



ICRA Report for Ireland - IRC Congress 2026

Irish IRC cert analysis

There are currently 254 IRC registered boats in Ireland. This is very similar to 2025 numbers and remains below the peak achieved in 2019 of 290 boats.

Irish Sailing	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
IRC Revalidation	270	193	242	251	245	229	239	238
IRC New	20	9	13	20	17	20	13	16
IRC Amendment	61	15	36	49	39	41	34	40
IRC Trial	34	28	21	13	19	19	14	11
IRC Secondary Cert New	1	1	2	1	10	11	7	7
IRC Secondary Reval	0	0	0	0	0	9	14	17

Offshore racing in 2026 included the Round Ireland Race and the ISORA series. The main inshore events were Calves Week and Cork Week, which included the ICRA National Championships.

The ICRA Nationals had a disappointing entry of 45 boats (72 in 2025) at a venue (Crosshaven) only 30 miles from last years event in Kinsale. A significant factor in this may well be the lack of appetite from sailors for week long events.

IRC remains the most popular rating system in Ireland. However, organising authorities in Ireland are under considerable pressure from a cohort of sailors, promoting ORC Club and continuing to issue free ORC certificates under the umbrella of ORC Ireland. They published shadow results for the biggest clubs and events in Ireland during 2026, including; Royal Cork Yacht Club, Howth Yacht Club, Dublin Bay Sailing Club, Calves Week. Whilst in most instances, overall series results were similar under both rating systems, ORC Ireland continue to claim smaller corrected time deltas for individual races, equating to closer racing.

The motivation behind the group promoting ORC, is what they consider to be the unfair IRC rating of certain boats, including the one(s) they sail. They cite the J109 as an example of a boat with an extremely competitive IRC rating, which makes it extremely difficult for any other similar rating IRC boat to beat it. The situation with the J109 is however quite unique. There are a considerable number of these boats in Dublin Bay, where they effectively have one-design racing with IRC classes. As such, the knowledge of how to sail the boat to it's optimum has gradually evolved over a number of years and the boats are also extremely well prepared, with some of the best sailors onboard.

What the J109 lacks somewhat, is stability, which is why removing the originally designed genoa and replacing it with a non-overlapping jib, is so effective. In Ireland, the competitiveness of the J109 is further enhanced by carrying additional crew, often way beyond the number shown on IRC certificates.

Interestingly, the most common reason given by people (not just in Ireland) for not racing their keelboat, is the lack of crew. It seems incongruous, in such circumstances, to allow boats to carry more crew than are required to sail the boat (often with no role onboard), whilst others remain tied up in the harbour due to lack of crew.

The option given by some OAs of boats being able to carry additional crew due to gender or age is being exploited by some, rather than being used to give meaningful opportunities to such sailors. This is the case not just in Ireland but also elsewhere; a Cape 31 racing in a windy Dartmouth Regatta with 9 crew for example.

At the recent Welsh IRC Championship, attended by one Irish boat, the notice of race stipulated that IRC crew limitation numbers would apply. This resulted in more boats being able to race and the feedback from sailors was that the racing was more fun as they were busier onboard. The consistent implementation of such crew limitations can only help get more boats competing.

Summary

- Participation in club racing remains similar to last year.
- Dissatisfaction with IRC remains from a small (but highly vocal) group, who are now actively promoting ORC.
- Many boats struggle to find crew
- Support appears higher for events providing good opportunities for socialising.
- The cost and availability of accommodation and catering offerings is a factor deterring some boats from travelling to events..
- Support for week long events appears to be in decline.
- Uptake of YTC has been disappointing.

29/09/26.