



TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN STUDENTS' UNION

TCDSU Housing Survey Report 2023/2024

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Introduction



Due to decades of neoliberal social and economic policy perpetrated by this government on the people of Ireland, housing has become both scarce and expensive. Students and staff are struggling and are being pushed into homelessness. We have seen students sleeping in cars, couchsurfing with friends, and dropping out of education, just as we have seen staff commuting for hours, unable to afford groceries and quitting academia. Each year, student representatives raise the alarm bells in the media, yet our pleas fall on deaf ears. Government rhetoric remains the same, that the housing crisis cannot be fixed overnight, while they continue to pursue policies that benefit the rich, the vulture funds and the multinational companies. Rather than build universal and affordable public housing, they subsidise the private market to build housing, resulting in failure. The state of the housing market is actively pricing students out of education, causing academics to leave their jobs and is contributing to making academia elitist, classist and inaccessible. We as the student movement, united with the workers' movement, must build a new society, one in which basic human needs such as housing are not commodities, but fundamental rights accessible to all, regardless of socioeconomic status. It is only together that we can strive to dismantle the oppressive structures that perpetuate inequality, envisioning a society where education, healthcare, and opportunities are equitable, ushering in a new era for humanity.

- László Molnárfi, TCDSU President

The housing crisis can no longer be viewed as a temporary fault, but must be recognised as an intrinsic and prevailing feature of the capitalist system. Housing, as a basic human need,

fundamentally shapes experiences of everyday life – which are becoming increasingly uneven under neoliberal policies of privatisation, financialisation, and austerity. The research presented in this report outlines not just that the vast majority of students are struggling to afford housing, but highlights the emergence of a two-tier student experience shaped by housing affordability. Access to higher education is becoming increasingly polarised under the housing crisis, with students who are living in precarious situations, commuting long distances, or stuck living in their family homes reporting disproportionately negative experiences of student life. This increasing social marginalisation has deeply concerning implications for the future of higher education and Irish society as a whole. It must not be normalised that students are struggling to survive in order to gain an education, and that university is becoming a privilege for the few who can comfortably afford housing in the current economy.

With this report we hope to bring light to the extent of the housing crisis as experienced by Trinity students, representing just a fraction of the housing injustices experienced by students across the country. We will continue to resist the profit-based housing system, and fight for an alternative based on justice, solidarity, and hope.

- Siubhán Stockman, TCDSU Housing Rights Officer

Methodology

The data presented in this report was collected using an online survey open to all TCD students in the academic year 2023/24. The survey was circulated by email to the student body by TCDSU, and advertised through a poster campaign across campus buildings and residences. The survey was open for a period of four weeks between October and November 2023. The survey gathered a total of 857 responses – a sample size of 4-5% of the student population.

The survey, which everyone can consult [here](#), consisted of 37 questions; a mixture of yes/no, open-ended, and multiple choice. This gathered classifying data on student demographics, accommodation type, rent cost, rent payment, working hours, commute distance, and the search for accommodation. The survey also gathered data on attitudes towards accommodation affordability and financial difficulties. Respondents were asked closed-ended questions with ordered choices relating to their perceived impacts of accommodation type, working, commuting, and the accommodation search on their student experience, mental health, and education, respectively. For these questions, respondents ranked the impact across a 5-axis basis ranging “Extremely positive”, “Somewhat positive”, “Neither positive nor negative”, “Somewhat negative”, “Extremely negative”. At the end of the survey students were given the opportunity to leave additional comments, which have been used throughout the report to present the impacts of the housing crisis in students’ own words.

Summary of Key Results

There were 857 respondents to the survey - 673 Undergraduates and 184 Postgraduates.

75.1% of respondents advised that their country of origin was Ireland.

28.94% of respondents live at home with family - most of these are Irish Undergraduates. Just under 40% of the Irish Undergraduates who responded live at home.

Just under one-fifth of respondents live in Trinity College accommodation - on campus or in Trinity Hall.

There is a lot of confusion about whether respondents are tenants or licensees in their accommodation, which means that many respondents may be unclear on their rights within their homes.

By far the most positive experiences reported by respondents was from those living either on campus or in Trinity Hall.

The most negative experiences were reported by those in temporary accommodation or who currently have no home. Of those in settled accommodation, the worst experiences were reported by those living at home or in Digs.

Almost two-thirds of those respondents who pay rent rely on family support to pay their rent.

28.6% of respondents reported that they pay rent of €1,000 or over.

The majority of those paying over €1,200 per month in rent are in Private Student Accommodation or in Private Rental Accommodation.

49.21% of renters work to help them to pay rent. 71.86% of those who work advised that it was having a negative impact on their education.

65.82% (almost two-thirds) of renters advised that they have gone into financial difficulty to pay rent.

61.29% of respondents who live at home advised that this was having a negative impact on their student experience.

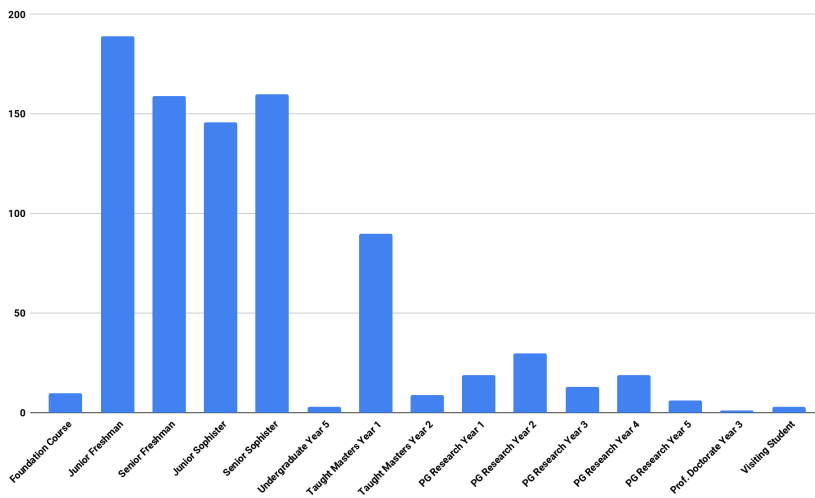
22.75% of respondents have a commute of over 1 hour to college. 57.95% of these advised that their commute was having an extremely negative impact on their student experience.

Non-EU Postgrads appear to be the most impacted by rent. 79.4% of Non-EU Postgrads reported that they have gotten into financial difficulties due to paying their rent. The majority of this cohort expressed that their accommodation situation was having a negative impact on their Student Experience and their Mental Health. This cohort is also generally paying the highest rates of rent. They also reported having the most difficult time in their accommodation search.

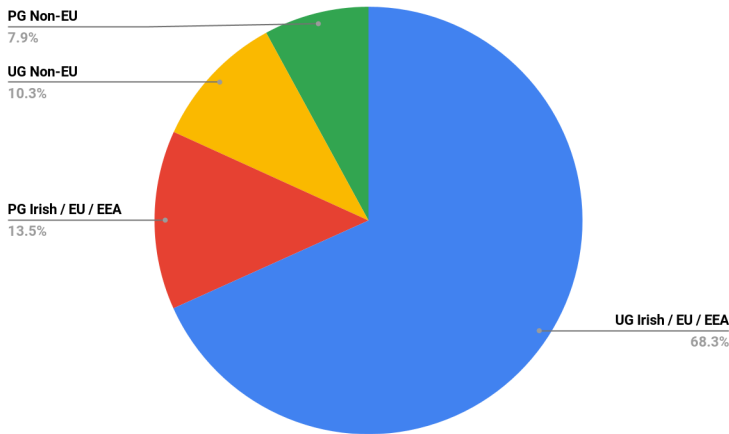
Those living at home, commuting over 1 hour, and/or working are generally having a difficult time. 78.79% of those who are working, commuting for over 1 hour, and living at home reported a negative impact on their student experience. 72.73% advised that it was having a negative impact on their education.

General Demographics of Respondents

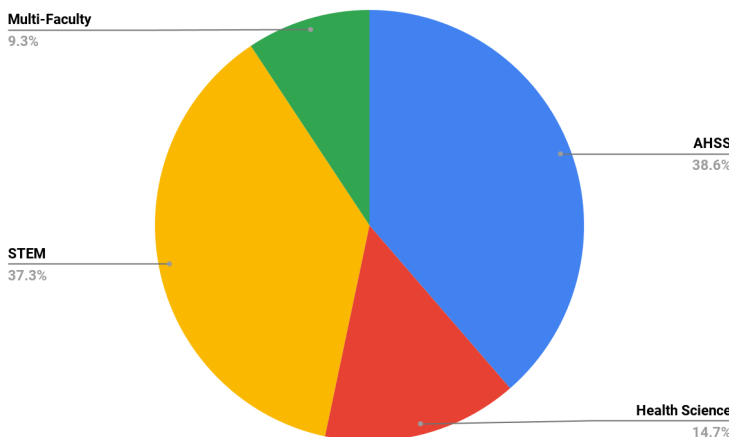
Year of Study



Fee Status



Faculty of Study



The survey was completed by 857 students.

Some key breakdowns are:

673 Undergraduates & 184 Postgraduates.

845 Full-Time Students & 12 Part-Time Students

551 Female, 262 Male, 32 Non-Binary and 12 who chose not to say.

161 respondents are Mature Students.

152 respondents had entered college via an Access Route - ie. The Trinity Access Programme or The College Disability Service.

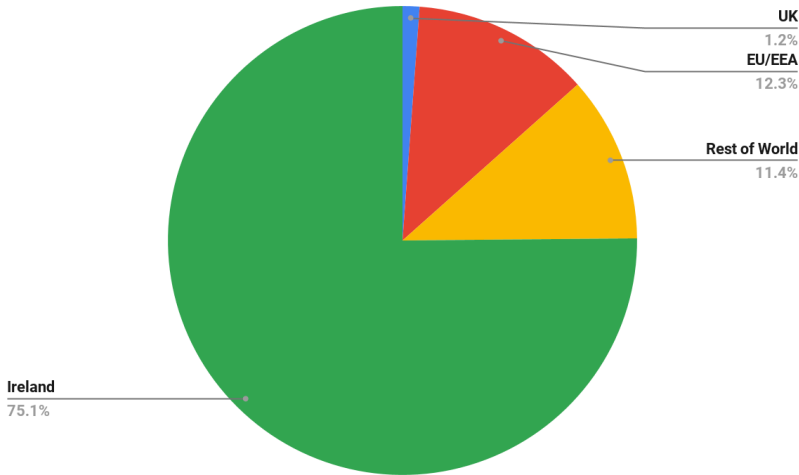
Year and Faculty of study are displayed to the left. You will also find a breakdown of Undergraduate vs Postgraduate and EU vs Non-EU.

There were no particular differences in quality of experiences reported across different years of study, different genders, faculties of study, or mature vs non-mature students.

However, in this report you will see notable differences between the experiences of Irish vs non-Irish students and Undergraduates vs Postgraduates.

Geographical Demographics

Country of Origin of our Respondents



Just over three-quarters of the respondents reported being from Ireland.

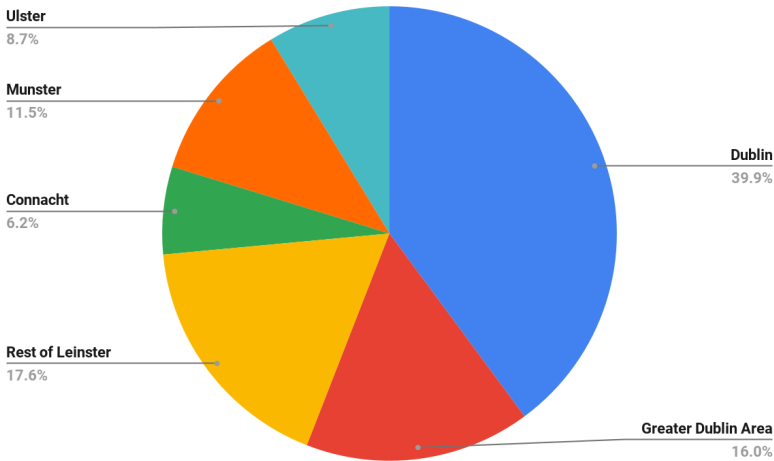
55.9% of those Irish respondents reported being from Dublin or the Greater Dublin Area.

49.7% of all respondents (Irish and non-Irish) advised that their college-registered address is in Dublin or the Greater Dublin Area.

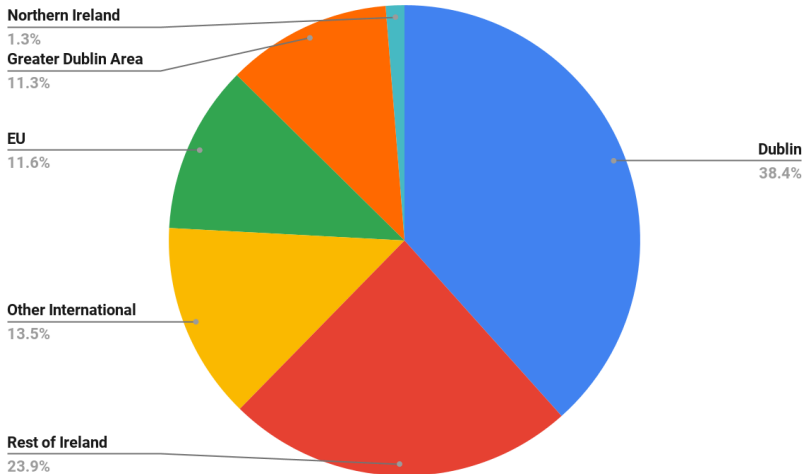
25.2% of all respondents gave a college-registered address which is on the island of Ireland but outside Dublin and the Greater Dublin Area.

25.1% of respondents advised that their college address is in the EU (outside of Ireland), or in a non-EU address.

Location of Origin of Irish Respondents

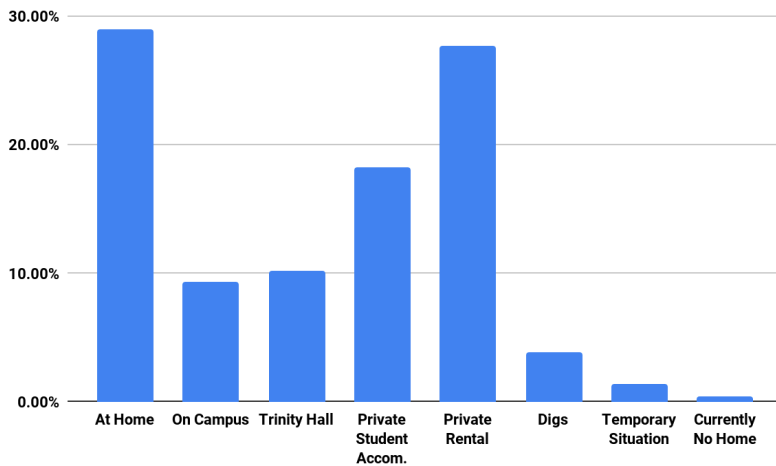


Location of College-Registered Addresses



Accommodation Details

Where do our respondents live?



The largest proportion of respondents reported living at home with family (28.94%), narrowly followed by people living in private rental accommodation (27.65% of respondents).

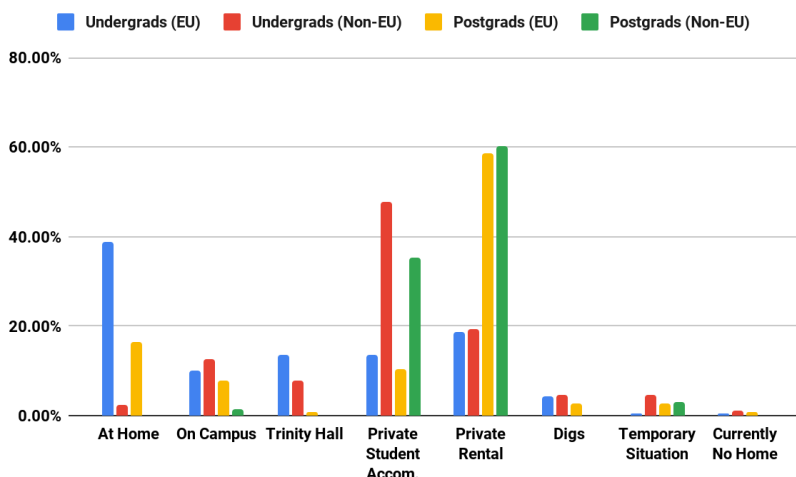
19.48% of students live in Trinity College accommodation (either Campus or Trinity Hall). A similar amount (18.2%) live in purpose built private student accommodation.

When broken out by level of study and EU vs non-EU, we can see that the majority of postgraduate students live in private rental accommodation. Almost 40% of Irish undergraduates live at home with family.

Unfortunately, 16 students reported that they are either currently homeless or in temporary accommodation.

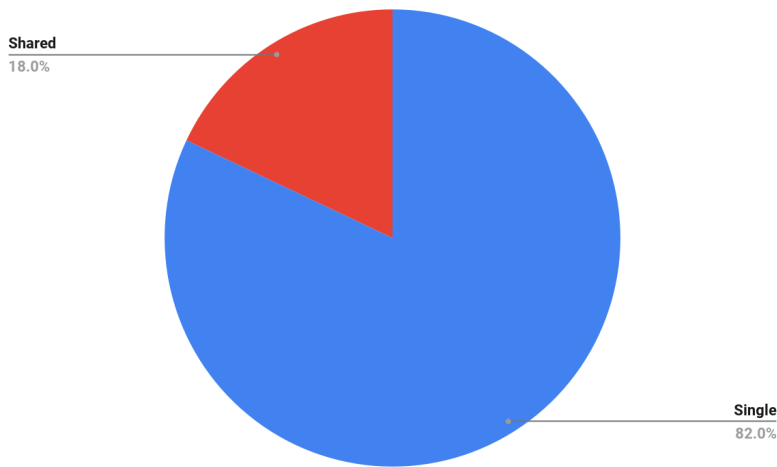
Just under half of all non-EU undergraduates live in purpose built private student accommodation.

Proportion of respondents by Accommodation Type Divided by Undergraduate, Postgraduate and EU vs Non-EU



Providers of Private Student Accommodation by Residents				Trinity / Campus Accommodation by Residents	
Host	24	Liv	2	Botany Bay	16
Aparto	18	Swuite	2	Printing House Square Single	13
Mezzino	9	Uninest	2	Pearse Street	11
Nido	6	Victoria Hall	2	New Square	7
Fresh	10	Aspen	1	GMB	5
Highlight	5	Brickworks	1	Front Square	4
Buckley Hall	3	Gateway Student Village	1	Business School	3
Griffith College	3	International Student	1	Printing House Square King	3
Here!	3	Scape	1	Printing House Square Double	2
Dublin Nest	2	We are Homes for Students	1	Trinity Hall	87

Do You Live in a Single Room or a Shared Room



82% of respondents have single rooms in their accommodation. Being in a shared or single room didn't appear to have any impact on student sentiments expressed elsewhere in this report.

74.7% of all respondents reported having a written agreement for their accommodation. However, 28.39% of those living in Private Rentals and 63.64% of those living in Digs reported having no agreement.

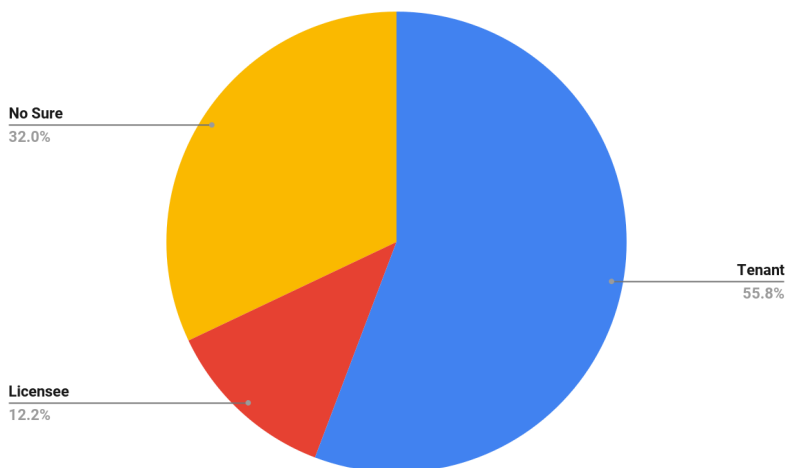
347 respondents reported that they are tenants in their accommodation. However, this shows that there is some confusion about the difference between being a tenant and a licensee. For example, 61 of those who advised that they are tenants live in Private Student Accommodation, a further 31 live on campus, and 30 live in Trinity Hall. All of these students are actually licensees. That's approximately 35% of the overall cohort.

21 of these respondents live in Digs. In the majority of cases, people living in Digs are licensees. These respondents would make up approximately 6% of the 'Tenant' cohort.

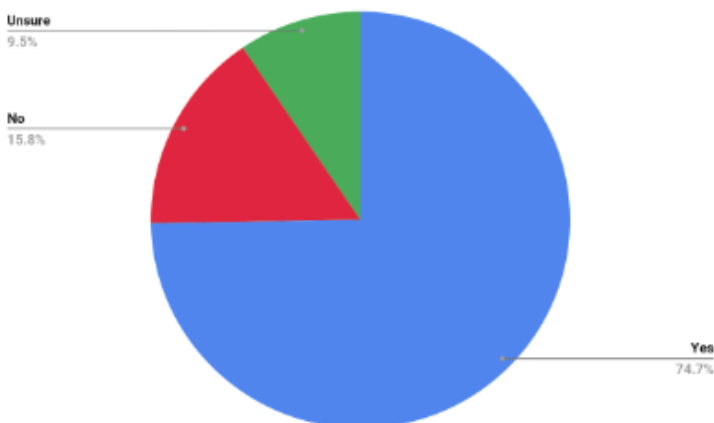
14 of those reporting to be tenants live at home, 3 live in temporary accommodation, and 1 is homeless. It is unlikely that these people are all tenants but we can't guarantee this. These 18 respondents would represent another 5% of the cohort.

As such, it would appear that at least 35% (and likely closer to 46%) of these respondents are incorrect in believing that they are tenants.

Are You a Tenant or a Licensee?

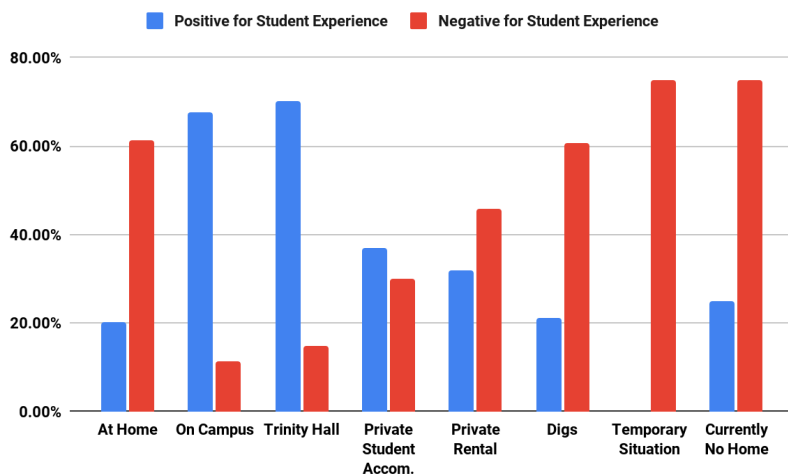


Do You Have a Written Agreement?

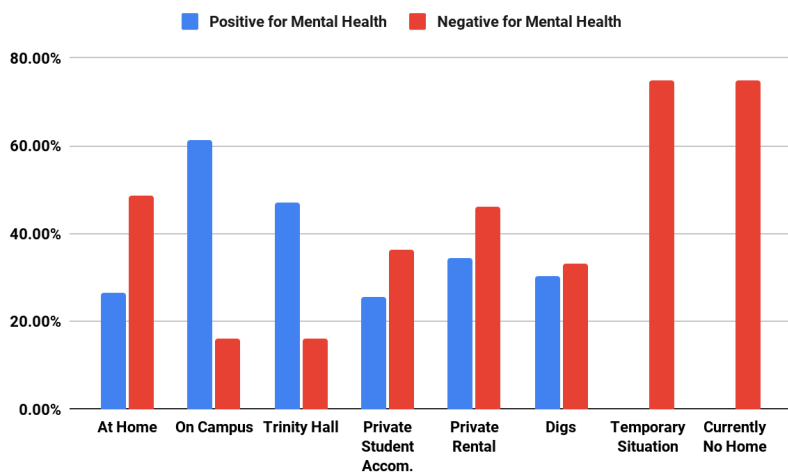


Impacts of Different Types of Living Situations

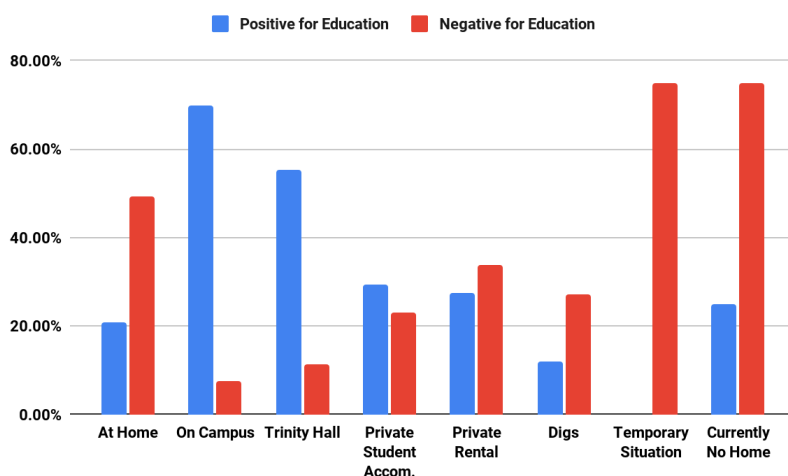
Impact of Accommodation on Student Experience



Impact of Accommodation on Mental Health



Impact of Accommodation on Education



All respondents were asked to rank the impact of their 'Accommodation Situation' on their Student Experience, Mental Health, and Education.

This ranking was on a 5-axis basis - from Extremely Negative to Extremely Positive.

The views on the graphs to the left represent those who ranked their accommodation as "Positive" (either "Somewhat Positive" or "Extremely Positive") or "Negative" (either "Somewhat Negative" or "Extremely Negative").

Across the board, we see that those having the best experience are those living on campus or at Trinity Hall.

Students in Private Student Accommodation are faring moderately better than those in Private Rentals.

Students in Digs generally feel that they are suffering in terms of their Student Experience and are generally negative on the other aspects. Later we will see that students in Digs found the Accommodation Search particularly difficult as well. It may be that living in Digs is seen as a "last resort".

About half of students living at home report that it is negatively affecting their education and their mental health, with 60% reporting it as detrimental to their student experience

Those who advised that they currently have no home or are living in temporary accommodation largely reported negative experiences.

In Our Own Words: Accommodation Situations

A safe and healthy living environment is one of the most basic human rights, and has a fundamental impact on student wellbeing. Many students reported living in situations that are precarious and unsafe, controlled by exploitative landlords, and with conditions that are physically and mentally harmful. Despite their disturbing living conditions, many students reported an inability to leave their housing situations due to affordability, lack of alternative accommodation, and fear. One student described their detrimental conditions of “Mould galore, large holes in walls and windows, landlord is criminal, can see my breath inside, and paying 1000 a month each”. Another student reported that “My bathroom is in my kitchen [with the exception of it being separated with a bit of plywood], no central heating, with mould and dampness, and the only way to heat the place is with electric plug in heaters. I have had rats, mice and a fly infestation. I am extremely clean, and have all my food in containers, but it’s just that the building is so old, any kind of vermin or insect can get in. I have also had neighbours that have threatened me, locked me out of the building, and engaged in antisocial behaviour, but any time I reported it to the landlord, he wouldn’t believe me”. A student living with their landlord described their lack of right to security, where “The heating is not turned on and the window in my room is leaking, so indoor and outdoor temperature is the same, meaning often 10 at night and in the morning (so far). There are gaps between the floor and the wall, cement dust comes off when I touch parts of the wall and I have no door handle or lock on my door, it’s literally just a wood board on hinges. All lights should preferably stay off according to the landlady due to bill prices”. These are just a few of many similar experiences of unsafe living conditions and exploitative landlords.

Despite the severity of their living conditions, many students expressed fear about raising issues with their accommodation providers. One student, discussing their lack of contract, stated that “I didn’t really have any rights and if the tenants requested to have something fixed, we risked having the landlord hike up the rent”. Another reported “I do not feel safe in my accommodation, but because I pay much less than I did last year I feel I have no right to complain”. It is horrifying that students trapped in precarious, unsafe situations are unable to stand up for their basic rights due to fear of eviction. It is even worse that students are so desperate to have any form of accommodation that they are forced to accept such exploitative conditions.

The students who have experienced homelessness reported suffering that no person should have to experience. One student stated that the experience of homelessness “has had a lasting impression upon me, and in many ways I still feel echoes of the trauma I experienced during this period in my life... Homelessness destroyed me and it has wrecked my chances of getting a high grade and reaching any sense of life stability. It has robbed me of my future and robbed me of myself”. Another reported that “I attend college hungry and exhausted and believe that affordable housing will never be an option. I love my country, and I pray that the next generation of students across Ireland will not experience the suffering I have endured to try and educate themselves”. The reality that students are forced into such conditions of poverty and precarity in order to attain a university education is utterly disturbing and unforgivable.

In Our Own Words: The Impact of Accommodation on Student Experience, Mental Health, and Education

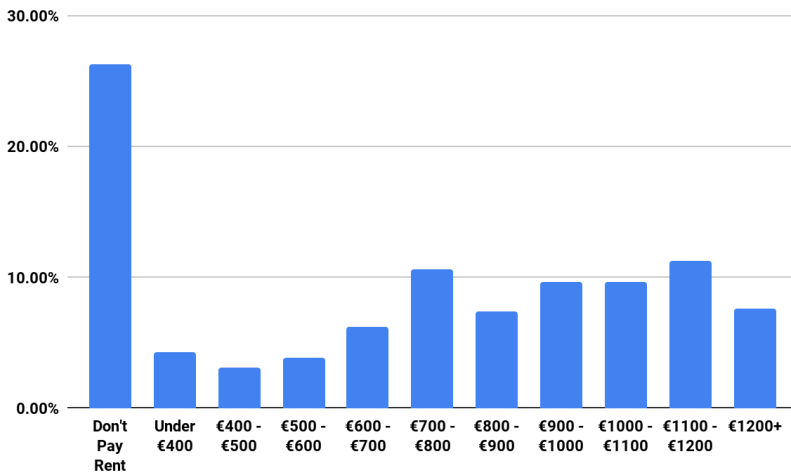
The ability of students to engage in social activities and events is a fundamental aspect of the college experience, but the cost of living in Dublin has put life for many students on hold. One reported that “I cannot afford anything in Dublin... and as a result the social side of college suffers immensely. It is harder to make friends when you don’t live with people your age and have to leave at certain times to catch your bus. There is also nowhere to study in my accommodation so it is a balancing act of when to go to the library and watching buses”. The cost of rent is creating a socio-economic divide within student life; as noted by another student, “I am putting myself through college with the aid of SUSI. I am a month in Trinity and already I’ve had to borrow money from relatives... I cannot afford a social life or any sort of fun in college at present because all of my money is spent on rent”. Even students who receive financial support from family are suffering: “My parents’ lives are on hold so I can live on campus, it’s not just about the students, it’s the toll on our families”.

Precarious accommodation has a range of negative impacts on mental health, but some of the more extreme impacts of the housing crisis extend to abusive and dangerous situations. One student, stressing the importance of accommodation to student well-being, reported that “During my undergraduate course I was living with a housemate who became physically and mentally abusive and had to move under very difficult circumstances. The move was very expensive and I am already on a shoestring budget as a mature student. I had to take unsuitable temporary accommodation to get to safety and was threatened with sexual assault in the last private rental situation I was in... The current situation with rising costs means that students and all of us are vulnerable to being exploited by landlords. The trauma of having been in abusive situations is still something I’m processing”. Another student reported that they relied on a partner for accommodation, and that “The financial strain of rent has caused me to stay in a relationship I might have otherwise left by now, to avoid becoming homeless or sleeping in my car”. Students are increasingly vulnerable to both mental and physical harm; as another student noted, “I’m fully funded and ended up with an eating disorder from the stress of finances and worrying about paying for food so just not eating. The situation is beyond disgraceful and am currently considering dropping out because I can’t afford the current cost of living on my stipend”.

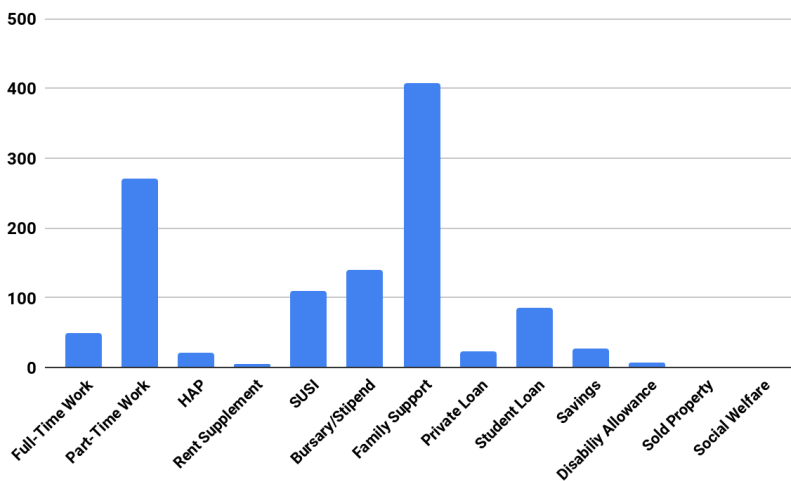
Housing has a direct impact on the ability to access education. As one student put it, “How can I care about my education when I’m not sure I’ll have somewhere to live?”. As well as the stress of housing precarity and insecurity, students are living in accommodation situations that hinder their ability to study: “For the price I am paying there isn’t even a desk in my room so I cannot study at home”. One student who worked full time to afford their rent stated that “When I stopped going to lectures because I was exhausted, I emailed my lecturers to explain my situation and one suggested I ‘defer the year’ or ‘only work part-time’. An absolutely tone-deaf response to give when I only had three weeks of classes left. It is not understood how much some students need to work when they are determined to get through college and get their degree. My parents can’t support me up in Dublin so I have decided to do it myself but the high rents make it hard to actually apply myself to college and last year I failed two modules when I haven’t failed an exam in my life”.

Respondents who Pay Rent

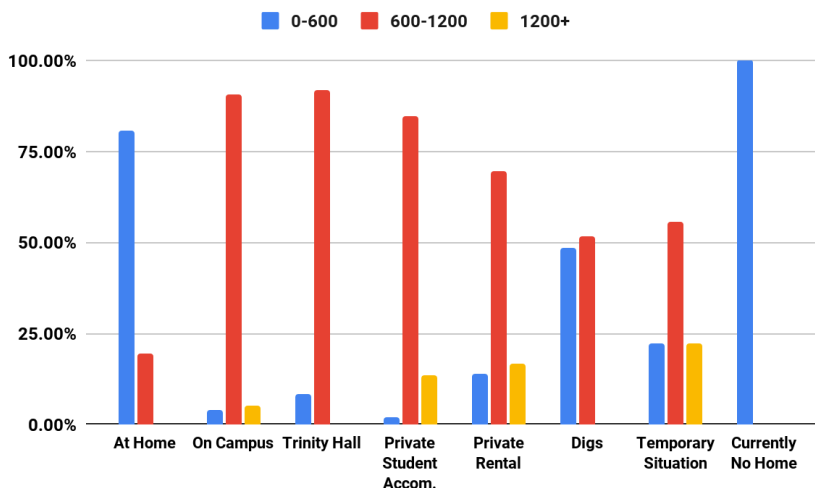
How much rent do you pay?



How do you pay for your rent? ~ (Total respondents from a cohort of 632 renters)



Rent Paid by Accommodation Type



The first graph shows what proportion of respondents pay what levels of rent. Likely, due to the large volume of respondents who reported living at home, 26.5% of respondents reported that they don't pay any rent. Approximately 30% of respondents are paying €1,000 rent or more per month.

The 632 respondents who do pay rent were asked how they pay for their rent. Respondents were entitled to include multiple sources of income for this question. For example, 407 students (roughly 64.4%) advised that they receive family support to pay their rent. However, some of those students also receive a grant, or work, or rely on savings.

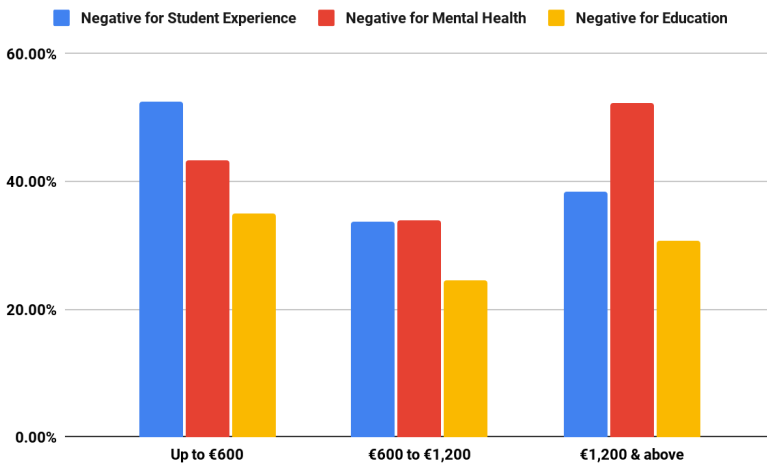
The bottom graph on this page shows the breakdown of how much rent respondents reported paying, divided by their accommodation type. Most renters fall into the €600 to €1,200 bracket.

Of those paying over €1,200 per month, most are in either private rental or in private student accommodation.

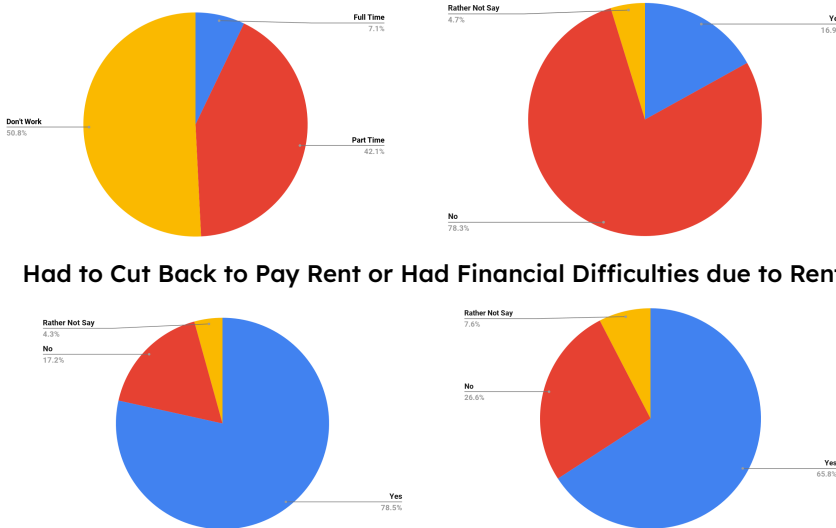
The data for temporary accommodation in this graph is somewhat misleading as there are only 9 rent-paying respondents in this category. We have no information on what kind of temporary accommodation is being represented here.

Effects of Rent

Impact of Different Levels of Rent

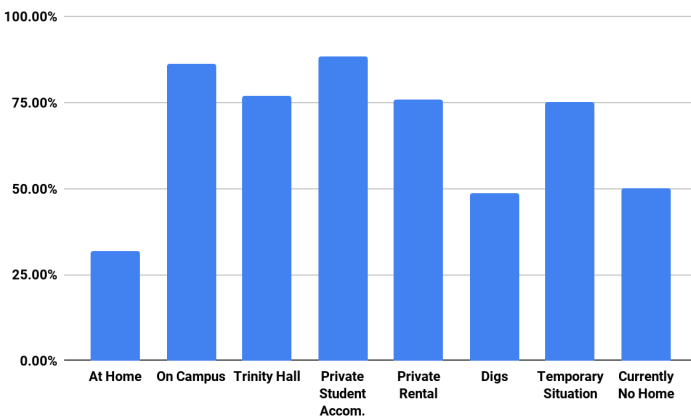


Do You Work to Pay Rent and Is Your Accommodation Affordable?



Had to Cut Back to Pay Rent or Had Financial Difficulties due to Rent?

Proportion of respondents in each type of Accommodation who advised that their accommodation is Not Affordable



These rent questions only refer to those 632 respondents who reported that they pay rent

As rent levels rise, the impact on respondents' Student Experience, Mental Health and Education does not necessarily rise accordingly. However, over 50% of respondents who are paying over €1,200 rent reported that their Accommodation Situation was having a "Somewhat Negative" or "Extremely Negative" impact on their mental health.

The number of people in the "Under €600" bracket who reported that their accommodation situation was having a negative impact on their student experience is likely skewed by those living at home or in Digs. It is unlikely that this impact is caused by the cost of their rent.

49.21% of renters reported that they work to help them to pay rent.

78.32% of renters advised that they do not find their accommodation affordable.

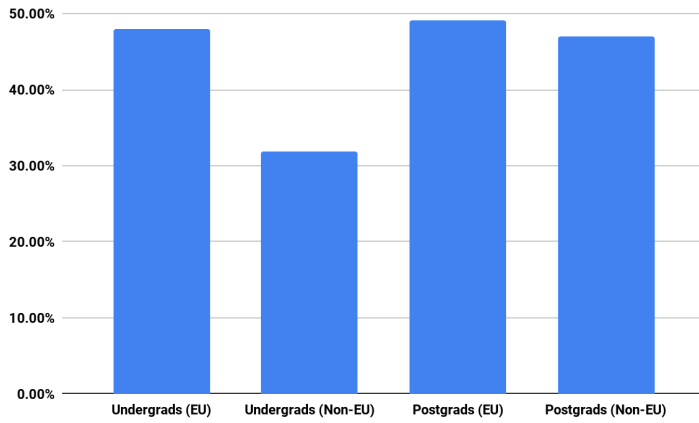
78.5% of renters reported that they have had to cut back in other areas to be able to afford to pay rent.

65.82% of renters reported that they have gone into financial difficulties due to the cost of their rent.

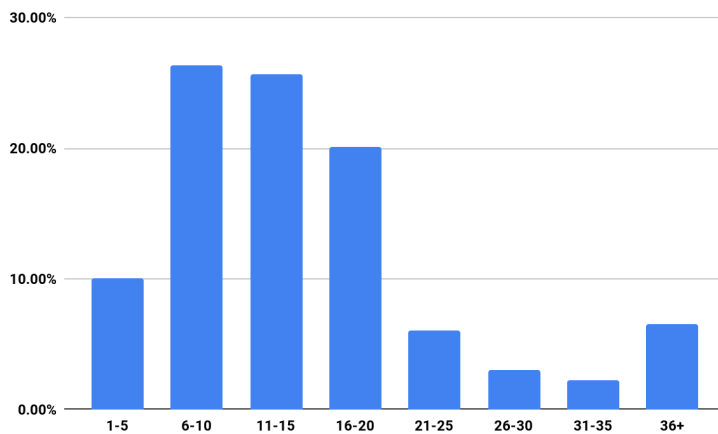
88.54% of renters in Private Student Accommodation and 86.25% of those living on campus reported that they feel that their accommodation is not affordable.

Work and Rent

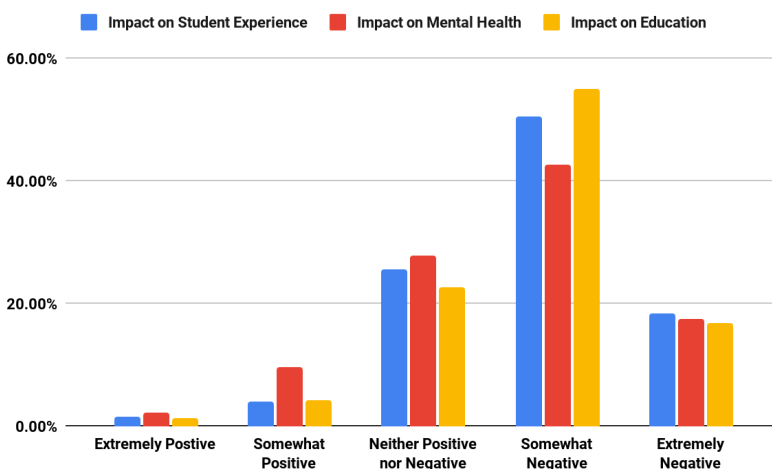
Proportion of Respondents who Advised that they work



How many hours do Respondents work?



The Impact of Needing to Work to Pay Rent (on Student Experience, Mental Health & Education)



398 respondents advised that they need to work to pay rent.

Of these, 72.11% work between 6 and 20 hours a week.

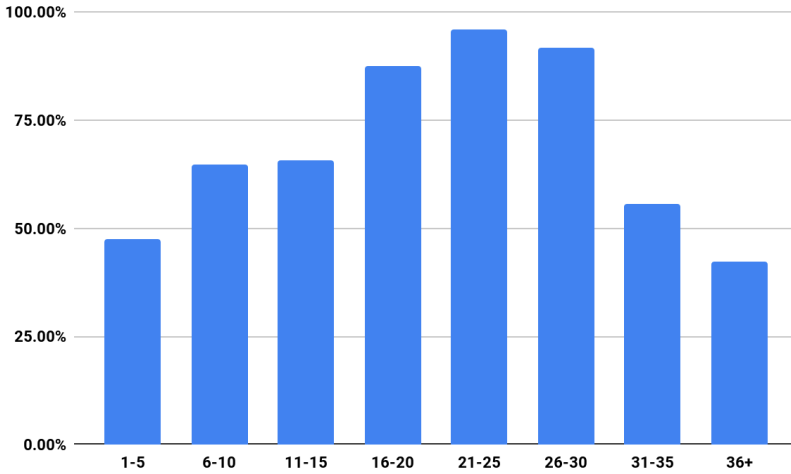
6.53% reported working 36 hours and above each week.

In the lower graph, we see the impacts of needing to work on respondents' Student Experience, Mental Health and Education.

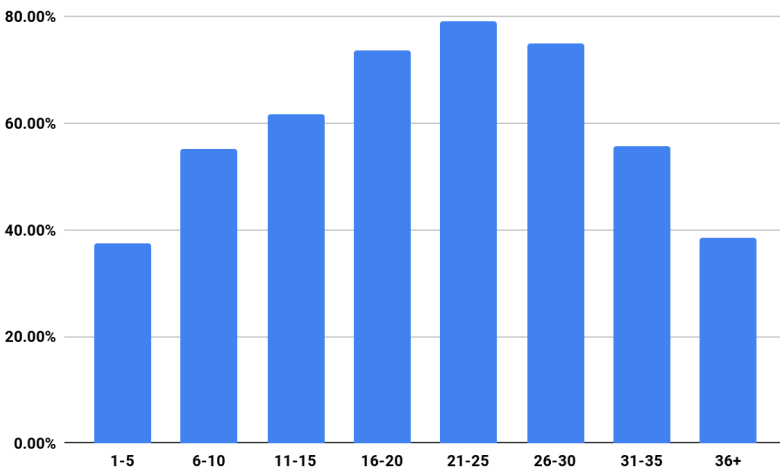
Over two-thirds of respondents who work advised that working while studying is having either a "Somewhat Negative" or "Extremely Negative" impact on their lives.

How varying amounts of work impact Respondents' lives

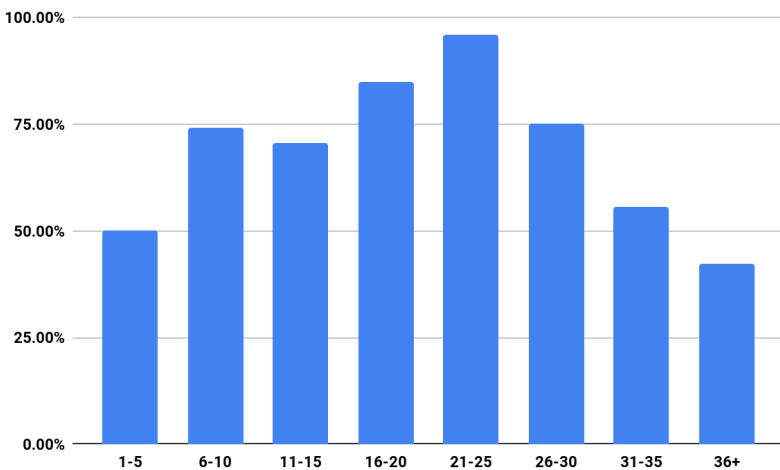
Work is having a negative impact on my student experience



Work is having a negative impact on my mental health



Work is having a negative impact on my education



These graphs show the relationship between varying amounts of work and the sentiment that work is having a negative impact on the student experience, students' mental health, or students' education.

This is based on respondents at each level of work who reported that work was having a "Somewhat negative" or "Extremely negative" impact.

There is no evidence from these graphs that longer hours of work lead to more negative outcomes.

Interestingly, we also saw no strong relationship between people with higher rents and more hours of work. As such, we can't say that higher rents lead to more work, which in turn leads to greater difficulties.

However, it is important to note that over 60% of those who work reported that work was having a negative impact on all three of these elements of their lives.

In Our Own Words: Affordability and Work

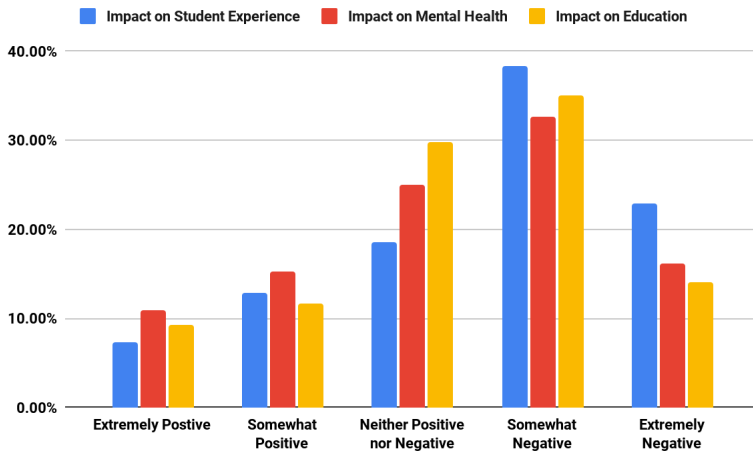
For those who cannot afford the extortionate cost of rent, there are few options. As one student described, “The options that faced me were: pay this, commute 2 hours every day, pay for Monday to Friday digs, live well outside the city. The fact a student is expected to pay this is absolutely unbelievable and it pains me. I’m thankful my parents contribute to my accommodation because without them, I wouldn’t survive off of my job because I don’t get paid enough to survive”.

Yet even with working full-time hours, students are struggling to survive. Many students experience exhaustion from working just to pay their rent, yet have no choice: “Whatever I earn thoroughly the month will be spent on tax and rent. And the work also is exhaustive, especially the transport and commuting part. The worst thing is I can’t take a break from all this.... Who will pay my rent if I take a break?”. Another student reported that “I’m a nursing student and when I am out on placement because of lack of funding I work a minimum of 55 hours a week and will only get paid for 24 of them. Even though I am receiving SUSI which helps alleviate some stress in regards to college fees and commuting costs, it’s not enough to help with accommodation that has better conditions”. The pressure of working can put significant strain on student wellbeing – as one student noted, “I cannot work part time during the school year due to being disabled, and work myself to the point of mental breakdown during summers to help afford accommodation”. For most students, the stress of affording rent overshadows all aspects of student life: “The only thing that relieves such pressure is the fact that I have only 2 years of education left. I cannot believe that it makes me look forward to finishing uni as soon as possible”.

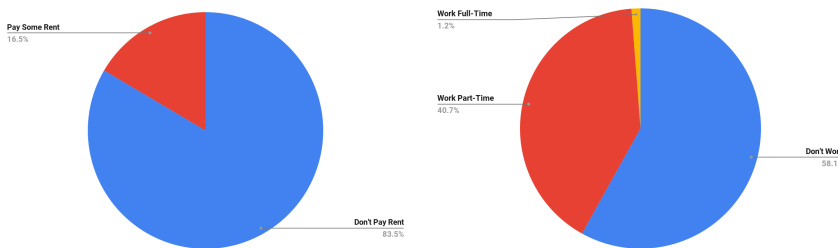
Not only does the toll of work impact students’ wellbeing, but the cost of living forces students to make sacrifices to their physical and mental health. One student described that “I had no choice but to move from home into Dublin this year, as my mental health couldn’t face a 5+ hour daily commute from Navan anymore... I’m in my final year and have an extremely full timetable that ranges from being 9-4 and 9-7 every day, and I have to work over 34 hours a week to keep up with rent. I have a lot of medical fees and medication that has had to take a back seat because my rent is so much, and I’ve had to push back numerous therapy appointments as I simply can’t afford them anymore, even though they are essential for me. Groceries are impossible to get, so my diet currently consists of one meal a day as I can’t afford more”. Other students described the need to cut back on essential expenses in order to budget for rent, leading to a detrimental impact on their health: “I actively eat less fruit, less fish, and less of certain vegetables, and actively choose a worse diet, because it’s all I can afford after paying rent”; “High rent cost has often led me to think twice even before buying groceries because I feel I can save some money in one way or another so that I can pay my rent”. Students are working to the point of exhaustion, cutting back on basic necessities such as food, and facing constant anxiety about funding their education – all to fund exploitative landlords.

Students Living at Home

Impact of the Accommodation Situation on those Living at Home (on their Student Experience, Mental Health & Education)



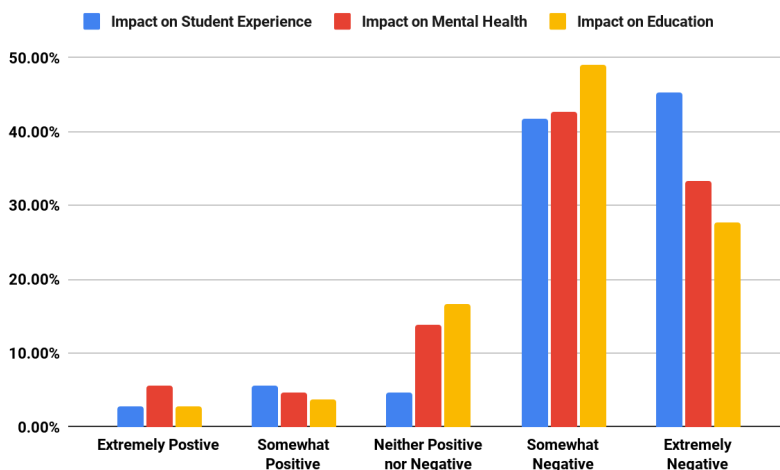
Do you pay rent and Do you work?



Living at Home & Had a Negative Accommodation Search

Impact of current Accommodation Situation of those who:

a) reported that they are currently living at home & b) described the Accommodation Search as having a “Somewhat Negative” or “Extremely Negative” Impact on their Mental Health



248 respondents advised that they are living at home.

61.29% of respondents who live at home advised that their accommodation situation is having a “Somewhat Negative” or “Extremely Negative” impact on their student experience.

16.5% of these respondents pay some rent and 41.9% of these respondents advised that they work.

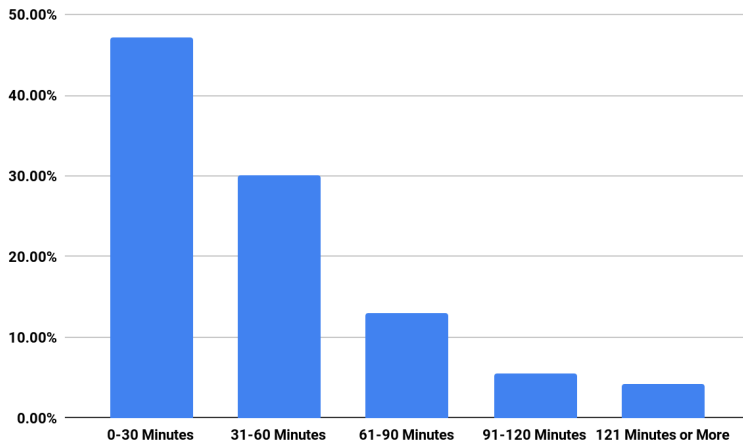
In the bottom graph, we look at the cohort of 108 respondents who live at home but also reported having a negative experience in their accommodation search.

We see that a larger proportion of these people report a negative impact of their Accommodation Situation on their Student Experience, Mental Health and Education.

This suggests that many of these are students who may be “stuck” at home after a disappointing search for accommodation. This may be due to supply or issues with affordability.

The Commute

How Long is Your Commute to College?



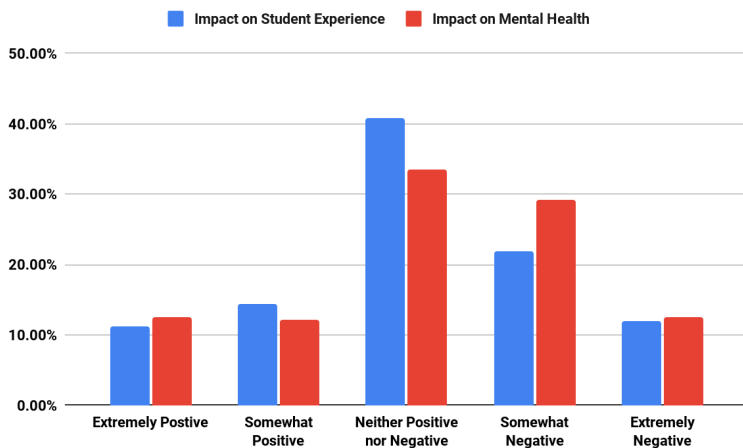
22.75% of respondents reported a commute of over 1 hour to college.

47.14% reported living within a 30 minute commute of college.

33.72% of all respondents reported that their commute had either a “Somewhat Negative” or “Extremely Negative” impact on their Student Experience.

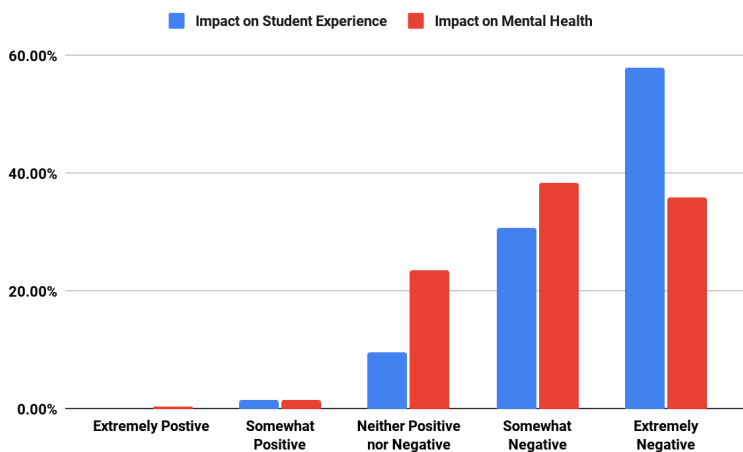
41.73% reported that their commute had a negative impact on their Mental Health.

The Impact of Respondents’ Daily Commute (All Respondents)

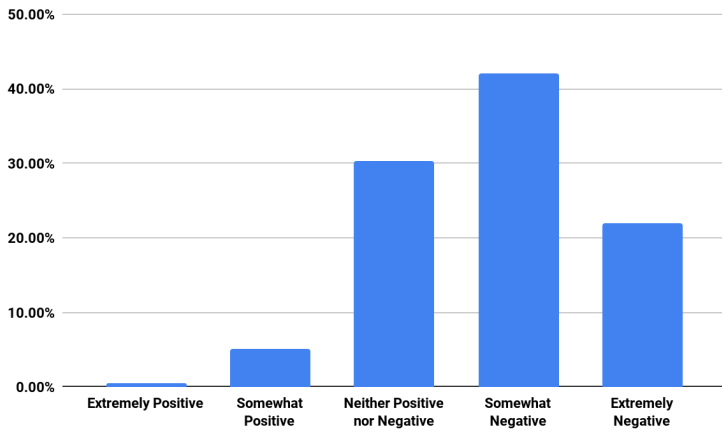


The bottom graph looks at those respondents who have commutes of over 1 hour. 88.72% of these respondents reported a negative impact of their commute on their Student Experience and 74.36% reported a negative impact on their Mental Health.

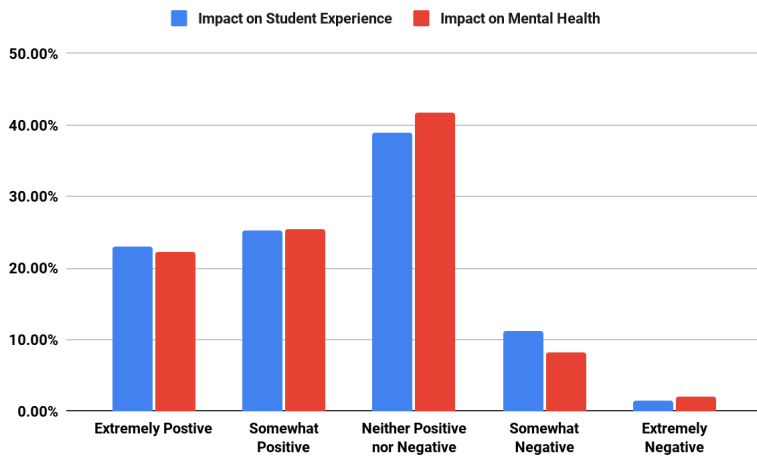
Impact of Commutes of Over 1 Hour (195 respondents with commutes of over 1 hour)



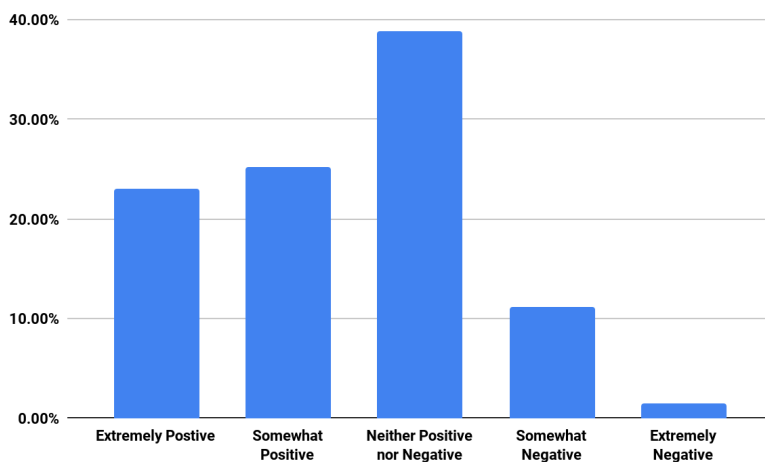
Impact of Accommodation Situation on Education for those Respondents with a Commute of 1+Hour



Impact of Commutes of Less than 30 Minutes on Student Experience and Mental Health



Impact of Accommodation Situation on Education for those with a Commute of 30 Minutes or Less



For those with a commute of over 1 hour, 64.1% reported that the impact of their Accommodation Situation on their education was either “Somewhat Negative” or ‘Extremely Negative’.

Conversely, those with a commute of 30 minutes or less are generally having a much better time.

48.27% of respondents with a commute of 30 minutes or less reported that their commute was having a positive effect (either “Somewhat Positive” or “Extremely Positive”) on their Student Experience and 47.78% reported the same for their Mental Health.

In Our Own Words: The Commute

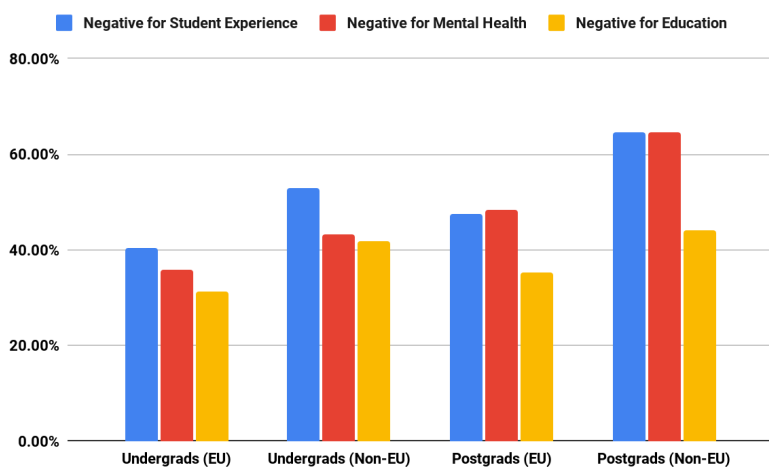
For the students who cannot afford to rent accommodation in Dublin, many are left with no choice but to commute long and gruelling distances to college each day. Commuting places significant restrictions on the ability to engage in student life. As one student describes, “While my peers are sleeping or eating their breakfast, I’m getting the 07:05 bus for my 9am lecture if I want to be anywhere near on time. I have to say no to class nights out because I have no way home as buses stop running before 12 and the hour trip home is just sad. I’m so blessed to have a warm roof over my head but I’m missing out on the college experience”. Other students reported the struggle of trying to take part in society events and activities, which are a fundamental aspect of student life, “Due to an over 3 hour commute to college everyday I am exhausted. I cannot take part in societies as many of the activities begin at 6pm, which by the time they are over would see me get home at 9pm. I often arrive late to classes”. The pressure of commuting places further barriers to socialising and making friends; as another student stated, “I wake up at 5-6am and come home from college at 7-8pm. When I come home I am exhausted and have no time to study or prepare for the next day. I have no friends at college because of commuting, joining societies is difficult due to having to make sure I get home on time and don’t miss the last bus. It’s exhausting and has ruined my college experience”.

The burden of travelling long hours every day has a significant impact on student mental health and wellbeing. Many students described the physical exhaustion caused by their commute; “I travel over 100km to reach college often for two lectures, I have to spend 12 hrs working on placement (nursing student) and travel for four hours so my days can be 16 hours long. I fear falling asleep behind the wheel of my car”. Another student experienced similar physical exhaustion, “Have to live at home as I cannot move out due to rent prices. Have an hour plus commute to college and an hour and a half commute to my college sports facility. I can spend 5 hours a day commuting. I was clinically sleep deprived around exam season as I couldn’t get home enough to get sleep”. Additionally, commuting places an additional burden on those already struggling with health issues. Some students noted the impact of motion sickness, “I have motion sickness so the bus rides are not only long but also at times uncomfortable. By the time I get home, it is already late and I only have time to eat, shower and then sleep to get ready for the next day”. Others raised the additional challenges faced due to disabilities, “Commuting has made me question whether or not I can even manage my final few years of college as it is incredibly difficult to manage as a disabled student”.

With regards to education, many students spend as much, if not more, time travelling to college as they do in lectures. A student reported “I spend 5.5-6 hours a day travelling, most of the time for just 1 class a day. This also means that I don’t get to participate in societies as much as I would like to since the last train to Belfast is at 9pm. This means I get home just before midnight. Unfortunately this isn’t sustainable in the long term because then I don’t get adequate sleep and my grades start to suffer. I don’t know if I’ll be able to keep this up next term, but I also don’t know if I can realistically afford €6k for one semester’s rent in a student accommodation”. For many students, it is difficult to see the point in commuting for more time than they would spend in classes, “Having to commute ~1 hour 30 each way for classes has meant missing a significant number of lectures, for example, what is the point in commuting 3 hours for 1-2 hours of lectures in a day?”.

Impacts on International and Postgraduate Students

Negative Impact of Accommodation Situation Divided by Level of Study & EU vs Non-EU Fee Status

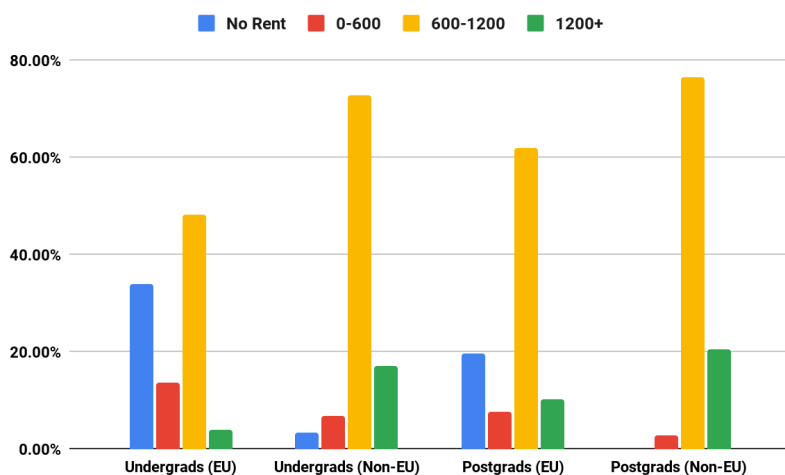


This page looks at some areas where two groups - Postgraduate students and Non-EU/EEA students are showing greater difficulties than other students.

The top graph looks at what proportion of respondents reported that their Accommodation Situation was having a negative impact on their Student Experience, Mental Health and Education.

A higher proportion of Non-EU Postgraduates are reporting a negative experience than any other cohort viewed. 52.94% of Non-EU Undergraduates are also reporting a negative impact on their Student Experience.

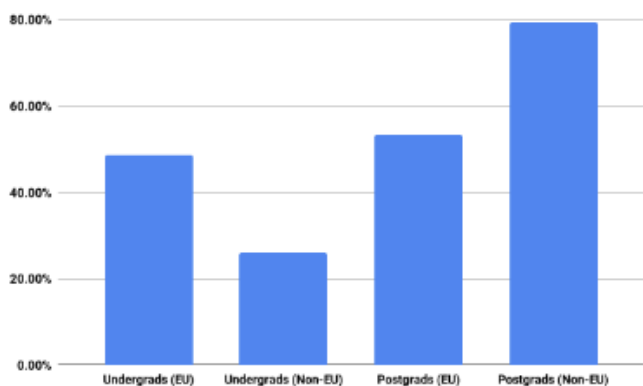
Proportion of Respondents Paying Various Levels of Rent



In the second graph, we can see that Non-EU students are generally paying higher rents.

60.29% of Non-EU Postgraduate Students live in Private Rented Accommodation, while 47.73% Non-EU Undergraduates live in Private Student Accommodation. Another 19.32% live in Private Rented Accommodation.

Respondents Who Pay Rent Who Have Had Financial Difficulties Due to Paying Rent



Furthermore, looking at those respondents who pay rent, we see that a much higher proportion of Non-EU students find their accommodation unaffordable than their EU counterparts.

79.41% of Non-EU Postgraduate students reported that they have had financial difficulties due to paying rent.

In Our Own Words: Impact of the Housing Crisis on International Students

Not only do international students already pay more expensive college fees, but many have no idea of the severity of the Irish housing crisis before moving to college. With less experience of the local rental market, international students are particularly vulnerable to housing scams and the struggle to find accommodation. In precarious situations, which many are forced to accept, the threat of eviction is even greater to students who have nowhere else to go.

The overarching sentiment from many international respondents was regret over choosing to pursue an education at Trinity due to the cost of renting in Dublin. On the struggle of finding accommodation, one student stated “I am an international student. I chose TCD because Ireland as part of the European Union still has European fees. If I had known about the housing situation before, I am not sure whether I had chosen Dublin at all. The search for accommodation from another country was one of the worst things I have experienced so far. Coming from a working class family and living on excellence scholarships, I was shocked by the rental prices in Dublin. I have experienced several attempts of scams and sexual harassment in Dublin. In February 2023, I almost could not find any accommodation for September 2023”. This sentiment is echoed by many international students, “I came to Dublin for my masters and planned to stay back for the 2 year work permit that every international student gets, however, I decided to leave the country and had no choice but to go back to my home country due to the accommodation crisis. The rent is skyrocketing which does not make sense to stay back for since there is hardly any savings for paying off my student loan. Extremely disappointed in the experience and would not recommend coming to Ireland for education to any other international student. I hope they take drastic measures to fix this issue ASAP”. In the words of another student, “I’ve lived in Italy for four years and Shanghai for three years, and I’ve never experienced things like this, no mention that the cost is more than 3 times that in Shanghai, which is an extremely huge metropolis. Renting must be the worst thing in Dublin because I’ve seen a lot of people who wanted to seek a chance here but finally left because they couldn’t afford the rent”.

Alongside the pressure of struggling to find accommodation in a new city, international students also raised the difficulty of trying to work to pay for their rent. One student describes the stress and precarity of not being able to work, and therefore becoming trapped in a precarious environment: “I am an American student moving from France where I have lived for the past 3 years. I am moving from Paris and my rent doubled in price upon arrival in Dublin... My parents have stepped in to help with rent and I realise I am extremely lucky to have this support. Without it we couldn’t afford to live here - it takes a minimum of 3 months to get all of the required documents etc to even be able to work. The rent is absolutely overpriced for the apartment which although ‘redone’ still stinks of nicotine from previous owners. There is no heating - something that we were promised would be resolved before our move in and after a near month of living there is still not taken care of. We are trying to find another apartment but without jobs, it’s looking nearly impossible. I have been so stressed, I don’t feel like I have a place to return to that is ‘home’ and it has become the number 1 negative factor on my mental health”.

In Our Own Words: Impact of the Housing Crisis on Postgraduate Students and Researchers

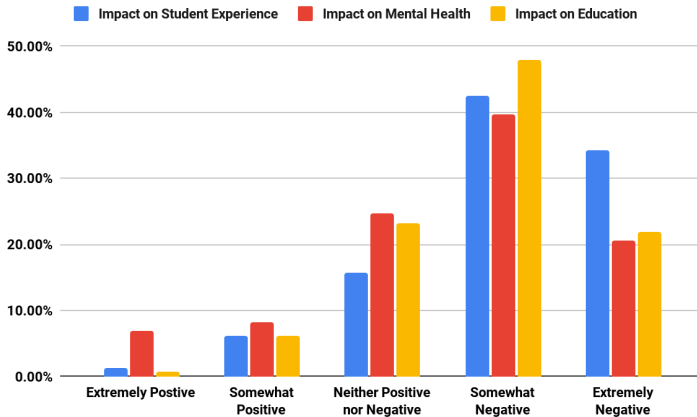
Postgraduate students and researchers are struggling on multiple fronts, and are fundamentally undervalued for the work they do within the higher education sector. The majority of PhD stipends are below the minimum wage, and postgraduate researchers are not granted benefits such as sick leave and maternity leave. The risk of precarious research contracts and job insecurity further adds financial pressure when trying to find affordable housing.

One respondent noted the discrimination against postgraduates within the rental market, due to financial insecurity: “If your only source of income is University stipend, it is extremely hard to find a place to live in Dublin as landlords/agencies prefer tenants with well paid, full time jobs.” Another described the stress of couchsurfing and commuting, which is worsened by a lack of sick pay and benefits: “I work primarily remotely but must commute from Mayo for in-person commitments on campus. I couch surf with friends when I have to stay in Dublin for extended periods. This is highly stressful and taxing on my health as a person with a disability and long-term illness. Because of having an uncertain housing situation, I became very ill and had to take 12 months off-books until I managed to get my mobile home set up. This time was very stressful because, as a postgraduate researcher, I was not entitled to any sick pay or unemployment benefits (I had no PRSI built up as a student). Eventually, I qualified for disability benefits, which is now helping me manage my living costs and meant that you could return to my research this year, thankfully. But I’m still feeling very precarious and stressed about my living situation”. Cost of living as a postgraduate student is also impacted by the length of the course; as one student stated, “The scholarship I have is covering my accommodation needs for the academic year. If I didn’t have the scholarship I would find it extremely difficult to be able to afford coming to college and it is very likely that I wouldn’t be doing a postgraduate course at all. Although I am grateful for the scholarship and that it covers rent for the academic year, I still have to work to pay for accommodation for the summer months (research PhD means that I am in college for 12 months of the year, not the typical academic year). Working during the year to pay for my summer accommodation, utilities, and other living expenses puts a strain on my education/mental health”.

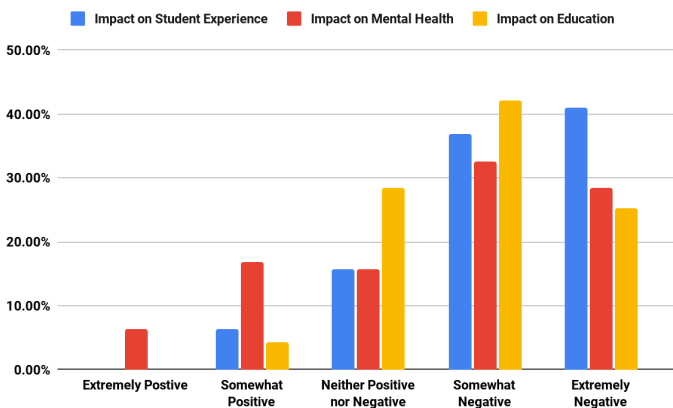
These issues are heightened for international postgraduate students, who face additional struggles. As one student reported, “I think the PhD students and in particular internationals are the most impacted since even if their families wish to support them, their support would not be sufficient to match with high rocket prices and due to the huge difference in wages among the different countries. Therefore, I hoped that TCD would provide a kind of subsidised accommodation for its own PhD students, as PhD usually takes 4 years and it’s demanding on its own and being distracted every now and then to allocate a reasonable priced accommodation is just adding extra stress on the students shoulders. This should also be valid as TCD is not acting as a private sector and not seeking higher profits margins”. Another stated that “Studying at Trinity has been a dream since forever but the housing crisis was pushing me away from it until my parents helped me secure a loan. The fee as an international student is already high, the living should not be the same. A compensation is needed to promote diversity and make it lucrative for international students. More help was not given even from university because of being a postgraduate student”.

Combinations of Work, Living at Home, and Commuting

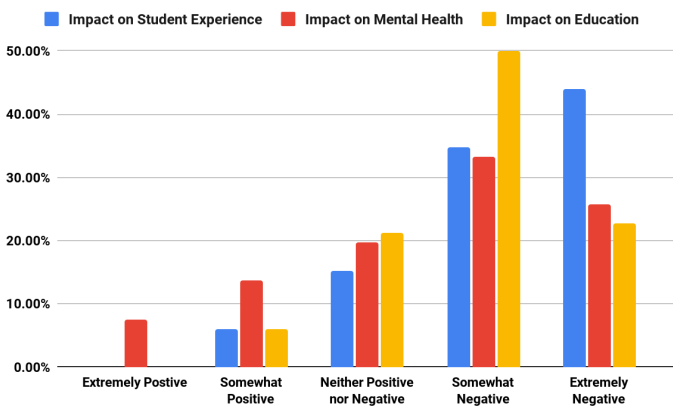
Impact of Accommodation Situation for Respondents Living at Home with Commutes of Over 1 Hr (146 Respondents)



Impact of Accommodation Situation for Respondents Having a Commute of Over 1 Hour and also Working (95 Respondents)



Impact of Accommodation Situation for Respondents Living at Home, Commuting for Over 1 Hour, and Working (66 Resp.)



Earlier, we looked at the negative experiences of respondents living at home, respondents with long commutes, and respondents who work. The graphs on this page look at the combinations of these factors.

Of the 146 respondents who reported living at home with a commute of over 1 hour, 76.71% reported that their accommodation situation was negative for their Student Experience, 60.27% for their Mental Health, and 69.86% for their Education.

Of the 95 respondents who commute over 1 hour and work, 77.89% reported that their Accommodation Situation was having a negative impact on their Student Experience, 61.05% negative for Mental Health and 67.37% negative for Education.

Of the 66 respondents living at home, commuting over 1 hour, and working, 78.79% reported that their Accommodation Situation was having a negative impact on their Student Experience, 59.09% negative for Mental Health and 72.73% negative for Education.

In Our Own Words: Work, Living at Home, and Commuting

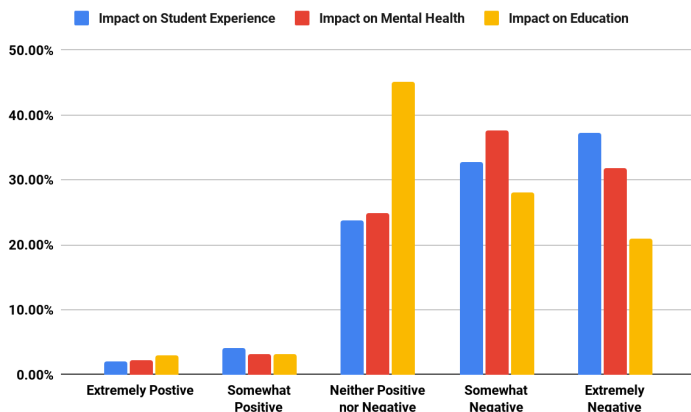
Following the previous findings on work, commuting, and living at home, it is unsurprising that the combination of these factors contributes to negative student experience and wellbeing. The effort of spending so much time travelling and working, not to mention the mental stress, leaves these students very little time to spend on their education. One student described the academic and social pressure of commuting home each week to work: “I lived in Trinity Halls last year and paid for my own rent from working a 20 hour week, for this to be doable I had to commute from Offaly to Dublin on Tuesdays and back to Offaly on the weekends. I left halls after the first semester due to financial pressure and the effect that all the commuting had on my education/college experience. I’m now in my second year and commute daily from Offaly. I’m lucky that my course requires very little time on campus, so commuting is definitely viable. However, if I was in a course that required me to be on campus more than I am, I’d be under serious academic pressure, so I sympathise with anyone in that situation”. Another student reported that they had to decline their offer entirely due to the cost, “I received an offer of accommodation in Trinity Halls and wished to accept it however despite working 12-18 hours a week, having savings and calculating numerous budgets I was still unable to afford the rent (excluding utilities and other living expenses) and therefore had to decline and continue spending between two and three hours on public transport every day with my last form of transport home leaving at 11:30pm”.

Students have noted that the impact of these pressures are not recognised by academic providers: “As someone who has commuted from Westmeath everyday for the last 3 years the impact on mental health is extreme. On account of rural transport systems I have to get up at 6am every day to drive to the next village to access a bus. The bus itself can take anything from 1.5 hours to 3 hours, both to and from Dublin. In order to afford my transport (bus, car insurance, fuel) and essential expenses (food, bills) I work every day I can. This results in heightened mental and physical exhaustion, something which is not taken into account by our academic providers.” In the words of another student, “I did live in an apartment but had to leave and move back in with my wife’s parents despite being 26. I had to work four days and go to college 5 days a week. I was so exhausted I couldn’t function and almost failed last year. The accommodation I was in was offered by a friend but the people that I lived with were verbally abusive, extremely unclean, and I wasn’t allowed to turn on the heating in the winter making me get sick numerous times... I have to travel almost four hours three days a week for one lecture because I only have one lecture for three of the days during the week”.

Commuting every day is a notable financial burden, yet it also limits the amount of time that students can spend working. As one student describes, “I live with my parents out in the Slane area in Meath and I’ve to commute every day for 2-3 hours total which has such an impact on my studies, motivation and productivity; all of which compounds and adds to stress and negative mental health for me... Because I live so far out and travel for so long I’m only able to work one day during the weekend and finding a different job is not an option anymore”. Even when living with family, commuting into the city, and working – many students still cannot afford to rent in Dublin. These combined factors make it increasingly difficult for students to attend the lectures that they are paying for, let alone take part in social events and extra curricular activities that are an essential part of the college experience.

The Impact of the Accommodation Search

What impact is / did your search for accommodation having / have on your Student Experience, your Mental Health or your Education?



The accommodation search itself was quite negative for most respondents, as can be seen in the first graph to the left.

If we look at where the respondents ended up living, we see that the experience was marginally worse for those who ended up in Private Student Accommodation or in Private Rented Accommodation.

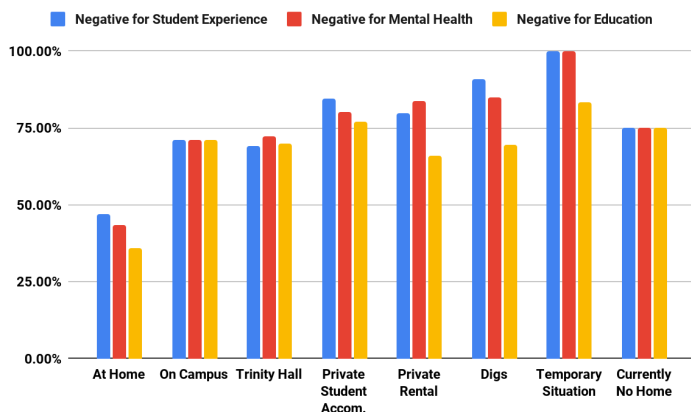
This may be due to one (or a combination of) of three reasons:

1) Many of the respondents who ended up living at home, on campus, or in Trinity Hall may have only targeted living in that specific accommodation, so their search was less involved.

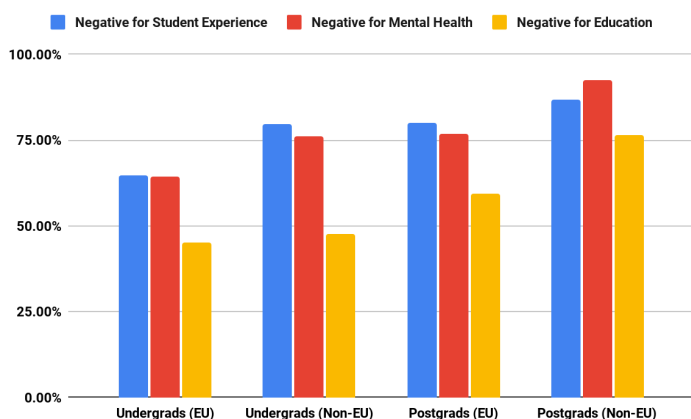
2) With a significant number of Private Student Accommodation providers and a very competitive private rental market, the accommodation search for these accommodation types may have been quite complicated.

3) These were seen as the most expensive accommodation types in earlier questions.

Looking at the impact of the accommodation search again, but broken down by where the respondent is currently living



Proportion of respondents who found the accommodation search negative, by level of study and EU vs Non-EU



In the third graph, we break out those respondents who found the accommodation search negative, by their level of study and in terms of EU vs non-EU fee status. We can see that a larger proportion of non-EU Postgraduate Students had difficulty with the accommodation search than any other cohort.

In Our Own Words: The Search for Accommodation

The search for accommodation in Dublin is a long, stressful, and unpredictable process which students begin months in advance, and still struggle to find anything. In the words of one student, "Finding affordable accommodation in Dublin is the most difficult thing I've ever experienced. It's much more difficult than applying for a place in Trinity College Dublin". Multiple students reported sending hundreds of emails and applications before successfully finding a place to live. A student described the process of trying to find accommodation as follows: "There are so many layers that I have to go through just to view the room (to ensure it is not a scam). Firstly you need to email/text/call and waiting sometimes is unbelievable. Then you need to ensure it is not a scam so you get to play a game "is this too good to be true?". After that you need to find time in your already busy and in the first weeks always changing schedule. Trying to search for something and getting your hopes crushed when you don't really takes a toll on you and makes you rethink if you actually want to go to university just to live with a guy you don't know. I don't want to put education higher than my safety and health and this accommodation crisis is really not helping students to enjoy their experience in university... the situation here is unbearable." The inconsistency of the search for housing leaves students feeling uncertain about their college life and education, which rests upon the issue of finding housing. Many students, despite looking months in advance, cannot find housing until the last minute; "I only got this accommodation days before I knew I had to move back for college. The main issue was the stress of not knowing if I would be able to continue my education because I had nowhere to move to".

Even for students who are in the position to afford high rents, the lack of available housing means that students have very little agency over where they can live. One student stated that they "Sent 68 inquiries on rent.ie, daft.ie etc. to all different kinds of lodgings up to about 1200 a month (or what amounted to 1200 a month per person), even though that would have required getting a loan, just to try and not be homeless for the year. Got one response to say we were waitlisted for a viewing and never heard from them again either. Doesn't matter how much money you can get to throw at it, the housing just isn't there". This hopelessness was reflected by other students, "Before moving to my current apartment, it took me almost a year (11 months) to find a place. I was responding to an average of 3 renting ads daily, (not counting on the ads that were gone within 5 minutes and couldn't reply to) and was barely getting one viewing every other week. It wasn't a matter of not being able to afford rent, but just there weren't enough places to live".

The lack of options leaves students vulnerable to accepting any accommodation option they can, which is often more than they can afford. As a student described, "Rent is incredibly high and unaffordable to me without working... I remain one of the fortunate few at TCD that come from wealthy backgrounds, and even then, finding any sort of accommodation at all short of hotel rooms was a difficult task that took a month of searching, facebook posts, and writing emails. Outside facebook groups, where there are hundreds of scams which prey on students unable to visit Dublin in order to get accommodation, it is near impossible to get a room through daft. This leaves PBSA as the only choice for students like me, where students end up overpaying due to a lack of other options".

Historical Background to the Housing Crisis

Neoliberalism involves the policy of shifting the provision of basic needs onto the private sector, rather than the state. In the context of housing, neoliberal policy has disastrous and unequal consequences. It is inefficient, unwilling, and un-incentivized to deliver the roughly 50,000 new homes that are needed each year¹. To take an example, the current Housing for All Plan is set to build 33,000 housing units a year, but much of this will come from the private market, REITS, foreign funds and build-to-rent. While the true solution is a shift away from the neoliberal landlord-led market and towards the state building of public and affordable housing, we support interim efforts to regulate the private market so that it can deliver for the needs of the people. Renting is the only option left for many people who cannot buy a house, considering that home ownership has become increasingly unattainable as decades of neoliberal government policy coupled with the 2008 global financial crisis have led to skyrocketing house prices. The selloff of 'bad debt' property in NAMA to vulture funds and multinational corporations is the root of many of the issues we face today, and a solemn indictment of where the blind trust in market forces leads. Today, many people are losing their houses due to the inability to keep up with mortgage repayments. We draw the attention of the government to Austria, Vienna, where 60% of all housing is public, and affordable, provided by the state².

State in Collusion with Capital for Purpose-Built Student Accommodation

“Over the past 28 years, the GSA IM management team has transformed student accommodation into an institutional asset-grade, real estate class.”

- *Global Student Accommodation*, one of the biggest managers and developers of student property.

According to a report published by the Government of Ireland, from 2016 to 2019 a total of 8,229 bed-spaces were built for student accommodation across the country. Out of those 8,229 bed-spaces, a staggering 6,900, representing 83%, were privately financed. The Irish government heavily relies on the private sector to build student accommodation, with only 4 out of 32 sites built by universities. More than 90% of these are only available for 840€ per month or more. The state is in clear collusion with multinational companies, pursuing a housing system that is premised on neoliberal ideology.

¹ Breakingnews.ie. “Up to 50,000 Homes a Year Needed to Meet Demand, Coveney Admits.” *BreakingNews.ie*, 19 Apr. 2023, www.breakingnews.ie/ireland/up-to-50000-homes-a-year-needed-to-meet-demand-minister-admits-1464950.html#:~:text=Up%20to%2050%2C000%20homes%20a%20year%20needed%20to%20meet%20demand%2C%20Coveney%20admits . Accessed 7 Aug. 2023.

² Hernández-Morales, Aitor. “How Vienna Took the Stigma out of Social Housing.” *POLITICO*, 30 June 2022, www.politico.eu/article/vienna-social-housing-architecture-austria-stigma/ .

Student Responses to the Irish government

“I’ve been a student for 15 years now. I am ready to purchase an apartment to live in. But even at my stage, highly educated, working two jobs, it is difficult to get the necessary approval in principle, to save enough deposit, and then to have to negotiate with bastard greedy estate agents who know how desperate you are. When I first came to Dublin in 2008, I did not think it would be 15 years later and I would still be renting. I have paid well over £100,000 in rent at this stage. Dead money. A transfer of wealth from the young, economically productive, to the economically non-productive, rent-seeking indolent landlord class who provide the bare minimum for the money.”

“We hear about the new government housing schemes and Housing for All but what about us young people, specifically 18-22? What are we supposed to do? How can we compete for rental properties with working families and tech expats with the miserly wage/ student grants we receive? ... How can the government ignore the nearly half a million young adults stuck in their childhood bedrooms? We are the hidden homeless. That would be a terrible mistake as we are furious and won’t forgive the assault on our most vibrant years.”

“In almost every other developed country in Europe there is a government fund that helps students with accommodation expenses. I am not saying the government should pay for everything but paying over 1000 euros per month is unmanageable for students on their own. Something has to change”

“I am fed up with the accommodation crisis in Ireland. If I wasn’t stuck with my studies here, I would have moved out to other European countries that give a better standard of living wages to students, like many of my friends. So it’s extremely frustrating to know that nothing has been done by the government or concerned to freeze rent or give allowance to struggling students towards rent.”

“...20% of my salary goes directly to the gold mountain of 65 billion (and increasing) of the Irish government. It’s abusive, and unfair, and of course, I’m mad. I’m from Barcelona and I came here for a year for my postgrad, and I have to say that things back home are bad, but the accommodation situation here is just ridiculous and a bad excuse for the rich to keep getting richer. I’d have no problem paying taxes (20% of paycheck) to a government that provides universal health care (that includes trans healthcare, please!), accommodation, a good working public transport system, funds for Colleges, research, culture, or even legitimate environmental solutions. But that is not the case for Dublin or Ireland in general, and that’s what infuriates me.”

Student Responses to Trinity College Dublin

“The Irish housing crisis and Trinity College Dublin’s more than questionable responses to it have made Dublin a place I would not recommend to anyone who wants to study anything... The universities are just watching as they become mere tourist attractions”

“If we can afford to pay our provost 200,000+ euros every year, why can we not allocate on campus accommodation for 20-30 economically disadvantaged students?”

“Nothing worse than having to be so grateful all the time because you’ve got accommodation on campus, and in this climate it’s impossible to get anything, knowing that college are using that climate and the horrid desperation that students feel to fuel the exploitation of their own students by upping the already astronomical costs of the campus accommodation. Private landlords are one thing, the fact that it’s TCD doing it to you just twists the knife”

“Students are forced into situations where they are paying up to a grand a month to their university that is supposedly inclusive and concerned about student experience.”

“Although it’s convenient to live on campus, it definitely is not worth the over a grand a month you have to pay for it. You’re not even guaranteed peace and quiet because of the amount of tourists you have quaking around at all times... but it’s Trinity - of course it’s about the money. But it’s a sham, this whole institution. It might look good on paper being a Trinity student but it really is far, far away from the truth and I’ve told everyone to not apply to TCD if they can go somewhere else. Ridiculous money for a whole lot of nothing”

“I pick the cheapest accommodation on campus every year. The maintenance is shocking. Just last week my fridge and freezer stopped working/was turned off. It took two days to fix it and nothing was mentioned about reimbursement of about 60€ of food. this is the 4th time in the last 12 months”

“Please make applying for on campus accommodation easier”

“I’m in Trinity Halls, paying €700-€900 a month however we have a huge leak kitchen ceiling for three weeks and they haven’t done anything about it, we also have been left without a microwave, it’s start to really have a negative experience on life especially for the amount we are paying to live there”

“In my opinion the college should make sure it is able to house the amount of students it is taking in and make sure the prices are affordable to everyone. They can’t expect people to have lots of money in order to afford expensive accommodations in town and attend the lectures and focus full time on their studies in order to do well when they have to work or commute for hours every day. On top of that, students don’t have so many options when it comes to accommodations that are not made for them due to the fact that lots of landlords would rather not rent to them.”

Solutions

Our Students' Union is in favour of a restoration of the eviction ban, severe restrictions on no-fault evictions, seizing of vacant and derelict properties, and a ban on Airbnbs in Dublin. People Before Profit's Rent Control Bill alongside Sinn Féin's legislation to ban sex-for-rent are also measures that the TCDSU is in full support of. We also endorse CATU's Universal Housing Programme, which involves massive public and affordable housing building projects, removing the profit motive from housing. We support its application to the student sector by the state construction and management of student accommodation, thus bringing it into public accountability and oversight. We define "affordability" as "the monthly rent being maximum 1/3rd of a national monthly minimum wage net income", however we ultimately advocate for free housing for all. We support a constitutional right to housing and urge the government to move quickly on this front. We, alongside all other students' unions in the country, are asking for digs legislation, as many of our members rely on digs to live for the academic year.

Evictions

The decision to lift the eviction ban in March 2023 was disastrous, and will worsen the housing crisis. In 2022 alone, 2,734 families were evicted³. Thousands more, often from vulnerable groups, will be made homeless and enter into a housing market that offers no housing, and if it does, at unaffordable rates. We believe that the eviction ban should be put back into place. This would have the effect that if, for example, a landlord was to sell up, they would have to do it by offering the place to local government or housing associations - thereby leaving tenants in place. It is to note that the eviction ban in place was essentially a no-fault eviction ban, and it temporarily brought Ireland to the same level as other European Union countries in terms of housing legislation. We oppose all evictions, and see the mechanism of eviction as an inhumane tool of oppression and control, putting tenants at harm; a first step in protecting the victims would be a ban on no-fault evictions.

Price Controls

Drastic changes need to be made to the policy of price controls in the residential rental market. We are in support of People Before Profit's Rent Reduction Bill 2022 which will establish a National Rent Authority and reduce rents to a maximum of a quarter of median monthly household income. Rents are unaffordable. In a survey of Trinity College Dublin students conducted by Students4Change, 93% found their on-campus housing to be unaffordable⁴. Existing rent pressure zones do not work and incentivize landlords to have a quick turnover of tenants as they can then charge higher rents. This is the "Vacancy or Lack of Tenancy" loophole

³ Hearne, Rory. "Reinstate the Eviction Ban | Uplift." *My.uplift.ie*, Mar. 2023, <https://my.uplift.ie/petitions/keep-the-ban-on-evictions> . Accessed 7 Aug. 2023.

⁴ Kenny, Ellen. "Students4Change Publish Accommodation Report Urging Formation of "Grassroot Renters' Groups."" *Trinity News*, 12 Apr. 2023, <https://trinitynews.ie/2023/04/students4change-publish-accommodation-report-urging-for-mation-of-grassroot-renters-groups/> . Accessed 7 Aug. 2023.

that is being exploited⁵. For reference, we advocate a maximalist approach of free housing for all, but define “affordable” as “a monthly rent being 1/3rd of a national minimum wage monthly net income”.

Universal Public Housing

The antidote to market-led housing is state investment in large-scale housing constructions projects. There are funds to do this, they just need to be reallocated. The idea behind this is that the state creates a construction company, employs construction workers, and builds public and affordable housing. Schemes like the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) have seen millions of euros spent to essentially subsidise the private sector and the landlord class through Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITS), build-to-rent, and other multinational corporations. These are neoliberal policies, underpinned by a belief that public money should be funnelled to the private sector to deliver on basic human needs⁶. Wonders could be done if these were reallocated to the public sector. The government has so far done the opposite - in fact, going as far back as the 1990s, it had been a policy to cease construction of council homes so as to simulate the private market. It reflects a deep-seated belief that housing is not a human right, but a commodity, and that as such it must operate based on market principles. The success of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) in the provisioning of publicly-built housing in the 1970s is an example to follow. We support the implementation of universal public housing in the student housing sector, for free or at least capped at affordable rates, with accommodation built by the state and managed by the state, thus providing public accountability and oversight. This is in line with CATU’s proposal for a Universal Housing Programme.

Derelict and Vacant Properties

There are close to 200,000 empty and derelict houses across the south of Ireland⁷, many of them for speculative purposes. These could be homes. If a state construction company is created as per previous suggestions, it could be responsible for refurbishing derelict properties.

Furthermore, a special levy of some kind must be applied to incentivize landlords to either rent their property, or sell it to the authorities who can then offer it to people as public housing. For example, charging the landlord monthly rent or a percentage of the building’s market value, or even legislating to take vacant housing into public ownership after a set amount of time.

⁵ Neylon, Laoise. “Increase in Landlords Using “Vacancy or Lack of Tenancy” Loophole to Charge Higher Rents.” *Dublin Inquirer*, 28 Feb. 2023, <https://dublininquirer.com/2022/11/02/increase-in-landlords-using-vacancy-or-lack-of-tenancy-loophole-to-charge-higher-rents/> .

⁶ Byrne, Michael, and Michelle Norris. “Housing Market Financialization, Neoliberalism and Everyday Retrenchment of Social Housing.” *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, vol. 54, no. 1, 24 Feb. 2019, p. 0308518X1983261, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0308518x19832614> .

⁷ Lenihan, Barry. ““A Crying Sin” - What to Do with Derelict Properties?” *Www.rte.ie*, 20 July 2023, www.rte.ie/news/2023/0720/1395486-derelict-properties/#:~:text=%22While%20official%20figures%20understate%20the . Accessed 7 Aug. 2023.

Constitutional Right to Housing

The Irish Constitution guarantees the right to private property, but not to housing. This has a two-fold effect. Firstly, regressive policies like the lifting of the eviction ban would be much harder to pass and would be open to challenges from the courts. Secondly, progressive policies would be easier to pass as the constitutional amendment would give grounding and framework to implement legislation. A constitutional right to housing also gives people the right to challenge adverse decisions relating to housing in the courts. It acts as a balancer to the state which is now overwhelmingly on the side of defending private property rights, and does not have a counterbalance such as a constitutional right to housing. The debate that would spring up around a referendum to secure a constitutional right to housing is also a key part of the political future of Ireland and would ignite much-needed discussions around the housing situation. For this reason, we support a constitutional right to housing and urge the government to call a referendum on the matter.

Ban on Sex for Rent

We are disgusted and horrified at recent news reports that landlords are asking for sex from vulnerable tenants. Urgent action is needed on this issue. The fact that this is happening shows how severe the state of the housing crisis is. We fully support Sinn Fein's legislation to ban sex for rent, the amendment to the Residential Tenancies Act.

Digs Reform

We do not believe that the Rent-A-Room scheme, a solution focused on the private market, is suitable or appropriate to compensate for the housing crisis. It is a neoliberal solution that, through its tax break of €14,000, drives up rents and leaves students in vulnerable conditions. At the very least, digs should be regulated via national legislation, not via guidelines, echoing the Union of Students Ireland (USI) ask.

Airbnbs

The issue with Airbnbs in rent pressure zones is that short-term stays from Airbnbs generate intense profits, meaning that landlords are encouraged not to rent out to longer-term stays, contributing to the housing crisis. We support the Union of Students Ireland (USI)'s dual-purpose strategy on this issue. This would allow a transition for the landlord from tourist or summer accommodation to affordable student accommodation at times of need, during the academic year.

Student Accommodation

For students specifically, we are in dire need of publicly-built and affordable student accommodation. According to a report published by the Government of Ireland, from 2016 to 2019 a total of 8,229 bed-spaces were built for student accommodation across the country. Out of those 8,229 bed-spaces, a staggering 6,900, representing 83%, were privately financed. The Irish government has a heavy reliance on the private sector to build student accommodation with only 4 out of 32 sites being built by third-level institutions. More than 90% of these are only available

for 840€ per month or more⁸. This is still nowhere near enough to meet the demand. The National Student Accommodation Strategy (NSAS) has failed because not only does it not deliver enough housing, but it also puts the burden to pay for these places on students and their families. Staff who live in student accommodation are also affected. At the University of Galway last year, 92 out of 300 deferrals were due to the accommodation shortage⁹, showing how the state of things threatens the viability of the academic sector as a whole. Even within third-level institutions, if they build accommodation, they are forced to act like businesses, raising rents, because of government underfunding. In fact, across the country, there are 12,000 students who are in arrears to their institutions due to late fees or rents¹⁰. Furthermore, students are not tenants in legislation, but licensees, which leaves them defenceless against shady landlords, random privacy intrusions, and other arbitrary rules in their domicile, such as a ban on overnight guests or visitors.

⁸ Students4Change. “Why Is Your Student Accommodation so F*cking Expensive?” *Students4Change*, 5 Mar. 2021, <https://students4change.eu/2021/03/05/why-is-your-student-accommodation-so-fcking-expensive/> . Accessed 7 Aug. 2023.

⁹ News, GBFM. “High Rates of Deferrals in University of Galway due to Accommodation Crisis.” *Galway Bay FM*, 23 Sept. 2022, <https://galwaybayfm.ie/galway-bay-fm-news-desk/high-rates-of-deferrals-in-university-of-galway-due-to-accommodation-crisis/> . Accessed 7 Aug. 2023.

¹⁰ Students4Change. “Number of Students in Fee and Rent Arrears Increased by 67% to 11,189 during the Pandemic.” *Students4Change*, 9 Aug. 2022, <https://students4change.eu/2022/08/09/number-of-students-in-fee-and-rent-arrears-increased-by-67-to-11189-during-the-pandemic/> .

TCDSU Housing Campaigns

Our Students' Union has taken a strong stance on housing and has focused on this issue for the entirety of its existence. We have participated in many housing campaigns including in Raise the Roof, the Cost of Living Coalition, collaborating with CATU through our partnership policy, as well as organised campaigns for student housing. Here are a few over the past years, including student marches, blockades against rent increases, protests against vulture funds and the local council for housing, and digs drives.

“Your protest in front of the Book of Kells was so inspiring and gave me hope. Do not give up!”









Conclusion

We as the Students' Union see each year the terrible impacts the housing crisis has on students. Every September, we get flooded with hundreds of requests to find housing, and we do our best, but many students are left without a stable place to live. Our accommodation service is overburdened with the amount of people looking to find a place. It gets worse each year, despite raising alarm bells with the government. We hope that this report will be considered and that it will be given the attention it deserves, and that immediate solutions will be implemented to alleviate this grave issue. Having a place to live is a human right and not having to worry about whether you will be homeless tomorrow is the least people can expect from a government that is bound by the social contract - currently, these obligations are not being delivered on by the state. Immediate change is needed. Students are voters too and the government would do well to remember this as the election period looms. Third-level institutions also have a role to play, namely in not following the government's for-profit housing model, for example by increasing rents year on year, and have a role to play in challenging the housing crisis and calling out the government. Otherwise, the third-level sector is at serious risk due to the effects of the housing crisis both on students and staff.