



IRISH TRAVELLER Accommodation Survey



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Foreword

I am pleased to present this report, which is the fourth comprehensive piece of research produced by the Housing Executive, examining Irish Travellers' accommodation in Northern Ireland. This research will be used to inform our Irish Travellers' Accommodation Strategy and decision-making around future Irish Traveller accommodation schemes.

In combination, the Housing (NI) Order 1981 and the Housing Order (NI) 2003 place a statutory responsibility upon the Housing Executive to assess the housing needs of Irish Travellers and to develop programmes to address any identified need. A first step in assessing need is to build as clear a picture as possible of the living arrangements and preferences of Irish Traveller households throughout Northern Ireland. Following on from similar surveys carried out in 2002, 2008 and 2014, we therefore carried out research in 2018/19, gathering up-to-date evidence to inform the development of a new accommodation strategy for the period 2020/25.

This report is the product of a lengthy and intensive process that involved a great deal of work above and beyond the survey itself. We are extremely grateful to the many individuals and organisations who gave their time, expertise, advice and constructive criticism in an effort to help us reach and engage with as many Irish Traveller households as possible.

To the best of our ability, within the constraints of time and resources, and relying on the participation of those individuals and households who kindly engaged with the survey, we have made every effort to capture the views of the majority of Irish Traveller households in Northern Ireland. However, every piece of research has its limitations. We cannot claim that the findings of this report capture the circumstances, preferences and opinions of every Irish Traveller household in the region; it is rarely possible to complete a full census survey for any population and our experience on this project was no different. Nonetheless, we are confident that, with 540 completed surveys, this research is one of the most comprehensive surveys ever undertaken of the Irish Traveller community in Northern Ireland, and provides a very robust foundation for further analysis and planning.

We are indebted to the members of the Irish Traveller community who took the time to participate in this survey. We look forward to continuing to work with them, and with our other partners and stakeholders, to ensure that suitable accommodation exists to meet identified needs, and that, where necessary, living conditions are improved.

Clark Barbe

Clark Bailie Chief Executive

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Summary

Background

In order to inform its Irish Traveller Housing Strategy and Needs Assessment, the Housing Executive commissioned Perceptive Insight Market Research Ltd to carry out a survey of Irish Traveller households across Northern Ireland. Fieldwork was undertaken between May 2019 and January 2020, and interviews were carried out with respondents representing 540 households, comprising a total of 1,628 individuals.

The Household

The majority (70%) of Household Reference Persons (HRPs) were female, and three quarters (75%) were aged between 25 and 59. Only six per cent were in employment, while the majority were economically inactive, predominantly due to looking after family/home (37%) or being permanently sick/disabled (34%).

Almost one third (31%) of all household members were children (aged 15 or under) and a further 41% were aged between 16 and 39. The vast majority of households (96%) consisted of only one family unit, and more than one quarter (27%) of households consisted of only one person. However, one fifth of respondents (20%) lived in households containing more than five people. Around two thirds of respondents (65%) said their household contained at least one person with a disability, and one third (32%) stated that a household member required specially adapted accommodation.

Current Accommodation

At 69%, the proportion of respondents living in social housing was substantially higher than in 2014 (49%). Similar proportions (10% and 9% respectively) were living in private rented accommodation and at permanent/serviced sites, and seven per cent were living in grouped housing.

Sizeable proportions had lived in their current accommodation for more than one year (89%) and expected to remain there for more than one year (83%). The majority (71%) were satisfied with their accommodation; satisfaction was highest among those living in grouped accommodation (87%) and lowest among tenants living at sites managed by the Housing Executive (56%). Those who were satisfied with their current accommodation cited reasons such as being close to family, having good neighbours and living in a quiet area. For those who were dissatisfied, state of repair (of either the dwelling or the site) was a common concern; other concerns related to harassment or security concerns and accommodation being too small.

While the vast majority knew that the Housing Executive provided 'bricks and mortar' accommodation, only 45% of those surveyed were aware that it also provided emergency halting sites.

Future Accommodation

When asked about their preferred accommodation, almost three quarters (72%) said they were happy with their current home, while just over one quarter (27%) said they would prefer different accommodation.

Broken down according to current and preferred accommodation type, the numbers of respondents expressing preferences for the various different types of accommodation were relatively low. The single largest sub-group wishing to move *between* accommodation types was private rented tenants who wished to move to Housing Executive or housing association accommodation (12 respondents). However, the largest group by some way was of respondents already living in social housing who wanted to move *within* the social housing sector (62 of the 152 Irish Travellers who expressed a preference for alternative accommodation). For those that wanted to remain within the Social Housing sector, preference for a settled lifestyle, nicer area, to meet a specific need e.g. ill health or disability, more suitable size and to be closer to family were the main reasons.

Potential newly-forming households

Around one fifth (19%) of respondents expected that a member of their current household would seek their own accommodation within the next five years, of which 61% anticipated that only one current household member would do so. More than two thirds (67%) said that those seeking their own accommodation would make up *one* new household; the figures suggest that around 165 household members would form a total of approximately 150 households within the next five years.

Current Accommodation and Preferences, and Newly-Forming Households: Summary

Group	Number of households
All respondents interviewed	540
Happy with current accommodation	386
Not Irish Travellers (English Travellers; Roma)	2
Total respondents expressing a preference for alternative accommodation	152
<i>Of the respondents who said they would prefer alternative accommodation:</i>	
those expressing a preference for the same type of accommodation	85
those who were unsure of preferred accommodation type	6
those expressing a preference to live in a different type of accommodation	61
Estimated newly-forming Irish Traveller households 2020-2025	151

Travelling

Only seven per cent of respondents expected that they or a member of their household would travel within the next three years; the majority (85%) did not expect to do so, and the remainder were unsure. Of those who did not travel, most (84%) said they did not wish to, just under one tenth cited health reasons and small proportions said they did not travel because of poor quality transit sites and lack of transit/emergency halting sites (both 2%).

Other issues

At around 55%, the proportion of respondents who said their household had access to the internet was 30 percentage points lower than the Northern Ireland average of 85%. This being the case, most of the respondents who had contacted the Housing Executive in the 12 months prior to the survey had done so by telephone (59%) or in person (32%). From a list of possible sources, the Housing Executive was the one that respondents were most likely to consult as their *main source* for housing and benefit advice (33%), but where benefit issues were concerned, most either were not aware of welfare reform (31%) or were aware but unsure how it might affect them (34%).

Introduction

Background to the Survey

The Housing Executive is responsible for the provision and management of accommodation for the Irish Traveller community in Northern Ireland. In order to inform this work, the Housing Executive's Research Unit completed research looking at the current accommodation and future accommodation preferences of Traveller households in Northern Ireland in 2002, 2008 and 2014. The objective of these studies was to inform a strategic review of the current accommodation and future accommodation requirements of Irish Travellers, and the research arose from recommendation 5 made in the final report of the Promoting Social Inclusion Working Group on Travellers in December 2000:

'The Northern Ireland Housing Executive should undertake a comprehensive strategic needs assessment of current and projected accommodation requirements of all Travellers in consultation with Traveller organisations, members of the Traveller communities and District Councils.'

As part of its Irish Traveller Strategy, the Housing Executive needs to regularly:

- assess accommodation needs to inform and facilitate decisions around the planning of future accommodation; and
- assess if its Travellers accommodation portfolio is in the right location, of the right type and quality and is strategically relevant to the Housing Executive in the exercise of its statutory duties.

In 2018, the Housing Executive therefore included a project on its annual Research Programme to carry out an updated survey among Irish Travellers. The initial objectives for the research project and associated needs assessment were as follows:

1. To conduct an accommodation needs assessment of the Irish Traveller community in Northern Ireland, involving the effective participation of the Irish Traveller community throughout the entire process – from the design and planning stages, to taking part in the survey, to effectively addressing the findings of the needs assessment;

2. To determine the housing needs of the Irish Traveller community; and

3. To provide a socio-economic profile of, and inform future planning of accommodation for, the Irish Traveller population in Northern Ireland.

The initial research objectives were subsequently revised to better reflect the separate stages involved and, in particular, to clarify that the survey findings alone would not represent an Irish Traveller housing needs assessment. Rather, the information collected regarding Irish Travellers' current accommodation and future preferences, which is summarised in this report, will inform a housing needs assessment carried out by the

Housing Executive's Land and Regeneration Services team. This assessment will, in turn, inform the Housing Executive's Irish Traveller Accommodation Strategy 2020 -2025.

The Housing Executive commissioned Perceptive Insight Market Research Ltd¹ to conduct fieldwork for the 2018/19 Irish Traveller Accommodation Survey, the key findings of which are presented in this report.

Purpose of the research

The 2018/19 research is the most up-to-date and comprehensive source of information available to the Housing Executive on Irish Travellers, and therefore represents a strong evidence base on which to:

fill a gap in the absence of good quality, available administrative data;

gauge views from Irish Traveller households regarding their current accommodation and the type and location of their preferred accommodation;

inform the Irish Traveller Housing Needs Assessment; and

enable the Housing Executive's Strategy and Policy team to use evidence to formulate the organisation's Irish Traveller Strategy.

The research findings summarised in this report can be read as a stand-alone account that provides a useful and important addition to the overall evidence that exists on Irish Traveller households in Northern Ireland. However, it is important to note that, in the context of the Housing Executive's wider strategic and needs assessment activities, the research findings do not, in themselves, constitute an Irish Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment. Instead, in the absence of suitable, robust data from any other source, these research findings will provide supplementary evidence to allow the Housing Executive's Data Analytics team to develop the organisation's Irish Travellers Accommodation Strategy 2020-25 and inform the associated needs assessment.

¹ <u>More information on Perceptive Insight Market Research Ltd can be found on their website</u>

The role of the Research Unit

The Research Unit gathers data, when requested, on behalf of internal and external clients. The information gathered, such as the findings of the Irish Traveller accommodation survey 2018/19, provides clients with evidence and insights to assist policy formulation and decision-making in that part of the Housing Executive's business.

Research Evaluation

To ensure the Research Unit continues to produce high quality, robust data, all surveys go through a client evaluation process. The evaluations allow the Research Unit to identify strengths and weaknesses of each research project.

The methodology, sample and Response Rates

Due to a lack of up-to-date information on Irish Travellers' current accommodation and future preferences, the Housing Executive identified a need for strategically robust data. The Housing Analytics team, which has responsibility for The Irish Travellers' Accommodation Strategy and associated Irish Traveller Housing Needs Assessment, asked the Research Unit to design and commission a quantitative research project, with the aim of collecting data from a large number of Irish Traveller households. A key consideration was to ensure that the data collected was valid, reliable and representative of the Irish Traveller community. During an extensive pre-research engagement process, the questionnaire that had been previously been used for similar surveys was revised in consultation with interested parties, including members of the Irish Traveller Community.

As no complete record of Traveller households in Northern Ireland exists, the Housing Executive Research Unit supplied Perceptive Insight with the address list of those households which had completed the survey in 2013. The Research Unit also supplied Perceptive Insight with addresses of Irish Travellers on the Housing Executive's Housing Management System. Further addresses were sourced from Housing Executive Patch Managers, housing associations, Irish Traveller support groups and other groups and representatives who provide help and advice to Irish Travellers.

The Research Unit was unable to use the Housing Benefit system or Customer Management System to gather contact details as the relevant information is not collected on either of these systems.

In total, Perceptive Insight was provided with 2,219 addresses. As this information was provided from different sources and at different stages during the fieldwork, all addresses underwent a quality assurance process to remove duplicates and other ineligible addresses. This produced a base sample of 985 addresses. In addition, 109 contact addresses were identified through the snowball sampling process, giving a total of 1,094 addresses (Table A).

Table A: Total number of identified addresses

	Number	%
Original addresses	985	90
Snowball sampling	109	10
Total addresses identified	1,094	100

During fieldwork, Perceptive Insight found that 196 contact addresses were ineligible for interview (Table B). The main reasons for ineligibility were that: the address was vacant or derelict; the person had moved; or it was ascertained that the address was not occupied by an Irish Traveller household.

Table B: Total number of valid addresses

	Number	%
Number of identified address	1,094	
Vacant/derelict	65	
Non Irish Traveller household/Moved away	131	
Valid addresses	898	100

Table C: Response Rates

	Number	%
Completed interviews	540	60
Addresses exhausted ²	187	21
Refusal	³ 49	5
No contact	122	14
	898	100

Due to the deadline set for completion of fieldwork, Perceptive Insight were unable to contact 122 of the addresses provided; a record of these addresses was provided to the Housing Executive. From their experience, Perceptive Insight felt it was likely that a proportion of the addresses not contacted would have been ineligible; however this cannot be confirmed and the addresses have been left in the valid addresses sample. In total, interviews took place with representatives of 540 households across Northern Ireland (Table C). These households comprised a total of 1,628 individuals. As would be expected, almost all HRPs (99.6%) were Irish Travellers. The Housing Executive is confident from a social science research perspective that robust insights can be drawn from this sample. The total number of households and individuals represented in the study stands up against other surveys including:

- 2001 Census: 1,710 individuals⁴
- 2011 Census: 1,301 individuals⁵
- 2014 Housing Executive Irish Traveller survey: 1,262 individuals⁶

² 'Exhausted' addresses are defined as those at which no contact had been made after five attempts by interviewers from Perceptive Insight. Calls were made on different days and at different times, including evenings and weekends, in an attempt to maximise the opportunity of contacting the household. Addresses where the occupant was away for the duration of the fieldwork are also included.

³ The main reasons recorded for refusing to take part in the survey were telephone refusal to office; broken appointment/avoided interview; too busy; policy not to do surveys; not interested and too ill.

⁴<u>Information on the 2001 Northern Ireland Census can be found on the NISRA website</u>

⁵ Information on the 2011 Northern Ireland census can be found on the NISRA website

⁶ Information on the 2014 Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment can be found on the Housing Executive website

Definitions

Household

A household comprises either one person living alone, or a group of people (not necessarily related) living at the same address who share cooking facilities and share a living room or a sitting room or dining room. A household may consist of one or more family units.

Household reference person

The household reference person is the member of the household who owns or pays the rent or mortgage on the property. Where two people (e.g. husband and wife) jointly own or rent the property, the household reference person is the person with the highest annual income. The definition is for analysis purposes only and does not imply any authoritative relationship within the household.

Presentation of findings

This report presents the key findings of the 2018/19 Irish Traveller Accommodation Survey; it is accompanied by appendix tables.

Throughout the report findings are reported on respondents or individuals. Where *respondents* are referred to, this represents the number or proportion of *households*; where the text or tables report on *individuals*, the figures represent the number or proportion of all individual members living in the households surveyed.

The report outlines the overall figures at Northern Ireland level. Where appropriate, comparisons with the 2014 survey are included. However, it should be noted that, following an extensive consultation process⁷, there were a number of changes to the questionnaire prior to the 2018/19 survey. It is not possible to provide 2014 comparisons for any new or amended questions (even minor amendments can affect interpretation of a question), or where definitions have changed.

The appendix tables present percentages to one decimal place. For ease of reporting, percentages reported in the commentary are rounded, and therefore may not add to 100%.

In addition to the report and appendix tables, it was agreed by the project advisory group that the Housing Executive would produce a short infographic at council level detailing key findings for each area with a resident Irish Traveller population. The publication of an infographic will be subject to data being collected from a sufficient number of households to ensure the information is robust.

⁷ Four consultative meetings took place in September and October 2018. The meetings took place in Belfast, Lurgan, Omagh and Derry and were attended by Irish Travellers, Housing Executive, Traveller support groups, Local Councils and individuals with an interest in Traveller issues.

Section 1: Profile of Household and Household Reference Person (HRP)

(Appendix tables – section 1)

70% of HRPs were female and 30 per cent were male.

39% of HRPs were aged between 25 and 39 years old; 36 per cent were aged between 40 and 59 years old; 11 per cent were aged between 65 and 79 years; nine per cent were aged between 16 and 24 years old; four per cent were aged between 60 and 64 years old and the remaining one per cent were 80 years of age or older (Figure 1).

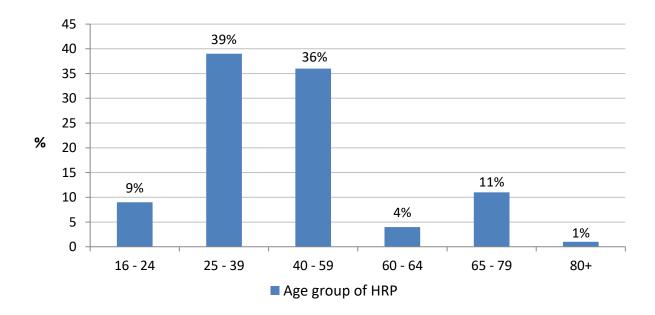


Figure 1: Age of Household Reference Person

94% (95% in 2014) of HRPs were economically inactive, with only 6 per cent in employment. More than one-third (37%) were looking after family/home and one-third (34%) were permanently sick/disabled. Smaller proportions were not working (long term) (13%) and retired (8%).

44% of HRPs were separated; more than one-quarter (27%) were single; one-fifth (20%) were married; eight per cent were widowed and the remaining one per cent were co-habiting. The predominant household type was lone adult (27%; 144 out of 540).

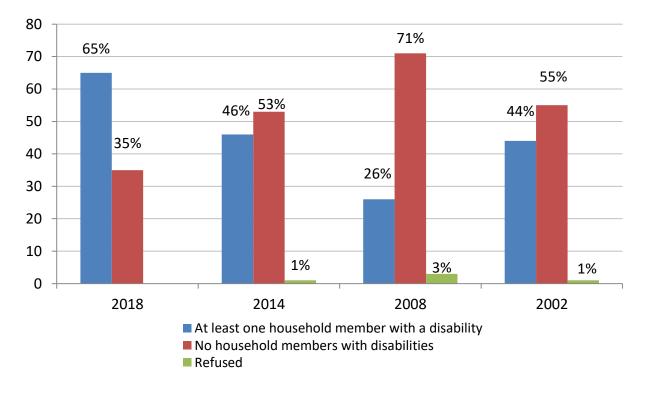
A family unit cannot span more than two consecutive generations (e.g. a parent with child [family unit 1], living with their parents [family unit 2]). A total of 540 households took part in the survey and findings show that the vast majority (96%) of households contained one family unit and four per cent contained more than one family unit.

The relatively young age profile of the population is indicated by the fact that almost onethird (31%) of household members were aged 15 years or under and 41 per cent were aged between 16 and 39. Less than one-tenth (7%) were aged 60 years or older.

27% of households were single person households; equal proportions (both 20%) of households comprised two people and five or more persons; 18 per cent comprised three people and16 per cent comprised four people.

65% of respondents said they or a member of their household had a disability that limited day to day activities. Of these, 64 per cent said there was one disabled household member, while more than one-quarter (27%) said two members of their household had a disability and the remaining 9% said there were three or more members of their household with a disability.

Figure 2: Households with one or more household member(s) with a disability, 2002-2018



32% of respondents said their household contained at least one disabled household member who required specially adapted accommodation.

28% of respondents said their household contained at least one disabled household member who had an Occupational Therapist referral from their GP.

Section 2: Current Accommodation

(Appendix tables – section 2)

Tenure and location of current accommodation

69% of respondents were living in social housing, compared with 49 per cent in 2014. Findings show 10 per cent of respondents were living in privately rented accommodation; nine per cent were living at permanent/serviced sites and seven per cent were living in grouped housing schemes.

The highest concentrations of the Irish Traveller households that took part in the survey were living in Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon council area (23%) and Mid Ulster council area (22%). Just over one tenth of respondents were living in Newry, Mourne and Down (13%) and Fermanagh and Omagh (11%) (Table 1).

Table 1: Location of respondents by District Council Area

District Council Area	% of respondents	Number of households	Number of individuals
Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon	23	122	339
Mid Ulster	22	121	335
Newry, Mourne and Down	13	69	263
Fermanagh and Omagh	11	60	202
Belfast	9	48	122
Derry and Strabane	9	50	154
Lisburn and Castlereagh	6	30	108
Mid and East Antrim	5	27	76

District Council Area	% of respondents	Number of households	Number of individuals
Antrim and Newtownabbey	2	12	38
Causeway Coast and Glens	<1	1	1
	100	540	1,628

(Base: 540 respondents)

89% of respondents had lived in their current accommodation for more than one year and 83 per cent said they **expected to remain** in their current accommodation for more than one year; 15 per cent did not know how long they would remain in their current accommodation.

71% of respondents said they were satisfied with their current accommodation and 18 per cent were dissatisfied. Satisfaction levels varied by tenure and ranged from 87 per cent of grouped housing tenants to 56 per cent of tenants living at sites managed by the Housing Executive (Figure 3).

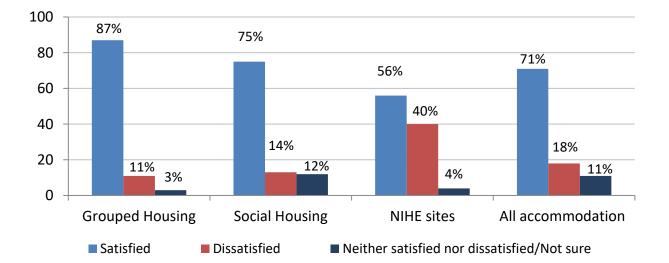


Figure 3: Satisfaction with current accommodation

Reasons for satisfaction included:

"We have most things we want. Like the site: clean and safe"

"Family are here; it's quiet, peaceful"

"Like everything; quiet area and neighbours good"

"Back yard good for kids: a good family house. Kids are happy here"

"Family live here; good neighbours"

Reasons for dissatisfaction included:

"I've no toilet facilities or washing facilities"

"We don't have proper site; it's not serviced"

"House too small for me and my children and for when my grandchildren come"

"Getting harassed: windows broken; houses spray painted"

"House is in need of repair"

87% of respondents felt very tired or fairly safe in the area/location where they lived; nine per cent felt a bit or very unsafe and the remaining four per cent felt neither safe nor unsafe.

Housing Executive site accommodation

The research found 50 households living in accommodation at Housing Executive-managed sites: 47 on permanent/serviced sites, two on transit sites and one on an emergency halting site. Households were asked if they had access to key services and facilities and, if they had access, whether they were satisfied or dissatisfied with the service or facility. A breakdown of the responses given by these 50 households is found in Table 2.

Table 2: Access to services and facilities on Housing Executive-managedsites, and satisfaction levels (number of households)

	Acce servi faci	ce or	Satisfaction with service or facility (figures represent numbers only)			
Service /facility	Yes	No	Satisfied	Satisfied Dissatisfied		
Cold water ⁸	40	10	40	0	0	
Hot water	31	19	31	0	0	
Electricity	40	10	36	4	0	
Indoor toilet facilities	34	16	33	1	0	
Outside toilet facilities	18	32	3	15	0	
Communal/shared toilet facilities	18	32	1	17	0	
Waste disposal facilities	48	2	34	12	2	
Storage facilities	14	36	12	2	0	
Good site access and roadways	39	11	39	0	0	
Access for emergency vehicles	47	3	46	1	0	

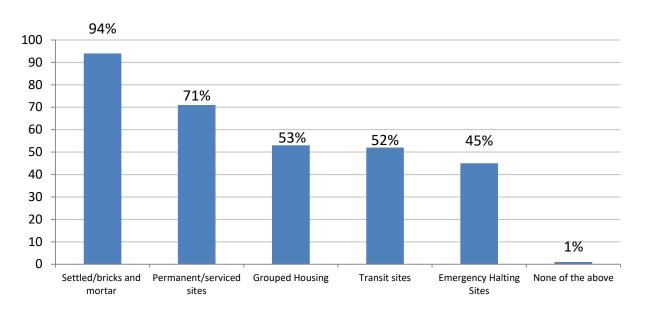
⁸ The 10 respondents who indicated that they were without a cold water supply at the time of the survey had recently arrived at a site that had been closed and were initially without a cold water supply. However, they had access to water standpipes and had water freely available promptly after arriving. The Housing Executive also added two further standpipes, along with bins and portaloos, to meet the needs of the families present on the site.

	Access to Satisfaction with service or facili service or facility (figures represent numbers only				
Service /facility	Yes	No	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
Car parking for residents and visitors	48	2	48	0	0
Sufficient site lighting	32	18	27	4	1
Appropriate fire safety	27	23	26	0	1
Postal arrangements	39	11	38	1	0
Washing facilities (amenity building)	24	26	5	19	0
Shower facilities (amenity building)	23	27	4	19	0
Laundry facilities (amenity building)	22	28	5	17	0
Play area for children	0	50	0	0	0

Base 50: All respondents who lived on a Housing Executive-managed site. Only respondents who had access to a particular service or facility were asked if they were satisfied with that service or facility. All findings in Table 2 are shown as numbers only.

66% of HRPs living on Housing Executive sites said they had a tenancy/license agreement for their pitch; 22 per cent said they did not have a tenancy/license agreement and the remaining 12 per cent did not know if such an agreement was in place. All Irish Travellers (99.6% of all respondents) were asked if they were aware of all the types of accommodation that were provided by the Housing Executive. The level of awareness ranged from 94 per cent (settled/bricks and mortar accommodation) to 45 per cent (Emergency Halting Sites) (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Awareness of accommodation types provided by the Housing Executive



Housing and benefit advice

From a list provided, respondents were asked to select any sources they would go to for housing and benefit advice (i.e. respondents could select more than one response). Respondents were then asked to select their **main** source of information. The source of information most commonly selected was the Housing Executive, which was cited as the *main* source by around one third (33%) of respondents. However, at least 60 per cent – and in some cases, a much greater proportion – of respondents said they would not seek advice from *any* of the listed sources (Table 3).

Table 3: Source of Housing and Benefit advice

	Ye	S	N	No		Main Source	
Source of advice							
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	
NIHE Office	218	40.4	322	59.6	176	32.6	
Family	163	30.2	377	69.8	114	21.1	
Traveller Support Group	128	23.7	418	76.3	90	16.7	
Advice service e.g. Citizens	77	14.3	463	85.7	45	8.3	
Advice, Advice NI, Housing							
Rights							
Friends	71	13.1	469	86.9	18	3.3	
Community Organisation	49	9.1	491	90.9	36	6.7	
Local representatives	45	8.3	495	91.7	32	5.9	
Local Council	4	0.7	536	99.3	0	0.0	
Other (including Housing	26	4.8	514	95.2	19	3.5	
Association, Jobs and benefits office,							
Sure Start, Doctor/medical professional, etc)							
None of the above	10	1.9	530	98.1	10	1.9	
Total					540	100.0	

Base 540: All respondents

Section 3: Future accommodation

(Appendix tables – section 3)

Evidence to support analysis of housing need⁹

The survey provides evidence to support further analysis of housing need, based on four key components:

- 1. Preferred type of accommodation (Table 4);
- 2. Current accommodation type by comparison with preferred accommodation type (Table 5);
- 3. Preferred accommodation type and location (Table 6); and
- 4. The potential for new Irish Traveller households.

Preferred accommodation

When asked about their preferred accommodation, 72 per cent of respondents **386 households)** said they were happy with their current accommodation; 27 per cent said they would prefer different accommodation and one per cent said they were not sure (table 4).

Table 4: What would be your preferred type of accommodation?

Response	Number	%
I am happy with my current accommodation	386	71.5
Permanent/serviced site	31	5.7
Transit site	1	0.2
Emergency halting site	¹⁰ 0	0.0

⁹ The Housing Executive's Irish Traveller Accommodation Strategy 2020-2025 is due to be published by Land and Regeneration Services in spring 2020.

¹⁰ The finding regarding emergency halting sites is to be expected as this type of accommodation is not designed for permanent living, these types of sites are designed to facilitate temporary stays when Irish Travellers are travelling.

Response	Number	%
Grouped accommodation	16	3.0
Settled/bricks and mortar accommodation (NIHE/HA)	88	16.3
Other (including wanting a bungalow or ground floor accommodation, wanting accommodation in a safer area, suitable property for health needs/disability)	12	2.2
Not sure/ don't know	6	1.1
Total	540	100.0

Of the 540 respondents interviewed, 386 said they were happy with their current accommodation. The remaining 154 respondents stated a preference for a form of accommodation other than the one in which they were living at the time of the survey. These 154 respondents represent households containing a total of 507 individuals.

This group of 154 respondents included one English Traveller household and one Roma household. These two respondents have been excluded from this future accommodation analysis, which, in line with the Housing Executive's statutory duty, applies solely to Irish Travellers. A breakdown of the current and preferred accommodation of the **152 respondents** from the Irish Traveller community is set out in Table 5.

It should be noted that, for the purposes of analysing any potential gaps in the supply of accommodation for Irish Traveller households, those respondents whose preferred accommodation type matched their current accommodation type (indicated by figures in bold text in highlighted cells in Table 5) are excluded. Of the 152 respondents (comprising 495 individuals) who indicated a preference for accommodation other than their current accommodation, this was the case for 85 respondents, who wanted to remain within the same type of accommodation.

A further **6 respondents did not know or were not sure** what type of accommodation they wanted (indicated in black bold text in Table 5). The remaining **61 respondents (comprising 205 Individuals)** stated that they wanted to live in a *different type* of accommodation (e.g. seven respondents who currently live in social housing said they would prefer to live in permanent/serviced site accommodation, indicated in bold black text in Table 5).

Table 5: Preferred accommodation type

	Preferred Accommodation								
Current Accommodation	Permanent /Serviced Site	Transit Site	Grouped Housing	NIHE/HA (settled/Bricks and mortar)	Other	Not Sure	Total		
Permanent/serviced site	17	1	0	1	1	0	20		
Transit site	0	0	0	2	0	0	2		
Grouped housing	0	0	6	4	2	0	12		
Social housing	7	0	3	62	7	4	83		
Unauthorised site	0	0	3	3	0	0	6		
Privately owned	1	0	0	0	0	1	2		
Privately rented	5	0	2	12	2	1	22		
Mobile caravan/trailer (beside Grouped housing)	0	0	2	0	0	0	2		
Other (please specify)	0	0	0	3	0	0	3		
Total	30	1	16	87	12	6	152		
Percentage	20%	1%	10%	57%	8%	4%	100%		

Base 152: respondents identifying as Irish Travellers who stated a preference for alternative accommodation

These **61 respondents** who wanted to live in a different type of accommodation were also asked about their preferred location; their responses can be seen in Table 6. The most common preference was for accommodation in the Newry Mourne and Down area (16 respondents; 26%), followed by Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon (9 respondents, 15%).

Table 6: Preferred future accommodation type and location

	Preferred Future Location											
Preferred Accommodation Type	Antrim & Newtownabbey	Ards & North Down	Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon	Belfast	Derry & Strabane	Fermanagh & Omagh	Mid & East Antrim	Mid Ulster	Newry, Mourne & Down	England	Don't Know/Not Sure	Total
Serviced site	3	0	0	0	1	0	0	4	5	0	0	13
Transit site	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Grouped housing	3	0	2	3	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	10
Social Housing	0	0	4	3	2	4	2	1	8	0	1	25
Other	0	1	3	1	1	1	0	2	1	1	1	12
Total	6	1	9	8	4	5	2	7	16	1	2	61
Percentage	10%	2%	15%	13%	7%	8%	3%	11%	26%	2%	3%	100%

Potential new Irish Traveller households

Respondents were asked if they expected any of the members living in their household at the time of the survey to seek their own accommodation – and therefore form a new household – within the next five years.

- Less than one-fifth of respondents (19%; 102 households) said they expected a household member(s) to seek their own accommodation in the next five years.
- Of these, more than half (62; 61%) said one member of their household would be seeking their own accommodation and 28 per cent (28 respondents) said they expected two members of their household to seek their own accommodation. The remaining 12 per cent (12 respondents) said three or more household members would be seeking their own accommodation. In total the number of household members expected to seek their own accommodation in the next five years was 166.
- More than two-thirds (68; 67%) of respondents said those seeking their own accommodation would make up one household and 27% (27 respondents) said those seeking their own accommodation would make up two households. The remaining seven per cent (7 respondents) said they would make up three or more households. The information gathered relating to the 166 household members expected to seek their own accommodation in the next five years indicates they would make up 151 households.
- Moving forward, the number of new Irish Traveller households who may seek their preferred accommodation is 61; in addition there are potentially another 151 newly-forming households who will be seeking accommodation within the next five years.
- The majority of respondents (78%) said that the preferred accommodation type for the new household would be social housing; 14 per cent said permanent/serviced sites and 6 per cent said grouped housing.

Section 4: Travelling

(Appendix tables – section 4)

The survey included questions on 'travelling' to measure the extent of nomadism within the Traveller community.

The majority (85%; 82% in 2014 and 70% in 2008) of respondents said neither they nor any member of their household intended to travel in the next three years; seven per cent said they or a member of their household did intend to travel and the remaining eight per cent did not know if they or a member of their household would travel¹¹.

Of the seven per cent (38 respondents) who intended to travel or had a household member who intended to, more than half (23 respondents) said they intended to travel throughout Ireland; twelve respondents said they intended to travel outside Northern Ireland and two respondents said that travelling would take place within Northern Ireland. The remaining respondent did not know if the travelling would take place within or outside Northern Ireland. Ireland.

The 85 per cent (461 respondents) who did not travel were asked their reasons for not travelling. More than four-fifths (84%; 385 respondents) said they did not wish to travel; eight per cent (38 respondents) said they did not travel due to health reasons. Equal proportions (2%; 8 respondents) said that poor quality transit sites and lack of transit/emergency halting sites was the reason they did not travel.

The eight respondents who said they did not travel due to lack of transit/emergency halting site were asked where they would like to see these types of sites located; the locations are listed in appendix table 26.

 $^{^{11}}$ The research fieldwork was paused from 16th July 2019 and resumed on 1st September 2019, as it was thought some Irish Travellers would be travelling during this period and therefore would be unable to take part in the research.

Section 5: Internet access

(Appendix tables – section 5)

More than half (55%) of respondents said that they or a member of their household had access to the internet. This figure was 30 percentage points lower than the 2018-2019 Northern Ireland average of 85%¹².

The findings from the Irish Traveller Accommodation Survey are similar to those of the 2018 Continuous Tenant Omnibus Survey (CTOS), which indicated that 62 per cent of Housing Executive households had access to the internet¹³; both surveys suggest that internet access among social housing tenants tends to be lower than the Northern Ireland average.

Respondents who had access to the internet were asked which devices they used to go online. Mobile/Smartphone was the most popular way of accessing the internet, used by more than nine out of ten (94%) of the respondents who had internet access. More than one-third (35%) used a personal tablet/ipad (Respondents were able to list all the methods of internet access available to them). (Figure 5).

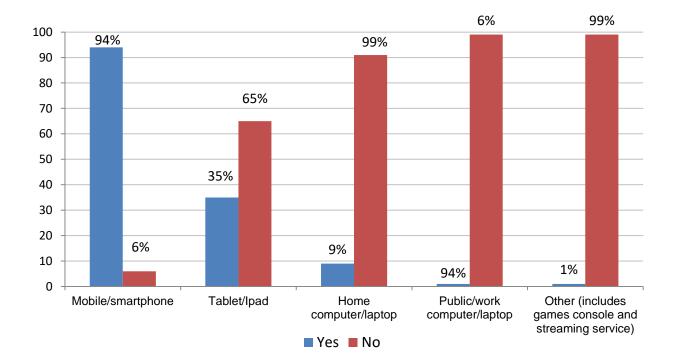


Figure 5: Methods used by respondents who had access to the internet

¹² Information on the Northern Ireland Household Survey 2018/19 can be found on the NIRSA website (It should be noted that this survey and the Irish Travellers survey were carried out among different populations and took place at different times.)

¹³ Information on the 2018 Continuous Tenant Survey can be found on the Housing Executive website

Section 6: Contact with the Housing Executive

(Appendix tables – section 6)

More than half (52%) of respondents said they had not been in touch with the Housing Executive regarding any service in the last 12 months.

The remaining 48 per cent of respondents had been in contact with the Housing Executive in the last 12 months. These 261 respondents were asked how they got in touch and the methods of contact are detailed below in Table 7.

Method of contact	Yes		No		Total		
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	
Telephoning	167	64.0	94	36.0	261	100.0	
Visiting an NIHE office	90	34.5	171	65.5	261	100.0	
Visiting the NIHE website	4	1.5	257	98.5	261	100.0	
Emailing	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	
Support group/support worker who contacted NIHE on my behalf	8	3.1	253	96.9	261	100.0	
Other (including the NIHE visited us and relative contacted NIHE on my behalf)	12	4.6	249	95.4	261	100.0	

Table 7: Method of contacting the Housing Executive

Base: All 261 respondents who said they had contacted the Housing Executive in the last 12 months.

The vast majority (95%) of respondents who had contacted the Housing Executive in the previous 12 months found it easy to make contact. The remaining five per cent said it had been difficult to make contact.

The main reasons given for saying it was difficult to contact the Housing Executive were: 'do not get a response'; 'put on hold for a long time'; 'have to call multiple times' and 'costs money to contact/visit office'. When asked what would make it easier to contact the Housing Executive, the main responses were: 'respond more quickly' and 'come out and visit the accommodation'.

Section 7: Welfare reform

(Appendix tables – section 7)

Welfare reform was enacted in Northern Ireland in December 2015 under the Welfare Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 2015, which aligned the welfare system in Northern Ireland with that already in place throughout Great Britain since 2012. Additional provisions for welfare reform were subsequently introduced under the Welfare Reform and Work (Northern Ireland) Order 2016. The changes to the benefit and tax credit system will mean that many of the benefits that had been in place for people of working age will eventually be replaced by a new benefits and payments system.

Key elements of welfare reform include:

- introduction of Universal Credit;
- introduction of the 'Social Sector Size Criteria' (SSSC) or 'Bedroom Tax';
- introduction of a household Benefit Cap; and
- significant changes to benefits for people with ill health and disabilities.

Mitigation, in the form of Welfare Supplementary Payments, was made available to those affected, initially until the end of March 2020. Following concerns expressed by a wide range of stakeholders about the changes in levels of benefits received and consequently in annual household income experienced by those affected, it was announced in early 2020 that mitigation of the *Bedroom Tax* would be extended from April 2020.

Asked about welfare reform, more than one-third (34%) of respondents said they were aware of changes but were not sure how they or their household would be affected; 31 per cent said were not aware of any welfare changes, while more than one-fifth (22%) said they would not be affected. Fewer respondents said welfare changes already affected them or their household (11%) and only two per cent expected the changes to affect them or their household in the future (9%) (Table 8).

The same questions were put to Housing Executive tenants of working age (i.e. aged between 16 and 63 years) as part of the Housing Executive's Continuous Tenant Omnibus Survey (CTOS) in 2018. While the surveys were carried out at different times and had different sample sizes, Table 8 shows that similar proportions of respondents to both surveys were broadly unaware of welfare changes. A slightly higher proportion of Irish Travellers said they were already affected by welfare changes (11% by comparison with 6% of CTOS respondents), but a lower proportion (2% by comparison with 9%) expected to be affected in future.

Table 8: Awareness and impact of changes to the benefits system andcomparisons with 2018 Continuous Tenant Omnibus Survey (HousingExecutive tenants)

	Irish Tr Accomm Survey 2		2018 Continuous Tenant Omnibus Survey (CTOS) ¹⁴		
	Number	%	Number	%	
Yes, welfare changes ALREADY affect me/my household	61	11.3	4,307	5.8	
Yes, welfare changes WILL affect me/my household in the future	10	1.9	6,904	9.3	
No, welfare changes WON'T affect me/my household	118	21.9	18,707	25.3	
I am aware of welfare changes but not sure how they may affect me/my household	186	34.4	20,756	28.0	
I am not aware of any of the welfare changes	165	30.6	23,382	31.6	
Total	540	100.0	74,055	100.0	

¹⁴. Information on the 2018 Continuous Tenant Survey can be found on the Housing Executive website

Extent to which respondents felt informed and concerned about welfare changes

More than one-third (38%) of respondents said they felt very well/quite well informed about benefit changes; 32 per cent said they felt neither well nor poorly informed and the remaining 30 per cent felt quite poorly/very poorly informed.

More than half (57%) of respondents said they were not concerned about benefit changes and how they might affect them or their household, but the remaining 43 per cent had concerns.

Conclusion

The findings provide an updated and robust insight into the housing circumstances and preferences of Irish Travellers in Northern Ireland. In terms of current and future housing needs, they indicate that:

- The majority of respondents were living in some form of 'bricks and mortar' accommodation, either social rented (69%); private rented (10%) or grouped housing (7%). Associated with this pattern of living in 'settled' accommodation, propensity to travel appears to be low: only seven per cent of respondents expected that they or a member of their household would travel within the next three years.
- Sizeable proportions had lived in their current accommodation for more than one year (89%) and most (71%) were satisfied with their current home. However, the rate of satisfaction varied and was highest among those living in grouped accommodation (87%) and lowest among tenants living at sites managed by the Housing Executive (56%).
- Those who were satisfied with their current accommodation cited reasons such as being close to family, having good neighbours and living in a quiet area. For those who were dissatisfied, state of repair (of either the dwelling or the site) was a common concern.
- The majority of respondents (72%) were happy with their current home, while just over one quarter (27%) said they would prefer different accommodation.
- Broken down according to current and preferred accommodation type, the numbers of respondents expressing preferences for the various different types of accommodation were relatively low. The single largest sub-group wishing to move *between* accommodation types was private rented tenants who wished to move to Housing Executive or housing association accommodation (12 respondents). However, the largest group by some way was of respondents already living in social housing who wanted to move *within* the social housing sector (62 of the **152** Irish Travellers who expressed a preference for alternative accommodation).
- Around one fifth (19%) of respondents expected that a member of their current household would seek their own accommodation within the next five years. The figures suggest that around 166 household members would form a total of approximately **151 households** within the next five years.

While the circumstances and plans of individuals and the households within which they live may change, the scale of this survey means that the evidence gathered is sufficiently robust to inform future plans. More data, which will also inform the development of the Housing Executive's Irish Travellers Strategy, is available in the tables published alongside this report (this information can be found in the Research section of the Housing Executive website).

User guide

Survey objectives

The main objectives of the survey were to explore the views of Travellers, with a view to helping inform the following activities:

1. Conduct an accommodation needs assessment of the Irish Traveller community in Northern Ireland, involving the effective participation of the Irish Traveller community throughout the entire process – from the design and planning stages, to taking part in the survey, to effectively addressing the findings of the needs assessment;

2. Determine the housing needs of the Irish Traveller community; and

3. Provide a socio-economic profile of, and inform future planning of accommodation for, the Irish Traveller population in Northern Ireland.

The report provides information that will be used to inform decisions around the planning of future accommodation schemes for the Irish Travellers.

The questionnaire

Following the publication of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission report, *Out of Sight, Out of Mind: Travellers Accommodation in Northern Ireland,* the questionnaire that had been used for previous research was revised and updated for the 2018/19 survey¹⁵. The revised questionnaire was used to explore a range of themes of relevance to the Housing Executive and was split thematically into seven sections:

- 1. Current Accommodation
- 2. Future Accommodation
- 3. Nomadic Lifestyle
- 4. Communication Channels
- 5. Welfare Reform
- 6. Social and Health
- 7. Household Information

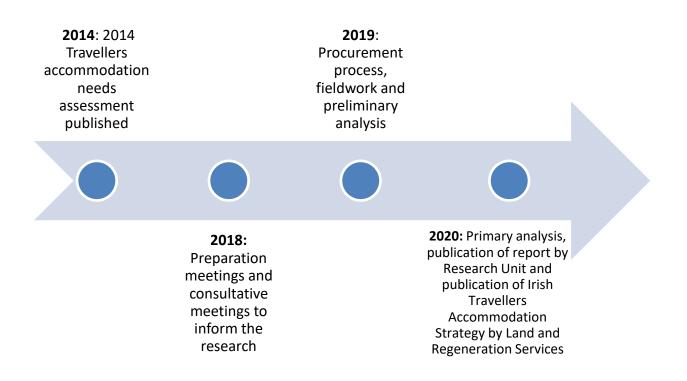
¹⁵ The questionnaire was revised in consultation with interested parties including members of the Irish Traveller Community.

Pilot Survey

Prior to finalising the questionnaire, a pilot survey was carried out with fifteen Irish Traveller households. During the pilot phase, question wording and understanding was tested, alongside routing and filtering. Following the pilot survey a few minor refinements were agreed before the main survey fieldwork began.

Project Timeline

The Research Unit worked on the Irish Travellers Accommodation Survey for two years. This included preparation and consultative meetings in 2018 through to the publication of the report in 2020.



Fieldwork/Data collection

Perceptive Insight sent advance letters to households to explain the purpose of the survey and to invite participation. Batches of letters were time-released to ensure a minimal gap between receipt of letter and a call from the interviewer. Everyone contacted by a Perceptive Insight interviewer was informed of the purpose of the research and asked if they were happy to take part in the survey.

Interviewing was conducted face-to-face using Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI), by a trained and experienced team of CAPI interviewers. Interviews took place between May 2019 and January 2020. Interviewers were fully briefed so that they understood the project aims and target audience, and were familiar with the questionnaire

and any sensitive or complex questions within it. In addition, interviewers and office staff from Perceptive Insight who were working on the project took part in Irish Traveller cultural awareness training provided by Craigavon Traveller Support Committee prior to commencement of fieldwork.

A household could be contacted up to five times in order to obtain a completed interview. At least two of the five attempts were made either in the evening or on a Saturday.

The date and time of each attempt at an address was recorded on contact sheets provided, and full contact histories were kept for every identified Traveller household.

Interaction with Traveller support groups and Housing Associations

Significant attempts were made to contact and collaborate with a range of Traveller support groups and organisations that come into contact with Travellers through their day-to-day work. The assistance of these groups proved to be valuable in aiding interviewers during fieldwork.

Representatives from the following organisations accompanied interviewers from Perceptive Insight to 'hard to reach' households and areas where a pre-existing relationship with households was established, and proved beneficial in ensuring participation:

- Maureen Sheehan Centre;
- Community Restorative Justice Ireland (CRJI); and
- Newry Traveller Support (Southern Health and Social Care Trust).

Additional meetings were held with and/or advice sought from the following organisations:

- South Tyrone Empowerment Programme;
- An Munia Tober;
- Craigavon Travellers Support Committee;
- Northern Ireland Migrant Centre;
- Tome Anosha;
- Toybox Belfast;
- Armagh Traveller Support; and
- Strabane AYE.

Housing Officers from Radius and Clanmil Housing Association accompanied interviewers to their Irish Traveller Grouped Housing accommodation at Hillhead Cottages, Tattykeel Cottages and Briar View. Apex Housing Association arranged for interviewers to be accompanied to their Grouped Housing Scheme at Mill Race by representatives from a support group. Clanmil also arranged a coffee morning for tenants at their Dobson's Way grouped housing scheme in a local community centre.

Project Advisory Group

As a first step in undertaking the research, the Housing Executive set up a project advisory group of interested parties to oversee the project. Representatives from the following organisations agreed to join staff from the Housing Executive's Regional Services and Housing Services on the Project Advisory Group:

- Tome Anosha;
- Equality Commission Northern Ireland;
- Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission;
- Department for Communities;
- Health and Social Care Northern Ireland Public Health Agency;
- Health and Social Care Northern Ireland South Eastern Childcare Partnership;
- Health and Social Care Northern Ireland Belfast Trust;
- Health and Social Care Northern Ireland Southern Trust;
- Local Government Partnership on Traveller Issues;
- Belfast City Council;
- Bryson An Munia Tober;
- Community Restorative Justice Ireland;
- Extern Northern Ireland;
- Maureen Sheenan Centre;
- Craigavon Traveller Support Committee;
- South Tyrone Empowerment Programme;

The role of the group was as follows:

- To provide guidance to the research team undertaking the study in terms of methodology, data sources and key issues;
- To facilitate access for the interviewers were appropriate; and
- To ensure that the research met objectives and addressed the priorities of the organisation.

A range of organisations and individuals with experience in Traveller issues were invited to bring expertise to the project advisory group, with a view that the research study would benefit from the knowledge of its members.

Strengths and weaknesses

As with all research, the findings of the Irish Traveller Accommodation Survey provide a snapshot of respondents' attitudes and perceptions at a particular point in time.

Strengths

- The Irish Traveller Accommodation Survey provides an evidence base to inform policy and decision making around future Irish Traveller accommodation schemes. The quality checks built into CAPI reduced the risk of errors in the data.
- Thorough quality assurance processes were in place at all stages of the research to ensure that high quality data were produced.
- The achieved number of interviews was higher than for any of the previous surveys carried out by the Housing Executive into Irish Traveller accommodation. It is also one of the most comprehensive pieces of research investigating Irish Traveller accommodation in Northern Ireland.
- The consultation process prior to the research starting proved invaluable, especially the contribution made by members of the Irish Traveller Community. Any future research into Irish Traveller accommodation should be underpinned by a similar consultation process.

Weaknesses

- In light of the General Data Protection Regulation 2018 (GDPR), the Research Unit worked closely with the Housing Executive's Data Protection team to prove the legal gateway and lawful basis for obtaining and sharing information for the purposes of the research. Given the lack of a central database of Irish Travellers in Northern Ireland the Research Unit was dependent on a number of data sources that were subject to availability and quality checks.
- As expected, it was necessary to pause fieldwork over the summer period, as some potential respondents were away travelling and unable for interview. The fieldwork was paused on 16th July 2019 and resumed on 1st September 2019. This extended the fieldwork period into January 2020.
- Perceptive Insight reported that participation was impacted by research fatigue and scepticism about the purpose and likely outcome of the research by members of the Irish Traveller Community.
- A number of Traveller support workers and other stakeholders with an organisational remit including Travellers assisted the interviewers. However, limited resources meant some were not able to offer the level of support envisaged at the start of the research.
- The relatively low number of Irish Travellers saying that site accommodation was their preferred accommodation type may be in part due to the perceived level of disrepair on some sites and an overall lack of sites.

Learning points and suggestions moving forward

- The research process underlined a gap in reliable data regarding Irish Travellers which resulted in difficulties in gathering and supplying contact addresses for Perceptive Insight. It is hoped that a review of existing data capture procedures by the Housing Executive in regard to Irish Travellers (i.e. asking people to self-identify in regard to their ethnicity and this information being accurately recorded) will ensure that this gap will not exist when the next Irish Travellers Accommodation Survey is carried out. This will mean mainstreamed data will be used as the principal basis for conducting future accommodation surveys to inform Irish Traveller housing needs assessment, and any additional research as and when required.
- There is a need for the Housing Executive to continue to build relationships with the Irish Traveller community throughout Northern Ireland. Building positive relationships will ensure that the Irish Traveller community do not feel the Housing Executive only want to engage with them every five years as part of an accommodation survey.
- The Research Unit will continue to work with staff in the Housing Executive's Local and Area offices, with a view to ensuring that effective and enabling communication processes are in place, in preparation for any future research on Irish Traveller accommodation. In future, the Research Unit would wish to work closely with staff in Local and Area Offices who are in a position to engage with Irish Travellers and make them aware of research, so that, where the Irish Travellers are happy to take part, Local and Area office staff can pass their contact details to the Research Unit. This will be part of an ongoing process to ensure that as many Irish Travellers as possible participate in the future Irish Traveller accommodation research that is likely to be required to supplement the available operational/administrative data.
- This research project has underlined the value of ongoing engagement between the Research Unit and research users and stakeholders throughout the research process. The consultative workshops prior to the start of the research proved very useful in informing the research.
- The Research process will be completed with the sharing of the findings. The Research Unit intends to re-engage with the Irish Travellers who took part in the consultative meetings, to present the research findings. Additionally, the findings may be presented to a wider audience, including members of the Irish Travellers community, to help give an understanding of the research that has been undertaken.

This report can be found on the Housing Executive website: https://www.nihe.gov.uk

For any information on the Irish Traveller Accommodation Survey 2018/19, please contact:

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