



Traveller & Roma Rights

Travellers remain one of the most marginalised and excluded minority groups in Irish society. Despite promises of action, the Government has repeatedly failed to recognise Travellers as an ethnic group.

In October 2015, ten people were killed in a fire at a Traveller halting site. This site was supposed to be temporary, but had been there for 8 years. It was overcrowded and in breach of safety regulations, which is the case for Traveller sites throughout Ireland.

When the Local Authority identified a site to re-accommodate survivors, local residents blockaded the site. As a result of this, the survivors were placed in emergency accommodation in a car park, where they still live.

After this tragedy, 23 families were evicted from a halting site in another local authority area on the basis of a fire safety review. These families were not provided with alternative accommodation.

These very recent cases highlight the ongoing lack of implementation of Traveller accommodation policy in Ireland. Local authorities continue to fail to meet accommodation targets under the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998.

Recommendations

Recognise Travellers as a distinct ethnic group without further delay

Develop and implement a progressive National Traveller and Roma Integration Strategy, in line with human rights commitments

Establish concrete measures to combat discrimination and ensure equal access and improved outcomes for Travellers and Roma in relation to education, employment, health and participation

Introduce legally binding targets for municipal authorities so that adequate accommodation for Travellers is provided

Members of the Roma community also experience deep levels of inequality and discrimination. In 2013, two Roma children were removed from their families due to physical dissimilarities from their parents, leading to an incorrect suspicion that they had been abducted. The Ombudsman for Children identified actions in one of the cases as ethnic profiling.

Roma families are living in Ireland in inadequate accommodation, in overcrowded, rodent-infested conditions and without adequate food, fuel and basic facilities. There are families who are not entitled to basic supports as they are deemed to not have the “right to reside”.

Travellers and Roma experience poorer outcomes regarding health, education and employment and are subjected to discrimination, thus resulting in deprivation and exclusion. The overall lack of prioritisation of Travellers and Roma was exemplified in Ireland’s National Traveller/Roma Integration Strategy which contains no goals, related timeframes, and no associated funding or monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

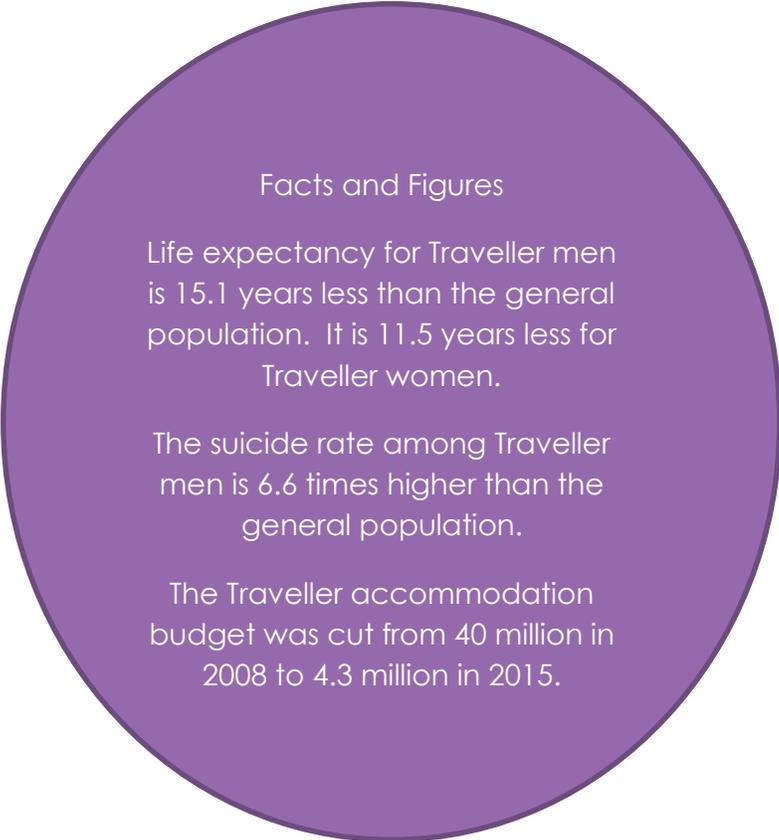
About Your Rights. Right Now

Your Rights. Right Now is a coalition of 17 Irish NGOS, trade unions and civil society groups established by the Irish Council for Civil Liberties (ICCL) in 2010 to coordinate the civil society response to Ireland’s first examination under the Universal Periodic Review. This group was re-convened in 2015 in advance of Ireland’s second examination. The coalition conducted a number of general and thematic consultations and invited written submissions to inform its report which was submitted to the UN in September 2015.

Members of the coalition are:

- Age Action
- Educate Together
- Free Legal Advice Centres
- Gay and Lesbian Equality Network
- Immigrant Council of Ireland
- Irish Congress of Trade Unions
- Irish Council for Civil Liberties
- Irish Family Planning Association
- Irish Penal Reform Trust
- Irish Traveller Movement
- Mercy Law Resource Centre
- NUI Galway, Centre for Disability Law and Policy
- Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre
- Transgender Equality Network Ireland
- Union of Students in Ireland
- Disability Federation of Ireland

For more information see www.rightsnow.ie



Facts and Figures

Life expectancy for Traveller men is 15.1 years less than the general population. It is 11.5 years less for Traveller women.

The suicide rate among Traveller men is 6.6 times higher than the general population.

The Traveller accommodation budget was cut from 40 million in 2008 to 4.3 million in 2015.