

Ireland

Ireland: Pension system in 2020

The public pension is a basic scheme paying a flat rate to all who meet the contribution conditions. There is also a means-tested pension to provide a safety net for the low-income elderly. Voluntary occupational pension schemes have broad coverage: over half of employees.

Key indicators: Ireland

		Ireland	OECD
Average worker earnings (AW)	EUR	46 685	34 301
	USD	53 324	39 178
Public pension spending	% of GDP	3.7	7.7
Life expectancy	at birth	82.0	80.6
	at age 65	20.3	19.7
Population over age 65	% of working- age population	25.0	30.4

Qualifying conditions

The State Pension is payable from age 66. The Qualifying Age was set to be increased to 67 in 2021 and 68 in 2028 but legislation in late 2020 repealed this increase pending a review from the Commission on Pensions which has been established by Government to examine sustainability and eligibility issues in respect of State Pension arrangements.

Full entitlement to the State pension (contributory) requires an average of 48 weeks' contributions or credits per year throughout the working life. The pension value is reduced for incomplete contribution histories. In January 2018, an interim "total contributions approach" qualification system was announced, effective from March 2018, for those pensioners who reached state pension age after 1 September 2012. This requires a person to have 40 years' worth of contributions to receive the full rate. There is a minimum total period of paid (as opposed to credited) contributions of 520 weeks (i.e. ten years' full coverage).

A means-tested State (non-contributory) pension is alternatively payable from age 66, where a person may qualify at a higher rate under that scheme.

Benefit calculation

Basic

The State Pension (Contributory) benefit is EUR 248.30 per week and an additional EUR 10 a week is paid if the receiver is aged 80 or above. If the pensioner is living alone, there is a further allowance of EUR 14 per week, increasing to EUR 19 per week in 2021. If they have an adult dependent they may be paid a means-tested allowance (directly to the dependent) of EUR 222.50 (over 66) or EUR 165.40 (under 66).

Targeted

The maximum value of the means-tested State pension (non-contributory) benefit is EUR 237 per week for a single person with an extra EUR 156.60 for an adult dependent aged under 66. Where the dependent is 66 or over, s/he may make a claim for this pension in his/her own right, and qualify for a payment of up to EUR 237 per week. There is a weekly disregard in the means test of EUR 30, and an additional earnings (from employment) disregard of EUR 200. There is also an assets test (excluding family home), with capital of more than EUR 20 000 being assessed as means, using a formula.

Voluntary private pensions

There is an additional voluntary pension which is assumed to be defined contribution. The contribution rate is assumed to be 10%.

Variant careers

Early retirement

The State pension (contributory) and the State Pension (non-contributory) can only be claimed from the age of 66 and cannot be claimed before the normal eligibility age.

Late retirement

There is no provision to defer claiming the pension.

Childcare

Eventual public pension entitlement is not affected by periods out of paid work for caring purposes since 1994, provided at least 520 weeks of contributions are paid over the course of the working life, as such periods - caring for children and/or incapacitated adults - are disregarded when calculating the average contributions used to determine pension entitlement (up to a maximum of 20 years). Under the “Total Contributions Approach” a qualifying procedure introduced in January 2018, a maximum of 20 years (out of the 40 required for full rate) caring for children (up to 12 years old) and people with a care need can be counted towards the 40 years required for a maximum rate pension (under this system, there is no ‘post-1994’ rule).

Unemployment

Eventual public pension entitlement is not affected by periods of unemployment provided at least 520 weeks of contributions are paid over the course of the working life, as contributions are credited in respect of such periods when the averaging method is used. Under the “Total Contributions Approach”, a maximum of 10 years can be credited (with an overall limit of 20 years for all credited contributions including home caring etc.).

Self-employed

In the mandatory pension scheme the benefits do not depend on earnings and the self-employed can expect the same benefits as employers with the same length of the contribution record.

Personal income tax and social security contributions

Taxation of pensioners

There is an additional tax credit for persons above 65 years of age of EUR 245 in 2020 for single people. This is on top of the general credit, which is EUR 1 650 in 2020 per person.

People over the age of 65 are also entitled to a high exemption limit (below which no tax is paid). For single people, over 65s have an exemption of EUR 18 000 in 2020.

Taxation of pension income

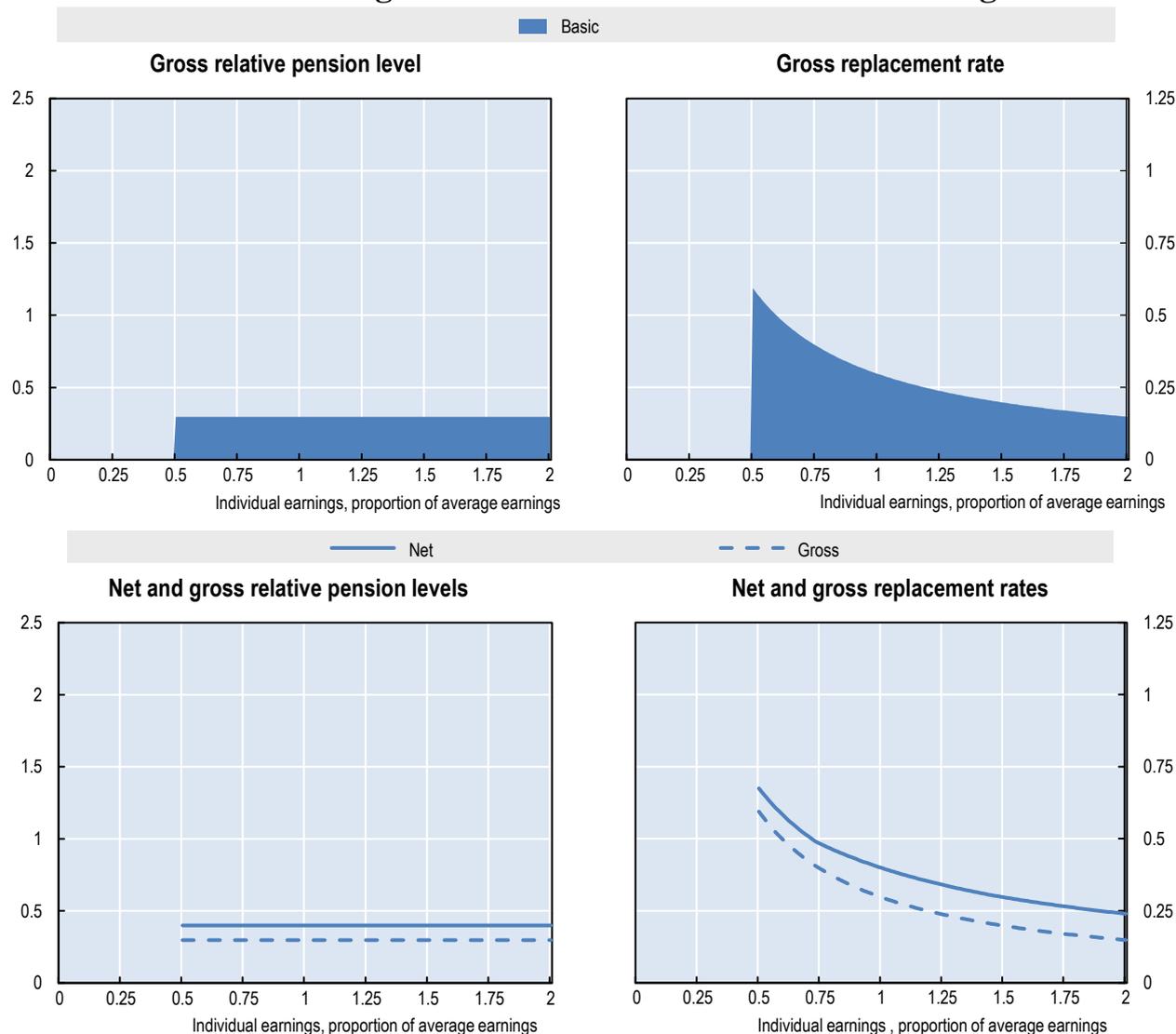
All pensions are taxable as income under the PAYE system and are also subject to the Universal Social Charge, but not PRSI.

State pensions are taxable, although they are paid without tax being deducted. If a person has an occupational pension, his/her tax-free allowance should be reduced when a State pension is being paid. This means that s/he will pay somewhat more tax on his/her occupational pension, to account for the tax that is due on the State pension.

Social security contributions paid by pensioners

Pensioners are not liable for social-security contributions. From 1 January 2011, the Health Contribution and the Income Levy have been combined to form the Universal Social Charge. This is payable at 0.5% for incomes below EUR 12 012, 2% for next EUR 8 472, 4.5% for next EUR 49 560 and 8% on the balance for people under 70. The reduced rate for people over 70 whose aggregate income for the year is EUR 60 000 or less was 2% of the balance in 2020.

Pension modelling results: Ireland in 2064 retirement at age 66



	Individual earnings, multiple of average					
	0.5	0.75	1	1.5	2	3
Men						
Women (where different)						
Gross relative pension level (% average gross earnings)	29.7	29.7	29.7	29.7	29.7	29.7
Net relative pension level (% net average earnings)	39.9	39.9	39.9	39.9	39.9	39.9
Gross replacement rate (% individual gross earnings)	59.4	39.6	29.7	19.8	14.9	9.9
Net replacement rate (% individual net earnings)	67.5	48.3	39.9	29.7	24.0	17.3
Gross pension wealth (multiple of individual gross earnings)	12.5	8.3	6.3	4.2	3.1	2.1
Net pension wealth (multiple of individual net earnings)	13.5	9.0	6.8	4.5	3.4	2.3
Net pension wealth (multiple of individual net earnings)	14.2	10.2	8.4	6.3	5.0	3.6
Net pension wealth (multiple of individual net earnings)	15.3	11.0	9.1	6.8	5.4	3.9

Assumptions: Real rate of return 3%, real earnings growth 1.25%, inflation 2%, and real discount rate 2%. All systems are modelled and indexed according to what is legislated. Transitional rules apply where relevant. DC conversion rate equal 90%. Labour market entry occurs at age 22 in 2020. Tax system latest available: 2020.