

Accommodation Survey

of International Students **2022**



Ireland: International students
forced to sleep on former nightclub
due to lack of housing

Finding a place to stay a 'nightmare
for int'l students in Ireland

IRELAND: STUDENTS STRUGGLE TO FIND HOUSING

Students sleeping on couches, paying
for hotels and deferring college entry
as accommodation crisis deepens

French Embassy warns new arrivals of 'severe
housing crisis' and 'sharp rent increases'

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Foreword

The Irish Council for International Students (ICOS) would like to thank the 465 international students who responded to this survey.

The student accommodation crisis in Ireland has been worsening year on year. In 2022, ICOS has seen a marked rise in reports from international students who have struggled to find accommodation, were scammed, or were living in sub-standard properties. Every year, we hear about the challenges students face trying to find a place to live: the scramble for accommodation in August and September, the rising costs, couch surfing, scams, students sleeping in cars, long commutes, and overcrowding. The findings from this survey provide evidence of these, and other, challenges that students encounter in the rental market. ICOS has outlined our recommendations to tackle the student accommodation crisis in this report.

The lack of affordable student accommodation is a symptom of the wider housing crisis in this country, but it requires its own solutions. The Government's National Student Accommodation Strategy 2017-2024 is not fit for purpose and has not been reviewed since 2019. The pace of progress is too slow when it comes to building purpose-built student accommodation. Ireland needs a clear student accommodation strategy and international education strategy that focus on ensuring that students who study here have a safe, affordable place to live.

Ireland's reputation as a study destination is being affected by this crisis, undermining the work of colleges who deliver excellence in education. If Ireland is to continue to be an attractive study destination, the Government must act to implement the recommendations in this report.

I would like to thank and acknowledge the work of Brian Hearne, Senior Policy and Communications Officer at ICOS, for undertaking this research and compiling the report. We look forward to engaging with public representatives and stakeholders on the recommendations.

Laura Harmon

Executive Director

Irish Council for International Students

Background

The national housing crisis has reached an unprecedented level of seriousness in 2022. For students, and in particular international students, the search for accommodation has become a huge source of stress and uncertainty. Spiralling rents and an acute shortage of affordable accommodation, which has been exacerbated by the war in Ukraine, have left many international students with little option but to live in housing that is overcrowded, cramped, and sub-standard. International students who have recently arrived in Ireland are at high risk of being scammed or exploited due to their limited knowledge of the rental market landscape. ICOS undertook this research to identify and highlight the current key issues facing international students in relation to their accommodation.

Methodology

The findings in this report are based on the responses from an anonymous online survey of international students studying in Ireland. The survey was conducted by ICOS between 19 September 2022 and 27 September 2022, and was available in 3 languages: English, Spanish, and Portuguese. ICOS shared the survey across social media, with higher education institutes, and relevant organisations and community groups that work with international students. The survey consisted of a mixture of multiple choice, dichotomous (yes/no), and open-ended questions, designed to gather data on international students' experience of renting in Ireland. A total of 465 people participated in the research.

Key Findings

66%

of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their mental health has suffered due to the accommodation crisis in Ireland

1 in 10

respondents said that it took them in excess of 100 days to find accommodation in Ireland

74%

of English language students and a third of students studying in higher education share a room with at least 1 other person

More than

1 in 10 (14%)

respondents said that they had been a victim of an accommodation scam while in Ireland, of whom a quarter were English language students

41%

of English language students said they had a lease agreement

28%

of respondents who fell victim to an accommodation scam reported the incident

54%

of respondents said they were satisfied with their accommodation. However, ICOS found there were higher levels of satisfaction among Erasmus (71%) and Study Abroad students (79%), and lower levels of satisfaction among English language students (41%)

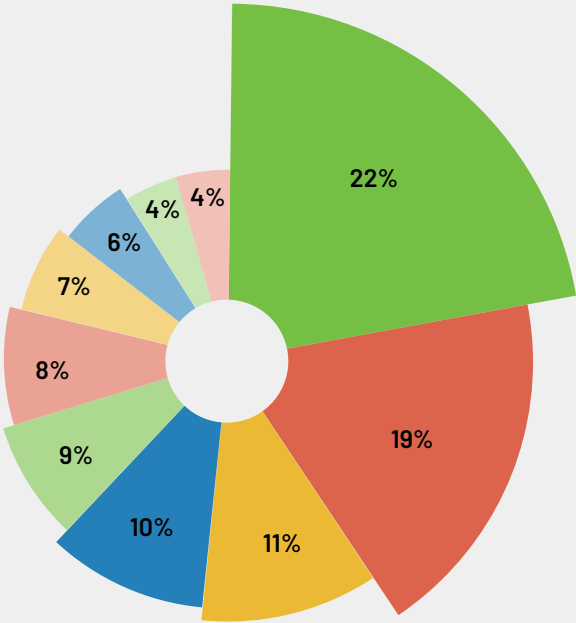
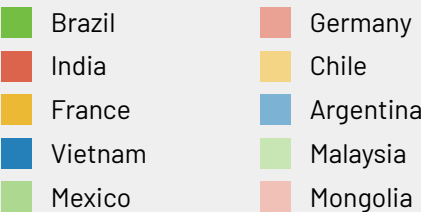
32%

of all respondents said they pay their rent in cash, with half of English language student respondents saying that cash was their method of paying the rent

1. Basic Information

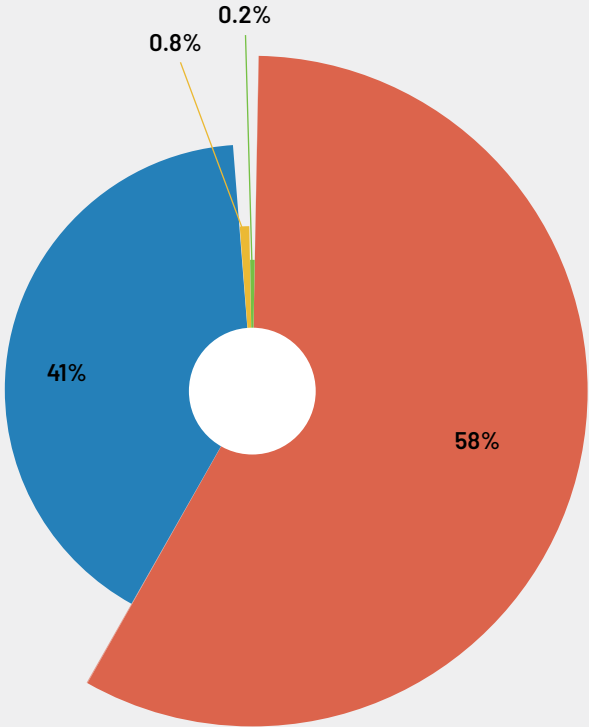
1. What is your nationality?

- 465 participants
- 62 nationalities
- Top 10 nationalities accounted for 68% of respondents
- 79% of respondents were from non-EEA countries



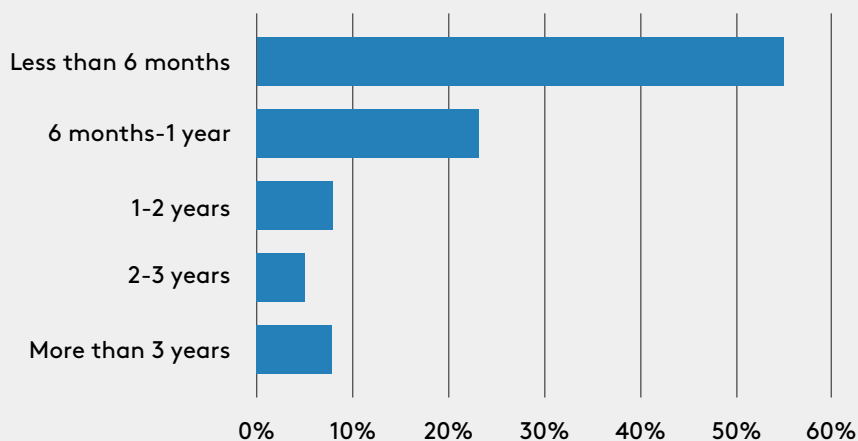
2. What is your gender?

- Female - 58%
- Male - 41%
- Non-Binary - 0.8%
- Did not say - 0.2%



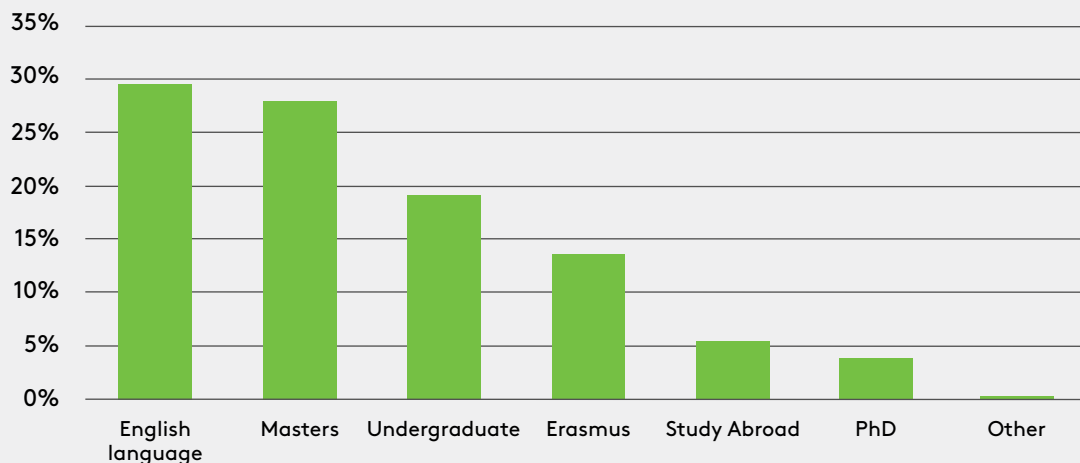
3. How long have you been living in Ireland?

- Less than 6 months - 56%
- 6 months - 1 year - 23%
- 1-2 years - 8%
- 2-3 years - 5%
- More than 3 years - 8%



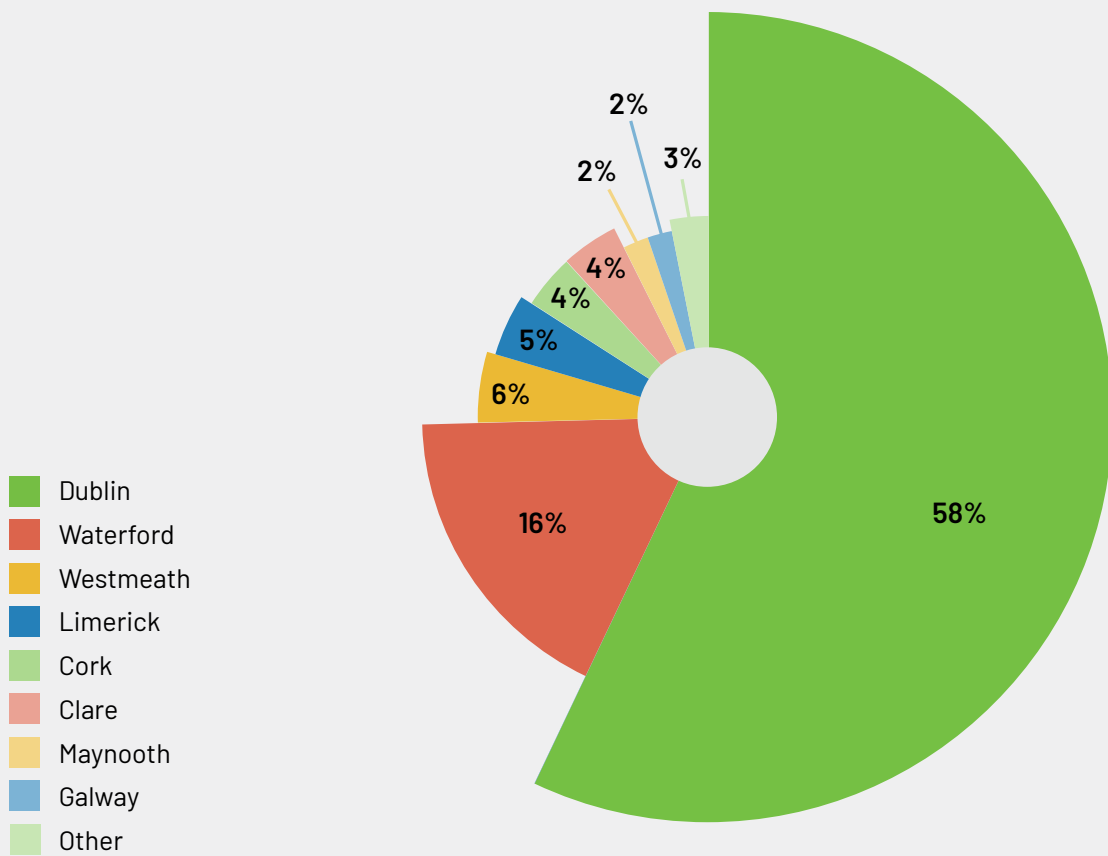
4. What course are you enrolled in?

- English Language - 29%
- Masters - 28%
- Undergraduate - 20%
- Erasmus - 13%
- Study Abroad - 5%
- PhD - 4%
- Other - less than 1%



5. What is the name of the city / town / area where you live?

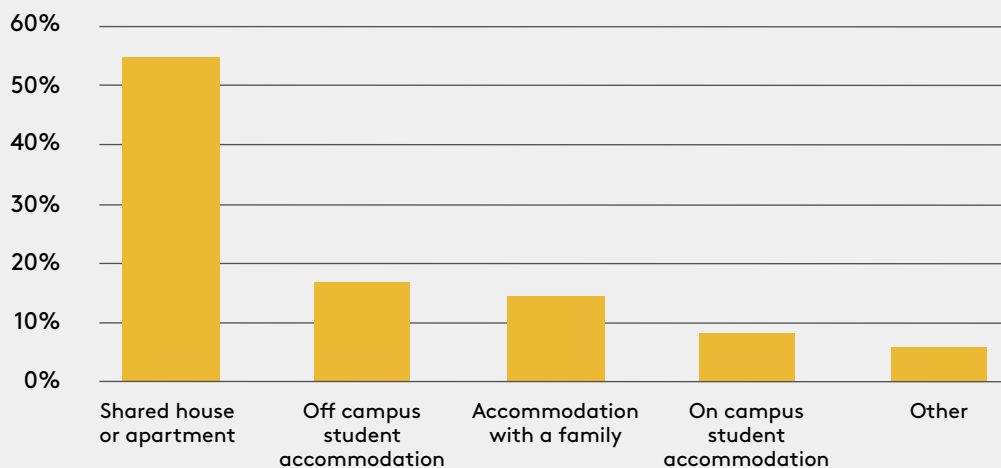
- 97% of respondents lived in 8 counties [Dublin, Waterford, Westmeath, Limerick, Cork, Clare, Maynooth, Galway]
- 58% of respondents said they were living in Dublin
- 94% of English language student respondents were based in Dublin
- 45% of Erasmus respondents said they lived in Waterford



Accommodation

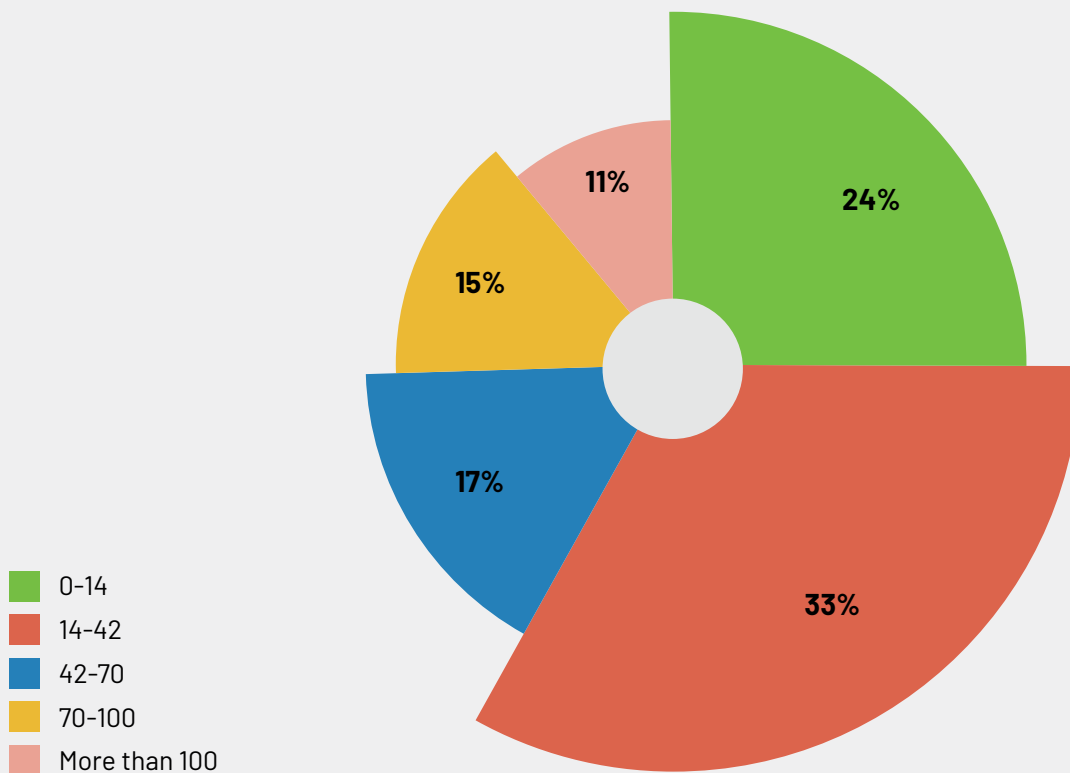
6. What sort of accommodation are you living in?

- More than half of respondents reported living in a shared house or apartment
- 15% said they were living in accommodation with a family
- 14% of respondents studying in higher education (undergraduate, masters, PhD, study abroad, and Erasmus) said they were living on campus



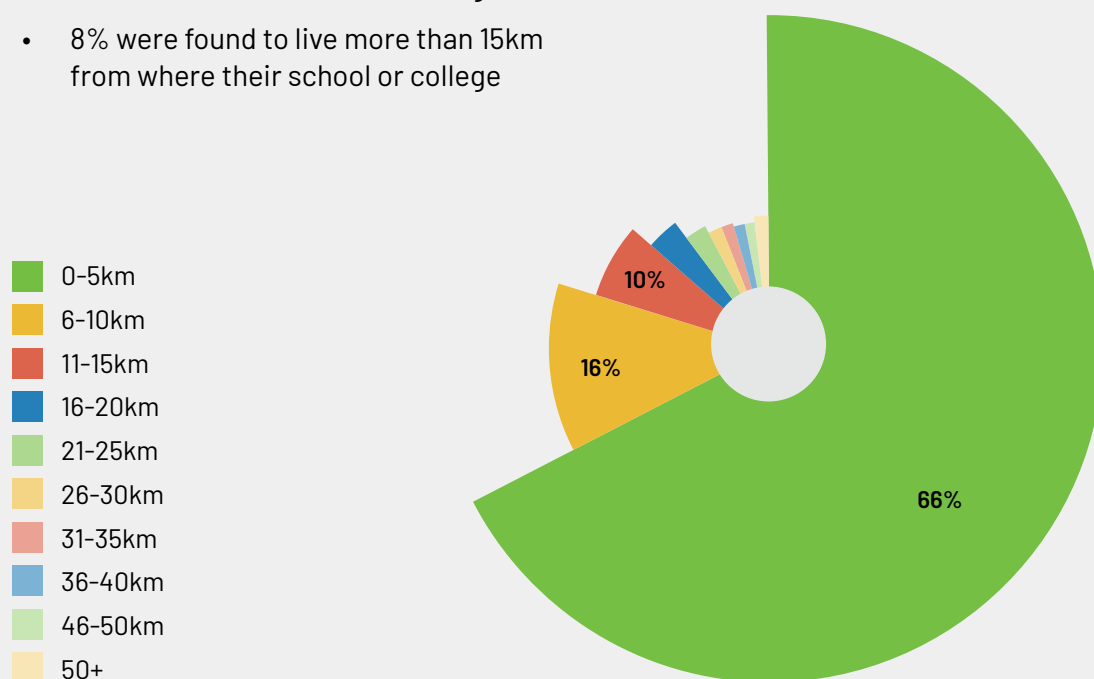
7. How long did it take you to find accommodation (in days)?

- Just under a quarter of respondents said they found accommodation within 14 days
- 33% said that they found accommodation within 42 days
- 17% of respondents found accommodation between 42 - 70 days
- 15% of respondents found accommodation between 70 - 100 days
- More than 1 in 10 respondents said that it took them in excess of 100 days to find accommodation in Ireland



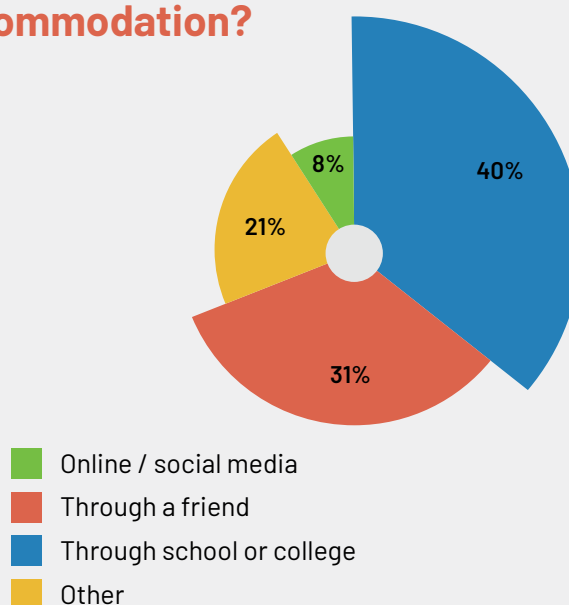
8. How far is your accommodation from your place of study (in km)?

- 66% of respondents live between 1-5 km from where they study
- 16% of respondents live between 6-10 km from where they study
- 10% said they live more than 15km from where their school or college
- 8% were found to live more than 15km from where their school or college



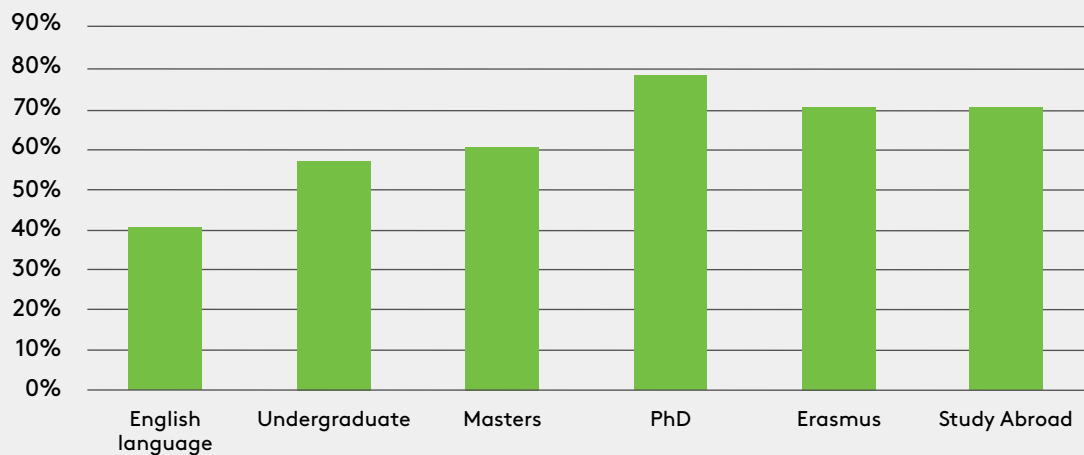
9. How did you find your accommodation?

- 40% of respondents said they found their accommodation online / through social media
- 31% said that they found accommodation through a friend
- 21% of respondents reported finding their accommodation via their school or college
- 8% responded 'Other' with many reporting that they had not yet found accommodation



10. Do you have a lease agreement?

- Just 41% of English language students said they had a lease agreement
- 56% of undergraduates said they had a lease agreement
- 60% postgraduate masters students reported having a lease agreement
- 71% of Erasmus and study abroad respondents said they had a lease agreement
- 78% of PhD students had a lease agreement



11. How many people do you live with?

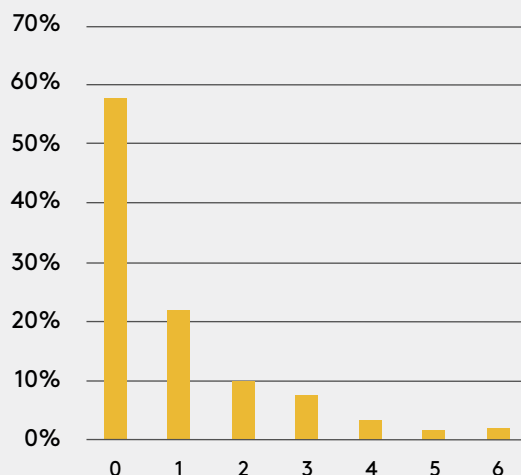
- 3% of respondents said they live alone
- 49% of respondents live in accommodation with between 1-3 rooms
- 35% of respondents said they live with between 4-6 people
- 13% of respondents lived with 7 or more people

12. How many bedrooms are in your house / apartment?

- 63% of respondents reported living in accommodation with 1-3 bedrooms
- 29% said they live in accommodation with between 4-6 bedrooms
- 8% of respondents said their home had more than 7 bedrooms

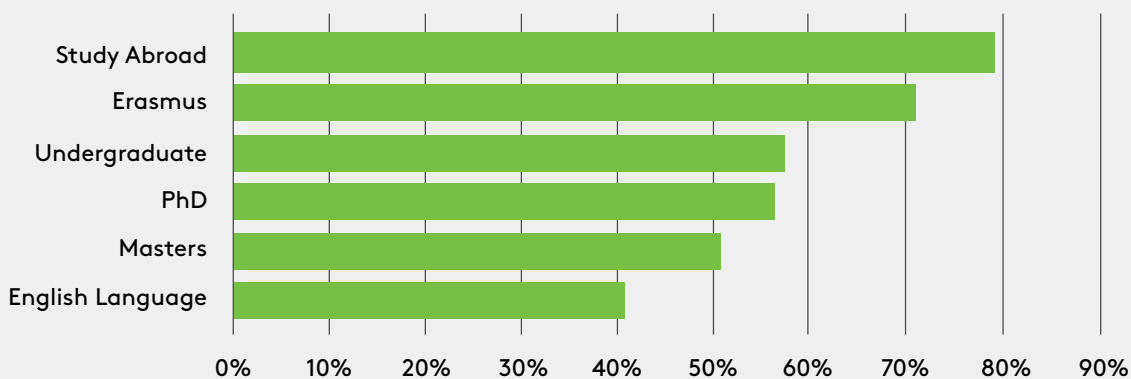
13. How many people do you share a bedroom with?

- 57% of all respondents said that they have their own bedroom, while 43% share their bedroom with someone
- Almost 20% of respondents said they share a room with 2 people or more
- 74% of English language students and a third of students studying in higher education were found to share a room with at least 1 other person
- 45% of English language students said they share a room with 2 or more people compared with just 13% of students studying in higher education (undergraduate, masters, PhD students)



14. Are you satisfied with your accommodation?

- Overall, 54% of respondents said that they were satisfied with their accommodation
- 51% of postgraduate masters respondents and 56% of PhD respondents said they were satisfied with their accommodation
- However, only 41% of English language students were found to be satisfied with their accommodation
- Conversely, the highest rates of satisfaction were amongst Erasmus (71%) and Study Abroad students (79%)



15. Why are you not satisfied?

Sample of responses from 198 respondents who provided feedback:

'Expensive, hard to find. my contract is over. my landlord let me go on a street.'

Mongolian postgraduate student

'We pay a fortune and just got hot water after 3 weeks, the apartment is falling apart, empty and not equipped at all.'

French undergraduate student

'I need share my bedroom with other person because is less expensive for me if I pay alone this bedroom and only can i work for 20 hours per week and this is not enough for can I live in Dublin.'

Nicaragua English language student

'The management company treat the residents terribly and do no respect privacy.'

USA postgraduate student

'Unfriendly family, no heated water, no heating in room, not allowed to cook meat, very thin walls.'

Swiss undergraduate student

'No hot water - mould everywhere - very dirty - humidity.'

French Erasmus student

'Way too expensive, bus connections to Maynooth are insufficient, bike trail to Kilcock unsafe at night.'

German Erasmus student

'Landlords do not respect the law when it comes to accommodation/ rent increase rules. The current crisis makes it effectively impossible to act on this or take it to relevant authorities, as we are as tenant in a very vulnerable position.'

French PhD student

'The price is high, and we sub rent don't have official contract.'

Argentinean English language student

'16 people with only one kitchen and 3 bathrooms. Rent is also expensive.'

Indian postgraduate student

'It's an old house and now we are having problems with rats that are coming from the takeaway downstairs.'

Brazilian PhD student

'It is too crowded and the area is kind of dangerous at night for a girl. There is only one bathroom for 6 people to share as well.'

Malaysia postgraduate student

'I pay 700 to share the room and I living 40 min to the city centre, I don't have night transportation and paying 700 just for living I can't work just 20 hours.'

Chile English language student

'I live with 20 people and only 3 bathrooms and the house has rats.'

Mexico English language student

'Furniture is in very poor condition as are the room interiors. One fire exit is broken, you cannot exit that way. False fire alarms also go off frequently. Maintenance has not yet arrived to fix items (waiting for a month now). Staff don't provide explanations on why some basics aren't provided - like a kitchen plug, meaning we're wasting a lot of water.'

Australian postgraduate student

'There is no permanent accommodation. This accommodation is just for one week. With a lot of people. And bedroom share is no good. The time of the people is different.'

Brazil English language student

'Sleeping in a car isn't the most comfortable thing to do and it can get quite cold but stressing about rent is worse.'

Bangladesh Undergraduate [Homeless]

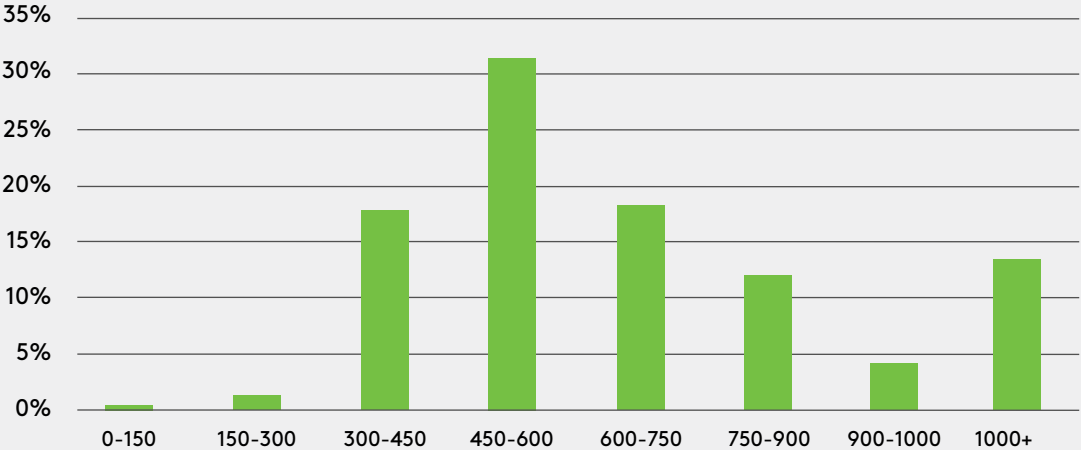
'I am living in an office.'

Chile undergraduate student [Homeless]

Rent & Deposit

16. How much is your rent per month? *

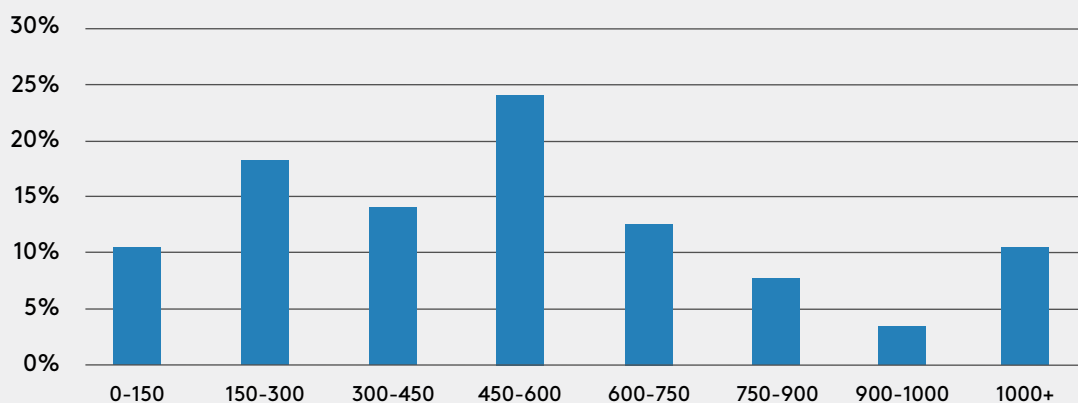
- 51% of respondents reported paying up to €600 per month for their accommodation
- 19% said they were paying between €600 - €750 per month
- 12% of respondents said they paid between €750 - €900 per month in rent
- 18% of respondents reported paying more than €900 in rent each month



*Respondents' rent and deposit were calculated per person. However, this assumption has its limitations due to, among other factors, the wide variance in the cost of rent, the type and quality of the accommodation, the number of people sharing a room, as well as the location of the property.

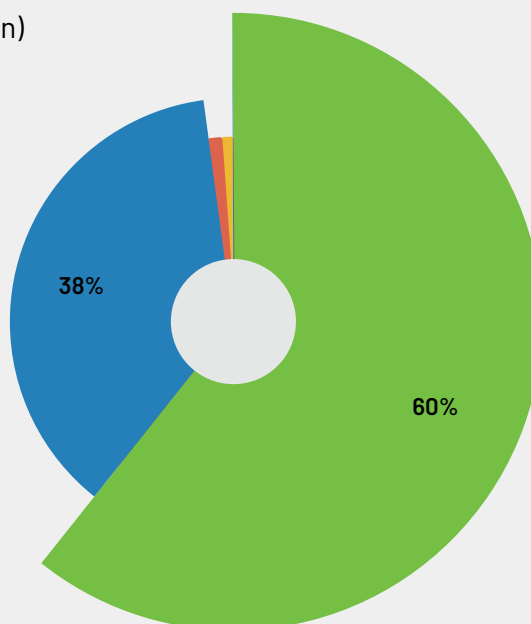
17. How much was the deposit to secure your accommodation?*

- 66% of respondents said they paid a deposit of up to €600
- 13% reported paid between €600 - €750 for their deposit
- 7% of respondents said they had to provide €750 - €900 to secure accommodation
- 14% of respondents reported paying more than €900 as a deposit



18. Are bills included in your rent?

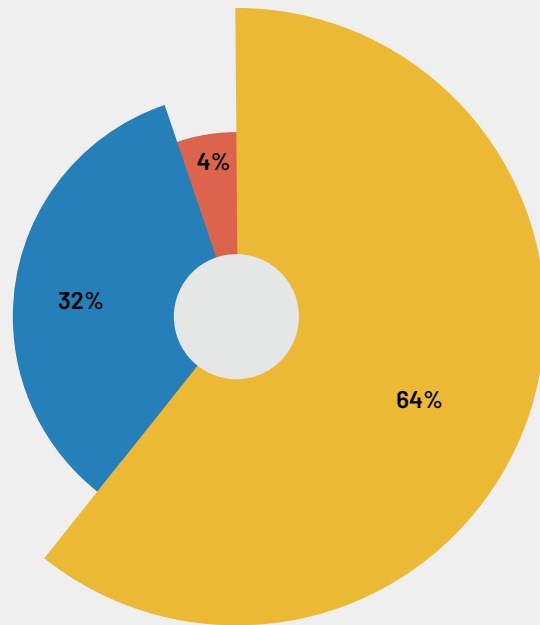
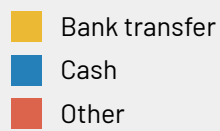
- 60% of respondents reported that bills were not included in their rent (of those that responded to the question)
- 38% said their bills were included in their rent
- The rest of respondents either reported that bills were partially included in their rent or that they were unsure



*Respondents' rent and deposit were calculated per person. However, this assumption has its limitations due to, among other factors, the wide variance in the cost of rent, the type and quality of the accommodation, the number of people sharing a room, as well as the location of the property.

19. How do you pay your rent?

- 64% of respondents said that they paid their rent via bank transfer
- 32% said they paid their rent in cash
- 4% of respondents said they were unsure or reported that their bills were partially included in their rent



Fraud

20. Have you been a victim of an accommodation scam while in Ireland?

- More than 1 in 10 respondents (67) said that they had been a victim of an accommodation scam while in Ireland
- 63% of people who reported being scammed in the search for accommodation were female

21. Did you report the scam to the Gardai?

- Less than a third of respondents who reported being a victim of an accommodation scam said they reported the incident to the Gardai

22. Were you happy with the outcome?

- Only a quarter of these people said they were happy with the outcome

23. Why did you not report it?

Sample of responses from 42 respondents who provided feedback:

'Lack of information, fear of getting negative references from landlord or not getting it at all to present at new accommodation.'

Brazilian postgraduate student

'Because I'm alone in here and if they are want do same bad things to me, they can. I thought I'm not in safe. So I'm scared.'

Turkish English language student

'Because I was unsure if the problem was fixable or even big enough to report.'

German Erasmus student

'I was the victim of at least 5 fraud attempts but I managed to realize it before it was done.'

Mexican English language student

'I was worried it would not be taken serious.'

Nigerian postgraduate student

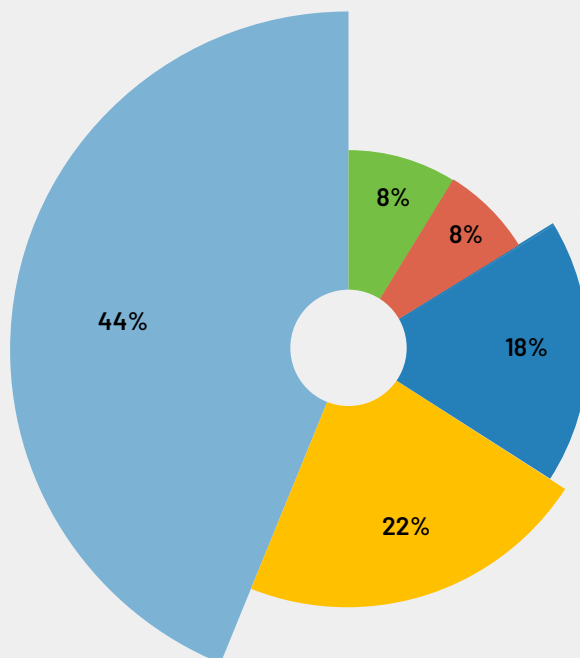
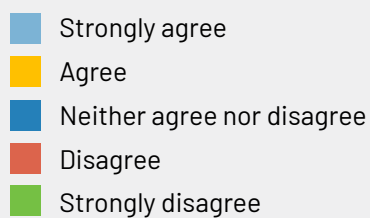
'Fear of having reprisals of the real estate agent, I pay to find this place.'

Brazilian English language student

Mental Health

24. Has your mental health suffered because of the accommodation crisis in Ireland?

- 66% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their mental health had suffered due to the accommodation crisis in Ireland



Final Comment

25. Do you have any additional comments or information you would like to share?

Sample of responses from 200 respondents who provided feedback:

'I am very scared about what I am going to do after my contract with the university is over for this accommodation. I really hope the rent is standardised and there is some relief for international students coming from developing countries to study.'

Indian undergraduate student

'There should be transparency from institutions about the accommodation crisis in Ireland and the cost of such accommodation. The mental stress and toll it takes to find a place when you assumed it will be smooth sailing is tremendous. Such transparency goes a long way in informing whether one should move and study in Ireland.'

Zimbabwean PhD student

'The rent in Dublin is chaotic. Students are being charged an exorbitant for accommodation, not to mention it's a challenge to rent a room if you're a student as you don't have a stable income. Scams are common on Facebook group (the ideal flatmate, Accommodation in Ireland, ...) but no authorities are taking actions either to eliminate these scammers or control the renting cost in Ireland.'

Vietnamese postgraduate student

'As an international student, I was extremely lucky to be able to find housing so close to my university. I emailed and texted people that were advertising accommodation for close to 4 months before I had a single reply. At some point, I thought I might have to cancel my academic year in Ireland because there was literally no place for me to live in. The situation is so bad that people will accept the first offer that they come across with, and that is why scams are so successful.'

Spanish Erasmus student

'Build more houses or apartments for students without been abusive in the rent. The minimum salary and 20 hours restriction is not enough for pay the actual rents and buy food.'

Brazilian English language student:

'With all prices increasing, I mean, college, rent, bills, food, I'm uncertain if I can handle everything for the next few years until I finish college so, it makes me feel super worried because it's a huge investment. My salary is being enough to pay bills, college and rent. If it still increasing, I will need to find another job, consequently I won't have enough time to study.'

Brazilian undergraduate student

'I have moved 5 times in the last 2 months in Waterford as I was only able to secure short term accommodation while attempting to find something more long term. I was on the waiting list for on campus accommodation for 6 months as I applied in April, and got an offer in September after which I was able to move into something more permanent. I'm not sure what I would have done if I hadn't got the place on the waiting list.'

Indian postgraduate student

'Unfortunately, the students can't pay the high cost of living here we live pay high rent in bad conditions sometimes the landlords approach the situations with sexual harassment in exchange for low cost of rent. Or many students have to work more hours to pay for one room with 4 people in 600e.'

Costa Rican English language student

'Especially international students are easy prey for scammers because we cannot visit the accommodation and have to rely on videos, phone calls and pictures. There needs to be a safer way for us to find a place that is affordable!'

German Erasmus student

'I barely make ends meet as a PhD student. Just the rent takes 50% of my stipend, with bills it reaches 60%, and this will be even more in winter.'

Spanish PhD student

'I didn't think it would be this difficult to find accommodation, I am starting to regret choosing this school.'

Nigerian postgraduate student

'I was very lucky to find decent accommodation, however, I spend 2 an a half to 3 hours a day commuting from my school and work to home but I know too many stories of people with whom I have talked and I have been able to learn where they live demeaning, uncomfortable and archaic situations, from mistreatment by landlords, excessive charges, too many people living in the same room (4 or more), all this without having more options than to accept these conditions.'

Mexican English language student:

'For a foreign student with not many contacts, limited income and work restrictions it is very hard to find decent accommodation. Most of the times students were scammed and racism victims.'

Bolivian postgraduate student

'The rent are so expensive that's why we need to shared bed, yes, shared bed between 2 or 3 persons, if the contract its finish we know that the other accommodation in the same conditions are more expensive, so good business Ireland. Nobody control the price and we are exhausted.'

Chilean English language student

'Ireland is very beautiful but because of the accommodation problem i would not recommend it.'

Honduran English language student

'I have no where to live next week. I'm scared. I think in to return to Brazil.'

Brazilian English language student

'As a student here in Ireland, I feel used by the Government where we pay dearly for school, accommodation and we have no way of keeping up with the standard they set us. To work 20 hours a week and in jobs that pay the least. We live in terrible conditions. Houses full of people we barely know, that's when we find a home. We are treated as if we are receiving a favour from being here. This is being a bad experience unfortunately!'

Brazilian English language student

'I have seen post on Facebook where house's owners charge more than 500 for a bunk bed, sharing room with 4 or more people which is insane, should be regulations to avoid that kind of situations.'

Mexican undergraduate student

Recommendations

ICOS proposes the following recommendations:

1. Build more affordable housing in both urban and rural areas to alleviate housing crisis;
2. Ringfence capital investment to enable higher education institutes to build affordable Purpose-Built Student Accommodation (PBSA);
3. Publish new National Student Accommodation Strategy and establish steering group to oversee its implementation;
4. Include accommodation targets in the new International Education Strategy;
5. Increase inspections of private rental properties to ensure that landlords are complying with minimum standards;
6. Strengthen housing legislation, including reporting mechanisms and enforcement, to target landlords who fail to comply with the law;
7. Raise awareness of accommodation rights and how to avoid accommodation scams with promotional material in different languages;
8. Introduce legislation for 'rent a room' style accommodation;
9. Restore 12-month Student Visa for English language students.*

*Non-EEA international students on a Stamp 2 Visa are currently given an 8-month visa for English language studies whereas they are provided with a 12 month visa for higher education studies. It is ICOS' view that given the significant costs that students must incur to fund their studies in Ireland, all students on a Stamp 2 Visa should be issued with a 12-month visa.

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due to lack of housing

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