Factsheet: Gypsies, Travellers and Roma in the UK and Europe

BACKGROUND

- It is estimated that between 90,000 and 300,000 Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people are live in the UK.
- Together, the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) communities form Europe’s largest ethnic minority.
- These terms are actually government imposed labels; community members may have other ways of self-identifying.
- Along with the Jews, the Roma were the only other ethnic minority targeted by the Nazis during the Holocaust.
- In 1989 Romani Gypsies were recognised as a distinct ethnicity under the Race Relations Act. In 2000 Irish Travellers were given the same recognition.
- In the 2011 census of England and Wales 58,000 people identified themselves as Gypsy or Irish Travellers.

INDICATORS

- Of those who took part in the 2011 census:
  - 60% over the age of 16 have no qualifications (compared with 23% overall for over 16s in England and Wales) due to educational exclusion
  - Only 24% live in a caravan or temporary structure, yet there is still not adequate provision of legal campsites
  - They are twice as likely to live in council housing than the general population, indicating high levels of poverty due to social exclusion
- In the UK, GRT communities have the highest rates of illiteracy of any ethnic group.
- GRT children perform 5 times worse than settled children in GCSE results.
- Life expectancy in the GRT community is 10 years lower than the UK national average of 81.5
- There are disproportionately high levels of child mortality, still birth & miscarriage within GTR families.
- Members of these communities are 3 times more likely commit suicide than the rest of the population and over twice as likely to suffer from depression.

MEDIA PORTRAYAL

- Unsympathetic media portrayal perpetuates racial hatred and stereotypical perceptions of this community:
  - 63% of GTR youths report being attacked or bullied
  - The Channel 4 program My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding caused “long term harm to the educational and social inclusion of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children... including physical and sexual assault, racist abuse and bullying, misinformation and hostile questioning, resulting in damage to the self-esteem of children, and withdrawal from school” – Brian Foster, educational consultant