Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Analytical Paper 2024

Overtime Expenditure in An Garda Síochána – Analysis on Expenditure Trends and Drivers.

EMILY O'DONOVAN,

JUSTICE VOTE SECTION

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC EXPENDITURE, NDP DELIVERY AND REFORM

DECEMBER 2024

This paper has been prepared by IGEES staff in the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform. The views presented in this paper do not represent the official views of the Department or Minister for Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform.

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Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service

Executive Summary

Overtime is a feature of policing service provision in Ireland and internationally. This paper analyses trends and drivers of Garda overtime expenditure over the period 2004-2023. The main findings are summarised below.

Key Findings

- Overtime spending increased by 57% from 2018 to 2023. This follows decreases in the period 2017-2020, making the increases from 2020-2023 more acute (155%).
- From an expenditure management perspective, there has been budgetary overruns on overtime expenditure at an increasing rate. Rising overruns occurred in 2020 (4%), 2021 (19%), 2022 (37%) and 2023 (75%).
- Overtime expenditure is a product of the cost per hour (which varies according to public sector pay changes and different *types* of overtime) and the volume of overtime hours worked. Between 2022 and 2023, 26% of the increase in expenditure was due to increases in the hourly rate, whereas 74% was due to additional hours.
- Regionally, between 2019 and 2023, overtime expenditure increased across all regions with a more pronounced increase in the Eastern region: (DMR +50%, Eastern +88%, North Western +49%, Southern +28%).
- From 2019 to 2023, the main areas that have seen increased overtime has been Security/Protection activities and supplementing units. Crime investigation, courts and fixed hours are other key elements overall.
- In 2023, overtime expenditure accounted for 11% of the overall pay-bill (this excludes "parade/briefing time" which are fixed hours, see Box 2).
- International comparisons are challenging due to differences in demographics, geography and policing models. Available data indicates that other jurisdictions (while varied) are below current Irish levels as % of pay-bill: West Yorkshire (3%), Scotland (4%), PSNI (6%), Victoria-Australia (7%) and Manchester (8%) (all 2022).
- The above increases in overtime arise in the context of an increase of 7% in Garda member strength between 2015 and 2023. While policing outputs and drivers are very complex, there have been decreases in recorded incidents of public order and other social code offences, attempts/threats to murder, assaults, harassments and related offences. Separately, AGS have also noted an increase in need for specialisation due to complexity of crimes and additional responsibilities in areas such as immigration, events and protection/security.

Conclusions

- Overtime is a flexible tool, commonly used by policing services internationally, which allows for short term responsiveness to ad hoc and seasonal pressures. However, it is important that it is managed and targeted effectively.
- Since 2015, Ireland has seen a small increase in Garda member numbers. The Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland outlined plans for workforce planning and capacity that "should ensure the end of overreliance on costly overtime". International best practice suggests 4% to 5% of pay to be made up of overtime.
- AGS should ensure appropriate management and focus on controls to prioritise the use of available funding. This should remain a particular focus in line with planned increases in policing numbers.

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

An Garda Síochána (AGS) is Ireland's national police service with responsibility for all policing and national security matters. It is a single, nationwide organisation and is a largely unarmed force. The AGS have responsibility for critical societal functions such as crime investigation, crime prevention, security protection, road traffic operations, and the policing of major events. Given the nature of policing, which is a situational, responsive and demand led function, it is imperative that in many instances where law and order are to be upheld, Garda members provide overtime hours where required. Overtime in An Garda Síochána involves Garda members working hours above their standard roster hours[1] of 28 – twelve hour shifts over an eight week period, with each hour of overtime worked commanding 1.5 the standard hourly rate.[2]

The *Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland (CoFPI)* and the subsequent comprehensive policing reform plan *A Policing Service for the Future (APSFF)* outlined a number of recommendations including increased civilianisation to allow for the redeployment of members to frontline policing duties.

Overtime expenditure in An Garda Síochána is currently the most significant expenditure pressure in the Vote with ongoing requirements for supplementary funding year on year. In 2023, Garda overtime expenditure reached €182m which was 13% of the total Garda pay bill – an increase from an equivalent figure of 4.9% in 2013.[3] Overtime spending increased by approximately 313% since 2013. It should be noted that this steep increase in recent years was preceded by a substantial fall in overtime following the 2007/8 recession. Given the significant increase in Garda overtime in recent years, and the fact that current levels of Garda overtime are now 32% higher than those seen in the Celtic Tiger years (2004 - 2007), this area clearly merits further analysis.

Previous research in this area includes:

- Spending Review – Review of Overtime Expenditure in An Garda Síochána (2018)
- Spending Review - Designing Performance Metrics in Policing (2020)
- Challenges to Investment in Policing Services - A Public Expenditure Perspective (2017)
- Garda Inspectorate Report - Changing Policing in Ireland (2015)

[1] The 12 Hour (contingency) roster pattern was introduced in 2020 as a response to Covid-19 pandemic. It should be noted Non-Core Garda Members have a different roster pattern.
[2] Overtime worked on Sunday and Public Holidays paid at double time.
[3] Figures in this paper do not include overtime worked in Garda College. Overtime in Garda College allocated in separate subhead (A.13). For reference, Garda College overtime allocation in 2023 was €1.3m.

- Garda Inspectorate Report on Resource Allocation (2010) – Selected findings

This paper examines the trends and drivers of overtime spend in An Garda Síochána. The key aims of this paper are as follows:

1. To outline the recent trends in overtime expenditure in policing services in Ireland;
2. To better understand the drivers and composition of overtime expenditure.
3. To compare overtime expenditure in policing services across other jurisdictions.

The rationale for this paper was to provide a further understanding of overtime expenditure and drivers within An Garda Síochána which can be used to assist An Garda Síochána with the management of overtime expenditure.

Data for this study has been provided by AGS, and other data sourced by Author from CSO, and international sources as outlined under each figure/table. The analysis in this paper provides an evidence base to understand trends, drivers and developments in overtime expenditure. The paper is structured as follows:

Section 1 sets out the policy context and background for the paper. It summarises the analysis and findings of the previous IGEES Spending Review on overtime as well as other studies. Section 2 outlines expenditure trends and the current policy direction for overtime spending. Section 3 examines the key activity trends and the profile of overtime spending by rank, geography and type (e.g. court attendance and crime investigation). Financial analysis of spending and activity data is employed in this regard. This section also considers the relationship between overtime and other regional and Garda-force variables such as member-rank, policing-type and size of Garda-membership both nationally and regionally. Section 4 compares overtime spending levels in Ireland to those in other jurisdictions using a benchmarking exercise to compare Irish policing services with international cases. Section 5 summarises the findings and conclusion.

1.2 Policy Context and Previous Reports

Overtime expenditure is currently the most significant expenditure pressure in An Garda Síochána with a 24% increase in allocation of funding provided for in Budget 2024. Previous reports completed by D/PENDR have analysed key factors of overtime spend including the governance of overtime spend. In 2018, D/PENDR published a Spending Review paper titled Overtime Spending in An Garda Síochána – Efficiency and Control. This Spending Review followed on from a number of other reports that addressed the ongoing trend of increasing overtime expenditure in An Garda Síochána. A summary of the Key Findings of the 2018 Spending Review and these other reports are outlined below.

Circular 14/2014 published by D/PENDR in relation to civil service overtime outlines that overtime is the payment given to an officer for extra attendance outside of the standard working week. Due to the nature of policing services, a certain level of overtime is necessary to effectively respond in instances where a need for additional resources arises. In some cases, the need for overtime is anticipated. However, the requirement for overtime may also arise in response to unforeseen events at budget time or for state visits the details of which tend to be finalised within year and hence the costs are not known in advance to include as a provision within the annual budgetary allocation. Overtime is paid at a premium level as a multiple of normal hourly pay.[4] Since overtime is required for flexible and effective policing, yet considerably more expensive than normal policing hours, a trade-off arises between the operational need for overtime and the importance of cost containment.

[4] This is generally 1.5 times but also at double time in certain instances (Sundays/Public Holidays).

Box 1 – Previous Analysis

The following sets out a high level summary of some of the previous relevant reports in this area. Further detail is available in the relevant reports.

Spending Review – Overtime Spending in An Garda Síochána Efficiency and Control (2018)

- Overtime spending increased by 185% in the period of 2013 to 2017 – this rate of increase was identified as unsustainable, particularly as the number of members in AGS increases.
- Government policy envisaged that significant additional Garda recruitment would ease pressures on the overtime budget towards the latter end of the reform programme.
- Overtime spending had increased in all regions with the most significant increase in the Dublin Metropolitan region which accounted for 44% of overtime.
- It was not just operations such as organised crime, port security and Operation Thor which explained the increase in activity levels at that time. More traditional overtime categories also accounted for significant components. Expenditure on courts related overtime is high (at least €20m+) and has proven a difficult problem to address since the Garda Inspectorate identified this as an issue in 2010.

There have also been a number of previous point in time reports as referred to in the 2018 Spending Review:

Garda Inspectorate Report on Resource Allocation (2010): Existing Garda leave, sick leave and overtime systems are disjointed and do not give Garda management the information they need to ensure that resources are deployed to the maximum benefit of the community. Crime investigation (19.2%) and courts attendance (18.5%) are the two biggest categories of overtime. The DMR region accounts for 38% of all overtime hours. There is scope for more strategic use of the overtime budget e.g. through a re-allocation of time spent on court appearances.

Directive Garda Inspectorate Report - Changing Policing in Ireland (2015): Overtime remains high relative to other jurisdictions. Court overtime in Manchester is 0.36% of the overtime budget compared to 25% in An Garda Síochána. There is limited professional support to assist divisional Chief Superintendents and divisional Chief Superintendents on HR, resourcing and financial planning (e.g. overtime).

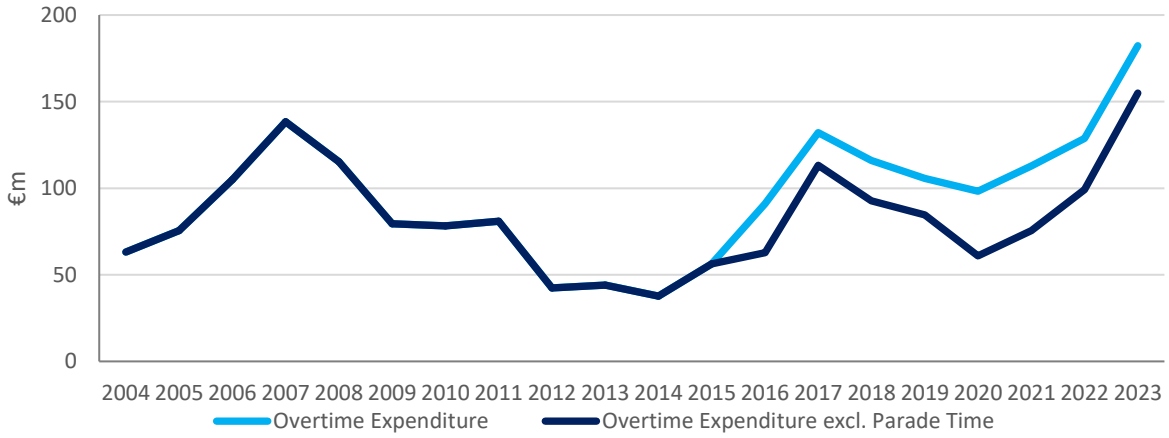
Challenges to Investment in Policing Services - A Public Expenditure Perspective (2017): The level of expenditure on overtime is rising and is high by international norms. From a public expenditure perspective, one of the key priorities for 21st Century policing in Ireland arising from the Government's Garda reform and investment programme is the reduction of overtime to sustainable levels (4-5% of pay) and the development of a structured system to budget for overtime by category (e.g. courts) including a contingency for ad-hoc events.

2. Overview of Expenditure Trends

2.1 Trend in Garda Overtime Spend

Expenditure on Garda overtime fell significantly during the financial crisis and in the years immediately before the pandemic. Since Covid, there has been a significant increase in expenditure to record levels. Figure 2.1 summarises the trend in overtime expenditure from 2004 to 2023. Overtime fell by over 70% from €138.3m in 2007 to a low of €37.7m in 2014, before rising again by 251% to €132.2m in 2017 (or by 175% if the effects of the 2016 Garda pay agreement amounting to €28.3m are excluded). From 2017 to 2020, overtime expenditure fell by 25.6% (€33.8m) to €98.3m. However, more recently overtime expenditure has increased by 85% from 2020 to 2023 to €182m.

Fig. 2.1 Trend in Garda Overtime, 2004 to 2023 Total Spend



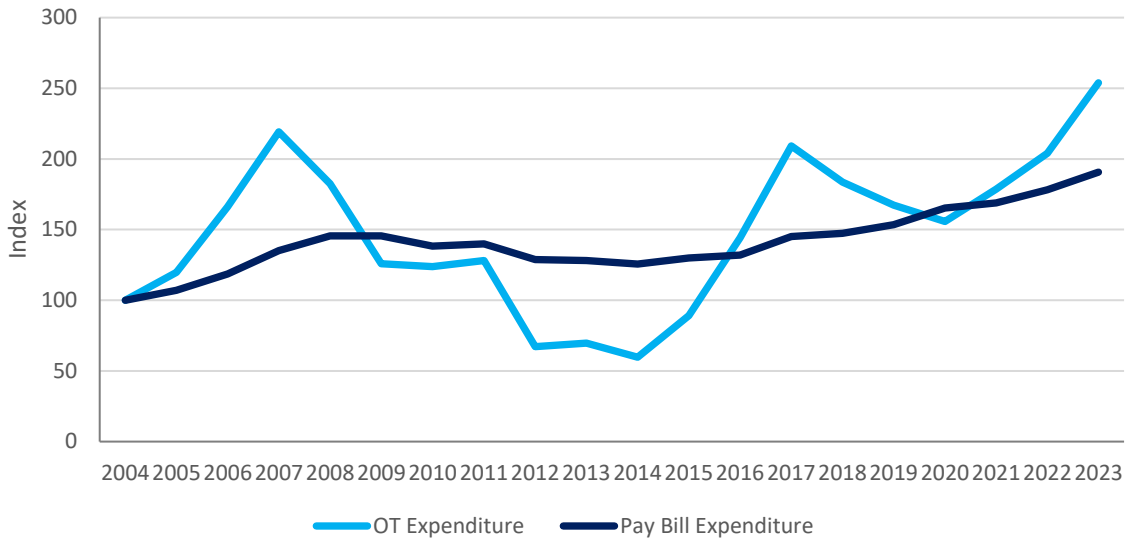
Source: DPENDR Estimates Management System. Note: 2004 represents first with available data on the EMS system.

Since 2020, there has been a number of factors which have contributed to the trend in overtime expenditure in An Garda Síochána. As a result of the policing challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic, the Garda Commissioner introduced the Covid-19 contingency roster. This consisted of a four-day-on four-day-off work pattern for Garda members. This also included 4 hours of parade time that were built into each roster. Moreover, the increase in major events which required policing presence and the impacts of the Building Momentum Pay Deal on the hourly cost of overtime have also impacted the trend in expenditure from 2020 onwards.

Fig.2.2 below compares the trends in overtime expenditure to trends in total pay bill expenditure. Since 2004, overtime expenditure has increased by 159%, this is compared to a 91% increase in the total pay bill (excl. overtime) in the same period. Decreases in the pay bill expenditure between 2009 and 2014, due to the recruitment moratorium, were mirrored by significant decreases in overtime expenditure. From 2015 onwards pay bill expenditure saw a steady increase, whereas the fluctuation

in overtime expenditure during this period highlights that overtime expenditure is not necessarily driven by policing supply.

Fig. 2.2 Trend in Garda Overtime Expenditure vs Garda Pay Bill Expenditure, 2004 to 2023



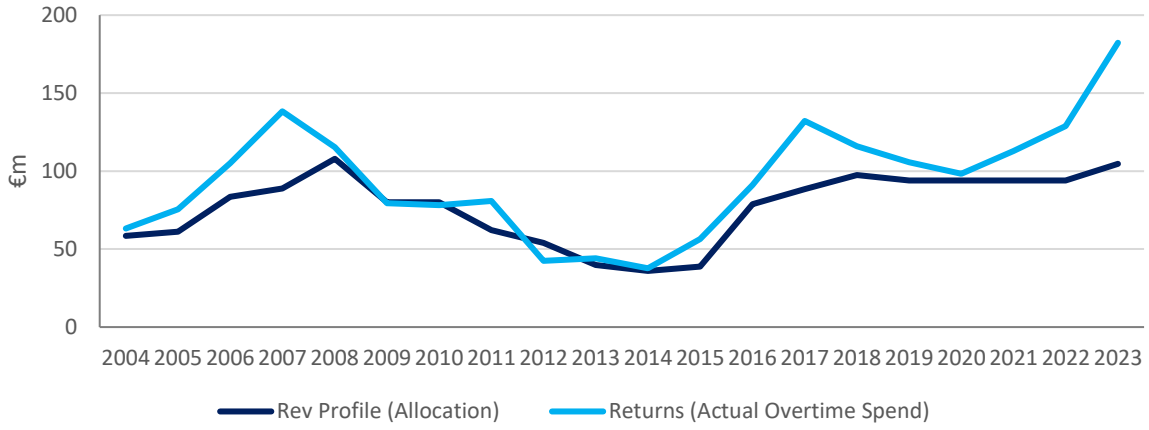
Source: Estimates Management System Note: Overtime expenditure excludes parade time. Pay bill expenditure excludes total overtime expenditure including parade time.

2.2 Garda Budget Management

While Garda pay has almost doubled in the last 19 years, overtime spending has almost tripled. Figure 2.3 below outlines the trend in overtime allocation compared to actual overtime expenditure from 2004 to 2023. Over this period, the overtime allocation increased by 79%. The total pay allocation has increased by 81%, with the total gross current allocation for the Garda Vote increasing by 95% over this time interval. However, expenditure on Garda overtime increased by 198% in that same period. This suggests that although the pay allocation itself is increasing, the overtime subhead is increasing at a much more substantial rate.

From 2019 until 2022, overtime budget allocations remained flat at €94m. However from 2017 onwards, overruns on overtime expenditure have been taking place. The average budget variation overtime has been increasing year on year, with a 4% variation in 2020, 18.8% in 2021, 37% in 2022 and a 75% variation in 2023. These overruns highlight a significant budgetary management issue. Between 2008-2013 and 2017-2019, overtime was highlighted as a budget sustainability issue to be addressed and reductions in overtime expenditure were achieved, showing that it is possible to directly target and reduce overtime expenditure over-runs.

Fig. 2.3 Budget Management – Overtime Allocation vs Spend 2004 to 2023



Note: Includes parade time
Source: Estimates Management System

In 2023, overtime expenditure came in at 74% (€77.6m) over profile compared to the REV allocation. An Garda Síochána identified €22m (12%) of overtime expenditure in 2023 as relating to the four day state visit of President Biden. State visits are not provided for as part of the annual estimates allocation.

Box 2: Parade/Briefing Time

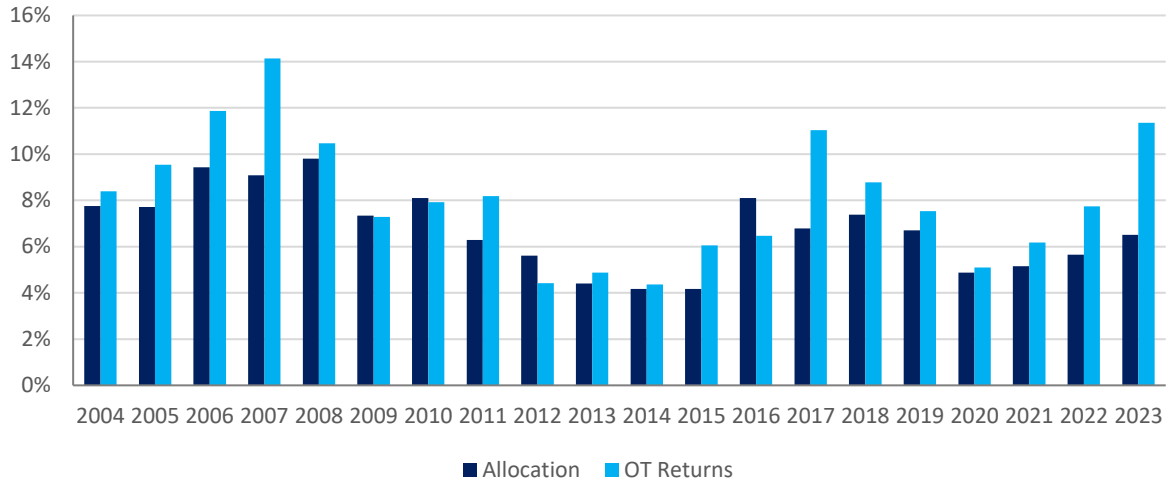
- A 2016 Labour Court agreement on Garda pay should also be taken into account when interpreting expenditure trends on Garda overtime. On the 3 November 2016 the Labour Court made a number of recommendations in relation to Garda pay including the following:
- The implementation of a recommendation of the Garda Inspectorate through the introduction of paid 15 minute pre-tour/pre-roster briefing with effect from 1 January 2017. This is also known as Parade Time and is classified as overtime as it occurs in advance of a rostered duty period.
- Parade/briefing time is therefore not activity based overtime and is currently built into the current existing roster for Core Garda Members.

2.3 Allocation vs Spend as Percentage of Pay Bill

Overtime as a proportion of the total Garda pay bill fell temporarily in the years before Covid, however since then, these reductions were reversed and overtime as a proportion of the Garda pay bill is back at 2017 (peak) levels. Figure 2.3 demonstrates that between 2017 and 2020 the level of overtime expenditure as a percentage of the pay bill (excluding parade time) decreased from 10% to 5%. As further analysis will show, this was primarily due to a decline in the number of overtime hours worked. However, in 2023 overtime expenditure (excluding parade time) increased to over 11% of the Garda pay bill. Recommendations from the 2018 Spending Review outlined that a plan should be developed

to achieve tapered reductions in overtime to a target of 4% to 5% by 2021 (excluding parade time). Reductions in overtime expenditure as a percentage of the overall pay bill were seen between 2017 and 2020. However, more recently as overtime expenditure has increased, its percentage share of the pay bill has also increased.

Fig. 2.4 Allocation vs Spend as Percentage of Pay Bill 2004 to 2023 [5]



Source: Estimates Management System

2.4 Garda members' strength, Overtime Expenditure and Crime Statistics 2010 – 2023

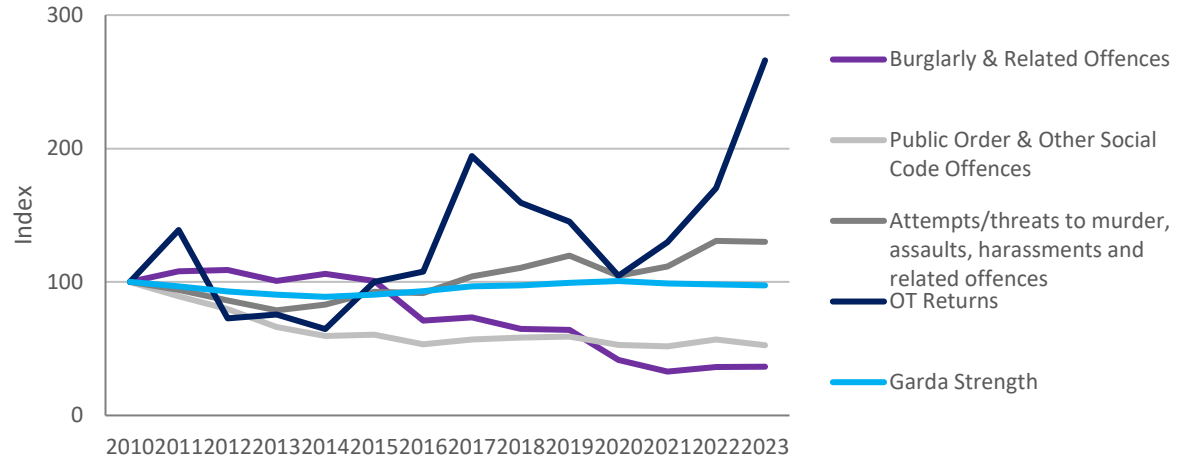
The link between the change in Garda member numbers and overtime expenditure is weak and does not appear to be a key driver of overtime expenditure in the context of decreasing crime trends. Fig. 2.5 compares trends in overtime expenditure and Garda numbers alongside recorded crime incidents from 2010 to 2023. Figure 2.4 suggests no clear association between changes in Garda numbers and changes in the overtime bill. Between 2012 and 2015, a decrease in Garda numbers was mirrored with a decrease in overtime expenditure. Between 2015 and 2017, Garda numbers increased alongside an increase in overtime expenditure. However, from 2017 to 2020, overtime expenditure decreased as numbers continued to increase. From 2020 to 2023 Garda numbers have since decreased slightly, whereas overtime expenditure has increased exponentially. Therefore, it is not clear that a direct correlation between Garda strength and overtime expenditure can be drawn. While additional overtime may be required in the case where numbers are decreasing, it can also be said that a growing cohort of Garda members, performing a common level of overtime, will give rise to an increase in absolute overtime hours.

[5] Excludes Parade Time

It should also be noted that this does not take into consideration changes in demographics or policing needs. If policing requirements increase where Garda member numbers stay flat, an additional need for overtime to meet policing requirements may be expected.

Policing strategy/policy is more likely to drive variation in overtime expenditure than gradual changes in Garda membership; i.e. the outcome will primarily depend on whether management choose to use additional members to reduce overtime requirements, or whether additional resources are deployed in a common or status quo fashion. The implications of policing management decisions in this area are important from a sustainable expenditure point of view and warrant further analysis.

Fig.2.5 Overtime Expenditure vs Garda Strength vs Recorded Crime Incidents 2010 - 2023



Source: CSO, REV and DPENDR Estimates Management System and Databank. Note: Overtime figures excludes Parade Time

Figure 2.5 also shows that increasing overtime expenditure trends do not display a clear link with the number of recorded crime incidents in recent years (crime data somewhat distorted by the 2020 phase of Covid-19 restrictions).[6] These specific crimes are a number of the crimes highlighted by An Garda Síochána and the Department of Justice in the Revised Estimates as context and impact indicators. It should be noted that crime levels cannot be measured by these indicators alone and there is a wide variety of crime types which have not been captured above. Through engagement with this Department, An Garda Síochána have noted a change in the nature of crime in recent years. For example, post-Covid there was a rise in fraud, deception and related offences.[7] The above analysis provides further context to understand drivers of expenditure in this time period. However, it is not within the scope of this paper to analyse a causal link between overtime expenditure, Garda strength and reported incidents of crime. In addition, understanding the overall link to policing demands and

[6] PBO Publication 22 of 2023
[7] Central Statistics Office, 2024.

policing supply is complex with a number of influencing factors to be considered, for example population growth which has increased by 12% between 2011 and 2022.

Table 2.1 outlines recorded crime by detection rates taken from Central Statistics Office data in accordance with the Irish Crime Classification System. A crime is marked as detected when at least one offender has been identified and sanctioned. Detection rates have remained steady with slight decreases in detection of public order and other social code offences, and attempts/threats to murder, assaults, harassments and related offences. Meanwhile, there has also been an increase in burglary and related offences detected.

Table 2.1 – Recorded Crime by Detection Rates 2018 - 2022

Detected Crimes	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Public order and other social code offences detected	81%	84%	86%	85%	83%
Burglary and related offences detected	16%	15%	22%	20%	20%
Attempts/threats to murder, assaults, harassments and related offences detected	32%	33%	38%	33%	31%

Source: Revised Estimates 2021,2022,2023,2024 Note: Crime data between 2003 and 2017 is under internal review owing to data quality concerns and in that context the detection figures for 2017 are not currently available. Crime statistics since 2017 have been published by the CSO under reservation.

Changes in recorded crime incidents and detected crime rates have not varied significantly year on year and do not mirror the significant increases in overtime expenditure trends. It is difficult to draw any causal links between these trends but they are noted in terms of context. It is also the case that the nature and types of crime vary over time and the above analysis focuses on a select number of high volume areas to get a high level understanding. It should also be noted that this does not take into consideration the impact of Covid-19 on recorded crime levels. A more effective measure may be the use of detected crime incidents compared to overtime expenditure levels. Detection rates also vary significantly between crime types due to the nature of incidents involved. Similarly, different crime types may proceed through the justice system at a different pace which may have a further impact. This type of analysis merits further work to understand the broader link between policing levels and crime detection. Demand for policing services is complex and is not explored in full in this high level analysis. AGS have noted that increasing demands on core policing have been a factor in recent years coupled with an increasing need for specialisation due to the complexity and changing nature of crime e.g. economic crime, cyber-crime and public order. Further consideration could be given to this in future analysis.

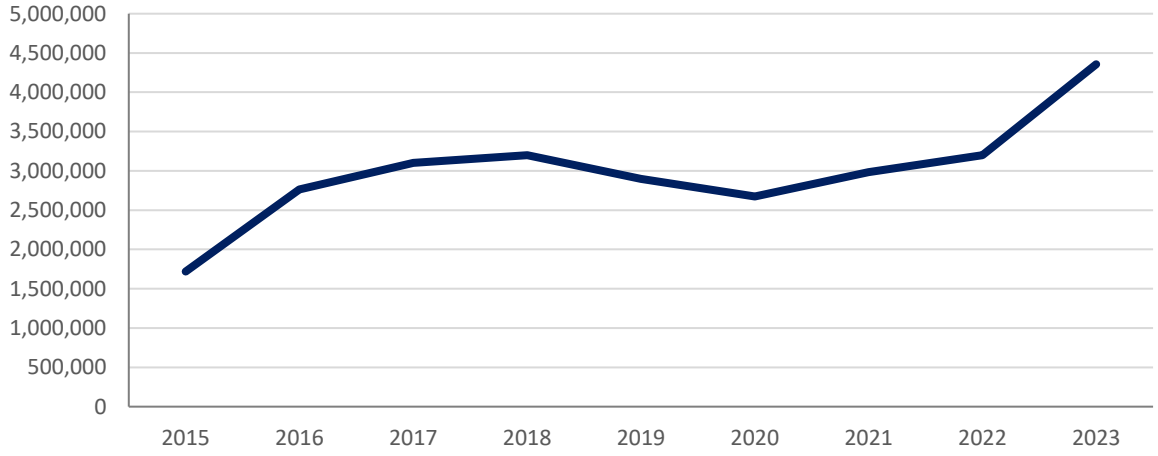
3. Garda Overtime: Activity, Efficiency and Effectiveness

This section examines trend patterns in overtime activity and spending across a number of headings including expenditure by rank, area and functional type. It also considers the main causes of overtime and decomposes the relative contributions of price and volume effects to the recent increase in overtime. Much of the data provided for this chapter includes "parade/briefing time". This is not strictly activity related. The analysis should be interpreted in that context. [8]

3.1 Overtime spending patterns – activity, rank, region

Overtime hours have been increasing since 2015, disrupted by a slight fall between 2018 and 2020. Similar to overtime expenditure, there is a weak link between Garda member strength and actual overtime hours worked. Expenditure on overtime is a product of the price of overtime and the volume of overtime hours worked by Garda members. The total volume of overtime hours worked will itself be a function of the size of Garda membership. Figure 3.1 shows the trend in overtime activity (hours) from 2015 to 2023.

Fig 3.1 – Actual Overtime Hours 2015 to 2023



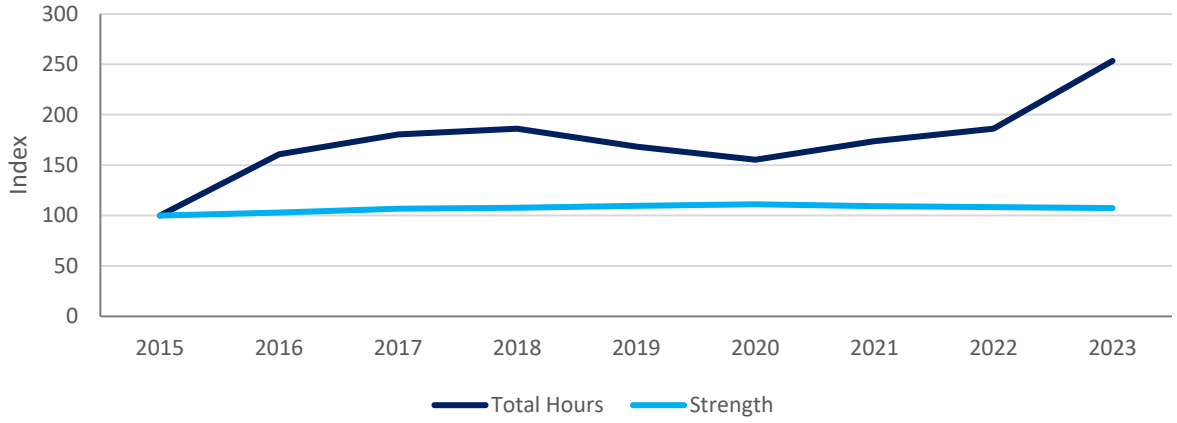
Source: DPENDR analysis based on data provided by AGS

The volume of overtime hours has increased by 153% since 2015. Most of this has taken place in the last two years.[9] The above figures are also adjusted for hours/costs that are paid through Garda pay such as CAB but do not hit the vote as they are reimbursed/transferred. The substantial increase in the number of overtime hours completed over the period has occurred alongside comparatively

[8] See Information Box regarding parade overtime pay conventions in Box 2.1, p.8.
[9] The overtime values depicted in Fig 3.1 and 3.2 are inclusive of approximate parade/briefing hours (see Box 2.1 on pg. 8 for more detail). This means that some portion of overtime hours depicted in Fig 3.1 and Fig 3.2 are not subject to typical roster adjustments, since they are baked in as part of labour court recommendation.

stagnant Garda member numbers, with index shown in Fig 3.2 peaking at 111 in 2020, before dropping back to 107 by 2023 (base year = 2015, 100). In 2015, Garda members[10] completed on average 136 hours of overtime compared to 316 hours in 2023 which represents a 136% increase. In this period, Garda numbers[11] increased by 964.5 (7%). It should be noted that 2023 includes the overtime hours related to the State Visit of President Biden which impacts the trend in overtime hours completed in this period.

Fig 3.2 – Total Overtime Hours vs Garda Member Strength



Source: AGS, Databank

Note: 2015 base year = 13,033.5 members. 2023=13,998 members.

3.2 Spending by Rank

Approximately three quarters of overtime expenditure arises from rank and file Garda members, and this is consistent over the last 10 years. The average unit price of overtime hours has increased by over 15% since 2017 across all ranks. Figure 3.3 shows the proportional breakdown of overtime expenditure by rank from 2013-2023 (i.e. Garda, Sergeant etc). In 2022, the Garda rank accounted for 73% of all overtime expenditure. Despite marginal changes in the proportional breakdown, levels have remained fairly static over the period.

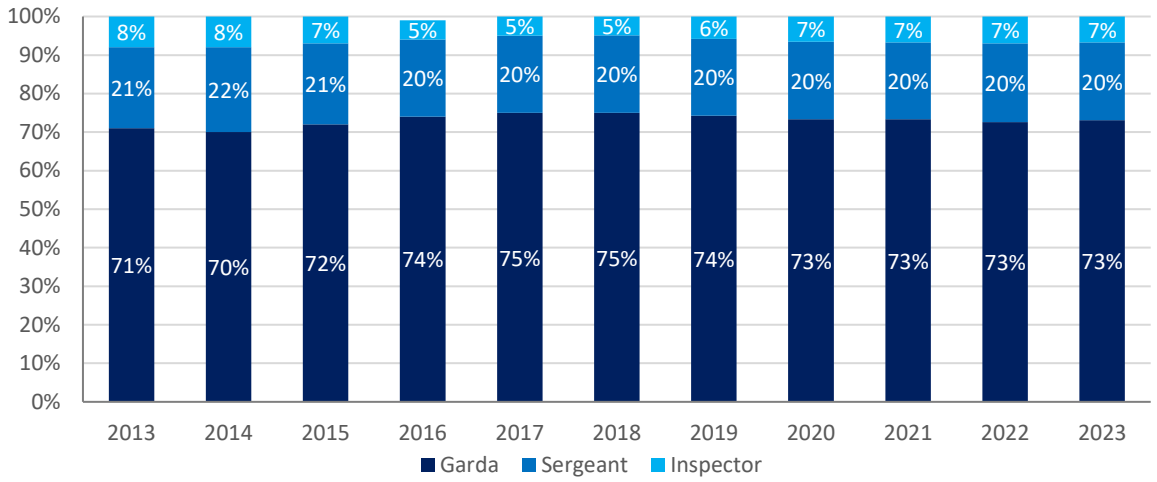
The majority of the remaining spend is at Sergeant rank. The share of spending at Inspector level has shown relatively little change from 2013 to 2023. Overtime hours incurred at the Garda rank are less expensive than overtime for Sergeants or Inspectors because the hourly rate of pay on which overtime payments are based is lower. For example, the 2023 average unit price of overtime hours for each rank was:

[10] Garda members in this instance include Garda ranks: Garda, Sergeant and Inspector as these are the only ranks eligible for Overtime.

[11] Garda members in this instance include Garda ranks: Garda, Sergeant and Inspector as these are the only ranks eligible for Overtime.

- Garda - €39.67(16% increase from 2017)
- Sergeant - €46.36 (16.5% increase from 2017)
- Inspector - €51.39 (18.6% increase from 2017)

Fig. 3.3 Trend of Distribution in Spending by Rank 2013 to 2023

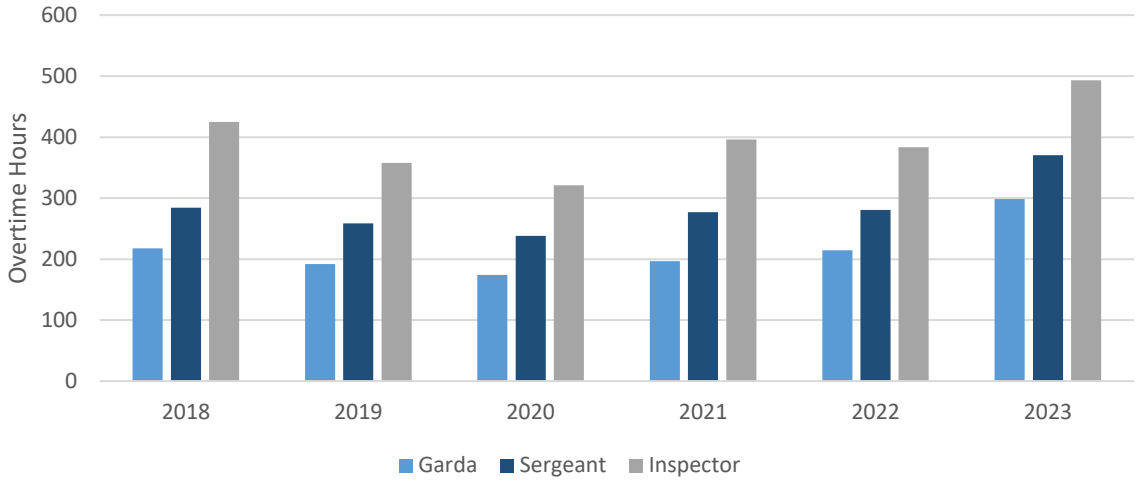


Source: DPENDR analysis based on data provided by AGS (includes parade time expenditure).

Figure 3.4 below outlines the trend in the average overtime hours worked across ranks from 2018 to 2023. In 2023, on average, Inspectors worked 479 hours of overtime compared to 425 hours in 2018. Sergeants on average worked 370 hours in 2023 compared to 284 hours in 2018 and Garda members on average worked 298 hours in 2023 compared to 217 hours in 2018. The average number of overtime hours worked per Garda member increased by 72%, 55% per Sergeant and 54% per Inspector. Figure 3.5 outlines the trend in the average annual overtime earnings across ranks from 2018 to 2023. Between 2018 and 2023, the average annual earnings per Garda member increased 55%, with the earnings of Sergeants and Inspectors increasing 45% and 32% respectively. In 2023, on average Inspectors earned circa. €25k per year for overtime hours worked compared to c. €19k in 2018. Whereas Sergeants earned c. €17k in 2023 compared to c. €12k in 2018 and Garda rank members earned c. €12k in 2023 compared to c. €8k in 2018. In 2023, the average overtime earnings per Garda members represented additional percentage earnings on base salary of 22% Garda, 26% Sergeants, and 34% Inspectors.[12] It should be noted that a proportion of the increase in overtime earnings will relate to increases in pay as a result of the Building Momentum pay agreements in this period.

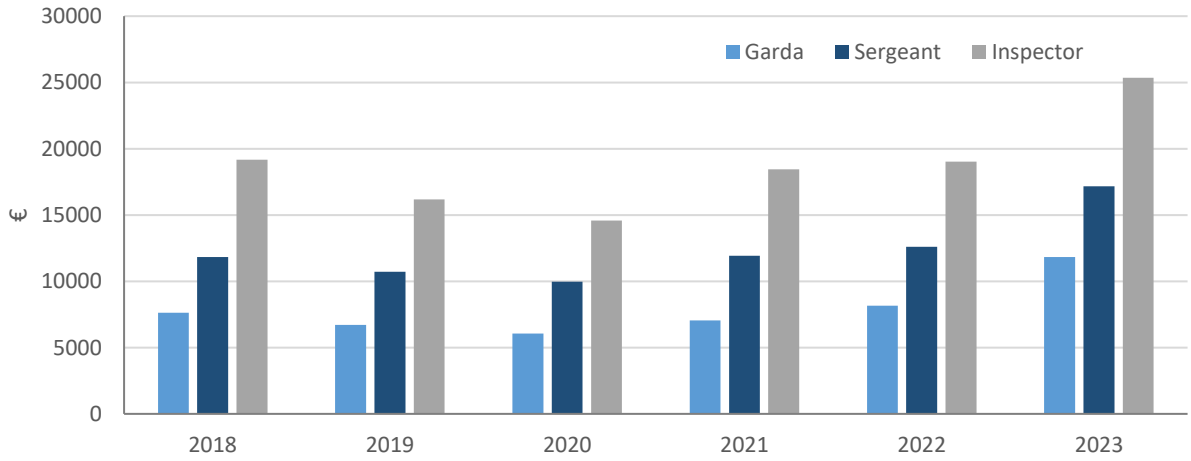
[12] Median Salary used for Garda A, Sergeant A, Inspector A ranks as per pay agreement 1st Oct 2023.

Fig. 3.4 Average Overtime Hours by Rank



Source: DPENDR analysis based on data provided by AGS

Fig. 3.5 Average Annual Overtime Earnings by Rank

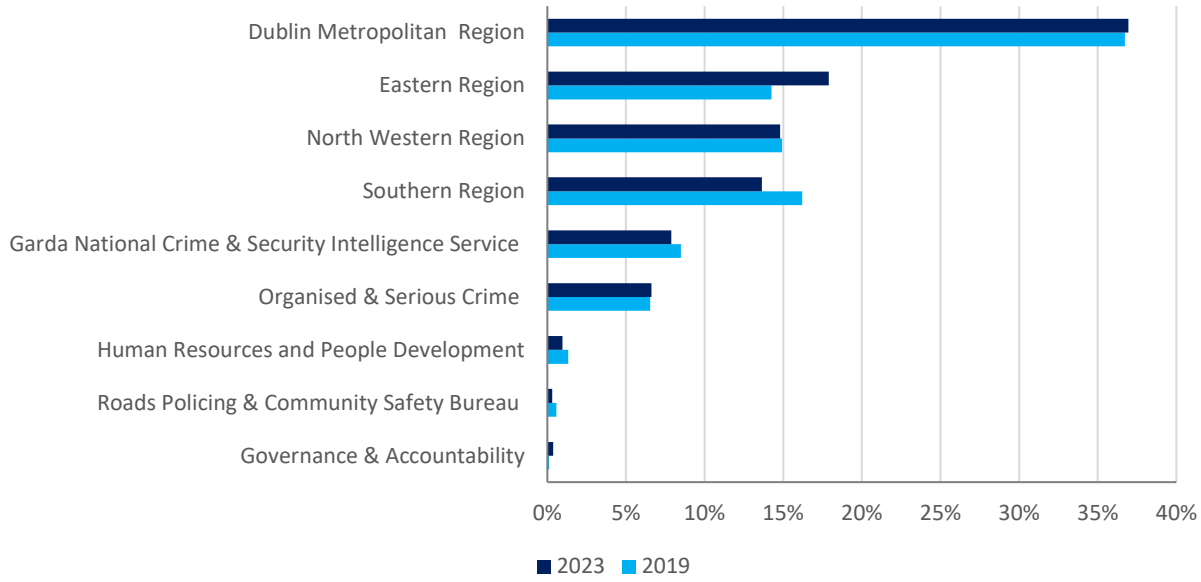


Source: DPENDR analysis based on data provided by AGS.

3.3 Overtime Expenditure by Region

More than one third of overtime spending is for the Dublin Metropolitan Region and this has been consistent since 2019. Just under half has been for the NW, S and E regions. However, in this period the Eastern region's proportion of total overtime expenditure showed the most substantial growth increasing by 4%. Figure 3.6 looks at the regional distribution of overtime expenditure. Some overtime is categorised as national priority (e.g. Organised & Serious Crime) and administrative functions. It should be noted that overtime expenditure in 2023 also includes overtime incurred as part of the state visit of President Biden.

Fig. 3.6 Distribution of overtime expenditure by region



Source: DPENDR analysis based on data provided by AGS. Note: Organised and Serious Crime previously Special Crime Operations. Garda National Crime & Security Intelligence Service (name change only) previously Security and Intelligence in 2019. Community Engagement & Public Safety, Roads Policing & Major Event Management merged into Roads Policing & Community Safety Bureau in 2022.

The majority of overtime spending is concentrated in the Dublin Metropolitan Region (DMR). In 2017, the DMR accounted for 44%. This concentration has remained at approximately 37% in the last five years. Despite the recent pressures in frontline policing in the DMR, it has seen a decrease in its percentage of overtime expenditure compared to 2017.[13]

While many factors can drive the percentage changes in overtime spending by region such as pressures in frontline policing (see section on policing activity drivers in 3.8), the availability of existing Garda human resources is one factor that has been identified by An Garda Síochána as a driver of overtime expenditure pressures, with a decrease in the number of Garda members in recent years highlighted by AGS as contributing to a reliance on overtime.

In 2023, Garda Members in the DMR worked on average 429 hours, which is 47% higher than the Eastern region which had the second highest average number of overtime hours worked (291). Table 3.1 demonstrates the Garda strength and average number of overtime hours completed across regions in 2023.

[13] Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, 2018. Overtime Spending in An Garda Síochána Efficiency and Control.

Table 3.1: Average Hours of Overtime per Garda Member by Region in 2019 v 2023

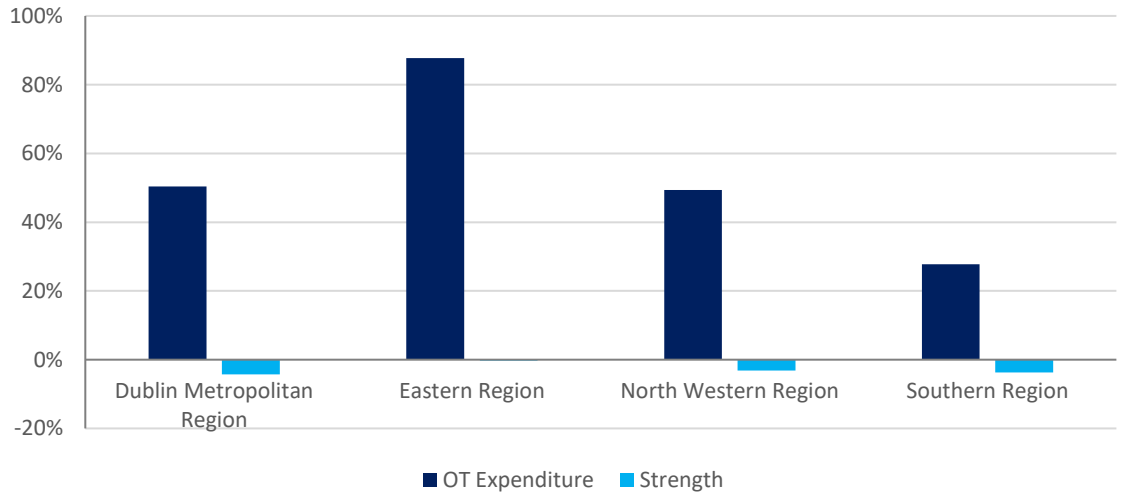
	Strength 2019	Hours 2019	Strength 2023	Hours 2023
D.M.R	4,039	273	3,865	429
Eastern	2,682	154	2,675	291
North Western	2,792	152	2,704	234
Southern	3,012	152	2,899	202

Source: Calculation by DPENDR based on data provided by AGS.

The Eastern region includes 22% of Garda members across the four regions, with 22.3% in the North Western Region, and 24% in the Southern region. However, the average Garda member in the Eastern region worked 24% and 44% more overtime hours than both regions respectively.

Despite, low percentage declines in Garda member strength across various regions from 2019-2023, overtime expenditure increased dramatically (range = 28 per cent to 88 per cent). Fig 3.7 compares change in overtime expenditure with the change of Garda member strength. While Garda numbers decreased in the DMR, North Western, Southern and Eastern Region, the relationship between the changes in overtime expenditure and Garda strength varies from each region. While the Eastern region had the lowest decrease in Garda strength (- 0.3%), it had the largest increase in Overtime expenditure (88%). Whereas the DMR saw a more significant decrease in Garda strength (- 4.3%), it saw a lower increase in overtime expenditure (50%) in the same period. Therefore, although a decline in Garda resources had an impact on overtime expenditure in a region, the change in overtime expenditure is significantly out of proportion with the change in Garda numbers.

Fig 3.7 Percentage change in Garda Overtime Expenditure vs Member Strength 2019 and 2023.

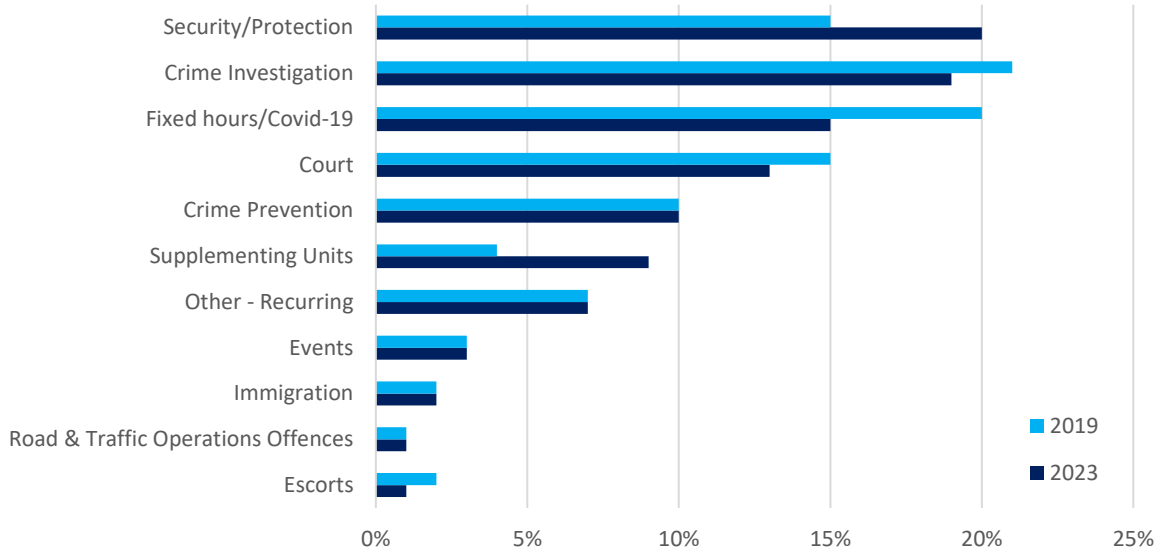


Source: DPENDR analysis based on data provided by AGS and data available of AGS website.
Note: Northern Region & Western Region revised to North Western Region in 2019. Data above reflects change.
Note 2: South Eastern Region no longer exists. Divided among Eastern and Southern Regions. Data above reflects change.

3.4 Overtime by Type of Policing Activity

Figure 3.8 outlines the breakdown of overtime activities by type. Crime Investigation, Security/Protection and Court attendance are the most significant drivers of overtime activity. In 2023, Overtime hours related to Security/Protection and Supplementing Units saw the biggest percentage increase from 2019.

Fig 3.8 Proportional breakdown of Overtime hours by Type[14]



Source: Data provided by AGS. Note: 2023 Data includes rosters 1-13 in 2023.

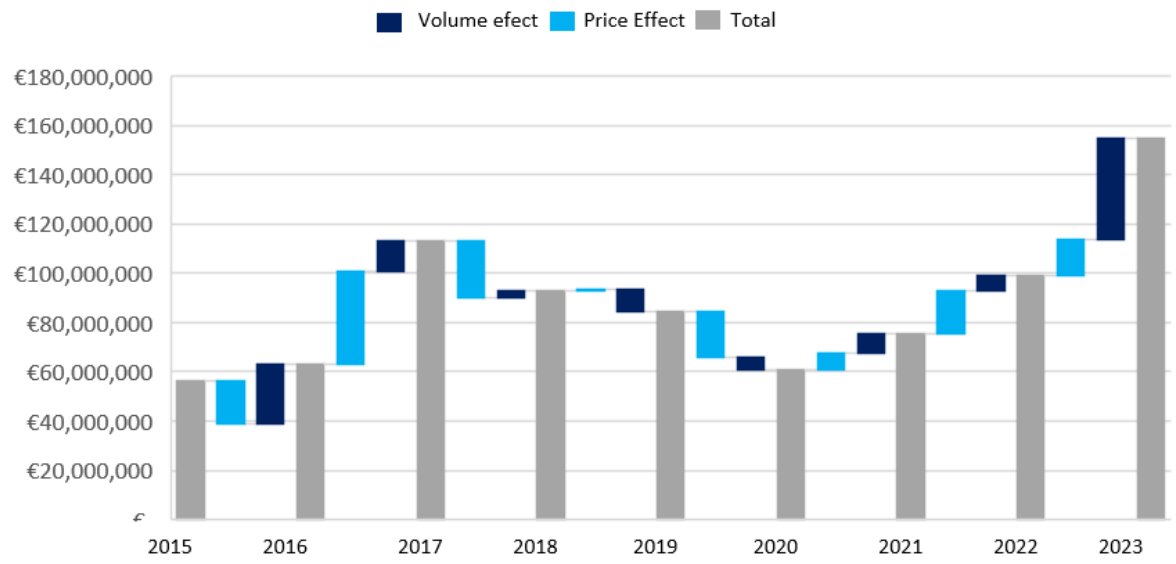
From 2019 to 2023, Security/Protection activities have seen the most significant increase from 15% of overtime in 2019 to making up 20% of overtime activity in 2023. In the same period, the percentage of overtime relating to supplementing units also increased by 5%. These changes may relate to increasing pressures in policing major events, protests etc. post pandemic. Fig 3.8 combines overtime relating to both Pre Tour Briefing (parade time) and the fixed hours associated with the Covid-19 contingency roster. This roster was introduced in 2020 as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Garda members work an average of 41 hours a week (standard time is 40 hours) and receive 1 hour overtime per week (4 hours per roster) instead of parade time.

Figure 3.9 divides the growth in overtime expenditure into two components; variation due to changes in volume of overtime hours worked, and variation due to changes in the pay rate of overtime hours. Overtime spend is driven by two key variables – the volume of hours worked and the cost of each hour. The volume of hours work relates to policing deployment and is an operational matter. The cost

[14] The breakdown of overtime categories have changed since the publication of the 2018 Spending Review by this Department. Previously, Garda regular overtime was used to include overtime activities such as Court, Crime Investigation, Crime Prevention, Escorts, Immigration, Events, Traffic Operations etc. The most recent data provided by AGS divides these types of overtime activities into individual categories. Note that Covid fixed hours did not exist pre-2020.

of each hour is a function of the public sector pay rates and also the composition of overtime hours between standard overtime (1.5 rate) and overtime on Sundays and Public Holidays (double rate). Generally, changes in price are followed by a change in volume in the same direction as the price change (price increase correlates to increase in volume effect and vice versa).

Figure 3.9 Decomposition of Overtime Expenditure Growth



Source: DPENDR analysis of data provided by AGS.

We can see from Fig 3.9 that the increases in overtime expenditure between 2015 and 2017 were mostly due to increases in price which may relate to the public sector day deal and the changed type of overtime hours. From 2017 to 2020, decreases were also driven by price – this may be linked with the composition of overtime hours worked. For example, if in this period there were a greater number of standard overtime hours work (1.5 rate) than double rate, the average price of overtime will decrease. Increases in the number of new Garda Members may also impact cost in this period, as costs for newer Garda members are lower. In 2023, the significant increase in overtime expenditure seen was due to increases in the volume of overtime hours worked. This may have been impacted by the pressures on frontline policing post pandemic.

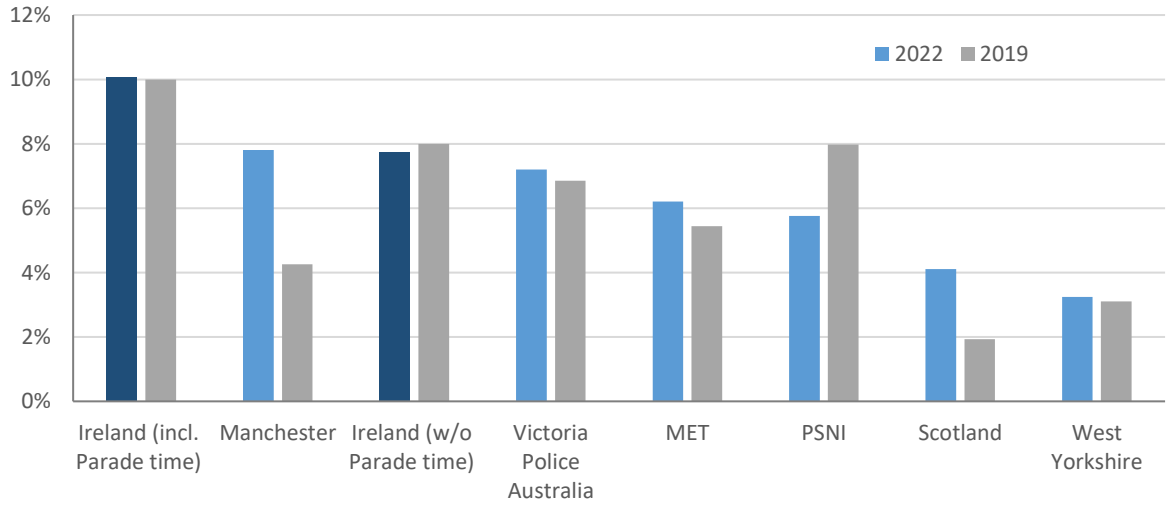
4. International Comparators

4.1 Level of Overtime Spend in other countries

Balancing the trade-off between overtime expenditure and service delivery is not a unique problem faced by An Garda Síochána, it is also a common problem faced by police services in other jurisdictions. The 2018 Spending Review compared overtime as % of the pay-bill to policing services in Northern Ireland, England and Wales as well as Scotland. This section of the paper provides an updated comparison of these international comparators and also compares a number of additional jurisdictions.

It should be noted that there are a number of challenges in comparing international jurisdictions as there are a number of different factors which may impact operational policing matters such as varying population sizes, crime levels, frontline policing pressures, different geographies and different types of policing systems. Therefore, the results of the below analysis should be considered within this context. Figure 4.1 below outlines overtime expenditure as a percentage of the pay bill across a number of comparable jurisdictions.

Fig 4.1 Comparison of selected jurisdictions – overtime as a % of pay (2022, 2019)



Source: Data provided by AGS, Annual Reports, Publicly available information from Freedom of Information requests and Annual Financial Statements from selected jurisdictions.

Since the 2018 Spending Review, overtime as a percentage of the pay bill has changed across each jurisdiction. Overtime spending increased in Scotland from 2% of the pay bill in 2017 to 4% in 2022. Overtime spending in the PSNI decreased from approx. 7.5% of pay bill to 5.8% in 2022. While overtime expenditure has increased in a number of jurisdictions since the 2018 Spending Review publication, Ireland continues to have the highest rate of overtime spending as a proportion of its pay bill. However, when parade time is excluded, An Garda Síochána and the Greater Manchester Police

Force both spend 8% of their pay bill on overtime. As outlined earlier, the level of overtime as a % of pay bill has increased in Ireland in 2023 to 11%.

The 2018 Spending review recommended in line with best practice internationally that a plan should be developed to achieve tapered reductions in overtime to a target of 4% to 5% by 2021 (excluding parade time). However, the more recent examples of overtime expenditure across jurisdictions demonstrate the challenges for organisations to reach that target. It is in the first instance a matter for the Garda Commissioner to determine the operational requirements relating to overtime expenditure. However, with consideration to changes seen across international comparators, an initial target of getting overtime to 6% of the pay bill would be a reasonable first measure over a period of time.

5. Findings and Conclusion

Given the demand led nature of policing, a level of overtime will be required for flexible and effective policing. While overtime is a lever for An Garda Síochána to ensure effective policing levels, it is more costly than normal policing hours, therefore, a trade-off arises between the operational need for overtime and the importance of cost containment.

From 2007 to 2014, overtime spending fell by 73% as a result of measures taken during financial crisis. However, other than a temporary decline from 2017-2020, overtime expenditure has since grown by 85%. It is now higher than its previous peak in 2007. The temporary decline from 2017-2020 can be attributed to a number of factors including the result of ongoing reform of the AGS and a focus by the Garda Commissioner to tackle overtime expenditure increases, and reductions in the price of overtime and the composition of overtime hours worked. Despite this, in the face of recruitment declines (primarily due to closure of the Garda College during Covid), and increasing policing demands, overtime has continued its upward trend.

Some of the key components which are driving overtime were policing activities such as Crime Investigation, Security/Protection and Court Attendance. State visits and major events also impacted the levels of overtime activity as was the case with the visit of President Biden in April 2023.

Overtime expenditure has increased alongside marginal increases in Garda member numbers. Across the historical period looked at (2013-2023), three quarters of overtime expenditure arose from rank and file Garda members while 20 per cent arose from the Sergeant grade and in the region of 5 to 8 per cent arose from Inspector grade.

Between 2018 and 2023, average annual earnings per Garda member increased 55%, with the earnings of Sergeants and Inspectors increasing 45% and 32%. In 2023, Inspectors worked 479 hours of overtime on average, compared to Sergeants who worked 370 hours and Garda Members who worked 298 hours. This translated into an average annual overtime pay of €25k for Inspectors in 2023 compared to €19k in 2018, €17k for Sergeants compared to €12k and €12k for Garda rank members compared to €8k.

Overtime spend is driven by two key variables – the volume of hours worked and the cost of each hour. Previous changes in overtime expenditure between 2015 and 2020 were mostly due to increases in price which likely related to the public sector pay deal and changes in composition of overtime hours worked where there were a greater number of standard overtime hours worked (1.5

rate) than double rate that is applied on Sundays and Public Holidays. The increase in overtime expenditure seen in 2023 was primarily due to increases in the volume of overtime hours worked.

Overtime expenditure also varied across regions, with Garda members in the DMR working on average 429 hours, 47% higher than Garda members in the next highest ranking region – the Eastern region - (291 hours). In 2023 the DMR accounted for 37 per cent of overtime expenditure, compared to 18 per cent in the Eastern region. Despite this, the Eastern region saw the highest comparative increase in overtime expenditure from 2019 to 2023, with overtime expenditure increasing by 88%.

Internationally, the proportion of overtime spend as a percentage of the total pay bill varied across jurisdictions. It is also challenging to make comparisons due to differences in demographics, geography and policing models and as such the analysis should be seen as indicative. Those in the lower range included West Yorkshire (3%), Scotland (4%) and the PSNI (6%). At the upper end of the range were Victoria-Australia (7%) and Manchester (8%). In 2022, Ireland was at 8%, excluding parade time, and in 2023 this increased to 11%. The 2018 Spending Review on Garda overtime, carried out by DPENDR, recommended a target of 4% to 5% of overtime as a percentage of the total pay bill in line with international best practice. However, it should be noted that overtime expenditure as a percentage of the total pay bill has also increased in other jurisdictions potentially highlighting similar challenges faced by policing organisations internationally.

Recent rates of growth in overtime spending are unsustainable over the medium term. Increasing overtime expenditure trends since 2020 have taken place following a temporarily successful attempt by the An Garda Síochána to reduce overtime spend from 2017-2020. Reliance on overtime hours for the provision of policing services is not optimal and provides significant budget management challenges. Although there are a number of challenges relating to demands on frontline policing and operational requirements, it is vital for fiscal sustainability that overtime expenditure is managed effectively and within budgetary allocations.

The management and delivery of policing services is a matter for AGS and is beyond the scope of this paper. An Garda Síochána have noted that there is a specific governance structure in place including the AGS Financial Management Framework and regular financial reporting issued to budget holders. There are a number of areas which could be looked at to assist further including ensuring clear planning on how overtime is allocated or assigned operationally, ensuring the governance framework operates effectively to manage overall expenditure and continuing to enhance data/information collection to understand expenditure drivers. AGS should ensure appropriate management and focus on controls to prioritise use of available funding particularly in the context of planned recruitment expansions.

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