



## Pavee Point Travellers' Centre

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*"If a settled person gets a good education it will get them a good job, yeah. But it's all the same to a Traveller. A Traveller will never come home with a real good job because of discrimination,"*

*Thomas Collins,  
aged 17.*

# Education & Cultural Rights

The rights of children, including Travellers, to an education that accommodates and respects their culture and is free from discrimination are elaborated in various international instruments. Article 4 of the UNESCO Convention Against Discrimination in Education 1960 obliges governments to develop and apply policy in such a way as to "promote equality of opportunity and of treatment in the matter of education".

"Children of minority communities and indigenous peoples have the right to enjoy their own culture, to practice their own religion and to use their own language." (Article 30, UN Convention on the Rights of the child. See also Article 2 and 29).

## Policy Changes

Traveller education policy from the 1960's to the 1980's contradicted these rights. Education was viewed as a tool of settlement, or to put it starkly, a way of taking the Traveller out of the Traveller child. Nonetheless, despite the assimilationist aims, provision tended to be characterised by segregation, with most Travellers who attended schools in "special" all-Traveller classes. In practice this meant that many schools had one teacher who catered for all the Traveller children together, regardless of age, in one classroom.

Over the last decade this approach has been largely abandoned in favour of age-appropriate, integrated provision. This has not happened without objections and in 2001 there were two high profile protests where settled parents withdrew their children en masse from school rather than allow this placement of Traveller children in classes with their children.

While full integration is the policy, practice on the ground varies. Many schools now withdraw Traveller children regularly from class for learning support with resource teachers. While resource teachers are a great asset, there are concerns about how this system is operating. Interculturalism is another key issue identified.

## Traveller Strategy

The Department of Education and Science is currently developing a Traveller Education Strategy through the Advisory Committee on Traveller Education and the Educational Disadvantage Committee. One of the challenges for a Traveller Education Strategy is to ensure equality of outcomes for Travellers. In 2003, €46 million was spent on Traveller education. Pavee Point has, for many years, called for a review of how resources are spent as the statistics below show that equality of outcome is not being achieved for Travellers.

## Statistics

The National Traveller Education Officer estimates in 2002/2003:

- 5,500 Traveller children attended Primary school.
- 1608 Traveller children attended mainstream Post-Primary schools (forty per cent of all Travellers children of post-primary school age)
- The national retention rate to Junior Cert. is 94.3%. For Traveller pupils the rate was only 51%.
- Sixty two Traveller children attended 6th year Post-Primary .
- Visiting Teachers estimate that in 2002, 16 Travellers attended third level.

And in 2002, 62 Traveller children attended 6th year Post-Primary (an increase of 13 on the previous year).

- The Visiting Teacher Service estimate that in 2002 there 16 Travellers at third level.



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*"We're taking control of our lives in a way that we never did before. And it will be a long time before that will have an impact on a political level. But, on a personal level that feels good – that sense of acknowledging your own self worth,"*

*Rosaleen McDonagh.*

# **Traveller Women**

Traveller women play an important role in their immediate family and the wider Traveller community. They have responsibility for the home, family and children. They also broker with service providers and often take on leadership roles in acting as spokespeople for the community.

## **Discrimination against Traveller Women**

Traveller women experience triple discrimination: discrimination as women, discrimination as Travellers and discrimination as Traveller women. For example:

- Lack of access to basic facilities has a direct negative impact on Traveller women because of their domestic role.
- There is much opportunity for direct discrimination when women, on behalf of their families, broker with settled service providers.

Like women from other minority ethnic groups Traveller women experience an intersection of a number of oppressions and experience both racism and sexism. The Task Force on Violence Against Women (1997) highlights the difficulties for Traveller women in addressing this issue:

*"Black and minority group women have extensively documented the interplay between, and contradictions of addressing gender oppression and racism in their lives. This can involve women in invidious choices between raising the issue of sexism within their own community and being in solidarity with their own community in resisting external oppression. Both the internal and the external discrimination experienced by Traveller women need urgent responses. For this to begin to happen such discrimination must be named in ways which do not further marginalise Traveller Women."*

## **Violence Against Women**

Throughout its work Pavee Point has always included attempts at raising awareness of the issue of violence against women. It is our analysis that Traveller women experience three types of violence - violence from an intimate partner, violence from the settled community and, in terms of evictions, violence from the State.

Since 1998, Pavee Point has been involved in partnership with the Eastern Regional Health Authority in developing culturally appropriate responses to the issue of violence against women in the Travelling Community.

## **Women and the Traveller Movement**

Traveller women play key roles in the Traveller movement throughout Ireland. They articulate the issues, and in particular the experience of Traveller women, at local, national and international levels. The National Traveller Women's Forum has been operating since 1988. The Forum is a partnership organisation of Travellers and settled women from all over Ireland who meet to discuss issues and share experiences and information. This helps women develop greater solidarity, explore gender issues, challenge sexism and take action on the situation.

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# **Irish Travellers**

Travellers are a minority ethnic group, documented as being part of Irish society for centuries. Travellers have a long shared history and value system, their own language, customs and traditions. The distinctive Traveller lifestyle and culture, based on a nomadic tradition, sets Travellers apart from the sedentary population or "settled people".

While Irish Travellers are native to Ireland, they have much in common with European Travellers and Gypsies. For example, a nomadic tradition, living in extended families and European Gypsies also have to resist attempts to absorb them into the settled population, in order to retain their identity.

### **Data**

There is a dearth of information on Travellers lives and experiences. As a result the discrimination and exclusion that Travellers experience is often invisible to policy and decision makers. This makes it difficult to develop policies to combat discrimination. Adequate data is necessary for proper planning of services.

Pavee Point has been working with the Central Statistics Office to help develop an ethnicity question for the next census where people can self-identify in terms of ethnic group.

It is also important that any information on ethnic group is collected within an equality framework. This means that the benefits, in terms of equality, are understood not only by those collecting the data but also by those providing the data.

### **Population Structure**

In the 2002 Census, Travellers were, for the first time, asked to self-identify in terms of their ethnicity by answering the question: Are you a member of the Traveller community? Pavee Point believes that a universal question on ethnic group would yield more accurate data.

According Census 2002:

- There are 24,000 Travellers nationally, accounting for 0.6% of the population.\*
- Only 3.3% of the Traveller community are over 65 years, compared to 11.1% of the general population
- Sixty three per cent of Travellers are under 25 years compared with 37% of the general population.
- Forty two per cent of Travellers are under 15 years of age compared with 21% of the general population.
- The average age for Travellers is 18 years compared with a national figure of 32.

\* Local authorities also carry out a count of Traveller families each year. This count for 2002 shows 5,541 Traveller families. The Central Statistics Office estimates an average Traveller family size of 5.5. This would give a count of 30,000 Travellers nationally.

*"Being a Traveller is the feeling of belonging to a group of people. Knowing through thick or thin they are there for you, having the support of family systems. Having an identity,"*

**Michael McDonagh.**

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# Distribution

In 2002, the Department of the Environment estimates there are 5,461 Traveller families. According to Census 2002, the Traveller population accounts for 0.6% of the general population.

According to the Department of the Environment:  
Fifty per cent of all Travellers live in 4 counties:

- 23% in Dublin
- 13% in Galway
- 6% in Limerick
- 7% in Cork

About 15,000 Irish Travellers live in Britain and 10,000 Travellers of Irish descent live in the United States of America (Travellers Health Status Study, Health Research Board (HRB), 1986.)

2002 Report from Department of the Environment and Local Government:

County	Standard Local Authority Housing	Group Housing	Halting site	Roadside	Other	Total
Carlow	34	12	7	16	8	77
Cavan	29	4	21	2	0	56
Clare	34	11	25	54	23	147
Cork City	132	0	70	32	5	240
Cork County	88	14	14	49	10	161
Donegal	88	12	35	6	2	143
Dublin City	82	154	153	62	4	452
Dún Laoghaire/ Rathdown	44	24	29	15	0	112
Fingal	53	23	173	35	0	284
Galway City	127	29	36	1	1	194
Galway County	203	38	24	72	19	356
Kerry	168	0	30	11	38	247
Kildare	16	8	29	50	1	104
Kilkenny	35	1	14	16	14	80
Laois	39	4	12	18	11	84
Leitrim	2	0	26	0	0	28
Limerick City	12	9	43	6	2	72
Limerick County	114	16	27	101	27	285
Longford	140	0	18	4	15	177
Louth	114	18	11	12	30	185
Mayo	105	5	6	46	19	181
Meath	60	34	49	1	14	158
Monaghan	43	0	11	8	20	82
Offaly	74	0	32	43	7	156
Roscommon	13	10	23	15	3	64
Sligo	22	0	27	21	4	74
South Dublin	101	24	237	31	8	401
Tipperary N.R.	73	9	19	29	2	132
Tipperary S.R.	43	8	17	20	4	92
Waterford City	92	0	20	2	4	118
Waterford County	9	0	12	14	0	35
Westmeath	51	4	19	7	2	83
Wexford	94	14	18	111	19	256
<u>Wicklow</u>	<u>61</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>128</u>
Total	2395	493	1314	939	320	5461

*"Travelling was good in  
the old days, we were  
accepted in the  
community. The life we  
had going around was  
better than today, there  
was more freedom,"*

*Paddy McDonagh.*



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# **Accommodation and Living Conditions**

**The Traveller accommodation crisis means nearly 1,000 Traveller families still live on the roadside in appalling conditions – without access to water, sanitation and electricity. Many other Travellers live in official accommodation that is poorly serviced and maintained and often situated in unhealthy or dangerous locations.**

This has a direct negative effect on Traveller quality of life and on how Travellers can access healthcare, education, social welfare and other services.

Much of the thinking behind the provision of Traveller accommodation, particularly at local level, continues to be based on assimilationist approaches. This approach wrongly identifies the existence of Travellers as the problem and sees the settlement and absorption of Travellers as the solution.

The Report of the Task Force on the Traveller Community in 1995, recommended 3,100 new units of Traveller accommodation be provided:

- 2,200 permanent and transient halting site bays
- 900 standard and group housing

To date, 251 units of halting site accommodation were provided out of 2,200 while 757 housing units have been provided out of 900. This would indicate that an assimilationist approach prevails and 'settling' Travellers in houses remains a priority for local authorities. The lack of provision is compounded by prejudiced objections to Traveller accommodation by settled residents.

### **Making Nomadism into a Crime**

In 2002, the Government enacted the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act which made trespass, previously a civil offence, a criminal offence. Currently, camping on private or public land is punishable by one month in jail, a €3,000 fine and the confiscation of property.

This means that Travellers living on the roadside – awaiting accommodation and with nowhere else to go - are criminalised. This is a direct attack on the nomadic part of Traveller culture and punishes Travellers for the Government's failure to provide Traveller permanent and transient halting sites. In answer to a Dail Question the Government said in 2002 - 2003, 88 evictions of Travellers took place under this legislation. In 2003 this law went to judicial review and may also be in contravention of the European Convention on Human Rights.

The 1998 Traveller Accommodation Act obliged local authorities to produce 5 year plans for delivering Traveller accommodation. However, the absence of sanctions for failing to implement these plans has meant there has been little progress. A review of this Act is taking place in 2004 and as part of this review Pavee Point recommends the Government set up an independent Traveller Accommodation Agency.

### **Traveller culture must be respected in Traveller accommodation:**

- The extended family lives together
- Traveller families tend to be larger in number than the national average
- Living space and work space tend to be one and the same
- Travellers practice varying degrees of nomadism – from occasional to regular journeying



***"Travellers have a right to their culture – and nomadism is an important part of that culture. It is up to our society to accommodate cultural diversity – not to try and destroy it,"***

***Martin Collins, Pavee Point.***

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***"I hope the launch of the National Traveller Health Strategy will mean in improvement to Traveller health because it is a document that acknowledges the ethnicity of Travellers and the central role Travellers can play in planning and delivering services,"***

***Missie Collins,  
Traveller Community  
Health Worker.***

# **Traveller Health**

**Traveller health is significantly worse than the health of those in the settled community. As Travellers are a distinct cultural group they have distinctive health needs and require special consideration in the health service.**

The most recent data, a 1987 Health Research Board study shows:

- The Infant Mortality rates for Travellers was 18.1/1000 live births compared to a national figure of 7.4.
- At birth, male Travellers can expect to live 9.9 years less than settled men.
- At birth female Travellers can expect to live 11.9 years less.
- Male Travellers have over twice the risk of dying in a given year than settled males. For female Travellers the risk is more than 3 times.
- The SIDS rate among Traveller families in 2002 was more than 3,5 times the national figure (2.2 vs 0.6 per 1000 live births), ISIDA 2002. Based on estimate of the total number of live births among Traveller families in 1995 (n=454)

## **National Traveller Health Strategy**

In 2002, the National Traveller Health Strategy (NTHS) was launched with a budget of 9 million for its implementation 2002-2005. This Strategy acknowledges the factors influencing Traveller Health:

### *Living Conditions*

The poor conditions in which many Travellers live is an important factor. The NTHS states one in four Travellers has no piped water or electricity.

### *Racism and Discrimination*

According to the NTHS, 17% of Travellers have difficulty in registering with a GP and in many areas it was found that only a small number of GPs provided services to Travellers.

### *Health Promotion*

Lack of education and training materials that are relevant and meaningful to Travellers has contributed to a low uptake of health services by Travellers.

## **Traveller Health Infrastructure**

A Traveller Health Policy Unit now exists at Departmental level along with the National Traveller Health Advisory Committee. At a regional level Traveller Health Units now operate and Primary Health Care for Traveller Projects exist at a local level.

## **New Study on Traveller Health**

As part of the NTHS an All Ireland Traveller Health Status and Needs Assessment Study will commence in 2004.

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*“The Traveller culture lies in the values, meanings and identity that the Traveller community shares. It is clear the Traveller community’s culture is distinct and different,”*

Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community, 1995.

# **Culture and Heritage**

**The Traveller community is the collective owner of Traveller culture and heritage.**

**The experience of Travellers in Ireland today can be described as one of social and cultural exclusion. The widespread denial of Travellers cultural identity exacerbates the experience of exclusion. Travellers nomadic tradition is equated with vagrancy and thereby criminalised; Traveller crafts and Traveller language is not recognised; Travellers’ values, beliefs and customs are dismissed or ignored in a monocultural education system; the Traveller economy and work patterns are not acknowledged and if they are, are denigrated.**

## **Cultural Rights**

Travellers and Traveller culture have been marginalised and rejected over the centuries. This continues to be the prevailing climate affecting Travellers in Ireland today. Accepting, resourcing and celebrating Traveller identity, culture and heritage is a central element in any strategy to counter this situation and improve the circumstances of Travellers.

## **Nomadism**

Moving from one place to another has given rise to a distinct Traveller way of looking at the world. Nomadism is often described as a state of mind. Even where Travellers occupy houses they regard accommodation as essentially temporary in nature - as do other nomadic peoples around the world.

## **Music and Storytelling**

Historically, Travellers played a role as bearers of culture – music and storytelling. They brought songs and stories from parish to parish and developed unique styles of singing, playing music and storytelling. This has influenced many musicians of today who openly acknowledge their debt to these Traveller musicians of the past.

## **Language**

Travellers inhabit two worlds – the settled world and the Traveller world. Traveller culture reflects this. Although little spoken today, an important part of Traveller heritage is their own language – Cant.

## **Cultural and Heritage Centre**

The Traveller Cultural Heritage Centre at Pavee point has been in existence since 1990. Its aims are to: research and document Traveller history which has previously gone unrecorded; to promote Travellers’ positive identity as an ethnic group through cultural action; to resource the traditional skills of Travellers and to improve knowledge and appreciation of Interculturalism in Ireland. Email [culture@pavee.iol.ie](mailto:culture@pavee.iol.ie).

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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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# **Traveller Children**

"There is a special minority within each minority culture – children. In the dominant society, the children of a minority must endure along with their parents the problems of social and cultural discrimination, and they are even more exposed to risk of cultural dissolution," Children of Minorities, UNICEF 1993.

Traveller children represent a minority within a minority, Accordingly they suffer all the ill-effects of inadequate provision that the Traveller community as a whole experiences. This can lead to restricted opportunities in society and can have a detrimental effect on self-esteem and on pride in Traveller culture. In addition, children are especially vulnerable to ill health and poor physical and cognitive development.

### **Facts**

According to Census, 2002:

- Forty two percent of Travellers are under 15 years
- Twenty one percent of Travellers are under 14 years
- The average family size is 3.5 children.

Traveller children participate actively in family life and are confident and mature in adult company. However, children experience and are affected by hostility from the majority community both directly and indirectly.

### **The Traveller Child**

Traditionally the Traveller child has been fully part of the adult society, speaking freely and frankly within adult company. Space for work, home and children is not segregated. From the earliest age children are integrated into the family work unit, learning skills by apprenticeship. The acquisition of these essential skills supports the positive identity of the child. Unfortunately, these skills are not always appreciated when the Traveller child enters mainstream provision. This can have a negative effect and damage the self worth of the Traveller child.

### **Rights of the Child**

In line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) Articles 2, 28, 29 & 30 Traveller children have the right to:

- Adequate accommodation
- Respect for their cultural identity and values
- Appropriate education
- Freedom and protection from discrimination

### **Issues Facing Traveller Children**

- The voice of the Traveller child needs to be heard in policy development
- Research on the wellbeing of the Traveller child is urgently needed
- Measures to tackle discrimination, which effect the development of full potential of the Traveller child, need to be put in place urgently

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*"Recognition of their ethnicity and distinct cultural identity is a prerequisite to the Traveller child being fully respected and included in the wider community,"*

*Colette Murray,  
Pavee Point.*



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*"Overall he feels a significant level of psychological stress associated with what he sees as his 'dual life' – living among the Traveller community, while spending his working life passing himself off as a settled person. On balance, he feels it's a choice he has had to make, and it's worth it as he loves his work."*

*A Traveller perspective from "Jobs Vacancies . . . Vacant Jobs"*

# Travellers and Work

## The Mainstream Labour Market

According to Census 2002, 73% of Traveller men are unemployed compared to 9.4% of the majority population. Recently, Pavee Point published a piece of research entitled "*Jobs Vacancies . . . Vacant Jobs Travellers Inclusion in the Mainstream Labour Market*". The key issues highlighted by the research were:

- Travellers' interest in successfully accessing employment
- that Travellers were accessing employment by hiding their Traveller identity
- the implications of the lack of recognised skills and low levels of education amongst Travellers
- the reality of discrimination in the labour market
- more pro-active measures needed to address exclusion.

As the above figures indicate a pro-active approach is necessary on behalf of employers to include Travellers in the labour market. The Irish Civil Service Commission, for example, recently targeted Travellers in an outreach project to encourage Travellers to sit civil service exams. Ten Travellers went on to complete this exam.

Census 2002 identifies a Traveller labour force of 7,401 of which 2,257 are at work. Of those who stated the type of work they did the highest percentages were in: manufacturing, construction, wholesale and retail trade and health and social work.

## The Traveller Economy

The 'Traveller Economy' is the term used to describe work Travellers initiate themselves. Scrap metal recycling, market trading and horse dealing would be examples of this type of work. The most important point to note about the Traveller Economy is how the work is organised. Its key features are:

- nomadism: where mobility makes marginal activity viable;
- a focus on income generation rather than job creation;
- self-employment as the preferred option;
- the (extended) family as the basic economic unit;
- home base and work base as one and the same;
- flexibility: often in response to market demand.

Barriers and challenges facing the Traveller Economy stem from a lack of recognition of the skills acquired through this way of working and its contribution to the mainstream economy. The lack of acknowledgement of Traveller culture within public policy results in both direct and indirect discrimination. For example, the changes in the law on street trading and horse ownership had a particularly adverse effect on the economic life of Travellers in comparison with other groups.

## Developing Other Responses

Traveller organisations and other locally based initiatives have developed employment opportunities for Travellers. These include youth and community work; childcare and class room assistants and in particular primary health care. A number of Traveller organisations also supported the establishment of enterprises through which Travellers progressed on from training courses into employment. The EU Community Initiative EQUAL is currently exploring the development of Traveller men's skills in the Traveller Economy.

## Cutbacks

Government cutbacks in Community Employment, Jobs Initiatives and FÁS Training Schemes have had a devastating effect on these responses. Cutbacks in the Government Community Development Support Programme is also having a negative impact on jobs in the community.

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# **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.

***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.***

**Visit our web-site at [www.paveepoint.ie](http://www.paveepoint.ie)**



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*"The reason why I'm proud to be a Traveller is that because over all the things that have happened over the years, between discrimination and all that, we stuck together, we stood together. I'm proud to be a Traveller. What's so good about being a settled person?... At the end of the day we're all human beings!"*

*Martin Collins,  
aged 12.*

# **Traveller Youth**

According to Census 2002, two out of every five Travellers are under 15 years of age, compared with one out of five among the general population.

A higher birth rate (3.5 children compared to 1.5 among majority population) and higher mortality rates account for this young population.

Like all Travellers, young Travellers are not a homogenous group. They have different needs according to their living circumstances and lifestyles. So, both formal and informal responses to their needs should take their cultural and varying needs into consideration.

## **Youth Work**

Youth work, as an educational process, is expected to play a key role in enabling young people to analyse society. It is also expected to help them to develop the skills and capabilities they need to become involved in affecting change. Due to the gaps in education provision and the low uptake in the formal education sector, it is important that young Travellers have access to youth work services. Census 2002 states that two thirds of Travellers who indicated at what age they left school did so before they were 15 years. This is compared to 15% of the majority population.

## **Issues Facing Young Travellers**

Some of the issues that face young Travellers include:

- Lack of access to youth work services
- Discrimination when trying to access commercial recreational services
- An increase in drug misuse in the community
- The need to reinforce cultural identity
- Increased participation in decisions that effect their lives

## **Task Force Recommendations**

The Task Force Report on the Travelling Community (1995) said youth work with Travellers should: "Assist in the development of individual and collective self-esteem through services which are based on standards of excellence, are non-judgemental, accepting, culturally appropriate, encouraging and yet challenging".

The Task Force Report further recommends the development of an equality mechanism, which would identify, track and monitor Traveller involvement in mainstream youth provision.

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