



Parents support students with €428 a month as cost of going to college soars

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Personal Finance Editor

PARENTS are saving for an average of eight years to put their child through third-level education.

The cost of sending a child to college is proving to be a massive burden for the majority of families.

A new survey has found that parents are being forced to contribute an average of €428 a month to support their offspring through third-level education.

And the majority of families say that the €2,750 student contribution charge is putting them under serious financial pressure.

Parents told researchers commissioned by the League of Credit Unions that their biggest fear was that their children would not find a job when they finished their course.

Half of students work throughout the academic year to fund their education, with an average of 19 hours a week being spent in part-time jobs.

There has been a rise in the numbers who are living away from home, with 44pc

of students now in student accommodation, compared with a third last year. The average cost of rent was put at €346.

A chronic shortage of student accommodation and escalating rents were huge issues for students this year, the credit union representative body said.

A lack of accommodation has prompted the Union of Students in Ireland to call for homeowners to take students in as lodgers.

Eight out of 10 parents support their children with third-level costs, by contributing an average of €428 a month per child. Seven out of 10 parents have been adversely affected by the rising cost of the student contribution cost, the iReach survey of 1,000 adults found.

The good news is that there has been a rise in the number of adults who say they have more disposable income every including mortgages, rents and utility bills, fell slightly to €757 this month.

But electricity, home-heating oil costs and bin charges have gone up. There has been a fall

in gas costs.

Households are repaying €272 a month on credit card balances. Health insurance costs have dropped €148 to €142 a month, the credit union survey found.

President of the league Martin Sisk said the cost of third-level education was a huge financial burden.

"Families are already struggling with the wider impact of austerity and the economic downturn and paying for college has become increasingly challenging for many."

Mr Sisk said huge numbers were struggling to cover the average contribution of €428 per child per month to cover college costs.

"The registration fee alone puts huge pressure on family budgets, but when you factor in all of the extras, such as rent, bills, food, travel and others, the costs begin to spiral," he said.

But Mr Sisk added that disposable income levels were stabilising.

"More people are telling us that their disposable income is increasing modestly compared

to March of this year."

month. For working adults, disposable income has risen by €12 a month since March.

However, close to half a million people report having nothing left at the end of the month after paying for food and essential bills.

The 'What's Left Tracker', which is published quarterly by the League of Credit Unions, found that 1.6 million people now have €100 or less left at the end of the month once all essential bills are paid. This is 73,000 fewer people who have €100 or less left at the end of the month.

Households said bills,

Back-to-school guide

TOMORROW'S 'Irish Independent' has a 20-page Your Money back-to-school supplement.

The supplement outlines how to keep costs of books and uniforms down, has tips on saving for a child's college education and outlines other ways parents can save.

COSTLY COLLEGE	
€346 Average student rent per month	€2,750 Student contribution costs
€428 Parental support per month	19 hours Weekly study time for students
8 years Time parents spend saving for college costs	€12 The increase in disposable income parents now have



'Pressure on parents':
Martin Sisk