



**National Student
Engagement Programme**

Clár Rannpháirtíochta Náisiúnta
na Mac Léinn

Census Project Report

2024 – 2025



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Census Project Report 2023–24

Introduction

The Class Rep Census Project was established by the National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP) in 2022, with the aim of directly ask students to share more information about themselves to provide us with a snapshot of the diversity of student representation in Irish Higher Education.

The Census Project is run annually, and this is the third year (2024/25) that the project has been carried out.

This data collection is carried out via a survey that is embedded within the *'Introductory Class Rep Training'* (ICRT) Feedback form that is circulated to all participants of the ICRT training sessions.

Students are informed prior to taking the survey of the following:

- Their responses are anonymous
- Their responses will not be shared with their higher education institution
- Not all questions may apply to them, and they may not know the answer to every question, and
- They don't have to answer these questions if they don't want to.

This year the survey had 254 respondents across 17 higher education institutions that are partnered with the National Student Engagement Programme.

Census Project

The Questions

The Census Project is composed of 12 questions.

The questions are as follows:

1. Please describe your gender identity.
2. Is your gender identity the same as the gender you were assigned at birth?
3. What is your ethnicity? *We understand that ethnicity cannot be easily quantified, so please select all that apply to you.*
4. Are you a member of the LGBTQ+ community?
5. Do you have a disability or condition that impacts on your learning, working, or learning activities?
6. If 'Yes', please indicate the nature of the disability or condition. *Select any that apply to you.*
7. Do any of these other conditions which may impact your learning, working, or learning activities apply to you? *Select any statements that apply to you.*
8. If you commute to college, please specify here. *Select as many as apply to your commute.*
9. How long on average does your commute take?
10. If you selected multiple modes of commuting, please go into detail here. *(e.g., if you have to take multiple buses, bus and train, travelling cross-counties, etc.)*
11. How has the cost of living crisis and/or the housing crisis affected you, if at all? *(e.g., sourcing accommodation, impact on college work, impact on social life, etc.)*
12. Do you have any feedback or suggestions for these questions?

Cont.

Census Project

The Questions

As you can see, questions 3, 6, 7, 8 and 9 had multiple choice options to collect the richest data possible. Please find the options below:

Q3. What is your ethnicity?

Arab	Asian or Asian Irish	Asian—Chinese
Asian—Indian	Any other Asian background	Black or Black Irish
Black—African	Black—Caribbean	Any other Black background
Irish Traveller	Roma	White or White Irish
Any other White background	Other	Prefer not to say

Q6. If 'Yes', please indicate the nature of the disability or condition.

Autism Spectrum	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD/ADD)	Mental Health Conditions (e.g., anxiety, depression)
Neurological Conditions (e.g., multiple sclerosis, cerebral palsy, etc.)	Physical Disability (e.g., spina bifida, cerebral palsy, amputations, etc.)	Sensory Disability (e.g. blind, deaf, etc.)
Speech & Language Communication Disorder	Significant Ongoing Illness (e.g., Crohn's Disease, fibromyalgia, etc.)	Specific Learning Difficulty (e.g., dyslexia, dyscalculia, etc.)
Other	Prefer not to say	-

Q7. Do any of these other conditions which may impact your learning, working, or learning activities apply to you?

I work full-time	I work part-time
I commute to college	I have caring responsibilities (e.g. child care, elder care, other)
I do not have a permanent residence	I am in Direct Provision
I am a refugee	I am the first in my family to go to Higher Education
I am financially dependent on a grant (e.g. SUSI)	I have experience of the criminal justice system

Census Project

The Questions

Q8. If you commute to college, please specify here.

Bicycle	Bus
Car	DART/Train
Luas	Motorbike
Walking	-

Q9. How long on average does your commute take?

Less than 30 minutes
30 minutes – 1 hour
1 – 2 hours
2 – 3 hours
3+ hours

Questions 10, 11 and 12 asked participants to give long-form answers. Please find them listed below:

Q10. If you selected multiple modes of transport, please go into detail here.
(e.g., if you have to take multiple buses, bus and train, travelling cross-counties etc.)

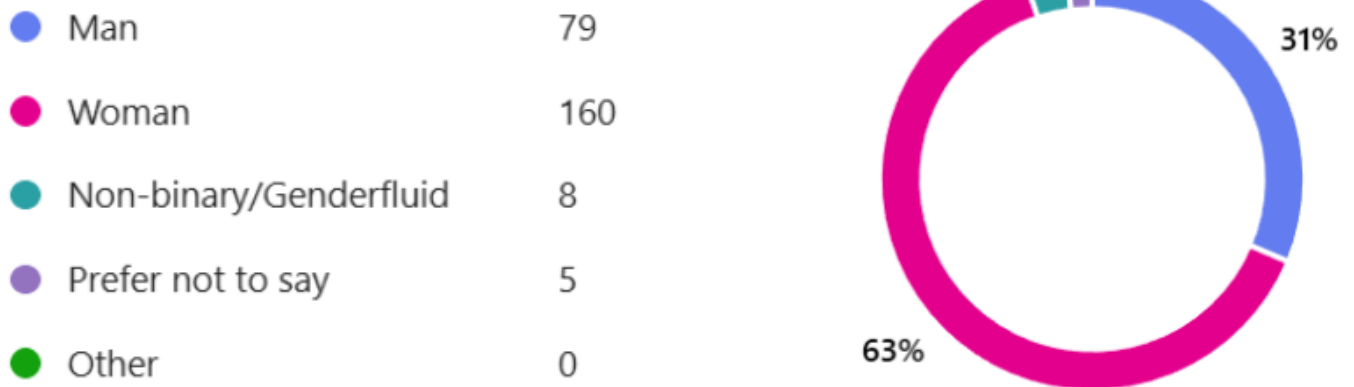
Q11. How has the cost of living and/or the housing crisis affected you, if at all?
(e.g., sourcing accommodation, impact on college work, impact on social life, etc.)

Q12. Do you have any feedback or suggestions for these questions.

Census Project

The Data

Q1. Please describe your gender identity.



Man — 31%
Woman — 63%
Non-binary/Genderfluid — 3%
Prefer not to say — 2%
Other — 0%

Similar to the previous two year's results and aligning with anecdotal evidence, there is a higher percentage of female class representatives.

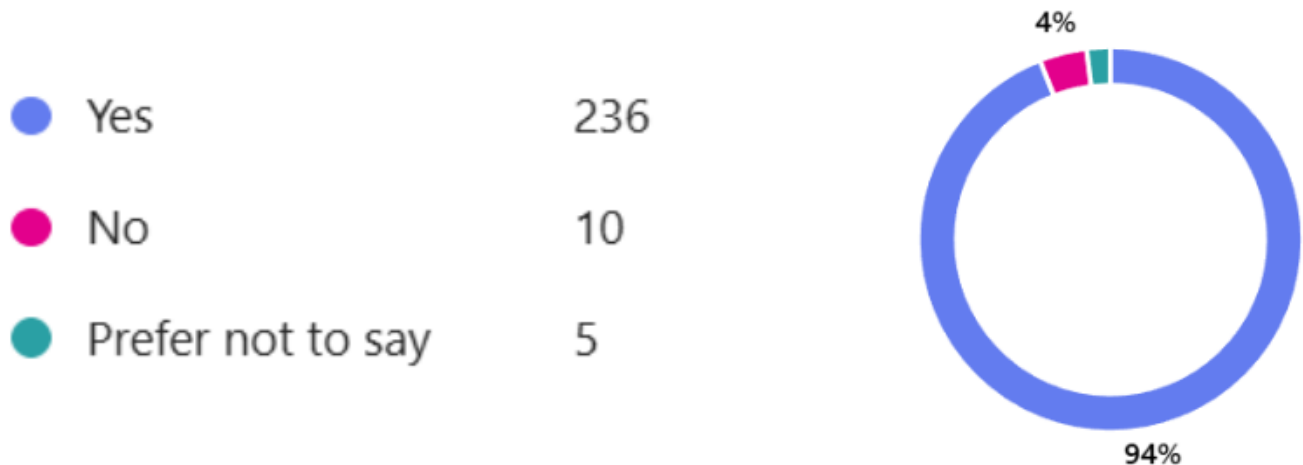
Compared to last academic year, there is a slight increase in representation for female class reps and a slight decrease for male class reps (Woman 56% and Man 39% in 2023/24).

These variations could be accounted for with the slight drop in respondents to the census: 279 versus 254 respondents.

Census Project

The Data

Q2. Is your gender identity the same as the gender you were assigned at birth?



Yes — 94%

No — 4%

Prefer not to say — 2%

An expected result, statistically speaking – 94% of class representatives surveyed identified as the gender identity they were assigned at birth, also known as cisgender.

This is in line with last year's results where 96% of class reps surveyed identified as cisgender. 4% of students representatives surveyed did not identify with the gender they were assigned at birth (i.e. transgender or non-binary/genderfluid), and 2% preferred not to say.

Census Project

The Data

Q3. What is your ethnicity?



As ethnicity is not something that can be easily quantified to limited survey checkboxes, participants were asked to select all options that applied to them.

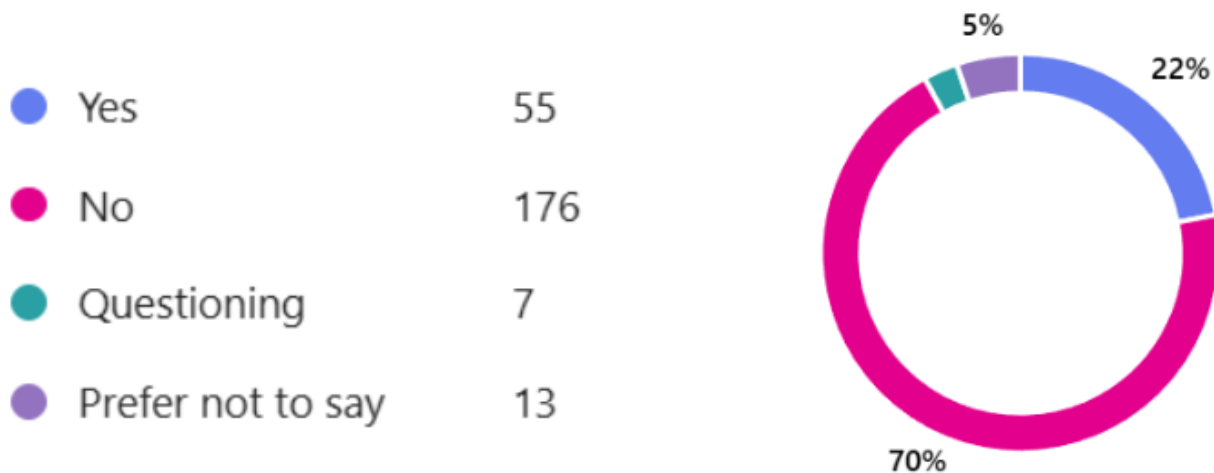
57% identified as 'White or White Irish' which has consistently been the highest cohort each year, although we note there is a decrease of 4% from 2023-24. The only other cohort identified at higher than 10% was 'Asian—Indian' at 15%

All other options selected were below 10%, which is in-line with data collected by the Census Project. It raises an interesting question that class representatives may not be reflective of the actual diversity of students in Irish higher education institutions.

Census Project

The Data

Q4. Are you a member of the LGBTQ+ community?



Yes — 22%

No — 70%

Questioning — 3%

Prefer not to say — 5%

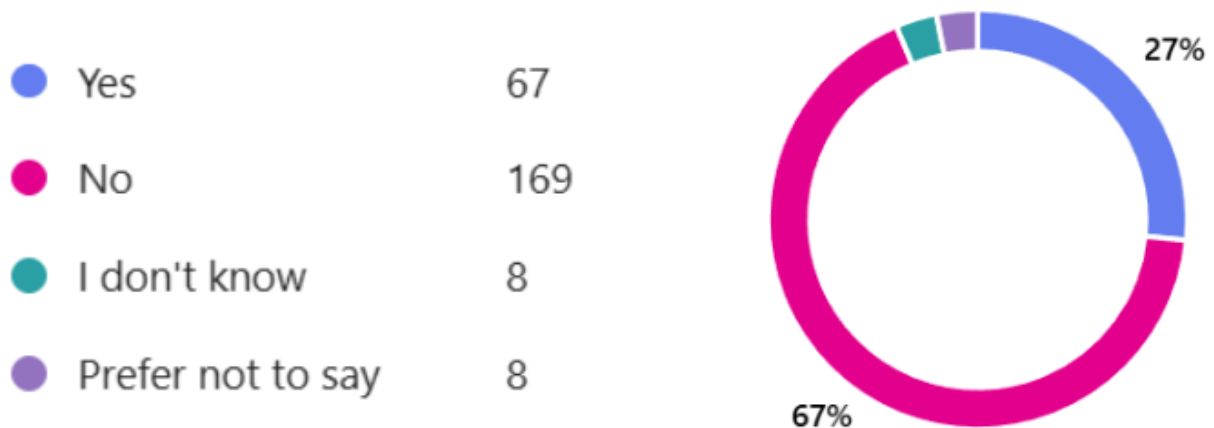
22% of student representatives identified as members of the LGBTQ+ community. This is in-line with previous results (21% 2022/23, 23% 2023/24) where student representatives identified as members of the LGBTQ+ community.

These results are quite a high percentage considering the small pool of participants, and that the estimated national average LGBTQ+ population is between 5–10% (Oireachtas Library & Research Service).

Census Project

The Data

Q5. Do you have a disability or condition that impacts on your learning, working, or learning activities?



Yes — 27%

No — 67%

I don't know — 3%

Prefer not to say — 3%

27% of student representatives identified that they had a disability or condition that impacted their learning, which is in-line with last year's results (28% in 2023/24).

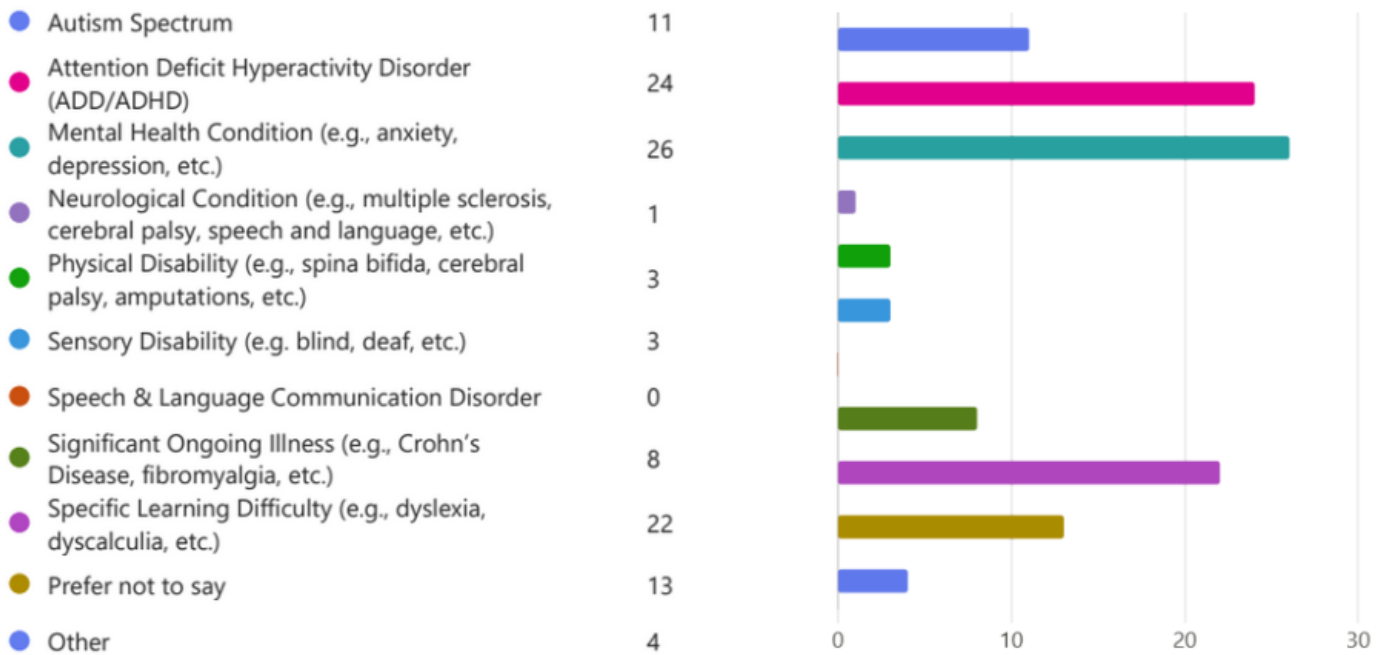
As of 2022/23, there are 20,351 students with disabilities registered for support services across higher education institutes in Ireland, representative of 7.4% the student population, (AHEAD, 2024).

Cont.

Census Project

The Data

Q6. If 'Yes', please indicate the nature of the disability or condition.



There were 82 respondents to Question 6, which is a continuance of Question 5.

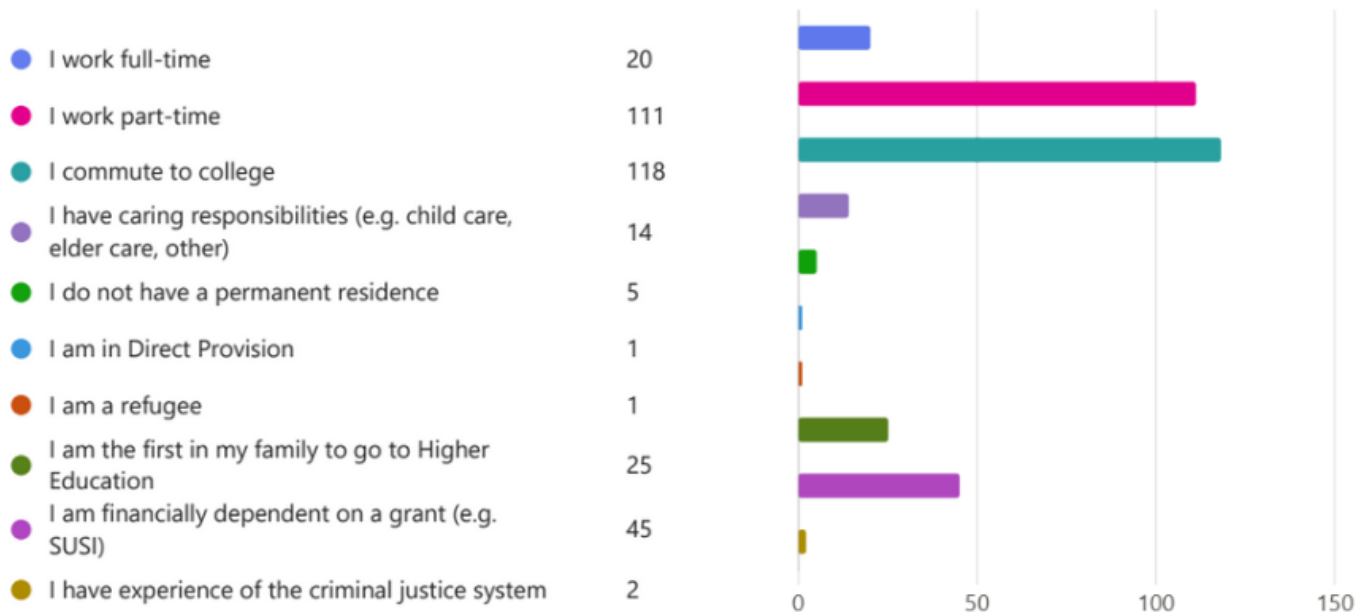
23% of class representatives surveyed identifying that they experience a mental health condition that impacts their learning and working activities. This is a slight decrease from 2023/24 (25.7%), however last year it was the second highest category after ADHD/ADD.

The second highest category, with a decrease from last year (21% vs. 26%) was ADHD/ADD. The next highest categories of disabilities or conditions that student representatives indicated had an impact on their learning and working activities were specific learning difficulties (19%) and autism (10%) respectively.

Census Project

The Data

Q7. Do any of these other conditions which may impact your learning, working, or learning activities apply to you?



35% of student representatives surveyed commute to college by various means (explored in the following question). This is a 24% decrease from last year (59% in 2023/24). 38% of student reps have to work to support themselves (either full or part-time). This result is also lower than last year (63% in 2023/24), but these decreases could be accounted for by the drop in survey respondents.

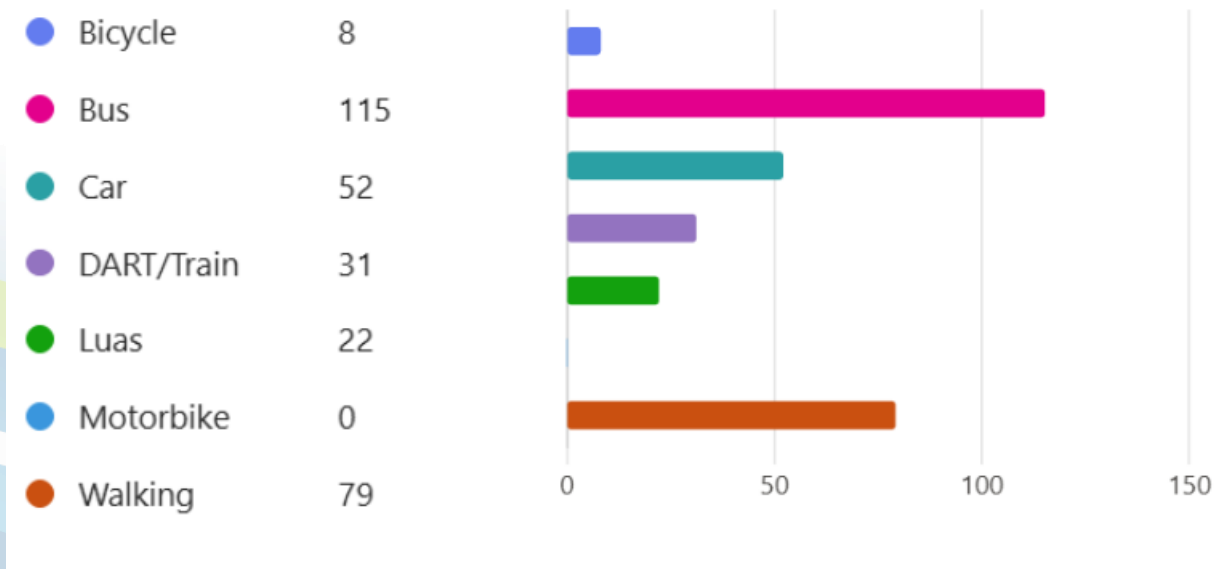
13% are financially dependent on a grant (e.g., SUSI), which is in line with what we're seeing nationally with the student accommodation crisis and increasing cost of living.

7% were the first in their family to go to Higher Education. 5 student reps indicated that they do not have a permanent residence. As these student reps did not identify as Roma, or as members of the Irish Traveller community, we can assume that these students may be homeless.

Census Project

The Data

Q8. If you commute to college, please specify here.



(Out of 224 respondents)

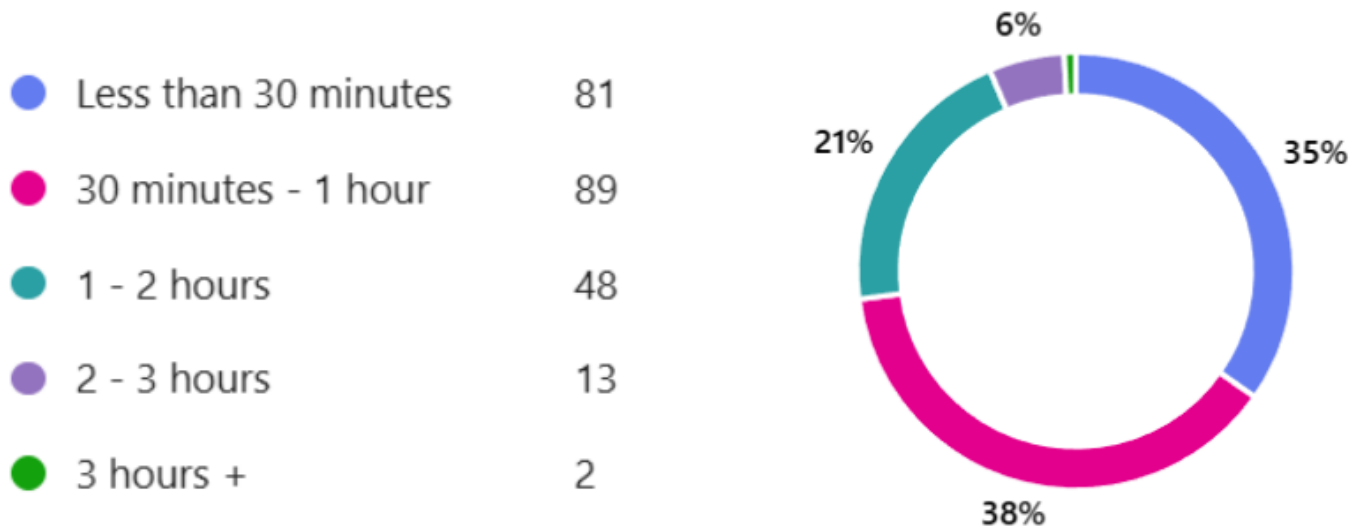
- 37% commute by bus
- 26% commute by walking
- 17% commute by car
- 10% commute by DART/Train
- 7% commute by Luas, and
- 3% commute by cycling to their institution

It is noted that most respondents commute using various combinations of the above methods, (e.g. bus/train/walking, DART/bicycle etc.)

Census Project

The Data

Q9. How long on average does your commute take?



(Out of 233 respondents)

- 35% of respondents stated their commute takes less than 30 minutes
- 38% of respondents stated their commute takes between 30 minutes—1 hour
- 21% of respondents stated their commute takes between 1—2 hours
- 6% of respondents stated their commute takes between 2—3 hours
- 1% of respondents stated their commute takes over 3 hours.

In the following question, we asked respondents to expand on the details of their commute. We have included some quotes from various respondents.

Census Project

The Data

Q10. If you selected multiple modes of commuting, please go into detail here.

We have included some quotes from various respondents below.

- “Commuter train from Leixlip to Conolly, then a DART, then a bus to the college.”
- “I walk from my house to the train for about 20 minutes, then take the train for 30 minutes then the bus for 20-30 minutes.”
- “10 minute walk to the Luas, then 50 minute ride until a 5 minute walk to the bus which then takes 30 minutes.”
- “Walk to first bus, travel for 50-60 minutes, walk to DART station and then wait for DART which takes 30-ish minutes, then wait for another bus which takes 10-20 minutes.”
- “I have to either cycle or walk to the Luas stop first around 20 minutes, and then take rather either bus or Luas. Around 35 minutes (in case of the Luas) or 45-50 minutes (if it is the bus). “
- “ I travel from Mayo to Donegal.”
- “I sometimes have to take a bus as the expense of running a car is quite high.”
- “I walk to Navan town, then I take a bus to Dublin. Then I walk to Connolly station, take the DART and then I get another bus.”
- “Depending on the day if I have access to a lift I’ll take it but usually I take the bus.”
- “Often a few buses or bus/train combinations, or bus/lifts as favours are required for me to get in to university.”
- “Sometimes, traveling from my place to college is frustrating because the bus may arrive late or not at all, so I need to leave my house 2 hours early so that I can go to class.”
- “10 minute walk to train station then 35 minute train ride and another 15 minute walk to campus.”

Census Project

The Data

Q11. How has the cost of living crisis and/or the housing crisis affected you, if at all?

We have included some quotes from various respondents below.

- “Sourcing accommodation has been a struggle over the past 3 years, if it weren't for my friends having connections I wouldn't have any place to stay this year.”
- “It makes me stressed as I have to work more and balancing work and college is really hard. I can't go out and social much because things are so expensive as well.”
- “Having to travel for up to 6 hours just to attend college can be exhausting and make keeping up with the content challenging.”
- “It makes me anxious about my future.”
- “Paying for accommodation without parental assistance and difficulty finding a job that works with my busy class schedule is difficult.”
- “Thankfully I have accommodation on campus but without that I would not have somewhere to live.”
- “Difficult to manage rent in proportion to the wages, i.e. more working hours whilst studying and less social life.”
- “I can't afford not to work which makes my ability to go to College events very difficult.”
- “It worked out to be less expensive for me to move to Sweden with my employer on a rotation basis than to travel to Dublin or Cork for work.”
- “Very difficult having to work so much at weekends to afford college fees...I work 12 hour shifts every day and Sundays”
- “ It has a big impact because to pay the high rent we have to work more to get the money necessary, and it means less time to study.”

Census Project

References

References

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Acknowledgements

The National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP) would like to thank all who participated in this year's Class Rep Census Project.

The work of student representatives contributes to the enhancement of teaching and learning, student engagement, and partnerships with staff across Irish higher education. The data collected is invaluable and will assist us in developing future resources and events to benefit students across Ireland, as well as lobbying for future supports and initiatives.

If you have any questions about the Census Project or other NStEP projects, please contact our Development Coordinator, Rachael Sarsfield Ryan, at nstepdevelopment@usi.ie.

The National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP) is a partnership programme of

