

Regional Innovation Scoreboard 2025

Regional profile Ireland

Independent Expert Report



European Innovation Scoreboard 2025 – Country profile Ireland

European Commission

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Regional Innovation Scoreboard 2025

Regional profile Ireland

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Ireland consists of three NUTS 2 regions. *Eastern and Midland (IE06)*, which includes Dublin, is the most innovative and is classified as an Innovation leader-. *Northern and Western (IE04)* is a Strong innovator+, while *Southern (IE05)* is a Strong innovator. *IE06* benefits from its urban concentration of universities, research centres, skilled labour, and multinational enterprises, with 63% of 25–34-year-olds in the region holding tertiary education degrees, well above the EU27 average of 43%.¹ *IE04*, despite its more rural and dispersed population, has advanced through targeted national support under the Regional Enterprise Plans, which promote SME innovation, digitalisation, and the blue economy^{2,3}. *IE05* includes strong innovation hubs such as Cork and Limerick, but its performance is held back by lower business R&D intensity and underperforming SME innovation activity⁴. All three regions are statistical, not political units, and decision-making power rests primarily at the national level or within municipalities, limiting regional capacity to implement dedicated innovation policy⁵.

Innovation performance improved across all three regions from 2018 to 2025. The strongest gains were recorded in *IE04*, particularly between 2023 and 2025, driven by significant growth in *Innovative SMEs collaborating with others*, *Innovation expenditures per person employed*, and *Sales of new-to-market and new-to-firm innovations*. *IE06* also performed strongly overall but saw a slower rate of progress in recent years, suggesting a more mature innovation system. *IE05* showed modest but consistent improvement, with strong results in *Population with tertiary education* and *Exports of medium and high technology products*, although firm-level innovation activity remained comparatively weak.

In 2025, *IE06* continues to lead in *International scientific co-publications*, *Innovation expenditures per person employed*, and *Public-private co-publications*, reflecting the strength of its knowledge ecosystem. *IE04* stands out for its upward trajectory, with the highest national growth in *Employed ICT specialists*, *Innovative SMEs collaborating with others*, and commercialisation of innovation. *IE05* shows strength in education and export-oriented industrial activity, but underperforms in *R&D expenditure in the business sector*, *Non-R&D innovation expenditures*, and SME innovation indicators. These patterns reflect wider territorial disparities in research infrastructure, industrial base, and innovation capacity.



¹ Central Statistics Office. (2024). *Educational Attainment Thematic Report 2024 – Key findings*. Available at: <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-eda/educationalattainmentthematicreport2024/keyfindings/> (Accessed: 3 July 2025).

² Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. (2022). *North-West Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024*. Available at: <https://enterprise.gov.ie/en/publications/publication-files/north-west-regional-enterprise-plan-to-2024.pdf> (Accessed: 3 July 2025).

³ Western Development Commission. (2023). *West Regional Enterprise Plan – Key Projects*. Available at: <https://westerndevelopment.ie/key-projects/west-regional-enterprise-plan-2/> (Accessed: 3 July 2025).

⁴ Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. (2022). *North-West Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024*. Available at: <https://enterprise.gov.ie/en/publications/publication-files/north-west-regional-enterprise-plan-to-2024.pdf> (Accessed: 3 July 2025).

⁵ European Committee of the Regions. Division of Powers – Ireland. Available at: <https://portal.cor.europa.eu/divisionpowers/Pages/Ireland-intro.aspx> (Accessed: 3 July 2025).

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Cartography: Eurostat - IMAGE

Region	Performance relative to EU in 2025	Performance group	Rank	Performance change 2018-2025	Performance change 2023-2025
Ireland	123.1	Strong	-	13.3	6.6
Northern and Western (IE04)	123.7	Strong+	41	26.7	16.3
Southern (IE05)	115.5	Strong	63	11.2	9.7
Eastern and Midland (IE06)	128.7	Leader-	28	14	4.9

Each Irish region is described in more detail below and tables containing the data on all RIS indicators are provided. A radar chart provides the region score relative to the country and to the EU in 2025, highlighting regional strengths and weaknesses. Significant increases and decreases in indicators are also presented. Finally, a table with structural indicators highlights structural differences of each region that may help to explain differences from the national and the EU averages.

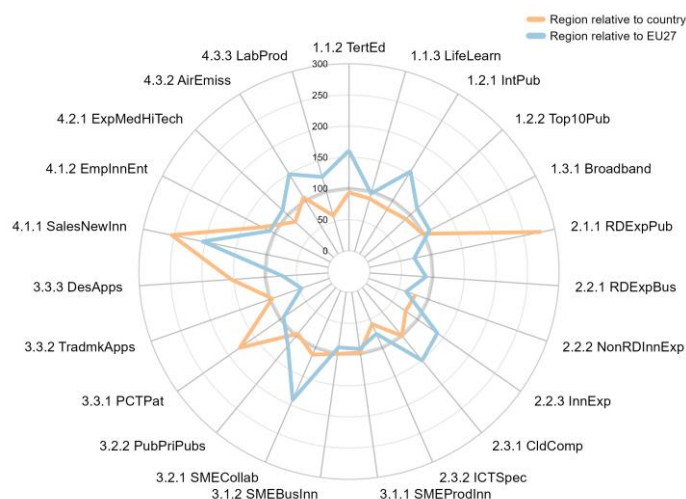
Northern and Western (IE04)

Indicator	Current benchmarking (relative to the EU in 2025)				Performance trends (relative to the EU in 2018)		
	Performance relative to		Region rank		Performance relative to EU in 2018	Performance change	
	IE	EU27				2018-2025	2023-2025
REGIONAL INNOVATION INDEX	100.4	123.7		41	139.2	26.7	16.3
Human resources							
1.1.2 Population with tertiary education	93.6	160.8		19	178.5	5.5	-4.6
1.1.3 Population involved in lifelong learning	88.2	96.8		111	122.4	0.0	0.0
Attractive research systems							
1.2.1 International scientific co-publications	83.8	154.6		77	208.9	92.3	4.6
1.2.2 Scientific publications among the top 10% most cited	90.2	114.7		82	108.5	-20.7	-2.0
Digitalisation							
1.3.1 Broadband penetration	98.3	110.7		76	110.7	0.0	0.0
Finance and support							
2.1.1 R&D expenditure in the public sector	278.9	72.6		124	73.6	0.0	0.0
Firm investments							
2.2.1 R&D expenditure in the business sector		89.3		81	93.8	5.7	5.7
2.2.2 Non-R&D innovation expenditures	78.5	62.9		212	50.1	-48.3	29.5
2.2.3 Innovation expenditures per person employed	76.7	138.3		22	154.0	32.0	38.3
Investments in information technologies							
2.3.1 Cloud computing in enterprises	100.0	150.7		38	150.7	0.0	0.0
2.3.2 Employed ICT specialists	58.6	75.6		122	85.1	7.9	23.4
Innovators							
3.1.1 SMEs introducing product innovations	97.8	92.0		151	102.5	-3.1	-33.5
3.1.2 SMEs introducing business process innovations	100.3	89.6		149	112.1	1.2	-59.4
Linkages							
3.2.1 Innovative SMEs collaborating with others	112.0	191.2		27	255.1	134.5	72.0
3.2.2 Public-private co-publications	95.4	120.2		108	136.9	30.7	3.4
Intellectual assets							
3.3.1 PCT patent applications	178.9	93.9		73	82.5	-24.9	-17.8
3.3.2 Trademark applications	96.1	46.9		186	43.8	-33.2	-37.3
3.3.3 Design applications	153.9	72.1		125	59.4	14.4	-21.9
Sales and employment impacts							
4.1.1 Sales of new-to-market and new-to-firm innovations	254.2	204.0		1	245.9	159.6	78.4
4.1.2 Employment in innovative enterprises	121.5	108.2		110	114.4	10.7	10.3
Trade impacts							
4.2.1 Exports of medium and high technology products	83.5	110.9		65	110.5	29.3	16.1
Resource and labour productivity							
4.3.2 Air emissions by fine particulates	106.1	149.5		19	221.1	0.0	1.4
4.3.3 Labour productivity	59.9	124.4		79	129.6	35.9	0.7

 >125% of the EU average
  100–125% of the EU average
  70–100% of the EU average
  <70% of the EU average

Note: 'Region rank' shows region rank among all regions for each indicator based on indicator scores.

Radar chart comparing region with the country and the EU in 2025



Note: The radar chart shows the region's performance relative to two different baselines: the country average (yellow line) and the EU27 average (blue line). These lines should be interpreted separately as they cannot be directly compared with one another. The grey circle represents the relevant baseline (either country or EU). A line above the grey circle (which corresponds to 100) indicates that the region performs above that baseline, while a line below indicates underperformance.

Main strengths, weaknesses, and performance trends⁶

Relative strengths

- Sales of new-to-market and new-to-firm innovations
- Innovative SMEs collaborating with others
- Population with tertiary education

Relative weaknesses

- Trademark applications
- Non-R&D innovation expenditures
- Design applications

Highest ranked indicators among RIS regions

- Sales of new-to-market and new-to-firm innovations
- Population with tertiary education
- Air emissions by fine particulates

Lowest ranked indicators among RIS regions

- Non-R&D innovation expenditures
- Trademark applications
- SMEs introducing product innovations

Strong increases since 2018

- Sales of new-to-market and new-to-firm innovations
- Innovative SMEs collaborating with others
- International scientific co-publications

Strong decreases since 2018

- Non-R&D innovation expenditures
- Trademark applications
- PCT patent applications

Strong increases since 2023

- Sales of new-to-market and new-to-firm innovations
- Innovative SMEs collaborating with others
- Innovation expenditures per person employed

Strong decreases since 2023

- SMEs introducing business process innovations
- Trademark applications
- SMEs introducing product innovations

Table highlighting structural differences between the region, a country, and the EU

Structural Indicator	IE04	IE	EU
Share of employment in (2022-2024 average):			
<i>Agriculture & Mining (A-B)</i>	6.77	3.93	3.73
<i>Manufacturing (C)</i>	13.93	10.87	15.6
<i>Utilities & Construction (D-F)</i>	8.2	7.6	8.4
<i>Services (G-N)</i>	65.6	71.93	64.77
<i>Public administration (O-U)</i>	5.3	5.37	7.1
Average number of employed persons per enterprise (2021-2022 average)			
GDP per capita (PPS) (2023)	38,300	81,200	38,100
GDP per capita growth (PPS) (2019-2023)	0.11	0.08	0.05
Population density (2023)	37.6	77.4	109.3
Urbanisation (2024)	25.09	59.28	76.09
Population size (000s) (2024)	945.56	5,351.68	449,306.2

⁶ Relative strengths and weaknesses refer to the three indicators where the region's scores are furthest above or below the EU average in 2025. These highlight the areas where the region stands out most positively or faces the greatest relative challenges compared to the EU.

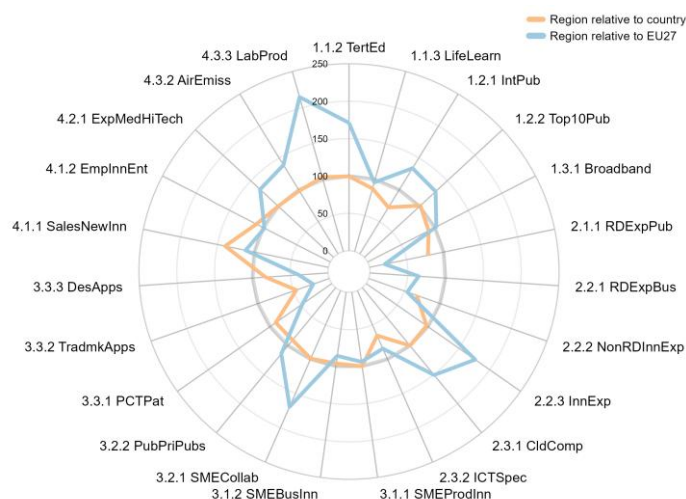
Southern (IE05)

Indicator	Current benchmarking (relative to the EU in 2025)				Performance trends (relative to the EU in 2018)		
	Performance relative to		Region rank		Performance relative to EU in 2018	Performance change	
	IE	EU27				2018-2025	2023-2025
REGIONAL INNOVATION INDEX	93.8	115.5		63	130.0	11.2	9.7
Human resources							
1.1.2 Population with tertiary education	99.6	171.1		2	189.9	8.9	13.5
1.1.3 Population involved in lifelong learning	87.5	96.0		112	121.4	0.0	0.0
Attractive research systems							
1.2.1 International scientific co-publications	72.6	133.9		95	181.0	59.3	10.5
1.2.2 Scientific publications among the top 10% most cited	101.5	129.1		62	122.1	-14.6	-6.6
Digitalisation							
1.3.1 Broadband penetration	90.9	102.3		117	102.3	0.0	0.0
Finance and support							
2.1.1 R&D expenditure in the public sector	78.9	20.5		222	20.8	-2.8	-2.8
Firm investments							
2.2.1 R&D expenditure in the business sector		64.7		148	68.0	4.5	4.5
2.2.2 Non-R&D innovation expenditures	67.5	54.0		223	43.1	-68.8	-17.1
2.2.3 Innovation expenditures per person employed	97.8	176.5		1	196.5	79.7	73.5
Investments in information technologies							
2.3.1 Cloud computing in enterprises	100.0	150.7		38	150.7	0.0	0.0
2.3.2 Employed ICT specialists	65.6	84.6		105	95.2	-4.1	-6.5
Innovators							
3.1.1 SMEs introducing product innovations	100.1	94.2		146	104.9	-25.0	-19.0
3.1.2 SMEs introducing business process innovations	96.4	86.1		155	107.7	-32.9	-37.2
Linkages							
3.2.1 Innovative SMEs collaborating with others	99.2	169.4		37	226.0	89.3	44.9
3.2.2 Public-private co-publications	90.5	114.1		114	129.9	19.9	3.9
Intellectual assets							
3.3.1 PCT patent applications	90.9	47.7		165	41.9	-23.9	-9.6
3.3.2 Trademark applications	46.2	22.5		235	21.0	-27.6	-16.4
3.3.3 Design applications	82.9	38.8		207	32.0	-0.8	-5.7
Sales and employment impacts							
4.1.1 Sales of new-to-market and new-to-firm innovations	139.6	112.0		72	135.0	7.8	-110.9
4.1.2 Employment in innovative enterprises	110.1	98.1		127	103.7	-54.5	-13.2
Trade impacts							
4.2.1 Exports of medium and high technology products	100.3	133.1		20	132.7	33.0	18.1
Resource and labour productivity							
4.3.2 Air emissions by fine particulates	98.6	139.0		26	205.6	-11.3	2.8
4.3.3 Labour productivity	103.3	214.6		1	223.5	0.0	0.0

 >125% of the EU average
  100–125% of the EU average
  70–100% of the EU average
  <70% of the EU average

Note: 'Region rank' shows region rank among all regions for each indicator based on indicator scores.

Radar chart comparing region with the country and the EU in 2025



Note: The radar chart shows the region's performance relative to two different baselines: the country average (yellow line) and the EU27 average (blue line). These lines should be interpreted separately as they cannot be directly compared with one another. The grey circle represents the relevant baseline (either country or EU). A line above the grey circle (which corresponds to 100) indicates that the region performs above that baseline, while a line below indicates underperformance.

Main strengths, weaknesses, and performance trends⁷

Relative strengths

- Labour productivity
- Innovation expenditures per person employed
- Population with tertiary education

Relative weaknesses

- R&D expenditure in the public sector
- Trademark applications
- Design applications

Highest ranked indicators among RIS regions

- Labour productivity
- Innovation expenditures per person employed
- Population with tertiary education

Lowest ranked indicators among RIS regions

- Trademark applications
- Non-R&D innovation expenditures
- R&D expenditure in the public sector

Strong increases since 2018

- Innovative SMEs collaborating with others
- Innovation expenditures per person employed
- International scientific co-publications

Strong decreases since 2018

- Non-R&D innovation expenditures
- Employment in innovative enterprises
- SMEs introducing business process innovations

Strong increases since 2023

- Innovation expenditures per person employed
- Innovative SMEs collaborating with others
- Exports of medium and high technology products

Strong decreases since 2023

- Sales of new-to-market and new-to-firm innovations
- SMEs introducing business process innovations
- SMEs introducing product innovations

Table highlighting structural differences between the region, a country, and the EU

Structural Indicator	IE05	IE	EU
Share of employment in (2022-2024 average):			
<i>Agriculture & Mining (A-B)</i>	5.8	3.93	3.73
<i>Manufacturing (C)</i>	13.83	10.87	15.6
<i>Utilities & Construction (D-F)</i>	7.77	7.6	8.4
<i>Services (G-N)</i>	67.77	71.93	64.77
<i>Public administration (O-U)</i>	4.5	5.37	7.1
Average number of employed persons per enterprise (2021-2022 average)			
GDP per capita (PPS) (2023)	85,700	81,200	38,100
GDP per capita growth (PPS) (2019-2023)	0.07	0.08	0.05
Population density (2023)	59.8	77.4	109.3
Urbanisation (2024)	45.93	59.28	76.09
Population size (000s) (2024)	1,772.41	5,351.68	449,306.2

⁷ Relative strengths and weaknesses refer to the three indicators where the region's scores are furthest above or below the EU average in 2025. These highlight the areas where the region stands out most positively or faces the greatest relative challenges compared to the EU.

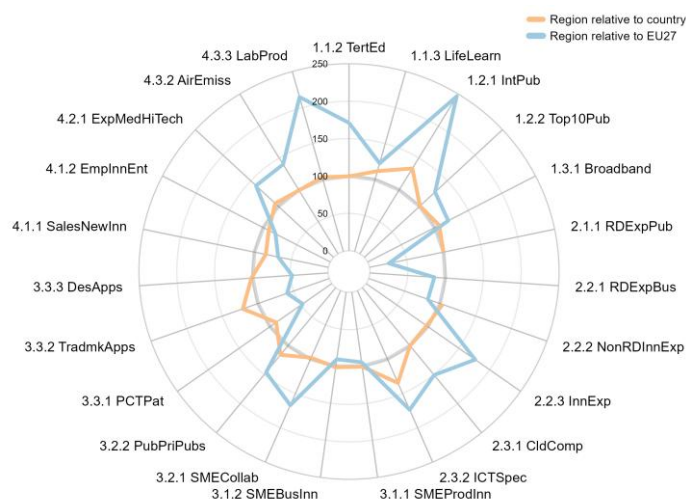
Eastern and Midland (IE06)

Indicator	Current benchmarking (relative to the EU in 2025)				Performance trends (relative to the EU in 2018)		
	Performance relative to		Region rank		Performance relative to EU in 2018	Performance change	
	IE	EU27				2018-2025	2023-2025
REGIONAL INNOVATION INDEX	104.5	128.7		28	144.9	14.0	4.9
Human resources							
1.1.2 Population with tertiary education	99.6	171.1		2	189.9	0.0	0.0
1.1.3 Population involved in lifelong learning	111.8	122.6		67	155.1	0.0	0.0
Attractive research systems							
1.2.1 International scientific co-publications	133.6	246.5		40	333.0	108.2	33.0
1.2.2 Scientific publications among the top 10% most cited	100.7	128.0		66	121.1	-7.9	-2.2
Digitalisation							
1.3.1 Broadband penetration	106.6	120.1		48	120.1	0.0	0.0
Finance and support							
2.1.1 R&D expenditure in the public sector	100.0	26.0		215	26.4	-5.6	-5.6
Firm investments							
2.2.1 R&D expenditure in the business sector		85.4		95	89.8	-4.9	-4.9
2.2.2 Non-R&D innovation expenditures	103.7	83.0		156	66.2	-15.9	-0.2
2.2.3 Innovation expenditures per person employed	97.8	176.5		1	196.5	30.1	8.8
Investments in information technologies							
2.3.1 Cloud computing in enterprises	100.0	150.7		38	150.7	0.0	0.0
2.3.2 Employed ICT specialists	134.8	173.9		26	195.7	-0.1	-4.3
Innovators							
3.1.1 SMEs introducing product innovations	100.6	94.7		142	105.4	-9.3	-17.0
3.1.2 SMEs introducing business process innovations	101.6	90.7		147	113.5	-23.6	-34.2
Linkages							
3.2.1 Innovative SMEs collaborating with others	97.9	167.2		38	223.0	103.8	80.0
3.2.2 Public-private co-publications	115.8	146.0		61	166.3	18.4	9.8
Intellectual assets							
3.3.1 PCT patent applications	90.1	47.3		166	41.6	-25.3	-13.6
3.3.2 Trademark applications	121.2	59.1		161	55.2	-42.4	-27.9
3.3.3 Design applications	101.7	47.7		183	39.3	-24.4	-28.7
Sales and employment impacts							
4.1.1 Sales of new-to-market and new-to-firm innovations	84.7	67.9		140	81.9	12.3	-164.0
4.1.2 Employment in innovative enterprises	91.7	81.7		151	86.4	-23.3	-26.3
Trade impacts							
4.2.1 Exports of medium and high technology products	105.9	140.6		6	140.0	34.3	18.8
Resource and labour productivity							
4.3.2 Air emissions by fine particulates	99.3	140.0		25	207.0	0.0	-1.4
4.3.3 Labour productivity	103.3	214.6		1	223.5	0.0	0.0

 >125% of the EU average
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Main strengths, weaknesses, and performance trends⁸

Relative strengths

- International scientific co-publications
- Labour productivity
- Innovation expenditures per person employed

Relative weaknesses

- R&D expenditure in the public sector
- PCT patent applications
- Design applications

Highest ranked indicators among RIS regions

- Labour productivity
- Innovation expenditures per person employed
- Population with tertiary education

Lowest ranked indicators among RIS regions

- R&D expenditure in the public sector
- Design applications
- PCT patent applications

Strong increases since 2018

- International scientific co-publications
- Innovative SMEs collaborating with others
- Exports of medium and high technology products

Strong decreases since 2018

- Trademark applications
- PCT patent applications
- Design applications

Strong increases since 2023

- Innovative SMEs collaborating with others
- International scientific co-publications
- Exports of medium and high technology products

Strong decreases since 2023

- Sales of new-to-market and new-to-firm innovations
- SMEs introducing business process innovations
- Design applications

Table highlighting structural differences between the region, a country, and the EU

Structural Indicator	IE06	IE	EU
Share of employment in (2022-2024 average):			
<i>Agriculture & Mining (A-B)</i>	1.77	3.93	3.73
<i>Manufacturing (C)</i>	7.93	10.87	15.6
<i>Utilities & Construction (D-F)</i>	7.3	7.6	8.4
<i>Services (G-N)</i>	76.77	71.93	64.77
<i>Public administration (O-U)</i>	5.97	5.37	7.1
Average number of employed persons per enterprise (2021-2022 average)	6.72	5.75	4.86
GDP per capita (PPS) (2023)	93,300	81,200	38,100
GDP per capita growth (PPS) (2019-2023)	0.08	0.08	0.05
Population density (2023)	182.9	77.4	109.3
Urbanisation (2024)	80.54	59.28	76.09
Population size (000s) (2024)	2,633.71	5,351.68	449,306.2

⁸ Relative strengths and weaknesses refer to the three indicators where the region's scores are furthest above or below the EU average in 2025. These highlight the areas where the region stands out most positively or faces the greatest relative challenges compared to the EU.

More information about Ireland and its innovation ecosystem can be found in the following other European Commission resources:

- [EIS country profile](#)
- [European Semester 2025 Country report for Ireland](#)
- [European Research Area Platform](#)
- [Smart Specialisation Community of Practice Observatory](#)
- [Horizon Data Dashboard](#)
- [European Committee of Regions Division of Powers tool](#)

This report provides the Country profile from the 2025 Regional Innovation Scoreboard for Ireland

Studies and reports