

Student Housing Report

National Student
Housing Survey 2017



Union of Students in Ireland
Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Union of Students in Ireland
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2017

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About Union of Student's in Ireland (USI)

The Union of Students in Ireland (USI) is the sole representative body for students in Ireland and represents 354,000 students in over thirty member colleges across Ireland, North and South. Throughout its history, USI has worked relentlessly in the pursuit of student rights in all areas of the student experience.

Objectives of the Union of Students in Ireland:

1. An education and training system open to all, irrespective of any consideration, including consideration of national origin, ethnic background, age, ability, sex, sexuality, creed, political beliefs or economic circumstances, so that each individual can realize their full potential.
2. An education and training system which truly serves the interest of the people of Ireland.
3. The right of students to a decent standard of living including the right to adequate financial support, proper housing and future prospects of employment in Ireland.
4. The defence and promotion of all democratic and human rights.
5. The provision of student services for the benefit of the membership on the principle that control of student service should lie with the membership.
6. To represent the interests of the students of Ireland at international level.



The issue of housing permeates across all groups of our society. In recent years, the shortage in student accommodation has forced students, families and professionals to race for accommodation, and compete for somewhere to live. In many instances, this competition has pushed students to take accommodation that exists outside of their price range.

USI protects and improves the right of students to a decent standard of living including the right to adequate financial support, proper housing and future prospects of employment in Ireland. It's from this objective that our need to assess the current situation with students and their accommodation sprouts.

Students have felt the pinch in the increase in rent - just like everyone else. Students have experienced being crammed into small spaces, with harsh living conditions and horror stories of the state of living. However, all we had were stories and anecdotal evidence. The first student-led national housing survey on students seeks to finally give a snapshot of the living conditions of students in Ireland along with their preferences and experiences regarding student accommodation.

It is important that the recommendations and preferences for what student accommodation should look like and what form student accommodation should take are listened too. If we rush to build inadequate housing and resolve the issue of supply and demand without students' rights, needs and voices at heart then we will face issues later on down the line.

The recommendations in our report are from students themselves, and the future tenants of student accommodation and future of this country. The provision of innovative, cost effective and actionable solutions to the issue of student accommodation present real opportunities for all areas.

The Union of Students in Ireland (USI) is committed to supporting the provision of quality, affordable and adequate housing for all and is willing to work with any and all groups to allow that.

Michael Kerrigan

Michael Kerrigan
USI President 2017/2018

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study explores the living conditions of students in Ireland along with their preferences and experiences regarding student accommodation. This section offers presentation of key findings along with recommendations for further steps to improve the student housing situation.

Survey

The survey was designed in online software - Survey Monkey - and distributed through a link among all the students through on-line channels, such as e-mail, website and social media. The link was active for three weeks. Out of the population of 225,641 students we collected 3,597 responses (at a level of 2% margin of error and 99% confidence level).

Study design

The first section – Executive Summary – offers presentation of key findings and is followed by Recommendations (section 2) to be considered by policy makers and stakeholders to better the student accommodation situation in Ireland. Section 3 (Introduction) attempts to introduce the topic of student accommodation in the country and includes the rationale for the present report. Section 4 (National Student Housing Survey) presents the overview of the results of the survey that USI carried out in 2017. Finally, the report finishes with References section that enlists the resources used for desk and Web research.

Current housing situation vs. preferences

The majority of students live in a form of Purpose Built Student Accommodation (PBSA) (33%; 1,103 out of 3,385) and privately rented accommodation (31%; 1,043). 7% of respondents live in digs (233), which have become increasingly relied upon due to shortage of accommodation supply on the one hand, and tax incentives for homeowners on the other. According to Revenue Statistics, the number of homeowners who availed of tax-free income has risen by 4,160 between 2004 and 2015.

Students state most frequently that they chose their current accommodation, because it suited their needs

perfectly (23%) or it was close to their college (25%). However, roughly one in four students declare they could not have found anything else (24%) or they had to agree to current accommodation due to time pressure (4%).

The choices students make regarding the type of accommodation overlap with their preferences. For 873 respondents (41%; 873 out of 2,147 students) PBSA was the most referred option, followed by privately rented accommodation (27%; 584). The least preferred accommodation option for students were digs (43%; 929).

Worryingly, however, thirty-eight students in the survey stated that they have no accommodation and consequently sleep on friends' couches, floors or in cars. In two cases, students declared sleeping rough and availing of homeless aid. Furthermore, according to latest Census 2016 data, 8% of total number of homeless persons (429 out of 7,000) were students. In addition, for almost 1 in 10 students, the accommodation they currently stay in is either not a permanent solution (4%) or it is difficult to say if they will be staying there permanently for various reasons (5%).

The crux of the issue is the lack of adequate or available accommodation for students, either dedicated or offered in the open private rented market. Consequently, the present level of insecurity and lack of accommodation put students at the health risk, may force them to drop out and impact their academic performance.

Lease/license agreements and RTB

Written lease/license agreements are rather popular among students, even in accommodation that is not regulated under Residential Tenancies Act. Over 70% of students staying in PBSA have signed an agreement with their accommodation provider. Interestingly enough, roughly nine in ten students staying in digs would have signed an agreement with their accommodation provider, which sets out good standards and willingness for additional security both for students and home-owners.

In privately rented accommodation the rate of written lease agreements is comparably lower. Less than half of respondents declared signing one with their land-

lords. Additionally, only 26% of students confirmed their property being registered with Residential Tenancies Board (RTB). However, this does not impact their ability to submit a dispute should one arise.

Cost of accommodation

The financial implications of going to university are making headlines in Ireland, focusing heavily on accommodation. With the relatively high increases of the cost of student accommodation, including that owned by college, furthers the threat of increasing drop-out rates. Only this year Trinity College Dublin increased the price of accommodation by 10% for the academic year 2017/2018, after a prior increase of up to 12% the previous year (University Times, 2017). Dublin City University (DCU) has planned to increase up to 11% (own source).

The vast majority of students pay for their accommodation (75%). Over the past years, costs of accommodation in Ireland have been climbing up in every type. For instance, in privately rented accommodation rents have risen by 10% since the peak in 2008 (Daft, ie, 2017b). According to the results of USI's survey, a large proportion or the entire income of students is spent towards their accommodation costs. 58% of students declared the monthly cost of accommodation including bills amounts to between €251-500, over half of those students' income does not exceed €500. The highest accommodation costs reported are over €1000 a month (2% of respondents), roughly half of which are paid in private rented market.

Students declared their rent costs being higher than planned or expected due to the landlords increasing the costs of accommodation after agreeing on the price and before moving in (14%; 308 out of 2,147) or, generally, outside of agreed or allowed period (9%; 192).

The overall cost of accommodation is, however, higher than just rent and bills. The cost of travel to and from college, laundry costs, transaction fees, administrative fees (the latter three particularly in PBSA) and deposit drive the total cost for staying in the chosen place.

Deposits

Almost one in three students who rent privately and live in PBSA and roughly one in five of those who stay in digs had to pay the deposit. The value of the deposit usually amounts to the value of a month's rent (61%), rather rarely it would be as high as the value of two months' rent (12%). On average students pay €400 deposit. Noteworthy, 36% of students who had paid the deposit stated they did not receive their receipt and further 81% had not been given key before handing in the deposit.

Finding a place

Over one-fifth of students did not look for accommodation at all (22%; 627 out of 2,873), usually because they knew they would be staying with their parents due to a difficult situation on the housing market or for the reason of having their accommodation secured with relatives, partners or pre-booked by their college. A significant cohort of students needed from one to three months to find their accommodation (36%; 1,031), which means that given that one in five students (20%; 580) started looking for accommodation in August, might have not been enough time to secure their bed spaces for college.

It is worth noting the most popular ways of finding accommodation for students. Over one-quarter declared they had found their accommodation through the word of mouth (28%; 800 out of 2,873), whereas one in five relied on on-line sources (20%; 579).

Satisfaction with accommodation

On average students are 'rather satisfied' with their accommodation in general. Having analysed the satisfaction levels across different types of accommodation, students are 'rather satisfied' with PBSA, digs/lodgings, privately rented accommodation and other types, whereas satisfaction level is slightly higher when living in parents'/relatives'/partners' accommodation, where students are 'quite satisfied'.

Despite the fact of general satisfaction levels being rather high, 347 individuals shared their comments, a sample out of which showed rather negative experiences suggesting rather low satisfaction levels. Re-

spondents pointed to poor assistance from accommodation providers, high prices not reflected in standards of a particular accommodation and poor condition of accommodation.

Conditions of accommodation

There are still a significant number of people struggling with accommodation-related issues, while in college. Almost one-fourth of students experience mould (24%), over one-fifth damp (21%) and inadequate heating (21%) and 19% high noise levels. Despite the fact that a cohort of students declares 'good conditions' (74%) and to be satisfied (67%) with their accommodation, only 11% of students stated they have not experienced inconveniences in the above-mentioned form or bugs, permanently defective appliance, lack of maintenance, lack of natural light, burglary, dirtiness, flooding. This means that an overwhelming majority of respondents (89%) are at a risk of physical and mental health deterioration and higher overall cost due to unsuitable accommodation conditions. For instance, due to poor insulation and damp, students have to spend more on heating to be able to keep their houses warm enough or dry clothes.

Past experiences

Over one in five of respondents experienced unexpected increase in rent before or shortly after moving in (14%; 308 out of 2,147) or outside of the allowed/agreed period (9%; 192). A quarter of all respondents had a dispute with their accommodation provider (25%; 530 out of 2,147), out of which the majority were in PBSA (177) and privately rented accommodation (167). 17% of those who had experience conflict, sought professional help (115 out of 530). Most frequently, students looking for assistance turned to their local students' union or Threshold.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Public supply of student accommodation through a student co-led organisation to ensure sustainable and affordable accommodation options in the long-run.

The study shows the majority of students live and want to live in PBSA, which translates into the need for accelerated supply of that type of accommodation. Apart from the efforts to attract private investors, USI strongly believes that publicly supplied affordable student accommodation is the most sustainable solution.

Better monitoring of tax reliefs through data collected by the Revenue.

USI would like to see data on the number and value of rent-a-room tax reliefs processed within a year, in order to be able to better assess the impact of campaigns rolled out to attract home-owners.

Introduction of the obligation for written lease/license agreements for better protection.

Under the current legislation there is no obligation for written lease agreements in privately rented accommodation, which may cause numerous problems for student tenants: limited ability to negotiate with the landlord, landlords breaching previous oral/implied agreements. USI suggests introducing an obligation for written lease agreements in the case of student tenancies.

Secondly, as the research demonstrated, home-owners and students tend to sign agreements to protect their rights and commit to obligations, while renting a room. There should be intensified efforts taken to promote that good practice. Furthermore, a possibility of necessary legal changes should be explored to regulate this type of accommodation, as a form of renting under the Residential Tenancies Act.

Introduction of further policy measures to address the high cost of student accommodation and improve grants and student assistance fund to better respond to the real living costs.

Students' income equals the money spent on accommodation. Students who support themselves with grant system are in particularly difficult situation. The amount of money received may cover tuition fees, but is not sufficient to cover the cost of living (USI, 2017).

Firstly, the rates of third-level grants, postgraduate grants and student assistance fund should be adjusted to reflect the real costs of participation in higher education, including accommodation costs. Secondly, the grant adjacency distance must be amended. The current qualifying distance of 45km intends to take into account a "reasonable distance" which students may commute on a daily basis. However, this clearly impact students from outside of the major urban areas (USI, 2017).

Introduction of the national deposit retention scheme.

As the research proves, lack of a national deposit protection scheme contributes to a numerous cases of misuse. Landlords make deductions from the deposits on unknown, unclear bases without providing calculations to the tenants. In addition, the amount of deposits asked keep growing.

Despite the efforts of RTB, standards of charging and returning deposits are not always kept, putting students at risk of unfair money loss and distress. A national deposit protection scheme, would be an effective way to ensure deposit safety.

Promoting housing choices.

In order to assist students in their accommodation search, national and local campaigns have to be carried out, particularly in August, with the main aim to present the options that students have for their college accommodation.

Monitoring the execution of Minimum Standards. Measures to better monitor execution of Minimum Standards for Rented Accommodation need to be introduced to reduce the number of cases when the privately rented accommodation puts students at risk of mental and physical health.

Introduction of Student Accommodation Charter.

As there exist no regulations on the terms and conditions of providing and living in PBSA, USI proposes creating common guidelines for publicly and privately-owned student housing that would set out standards and good practices with regard to quality and management that should be followed by accommodation providers.

In cooperation with stakeholders, expanding student housing information services providing technical and legal advice on student housing across all types. The number of students having difficulties finding accommodation is too high and may result in fuelling the drop-out cultures. Therefore, the assistance for students in particularly difficult housing situations should be provided through better provision of the supportive services on local and national levels.

Preventing discrimination against students.

Discrimination against students particularly in privately rented accommodation is visible and has to be prevented. In order to create measures for action against discriminatory behaviour of landlords, USI suggests to amend the regulations to introduce a possibility of a legal action against unfair treatment of students searching for accommodation.

Intensified data collection.

Data collection is a key in policy development and monitoring the housing situation in Ireland. Despite the availability of various datasets on different levels, USI sees a need for intensified consultation with the those affected by policies.

Student engagement is important not only to the qual-

ity of higher education, but also plays an important role in introducing and developing student services locally and nationally. USI is confident that student-centred approach applied to accommodation issues will be a great benefit for the sector and will allow not only for increasing supply of accommodation, but also driving up its quality and sustainability. The research should inform the Government on all matters relating to the development of housing policy, as all the elements of housing policy impact student accommodation situation.

The recently launched National Student Accommodation Strategy should be monitored and evaluated on regular basis to be able to observe the impact of the actions on student accommodation in Ireland. It will allow for adjustments should they be necessary.

Apart from the above-mentioned, the following should be considered:

- Regulating student accommodation in a separate act that would include provision and standard of digs, student house-shares and PBSA;
- Facilitate the development of best practices in relation to student housing.

Background

Pursuant the Union’s of Students’ in Ireland (USI) commitment to striving for adequate housing for students and given the deteriorating situation in the Irish housing sector, USI carried out an independent study on the state of student accommodation in Ireland.

This report is based on USI’s work on accommodation-related topics and the support from the Department of Education and Skills and Department of Housing, Planning, Community, and Local Government. The study explores the conditions of housing for third-level students across Ireland in various types of accommodation.

Rationale

Higher Education in Ireland is seen as a game changer for both the society and the individuals in different roles and is said to further be the drive force for the future skills infrastructure, development of innovation and thriving equal society (Expert Group on Future Funding for Higher Education, 2016). The existing research quantifies also the economic contribution of third-level institutions. For instance, the UCD report estimated that the college generated €1.3 Billion, including €448 Million produced by students only (UCD, 2015).

Despite the education being widely recognised as a key factor in social and economic development and well-being, the overall funding per a third-level student fell by 27% over the seven years between 2006-2013 (Goldrick-Kelly, 2015). The ever-worsening housing crisis along with the limited financial aid only fuel the drop out culture (USI, 2016a) and decreases attractiveness of Irish higher education institutions to domestic and overseas students.

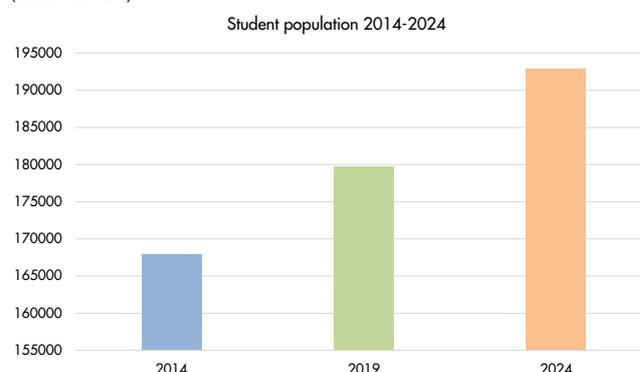
Accommodation is an important factor impacting living conditions of students and therefore the overall studying experience, often enough shaping the higher education attainment and completion rates. The importance of attracting students to college and assisting them in completing their degrees has a positive impact on the economy and societal development. Therefore, it is crucial to give necessary attention to secure good quality and affordable accommodation to third-level students across the country.

Student population

According to Higher Education Authority’s (HEA) figures, a total of 225,641 students were enrolled in higher education institutions (HEIs) in Ireland in 2015/2016 academic year (HEA, 2016). The student population is expected to grow, as

the projected numbers for full-time enrolments (FTEs) are to continuously increase by 2024. The past statistics and calculations from the Higher Education Authority (HEA) are presented in the Figure 1 .

FIGURE 1 CURRENT AND PROJECTED NUMBERS OF STUDENTS (2014-2024).



Source: HEA, 2015.

Additionally, the numbers presented by the Department of Education and Skills show a significant increase in international student population between 2010/2011 and 2014/2015 from 16,742 to 27,598 (DES, 2016). Furthermore, the International Strategy for Ireland sets a target of 15% of students being international students by the academic year 2019/2020, which means an increase of international student population by 33% per Higher Education Institution (DES, 2016).

The student accommodation report of Cushman&Wakefield (2016) presented density of student population by regions, highlighting where student accommodation is needed the most. As shown in Table 1, the regions with highest concentration are Dublin, Mid-West and West and there the authorities should be particularly conscious of ensuring sufficient bed spaces for students.

TABLE 1 STUDENT DENSITY BY REGION IN 2016 (CSO NUTS 3).

Region	Student population (% of population)
Border	2.24
West	4.47
Mid-West	5.42
South-West	3.97
South-East	2.10
Mid-East	1.70
Midlands	1.29
Dublin	5.71

Source: Cushman&Wakefield, 2016.

Economically speaking, the growing student population compared with the austerity measures applied in the education sector will cause further constraints on the Exchequer and Higher Education Institutions (NERI, 2015), impacting student experience at a risk of decreasing retention rates.

Housing crisis

The difficult accommodation situation across Ireland is certainly not a new issue. Almost two decades ago the Nation Social and Economic Forum warned:

“One of the most serious economic and social policy issues now facing Irish society is the escalating crisis in social and affordable housing and accommodation.”

The quality and affordable housing, in general, had been a struggle in Ireland for many years back, however as oppose to post-Celtic Tiger, many new housing units had been built for sale or rent and many landlords made their properties available for rents (Drudy, 2007). Nowadays, not only poor quality and affordability gap cause the struggle for all those trying to find their home, but also availability is far from being consistent with needs.

As highlighted by Daft.ie (2017b), the privately rented market reported a record low availability. In May 2017, there were only 3,100 properties offered to rent. Moreover, with the average nationwide reaching €1,131, rents in privately rented accommodation have risen by 10% since the peak in 2008 (Daft.ie, 2017b). As shown in Table 2, it is most expensive to rent a room in Dublin (€610/pm) and Cork (€433) City Centres.

TABLE 2 RENT A ROOM TRENDS IN Q1 2017.

Area	Price (per month) in €
Dublin City Centre	610
Dublin Commuter Counties	374
Cork City Centre	433
Limerick City Centre	292
Waterford City Centre	288
Galway City Centre	374
Rest of Connacht	265

Source: Daft, 2017b.

It is not only privately rented market that represents the housing crisis in Ireland. The prices of the houses keep growing too and the number of homeless persons have been on the rise. The evidence from 2016 shows, that with 15,000 new homes completed, which marked 18% increase in sup-

ply, the prices of homes increased by 8.6% (DHCPLG, 2016). Moreover, 2016 Census reported almost 7,000 individuals without accommodation (CSO, 2017b), 8% out of which were students (O'Halloran, 2017).

The Government addressed the deteriorating situation through a strategy - Rebuilding Ireland – an Action Plan for housing and Homelessness (2016) that aims at tackling Ireland's housing shortage and under-supply across all tenures. The changing reality of the housing market in Ireland forced the Government to rethink the vision of housing and redesign related policies and create a sector that caters for the needs of the diverse society of Ireland, which translates into, among others, strengthening the rental sector due to decreasing homeownership. Although the effects of the new policies are yet to be evaluated, students welcomed that the Strategy also addressed the issues of student accommodation setting mid- and long-term goals involving the whole spectrum of stakeholders.

Student accommodation

Students in Ireland occupy four main types of accommodation: purpose-built accommodation (either college- or privately-owned), privately rented accommodation, digs-style accommodation and parents'/relatives' houses/flats. It is rather difficult to estimate what is the exact distribution of students by the type of housing, but according to available data ca. 18% of students stay in PBSA, which is a comparable percentage to other European countries (see: Table 3).

TABLE 3 NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS LIVING IN STUDENT ACCOMMODATION IN THE NORDIC COUNTRIES.

Country	Percentage of students living in PBSA	Student population
Denmark	23.3%	215,000
Finland	20.0%	310,000
Germany	10.9%	2,977,781
Ireland	18%	225,641
Norway	15.4%	204,727
United Kingdom	27%	2,280,830

Source: DES, 2017, HEA, 2016, JLL, 2017, NSBO, 2012.

The widely popular in the UK so-called 'investor model' of student housing has arrived in Ireland and the current policy setting attempts to secure optimal conditions for its development. The recently launched National Student Accommodation Strategy sets out a broad framework for student housing provision in the country and will lead to provision

of suitably located and affordable sites (DES, 2017). The reports and policy documents have been underlining the importance of providing student accommodation to avoid additional pressure on the private rented market (DHPCLG, 2016). The delivery of student housing, and other facilities, should be particularly targeted in the regions with a higher ratio of student population (Cushman&Wakefield, 2016).

In 2014, the demand estimated by the colleges amounted to 57,104, whereas the number of beds secured by on-campus accommodation in the same year was 31,296, leaving a gap of 25,808 (HEA, 2015). Despite the increasing demand in 2024 the gap is to be lower (20,986), due to accelerated supply (54,654), but is still expected to amount to over 20,000 bed spaces (DES, 2017), causing great difficulties for students in need of accommodation.

In the ideal situation students would be able to avail of purpose-built accommodation, which, particularly in the time of housing crisis, would take the pressure off the privately rented accommodation. However, the reality is that many students rely on the private rented sector and they will continue to do so up until the supply of alternative accommodation is sufficient. Therefore, USI started identifying and sourcing a short-term supply of student rented accommodation in the form of digs, which have been gaining increasing popularity among students and homeowners. Only last year (2016), through Homes For Study campaign, USI with its members housed roughly 2,500 students (DES, 2017). Moreover, the Revenue Statistics data confirm the positive trend of the rent-a-room scheme over the year (Table 4).

TABLE 4 THE NUMBER AND VALUE OF TAX EXEMPTIONS IN RENT A ROOM SCHEME (2004-2015).

Rent a Room	mIn €	number
2004	2.7	2,300
2005	3.3	2,820
2006	3.9	3,560
2007	4.7	3,180
2008	5.6	3,600
2009	5.6	3,770
2010	5.3	3,770
2011	5.6	3,920
2012	8	5,250
2013	8.3	5,730
2014	9.3	5,710
2015	6.9	6,460

Source: Revenue statistics, 2017.

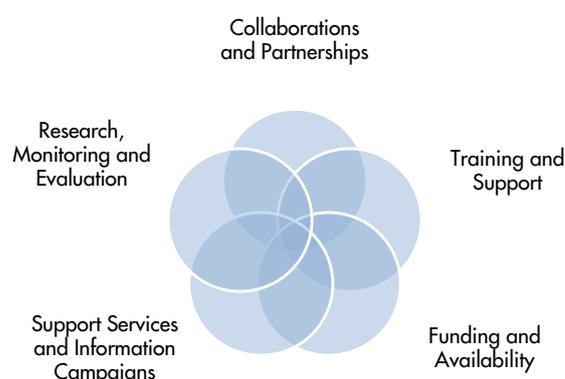
There is rather limited up-to-date evidence on students in

other forms of accommodation, which is one of the reasons that led to preparing this report.

Priority Issues

USI has identified priority issues in five main areas that together constitute Student Accommodation Strategy 2016-2020 setting priorities within student accommodation-related topics (see Figure 2).

FIGURE 2 MAIN AREAS OF THE STUDENT ACCOMMODATION STRATEGY 2016-2020.



Source: USI, 2016b.

With the main aim of mobilising the National and local students' unions to action, the document points out what issues have to be addressed to ensure sustainable student accommodation landscape in Ireland. The priority issues identified are following:

- Limited supply of PBSA;
- Poor quality of student rented accommodation;
- Insufficient assistance for students in their accommodation-related issues;
- Discrimination of student in privately rented accommodation;
- Insufficient or out-of-date data available on student accommodation;
- Limited publicly supplied student housing;
- High cost of accommodation, including PBSA.

Difficult situation in student housing sector resulting from, among others, problems listed above, has been addressed on number of occasions in various reports produced by or in cooperation with USI. In a joint-report USI, Residential Tenancies Board (RTB)¹, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and Department of Education and Science conclude that due to a probable increase in student numbers the demand is likely to expand,

¹ Private Residential Tenancies board (PRTB) at the time.

which translates into the need of developing affordable student accommodation in close neighbourhood to colleges (Cotter, Murphy, 2009). However, there is a need for more in-depth analyses with student eyes to bring a student-centred approach to the discussion.

Therefore, this study was designed and carried out to shed some light on accommodation in Ireland and contribute to the discussion with student-led exercise that present the state of play with student eyes.

Aims and objectives

Accessing quality and affordable student accommodation is a concern for third-level students and their families. This study therefore aims to explore in-depth the situation of student accommodation through the lens of the student.

The specific objectives of this study were to:

1. Identify problems students experience accessing accommodation;
2. Map types of accommodation and conditions students live in;
3. Explore through primary research the satisfaction levels and preferences of students;
4. Make recommendations based on the findings, with regard to:
 - Availability;
 - Affordability;
 - Higher quality and;
 - Security of student accommodation.

Study Limitations

The following study limitations should be considered when interpreting the data collected through the quantitative (online survey) and qualitative (focus group) methods:

- The research depends on the experience of respondents and their memory which may be influenced by a number of factors;
- Inability to follow up on written input in open-ended questions.

Methodology

The study used a combined methodology using primary and secondary research methods, design of which underwent an internal quality assurance procedure and involved consulting with external stakeholders (e.g. Housing Agency).

Desk and Web research

This included analyses of legal acts, minutes of the meetings, academic literature, press articles, and data. All the references we used are gathered and presented at the end of the report in references section.

Computer-assisted Web Interview (CAWI) on students

It is worth noting that the student population represented by USI amounts to 354 000 (including students from Northern Ireland). The survey was designed using online software (Survey Monkey) and distributed through a link among all the students through online channels, such as e-mail, website, and social media. USI was in no position to send e-mails directly to every student due to the lack sufficient resources. The link was active for three weeks. Out of the population of 225,641 students ² we collected 3,597 responses (at a level of 2% margin of error and 99% confidence level).

² The number of students enrolled in third-level institutions in the Republic of Ireland in the academic year 2015/2016, according to the HEA data.

This chapter provides an overview of the results of Ireland's first National Student Housing Survey carried out by USI at the beginning of 2017. The survey consisted of five modules: demographics, accommodation status and conditions, satisfaction with current accommodation and past experiences and preferences.

While reading this chapter, please note the following:

- Percentages included in the report are rounded to the nearest whole number. Due to rounding error it may result in the total percentage not being equal to 100.
- N = refers to the total number of respondents from the overall sample who answered to specific questions.
- Responses 'difficult to say' are not included in the presentation of the results.

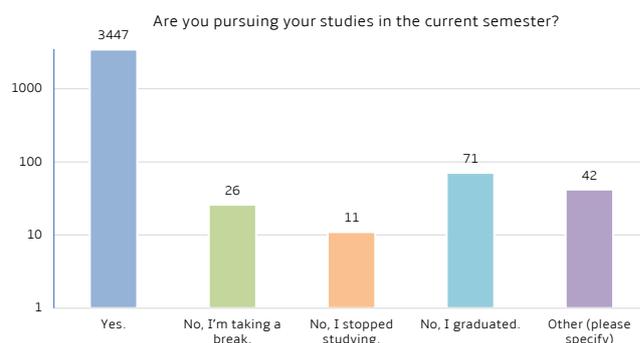
For the ease of the presentation this report will be referring to four main categories of accommodation:

1. Purpose-built accommodation, including college on- and off-campus accommodation and private student accommodation.
2. Parents/Relatives or partners, including staying with parents'/relatives' or partners' accommodation.
3. Digs/lodgings.
4. Privately rented accommodation.
5. Other.

Demographics

During the 4-week period when the survey link was open for responses a total 3,597 respondents submitted answers. From these 3,597 responses, 3% were disqualified and not able to proceed with filling out the survey as these responses identified themselves as currently students taking a break (26), stopped studying (11) or graduated (71). The detailed breakdown of all respondents is presented in Figure 3 below. The final total of responses were: 3,447 respondents.

FIGURE 3 BREAKDOWN OF QUALIFIED AND DISQUALIFIED RESPONSES TO THE SURVEY (N=3,597).



Breakdown of respondents by type of institution is presented in Table 5.

TABLE 5 INSTITUTIONAL BREAKDOWN OF STUDENTS WHO COMPLETED THE SHORT SURVEY (N=3,312).

Name of the college	Respondents	
	No.	%
Mary Immaculate College	8	0.2
NCAD	3	0.1
RCSI	7	0.2
St. Angela's	41	1.2
Athlone IT	249	7.5
Cork IT	59	1.8
Dublin IT	47	1.4
IADT	72	2.2
Dundalk IT	46	1.4
Galway-Mayo IT	426	12.9
IT Blanchardstown	5	0.2
IT Carlow	425	12.8
IT Sligo	46	1.4
IT Tallaght	52	1.6
IT Tralee	245	7.4
Letterkenny IT	6	0.2
Limerick IT	112	3.4
Waterford IT	130	3.9
Dublin City University	386	11.7
National College of Ireland	33	1.0
NUI Galway	159	4.8
NUI Maynooth	138	4.2
Trinity College Dublin	383	11.6
University College Cork	178	5.4
University College Dublin	36	1.1
University of Limerick	13	0.4
Carlow College	7	0.2

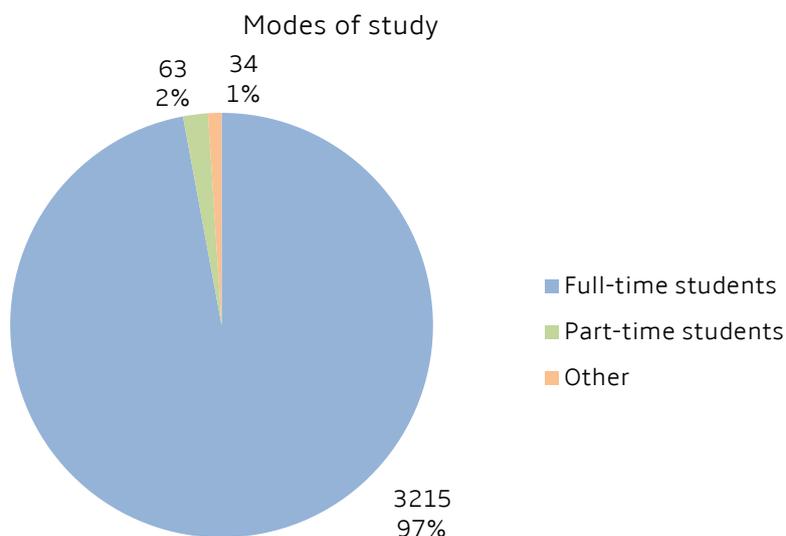
As shown in Table 6 approximately 8% of the respondents came from outside of Ireland, approximately evenly from the EU and non-EU countries.

TABLE 6 RESPONDENTS BY CITIZENSHIP (N=3,312).

Citizenship	No	%
Irish citizens	3,063	92.5
Other EU citizens	126	3.8
Non-EU citizens	123	3.7
Total	3,312	100

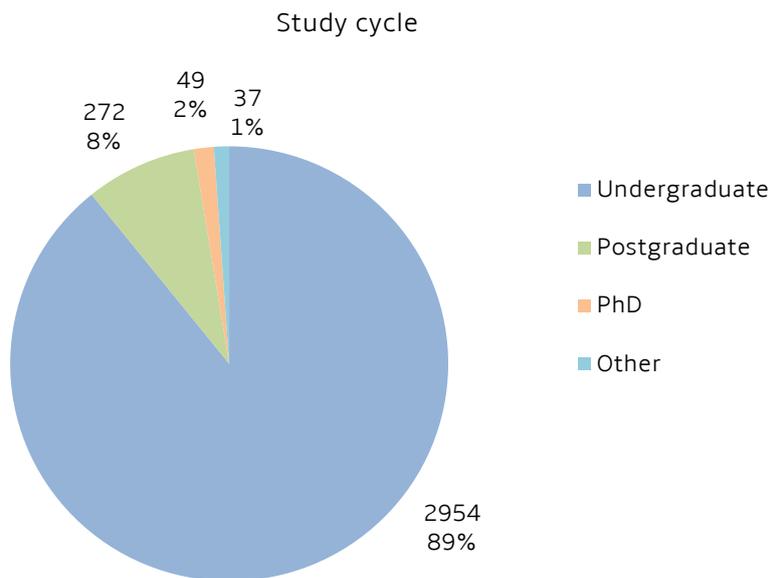
The vast majority (97%) of respondents represented full-time students (FTE, full-time enrolments). 3% of responses were submitted by students studying part time (2%) or other, including short- or long-term international students (1%). The detailed distribution is presented in the Figure 4. Additionally, ca. 13% of respondents entered college as a mature student (i.e. over 23 years old).

FIGURE 4 MODES OF STUDY OF THE QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS TO THE SURVEY (N=3,312).



As presented in the Figure 5, almost 90% (2,954) of the respondents were undergraduate students, including 1,103 first-year students. Further hardly above 10% represented postgraduate, PhD and other study cycles, 8% (272), 2% (49) and 1% (37), respectively. 442 out of 3,312 were mature students. The vast majority of respondents (63%) were in their first or second year of studies (2,085 out of 3,312).

FIGURE 5 STUDY CYCLES OF THE QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS TO THE SURVEY (N=3,312).

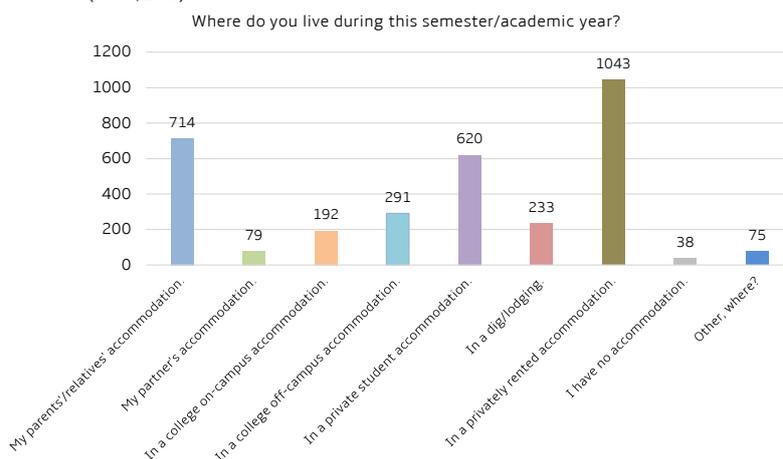


In general, students have indicated their current study situation depends on their housing situation. Students' testimonies include situations of limited availability or low affordability of accommodation in the proximity to their college/campus. It results in poor attendance, low performance, due to long hours spent on commuting or working part-time jobs to get enough financial support. Students quite often pointed out that the support offered through SUSI is not enough to aid them throughout their studies.

Current Housing Situation

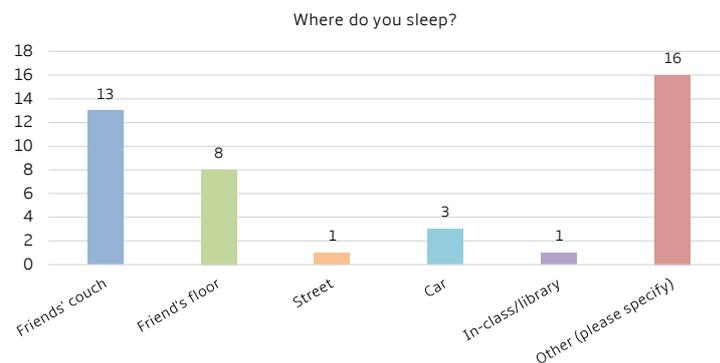
If aggregated, PBSA, either college- (both on- and off-campus) or privately-owned, turns out to be the most popular type of accommodation among students (1,103 out of 3,285; ca. 34%), followed by privately rented accommodation (1,043; 32%). Hardly one fourth of the respondents are staying with their parents, relatives, or partners (793; 24%). Only 7% (233) of students stated that they live in digs. It must be noted that the evidence shows 38 cases (1% of the respondents) where students stated they have no accommodation secured when asked where they live during this semester/academic year. The remaining 2% of students who declared the type of their accommodation as 'other' have not specified. The Figure 6 presents detailed breakdown of the respondents' accommodation types.

FIGURE 6 RESPONDENTS BY THE TYPE OF ACCOMMODATION (N=3,285).



As shown in Figure 7, out of 38 respondents who stated they have no accommodation, over 60% sleep on friends' couches (13) and floors (8). Worryingly, there were five cases reported of students sleeping on the street (1), in cars (3) or class/library (1). Out of 16 respondents who selected other as their response, the majority stays in hostels, hotels or in family home.

FIGURE 7 SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS OF STUDENTS WITHOUT ACCOMMODATION (N=34).



Vast majority of students without accommodation reported that the reason for their housing situation is:

1. Lack of available accommodation (44%; 21);
2. High rents (37%; 18 out of 34).

Students also pointed out that frequent scamming and lack of adequate support and aid for students to find accommodation added to their difficulty in finding accommodation in time for term.

Out of the students who declared staying in accommodation, more than half (1,907; 59%) had chosen their accommodation over 'positive' reasons such as:

1. Proximity to their college/campus (797; 25%);
2. Suitability for student's needs (750; 23%);
3. Reasonable price (360; 11%).

More than one-fourth of all respondents (922; 28%) were bound to take a decision due to 'negative' reasons such as:

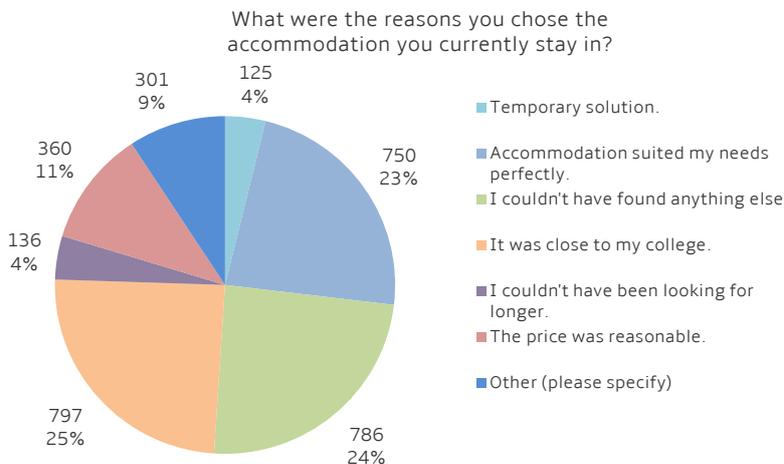
1. Lack of availability of any alternative (786; 24%);
2. Time pressure (136; 4%).

The remaining 9% (301 out of 3,255 respondents) who declared 'other' reasons mainly referred to affordability as the main factor influencing the decision on the accommodation they currently stay in, for example:

- *My parents live kind of close and there's no way I could afford to live closer to town.*
- *Can't afford to live away from home.*
- *The price of renting close to college was too high, I couldn't afford it.*

The detailed distribution of answers are presented in Figure 8.

FIGURE 8 THE REASONS FOR CHOOSING ACCOMMODATION (N=3,255).



The majority of students share their accommodation with other students (55%; 1,810 out of 3,255). Further almost one-third stays with their parents or relatives (23%; 739) and partners (6%, 188). The remaining one-fifth live on their own (2%; 84), with their home-owner (8%; 249) or other (6%; 185), which students specified as living with other students, partners, parents'/relatives' or home-owners.

The Figure 9 shows the detailed distribution of the respondents' answers.

FIGURE 9 WHO DO STUDENTS LIVE WITH – DISTRIBUTION OF THE ANSWERS (N= 3,255).

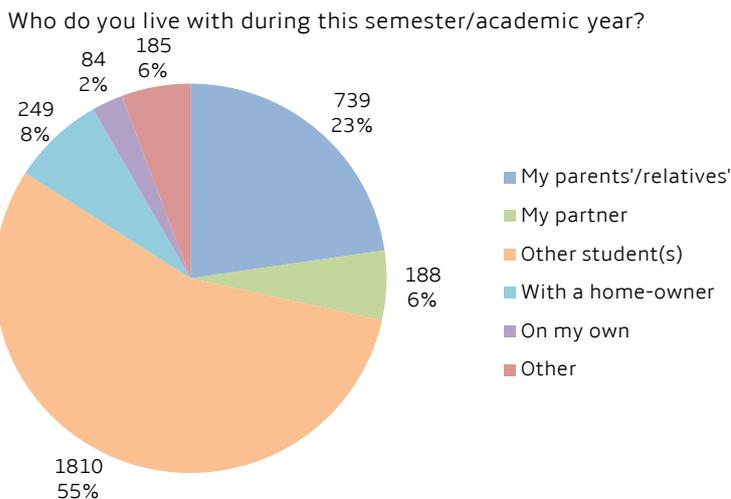
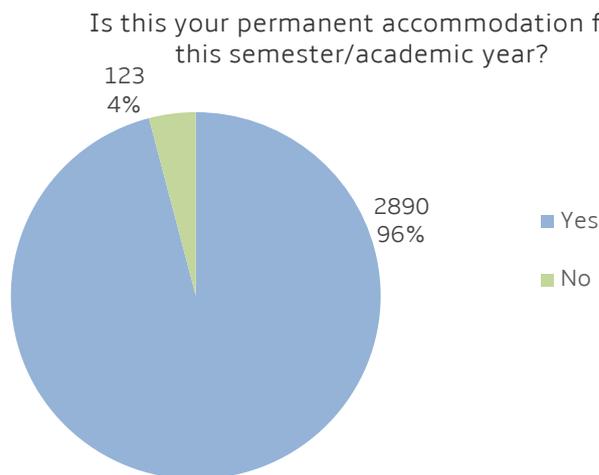


Figure 10 shows students' responses to the question on tenancy of their accommodation. While a significantly larger group of respondents (96%; 2,890 out of 3,013) indicated their current accommodation is permanent for the semester/academic year, whereas almost one in five declared that the accommodation they stay in is not of a permanent character (4%; 123).

FIGURE 10 THE DURATION OF STUDENT ACCOMMODATION (N=3,013).



1,317 respondents who live in digs-style accommodation (272) or privately rented accommodation (1,045) were asked about the number of bedrooms their rented property and number of people living in their accommodation. Out of 272 respondents living in digs, roughly half (111) said there are more people than bedrooms. In privately rented accommodation, 333 (out of 1,045) lived in similar set-up.

Out of 1,045 students living in privately rented accommodation ca. two-thirds (66%; 690) did not know whether their property had been registered with Residential Tenancies Board (RTB). Over one-fourth (26%; 271) declared that their property had been registered with RTB, as oppose to the remaining 8% (84) respondents whose properties had not (see Figure 11).

FIGURE 11 REGISTRATION IN RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES BOARD (N=1,045).

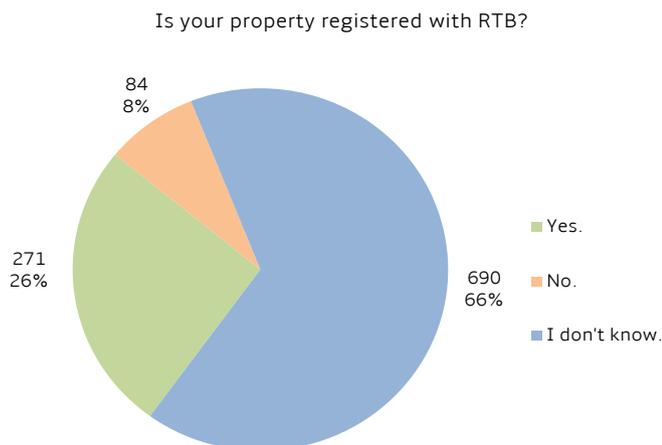
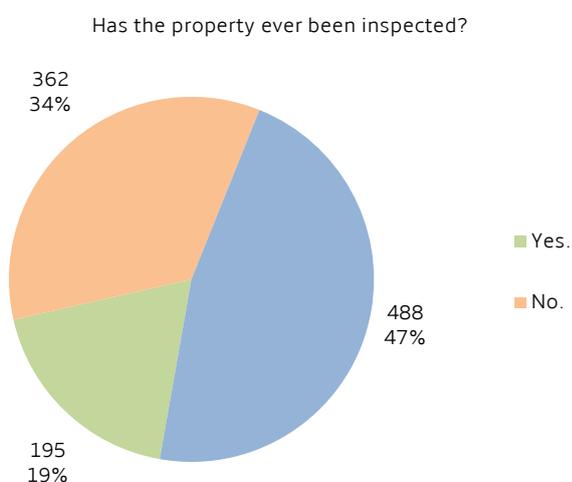


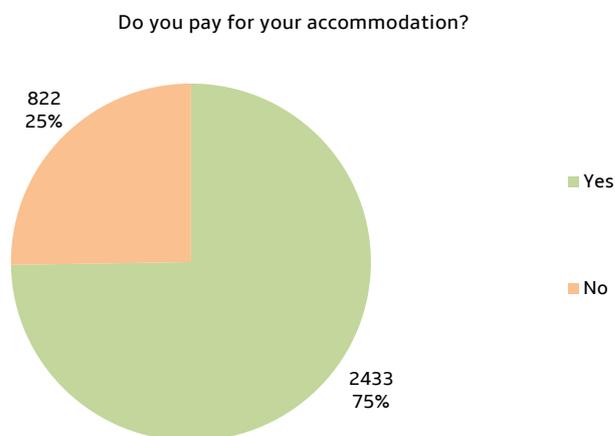
Figure 12 presents the distribution of answers regarding the inspections in student private-rented accommodation. Similarly to registration in RTB, the majority of students (488; 47%) do not know if the property has been inspected. Hardly over one-third (362; 34%) states that it has not been inspected, whereas almost one-fifth (195; 19%) declare it has.

FIGURE 12 INSPECTIONS IN STUDENT PRIVATELY RENTED ACCOMMODATION (N=1,045).



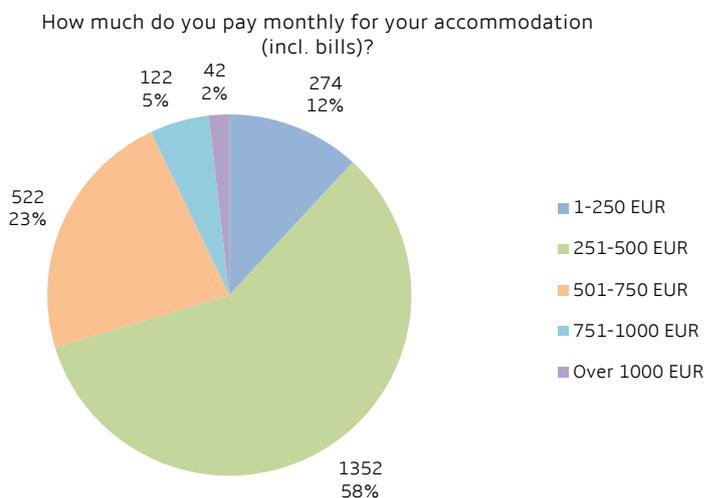
As shown in Figure 13 the vast majority of students (2,433 out of 3,255) pay for their accommodation, whereas only a quarter (822) stated otherwise.

FIGURE 13 WHO PAYS FOR STUDENT ACCOMMODATION (N=3,255).



A majority of the respondents declared paying between €251-500 (58%; 1,352 out of 2,312). One-fourth (23%; 522) reported paying over €501-750 and less than 10% paid €751-1000 (5%, 122) and over €1000 (2%, 42). Detailed breakdown is presented in Figure 14.

FIGURE 14 COST OF STUDENT ACCOMMODATION INCL. BILLS (N=2,312).



Finding A Place

The majority of students declared they had not had to look for accommodation at all (627; 22%). Interestingly this group of respondents lived in all types of student accommodation, reflecting accommodation mix presented earlier in this report. Roughly one-third of respondents (1,072; 37%) needed up to four weeks to find their accommodation, whereas a further one-third (1,031; 36%) looked for accommodation between one and three months. The 5% of students (143) who responded 'other' included cases of lack of accommodation at the time of filling out the survey (January/February 2017), a respondent specifying the exact amount of time spend on looking for accommodation varying between 0 – 5 months or declaration of staying with parents/relatives or partners. Figure 17 demonstrates distribution of all answers.

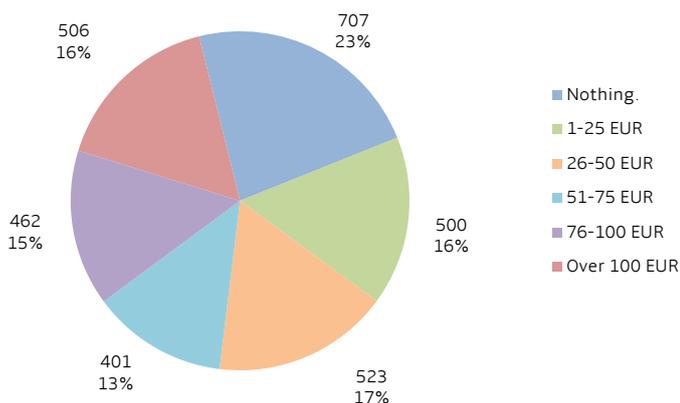
FIGURE 17 THE TIME NEEDED TO FIND STUDENT ACCOMMODATION (N=2,873).



Figure 15 presents distribution of the costs of travel to and from college. Almost one-quarter of respondents (23%; 707 out of 3,099) stated they do not have to pay for accommodation. The rest of the answers are distributed roughly equally between other options: €1-25 (16%; 500), €26-50 (17%; 523), €51-75 (13%; 401); €76-100 (15%; 462), over €1000 (16%; 506).

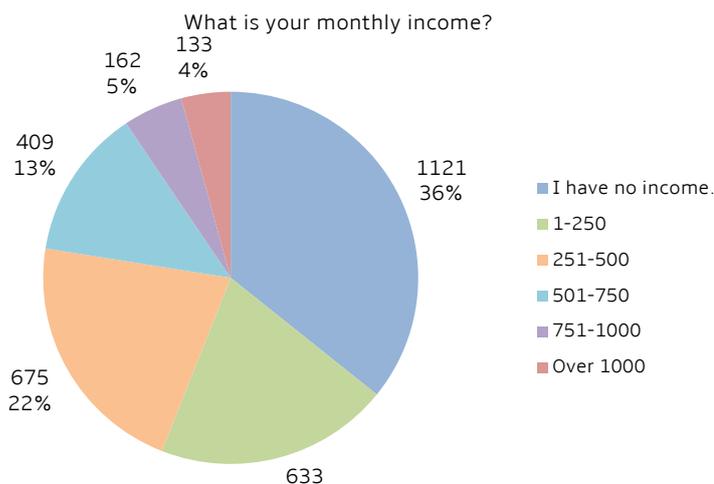
FIGURE 15 COST OF TRAVEL TO AND FROM COLLEGE (N=3,099).

How much do you pay monthly for your travels to and from your Higher Education Institution?



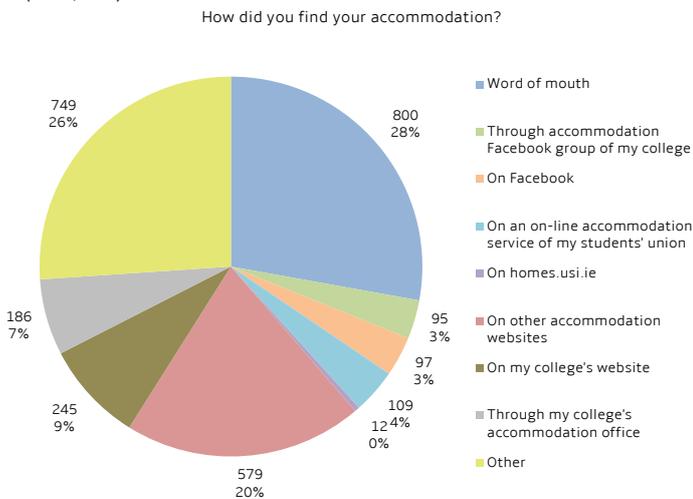
As shown in Figure 16, over one-third of students declare having no income (36%; 1,121 out of 3,133). Nearly half (42%) of respondents' income does not exceed €500. 13% (409) students reported their income between €501-750, whereas less than 10% of students have incomes of more €750 at their disposal.

FIGURE 16 DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENTS' INCOME (N=3,133).



As shown in Figure 18 over one-fourth (800 out of 2,873; 28%) find their accommodation through the word-of-mouth. Further slightly over one-fourth (749; 26%), who declared 'other', mainly represent the group who live with partners/relatives or partners. Accommodation websites other than college, Students' Union's websites or homes.usi.ie strike as a popular source of student accommodation (579; 20%). Surprisingly enough, only ca. 7% student stated they had used Facebook in general (97) or accommodation Facebook group (95) to find their accommodation.

FIGURE 18 WAYS OF FINDING STUDENT ACCOMMODATION (N=2,873).



The overwhelming majority (20%; 580 out of 2,873) started looking for accommodation in August. However, only 295 out of those 580 are first-year undergraduate students, whose choice might have been determined by the results of their college applications delivered only in August. Further trends are demonstrated in Figure 19.

FIGURE 19 MONTHS WHEN STUDENTS START LOOKING FOR THEIR ACCOMMODATION (N=2,873).

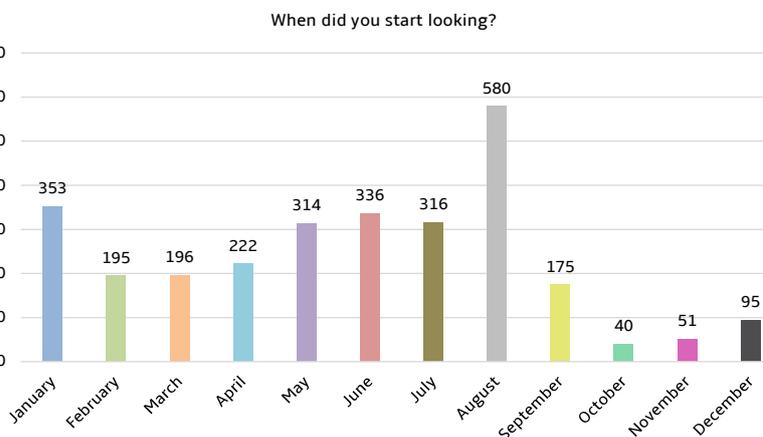
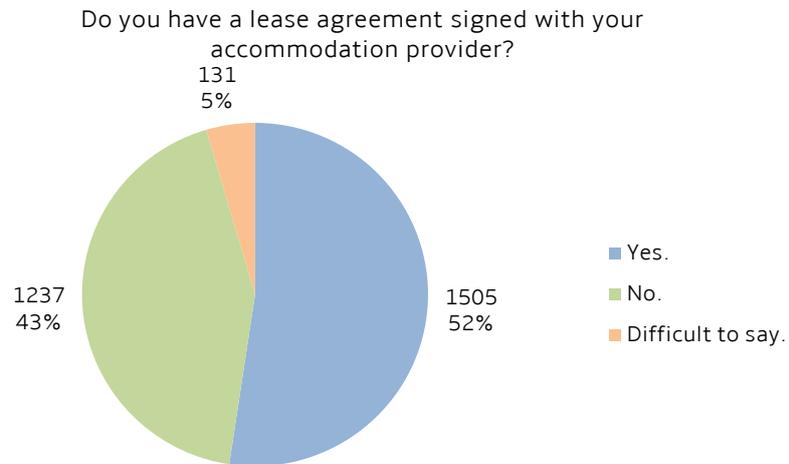


Figure 20 illustrates the number of students who signed their lease agreements and those who did not. Marginal majority (1,505 out of 2,873; 52%) of respondents stated they have signed a written lease agreement. 52% (782) out of that group of respondents stay in PBSA, 32% (481) in privately rented accommodation, 13% (203) in digs/lodgings and 2% (32) stay with parents/relatives or partners. Out of 1,237 (43%) respondents who stated they do not possess a written document, 42% (525) stay with the relatives/parents or partners, 21% (261) digs/lodgings, 17% (212) in PBSA and finally 16% (193) in privately rented accommodation.

FIGURE 20 WRITTEN LEASE AGREEMENT (N=2,873).



As presented in Table 7, vast majority of respondents (2,036 out of 2,873; 71%) paid deposit in their accommodation; 933 – PBSA, 648 – in privately rented accommodation, 395 – digs/lodgings, 47 – parents/relatives or partners. Most of the students who stated they had not paid the deposit live with parents/relatives or their partners (546 out of 837), however there are cases of students staying in PBSA, digs/ lodging and privately rented accommodation without having to pay it (98, 91, 57, respectively).

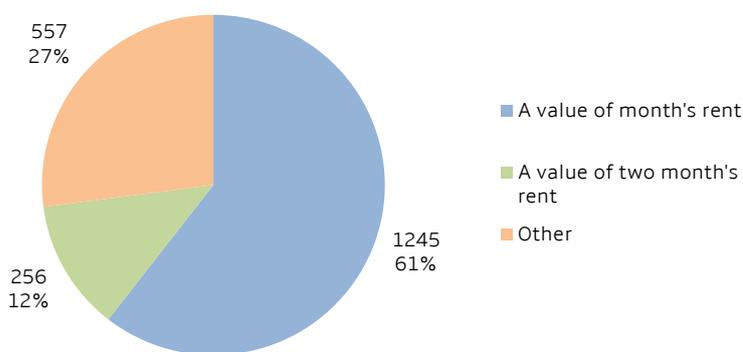
TABLE 7 DEPOSIT BY THE TYPE OF ACCOMMODATION (N=2,873).

Type of accommodation	No	Yes	Total
Purpose-built accommodation.	98	933	1031
Parents/relatives and partners	546	47	593
In a dig/lodging.	91	395	486
In a privately rented accommodation.	57	648	705
Other	45	13	58
Grand Total	837	2036	2873

When it comes to the amount of the deposits almost half (61%, 1,245 out of 2,058) of the respondents paid the deposit of a value of month's rent. Only 12% (256) of students had to pay the deposit equal to a value of two month's rent. The majority of the respondents stating 'other' as their answer (557 out of 557) gave the exact amount of the deposit they had to pay, which the average of amounts to ca. €400. Figure 21 presents the distribution of the answers to the question about the level of the deposit.

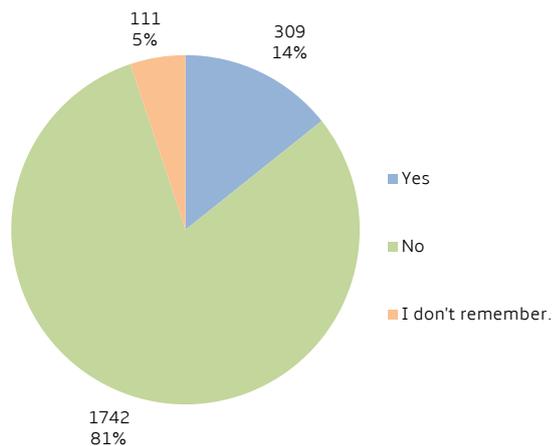
FIGURE 21 THE AMOUNT OF DEPOSIT THAT STUDENTS HAD TO PAY (N=2,058).

How much was your deposit?



Out of students who paid the deposit, only 309 (ca. 15%) had been given keys to the accommodation, as opposed to 1,595 (out of 1,742) individuals who had not (see: Figure 22).

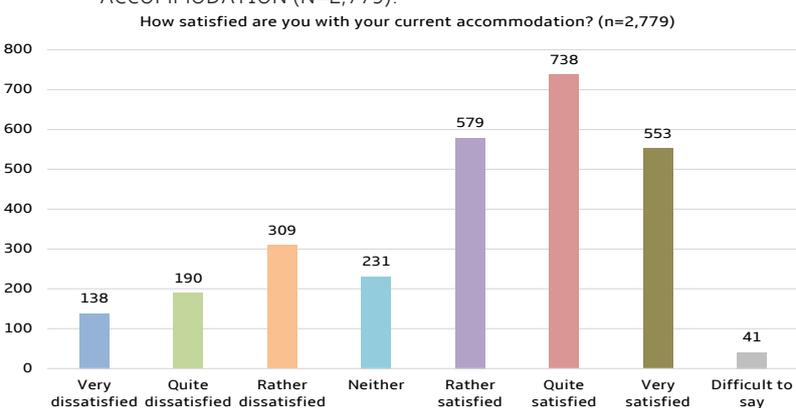
FIGURE 22 HAD YOU BEEN GIVEN KEYS BEFORE YOU HANDED IN YOUR DEPOSIT? (N=2,162)



Satisfaction with the accommodation

Figure 23 shows the general satisfaction with student accommodation. According to collected data, the vast majority of students are rather, quite or very satisfied with their accommodation (579, 738, 553 out of 2,779). The average rating was 4.95 that can be translated into 'rather satisfied' on a 7-point Likert scale. Detailed breakdown of all the answers is presented in the figure 23.

FIGURE 23 GENERAL SATISFACTION WITH STUDENT ACCOMMODATION (N=2,779).



The analysis of satisfaction levels across different types of accommodation shows that the average ratings are similar in most of the cases, meaning that respondents staying in PBSA, digs/lodgings, privately rented accommodation and other are 'rather satisfied' from their accommodation. The rating of students who live in their parents'/relatives' or partners' accommodation is slightly higher (5.15) making them generally 'quite satisfied' with their accommodation (see: Table 8).

It is worth noting that in most of the cases (except safety and security, proximity to college and location) living in parent'/relatives/ or partners' accommodation had the highest average satisfaction (rather or quite satisfied). Respondents seem to be 'very satisfied' with safety and security in privately rented accommodation, whereas the highest satisfaction with location and proximity to college was reported in purpose built student accommodation (quite satisfied). Table 9 presents the detailed breakdown of average satisfaction levels with selected features by accommodation type. Additionally, respondents shared comments regarding satisfaction with their accommodation in designated area (n=347). Below is a sample of entries from respondents:

- *I rent a room in a house from an agent but I'm living with two people who have complete control over everything and really are bullies. I'm moving.*
- *Feel very insecure*
- *The price I pay and the standard of the house are polar opposite.*
- *Our accommodation provider has reduced office hours from 9-5 Monday to Friday, too 3-5 Monday Wednesday and Friday. It is very difficult to make it down to pay rent with attending college.*
- *Accommodation is completely carpeted and we are not provided with a hoover in the apartment.*
- *Overpriced for what you are getting, strict on visitors which is unfair when your paying so much, it's college owned accommodation should be way cheaper.*
- *Would prefer a double bed for the price I'm paying for the room.*

TABLE 8 GENERAL SATISFACTION BY TYPE OF ACCOMMODATION (N=2,779).

Type of accommodation	Very dissatisfied	Quite dissatisfied	Rather dissatisfied	Neither	Rather satisfied	Quite satisfied	Very satisfied	Total	Weighted Average
Purpose-built accommodation.	52	63	109	69	229	293	179	994	4.97
Parents/relatives and partners	29	27	55	70	73	123	167	544	5.15
In a dig/lodging.	22	37	67	33	108	133	75	475	4.83
In a privately rented accommodation.	29	57	73	55	164	183	111	672	4.88
Other	6	6	5	4	5	6	21	53	4.85
Grand Total	138	190	309	231	579	738	553	2738	4.95

- While the arrangement is very informal my land lady is a genuine person - so there is no exploitative agenda in the nature of the arrangement.
- Mould problem in house despite it being warm.
- The kitchen only has stools, so really uncomfortable. The couches in the living room are old and some seats have no pillows.
- Fear of rent increase causes reluctance to complain about the standard of accommodation. The apartment is like an icebox and full of mould, but we can't afford anything better. Electric heaters have to be kept on high all night to keep warm. The apartment has a gBER rating, but if there were a z rating this apartment would be the first.

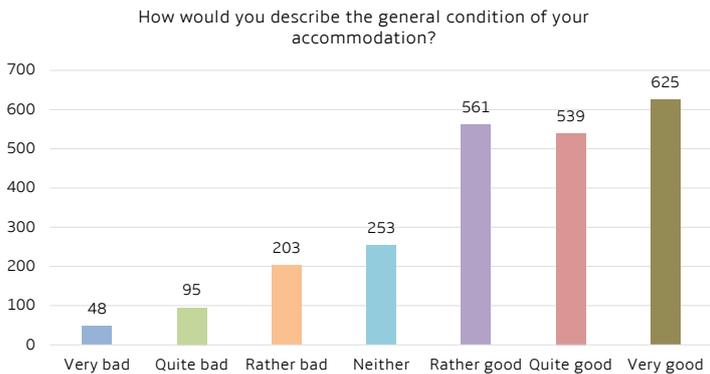
TABLE 9 AVERAGE SATISFACTION WITH SELECTED FEATURES OF ACCOMMODATION BY ACCOMMODATION TYPE.

	N	PBSA	Parents'/ relatives' or partners'	Digs/lodgings	Privately rented accommodation	Other	General
Size of your room/apartment	2,755	Quite satisfied (5.51)	Quite satisfied (5.46)	Quite satisfied (5.07)	Quite satisfied (5.21)	Quite satisfied (5.16)	Quite satisfied (5.34)
Study space	2,749	Rather satisfied (4.82)	Rather satisfied (4.82)	Neither (3.88)	Neither (3.92)	Rather satisfied (4.42)	Rather satisfied (4.39)
Sleeping arrangement	2,751	Quite satisfied (5.41)	Quite satisfied (5.70)	Quite satisfied (5.32)	Quite satisfied (5.47)	Quite satisfied (5.09)	Quite satisfied (5.46)
Space to relax	2,763	Quite satisfied (5.51)	Quite satisfied (5.46)	Quite satisfied (5.07)	Quite satisfied (5.17)	Quite satisfied (5.16)	Quite satisfied (5.33)
Kitchen	2,750	Rather satisfied (4.81)	Quite satisfied (5.80)	Rather satisfied (4.86)	Rather satisfied (4.86)	Quite satisfied (5.15)	Quite satisfied (5.03)
Sanitary facilities	2,755	Rather satisfied (4.97)	Quite satisfied (5.94)	Quite satisfied (5.09)	Rather satisfied (4.88)	Quite satisfied (5.40)	Quite satisfied (5.17)
Laundry facilities	2,755	Quite satisfied (5.51)	Quite satisfied (5.46)	Quite satisfied (5.07)	Quite satisfied (5.21)	Quite satisfied (5.16)	Quite satisfied (5.34)
Safety and security		Quite satisfied (5.19)	Rather satisfied (4.96)	Quite satisfied (5.39)	Very satisfied (6.08)	Quite satisfied (5.43)	Quite satisfied (5.35)
Proximity to your college	2,745	Quite satisfied (5.63)	Neither (3.92)	Quite satisfied (5.13)	Quite satisfied (5.20)	Rather satisfied (4.44)	Quite satisfied (5.08)
Location	2,738	Quite satisfied (5.64)	Rather satisfied (4.54)	Quite satisfied (5.41)	Quite satisfied (5.46)	Quite satisfied (5.16)	Quite satisfied (5.33)
Appliances at your disposal	2,730	Quite satisfied (5.05)	Quite satisfied (5.95)	Quite satisfied (5.15)	Quite satisfied (5.09)	Quite satisfied (5.25)	Quite satisfied (5.26)
Rent	2,698	Rather satisfied (4.18)	Quite satisfied (5.53)	Rather satisfied (4.51)	Rather satisfied (4.46)	Rather satisfied (4.59)	Rather satisfied (4.57)
Communication with your accommodation provider	2,701	Rather satisfied (4.68)	Quite satisfied (5.80)	Quite satisfied (5.04)	Rather satisfied (4.59)	Quite satisfied (5.23)	Rather satisfied (4.94)
Maintenance and repairs	2,701	Rather satisfied (4.54)	Quite satisfied (5.72)	Rather satisfied (4.82)	Rather satisfied (4.26)	Quite satisfied (5.06)	Rather satisfied (4.76)
Furnishing	2,743	Rather satisfied (4.56)	Quite satisfied (5.89)	Quite satisfied (5.08)	Rather satisfied (4.62)	Quite satisfied (5.16)	Rather satisfied (4.94)

Accommodation Conditions

The majority of respondents (ca. 74%) said their accommodation was in rather, quite or very good condition (561, 539, 625 out of 2,348, respectively). A detailed breakdown can be found in Figure 24.

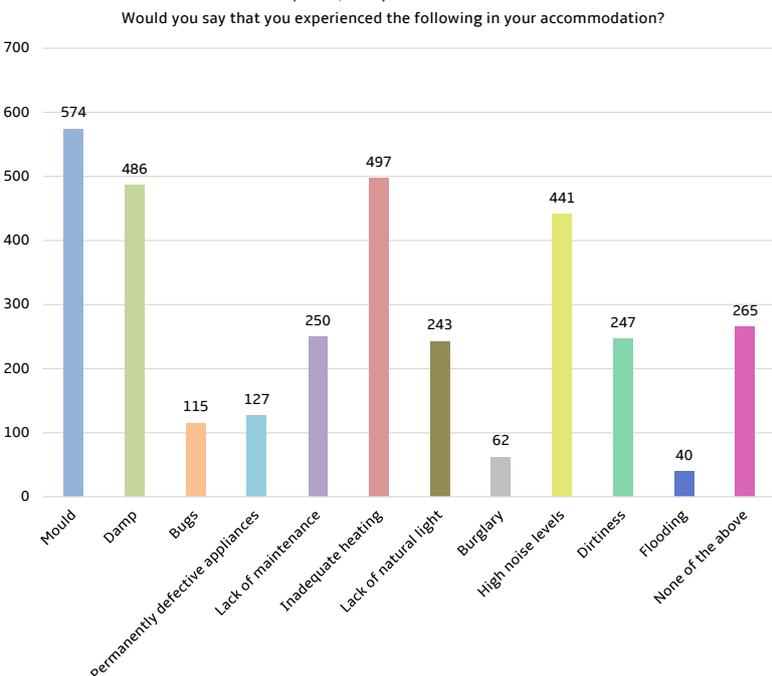
FIGURE 24 GENERAL CONDITION IN STUDENT ACCOMMODATION (N=2,324).



As shown in Figure 25, when asked about the common problems in accommodation:

- Almost one-fourth (24%) of the respondents stated they found mould in their accommodation.
- Over one-fifth (21%) – inadequate heating, dampness and.
- Slightly below one-fifth (19%) – high level of noise

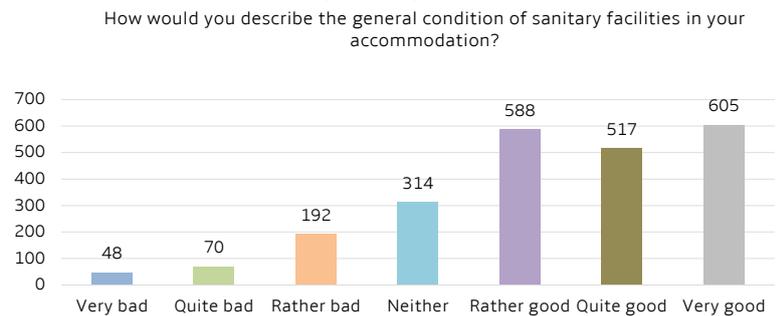
FIGURE 25 SELECTED PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED IN ACCOMMODATION (N=2,348).



Sanitary Facilities

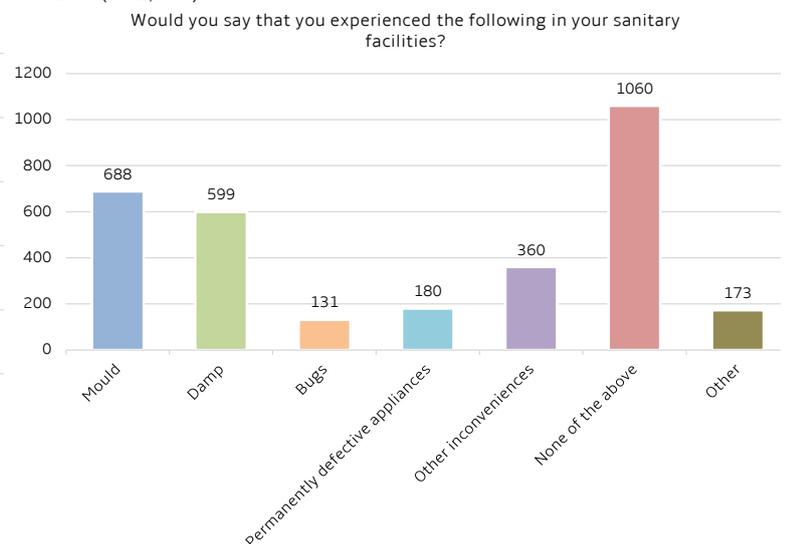
Despite the majority of respondents who said their sanitary facilities are in rather, quite or good condition (see Figure 26), 111 out of 2344 stated that they do not have access to sanitary facilities that are separated from other rooms with a wall and door. Almost one-fourth (508 out of 2317) of the respondents stated that sanitary facilities do not contain separate ventilation.

FIGURE 26 GENERAL CONDITION OF SANITARY FACILITIES IN STUDENT ACCOMMODATION (N=2,334).



Moreover, almost 10% (208 out of 2,344) of respondents stated that 'a fixed bath or shower with continuous supply of cold and facility for supply of hot water' is either not available or defective. 139 respondents (6%) declared no adequate screening of the windows to ensure privacy. As presented in Figure 27 below, almost one-third (29%; 688 out of 2,348) of respondents stated they experienced mould and one-fourth (25%; 599) dampness in sanitary facilities. Among 7% (173) of respondents who stated other, most of students gave examples of: lack of privacy, dirtiness, permanently defective hot water supply, leaking showers, poor drainage, broken water taps etc.

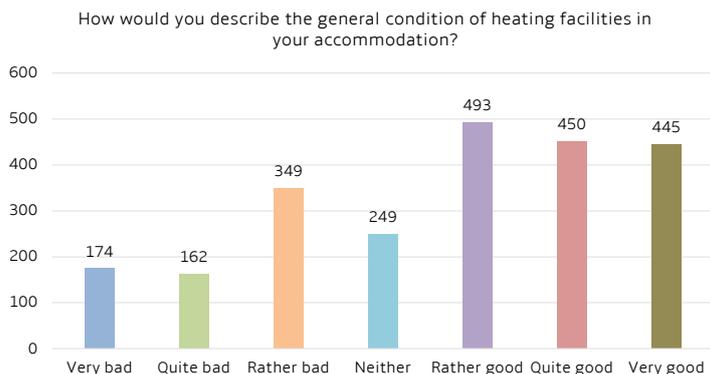
FIGURE 27 SELECTED PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED IN ACCOMMODATION (N=2,348).



Heating Facilities

Similarly to sanitary facilities, heating condition is described as 'rather good', 'quite good' and 'very good' (493, 450 and 445 out of 2,348) by the majority of respondents (60%) (see: Figure 28).

FIGURE 28 GENERAL CONDITION OF HEATING FACILITIES IN STUDENT ACCOMMODATION (N=2,322).



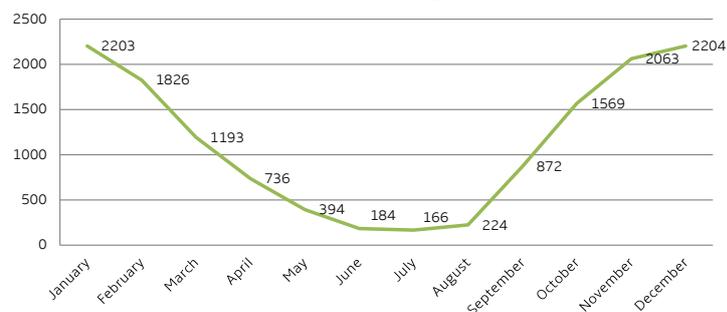
However, over one-fifth of respondents (21%, 484 out of 2,333) also stated that the heating facilities are not kept in good repair, contradicting the minimum standards in rented accommodation.

43% of respondents (1,010 out of 2,348) stated that their heating is managed by their accommodation providers, out of which 421 respondents stay in digs/lodgings and the rest in various types of purpose-built accommodation. 933 (40%) declared that they manage their own heating.

Almost half of the respondents stated that the heating in their accommodation is electric (46%; 1,088 out of 2,348), which, according to the domestic fuel comparison of energy costs contributes to higher costs of living (SEAI, 2017). Approximately in one-third of student accommodation had heating facilities, which were gas (777 out of 2,348).

As presented in Figure 29, overwhelming majority (88%, 94%, 94%) of respondents uses heating between November and January. Over half of the respondents turn on the heating in February (78%), March (51%) and October (67%). Less than 20% of respondents decide to use their heating between May and August (17%, 8%, 7%, 10%).

FIGURE 29 MONTHS WHEN THE HEATING IS ON (N=2,348).
Months when the heating is on

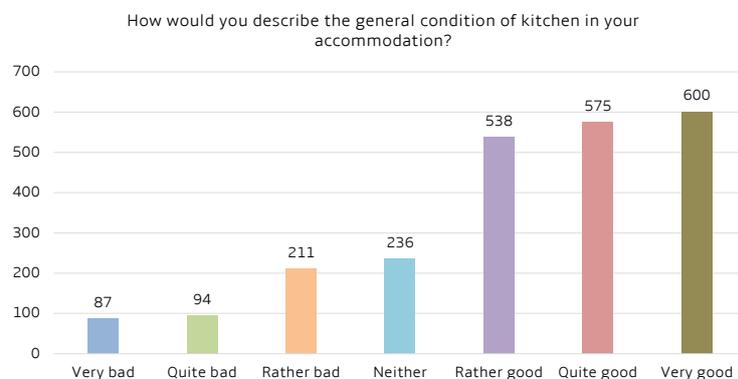


The type of heating and associated costs are important to students' wellbeing and living conditions, as 64% of respondents declare they would leave the heating off to save money (1,490 out of 2,348).

Kitchen

As in the case of facilities described, the vast majority of respondents (73%; 1,710 out of 2,341) stated that the condition of their accommodation is 'rather good', 'quite good' or 'very good' (538, 575 and 600, respectively). For detailed breakdown, please consult Figure 30 below.

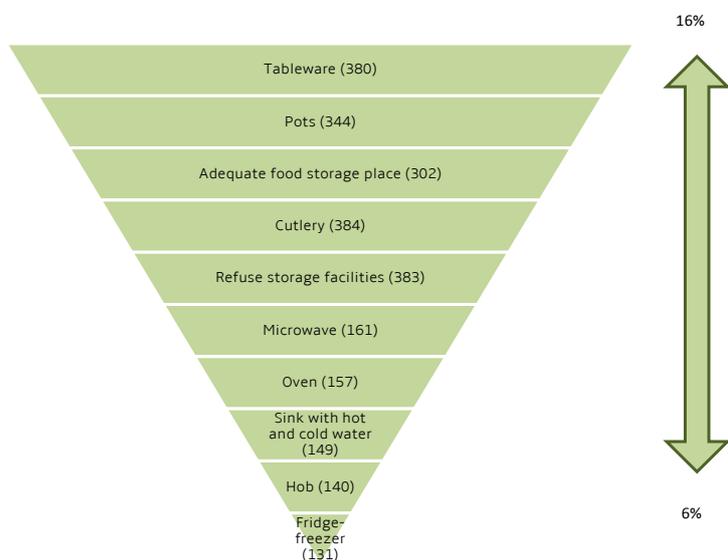
FIGURE 30 CONDITION OF KITCHEN IN STUDENT ACCOMMODATION (N=2,341).



Over 90% of respondents prepare all or some of their meals at home (2,202 out of 2,348). Therefore it is important that the accommodation they live in secures adequate condition of kitchen facilities.

As presented in Figure 31, between 6 – 16% of respondents reported their kitchen appliances not available or defective (between 140 and 380 respondents out of 2,348). These appliances were rated in a decreasing order as: tableware, pots, adequate food storage place, cutlery, refuse storage facilities, microwave, oven, sink with hot and cold water, hob, fridge-freezer. On average over 90% of respondents stated that each of the following appliances is available and working.

FIGURE 31 KITCHEN EQUIPMENT IN STUDENT ACCOMMODATION (N=2,348).



Laundry Facilities

Almost 10% of the respondents (223 out of 2,348) stated that they have no access to washing machine, dryer or designed drying indoor space. Those cases include charge-limited access to washing and drying machines, having to bring laundry home every week, drying clothes in non-designated areas.

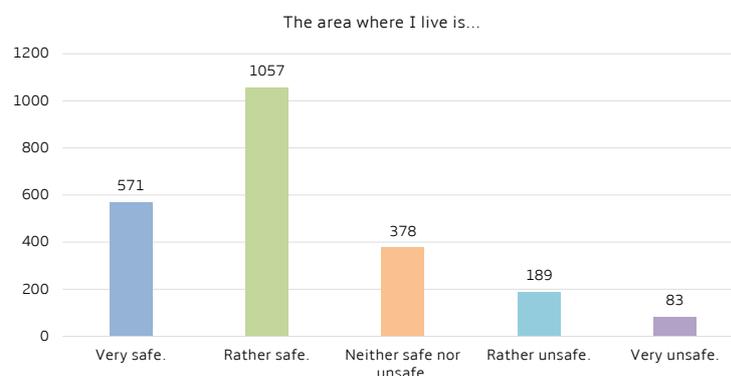
26% (608 out of 2,348) stated that there is no adequate ventilation provided in every room, and a further 34% (794) stated that specifically kitchen and bathroom lack proper ventilation to remove water vapour.

¼ (594) of the respondents stated that the adequate light in every room is either not provided or defective.

Safety

As shown in Figure 32 the area that students live in is rather safe (1,057 out of 2,278). 12% of respondents think of the area they live in as rather (189) or very unsafe (83).

FIGURE 32 SAFETY OF THE AREA STUDENTS LIVE IN (N=2,278).



Past Experiences and Preferences

When asked about their preferences, students ranked purpose built student accommodation as the most preferred option (41%; 873 out of 2,147), followed by privately rented accommodation (27%; 584). The least preferred options by students are to live in digs (43%; 929 out of 2,147) or parents' or relatives' (34%; 732). The detailed distribution is presented in the Table 10.

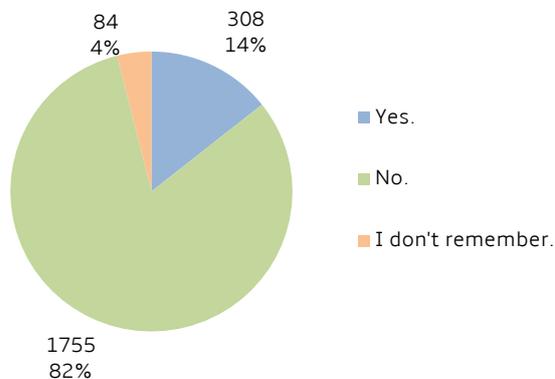
TABLE 10 THE MOST AND THE LEAST PREFERRED STUDENT ACCOMMODATION (N=2,147).

Preferences	Option 1	Option 2
1	PBSA (873)	Privately rented accommodation (584)
2	PBSA (1,167)	Parents'/relatives' (579)
3	PBSA (1,317)	Parents'/relatives' (457)
4	Digs (929)	Parents'/relatives' (732)

In 308 out of 2,147 (14%) cases accommodation provider unexpectedly increased rent before or shortly after a student moved in (see Figure 33).

FIGURE 33 UNEXPECTED RENT INCREASES (N=2,147).

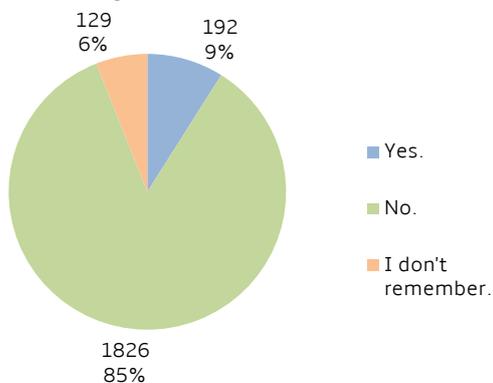
Has your accommodation provider unexpectedly increased your rent before/shortly after you have moved in?



192 out of 2,147 students have had experience with accommodation providers increasing rent outside of the agreed or allowed period (see Figure 34).

FIGURE 34 RENT INCREASES OUTSIDE OF THE AGREED/ALLOWED PERIOD (N=2,147).

Has your accommodation provider ever increased the rent outside of the agreed/allowed period?



A quarter of respondents stated they had a dispute with their accommodation provider (25%; 530 out of 2,147). The majority of the disputes occurred in purpose built student accommodation (177 out of 530) followed by privately rented accommodation (167 out of 530). The detailed distribution of the disputes by accommodation type is presented in the Table 11.

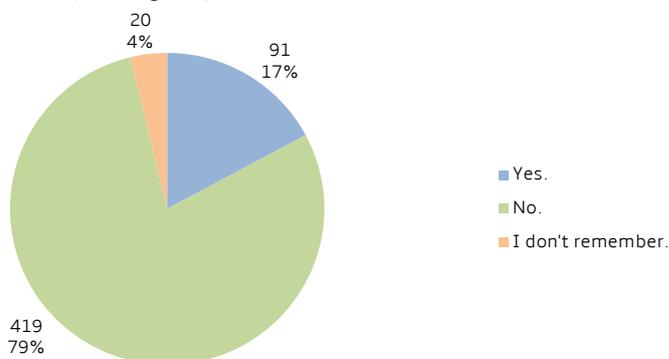
TABLE 11 DISPUTES WITH ACCOMMODATION PROVIDER BY ACCOMMODATION TYPE (N=530).

Type of accommodation	No of respondents
Purpose-built accommodation.	177
Parents/relatives and partners	75
In a dig/lodging.	102
In a privately rented accommodation.	167
Other	9
Grand Total	530

As presented in Figure 35 below, 17% of respondents (115 out of 530) have sought professional conflict. The reasons for that included: difficulties with reaching the accommodation provider, communication problems (lack of respect, threats etc.), not having a written lease, not being able to access legal advice or worrying that the conflict may result in losing accommodation. The remaining 83% stated that they either had not remembered or had not looked for professional assistance.

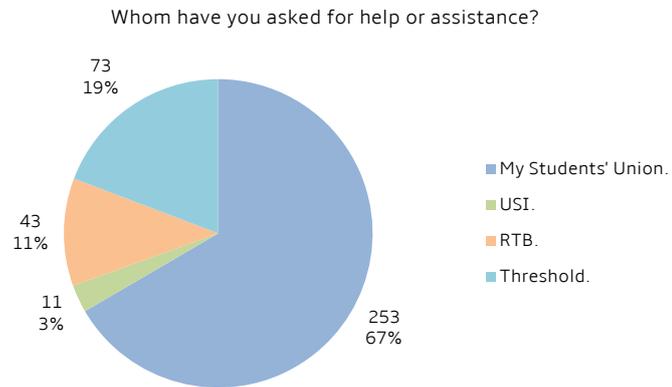
FIGURE 35 PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT IN DISPUTE RESOLUTION (N=530).

Have you sought a professional conflict resolution?



The majority (67%) of students turned to their Students' Union when looking for assistance in conflicts with their accommodation providers (253 out of 380). Almost one-fourth (19%; 73) declared seeking assistance in Threshold and roughly one in ten (11%; 43) in RTB. The remaining 3% asked for help is USI (see: Figure 36).

FIGURE 36 WHERE HAVE YOU LOOKED FOR ASSISTANCE? (N=380).



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