

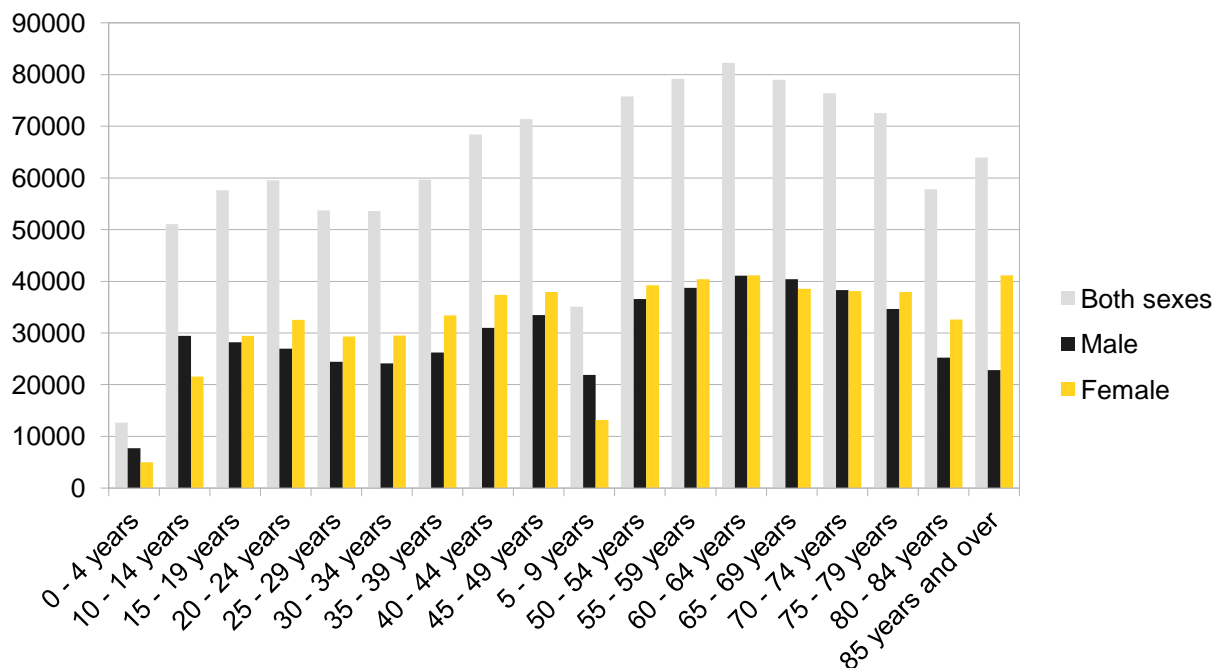
## Housing

Table 1.1: Families Accessing Emergency Accommodation in a week in December 2015 – 2023

	Total Families	(of which single parent families)	Total Adults	Total Child Dependents
21-27 Dec 2015	775	489	1061	1616
19-25 Dec 2016	1,205	783	1627	2505
25-31 Dec 2017	1,408	852	1964	3079
24-30 Dec 2018	1,617	955	2279	3559
23-29 Dec 2019	1,548	881	2215	3422
21-27 Dec 2020	9,70	514	1426	2327
20-26 Dec 2021	1,077	N/A	1744	2451
19-25 Dec 2022	1,594	856	2619	3442
25-31 Dec 2023	1,916	1065	3185	3962
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,048</b>	<b>3,695</b>	<b>17,998</b>	<b>26,156</b>

Source: Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. Homelessness data, various years.

Chart 1.2: Population experiencing a long-lasting condition or difficulty to any or a great extent by age group and sex, 2022



Source: CSO, table FY084

## Housing

### *Family Homelessness*

Secure, affordable, suitable housing could be considered the primary site for care. However, the latest data indicate that 2,051 families comprising 3,407 adults and 4,316 children, accessed emergency homeless accommodation in the week 20-26 May 2024.<sup>1</sup> That's 7,723 individuals without a secure base from which to care for health, education, social inclusion and community needs. Table 1 gives a snapshot of recorded family homelessness for a week in December from 2015 to 2023.

Family Hubs were first introduced in 2017 as an alternative to hotels and B&Bs. In response, the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) warned of the risks: of institutionalising families and normalising family homelessness.<sup>2</sup> This warning was ignored, with Minister Eoghan Murphy TD urging Local Authorities to build more 'rapid build' Family Hubs at the Second Housing Summit in January 2018, and increased funding for Family Hubs provided in Budgets 2019 and 2020. The only mention of family hubs in the Programme for Government 2020 is a commitment to provide additional supports to students living there. A report published in April 2019 by the Ombudsman for Children's Office shows just how prescient IHREC's warnings were, as children as young as 10 describe their living conditions as being "like a prison".<sup>3</sup> While the Report does point out that Family Hubs have been found to be better than hotel rooms, in the long-term they remain an unsuitable solution.

Institutionalising families in accommodation without cooking independent cooking facilities, adequate room to crawl, walk or play,

or without the opportunities for social development is inexcusable in a wealth country such as Ireland. We must do better.

### *A Lifecycle Approach to Housing Delivery*

Older people and people living with disabilities have a range of needs, from the very minimal to the very complex in care. Housing design for older people and people living with disabilities should incorporate a life-cycle approach to ensure that those with deteriorating conditions can continue to live a life with dignity and in their own home for as long as possible.

Chart 1.2 shows the number of people reporting a disability by age group from the 2022 Census. This approach would see the adoption of Universal Design principles in the development of housing responses, as committed to in the Government's policy statement on housing for our older population.<sup>4</sup> Universal design ensures that housing is accessible to all individuals, regardless of age or ability, by incorporating features that accommodate a wide range of needs and preferences. By embracing universal design, we can create more inclusive and adaptable communities that promote independence, dignity, and equal opportunity for all residents.

### **Policy Priorities**

- Expand the remit of Housing First in Budget 2024 to homeless families accessing emergency accommodation.
- End family hubs and providing suitable long-term alternatives for families experiencing homelessness.
- Take a life-cycle approach to housing development and town planning.

<sup>1</sup><https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/297403/eabd7b85-e9ba-4a31-95d6-415f741cee1e.pdf#page=null>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.ihrec.ie/app/uploads/2017/07/The-provision-of-emergency-accommodation-to-families-experiencing-homelessness.pdf>

<sup>3</sup><https://www.oco.ie/app/uploads/2019/04/No-Place-Like-Home.pdf>

<sup>4</sup><https://assets.gov.ie/9398/ca553fa753b64f14b20e4a8dcf9a46ab.pdf>