

## **A different kind of housing crisis**

**By Niamh Herbert**

*Ireland has been facing a housing crisis since 2013. There is a lack of suitable, affordable accommodation for the average, able-bodied person, so what is the situation for people with disabilities?*



Senator Tom Clonan, an advocate for disability rights, [spoke in the Seanad](#) on September 28 2022 about how the current housing crisis is impacting people with disabilities, particularly his son Eoghan who is a wheelchair-user.

Clonan noted that the waiting list for accessible, social housing is approximately 22 years long.

Clonan's son, like many others, has no option to live independently because there are no suitable options in the current overheated housing market.

Senator Clonan then called for the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth to liaise with the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage to properly address and tackle this issue.

## **Ireland's housing crisis**

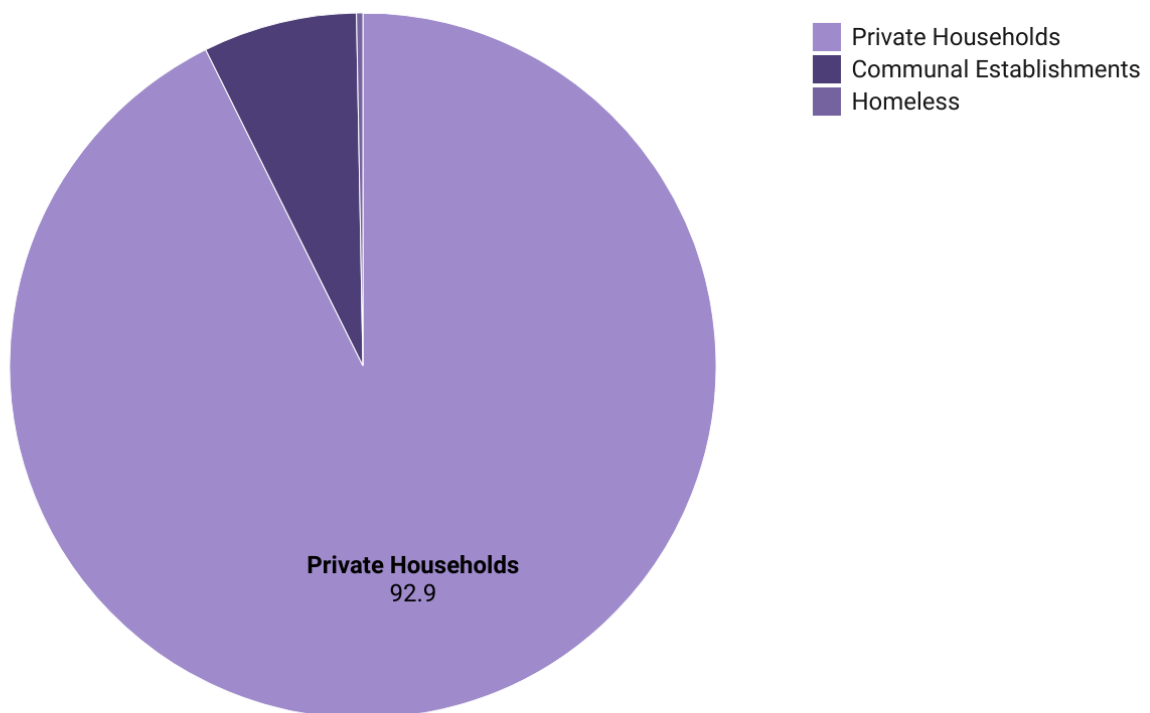
The 2016 census reported that there were 643,131 people with disabilities. Clonan's son's situation is a small part of a much larger story about the housing crisis facing Ireland's disabled population.

Currently, housing of any kind is a struggle to find in Ireland, but the task becomes almost impossible when the housing is required to be accessible.

The lack of accessible accommodation has led to a high number of disabled people living in unsuitable conditions.

This article will look at various datasets derived from Ireland's 2016 Census of Population, which found that the three most common settings in which disabled people live are private households (92.90%), homelessness (0.29%) and communal establishments (2.09%).

## Where do persons with Disabilities Live? (Copy)



Source: National Disability Authority • Created with Datawrapper

(<https://datawrapper.dwcdn.net/UihTG/1/>)

### People with disabilities in private households

Census data from 2016 shows that the largest portion of the disabled population live in private households (92.90%).

Housing Adaptation Grants of up to \$30,000 are available to people with disabilities from their local authorities to help make their homes more physically accessible. This grant system has been in operation since 2008.

Housing Adaptation Grants are part of the solution to create suitable, accessible homes for people with disabilities, but Housing Adaptation Grants are not the answer to the lack of suitable, accessible housing for disabled people in Ireland because there are no houses available for rent or purchase

In light of this, Inclusion Ireland [advocates for a review of or abolishment of the Housing Adaptation Grants](#), and for it to be replaced by a system that allows people to avail of this grant when building their own homes.

In January 2022, the government published the [National Housing Strategy for Disabled People 2022-27](#), which outlines how the government will implement frameworks to ensure that the housing and support needs of disabled people are comprehensively addressed.

The Strategy outlines the government's plans to deliver 90,000 social homes by 2030, with an aim to provide accessible accommodation to people with disabilities.

### **Disability and homelessness - a comparison of 2011 and 2016 census data**

The inadequate provision of suitable housing can lead to homelessness.

In November 2021, the *Irish Examiner* [reported](#) on the story of Ciara, a 31 year old woman who became homeless after she was severely injured by a car accident, and was forced to leave her rented accommodation as it was no longer suitable for her.

With no other option but to live in her car, Ciara told the Irish Examiner, "If I don't get social housing I see myself going into a nursing home as I cannot continue the way I am going"

The Central Statistics Office (CSO) reported in 2016 that 1,871 homeless individuals identified as people with disabilities out of the total homeless population - meaning that 27.1% of Ireland's homeless population were disabled.

The total homeless population has risen by 81% since Ireland's 2011 Census, two years before Ireland's housing crisis hit. Moreover, the percentage of disabled homeless people has risen by 18.7% between 2011 and 2016.

## Homeless Persons with Disabilities

	Census 2011	Census 2016
Difficulty in participating in other activities	408	509
Difficulty in working or attending school/college	578	619
Difficulty in going outside home alone	277	362
Difficulty in dressing, bathing, getting around inside the home	180	246
Other disability	697	840
Psychological or emotional condition	740	825
Difficulty in learning, remembering or concentrating	532	621
An intellectual disability	214	213
A condition that substantially limits one or more basic physical activities	492	581
Deafness or a serious hearing impairment	144	131
Blindness or a serious vision impairment	140	158
Total homeless persons with a disability	1,581	1,871
Total homeless persons	3,808	6,907

Source: Central Statistics Office (CSO) • Created with Datawrapper

(<https://datawrapper.dwcdn.net/T6NW6/1/>)

### People with disabilities in communal establishments

As well as private households, Census data shows that a significant number of people with disabilities are living in communal establishments.

Hotels, hospitals, religious communities and nursing homes were the most popular communal establishments for people with disabilities in the 2016 census.

The lack of suitable, accessible housing options for people with disabilities has resulted in a number of people with disabilities being put into residential accommodation like nursing homes. This article will look at data.

The largest numbers of persons with disabilities in communal establishments at the time of the census were residing in Nursing and Children's Homes (25,356) .

The Ombudsman, Peter Tyndall, published a [report](#) in 2021 which detailed the situation for young people with disabilities placed in nursing homes because there is no other option for them. The report was compiled by Tyndall after his office received a number of complaints from people with disabilities who were put in nursing homes

Tyndal told the [Irish Times](#) about his work on the report and said, "One of the people we met during the investigation said that he wasted the best years of his life in an institution."

The investigation identified systematic funding issues with long-term care for people with disabilities who want to live independently.

### **What's next?**

97.37% of the non-disabled population live in private households, compared to 92.90% of persons with disabilities. The National Housing Strategy for Disabled People 2022-2027 plans to make these numbers equal by introducing more comprehensive policy packages.

The Strategy states that it is time to move away from housing persons with disabilities congregated settings, and more must be done to facilitate independent living.

Although Ireland is currently facing a significant housing crisis in general, it is clear that the situation for people with disabilities is more dire and that the housing options are slimmer than those available to the non-disabled population.