

# The last acceptable form of racism?

The pervasive discrimination and prejudice  
experienced by Gypsy, Roma and  
Traveller communities

A report by  
The Traveller Movement  
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# Foreword by Baroness Sal Brinton

**Liberal Democrat member of the House of Lords  
Patron of the Traveller Movement**

**T**his research by the Traveller Movement tells a powerful story of the pervasive prejudice and discrimination Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) people face in their everyday lives. These experiences of prejudice are seemingly so common that they have almost become normalised for these communities.



Gypsies, Roma and Travellers share, in some cases, traumatic experiences of prejudice and discrimination. Their negative experiences in education in particular have a lasting impact on GRT communities. This has fuelled a lifelong impression that British society does not value or respect their culture and certainly does not recognise the rich contribution they make.

The importance of education and schools goes beyond teaching children how to read and write. Schools are often the first place children meet people outside their family and community; it's an opportunity for children to learn about different people and different cultures, and it is often the first official contact they have with wider society.

A child's experience in this context is therefore not only vital in shaping their views but also in ensuring that they feel accepted and part of society. The pervasive discrimination mentioned by GRT people in relation to schools is therefore very troubling. If this experience is mostly characterised by fear, ridicule and an overwhelming sense that they are not welcome, it is no surprise that these communities have widespread distrust for institutions and authorities as found in this research.

These negative experiences with authorities and public institutions, which begin with schools, have led to GRT individuals regularly attempting to hide their ethnicity in an effort to avoid discrimination and prejudice.

**“If action is not taken,  
Gypsies, Roma and  
Travellers will continue to  
face discrimination and  
will sadly see it as a fact of  
their daily lives”**

Most troublingly of all, the pervasive discrimination reported by GRT people was more often than not coupled with a sense of helplessness and a feeling of nowhere to turn to challenge prejudice.

The experience of bullying, discrimination and prejudice beginning in school and continuing throughout adult life has created a sense that, should help be needed, either services will refuse to help or no action will be taken.

This is a very worrying trend as, unable to overcome the barriers to legal support and seek help to confront unlawful discrimination, service providers and public bodies go unchallenged.

The pervasive discriminatory behaviour directed toward Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people is borne out of ignorance and is usually based on ill-informed cultural stereotypes. This lack of understanding or cultural awareness causes significant damage to the trust Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities have in British society; and perhaps understandably leads to them withdrawing from the support and services they desperately need.

This is precisely why education is so important. Prejudice and hate is not a characteristic we are born with: it is a learned behaviour. The most powerful tool to combating prejudice in this regard is to ensure children understand and are taught about GRT culture and people.

Schools are therefore absolutely critical when it comes to addressing racism and discrimination toward GRT communities. It is high time Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month was supported by the Department for Education and rolled out in schools across the country.

This simple measure would make an enormous difference in addressing the daily discrimination and prejudice these communities face. Just as importantly, it would send a message to GRT communities that they are a valued part of our society.

If action is not taken, Gypsies, Roma and Travellers will continue to face discrimination and will sadly continue to see it as a fact of their daily lives.

# Foreword by Patrick O'Leary

## Irish Traveller and Traveller rights activist

**I**t is almost 17 years to the day when I won my historic case which established in law that Irish Travellers are an ethnic minority and entitled to the same protections as other ethnic minorities in Britain.

After the ruling, I stood on the steps outside the court and said: “for the first time in our lives we feel we can proudly and publicly tell everyone we are Irish Travellers”. When I said these words I believed we would finally be free from the discrimination and prejudice that my people had suffered for so long.

But as the research by the Traveller Movement shows my people continue to suffer, on almost a daily basis, the same prejudice and racism I fought to end.

The people who took part in this research told stories of being refused entry to pubs, told they can't register for the doctors or told they weren't even allowed into the pictures with their family. All because of their ethnicity.

Most of the people said that they have hidden who they are just so they could try and avoid this racism. Sadly, none of this will come as surprise to my community. But what breaks my heart is that too many of us still see this as a fact of life. Something we can do nothing about. Too many of us think there's no point in getting legal help because 'what's the point!'

Well, to that I say this is the point. If our community is finally going to be free from the discrimination, prejudice and racism we have suffered in this country we need to show, using the courts, that we will no longer stand for it and that services can no longer get away with it.

That's what I hope this work by the Traveller Movement achieves. I hope it inspires more Gypsies, more Travellers and more Roma to stand up, come forward and challenge the racism that has gone on too long.

Because it is only by coming forward and showing we matter too that we can make sure our children and grandchildren don't suffer the same racism and hatred we have.



*Patrick with his wife and Grandchildren*

# I. Executive Summary

This report explores Gypsy, Roma, Traveller (GRT) people's experience of prejudice and discrimination based on an online survey of 214 community members from across the UK. The Commission for Racial Equality previously described discrimination against GRT people as "*the last respectable form of racism*";<sup>i</sup> while a more recent report by the Equality and Human Rights Commission highlighted that GRT people continue to face bias and hostility in society.<sup>ii</sup>

This survey sheds new light on the extent of that experience of discrimination and prejudice in areas such as education, employment, healthcare and access to services. It also reveals the full extent to which hate crime impacts on community members everyday lives, the coping mechanisms they use, and how likely they are to seek help.

## 1.1 Key findings

### General

**91%** experienced discrimination because of their ethnicity

### Education, employment and healthcare

**70%** experienced discrimination in some aspect of education

**49%** experienced discrimination in some aspect of employment

**30%** experienced discrimination in relation to accessing health care

### Access to services and hate crime

**55%** had been refused services because of their ethnicity

**77%** experienced hate speech or a hate crime

### Coping mechanisms and seeking help

**76%** had hidden their ethnicity to avoid discrimination or prejudice

**77%** had not sought legal help after experiencing discrimination

## 1.2 Recommendations

- ☑ Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month should be supported by the Department for Education and rolled out across all schools in the UK.
- ☑ Greater communication with primary health care providers is needed to ensure they understand that they cannot refuse to register GRT individuals because they do not have proof of their address.
- ☑ NHS England should update their data monitoring systems, as a matter of urgency, to include Gypsy and Irish Traveller categories, as per the 2011 Census.
- ☑ Discrimination and harassment training programmes in workplaces should refer to derogatory comments about Gypsies, Roma and Travellers as potential disciplinary offences so that employers and employees understand that such comments will not be tolerated.
- ☑ Development of resources and funding streams to support GRT NGOs and groups to assist GRT communities to challenge and engage on these issues.
- ☑ The police should take steps to ensure that they are fully complying with their statutory and equality duties in their treatment of complaints by GRT individuals or communities, thereby increasing GRT communities' confidence in their police service.



## 2. Introduction and background

In 2015 the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) published a report on the state of equality and human rights in Britain. The report found that discrimination against Gypsies, Roma and Travellers (GRT) – despite these communities being classed as ethnic groups and therefore theoretically protected against discrimination – remains a common occurrence.

EHRC found that GRT communities faced “**multiple disadvantages**” in education, health, the workplace and the justice system. The report found that Gypsy and Traveller children were far less likely to get the minimum number of GCSEs compared to their White British peers. In health, Gypsy and Traveller communities were shown to have a lower life expectancy, lower rates of child immunisation and a higher prevalence of anxiety and depression compared to other groups.

The report pointed to the widespread discrimination these communities face, particularly from the public, the police and other authorities as possible explanations for the significantly worse outcomes these communities face.

The findings in Traveller Movement’s report ‘**The last acceptable form of racism?**’ certainly point to that possibility; the majority of Gypsies, Roma and Travellers shared negative experiences. These experiences were present across society: in education examples were provided of being made to feel inadequate; in health people spoke of being turned away by front-line health services and in criminal justice Gypsies and Travellers spoke of having their complaints dismissed by the police and legal professionals.

In particular, this report has shed new light on the discrimination experienced by GRT communities in employment; an area which has had little exploration to date.

The Traveller Movement believes this report will add significant evidence to the claim that Gypsies, Roma and Travellers continue to experience pervasive discrimination in their everyday lives and that this experience of discrimination, coupled with the feeling that there is no recourse to challenge discrimination, entrenches the inequalities they face.

# 3. Methodology

The Traveller Movement conducted an online survey of GRT people aged 18+ from across the UK to better understand the communities' experience of racism and discrimination. In total, 214 people completed the survey between February 2016 and July 2017, making it one of the largest surveys conducted among the GRT communities in the UK.<sup>iii</sup>

The questions were informed by Traveller Movement's 17 year's experience working with GRT individuals and communities.

The survey addressed experiences of racism and discrimination in the following areas:

- **Education, employment, healthcare, and policing**
- **Access to services**
- **Hate crime and hate speech**
- **Coping mechanisms**
- **Seeking help**

The survey was circulated via social media (Facebook and Twitter) to reach as many GRT individuals as possible. All responses were analysed and answers from non-GRT people removed. None of the survey questions required a compulsory answer, so the numbers of replies per question range from 187-202.

# 4. Findings

## 4.1 Education

### “Schools are the worst. Gypsy children are constantly bullied”

Cases of discrimination and bullying occurred at every level of the education system, from pre-school to university. The most prevalent areas where respondents described discrimination were the conduct of teachers and bullying by other pupils/students.

#### The conduct of teachers

Teachers were frequently mentioned (48 times by respondents) in the context of perpetuating stereotypes, poor engagement with parents and overlooking bullying and racism.

**“The teachers at my school were worse than the pupils for highlighting that I was different”**

**“Not being taught in the same way as settled children as teachers thought it was a waste of time”**

Over 15 respondents spoke of teachers expecting illiteracy and inadequacy because they were from a GRT background and highlighted this as a barrier to either continuing education or feeling welcome in a school. Some spoke of how if they displayed strong educational understanding they were

**70% (138/199) of respondents experienced discrimination in education**

#### Perpetuating stereotypes

**“Even the teachers would call our family the ‘Gypsy family’. Like we were a disease”**

The most common example provided by respondents in relation to teachers was the perpetuation of cultural stereotypes, particularly around illiteracy. This ranged from minor issues, such as “some teachers treat you different” to teachers assuming a GRT child will fail because of their ethnicity, with one respondent claiming a teacher said:

**“there is no point teaching you, you will only end up tarmacking drives”**

met with “incredulity” while many spoke of being “separated into lower educated class groups” without tests for capabilities.

#### Poor engagement with parents

**“Because me mam couldn’t read or write, they belittled her”**

Many respondents spoke of how teachers made their parents, or themselves as parents, feel uncomfortable and inadequate. Poor engagement with parents, particularly in instances of illiteracy, clearly had a lasting impact on respondents’ views of education.

**“A head teacher [was] showing me and my child around her school. [She] was perfectly polite until I told her we were Travellers. She then launched into a rude and extremely judgmental lecture on personal hygiene and time keeping. I took my child to a different school.”**

### Overlooking bullying and racism

Respondents also reported that teachers often overlooked or ignored instances of racist bullying. Their comments suggest a sense of helplessness and a feeling that should they report the bullying nothing

with words such as Gy\*o and Pi\*\*y frequently used. This was often combined with a sense that schools did not treat instances of GRT bullying seriously.

**“Many kids used to verbally abuse me over being a Gypsy”**

**“Schools don’t take bullying of Traveller children seriously”**

Respondents also mentioned feelings of wider social isolation and exclusion from everyday activities within school life which made attendance and attainment more difficult.

**“When I reported racist bullying aged 14, I was told by the head teacher to ‘tone down the Traveller thing’ and maybe it would stop. Even though I had no control over my accent, or how I look and I don’t know how to stop it or tone it down”**

would be done or they themselves would be blamed.

**“Bullying at school and teachers doing nothing about it - whereas for other students they would have”**

### Bullying by other pupils/students and hiding ethnicity

After negative experiences with teachers, the second most common experiences of discrimination in schools related to bullying by other children. Respondents also reported facing prejudice in college and university, social isolation and hiding their identity.

**“Yes, the children get called Gy\*o and the teachers will not record it as a race hate incident”**

Many respondents spoke of how their children and they themselves had experienced racist name calling in school,

**“Couldn’t sleep over at my friend’s house because her mother said Gypsy children would steal”**

Bullying and discrimination wasn’t limited to schools, with one respondent experiencing discrimination while doing a post-graduate degree, while another spoke of the difficulty they had as a PhD student.

As a coping mechanism, many respondents reported hiding their ethnicity to avoid bullying and discrimination. This took place in schools, colleges and universities.

**“As a PhD student, I have been treated as an oddity or as incompetent by my peers and professors”**

“[Hid ethnicity] at university sometimes to avoid direct racism”

“My boy is in college and never says he’s a Traveller unless they ask him”

“I never put it in a form when I attended uni.”

**“School was ok because, sad to say, but did not let anyone know I was a Gypsy which I regret. But would have made life harder”.**

## 4.2 Employment

**“I went for a cleaning job; when I told her where I lived she, as the pub owner, said ‘we don’t serve your sort and I would not employ you’**

**D**iscrimination in employment manifested itself in a number of ways, including discrimination in recruitment and career progression, losing a job after revealing GRT identity, and hiding ethnicity.

### Discrimination in recruitment and career progression

“If I put Romany in the equality monitoring section, never got interviews”

withdrawn once the person revealed their GRT background.

There was a perception that should respondents reveal their ethnicity in job application forms, they were unlikely to be called for an interview, let alone be offered the job.

“I wouldn’t tell them I’m Romany till I had the job”

“I had to hide on my CV [that] I lived on a site so I can get a job”

**Half (49%; 96/195) of respondents experienced discrimination in employment.**

17 respondents claimed they had been refused employment or overlooked for jobs because of their ethnicity. These experiences ranged from direct racism with applicants being told they could not have a job because as a “Gypsy, I was too untrustworthy”, to having job offers

This also included being denied access to courses to further employment chances. Two respondents reported being denied access to a hair dressing course because of their ethnicity.

## Losing a job after revealing GRT identity

**“Fired on three separate occasions for nonsensical reasons and false accusations shortly after confiding [my] heritage to a colleague”**

11 respondents provided examples of when they had been fired after revealing their ethnicity in the workplace, including cases of co-workers refusing to work with them once they found out they were GRT.

**“I have worked for a company and I was asked not to come back because the other men refused to work with a Gypsy”**

this when completing equality and diversity monitoring forms.

**“Jobs wise, if you mention this you don’t get anywhere”**

Some respondents said they altered their accent to secure a job, whilst others stated they were ‘White British’ to avoid discrimination.

**“I am now in a job where I have identified myself as White British for the first time so that I reduce the impact of my cultural identity affecting my employment”**

**[On hiding ethnicity]. “Constantly. It’s a sad fact but whenever I receive an equalities form, I never tick the Irish Traveller box. I feel like I would be treated differently. I now have a managerial position and hope to encourage recruitment of people within the community and a fair view of their lifestyle and culture”**

## Hiding ethnicity

**“In my first job at a fast food restaurant, I changed my accent and wore makeup etc. so as they wouldn’t know I was a Traveller when applying”**

**56 respondents said they hid their GRT ethnicity for the purposes of employment.** This is significantly more than respondents who reported elsewhere in the survey that they hid their ethnicity in relation to education, healthcare and access to services.

Many of the respondents explained that if they didn’t hide their ethnicity, they would not be employed. Some mentioned doing

Hiding ethnicity was also used to ensure that respondents wouldn’t be overlooked for promotions, with one health and safety officer explaining **“if I divulged my ethnic roots then I would be passed over on many occasions”**.

It is clear from the responses that many felt a sense of sadness and frustration that they had to hide their ethnicity and identity.

**[On hiding ethnicity]. “All the time. [I own] shops that would go bankrupt if customers knew I were Gypsy, even my staff are racist against Gypsies but don’t realise I employ them, pay their taxes, National Insurance & pensions for them”**

## 4.3 Healthcare

**“I stopped using the camp address because they always look down on us. I now use my mother-in-law’s house address because it doesn’t draw [attention] when I’m making appointments”**

**2**1 people described encountering discrimination when registering with a GP surgery because they had no permanent address or their address was on a caravan site. Respondents also described being mistreated by receptionists and other GP staff and of hiding their ethnicity.

Other respondents shared a similar experience being “refused antenatal care”, while another said she had “difficulty getting vaccinations for children”. One explained that GPs repeatedly **“refused help for my child’s hernia because [we] were of no fixed abode”**.

**Almost a third (30%; 54/193) of respondents experienced discrimination when accessing health care.**

**“I was having a baby and passing blood. I tried to get an appointment with the doctor’s but was not able to. I went to A&E where I waited three hours. After being seen by a nurse, I was told to go back and see the doctor as it wasn’t an emergency. I returned to the doctor’s surgery; they said I had to have a permanent address so I told them I was staying at a hotel and gave that address. When I finally saw the doctor, he said I was very ill and was upset with the staff”**  
(English corrected)

Respondents also reported that they regularly hid their ethnicity in order to access health services and receive equal treatment.

**“I’m registered as white British; it’s just easier - why run the risk?”**

**“My family would never say we was Gypsies in case they refused to give us health care”**



## 4.4 Policing

**“[Repeatedly] being stopped, questioned and sometimes searched by the police who freely admitted their only reason for doing so was because we were Travellers”**

Respondents' comments on the police ranged from feeling “harassed” to having their claims of racism not taken seriously.

**“The police refuse to turn up when vigilantes are trying to burn you out”**

**“[Reaction] from the police when me and my family have suffered racism. They really don't want to do anything, just get brushed off”**

On perceived harassment, some respondents provided examples of being routinely stopped and searched by the police without good reason.

**Over 50 respondents specifically mentioned mistreatment by the police.**

**“Having the local police stop and question me every time I went out shopping, as I was a ‘known criminal’ despite never having a criminal record” (English adjusted)**

**“The police don't take racism against Gypsies as valid”**



## 4.5 Access to services

**“On an almost weekly basis, clubs/pubs/eateries/shops, the local cinema, at this point it would be easier to list local places that serve Travellers than ones that don’t, because most of them don’t”**

The most common was denial of service in pubs and restaurants.

**82 respondents specifically mentioned pubs when providing examples of discrimination and over 40 mentioned restaurants, usually when they were with their family.**

“I walked into a pub. The landlord shouted: ‘oi you’, I said ‘who me?’ He shouted again ‘Yeah you, fuck off we don’t want your sort in here’. I had never been in there before. Was with a couple of mates; we were all parked up on a field nearby, which we had permission for because we are circus people. None of us drank much at all and it is very unusual

for us to visit a pub. We said nothing, left and went for a pint in a different pub but I made sure to take my trilby off first”

“Refused service in a pub because we were ‘dirty traveller scum’”

**55% (103/189) of respondents were refused access to services because they were Gypsies, Roma or Travellers.**

## 4.6 Hate crime and hate speech

**“Random people would just shout ‘Dirty fucking pi\*\*\*s’. ‘Get out of my country’, ‘I will burn your caravan down when you sleep!’ and at one point a woman screamed at my 9-year-old sister ‘Dirty thieves who should have been deported. Even the young one’ (even though we was born in England)”**

Respondents spoke of regularly being subject to racist abuse in public, describing cases of both verbal and physical

**“Was physically assaulted by a man who said he was tired of ‘pi\*\*\*s’ taking over ‘his country’”**

**77% (153/199) respondents were victims of hate speech/hate crime.  
91% (184/202) experienced discrimination because of their ethnicity.**

assault. Others described the acceptable nature in which offensive terms were thrown at them, including in front of children.

**“Been called gy\*o or pi\*\*y in front of my children”**

**“People making comments that we’re all thieves and that was accepted”**

**“Have been called a gy\*o and a pi\*\*y as a child by adults and as an adult; these terms including tinker have been used at times by people who think it’s funny”**

Some respondents provided first hand examples of physical attacks on them or their property because someone disliked their ethnicity.

**“I’ve been called a ‘pi\*\*y’ regularly. I’ve had my vehicle vandalised with graffiti. I’ve been threatened that they are going to come back and set my van on fire”**

Respondents also described abuse on social media, including as part of campaigns and protests in local areas against the presence of GRT people or Traveller sites.

**“On social media numerous times and in the work place”**

**“Locals protesting to us being in the area, posting lies on social media, local councillors making personal vendettas, having caravans stoned by local youths, harassment by police”**

## Examples of derogatory tweets

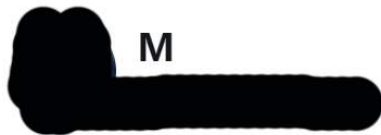


stef

Follow

i fucking hate pikeys

1:28 PM - 10 May 2017

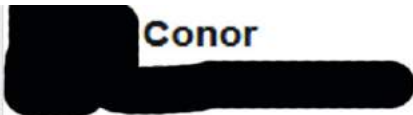


M

Follow

Nothing worse in this world than pikeys,  
honestly set fire to all of them

10:22 PM - 23 Jul 2017



Conor

Follow

Fuck sake there's gypos in callands, might  
round up the old people's home and set fire  
to the caravans

A 'tribe' of 10-15 pikey wagons have decided to 'set up home' in Asda Old Ke  
Road's car park! Get on it @metpoliceuk Tried 101 for 13mins



Met Contact Centre

@MetCC

Follow

Replying to

Hi Mark, sorry for the delay you have  
experienced. @MPSSouthwark are aware  
and dealing. Thanks.

3:44 pm - 5 Jul 2017

## 4.7 Coping mechanisms

**“All the time it has become part of life if nobody knows what you are they cannot attack you”**

As highlighted in the employment, education and health sections of this report, hiding ethnicity was the dominant coping mechanism respondents used when faced with prejudice and discrimination. Many described speaking with a different accent, wearing plain black clothes, giving friends' settled addresses when required, and pretending to be Irish or Mediterranean in order not to disclose their GRT background.

**“As a child, my mother told us to say we were Portuguese rather than Romany”**

In addition to hiding ethnicity to access services or to seek employment, respondents also explained that they resorted to hiding their ethnicity in social situations and with friends for fear of social exclusion and isolation.

**76% (148/196) of respondents hid their ethnicity in order to avoid racism and discrimination**

**“[on hiding ethnicity] every day! I wear very plain black clothes, hair in a bun and glasses on, talk quiet or hardly at all to people just to not have the hate put towards me as, if I'm alone in towns, it gets scary as I have been followed to my car and had stone thrown at me and my car before by several men”**

Respondents frequently reported having to tell their children to behave differently to avoid discrimination.

Other respondents described how they had to wait until they really trusted someone before they would tell them they are from the GRT community.

**“All the time. I won't tell anyone I am a Traveller until I have known them for a month or more. Until I feel that I can judge their reaction”**

## 4.8 Seeking help

**“It will never stop so why bother. Grown a thick layer of skin”**

Many respondents saw “no point” in seeking legal help and believed many of the institutions and organisations tasked with addressing discrimination and hate crime would not take them seriously because they are GRT.

**“Pointless as they would just look at my case and throw it out because I’m a Traveller”**

**“Who cares if we live or die”**

**“No one helps you report it to the police; and they just give you a crime number, report it to the boss of the places and they say they will “talk” to them but never seem to do anything. It’s the last acceptable form of racism”**

**77% (145/189) of respondents had not looked for any legal help after experiencing discrimination.**

**“They always assume we wasn’t worth the time or just plain lying”**

Alongside low levels of institutional trust, respondents also highlighted the mistrust the settled community has towards GRT. Many emphasised just how entrenched this sense of being hated by the settled community is for GRT people.

Others explained how when they had sought advice, the treatment they received made them feel worse.

**“I got advice but not helpful as we are looked down on as vermin”**

# 5. Recommendations

## Education

The history and culture of Gypsies and Travellers is not being taught in schools in the UK despite initial progress made in 2008 when the Department of Education established Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month. Without action, teacher's and pupil's general ignorance of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller cultures will ensure the children from these communities continue to feel excluded and isolated at school. **Therefore, we strongly recommend that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month should be supported by the Department for Education and rolled out across all schools in the UK.**

## Health

The NHS should, as a matter of urgency, communicate clearly to all primary health care providers that they **must not refuse to register a Gypsy, Roma or a Traveller individual due to a lack of proof of address.**

Despite Gypsies and Travellers being widely recognised as experiencing the poorest health outcomes of any group in the UK, the NHS England's data monitoring does not include GRT in the ethnic categories currently monitored. **This should be addressed as a matter of urgency.**

## Employment

**Employers should take a zero tolerance approach to all forms of discrimination and harassment.** As recommended by trade unions on broader equality, this should be reflected in workplace policies and training, including what bystanders can do to challenge harassment. It is imperative that these training programmes highlight racist and derogatory comments towards GRT individuals and communities as examples of discrimination and harassment leading to disciplinary action. Where such incidents do occur there should be systems in place to support the victim and clear disciplinary procedures to deal with the perpetrator.

## Funding

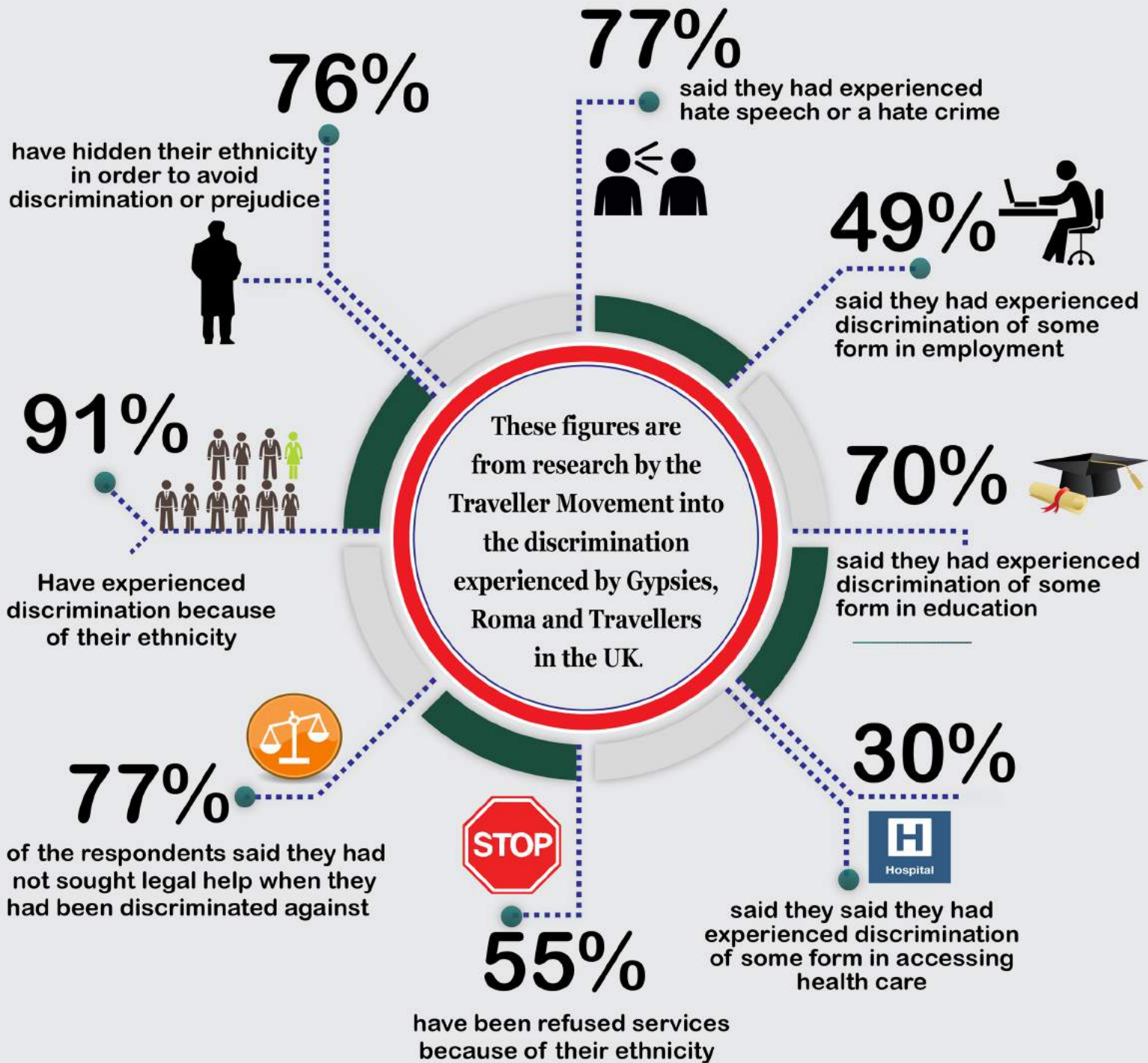
**D**evelopment of resources and funding streams to support GRT NGOs and groups to assist GRT communities to challenge and engage on these issues.

## Hate Crime

**T**oo often the GRT community view the police as passive in their response to racism directed toward them. **The police should take steps to ensure that they are fully complying with their statutory and equality duties in their treatment of complaints by GRT individuals or communities, thereby increasing GRT communities' confidence in their police service.**



# DISCRIMINATION EXPERIENCED BY GYPSIES, ROMA & TRAVELLERS



## Collection of quotes from community members used in the report.

### Education

“Schools are the worst. Gypsy children are constantly bullied”

“Even the teachers would call our family the ‘Gypsy family’. Like we were a disease”.

“some teachers treat you different”

“there is no point teaching you, you will only end up tarmacking drives”.

“The teachers at my school were worse than the pupils for highlighting that I was different”

“Not being taught in the same way as settled children as teachers thought it was a waste of time”

“Because me mam couldn’t read or write, they belittled her”

“A head teacher [was] showing me and my child around her school. [She] was perfectly polite until I told her we were Travellers. She then launched into a rude and extremely judgmental lecture on personal hygiene and time keeping. I took my child to a different school.”

“When I reported racist bullying aged 14, I was told by the head teacher to ‘tone down the Traveller thing’ and maybe it would stop. Even though I had no control over my accent, or how I look and I don’t know how to stop it or tone it down”

“Bullying at school and teachers doing nothing about it - whereas for other students they would have”.

“Yes, the children get called Gy\*o and the teachers will not record it as a race hate incident”

“Many kids used to verbally abuse me over being a Gypsy”

“Schools don’t take bullying of Traveller children seriously”

“Couldn’t sleep over at my friend’s house because her mother said Gypsy



children would steal”

“As a PhD student, I have been treated as an oddity or as incompetent by my peers and professors”

“School was ok because, sad to say, but did not let anyone know I was a Gypsy which I regret. But would have made life harder”.

“[Hid ethnicity] at university sometimes to avoid direct racism”

“I never put it in a form when I attended uni.”

“My boy is in college and never says he’s a Traveller unless they ask him”

## Employment

“I went for a cleaning job; when I told her where I lived she, as the pub owner, said ‘we don’t serve your sort and I would not employ you”

“If I put Romany in the equality monitoring section, never got interviews”

“I wouldn’t tell them I’m Romany till I had the job”

“I had to hide on my CV [that] I lived on a site so I can get a job”

“Fired on three separate occasions for nonsensical reasons and false accusations shortly after confiding [my] heritage to a colleague”

“I have worked for a company and I was asked not to come back because the other men refused to work with a Gypsy”

“In my first job at a fast food restaurant, I changed my accent and wore makeup etc. so as they wouldn’t know I was a Traveller when applying”

“Jobs wise, if you mention this you don’t get anywhere”

“Constantly. It's a sad fact but whenever I receive an equalities form, I never tick the Irish Traveller box. I feel like I would be treated differently.

I now have a managerial position and hope to encourage recruitment of people within the community and a fair view of their lifestyle and culture”

“I am now in a job where I have identified myself as White British for the first time so that I reduce the impact of my cultural identity affecting my employment”

“if I divulged my ethnic roots then I would be passed over on many occasions”.

[On hiding ethnicity]. “All the time. [I own] shops that would go bankrupt if customers knew I were Gypsy, even my staff are racist against Gypsies but don’t realise I employ them, pay their taxes, National Insurance & pensions for them”

“I would not say I am a Traveller anymore”

## Health

“I stopped using the camp address because they always look down on us. I now use my mother-in-law’s house address because it doesn’t draw [attention] when I’m making appointments”

“I was having a baby and passing blood. I tried to get an appointment with the doctor’s but was not able to. I went to A&E where I waited three hours. After being seen by a nurse, I was told to go back and see the doctor as it wasn’t an emergency. I returned to the doctor’s surgery; they said I had to have a permanent address so I told them I was staying at a hotel and gave that address. When I finally saw the doctor, he said I was very ill and was upset with the staff” (English corrected).

“refused antenatal care”

“difficulty getting vaccinations for children”.

“refused help for my child’s hernia because [we] were of no fixed abode”.

“I’m registered as white British; it’s just easier - why run the risk?”

“My family would never say we was Gypsies in case they refused to give us health care”

## Policing

“[Repeatedly] being stopped, questioned and sometimes searched by the police who freely admitted their only reason for doing so was because we were

Travellers”

“The police don’t take racism against Gypsies as valid”

“The police refuse to turn up when vigilantes are trying to burn you out”

“[Reaction] from the police when me and my family have suffered racism. They really don’t want to do anything, just get brushed off”

“Having the local police stop and question me every time I went out shopping, as I was a ‘known criminal’ despite never having a criminal record” (English adjusted)

## Access to services

“On an almost weekly basis, clubs/pubs/eateries/shops, the local cinema, at this point it would be easier to list local places that serve Travellers than ones that don’t, because most of them don’t”

“I walked into a pub. The landlord shouted: ‘oi you’, I said ‘who me?’ He shouted again ‘Yeah you, fuck off we don’t want your sort in here’. I had never been in there before. Was with a couple of mates; we were all parked up on a field nearby, which we had permission for because we are circus people. None of us drank much at all and it is very unusual for us to visit a pub. We said nothing, left and went for a pint in a different pub but I made sure to take my trilby off first”

“Refused service in a pub because we were ‘dirty traveller scum’”

## Hate crime and hate speech

“Random people would just shout ‘Dirty fucking pi\*\*\*s’. ‘Get out of my country’, ‘I will burn your caravan down when you sleep!’ and at one point a woman screamed at my 9-year-old sister ‘Dirty thieves who should have been deported. Even the young one’ (even though we was born in England)”

“Been called gy\*o or pi\*\*y in front of my children”

“People making comments that we’re all thieves and that was accepted”

“Have been called a gy\*o and a pi\*\*y as a child by adults and as an adult; these terms including tinker have been used at times by people who think it's funny”

“Was physically assaulted by a man who said he was tired of ‘pi\*\*\*s’ taking over ‘his country’”

“I've been called a ‘pi\*\*y’ regularly. I've had my vehicle vandalised with graffiti. I've been threatened that they are going to come back and set my van on fire”

“On social media numerous times and in the work place”

“Locals protesting to us being in the area, posting lies on social media, local councillors making personal vendettas, having caravans stoned by local youths, harassment by police”

## Coping mechanisms

“All the time it has become part of life if nobody knows what you are they cannot attack you”

“[I hide my ethnicity] every day! I wear very plain black clothes, hair in a bun and glasses on, talk quiet or hardly at all to people just to not have the hate put towards me as, if I'm alone in towns, it gets scary as I have been followed to my car and had stone thrown at me and my car before by several men”

“As a child, my mother told us to say we were Portuguese rather than Romany”

“All the time. I won't tell anyone I am a Traveller until I have known them for a month or more. Until I feel that I can judge their reaction”

## Seeking help

“It will never stop so why bother. Grown a thick layer of skin”

“Pointless as they would just look at my case and throw it out because I’m a Traveller”

“They always assume we wasn’t worth the time or just plain lying”

“Who cares if we live or die”

“No one helps you report it to the police; and they just give you a crime number, report it to the boss of the places and they say they will "talk" to them but never seem to do anything. It’s the last acceptable form of racism”

Others explained how when they had sought advice, the treatment they received made them feel worse.

“I got advice but not helpful as we are looked down on as vermin”

## Bibliography

- <sup>i</sup> BBC, 2004, CRE examines treatment of gypsies
- <sup>ii</sup> EHRC, 2015, Is Britain Fairer, p. 85
- <sup>iii</sup> E.g. Lane, P., Spencer, S. and Jones, A. (2014): Gypsy, Traveller and Roma: Experts by Experience. Reviewing UK Progress on the European Union Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies. Anglia Ruskin University.



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