



Submission to An Garda
Síochána's Strategy Statement
2022-2024

Background Introduction

Founded in 1990, the Irish Traveller Movement is the national advocacy and membership platform which brings together Travellers and representative organisations to develop collective solutions on issues faced by the community to achieve greater equality for Travellers. We represent Traveller interests in national governmental, international and human rights settings. We challenge racism-individual, cultural and structural which Travellers face and promote integration and equality.

Travellers are an indigenous ethnic minority who, historical sources confirm, have been part of Irish society for centuries. Travellers' long shared history, cultural values, language, customs and traditions make them a self-defined group and one which is recognisable and distinct. Their culture and way of life, of which nomadism is an essential factor, distinguishes them from the settled population.

According to the last available data 2019 ⁽¹⁾ there were 10,809 families across 31 local authorities, accounting for approximately upwards of 50,000 people.

Submission replies

The Irish Traveller Movement welcome the opportunity to submit to An Garda Síochána on matters related to Travellers and policing and set forth replies here based on long term expertise in Traveller equality. These respond across the questions posed towards a renewed Garda Strategy 2022-2024 and on thematic approaches contained in it, Engagement and Accessibility, Community, Inclusivity and Diversity and Service Delivery and Improvement.

The Irish Traveller Movement welcome also the Garda Diversity and Integration Strategy 2019-2021 and the specific goals underpinning it. We note the important and ongoing research by The Policing Authority on the Experiences of Victims of Crime Within the Garda Síochána and that phase 2 of the research will address the lack of information of understanding or reporting concerns for Victims from Traveller and Roma communities.

The full implementation of the actions within strategies related to An Garda and within the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy, are urgently required in the context of the following:

- ▶ **The Irish Traveller Movement noted the findings on an internal study highlighted by a journalist in 2020 by the then Garda Ethnic Liaison Office ⁽¹⁾. The report which found high levels of negative attitudes towards Travellers at the time, established that all the Gardaí interviewed for the study held those attitudes in advance of taking up their positions and remained negative as serving Gardaí. This study was undertaken in 2014 but unpublished.**

The Irish Traveller Movement have long reported concerns and studies which have established ingrained negative views towards Travellers within policing, in community engagement, civil and legal matters, of racial profiling and an inconsistent response to the community where policing is required, sometimes during times of trauma and bereavement. These have impacted in some part on Travellers ability to have confidence in policing supports and police protection.

Conscious or unconscious bias has been catalogued in national studies of Travellers own attitudes, 70% of Travellers have felt discriminated against by the Gardaí 48%⁽²⁾ in the past year and show how access to services within the State including the Gardaí, have given rise to discriminatory practice, borne of perceived bias.

The high incidence of racial profiling by the Gardaí targeted at Travellers and other ethnic groups, and their disproportionate high representation in the prison system was raised in December (2019) by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in its Concluding observations⁽³⁾ on Ireland. It cited “regrets of the lack of detailed information on legislative, disciplinary or other measures taken by the State party to prevent, prohibit and monitor ethnic profiling by the police force” and raised concerns “about the absence of legislation proscribing racial profiling, and of independent complaint mechanisms dealing with racial profiling and the lack of statistics”

While we acknowledge continued efforts to redress cultural awareness training as part of 2020 strategies, key recommendations by CERD to the State party called for the full implementation of Strategy; including to collect disaggregated data on racial profiling and regularly publish it and to provide the data in its next CERD periodic report.

It also recommended the Introduction of legislation prohibiting racial profiling with an independent complaints mechanism; a review, with affected communities, of police policy, practices and training; and to incorporate racial profiling issues into the training.

- ▶ **The Public Attitudes Survey (PAS)** does not provide an adequate measure of Travellers views and other underrepresented groups, as it is undertaken using a national representative sample. **These surveys should be bolstered by cohort surveys of Travellers, to ensure Travellers are included within the range of experiences, as a matter of course.**
- ▶ **10% of hate crimes reported to iReport in 2019** ⁽⁴⁾ were made by Travellers who represent just 0.7% of the population. **The proposed hate crime legislation and introduction of the specific indicators in crime reporting by An Garda Síochána are urgently required.**

Travellers and representative groups continue to be concerned regarding the uneven experience of reporting hate crime, despite plans under Strategic Priority 5 – Outcome 5 “*Clear, concise and effective internal communications in respect of policy and procedures on diversity, integration and hate crime.*”

- ▶ Since the introduction of the **Public Sector Duty in 2014**, this is the first audit of public services as they relate to Travellers. The inclusion of an ethnic identifier is critical to measure the effectiveness of the Public Sector Duty and to determine the practice, policy and procedure of public services towards Travellers. **This duty must also be reflected in Policing Priorities and Policing Plans.**
- ▶ **A comprehensive data collection system’** (inclusive of disaggregation of data by ethnicity in line with human rights-based standards) should be a priority in all policing strategies and plans to generate robust and reliable data to inform policing policy and practice
- ▶ **Intercultural awareness and anti-racism training:** The CERD Committee recommended the State to develop a coordinated work plan with the Irish Human Rights Commission (IHRC) that allows the IHRC to raise awareness and provide human rights training to all civil servants including the *Garda Síochána*.
- ▶ **There are concerns that ambition for the Garda Traveller Advisory Group (GTAG)** have been suspended and meetings postponed in 2020 despite opportunities to convene in digital spaces. This Group requires a Garda representative lead to direct and coordinate its scheduling to maintain momentum and progress actions.

- ▶ **Participation of Travellers in Joint Policing Committees** and links between Local Traveller Organisations and the Ethnic Minority Liaison Officers, while welcomed is not pervasive. It is noted in 16.2⁽⁵⁾ of Guidelines on Membership of Joint Policing Committees, the need to ensure that those community members selected will ensure broad representation, including Travellers. It is not clear and anecdotal evidence would suggest there is limited Traveller representation across Committees. **A review of Committee membership should be undertaken with a plan to renew targeted actions.**
- ▶ **In relation to monitoring and maintaining Garda digital platforms** and those which intersect between the Gardai and the Public. The Irish Traveller Movement raised matters with The Corporate Communications Unit in June 2020 regarding Garda specific social media platforms were anti-Traveller and racist comments from members of the public were unmoderated.

Outlining how self-regulation of the comments section by the public seemed to be the favoured given replies to concerns as such *“...where the comments are offensive we request people to remove their post and provide the feedback without the bad language, offensive wording. This engagement approach works in the majority of cases. Where however the commentary is blatantly offensive we may request the person to remove it and on occasions we immediately remove the comment and block the person from posting on the Garda account.*

We noted under Garda Síochána Social Media Policy however *“The moderator's role is to ensure that online postings placed on official An Garda Síochána social media sites are relevant, non-threatening, respectful of the views of other contributors, are not insulting, obscene, prejudicial, offensive, discriminatory or defamatory, or a breach of discipline.*

We raised this matter with Garda representatives on the NTRIS committee and the Garda Community Relations Bureau, seeking further clarity. **We remain concerned that to date there has been no definitive response.**

1. <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/crime-and-law/garda%C3%AD-have-negative-view-of-travellers-survey-finds-1.4334274>
2. <https://itmtrav.ie/key-reports/>
3. CERD United Nations, CERD/C/IRL/CO/5-9. International Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. Distr.: 23 January 2020
4. https://inar.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/2019_iReport_Final.pdf
5. <http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/JPC%20Guidelines%20Revised%20August%202014.pdf/Files/JPC%20Guidelines%20Revised%20August%202014.pdf>

Context Statistics

Health status

- Traveller women live on average 11.5 years less than women in the general population and
- Traveller men 15 years less
- Deaths among Traveller infants is estimated at 14.1 for every 1,000 live births compared to 3.9 for every 1,000 live births among the general population.
- Suicide is six times the national rate for Travellers.⁽¹⁾

Accommodation status

- Over 2,000 families are living in inadequate, unsafe and impermanent conditions in shared and overcrowded accommodation or on roadsides. Traveller Accommodation Programmes show a current need to supply nationally for 2,871 families. ⁽²⁾
- Approximately 60% of Travellers are under 25 and 31% of 15-29-years olds are married versus 5.8% nationally. ⁽³⁾
- In May 2017 (last available) 10% of families in emergency accommodation were Travellers ⁽²⁾

Education status

- In 2016 only 13% of Travellers versus 92% non-Travellers completed senior cycle at second level ⁽³⁾
- 2019 enrolment shows a total nationally in primary and post primary education of 11,397 pupils, 4,136 girls and 4,169 boys in primary and 1,610 girls and 1,482 boys in post-primary ⁽⁴⁾
- In 2017 only 8% of working-age Travellers compared to 73% of non-Travellers had reached leaving certificate at second level. ⁽⁵⁾
- 57% of Traveller boys had only primary-education compared to 13% nationally ⁽³⁾
- 13% of female Traveller females were educated to upper secondary or above compared with 69.1% of the general population ⁽³⁾.

Employment status

- 80% of Travellers eligible for work were unemployed in 2016 and participation rates of Travellers aged 15 – 24 were 55.9% compared to 32.5% for the general population in that age group. ⁽³⁾

Policing and detention

- 70% of Travellers felt discriminated against by the Gardai ⁽⁷⁾
- In 2019 Travellers accounted for 19% of children in Oberstown Children Detention Campus. By comparison, Travellers account for just over 1% of the population aged 12 to 18. ⁽⁶⁾

Discrimination

- 53% of Travellers had experienced discrimination in licensed premises from pub staff, 51% from hotel staff and 43% from staff of discos/clubs. ⁽⁷⁾
- Ireland had the second highest rate of reported discrimination within EU countries surveyed - 68 % of men and 62% of women and 46% of respondents stated they would feel “uncomfortable with Roma and Travellers as neighbours.” ⁽⁸⁾
- 4 out of 10 Travellers said they or their children had been bullied in school because of their identity. ⁽⁷⁾
- Of a national representation sample only 17% of people they would employ a Traveller ⁽⁷⁾ and (IHREC) found “Travellers are ten times more likely than White Irish to experience discrimination seeking work ⁽⁹⁾.

References

1. <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/b9c48a-all-ireland-traveller-health-study/>
2. <https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation/department-of-housing-local-government-and-heritage/>
3. <https://www.cso.ie/en/csolatestnews/presspages/2017/census2016profile8-irishtravellersethnicityandreligion/>
4. Department of Education POD and PPOD on request.
5. <https://www.esri.ie/system/files/publications/RS56.pdf>
6. <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/c2a87f-the-statistical-spotlight-series/>
7. <https://itmtrav.ie/key-reports/>
8. <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2020/roma-travellers-survey>
9. <https://www.ihrec.ie/app/uploads/2017/11/Who-experiences-discrimination-in-Ireland-Report.pdf>