



The National Roma Needs Assessment:

SELECTED FINDINGS BRIEFING



PAVEE POINT
TRAVELLER AND ROMA CENTRE

OVERVIEW

The National Roma Needs Assessment was undertaken by Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre in partnership with the Department of Justice and Equality, and published in 2018. It was commissioned by the Department of Justice and Equality in line with recommendation 4.2.3 of the Logan Report, following the removal of two Roma children from their families in 2013. The Roma Needs Assessment aims to provide a better understanding of the experiences of the Roma community in Ireland, and to identify areas requiring further consideration. This is the first participatory research project of its kind with Roma in Ireland, and the research was undertaken with 14 Roma peer researchers. The study adopts a mixed-methods, rights-based approach, including:

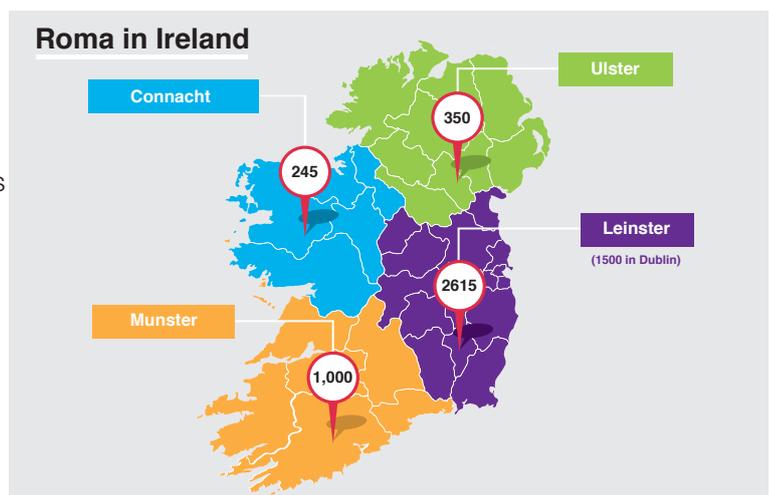
- Quantitative analysis in 108 Roma households; (information on 609 household members)
- Collection of qualitative data (30 interviews and 8 focus groups) with service providers and Roma;
- Consultations with other relevant 'experts' in the field.

The research highlighted the discrimination and difficulties that Roma face when accessing social services in Ireland. The Roma population in Ireland is small, and special measures can be adopted in order to improve the lives of Roma living in Ireland. The issues facing Roma in Ireland are multi-faceted and are often experienced across a number of areas. Experiences of poor health are linked to poverty, which can be linked to a lack of access to accommodation, education, and employment. It is well documented that the Roma community has faced generations of racism and discrimination.ⁱ This means that responding to issues facing Roma in Ireland will need cross-departmental and inter-agency collaboration. The National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy, in conjunction with the national steering group, is the forum to lead on this and to drive the implementation of the recommendations of the Roma Needs Assessment.

PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

The demographic findings reflect a diverse picture of Roma communities in Ireland and it is important that this is widely recognised and understood. This demonstrates the need for consistent, comprehensive and accurate data to inform policy and practice and to avoid conscious or unconscious applications of stereotypes and generalisations about Roma.

- 63.3% of children were born in Ireland.
- 52.2% of children are Irish citizens.
- 70% of respondents had been living in Ireland for five years or more; 14% for 15 years or more.
- 25.5% of adults in households were reported as not having the right to resideⁱⁱ and 25.7% were reported as not being habitually resident.ⁱⁱⁱ



KEY ISSUES

The impact of a lack of employment, not having the right to reside and not being habitually resident was highlighted throughout the research. This acts as a block to any on-going financial support (including child benefit); social housing supports (including homeless supports); and employment training supports, such as community employment. This creates a vicious cycle where those in most need of employment and other supports cannot access them. It can also impact access to medical cards whereby people cannot prove their means. It impacts on access to education where families struggle with the finances needed to support children in school.

HEALTH

- 39% of respondents did not have access to a GP.
- 50% of respondents did not have a medical card.
- In 36% of households women had difficulty accessing maternity services.
- 51.3% of respondents reported more than 14 days of the previous month when their mental health was not good.

DISCRIMINATION

- Respondents reported high rates of feeling discriminated against – particularly in accessing accommodation (93.3%), and social protection (84.3%).
- 81.1% of respondents reported having felt discriminated against in the street/public setting.
- 77.5% of respondents reported being stopped by An Garda Síochána for ID.

POVERTY

- 49.5% of respondents did not always have enough food.
- 46.2% of respondents did not always have enough fuel.
- Begging as a source of income (17.6%) and no income (14%).
- Of respondents who applied for social protection, 48.1% were not successful.
- 45.7% of respondents reported having been homeless at some stage of their lives.

EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

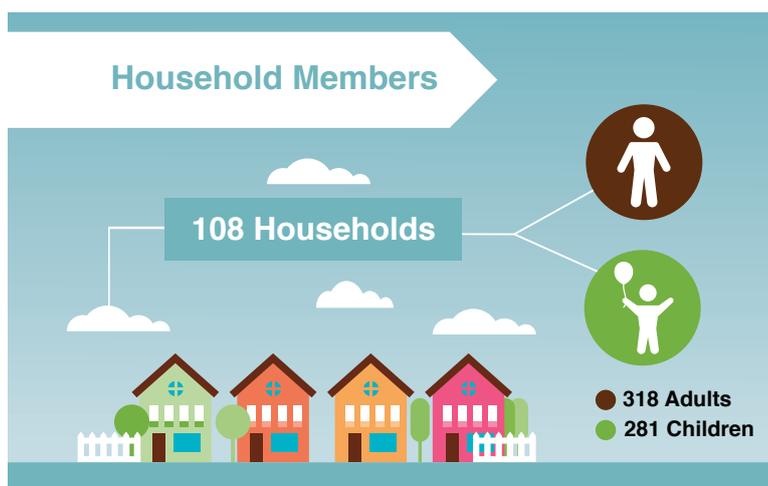
- 16.7% of respondents reported that they are in employment.
- In 78% of households primary aged children were attending school.
- Post primary aged children were attending school in 72% of households.
- 6% of households had a member attending third level education.

WOMEN AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

- Roma women were identified as particularly vulnerable to racist abuse.
- 41.1% of adult Roma women born outside of Ireland have never been to school.
- 25% of respondents reported children going to school hungry.
- Not enough money for books and uniforms (57.5%).
- Service providers reported cases of malnutrition in young Roma children.

ACCOMMODATION

- No kitchen (12.4%); No cooker (9.6%); No fridge (13.5%).
- Overcrowded and poor quality accommodation –reports of rats and damp.
- 24% of Roma respondents lived in households of 8 or more people.
- 44.8% of respondents said they did not have enough beds in their accommodation.



Felt discriminated against	% of respondents
Getting a job	78.9% (n=76)
Getting accommodation	93.3% (n=90)
Getting social welfare	84.3% (n=83)
At health services	70.5% (n=78)
Getting served in a shop, restaurant, pub or other social venue	74.7% (n=87)
In the street or another public setting	81.1% (n=90)
From the guards or in the courts	53.8% (n=78)
By a landlord or local authority	76.2% (n=77)

SELECTED QUOTES



'I would not dress in Roma [now] because we get treated badly, followed, and discriminated against'

Young Roma woman.

'A family came to me with a very sick baby. They are sharing a flat with someone else and when I visited the flat I saw that they have no cooker, kettle or microwave. They have a small fridge and they go into another flat to cook. The only furniture they have is a small table, a chair and one bed with a single mattress. There is no water in the bathroom. They have no money. The father begs and has been arrested several times.'

Reported by a health care provider.

'I am very unhappy and poor...I feel helpless. When I do not feel in good health, I'm not going to the doctor because I have no medical card.' **25 year old Roma man.**

'Hard life. Very hard but I don't know what to do, where to go, I am hopeless, please help me, help me, help the Roma.' **32 year old Roma man.**

'This is my home. I would not consider anywhere else home, I grew up here.' **21 year old Roma woman.**

'Ireland is my home but I feel excluded. I don't know how to read or write very well. It is very hard to find work. People are looking down on us because we are Roma. I don't want my children to have this experience.'



SELECTED RECOMMENDATIONS

- Enhance humanitarian responses for Roma families living in extreme poverty to ensure that adults and children are not living without food and basic accommodation facilities.
- Develop national Roma training and employment actions in the following areas:
 - A. Undertake targeted training to support labour market activation of Roma in key areas, for example, Roma community workers and professional Roma translators.
 - B. Support training programmes for Roma who are not habitually resident.
- Provide support to Roma in ensuring documentation for social protection applications.
- Review the legislative and policy restrictions that impact on the provision of medical cards for Roma with no income.
- Take effective measures to tackle anti-Roma discrimination and racism with a priority focus on Roma women.
- Introduce a standardised ethnic identifier using the human rights framework in routine administrative systems.

These briefings were made possible with the support of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission. To read the full report, please visit <https://www.paveepoint.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/RNA-PDF.pdf>



Coimisiún na hÉireann um Chearta an Duine agus Comhionannas
Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission

¹ Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, Human rights of Roma and Travellers in Europe (Strasbourg, Council of Europe Publishing 2012).

² Under the European Directive 2004/38/EC all EU citizens have a right of residence without restriction for three months. After this they must be workers or self-employed in the member state; have sufficient resources for themselves and their families so as not to become a 'burden' on the social assistance system of the host state and have comprehensive sickness insurance cover; or are enrolled at a private or public establishment for study purposes (Article 7).

³ Establishing a right to reside is a prerequisite to meeting the habitual residence condition which a person must meet in order to access non-contributory benefits, including child benefit, job seekers allowance and access to some employment and training supports. Social Welfare Consolidation Act 2005, s.246(4), as inserted by the Social Welfare & Pensions Act 2007, s.30.