

Demographic advice for the Travellers' All-Ireland Health Study

**Discussion paper regarding the sampling frame for the
Travellers' All-Ireland Health Study**

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1. Background

The Department of Health and Children (DoHC) in the Republic of Ireland has requested demographic advice on the development of the population estimates for the Travellers' All-Ireland Health Study (TAIHS). The TAIHS is planned as a result of the concerns for the Travellers' health status expressed by the national initiatives of both the Republic and Northern Ireland.

The TAIHS consists of the three sub-studies; *1 Health issues as perceived by Travellers*, *2 Health issues as perceived by service providers*, and *3 Study of births and deaths*. The content of the sub-studies is outlined in the Appendix. Two of the sub-studies involve interviewing a representative sample. Sub-study 1 requires a sampling frame for the Traveller population and Sub-study 2 requires a sampling frame for health professional providing services to the Traveller community.

The purpose of this paper is to explore how to develop these sampling frames for the TAIHS. The requirements for the sampling frames for the Sub-study 1 and 2 will be examined for the Republic and Northern Ireland.

2. Sampling frame for Sub-study 1

2.1 Study objectives

This sub-study will address health issues as perceived by Travellers. *Scope of service for the conduct of the Travellers' All-Ireland Health Study* (DoHC, 2005) specifies that the issues to be included are; how health is understood in Traveller culture, circumstances affecting their health, health and social services needs, uptake and experiences of such services, barriers to access, examples of best practice, solutions for any difficulties, and lifestyle behaviours.

2.2 Sample requirements

The data on the issues above will be collected and examined for;

- a) *Traveller women/men,*
- b) *Traveller children/elderly,*
- c) *Travellers with disabilities,*
- d) *Travellers with different sexual orientations,*
- e) *Travellers who were adopted,*
- f) *Travellers in care,*
- g) *Travellers in prison,*
- h) *Travellers with drug problems,*
- i) *Travellers with HIV/AIDS,*
- j) *Nomadic Travellers,*
- k) *Travellers in 'settled housing estates', and*
- l) *Travellers not associated with a known local Traveller organisation.*

Scope of service for the conduct of the Travellers' All-Ireland Health Study (DoHC, 2005) specifies that a random sample of 2,000 families is required for the qualitative component of the Sub-study. First of all, *family* needs to be defined to clarify what is to be included in the sampling frame.

The annual counts of the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DEH&LG) in the Republic of Ireland, defines that a family is taken to mean parent(s) and/or children and relative(s) normally resident with them. This is wider than the definition of *family unit* in the census 2002 in the Republic of Ireland, where only couple, couple with never-married children, or one parent with never-married children are considered to form a *family unit*. The census also counts households that can contain one or more *family units* and/or others. In the census, a *private household* comprises either one person living alone or a group of people (not necessarily related) living at the same address with common housekeeping arrangements – that is, sharing at least one meal a day or sharing a living room or sitting room. The mapping exercise among the Traveller community and Traveller support organisation does not explicitly define who should be included in a family.

For the purpose of the sub-study, the decision needs to be made to use either the DEH&LG's definition of *family*, or the census 2002's definition of *private household*, or to develop the definition otherwise. From the point of view of conducting interviews, the census 2002's *private household* would be the simplest concept to work on, as the interviewer does not need to exclude some household members depending on the family relationship status.

2.3 Sources of the sampling frame

The two main sources of information for the sampling frame for the Republic of Ireland are Local Authorities and Traveller support organisations. For Northern Ireland, District Councils, Housing Executive district offices, and Traveller support organisations are the main sources of information. National censuses do not provide information necessary for sampling frames such as contact details.

2.4 Development of the sampling frame

For the settled Traveller community, the items to be included in the sampling frame are address and name (if available). The initial sampling frame could be used to help conduct a Traveller census as suggested in the other part of this study '*Report on the proposed methodology for deriving the population estimates for the North and the South*'. If this census is conducted, more detailed information of each household will be available. Such information would ensure representativeness of the sample, for example, the information on household accommodation types will help to extract the sample that reflect the distribution of accommodation types in the whole Traveller community.

Nomadic Travellers, as listed as *j*) in Section 2.2, are a subject of special interests, therefore as well as serviced and un-serviced sites, all known roadside Travellers should be listed and a representative sample should be selected from it so that this particular group of Travellers are included in the sample. A quota sampling is particularly important for nomadic Travellers to make sure that they are represented in the sample.

The other sub-groups that require specific planning are *f) Travellers in care* and *g) Travellers in prison* in Section 2.2. In the census 2002 in the Republic of Ireland, Travellers enumerated in communal establishments were 739, approximately 3% of the whole Traveller population. They will be the hardest group to develop a sampling frame for and the co-operations of the prisons as well as the care establishments will be necessary for successful data collection. The list of prisons, hospitals, children's homes, and nursing homes needs to be compiled. Some information regarding those who are in such institutions may be available from Traveller support organisations.

3. Sampling frame for Sub-study 2

3.1 Study objectives

This sub-study will address health issues as perceived by service providers. *Scope of service for the conduct of the Travellers' All-Ireland Health Study* (DoHC, 2005) specifies that the issues to be included are; the degree of understanding of service providers in relation to Traveller health issues, health and social services needs, quality and quantity of services for Travellers, uptake of such services, barriers to access, examples of best practice, and solutions for any difficulties.

3.2 Sample requirements

A representative sample of providers of front line services such as GPs, health visitors, social workers, occupational therapists, pharmacists, dentists, and opticians as well as more senior health officials is required. The TAIHS divides the whole study area into five regions i.e. the four regions as set out by the Health Service Executive (HSE) in the Republic and the entire region of Northern Ireland. A minimum of 200 providers in each of the five regions is proposed to be involved, which means that the total sample size will be 1,000 or more.

3.3 Sources of the sampling frame

Information on health professionals is available from various websites. For the Republic of Ireland, the HSE website (www.hse.ie) and each HSE area website (the current HSE areas cover the same areas as the former health boards) provide the framework of the healthcare services in the country. There are also other websites such as Irish medical directory (www.imd.ie/imdir.htm) that provide this information on healthcare professionals. For Northern Ireland, the information on the healthcare structure is available from the website of the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/hss) and there is an official website for health and social services that includes the directory of health professionals (www.n-i.nhs.uk).

3.4 Development of the sampling frame

To ensure all the health professionals are represented in the sample, sampling frames need to be created for each group of health professionals. For those who work within the regional healthcare services (e.g. Community care health centres in the South and Health and social services trust in the North), a sampling frame of such centres would be useful.

Appendix The TAIHS three sub-studies

Sub-study 1 Health issues as perceived by Travellers

This sub-study will examine:

- The health status of Travellers and its determinants.
- Access to and uptake of health and social services by Travellers.
- Health and social services needs as perceived by Travellers.

It will use qualitative research methods together with an associated questionnaire study. Traveller peer-researchers will collect most of the data.

Sub-study 2 Health issues as perceived by service providers

This sub-study will examine the three topics listed in sub-study 1 as perceived by service providers. The sub-study will also consider models of best practice for the provision of health and social services for Travellers at a local level.

Sub-study 3 Study of births and deaths.

This sub-study will determine:

- Deaths from various causes.
- A study of all births to assess birth rates.
- Birth and early childhood outcomes.

A link with the proposed National Longitudinal Children's Study in the Republic of Ireland will be explored.