

## **Extract from Equalities in Health website**

### **Gypsy Travellers**

#### **How many Scottish Gypsy Travellers are there?**

It is estimated that there are approximately 15,000 Scottish Gypsy Travellers, however the numbers are uncertain because people are reluctant to self-identify as a Gypsy for fear of prejudice or official interference.

The 2011 Census will include a category 'Gypsy/Traveller', which will provide an official source of information.

#### **Who are Gypsy Travellers?**

Gypsy Travellers refers to all travelling communities who regard 'travelling' as an important aspect of their ethnic/cultural identity. They come from Scotland, other parts of the UK and other parts of Europe. Other groups of travellers include new travellers (previously new age travellers) or occupational travellers (show or fairground). Gypsy Travellers are the only one of these groups to be protected by equalities legislation.

#### **Discrimination and Prejudice**

Gypsy Travellers experience discrimination in health, housing, education, work and from settled communities. This is due to negative stereotypes and prejudice towards Gypsy Travellers. Many Gypsy Travellers face harassment and verbal and physical hostility from local communities.

The following points highlight a few key areas of concern from among the severe, wide-ranging inequalities and problems faced.

- Gypsies and Travellers die earlier than the rest of the population.
- They experience worse health, yet are less likely to receive effective, continuous healthcare.
- Children's educational achievements are worse, and declining still further (contrary to the national trend).
- Participation in secondary education is extremely low: discrimination and abusive behaviour on the part of school staff and other students are frequently cited as reasons for children and young people leaving education at an early age.
- There is a lack of access to pre-school, out-of-school and leisure services for children and young people.
- There is substantial negative psychological impact on children who experience repeated brutal evictions, family tensions associated with insecure lifestyles, and an unending stream of extreme hostility from the wider population.
- Employment rates are low, and poverty high.
- There is an increasing problem of substance abuse among unemployed and disaffected young people.

- There are high suicide rates among the communities.
- Within the criminal justice system there is a process of accelerated criminalisation at a young age, leading rapidly to custody.
- Policy initiatives and political systems that are designed to promote inclusion and equality frequently exclude Gypsies and Travellers.
- There is a lack of access to culturally appropriate support services for people in the most vulnerable situations, such as women experiencing domestic violence.
- Gypsies' and Travellers' culture and identity receive little or no recognition, with consequent and considerable damage to their self-esteem.
- The lack of systematic ethnic monitoring of Gypsies and Travellers who use public services

[\(Extracted from Inequalities experienced by Gypsy and Traveller communities: A review\)](#)

### **Health Impact**

Results of a survey carried out by the Department of Health in 2004 showed that Gypsy Travellers have significantly poorer health than other English speaking ethnic minorities and economically disadvantaged white UK residents. For Gypsy Travellers, living in a house is associated with long term illness, poorer health state and anxiety. Those who rarely travel have the poorest health. This study also showed an inverse relationship between health needs of Gypsy Travellers and their use of health services.

### **Key resources**

#### **Publications**

[NHS Health Scotland Practice Guidance - Gypsy Travellers](#)

[Inequalities experienced by Gypsy and Traveller communities: A review](#)

[Delivering for Scotland's Gypsies/Travellers, An updated Response to the Equal Opportunity committee Inquiry Into Gypsy Travellers and Public Services 2001, published by the Scottish Executive, June 2004.](#)

[The Health Status of Gypsies & Travellers in England, Department of Health 2004](#)

### **Links**

[www.gypsy-traveller.org](http://www.gypsy-traveller.org)