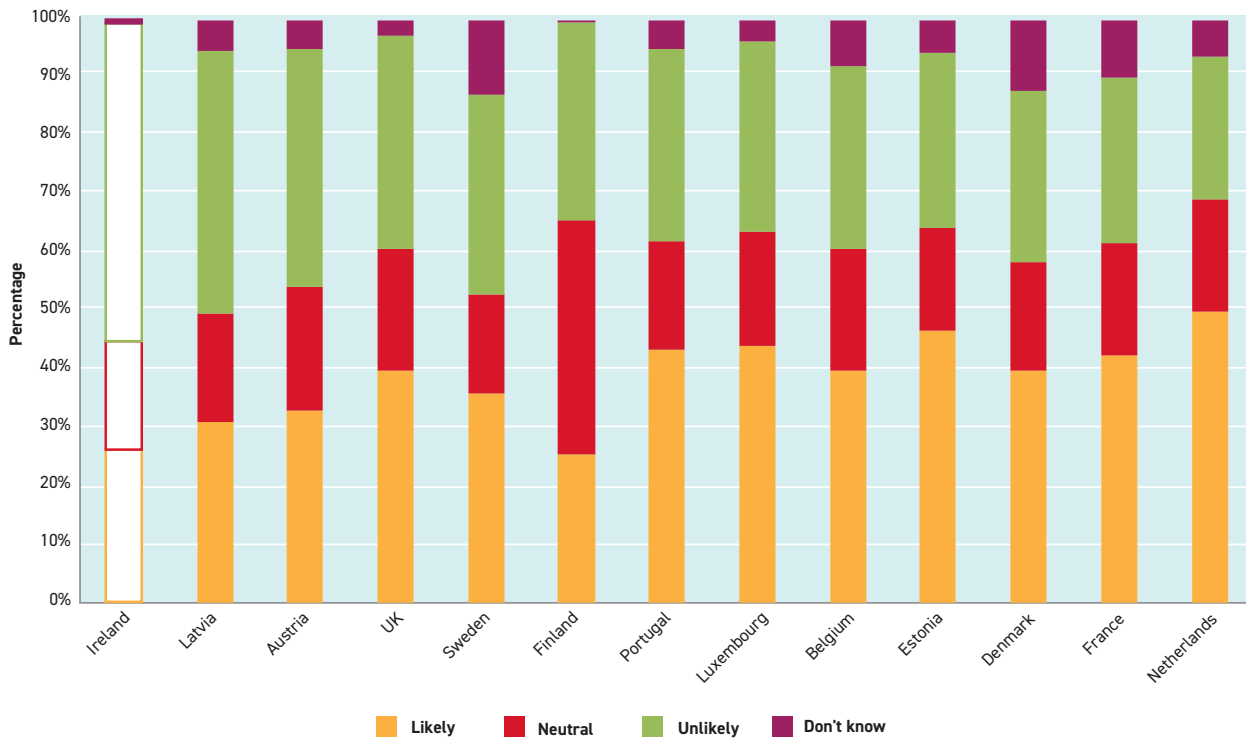


- The OECD published a report based on a survey of the drivers of trust in public institutions in 2022.
- Just over half (54 per cent) of those surveyed in Ireland believe it is unlikely that public services would improve if people complained. A third believe it is likely that services would improve.

## People in Ireland are less likely than other countries to believe that public agencies adopt innovative ideas

FIGURE 26 RESPONDENTS VIEW OF LIKELIHOOD OF PUBLIC AGENCIES ADOPTING INNOVATIVE IDEAS

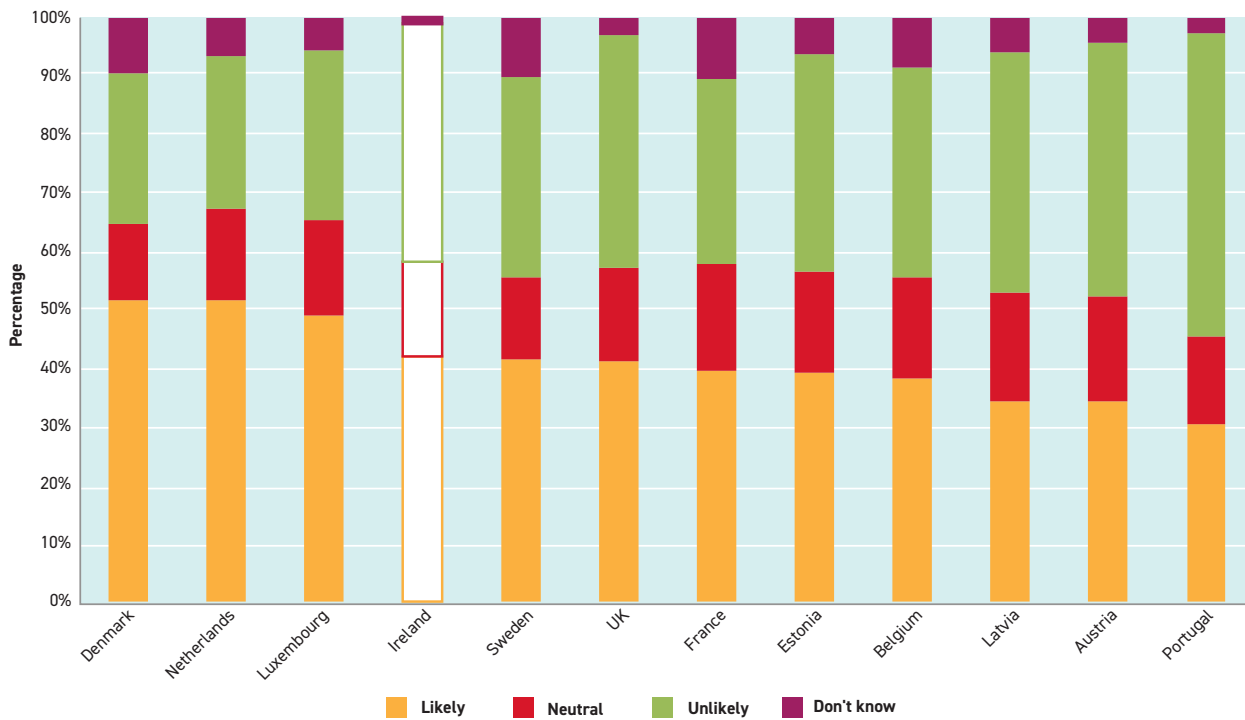
Source: OECD Trust Survey 2022



- The OECD published a report based on a survey of the drivers of trust in public institutions in 2022.
- 55 per cent of people surveyed in Ireland believe that it is unlikely that public agencies would adopt innovative ideas. This was the highest rate of the countries surveyed.
- Only 26 per cent believe that public agencies are likely to adopt innovative ideas.

**There are mixed views amongst people in Ireland as to whether public employees treat rich and poor people equally**

**FIGURE 27 RESPONDENTS VIEWS THAT PUBLIC EMPLOYEES TREAT RICH AND POOR PEOPLE EQUALLY**  
 Source: OECD Trust Survey 2022

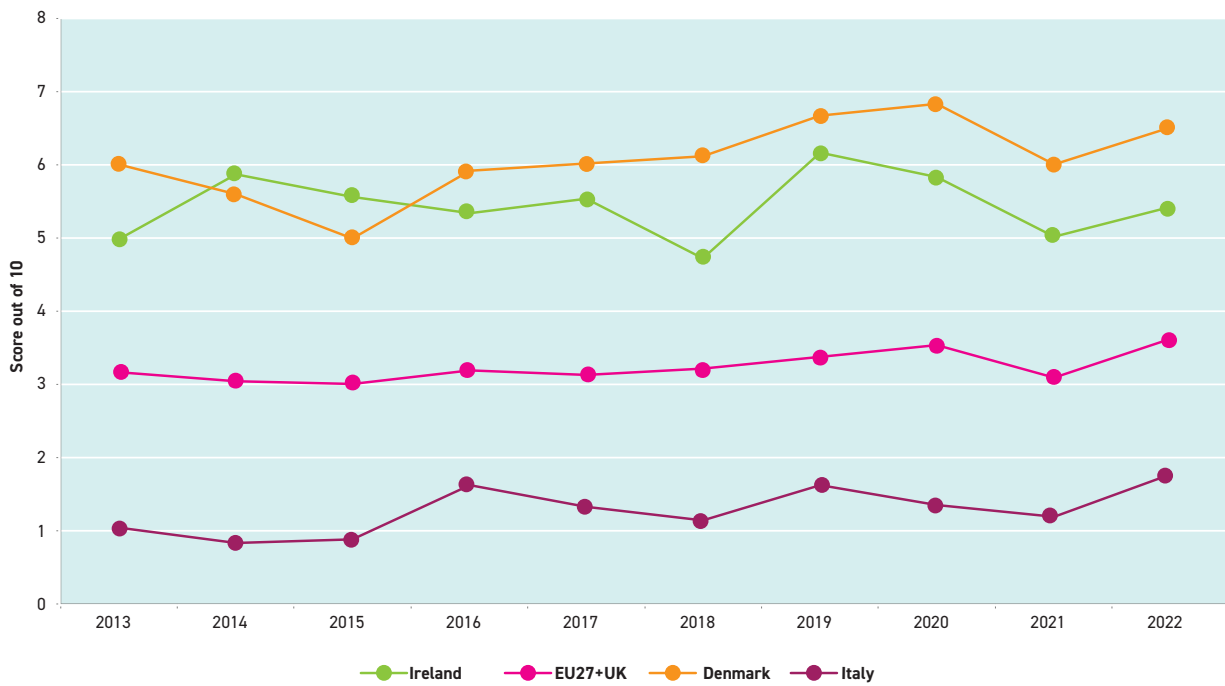


- The OECD published a report based on a survey of the drivers of trust in public institutions in 2022.
- 42 per cent of people surveyed in Ireland believe it is likely that public employees treat rich and poor people equally. Conversely, 41 per cent believe it is unlikely. Ireland is mid-ranking amongst the countries surveyed.

## Business executives see Irish public services as one of the less bureaucratic in Europe

**FIGURE 28 BUREAUCRACY HINDERS BUSINESS ACTIVITY**

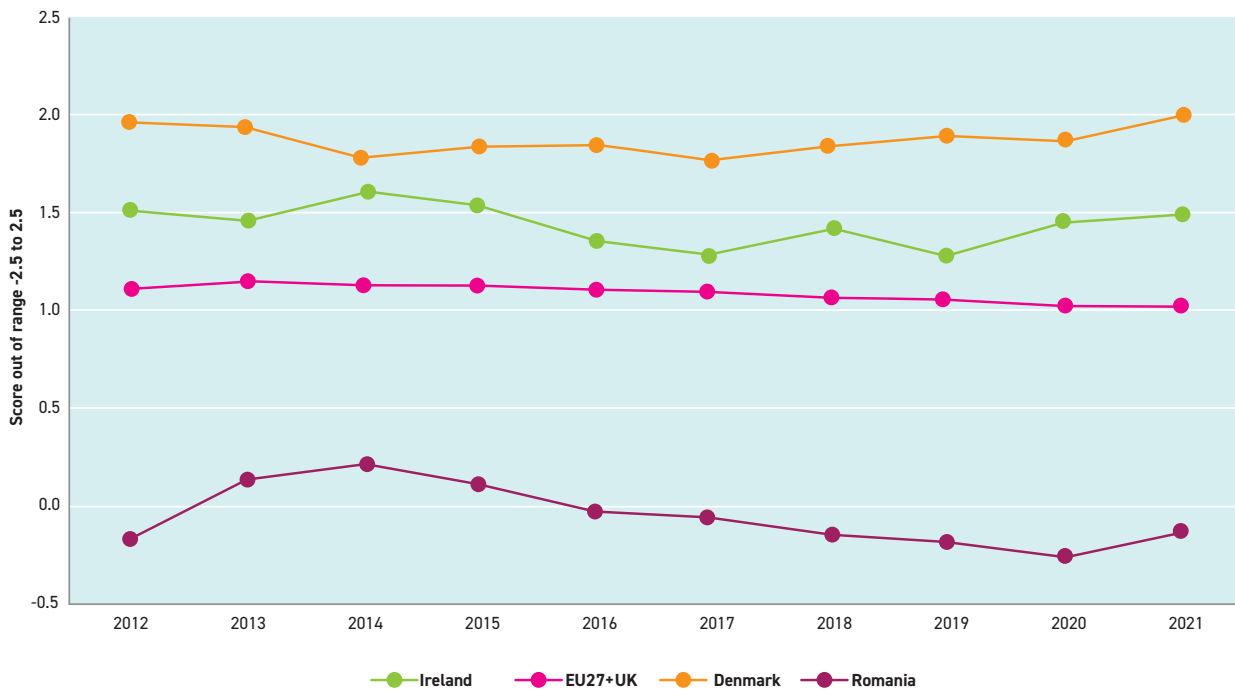
Source: IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook data



- Respondents to the executive opinion survey carried out by IMD for their World Competitiveness Yearbook indicate that compared to most European countries in the EU, bureaucracy in Ireland is seen as less of a hindrance to business activity. Ireland ranked fourth on this indicator in 2022, up from sixth in 2021.

In World Bank assessments, Ireland's government effectiveness score remains above the European average and has improved in each of the last two years

**FIGURE 29 WORLD BANK GOVERNMENT EFFECTIVENESS INDICATOR**  
Source: World Bank Worldwide Governance Indicators



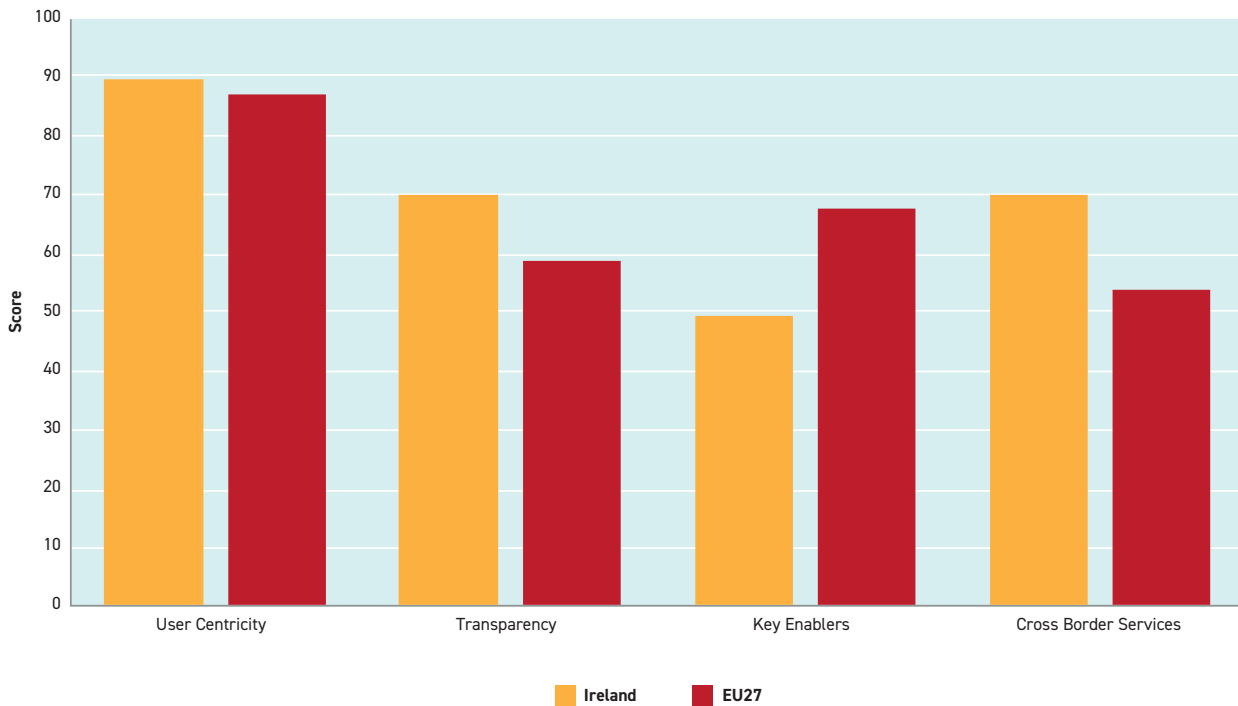
- The World Bank has developed a set of governance indicators as part of its work on promoting good governance. They are based on over 30 individual data sources produced by a variety of survey institutes, think tanks, non-governmental organisations, international organisations, and private sector firms.
- The Government Effectiveness indicator aims to measure the quality of public services, the capacity of the civil service and its independence from political pressures, and the quality of policy formulation.
- Ireland's government effectiveness indicator score trended downwards overall from 2014 to 2019, but remained above the European average. Ireland's score has increased in 2020 and 2021
- Denmark is the top European scorer on this indicator and Romania the lowest ranked.



## Government in Ireland overall performs above the European average for most indicators

**FIGURE 30 EGOVERNMENT BENCHMARKS 2022**

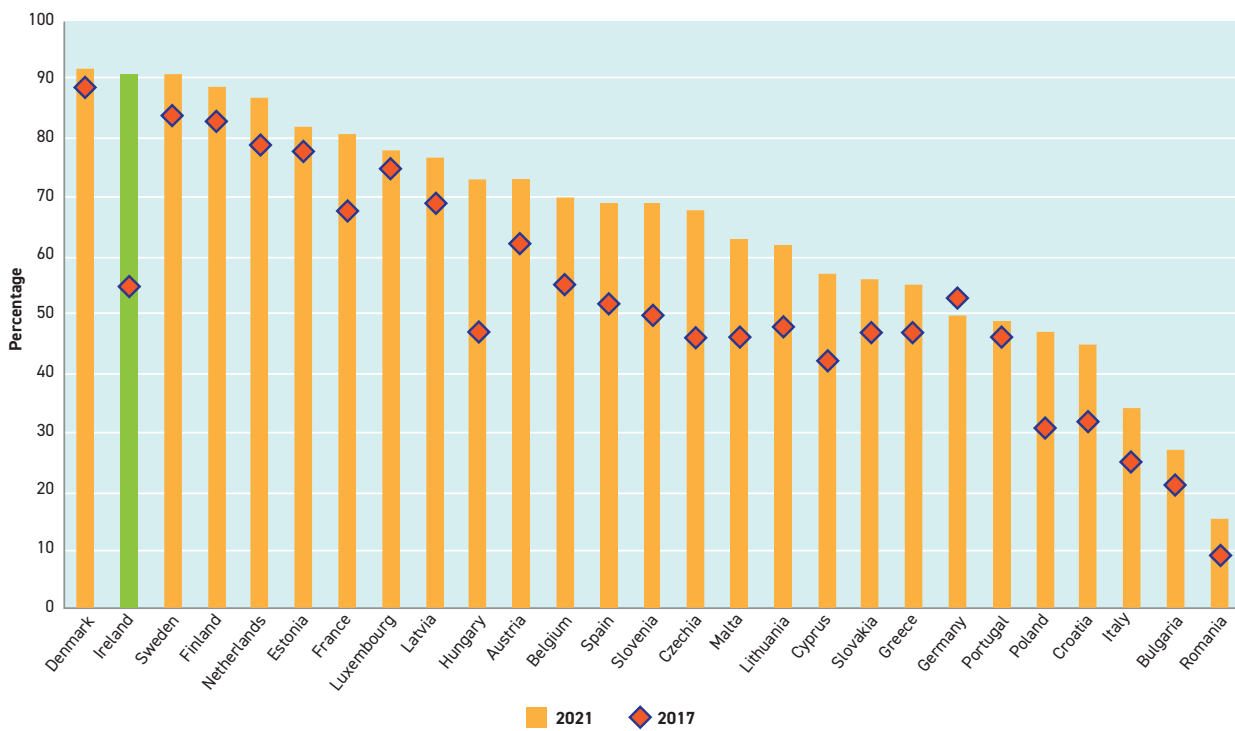
Source: EU eGovernment Benchmark 2022



- Ireland ranks above the EU27 average with regard to user centricity (to what extent information about a service is provided online), transparency (to what extent
- Ireland ranks below the European average with regard to key enablers (indicates the extent to which four technical pre-conditions for eGovernment are available online).

**Individual use of the internet to interact with public authorities in Ireland is very high compared to other European countries**

**FIGURE 31 INDIVIDUALS USING THE INTERNET FOR INTERACTION WITH PUBLIC AUTHORITIES**  
Source: Eurostat

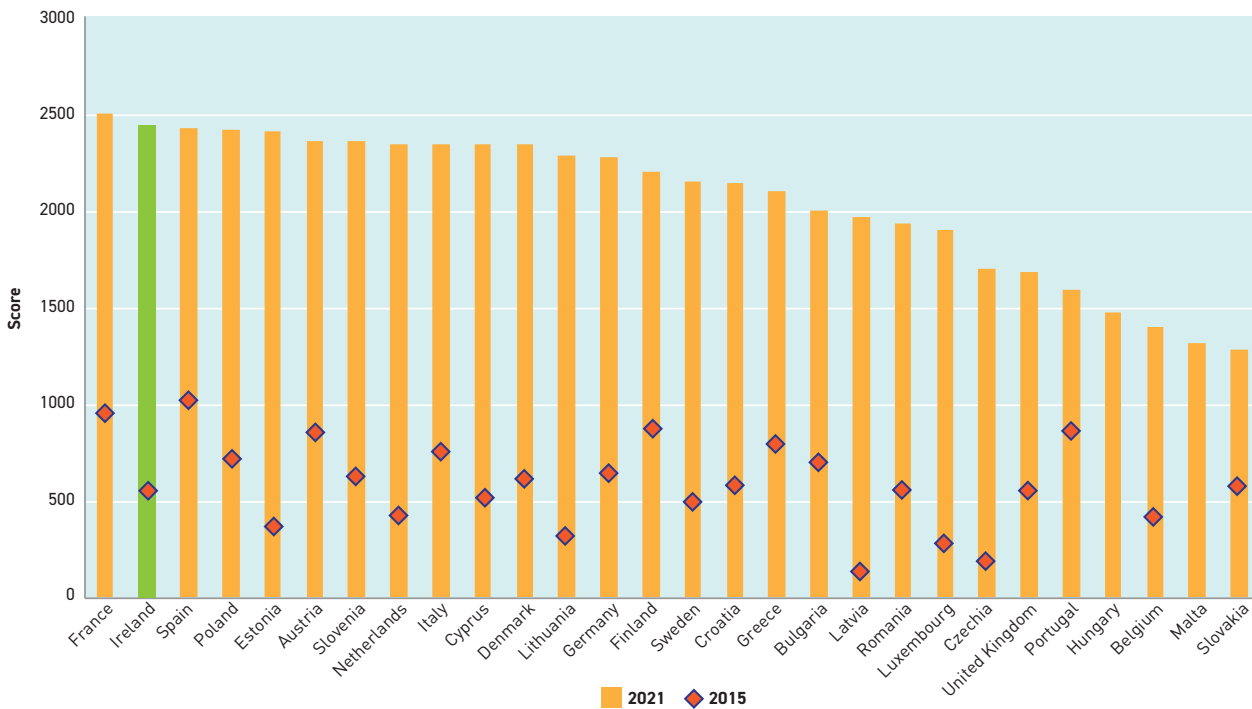


- Just over 90 per cent of individuals in Ireland use the internet to interact with public authorities. It is the joint second highest figure in Europe, just behind Denmark.
- Ireland compares favourably with countries like Finland, the Netherlands, Estonia and France.

## Ireland is one of the leaders with regard to open data maturity

**FIGURE 32 OPEN DATA MATURITY SCORE**

Source: European Data Portal



- Open data maturity is described by a series of indicators selected to cover the level of development of national policies promoting open data, an assessment of the features made available on national data portals, as well as the expected impact of open data.
- Ireland ranked second with regard to open data maturity in 2021, up from fourth in 2020 and up significantly from 2015, when ranked eighteenth.

**Ireland's public administration is viewed by executives as one of the best in Europe in encouraging competition and providing a supportive regulatory environment**

**FIGURE 33 COMPETITIVENESS AND REGULATION INDICATOR (CRI)**

Source: IPA analysis based on IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook data



- A sub-set of the quality of public administration indicators can be used to assess issues of competitiveness and regulation. There is an expectation that as part of a quality service, public servants will help ensure a legal and regulatory framework that encourages competition. And that they will scrutinise regulation intensity to ensure it does not become too great a burden on enterprises.
- Ireland's ranking on this competitiveness and regulation indicator is above the European average. In 2021, Ireland ranked fifth.
- Developing a public administration that encourages competition and where regulation is not too great a burden on enterprises is an important goal. But events in the banking sphere at the time of the financial crisis indicate the need for strong regulation. It must be remembered that this ranking is based on executive opinion surveys, where there would generally be an interest in less regulation.

## In World Bank assessments, Ireland's regulatory quality ranks above the European average

**FIGURE 34 WORLD BANK REGULATORY QUALITY INDICATOR**

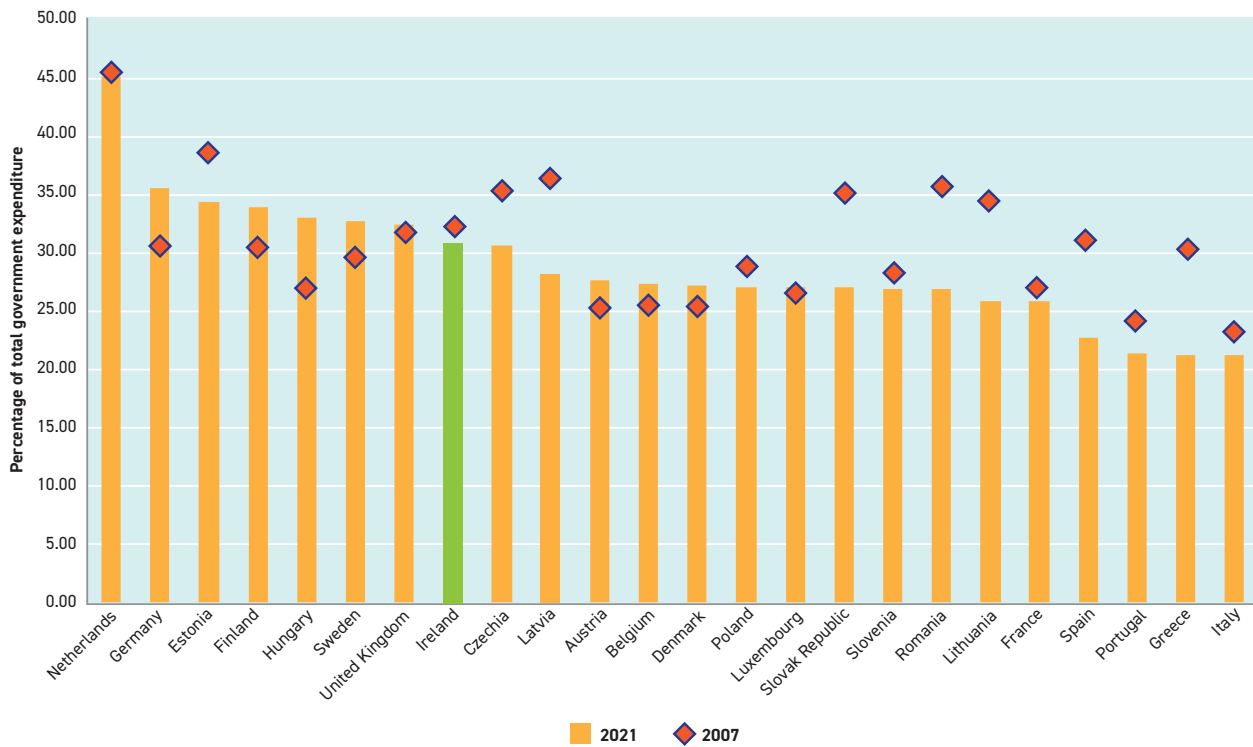
Source: World Bank Worldwide Governance Indicators



- The Regulatory Quality indicator aims to measure the ability of the government to provide sound policies and regulations that enable and promote private sector development. On this indicator Ireland ranks as well above the EU27+UK score.
- The impact of the regulatory problems identified in the financial sector in 2009 had an impact on the indicator, and Ireland dropped from first in 2009 to seventh ranked EU27+UK country on this indicator by 2013.
- In 2021 Ireland ranked seventh EU27+UK country. Luxembourg ranked highest.

**Ireland's procurement spending as a proportion of total government expenditure is close to the European average**

**FIGURE 35 GENERAL GOVERNMENT PROCUREMENT SPENDING AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE**  
 Source: OECD Government at a Glance yearly updates



- Governments procure large amounts of goods and services to help them implement policies and deliver public services.
- Ireland's procurement spending as a proportion of total government expenditure, at 31 per cent in 2021, is close to the European average.

## 4. SECTORAL PERFORMANCE

Ultimately, the provision of public administration is intended to achieve social outcomes in sectors such as health, education, the environment, law and order and transport. As such, it is important that any review of public administration looks at sectoral outcomes. In this report, some high-level education, health and environmental indicators are included, given their policy and spending implications.

In the education system, high-level outcome indicators that assess performance in reading, maths and science give an overview of performance.

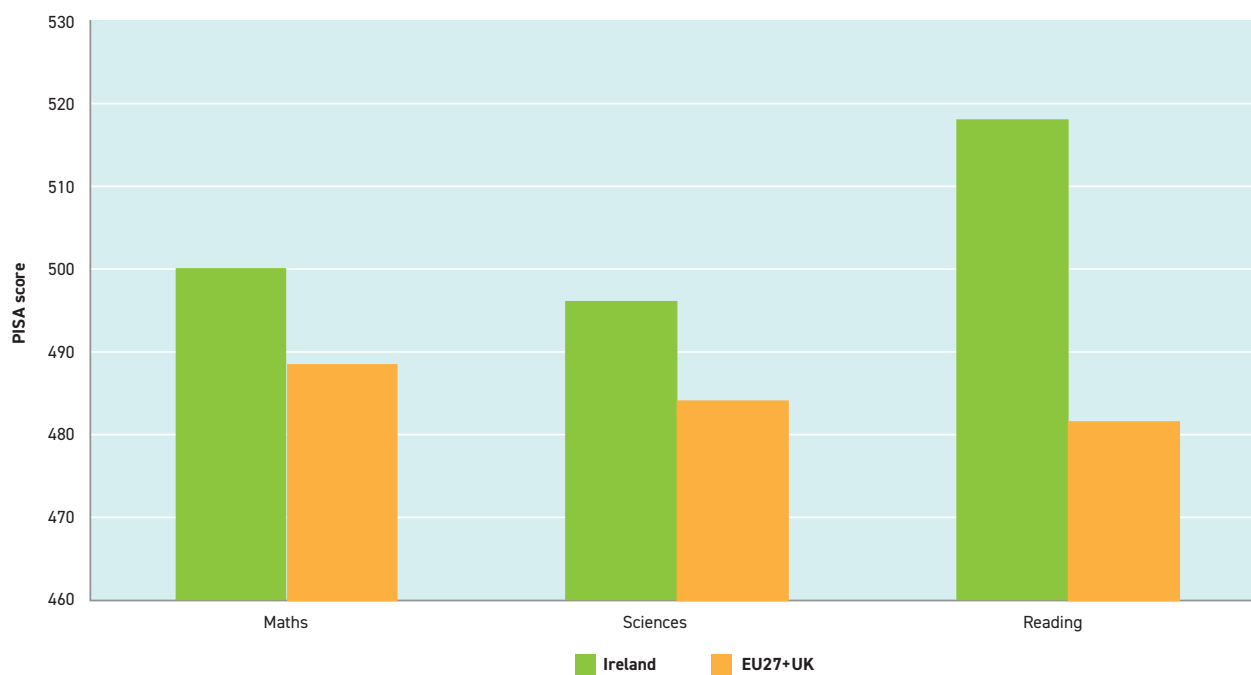
In the health sector, high-level outcome indicators in areas such as life expectancy and healthy life expectancy, and other indicators such as length of stay in hospitals, give a sense of performance at the macro level. These are commonly used indicators in international rankings of health and education systems.

In the environmental sector, high-level indicators assess performance in the policy areas of ecosystem vitality and climate change. Indicators on government expenditure on environmental protection and environmental research are also provided.

## Ireland's educational attainment scores compare well to the European average

**FIGURE 36 PISA EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT SCORES 2018**

Source: OECD PISA 2018 survey

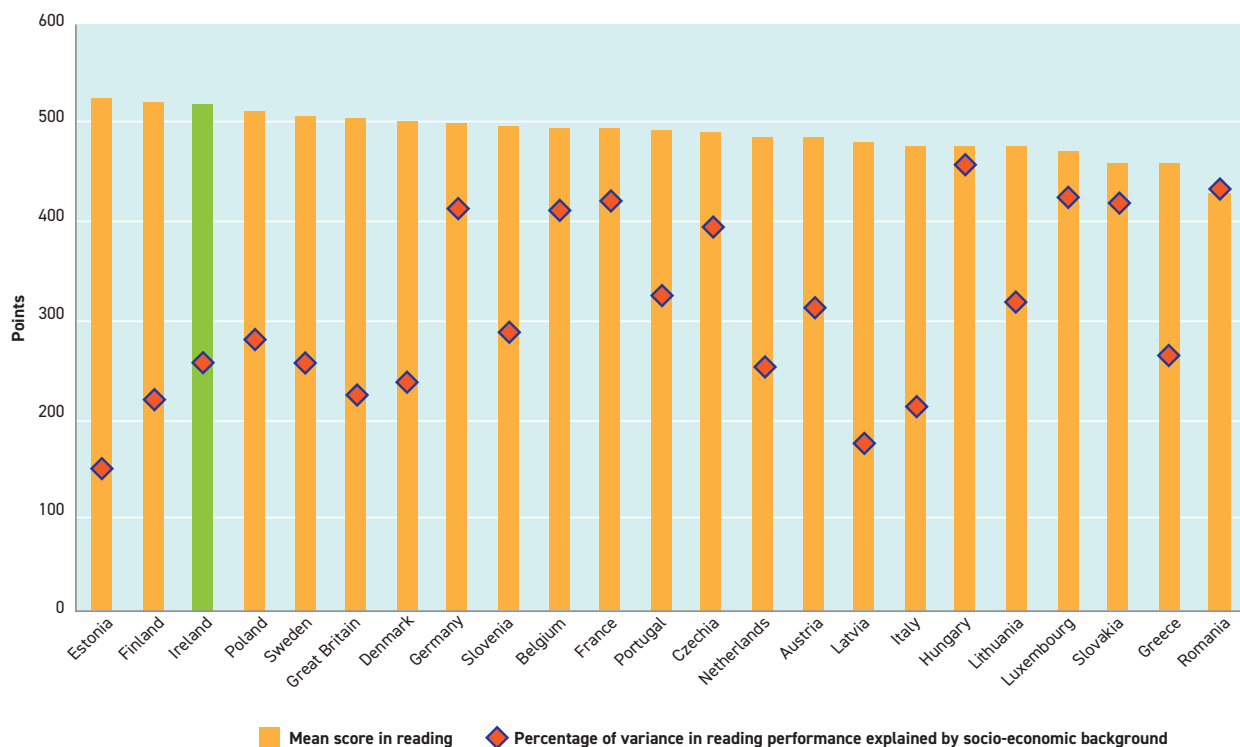


- The OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) survey is an internationally standardised assessment administered to 15-year olds in schools. Tests are typically administered to between 4,500 and 10,000 students in each country.
- The 2018 PISA survey shows that Ireland has a higher ranking than the European average in maths, sciences and reading. Estonia is the highest ranked country in all three categories.



## Irish students score well in reading with socio-economic background being less of an influence than in many European countries

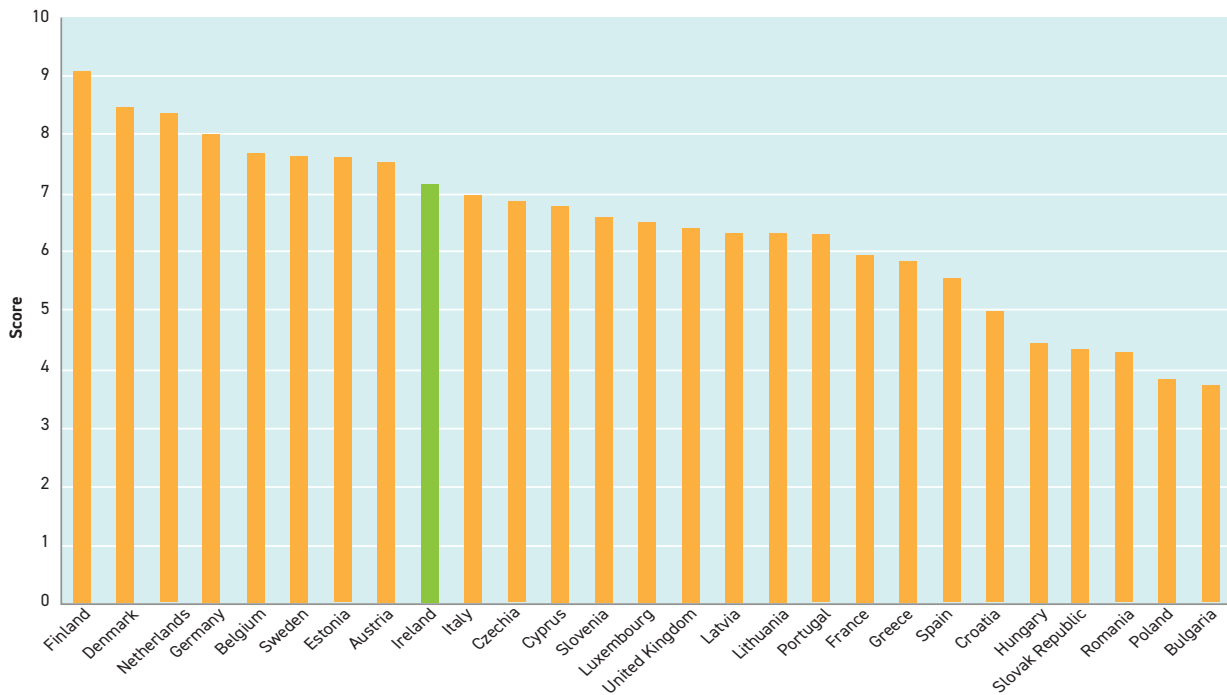
**FIGURE 37 MEAN SCORE IN READING AND PERCENTAGE OF VARIANCE EXPLAINED BY SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND 2018**  
Source: OECD Government at a Glance 2021



- In 2018, students across the OECD reached an average of 487 points in reading in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). Ireland (518 points) had one of the highest scores.
- However, these averages hide inequalities between students. On average across the OECD, 12 per cent of the variance in performance can be attributed to students' socio-economic status. In Ireland, this percentage is 10.7 per cent. A lower percentage means that socio-economic background plays a less significant role.

**Ireland's executives perceive the primary and secondary education system relatively high in terms of it meeting the needs of the economy**

**FIGURE 38 PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION MEETS THE NEEDS OF A COMPETITIVE ECONOMY 2022**  
Source: IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook data

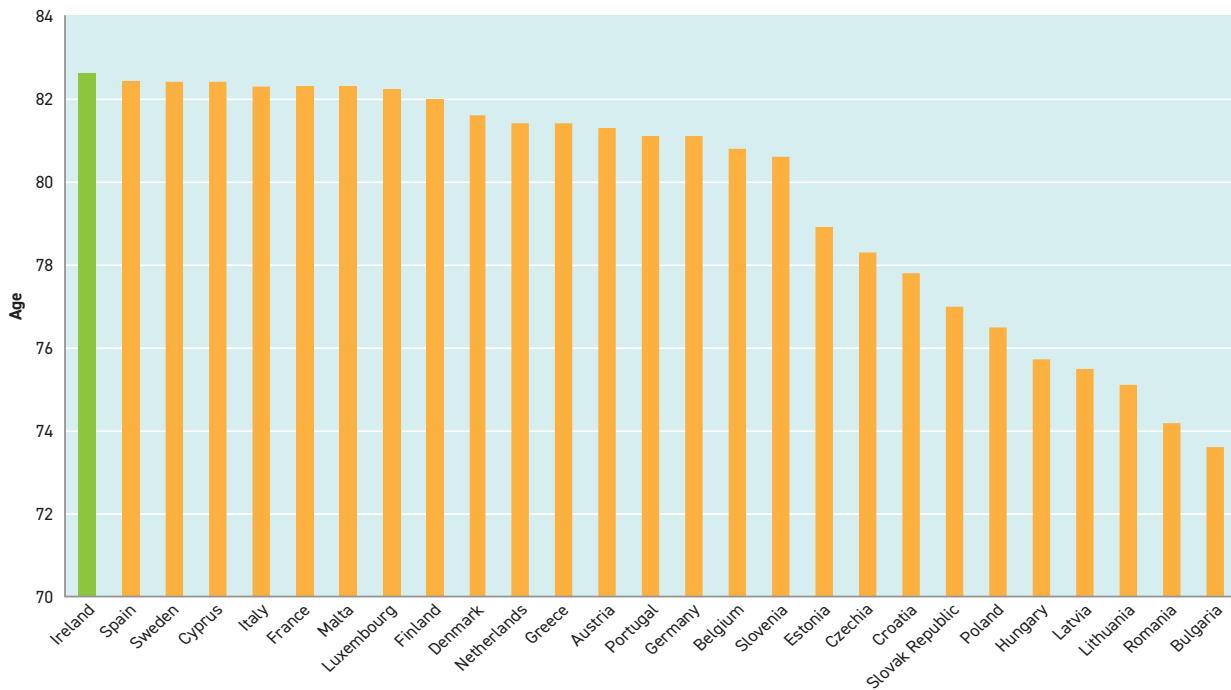


- Executive opinion about the role of the educational system in meeting the needs of a competitive economy is one (though only one) qualitative indicator of how well the education system is functioning.
- Ireland's primary and secondary education are ranked ninth best in Europe in terms of meeting the needs of a competitive economy, down from fourth in 2021.

## Life expectancy at birth is highest in the European Union for 2020

FIGURE 39 LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH 2020

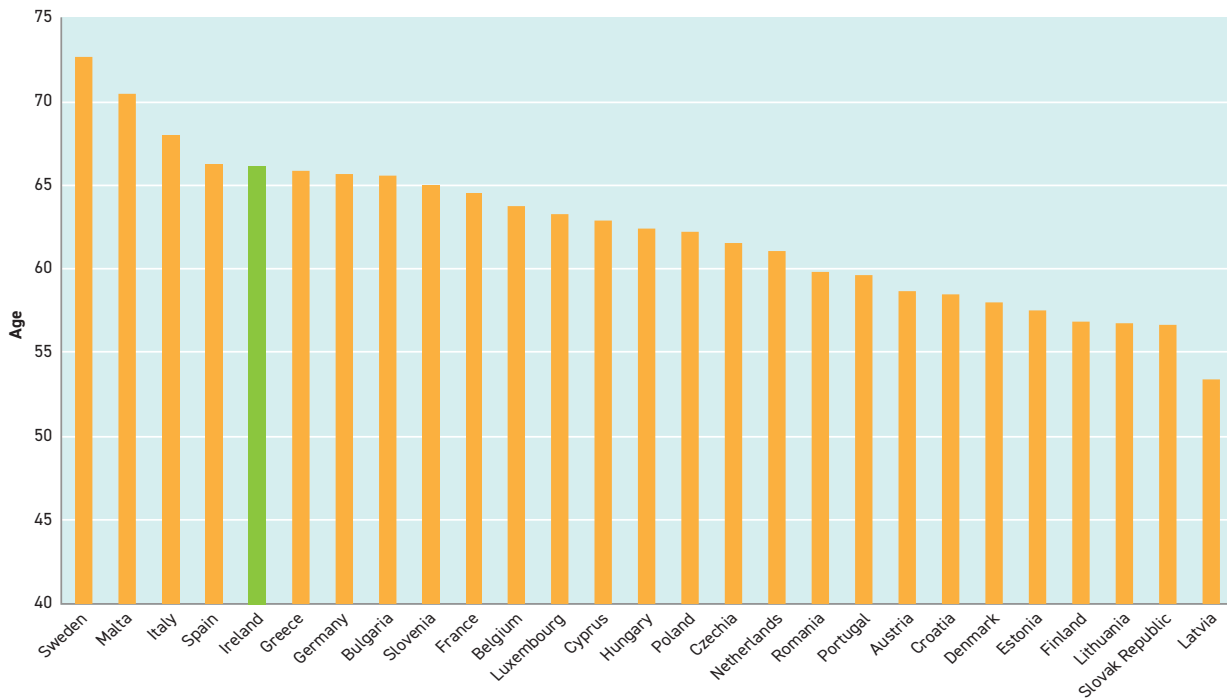
Source: Eurostat



- Life expectancy at birth in Ireland for 2020 was 82.6 years; this ranked the highest in EU countries for 2020.
- The lowest ranking EU country was Bulgaria where the life expectancy at birth in 2020 was 73.6 years.

In terms of healthy life expectancy at birth Ireland ranks highly in Europe

FIGURE 40 HEALTHY LIFE YEARS AT BIRTH 2020  
Source: Eurostat

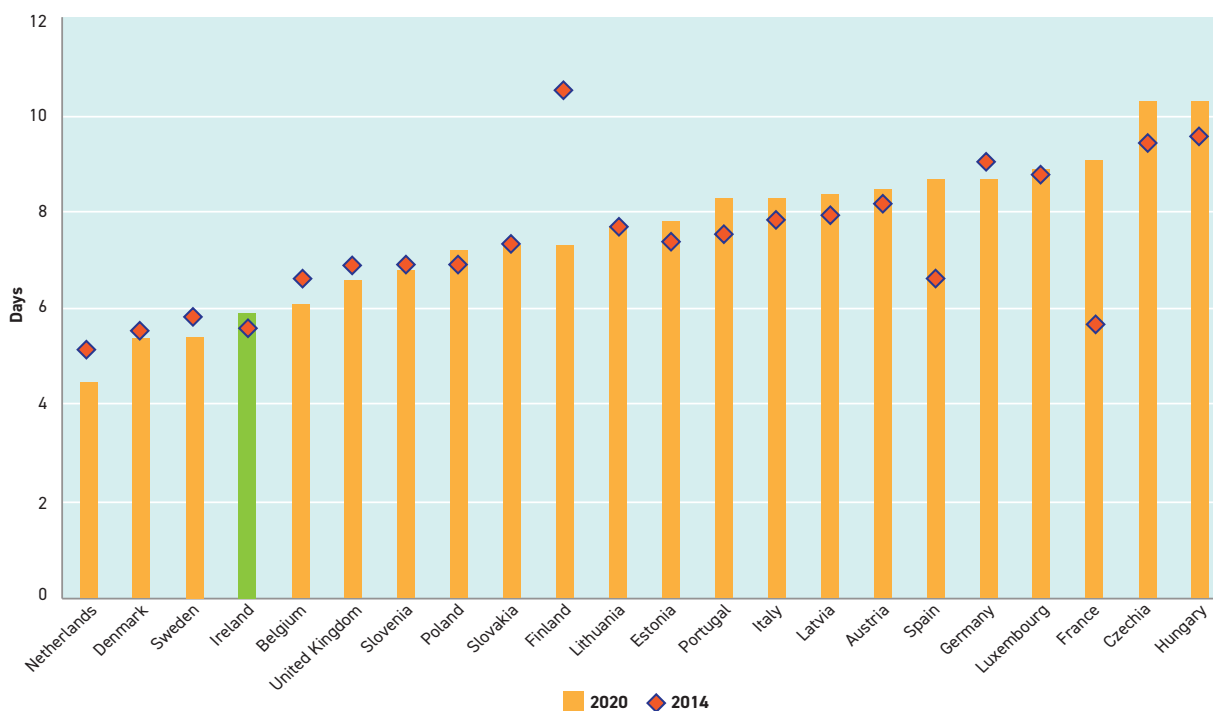


- Healthy life expectancy represents the average number of years that a person can expect to live in 'full health' by taking into account years lived in less than full health due to disease and/or injury.
- Ireland ranks fifth best in Europe in 2020 in terms of healthy life expectancy at birth, at 66.2 years; this represents a decrease of 3.4 years on the figure for 2019.

## Ireland's hospitals display comparatively high levels of efficiency with regard to length of stay

FIGURE 41 AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY IN HOSPITALS FOR ALL CONDITIONS

Source: OECD Health Statistics 2022

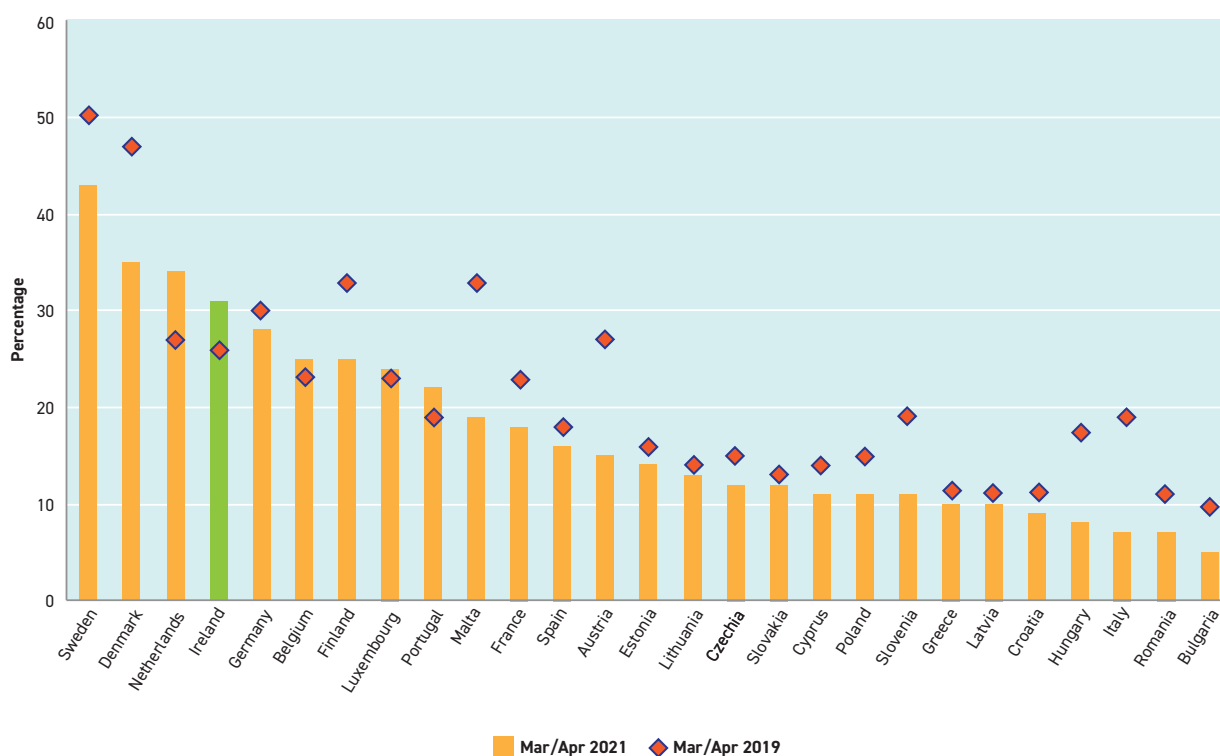


- Average length of stay in hospitals is a commonly used indicator of efficiency in the health system. All other things being equal, a shorter stay is associated with reduced costs. However, shorter stays do tend to be more service intensive and more costly per day. And too short a length of stay may cause adverse health effects.
- On a comparative basis, Ireland shows a low level of length of stay in hospitals (5.9 days in 2020), suggesting a relatively high level of efficiency.

## EU surveys highlight the importance of tackling climate change and biodiversity for Irish people

**FIGURE 42 SURVEY RESPONDENTS WHO VIEW CLIMATE CHANGE AS THE SINGLE MOST SERIOUS PROBLEM FACING THE WORLD**

Source: Eurobarometer

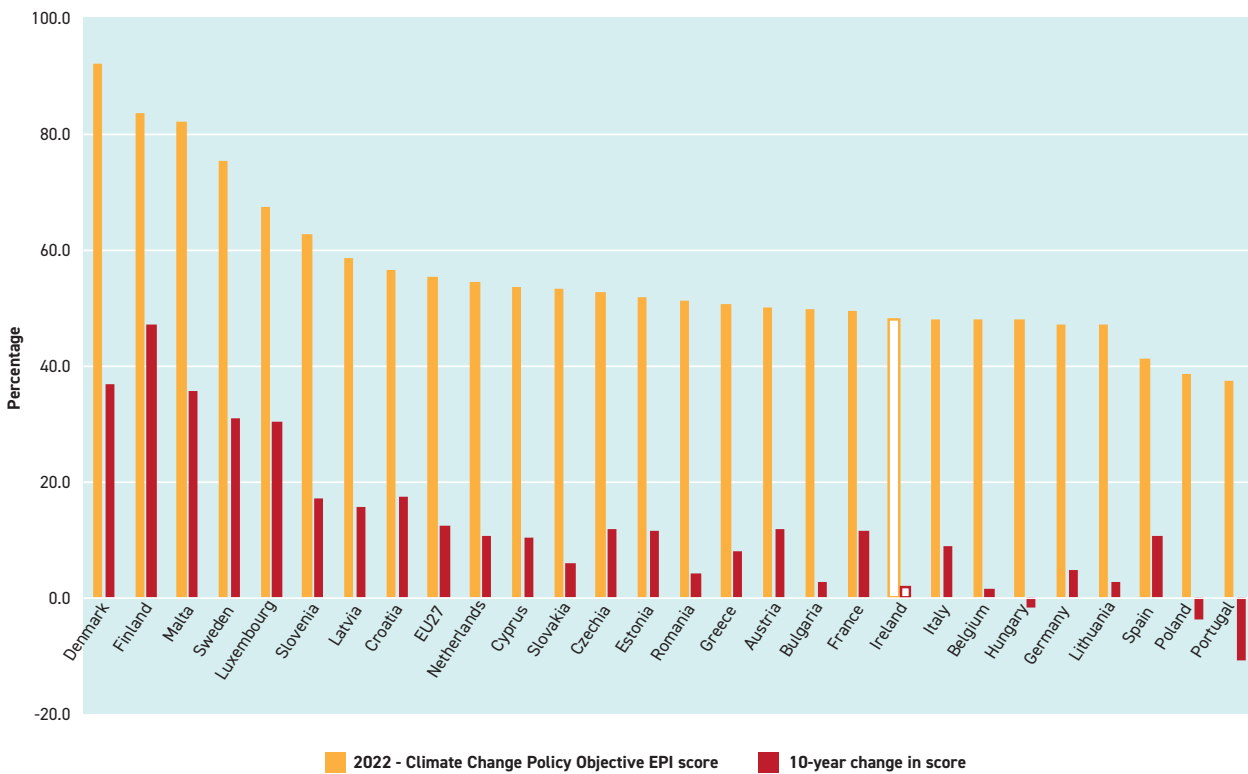


- According to the 2021 Eurobarometer on climate change, Ireland (31 per cent) was one of eight EU member states who view climate change as the single most serious problem facing the world at large; this is the fourth highest proportion of survey respondents in an EU country with this view.
- According to the 2019 Eurobarometer on biodiversity, Ireland was very much in line with EU average for the percentage of people who stated that we all have a responsibility to look after nature (76 per cent) and that looking after nature is essential in tackling climate change (71 per cent).

## Ireland's performance in climate change policy is below the EU27 average

**FIGURE 43 ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE INDEX - CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY OBJECTIVE**

Source: Environmental Performance Index 2022

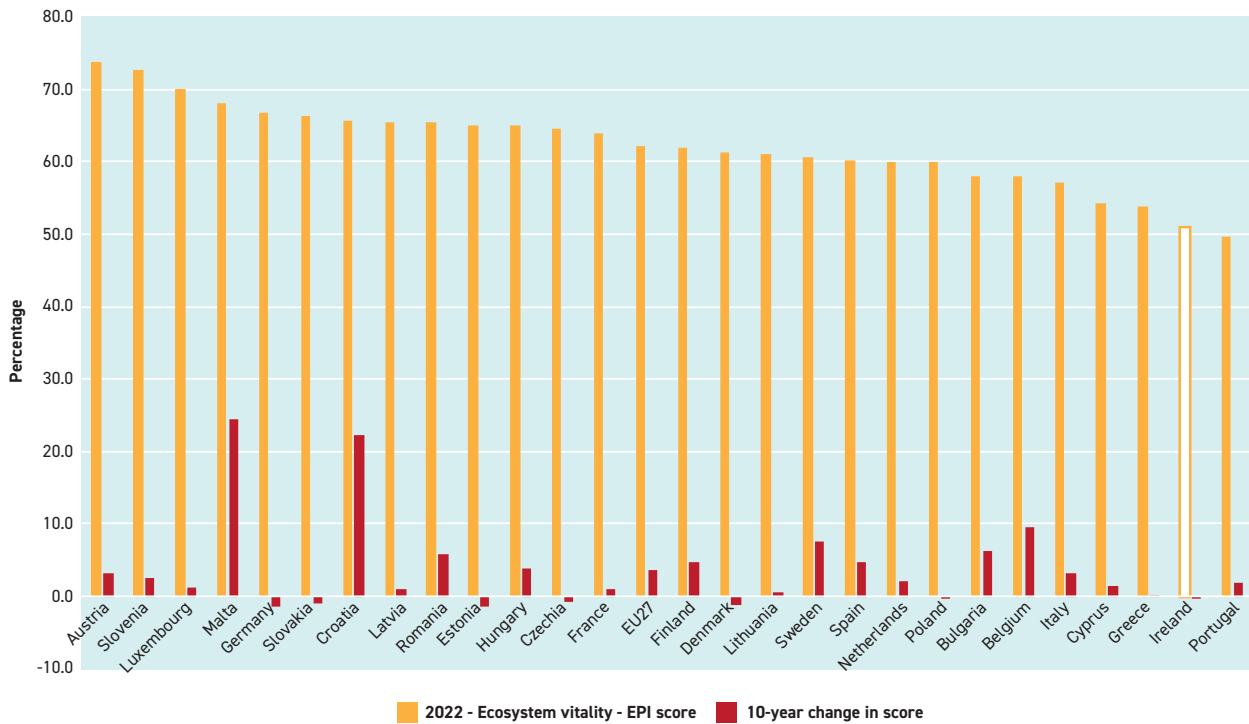


- The Environmental Performance Index (EPI) 2022, ranks 180 countries on their national efforts to improve environmental health, protect ecosystem vitality, and mitigate climate change and explores economic, governance, and social factors that help drive better environmental outcomes.
- According to the EPI 2022, Ireland's performance in the climate change policy objective, which is concerned with climate change mitigation, scored 48.2; this represents an increase of 2.0 in Ireland's score over a 10-year period.
- For this specific indicator Ireland ranks 19th in the EU27 and 56th out of 180 countries.

## Ireland's performance in ecosystem vitality policy is below EU27 average

**FIGURE 44 ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE INDEX - ECOSYSTEM VITALITY**

Source: Environmental Performance Index 2022



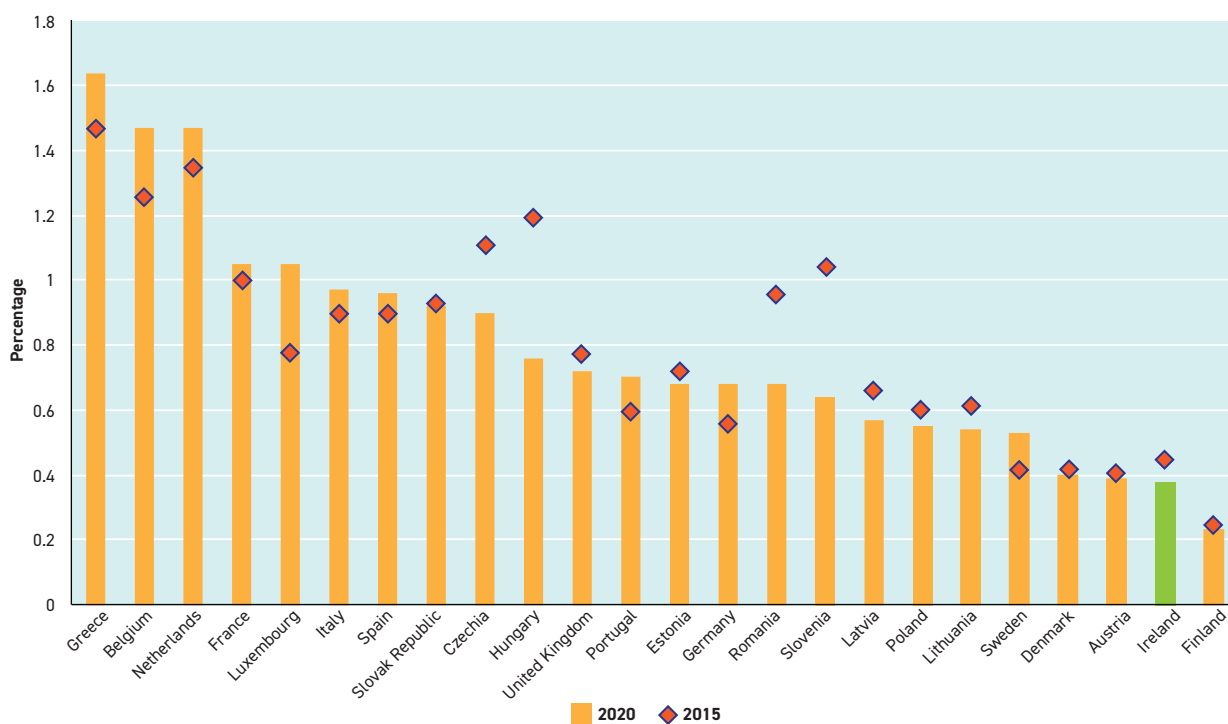
- In the Environmental Performance Index 2022, Ireland's performance in the ecosystem vitality policy objective, which measures how well countries are preserving, protecting, and enhancing ecosystems and the services they provide, scored 50.90; this represents a reduction of 0.30 in Ireland's score over a 10-year period.
- For this specific indicator Ireland ranks 26th in the EU27 and 62nd out of 180 countries.



## Ireland's expenditure on environmental protection and overall spend on energy and environment research is low relative to other countries

FIGURE 45 GENERAL GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE ON ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION, PERCENTAGE OF GDP

Source: OECD



- According to OCED, general government expenditure in Ireland for 2020 on environmental protection<sup>15</sup> as a per cent of GDP was 0.38; it decreased marginally on the figure for 2015.
- In addition, the OECD noted in a separate performance review that approximately 2 per cent of the overall Irish R&D budget is spent on energy and environment research projects which is relatively small compared to other European Countries with only Estonia recording a lower figure<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> Expenditure on environmental protection includes the following types of expenditure: waste management, waste water management, pollution abatement, protection of biodiversity and landscape, R&D environmental protection and environmental protection.

<sup>16</sup> [https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/environment/oecd-environmental-performance-reviews-ireland-2021\\_9ef10b4f-en#page122](https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/environment/oecd-environmental-performance-reviews-ireland-2021_9ef10b4f-en#page122) p. 120.

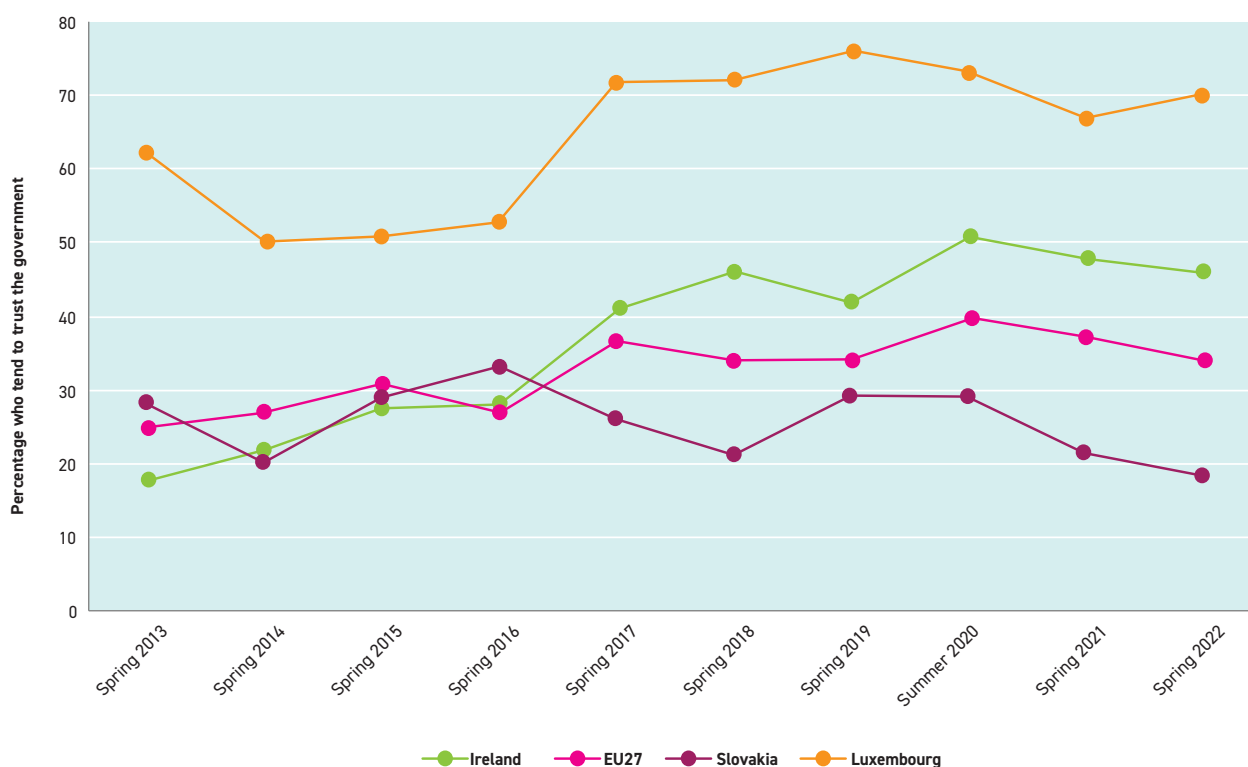
## **5. TRUST, SATISFACTION AND CONFIDENCE IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

Twice a year Eurobarometer measures the level of public confidence in the national government and the national parliament. National government is not defined, and the extent to which it covers both political and administrative elements of government is unclear. But it is likely to primarily reflect levels of trust in the political parties in power at the time of the survey. Periodic surveys of trust in regional and local authorities and in different sectoral workforces by Eurobarometer are also examined, as are levels of satisfaction and confidence with police, education, health care, local government, and the justice system. Complaints to Ombudsman's offices are tracked as an indicator of confidence in public services, as are freedom of information requests.

## Trust in government is falling but remains above the European average

FIGURE 46 LEVEL OF TRUST IN GOVERNMENT

Source: Eurobarometer

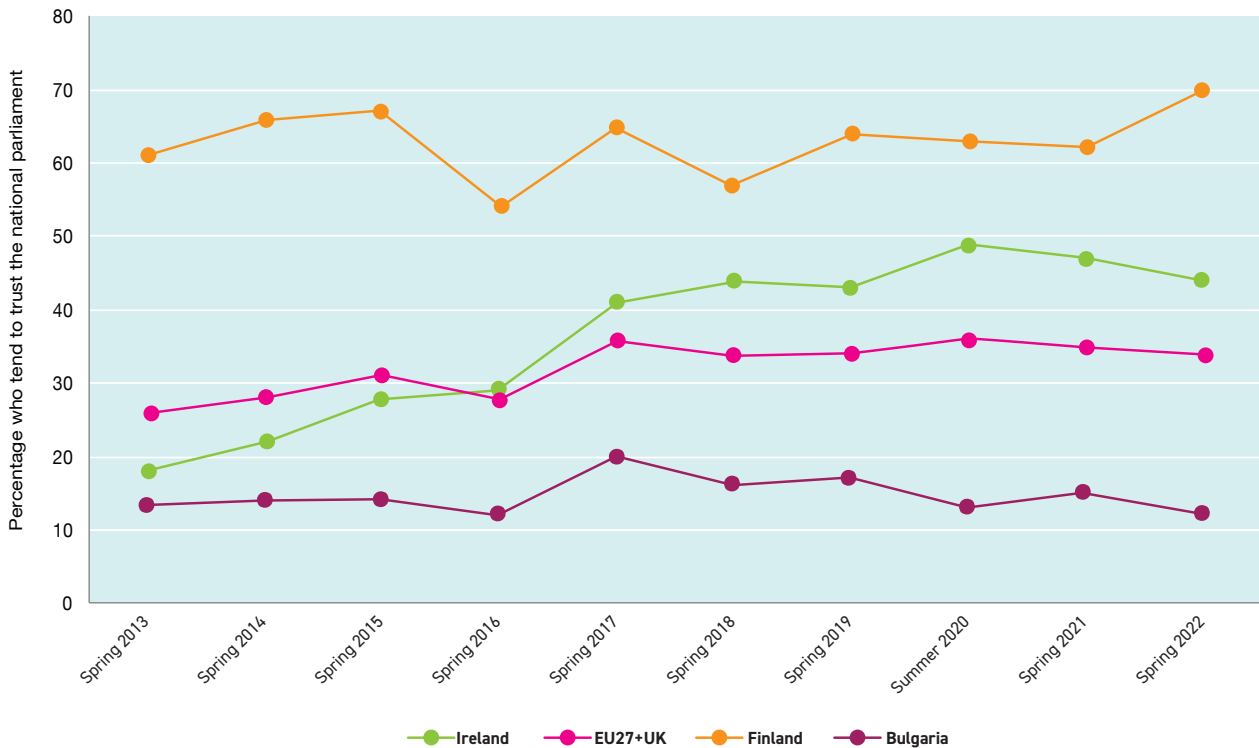


- There was a dramatic fall in the level of trust in government in Ireland from 2008 to 2010. Trust in government in the rest of Europe also fell, but only slightly. In autumn 2010, Ireland expressed the lowest level of trust in government of any of the then EU28 (10 per cent).
- Trust in government in Ireland increased from 2010 to 2020, when trust in government in Ireland stood at just over 50 per cent.
- Trust in government in Ireland has dropped a little in the last two years, and is at 46 per cent in 2022. There has been a general decline in trust in government across most of Europe over this period.

## Trust in parliament is falling but remains above the European average

**FIGURE 47 LEVEL OF TRUST IN NATIONAL PARLIAMENT**

Source: Eurobarometer

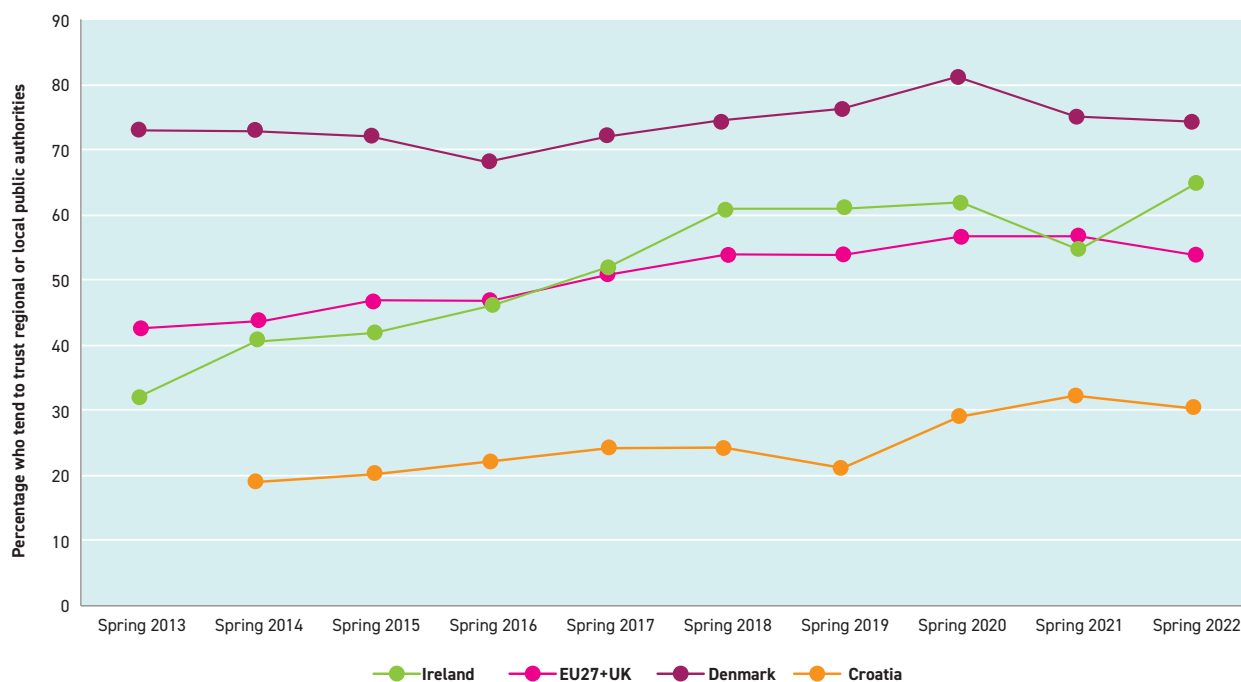


- From 2008 to 2010, as with trust in government, trust in parliament in Ireland dropped rapidly both in absolute terms and compared to the European average.
- Trust in parliament in Ireland gradually increased from 2012 to 2016 and was relatively stable from then until 2019, at just over 40 per cent.
- There has been a reduction of trust in parliament in Ireland from 2020, down from 49 per cent to 44 per cent. This remains above the European average of 34 per cent.
- Finland has a high level of trust in the national parliament, of 70 per cent in spring 2022.

## Trust in regional and local authorities has risen above the European average and counter to the general European trend

FIGURE 48 LEVEL OF TRUST IN REGIONAL OR LOCAL PUBLIC AUTHORITIES

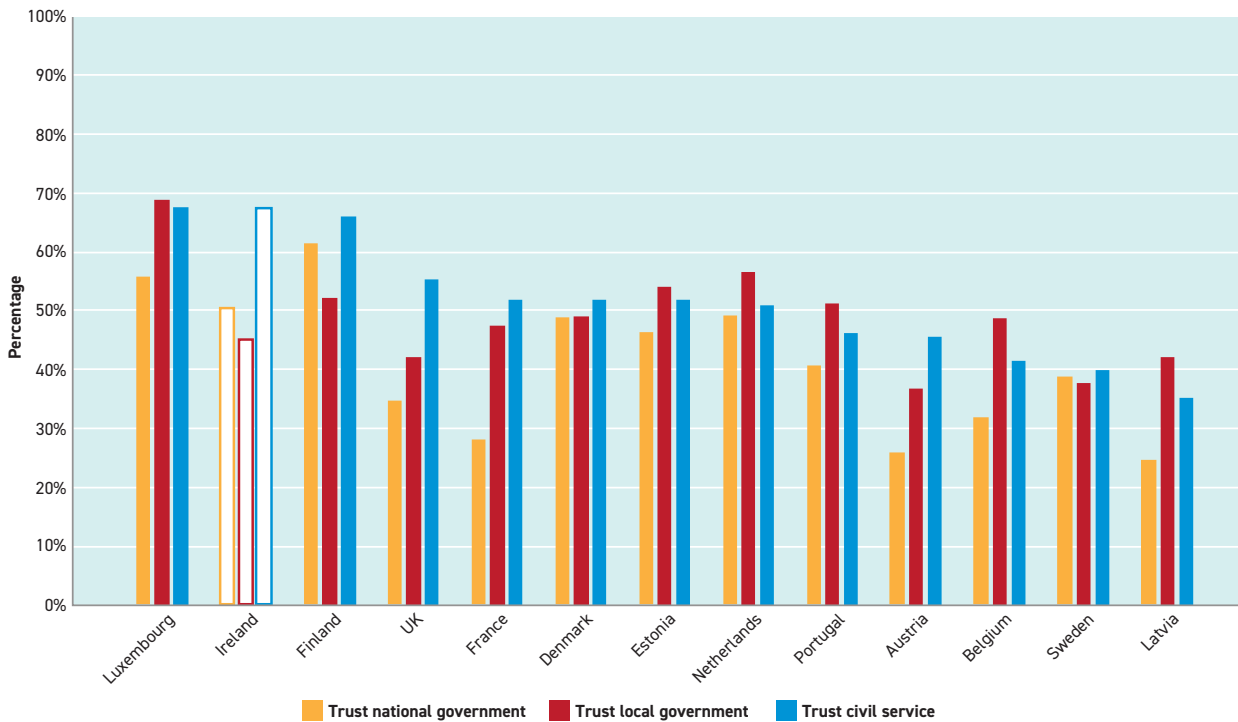
Source: Eurobarometer



- The level of trust in regional and local authorities in Ireland was at 30 per cent in 2012, down from 40 per cent in 2008. It gradually increased since then, and stood at 62 per cent tending to trust regional and local authorities in spring 2020.
- The level of trust in Ireland increased in 2022, up to 65 per cent from 55 per cent in 2021. This is against the general trend in the EU27 as a whole, where trust in regional and local authorities has fallen.

## Trust in public institutions in Ireland is comparatively high compared to other European countries

**FIGURE 49 LEVEL OF TRUST IN NATIONAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND THE CIVIL SERVICE**  
Source: OECD Trust Survey 2022

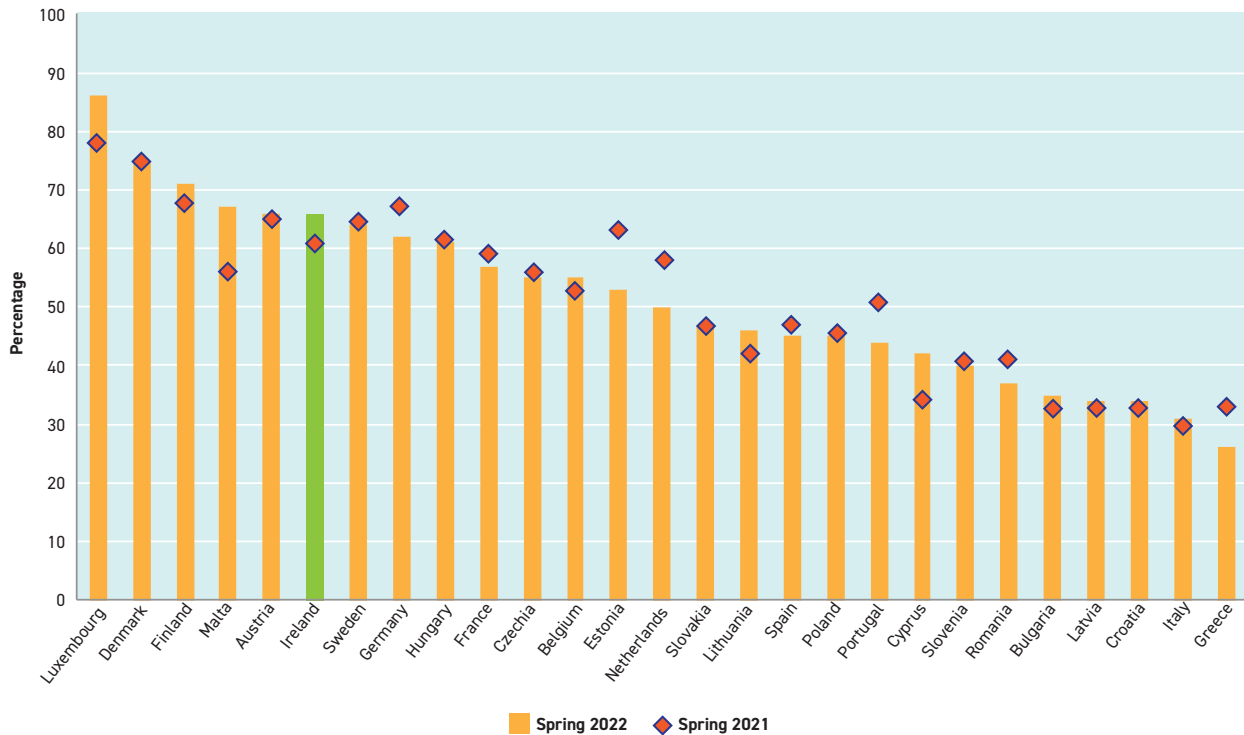


- The OECD published a report based on a survey of the drivers of trust in public institutions in 2022. Ireland shows a relatively high level of trust compared to the other countries surveyed.
- Trust in the civil service is second highest, behind Luxembourg, with 68 per cent saying they trust the civil service.
- While levels of trust in national government (51 per cent) and local government (45 per cent) are relatively low, they are still at the higher end of countries surveyed.

## The level of trust in the public administration in Ireland is above the European average

FIGURE 50 TEND TO TRUST - PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

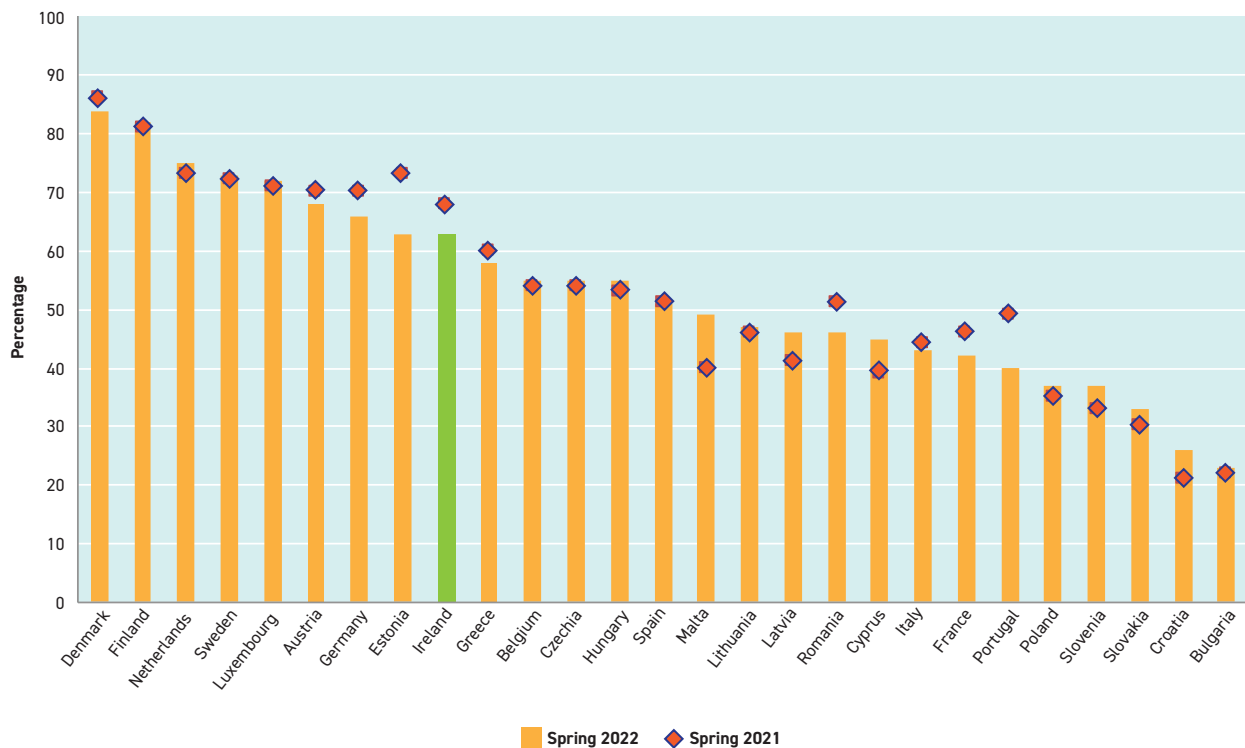
Source: Eurobarometer



- With regard to trust in public administration, Ireland, at 66 per cent, sits 9 points above the EU27 average of 50 per cent.
- Trust in public administration in Ireland has increased over the last few years, up from 51 per cent in spring 2016.

Ireland ranks reasonably highly with regard to trust in the justice/legal system though the level of trust is falling

FIGURE 51 TEND TO TRUST - JUSTICE/ LEGAL SYSTEM  
Source: Eurobarometer



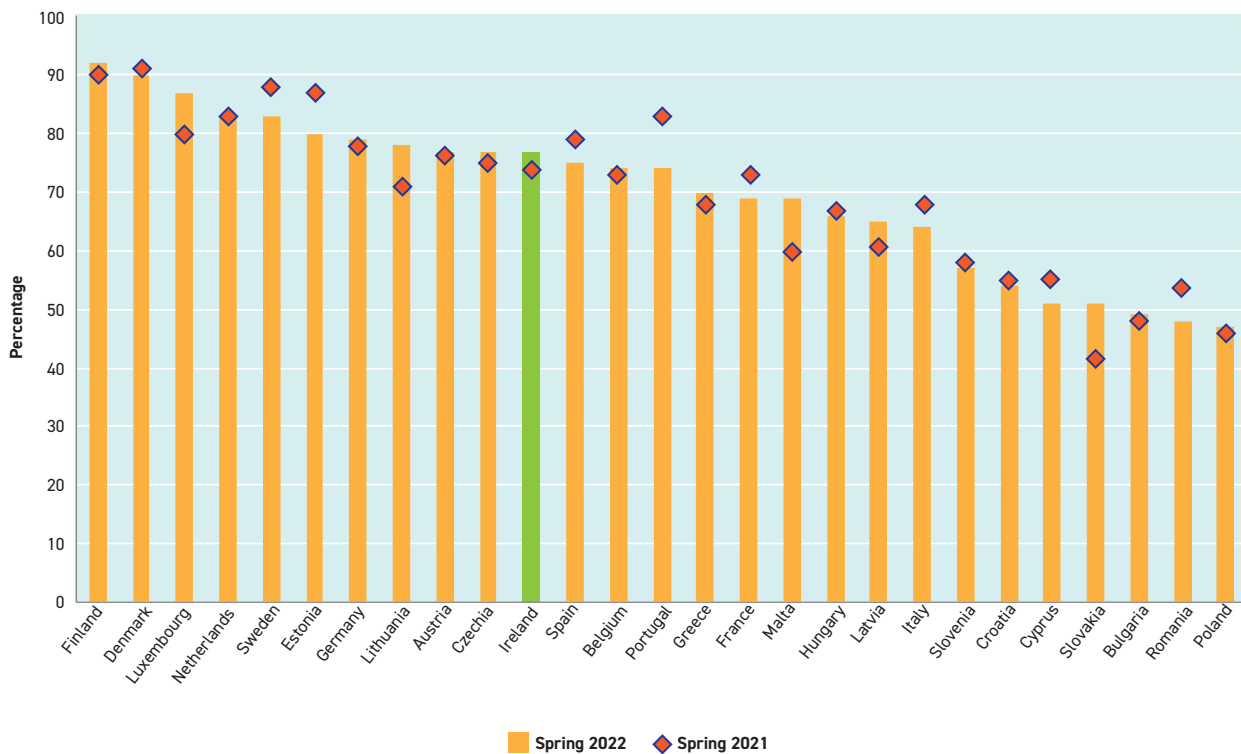
- Ireland, with trust in the justice/legal system at 63 per cent, ranks above the EU27 average in this category. However, the level of trust has dropped from 74 per cent in 2020.
- Denmark and Finland display the highest levels of trust with the justice/legal system.



## Trust in the police is a little above the European average

FIGURE 52 TEND TO TRUST - THE POLICE

Source: Eurobarometer

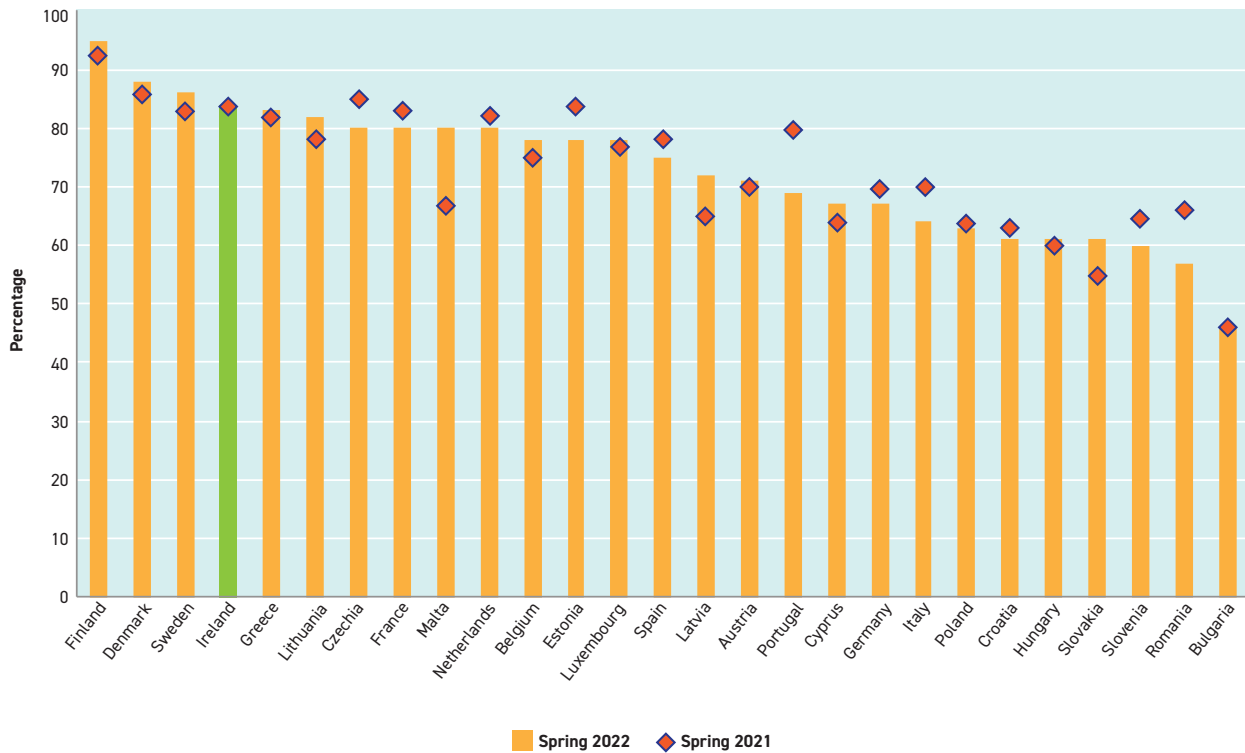


- Trust in the police in Ireland fell significantly to 67 per cent in 2018, from a high of 78 per cent in spring 2017. However, it is at 77 per cent in spring 2022, above the EU27 average of 69 per cent.
- Finland and Denmark have very high trust scores of around 90 per cent.

## There is a high level of trust in the army in Ireland

FIGURE 53 TEND TO TRUST - THE ARMY

Source: Eurobarometer

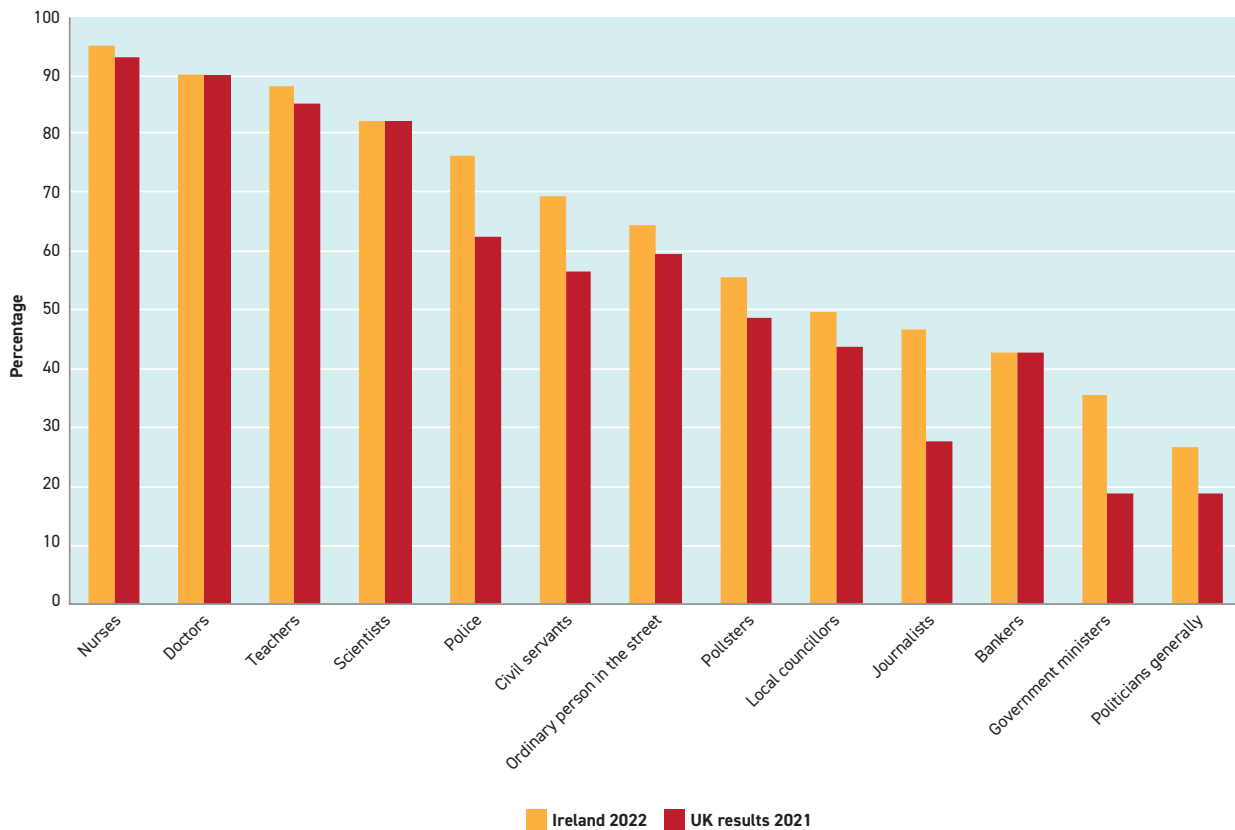


- Ireland is the fourth highest country in Europe with regard to level of trust in the army, with a score of 84 per cent.
- This category had the highest European average trust score of all the public services surveyed, at 71 per cent.

## Trust in public servants to tell the truth is reasonably high

**FIGURE 54 LEVEL OF TRUST TO TELL THE TRUTH**

Source: Ipsos (Ireland) Veracity Index for Ireland, Ipsos Veracity Index for UK

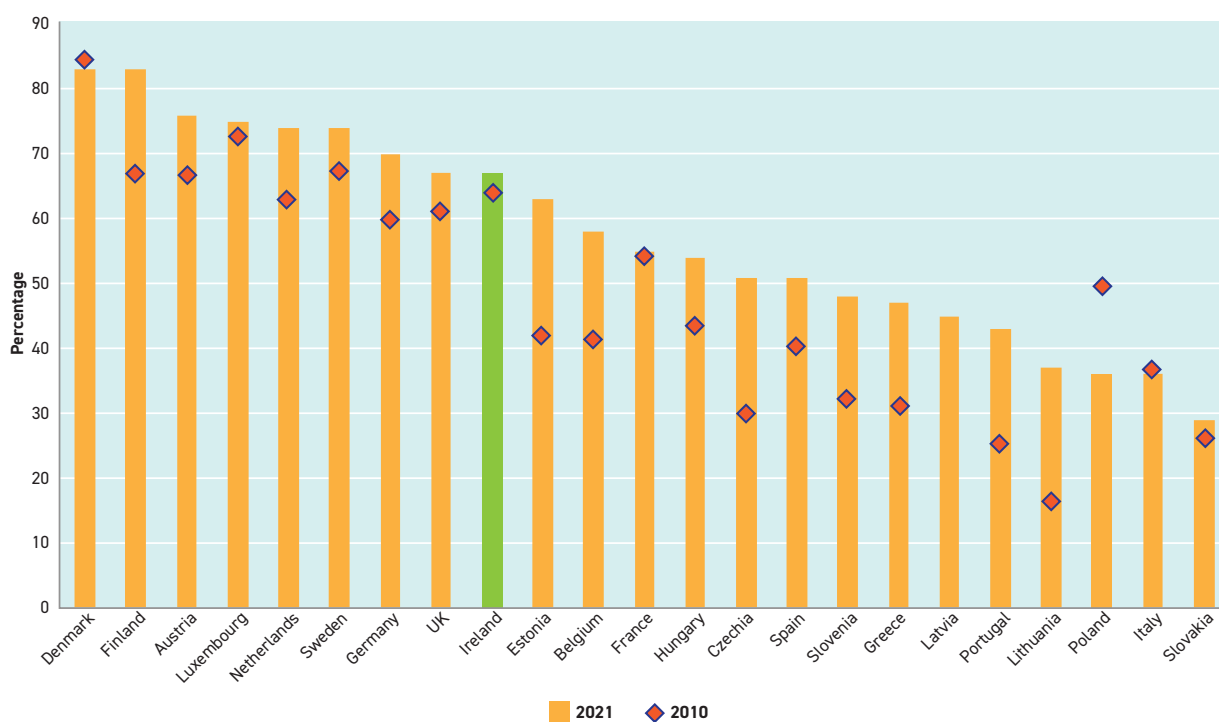


- In general, the level of trust in public servants is much higher than the level of trust in the government or parliament.
- There is over 90 per cent trust in nurses and doctors to tell the truth. This drops to 77 per cent for the police and 70 per cent for civil servants (up from 63 per cent in 2021).
- Levels of trust in Ireland are similar to but generally slightly higher than in the UK, particularly with regard to trust in government ministers and politicians generally.

Citizen confidence with the judicial system and the courts in Ireland is above the European average

FIGURE 55 CITIZEN CONFIDENCE IN THE JUDICIARY SYSTEM AND THE COURTS

Source: OECD Government at a Glance yearly updates

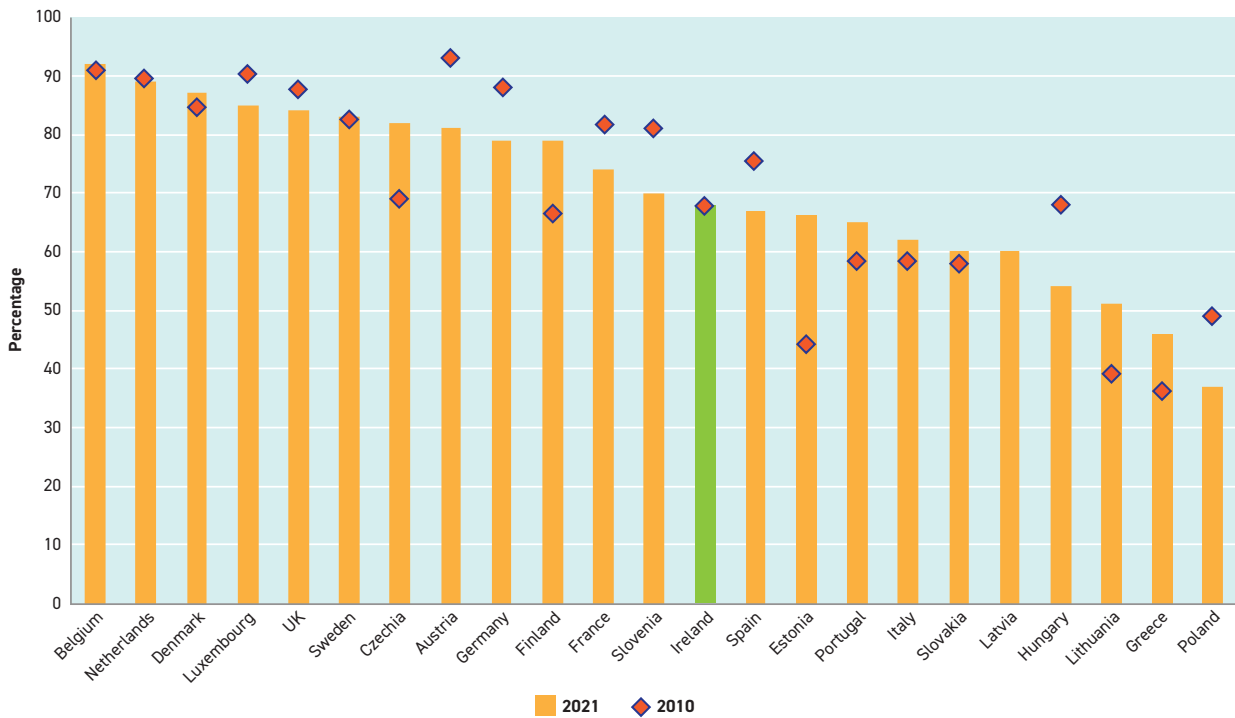


- Citizen confidence with the judicial system and the courts in Ireland in 2021, at 67 per cent is above the European average.
- Confidence has remained at a relatively stable level since 2007.

## Citizen satisfaction with the healthcare system is just below the European average

**FIGURE 56 CITIZEN SATISFACTION WITH THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM**

Source: OECD Government at a Glance yearly updates

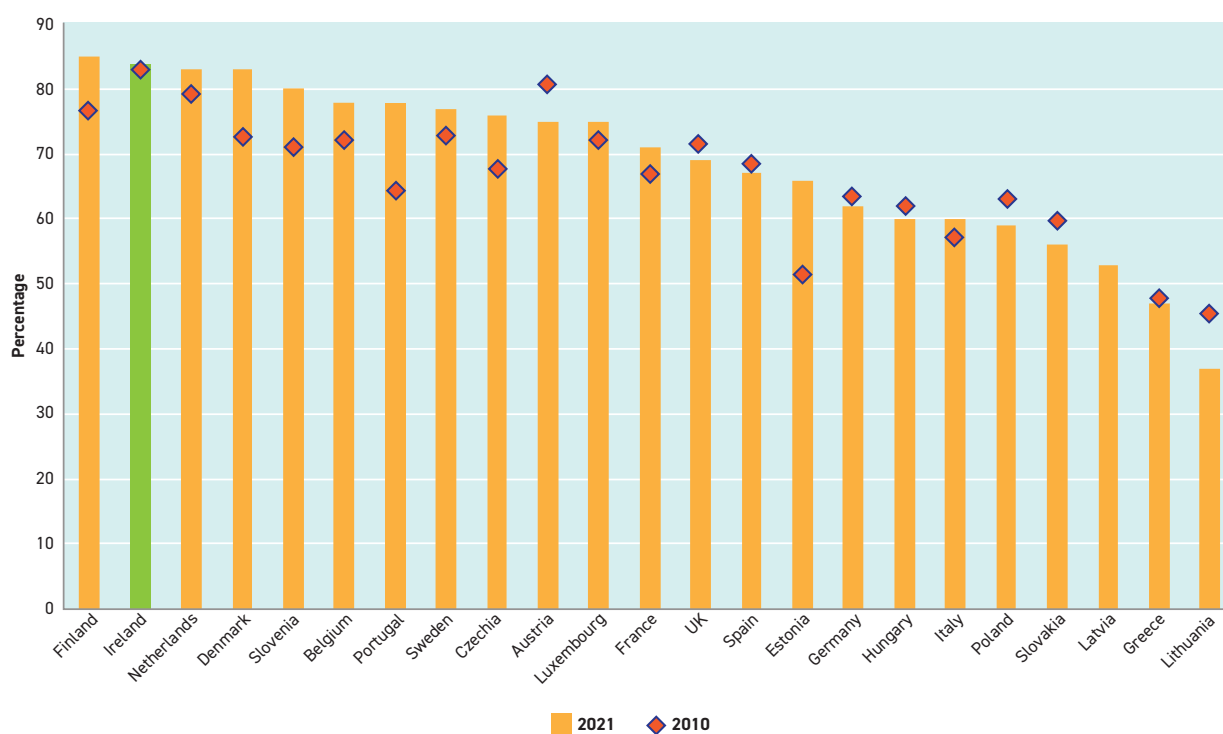


- At 68 per cent, citizen satisfaction with the healthcare system in 2021 is a little below the European average.
- Satisfaction levels have not changed dramatically in recent years: they were at 68 per cent in 2010 and 60 per cent in 2016.

## Citizen satisfaction with the education system and schools remains at a high level

**FIGURE 57 CITIZEN SATISFACTION WITH THE EDUCATION SYSTEM AND SCHOOLS**

Source: OECD Government at a Glance yearly updates

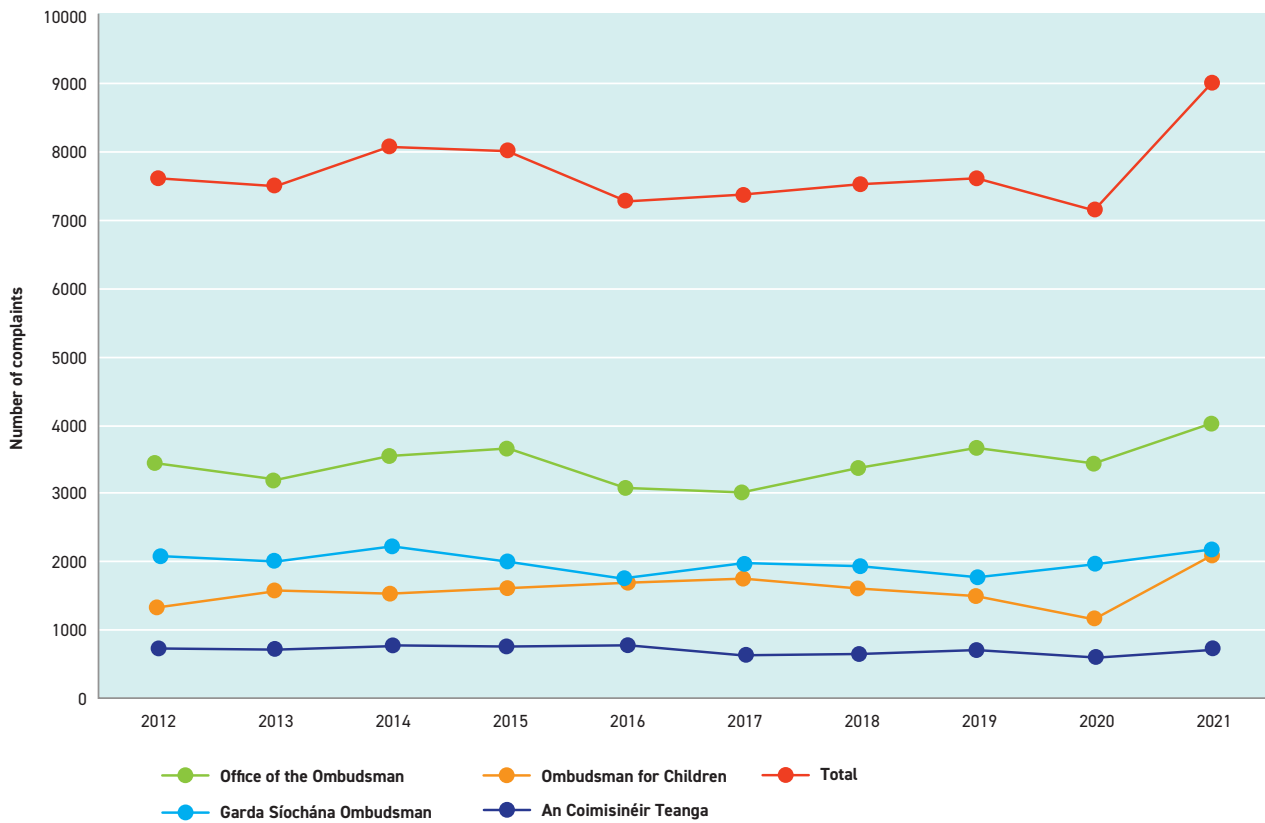


- Citizens express a high level of satisfaction with the education system and schools, at 84 per cent in 2021 (up from 76 per cent in 2020 when it dipped slightly).
- Ireland scored the second highest level of satisfaction with the education system behind Finland.

## Complaints to Ombudsman offices increased sharply in 2021

**FIGURE 58 COMPLAINTS TO OMBUDSMAN OFFICES**

Source: various Ombudsman Office annual reports.

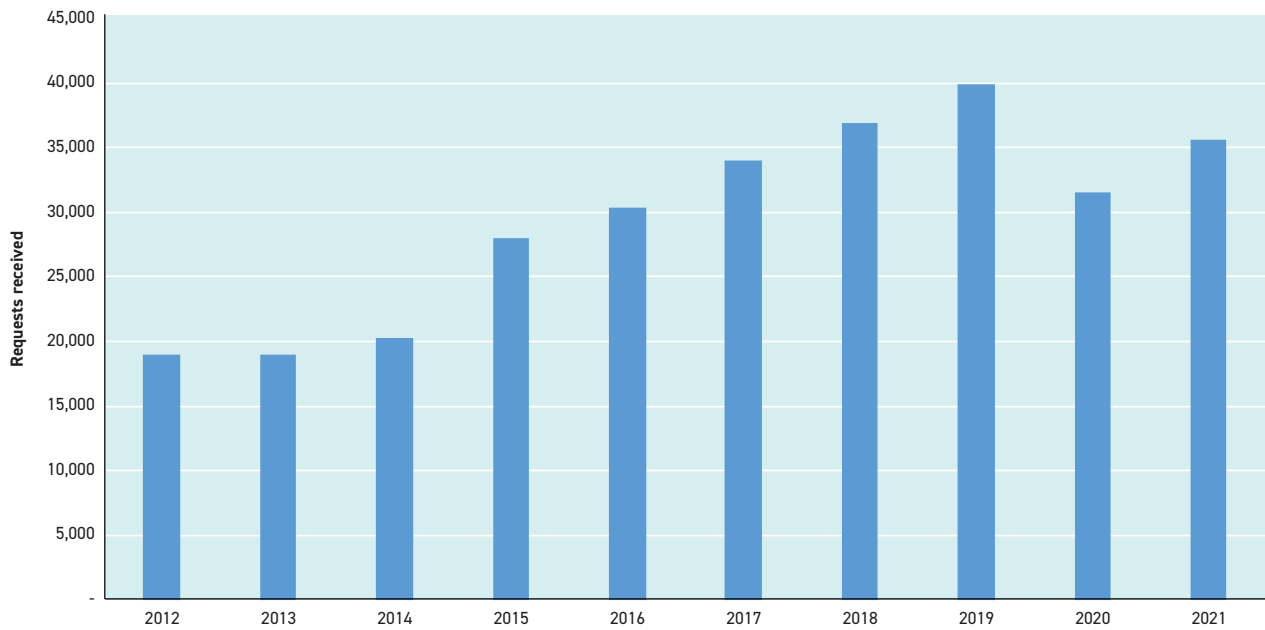


- Ombudsman offices received 9,046 complaints in 2021, an increase of just over 25 per cent on the 2020 figure. The Covid-19 pandemic likely had an effect here.
- All offices recorded an increase in the number of complaints.

## The number of freedom of information requests received by public bodies increased in 2021

**FIGURE 59 NUMBER OF FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUESTS RECEIVED**

Source: Office of the Information Commissioner annual reports



- The number of freedom of information (FOI) requests in 2021 was 35,673. This represents an increase of 13 per cent on 2020 and indicates a return to a more normal trend. However, the 2021 figure is still eleven per cent below the 2019 figure.
- Prior to 2020 there has been a continuous upward trend in FOI requests, from just over 10,000 in 2007, with a large increase since 2014, when the Freedom of Information Act 2014 removed restrictions and extended the range of bodies covered.
- The HSE accounts for just under a third of the requests received.



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## APPENDIX 1

INDICATORS USED TO MAKE UP THE IPA PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION QUALITY INDICATOR  
(data from IMD World Competitiveness yearbook)

	Data Source and Indicator	Description
<b>Traditional Public Service Values Indicator (TPSVI)</b>	Justice Processes	Justice is fairly administered
	Bribery and Corruption	Existence of bribery and corruption
	Transparency	Government policy is transparent

	Data Source and Indicator	Description
<b>Competitiveness and Regulation Indicator (CRI)</b>	Legal and Regulatory Framework	The legal and regulatory framework encourages the competitiveness of enterprises
	Public Sector Contracts	Public sector contracts are sufficiently open to foreign bidders
	Intellectual Property Rights	Intellectual property rights are adequately enforced
	Public and Private Sector Ventures	Public and private sector ventures are supporting technological developments
	Bureaucracy	Bureaucracy hinders business activities



