

Dublin: Homeless in the Wealthiest City

How can homelessness, a topic quite relevant to the wealth of the city and its people, be such a big issue in a well situated city like Dublin? This is a great conflict, a conflict that is being analyzed and approved by many searches. To start with, it can be said that Dublin is the wealthiest city in Europe with a per capita income of almost \$115,000 on October 22, 2022. Even after a great pandemic that affected many economies and lives, Dublin became the richest city in a continent like Europe where wealth is not really an issue to compare with many other continents. But yet, there are at least 11,000 people that are homeless in Ireland and nearly half of this number lives in Dublin. As a matter of fact, homelessness might be the biggest problem of Ireland, especially after the pandemic. According to findings from a 5-year study of a cohort of homeless people in Dublin found that the vulnerability of those who are homeless has become more visible since the advent of COVID-19. With the increased physical morbidity in societies, homeless people have much increased probability of using drugs and alcohol, the article by Aoibheann Mcloughlin, Anna Feeney and John Cooney says. As can be stated more clearly now, homelessness does not only affect the people who cannot afford housing, it effects everyone in that curtain area that these homeless people stay. This helps us to say that homelessness is a bigger issue in Dublin than we even think, and a solution should be found immediately. But before discussing the solutions, if we get to the main question, what causes homelessness in a city like Dublin?

The following categories of factors are commonly at the core of the events that result in homelessness: personal, institutional, and structural. Of course, there can be a high number of people that are homeless in Dublin because of personal or institutional causes. These causes can be as a result of abusive family relations or mental health issues, even may be a result of children leaving state care. But I believe, for Ireland, the main reason behind homelessness is economic and social problems which can be considered as structural causes. Even though Ireland has a strong economy, at least strong enough to support many people during an extreme event like Covid-19 pandemic, the price for owning property is luxury. A great source that I have, my cousin who lives in Dublin for many years, says that “Living and fulfilling daily events, like eating and drinking and socializing in Ireland is really easy and cheap. But when it comes to owning any kind of property, you have to be quite rich.”. Some of the reasons behind these high property prices I believe are the life quality and the mindset of people who live in Dublin. About life quality, as it was mentioned before, life is really cheap in Ireland when it

comes to foods and drinks. This is a great reason for people to choose Ireland, especially Dublin, as a place to study, work or live. About the mindset of society, Dublin has been selected for years as one of the friendliest cities. The people are so accepting and sympathetic to others who come from outside of Ireland. This situation also leads people, especially the ones who face racism and hate from others in their lives, to choose Dublin as their new homes to start a better life. Even though the previous reasons affect homelessness quite a lot, the biggest reason is not them. The main reason, in my and many others' opinion, is that there is not enough social and affordable housing for the people in Dublin. I believe these reasons are better to stay as they are, even though they play a role in homelessness, except the last one. So, if it is known that there is not enough affordable housing, what can be done to solve this problem?

Some very clear and easy solutions are providing more social and affordable houses, homeless services that help people in need to stay away from streets and increasing the job opportunities and employments in many fields to avoid poverty and eventually homelessness. When it comes to what the government of Ireland does significantly about preventing this topic, there are two solutions that are being worked on currently, Housing First model and the organization Focus Ireland. About Housing First, it is a model that is offered by Peter McVerry Trust, a national housing and homeless charity, seeks to give people who have been homeless for a long time access to secure housing as well as comprehensive and specialized support services. Secondly, Focus Ireland is a nonprofit organization based in Dublin that provides aid to those who are homeless or at risk of becoming so since 1985. One great plan that Focus Ireland offers is the “#FocusOnHomes” campaign that involves five steps. These steps cover building at least 35,000 new homes a year, developing a dedicated “Family Homelessness” strategy which means government guaranteeing that no family or individual is homeless for longer than six months, developing a new “Youth Housing and Homeless” strategy that helps especially young people that are in particular risk during a housing crisis, holding a referendum to put stronger housing rights in the Constitution, and lastly establishing a national commission on housing. So, after all this information, if what to do to prevent homelessness is so obvious, why is it still an issue? A pessimistic yet true research mentioned in the article “Ending Homelessness in Ireland: Ambition, Adversity, Adaptation?” by Eoin O’Sullivan states that homelessness and housing insecurity will continue to be a very expensive and harmful result of the shortcomings of housing policy because local authorities in Ireland were unable to fully address the structural issues of housing affordability and supply, particularly in the private rented sector. Which means, even though reasons seem clear from where we stand, there are always other factors that postpone the problem from being solved.

In conclusion, it can be said that Dublin is a global city at the end of the day, and it is obvious that the authorities of this city will struggle to raise taxes and find money for maintenance and major projects. The solutions that are offered might be the ones to end homelessness for all, but again these are solutions at great expense and even the wealthiest city in Europe can struggle to afford these kind of projects. But still, to the way I am thinking, ending homelessness is not as absurd as it seems. With smaller but smarter steps homelessness can be a solved problem for Dublin. If we look from another angle we will see that even though Dublin has many significant characteristics, like being among the friendliest cities or being the richest European city, it is not the first city that comes to mind when the topic is tourism. Dublin has many natural parks and beautiful historical places and yet it is not as known as most of the other cities in Europe. Solving Dublin's unpopularity might actually be a major step to solve homelessness. So, an alternative solution that can be effective is urban boosterism, which is about increasing the creativity around the city and increasing tourism incomes, so the taxing will be decreased implicitly. At long last, finding funds through urban boosterism to run the city can solve the problem of homelessness for the people of Dublin.

Sources

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