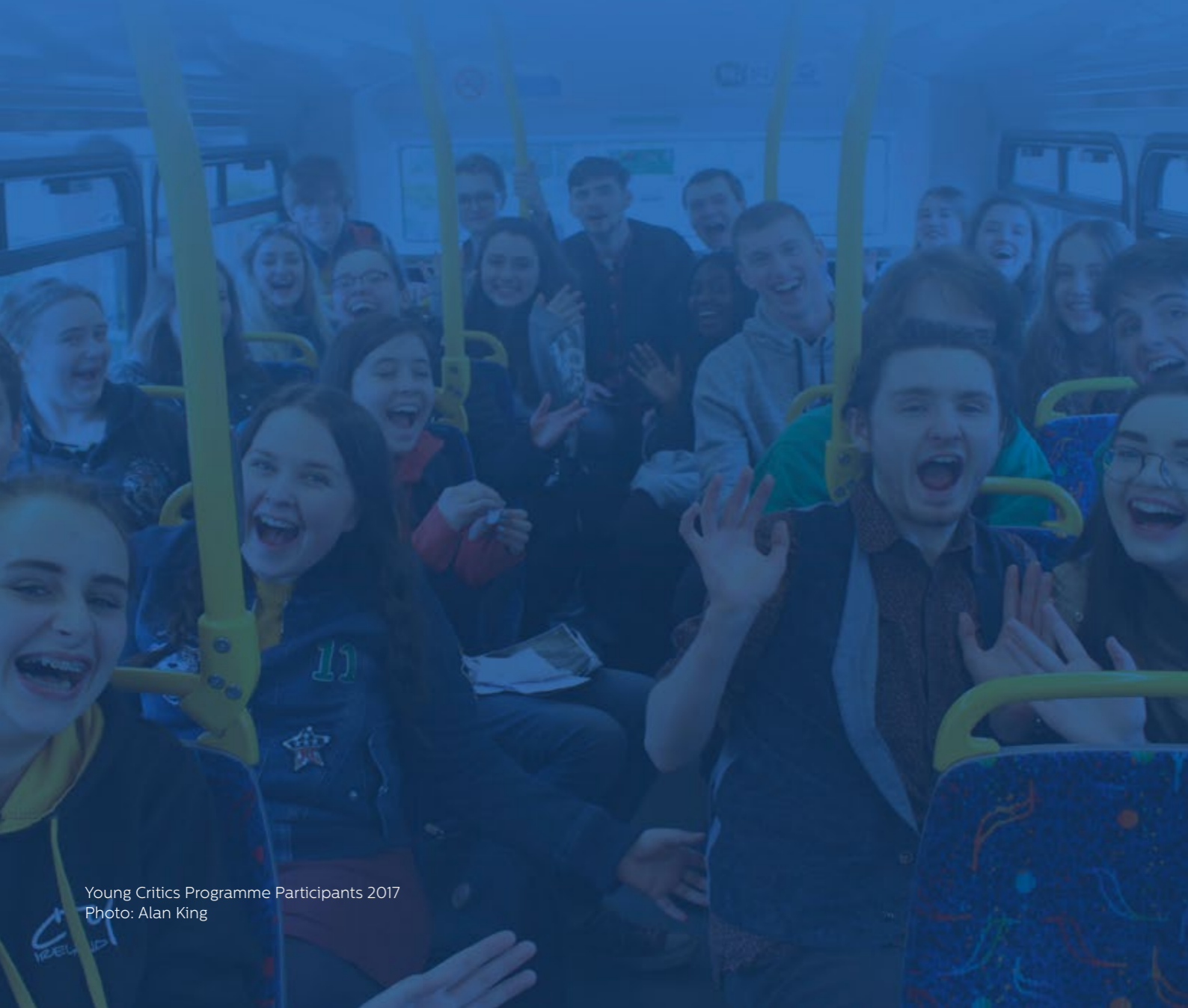


Chapter 5: Youth Theatre Members

“Youth theatre means working with people who are very different to myself and working towards the common goal of creating something wonderful.”



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5.1 Youth Theatre Members – Profile

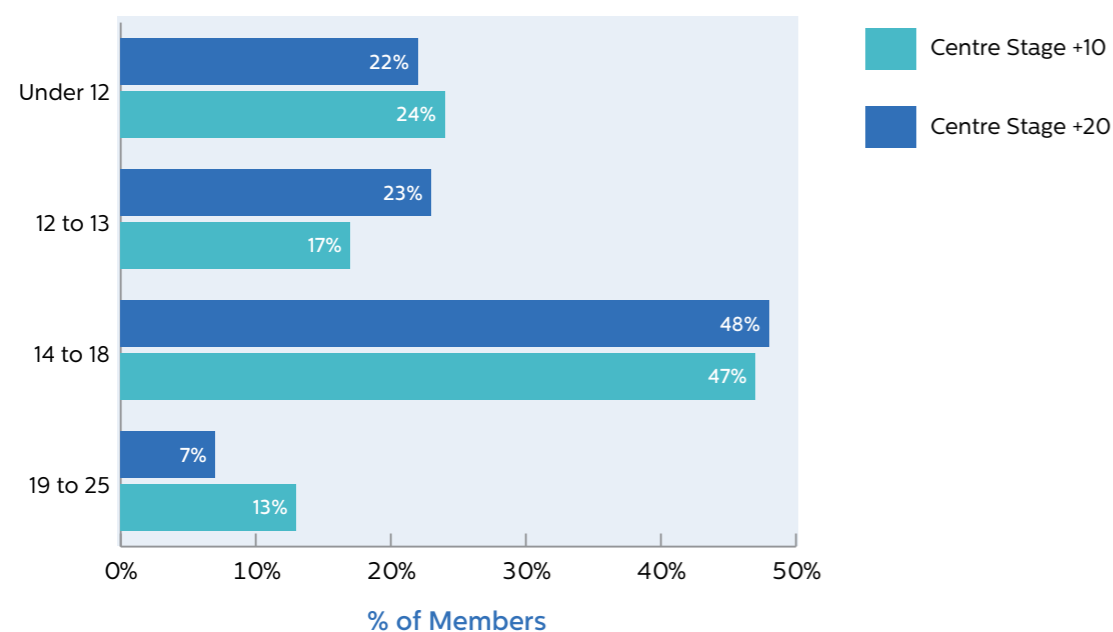
5.1.1 Age Profile

Key Findings

- The 2,663 members who participate in youth theatre stretch from the 'Under 10' age range to the '19 to 25' age range.
- Nearly half of all youth theatre members are aged 14 to 18 (48%), with a peak in membership levels between the ages of 15 and 17. The average age of the membership is 15.5.
- There has been a 5% increase in 12 to 13 year olds and a 5% decrease in 19 to 25 year olds over the past decade.
- Just over a fifth of the membership is aged 12 or under, the majority of which are 10 to 11 year olds who are now officially recognised as 'young people'.

Figure 5.1 compares the age profile of youth theatre members from Centre Stage +20 and Centre Stage +10. Centre Stage (1998) does not have comparative data for under 13 year olds, so the data from this research report has not been included in this chart.

Figure 5.1: Age Profile of Youth Theatre Membership



Figures are based on Census Data from 55 Centre Stage +20 youth theatres and 38 Centre Stage +10 youth theatres. Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Centre Stage Context

The age profile of the youth theatre membership remained essentially the same between Centre Stage and Centre Stage +10. The average age of a youth theatre member moved only slightly from 15.3 in 1998, to 15.5 in 2009.

The 14 to 18 age range has typically been at the heart of youth theatre provision, forming 51% of the membership in 1998 and 47% of the membership in 2009. However, by Centre Stage +10, the membership had expanded past this target group to include increased numbers of younger members as the 12 to 13 year olds were included within the core Youth Theatre Ireland programme and affiliation criteria. The older 19 to 25 age range also saw a growth of 5% in 2009, just as the recession was beginning.

Age Profile Of Youth Theatre Members

Centre Stage +20 Youth Theatre Questionnaires and Census Questionnaires show that the overall total of 2,663 youth theatre members breaks down into the following age categories:

Under 10s

- 10% of the youth theatre membership are under 10 years old.

These members are spread across 15 youth theatres. The largest cohort of this age group are based at Galway Community Circus and Griese Youth Theatre.

10 to 11 year olds

- 12% of the youth theatre membership are aged 10 to 11.

These members are spread across 20 youth theatres and are an important new group to document in youth theatre. A young person is now defined "as any person aged 10 years and under 25 years of age, in line with the upper age threshold of the Youth Work Act, 2001 and in line with the definition used by the United Nations."

12 to 13 year olds

- 23% of the youth theatre membership are aged 12 to 13.

These members are spread across 39 youth theatres. This age range has traditionally been profiled separately as it was the first official extension of the age range served by Youth Theatre Ireland when the lower threshold was reduced from 14 to 12. This age group is now part of the mainstream age range of youth theatre and is served by 71% of youth theatres.

14 to 18 year olds

- Nearly half of the youth theatre membership (48%) are aged 14 to 18.
- The average age of the youth theatre membership is 15.5.

These members are spread across 54 out of the 55 participating youth theatres and this age range traditionally forms the core of the youth theatre membership. Figure 5.2 illustrates the peak in membership levels between the ages of 15 and 17 and the drop-off rate when members are 18. Youth theatre leaders confirm that some young people leave youth theatre to concentrate on Leaving Certificate studies and this was also reflected in Centre Stage +10 data 10 years ago. School work and exams is the most cited barrier to youth theatre participation experienced by current youth theatre members (45%).

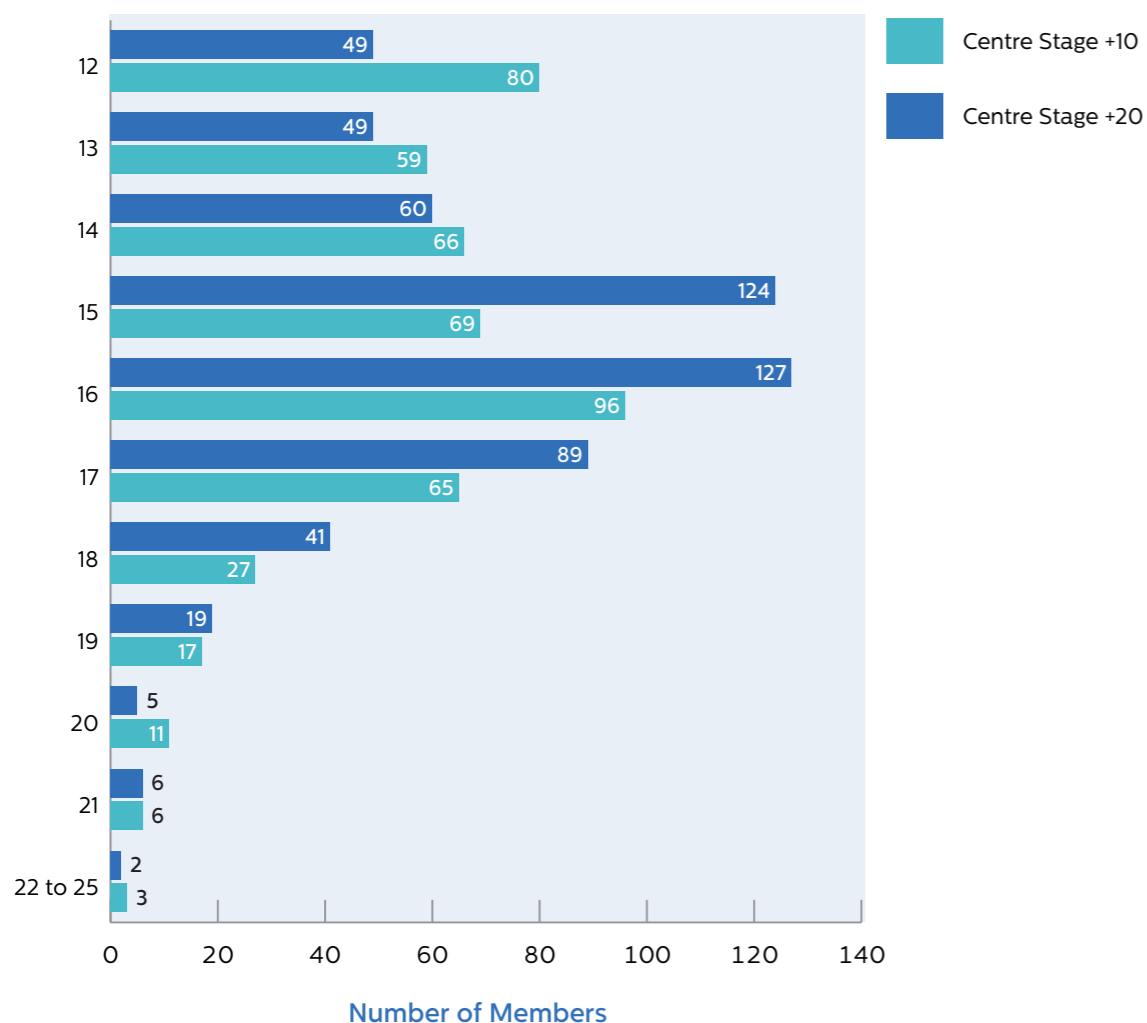
19 to 25 year olds

- 7% of the youth theatre membership is aged 19 to 25.

These members are spread across 26 youth theatres. The majority of these members are aged 19 (see Figure 5.2) and are typically participating in a group with 14 to 18 year olds. Four youth theatres have significant groups of members in this age range: Dublin Youth Theatre (51 members), Galway Community Circus (37 members), Kildare Youth Theatre (30 members) and Roundabout Youth Theatre (10 members). Youth theatres within a commutable distance to college/university that offer specific opportunities for older members are more likely to attract a group of members within this age range. In the majority of youth theatres, members in this age range leave when they go to college/university, move on when they feel it is time or train to become Young Leaders with their group. Young Leaders from this age range are counted as Youth Theatre Leaders and are examined within Chapter 6.

Figure 5.2 depicts the age profile of the youth theatre membership by year, using Membership Questionnaire data from Centre Stage +20 and Centre Stage +10. The chart shows a clear spike in the membership levels of 15 to 17 year olds.

Figure 5.2: Age Range of Youth Theatre Members



Figures are based on 571 respondents from Centre Stage +20 Member Questionnaires and 450 respondents from Centre Stage +10 Member Questionnaires (with an additional 49 respondents from the 'Under 12' Questionnaires who were aged 12).

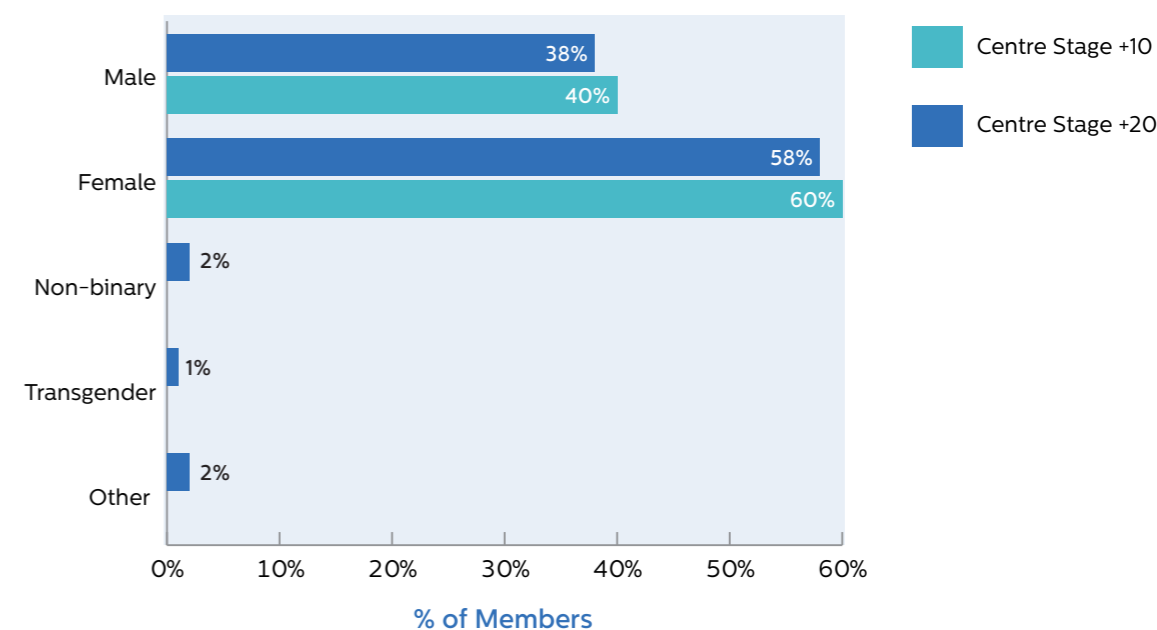
5.1.2 Gender and LGBTI+ Profile

Key Findings

- 58% of members are female.
- 38% of members are male.
- 4% of members identify as non-binary, transgender or 'other'.
- Members who openly identify as LGBTI+ within their youth theatre are estimated to form 7% of the membership.

Figure 5.3 illustrates the gender profile of youth theatre members who completed Member Questionnaires in Centre Stage +20 and Centre Stage +10.

Figure 5.3: Gender of Youth Theatre Members



Figures are based on 605 respondents from Centre Stage +20 Member Questionnaires and 449 respondents from Centre Stage +10 Member Questionnaires. Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Centre Stage Context

In Centre Stage (1998), the proportion of female to male youth theatre members was 2:1. Centre Stage +10 saw an improvement where nearly four out of every 10 members was male by 2009. Centre Stage +10 noted that the number of boys and young men taking part in youth theatre indicated they were consistently under-represented in the membership.

Gender Profile of the Youth Theatre Membership

The key change in the gender profile of the youth theatre membership over the past 20 years has been its evolution from gender binarism (male and female youth theatre members only) to be more inclusive of young people who identify outside of traditional gender binaries. For the first time, the Centre Stage +20 gender question included 'non-binary', 'transgender' and 'other' options.

From data gathered from 605 Centre Stage +20 Membership Questionnaire respondents:

- Nearly six out of 10 members are female (58%);
- Nearly four out of 10 members are male (38%);
- Nine out of 200 members identify as non-binary, transgender or 'other' (4%).

The statistics from Centre Stage +20 show that the percentage of male and female participation in youth theatre has not changed significantly in the past 10 years. Both male and female members saw a slight percentage drop as new gender description options were available to young people on the Member Questionnaire.

Gender Balance – Inclusion of Male Youth Theatre Members

The statistics on gender underline that boys/young men are still one of the most under-represented groups in youth theatre. However, some youth theatres do achieve a gender breakdown in their youth theatre membership that challenges the national average of 38% for boys/young men. For example:

- Kildare Youth Theatre reported a membership with 65 males, 30 females, and five young people who identified as non-binary, transgender or 'other';
- Roundabout Youth Theatre reported a membership of 10 males and five females.

As in 2009, youth theatres are still more likely to have a larger cohort of members who are male if they:

- Have male leaders in the youth theatres;
- Target boys and young men as part of active recruitment strategies and communicate effectively with them about what youth theatre can offer;
- Have traditionally had a significant group of boys or young men within their group and this membership profile is part of their public image;
- Are an established, funded youth theatre with an excellent artistic programme and a strong public profile;
- Have a local culture which supports the participation of boys/young men in the arts;
- Have an artistic programme which interests and challenges boys and young men.

LGBTI+ Members

Centre Stage +20 gathers data for the first time on the number of youth theatre members who describe their gender outside of the traditional, binary descriptions of male and female. Of 605 respondents to the Centre Stage +20 Member Questionnaire:

- 4% of members defined their gender in different ways;
- 2% of members described themselves as non-binary;
- Three members described themselves as transgender;
- 12 members chose 'other' and noted: male and transgender; female transgender; female and non-binary; or didn't specify.

LGBTI+ Youth Theatre Members

As part of the youth theatre questionnaire, youth theatre leaders were asked to count how many of their members openly identified as LGBTI+ within their group or described themselves as non-binary or transgender on their membership form. As youth theatre members as young as 12 were completing the Member Questionnaires, it was decided not to include a direct question on sexuality in the form.

- 25 youth theatres responded to this question in the Youth Theatre Questionnaire.
- They had 75 members who identified openly within youth theatres as LGBTI+ or described themselves as non-binary or transgender on their membership form.
- LGBTI+ members made up 7% of the membership in these 25 youth theatres (total membership 1,026).
- If roughly 10% of the Irish population is LGBTI+²⁰, then the youth theatre membership is quite representative of the LGBTI+ community considering their age profile. The mean age of knowing one's LGBTI+ identity in the LGBT Ireland Report "was 15 (most common 12) with the mean age of telling another person being 19 (most common 16)".²¹ With 51% of the youth theatre membership aged 16 or over according to the Member Questionnaires, the number of young people who openly identify as LGBTI+ in youth theatre suggests that youth theatre is viewed as a supportive and accepting environment by LGBTI+ young people.

²⁰ 10% is the statistic accepted by the LGBT Ireland Report in 2016 (Published by GLEN and BeLonG To). In 2002, The Equality Authority adopted a figure of 10% for the *Implementing Equality for Lesbians, Gays and Bisexuals report* (The Equality Authority 2002).

²¹ LGBT Ireland Report, Published by GLEN and BeLonG To, 2016, Page 22

5.1.3 Nationality and Ethnic Background

Key Findings

- 12% of the youth theatre membership comes from an ethnically diverse background.
- The largest cohort of these members (8%) describe themselves as having 'Any Other White Background' and have family backgrounds from a range of EU countries.
- 13% of members reported speaking a language other than English or Irish at home.
- The diversity levels of the youth theatre membership are currently 2% to 5% behind the national average, with the vast majority of members describing themselves as 'White Irish' (88%) and of Irish nationality (90%). One of the factors which is influencing this trend is the low level of youth theatre provision in Dublin, the county with the richest diversity of young people in the 10 to 19 age range.

Table 5.1 compares the percentage of Centre Stage +20 youth theatre members from different ethnic/cultural backgrounds with Centre Stage +10 and Census 2016 data to explore how representative the youth theatre membership is.

Table 5.1: Ethnic/Cultural Background of Youth Theatre Members

Ethnic/Cultural Background Answer Choices	Centre Stage +20 % of Members	2016 Census % of 10 - 19 Year Olds ²²	Centre Stage +10 % of Members
White Irish	88.1%	83.4%	86.0%
White Irish Traveller	0.9%	1.1%	0.7%
Roma*	0.2%		
Any other white background	7.6%	6.6%	11.5%
Black or Black Irish - African	0.3%	2.5%	0.9%
Black or Black Irish - Any other black background	0.5%	0.2%	0.0%
Asian or Asian Irish - Chinese	0.2%	0.4%	0.0%
Asian or Asian Irish - Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi*	0.2%		
Asian or Asian Irish - Any other Asian background	0.3%	1.8%	0.0%
Other including mixed backgrounds - Arab*	0.2%		
Other including mixed backgrounds - Other	1.5%	1.8%	0.9%
Not stated		2.3%	

Figures are based on 607 respondents from Centre Stage +20 Member Questionnaires and 444 respondents from Centre Stage +10 Member Questionnaires. Percentages are rounded to one decimal point.

* These Ethnic/Cultural background answer choices were not included in the 2016 Census but have been included in Centre Stage +20 to futureproof the data for future research projects.

²² Census 2016 data is drawn from www.cso.ie, Statbank: E8001 Population Usually Resident and Present in the State 2011 to 2016 by Age Group, County of Usual Residence, Ethnic or Cultural Background, Census Year and Sex. Statistics for the '10 to 14' and '15 to 19' age groups are the closest match for the age range of the Centre Stage +20 Member Questionnaires.

Centre Stage Context

Information was gathered on the nationality and ethnic/cultural background of youth theatre members for the first time in Centre Stage +10 to help build a richer profile of the membership.

In 2009, Centre Stage +10 data indicated that 86% of the membership described themselves as 'White Irish', which was just below the 91% identified within Census 2006 (aged 10 to 19). Youth theatre members from a range of other ethnic backgrounds (including White Irish Traveller, Black or Black Irish, Asian or Asian Irish, Other including Mixed backgrounds, etc.) accounted for 14% of the youth theatre membership (62 members) in 2009. Reflecting the immigration trends of 2009, young people who identified as 'Any Other White Background' formed the second largest cohort in Centre Stage +10, with many members having family backgrounds in the UK and Eastern Europe in particular.

Cultural Background and Ethnic Diversity

The vast majority of youth theatre members (88%) who completed Membership Questionnaires identified as 'White Irish' (Table 5.1). This is 5% higher than the national average for the 10–19 age range and indicates that the inclusion of young people of different ethnicities is an ongoing issue within inclusion work in youth theatre. Exploring the other ethnicities/cultural backgrounds within the membership, youth theatre is most representative of young people who identify as 'Any Other White Background' and young people who identify as 'White Irish Traveller'.

The 607 members who provided information on their ethnicity/cultural background through the Centre Stage +20 Member Questionnaires demonstrate that:

- 6 members (1%) identified as 'White Irish Traveller', similar to the percentage of young people aged 10–19 identifying as 'White Irish Traveller' in the Census 2016 (1%);
- 46 members (8%) identified as 'Any Other White Background'. This is 1% higher than the Census 2016 data. 'Other' descriptions included: *Polish, Latvian, French, Spanish, Russian, American, English, Lithuanian, British, Eastern European, European, Hungarian, Irish/Irish Traveller, Irish/Scottish, Irish/English, Irish/Spanish, Irish/Russian, Irish/American, Irish/German, Irish/French, Irish/Portuguese, Irish/Greek, Irish/Bangladeshi, Irish/White South African, Irish/Canadian, Irish/Jewish, French/Slovakian, Australian/Maltese*;
- 5 members (1%) identified as 'Black or Black Irish'. This is slightly less than the national percentage of 3% of young people aged 10–19 identifying as Black or Black Irish in Census 2016;
- 4 members (1%) identified as 'Asian or Asian Irish'. This is slightly less than the national percentage of 2% of young people aged 10–19 identifying as Asian or Asian Irish in Census 2016;
- 10 members (2%) identified as 'Other including Mixed Backgrounds'. This is similar to the 2% of 10–19 year olds in this category in Census 2016. Members who selected 'Other including mixed backgrounds – Other' volunteered descriptions such as: *'Romanian/Albanian/Italian', 'Bi-racial – Half Costa-Rican', 'Afghan, Irish/Nigerian', 'Mexican/Irish/Slovakian', 'Turkish/Irish', 'Irish/African'*.

Nationality

The vast majority of youth theatre members who completed Centre Stage +20 Member Questionnaires are of Irish nationality (90%). This is 2% higher than the national average for the 10–19 age range (Table 5.2) and indicates that the inclusion of young people of different nationalities is an ongoing issue within inclusion work in youth theatre. This statistic is mirrored by the 90% of 543 Member Questionnaire respondents who were born in Ireland.

Table 5.2 below demonstrates that:

- 5% of members described themselves as having a dual Irish nationality (citizenship of Ireland and another country), an increase from Centre Stage +10. This is in line with Census 2016 data where the number of persons with a dual Irish nationality almost doubled. The largest cohort of dual Irish nationals were under the age of 15²³;
- 5% of members described themselves as having 'Other Nationalities', a decrease from Centre Stage +10. This may have been influenced by the trend towards dual Irish nationality or the high proportion of young people (68) in Centre Stage +20 who chose not to complete this question;
- 11% of members reported being born in a range of other countries, including (in order of frequency): England, Poland, America, Russia, Lithuania, Scotland, Hungary, Spain, France, Wales, UK, Kazakhstan, Holland, Italy, Belgium, Kenya, Philippines, Latvia, China and Brazil.

Table 5.2 compares the nationalities of Centre Stage +20 youth theatre members with Centre Stage +10 and Census 2016 data to explore how representative the youth theatre membership is.

	Centre Stage +20 % of Members	Census 2016 % 10–19 Year Olds ²⁴	Centre Stage +10 % of Members
Irish	89.9%	88.0%	85.7%
Dual Irish Nationality	4.8%	3.0%	2.7%
Other Nationality	5.3%	7.6%	11.7%
Not stated or No Nationality	0.0%	1.5%	0.0%

Figures are based on 546 respondents from Centre Stage +20 Membership Questionnaires and 446 respondents from Centre Stage +10 Member Questionnaires. Percentages are rounded to one decimal point.

Languages Spoken at Home

It can prove complex for young people to answer questions around their nationality or ethnicity and they can respond to questions in a uniquely personal manner based on their own experiences. It is interesting to contrast the results from the nationality question with the languages that youth theatre members reported they spoke at home.

Of the 594 respondents to this question in the Member Questionnaire, 13% of young people reported speaking a language other than English or Irish at home, a greater percentage than the level of members reporting dual Irish nationality or other nationalities (Table 5.2). This could indicate a slightly more diverse membership than outlined in the earlier statistics. For example:

- 14 respondents recorded speaking Polish but only 10 young people described their nationality as Polish or Irish/Polish.

Young people were speaking a wide range of European languages at home that reflected the mix of nationalities reported. Languages spoken also included: Benin (Edo language, Nigeria), Chinese, Japanese, Tagalog (Phillipines) and Turkish.

Impact of Low Youth Theatre Provision in Dublin

Section 2.1.2 explores how Dublin has the lowest rate of youth theatre provision per young person in the country. This situation also has an impact on the diversity of the youth theatre membership. Examining the ethnic and cultural background of the 10 to 19 year old age range, Census 2016 states that living within the four local authority areas of Dublin are:

- Just over a quarter of all young people (26%) who describe themselves as having 'Any other White Background';
- 44% of all young people who describe themselves as 'Black or Black Irish';
- Nearly half of all young people (48%) who describe themselves as 'Asian or Asian Irish';
- Over a third (36%) of young people who describe themselves as 'Other, including Mixed Backgrounds'.²⁵

²³ Census Data drawn from: *Census of Population 2016 – Profile 7 Migration and Diversity*, www.cso.ie

²⁴ Census 2016 data is drawn from www.cso.ie Statbank: E7003 Population Usually Resident and Present in the State 2011 to 2016 by County of Usual Residence, CensusYear, Age Group and Nationality

²⁵ Census 2016 data taken from: Statbank E8001: Population Usually Resident and Present in the State 2011 to 2016 (Number) by Sex, Ethnic or Cultural Background, Age Group, County of Usual Residence and Census Year

The county with the richest diversity of young people has the lowest rate of youth theatre provision to include them and this is impacting on the rate of diversity within the youth theatre membership.

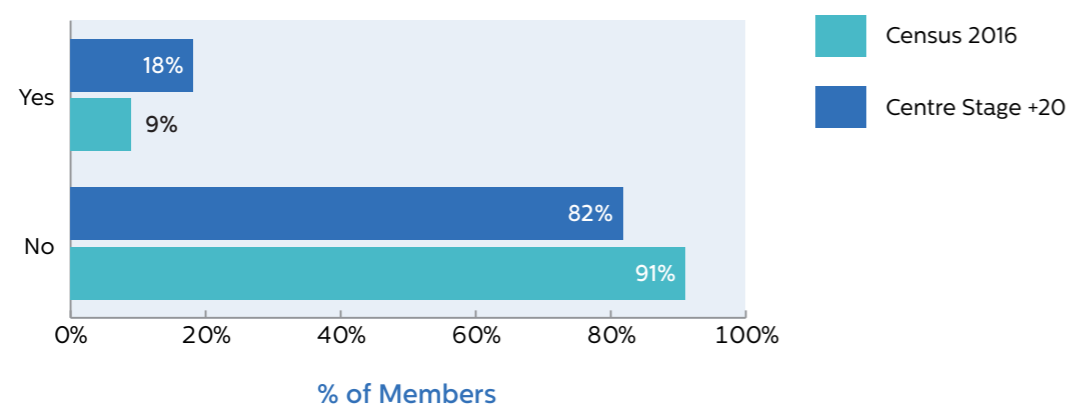
5.1.4 Disability & Long-Term Illness

Key Findings

- 18% of youth theatre members report a disability.
- Youth theatre members disclosed a disability rate 9% higher than the national average identified through the Census 2016. The vast majority (85%) of disabilities reported were: Autism/Autistic Spectrum Disorders, Dyspraxia, General Learning Disabilities and Behavioural Disorders.
- Just under one in six youth theatre members said they had a long-term illness, with asthma being the most prevalent condition.
- Youth theatre exhibits high levels of inclusion of young people with a range of disabilities and long-term illnesses.
- Mental health disorders are under-represented in the questionnaires. Members who participated in the Centre Stage + 20 Member Workshops discussed higher levels of anxiety, depression and stress than is evidenced in the Member Questionnaires.

Figure 5.4 charts the levels of disability which youth theatre members disclosed through the Centre Stage +20 Member Questionnaires.

Figure 5.4: Do you have a disability?



Figures are based on 588 respondents from Centre Stage +20 Member Questionnaires and the 54,869 out of 616,081 young people aged between 10 and 19 who recorded a disability as part of Census 2016.²⁶ Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Centre Stage Context

This is the first time that data on disability and long-term illness levels has been gathered within the Youth Theatre Member Profile section for Centre Stage and there is no comparative data.

Disability

Nearly a fifth of members who responded to the Membership Questionnaire (18%) reported that they had a disability (Figure 5.4). This is significantly higher than the 9% of the 10–19 year old population who recorded a disability as part of Census 2016.

Seventy-one young people provided further information on their disability in the Member Questionnaires:

- 85% of these members recorded a range of Autism/Autistic Spectrum Disorders, Dyspraxia, General Learning Disabilities and Behavioural Disorders, including: Autistic Spectrum Disorder, Dyspraxia, Aspergers Syndrome, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), Learning Disabilities, Dyslexia and Comprehension Disorder. The prevalence of young people with this range of specific challenges is common in the majority of youth theatres across Ireland and is reflected in anecdotal conversations with youth theatre leaders;
- Only four young people recorded physical disabilities such as scoliosis, muscle collapse and hyper-mobility. A further seven young people recorded sensory disabilities related to hearing and sight.

Youth theatre is very inclusive of young people with a wide range of Autism/Autistic Spectrum Disorders, Dyspraxia, General Learning Disabilities and Behavioural Disorders. However, young people with physical disabilities, including wheelchair users, are under-represented in the membership.

Long-Term Illness

Of the 586 members who completed Member Questionnaires, just under a sixth of respondents (16%) reported a long-term illness. Sixty-three young people gave some further insight into the type of illness they were dealing with:

- The vast majority of these young people reported asthma (67%);
- The remaining 33% cited kidney health and function issues, epilepsy, scoliosis, coeliac disease, 'type 1' diabetes and heart problems.

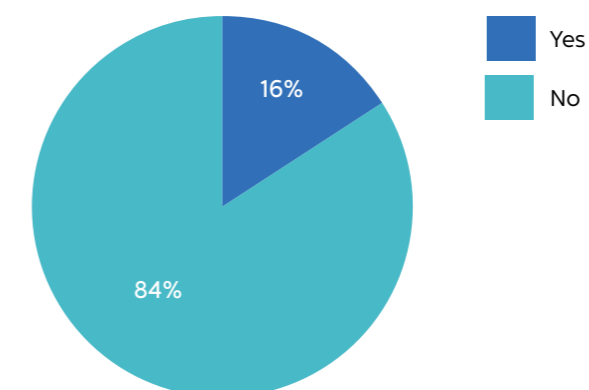
Mental Health

One young person noted that they were dealing with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) and interestingly, this was the only mental health condition mentioned in the questionnaires even though the question text explicitly invited young people to include these conditions. The *My World Survey* reported that 30% of young people at secondary school had between mild and severe levels of depression; 32% had mild to severe levels of anxiety; and 19% had mild to severe levels of stress.²⁷

However, mental health was central to discussions in the Centre Stage +20 Member Workshops, where issues around anxiety were mentioned a total of 85 times by 103 members as part of a discussion on barriers to youth theatre participation. Members described a situation where their mental health and negative feelings about themselves were hindering their participation to a much greater extent than any external factors such as transport or the cost of participation (See Section 5.3.5). Centre Stage +20 data is inconclusive on the issue of mental health, but evidence from Member Workshops indicates that members are experiencing a higher level of mental health issues than they chose to disclose in the Membership Questionnaires.

Figure 5.5 charts the percentage of youth theatre members who identified as having a long-term illness through the Centre Stage +20 Member Questionnaire.

Figure 5.5: Percentage of Youth Theatre Members with a Long-Term Illness



Figures are based on 586 respondents from Centre Stage +20 Member Questionnaires. Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

²⁶ Census 2016 data is drawn from www.cso.ie, Statbank E9001: Persons with a Disability as a Percentage of All Population 2011 to 2016 by Single Year of Age, Sex, CensusYear and Statistic

²⁷ My World Survey, Barbara Dooley and Amanda Fitzgerald, Published by UCD and Headstrong, 2012, Pages 25–27

Case Study: National Festival of Youth Theatres

Leaders within the youth theatre sector work very closely together to support the inclusion of young people with a range of disabilities and long-term illnesses at residential events such as the National Festival of Youth Theatre (an annual, five-day residential festival for over 100 young people). Youth theatre members and their parents/guardians discuss any additional needs or necessary medical information with youth theatre leaders and the Youth Theatre Ireland Welfare and Child Protection Officer prior to the festival to create a positive approach to the inclusion of all young people and the management of any health condition. A full-time nurse is hired for the duration of the festival to deal with any health emergencies and the management of any long-term illnesses, in collaboration with the youth theatre leaders and YTI's Welfare and Child Protection Officer.

5.1.5 Socio-Economic Background

Key Findings

- Youth theatre members from middle class backgrounds account for a small majority, with 57% of members coming from 'ABC' socio-economic groupings.
- Youth theatre members from a range of socio-economic backgrounds outside the 'ABC' groupings have increased slightly and now form 43% within the membership.
- One in four youth theatre members comes from the C 'Lower Professional' category (teachers, nurses, artists, lab technicians, etc.) and one in four youth theatre members comes from the D 'Non Manual' category (secretaries, chefs, sales assistants, hairdressers, etc.).
- Youth theatre members from skilled working class backgrounds have increased by 7% and are now well-represented in the membership. However youth theatre members from other working class backgrounds are still under-represented.
- Young people from farming and agricultural backgrounds are now participating at a level (4%) which corresponds with their representation in Census 2016 data.

Centre Stage Context

In 1998, the Centre Stage report concluded that the majority of youth theatre members were from middle-income families. The report identified that:

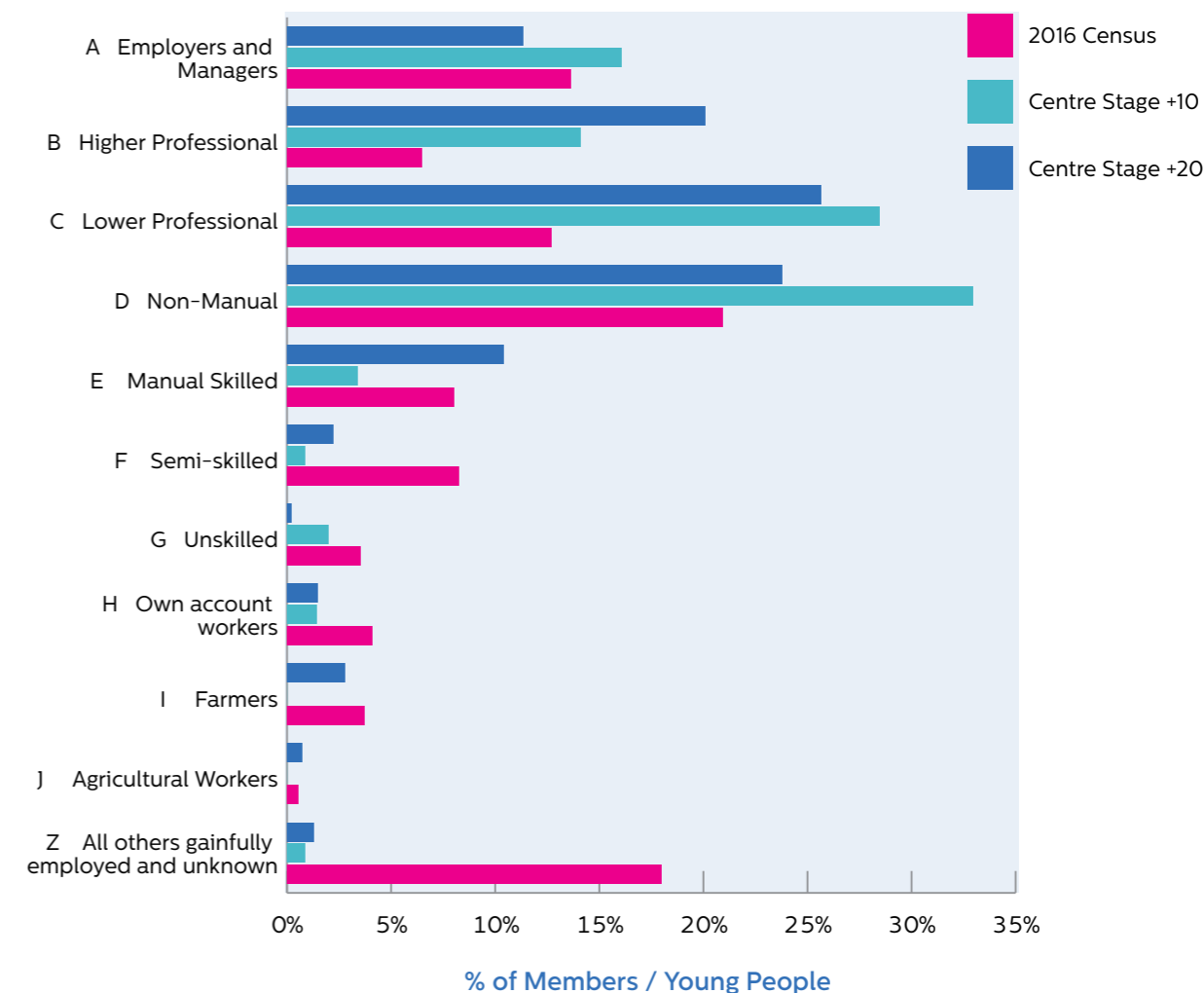
- About seven out of 10 members had one family member employed in a middle-to upper-income job (professions, business owners, management);
- Nearly half of members had one family member in a lower-to-middle-income job (trades, clerical workers, skilled operatives);
- One in five members had a family member in a low-paid job or who was unemployed (manual workers, factory floor workers, unemployed).

In 2009, Centre Stage +10 moved to the current socio-economic classification system but found similar results:

- Three out of 10 members were from A 'Employers and Managers' or B 'Higher Professional' categories (30%);
- Nearly three out of 10 members were from the C 'Lower Professional' category (28%);
- Nearly a third of members were from the D 'Non-Manual' category (33%).

Figure 5.6 compares the socio-economic background of Youth Theatre Members in Centre Stage +20 with the Census 2016 results for the Irish population²⁸ and the results of Centre Stage +10 (2009). Youth theatre members were asked in the Members Questionnaires to list the type of jobs their parents or guardians had held. Their responses were coded in line with socio-economic classification used by the Central Statistics Office (Socio-economic group and occupation – Soc90). The classification aims to bring together persons with similar social and economic status on the basis of the level of skill or educational attainment required. The same classification system was used for Centre Stage +10.

Figure 5.6: Comparison of the Socio-Economic Background of Youth Theatre Members with the Irish Population



Figures are based on 538 respondents from Centre Stage +20 Member Questionnaires and 355 respondents from Centre Stage +10 Members Questionnaires. Census 2016²⁸ percentages are based on a population of 3,755,313.

Current Socio-Economic Profile of Youth Theatre Members

Centre Stage +20 Member Questionnaire data shows that:

- Youth theatre members are most likely to come from the socio-economic categories 'Lower Professional' (C), 'Non-Manual' (D) and 'Higher Professional' (B) respectively. Youth theatre members from these categories are all over-represented in the membership in comparison with Census 2016 data (Figure 5.6);

²⁸ Census 2016 data is drawn from www.cso.ie Statbank: EB069 Population aged 15 years and over 2016 by Towns, by Size, Sex, Socio-Economic Group and Census Year

- The 'Lower Professional'(C) category continues to be the most prevalent socio-economic background;
- In comparison with Centre Stage +10 data, there has been an increase in the 'Higher Professional'(B) and 'Skilled Manual'(E) categories and decreases in the 'Non-Manual'(D) and Employers and Managers'(A) categories.

Examining the socio-economic profile of the members sampled in the Member Questionnaires, a majority of the youth theatre membership is middle-class at 57%. However, 43% of the membership sampled in the questionnaires were outside of the 'ABC' socio-economic groupings. Of the 538 members who provided information on the type of work undertaken by their parents/guardians in the Member Questionnaires:

- Just over a quarter of youth theatre members (26%) came from category C 'Lower Professional', including occupations such as: *teachers, nurses, lab and engineering technicians, actors, artists, musicians, journalists, driving instructors, ambulance staff, occupational and speech therapists, marketing managers, surveyors, etc.*;
- Just under a quarter of youth theatre members (24%) came from category D 'Non-Manual', including occupations such as: *secretaries, soldiers, chefs, bar staff, hairdressers, childminders, prison and police officers, waiters, receptionists, cashiers and bank clerks, civil service administrative officers, sales assistants, railway station workers, etc.*;
- A fifth of youth theatre members (20%) came from category B 'Higher Professional', including occupations such as: *medical practitioners; barristers and solicitors; chartered accountants; mechanical, electrical or software engineers; scientists; veterinarians; architects; social workers and probation officers; university and higher education teachers, etc.*
- Just over a tenth of youth theatre members (11%) come from category A 'Managers and Employers', including occupations such as: *marketing, purchasing or personnel managers; senior police and prison officers; publicans, restaurant and catering managers; proprietors of butchers and shops; administrators of schools and colleges, librarians, credit controllers; local government officers, business owners, etc.*;
- A tenth of youth theatre members (10%) come from category E 'Manual Skilled', including occupations such as: *builders, plumbers, electricians, plasterers, mechanics, dressmakers, carpenters; radio and tv engineers; bakers; butchers; truck drivers; bus conductors and coach drivers, etc.*;
- There was a small increase in youth theatre members from farming backgrounds since Centre Stage +10. Centre Stage +20 saw 4% of members report they were from a farming or agricultural work background compared with 0% 10 years ago.;
- Categories F 'Semi-Skilled' and G 'Unskilled' remain under-represented in the youth theatre membership. These include occupations such as: *gardeners, care assistants, security guards, postal workers, machine operatives (F) and road construction workers, cleaners, labourers, refuse collectors (G).*

DEFGHIJ socio-economic groupings

Youth Theatre Members from the 'DEFGHIJ' socio-economic groupings (43%) stay similar lengths of time in youth theatre as their peers and also have similar aspiration levels to work professionally in the arts or remain an arts participant. This group were 8% more likely than their peers to have no other family members who participated in the arts but only 3% more likely not to have any family member working professionally in the arts. This group experienced similar barriers to participation in youth theatre as their peers. However, they were slightly less likely to have had difficulty with family commitments and holidays (-3%), and slightly more likely to have had difficulty with work commitments (+2%) and the cost of participation (+1%).

This group of young people were spread out amongst all 35 youth theatres represented in the Member Questionnaires. Working from the questionnaire data, County Limerick Youth Theatre, Griese Youth

Theatre, M.A.D. Youth Theatre and Droichead Youth Theatre were particularly inclusive of young people from these socio-economic groupings.

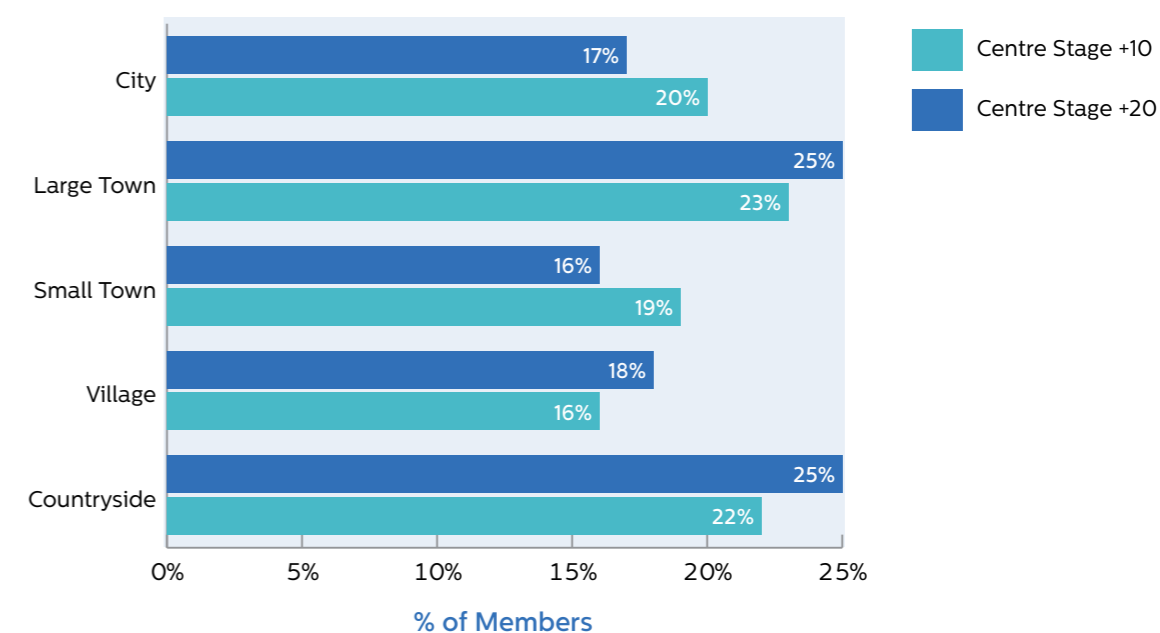
5.1.6 Geographic Distribution

Key Findings

- The participation of rural young people in youth theatre has continued to grow and now every four out of 10 youth theatre members come from a rural background (43%).
- Young people from small and large towns are also dominant within the membership (41%).
- Young people from Irish cities and suburbs continue to be under-represented in the youth theatre membership by 13%, as 30% of all 10 to 19 year olds live in cities and their suburbs.

Figure 5.7 compares the geographic distribution of youth theatre members around the country, as identified by members through the Centre Stage +20 and Centre Stage +10 Member Questionnaire.

Figure 5.7: Geographic Distribution of Members



Figures are based on 603 respondents from Centre Stage +20 Member Questionnaires and 447 respondents from Centre Stage +10 Member Questionnaires. Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Centre Stage Context

Centre Stage +10 documented the inclusion of an increased number of young people from rural backgrounds in youth theatre in 2009. The study also noted that young people from cities were under-represented in the membership by about 12% compared to Census 2006 data.

Current Geographic Distribution of Members

The statistics from the Member Questionnaires show a good spread of youth theatre members across urban and rural areas (Figure 5.7). Centre Stage +20 results continue the trends which emerged a decade ago: an increasing rural membership and a declining urban membership. Of the 603 members who provided information on the type of area where they lived through the Member Questionnaires:

- 43% of members indicated that they lived in villages or the countryside. This shows continued success in terms of the inclusion of young people from rural backgrounds. The strength of rural participation is reflected in the findings of *Arts and Cultural Participation among Children and*

Young People: Insights from the Growing Up in Ireland Study, where researchers found (for a slightly younger age group) that in structured cultural activities “there is no significant difference between urban and rural areas in participation levels, so it does not seem to be the case that provision is greater in urban areas.”²⁹

- 16% of members indicated that they lived in a small town mirroring the 16% of the youth theatre sector which is based in small towns (See Section 2.1.3 for location of youth theatres);
- 25% of members indicated that they lived in a large town. The percentage of the youth theatre sector based in large towns (44%) is more significant, indicating that it is likely young people are travelling in from surrounding rural areas to participate in youth theatre;
- Only 17% of members indicated that they lived in a city. Three out of every 10 young people aged between 13 and 18 live in cities and their suburbs in Ireland (30%).³⁰ Young people from cities are still under-represented by 13% in the overall youth theatre membership. This may be due to the continued drop in numbers of youth theatres in Dublin. A quarter of all young people aged between 10 and 19 live in the four Local Authority areas in Dublin and it is the area with lowest youth theatre provision per young person.

5.1.7 Educational Background

Key Findings

- The vast majority of the youth theatre membership (95%) aged 12 to 24 are in full-time, formal education. Following the national trend of increasingly high educational attainment levels, three quarters of youth theatre members aspire to achieve a degree.
- The membership also includes young people who are attending Youthreach, doing an apprenticeship and young people in the 16–25 age category who are ‘Not in Education, Employment or Training’ (NEET).

Table 5.3 details the educational stages of youth theatre members from Centre Stage +20 and Centre Stage+10.

Table 5.3: Educational Stages of Youth Theatre Members

	Centre Stage +20 Percentage of Members	Centre Stage +10 Percentage of Members
At primary school	6.0%	3.6%
At secondary school	82.6%	84.9%
At Youth Reach	0.7%	0.2%
At a further education college	2.0%	2.3%
Doing an apprenticeship	0.3%	0.7%
At Third Level	4.5%	4.7%
Other training/studies	1.2%	3.6%
No	2.3%	-

Figures are based on 600 respondents from Centre Stage +20 Member Questionnaires and 443 respondents from Centre Stage +10 Member Questionnaires. Percentages are rounded to one decimal point.

²⁹ *Arts and Cultural Participation among Children and Young People: Insights from the Growing Up in Ireland Study*, Dr Emer Smyth, The Arts Council & The Economic and Social Research Institute, 2016, P 49

³⁰ Census 2016 data is drawn from Statbank: E3005: Population 2016 by Age Group, Sex, Towns by Size and CensusYear. www.cso.ie The total population of 13–18 year olds in the State in 2016 was 371,588. This age group within the Census statistics for this topic was the best match for the age range of members who had completed Member Questionnaires.

Centre Stage Context

A decade ago, Centre Stage +10, noted that almost all youth theatre members were in full-time formal education, either at primary school, secondary school or third-level institutions (95%). Educational aspirations had risen too: 60% wanted to study to degree level in 1998 and 70% wanted to in 2009. It was noted at the time, that this increase mirrored a national trend toward educational attainment indicated by a continued rise in CAO applications.

Educational Profile

The vast majority of the youth theatre membership (aged 12 to 24) are in full-time, formal education. Table 5.3 shows that:

- The majority of youth theatre members were attending secondary school (83%), which corresponds with the age range of the membership;
- 6% were still at primary school with an age profile of 12 to 13;
- 4% of members were studying at third level. They were all attending youth theatres in cities and large towns and with an average membership length of 4.4. years, they show that it is more common for this cohort to continue their youth theatre engagement into their college years rather than begin youth theatre at third-level. See Section 5.1.1 for a profile of the youth theatres where these young people are members;
- 1% were either attending Youth Reach or doing an apprenticeship. Aged 16 to 19, these young people were equally split between rural and urban locations;
- 2% of members were attending a further education college. Aged 17 to 21, they were all participating in youth theatres based in large towns and cities;
- 14 young people were not studying or training. They were spread across 10 youth theatres in predominantly urban settings and had an average membership length of 3.2 years. Nine of these young people are aged 16 to 21 and are ‘Not in Education, Employment or Training’ (NEET).

Educational Attainment of Youth Theatre Members

Of the 286 youth theatre members aged 16 and over who provided information on the educational qualifications they had achieved, 96% had achieved their junior certificate and 16% had achieved their leaving certificate. There were no significant differences in educational attainment amongst any of the socio-economic groups represented within the membership.

The Centre Stage +20 statistics reflect Ireland’s high levels of educational attainment. Ireland was ranked the second highest amongst EU member states for secondary level educational attainment in 2017, with 94% attaining at least a higher secondary level of education.³¹

Youth theatre, along with other structured cultural activities, may also have a positive effect on academic attainment. The *Arts and Cultural Participation among Children and Young People*’ report (2016) states “Children and young people who read for pleasure and take part in structured cultural classes tend to be more engaged in school, have better academic skills and improved wellbeing.”³²

Educational/Training Aspirations of Youth Theatre Members

Youth theatre members continue to have high educational aspirations, with results broadly similar to Centre Stage +10 a decade ago. Youth theatre members want to achieve high levels of academic attainment, with 75% of members wanting to achieve a degree, an increase of 4% from 2009.

³¹ Educational Attainment Thematic Report 2018, CSO Statistical Release, Central Statistics Office, 2018

³² *Arts and Cultural Participation among Children and Young People: Insights from the Growing up in Ireland Study*, Dr Emer Smyth, The Arts Council and The Economic and Social Research Institute, 2016, P 98

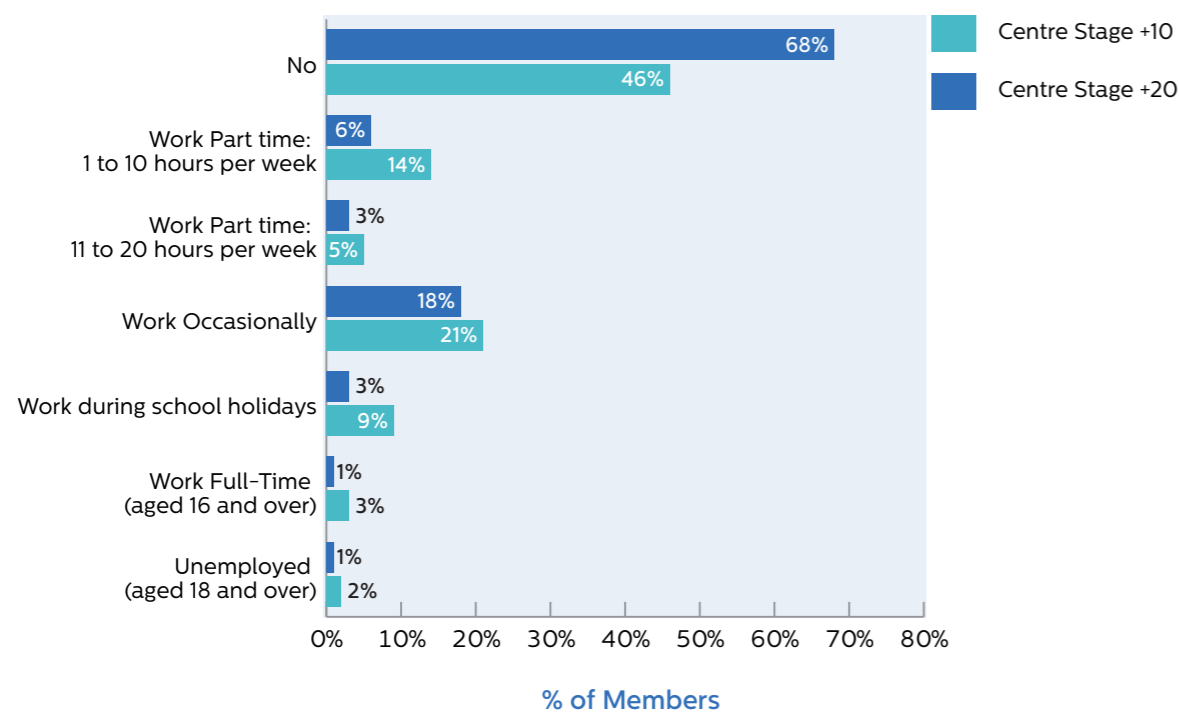
5.1.8 Work Background

Key Findings

- Three out of 10 youth theatre members (32%) are working (on an occasional, part-time or full-time basis). The vast majority of these members are working alongside their studies.
- 9% of members have part-time jobs and work one to 20 hours a week.
- Nine of the youth theatre members who responded to the questionnaire are 'Not in Education, Employment or Training' (NEET).
- Comparative data for this age range shows that the take-up rate of employment opportunities amongst the current youth theatre membership is below the national average.

Figure 5.8 compares the employment status of youth theatre members from Centre Stage +20 and Centre Stage +10.

Figure 5.8: Employment Status of Youth Theatre Members



Figures are based on 602 respondents from Centre Stage +20 Member Questionnaires and 426 respondents from Centre Stage +10 Member Questionnaires. Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Centre Stage Context

In 1998, Centre Stage reported that 17% of the members aged 13 and over had part-time work and a significant 83% worked occasionally. In 2009, Centre Stage +10 reported that 19% of members aged 12 and over had part-time work and 21% also worked occasionally. At that time, leaders spoke of the challenge of scheduling activities at the weekend when so many members were working and 14% of members considered work commitments a barrier to participation in youth theatre.

Current Employment Status of Youth Theatre Members

The employment profile of youth theatre members has changed significantly in the past decade, with a drop of 22% in the number of members working (Figure 5.8).

Of 602 respondents to the Centre Stage +20 Member Questionnaire, nearly seven out of 10 youth theatre members were not working (68%). They were predominantly full-time students at primary, secondary and third level. The socio-economic profile of this cohort who were not working alongside their studies is very similar to that of the general membership.

- **Occasional Work:** 18% of members were working occasionally (working for family members, babysitting, gardening, irregular work, etc.). This group were aged between 12 and 21 and were more likely to be from a rural background.
- **Part-time:** The 9% of youth theatre members who were working part-time between one and 20 hours were typically aged 16 and over. Of those working part-time, 60% were female and 56% were from towns and cities. Members who described their ethnic/cultural identity as 'Any Other White Background' were 6% more likely to have a part-time job. Those working part-time were also more likely to be from the C 'Lower Professional' or D 'Non-Manual' socio-economic categories.
- **Work During School Holidays:** This group of members who worked during school holidays decreased significantly to 3% of the membership and are aged between 12 and 17.
- **Full-Time Work:** Only three young people were working full-time and they were aged between 18 and 24. They were from a mix of A, B and D socio-economic backgrounds and came from a mix of urban and rural backgrounds.
- **Unemployed:** Nine members aged between 16 and 21 indicated they were not working and were not in education or training (NEET). These young people were from the D 'Non-Manual' and E 'Skilled Manual' socio-economic categories and were living in large towns and cities.

Youth Employment Rates

To an extent, lack of employment amongst youth theatre members mirrors the experience of young people on a national level where the Post-2008 Economic Crisis in Ireland contributed to a sharp rise in youth unemployment. However, the CSO announced a decreased youth unemployment rate of 12.4% in January 2019 for 15–24 year olds³³ and the Growing up in Ireland Study released 'Key Findings for the Child Cohort at 17/18 years' (2016) which showed that a third of all 17/18 year olds who were still at school had a part time job.³⁴ This new data shows that increased employment opportunities are open to young people again and highlights a low take-up rate of employment opportunities amongst youth theatre members.

Conclusions

Youth theatre is contributing to the cultural inclusion of rural young people, LGBTI+ young people and young people with a range of disabilities and long-term illnesses.

The youth theatre sector still needs to work hard through recruitment and retention strategies to create a more representative mix of young people in youth theatres, particularly in terms of socio-economic status, ethnicity and nationality, gender, physical disability and geographic location. This has implications for the work of local youth theatres and Youth Theatre Ireland in terms of the development of local recruitment strategies, national marketing campaigns, training programmes and resources. These inclusion priorities also highlight the importance of targeted and partnership-based development work which can pro-actively support the development of youth theatres in areas rich in diversity. If the youth theatre sector and its funders aspire to a more diverse membership, then this area of work will need to be resourced appropriately.

The membership profile highlights factors which can impact members' participation in youth theatre and should influence the planning and delivery of appropriate resources and programmes at a local and national level. As youth theatre becomes more inclusive and the needs of members become more complex, youth theatre leaders need specific training and resources to support the participation of their members. The level of additional needs within some youth theatre groups has become a resource capacity issue.

Children under the age of 12 form a significant proportion of the youth theatre membership but are currently outside of the remit of Youth Theatre Ireland. There is no national organisation supporting the development of children's theatre groups and this poses challenges in terms of these groups being supported to have the appropriate child protection policies, artistic resources, training and national opportunities.

³³ Monthly Unemployment January 2019, CSO Statistical Release 2019
<https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/mue/monthlyunemploymentjanuary2019/>

³⁴ Growing Up in Ireland, Key Findings: Child Cohort at 17/18 years, 2016
<https://www.esri.ie/system/files/media/file-uploads/2016-11/SUSTAT56.pdf>

5.2 Youth Theatre Members – Background

5.2.1 Leisure and Creative Interests

Key Findings

- Youth theatre members are very active as creators and audience members within other art forms, with 98% of members reporting engagement in at least one other arts activity.
- The most popular creative activities for youth theatre members to experience as audience members are: listening to music, watching films, watching tv/boxsets/series, reading and watching digital content.
- The most popular creative activities for youth theatre members to experience as creators are: playing music/singing, writing, making art and taking part in drama classes outside youth theatre.
- Youth theatre members engage with a range of additional leisure interests alongside youth theatre and other creative activities. Youth theatre members in 2019 are 15% more likely to participate in individual sports and 10% more likely to participate in team sports than they were a decade ago.

Table 5.4 details the creative interests of youth theatre members in Centre Stage +20 and Centre Stage +10. New art forms and mediums were added to the Centre Stage +20 question text to reflect current creative trends and to which there was no comparable data from Centre Stage +10.

Table 5.4: Creative Interests of Youth Theatre Members

	Centre Stage +20 % of Members	Centre Stage +10 % of Members	
1	Listen to music	88.3%	87.0%
2	Watch films	81.5%	75.8%
3	Watch tv/boxsets/series	73.0%	51.4%
4	Read	72.7%	65.0%
5	Play music/sing	70.7%	53.1%
6	Write	58.5%	38.1%
7	Watch digital content	47.5%	---
8	Make art	44.3%	36.8%
9	Drama groups/classes outside youth theatre	35.3%	23.8%
10	Watch/create dance	34.7%	35.7%
11	Spoken Word	29.3%	---
12	Make films	26.8%	18.2%
13	Go to art exhibitions	24.5%	10.8%
14	Irish music, dance or storytelling	20.3%	8.7%
15	Create animation/comics	17.5%	---
16	Create digital content	17.0%	---
17	Watch/create street art	14.2%	---
18	Watch/create circus	11.8%	---
19	Coding	9.5%	---
20	Watch/make opera	8.5%	2.2%
21	Other	2.5%	---

Figures are based on 600 respondents from Centre Stage +20 Member Questionnaires and 446 respondents from Centre Stage +10 Member Questionnaires. Percentages are rounded to one decimal point.

Centre Stage Context

In Centre Stage (1998), four out of five over-13s indicated a previous active involvement in at least one art form, and more than one in eight indicated a previous active involvement in four or five art forms. A decade later, Centre Stage +10 youth theatre members were interested in listening to music, watching films and TV, reading, playing music and many other creative activities (Table 5.4).

Creative Interests of Youth Theatre Members

The creative interests of youth theatre members have broadened as they participate as audience members and creators in an increased range of different art forms and mediums, both on an informal/personal level and within structured activities. Table 5.4 demonstrates that:

- The majority of youth theatre members' favourite creative activities place them in the role of audience members: listening to music (88%); watching films (82%); watching tv, boxsets, etc. (73%); watching digital content (48%);
- Another set of very popular creative activities are those which young people can do on an informal level by themselves: reading (73%); writing (59%); playing music /singing (71%); making art (44%);
- 35% of members were taking part in other types of drama classes outside of youth theatre. Members may also be playing music and creating art as part of structured art classes or activities;
- New activities such as creating/watching digital content and coding feature in member's lives for the first time.

Compared with Centre Stage+10, youth theatre members are now between 12% and 20% more likely to: write; watch tv/ boxsets/ series; play music or sing; go to art exhibitions; and go to other types of drama/theatre classes.

Creative Interests and Family Background

Many different factors effect young people's participation in creative activities, whether on a personal/informal level or through structured opportunities. For example, young people who are the only person in their family to participate in the arts are between 3% and 7% less likely to: play music/sing; make art; watch/create dance; make films; go to art exhibitions; create animation/comics; and watch/create circus. Members with a family connection to the professional arts sector were more active as creators and consumers of other art forms than their peers. They had significantly higher levels of participation in many arts/cultural activities than the general membership, including: making art (+20%); going to art exhibitions (+16%); making films (+14%); taking part in drama classes outside their youth theatre (+11%); and writing (+11%).

The socio-economic background of a youth theatre member can also impact on their creative interests. For example, young people from the 'DEFGHIJ' socio-economic groupings are 7% less likely to read, reflecting the conclusion of the *Arts and Cultural Participation Amongst Children and Young People* report, that "children from more advantaged families read more frequently". Young people from less advantaged backgrounds also take part in fewer structured arts activities often due to economic barriers. For example, youth theatre members from the above socio-economic grouping are 7% less likely to take part in drama classes on top of their youth theatre participation.

Participation in Other Types of Leisure Activities

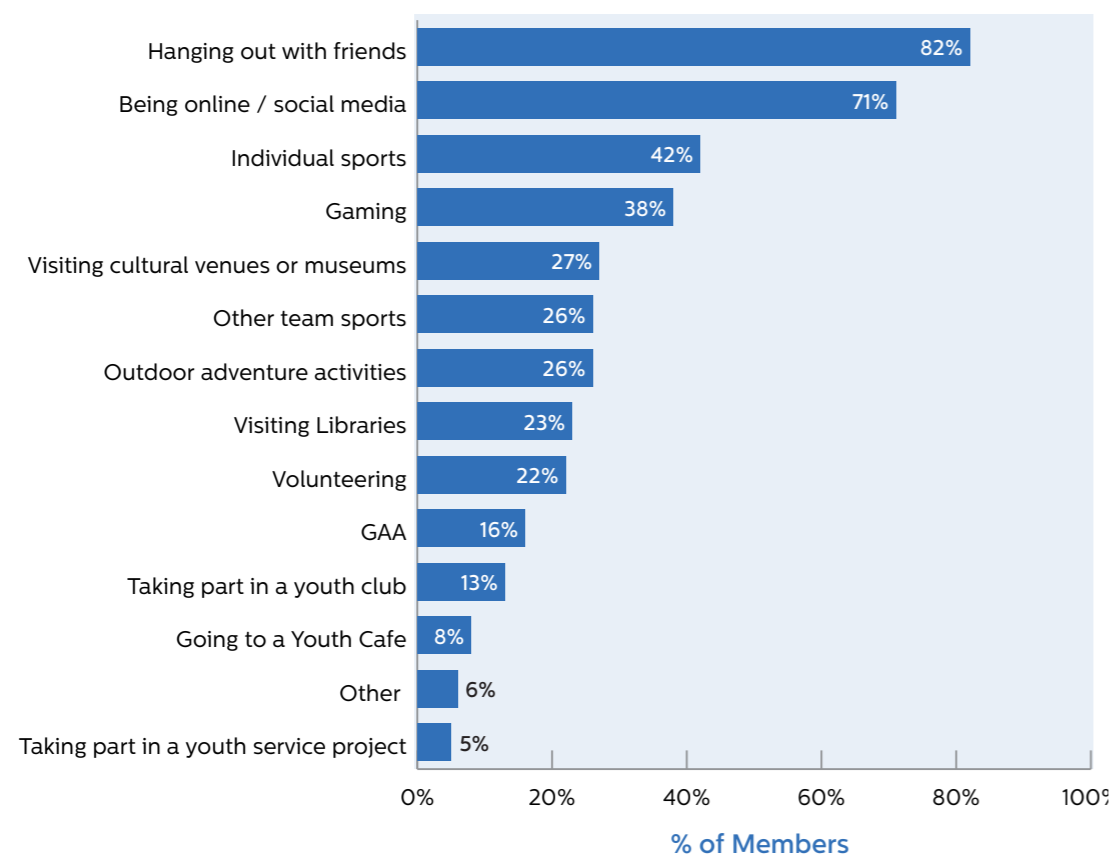
Alongside a range of creative activities, youth theatre members were also involved in: socialising with friends; using social media; taking part in sports; visiting other cultural spaces; volunteering, and taking part in other youth clubs or youth services. Of the 596 members who provided information on their leisure interests in the Member Questionnaires:

- 97% of members indicated that they also took part in at least one other type of leisure activity;
- 82% reported socialising with friends, the most popular leisure interest of youth theatre members;
- Seven out of 10 youth theatre members listed being online or using social media as leisure activities (71%), with 38% listing Gaming;
- A fifth of youth theatre members worked as volunteers and around a quarter of members were accessing cultural venues, museums and libraries.

During Centre Stage +20 member workshops, young people cited 'sporty' people as being under-represented in the youth theatre membership because of a lack of interest in drama and, in general, did not view youth theatre members as 'sporty'. However, 42% of youth theatre members had an interest

in individual sports, 26% participated in team sports and 16% participated in the GAA. Youth theatre members in 2019 are 15% more likely to participate in individual sports and 10% more likely to participate in team sports than they were a decade ago.

Figure 5.9: Leisure Interests of Youth Theatre Members



Figures are based on 596 respondents from Centre Stage +20 Member Questionnaires. Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

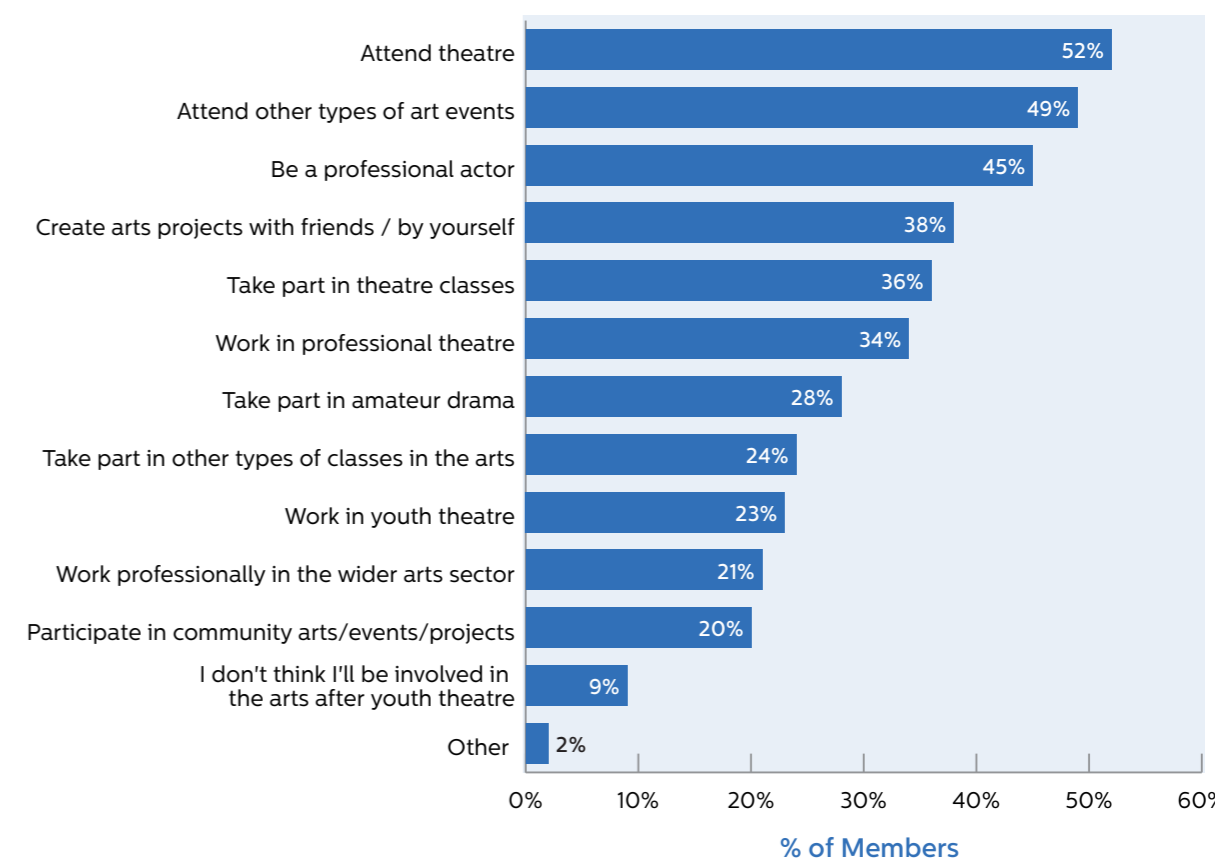
5.2.2 Future Involvement in the Arts

Key Findings

- 91% of youth theatre members wanted to continue their involvement in the arts after youth theatre. Youth theatre can be seen as an effective tool in developing artists, audiences and participants for the arts sector.
- Factors such as family background in the arts and geographical, economic and attitudinal barriers may contribute to youth theatre members' aspirations to work and participate in the arts as an adult.

Figure 5.10 illustrates the different ways that youth theatre members would like to be involved in the arts in the future.

Figure 5.10: Future Involvement in the Arts



Figures are based on 582 respondents from Centre Stage +20 Member Questionnaires. Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Centre Stage Context

Young people's interest in working in professional theatre and the arts increased slowly in the decade between the first two Centre Stage research projects. In 1998, 30% of members wanted to work professionally in theatre. A decade later, 32% wanted to be a professional actor and a further 20% wanted to work professionally in theatre. Members' interest in working professionally in the wider arts sector also grew from 13% in 1998 to 22% in 2009.

Future Involvement in the Arts

Centre Stage +20 set out to capture a broader sense of young people's aspirations to be involved in the arts as adults, including: working professionally in the arts; being an audience member; being a participant in classes, community or amateur arts; or working in youth theatre. Of the 582 members who provided information on this topic through the Member Questionnaires, 91% wanted to continue their involvement in the arts after youth theatre. Centre Stage +20 data shows that youth theatre can be seen as an effective tool in developing artists, audiences and participants for the arts sector.

- Half of the youth theatre members were interested in going to the theatre (52%) and other types of arts events (49%) in the future. Results suggest that youth theatre could be seen as an agent in audience development.
- In terms of youth theatre members' aspirations to become involved in the arts on a professional level, they were most likely to say they want to be a professional actor (45%). A further 34% of members were interested in working professionally in theatre and 21% were interested in working professionally in the arts in general. The gender breakdown of this cohort didn't differ significantly from that of the overall membership and members were fairly evenly spread across

rural and urban backgrounds. 18% of the members who registered a disability aspired to work professionally in theatre or the wider arts sector.

- Another cohort were interested in staying active as participants and creators in theatre and the arts on a personal or community level. For example, 38% of members wanted to create arts projects with friends/by themselves and 36% wanted to take part in theatre classes in the future.
- About a fifth of members were interested in working in youth theatre in the future (23%), with 35% indicating they would be interested in becoming a youth theatre leader at some stage.

Members who did not want to be involved in the Arts in the Future

- Fifty Member Questionnaire respondents (9%) indicated that they would not like to be involved in the arts in the future.

The success of a youth theatre is not gauged on the number of members who pursue a professional career in the arts or the number who become committed local amateur participants and audience members. Some members will take the outcomes they have achieved for themselves and move on from the arts. However, in the absence of an explanation for their choice, it is interesting to look at the profile of this cohort to see if there are any contributing factors:

- 70% of this group were members of a youth theatre for two years or less;
- Boys were 14% more likely to say they did not want to be involved in the arts in the future;
- Half of this group said they lived in a village or the countryside;
- Young people from the E 'Manual Skilled' socio-economic categories were 10% more likely to say they didn't want to be involved in the arts in the future.

Though the sample is small, the above data indicates potential geographic, economic and attitudinal barriers may exist which contribute to young people's decision not to participate in the arts as an adult.

5.2.3 Family Background in the Arts

Key Findings

- Nearly half of all youth theatre members (48%) are the only person in their family to participate in the arts. Youth theatre can be seen as a highly effective way of engaging young people in the arts who do not have a family culture of arts participation.
- Members who are the only people in their families to actively participate in the arts have similar levels of ambition to be a professional actor and work professionally in theatre as their peers. These members are less likely to aspire to professional work in the wider arts sector or participate in other arts forms. Youth theatre may help these members overcome barriers and reach their creative potential in this particular art form.
- One in five young people in youth theatre has a family member working professionally in the arts. A family culture of participation in the professional arts sector increases young people's level of engagement in multiple art forms as well as their aspiration to work and participate in the wider arts sector.

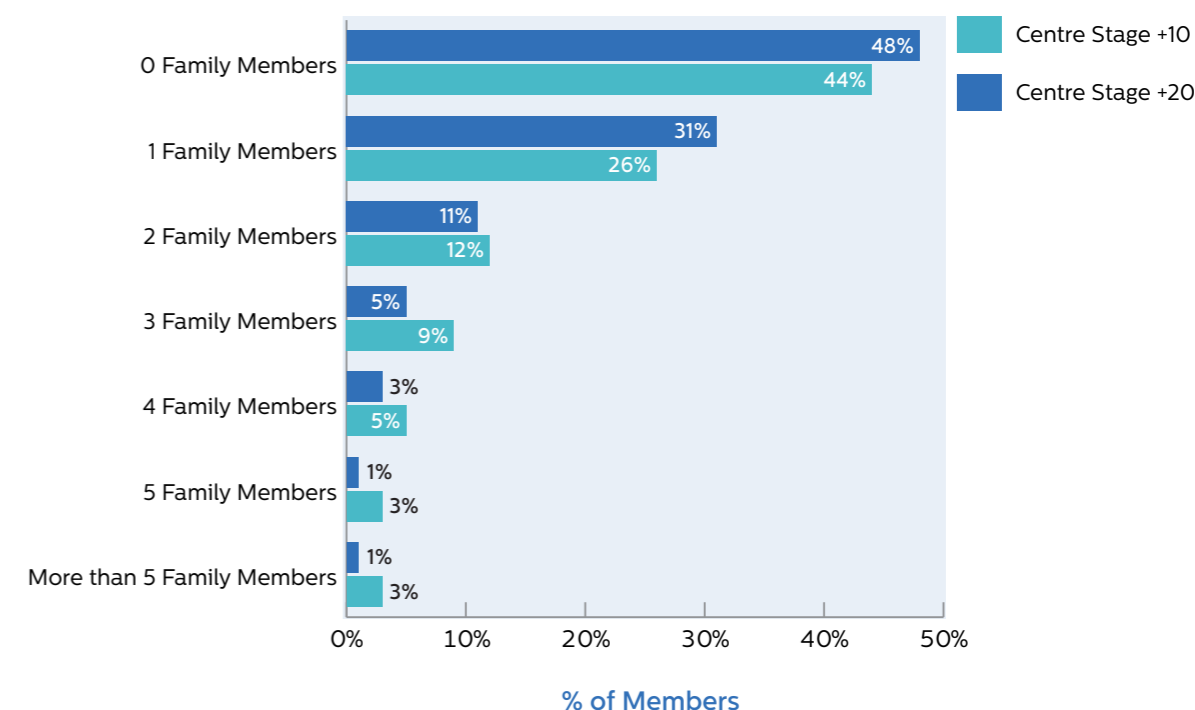
Centre Stage Context

Two decades ago, 34% of youth theatre members reported in Centre Stage that no other family member was active or interested in the arts. By 2009, this percentage had increased to 44% and youth theatre was beginning to prove itself effective at attracting the participation of young people with no family background in the arts. The Centre Stage +10 report highlighted that this was at a time when The Arts Council report 'The Public and The Arts' noted that public participation in different art forms had risen by 18% between 1994 and 2006.

In Centre Stage and Centre Stage +10, one in six members reported that they had a family member who was working professionally in the arts. Youth theatres with strong public reputations had higher levels of young people with family members working professionally in the arts. By Centre Stage +10, the location of youth theatres with members who had connections to the professional art world had spread beyond cities and large towns to some of the smaller towns and rural areas.

Figure 5.11 charts the number of other family members that youth theatre members state are participating in the arts and compares data from Centre Stage +20 and Centre Stage +10.

Figure 5.11: Number of Family Members Participating in the Arts



Figures are based on 535 respondents from Centre Stage +20 Member Questionnaires and 400 respondents from Centre Stage +10 Member Questionnaires. Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Family Participation in the Arts

Nearly half of all youth theatre members (48%) are the only person in their family to participate in the arts (Figure 5.11). Youth theatre can still be seen as a highly effective way of engaging young people in the arts who do not have a family culture of arts participation. The 256 members who reported that no other family members participated in the arts:

- Came from a range of urban and rural backgrounds with a quarter coming from the countryside;
- Had a gender profile consistent with their peers in youth theatre;
- Had an average membership length (2.4 years) fairly consistent with their peers (2.6 years);
- Came from a range of socio-economic backgrounds that are broadly consistent with their peers (See Section 5.1.5) but included a decrease in young people from the 'C Lower Professional' category (-6%) and small increases in the 'D Non Manual' (+3%) and 'E Manual Skilled' (+2%) categories compared with statistics for the general membership.

A number of youth theatres with 'large' membership levels were very inclusive of young people from this background, including: Droichead Youth Theatre (Drogheda); County Limerick Youth Theatre (Lough Gur); Gonzo Youth Theatre (Cavan Town); M.A.D. Youth Theatre (Dundalk); and Dublin Youth Theatre (Dublin City).

Future Involvement in the Arts – Members with No Family Background in the Arts

Members who are the only people in their families to actively participate in the arts are still ambitious about working professionally in theatre in the future in comparison with other art forms. There is only a small decrease of 1% to 2% in young people from this group wanting to be a professional actor, work professionally in theatre, attend theatre or work in youth theatre compared with statistics for the general membership. However, this group of young people are between 4% and 6% less likely: to want to work professionally in the wider arts sector; to attend other types of art events in the future; to create arts projects with friends by themselves; to take part in other types of classes in the arts compared to the statistics for the general membership.

The lack of a family background in arts participation appears to have impacted to a certain extent on their aspirations for professional work in the wider arts sector or future participation in other art forms. Youth theatre may be supporting these young people to aspire to professional work or future participation within theatre, and may be assisting in narrowing the gap between these young people and their peers for this particular art form.

Family Members Working Professionally in the Arts

Just over one fifth of Member Questionnaire respondents (21%) reported that one or more family members were working professionally in the arts (Figure 5.12). That means that in 2019, one in five youth theatre members now has a connection to the professional arts sector.

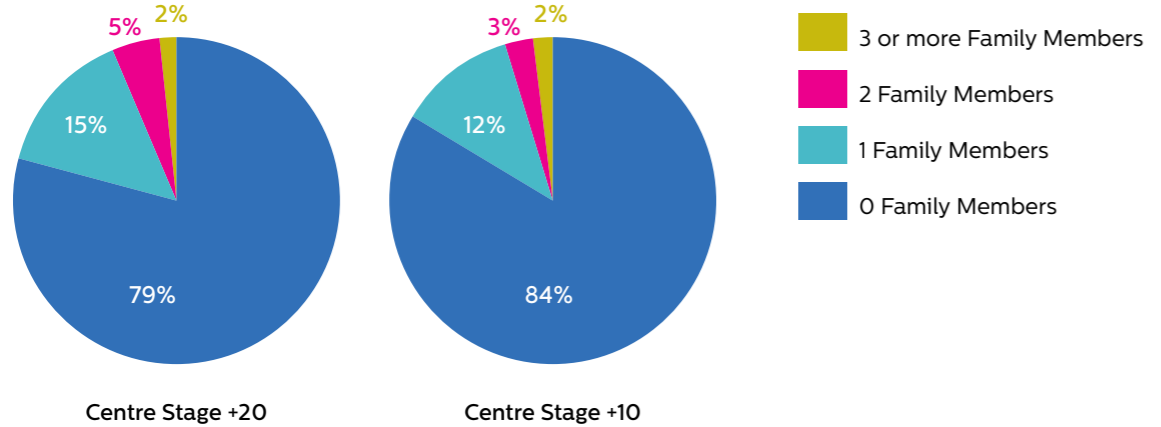
These youth theatre members are spread out across 31 different youth theatres but a number of youth theatres had more than five young people with family members working professionally in the arts: Dublin Youth Theatre; Droichead Youth Theatre; LYTC Carrick-on-Shannon; Activate Youth Theatre; and County Limerick Youth Theatre.

Young people with family connections in the professional arts sector are more likely to participate in an established, local youth theatre with a good public profile and, as in Centre Stage +10, Dublin Youth Theatre still has the most members in this category. However, the youth theatres with members from this cohort have now spread to 19 different counties and, though the youth theatres listed are mainly in towns and cities, 46% of these members come from villages or the countryside.

Future Involvement in the Arts – Members with a Family Background in the Professional Arts Sector

Members with family connections in the professional arts sector aspired to work and participate in a broader range of arts settings than their peers. They were more likely to want to work professionally in the wider arts sector (+15%), take part in other types of classes in the future (+8%) and more likely to participate in community arts/events in the future (+8%).

Figure 5.12: Percentage of Young People in Youth Theatre with Family Members Working Professionally in the Arts



Figures are based on 528 respondents from Centre Stage +20 Member Questionnaires and 380 respondents from Centre Stage +10 Member Questionnaires. Percentages are rounded the nearest whole number.

Conclusions

Youth theatre members are very active as creators and audience members in other art forms, bringing a host of skills, knowledge and opinions that enrich the work they create as an ensemble.

The youth theatre sector can play a role in engaging young people who do not currently access many creative activities and in addressing factors which can negatively impact on young people's aspiration to work or participate in the arts as adults.

Youth theatre is an effective way of engaging young people in the arts who do not have a family culture of arts participation. Young people with no family background in arts participation have similar outcomes as their peers and similar levels of aspiration to work professionally or participate in theatre in the future. Youth theatre should continue to level the playing field for young people who want to build a career in theatre or further their participation in the art form.

The fact that a fifth of youth theatre members are interested in working in youth theatre in the future is a very positive indicator for youth theatre development.

5.3 Youth Theatre Members – Participation

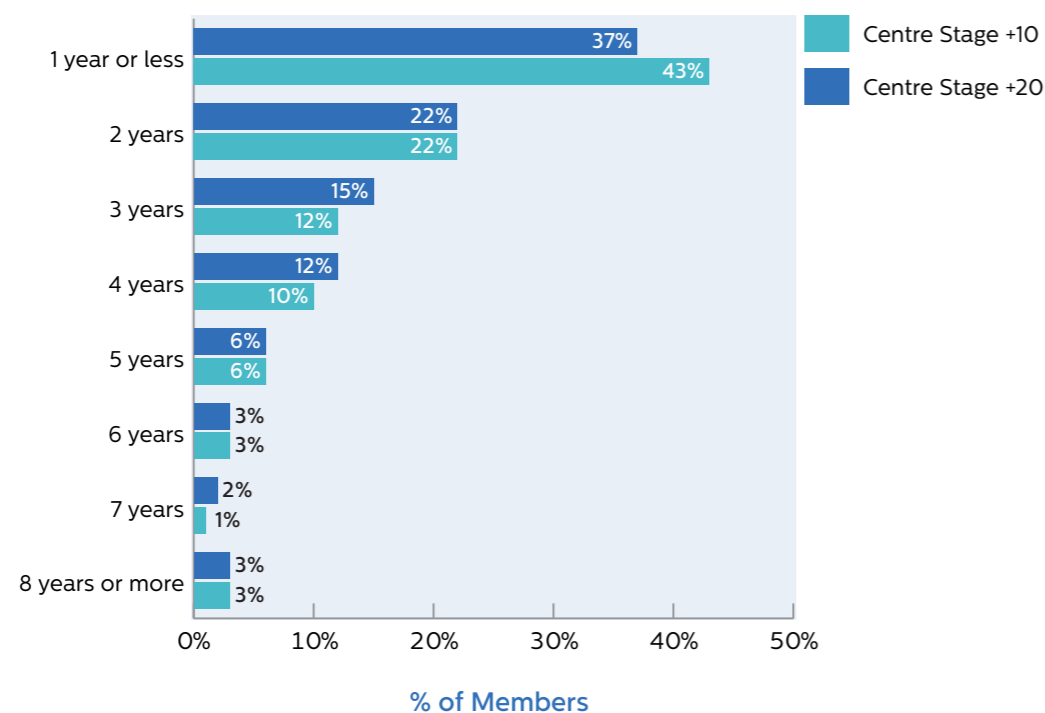
5.3.1 Length of Membership

Key Findings

- The average length of youth theatre membership is continuing to grow, from 1.6 years in Centre Stage (1998) to 2.3 years in Centre Stage +10 (2009) and 2.6 years in 2019. Centre Stage +20 Member Questionnaires record young people with 13 years of experience.
- The percentage of members who leave youth theatre after one year of membership has dropped to 15.6%, with boys more statistically likely to remain.

Figure 5.13 charts a comparison of membership lengths from Centre Stage +10 and Centre Stage +20.

Figure 5.13: Comparison of Membership Lengths



Figures are based on 590 respondents from Centre Stage +20 Member Questionnaires and 431 respondents from Centre Stage +10 Member Questionnaires. Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Centre Stage Context

In 1998, nearly half of the youth theatre membership were members for a year or less (46%), a statistic influenced by the comparative youth of the groups participating in the survey (see Section 2.6.1). Just over 40% had been members for two or three years and only 13% had been members for four years or more. By 2009, youth theatre members were recording longer membership records, with the average length of membership growing from 1.6 years to 2.3 years and those who were members for four years or more jumping to 23% of the membership (+10%). The longest membership length recorded in 1998 and 2009 was nine years.

Current Membership Length

From the 590 members who responded to this question in the Centre Stage +20 Member Questionnaire, it can be deduced that the length of youth theatre membership is continuing to grow:

- The average membership length was 2.6 years;
- The shortest membership was just a few months long, and the longest was 13 years;
- 37% were members for one year or less. They had an average age of 15;
- 37% were members for between two and three years. They had an average age of 15.5;
- A quarter of the membership were members for four years or more. They had an average age of 16.

Long Membership

In Centre Stage +20, 46 young people who filled in questionnaires were members for more than five years, including two young people who had been members for 13 years.

When average ages are compared with membership lengths, it suggests that the majority of young people who have the longest membership records are more likely to start youth theatre in junior youth theatre groups and leave around the completion of secondary school (between 17 and 19) rather than leaving youth theatre in their twenties. There is a small, experienced section of the membership who are joining at a very young age and really growing up within their youth theatre.

Impact of Gender on Membership Length

The Centre Stage +20 Member Questionnaire shows that fewer boys join youth theatre, but once they do, they are more likely to have a longer membership record than girls. A higher percentage of girls appear to try youth theatre out, but not commit beyond the first year. The result is that boys have an average membership length of 2.8 years and girls have an average length of 2.5 years. This trend has not changed in 20 years, as in Centre Stage the boys had an average membership of 1.8 years and the girls had an average of 1.5 years. The 590 respondents to this area of enquiry in the Member Questionnaire show that:

- Youth theatre members who reported being in youth theatre for one year or less, were 61% girls and 33% boys with 6% identifying as non-binary, transgender or 'other';
- 53% of girls and 71% of boys stayed on a for a second year of membership;
- By the time young people recorded four years of membership, there were nearly equal numbers of male and female members with 9% identifying as non-binary, transgender or 'other';
- This ratio remains reasonably the same for the remainder of their youth theatre membership. Those with membership for five years or more broke down into 49% girls, 47% boys and 4% young people who identified as non-binary, transgender or 'other'.

5.3.2 Reasons for Joining Youth Theatre

Key Findings

- Young people are joining youth theatre to act, to be in plays, to have fun and because they're interested in being an actor. Artistic motivations are a key factor, with the majority expressing an interest in acting (66%). What attracts young people to youth theatres has not changed significantly in the past decade.
- In 2019, young people also report that they are joining youth theatre to find a place where they can be themselves (44%).

Table 5.5 details the key reasons why young people joined youth theatre (ranked) from Centre Stage +10 and Centre Stage +20. Members' primary reason for joining youth theatre (statements ranked 1st) and the percentage of members who included a statement in their 'Top 5' reasons are also included for Centre Stage +20.

	Centre Stage +20 Overall Rank	Centre Stage +10 Overall Rank	Centre Stage +20 Number of Members who Ranked statement # 1	Centre Stage +20 % of Members who included statement in 'Top 5'
To act	1	1	197	65.9%
To have fun	2	3	52	57.3%
Because I want to be an actor	3	4	80	42.0%
To be in plays	4	2	24	46.3%
To have a place where I can be myself	5	-	43	43.7%
To meet new people	6	6	28	40.2%
To try something new	7	7	31	31.2%
To learn more about drama	8	5	18	35.9%
To meet other people with the same interests	9	8	20	33.6%
To do more drama workshops	10	9	13	26.3%
I liked drama in school	11	10	16	19.7%
Because my friends joined	12	11	16	14.6%
For something to do	13	12	5	15.7%
Because of my parents	14	13	21	11.3%
Other	15	14	9	3.1%

Figures are based on 574 respondents from Centre Stage +20 Member Questionnaires. Percentages are rounded to one decimal point.

Centre Stage Context

In Centre Stage +10, young people were joining youth theatre to act, to be in plays, to have fun and because they wanted to be an actor. Artistic interests were the strongest motivating factor, with young people being drawn particularly to performance and production opportunities. No comparable data is available for Centre Stage.

Key Reasons for Joining Youth Theatre

Respondents to the Member Questionnaire (574) cited the following key reasons for joining youth theatre:

1. To act (66% ranked this in their 'Top 5'). Over a third of members gave this as their number one reason for joining youth theatre;
2. To have fun (57% ranked this in their 'Top 5'). Fun was slightly more important to current youth theatre members than it was 10 years ago and was more likely to be in members' 'Top 5' reasons than their number one reason;
3. Because they want to be an actor (42% ranked this in their 'Top 5'). Members saw youth theatre

as an activity which could help them with this aspiration and it was the most important reason for 14% of the members;

4. To be in plays (46% ranked this in their 'Top 5');
5. To have a place where they can be themselves (44% ranked this in their 'Top 5'). To reflect feedback from young people, an additional reason for joining youth theatre was added to the Centre Stage +20 response options in this question. Having a place where they could explore their own identity and creativity in a safe place was the most important reason for 43 of the young people who completed the questionnaire.

Though the order was slightly different, the top four reasons also featured in the Centre Stage +10 report. Artistic interests are still the key motivating factor for the majority of young people, backed by a personal expectation of enjoying the youth theatre environment.

Young people are still joining youth theatre for social reasons as well as artistic ones. They want to meet new people, especially young people with similar interests to them. As in Centre Stage +10, it was unlikely to be the main reason young people joined youth theatre, but featured in 40% and 34% respectively of members' 'Top 5' reasons.

Young people aged 12 and over were more likely to make independent decisions to join youth theatre rather than being influenced by friends and family. However, encouragement from family and peers was still a significant factor for a small number of members who ranked either 'Because my friends joined' and 'Because of my parents' as the most important reason for joining youth theatre.

5.3.3 Reasons for Staying in Youth Theatre

Key Findings

The top five reasons young people return to youth theatre each week are:

1. They love acting;
2. They are having fun;
3. They love youth theatre workshops;
4. They want to be with their friends in youth theatre;
5. They feel they can be themselves in youth theatre.

Table 5.6 details the key reasons why young people stay in youth theatre (ranked) from Centre Stage +20. Members' primary reason for staying in youth theatre (statements ranked 1st) and the percentage of members who included a statement in their 'Top 5' reasons are also included.

	Centre Stage +20 Overall Rank	Centre Stage +20 Number of Members who Ranked statement # 1	Centre Stage +20 % of Members who included statement in Top 5
I love acting	1	156	72.8%
To have fun	2	57	66.5%
I love youth theatre workshops	3	109	55.7%
To be with my friends	4	65	52.9%
To have a place where I can be myself	5	49	46.6%
I like the plays/projects we work on	6	15	41.2%
I'm learning lots about theatre	7	21	37.0%
To help me build towards a career in the arts	8	29	36.0%
I love creating plays	9	31	30.5%
To be with other members and leaders	10	20	23.0%

I made a commitment to go to workshops /rehearsals	11	11	21.5%
Other	12	7	1.9%

Figures are based on 573 respondents from Centre Stage +20 Member Questionnaires. Percentages are rounded to one decimal point.

Centre Stage Context

In the Centre Stage +10 Member Workshops, young people discussed reasons they stayed as youth theatre members and this was analysed for qualitative findings. Young people told researchers that they joined youth theatre to act and be in plays but stayed because of the people who were there, the atmosphere they created together and how it made them feel. No comparative data is available for Centre Stage.

Key Reasons for Staying in Youth Theatre

In Centre Stage +20, young people were asked about what drew them back to youth theatre each week as part of the Member Questionnaire, using response options that had been suggested by members a decade ago.

The 573 respondents to this question cited the following key reasons for staying in youth theatre:

1. I love acting (73% ranked this in their 'Top 5'). Over a quarter of members (27%) say this was the most important reason;
2. To have fun (66% ranked this in their 'Top 5') Having fun was less likely to be the main reason young people stayed, but a significant percentage were returning each week because they were enjoying themselves;
3. I love youth theatre workshops (56% ranked this in their 'Top 5'). An enjoyment of youth theatre activities is also encouraging young people to commit to their youth theatre. The most popular activity mentioned was youth theatre workshops with 19% of members listing it as the most important reason they returned each week;
4. To be with my friends (53% ranked this in their 'Top 5'). Being with friends was a key factor in pulling young people back each week and featured in the lists of over half of the questionnaire respondents;
5. To have a place where I can be myself (47% ranked this in their 'Top 5'). Youth theatre is a place where young people feel accepted and welcome. This sense of belonging is very significant for the 9% who voted this their main reason for staying in youth theatre.

"Youth Theatre is great therapy. It makes me feel proud, strong and fulfilled"
 Youth Theatre Member

Interestingly, the top two reasons young people give for staying in youth theatre match the top two reasons for joining. Youth theatre appears to be delivering on the expectations of young people who participate regularly. Personal and social outcomes are a strong magnet for young people as well as their love of acting and workshops, as two out of the 'Top 5' reasons given by young people are related to these outcomes.

A strong interest in theatre also features in some of the other reasons that young people gave for staying in youth theatre. Young people indicated that they also liked the plays/projects they were working on (41%), were learning lots about theatre (37%) and loved to create plays (31%) in their 'Top 5' reasons for staying in youth theatre.

Just over a third of members (36%) returned to youth theatre because they believed it was helping them build towards a career in the arts. This was a cohort of slightly older youth theatre members who were beginning to think about how youth theatre was helping them build the experiences and skills that would help them progress in the arts sector. Just under three quarters of these young people (73% of these 201 members) wanted to become professional actors.

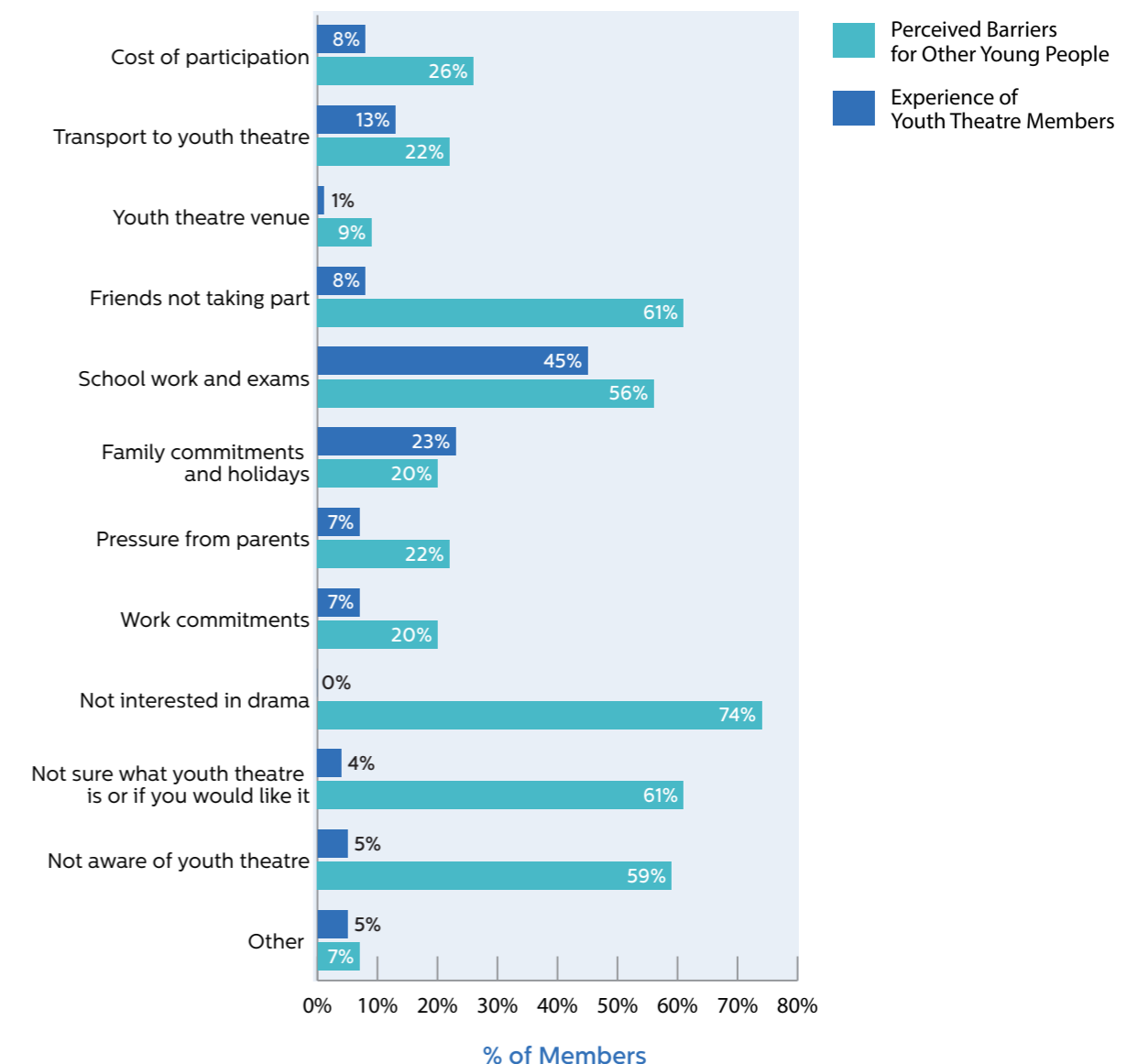
5.3.5 Barriers to Participation

Key Findings

- Nearly two-thirds of youth theatre members report one or more factors which made taking part in youth theatre difficult. The most significant barriers experienced by current members were 'school work and exams' (45%) and 'family commitments and holidays' (23%).
- However, discussions around this theme during Member Workshops presented an increase in the significance of mental health, self-doubt and fear of judgement from peers as a psychological barrier to participation in youth theatre.

Figure 5.14 illustrates barriers to participation as recorded by members in the Centre Stage +20 Member Questionnaires. The graph contrasts the personal experience of members with the barriers they perceive other young people might experience.

Figure 5.14: Barriers to Youth Theatre Participation



Figures are based on 567 respondents reporting on their own experience of barriers and 572 respondents reporting on their perception of barriers experienced by other young people from the Centre Stage +20 Member Questionnaire. 37% of members did not personally experience any barriers to participation. Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Centre Stage Context

A decade ago in Centre Stage +10, the most common factors that made youth theatre participation difficult for young people were: school work and exams; work commitments; family commitments and holidays; and transport. School work and exams was overwhelmingly the main barrier to participation, with 44% of 434 members recording this experience. The other barriers were mentioned by between 12% and 13% of the members. Nearly four out of 10 members had not experienced any issues which made youth theatre participation difficult (38%).

Barriers to Participation Experienced by Members

Youth theatre members recorded their personal experience of barriers to youth theatre participation in the Member Questionnaires and also in the Member Workshops. Of the 567 young people who responded to the Questionnaires, 37% did not register any barriers to participating in youth theatre, a similar level to Centre Stage +10.

The remaining members said they had experienced one or more factors that had made their initial or ongoing participation difficult. These included:

- 45% of members said that school work and exams had made it hard to take part in youth theatre. This remains the primary barrier to participation reported by young people;
- A further 23% registered that family commitments and holidays can make it difficult to take part. The Member Questionnaire results demonstrate a big family effort to transport young people by car to and from youth theatre activities and concludes that family support is key to engagement (See Section 5.3.5). Youth theatres may also run additional projects or rehearsals during school breaks at times when families may take holidays. This factor has increased by 10% in the past decade;
- 13% of members felt that transport had made it hard to participate in youth theatre activities at times. Seventy percent of these 70 young people were driven by car to youth theatre and 70% described themselves as living in small towns, villages or the countryside. This highlights the importance of transport in rural settings to achieve accessibility for young people;
- Disappointingly, 44 young people (5%) state that the cost of participation has at some time made it hard for them to participate in youth theatre. These young people were still members, so it's unclear whether the youth theatre was able to help these young people with reduced fees/bursaries or whether families continued to pay. These young people came from seven different socio-economic categories, with the majority between C (Lower Professional) and D (Non-Manual);
- For other young people, the fact that their friends weren't taking part, pressure from parents and work commitments were also significant factors in their participation. A handful of young people listed the conflicting demands of sports or other extra-curricular activities and disabilities as factors which made participation more difficult;
- 9% felt that not being aware of youth theatre or not knowing whether they would like it had been a barrier to their initial participation in youth theatre.

Anxiety and Mental Health

Anxiety, a lack of confidence or mental health issues were key factors in Centre Stage +20 Member Workshop discussions around barriers to participation in youth theatre. These topics were mentioned a total of 85 times by the 103 members who took part in the six workshops. Members described a situation where their mental health and negative feelings about themselves were hindering their participation to a much greater extent than any practical factors such as transport or the cost of participation.

"I had to move school recently and I went through a hard time last year with things going on in school. Youth theatre... while it was something that was really helping me, this experience was something that kind of stopped me participating and stopped me enjoying youth theatre as much as I could have... but it was really helpful too because I have lots of friends here. But I think that was one of the biggest things that was a barrier for me... because it was really affecting me the things that were going on."

Participant, Centre Stage +20 Member Workshop

"For myself over the summer, I got really depressed and I was doing drama but then at the same time it can be really hard to come in when you're anxious and have those feelings."

Participant, Centre Stage +20 Member Workshop

"When I first came in here I found it very hard to socialise with people. I was always very quiet. For the first few months it was very hard to come in, and I enjoyed it... but then afterwards you just felt like you were just standing there watching other people talk rather than talking because I didn't know how to engage. But then during the summer I just realised that I had more confidence and I was just able to do things. Looking back now it's really helped. But it wasn't instant. It took time and it was hard for me at the start."

Participant, Centre Stage +20 Member Workshop

Another issue which arose in workshops was concern over the stereotyping of young people who were interested in youth theatre. Young people had a fear of being judged by their peers for their participation in youth theatre. This was more common amongst boys, but young people of all genders were afraid of what people might think of them. It was mentioned 31 times across the six workshops.

"Some boys (and girls) feel they would be laughed at or called names for doing drama."

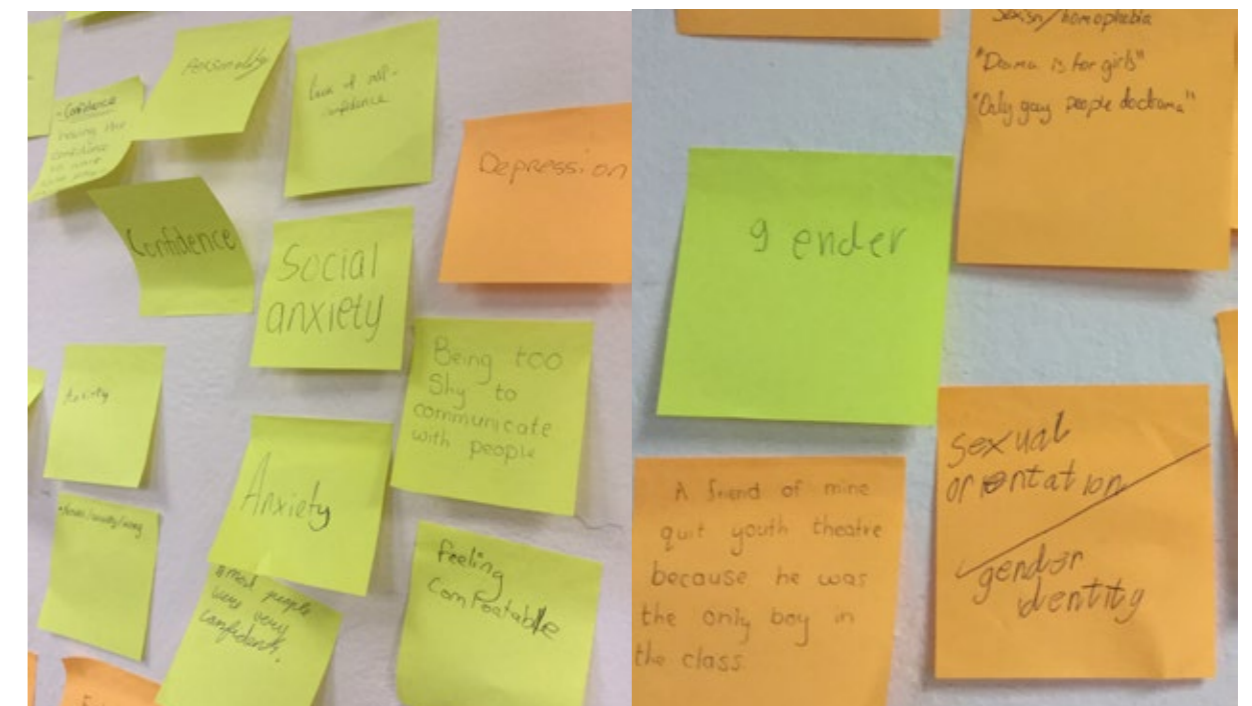
Participant, Centre Stage +20 Member Workshop

"Afraid of getting bullied because all the other boys were sporty in school"

Participant, Centre Stage +20 Member Workshop

"Some people have stereotypes of people who do drama in their heads and feel they don't fit that mould eg. Outgoing, confident. They might feel they'd be mocked especially boys."

Participant, Centre Stage +20 Member Workshop

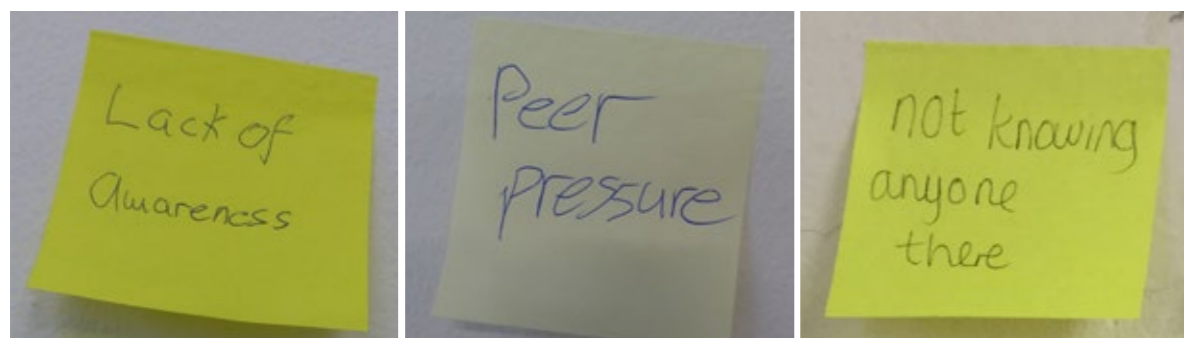


Perceived Barriers Experienced by Other Young People

Youth theatre members were also asked if they could identify reasons why other young people don't get involved in youth theatre. It was outside the scope of this study to investigate barriers to participation with young people who have never joined youth theatre or left early in their membership experience. Interestingly, other than 'Family Commitments and Holidays', youth theatre members perceived significantly higher levels of obstacles for others than they themselves experienced (See Figure 5.14).

- The 572 youth theatre members who responded felt that the key reason other young people weren't joining youth theatre was because they just weren't interested in drama (74%). This was reflected in Member Workshops when all six workshop groups suggested that the main group of young people who weren't included in their youth theatre were young people who just weren't interested in drama.

- A lack of information was also cited as a fundamental barrier. Members felt that other young people were not aware of youth theatre (59%) and were not sure if they would like it (61%). Many young people in the Member Workshops felt there was a lack of available information about youth theatre and that it wasn't always visible to young people as an option.
- Another reason identified by 61% of members is that it is hard to join a youth theatre when your friends are not taking part. Members felt that it was hard to make an individual choice to try out youth theatre. There was a significant difference of 53% between member's own personal experience of this factor and their perceived effect on other young people.
- School work and exams also featured as something that 56% of members believed could be a barrier to participation.
- Many other answer choices such as the cost of participation, transport to youth theatre, family commitments and holidays, pressure from parents and work commitments were identified by between 20% and 26% of members as potential barriers to participation.



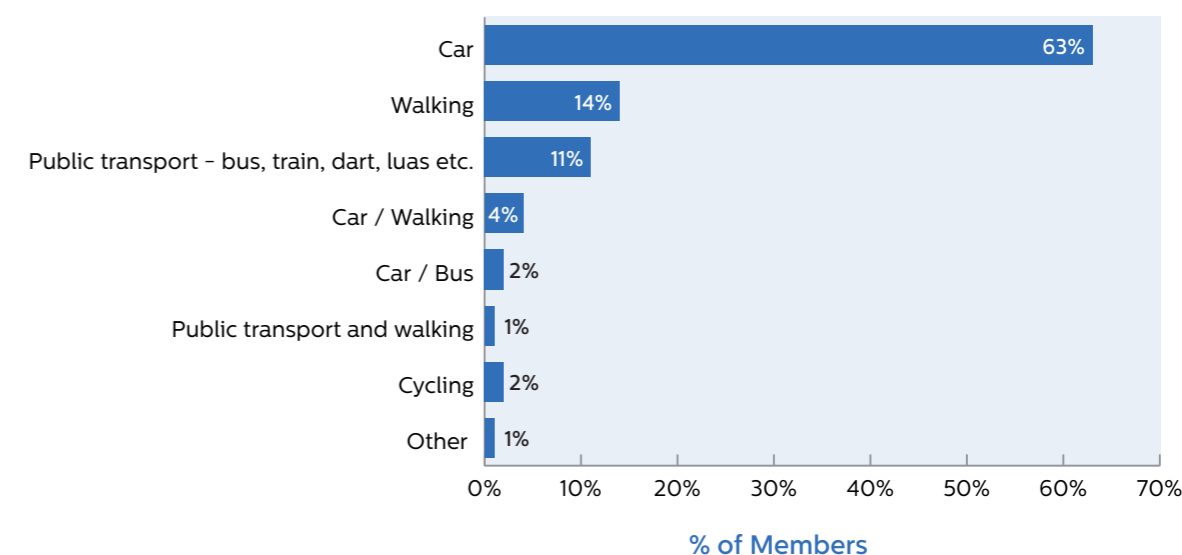
5.3.6 Travel to Youth Theatre Activities

Key Findings

- Nearly two-thirds of members (63%) are now dependent on others to bring them by car to youth theatre activities. Levels of independent travel by youth theatre members have decreased again in the past decade. These statistics illustrate the limited personal mobility of children and young people (particularly outside of cities) and show that family support is key to youth theatre engagement.
- The vast majority of youth theatre members (71%) travel 20 minutes or less to get to their youth theatre activities. Youth theatre remains geographically accessible for existing members but travel times have increased, with 8% fewer journeys under 20 minutes.

Figure 5.15 depicts the methods of transport Centre Stage +20 youth theatre members used to get to weekly youth theatre activities.

Figure 5.15: Travel to Youth Theatre



Figures are based on 512 respondents from Centre Stage +20 Member Questionnaires. Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Centre Stage Context

A decade ago, Centre Stage +10 reported that more than half of all youth theatre members (54%) relied on family members to take them to youth theatre activities by car. Just over four out of 10 members were able to get to youth theatre independently, with 31% walking and 13% taking public transport. It was noted at the time, that family support had become vital to enable youth theatre participation. In Centre Stage +10, a huge majority of young people (79%) lived within 20 minutes of their youth theatre. Young people in small and large towns lived the closest to their activities. Members who travelled more than 20 minutes to youth theatre lived in all types of locations but the few young people who travelled more than an hour, were all from rural locations. No comparable data is available from Centre Stage.

Transport to Youth Theatre

Methods of Transport

Nearly two-thirds of members (63%) are now dependent on others to bring them by car to youth theatre activities (Figure 5.15). A further 6% combine travel by car with either walking or taking the bus. This statistic highlights the importance of family support to help young people engage in youth theatre.

Transport is key to social inclusion, particularly in rural areas. A 2016 report for Irish Rural Link states that a “lack of transport remains the biggest pressure on rural residents as it affects their ability to access services and employment.”³⁵ The report notes that young people living in rural areas are at risk of social exclusion and isolation from many factors including transport. Children and young people already have a reduced mobility in comparison with the rest of the population, but those from low-income families or from isolated, rural areas may suffer an increased disadvantage in their ability to participate regularly in activities such as youth theatre. Analysing the questionnaire responses of 512 members, they show that:

- The 14% of members who walked to activities participated in youth theatres that were primarily based in towns and cities. Though these members were aged 13 to 21, the majority were aged between 15 and 17 and had more independence than younger members. The number of young people who walk to youth theatre has halved from 31% to 14% over the past decade;
- The 11% of members who took public transport (55) to get to youth theatre were typically based

in large towns and cities. Members in Dublin youth theatres were most likely to take public transport, accounting for 65% of this group.. More than half of the 43 Dublin Youth Theatre members who completed questionnaires, took public transport. The combination of an older age profile and access to good public transport increased their ability to travel independently.

Length of Travel

The vast majority of youth theatre members have short travel times to get to their youth theatre activities, showing that youth theatre is reasonably accessible to those who are already participating and the communities in which they are based. Analysing the questionnaire responses of 513 members, they show that:

- Nearly two-fifths of youth theatre members lived within 10 minutes of their youth theatre (38%);
- A significant 71% of members lived within 20 minutes of their youth theatre activities.

Travel times have increased in the past decade, however. The cohort of youth theatre members traveling less than 20 minutes has decreased by 8%.

Short Travel Times

- There is a concentration of youth theatre members who travel 20 minutes or less in youth theatres that are based in towns such as Letterkenny, Cavan or Dundalk. Two rural youth theatres also had a significant number of young people who were living locally and travelling shorter distances: Griese Youth Theatre and County Limerick Youth Theatre.
- The majority of youth theatre members travelling under 20 minutes (362 members), travelled by car (73%) or walked (16%).

Longer Travel Times

- 12% of members travelled over 30 minutes to their youth theatre activities (60 members). These members were spread out across 19 youth theatres and included young people from many different types of geographic location.
- The majority of these young people were breaking the trend and were travelling independently combining public transport, walking and cycling (65%).
- The remaining 35% of young people were travelling longer distances by car, with the majority coming from small towns and rural backgrounds. Anecdotally, youth theatre leaders report that young people travel from Caherciveen to participate in Tralee-based youth theatres or from South Donegal to participate in Sligo Youth Theatre due to a lack of youth theatre provision in their local area.
- The longest travel time recorded was a member who was doing a three hour round-trip by public transport to participate in weekly youth theatre activities.

Table 5.7 details the length of time it was taking youth theatre members from Centre Stage +10 (2009) and Centre Stage +20 (2019) to travel to youth theatre.

Answer Choices	Centre Stage +20 Youth Theatre Members	Centre Stage +10 Youth Theatre Members
1 to 10 minutes	38.4%	47.0%
11 to 20 minutes	32.2%	31.6%
21 to 30 minutes	17.7%	11.9%
31 to 40 minutes	6.4%	4.5%
41 to 50 minutes	3.1%	2.1%
51 to 60 minutes	1.0%	2.1%
More than an hour	1.2%	0.7%

Figures are based on 513 respondents from Centre Stage +20 Member Questionnaires and 421 respondents from Centre Stage +10 Member Questionnaires. Percentages are rounded to one decimal point.

Conclusions

It is important to understand what young people want from youth theatre and what motivates them to participate each week. Artistic programmes that challenge, quality facilitators and a safe environment that encourages exploration, friendship and fun all contribute to the type of appealing experience described by youth theatre members in Centre Stage +20. This knowledge can influence how we communicate with young people about youth theatre; how we meet young people's expectations; and how we help youth theatres to sustain, and build on, their membership levels.

Members show a significant commitment to their youth theatre. As members stay longer in youth theatre, the artistic programme and facilitation approach must adapt to meet the needs of a very experienced cohort of members who are working alongside new members.

The families of youth theatre members are key in supporting young people's participation in youth theatre and their significant contribution should be acknowledged and valued. Though not nominated as a significant barrier to participation by existing members, young people's reliance on parents to transport them to youth theatre raises questions about the inclusion levels of young people from low-income families or isolated rural areas in youth theatre.

Members describe a complex narrative of personal factors (other commitments, mental health, etc.), environmental factors (peer pressure, school, family commitments, transport, etc.) and organisational factors (cost of participation, lack of publicity, location of venue, etc.) as barriers to participation. These findings have implications on a national and local level in terms of recruitment, communications and marketing, management of membership fees, venue choice and supporting the individual engagement of young people. If the youth theatre sector wants to expand and make youth theatre more accessible to young people in Ireland, it needs to listen to young people's experiences.