

Locked Out of the Market

March 2026



Introduction

Locked Out of the Market is a snapshot study undertaken every quarter, over three consecutive days, on Ireland's most used property website and app, Daft.ie.¹ This report tracks the number of properties advertised to rent within the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) limits. Since its establishment in 2014 and nationwide rollout in 2017, the HAP scheme has become a central pillar of housing support in the private rented sector. However, as outlined in Figure 1, which traces the development and key changes to the scheme over time, HAP rent limits have not kept pace with rapidly rising market rents. This study examines the availability of properties within standard and discretionary HAP limits in 16 areas.² This discretionary rate can be up to an additional 50% of the standard rate in Dublin, and up to an additional 35% of the standard rate elsewhere. The four household categories examined are: Single Person; Couple; Couple/One Parent and One Child; and Couple/One Parent and Two Children.

The March 2026 **Locked Out of the Market** report shows a decrease in the number of properties available to rent through HAP since the December 2025 report, though the number of properties available to rent at any price has increased over the same period. The prospect of finding a rental property within HAP limits remains extremely difficult, especially outside of Dublin where supply is even more limited, and HAP limits are set much lower.

This report is especially important in the context of the Residential Tenancies (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2026, which came into force on March 1, 2026 and marks a significant shift in Ireland's rental landscape. The March 2026 **Locked Out of the Market** report represents the first in the **Locked Out** series to be conducted under this new legislative framework. While changes such as six-year tenancies of minimum duration and limits on annual rent increases may provide greater stability for some renters, they do not address the fundamental issue of affordability, particularly for households reliant on HAP. Crucially, provisions allowing rents to be reset to market levels between tenancies or at the end of a six-year cycle risk further widening the gap between HAP limits and actual rents. Without substantial and sustained adjustments to HAP rates, many households will continue to be effectively locked out of the rental market.

The Office of the Ombudsman's **Investigation of the HAP Scheme** highlights the inefficiencies and inequities of the current scheme, making a number of welcome recommendations – including raising the maximum rent caps to reflect the current market.³ The Department of Housing, Local Government, and Heritage has also commenced a review of HAP rent limits.⁴

¹ Daft.ie is a property website that advertises the asking prices for properties available for sale and for rent. <http://www.daft.ie/about/>

² Cork City Centre, Cork City Suburbs, Dublin City Centre, Dublin City North, Dublin City South, Galway City Centre, Galway City Suburbs, Limerick City Centre, Limerick City Suburbs, Portlaoise, Kildare (selected areas), Athlone, Sligo Town, Dundalk, Co. Leitrim, and Waterford City Centre

³ *Investigation of the HAP Scheme*. Office of the Ombudsman. Published 5 June 2025. Available here: <https://ombudsman.ie/en/publication/2ae60-investigation-of-the-hap-scheme/>

⁴ Parliamentary Question 53827/25 - Deputy Shane Moynihan, 8 October 2025. Available here: [Rental Sector – Wednesday, 8 Oct 2025 – Parliamentary Questions \(34th Dáil\) – Houses of the Oireachtas](#)

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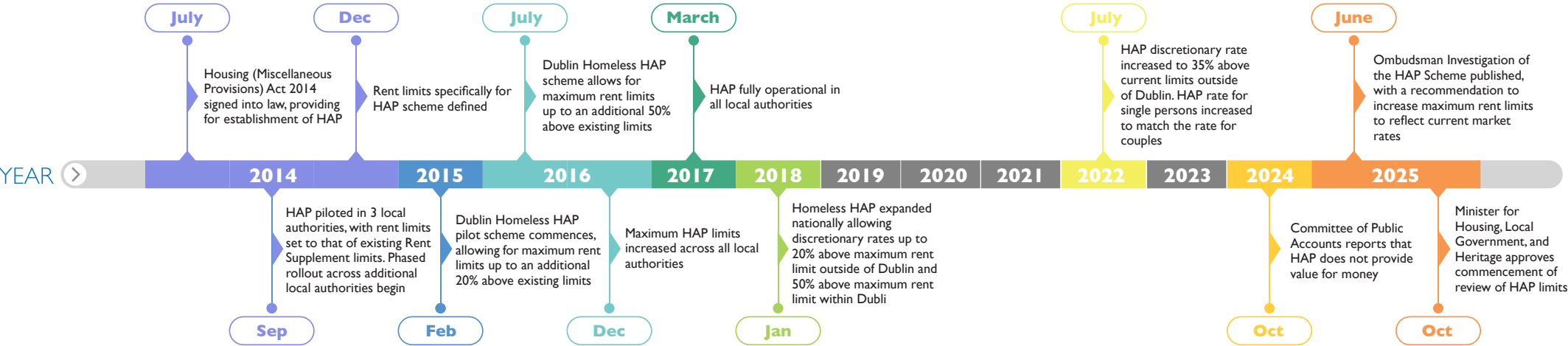


Riailtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



Ireland continues to reach record levels of homelessness. According to the latest figures published by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, as of February 2026 there were 17,308 people living in emergency accommodation across the country, including 5,457 children. This represents a 12.6% and 17.3% year-on-year increase, respectively.

Figure I. Timeline of HAP



Findings

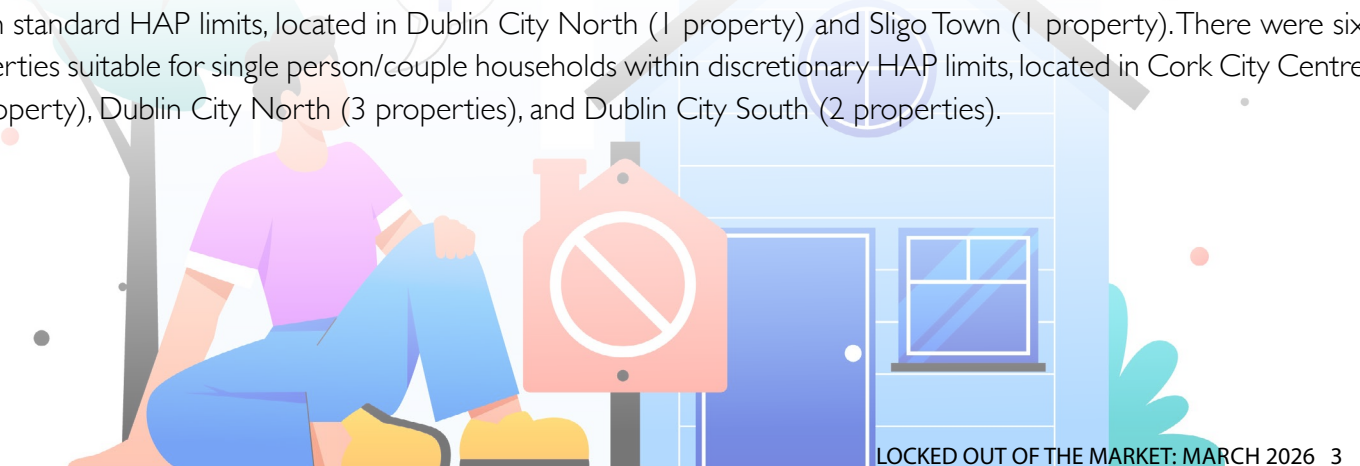
The March 2026 **Locked Out of the Market** report found 1,070 properties available to rent at any price within the 16 areas over the three dates surveyed. This is a 15% increase from the 929 properties available in the December 2025 report. However, it is a 4% reduction from the 1,119 properties available in March 2025 report.

65% (693) of the properties available to rent at any price were in the three Dublin areas studied. Portlaoise and Co. Leitrim had the lowest number of properties available to rent, with just one and seven properties available in each area, respectively, across the three days. When compared with the December 2025 **Locked Out of the Market** Report, four of the 16 study areas saw a reduction in the number of properties available to rent. These include Dublin City Centre (-6 properties), Dundalk (-2 properties), Galway City Centre (-6 properties), and Co. Leitrim (-7 properties). 12 of the 16 study areas saw an increase in the number of properties available to rent. These included Athlone (+10 properties), Cork City Centre (+11 properties), Cork City Suburbs (+20 properties), Dublin City North (+4 properties), Dublin City South (+27 properties), Galway City Suburbs (+28 properties), Kildare (+12 properties), Limerick City Suburbs (+8 properties), Limerick City Centre (+15 properties), Sligo Town (+5 properties), Portlaoise (+1 property) and Waterford City Centre (+21 properties).

The March 2026 **Locked Out of the Market** report found 14 properties available to rent within any HAP limit. This is a staggering 55% decrease (-17 properties) from the number of properties available in the December 2025 report. Just 1% of all properties available to rent at the time of data collection were available within HAP limits. Eight of the 16 study areas had no properties available within HAP limits in either the December 2025 or March 2026 reports. These include Athlone, Galway City Suburbs, Galway City Centre, Co. Leitrim, Limerick City Suburbs, Limerick City Centre, Portlaoise, and Waterford City Centre. Six of the 16 study areas saw a reduction in the number of HAP properties available since the December 2025 report. These include Cork City Suburbs (-1 property), Dublin City North (-7 properties), Dublin City South (-7 properties), Dublin City Centre (-2 properties), Dundalk (-1 property), and Kildare (-1 property).

As seen in previous **Locked Out of the Market** reports, the supply of properties within HAP limits was predominantly found in Dublin; 11 (79%) of the 14 HAP properties were found across the three Dublin study areas. Just three of the 13 study areas outside of Dublin had properties available to rent within HAP limits. These included Cork City Centre (1 property), Dundalk (1 property) and Sligo Town (1 property). No properties were available to rent within HAP limits in 10 of the 16 study areas. These include Athlone, Cork City Suburbs, Galway City Suburbs, Kildare, Galway City Centre, Co. Leitrim, Limerick City Suburbs, Limerick City Centre, Portlaoise, and Waterford City Centre.

Single person households received an increased HAP rate to match that available for couples in July 2022. The **Locked Out of the Market** March 2026 report found two properties suitable for single person/couple households within standard HAP limits, located in Dublin City North (1 property) and Sligo Town (1 property). There were six properties suitable for single person/couple households within discretionary HAP limits, located in Cork City Centre (1 property), Dublin City North (3 properties), and Dublin City South (2 properties).



Up until the March 2024 **Locked Out of the Market** report, studio apartments have not been included as a suitable option for any of the four household categories examined. This is due to the inherent inadequacy of studio apartments as long-term housing solutions, given the lack of space and privacy they provide. However, we note that studio apartments may be suitable for some single person households, particularly given the severity of the housing crisis, which has left households with extremely limited housing options. For the purpose of this report, studio apartments are not included in the overall figure for HAP properties. However, we note there were 14 studio apartments available within HAP limits during the study period. Just one of these properties was available within standard HAP limits. 12 of these studio apartments were located in Dublin, one in Dundalk, and one in Kildare. There were no properties available to couple/one parent households with one child through a standard HAP rate. There were four properties available through discretionary HAP rates. Three of these properties were located in Dublin, and one in Dundalk.

There were no properties available to couple/one parent households with two children through a standard HAP rate. There were 3 unique properties available through discretionary HAP rates, and an additional 4 properties that overlapped with properties available to families with one child. The three unique properties were all located in Dublin.



Summary of Key Findings



» The report found just **14 properties available within discretionary HAP limits** across the 16 study areas.

» This represents just **1% of the total properties** examined in the study.

» This is lower than 2024 and 2025's average of 3%. In 2023, an average of 4% of properties were available through HAP. In 2022, the average was 8% and in 2021 the average was 28%.



» **Just two properties were available through standard HAP limits.**



» **11 (79%) of the 14 properties available through HAP were in Dublin.** In Dublin, the discretionary rate allows up to an additional 50% on the standard rate; this is limited to 35% elsewhere in the country.



» **In 10 out of the 16 study areas there were no properties available to rent through HAP** in any household category. These include Athlone, Cork City Suburbs, Galway City Suburbs, Kildare, Galway City Centre, Co. Leitrim, Limerick City Suburbs, Limerick City Centre, Portlaoise, and Waterford City Centre.

Household Types

The study found a total of 14 properties to rent within HAP limits across the 16 study areas in at least one of the four household categories. 12 of these properties were available under discretionary HAP limits, and two were available within standard HAP limits.



Single Persons and Couples

There were two properties available for single person/couple households within standard HAP limits, located in Dublin City North (1 property) and Sligo Town (1 property). There were 6 properties suitable for single person/couple households within discretionary HAP limits, located in Cork City Centre (1 property), Dublin City North (3 properties), and Dublin City South (2 properties).



Couple/One Parent with One Child

There were no properties available to couple/one parent households with one child through a standard HAP rate. There were 4 properties available through discretionary HAP rates. These were located in Dublin City North (1 property), Dublin City South (1 property), Dublin City Centre (1 property), and Dundalk (1 property).



Couple/One Parent with Two Children

There were no properties available to couple/one parent households with two children through a standard HAP rate. There were three unique properties available through discretionary HAP rates, and an additional four that overlapped with properties available to families with one child. The three unique properties were in Dublin City North (1 property) and Dublin City South (1 property), and Dublin City Centre (1 property).

Voices of those Locked Out

Ellen,

Mid West service user

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The cost of living in Ireland has risen too high in recent years especially renting and renting while on a social welfare payment. Between electricity, oil, and rent particularly skyrocketed over recent years even with HAP and some other benefits getting by on a weekly basis can be a struggle. Even when I had a working income renting would have been a struggle to find accommodation and not affordable given the rising inflating market. Daft as of recent months has offered not much of housing variety and what was on offer is overpriced shared accommodation, and even more overpriced open accommodation.

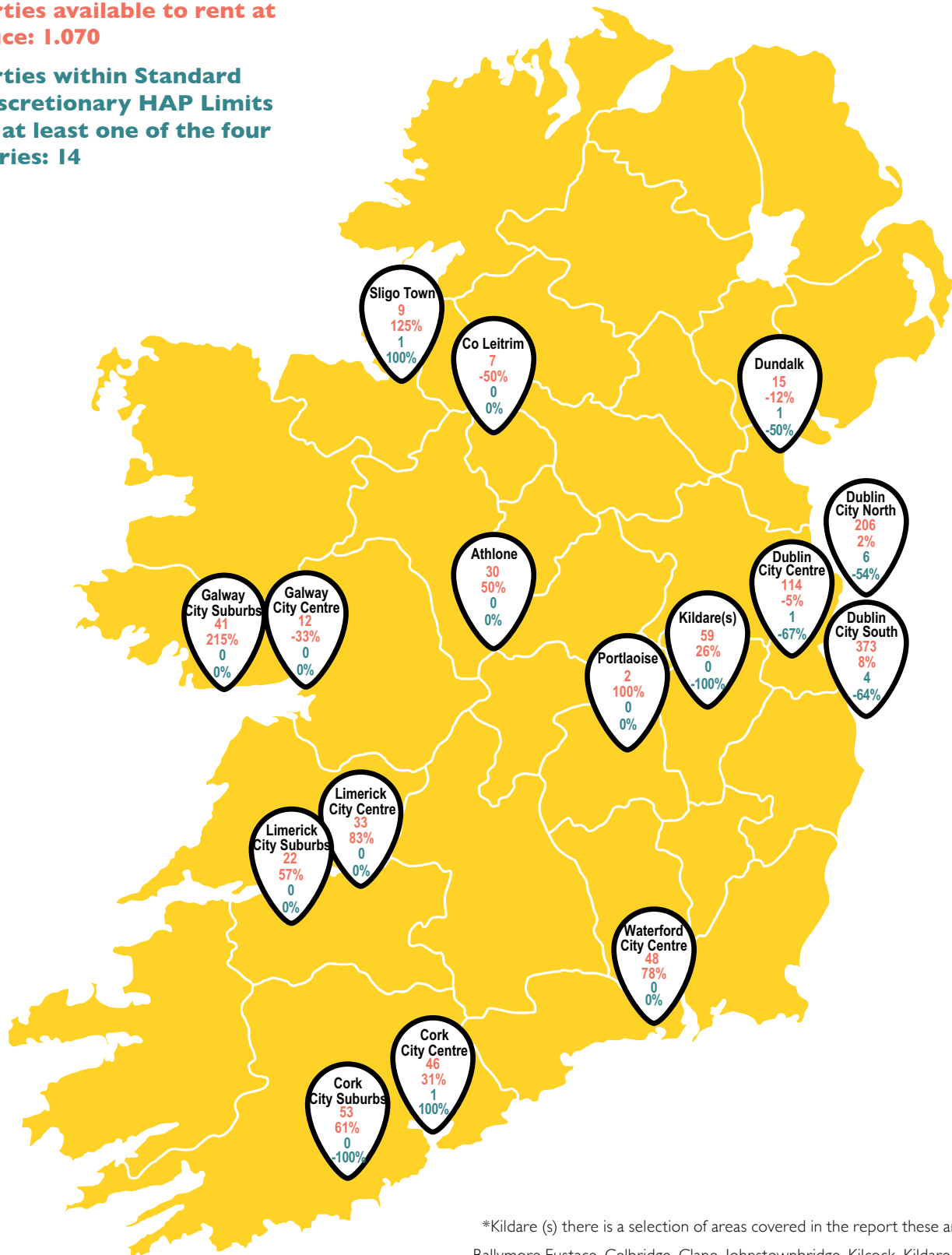
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Properties Available to Rent at Any Price and Within HAP Rates Across the 16 Study Areas

Properties available to rent at any price: 1,070

Properties within Standard and Discretionary HAP Limits within at least one of the four categories: 14



*Kildare (s) there is a selection of areas covered in the report these are: Ballitore, Ballymore Eustace, Celbridge, Clane, Johnstownbridge, Kilcock, Kildare, Kill, Leixlip, Maynooth, Naas, Newbridge, Prosperous, Rathangan, Robertstown, Sallins, Straffan, and The Curragh

% change from the last quarter in properties available to rent at any price.

% change from the last quarter in properties available within HAP or Discretionary HAP rates within the 4 household types.