



# National Student Engagement Programme

Clár Rannpháirtíochta Náisiúnta  
na Mac Léinn

# Census Project Report 2025 – 2026



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# Census Project Report 2025–26

## 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 fourth year (2025/26) 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 338 total respondents across 23 higher education institutions that participate in 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.)*

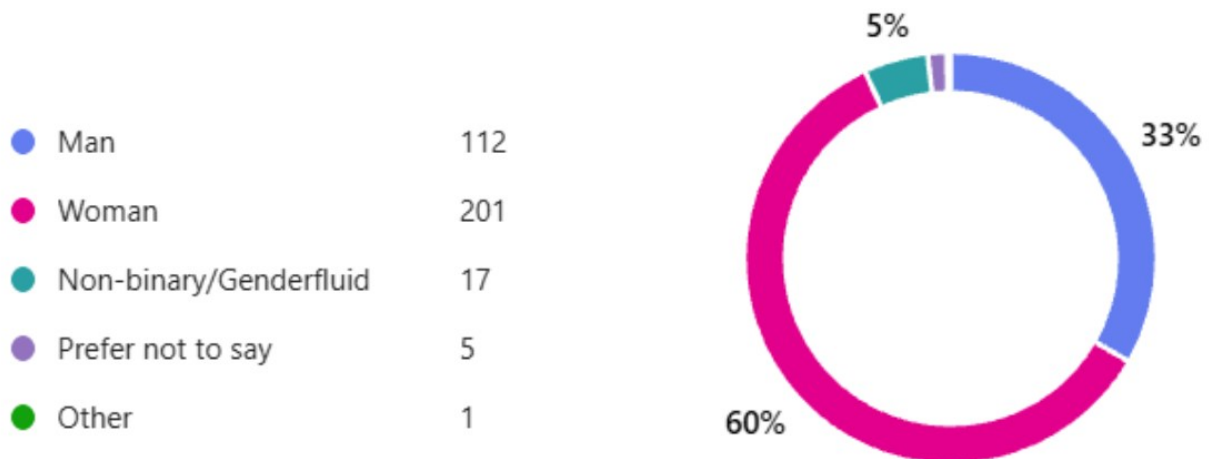
**Q11. How has the cost of living and/or the housing crisis affected you, if at all?**  
*(e.g., sourcing accommodation, impact on college work, impact on social life, etc.)*

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

# Census Project

## The Data

Q1. Please describe your gender identity.



Man — 33%  
Woman — 60%  
Non-binary/Genderfluid — 5%  
Prefer not to say — 1%  
Other — 1%

(of 336 respondents)

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

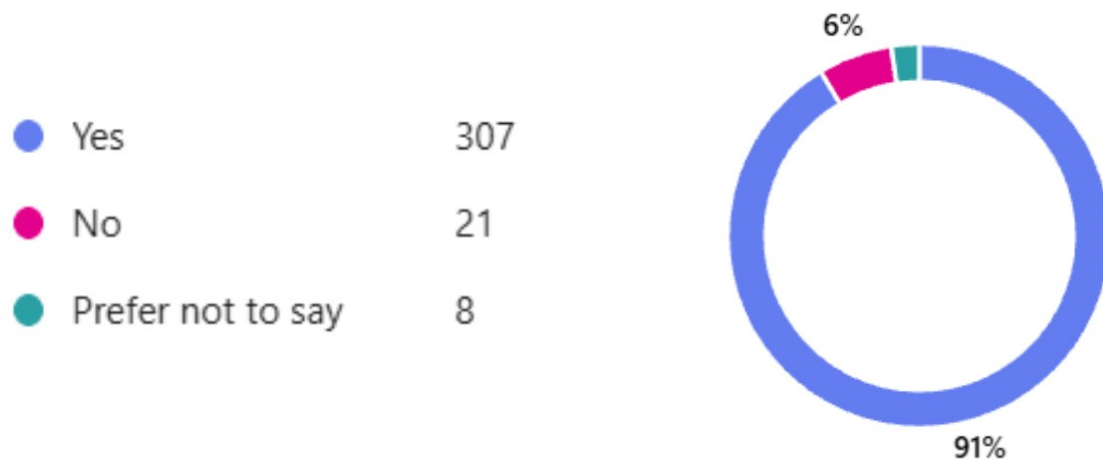
*Compared to last academic year, there is a slight increase in representation for male class reps and a slight decrease for female class reps (Woman 63% and Man 31% in 2023/24).*

*These variations could be accounted for with the variations in respondents to the census, and general fluctuations to academic intake.*

# Census Project

## The Data

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



Yes — 91%

No — 6%

Prefer not to say — 2%

(of 336 respondents)

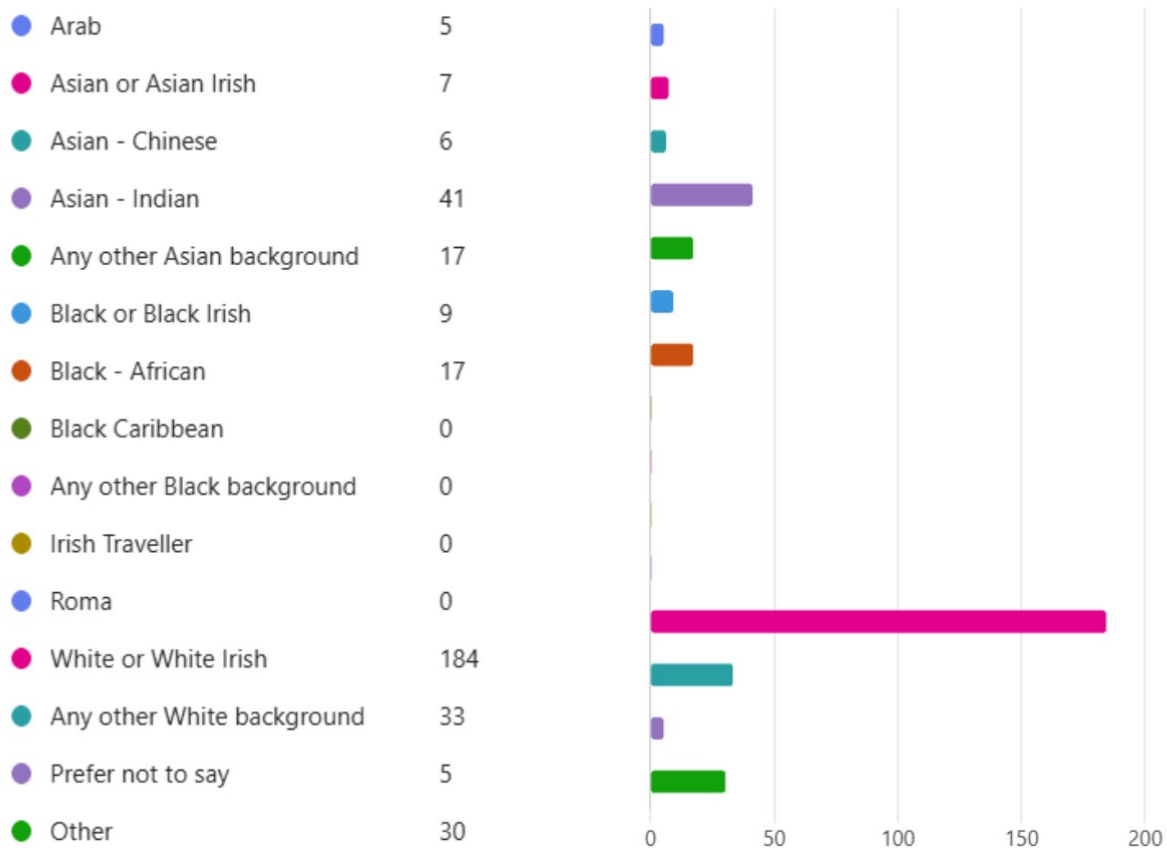
*An expected result, statistically speaking – 91% of class representatives surveyed identified as the gender identity they were assigned at birth, also known as cisgender.*

*This is in line with last year's results where 94% 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, non-binary/genderfluid or gender non-conforming), 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.

*(of 299 respondents)*

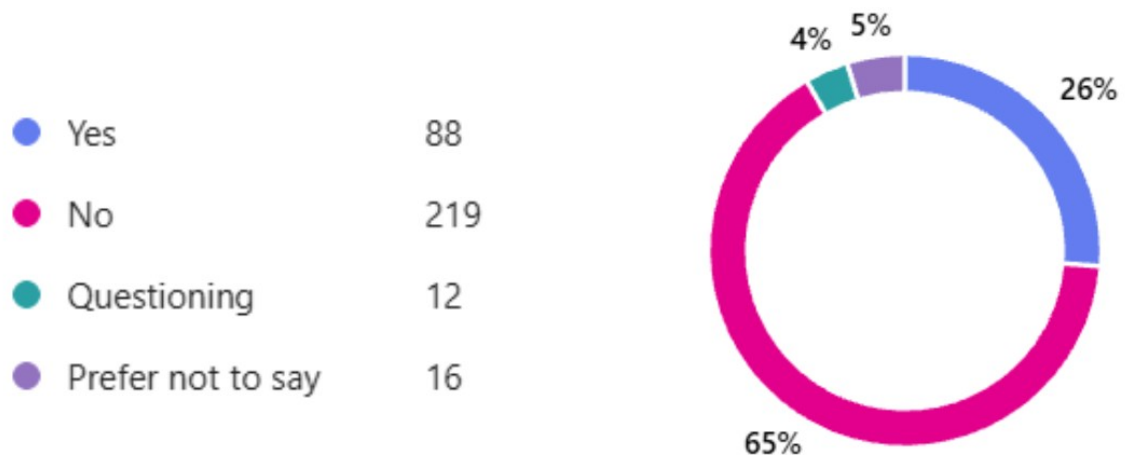
*52% identified as 'White or White Irish' which has consistently been the highest cohort each year, although we note there is a decrease of 5% from 2024-25. The only other cohort identified at higher than 10% was 'Asian—Indian' at 12%.*

*All other options selected were below 10%, which is in-line with data collected by previous Census Project Reports. This is also the first Census Project Report where no respondents self-identified as members of the Traveller or Roma communities.*

# Census Project

## The Data

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



Yes — 26%

No — 65%

Questioning — 4%

Prefer not to say — 5%

(of 335 respondents)

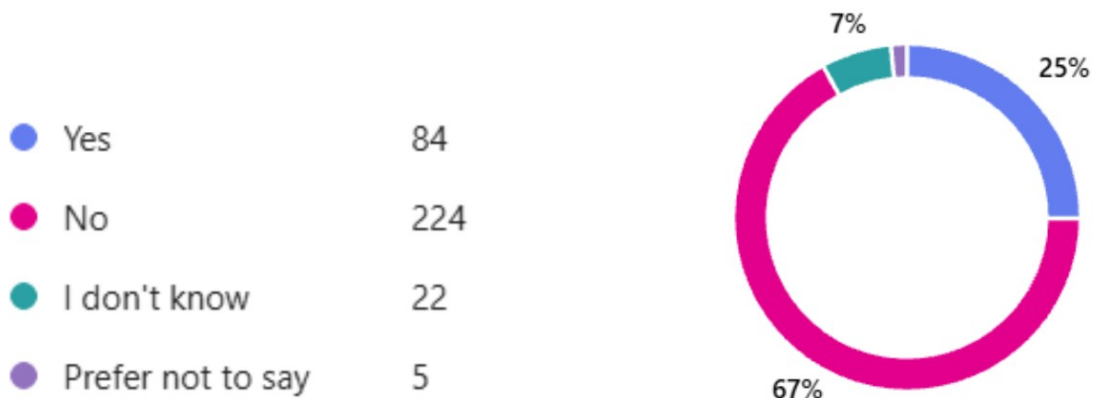
*26% of student representatives identified as members of the LGBTQ+ community. This is consistent with previous year's results of the Census Project Report (21% 2022/23, 23% 2023/24, 22% 2024/25) where student representatives identified as members of the LGBTQ+ community.*

*These results are quite a high percentage considering the small pool of participants, and that the net percentage of LGBTQ+ adults in Ireland is 10% (LGBT+ Pride Report, Ipsos 2025).*

# Census Project

## The Data

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



Yes – 25%

No – 67%

I don't know – 7%

Prefer not to say – 1%

*(of 335 respondents)*

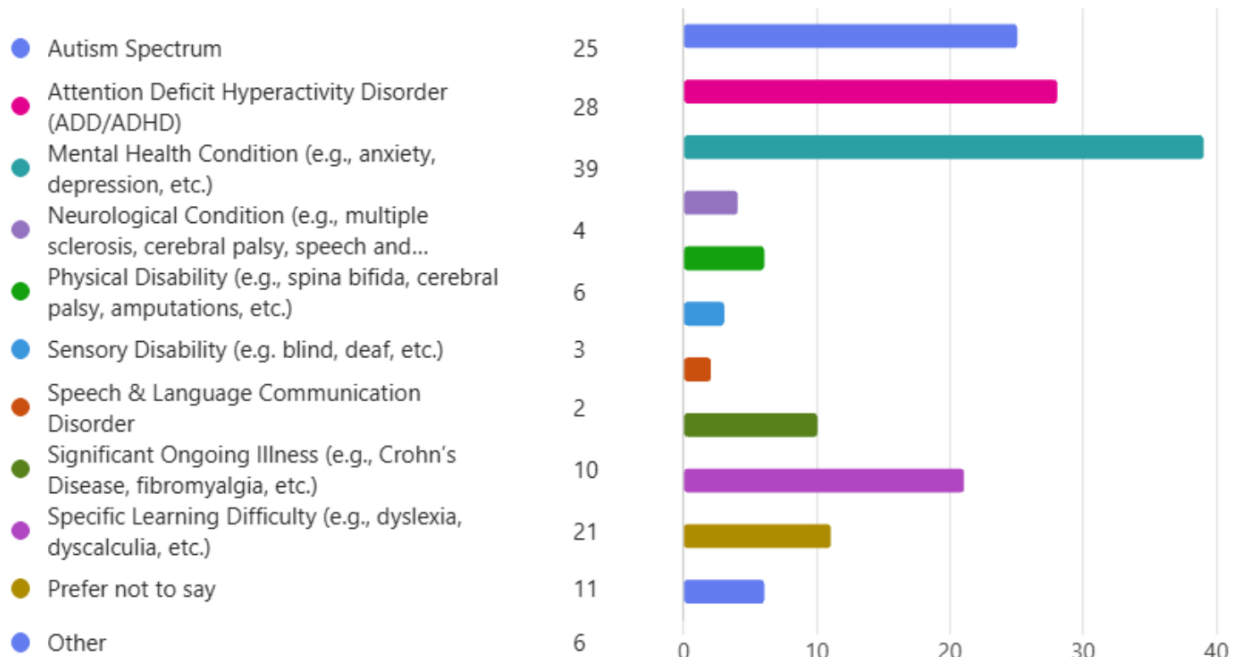
*25% of student representatives identified that they had a disability or condition that impacted their learning, which is similar to last year's results (27% in 2024/25), and in-line with the current Census data from 2022 which indicated that 22.2% of the Irish population self-identified as disabled.*

*According to AHEAD (2025) there are 22,519 students with disabilities registered for support services across higher education institutes in Ireland, representative of 8% of the student population.*

# Census Project

## The Data

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



*There were 115 respondents to Question 6, which is a continuance of Question 5.*

*25% of class representatives surveyed identifying that they experience a mental health condition that impacts their learning and working activities.*

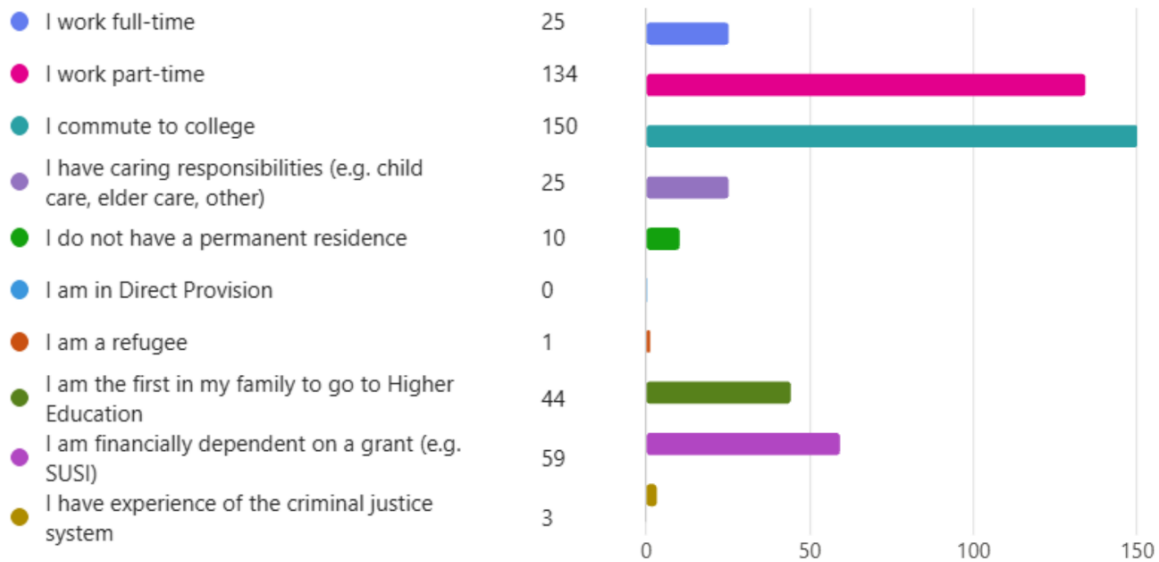
*It remains the highest category that had an impact on student representatives learning and working, with a slight increase from last year (23%, 2024/25).*

*The second and third highest categories were ADHD/ADD (18%) and autism (16%) respectively, closely followed by specific learning difficulties (14%). All other categories were below 10%.*

# Census Project

## The Data

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



(of 338 respondents)

*36% of student reps have to work to support themselves (either full or part-time), similar to last year's results (38% in 2024/25). 33% of student representatives surveyed commute to college by various means (explored in the following question).*

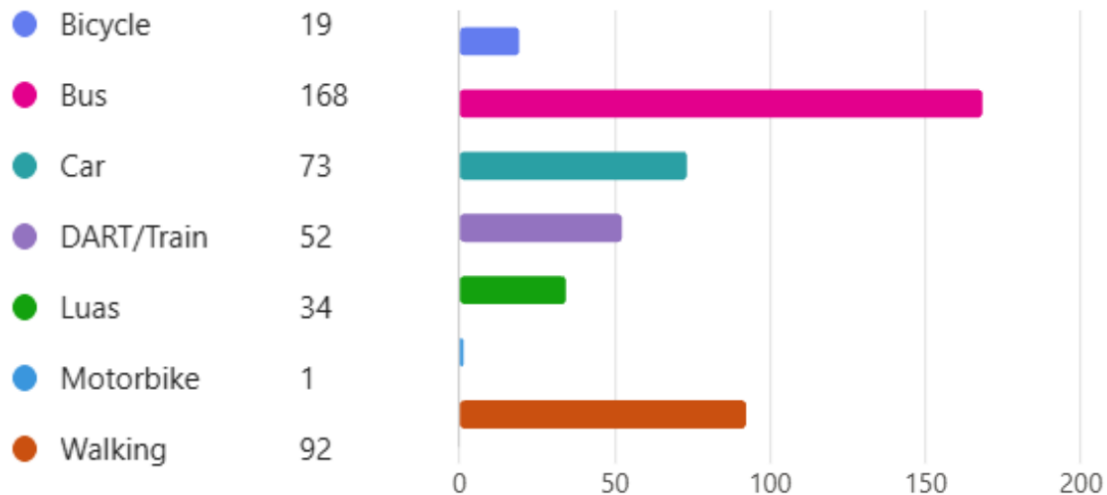
*For the second year in a row, 13% of reps surveyed are financially dependent on a grant (e.g., SUSI). 10% were the first in their family to go to Higher Education, an increase of 3% from 2024/25.*

*10 student reps indicated that they do not have a permanent residence. As these student reps did not identify as members of the Roma or 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.



*(of 338 respondents)*

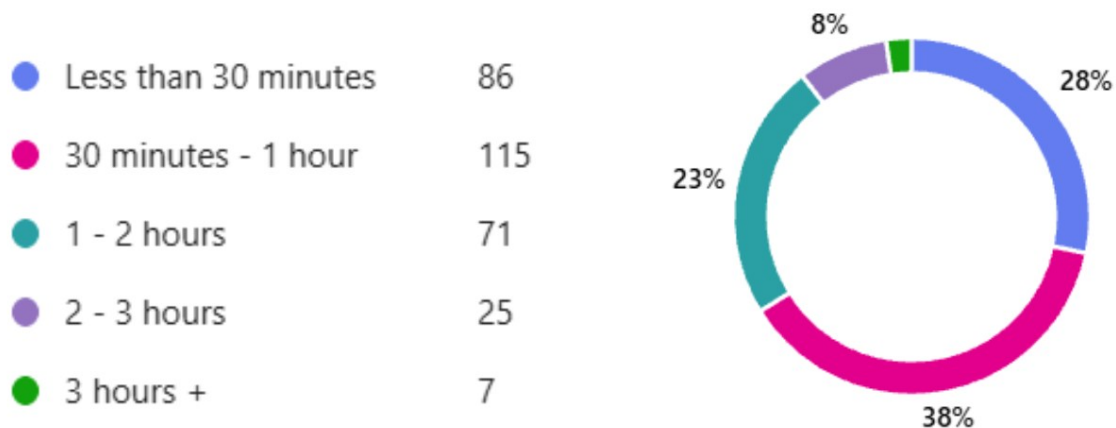
- 38% commute by bus
- 21% commute by walking
- 17% commute by car
- 12% commute by DART/Train
- 8% commute by Luas, and
- 4% commute by cycling to their institution

It is noted that most respondents commute to their institution 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 304 respondents)*

- 28% of respondents stated their commute takes less than 30 minutes
- 38% of respondents stated their commute takes between 30 minutes—1 hour
- 23% of respondents stated their commute takes between 1—2 hours
- 8% of respondents stated their commute takes between 2—3 hours
- 2% 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.

- *"I need to take 3 buses in total. One bus is never reliable and it sometimes disappears from the bus timetable. For me to get to college on time, I need to allocate at least 2 hours to get there."*
- *"I have to get the bus then the Luas, then walk to get to college and it take about 2 hours or more."*
- *"I walk 6 minutes to the bus stop, then the bus takes almost 30-40 minutes to get near, and then I walk another 10 minutes till I get there."*
- *"20 minute walk to train station, 1 train, 25 minute DART and a bus. A direct train and a bus on a good day."*
- *"I have to walk if the bus doesn't come, then get a train then a bus again. If not, then I drive with my friend and it can take a very long time with traffic."*
- *"Usually I have to take a bus and a train to get here. But when I have to get here early, like for a 9 am class, I have to take 2 trains and a 15–20 minute car ride to the station for the first train."*
- *"When I take the bus I have to get the first bus for 2 and a half hours and then a second bus for half an hour. When I get the DART, I have to drive to the DART station 20 minutes away, then be on the DART for an hour and then get the bus for 30 minutes."*
- *"On weekends to get to college I have a 6 to 8 hr commute home and back to college."*
- *"Walk to train station (20 minutes), train ride (30 minutes), bus ride (50 minutes)."*

# 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.

- *"It takes literally all of my money and I am completely reliant on my parents to pay my rent and for food and I have to work part time."*
- *"Way too expensive to find somewhere stable and nice off campus, so I am living with the constant uncertainty of whether I will be homeless or not."*
- *"Finding affordable accommodation is very difficult, digs are not always fit for purpose, high costs mean grocery shopping is becoming more and more difficult/have to be careful what I am buying sometimes ."*
- *"I have to be very careful with my finances and make sure to budget everything. I also struggle to pay for books/materials for classes."*
- *"Impact on social life, basically no college life ."*
- *"Student accommodation is way too expensive and it worries me that it's affecting my parents who pay for it ."*
- *"I could work every day possible, 9-5, and still wouldn't have enough to pay for rent, food, utilities and social costs, so I have to stay at home."*
- *"Bills are through the roof and I have to work extra shifts at nights which leaves me less time to study."*
- *"Because of the housing crisis and high living cost it takes up all my allowances and left me with bare minimum spending, which in total has an effect on my social, personal and as well as my academic life ."*
- *"This issue impacts in my social life and college activities, because as far I live from school, less time for studies, integration and networking."*

# Census Project

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# Census Project Report 2025–26

## 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](mailto:nstepdevelopment@usi.ie).

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

