



Modern caravans have replaced the old-fashioned wagons. In common with the wider community the standard of living of many Gypsies and Travellers has improved over the years.



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## What do Gypsies and Travellers Want?

- To be allowed to live peacefully as part of British society
- Recognition that a nomadic or semi-nomadic lifestyle is a legitimate way of living
- Fairer representation in the media
- An urgent solution to current accommodation problems
- Greater acceptance and understanding

## Find out more...

The Gypsy and Traveller Law Reform Coalition:  
[www.travellerslaw.org.uk](http://www.travellerslaw.org.uk)

The Gypsy Council: [www.thegypsyncouncil.org](http://www.thegypsyncouncil.org)

The Irish Traveller Movement: [www.itmtrav.com](http://www.itmtrav.com)

Friends, Families and Travellers:  
[www.gypsy-traveller.org](http://www.gypsy-traveller.org)

Commission for Racial Equality: [www.cre.org.uk](http://www.cre.org.uk)

Travellers in Leeds: [www.travellersinleeds.co.uk](http://www.travellersinleeds.co.uk)

Travellers Tairing: [ww.lmu.livjm.ac.uk/Traveller](http://ww.lmu.livjm.ac.uk/Traveller)

“Gypsies and Travellers: FAQs, Myths and the Facts” – booklet available from Bristol City Council (0117 922 2664).

Bristol City Council, Gypsy and Traveller Team:  
0117 352 5009

- This leaflet was produced by a local group of Gypsies, Travellers and settled people with Bristol City Council. The group would like to thank Devon Gypsies and Travellers for sharing their ideas for the leaflet.

# Gypsies and Travellers



**Who they are – not what they are perceived to be**



## Who they are – not what they are perceived to be

There are several different groups of Gypsies and Travellers living in England, including Romany Gypsies, Irish Travellers and New Travellers, and Circus and Fairground families. Some cultural values and traditions are shared, including a nomadic lifestyle or heritage.

The other thing they share is a high level of discrimination and prejudice in their daily lives, and great difficulty in maintaining their lifestyle and heritage. They are disadvantaged in many different ways including access to health care, education, and secure accommodation. As a result, life expectancy is significantly lower than the national average.

Under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act all public bodies have a duty to promote equality for Gypsies and Travellers.

## Gypsies and Travellers in the Bristol Area

It is at least 500 years since Romany Gypsies arrived in Britain, and 200 years since Irish Travellers first came. Gypsies and Travellers have lived in and around Bristol for centuries. Many British people, including famous household names, have Gypsy or Traveller ancestry, yet few people really understand their culture.

The extended family is extremely important. Children have a central place, and older people

are cared for at home. Families travel long distances to support each other in bereavement, illness or other family events. They have special hygiene rules; their own languages of Romany and Irish Cant; and often strong religious beliefs. There is a rich oral, musical and artistic tradition.

Originally Gypsies and Travellers were nomadic, regularly travelling to earn a living, as some still do. Others travel part of the time, while some settle in sites or houses.

Self-employed family businesses are important to their economy, and skills are learnt in families. Wherever they live, most Gypsies and Travellers want to retain their cultural identity. However life can be very difficult when there is nowhere to park a caravan, and services or neighbours are hostile.

## Myths and Facts

### Travellers are thieves and criminals!

There can be problems in any community but there is no evidence of higher crime rates among Gypsies and Travellers. Media reports and images are often inaccurate and discriminatory.

### Gypsies are dirty!

Gypsies and Travellers take great pride in cleanliness inside their homes, and have strict rules about different bowls for washing hands, food and different items of clothing. Outside the caravan may be a working area. A quarter of Gypsies and Travellers are homeless, having no legal site, and so may have no rubbish collection or other facilities provided.

### A Travellers' site ruins the neighbourhood!

Where proper well-designed sites are provided, research shows that neighbourly relationships develop. Gypsies and Travellers can use local services and take their place in the community.

Since 1994 there has been no duty on councils to provide sites, and Gypsy and Traveller families who try to provide their own have great difficulties getting planning permission.

Until 2006 in Bristol there was just one short stay council site. Homeless Gypsies and Travellers have to stop in unsuitable, often dangerous locations and are constantly moved on. Others may move into housing, but they can feel isolated and closed in. At least 4500 additional pitches are needed nationally.

### Gypsies don't pay tax!

Like everyone else Gypsies and Travellers pay road tax, VAT on goods and services, and income tax when working or self-employed. They pay council tax and licence fees on settled sites.

### Gypsies and Travellers don't care about society!

Gypsies and Travellers are engaged in very many paid and voluntary activities supporting local communities and national life. They fought and died for this country in both world wars. Today, despite barriers to health and education services, increasing numbers of children are enrolled in school. Although often rebuffed, Gypsies and Travellers want to engage with the wider community and promote mutual understanding.