

# Economic Impact Assessment of the League of Ireland

Prepared by BDO  
October 2024



# Foreword

**Mark Scanlon**  
League of Ireland Director



Football is the world's game, played in every corner of the globe and driving the highest number of participants and spectators of any sport, and is also Ireland's number one participant sport.

Football is sport's biggest industry and with the growth of the League of Ireland in recent years via the number of supporters coming through the gates, as well as our Clubs going from strength to strength, the Economic Impact Assessment of the League of Ireland report highlights the potential that exists within our League and the opportunity for the football industry to support the national and local economies.

The League of Ireland plays a crucial role through multiple dimensions, bringing significant contributions to Irish society. Whether it be through direct or indirect employment, investment in infrastructure or supporter spend through travel, merchandise and hospitality, the League of Ireland has a major role to play in the Irish economy.

*“The League of Ireland plays a crucial role through multiple dimensions, bringing significant contributions to Irish society.”*

Beyond the financial elements of the League, our Clubs play a huge role in developing extensive community and social benefits for the people in their areas. Football & Social Responsibility programmes are hugely important and becoming ever more fruitful in communities across Ireland, driving a significant Social Return on Investment.

With all these elements considered, it was important for us to commission this first ever independent Economic Impact Assessment report into our League, and we are delighted

that BDO Ireland, an industry leader, has valued the League of Ireland's contribution to the Irish economy of over €164 million, whilst supporting 6,094 jobs through direct and indirect employment.

The report also demonstrates that attendances, TV audiences, and Clubs' supporter bases are growing annually, but for the League of Ireland to reach its full potential there is an ever-increasing need for investment in infrastructure around the country.

League of Ireland Clubs have become increasingly professionalised in recent years and with Clubs now having Men's and Women's teams at Senior and Academy levels as well as strong community programmes, the Clubs have become integral to their local areas. Whether it be the growing number of full-time employees at Clubs or the crucial volunteers that work within them, we can clearly see the benefits that exist in supporting our Clubs even further.

One of our fastest growing areas is the League of Ireland Academies which continue to be pivotal for young people in our Clubs providing numerous benefits for their growth as players and individuals. With over 2,600 players in League of Ireland Academies, the impact our Clubs have outside of the three senior Divisions is extremely important and the report highlights this even further.

With the current trajectory that our League is on, I look forward to seeing the League's status and economic impact continuing to grow in the coming years.

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Connor Parsons of Waterford celebrates after scoring his side's first goal during the SSE Airtricity Men's Promotion/Relegation play-off match between Waterford and Cork City at Tallaght Stadium in Dublin. Photo by Tyler Miller/Sportsfile

## Executive Summary

### 2023 Season highlights

# 966,994

Total attendance during the 2023 season

# 21

The average number of games attended by LOI fans

# 16

Average number of home games attended by LOI fans

# 7

The average number of away games attended by LOI fans

# 8,021

The largest attendance at an LOI game

# 43,881

The number of people who attended the 2023 Sports Direct Men's FAI Cup Final

# €38.1m

Total revenue generated by all Clubs participating in the LOI

# €10.1m

Amount invested in stadia and supporting infrastructure

## Economic impact of the League of Ireland

Total Economic Impact  
(Direct, indirect and induced)

# €164.7m

Total direct impact  
of the League of Ireland

# €103.8m

Multiplier impact  
(Indirect and induced)

# €60.9m

Estimated contribution to  
Exchequer through taxes

# €40m

Number of people  
directly engaged by  
the League of Ireland

# 1,646

FTE jobs  
supported indirectly

# 4,448



# Introduction

In Ireland, football is currently structured across three core levels – Grassroots, League of Ireland and International.



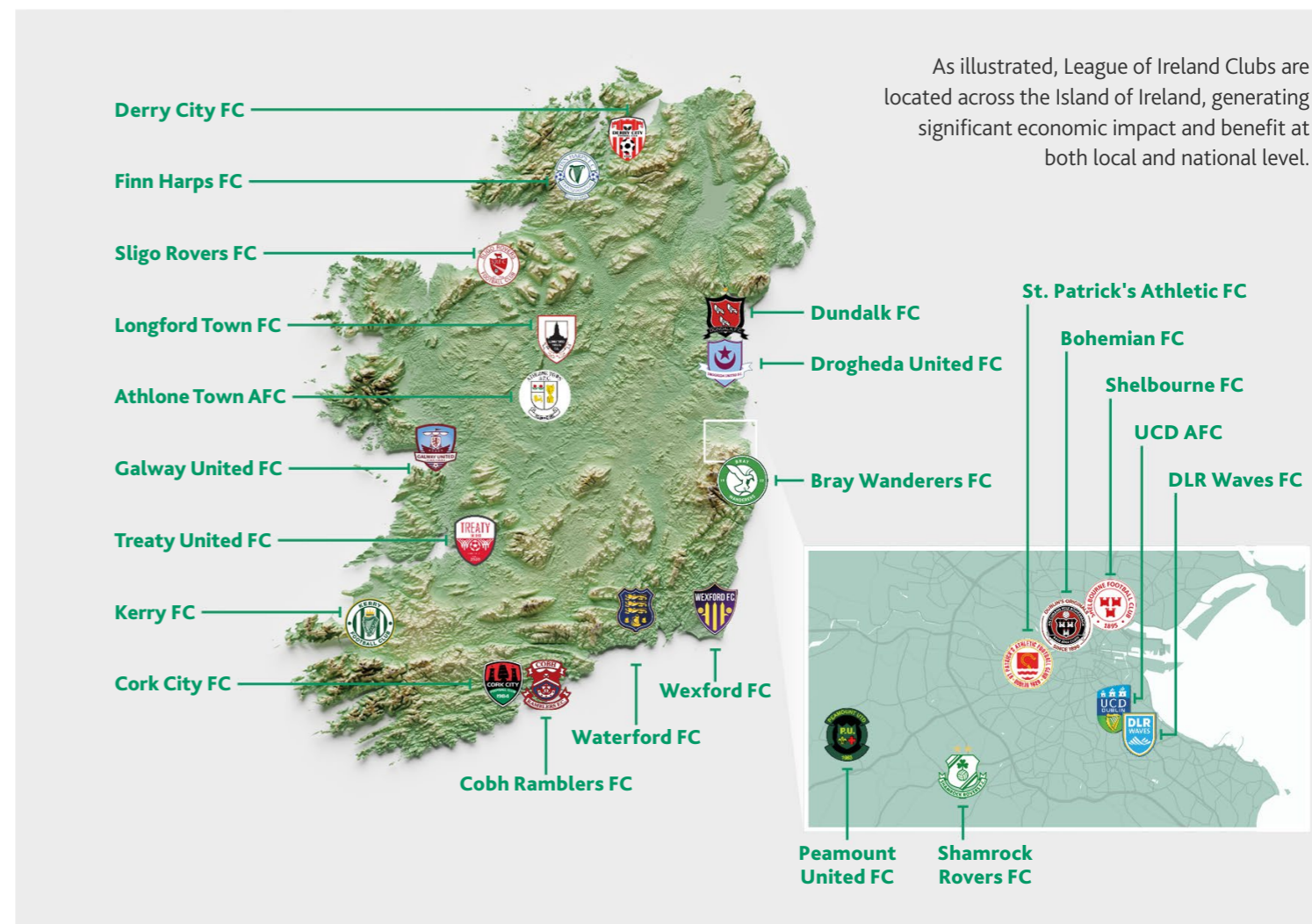
## International Level

At the pinnacle of Irish football, the international level encompasses the national teams representing the Republic of Ireland. These teams compete in major international tournaments organised by FIFA, UEFA and various friendly matches. The international level garners significant attention, drawing substantial media coverage, sponsorship, and fan support, and serves as a source of national pride and unity.

## League of Ireland

The League of Ireland is the top tier of Irish football and dates back to the foundation of the Football Association of Ireland in 1921. It consists of:

- ▶ Two Men's divisions: the **SSE Airtricity Men's Premier Division**, the **SSE Airtricity Men's First Division**
- ▶ The **SSE Airtricity Women's Premier Division**
- ▶ The **EA SPORTS LOI Academy** for MU14, MU15, MU17, WU17, WU19 and MU20 competitions.



As illustrated, League of Ireland Clubs are located across the Island of Ireland, generating significant economic impact and benefit at both local and national level.

Clubs in these divisions compete for national titles and qualification to European competitions, such as the UEFA Champions League, UEFA Women's Champions League, UEFA Europa League and the UEFA Conference League.

The three senior divisions are made up of a total of 22 clubs, comprising of a total of 31 teams, who compete against each other in their respective leagues for the League title.




In addition, to the domestic league games, LOI teams also compete in other cup and league competitions:

- ▶ Sports Direct Men's FAI Cup
- ▶ Sports Direct Women's FAI Cup
- ▶ Avenir Sports Women's All-Island Cup
- ▶ Men's President's Cup
- ▶ Women's President's Cup
- ▶ UEFA Club Competitions

## Grassroots Level

Grassroots football forms the foundation of the sport in Ireland, encompassing youth, amateur leagues, and local clubs. This level is vital for nurturing young talent, promoting physical activity, and fostering community spirit. Grassroots football is predominantly volunteer-driven and relies on local support, with an emphasis on participation and development rather than commercial gain. Grassroots football is essential for the long-term sustainability and growth of the sport.

Grassroots football in Ireland delivers an annual €1.8 billion impact to Irish society according to a landmark survey carried out for the FAI by UEFA for its Social Return On Investment model.

 2023 Season	Bohemian FC	 2023 Season	Athlone Town AFC	 2023 Season	Athlone Town AFC
	Cork City FC		Bray Wanderers FC		Bohemian FC
	Derry City FC		Cobh Ramblers FC		Cork City FC
	Drogheda United FC		Finn Harps FC		DLR Waves FC
	Dundalk FC		Galway United FC		Galway United FC
	Shamrock Rovers FC		Kerry FC		Peamount United FC
	Shelbourne FC		Longford Town FC		Shamrock Rovers FC
	Sligo Rovers FC		Treaty United FC		Shelbourne FC
	St. Patrick's Athletic FC		Waterford FC		Sligo Rovers FC
	UCD AFC		Wexford FC		Treaty United FC
			Wexford FC		

# Performance of the League of Ireland

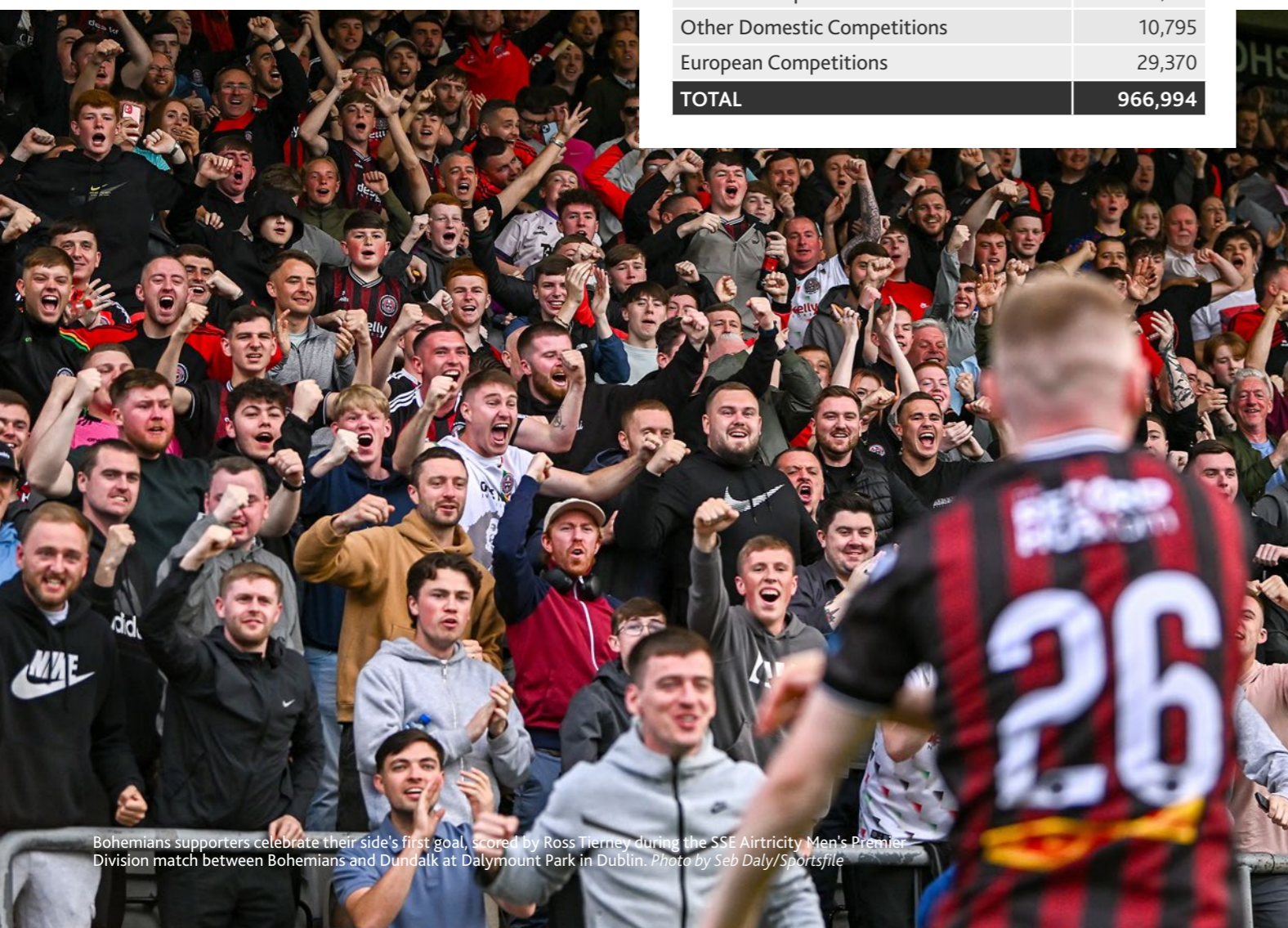
This section presents an overview of the operational and financial performance of League of Ireland Clubs during 2023. As part of the analysis we have considered attendance levels at matches, TV & streaming audiences, and club finances.

## Attendance in the League of Ireland

Data for 2023, shows total attendances of 966,994 for League of Ireland games, FAI cup, other domestic and European competition matches during the 2023 season.

The total attendance can be broken down as follows:

Competition	Attendance
League Games	826,086
Domestic Cup	100,743
Other Domestic Competitions	10,795
European Competitions	29,370
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>966,994</b>



Bohemians supporters celebrate their side's first goal, scored by Ross Tierney during the SSE Airtricity Men's Premier Division match between Bohemians and Dundalk at Dalymount Park in Dublin. Photo by Seb Daly/Sportsfile

During 2023 the largest attendance recorded was 8,021 spectators who attended Shamrock Rovers' home match against Sligo Rovers. The largest attendance in the SSE Airtricity Women's Premier Division was between Shamrock Rovers and Peamount United at Tallaght Stadium with 1,464 in attendance.

Total attendances at SSE Airtricity League Men's and Women's matches increased from 464,100 in 2019 to 826,086 in 2023 – an increase of 78%. The SSE Airtricity Men's First Division experienced an increase in attendances over the period of 159%, while the Women's and Men's Premier Division increased by 169% and 59% respectively.

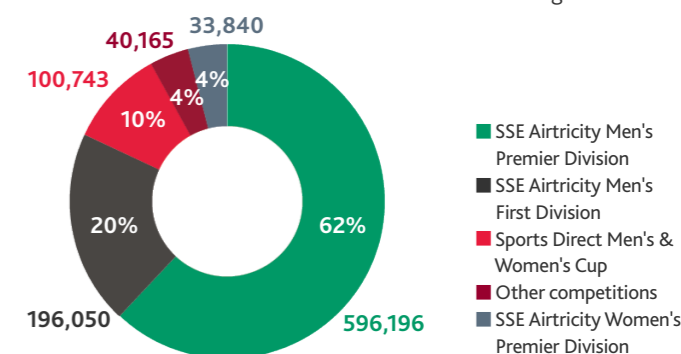
Approximately 50% (89 games) in the SSE Airtricity Men's Premier Division saw attendances of over 75% of the ground's capacity. Of these, 55 games saw attendances of 90% of the ground's capacity.

The largest attendance across all games was recorded at the Sports Direct Men's FAI Cup Final, with 43,881 spectators in attendance. This represents an upward trend in attendance levels, with the previous two Finals attracting 32,412 and 37,126 spectators respectively.

Attendance at home UEFA Cup Competitions involving League of Ireland teams in 2023 was 29,370 over eight matches. Attendance is a function of the number of matches played and the success of League of Ireland teams in these competitions.

## Attendances per competition 2023

Source: League of Ireland

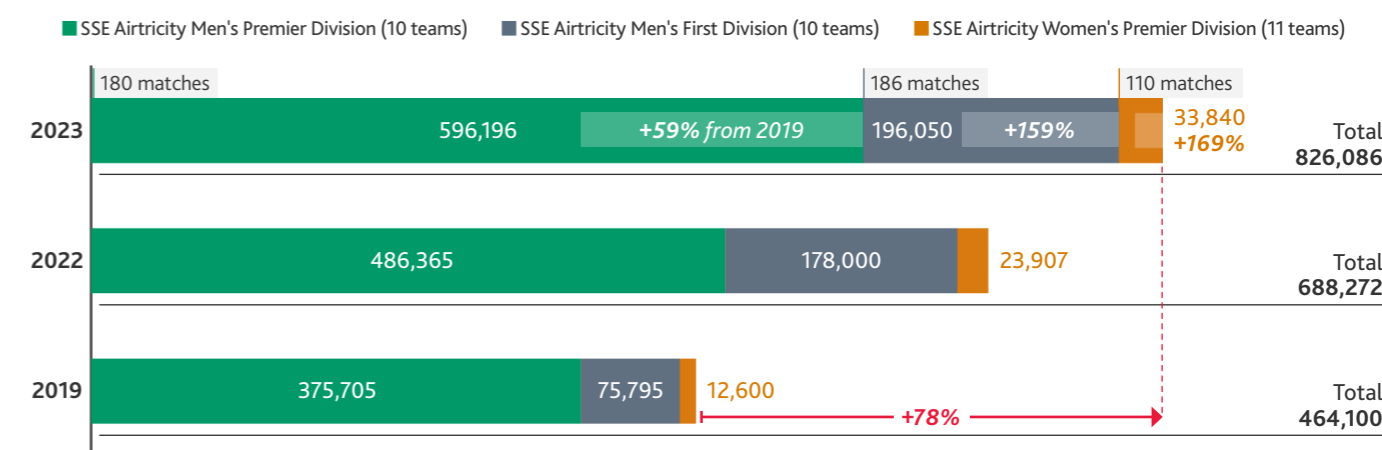


The 2022 campaign was more successful for Irish teams, with total attendance of 69,276 over thirteen games.

For the purpose of our analysis, we have treated these as domestic attendees. However, it is acknowledged that a percentage of these fans would be visiting fans coming from outside Ireland and as such would have a greater economic impact given that their overall spend is greater than a domestic supporter. A conservation estimate, based on data from Fáilte Ireland for 2019, would indicate that the typical overseas holidaymaker spends on average €96 per day when visiting Ireland.

## League of Ireland Attendances 2019–2023

Source: League of Ireland



## Season ticket sales

Source: League of Ireland

Season	Capacity	Home Capacity	Season Ticket Sales	% of ST to HC
2023	82,548	74,293	23,241	31.2%
2024	82,548	74,293	25,128	33.8%

In 2023, a total of 23,241 Season Tickets were sold across all League of Ireland teams. This represents c.31% of total home supporter capacity.

In 2024, the total amount of Season Tickets sold increased to 25,128, representing c.34% of total home supporter capacity.

## Performance of the League of Ireland

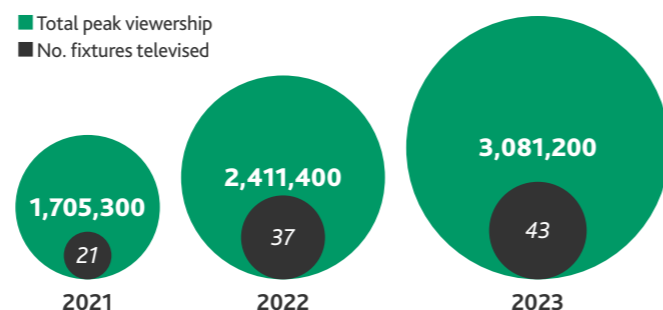
### TV & streaming viewership

League of Ireland football matches are televised and streamed online through various platforms to ensure broad accessibility for fans.

Traditionally, national TV broadcasters—including RTÉ, Virgin Media, and TG4—provide live coverage of select matches, particularly high-profile games and critical fixtures. In 2023, 43 games involving League of Ireland teams were televised, more than double the 21 games aired in 2021. Over the same period, total peak viewership increased by **80%**, from 1.71 million to 3.08 million.

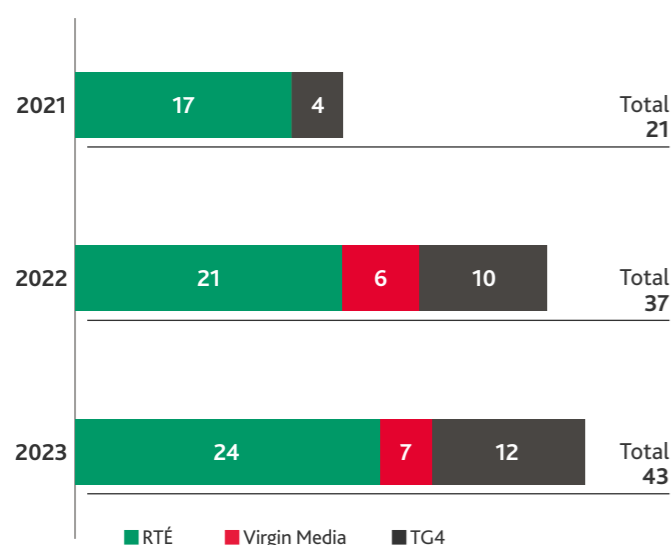
### Total peak TV viewership

Source: League of Ireland



### Total televised\*

Source: League of Ireland



\*Includes LOI teams in UEFA Club Competitions



Ronan Finn of Shamrock Rovers, centre, and team-mates celebrate after the SSE Airtricity Men's Premier Division match between Shamrock Rovers and Sligo Rovers at Tallaght Stadium in Dublin. Photo by Stephen McCarthy/Sportsfile

In recent years, the League has embraced digital streaming to cater to the growing online audience. The League of Ireland's official streaming service, LOITV, launched in March 2021 offering live streaming of all LOI football matches with over 500 live streams annually, enabling fans to watch games on-demand on a season pass, and pay-per-view basis.

The platform has over **107,000 registered users**, of which **49,517** have made purchases, and has seen year-on-year revenue growth and an increase of 75% since 2021.

### LOITV audience

Source: League of Ireland

107,000 registered users

49,517 made purchases

75% revenue growth since 2021



Shelbourne manager Damien Duff is interviewed by LOITV before the SSE Airtricity Men's Premier Division match between Shelbourne and Sligo Rovers at Tolka Park in Dublin. Photo by Tom Beary/Sportsfile



Athlone Town players, including captain Laurie Ryan, centre, celebrate with the trophy after their side's victory in the SSE Airtricity Women's Premier Division match between Athlone Town and Bohemians at Athlone Town Stadium in Westmeath. Photo by Sam Barnes/Sportsfile

# Performance of the League of Ireland

## Club Finances

### Revenues

League of Ireland Clubs had a **combined turnover of €38.1m** in the financial period ending 2023. This figure is based on analysis of Clubs audited financial statements, management accounts, and the FIFA Global Transfer Report for 2023.

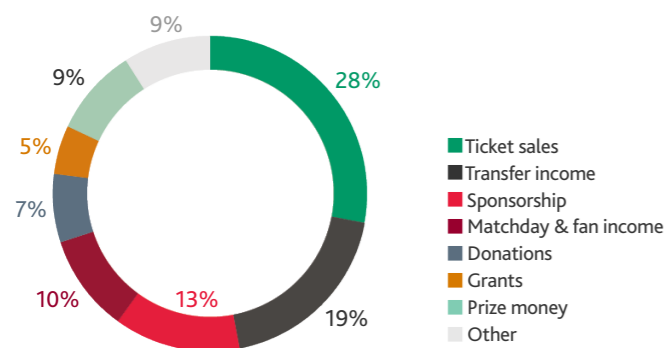
The financial landscape of League of Ireland Clubs is multifaceted, with revenue streams including sponsorships, matchday and fan income, transfer fees, fundraising and donations, grants, prize money, and other miscellaneous sources.

The distribution of revenue sources reveals that ticket sales accounted for the largest portion at 28%, followed by transfer income at 19%, sponsorship at 13%, and matchday and fan income at 10%. Fundraising and donations, grants, and prize money also contribute significantly, at 7%, 5%, and 9% respectively.

Income streams are generally similar for all Clubs across the League. However, the contribution of each stream is

### Distribution of revenue sources

Source: BDO Analysis of Club Accounts



influenced by several factors including fan base, stadium size and quality, and ability to secure sponsors.

Individual Clubs exhibit varying revenue profiles. For instance, some show robust earnings from sponsorship and matchday income, while others benefit significantly from UEFA Club Competitions prize money and transfer fees. Smaller clubs rely more on ticket sales and other forms of income, reflecting the diverse revenue model make-up within the League. The financial data underscores the importance of diversified revenue streams for the sustainability and growth of League of Ireland Clubs.

### Expenditure

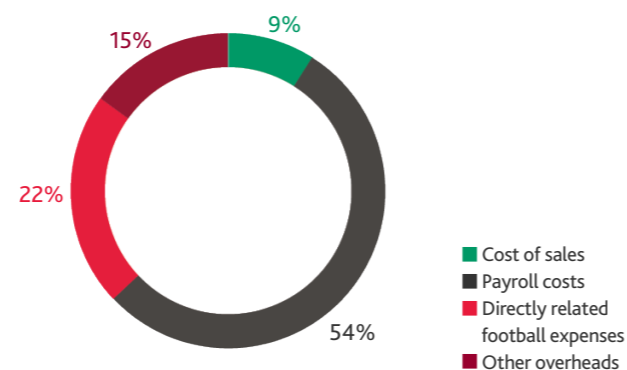
Analysis showed that total operational expenditure by clubs in 2023 was **€39.4m**.

The largest expenditure item was the payroll costs of players, managers, coaches and support staff amounting to **€21.4m** or 54% of total expenditure.

Overhead costs accounted for 37% or **€14.5m** of expenditure. Of this expenditure €8.6m of the expenses related directly to

### Club expenditure

Source: BDO Analysis of Club Accounts



*“Our League of Ireland is thriving with sold-out stadia and an increasingly strong on-field product, but the state of our facility infrastructure is clearly holding the League back.”*

– FAI, 'Facility Investment Vision and Strategy'

football activity including matchday expenses, players' travel and accommodation, academy underage team costs, training costs, and physio/medical expenses. The remainder of the expenditure relates to the cost of sales, which account for 9% of all expenditure.

### Capital Expenditure of Stadium & Training Facilities

There have been modest levels of capital investment by Clubs in stadia and associated facilities. The effects of long-term under-investment in many grounds has resulted in a situation where basic facilities such as food/beverage facilities and toilets are limited, adversely impacting on the ability of Clubs to cater for other events and activities.

However, 2023 did see some investment, the most notable being an investment by South Dublin County Council in Tallaght Stadium.

When this investment is considered in addition to other investment by teams competing across the Leagues, the total level of investment has been estimated to be **€10.1m**.

In 2023, the FAI launched their 'Facility Investment Vision and Strategy' for Irish Football. The Strategy notes that *“Our League of Ireland is thriving with sold-out stadia and an increasingly strong on-field product, but the state of our facility infrastructure is clearly holding the League back.”* The Strategy proposes that **€390m** be spent on building an academy and training hub for every League of Ireland club, transforming in-stadium fan experience and broadcast product, and fit-for purpose stands, structures, and amenities. The FAI believe that this *“investment would gradually and sustainably transform League of Ireland football for ever,”* driving increased economic benefit across the League of Ireland and nationally.

League of Ireland clubs are in many cases at the heart of their communities. It is anticipated by the Strategy that this investment can help transform Clubs into thriving community hubs, offering a self-sustaining future that deliver positive community and social impacts at a local level.

Eve Dossen of Galway United celebrates after scoring her side's first goal during the SSE Airtricity Women's Premier Division match between Shamrock Rovers and Galway United at Tallaght Stadium in Dublin. Photo by Tyler Miller/Sportsfile

# Fans/Spectator Survey

An online spectator survey was developed and distributed to Clubs operating across the three divisions.

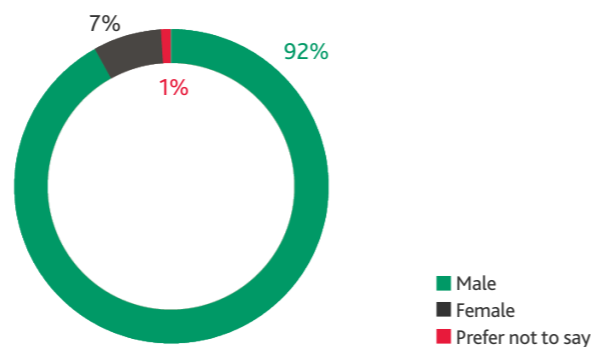
The survey generated a total of 1,491 responses, with supporters/fans from all Clubs represented in the responses.

The survey sought data on the following:	
	Supporter profile
	Club supported
	Match attendance
	How they travel to games
	Spend

## Spectator profile

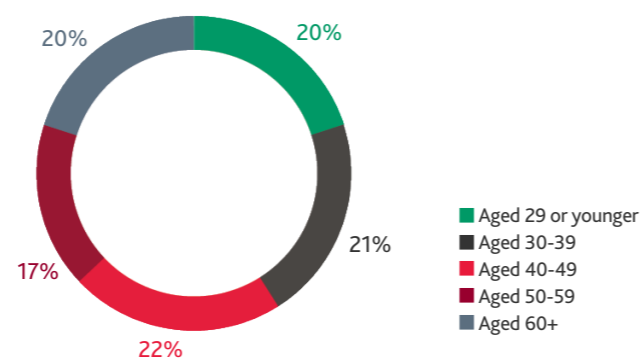
Approximately 1,383 or **92%** of all respondents to the survey were male, with 99 or **7%** identifying as female and 9 or **1%** of respondents preferring to not identify their gender.

Gender Source: BDO League of Ireland Fans Survey



Participants were asked to identify their age bracket. The largest number of responses came from those in the 30-39 (315) and 40-49 (328) age category, which made up a combined **43.1%** of respondents.

Age profile Source: BDO League of Ireland Fans Survey



Roma McLaughlin of Shelbourne in action against Laurie Ryan of Athlone Town during the SSE Airtricity Women's Premier Division match between Shelbourne and Athlone Town at Tolka Park in Dublin. Photo by Ben McShane/Sportsfile

Participants were asked to identify where they live. Most respondents (99%) indicated that they live in Ireland, with 1% indicating that they live in the UK, Other EU and Non-EU Countries.

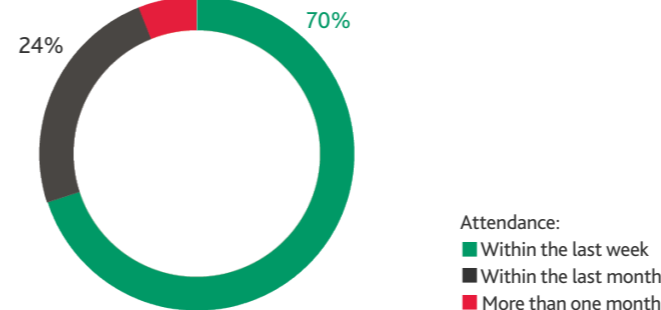
Fans living in Dublin, accounted for the greatest number of respondents, and consequently Dublin based Clubs featured highly as the Club supported.

## Matchday attendance

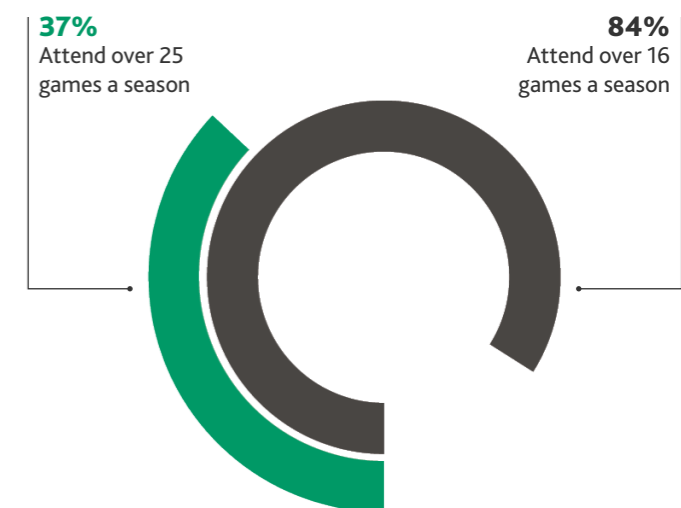
Respondents were asked to identify when they last attended a League of Ireland game. Nearly **70%** of respondents indicated that they **attended a match within the last week**, with approximately 24% indicating that they attended a match within the last month. The balance (6%) indicated that they last attended a game more than 1 month ago.

## Matchday attendance

Source: BDO League of Ireland Fans Survey



Games attended Source: BDO League of Ireland Fans Survey



The average number of games attended in a season was 21. More than 1-in-3 (37%) respondents indicated that they attend over 25 games a season. Approximately **84%** or 1,245 respondents to the survey identified that they **attend more than 16 games in a season**.

Given the high volume of games attended among the participants, the average number of home matches attended was 16 and the average number of away games was approximately seven.



# Fans/Spectator Survey



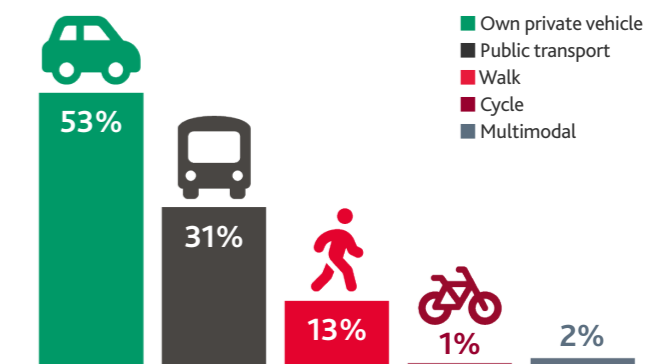
### Travelling to games

The primary mode of travelling to and from matches is 'own private vehicle' which accounted for 791 or 53% of responses, followed by 31% using public transport and 13% indicating that they typically walk to home games. The remainder of respondents indicated a mix of cycling, carpool/lift, hired/supporter bus or taxi.

Own private vehicle, public transport, and supporter bus are the most common forms of transportation used to travel to away games.

### Transport modes

Source: BDO League of Ireland Fans Survey



### Average spend

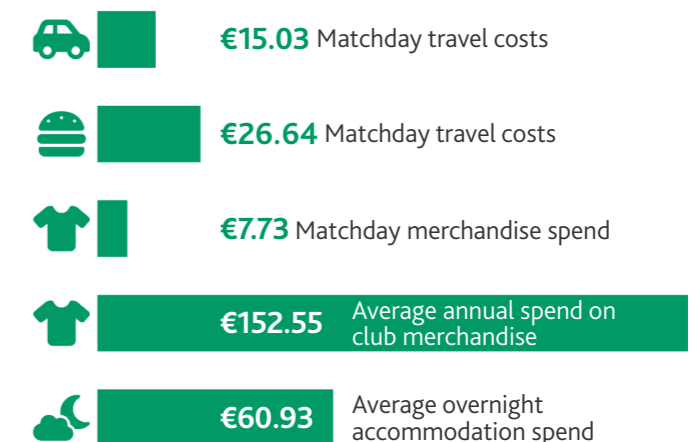
The survey responses indicate that fans, on matchday, spend on average €15.03 travelling to and from matches, €26.64 on food and drinks both inside and outside the ground, and €7.73 on merchandise and associated items.

Respondents were also asked to identify how much they spend annually on club merchandise, with an average spend of €152.55 reported.

For fans attending long-distance away matches, and who overnight, the average spend on overnight accommodation was found to be approximately €60.93.

### Spend

Source: BDO League of Ireland Fans Survey



# Economic Impact Assessment

## Direct expenditure

In order to quantify the overall economic impact of the League of Ireland, we have quantified the direct expenditure as a direct result of the League of Ireland. This includes consideration of the operational income of the League of Ireland itself and each of the Clubs participating in the three League of Ireland Divisions. This has been estimated following a review and assessment of audited accounts and other financial statements prepared by the League of Ireland and each of the participating Clubs for the financial year ending 2023.

Using the spectator survey, we have also calculated average spectator spend on matchdays and on Club merchandise throughout the year. We have used this information, combined with the attendance data to estimate spectator spend during the 2023 season.

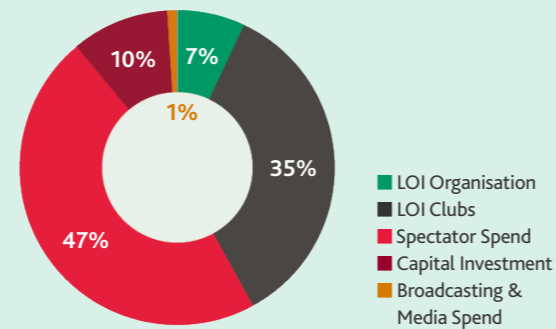
We have taken information reported in the financial statements of each of the Clubs, and publicly reported information, to estimate the total level of capital investment into the stadium and training facilities.

Finally, we have assessed information provided by the League of Ireland to estimate the total level of broadcasting and media spend.

**Based on the above we have calculated the direct economic impact of the LOI to be €103.8M.**

### Direct economic impact 2023

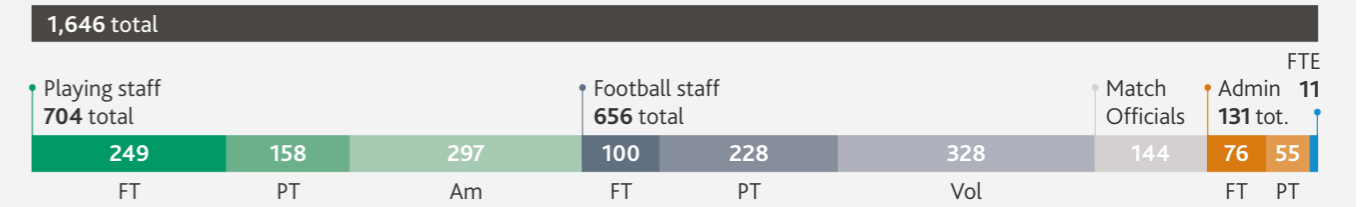
League of Ireland Organisation	€7,010,000
League of Ireland Clubs	€36,750,000
Spectator Spend	€48,560,000
Capital Investment	€10,100,000
Broadcasting & Media Spend	€1,390,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>€103,820,000</b>



▲ Drogheda United supporters before their Sports Direct Men's FAI Cup match against Dundalk at Weavers Park in Drogheda, Louth. Photo by Shauna Clinton/Sportsfile

### Roles directly engaged by League of Ireland Clubs (paid and voluntary)

Source: League of Ireland



## Indirect and induced expenditure

In order to estimate the overall economic impact, we have applied an economic multiplier. The multipliers utilised in this report capture both the indirect and induced effects of expenditures related to the League of Ireland and its Clubs, based on sectoral composition. These effects are estimated using Type I and Type II multipliers within the model. Type I multipliers allow us to determine the indirect effects stemming from the initial expenditure, while Type II multipliers enable the calculation of both indirect and induced effects generated by the initial expenditure.

The results of the economic impact analysis are summarised in the following table.

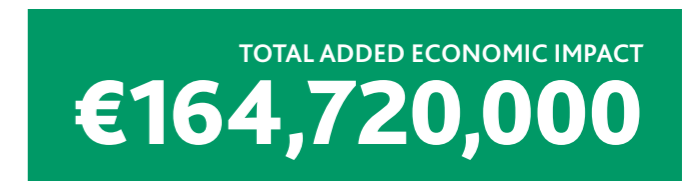
### Overall economic impact 2023

Total Direct Impact of the LOI	€103,820,000
Multiplier Impact (Indirect and Induced)	€60,900,000
<b>Total added economic impact</b>	<b>€164,720,000</b>
Estimated contribution to taxes	€40,000,000

The direct contribution by the League of Ireland to the Irish economy in 2023 is estimated to be €103.8m, with an additional €60.9m generated through indirect and induced impacts. **Thus, the League of Ireland resulted in a total contribution to the national economy of €164.7m in 2023.**



▼ Frank Darby of Shelbourne during the League of Ireland Walking Football Festival 2024. Photo by Shauna Clinton/Sportsfile



## Employment impact

A total of **1,646 people** are directly engaged (paid and voluntary basis) by the League of Ireland and its affiliated Clubs competing across the three divisions. These roles are distributed across playing, football and administrative staff roles and include referees, match observers, match officials, and delegates.

Playing staff account for the largest number of personnel. There are currently **249 full-time players, 158 part-time players, and 297 amateur players** or 704 in total.

Football staff account for 656 positions in total, broken down between 100 full-time, 228 part-time, and 328 individuals engaged in a voluntary capacity.

There are currently 131 administrative staff, of which 76 are full-time and 55 part-time employees.

The League of Ireland directly employees 11 full-time equivalents, while a further 144 individuals are retained as officials, referee observers and match delegates.

**The number of indirect FTE jobs supported by the LOI has been estimated to be 4,448 in 2023.**

### Indirect FTE jobs supported 2023

Indirect FTE jobs supported (estimated)	Directly engaged by LOI Clubs
<b>4,448</b>	<b>1,646</b>

## Community & Social Impact

The League of Ireland has significant impact across the Island of Ireland, generating not only economic benefits but also fostering community and social advantages.

Through the "More than a Club" Football & Social Responsibility (FSR) programme, the Football Association of Ireland (FAI) promotes and enhances the community engagement capacity of Clubs. This initiative provides a framework for Clubs to benefit their local communities by delivering much needed social services, and also presents a platform to support their own growth. These services contribute to the overall economic impact of the League. While the social return on investment from these programmes has yet to be quantified, when assessed, it promises to demonstrate significant community value in the range and efficiency of services delivered. Currently, 15 Clubs, supported by full-time and part-time staff and volunteers, deliver various community programmes at varying levels under this initiative.

### Charitable and community-focused Initiatives

League of Ireland Clubs increasingly engage in community outreach, developing and delivering programmes centred on health and well-being (both physical and mental), social equality and inclusion, and education. Notable examples are Walking Football and Football Memories, designed to target older adults at risk of social isolation, Inclusion programmes which provide playing opportunities for young people with autism, as well as half of the League's Clubs forming teams for young people with Down Syndrome. Other Clubs have delivered Numeracy through Football programmes in primary schools, while others have partnered with local Education & Training Boards to deliver employability programmes. A significant number of Clubs are also involved in refugee integration programmes, with many also having facilitated



Finn Harps FC players, including Shaun McCusker, centre, with the Cairdeas Cup after their side's victory in the FAI League of Ireland Down Syndrome Festival at the National Indoor Arena Futsal Courts in Dublin. Photo by Shauna Clinton/Sportsfile

the delivery of "Show Racism the Red Card" workshops in schools countrywide. Other school initiatives include a collaborative project with schools from both sides of the north/south border, to promote harmonious community relations.

One progressive club has an advanced Climate Action programme that can serve as a blueprint for others to adopt. Other clubs have also started to consider their environmental impact and have surveyed their fan base on this topic. Additionally, some clubs are running football camps during

school holidays and offering girls' coaching programmes. Others have collaborated with local social services to support programmes such as blood donation drives, or provide ad hoc assistance for youth diversion cases and families facing addiction and homelessness.

### Health and Well-Being

Professional football's popularity encourages physical activity, whether through playing, participating in local leagues, or simply being more active. This positively

impacts community health and can help to address health inequalities. Football also provides stress relief and emotional expression for players and fans. Supporting a team and attending games can enhance mental well-being, reducing isolation, and fostering belonging. Programmes like the football 'Bootrooms' offer social support where people can share stories, display skills, make friends, volunteer with football Clubs, and connect with their communities in a pressure-free environment. The economic and societal impact of such services should not be underestimated.

# Academies

There are a total of **26 League of Ireland academies** in Ireland. All the Clubs operating across the League run football academies to develop boys and girls who have the potential to become professional footballers. The primary objectives of these academies are to promote football development, thereby increasing the future pool of players, and, in many instances as a way of giving back to their local economies.

These academies not only impact positively on the lives of these young players, but also on the lives of those who are responsible for the development of these children.



St Patrick's Athletic teammates celebrating after scoring their side's first goal during the EA SPORTS LOI Academy MU15 development weekend at FAI Headquarters in Abbotstown, Dublin. Photo by Seb Daly/Sportsfile



Anna Butler of Shamrock Rovers celebrates after scoring her side's fourth goal during the EA SPORTS WU17 League of Ireland Cup match between Athlone Town and Shamrock Rovers at Athlone Town Stadium in Westmeath. Photo by Ben McShane/Sportsfile

As illustrated, there are currently a total of **2,640 children and young adults** playing across **132 teams** within the academy structure in Ireland.

	Teams	Players
Men's U14	23	460
Men's U15	24	480
Men's U17	24	480
Women's U17	22	440
Women's U19	17	340
Men's U20	22	440
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>2,640</b>

These academies are delivered by a team of full-time staff and volunteers. On average, there are approximately **3.6 volunteers** per LOI Academy team, volunteering on average **21.5 hours per week**.

The Football Association of Ireland 'Social Return on Investment Report 2021' placed a value on volunteering of approximately €4,698 per volunteer. The monetary value of this volunteer input across the academies can be estimated at **€2.2m** and would be additional to the overall economic impact presented in this report.

# Methodology

This economic impact assessment has been completed in two phases, namely:

## Phase 1 – Data Collection & Spectator Survey

## Phase 2 – Economic Modelling

### Phase 1 – Data Collection

During the course of the data collection phase we:

- ▶ Interviewed employees of the League of Ireland Department to obtain information such as attendances, TV viewing figures, and streaming data. We also obtained financial data relating to the Operations of the League of Ireland from the FAI.
- ▶ Sent an information/data request to each of the Clubs competing in the LOI, which sought financial and operational data for the financial year ending 2023.
- ▶ Developed an online supporter/fans survey which was distributed by Clubs participating across all divisions.
- ▶ Received a total of 1,491 supporters responses to the survey, providing useful insights on spectator attendance, spend and travel patterns across each of the three divisions.

### Phase 2 – Economic Impact Modelling

The assumptions applied for the economic modelling were calculated, determined, and/or assumed, based on information gathered during the data collection phase.

**The resulting economic impact assessment addresses the impact of the League of Ireland, and it includes:**

- ▶ The economic benefits of football calculated as contribution to GDP
- ▶ The contribution to national taxes
- ▶ The contribution to job creation/sustaining jobs and work opportunities.

The economic modelling also estimates the indirect and induced benefits that are derived from the activities of the LOI and its affiliated Clubs.

Derry City supporters celebrate after the SSE Airtricity Men's Premier Division match between Shamrock Rovers and Derry City at Tallaght Stadium in Dublin. *Stephen McCarthy/Sportsfile*

#### Economic Impact Analysis note: Derry City FC

Our economic assessment is based on an all-island approach. It is important to note that Derry City FC, despite competing in the League of Ireland, is geographically located in Northern Ireland. Consequently, we have adjusted our economic impact calculations to account for this unique circumstance, including considerations related to foreign exchange rates, economic multipliers, taxation, and other pertinent factors.

The primary economic impact attributable to Derry City FC is directed towards the Northern Ireland economy rather than that of the Republic of Ireland. To maintain confidentiality and uphold fairness towards Derry City FC, we have opted not to disclose the specific economic impact figures related to the club. It is essential to emphasise, however, that this adjustment does not result in a material impact on the overall economic analysis.

By accounting for these distinctions, we ensure a more accurate and comprehensive representation of the economic landscape, reflecting the true distribution of impacts of League of Ireland clubs throughout island of Ireland.

## Conclusion

The Economic Impact Assessment of the League of Ireland reveals that the League plays a pivotal role in the Irish economy and society, demonstrating significant contributions across multiple dimensions.

In 2023, the League of Ireland generated a **total economic impact of €164.7 million** when accounting for direct, indirect, and induced effects. The League's activities contributed an **estimated €40 million to the Exchequer** through taxes, highlighting its importance to national finances.

The assessment also underscores the League's ability to draw large crowds, with **826,086 fans** attending League games throughout the year, marking a **78% increase** from 2019. This surge in attendance is indicative of growing engagement and support for Irish football. When cup and European matches are factored in, total attendance at games, during 2023, **increases to 966,994**.

This report not only reflects the current Economic Impact of the League of Ireland, but also highlights the significant potential and opportunities that exists within the League of Ireland in the coming years.



**€164.7m**  
Total economic impact

**€40m**  
Paid to the Exchequer *(estimated)*

League attendance  
**826,086**  
*78% increase from 2019*

Total attendance  
**966,994**  
*incl. League, Cup and Euro. matches*

The League of Ireland also has a considerable impact on employment, **directly engaging 1,646 people** and an estimated **4,448 indirect jobs** supported. Investment in infrastructure was noteworthy, with **€10.1 million directed towards stadia and supporting facilities**, including significant projects like Tallaght Stadium. With fans spending on average **€49.40** on travel, food, drink, and merchandise as part of the overall matchday experience, this spend makes a significant contribution to local economies.

Beyond the economic metrics, the League of Ireland fosters extensive community and social benefits. Several Clubs are actively involved in charitable initiatives, youth development programmes, and health and well-being projects, enhancing the quality of life for many

individuals. The League's academies play a crucial role in nurturing young talent, involving **over 2,640 children and young adults**. The value of **volunteer contributions, estimated at €2.2 million**, underscores the community spirit and engagement fostered by the League.

In conclusion, the League of Ireland's influence extends far beyond the football pitch, making substantial economic, social, and community contributions. Its role in generating income, creating jobs, supporting local businesses, and fostering community well-being underscores its significance to Ireland. The League not only enhances the national economy but also enriches the social fabric of Irish communities, making it an indispensable asset to the Country.

The SSE Airtricity Men's Premier Division match between Shamrock Rovers and Bohemians at Tallaght Stadium in Dublin on 29 March 2024. Photo by David Fitzgerald/Sportsfile

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**Cover image:** James Clarke of Bohemians in action against Joe Redmond of St Patrick's Athletic during the Sports Direct FAI Cup Final at the Aviva Stadium in Dublin on 12 November 2023. *Photo by Stephen McCarthy/Sportsfile.*