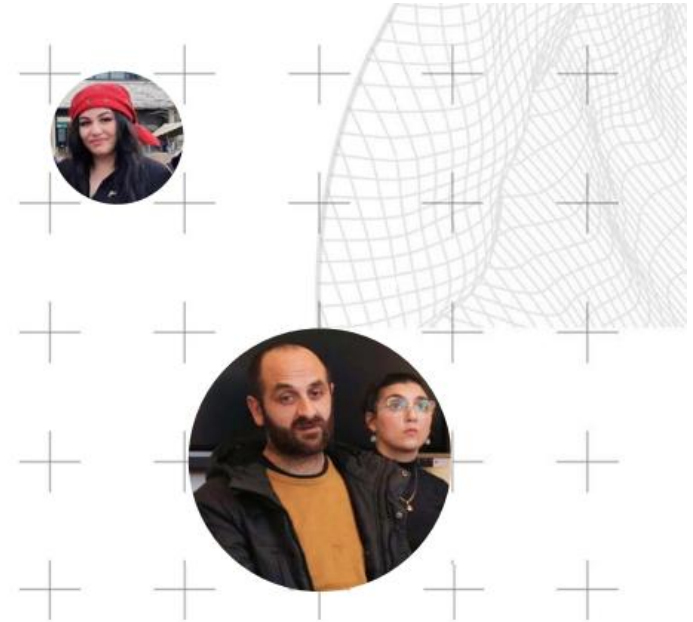


# Roma in Ireland: **Access to Fair and Decent Work**



# Research Aim

Explore Roma experiences of employment in Ireland and to identify how best to improve Roma 'access to' and 'experience of' work



# PEER LED RESEARCH

**Community Development Values and Principles – human rights, empowerment, participation**

**The research was framed, designed, developed by Roma peer researchers involved in all stages of the research process**

**The project provided education and training on research and research methodologies to create the conditions for full participation**

**Interviews with 23 members of the Roma community (13 women) and 11 staff from key state agencies, employment and training initiatives and Roma employment support programmes**

# Findings: Profile of the Community

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Rich diversity within the Roma community

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Strong desire and motivation to work

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Experience of racism in all aspects of life including when availing of services, on the street and in employment, especially for Roma women who were more identifiable

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Second generation Roma in Ireland had better outcomes when young people had access to education and opportunities. However, this was not the experience for everyone.





# Discrimination

- I kept going, and she kept following me, so I said to her, I'm not going to steal, like, you don't have to be following me. She goes, I'm so sorry, but there's people, your kind of people she said to me, that were here stealing and we're just trying to avoid it.*

# Findings: Experience trying to access and participate in work

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The barriers to work were both directly related to employment and broader than employment – racism and discrimination a key theme

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Direct challenges included language, and literacy barriers

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No safety net – barriers to accessing social protection and employment/training supports – due to how the Habitual Residence Condition is applied

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Indirect barriers such as health inequalities and poor living conditions

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Lack of appropriate transport and childcare support also featured as barriers for Roma who were trying to access employment, particularly for Roma women

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# Hiding Identity

*“but when I went for the job interviews and I went to work I used to wear trousers just so I will blend in with everyone else and they won't think that I'm Roma, um, also when I go like to shops or even to work, I would think that if I wear a long skirt, they would think that I'm Roma and that they would follow me and that they wouldn't have you know, they wouldn't trust me”.*

# Impacts of Health and Caring Responsibilities

“....something like 93% of my absentee rates were connected to health, either children or parent’s health, but it was almost always directly related to health of somebody in the family, so, I think the health inequalities, you just can’t separate them, and so that means then that their ability to participate is hugely impacted by their health”



# Findings: Experience in work

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The majority of Roma interviewed also described how they faced racism in the workplace

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Treated differently to other employees and described a power hierarchy where they felt they were at the bottom

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Materially affected by racism, not paid properly, at risk of injury where factory rotations or safety protocols were not followed for them.  
Extreme exploitation in some cases

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Lack of systems to report these experiences

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# Treatment in Work – workplace injuries

- *“We worked night shifts for two weeks, we didn’t even have a day off, and when I was exhausted, I didn’t go to work for one day, so they fired me....”*
- *“people with injuries and everything like that, and then they are dismissed because of those injuries, and simply new people are just brought in and that’s it”*

# Working Hours and Payment

- *because sometime, like Roma people, Roma community they work too hard but they are not paying well, you know what I mean? So, like I work six day, from seven days, I work six day in Y shop, and they pay me like the normal 400, 420. But it shouldn't be 420 you know. And then I don't say anything I say it's fine, I leave it the way they are.*

# Workplace Recommendations:

Develop clear mechanisms to address racism in work (anti-racism awareness, equality codes of practice), and ensure employers and State agencies are aware of their obligations;

Workplace Relation Inspectorate to conduct targeted inspections of certain sectors, for example, sectors that feature in the research such as - waste management, agency work, meat factories, and fruit farms;

Employment supports and services to include information on worker's rights, and complaints mechanisms (such as Work Relations Commission, Trade Unions, workers associations) and improve access to these mechanisms for Roma with targeted information and language supports;

# Recommendations: Targeted Roma Supports

Clear pathways to mainstream employment services and basic social protection for Roma are needed, with specific, targeted supports to navigate the system and the digital divide;

Targeted and mainstream measures to address barriers to Roma employment, including sustainable funding for Roma projects to ensure long term, meaningful engagement with Roma

Introduce specific measures for Roma women that incorporate flexibility in employment and childcare supports at a local level

# Policy Recommendations

Review the application of the Habitual Residence Condition and PPS application process, which disproportionately impact Roma access to basic social protections employment supports;

A specific Traveller and Roma Employment, Training and Enterprise Plan with clear targets, indicators, timelines, and allocated resources;

Implement ethnic equality monitoring (in line with human rights standards) across all relevant state departments (including Department of Social Protection and Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment);



# Next Steps...

- How do we create more inclusive and anti-racist work environments?
- What can we do to ensure that Roma and other ethnic minority groups have access to information about their rights as workers and how do we make complaints mechanisms more accessible?
- How can we ensure that employers are aware and held accountable for their obligations to their workforce? How do we monitor issues of racism and poor working conditions in workplaces?
- How do we forge partnerships between Trade Unions, employer groups, state agencies and Traveller and Roma organisations?

# THANK YOU



**PAVEE POINT**  
TRAVELLER AND ROMA CENTRE

**APPLIED SOCIAL STUDIES**  
STAIDÉAR SÓISIALTA FEIDHMEACH



An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais,  
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