

# IRELAND

## KEY STATISTICS

There are several sources of data on homelessness in Ireland.

The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government publishes a monthly report on the number of people accessing state funded emergency accommodation. These reports provide an important insight into the rising levels of homelessness in Ireland. The report details of the location, age profile, gender, number of families, and dependents who are accessing emergency accommodation. Unfortunately, in early 2018 a technical dispute between the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, and local government authorities who provide the statistical information for the published reports, led to 1,606 people being removed from the monthly totals. This has damaged the veracity and value of the reports, however, work is ongoing to establish a rigorous basis for future reports. Even with over 1,600 people being removed from the figures the number of people impacted by homelessness in Ireland was 9,698 as of September 2018.

The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, in conjunction with the Housing Agency, also carries out a **Housing Needs Assessment (HNA)**. This national summary of social housing assessments provides an important insight into the level of need for social housing support across Ireland. The Housing Needs Assessment was collated by the Housing Agency in **2017**. 85,799 households were assessed as qualifying for social housing supports (as of 28<sup>th</sup> June 2017). This included:

- Homeless households (ETHOS 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6): 4,977 (5.8%)
- Households living in unfit accommodation (ETHOS 12.1): 948 (1.1%)
- Households living in overcrowded accommodation (ETHOS 13.1): 3,544 (4.1%)

The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and the Department of Social Protection

<sup>1</sup><http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/homelessness/other/homelessness-data>.

provide a number of subsidies to people in need of housing assistance. As of June 2018 it was estimated that some 70,000 households were in receipt of such a subsidy in order to maintain their private rental accommodation. People exiting homelessness into private rental can avail of housing subsidy in the form of the Housing Assistance Payment.

Dublin continues to be by far the location with the largest concentration of homeless people. The Dublin Region Homeless Executive identified a total of 5,540 adults who used emergency accommodation during Quarter 2 2018 (April-June). Of these, 875 (16%) were new presentations who were assessed as homeless and placed in emergency accommodation. The remaining 4,665 (84%) were repeat or existing service users. At the end of Quarter 2 (June 2018), 1,352 families, comprising 1,878 adults and 2,858 children were accessing emergency accommodation. On the night of the Spring Rough Sleeping Count in Dublin (27<sup>th</sup> March 2018), 110 persons were discovered sleeping rough.

Official homelessness data is produced by local authorities through the **Pathway Accommodation & Support System (PASS)**<sup>1</sup>. **During the week of 24-30 September 2018, 5,869 homeless adults accessed local authority managed emergency accommodation.** 67% of them were counted in Dublin region. **1,753 families (3,829 dependents) were reported in emergency accommodation in Ireland this same week.**

January: 5837 individuals / 1517 families / M: 3375 / F: 2462 / 18-24: 891 /

September: 5869 / 1753 / M: 3275 / F: 2594 / 18-24: 893

Since 2011, the National Census, undertaken by the Central Statistics Organisation, has included a recording of homeless persons. The last national assessment of persons who are homeless took place in April 2016 in partnership with the **Central Statistics Office**<sup>2</sup>. This is the second time that homelessness has been included in the census.

The Census 2016 national homeless results showed that there were 6,906 homeless individuals in Ireland.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cso.ie/en/index.html>

This is a point-in-time count and does not include everyone who comes under the ETHOS definition.

The Census 2016 results show that Ireland's homeless population increased by 4,090 individuals over the five years since the April 2011, representing a total increase of 145 percent over the five years. In April 2011 2,816 people were counted as sleeping rough or in homeless accommodation on Census night, a figure which was adjusted to deduct individuals in Long Term Accommodation to be comparable to the 2016 national homeless results.

## INCREASE/DECREASE IN NUMBER OF HOMELESS PEOPLE

Homelessness in Ireland has risen rapidly in recent years. In particular child, youth, family and rural homelessness have increased significantly

The PASS reports show that there has been **an increase between January and September 2018** in homeless adults accessing local authority managed emergency accommodation (+ 32 individuals = + 0.5 %), in family homelessness (+ 236 families = + 15.5 %), in women accessing homeless services (+ 132 women = + 5.3 %), in young people -aged between 18 and 24 years old-accessing homeless services (+ 2 young people = + 0.2 %).

The Dublin Region Homeless Executive (DRHE) reports a constant rise in adult individuals who have accessed homeless accommodation since January 2016 (from 3,885 individuals in one week in January 2016 to 3,969 individuals in one week in March 2016 to 5,963 individuals in one week in April 2018 to 6,048 individuals in one week in June 2016).

There has been an unrelenting increase in the number of families becoming homeless in Dublin, many for the first time, particularly those who were previously living in private rented accommodation. The number of families in homeless accommodation rose by 20% between September 2017 and September 2018: from 1455 families in one week in September 2016 to 1753 families (3,829 dependents) in the same week in September 2018. The DRHE recorded 878 new families presenting as homeless between January and September 2018.

## CHANGE IN PROFILE OF HOMELESS PEOPLE

Rural homelessness in Ireland has grown significantly in recent times, and in the first half of 2018 rural homelessness increased at a faster rate than urban homelessness, albeit from a much lower base figure. In the first half of 2018, rural homelessness in Ireland increased by 30%.

Family homelessness is constantly on the rise: according to the DRHE, 44% of the adult population in emergency accommodation (in Dublin, in June 2016) were adults who presented with child dependents.

Long-term homelessness is on the rise in Dublin: 55% of adult individuals in emergency accommodation were in accommodation for 6 months or more on the last day of Quarter 1 2014, and 60% on the last day of Quarter 2 2016.

Child and Youth homelessness is a growing concern in Ireland with 48% of Ireland's homeless population aged 24 or younger.

## POLICIES & STRATEGIES

The current housing and homeless strategy is known as Rebuilding Ireland.

### **2016: Rebuilding Ireland – an Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness:**

The root cause of increased homelessness is the supply shortage across the housing sector, which in turn is a result of the recent economic collapse and the associated damage to the construction sector. Accordingly the long-term solution to the current homeless issue is to increase the supply of homes. **Rebuilding Ireland – an Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness** was launched in July 2016 and provides a multi-stranded, action-oriented approach to achieving the Government's key housing objectives, and to tackle homelessness in a comprehensive manner.

The Action Plan is designed to accelerate all types of housing supply – social, private and rental.

This whole-of-government plan has been developed in close collaboration with other key government departments and agencies, under the oversight of a dedicated government cabinet committee chaired by

An Taoiseach (Prime Minister of Ireland). The plan sets out the path to achieving the critical national ambition of ensuring that all our people have access to quality and affordable housing.

The Action Plan is available through the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government's website at: <http://rebuildingireland.ie/>.

#### National Vacant Housing Reuse Strategy

Published in August 2018, this strategy seeks to increase the availability of social housing, including for people exiting homelessness, by targeting some of the 183,000 empty homes in Ireland.

The Plan is available from the Department of Housing's website <https://www.housing.gov.ie>

#### Housing First National Implementation Plan

Published in September 2018 the new Housing First National Implementation Plan commits to the rollout of Housing First in every county in Ireland and sets annual targets for each local authority.

The plan is available from the Department of Housing's website <https://www.housing.gov.ie>

#### Negative

- Overreliance on the private rental market
- Large increase in the number of emergency beds for emergency and temporary accommodation
- Increase in the numbers of people experiencing homelessness in rural areas and large towns
- Lack of housing provision for single-person households
- Lack of affordable housing more broadly
- Increase in the rate of long term homelessness
- Record high rents in Dublin

## REMARKS ON KEY POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

#### Positive

- Combined National Housing & Homeless Strategy (Rebuilding Ireland)
- Gradual increase in social housing provision
- Improved responses from the Department of Health and the Health Service Executive to the needs of people experiencing homelessness..
- New National Housing First Strategy published and a National Director of Housing First appointed.
- New Housing Programme to prevent for young people leaving state care institutions at the age of 18 from becoming homeless.
- Progress on Rapid Build Housing and Apartments (mainly in Dublin).