



Engaged Research Case Study Template

Health and Wellbeing

Project Title (8 words max)	Exploring the social determinants of Traveller women’s food choices and physical activity through Community-Based Participatory Research
Project synopsis (100 words max) Please give a very short description of the societal challenge, the action taken, and the intended/ achieved result.	<p>The goal of this project was to reduce the health inequities experienced by the Irish Traveller community through challenging the dominant ‘individual behaviour change’ discourse with evidence of the role of the social determinants of health (SDoH) in the creation of Traveller’s poor health outcomes.</p> <p>This exploratory qualitative study was undertaken through a partnership between the Department of Epidemiology and Public Health, UCC, the Southern Traveller Health Network (STHN) and two HSE departments. Based on a reflective question from the STHN, it analysed food choices and participation in physical activity among a sample of Traveller women.</p>
Higher Education Institution:	University College Cork
Engaged Research Partners (civic, civil society organisations, Social enterprises, public or professional service or product users, policy makers, members of the public).	Southern Traveller Health Network (STHN)
Engagement (research method or activity) (100 words max)	<p>A Community Based Participatory Research approach was employed. Planning meetings involved representatives of the STHN, UCC and the HSE South Health Promotion Department. The methodology and data collection methods were chosen with a view to ensuring maximum participation by STHN members. Focus groups incorporating a vignette were used to collect primary data. The topic guide was developed from the literature review and STHN suggestions.</p> <p>Three focus groups explored food choice/ consumption and two weeks later the same three groups discussed physical activity/ exercise. A total of 21 STHN members took part with 17 participating on both occasions. A thematic analysis was undertaken in two phases with the food related data</p>



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analysed first, followed by analysis of the physical activity/ exercise data. Common themes were identified a synthesis of both sets of findings was completed. Preliminary findings were presented to the STHN membership for discussion and verification. Further discussion was undertaken with the research partners prior to finalising the report. Following its publication, a series of actions have been taken by the partners to share the findings with the Traveller community, health professionals, academics and policy makers.

Project outputs and outcomes: (600 words max)

Please describe briefly the target audience and activities that occurred and short terms results.

This information could include:

- who you worked with;
- issue to be addressed
- what actions you took;
- the geographical location;
- any shorter-term outcomes or changes in local situation and circumstances, knowledge and skills attitudes or behaviour, policy, practice, organisational development etc, decision-making.

The outputs are as follows:

- Published 'Full' & 'Highlights' reports - October 2016
- Three workshops with STHN members & Traveller Primary Healthcare Workers – Spring 2017
- Presentation to HSE South Health Promotion staff – May 2017
- UCC seminar - October 2017
- Presentation to the HSE National Traveller Health Advisory Forum – November 2017
- Complete video to illustrate the Social Determinants of Traveller Women's Health – January 2017
- Presentation to the National Traveller Health Network – Spring 2018
- Dissemination to academic community via journal article and conferences
- Official launch of Research Reports and Video

The outcomes are as follows:

- While identifying and exploring factors underlying Traveller women's behaviour in relation to food choice/ consumption and physical activity/ exercise, this research found evidence of serious social exclusion among the study participants and other Traveller women whose lives they described. Traveller women experience racial discrimination on an ongoing basis while attempting to socialise, to exercise outside the home, to shop – this is a source of chronic stress which impacts negatively on



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	<p>both their food consumption and participation in exercise.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The findings illustrate that a multiplicity of social, psychological, cultural, historical, political and environmental factors overlap in complex ways to influence Traveller women’s behaviour regarding food choice/ consumption and physical activity/ exercise. • This research seeks to influence the thinking, discourse and actions of the wider Traveller community in Ireland, policy makers, health professionals, academics and educators. A number of significant social barriers to better nutrition/ diet and increased participation in exercise were identified, many of which are also evident in international literature on other ethnic minority women and women on low incomes, clearly indicating that they’re not exclusive to Irish Travellers. • Following this research project, the leadership of the STHN now seeks to influence the wider Traveller community to (i) adopt a Social Determinants approach when addressing Traveller health issues, (ii) to develop a Traveller designed and led programme for local groups to address the SDoH and (iii) to work together through community development actions to improve the structural determinants of health such as racism, poor accommodation, poor educational outcomes and low levels of employment.
<p>Longer term anticipated areas for Impact (Choose from below):</p> <p>Economic Policy & Public Service Societal Engagement Health & Wellbeing Professional services Environmental New knowledge Human Capacity</p>	<p>Health & Wellbeing Societal Engagement</p> <p>The research partners wish the analysis presented in this study to make a constructive contribution to the long-standing struggle to improve Travellers health and wellbeing, and to reduce Travellers experience of severe health inequities. They hope it will inspire the Traveller community to work together using SDoH and community development approaches at community, local and national levels.</p>



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	<p>The partners aspire to positively influence political, health and public discourses and understanding of Travellers lived experiences, which in turn could contribute to positive, wide-ranging policy and attitudinal change over time, thus significantly improving Travellers lives. They are making the study findings available through a number of media with a view to disseminating this SDoH analysis as widely as possible and influencing many audiences.</p>
<p>Funding source:</p>	<p>STHN members' participation was funded by the Traveller Health Unit of the HSE South. Academic staff and a post-graduate student commenced the research as a thesis project. Subsequently, academic staff, Mary Cronin and Jennifer Russell, committed both paid and voluntary time to complete the work.</p>
<p>For more information contact:</p>	<p>Mary Cronin (Department of Epidemiology and Public Health, UCC)</p>