

► A 'right to housing'? Or ...

Many on the political left assert a 'right to housing', but that is not how the author of this leaflet views it. A 'right to housing' implies a right to the fruit of other people's labour (which we don't have).

A right to *land* (as contentious as that may be in itself) is a more tenable idea, because the land is 'God-given' (while housing requires human labour and effort for its provision).

► ... the land itself

This is an important distinction. Once we get to grips with the 'land question' the battle will be largely won¹⁾. People will be able to figure out their own housing solutions once access to land is freed up. Do we really need to invent a 'right to housing' to achieve this?

The point is this: if the more fundamental right—to land—was recognized, we might not need the Government to intervene and 'solve' the crisis for us. It's quite likely we could solve it ourselves.

¹⁾One of the main obstacles to achieving this is Government policies on land use. These are discussed more in a separate leaflet available at <https://plainspeak.ie/>

► Summary

Many people are asking or expecting the Government to solve the housing shortage / crisis. This is understandable—when it seems there is no other option. But this leaflet suggests to first of all examine our own attitudes and way of thinking.

Some of the views expressed in this leaflet might seem contradictory—e.g. criticizing the practice of rent-seeking on one hand, while on the other contesting that a 'right to housing' exists.

There is not enough space here to explain how these views can be reconciled.


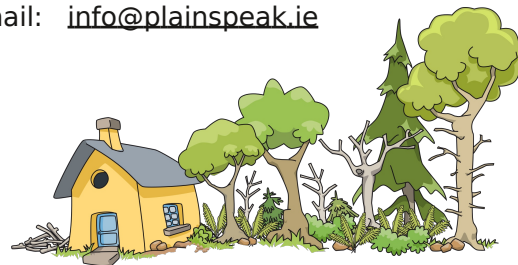
Please see the link below for further explanation and more information.

► More information

- <https://plainspeak.ie/> analysis of housing and other issues

Comments or questions?

Email: info@plainspeak.ie

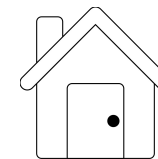


Housing and Shelter

— *a fundamental human need* —

This leaflet examines some 'philosophical' questions related to shelter, housing and the housing crisis.

This leaflet is not associated with any political party or candidate. Its primary aim is not to influence Government policy, but rather to briefly examine our attitudes on this issue (i.e. housing, land and shelter) - and consequently, in part, to each other.



E: info@plainspeak.ie

W: <https://plainspeak.ie>

► A fundamental human need

Shelter is a fundamental human need; beyond a certain degree north or south of the equator it is not possible to function—or even physically survive—long without it.

How can a society which makes access to shelter contingent on rent or financial debt regard itself as ‘civilized’?



Is a society which leaves people homeless truly ‘civilized’?

► Where are people supposed to go?

Where are people supposed to go when houses and accommodation are out of reach, and the land is all already claimed? What exactly are they supposed to do?

Take to houseboats and a life on the river or at sea? Grow wings and take to the skies?

We are land animals, and to be prohibited from access to land is to be disconnected from everything that our life depends on.

► Homes and shelter - our attitudes

Some people view homes, accommodation and shelter merely as ‘financial assets’ to ‘make money from’, rather than as something to live in—as a basis for all other aspects of life.

Even though there are many aspects to this problem (the housing shortage), this attitude seems to be a large part of it.

► Treating humans worse than animals

Our society, in some ways, treats pets and animals with more compassion and plain decency than our human brethren.

No one charges their dogs and cats rent, do they? No one threatens their pet with eviction or turfs them on to the street for failing to make a monthly payment. But humans treat each other this way all the time.

The goal of this leaflet is not to point the finger at all landlords, some of whom might be renting out their property only to repay a mortgage, etc. But the practice of rent-seeking *is* a factor in this problem, and there is no point in making any bones about this fact (even if stating it rubs some people up the wrong way).

► A moral rather than technical issue

Why can't we, in this day and age, figure out a way of helping people to meet this fundamental need—without prostrating ourselves before moneylenders or landlords?

We have the technical ability and competence to solve it, but that is not enough. It's mainly a moral problem, rather than a technical or logistical one.

Advances in building technology (e.g. modular homes, etc.) might increase, but as long as the perception of homes as ‘financial investments’ predominates—and as long as rent-seeking remains widespread and ‘morally respectable’—this problem will not be solved (not in a way that maintains human dignity and freedom anyway).²⁾

²⁾ Again, this leaflet is not asserting that rent-seeking is immoral in all cases. It depends on the details of the situation, and the spirit in which actions are taken.