

IRC Rating System - 2026 Annual Report to IRC Congress and World Sailing

1. IRC OVERVIEW

The IRC Rating System is managed by the IRC Rating Authority (RORC Rating Office & YCF Centre de Calcul) and further administered by 52 additional rule authorities worldwide, on seven Continents, making it the most widely used Rating System available, with IRC certificates issued in 37 countries in 2026.

► IRC Boat and Certificate Numbers

Joint figures from RORC and YCF show that at the end of August 2026 the overall total valid rated **boats** including single event ratings (SER) is 3178, a reduction of 5.9% (201 boats) from the end of August 2025. In total, 4738 **certificates** have been issued to 3332 boats since 1 January in 2026 (this includes South region boats/certificates which expired on 31 May and have not yet revalidated). The secondary certificate permitted by rule 8.2.1 continues to prove popular with 278 boats holding a valid secondary certificate on 31 August 2026, in 15 countries.

2. EVENTS AND CLASSES

IRC remains the principal International Rating System for a long list of events around the world, with the offshore classics, including the RORC Transatlantic Races, Rolex Fastnet Race, Rolex Sydney Hobart Race, Rolex Middle Sea Race, RORC Caribbean 600, Aegean 600, Rolex Giraglia Race, Baltic Sea Race, and regattas such as Cowes Week, Hamilton Island Race Week, Maxi Yacht Rolex Cup, Phuket King's Cup Regatta, China Cup Regatta, Spi Ouest France, SNIM, the Voiles de Saint-Tropez and Cap Martinique using IRC as the rating system for the principal trophies.

In 2026, the Sardinia Cup was revived by Yacht Club Costa Smeralda (YCCS), with IRC used as the rating system. The event attracted 10 two-boat teams from five countries. The Event Technical Committee carried out three days of equipment inspection, together with rigorous post-race checks after each day of racing. The Sardinia Cup is scheduled to take place again in 2028.

Following the successful return of the Admiral's Cup in 2025, the Notice of Race for the 2027 edition has now been published and planning for the event is progressing well.

Prestigious events like the Admiral's Cup and Sardinia Cup demand extensive preparation and active participation from both Rating Offices including on the Event Technical Committees; the strong positive image they create for the IRC fully justifies this.

There are thousands of boats club racing around the world using IRC rating. For more information, please refer to the individual [country reports](#) submitted to the annual IRC Congress.

For news about IRC regional and championships please visit [IRC News](#).

3. IRC CONGRESS

The IRC Congress will meet on 10 October 2026 in London, UK, at the Royal Overseas League, and via video conference call. The IRC Congress will discuss the organisation of IRC and IRC Events around the World. IRC Rule Changes proposed by the IRC Technical Committee, and any submissions received from Congress members, will be presented for approval. The proposed technical development will be

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presented and approved. Importantly the IRC future strategy and IRC Grand Prix rule proposals will be presented. There will also be considerations of the Championships for the future. Papers can be seen on the [IRC website](#).

4. TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENTS 2027

► IRC Program and Certificate Processing

The IRC processing program continues to work well. Published [IRC valid boat data](#), introduced in January 2024, provides useful information for competitors, measurers and equipment inspectors.

There have been further developments throughout the year with more data checks and tools for research. The program and calculation methods will be updated for the 2027 IRC formulation and rule, and development will continue in 2027.

► IRC Technical Committee

The IRC Technical Committee consists of nominated representatives from RORC and YCF and consultancies. The committee continues its many discussions via email and digital meetings. Rule changes have been developed to present to the IRC Congress in October; in addition, a number of IRC rating calculation developments are being discussed.

► IRC Rating and Rule Changes for 2027

The IRC Rule and formulation have worked very well this year with only the need for some minor changes to the rule and formulation. Proposed rule/rating changes for the following areas:

RULES:

- Rules clarifying the sheeting and setting of sails.
- Adding a new definition of tack point, and updating the definitions of STL, STLFHmax and aft rigging.
- Rules to clarify the use of stored power for adjustment of moveable ballast, variable ballast and hull appendages except for steering.

These are for improved clarification and ease of understanding of the rule and do not change the practicalities of measurement or rating parameters.

RATING (ongoing, amongst others):

- Submerged transoms – negative Y.
- Scow Bows and planing hull forms
- Minimum headsail area
- Twin masted yacht rules – schooner and ketch
- Age allowance for grand prix yachts
- Drop keels

5. MEASUREMENT AND RULE AUTHORITIES

We continue to help our Rule Authorities around the world who look after the network of IRC measurers, including offering resources for training measurers. The Rating Offices will be happy to receive any requests that the Rule Authorities may make in this regard.

The [IRC Measurement Manual](#) is updated when necessary to reflect any changes in IRC rules and definitions, or measurement practices. It includes measurement procedure and policy guidance for

measurement of hull, appendages, rig and sails. This has been updated to account for rule amendments made in 2025 and 2026 plus the recent innovations seen in IRC, such as measurement of interceptors and lifting foils. The updated version will be published on the IRC website before the end of this year.

The work on the development of UMS with ORC and World Sailing is complete and we maintain the use of IHC for sail measurement around the world. The Rating Offices have worked with World Sailing and ORC to have a consistent sail measurement stamp for all systems under the umbrella of the UMS. This makes it simpler for sailmakers to build sails for both systems.

We expect another busy year of measurement in 2027 with the Admiral's Cup, with boat captains and owners already making enquiries.

As an additional service to IRC certificate holders, the RORC Rating Office continues to assist owners and designers in obtaining stability information for racing in Offshore Special Regulations categories. This includes helping owners understand the stability requirements and, where appropriate, putting them in contact with specialists who can assess the boat's stability. The more onerous Category 0 and 1 requirements have made this work increasingly important, but also more difficult to manage, particularly where competitors do not understand why a boat that has previously completed offshore or Atlantic passages may no longer meet the current requirements.

6. RACE MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

We continue to offer advice on IRC race management, both directly to event organisers and through published [Race Management Guidelines](#). The Rating Authorities monitor events and their use of the IRC Rule and update guidance to the organising authorities when we see issue arise or further advice is needed.

The published guidelines are being revised to reflect changes in IRC rules and provide greater clarity to event organisers on both pre-event and post race equipment inspections as well as courses, communications and IRC race management policies. The updated guidelines will be published on the IRC website before the end of the year.

7. IRC FLEET STATISTICS

To provide suitable statistics for comparative purposes we have included the total number of certificates issued as well as the number of boats rated for each of the last 5 years in a table below. From this we can see that the predicted number of certificates for the end of 2026 is in the region of 5800 worldwide, to approximately 3900 boats. Information on fleet distribution is shown below.

IRC Certificate Numbers at 31/8/26

	CUMULATIVE FIGURES - NUMBER OF CERTIFICATES (ALL TYPES)											
	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
2022	656	1208	1963	2774	3490	4105	4526	4853	5217	5570	5787	5926
2023	757	1313	2310	3065	3789	4424	4885	5120	5422	5787	6025	6171
2024	664	1301	2267	3027	3743	4202	4625	4967	5319	5701	5917	6116
2025	654	1291	2019	2852	3619	4197	4717	4958	5307	5651	5855	6050
2026	552	1177	2053	2753	3398	4001	4479	4738				

Including: New application, Revalidation, Amendment, Trial, Secondary, Single Event Rating

Note: IRC Fleet statistics table on next page

IRC Boat Distribution at 31/8/26

Full certificates only, excludes SEC (worldwide) and SER (GBR/FRA)												
Admin	IRC area	Country	Continent	Region	End of certificate year					To 31 August		
					2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2025 to 31 Aug	2026 to 31 Aug	boats 2026 - 2025
RORC	101 - 117	GBR	Europe	North	1133	1178	1181	1117	1059	1040	995	-45
RORC	118	IRL	Europe	North	254	274	264	254	260	252	251	-1
RORC	120 - 133	USA	N America	North	14	22	30	22	38	33	31	-2
RORC	136	CAN	N America	North	1	1	0					
RORC	138	DEN	Europe	North		2	2	1			1	1
RORC	139	FIN	Europe	North	2	14	4	16	6	4	10	6
RORC	140	GER	Europe	North	25	24	41	31	51	46	22	-24
RORC	141	NED	Europe	North	74	70	90	64	72	71	58	-13
RORC	142	NOR	Europe	North	1	2	35	22	32	31	26	-5
RORC	143	SWE	Europe	North	10	11	7	12	5	5	11	6
RORC	144	ISL	Europe	North	10	9	6	8	5	5	9	4
RORC	146	ISR	Europe	North			1	1			1	1
RORC	147	MLT	Europe	North	33	31	39	41	41	35	31	-4
RORC	148	JPN	Asia	North	230	266	258	237	223	218	217	-1
RORC	150	KOR	Asia	North				3				0
Both	152 & 452	Worldwide			54	57	60	63	65	56	53	-3
RORC	153	TPE	Asia	North	8	18	21	19	11	11	8	-3
YCF	203	AUT	Europe	North	1							
YCF	204 - 205	BEL	Europe	North	31	40	41	46	39	38	37	-1
YCF	206	BUL	Europe	North	27	31	29	28	30	26	15	-11
YCF	207 - 208	CHN	Asia	North	0	17	64	42	30	17	4	-13
YCF	209	CRO	Europe	North	10	6	5	6	8	4	5	1
YCF	210	CZE	Europe	North	2	2	1				1	1
YCF	211	EST	Europe	North				3	2	1	1	
YCF	212 - 217	FRA	Europe	North	492	562	591	557	584	560	536	-24
YCF	218	GRE	Europe	North	24	29	23	27	18	17	25	8
YCF	219 - 220	ITA	Europe	North	320	317	360	331	294	237	219	-18
YCF	223	LTU	Europe	North	1	1	1	1				0
YCF	225	MON	Europe	North			1	1	1	1	1	0
YCF	226	POL	Europe	North	1	4	5		1	1		-1
YCF	227	POR	Europe	North			1					
YCF	228	ROU	Europe	North	8	3	2	1				
YCF	229	RUS	Asia	North	18	11	12	13	10	7	4	-3
YCF	234	SLO	Europe	North	1		2					
YCF	235 - 236	ESP	Europe	North	77	104	106	105	107	94	91	-3
YCF	237	SUI	Europe	North	6	9	7	4	2	2	4	2
YCF	238 - 240	TUR	Europe	North	244	287	294	278	214	173	138	-35
YCF	241	UKR	Europe	North			1					
YCF	242	MRI	Africa	North			10					
YCF	244	BRA	S America	North	7	2						
RORC	401 - 407	AUS	Oceania	South	339	372	324	321	340	187	189	2
RORC	408	NZL	Oceania	South	1	3	7		6		3	3
RORC	409	RSA	Africa	South		8						
RORC	410	HKG	Asia	South	65	77	74	68	62	52	47	-5
RORC	412	PHI	Asia	South	7	8	10	9	11	2		-2
RORC	414	SE Asia	Asia	South	31	58	65	61	60	21	25	4
RORC	416	UAE	Africa	South	51	72	62	65	69	2	7	5
RORC	421	IND	Asia	South	15	11	11	2	11	10		-10
YCF	501	ARG	S America	South								
YCF	505	MEX	S America	South	1							
YCF	507	MRI	Africa	South			1					
YCF	509	URU	S America	South	12	10	2		4		1	1
YCF	510	NCL	Oceania	South	12	2		27	29	23	21	-2
YCF	511	CHI	S America	South	7	36	32	22	41	1		-1
YCF	512	COL	S America	South			8	4	18		1	1
Totals:					3660	4061	4191	3933	3859	3283	3099	-184
As % of previous year:						111.0	103.2	93.8	98.1		94.4	

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