



UN Human Rights Council
Universal Periodic Review of



MINCEIRS WHIDEN
"TRAVELLERS TALKING"

Ireland

4th Cycle
53rd session (2-13 Nov 2026)

Irish Travellers & Roma - Joint Submission by a Coalition of Traveller and Roma Organisations

This report is submitted as a coalition of nine organisations which work towards achieving Traveller and Roma rights in Ireland, as coordinated by **Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre**. **Pavee Point**, founded in 1985, uses collective community development methods locally, nationally, and internationally to realise Traveller and Roma rights in Ireland. The **National Traveller Women's Forum**, founded in 1988, is a network of national Traveller women and Traveller organisations throughout Ireland that recognise the particular oppression of Traveller women in Irish society. **Minceirs Whiden** is Ireland's only all Traveller forum formed in 2004 with the aim of creating a safe place that Travellers could come together and discuss the issues affecting their community. **Donegal Travellers Project** was formed in 1996 and is one of the longest established and largest locally based community development organisations working for, and with, the Traveller and Roma communities. **Galway Traveller Movement**, established in 1994, aims to achieve equality and self-determination for the Traveller community in Galway by applying community work and human rights based approaches to its work. **Offaly Traveller Movement**, established in 1991, is a Traveller led community development organisation working to achieve full equality for the Traveller community throughout County Offaly. **Cork Traveller Visibility Group**, formed in the 1990's, is a Traveller-led, community development organisation committed to social justice and equality for Travellers in County Cork, **Wicklow Travellers' Group**, established in 2001, is a voluntary community development organisation committed to achieving human rights for Travellers in County Wicklow. **Tipperary Rural Traveller Project (TRTP)** formed in 2003 works with the Traveller community in Tipperary to address key issues such as health and accommodation and to promote and protect Traveller culture. **St. Catherine's Community Services Centre** in Carlow, established in 1975, provides a range of community and advocacy support for Travellers and other disadvantaged groups, promoting social inclusion and participation. **Cavan Traveller Movement** is a community organisation supporting the Traveller community in County Cavan, focusing on social inclusion, health and community development.

For full details of our organisations, please see Appendix 1.

INTRODUCTION

Irish Travellers and Roma in Ireland

‘Roma’ represent the largest minority ethnic group in Europe and serves as an umbrella term for a diverse ethnic group, which includes Irish Travellers. There are a little over 36,000 Irish Travellers in Ireland, representing less than 1% of the Irish population, and an estimated 16,049 Roma live in Ireland.¹ Travellers and Roma experience significant and persistent racism and discrimination on the basis of their ethnicity, gender and other grounds, and are among the most marginalised and excluded groups in Ireland.

Our Report - Assessment of the Human Rights Situation of Travellers & Roma in Ireland 2021-2026

This report is structured thematically assessing the extent to which the Irish State has implemented recommendations related to Travellers and Roma from Ireland’s third UPR cycle. It identifies persistent gaps in implementation, and proposes recommendations for urgent and strengthened action to address the ongoing exclusion, discrimination and racism faced by Travellers and Roma. Our submission draws on evidence gathered by our organisations through direct work with the communities, providing additional supporting information from published research and reports.

We welcome positive developments in recent years, including new policies on Traveller and Roma inclusion and anti-racism and the introduction of hate crime legislation. However, policy and legislative gaps remain and positive outcomes on the ground for Travellers and Roma are limited, including for Traveller and Roma women who experience intersectional racism and discrimination. In recalling Ireland’s commitments under European Union and United Nations frameworks, including recent recommendations by treaty monitoring bodies, we urge the State to step up the implementation of existing policies and address remaining gaps in policy and legislation to improve the rights situation of Travellers and Roma.

1. Equality and Non-discrimination Measures – Irish Travellers and Roma

1.1 Ireland’s Second National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2024-2028 (NTRIS II)

A number of recommendations (**157.225, 157.226, 157.229, 157.234, 157.236, 157.237**) were issued from the last UPR Cycle urging Ireland to increase its efforts in relation to implementing and monitoring Ireland’s National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy (NTRIS). Ireland’s first NTRIS (2017–2021) faced significant implementation delays and was weakened by the absence of clear targets, measurable indicators, timelines, dedicated budgets, and a lack of a whole-of-government approach.

We have welcomed Ireland’s second National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy (NTRIS II 2024-2028) and its focus on outcomes for Travellers and Roma across a range of areas, including racism, education, employment, gender inequality, and accommodation. However, we have observed significant delays in advancing the implementation of NTRIS II and remain concerned about the lack of coordinated leadership across government departments in progressing the actions for which they are responsible.

¹ According to Census, 2022 there are approximately 32,949 Travellers in Ireland, however this is considered an undercount as the All Ireland Traveller Health Study (AITHS) established the Traveller population at 36,224 in the Republic of Ireland, in Kelleher et al., *All Ireland Traveller Health Study*, University College Dublin & Department of Health & Children, 2010. Census 2022 reported an estimated 16,049 Roma reported their ethnicity in the national census in Ireland. This was the first time Roma ethnicity was included in the Census form. Central Statistics Office, [Census of Population 2022 – Profile 5: Diversity, Migration, Ethnicity, Irish Travellers and Religion, Dublin: CSO, 2023, Table “Ethnic Group/Background”, including Roma category.](#)

We recommend the Irish State to:

- a) **Ensure the full and timely implementation of the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy (NTRIS) II, with clear targets, robust monitoring, strong accountability, and adequate resourcing across all relevant statutory agencies.**

1.2 Anti-Traveller and Roma Racism & the National Action Plan against Racism

• In 2024, 75% of Travellers said they were discriminated against the year before the survey; only 11% reported discrimination to an official body.² • Travellers are 10 times more likely than White Irish to experience discrimination in seeking work.³ • 40% of Travellers experience discrimination in accessing health services.⁴	• In 2024, 60% of Roma said they were discriminated against in the year before, and only 5% reported discrimination to an official body.⁵ • 78.9% of Roma feel discriminated in getting a job, 93.3% in getting accommodation, 84.4% in getting social welfare, and 81.1% feel discriminated against in a public setting.⁶
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During the last cycle, Ireland was urged to develop a new National Action Plan Against Racism and address anti-Traveller and Roma racism and discrimination (**157.51; 157.74; 157.84; 157.88; 157.230; 157.56; 157.75; 157.81; 157.89; 157.225; 157.226; 157.229; 157.231; 157.232; 157.234**). While we commend the State for developing a new National Action Plan against Racism (NAPAR) 2023-2027, its 2025 Annual Report highlights slow progress and implementation that is insufficient to address the scale of racial discrimination.⁷ Reports across the country indicate that racism and far-right rhetoric targeting Roma and other migrant and minority ethnic groups has increased in recent years, and the intersection of racism and sexism means that Traveller and Roma women are further targeted with hostility and violence.⁸

We recommend the Irish State to:

- a) **Step up the implementation of the National Action Plan Against Racism (NAPAR) through strong leadership, dedicated funding, robust monitoring, and meaningful partnership with Traveller, Roma and other representative organisations, including organisational representation on the NAPAR Advisory Group to strengthen accountability and support action on systemic, intersectional and gendered racism.**

² European Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), [Summary and Perspectives on the Irish Findings from the Rights of Roma and Travellers in 13 European Countries](#), Dublin: Pavee Point Publications, 2025.

³ McGinnity, F., R. Grotti, O. Kenny and H. Russell, [Who experiences discrimination in Ireland?: Evidence from the QNHS Equality Modules](#), Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission and Economic and Social Research Institute, 2017.

⁴ Kelleher et al. *All Ireland Traveller Health Study*, 2010. Survey in 2024 found that 39% of Travellers in Ireland felt discriminated against when accessing healthcare, EU FRA, 2025.

⁵ EU FRA, 2025.

⁶ Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre & Department of Justice and Equality, [Roma in Ireland – A National Needs Assessment](#), 2018.

⁷ The Special Rapporteur on Racial Equality and Racism, [Annual Report 2025 of the Special Rapporteur on Racial Equality and Racism, Ireland](#), December 2025.

⁸ Roma in Ireland: National Needs Assessment found that some Roma women are more easily identifiable through traditional dress associated with Roma and this makes them more vulnerable to on street harassment. Many Roma living in Dublin's inner city felt targeted following the Dublin riots in 2023. The rise of the far right in Ireland is documented in recent research such as Fattibene et al., [The Far-Right Ecosystem in Ireland: History and Contemporary Trends](#), 2024. EU FRA, [Summary and Perspectives on the Irish Findings from the Rights of Roma and Travellers in 13 European Countries](#), Dublin: Pavee Point Publications, 2025.

1.3 Hate Crime and Speech

- In 2024, 50% of Irish Travellers and 41% of Roma experienced hate motivated harassment.⁹
- 5% of Roma reported discrimination to an official body and 57% of Roma tend to trust the police.¹⁰
- In 2020, among all surveyed, Irish Travellers (52%) have the third highest rate of hate-motivated harassment such as offensive comments on the street or online.¹¹

We welcome the enactment of the Criminal Justice (Hate Offences) Act 2024, in line with recommendations from the last Cycle, but note with concern the removal of specific provisions within the legislation to address hate speech. This leaves Travellers, Roma and other groups without this crucial additional layer of protection against targeted abuse and incitement.

We recommend the Irish State to:

- a) Amend the current Incitement to Hatred Act 1989 in order to fully protect victims of hate speech in Ireland, including Travellers and Roma.**
- b) Implement targeted measures to ensure the Criminal Justice (Hate Offences) Act 2024 effectively addresses hate crime against Travellers and Roma, including Traveller and Roma women, supported by enhanced criminal justice training, improved reporting and data collection, strengthened victim supports and public awareness initiatives.**

1.4 Equality Proofing Policy Measures - Lack of Disaggregated Data by Ethnicity

Recommendations from the last cycle (157.228; 157.225) urged the State to develop a mechanism to monitor Traveller and Roma inclusion. While key Traveller and Roma inclusion policies are now in place, the inability to monitor the outcomes of these measures remains due to lack of systematic ethnic data collection across state systems. Where ethnic data is collected it often isn't carried out in line with human rights standards.¹²

In this context, we have welcomed the first ever National Equality Data Strategy 2026-2031, published early this year. It is important that the State meets its obligations related to systematic collection of disaggregated data by ethnicity, gender and other key indicators for the State to be able to human rights and equality proof its policies, budgets and programmes.

⁹ European Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), [*Summary and Perspectives on the Irish Findings from the Rights of Roma and Travellers in 13 European Countries Perspectives from the Roma Survey 2024*](#), Dublin: Pavee Point Publications, 2025.

¹⁰ EU FRA, 2025.

¹¹ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), [*Travellers in Ireland: Roma and Travellers in Six Countries Survey – Country Sheet Ireland*](#), Vienna: FRA, 2020.

¹² To date progress has been made with some Government Departments and State Agencies in relation to progressing ethnic data collection, but there has been significant resistance and regression with others. The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government uses a Traveller only question in their Housing Needs Assessment, which is not compliant with a human rights-based approach as only one group (Travellers) are being asked their ethnicity. An Garda Síochána and the Courts Service report that there is 'no legal basis for ethnic data to be collected' and that ethnic data is not relevant to their services. Where steps have been taken to disaggregate data by ethnicity by some state agencies, it hasn't always taken place in line with human rights standards. For instance, a small number of health service providers have introduced ethnic identifiers. However, ethnic categories are not standardised; ethnic identity is often ascribed to Travellers and Roma by using proxies such as name or looks; and the data is not disaggregated, analysed or provided to stakeholders within an appropriate timeframe.

We recommend the Irish State to:

- a) Fully implement the National Equality Data Strategy 2026-2031 and ensure the collection, analysis, and dissemination of disaggregated data by ethnicity, gender and other key indicators across all relevant administrative systems, in line with human rights standards. Ensure that this data is systematically used to inform ethnic equality monitoring and to equality-proof State policies, budgets, and public programming.

2. Right to Adequate Standard of Living

2.1 Barriers to Basic Social Protection for Roma Children and Families

- 95% of Roma are at risk of poverty (compared to 12% of the general Irish population).
- 96% of Roma children are at risk of poverty (compared to 15% of Irish children in general.)
- 41% of Roma live in severe material deprivation (compared to 4% of the general Irish population).¹³
- Nearly 1 in 2 (49.2%) households with children were not successful in their application for social protection payments and were not receiving child benefit or other crucial welfare supports.
- Roma who are not successful in their social protection applications, the average number of years they have lived in Ireland is eight years.

The State was urged to expand access to justice and social support for marginalised groups, including Roma, migrants, and asylum seekers, ensure they are informed of their rights, and promote their socioeconomic inclusion **(157.126; 157.228; 157.232; 157.235; 157.256)**. These recommendations have not been adequately implemented, and we continue to share significant concern for Roma children, women and families in particular.

Despite residing in the State for several years, many lack the documentation, proof of address, or language and literacy skills required to demonstrate their connection to the State.¹⁴ As a result, many Roma—including women and children—are denied access to social protection and experience extreme poverty. Roma women facing domestic and sexual violence are unable to access essential supports and protection due to inability to prove their right to reside in the State.¹⁵

These barriers are closely linked to the State's application of the right to reside requirements under European Directive 2004/38, and the State's own related policy, the Habitual Residence Condition (HRC).¹⁶ Establishing a right to reside is a prerequisite for meeting the HRC, which is required to access key social protection supports, including Child Benefit, Jobseeker's Allowance, housing

¹³ EU FRA, 2025.

¹⁴ Establishing a right to reside is a prerequisite to meeting the HRC, which a person must meet in order to access welfare supports, including Child Benefit, Rent Allowance, public housing, and employment and training supports.

¹⁵ Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre & Department of Justice and Equality, [*Roma in Ireland – A National Needs Assessment*](#), 2018.

¹⁶ Under the European Directive 2004/38 every EU citizen has a right of residence in another member state for up to three months. They have a right of residence for more than three months if they: are 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; are enrolled at a private or public establishment for study purposes and have sufficient resources for themselves and their families so they are not a burden on the social assistance system; or are family members accompanying or joining the Union citizen who satisfies the above conditions as appropriate. European Union (n 137).

supports, and employment and training services.¹⁷ The application of the HRC has a disproportionate and discriminatory impact on many Roma who have been living in the State for a number of years but are unable to meet these administrative requirements. This includes barriers to applying for social housing or registering as homeless, with digital divide, lack of documentation and interpretation/language supports forming significant barriers in meeting the Habitual Residence Condition.

We recommend the Irish State to:

- a) Ensure the right to reside and the Habitual Residence Condition are applied in line with human rights, with practical measures to guarantee that Roma and other marginalised children and families with long-term residence can access social protection despite documentation, language or literacy barriers.**

2.2 Traveller and Roma Accommodation and Housing

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 42% of Travellers lived in housing deprivation in 2024 (increase from 39% in 2019) and 63% lived in overcrowded housing (increase from 46% in 2019).¹⁸ • Travellers are ten times as likely to report discrimination in access to housing as the general population.¹⁹ • Travellers had one of the highest rates of reported discrimination (73%) when trying to rent or buy housing over the previous 5 years.²⁰ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over 90% of Roma report experiencing discrimination when accessing accommodation. • 6.6% of Roma reported to be currently homeless. • Almost half (45.7%) have been homeless at some stage. • 1 in 5 Roma (24%) lived in households of 8 or more people. • Almost half (44.8%) of Roma did not have enough beds in their accommodation. • Almost 1 in 10 (7.3%) Roma live in households with 10+ people.²¹ |
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Despite recommendations from the last cycle (157.157;157.227; 157.158; 157.154), the State continues to fail to provide safe, adequate, and culturally appropriate accommodation for Travellers and address the housing crisis affecting Roma families in Ireland. Poor and unsafe standards, overcrowding and homelessness have serious consequences for outcomes and have a disproportionate impact on women who bear the effects of these conditions.

Despite the State having a significant national and local Traveller accommodation infrastructure, implementation of Traveller accommodation policy has been slow. While acknowledging that allocated Traveller accommodation budgets are being spent by Local Authorities, it is important to note that the spend is on maintaining existing Traveller accommodation instead of providing new units to meet existing and projected needs in line with legislation. The Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2002 gives additional provision for the State to evict Travellers living on unauthorised sites or on roadside with little or no basic services including access to water or sanitation, while waiting to be accommodated by Local Authorities.

¹⁷ The habitual residence test is intended to evaluate if a person has a connection with the Irish State Department of Social Protection [Habitual Residence Condition](#).

¹⁸ EU FRA, 2025.

¹⁹ Grotti, R., Russell, H., Fahey, É. and Maître, B. (2018) Discrimination and Inequality in Housing in Ireland. Dublin: Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission by the Economic and Social Research Institute.

²⁰ EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) (2020) Travellers in Ireland - Key results from the Roma and Travellers survey 2019

²¹ Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre & Department of Justice and Equality, [Roma in Ireland – A National Needs Assessment](#), 2018.

Roma experience systemic discrimination in accessing accommodation and face severe overcrowding, poor living conditions, lack of security of tenure, and homelessness. Significant barriers to accessing social housing and the Housing Assistance Payment, as well as restrictive eligibility criteria for emergency accommodation and housing supports, leave many Roma families reliant on poor-quality private rental accommodation and living in overcrowded conditions. The process of applying for social housing or registering as homeless can also be lengthy and complex, with the digital divide and the lack of interpretation and language supports creating additional barriers to accessing essential services.²²

We recommend the Irish State to:

- a) Introduce a robust monitoring and accountability framework to ensure funds allocated to Local Authorities for Traveller specific accommodation are effectively used, with clear targets and reporting on new units to accelerate the delivery of safe, gender-responsive, and culturally appropriate Traveller accommodation.**
- b) Take targeted measures to eliminate administrative barriers faced by Roma in accessing social housing, emergency accommodation and the Housing Assistance Payment, and ensure equal access through accessible application processes, including interpretation services, language supports and measures to address the digital divide.**

3. Discrimination and Violence against Traveller and Roma Women

Recommendation **157.234** called on the State to address intersectional discrimination against Traveller and Roma women. Yet, key policies—including National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy (2017–2021 and 2024–2028), the Strategy for Women and Girls (2017–2020 and (2025–2030), and the Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Strategy (2022–2026) - have not transformed outcomes. Actions targeting Traveller and Roma women remain under-resourced, their inclusion in broader gender initiatives is limited, and implementation plans lack clear targets, indicators and measurable outcomes.²³

We welcome the National Strategy for Women and Girls (2025–2030) but stress that without prioritisation and clear targets for Traveller and Roma women and girls, it risks falling short again. Similarly, as the Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (2022–2026) comes to an end, the next iteration must include clear actions and targets for Traveller and Roma women to address the barriers experienced to safety and protection.

We recommend the Irish State to:

- a) Include Traveller and Roma specific actions, targets, and dedicated resources within the action plan for the new National Strategy for Women and Girls (NSWG 2025–2030) and in the next Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence. Ensure the actions are coordinated with the gender actions of the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2024–2028 (NTRIS II) and implemented by all relevant statutory agencies.**
- b) Engage in active and meaningful consultation with Traveller organisations and groups working with Roma throughout the development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the**

²² Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre & Department of Justice and Equality, 2018.

²³ We have welcomed that actions related to Traveller and Roma women have been explicitly included in the current National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy, National Strategy for Women and Girls and Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (NSDSGBV) and urge for prioritising such actions in the forthcoming strategies.

4. The Right to Education – Traveller and Roma Educational Disadvantage

- In 2023/2024, only 76% of Traveller and 65.3% of Roma children entered junior infants/primary school from early childhood care and education, compared to 93.3% of children in the general population.
- Only 26.5% of Travellers and 58.9% of Roma sit the Leaving Certificate compared to 90% of the total cohort.²⁴

Despite recommendations from the previous cycle (**157.236; 157.232; 157.225; 157.226; 157.229; 157.234; 157.236; 157.237**), access, participation, progression, and attainment rates for Travellers and Roma remain significantly lower.²⁵ Structural barriers—including racism, discrimination, bullying, placing children on reduced hours during school day or week, and the high cost and limited availability of childcare and early years education—continue to restrict equal access and retention in education.²⁶

Previous efforts have been made by setting targets to increase Traveller participation in higher education,²⁷ but progress has been modest with only 2.8% of Travellers holding a third level qualification.²⁸ More recently, we have welcomed the development of Ireland’s first National Traveller and Roma Education Strategy (TRES 2024-2030).²⁹ However, the implementation of the TRES has been slow and is further exacerbated by lack of clear targets, accurate disaggregated data, and adequate resourcing that are essential to achieve meaningful change for Traveller and Roma learners, including women.

We recommend the Irish State to:

- Fully implement and resource the National Traveller and Roma Education Strategy to address the educational disadvantage experienced by Travellers and Roma across all education levels.**
- Address Traveller and Roma educational disadvantage through setting clear targets and measures in all other relevant policy measures, including early years education and care and further and higher education.**

4. Right to Health - Traveller and Roma Health Inequalities

²⁴ Government of Ireland, [Traveller and Roma Education Strategy Third Progress Report](#), December 2025.

²⁵ Dr Máirín Kenny, [Travellers and Roma in Education and Training: Overview of Provision and Engagement](#), Pavee Point, 2024.

²⁶ As a result of the cutbacks to targeted supports, there has been a growing trend in the use of ‘reduced timetables’ at primary and secondary level schools whereby Traveller children are being placed on reduced hours during school days but are marked as ‘present’. Cutting children’s school hours is used as a tool to manage behavioural issues related to health, emotional or behavioural issues or conditions, such as ADHD, when schools lack the necessary resources to support children who need additional assistance, in Amin, N., R. Fay, L. Kavanagh, K. Lawrence (eds), *Traveller Health Needs Assessment: County Clare*, Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre and Mid West Traveller Health Unit (THU), 2019.

²⁷ This figure compares to 48% of the general population. Targets have been set in national access plans, including [National Access Plan: A Strategic Action Plan for Equity of Access, Participation and Success in Higher Education 2022-2028](#), 2022.

²⁸ Central Statistics Office, [Census of Population 2022 – Profile 5: Diversity, Migration, Ethnicity, Irish Travellers and Religion, Dublin: CSO, 2023, Table “Ethnic Group/Background”, including Roma category.](#)

²⁹ [Traveller and Roma Education Strategy](#), 2024.

• 134 excess Traveller deaths per year. • Infant mortality rate for Travellers is 3.7 times the national rate. • Life expectancy at birth for male Travellers is 15.1 years less than males in the general population, and 11.5 years less for female Travellers than females in the general population. • suicide rate for Traveller women is 5 times higher than women in the general population and 7 times higher for men.³⁰ • 39% of Travellers felt discriminated against when accessing healthcare.³¹	• 24% of women do not access health services while pregnant. • 36% of Roma women report difficulty in accessing maternity services. • 51% of Roma report more than 14 days of the previous month when their mental health was not good. • 50% of Roma report not to have access to medical cards and GP care. • 84% of Roma women have experienced discrimination in health services, versus 53% of Roma men.³² • 30% of Roma felt discriminated against when accessing healthcare.³³
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The State was urged to address access to health care for Travellers and Roma in the previous UPR Cycle (**recommendations 157.236; 157.81**) and we have welcomed the publication of the National Traveller Health Action Plan (NTHAP) 2022-2027 and its associated resources and implementation structures. This is an ambitious plan and holds potential to have an impact on Traveller health experiences and outcome if fully resourced and implemented. Traveller mental health remains at crisis levels, driven by racism, discrimination, bereavement, poor living conditions and social exclusion, with lack of trust and culturally informed supports limiting access to services.

The State has also committed to the development of a Roma Health Action Plan. This must be progressed with no further delay, and in partnership with civil society organisations working with Roma.

We recommend the Irish State to:

- a) Fully resource and implement the National Traveller Health Action Plan (NTHAP), resourcing and supporting further development of special measures to address Traveller and Roma health inequalities.
- b) Develop a comprehensive Roma Health Action Plan in partnership with groups working with Roma, with targeted measures, indicators, budget and timelines.
- c) Ensure that both targeted and mainstream health policies address the mental health needs of Travellers and Roma, delivering targeted, culturally informed and trauma-aware supports that are fully implemented, resourced and developed in partnership with Traveller and Roma organisations.

5. Right to Work and Equal Employment Opportunities for Travellers and Roma

³⁰ Kelleher et al., 2010.

³¹ EU FRA, 2025.

³² Pavee Point and Department of Justice, *National Roma Needs Assessment*, 2018.

³³ EU FRA, 2025.

- 61% of Irish Travellers are unemployed, compared to 7% of the White Irish population (Census, 2022).³⁴
- 65% of young Travellers are neither in employment, education or training, compared to 7% of young people in Ireland generally.
- 84% of Travellers felt discriminated against when looking for work, and 34% felt discriminated against at work.
- 96% of Travellers are at risk of poverty, compared to 12% of the general Irish population.
- 40% of Travellers live in severe material deprivation, compared to 4% of the general Irish population (an increase from 31% in 2019).³⁵
- Census 2022 indicates that 16% of Roma are unemployed, compared to 7% of the White Irish population, but a 2024 survey shows that just over 50% of Roma are reported not to be in paid work - well below the figure of 21% for the general population.³⁶
- 95% of Roma are at risk of poverty, compared to 12% of the general Irish population.
- 41% of Roma live in severe material deprivation, compared to 4% of the general Irish population.

The previous UPR cycle made recommendations for the State to address discrimination and exclusion experienced by Travellers and Roma in employment (**157.52; 157.57; 157.232; 157.238**). However, progress remains limited, and Traveller and Roma unemployment rates remain substantially higher than those of the general population, reflecting persistent structural barriers, discrimination, and limited access to education, training, and employment supports.

Travellers and Roma are not identified as target groups in key mainstream employment policy initiatives,³⁷ and no dedicated strategy has been developed to address the high levels of unemployment. While there have been some positive affirmative action measures undertaken by the State, commitments to develop a comprehensive Traveller and Roma Training, Employment and Enterprise Plan remain outstanding. This is in addition to commitments for targeted employment support for minority ethnic groups under the *Pathways to Work* Strategy.³⁸ Delivery of these commitments must be prioritised without further delay.

We recommend the Irish State to:

- Develop and resource a comprehensive Traveller and Roma Training, Employment, and Enterprise Plan with clear targets, measures, timelines and resources to increase the employment, training and apprenticeship opportunities for Travellers and Roma. Ensure this plan has a strong gender lens to address the specific barriers facing Traveller and Roma women.**
- Explicitly include Travellers and Roma in mainstream employment strategies with special training, employment and enterprise measures that have clear targets, timelines and resources**

6. Participation in Political and Public Life

Travellers and Roma remain significantly excluded from decision-making and political processes due to discrimination and marginalisation. Despite policy commitments, there are no effective measures

³⁴ Central Statistics Office, [Census of Population 2022 – Profile 5: Diversity, Migration, Ethnicity, Irish Travellers and Religion, Dublin: CSO, 2023, Table “Ethnic Group/Background”, including Roma category.](#)

³⁵ EU FRA, 2025.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ The Pathways to Work Strategy 2016-2020 or Future Jobs Ireland 2019, [Future Jobs Ireland- 2019- Preparing Now for Tomorrow's Economy](#), Department of the Taoiseach and the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, 2019.

³⁸ Government of Ireland, [Pathways to Work](#), 2021.

to increase representation. While the appointment of a Traveller woman to the Seanad in 2020 (upper house of the Irish Parliament) and her election in 2024,³⁹ and voter education initiatives, are welcome, no other measures to improve participation at local and national levels have been introduced. Gender quotas under the Electoral (Amendment) (Political Funding) Act 2012 have not increased participation by minoritised women, including Traveller and Roma women, and no quotas exist for Travellers or other minority groups. The expanding role of Local Authorities offers opportunities for inclusion, but targeted support and resources are needed to ensure meaningful participation of Travellers and Roma in local governance and community initiatives.⁴⁰

We recommend the Irish State to:

- a) Undertake special measures to ensure the inclusion of Travellers (recognised as a distinct ethnic minority in Ireland) and other minority ethnic groups in political representation at local and national levels. This should include the introduction of representation quotas in the Houses of the Oireachtas (national parliament) and, where appropriate, in local councils, including targeted provisions within existing gender quotas.**
- b) Undertake special measures to promote the inclusion of Travellers and Roma, and their issues experienced, in participative democracy, policies, programmes and initiatives undertaken by Local Authorities**

7. Access to Justice

- Although Travellers account for 0.6% of the overall population in Ireland, they account for 22% of the female prison population.⁴¹
- The risk for a Traveller woman being imprisoned is 18 to 22 times higher than that of the general population.⁴²
- The majority of Traveller women in detention are imprisoned for non-violent, poverty related offences.⁴³ Their criminalisation is shaped by poverty, racial discrimination, unmet mental health needs, homelessness, and gender-based violence. Many should have been diverted to community-based, trauma-informed supports rather than custody.

The last cycle (157.119) called for the State to apply more non-custodial measures and ensure that solitary confinement remains a measure of last resort. Yet, we continue to have serious concerns regarding the over representation of Travellers in the criminal justice system due to poverty related

³⁹At local level, there are currently no Traveller or Roma councillors. At national level, Ireland had never directly elected a Traveller or Roma woman to either House of the Oireachtas until the 2025 Seanad election when Senator Eileen Flynn was elected for the Administrative Panel in 2025, having previously being nominated by the Taoiseach in 2020.

⁴⁰ National Traveller Women's Forum & AkiDwA. (2022). *Different paths, shared experiences: Ethnic minority women and local politics in Ireland* (P. Cullen & S. Gough, Authors). Maynooth University, Department of Sociology.
https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/sites/default/files/assets/document/15754_NTWF_Summary_Report_V4.pdf

⁴¹ Irish Prison Service cited in Travellers in Prison Initiative, [see more here](#).

⁴² Kelleher et al., 2010.

⁴³ Irish Independent, '[Women's prisons over capacity as inmates committed for minor offences, warns Irish Penal Reform Trust](#)', 21 November 2013.

offences; their lack of access to legal representation, prevention, diversion, and post-release supports;⁴⁴ and experiences of racism while in the system.⁴⁵

The work of the Irish Prison Service, which supports peer support work with Travellers in prison, has been welcome, and the Probation Service Statement of Strategy 2024-2026 acknowledges some key recommendations related to Travellers in detention. However, the State has not responded with adequate measures to address the scale of the over-representation or the contributing factors that increase Travellers' risk of imprisonment. Overcrowding and prison standards continue to be serious issues across the prison services (despite **157.113; 157.114; 157.118; 157.21; 157.122**), with women and men's prisons consistently showing high rates of overcrowding.⁴⁶ The practice of a lock back regime in the women's prison (Dóchas Centre), which confines women to their cells for long periods of time, is having a serious impact on the mental health and wellbeing of women.⁴⁷

These issues reflect systemic problems across the criminal justice system, where discriminatory policing and limited access to legal representation, contribute to the disproportionate number of imprisonment of Travellers, —especially women. Addressing this over-representation requires action across all stages of the system, not only in prisons.⁴⁸

We recommend the Irish State to:

- a) Identify and address the contributing factors to the overrepresentation of Traveller women in prison and expand community-based alternatives for short sentences and non-violent offences.**
- b) Enhance early intervention, pre- and post-release supports for Traveller and Roma women, utilising trauma-informed care that acknowledges intergenerational disadvantage and systemic inequality.**

⁴⁴ In 2020 FLAC set up a [dedicated Traveller legal aid service](#) with a view to increased access to legal Justice for Travellers. However, it is a time and resource limited project and more action in this area is needed.

⁴⁵ Travellers report racist name calling by other prisoners and prison staff, and many experience mental health issues, depression, suicidal thoughts and begin to use drugs as a means of coping. Traveller women experience stigma, anxiety, and fear as they are separated from their children, many of whom are in foster care [ICJA Conference, "Toward a Trauma-Responsive Criminal Justice System", 2018](#)

⁴⁶ On the 8th of May 2025 the number of women in custody in the Dóchas was 194 - 133% capacity and Limerick women's prison had 83 women in custody – 148% capacity, [see more here](#).

⁴⁷ <https://www.iprt.ie/latest-news/iprt-responds/> "Of particular concern is the 'lock-back' regime, whereby women were either locked in their cells or in the yard for 3-hour periods. Those who were in the yard were not permitted inside for any reason, even to use the toilet. It was chilling to read that during the inspection, women banging on doors pleading to be let out of their cells were ignored by staff. Inspectors also witnessed women being locked out during a severe storm, shouting to staff to be let back in, with one woman describing their treatment as being 'left like rats outside'. While the report notes that changes were made following this incident, there is no clarity provided on what follow-up actions were taken in terms of accountability."

ANNEX 1: Coalition Members – Submitting Organisations

Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre

46 North Great Charles Street, Dublin 1, Ireland

Tel: 353 1 878 0255

Email: lynsey.kavanagh@pavee.ie and martin.collins@pavee.ie

Website: www.paveepoint.ie

National Traveller Women's Forum

4/5 Eustace St., Dublin 2, Ireland

Tel: 353 1 7383874

Email: mariajoyce2@yahoo.co.uk / info@ntwf.net

Website: www.ntwf.net

Minceirs Whiden

Our Lady of Lourdes Community Centre, Childers Road, Limerick, Ireland

Tel: 353 85 880 4450

Email: maureen.minceirswiden@gmail.com

Website: www.minceirswiden.ie

Donegal Travellers Project

Port House, Port Rd, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal, Ireland

Tel: 353 74 98 51936

Email: siobhankmclaughlin@gmail.com

Website: www.donegaltravellersproject.ie

St. Catherine's Community Services Centre

St. Joseph's Road, Carlow. R93 T4C6

Tel: 353 59 9138700

Email: tpm@catherines.ie

Website: www.catherines.ie

Galway Traveller Movement

1 The Plaza, Headford Road, Galway

Tel: 353 91 765390

Email: margaret@gtmtrav.ie

Website: www.gtmtrav.ie

Offaly Traveller Movement

Harbour St, Tullamore, Co. Offaly, R35 Y470

Tel: 353 057 935 2438

Email: sandra@otm.ie

Website: www.otm.ie

Cork Traveller Visibility Group Ltd.

25 Lower John St, Cork, Ireland T23 YX50

Tel: 353 214503786

Email: tvgtehmina@gmail.com

Website: www.tvgcork.ie

Wicklow Travellers Group

Crinion Park, Corporation Lands, Wicklow

Tel: 353 83 442 8130

Email: coordinator@wicklowtg.ie

Website: www.wicklowtravellersgroup.ie

Tipperary Rural Traveller Project

Carrownreddy, Tipperary, E34 FT91

Tel: 353 062 31138

Email: nuala@tipptravellerproject.com

Website: www.trtp.ie

Cavan Traveller Movement

Unit 9, New Court, Cavan Town, H12 Y320, Co. Cavan

Tel: 353 87 1753007

chrissiectm@gmail.com

ENDNOTES: