

Target Investment for Travellers in Budget 2024

Travellers are one of the most excluded and discriminated groups in Ireland. High unemployment, poor educational outcomes, chronic disproportionate ill-health, social exclusion and racism is widespread. 73% of the population is under 35yrs ⁽¹⁾ **with life expectancy 15 years less for men and 11 years less for women** compared to the general population. Suicide is six times the national average accounting for 11% of all Traveller deaths ⁽²⁾. **Over 2,000 families live in inadequate, and unsafe conditions**, many without access to running water or a toilet and almost **1,000 families live in overcrowded / shared housing** ⁽³⁾.

Recommendations

Future Proof and Put Money Where It Matters

- Reduce Traveller child poverty and introduce a Child Income Support Payment (CISP)
- Increase core social welfare rates by a minimum of €27.50.
- Expedite the National Equality Data Strategy to ensure Travellers are targeted in investment decisions, service design and reporting
- Invest in a National Traveller Employment Strategy towards poverty alleviation and improve Traveller welfare

Make Our Homes A Government Priority

- Ensure priority investment in social housing monies to establish a National Traveller Accommodation Authority.
- Mind Our Children and Give Them a Secure Future
- Take a needs-led / follow the Traveller child budgetary approach across all domains in health, mental health, poverty risk, education and accommodation.
- Resource beyond dormant accounts, targeted investment for improving retention at year 3 senior cycle and ring-fence monies to deliver the National Traveller Education Strategy

Mind Our Health

- Commit specific investment for Traveller mental health and towards a Mental Health Strategy

Ensure Our Future Outcomes with Realistic Investment

- Ensure adequate, cross departmental and integrated investment for the next National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2024
- Increase funding for Traveller Community Development organisations and take account of cost of living increases

Ensure Our Culture Matters

- Commit dedicated Traveller investment in Arts, Culture and Heritage
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Poverty Tracking and monitoring

Intergenerational poverty and high unemployment among Travellers is common. Mainstream alleviation measures have not redressed specific long-term income inadequacy, improved standards of living or better life outcomes.

A systematic understanding of the cause of Traveller's social inequalities is absent to inform government investments and strategies, despite disproportionate evidence of high unemployment, social protection reliance and a long-term housing and accommodation crisis.

Travellers are not tracked within the Survey on Income and Living Conditions SILC or as a subset to mainstream benchmarking reports and longitudinal analysis ⁽⁴⁾ of poverty, income inequality and living standards, despite unequivocal, anecdotal and academic evidence ⁽⁵⁾

Available data shows (2020 last available) There are 11,118 Traveller families nationally, accounting for approx. 46,695 to 58,925 people, ⁽⁶⁾ who are not catered for via a targeted approach in government policy and planning, but subject to catch all mainstream models, which has underserved Traveller welfare.

The Poverty Comparators (Reference at Table 1)

13% of Ireland's population were living below the poverty line compared to 31% of Irish Traveller households, in acute poverty. Unemployed people were most at risk of poverty in 2022 at (35.6%), versus 80% of Travellers unemployed. Age is a risk factor for poverty and for persons over 65years in particular -19% in 2022, however just 3% of Travellers in 2016,

were 65 years or older. Conversely, 28% of Traveller children in Ireland grow up in severe material deprivation.

People renting or rent free were next at risk, with 23.6% nationally, putting Travellers severely at risk with 93% in rental accommodation in 2021.

When making ends meet 5.9% of all households in Ireland had great difficulty in 2022. **40% of Travellers households had (great) difficulties in 2019**(last available data).

We support proposals, including the European Anti Poverty Network's, to benchmark all social welfare rates against an adequate level to lift people above the poverty line and provide them with a Minimum Essential Standard of Living (MESL). Also, to move toward introducing a living wage based on the cost of living, as calculated by the Living Wage Technical Group

Traveller Children and Young People

There is an estimated 22,000 – 28,000 Travellers under 19 years in Ireland. Their needs have not been prioritised in public service monitoring, and they are underserved by mainstream approaches. There is an absence of data collection much needed to plan and target interventions to improve their life chances.

The Comparators (Reference at Table 2) Traveller infant mortality is 4.5 times the rate of the general population, disability for under 4 yrs. is double, and for 12-24 years, is almost twice the rate nationally. 7 times more Traveller children under 5 years are living in a jobless household and 3 in 10 grow up in severe material deprivation. 25% of homeless children in emergency accommodation outside of Dublin were Travellers (no national data set available).

- The First 5 strategy, the Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies and Young Children takes a universal investment approach and Traveller children are not being targeted for specific interventions in view of poor accommodation, education, health and mental health.
- Health and Disability: Traveller children are not entitled to a medical card based on identity, despite higher rates of material deprivation. Expansion of the GP access scheme is welcome, but the demand is much greater in the context of chronic health worsened by inadequate living conditions for many. There are no targeted measures for Traveller children in the National Disability Inclusion Strategy (2017- 2021), but there is disproportionate need.
- Mental health. The trajectory of poor mental health for young Travellers is a continued cause of concern and the absence of data too. Currently 24 of the 26 adult Emergency Departments collect ethnic data but not the Child and Adolescence Mental Health

Emergency Departments. Programmes to address mental health issues for young Travellers are earmarked in the National Traveller Health Action Plan, but the crisis is outpacing the incidence in the community, and not being addressed as priority.

The ESRI's latest research ⁽⁷⁾ (Sept 2023) addresses child poverty and asserts 'there exists a strong body of evidence that income poverty has a causal impact on child outcomes, particularly when it starts in early childhood and persists throughout'.

According to the ESRI 170,000 children are currently below the poverty line in Ireland. Those most at risk are living in rented accommodation (with or without state support) and those where no one is in paid work in their household, are particularly associated with a greater risk of poverty and material deprivation. So too living in a large household, where someone has a disability. **9 in 10 Traveller households are renting, 8 in 10 Travellers are unemployed, 2 in 10 Travellers have a disability and the average household size is 5.3**

The Irish Traveller Movement support the call for the introduction of a new Child Income Support Payment (CISP) to reduce child poverty more effectively, and accord with the ESRI ⁽⁸⁾, the Commission on Taxation and Welfare, National Economic and Social Council (2007; 2021) the Children's Rights Alliance (2010).

Universal Poverty alleviation supports alone will not redress Traveller income inequality, but additional child related supports will help material deprivation for households who are consistently affected.

Educational disadvantage

The Comparators (Reference at Table 2) Just **2 in 10 Travellers took the leaving certificate compared to 9 in 10 nationally**. Half the rate of Traveller students under 16 years are in post primary compared to all pupils at the same age. Traveller pupils were 4 times the rate taking the Junior Certificate School Programme JCSP and 6 times the rate in Leaving Cert Applied.

There is no ring-fenced government investment for Traveller education now or at any time. Local and National Traveller organisations are not broadly resourced to work to support Traveller's in education. Dormant accounts funding in 2022 has allowed supports in some areas but there is a critical need for expansion, especially to ensure Traveller retention in post primary. Further targeted investment too beyond 4 government led pilot projects, 3 years running and choking progress on a national roll out of supports for all Traveller learners, while students continue to drop out. Expediting targeted investment beyond the 4 government led pilot projects, which are 3 years running and choking progress on a national roll out of

supports for all Traveller learners, is critical where Traveller students continue to leave school early.

The DEIS Programme has indirectly benefited some Traveller children, but is without monitoring of allocations made at school level to assess Traveller outcomes. In retention terms, Traveller pupils in DEIS schools have had a similar average retention rate (25.0%) to non-DEIS status schools (25.1%) for five years, especially Traveller girls, and approximately half of all Traveller pupils attend DEIS. (at Table 2)

School administered supports, such as the capitation grant for Travellers, are not disaggregated by pupil at school level and information is not transparent. Anecdotal analysis, (data not collected) shows Travellers with additional needs who are also affected by their accommodation status, parental educational status, and marginalization from additional needs supports and services, are being underserved by mainstreaming approaches and are not being monitored.

Guidelines to combat the operation of Reduced Timetables affecting Traveller students (Jan 2022) and TUSLA reporting is welcome but first reporting for the school year 2022/23 shows **that primary schools are four times more likely to reduce the length of the school day for a Traveller or Roma child, and those children 12 times more likely to have their school hours cut at second level.**

Funding committed for 21 Higher Education Institutions over 3 years is reassuring but attention to address retention in post primary at year 3, is a factor in lower uptake to date. A combination of universal and targeted supports is needed to improve Traveller educational outcomes given the additional and legacy barriers not being met by catch all mainstream supports. The introduction of a “follow the Traveller child” investment approach is needed.

Traveller Mental Health

Traveller consultation is not imbedded in mainstream health frameworks and strategies (except in 6 sets), (9) most National Health studies or vital statistics monitors, National Office for Suicide Prevention, HSE mental health services, coroner’s courts, addiction and rehab services. This significantly undermines the need for action and investment, which includes the need for a national Traveller suicide observatory.

Mental health supports are provided for in the new National Traveller Health Action Plan NTHAP, but the Programme for Government promised National Traveller and Roma Mental Health Action Plan has been revoked, a cause of concern as the six actions to be delivered through the HSE in the NTHAP, are less than the demand requires.

The Self-Harm Comparators. Compared to other ethnic groups, Travellers had the highest rate of self-harm acts overall at (61%) and of 24,473 self-harm and suicide-related ideation presentations, 744 (3%) were Irish Traveller patients. (10) Traveller men 20-29 years had the highest suicide-related ideation amongst all Traveller men, and Traveller women aged 40–49yrs of their group. The peak self-harm age for Traveller men and women, was between 20 and 29 years' old (11)

Inadequate living conditions

Over 8,000 Travellers are in need of accommodation, including 2000 families in overcrowded or emergency provision, or roadsides. Additionally, 13% of all homeless adults nationally were Travellers (12). As a comparator to national homeless findings (children and adults), this could equate to 1 in 5 Travellers as homeless, as a low estimate.

The Delivery Rate and Funding Comparators. There is no National Traveller Accommodation oversight body to monitor delivery rates, but in July 2023 information supplied via parliamentary questions shows the planning status of council's Traveller accommodation projects from 2016-2023.

- **Units Planned:** From **2016 -2023** - Councils planned and sought funding for **892 units** for Travellers comprising **only 93 new units**, with **707** units earmarked for refurbishments or health and fire safety.
- **Where in the pipeline:** Of the **297** Traveller projects planned nationally 207 are still at Planning Stage with just 12 at Final Account stage. (139 are using Single Stage, their status is unknown.)
- **Rate of Delivery:** **Just 44 units were built** by local authorities for the **3 years 2019-2021** despite a need of 2,871 Traveller families (in 2020) **compared with 6,499 New Build Housing units** delivered by councils for the same period
- **Funding Budgets** Spending remains well below pre-austerity levels and pro rata to mainstream investment 59,247 households nationally qualified for social housing support (2021) and government spent €3.1 Billion (13), versus 2000 Traveller households (2021 last available) in need or living in inadequate provision, with only €15 million spent by councils for the same period.

The foundational architecture to remedy stagnant delivery of Traveller accommodation remains absent under four pillars scrutiny, transparency, fairness and accountability. Two other absent drivers since the legislative requirement of The Traveller Accommodation Act 1998, is a clear national strategy and an implementation plan. The conclusive governance recommendation of 32 made in the government commissioned and endorsed Expert Group Report of Traveller Accommodation 2019, was an independent authority to oversee delivery, which has not materialised.

Traveller accommodation is not aligned to Ireland's Housing Strategies, and the inequality is starkly demonstrated in the commencement of other Social Housing Strategies and Plans which have outpaced Traveller provision, since the Expert Group Report. These include Housing for All, The National Housing Strategy(s) for Disabled People 2019 – 2027, The Action Plan on 'Housing Options for our Ageing Population', Housing First (Homeless Strategy) and the Youth Homelessness Strategy.

Housing for All in particular, as the master Housing Plan for Ireland, is devoid of Traveller targets nor in the supply indicators in Budget 2023 for 9,100 new-build social homes, 5,500 new affordable and 6,500 new social homes. Social Housing and Affordable Housing Delivery, also has no specific requirement and Travellers are in name only in the 2022 Homeless Youth Strategy.

Ensuring proper Budgetary Estimates. Local authority Works Programme estimates and Quarterly Pipeline Reports don't report on Traveller accommodation. Scrutiny of delivery performance, planning progress, and future growth are also absent, and no budget projections are made for Traveller accommodation nationally, which undermines the need and conceals the collective failure to deliver Traveller accommodation, without intervention.

National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy (NTRIS) and Sectoral Investment

Investments of €5 million in 2021, €5.6million in 2022 and € 5.9million in 2023 for the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy (NTRIS) augmented by Dormant Accounts funds for specific projects was welcome, but way below the investment required. Since initiation of the Strategy and 149 actions to combat Traveller inequalities, there has been no ring-fenced investment, or whole of government approach or alignments to those departments' duty bound to deliver specific actions.

Budget estimates for 2024 need to be designed with a view to future proof actions culminating in the next NTRIS 2024, to ensure implementation of Traveller policies and see a real improvement in quality of life for Travellers.

Traveller sectoral organisations working locally and nationally, remain vulnerable to the severe impact of energy costs, staff retention, pay equivalence and committed and ring fenced multi annual funding. Many organisations are under resourced to work in collaboration with the community on themes identified in government policy, such as in the areas of education, culture and heritage, employment, and mental health.

Safeguarding Traveller Culture and Correcting historical erosion

There are no ring-fenced monies at any time in the State to promote and safeguard Traveller culture and heritage and provide for specific participation in the arts. In 2021 a modest allocation of two dedicated and time limited positions in two cultural institutions were welcome.

The Comparators The extension of the Creative Ireland Programme to 2027 was positive, but Travellers were not consulted within groups from which the five-year Culture and Creativity Strategy 2017 – 2022 evolved, and were visible in a very small number of projects in the €6.6m allocated in 2022.

There are no dedicated Traveller funded schemes and bursaries under the Arts Council grant in 2023 of €130 million and “Investing in our Culture, Language and Heritage 2018–2027” Strategy is also devoid of monies for Traveller related initiatives, despite the commitment of €1.2 billion to national programmes.

National and local Traveller organisations are not resourced in the area and essential benefits from the promotion of Traveller culture and heritage to the community and to Ireland are being lost, which are also important to defeat racism and discrimination.

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Footnotes

1. <https://www.cso.ie/en/csolatestnews/presspages/2017/census2016profile8-irishtravellersethnicityandreligion/>

2. <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/b9c48a-all-ireland-traveller-health-study/>

3. Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage Annual Count of Traveller Families 2019 <https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation/departments-of-housing-local-government-and-heritage/>

4. <https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation-information/be955a-social-inclusion-division/?referrer=http://www.gov.ie/socialinclusion/>

5. In 2020 the CSO equality data audit found Travellers were collected in only 12 national datasets <https://www.cso.ie/en/methods/methodologicalresearch/rp-eda/equalitydataaudit2020/>

6. <https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/29c76-traveller-accommodation-statistics/#2020>

7. https://www.esri.ie/system/files/publications/JR4_6.pdf

8. Ibid

9. Traveller Data is collected in these sets the; Health Information and Quality Authority Drug Prevalence Survey, Healthy Ireland Survey (Department of Health) and National Psychiatry in Service Reporting, National Ability Supports System, National Drug Treatment Reporting System and National Drug Related Deaths

10. <https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/35870/>

11. Ibid

12. Available at: Travellers - Lives On The Fringes RTE

13. https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/parliamentaryBudgetOffice/2022/2022-03-02_housing-ireland-trends-in-spending-and-outputs-of-social-and-state-supported-housing-2001-2020_en.pdf

Comparator Tables

Table 1.

Poverty in Ireland	Poverty for Travellers in Ireland
In poverty: 13% of the population living below the poverty line (at risk of poverty) (1)	In poverty: 31% of Irish Traveller households, (approx. 17,000 people) are in acute poverty . (2)
Unemployed People most at risk of poverty in 2022 (35.6%) (3)	Unemployed People most at risk of poverty in 2022 and 80% of Travellers were unemployed in 2016 (last available data) (4)
Next at-risk long-standing health problems: Of those unemployed people (35.2%) unable to work due to long-standing health problems (5)	Next at-risk long-standing health problems: (11.3%) of Travellers were unable to work due to a disability (6)
Others at risk of poverty <ul style="list-style-type: none">Age: Persons aged 65 or over (19% in 2022) (7)Accommodation: Persons renting or rent free 23.6% (9)Making ends meet: 5.9% of all households had great difficulty in 2022 (11)	Others at risk of poverty <ul style="list-style-type: none">Age :Traveller data is not collected in The Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC), however 28% of Traveller children in Ireland grow up in severe material deprivation (8)Accommodation: 93% of Travellers were in rental accommodation in 2021 (10)Making ends meet: 40% of Travellers households had great difficulty in 2019 (12)
1. https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-silc/surveyonincomeandlivingconditionssilc2022/	
2. https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2020/roma-travellers-survey (2020)	
3. https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-silc/surveyonincomeandlivingconditionssilc2022/	

4. <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/pcp8iter/p8iter/p8itseah/#:~:text=There%20were%2010%2C653%20Travellers%20in,cent%20for%20the%20general%20population>
5. <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-silc/surveyonincomeandlivingconditionssilc2022/>
6. <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/pcp8iter/p8iter/p8itseah/#:~:text=There%20were%2010%2C653%20Travellers%20in,cent%20for%20the%20general%20population>
7. <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-silc/surveyonincomeandlivingconditionssilc2022/>
8. <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2020/roma-travellers-survey> (2020)
9. <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-silc/surveyonincomeandlivingconditionssilc2022/>
10. <https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/29c76-traveller-accommodation-statistics/>
11. <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/psilced/surveyonincomeandlivingconditionssilc2022/abilitytomakeendsmeet/>
12. [https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2020/roma-travellers-survey\(2020\)](https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2020/roma-travellers-survey(2020))

Table 2.

<u>Children and Young People in Ireland</u>	<u>Traveller Children and Young People in Ireland</u>
<p>Infant mortality: 3.1 per 1,000 live births (1)</p>	<p>Infant mortality 14.1 per 1,000 live births (2)</p>
<p>Disability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2.4% of females aged 0-4 years and 3.5% of males had a disability. • 9.2% males and; 9.1% females aged 20-24yrs (Census 2016) (3) 	<p>Disability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5.4% of females aged 0-4 years and 6.7 % of males had a disability. • 17.8% males and 15.7% females aged 20-24yrs – (Census 2016) (4)
<p>Education: (5)</p>	<p>Education: (5)</p>
<p>Retention post primary 23% of all pupils over 16 years of age were in post primary</p>	<p>Retention post primary 11.2% of all Traveller pupils over 16 years of age were in post primary</p>
<p>Retention post primary to year 3: 97.5% of pupils progressed to Junior Cycle Year 3</p>	<p>Retention post primary to year 3: 90% of Traveller pupils progressed to Junior Cycle Year 3</p>
<p>Junior Cert Completion 97% sat Junior Certificate examinations (2015)</p>	<p>Junior Cert Completion 69% sat the Junior Certificate examination (2015 last available)</p>
<p>Junior Certificate School Programme 10% of all pupils in the Junior Cycle took JCSP (Yr. 2020/21)</p>	<p>Junior Certificate School Programme 45% of all Traveller pupils in the Junior Cycle, took JCSP (2020/21)</p>
<p>Retention to Leaving Certificate LC: 96% of all pupils took the LC (2011-</p>	<p>Retention to Leaving Certificate LC: 23% of all Traveller pupils took the LC</p>

2015 cohort)

Leaving Cert applied 5% of all pupils

Senior Cycle were enrolled in LCA

(2020/21)

Economic protection

5% of children aged 0-5 lived in jobless households

(2011-2015 cohort last available)

Leaving Cert applied 33.5% of all

Traveller pupils at Senior Cycle were

enrolled in LCA (2020/21)

Economic protection

36% of Traveller children aged 0-5 lived in jobless households (2019). (7)

1. <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-vsar/vitalstatisticsannualreport2020/infantmortalitystillbirthsandmaternalmortality2020/>
2. <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/b9c48a-all-ireland-traveller-health-study/>
3. <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cp9hdc/p8hdc/p9d/>
4. <https://www.cso.ie/en/csolatestnews/pressreleases/2017pressreleases/pressstatementcensus2016resultsprofile8-irishtravellersethnicityandreligion/>
5. <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/91561-primary-and-post-primary-traveller-statistics-2016-20/>
6. https://first5.gov.ie/userfiles/pdf/5223_4966_DCYA_EarlyYears_INTERACTIVE_Booklet_280x215_v1.pdf
7. Ibid.