

Ireland

Geography

Location: Western Europe, occupying five-sixths of the island of Ireland in the North Atlantic Ocean, west of Great Britain

Area:

total area: 70,280 sq km

land area: 68,890 sq km

Land boundaries: total 360 km, UK 360 km

Coastline: 1,448 km

Maritime claims:

continental shelf: not specified

exclusive fishing zone: 200 nm

territorial sea: 12 nm

Climate: temperate maritime; modified by North Atlantic Current; mild winters, cool summers; consistently humid; overcast about half the time

Terrain: mostly level to rolling interior plain surrounded by rugged hills and low mountains; sea cliffs on west coast

Natural resources: zinc, lead, natural gas, petroleum, barite, copper, gypsum, limestone, dolomite, peat, silver

Land use:

arable land: 14%

permanent crops: 0%

meadows and pastures: 71%

forest and woodland: 5%

other: 10%

Irrigated land: NA sq km

Environment:

current issues: water pollution, especially of lakes, from agricultural runoff

natural hazards: NA

Note: strategic location on major air and sea routes between North America and northern Europe; over 40% of the population resides within 60 miles of Dublin

People

Population: 3,550,448 (July 1995 est.)

Age structure:

0-14 years: 24% (female 415,640; male 440,468)

15-64 years: 64% (female 1,125,638; male 1,155,823)

65 years and over: 12% (female 237,098; male 175,781) (July 1995 est.)

Population growth rate: 0.33% (1995 est.)

Birth rate: 14.04 births/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Death rate: 8.48 deaths/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Net migration rate: -2.22 migrant(s)/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Infant mortality rate: 7.2 deaths/1,000 live births (1995 est.)

Life expectancy at birth:

total population: 75.99 years

male: 73.15 years

female: 79 years (1995 est.)

Total fertility rate: 1.95 children born/woman (1995 est.)

Nationality:

noun: Irishman(men), Irishwoman(women), Irish (collective plural)

adjective: Irish

Ethnic divisions: Celtic, English

Religions: Roman Catholic 93%, Anglican 3%, none 1%, unknown 2%, other 1% (1981)

Languages: Irish (Gaelic), spoken mainly in areas located along the western seaboard, English is the language generally used

Literacy:

total population: 98%

Labor force: 1.37 million
by occupation: services 57.0%, manufacturing and construction
28%, agriculture, forestry, and fishing 13.5%, energy and mining
1.5% (1992)

Government

Names:

conventional short form: Ireland

Type: republic

Capital: Dublin

Independence: 6 December 1921 (from UK)

National holiday: Saint Patrick's Day, 17 March

Constitution: 29 December 1937; adopted 1 July 1937 by plebescite

Suffrage: 18 years of age; universal

Flag: three equal vertical bands of green (hoist side), white, and orange; similar to the flag of the Cote d'Ivoire, which is shorter and has the colors reversed - orange (hoist side), white, and green; also similar to the flag of Italy, which is shorter and has colors of green (hoist side), white, and red

Economy

Overview: The economy is small and trade dependent. Although exports remain the primary engine for Ireland's robust growth, the economy is also benefiting from a rise in consumer spending and recovery in both construction and business investment.

Unemployment remains a serious problem, however, and job creation is the main focus of government policy.

Industries: food products, brewing, textiles, clothing, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, machinery, transportation equipment, glass and crystal

Agriculture: accounts for 10% of GDP; principal crops - turnips, barley, potatoes, sugar beets, wheat; livestock - meat and dairy

products; 85% self-sufficient in food; food shortages include bread grain, fruits, vegetables

Illicit drugs: transshipment point for hashish from North Africa to the UK and Netherlands

Transportation

Railroads:

total: 1,947 km

Highways:

total: 92,327 km

Inland waterways: limited for commercial traffic

Pipelines: natural gas 225 km

Ports: Arklow, Cork, Drogheda, Dublin, Foynes, Galway, Limerick, New Ross, Waterford

Airports:

total: 44

Defence Forces

Branches: Army (includes Naval Service and Air Corps), National
Police (Garda Siochana)