



The Traveller Movement

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Written evidence by the Traveller Movement to the Home Affairs Select Committee inquiry into hate crime and its violence consequences

#OPERATIONREPORTHATE



About TM: The Traveller Movement (TM) was established in 1999 and is a leading national policy and voice charity, working to raise the capacity and social inclusion of the Traveller, Gypsy and Roma communities in Britain. TM act as a bridge builder bringing the communities, service providers and policy makers together, stimulating debate and promoting forward-looking strategies to promote increased race equality, civic engagement, inclusion, service provision and community cohesion. For further information about TM visit www.travellermovement.org.uk

TM is pleased to respond to this inquiry and asks the Committee to give due consideration to the impact of hate crimes on the Gypsy, Traveller and Roma community. TM would welcome the opportunity to provide oral evidence to the Committee.

1. Summary of key points

1.1 It is widely acknowledged that hate crimes towards the Gypsy, Traveller and Roma (GTR) community are underreported.

1.2 The classification system currently in use by 81% of UK police forces does not include the ethnic GTR categories, which prevents the police from being able to develop an appropriate response and gain greater clarity of the extent to which these communities experience hate crime.

1.3 Police forces should engage and support the invaluable work of the Gypsy Roma Traveller Police Association. This will increase understanding of GTR communities within the police.

1.4 The Crown Prosecution Service should use its existing powers to prosecute people who incite racial hatred and commit hate crimes towards GTR communities. Successful cases will encourage the communities' to report their experience of hate crimes.

1.5 Too often, online comment threats attached to articles on Travellers and Gypsies are used to incite racial hatred. Website moderators should act immediately to remove such comments.

1.6 Politicians have a moral duty to promote community cohesion and should be held accountable when they make inflammatory comments about the GTR communities, which more often than not lead to a spike in racial hatred incidents.

1.7 In many cases, negative stereotypes toward the GTR communities stems from ignorance and a lack of awareness, which are in turn perpetuated by the media. Cultural awareness courses are an important tool in addressing these attitudes.

1.8 Increasing Gypsies' and Travellers' awareness of hate crimes and the need to report them can only be effectively achieved with the community and with organisations that are trusted by the communities.

1.9 Intensive efforts, with genuine support from government departments, are needed to increase the GTR communities' awareness of hate crimes.

2. The effectiveness of current legislation for preventing and prosecuting hate crime

2.1. As is widely acknowledged, including in the government's latest [Action against Hate Crime](#) strategy, hate crimes towards the Gypsy, Traveller and Roma (GTR) communities are underreported. Until there is a concerted effort by the Government, the criminal justice agencies and local authorities to improve awareness and reporting rates, the strength of legislative protection has little relevance to these communities.

2.2. The lack of action in tackling wider discrimination against GTR communities is a case in point. Despite the UK having a very strong legislative framework to protect individuals and communities from discrimination, GTR communities continue to experience ubiquitous racial discrimination.

2.3 The Traveller Movement (TM) has launched an Equality and Social Justice Unit (ESJU), to improve access to justice for GTR individuals and communities and to work with them to challenge unlawful discrimination and human rights abuses. The ESJU's Legal Development Officer will work with GTR communities, public bodies to offer training, legal resource and information to challenge abuses against Gypsies, Travellers and Roma.

2.4. TM's 2016 discrimination survey found that 98% of GTR respondents had experienced discrimination because of their ethnicity, yet despite this experience 74% did not seek legal advice or advocacy. The reasons included lack of trust in authorities, lack of knowledge of rights, or the length or expense of the process.

2.5. An alarming number of Gypsies, Travellers and Roma (77%) – as a coping mechanism against discrimination and hate – hide their ethnicity.

"[I hide my ethnicity] 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." – TM Discrimination Survey 2016

2.6. Therefore, it is clear that the best equality laws or legal protections from discrimination and hate crimes – while important – are irrelevant if complainants cannot enforce their rights because they a) do not know their rights, b) cannot access legal advice or representation, or c) trust that the authorities will protect and enforce their rights.

3. The barriers that prevent individuals from reporting hate crime, and measures to improve reporting rates.

3.1 The reasons for the underreporting of hate crimes are varied and outlined below.

3.1.1 Lack of ethnic minority recording by criminal justice agencies

3.1.2. The Home Office requires police forces to record and report the ethnicity of users and employees; however, the classification system currently in use by 81% of UK police forces does not include GTR ethnic categories.¹ Without data, police forces cannot comply with their S149 public sector equality duty (PSED) under the Equality Act 2010.²

3.1.3. The gathering of information relating to GTR ethnic status by the criminal justice sector agencies would enable the police to develop an appropriate response and gain greater clarity of the extent to which these communities experience hate crime.

3.1.4. The need to improve the classification system currently in use was supported by a review commissioned by Thames Valley Police, which assessed the force's policies and procedures relating to GTR communities. The review noted that the police service has difficulty understanding GTR communities as their ethnicity is not properly recorded³. The review identified *'the need for standardizing official intelligence record keeping relating to GTR'*.

3.1.5. There is a strong feeling within the GTR communities that crimes against them are not taken as seriously as crimes against the wider population. It is notable for example, that the

¹ Page 7, The Traveller Movement (2016): *Inclusion of Gypsies and Travellers in ethnic monitoring systems of Police forces in the UK*.

² Under S149 of the Equality Act 2010 a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act; (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

³ [TVP GRT Policy and Procedure Review May 2015](#), Greenfields, Watson & Davies, May 2015

British Crime Survey visits households living in bricks and mortar but not those living on caravan sites, so their experience of crime is also unrecorded.

3.1.6. If crime is not measured, it cannot become a target to be tackled. Therefore, hate crimes – and crimes more generally – against GTR communities will remain the lowest of priorities⁴.

3.1.7 Recommendations:

- 3.1.8. Criminal justice sector agencies should be required to include the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities in their ethnic monitoring systems, as classified in the Office for National Statistics 2011 National Census.
- 3.1.9. The British Crime Survey should work with community organisations, and the GTR sector to include the GTR communities in its survey.

3.2 Negative experiences with authorities

3.2.1. A significant barrier to the reporting of hate crimes is the historical distrust GTR communities have towards the authorities. This distrust stems from many years of negative experiences with authority figures, including local authorities, the police and even schools. In addition, the distrust is exacerbated by contact with the police usually being in the form of police enforcement action, e.g. enforcement of eviction notices and the exercising of search warrants.

3.2.2. GTR communities are hesitant to approach the police to report crimes, as the police are often dismissive and insensitive. Below are a selection of quotes from community members:

“Why bother nobody believe (sic) you” – TM Discrimination Survey 2016

“Nobody cares” – TM Discrimination Survey 2016

“We are taught from a young age to let it run off you like water off a duck’s back and you don’t say anything” [Plymouth & Devon Racial Equality Council, 2013](#)

3.2.3. Research into the responses to a ‘needs and accommodation assessment’ of Gypsy and Traveller communities in the West of England found that half of the respondents had experienced racism. Yet, the reporting rate for race related crime was only 17.2% - much lower than for other offences⁵.

3.2.4. Recommendations:

- 3.2.5. Police forces need to be more cooperative in their approaches in engaging with GTR communities. A community policing model – which will still have its challenges – should be developed for the police to engage with the community in non-enforcement settings.
- 3.2.6. Police forces should engage and support the invaluable work of the Gypsy Roma Traveller Police Association. This will increase understanding of GTR communities within the police⁶.
- 3.2.7. Increasing the representation of GTR police officers would be an effective step in improving relations between the police and GTR communities.

⁴ This was a finding echoed by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), which called for disaggregated data on hate crimes in its latest report in August 2016. Full report here: [CERD August 2016](#)

⁵ [Devon-wide Gypsy and Traveller Housing Needs Assessment](#), Dr Rebekah Southern & Dr Zoë James, November 2006

⁶ The Gypsy Roma Traveller Police Association can be found here: <http://www.grtpa.com/>

3.3. Lack of action in response to the reporting of hate crimes

3.3.1. Underreporting by GTR communities is fuelled by the lack of action in resolving the crime, not just by the police but also the courts. CERD, in its latest report in August, stated this was an issue for hate crimes widely too, highlighting that there is a significant gap between reported cases and successful prosecution of hate crimes.

3.3.2. In the event GTR people report racist offences against them, courts rarely – in our experience – impose increased penalties for such offences. This largely seems to be because there is little political pressure on the police and Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to prosecute. Below are two examples of the courts missing this opportunity.

3.3.3. In the case of a fatal assault on a 15 year-old Irish Traveller Johnny Delaney in Liverpool in 2003, the trial judge did not find that it was a racially aggravated offence despite the evidence of a number of witnesses about the racist comments shouted during the attack. The (then) chair of the Commission for Racial Equality commented that '*it is extremely hard to see how this particular killing wasn't motivated in some way by racial prejudice*'.

3.3.4. Another example of unrecognised hate crime is the case of [Barry Smith](#), an English Gypsy, who was beaten to death and set alight in 2011 by a woman, her husband and a friend after the woman had lost her job for racially abusing Mr Smith at her workplace. Again, the police flagged the case as being racially motivated, but the judge ruled that the racist comments were a separate incident not related to the tragic killing of Mr Smith.

3.3.5 Recommendation:

- 3.3.5. The CPS should use its existing powers to prosecute people who incite racial hatred and commit hate crimes towards GTR communities. Successful cases will encourage the communities' to report their experience of hate crimes.

4. The role of social media companies and other online platforms in helping to identify online sources of hate crime and to prevent online hate crime incidents from escalating

4.1. Racism on social media is especially harmful because of its immediate results within all sectors of society; its extensive nature has enabled hate speech toward GTR communities to spread more quickly and to take on even more serious and intimidating forms. According to Hatebase, an online database that 'records' hate speech on Twitter, Gypsies and Travellers were the number one targets of online hatred.⁷

4.2. Online comment threads attached to articles on Travellers are a particular source and platform used to express racist, derogatory and threatening language. Too often, newspapers and online moderators either ignore the comments or take an inordinate amount of time to remove them – a situation you do not see for racist comments made against other ethnic minorities.⁸

4.3 Recommendations:

- 4.4. Social media companies, website and newspaper moderators should take down racist remarks against GTR communities as a matter of urgency.

⁷ According to Hatebase, an online database that 'records' hate speech on Twitter, Shubber, 2014: <http://www.wired.co.uk/article/hatebrain-stats-uk>

⁸ [Submission by the Irish Traveller Movement in Britain to the Leveson Inquiry](#), April 2012

5. The role of the voluntary sector, community representatives and other frontline organisations in challenging the attitudes that underpin hate crime

5.1. Awareness raising campaigns and working with the voluntary sector

5.1.1. TM has partnered with leading stakeholders and charities to develop a public awareness campaign called #OperationReportHate. The campaign will raise awareness within GTR communities about hate crimes and promote and share good practice and resources. The end goal is for hate crimes against the GTR communities to be given the same public profile and recognition as other hate crimes.

5.1.2. Increasing Gypsies' and Travellers' awareness of hate crimes and the need to report them can only be effectively achieved with the community and with organisations that are trusted by the community. By way of example, TM ran Operation Traveller Vote – in close partnership with the community – prior to the 2015 General Election and successfully increased the number of Travellers, Gypsies and Roma registered to vote.

5.1.3. In the latest hate crime action plan, the government states that they will continue to work with the Gypsy Traveller Liaison Group. TM resigned in 2014 because of its failure to make measureable progress and its lack of accountability and transparency.

5.1.4 Recommendations:

- 5.1.5. Funding revenue streams need to be directed towards organisations working with and who are trusted by the community for there to be any tangible progress in improving the reporting and recording of hate crimes against Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities.
- 5.1.6. The government need to adopt a more productive and proactive engagement strategy with the community and leading stakeholders in the sector.
- 5.1.7. Intensive efforts, with genuine support from government departments, are needed to increase GTR communities' awareness of hate crimes and incidents and how to report them.
- 5.1.8. Reporting websites should work with the GTR sector to produce pages and materials which are user friendly for the communities.

5.2. Media and politicians

5.2.1. Hostility towards GTR communities is long-standing and widespread. Politicians and the media continue to use hate speech against them.⁹ This has created a climate in which racism and hate speech/hate crime towards these communities is thought acceptable.

5.2.2. As recognised by the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities of the Council of Europe: '*Negative and inaccurate reporting by certain sectors of the media is contributing to hostile attitudes towards certain groups, in particular Gypsies and Travellers.*¹⁰

⁹ The European Commission noted the prevalence of discrimination in the UK and stated that '*the hostile attitude and negative stereotyping of Gypsies and Travellers and newly arrived Roma should be carefully addressed. Effective measures should be taken to combat anti-Roma rhetoric and hate speech*'; page 55 EC: Directorate-General for Justice Report on the implementation of the EU framework for National Roma Integration Strategies. European Union 2014.

¹⁰ See submission from the **Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities of the Council of Europe**, page 3 para 9 of the Human Rights Council Working Group on the UPR First session, April 2008 summary of stakeholders submissions:
<https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G08/115/86/PDF/G0811586.pdf?OpenElement>

5.2.3. Deputy Chief Constable Janette McCormick, the National Police Chiefs' Council's lead for Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities said in 2015: '*prejudice against Gypsies and Travellers is sadly endemic in society and is often fuelled by stereotypes in the media.*'¹¹

5.2.4. In Scotland, an audit of published media articles over six months in 2014/15 about Gypsy/ Travellers, found that around two-thirds contained negative coverage.¹²

5.2.5. [The Leveson Inquiry](#) confirmed these findings, stating that the hostility towards and racial stereotyping of GTR people is widely used by the press in a way that would not be tolerated with any other minorities.¹³

5.2.6. It is therefore integral to any strategy to challenge the attitudes that underpin hate crimes towards GTR communities, the media must be held accountable for perpetuating negative stereotypes and biased reporting.

5.2.7. Politicians also have a role to play as hostile media coverage of these communities often occurs when the views of local and national politicians are reported. Comments such as those made by Mr Gary Streeter MP in August 2016¹⁴ only increase the likelihood of violent incidents towards GTR communities.

5.2.8. Recommendations:

- 5.2.9. A new clause should be inserted into the press code of conduct that recognises that prejudicial and racist reporting can be targeted at a group and not just an individual.
- 5.2.10. Politicians have a moral duty to promote community cohesion and should be held accountable when they make inflammatory comments about the GTR communities which more often than not lead to a spike in racial hatred incidents.

5.3. In many cases, negative and erroneous attitudes held about GTR communities stems from ignorance and a lack of awareness. This is true of public bodies as well as individuals across society.

5.3.1 Recommendation:

- 5.3.2. Training on PSED for people in authority should always include the need to foster good race relations with the GTR communities. Cultural awareness training should also be rolled out more widely to improve understanding and knowledge of GTR communities.

¹¹ Deputy Chief Constable Janette McCormick, National Police Chiefs' Council's lead for Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities: <http://news.npcc.police.uk/releases/landmark-ruling-against-gypsy-and-traveller-discrimination>, 2015

¹² Article 12 in Scotland [2015]: *I Witness: the UNCRC in the United Kingdom, Young Gypsy/Travellers Voices*. Online at: <http://bit.ly/1SOPys0>

¹³ Crofts-Gibbons, 2013: <http://toglobalist.org/2013/02/we're-not-racist-but-those-gypsies/>

¹⁴ The Telegraph, [Tory MP compares travellers \(sic\) to Genghis Khan and says they should not be classed as a vulnerable minority](#), 17 August 2016