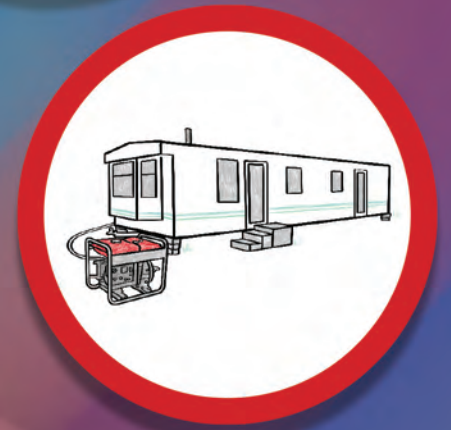


# Irish Travellers and Pensions **2025**



An analysis of pension preparedness  
and retirement planning

# **Irish Travellers and Pensions 2025**

## **An analysis of pension preparedness and retirement planning**



# Executive Summary

This report, titled “Pension Preparedness and Irish Travellers 2024,” provides an in-depth analysis of the retirement planning behaviours and attitudes of Irish Travellers. It highlights significant disparities in pension coverage between Irish Travellers and the settled population, revealing critical insights into the financial preparedness of the Traveller community.

When it comes to pension ownership only 21% of Travellers have a pension, compared to 61% of the settled population. Pension ownership is lowest among the 18-24 age group (0%) and peaks at 31.25% in the 45-54 age group. When it comes to retirement planning preferences 86.7% of Travellers plan to rely on the State Pension, significantly higher than the 69% of the settled community. Only 16.9% of Travellers will have a personal pension, and none reported having investment properties as a retirement strategy. This is not surprising due to the high rate of unemployment among the Traveller community, the high rate of self-employed Travellers and the fact that a lot of Travellers are engaged in part time, low paid work. The major barriers to pension ownership include lack of understanding (62.5%), affordability (46.6%), and unstable employment (36.4%). Again these figures and reasons are not unexpected.

When it comes to financial preparedness Travellers are significantly behind the settled community. 52% of Travellers expect to retire at 65, compared to 25% of the settled population. 80% of Travellers have never consulted a financial advisor compared with 66% of the settled community. Only 21% of Travellers anticipate owning their homes outright in retirement, compared to 69% of the settled population. The level of retirement anxiety is extremely high with 92% of Travellers worry about not having enough money during retirement.

When it comes to pension information and education the findings are concerning. 67% of Travellers have never received information about pensions and 58% are not confident in understanding private pensions. However the willingness to learn about pensions is quite high with over 80% of respondents indicating that they would like to learn more both about the State and private pensions.

The report underscores the urgent need to address the financial vulnerabilities of Irish Travellers, particularly concerning pensions and retirement planning. By implementing targeted education, financial support, and policy interventions, it is possible to bridge the gap between the Traveller community and the settled population, ensuring a more secure financial future for all.

This comprehensive analysis aims to foster greater understanding and action towards improving pension provision within the Traveller community, promoting financial security and independence for future generations.

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# Foreword

National Traveller MABS undertook this comparative research into the retirement planning behaviours and attitudes of Irish Travellers across various age groups to further inform our work in addressing financial exclusion as experienced by Travellers. While previous work undertaken by National Traveller MABS has highlighted the financial exclusion of Irish Travellers, this research report allows us to directly compare the pension preparedness of Irish Travellers with that of the majority population using the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC)'s annual pension research.

National Traveller MABS works with Travellers and Traveller organisations to understand financial exclusion as it is experienced by the community. This means understanding barriers to financial inclusion, and the measures needed to address these barriers. Our work involves community education and development work that aims to pilot and explore measures to address these barriers. Our policy work focuses on bringing about necessary policy change that can support or improve financial inclusion. This report will inform our community education, development and policy work in terms of where best to focus our resources in being more effective, and in highlighting the kinds of policy changes needed to improve the financial inclusion of Travellers.

In assisting us with this research report, we would particularly like to thank each individual Traveller who took the time to answer our questionnaire, sharing with us their time, personal circumstances and thoughts relating to pensions. I would also like to thank the staff at National Traveller MABS for their continued dedicated work on Traveller financial inclusion.

While this research looks at retirement planning and pension preparedness from a Traveller perspective, we believe that the findings are applicable to the retirement planning and pension preparedness of many other marginalised and low-income groups and can inform future actions to improve the situation of those who are financially excluded in general. It is our hope that the research can be carried out annually to measure any changes to retirement planning among Travellers with the added bonus of being able to compare Travellers pension planning with that of the general population using the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC)'s annual pension research.

Finally, this research has highlighted the need for targeted initiatives on pension awareness among the Traveller community to allow them to prepare adequately for retirement. By implementing targeted education, financial support, and policy interventions, it is possible to bridge the gap between the Traveller community and the settled population, ensuring a more secure financial future for all.

Doreen Carpenter  
Chairperson National Traveller MABS  
April 2025

# Introduction

This report analyses the retirement planning behaviours and attitudes of Irish Travellers across various age groups. It investigates the prevailing pension landscape for Irish Travellers, identifying significant disparities in coverage when compared to the settled population. It incorporates statistical data to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issue.

The findings reveal significant concerns regarding reliance on the State Pension and the lack of personal retirement savings. Furthermore, this report outlines a series of actionable recommendations aimed at improving the pension provision within the Traveller community.

It is National Traveller MABS hope that the research can be carried out annually to measure any changes to retirement planning among Travellers with the added bonus of being able to compare Travellers pension planning with that of the general population using the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC)'s annual pension research.

## Objectives

The main objective of this research is to understand the current retirement planning behaviours and attitudes of Irish Travellers in 2024 and to compare this data with that of the general population as per the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC) research on pensions 2024.

Further objectives include examining:

- Ownership of pensions
- Reasons for not having a pension in place
- Other forms of retirement planning currently in place or expected to be used
- Expected age of retirement
- Expected living situation when retire
- Contact with a financial advisor
- Review of pension arrangements
- Knowledge about private and state pensions
- Cultural issues that affect pension planning

## Methodology

The Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC) Pensions Research 2024 was used as the basis for our questionnaire. The CCPC research allows us to compare the situation of Travellers with that of the settled community.

105 questionnaires were completed. These were filled in online, filled in a paper forms and through phone interviews. Data collection was carried out from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 31<sup>st</sup> of October 2024. This is not a representative data sample.

# Demographics

The Irish Traveller community is a distinct ethnic minority in Ireland, with the 2022 Census recording their population at approximately 32,949 individuals, accounting for around 0.65% of the national population. This represents a 6% growth since 2016. Geographically, Travellers are concentrated most densely in Galway City, Longford, and Offaly, though notable increases were observed in regions like Offaly, Fingal, and Cork.

The community has a notably youthful demographic, with a median age of 27 years compared to 39 years in the broader Irish population. Approximately 36% are under 15 years old, significantly higher than the national average of 20%. Conversely, only 5% of Travellers are aged 65 or older, compared to 15% nationwide.

Traveller health outcomes are significantly poorer than the general population with lower life expectancy, higher infant mortality rates, higher suicide rates, poorer mental health and higher rates of chronic disease.<sup>1</sup> 15% of Irish Travellers experience a long-lasting health condition to a great extent, which is nearly twice the rate for the total population. The proportion of 15 to 29 year old Irish Travellers experiencing at least one long-lasting condition or difficulty to a great extent (13%) was more than twice that of all people in the same age cohort (6%). Between the ages of 30 and 59, the proportion of the population experiencing at least one long-lasting condition or difficulty to a great extent was over three times higher for Irish Travellers (21%) than the total population (6%). Among the older age cohorts, the differences were less pronounced, and Irish Travellers over the age of 80 were slightly less likely to experience a long-lasting condition or difficulty to any extent than would be expected in the overall population. However only 197 Travellers, over the age of 80 are resident in the State.

Travellers tend to live 8 years shorter than people do generally in Ireland. The life expectancy of men in Ireland is 79.7 years and for women 83.4. For Traveller men it is 71.3 years and for women 75.2.<sup>2</sup> The Traveller suicide rate is 6 times higher when compared to the general population and accounts for approximately 11% of all Traveller deaths. Suicide for Traveller men is 7 times higher and most common in young Traveller men aged 15-25. Suicide for Traveller women is 5 times higher than the general population<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/primarycare/socialinclusion/travellers-and-roma/irish-travellers/>  
All statistics in this section are taken from Census 2022, available from the Central Statistics Office unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>2</sup> European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2020) *Travellers in Ireland – Key results from the Roma and Travellers survey 2019*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Available at: [https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra\\_uploads/fra-2020-roma-and-travellers-survey-country-sheet-ireland\\_en.pdf](https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2020-roma-and-travellers-survey-country-sheet-ireland_en.pdf) (Accessed: 20 May 2025).

<sup>3</sup> National Suicide Research Foundation, University College Cork (2015), *Evidence Brief: Mental and Health and Suicide in the Traveller Community*, Available at [Evidence-brief-NSRF-Mental-Health-and-Suicide-among-Travellers-02-07-2015.pdf](https://www.nsrff.ie/evidence-brief-nsrf-mental-health-and-suicide-among-travellers-02-07-2015.pdf) (Accessed: 20 May 2025).



Housing conditions vary, with most Travellers (92%) living in private households, while 8% reside in temporary accommodation such as trailers and mobile homes. Health issues are prevalent, with 26% reporting long-lasting conditions, higher than the general population's 22%. Household sizes typically larger, averaging four persons compared to the national average of 2.7. Travellers are overrepresented in homeless data with 19% experiencing homelessness.

Educational attainment within the Traveller community historically has been low, with only a small number progressing to third-level education, contributing further to economic vulnerabilities.

According to Census 2022, the overall or national unemployment rate was 8%, while the unemployment rate for Travellers was 61%. 11,966 were not in the labour force with 3,242 classing themselves as employees, and 286 as employers or self employed. 4,358 Travellers were looking for their first regular job. The EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, found that, in comparison to the five other EU countries surveyed, Ireland had the lowest percentage of Travellers in employment (13% of Traveller men and 17% of Traveller women)<sup>4</sup>. It also found that 70% of young Travellers (aged 16-24) are not in employment, education or training, the highest of all groups across the six countries. This is almost seven times more than young Irish people generally (11%)<sup>5</sup>.

These demographic characteristics highlight both the unique social structure and specific socio-economic challenges faced by the Traveller community, which have significant implications for public policy, including pension provision and broader social support systems.

## Respondent demographics

105 questionnaires were completed. These were filled in online, filled in a paper forms and through phone interviews. Data collection was carried out from the 1st to the 31st of October 2024. This is not a representative sample of the community.

The Traveller Community is hugely over researched, and many Travellers have research fatigue and do not trust researchers as they have seen no improvement to their lives despite years of research. National Traveller MABS has worked hard to develop trust with the community and we were delighted to get a response of 105.

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<sup>4</sup> European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2020) *Travellers in Ireland – Key results from the Roma and Travellers survey 2019*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

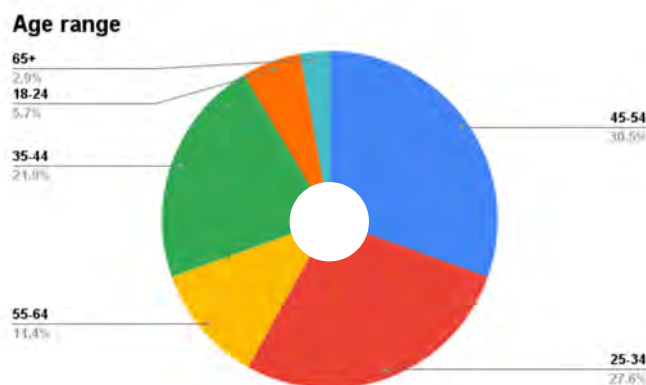
<sup>5</sup> Ibid



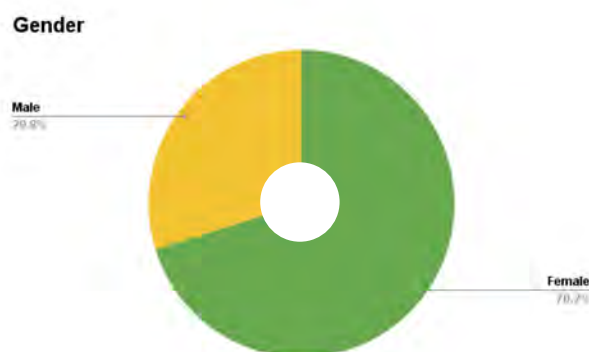
There was a broad age range of respondents to the survey:

- 5.74% were in the 18- 25 age bracket
- 27.6% were in the 25-34 age bracket
- 21.9% were in the 35-44 age bracket
- 30.5% were in the 45-54 age bracket
- 11.4% were in the 55-64 age bracket
- 2.9% were in the 65+ age bracket

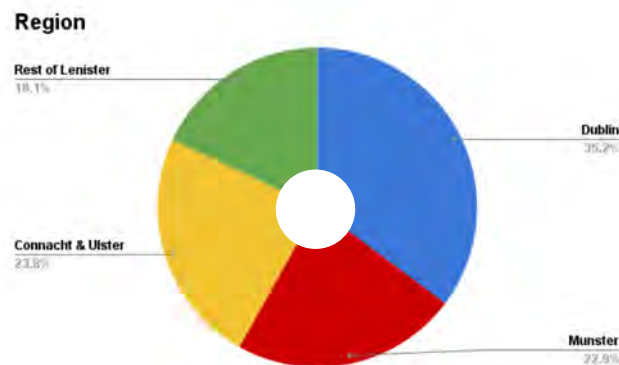
The numbers generally reflect the population statistics of Travellers as per census 2022. However, we would have liked to have received more responses from the 18-25 age group.



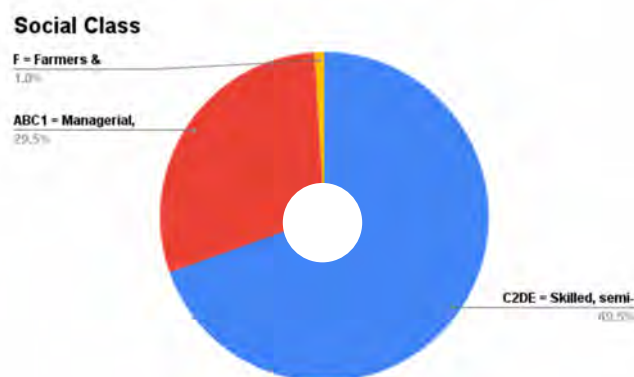
70% of respondents were female while 30% were male. One reason for this could be that the survey was circulated to all the Traveller Primary Healthcare project in the country where the vast majority of the employees would be women and Traveller women would be more likely to interact with research projects.



Respondents were relatively equally spread throughout the country with a slightly higher majority from Dublin, but this again reflects the Census data that shows the largest Traveller population is in Dublin.



69.5% of respondents were from social class C2DE which comprises of skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers, casual workers, pensioners & unemployed. 29.5% of respondents were from class ABC1. ABC1 grouping typically encompasses individuals in higher managerial, administrative, or professional roles, as well as those in supervisory, clerical, and junior managerial positions. 1% were farmers & agricultural workers. Again this data broadly reflects the employment status of Travellers.

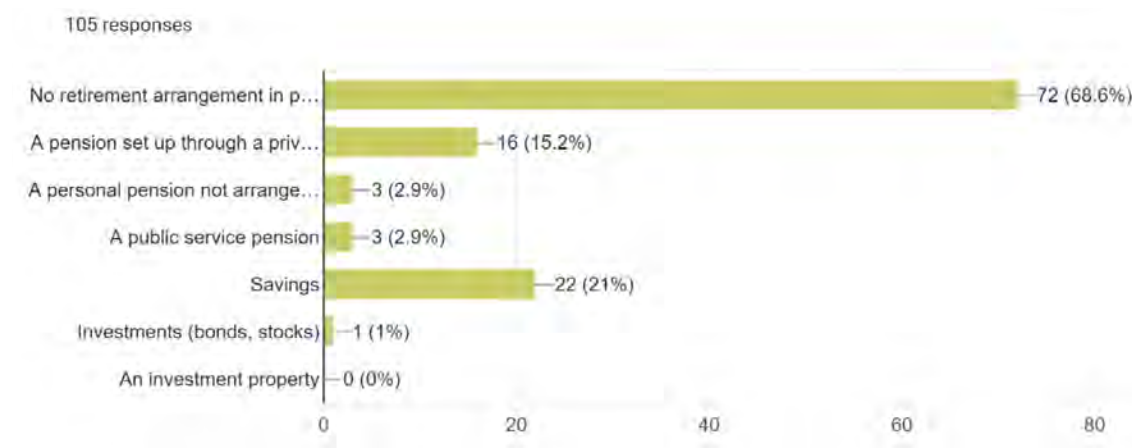


# Findings

## 1. Pension Ownership

- Only 21% of Travellers have a pension, a stark contrast to the 61% of the settled population with pensions.
- No real gender difference is observed in terms of overall pension coverage among Travellers, with 16% of Traveller men and 15% of Traveller women having a pension.
- 3% of Traveller men and 3% of Traveller women have a public pension.
- Pension ownership remains the lowest among the 18-24 age group with 100% not having a pension.
- Pension ownership rises to 10% in the 25-34 age group, 30.4% in the 35-44 age group and peaks at 31.25% in the 45-54 age group.
- Pension ownership declines to 16.6% in the 55-64 age group and pension ownership in the 65+ age group falls to 0%.

Which, if any, of the following arrangements do you currently have in place that you will use to fund your retirement?

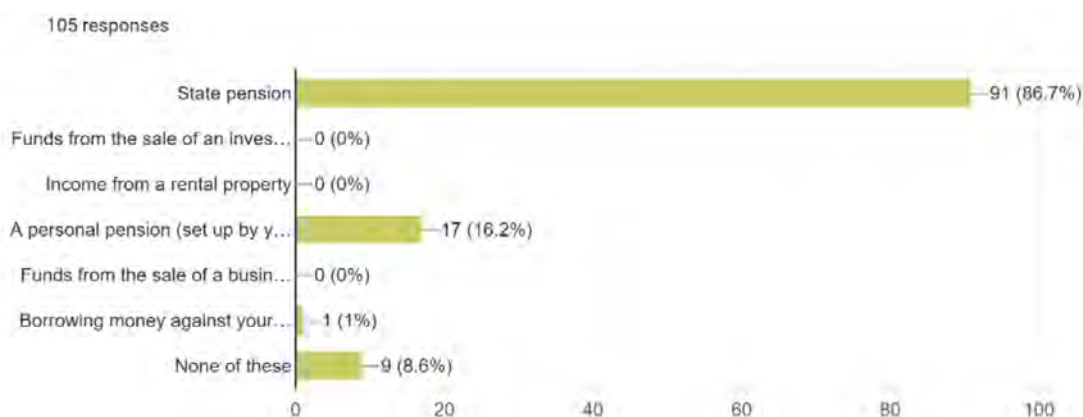


## 2. Retirement Planning Preferences

- **State Pension Reliance:** 86.7% plan to depend on the State pension to fund their retirement. This is in comparison to 69% of the settled population who plan to depend on the State pension to fund their retirement.
- **Savings:** 21% intend to use savings to fund retirement in comparison to 51% of the settled population. No Travellers reported having investment properties as a retirement strategy compared with 13% of the settled population.
- **A Private Pension:** 16.9% of Travellers will have a personal pension to help them fund their retirement.

- The State Pension, savings and the private pension are the only methods Travellers have indicated that will use to fund their retirement. This is in stark comparison with the settled population who plan use these methods to fund their retirement as well as:
  - funds from the sale of an investment property
  - income from a rental property
  - funds from the sale of a business
  - borrowing money against your home

Which, if any, of these do you expect you may also use to fund your retirement?

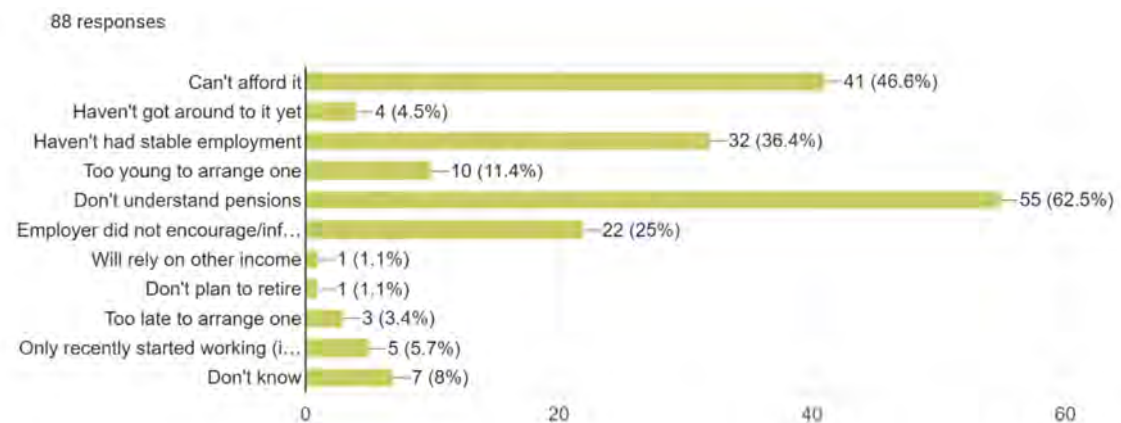


### 3. Challenges to Pension Ownership

- **The key barriers identified include:**
  - Lack of understanding of pensions: 62.5%. This compares with 7% of the settled population.
  - Affordability: 46.6%. Affordability was a factor for 30% of the settled population.
  - Unstable employment: 36.4%. This was a factor for 12% of the settled population.
  - Lack of encouragement/information from employers: 25%. Only 6% of the settled population reported this as a barrier to pension ownership.
  - Feeling too young to arrange a pension: 11.4%. Interestingly this figure is the same as the settled population with 11% reporting feeling too young to arrange a pension.

After affordability the next highest barrier to pension ownership among the settled population is 'haven't got around to it yet'. Only 4.5% of Travellers report this as a barrier to pension ownership.

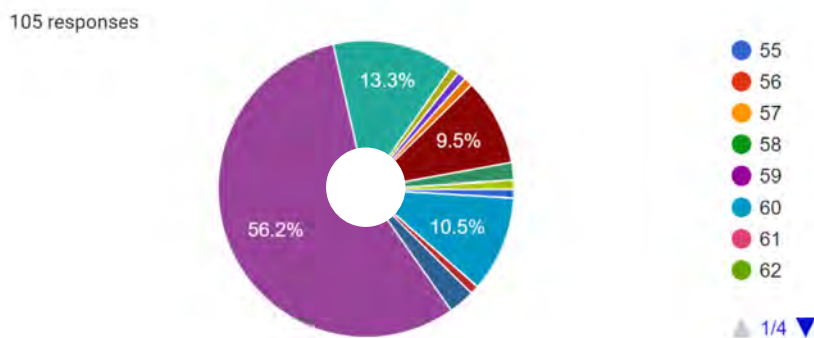
### For what reason do you currently not have a pensions arrangement in place?



## 4. Expected Retirement Age

- 52% of Travellers expect to retire at 65, compared to 25% of the settled population.
- 10.5% anticipate retiring at 60, while 13% expect to retire at 66.
- 9.5% foresee working until 70, with 3% expecting to work beyond this age.
- Gender-specific data shows 16% of men and 11% of women expect to work past 70.

### At what age do you expect to retire?

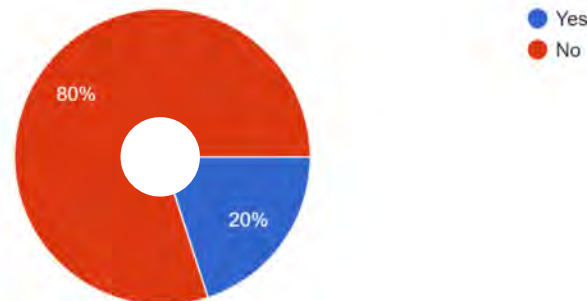


## 5. Financial Preparedness

- **Engagement with Financial Advisors:**
  - 80% of Travellers have never spoken to a financial advisor.
  - No one in the 18-24 or 65+ age groups has consulted a financial advisor.
  - Interaction is highest (31%) in the 45-54 age group.
  - Financial advice is typically accessed through referrals from employers, banks or from knowing a financial advisor personally.

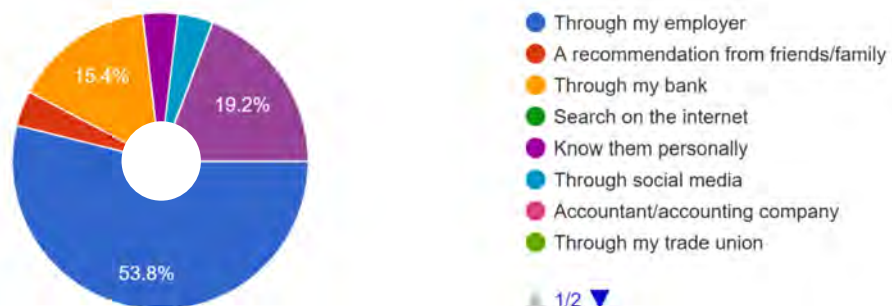
### Have you ever talked one-to-one to a financial advisor for advice on your retirement or pensions?

105 responses



### If you answered yes to the last question, how did you find your most recent advisor you spoke to?

26 responses



## 6. Living Arrangements in Retirement

- 52.4% expect to rent their homes in retirement.
- Only 21% anticipate owning their homes outright with no mortgage.
- 19% are unsure of their future living situation.
- For comparison, 69% of the settled population expect to own their homes outright.

### Which of these best describes your expected living situation when you retire?

105 responses

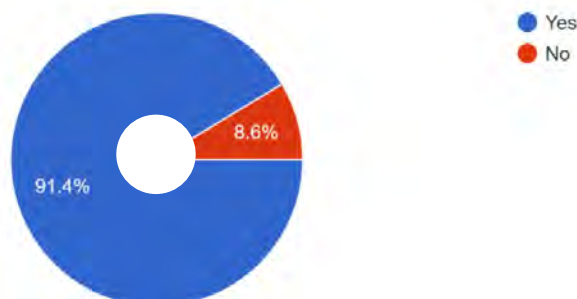


## 7. Intergenerational Aspirations

- 91.4% of Travellers would like their children to start a pension early in life, reflecting concerns about their own financial security.

With your lived experiences would you like your children to join a pension at an early age?

93 responses

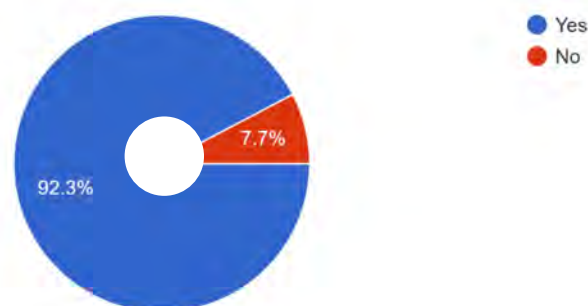


## 8. Retirement Anxiety

- 92% of Travellers worry about not having enough money during retirement, underscoring the community's financial insecurity.
- 28% of Travellers are confident that their pension will allow them a good standard of living when they retire compared with 39% of the settled population.
- 31% of Travellers are unsure that their pension will allow them a good standard of living when they retire. This figure is similar to the 35% of the settled population who are unsure their pension will allow them a good standard of living when they retire.
- 40.8% of Travellers do not believe that their pension will allow them a good standard of living when they retire. This figure is significantly higher than the 24% of the settled population who do not believe their pension will allow them a good standard of living.

Do you worry about having enough money to get by on when you retire?

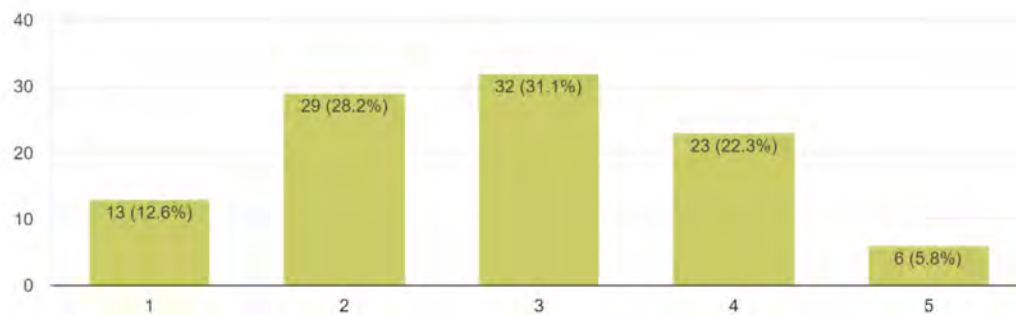
104 responses





### I am confident that my pension will allow me a good standard of living on retirement

103 responses

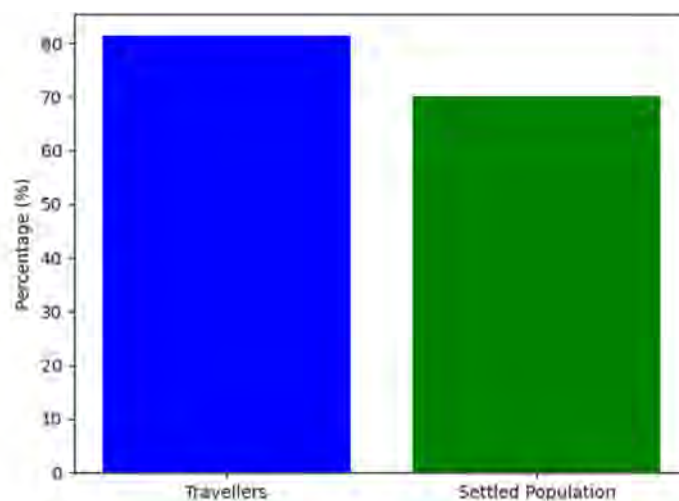


1 is Strongly Disagree, 2 is Disagree, 3 is neither agree or disagree, 4 is Agree, 5 is Strongly Agree

## 9. Pension Contributions

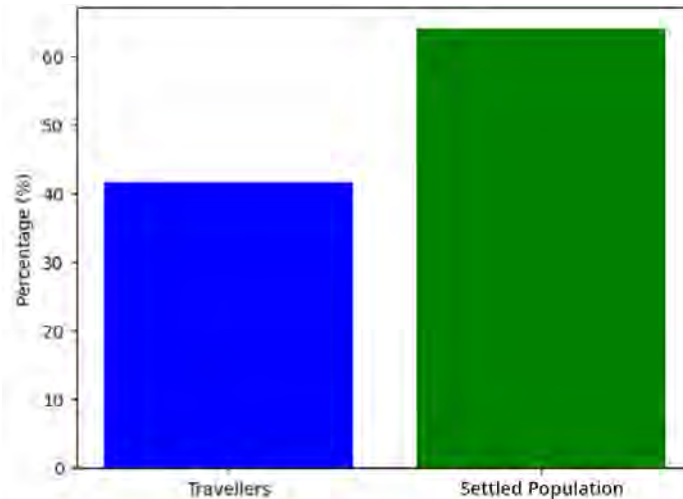
- 81.4% of Travellers agree that they would be willing to increase their pension contributions if their employer offered to match the increased amount. This compares with 70% of the settled population.

### Willingness to Increase Pension Contributions if Employer Matches



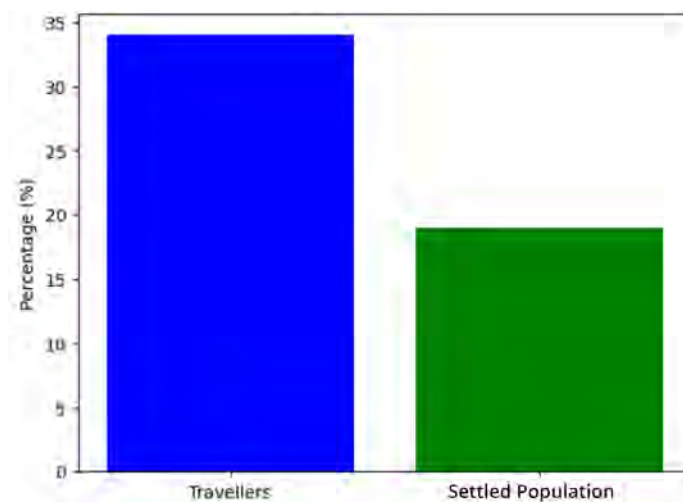
- 41.7% of Travellers expect their salary to increase as they get older, which will increase their pension contributions in comparison with 64% of the settled population.

### Expectation of Salary Increase Leading to Higher Pension Contributions



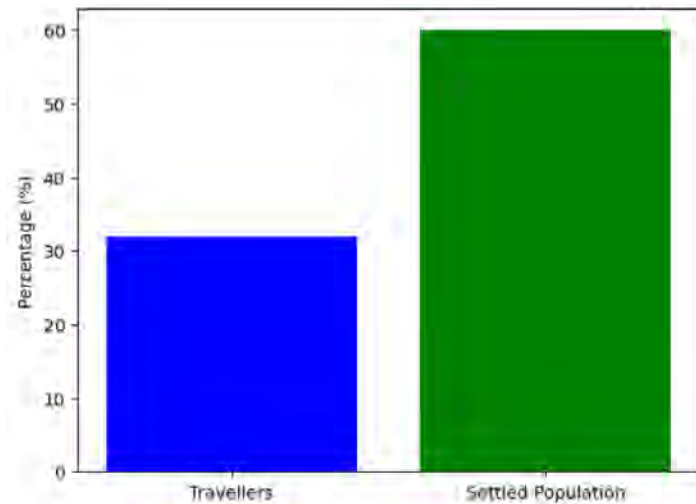
- 34% of Travellers do not expect their salary to rise nor their pension contributions to increase with 24.3% indicating that they are unsure whether their salary will increase. This compares with 19% of the settled population who do not expect their salary to increase nor their pension contributions and 13% unsure.

### Expectation of Salary and Pension Contribution Increase



- Only 32% of Travellers intend to increase the proportion of their salary which they pay into a pension as they get older while 60% of the settled population intends to increase the proportion of their salary which they pay into a pension.

### Intention to Increase Pension Contributions with Age

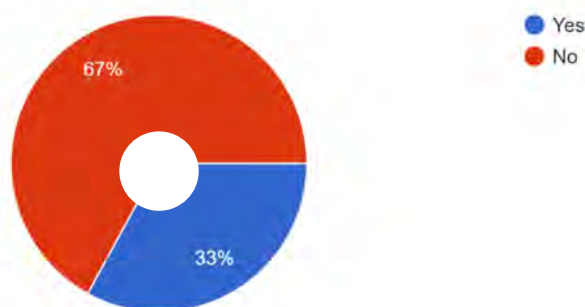


## 10. Pension Information and Education

- 67% of Travellers have never had information provided to them about pensions at any stage of their life.

Have you ever had information provided to you about pensions at any stage of your life?

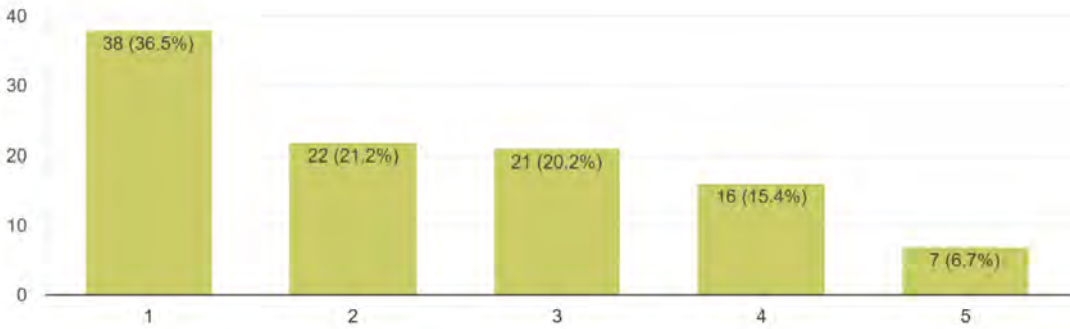
94 responses



- 58% of Travellers said they are not confident in understanding what a private pension is and how it works.
- 20.2% of Travellers were neither sure nor unsure of their understanding of what a private pension is and how it works.
- Only 22% of Travellers felt they understood what a private pension is and how it works.

I am confident that I understand what a private pension is and how it works

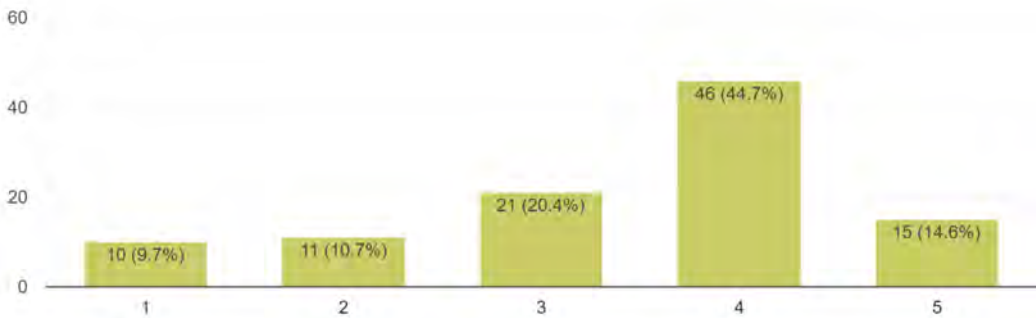
104 responses



- Conversely 59.3% of Travellers are confident in their understanding of the State Pension and how it operates with 20.4% stating that they are unsure of how it works.

I am confident that I understand how the state pension operates

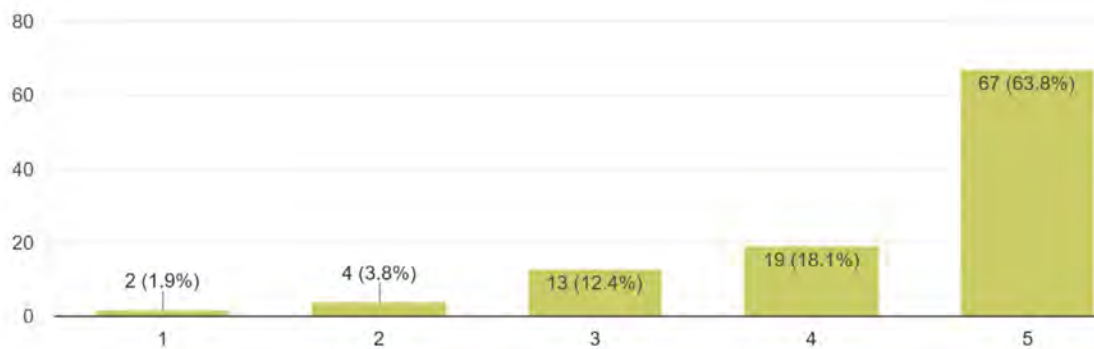
103 responses



- When it comes to learning about pensions 81.9% of Travellers would like to learn more about the State Pension and 80.7% would like to learn about private pensions.

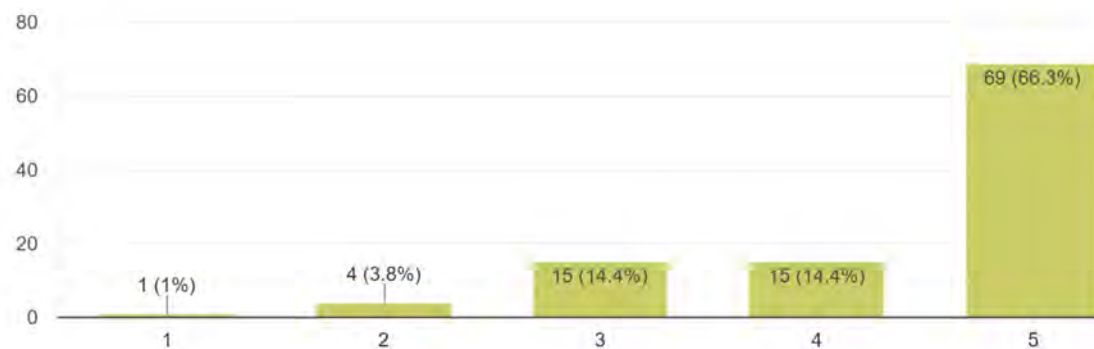
I would like to learn about how the state pension operates. For example the difference between the State Contributory and Non-Contributory pensions how to qualify, what type of contributions I need. Etc

105 responses



I would like to learn about private pensions. For example the options available, how they work, tax credits, fees, complaints, Etc

104 responses



# Traveller's Voices

In previous research National Traveller MABS has discussed that the concept of financial wellbeing has developed predominantly as a 'top down', 'economic-centric' concept, with individuals rarely asked about what it means to them and how they and their families might achieve it. For this reason we believe that it is imperative that Travellers own voices be included in any research and that we ask them what does the particular subject being investigated mean to them. As part of our pension's enquiry we included an open ended question for Travellers to tell us anything they wanted to about pensions, their experiences, cultural attitudes etc. The responses provide context and insight beyond the scope of the questionnaire. The responses in full are as follows:

- As a Traveller I've no one to talk to about my pension, not many of my family work or pay contributions to pension. It's all new to me. I have no idea how it works or what happens with the money. I'd love to learn about it.
- We need to educate more Travellers about pensions. Lots of Travellers don't think about pensions because they say we don't live long enough, but Travellers are living longer and we need to start planning for retirement as a community and start talking about pensions.
- Yes, I am 50 and only started a pension this year. I fought tooth and nail with my employer to get a contributory pension but lost 6 years of payments through this fight. I have worked 30 years and most of the Travellers working do not have a pension and don't have proper access to information. The earlier we start the better. I do believe the Community Development sector and the National Traveller Partnership (NTP) need to advocate for contributory pensions for all Travellers because we are all facing poverty after working all our lives in jobs. Thank you.
- I think in Traveller organisations there should be information sessions given annually on pension schemes.
- We only get the state pension and can't survive on it
- Travellers don't know about pensions, not something we can afford or live long enough to see as it's hard to get jobs if you're a Traveller
- Travellers need to learn about pensions. Can organisations do information sessions for staff
- Travellers are highly unemployed so there is not many Travellers with a pension
- Travellers don't have as long life, a younger retirement age would benefit more

- I'm lucky I got a civil service job when I was in my 30's and have been paying into a pension since then. Most Travellers aren't so lucky. I'm one of 7 and I'm the only one with a pension. All my brothers and sisters have worked all their life but none have a pension.
- More information and specific support needs to be given about the importance of having a pension
- I made it my business to find out about my pension and understand how it works. I know I will be able to take care of myself when I retire because I have planned for the future. Travellers don't want to know about pensions because none of us believe we'll live that long. I get a lot of abuse if I mention it and am told I'm throwing away my money because I won't live to see it.
- Travellers need to know more about pensions
- I've been working for 10 years and nothing about a pension asked my employer and they said no I had to do that myself I don't know anything about them and I don't have any more left to go into a pension
- Historically Travellers were self-employed so didn't think about pension so we didn't have a history of having pensions
- Travellers don't typically get pension paying jobs as employers are reluctant to hire Travellers but I think Travellers should be shown how important a pension is in later life
- I worry a lot about how I'll survive when I'm old. They're saying there might not even be a state pension in 30 years and it's hard to get a job when you're a Traveller. I'm scared about the future. It's not something you can talk about in the community. They'd be laughing at you
- Most Travellers won't live long enough to get the pension so it's pointless talking about it
- Travellers don't know about pensions we don't live long enough to have to worry about it. Young Travellers don't earn enough money to have a pension they can barely live it's hard to get jobs if you're a Traveller
- Travellers don't know about pensions; were either unemployed, part time employed or self-employed and no one's making enough for a pension
- My father worked for himself all his life, never had a pension, my mother worked for 30 years for nothing. There's 8 of us on the family, all working 25+ years and none of us have a pension, never been offered one at work or not earning enough to keep the house going and pay into a pension.
- I don't think Travellers have a great understanding of the importance of pensions



- The majority of Travellers does not have enough information on pensions.
- I've been working for 20 years, never even heard about a pension. I work part time and it's not an option for me. I try to save a little so that I'll have money when I'm older but I'm afraid that I won't be able to afford to live if all the prices keep going up and up every year and the state pension stays the same.
- Is it worth starting a pension at this stage of my life?
- Been working all my life no pension no employer ever said anything about it I'm 67 now and still working
- Yes if wages was higher young Travellers would have no problem paying into pensions
- Working 20 years and never had opportunity to have a pension by my employer
- Travellers don't live long enough to enjoy Pension, and I only work part time
- Inform Travellers about the benefits of having a pension
- Travellers don't understand pensions it's hard to think about the future when you're trying to survive day to day

# Analysis and Insights

- 1. Age-Based Disparities:** Pension ownership is critically low among younger Travellers (18-24), indicating a need for early intervention and education. The sharp decline in pension ownership after age 55 also suggests inadequate long-term planning and insufficient retirement savings.

The sharp decline in pension ownership after age 55 among Travellers suggests several underlying issues:

- **Inadequate Long-Term Planning:** Many Travellers may not have engaged in sufficient long-term financial planning earlier in life, leading to a lack of retirement savings as they age.
- **Health Issues:** Travellers often face significant health disparities, including higher rates of chronic illnesses and lower life expectancy. These health issues can lead to early retirement or inability to work, reducing the ability to save for retirement.
- **Economic Instability:** Economic instability and lack of stable employment can result in inconsistent contributions to pension plans. This instability is often more pronounced in the Traveller community due to discrimination and limited job opportunities.
- **Cultural and Social Factors:** The Traveller community's reliance on family and community support systems can sometimes lead to a lower emphasis on individual financial planning for retirement.

- 2. Reliance on the State Pension:** The overwhelming dependence on the State pension highlights a lack of diversified retirement strategies. This over-reliance could leave the community vulnerable to policy changes or insufficient funds. However this overreliance is not unexpected considering only 16.78% of Travellers were working for payment or profit according to Census 2022, compared with 56.21% of the settled population. 16.9% of Travellers were long term unemployed (more than 12 months), 3.84% were short term unemployed (less than 12 months) and 18.51% of Travellers were unable to work due to permanent sickness or disability compared with just 4.62% of the settled population. A further 17.63% of Travellers are looking after the home/family which places them outside the workforce. Unemployment is disproportionately high in the Traveller community and this means that there will be a large sole reliance on the State Pension to fund the retirement of the majority of Travellers.

- 3. Barriers to Pension Access:** The high percentage of Travellers citing lack of understanding (62.5%) and affordability (46.6%) as barriers indicates structural issues that need addressing through tailored financial education programmes and pension information schemes that are relevant to Travellers. The affordability issue is understandable with many Travellers experiencing high rates of unemployment while those in employment are generally in part time, low income roles. The lack of understanding of pensions is

understandable given the low level of financial literacy in the community<sup>1</sup>. However the high numbers who indicate that they want to learn more about pensions, over 80% for both private and state pensions is heartening. It is essential that we provide these learning opportunities as soon as possible and National Traveller MABS hopes to work with other agencies to provide educational resources that are accessible to all.

- 4. Housing Concerns:** The Traveller community faces significant housing insecurity, with over half of Travellers expecting to rent their homes in retirement. This situation starkly contrasts with the settled population, where homeownership is the norm for retirement plans. The disparity highlights the broader accommodation crisis affecting Travellers, who often encounter barriers such as discrimination, lack of affordable housing, and limited access to social services. Currently approximately 40% of Traveller households live in severely overcrowded conditions, compared to less than 6% of non-Traveller households while Travellers make up about 9% of the homeless population in Ireland, despite representing less than 1% of the total population<sup>2</sup>. Around 1,700 Travellers live on the roadside without access to basic facilities like running water, toilets, or electricity Travellers are ten times more likely to report discrimination in access to housing compared to the White Irish population, with 73% of Travellers experiencing discrimination when trying to rent or buy homes.<sup>3</sup> This crisis is exacerbated by historical marginalisation and socio-economic challenges, as well as mismanagement of Traveller accommodation, making it imperative for the Government to take immediate and comprehensive action to address these issues and ensure equitable housing solutions for the Traveller community.
- 5. Gender Parity:** Interestingly, there is no significant gender difference in pension ownership (16% of men and 15% of women), suggesting uniform challenges across genders within the Traveller community in accessing pensions.

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<sup>1</sup> Financial Unwellness, National Traveller MABS, Dublin, 2024, available from <https://www.ntmabs.org/images/resources/publications/policy/ntmabs-financial-unwellness.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> SpunOut and Pavee Point, available from <https://spunout.ie/life/accommodation/traveller-accommodation-crisis/>

<sup>3</sup> SpunOut and Pavee Point, available from <https://spunout.ie/life/accommodation/traveller-accommodation-crisis/>

# Recommendations

- 1. Targeted Financial Education:** National Traveller MABS will continue to work and develop culturally sensitive educational programs to improve financial literacy among Irish Travellers, focusing on the importance of pensions and retirement planning. We will continue to work with partners to ensure culturally appropriate financial education is delivered to Travellers. The National Financial Literacy Strategy provides a unique opportunity to address the issue of general financial literacy for Travellers. We hope that the Pension Authority might also direct some of its resources toward pension education for Travellers.
- 2. Subsidised Pension Schemes:** National Traveller MABS would like to see the introduction of government-backed or community-supported pension scheme that address affordability and employment instability. The introduction of the Government's auto-enrolment pension scheme will go some way to addressing this.

Auto-enrolment is a new pension savings scheme for employees earning more than €20,000 who are not paying into a pension. They will be automatically included in the scheme but can opt out after 6 months. If you earn less than €20,000 per year, or you are not aged between 23 and 60, you can choose to join the pension scheme if you are not already part of a pension plan. The introduction of the auto-enrolment retirement savings scheme, called My Future Fund, will start from 1 January 2026. Under the scheme, the employee, employer, and Government all pay a certain amount into the employee's pension fund. If an employee changes jobs, their pension pot follows them, ensuring continuity in their retirement savings.

There is also a strong belief in the community, interestingly most strongly in those paying into a pension, that they will not live long enough to be able to access their pension due to the lower life expectancy of Travellers when compared to the majority population. National Traveller MABS would also like to see the allowance of earlier access to pensions without penalties due to the significantly lower life expectancy of Travellers.

- 3. Employer Engagement:** Incentivise employers to provide clear information about pension plans and encourage participation among all employees but in particular Traveller employees and employees from other minority backgrounds. National Traveller MABS would like to partner with local Traveller organisations and national pension organisations and providers to provide a pension's roadshow that would provide information to Travellers working in the local organisations but also to the service users.
- 4. Enhanced Financial Advisory Services:** Increase access to financial advisors within the Traveller community through outreach programs and mobile advisory units ensuring that the advice provided is properly tailored towards the community and takes into account cultural appropriateness.

5. **Youth-Focused Initiatives:** Launch campaigns targeting younger Travellers (18-24) to instil early financial planning habits and reduce the perception of being “too young” to start a pension.
6. **Addressing Accommodation Insecurity:** Promote initiatives that support homeownership among Travellers, such as affordable housing schemes, a trailer loan scheme that is fit for purpose and rent-to-buy programs. Housing classed as Traveller accommodation should be made available to purchases under the Tenant Purchase Scheme. Immediate Government action on Traveller accommodation is urgently required.

# Conclusion

The data reveals a troubling trend among Irish Travellers regarding retirement planning. Across all age groups, there is a pervasive reliance on the State Pension and a lack of personal retirement savings. This dependency poses significant risks for future financial security, especially for those nearing retirement age.

This report underscores the urgent need to address the financial vulnerabilities of Irish Travellers, particularly concerning pensions and retirement planning. Addressing these issues is essential for promoting financial security and independence among Irish Travellers in the future.

By implementing targeted education, financial support, and policy interventions, it is possible to bridge the gap between the Traveller community and the settled population, ensuring a more secure financial future for all.

Overall, the findings highlight the need for targeted interventions to improve pension ownership, financial literacy, and retirement planning among Travellers. Addressing the identified barriers through education, employer support, and financial advice can help bridge the gap between Travellers and the settled population in terms of pension and retirement security.

