

**LONDON
GYPSIES &
TRAVELLERS**

**The problem: Why Gypsies and Travellers are
left with nowhere to go**

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Everyday racism and systemic discrimination continue to affect most Gypsy and Traveller people in the UK



History

Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers are some of the oldest ethnic minority groups in the UK. Alongside other travelling communities, Gypsies and Travellers have a shared heritage of nomadism that goes back centuries.



[Watch 'Roads from the past', a short film from Travellers' Times about nomadism in the UK](#)

Gypsies and Travellers have lived and worked in London for hundreds of years, contributing to the social, economic and cultural life of the city



[Explore our project 'Mapping the Histories of London's Travellers' for more information](#)



Laws and policies affecting nomadism in the UK

Travelling is a significant part of Gypsies and Travellers' culture and way of life and many families continue to travel in and around London, following in the footsteps of past generations. But nomadism in the UK has been eroded by a series of draconian laws and policies for centuries. Some examples from the last few decades include:



1960 Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act

Gave power to local authorities to close common land to Gypsies and Travellers and many were evicted from traditional stopping places

1968 Caravan Sites Act

Councils were given the duty to provide sites for Gypsies and Travellers, but also increased eviction powers

1994 Criminal Justice Act

The duty to provide sites was removed and the police and councils were given more powers to evict

2015 Planning Policy for Traveller sites

The government changed the planning definition of Travellers to exclude those who stopped travelling permanently

2022 Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act

Stopping on public and private land without consent has been made a criminal offence

Living a nomadic life today


A Catch-22

Planning definition

Gypsies and Travellers have to prove they are actively travelling in caravans for work reasons in order to have their housing needs counted.

This has resulted in many councils saying there are no Travellers who meet this definition in their area.

Consequently, many local plans don't identify land for new sites and stopping places.



There aren't enough transit sites and stopping places – so Gypsies and Travellers have to stop roadside, on vacant and derelict land, and sometimes on green open spaces.

Many people have been forced to settle permanently, giving up their traditional way of life.

Police and Crime Act

There has been growing hostility towards nomadic people who stop on roadside camps in recent decades.

Negative public perceptions have led to many politicians actively promoting evictions instead of temporary stopping places.

The new law means that Gypsies and Travellers who are actively travelling and have nowhere suitable to stop can be committing a criminal offence.

The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022

A new criminal offence is now in place, which affects Gypsies and Travellers and other people living a nomadic way of life in England and Wales.

This applies when someone resides or intends to reside in a vehicle on land without consent, and fails to leave when given notice by the landowner or occupier of the land.

The condition required to give notice is that the person has caused significant damage, disruption or distress, or they are likely to do so.

Committing this offence can lead to:

- **a fine of up to £2500**
- **being imprisoned for up to 3 months**
- **having vehicles and other property impounded by the police**

"For those people who seek to practice their nomadic cultures and traditions, as protected by law, this legal 'no-win situation' means that the 10,000 families who have no legal safe place to stop in England and Wales could soon be made even more vulnerable."

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Social Work Association

The accommodation crisis

768 new pitches were needed between 2007- 2017

Only 10 pitches were delivered as extensions to existing council sites

0 200 400 600 800

The 2011 Census estimates that a quarter of Gypsies and Travellers in England and Wales live in a caravan or mobile dwelling.

In London this percentage is likely to be much lower. Many families feel forced into bricks and mortar due to a lack of culturally suitable homes.

Across London there are roughly 500 pitches on council run sites. A pitch is a space accommodating one household, but many pitches on London sites are overcrowded with multiple generations or extended family members sharing their space.

Many Gypsies and Travellers who own land and want to provide private sites struggle to get planning permission.

There are no transit sites or temporary stopping places for nomadic people travelling in London.

Prejudice and discrimination

Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities share a long history of persecution and oppression in the UK and across the world.

To this day, Gypsy and Traveller people continue to be affected by prejudice and negative public perceptions.

Public attitudes often manifest in real life as hate speech, hate crime and discrimination.

A [research report](#) from GATE Herts found that 78% of GRT people who took part had experienced hate speech/hate crime very often.

Isolation, shame, fear of racism and discrimination take a huge toll on mental health for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people.

A survey by University of Birmingham published in 2022 found:

44.6% felt negative towards Gypsies and Irish Travellers

25.9% felt negative towards Muslims

8.5% felt negative towards Jewish people

6.4% felt negative towards Black people and

8.4% felt negative towards White people



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It's been a long time coming...

...but I know a change is gonna come