Seirbhís Phríosúin
na hÉireann
Irish Prison Service

Irish Prison Service Publishes 2023 Annual Report

(Friday 13th December 2024)

The Irish Prison Service today published its 2023 Annual Report. The report highlights significant advancements in rehabilitation, safety, and dignity, while outlining the Irish Prison Service's response to a rising prison population and the ongoing need for infrastructure expansion.

In 2023, the Irish Prison Service made notable strides towards improving the welfare of both prisoners and staff. Key milestones include the introduction of the ***Irish Prison Service Strategic Plan 2023-2027*** and **the** ***Irish Prison Service Drug Strategy 2023-2026***, which set the roadmap for the organisation's future work in areas such as reducing drug-related harm within the prison system and enhancing rehabilitative services for those in custody. Additionally, the Irish Prison Service participated in the Amber Flag initiative, making it the first public or private organisation to be awarded the prestigious Amber Flag by Pieta.

The Irish Prison Service also prioritised staff development and wellbeing. With an ongoing commitment to continued professional development and the introduction of various mental health initiatives, the Irish Prison Service continued to foster a culture of support for staff.

The Irish Prison Service, Director General, Caron McCaffrey commented on the progress made throughout 2023:***"2023 was a year of significant achievement for the Irish Prison Service, as we continue to uphold our mission to provide a safe, secure, and rehabilitative environment for all those in our care.***

"Our focus on improving the welfare of prisoners, coupled with our commitment to enhancing the professional development of our staff, underpins our core values of safety, dignity, and rehabilitation.

"As we look to the future, the introduction of our strategic plans will guide us through the ongoing challenges of rising prisoner numbers and capacity constraints, ensuring that we continue to deliver services that prioritise rehabilitation, community reintegration, and the safety of both staff and prisoners."

Despite the progress made in 2023, the Irish Prison Service faces significant challenges with a rising prison population. The overall daily average number of prisoners in custody in 2023 increased by 11.1% (+460), with the daily population reaching **4,582**, compared to **4,122** in 2022. This increase, coupled with a growing number of prisoners serving longer sentences, continues to place pressure on the prison system.

In 2023, the number of committals to prison increased by 12.7% (+895) compared to the previous year. This, coupled with the increasing length of sentences, has had a considerable impact on prison capacity, highlighting the need for continued investment in infrastructure and resources to maintain safe and effective prison conditions.

To respond to this growing demand, the Irish Prison Service has made progress in expanding its prison estate. In 2023, Limerick Prison B Division was officially opened, providing much-needed additional capacity. This facility not only improves conditions for those in custody but also enhances the working environment for staff. In addition, the opening of a new dedicated female prison at Limerick Prison is another key development aimed at addressing the specific needs of female offenders, further expanding capacity and improving the quality of care provided to female prisoners.

Government has allocated significant capital funding to the Irish Prison Service to enhance infrastructure and increase capacity. In Budget 2025, €525 million has been secured to tackle overcrowding, an 18% increase from the previous year. The 2025 capital budget of €53 million will fund over 150 spaces by the end of 2024, with plans to create over 1,100 new spaces by 2030.

These initiatives represent critical steps towards meeting the challenges posed by overcrowding and ensuring that the Irish Prison Service can continue to offer rehabilitative services in an environment that is safe and conducive to positive outcomes for those in custody.

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Note for Editors

Other Key Achievements in 2023

- **In-cell telephony**: The continued rollout of in-cell telephones enables prisoners to maintain essential communication with their families and support networks, a vital tool for rehabilitation and community reintegration.
- **Staff development and professional training**: The Irish Prison Service remains committed to investing in its staff through ongoing professional development programs. This ensures that those working within the prison system have the knowledge and skills to meet the evolving challenges of custodial care, supporting a safer and more rehabilitative environment for all involved.

Statistics

The Irish Prison Service has reported an increase in committals and prison population figures for 2023, continuing a trend observed in recent years. Below are the key points:

- **Total Committals in 2023**:
  - There were **7,938 committals** to prison in 2023, reflecting a **12.7% increase** (+895) compared to 2022 (7,043).
  - **6,495 persons** were committed to prison in 2023, compared to **5,801** in 2022, marking an **11.9% increase** (+694).
  - **87.9%** of those committed were male, while **12.1%** were female.

- **Sentenced Prisoners**:
  - The total number of **sentenced prisoners** in 2023 increased by **15.1%**, from **4,855** in 2022 to **5,588** in 2023.
  - Notably, the number of prisoners sentenced to **3 to <6 months** increased by **10.4%**, and those receiving **sentences of 3 to <5 years** grew by **23.1%**.

- **Fine Defaulters**:
  - There was a notable increase in committals for the **non-payment of fines**, rising from **205** in 2022 to **552** in 2023.

- **Prison Population**:
  - The **daily average prison population** in 2023 was **4,582**, up **11.2%** from **4,122** in 2022.
  - The daily average number of **female offenders** in custody increased by **23.7%**, from **173** in 2022 to **214** in 2023.

- **Persons on Remand**:
  - **3,035 persons** were on remand in 2023, highlighting the ongoing challenge of managing remand prisoners in addition to those serving sentences.

- **Immigration and Extradition**:
  - There were **127 committals** in 2023 related to immigration issues, representing an **8.6% increase** from the previous year.
  - **27** individuals were committed under **European Arrest Warrants**.

- **County and Country of Origin**:
  - **36.4%** of those committed were from **Dublin**, followed by **Cork** (8.5%), **Limerick** (4.8%), and **Louth** (3.1%).
  - **79.3%** of those committed were **Irish nationals**, with **10.8%** being **EU nationals** and **3.4% African nationals**.