

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 dark purple background.

Focus on Homelessness

Gender and Homelessness

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Challenging homelessness. Changing lives.

FOCUS
Ireland

Introduction

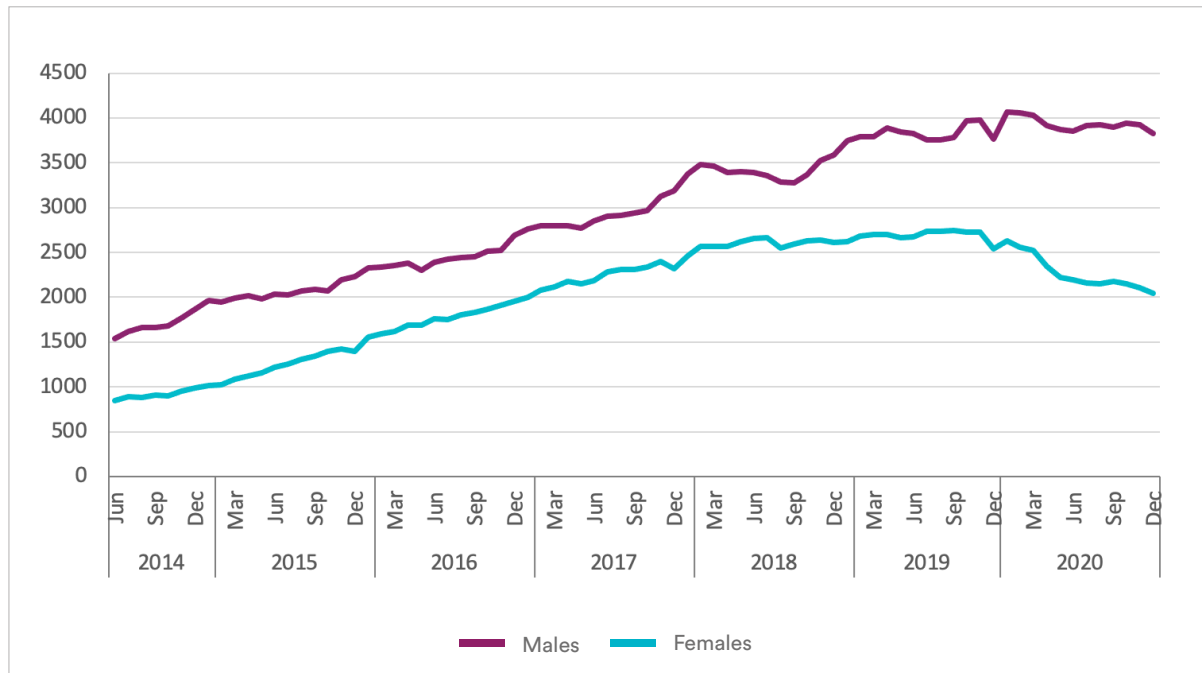
Focus on Homelessness is a collaborative series between Focus Ireland and the School of Social Work and Social Policy, Trinity College Dublin to publish a unique picture of the extent of homelessness in Ireland. Since 2014, the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (DHPLG) has published data on the number of people living in emergency accommodation each month. In addition, Quarterly Performance Reports and Financial Reports have contained data on the duration and cost of homelessness in Ireland each quarter. Focus on Homelessness aims to make this substantial body of data available in an accessible and reliable format by providing detailed reports on the extent, nature, duration and cost of homelessness in Ireland.

This special report looks at gender in homelessness, and what differing trends have emerged between genders.

The Monthly Reports published by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage on the number and characteristics of households accessing local authority-managed emergency accommodation do not provide a figure for household type. However, they provide data on the total number of adults with accompanying child dependents and the number of single parent families. From this, we can calculate the numbers of single adults (ie: without accompanying children) and the number of parents both single and part of a couple.

For the numbers of couples, two assumptions are made here for the purpose of this calculation, based on existing information. Firstly, that all couples with accompanying child dependants are heterosexual couples, and secondly that 93% of single-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 emergency accommodation may be heterosexual and the percent of those parenting alone that are female headed may also vary, but this is likely to be minor. It must also be noted here that these data sources only provide a breakdown by male or female, with no third gender or other option available. This report, therefore, only has capacity to analyse trends within this definition.

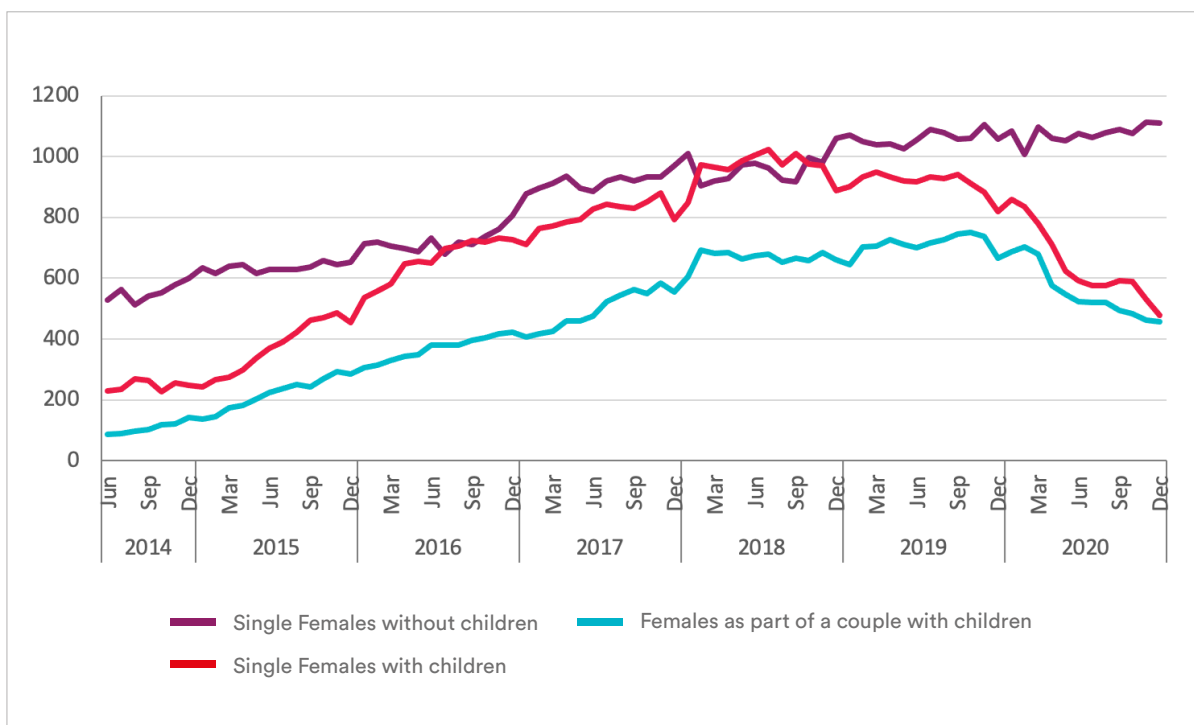
Figure 1: Adults in Emergency Accommodation by Gender



The gender balance among adults in emergency accommodation has steadily remained around 60% men to 40% women over the past six years. Figure 1 shows that the numbers of men and women in emergency accommodation increased at a similar rate from 2014 to the end of 2017, after which point the trends began to diverge.

The number of women in emergency accommodation began to stabilise from the start of 2018, and has seen a significant decrease during 2020. However, The number of men in emergency accommodation continued to climb during 2018 and 2019 and has not seen the same sharp decrease during 2020. Between January and December 2020, the number of women in emergency accommodation decreased by 22%, while for men the decrease was 6%.

Figure 2: Women in EA by Household Type

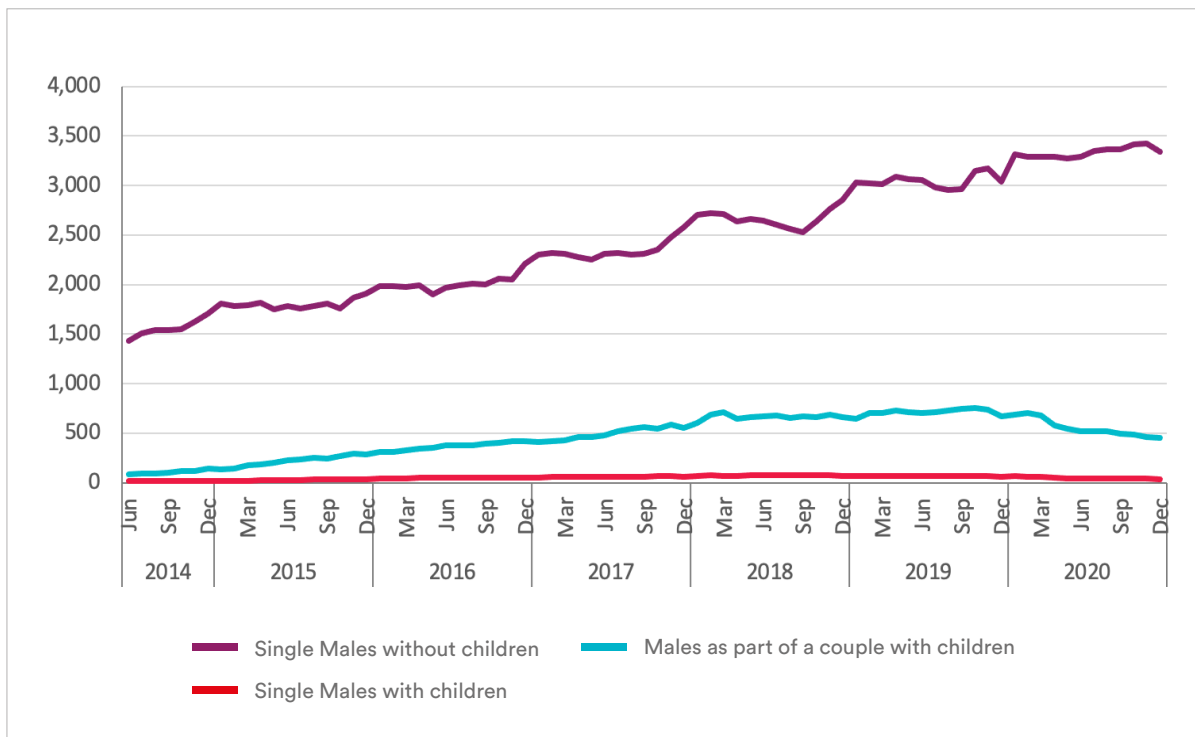


These differing trends are best explained by looking at household type. Figure 2 and 3 break down the overall number of men and women in emergency accommodation into adults without accompanying child dependents, adults in a couple with accompanying children and individual adults with accompanying child dependents.

The overall trend in female homelessness mirrors the trend in family homelessness over this period, reflecting the over representation of lone mothers in homelessness compared to the general population. As shown above, the number of women without children in emergency accommodation diverges from the number of those with children from the start of 2019 and has continued to rise since.¹

¹These trends in single adult homelessness are further discussed in a previous edition of Focus on Homelessness.

Figure 3: Men in Emergency Accommodation by Household Type

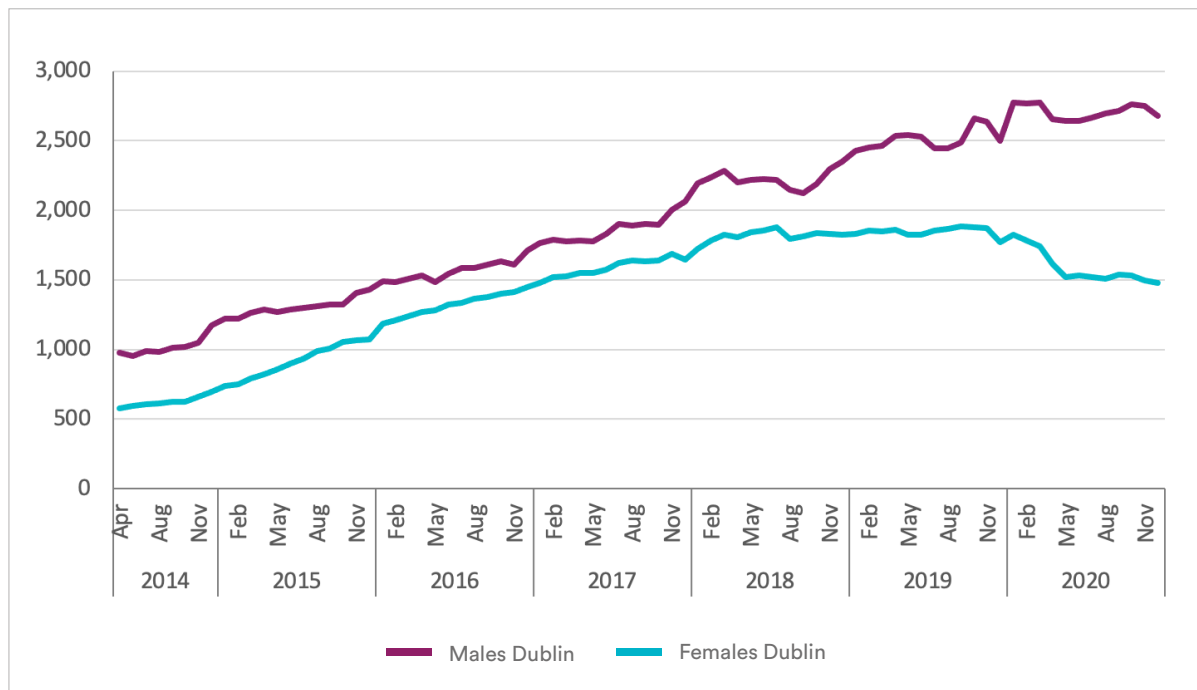


In 2014 when this data began being published regularly, over 90% of men in emergency accommodation were adults without accompanying children. As the number of families in emergency accommodation increased between 2014 and 2019, this proportion fell, averaging 78% in 2018 when family homelessness was at its peak.

Between January and December 2020, the number of men with children in emergency accommodation decreased by over a third (-34%), while the number of men without children saw a slight increase (0.6%). Adult-only households, for both men and women, are the only household type in emergency accommodation to have increased during 2020.

Gender and Homelessness in Dublin

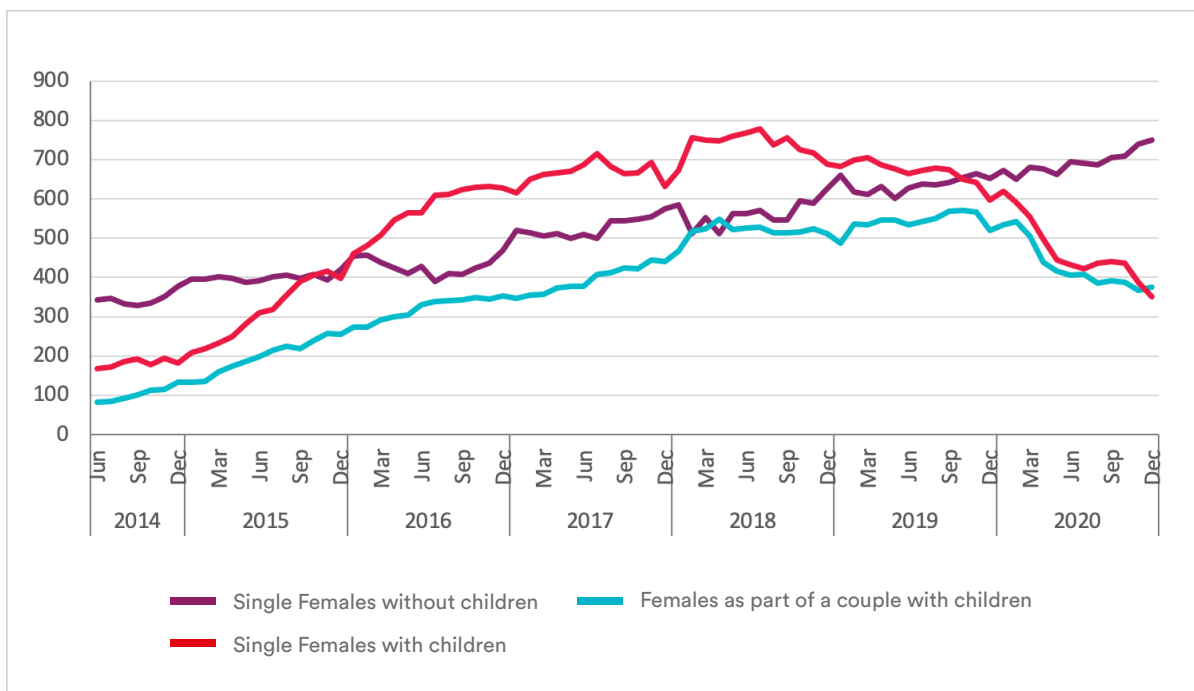
Figure 4: Adults in Emergency Accommodation by Gender, Dublin



More than seven out of every ten people in emergency accommodation in Ireland are in Dublin, meaning that the national trends are largely driven by the Dublin figures. The gender split in Dublin is around 60% men and 40% women, similar to the overall national trend. During 2020, the number of men in emergency accommodation has continued to increase while the number of women in emergency accommodation has remained steadily around 1,500 in Dublin since May.

However, while the overall gender distribution in Dublin is very similar to the national trends, it is notable that the plateau in the number of women in emergency accommodation does not begin until late 2018, almost a year after the trend had appeared at a national level.

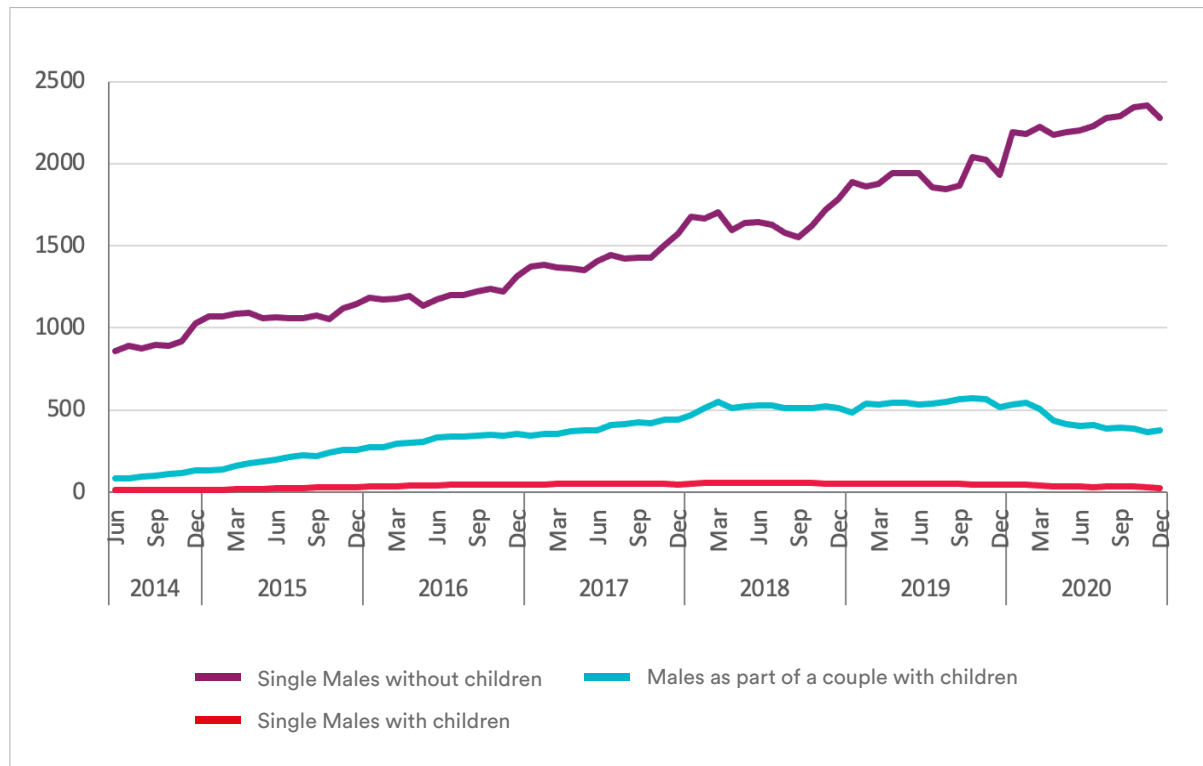
Figure 5: Women in Emergency Accommodation, Dublin



The substantial rise and fall in the number of single females with children in emergency accommodation in Dublin since 2014 is illustrated by Figure 5 above. Between June 2014 and the peak in July 2018, the number of women with children in Dublin emergency accommodation more than quadrupled (361%). Between July 2018 and the end of 2020, this figure has halved (-55%).

During 2020, the number of women in two-parent families fell by 30% and the number of single females with children by 43%. However as with the national figures, the number of women without children continued to grow, increasing by 11% between January and December 2020.

Figure 6: Men in Emergency Accommodation, Dublin

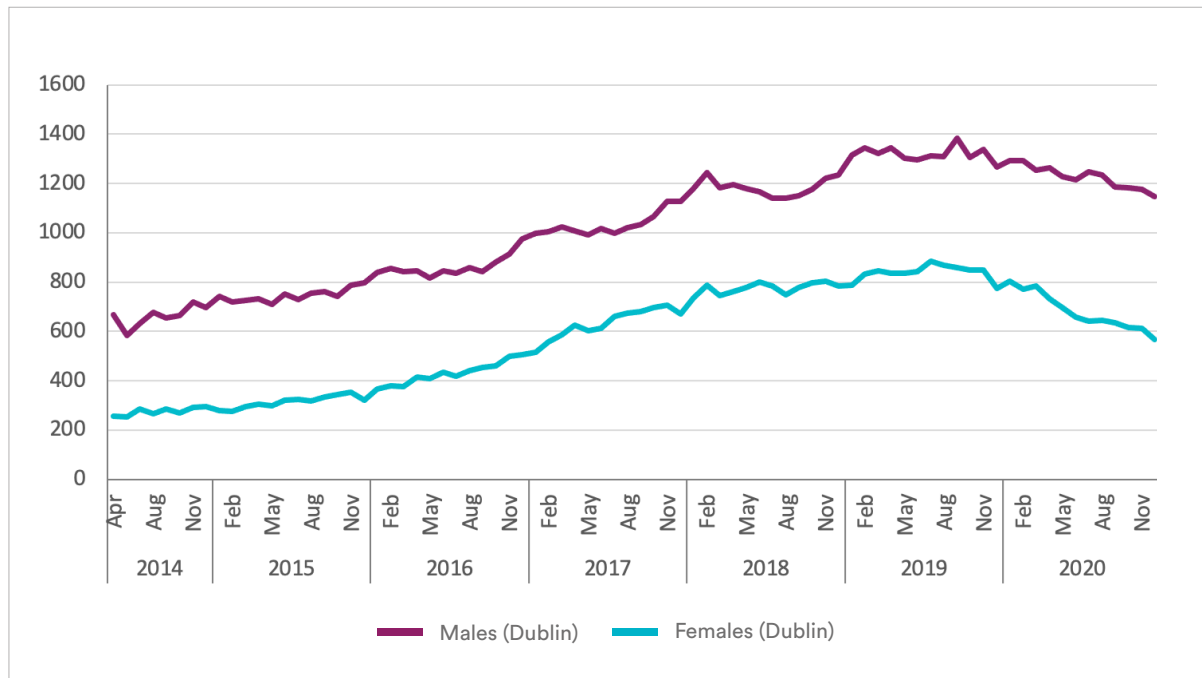


On average, around 80% of the men in emergency accommodation in Dublin are adults without children. Their numbers have risen more in Dublin than the rest of the country during 2020, rising by 4% compared to 0.6% nationally.

By contrast, similar to the trends discussed above, during 2020 the number of men with children fell in a similar pattern to that seen in Figure 5 among women. The number of adult males with children in emergency accommodation fell by 43% and adult males in two-parent families fell by 30%.

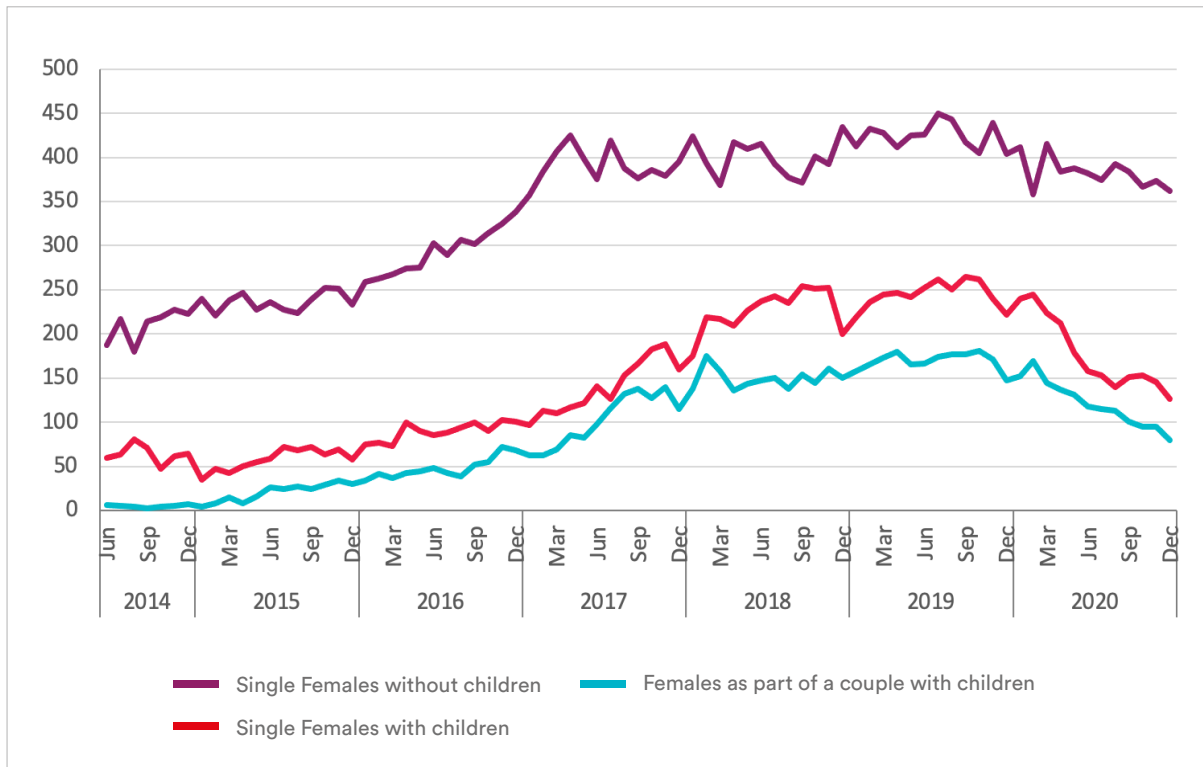
Gender and Homelessness Outside Dublin

Figure 7: Adults in Emergency Accommodation by Gender, Outside Dublin



Compared to Dublin, the rest of the country sees much less of a divergence between the trends in men and women in emergency accommodation. As in Figure 7, there is no continued rise in the number of men in emergency accommodation after 2019 and instead, this begins to fall alongside the number of women. Additionally, there are slightly fewer women in emergency accommodation outside of Dublin, with a ratio of about 65:35 men to women.

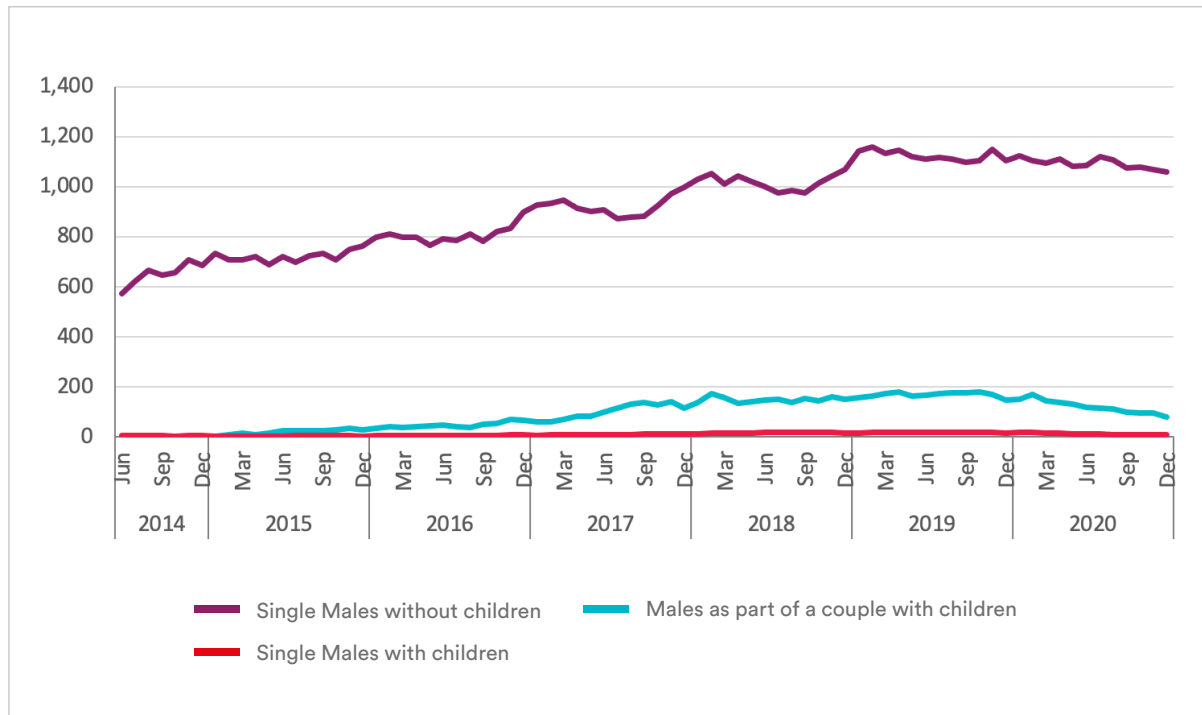
Figure 8: Women in Emergency Accommodation, Outside Dublin



The lower percentage of women in emergency accommodation around the rest of the country reflects the fact that families in emergency accommodation are largely concentrated in Dublin. Outside of Dublin, women without children have remained by far the largest household type over the past six years, as seen in Figure 8.

In contrast to the continued rise in the number of females without children in Dublin in Figure 5, for the rest of the country this figure has remained between 350 and 450 since early 2017. All categories have seen decreases during 2020, with the number of women without children falling by 12%, women in two-parent families by 47% and single women with children by 48%. As of December 2020, outside of Dublin 64% of women in emergency accommodation are women without children, 22% are parenting alone and 14% are part of a couple with children.

Figure 9: Men in Emergency Accommodation, Outside Dublin



The number of men without children in emergency accommodation outside of Dublin began to stabilise by the end of 2018, and since then has fallen by just over 1%. By contrast, in Dublin this figure rose by 45% over the same period.

As with women in emergency accommodation, men in emergency accommodation in all categories fell during 2020 outside of Dublin. The numbers of men with children in emergency accommodation – both those parenting alone and those in couples - roughly halved, while the number of men without children decreased by 6%.

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