

Gypsy, Roma and Travellers

Summary Points

- Nationally, life expectancy is found to be lower for Traveller men and women and negative health outcomes and barriers to healthcare have been found to be experienced by GRT communities.
- **According to the 2021 census, in Bristol:**
- Those identifying as 'White Gypsy or Irish Traveller' had the highest proportion of individuals reporting a long-term physical or mental health issue or disability that affected their daily lives of all ethnic groups in Bristol as well as the highest proportion reporting their health as bad or very bad. Poorer health amongst this community is not explained by age.
- The age profile of those identifying as 'White Gypsy or Irish Traveller' and 'White Roma' is younger than that of Bristol.
- Those identifying as 'White Gypsy or Irish Traveller' had a much higher proportion of individuals who reported providing unpaid care than any other ethnic group.
- Those identifying as 'White Gypsy or Irish Traveller' and 'White Roma' had higher proportions than the total Bristol population of individuals reporting no formal qualifications.
- For White Gypsy or Irish Travellers (age 16-64), the proportion in employment was lower and the proportion economically inactive was higher than the Bristol average. On the other hand, for those identifying as 'White Roma,' (age 16-64) the proportion in employment was higher than Bristol's average and the proportion of economically inactive was lower. The proportion of individuals who reported being economically active (but unemployed) were similar across Bristol's total population, White Gypsy or Irish Travellers and White Roma individuals.
- The most common housing tenure type for those identifying as 'White Gypsy or Irish Traveller' in Bristol was social rented housing and for 'White Roma,' this was 'private renting or lives rent free.' 8% of 'White Gypsy or Irish Traveller' individuals reported living in a caravan. Reports of overcrowding were higher than the Bristol average for both 'White Gypsy or Irish Traveller' and 'White Roma' ethnic groups.

Terminology

Gypsies, Roma and Travellers are often categorised together under the acronym "GRT" and these communities and other nomadic groups, such as Scottish Travellers, English Romany, Show People and New Travellers, share several characteristics in common. However, Travellers and Roma each have very different customs, religion, language, and heritage¹.

¹ The Traveller Movement. (no date) Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller History and Culture; [Link](#)

National data and evidence (GRT Health):

Life Expectancy: The Traveller Movement suggest that life expectancy in Traveller men and women is 10 - 12 years less than the wider population².

Health Outcomes: A range of health difficulties are reported amongst the GRT community including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), asthma, diabetes, bladder problems, cancer, and mental health difficulties. Environmental factors, such as site locations and living conditions as well as occupational hazards, are believed by Gypsy and Traveller people to be linked to the health conditions they experience. Although mental health challenges have been identified, the topic is not widely spoken about within communities³.

High rates of Caesarean birth, miscarriage, pregnancy loss and/or child loss are reported by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people and health professionals⁴. Although there is little data on the extent of domestic abuse and violence against women and girls in Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, agencies and individuals report that this is a serious and long-standing problem (at least in Gypsy and Traveller communities)⁵.

Research has found that although there was found to be an understanding of lifestyle factors, such as healthy diet, stopping smoking and drinking less alcohol to reduce cancer risk amongst those identifying as GRT, there was a lack of confidence in the effectiveness of these measures, particularly in relation to smoking. Participants described cancer as a taboo disease not spoken about outside of the family. In this particular study, most women reported that they engage with cervical and breast screening, but few Gypsy/Traveller men would engage with bowel screening due to a conflict with ideals of stoical masculinity, with language barriers and confusion around timing and eligibility differences between countries found amongst Roma participants⁶. As outlined below, the local needs analysis found that being away from a postal address may be a barrier to receiving screening invitations for individuals who are nomadic or touring.

Regarding health protection, despite being limited, there is evidence to suggest that GRT communities can face inequalities, for example in regard to vaccinations (due to barriers such as language, low literacy, discrimination and low trust) and some infectious diseases⁷.

Barriers to Healthcare: Published evidence has shown that individuals from the GRT community can face barriers to accessing healthcare. For example, frequently raised as a

² The Traveller Movement. (no date) Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller History and Culture; [Link](#)

³ Office for National Statistics. (2022) Gypsies' and Travellers' lived experiences, health, England and Wales: 2022; [Link](#)

⁴ Friends, Families & Travellers. (2023) Guidance: Tackling Maternal Health Inequalities in Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Communities; [Link](#)

⁵ Women and Equalities Committee. (2019) Tackling inequalities faced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities; [Link](#)

⁶ Condon et al. (2021) Knowledge and experience of cancer prevention and screening among Gypsies, Roma and Travellers: a participatory qualitative study; [Link](#)

⁷ Office for Health Improvement & Disparities. (2026) Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller communities: health overview; [Link](#)

problem is access to primary and secondary care services⁸; 74 out of 100 UK GP surgeries failed to register mystery shoppers who identified as GRT+⁹. Challenges in registering with a GP without a fixed address (particularly for those living on sites or roadside) has been found. Experiences of perceived discrimination and derogatory attitudes of healthcare providers may undermine access, as concerns about the likelihood of receiving help and fears of facing negative judgement or discrimination have been reported. Delayed access to healthcare could result in delayed diagnoses and treatment, and could undermine access to screening and preventative care, with potential negative health consequences¹⁰.

Local data

Local data outlined below is derived from the 2021 census findings¹¹ unless otherwise stated.

Local Population Numbers

The 2021 census included a new response option of 'Roma' within the 'White' ethnic group. In Bristol, 966 people (0.2%) identified as 'Roma' in 2021, the same percentage as in England and Wales. The 'Gypsy and Irish Traveller' ethnic group was first included as an option within 'White' ethnic group in 2011 and 273 respondents (0.1%) of the 2021 census in Bristol identified in this way, down from 359 in 2011.

Health

In Bristol, those identifying as 'White Gypsy or Irish Traveller' had the highest percentage of people saying their health was bad or very bad at 13% (of Bristol's total population, this was 5%) of all ethnic groups. The poorer health of people identifying as 'White Gypsy or Irish Traveller' is not explained by age. The highest reported levels of good or very good health in Bristol were among people who selected the 'White Roma' or the 'Mixed White and Asian' ethnic groups, with both at 93% compared to Bristol's total population of 84%. See Figure 1 overleaf.

⁸ Women and Equalities Committee. (2019) Tackling inequalities faced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities; [Link](#)

⁹ Friends, Families & Travellers. (2021) Locked out: A snapshot of access to General Practice for nomadic communities during the COVID-19 pandemic; [Link](#)

¹⁰ Office for National Statistics. (2022) Gypsies' and Travellers' lived experiences, health, England and Wales: 2022; [Link](#)

¹¹ Bristol City Council. (2023) Census 2021 Population Profile Ethnic Group; [Link](#)

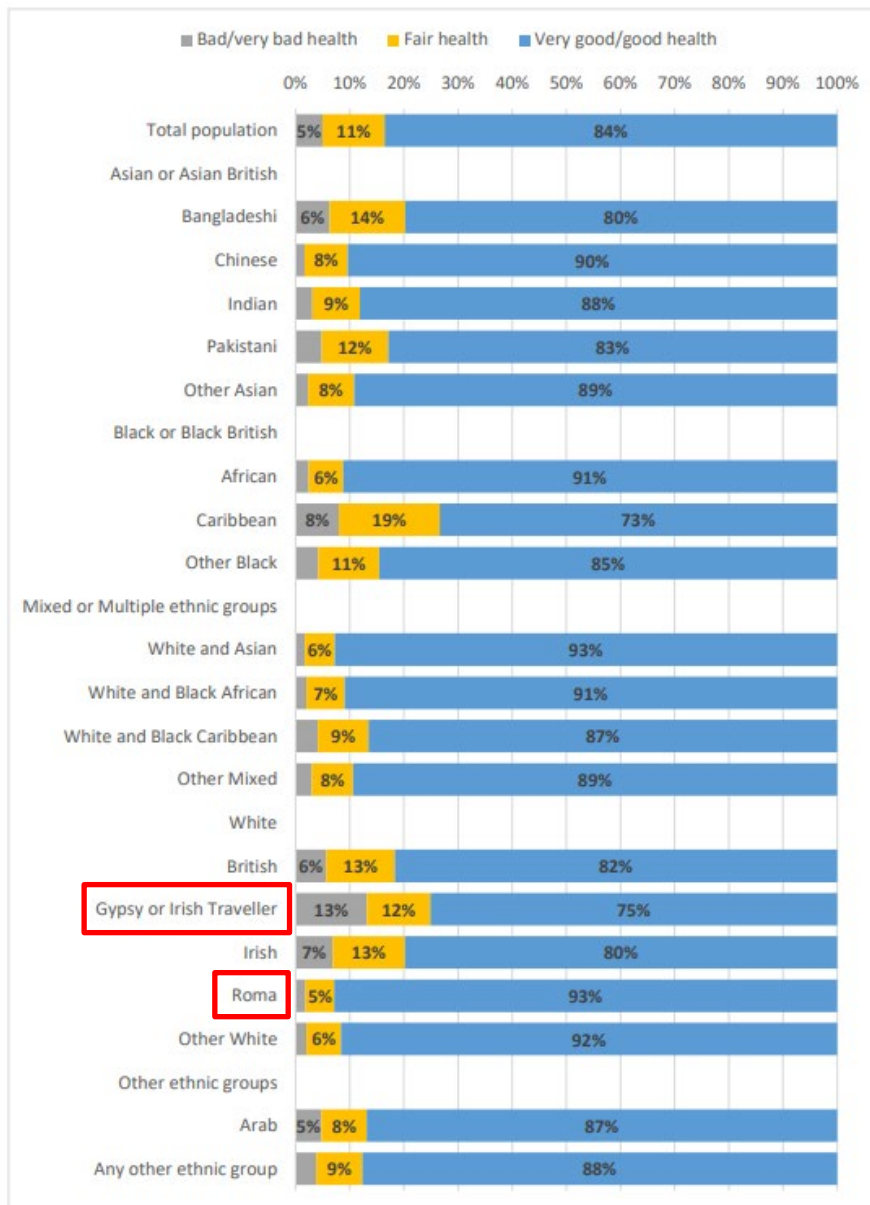


Figure 1: Ethnic group and general health in Bristol: Source: ONS Census 2021 ([Census 2021 Population Profile - Ethnic group](#))

In 2024, a Health Needs Analysis Gypsy, Roma, Traveller, and Showpeople in Bristol 2024 was published. Through this Health Needs Analysis, a number of barriers were identified which prevent Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Showpeople from accessing healthcare including discrimination, lack of trust, differences in cultural norms around parenting and fear of having children removed and written communication and physical letters to postal addresses. It found a number of health-related concerns including but not limited to dental health (children and adults), cancer prevention and screening (for people who are nomadic or touring, they may be away from a postal address (if they have one) and so invitations to screening may be picked up after the appointment date; even when post is received, there may also be difficulties reading the information), domestic abuse and harmful practices, accelerated aging/ negative health impacts in older age and mental health (including suicide). For the full report, please follow [Health Needs Analysis Gypsy, Roma, Traveller, and Showpeople in Bristol 2024](#)

Disabled people

Disability is self-reported on the census; people are considered Disabled if they reported being limited ‘a little’ or ‘a lot’ in their day-to-day activities by a long-term physical or mental health condition or illness. People identifying as ‘White Gypsy or Irish Traveller’ had the highest proportion of people identifying as Disabled of all ethnic groups in Bristol with more than a quarter (27%) reporting that they had a long-term physical or mental health issue or disability that affected their daily lives. This is 10 percentage points more than Bristol’s total population at 17%. 5% of those who identified as ‘White Roma’ reported that they had a long-term physical or mental health issue or disability that affected their daily lives. See Figure 2.

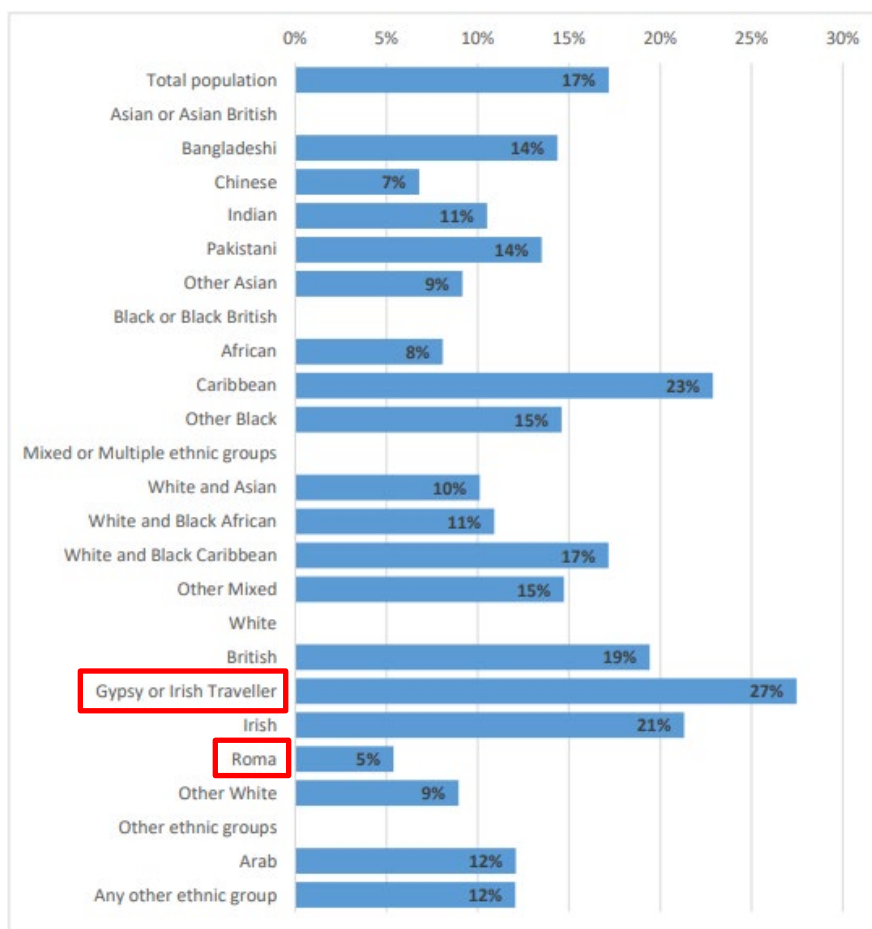


Figure 2: Ethnic group and long-term health issue or disability in Bristol: Source: ONS Census 2021 ([Census 2021 Population Profile - Ethnic group](#))

Age

In 2021, the average age for the overall population of Bristol was 34 years (in England and Wales, the average age was 40 years¹²). The average age of people who identified as ‘White Gypsy/Irish Traveller’ was 28 and for Roma was 30, suggesting a younger age profile for people from these ethnic groups than the overall population of Bristol.

¹² Gov.uk. (2023) Age groups; [Link](#)

The 'White Gypsy/ Irish Traveller' population reported a higher percentage of children aged 0-15 than the total population of Bristol (26% vs 18%). Only 1% of 'White Roma' and 3% of 'White Gypsy/Irish Traveller' respondents were over the age of 65 compared to 13% of the total population of Bristol.

Carers

According to the 2021 census, among those who identified as 'White Gypsy or Irish Traveller', 16% of people provided unpaid care, a much higher proportion than any other ethnic group (and higher than the Bristol average of 8%). 2% of White Roma individuals reported providing unpaid care.

Qualifications

Those who identified within the 'White Gypsy or Irish Traveller' ethnic group had the lowest proportion of people with a higher-level qualification (Level 4 qualification or above) at 22% (Bristol average 42%) and were the ethnic group most likely to have no formal qualifications (29%, compared to Bristol average of 15%).

The 'White Roma' ethnic group had the highest percentage of people with 'other qualifications' at 6%, however 22% of those identifying as 'White Roma' reported having no qualifications, higher than the Bristol average of 15%.

Employment

Of those who identified as 'White Gypsy or Irish Traveller' (age 16-64), 45% reported being in employment, 25 percentage points lower than of Bristol's total population (70%). 50% of those from the 'White Gypsy or Irish Traveller' ethnic group (age 16-64) were considered economically inactive¹³, compared to 25% of Bristol's total population.

80% of 'White Roma' individuals (age 16-64) reported being in employment (compared to 70% of Bristol's total population) and 16% reported being economically inactive (compared to 25% of Bristol's population).

The proportion of those considered economically active but unemployed (age 16-64) were similar across 'White Gypsy or Irish Traveller' (5%), 'White Roma' (4%) and Bristol's total population (4%).

Of those who identified as 'White Gypsy or Irish Traveller' (age 16-64) and reported being economically inactive, the most common reasons for this were looking after the home or family (13%) and being long-term sick or disabled (13%), followed by being a student (12%) or 'other' (11%). For the total population aged 16 to 64 years, 7% of females looked after home or family compared to 1% of males. This difference was larger among people identifying as 'White Gypsy or Irish Traveller' (22% for females, 7% for males – the highest male % of all ethnic groups).

¹³ not looking for work mainly because they were a student, retired, long-term sick or looking after the home or family

Of younger people in Bristol, aged 16 to 24 years, 8.9% were unemployed and looking for work. This was higher for young people identifying as 'White Gypsy or Irish Traveller' (14%).

The 'White Roma' and 'White Gypsy or Irish Traveller' ethnic groups had the highest percentage of those in 'skilled trades occupations' at 16% and 14% respectively. People working in 'skilled trades occupations' were mostly men across all ethnic groups. The highest percentage of people working in elementary occupations (jobs that require fewer formal qualifications) in Bristol identified as 'White Roma' (28%). In the 'White Gypsy or Irish Traveller' population, this was 20%.

Living situation

54% of the population of Bristol reported living in an owned home; for those who identified as 'White Gypsy or Irish Traveller,' this was 17% and for 'White Roma,' 12%. The most common housing tenure type for those identifying as 'White Gypsy or Irish Traveller' in Bristol was social rented housing (48%), compared to 19% of the total Bristol population and 6% of those who identified as 'White Roma.' For 'White Roma' individuals in Bristol, 'private renting or lives rent free' was the most common, at 82%, compared to 27% for Bristol and 34% for 'White Gypsy or Irish Traveller.'

The only ethnic group with a noteworthy rate of people living in a caravan or other mobile or temporary structure was 'White Gypsy or Irish Traveller' at 8% with 57% of individuals identifying as 'White Gypsy or Irish Traveller' living in houses or bungalows (compared 73% of Bristol's total population) and 35% in flats, maisonettes or apartments (compared to 27% of Bristol's total population). 50% of 'White Roma' individuals in Bristol reported living in a 'whole house or bungalow' and 50% in a 'flat, maisonette or apartment.'

Numbers reporting overcrowding were higher than for the total population of Bristol (10%) for both those identifying as 'White Gypsy or Irish Traveller' (15%) and 'White Roma' (19%).

Date updated: January 2026

Next update due: January 2027