

# PUBLIC SECTOR TRENDS 2019

# 25



STATE OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE SERIES

**RICHARD BOYLE**  
DECEMBER 2019

**IPA**  
AN FORAS RIARACHÁIN  
INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC  
ADMINISTRATION



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## FOREWORD

This report examines trends in public sector development and is the tenth 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.

Dr Marian O'Sullivan  
Director General  
Institute of Public Administration

## SELECTED FINDINGS

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

- Average government spending per person was almost €17,000 per head in 2018.
- In 2019 the numbers employed in the public service rose to approximately 335,000 back above what it was in 2008 before the economic downturn.
- As the economy has grown, the proportion of the workforce working in the public sector has fallen, and is currently just below 15 per cent.
- Spending on public service pay and pensions has increased each year since 2014. Spending stands at €20.8bn in 2019, its highest ever total.
- The proportion of top-level civil service posts filled by applicants from outside the civil service fell in 2017.
- The proportion of top-level posts filled by women increased in 2017 to 43 per cent, its highest ever total.
- Sick leave levels are increasing but vary across the public service. There has been a notable increase in sick leave in the defence forces since 2014.

### The quality and efficiency of public administration

- Executives see the quality of Irish public administration as notably above the European average. Ireland came 4th of the EU28 on this indicator in 2019, up from 7th in 2018.
- The provision of public services in Ireland is rated less well than in many European countries. Just under 55 per cent of all people surveyed say that the provision of public services was good.
- Ireland has a less positive view of the term 'public service' than many countries. 70 per cent gave a positive response to the term, compared to around 90 per cent for the top scoring countries.
- Business executives see Irish public services as one of the least bureaucratic in Europe, ranking second behind Denmark.
- Ireland scores a little above the European average on an index of civil service effectiveness.
- Ireland leads the way with regard to open data maturity, ranking first of European countries on an index of open data maturity, up significantly from 2015, when ranked 18th.
- Nearly two-thirds of the public, and just under half of business users, see the civil service as efficient.



## Sectoral performance

### Education

- Ireland delivers a reasonable level of educational efficiency when comparing reading and maths performance to spending per student across Europe.
- Ireland's executives perceive the primary and secondary education system highly in terms of it meeting the needs of the economy, ranking 4th of the EU28 on this indicator.

### Health

- Ireland performs well compared to most European countries with regard to life expectancy at birth (82.2 years) and healthy life expectancy at birth (72.1 years).
- Against a 'basket' of outcomes assessed by the Euro Health Consumer Index, Ireland performed a little above the EU28 average in 2018, an improvement on 2017.
- The rate of potentially avoidable hospital admissions in Ireland is high.

## Trust, satisfaction and confidence in public administration

- Levels of trust in government and in parliament have improved from a very low base and are now back above the European average.
- Trust in local authorities is now above the European average after several years of being below the average.
- 62 per cent of the population tend to trust the public administration in Ireland. This is just above the European average.
- There were just over 7,500 complaints to Ombudsman offices in 2018.
- The number of freedom of information requests continues to increase significantly, to just under 37,000 in 2018, up from just over 10,000 in 2007.



# 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, cost and inputs alone 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 and economic 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) 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 report draws 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>.

## 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 (on a scale from 1–10 for the IMD and WEF 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.

<sup>1</sup> Afonso et al (2003)

<sup>2</sup> Social Cultural and Planning Office (2004)

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

<sup>4</sup> See <http://www.oecd.org/governance/govatataglace.htm>

<sup>5</sup> 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>.

<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 EU28 average and falling

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

Source: Eurostat



- A commonly used indicator of public spending in the economy is expenditure as a percentage of GDP (gross domestic product). From 2008 to 2010, as GDP shrank because of the recession, Ireland's government expenditure as a percentage of GDP increased rapidly. The particularly large increase in 2010 is mostly explained by the impact on government expenditure of specific government support to banks during the financial crisis, in the form of capital injections.
- Since 2011, as spending reductions introduced by the government came into effect, expenditure as a percentage of GDP had fallen considerably.
- 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 in 2018, at 42 per cent.

<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 slightly

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

Source: Eurostat



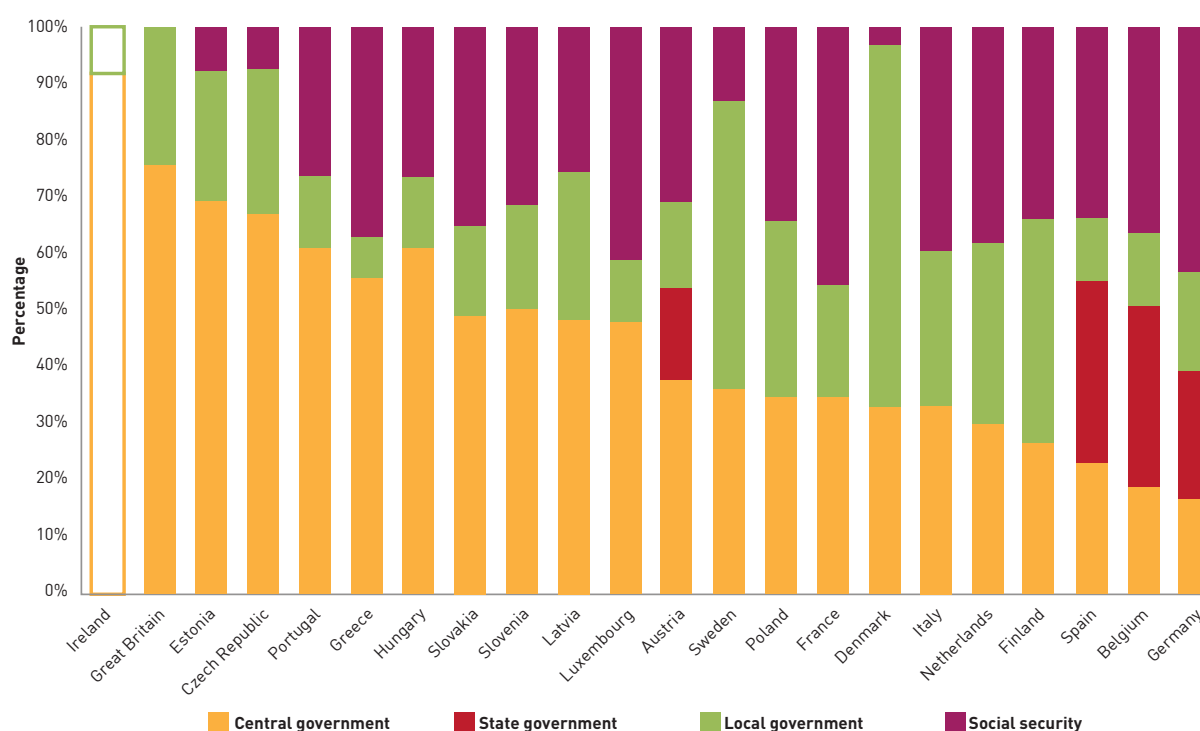
- Expenditure per head of population grew faster in Ireland than the EU average up to 2010. The effect of government support for the banks is clearly visible on the impact on the figures for 2010. From 2010, general government expenditure per head fell significantly.
- From 2013 government expenditure per head has remained relatively constant. It has been increasing slightly in recent years, however, and was at almost €17,000 per head in 2018.
- Government expenditure per person in Ireland in 2018 was the tenth highest in Europe. 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 €42,156 in 2018, 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 the most centralised in Europe

**FIGURE 3 DISTRIBUTION OF GENERAL GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE ACROSS LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT 2016**

Source: OECD Government at a Glance 2017

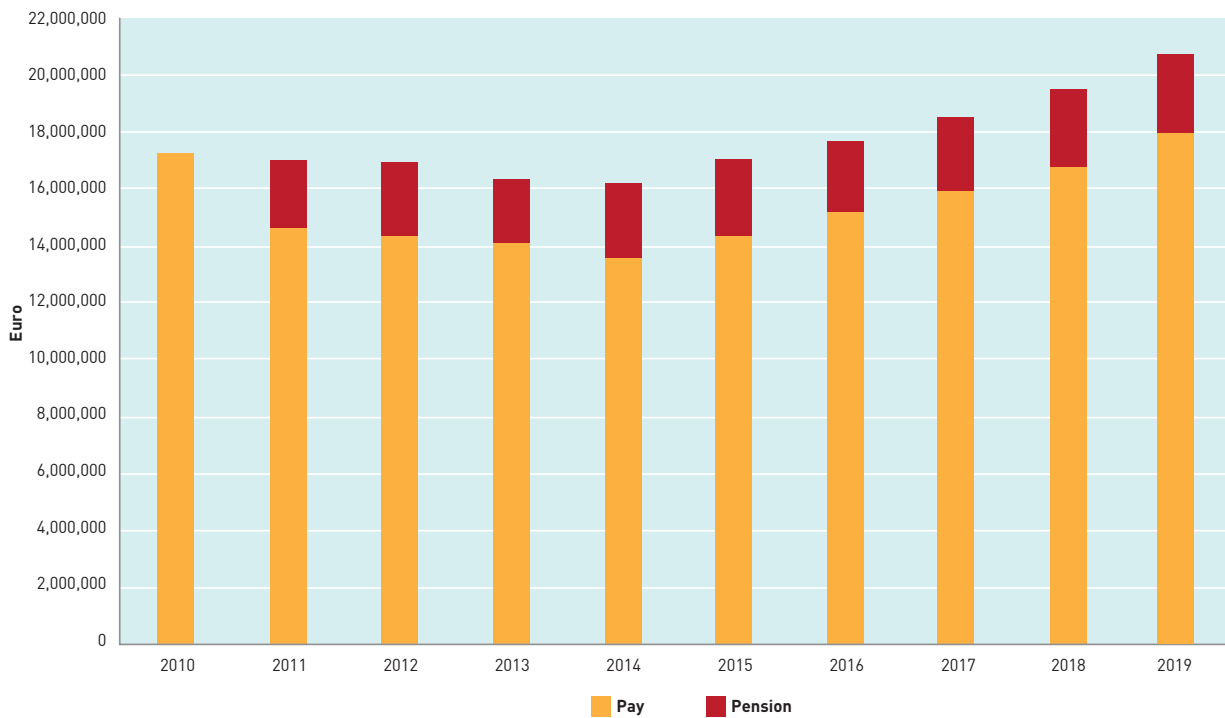


- The tasks of government are shared between different levels of government. The nature of this share-out varies markedly between countries.
- Ireland has the highest share of general government expenditure allocated at national level in the OECD in 2016, with just over 90 per cent of expenditure undertaken by central government.
- Centralisation has increased in recent years: central government's share of expenditure was around 82 per cent in 1987.
- At 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 after several years of falling.

**FIGURE 4 PUBLIC SERVICE PAY AND PENSIONS**

Source: Department of Public Expenditure and Reform Databank. Separate data on pensions only available from 2011.



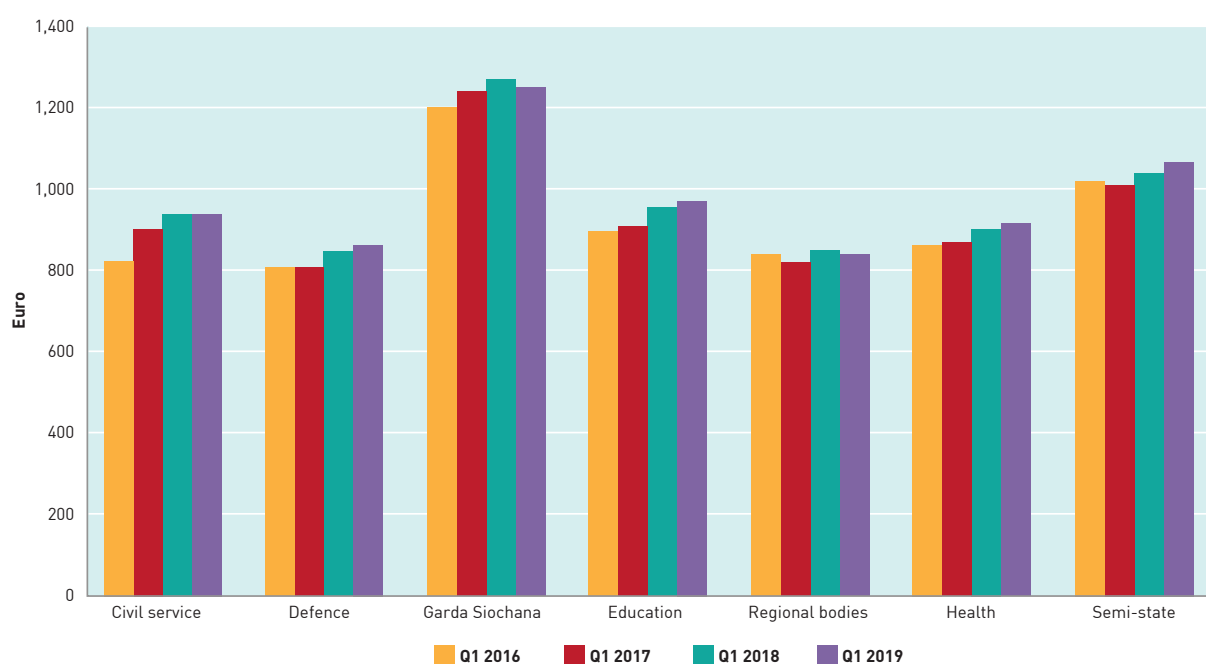
- The public service pay and pension bill reached a peak of €18.7bn in 2008. From 2008 to 2014, as the cutbacks in numbers and pay introduced by the Government took effect, expenditure on public service pay and pensions decreased to €16.2bn in 2014.
- Spending on public service pay and pensions has increased each year since 2014. Spending stands at €20.8bn in 2019, its highest ever total.
- Pensions account for approximately €2.7bn (13 per cent) of the total pay and pension bill in 2019.



## Average weekly earnings in the public sector are increasing overall

**FIGURE 5 PUBLIC SECTOR AVERAGE WEEKLY EARNINGS**

Source: CSO. Figures are for Q1 each year. 2019 figures are a preliminary estimate.

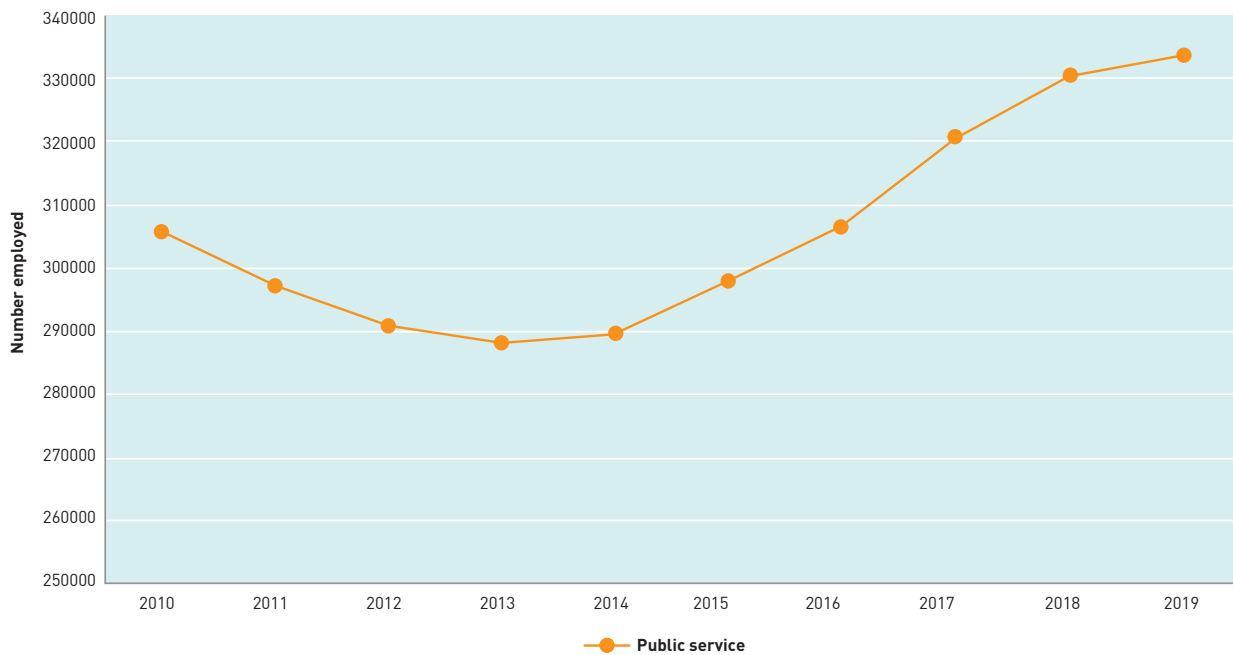


- These are gross earnings figures before deductions for PRSI, tax and other levies. The CSO note that this is particularly relevant to the public sector since March 2009 when the pension levy was introduced.
- Overall, average weekly earnings have increased between 2016 and 2019.

## Numbers employed in the public service are continuing to rise after a period of steady decline

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

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



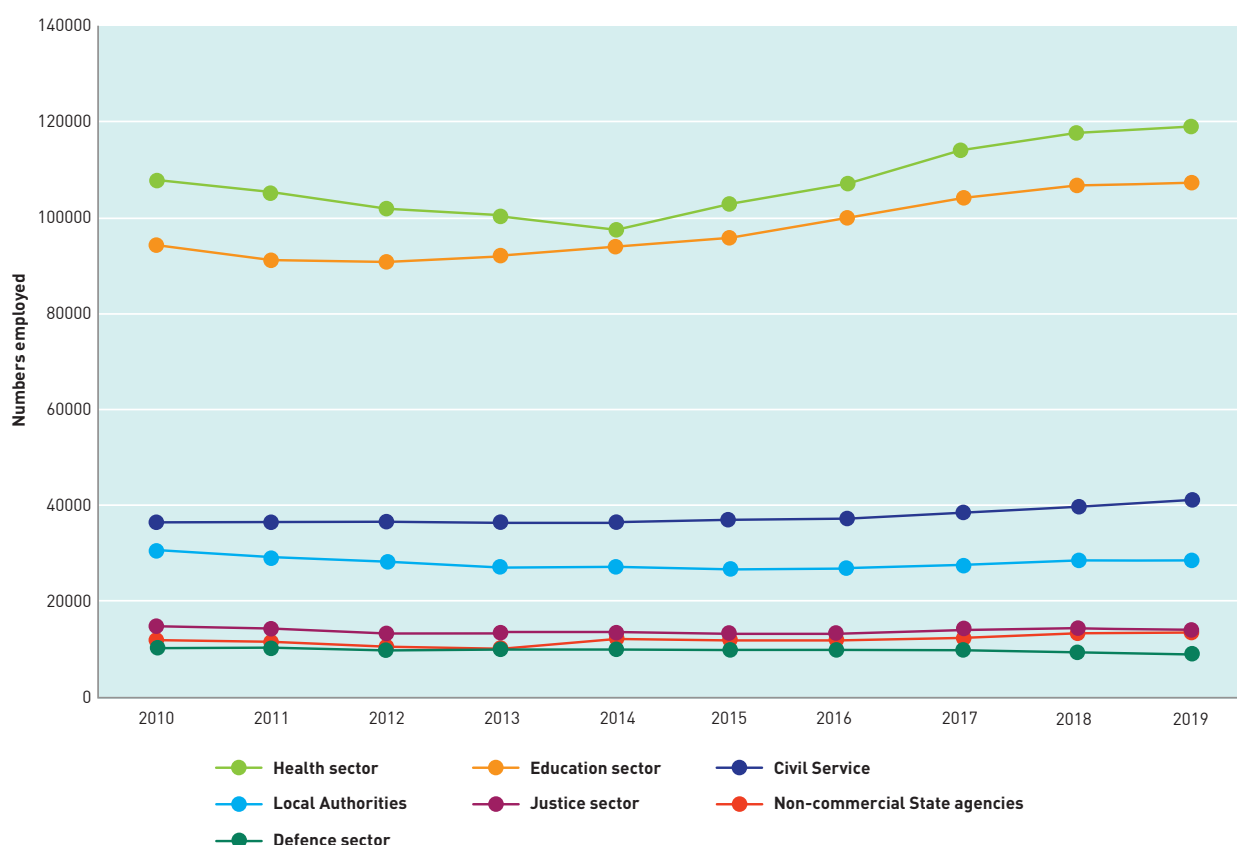
- From its peak in 2008, the total number of people employed in the public service dropped from 320,000 to 288,000 in 2013, a drop of 10 per cent.
- The number of people employed in the public service has risen since 2013, and is now above the level of employment in 2008.
- In 2019, the numbers employed in the public service rose to approximately 335,000.

<sup>9</sup> Figures are for end of year, apart from 2019, 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>



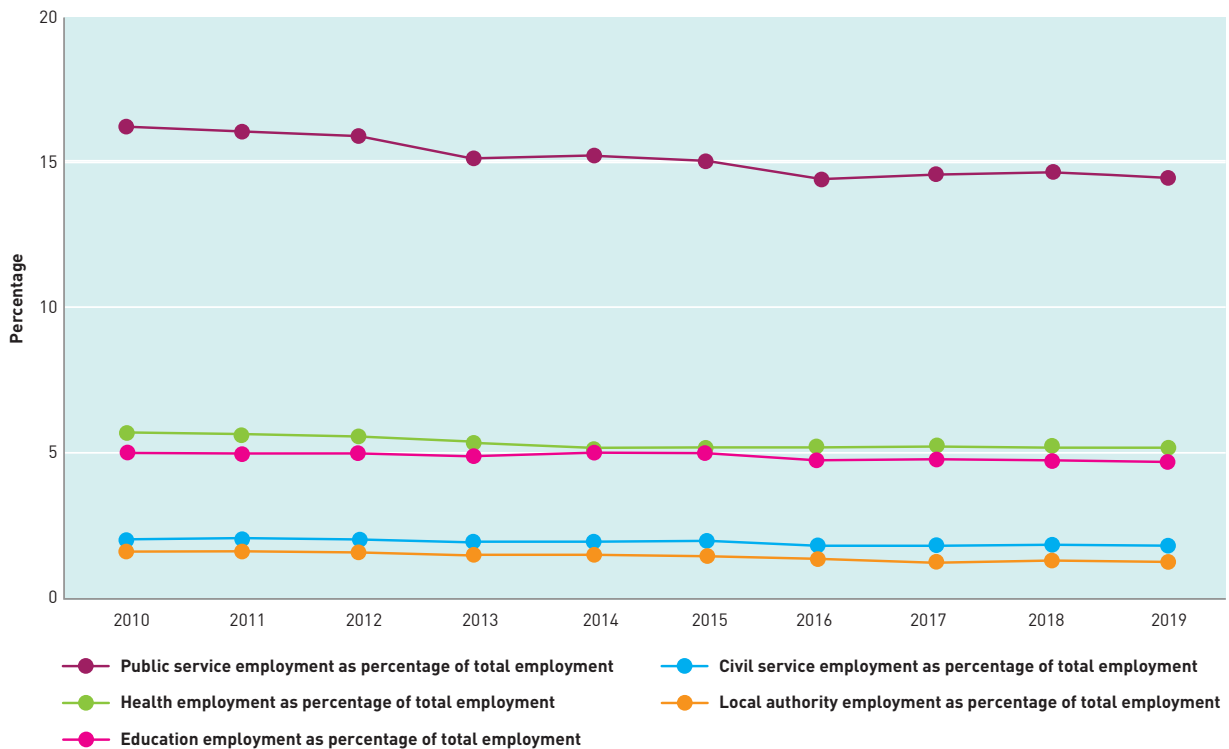
- Two out of every three people employed in the public service work in either health or education. In 2019, there were approximately 120,000 people employed in the health sector and 110,000 people employed in the education sector.
- Employment is now higher than in 2008 in the civil service, education, health and non-commercial state agency sectors. Employment remains lower than 2008 in the justice, defence and local authority sectors.

<sup>10</sup> Figures are for end of year, apart from 2019 which is for Q1, the most recent available.

While numbers employed in the public service have varied over the last decade, as a proportion of the total workforce they have slightly declined

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

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



- While public service employment grew slightly as a proportion of the labour force in 2009 and 2010, since 2010 its share of the labour force has dropped back again<sup>12</sup>.
- Over the past decade, public service employment has generally remained around 15 to 16 per cent of total employment. However, from 2016 it is just below 15 per cent of the labour force, the lowest it has been in the last decade.
- 5 per cent of all those in employment are employed in the health sector, and just under 5 per cent in education. 1.8 per cent of those in employment are civil servants, and 1.2 per cent are in local authorities.

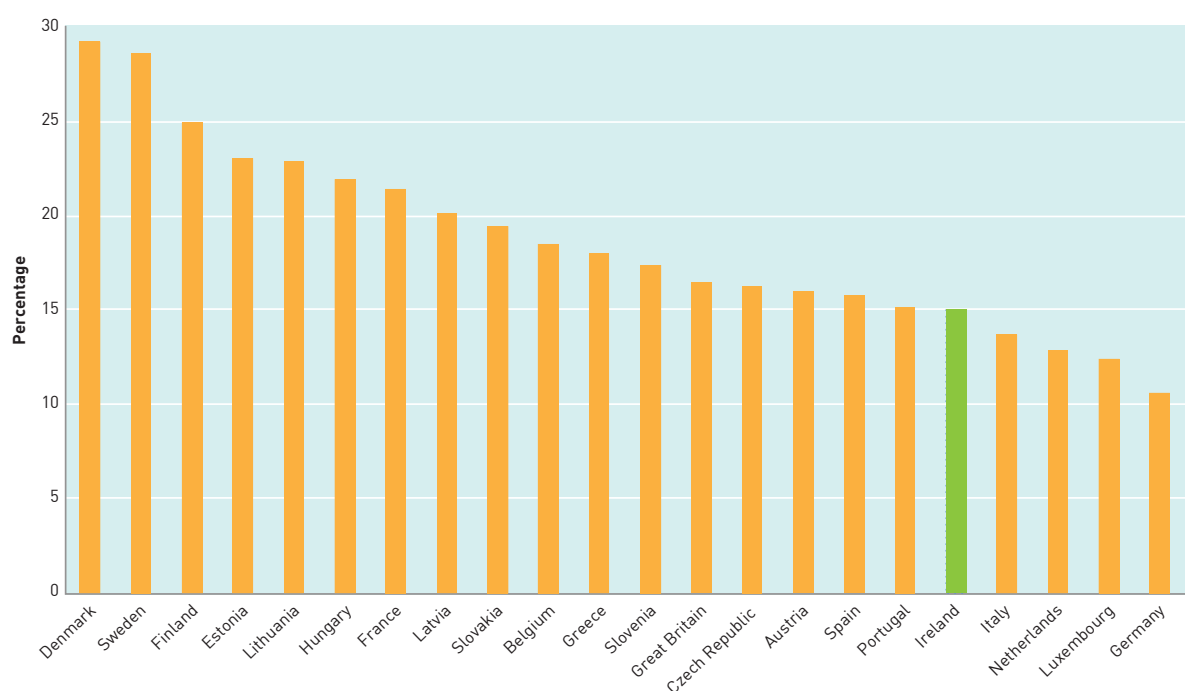
<sup>11</sup> Figures are for end of year, apart from 2019 which is for Q1, the most recent available.

<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 2015**

Source: OECD Government at a Glance 2017

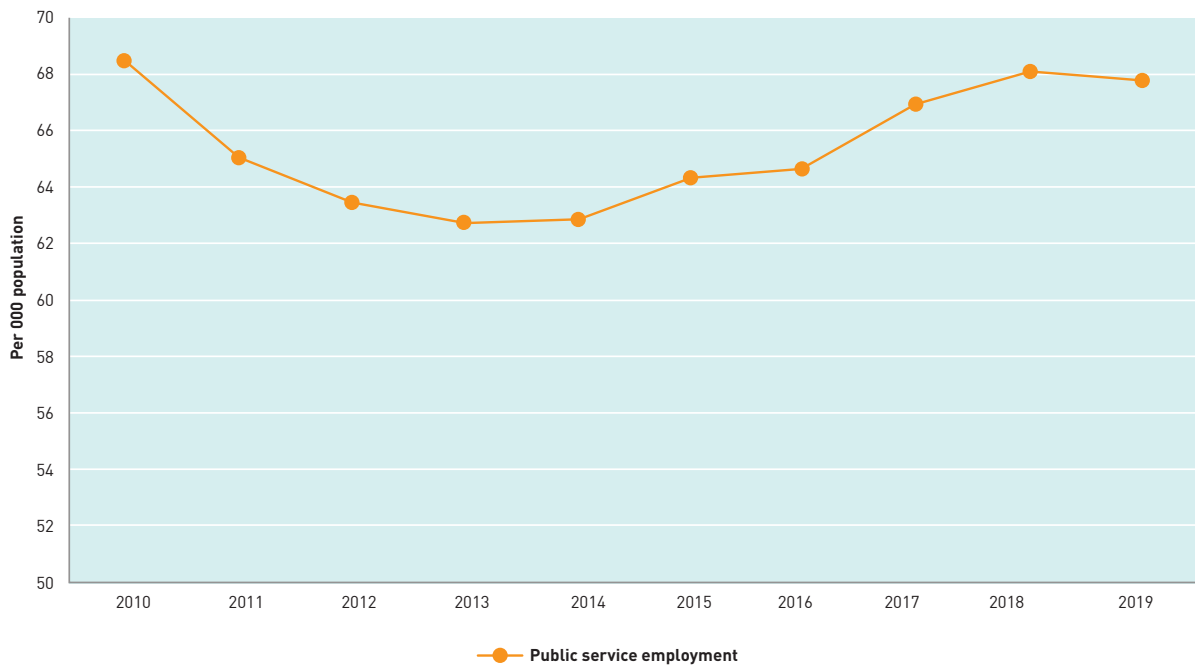


- The size of government employment varies significantly amongst European countries, from 29 per cent of the labour force in Denmark to 11 per cent in Germany in 2015.
- In Ireland in 2015 employment in general government services accounted for 15 per cent of the labour force, towards the lower end of countries surveyed.

## Public service employment relative to the total population has levelled off after a period of growth

**FIGURE 10 PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYMENT PER 000 POPULATION**

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



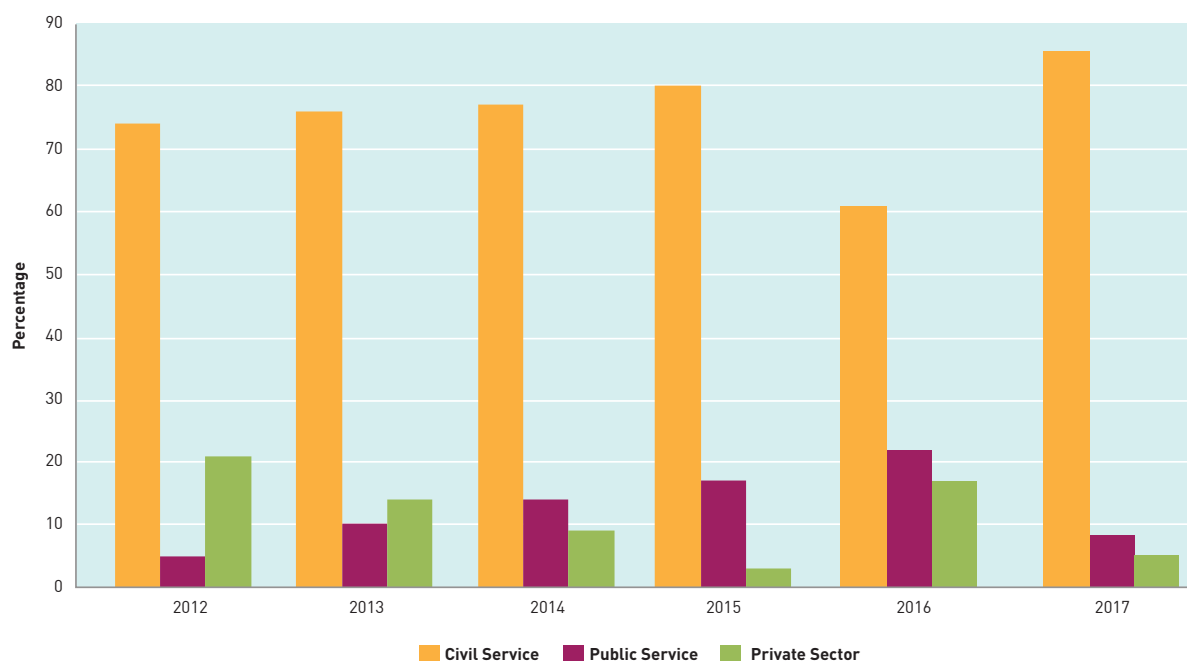
- While public service employment levels have been changing, the population has continued to increase.
- Public service employment relative to the population was relatively stable at between 70 and 73 public sector employees per 000 population up to 2008, but dropped rapidly from 2008 until 2013 when it was at 62.8 public service employees per 000 population.
- The number of public service employees per 000 population rose to 66.5 in 2018, and dropped in 2019 to 67.8, still somewhat below the 2008 figure.

<sup>13</sup> Figures are for end of year, apart from 2019 which is for Q1

The proportion of top-level civil service posts filled by applicants from the wider public service and private sector fell in 2017

**FIGURE 11 PERCENTAGE OF SUCCESSFUL TOP LEVEL APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE (TLAC) CANDIDATES RECOMMENDED TO MINISTER/GOVERNMENT BY SECTOR**

Source: Top Level Appointments Committee (TLAC) Sixth Report to the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, 2017 Developments & Trends



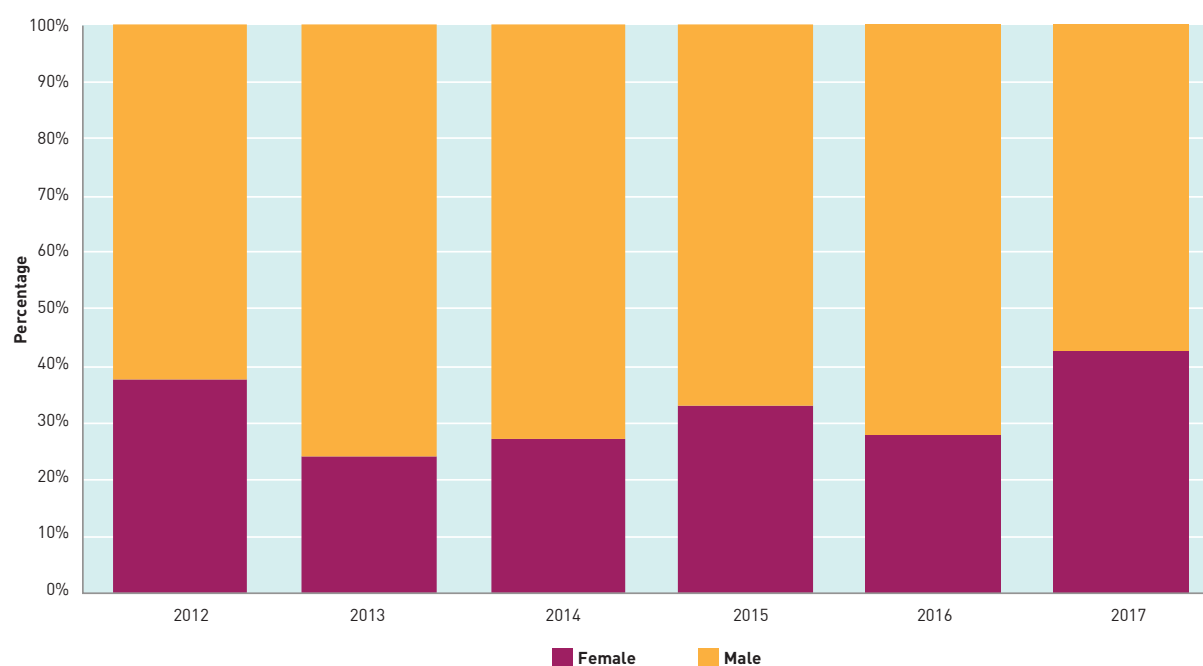
- Between 2012 and 2015, roughly 80 per cent of top-level appointments were filled from within the civil service<sup>14</sup>. This dropped to just over 60 per cent in 2016.
- The proportion of top-level posts filled by private sector applicants reached a high of 21 per cent in 2012 but has been lower each year since then. Private sector applicants made up 5 per cent of successful applicants in 2017.
- 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 dropped back to 8 per cent in 2017.

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

## The proportion of top-level posts filled by women increased in 2017

**FIGURE 12 TOP LEVEL APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE (TLAC) SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATES BY GENDER**

Source: Top Level Appointments Committee (TLAC) Sixth Report to the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, 2017 Developments & Trends



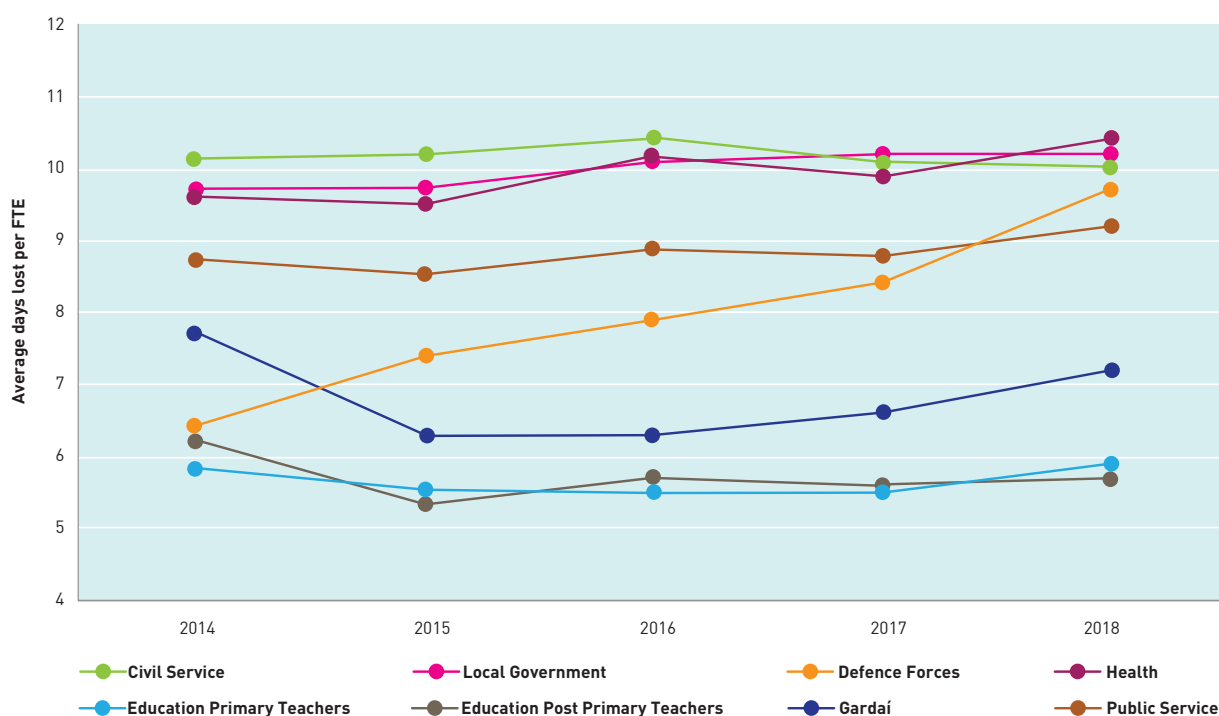
- The proportion of top-level posts filled by women has varied between roughly a quarter and a third of all posts.
- The proportion of posts filled by women increased in each of 2014 and 2015, when it was at 33 per cent. It remained at 33 per cent in 2016, and increased to 43 per cent in 2017.



## Sick leave levels are increasing but vary across the public service

**FIGURE 13 PUBLIC SERVICE SICK LEAVE**

Source: Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, 2018 Public Service Sick Leave Statistics and Trends

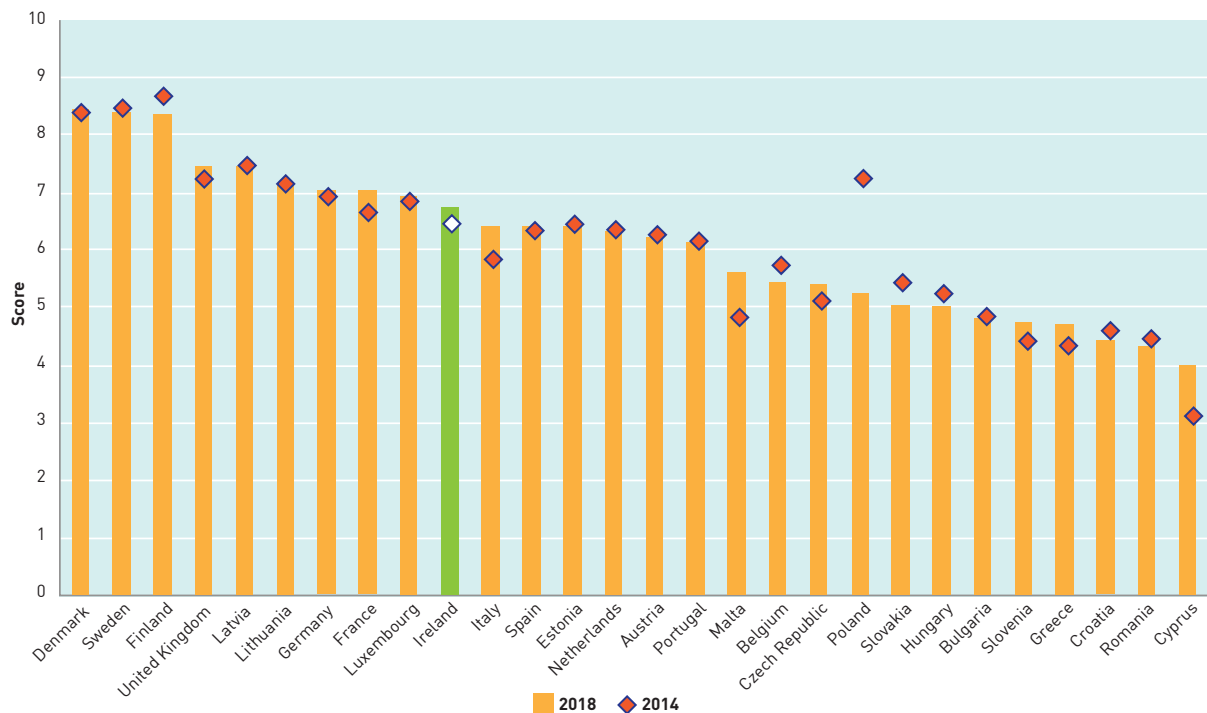


- Sick leave levels in the public service as a whole have tended to fluctuate around 9 days per full time equivalent (FTE) between 2014 and 2018.
- The highest levels of sick leave in the public service are in the civil service, health and local government sectors. The lowest levels of sick leave are in education (primary and post primary teachers).
- There has been a notable increase in sick leave in the defence forces since 2014.

The steering capacity of the Irish government is assessed at just above the European average

**FIGURE 14 EXECUTIVE CAPACITY**

Source: Bertelsmann Stiftung Sustainable Governance Indicators

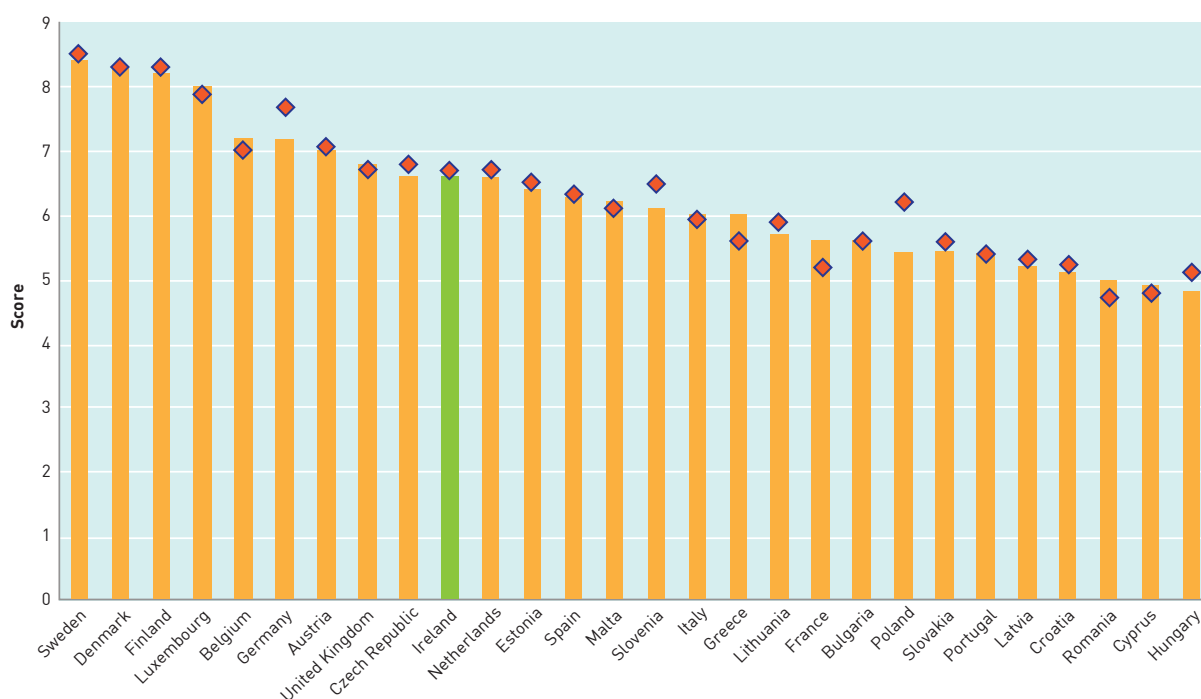


- This executive capacity index assesses the steering capacity of government. It covers strategic capacity, inter-ministerial coordination, evidence based instruments, societal consultation, policy communication, implementation, and adaptability.
- Ireland falls into the upper-middle ranks with regard to executive capacity. Its score on this measure has slightly improved over the last couple of years.
- Denmark, Finland and Sweden are the highest scorers.

## Executive accountability in Ireland is rated at slightly above the European average

**FIGURE 15 EXECUTIVE ACCOUNTABILITY**

Source: Bertelsmann Stiftung Sustainable Governance Indicators



- The executive accountability index examines non-governmental actors' involvement in policy-making. It assesses citizen's participatory competence, legislative actors' resources, the role of the media, and the role of parties and interest associations.
- Ireland falls into the upper-middle ranks in terms of executive accountability. Its score has remained relatively steady since 2014.
- As with executive capacity, Sweden, Denmark and Finland receive the highest scores.

### **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. Eleven indicators derived from both the International Institute for Management Development (IMD) and World Economic Forum (WEF) executive opinion surveys 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 notably above the European average

**FIGURE 16 QUALITY OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION SCORE**

Source: IPA analysis based on IMD and WEF data

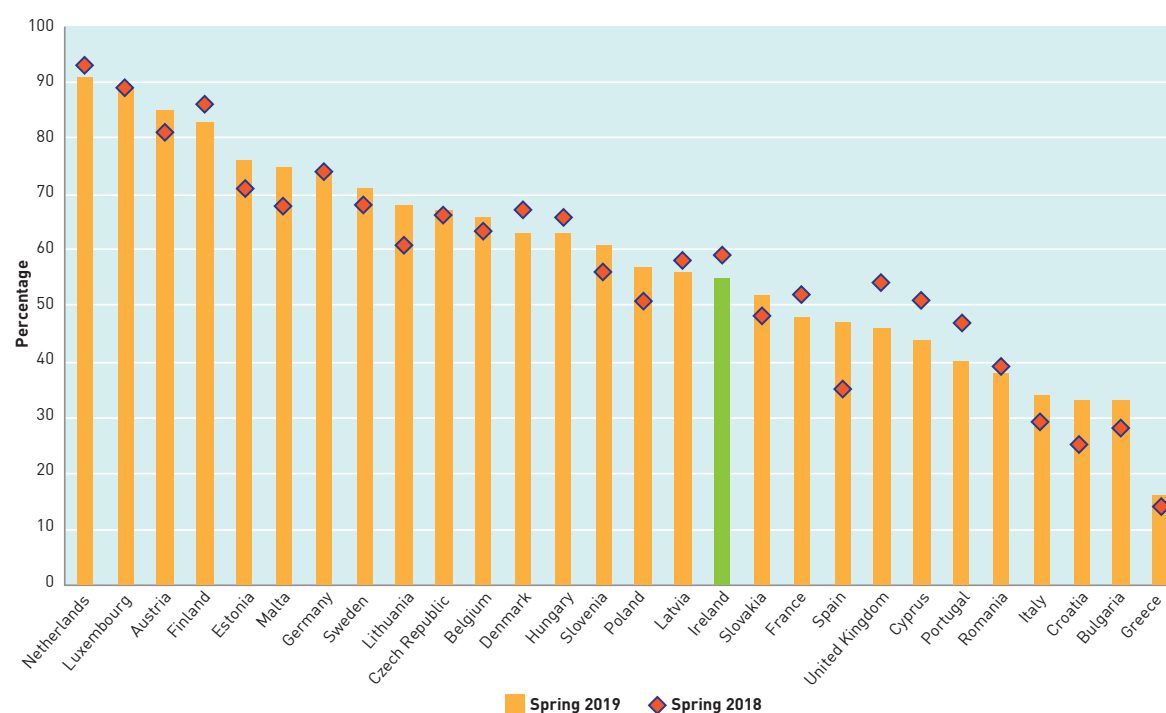


- This quality indicator measures executives' opinions of the quality of public administration as assessed by a range of indicators covering issues such as the existence of bribery and corruption, and transparency of decision making (see Appendix 1 for full list).
- Ireland's score on the quality of public administration index fell slightly between 2014 and 2018, but increased again in 2019. Ireland came 4th of the EU28 on this indicator in 2019.

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

**FIGURE 17 TOTAL POSITIVE FEELINGS TOWARDS - PROVISION OF PUBLIC SERVICE**

Source: Eurobarometer

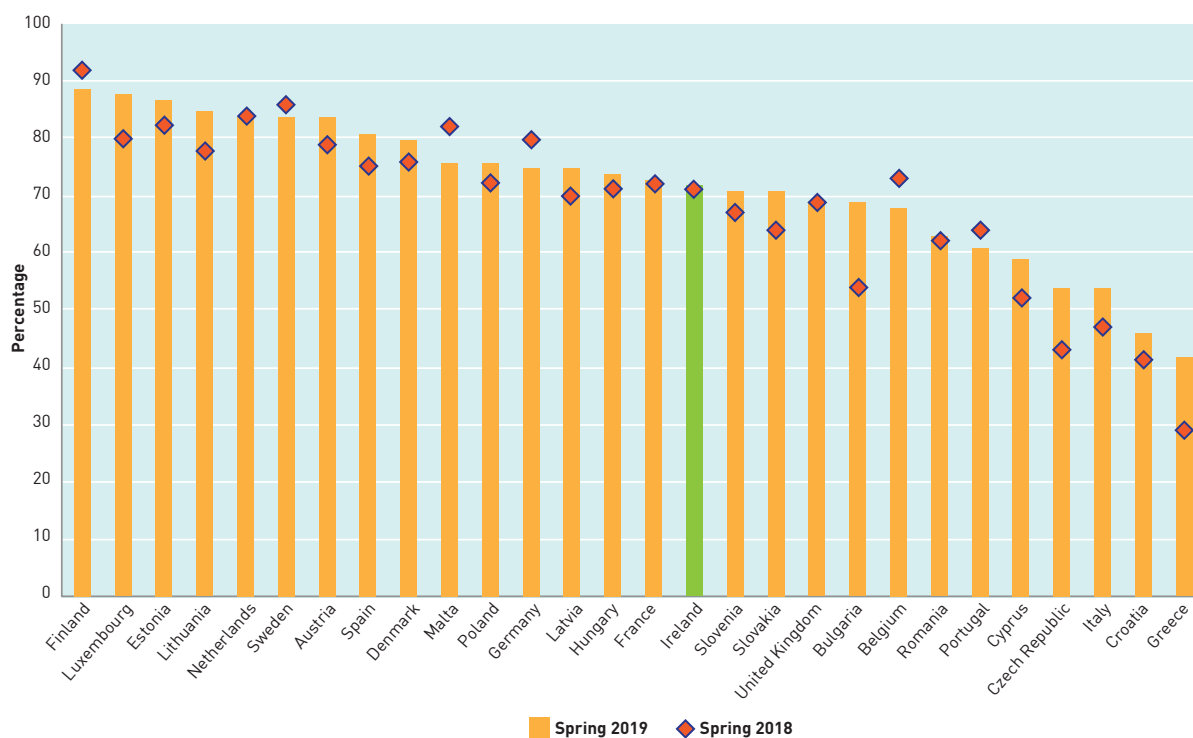


- In spring 2019, just under 55 per cent of all people surveyed said that the provision of public services was good. This was a 5 point decrease on the rating achieved in spring 2018.
- The Netherlands, Luxembourg and Austria receive the highest rating, with 91 per cent in the Netherlands rating public service provision as good.

## Ireland has a less positive view of the term 'public service' than many countries

**FIGURE 18 POSITIVE VIEW OF THE TERM 'PUBLIC SERVICE'**

Source: Eurobarometer

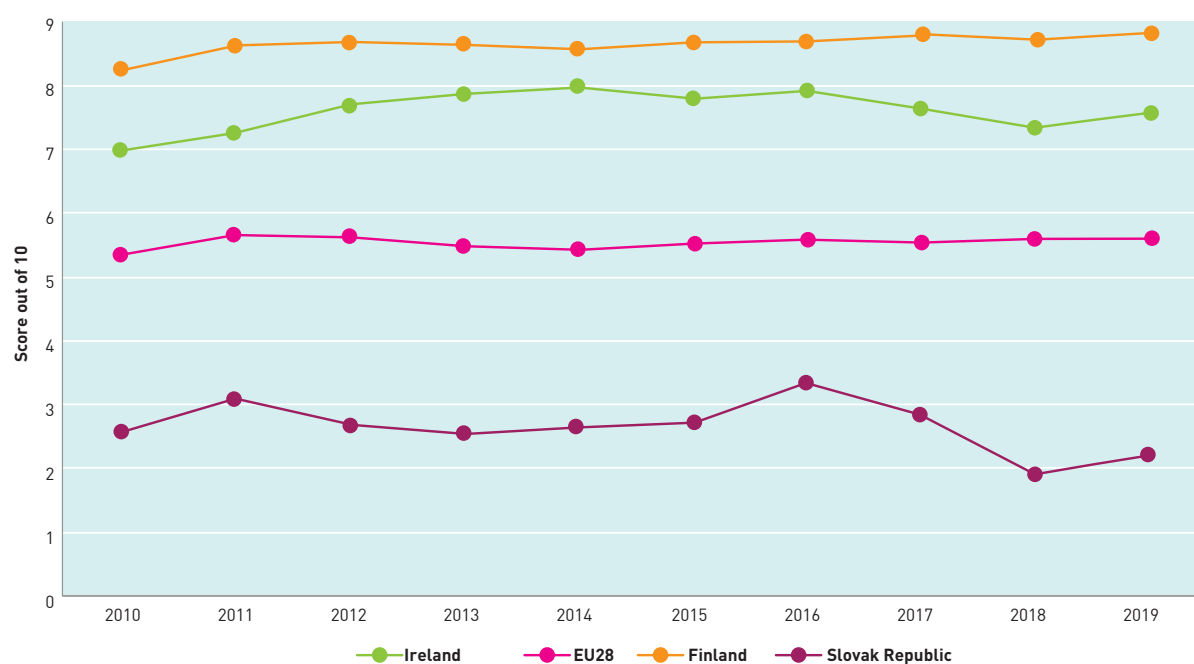


- Respondents were asked if the term 'public service' brought to mind something positive or negative. In Ireland, 70 per cent in spring 2019 gave a positive response. This put Ireland 16th of the EU28.
- The top scoring countries have positive rates near to 90 per cent.

Irish maintenance of traditional public service values is seen as significantly better than the European average

**FIGURE 19 TRADITIONAL PUBLIC SERVICE VALUES INDICATOR (TPSVI)**

Source: IPA analysis based on IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook and WEF Global Competitiveness Report



- 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 EU28 average. Ireland ranked 6th of the EU28 on this indicator in 2019.
- Finland, the Netherlands and Denmark score highest on this indicator.



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

**FIGURE 20 BUREAUCRACY HINDERS BUSINESS ACTIVITY**

Source: IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook

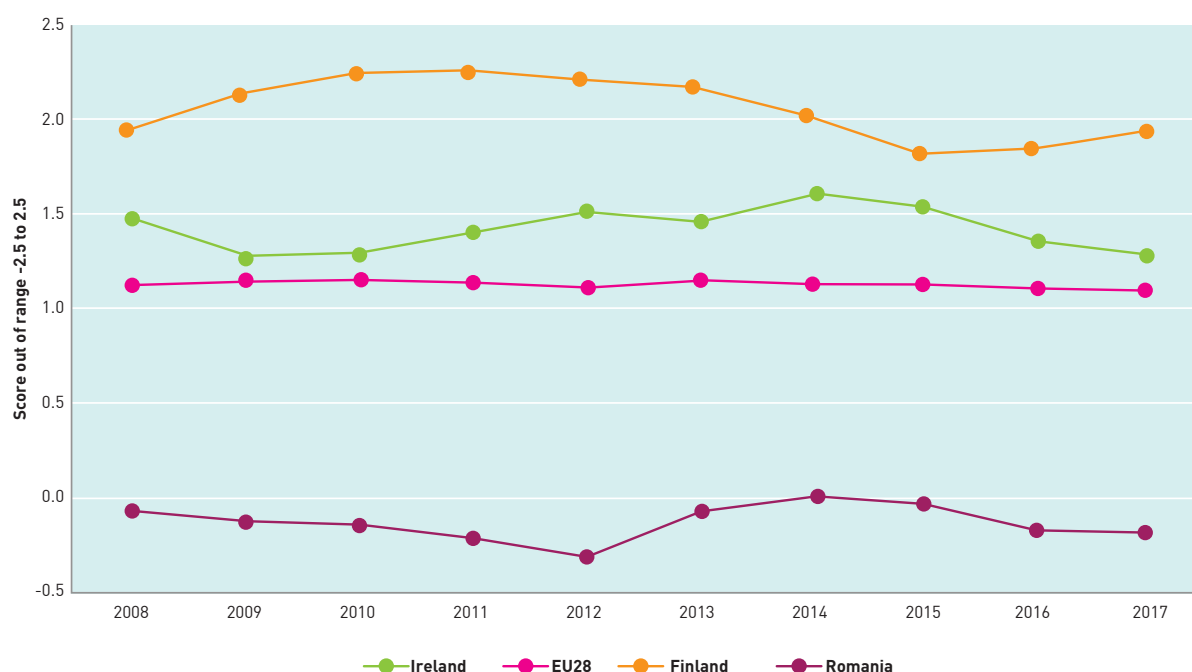


- Respondents to the executive opinion survey carried out by IMD for their World Competitiveness Yearbook indicate that compared to most European countries in the EU, bureaucracy in Ireland is seen as less of a hindrance to business activity. Ireland ranked second on this indicator in 2019, behind Denmark.
- Ireland's score in 2019 was a notable improvement on 2018, when Ireland ranked sixth.

In World Bank assessments, Ireland's government effectiveness score remains above the European average and is relatively stable, though declining in recent years

**FIGURE 21 WORLD BANK GOVERNMENT EFFECTIVENESS INDICATORS**

Source: World Bank Worldwide Governance Indicators

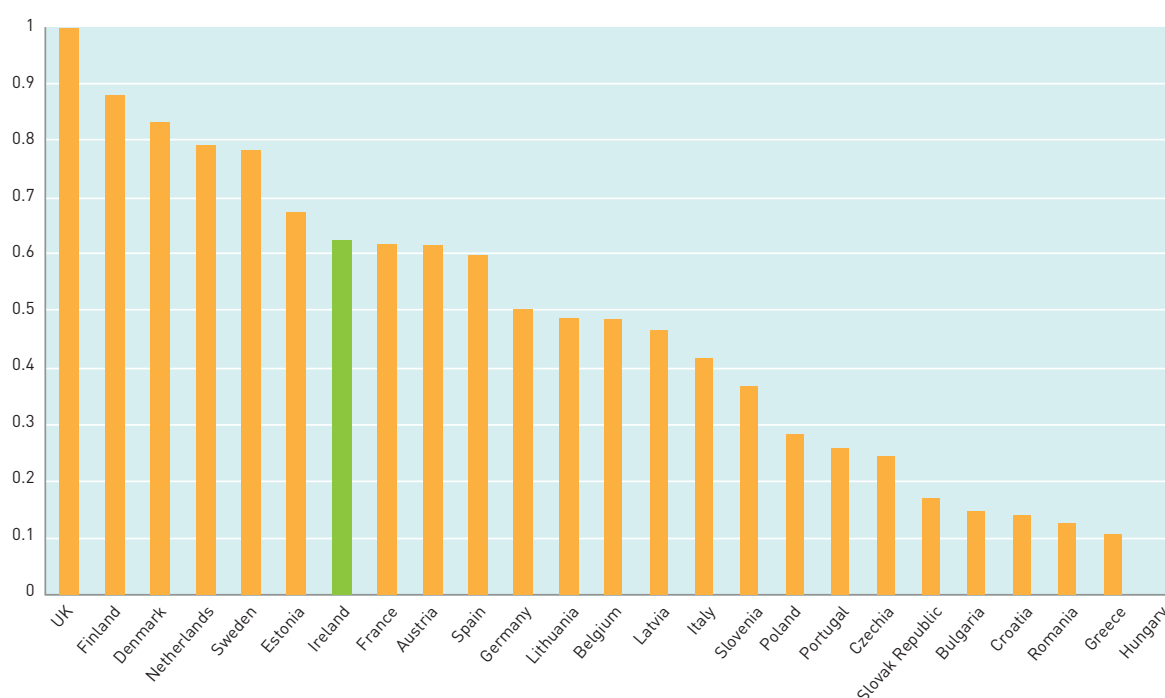


- Since 1996, the World Bank has been using a set of governance indicators as part of its work on promoting good governance. The indicators draw from 35 separate data sources constructed by 32 different organisations.
- The Government Effectiveness indicator aims to measure the quality of public services, the capacity of the civil service and its independence from political pressures, and the quality of policy formulation. On this indicator, Ireland ranked well above the EU28 average up to 2007.
- Ireland's government effectiveness indicator score dropped to just above the EU28 average in 2009. It stabilised in 2010, and generally improved up to 2014. Ireland's score has dropped since 2014 and is just above the European average. Finland is the top European scorer on this indicator and Romania the lowest ranked of the EU28.

## Ireland scores a little above the European average on an index of civil service effectiveness

**FIGURE 22 INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVICE EFFECTIVENESS INDEX**

Source: International Civil Service Effectiveness (InCiSE) Index

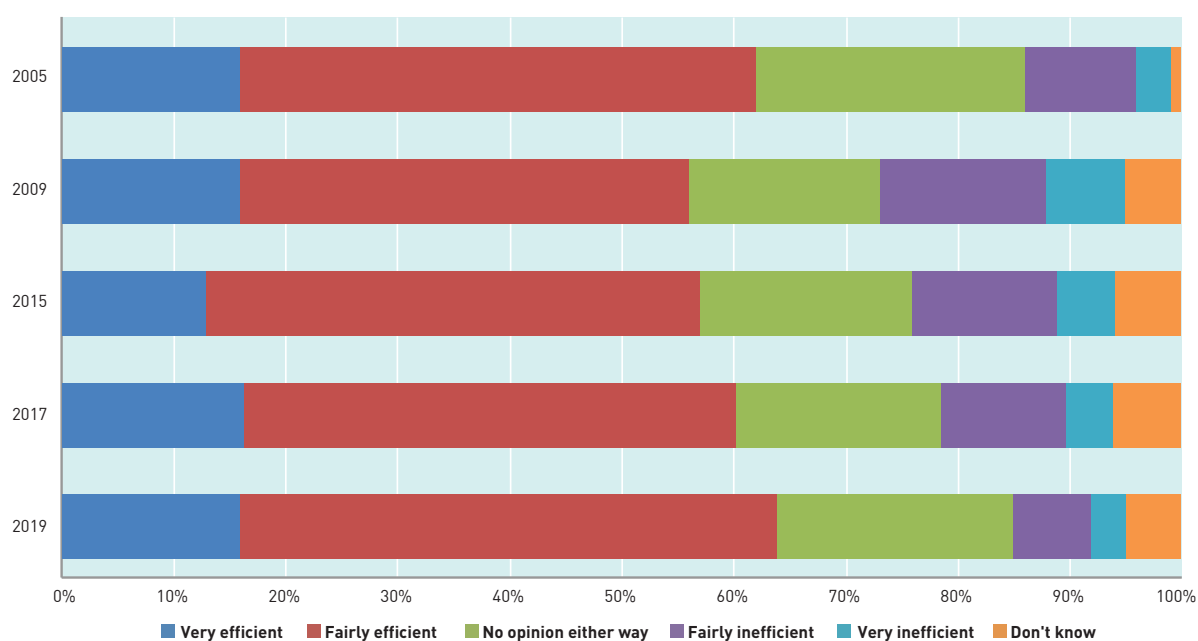


- The InCiSE Index is a collaboration between the Blavatnik School of Government in Oxford and the Institute for Government in London. The Index focuses on the central government civil service, not the public service more generally. The index is based on a framework that defines 17 functions and attributes that contribute to civil service effectiveness. At present, due to data availability, only 12 have been included in the index.
- Ireland ranks above the European average but some way below the higher ranked countries.
- Ireland's highest scores are for HR management and tax administration. Ireland also scores well for procurement and administrative effectiveness.
- The main indicators where Ireland's performance is relatively low are digital services regulation and openness.

## Public impressions of civil service efficiency are generally favourable and improving

**FIGURE 23 IMPRESSION OF CIVIL SERVICE EFFICIENCY**

Source: Irish Civil Service Customer Satisfaction Survey, 2019

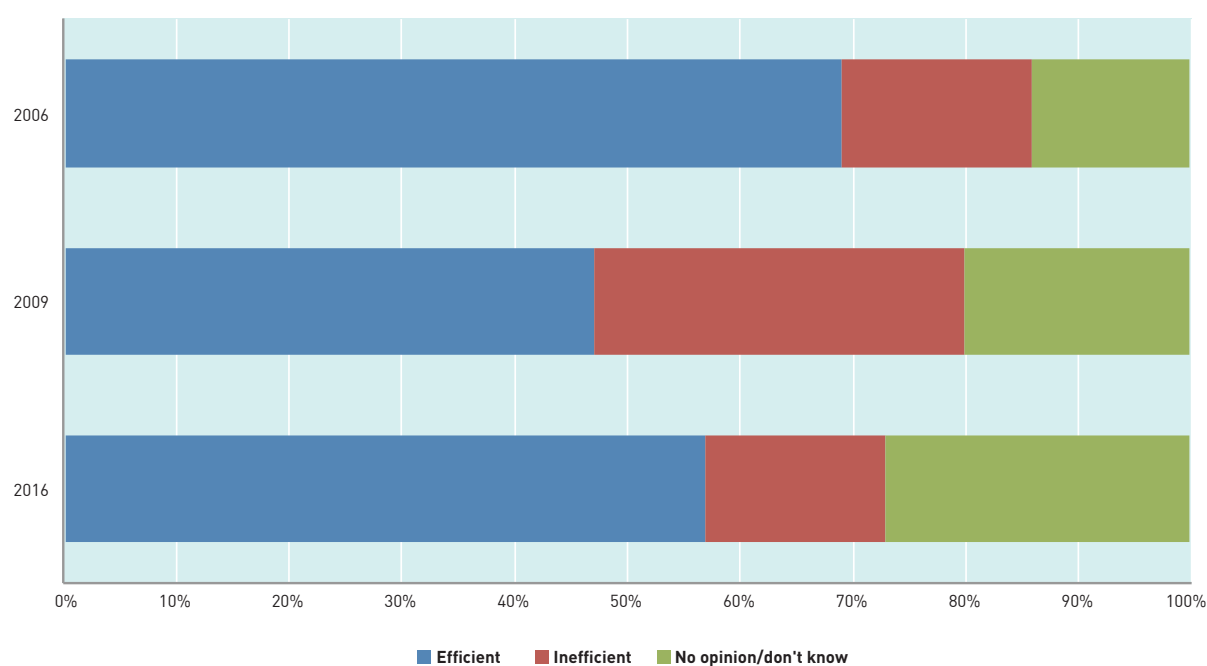


- Most members of the public feel that the civil service is efficient. In 2019, 64 per cent viewed the civil service as either very or fairly efficient. This is the highest figure recorded since the survey started in 2005.
- 10 per cent of people surveyed in 2019 feels that the civil service is either very or fairly inefficient, down from 15 per cent in 2017.

## Just over half of business users view the civil service as efficient

**FIGURE 24 BUSINESS PERCEPTION OF CIVIL SERVICE EFFICIENCY**

Source: Civil Service Business Customer Survey 2016

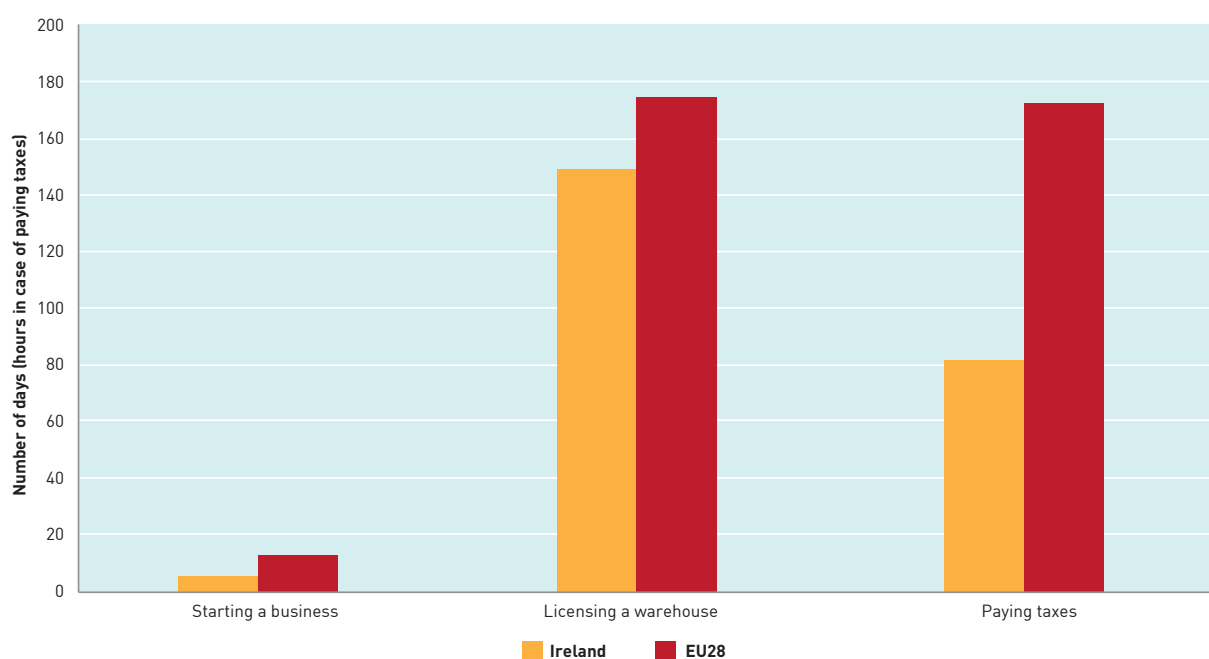


- 57 per cent of business users in 2016 rated the civil service as efficient. 16 per cent rated the civil service as inefficient.
- The perceived level of efficiency was above that achieved in 2009, but below that of 2006.

## Ireland's public administration continues to provide a relatively efficient level of service to business

**FIGURE 25 WORLD BANK DOING BUSINESS INDICATORS 2019**

Source: World Bank *Doing Business* indicators

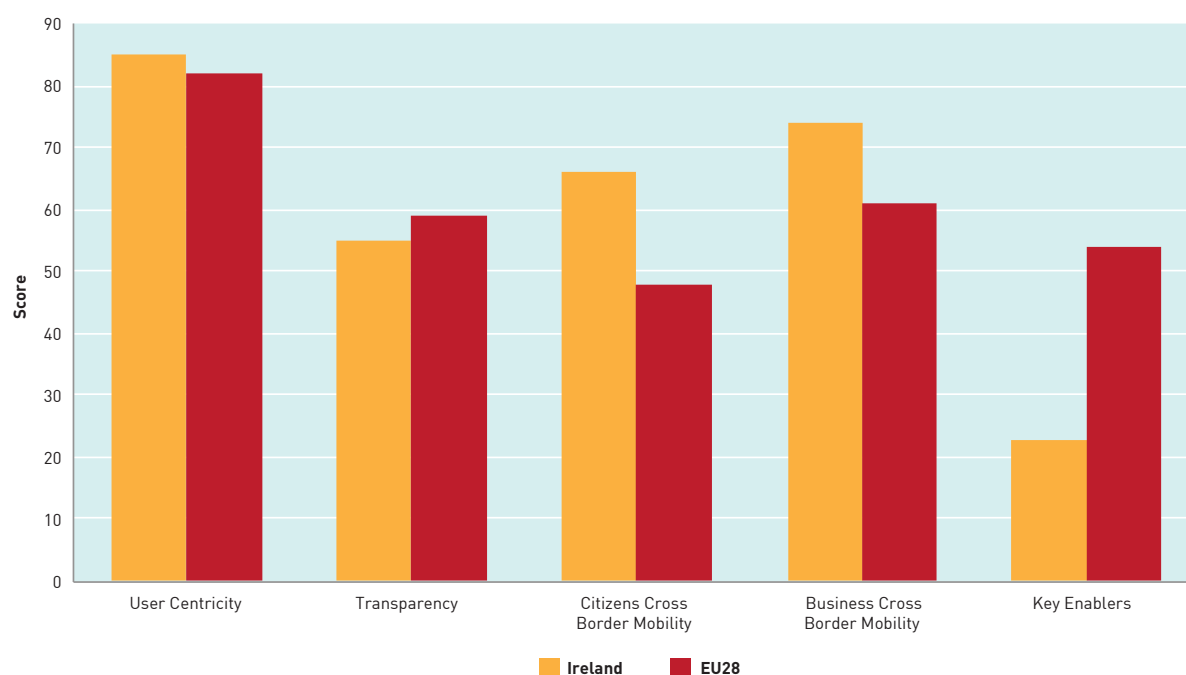


- A 'bottom-up' approach to assessing efficiency of public administration is taken by the World Bank in some of their *Doing Business* indicator set, with performance assessed from a service user perspective.
- The number of days estimated that it takes an entrepreneur to start a business in Ireland reduced to 5 days in 2016 and has stayed at the level since, down from 13 days in 2012. The EU28 average is 13 days, up from 10 days in 2017. In Denmark it takes 3.5 days, and 35 days in Romania.
- The number of days to complete all procedures required for a business in the construction industry to build a standardised warehouse in Ireland was estimated at 149.5 days in 2018. This remains lower than the EU28 average of 175 days. The best performers are Denmark (64 days) and Finland (65 days).
- The number of hours it takes a medium-sized company to pay tax in a given year is estimated as significantly lower in Ireland, at 82 hours, than it is for the EU28 (172 hours) average. Ireland ranks third in the EU behind Estonia (50 hours) and Luxembourg (55 hours).

## Egovernment in Ireland has a number of strengths and weaknesses

**FIGURE 26 EGOVERNMENT BENCHMARKS 2018**

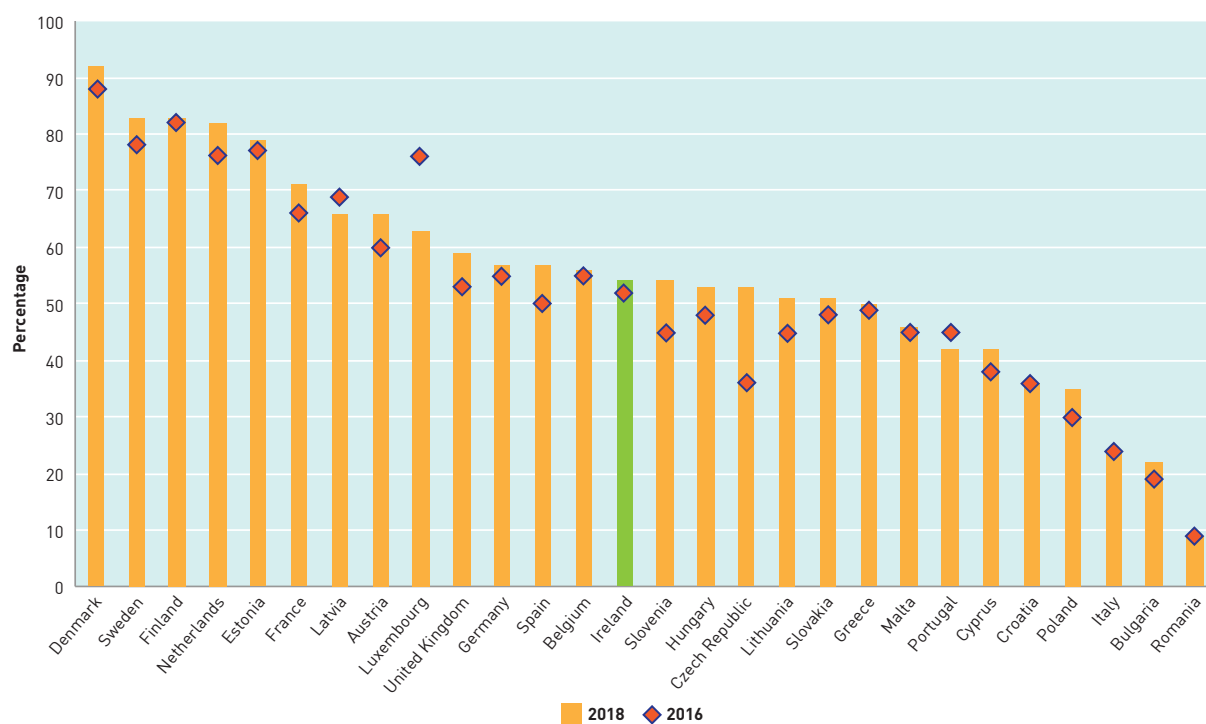
Source: EU eGovernment Benchmark 2018



- Ireland ranks above the EU28 average with regard to user centricity (to what extent information about a service is provided online), citizen mobility and business mobility (mobility indicates to what extent European users can use online services in another country)
- Ireland ranks below the EU28 average with regard to transparent government (indicates to what extent governments are transparent as regards: (a) their own responsibilities and performance, (b) the process of service delivery and (c) personal data involved), and, in particular, key enablers (indicates the extent to which five technical pre-conditions for eGovernment are used).

Individual use of the internet to obtain information on government services in Ireland is at the European average

**FIGURE 27 INDIVIDUALS USING THE INTERNET TO OBTAIN INFORMATION ABOUT PUBLIC AUTHORITIES**  
Source: Eurostat



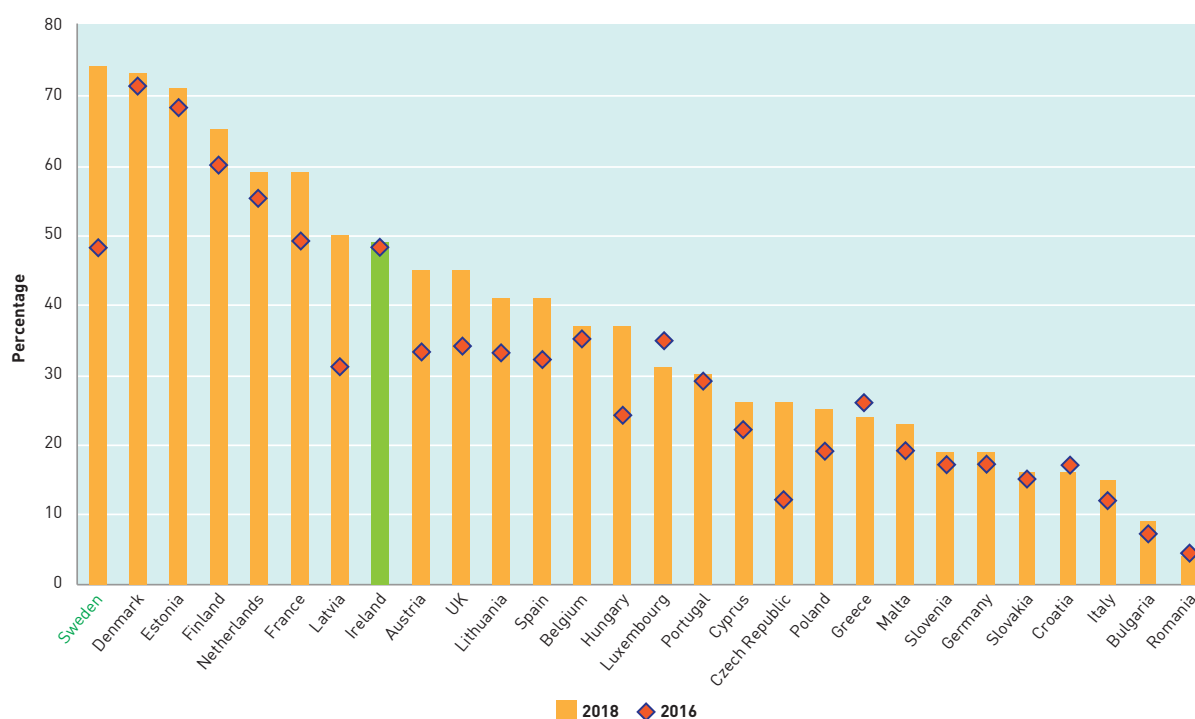
- With regard to using the internet to obtain information on public authorities, Ireland remained at just above half those surveyed making use of the internet in 2018.
- This places Ireland 14th of the EU28.



Individual use of the internet to send filled forms to public bodies in Ireland is higher than in much of Europe

FIGURE 28 INDIVIDUALS USING THE INTERNET TO SEND FILLED FORMS TO PUBLIC AUTHORITIES

Source: Eurostat

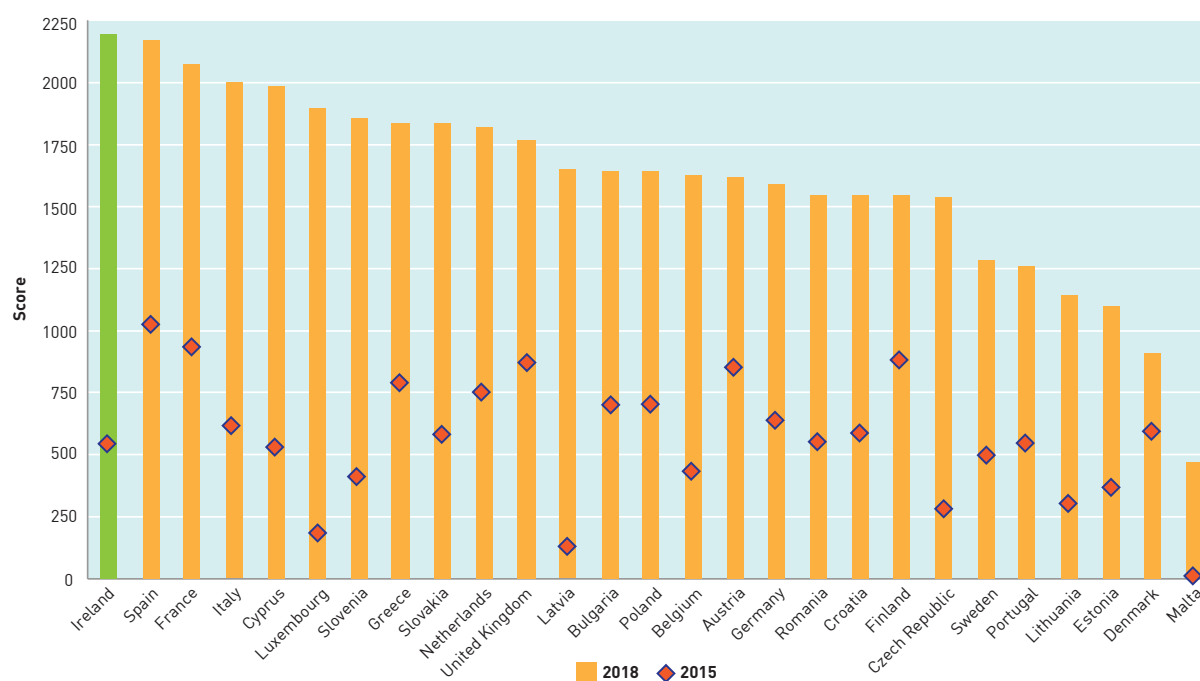


- With regard to using the internet for submitting completed forms, in Ireland just under half of those surveyed used the internet in 2018.
- Ireland remains one of the more active in this area, ranking 8th of the EU28.
- There have been substantial increases in some countries, such as Sweden and Latvia between 2016 and 2018.

## Ireland leads the way with regard to open data maturity

**FIGURE 29 OPEN DATA MATURITY SCORE**

Source: European Data Portal

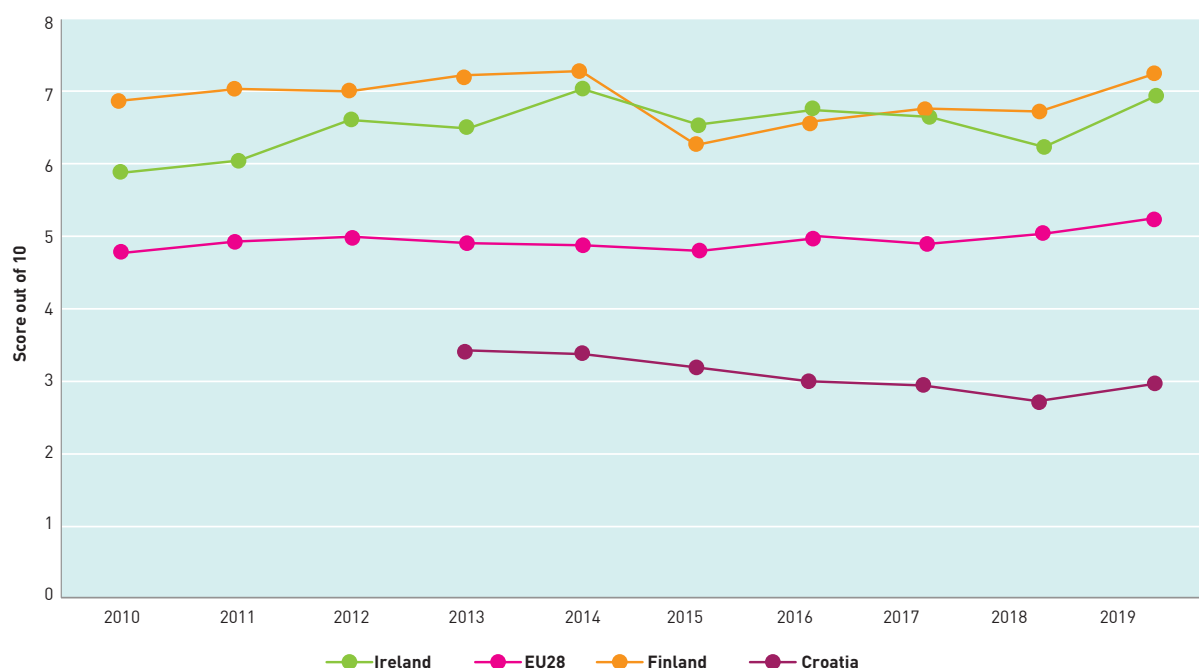


- Open data maturity is described by a series of indicators selected to cover the level of development of national policies promoting open data, an assessment of the features made available on national data portals, as well as the expected impact of open data.
- Ireland ranked 1st with regard to open data maturity in 2018, up significantly from 2015, when ranked 18th.

**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 30 COMPETITIVENESS AND REGULATION INDICATOR (CRI)**

Source: IPA analysis based on IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook and WEF Global Competitiveness Report

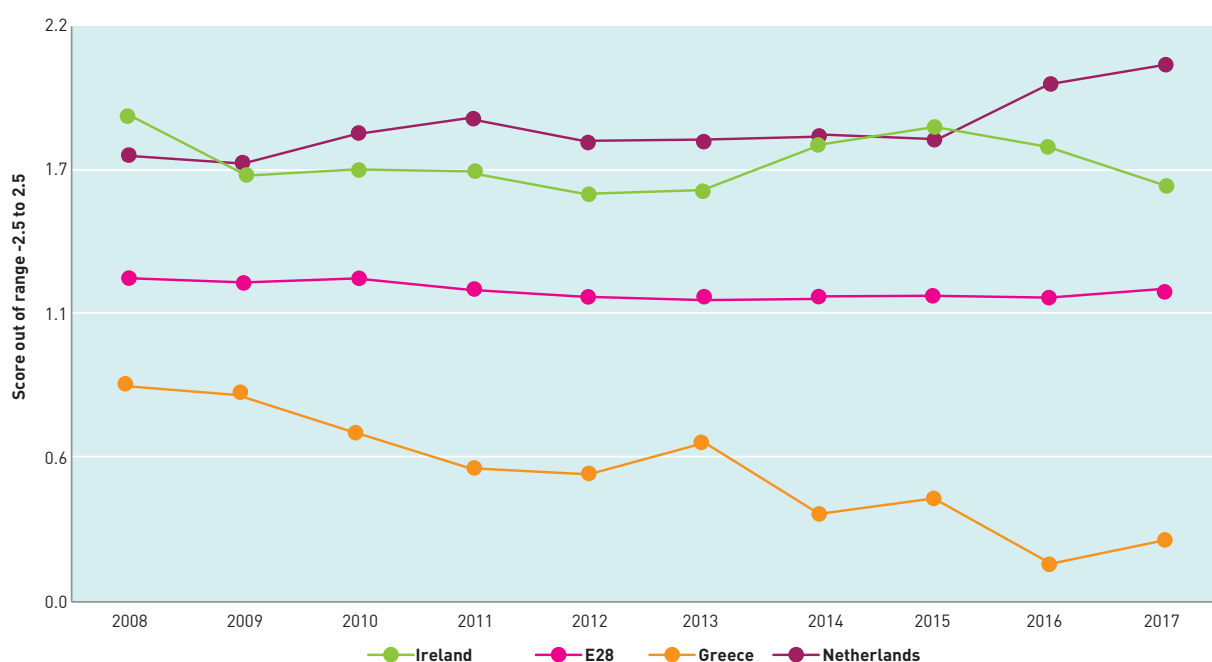


- A sub-set of the quality of public administration indicators can be used to assess issues of competitiveness and regulation. There is an expectation that as part of a quality service, public servants will help ensure a legal and regulatory framework that encourages competition. And that they will scrutinise 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 2019, Ireland ranked third, behind Finland and Denmark.
- 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 as one of the highest in Europe, but has been declining in recent years

**FIGURE 31 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 European average score.
- The impact of the regulatory problems identified in the financial sector in 2009 clearly has had an impact on the indicator, and Ireland dropped from 1st to 7th ranked European country on this indicator by 2013.
- Ireland's ranking improved from 2013 to 2015, but its score has worsened since then. In 2017 Ireland ranked 9th European country. Netherlands ranked highest.

## 4. SECTORAL PERFORMANCE

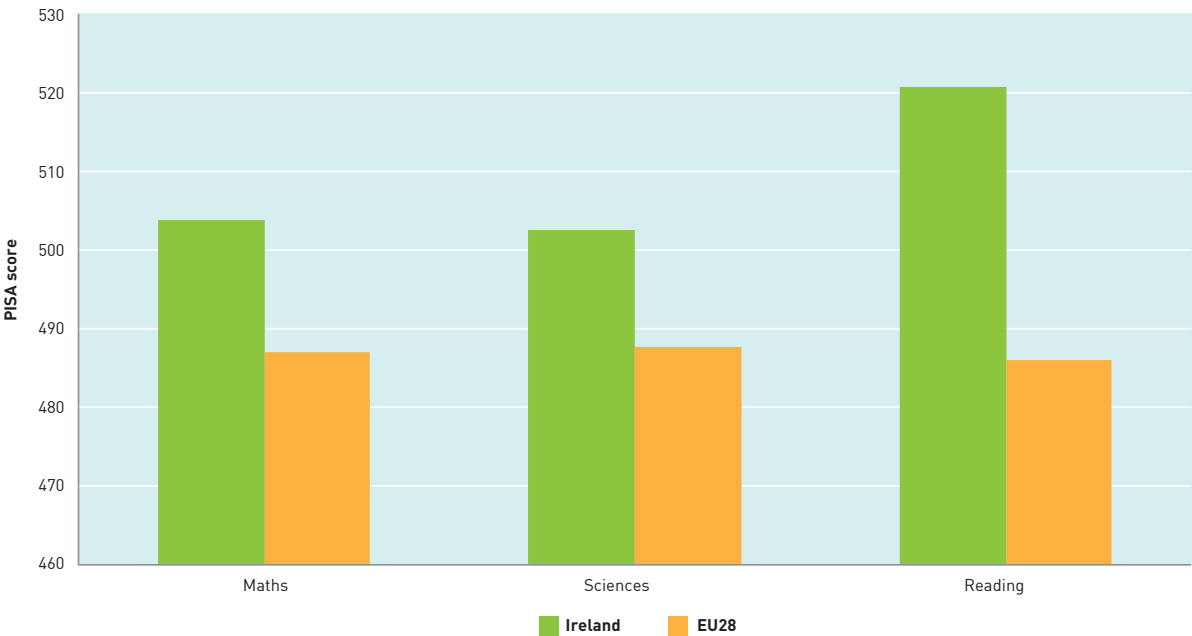
Ultimately, the provision of public administration is intended to achieve social outcomes in sectors such as health, education, law and order and transport. As such, it is important that any review of public administration looks at sectoral outcomes. In this report, some high-level education and health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

In the education system, high-level outcome indicators that assess performance in reading, maths and science give an overview of performance. Evidence is taken from the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) survey. PISA 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.

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.

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

**FIGURE 32 PISA EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT SCORES 2015**  
Source: OECD PISA 2015 survey

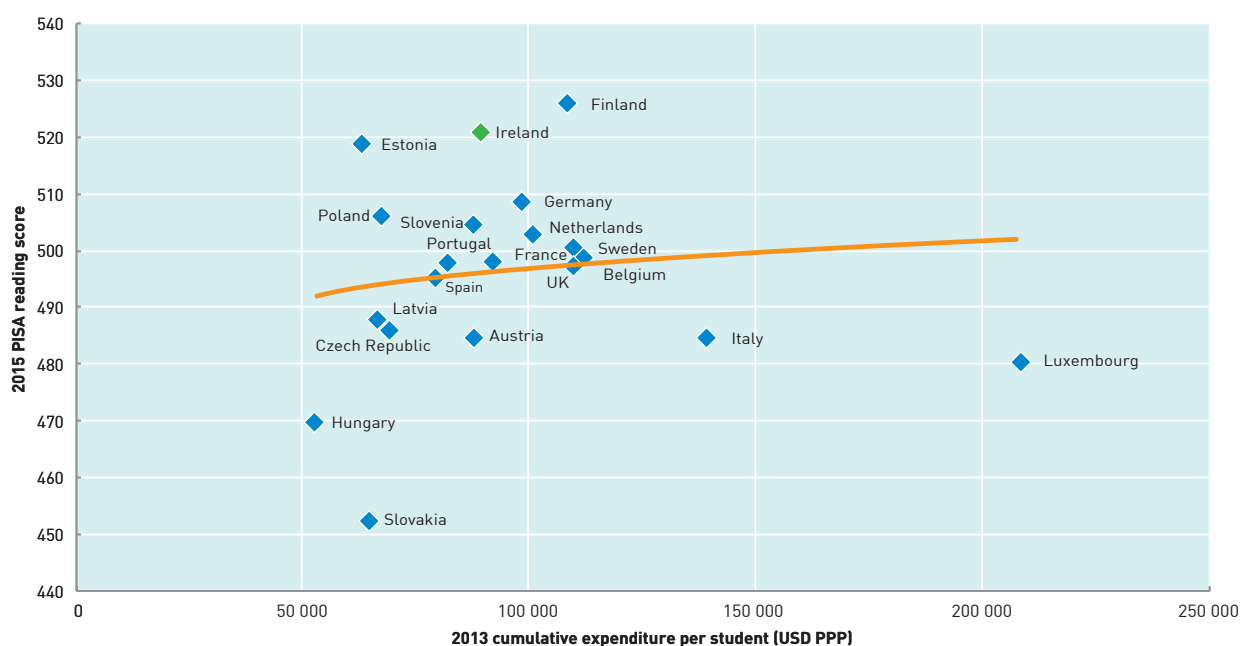


- The OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) survey is an internationally standardised assessment administered to 15-year olds in schools. Tests are typically administered to between 4,500 and 10,000 students in each country.
- The 2015 PISA survey shows that Ireland has a higher ranking than the European average in maths, sciences and reading. Estonia ranks highest in maths, and Finland is the highest ranked European country in sciences and reading.

Ireland delivers an above average level of educational efficiency when comparing reading performance to spending per student across Europe

**FIGURE 33 PISA READING SCORE AND SPENDING PER STUDENT**

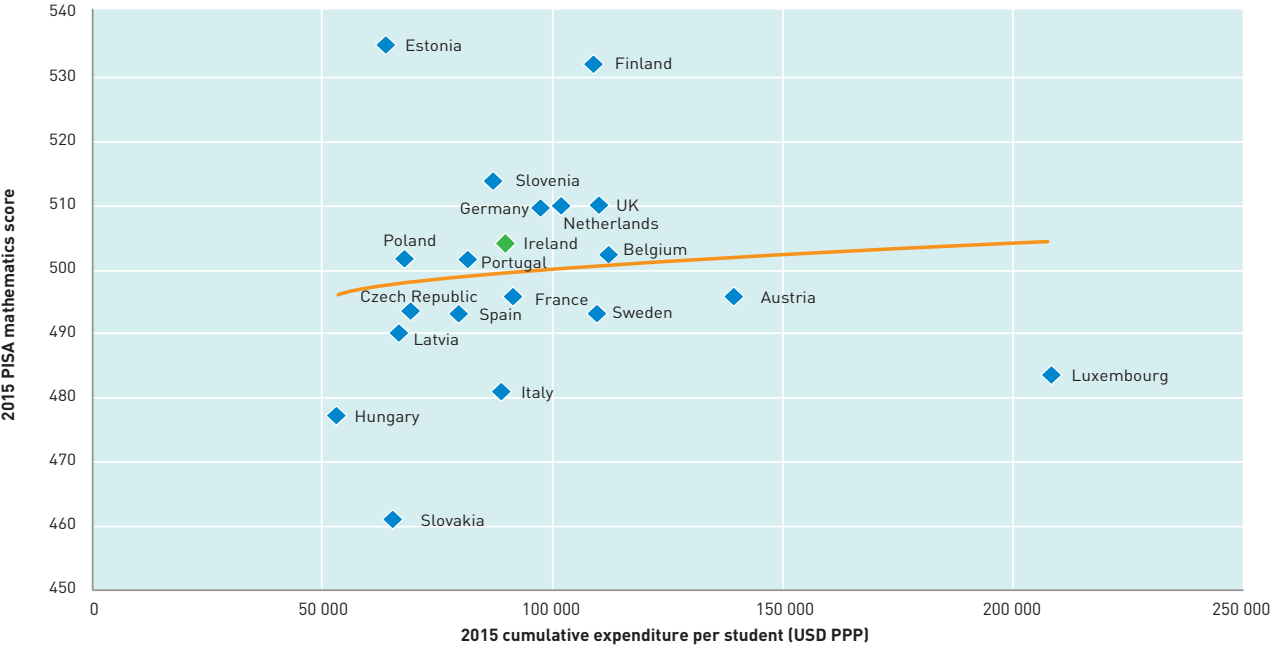
Source: OECD Education at a Glance 2018



- The OECD note that educational attainments of individuals, as measured by the PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) score can be seen as an indicator of output of human capital production. When compared to the national cumulative expenditure per student (the educational input), the results can offer an insight into which systems are able to deliver more efficient services.
- Finland achieves a high performance score for reading but only spends around the European average. Ireland is close to Finland with spending close to the European average but with a high performance score, showing a good level of efficiency.

Ireland delivers an average level of efficiency when comparing maths performance to spending per student across Europe

FIGURE 34 PISA MATHS SCORE AND SPENDING PER STUDENT  
Source: OECD Education at a Glance 2018



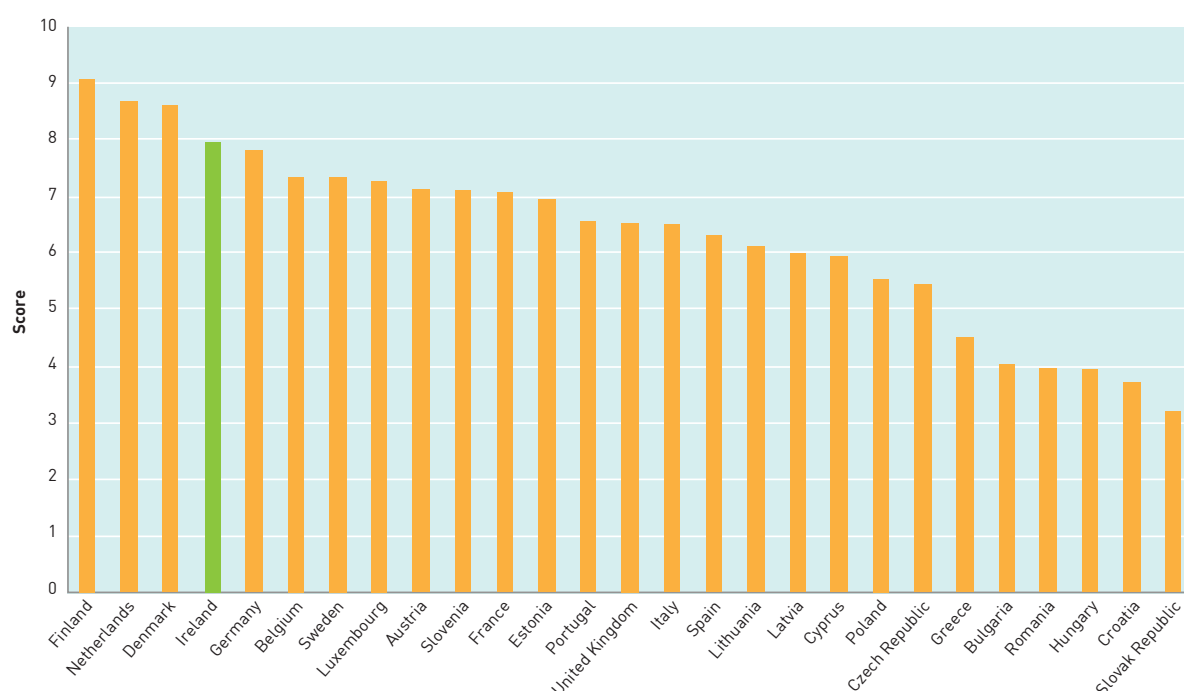
- Finland and Estonia have particularly good maths scores compared to spending, suggesting the delivery of efficient services.
- Ireland spends around the European average and get results that are similarly around the average, that is, performance is in line with what might be expected given the resources put in, showing an average level of efficiency.



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

**FIGURE 35 PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION MEETS THE NEEDS OF A COMPETITIVE ECONOMY**

Source: IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook

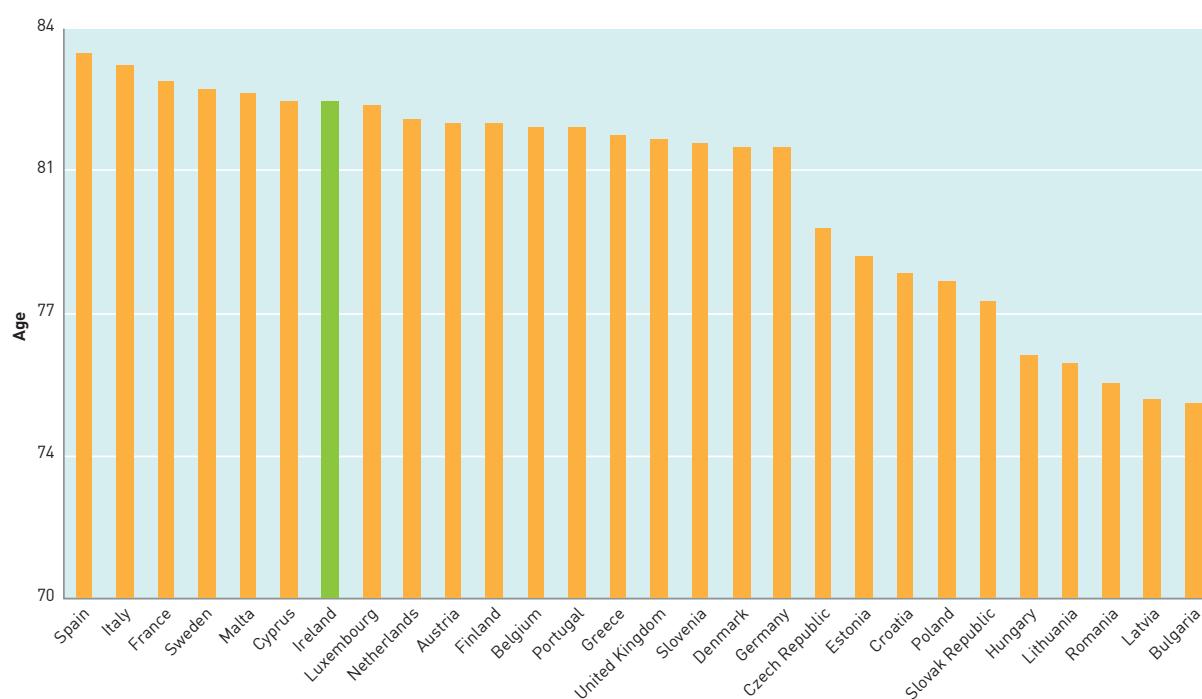


- Executive opinion about the role of the educational system in meeting the needs of a competitive economy is one (though only one) qualitative indicator of how well the education system is functioning.
- A new indicator introduced this year shows that Ireland's primary and secondary education are ranked fourth best in Europe in terms of meeting the needs of a competitive economy, behind Finland, the Netherlands and Denmark.

## Life expectancy at birth is towards the higher end in European terms

**FIGURE 36 LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH 2017**

Source: Eurostat

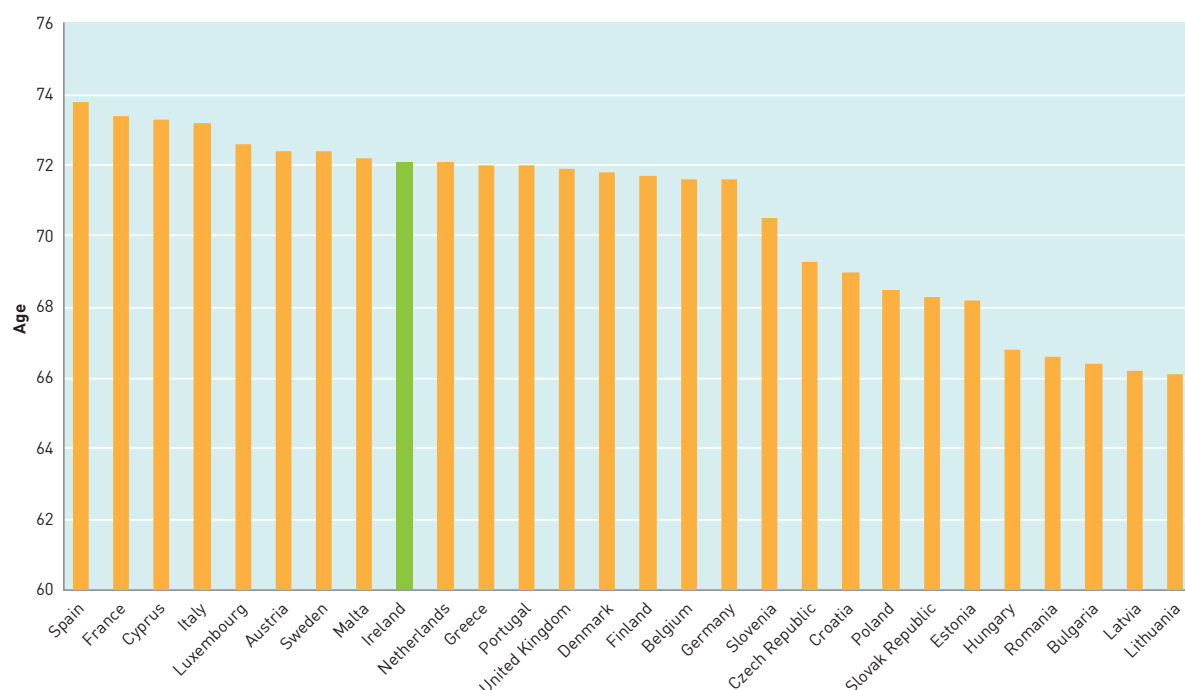


- Life expectancy at birth in Ireland in 2017 was 82.2 years. The range in EU countries is from 83.4 years in Spain, down to 74.8 years in Bulgaria.
- Ireland ranked 7th of the EU 28 in 2017.

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

**FIGURE 37 HEALTHY LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH 2016**

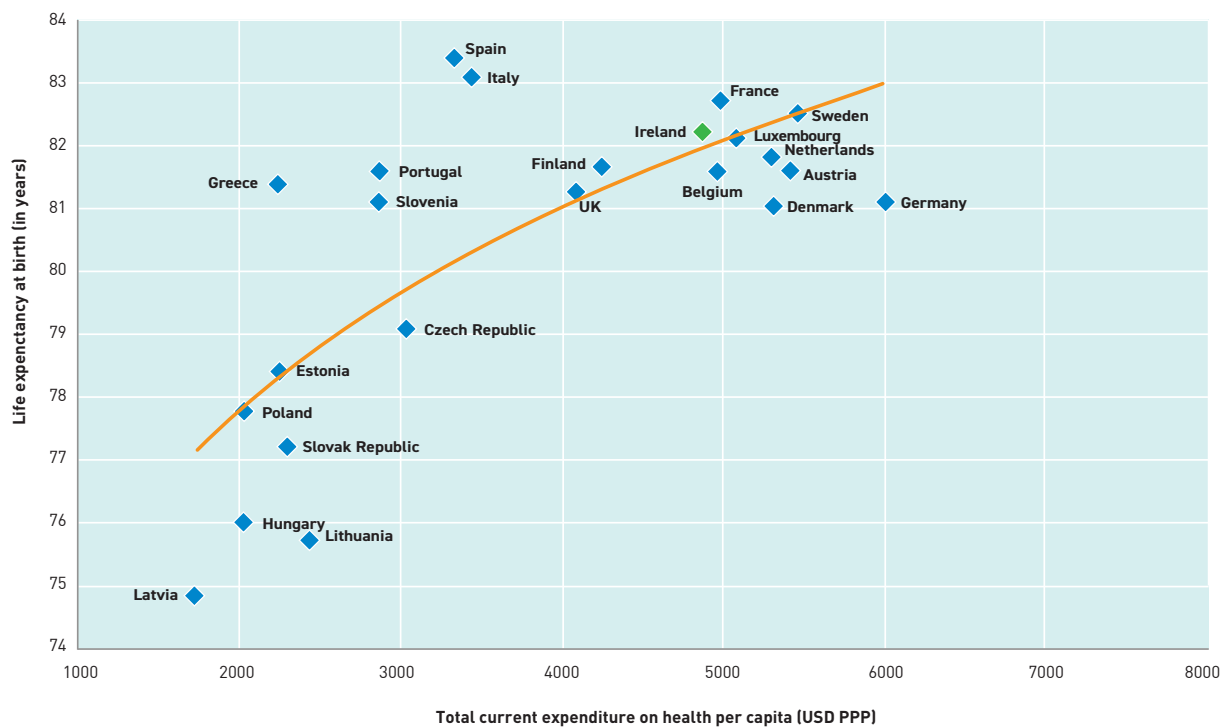
Source: WHO



- 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 9th best in Europe in 2016 in terms of healthy life expectancy at birth, at 72.1 years.

## Cost-effectiveness of health expenditure is at a reasonable level

**FIGURE 38 LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH (2016) AND TOTAL EXPENDITURE ON HEALTH CARE PER CAPITA (2017 OR NEAREST YEAR)**  
Source: OECD Health Statistics 2018

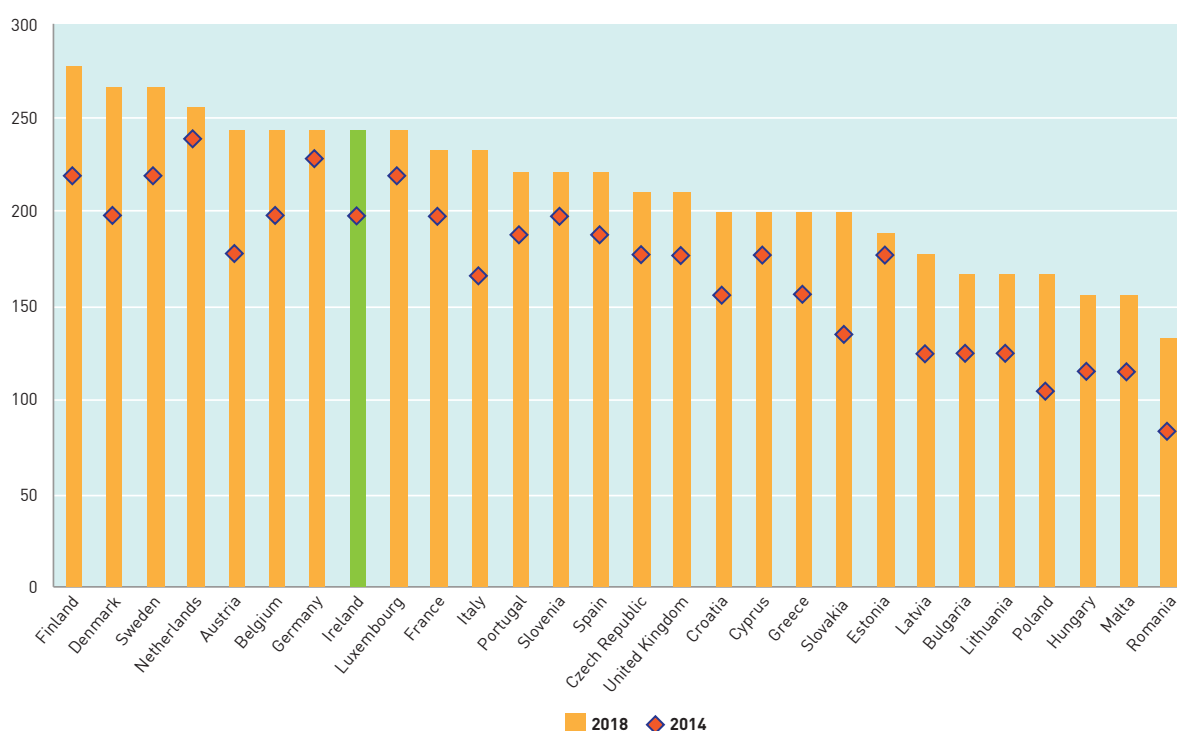


- In order to assess the cost-effectiveness of health services, OECD data allows comparison of improvements in life expectancy to total health expenditure per capita in countries. They note, however, that conclusions should be drawn with care, as many other factors beyond total health spending have a major impact on life expectancy and total health expenditure comprises both public and private expenditures.
- Overall, there is a positive relationship between total health expenditure per capita and life expectancy. Italy, Spain and Greece stand out as having relatively high life expectancy relative to their expenditure.
- Ireland has a level of life expectancy close to what might be expected given the level of expenditure, suggesting cost-effectiveness is neither particularly good nor particularly bad.

Ireland ranks just above the EU28 average in achieving consumer health outcomes and has improved its ranking

**FIGURE 39 EUROPEAN HEALTH CONSUMER OUTCOMES INDEX**

Source: Euro Health Consumer Index 2018



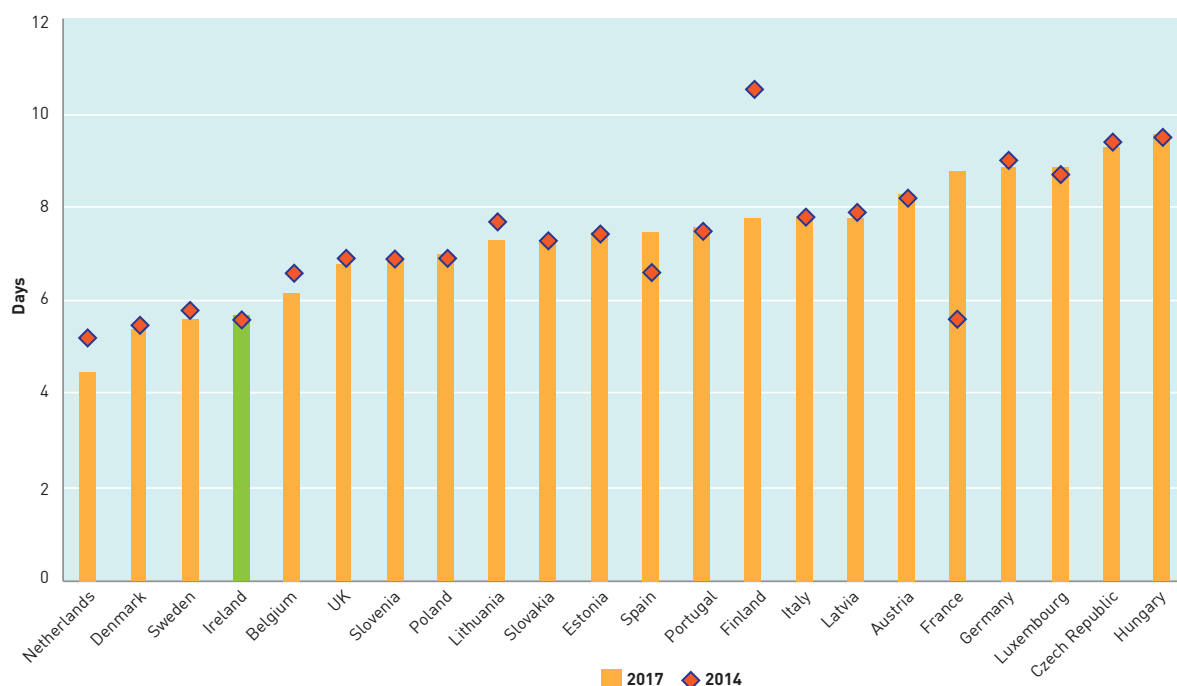
- The Euro Health Consumer Index 2018 (Health Consumer Powerhouse, 2019) includes a composite 'basket' measure of a sub-set of indicators focused on health outcomes<sup>15</sup>. The higher the score on this index, the better the outcomes.
- Ireland ranks a little above the EU28 average on this health outcomes index. Finland, Denmark and Sweden achieve the top three rankings.

<sup>15</sup> The outcomes measured in 2018 are: decrease of cvd deaths; decrease of stroke deaths; infant deaths; cancer survival; potential years of life lost; MRSA infections; abortion rates; depression; and COPD mortality.

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

**FIGURE 40 AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY IN HOSPITALS FOR ALL CONDITIONS**

Source: OECD Health Statistics 2019

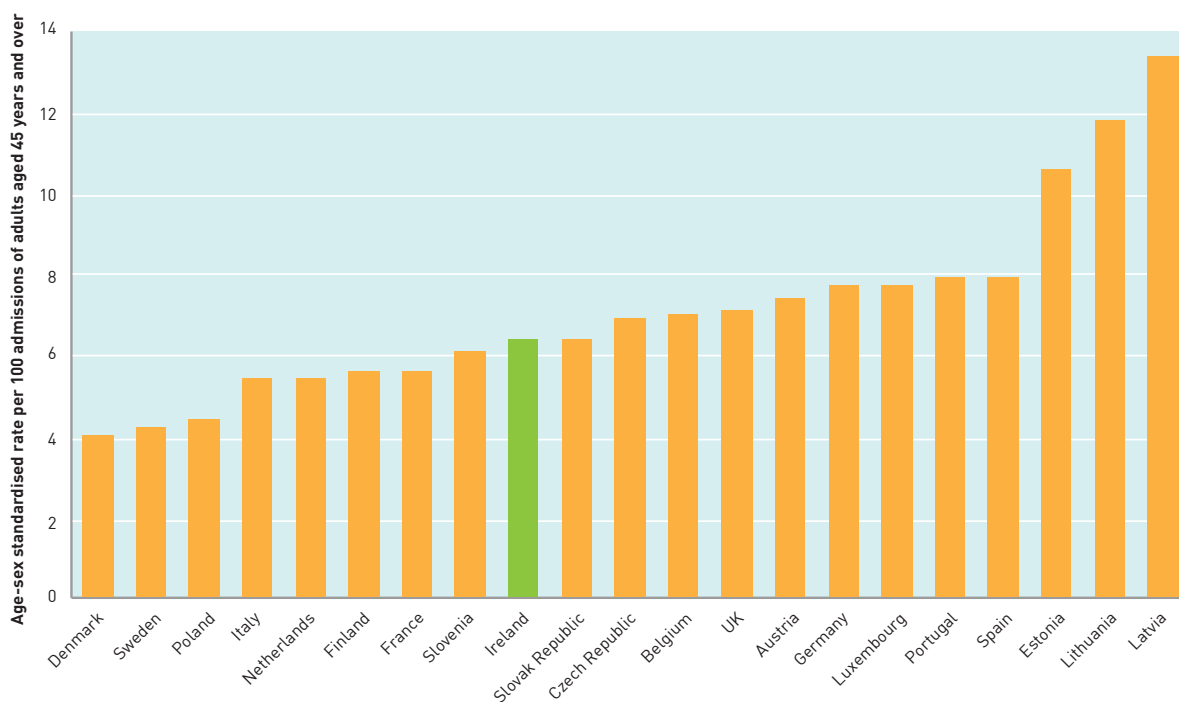


- Average length of stay in hospitals is a commonly used indicator of efficiency in the health system. All other things being equal, a shorter stay is associated with reduced costs. However, shorter stays do tend to be more service intensive and more costly per day. And too short a length of stay may cause adverse health effects.
- On a comparative basis, Ireland shows a low level of length of stay in hospitals (5.7 days in 2017), suggesting a relatively high level of efficiency.

## Mortality rates for heart attack victims after admission to hospital at the lower end for Europe

**FIGURE 41 THIRTY DAY MORTALITY AFTER ADMISSION TO HOSPITAL FOR HEART ATTACK 2015 (OR NEAREST YEAR)**

Source: OECD Health Statistics 2019

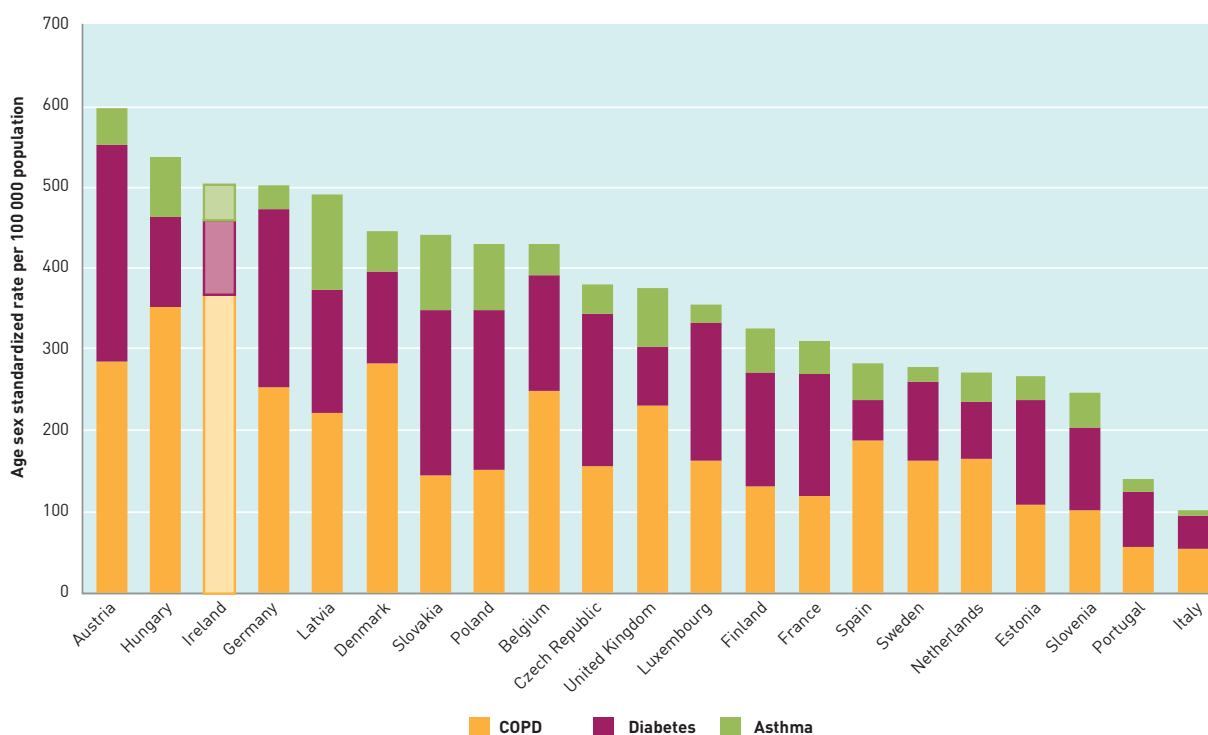


- Case-fatality rates for people admitted to hospital following an acute myocardial infarction (heart attack) have significantly decreased between 2006 and 2015.
- Case-fatality rates in Ireland fell by almost 30 per cent between 2006 and 2015. Ireland is close to but slightly better than the European average.

## The rate of potentially avoidable hospital admissions in Ireland is high

FIGURE 42 ASTHMA, DIABETES AND COPD HOSPITAL ADMISSION IN ADULTS 2015 (OR NEAREST YEAR)

Source: OECD Health Statistics 2019



- A number of chronic health problems such as asthma, diabetes and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) can be treated in the primary care system to avoid unnecessary and costly hospital care.
- The rate of potentially avoidable hospital admissions was high in Ireland in 2015, with only Austria and Hungary getting a higher score.



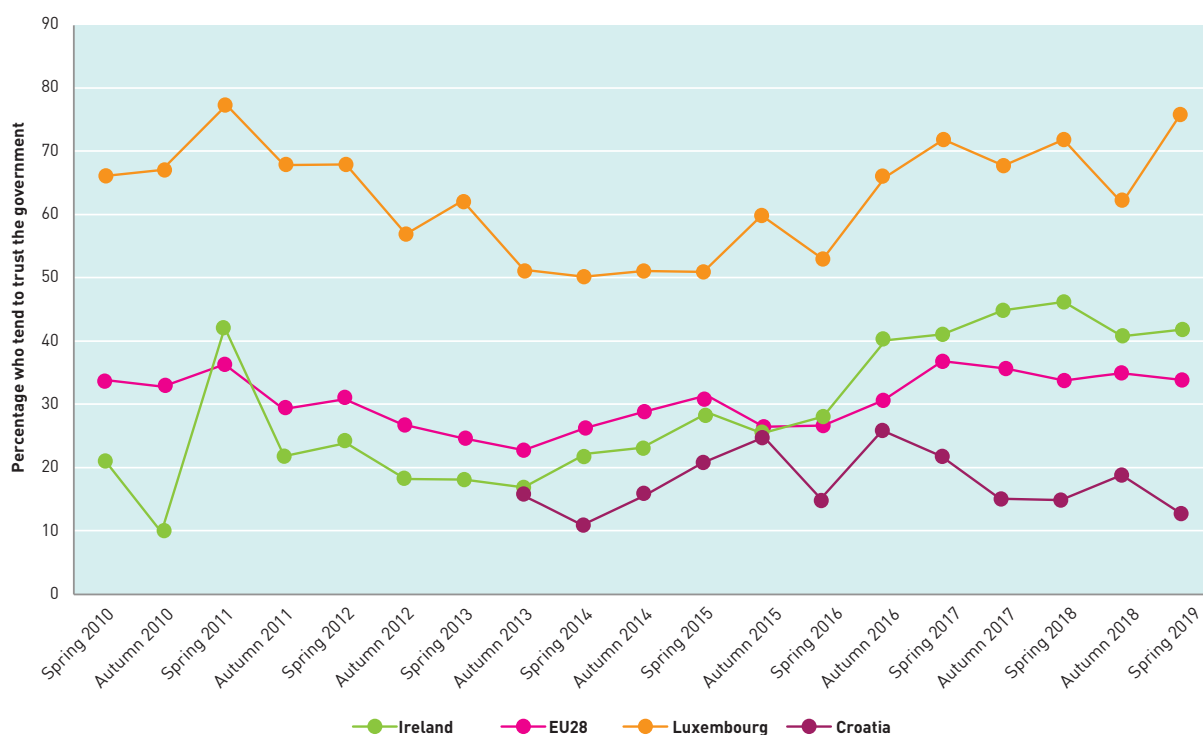
## 5. TRUST, SATISFACTION AND CONFIDENCE IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

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 remains above the European average

**FIGURE 43 LEVEL OF TRUST IN GOVERNMENT**

Source: Eurobarometer

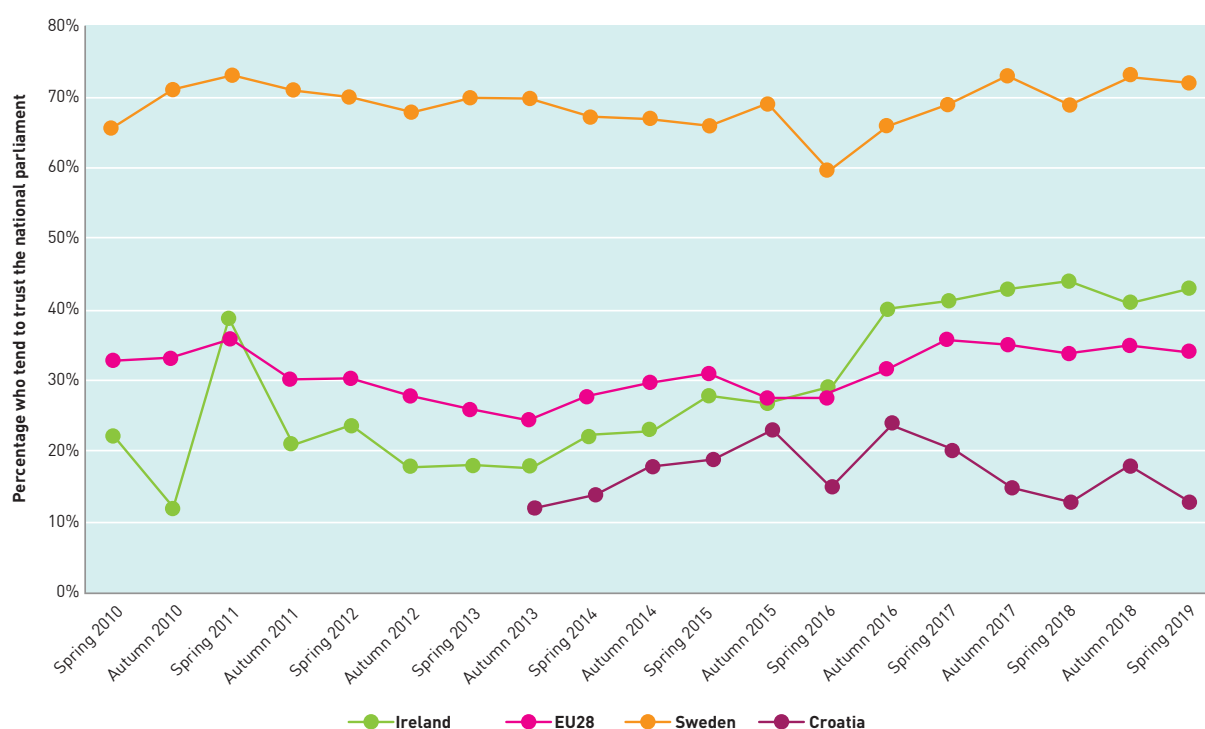


- There was a dramatic fall in the level of trust in government in Ireland from 2008 to 2010. Trust in government in the rest of Europe also fell, but only slightly. In autumn 2010, Ireland expressed the lowest level of trust in government of any of the then EU27 (10 per cent).
- In spring 2011, the level of public trust increased significantly to 42 per cent expressing trust in the Irish government, reflecting the election of a new government. This fell back to 22 per cent by autumn 2011.
- Trust in government has increased since 2013, though there has been a small drop in trust since spring 2018. Trust in government in Ireland in spring 2019 stood at 42 per cent.
- Luxembourg has a high level of trust in government at 76 per cent, with the next highest being the Netherlands at 63 per cent.

## Trust in parliament is above the European average and remained relatively steady in recent years

**FIGURE 44 LEVEL OF TRUST IN NATIONAL PARLIAMENT**

Source: Eurobarometer

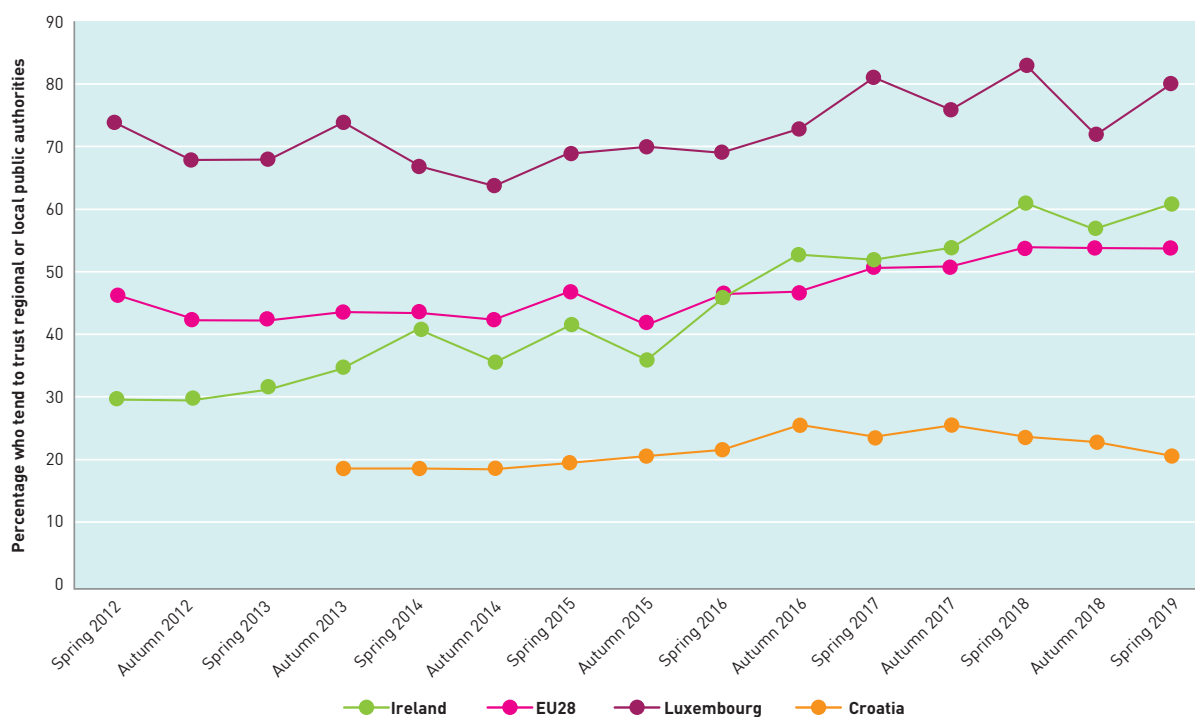


- From 2008 to 2010, as with trust in government, trust in parliament dropped rapidly both in absolute terms and compared to the European average.
- In spring 2011, the positive perception brought about by the election of a new government led to the proportion of respondents who expressed trust in the Irish parliament being back above the EU average, at 39 per cent. The level of trust subsequently fell again.
- Trust in parliament in Ireland gradually increased from 2012 to 2016 and has been relatively stable since then, standing at 43 per cent in spring 2019. This is above the European average of 34 per cent.
- Sweden has a high level of trust in the national parliament, of over 70 per cent.

Trust in regional and local authorities remains above the European average after several years of being below the average

**FIGURE 45 LEVEL OF TRUST IN REGIONAL OR LOCAL PUBLIC AUTHORITIES**

Source: Eurobarometer

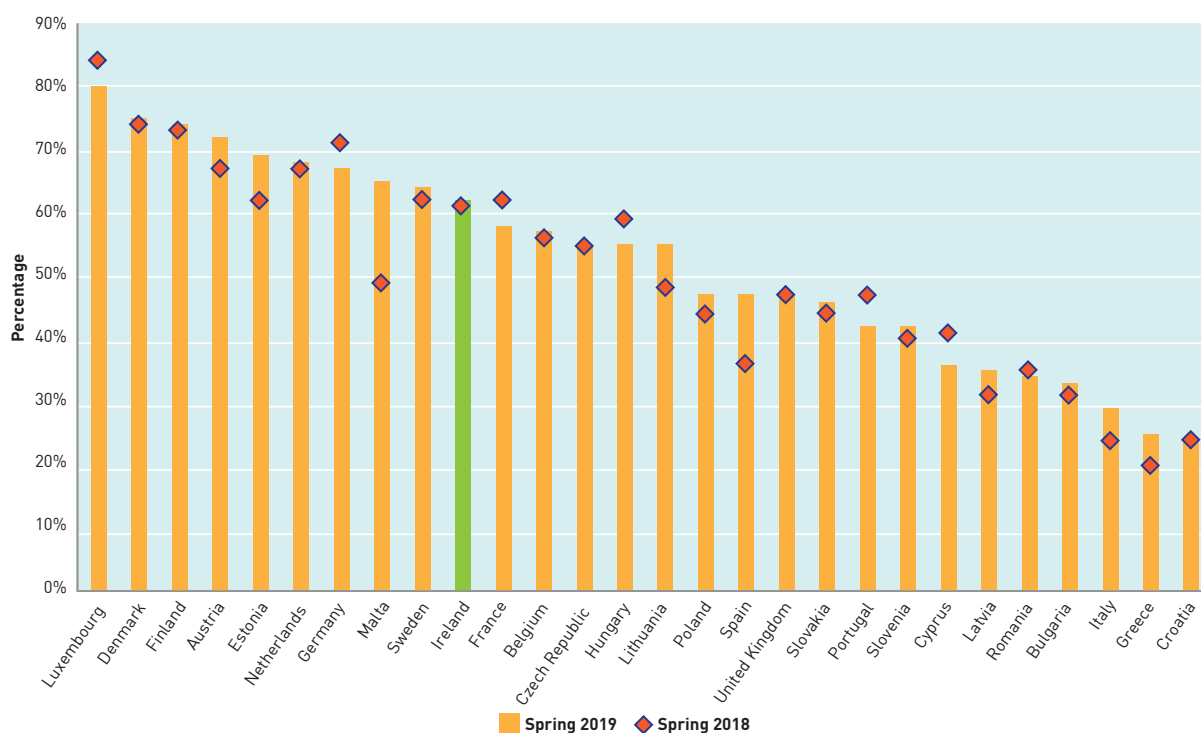


- The level of trust in regional and local authorities in Ireland was at 30 per cent in 2012, down from 40 per cent in 2008. It has gradually been increasing since then, and stood at 61 per cent tending to trust regional and local authorities in spring 2019.
- After exhibiting one of the lower levels of trust in the EU in 2012, the level of trust expressed is now back above the EU28 average.

## Trust in the public administration in Ireland is a little above the European average

**FIGURE 46 TEND TO TRUST – PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

Source: Eurobarometer

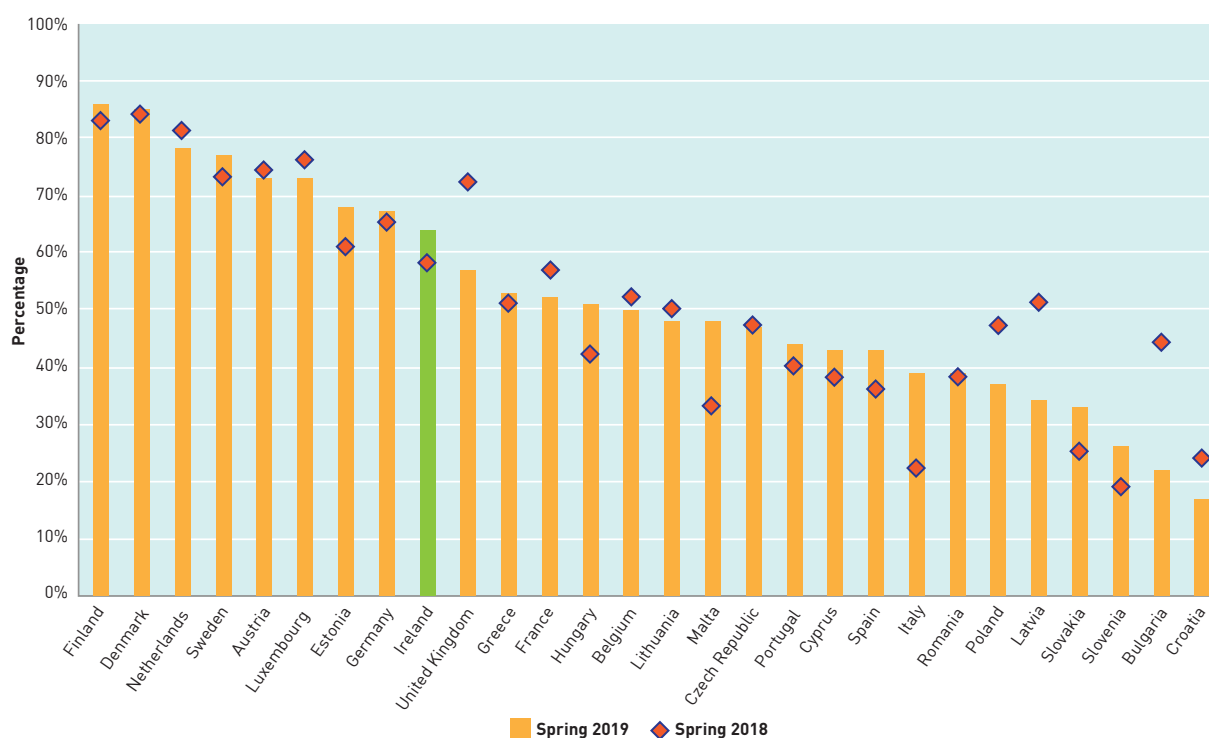


- With regard to trust in public administration, Ireland, at 62 per cent, sits 11 points above the EU28 average. Trust has increased in each of the last three years, up from 51 per cent in spring 2016.
- Luxembourg ranks the highest in this category, with a score of 80 per cent.

## Ireland ranks above the European average with regard to trust in the justice/legal system

**FIGURE 47 TEND TO TRUST - JUSTICE/LEGAL SYSTEM**

Source: Eurobarometer

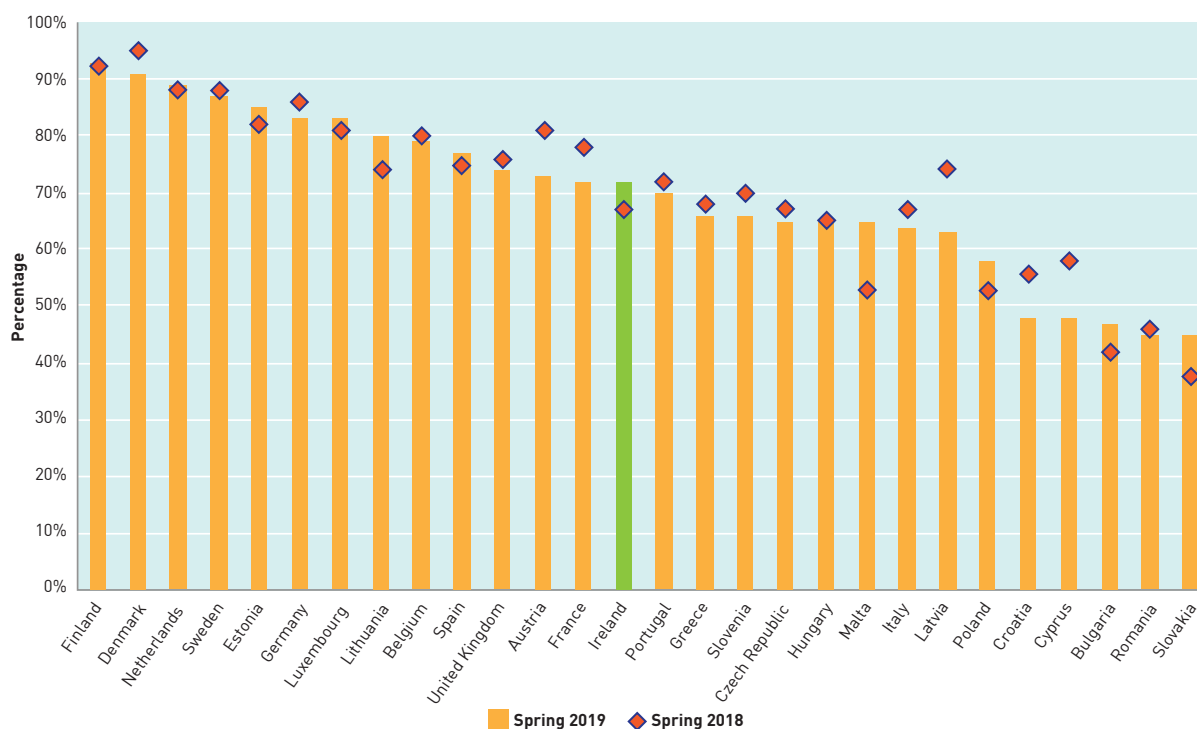


- Ireland, with trust in the justice/legal system at 64 per cent, ranks above the EU28 average in this category.
- Finland and Denmark display the highest levels of trust with the justice/legal system.

## Trust in the police is at the European average

**FIGURE 48 TEND TO TRUST - THE POLICE**

Source: Eurobarometer

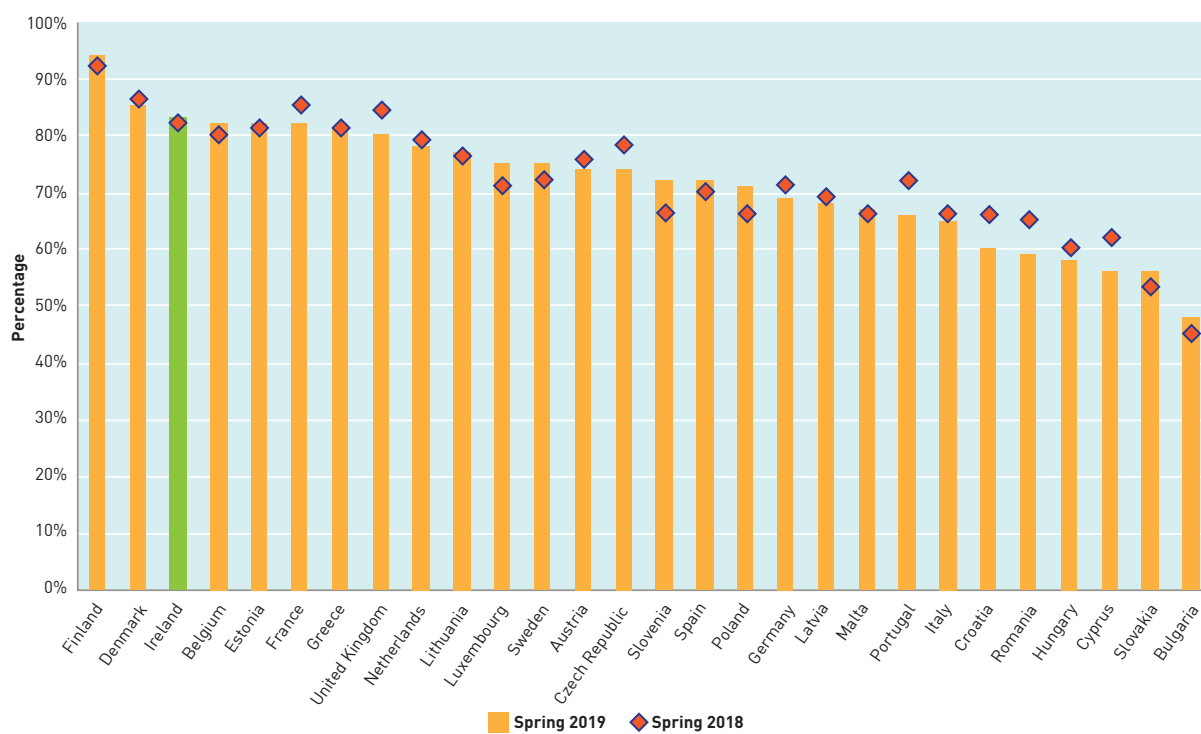


- Trust in the police in Ireland fell significantly, by 11 points, from a high of 78 per cent in spring 2017 to spring 2018. However, it increased slightly to 72 per cent in spring 2019, at the European average.
- Finland and Denmark have very high scores of over 90 per cent.

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

**FIGURE 49 TEND TO TRUST - THE ARMY**

Source: Eurobarometer



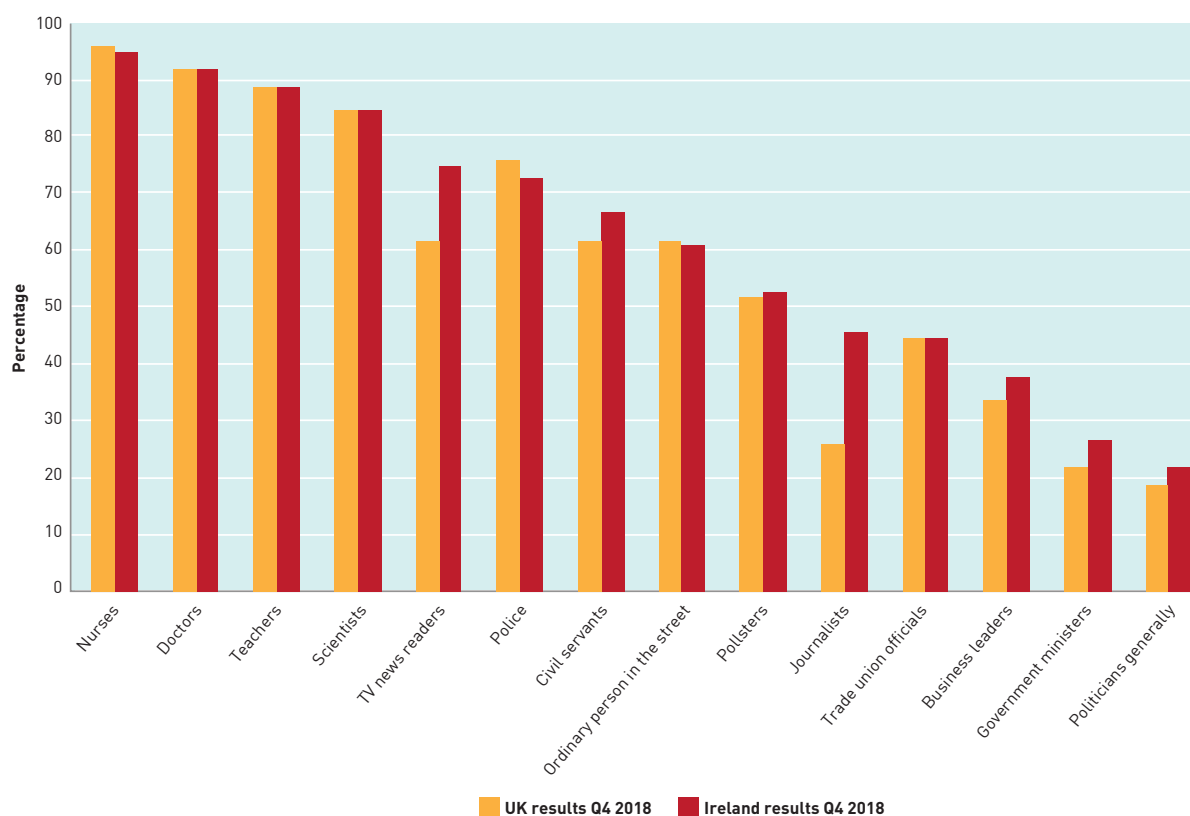
- Ireland is the third highest country in Europe with regard to level of trust in the army, with a score of 83 per cent.
- This category had the highest European average trust score of all the public services surveyed, at 73 per cent.



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

**FIGURE 50 LEVEL OF TRUST TO TELL THE TRUTH**

Source: Irish Civil Service Customer Satisfaction Survey 2019.

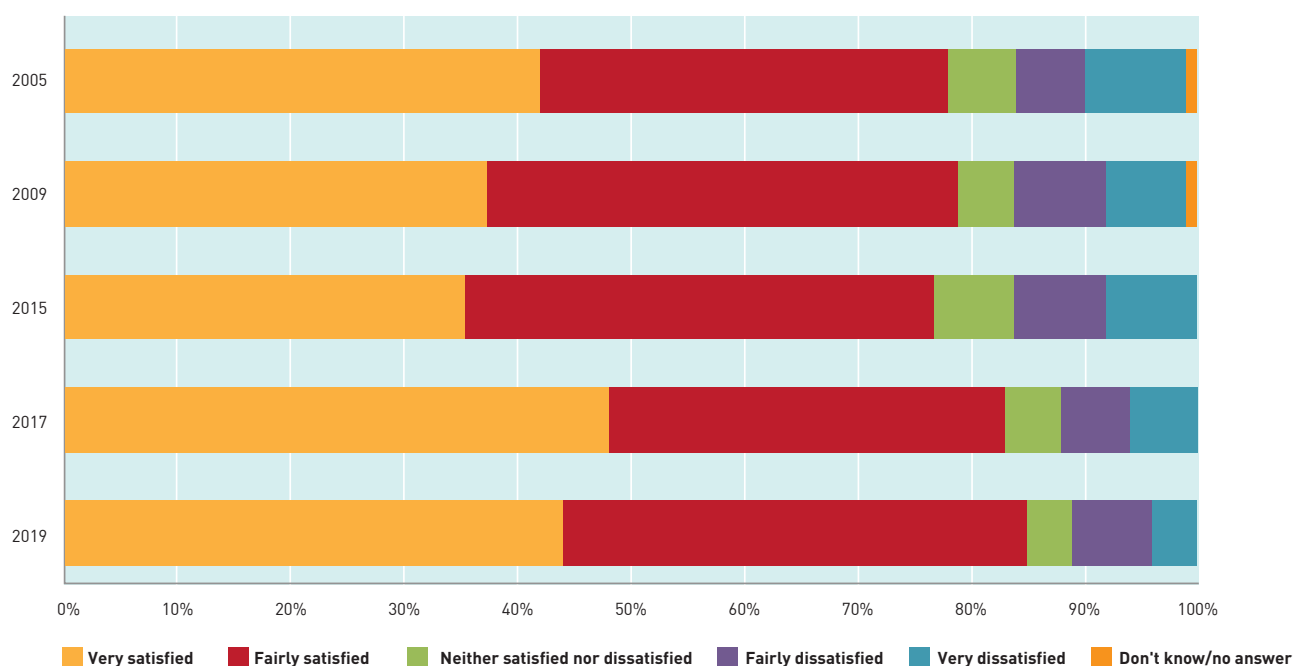


- In general, the level of trust in public servants is much higher than the level of trust in the government or parliament.
- There is over 90 per cent trust in nurses and doctors to tell the truth. This drops to 73 per cent for the police (down from 81 per cent the previous year) and 63 per cent for civil servants.
- Levels of trust in Ireland are similar to but in some case slightly higher than in the UK.

## Public satisfaction with the service received from the civil service is high

**FIGURE 51 LEVEL OF SATISFACTION WITH SERVICE RECEIVED FROM THE CIVIL SERVICE**

Source: Irish Civil Service Customer Satisfaction Survey 2019

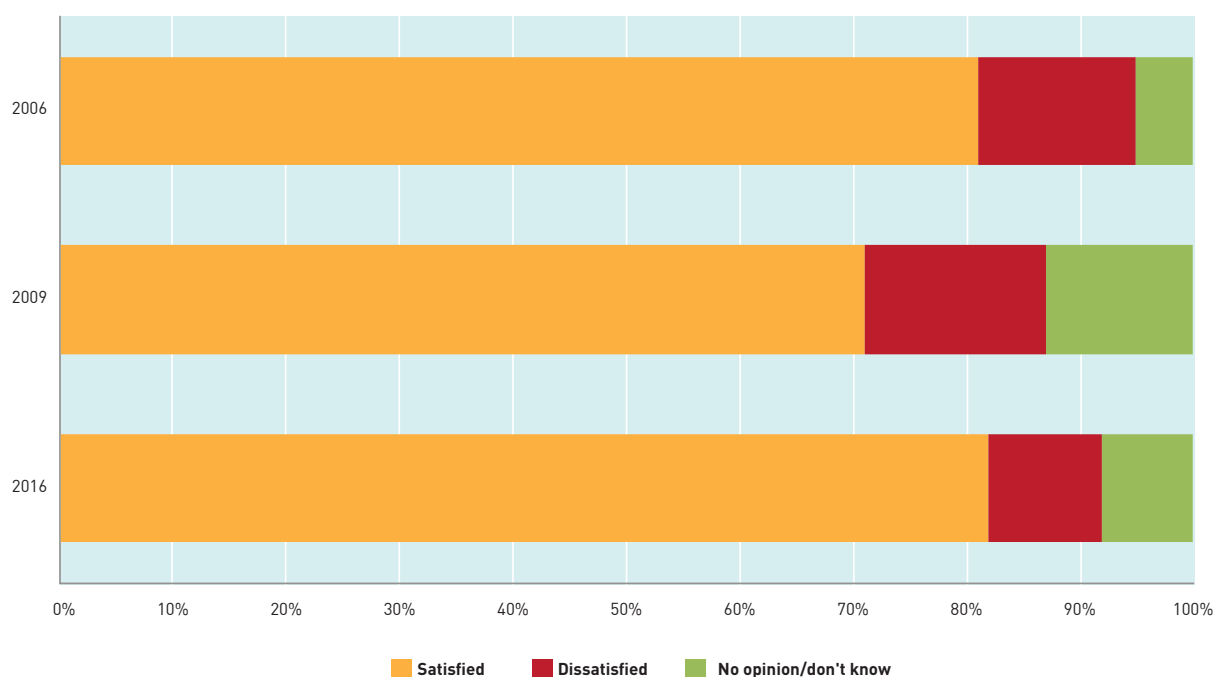


- Most members of the public are satisfied with the service received from the civil service. 85 per cent of those surveyed were either very or fairly satisfied in 2019. The level of satisfaction is higher than in the four previous surveys (2005, 2009, 2015 and 2017).
- 11 per cent of the public were either very or fairly dissatisfied with the level of service provided to them by the civil service in 2019. This level of dissatisfaction is lower than in previous surveys.

## Businesses display a reasonably high level of satisfaction with the service received from the civil service

**FIGURE 52 LEVEL OF BUSINESS SATISFACTION WITH SERVICE RECEIVED ON LAST INTERACTION WITH CIVIL SERVICE**

Source: Civil Service Business Customer Survey 2016

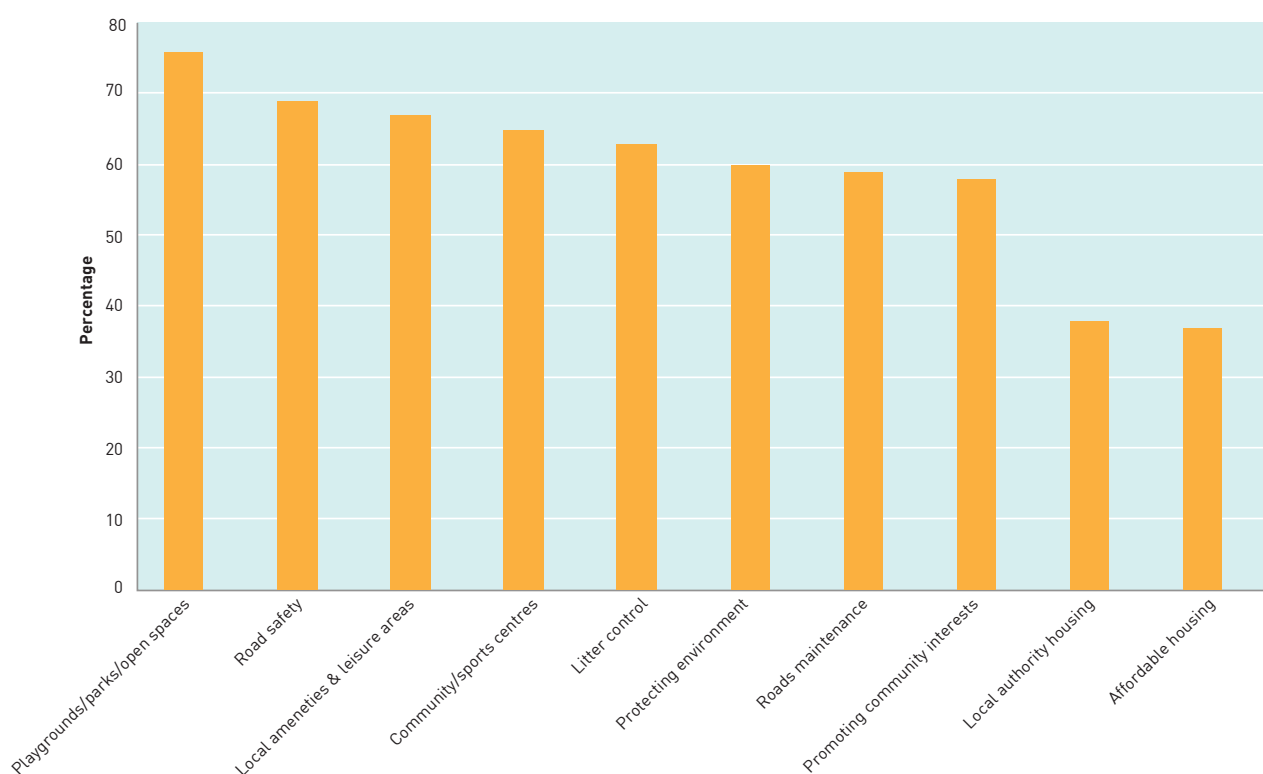


- Business satisfaction with the service received from the civil service stood at 82 per cent satisfied in 2016. This was higher than in previous surveys in 2006 and 2009.
- The percentage of businesses saying they were dissatisfied stood at 10 per cent in 2016, lower than in previous surveys.

## Satisfaction with local council's services varies depending on the service

**FIGURE 53 SATISFACTION WITH LOCAL AUTHORITY SERVICES**

Source: National Oversight and Audit Commission Local Authority Satisfaction Survey 2019

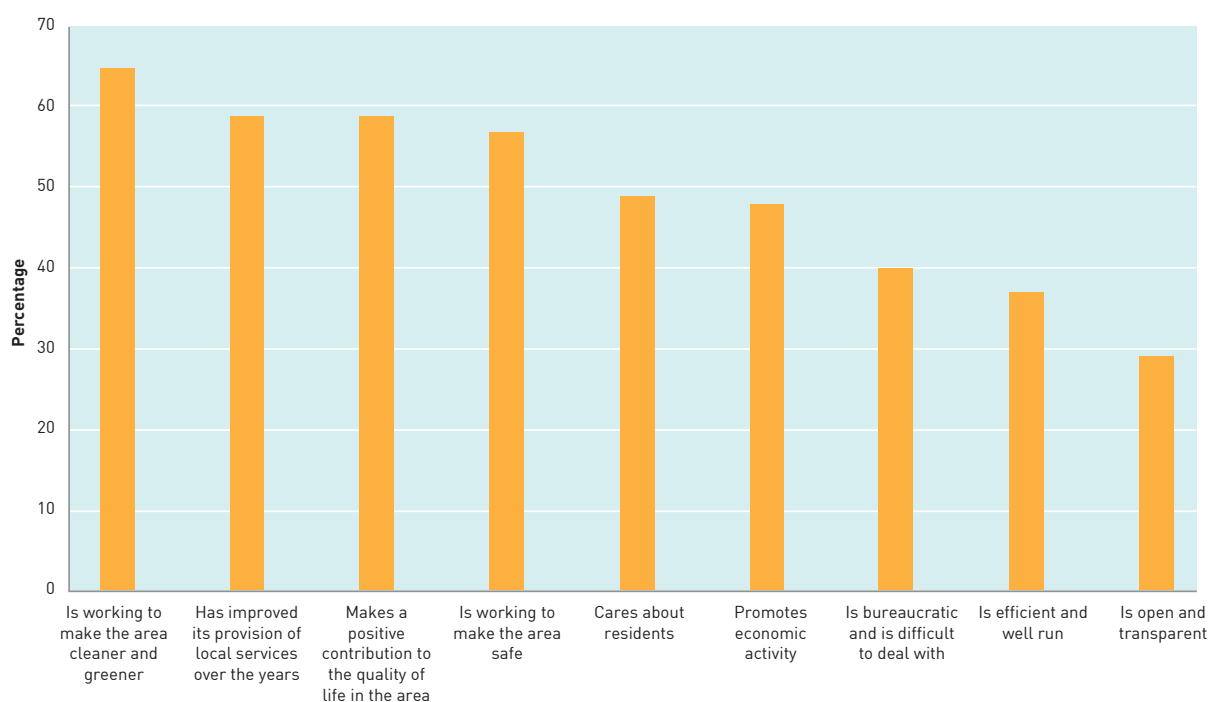


- Around three-quarters of people are satisfied with the playground/parks/open spaces service provided by their local authority.
- The lowest level of satisfaction related to housing services, with both affordable housing and local authority housing getting a satisfaction rating below 40 per cent.

## Most people have broadly positive views of their local authority

**FIGURE 54 PUBLIC VIEWS ON THE CONTRIBUTION OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES**

Source: National Oversight and Audit Commission Local Authority Satisfaction Survey 2019

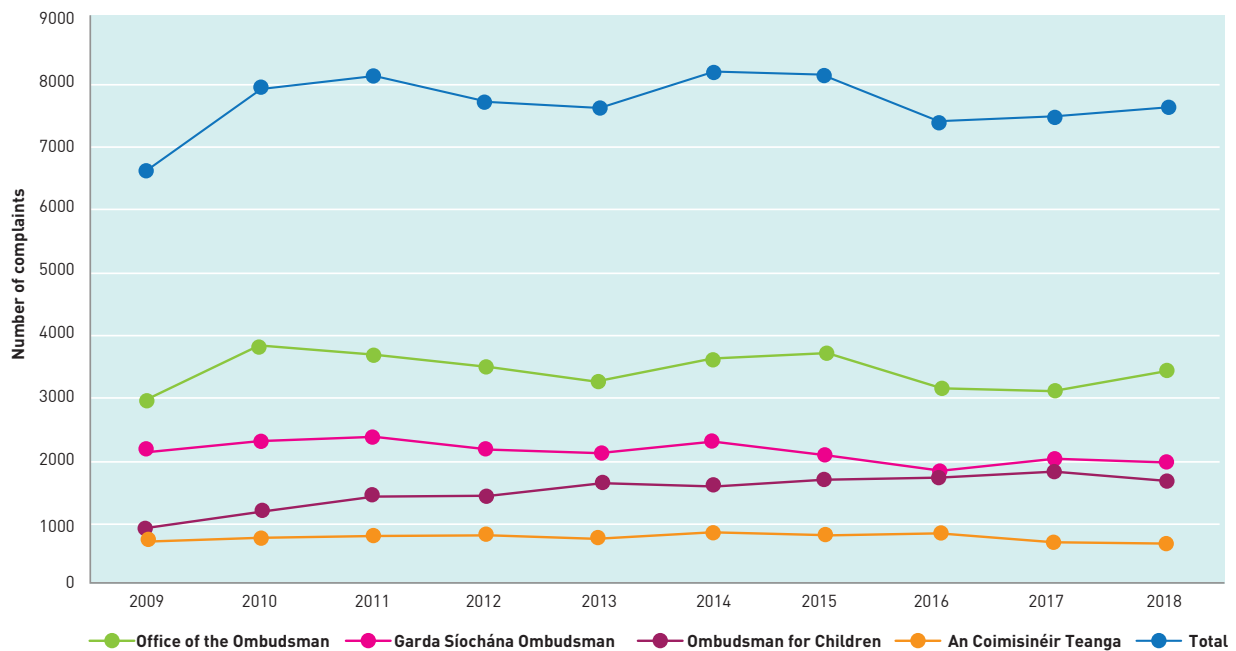


- The majority of respondents (73 per cent) believe that their local authority is working to make their area cleaner and greener.
- Just over 60 per cent believe that their local authority is working to make the area safe, has improved the provision of services over the years, and makes a positive contribution to quality of life in their area.
- Less than half of respondents believe that their local authority is efficient and well run, and is open and transparent.

## Complaints to Ombudsman offices are relatively stable

**FIGURE 55 COMPLAINTS TO OMBUDSMAN OFFICES**

Source: various Ombudsman Office annual reports.

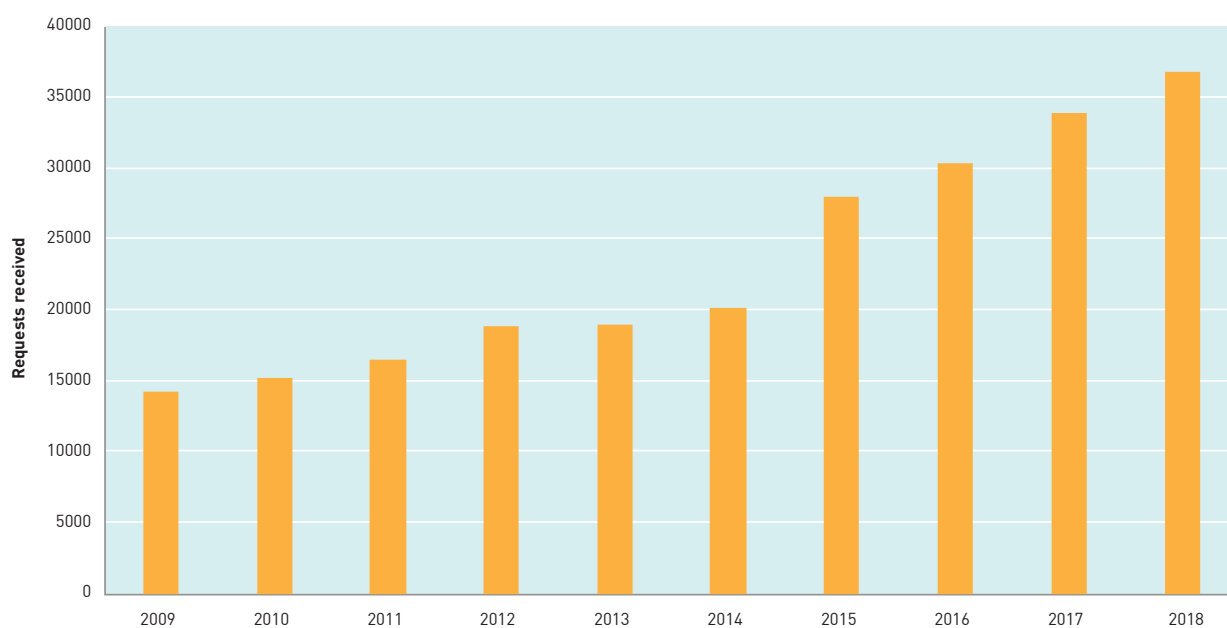


- 7,541 complaints were received by ombudsman offices in 2018. This is down from a high of just over 8,000 complaints in 2014 and 2015, but an increase since 2016.
- The majority of complaints are to the Office of the Ombudsman, with 3,364 complaints received within their remit in 2018.
- There was a small decrease in 2018 in the number of complaints received to all ombudsman offices except the Office of the Ombudsman.

## The number of freedom of information requests received by public bodies continues to increase

**FIGURE 56 NUMBER OF FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUESTS RECEIVED**

Source: Office of the Information Commissioner annual reports



- The number of freedom of information (FOI) requests stood at just under 37,000 in 2018.
- 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 almost a third of the requests received.

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## APPENDIX 1

### INDICATORS USED TO MAKE UP THE IPA PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION QUALITY INDICATOR<sup>1</sup>

	Data Source and Indicator	Description
<b>Traditional Public Service Values Indicator (TPSVI)</b>	Justice Processes (IMD)	Justice is fairly administered
	Judicial Independence (WEF)	The judiciary is independent from political influences of members of government, citizens or firms
	Bribery and Corruption (IMD)	Existence of bribery and corruption
	Transparency (IMD)	Government policy is transparent
	Reliability of Police Services (WEF)	Police services can be relied upon to enforce law and order
	Data Source and Indicator	Description
<b>Competitiveness and Regulation Indicator (CRI)</b>	Legal and Regulatory Framework (IMD)	The legal and regulatory framework encourages the competitiveness of enterprises
	Public Sector Contracts (IMD)	Public sector contracts are sufficiently open to foreign bidders
	Intellectual Property Rights (IMD)	Intellectual property rights are adequately enforced
	Public and Private Sector Ventures (IMD)	Public and private sector ventures are supporting technological developments
	Bureaucracy (IMD)	Bureaucracy hinders business activities
	Burden of Government Regulation (WEF)	Complying with administrative requirements (permits, regulations, reporting) issued by government is burdensome

<sup>1</sup> IMD refers to indicator from the IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook. WEF refers to indicator from the WEF Global Competitiveness Report

