

A stylized, dark purple house icon with a gabled roof, a large arched doorway, and a window with four panes. The house is set against a lighter purple background.

Focus on Homelessness

Adult-Only Households

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Challenging homelessness. Changing lives.

FOCUS
Ireland

Introduction

This edition of Focus on Homelessness looks at the trends in homelessness among ‘adult-only’ households composed of either a single adult individual or couples without accompanying children.¹ A previous edition of Focus on Homelessness on adult-only households was published in February 2021 and included data up to December 2020.² At this time, there had been significant reductions in the number of families (adults with accompanying child dependents) in local authority-funded emergency accommodation (EA), however, the number of adult-only households experiencing homelessness had not followed this trend, and had continued to increase. By December 2020, over 82 percent of households in EA were adult-only. Over the last nearly three years, we have seen adult-only homelessness continue to rise and reach record levels nearly every month.

Until April 2023, the monthly report published by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage did not provide a figure for ‘Single Adult’ households accessing emergency homeless accommodation. However, the reports prior to that date included data both on the total number of adults in emergency accommodation and the number of adults with accompanying children. From June 2014 until March 2023, the figure for total number of adults without children used in this report was derived by subtracting the number of adults with children from the total number of adults. From April 2023, the published single adult figure is used.

The gender analysis of the pre-2023 figures is calculated on the basis of two assumptions, based on existing information. Firstly, that all couples with accompanying child dependants are heterosexual couples, and secondly that 93% of lone-parent households are female headed. A figure is calculated for both categories each month and then subtracted from the total number of female/male adults to generate the figure used in this report for female/male adult-only households. Thus there is a margin of error associated with the gender breakdown, as in any given month not all couples in EA may be heterosexual and the percent of single parents that are female headed may also vary, but this error is likely to be minor.

Significant developments emerging from this report:

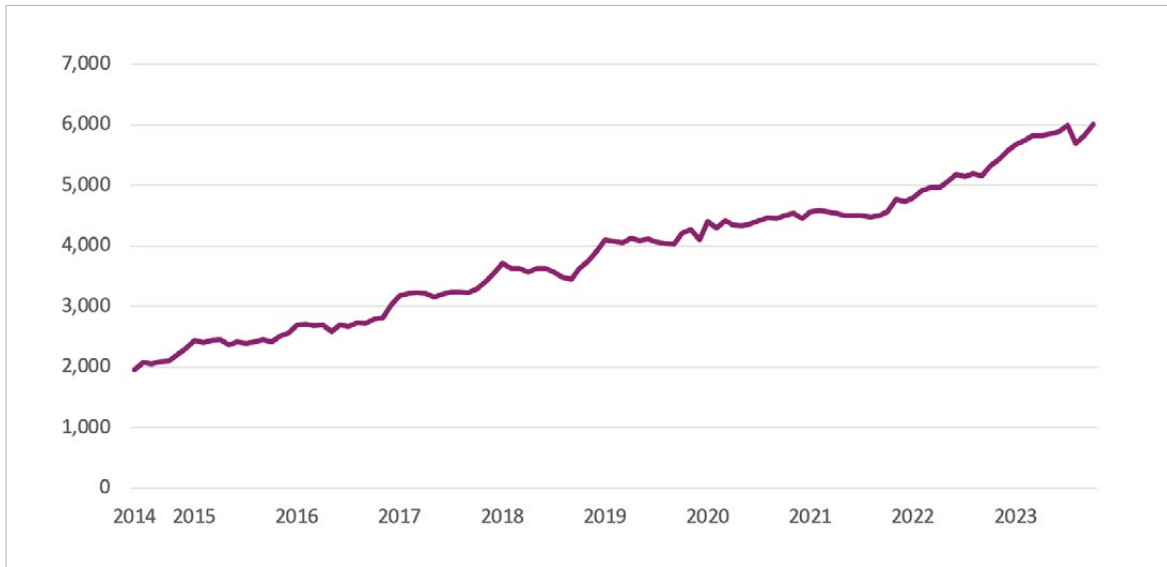
- The number of adult-only households in Emergency Homeless Accommodation has tripled since 2014 (from 1,962 in June 2014 to 6,000 in October 2023) Page 4.
- This increase has primarily occurred in Dublin which now accounts for 70% of all homeless adult-only households. There was no increase in homelessness adult-only households outside of Dublin between 2018 and 2022, but this overall figure masks decreases in some regions and increases in others. Page 6.
- Rising homelessness among adult-only households is not reflected in the numbers of such households on local authority housing waiting lists, which has remained relatively stable. Nevertheless in 2022, adult-only households accounted for 56% of households on waiting lists while only making up 23% of all households. Page 7.
- The gap between households entering emergency accommodation and exits fell in 2020 and 2021, but increases in subsequent years, with declining exits being a greater factor than rising entrances. In 2022, four adult only households entered homelessness for every one that made a sustained exit. Page 9.
- The number of adult-only households who were ‘accepted as homeless’ in Dublin (that is entered emergency accommodation or offered supports, such as Homeless HAP, on the basis of being assessed as homeless) has remained almost static at around 215 month for the last 6 years, except for a slight covid-related dip in 2020) Page 11.
- While homeless adult-only households are predominantly male (75%), the number of females has increased faster than males (171% for females since 2014 compared with 133% for males) with this pattern being pronounced in the last 3 years (a 44% increase in females as against 34% for males) Page 13-15
- The changes have occurred against a wider context where the number of single people of ‘no fixed abode’ has increased both in committals to prison (Page 18) and in admissions to psychiatric units (Page 19).

¹ Households without accompanying children are often referred to simply as ‘single homeless adults’, but the term ‘adult-only households’ more accurately describes the existence of couples in this category. While these households do not have accompanying children, some of the adults in this category may be parents.

² Focus on Homelessness: Adult-Only Households- February 2021. [Available here.](#)

Adult Only Households

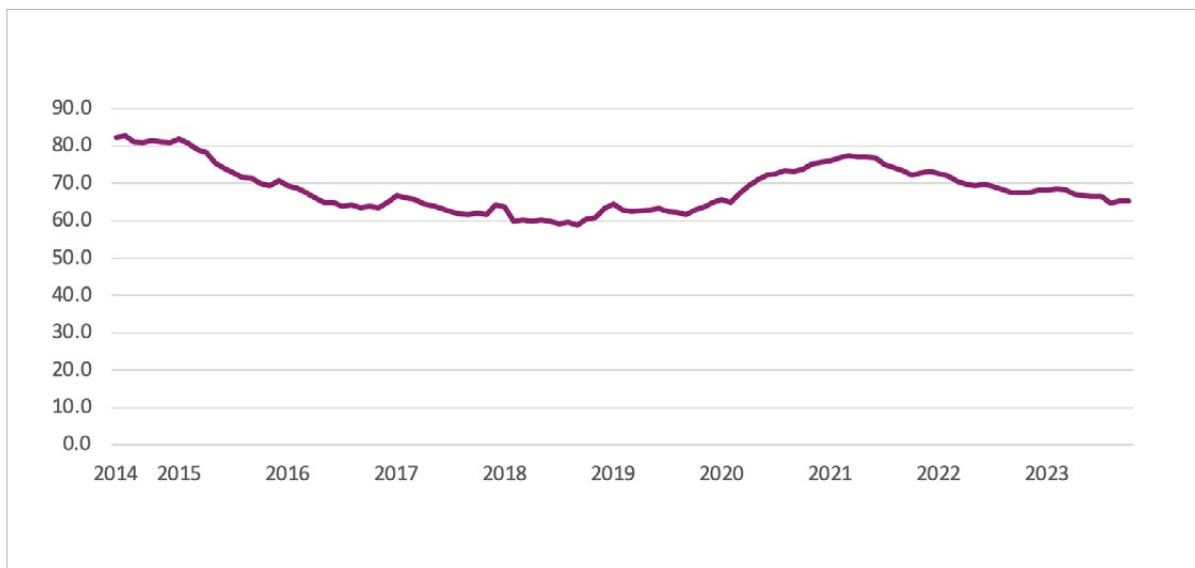
Figure 1: Adult-only Households in Temporary and Emergency Accommodation Ireland, June 2014-October 2023



As shown in Figure 1, as of October 2023 there were 6,000 adult-only households in EA in Ireland. This is an increase of 35% since the last Focus on Homelessness on Adult-Only Households was published in February 2021, and an increase of 206% since June 2014 when there were 1,962 adult-only households in emergency accommodation.

During 2023, there was an error in how the number of people accessing EA was recorded over a period of several months which resulted in a cumulative overcount of adult-only homelessness in Dublin of 308 individuals. The correction of this error saw the official number of people homeless decrease by 156 in August.

Figure 2: Adult-only Households in Temporary and Emergency Accommodation Ireland as a per of all Adult Homelessness, June 2014-October 2023

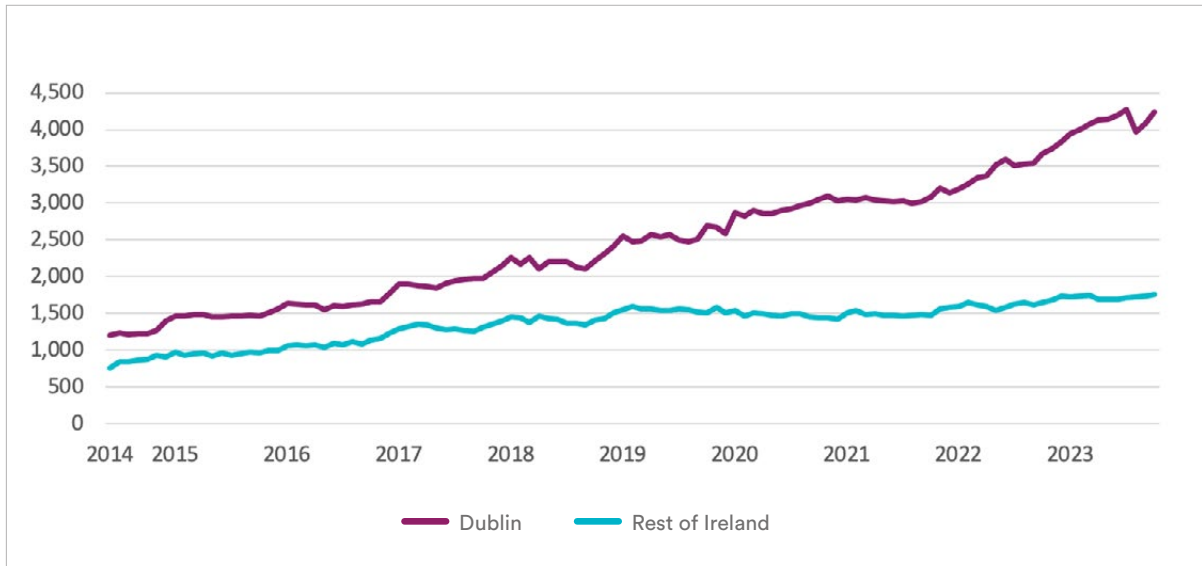


Given the decline in family homelessness in 2020 and 2021 and the increase in adult-only households homeless in Dublin, adult-only households made up an increasingly large percentage of all homeless adults during these years, as shown in Figure 2. By March 2021, 77% of adults in EA were in adult-only households.

When the publication of the Monthly Reports commenced in 2014, 82% of households in EA were adult-only. Although the number of such households continued to increase over the period 2015-2019 as shown in Figure 1, the number of households with accompanying child dependents in EA increased at a faster rate over the same period, and by September 2018, just under 60% of adults in EA were in adult-only households.

As the number of households with accompanying child dependents in EA began to increase again from late 2021, the percentage of adult-only households began to account for less of all adults in EA and in 2023 so far, an average of 67% of homeless adults were in adult-only households.

Figure 3: Adult-only Households in Temporary and Emergency Accommodation, Dublin and the Rest of Ireland, June 2014-October 2023



While the number of adult-only households is rising nationally, this rise was exclusively driven by trends in Dublin until the middle of 2022, as shown in Figure 3. The number of adult-only households increased by 48% since the start of 2020 in Dublin, compared to 15% in the rest of the country. Dublin now accounts for over 70% of all adult-only households in EA.

Outside of Dublin, the number of adult-only households in EA had plateaued since the start of 2019, remaining at approximately 1,500 each month in 2019, 2020 and 2021. Since the start of 2022, there has been a rise in the number of adult-only households in EA outside Dublin by 10%. However, as highlighted by previous Focus on Homelessness reports, this overall ‘Rest of Ireland’ trend does conceal considerable variation outside of Dublin when further broken down by region. Up to 2021, there had been significant declines over the previous two years in adult-only households in the South East (Carlow, Kilkenny, Tipperary, Waterford and Wexford) and West (Galway, Mayo and Roscommon), and significant increases over roughly the same period in the South-West (Cork and Kerry) and Mid-East (Kildare, Meath and Wicklow).³

³ A detailed analysis of the regional variations in the use of local authority emergency accommodation is available [here](#).

Figure 4: One-adult households Assessed as Qualified for Housing Support, 2016-2022⁴



The number of one adult households assessed as qualifying for housing supports (sometimes referred to as Social Housing Waiting list) has plateaued since 2018 following a significant fall in the number of male one-adult households that qualified for support between 2017 and 2018. There were 31,696 one-adult households assessed as needing housing support in 2018, compared to 32,383 in 2022, a slight increase of 2%. While not directly comparable, over a similar period, there was a 47% increase in the number of adult-only households in EA.

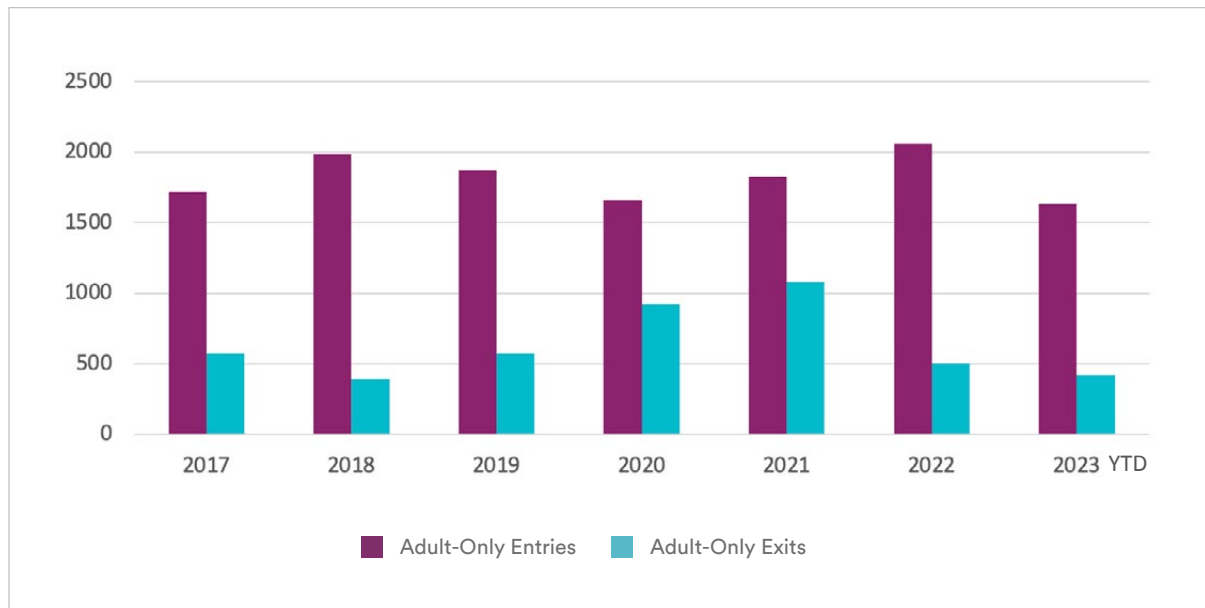
While the overall number of one-adult households qualifying for support has plateaued since 2018, one-adult households make up a much higher percentage of the overall number of all households that qualify for support. In 2016, 42% of households that qualified for support were one-adult only compared with 56% in 2022. This is particularly noteworthy given that one-person households only make up 23% of all households nationally according to Census 2022⁵, but 56% of the households assessed that year qualifying for housing supports were one adult households meaning that one-adult households are significantly overrepresented.

4 Social Housing Needs Assessments (Various Years). (Dublin: Housing Agency.) The gender breakdown was kindly provided by Onna Kenny of the Housing Agency.

5 [CSO- Census 2022](#)

Entries, Exits and Households

Figure 5: Adult-only Households: Entries to and Exits from Emergency Accommodation in Dublin, 2017-2023 YTD



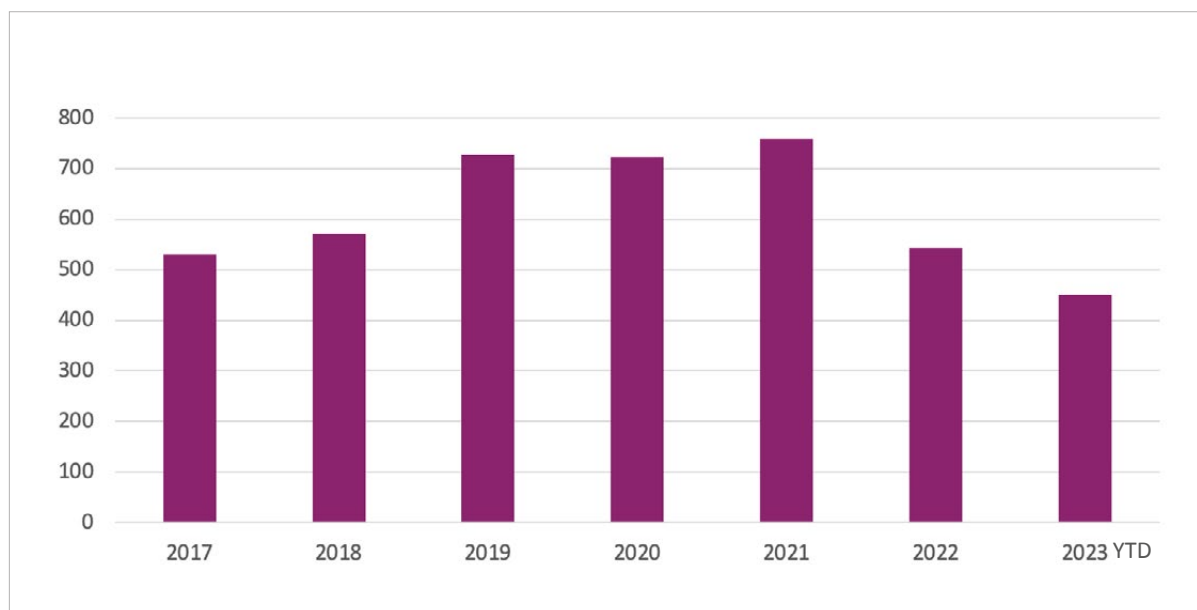
As shown in Figure 5, the peak in the number of adult-only households exiting EA in Dublin was 2021 when there were 1,079 exits which was followed by a decline of over 53% the following year.

In 2022 (the last full year of data), 2,059 adult-only households entered EA in Dublin, and there were 504 exits from EA for adult-only households.⁶ This means that for every four adult-only households that entered EA in 2022, only one left.

While there is currently only data available at the time of publication for the first 10 months of 2023, an average of 141 adult-only households have exited EA per quarter so far in 2023, compared with 126 in 2022.

⁶ Published data on adult-only exits for all regions is available from Q1 2022, but given that a longer time series is available for Dublin, only data from Dublin is presented here.

Figure 6: Divertions from Emergency Accommodation for Adult-Only Households in Dublin 2017-2023 YTD

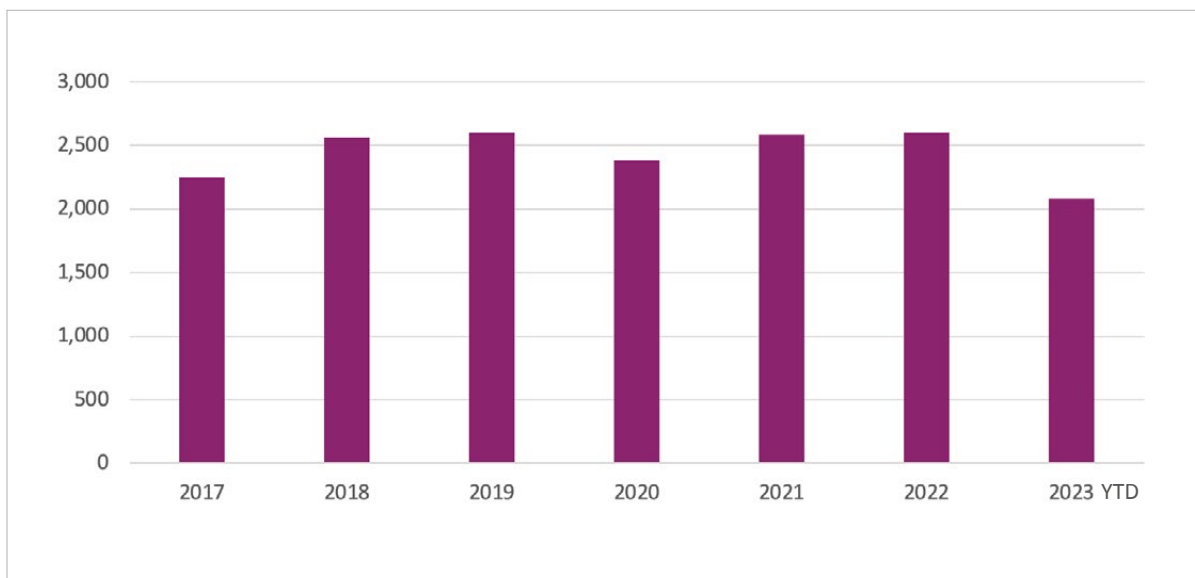


The number of adult-only households who presented to Local Authorities but were diverted or prevented from entering EA in Dublin is shown above in Figure 6 (for the first 10 months only of 2023).⁷ On average in 2019 and 2020, 60 adult-only households were prevented from entering EA each month, primarily through securing private rented accommodation with the assistance of a Homeless Housing Assistance Payment (HHAP).

In 2022, there were an average of 45 adult-only households prevented from entering EA each month and so far in 2023, an average of 50 households a month have been prevented from entering EA.

⁷ Published data on adult-only preventions for all regions is available from Q1 2022, but given that a longer time series is available for Dublin, only data from Dublin is presented here.

Figure 7: Total Adult Only Acceptances in Dublin 2017-2023 YTD (Entries and Preventions)



In 2022, 2,602 adult-only households in Dublin were ‘accepted’ as homeless, and either entered EA or were prevented from entering EA as shown in Figure 7. The number of adult-only acceptances in Dublin has been similar each year since 2018 (approx. 215 per month) apart from 2020 when there was a slight reduction in the number of acceptances to approx. 199 a month. The reduction in the numbers presenting as homeless in 2020 may be due to additional protections that were introduced during the first year of Covid-19.

Despite the number of acceptances since 2018 being very similar every year apart from 2020, the total number of adult-only households in EA as reported by the monthly homeless reports has increased by 62% during the same period.

Gender and Homelessness

Figure 8: Adult-only Households in Temporary and Emergency Accommodation by Gender, June 2014-October 2023

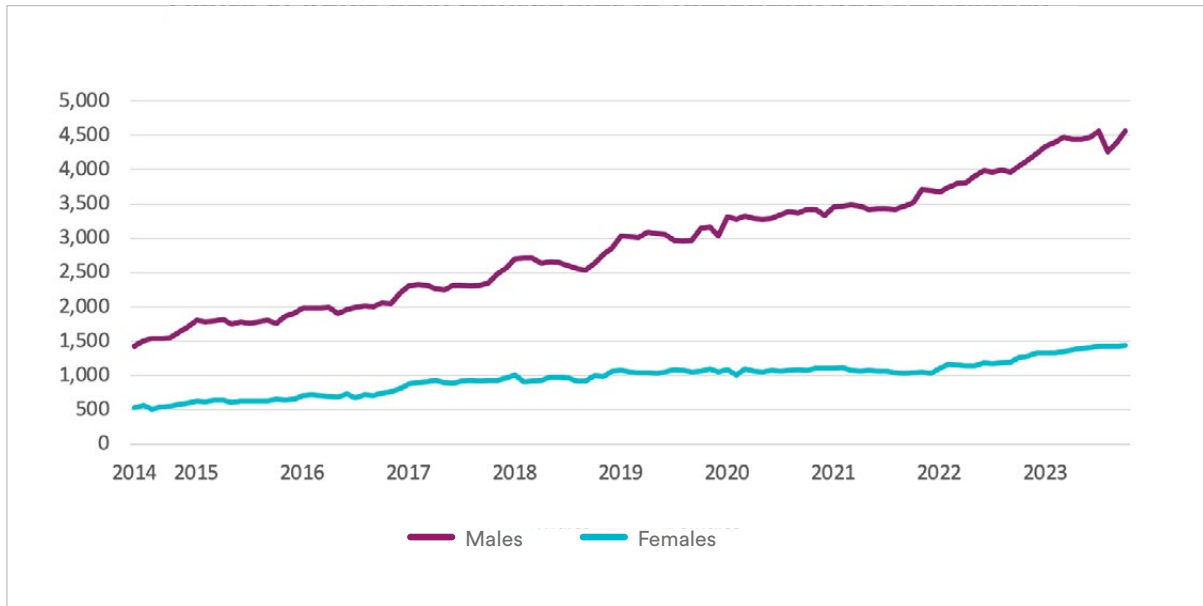
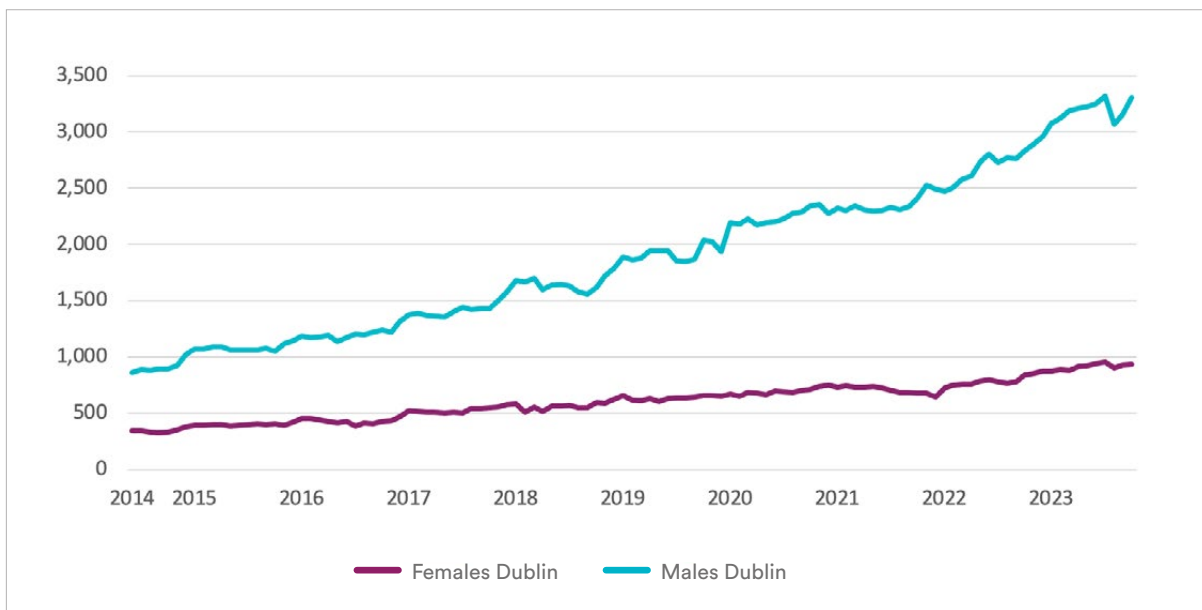


Figure 8 shows that the rise in adult-only households in EA has been predominantly male, with 4,565 males in EA in October 2023 compared to 1,435 females. The increase in the number of adult-only households in EA in 2020 and 2021 is mainly due to an increase in the number of males in EA while the number of females in EA had plateaued in 2019, 2020 and 2021. Three-quarters of those in adult-only homeless households are now men. While the total number of males in EA is greater than the number of females, in the last three years, the number of female adult-only households in EA has risen at a faster rate compared to male households, there has been a 44% increase in the number of females compared to a 34% increase for males.

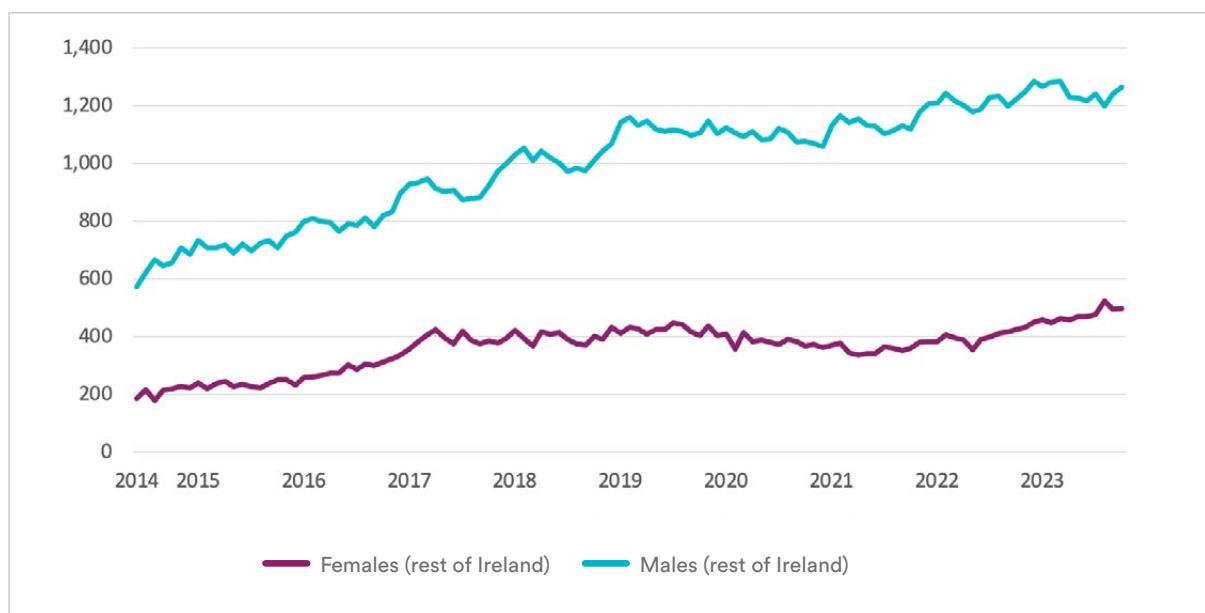
The number of females in adult-only households in EA has risen by 171% since June 2014 compared to the number of male adult-only households increasing by 133% since June 2014.

Figure 9: Adult-only households by Gender, Dublin



In Dublin, there are over three times as many males in homeless adult-only households as there are women, as shown in Figure 9. In total, there are now over 4,240 adults in adult-only households in Dublin, of which 78% (3,302) are males.

Figure 10: Adult-only households by Gender, Rest of Ireland



While there are far fewer adult-only households in EA outside of Dublin, the ratio of men to women remains similar to that in Dublin. On average, just under 30 percent of the approximately 1,760 adults outside of Dublin in adult-only households are women. As noted above however, this overall pattern does conceal some notable regional variations.

Wider Context

Analysis of the reasons for the continued rise in homelessness among adult-only households, as distinct from the fall in households with children, is beyond the scope of Focus on Homelessness.

However, it is useful to publish in this report information available from other sources which provides some further information on homelessness among adult-only households. These sources include:

- Data on tenancies under the National Housing First Implementation Plans
- Data on committals to prison of persons with ‘no fixed abode’
- Data on admissions to psychiatric institutions and hospitals of persons with ‘no fixed abode’

No data is available for people of no fixed abode who are discharged from either prison or from psychiatric institutions.

These factors operate in the context of a range of other facts including the continued scarcity of social housing and the cost and scarcity of private rented accommodation.

Figure 11: Numbers of individuals in Housing First tenancies at end of Q3 2023

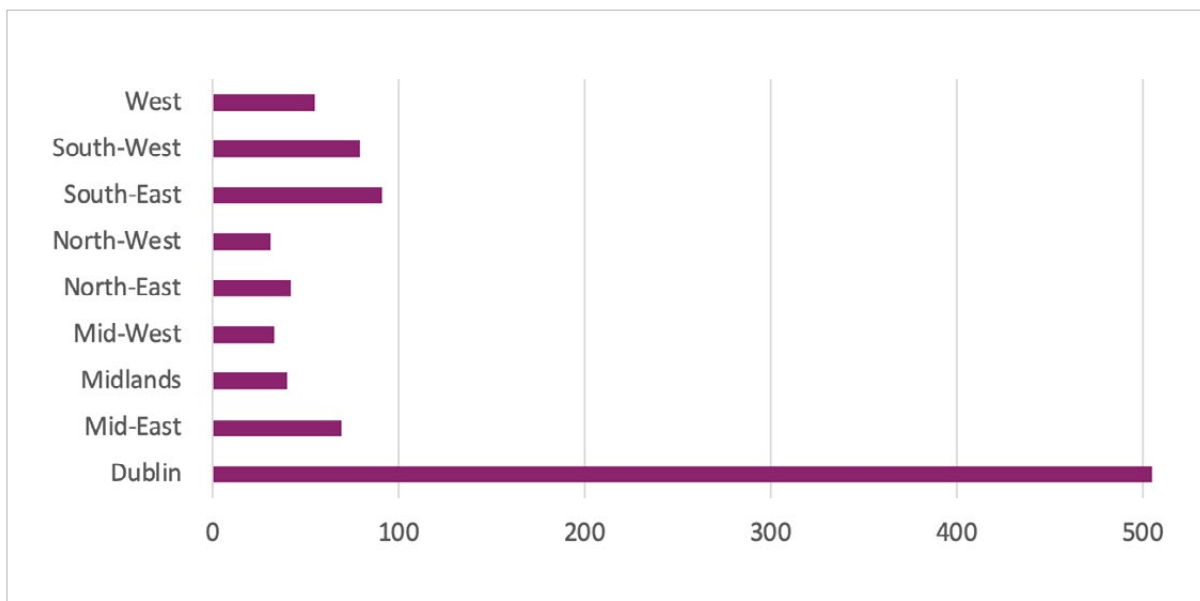
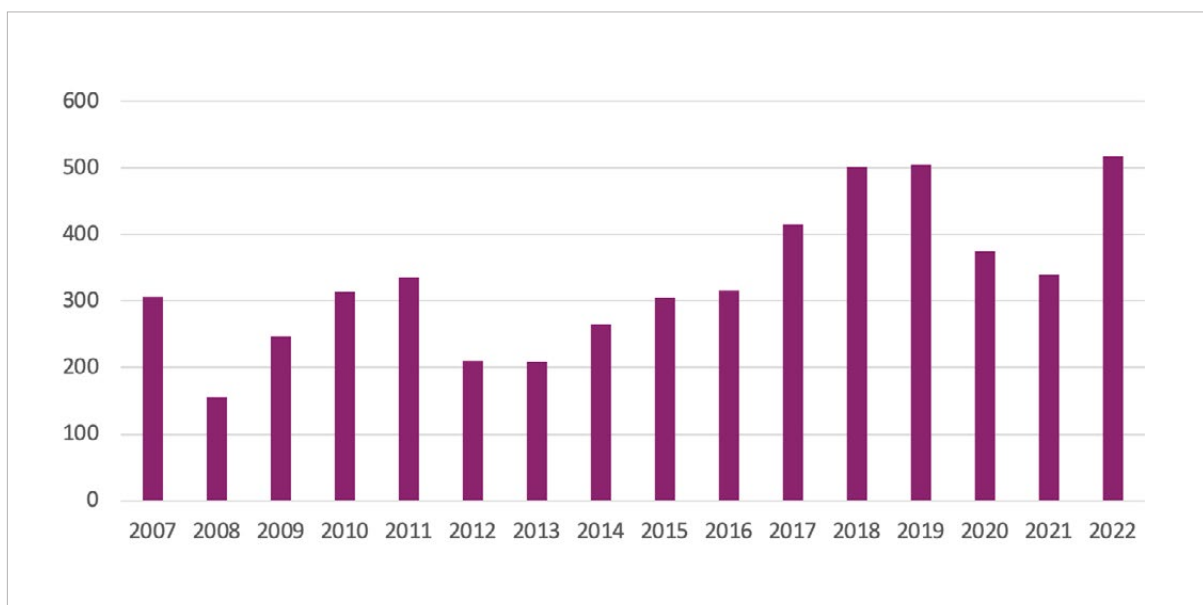


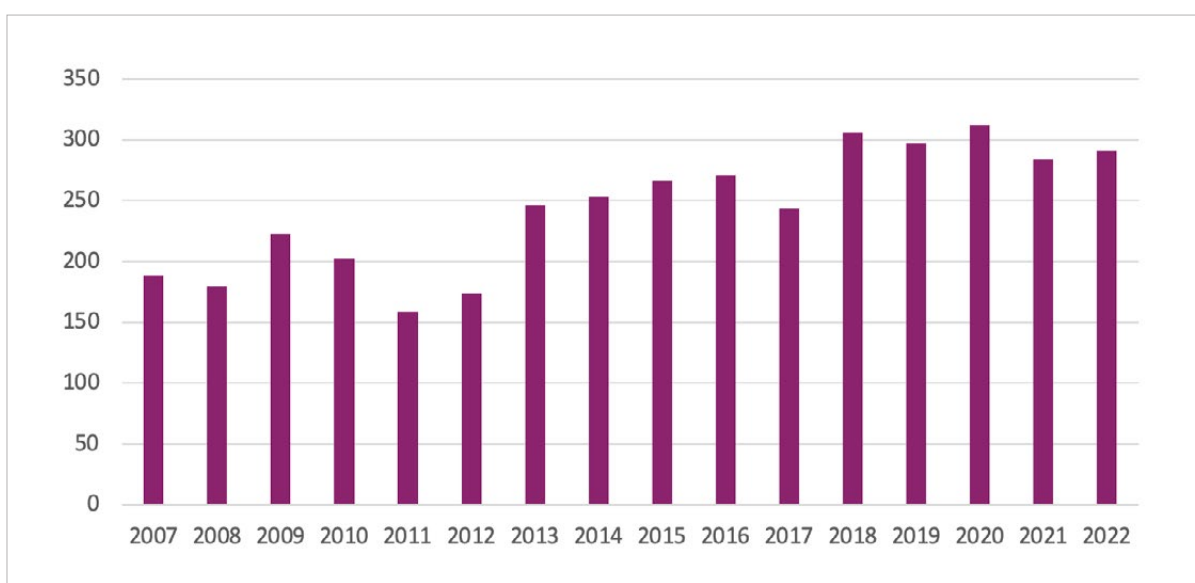
Figure 11 shows the total number of people in Housing First tenancies in Ireland at the end of Q3 2023, with 69 new tenancies created in Q3 2023, with Dublin having the largest number of individuals during in Housing First tenancies (a significant number of these Dublin tenancies predate the current national implementation plan 2022-2026). At the end of Q3 2023, there were 945 individuals currently in a Housing First tenancy across Ireland.

Figure 12: Number of committals with No Fixed Abode, as disclosed by the prisoner



The number of prison committals, where the prisoner declared themselves to be homeless (or of no fixed abode) has increased significantly in recent years, from 265 committals in 2014 (231 males and 34 females) to 517 in 2022 (444 males and 61 females), as shown in Figure 11.

Figure 13: Number of Admissions to Irish Psychiatric Units and Hospitals with No Fixed Abode



Finally, the number of admissions to psychiatric hospitals and units who were homeless has also increased from 253 (170 males and 83 females) in 2014 to 291 in 2022 (211 males and 86 females), shown in Figure 12⁸. This suggests that in addition to those accessing EA and rough sleeping, there are a significant number of adults who are cycling in and out of other institutions, a phenomenon referred to as the ‘institutional circuit.’⁹

8 It is important to note that admissions data does not account for repeated admissions of the same person, so one person could account for multiple admissions in the same year.

9 For further details, see Daly, A. Craig, S and O’Sullivan, E. (2018) The Institutional Circuit: Single Homelessness in Ireland, *European Journal of Homelessness* 12(2) pp.79-94.

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