



Pavee Point Travellers' Centre

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"No one wants you for being a Traveller; we're not accepted, can't go nowhere or do nothing. The biggest half of young people don't want to be called Travellers – getting put down for it,"

*Kathleen Joyce,
Dublin.*

Racism and Discrimination

In Irish society there has been a great reluctance to acknowledge racism as an internal problem to be addressed: increasing immigration is resulting in a more culturally diverse society and a growing realisation that this issue can no longer be ignored. Racism is an explicit part of the economic, social, political and cultural exclusion experienced by Travellers.

What is racism?

Racism is a specific form of discrimination based on skin colour or membership of a minority ethnic group. It is a system of group dominance which is both structural and ideological. In other words racism is a combination of power and prejudice whereby the group with the greater power and influence shapes society - it is their assumptions of 'what is normal' which becomes society's underlying assumptions and this process then excludes those who do not belong to the dominant group. The policies, practices and structures based on these assumptions impact negatively on those who do not belong to the dominant group.

What is an ethnic group?

It is a group one is born into which shares a common ancestry, culture, history, tradition, and sense of belonging or peoplehood and is a political and economic interest group. Ethnicity is a way of categorising people on the basis of self-identification and ascription by others.

What is direct discrimination?

This occurs whenever a person is treated less favourably than others on, for example, grounds of 'race', colour, ethnic origin, nationality or citizenship.

What is indirect discrimination?

This is a more subtle form of discrimination. Indirect discrimination can often be unintentional but occurs nevertheless because of policies, practices, terms or conditions having an adverse affect on particular groups, including minority ethnic groups.

How do Travellers experience racism and discrimination?

The widespread negative stereotypes of Travellers, combined with notions of innate inferiority, are used to legitimate discrimination. Examples would include residents associations which organise against the provision of Traveller accommodation; the denial of one's own Traveller identity to get a job and the fear if it's known you're a Traveller you will lose the job; the design and delivery of a range of public services that ignore the specific needs of minority ethnic groups, including Travellers - because it is assumed there is only one culture.

Equality Legislation - Challenges and Opportunities

The Employment Equality Act 1998 and the Equal Status Act in 2000 cover discrimination and equality issues in employment and the provision of goods and services, respectively. The grounds of 'race' and membership of the Traveller community are amongst the nine grounds covered by these two pieces of law.

The Equality Tribunal investigates and mediates on complaints made to them by members of the public on any of the nine grounds. In 2003, under pressure from publicans, Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform Michael McDowell changed the legislation to exclude complaints against liquor licenceholders from going before the Equality Tribunal. Instead these complaints, only, are to be heard by the District Courts where there is less expertise in equality issues. But, increased sanctions mean if found guilty licenceholders may have their liquor licence suspended.

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