Health
Culture
Human Rights
Identity
Work
Ethnicity
Education
Racism
Equality
Justice
Discrimination

Stall Anoishe!
Minceirs Whiden
Stop Here! Travellers Talking

Analysing the Reality for Travellers in Galway City

GALWAY TRAVELLER MOVEMENT

Stall Anoishe!
Minceirs Whiden
Stop Here! Travellers Talking

Analysing the Reality for Travellers in Galway City

Established in 1994, the Galway Traveller Movement is a partnership organisation of Travellers and settled people working together to achieve equality and self-determination for the Traveller community in Galway City.

The vision of the GTM is achieve full equality for Travellers and to accomplish full participation of Travellers in social, economic, political and cultural life as well as the broader enhancement of social justice.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

PREFACE

This research project stemmed from conversations within the GTM about the lack of reliable data and information on the Traveller community in Galway City. We knew anecdotally what the reality for Travellers in Galway City was but we had never had it documented systematically before. This report does this. And it does more. Largely using Travellers' own words the report gives the stories behind the statistics.

It tells us that Traveller identity and culture is strong and vibrant. Even where manifestations of Traveller culture, such as nomadism and language are not practised or spoken, this research tells us that people view them as an intrinsic part of themselves and value them highly.

It tells us that the vast majority of Travellers in Galway City experience discrimination and racism in all areas of their lives. It also tells us that many feel so powerless that they do nothing about it.

Accommodation is a difficult area and one that is complex and multi-layered. Improvements have been made and the GTM wish to acknowledge these. However this report tells us that much remains to be done. It tells us that many Travellers are still living in inadequate substandard accommodation in Galway City.

It tells us that the health of Travellers in Galway City remains deeply affected by a number of inter-related issues. Inadequate and inappropriate accommodation is directly linked with poor physical health. It is also linked to the erosion of Traveller identity which in turn is leading to stress and depression. The widespread experience of discrimination is also causing stress and depression.

It tells us that Travellers value education and hope that their children will have a better experience of the education system than they had. However, it also tells us that many young Travellers are continuing to leave school early without qualifications.

It tells us that if you are a Traveller in Galway City you are almost eight times more likely to be unemployed than a person in the overall population. It also tells us that many Travellers have an aspiration to work but that people feel their name and address often facilitates negative discrimination in the employment market.

It tells us that Traveller women tend to suffer the effects of racism and discrimination more acutely than men and their role as primary carers frequently bring them into contact with services that many be discriminatory towards them.

This is more than just a report. It has to be because people gave us their information, told us about their lives, about their families' lives, about their children's lives. We are grateful for that information and know we have an obligation to use it wisely and well.

We acknowledge that some sections, such as health and accommodation, are more detailed than others. These tend to reflect the areas of work that are most developed within the GTM.

We are aware that the importance of this piece of work lies, not in the publication of this report, but in what will happen as a result of its publication – on what we as a society and service providers in Galway City do as a result of hearing what this report has to say. The report poses challenges to us all and we sincerely hope that the Government and service providers will take this report as intended – as a constructive analysis of Travellers' lives in Galway City with recommendations that have the potential to ensure continuous development and bring about positive social change.

To say a service is open to all, including Travellers, is no longer sufficient. One size does not fit all and services must respond to the particular needs of Travellers. As a starting point to this, this report and the GTM lend their voice to the call for the conferring of ethnic identity status on the Traveller community.

The publication of this report represents the culmination of a lot of hard work and we in the GTM are indebted to all those who participated in this research - members of staff, past and present, who displayed dedication above and beyond the call of duty; the interviewers, many of whom went out night after night to collect the information that was central to this report; our guests on the Advisory Committee who gave of their experience and knowledge generously; all those who took part in the research – we see this as a beginning, not as an end.

Kathleen Sweeney *Galway Traveller Movement Chairperson*
Margaret Ó Riada *Co-Ordinator of Galway Traveller Movement*
November 2006

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

This is the first study of its kind to be carried out on the Traveller community in Galway City. It aims to provide comprehensive information in relation to all aspects of Travellers' lives. In so doing it draws on secondary sources of information such as the major policy documents pertaining to Travellers nationally and locally, as well as other research studies and relevant publications. It also draws on the primary research carried out by independent researchers on behalf of GTM.

Section One: Policy & Legislation

Since the 1960s, the evolution in thinking that informed policy development in relation to the Traveller community moved from regarding the existence of Travellers as a problem to be solved to acknowledging Travellers as a distinct group for whom special initiatives were required to achieve full participation in society. Subsequent developments have resulted in a range of policies, more developed in some areas, such as health, than in others, notably education.

Progress in the area of legislation affecting Travellers is mixed. There have been positive developments such as the inclusion of membership of the Traveller community in the Equality legislation. These have been offset by the failure of the Irish Government to acknowledge Travellers under the **International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination** and the dilution of various other pieces of legislation that protect the rights of Travellers, such as the Intoxicating Liquor Act 2003 and trespass legislation (**Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) 2002**).

In general terms there are two issues worth stating with regard to policy and legislation. First, there appears to be little coherence or consistency in policy development so that some areas are relatively well developed while others are not. This seems to be because policies are not informed by the same fundamental understanding and approach to the Traveller community. Traveller organisations say that the starting point for the development of policy coherence is an acknowledgement that Travellers are an ethnic group. Such an acknowledgement would, they argue, contribute in a significant way to the development of less contradictory, more consistent policy responses (Pavee Point, 2005, p. 13).

Second, even when policy is relatively well developed there appears to be a gap in its implementation, with for example the most recent **Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community** (2006) claiming that many members of the Traveller community are still not benefiting from policies designed to assist them.

Section Two: Demographic Profile

According to the National Census (2002) there are 1,058 members of the Traveller community in Galway City. The Traveller community accounts for 1.6% of the population in the city – almost three times the national average. Of all the cities in Ireland, Galway has the highest proportion of its population made up of members of the Traveller community and has the second highest proportion at city or county level. The census carried out by the GTM in 2003 identified 214 families, with a total population of 1,149 people, substantially more than the 176 families identified by the National Census of Population.

The picture presented by the demographic data in the National Census (2002) is one of a community suffering severe disadvantage. The age dependency for the Traveller community is 100.4%, compared to an overall population figure of 32.4%. The unemployment rate for the Traveller community is 77%, compared to an overall population figure of 10%. Sixty per cent of the Traveller population finished school with no education or primary education only, compared to an overall population figure of 12.6%. Fifty per cent of Travellers are living in local authority accommodation compared to an overall population figure of 7%. Only 3% of the Traveller population own their own homes, compared to 57% of the overall population. Using any or all of these indicators indicates that the Traveller community in Galway City is living in extreme disadvantage.

Section Three: Culture, Identity & Ethnicity

This section of the report concludes that Traveller culture is strong and vibrant. Comparable to the picture of the Traveller community nationally, the picture that emerges from the GTM research is of a community whose sense of culture and identity is profound. Participants clearly identify strongly with Traveller culture and with themselves as Travellers. Even where manifestations of Traveller culture, such as nomadism and language are not practised or spoken, it is very apparent that people view them as an intrinsic part of themselves and value them highly. Participants clearly have a very positive attitude towards Traveller culture and want to be able to pass that culture on to subsequent generations.

However, both the internal and external challenges to preserving this culture and identity are immense. To date Traveller culture has shown resilience and flexibility in moving and adapting to the changing times, but the picture emerging here is of a community whose culture and identity are being eroded and who are suffering intensely as a result. Travellers, against their own expressed wishes, are sometimes forced to hide their very identity in order to avoid discrimination. This research reveals a sense of anger, frustration and disappointment and a feeling of betrayal by the state, which people perceive as conceding them rights with one hand and taking them back

with the other, e.g. the Trespass laws[1]. Put simply, Travellers would like to be able to live like Travellers – to have the option of travelling, to be able to work in the Traveller economy and to be free of discrimination so that Traveller identity becomes something to be proud of and celebrate.

Recognition of the importance of affirming Traveller culture has been growing. Ó Riain (1995), for example, maintains that acknowledging Travellers' right to be proud of their culture and identity may be a necessary "self re-evaluation" that breaks down the image of Traveller as negative and inferior and allows Travellers to be proud of being Travellers. A starting position for this affirming process must be the conferring by the Irish Government of ethnic group status to Travellers, allowing Travellers to claim the facilitation of their culture and identity as an entitlement.

Section Four: Discrimination and Racism

The picture presented by the GTM research is of a community where experiences of discrimination and racism are commonplace. 96% of people interviewed said that they had experiences of discrimination or racism. These experiences happened in all walks of life – in shops, on the street, in banks, in schools. They include not being allowed access to places or services, not being given the same service, comments, and in some cases physical assault. There is evidence of the racialisation process – of linking the Traveller community with negative characteristics like theft and deviancy. There is evidence that service providers are making negative assumptions about Travellers because of their identity, and consequently either denying them a service or refusing to give them the same service as others. Examples abound of Travellers being denied access to social outlets such as pubs *"just because we are Travellers"*. These experiences are racist and it is important to name them as such. Incidents of institutional racism are also commonplace, particularly in the areas of accommodation and education.

The depth at which the feeling of powerlessness exists within the Traveller community in the face of discrimination and racism is exemplified by the reluctance of a substantial number of people to make a complaint after experiencing discrimination.

The feelings that members of the Traveller community are left with after having experienced a racist or discriminatory incident are profound and heart felt. The impact of this persistent oppression is immense. It includes poor mental health, depression, low self-worth (both individual and at a community level) and poor health. This impact should not be underestimated. The publication of the **National Action Plan Against Racism** and the **Galway City Anti-Racism Strategy** suggest a growing recognition that racism and discrimination can no longer be tolerated and these reports must be considered to be positive developments to the policy context in this area. Travellers and their experience of racism must continue to inform the implementation of these strategies.

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[1] Housing (Miscellaneous Provision) 2002.

Section Five: Accommodation

The challenge posed by the question of Traveller accommodation in Galway City is improving and there have been many positive developments in the area of accommodation over the past number of years. There has been an increase in participation by, and consultation with, the City Council, Travellers and the GTM. Travellers now elect their own representatives onto the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (LTACC). This is to be welcomed. The fact that the Traveller Accommodation Programme (TAP) for Galway City acknowledges the ethnicity of Travellers and the consequences this has for accommodation provision is also to be welcomed. However, this acknowledgement must be demonstrated by the provision of culturally appropriate accommodation for Travellers in Galway City. This includes the provision of Traveller-specific accommodation where appropriate, as well as space for the facilitation of specific aspects of Traveller culture, such as working from home.

Galway City Council are now working with GTM to devise tenant participation training, and staff participated in a session facilitated by GTM on delivering a Traveller-friendly service. These actions are important and should be acknowledged. The refurbishment of the Tuam Road and Doughiska halting sites and the completion of the new five-unit group housing scheme are also to be welcomed.

The fact that Galway City Council is content to aim to produce just 36% of the anticipated accommodation needs of Travellers between 2005 and 2008 (as outlined in the TAP) is disappointing and indicates that Galway City Council is reluctant to engage in a meaningful way with the issue of provision. The assurances regarding the review of the TAP within a year must be fulfilled.

The results of the research show that while many Travellers expressed satisfaction with their accommodation, some continue to live in inadequate, inappropriate accommodation in Galway City, with many people still lacking basic facilities and experiencing overcrowding. Those who expressed most dissatisfaction with their accommodation live in Traveller specific accommodation. Many believe that they are living in unsafe, unacceptable conditions. Those in other forms of accommodation spoke of overcrowding and the lack of understanding of Traveller culture in all accommodation provision. Consultation with Travellers about their accommodation needs and the implementation of strategies to acknowledge the needs of Travellers was perceived to be inadequate.

Section Six: Health

The right to good health is a basic right and access to good and appropriate health services is strongly linked to this. There have been many positive developments in relation to health services for Travellers both nationally and locally. However, these developments have largely been catching up on generations of neglect of the health of Travellers. It is difficult to determine whether or not there has been any overall improvement in the health status of Travellers since no national study on Travellers' health has been carried out since 1987.

It is clear that the health of Travellers in Galway City remains deeply affected by a number of inter-related issues. Inadequate and inappropriate accommodation is directly linked with poor physical health. It is also linked to the erosion of Traveller identity, which in turn is leading to stress and depression. The widespread experience of discrimination is also causing stress and depression.

The discrimination and negative attitudes of some health care providers is leading to the under-utilisation and often inappropriate use of health services. The failure of some GPs and others to take the health concerns of Travellers seriously, the neglect in giving proper examinations and the tendency to prescribe medication for depression in answer to all medical matters are of huge concern. The failure of the health services to refer Travellers to outpatient and specialist health care services is also a concern. These issues must be treated with the seriousness they deserve.

On the other hand, it is clear that the GTM Primary Health Care Programme has made an enormous difference to the lives of those Travellers who have been trained as Community Health Care Workers and it is anticipated that they will continue to be a positive influence on the health of Travellers in Galway City.

Older Travellers tend to be even more marginalised than the younger generations. Ill health and high levels of dependency on health and social services mean that they are often dependent on others for their care. It is imperative that this care is Traveller-friendly and offered in a non-discriminatory way.

Section Seven: Education

Despite the high level of investment in education initiatives directed at Travellers, it is clear that the education system continues to fail many Traveller children. This research suggests that Travellers place a high value on education but often have low expectations of the education system.

This view is informed both by the levels of discrimination experienced by their children whilst in schools and by the futility of completing education when progression to further education or employment is still not a realistic prospect for many Travellers. Many Traveller parents are not in a position to help their children with schoolwork because of their own literacy difficulties and this adds to the levels of disadvantage experienced by their children in comparison to other children.

Parents suggest that some schools continue to regard Travellers as underachievers. By doing so schools fail to encourage them while they are in school, and those with responsibility for early school leaving fail to encourage them to go back to school when they drop out. Parents are aware of this and it adds to their scepticism.

This research shows that seventy-eight per cent, or almost 8 in every 10 children, left school at age fifteen or under. Traveller children are still leaving school as soon as they are legally allowed to do so, with few if any examinations and prospects. This has the effect of compounding the disadvantaged status of Travellers, and perpetuates the cycle of poverty and dependency on the state that most Travellers find themselves in.

The predominant emphasis in terms of investment in Traveller education is on the numbers of Traveller children participating. There is very little focus on the experience of Traveller children as they go through what some describe as a discriminatory system and on the outcomes for them as they leave. This research shows a community of people whose general experience of the education system is negative. Travellers in Galway City are struggling to see the relevance of an education system that they see as inequitable and discriminatory with few chances for Travellers to advance into well-paid employment or other opportunities.

Failure on the part of the Department of Education and Science to develop the notion of an intercultural education system in a meaningful way means that many teachers are not skilled to adequately cope with the challenge of diversity. This can and often does mean a negative experience for the Traveller child.

Currently, it would appear that many young Travellers are not availing of youth facilities in their areas. It is vital that this is addressed. Mainstream youth facilities should target young Travellers to become involved, as their experience of discrimination often negatively impacts on them taking part in an activity or organisation unless specifically targeted.

Section Eight: Mainstream Labour Market and the Traveller Economy

The picture that emerged from the GTM research is one of a community where unemployment is endemic. The main reason given for this is the discrimination experienced by Travellers in all aspects of their lives – in education, training, accessing employment and when employed. A viable alterative for some Travellers, the Traveller economy, is neither encouraged nor facilitated.

Section Nine: Traveller Women

Women tend to suffer the effects of racism and discrimination more acutely than men, and their role as primary carers frequently bring them into contact with services that many be discriminatory towards them. The Equality Women's Measure (EWM)-funded project in the GTM will give an opportunity for the GTM to work directly with Traveller women in Galway City.

It is vital that services that support Traveller women experiencing violence are Traveller-friendly and culturally appropriate. In this regard the work about to be undertaken by Waterside House should be supported.

Section Ten: Traveller Children

There is an absence of good quality data on Traveller children and it is regrettable that a cohort of Traveller children will not be followed by the National Longitudinal Study of Children.

The importance of the informal knowledge that the Traveller child learns about his/her culture and identity must be valued and encouraged as it is this knowledge that is fundamental to the survival of the Traveller way of life.

Good affordable, culturally appropriate early childhood care and education (ECCE) must have at its core, not only the objective of enabling parents to access employment and further training, but also the education of the child. Research consistently shows the benefits of good quality early education, especially to a child of disadvantaged parents. The importance of ECCE for Traveller children must be seen in the wider context of educational disadvantage and therefore be considered to be of fundamental importance if the inequalities they experience entering the formal education system are to be minimised.

Many Traveller families are reluctant to use childcare services because of fears that their child will suffer discrimination or racism. It is important that these fears are addressed.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Main Recommendations

Although this report makes extensive recommendations throughout, the following are the key recommendations.

1. **This report lends its voice to that of the national Traveller organisations, the Equality Authority, the Irish Human Rights Commission and others in calling on the Irish Government to confer ethnic status on the Irish Traveller community immediately.**

2. **The immediate publication of the Traveller Education Strategy and adequate resources to ensure the successful implementation of the strategy at national and local levels.**

3. **Adequate resourcing in the area of health.**

4. **Ending the disadvantage experienced by the Traveller community must remain a top priority for all policy makers and service providers in Galway City.**

Section Two: Demographic Profile

This report recommends that:

- A Traveller Data Collection Strategy is needed, to supply policy makers and service providers with the means of assessing needs, future planning, bench-marking, target setting and quantifying progress (**Report of the High Level Group on Traveller Issues** GEN 2, p. 5). The development of this Strategy should be embarked upon as soon as possible.

- The GTM commit to ongoing demographic information gathering. The information gathering process initiated by this research should be updated regularly and should include information on new family formation, level of transience and new families moving to the city.

- The GTM continue to be proactive in relation to helping Travellers understand and complete the National Census form every five years, in particular in relation to identifying themselves as members of the Irish Traveller community.

- The GTM commit to analysing the situation of Travellers in relation to the overall population, by analysing the National Census Small Area Population Statistics every five years.

- It is noted that the Central Statistics Office initiated a campaign aimed at encouraging Travellers to participate in the Census 2006. It is recommended that this campaign go a step further and target Traveller enumerators to carry out the census among Travellers in Galway City (Census 2011). It is recommended that this be done in consultation with the GTM.

- Traveller-specific data collection methods be developed by statutory and other agencies. Data collected to be used to inform the work of the organisation and to trace the impact of initiatives and projects on Travellers. This should be done in conjunction with the GTM.

Section Three: Culture, Identity & Ethnicity

This report recommends that:

- The Irish Government confer ethnic group status on the Irish Traveller community immediately. The policy implications of their being recognised as an ethnic group should be fully considered and accommodated by Government, nationally and locally.

- A Traveller Heritage and Cultural Centre be established in Galway City as part of the Galway City Museum initiative.

- National University of Ireland, Galway and Galway Mayo Institute of Technology proactively include Traveller culture, history and folklore in their efforts to document and preserve Irish traditions.

- GTM undertake a community-based initiative to promote Traveller culture and identity in the context of ethnicity.

- A commitment to breaking down the barriers and building relationships between the Traveller and settled communities be undertaken under the auspices of **Towards a City of Equals: Galway City Anti-Racism Strategy**.

- All agencies adopt an intercultural approach to service provision, as recommended by the National Action Plan Against Racism.

- In acknowledging the challenges that the issue of teaching Cant presents, GTM commit to exploring how the teaching of Cant to Traveller children in a community setting can be resourced.

Section Four: Discrimination and Racism

This report recommends that:

- Travellers' experience of racially motivated discrimination be recognised as racism by the Government.

- Travellers be automatically and fully included in future anti-racism initiatives, including the Strategic Monitoring Committee of the National Plan Against Racism.

- All policies, local and national, require proofing to ensure that they do not discriminate directly or indirectly against Travellers.

- Experiences of discrimination and racism against Travellers be logged and followed-up on, as part of the **Galway City Anti-Racism Strategy** Logging Incidents Initiative.

- Travellers remain central to the implementation of the **Galway City Anti-Racism Strategy**.

- The statutory sector use the NPAR and Galway City Anti-Racism Strategy to inform all policy developments in relation to Travellers, specifically the recommendations relating to **Planning by Design**[2]. These initiatives should be monitored.

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[2] The National Action Plan Against Racism, **Planning by Design**, refers to planning for a more inclusive and intercultural society by design and not as an add-on or an afterthought. It acknowledges that "one size does not fit all" and that by planning for and accommodating cultural diversity, everyone will benefit (p. 38).

- Statutory agencies recognise the need for attitudinal change within their organisations, and that they organise anti-racism/Traveller-friendly training for staff at all levels in conjunction with the GTM.
- Travellers be included in discussions for Joint Policing Committees between local government and local Gardaí as proposed in the Garda Síochana Bill (2004).

- The standard of Traveller Specific Accommodation be audited on a regular basis by the GTM in partnership with Galway City Council. Identified problems should be rectified immediately.
- Galway City Council engage in Traveller Awareness Training in relation to accommodation issues.
- There should be a facilitated session for all LTACC members to discuss the workings of the committee as recommended in the recent review of the LTACCs (Ó Riain, 2005).

Section Five: Accommodation

This report recommends that:
- An intercultural dimension into key housing and related policy instruments be developed, and that greater progress be made in implementing the local authority Traveller Accommodation Programmes as outlined in the **National Action Plan Against Racism** section on accommodation (pp. 123-129).
- A Traveller Accommodation Agency with the statutory powers to ensure the implementation of the Task Force Report recommendations be established at a national level.
- Mechanisms be established to ensure that local authorities adhere to the Department of the Environment guidelines in relation to Traveller accommodation. These guidelines should be viewed as the minimum standard acceptable.
- Traveller culture be respected and facilitated in the development of accommodation. This includes taking the following into account in relation to Traveller culture:
  - The extended family frequently, though not always, wants to live together.
  - Traveller families tend to be larger than the national average. Therefore larger accommodation units are needed for Traveller families. In relation to halting site accommodation, each bay should be able to accommodate at least two caravans.
  - Living space and work space tend to be the same, so work space in the home needs to be facilitated.
  - The nomadic traditions of the Traveller community must be facilitated. Space for visiting family should be provided.
  - Horses form a large part of Traveller culture and the keeping of horses should be facilitated
- The **Galway City Council Traveller Accommodation Plan 2005-2008** be implemented in a culturally appropriate way. A review of implementation targets and timescales should be carried out before the end of 2006.
- New family formation must be central to the planning for Traveller accommodation.
- The development of tenant participation strategies for Travellers be a priority for the City Council. To this end, the GTM should be funded by the Department of the Environment to employ a community worker with a focus on accommodation and tenant participation.

Section Six: Health

This report recommends that:
- A more inclusive, intercultural approach to health be developed as outlined in the National Action Plan Against Racism section on Health (pp. 115-122).
- Adequate support and resources be allocated to the successful completion of the ongoing All-Ireland Traveller Health Status Study, in which the importance of peer-led research approaches be recognised where appropriate.
- Adequate support and resources be allocated to realise the full implementation of **Traveller Health: A National Strategy 2002-2005**. A new national Traveller Health Strategy for the post-2005 period needs to be prioritised. While the developments in relation to the HSE Intercultural Strategy are to be welcomed, Travellers should be included, it should not replace a separate Traveller health strategy.
- The partnership between the Health Section of the GTM and the HSE Western Region continue to be developed and resourced. To facilitate this, adequate resources should be committed to the Traveller Health Unit on a continuing basis.
- The HSE provide ongoing support to the existing Peer-Led Primary Health Care Programme for Travellers. It further recommends that serious consideration be given to the establishment of a second city-based programme in order to ensure that new workers are trained and ready to come on stream when needed. In addition, the area of men's health needs to be urgently considered.
- The culturally sensitive ethnic identifier being developed by Pavee Point be used to track the experience of Travellers in the health system. The HSE Western Region should work in partnership with GTM to ensure the implementation of the ethnic identifier at local level.
- The Traveller Awareness Training with health service providers in the HSE Western Region be continued and expanded.
- Special initiatives be developed, in partnership between the GTM and the HSE, to address the diverse needs of young Travellers, older Travellers, Traveller mothers and Traveller men.

Section Seven: Education

This report recommends that:

- Access to education services and the delivery of education services to Travellers be enhanced as outlined in the National Action Plan Against Racism's section on education (p. 106-114).
- The Traveller Education Strategy must bring with it positive changes for Travellers in the education system and facilitate the partnership of Traveller organisations in its implementation.
- Real progress needs be made in the aspiration of the Department of Education and Science to design and deliver an intercultural education system in a systematic way.
- A system of monitoring should be developed in order to assess the outcomes for Traveller children from the education system. This needs to be pre-empted by the implementation of the ethnic identifier currently being designed by Pavee Point.
- Whole School Planning needs to include anti-racism training and Traveller friendly approaches and be carried out by all schools in Galway City. GTM should be resourced by the Department of Education and Science to employ a community worker with a focus on education to support this work.

The data collected by the Department of Education and Science on Travellers should be made available at a local level.

All facilities for young people and youth groups in Galway City should ensure that they are targeting young Travellers in their catchment areas. The needs of young Traveller girls should be given special consideration. Special initiatives aimed at "young people helping out at home" (as identified by the GTM census) be developed. These initiatives must be flexible and culturally sensitive and developed in conjunction with the GTM.

Section Eight: Mainstream Labour Market and the Traveller Economy

This report recommends that:

- A Strategy for Travellers and Work be developed by the Department of Trade and Enterprise. Included in this should be a strategy to develop the Traveller Economy. The development of the Traveller Health Strategy should be used as a model.
- Current employment programmes be reviewed and adapted so that Travellers are fully included in them. The development of Traveller-specific employment initiatives, such as Jobs Initiative and Back to work schemes, should be considered.
- Positive discrimination and affirmative actions for members of the Traveller community be promoted among employers in Galway City.

- The GTM initiate a project to ensure the promotion and recognition of the Traveller Economy in Galway City and to ensure support for its development.
- The needs of Traveller women in the area of work should be considered, particularly in the area of accessible, affordable childcare.
- Employers in Galway City should be targeted for anti-racism/Traveller Awareness training under the auspices of the **Galway City Anti-Racism Strategy**.

Section Nine: Traveller Women

This report recommends that:

- The recommendations to come from the Equality for Women Measure project be implemented in order to ensure that the learning from the project is not lost.
- Cope/Waterside House continue to work closely with the GTM to ensure that its services are appropriate to the needs of Traveller women.
- The close links developed between GTM and the National Traveller Women's Forum be maintained and developed.

Section Ten: Traveller Children

This report recommends that:

- A cohort of Traveller children be specifically followed by the **National Longitudinal Study of Children**.
- Initiatives to encourage Traveller children to learn about and value their identity be undertaken by the GTM.
- Traveller children in Galway City be targeted for inclusion in ECCE.
- The elements of choice and affordability should be central to the provision of childcare services to Traveller families. Whilst ongoing progress towards integration should be central, Traveller-only services should be available to those that prefer this option. Anti-racism training should be provided for childcare workers, so that in a mixed environment Traveller families can be assured that their children will not suffer discrimination.
- The importance of pre-school education is now well documented. It is essential that Traveller children are encouraged to attend pre-school education, as this experience helps to ensure that they begin their education with as many advantages as possible. An awareness campaign about the importance of pre-school education should be targeted at parents of children of pre-school age.
- Culturally appropriate pre-school education facilities be put in place for all Traveller children of pre-school age.

GLOSSARY

Culture

The distinctive beliefs and practices of a group.

Discrimination

Negative behaviour of an individual or group towards another individual or group.

Ethnicity

An ethnic group is a group of people sharing a collective identity based on a sense of common history and ancestry. Ethnic groups possess their own culture, customs, norms, beliefs and traditions. Other relevant characteristics shared in common would be language, geographical origin, literature or religion.

Institutionalised Racism

The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people (defined by the McPherson report of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry).

Integration

A two-way process that places duties and obligations on both cultural and ethnic minorities and the State to create a more inclusive society.

Interculturalism

Interculturalism is essentially about creating the conditions for interaction, equality of opportunity, understanding and respect between all cultures and ethnic groups, without glossing over issues such as racism. It is about planning for and accommodating cultural and ethnic diversity.

Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism is a complex term but essentially it refers to the integration of minorities into the dominant society. The emphasis, in a multiculturalist approach, is on ethnic minorities to integrate into the dominant society. Multiculturalism has been rejected by most working in the area of anti-racism in favour of interculturalism.

Prejudice

Negative opinions or attitudes held by members of one group about another.

Racialisation

A process of race thinking by which specific groups of people are 'constructed' as a 'type' with reference to a limited number of physical and cultural characteristics.

Racism

Racism is a specific form of discrimination and exclusion faced by cultural and ethnic minorities. It is based on the false belief that some 'races' are inherently superior to others because of different skin colour, nationality, ethnic or cultural background. Racism denies people their basic human rights, equality, and respect.

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Baseline Research Project

The Galway Traveller Movement (GTM) Baseline Research Project came about because of the lack of reliable and up-to-date information about the Traveller community in Galway City. It was designed to gather basic information on several key aspects of Travellers' lives and to enable the GTM to plan into the future, based on an accurate picture of the Traveller community in the city and the issues affecting them. The study covered culture, discrimination, accommodation, health, education and legal and justice issues.

Specifically, the Baseline Research Study Project set out to ascertain:

(a) **The level of disadvantage, poverty, inequality and marginalisation experienced by the Traveller Community in Galway City.**

(b) **The impact of continuous oppression, discrimination and racism on Traveller identity.**

(c) **The critical issues affecting Travellers' lives, with reference to all aspects of Travellers' social, cultural, political and economic lives.**

The GTM was keen to ensure that the process be Traveller-led and carried out in a way that was participatory and empowering for all involved. The management, design and implementation of the project followed these principles closely. The project was overseen by a management structure that consisted of both Travellers and settled people. While the GTM had overall managerial responsibility for the project, it employed a number of independent researchers at different times to lead the process. An Advisory Committee and a Steering Group were established. The Advisory Committee was made up of GTM staff and Management Committee members, as well as a number of external people – academic staff at the National University of Ireland, Galway and others involved in community and local development. The role of the Advisory Committee was to advise and make recommendations on the overall project. The Steering Committee consisted of GTM staff and members of the Management Committee only, and its role was to act as a liaison between the independent researchers and the GTM and to decide on matters of importance to the development and implementation of the project.

Methodology

The Baseline Research Study Project involved both primary and secondary data collection and was designed with the principles of participation and empowerment in mind, in keeping with the philosophy of Participatory Appraisal[3]. Participatory Appraisal (PA) stresses that those being researched should be full participants in the process, and also emphasises the importance of change being brought about as a result of the research. In adhering to these principles, Traveller members of the GTM were involved at all levels of the research process and most of the fieldwork was carried out by staff (Traveller and settled) of the GTM. The employment of Traveller fieldworkers ensured an extremely high participation rate in the research and a level of information sharing by the Traveller community that probably would not have been achieved had settled researchers alone been used. The GTM is committed to using the information from the research project as a basis for planning the future work of the organisation.

Primary Research

The primary research was broken down into four distinct strands: the GTM census, a series of in-depth interviews, focus groups and a questionnaire sent to service providers.

GTM Census

The GTM first carried out a census of all Travellers in Galway City. It initially targeted Travellers with whom the GTM had contact, and gradually extended this to other Travellers known to them in the city. The census form was designed by the GTM in conjunction with the independent researcher and with the input and advice of Traveller members of the GTM. The census was carried out between in 2003 by Traveller fieldworkers. The census looked at the numbers of people in each family, their ages and their primary occupations.

Some of the information from this census was subsequently updated by information from the census carried out as part of the All Ireland Traveller Health Status Study in 2006.

In-depth Interviews

The objective of the in-depth interviews was to give Travellers in the city the opportunity to give their opinions on the major issues that affect them in their lives. Due to budgetary constraints the maximum number of interviews possible was twenty-five, but is was important to ensure that a representative sample of the Traveller community was obtained. The sampling process was carried out by Dr. John Newell, Department of Mathematics, NUI, Galway. Stratified sampling, according to accommodation type and location, was used in order to represent the diversity in the population. Stratified sampling was made possible by the existence of a sampling frame (i.e. a list of all Traveller families in Galway), developed as part of the census process. The sample thus derived can be considered a representative and unbiased sample of the Traveller community in Galway City. Simple random samples were chosen within each population stratum and the sample sizes were determined using proportional allocation. The sample represented just over 10% of the 214 families identified by the census. The response rate to this element of the study was high. In the event of a non-response, replacements for interviewees were randomly picked using the same process. The interviews were carried out in late 2004 and early 2005.

Those interviewing practiced a technique whereby notes were taken in the participant's own words, thereby allowing for the use of quotations.

Focus Groups

A number of focus group discussions were also carried out with Travellers from Galway City. These focus groups were organised on a thematic and geographical basis. The themes covered included:

- Accommodation
- Health
- Children
- Young Women
- Culture
- Older People
- Legal and Justice Issues
- Work and Employment
- Young People
- Education
- Young Men

The area-based focus groups were held in different locations in the city. They asked Travellers what the major issues were for them in that particular area. The focus groups were designed to encourage maximum inclusion and participation. Emphasis was placed on recording as much of the discussion as possible in the participant's own words thereby allowing for the use of quotations. These discussions added depth and additional analysis to the information gathered in the one-to-one interviews. The focus groups were carried out in 2003 and 2004.

Service Providers Questionnaire

A questionnaire was sent to statutory organisations that provide a service to Travellers in Galway City. It focused on outlining the service(s) provided and on describing the policy of the organisation in relation to Travellers.

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[3] Participatory Appraisal is an approach to research used in developing countries and with groups that have low levels of literacy. It acknowledges that those to be researched are active subjects, not just objects, of the research process, and requires the involvement and participation of members of the research group at all levels of the research process – design, implementation and reporting. Participatory Appraisal places strong emphasis on the action that takes place after the research process. This requires that recommendations should be feasible, practical and actionable and that they should improve the lives of the people and communities being researched.

Secondary Research

The secondary research included a review of key policy documents relating to Travellers generally, with specific regard to Travellers in Galway City. It also included a review of the literature on discrimination and racism, particularly as it pertains to Travellers, as well as a review of other relevant research carried out in Galway City and other areas of the country. This phase also involved an analysis of the Small Area Population Statistics from the National Census of Population 2002.

Analysis

The analysis of both the census information and the quantitative information from the in-depth interviews was carried out using the computer package SPSS. The independent researcher analysed the qualitative information. The main themes of the qualitative information were drawn out and cross-referenced with information from research publications and literature.

Feedback

Workshops were held in five areas of the city to give a preliminary report on the project to Travellers in the city, many of whom had participated in the research.

Report

The report is divided into a number of different sections. **Section One** examines the general policy environment in relation to the Traveller community in Ireland. It also looks at legislation, national and international, that has particular relevance for the Traveller community.

Section Two looks at the demographic profile of the Traveller community in Galway City. This is done by first analysing the information from Census 2002, published by the Central Statistics Office. This is followed by an analysis of the GTM census carried out as part of the research process. Each remaining section of the report examines the major policy developments in relation to its respective theme, before presenting the results of the GTM research and outlining conclusions and recommendations. **Section Three** examines culture, identity and ethnicity. **Section Four** looks at discrimination and racism. **Section Five** is concerned with the area of accommodation. **Section Six** looks at health and the health issues affecting young Travellers and older Travellers. **Section Seven** looks at education, as well as issues for young Travellers. **Section Eight** examines work and the Traveller economy. **Section Nine** looks at issues affecting Traveller women, and **Section Ten** looks at Traveller children.

Section one
POLICY &
LEGISLATION

Section one
POLICY & LEGISLATION

Introduction

It has been acknowledged since the 1960s that addressing the needs of the Traveller community requires distinct policy measures. The thinking behind such policies has undergone a number of phases. It has moved from regarding the existence of "itinerants"[4] as a "problem"[5] to acknowledging the Traveller community as a distinct group with a culture worthy of preservation. This evolution in thinking has brought about an impressive policy architecture that has been informed since 1995 by the **Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community**.

This section of the report gives a brief overview of the development of the overall policy structure in relation to the Traveller community since the 1960s. Specific policy developments relating to particular themes are examined in the appropriate sections. This section also looks at key pieces of legislation – national and international – in which Travellers are mentioned, or that have particular significance for the Traveller community.

The Development of Policy

The first attempt by the Government to develop national policy in relation to Travellers was through the Commission on Itinerancy, which published the **Report of the Commission on Itinerancy** in 1963. The starting point of the Commission's work was that the existence of a large number of "itinerants" and "their way of life" was a problem to be eliminated through rehabilitation, settlement and assimilation. The Commission rebutted the claim that Travellers were a separate ethnic group. No attempt was made to analyse the discrimination faced by members of the Traveller community, and attempts to redress the "problem" of itinerancy were based on a charitable model of doing things for Travellers as opposed to working *with* Travellers. The recommendations from the report promoted a policy of assimilation of Travellers into the settled community (O'Connell, 2002; Pavee Point, 2005).

The second phase of the development in policy came with the establishment of the **Travelling People Review Body** in 1981. It marked a significant shift in thinking: the Review Body gave recognition to the distinct identity of Travellers as a group. They rejected the term "itinerant", which had become associated with deviance, in favour of the term "traveller" (sic). The Review Body acknowledged that Travellers experienced difficulties such as prejudice and hostility towards them, but it refused to accept that Travellers experienced discrimination. The Review Body rejected

absorption, rehabilitation, settlement and assimilation as problematic, and recommended integration between the Traveller and settled communities.

The third phase of policy development was marked by the establishment of the Task Force on the Travelling Community in July 1993. The Task Force was given the brief of examining, advising and making recommendations on Government policy and the needs of Travellers. Published in July 1995, the **Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community** was a comprehensive document that has informed and influenced policy in relation to the Traveller community since its publication. The report examined and made recommendations in relation to Traveller/'settled' relations, culture, discrimination, accommodation, health, education and training, work and the Traveller economy, Traveller women, Traveller youth and Travellers with a disability. It also commented on the lack of co-ordination in relation to services for Travellers.

The report explored the notion of Traveller culture[6] and its manifestations, and clearly linked the question of cultural difference evident in the minority Traveller community to the question of ethnicity. In a distinct move away from its predecessors' reluctance to name discrimination as an issue for Travellers, it described the experience of discrimination at the individual and institutional levels and named that experience as racism: *"Academic debate and various international fora focus attention on the link between and cultural difference particularly in scenarios of unequal power relationships. The forms of prejudice and discrimination experienced by the Traveller community equate with racism in the international context"* (p. 79).

Following on from the recommendations of the Task Force on the Travelling Community there have been a number of developments, principally in the areas of health and accommodation. However, despite these developments the Committee to Monitor and Co-ordinate the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Task Force on the Travelling Community in its **First Progress Report** (2000) was critical of the progress that had been made on implementing the Task Force's recommendations. It noted that, *"About one quarter of all Traveller families continue to live out their day to day lives in very poor conditions."* (p. 8)

The **Second Progress Report of the Task Force** was published in early 2006 and acknowledged positive developments such as the publication of **Traveller Health: A National Strategy** in 2002, the commitment to publish a national Traveller education strategy, and the specific commitment in the **National Action Plan Against Poverty and Social Exclusion 2003-2005** to *"improving the life experience of Travellers through the provision of appropriate education, health and housing services and to removing any remaining barriers to the full participation of members of the Traveller community in the work and social life of the country"*.

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4 **Report of the Commission on Itinerancy** in 1963.
5 *Ibid.*

6 **Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community**, 1995, pp. 71-77.

However, the report comments that *"the bottom line is that despite the allocation of considerable financial and staff resources and some progress being achieved, Travellers continue to have lower life expectancy, lower education qualifications and, in many cases, unacceptable accommodation. Traveller culture is under threat, both from lack of recognition by the settled community, but also from internal changes within the community. Issues around self-employment, unemployment and employment within the wider community also still need to be resolved"* (p. 6). The report further notes that many Travellers feel that there have been a number of high profile reversals, such as the amendment of the public order legislation through the **Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2002**[7] and the change of forum for discrimination cases involving licensed premises from the Equality Tribunal to the District Court[8] (p. 7).

The recently published **Report of the High Level Group on Traveller Issues** (March 2006) states that there is a need to review the Monitoring Committee on the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Task Force on the Travelling Community, and a review of its role and structures is currently under way. The High Level Group will monitor progress on this review (p. 5).

Travellers are singled out by the **National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion** (NAPS/incl), which states that it will further develop measures to enable Travellers achieve greater integration while respecting their distinctive way of life. The overall objective in relation to Travellers is to *"improve the life experience of Travellers through the provision of appropriate education, health and housing services and to remove any remaining barriers to the full participation of members of the Traveller Community in the work and social life of the country"* (p. 32).

Key targets in relation to Travellers include:

- The gap in life expectancy between the Traveller Community and the whole population to be reduced by at least 10% by 2007.
- Age appropriate placement of all Travellers in primary school to be achieved by 2003.
- The transfer rate of Travellers to post-primary schools to be increased to 95% by 2004.
- Each third-level institution to double the participation of mature disadvantaged students, including Travellers and Refugees, by 2006 (within the 15% quota).
- All Traveller families identified in the five-year local authority Traveller Accommodation Programme as being in need of accommodation to be appropriately accommodated by the end of 2004.
- There will also be a priority focus on the implementation of the local authority Travellers Accommodation Programmes (pp. 32-33).

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[7] This act makes trespass on public and private land, heretofore a civil offence, a criminal offence.
[8] Section 19 of the **Intoxicating Liquor Act 2003** transfers discrimination cases against publicans away from the Equality Tribunal and into the District Court, effectively making it much more difficult for Travellers (or members of other minority groups discriminated against in this way) to bring a case under that legislation.

Legislation

There are a number of both international and national pieces of legislation that have particular relevance for the Traveller community. The **International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination**[9] (ICERD) is the main instrument governing anti-racism. Under this Convention, States agree to prohibit and eliminate racial discrimination in all its forms and to guarantee the right of everyone to equality before the law with respect to the full range of rights set out in other human rights instruments. The Irish government currently refuses to recognise that Travellers constitute an ethnic group thereby refusing them protection under this convention.

The **Framework Convention on National Minorities** is the first legally binding multilateral instrument devoted to the protection of national minorities. Under this framework, states are required to adopt special measures to ensure equality and non-discrimination for persons belonging to minority groups. For the purposes of the Convention, Ireland recognises the Traveller community as an indigenous community.

In relation to domestic legislation, the **Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 1989** makes it an offence to publish or distribute written material, to use words, behave or display written material, or to distribute, show or play a recording of visual images or sounds if the written material, words, behaviour, visual images or sounds are threatening, abusive, insulting, and are intended to or, having regard to all the circumstances, are likely to stir up hatred. However, prosecution under this Act is very difficult due to the requirement that intention to 'stir up hatred' must be proven to have been deliberate, and there have been very few prosecutions under the Act.

There are a number of pieces of legislation that together are commonly referred to as the equality legislation. These are the **Employment Equality Act 1998**, the **Equal Status Act 2000** and the **Equality Act 2004**. The acts outlaw discrimination in employment, the provision of goods and services, the disposal of premises, the provision of accommodation, and educational establishments on the basis of nine grounds, including membership of the Traveller community. The **Equality Authority** provides services such as legal advice, the promotion of equality of opportunity legislation, research on equality issues, and the dissemination of information on equality matters. The **Office of the Director of Equality Investigations** addresses complaints under the Equality legislation and has the power to issue legally binding decisions ordering compensation, equal pay, wage arrears, equal treatment or an order that a person or persons take a specified course of action.

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[9] The implementation of ICERD is monitored by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD).

There are a number of domestic bodies monitoring human rights. The **Irish Human Rights Commission** (IHRC) reviews legislation regarding human rights and makes recommendations to the Government on measures it considers should be taken to strengthen, protect and uphold human rights in the State. The **National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism** (NCCRI) was established by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform in 1998 as an expert body focusing on racism and interculturalism. Functions of the NCCRI include the provision of training in anti-racism awareness, information seminars on interculturalism, and advice to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) seeking funding. The institution performs an important advisory role to government bodies. The **Garda Racial and Intercultural Office** was established in 2000 and operates within the Community Relations Section. The Office has a national remit, with responsibility for the development and monitoring of the implementation of organisational policies and strategies that deal with racial, ethnic, religious and cultural diversity. Garda Ethnic Liaison Officers are appointed across the country to support people who have experienced racism, and to make proactive links with community and voluntary groups working closely with minority ethnic groups in their areas.

There are also a number of pieces of legislation that have a disproportionately negative impact on the Traveller community, for example in relation to nomadism, horses and discrimination. Travellers have traditionally had places where they pulled in and camped for a period of time. This practice is increasingly frowned upon. Boulders and large stones are erected in some of these areas to deny Travellers access to them. This campaign, known as the Boulder Campaign, has caused immense hardship to the Traveller community and has done untold damage to the practice of nomadism. The situation was made even more difficult for Travellers in 2002 when the **Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act** was enacted. This Act makes trespass on public and private land, heretofore a civil offence, a criminal offence, therefore essentially criminalising a tradition. Under the Act families are served with 24 hours' notice to move. Enforced evictions are a regular occurrence and in many cases the local authority does not give the family or families an alternative choice of accommodation. The Irish Traveller Movement (ITM) estimates that between 2000 and 2001, approximately 500 families nationwide were served with eviction notices without the provision of, or access to, appropriate forms of legal or other protection.

The **Control of Horses Act 1997** was introduced in response to the problem of wandering urban horses. According to ITM, the government failed to recognise the importance of the role that the horse plays in the Traveller community, and those who were directly affected by a Horses Act were excluded from the decision-making process (2001, p.4). They claim that the implementation and orientation of this Act is a class and cultural issue and that Travellers are unfavourably affected by the Act.

Accessing social facilities, such as pubs and hotels, is very difficult for Travellers. There are a multitude of stories of members of the Traveller community being refused access to licensed and other premises for no reason other than their membership of the Traveller community. There was a welcome attempt to address this problem when the Equality legislation was introduced and membership of the Traveller community was named as one of the nine grounds on which the Equality legislation made discrimination illegal. However, Section 19 of the **Intoxicating Liquor Act 2003** transfers discrimination cases against publicans away from the Equality Tribunal and into the District Court, effectively making it much more difficult for Travellers (or members of other minority groups discriminated against in this way) to bring a case under that legislation.

Recent Developments

A number of recent developments have had an impact on the Traveller community and Traveller organisations. These developments include the publication of **Planning for Diversity: National Action Plan Against Racism (NPAR)**, **Towards a City of Equals: Galway City Anti-Racism Strategy** and the **Report of the High Level Group on Traveller Issues** (March 2006).

Planning for Diversity – National Action Plan Against Racism

Published in early 2006, the **National Action Plan Against Racism** *"reaffirms the Irish Government's commitment that racism has no place in Irish society"* [10]. The aim of the plan is to provide strategic direction to combat racism and to develop a more inclusive, intercultural society in Ireland. It provides a strategic "Intercultural Framework" to achieve this aim under the headings of Protection, Inclusion, Provision, Recognition and Participation. The NPAR recognises that the Traveller community experiences racism.

Towards a City of Equals – Galway City Anti-Racism Strategy

The aim of **Towards a City of Equals** is to welcome diversity, eliminate racism and promote interculturalism, and it contains a total of thirty-three actions to work towards achieving this aim. The strategy adopted the same Intercultural Framework as the NPAR and also recognises that Travellers, as an ethnic group, experience racism.

High Level Group on Traveller Issues

At the request of the Taoiseach, a High Level Group on Traveller issues was established under the aegis of the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion in December 2003.

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[10] NPAR, p. 40.

Its remit is to ensure that the relevant statutory agencies involved in providing the full range of services to Travellers focus on improving the integrated practical delivery of such services. It is distinguished by the lack of representation from Traveller organisations.

Published in March 2006, the **Report of the High Level Group on Traveller Issues** calls for the *"promotion of a coordinated interagency approach to the delivery of services and supports for Travellers"* (p. 4). To that end the report suggests, amongst other things, that integrated strategic plans for service delivery should be drawn up for all cities and counties with Traveller populations.

Conclusion

Since the 1960s, the evolution in thinking that informed policy development in relation to the Traveller community moved from regarding the existence of Travellers as a problem to be solved, to acknowledging Travellers as a distinct group for whom special initiatives were required to achieve full participation in society. Subsequent developments have resulted in a range of policies, more developed in some areas, such as health, than in others, notably education.

Progress in the area of legislation affecting Travellers is mixed. There have been positive developments such as the inclusion of membership of the Traveller community in the Equality legislation. These have been offset by the failure of the Irish Government to acknowledge Travellers under the **International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination** and the dilution of various other pieces of legislation that protect the rights of Travellers, such as the Intoxicating Liquor Act 2003.

In general terms there are two issues worth stating with regard to policy and legislation. First, there appears to be little coherence or consistency in policy development, so that some areas are relatively well developed while others are not. This seems to be because policies are not informed by the same fundamental understanding and approach to the Traveller community. Traveller organisations say that the starting point for the development of policy coherence is an acknowledgement that Travellers are an ethnic group. Such an acknowledgement would, they argue, contribute in a significant way to the development of less contradictory, more consistent policy responses (Pavee Point, 2005, p. 13).

Second, even when policy is relatively well developed there appears to be a gap in its implementation, with for example the most recent **Progress Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community** (2006) claiming that many members of the Traveller community are still not benefiting from policies designed to assist them.

Section two
DEMOGRAPHIC
PROFILE

Section two
DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Introduction

This section of the report provides a snapshot of the life experience of the Traveller community in Galway City, based on information from the Census of Population 2002, the GTM census 2003 and the census of the Traveller population that was carried out as part of the All Ireland Traveller Health Status Study in 2006. First of all, in order to highlight the inequalities that exist in some areas, the section uses information from the national census to compare the statistics for the Traveller population with the overall population in Galway City. The information used generally corresponds to some of the most widely used indicators of poverty and disadvantage[11]. This is followed by an analysis of the censuses carried out by the GTM in 2003 and 2006.

National Census of Population 2002

This part of the report makes a number of comparisons between the Traveller population and the overall population in Galway City, based on the National Census of population carried out in 2002. These comparisons were possible because in 2002, for the first time, the National Census asked a question and subsequently published results in relation to membership of the Traveller community. The comparisons that are made correspond to some of the most commonly used indicators of poverty and disadvantage.

Population

According to the Census of Population 2002, the population of Ireland is 3,917,203. Members of the Traveller community (23,681 people) make up 0.6% of the national population.
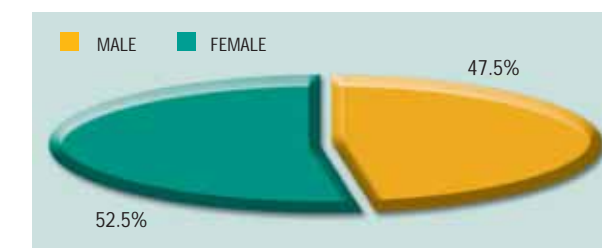
There are 65,832 people living in Galway City, 1,058 of whom are members of the Traveller community. The Traveller community accounts for 1.6% of the population in the city – almost three times the national average. Of all the cities in Ireland, Galway has the highest proportion of its population made up of members of the Traveller community and has the second highest proportion at city or county level. The following diagrams break down the Traveller population in relation to gender, age, unemployment rate, labour force participation, education, household size and accommodation.

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[11] Indicators of poverty and disadvantage include things such as age dependency and levels of education and unemployment. Usually based on information from the national census of population, they give an indication of the level of poverty and disadvantage in a geographical area or, in this case, in the Traveller community.

Gender

Figure 2.1 shows the gender breakdown of the Traveller population in Galway City. It is proportionately the same as for the overall population. There are 503 (47.5%) male members and 555 (52.5%) female members of the Traveller community in the city.

Figure 2.1 **Gender Breakdown of the Traveller Population**

MALE   FEMALE
47.5%
52.5%

Source: National Census of Population 2002

Age

Figure 2.2 **Age Breakdown of the Traveller Population**

0-14 YEARS   15-24 YEARS   25-34 YEARS
35-44 YEARS   45-54 YEARS   55-64 YEARS
65 YEARS AND OVER

Source: National Census of Population 2002

Figure 2.3 **Age Breakdown - Comparison of Traveller and Overall Population**

TRAVELLER POPULATION   OVERALL POPULATION

Source: National Census of Population 2002

Figure 2.2 shows the age breakdown of the Traveller population and Figure 2.3 shows a comparison between the age breakdown of the Traveller community and the overall population. 49% of the Traveller population in Galway City is made up of children between the ages of 0-14 years, compared to 16% in the overall population, indicating a significantly larger proportion of children and young people in the Traveller community than in the overall population.

There are 50% of Travellers in the predominantly economically active age categories 15-64 years, compared to 76% of the overall population. This indicates that there are fewer Travellers in the economically active age groups to provide for the needs of younger and older dependents.

Only 1% of the Traveller population is made up of people 65 years or over, compared to 8% in the overall population, strongly indicating that Travellers die at a younger age than their settled counterparts.

Age Dependency

Age dependency rates[12] provide crude[13] but useful indicators of the age structure of a population.

Figure 2.4 **Age Dependency - Comparison of Traveller and Overall Population**

Source: National Census of Population 2002

Figure 2.4 shows a comparison of age dependency rates between the Traveller and overall populations. The age dependency rate for the overall population in Galway City is 32.4%. This means that for every 100 people in the active age groups, there are 32.4 people in the inactive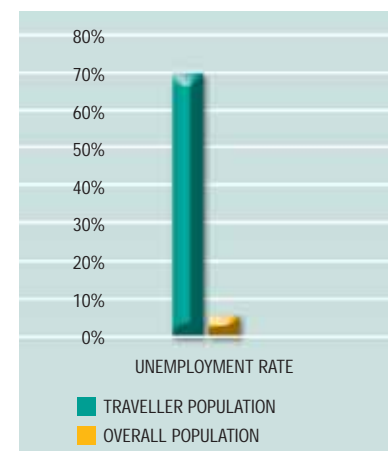 age groups dependent on them. The rate for the Traveller population in Galway City is 100.4%, which means that for every 100 people in the active age groups, there are 100.4 people in the inactive age groups dependent on them. This means that there is a much higher age dependency rate in the Traveller community than in the settled community. In fact, among Travellers there are more than three times as many people dependent on those in the economically active age groups than in the settled community.

Unemployment Rate

The CSO classifies the population aged 15 years and over as either inside or outside the Labour Force[14]. The unemployment rate is then calculated as the sum of those unemployed and those seeking their first job as a percentage of the labour force.

Figure 2.5 **Unemployment Rate - Comparison of Traveller and Overall Population**

Source: National Census of Population 2002

Figure 2.5 shows a comparison of the unemployment rate for the Traveller and overall populations in Galway City. The unemployment rate for the overall population is slightly higher than the national average (8.8%) at 10%. The unemployment rate amongst the Traveller population is almost 77%.

A comparison of the proportions of those in the labour force that are unemployed shows that this is much higher in the Traveller population (71.5%) than in the overall population (8.4%).

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[12] The young and old dependency rates are derived by expressing the young population (0-14 years) and the old population (aged 65 years and over) as percentages of the population of working age (15-64 years). The total age dependency rate is the sum of the young and old rates.
[13] Age dependency rates are crude because the notion of age dependency is not precise. There is a likelihood of a substantial number of people aged 15 years and over still in education, and there is also a likelihood of people aged 65+ still at work. However, they are still useful indicators, showing the number of those aged dependent on the population of working age.
[14] The Labour Force consists of those who are at work, unemployed or seeking regular work for the first time. Those outside the Labour Force are students, those looking after home/family, retired, unable to work, or not in the Labour Force for other unspecified reasons.

Education

A good education is recognised as one of the main routes out of poverty. The **National Anti-Poverty Strategy** recognises that education is one area that needs to be given particular attention if any significant advance on the tackling of poverty is to be achieved. As Table 2.1 illustrates, the unemployment rate amongst those who have no education or primary education only is more than four times greater than amongst those who have third level education (18.2% compared to 4.1%).
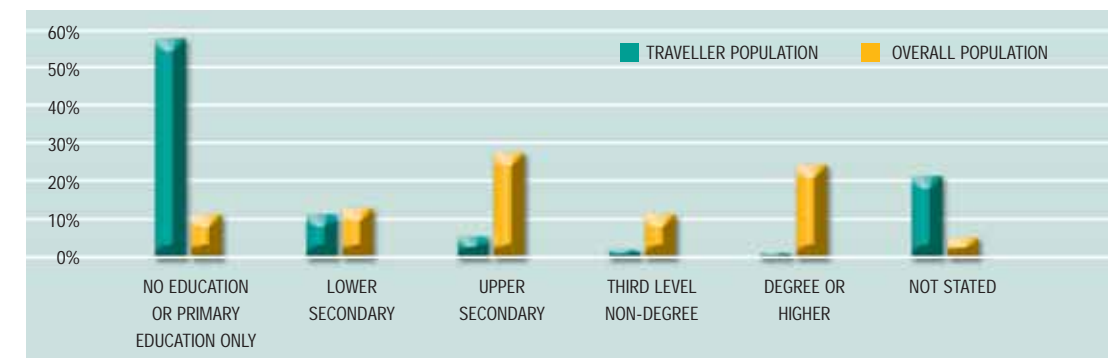
Table 2.1 **Unemployment rate by educational level (Overall Population)**

HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION ATTAINED	UNEMPLOYMENT RATE
Primary (includes no formal education and not stated).	18.2%
Lower secondary	12.2%
Upper secondary	6.6%
Third Level (non-degree)	4.7%
Third level (degree or higher)	4.1%
Total	**8.8%**

Source: CSO Principal Socio-Economic Results, 2003 (Census 2002)

Figure 2.6 shows the education levels of the Traveller Community in Galway City compared to the overall population.

Figure 2.6 **Comparison of Highest Level of Education Completed - Traveller and Overall Population**

Source: National Census of Population 2002

In Galway City, 60% of the Traveller population has left school with "no education or primary education only", compared to 12.6% of the overall population. At the other end of the education spectrum, three members or 0.7% of the Traveller population have third level education to non-degree level, compared to 13% of the overall population. No member of the Traveller population has a degree, compared to 26% of the overall population in the city.

PC ownership and Access to the Internet

Personal computer (PC) ownership and access to the Internet are linked with education. Low levels are now used as indicators of poverty and disadvantage. The following chart shows a comparison of the levels of PC ownership and access to the Internet between the Traveller and overall populations.
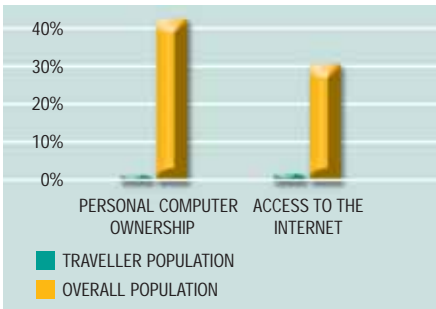
Figure 2.7 Levels of PC Ownership and Access to the Internet - Comparison of Traveller and Overall Population

Less than 2% of the Traveller population owns a PC, compared to almost 45% of the overall population. Similarly, only 2.5% of the Traveller population has access to the Internet, compared to 34% of the overall population.

Source: National Census of Population 2002

Household Size

Figure 2.8 Household Size - Comparison of Traveller and Overall Population
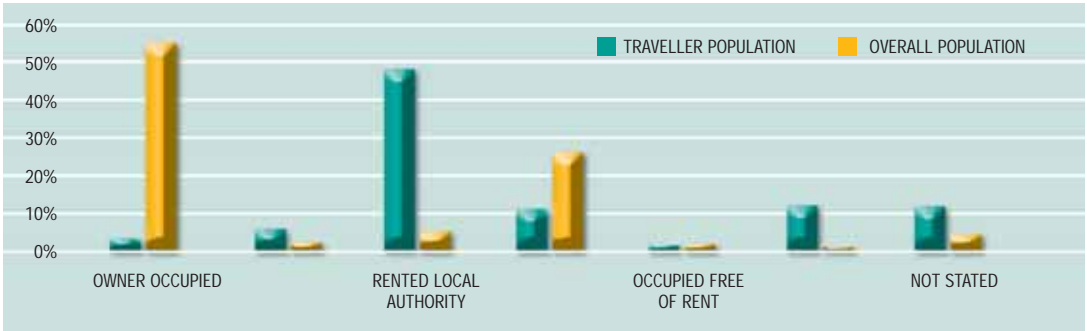

Source: National Census of Population 2002

Figure 2.8 shows a comparison in household size between the Traveller and overall populations. The Traveller population typically lives in much larger households than the overall population. For example, the proportion of the Traveller population with a 3-person household is 15.3%, compared to 19.6% for the overall population. However, over a quarter of Traveller households are made up of seven people or more, compared to 1.8% of households in the overall population.

Accommodation[15]

Figure 2.9 Type of Accommodation - Comparison of Traveller and Overall Population

Source: National Census of Population 2002

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[15] The CSO classifies accommodation as follows: A private household comprises either one person living alone or a group of people (not necessarily related) living at the same address with common housekeeping arrangements – that is, sharing at least one meal a day or sharing a living room or sitting room. A *permanent private household* is a private household occupying a permanent dwelling such as a dwelling house, flat or bed-sitter. A *temporary private household* is a private household occupying a caravan, mobile home or other temporary dwelling, and includes travelling people and homeless persons living rough on census night.

The national census (2002) indicates that there are 176 private Traveller households in Galway City. Figure 2.9 shows a comparison of the types of accommodation in the Traveller and overall populations. The majority (50%) of the Traveller population in Galway City live in accommodation rented from the Local Authority. This compares to 7% of the overall population for the same category. Three per cent of the Traveller population have owner-occupied homes, compared to 57% of the overall population. Twenty-eight per cent of these Traveller households do not have central heating, compared to 15.5% of overall households.

Twenty-one private Traveller households, with a total of 116 people, are in temporary accommodation. This accounts for 12% of the Traveller population. Fifteen of the twenty-one temporary households do not have central heating, eight of the twenty-one have only one room, four have no piped water, and two have no sewerage facilities.

Disability

Eighty-seven members of the Traveller population in Galway City described themselves as having a disability. This accounts for 8.2% of the population, compared to 6.9% of the overall population.

GTM Censuses 2003 and 2006

As part of the research project the GTM carried out a census of all the Traveller families identified in Galway City in 2003. In 2006, a census was also carried out as part of the **All-Ireland Traveller Health Status Study**. The results of both are outlined below.

GTM Census 2003

The 2003 GTM census was carried out by Traveller field workers. It identified 214 families with a total population of 1,149 people – substantially more than the 176 families identified by the National Census of Population in 2002.

Table 2.2 **Age and Gender of the Traveller Population**

AGE	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Under 18	337	315	652
Over 18	243	254	497
Total	580	569	1,149

Source: GTM Census 2003

Figure 2.10 **Age and Gender of Traveller Population**

Source: GTM Census 2003

Table 2.2 and Figure 2.10 show the age and gender breakdown of the Traveller population in Galway City according to the GTM Census, in which 580 male and 569 female Travellers were identified. There were:

- 337 males under 18 years of age.
- 243 males over 18 years of age.
- 315 females under 18 years of age.
- 254 females over 18 years of age.
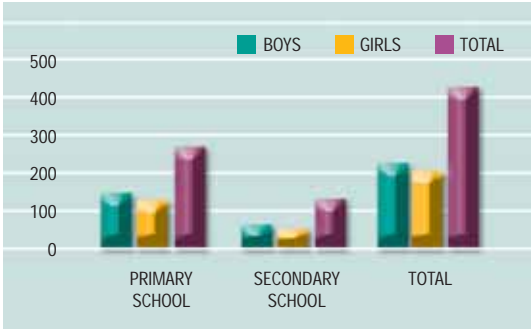- A total of 652 people under 18 years of age and 497 people over 18 years of age.

Boys and Girls Under 18

Table 2.3 **Boys and Girls Under 18**

AGE	BOYS UNDER 18	Number	%	GIRLS UNDER 18	Number	%
0-2	Baby Boys	54	16%	Baby Girls	31	10%
3-4	Toddler Boys at home	20	6%	Toddler Girls at home	15	5%
	Toddler Boys in Playschool	12	4%	Toddler Girls in Playschool	25	8%
4-12	Boys in Primary School	153	46%	Girls in Primary School	142	45%
13-17	Boys in Secondary School	75	22%	Girls in Secondary School	74	23%
	Boys helping out at home	15	4%	Girls helping out at home	24	8%
	Boys in Training	7	2%	Girls in Training	1	0%
	Boys with a Job	1	0%	Girls with a Job	3	1%
	Overall Boys	**337**	**100%**	**Overall Girls**	**315**	**100%**

Source: GTM Census 2003

Figure 2.11 **Traveller Children in School**

Source: GTM Census 2003

Table 2.3 and Figure 2.11 give a further breakdown of those under 18 years of age. There are 652 Traveller children in Galway City, 481 of whom are in education.

Seventy-two Traveller children are aged between 3-4 years of age. Of those, 35 are at home and 37 are in pre-school education.

A total of 444 Traveller children are in schools in Galway City, with 295 in Primary school and 149 in Secondary school.

There are a total of 39 (6%) young Travellers (under 18), both male and female, "helping out at home", while eight (primarily boys) are in training and four have jobs.

Travellers over 18

Table 2.4 **Breakdown of the activities of those over 18 years of age**

MEN OVER 18		WOMEN OVER 18	
Men 18-25		**Women 18-25**	
Helping out at home or working with the family	4	Helping out at home or working with the family	31
In training	5	In training	4
Has a Job	3	Has a Job	2
On the dole	49	On the dole	33
Other	2	Other	4
Total	**63**	**Total**	**74**
Men 26-34		**Women 26-34**	
Helping out at home or working with the family	2	Helping out at home or working with the family	41
In training	3	In training	10
Has a Job	7	Has a Job	2
On the dole	47	On the dole	16
Other	5	Other	3
Total	**64**	**Total**	**72**
Men 35-55		**Women 35-55**	
Helping out at home or working with the family	4	Helping out at home or working with the family	52
In training	6	In training	10
Has a Job	4	Has a Job	2
On the dole	70	On the dole	17
Other	10	Other	4
Total	**94**	**Total**	**85**
Men 56-64		**Women 56-64**	
Helping out at home or working with the family	0	Helping out at home or working with the family	6
In training	0	In training	0
Has a Job	0	Has a Job	0
On the dole	11	On the dole	1
Other	7	Other	5
Total	**18**	**Total**	**12**
Men 65+		**Women 65+**	
Helping out at home or working with the family	0	Helping out at home or working with the family	0
In training	0	In training	0
Has a Job	0	Has a Job	0
On the dole	0	On the dole	1
Other*	4	Other*	10
Total	**4**	**Total**	**11**
Total	**243**	**Total**	**254**

Source: GTM Census 2003

* These payments may refer to pension payments.

Table 2.5 **Occupation of Traveller Men and Women over 18 Years of Age**

	MEN OVER 18	WOMEN OVER 18	TOTAL
Has a Job	14	6	20
On the dole	177	68	245
In Training	14	10	24
Total	**205**	**84**	**289**

Source: GTM Census 2003

Table 2.5 shows the occupation (excluding those helping out at home, working with the family or other) of Travellers over 18 years of age in Galway City. Of the total 497, twenty stated that they have jobs, representing just 4% of the total. Twenty-four are in training. Two hundred and forty-five people stated that they are on the dole, representing 49% of the total number of Travellers over the age of 18 in Galway City.

GTM Census 2006

The census carried out by the GTM in 2006 as part of the **All-Ireland Traveller Health Status Study** identified 295 family units[16] in Galway City, with a total of 1,343 people. Table 2.6 shows the gender breakdown and table 2.7 shows the age breakdown of those surveyed.

Table 2.6 **Travellers in Galway City by Gender**

GENDER	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Male	647	48%
Female	692	52%
No Answer	4	0%
Total	**1,343**	**100%**

Source: GTM Census 2006

Table 2.7 **Travellers in Galway City by Age Category**

AGE CATEGORY	TRAVELLER POPULATION IN GALWAY CITY (GTM '06)	
	Number	Percentage
0-14 years	607	45%
15-24 years	278	21%
25-34 years	188	14%
35-44 years	136	10%
45-54 years	62	5%
55-64 years	43	3%
65 years and over	16	1%
No answer	13	1%
Total	**1,343**	**100%**

Source: GTM Census 2006

The 2006 GTM census is consistent with the results of the National Census of Population 2002. It shows that 45% of Travellers in Galway City are aged between 0 and 14 years and that a further 21% are between the ages of 15 and 24 years. It also shows that only 1% of Travellers are aged 65 years and over.

Conclusion

The picture presented by the demographic data in the National Census (2002) is one of a community suffering severe disadvantage. Studies of poverty generally examine indicators such as low educational attainment, low levels of home ownership, high level of age dependency and high unemployment rates. This study looked at some of these indicators. The results were startling.

The age dependency for the Traveller community is 100.4%, compared to an overall population figure of 32.4%. The unemployment rate for the Traveller community is 77%, compared to an overall population figure of 10%. Sixty per cent of the Traveller population finished school with no education or primary education only, compared to an overall population figure of 12.6%. Fifty per cent of Travellers are living in local authority accommodation, compared to an overall population figure of 7%. Only 3% of the Traveller population own their own homes, compared to 57% of the overall population. Using any or all of these indicators indicates that the Traveller community in Galway City is living in extreme disadvantage.

The age structure of the Traveller community is significantly different to that of the overall population. A significant majority of Travellers in Galway City are children aged between 0 and 14 years and only a tiny minority are older people aged 65 years and over. There is a consistency in these findings between the 2002 National census of Population and the GTM 2006 census.

The GTM census supports the argument that Travellers are under-represented in the National Census figures. The reasons for this are complex and must be addressed by the Central Statistics Office.

Approximately half of Traveller children of pre-school age are in pre-school education. While this is to be welcomed, it also indicates that half of Traveller children of pre-school age are missing out on valuable early education.

Most starkly, the GTM 2003 census indicates that less than 5% of the Traveller community in Galway City has a job. This has obvious implications for the persistence of intergenerational poverty. The numbers of young people *"helping out at home"* is also an issue that must be tackled, but in a culturally appropriate way.

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[16] TThe definition of family unit in the 2006 GTM census was different to that used in the 2003 GTM census.

This report recommends that:

- A Traveller Data Collection Strategy is needed, to supply policy makers and service providers with the means of assessing needs, future planning, bench-marking, target setting and quantifying progress (Report of the High Level Group on Traveller Issues GEN 2, p.5). The development of this Strategy should be embarked upon as soon as possible.

- The GTM commit to ongoing demographic information gathering. The information gathering process initiated by this research should be updated regularly and should include information on new family formation, level of transience and new families moving to the city.

- The GTM continue to be proactive in relation to helping Travellers understand and complete the National Census form every five years, in particular in relation to identifying themselves as members of the Irish Traveller community.

- The GTM commit to analysing the situation of Travellers in relation to the overall population, by analysing the National Census Small Area Population Statistics every five years.

- It is noted that the Central Statistics Office initiated a campaign aimed at encouraging Travellers to participate in the Census 2006. It is recommended that this campaign go a step further and target Traveller enumerators to carry out the census among Travellers in Galway City (Census 2011). It is recommended that this be done in consultation with the GTM.

- Traveller-specific data collection methods be developed by statutory and other agencies. Data collected to be used to inform the work of the organisation and to trace the impact of initiatives and projects on Travellers. This should be done in conjunction with the GTM.

Section three
CULTURE, IDENTITY
& ETHNICITY

Section three
CULTURE, IDENTITY & ETHNICITY

Introduction

It is often stated that Travellers are an indigenous Irish ethnic minority group with their own distinct culture. Drawing on some of the policy documents and literature that relate to Traveller culture, this section of the report explores the culture of the Traveller community. Building on that it then examines the concept of Traveller identity and the question of ethnicity. Finally the main findings of the GTM research are presented before conclusions are drawn and recommendations made.

Culture

"Our lifestyle, the way we live, the way we talk, the stuff we make"
(*Culture* Focus Group participant)

Whilst there are many similarities and parallels between the cultures of the Traveller and settled communities in Ireland, there are differences that mark the culture of the Traveller community as distinct from the settled community. But what exactly is 'culture'?

Culture was defined by the Task Force on the Travelling Community as a *"package of customs, traditions, symbols, values, phrases and other form of communication by which we can belong to a community. The belonging is in understanding the meaning of these cultural forms and in sharing values and identity. Culture is the way we learn to think, behave and do things"* (1995, p. 71). The Task Force went on to single out some of the 'visible manifestations' of Traveller culture: *"Visible manifestations of Traveller culture include nomadism, the importance of the extended family, the Traveller language and the organisation of the Traveller economy"* (p. 72).

These and other elements of Traveller culture are intrinsically linked so that, for example, nomadism plays a central role in both maintaining the extended family and the Traveller economy, and the Traveller economy depends, to a large extent, on the mobility of those involved.

Nomadism
"Nomadism is neither entirely the product nor the producer of culture, it is a basic component which confers on the whole a marked flavour"[17]
The expression of a nomadic culture through the practice of nomadism is perhaps the single biggest difference between the culture of the Traveller community and the sedentarism of the

settled community. Nomadism does not necessitate constant travelling. It takes a range of forms and includes those who are constantly on the move, those who move out from a fixed base for a part of any year, and those who are sedentary for many years and then move on (*ibid.*, p. 72). Even for those who never travel, the idea of travelling stills plays a very important part in their view of themselves, so that it plays a psychological role described in the Council of Europe report **Gypsies and Travellers**: *"Nomadism is more a state of mind than an actual situation. Its existence and importance are frequently more psychological than geographical." (ibid.)*

Nomadism ensures both the maintenance of contact among a scattered community and the viability of the Traveller economy. The **Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community** says that nomadism *"plays a part in the social organisation of the Traveller community as it provides for contact and communication within a dispersed community and it plays an important economic role in providing Travellers with access to markets broad enough to make marginal economic activities viable"* (p. 72).

The Traveller Economy
The distinct manner in which economic activity is organised is what distinguishes and provides the basis for referring to a "Traveller economy". According to the **Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community** (p. 73 & 235), the Traveller economy is characterised by:

- **Flexibility:** in moving from one economic activity to another as opportunities for profit emerge.
- **An emphasis on self employment:** Travellers in self-employment can more easily respond to social and cultural demands required of them by their own community than is possible in a wage labour situation.
- **Income basis:** the Traveller economy is based on immediate payment for goods or services provided.
- **Importance of the extended family:** the extended family is the basic economic unit within the Traveller economy
- **Home base:** home space and working space tend to be one and the same.

Travellers are more concerned about generating income than generating jobs (McDonagh, 2000, p. 48) and are now involved in a broad range of activities including buying and selling, market trading, scrap collecting, tarmac laying, antique dealing, horse dealing, recycling and gardening. Nomadism plays a very importance part in these activities – as does the extended family, with members often travelling and working together.

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[17] Jean Pierre Liégeois, **Gypsies and Travellers**, Dossiers for the Intercultural Training of Teachers: Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 1987, quoted in the **Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community** (1995, p. 72).

The Importance of the Extended Family

"More sites, small sites. Keep it to families that get on"

Within the Traveller community the extended family still plays a major role. **The Task Force Report** (1995) describes the extended family as *"the basic economic unit within the Traveller economy"* (p. 73), and many family groups share work. Furthermore, according to Michael McDonagh (2000, p. 31), while *"Settled people organise themselves within parishes and districts, Travellers organise within families"*. The extended family is of central importance to many Travellers' lives and *"it is important that it is kept together. All the support mechanisms and everything that allows us to survive as Travellers are within it" (ibid.*). For many Travellers the need to live in close proximity to each other is more than just a preference: it actually plays an important social and economic function.

The Traveller Language

Travellers have their own language. Called Cant or Gamon[18] (the academic term used is Shelta), it is an oral language and much of it remains unwritten. There are claims by academics, most notably Irish socio-linguist Dr. Alice Binchy, that Cant is a very old language. In Cant, the vocabulary is relatively well developed while the grammar is borrowed from the majority settled community. This results from a nomadic lifestyle, as the development of grammar requires a fixed stable community (Binchy, 1994).

While in the past Cant was used as an everyday language, Travellers now tend to use Cant to communicate with each other when they do not want another person to know what they are saying. Cant is in decline and its loss is regarded with great regret by the Traveller community. However, efforts to preserve the language are subject to debate within the Traveller community, with many being reluctant to share it with the settled community in, for example, the education system.

Horses

Horses have always played a key role in the maintenance of the Traveller way of life. In the past they were vital to the practice of nomadism as they were used to pull caravans. Cars and vans now perform that function. However, horses are still central to the Traveller culture with many Travellers still keeping horses. Horses are often used as an investment alternative to financial institutions for saving. They are kept and then sold to pay for occasions such as funerals or weddings (ITM, 2001, p.6).

Keeping horses also plays a social role, especially for Traveller men, and the practice is seen as an arena for social interaction. The traditions associated with horse dealing are still evident. The skills associated with keeping horses are passed on to young Traveller children, for whom horses are a great source of activity and fun (*ibid.*)

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[18] According to Dr. Alice Binchy, "which name they [Travellers] use for it depends on their family background", and most Travellers agree that it is basically one language (1995, p. 87).

Other elements of Traveller Culture

Other elements of Traveller culture include the strong allegiance to religion and traditional religious practices (many Travellers, for example, wear black for a year after the death of a close relative), a love of music, crafts, and the use of traditional cures for illnesses.

Identity

The key questions here are whether Travellers identify with their culture and as Travellers, and whether Travellers are identifiable as a distinct group. Identity is an intangible, complex concept. It is complex because it includes notions of how we identify ourselves as well as how others identify us. Within the Traveller community there are two main elements to this complexity. First, there is the issue of how individual members of the Traveller community identify themselves and are identified by others. Second, there is the issue of whether the Traveller community (as a group) is identified, and is identifiable, as distinct from the settled community.

There is ample evidence to suggest that members of the Traveller community identify with being Travellers. Martin Collins (2001), for example, says, *"we Travellers are a small, indigenous, ethnic minority who have been a part of Irish society for centuries. We have a long shared history, customs and traditions making us a group, recognised by ourselves and by the majority population as distinct"* (p. 35). Many argue that membership of the Traveller community is not optional. One cannot choose to become a Traveller: *"Travellers are born, not made, and only those with at least one Traveller parent are accepted by the group as true Travellers"* (Binchy, 1995, p. 87), and to a large extent you cannot choose not to be a Traveller.

However, this latter point has caused much debate both within the Traveller movement and outside it. One strand in this debate asks, for example, whether Travellers have a choice in identifying or not identifying themselves as Travellers. Another strand asks whether or not Travellers who do not travel are still Travellers. Yet another asks whether Travellers can choose to become part of the settled community, sometimes referred to as "settled Travellers". Many within the Traveller movement argue that the thinking behind such debates can be traced to the view that Travellers are vagrants in need of rehabilitation (O'Connell, 2002, p. 58). Internalising this oppression, the argument continues, some members of the Traveller community deny their identity in an attempt to conform to what the majority settled population regard as the norm. In fact, Traveller activists would say that, whether Travellers choose to use the term or not, they are still Travellers. Traveller organisations are careful not to force this view on individual members of the Traveller community who choose not to identify. This is apparent in, for example, the approach of the All-Ireland Health Status Study, which first asks a question on whether respondents want to identify as a member of the Traveller community before continuing with the survey.

The second element to the question of identity is whether the Traveller community is a recognised and recognisable community, and of this there can be no doubt. The **Report of the Travelling People Review Body** (1983) defined Travellers as, *"an identifiable group of people, identified both by themselves and by other members of the community (referred to for convenience as the 'settled community') as people with their own distinctive life style, traditionally of a nomadic nature but not now habitual wanderers. They have needs, wants and values which are different in some ways from those of the settled community"*. **The Equal Status Act 2000** defines Travellers as the *"Community of people who are commonly called Travellers and who are identified (both by themselves and others) as people with a shared history, culture and traditions including, historically, a nomadic way of life on the island of Ireland"*. The Equality Legislation in Ireland makes specific reference to membership of the Traveller community as one of the grounds on which discrimination is illegal. It is also clear that the Irish State recognises the Traveller community as distinct. For example, mention of the 'Traveller community' is now commonplace in political and public discourse or discussion. Public policy organisations and the institutions of the state such as government departments, the Health Service Executive and local government make use of the term *Traveller community* on a regular basis.

The evidence indicates that Travellers are identifiable and identified as a distinct group from the majority population. However, ethnic identification by statutory and other agencies remains controversial. Those in favour of it argue that Traveller-specific data are necessary in order to assess the impact of special initiatives aimed at alleviating the disadvantage experienced by Travellers. For this purpose, an ethnic identifying question is often asked by statutory agencies and other service providers. Traveller activists have for many years been calling for *"data collection and analysis to assess and monitor the outcomes of the equality policy"* (Crowley. 2001, p. 190). Anecdotally, it is known that Travellers are often reluctant to complete questions that identify them as such. This is often misunderstood to mean that Travellers do not want to identify themselves or be identified as Travellers. This is not always the case – many Travellers are, in fact, reluctant to submit this information as they believe it may be used in an inappropriate way. This indicates the importance of developing methods of ethnic identification in consultation with Travellers and Traveller organisations.

The **Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community** states that a sense of identity and belonging is vital to everybody and is of equal importance to physical wants and needs. The recognition of Traveller culture and identity has an importance for Travellers and their status in Irish society (p. 74). However, many would argue that Traveller culture has been under threat by the State, its institutions and some sections of the settled community for generations. O'Connell, for

example, writes about the oppression experienced by Travellers – attempting to express elements of their culture – at the hands of local authorities, residents' associations, the media and politicians (2002, pp. 49-62). Helleiner also writes about the oppression experienced by Travellers, particularly Travellers in Galway City, at the hands of the local authority, the media, national politicians and the public (2000). Gearóid Ó Riain (1995) describes the Traveller community as being a "colonised community" and says: *"one of the principal legacies of colonisation is the depletion in the sense of self-worth of the colonised. This externally imposed self-evaluation serves to maintain the status quo by weakening the resolve of the colonised to work for change. It turns anger inwards and contributes to low self-esteem and divisiveness among the members of the community and can manifest itself in delinquency and break down the fabric of the society"* (p. 15). This, it is argued, has had many consequences for Travellers, as summed up by the following: *"When you take away someone's identity, as had happened to many Travellers, it causes unbelievable problems. This happened in the 1960s and generated very low self-esteem among Travellers. Many have a fierce inferiority complex, which has only been tackled in the last few years"* (McDonagh, 2000, p. 30)

More recently, Traveller organisations claim that the Irish Government's refusal to concede ethnic minority status to the Traveller community is further evidence of oppression. It is, they argue, evidence of a mindset and policy project that continues to be assimilationist – "In short, if they are not a distinct community then *ipso facto* they should be treated the same as the general population and incorporated into the general Irish population and they and their needs will become invisible" (Pavee Point, 2005, p. 12). In fact the argument for ethnic minority status has become one of the biggest issues for the Traveller movement. Many Traveller activists regard recognition of Traveller ethnicity as the foundation upon which the facilitation of Traveller culture will become a right as opposed to a concession.

Ethnicity

The *Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community* (1995) looked at the question of ethnicity. It examined the British definition of what constitutes an ethnic group, which says that a group constitutes an ethnic group if it has some or all of the following:
• A long shared history, of which the group is conscious as distinguishing it from other groups, and the memory of which it keeps alive
• A cultural tradition of its own, including family and social customs and manner – often, but not necessarily associated with, religious observations

- Either a common geographical origin or descent from a small number of common ancestors
- A common language peculiar to the group
- A common religion different from that of neighbouring groups or from the general community surrounding it
- Being a minority or being oppressed or being a dominant group, for example a conquered people and their conquerors might both be ethnic groups.

On this basis, in 2000, Irish Travellers in Britain were granted ethnic minority status protecting them under the **Race Relations Act 1976**. The Task Force argued that the relevance for Travellers in Ireland was clear. Traveller activists also argue the relevance for the situation in Ireland, stating that Travellers fulfil the requirements set out above, i.e. that the Traveller community has a shared history and a culture of its own. It has a common language, of which the passing on from generation to generation indicates that it is a language of an *ethnic* group rather than, for example, a language of an occupation group (Binchy, 1995, p. 90). The religion of the Traveller community is not different from that of the general community, but the degree of religious observance within the Traveller community is different. The evidence of Travellers being oppressed and discriminated against is plentiful (see Section Four of this report for examples).

The recently published **Traveller Ethnicity: An Equality Authority Report** (July 2006) sets out to examine the policy and academic debate that surrounds the arguments for and against Traveller ethnicity. It points to the fact that some anthropologists such as Barth and Ní Shuinéar stress the critical nature of how the group is defined by themselves and by others in the argument for ethnicity. Having assessed the debate, the report states that it *"validates the position of the Equality Authority in recognising Travellers as an ethnic group"*, and recommends that the *"Government should now recognise Travellers as an ethnic group and that this recognition should be reflected in all policies, programmes and institutional practices that impact on the Traveller community"* (p. 65).

The Irish Human Rights Commission, whose powers and functions are assigned by statute, have also called for the Government to *"recognise Travellers as an ethnic minority, or a group with distinct ethnic origins, at least for the purposes of the CERD Convention, the Framework Convention on National Minorities and the EU Race Directive and the protections and entitlements that spring from them"* (HRC, 2004, p. 17).

There are many instances in which there is (sometimes tacit) recognition of the ethnicity of Travellers, such as in the Equality Legislation and the National Action Plan Against Racism. At a more local level, both **Towards a City of Equals: Galway City Anti-Racism Plan** and **Plan for Travellers' Health** (Western Health Board, 2003) acknowledge Travellers to be a distinct ethnic minority group of Irish people. Despite this, the official Government view is that Travellers are not an ethnic group. This view was most publicly aired recently in the **Irish Government's First National Report to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination** (2005), in which the Government stated *"that Travellers do not constitute a distinct group from the population as a whole in terms of race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin"*[19]. The Government claims that the notion of Travellers as an ethnic group is controversial in academic debate, and uses this as justification for their stance. The report published by the Equality Authority (2006) examined this claim and found little to substantiate it.

The Government's position has been severely criticised by Traveller organisations as well as by bodies such as the Irish Human Rights Commission, the Equality Authority and the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI). In rejecting the Irish Government's assertion, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) reminded the Irish Government of its principle of self-identification[20], which basically states that if no evidence exists that the Traveller community is not an ethnic minority, then the Traveller community has the right to self-identify as an ethnic minority[21].

The Government asserts in their CERD report that recognising Travellers as a distinct ethnic group would have no implications for Traveller status, as *"to define Travellers as a minority ethnic group would not entitle Travellers to any additional rights and protections"*. Traveller organisations such as Pavee Point vigorously dispute this assertion. They believe that the failure to recognise Travellers as an ethnic group has *"profound implications"* (Pavee Point, 2005, p. 13) for the implementation of measures aimed at protecting Traveller culture, for Government recognition that Travellers experience racism, and for the inclusion of Travellers in policy aimed at promoting a more inclusive and intercultural society. While acknowledging that recognising Travellers as an ethnic group will not be a panacea for movement on Traveller policy, Traveller organisations believe it would be *"a significant beginning and could contribute in a significant way to less contradictory and more consistent policy responses and would send out an important signal about the status of Travellers in Irish society."* (*ibid.*)

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[19] **First National Report to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination**, Appendix 1, p. 90.
[20] In its General Recommendation VIII, the CERD says that "Having considered reports from States parties concerning information about the ways in which individuals are identified as being members of a particular racial or ethnic group or groups, [the Committee] is of the opinion that such identification shall, if no justification exists to the contrary, be based upon self-identification by the individual concerned."
[21] Travellers and Traveller representative organisations have long made the case for ethnic group status. See Collins, M., *Travellers and Racism* in Farrell, F. and Watt, P., **Responding to Racism in Ireland** (2001) and the Irish Traveller Movement (ITM), **Submission to the Development of the National Action Plan Against Racism**, http://www.itmtrav.com/frame4.html

GTM Research Findings

This section of the GTM research showed the following:

- Travelling, whether practised or not, is very important to Travellers in Galway City and some do still travel.
- There is little facilitation of nomadism and other aspects of Traveller culture within society.
- Travelling has been increasingly discouraged and this is having an impact on the choices that Travellers have in relation to travelling.
- Many Travellers do not see travelling as a real choice open to them anymore.
- The Traveller language, Cant, is very important to Travellers in Galway City but is in decline.
- Traveller culture is under threat from sources both external and internal to the community
- There are a number of things that Travellers in Galway City would like to see established that they believe would help to preserve their culture.
- Traveller identity is very important to Travellers in Galway City.
- When Travellers deny their identity it is almost always done to avoid discrimination.

Recognising that culture and identity are a vital part of what it means to be a Traveller in Galway City, the GTM research looked at these areas and asked questions on the importance of culture, how Traveller culture is changing and how it can be celebrated and protected. People were also asked about their identity as a Traveller and how important it was to them.

Nomadism and Travelling
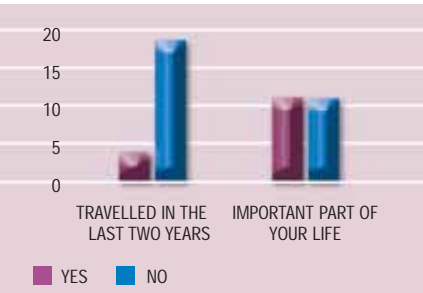
Figure 3.1 **Nomadism**

Figure 3.1 shows that of those who were interviewed, 20% (5) had travelled in the two years prior to the interview, compared to 80% (20) who had not travelled. A much higher number (12, or 48%) said that going on the road is an important part of their lives. This suggests that the idea of travelling is still significant for people.

Travellers in Galway City do still travel, mostly in the summer, and many others still hold it as an aspiration to be back on the road: *"I love travelling and I take my children away for the summer"* and *"I love travelling and would love to go back on the road"*. For some it is a central part of who they are: *"You pine away without it [travelling]. There's something about the road. It's like a tonic. Travelling is in our blood. You can't explain it…"*

A substantial number of those who do not now travel gave reasons associated with the practical difficulties now linked with travelling, as opposed to referring to a cultural change. For example, of those who do not travel anymore, eight people gave the reason as having something to do with the

Trespass[22] laws: *"because of the law and Council moving Travellers on"* and *"since the new law came in it has stopped most Travellers from travelling. There's nowhere to go."*

Another of the reasons given was the lack of facilitation of the nomadic culture of Travellers: *"No one goes anymore. No place to pull in"*. A further reason given by some was the practice of putting boulders up on traditional sites for pulling in: *"Because of boulders and barriers. Travellers can only pull on the side of the road where it is dangerous. It's not like years ago when we could pull into a lay-by or a field where it was safe"*. A number of people also said that the difficulties with medical cards and the difficulties in getting the children to school when travelling make it too difficult. Others said that they had no interest in travelling any more: *"since I settled down I have no more interest in the road anymore"* and that they do not want their children to endure the hardship of the road: *"…I am settled now and don't want my children to suffer on the road as I did"*.

Language

As stated, while Travellers used Cant as an everyday language in the past, they now tend to use it to communicate with each other when they do not want another person to know what they are saying: *"we were talking our own Cant, settled people didn't know what we were saying"*. The fact that a number of settled people now know Cant is seen as a threat: *"More people know Cant now. That's not a good thing. Travellers should keep it to themselves"*.

It is widely acknowledged amongst Travellers that Cant is largely in decline, and this decline is seen as a grave loss amongst the Traveller community in Galway City: *"I feel bad about it… It's the first thing that should never had been let out* (sic)*"*.

Traveller Culture Under Threat

"Traveller culture is dying"

All of the twenty-five interviewees see Traveller culture changing. While this is not necessarily a bad thing, as culture needs to be dynamic in order to survive, many feel that their culture is actually under threat: *"…I'd love to go travelling but it's not allowed now. People are not as happy today"* and *"Times were better, you got enough food for your kids, today you don't even know where they are."*

There was a strong message coming from the research that attempts, past and current, to impose the "settled" lifestyle on Travellers have contributed to the erosion of Traveller culture: *"since the bye-laws came in it's harder for Travellers to travel anymore we are made to live like settled people. [The local] authority is taking away our identity and all that it stands for like nomadism, customs, values and beliefs."*

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[22] This refers to the **Housing (Miscellaneous Provision) Act 2002**, commonly referred to as the Trespass law. See the section on accommodation.

The threat to Traveller culture comes from a number of sources, including the settled community and the state: *"City councils and others want to settle all Travellers and don't take their culture into consideration"*; *"Can't travel no more we have no choice any more of where we live"*; and from young Travellers: *"Young people know no Cant, cures, nothing"*; *"Too much television"*; *They don't know about antique stuff. They'd throw it away. I could sell it for a hundred euro, they know nothin' about nothin'."*

There was a perception from some that there is increasing integration between the Traveller community and the settled community, and that Travellers are increasingly marrying and choosing partners from within the settled community. This will make preserving the Traveller part of family culture and passing it on to children difficult. Whilst some Travellers see this as a positive thing: *"Need to integrate more into settled. I've two brothers married to settled and we don't try to change them and they don't try to change us. Children don't deny their uncles aunts grandfathers and they get on with both sides"*. Some believe strongly that Traveller culture will be subsumed into the majority, stronger, settled culture: *"mixing more with the settled, more settled know the cant now. The music people are into is changing"*; *"Travellers ways are being lost we still have our traditions but it's hard to hold onto them. Not as religious as before."*

The demise of the traditional lifestyle, as some see it, is having a hugely detrimental effect on some people's lives and on the community as a whole. As one interviewee put it, *"you pine away without it, there's something about the road it's like a tonic. Travelling is in our blood you can't explain it. Travellers are not used to the ways of settled life. That's why they're dying, committing suicide, suffering from depression."*

Preservation of Traveller culture

There was a strong message from both the interviews and the focus groups that Traveller culture should be preserved and facilitated: *"Travellers should have equal rights and a right to celebrate their culture in their own way"* and *"Those who want to live on the road should be allowed to live on the road."* There were suggestions on how this could be done:
Suggestions from the Focus Groups and Interviews

* Settled people should learn to accept and respect Traveller culture.
* Culturally appropriate facilities should be made available, including halting sites, space to keep horses, etc.
* A museum/heritage centre in Galway City to celebrate Traveller culture and traditions.
* Exhibitions, concerts, films and documentaries to document Traveller culture.
* Travellers should pass their culture on to their children.
* Traveller culture and Cant should be taught in schools[23].

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23 This a contentious issue, as many other Travellers would be reluctant to teach Cant to members of the settled community.

Identity

"I am a Traveller"
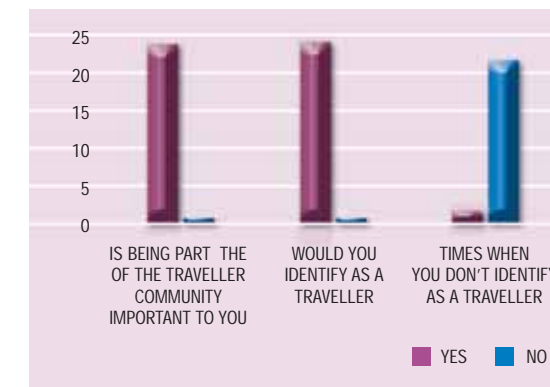*"Traveller all the way through"*
"It's my life, my whole history, my background. It's what I am and it's what I represent."

Figure 3.2 illustrates how those interviewed view their identity as Travellers.

Figure 3.3 **Identity**

It is clear that identity is very important to Travellers in Galway City. All of the twenty-five people interviewed said that their identity as a Traveller was important to them. In answer to the question *"Would you identify as a Traveller?"* all twenty-five respondents said that they would. In answer to the question "*Are there times when you don't identify as a Traveller?"* all but two of the respondents said that they would not hide their identity as a Traveller: *"I am what I am"*; *"It's who I am"*. Those who hide their identity do so to avoid discrimination: *"When I do go out I do hide my identity because if you are seen as a Traveller you will not be served"*; *"Job applications 'cos I wouldn't get the job".*

There is a pride associated with being a Traveller and an intractability of being identified as 'Traveller': *"I love being a Traveller. My kids are proud and love telling people they are Travellers in school. Before I was afraid and ashamed. Now it's different"*; *"That's what I am and I'm proud of my identity"*; *"we will never change"*; *"The blood is in us".*

Conclusions

Comparable to the picture of the Traveller community nationally, the picture that emerges from the GTM research is of a community whose sense of culture and identity is profound. Participants clearly identify strongly with Traveller culture and with themselves as Travellers. Even where manifestations of Traveller culture such as nomadism and language are not practised or spoken, it is very apparent that people view them as an intrinsic part of themselves and value them highly. Participants clearly have a very positive attitude towards Traveller culture and want to be able to pass that culture on to subsequent generations.

However, both the internal and external challenges to preserving this culture and identity are immense. To date Traveller culture has shown resilience and flexibility in moving and adapting to the changing times, but the picture emerging here is of a community whose culture and identity are being eroded and who are suffering intensely as a result.

Travellers, against their own expressed wishes, are sometimes forced to hide their very identity in order to avoid discrimination. This research reveals a sense of anger, frustration and disappointment and a feeling of betrayal by the state, which people perceive as conceding them rights with one hand and taking them back with the other, e.g. the Trespass laws . Put simply, Travellers would like to be able to live like Travellers – to have the option of travelling, to be able to work in the Traveller economy and to be free of discrimination so that Traveller identity becomes something to be proud of and celebrate.

Recognition of the importance of affirming Traveller culture has been growing. Ó Riain (1995), for example, maintains that acknowledging Travellers' right to be proud of their culture and identity may be a necessary "self re-evaluation" that breaks down the image of Traveller as negative and inferior and allows Travellers to be proud of being Travellers. A starting position for this affirming process must be the conferring by the Irish Government of ethnic group status to Travellers, allowing Travellers to claim the facilitation of their culture and identity as an entitlement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This report recommends that:

- The Irish Government confer ethnic group status on the Irish Traveller community immediately. The policy implications of their being recognised as an ethnic group should be fully considered and accommodated by Government, nationally and locally.
- A Traveller Heritage and Cultural Centre be established in Galway City as part of the Galway City Museum initiative.
- National University of Ireland, Galway and Galway Mayo Institute of Technology proactively include Traveller culture, history and folklore in their efforts to document and preserve Irish traditions.
- GTM undertake a community-based initiative to promote Traveller culture and identity in the context of ethnicity.
- A commitment to breaking down the barriers and building relationships between the Traveller and settled communities be undertaken under the auspices of **Towards a City of Equals: Galway City Anti-Racism Strategy**.
- All agencies adopt an intercultural approach to service provision, as recommended by the National Action Plan Against Racism.
- In acknowledging the challenges that the issue of teaching Cant presents, GTM commit to exploring how the teaching of Cant to Traveller children in a community setting can be resourced.

Section four
DISCRIMINATION AND RACISM

Section four
DISCRIMINATION AND RACISM

Introduction

For Travellers, the question in relation to discrimination is not whether they have experiences, collectively and individually, of discrimination, but whether or not those experiences can be properly labelled racist experiences. This section of the report examines the discrimination and prejudice experienced by the Traveller community and asks whether they can properly be called racist experiences. The main findings of the GTM research are then presented, followed by conclusions and recommendations.

Discrimination

Research has consistently shown that Travellers are the community most often discriminated against in Ireland. The Task Force on the Travelling Community quoted the European Parliament Committee of Inquiry on Racism and Xenophobia in 1991 as reporting that, in Ireland, *"The single most discriminated against ethnic group is the 'Travelling People'"* (p. 78). The Millward Brown IMS study carried out in 2004 for the KNOW Racism campaign found that 68% of respondents (1,200 nationally representative adults) disagreed that there is no discrimination against Travellers; 72% of respondents agreed that the settled community is not willing to accept Travellers living among them; 13% of all respondents disagreed that the Travelling community should have the same rights as the settled community; 23% disagreed that the nomadic way of life and culture of the travelling community should be preserved; and 48% disagreed that the travelling community make a positive contribution to Irish society. The study concluded that *"face-to-face with Travellers their [the general public's] attitudes are often more negative – more instinctive, more deeply ingrained and less subject to correction by liberal sensitivity – there is more public acceptance of negative attitudes to Travellers than to immigrants"*.

A study carried out for Amnesty International in 2001[24] found that almost 79% of Travellers stated that they experienced racism or discrimination, with 41% of these respondents stating that they experience abuse "frequently" (pp. 16–18). The research found it 'alarming' that 25% of racist incidents reported by respondents were at the hands of the Gardaí, the second highest source of racist incidents overall (p. 18). In addition, the study found that a high percentage of respondents believe that there is no point in making complaints about racist incidents to the Gardaí (p. 43).

Research carried out for the Citizen Traveller campaign in 2000 found that 42% of Irish people hold negative attitudes towards Travellers. Research carried out by Curry (2000) concurs with the above. In a large random sample of the Dublin population he found that the respondents perceived themselves to be most *"socially distant"* from Travellers, followed by other ethnic minority groups.

The level of acceptance of anti-Traveller discrimination within Irish society is a phenomenon highlighted by Fanning (2002) as *"a casual and unquestioning acceptance within Irish society of the legitimacy of discrimination against Travellers"* (p. 167). MacGréil (1996) compared research he carried out in Ireland in 1972/73 to a similar study carried out in the late 1980s, and found that there was a growing and unacceptable level of social prejudice against what he called 'Travelling People'. This was apparent despite an overall reduction in racialist prejudice (p. 13).

More locally, Helleiner in her publication **Irish Travellers: Racism and the Politics of Culture** illustrates the level of discrimination that Travellers, both nationally and in Galway City, endure. She claims that the history of what she terms *"anti-Travellerism"* can be traced at least as far back as the late nineteenth century (p. 52). She reveals evidence that *"there was a policy in Galway City to refuse tenancies to 'itinerants' as late as 1958, and that even those described as not 'strictly itinerant' were accorded the lowest priority"* (p. 56) and that *"Travellers were actively excluded from Galway City through evictions, prosecutions, and the denial of housing"* (p. 57).

Irish people rarely acknowledge that Travellers experience racism. According to John O'Connell (2001), for example, *"there is still a strong resistance among the Irish public to calling the treatment of Travellers racism"* (p. 52). Similarly, though the Irish Government acknowledges that Travellers suffer discrimination on the basis of social origin[25], it refuses to acknowledge that this discrimination is racist. But does this assertion bear up to scrutiny? Can these experiences be properly called racist experiences?

Racism

The most commonly used definition of racism is the UN definition, which states that racism is: *"Any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference, based on colour, descent, national or ethnic origin, which has the purpose of modifying or impairing the recognition, the enjoyment or exercise on an equal footing of human rights and fundamental freedom in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life"* [26].

According to **Planning for Diversity: the National Action Plan Against Racism** (2005), racism *"is a specific form of discrimination and exclusion faced by cultural and ethnic minorities. It is based on the false belief that some 'races' are inherently superior to others because of different skin colour, nationality,*

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[24] A study carried out by Loyal and Mulcahy for Amnesty International in 2001, **Racism in Ireland: The Views of Black and Ethnic Minorities**, interviewed 622 members of ethnic minorities and highlighted "the systematic abuse that black and ethnic minority groups continually face in Ireland" (p. 17).

[25] Ireland, **First National Report 2003**, paragraph 3.
[26] **The UN International Convention on all Forms of Racist Discrimination** (1969).

ethnic or cultural background. Racism denies people their basic human rights, equality and respect" (p.38)[27]. It is now generally accepted that that there is in fact only one race – the human race. Ethnicity or membership of an ethnic group is now recognised as being one of the main bases on which people experience racism. Members of ethnic minority groups experience racism as a result of their membership of these groups. Racism can occur at two levels – at individual level and at institutional level. Racism experienced at an individual level includes offensive acts or comments based on a person's colour, religion, nationality or ethnicity. Institutional racism[28] occurs:

When members of ethnic minority groups are *deliberately* **discriminated against by institutions**
and/or
When institutions *inadvertently* **discriminate against members of ethnic minorities by failing to plan for their diverse needs**

In addition to membership of an ethnic group, a prerequisite to naming discrimination as racist discrimination is the notion of racialisation. Racialisation refers to a process whereby members of a group become identified with a fixed notion of inferior characteristics. Central to this are the notions of superiority and inferiority. This process is carried out within society, the media and political structures. In relation to the Traveller community, this process has been a feature of Irish society for generations. O'Connell (2002) reviewed media coverage and political speeches in the 1990s that referred to Travellers and concluded, *"Quite clearly, a racialisation process inferring the inferiority of travellers is the outcome of media and political discourse"* (p. 55).

Helleiner refers to the racialisation process when she talks about how Travellers were *"inferiorized"* and how *"politicians, settled communities and the Irish nation were portrayed as abused and exploited by the Travellers, who were constructed as perpetrators rather than victims of injustice"* (p. 64). Travellers were also portrayed as criminal and as being responsible for *"creating havoc"*, *"scenes"* and *"pandemonium"* and for posing *"a collective menace to the social order"*. She talks about the animalistic phraseology that described Travellers as *"infesting"* remote areas, *"breeding like rabbits"*, adding *"a dehumanizing discourse to such allegations"* (p. 65). The work of Travellers, Helleiner claims, was downgraded and the *"productive craftspeople of the past - had been replaced by parasitical traders and/or beggars"* (p. 65). They were also identified more broadly as dangerous to the nation's public health, economy, and *"social order"* (p. 62).

Part of this process is the tendency to blame Travellers themselves for the discrimination that they experience. This has been identified by, amongst others, Farrell and Watt (2001, p.11) who say that *"if groups do experience racism in Ireland, it was somehow their own fault arising either from some*

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[27] This is the understanding of racism that was used by the KNOW RACISM campaign and is the one adopted by **Towards a City of Equals – the Galway City Anti-Racism Strategy**.
[28] See **Planning for Diversity 2005, National Women's Council of Ireland**, 2004, p. 49.

form of deficiency on their part and/or the failure of such groups, in particular the Traveller community, to allow themselves to be subsumed into Irish society". In other words, because Travellers do not behave as settled people would like them to behave, they deserve the discrimination they experience. There is rarely any questioning of the fact that it is settled people who determine these standards of behaviour. As Fanning (2002) puts it, *"the rights of Travellers are called into question within a one-sided communitarianism[29] which suggests that the dominant community is entitled to exclude Travellers until they demonstrate compliance with the standards and cultural norms of the dominant settled community"* (p. 19).

Discrimination against Travellers has been named as racist discrimination by a growing number of academics and commentators. In his article *Travellers in Ireland: an examination of discrimination and racism*[30], John O'Connell concludes: *"racism towards Travellers in Ireland is similar to racism in general insofar as it involves a negative stereotyping based on notions of superiority and inferiority"* (p. 58). Fanning (2002) agrees when he says that *"it would be difficult to exaggerate the extent of racism and discrimination against the Travelling people in Irish society and the extent to which it remains justified within racialised discourses that construct the Travelling people as deviant and inferior"* (p.5). McVeigh and Lentin (2002) say that the *"prejudice, discrimination and violence experienced by Travellers can clearly be characterised as racism"* (p. 23) and go on to say that *"it is now difficult to argue against the thesis that Traveller disadvantage occurs because sedentary Irish society in general – and the state in Ireland in particular – discriminates against Travellers, routinely, structurally and in a racist manner"* (*ibid.*, p. 23).

Ronit Lentin (2002) argues that *"anti-Semitism, together with anti-Traveller racism, has been the most prevalent form of racism in 20th century Ireland"* (p. 154). Fanning (2002) draws a comparison between the experience of Protestant, Traveller and Jewish groups in saying that they *"became the focus of racialisations which, in each case, served as justification for their exclusion within Irish society"* (p. 51). John O'Connell argues that as the largest indigenous minority group, Irish Travellers have historically endured racism and discrimination that has resulted in Travellers being *"widely acknowledged as one of the most marginalized and disadvantaged groups in Irish society"* (2002, p. 49). The Task Force report (1995) concludes that *"The forms of prejudice and discrimination experienced by the Traveller community equate with racism in the international context"* (p. 79).

The World Conference Against Racism (WCAR), held in Durban in 2001 under the aegis of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, also recognises that Travellers experience racism. Article 68 of the Declaration states: *"We recognize with deep concern the ongoing manifestations of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, including violence, against Roma/Gypsy/Sinti/Travellers and recognise the need to develop effective policies and implementation mechanisms for their full achievement of equality"*.

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[29] Communitarianism is a term that refers to the linking of rights to responsibilities in social policy debates.
[30] Ronit Lentin and Bobbie McVeigh, **Racism and Anti-Racism in Ireland**, 2002.

Donncha O'Connell, writing in *Racially Aggravated Crime – The Irish Experience* (2004), calls racism against Travellers a *"particularly Irish form of racism"* and says that it *"must not go unacknowledged or, indeed, unsupported as an issue of enduring discrimination in Ireland"*. Most recently, the **National Action Plan Against Racism** acknowledges that racism is experienced by Travellers (NPAR, p. 29), a view echoed by the **Galway City Anti-Racism Strategy**.

The need to address the level of discrimination and racism experienced by Travellers is all the more urgent as there is evidence to suggest that the levels are growing. Examples of incidents that relate to Travellers and their experiences of racism abound in the *Reported Incidents Relating to Racism* published by the NCCRI. In the 2004 **Annual Report of the Equality Authority**, it was reported that the largest category (35.4%) of case files under the **Equal Status Act** relate to cases taken on the Traveller ground. According to Niall Crowley, CEO of the Equality Authority, *"The race and Traveller grounds continue to dominate in the case files"*.

GTM Research Findings

This section of the GTM research showed the following:

- The experience of discrimination and racism is a common occurrence for Travellers.
- Travellers experience discrimination in all aspects of their lives.
- The experiences of discrimination range from being called names to being refused service or not receiving the same service as others.
- People are frequently embarrassed, angry, hurt and ashamed by their experiences.
- Though some do make a complaint, a substantial number of people feel powerless and do nothing after such an experience.

As part of the research process, the GTM included in the questionnaire a number of questions relating to discrimination, and also held a focus group session on this theme. Given the centrality of discrimination in the lives of Travellers, most of the other focus group sessions also touched on this subject.

Figure 4.1 shows that of the twenty-five people interviewed, an overwhelming 96% (24) said that either they or their families had experienced racism and discrimination.

Figure 4.1 **Racism an Discrimination**

- EXPERIENCED RACISM OR DISCRIMINATION
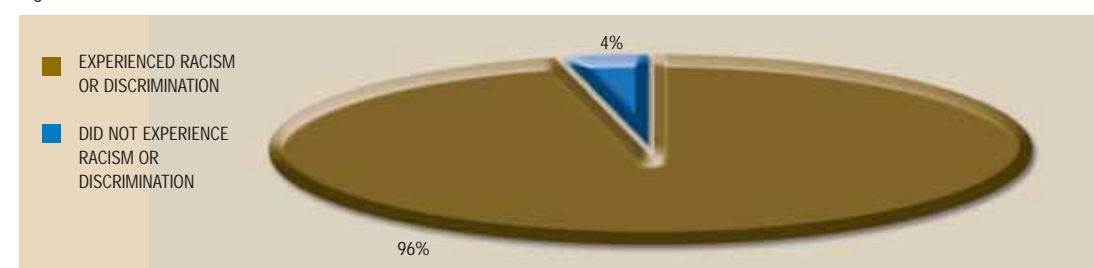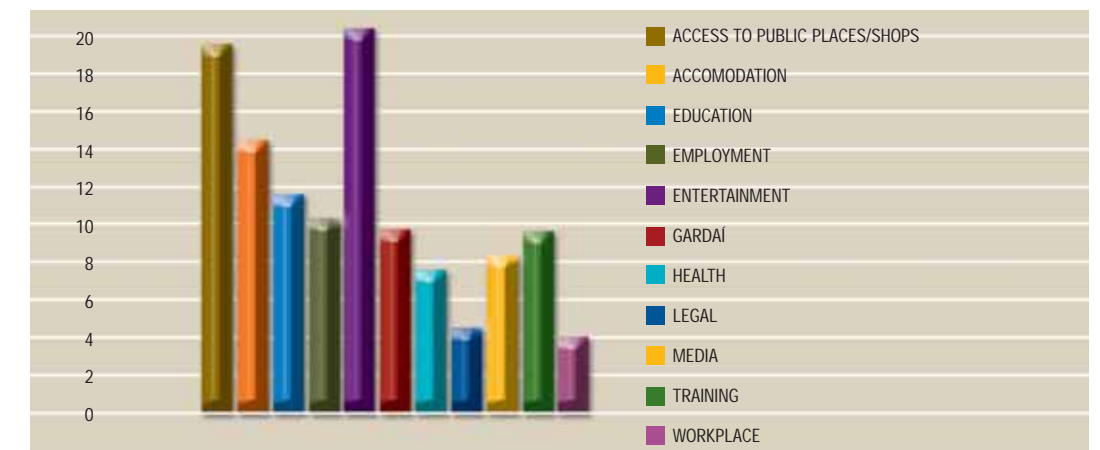- DID NOT EXPERIENCE RACISM OR DISCRIMINATION

4%
96%

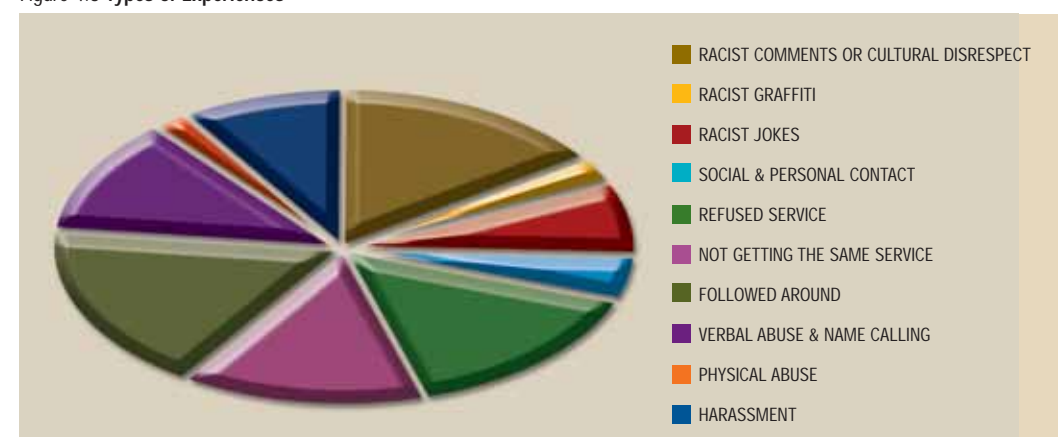Figure 4.2 shows that Travellers in Galway City experience discrimination in all aspects of their lives:

Figure 4.2 **Experiences of Racism an Discrimination**

- ACCESS TO PUBLIC PLACES/SHOPS
- ACCOMODATION
- EDUCATION
- EMPLOYMENT
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GARDAÍ
- HEALTH
- LEGAL
- MEDIA
- TRAINING
- WORKPLACE

- **Entertainment and shops** – most experiences of racism and discrimination take place when Travellers access entertainment services (including pubs) and in shops and public places.
- **Accommodation** – Travellers report high levels of racism and discrimination in relation to accommodation: *"my son and his new wife got it hard to find a home when landlords found out they were Travellers they were told that he would get in touch with them but never did".*
- **Education** – many feel that discrimination exists in the education systems, with many believing that their children are discriminated against in schools in Galway City: *"I feel my children are discriminated in [name of school] school" and "I feel my child is left out in the classroom".*
- **Employment** – People strongly feel that discrimination prohibits them and their children from gaining access to employment: *"when my oldest children were younger they couldn't find work because of discrimination".* Interestingly, the workplace ranks relatively low in the list of areas in which Travellers experience racism and discrimination. That may be because so few Travellers overcome the discrimination associated with achieving employment to gain access to the workplace in the first place.
- **Health** – some believe that they are treated differently by health professionals, and the approach and amount of time allotted to Travellers by health professionals were seen by some as problematic: *"[Travellers are] seen differently to settled people"*; *"doctor not friendly"* and *"had not time for us".*
- **Media** – many mentioned the media as highlighting Traveller issues in a negative way: *"when I first got my house in [name of area] the papers and media tortured me"* and *"when we were pulled out of Hillside we were plastered all over the paper".*

The types of racist abuse experienced by Travellers are illustrated in Figure 4.3:

Figure 4.3 **Types of Experiences**

- RACIST COMMENTS OR CULTURAL DISRESPECT
- RACIST GRAFFITI
- RACIST JOKES
- SOCIAL & PERSONAL CONTACT
- REFUSED SERVICE
- NOT GETTING THE SAME SERVICE
- FOLLOWED AROUND
- VERBAL ABUSE & NAME CALLING
- PHYSICAL ABUSE
- HARASSMENT

The most common experience reported was being followed around (e.g. shops). Eighty per cent, or one in four of those interviewed, reported this as an experience they have or have had: *"Followed in [name of shop] every time I go in".*

Eighteen of twenty-five people reported being at the receiving end of racist comments or cultural disrespect, fourteen of twenty-five reported experiencing verbal abuse and name calling, and nine of twenty-five reported bearing the brunt of racist jokes such as being called "Knacker" by neighbours or settled people in the area where they live, or from young people "being smart" or "calling names" and *"since the first day I moved to Galway I have had bad remarks thrown at me".*
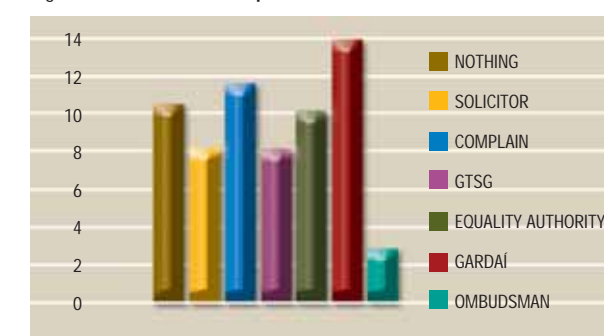
Eighteen of the twenty-five people interviewed reported being refused service, and a substantial number reported not getting the same service as other customers. People reported that when they were recognised or identified as Travellers, they were frequently either refused service or that the service was not the same as the service being received by other customers: *"not getting the same service as others all the time"*; *"when I'm seen as a Traveller I'm not respected like others"*; *"…[refused service] in pubs, shops and hotel for my wedding"* and *"I dress like a Traveller and people sit away from me".*

The added difficulties of going out with a group of people were mentioned: *"never had any problems when it was just the two of us (me and my husband) but if there was a gang it would be different."*

Harassment was mentioned by a substantial proportion of people, especially in relation to harassment from Gardaí and harassment towards Traveller men. Two respondents cited incidents of physical abuse, one of these in relation to the Gardaí.

Figure 4.4 outlines how people deal with the experiences of discrimination and racism.
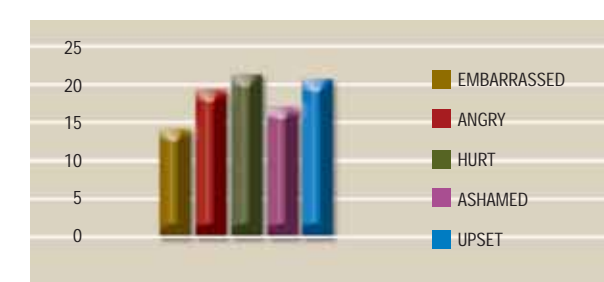
Figure 4.4 **Deal with the Experience**

- NOTHING
- SOLICITOR
- COMPLAIN
- GTSG
- EQUALITY AUTHORITY
- GARDAÍ
- OMBUDSMAN

A significant number of people said that they would make some type of complaint, either to the person in charge, to the Gardaí or to the Equality Authority. However, a substantial number of people said that they would do nothing.

Figure 4.5 gives an illustration of how these experiences made respondents feel:

Figure 4.5 **Feelings**

- EMBARRASSED
- ANGRY
- HURT
- ASHAMED
- UPSET

The most frequently expressed feelings were those of being hurt and upset by the discriminatory experience. Respondents also said that they experienced anger, shame and embarrassment as a result of discriminatory incidents.

A focus group discussion was organised on the theme of legal and justice issues, at which the issue of discrimination was foremost. There was a clear perception amongst the participants that Travellers suffer discrimination at all levels of the legal and justice system: *"To be treated the same as settled people. You're put down as different. It may be the same case. That's where discrimination comes in".* Participants reported literacy being a major issue when dealing with the justice system. They recounted instances where Travellers with literacy difficulties were being asked to sign statements that they could not understand: *"They can't read it; they don't know what they're signing"*; *"read back to them what they're signing".*

There was a perception that Travellers are treated less favourably than settled people by the legal and justice system. For example, participants had a strong perception that when a crime is committed the Gardaí will frequently assume that a Traveller is the perpetrator. They also believe that Travellers are treated less favourably when in custody than settled people. Participants also reported instances of being asked to inform on others. Participants were adamant that imprisoning people for minor offences did nothing to solve the problems of which anti-social behaviour is symptomatic: *"They need to look at other options, solutions to problems [other than jail]"*, *"Jail doesn't solve anything".*

Conclusions

The picture presented by the GTM research is of a community where experiences of discrimination and racism are commonplace. Over 96% of people interviewed said that they had experiences of discrimination or racism. These experiences happened in all walks of life – in shops, on the street, in banks, in schools.

They include not being allowed access to places or services, not being given the same service, negative comments, and in some cases physical assault. There is evidence of the racialisation process – of linking the Traveller community with negative characteristics like theft and deviancy. There is evidence that service providers are making negative assumptions about Travellers because of their identity, and consequently either denying them a service or refusing to give them the same service as others. Examples abound of Travellers being denied access to social outlets such as pubs *"just because we are Travellers"*. These experiences are racist and it is important to name them as such. Incidents of institutional racism are also commonplace, particularly in the areas of accommodation and education.
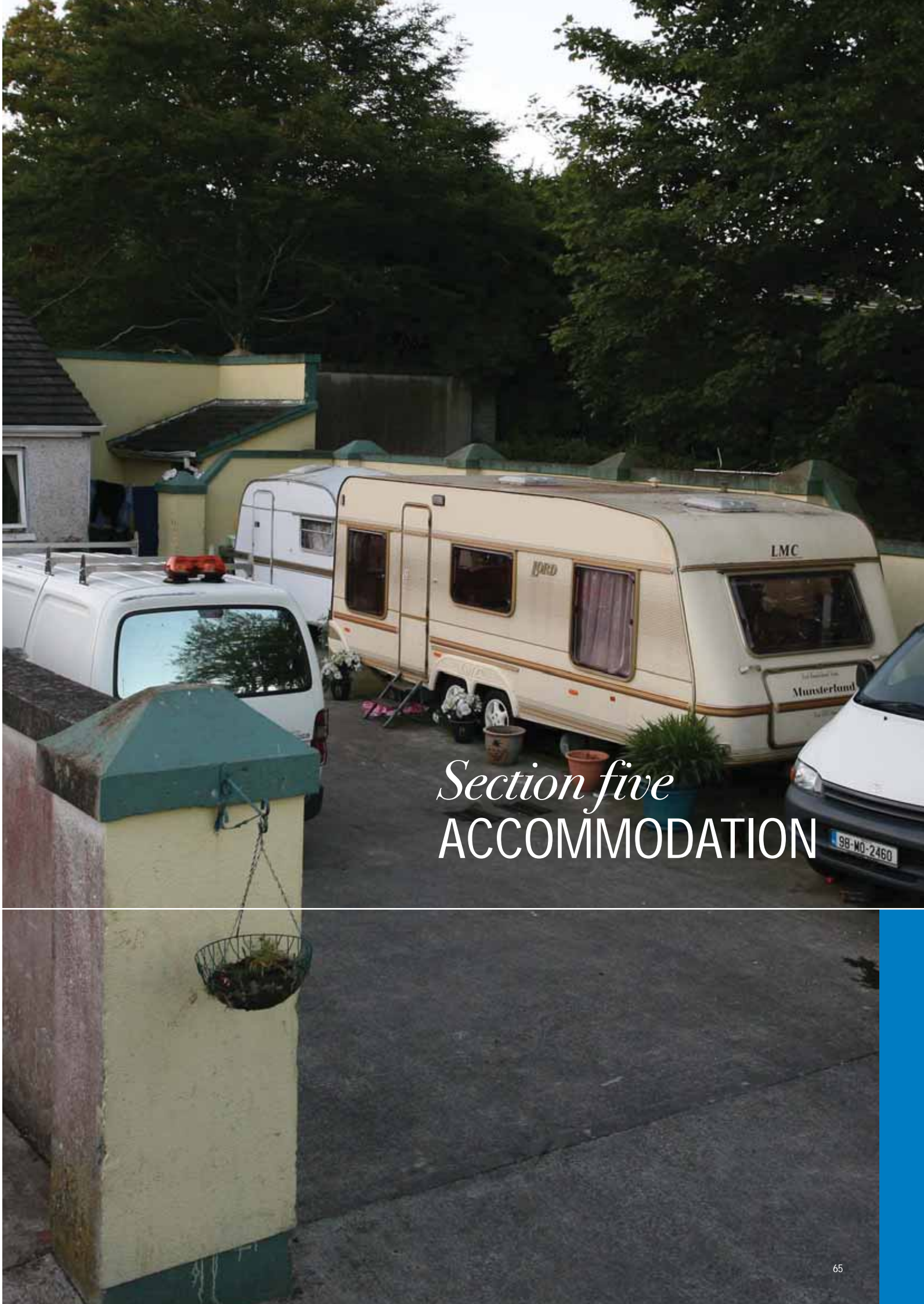
The depth at which the feeling of powerlessness exists within the Traveller community in the face of discrimination and racism is exemplified by the reluctance of a substantial number of people to make a complaint after experiencing discrimination.

The feelings that members of the Traveller community are left with after having experienced a racist or discriminatory incident are profound and heartfelt. The impact of this persistent oppression is immense. It includes poor mental health, depression, low self-worth (both individual and at a community level) and poor health. This impact should not be underestimated. The publication of the **National Action Plan Against Racism** and the **Galway City Anti-Racism Strategy** suggest a growing recognition that racism and discrimination can no longer be tolerated and must be considered positive developments to the policy context in this area. Travellers and their experience of racism must continue to inform the implementation of these strategies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This report recommends that:

- Travellers' experience of racism be recognised by the Government.
- Travellers be automatically and fully included in future anti-racism initiatives, including the Strategic Monitoring Committee of the National Plan Against Racism.
- All policies, local and national, require proofing to ensure that they do not discriminate directly or indirectly against Travellers.
- Experiences of discrimination and racism against Travellers be logged and followed-up on as part of the **Galway City Anti-Racism Strategy** Logging Incidents Initiative.
- Travellers remain central to the implementation of the **Galway City Anti-Racism Strategy**.
- The statutory sector use the NPAR and **Galway City Anti-Racism Strategy** to inform all policy developments in relation to Travellers, specifically the recommendations relating to Planning by Design. These initiatives should be monitored.
- Statutory agencies recognise the need for attitudinal change within their organisations, and that they organise anti-racism/Traveller-friendly training for staff at all levels in conjunction with the GTM.
- Travellers be included in discussions for Joint Policing Committees between local government and local Gardaí as proposed in the Garda Síochana Bill (2004).

Section five
ACCOMMODATION

Introduction

"Not only is the question of accommodation perceived by Travellers to be closely linked with their sense of identity but there is also ample evidence to suggest that accommodation is also closely associated with other key dimensions of Travellers' lifestyle, such as health, education, access to credit and the economy." (Weafer, 2001, p. 35.)

The question of accommodation is regarded by many Travellers to be intrinsically connected to their sense of culture and identity. Travellers also perceive the question of accommodation to be closely linked to other areas of their lives, such as health, education and the Traveller economy.

This section of the report focuses on Traveller accommodation. It first looks at the main policy documents and research in relation to this issue. It then presents the main findings of the GTM research in relation to accommodation. Finally it presents conclusions and recommendations.

Policy Developments

Prior to the publication of the **Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community** (1995), the housing of Travellers was seen to be one of the key solutions to the challenge of assimilating Travellers into settled society. The Commission on Itinerancy (1963) recommended, for example, that local authorities make adequate houses available for Traveller families and that halting sites be provided only when and where there was insufficient housing available.

In 1983, the Travelling People Review Body did acknowledge that absorption of the Traveller community into the settled community was unacceptable, but also strongly recommended that the provision of halting sites be kept to the minimum required for Travellers who found the transition to a house difficult.

In 1995, the Task Force on the Travelling Community reported that there is a close link between accommodation and identity, and that the design of Traveller accommodation should reflect the distinct culture and identity of Travellers. The report further said that it was the view of the Task Force that the accommodation provided to Traveller families must be appropriate to their needs, and must be met through the provision of a range of accommodation types (p. 96). The report also made clear that in formulating its recommendations it took into account not only the needs of families indigenous to an area but also the needs of *other* families who may require the use of a transient site from time to time (p. 97). The Task Force made a total of forty-nine recommendations relating to the area of accommodation, including recommendations on the design and provision of accommodation, on permanent halting sites, on transient halting sites and on caravan design.

It was recommended:

- That an independent statutory body, to be known as the Traveller Accommodation Agency, be established to draw up, in consultation with local authorities, a National Programme for the provision of Traveller-specific accommodation.
- That each local authority establish a Traveller Tenant Accommodation Committee representing a partnership, based on fair representation and the principle of equity, of local authority councillors, Travellers and Traveller organisations. The key role of the Committee would be to assist in the implementation of the accommodation programme and of developing Traveller tenant participation strategies.
- That 3,100 units of additional Traveller accommodation be provided between 1995-2000. These 3,100 units were to be made up of 900 houses (standard and group housing), 1,200 serviced units and 1,000 transient units.
- That a nationwide network of transient halting sites be developed.

While there has been some progress in delivering on the recommendations, the majority of them have not been implemented to date.

Following on from the publication of the Task Force Report, the **National Strategy for Traveller Accommodation** was published in 1996. The strategy supported the recommendations of the Task Force regarding the provision of 3,100 units of Traveller accommodation nationally, and proposed the development of a five-year Traveller Accommodation Programme by each local authority.

In May 1996, a dedicated **Traveller Accommodation Unit** was established in the Department of the Environment and Local Government to oversee the implementation of the strategy and the development of Traveller accommodation strategies at a local level.

In December 1996, the **National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Group** was set up under the aegis of the Department of the Environment and Local Government with representatives from that Department, the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, the national Traveller organisations (Irish Traveller Movement, National Traveller Women's Forum and Pavee Point), local authorities, the Association of City and County Managers, and county councillors. In April 1999 this group was established on a statutory basis as the **National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee** (NTACC).

In July 1998 the **Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998** was enacted. The Act obliges each of the major local authorities to establish a **Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee** (LTACC) comprising elected representatives and officials of the local authority, Travellers and Traveller organisations. The role of the LTACC is to facilitate consultation between housing authorities and Travellers, to advise on the preparation and implementation of the Traveller Accommodation Programme in their area, to advise on the management of accommodation for Travellers, and to provide a liaison between Travellers and the local authority.

The 1998 Act also obliges local authorities to develop and implement a five-year Traveller Accommodation Programme, with the active involvement of Travellers and Traveller groups in the design and implementation of these programmes. This is to include consultation, a recent assessment of needs and a policy statement on meeting accommodation needs. The accommodation to be provided can include standard local authority housing, group housing schemes, permanent residential caravan parks and transient halting sites.

It allows for:

- The provision of assistance and incentives for Travellers to build, purchase or improve the private home of their choice.
- The direct provision by local authorities of a range of Traveller appropriate accommodation.
- A range of assistance and supports to the voluntary sector to provide, for rent, a range of accommodation options.[31]

In relation to the targets set for Travellers and accommodation, the **National Anti-Poverty Strategy** says that *"All Travellers' families identified in the local authority five-year Traveller accommodation programme process as being in need of accommodation will be appropriately accommodated by end 2004"* (NAPS 1997).

Progress in the area of accommodation for Travellers has been limited. Ten years after the publication of the **Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community**, almost one Traveller family in ten was living on unauthorised sites[32] or other unserviced locations[33]. The ***First Progress Report of the Committee to Monitor and Co-Ordinate the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Task Force on the Travelling Community*** (2000) noted that despite the fact that much progress had taken place since 1995 in putting in place the administrative, legislative and financial framework for the provision of Traveller accommodation, progress in the actual provision of new accommodation had been very slow. It further noted that between 1998 and 1999, there was an increase of only sixty-eight Traveller families in accommodation provided by local authorities or with local authority assistance, and that in the same period the numbers of families on the roadside or in unauthorised sites actually rose from 1148 to 1207. The Committee went on to emphasise *"in the strongest terms"* the importance of having the local Traveller Accommodation Programme delivered in a way that clears the backlog in Traveller accommodation (p. 13).

There are many concerns about the way that the Local Authority Traveller Accommodation Programmes are working. In a critique published in 2001, it was stated that while *"all of these programmes have been adopted by the relevant Local Authority and submitted to the Department of the Environment and Local Government, it is clear that many do not meet the basic requirements or guidelines set down by Government. Concerns include weak assessment procedures and figures, an*

[31] Department of the Environment and Local Government, **Accommodation Options for Travellers** (no date), p. 3.
[32] The term unauthorised sites is a term that includes the roadside, private yards, gardens, fields and unofficial sites, and generally implies unacceptable standards with no access to services such as running water, toilets, washing facilities or rubbish collection.
[33] According to the **Annual Housing Statistics Bulletin** for 2004, there were a total of 6,991 Traveller families living in the State, with 601 families living on unauthorised sites or other unserviced locations.

overt focus on the provision of local authority housing, lack of recognition of nomadism or need for transient sites, lack of implementation details, targets and timescales and little focus on Traveller culture and tenant centred management procedures" (Fahey, 2001). In 2000, an evaluation of the LTACCs found that a significant strength of the LTACCs is that they provide a roundtable forum between Travellers and the local authority. However, it described as "significant" the fact that levels of satisfaction among Traveller representatives were lower than among other members, relating to both their input into the LTACC and the provision of advice for the Accommodation plan (Costello, 2000).

In the **Review of the Operation of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998: Report by the National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee to the Minister for Housing and Urban Renewal**, carried out in 2004, it was estimated that there was an overall increase of 1,885 families accommodated between 1996 and 2003. This increase fell far short of the 3,100 families by the year 2000 recommended by the Task Force in 1995. Only 579 of these units were in Traveller-specific accommodation, again falling far short of the 2,200 recommended by the Task Force. The Irish Traveller Movement noted the failure of the current National Traveller Accommodation Strategy to impact positively on Travellers' lives and deliver the necessary accommodation (2002, p.5), and say that *"these figures highlight the lack of commitment that exists to provide accommodation for Travellers that meets their needs as a nomadic ethnic group in Irish society"* (p. 9).

The **Second Progress Report of the Committee to Monitor and Co-Ordinate the Implementation of the Task Force on the Travelling Community** (2000) states that the provision of good quality appropriate Traveller accommodation continues to be a challenge. The report acknowledges that improvements are taking place, but remains conscious that there is still much work to be done in meeting the accommodation needs of Travellers (pp. 19-22).

Some policy developments in the area of accommodation are considered regressive by Travellers and Traveller organisations, including the **Housing (Miscellaneous Provision) Act 2002**, known as the Trespass Law. This is a controversial piece of legislation that essentially makes trespassing, heretofore a civil offence, a criminal offence. It allows for Gardaí to remove illegal encampments and to bring charges of trespass against the owners. Traveller organisations are highly critical of the fact that there was no consultation with them prior to the enactment of this legislation. They argue that the failure on the part of local and central Government to provide adequate, culturally appropriate accommodation ensures that Travellers often have little option but to camp on unofficial sites. The Act is seen by Travellers and Traveller groups as a major obstacle to the nomadic tradition of Travellers.

Galway City

In Galway City there have been a number of welcome developments in the recent past in the area of accommodation for Travellers. These developments include the establishment of a **Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee** (LTACC), with representation from Galway City Council (councillors and officials), the Traveller community and the GTSG (now GTM). The Galway LTACC has adopted two programmes, known as the first and second **Traveller Accommodation Programme** (TAP), covering the periods 2000-2004 and 2005-2008. The most recent TAP states that *"Galway City Council recognises Travellers' identity as a minority ethnic group, some of whom travel and strive to accommodate themselves in a culturally appropriate way"* (p.3). This has been welcomed by the GTM as an important move forward.

The Traveller representatives on the LTACC are now elected by the Traveller community. This marks a progression in the development of real participation for Travellers on the committee. Working arrangements between Galway City Council and GTM are also improving. Galway City Council is now working with GTM to devise tenant participation training, and staff participated in a session facilitated by GTM on delivering a Traveller friendly service. These actions are important and should be acknowledged. Work on the refurbishment of two halting sites and the completion of a new housing scheme are also to be welcomed. Moreover, it is worthy of note that there are no Travellers in Galway City living by the side of the road or in unofficial halting sites.

However, GTM claim that much work remains to be done. They contend that the conditions on the transient halting site in Galway City are deplorable, that many families are living in overcrowded conditions and that this needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

The first Galway City **Traveller Accommodation Programme** estimated that there was a need for accommodation for 87 families (77 current and 10 projected). During the period of this programme (2000-2004) a number of Traveller families were housed in standard local authority accommodation, two group housing schemes (16 units) were provided and the halting site in Hillside in the east of the city was closed down. However, there was no increase in the number of halting sites, nor, GTM claim, any improvements on the existing sites. At the end of the TAP period there was, according to GTM, an immediate need for 117 units of accommodation and a projected need for 52 units of accommodation.

The second Traveller Accommodation Programme (TAP) for Galway City states that there are currently a total of 340 Traveller families[34] in Galway City, whose current accommodation status is outlined in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 **Details of Traveller Accommodation in Galway City**

ACCOMMODATION TYPE	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Standard Housing	176	52.0%
Group Housing Schemes	22	6.5%
Shared Ownership Scheme	1	.3%
Voluntary Housing	2	.6%
Permanent Residential Caravan Bays	21	6.0%
Private Rented Accommodation	78	23.0%
Families Sharing	22	6.5%
Families residing on Transient Sites	18	5.0%
Total	**340**	**100%**

Source: Galway City Council Draft Traveller Accommodation Programme 2005-2008

Seventeen and a half per cent of Traveller families in Galway City are accommodated in Traveller-specific accommodation, with the majority (52%) housed in Standard Local Authority Housing. According to Galway City Council this *"confirms housing as the accommodation of choice for the majority of Traveller families"* (p. 5). Whilst the GTM would concur that this is so for many families, it would also suggest that many Travellers with a preference for Traveller-specific accommodation do not view this as a realistic option open to them. Consequently, many do not state this to the local authority as their preferred option, opting instead for the more realistic option of standard local authority accommodation.

The national Traveller organisations have examined this phenomenon. According to the ITM, *"the overemphasis on standard housing provision is having a detrimental effect on the Traveller community. In many areas Travellers are being encouraged to accept housing by local authorities where their first accommodation choice is a halting site. Once a family accepts a house there is little hope of them ever living in a halting site again"* (p.9). Pavee Point contends that *"many local authorities persist in the assimilationist approach to Traveller accommodation. The unstated policy… is to persuade/force Travellers to move into houses rather than providing Traveller specific accommodation"* (2005, p. 12).

Traveller organisations, including GTM, have long advocated for the provision and standards of Traveller accommodation to be seen in the context of human rights. However, many Travellers in Galway City continue to live in overcrowded and substandard accommodation. One of the halting sites in particular has no electricity or basic facilities and another is badly in need of refurbishment. In addition, "Families Sharing" – the new heading used by the Department of the Environment since 2003 – is, according to Pavee Point, "a euphemism for Travellers living in conditions of chronic overcrowding" (2005, p. 27) and anecdotal evidence would suggest that this is the case for many of the twenty-two families sharing accommodation in Galway City.

In their projections for the future accommodation needs of Travellers, Galway City Council estimates that 188 units will be needed between 2005 and 2008[35]. However, according to the TAP the target for new accommodation is 67 units, leaving a shortfall of 121 units by Galway City Council's own estimates.

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[34] According to the **Annual Housing Statistics Bulletin for 2004**, a total of 280 Traveller families were living in Galway City, none of which were living on unauthorised sites. These figures were revised and updated to 340 with the assistance of the GTM.

[35] Galway City Council projections submitted to the Department of the Environment and Local Government.

This shortfall accounts for a third of the shortfall for the entire country. GTM expressed concerns about this shortfall both locally and to the NTACC. GTM states that their support for the adoption of the TAP was reluctant and based on assurances that the programme would be reviewed within a year of its adoption.

GTM Research Findings

This section of the GTM research showed the following:

- Many Travellers expressed satisfaction with their accommodation. However, others expressed dissatisfaction, most notably those in Traveller-specific accommodation.
- Overcrowding is a problem for many.
- Many respondents believe that inappropriate accommodation and overcrowding are affecting their health and well being, and undermining Traveller culture.
- At the time the interviews were carried out, many of the facilities on the Traveller Halting Sites were inadequate.
- Despite the fact that Galway City Council states that it recognises Travellers as an ethnic minority group, there is little facilitation of aspects of Traveller culture such as work space or space to keep horses.
- Many respondents believe that the consultation with Travellers on their accommodation needs is inadequate.
- Many respondents believe that there is inadequate understanding of Traveller culture in Galway City Council.
- Many respondents report having received negative treatment by some staff in Galway City Council.

The issue of accommodation has been one of the core areas of the work of the GTM since its foundation. Indeed, the GTM employs an Accommodation Worker. The GTM research looked at the area of accommodation for Traveller families in Galway City.

Figure 5.1 **Accommodation Type**

- PERMANENT HALTING SITE
- TRANSIENT HALTING SITE
- GROUP HOUSING SCHEME
- LOCAL AUTHORITY STANDARD HOUSING
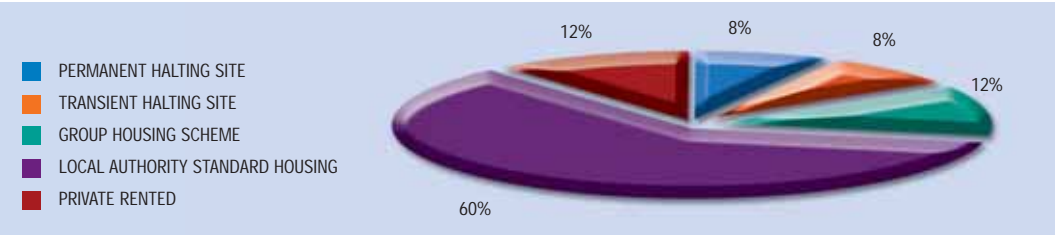- PRIVATE RENTED

12% 8% 8% 12% 60%

Figure 5.1 shows a breakdown of the type of accommodation of those interviewed. Of the 25 in-depth interviews, 15 were with families in standard local authority housing, 3 families were in private rented accommodation, 3 families were in a group housing scheme, 2 families were in permanent halting sites and 2 families were in transient halting sites.

Table 5.1 Satisfaction Rate with Accommodation

	SATISFACTION RATE			TOTAL
ACCOMMODATION TYPE	SATISFIED	DISSATISFIED	MIXED	
Permanent Halting Site	0	1	0	1
Transient Halting Site	0	2	0	2
Group Housing Scheme	1	2	0	3
Local Authority Standard Housing	8	3	4	15
Private Rented Accommodation	2	1	0	3
Total	11	9	4	24

Table 5.1 shows the satisfaction rate with regard to accommodation. In relation to an overall satisfaction rating, eleven people interviewed said that they were satisfied with their accommodation, nine were dissatisfied and four had a mixed view.

Three of four respondents living on halting sites expressed dissatisfaction with their accommodation. One respondent did not answer this particular question. One respondent from the group housing schemes expressed satisfaction with their accommodation and two expressed dissatisfaction. Eight of those interviewed from local authority standard housing expressed satisfaction with their accommodation, three expressed dissatisfaction and four had mixed views. Two of those living in private rented accommodation expressed satisfaction with their satisfaction and one expressed dissatisfaction.

Halting Sites

At the time the interviews were carried out:
- There were no functioning toilets on one of the permanent halting sites or on the transient site.
- There was a cold water tap on the transient site but at the time of the interview it was not working.
- There was no electricity on the transient site.
- There was no running hot water on the transient site.
- There were no working showers or washing facilities on the transient site.
- There were service huts with facilities for washing clothes on the permanent halting sites but all were in very bad condition.
- There was a barrier denying access to vehicles over a certain height across all of the halting sites. None of those interviewed on the Traveller sites had access to the key for the barrier. Two of those interviewed living in group housing said that they did not have access to a key for the barrier.
- There was a communal skip but no individual refuse collection on the transient site.

From the comments of those interviewed it is clear that some of the accommodation on some of the halting sites is inadequate: *"Portaloo toilet is very bad, no flush – two days max and then it is filled up. Just an outside tap often very bad water - running hot water is needed badly."*

The shower doesn't work - can't use it. The skip collection is not enough, we need more skips -outside people are using them. Street lighting is mostly not working and is always broken in wintertime".

Respondents stated that when repairs are needed, it takes such a long time to get a response from those responsible that the residents don't even bother to make a complaint: *"try to solve it ourselves/no one helps us, no one comes out to us"*; *"we have to do it ourselves no point in going to the corporation they're not going to help you"*. This has, according to GTM, improved considerably in recent times, and it is acknowledged that the work of the Galway City Council Social Work Team has been key to this.

When asked how people felt about their accommodation, the picture that emerges is one that reflects a feeling of neglect: *"too packed this is a transient site but all the families here are here for years we're not transient"*; *"I need a proper service hut or a little house beside my mobile the whole bay needs doing up with proper facilities"*.

When asked if there were any issues for them when they had to approach the City Council, many respondents spoke about the negative treatment that they receive from the City Council, the lack of consultation with Travellers about their accommodation needs and the lack of response from the City Council in relation to necessary repairs etc.: *"no respect, write down details but do nothing. Get the name of the person but they're never there never get to see the person"*; *"feel ashamed and embarrassed at the way they treat me"*; *"half of the time the corporation won't listen to me, I have been in and out of the corpo for a long time to ask what are they doing for the site but don't get any support or proper information. There is no consultation with us to what we want. There is supposed to be plans for the site but I have not yet seen them"*. One respondent said that she did not really have any complaints.

Group Housing

There are four group housing schemes in Galway City. Galway City Council states in the **Draft Accommodation Programme 2005-2008** that the *"families residing in these schemes were consulted from design stage"*. However, the picture that emerges from the interviews is one of accommodation that does not entirely suit those living there: *"Not allowed to work on the site. My sons had horses and were not allowed to keep them on site"*; *"would not give the [space for trailers] in negotiations – were not allowed"*. GTM claims that what is needed is real consultation and discussion about options in relation to accommodation, rather than the information-giving that is, according to GTM, currently the practice. Those interviewed also complained that the houses were not finished properly.

In relation to getting repairs done, those interviewed said much the same as those living on halting sites, that it takes a long time to get repairs done and when residents have to go to the City Council some feel that there is a *"bad attitude towards Travellers"*.

The dangers associated with barriers – usually erected at the entrance to group housing schemes and halting sites – were particularly highlighted by participants of one of the focus groups. They spoke of the dangers when emergency services cannot gain access when necessary: *"The fire brigade was ten minutes waiting to get through the barrier and the house on fire. We rang the [Galway City Council staff member] about the key [to open the barrier] but she didn't get back to us"*. The concern and anger that this is generating is clear: *"We are just like animals down here, it feels like prison. You can't blame people for breaking the barrier, I've done it and will do it again"*.

Standard Local Authority Housing

It is clear that some of those interviewed are very satisfied with their accommodation: *"My first choice. Has four bedrooms that accommodates five kids. Nice area friendly neighbours. It's quiet – no hassles. Close to all services"*. However, not all Travellers living in standard local authority housing want to live there: *"the whole attitude around Travellers has to change. Travellers should have a choice about where they want to live – house or halting site"*.
Overcrowding is an issue for some of those interviewed. According to Galway City Council estimates, there are twenty-two families "sharing accommodation" in Galway City. The reality in these cases is that there may be two families living together, generally the family and a grown-up child with their own family. These families have to share toilets, water facilities, cooking facilities, etc.

In relation to getting repairs done, those interviewed said that it takes a long period of time before requests are answered, and some have carried out the necessary repairs themselves: *"I was eight years waiting for a leak in my bathroom to be repaired. I had to borrow money from a money lender to get it fixed"*.

A common issue for Traveller families is the issue of overcrowding. Young adults often face difficulties in accessing their own accommodation because they face discrimination in relation to private rented accommodation and/or do not qualify for local authority accommodation. The result is that many young adults, some with families of their own, are forced to continue living in the parental home. The frustration of some at the lack of understanding of these difficulties is clear: *"Corporation have no time for Travellers they just want to get their rent every week. If you complain about the rent being too high you're told to put your children over 18 out of the house yet there's nowhere for them to go. There is no one there you can talk to. I would rather give up my house than put my children out on the street. They don't understand the nature of Traveller families, children and family come first"*.

The difficulty that some Travellers have in communicating with Galway City Council was also highlighted: *"some Travellers can't read letters sent out by the corporation. Corporation needs to explain better/use pictures don't use big words - maybe visit and explain"*.

Private Rented

In relation to private rented accommodation, those interviewed are generally fairly satisfied with their accommodation. However, discrimination in relation to accessing private rented accommodation is still apparent. One respondent said that she found it difficult to get accommodation and another said that at the time she got private rented accommodation, the landlord did not know that she was a Traveller. GTM has evidence to indicate that even when Travellers manage to access accommodation they frequently have to accept sub-standard houses/apartments.

Focus Group Discussion – Accommodation

Some of the main points that came from the focus group discussion on the theme of accommodation were:

- The lack of consultation with Travellers on their accommodation needs: *"There's no consultation with Travellers, do you know what I mean?"*; *"They're not asking Travellers what they want"*.
- The preconceived notions of Travellers' accommodation needs that those in authority seem to have: *"The Corporation are trying to change Travellers to something they want"*.
- The problem of overcrowding: *"It affects Traveller health – the overcrowding"*; *"More halting sites. So that when young Travellers get married they have somewhere to go. The young ones are miscarrying about the stress of where to go. There's nowhere for them to go. They don't want to be in on top of you and you don't want young couples in on top of you"*.
- The poor standard of some accommodation: *"Some halting sites are not fit for dogs"*.
- The lack of planning for the needs of children: *"Did not think of children [when planning]. No space for playing. The high walls are very dangerous"*.
- The absence of a network of transient halting sites: *"I want to come and go as I like. You're a Traveller…. No freedom"*.
- The futility of paying rent for a long time with no ownership rights: *"I'm 2 years in my house. What use is it to me? I'll never own it"*.
- The lack of facilitation for those with a disability: *"I have a disability…I wanted a toilet downstairs, turned down because I was not [completely] handicapped"*.
- The amount of discrimination by settled people against Travellers: *"It's a lot to do with settled people, they do not accept them [Travellers]. Do not want to take a house beside a Traveller"*.

Suggestions for improvements from the focus group participants

Suggestions to Galway City Council in relation to the accommodation needs of Travellers included:

- Employing someone who has an understanding of Traveller culture and accommodation needs – *"should help out Travellers – someone we could have confidence in"*.
- Training for staff of the City Council – *"more Traveller friendly; there needs to be a lot more done for Travellers"*; *"give a bit more respect to Travellers"*.
- Establish a complaints procedure in relation to accommodation – *"there should be a complaints officer who can deal with the work not getting done someone to listen to people who have major problems with their accommodation"*.
- Refurbishment of sites.
- More transient sites. Make them smaller.
- Play areas.
- Consultation with Travellers on their accommodation needs – *"Attitudes need to change. Travellers should be consulted and supported"*; *"Give people what they want: not what they want to give them"*.
- A more user friendly system – *"[At City Council] when I was upstairs they sent me downstairs, when I was downstairs they sent me upstairs"*.

Conclusions

The challenge posed by the question of Traveller accommodation in Galway City is improving and there have been many positive developments in the area of accommodation over the past number of years. Galway City Council is facilitating greater participation by, and consultation with, Travellers and the GTM. Travellers now elect their own representatives onto the LTACC. This is to be welcomed. The fact that the TAP for Galway City acknowledges the ethnicity of Travellers and the consequences this has for accommodation provision is also to be welcomed. However, this acknowledgement must be demonstrated by the provision of culturally appropriate accommodation for Travellers in Galway City. This includes the provision of Traveller-specific accommodation where appropriate, as well as space for the facilitation of specific aspects of Traveller culture, such as working from home. Galway City Council are now working with GTM to devise tenant participation training, and staff participated in a session facilitated by GTM on delivering a Traveller-friendly service. These actions are important and should be acknowledged. The refurbishment of the Tuam Road and Doughiska halting sites and the completion of the new five-unit group housing scheme are also to be welcomed.

The fact that Galway City Council is content to aim to produce just 36% of the anticipated accommodation needs of Travellers between 2005 and 2008 (as outlined in the TAP) is disappointing, and indicates that Galway City Council is reluctant to engage in a meaningful way with the issue of provision. The assurances regarding the review of the TAP within a year must be fulfilled.

The results of the research show that while many Travellers expressed satisfaction with their accommodation, some continue to live in inadequate, inappropriate accommodation in Galway City,
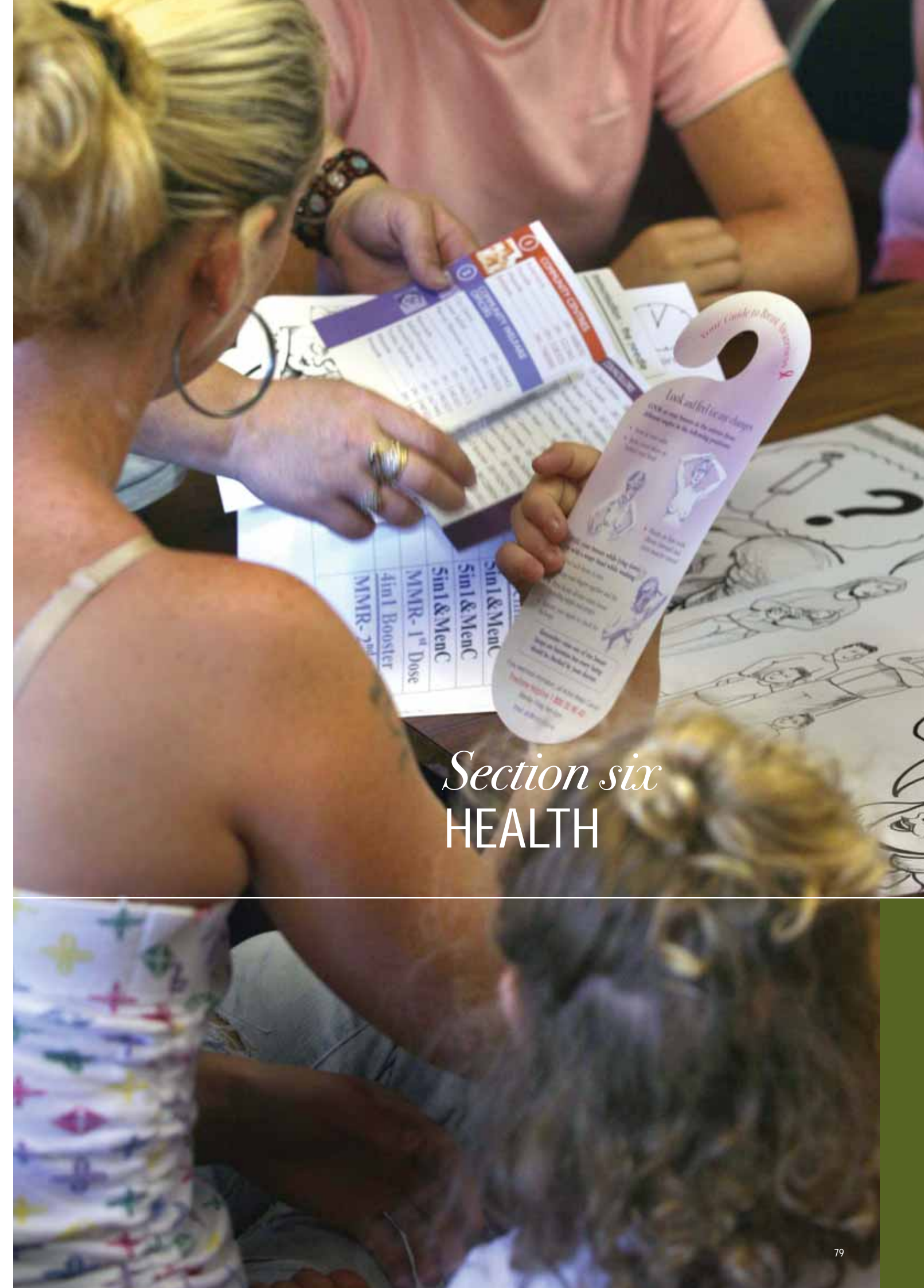
with many people still lacking basic facilities and experiencing overcrowding. Those who expressed most dissatisfaction with their accommodation live in Traveller-specific accommodation. Many believe that they are living in unsafe, unacceptable conditions. Those in other forms of accommodation spoke of overcrowding and the lack of understanding of Traveller culture in all accommodation provision. Consultation with Travellers about their accommodation needs and the implementation of strategies to acknowledge the needs of Travellers was perceived to be inadequate.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This report recommends that:

- An intercultural dimension into key housing and related policy instruments be developed, and that greater progress be made in implementing the local authority Traveller Accommodation Programmes as outlined in the National Action Plan Against Racism section on accommodation (pp. 123-129).
- A Traveller Accommodation Agency with the statutory powers to ensure the implementation of the Task Force Report recommendations be established at a national level.
- Mechanisms be established to ensure that local authorities adhere to the Department of the Environment guidelines in relation to Traveller accommodation. These guidelines should be viewed as the minimum standard acceptable.
- Traveller culture be respected and facilitated in the development of accommodation. This includes taking the following into account in relation to Traveller culture:
  - The extended family frequently, though not always, wants to live together.
  - Traveller families tend to be larger than the national average. Therefore larger accommodation units are needed for Traveller families. In relation to halting site accommodation, each bay should be able to accommodate at least two caravans.
  - Living space and work space tend to be the same, so work space in the home needs to be facilitated.
  - The nomadic traditions of the Traveller community must be facilitated. Space for visiting family should be provided.
  - Horses form a large part of Traveller culture and the keeping of horses should be facilitated.
- The Galway City Council Traveller Accommodation Plan 2005-2008 be implemented in a culturally appropriate way. A review of implementation targets and timescales should be carried out before the end of 2006.
- A review of implementation be carried out before the end of 2006.
- New family formation must be central to the planning for Traveller accommodation.
- The development of tenant participation strategies for Travellers be a priority for the City Council. To this end, the GTM should be funded by the Department of the Environment to employ a community worker with a focus on accommodation and tenant participation.
- The standard of Traveller Specific Accommodation be audited on a regular basis by the GTM in partnership with Galway City Council. Identified problems should be rectified immediately.
- Galway City Council engage in Traveller Awareness Training in relation to accommodation issues.
- There should be a facilitated session for all LTACC members to discuss the workings of the committee as recommended in the recent review of the LTACCs (Ó Riain, 2005).

Section six
HEALTH

Introduction

In many countries, cultural and ethnic minorities experience higher illness and mortality rates compared to the general population[36]. This is certainly the case for the Traveller community in Ireland. Research[37] has shown that Traveller women live on average twelve years less than women in the general population. Traveller men live on average ten years less than men in the general population. The Traveller infant mortality rate is more than twice that of the overall population. The stillbirth rate is over double that of the general population. In 1999, the occurrence of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (cot death) among Traveller families was twelve times the national figure[38].

This section of the report looks at the area of health. It looks at some of the major policy developments and reviews some of the research and literature pertaining to health. It also looks at some of the specific issues affecting older Travellers. It then presents the main findings of the GTM research on health, draws conclusions and makes recommendations in the area of health.

It is worthy of note that there was a decision made during the design of the GTM research to look primarily at access to services in relation to the health of Travellers in Galway City. This decision was made because the Department of Health and Children, in conjunction with Pavee Point, is planning to carry out an All Ireland Health Status Study in 2006 and it was felt that to carry out something similar prior to that study would be confusing for the research participants.

Policy Developments

The most up-to-date statistical analysis of Travellers' health was commissioned by the Health Research Board and carried out on behalf of the Department of Health by Barry et al. in 1987 and published in 1989, making the information almost twenty years old. Entitled the Travellers Health Status Study: Vital Statistics of the Travelling People, the picture it presented was stark. Analysis of life expectancy showed that Travellers were only then reaching the life expectancy that settled Irish people reached in the 1940s, and that Travellers of all ages have much higher mortality rates than people in the general population. Male Travellers have over twice the risk of dying in a given year than settled males, whereas for female Travellers the risk is increased more than threefold.

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[36] **Planning for Diversity – the National Action Plan Against Racism** (2005, p. 115).
[37] Barry *et al.*, 1987.
[38] **Sudden Infant Death Association Report 1999**.

A study into Travellers' health commissioned by the Task Force on the Traveller Community[39] showed the following:

- A high utilisation of general practitioners and accident and emergency services and a low utilisation of other hospital services, including aftercare and preventative services.
- Difficulties in completing forms for the renewal of medical cards due to high rates of illiteracy.
- Lack of provision for tracing and transferring health records of Travellers who are mobile, which makes referrals and continuity of care more difficult.
- Prejudice on the part of the general public and service providers, resulting in Travellers being refused access (p. 140).

The **Report of the Task Force** (1995) drew a clear linkage between the poor health status of the Traveller community and their poor living conditions, stating: *"the immediate improvement of the accommodation situation of Travellers is a prerequisite to the general improvement of the health status of Travellers"* (p. 145). The Task Force made a number of recommendations in relation to the improvement of Travellers' health, including the establishment of a Traveller Health Advisory Committee (to include representatives from local Travellers and Traveller organisations), and the establishment of a Traveller health unit in each health board area.

In 1998, the **Traveller Health Advisory Committee** was established. It is chaired by the Department of Health and Children and is made up of representatives of that Department, Pavee Point, Irish Traveller Movement, National Traveller Women's Forum and the Health Services Executive (HSE). The committee advises the Minister for Health and Children on the formulation of Traveller health policy. The work of the Traveller Health Advisory Committee was key to the development of the strategy for Travellers' health.

Published in 2002, **Traveller Health: A National Strategy** was a response to one of the key recommendations of the report of the Task Force. Importantly, although it stops short of recognising the ethnicity of Travellers, the strategy acknowledges that the Traveller community has a distinct culture, stating that *"if we as a society recognise and accept the rights of minority groups then we must be prepared to ensure that services (in this case health services) are responsive to Travellers especially in terms of their nomadic lifestyle"* (p. 15). This is important because it acknowledges in a major policy document that *the principle* of recognising the distinct culture of Travellers must be backed up by the practice of facilitating that culture. The point was reiterated by the Minister Mr. Micheál Martin TD in his speech at the launch of the strategy[40], when he stated that *"the strategy recognises that Travellers have a right to appropriate access to healthcare services, which take into account their particular needs, culture and way of life"*.

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[39] A study by the Dept. of Heath Promotion UCG (now NUI, Galway) and by Patricia McCarthy and Associates in Dublin involved in-depth interviews with 200 Travellers in Galway and Dublin in 1994.
[40] February 26th 2002. See http://www.dohc.ie/press/releases/2002/20020226.html

The strategy commits to *"active partnership and participation of Travellers and their representative organisations in the determination of health priorities for the Traveller community"*, and says that *"all planning and provision of health services relating to Travellers will be carried out in this spirit of partnership and with respect for the Traveller community and its culture"* (p. 10).

The strategy acknowledges that mainstream health service provision has not met the needs of Travellers up to now: *"in the past, the health services have responded in a fragmented and often inappropriate manner to the special needs of Travellers"* [41] (p. 5). It makes clear that continuing mainstream service provision must be accompanied by Traveller-specific programmes that expressly address and target the particular health needs of Travellers (p. 9). The strategy further acknowledges that there must be an emphasis on equality of outcome as well as equality of access to, and participation in, services – beginning from the position that there is now a greater need for healthcare for Travellers, given their poor current health status (p. 9).

The strategy echoes the 1995 Task Force report in drawing a link between the poor health status of Travellers and the influence of a harsh living environment, in saying that *"there is little doubt that the living conditions of Travellers are probably the single greatest influence on health status. Stress, infectious disease including respiratory disease and accidents are all closely related to the Traveller living environment. It is clear that an immediate improvement to the living environment of Travellers is a prerequisite to the general improvement in health status"* (p. 28). The strategy also lists social exclusion and racism among the most important factors contributing to the poor health status of Travellers.

The strategy emphasises the role of Travellers as active participants in the development of health services. Amongst the specific actions proposed are the following:
• The development of peer-led services.
• An emphasis on health promotion.
• Training for healthcare staff who come into contact with members of the Traveller community.
• The strengthening of Traveller Health Units.
• Each Traveller Health Unit to be required to draw up a regional action plan for the implementation of the proposals in the strategy.
• The establishment of a link between the Department of Health and Children and the Department of the Environment and Local Government.
• Research on Travellers' health needs to be based on sound ethical principles of social research.
• Data-gathering on an ongoing basis.
• Development of initiatives to increase Travellers' awareness of general medical services.
One of the major developments in relation to improving access for Travellers to health services has

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[41] The institutional inertia in terms of developing Traveller-specific programmes and special initiatives is rooted in the past policy of assimilating Travellers into the settled community (p. 5).

been in the area of Primary Health Care (PHC). PHC has been used in developing countries as an innovative, peer-led approach to health care. PHC essentially trains a group of people, in this case Travellers, to deliver primary health care in their own communities. It is designed to be flexible and adaptable and to work closely with other health care providers in the community. The first Primary Health Care for Travellers Project was established in 1994 as a joint initiative by Pavee Point and the Eastern Health Board. Work in the area of the development of PHC has been an important initiative in the effort to make healthcare culturally appropriate to Travellers and to encourage them to use health services.

The issue of Travellers' health was specifically referred to in the National Anti-Poverty Strategy, which states that *"The gap in life expectancy between the Traveller community and the whole population will be reduced by at least 10% by 2007"*.

Progress in relation to health service provision and outcomes for Travellers is varied. In 2000, the **Committee to Monitor and Co-Ordinate the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Task Force** said of the health issue that it *"is satisfied that the new structures recommended by the Task Force have been established by the Department of Health and Children"*. But the report continued: *"Many difficulties remain in the provision of services and Travellers continue to endure a poor health status and a low rate of life expectancy"* (p. 15). The committee recommended that funding allocated to health boards specifically for Travellers' health should be ring-fenced to ensure that it is used only for that purpose. In 2005 the Monitoring Committee, in its second progress report, stated that progress in relation to health has been 'mixed', undermined by the lack of funding to implement the Traveller Health Strategy and by insufficient data in the area of Traveller health (p. 23). The latter point is finally to be addressed by the All Ireland Travellers Health Status Study in 2006. This study will provide important information on the current health status of the Traveller community in Ireland.

A recent report showed how health services to Travellers and other minority groups are still inadequate in many areas. The report examined how public authorities provide services to minority ethnic groups, and stated in relation to health that *"In Ireland, there appears to be little change in structures or service delivery to reflect a mainstreaming of the specific needs of minority ethnic groups"* (NCCRI, 2006, p. 33). The report went on to cite anecdotal evidence from a number of sources, including GPs themselves, that *"some GPs actively discourage patients from minority ethnic backgrounds, in particular Travellers and asylum seekers, from attending their surgeries citing reasons such as 'other patients would object' …or 'such patients' needs are too time consuming'."* (*ibid.*)

Traveller Health Issues

Drawing on the research and policy documents, it is possible to summarise some of the main issues in relation to Traveller health.

Accommodation

For most Travellers the areas of health and accommodation are two sides of the same coin, with their living circumstances having a direct impact on their health status. Both the report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community and **Traveller Health: A National Strategy**, amongst others, clearly link the issue of unacceptable living conditions with poor health.

Discrimination

The general experience that Travellers have of discrimination can lead to depression and ill health. In the **Plan for Travellers Health**, it was reported that people [Travellers] felt that the way in which they and their children were treated had a big effect on their health, leading to depression. Particular problems were expressed in relation to hospital.

Specific discrimination in relation to health services is a major issue for Travellers. In a survey of 200 Travellers throughout Ireland (O'Donovan *et al.*, 1995) it was reported that 35% of Travellers have felt discriminated against by someone in the health services because they were a Traveller, often making them reluctant to use health services. Hostility from other clients, inadequate waiting facilities for small children, low literacy rates (making form-filling difficult) and lack of transport were some of the reasons given during this research for Travellers under-using the health services. Travellers often concentrate on the health of their children at the expense of their own.

General Practitioners

The research carried out by O'Donovan *et al.* highlighted that many Travellers had difficulty in registering with a General Practitioner. In many areas only a small number of GPs provided services to Travellers, and having a relationship with one doctor does not suit the nomadic lifestyle. Part of the research carried out for **The Health Needs of Travellers** (WHB, 2002) showed that many felt unhappy with their GP/Doctor and appeared to have little trust in him/her (p. 44), although other elements of the research would suggest that Travellers do not have problems with their GP service. A recent report by the NCCRI (2006) shows that some GPs continue to discriminate against Travellers (NCCRI, 2006).

A difficulty linked to that of GP care is the fact that Travellers are very infrequently referred on for outpatient treatment. The Traveller Health Strategy, for example, refers to the *"negligible referral rate by GPs to Outpatients"* (p.99). This has a knock-on effect in relation to Travellers and other areas of health service provision.

Hospital Services

The research carried out by O'Donovan *et al.* highlighted the fact that services most frequently used by Travellers are accident & emergency, obstetric and pediatric services. The report **Health Needs of Travellers** highlights research (Evans and Jones, 2001) that concludes that, compared to the general population, Travellers do use certain health services, including accident & emergency services, more than the general population. Research by the Traveller Health Unit in the HSE Eastern Region, undertaken in December 2004, shows that the majority of Travellers are not referred for hospital treatment except through A&E services[42]. The Traveller Health Strategy admits that, *"This [the fact that Travellers are not referred for Specialist treatment] gives rise to a situation where Travellers use A&E as this is the only way they can access a hospital bed or an outpatient clinic"* (p. 99).

There is also an issue in relation to the continuity of care. *Traveller Health Strategy* cites anecdotal information from hospitals indicating that lack of up-to-date and comprehensive medical records for Travellers is identified as a cause of poor continuity of care in terms of follow-up from hospital to community care (p. 98).

Preventative Health Care

In general, there is a low uptake of preventative health care amongst the Traveller community. O'Donovan et al. identified the immunisation rate at 52% amongst Travellers, compared to 75% nationally. Traveller women have a higher utilisation of obstetric services but a lower uptake of other maternity services, such as antenatal classes and post-natal check-ups. There is also a low rate of breast-feeding and a low uptake of family planning services, developmental paediatric services and specialist child healthcare services. According to the **National Traveller Health Strategy**, *"the present appropriateness of these services and the ways in which they are delivered to Travellers are called into question by these low utilisation rates"* (p. 53).

Public Health Nurse

Research has highlighted the fact that, despite their low health status, Travellers do not use the services of the PHN on a regular basis (O'Donovan et al., 1995). In research carried out by the WHB, **The Health Needs of Travellers**, the need to improve the PHN service was highlighted (p. 45). According to **Traveller Health: A National Strategy 2002-2005**, *"in the front line of health services, public health nurses provide a critical point of contact with Travellers"* (p. 74). The strategy "encourages" the appointment of designated PHNs to work with Travellers. The WHB Plan for Travellers' Health took this on as an action, and according to the PHN service it provided additional nursing support to the three public health nursing areas. This enabled the PHNs for those areas to target [Traveller] families by providing child health clinics, health promotion, breastfeeding support and antenatal classes (responses to questionnaire received from the PHN service).

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42 The research showed that 70% of Traveller patients accessed outpatient services through A&E services, compared to 53% of settled patients. Only 20% of Traveller patients were referred from outpatient services to other clinical services, compared to 71% of the settled population.

Prevalence of Stress, Depression and Suicide

There is a very strong perception that stress, depression and suicide are now very major issues for the Traveller community. Stress as a result of inadequate living conditions and depression are often reported by the Traveller community. The **Health Needs of Travellers** study found that some Travellers believed that depression was quite prevalent among both male and female Travellers, and that this was a result of poor living conditions and inadequate accommodation (p. 43). In answer to this situation the GTM has launched two DVDs entitled **Am I stressed?** and **Am I depressed?**

In relation to the issues of suicide, there is a strong perception by Travellers that the prevalence of suicide in the Traveller community is much higher than in the settled population, especially in relation to young Traveller men. *Reach Out*, the National Strategy for Action on Suicide Prevention 2005-2014 says that there is currently a lack of research on mental health and suicide among the Traveller community, but that anecdotally, service providers are expressing concern about an apparent increase in suicide risk and suicidal ideation among this group, especially among young Traveller men (p. 37).

Galway City

In the area of health, Galway City is governed by the Health Services Executive Western Area, formerly the Western Health Board. There have been a number of developments in the area of Traveller health since the publication of the Task Force report, and the GTM would contend that the HSE Western Region represents an example of an agency that has engaged with the needs of the Traveller community in a positive way. In 1995, a Senior PHN was appointed with a remit to co-ordinate and develop Traveller health services. In 1996, the Traveller Health Unit (THU) was established; it works closely with the GTM in a number of areas pertaining to Travellers' health.

In 1998/1999, the **Traveller Friendly Service Programme** was devised in partnership with the GTM for health board staff and voluntary bodies with the objective of making health services more Traveller-friendly. This initiative involved a training programme designed to improve negative attitudes towards the Traveller community and to make services more Traveller-friendly. The initiative was evaluated in 1999 and the evaluation established that *"The workshop did lead to a shift towards more appropriate attitudes and beliefs regarding Travellers although there is some scope for further improvement"* (Evans, 1999, p. 2). The HSE Western Area also funds a Mobile Play Service for Traveller children in Galway City, managed by the Galway City and County Childcare Committee.

In 2002, the Western Health Board published the **Health Needs of Travellers**. This involved research into the needs of Travellers in the area of healthcare, and was carried out *"in order to get a clearer picture of the current uptake of services by Travellers in the Western Health Board region"*. The aim of the research was to determine the attitudes and perceptions Travellers have about their health, to determine the current utilisation of health services, and to identify areas where the Western Health Board (now the HSE Western Region) services can meet the needs of Travellers.

In relation to health services, almost a third of those interviewed believed that health services had improved in the previous five years, particularly in terms of front line staff's understanding of Traveller culture and issues. One third of Travellers said they thought the services remained the same, while 6% said they had got worse, with attitudes towards Travellers remaining a "significant issue" (p. 45). Sixteen per cent of those interviewed said that they had experienced unfair treatment whilst availing of health services (p. 47).

In 2003, the Western Health Board published **Plan for Travellers' Health**. The Plan described itself as *"a critical step forward"* in meeting the identified health needs of Travellers in the region (p. 4), and goes further than the national Travellers' health strategy in acknowledging Travellers as a distinct ethnic minority of Irish people (p. 4). The Plan sets out to provide integrated services with a positive bias towards Travellers, rather than a separate service, and to enhance mainstream services with designated or specialist services where appropriate. It also sets out to develop and extend peer-led services, so that more Travellers are more involved in the delivery of healthcare to their own people (p. 4). It sets out actions under seven headings:

- **Ethnicity, Culture and Travellers Health**
- **Primary Healthcare for Traveller Projects**
- **Health Promotion**
- **Mainstream Health and Personal Social Services**
- **General Practitioners' Services**
- **Public Health Nurses' Services**
- **Traveller Health Unit**

Much work has been done in relation to the implementation of the Plan. However, the impact of the Plan on Travellers and their health has yet to be assessed.

The area of Traveller health has been one of the main priorities for the GTM for a number of years. In 1998 the GTM began working with the THU of what was then the WHB to plan and develop a Primary Health Care programme for Travellers in Galway City. An evaluation carried out by Harrington *et al.* in 2002 concludes that the *"women [PHC participants] are putting their newly developed skills into use and are having a positive influence on those around them, both their families and in the wider Travelling Community. This sharing of knowledge, and passing on of information clearly demonstrates the positive influence this peer-led training course is having"* (p. 43). The participants themselves have pointed to some of the challenges of being a Community Health Worker, including other Travellers viewing them as trying to show that they are 'better' than them, and being accepted as Community Health Care workers by other health care providers (Harrington *et al.*, 2002).

GTM Research Findings

> This section of the GTM research showed the following:
>
> - All of those interviewed said that they had a medical card and none had private health insurance.
> - Travellers linked the issues of health, unacceptable accommodation and discrimination in a fundamental way.
> - Many have experienced negative behaviour and discrimination at the hands of the health services.
> - The participants perceive that there is a high rate of depression and suicide amongst the Traveller community.

Questions relating to health formed one of the sections of the GTM interview, and a focus group on the subject was also held. In addition, questionnaires were sent to relevant agencies providing health care services to Travellers. Participants in the research were asked to identify their health issues, and to describe their quality of access to health services.

When asked to identify their health issues a number of respondents replied that they had none or that they were only 'ordinary ones'. However, some of the responses give an insight into the harsh reality of the lives of some members of the Traveller community in Galway City.

"I'm under so much stress, with the struggle from day to day, hassle with the corporation, parents worrying about how to survive from week to week. I worry about my kids and their lives. Discrimination is getting worse. My kids are not as strong as we were. Things has to change. I don't know what's going to become of the younger generation. My husband is a diabetic and has a heart condition – he needs certain foods that we can't afford."

"unhealthy living conditions, rats here we have to put down rat poison ourselves, which is dangerous. Toilets are very unhealthy, too full, not enough. Need flush toilets."
"Accommodation is a big issue – pushing people where they don't want to go."

"Accommodation affects health – increases stress levels"; "not happy, depressed, increase in suicide."

Research participants clearly linked their unacceptable living conditions with ill health. Some also clearly linked stress and depression with the fact that they were living in culturally inappropriate accommodation.

Treatment by Health services

The other major issue that participants said impacted on their health was discrimination and negative treatment by the health services.

"in the maternity unit when they realised I was a Traveller, the patients and some nurses treated me badly."

"If you feel that the doctor or health services have an attitude problem, you won't want to go back again."

"the attitude of doctors and health service people is a problem."

"They [health services] have no time for Travellers."

Participants generally believed that if they are identified as Travellers there is a much higher likelihood of them experiencing discrimination and negative behaviour on the part of the health provider. The experience of discrimination was linked with Travellers under-using health services, and clearly impacts on whether they go back to that service or not.

Figure 6.1 **Treated Differently by the Health Services**

Figure 6.1 shows how people believe they have been treated by the health services. It indicates that while the majority (60%) do not feel that they have been treated differently by Health Service, a significant minority (40%) replied that they had been treated differently.

The latter group gave reasons and situations that mirror much of the research carried out by others, including:

- Discrimination in the health services: *"Sometimes treated in a thick manner"*; *"approached a doctor and was told to leave. Rude and unhelpful. Lack of respect"*; *"I feel that settled get more of a priority than Travellers. Health service providers can have bad attitudes"*; *"…my daughter, when she was attending the clinic for her pregnancy, was harassed by the nurse regarding about her appointments - she was nagging her and getting her name wrong and telling her she should have attended at different times"*.
- The absence of an understanding of the fact that many Travellers have literacy difficulties: *"when asked to fill out a form they don't ask if you need help with it"*.
- Inappropriate waiting areas: *"Health service don't like to see you bring too many children"*.

It is important to note that none of the respondents said that they had been treated more favourably because of the fact that they were a Traveller, even though the Traveller Health Strategy urges health care providers to be aware and facilitative of the particular needs of Travellers, and training has been provided to some staff through the Traveller Friendly Services initiative.

Specific Health Care Services

Respondents to the in-depth interviews were asked whether or not there had any issues in relation to specific health services. The vast majority of respondents stated that they did not have any issues with these services. Figure 6.2 illustrates this.

Figure 6.2 **Treated Differently by Specific Services**

GP

The vast majority of respondents to the GTM interviews said that they did not have a problem with their GP: *"no, lovely doctor here"*; *"some doctors are concerned about Travellers health, some will follow up on appointments if concerned"*.

However, some felt uncomfortable with their GP: *"not very friendly when I visit him/her, he/she doesn't understand me as he/she is a new doctor. I felt more relaxed with [name of retired doctor]"*. The focus group on health issues also explored the relationship between Travellers and GPs. Some of the participants believed that GPs have a negative view of Travellers: *"Doctors think that Travellers abuse the medical card"*; *"In doctor's eyes you are still only a 'tinker'."*

Some respondents mentioned the prevalence of prescribed medication, and there is a strong perception that Travellers are being 'fobbed off' by certain GPs who neglect to examine them when they present with an illness or ailment. They are frequently given a diagnosis of depression and a prescription for medication, when this is often not the issue with which they presented at all: *"If I only go in with a sore toe everything is put down to stress"*; *"If you go to the doctor with the flu, he says you are depressed"*; *"Doctor tells you, you are depressed and gives tablets"*; *"Doctors are prescribing box loads of valium"*.

There was obvious concern that Travellers are not being referred for follow-up specialist treatment: *"I have a thyroid problem that should have been checked out but the doctor has not sent for me, no follow-up"*; *"Was concerned about my husband and had to beg a doctor to bring him in"*. Participants also highlighted the difficulty that people had understanding the medical language used by GPs: *"If I go down to the doctor and big words are used I ask him to break them down now, before I wouldn't do that"*.

Public Health Nurse

None of the respondents reported having an issue with the PHN but a substantial number of people reported never having met her, not "having one" and certainly not having a relationship with the PHN.

Hospital Services

The GTM interviews reflected a generally positive experience in relation to using hospital services, although some negative comments were received in relation to the maternity services and the long waiting times to be seen in both A&E and outpatient services. However, the focus group participants gave a different view of using hospital services. There were many examples of clearly discriminatory treatment at the hand of some of those working in the hospital services.

Stress, Depression and Suicide

There is a very strong perception that there is a high rate of stress, depression and suicide amongst Travellers: *"Suicide is big now"*. This issue is again linked to the issue of inappropriate accommodation: *"Accommodation affects health – increases stress levels. Not happy, depressed, increase in suicide"*, as well as the stress that young Travellers experience in growing up: *"Young people have more problems now – drink, drugs, bullying, funny drinks that blows their heads off"*. The increased worry that this brings to parents was mentioned – *"Afraid to argue with children if they give cheek as afraid they will take an overdose"*; *"worried about copycat suicide for attention"* – as was the lack of support provided to people who have had a bereavement through suicide: *"They need to talk to people who have lost children in suicide"*.

Young Travellers and Health

A focus group discussion was held with the youth focus group, a group of young Travellers attached to the GTM, to discuss what they perceived their health issues to be. There was a strong belief amongst the participants that *"Travellers are different"*. The group believed that Travellers are slower than settled people to go for help with health problems because of literacy difficulties, lack of confidence, discrimination and not having the 'know how'.

Traveller nomadism was identified as a barrier to building up a relationship with one GP, which they believed made it less likely for Travellers to visit a GP. Participants also mentioned that *"some doctors don't treat Travellers very well"*.

They identified the poor living conditions of some Travellers as key to Traveller health. Traveller choices around accommodation need to be respected and proper facilities made available (it was pointed out that while it is important to your health to bathe regularly, having to shower in a concrete shed is hardly conducive to good health). Properly serviced sites need to be made available to those who choose to live on sites.

The fact that some Travellers still go to *"Curing People"* rather than doctors was mentioned and participants saw this as something that needs to be respected.

In relation to health in pregnancy, it was stated that young Traveller women do not usually attend antenatal classes because of a fear of required literacy and a reluctance to mix with settled people, as they are "not used to it". They suggested that there should be videos available for those with literacy difficulties.

In relation to sex education, participants felt that there is an absence of culturally appropriate sex education.

Recommendations from the Focus Group

Participants recommended that a piece of research be carried out in relation to the utilisation of health services by Travellers and the barriers that exist in this area. They also recommended:

- That health services be 'Traveller proofed' to ensure that they are culturally appropriate.
- That sex education be provided for young Travellers designed and delivered in a culturally appropriate way.
- The development of a safe space where adolescents can discuss health issues with their peers without their parents being present (it was pointed out that while this may be true for most adolescents, it is particularly true for young Travellers).
- The issue of antenatal classes and the fact that many young Travellers do not attend them be addressed. It was suggested that there is a need for further consultation in this area.
- Adequate accommodation provided in a culturally appropriate way.
- Further research and consultation with Traveller adolescents.

Service Providers' Questionnaires

A number of questionnaires were sent to sections of the HSE Western Area providing services for Travellers. Apart from the Public Health Nursing Service, none of the bodies that provide services to Travellers uses an ethnic identifier, making it very difficult to record information and data relating to Travellers.

Traveller Health Unit As expected, the Traveller Health Unit provides a range of initiatives for Travellers. This includes supporting the Primary Health Care programme run by the GTM and employing two Community Development Workers and eleven Traveller Community Health Care Workers. The THU also supports other initiatives aimed at healthcare amongst the Traveller community. The THU is currently working on a racism policy; anti-racism training for staff will form part of that policy.

Public Health Nurse As already described in this report and others, the services provided by the Public Health Nurse are regarded as key to the healthcare of Travellers. This service has received additional resources to target Travellers and Traveller families. The service does not have an anti-racism policy but training has been provided to staff. The service says that Travellers avail of the public health nursing service on an ongoing basis. Services are provided in their homes and at the local health centre. Non-attendance at child health and developmental clinics is a major problem among Traveller families, and literacy problems may be an issue for some Travellers in relation to appointments for clinics.

The Gaf The HSE Western Area funds a Health Advice Café known as the Gaf. The information from the Gaf indicates that Travellers did at one stage use the Café but not on a regular basis. The Gaf service does not currently have any special initiatives to attract Travellers to use the service, and implies that the responsibility for introducing Travellers to the service rests with the Traveller support organisations. The service does not have an anti-racism policy but staff do receive training in the area.

Community Welfare Service In relation to the Community Welfare service, it is clear that there are no special initiatives to facilitate Travellers in using the service, and that it is provided on a 'one size fits all' basis (National Plan Against Racism, 2005). Staff do not receive anti-racism training nor any training in relation to the delivery of their services to Travellers. The service does not have an anti-racism policy. However, as the Traveller Health Strategy points out in relation to Community Welfare Services, "Travellers' needs will differ from those of the settled community and specific guidelines governing the issue of discretionary payments to Travellers will be developed in consultation with Traveller organisations" (p. 92).

Older Travellers

As they age, older Travellers, like older settled people, have an increased need of and dependency on social and health services, family and friends. Older people may also experience an increase in loneliness and this is not always attributable to isolation: *"It is important when talking about social contact and older people to be aware that desolation rather than isolation may be the fundamental cause of loneliness in old age"* (O'Shea, 1993, p. 43).

Older people are becoming increasingly more vocal about their needs and there are now several organisations, statutory and voluntary, that represent older people. However, few Travellers engage with these organisations and older Travellers are very often silent and their needs are often ignored.

A Focus group discussion was held with older Travellers to talk to them about their needs. It is clear from the discussion that older Travellers regard the past with a mixture of dread – *"The treatment for Travellers was that way. That man broke the caravan and it was a lovely one"*; *"Travellers got no education because we were made to move on so there would be school one day and no school the other day"*; *"Starving People"*, and fondness – *"We had a horse-drawn carriage and would go to Sligo, Roscommon, Galway, Longford and see all the places long ago but not now"*; *"Men would pick beet and pick potatoes, buy asses and help the farmers"*.

The participants also spoke about their health worries: *"I was never in hospital in the past before my husband had the stroke but I now need tablets for my heart and the spray under the tongue"*; and of the discriminatory practices that are indirectly endangering their health: *"My husband got sick and there was no way out with the barrier. The doctor said it was ridiculous that there was no key for the barrier. The ambulance had to wait for the key to arrive, had to wait at the barrier"*; *"I was sick, a friend's daughter phoned the GP to say I was very sick and wanted the GP to visit. He wanted someone to come in for a prescription, eventually he did come out to visit"*; *"Need to make the house wheelchair accessible"*.

They also spoke about the hardships that they have endured: *"I have had a lot of loss, two grandchildren, a son and daughter-in-law. I had no one to turn to. Had to keep going. Nobody called"*; and their loneliness: *"After 7pm no one visits my house"*.

Participants would like *"to meet up with other older people and chat, sew, cook, especially for the women who never get out"*. They would also like to receive better information about their rights and entitlements, such as meals-on-wheels.

Conclusions

The right to good health is a basic right and access to good and appropriate health services is strongly linked to this. There have been many positive developments in relation to health services for Travellers both nationally and locally. However, these developments have largely been catching up on generations of neglect of the health of Travellers. It is difficult to determine whether or not there has been any overall improvement in the health status of Travellers, since no national study on Travellers' health has been carried out since 1987.

It is clear that the health of Travellers in Galway City remains deeply affected by a number of inter-related issues. Inadequate and inappropriate accommodation is directly linked with poor physical health. It is also linked to the erosion of Traveller identity, which in turn is leading to stress and depression. The widespread experience of discrimination is also causing stress and depression.

The discrimination and negative attitudes of some health care providers is leading to the under-utilisation and often inappropriate use of health services. The failure of some GPs and others to take the health concerns of Travellers seriously, the neglect in giving proper examinations, and the tendency to prescribe medication for depression in answer to all medical matters are of huge concern. The failure of the health services to refer Travellers to outpatient and specialist health care services is also a concern. These issues must be treated with the seriousness they deserve.

On the other hand, it is clear that the GTM Primary Health Care Programme has made an enormous difference to the lives of those Travellers who have been trained as Community Health Care Workers, and it is anticipated that they will continue to be a positive influence on the health of Travellers in Galway City.

Older Travellers tend to be even more marginalised than the younger generations. Ill health and high levels of dependency on health and social services mean that they are often dependent on others for their care. It is imperative that this care is Traveller-friendly and offered in a non-discriminatory way.

This report recommends that:

- A more inclusive, intercultural approach to health be developed as outlined in the **National Action Plan Against Racism** section on Health (pp. 115-122).

- Adequate support and resources be allocated to the successful completion of the ongoing All-Ireland Traveller Health Status Study, in which the importance of peer-led research approaches be recognised where appropriate.

- Adequate support and resources be allocated to realise the full implementation of **Traveller Health: A National Strategy 2002-2005**. A new national Traveller Health Strategy for the post-2005 period needs to be prioritised. While the developments in relation to the HSE Intercultural Strategy are to be welcomed, Travellers should be included, it should not replace a separate Traveller health strategy.

- The partnership between the Health Section of the GTM and the HSE Western Region continue to be developed and resourced. To facilitate this, adequate resources should be committed to the Traveller Health Unit on a continuing basis.

- The HSE provide ongoing support to the existing Peer-Led Primary Health Care Programme for Travellers. It further recommends that serious consideration be given to the establishment of a second city-based programme in order to ensure that new workers are trained and ready to come on stream when needed. In addition, the area of men's health needs to be urgently considered.

- The culturally sensitive ethnic identifier being developed by Pavee Point be used to track the experience of Travellers in the health system. The HSE Western Region should work in partnership with GTM to ensure the implementation of the ethnic identifier at local level.

- The Traveller Awareness Training with health service providers in the HSE Western Region be continued and expanded.

- Special initiatives be developed, in partnership between the GTM and the HSE, to address the diverse needs of young Travellers, older Travellers, Traveller mothers and Traveller men.

Section seven
EDUCATION

Introduction

Education and related qualifications determine people's life chances to a large extent. Those who leave the formal education system with few or no qualifications are at a disadvantage. Their personal and social development is curtailed and they are at increased risk of poverty and social exclusion[43]. Travellers have, historically, failed to benefit from the education system. Despite some progress in this area, many still leave school as soon as they reach fifteen years of age[44] with few, if any, qualifications and often still unable to read, write or add.

This section of the report looks at the issue of education for Travellers. It first looks at the policy developments in relation to the area of education. It then turns to the issue of Traveller youth before presenting the findings of the GTM research. Finally, it presents the conclusions and recommendations of that research.

Policy Developments

The right to an education that respects culture and does not discriminate is enshrined in a number of international instruments, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights[45], the UNESCO Convention Against Discrimination in Education 1960[46] and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which declares that states should progressively realise free compulsory primary education and the various forms of second level education, ensuring that education be framed by a human rights approach.

In contrast, education policy in Ireland from the 1960s to the 1980s was informed by the **Report of the Commission on Itinerancy**, which viewed education as a tool of settlement or *"a way of taking the Traveller out of the child"*[47]. This assimilationist approach led in many cases to a segregated approach to education, wherein Traveller children were educated in Traveller-only schools and preschools, Traveller-only classes in primary schools and Traveller Training Centres that were established to cater for the majority of Travellers who did not progress to post-primary schools.

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[43] Johnston, 1997 p. 307, quoted in **Combat Poverty Agency Educational Disadvantage in Ireland**, Poverty Briefing Paper No. 14, Summer 2003.

[44] CSO Press Statement, January 2004: Nearly two thirds of the 7,000 Travellers who indicated the age at which their full-time education ceased left before the then prevailing statutory minimum age of 15 years, compared with 15% for the population as a whole. As a consequence, two thirds of all school-leavers among the Traveller Community were educated to Primary level at most, compared with 21% of the overall population.

[45] The right to education is provided in Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: *"…education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity, and shall strengthen the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms… education shall enable all persons to participate effectively in a free society, promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations and all racial, ethnic or religious groups."*
The principles of 'non-discrimination' and equal treatment are enshrined in Article 2 (2) of the Covenant. The underpinning belief is that positive action and specialised activities can achieve de facto equality for men, women and disadvantaged groups.

[46] Article 4 of the **UNESCO Convention Against Discrimination in Education 1960** obliges governments to develop and apply policy in such a way as to *"promote equality of opportunity and of treatment in the matter of education".*

[47] Pavee Point, Fact sheet on Education.

The argument for a more appropriate education for Travellers was made in the **Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community** (1995). It made a total of 167 recommendations in relation to the development of appropriate education for Travellers. These included the development of an intercultural education system with a guarantee of equal opportunity, to ensure that Travellers have access to all forms of education. It also recommended increased parental involvement, integration save in exceptional circumstances, support for the role of the visiting teacher and the facilitation of Traveller nomadism.

The National Anti Poverty Strategy (NAPS) targets in relation to education have particular relevance for the Traveller community. They are:

- The proportion of pupils with serious literacy difficulties will be halved by 2006.
- A reduction in the proportion of the population aged 16-64 with restricted literacy to below 10 to 20% by 2007 – restricted literacy being defined as falling below 200-225 on the IALS scale or equivalent.
- The number of young people who leave the school system early will be reduced, so that the percentage of those who complete upper second level or equivalent will reach 85% by 2003 and 90% by 2006.

Targets in relation to Traveller education are also included in NAPS. These are:

- Age appropriate placement of all Travellers in primary school will be achieved by 2003.
- The transfer rate of Travellers to post-primary schools will be increased to 95% by 2004.
- Each third-level institution will take in twice as many mature disadvantaged students, including Travellers, by 2006 (within the 15% quota).

Within the Department of Education and Science, the Social Inclusion Unit[48] is responsible for reporting progress made towards the NAPS targets to the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion.

Other policy documents such as **The National Children's Strategy, Our Children – Their Lives** (2000), the **Report of the Forum for Early Childhood Education** (1998), the **White Paper on Early Childhood Education** (1999), and the **White Paper on Adult Education Learning for Life** (2000) all emphasise the notion of inclusion and a commitment to interculturalism and anti-racism throughout the education system (further information on these is outlined in Appendix 3).

Between 2003 and 2004, €47.7 million was spent on specific additional supports for Traveller education[49]. The Department of Education and Science has a number of initiatives in relation to Traveller education. These include:

Traveller pre-schools – The department funds 98% of the salary costs and transport costs of these schools. It also provides grants for equipment and materials.

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[48] http://www.education.ie/home/home.jsp?maincat=&pcategory=17216&ecategory=19079&sectionpage=12251&language=EN&link=link001&page=1&doc=17104

[49] **Second Progress Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community**, p. 34.

Primary Education – Support is provided for an estimated 5,000 Traveller children at primary level. An additional capitation grant is provided for each Traveller child.

Resource Teachers for Travellers – There are also approximately 465 resource teachers for Travellers working in 375 ordinary primary schools. These schools and the special schools for Travellers operate at a pupil-teacher ratio of 14:1. Traveller children attending special schools or supported by the resource teacher for Travellers service attract special increased rates of capitation funding. A minimum of fourteen Traveller children is required for a school to be allowed a permanent Resource Teacher for Travellers.

Secondary Education – An additional 1.5 hours per week is allowed per Traveller child enrolled, and additional full-time equivalent teachers appointed to the school. A capitation grant is paid to schools to help them in the outreach necessary to help the children and families to participate successfully in the life of the school. The National Education Officer for Travellers promotes and oversees the implementation of the education service (this involves identifying the needs of Travellers, assisting in planning and establishing education provision, consulting with Traveller families and ensuring optimal use of existing educational facilities).

Visiting Teachers for Traveller children – Forty-two visiting teachers deliver a nationwide service to both primary and second level pupils. The service provides an important link between schools and Traveller families.

Junior Traveller Training Centers – A number of children aged 12 to 15 years attend one of eight Junior Traveller Training Centers. A grant per pupil is provided to cover overhead costs. Teaching resources are provided by the Vocational Educational Committees.

Senior Traveller Training Centers – There are twenty-eight of these Centers, which provide a programme of integrated general education, vocational training and work experience and guidance/counselling/psychological services for some 769 Travellers annually in the 15+ age group.

However, despite this substantial expenditure, Traveller organisations such as Pavee Point have been critical of the extent to which additional funding is actually benefiting Travellers (2005, p. 22). Information on education outcomes for Traveller children is unavailable and little analysis has been carried out to date on the impact of education expenditure on Traveller children.

In 2000, the **First Progress Report of the Committee to Monitor and Co-Ordinate the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Task Force** expressed concern at the lack of progress in education, especially on the integration of intercultural education into the education system as a whole (p. 17). Most notably, the recommendation to establish the Traveller Education Service within the Department of Education and Science has not been implemented, rendering impossible the realisation of many of the other recommendations. In 2005, the **Second Progress**

Report of the Committee to Monitor and Co-Ordinate the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Task Force stated that, despite progress, considerable work still needed to be done in the area of education.

Educational disadvantage is defined by the Education Act (1988) as *"the impediments to education arising from social or economic disadvantage which prevent students from deriving appropriate benefit from education in schools"*. Boldt and Devine (1998, p. 10) view educational disadvantage as a limited ability to derive equal benefit from schooling compared to one's peers. They go on to say that educational disadvantage must take into account the individual deriving less benefit from the education system, and of the diminished life chances of the individual who has left formal education without recognised qualifications. Educational disadvantage is manifested in many ways, most notably in poor levels of participation and achievement in the formal education system (Combat Poverty Agency, 2003). The CPA further notes that *"educational disadvantage is also considered to be a factor that perpetuates intergenerational poverty"* (*ibid.*).

In an analysis of those unemployed by the highest level of education attained, the CSO estimated that a person with *no education or primary education* only was more than $4^1/_2$ times as likely to be unemployed as someone with a third level degree, and almost three times as likely to be unemployed as someone with upper secondary education. (CSO Principal Socio-Economic Results, 2003 (Census 2002)). Kellegan *et al.* (1995) speak of the consequences of educational disadvantage in the economic benefits lost to the state and the increased cost to the state in supporting those who are unemployed[50]. The **National Anti-Poverty Strategy** states that *"the education system has a key role to play in providing a route out of poverty"*.

Traveller organisations assert that many Travellers suffer from educational disadvantage. Many continue to leave school as soon as they reach the age of fifteen, with few or no qualifications, poor levels of literacy and numeracy, and little chance of progression to further education or to good employment (including self-employment). Pavee Point[51] quotes the National Traveller Education Officer as estimating that in 2002/2003:

- Only 40% of all Traveller children of post-primary school age attended mainstream post-primary schools.
- The national retention rate to Junior Certificate is 94.3%. For Traveller pupils the rate was only 51%.
- Only sixty-two Traveller children attended 6th year post-primary.
- The visiting teacher service estimates that in 2002 there were sixteen Travellers at third level.

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[50] Quoted in Combat Poverty Agency, **Educational Disadvantage in Ireland**, Poverty Briefing Paper No. 14, Summer 2003.
[51] Factsheets: **Education and Cultural Rights** http://www.paveepoint.ie/fs_educ_a.html

Especially worrying for Traveller organisations is that despite the increase in numbers of Traveller children transferring from primary school to secondary school, very few Travellers remain in secondary schools after the second year (Pavee Point, 2005). Table 7.1 gives an illustration of this:

Table 7.1 **Traveller Children: Progression from Primary to Post Primary Schools**

POST PRIMARY	% TRANSFER
Travellers in Year 1	100%
Travellers in Year 2	56%
Travellers in Year 3	29%
Traveller in Year 4	6%
Travellers in Year 5	7%
Travellers in Year 6	5%
Post Leaving Cert	0.3%

Source: First Progress Report of the Committee to Monitor and Co-Ordinate the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Task Force on the Travelling Community (2000), p. 240

There are many reasons why Traveller children tend to leave school early, including the negative experience Traveller children have in some schools and the tradition within the Traveller community of preferring paid work over educational qualifications[54]. The fact that Traveller Training Centres and schemes such as Youthreach offer paid alternatives to Travellers, many of whom do not have the option of working in a part-time job to make pocket-money largely due to discrimination in the workplace, has also been criticised by Traveller organisations. They say that this is an incitement to Traveller children to leave school early.

In calling for the development of an intercultural education system, Travellers and Traveller organisations are critical of what they perceive as the overemphasis that has been put on school attendance. This emphasis, they argue, must to be counterbalanced with an equal emphasis on the type of education that Traveller children receive. Traveller children should be educated in such a way as to ensure that *"they receive an education for life that allows their identity to be developed, celebrated and resourced"* (McDonagh, 2000, p. 4). To date, as a recent report by the NCCRI commented, *"intercultural issues are left to the individual school for the most part"* (2006, p. 42) and while some *"manage reasonably well…relatively little has been achieved to date"* (*ibid.*). The result is that many Travellers continue to opt out of a system that they see as inappropriate to them and their culture.

There have been a number of recent positive developments in the area of Traveller education. For example, responsibility for Traveller education has moved from Special Education to the Social Inclusion Unit, a High Level Official with responsibility for Traveller Education was appointed in 2003, and the **Traveller Education Strategy**[55] was developed. Travellers and Traveller organisations regard this initiative as key to the development of an appropriate education system for Travellers, and its publication is eagerly awaited.

Galway City

As reported earlier in this document, according to the Census 2002, 60% of the Traveller population in Galway City have no education or only primary education, compared to 12.6% of the overall population. At the other end of the education spectrum, three members, or 0.7% of the Traveller population, have third level education to non-degree level, compared to 13% of the overall population. No member of the Traveller population in Galway City on census night had a degree, compared to 26% of the overall population.

There are two exclusively Traveller pre-schools – one in Westside and one in Ballybane. There are Traveller children in attendance in almost all the primary and post-primary schools in Galway City. There is no information available on the numbers of Traveller children attending each school, the numbers of children who transfer from one year to the following year, the number of Traveller children who leave school before the age of fifteen or who leave school without qualifications. This information is collected by the Department of Education and Science on the basis of the catchment areas of the Traveller visiting teachers, and is not available on a city or county basis. There are a number of after-school projects for Travellers in Galway City.

The City of Galway VEC provides second-level, post-leaving and adult and continuing education services in Galway City. In a questionnaire completed for this research, the VEC states that it has legal obligations in relation to Travellers laid out in the VEC Amendment Act 2001, and that these obligations are fulfilled and are monitored in line with VEC policy and Department of Education and Science requirements. Travellers use the education and training services provided. According to the VEC, the needs of Travellers are basic and continuing education and training. The service is actively promoted by all key agencies working with Travellers, and services targeted specifically at Travellers include Sandy Road Traveller Training Centre, Ballybane Social and Eduction Project, Ballybane Traveller Youth Project and access to Youth & Sports grants. In relation to barriers for Travellers in using the services of the VEC, the organisation stated that restrictions on numbers sometimes result in a waiting list, and applicants are referred elsewhere as appropriate. Ethnic identifiers are used "as appropriate" and Travellers are recorded separately in line with the Department of Education and Science requirements. The service states that it supports the anti-racism policy being developed by Galway City development board, that some staff members have received limited training in this area, and that awareness-raising is a key element of staff development.

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[54] **Second Progress Report of the Committee to Monitor and Co-Ordinate the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Task Force on the Travelling Community**, 2005, p. 28.

[55] Department of Education and Science with the National Advisory Committee on Traveller Education and the Educational Disadvantage Committee.

GTM Research Findings

Acknowledging its importance to the Traveller community in Galway City, the area of education is a developing one for the GTM. One section of the interviews was dedicated to the issue of education, and respondents were asked questions in relation to their own experience of the education system and that of their children.

<div style="background:#a02020;color:#fff;">This section of the GTM research showed the following:</div>

- Travellers view education as being extremely important.
- Paradoxically, many see participation in the education system as being futile, with few benefits to be gleaned from participation in higher levels of secondary education.
- The majority of older Travellers never attended school, or left school early with no or very little education.
- Most people stayed at home after leaving school. Only a few went on to employment.
- Their experience of the education system was overwhelmingly negative, with overt discrimination frequently experienced.
- The vast majority of the current generation of young people left school at the age of fifteen or younger.
- The majority – more than three in every five Traveller children – left school with no examinations.
- A large number of these young people did not progress to further education or employment.
- Racism and discrimination are still very common experiences for people in the education system, with many opting out of education early because of them.

Figure 7.1 **Age at which Respondents Left School**

NO EDUCATION AT ALL
LEFT SCHOOL AT AN EARLY AGE
AGE TWELVE
AGE THIRTEEN
AGE FOURTEEN
AGE FIFTEEN
AGE SIXTEEN
AGE EIGHTEEN

Figure 7.1 illustrates the age at which respondents left school. Of the twenty-four people who responded to this question, two had no education at all, one left school "at an early age", three left school at twelve years of age, three at thirteen years of age, six at fourteen years of age, six at fifteen years of age, and three between the ages of sixteen and eighteen. In total, 88% either had no education at all or left school at the age of fifteen or younger. That amounts to almost nine in every ten people.

When asked to comment further, the picture that emerges is one where many did not receive an education and if they did, their experience of the education system was negative and discriminatory: *"Did a lot of travelling, didn't get a lot of education, most of it from aged 13-15. Lots of fights through being called names like knacker"*; *"Bad. Always picked on. Called names. Not treated like the rest of the class. Traveller kids always got the blame. Teachers and kids made a laugh of me I was the joke of the class"*.

Some respondents spoke of how they essentially taught themselves as many teachers ignored their presence in the classroom: *"I did not like school at all. I was out of place and I did not learn anything"*; *"did not like it very much as back then there was not support and I felt isolated from the class. I learned to read and write but I really taught myself because I listened more than I was taught"*.

The regret for some was plain: *"got no schooling. It breaks my heart today. I regret that"*.

This is notwithstanding the fact that a small number of respondents reported that their experience of the education system was positive: *"good. I had loads of friends from both sides – settled and Traveller. I had a happy time in school"*; *"I loved school. Back in those times it wasn't as bad [as it is now]. At that time racism was born but it wasn't developed. It wasn't so bad."*

Many of the focus group participants said that they left school unable to read and write and that this was common for Travellers in schools: *"We never went to school for learning, I mean sure, we'd pick up bits here and there, but we knew that we wouldn't be learning anything in school."* The importance of education, however, is clear to the participants: *"If Travellers had education, maybe they'd be too brainy compared to the others [settled people]. Then they wouldn't be dependent on someone else, they could do things for themselves"*; *"It's embarrassing, though, if you can't read and write, because you can't help them with their homework"*.

When asked what they did after leaving school, most of the respondents said that they stayed at home, a number said that they went to a training centre and a few said that they worked.

Table 7.2 **Children in Education currently**

LEVEL OF EDUCATION	NUMBERS OF CHILDREN
Pre-school	1
Primary	30
Second Level	20
Training Centre	0
Further Education	0
Total	51

Table 7.2 gives an illustration of the numbers of children (of those interviewed) currently in education. Sixteen of the twenty-five families had children in school at the time of asking. Very few of the respondents have current or past experiences of pre-school education for their children. Those that did, gave a positive picture of the Traveller-only pre-schools: *"It was all Travellers, so it was grand"*.

In relation to primary level, the picture that emerged was a mixed one. Some respondents felt that the primary school service is *"very good. Well treated. The children are learning"*; *"No problems, great, never had a problem, you can go anytime and talk to the principal and they treat the children very kind"*; while others are less positive: *"had a few problems with racism. Principal and some teachers not very nice towards Traveller kids"*; *"There is some discrimination. I try to deal with it promptly. I try to teach the kids to deal with it as well. It usually comes from a minority of teachers who think that Travellers have no interest in their kids education and think they can treat Traveller kids how they like because of this"*.

In relation to secondary school, the situation seemed again to be mixed. For some the experience of secondary school seems to be positive: *"Good"*. For others it seems to be worse than primary school: *"worse again. Attitude of teacher and principal they didn't want Travellers there. Intimidated by teachers"*; *"my son does not like secondary school as he feels Travellers are being picked on all of the time"*.

There is a sense that girls find it easier to cope with than boys: *"girl doing very well with good grades. She'll go further, always studying. Fellah – not sure – more difficult for Traveller boys"*.

For some, the question of opting out of an education system seen to be unfair was a very real one: *"feel as if they are being picked on all the time, have no intention of going back in September"*.

There was one comment in relation to the Traveller Training Centres expressing the hope of the respondent to get her children into the training centre in the future. Similarly, there was one comment in relation to further education from a respondent who said that she would like her children to go on to further education but that her children did not want to.
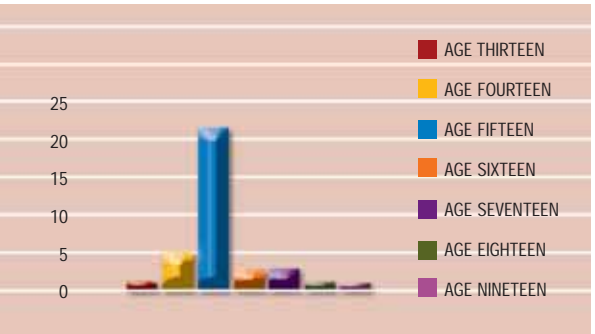
Respondents were then asked about their experiences of dealing with the service(s) teaching their children. Again the picture that emerged was a mixed one, with some respondents saying that they have no problems: *"if there is a problem I will visit the school and speak to [the teachers], some teachers can be very nice and friendly especially if they are teaching Traveller children"*; and others saying that they do: *"I thought the attitudes of the teachers was very un-friendly"*; *"I find the teachers very cross"*.

Suggestions on how to improve the situation included more training for teachers in the area of Traveller culture and more Travellers involved in the education system: *"needs to be more Traveller education as some of the teachers have no knowledge of Traveller culture"*; *"it has improved much more now than when I went to school. There is more support now but I think again Travellers should take up positions within the education system."*

Some felt that it is a matter of attitude and that the attitudes of some teachers need to change: *"attitude of principals and teachers need to change. They always take the settled child's side. The Department of Education has to take more responsibility. [There is] nobody for our children to talk to at school."*

According to some, additional supports are needed – especially for boys and especially during the transition to secondary schools: *"need to have supports in place for Traveller kids settling into secondary school, especially the boys"*; for others, more consultation is needed with Traveller parents, and the role of the Traveller Support Teachers should be expanded: *"to be more Traveller-friendly and they should consult more with parents"*; *"Traveller liaison workers should be positioned in every school so that Traveller children can identify with them"*; but the right person is essential for that position: *"The resource teacher should access more Traveller awareness training, there should be a more suitable teacher with a better background knowledge of Travellers."*

Figure 7.2 **Age at which the children left school**

Seven of the twenty-five families interviewed had children who had left the education system, with twice as many boys as girls out of the education system. Figure 7.2 shows the ages at which these children left school. Seventy-eight per cent, or almost eight in every ten children, left school at age fifteen or under. The vast majority of children (60%) left school at the age of fifteen, with a further 18% leaving even younger. A further 8% left school at age sixteen. Fourteen per cent left school at age seventeen or older.

Figure 7.3 **Exams**

Figure 7.3 gives an indication of the exams achieved by those who had left school. Of the thirty-eight children referred to in the interviews, 21% left school with their Junior Certificate and 16% with their Leaving Certificate. However, the vast majority, 63% or more than three in every five, left school with no examinations.
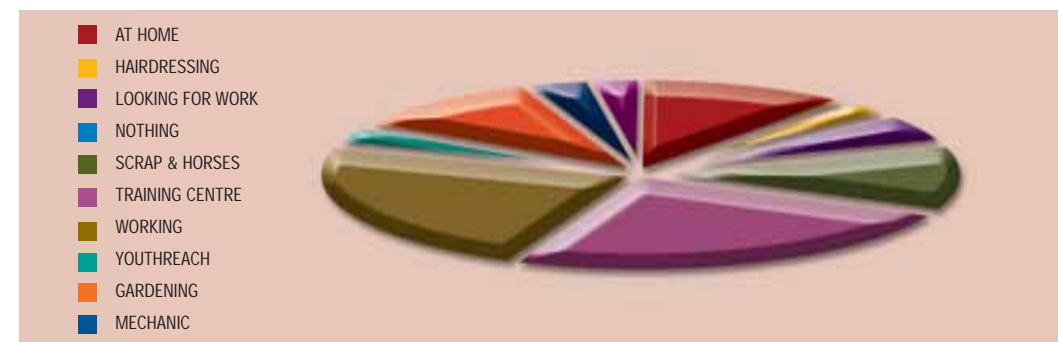
Figure 7.4 **After School**

- AT HOME
- HAIRDRESSING
- LOOKING FOR WORK
- NOTHING
- SCRAP & HORSES
- TRAINING CENTRE
- WORKING
- YOUTHREACH
- GARDENING
- MECHANIC

Figure 7.4 shows what the children did after leaving school. A large number of young people remain at home or *"do nothing"* after leaving school. Others work with scrap and horses or go on to the Traveller Training Centre. A few get work or go on to other training courses.
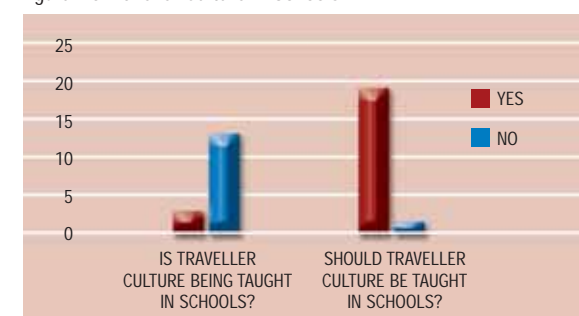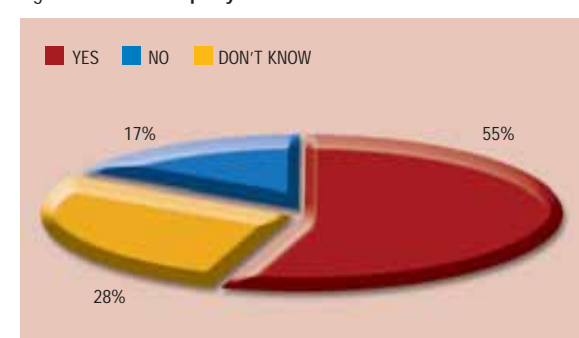
Figure 7.5 **Traveller Culture in Schools**

Figure 7.5 illustrates the responses to whether Traveller culture was and should be taught in schools. The majority of respondents said that Traveller culture is not being taught in schools and that it should be. The Focus Group participants also believed that Traveller culture is not represented in the education system: *"They (schools) recognise other cultures, but not Traveller culture, because it's not in any books like."* They also believe that every person has the right to a culturally appropriate education: *"Everyone has a right to a proper education."*

When asked whether Traveller culture should be taught in school, the vast majority of respondents said that it should. The picture that emerges in relation to this is a mixed one, where in some schools Traveller culture is taught and in others it is not: *"in [a particular school] there is more of a Traveller input as resource teacher in the school is very supportive of Travellers and works with Travellers girls school. [All schools] should have something like this"*; *"In primary school there was a very good resource teacher who makes time for the Traveller children and the children likes going to her. The Resource Teacher and a Traveller woman worked very well together for a while."*

Figure 7.6 **Treated Equally in Schools**

YES NO DON'T KNOW

17%
28%
55%

Respondents were then asked if they thought that their children were treated equally in schools. Figure 7.6 illustrates the answers. The majority of respondents said that they felt that their children were treated equally in schools. Worryingly however, half of that number again said that their children were

not treated equally in schools: *"discrimination, name calling, heads are turned by teachers, principals and teachers are no better, kids are afraid of going to school because of all they have to put up with"*. The inevitability of this is inescapable for some: *"they're known in the school as Travellers and I suppose are treated a bit different. Weren't we all?"*

Focus Group Discussion on Education

The focus group discussion that was held on education presented a picture of an education system that is often culturally inappropriate, and in some instances discriminatory and racist. Travellers reported that their children are being bullied, both by fellow pupils and teachers, on the basis of their Traveller identity: *"When my son was going back to school, I was dreading it, because this particular school has it in for Travellers, especially the lads. I knew that I was going to be down there all the time"*; *"They're still on Travellers though, in one particular school. They can't discriminate against colored people, because they know that if they did, they'd be in big trouble. It's a shame that they don't stop and think when it's Travellers."*

The discriminatory practices of removing children to special Traveller classes has all but disappeared, but participants reported some instances where Traveller children are still removed from classes: *"They automatically take Traveller children out of class and others wonder where they are going."*

One of the key messages portrayed is that Travellers were not encouraged to achieve in the school because teachers believed that they had no future: *"Don't bother to push yourself because you won't get anywhere"*; *"I left school at 12 years of age. I remember being in class one day, at the end of the school year. I was the only Traveller in the class. The teacher went around to everyone in my row: He asked every person where they would be going for secondary school…'Where are you going? Where are you going?', like that, in a line. He skipped right over me, as if I wasn't even sitting there. I left school and I never went back. I was 12 years old. No one came knocking on my parents' door, wondering why I wasn't returning to school, or why."*

Some questioned the point of education in the first instance as there are few prospects of employment for Travellers: *"What's the point of junior certs or leaving certs, when there's nothing there for them [Travellers] afterward"*; *"They're getting fed up, doing it. I know a girl who's done secretary training, and then no one would hire her once they saw that she was a Traveller, or once they find out that you're a Traveller"*; *"Traveller young ones just need to learn housework and how to keep the house, because they have no future."*

Some parents worry about the influence that sending their daughters to school will have on them and see it as dangerous to expose them to a settled value system: *"My daughter will not go to secondary, there is too much going on inside of those tech schools. I'll learn her at home. The facts of life and all that."*

The services that are involved in ensuring school attendance seem ineffective to the participants: *"Traveller kids could be around in the streets, not in school and no one would come looking for them. No one in school would care where they are at. They could be doing anything."*

Young People

In the context of youth work, "youth" refers to those people under the age of twenty-five. According to the National Youth Federation of Ireland, youth work is a *"planned systematic non-formal educational process which assists and enhances the personal and social development of young people. It is complementary to the school and in Ireland is implemented primarily by voluntary youth organisations and groups."* [54]

A legal framework for work in this area is provided by the **Youth Work Act 2001**. The purpose of the Act is to provide a legal framework for the provision of youth work programmes and services by the Minister for Education and Science and the vocational education committees (VECs)[55].

The **National Youth Work Development Plan 2003-2007** was published by the Minister for Youth Affairs, Ms Síle de Valera, T.D., in August 2003. The Plan, which is being managed by the National Youth Work Advisory Committee, provides a blueprint for the development of Youth Work in Ireland for a period of five years.

The Plan has four broad goals:
1. To facilitate young people and adults to participate more fully in, and to gain optimum benefit from, youth work programmes and services.
2. To enhance the contribution of youth work to social inclusion, social cohesion and citizenship in a rapidly changing national and global context.
3. To put in place an expanded and enhanced infrastructure for development, support and coordination at national and local levels.
4. To put in place mechanisms for enhancing professionalism and ensuring quality standards in youth work. [56]

Pavee Point has identified some of the issues facing young Travellers as:
• Lack of access to youth work services
• Discrimination when trying to access commercial recreational services
• An increase in drug misuse in the community
• The need to reinforce cultural identity
• Increased participation in decisions that effect their lives (Factsheet Traveller Youth)

Working with younger Travellers has always been a priority for the Galway Traveller Movement. Its importance is emphasised by Pavee Point: *"Youth work, as an educational process, is expected to play a key role in enabling young people to analyse society. It is also expected to help them to develop the skills and capabilities they need to become involved in affecting change. Due to the gaps in education provision and the low uptake in the formal education sector, it is important that young Travellers have access to youth work services."* (*ibid.*)

Galway Youth Federation (GYF) provides youth work services to the community in Galway City. It states that Travellers avail of its services and are employed to deliver services. Development youth work opportunities, educational supports, and supports to remain in education and to deal assertively with racism were the specific needs of Travellers identified by the service. No particular reasons for Travellers not using the services were identified, and GYF stated that some programmes are co-facilitated with NATC youth workers and project premises are shared. GYF has no procedures in place to attract Travellers to use their services and there are no initiatives specifically targeted at Travellers. No ethnic identifier is used but the organisation ensures equal access to services and employment. The GYF has an equality policy and provides equality and diversity briefings for staff and training on working in a diverse society. In addition, all projects have committees that have representation from the Traveller community. Attracting older boys (15+) is an area of challenge for the GYF, which states that more consultation with the 15+ age group in general is required to design appropriate services.

Galway diocesan youth services provides a drop-in service for people aged 16 to 25 who may find themselves in need of extra support. It is primarily a referral agency and provides advice on employment and accommodation amongst other issues which may arise. Meals are also provided. Travellers do avail of the service and the service states that many issues arise within the Traveller community, from accommodation to employment and education. Queries surrounding welfare payments, sexual health, childcare and health in general are also encountered. In relation to targeting Travellers or providing Traveller-specific services, the service states that it is all-inclusive, hence all sectors who are experiencing difficulties are encouraged to present.

[54] http://www.youth.ie/work/yw.html
[55] **National Youth Work Development Plan** (p. 5).
[56] http://www.education.ie/home/home.jsp?maincat=17216&pcategory=17216&ecategory=17265&sectionpage=12251&language= EN&link=link001&page=1&doc=15252 (Department of Education and Science).

Ethnic identifiers are not used and Traveller users of the service are not recorded separately. There is an anti-discrimination policy in place and there is an all-inclusive ethos, within which the Traveller community is included. The service has an anti-racism policy and staff are trained in this area. Guidelines on mutual respect and acceptance have been developed. The service recognises that it needs to raise the profile of the work that it is doing.

The picture of facilities and activities for young people that emerged from the in-depth interviews held with Travellers was of a limited range of facilities and activities in some areas. In other areas, there appears to be quite a range of activities. However, it appears that many Traveller youths are not using these facilities because they frequently do not set out to target Travellers and, according to the GTM, unless Travellers are specifically targeted, they will not use the facilities for fear of discrimination. It also appears that there are more activities targeted at boys than girls, especially sporting activities.

A number of general focus groups were held with young people, including one specifically with young women and one with young men. The general issues that emerged were the lack of facilities for young people and the experience of discrimination: *"You always face discrimination. Unless they know you really well they'll follow you"*; *"Weddings now they can't get a hotel 'cos of their name"*; *"You're still a knacker in their [society's] eyes"*. The negative experience of education was also an issue for the young Travellers: *"They [teachers] don't encourage them to further themselves"*; and the lack of hope for future employment: *"They're sending me all cleaning jobs, cleaning rooms. He asked me what kind of work I'd like and I said a Bank Manager. I'll be waiting a long time for it"*; *"There are no job opportunities for Travellers. If they know you're a Traveller there are no jobs"*.

The young people were also critical about the lack of facilitation of Traveller culture: *"The fact that they can take away the fact that you can travel. You should have that choice"*; *"More sites should be built, not enough transient sites either. There's only one in Galway and loads of families living on the side of the road in Ennis. They're being ran like dogs"*; and pessimistic about their own accommodation prospects: *"Young ones getting married – where will they live?"*

When asked what they would like to see in their future, the young people answered that they would like *"Freedom"*; *"To hold on to our culture"*; *"To be a Traveller though I don't travel"*.

Conclusions

Despite the high level of investment in education initiatives directed at Travellers, it is clear that the education system continues to fail many Traveller children. This research suggests that Travellers place a high value on education but often have low expectations of the education system. This view is informed both by the levels of discrimination experienced by their children whilst in schools and by the futility of completing education when progression to further education or employment is still not a realistic prospect for many Travellers. Many Traveller parents are not in a position to help their children with schoolwork because of their own literacy difficulties, and this adds to the levels of disadvantage of their children in comparison to other children.

Parents suggest that some schools continue to regard Travellers as underachievers. By doing so schools fail to encourage them while they are in school, and those with responsibility for early school leaving fail to encourage them to go back to school when they drop out. Parents are aware of this and it adds to their scepticism.

This research shows that seventy-eight per cent, or almost 8 in every 10 children, left school at age fifteen or under. Traveller children are still leaving school as soon as they are legally allowed to do so, with few if any examinations and prospects. This has the effect of compounding the disadvantaged status of Travellers, and perpetuates the cycle of poverty and dependency on the state that most Travellers find themselves in.

The predominant emphasis in terms of investment in Traveller education is on the numbers of Traveller children participating. There is very little focus on the experience of Traveller children as they go through what some describe as a discriminatory system and on the outcomes for them as they leave. This research shows a community of people whose general experience of the education system is negative. Travellers in Galway City are struggling to see the relevance of an education system that they see as inequitable and discriminatory with few chances for Travellers to advance into well-paid employment or other opportunities.

Failure on the part of the Department of Education and Science to develop the notion of an intercultural education system in a meaningful way means that many teachers are not skilled to adequately cope with the challenge of diversity. This can and often does mean a negative experience for the Traveller child.
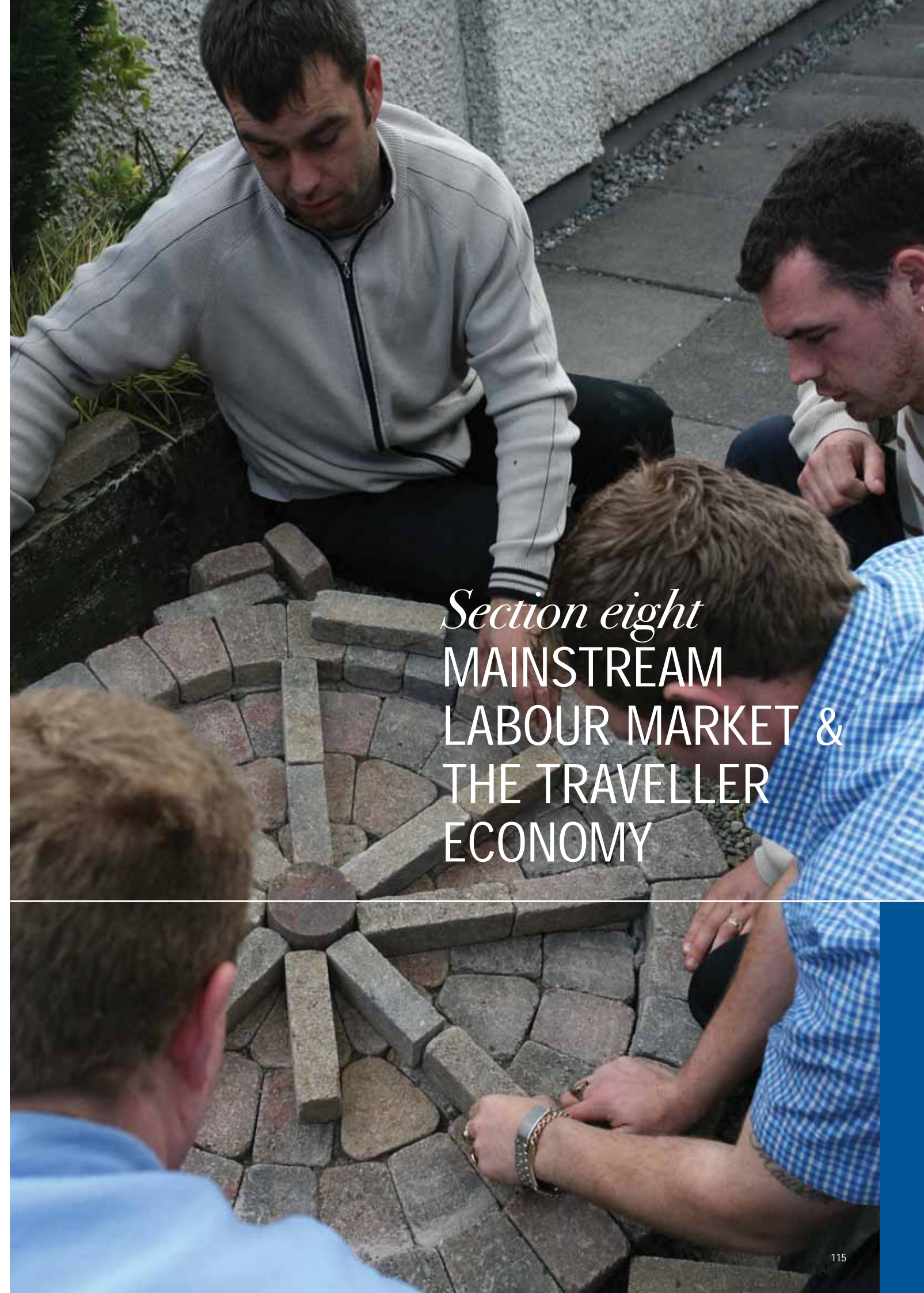
Currently, it would appear that many young Travellers are not availing of youth facilities in their areas. It is vital that this is addressed. Mainstream youth facilities should target young Travellers to become involved, as their experience of discrimination often negatively impacts on them taking part in an activity or organisation unless specifically targeted.

This report recommends that:

- Access to education services and the delivery of education services to Travellers be enhanced, as outlined in the National Action Plan Against Racism's section on education (pp. 106-114).
- The Traveller Education Strategy must bring with it positive changes for Travellers in the education system and facilitate the partnership of Traveller organisations in its implementation.
- Real progress be made in the aspiration of the Department of Education and Science to design and deliver an intercultural education system in a systematic way.
- A system of monitoring be developed in order to assess the outcomes for Traveller children from the education system. This needs to be pre-empted by the implementation of the ethnic identifier currently being designed by Pavee Point.
- Whole School Planning include anti-racism training and Traveller-friendly approaches and that it be carried out by all schools in Galway City. GTM should be resourced by the Department of Education and Science to employ a community worker with a focus on education to support this work.
- The data collected by the Department of Education and Science on Travellers be made available at a local level.
- All facilities for young people and youth groups in Galway City ensure that they are targeting young Travellers in their catchment areas. The needs of young Traveller girls should be given special consideration.
- Special initiatives aimed at "young people helping out at home" (as identified by the GTM census) be developed. These initiatives must be flexible and culturally sensitive and developed in conjunction with the GTM.

Section eight
MAINSTREAM
LABOUR MARKET &
THE TRAVELLER
ECONOMY

Introduction

The Irish economy has enjoyed a period of unprecedented growth for the past number of years.
Unemployment rates have dropped considerably. Despite this, the unemployment rate amongst the
Traveller community remains high, and where Travellers are employed it is very often at the lower
end of the jobs market in insecure, temporary, low-paid positions. The Traveller economy has
remained undeveloped as an option for Travellers.

This section of the report looks at work, employment, unemployment and the Traveller economy.
It looks at some of the literature in these areas, presents the findings of the GTM research and the
conclusions and recommendations arising from this process.

Mainstream Labour Market and Labour Market Programmes

The **Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community** looked at the low level of Traveller
participation in the Mainstream Labour Force. It quoted a report by the National Economic and Social
Forum[57] that says that barriers facing the long-term unemployed in finding and accepting jobs include
factors such as employer reluctance to hire long-term unemployed people and the skills and
education levels of the long-term unemployed. The Task Force claims that these barriers are
magnified when combined with anti-Traveller prejudice amongst employers and the low levels of
education amongst the Traveller community (p. 255). It recommends concentrating on the area of
community enterprise through which, it says, a number of Travellers have accessed the mainstream
labour force and which brings both economic and social gain to the Traveller community. The report
further recommended that public sector employment strategies should have a particular commitment
to recruit from groups at present excluded from the mainstream labour force, similar to the one
evident in relation to people with disabilities. The report goes on to say that the recruitment of
Travellers into the public sector should embrace all services, but that particular attention should be
paid to the recruitment of Travellers into those parts of the public sector providing services to the
Traveller community or in contact with the Traveller community.

The **National Employment Action Plan 2003-2005** commits to promoting integration, combating
discrimination and tackling disadvantage in the labour market. A co-funded Equality Studies Unit has
been established in the Equality Authority under the Employment and Human Resources Development
Operational Programme (EHRDOP), to support the integration of people with disabilities, refugees,
Travellers and older people into the labour market.

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[57] **Ending Long-Term Unemployment Report No. 4**, National Economic and Social Forum, June 1994.

The **National Anti-Poverty Strategy** has set the following targets:

- The elimination of long-term unemployment as soon as circumstances permit, but in any
  event not later than 2007.
- A reduction in the level of unemployment experienced by vulnerable groups towards the
  national average by 2007.
- The achievement of targets/objectives set in the National Employment Action Plan.

Labour Market Programmes target the long-term unemployed and actively promote labour force
participation. They include such programmes as the Community Employment Scheme, Renew Jobs
Initiative programme and others that are used by Travellers and Traveller organisations throughout the
country as one of the main ways of engaging members of the Traveller community.

Progress made in relation to the Task Force recommendations has been limited. The **First Progress
Report of the Committee to Monitor and Co-ordinate the Implementation of the
Recommendations of the Task Force on the Travelling Community** noted that *"in terms of access
to the mainstream labour market, the participation of Travellers continues to be very low"* (p. 73).
According to the last national census (2002), the labour force participation rate for male Travellers
(72%) slightly exceeded that for total males (70%), while the rate for female Travellers (38%) was
considerably below that for females in general (47%)[58]. Unemployment amongst Travellers is extremely
high. According to the census (2002), 73% of Traveller men were unemployed, compared to 9.4% of
the overall population of men, and 62.5% of Traveller women were unemployed compared to 8% of
the overall population of women[59].

The rate of unemployment amongst the Traveller community must be viewed in the context of the
experience of Travellers in the education system, their tendency to leave school early with few if any
qualifications (although anecdotally it is known that even for those who have obtained their
Junior/Leaving Certificate the rate of unemployment remains high), the low levels of literacy and
numeracy amongst the Traveller community, and the discriminatory practices of many employers who
refuse to employ Travellers.

Speaking of the lack of progress on the implementation of the Task Force recommendations, WRC
Social and Economic Consultants (2003) said that, *"Among the consequences of the lack of full
implementation is that, almost 10 years later and following on the heels of a period of unprecedented
economic and employment growth, the labour market situation of Travellers has changed little. When
seen in the broader context of the pattern of occupational change and labour market developments
(for example the decline in unskilled work and the increase in average levels of educational attainment
among new entrants to the labour force) it is arguable that the labour market situation of Travellers
has deteriorated relative to that prevailing at the time the Task Force issued its report"* (p. 25).

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[58] CSO Press Release, 29th January, 2004, www.cso.ie
[59] Pavee Point Factsheet *Travellers and Work*.

Discrimination in the labour market continues to be a problem. In the 2004 Annual Report of the Equality Authority, it was reported that there were 509 casefiles under the Equal Status Act and that the largest category (35.4%) of these relates to cases taken on the Traveller ground. According to Niall Crowley, CEO of the Equality Authority, in his address at the launch, *"The race and Traveller grounds continue to dominate in the casefiles"*. According to the Equality Authority, race was the main ground for claims of discrimination at work in 2003 (*The Irish Times*, May 20th, 2004).

Research commissioned by the Equality Authority (Pearn Kandola, 2003)[60] highlights the experiences of Travellers accessing and participating in the labour market and details barriers Travellers experience in accessing labour market programmes. The research suggests that Travellers cannot adequately and fairly participate within mainstream labour market programmes without the reasonable accommodation of their particular needs and culture at each step in the cycle of programme planning and provision. It makes recommendations to policy makers and programme providers on the design and delivery of programmes delivered under the Operational Programme. The research found that, for many programmes, Travellers have not been identified as a potential part of the target audience and although the values expressed by many mainstream programmes refer to openness, awareness, tolerance and inclusiveness of Travellers, there is little evidence of concrete steps being taken or objectives being set to ensure this becomes a reality. The research also found little evidence that selection criteria and strategies for attraction of candidates were assessed for their impact on the Traveller population and that there were few attempts to consider the context of Travellers, Traveller needs and their past experiences. The report went on to suggest that there was evidence of mistrust between programme providers and Traveller participants, as well as evidence of programme provider stereotypes of Travellers (for example a lack of accountability among Travellers). Evidently, the report concluded, the skills of trainers require further development in the areas of diversity awareness and facilitating integration. The research recommended that an examination of the additional supports that Travellers require to participate successfully in labour market programmes be carried out, and that greater effort needs to be made to reasonably accommodate Travellers as a group and to meet the needs of individuals.

The Traveller Economy

"In the past where settled people could only see rubbish, Travellers saw a real business opportunity." [61]

The Task Force Report points out that cultural factors are a significant element in the low participation rate (in the mainstream labour market) because Travellers enter the Traveller economy in preference to the mainstream labour force (p. 255). The **First Progress Report of the Committee to Monitor and Co-Ordinate the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Task Force on the Travelling Community** concurs with this and states that nomadism and the desire for self-employment influence

the participation rate in the mainstream labour market (p. 73). The term Traveller Economy refers not only to the range of activities pursued by some Travellers but also to the particular and distinct manner in which these activities are organised[62]. This includes:

- **Nomadism** – where mobility makes marginal activity economically viable. Being able to move from work in one geographical area to another is instrumental to the Traveller economy. The mobility and the speed at which Travellers are able to access markets throughout Ireland (and beyond), makes marginal activities that much more viable.
- **Income** – a focus on income generation rather than job creation or career development. Activities are based on the immediate payment for goods or services provided.
- **Self-employment** – from a very early age Travellers are encouraged to become self-employed. This custom is a central feature of the Traveller Community.
- **Extended family** – the extended family is the basic economic unit, with senior family members passing on skills and knowledge to budding entrepreneurs and even much younger family members (See Figure 1).
- **Working from Home** – home space and workspace are considered one and the same within the Traveller community. Using a part of home space as a base from which to work and as storage is both efficient and in keeping with the Traveller economy and therefore Traveller culture.
- **Multi-skills** – having a bank of skills to draw upon allows for a degree of flexibility to enable Travellers to react quickly to fluctuations in marketplace demand.
- **Flexibility and adaptability** in moving from one economic activity to another as opportunities for profit emerge or in response to the demands of the market.

According to the report written at the end of the **Pavee Feens Hawken** project, when Travellers engage in economic activity it tends to be in areas related to manual work and often needs to incorporate a degree of both geographical and seasonal flexibility. Activities ranging from recycling, market trading, motor repairs, handicrafts, horse dealing, seasonal selling, catering and gardening have been at the centre of the Traveller economy.

The potential of the Traveller economy has rarely been given any chance to develop. Recently however, the Traveller economy is beginning to gain recognition as a viable economic activity. **Pavee Feens Hawken** (Traveller Men Working) was an initiative designed to develop a demonstration model for working with Traveller men. One of twenty-one EQUAL Development Partnerships funded under Round 1 of the EU EQUAL Community Initiative (2001), the initiative sought to identify and address fundamental forms of discrimination and inequality in connection with the labour market through the development of innovative policies and practices. **Pavee Feens Hawken** worked with men who expressed an interested in becoming involved in the Traveller economy. The initiative was led by Pavee Point with the participation of Clondalkin Travellers Development Group and the GTM.

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[60] As part of its contribution to the effective implementation of the Employment and Human Resources Development Operational Programme

[61] Traveller activist, Galway, quoted in Currie, Charlie, **An Account of an EQUAL Traveller Men's Group and the Traveller Economy in Galway City**, unpublished, 2005

[62] *Report of the* **Task Force on the Travelling Community**, 1995, p. 234.

Galway City

As indicated earlier in this report, the unemployment rate amongst Travellers in Galway City is extremely high, at 77% compared to 10% for the overall population in Galway City. The census carried out by the GTM as part of this research indicated that the number of people *with jobs* represents only 4% of Travellers over eighteen years of age in Galway City, whereas those on the dole represent almost 49%.

The section on discrimination in this report indicates that the workplace ranks relatively low in the list of areas in which Travellers experience racism and discrimination. This may be because so few Travellers actually overcome the discrimination associated with achieving employment to gain access to the workplace in the first place. The section on identity indicates that one of the few times that Travellers in Galway City hide their identity as Travellers is when they believe that if they identify as Travellers they will not be employed or will lose their job. The section on education indicates the low educational status of Travellers in Galway City and this certainly mitigates against them achieving employment.

There is a Local Employment Service in Galway City that is run by the Galway City Partnership. According to the questionnaire returned by the service, it includes Travellers as one of its target groups and Travellers do use the services they provide. These include information, guidance, support and mediation. The service does not use an ethnic identifier and cites fear of the unknown, literacy difficulties and lack of awareness of the service as reasons why Travellers may not use the service. However, it reports that efforts are being made to work with the GTM in this area and cites using 'word of mouth' and more easily accessible information as ways of attracting more Travellers to use the service. Galway City Partnership employs a Traveller man who facilitates services to unemployed Travellers.

The GTM has been involved in running a Community Employment scheme for Traveller participants since its foundation. To date this scheme has concentrated in the main on training Traveller participants to be leaders in their community and to work in community development, media, literacy and other areas.

As already mentioned, the GTM participated in *Pavee Feens Hawken* (Traveller Men Working), the Traveller Economy Sectoral Partnership project, in 2003. Nine men were involved in the project in Galway City. According to the project report, *"Being self-employed, or wishing to be so, indicates that a person is prepared to take risks. Being your own boss, requires self-motivation, careful planning, a need to be able to make and take decisions, to accept financial responsibility and having an appreciation of the sense of independence that goes with running a small family enterprise. These points stand in stark contrast to the widespread and deeply ingrained myths that continue to persist amongst the majority community about Travellers and their presumed unwillingness to work"* (p. 11). Funding for the project ended in December 2004. A number of the Traveller men who participated in the project are now involved in the GTM Community Employment scheme, some on a voluntary basis – an indication of their commitment.

GTM Research Findings

This section of the GTM research showed the following:

- Travellers believe that discrimination, being identified as a Traveller and lack of education were the biggest obstacles to Travellers gaining work.
- Very few Travellers in Galway City have experience of working or even trying to get a job.
- Fear of the poverty trap is a barrier in accessing employment.
- Respondents see a role for the Traveller economy and would like to see it developed.

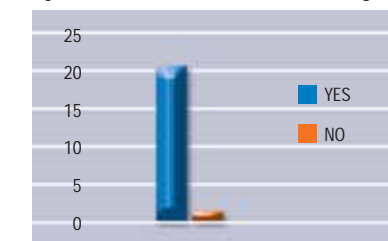Figure 8.1 **Issues in Travellers Accessing Jobs**

Figure 8.1 illustrates the answers to a question on whether there are issues in relation to Travellers getting jobs. Twenty-four of the twenty-five respondents said that there were. Discrimination, being identified as a Traveller and lack of education were the biggest obstacles to Travellers gaining work: *"Travellers know they will have difficulty looking for work because they suffer discrimination and it's worse if you have no education and live in group housing or on a site"*. Similar barriers were identified by the Focus Group participants: *"Living on a site – they [employers] know who you are"*; *"Discrimination is a major one"*; and in relation to education: *"Travellers for years and years managed without education. Older Travellers were dealing with horses. Older Travellers didn't need education but for younger ones it's different. Today they need some sort of education."* Participants spoke of the perception that some have of Travellers: *"People think that Travellers don't want to work"*.

Figure 8.2 **Experience of Trying to Get a Job**

Figure 8.2 shows that only 32% of respondents have experience of trying to get a job. Sixty-eight per cent of respondents have no experience of trying to get a job. Discrimination is seen as a major barrier to Travellers even taking the first step and looking for work: *"not knowing how to read and write haven't got the confidence to sit an interview and discrimination is a barrier why Travellers are not applying for work"*. Employers are seen as being discriminatory: *"when they know you're a Traveller it's very difficult. Once they know you're a Traveller they'll tell you there's no work"*; *"Everything is fine, lovely on the phone, but when they see that you're a Traveller, forget it. This happens in accommodation, work…"*

In relation to mainstream employment, participants talked about having to change in order to fit into the mainstream labour market: *"To access work we would have to change over. Become a buffer [settled person]"*.

The participants identified the poverty trap as a major issue and recommended what amounts to affirmative action and a quota system to ensure the representation of Travellers in all spheres of work: *"You go in there [social welfare] and get your dole – you get €240. Why work forty hours for €270? That's a difference of thirty euro"*; *"A lot of people won't sign off the dole [for fear of losing their medical card]"*;

"If a Traveller goes in and applies for a job and if there is not a Traveller in the shop, then employ the Traveller"; *"Fines should be imposed on people who won't employ Travellers"*; *"There's one Traveller for every ten settled people in Galway. A place employing a hundred should employ ten Travellers"*.

When asked if the situation regarding work and employment was the same for women as for men there was a mixed response from the respondents of the in-depth interviews, with over half of the respondents saying that the situation is different. Some said that the situation is worse for women – *"there is more opportunities out there for men"*; *"Women get the whole bang of it"*, while some said that it is better for women: *"more women in training and employment than men."*

In relation to the Traveller economy, the participants were clear that they would like it to be developed and facilitated but were critical that there are no attempts to facilitate its development: *"Living in a halting site means we can't do no work from home"*; *"There's plenty of space where I am, but we're still not allowed to use space for work."*

In the future, participants would like to see things change for their children: *"To be given an equal chance, give them a chance. If they have the qualifications, don't choose a buffer over a Traveller"*. They would also like to see more anti-racism initiatives in employment: *"The unions in work should help to stop discrimination"*; *"I think we need an anti-racism code of practice in the workplace and in society."*

Conclusions

The picture that emerged from the GTM research is one of a community where unemployment is endemic. The main reason given for this is the discrimination experienced by Travellers in all aspects of their lives – in education, training, accessing employment and even when employed. A viable alterative for some Travellers, the Traveller economy, is neither encouraged nor facilitated.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This report recommends that:
- A Strategy for Travellers and Work be developed by the Department of Trade and Enterprise. Included in this should be a strategy to develop the Traveller Economy. The development of the Traveller Health Strategy should be used as a model.
- Current employment programmes be reviewed and adapted so that Travellers are fully included in them. The development of Traveller-specific employment initiatives, such as Jobs Initiative and Back to work schemes should be considered.
- Positive discrimination and affirmative actions for members of the Traveller community be promoted among employers in Galway City.
- The GTM initiate a project to ensure the promotion and recognition of the Traveller Economy in Galway City and to ensure support for its development.
- The needs of Traveller women in the area of work should be considered, particularly in the area of accessible, affordable childcare.
- Employers in Galway City should be targeted for anti-racism/Traveller Awareness training under the auspices of the Galway City Anti-Racism Strategy.

Section nine
TRAVELLER WOMEN

Introduction

Traveller women are often the ones who bear the brunt of racism and discrimination. As primary family carers they are also the ones who have to manage the household in what are often difficult circumstances. This section looks at Traveller women and at the issue of violence against women.

Traveller Women

The **Task Force of the Travelling Community** acknowledged the difficulties faced by Traveller women in their role as primary carers for their families in conditions *"unheard of by most 'Settled' women"* (1995, p. 271). The Task Force also acknowledged the important role played by Traveller women in maintaining Traveller culture and identity.

The **Second Progress Report of the Committee to Monitor and Co-Ordinate the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Task Force on the Traveller Community** (2005) noted that the *"interface of sexism and racism"* (p. 39) experienced by Traveller women makes them particularly vulnerable to discrimination and inequalities.

The Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) is a UN action plan that governments, including Ireland's, have signed. The BPfA is designed to make real progress in relation to the inequalities faced by women. As part of the BPfA, governments committed to drawing up action plans. In 2001, the Irish Government produced the **Draft National Action Plan for Women** (2001). The draft makes a number of specific references to Traveller women but it was never finalised. The current Government position is that a **National Women's Strategy** will be published that will take into account the consultation carried out as part of the **Draft National Action Plan for Women**. The National Traveller Women's Forum and Pavee Point have made a joint submission in relation to this process, calling for an acknowledgment of the different needs of Traveller women and for full Traveller participation in the process.

Traveller organisations and others have highlighted the specific experiences of Traveller women. There is for example the importance of acknowledging that a Traveller woman's identity is shaped by her experience as a woman, as a Traveller and as a Traveller woman. Traveller women's experiences of racism and discrimination are also shaped by these three aspects of their identities. It is argued that women face the effects of racism and discrimination more

acutely than men. Anastasia Crickley points to the fact that Traveller women are more easily identifiable as Travellers than men are, and therefore often bear the brunt of racist abuse. She says: *"what could be called the feminisation of racism means that Travellers, black, refugee, asylum-seeker and other minority ethnic group women suffer oppression experienced by the whole group more acutely"* (2001, p. 94).

According to the National Women's Council of Ireland (2004) the effect of institutional policies and practices targeting minority ethnic groups are frequently more detrimental to the health, well-being and dignity of women than men (p. 53), indicating that any analysis of racism and discrimination must have a gender perspective.

This is borne out by the fact that the health status of Traveller women is comparatively worse than that of Traveller men. The last research carried out into the health status of Travellers (Barry *et al.*, 1987) showed that at birth Traveller males can expect to live 9.9 years less than settled males. Traveller females can expect to live 11.9 years less than settled females. A **Plan For Women's Health** (Western Health Board) looks specifically at the area of Traveller women's health and makes a number of recommendations in this area, including advising regular consultation with Traveller women and training Traveller women to act as health advisors.

The complexity of identity may be made even more complex for a lesbian Traveller woman or a Traveller woman with a disability. Rosaleen McDonagh (2001), for example, writes about her experiences as a woman, a Traveller and a person with a disability and refers to *"the web of self-identity"* and *"the complexity of multiple identity"* (p. 129). According to Pavee Point, *"Like women from other minority ethnic groups Traveller women experience an intersection of a number of oppressions and experience both racism and sexism"*.

The **Task Force on Violence Against Women** (1997) highlights the difficulties for Traveller women in addressing this issue: *"Black and minority group women have extensively documented the interplay between and contradictions of addressing gender oppression and racism in their lives. This can involve women in invidious choices between raising the issue of sexism within their own community and being in solidarity with their own community in resisting external oppression. Both the internal and the external discrimination experienced by Traveller women need urgent responses. For this to begin to happen such discrimination must be named in ways which do not further marginalise Traveller Women."*

Domestic Violence

Approximately one in five women in Irish society has experienced some form of violence in an intimate relationship[63]. Traveller women, like settled women, experience domestic violence. Research into this issue carried out by Pavee Point indicates that, for Traveller women, this experience may be compounded by a number of issues. There can often be an internal dilemma for Traveller women experiencing domestic violence, as there is frequently a feeling that they are betraying their community as well as their partner if they disclose that they are experiencing domestic violence. In addition, there can be difficulties with involving the Gardaí, with many Traveller women reluctant to bring their families and communities to the attention of what is a police force made up of settled people.

In practical terms, Travellers tend to live in closer proximity to each other and often live close to family members. Staying with friends and relatives may be a problem because of the limited space within which most Travellers live. Accessing barring or protection orders are even more challenging for Traveller women with limited literacy skills, and enforcing these orders may be even more difficult if the woman lives on a site. Traveller women do use refuge services, but the fact that refuges are almost entirely staffed by settled women can pose challenges for many Traveller women. Traveller women generally return to their partners as, for them, leaving their partners also usually means leaving their entire close family network.

The **Report of the Task Force on Violence against Women** looked at the effects of violence against Traveller women and members of other minority groups, and acknowledged that the effects of violence can be all the more traumatic for Traveller women: *"The cumulative effects of living in poverty, isolation, and poor environmental conditions in themselves damage women's health. When these difficulties are combined with physical, mental and emotional abuse, the effects are enormous"* (p. 31). The task force suggested that refuges and other services should be aware of, and sensitive to, issues faced by particular groups of women, such as Traveller women.

The **Regional Planning Committee on Violence Against Women** has a remit to plan and co-ordinate the services for women experiencing violence. There are representatives of Traveller women on the committee.

Waterside House is the refuge for women experiencing violence in Galway City. They provide refuge from domestic violence and a safe place, accommodation and support with social welfare housing needs and legal options. The service states that approximately half of their service users are Traveller women, and that location and lack of transport are the only reasons it can think of that may be a barrier to Travellers using the services provided. The service states that it links in with the Galway Traveller Movement and organises awareness-raising talks in Traveller Training Centers. The service used an ethnic identifier at one stage but is currently awaiting an ethnic identifier question, and some Travellers self-identify as members of the Traveller community. The service ensures that it is accessible and does not discriminate against Travellers under the Equality Legislation because of their culture or ethnicity. Waterside House is currently carrying out an evaluation of their service to Traveller women. Any recommendations from the evaluation will be implemented and they will be revised annually.

The *National Traveller Women's Forum*[64] (NTWF) is an alliance of Traveller women and Traveller organisations from throughout Ireland, which aims to work collectively to challenge the racism and sexism experienced by Traveller women and to promote Traveller women's right to self-determination, the attainment of human rights and equality within society. The NTWF helps Traveller women to come together, examine and analyse the issues affecting them and develop policies and strategies to address these issues in order to effect change. It also supports Traveller women in taking up key positions and leadership roles within the Traveller community, within the National Traveller Women's Forum and within other arenas in society.

Conclusions

Women tend to suffer the effects of racism and discrimination more acutely than men, and their role as primary carers frequently bring them into contact with services that may be discriminatory towards them. The Equality for Women Measure (EWM)-funded project in the GTM will give an opportunity for the GTM to work directly with Traveller women in Galway City.

It is vital that services that support Traveller women experiencing violence are Traveller-friendly and culturally appropriate. In this regard the work about to be undertaken by Waterside House should be supported.

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[63] Kelleher & associates and Monica O'Connor (1991), **Making the Links: Towards an integrated strategy for the elimination of violence against women in an intimate relationship with men.**

[64] http://www.ntwf.net/aboutntwf.html

This report recommends that:

• That the recommendations to come from the Equality for Women Measure project be implemented in order to ensure that the learning from the project is not lost.
• Cope/Waterside House continues to work closely with the GTM to ensure that its services are appropriate to the needs of Traveller women.
• The close links developed between GTM and the National Traveller Women's Forum be maintained and developed.

Section ten
TRAVELLER CHILDREN

Introduction

Traveller children make up a large proportion of the Traveller population. The way that Traveller children are treated by their community and by society at large will largely dictate their future. As the ones who will carry on Traveller culture to the next generation it is vital that Traveller children are made aware of their Traveller culture and identity. It is also vital that they gain maximum benefit from Early Childhood Care and Education so that they begin their education with all the benefits that ECCE brings.

This section of the report looks at Traveller children and at the importance of ECCE. It presents the results, brief as they are, of a Focus Group carried out with Traveller children in Galway City. Finally it will make recommendations on the issue of Traveller children.

Children

Statistics from the last Census of Population (2002) indicate that children make up a much larger proportion of the Traveller population than children in the settled population. Despite this there is *"an almost total lack of information about Traveller children"* as highlighted by the **Second Progress Report of the Committee to Monitor and Co-Ordinate the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Task Force on the Traveller Community** (2005, p. 42). The Task Force welcomed the National Longitudinal Study of Children[65] to be jointly funded by the National Children's Office and the Department of Social and Family Affairs, and led by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) and Trinity College Dublin (TCD). However, a cohort of Traveller children will not be specifically targeted in the study. The Task Force further emphasised the importance of including Traveller children as a specific category in any research undertaken.

As part of Ireland's efforts to implement the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the **National Children's Strategy: Our Children Their Lives** was launched in 2000. The strategy aims to improve the quality of children's lives. It makes a number of specific references to Traveller children, specifically in relation to the disadvantage suffered by Traveller children and of the need to ensure that their cultural identity is protected.

The document **Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children** was published by the Department of Health and Children in 1999. The guidelines are intended to assist people in identifying and reporting child abuse. They aim, in particular, to clarify and promote

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[65] The aim of the National Longitudinal Study of Children in Ireland is to examine the factors that contribute to or undermine the well-being of children in contemporary Irish families; and, through this, contribute to the setting of effective and responsive policies relating to children and to the design of services for children and their families. http://www.nco.ie/press_room/45/

mutual understanding among statutory and voluntary organisations about the contributions of different disciplines and professions to child protection. They emphasise that the needs of children and families must be at the centre of childcare and child protection activity and that a partnership approach must inform the delivery of services. They also highlight the importance of consistency between policy and procedures across health boards and other statutory and voluntary organisations. They emphasise in particular that the welfare of children is of paramount importance. Traveller organisations have called for the **Children First Guidelines** to acknowledge their cultural implications for the Traveller community.

According to Pavee Point, the Traveller child has, traditionally, been fully part of the adult society, speaking freely and frankly in adult company. Space for work, home and children is not segregated. From the earliest age children are integrated into the family work unit, learning skills by apprenticeship. The acquisition of these essential skills supports the positive identity of the child. Unfortunately, these skills are not always appreciated when the Traveller child enters mainstream provision. This can have a negative effect and damage the self-worth of the Traveller child (**Pavee Point Factsheet – Children**).

GTM Research Findings

A discussion was held with Traveller children as part of the GTM research. They had their own very astute views of the differences between Travellers and settled people: *"We live in caravans, they live in big houses with big rooms. They can get their own room and there's stairs and big kitchens"*; *"Buffers have more manners than Travellers, more polite"*; *"Travellers is nice to people"*; and on

what would make life better for them: *"Stop big girls in school who call us names"*; *"Clean up the site"*.

Early Childhood Care and Education

The importance of early childhood care and education (ECCE) is being increasingly recognised, particularly for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. The White Paper on Early Childhood Education *Ready to Learn*, launched in 1999, states that there is growing recognition of the importance of lifelong learning and the idea that children learn from the earliest moment and continue to learn throughout their lives. Education, the document states, is concerned with all the phases of life, including the very early childhood phase.

It speaks of the *"compelling evidence of a wide range of benefits generated by quality early intervention programmes"* and says that the research suggests more significant benefits for children who came from disadvantaged backgrounds (pp. 11-14). The document commits to consulting with Traveller parents and Traveller organisations on issues relating to early education for Traveller children.

According to the National Economic and Social Forum, the overwhelming research evidence at international level points to the importance of early childhood care and education (NESF, 2005). The NESF further note that children of parents in disadvantaged communities, including Traveller children, greatly benefit from ECCE and opportunities for participation in pre-school care and that education equips them better for school and for life (*ibid.* p. 23).

According to **Pre-School for Travellers – National Evaluation Report** there were fifty-two Traveller pre-schools in receipt of support from the Department of Education and Science in 2003. The Traveller pre-schools were not founded as a result of State initiative; rather, they emerged from the work of local voluntary agencies and the commitment of members of the Traveller community (*ibid.* p. 10). The evaluation *"demonstrated that the pre-schools provide valuable educational experiences for Traveller children. It is clear that they can have a positive effect in counteracting the effect of the pronounced educational disadvantage experienced by Traveller families"* (p. 73).

In relation to the future of pre-school initiatives for Traveller children, the NESF report recommends the provision of universal access for all children and targeted interventions for disadvantaged children, Traveller children, ethnic minorities and children with special educational needs. In addition, the report states that *"a phased transition should be put in place for Traveller children, to move from segregated services to more mainstream provision"*. It further recommends that the **Éist** programme developed by Pavee Point should be used as a model for training and for working in the areas of diversity and equality within early childhood settings (Executive Summary).

Entitled **Éist**, the Pavee Point publication on respecting diversity in early childhood, care, education and training examines the need for diversity awareness in ECCE. It recommends an anti-bias approach and inclusive diversity training for early years education (p. 78).

The National Co-ordinating Childcare Committee plans and directs the area of childcare in Ireland. There is an Advisory Sub-Group to the National Coordinating Childcare Committee for Children with Special Requirement and Minority Ethnic Children including Travellers. The function of that committee is to proof the work of the National Co-ordinating Childcare Committee in relation to the provision of services for children with special requirements and minority ethnic children, including Traveller children.

As part of the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme, all childcare services funded by the programme must be accessible to Traveller children and this must be included in services' Equal Opportunities policy and procedures, including admission procedures. The Galway City and County Childcare Committee is the organisation that develops and supports childcare services in Galway. According to the questionnaire returned by the committee, their roles includes co-ordinating, developing and funding childcare services in Galway City & county; facilitating the improvement in quality of childcare services; providing information on childcare for parents, childcare providers and the general public; and facilitating the provision of training for the childcare sector in Galway. Travellers use the services of the organisation, including availing of information regarding childcare as parents and attending training as participants.

The organisation believes that Travellers require greater access to community-based childcare services and the provision of childcare where there are no childcare services. In relation to women, the organisation believes that greater access to childcare services is required by Traveller women to facilitate them in training and employment. In relation to Traveller youth, training in the area of childcare is a requirement. The organisation says that it actively promotes the participation of Traveller parents on management committees of childcare services. In relation to Traveller-specific services, the organisation has a mobile Playbus service providing childcare at two halting sites in Galway City, training courses for parents of children attending the Playbus service, training courses in childcare for Traveller parents to encourage them to take up employment in childcare, and outreach resource libraries based in county libraries with toys and equipment available to Traveller families. Actions specifically targeting Traveller families are recorded separately, while training or quality improvement programmes that include Travellers as participants do not specifically record Traveller participation.

GTM Research indicates that few Traveller families use childcare: *"I prefer to look after them myself"*, and where they do it is often services provided by other family members that are used. In relation to the issue of Traveller-only childcare (including pre-schools) or mixed childcare (Travellers and settled) there was a mixed reaction, with a number of respondents saying that they prefer Traveller-only services as there is less racism: *"I would rather my children minded by Travellers as Travellers know the way of Travellers"*; *"I have heard that my children won't be discriminated in a Traveller crèche as I have heard of some crèches being racist towards Travellers and children"*; and others saying that they think it is important for Traveller and settled children to mix from a young age: *"because when they mix sometimes they bond and their friendship can develop and they don't be racist towards each other"*.

Conclusions

There is an absence of good quality data on Traveller children and it is regrettable that a cohort of Traveller children will not be followed by the National Longitudinal Study of Children.

The importance of the informal knowledge that the Traveller child learns about its culture and identity must be valued and encouraged, as this knowledge is fundamental to the survival of the Traveller way of life.

Good affordable, culturally-appropriate ECCE must have at its core not only the objective of enabling parents to access employment and further training, but also the education of the child. Research consistently shows the benefits of good quality early education, especially for a child of disadvantaged parents. The importance of ECCE for Traveller children must be seen in the wider context of educational disadvantage and should therefore be considered of fundamental importance if the inequalities they experience entering the formal education system are to be minimised.

Many Traveller families are reluctant to use childcare services because of fears that their child will suffer discrimination or racism. It is important that these fears are addressed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This report recommends that:
- A cohort of Traveller children be specifically followed by the National Longitudinal Study of Children.
- Initiatives to encourage Traveller children to learn about and value their identity be undertaken by the GTM.
- Traveller children in Galway City be targeted for inclusion in ECCE.
- The elements of choice and affordability should be central to the provision of childcare services to Traveller families. Whilst ongoing progress towards integration should be central, Traveller-only services should be available to those that prefer this option. Anti-racism training should be provided for childcare workers, so that in a mixed environment Traveller families can be assured that their children will not suffer discrimination.
- The importance of pre-school education is now well documented. It is essential that Traveller children are encouraged to attend pre-school education, as this experience helps to ensure that they begin their education with as many advantages as possible. An awareness campaign about the importance of pre-school education should be targeted at parents of children of pre-school age.
- Culturally appropriate pre-school education facilities be put in place for all Traveller children of pre-school age.

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APPENDIX ONE
MEMBERS OF THE WORKING GROUP AND ADVISORY GROUP

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