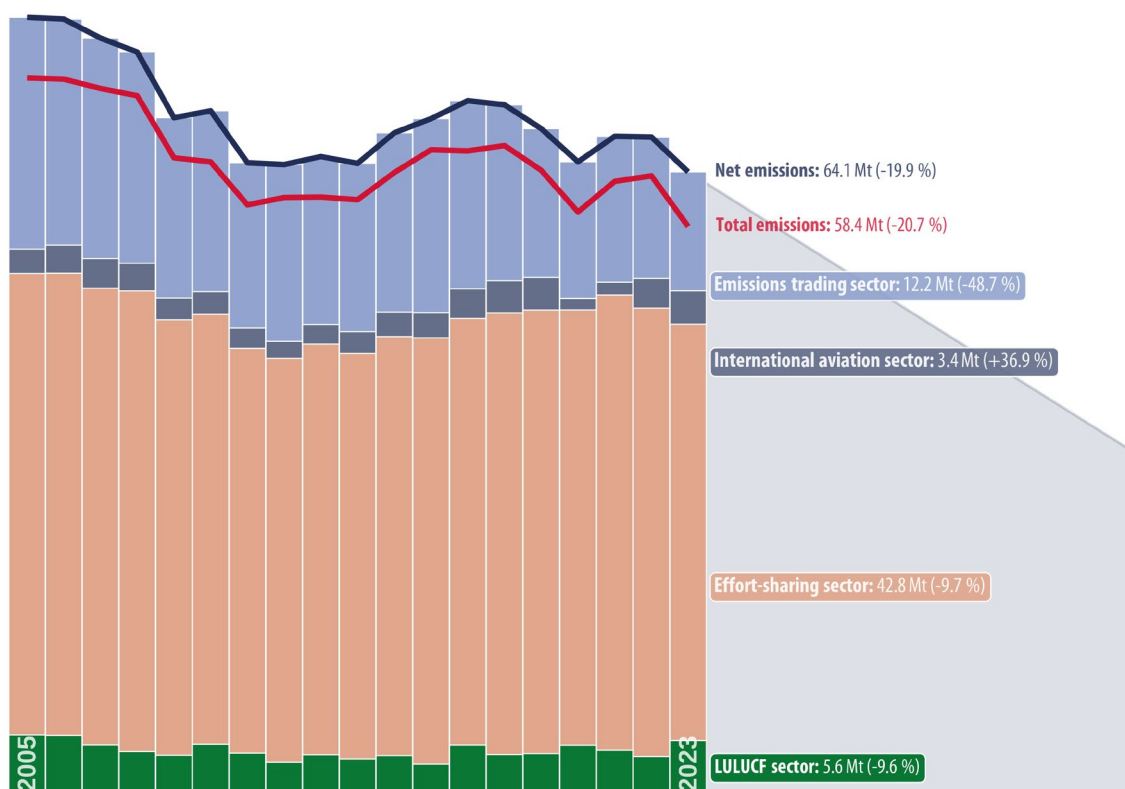


Ireland's climate action strategy

Ireland is committed to reaching climate neutrality by 2050 (see trajectory in Figure 1) and to delivering a 51 % reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2030, compared with 2018. Ireland accounts for 2.1 % of the EU's net GHG emissions and achieved a net emissions reduction of 19.9 % between 2005 and 2023, below the EU average reduction of 30.5 % over the same period. Emissions from sectors under the EU emissions trading system (ETS) dropped 48.7 % over the period. The role of agriculture means that Ireland's land use, land-use change and forestry (LULUCF) sector has delivered net emissions. For the effort-sharing sectors, Ireland missed its 2020 target, and having exceeded its allocations since 2016, decisive action is needed to deliver on the updated 2030 obligations. With the REPowerEU amendment of June 2024, the country's recovery and resilience plan now devotes 50.2 % to climate objectives. In December 2023, Ireland submitted its [draft](#) updated national energy and climate plan (NECP). The European Commission [assessed](#) it and made recommendations for the [final](#) updated NECP, delivered on 22 July 2024.

In a 2023 [survey](#), 49 % of Irish (compared with a 46 % EU average) identified climate change to be one of the four most serious problems facing the world. Most expect national government (56 %) and/or the EU (51 %) to tackle climate change, while 39 % find it to be a personal responsibility.

Figure 1 – Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions in million tonnes (Mt), 2005–2023



Data source: European Environment Agency (EEA), 2024.

This briefing is one in a series covering all EU Member States.



Ireland's starting point

On 23 July 2021, the [Climate Action and Low Carbon Development \(Amendment\) Act 2021](#) was signed into law. It sets a 2050 climate neutrality target, as well as a 2030 target to reduce GHG emissions by 51 % compared with 2018 levels. The act requires annual climate action plans, a national adaptation framework, and – once every 5 years – a national [long-term climate action strategy](#). Moreover, it defines the role of local authorities, which are required to develop local authority climate action plans (LACAPs) relating to a period of 5 years, consistent with the latest national plans including sectoral plans, the adaptation framework and the long-term strategy. It further notes the need to promote [dialogue](#) with the public. To deliver on targets, the act requires a carbon budget with sectoral emissions ceilings (SECs); this was [adopted](#) in 2022. On 21 May 2024, the government approved the Climate Action Plan 2024 ([CAP24](#)). Ireland has been operating a [carbon tax](#) since 2010.

Ireland met its [2020 EU targets](#) regarding primary and final energy consumption. However, it had to make use of flexibilities to comply with its national target under the Effort-sharing Decision, as well as statistical transfers to reach the target share of renewable energy. Between 2005 and 2023, GHG emissions decreased in all sectors. In 2023, LULUCF emissions increased, reaching the highest level since 2006. Emissions per capita in Ireland reached 11.1 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO₂e) in 2023, reduced since 2005 by 38 %. Per capita emissions however remain significantly above the 7.2 tCO₂e EU average. The Irish economy's carbon intensity decreased by 66 % between 2005 and 2023, and is currently 42 % below the EU average.

The Council's 2024 [country-specific recommendations](#) for Ireland highlight the need to address emerging delays in the implementation of Ireland's recovery and REPowerEU investments. The need to modernise and expand the electricity grid and improve planning and permitting procedures for storage and grid connectors is noted, along with efforts for private buildings' energy efficiency. The Commission's [country report](#) provides further details, including on ensuring a just transition.

Ireland is considered a medium performer (29th) in the 2025 [Climate Change Performance Index](#) (CCPI). The CCPI ranks countries on four categories using mainly quantitative data, with qualitative evaluation of forward-looking climate policies. Ireland is given a medium rating in the renewable energy, climate policy, and energy use categories, and low in the GHG emissions category.

Climate action governance

The 2021 amendments to the Irish climate law were made in response to the [Irish climate case](#). Initial draft amendments were published before the Supreme Court in July 2020 ruled the original [2015 Act](#) unlawful owing to its lack of specific GHG emissions targets. In October 2020, after the general election, the new government published the draft law, which co-legislators amended for approval.

Beyond the 2030 and 2050 targets and specific deliverables mentioned in the section above, the amended law strengthened the governance framework. It ensured a clearer mandate and [expertise requirements](#) for Climate Change Advisory Council (CCAC) members, stating that an appropriate balance across expertise areas should be ensured, as well as an equitable gender balance. The CCAC proposes the carbon budget, which the climate minister finalises to include sectoral emissions ceilings, all approved by the government, as each sectoral minister is responsible for achieving the targets for their sectoral area. The proposed carbon budget must be presented to both houses of the Oireachtas (Ireland's bicameral parliament) as part of the approval process. The climate minister and relevant sectoral ministers must present progress made to a joint committee of the Oireachtas. By 15 September annually, the CCAC provides a progress report for the previous year, and can give recommendations for corrective action when needed.

The CCAC further establishes a subcommittee on adaptation to guide the implementation of the national adaptation framework; the latest was [adopted](#) on 5 June 2024. Under the new framework, 14 sectoral adaptation plans need to be completed by the third quarter of 2025. All 31 local authorities [completed LACAPs](#) in early 2024, valid for 5 years and including risk assessments.

Climate action in the national recovery and resilience plan

The Irish 2021 [national recovery and resilience plan](#) (NRRP) has seen several revisions, including following the 2022 [revision](#) of allocations, which resulted in a slight decrease of the Irish maximum grant only allocation. Ireland finally amended its plan to include a [REPowerEU chapter](#) in March 2024, which the Council [approved](#) in June 2024. The plan now totals €1 153 million in grants. According to the Commission's [assessment](#), Ireland dedicates 50.2% of this to climate action, above the Recovery and Resilience Facility target of 37% (Figure 2). The [Irish NRRP](#) consists of three overall components focusing on digital reforms and transformation; green transition; and social recovery and job creation. Linked to the latter is also investment for green skills. Electrification of rail infrastructure is prioritised with funding towards the Cork commuter rail network and the Dublin-Drogheda line. Energy efficiency support measures focus on both the public and private sector, with a Carbon Reduction Fund added for enterprises. Peatland rehabilitation is the main land measure. The REPowerEU chapter added policy support measures for sustainable biomethane and offshore wind.

Figure 2 – NRRP climate dimension (€ million)

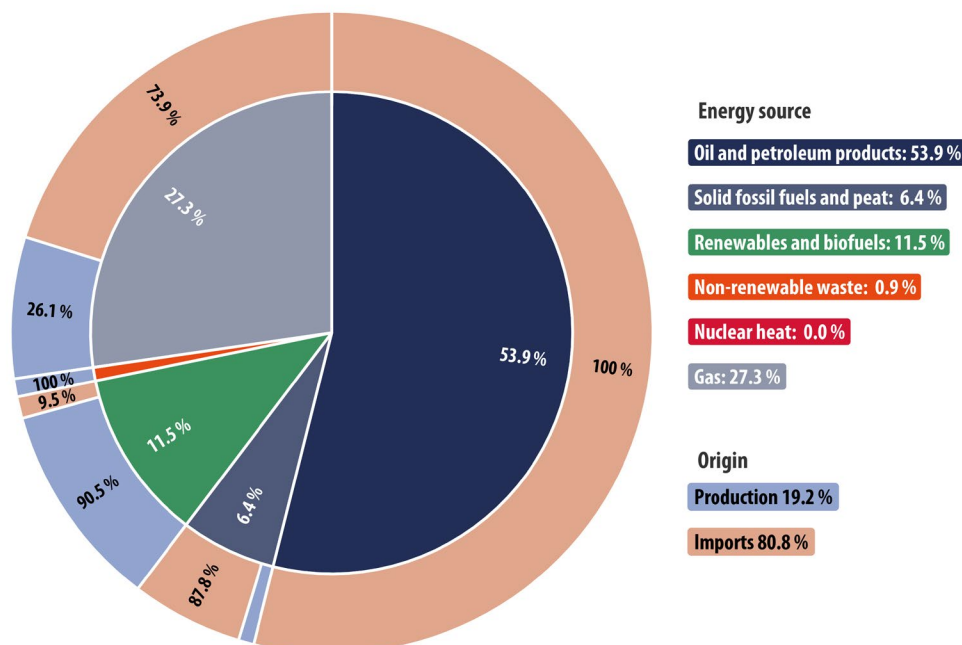
Transport 220.0	Energy efficiency 199.5		
	Research and development 50.2	Land 43.2	SMEs and large enterprises 37.6
			Green skills and jobs 29.0

Data source: [European Commission](#), 2024; graphic by Lucille Killmayer, EPRS.

Energy situation

In 2022, Ireland imported (80.8%) or produced (19.2%) a total of 16.8 million tonnes of oil equivalent (Mtoe). As shown in Figure 3, oil and petroleum products, of which all are imported, remain the main fraction in the country's energy mix, with a 53.9% share. Gas, which accounts for just over a quarter of the country's energy mix (27.3%), is mainly imported from the United Kingdom. Approximately [400 000 households](#) have individual gas boilers. In 2022, gas was the primary source of electricity generation, overtaken in 2023 by wind power. Solid fossil fuels and peat remain a fraction of Ireland's energy mix. The country's largest electricity plant will [end the use of coal](#) by 2025.

Figure 3 – Energy mix and import dependency, 2022



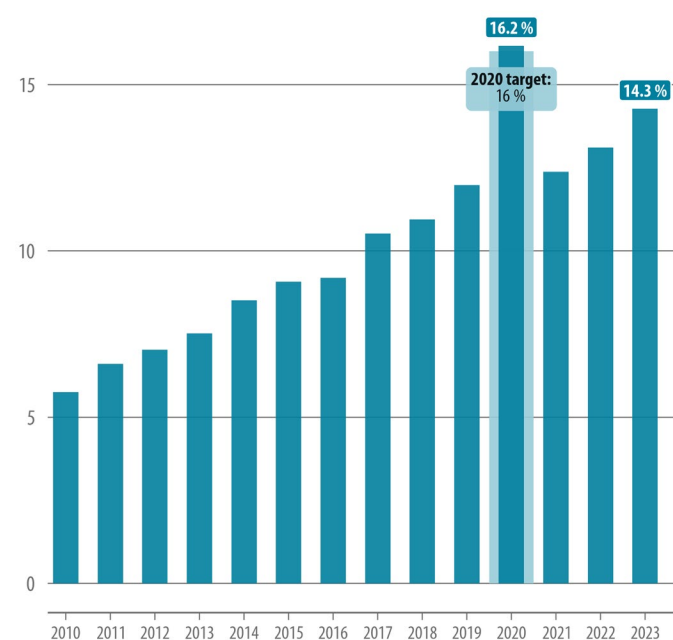
Data source: Eurostat ([nrq_bal_sd](#)), 2024.

Ireland has moved away from peat for heat and power generation. Ireland's last peat-fired power plant was converted to biomass in 2023. Peatland restoration measures are expected to bring both biodiversity and carbon sequestration benefits. The Midland Region received [support](#) from the EU Just Transition Fund, to transition the local economy away from peat extraction.

In 2023, renewable energy sources (RES) held a 14.3 % share in final energy consumption, most of it domestic production (Figure 4). Ireland has seen a steady increase of RES in final energy consumption over the past decade. The RES share for 2020 includes [statistical transfers](#) Ireland acquired to meet its 2020 target. In 2023, 50 % of Ireland's renewable energy (RE) came from wind, with an installed capacity of [4.7 gigawatts](#) (GW). Wind, together with biodiesel (13.4 %) and biomass (11 %), form the top three types of RE.

To decarbonise and improve its energy security, Ireland is seeking to boost domestic RES. The Irish final updated NECP with additional measures (WAM) projects a 2030 share of RES in final consumption of [42.7 %](#), up from [31.4 %](#) in its draft updated NECP based on existing measures only. Ireland also has a target in place to reach 80 % renewable electricity by 2030. To deliver on these targets, the final updated [NECP](#) mentions onshore wind (9 gigawatts (GW)), offshore (5 GW) and solar energy (8 GW) by 2030. In June 2024, the government approved an [implementation acceleration plan](#) for renewable electricity. The recent [national biomethane strategy](#) seeks to support the domestic production of 5.7 terawatt-hours of biomethane in Ireland by 2030.

Figure 4 – Renewable energy share in final energy consumption



Data source: Eurostat ([nrg_ind_ren](#)), 2024.

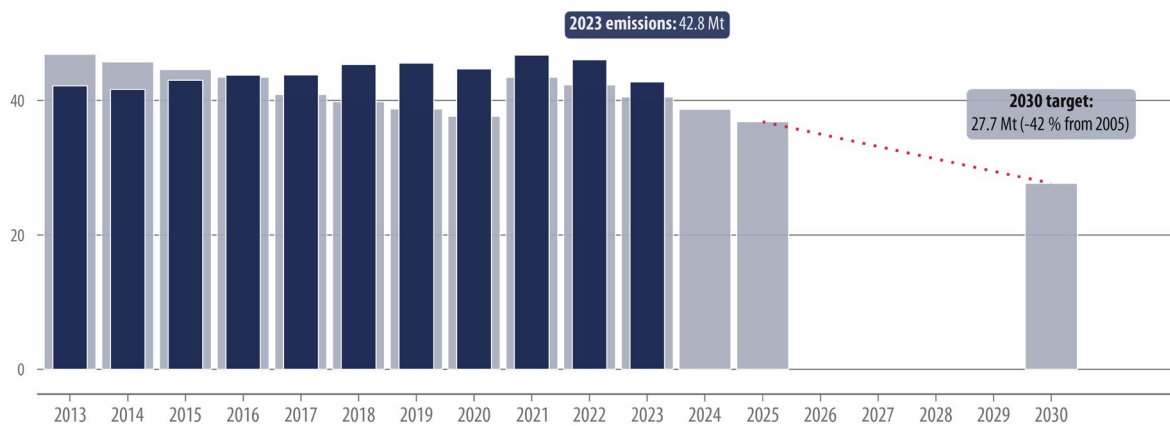
Sectoral challenges and strategies

According to Ireland's climate law, a carbon budget programme covering three successive 5-year periods between and 2021 to 2035 was [adopted](#) in 2022. The carbon budget also sets associated SECs per period. Sectors covered include industry, electricity, agriculture, transport, buildings, and an 'other' sector covering emissions linked to waste, [F-gases](#) and petroleum refining. The CAP2024 seeks to address the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimate of a 12 percentage point [shortfall](#) in 2030 on Ireland's overall target of a 51 % reduction compared with 2018. On the whole, the EPA's 2023 report projected that the first two budgets would be [exceeded by a 24-34 % margin](#). In a positive turn of events, provisional emissions data from 2023 show that emissions levels significantly decreased compared with 2022 (-8.2%), and are nearing the 1990 baseline. Researchers note that, if this trend continues, Ireland could [manage to stay within](#) its first carbon budget. However, for each of the years 2024 and 2025, Ireland would need to reduce emissions by 8.3 %. In line with the EPA report, electricity and industry are the sectors that are furthest from their SECs.

Latest data show that, from 2022 to 2023, emissions in all sectors decreased, apart from transport, where emissions remained at the same level. The largest reductions were seen in energy industries, which saw a 22 % reduction, and agriculture, with an 11 % decrease. In the years 2005 to 2023, emissions decreased the most in the energy (-51 %) and waste sectors (-42%). Waste management

represents however only a 1.5 % share in Ireland's total emissions, compared with the energy sector, which makes up 13.3 %. Industry has reduced its emissions by 25 % since 2005, while transport has managed a 10 % decrease. Agricultural emissions, which account for 34 % of total emissions, have only declined by 1 % since 2005. As shown in Figure 5, Ireland exceeded its annual emissions allocation in the effort-sharing sector since 2016 and, despite a 20 % target, only delivered a 5.7 % reduction over the 2005–2020 period. By 2030, according to the [revised](#) Effort-sharing Regulation (ESR), Ireland must deliver a [42 %](#) reduction compared with 2005. In its NECP WAM projections, making full use of flexibilities, Ireland expects to [exceed](#) its cumulative 2021–2030 emissions budget by 17.7 MtCO_{2e}. To decrease emissions from buildings, the final updated Irish NECP includes several [measures](#) designed to decarbonise [heating systems](#) and improve [energy efficiency](#).

Figure 5 – Ireland's emissions under the Effort-sharing Decision/Regulation



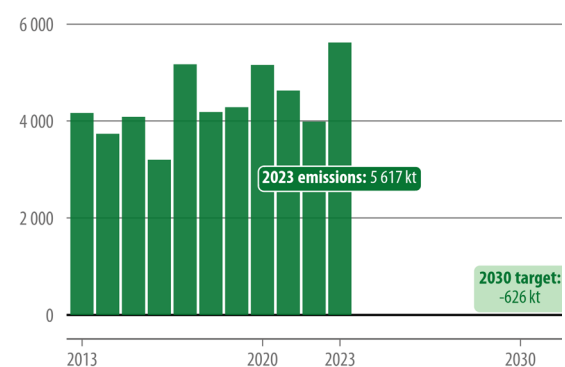
Data source: [EEA](#), 2024.

In Ireland, agriculture and transport accounted for [76.4 %](#) of ESR emissions in 2022. The NECP shows an ambition to boost reduction of [transport emissions from 5 % to 26 %](#) under the WAM scenario towards 2030, particularly through an increase in electric vehicles and renewable fuels blending pushed by the carbon tax, and using behavioural change initiatives to reduce vehicle kilometres. The Irish [carbon tax](#) will increase towards €100 per tCO₂ in 2030. The NECP [outlines](#) how revenue will be used to ensure a just transition and specific climate action including efforts for 'greener' farming.

The NECP notes that price increases for chemical nitrogen fertilisers led to a [14 % drop](#) in their usage, which in turn resulted in decreasing emissions from the sector in 2022. Under Ireland's stakeholder-led [Food Vision 2030](#) strategy, work is ongoing to achieve climate-neutral food systems by 2050. Resources have been committed to advancing research into and implementation of low-emission feed and fertiliser, as well as low-methane traits in cattle- and sheep-breeding programmes. Ireland uses its strategic plans under the EU common agricultural policy to increase organic farming from 3.6 % today, to 10 % of farm land by 2030. The 2021 Climate Act set a [25 % emissions reduction target](#) for the sector by 2030, compared with 2018; a target considered to be feasible with the measures [listed](#) in the NECP.

LULUCF sector emissions increased by 41 % in 2023 compared with 2022 and were only 9.6 % below 2005 levels. The sector remains a source of emissions rather than a carbon sink (Figure 6). By 2030, Ireland [must](#) reduce its LULUCF emissions by 626 kilotonnes of CO_{2e} (ktCO_{2e}) compared with its average emissions in 2016, 2017 and 2018

Figure 6 – LULUCF emissions in Ireland



Data source: [EEA](#) (2030 target is based on 2016–2018 baseline), 2024.

(where accounting adjustments may occur). In 2020, this baseline was 4 354 ktCO₂e. The NECP includes [primarily](#) afforestation and forest management, plus some carbon farming measures, considered [cost-effective](#). In its [assessment](#) of the draft NECP, the Commission noted that Ireland was off track for LULUCF, but that targets could be met, when considering revised inventory data.

Latest policy developments

For many sectors, climate action will imply increased electrification. This, combined with the SECs and the 80 % renewable electricity by 2030 target, makes delivering the national targets for [electricity](#) one of Ireland's biggest challenges. On 1 May 2024, based on taskforce work since 2022, the climate minister published Ireland's '[Future Framework for Offshore Renewable Energy](#)', a roadmap towards 37 GW of offshore wind capacity by 2050. The '[Accelerating Renewable Electricity \(ARE\) Taskforce Implementation Plan](#)', adopted by the Irish government in June 2024, is expected to be updated to reflect future climate action priorities. Its core elements include ensuring faster permitting, and removing market barriers to further boost the near-term actions decided in previous plans, as well as additional measures under the CAP24 (in particular on onshore wind and solar). In July 2024, the government adopted the [electricity storage policy framework](#), which identifies the role of electricity storage towards the 2030 targets with a view to 2040, and identifies support actions to align storage to grids needs.

The 2022 agreement on SECs included 26 MtCO₂e of unallocated emissions savings for the 2026–2030 carbon budget. Five areas are [identified](#) as options to deliver these savings in the CAP24. These include, for instance, data centres' power demand, carbon capture utilisation and storage actions, and carbon removal technologies such as biochar and bioenergy with carbon capture and storage. The agreement further mentions hydrogen, where the [2023 strategy](#) aims for 2 GW of renewable hydrogen by 2030, also [noted](#) in the final updated NECP. Moreover, the CAP24 mentions electricity interconnector capacity as key to reaching renewables targets, a [point](#) also made by the Commission's country report. Furthermore, in 2023, Ireland adopted a [plan](#) to boost interconnections. Supported by [study](#) findings, a 2024 climate action [campaign](#) encourages behavioural change. Ireland held general elections on 29 November 2024. The outcome was just short of a majority for the current coalition government parties, and at the time of publication, coalition talks are still [ongoing](#).

MAIN REFERENCES

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