

SAFEABROAD



SafeAbroad Forecast Report

IRELAND ANTI-MIGRANT PROTESTS

SAFETY IMPLICATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Overview

Citizens of Ireland are leading anti-migrant protests more frequently nationwide due to the steep increase in asylum applications over the past year.¹ Many such protests have turned violent, with protestors setting fires and clashing with police.² Travelers should expect an increased security presence and travel disruptions near asylum sites due to the unrest. Travelers should also remain aware of their surroundings and avoid drawing attention to themselves because of possible discrimination. Although the government is working on a better approach to immigrant integration, it will take time to implement new policies. Until then, travelers should continue to take extra precautions when traveling to Ireland.

Key Takeaways

1. **While Ireland is still a generally safe destination, anti-migrant sentiment is likely to create a more hostile travel environment.** Growing unrest towards asylum seekers is also a threat to the safety of travelers despite the vitriol being directed toward immigrants rather than tourists. Students should attempt to blend in with their surroundings and avoid behavior that would attract unwanted attention.
2. **Unexpected protests and police responses can create travel disruptions.** Violent demonstrations can materialize at any time and often render streets unsafe for travel. Students should stay informed on protests via local media and monitor police notifications to plan routes around affected areas.
3. **Anti-migrant protests are not limited to Dublin.** Although Dublin hosts frequent protests by its nature as the capital of Ireland and the country's largest city, violent activism has occurred nationwide. Protestors have targeted current refugee housing construction in County Kildare and demonstrated outside future refugee housing locations in Cork city.^{3,4} Travelers should be aware of potential protests, even outside of Dublin.

Background

Irish citizens are protesting to condemn the rising presence of migrants in the country and criticize the government's immigration policies of housing asylum seekers amidst an ongoing housing shortage.⁵

Many citizens in Ireland are unable to afford everyday items and rent or buy homes, causing an increase in Ireland's homeless population; In the first 6 months of 2024, there were 10,604

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<https://www.euronews.com/2024/08/02/irelands-sinn-fein-struggles-to-claw-back-voters-as-anti-immigrant-anger-surges>

² <https://www.tortoisemedia.com/2024/07/19/ireland-is-turning-violently-against-migrants/>

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<https://www.irishtimes.com/crime-law/courts/2024/02/29/firm-building-emergency-housing-for-ukrainians-gets-injunction-to-prevent-protester-site-blockade/>

⁴ <https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/munster/arid-41314945.html>

⁵ <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/57273/the-rise-of-antimigrant-sentiment-in-ireland>

applicants for International Protection, which is a 93.9 percent increase from the 5,470 applications by the end of June in 2023.⁶

Protests nationwide have turned violent and destructive, with clashes between police and protestors becoming commonplace, and fires being set frequently. On July 15, 2024, at the former Crown Paints building in Dublin, which is in the process of being renovated to house asylum seekers, a protest, with a turnout of over 1,000 people resulted in 19 arrests and injuries to multiple police officers.⁷ In November 2023, a stabbing carried out by an Algerian migrant in Dublin, which left three children and one adult injured, resulted in protestors setting fire to buses and trams and robbing shops throughout the capital.⁸

Government Response

The Irish Government has considered both the domestic and international impacts of anti-migrant issues, responding to the protests to stifle the unrest.

The government is charging violent protestors with criminal offenses. The Irish government has established that aggressive actions against police are “reprehensible” and has been dealing with such actions accordingly.⁹ While the media continues to consider the unrest as protests, Irish government officials are treating involved parties and their actions as criminal.¹⁰ Travelers should avoid getting caught up in such demonstrations, not only due to their nature but the heightened risk of arrest.

The government is considering sending immigrants to the United Kingdom to alleviate the number of asylum seekers and hopefully curb the related unrest. The Common Travel Area (CTA) between the UK and Ireland has facilitated immigration from the UK to Ireland. Irish officials state that 80% of asylum seekers arrive from Northern Ireland by land, and choose Ireland over the UK due to fears of deportation to Rwanda due to current UK legislation.¹¹ As a result of the unrest, Irish officials are exploring plans to send immigrants back to the UK, and potentially tighten regulations of the CTA to assuage the influx of asylum seekers.¹² After the Labour Party’s win in the 2024 UK general elections, the legislation known as the “Rwanda Plan,” which aims to deter people from crossing the English Channel through deportation, was scrapped.¹³ At the very least, this is likely to encourage the return of immigrants to the UK without much pushback from migrants, as the risk of deportation has been removed for the time being.

⁶<https://www.bbc.com/news/explainers-61782866>

⁷<https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/jul/19/former-factory-in-dublin-intended-to-house-asylum-seekers-is-set-on-fire>

⁸<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/nov/23/dublin-knife-attack-children-stabbing-ireland-parnell-square>

⁹<https://www.barrons.com/articles/irish-police-make-arrests-after-clashes-at-anti-immigration-protest-a1fef2c6>

¹⁰ <https://time.com/6999049/dublin-ireland-anti-immigration-protests-arrests/>

¹¹<https://www.reuters.com/world/ireland-says-uks-rwanda-policy-drives-migrants-over-its-border-2024-04-26/>

¹² <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-68914399>

¹³<https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/commentaries/qa-the-uks-policy-to-send-asylum-seekers-to-rwanda/>

Traveler Implications

As of August 2024, the anti-migrant unrest is ongoing.

Travelers to Ireland should remain cautious of protests while in the country, particularly in the capital Dublin, and other urban centers, due to the increased likelihood of violent clashes and the deferred impact of anti-migrant sentiment on tourists.

What to watch for in 2024:

- **Authorities are likely to increase security measures in public places due to hostile protests.** Heightened security is likely to be stationed at airports, transport hubs, high-traffic locations, and high-profile events, which can include more thorough searches and a larger police presence to quell violence or disruptions.¹⁴
- **Protests are likely to cause travel disruptions.** Protests and violent clashes can lead to road closures and delays in public transportation, especially in major cities like Dublin. Police responses to violent demonstrations can further disrupt transport.¹⁵
- **Personal safety is at an increased risk due to unrest.** Violent demonstrations have included acts of arson, fireworks, and other projectiles. Riot police have responded to protests aggressively, causing injuries to both parties involved. There have also been instances of direct violence to asylum seekers, posing threats to travelers.¹⁶
- **Travelers are subject to potential discrimination due to anti-migrant sentiments.** Travelers may encounter a less welcoming atmosphere in areas with strong anti-immigrant attitudes, which can result in unequal treatment in public areas and for services.

¹⁴<https://crisis24.garda.com/alerts/2024/07/ireland-protesters-clash-with-police-set-fire-to-vacant-factory-in-coolock-area-of-dublin-july-19>

¹⁵ <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/58472/ireland-police-arrest-19-following-antimigrant-protests>

¹⁶<https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/jul/17/asylum-seekers-in-dublin-reportedly-attacked-by-people-with-knives>

