



**PAVEE POINT**  
TRAVELLER AND ROMA CENTRE

**Submission to the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration & Youth on the Regulations on Domestic Violence Leave-Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023**

**May 2023**

Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre ('Pavee Point') is a national non-governmental organisation committed to the attainment of human rights for Travellers and Roma. The organisation comprises Travellers, Roma and members of the majority population working in partnership to address the needs of Travellers and Roma, who as minority ethnic groups experience racism, discrimination, exclusion and marginalisation.

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Pavee Point welcomes the opportunity to make this submission to the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration & Youth on the Regulations on Domestic Violence Leave-Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023. In doing so, we offer recommendations to consider as per S13AA (6) of the Parental Leave Act.

**Context**

Traveller and Roma women are among the most marginalised and excluded individuals and groups in Ireland due to intersectional discrimination based on gender, ethnicity and other factors. Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (DSGBV) impacts all communities and Irish society at large. However, specific barriers to basic rights that Traveller and Roma women experience in Ireland means that women in these communities experience additional difficulties with accessing information, safety, protection and exit routes from DSGBV.

Traveller and Roma women experience high levels of unemployment due to racism, low educational attainment, discrimination, childcare and family commitments and being placed in a poverty trap due to welfare issues. Roma women who do not meet the right to reside or habitual residence condition are not considered jobseekers and therefore are not eligible for many training and employment supports.<sup>i</sup> Many women also fear losing secondary benefits, in particular the Medical Card.<sup>ii</sup>

While a number of Traveller and Roma women experiencing domestic violence will not be affected by proposals for paid leave due to being unable to access mainstream employment, for those that are currently in employment, it is crucial they have access to domestic violence leave paid in full at 100% the person’s normal rate.

Traveller Women – Unemployment	Roma Women – Unemployment <sup>iii</sup>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 81.2% of Traveller women are unemployed</li> <li>• Among females, 972 were at work while 2,938 were looking after the home, representing 30.4% of Traveller women aged 15 or over<sup>iv</sup></li> <li>• 80.2% of Travellers are unemployed<sup>v</sup></li> <li>• Only 4.8% of Travellers are employed or self-employed<sup>vi</sup></li> <li>• 55% of Travellers have experienced discrimination at work<sup>vii</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only 8.2% of Roma women are in employment in comparison to 20% of Roma men</li> <li>• All Roma who report being engaged in self-employment are male</li> <li>• 81.6% of Roma women report feeling discriminated against in getting hired</li> </ul>

**1. Increase in Financial Hardship**

Of the Traveller and Roma women who are employed, the majority are employed through Section 39s vis-à-vis Traveller organisations and groups working with Roma, on a part time capacity, earning maximum €147 gross per week.<sup>viii</sup> Roma women who are not Habitually Residence, may be dependent upon their partner’s entitlements, and leaving the relationship means losing all entitlements. As a result, many Traveller and Roma families would be low income families and do not have assets and savings comparable to that of the general population. Many victims of domestic violence experience financial abuse as part of the coercive control they are subjected to. This means that victims may have little and/or no access to family assets and savings and may not have control of their own money. Even the slightest decrease in their usual pay will create further difficulties for the victim and/or their children to leave.

Additional financial constraints such as legal fees, sourcing accommodation and replacement of belongings/items conflated with a decrease in wage exacerbate the risk of victims not being able to provide essentials for themselves and/or their children. Traveller and Roma women experience significant barriers in securing accommodation. In particular homelessness, disproportionately impact both Travellers and Roma, with 39% of all Travellers meeting the threshold of the EU definition of homelessness.<sup>ix</sup> Overcrowding is also an issue with 24% of Roma living in households of 8 or more people and 7% with 10 or more people, and Traveller overcrowding 7 times the national rate.<sup>x</sup> Travellers are unable to access the private rented sector due to majority of landlords unwilling to rent to Travellers.<sup>xi</sup> This has been further conflated due to the current homelessness crisis and accommodation shortage in Ireland with average rents rising to record levels and increase of cost of living.<sup>xii</sup> A decrease in wage will prohibit women from being able to financially leave the abuse.

## 2. Risk to Safety

Perpetrators may monitor the income and bank account of their victim and in some cases, may ask for the victim to hand over their wage and social welfare directly. This was visible in Traveller and Roma communities during the Covid-19 pandemic when the Department of Social Protection made social welfare payments available fortnightly rather than weekly.<sup>xiii</sup> The perpetrator would demand that the victim hand over the payment, leaving the victim without money for a two week period. If the perpetrator is monitoring income via bank account or wage slips, a decrease in wage may alert them that the victim did not attend work as usual and could potentially exacerbate the violence.

### Recommendations:

- **The rate of pay for domestic violence leave should be paid in full at 100% of the person's normal rate of pay**
- **Government Departments and Agencies with responsibility for funding Section 39 organisations should ensure domestic violence paid leave is incorporated into Section 39 funding arrangements (e.g.) Service Level Agreements (SLAs), Grant Aid Agreements (GAAs), etc.**
- **Introduce an exemption for women affected by domestic violence and guidelines for Traveller and Roma communities in the Habitual Residence Condition**

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<sup>i</sup> Ireland has the highest childcare costs in the EU as a percentage of family income, making it inaccessible for many Traveller and Roma women. OECD, Benefits and Wages: Statistics, 2014, cited in Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Submission to the UN Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights, June 2015, [www.ihrec.ie](http://www.ihrec.ie).

<sup>ii</sup> Within the context of poor health outcomes for Traveller and Roma women, this fear is not unfounded. Kelleher et al., *All Ireland Traveller Health Study*, University College Dublin & Department of Health and Children, 2010; Curran, S., A. Crickley, R. Fay, F. Mc Gaughey (eds), *Roma in Ireland - a National Needs Assessment*, Department of Justice and Equality and Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre, 2018.

<sup>iii</sup> Curran et al., *National Needs Assessment*, 2018.

<sup>iv</sup> Central Statistics Office, 2016.

<sup>v</sup> Ibid.

<sup>vi</sup> Kelleher et al., *All Ireland Traveller Health Study*, 2010.

<sup>vii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>viii</sup> Many Travellers are employed with Traveller organisations through Primary Health Care Traveller Projects (PHCTPs). It is estimated that there are 300 Travellers working within the PHCTP.

<sup>ix</sup> Pavee Point (2021) [The Traveller Community and Homelessness](#) - European Typology of Homelessness and housing exclusion-ETHOS) - this includes the large number of Travellers who experience 'hidden homelessness' in overcrowded living conditions.

<sup>x</sup> Curran et al., *National Needs Assessment*, 2018.

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<sup>xi</sup> Grotti, R., O. Kenny, F. McGinnity, H. Russell, 'Who Experiences Discrimination in Ireland? Evidence from the QNHS Equality Modules', Economic and Social Research Institution and the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, 2017.

<sup>xii</sup> Irish Examiner, 'Average Rents Top €2,300 in Dublin and €1,700 in Cork, as Prices Respond to Chronic Shortage of Properties', 13 February 2023, <https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/arid-41069876.html>.

<sup>xiii</sup> Department of Social Protection, *Annual Report 2020*.