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Traveller Ethnicity

Ensuring Traveller inclusion in Health Services

February 2026

Travellers have been **part of Irish society for centuries**, long before the Irish Famine.

In the Equal Status Act “Traveller community” is defined as: “The community of people who are commonly called Travellers and who are identified (both by themselves and others) as people with a **shared history, culture and traditions including, historically, a nomadic way of life on the island of Ireland.**”

Ethnicity is a term used to refer to a group of people who identify with each other because of a shared and distinctive culture, ancestry, language, religion, or nationality. **Ethnicity should always be identified by the individual** and it should not be assumed by others.

For decades, Traveller organisations campaigned for formal recognition of Travellers as an ethnic minority group — a vital step in **addressing racism and discrimination** and ensuring that Travellers were acknowledged as a distinct ethnic community within their own country.

In 2017, Taoiseach Enda Kenny made a statement in Dáil Éireann formally recognising Irish Travellers as an ethnic minority group. While this marked a **significant milestone, ongoing inequality**, racism and discrimination mean that substantial challenges remain.

Health services are for everyone and it's important we treat all service users, including Travellers and Roma with dignity and respect.

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