

Pavee Approach: Guidelines for Inclusive and Ethical Research with Travellers and Roma



PAVEE POINT
TRAVELLER AND ROMA CENTRE

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Involvement of Traveller or Roma organisations throughout the research on these communities is a key principle of a human rights-based approach to data collection. Pavee Point and its cooperating Traveller and Roma organisations throughout the country were crucial element in successful implementation of the EU Fundamental Rights Agency's Roma and Traveller Survey 2024. Thanks to their work the research was able to access various Traveller and Roma households in Ireland and to interview them in a sensitive way, not negatively intervening in their everyday lives. The level of expertise the researchers from these organisations showed made it possible to complete the work on time and in a quality necessary for producing internationally recognised results on the situation of Travellers and Roma and their enjoyment of fundamental rights in Ireland

Jaroslav Kling, Research Officer, Equality, Roma and Social Rights Unit, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights

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Ipsos B&A has collaborated with Pavee Point on two high profile research projects. This partnership transformed challenges into opportunities, enabling us to connect deeply with diverse communities that would typically be difficult for a research company to access or engage. The collaboration facilitated effective information gathering through these local partnerships. Moreover, the individuals involved were an absolute pleasure to work with, with a consistent focus on problem-solving and ensuring the success of the research at all stages.

Kieran O'Leary - Director, Ipsos B&A

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INTRODUCTION

Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre (Pavee Point) is a non-governmental organisation committed to the attainment of human rights for Travellers and Roma. Pavee Point is a partnership organisation that works at national and international policy levels on all areas affecting Travellers and Roma.

Over the last 40 years, Pavee Point has established a strong track record in innovative and ground-breaking work using collective community development to address Traveller and Roma issues and promote Traveller and Roma rights. A key element of this work has been the development of our particular methodological approach to research, across all levels (local, regional, national and international) to inform evidence based responses to the stark inequalities faced by Travellers and Roma in Ireland.

At the local level, Pavee Point has undertaken community-based needs assessments, participatory research projects, and collaborative studies focusing on areas such as health, education, accommodation and gender equality.

At the regional and national levels, the organisation has partnered with statutory agencies, universities, and other NGOs to produce evidence that informs policy, legislation, and service development. Pavee Point has contributed to a number of national strategies, including on health, mental health, domestic and gender-based violence, early years care, and anti-racism.

Internationally, Pavee Point has engaged in research collaborations with European and international human rights organisations, contributing to EU policy processes, European Commission studies, UN reports, and international human rights monitoring mechanisms.

Pavee Point's work is recognised for:

- Commitment to human rights and equality frameworks
- Community-led methodologies
- Strong partnerships with universities, public bodies, and civil society
- An ability to translate research into advocacy for policy change

Pavee Point Research Advisory Group oversees, coordinates and monitors the organisation's research activities in terms of both commissioned research and collaborative research for, and with, Travellers and Roma as well as external research supported by Pavee Point. Through the work of the Advisory Group, and building on previous work, we have further developed our analysis and approach to research.

These guidelines aim to ensure that research with and about Travellers and Roma supports Traveller and Roma visibility, equality, collective outcomes, and positive impact, and that research processes respect community knowledge, collective analysis and the expertise of Traveller organisations and groups working with Roma. They highlight best

practices for inclusive, co-designed research, with practical tips on collaborative approaches in setting research agendas, countering harmful and unethical practices, and promoting meaningful and direct participation of Travellers and Roma at every stage of the research process.

WHY THESE GUIDELINES?

Since our establishment in 1985, Pavee Point has believed that robust evidence and research is required in the struggle to protect and promote the human rights of potentially discriminated minorities and to promote

equality and counter discrimination. Without research, we cannot provide the evidence to highlight the existence of systemic or indirect racism and discrimination; inform good policy and practice; and/or assess policy effectiveness over time. Over the past few decades, we have seen how robust research can contribute and inform policy development and support progression of Traveller and Roma rights. Research, when done effectively, can have a positive impact and effect change, but equally, poor research, can have detrimental impacts on communities, in particular, those most marginalised.



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Partnering with Pavee Point brings outstanding expertise that ensures our research is credible, culturally informed and responsive to the real-world needs of Travellers. Pavee Point's leadership strengthens our research through co-creating evidence that is trusted and relevant to inform change.

Dr. Kate Frazer, Associate Professor, UCD School of Nursing, Midwifery and Health Systems

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In this context, we are conscious that in Ireland and across Europe, there have been examples of extractive, harmful and sometimes, unethical research practices related to Travellers and Roma¹ (along with other marginalised and minority ethnic groups) which often only served the interests of the researcher/ research institution, whether intentionally or unintentionally. In some instances, these research projects have had a direct impact on policy measures and decisions and informed public discourse which only further marginalised Travellers and Roma. Because of this history, and given increasing requests and demands on Traveller organisations and groups working with Roma (along with other community organisations) to co-design, collaborate, promote, or engage with research, there is a need for clear, practical guidelines that ensure research undertaken with, and about Travellers and Roma, is:

- Considered, responsible and ethical
- Firmly committed to anti-racist approaches
- Grounded in community work principles of human rights, social justice, empowerment and participation; and
- Is of demonstrable benefit to the community in advancing collective rights and equality

These guidelines are not intended to provide all-encompassing protocols, but rather, offer practical guidance and good practice for inclusive research directly with, about or

impacting on Travellers and Roma. Although this resource is Traveller and Roma specific, key principles and values can support researchers interested in participatory and partnership research grounded in human rights and social justice.

WHO SHOULD USE THESE GUIDELINES?

- International and national funding bodies in the development of new funding schemes or reviewing proposals
- Further and Higher Education Institutions, including including staff and students
- Research ethics committees within academic or other institutions, reviewing and approving applications that seek to undertake research with Travellers/Roma
- Independent researchers and consultants in the design, development and implementation of research project designing and implementing projects
- Traveller organisations or groups working with Roma in commissioning research or considering participation in research
- Public/private bodies commissioning or funding research

¹ McDonagh, R. (2000) Talking back Rosaleen McDonagh In: Byrne, A. and Lentin, R., eds. (2000) *(Re)searching Women: Feminist research methodologies in the social sciences in Ireland*. Dublin: Institute of Public Administration. 237-247.

THE 'P' - PAVEE APPROACH

There are a number of steps that should be considered to ensure that research is appropriate, ethical and of use for advancing collective rights and equality for Travellers and Roma from start to finish. We are calling this the 'Pavee Approach.' This involves addressing the following:

- **Planning**
- **Process and Partnership**
- **Participation**
- **Positioning and Perspective**
- **Publications/outputs**



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Working with Pavee Point has affirmed that partnership is at the heart of a true human-rights approach. When we invest in relationships and collaborate through a collective lens, we create research that is more authentic, more accountable, and ultimately more capable of driving real, lasting change.

Dr. Ciara Bradley, Associate Professor, Department of Applied Social Studies, Maynooth University

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RESEARCH CHECKLIST

1. PLANNING

At the starting point of any research project, it is important to reflect on (1) why the research is being developed; (2) for what purpose; and (3) who will benefit? Travellers and Roma can often be over-researched, without seeing the benefits of engagement. Researchers are asked to consider:

- ☐ Who has set the research agenda? Why? What is the overall purpose?
- ☐ How will the research benefit Travellers/Roma? In what ways?
- ☐ Have you considered the risks to the research and proposed mitigating these risks?
- ☐ What is the added value of this research? For whom?
- ☐ Does the research challenge racism and marginalisation and look to actively contribute to positive social change and justice?
- ☐ Has research been done before? If so, why do it again?
- ☐ Are the methods proposed appropriate to address the research question; can other methods be used e.g. instead of proposing interviews can documentary analysis be considered instead?
- ☐ Have you engaged with Travellers/Roma, Traveller organisations/groups working with Roma, in developing the research question/ research focus? If not, why and how do you propose engaging with Travellers/Roma?
- ☐ Does the proposal explicitly and comprehensively explain how intersectionality and gender issues will be addressed?

PLANNING EXAMPLE: PAVEE POINT'S COVID 19 RESEARCH



Pavee Point commissioned two pieces of research exploring the impacts of COVID 19 on Traveller mental health and maternal health². This research agenda was informed by the experiences of our projects on the ground during the pandemic and the need to reflect on urgent and emerging issues for Traveller families. COVID 19 highlighted the stark health inequalities faced by Travellers and Roma and Pavee Point identified the need to learn from the pandemic, document its impacts and make recommendations for policy and service improvement, with a view to establishing what measures must be prioritised in preparation for future public health emergencies.

² Pavee Point (2024) Travellers' Mental Health: Reflections on the impact of COVID 19. Pavee Point & Maynooth University (2024) Pavee Mothering in COVID 19 <https://www.paveepoint.ie/how-were-you-to-isolate-in-trailers-new-research-published-on-covid-19-and-travellers/>

RESEARCH CHECKLIST

2. PROCESS AND PARTNERSHIP

It is increasingly acknowledged that there is an ethical imperative to ensure direct engagement of communities in the research process, from design right through to dissemination of findings. This means going beyond collaboration and ensuring meaningful partnership and parity of esteem and recognition of expertise of all stakeholders. Ask yourself:

- ☐ Are you working in partnership (or intend to work) with a Traveller organisation or group working with Roma?
- ☐ Have you applied for ethics approval, if so, have you developed this with the organisation/group?
- ☐ Do you have a research advisory group in place and is there representation from Traveller/Roma organisations with knowledge/expertise in research, with collective analysis of key issues? If so, does the research advisory group have a clear Terms of Reference which allows them to raise concerns or pause the research at any stage?
- ☐ In this partnership, are they acknowledged as an equal partner in terms of developing and approving research design, methodology, analysis of findings, and key recommendations?
- ☐ Are research methods culturally appropriate? Have they been agreed with Traveller organisations/groups working with Roma?
- ☐ Have you ensured methods and analysis safeguard against reinforcing stereotypes or further marginalising Travellers?
- ☐ Do you have an agreement on how research results are shared and disseminated and to whom?
- ☐ Have you agreed on a mechanism or process for research findings to be fed back to the community? Have you ring-fenced resources to do this as part of research plan?
- ☐ How accessible and user friendly is the report of the findings? Is there a dissemination plan for different formats/translations as required?
- ☐ Have you worked with Traveller organisations, groups working with Roma to Traveller/Roma proofed outputs?
- ☐ If Traveller organisations/groups working with Roma are commissioning research, is there clarification on research ownership and intellectual property?

PROCESS AND PARTNERSHIP EXAMPLE: ROMA IN IRELAND: ACCESS TO FAIR AND DECENT WORK



Pavee Point and the Department of Applied Social Studies, Maynooth University engaged in a research project on Roma experiences of employment in Ireland³. The study was guided by the core values of community work, participation, collective analysis and collective action. Ethical practice extended beyond the university ethics committee through the involvement of Pavee Point's Research Advisory Group. The approach was informed by a critique of research, consciously moving away from extractive methods towards power-sharing, participation, reciprocity, and action for human rights. Roma researchers, along with broader Pavee Point staff, were involved at all stages of the process from research design, data collection, analysis of findings and dissemination of the report/related advocacy work.

Power dynamics within the research team, as well as power imbalances between researchers and participants were considered. Informed participation and right to refuse were at the centre of this. Roma-proofed consent forms in multiple national languages, ensured information about the research was accessible. Additional time was allocated for explanation and discussion to ensure informed, voluntary participation. Active follow-up on participant needs and provision of information about community-based supports, as well as sharing and reflecting on research findings with the community was fundamental to the approach.



³ Pavee Point & Maynooth University (2023) *Roma in Ireland: Access to Fair and Decent Work*. <https://www.paveepoint.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Access-to-Fair-Decent-Work-AF-LR-FINAL-1.pdf>

RESEARCH CHECKLIST

3. PARTICIPATION

Direct Traveller and Roma participation throughout all stages of the research process is vital. For participation to be meaningful, it needs to be threaded throughout the research design, attributing adequate time, resources, and consideration. To support Traveller/Roma participation, answer the following:

- ☐ How is participation of Travellers and Roma facilitated and supported within the research?
e.g. through community researchers, as co-researchers, others?
- ☐ Is there appropriate funding allocated to support partnership working with Traveller organisations/groups working with Roma?
- ☐ Is participation agreed as negotiable and the right to withdraw from the research process understood?
- ☐ Do research timelines allow for genuine relationship-building and collaboration? If not, have you explored other effective ways of engagement?
- ☐ Are organisations/groups acknowledged for their knowledge and expertise, rather than used solely for access to research participants?⁴
 - *Are they named as co-authors of the research?*
- ☐ Has this partnership been established from the beginning of the project and supported throughout the process?
- ☐ Is the process anti-extractivist at all times, ensuring genuine and beneficial engagement?
- ☐ Have research materials been piloted and Traveller/Roma-proofed to ensure they are accessible and appropriate?
- ☐ Has the organisation/group considered implications of involvement for staff time/ whether the research itself staff involvement in the research constitutes net-value / alignment with strategic priorities of the organisation.
- ☐ How has the research design incorporated a mechanism for accountability to partners and participants, including dissemination of draft research (in an accessible format) for discussion/feedback and analysis.

⁴ Note- the term 'gate-keeper' is often inappropriately applied by researchers in requests to organisations and groups. Given the historical context with Travellers, Roma and other minority ethnic groups, we advise this term not be used.

PARTICIPATION EXAMPLE: THE EU FRA TRAVELLERS AND ROMA IN IRELAND SURVEY 2024



The EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) published a 2024 report on Travellers and Roma across 13 European Countries⁵. This was a follow-up to the 2019 survey, and it was the first time in Ireland that Roma were included. The Irish survey was directly supported by Pavee Point and consisted of surveys with 415 Travellers and 106 Roma across the country.

Pavee Point provided national co-ordination of these two studies and supported the development of the pilot survey and provided information and training on the background/context for the research project.

Data collection was undertaken by peer-researchers in local Traveller organisations and groups working with Roma. This is the advisable approach, as the projects have trust established, ensuring a more robust quality of response. In order to be successful, resourcing, time, and training were provided to the participating organisations. Pavee Point also provided ongoing support for Traveller and Roma interviewers throughout the research process, answering any queries and responding to concerns.



⁵ EU Fundamental Rights Agency (2025) *Rights of Roma and Travellers in 13 European countries - Perspectives from the Roma Survey 2024* <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2025/roma-survey-2024>

RESEARCH CHECKLIST

4. POSITIONING AND PERSPECTIVE

Research is never neutral, it is shaped by our values, theory of knowledge, interests, guided by what we believe can be known and how; as such, it is a political act. What questions we ask, how we ask them and how we interpret the data are key in terms of how data will be used. Consider the following:

- ☐ Have you received an anti-racism induction/training from a Traveller organisation/group working with Roma prior to conducting the research?
- ☐ Have you created opportunities to discuss and reflect on the direction of the research and any potential risks or negative, harmful impacts for Travellers/Roma?
- ☐ Is community knowledge recognised, respected and given equal weight to academic knowledge?
- ☐ How are any power imbalances recognised and addressed?
- ☐ Has the researcher/s considered their own positionality in relation to the research?
- ☐ Are limitations of the research clearly outlined?
- ☐ How is accountability built in as a commitment?
- ☐ Is the analysis and drafts shared with partner organisations/groups and feedback taken on board?

POSITIONING AND PERSPECTIVE EXAMPLE: NATIONAL TRAVELLER CANCER AWARENESS AND ATTITUDES SURVEY

In 2023/4, the first National Traveller Cancer Awareness and Attitudes Survey was undertaken by the HSE National Cancer Control Programme in partnership with Pavee Point. The research was undertaken by Traveller Community Health Workers across Ireland and reflects 483 surveys with Travellers on the ground-exceeding initial targets. Interviews were also undertaken with Travellers and health service providers. The research focused on Travellers awareness of cancer- the risk factors, signs and symptoms, and also key barriers and challenges.

As part of this process, Pavee Point provided anti-racism training to all partners in the project. Pavee Point also played a key role in reviewing drafts of the research, providing feedback and supporting analysis. Preliminary results and updates were also shared with all participating local Traveller organisations for their feedback during the process.

In order to ensure that the findings are accessible and usable for Travellers and Traveller organisations, Pavee Point developed an easy read, Traveller proofed resource which provides an overview of key findings from the survey, which can be used for advocacy at local and national levels.



RESEARCH CHECKLIST

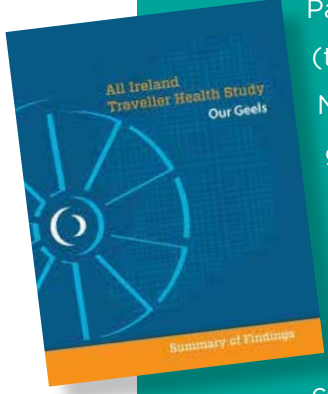
5. PUBLICATIONS/OUTPUTS

Once research is complete and published, it should not be left on a shelf. Research must be accessible and usable for further Traveller and Roma rights, through advocacy, policy development, service improvement and collective action. When finalising your research, please consider:

- ☐ Are Travellers and Roma represented in the findings with accuracy, dignity, and context, and has this been reviewed and supported by Traveller/Roma organisations? Have we avoided:
 - *stereotypes*
 - *sensationalism*
 - *deficit language*
 - *lack of diversity, reducing all experiences to one*
 - *overstating and broad sweeping statements*
- ☐ Does the research use the correct lens/framing for interpreting/analysing the findings i.e. that the framing of findings does not reinforce inequalities?
- ☐ Are findings framed in a way useful for advocacy and policy influencing?
- ☐ Is the research accessible and outputs Traveller/Roma-proofed to support feedback to the community (e.g. visual, audio, infographics, etc.)
- ☐ Is the research open access where possible (and budgeted for in the outset)?
- ☐ Are Traveller organisations and groups working with Roma research partners involved in the dissemination process/creation of academic articles, joint presentation of findings, if involved as co-producers in research, to communicate findings to funders, policy makers, researchers and communities?.



PUBLICATION EXAMPLE: THE ALL IRELAND TRAVELLER HEALTH STUDY AND ROMA IN IRELAND: A NATIONAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT



Pavee Point has led two large scale national studies on the needs of Travellers (the All Ireland Traveller Health Study, 2010)⁶ and Roma (the National Roma Needs Assessment, 2018)⁷. Both projects were ambitious and contributed greatly to the evidence base on Travellers and Roma in Ireland. Both projects used a similar participatory methodology, supporting Traveller and Roma researchers across the country to engage in all aspects of the research. This direct involvement resulted in unprecedented levels of participation; with the All Ireland Traveller Health Study yielding an 80% participation with a community that is so-called 'hard-to-reach'.

The publication and dissemination of the research findings was a vital component of both projects. All researchers were named and recognised in the publications. Pavee Point organised media training to prepare researchers to present the results back to families on the ground and decision-makers and across a wide range of platforms.

Pavee Point also developed Traveller/Roma-proofed resources, highlighting the key findings from both projects and they are used in our ongoing advocacy work at local, national and international levels. This has had direct policy implications and has provided the State with evidence in the development of targeted and mainstreaming policies, including the National Traveller Health Action Plan, the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy, and Travellers/Roma explicitly named and targeted in most mainstream policies and strategies.



⁶ Kelleher, C.C. et al., 2010. *Our Geels: All Ireland Traveller Health Study (AITHS)*. Dublin: University College Dublin & Department of Health and Children. <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-health/publications/all-ireland-traveller-health-study/>

⁷ Pavee Point & Department of Justice (2018) *Roma in Ireland: A National Needs Assessment*. <https://www.paveepoint.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/RNA-PDF.pdf>



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