

Ireland — Va-PoReg Country Report

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06/18/1542 Start Part of Other Country [of United Kingdom]: 06/18/1542 marks the date of the annexation of Ireland by England, as it proclaimed Henry VIII as the King of Ireland. Prior to this, English influence in Ireland was through the Lordship of Ireland, but this Act brought Ireland more directly under the authority of the English crown. The Kingdom of Ireland was founded by the ‘Crown of Ireland Act 1542’ on 06/18/1542.¹ The Roman Catholic Relief Act 1791 removed the voting ban from Catholic men in the Kingdom of Ireland. On 04/16/1916, Irish Republicans launched the Easter Rising against British rule and proclaimed the Irish Republic. However, they were defeated by British forces a week later. Nonetheless, the Easter Rising had a significant political impact and contributed to the landslide victory of the Irish Republican party, Sinn Féin, in the Irish general elections on 12/04/1918 (as part of the 1918 United Kingdom general elections).² All adult men in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland were enfranchised by the Representation of the People Act 1918. Women were enfranchised over the age of 30, subject to a property qualification. Men who had seen active service could vote from the age of 19.³ On 01/21/1919, Sinn Féin formed a breakaway government, the Dáil Éirann, and declared Ireland’s independence. Subsequently, the conflict between the Irish Republican Army, the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC), and the British Army patrols escalated amidst the Irish War of Independence. On 12/10/1920, the British authorities declared martial law in the southern region of Ireland.⁴ According to LIED only multiparty legislative elections were held in 1919 and 1920. LIED and V-Dem do not provide data for Ireland before 1919. In this timeframe, V-Dem’s JCE is classified by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were comprehensive, whereas V-Dem’s LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were limited.

05/03/1921 End Part of Other Country [of United Kingdom, Electoral Democracy]/Start (Monarchical) Democratizing Regime: On this date, the British government divided Ireland into two self-governing entities: Northern Ireland and Southern Ireland. This division de facto ended the British rule in Southern Ireland and established a provisional government. Based on Polity5’s assessment, during this period, the executive was either equal to or subordinate to other institutions, demonstrating strong constraints on decision-making authority. LIED identifies political liberties as absent, while V-Dem’s PCLI is classified by us as indicating that political liberties are somewhat present.

12/06/1921 End (Monarchical) Democratizing Regime/Start (Monarchical) Electoral Democracy: The Anglo-Irish Treaty established the Irish Free State and offered Northern Ireland to remain in the United Kingdom, which it accepted on 12/08/1922. Subsequently, on 10/25/1922, the Constitution of the Irish Free State was ratified, establishing a parliamentary system of government.⁵ Arthur Griffith, the first president and pro-Treatyite who had been in office since January 1922, died in August 1922. He was succeeded by Micheal Collins who was killed after only ten days in office. After Collins, William T. Cosgrave took office and began organizing the pro-Treatyites within the newly re-founded Cumann na nGaedheal party (CG). Cosgrave remained in Office until 1932, although his CG party did not always have the majority of seats, he was not challenged by oppositional parties.⁶ Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. LIED categorizes the elections as competitive. V-Dem’s EF&FI scores them as free and fair but their CEI scores electoral cleanliness as ambiguous. Moreover, political liberties were not achieved according to LIED. V-Dem’s PCLI already

declares them as somewhat present for the time. As per Polity5's classification, the executive's authority was on par with or below that of other branches, reflecting executive parity or subordination. However, the adoption of the Anglo-Irish Treaty ignited a ten-month civil war between the Provisional Government (pro-Treaty forces) and the Irish Republican Army (anti-Treaty forces). The conflict concluded on 05/04/1923 when Frank Aiken, IRA Chief of Staff, issued a ceasefire order to IRA volunteers.⁷ The Electoral Act in the Irish Free State changed previous British law to enfranchise women equally with men in 1923.⁸ For the year 1922, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were comprehensive, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were moderate. For the following year, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were comprehensive, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were robust.

08/27/1923 End (Monarchical) Electoral Democracy/Start (Monarchical) Liberal Democracy: On this date, for the first-time universal suffrage was practiced in a parliamentary election in Ireland. Free and fair elections have been the norm since 1923. Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. LIED has ever since classified all elections as competitive. V-Dem's EF&FI and CEI have scored all elections as free, fair and clean. As per Polity5's classification, the executive's authority was on par with or below that of other branches, reflecting executive parity or subordination. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were comprehensive, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were robust. On 02/16/1932, the losing faction of the 1922 Irish civil war, Fianna Fáil, took power by peacefully winning the election. It was the first election in the Irish Free State since the 1931 Statute of Westminster had removed the authority of the United Kingdom parliament to legislate for the Dominions.⁹ The leader of Fianna Fáil, Eamon de Valera, was able to form a government with the support of seven members of other parties, indicating for a will to compromise in preparation for the drafting of a constitution.¹⁰

07/01/1937 Continuation Liberal Democracy: On this date, a new constitution reestablished the state as Ireland as a republic. The British monarch was no longer the head of state. During the Second World War, Ireland remained neutral.¹¹ On 04/18/1949 Ireland left the Commonwealth and became a republic under the Fine Gael Taoiseach (prime minister) John A. Costello. Several of the main political parties in Ireland – Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, and Sinn Féin – represent successors of the conflict parties of the 1922 to 1923 civil war.¹² Since the 1930s the governmental power alternated between Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael as the main political parties, usually governing in coalition with minor parties. Starting in 1979, there are several instances of prime ministers resigning, but otherwise the governmental conditions are stable and competitive within constitutional boundaries.¹³ Ireland is a parliamentary democracy with a bicameral system consisting of an indirectly elected Senate and a directly elected House of Representatives. All citizens over the age of 18 years are able to vote in elections. Additionally, British citizens residents in Ireland have the right to vote in parliamentary elections (OSCE 2020). Credible polls are held by the Irish government as well as frequent referendums. Ireland has a free and competitive political landscape. The freedom of religion and freedom of assembly are granted. Per FH, for this regime period, the country is classified as free, scoring between 2 and 4, which we also place in the free category. Furthermore, political liberties have been present ever since 1946 (LIED). Whereas V-Dem's PCLI already underlines them as fully present since 1924. As per Polity5's classification, the executive's authority was on par with or below that of other branches, reflecting executive parity or subordination. Judiciary is generally independent in Ireland. Until 1991, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were comprehensive, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were robust. Since 1992, V-Dem's JCE and LCE are both interpreted by us as indicating comprehensive constraints on the executive. Discrimination based in sexual orientation and discrimination in the workplace based on gender is prohibited, but still problems persist. On 01/08/2020 a general election was held, which was deemed free and fair.¹⁴

Liberal Democracy as of 07/01/2025 continued.

Additional Sources (Coakley 1986, Elvert 2009, Gallagher/Weeks 2010, Zink 2000b)

Notes

- ¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crown_of_Ireland_Act_1542
- ² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irish_War_of_Independence
- ³ <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/heritage/how-irish-women-won-the-right-to-vote-in-1918-1.3697389>
- ⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irish_War_of_Independence
- ⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitution_of_the_Irish_Free_State
- ⁶ <http://www.chisols.org/narratives.html> , see narratives for version 5.0, Ireland_R: 1, Ireland_V: 1.
- ⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irish_Civil_War
- ⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_suffrage#cite_note-centralasiainstitute.org-37
- ⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1932_Irish_general_election
- ¹⁰ <http://www.chisols.org/narratives.html> , see narratives for version 5.0, Ireland_R: 1.
- ¹¹ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Ireland#Free_State_and_Republic_\(1922–present\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Ireland#Free_State_and_Republic_(1922–present))
- ¹² <https://freedomhouse.org/country/ireland/freedom-world/2023>
- ¹³ <http://www.chisols.org/narratives.html> , see narratives for version 5.0, Ireland_R: 1-2, Ireland_V: 1-2.
- ¹⁴ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/ireland/freedom-world/2021>; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2020_Irish_general_election#:~:text=Sin%20F%e1n%20made%20significant%20gains,and%20in%20first%20D%20preference%20votes.

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