

Traveller Culture & Heritage

Irish Travellers are a small indigenous ethnic minority group that has been part of Irish society for centuries. Travellers have a value system, language, customs and traditions that make them an identifiable group both to themselves and to others. Their distinctive lifestyle and culture, based on nomadic traditions, sets them apart from the general population.



TRADITIONS

Irish Travellers are commercial nomads who traditionally moved in a patterned way – accessing traditional camps – in order to provide goods and services to the majority population.

Historically, Travellers also played a role as 'bearers of culture'. Travellers brought songs and stories from parish to parish and developed unique styles of singing, playing music and storytelling as well as producing tin musical instruments.

EXTENDED FAMILY

Extended family and community are key social institutions in the Traveller community. In addition to defining identities and roles, they provide important support and protection in the face of anti-Traveller discrimination and social exclusion.

LANGUAGE

Although spoken less today, an important part of Traveller heritage is the language – Cant or Gammon. Cant remains a largely unwritten language and is influenced by both Irish and English. Most Travellers today would have some words of Cant.

MINORITY ETHNIC GROUP

Being a minority ethnic group within a larger dominant group has always impacted on Traveller culture. The experience of racism and discrimination has meant Travellers have always relied on one another for support.

The promotion and celebration of Traveller culture and heritage is important in showing respect for Traveller identity. The recognition of Traveller ethnicity by the Irish State on 1st March 2017 puts Traveller and settled relations on a new footing of equality.

