



# Enforced lifestyle changes have health and microbiome implications for Irish Travellers today

Irish Travellers diverged from the settled community 200 to 1,200 years ago



*'Irish Travellers have their own language called Cant or Gammon. It is important for families and children to keep their language alive and for it to be valued and supported, as other languages have been.'*

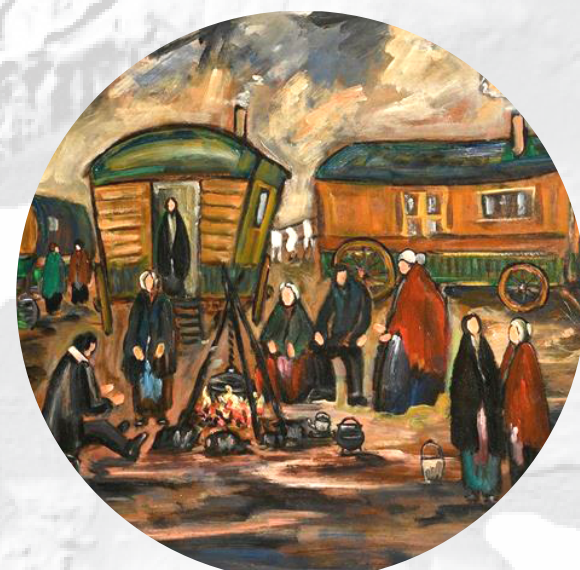
820

The lives of Irish Travellers reveals that their bygone world lived in parallel with a modern Irish society, including large families living in close confinement and in proximity to domesticated animals



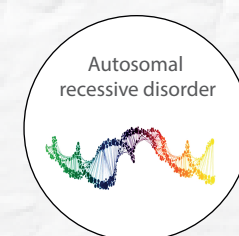
*'Extended families support and look after one another. Older members of the community are respected and cared for within the family.'*

1800



*'The family is extremely important to Travellers and a source of great pride.'*

*'It's very important to keep your trailer clean but when you're travelling it can be very awkward...Sometimes you haven't got enough water...And it's getting the water, because they won't let you have it. So you learn to use maybe one dish of water to clean your trailer - you'll wipe all around first, and then do your floor with it. I clean my trailer every day.'*



Social isolation for generations and endogamous relationships among the Irish travellers has resulted in a genetic drift and an increased prevalence of autosomal recessive disorders

The lifestyle of Irish Travellers changed with legislation that effectively ended nomadism and altered their living conditions



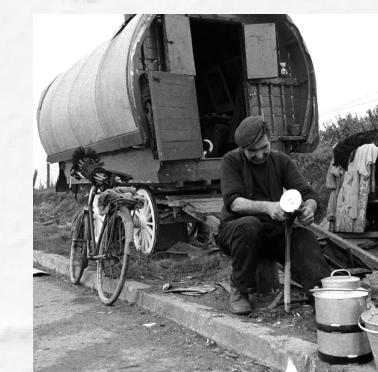
*'Nomadism entails a way of looking at the world, a different way of perceiving things, a different attitude to accommodation, to work and to life in general.'*

2002

## Microbiome and health implications for ethnic minorities after enforced lifestyle changes

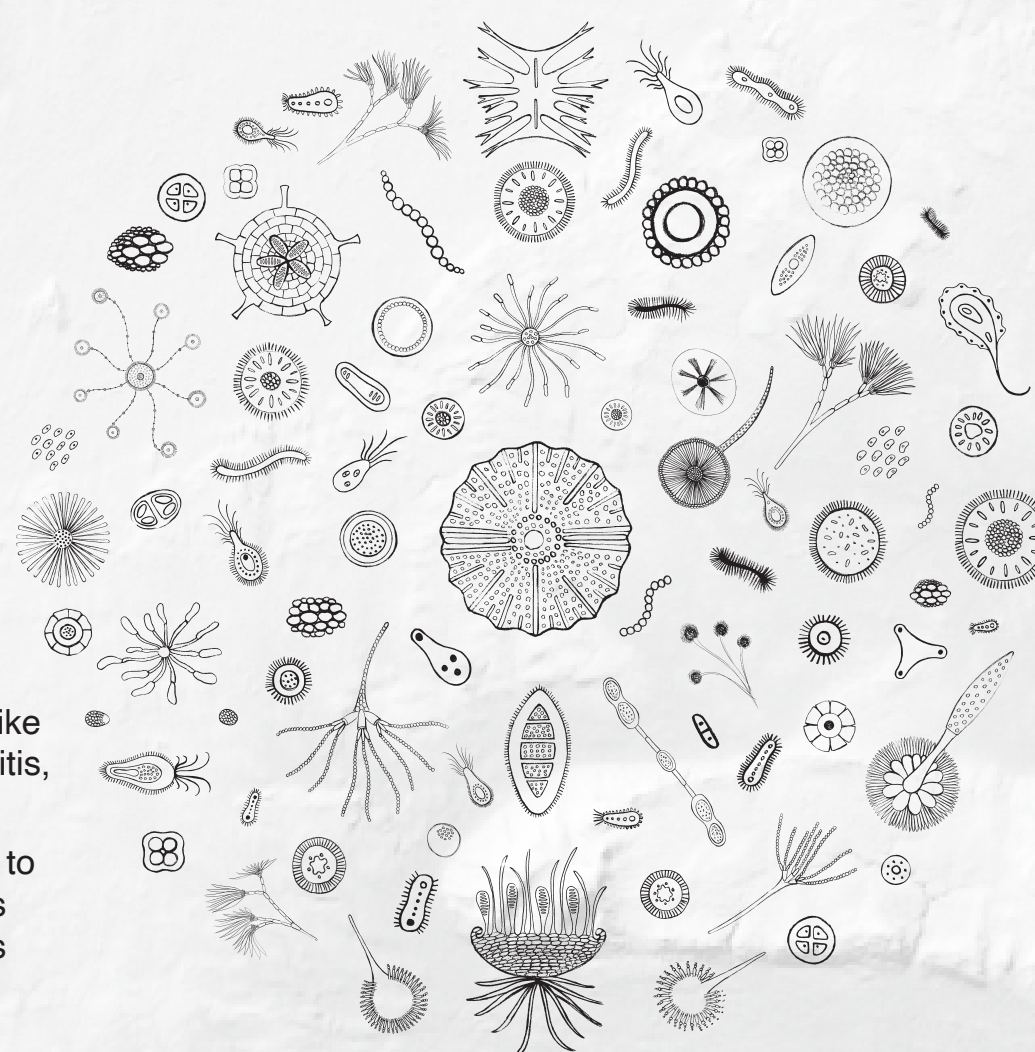
In July 2020, Fergus Shanahan and his team published an historic 21st Century piece of scientific evidence that absolutely and irrefutably confirms the distinct ethnicity of the Irish Traveller community.

The study has revealed that the way of life of Travellers, including living in close proximity with their animals, has meant that they have retained an ancient microbiome that is closer to that of all our ancestors and which has protected them from some 'modern' ailments.



Settled people do not have the same defences as Travellers against inflammatory diseases like multiple sclerosis, ulcerative colitis, arthritis and Crohn's.

The study warns that pressures to change their traditional lifestyles can cause Travellers to lose this unique health advantage.



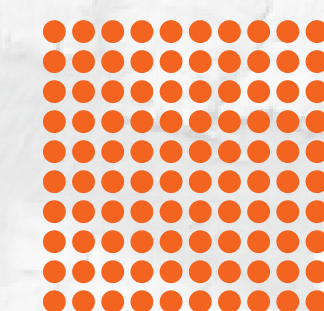
2017

Irish Travellers granted separate ethnic status

*Speaking to RTE on the day of the ruling, former director of the Irish Traveller Movement Brigid Quilligan said, 'We want every Traveller in Ireland to be proud of who they are and to say that we're not a failed set of people. We have our own unique identity, and we shouldn't take on all of the negative aspects of what people think about us. We should be able to be proud and for that to happen our State needed to acknowledge our identity and our ethnicity, and they're doing that today.'*

2021

Irish Travellers represent almost 1% of the population of Ireland



*'Dhalyōn mun'ia'*  
God bless you!

## 2018 Oireachtas (Parliament) Report on Traveller Housing

- demonstrated significant increase in social housing and a decline in traditional housing (halting site/encampment) since 2002 (Trespass) Legislation

2017

Irish Traveller Ethnicity Recognised Under Irish Law

2018-20

**2019 ECRI Report (European Council of Racism and Intolerance)**  
"The majority of local authorities have consistently failed to provide adequate and culturally appropriate accommodation for Travellers"

## Key Events in the Cultural Changes for Irish Travellers between 1922 and 2020

1922

Foundation of the Irish Free State

1926-38

1926: The School Attendance Act  
1926: Street Trading Act  
1931: Housing Act  
1933: Road Traffic Act  
1938: Litter Bye Laws  
1938: Unemployment Act

1960

State Legislation with social effect on the living conditions of Irish Travellers

Commission on Itinerancy Established

1963

Commission on Itinerancy Report

Control of Horses Act

1996

Housing Act (Anti-Trespass Legislation)

2002

APC Microbiome Ireland  
University College Cork

2017

2018-20