

Polity IV Country Report 2007: Ireland

<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 15%;">Score:</td> <td style="width: 15%;">2006</td> <td style="width: 15%;">2007</td> <td style="width: 15%;">Change</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Polity:</td> <td>10</td> <td>10</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Democ:</td> <td>10</td> <td>10</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Autoc:</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Durable:</td> <td></td> <td>86</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tentative:</td> <td></td> <td>No</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Score:	2006	2007	Change	Polity:	10	10	0	Democ:	10	10	0	Autoc:	0	0	0	Durable:		86		Tentative:		No		<p style="text-align: center;">Authority Trends, 1946-2007: Ireland</p>
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SCODE	IRE	CCODE	205	Date of Report	1 November 2008																				
Polity IV Component Variables																									
XRREG	XRCOMP	XROPEN	XCONST	PARREG	PARCOMP																				
3	3	4	7	5	5																				
Date of Most Recent Polity Transition (3 or more point change)																									
End Date			Begin Date																						
			6 December 1921 (Ind.)																						
Polity Fragmentation: No																									
Constitution																									
1937																									
Executive(s)																									
President Mary Patricia McAleese (FF); directly elected, 30 October 1997; reappointed without a vote 10 November 2004 (no other candidate qualified for the 22 November election) Prime Minister Brian Cowen (FF), initially selected by House of Representatives on 7 May 2008																									
Legislature																									
Bicameral: House of Representatives (166 seats; proportionally elected, most recent elections, 24 May 2007) Fianna Fáil (FF): 78 Fine Gael (FG): 51 Labour Party (LP): 20 Other parties: 12 Non-partisans: 5 Senate (60 seats; 43 elected by five vocational panels, 6 selected by universities, 11 nominated by the prime minister, most recent elections 23 July 2007) FF: 28 FG: 14 Other parties: 11 Non-partisans: 7																									
Judiciary																									
Supreme Court																									

Narrative Description:¹

Executive Recruitment: Competitive Elections (8)

Ireland is a mixed presidential-parliamentary democracy with a long tradition of competitive multiparty elections and a periodic orderly transfer of power between two major parties: Fine Gael (FG) and Fianna Fáil (FF). In 1997, Fianna Fáil regained control of the legislature and party leader Bertie Ahern became prime minister replacing John Burton, the leader of Fine Gael. Shortly thereafter, the Fianna Fáil candidate, Mary McAleese, was elected president to replace Mary Robinson, Ireland's first female president and a member of the Fine Gael party. McAleese was re-appointed in November 2004, when no other candidate fielded enough votes to qualify for candidacy. In the May 2002 legislative elections, the incumbent ruling-party (FF) retained its leadership position was the first time in 30 years. The opposition Fine Gael party saw its support plummet from 54 to 31 seats in the lower house. While Fine Gael increased its representation to fifty-one seats in the May 2007 legislative elections, nonetheless, it failed to unseat Prime Minister Bertie Ahern's Fianna Fáil party. On 14 June 2007 the House of Representatives voted again to ratify Ahern as prime minister. Fianna Fáil relied on the support of six Green lawmakers, two members of the Progressive Democrats and four independents.

Executive Constraints: Executive Parity or Subordination (7)

The President is elected by direct universal suffrage for a seven-year term and may only be reelected once; the president is assisted by the Council of State (cabinet) and appoints the prime minister, who is leader of the majority party (or coalition) in the House of Representatives. The Cabinet is directly responsible to the parliament and depends on its continued support to remain in office. The judiciary is completely independent in the exercise of its powers. Judges can be removed from office only by resolution of both houses of the National Parliament.

Political Participation: Institutionalized Open Electoral Competition (10)

Ireland has been concerned for some time with preventing the spillover of political violence from Northern Ireland. With the signing of the Good Friday Peace Agreement on 10 April 1998, all major paramilitary groups, on both sides of the border, have declared permanent cease-fires and acknowledged the goals of democracy, peace, and reconciliation. In 2000, the country's government was preparing legislation which would allow for an "interpretive incorporation" of the European Convention on Human Rights into Irish law.

Ireland's political parties are stable and inclusive and represent a broad spectrum of ideological platforms. The Fianna Fáil is a nationalist party that calls for the unification of all Ireland by peaceful means and advocates a move toward national self-sufficiency. The Fine Gael is less nationalistic and more conservative in its ambition of national reunification. It advocates greater development of and reliance upon agriculture, increased foreign investment, and financial support of industry. The Labour Party advocates a moderate, democratic labor program based on orthodox trade unions. The Progressive Democrats party (PD) was formed as an alternative to parties based on opinions of the north-south division. Its platform calls for basic tax reform, federal tax cuts, encouragement of private enterprise, and separation of the church and state. The Green Party promotes political decentralization, environmental issues, freedom of information, and humane behavior. Sinn Féin ("Ourselves Alone") seeks a 32-county socialist Ireland completely free of British rule and is the political arm of the Irish Republican Army. The current government is formed by a coalition of the Fianna Fáil and Progressive Democrats. The May 2002 elections to the lower house not only kept the ruling coalition in place (for the first time in 30 years) but resulted in the near collapse of the main opposition party, the Fine Gael.

¹ The research described in this report was sponsored by the Political Instability Task Force (PITF). The PITF is funded by the Central Intelligence Agency. The views expressed herein are the authors' alone and do not represent the views of the US Government.