



IRISH TRAVELLER MOVEMENT



4-5 Eustace Street, Dublin 2, Ireland
Tel: +353 1 679 65 77
Fax: +353 1 679 65 78
Email: itmtrav@indigo.ie
www.itmtrav.ie

A Review of Traveller Accommodation in the Republic of Ireland (2000 – 2009)

(Page 1-9)

Introduction

This report is compiled by the Irish Traveller Movement highlighting the status to date of Traveller Accommodation in Ireland. It analyses a period of 9 years November 2000 – November 2009 based on national and local monitoring reports (from returns of the Department of the Environment and Local Government).

The report details the Annual Count and current trends in Traveller accommodation types and offers an analysis of the current figures.

Annual count 2010

The annual count for Travellers is conducted by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government annually in November. The information is compiled by returns from the 34 Local authorities and shows all accommodation types inhabited by Travellers.

The Annual Count predates the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998, and Departmental records are available from 1980, however the format differs to today's, and it is difficult to therefore compare recent Annual Counts with older ones; for instance, details such as numbers of families in private rented accommodation, own resources or shared housing were not recorded until 2002. The current format of recording figures has not changed for the last 7 years.

The count began as a means to monitor the accommodation position of Traveller families, to track trends and to ascertain the progress of local authorities in providing accommodation for the Travelling community.

In March each year the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government publish the annual figures. The figures are also published in the National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee annual report (Links to previous documents are listed in the bibliography). **Table 1** shows a compilation of the annual counts from 2000 to 2009.

The following points highlight the key trends in Traveller accommodation nationally and locally.

- The annual count identifies **8,943 Traveller families** residing in the Republic of Ireland. However this is a very significant underestimation according to the all Ireland Traveller Health Study (Sept 2010) which estimates the current figure at **10,618 families**. According to the Department's figures, this has risen by 545 families in the period 2008-2009, and by 2,654 between 2002 (the earliest figure available) and 2009, an increase of 42%. This increase has surpassed the estimated growth by the Task Force of the Travelling people which was estimated at 4% per annum.
- Standard Local Authority Housing: The number of Traveller families living in Standard Local Authority Housing has steadily increased over the 9-year period 2000-2009 from 2,110 to **3,300 families**; this represents a **rise of 56%**. Rises are seen in 20 local authorities around the country, most significantly in Dublin City and Galway County both showing an increase of 20 families between 2008 and 2009; although the numbers of Travellers is higher than most other counties the increase is still significant. Cavan's increase of 10 in the same period was proportionally greater (with an increase by 20%). Limerick, Monaghan and South Dublin also show significantly increased figures.
- Group Housing: The number of families living in group housing is **708**, which has increased by 86% from a base of 380 families in the year 2000. Although the number has **increased by 17** in the last year the overall figure is only 8% of the 8,943 families, while this accommodation type is one of the most sought after. Some concerning facts are that in **11 Local Authorities the number of families have decreased** while in Kerry,

Longford, Monaghan, Sligo and Waterford there is **no group housing available**.

- Private Houses assisted by Local Authority: The number of families has **quadrupled** in the 9-year period 2000-2009 from 123 to 479. The most significant **increase** in the past 12 months **is in Galway County** with a rise from 45 to 66.
- Private rented accommodation: The most alarming change in the last year is shown in the increase of Traveller families being accommodated in private rented options - 487 in the last 12 months and a **greater than twelve-fold increase in the 7-year** period 2002-2009, from 162 families to 2,003 families. Twenty seven of the 34 Local Authorities show an increase and, in the period 2007 - 2009 there were **significant increases** seen in (in fold multiples) Carlow (2.5), Kildare(5) and Clare (2.5).
- Housing provided by Voluntary Organisations: there are currently **131 families** living in this accommodation type, showing a **greater than three-fold increase** over the nine-year period, from 40 families in the year 2000.
- Halting sites: The number of families in halting sites has steadily **decreased over the past 10 years** by 153 to 999 families (a decrease of 13% over nine years). The most significant change has happened from 2005 to 2009, with a **reduction of 132 families** (17% down from the 2005 figure of 1,203). Counties such as Kildare and Clare which have amongst the highest **increases in numbers of families in private rented accommodation also show the greatest decreases in numbers of families in halting sites**. Twenty five Local Authorities show decreased numbers over the past two years. County Cavan **does not have any** halting sites and Longford, Laois, Louth, Limerick, Clare, Donegal, Wexford, Kildare, Monaghan, Kerry, Sligo, in that order (worst first) and the % ranges from 100 in Longford, to 28 in Sligo.
- Unauthorised Halting sites: According to the figures there are currently **422 families living in unauthorised halting sites**, although this figure represents a decrease on last years count it is concerning that so many families are living in conditions that are often **un-safe, overcrowded** and in most cases lacking in the most basic of facilities, such as water, sanitary and electricity services. In **fifteen Local Authorities** the number of

unauthorised halting sites has remained the same as last year or increased.

- Own resources: there are currently **511 families estimated to be** living in accommodation financed through their own resources. The **511 families represent less than 6% of the overall Traveller population.**
- Sharing accommodation : At present there are **390 families** (approx 1900 people) estimated to be sharing accommodation. This figure represents an increase of **45 families in the past 12 months.** This figure only counts those families who are not registered to the specific accommodation. Therefore those families whose accommodation they are sharing are enumerated separately.

Conclusions

The latest Annual Count figures from the Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government shows that Local Authorities are failing to implement their Traveller Accommodation Programmes. The Traveller Accommodation Programmes are now in their 10th year and the figures highlight the failure of the delivery of the National Strategy for Traveller Accommodation.

- 1) One of the key trends in the recent figures is the increase in the numbers of families in private rented accommodation which has risen by 487 in the past year. This figure almost equals the increase in the total number of Traveller families in Ireland which has risen by 545; group housing has only increased by 17 families in the past 12 months while Halting sites have been reduced by 36 families. These figures clearly show Local Authorities' preference for offering Travellers private rented accommodation over Traveller-specific accommodation.

Example: In County Galway there has been an increase in the number of Traveller families over the past 12 months by 48. There has also been an increase in families moving into standard local authority housing (+20) private houses assisted by local authority (+21) and private rented accommodation (+23), while there has been a decrease in group housing (-1) and only a slight increase in halting sites (+5). The figures show

that while the Traveller population is increasing, Traveller-specific accommodation is not keeping pace.

- 2) Local Authorities are steadily decreasing the provision of halting sites through the country. There has been a decrease of 132 families accommodated in halting sites in the 3 year period 2006-2009.

Example: In Laois there has been an increase of 8 Traveller families in the county over the past 2 years. This increase has been met with a reduction of 7 families in Halting sites and one in group housing, an increase of 14 in private rented accommodation and increases in standard local authority housing and housing assisted by the local authority.

- 3) The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government do not calculate transient accommodation delivery. The Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community (1995) recommended that 1000 transient units of accommodation were needed to accommodate nomadism. This is clearly not being prioritised by local authorities.
- 4) The rollout of Traveller Accommodation Programmes is not meeting the population increase. The total accommodation provided by local authorities over the 2006-2009 period represents an increase of 6% however in this time the Traveller population has increased by 16%.

These concerning trends of increased numbers of families moving into housing coupled with decreased provision of halting sites and general slow delivery throughout the Traveller accommodation programmes has highlighted the need for a National Traveller Accommodation Agency to oversee all aspects of Traveller accommodation provision, like that of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

Irish Traveller Movement Accommodation November 2010

Continues

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	% change
Standard Local authority housing	2110	2272	2395	2613	2753	2878	2941	3071 (+130)	3211 (+140)	3300 (+89)	+56%
Group housing	380	456	493	545	582	606	642	677 (+35)	691 (+14)	708 (+17)	+86%
Private houses assisted by council	123	157	259	329	376	403	433	444 (+11)	444 (+0)	479 (+35)	+289%
Provided by Voluntary bodies	40	56	61	67	74	87	104	104 (+0)	119 (+15)	131 (+12)	+227%
Halting sites	1152	1192	1314	1398	1321	1203	1131	1140 (+9)	1035 (-105)	999 (-36)	-13%
Total Accommodation provided	3805	4133	4522	4952	5106	5177	5251	5436 (+185)	5500 (+64)	5617 (+117)	+48%
Unauthorised sites	1093	1017	939	788	601	589	629	594 (-35)	524 (-70)	422 (-102)	-159%
Total Accommodation provided included unauthorised sites	4898	5150	5461	5740	5707	5766	5880	6030 (+150)	6024 (-6)	6039 (+15)	+23%
Private rented	**	**	162	293	486	696	935	1143 (+208)	1516 (+373)	2003 (+487)	+1136%
Own resources	**	**	417	443	464	478	485	489 (+5)	513 (+24)	511 (-2)	+22%
Sharing housing	**	**	249	323	334	326	391	437 (+46)	345 (-92)	390 (+45)	+57%
Total= Total accommodation provided + families in shared housing, private rented and own resources	**	**	6289	6799	6991	7266	7691	8099 (+408)	8398 (+299)	8943 (+545)	+42%
** Figures not available											

Table 1: Traveller accommodation counts; 2000-2009

Bibliography

Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community, 1995 Dublin: Stationery Office.

National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee annual report (2002)

<http://www.environ.ie/en/Publications/DevelopmentandHousing/Housing/FileDownload,1987,en.pdf>

National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee annual report (2003)

<http://www.environ.ie/en/Publications/DevelopmentandHousing/Housing/FileDownload,1985,en.pdf>

National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee annual report (2004)

<http://www.environ.ie/en/Publications/DevelopmentandHousing/Housing/FileDownload,1983,en.pdf>

National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee annual report (2005)

<http://www.environ.ie/en/Publications/DevelopmentandHousing/Housing/FileDownload,17448,en.pdf>

National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee annual report 2006

<http://www.environ.ie/en/Publications/DevelopmentandHousing/Housing/FileDownload,17837,en.pdf>

National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee annual report (2007)

<http://www.environ.ie/en/Publications/DevelopmentandHousing/Housing/FileDownload,21352,en.pdf>

Backgrounder enclosed

Traveller Accommodation - background

There is no discord in the recognition of the need for fully serviced culturally appropriate Traveller accommodation. Yet to date there are many Travellers living on the roadside or unauthorised encampments *'have to endure living in intolerable conditions and living without access to the basic facilities of sanitation, water and electricity'*. Despite a National Traveller Accommodation Strategy that has been in operation for 12 years, progress is not what would have been expected at this juncture. *'In relative terms there is little change in the number of Traveller families living in unauthorised/roadside encampments since the time of the 1963 Commission on Itinerancy report.'*

The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 enshrines in law the requirement of local authorities to provide culturally appropriate accommodation in all its forms, including halting sites, group housing schemes, standard houses and transient accommodation.

Local authorities, following a consultation process are required, to prepare and adopt accommodation programmes to meet the existing and projected accommodation needs of Travellers in their areas. The first Traveller Accommodation Programmes covered the period 2000–2004, the second from 2005-2008 and the third run from 2009-2012.

At national level the National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee's (NTACC) role is to advise the Minister of the Environment and Local Heritage in relation to *'the most appropriate measures for improving, at local level, consultation with, and participation of, Travellers in the provision and management of accommodation, and general matters concerning the preparation, adequacy, implementation and co-ordination of Traveller accommodation programmes.'*

The 1998 Act also provided for the establishment of Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committees comprising of elected representatives and officials of the local authority, Travellers and Traveller organisations. Their role is to *'advise in relation to the preparation and implementation of any accommodation programme for the functional area of the appointing authority concerned.'*

The Annual Count

The annual count for Travellers is conducted by the Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government and the information is compiled by returns from the 34 Local authorities and shows all accommodation types.

The Annual Count predates the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998, and records are available from the Department going back to 1980, however the format was very different to today's, and it is difficult to reliably compare recent Annual Counts with older ones; for instance, details such as numbers of families in private rented accommodation were not recorded. The current format of recording figures has not changed for the last 7 years. The count began as a means to monitor the accommodation position of Traveller families, to track trends and to ascertain the progress of local authorities in providing accommodation for the Travelling community.

For further information please contact Jacinta Brack Public Relations Co-ordinator 01 679 6577 / 087 27 44 791 publicrelationsitm@gmail.com,

Ends