

Profile of the Traveller Family

For Family Resource Centres

Pavee Point Travellers' Centre October 2010



PAVEE POINT
TRAVELLERS CENTRE

Profile of the Traveller Family: By the Numbers

Prepared for Family Resource Centres, October 2010

This profile of the Traveller Family supercedes the one issued in March 2010, and contains data from the All Ireland Traveller Health Study, as well as research conducted in-house and information from the CSO Census 2006.

Configuration and definition of the Family

Whilst many myths exist on the composition of the Traveller Family, it is fair to say that the configuration of the family, and more specifically the approach taken to defining membership of the family, is significantly different from the general population.

First of all, Travellers tend to emphasise the importance of the extended family, including aunts, uncles, grandparents, cousins, nieces and nephews in their conception of the family, with little or no distinction between this definition and the more usually accepted definition of people living together. This is reflected in the preference of Traveller extended families to live, as far as is practicable, together on sites or Traveller specific accommodation developments.

Traveller Numbers in Ireland

There were 9,056 Traveller families identified in the Republic of Ireland in the All Ireland Traveller Health Study. This results in a Traveller Population of some 36,224 Travellers in the Republic of Ireland.

In Early 2011, a breakdown of the number of Travellers by county will be possible, which will be of use to Family Resource Centres.

Age and Demographics

Pavee Point often describes Travellers as a young population, and our research clearly shows this. Traveller families are significantly more likely to include younger dependents than is true for the general population, and significantly less likely to include many much older members.

The birth rate within the Traveller community is significantly higher than in the general population, but not as high as generally thought, providing an average Traveller Family size of 4.02, compared to the general population mean family size estimated by the CSO in 2006 at 3.07. The general population number of children per family as per Census 2006 was 1.4 per family.

63% of Travellers are under 25, compared to 35% of the general population
42% of Travellers are under 15, compared to 21% of the general population
3% of Travellers are over 65, compared to 13% of the general population

Health Status

The health status of Travellers significantly contributes to differences in the age profile of the community.; the All Ireland Traveller Health Study discloses that the life expectancy of Irish Travellers is significantly lower than the general population; some 11 years lower for Traveller women and some 15 years lower for Traveller men. As a result, the Health Study found only eight Travellers over the age of 85.

The differential in mortality rates between men and women provides for a slightly larger number of older women than older men within the Traveller community.

Issues for Older Travellers

As with so many older people in the majority population, older Travellers experience increased loneliness and social isolation in modern Ireland. However for older Travellers these difficulties are compounded by racism, higher than average rates of poverty and significant levels of social exclusion. Research has shown that the Traveller community face the highest degree of discrimination against them than any other minority group in the country (McElwee et al. 2003)[4]. In light of these circumstances, it is imperative that service providers, Traveller organisations and other community based organisations ensure that the needs of older Travellers are included in their work.

Divorce

Divorce is rare but not entirely unheard of within the Traveller community; whilst there is no ethnic identifier used for collecting information on divorce in the state, it is not possible to provide numbers, but it is considered true that the number of divorces has increased in recent years. In general, it is true that Travellers tend to seek out alternatives to divorce.

Further Reading:

1. Pavee Point Website Dedicated FRC section: <http://paveepoint.ie/about-2/pavee-point-specialist-support-agency/>
2. All Ireland Traveller Health Study Section 2: <http://pavee.ie/ourgeels/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/Technical-Report-2-Final.pdf>
3. Auld Pavee Beoirs and Glokes: Emerging voices of Older Travellers 2008 Pavee Point and Age & Opportunity http://pavee.ie/BEOIRS_GLOKES_FINAL_FINAL.pdf
4. Traveller Health Strategy 2002-2005: Department of Health and Children http://www.dohc.ie/publications/traveller_health_a_national_strategy_2002_2005.html
5. Equality Authority Annual Reports <http://www.equality.ie/index.asp?locID=12&docID=-1>