

The National Roma Infoline Annual Report 2022



Cairde
Challenging ethnic minority health inequalities



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Cairde is a community development organisation working to tackle health inequalities among minority ethnic communities by improving their access to health services and their participation in health planning and delivery. Since 2010, Cairde has been providing information and advocacy to a significant and increasing number of Roma families and individuals in Dublin, Balbriggan, and nationally. Cairde's National Roma Infoline was established in March 2020 to respond to Roma health needs in Ireland.

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Timeline of the National Roma Infoline



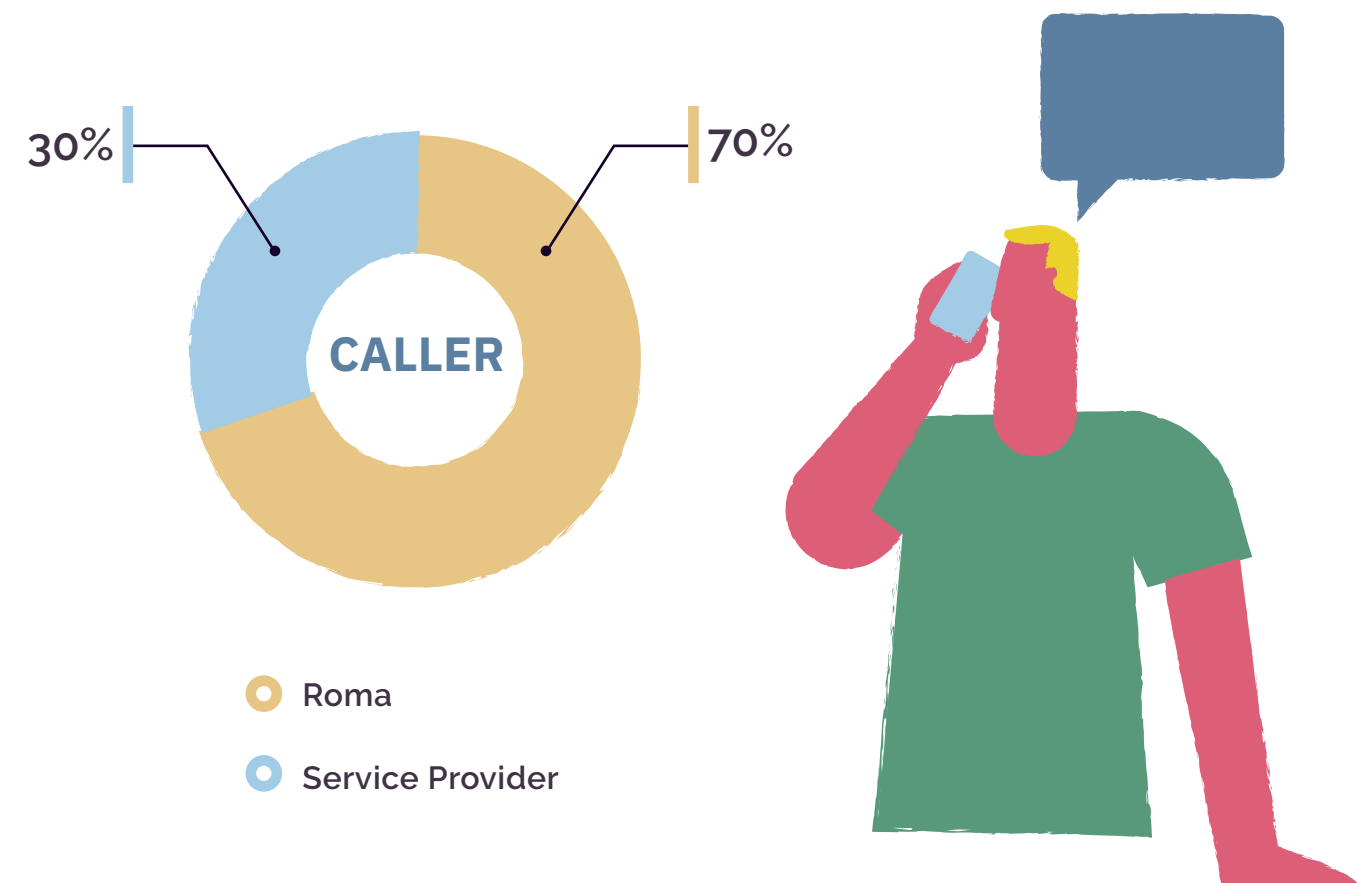
Overview of 2022 Calls

Number of Calls

Between the 1st of January 2022 and the 31st of December 2022, the Infoline dealt with 5,374 calls.

In 2022, the Infoline addressed a wide variety of issues from both Roma and service providers. This included accommodation, translation and interpretation, health, and social welfare. The most common reasons for calling were accommodation, health, and translation and interpretation (most frequently in the areas of accommodation and health). Typically, callers had more than one reason for calling the Infoline and the Infoline dealt with many complex cases, one of these is outlined in a case study later in the report.

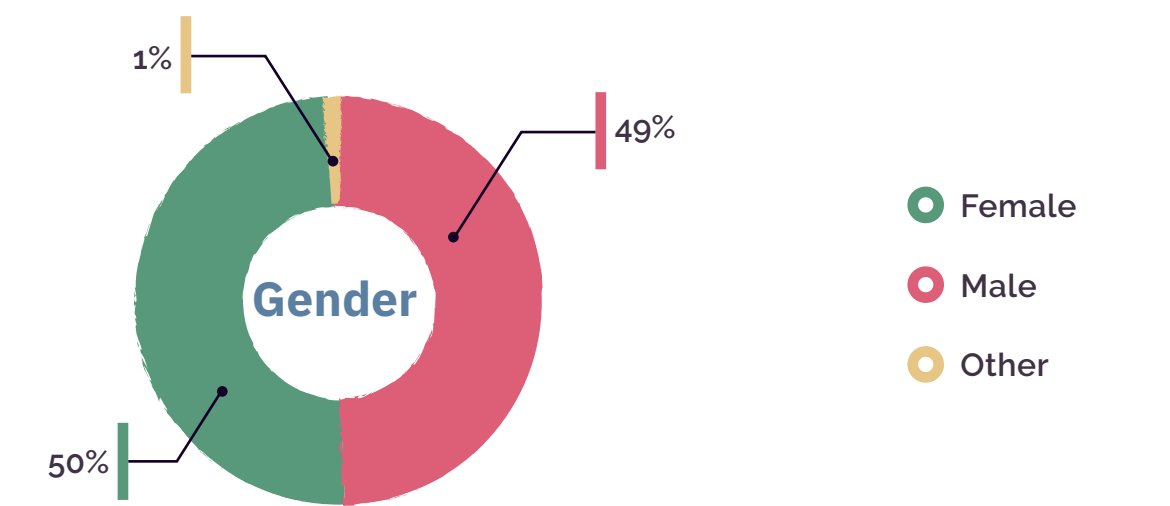
Caller Type



The graphs below outline data collected from the Infoline calls, including information on gender, PPS numbers, medical cards, age group, service providers, location, and accommodation.

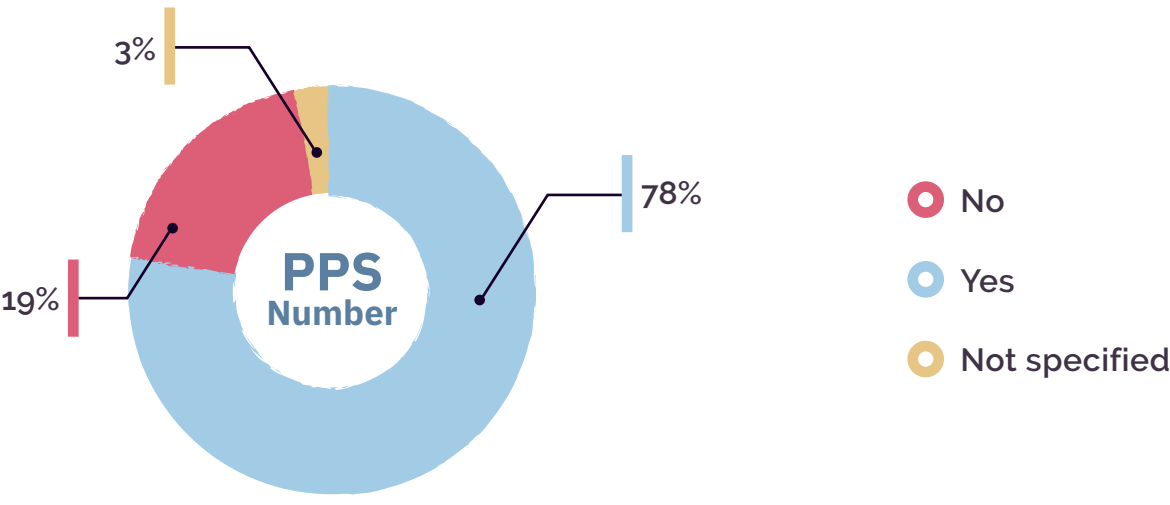
Gender

This graph shows that 50% of the calls dealt with by the National Roma Infoline in 2022 were from or on behalf of Roma women and 49% of the calls were from or on behalf of Roma men. In some cases, gender was not recorded, for example in the case of a general query.



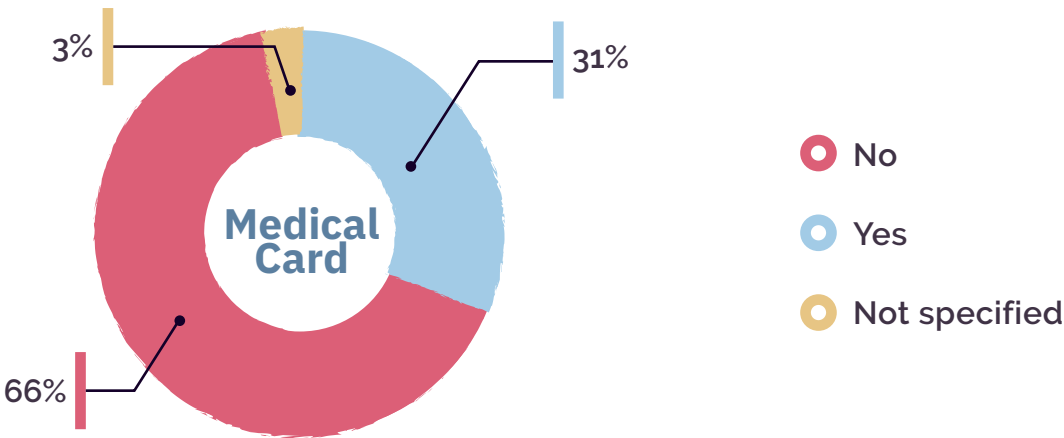
PPS Number

Close to a quarter of incoming Infoline calls were made from or on behalf of Roma who had no PPS number.

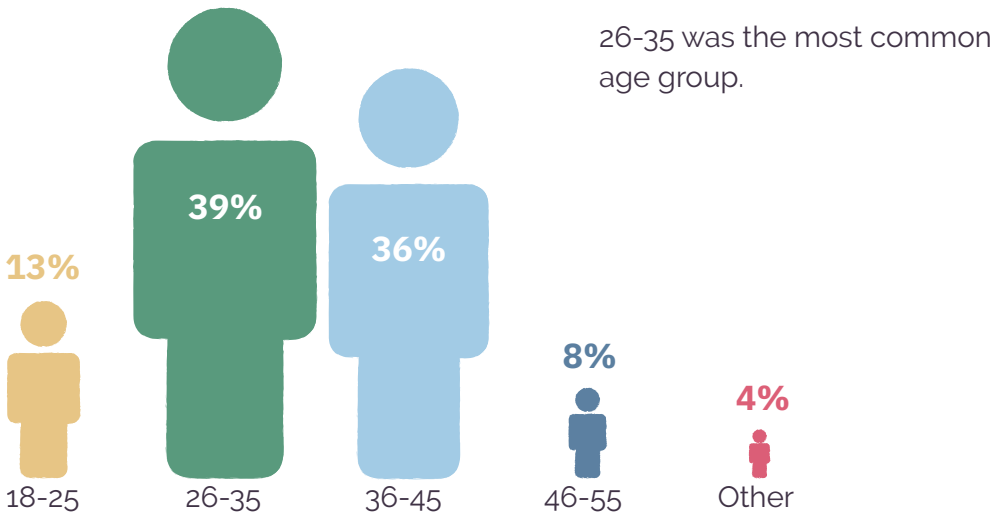


Medical Card

More than half of the incoming Infoline calls were made from or on behalf of Roma who had no medical card.



Age Group



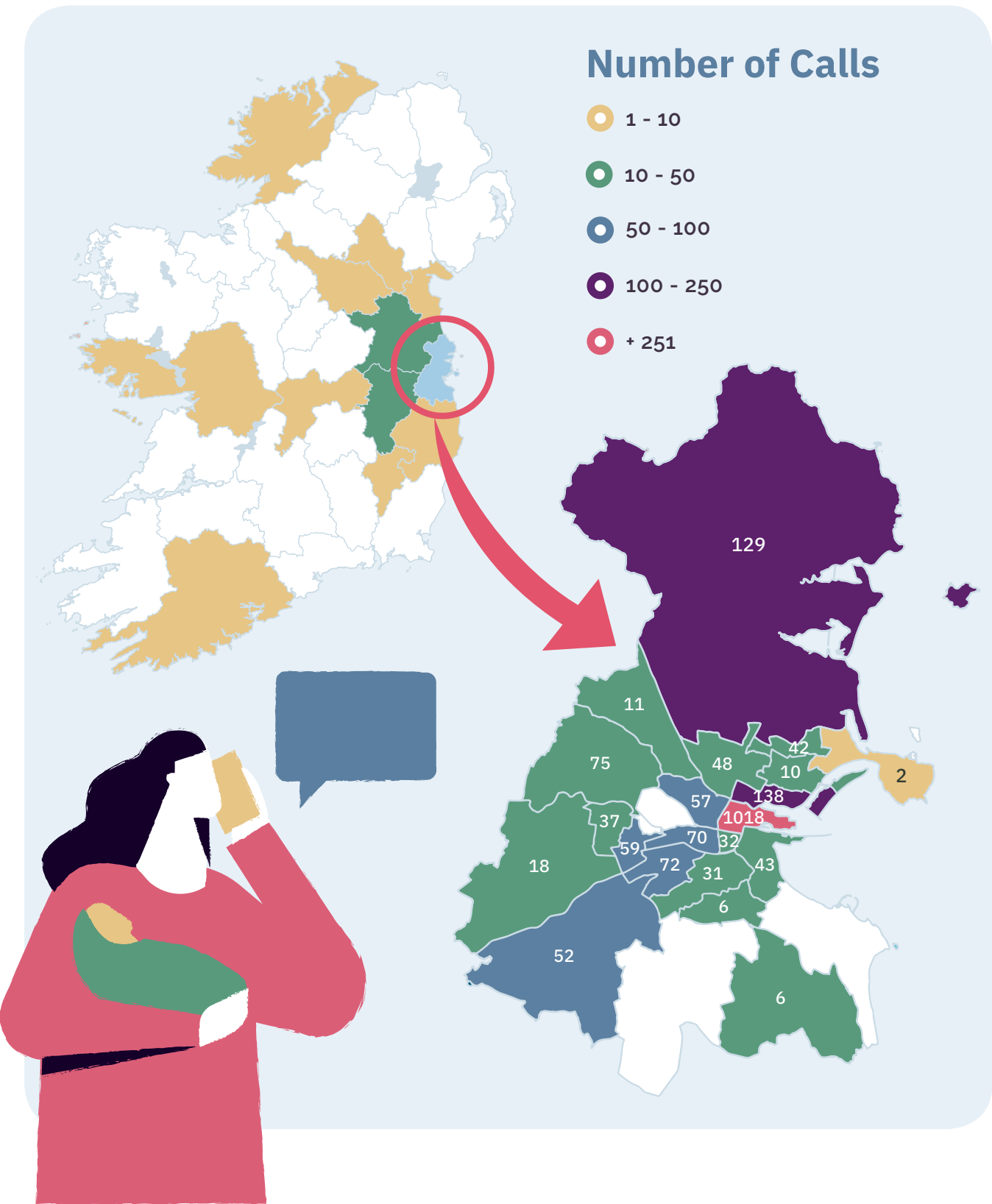
Service Providers

In 2022, 30% of the calls addressed by the Infoline were from service providers around the country. The Infoline received the majority of these calls from health services including staff from self-isolation facilities, GPs, hospital staff, primary care centres, and the Health Link Team for the Homeless. The Infoline also received a large portion of calls from emergency accommodation or organisations working in this area.

The Infoline worked with a wide range of organisations in the community and charity sector nationwide. The majority of these organisations deal with issues in relation to health and accommodation. The Infoline also liaised with organisations working in the areas of education, social welfare, employment, repatriation, legal support, and poverty. Additionally, the Infoline received calls from a number of public and statutory bodies.

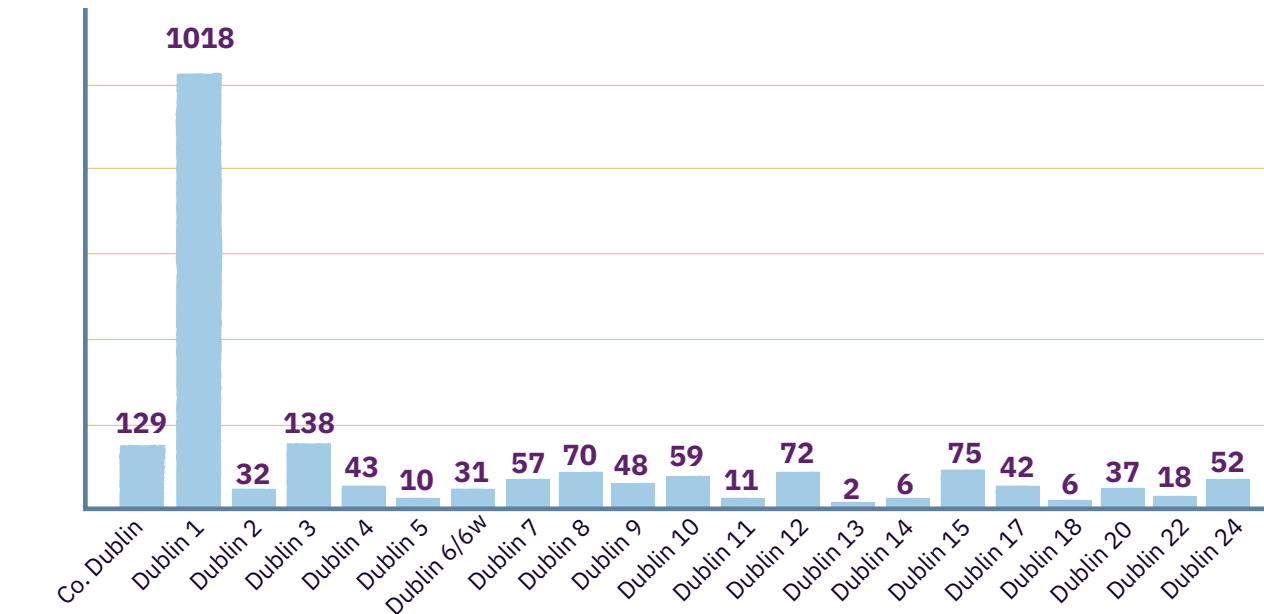
Location

The majority of calls to the Infoline were received from Dublin, and a further breakdown showed that Dublin 1 was the area in the country with the highest number of calls to the Infoline. This graph shows that calls to the Infoline were received from all corners of the Republic of Ireland.



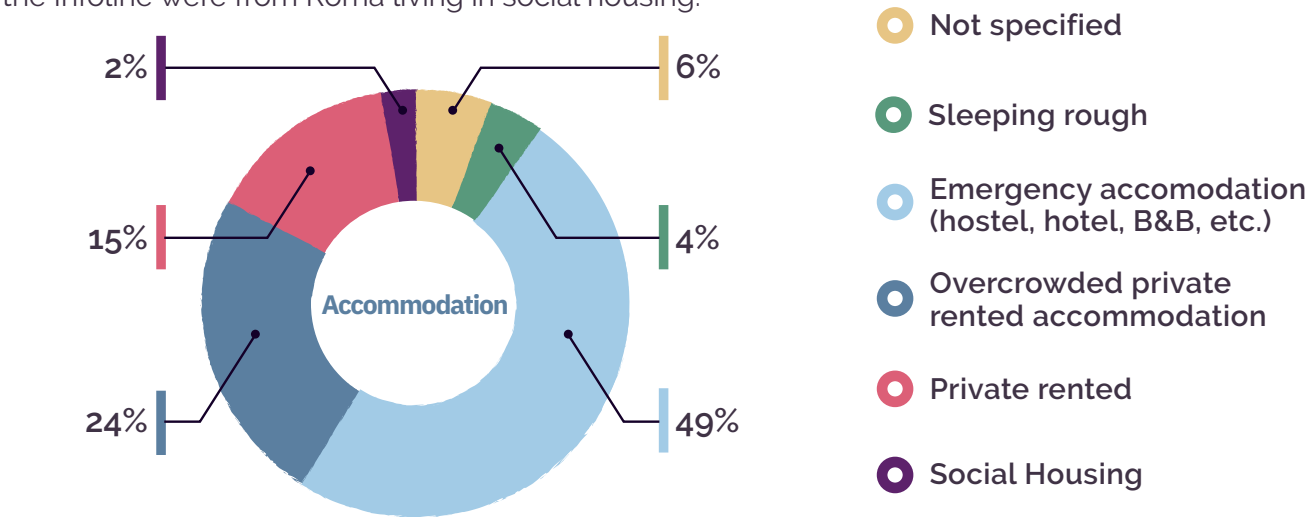
Breakdown of Calls from Dublin

The majority of calls to the Infoline were received from Dublin, and a further breakdown shows that Dublin 1 was the area in the country with the highest number of calls to the Infoline. This is unsurprising considering a large number of emergency accommodation is located in this area, and as shown in the graph below, most of the Roma callers to the Infoline are homeless.



Accommodation

As for accommodation, 77% of incoming calls were made from or on behalf of Roma who were homeless. This includes Roma who were sleeping rough, living in emergency accommodation or in overcrowded private rented accommodation. This reflects the dire housing situation in Ireland due to the ongoing housing crisis¹. In some of the most recent data published by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, EEA/UK citizens made up 22% of adults accessing local authority managed emergency accommodation². It is interesting to note that only 2% of the calls to the Infoline were from Roma living in social housing.



¹ Kitty Holland 2023, 'Homelessness in Ireland hits record peak of more than 11,700', The Irish Times, 24th February 2023, viewed 6th April 2023, < <https://www.irishtimes.com/ireland/social-affairs/2023/02/24/more-than-11700-people-homeless-in-ireland-in-new-record-high/> >

² Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, February 2023, 'Monthly Homelessness Report February 2023, viewed 6th April 2023, < <https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/251749/eb885975-c738-4e8f-9b96-43981559f643.pdf#page=null> >, p.3

Case Study: Accommodation and Health

A Roma woman called the Infoline because she did not speak English and she had been trying to make calls to help her with accommodation. The woman explained to the Infoline that her husband was currently working and that she had also been previously working in Ireland but that she had to leave work, after one month of employment, to care for her daughter. The woman's daughter has a disability that requires 24-hour care, and the family was asked to leave by the family they had been staying with in over-crowded accommodation.

The Infoline contacted the local authority where the family was connected. The worker there explained that they could not support the family previously because they could not communicate in English on the phone. The Infoline supported the family to be assessed for social housing by the local authority and once they had been assessed they were then accommodated in emergency accommodation.

As the family were new to Ireland and spoke no English, they were unaware of the various health supports and services available to assist with their daughter's care. The Infoline provided information on how the health system works in Ireland and about a number of different services, including disability supports.



Recommendations: Accommodation

- Interpretation services should be used across all housing services for Roma who do not speak English fluently.
- Housing application forms should be simplified and made available in languages other than English and Irish, including the languages commonly spoken by Roma in Ireland: Romanian, Czech, and Slovak, among others. Resources may also need to be allocated to support local authorities to process applications submitted in the aforementioned languages.
- The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage should introduce actions on Roma and accommodation to the National Traveller Roma Inclusion Strategy (NTRIS) as a matter of urgency. These actions should be drafted in conjunction with organisations working on Roma issues.
- The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage should introduce an ethnic identifier across all their services in order to assess current policy and to develop more targeted policy measures going forward.
- The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage should ensure that the provision of emergency accommodation, across local authorities, is not dependent on the result of a social housing support assessment.
- The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage should review the 41/2012 Housing Circular and consider removing some of the qualifying criteria.
- Anti-racism training that addresses antigypsyism should be implemented across relevant housing and accommodation services as well as systems and procedures that respect cultural diversity.

Recommendations: Health

- Interpretation services should be used systematically across all health services for Roma patients who do not speak English fluently.
- Due to the health inequalities experienced by Roma, the Department of Health and the HSE should consider removing certain qualifying criteria, such as proof of income and proof of rent, when Roma apply for a medical card but cannot meet these requirements.
- Health application forms should be simplified and available in languages other than English and Irish, including the languages commonly spoken by Roma in Ireland: Romanian, Czech, and Slovak, among others. Resources may also need to be allocated to support the HSE to process health application forms submitted in the aforementioned languages.
- Ethnic data should be collected consistently across all health services in Ireland in order to assess current policy and to develop more targeted policy measures going forward.
- Anti-racism training that addresses antigypsyism should be implemented across relevant health services as well as systems and procedures that respect cultural diversity.

Note: This report specifically deals with Roma issues with the knowledge that there are other marginalised groups in Ireland. The recommendations outlined in this report may be applicable to communities in similar situations.

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