

Microfinance Ireland

Report on The Microenterprise Loan Fund Scheme As of the 31st of March 2026



An Roinn Fiontar,
Turasóireachta agus Fostaíochta
Department of Enterprise,
Tourism and Employment



Oifig Fiontair Áitiúil 
Local Enterprise Office

Overview of the Microenterprise Loan Fund Scheme

The Microenterprise Loan Fund, administered by Microfinance Ireland was established as part of the Government's Action Plan for Jobs and forms part of a suite of financial programs provided through the Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment to assist businesses of different sizes and at different stages of development across all industry sectors.

The purpose of the Fund is to provide loans of €2,000 up to €50,000 to Micro-enterprises, both startups and existing businesses with viable businesses, who cannot obtain funding through traditional sources. (Microenterprises are defined as businesses with less than 10 employees and /or Turnover <€2m)

Fund Performance Summary: 1st October 2012 to 31st March 2026

As at end 31st March 2026, Microfinance Ireland has been in business for c. 14 years. In this time, it has delivered the following key results:

- ✓ **13,800** Applications received.
- ✓ **€108.3M** Value of loans approved
- ✓ **12,354** Net jobs supported in 6253 micro-enterprises.
- ✓ **46%** Approval rate
- ✓ **€96.3M** Value of loans drawn
- ✓ **5,584** Loans drawn
- ✓ Average Loan size of **€17.3K**
- ✓ **82%** approvals granted to businesses employing **3 people or fewer**.
- ✓ **44%** of approvals granted to start-ups (in business for less than 18 months)
- ✓ **Wide geographic coverage:** 22% of loans granted to Dublin, 78% to the rest of Ireland

Successful applicants by Sector YTD 2026,

WHOLESALE AND RETAIL TRADE; REPAIR OF MOTOR VEHICLES AND MOTORCYCLES (16%)	ACCOMMODATION AND FOOD ACTIVITIES (15%)
CONSTRUCTION (13%)	OTHER SERVICES (10%)
MANUFACTURING (9%)	HUMAN HEALTH AND SOCIAL ACTIVITIES (9%)
ARTS, ENTERTAINMENT AND RECREATION (8%)	ADMINISTRATION & SUPPORT SERVICES ACTIVITIES (5%)
PROFESSIONAL, SCIENTIFIC & TECHNICAL ACTIVITIES (5%)	OTHER (3%)
TRANSPORT AND STORAGE (2%)	EDUCATION (2%)
AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND FISHING (2%)	PUBLISHING BROADCASTING & CONTENT PRODUCTION (1%)

Assessing applications efficiently:

- ✓ **13,559** Applications processed to full assessment.
- ✓ **241** Applications in progress at reporting date
- ✓ Endeavour to process complete applications within **10 days**.

Promotion and performance of the Fund during 1st January 2026 to 31st March 2026

Key performance indicators YTD 2026

- ✓ **438** **Applications received.**
- ✓ **€3.653M** **Value of loans approved**
- ✓ **288** **Jobs supported in 148 micro-enterprises.**
- ✓ **42%** **Approval rate**
- ✓ **€2.996M** **Value of loans drawn**
- ✓ **123** **Loans drawn.**
- ✓ Average Loan size of **€24.7K**
- ✓ **84%** approvals granted to businesses employing **3 people or fewer.**
- ✓ **59%** of approvals granted to start-ups (in business for less than 18 months)
- ✓ **Wide geographic coverage:** 24% of loans granted to Dublin, 76% to the rest of Ireland.

In Q1 2026, MFI continued to engage in a range of Marketing and PR activities, as well as new initiatives.

TV Advertising:

In November 2025 we ran a national TV advertising for the first time on Virgin Media and Sky TV. This was on the AdSense platform and targeted to those with a “business interest” profile. The response was very positive, and a larger scale Media campaign, starting with Press and Outdoor went live at the end of Q1 2026, with TV advertising (AdSense and Video on Demand) to go live at start of Q2.

Digital Advertising /social media:

We continue with ongoing promotion through our social media channels, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, TikTok and LinkedIn to maintain strong brand awareness with paid digital advertising campaigns primarily focused on Google, YouTube and Meta.

Events/Webinars/Sponsorships:

We continue our representation at in person events and webinars.

We sponsored the “Emerging New Business” Category of the SFA National Small Business Awards and the Gala Awards night was held in the RDS on March 5th where we presented the 5 finalists with their awards.

We held a webinar for International Women’s Day on Friday March 6th, with previous MFI client, Siobhan Berry Founder of MummyCooks as our guest speaker. We had 245 Registrations and 103 attendees which was our highest attendees to date.

Customer Experience & Surveys

In Q1 we have continued to make customer experience (CX) improvements on our Application portal after a CX review in 2025. We have also made some Accessibility change requests to our website also to ensure it meets WCAG AA requirements. The CX and UX enhancements will continue in Q2 to ensure we are presenting the most efficient journey for our applicants. Further Customer Insight and Brand Barometer Surveys are planned for Q2 2026.

Performance:

Application levels in Q1 were strong and in line with our targets which we believe reflects our Q4 2025 advertising and marketing activities. Application numbers and values in Q1 were c. 21% ahead of the corresponding period in 2025.

Our approval rate for the quarter at 42% is running slightly below the long-term average and continues to be impacted by applications where not all the documentation is submitted and need to be withdrawn without being assessed. We also continue to see applications that are outside our eligibility criteria which are also withdrawn prior to assessment. We have an outreach program to encourage and assist applicants submit documentation and are reviewing other methods of assisting applicants with their applications. Our approval rate for loans that are assessed is in the mid 60% which is in line with long term averages.

Start Up’s accounted for c. 59% of approvals in the quarter.

In the year to date, applications from Female business owners accounted for over 30% of all applications.

Year to date loans to businesses located outside of Dublin accounted for c. 76% of all loans which is in line with historic numbers.

Microenterprise Loan Fund Scheme Analysis

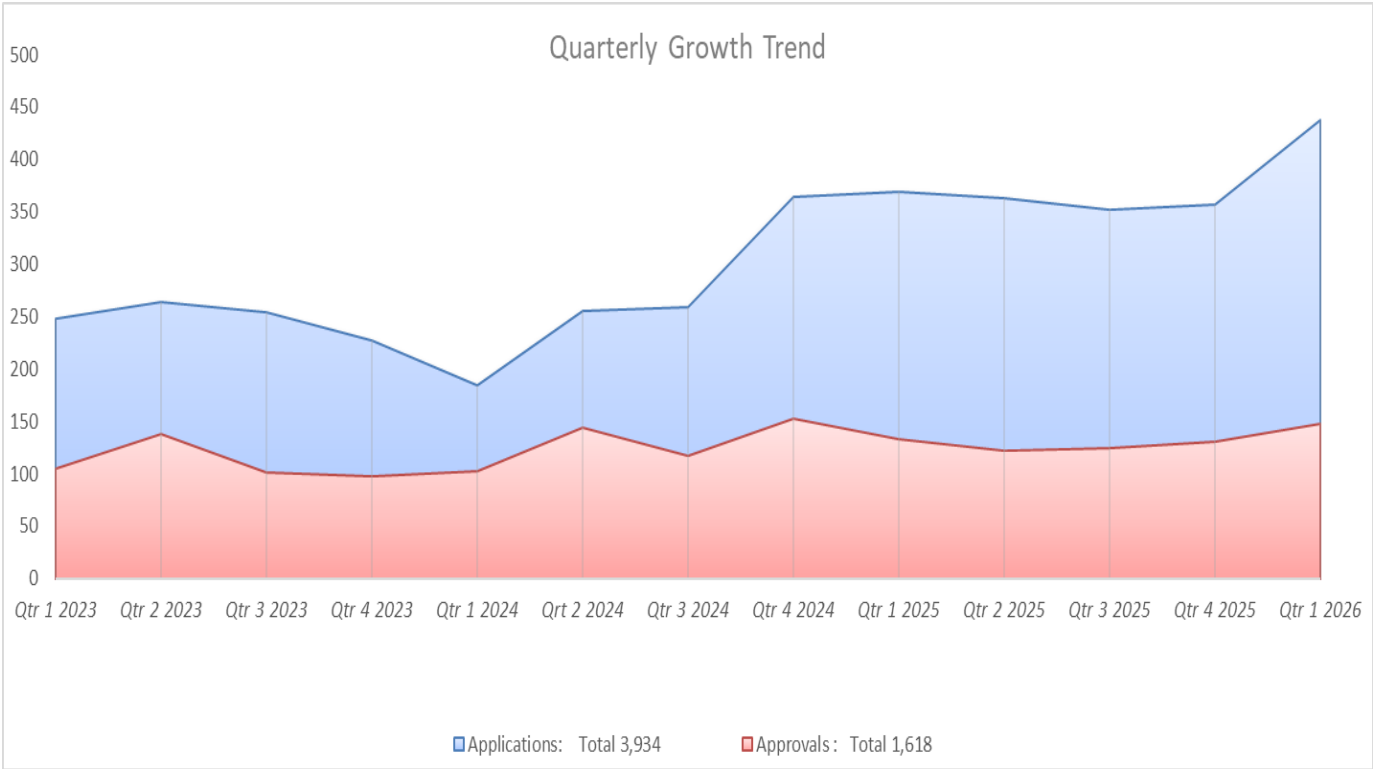
January 2023 – 31st March 2026

	2023	2024	2025	Q1 2026	Total 2026
Total Applications No.	994	1062	1,435	438	438
Total Applications Amt.	€16.841M	€21,558M	€38,787M	€11,736M	€11,736M

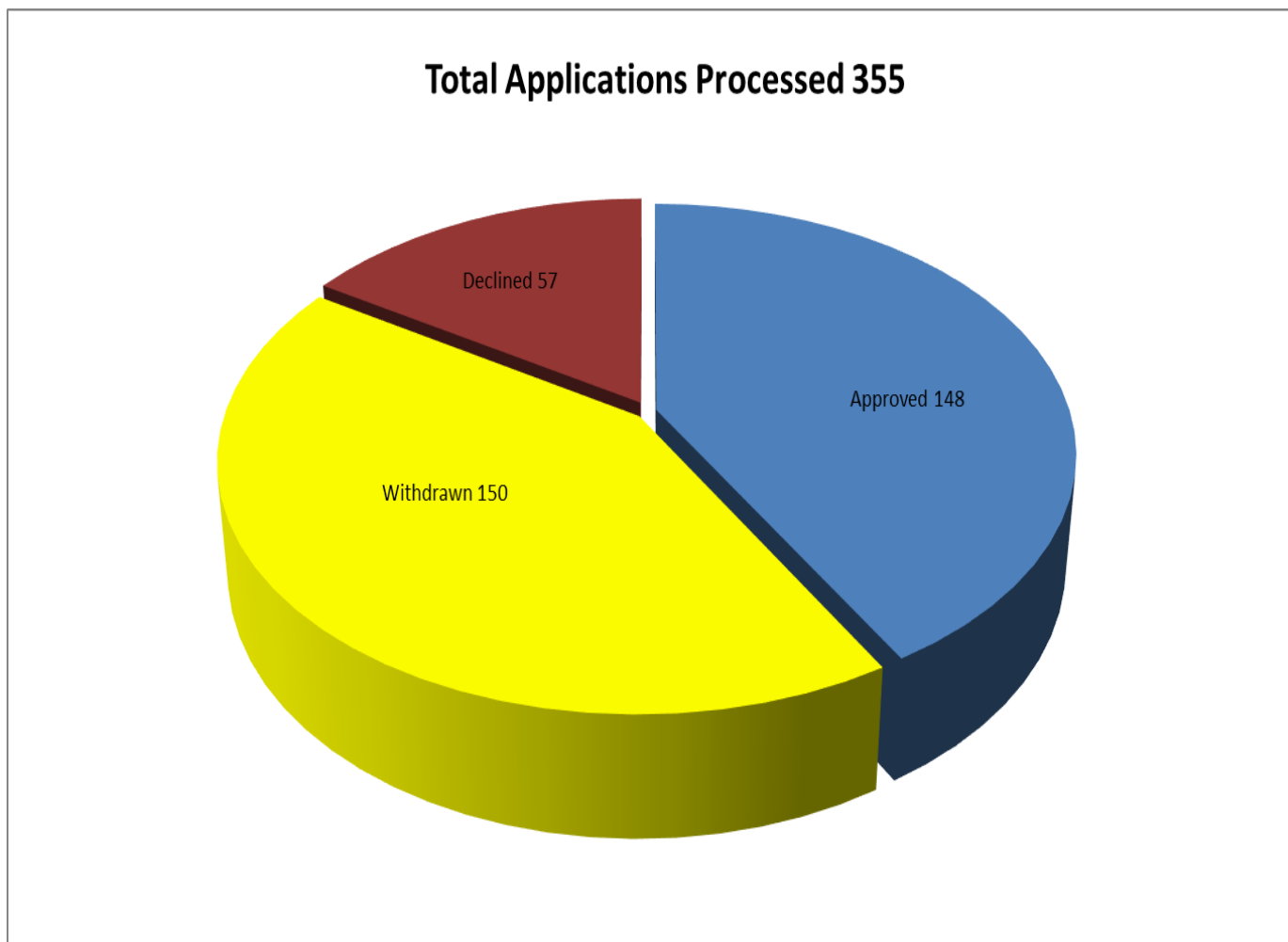
	2023	2024	2025	Q1 2026	Total 2026
Applications Processed	965	998	1,390	355	355
Approved	442	517	511	148	148
Approval Rate	46%	52%	37%	42%	42%
Approved (€'000)	€6.600M	€9.099M	€12.192M	€3.653M	€3.653M
Loans Drawn	397	450	467	123	123
Loans Drawn (€'000)	€6.009M	€7.482M	€11.199M	€2.996M	€2.996M
Loans Declined	263	217	282	57	57
Loans Declined (€'000)	€4.661M	€4.388M	€8.054M	€1.598M	€1.598M

Quarterly Growth Trend

Application and approval activity levels by Quarter are displayed in the graph below:



Applications processed (1st January 2026 - 31st March 2026)



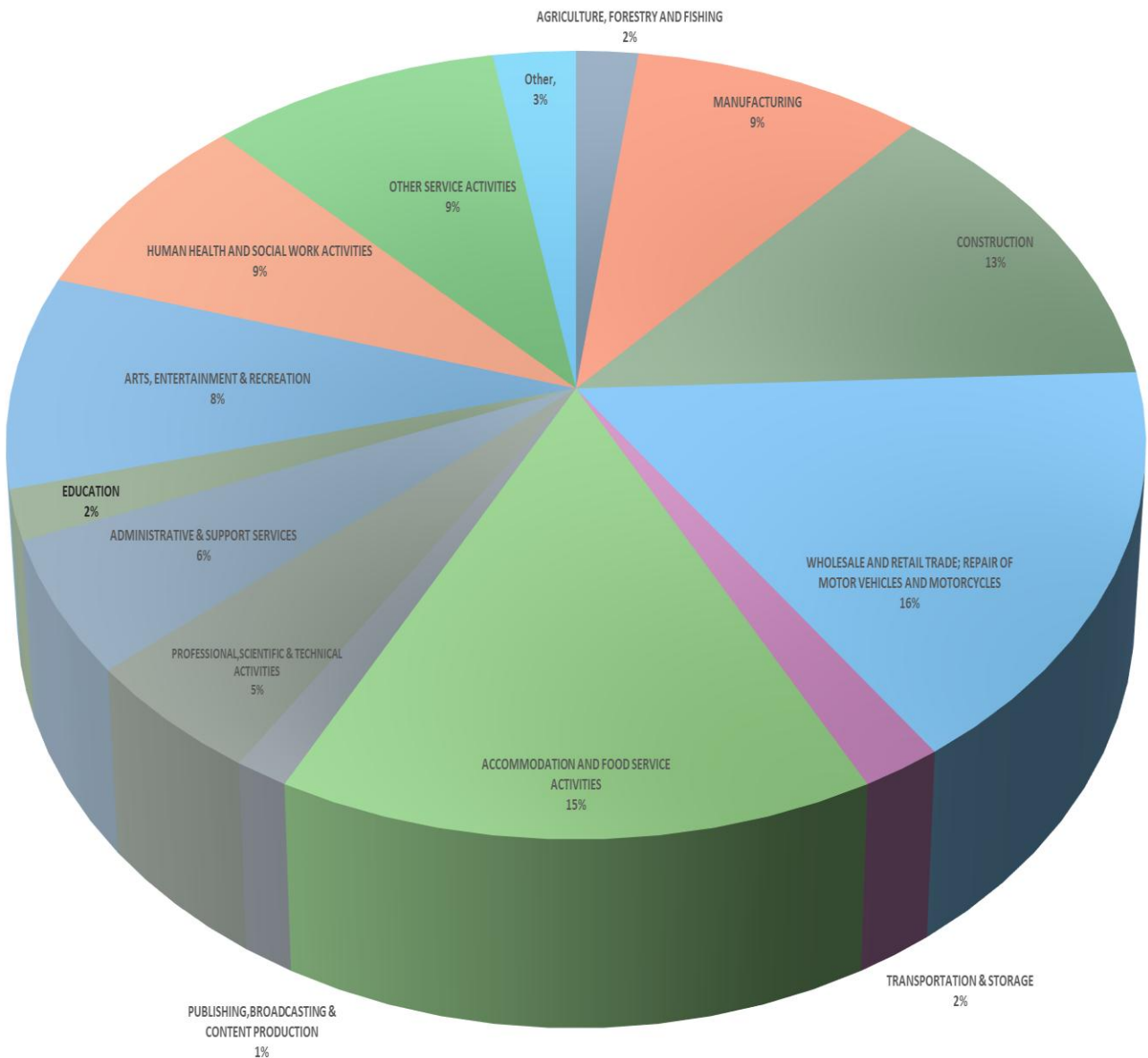
Number of Loans by Sector

Number of Loans					
	2023	2024	2025	Q1 2026	Total 2026
Wholesale and retail trade; Repair of motor vehicles and	88	99	96	24	24
Accommodation and food service activities	32	53	54	22	22
Construction	26	57	33	19	19
Manufacturing	49	38	45	14	14
Arts, Sports & Recreation	26	31	47	12	12
Real Estate Activities			1		-
Human Health & Social Work Activities	34	35	38	13	13
Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities	41	46	46	7	7
Transport/storage	19	32	27	3	3
Administrative & Support Service Activities	25	24	18	8	8
Publishing, Broadcasting, And Content Production And	17	20	8	2	2
Agriculture, forestry & fishing	12	0	5	3	3
Education	19	25	25	3	3
Other Service Activities	49	53	53	14	14
Others	5	4	15	4	4
Total	442	517	511	148	148

Values of Loans by Sector

Value of Loans					
	2023	2024	2025	Q1 2026	Total 2026
Wholesale and retail trade; Repair of motor vehicles and	1434	1711	2,210	680	680
Accommodation and food service activities	471	1034	1,547	575	575
Construction	445	1069	802	536	536
Manufacturing	796	808	1,180	248	248
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	402	601	1,226	344	344
Real Estate Activities			30		-
Human Health & Social Work Activities	435	619	990	255	255
Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities	515	713	1,013	171	171
Transport/storage	317	692	783	93	93
Administrative & Support Service Activities	403	386	402	191	191
Publishing, Broadcasting, And Content Production And	264	343	127	15	15
Agriculture, forestry & fishing	187	0	132	140	140
Education	340	399	461	90	90
Other Service Activities	516	654	877	210	210
Others	75	70	412	105	105
Total	6,931	6,600	12,192	3,653	3,653

Loan By Sector YTD



Approvals by Size of Borrower

From 1st January 2023 to 31st March 2026

Loans were approved to micro-enterprises with the following number of jobs at time of approvals:

No. of Employees	2023	2024	2025	Q1 2026	Total 2026
1	327	304	265	88	88
2-3	84	144	162	37	37
4-5	13	42	46	12	12
6-9	18	27	38	11	11
10	0	0	-		-
Total No. of Loans	442	517	511	148	148

Approvals by Loan Size

From 1st January 2023 to 31st March 2026, loans were granted in the following size range

Loans by Size					
Euro	2023	2024	2025	Q1 2026	Total 2026
≤50k		22	61	20	20
≤45k		1	8		-
≤40k		6	46	21	21
≤35k		9	30	4	4
≤30k		9	42	19	19
≤25k	125	130	60	9	9
≤20k	62	72	71	18	18
≤15k	93	103	70	22	22
≤10k	84	89	75	20	20
≤5k	78	76	48	15	15
Total	442	517	511	148	148
Average Loan Size	€14.9K	€17.6K	€23.9K	€24.7K	€24.7K

Purpose for which Microfinance Loans were granted.

Number of Loans					
Purpose	2023	2024	2025	Q1 2026	Total 2026
Working Capital	108	140	140	33	33
Tangible and Intangible Assets	131	169	143	42	42
Mixed Financing for tangible, intangible assests and working capital	158	208	228	73	73
Total	397	517	511	148	148

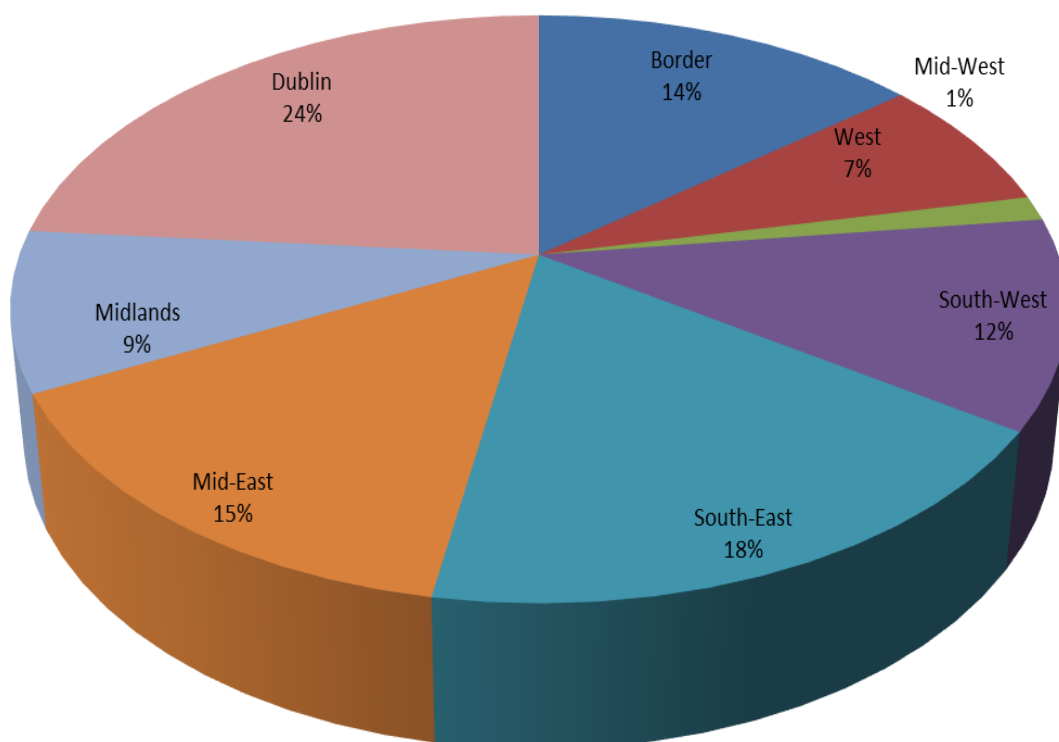
Value of Loans					
Purpose	2023	2024	2025	Q1 2026	Total 2026
Working Capital	1,578	2,323	3,117	833	833
Tangible and Intangible Assets	2,126	3,037	3,700	1,165	1,165
Mixed Financing for tangible, intangible assests and working capital	2,305	3739	5,375	1,655	1,655
Total	6,009	9,099	12,192	3,653	3,653

Geographical Analysis of Approval – from 1st January 2026 to 31st March 2026

County	Applications Received YTD	Approved Q1	Approved YTD	Approved Amount
Dublin	106	35	35	805
Cork	49	13	13	328
Kildare	24	7	7	245
Meath	23	7	7	195
Wexford	21	14	14	364
Wicklow	21	8	8	220
Galway	20	4	4	97
Donegal	18	7	7	132
Tipperary	14	7	7	185
Louth	14	6	6	217
Mayo	14	1	1	30
Kerry	13	4	4	125
Laois	11	4	4	162
Limerick	10	1	1	4
Westmeath	9	4	4	31
Sligo	9	2	2	45
Roscommon	8	6	6	138
Waterford	7	3	3	33
Carlow	7	2	2	23
Clare	6	1	1	2
Offaly	6	2	2	40
Cavan	6	2	2	38
Leitrim	6	3	3	71
Longford	6	3	3	55
Kilkenny	4	1	1	30
Monaghan	4	1	1	38
Outside Jurisdiction	2	0	0	0
Total	438	148	148	3,653

Approval by Business Sector January 2026 to 31st March 2026

Approved Loans By Regions YTD



Demographical Analysis

Approved Applications	2023	2024	2025	Q1 2026	Total 2026
Start Up	181	239	261	87	87
Existing	261	278	250	61	61
Female	168	167	199	54	54
Male	274	350	312	94	94
No. of Ltd Co.	157	208	229	69	69
No. of Unltd Co.					
No. of Sole Traders	281	300	269	76	76
No. of Partnerships	4	9	13	3	3
Youth (Aged 18-25)	9	16	8	4	4

Source of Loan Application

Channels	2023	2024	2025	Q1 2026	Total 2026
LEO	222	280	319	79	79
Direct	214	229	161	58	58
Bank	3	6	29	11	11
Údarás	0	0	-		-
Other	3	2	2		-
Total	442	517	511	148	148

Appeals Process

The purpose of the Microfinance Ireland appeals process is to support an applicant who wishes to have a review of an MFI decision to declining a loan application.

MFI will appoint an Appeal Assessor to carry out an independent review of the original loan decision. The assessor who was involved in the original decision will not be involved in the appeals process. The outcome of this review is communicated in writing to the applicant within 15 business days of receipt of the written appeal. The credit decision of the Appeal Assessor is independent of MFI management and is final. There have been 15 appeals in 2026 and 3 of these cases have been approved on appeal. These figures are included in the YTD approval figures.

Complaints

No complaints have been received by the business in 2026.

Business Failures

During 2026, 8 businesses of our borrowers have failed. While any business failure is regrettable, it was anticipated from the outset that a not insignificant proportion of projects supported by the Microfinance Ireland might fail. It is a feature of microfinance (given the higher risk profile) that even with strong business supports, failures will occur.

On an ongoing basis, Microfinance Ireland, in conjunction with other agencies, works with every customer at risk to minimise business failure.