



The Traveller Movement

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Gypsies and Travellers: Community, Equality and Discrimination

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Introduction

Gypsies and Travellers are legally recognized ethnic minority groups with a centuries old cultural tradition of nomadism. The majority of the UK's 150,000 to 300,000 Gypsies and Travellers are part of their local communities and live in either 'bricks and mortar' housing or on authorised Traveller sites, a majority of which are privately provided. Gypsies and Travellers continue to face high levels of discrimination and racism, contributing to and exacerbating the inequalities they experience in education, health, accommodation and employment. Policies that successfully address these issues will be underpinned by the principle of bringing communities together, rather than driving them apart.

Community

Contrary to popular belief, Gypsies and Travellers are part of local communities up and down the country. These groups have played, and continue to play key roles in the socioeconomic and cultural life of the UK, working in areas such as construction, the emergency services, retail, teaching, business, charity, politics etc.

- The 2011 [ONS census](#) found that 66% of Gypsies and Travellers identified with an English only national identity. More recent research by Bucks New University found that 70% of Gypsy and Traveller respondents resided under 25 miles from their birth place and cited deep rooted family connections with their local areas.¹
- Housing charity [Shelter](#) note that approximately two-thirds Gypsies and Travellers live in 'bricks and mortar' housing.
- [Communities and Local Government](#) data shows that a significant minority of Gypsies and Travellers continue to live in caravans and/or mobile homes, with the majority of these (87%) based on permanent authorised sites and only a small minority (13%) living on sites without planning permission. The EHRC has estimated that as little as [one square mile](#) of land could meet the accommodation needs of those Travellers who lack an authorised site in England.
- The [Gypsy Roma Traveller Police Association](#) has nearly a hundred members, all of whom are officers or police staff protecting and supporting local communities up-and-down the country.

¹ Bucks New University, The Traveller Movement, 2015, *Impact of insecure accommodation and the living environment on Gypsies and Travellers health* (awaiting publication)

Equality

While many Gypsies and Travellers are living long healthy lives, have secure accommodation and are achieving in education and employment, national indicators show that many from these groups face inequality and disadvantage. The 2012 [Minister Working Group \(MWG\) report](#) on inequalities experienced by Gypsies and Travellers stated that these communities ‘experience, and are being held back by, some of the worst outcomes of any group, across a wide range of social indicators.’ The MWG and ONS provide key indicators of these inequalities.

- Just 12% of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils achieved five or more good GCSEs, including English and mathematics, compared with 58.2% of all pupils (MWG).
- There is an excess prevalence of miscarriages, stillbirths, neonatal deaths in Gypsy and Traveller communities (MWG).
- Data from the 2011 [ONS census](#) shows that Gypsies and Travellers have low levels of economic activity, high rates of unemployment and high numbers with no qualifications.
- The Government’s [2014 Child Poverty Strategy](#) identifies Gypsy and Traveller children as being particularly vulnerable to Child Poverty.
- [Communities and Local Government](#) data shows that approximately 13% of Traveller caravans are on unauthorised sites, and as such, are legally classified as homeless.

Discrimination

Sir Trevor Phillips (in his role as Chair of the EHRC) described discrimination against Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities as [“the last respectable form of racism”](#). High levels of discrimination and racism persist with a recent [report](#) by Anglia Ruskin University and NFGLG finding that [9 out of every 10 Gypsy and Traveller children suffer racial abuse](#). Already in 2015 there have been two prominent cases where the Government and national pub chain Wetherspoons were found to be discriminating against Gypsies and Travellers.²

- The 2012 MWG report highlighted that Gypsy and Traveller communities are subjected to hostility and discrimination.
- An EHRC [review of Inequalities Experienced by Gypsy and Traveller Communities](#) found that discrimination and racism towards Gypsies and Travellers is *“still common, frequently overt and seen as justified”*.
- The [Government’s 2012 Plan To Tackle Hate Crime](#) identified Gypsies, Travellers and Roma as groups where under-reporting of Hate Crime was a significant issue.
- The National Police Chiefs’ Council lead for Gypsies, Roma and Travellers, [Deputy Chief Constable Janette McCormick](#), recently stated that *“prejudice against Gypsies and Travellers is sadly endemic in society and is often fuelled by stereotypes in the media.”*

Recommendations

- Increased support for community cohesion and social inclusion initiatives for Gypsy, Traveller, Roma and settled communities in local areas experiencing tension.
- Greater support for initiatives that promote improved health, education, and employment outcomes for GTR in houses and on sites experiencing disadvantage.
- Ensure the adequate provision of authorised Traveller sites in England (e.g. [Housing Wales Act 2014](#)) and sustainable management of unauthorised encampments.

² [R\(Moore & Coates\)v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government \(SSCLG\) The Traveller Movement & ors v Wetherspoons](#)