

Ireland



REGION: WESTERN EUROPE

Also included in this region: Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom

PART I: ENROLMENTS AND INSTITUTIONS

The Irish HE system is a mix of the Northern European and South Asian models. Over 85% of the country’s HE students enrolled either in university colleges or hybrid institutions in 2018, with less than 15% attending comprehensive universities. Enrolments in Irish HE rose by just over 30% between 2006 and 2018, well above the pace across the rest of Western Europe. At the same time, the number of HE institutions fell, such that average institutional size increased considerably. Close to 94% of Irish students studied in public institutions in 2018, which was somewhat above the average across the rest of Western Europe.

TABLE 1 – Types of higher education providers

CATEGORY	INSTITUTIONS	INSTITUTIONS COUNT IN 2018		
		PUB.	PRIV.	TOTAL
Comprehensive Universities	Universities	4	0	4
Specialised Universities	Pontifical college Maynooth	0	1	1
University Colleges	National University of Ireland institutions; Trinity College Dublin; Colleges (includes Royal College, Milltown Institute, private religious higher education aside from Pontifical college Maynooth)	8	1	9
Hybrids	Institutes of Technology; Universities of Technology; private non-religious institutions; other institutions aided by Ministries other than the Ministry of Education	14	15	29

FIGURE 1 – Numbers of institutions by type, 2006-2018

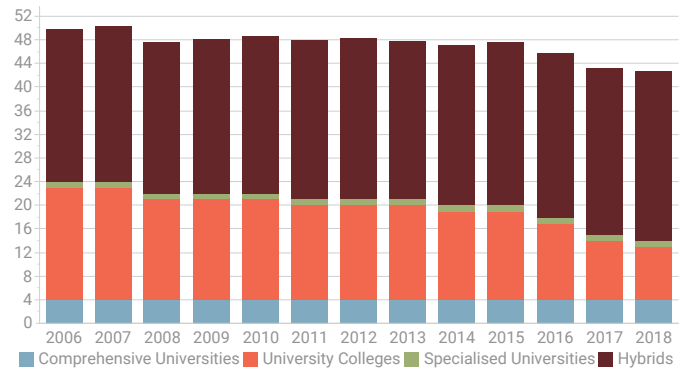


FIGURE 2 – Total enrolments with public and private higher education providers, 2006-2018 (Millions)

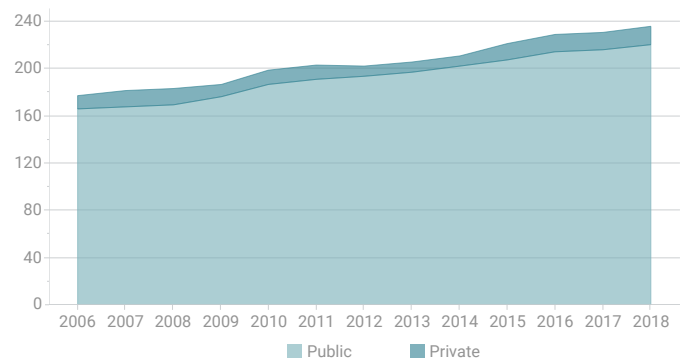


FIGURE 3 – Changes in enrolment, in Ireland, the rest of Western Europe and the rest of the Global North, 2006-2018

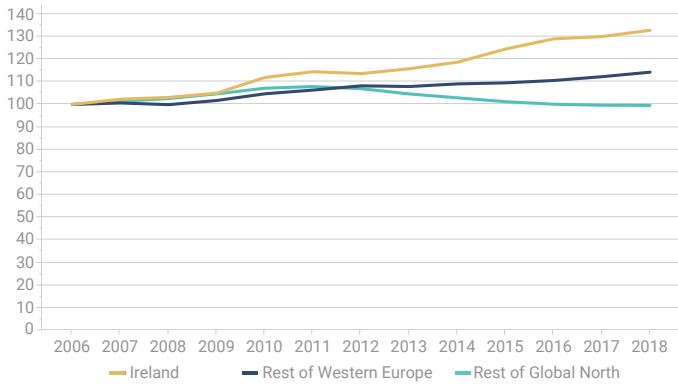


FIGURE 4 – Share of enrolments by institution type in Ireland and the rest of Western Europe, 2006 and 2018 (2006=100)

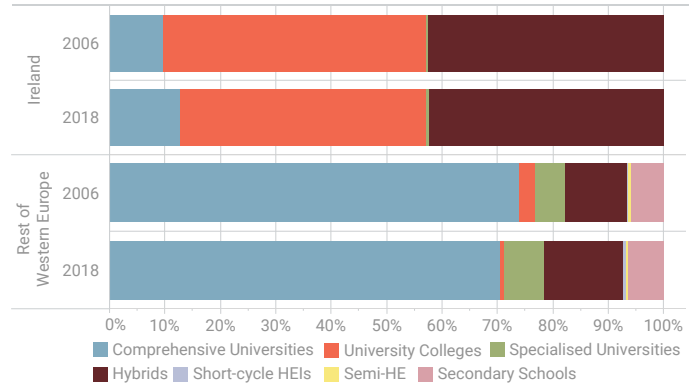


FIGURE 5 – Share of enrolments in public and private institutions, by institution type in Ireland and the rest of Western Europe, 2018

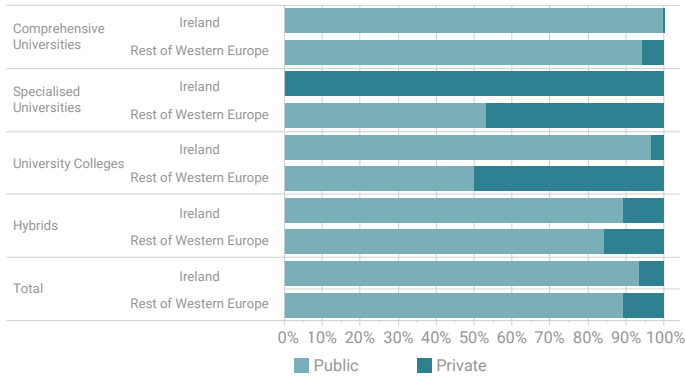
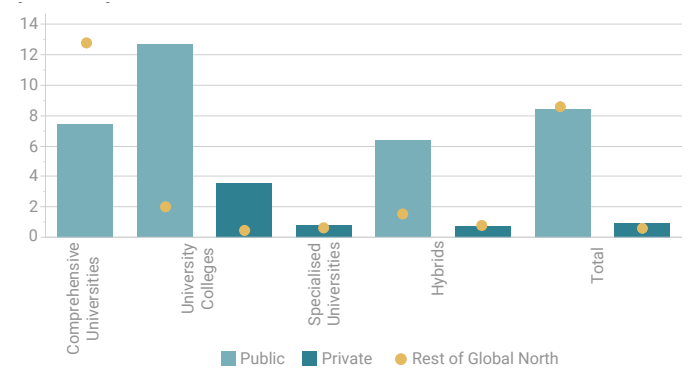
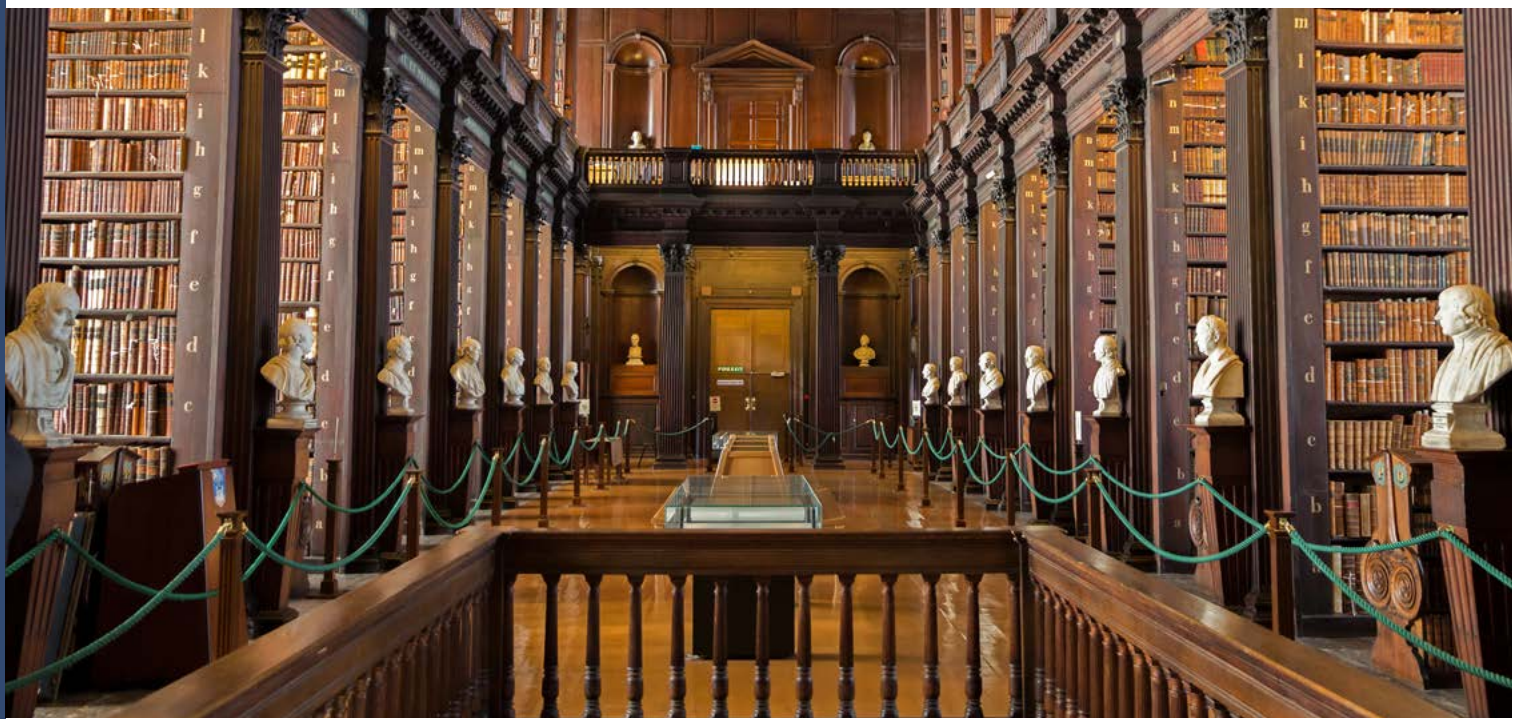


FIGURE 6 – Average institution-size by institution type, in Ireland and the rest of the Global North, 2018 (Thousands)



Trinity College, Ireland



PART II: HIGHER EDUCATION FINANCING

Public HE spending in Ireland fell slightly in constant dollars during the 2006-2018 period, due largely to the country's economic struggles following the 2008 financial crisis. This performance lagged well behind the rest of Western Europe and the Global North. Relative to GDP, spending fell by more than half, from 1.2% in 2010 to below 0.6% in 2018, making Ireland easily the worst performer in the Global North. Total expenditures of public HEIs nevertheless grew, partly because increased student fee revenues offset falls in government spending, but also because of increases in other sources of income.

FIGURE 7 – Change in real total public spending on higher education in Ireland, the rest of Western Europe and the rest of the Global North, 2006-2018 (2006=100)

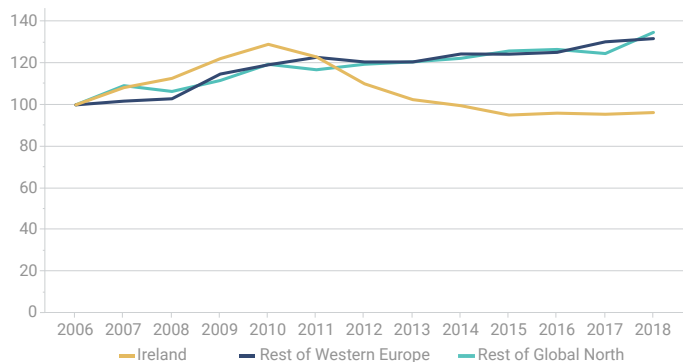


FIGURE 8 – Total public spending on higher education relative to GDP in Ireland, the rest of Western Europe and the rest of the Global North, 2006-2018

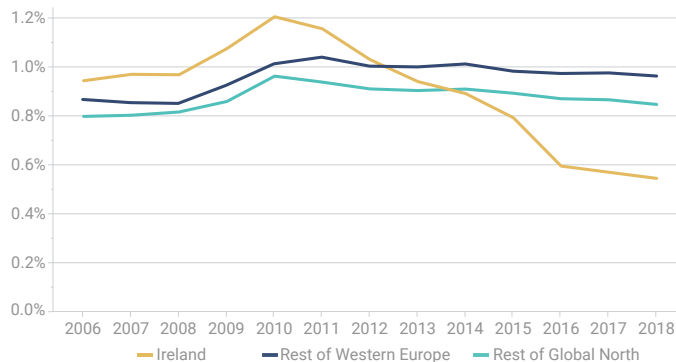


FIGURE 9 – Change in real total institutional spending of public institutions by institution-type, in Ireland and the rest of the Global North, 2006-2018 (2006=100)

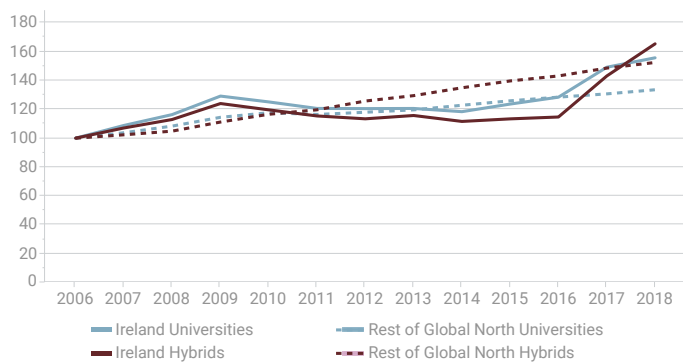


FIGURE 10 – Per-student total institutional spending of public institutions by institution-type in real PPP, in Ireland and the rest of the Global North, 2006-2018

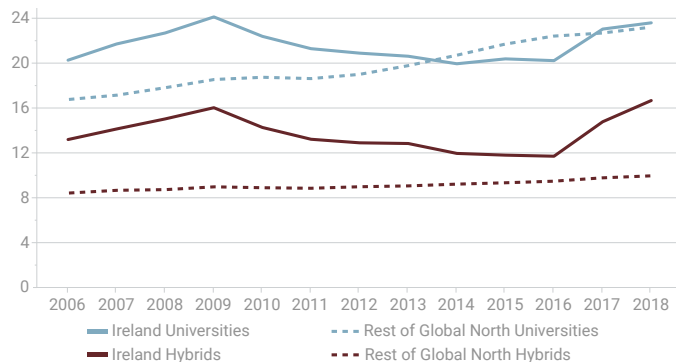
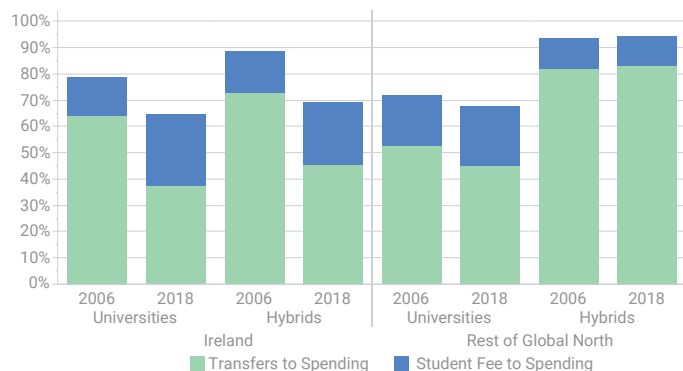


FIGURE 11 – Government transfers relative to total institutional spending of public institutions by institution-type in Ireland and the rest of the Global North, 2006 and 2018



PART III: STUDENT FEES

All students in Ireland pay some kind of compulsory fee. This is a differentiated fee-charging system. At public institutions, fee-income per student paying “regular” rates (i.e. “free fees” students) nearly quadrupled from 2006 to 2018. Those paying elevated fees paid roughly 2.5 times as much as those paying regular fees in 2018.

FIGURE 12 – Share of students at public institutions under each type of tuition regime in Ireland, the rest of Western Europe and the rest of the Global North, 2006 and 2018

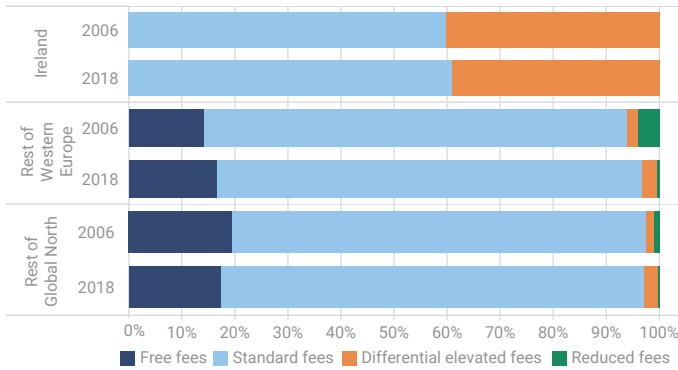


FIGURE 13 – Fee revenues per student paying “regular” rates at public institutions by institution type in PPP, 2006-2018

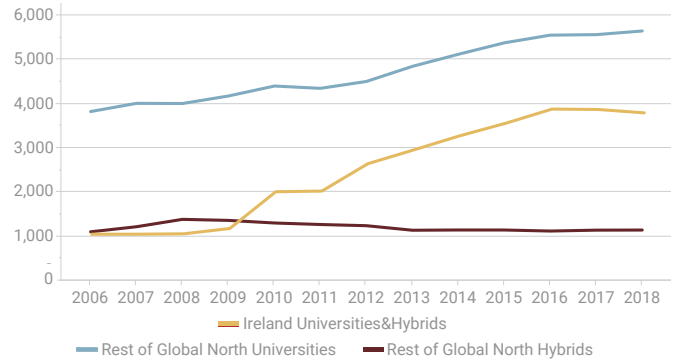
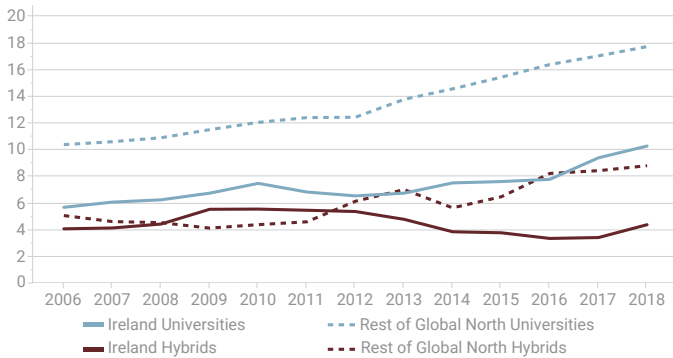


FIGURE 14 – Fee revenues per student paying elevated differential fees at public institutions by institution type in PPP, 2006-2018



PART IV: STUDENT FINANCIAL AID

Government student financial aid in Ireland is a grant-only system, with no student loans available. Over the 2006-2018 period, the amounts disbursed annually rose somewhat, but the proportion of students receiving the awards fell slightly. As a percentage of GDP, student financial aid disbursements rose slightly between 2006 and 2018 but lagged behind the trend across the rest of Western Europe.

TABLE 2 – Student financial aid regime, including recipients and amounts disbursed in 2018

CATEGORY	PROGRAMS	BASIS OF ALLOCATION	RECIPIENTS	AMOUNTS DISBURSED (USD)
Grants	Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) grants	Need-based	68,968	498,311,788

FIGURE 15 – Total disbursements to students in financial aid relative to Gross Domestic Product, in Ireland, the rest of Western Europe and the rest of the Global North, 2006-2018

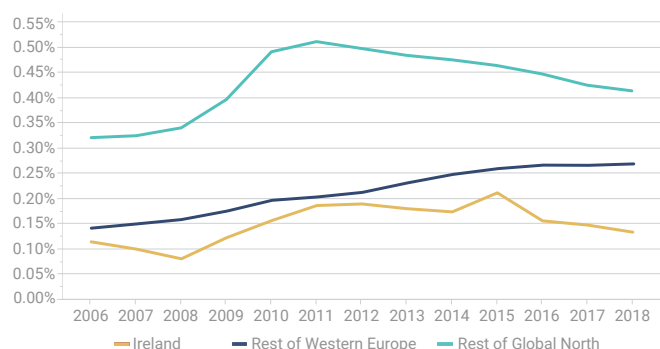


FIGURE 16 – Change in amounts disbursed to students by form of financial aid in Ireland and other Global North countries that offer financial aid of this type, 2006-2018 (2006=100)

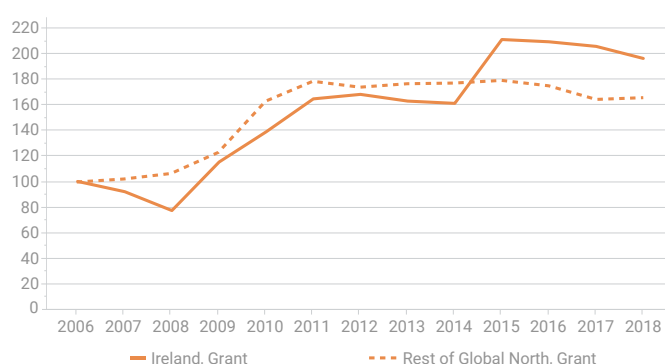


FIGURE 17 – Share of higher education students receiving student financial aid by type in Ireland and other Global North countries that offer financial aid of this type, 2006-2018

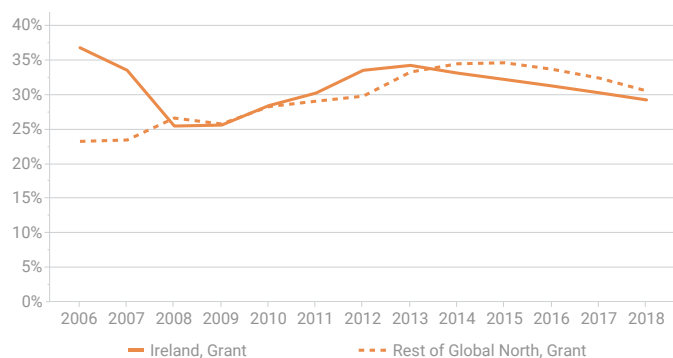
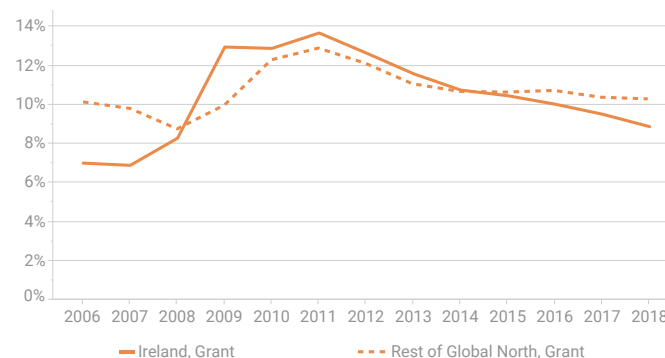


FIGURE 18 – Financial aid per recipient relative to GDP per capita by form of financial aid in Ireland and other Global North countries that offer financial aid of this type, 2006-2018



*Note: For more on methodology and data quality please see [Appendices A and B](#).