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Complete Analysis of All Telephone Surveys with Families that Became Homeless During 2016

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Insights into Family Homelessness No. 9: Complete Analysis of All Telephone Surveys with Families that Became Homeless during 2016

This briefing paper presents an overview of the aggregate data of all telephone surveys which were conducted with families presenting as homeless across 2016.
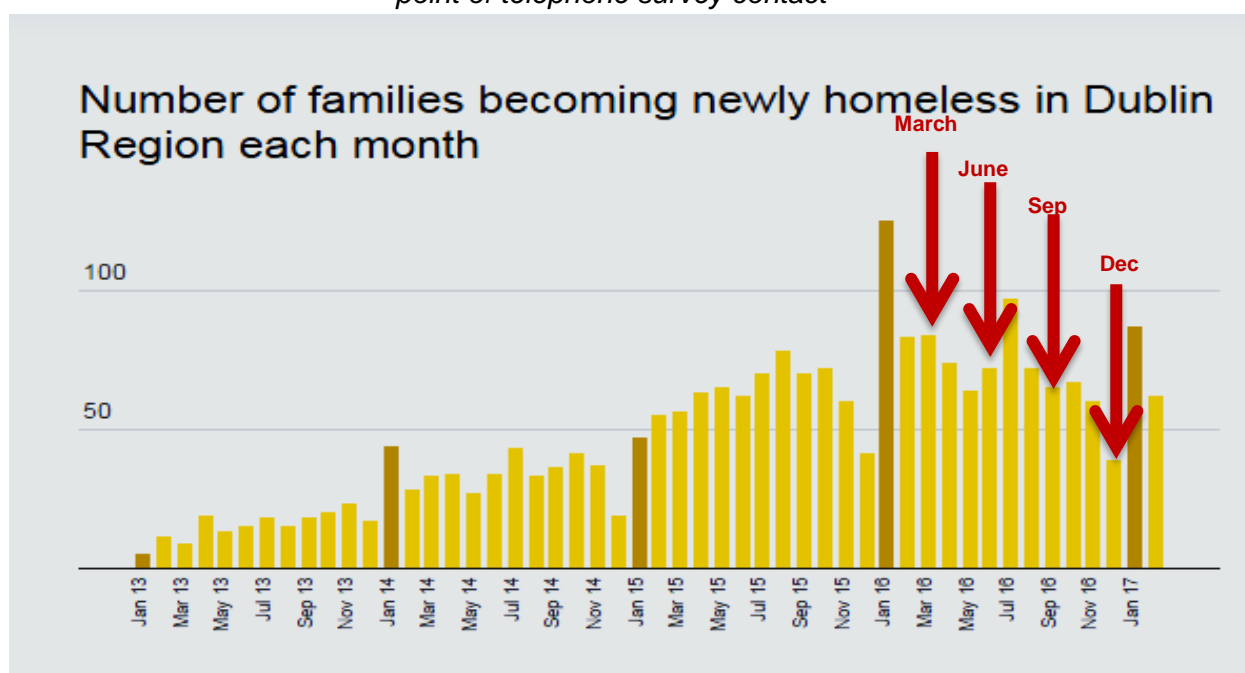
For greater detail of the findings emerging from each of these surveys, please refer to *Insights into Family Homelessness Series* on our [Publications and Partnership Page](#) on the Focus Ireland website.

INTRODUCTION

Overview of family homelessness during 2016:

- There was a 36% overall increase in the number of families in emergency accommodation during 2016 across Ireland (from 884 families in January to 1,205 in December 2016[1]).

- 85.3% of all families were living in Dublin region (in December 2016).

- 76% of Dublin families living in commercial hotels or B&Bs (in December 2016).

- Focus Ireland conducted quarterly telephone surveys with families presenting as homeless in Dublin region during March, June, September and December 2016.

Graph 1 – Number of families becoming newly homeless in Dublin Region each month and point of telephone survey contact
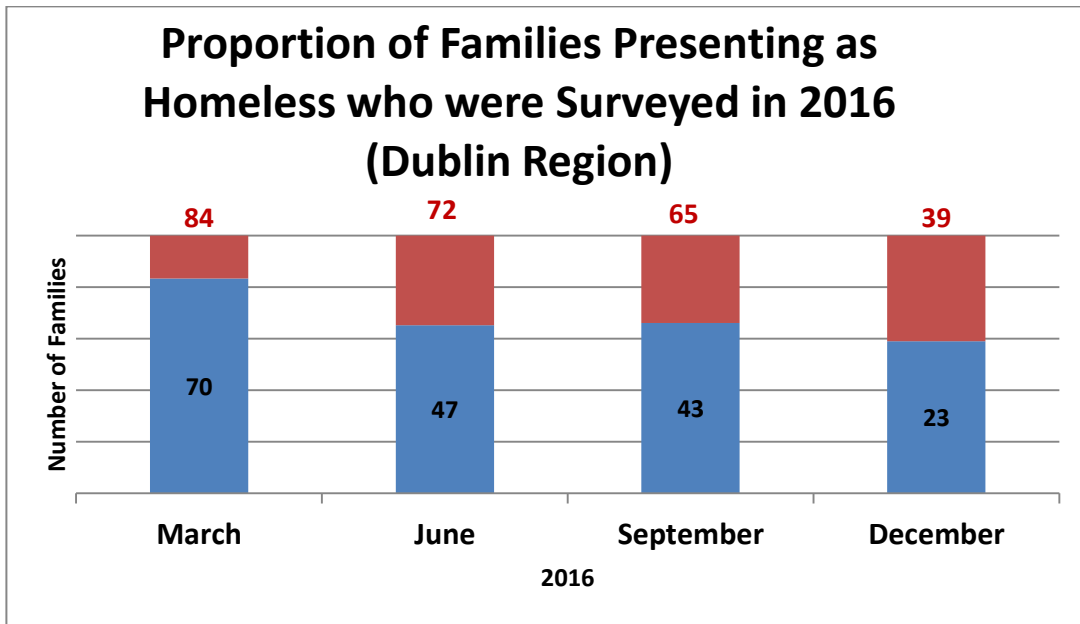

METHODOLOGY

- 3-page telephone survey - 5-10 minutes duration of telephone call.

- Focus of survey instrument:
    - Last 4 accommodations and self-reported reasons for leaving these accommodations
    - Demographic profile
    - Service use

- Total survey data sample: 183 surveys were conducted out of the total 260 families who presented as homeless (i.e. 70% of all families surveyed who presented as homeless during those four months).

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[1] Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government data on Homelessness:
http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/homelessness/other/homelessness-data

▪ High ethical standards adhered to at all times.

Graph 2 – Proportion of families presenting as homeless surveyed in 2016

Proportion of Families Presenting as Homeless who were Surveyed in 2016 (Dublin Region)

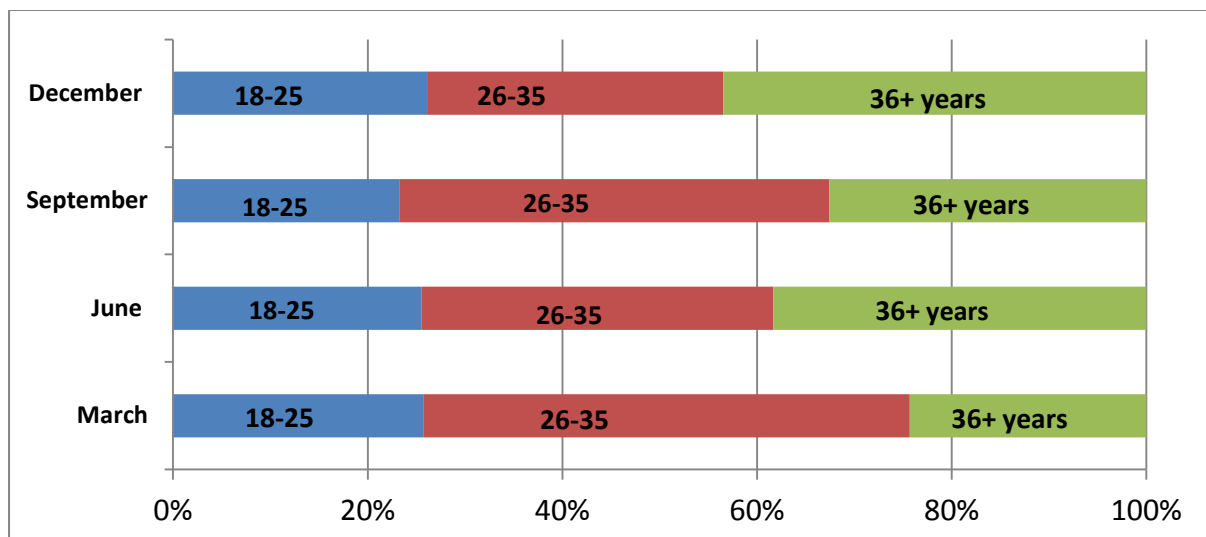|	March	June	September	December
(red)	84	72	65	39
(blue)	70	47	43	23

Number of Families

2016

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Age

While, overall, respondents in the middle age bracket of 26-35 years represent the majority of those families who became homeless (42% of full sample), figures for 2016 show a **consistent and considerable cohort of young people** in the 18-25 years age bracket (26% of full sample).

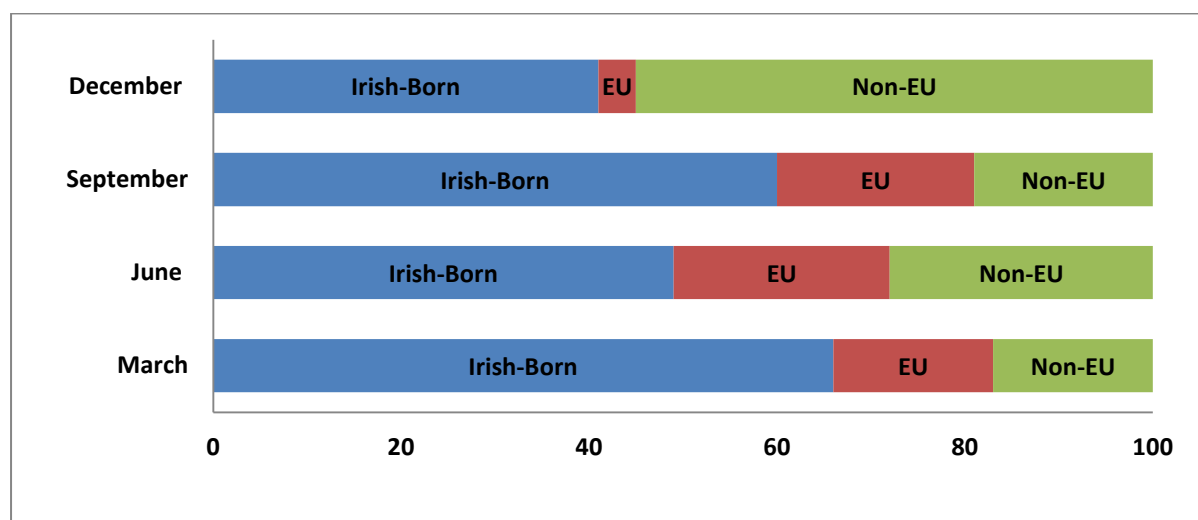*Graph 3 – Age breakdown in years (by percentage of respective sample)*

	18-25	26-35	36+ years
December			
September			
June			
March			

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%   100%

Nationality and Ethnic/Cultural Background

The number of migrant households[2] in March was 34%. This figure increased to 51% for June but experienced a decrease to 40% for September. The share of migrant households for December increased considerably to 59% of the sample. The majority of these migrant households (55%) were from a non-EU background (see Graph 4). The **average percentage** of families of migrant origin across the four samples was **46%** which is considerably high.

It is worth noting that across these migrant families, there were 1**9 families with histories of residing in Direct Provision** (asylum seeker congregate accommodation in the past). This represents 10.3% of the total 183 families. 15 of these families have very stable housing histories and lived in direct provision accommodation many years ago. The remaining 4 left DP and could not find accommodation so stayed with friends (sometimes moving between friends) highlighting current difficulties for families accessing PRS accommodation upon leaving Direct Provision. 10 of the 19 families became homeless because their landlord withdrawing the property from the private rented market.

Graph 4 – Nationality breakdown (by percentage of respective sample)

Family Type

One-parent families represented the majority of family type for each of the four waves, with an average of 62%. This broadly reflected Department of Environment data, as outlined below.

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[2] Migrant households refers to households which are headed by a parent who was not originally born in Ireland (as opposed to citizenship status). This is in an effort to understand whether ethnic minorities are disproportionately represented.

Table 1 - One-parent families (percentage)

One-Parent Families	March	June	September	December	AVERAGE
Telephone surveys percentage of sample	67%	51%	65%	65%	**62%**
Department of Environment percentage of all families in emergency accommodation	65%	64%	66%	65%	**65%**

Almost all of these single parent households were female-headed, **highlighting the disproportionate risk women** face in accessing and maintaining stable housing.

Table 2 outlines the number of children in family units across the four samples. In general an average of 67% of children were part of 1 or 2 children. There were a total 406 children across the families who participated in the surveys during 2016. 67% of all families had either one or two children.

Table 2 – Number of children (and percentage)

No. of Children	Number of Families				AVERAGE
	March	June	September	December	
1	27 (39%)	16 (34%)	16 (37%)	11 (48%)	**40%**
2	21 (30%)	15 (32%)	14 (32%)	3 (13%)	**27%**
3	10 (14%)	5 (11%)	7 (16%)	4 (17%)	**14%**
4	9 (13%)	4 (8%)	4 (9%)	3 (13%)	**11%**
5+	3 (4%)	7 (15%)	2 (6%)	2 (9%)	**8%**

Additionally, there were 12 women pregnant when surveyed across the four waves of data collection.

Employment Status of Respondents

Across all four waves of data collection, 83**%** of all respondents were unemployed (average across four samples).

Table 3 – Employment status (percentage)

Employment Status	March	June	September	December	AVERAGE
Unemployed	84%	85%	79%	84%	**83%**
P/T Employment	7%	4%	14%	16%	**10%**
F/T Employment	3%	4%	5%	0%	**3%**
Student (F/T or P/T)	4%	4%	2%	0%	**3%**
Training/CE Scheme	2%	3%	0%	0%	**1%**
TOTAL					**100%**

CAUSES OF HOMELESSNESS & HOUSING HISTORIES

72% of all respondents reported that this was their first experience of homelessness (averaged across the four waves of data collection). It is important to note, that some families conceptualized their homelessness as living in 'hidden' homeless situations (sofa surfing, doubling up with family members, and insecure housing) and not necessarily living in emergency homeless accommodation. This suggests a degree of housing precariousness across a proportion of families.

Table 4 – Respondents first time homeless (percentage)

First time homeless	March	June	September	December	AVERAGE
YES	66%	77%	75%	68%	**72%**

Last Stable Accommodation

The majority of the families (69%) reported that their last stable accommodation was in the private rented sector. Table 5 below outlines all accommodation types prior to homelessness.

Table 5 – Last Stable Accommodation by Tenure

Tenure	Total no. of families	Percentage across 4 waves of data collection
Private Rented Accommodation	126 (101 of these or 80% on RS)	**69%**
Family Home	26	**14%**
Housing instability[3]	17	**9%**
Local Authority / Approved Housing Body	6	**3.20%**
New to the country[4]	5	**2.70%**
Own home	2	-
Halting site	1	-
TOTAL	*183*	-

Reasons for leaving last stable accommodation

As Table 6 outlines, the most commonly reported reason for leaving last stable accommodation was landlords selling – amounting to 23% of all families or almost a quarter. A total of 34% of families were made homeless due to landlords leaving the market (i.e. landlords selling, landlord moving in or giving to family member, or bank repossession of landlords' properties).

An additional 23% of families were made homeless due to other issues specifically related to the private rented sector such as rent affordability problems or arrears, receiving notices of termination, and more (see below).

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[3] This cohort reported housing instability more broadly and said they had never had a 'stable' place to live.

[4] This cohort had arrived in Ireland some months or years prior to presenting as homeless but had always stayed with friends or relatives in overcrowded accommodation and were unable to source stable accommodation.

Table 6 – Most Commonly-Cited Reasons cited for Leaving Last Stable Accommodation

	Most Commonly-Cited Reasons	No. of families (N=183)	Percentage across 4 waves of data collection
Property removed from market (34%)	*Landlord selling*	42	**23%**
	Landlord moving in or giving to a family member	15	**8%**
	Bank repossession of landlords' properties	6	**3%**
PRS-related issues (23%)	*Rent increase*	10	**5%**
	Rent arrears	8	**4%**
	Insecure tenancies	6	**3%**
	Landlord renovating property	4	**2%**
	Issues with payment of rental subsidies	4	**2%**
	Issues notice of termination	4	**2%**
	Substandard property	3	**1.6%**
Other:	*Domestic violence*	16	**9%**
	Family conflict	14	**8%**
	Overcrowding	11	**6%**
	Anti-social behaviour	7	**2%**
	Relationship breakdown	5	**3%**

Trajectories into Homelessness

Exactly half of the families reported that they had an exceptionally stable housing history. 21% reported that their housing history was somewhat more precarious; while 11% had chaotic housing histories. 16% of the sample reported a specific 'youth pathway' into homelessness. These young people reported going directly from family home into homelessness or had spent periods of time in hidden homeless situations (i.e. sofa surfing, etc.).

These housing trajectories are summarised below, together with typical 'triggers' to homelessness which were reported.

1. **Stable housing history (n=92, 50% of total)**

   - First experience of homelessness
   - Lengthy and stable tenancies in PRS
   - Some stayed temporarily with friends/family before presenting as homeless
   - Triggers to homelessness:
     - Landlord selling
     - Landlord decisions
     - Rental increases

2. **Precarious housing history (n=38, 21%)**

- Broadly stable housing histories in PRS with some degree of housing problems in the past
- Experiences of substandard / insecure tenancies in PRS.
- Reliance on informal arrangements for longer periods (several months or longer)
- Triggers to homelessness:
  - Landlord leaving market
  - Affordability/financial issues
  - Personal crises
  - Larger families

3. Unstable/ chaotic housing history (n=20, 11%)

- No experience of living in independent tenancies
- Transience
- Extensive hidden homelessness (Sometimes for years)
- Histories of homelessness
- Triggers to Homelessness:
  - Family conflict and overcrowding
  - Personal crises
  - Difficulties accessing PRS tenancies

4. Youth pathways to homelessness (n=30, 16%)

- Under the age of 25 (many under 21).
- No experience of living independently
- Triggers to Homelessness:
  - New family formation
  - Overcrowding & family conflict
  - Difficulties accessing private rented sector
  - Affordability problem

Help-Seeking across the sample

In response to the question "*Did you contact any support service before you presented as homeless?*" the majority of families did seek help from a support organisation or body prior to presenting as homeless. This varied over the four waves of data collection, however, as demonstrated below.

Table 7
Respondents who contacted support service before homelessness (percentage)

Contact Support Service?	MARCH	JUNE	SEPTEMBER	DECEMBER
YES	81%	72%	63%	50%

The type of agencies approached were Local Authority (most common) and voluntary organisations such as Threshold an Focus Ireland. Respondents sought information through informal networks (i.e. word of mouth), website searches/Google, and local representatives (TDs/Local councilors).

SUMMARY

183 surveys were conducted with families presenting as homeless across four waves of data collection during 2016 (70% of total number of families).

- ■ **Demographic profile of families presenting as homeless**

    - ❑ **One-parent households** (single parents) - The average percentage of single parents across the four waves was **62%.** The vast majority of these were **female-headed households** demonstrating that lone mothers in particular are disproportionately at risk of homelessness.

    - ❑ **Joblessness and homelessness** – The average percentage of unemployed respondents across the four waves was **83%**

    - ❑ **Young parents** - The average percentage of parents in the age category of 18-25 years across the four waves was **26%**

    - ❑ **Migrant parents** - The average percentage of parents from a migrant background across the four waves was **46%**

- ■ **Housing Histories:**

    - ❑ **69**% of all families reported that their last stable accommodation was in the **private rented sector**. **80**% of these were dependent on rent supplement.

    - ❑ **Causes of homelessness** are closely linked to landlords selling (23%) or leaving the market (34%).

    - ❑ Over half of the families demonstrated **stable housing histories**

    - ❑ Housing histories of families demonstrate overall **marginality** from the housing market facing a scarcity of affordable housing options.

- ■ Evidence highlights that these families need, above all, subsidised housing with security of tenure. Looking into 2017 and beyond, Focus Ireland believe it is important to continue to build a robust evidence base.

Challenging homelessness. Changing lives.

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