

Chapter 5: Youth Theatre Members

Introduction

Youth theatres are welcoming a wide variety of young people between the ages of 5 and 25 to participate in their activities. The profile and participation of youth theatre members are explored under the following headings:

- 5.1 Youth Theatre Member Profile
- 5.2 Participation in youth theatre – Members
- 5.3 Senior Members

5.1 Youth Theatre Member Profile

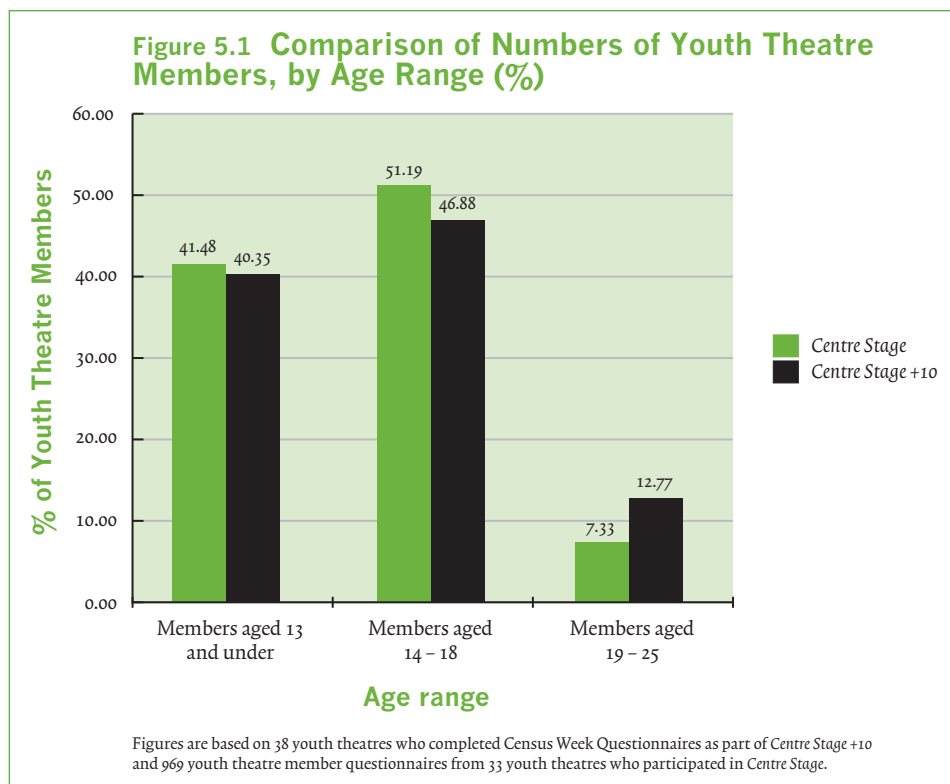
The profile of youth theatre members is explored under the following headings:

- 5.1.1 Age
- 5.1.2 Gender
- 5.1.3 Nationality and Ethnic Background
- 5.1.4 Geographic Distribution
- 5.1.5 Educational Background
- 5.1.6 Work Background
- 5.1.7 Leisure Interests
- 5.1.8 Career Aspirations
- 5.1.9 Family Background

5.1.1 Age

The age range of youth theatre members has remained largely the same over the past 10 years. The average age for a youth theatre member in *Centre Stage* was 15.3. The current average age for a youth theatre member is 15.5 (based on 446 completed questionnaires from youth theatre members). In both *Centre Stage* and *Centre Stage +10*, the youngest member who returned a questionnaire was five. In *Centre Stage +10*, the oldest member who returned a questionnaire was 23, a drop of two years from the oldest member in *Centre Stage*.

The most significant change in the age range has been the decline in 17 and 18 year olds in youth theatres around the country. The youth work sector in general has registered declining numbers of young people from this age group participating in local youth work services and projects.



Comparing the data for the age of current youth theatre members with the results from *Centre Stage* shows that:

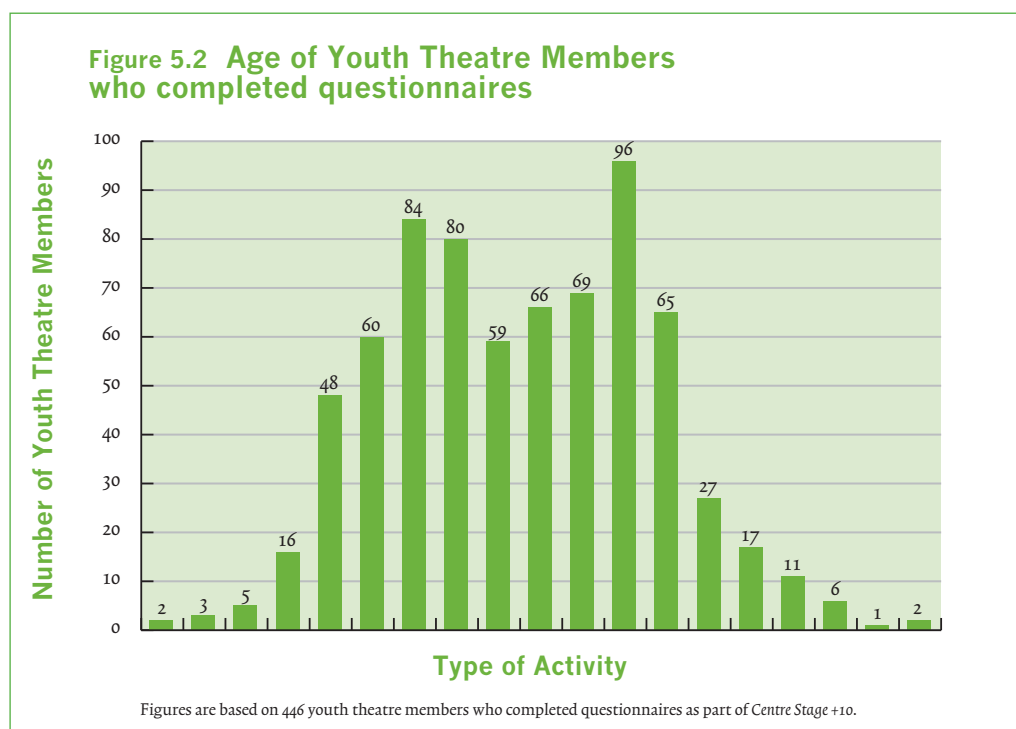
- The percentage of youth theatre members aged 13 and under has remained largely the same;
- The percentage of youth theatre members aged 14 to 18 has dropped by 4.31%;
- This percentage of youth theatre members aged over 18 has risen by 5.44%.

Table 5.1 Number of Youth Theatre Members by age range*

Age Range	Number of Youth Theatre Members	Percentage of Youth Theatre Members
Members aged 6-11	407	23.73%
Members aged 12-13	285	16.62%
Members aged 14-18	804	46.88%
Members aged 19-25	219	12.77%

*Figures are based on 38 youth theatres that completed questionnaires during Census Week as part of *Centre Stage +10*.

Youth theatre members were asked their age as part of the *Centre Stage +10* members questionnaires. Figure 5.2 collates these responses and demonstrates some of the major national trends in the age of youth theatre members.



6-11 Age range

23.73% of young people in membership of 39 youth theatres were under the age of 12. Although the youngest member registered as part of *Centre Stage +10* was five, the majority of young people from this age range were between nine and 12. Youth theatre leaders commented that parents of this 9-12 age group make the highest level of enquiries about joining youth theatre. This category of youth theatre membership hasn't grown considerably since *Centre Stage* where the majority of this age range were also between nine and 12.

12-13 age range

16.62% of youth theatre members are aged 12 to 13. The research focuses on this narrow age range as it is the most common extension of the traditional youth theatre age range. The NAYD National Programme has included members from this age group in recent years.

14-18 age range

The largest percentage of youth theatre members (46.88%) fall into the 14-18 age range. This age range forms the backbone of youth theatres around the country. Youth theatre leaders reported a general membership pattern that was closely associated with the structure of the formal education system and the pressure of state exams.

They reported that young people would join in the first or second year of secondary school as well as during fourth year (Transition year). Members would often drop out for a few months at the end of third year because of their Junior Certificate exams. Leaders reported that if members rejoined in fourth year, they would be likely to leave again at the beginning of sixth year due to pressures associated with the Leaving Certificate.

Figure 5.2 reinforces the observations of the youth theatre leaders. The questionnaire data registered a high membership level of 96 sixteen year olds dropping to 27 eighteen year olds. Youth theatre leaders also reported a high level of part-time work among this age group that also affected their participation levels.

- **19-25 age range**

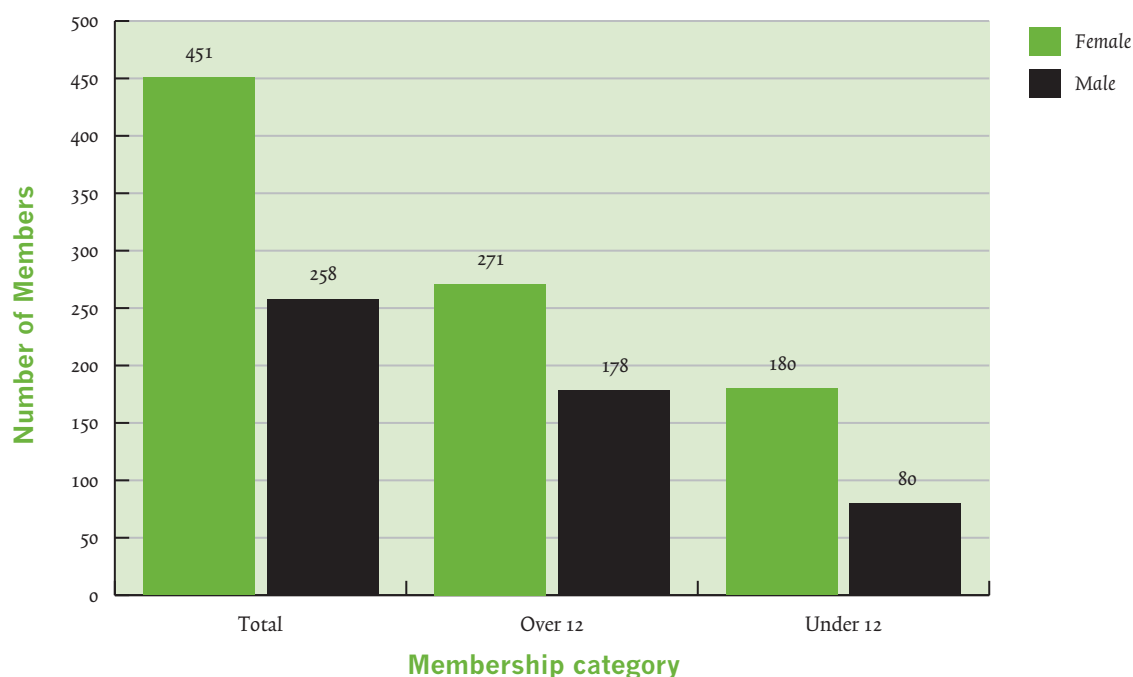
There has been an overall increase of nearly 5% in the numbers of youth theatre members aged over-18 since the last *Centre Stage*, although this age range still forms a minority in terms of the overall age range of youth theatre in Ireland. Most members leave their youth theatre before their Leaving Certificate or on completion of secondary school. Young people tend to move away from smaller urban and rural areas to larger urban areas for third level education. Youth theatre members are most likely to stay after 18 if they live in or near an urban area where they can access third level education or if they decide to begin working or training locally. They are also likely to stay in youth theatres where there is a culture of retaining older members and where the minimum entry age is higher.

5.1.2 Gender

The typical youth theatre member has always been female. Statistics from *Centre Stage* highlighted this 10 years ago and *Centre Stage +10* statistics prove that this is still the case. Youth theatres generally have an inclusive recruitment policy that welcomes young people from all backgrounds, nationalities and abilities. Data from *Centre Stage +10* shows that boys are the most underrepresented group of young people in youth theatre and that gender should be added to the inclusion debate. It is an issue for the vast majority of youth theatres and an important issue for some who have very low levels of male youth theatre members, effecting not only the dynamic of the group, but also restricting content in workshops and productions. During Census Week, Tallaght Youth Theatre and Mountrath Youth Theatre recorded no male youth theatre members taking part in activities and other youth theatres such as Activate Youth Theatre and Stradbally Youth Theatre recorded percentages of male youth theatre members as low as 9.09% and 5.88% respectively during Census Week.

Nearly two-thirds of all members who completed questionnaires as part of *Centre Stage +10* were female. Of the 709 youth theatre members, 63.61% were female and 36.39% were male. This strong female presence is slightly increased in the 'under 12' category (69.23%) and slightly decreased in the '12 and over category' (60.36%). In general, the overall ratio was maintained regardless of length of membership or region. The overall average is similar to that of *Centre Stage* where 67% were female and 33% were male.

Figure 5.3 Gender of Members who completed questionnaires



Figures are based on 709 members who completed questionnaires as part of Centre Stage +10

This male/female ratio was also confirmed by data from the Census Week and Youth Theatre Member Workshops:

Table 5.2 Male to Female Ratio of Members during Census Week and Youth Theatre Member Workshops

	Male		Female	
	No. of members	Percentage	No. of members	Percentage
Youth Theatre Member Workshops	37	33.04%	75	66.96%
No. of contacts between young people and youth theatre activities during Census Week	639	36.33%	1120	63.67%

Some youth theatres manage to create a healthy balance between numbers of male and female members. According to youth theatre leaders and statistics gathered throughout Centre Stage +10, large percentages of male youth theatre members are found:

- In youth theatres that have traditionally had a large percentage of males and this factor forms part of the public profile of the youth theatre;
- In youth theatres where there are male leaders;
- In youth theatres where the local culture supports the participation of boys in the arts;
- In youth theatres where leaders actively recruit each year and where leaders target boys schools in their recruitment drive to improve the male/female ratio in the group;
- In youth theatres that provide a rounded programme of activities including opportunities to get involved in technical theatre, writing, film and design.

“We have 1 boy and 13 girls. We had 2 boys but one of them... it’s quite hard in a small town like Manorhamilton. I think he was having a real hard time from his friends and he came to me and he said “Look I don’t want to be onstage”. And I said that’s ok, we’ll do some lighting stuff but I think the... I think the peer group pressure just got too much.” – Manorhamilton Youth Theatre Leader

Among the youth theatres who completed Census Week activity logs as part of Centre Stage +10, some had achieved a good balance between male and female members.

- In Dreamstuff Youth Theatre, 53.10% of youth theatre members during Census Week were male;

- In Co. Sligo Youth Theatre, 50.68% of youth theatre members were male;
- In CSM Youth Theatre, 48.65% of youth theatre members were male;
- In Co. Carlow Youth Theatre, 46.15% of youth theatre members were male;
- In Waterford Youth Arts, 44.53% of youth theatre members were male.

5.1.3 Nationality and Ethnic Background

The vast majority of youth theatre members (85.65%) are of Irish nationality. The percentage of youth theatre members of non-Irish nationality appears small but is actually above the percentage of young people who are non-Irish in Ireland. Overall, it appears that the levels of diversity in terms of nationality and ethnicity are reflective of the national average. However, youth theatres in rural areas and smaller urban centres tended to have better levels of diversity than those in the larger urban areas such as Dublin, Cork or Galway.

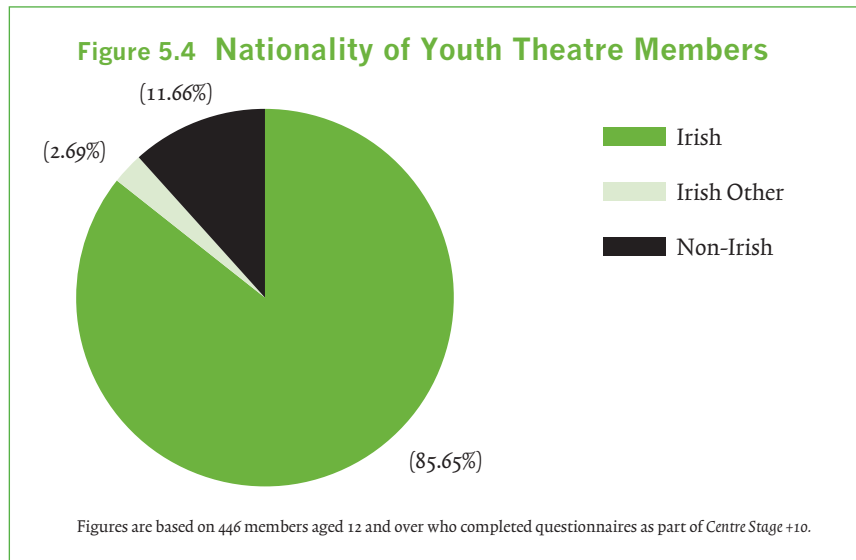


Table 5.3 Comparison of Nationality (%)*

Nationality	Number of Young People aged 10-19 in Ireland	% of Young People aged 10-19 in Ireland	Number of Youth Theatre Members	% of Youth Theatre Members
Irish	507511	90.69%	382	85.65%
Irish Other	8341	1.49%	12	2.69%
Non-Irish	43769	7.82%	52	11.66%

*Figures for 'Young People aged 10-19 in Ireland' are based on statistics from the 2006 Census¹ and figures for youth theatre members are based on 446 members aged 12 and over who completed questionnaires as part of Centre Stage +10.

Table 5.4 provides a breakdown of the nationality of the 14.35% of youth theatre members who were 'Non-Irish' or 'Irish Other'. Young people from English speaking countries have higher participation rates in youth theatre, but generally the number of members from these countries are reflective of the number of young people in Ireland from these countries. People from the UK are the largest immigrant group in Ireland and young people from the UK remain the largest category of non-Irish youth theatre members. It is important to note that some of largest immigrant groups who have moved to Ireland as part of recent immigration trends do not include high numbers of young people aged between 10 and 19. However, young people who speak English as a second language may consider language a barrier to participation in youth theatre.

¹ This data is drawn from figures listed in Volume 4 of the 2006 Census: Usual Residence Migration Birthplaces and Nationalities

- 'Usually resident persons, males and females, present in the State on Census Night, classified by nationality and age group'

² The term 'Non-Irish' describes young people who are not of Irish nationality and 'Irish Other' means young people who describe themselves as having a dual nationality. The terms are drawn from the 2006 Census to allow for the comparison of statistics.

Table 5.4 Comparison of Nationality

Nationality	Number of YT Members	Number of Young People in Ireland (2006 Census)			
		Age 5-9	Age 10-14	Age 15-19	Age 20-24
IRISH	382	258,291	245,504	262,007	269,145
IRISH OTHER TOTAL	12	5,323	4,735	3,606	2,019
Irish / UK	3				
Irish / American	5				
Irish / Canadian	3				
Irish / German	1				
NON-IRISH	52	23,699	22,261	21,508	60,180
UK	23	5,773	7,350	6,506	4,916
American	7	1,365	1,244	836	779
Canadians	2	334		427	
German	3	291	303	412	1,049
Polish	3	1,581	948	1,458	16,207
Russian	3	653	793		
Nigerian	3	2,057	1,285	821	805
Dutch	2	418		416	
Lithuanian	2	1,014	758	1,150	5,578
Italian	1	366		791	
South African	1	955		735	
Romanian	1	1024		1156	
Moldovan	1				

*Figures for 'Young People aged 5-24 in Ireland' are based on statistics from the 2006 Census³ and figures for youth theatre members are based on 446 members aged 12 and over who completed questionnaires as part of Centre Stage +10.

In the 2006 Census, 76% of the 414,512 people who were non-Irish were based in urban areas (cities and towns) and 24% were based in rural areas. Of the 64 members who stated they were non-Irish or Irish Other in Centre Stage +10, 56.26% were based in urban areas (cities and towns) and 43.75% were based in rural areas. This could indicate a higher level of inclusion of non-Irish young people in rural areas. It should be noted that a high percentage of youth theatre members from the UK, the largest non-Irish group, live in rural areas and that according to the 2006 Census, 51% of all people from the UK live in rural areas.

The ethnic background of youth theatre members is predominantly 'White Irish' (86.04%) with the second largest category of 'Any other White Background' reflecting immigration trends from the UK, other European countries, America and Canada.⁴

Table 5.5 Comparison of Ethnic Background

Ethnic Background	% of Young People aged 10-19 in Ireland	% of Youth Theatre Members
Irish	90.85%	86.04%
Irish Traveller	0.98%	0.68%
Any other White background	4.09%	11.49%
African	0.78%	0.9%
Any other Black background	0.08%	0%
Chinese	0.22%	0%
Any other Asian background	0.53%	0%
Other including mixed background	1.08%	0.9%
Not stated	1.39%	1.35%

*Figures for 'Young People aged 10-19 in Ireland' are based on statistics from the 2006 Census³ and figures for youth theatre members are based on 450 members aged 12 and over who completed questionnaires as part of Centre Stage +10.

The percentage of youth theatre members whose ethnic background is Irish is slightly less than the percentage of young people in that category in Ireland. Youth theatres include a significant number of members from the 'Any other white background' category, a rise of 8% above the national average.

³ This data is drawn from figures listed in Volume 4 of the 2006 Census: Usual Residence Migration Birthplaces and Nationalities - 'Usually resident persons, males and females, present in the State on Census Night, classified by nationality and age group' and also from the Census 2006 Non-Irish Nationals Living in Ireland Publication, Appendix 3, 'Table A1 Persons, males and females by age group for selected nationalities'

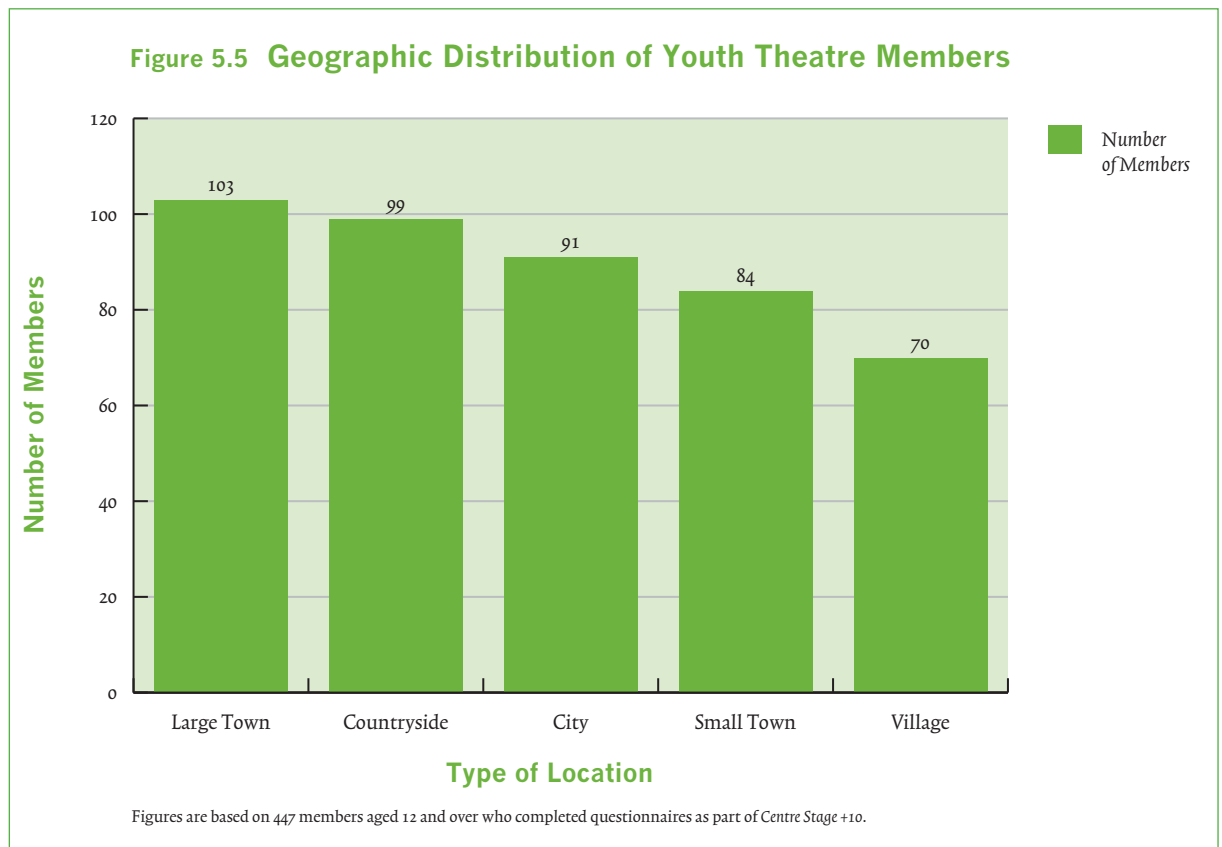
⁴ The terms used to describe the ethnic background of youth theatre members are drawn from the 2006 Census to allow for the comparison of statistics.

⁵ This data is drawn from figures listed in Volume 5 of the 2006 Census- Ethnic or Cultural Background, 'Persons, males and females, usually resident and present in the State on Census Night, classified by age group and ethnic or cultural background'

5.1.4 Geographic Distribution

Youth theatre members live in a combination of rural and urban areas. The number of members residing in smaller towns and villages has grown over the past 10 years as youth theatres have spread beyond the larger towns and cities with and inclusion levels of young people from rural areas have increased.

The questionnaire statistics indicate that young people from cities are under-represented in the overall membership. The 2006 Census finds that 32.40% of all young people aged between 10 and 19 were based in cities whereas the Centre Stage +10 questionnaires show that 20.36% of youth theatre members are based in cities. This may be due to an under-representation of urban young people in the questionnaires but also due to the drop in the number of youth theatres in Dublin over the past 10 years.



5.1.5 Educational Background

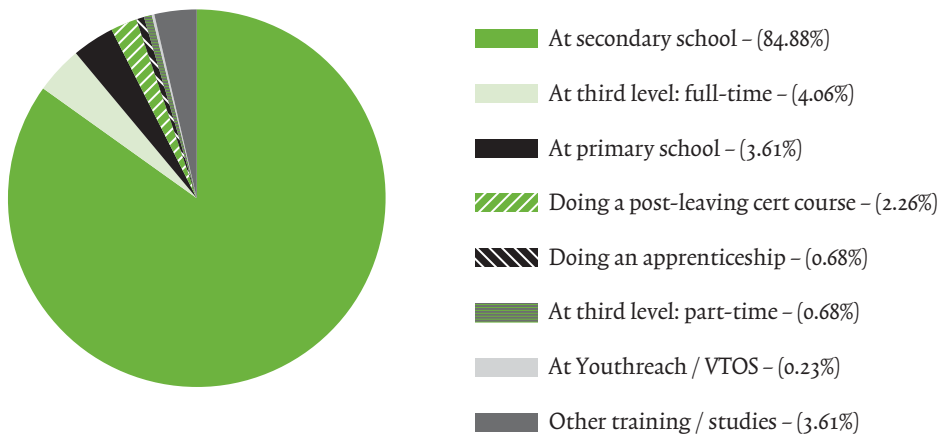
Almost all youth theatre members are in formal education at either primary, secondary or third level. Youth theatre members want to achieve high levels of academic qualifications with 71.10% of members aspiring to degree level. This may be part of a wider education trend illustrated by the huge growth of applications to the CAO system from 14,845 in 1977 to 65,853 in 2007⁷. Figure 5.6 provides a breakdown of the educational background of youth theatre members who completed questionnaires.

- 88% of youth theatre members were still at school, a small drop from the Centre Stage report where 94% were still at school. This may be related to the rise in members aged over 18;
- 5% were involved in third-level education on a part-time or full-time basis in comparison with 3% from the Centre Stage report;
- 3.16% youth theatre members were involved in training and apprenticeship programmes such as Post Leaving Cert courses, apprenticeships or Youthreach and a further 4% of youth theatre members were involved in other types of training or studies.

⁶ This percentage is based on figures listed in Volume 2 of the 2006 Census- Ages and Marital Status, 'Persons, males and females, in each Province, County and City classified by age group' where 182,780 young people out of a state total of 564,129 were registered as living in Cork city, Dublin city (all councils), Galway city, Limerick City and Waterford City.

⁷ Board of Directors Report 2007, Central Applications Office, P4

Figure 5.6 Educational Background of Youth Theatre Members



Figures are based on 443 youth theatre members aged 12 and over who completed questionnaires as part of Centre Stage +10.

There has been a rise in the educational aspirations of youth theatre members in the last 10 years. In Centre Stage +10, 71.10% of youth theatre members aged 12 and over planned to study for a degree in comparison with the 60% in Centre Stage who planned to pursue a degree or a diploma. However, youth theatre members do report a wide variety of educational or training paths:

- 12.82% of youth theatre members were planning to complete the Applied or Vocational Leaving Certificate or pursue a trade. These members were aged between 12 and 18;
- 2.80% of youth theatre members were not planning to achieve any educational or training qualifications. The vast majority of these members were aged 17 and over.

Table 5.6 Educational aspirations of Youth Theatre Members

Educational / Training Aspirations	Number of Youth Theatre Members*	
Leaving Certificate	371	86.48%
A degree	305	71.10%
Junior Certificate	196	45.69%
A diploma	165	38.46%
A certificate	80	18.65%
A trade	34	7.93%
Applied or Vocational Leaving Certificate	21	4.90%
None of these	12	2.80%

*Figures are based on 429 youth theatre members aged 12 and over who completed questionnaires. Members could choose more than one type of qualification.

5.1.6 Work Background

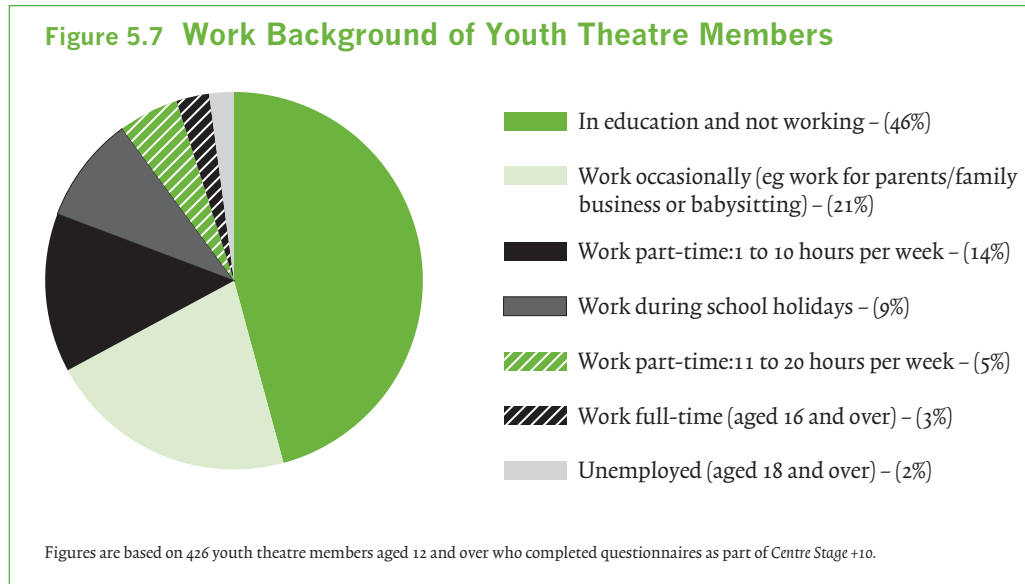
Youth theatre leaders reported in their interviews that work was often a barrier to participation for youth theatre members. Youth theatre leaders from rural and urban areas noted an increase in the number of youth theatre members with part-time work, particularly at the weekend, and some youth theatre leaders felt that part-time work restricted participation levels in their youth theatre.

Young people's engagement with the world of work increased considerably during the economic boom of the last decade. A survey carried out in selected Dublin secondary schools in 2000⁸, found that nearly one fifth of those in disadvantaged schools were working more than 20 hours per week. The sample of young people reached through questionnaires did not show such high levels of employment. In fact, the sample of youth theatre members shows only a small increase in working hours compared with the young people who participated in Centre Stage 10 years ago.

⁸ Morgan, M., *Schools and Part-Time Work in Dublin. The Facts*. Dublin Employment Pact, Policy Paper No. 4, 2000

Since the last *Centre Stage* there has been a slight rise from 17% to 19% of members who are involved in part-time work and a drop from 83% to 21% in members who are engaged in occasional work. Nearly half of the youth theatre members aged 12 and over were in education and were not working.

On the whole a higher proportion of girls worked but this generally corresponds to the higher proportion of girls participating in youth theatre. In general, youth theatre members who are from small towns or rural backgrounds are most likely to be engaged in occasional, holiday or part-time work.



- **In education and not working**

53.89% who were in education and not working were based in large towns (31.09%) or cities (22.80%). The remaining young people were reasonably evenly spread between small towns, villages and the countryside.

The age range for this group was 12 to 25 with the majority of young people (70.10%) clustering around 12 to 15. A further 26.80% aged between 16 and 18 were in education and not working.

- **Part-time work**

Young people from rural backgrounds were most likely to be working part-time hours. 46.25% of young people who worked part-time were from rural backgrounds with 30% coming from the countryside and 16.25% coming from villages. A further 22.50% of young people were from small towns. Only 18.75% of the young people who were working part-time were from cities and 12.50% were from large towns. The majority of young people (57.50%) doing part-time work were aged 16 and 17.

- **Occasional work and work during school holidays**

Young people from rural backgrounds were again most likely to be working during school holidays or doing occasional work such as work for parents, a family business or babysitting. 44.27% of young people who did occasional work or worked during the school holidays were from rural backgrounds with 20.61% coming from villages and 23.66% coming from the countryside.

The majority of young people who worked during school holidays were aged between 15 and 17, with 64.10% of young people falling between these ages. The majority of young people (85.87%) who worked occasionally fell between a wider age range of 13 and 17.

- **Full-time work and the unemployed**

Two-thirds of the young people who were unemployed were based in large towns or cities. Two-thirds of the young people who were working full-time were also based in large towns or cities. The remaining young people who worked full-time were resident in villages or the countryside.

The majority of this group were aged 18 or over but one-third of young people who reported full-time work were aged 16 and 17. There is an equal amount of male and female members working full-time and two-thirds of the young people who were unemployed were male.

Table 5.7 Employment background of Youth Theatre Members

	In education and not working	Work during school holidays	Work occasionally*	Work part-time: 1 to 10 hours per week	Work part-time: 11 to 20 hours per week	Work full-time (aged 16 and over)	Unemployed (aged 16 and over)
All locations	195**	39	92	58***	22	12	9
City	44	6	17	9	6	5	1
Large Town	60	5	18	10	0	3	5
Small Town	31	5	22	10	8	0	1
Village	25	9	18	10	3	3	1
Countryside	33	14	17	19	5	1	1
Female	109	20	69	37	15	6	3
Male	86	19	23	21	7	6	6
Age 12	20	0	7	0	0	0	0
Age 13	38	4	13	2	0	0	0
Age 14	41	4	11	6	0	0	0
Age 15	37	8	14	7	1	0	0
Age 16	26	11	28	15	8	1	0
Age 17	17	6	13	18	5	3	0
Age 18	9	3	4	4	2	1	2
Age 19	4	1	1	0	5	3	3
Age 20	1	2	1	3	1	2	0
Age 21	1	0	0	0	0	1	3
Age 22	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Age 23	0	0	0	0	0	1	1

Figures are based on 426 members aged 12 and over who completed questionnaires as part of Centre Stage +10.

* eg work for parents / family business or babysitting

** Two young people who were in education and not working did not indicate their area of residence and one did not indicate their age.

***Two young people who worked one to 10 hours per week did not indicate their age.

5.1.7 Leisure Interests

Leisure time activities comprise between 40–50% of an adolescent’s life.⁹ The Cork Institute of Technology research on behalf of the National Children’s Office into young people’s leisure time found that most young people are engaged in a broad range of activities:

- 88% reported some involvement in sport;
- nearly two-thirds (65%) reported one or more hobbies;
- nearly one-third (32%) participated in one or more community clubs or groups(e.g., youth clubs/groups).¹⁰

Youth theatre members are interested in several art forms as well as other leisure interests and sports. Youth theatre members were asked to indicate their interest in specific leisure activities that focused on the arts and sports as part of the ‘12 and over’ questionnaire. Figure 5.8 shows that the most popular activities were listening to music, watching films, reading, playing music and watching tv. Youth theatre leaders reflected that their members were likely to have many different hobbies and that a good proportion of them had busy schedules of after-school activities that ran throughout the week.

Some youth theatre leaders stated that their youth theatre attracted the non-sporty young people from their area. 31.61% of young people who completed the questionnaires were active in team sports and 26.46% were interested in individual sports compared with 88% of young people at a national level having some involvement with sport.¹¹ Some youth theatre leaders reported high levels of participation in GAA sports (especially amongst male youth theatre members) and specific individual sports.

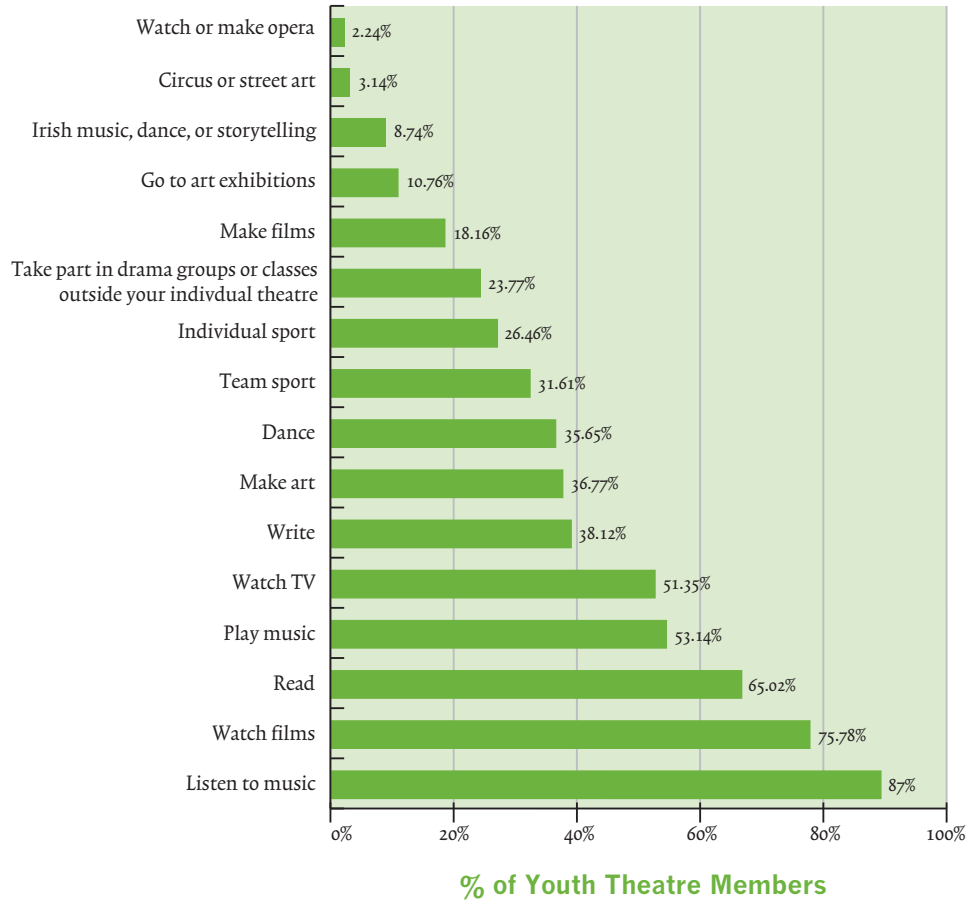
⁹ Caldwell, L.L., Smith, E.A. and Weissinger, E., *Development of a Leisure Experience Battery for Adolescence: Parsimony, Stability and Validity*, *Journal of Leisure Research*, Vol. 24, 1992, pp. 361-76.

¹⁰ de Róisteand, Dr. Áine and Dinneen, Joan, *Executive Summary - Young People’s Views about Opportunities, Barriers and Supports to Recreation and Leisure*, A research report by Cork Institute of Technology on behalf of the National Children’s Office, 2005, p5

¹¹ de Róisteand, Dr. Áine and Dinneen, Joan, *Executive Summary - Young People’s Views about Opportunities, Barriers and Supports to Recreation and Leisure*, A research report by Cork Institute of Technology on behalf of the National Children’s Office, 2005, p5

It is worth noting that 23.77% of members who completed questionnaires took part in drama activities other than their youth theatres. Youth theatre members and leaders commented on this trend of young people being involved with speech and drama classes, stage schools and summer ‘drama camps’ as well as their youth theatre. Participation in youth theatre and a different type of drama activity are not mutually exclusive and some young people move very fluidly between these different types of drama experiences.

Figure 5.8 Leisure Interests of Youth Theatre Members

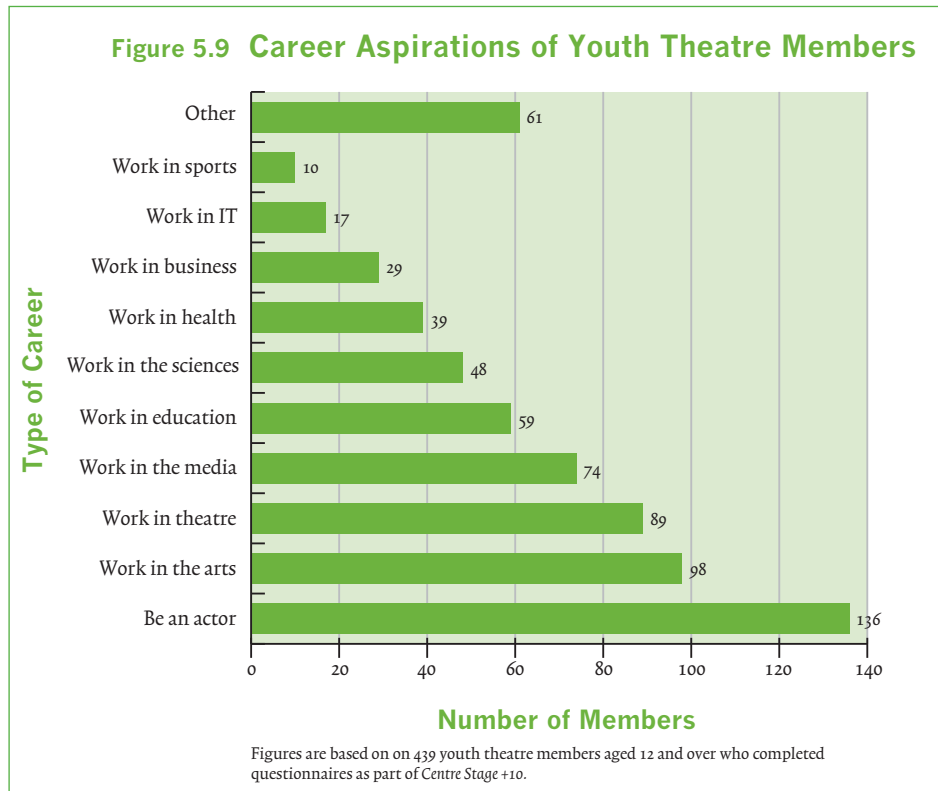


Figures are based on 446 youth theatre members who completed questionnaires as part of Centre Stage +10.

5.1.8 Career Aspirations

As part of the *Centre Stage +10* Questionnaires, youth theatre members aged 12 and over were asked what they planned to do in the future. Some members had not decided on one career option and registered an interest in a few different career paths. 31.98% of youth theatre members who completed questionnaires were interested in being an actor in the future while a further 20.27% of members aspired to work within theatre. 22.32% registered a general interest in work within the arts sector.

In *Centre Stage*, 30% of members aspired to a career in the theatre with about 13% of members expressing an interest in the arts as a career.



Though youth theatre members were primarily interested in work within the world of theatre and the arts they also reported a strong interest in other sectors. Careers mentioned in the 'Other' category included:

- Zoology / Veterinarian;
- Interior design;
- A trade / Mechanic / Furniture maker;
- Law;
- Architecture / Engineering / Construction;
- Social work;
- Military;
- Hairdresser;
- Computer programmer / physicist;
- Travel;
- Chef;
- Inventor;
- Service work.

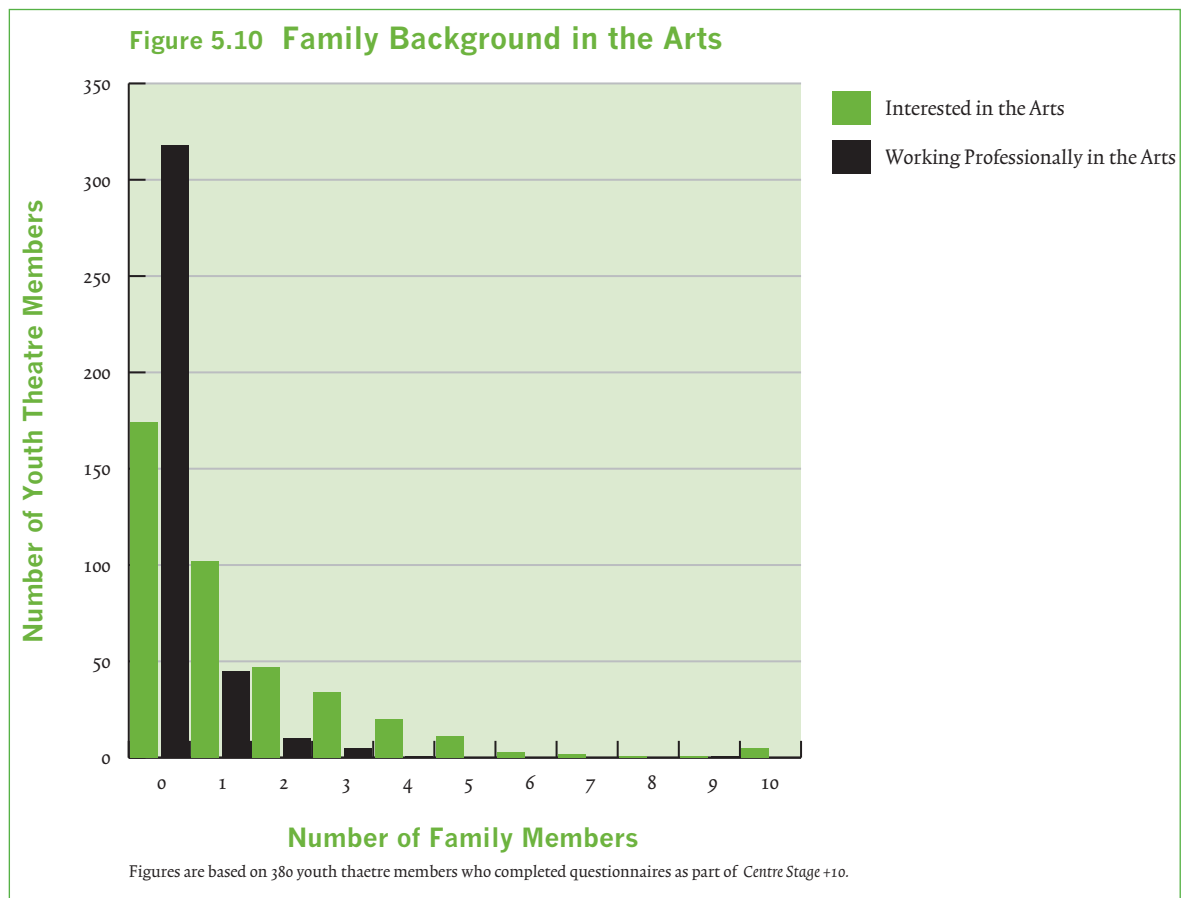
5.1.9 Family Background

• INTEREST IN THE ARTS

In *Centre Stage*, 66% of youth theatre members reported that at least one family member was active or interested in the arts. In *Centre Stage +10*, 56.5% of youth theatre members reported that at least one family member was interested in the arts. The past 10 years have seen a 10% drop in the interest levels of family members in the arts even though general levels of interest in the arts nationally have grown due to increased levels of government investment in the arts. The Arts Council report 'The Public and the Arts' noted a 2% overall rise in attendance at arts related activities and that participation in different art forms had increased overall by 18% between 1994 and 2006.¹² The data produced by the *Centre Stage +10* questionnaires indicate that 43.5% of youth theatre

¹² Arts Council, *The Public and the Arts*, Dublin 2006. P64 & P79

members are the first in their family to show an active interest in the arts. Youth theatre can therefore be seen as a highly effective way of engaging young people in the arts for the first time and also their families through their participation as audience members at youth theatre performances.



Of the 380 youth theatre members who completed questionnaires as part of *Centre Stage +10*, 16.32% reported one or more family members who work professionally in the arts. These statistics are remarkably similar to ten years ago where one in six members (16.67%) reported that a family member worked professionally in the arts.

In *Centre Stage*, the statistics around family involvement in the arts varied from region to region due to unequal access to the arts. *Centre Stage* also found that the higher profile youth theatres had a higher proportion of young people whose family members worked professionally in the arts. Table 5.8 shows that regional issues over access to the arts have decreased slightly but youth theatres with strong public profiles are still attracting a higher percentage of young people whose family members are interested in the arts.

Table 5.8 Family Background in the Arts, by Youth Theatre

Youth Theatre	Number of Family Members working professionally in the Arts*	Number of YT Members with Family Members interested in the Arts**	Percentage of YT Members with Family Members interested in the Arts***	Number of Total Family Members interested in the Arts	Youth Theatre Location
Dublin Youth Theatre	10	19	61.29%	61	City
Co. Sligo Youth Theatre	6	9	39.13%	21	Town
Kildare Youth Theatre	5	22	57.89%	52	Town
Cavan County Youth Drama	4	16	66.67%	53	Town / Rural
Stage Craft Youth Theatre	4	12	66.67%	26	Town
Waterford Youth Arts	3	12	30.00%	18	City
Activate Youth Theatre	3	7	58.33%	17	City
Leitrim Youth Theatre - Manorhamilton	3	6	85.71%	21	Rural
WCAC Youth Theatre	3	5	50.00%	14	Rural
Co. Limerick YT - Abbeyfeale	2	13	100.00%	35	Rural
Roscommon Co. Youth Theatre	2	12	70.59%	23	Town
Na Crosáin	2	11	100.00%	28	City / Rural
Celbridge Youth Drama	2	10	45.45%	11	Town
Lightbulb Youth Theatre	2	10	43.48%	29	Town
Mayo YT - Ballina	2	5	41.67%	11	Town
Backstage Youth Theatre Group	2	4	26.67%	5	Town
Griese Youth Theatre	1	12	50.00%	19	Rural
Portumna Youth Theatre	1	7	35.00%	8	Rural
Roundabout Youth Theatre	1	5	29.41%	11	City
Co. Carlow Youth Theatre	1	4	36.36%	9	Town
Physically Phishy Youth Theatre	1	2	33.33%	4	City
Mayo YT - Castlebar	1	2	22.22%	4	Town
Portlaoise Youth Theatre	0	5	38.46%	19	Town
Leitrim Youth Theatre - Carrick-on-Shannon	0	4	36.36%	8	Town
Cabinteely Youth Theatre	0	4	30.77%	8	City
Rathdowney Youth Theatre	0	3	50.00%	3	Rural
Leitrim Youth Theatre - Carrigallen	0	2	50.00%	4	Rural

*Figures are based on 380 members aged 12 and over who completed questionnaires as part of Centre Stage +10.

** Figures are based on 400 members aged 12 and over who completed questionnaires as part of Centre Stage +10.

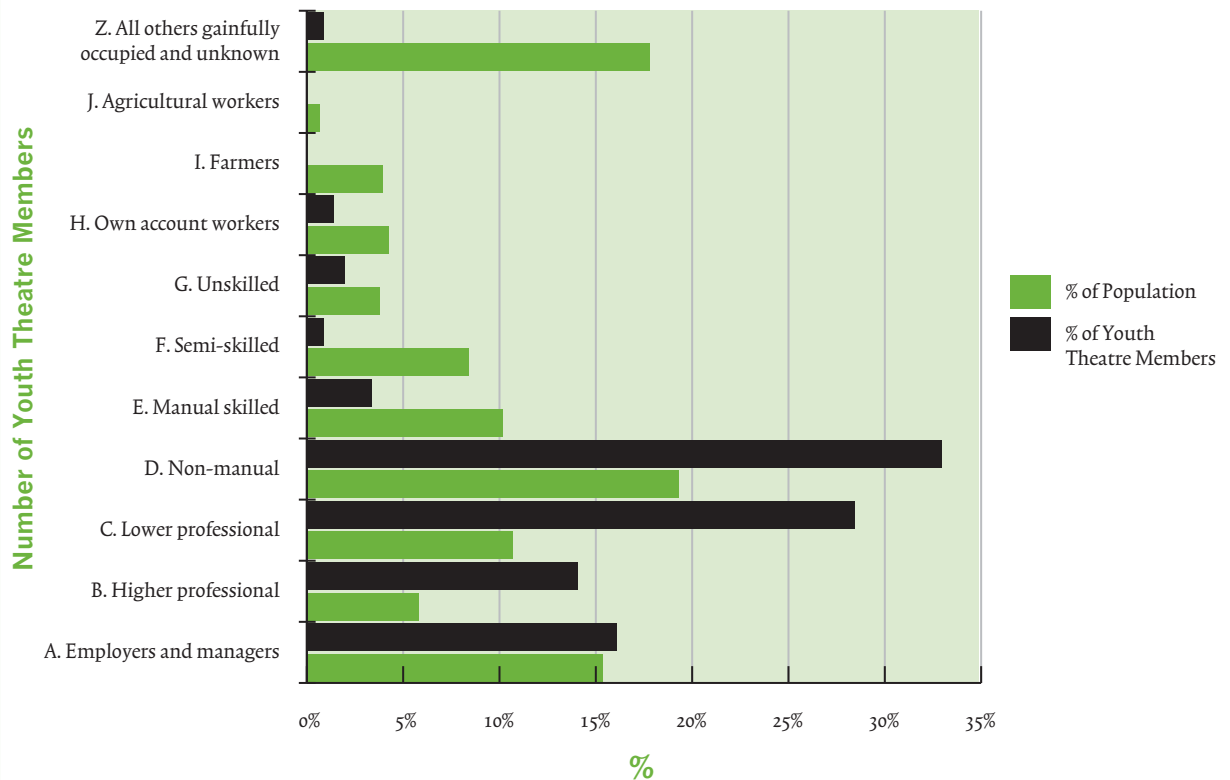
*** Number of youth theatre members with family members interested in the arts expressed as a percentage of the total questionnaires received from each youth theatre.

• SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND OF MEMBERS

Youth theatre members were asked, as part of the '12 and over' questionnaire, to list the type of jobs that their parents or guardians had held. Their responses were coded in line with socio-economic classification used by the Central Statistics Office. 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. Youth theatre members were not asked to indicate their level of household income and in defining socio-economic group, no attempt is made to rank groups in order of socio-economic importance. Many members listed a variety of different occupations for their household, in these situations they were assigned to the socio-economic group of what appeared to be the principal earner in the family.

Figure 5.11 compares the socio-economic background of the Irish population with the socio-economic background of the youth theatre members who completed questionnaires.

Figure 5.11 Comparison of the Socio-Economic Background of Youth Theatre Members with the Irish Population, %



Figures are based on 355 youth theatre members who completed '12 and over' questionnaires as part of Centre Stage +10 and figures from the 2006 Census.

Figure 5.11 indicates that a large percentage of youth theatre members are from the C group (Lower Professional) and the D group (Non-manual) and that these socio-economic groups are highly represented in youth theatre membership.

- Lower Professionals include teachers, nurses, technicians, actors, writers, information officers;
- Non-manual includes chefs, waiters, bar staff, childminders, office staff, civil service staff and sales assistants.

Group B (Higher Professionals) is also very prominent in youth theatre membership. Youth theatre members from a Group A background (Employers and Managers) are roughly in proportion to the national percentage.

- Higher Professionals include chemists, barristers, engineers, dentists, doctors, vets, social workers, higher education professionals ;
- Employers and Managers include managers within local government, shops, construction, banks, Garda Síochana, hotels as well as publicans, librarians, B&B owners.

The remaining socio-economic groups were under-represented in the membership that was surveyed through the '12 and over' questionnaires. Figure 5.11 indicates that the increase in members from rural areas has not brought about an inclusion of members from a farming and agricultural background. It appears that young people from the E (Manual skilled), F (Semi-Skilled), G (Unskilled) and H (Own account workers) are under-represented in youth theatre membership. The inclusion of young people from these socio-economic groups remains an issue for Irish youth theatre.

- Manual skilled included bricklayers, plumbers, goldsmiths, TV engineers, mechanics, tailors, printers, butchers, bakers, bus and train drivers;
- Semi-skilled included assemble line workers, storekeepers, roofers, gardener, security guards, care assistants, postal workers, kitchen porters;
- Unskilled included cleaners, road construction workers, labourers, goods porters, car park attendants;
- Own account workers included plasterers, painters, carpenters, bakers, butchers, gardeners who were self-employed.

5.2 Participation in Youth Theatre - Members

Young people's participation in youth theatre is explored under the following headings:

- 5.2.1 Length of Membership
- 5.2.2 Reasons for Joining Youth Theatre
- 5.2.3 Reasons for Staying in Youth Theatre
- 5.2.4 Barriers to Participation
- 5.2.5 Method of Transport to Youth Theatre Activities

5.2.1 Length of Membership

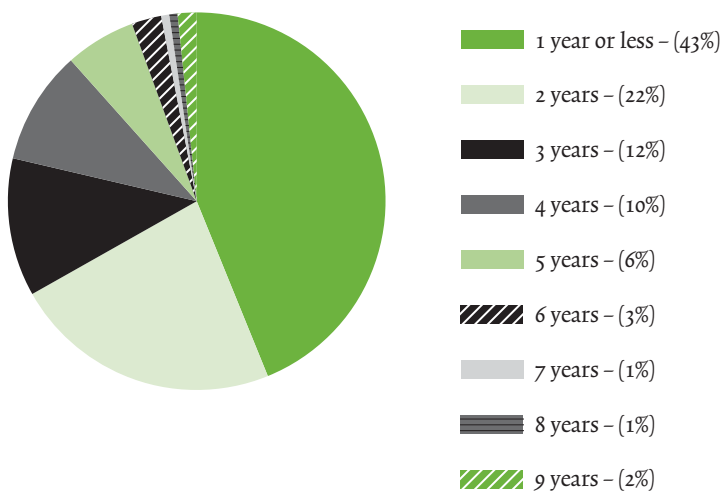
Young people are members of their youth theatre for an average of 2.3 years, according to the members questionnaires. Of the 431 youth theatre members aged 12 and over who completed questionnaires, 43% were in their first year of membership. Figure 5.12 indicates that these membership levels are reduced almost by half in the second year of membership and again by almost a half in the third year. The statistics are very similar to those produced in *Centre Stage* where 46% of members were in their first year of membership and the average age of first year youth theatre members in both studies was 15. The statistics indicate that members who really commit to their youth theatre during the second and third year of membership are staying longer than they did 10 years ago:

- Young people who had been youth theatre members for four or more years were only 13% of the total membership in *Centre Stage* and 23% of the membership in *Centre Stage +10*.

Other factors that may have contributed to this extension in the length of membership is the increase in the average age of youth theatres and the continued expansion of the youth theatre age range through sub-groups for the under 12s and the over 18s.

The average age for young people with two to three years of membership and four or more years of membership was actually just 16, the same average as the *Centre Stage* report. This would indicate that there is a small section of experienced members who are joining at a very young age and growing up within their youth theatre. This is supported by the extended age range served by the youth theatres where these experienced young people are members: Griese Youth Theatre, Cavan County Youth Drama, Waterford Youth Arts, Co. Sligo Youth Theatre, Kildare Youth Theatre, Stagecraft Youth Theatre, WCAC Youth Theatre. All these youth theatres have sub-groups for children under the age of 12.

Figure 5.12 Length of Membership



Figures are based on 431 youth theatre members who completed questionnaires as part of *Centre Stage +10*.

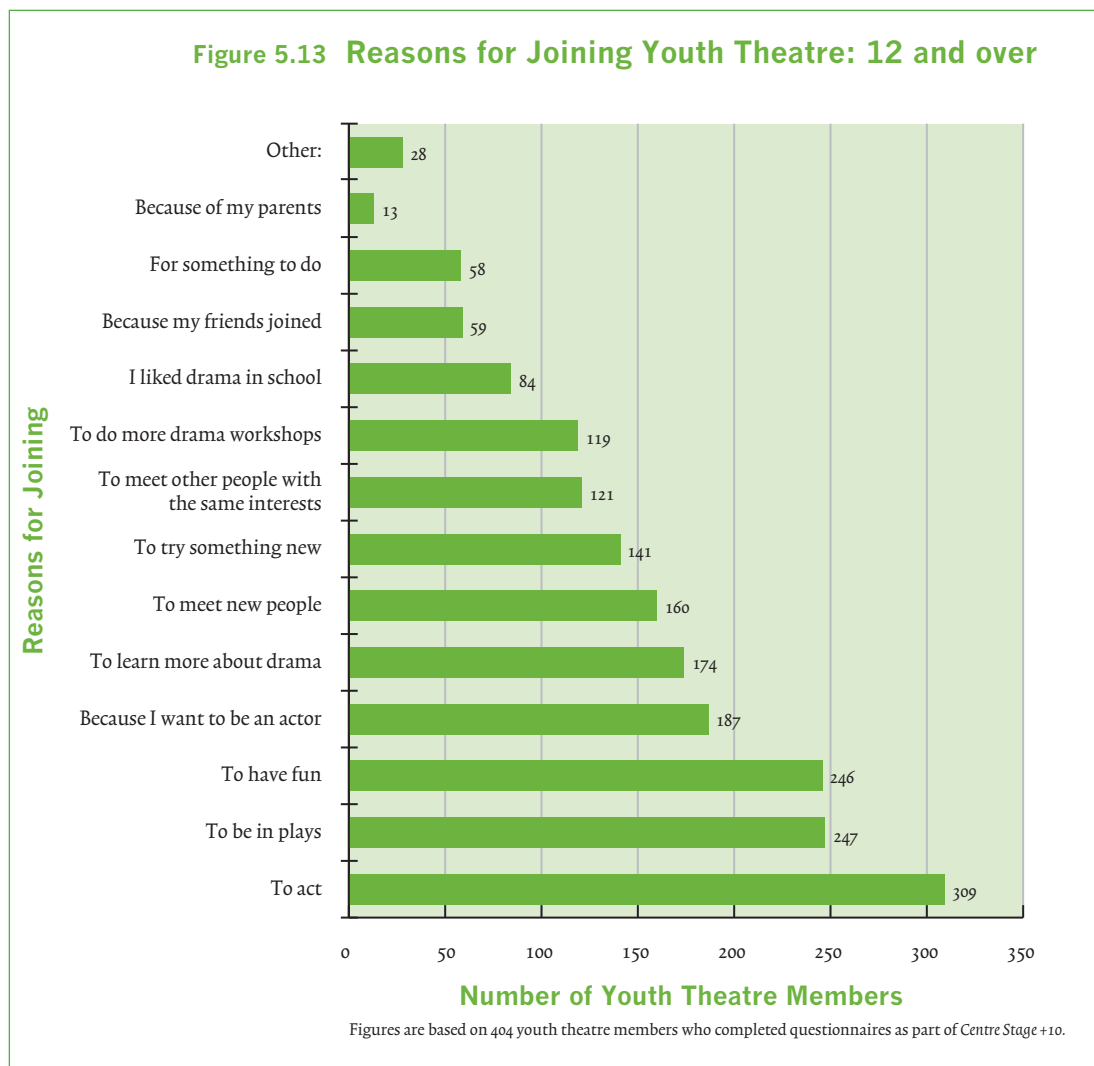
5.2.2 Reasons for Joining Youth Theatre

Youth theatre members aged 12 and over were asked to rank their top five reasons for joining youth theatre. Combining the scores, it is clear that young people join youth theatre, primarily, to act. Nearly half of the 404 youth theatre members who completed questionnaires (46.29%) expressed an interest in being an actor and reported that this contributed to their decision to join. While the majority of members (61.14%) recorded a desire to be in plays as a major reason for joining, a significant number were still very interested in the drama workshop process. 43.07% wanted to learn more about drama and 29.46% wanted to do more drama workshops.

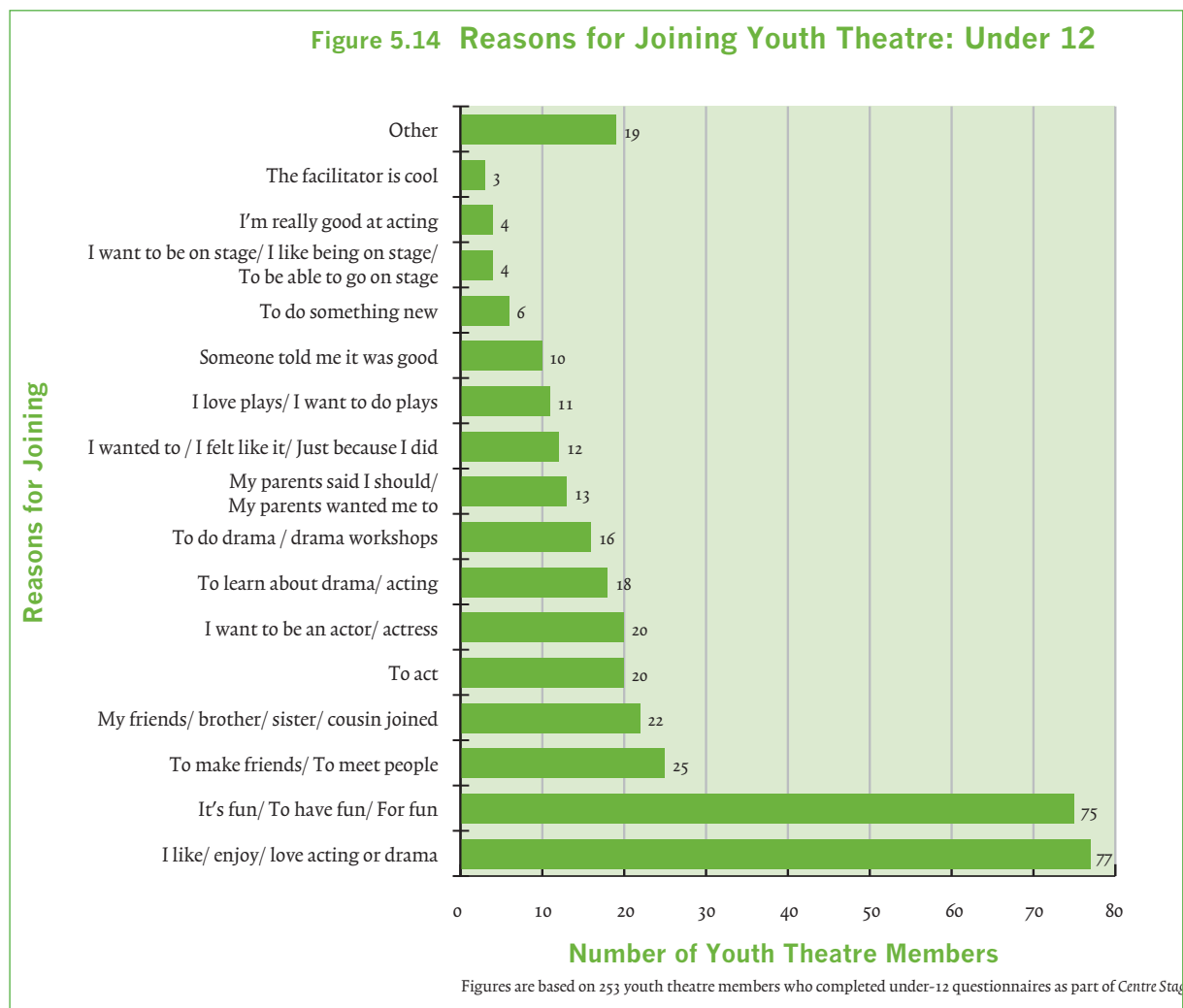
Young people are also joining youth theatre to have fun and for social networking. 60.89% of young people felt that youth theatre would be fun, although only 34 young people ranked fun as their top reason for joining. Young people were attracted by the idea that they might meet new people who had similar interests to them. 39.60% of young people registered an interest in meeting new people while 29.95% mentioned a desire to meet people with similar interests to them. However, only 29 young people recorded either of these as their top reason for joining. Factors related to drama and theatre tended to rank more highly in young people's reasons for joining youth theatre because opportunities to meet new people and have fun could also be accessed through other activities such as sport or youth clubs.

Young people aged 12 and over tend to make an independent decision to join youth theatre rather than being influenced by parents or friends. The influence of parents in the young person's decision making was reported by only 3.22% while friends were at the slightly higher rate of 14.60%. Only two young people listed their parents as the top reason they joined youth theatre, while seven young people listed their friends as the top reason they joined.

Figure 5.13 Reasons for Joining Youth Theatre: 12 and over



Youth theatre members aged under 12 were asked an open question “Why did you join your youth theatre?” on their questionnaire. Their responses are collated in Figure 5.14.



Some members listed more than one reason for joining in their answer, 253 youth theatre members recorded 355 reasons why they joined youth theatre. Half of those reasons (50.42%) did not mention anything to do with acting, drama or plays but focused instead on fun, making friends, the influence of family and friends, doing something new or the personality of the facilitator. An interest in drama and theatre featured more significantly with the older age group where 58.39% of the reasons given by members were drama or theatre related.

The under-12 age group were keen to have fun in youth theatre and mentioned an enjoyment or love of drama and acting. Youth theatre leaders echoed this in interviews when they described how important the ‘fun’ factor was in retaining children of this age year after year.

Members aged under 12 are less likely to make an independent decision to join youth theatre. 5.14% of youth theatre members aged 11 and under joined youth theatre because of their parents, while 8.70% joined youth theatre because a friend or family member joined first. These responses do not demonstrate a significant difference in the level of influence that parents and friends have on the decision to join a youth theatre compared to the older age group. However, youth theatre leaders report that parents of this 9-12 age group make the highest level of enquiries about joining youth theatre on behalf of their children and reported that children often joined in small groups of friends or because another family member was already participating. Youth theatre leaders considered these factors of more importance than the questionnaires indicated.

5.2.3 Reasons for Staying in Youth Theatre

Young people may join youth theatre to act and be in plays but they keep attending on a weekly basis because of the people who are there, the atmosphere they create together and how it makes them feel.

Youth theatre members who attended the Member Workshops as part of Centre Stage +10 were asked to respond to the question “Why do you keep coming back to youth theatre every week?”. Youth theatre members felt that they were continually learning through the workshops and had developed a real love of acting. They were enjoying the projects and plays that they were working on together. They felt that once they had committed to the youth theatre and to a rehearsal process that people were counting on them to attend on a regular basis.

“You never know what is going to happen because we always get different workshops and it’s just good fun to be able to learn new stuff” – Roscommon Co. Youth Theatre Member

“I like the play we’re working on.” – Co. Limerick Youth Theatre Member – Lough Gur

“Because I love it and if you make a commitment to a show then you have to obviously attend for rehearsals but also it’s good craic.” – Independent Youth Theatre Member

The vast majority of youth theatre members really valued the other people who were in the youth theatre, their relationships and the sense of being part of a group. The expectation of fun and having ‘a laugh together’ encouraged young people back to youth theatre activities each week. Members returned to be with friends and because of the sense of happiness and belonging that the group dynamic offered them.

“It’s the one time of the week that you’re always smiling. Nothing gets you down because you’re with everyone, doing what you love and having fun and learning new stuff and like... I think we got lucky with our drama teacher.” – Roscommon Co. Youth Theatre Member

“It’s really fun and it’s given me a lot of confidence” – Waterford Youth Arts Member

“It’s fun and my friends are there” – Stradbally Youth Theatre Member

“You can do whatever you want because nobody thinks you’re weird” – Waterford Youth Arts Member

Youth theatre members aged under 12 were asked an open question “What’s the best thing about your youth theatre?” on their questionnaire. Some members listed more than one aspect of youth theatre, with 228 members listing 306 things that they liked. Their responses are collated in Table 5.9.

Table 5.9 Reasons for Staying in Youth Theatre: under 12

“What’s the best thing about your youth theatre?”	Number of YT members	Percentage of YT Members
Having fun/ It’s fun	75	32.89%
Meeting people and making friends/ Being with your friends	65	28.51%
Doing a show / The plays	39	17.11%
Games	29	12.72%
Acting	29	12.72%
The teacher / Facilitator	11	4.82%
The people there/ The people are nice to me	8	3.51%
Drama	8	3.51%
Everything	7	3.07%
I like being on stage	4	1.75%
Learning new things / Learning about drama	4	1.75%
The sketches / The little acts	4	1.75%
It’s cool	3	1.32%
Other	20	8.77%

* Figures are based on 228 youth theatre members aged under 12.

This age group reported that their favourite things about youth theatre were having fun (32.89%), making new friends and being with friends (28.51%). These were the main factors that kept these members coming back each week and represented 45.75% of all the things they liked about youth theatre. The people who are present in the youth theatre are important to members with 4.82% specifically mentioning the facilitator and a further 3.51% mentioning youth theatre people in general.

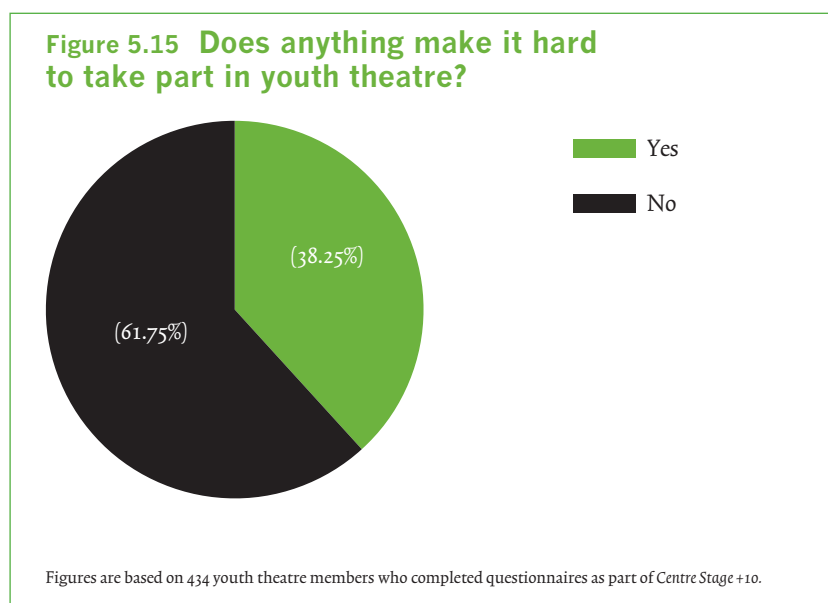
This age group did show a love of performance with 17.11% of members listing the performance of plays, 1.75% listing a love of being on stage and a further 1.75% listing the performance of scenes within a workshop setting. The group seemed to prefer the experience of participating in a workshop as 12.72% reported enjoying the games, 12.72% enjoying acting, 3.51% enjoying drama in general and a further 1.75% who appreciated learning about drama.

Of 228 members who completed questionnaires in this age range, 79.39% liked everything about their youth theatre. The most common issues that the remaining 20.61% disliked were (listed in order of unpopularity):

- Specific games or activities;
- A specific play or production;
- The behaviour of other members in the group;
- Members of the opposite gender in the group;
- Rules on what you can bring into the workshop;
- The workshop space itself;
- Losing at games;
- The age range or size of the group.

5.2.4 Barriers to Participation

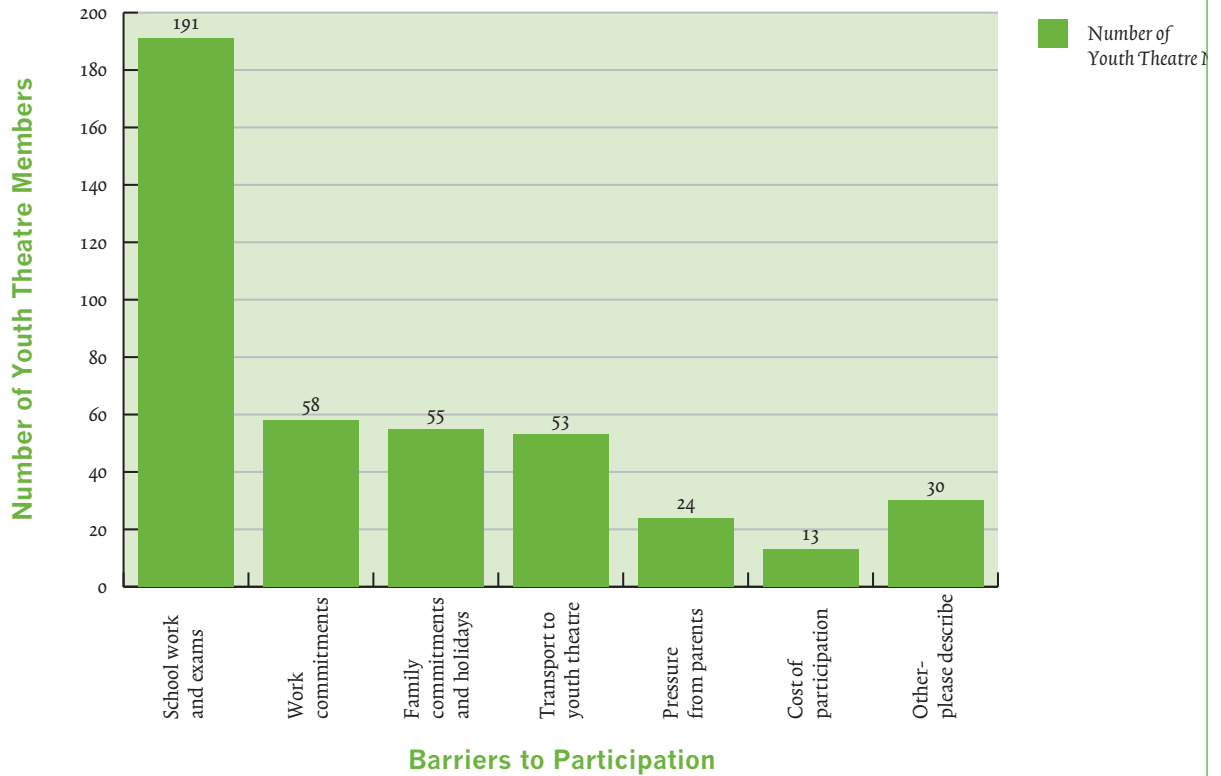
The majority of youth theatre members who completed questionnaires for members aged 12 and over find it easy to take part in youth theatre activities and do not report any factors that make participation difficult.



The 166 youth theatre members who experienced difficulties in participating, reported school work and exams as the single biggest factor with 71.27% of these members selecting this category. Work commitments, family and holiday commitments as well as transport also figured significantly in their responses while 13.81% of young people mentioned pressure from parents or the cost of participation as an important barrier for them.

Other factors that members mentioned were disability and illness, sporting commitments, commitments to other leisure interests and friends, the behaviour of other young people in the group, a lack of confidence communicating in English and the scheduling of the weekly workshop.

Figure 5.16 Barriers to Participation in Youth Theatre



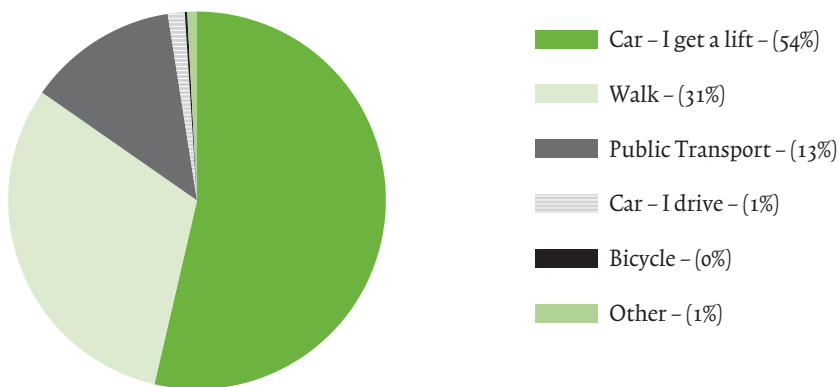
Figures are based on 268 youth theatre members who completed Centre Stage +10 questionnaires and registered a difficulty in participating in youth theatre.

5.2.5 Method of Transport to Youth Theatre Activities

More than half of youth theatre members aged 12 and over rely on family members to take them to youth theatre activities. Parents or other family members bring 54% of members to youth theatre by car. This indicates that family support is vital to enable over half the youth theatre members to participate in youth theatre.

Some youth theatre members are able to get to youth theatre activities independently, as 32% of members who completed questionnaires walk, drive or cycle, while a further 13% rely on public transport. Young people living in large towns or cities were more likely to walk and use public transport while those living in rural areas were more likely to get a lift from family members or drive themselves.

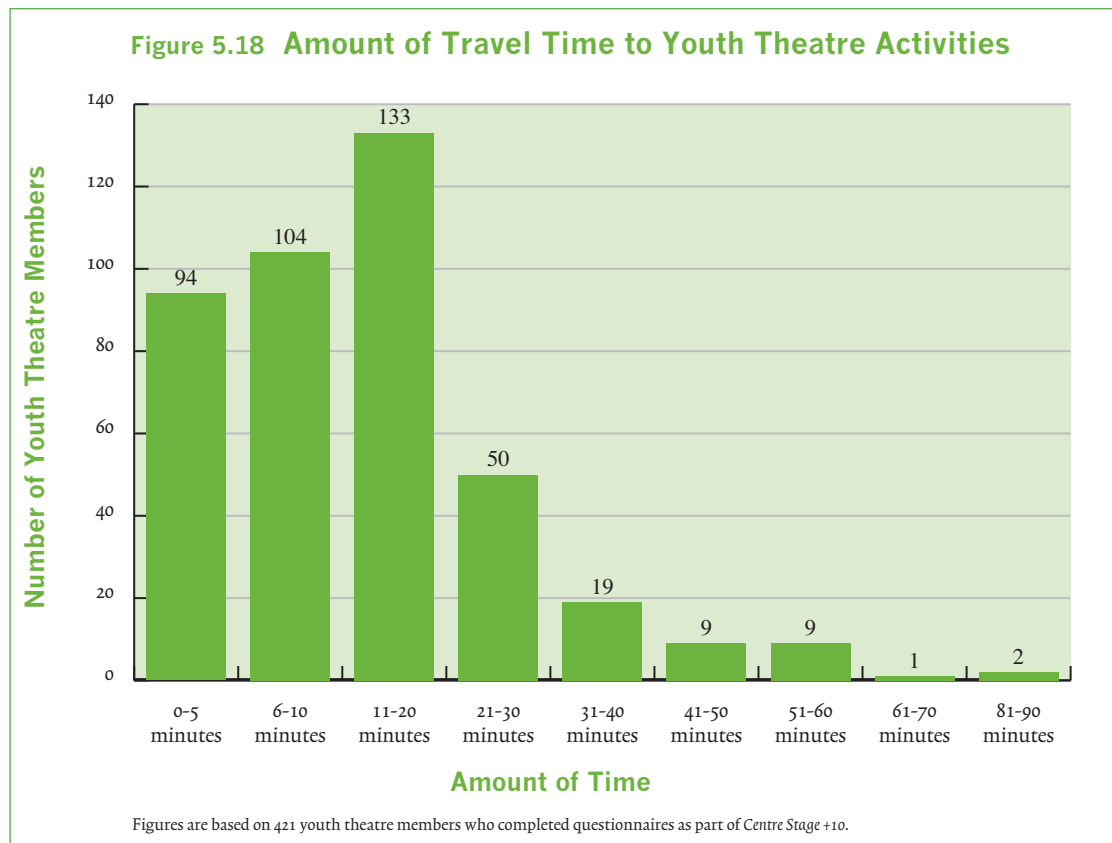
Figure 5.17 Method of Transport to Youth Theatre Activities



Figures are based on 421 youth theatre members who completed questionnaires as part of Centre Stage +10.

The majority of youth theatre members (78.62% of 421 members who completed questionnaires) live within 20 minutes of their youth theatre. Youth theatre members based in small and large towns were able to get to their youth theatres the quickest, with 26.37% members reaching their youth theatre within 10 minutes. The youth theatre members who took between 11 and 30 minutes were from an even mixture of rural and urban backgrounds.

The 8.79% of members who needed 31 to 60 minutes to travel to youth theatre were reasonably evenly split between rural/small town locations and large towns or cities. The members who took more than 60 minutes to reach youth theatre were all from rural backgrounds. All members who took 40 minutes or more to travel were aged 15 and over.



5.3 Senior Members

The cycle of youth theatre members becoming the next generation of youth theatre leaders is not only key to the ethos of youth theatre but also to the sustainability of youth theatre. It is best practice within youth theatre to provide members with opportunities for progression so that young people can keep building skills and participating in experiences that are appropriate and challenging. The role of the senior member can be seen as a progression route for a youth theatre member who is interested in developing their skills with a view to becoming a youth theatre leader or accessing further theatre or youth work training or employment.

This cycle has become a tradition in some of the older youth theatres who have witnessed a few generations of senior members becoming leaders and is an emerging trend for some youth theatres who have just seen their first generation of senior members develop. Senior members are experienced youth theatre members who take on extra leadership, facilitation, administration or production responsibilities within their youth theatre.

- Senior Members are active in 25 of the 45 youth theatres that participated in *Centre Stage +10*. The youth theatres that did not have senior members were generally working with a younger age group, were set in a rural location or were new youth theatres;
- Thirty senior members were involved in activities for 11 different youth theatres in Census Week. They were helping to facilitate workshops, working on productions and helping with administrative tasks and planning. Senior members were working on a voluntary basis although some youth theatres gave token payments to senior members for their assistance with the facilitation of younger groups.

It can be difficult to encourage the development of the senior member role within some youth theatres. It is particularly difficult in youth theatres set in a rural location where the vast majority of members leave at 18 and move to urban centres for education, training or work. It is also challenging within youth theatres that attract a younger age group and have one main workshop group. These youth theatre members can outgrow the youth theatre in later teenage years and tend to leave rather than take on the responsibilities of a senior member. Youth theatres which serve a younger age group generally have multiple groups that allow a member to progress through each age group and continue working with their peers.

Senior Members can be found in the majority of youth theatre models. The development of senior members is a very strong tradition within the autonomous youth theatre model. The smaller autonomous youth theatres which are run by volunteers rely on the cycle of senior members becoming the next generation of youth theatre leaders. This cycle makes the smaller autonomous youth theatre sustainable.

• TRAINING

The training of senior members can be quite informal. Youth theatre leaders commented that senior members usually identify themselves by voluntarily taking on a leadership role within the group of members or volunteering themselves for extra tasks and responsibilities. Some youth theatres will encourage this idea of leadership from within the membership through the creation of member representatives. These roles often involve leading feedback sessions with the rest of the membership and reporting to a youth theatre leader or possibly to a board. They may also involve responsibility for organising social events for the members. Senior members within smaller autonomous youth theatres have an opportunity to increase their administrative and leadership tasks by becoming involved at a governance level.

Senior members are often keen to assist with the facilitation of workshops and the directing of productions within their groups. Senior members experience workshops as part of their regular youth theatre activities and this participation forms the basis of their understanding of facilitation. Some senior members make the leap straight from participation to facilitation and these members often start by facilitating the younger groups of their youth theatres. Other youth theatres prefer to build skills slowly and may offer experiences where youth theatre leaders:

- explain to members within the workshop setting why they are doing particular exercises and discuss the workshop plan and the progression between the activities with interested members after the workshops;
- work with senior members on particular workshop activities and then ask them to lead a warm-up or another contained activity within the workshop;
- ask senior members to assist or lead smaller groups working on task-orientated activities;
- build these facilitation experiences to a level where a senior member is comfortable to co-facilitate with another leader;
- work with a senior member to develop workshop plans which the senior member delivers by themselves.

Senior members who are interested in directing can go through similar processes of participation as actors, observation and co-directing until they feel confident enough to direct themselves. Some youth theatres run one-act festivals where members can act, write and direct their own short plays. Youth theatre leaders state that these types of experiences are invaluable for building confidence, leadership skills and artistic skills and are important for a senior member who is developing his/her own artistic voice and style.

Once senior members reach 18, some of them begin to participate in NAYD's training programme for youth theatre leaders. Co. Carlow Youth Theatre and Roundabout Youth Theatre are currently offering formal qualifications for senior members within their youth theatres. Senior Members from Roundabout Youth Theatre can access a FETAC accredited course in Youth Work run by the Training and Development Officer for the Ballymun Regional Youth Resource. Co. Carlow Youth Theatre was also creating a FETAC accredited course for senior members.

