

MARCH 2025 Focus on Homelessness

A stylized, dark purple house icon with a gabled roof, a large arched doorway, and a window with four panes. The house is positioned in the upper half of the page, overlapping the dark purple background.

Focus on Homelessness

Public Expenditure on Services for
Households Experiencing Homelessness

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Challenging homelessness. Changing lives.

FOCUS
Ireland

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Introduction

Focus Ireland and the School of Social Work and Social Policy, Trinity College Dublin have collaborated for over a decade to bring high quality and up-to-date research on homelessness to a wider audience and into the core of public policy formation. This series, ‘Focus on Homelessness’ aims to build on the success of our research partnership by making the now substantial body of data published by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, and other State Agencies working in the area of Housing and Homelessness, available in an accessible format.

Since 2020, Focus on Homelessness has provided an overview of key trends in the number of households experiencing homelessness in Ireland in recent years, the number of entries into and exits from emergency accommodation, length of stay in emergency accommodation and the expenditure on these services. Special Editions of Focus on Homelessness have examined Adult-Only Homelessness, Gender and Homelessness, patterns of homelessness in each of nine regions and ‘A Decade of Homelessness data’. All previous editions of Focus on Homelessness can be found [here](#).

The previous Focus on Homelessness edition on Public Expenditure on Services for Households Experiencing Homelessness published in March 2023¹, analysed expenditure up to 2022. In this volume, we provide an updated detailed description of expenditure data and some of the limitations of this data up to the end of 2024, as well as the expected, allocated or estimated expenditure for 2025.

The editorial approach of Focus on Homelessness in the individual editions has been to set out the data in a clear and accessible format with some textual description with no analysis or commentary.

Focus Ireland has published separate blogs on its website setting out an analysis of the figures in various Focus on Homelessness editions along with proposals for policy responses which can be read [here](#).

¹ [Focus on Homelessness: Public Expenditure on Services Experiencing Homelessness](#)

Overall Expenditure on Services for Households Experiencing Homelessness

The Housing Act, 1988 gave responsibility to local authorities to consider the needs of people experiencing homelessness and expanded their powers to respond to those needs. Under Section 10 of the Act, each Local Authority can recoup up to 90% of what it spends on households experiencing homelessness from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, but it may also incur additional expenditure on services not covered under Section 10².

In addition to Section 10 funding, services for households experiencing homelessness may receive funding from HSE (Social Inclusion), TUSLA, other Government Departments and agencies. Not-for-profit agencies providing services for households experiencing homelessness also fundraise directly for their activities. For a discussion of these additional sources of funding, see Appendix 1 in the first Focus on Homelessness edition focused on public expenditure, available [here](#).

² 110.—(1) A housing authority may, subject to such regulations as may be made by the Minister under this section— (a) make arrangements, including financial arrangements, with a body approved of by the Minister for the purposes of section 5 for the provision by that body of accommodation for a homeless person, (b) provide a homeless person with such assistance, including financial assistance, as the authority consider appropriate, or (c) rent accommodation, arrange lodgings or contribute to the cost of such accommodation or lodgings for a homeless person. (2) A request for accommodation may be made to a housing authority by or on behalf of a homeless person. (3) Where accommodation or lodgings are made available to a person by virtue of subsection (1), the housing authority may at any time specify a period for which the accommodation or lodgings are to be so made available to that person. (4) The Minister may, with the consent of the Minister for Finance and subject to such regulations as may be made by the Minister under this section, recoup, out of moneys provided by the Oireachtas, all or part of any payment made by a housing authority by virtue of subsection (1).

Figure 1: Expenditure on Services for Households Experiencing Homelessness by Local Authorities Dublin / Outside Dublin, 2009-2025 (e)

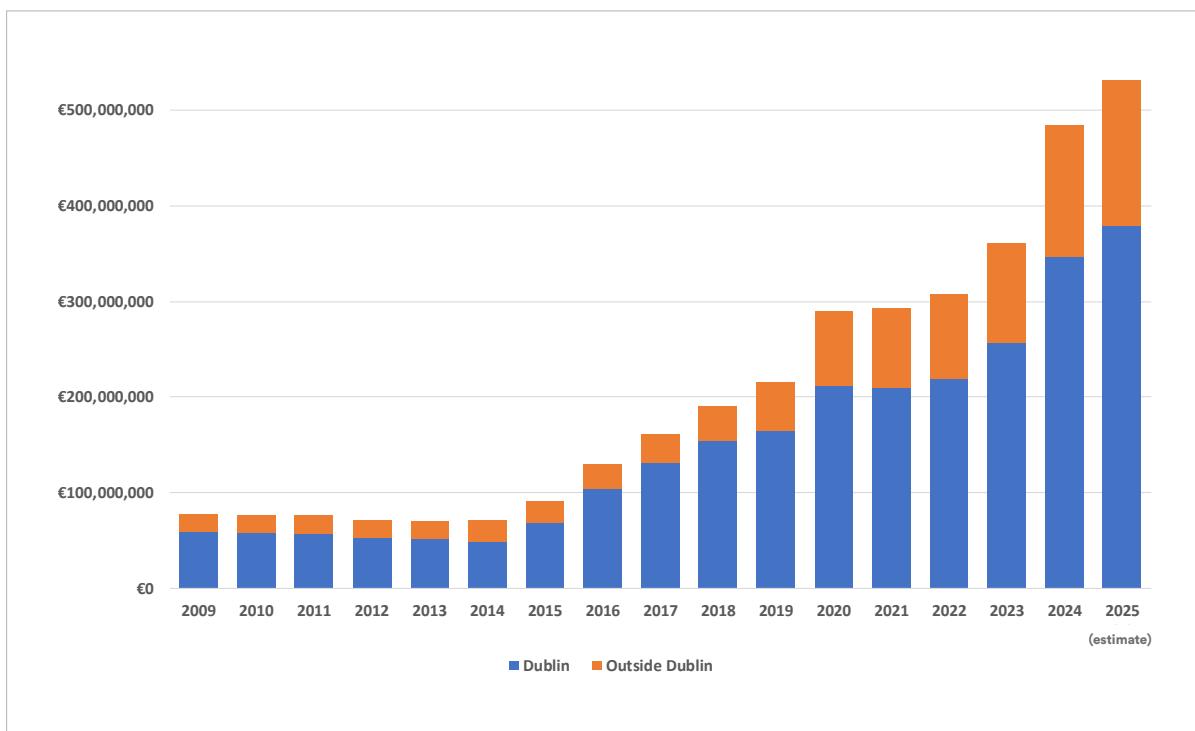


Figure 1 shows the total expenditure on services for households experiencing homelessness by Local Authorities from all sources between 2009³ and 2025 (e). From 2009 to 2014, average annual expenditure was €73.5m, but increased significantly from 2015 onwards, with over €483m spent by Local Authorities in 2024. It is currently estimated that €531.6m will be spent by Local Authorities on services for Households experiencing Homelessness in 2025.⁴

In total, just under €3bn has been spent by Local Authorities on services for households experiencing homelessness between 2009-2024. Just under €2.6bn was expended over the period 2014 to 2024, when the number of households in temporary and emergency accommodation in Ireland increased from 2,419 in July 2014 to 8,669 by July 2024—an increase of 258%.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of this funding between Dublin and outside Dublin, with just under three-quarters of all spending on homeless services by the four Dublin local authorities, which is as expected given that 70% of households experiencing homelessness at a point-in-time were in Dublin in December 2024.

As mentioned in the previous expenditure report, over the period 2009 – 2020 there was effectively no inflation, with purchasing power of the expenditure in 2009 much the same as in 2020, and hence the significant increases in expenditure were not inflation related. This period of historically low rates of inflation ended in 2021 with inflation increasing steadily during 2021 and 2022, hitting a 38-year high in October of 2022 at 9.2%. The annual rate of inflation then dropped significantly to 4.6% in 2023 and to 1.4% in 2024.

3 2009 was the first year that a category Administration of Homeless Service was included in the Local Authority Annual Revenue Budgets

4 Estimated expenditure is calculated based on what Local Authorities publish in their official expenditure estimates for 2025. This expenditure is subject to approval by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

Figure 2: Expenditure on Services for Households Experiencing Homelessness by the Department of Housing, under Section 10 funding, 1989-2025 (e)

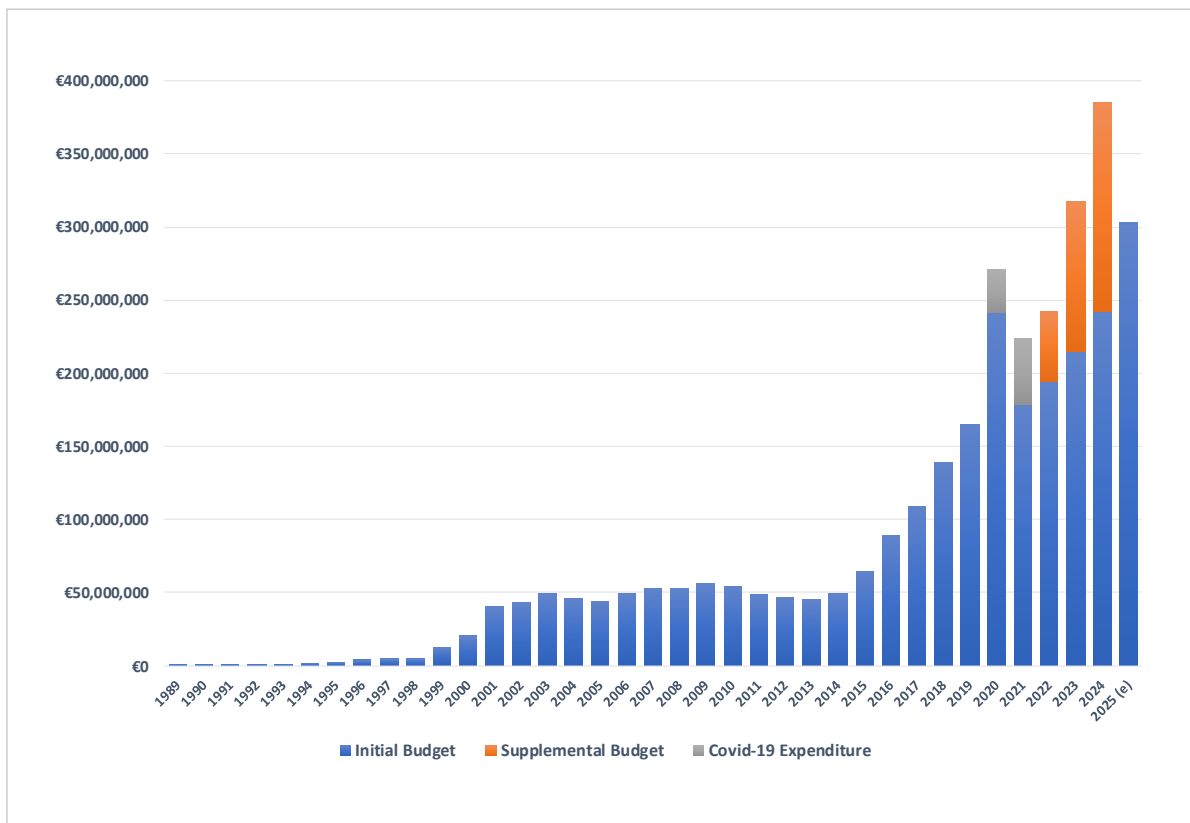


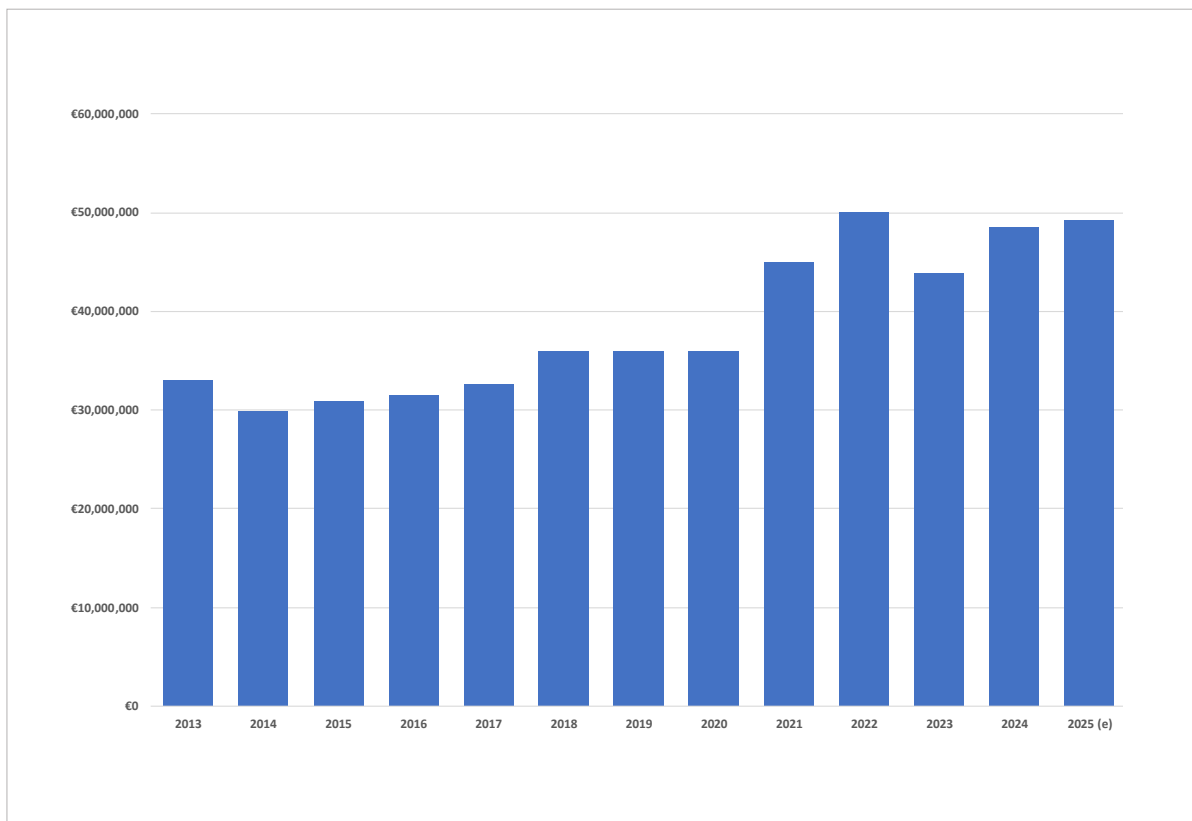
Figure 2 shows the funding available from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage to Local Authorities between 1989 and 2025(e). Between 2001 and 2014, the average annual budget available for recoupment by Local Authorities from the Department was €48.3m, but rose rapidly over the next 6 years.

Additional funding was made available in 2020 and 2021 due to the Covid-19 public health emergency. The initial funding available from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage to Local Authorities decreased in 2021 to €218m, and decreased further to €194m in 2022, before increasing to €215m in 2023 and €242m in 2024. However, considering inflation, the 10 percent funding increase from 2022 to 2023, and 2023 to 2024 largely kept pace with inflation and therefore, unlike previous years, the purchasing power of these budgets was much the same as the 2022 expenditure.

Since 2022, there has been a trend of supplementary budgets being used to cover the additional costs of providing Services for Households Experiencing Homelessness from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage to Local Authorities. In 2023, an initial budget of €215m was made available to Local Authorities but an additional €102m was made available that year under a supplementary budget, bringing the total amount of Expenditure on Services for Households Experiencing Homelessness by the Department of Housing that year to €317m. In 2024, supplementary budget of €143m was also added on top of an initial budget of €242m, bringing total expenditure last year to €385m.

Given these recent trends, the initial sum allocated in Budget 2025 of €303m, which is a decrease of €82m on the final figure of €385m in 2024, will also likely require a Supplementary Budget. Based on the estimates by Local Authorities in their revenue Budgets for 2025, this supplementary budget will be in the region of approx. €200m.

Figure 3: Expenditure on Homeless Health-related Services by the Department of Health and Associated Agencies, 2013–2025 (e)



As well as Section 10 funding from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage to Local Authorities, as set out in Figure 2, the Department of Health provides funding for Homeless Health-related Services.

As shown in Figure 3, the available funding from the Department of Health to HSE Homeless funded services increased from €33m in 2013 to €48.6m by 2024. In 2025, it is estimated that approx. €49.2m will be spent.⁵

As well as this funding, a range of HSE-funded general health services including addiction supports; acute hospital inpatient/outpatient services; Primary Care services; HSE mental health services etc. would also be available to households experiencing homelessness.

⁵ This funding is calculated based on consolidated financial information available through the HSE general ledgers for Social Inclusion. Where funding covered more than one target group within HSE Social Inclusion target groups a 'best fit' approach is applied and expenditure is aligned to one specific area.

Quarterly Financial Reports, 2013–2024

Since 2013, Local Authorities produce detailed Quarterly Financial Reports outlining their expenditure on a range of services for households experiencing or at risk of homelessness that can be recouped from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, in addition to their own financial contribution. These reporting requirements arose from the issuing of a Protocol Governing Delegation of Section 10 Funding for Homeless Services to Local Authorities. Thus, the Quarterly Financial Reports do not contain expenditure recouped or received from other Department or agency sources.

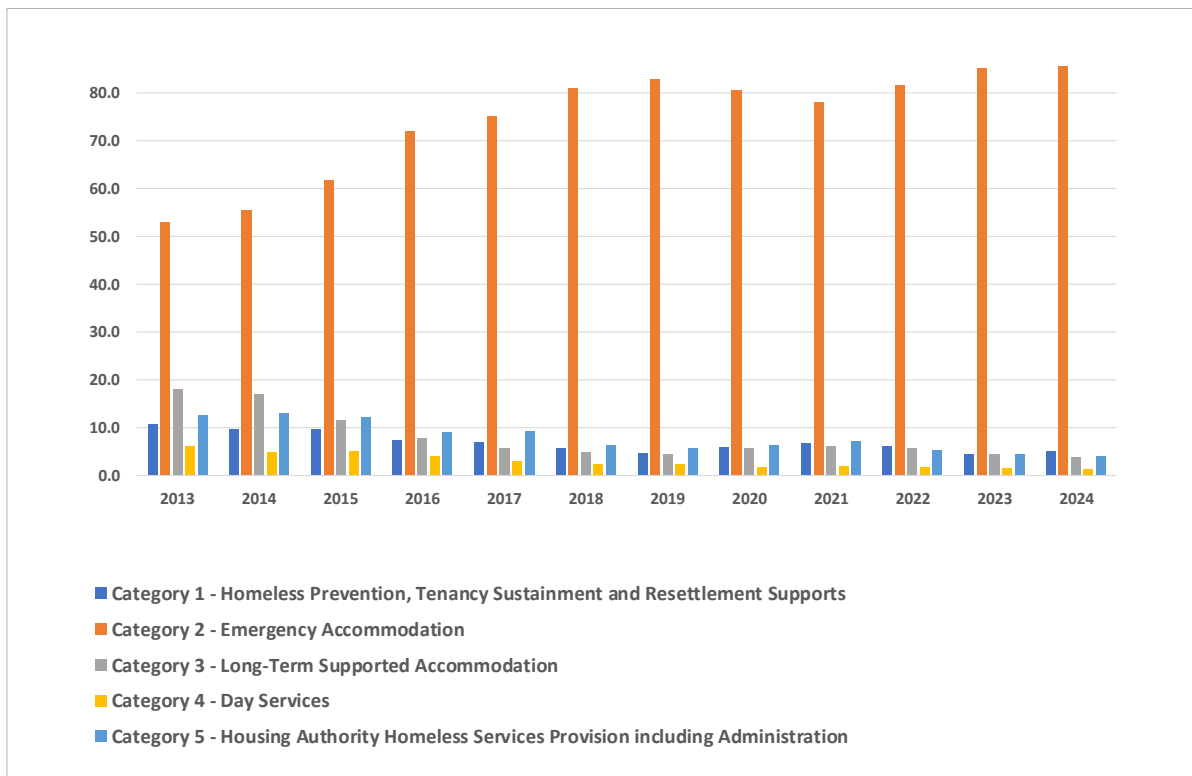
Expenditure on services for households experiencing homelessness in the Quarterly Financial Reports prepared by Local Authorities is classified in five areas:

- 1. Homeless Prevention, Tenancy Sustainment and Resettlement Supports**
- 2. Emergency Accommodation**
- 3. Long-Term Supported Accommodation**
- 4. Day Services**
- 5. Housing Authority Homeless Services Provision including Administration**

In 2013 and 2014 there was a further category detailing expenditure on services for those experiencing Domestic Violence, but from January 2015, such services which had been funded via Section 10 were transferred to the statutory Child and Family Agency (TUSLA). Expenditure on Domestic Violence services in 2013 and 2014 of €4.4m is excluded from this analysis and only the 5 categories above are included.

From 2020 onwards, emergency accommodation is categorised as ‘scheduled’ (for families and adult-only households) and ‘unscheduled’. The majority of the scheduled emergency accommodation for families is in the form of congregate ‘Family Hubs.’ Scheduled emergency accommodation for adult-only households, which includes single adults and couples without accompanying child dependents takes a range of forms, but is largely congregate quasi-dormitory accommodation ranging from recently purpose built provision, building conversions and congregate facilities that have been in operation for over a century. The vast majority of scheduled emergency accommodation are provided by NGOs. Unscheduled Emergency Accommodation is provided by private providers is in the form of hotel / bed and breakfast accommodation, and is primarily for households with accompanying child dependents, but also couples without child dependents.

Figure 4: Expenditure by Category 2013–2024 (%)



Not unexpectedly, given the increase in the number of households in emergency accommodation noted above, expenditure on emergency accommodation accounted for 53 percent of all expenditure in 2013, but had increased to 86 percent of total spending in 2024 as shown in Figure 4.⁶ In 2024, nearly €361m was spent on providing emergency accommodation, an increase of €74m compared to the previous year.

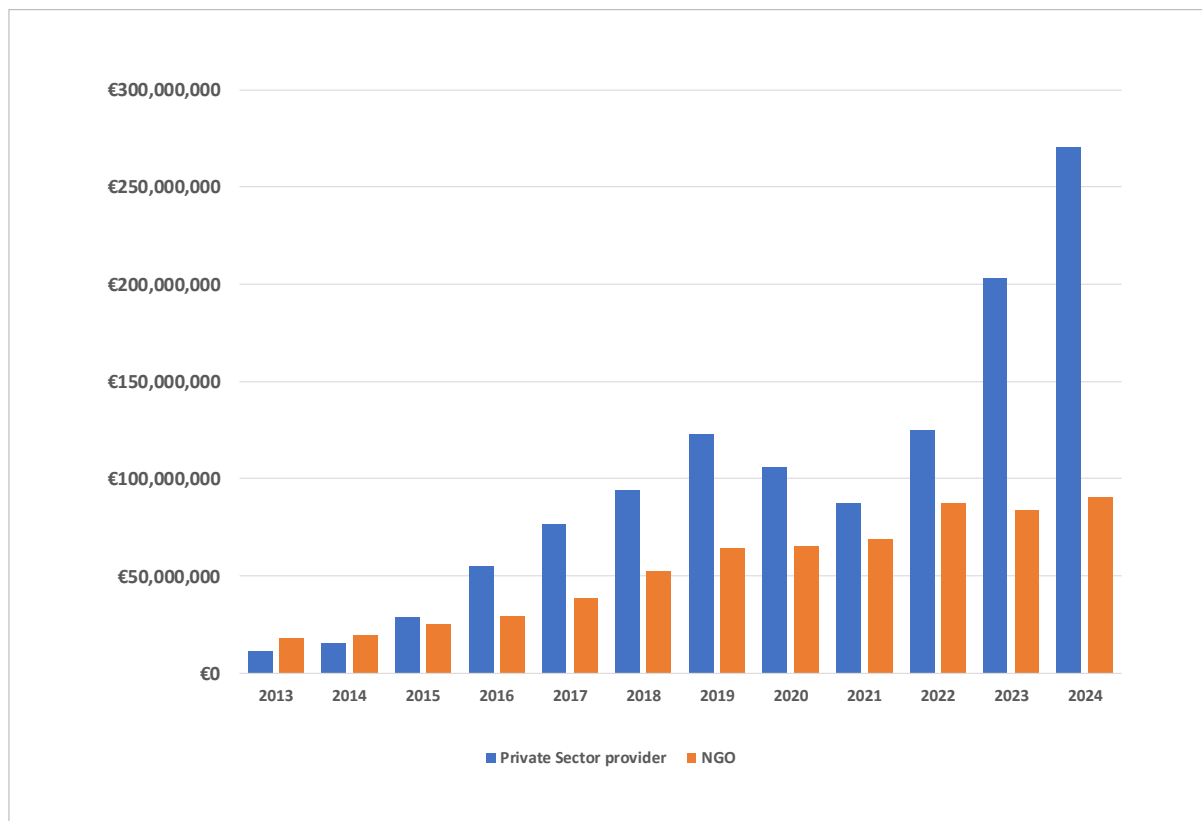
In total, €1.84bn has been spent on the provision of emergency accommodation for households experiencing homelessness between 2013 and 2024. This means that 79 percent of all expenditure has been on the provision of emergency accommodation since 2013.

While certain categories have decreased as a percentage of total expenditure, the total amount spent on all categories has increased since 2013. For example, Category 1 (Homeless Prevention, Tenancy Sustainment Resettlement Supports) has decreased as a percentage of expenditure from 10% in 2013 to 5% in 2024, however, the total amount spent on Category 1 has increased from €5.7 million in 2013 to €21.4 million in 2024.

⁶ The expenditure figure for 2024 captures actual expenditure up to November and estimated expenditure for December 2024.

Emergency Accommodation (Funding Category 2)

Figure 5: Expenditure on Emergency Accommodation by Provider, 2013–2024

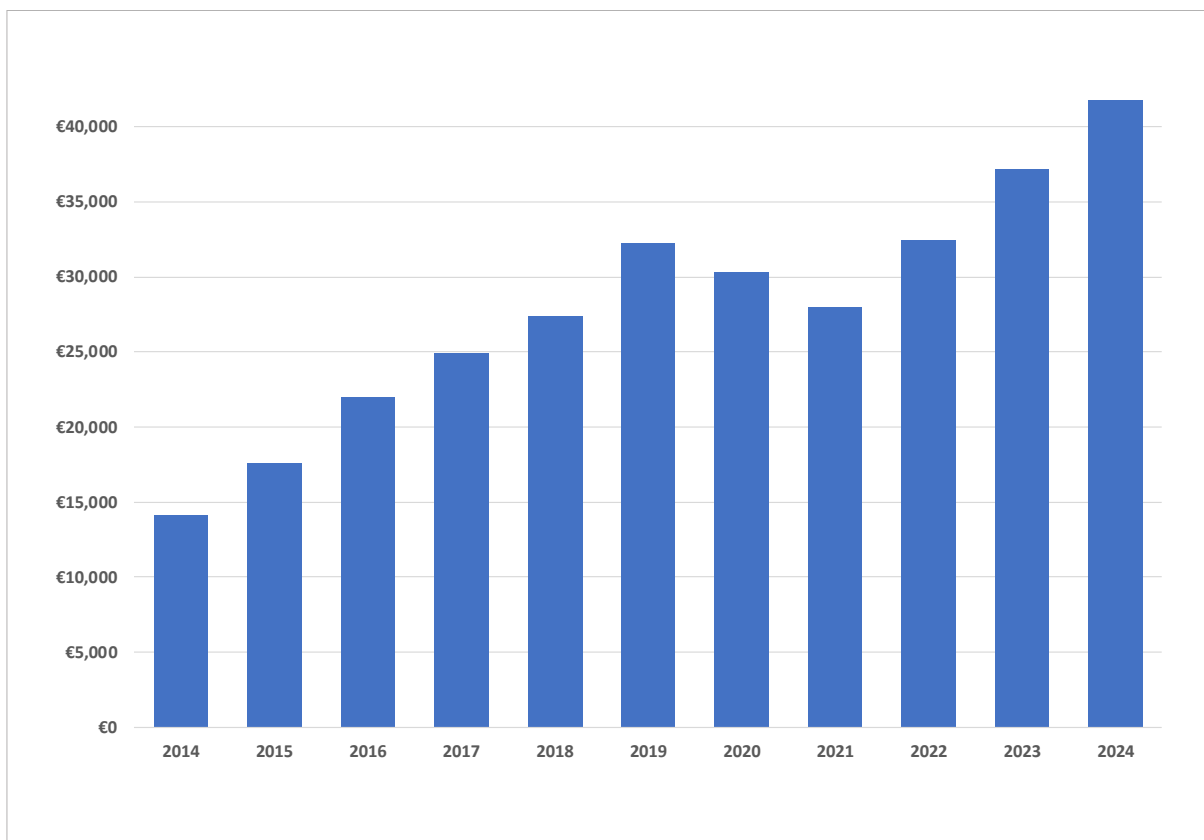


Providers of emergency accommodation are both not-for-profit organisations and private for-profit bodies, with no Local Authority now providing emergency accommodation directly. As noted above, the vast majority of ‘scheduled’ emergency accommodation is provided by NGOs and the majority of ‘unscheduled’ emergency accommodation is provided by private for-profit providers. In 2013, just over €11m was expended on private for-profit providers or just under 40 percent of all spending on emergency accommodation, compared to just over €270m in 2024 or 75 percent of all spending on emergency accommodation. Over the period 2013–2024, total expenditure on private for-profit providers amounted to nearly €1.2bn and for the not-for-profit bodies €642.5m. Expenditure on emergency accommodation was lower in 2020 and 2021, compared to 2019, with this reduction being particularly evident for private providers of emergency accommodation.

In 2024, there was a very significant increase in expenditure on for-profit providers of emergency accommodation with over €270m expended on this form of emergency accommodation in this year alone- an increase of nearly €70m compared to 2023. Moreover, the amount expended on for-profit providers has more than doubled in the last two years. €125m was expended on for-profit providers in 2022 compared to €270m in 2024. At the same time, expenditure on not-for-profit bodies has only fluctuated slightly since 2022.

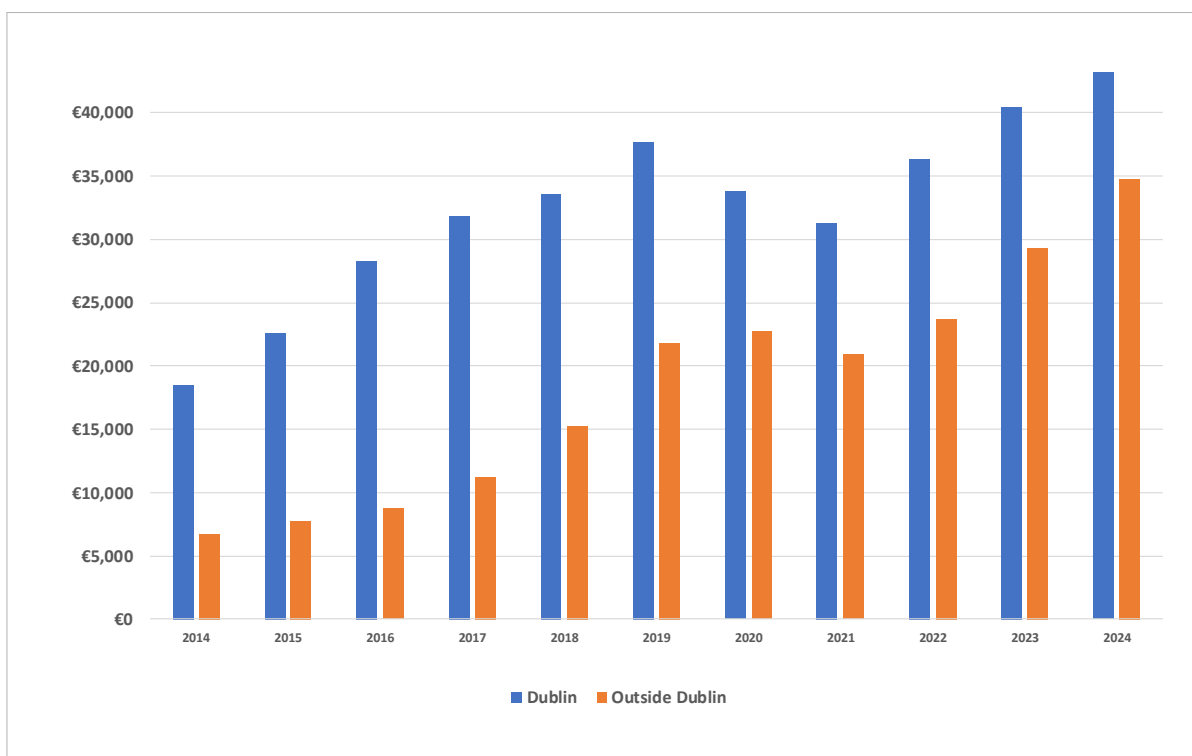
Cost per Household in Emergency Accommodation

Figure 6: Average Cost of Maintaining Households in Section 10 Funded Emergency Accommodation, 2014-2024



Since 2014, the average cost of maintaining households in emergency accommodation (the average number of households in each year divided by the expenditure on emergency accommodation only) nearly tripled from just over €14,000 in 2014 to nearly €42,000 in 2024 as shown in Figure 6. In 2020 and 2021, there was a decrease in the average costs of maintaining households in EA before rising again from 2022 onwards.

Figure 7: Average Cost of Maintaining Households in Emergency Accommodation, Dublin - Outside Dublin, 2014–2024

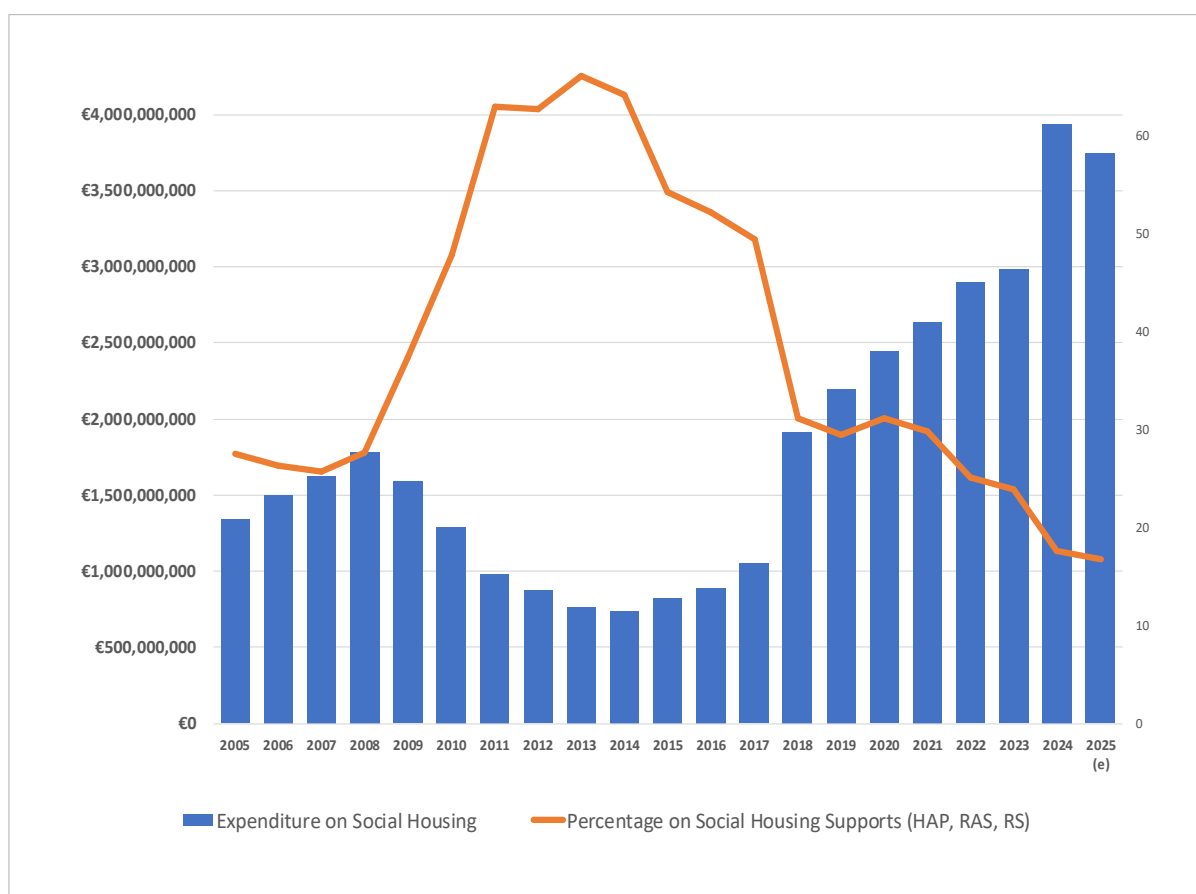


As shown in Figure 6, the average cost of maintaining households in EA has risen significantly since 2014, however there is considerable regional variation in the cost of providing EA. In Dublin, the average cost of maintaining households in emergency accommodation is higher than Outside Dublin. In 2024, the average cost of maintaining a household in emergency accommodation was nearly €45,000 compared to nearly €35,000 Outside Dublin.

Expenditure on Social Housing

While expenditure on social housing fulfils a range of other objectives in addition to responding to homelessness, access to social housing, including social housing supports, is such an important factor in homelessness that it is relevant to include data on social housing expenditure here. Government data for ‘Social Housing Expenditure’ includes capital expenditure on building and renovating social housing as well as current expenditure on leasing, and the three rent subsidy schemes.

Figure 8: Expenditure on Social Housing, 2005-2025 (e)



Expenditure on Social Housing was cut significantly in the austerity years that followed the Global Financial Crash (GFC) 2007/2008. As shown in Figure 8, expenditure on Social Housing declined from €1.7 billion in 2008 to €735.5m in 2014. Expenditure on Social Housing increased incrementally between 2015—2017 and increased significantly in 2018 when expenditure increased from €1bn in 2017 to €1.9bn by 2018. Since 2018, expenditure on social housing has continued to grow and in 2024 nearly €4bn was spent on social housing, nearly €1bn higher than the previous year. At the time of writing, it is expected that expenditure on social housing in 2025 will be €3.7bn.

As shown in Figure 8, as capital expenditure on new social housing fell in the wake of the GFC, spending on non-capital social housing supports including on the rent subsidy schemes began to account for a greater percentage of social housing expenditure as output of new social housing declined by 91.5% in the years following the GFC.⁷ The rent subsidy schemes are the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP), the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) and Rent Supplement (RS). The HAP and RAS schemes are funded by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, while Rent Supplement is funded by the Department of Social Protection. While each of the schemes operates slightly differently, each of them is intended to support households who are unable to meet their housing costs, either in the short or long term, by providing funding that goes towards paying for private rented accommodation provided by private landlords. For HAP, the largest of the schemes with approx. 54,400 households using HAP to access housing at the end of Q3 2024⁸.

As shown in Figure 8, at its peak in 2013, the total combined expenditure on the three rent subsidy schemes accounted for 66% of all social housing expenditure in that year as capital expenditure on new social housing was cut. As expenditure increased from 2018 onwards, rental subsidies began to account for less of the total percentage of expenditure. In 2023, just under €3bn was spent on social housing, and 24 percent of this expenditure was spent on private rental subsidies. This is a slightly lower percentage than before the Global Financial Crisis, although as a total cost, spending on social housing supports are significantly higher. For example, in 2024, €692m was spent on social housing supports but in 2008 €493m was spent on these supports. In 2025, expenditure on social housing supports as a total of amount spent on social housing is expected to reduce further.

In total, in the decade between 2015 and 2024, the total expenditure on social housing was over €21.7bn and over €6.37bn, or nearly 30 percent of total expenditure, was spent on funding the HAP, RAS and Rent Supplement schemes.

7 Byrne, M. and Norris, M. (2018). Procyclical Social Housing and the Crisis of Irish Housing Policy: Marketization, Social Housing, and the Property Boom and Bust, *Housing Policy Debate*, 28(1) pp.50-63.

8 Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (2024) HAP Funding and Delivery Statistics to Q3 2024 (Dublin: Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage).

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Publication date: March 2025

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