



Press Release

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Survey reveals Irish public opinion on how to solve the housing crisis

Government housing and rent controls lead the way

A survey from leading protection specialist Royal London has revealed that more than 1 in 4 people believe the onus is on the Government to solve the housing crisis by building more new houses itself. The second most popular solution was the introduction of greater rent controls, with 25% of respondents favouring this option.

The survey, commissioned by Royal London and conducted by market research company IReach, asked 1,000 people nationwide for their opinions on what the Government should do to solve the housing crisis.

Respondents answered as follows:

The Government should build more houses itself	28%
Apply strict rent controls	25%
Cut the level of planning using red-tape/bureaucracy to speed up new home building	17%
Place price control on development land	13%
Create financial incentives to encourage landowners/developers to build more homes	13%
Stem the proliferation of AirBnB	4%

Joe Charles, Head of Proposition at Royal London, commented on the findings:

“It’s clear that people have a variety of views when it comes to how best to tackle our housing crisis. That’s understandable given that Ireland’s current housing situation affects a range of people from a wide variety of societal groupings. So there naturally isn’t going to be a ‘one size fits all’ solution. The reasons behind the shortage of houses are equally as varied, and with the country’s population projected to grow by 1 million people by 2040, it’s clear that a longer-term solution is as vital as an immediate one.

“The survey findings show that 28% of respondents are in favour of the Government building more housing stock itself. Recently, the Government launched ‘Project Ireland 2040’, which set out plans to increase overall housing supply to a baseline level of 25,000 homes a year by 2020, and then a likely level of 30-35,000 annually up to 2027.*

*“Social housing is a vital component of the project, and through the plan 112,000 households are expected to have their housing needs met by securing a social housing home over the next decade**.*

While progress and success will only be viewed in the medium to longer term, it would appear that the provision of housing stock as a solution to the housing crisis is high on the Government agenda.”

The results of the survey highlight that the housing crisis is not just about a lack of housing. 25% of those surveyed believe that the Government should apply stricter rent controls to ease the housing crisis.

Joe noted, *“A quarter of our respondents would like to see stricter rent controls put in place. The rental market appears to be a ‘hamster wheel’ of sorts, with those currently renting, particularly in Dublin, struggling to save enough to buy their own home. This predicament has given us what has been called ‘Generation Rent’ - a whole generation who face the prospect of renting for a large part of their lives.”*

The Gender Divide

The Royal London survey found that:

- 31% of females as opposed to 20% of males believe that the Government should apply stricter rent controls.
- More males than females, 32% to 24%, believe the Government should build more houses.
- Women appear to place greater focus on controlling the price of development land, with 16% of female respondents saying this should be the priority compared to just 10% of male respondents.

The distinction between gender opinion on the issue is particularly interesting – the survey illustrates that women are perhaps more inclined to take a legislative approach towards the solution, while men were more in favour of a construction-focused approach.

Joe concluded, *“Restrictions on AirBnB letting, greater financial incentives and even price-control on development land have been much touted as possible solutions over the last few years. The Government is taking steps to ease the housing crisis but it appears from our survey that quicker results are felt to be needed. The Residential Tenancies Act should help slow down rising rents in designated Rent Pressure Zones (RPZs)***, and bring about greater protection for tenants in the private rental market. The aforementioned ‘Project Ireland 2040’ scheme will provide a considerable number of new homes but these must be made available soon. Whatever the Government’s chosen approach is, it is clear that in the context of this issue a varied approach is needed to combat the critical situation that many Irish people find themselves in.”*

Other highlights from the Royal London consumer survey included:

- People in Munster are marginally more in favour of rent controls.
- More people aged over 55 were in favour of cutting the amount of red tape involved in home building compared to other age groups.
- Those in Dublin and Leinster were more inclined to prioritise the Government building more houses itself – this was the most popular selection overall.
- Although some commentary has pointed to AirBnB as contributing to the housing and rental crisis – most people didn’t feel that addressing this is a priority.
- People under age 55 were more concerned with rent controls than those above - possibly because more people in these age groups are affected by rising rents.

-ENDS-

Notes to the Editor:

About Royal London:

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Royal London's Irish office is based at 47- 49 St Stephen's Green, Dublin 2.

Royal London Consumer Survey

Recent reports have shown a huge reduction in the number of homes for sale or for rent. Which of the following measures should the next Government prioritise to solve the housing crisis?

	Total	Male	Female	Not married	Married	18 - 34	35 - 54	55+	Dublin	Rest of Leinster	Munster	Connaught / Ulster
Apply strict rent controls	25 %	20 %	31 %	25 %	25 %	27 %	26 %	19 %	25 %	22 %	28 %	25 %
Cut the level of planning using red tape/bureaucracy to speed up new home building	17 %	20 %	13 %	17 %	16 %	16 %	16 %	20 %	15 %	17 %	20 %	16 %
Create financial incentives to encourage landowners/ developers to build more homes	13 %	13 %	12 %	13 %	13 %	14 %	12 %	13 %	12 %	13 %	13 %	14 %
The Government should build more houses itself	28 %	32 %	24 %	28 %	28 %	26 %	28 %	31 %	30 %	30 %	24 %	27 %
Stem the proliferation of Airbnb as it is harming out housing market	4 %	5 %	4 %	5 %	4 %	3 %	6 %	3 %	6 %	2 %	4 %	5 %
Place price control on the price of development land	13 %	10 %	16 %	12 %	14 %	14 %	12 %	14 %	12 %	16 %	11 %	13 %

Sources:

*Government of Ireland, Project Ireland 2040, 2018 - <http://www.gov.ie/en/project-ireland-2040>

**Government of Ireland, Project Ireland 2040, Compact Growth, 2018 - <http://www.gov.ie/en/compact-growth/>

***Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, Residential Tenancies Act – What are my rights an obligations under a tenancy, 2017 - <http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/private-rented-housing/other/residential-tenancies-act-what-are-my-rights-and-obligations>

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