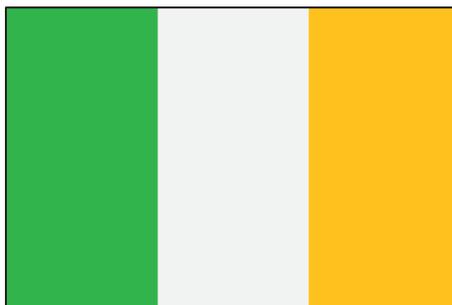




YouthPartnership

COUNTRY SHEET ON YOUTH POLICY IRELAND



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1. Statistics on young people

According to the Youth Work Act 2001 a young person means ‘a person who has not attained the age of 25 years’, but statistics focusing on youth commonly use the 15-24 age bracket.

Persons aged 0-24 in the population, by gender, are as follows (bracketed percentages indicate proportion of the global population):

Age Group	Males	Females	Persons
0-14	443,044 (10.45%)	421,405 (9.94%)	864,449 (20.39%)
15-24	321,007 (7.57%)	311,725 (7.35%)	632,732 (14.92%)
Total	764,051 (18.02%)	733,130 (17.29%)	1,497,181 (35.31%)

Source: *Census 2006*

2. Actors and Structures

2.1 Public authorities

2.1.1 National public authorities

Ministry

The [Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs](#) is part of the [Department of Health and Children](#). It was established as the Office of the Minister for Children (OMC) in December 2005, and in mid-2008 the Government announced that the Youth Affairs section of the Department of Education and Science (see below) was to be integrated within the OMC and the name changed to OMCYA. The Minister for Children and Youth Affairs is Mr Barry Andrews TD. The role of the OMCYA is: to improve the lives of children (defined as persons under the age of 18 years) within the framework of the [National Children's Strategy](#) 2000-2010); to develop policy and legislation on child welfare and child protection; and to bring greater coherence to policy-making for children. As already indicated its role will henceforth also relate to youth affairs. In addition to the *National Children's Strategy*, the OMC supports the Minister to implement the [National Childcare Investment Programme](#) (2006-2010), the [Children Act 2001](#) (see 3 below) and the commitments in the national agreement [Towards 2016](#) in relation to children's services.

In addition to the Minister's Office Staff and Advisor, the OMCYA units within the Department of Health and Children include the [Child Welfare and Protection Policy Unit](#), the [Childcare Directorate](#) and the [National Children and Young People's Strategy Unit](#).

In addition, two other units are 'co-located' with the OMCYA, but continue to report to, and be part of, their respective parent departments. This co-location allows people to work side by side and helps to facilitate a 'joined-up' approach to the development of policy and delivery of services for children and young people. One of these co-located units is the [Early Years Education Policy Unit](#) for young children (Department of Education and Science). The other, more relevant in the context of youth policy, is the Irish Youth Justice Service (see below).

The Children and Youth Services Development Unit of the OMCYA is concerned among other things with the non-formal education of Ireland's young people and provides support by way of financial and other assistance to those providing youth work programmes and services. The main aim of the youth work service is to help all young people to realise their full potential and to become active participants in a democratic society. Youth projects and organisations present valuable opportunities for the social and personal development of young people.

The [youth work](#) objectives of the OMCYA are:

1. To develop youth work policies and strategies which develop and enhance young people's personal and social development (Youth Work Act, 2001);
2. To support the youth work sector in providing effective youth work opportunities for young people and to consolidate existing provision of youth work services and initiatives to ensure both quality of service and value for money;

3. To support the alignment of youth work policies and services with other OMCYA policies and services and the broader policy and services field to help ensure an integrated and coordinated approach to the needs of young people;
4. To liaise with EU/Council of Europe on youth policy and the implementation of EU programmes for youth.

The staff of the Youth Affairs Unit currently number 8.

The Principal Officer (Director) is Ms Elizabeth Canavan and the contact person for European youth policy is Mr Jim O'Donovan, Assistant Principal Officer.

Other national public bodies who are directly involved in youth policies

The [Irish Youth Justice Service](#) (IYJS) was set up in the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform in 2005 and is physically co-located within the strategic framework of the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA). The service is guided by the principles in the [Children Act 2001](#) and is separate from the adult justice system as far as possible. It was set up to manage and improve services to children under the age of 18 who get into trouble with the law or who are at risk of doing so. The IYJS focuses on diversion, community sanctions and rehabilitation with detention only as a last resort. Its objectives include:

- developing a coordinated youth justice policy;
- implementing the [National Youth Justice Strategy](#) (launched in 2008).

Other national offices with relevance for young people

The [Ombudsman for Children's Office](#) (OCO) was established under the [Ombudsman for Children Act 2002](#). It describes its role as being 'to make sure that the government and other people who make decisions about young people really think about what is best for young people'. The main areas of work of the OCO relate to: independent complaints handling; communication & participation; research & policy.

[FAS](#) is the National Training and Employment Authority

[Youthreach](#) is the national education and training programme for early school leavers, jointly funded by the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment.

[Leargas](#) is the national exchange bureau (see 6 below)

Parliament commission in charge of youth issues

There is no commission or committee in the Oireachtas [Parliament] which deals specifically with youth issues. There is currently a [Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health and Children](#) chaired by Deputy Seán Ó Feargháil; and a [Joint Oireachtas Committee on the Constitutional Admendment on Children](#) chaired by Deputy Mary O'Rourke. A constitutional amendment on the rights of the child is expected to be held following the agreement by the Joint Committee of the wording for such an amendment.

National advisory committees and boards

There are a number of national advisory committees and boards whose work touches on aspects of youth policy and youth services.

The [National Youth Work Advisory Committee](#) (NYWAC) was established under the terms of the [Youth Work Act 2001](#) (see 3 below). Its function is to advise the Minister for Health and Children on all aspects of the provision, co-ordination and evaluation of youth work programmes and youth work services. Its membership (31-33 members) includes representation of the [Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs](#), relevant [government departments](#) and statutory agencies; the [Irish Vocational Education Association](#) (IVEA) whose member Vocational Education Committees (33 in total) are responsible under the Youth Work Act for ensuring the provision and coordination of youth work at local level; and the [National Youth Council of Ireland](#) which is the 'prescribed representative body for voluntary youth organisations' (see 2.3 below). The current chairperson of NYWAC is Mr Pat Forde.

The National Children's Advisory Council was established in May 2001 as one of the new structures to support the implementation of the National Children's Strategy. The Council has an independent advisory and monitoring role in relation to the implementation of the National Children's Strategy and reports to the Minister for Children. The first Council served from May 2001 until May 2004. The second term of the reconstituted Council commenced in April 2005 and concluded in mid-2008. During its first and second terms the Council included representatives of the statutory agencies, the voluntary sector, the research community, parents and young people. It is anticipated that the formation of any new Council will reflect, in the main, representation of similar bodies as comprised the membership of the previous two Councils. A final decision regarding the reconstitution of the Council is expected shortly.

The Children Acts Advisory Board was established in 2007. A major programme of agency rationalisation within the health sector was announced by the Minister for Health and Children on 15th October, 2008. The primary aim of this ambitious programme is to streamline service delivery, professional registration and policy making in a number of areas in the health sector, through the integration and /or amalgamation of functions. As part of this process, and on foot of a Government Decision, the functions of the Children Acts Advisory Board (CAAB) are being subsumed into the [Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs](#).

2.1.2 Regional public authorities

There are eight [Regional Authorities](#) in Ireland, whose members are not directly elected, but are nominated from among the elected members of the local authorities in each region (see 2.1.3 below). The regional authorities do not have specific competencies in the youth field. Members of the Regional Authorities come together in two [Regional Assemblies](#).

2.1.3 Local public authorities with competencies in the youth field

The [local government system](#) in Ireland consists of 29 directly elected County Councils and 5 City Councils (along with Borough Councils and Town Councils). In order to enhance the relationship between local government and social inclusion, [City and County Development Boards](#) (CDBs) were placed on a statutory footing by the [Local Government Act 2001](#). They bring together the local authorities (city and county councils), state agencies (including the Vocational Education Committees, referred to below), local development agencies and the 'social partners' (including the community and voluntary sector) and they are charged with drawing up comprehensive strategies for economic, social and cultural development. Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) attached to the CDBs deal with specific areas of policy and provision, including youth. Most of the CDBs have established a local youth council (Comhairle na nÓg) to select participants to the national annual 'youth parliament' ([Dáil na nÓg](#)) (see 2.3.1 below).

Local authorities have the key role of nominating members of **Vocational Education Committees** (VECs), which are the local bodies with the most explicit statutory and legislative responsibility relating to youth in Ireland. The collective representative body for the VECs is the [Irish Vocational Education Association](#). The VECs have responsibility under the terms of the [Youth Work Act 2001](#) for ensuring the provision and coordination of youth work programmes and services at local level by (among other things) providing assistance to voluntary youth organisations within their areas of operation. Under the terms of the Act, VECs will be assisted in their work by youth work committees (sub-committees of the VECs) and by local voluntary youth councils. (The relevant sections of the Act relating to these structures have yet to be commenced.)

2.2 Youth welfare services (comprising public and/or non public actors)

Health Service Executive

Under the terms of the [Child Care Act 1991](#), the [Health Service Executive](#) is the public body charged with a statutory duty to 'promote the welfare of children who

are not receiving adequate care and protection', as well as to provide a range of child care and family support services. In performing these functions the health authorities must regard the welfare of the child as the first and paramount consideration, have regard to the rights and duties of parents, give due consideration to the wishes of the child and also have regard to the principle that it is generally in the best interests of the child to be brought up in her or his own family. Under the terms of the Child Care Act 1991, children (defined as persons under 18) can be taken into care under orders of the District Court (including a supervision order, an emergency care order and a care order). The health authorities fulfil their functions under the Act through the employment of social workers and different types of child care worker (community child care workers and residential child care workers). They cooperate closely with a range of voluntary care organisations, and the voluntary sector runs almost half of the residential child care centres in the State.

National Education Welfare Board

The [National Educational Welfare Board](#) was established by the [Education \(Welfare\) Act 2000](#) to coordinate and implement services for young people with school attendance difficulties. The Act requires that schools take a strategic approach to preventing school non-attendance and in doing so cooperate with other relevant services such as youth work services. The National Educational Welfare Board employs a team of educational welfare officers.

Non-public actors in youth welfare

Major *non-governmental* organisations dealing with disadvantaged children and young people include [Barnardos](#), [Focus Ireland](#) and the [Simon Community](#) (the latter two dealing with homelessness, and with adults as well as young people).

2.3 Non-public actors/structures & youth services with competencies in the youth field

2.3.1 Youth councils

The [National Youth Council of Ireland](#) is the representative body for national voluntary youth work organisations (youth NGOs) in Ireland. It represents and supports the interests of 50 voluntary youth organisations and uses its collective experience to act on issues that impact on young people. It seeks to ensure that all young people are empowered to develop the skills and confidence to fully participate as active citizens in an inclusive society. NYCI is the national 'prescribed representative organisation' under the Youth Work Act 2001 and is recognised as a Social Partner (within the the Community and Voluntary Pillar) in the partnership framework for drawing up national agreements (including the current agreement [Towards 2016](#)).

NYCI organises [Dáil na nÓg](#) (in partnership with two of its member organisations, [Foróige](#) and [Youth Work Ireland](#)) on behalf of the [Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs](#).

[Dáil na nÓg](#)

Dáil na nÓg means ,youth parliament'. It is an annual event where the children and young people of Ireland meet on a national level to discuss issues that are important to them.

Each young person represents their local authority area, having been nominated at a local Comhairle na nÓg (,youth council'). The *comhairlí* are organised by the [City and County Development Boards](#).

2.3.2 Youth NGOs (Other than those in membership of the National Youth Council)

The [Irish Association of Young People in Care](#) (IAYPIC) has as its aims to give a voice to what young people in care are saying, to promote the rights of children in care, to provide information, advice and support to young people and to promote the participation of young people.

2.4 Other structures

Research

The **National Longitudinal Study of Children**, also known as [Growing Up in Ireland](#), was launched in 2007 as part of the [National Children's Strategy](#). The research is being conducted by the [Economic and Social Research Institute](#) (ESRI) and the [Children's Research Centre](#) at Trinity College Dublin, and is being overseen by the Research Division of the [Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs](#) (OMCYA).

The other functions of the Research Division of the OMCYA are:

- developing a [children's research programme](#);
- capacity building in children's research;
- improving information systems about children's lives;
- developing a national set of [child well-being indicators](#); and
- compiling a [State of the Nation's Children](#) report.

The [Health Service Executive](#) (see 2.2.1 above) has a [Children and Young People's Team](#) which supports and publishes research and resource materials.

Centres for research activity on children and young people in **academic institutions** include the following:

- The [Children's Research Centre](#) at Trinity College Dublin.
- The [Child and Family Research Centre](#) at National University of Ireland, Galway.
- The Youth Research Programme in the [Department of Applied Social Studies](#) at National University of Ireland, Maynooth.
- The [Department of Applied Social Studies](#) at University College, Cork.

[Youth Studies Ireland](#) is an interdisciplinary peer-reviewed **journal** published biannually by the [Irish Youth Work Centre](#).

3. Legislation

[Bunreacht na hÉireann](#), the Constitution of Ireland, does not contain any articles explicitly concerning youth. Children's 'natural and imprescriptible rights' are referred to but not defined (Article 42.5). A constitutional referendum setting out children's rights is under consideration (see 2.1.1.4 above).

Major national legislation relating to young people includes the Acts already referred to above:

- [Child Care Act 1991](#) dealing with the provision of care by the State for those children (up to 18 years of age) who need it.
- [Children Act 2001](#) dealing with justice issues as they pertain to children and young people.
- [Education \(Welfare\) Act 2000](#) dealing with school attendance and educational welfare.
- [Youth Work Act 2001](#) dealing with the provision and coordination of youth work services.

Other relevant legislation includes:

- [Education Act 1998](#) dealing with the national framework for education at primary and secondary levels.
- [Protection of Young Persons \(Employment\) Act 1996](#) setting out the limited circumstances in which children and young persons may be employed.

4. National programmes on youth

The most important national strategies, plans or policies concerned specifically with children and young people include:

[National Children's Strategy 2000-2010](#)

The goals of the National Children's Strategy are:

1. Children will have a voice in matters which affect them and their views will be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity.
2. Children's lives will be better understood; their lives will benefit from evaluation, research and information on their needs, rights and the effectiveness of services.
3. Children will receive quality supports and services to promote all aspects of their development.

A follow up to the National Children's Strategy is currently in preparation within the [Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs](#).

[National Youth Work Development Plan 2003-2007](#)

The goals of the NYWDP are:

1. To facilitate young people and adults to participate more fully in, and to gain optimum benefit from, youth work programmes and services.
2. To enhance the contribution of youth work to social inclusion, social cohesion and active citizenship in a rapidly changing national and global context.
3. To put in place an expanded and enhanced infrastructure for development, support and coordination at national and local level.
4. To put in place mechanisms for enhancing professionalism and ensuring quality standards in youth work.

National policy and strategy relating to youth work is currently under review within the [Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs](#).

National Recreation Policy for Young People (2007)

The National Recreation Policy for Young People has seven objectives:

1. Give young people a voice in the design, implementation and monitoring of recreation policies and facilities.
2. Promote organised activities for young people and examine ways to motivate them to be involved.
3. Ensure that the recreational needs of young people are met through the development of youth friendly and safe environments.
4. Maximise the range of recreational opportunities available for young people who are marginalised, disadvantaged or who have a disability.
5. Promote relevant qualifications/standards in the provision of recreational activities.
6. Develop a partnership approach in developing and funding recreational opportunities across the statutory, community and voluntary sectors.
7. Improve information on, evaluation and monitoring of recreational provision for young people in Ireland.

Programmes and actions for specific target groups

The [Youth Homelessness Strategy](#) was introduced by the Department of Health and Children in 2001. Its overall goal was:

“To reduce and if possible eliminate youth homelessness through preventative strategies and where a child becomes homeless to ensure that he/she benefits from a comprehensive range of services aimed at reintegrating him/her into his/her community as quickly as possible”.

The Youth Homelessness Strategy remains a priority action within the national partnership agreement [Towards 2016](#).

5. Budget / Public expenditure allocated to youth

A total figure for all spending on youth at national level is not available.

The Youth Affairs budget (see 2.1.1.above) in 2009 was €48.115m in 2009. The provisional budget for 2010 was €46.6m.

In addition, the Young Peoples Facilities Services Fund (Round 2 funding stream), administered by the OMCYA was allocated some €19.87m in 2009, covering both capital and current spending.

An additional significant item of expenditure is the Garda [Police] [Youth Diversion Projects](#) (budget in 2007 was € 7.591.000).

6. European Dimension of youth policy

The [National Youth Council of Ireland](#) (see 2.3.1 above) is a member of the [European Youth Forum](#) and engages extensively in international youth activities. The [International Programme](#) of NYCI facilitates and promotes the involvement of NYCI member organisations in European and international youth activities and youth policy, and advises on funding opportunities available, including funding from the European Youth Foundation.

[Leargas](#) is the national agency for the management of European and international co-operation programmes, including the Youth in Action programme. It also hosts the national website of [Eurodesk](#).

7. Forthcoming events/conferences

7.1 Current developments/plans with regard to national legislation/guidelines

- Quality Standards Framework for the Youth Work Sector

A National Quality Standards Framework (NQSF) for the youth work sector completed a pilot phase in 2008-2009 and was independently evaluated. The National Quality Standards Framework was subsequently finalised for launch and implementation in 2010.

The NQSF aims to evidence and enhance the dimensions and principles of youth work as an educational process. The rationale for the development of the NQSF is to:

- Provide a support and development tool to organisations and projects.
- Establish standards in the practice and provision of youth work.
- Provide an enhanced evidence base for youth work.
- Ensure resources are used effectively in the youth work sector.
- Provide a basis for whole-organisational assessment.

As a broad-based framework accommodating organisational diversity throughout the youth work sector, the NQSF is intended to be practicable, developmental and evidential. It sets out ten specific standards which describe effective youth work provision. Full details of the framework are available [here](#).