



Pavee Point Travellers' Centre

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A recent survey carried out by the University of Ulster showed 77% would not want a Traveller relative by way of marriage compared to 53% who would not want a Chinese person as a relative.

Travellers in Northern Ireland

Travellers in Northern Ireland and Travellers in the Republic are members of the same ethnic group and are faced with similar life experiences, which include discrimination and social exclusion.

The Department of Environment Northern Ireland Census 2001, counted 1710 Travellers in Northern Ireland. Features of multiple disadvantage experienced by Travellers include:

- Long term unemployment - only 11% are in paid employment whilst 70% who are economically active have had no paid work in the last 10 years.
- Poor levels of educational attainment - 92% of Travellers have no GCSEs or their equivalent or higher.
- Poor health status - Only 10% of Traveller population is over 40 years of age and only 1% are over 65 years.
- High levels of prejudice - In one survey 57% said they did not want Travellers resident in their local area and two thirds said they would not willingly accept a Traveller as a work colleague.

Government Responses

The provision of adequate Traveller accommodation is a major issue. One survey in 1989 described Traveller living conditions 'as possibly the worst of any group in the United Kingdom.'

In 1999 the Department of the Environment published its 'New Policy on Accommodation for Travellers'. In it the Department is in favour of one strategic agency to deal with Traveller accommodation and agreed that agency should be the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. The Department recommends responsibility for transient halting sites remains with the relevant District Councils.

In 1997 the Race Relations Order Northern Ireland was introduced and allows redress if Travellers come across discrimination in employment, education, housing, the provision of goods or services and the disposal of premises. Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act, 1990 obliges all public authorities to have due regard for the need for equal opportunity in all their functions, powers and duties.

The Good Friday Agreement resulted in the formation, in 1998, of the Equality Commission and the establishment of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission.

In 2000, the Promoting Social Inclusion Working Group on Travellers was established to develop a fresh analysis of the situation of Travellers and to make recommendations for an integrated strategy. This was done under the Government's 'New Targeting Social Need' policy.

For the first time representatives of the Traveller community were invited onto the committee. Travellers and Traveller support groups remained cynical about how genuine the attempt would be to address Travellers needs. The PSI made its report in 2001 and an independent academic has since been engaged to consult with Travellers on the recommendations in that report.

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