



**FRIENDS,
FAMILIES &
TRAVELLERS**

UOK - Gypsy and Traveller Inclusive Services Training

Racism, Trauma, Discrimination & Inclusion

gypsy-traveller.org

Agenda

- About Friends, Families & Travellers
- Gypsy and Traveller History
- Overview
- Gypsy and Traveller Culture
- Accommodation
- Education
- Healthcare
- Racism, Trauma, Discrimination & Inclusion
- Social Attitudes & Economic Exclusion (YouGov)
- Gypsy and Traveller Mental Health
- Case Study – Mary’s Situation – Breakout Rooms
- Common Barriers to Access
- Recommendations
- Questions and Answers

Rest assured; we will be stopping for **two** comfort breaks.



About Friends, Families & Travellers



Friends, Families and Travellers

- FFT are a national charity that works on behalf, and in conjunction with all Gypsies, Travellers and Roma regardless of ethnicity, culture or background
- Active in advocacy casework, policy and cultural competency training
- Secretariat for All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Gypsies, Traveller and Roma
- Strategic partner of the Department of Health, NHS England and Public Health England as the Gypsy, Roma Traveller member organisation of the VCSE Health and Wellbeing Alliance
- Registered Royal Society for Public Health Training Centre.



History



Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller History



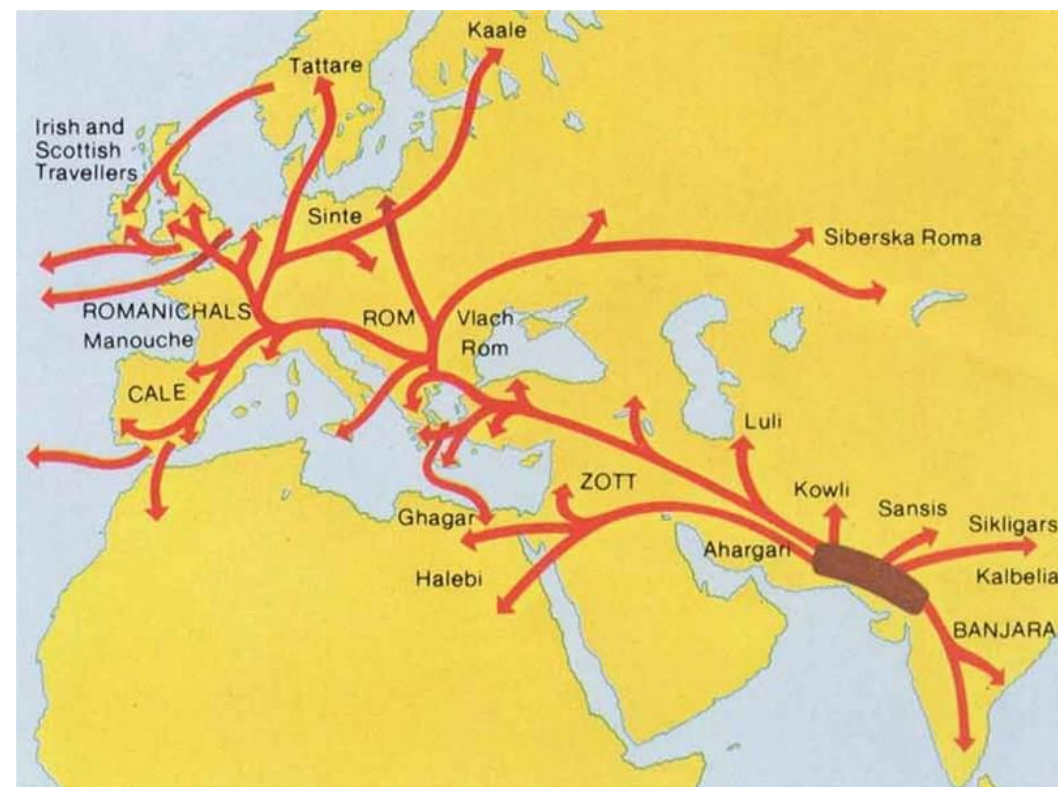
**FRIENDS,
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Britain's nomadic communities: A short history



History

- **Romany Gypsies** left India in C11th, arrived in UK in 1500s, persecuted by the Egyptians Act 1530
- 500,000 **Roma and Sinti** people were murdered in the Holocaust (Porajmos)
- Many **Irish Travellers** came to the UK during the C19th Irish Famine
- There was a large migration of Irish Travellers into the UK during the 1950's and 60's to work as labourers and builders during the post World War II rebuild period
- **New Travellers** are people who have 'chosen' a nomadic way of life, this was cracked down on during the 1980s
- **Roma** people are Europe's largest ethnic minority
- Other groups include, but are not limited to, **Scottish Travellers, Welsh Gypsies, Boaters, Bargees, Showpeople** and more



Overview



Overview of Gypsies and Travellers Today

Estimated 300,000 Gypsies and Travellers living in UK

- 3/4 housed and 1/4 in caravans;



- Romany Gypsies, Irish & Scottish Travellers are legally recognised ethnic minorities.
- 25,000 individuals have no authorised place to stop.
- There are many barriers preventing Gypsies and Travellers from accessing services.



2021 Census Ethnic Data - Sussex

Area	No. of Gypsies & Irish Travellers	No. of Roma
Adur	105	53
Arun	216	159
Brighton & Hove	197	787
Chichester	294	93
Crawley	103	337
Eastbourne	77	136
Hastings	128	164
Horsham	233	100
Lewes	100	67
Mid-Sussex	233	100
Rother	168	47
Wealdon	397	104
Worthing	82	194
	2,333	2,341

= 4,674



Gypsy and Traveller Culture



The Importance of Family

- Family is **central**; large, close/knit
- Live nearby to one another
- Know extended family
- Roles and responsibilities within the family
- Younger, elder and poorly family members cared for
 - According to the [2021 Census](#), Gypsies and Travellers were almost twice as likely to provide **50 or more** hours per week unpaid care
- Many Gypsies and Travellers feel the only people they can trust, are family members



Customs around Cleanliness

- Mochadi
 - High levels of personal and household hygiene
 - Previous roadside living (pre-NHS)
 - Colour coded bowls and cloths
 - Washing patterns
 - Boiling of tea-towels
 - Excessive use of bleach
 - Immediate disposal of damaged crockery
 - Use of own crockery outside of the home
 - Dogs kept outside



Customs around Healthcare

- Same gender medical professionals recommended
- Discretion advised
- Chaperoning common
- Poor mental health / bad nerves and high rates of self-harm and suicide (more on this later)
- Fear of overzealous social services involvement
- Where feasible, poorly community/family members are cared for at home by family; including palliative care



Education



Primary Attainment

In England, primary school pupils' attainment and progress is measured by national tests and assessments at the end of the primary schooling phase (key stage two). These tests and assessments are often referred to as **SATs**.

According to a House of Commons [Research Briefing](#),

As of summer 2023:

- **60%** of **all** pupils reached the expected standard in English reading, writing and mathematics.
- Of the children who identified as Gypsy/Roma, **18%** met the expected standard.
- For those identified as Travellers of Irish Heritage, the figure was **21%**.



Secondary Attainment

According to the same House of Commons Research Briefing, as of summer 2023:

- **31%** of state-funded secondary school pupils who identified as Travellers of Irish Heritage attained GCSEs in English and maths at grade 4 or above – which the DfE describes as a ‘standard pass’.
- The figure for pupils who identified as Gypsy/ Roma was lower, at **16%**.
- Nationally, **65%** of state-funded school pupils attained these qualifications.
- Only **3-4%** of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller population access higher education (18-30yrs), compared to **43%** of the general population (18-30yrs)



Accommodation



Poll



Lack of Local Authority Transit Provision

In November 2024, Friends, Families & Travellers [submitted Freedom of Information requests](#) to **380** local authorities across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland in relation to the number of authorised (**transit**) stopping places available to Gypsies and Travellers.

We received responses from **362** (95%) local government authorities:

- Just **9%** of authorities told us they had transit provision within their area – which amounted to a total of **32** authorities across all four UK regions.
- **329** authorities (91%) responded indicating that they had **no** local authority owned or managed transit sites or pitches.



January 2024 Caravan Count

Despite the chronic lack of authorised stopping places for Gypsies and Travellers, the government's January 2024 Caravan Count indicated that **86%** of all caravans in England were on **authorised** land and that **14%** were on **unauthorised** land.

There were **3,658 unauthorised** caravans reported in the January 2024 count.

- Of these, **3,357** were reported on unauthorised **developments** on land **owned** by Travellers
- **301** were on unauthorised **encampments** on land **not owned** by Travellers, a **decrease** of 170 caravans (36%) when compared to the January 2023 Caravan Count

The January 2025 Caravan Count will be published between June & July 2025.



Challenges Moving into Bricks and Mortar

The impact of **accommodation uncertainty** on Gypsies and Travellers living on roadsides is significant, affecting their **physical, mental, and social** well-being.

And those who make the transition from roadside living into 'bricks and mortar' accommodation often face challenges such as:

- Increase in mental health struggles
- Isolation from wider family unit
- Fear of fire inside common
- Dramatic change in lifestyle; losing touch with nature
- Noise issues; not used to neighbours, windows open, large families



Healthcare



Poll



Healthcare

Gypsies and Travellers are known to face some of the most severe health inequalities in the UK.

On average, Gypsy and Traveller individuals have life expectancies **10-25 years** shorter than the general population and live around **6 years** less in good health

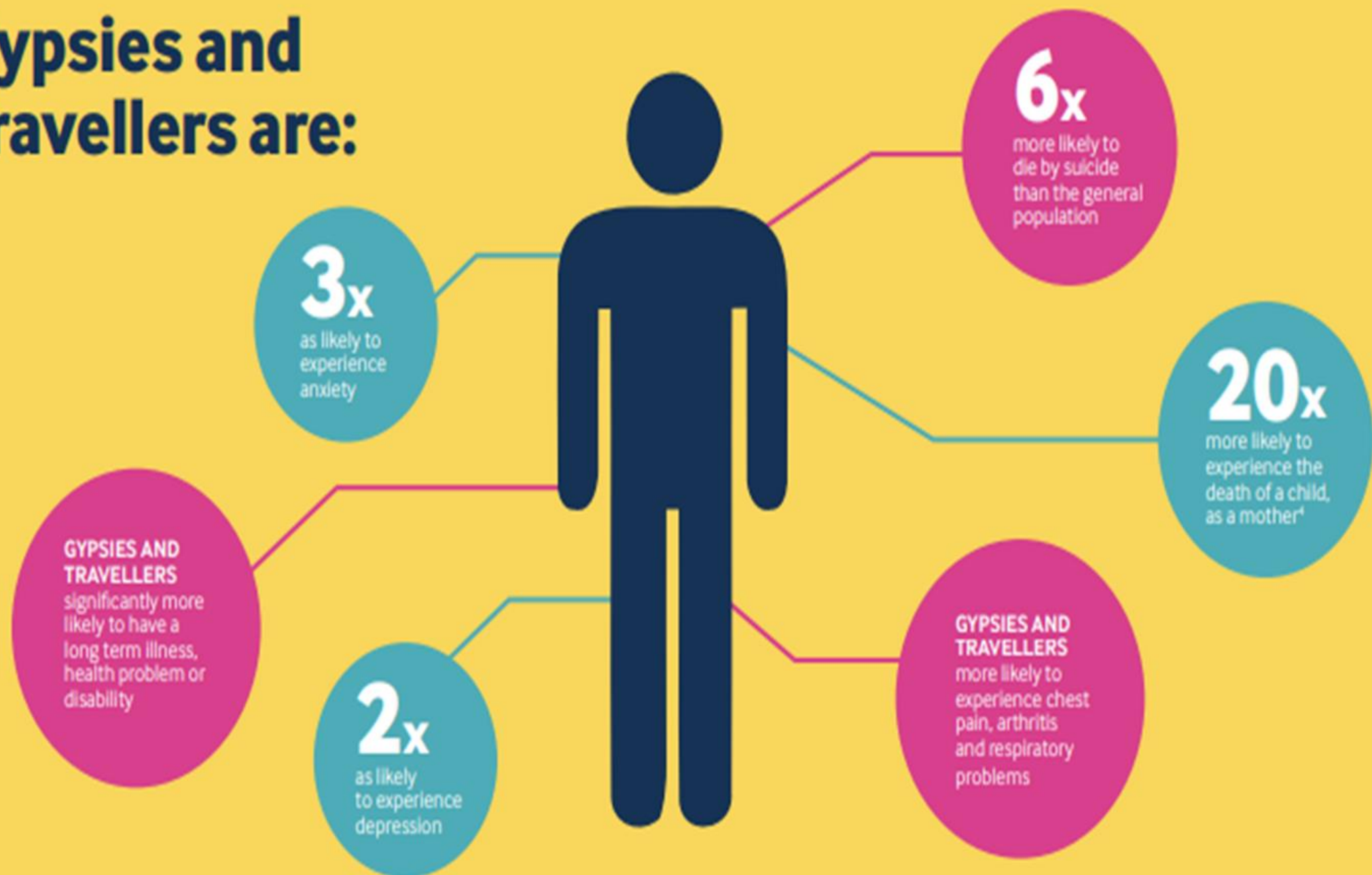
According to the [Census 2021](#):

- Gypsies and Travellers reported the **lowest** figures of rating their general health as 'good' or 'very good' at 72% compared to 82% overall
- Gypsies and Travellers were more than **twice as likely** to report 'bad' or 'very bad' health
- Gypsies and Travellers reported poorer health across **all** age groups (compared with the wider settled population)



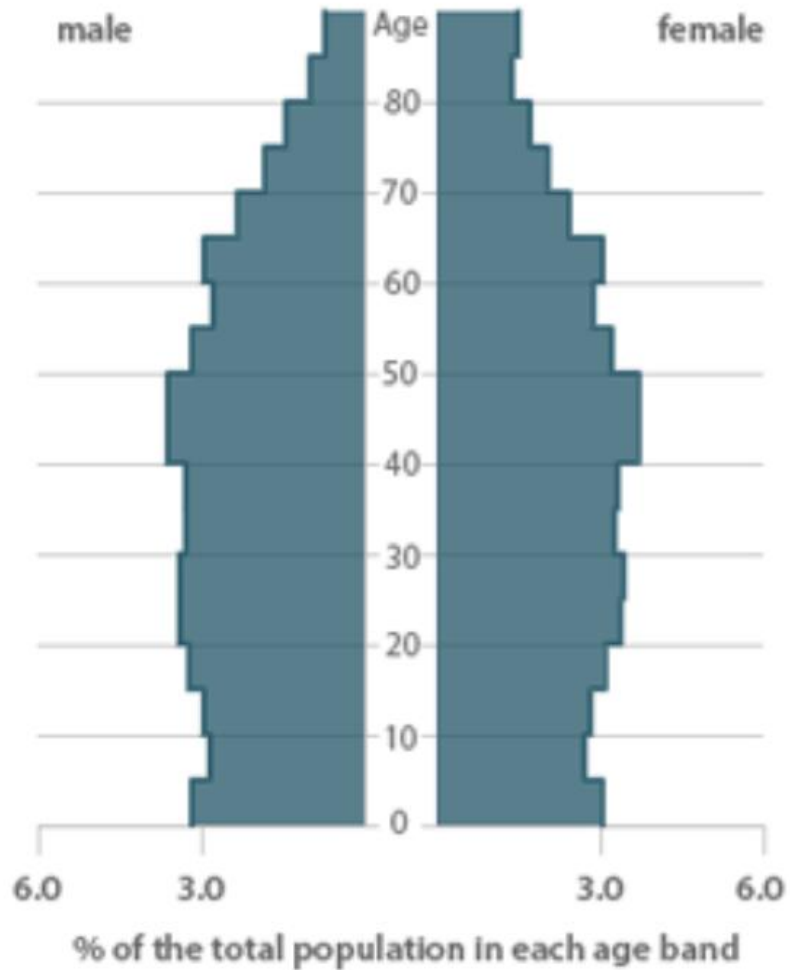
Gypsies and Travellers are:

56

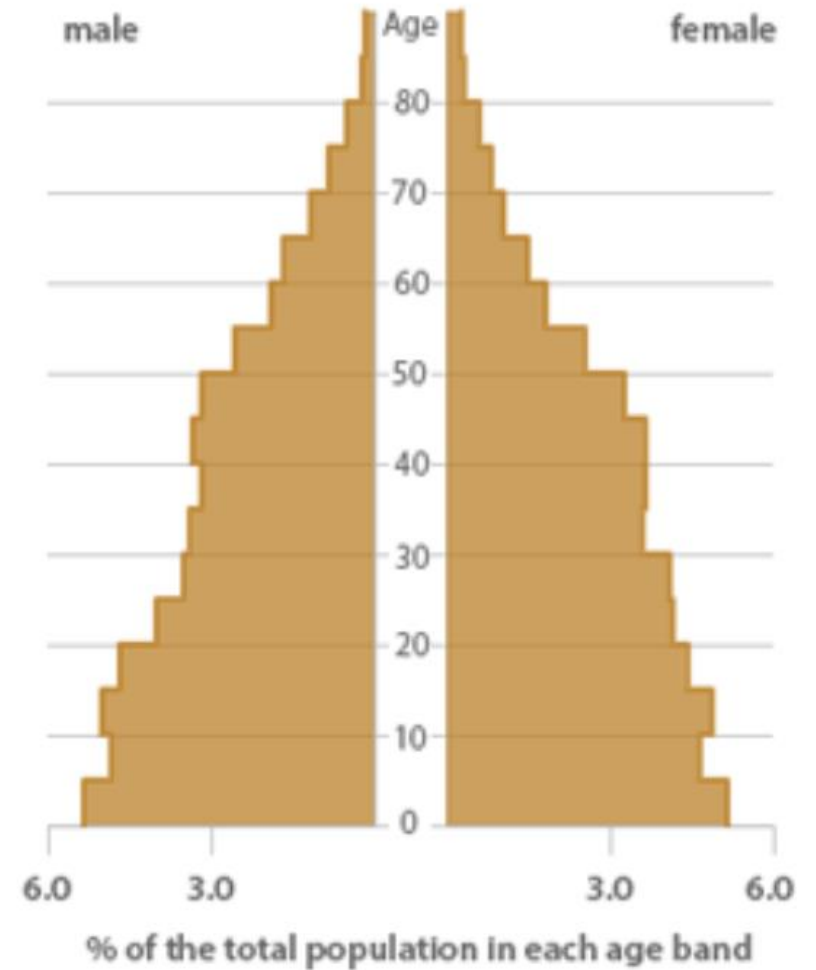


Life Expectancy

England and Wales



Gypsy or Irish Traveller



Racism, Trauma, Discrimination & Inclusion



Social Attitudes (YouGov)



Poll



YouGov: Social Attitudes Survey

In 2023, Friends, Families and Travellers commissioned YouGov to conduct a survey looking at social attitudes towards Gypsy, Roma and Traveller individuals in the UK. The survey found the following:

- **45%** of respondents would be unhappy with a Gypsy or Traveller moving next door to them
- **38%** of respondents would be unhappy with their child meeting up with a Gypsy or Traveller child at their home
- **33%** of respondents would be unhappy with a family member marrying a Gypsy or Traveller



YouGov: Economic Exclusion Survey

Friends Families and Travellers also instructed YouGov to conduct a survey looking at economic exclusion and prejudice. Survey results showed that:

- **34%** of respondents would be uncomfortable with having a Gypsy or Traveller in their home, either in a social setting or as a tradesperson
- **22%** of respondents would be uncomfortable employing a Gypsy or Traveller
- **34%** of respondents would not be comfortable buying a service from a small business if they knew the business was run by a Gypsy or Traveller



Gypsy and Traveller Mental Health

Jonathan Jones



Race-based Trauma

The concept of **race-based trauma** and its effects has been increasingly recognised and studied within psychological and sociological research.

Several key findings support the idea that marginalised groups, including Gypsies and Travellers, experience trauma related to racism, discrimination, and oppression.

These experiences lead to mental health challenges similar to those seen in **PTSD**, with symptoms such as anxiety, hypervigilance, depression, and emotional numbing.



Contributing Factors to Race Based Trauma

- **Historical Oppression & Discrimination:** Marginalised groups, including Gypsies and Travellers, experience systemic racism, exclusion, and historical mistreatment.
- **Cultural Stereotypes & Stigma:** Negative stereotypes perpetuated by society and media about marginalised groups contribute to a hostile environment.
- **Economic Disadvantages:** Limited access to education, jobs, and resources exacerbates the trauma of these communities.
- **Violence & Hate Crimes:** Physical and verbal abuse, hate crimes, and societal violence cause ongoing harm.
- **Forced Assimilation & Erasure:** Policies that force cultural assimilation, like in the case of Gypsies and Travellers, can lead to cultural dislocation and loss.
- **Institutional Racism:** Discriminatory practices within institutions like the police, healthcare, and education lead to unequal treatment and an acute fear of authority.



Symptoms of Race Based Trauma

- **Hypervigilance:** Constantly being on guard due to perceived threat or previous experiences of discrimination.
- **Depression & Anxiety:** Persistent feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and nervousness often stemming from ongoing racial discrimination.
- **Intrusive Thoughts & Flashbacks:** Memories or thoughts of traumatic events (racial profiling, hate crimes) can resurface unexpectedly.
- **Avoidance Behaviour:** A tendency to avoid people, places, or activities that may trigger past traumatic experiences related to racism.
- **Chronic Stress & Fatigue:** Living with the constant pressure of racial marginalisation can lead to exhaustion and mental burnout.
- **Low Self-Esteem & Internalized Racism:** Internalising negative stereotypes about one's racial group and experiencing a sense of worthlessness.



Suicide and Self-Harm



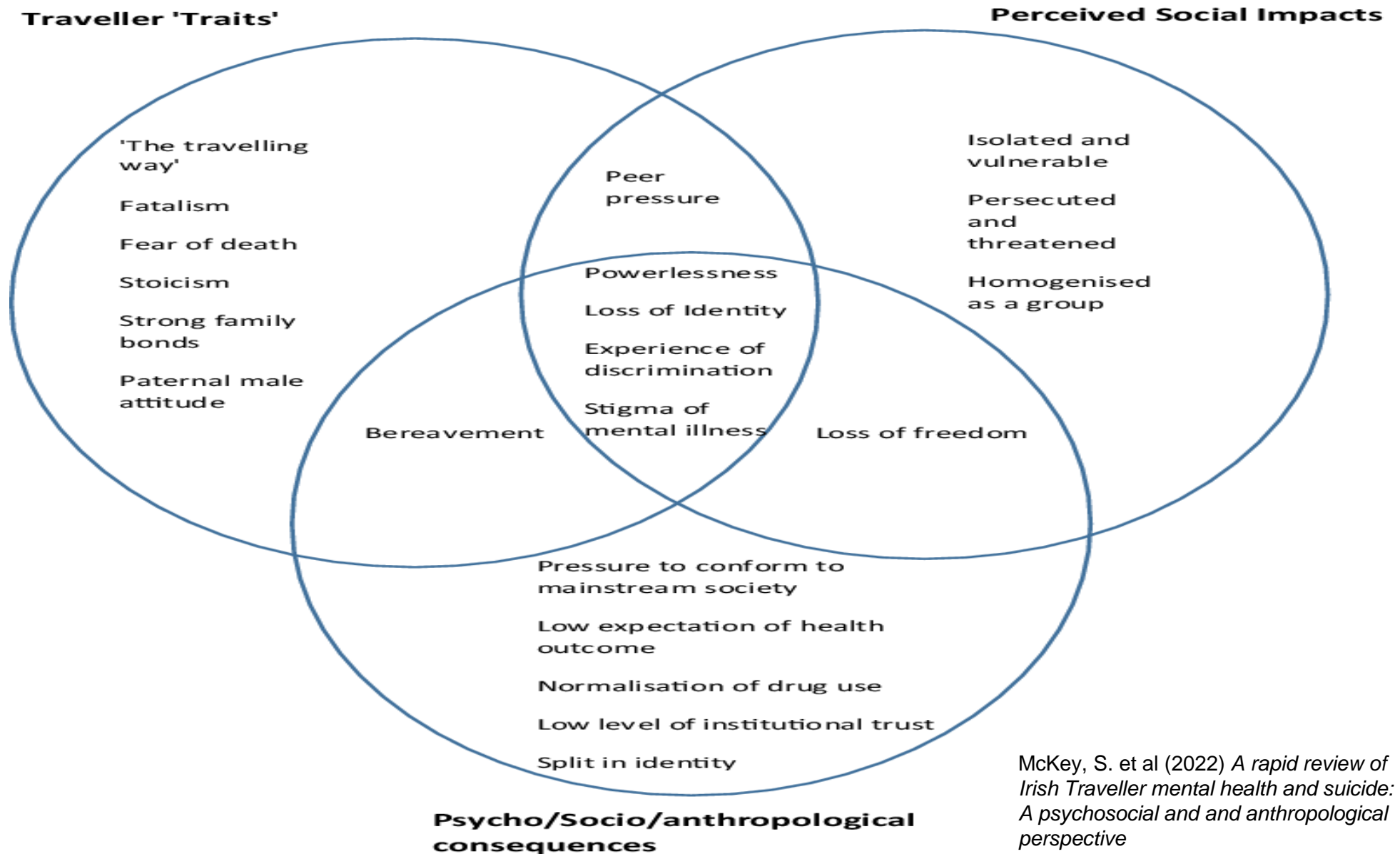
Gypsy and Traveller Mental Health



- The suicide rate for members of the Irish Traveller community is **six times higher than the general population**
- No precise studies in England-Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities are excluded from many datasets, including the NHS Data Dictionary
- Has been stated that as many as 11% of community members die by suicide.



Negative Factors Impacting Suicide Rates



McKey, S. et al (2022) *A rapid review of Irish Traveller mental health and suicide: A psychosocial and anthropological perspective*



Case Study – Breakout Rooms



Mary's Situation

Mary, a 30-year-old Irish Traveller woman, recently gave birth to her second child. She lives roadside with her husband and their children, frequently moving between temporary locations as they await permanent accommodation. While Mary is a devoted mother, she has been struggling with postpartum depression, anxiety, and isolation.

Mary is hesitant to seek help due to a deep fear that involvement with social services could result in her children being taken away. This fear, rooted in her cultural background and past experiences within her community, prevents Mary from openly discussing her mental health challenges.

- To receive communication, Mary uses her sister's postal address, as she doesn't have a permanent one due to her nomadic lifestyle. However, letters from mental health services were delayed and arrived too late, causing her to miss several appointments.
- Frustrated and overwhelmed, Mary eventually decided to leave the area with her family, disengaging completely from the mental health services. Despite attempts by the mental health charity to contact her, Mary's whereabouts remain unknown.



What could have been done differently?

Consideration of Communication Methods:

- Mental health services should have asked Mary about her preferred communication method, such as email or phone, considering her nomadic lifestyle.

Flexible Communication and Follow-Ups:

- Offering phone check-ins, text reminders, or WhatsApp communication would have helped keep Mary engaged with her care.

Cultural Sensitivity and Trust-Building:

- Mental health professionals could have been more aware of Mary's fears regarding social services and taken time to reassure her that seeking help wouldn't lead to child removal.



What could have been done differently?

Accessible and Non-Threatening Support:

- Services could have provided outreach support or visited Mary in her current location for an informal face-to-face meeting to make the services feel less formal and more accessible.

Community-Based Approaches:

- Collaborating with Traveller support organisations could have helped Mary feel more comfortable and trusted in engaging with services.

Signposting to Additional Services:

- Mary could have been signposted to additional support services, such as **peer support networks** for Irish Traveller women, or community groups that focus on mental health and/or nomadic lifestyles. This would help reduce isolation and give her access to shared experiences and advice from others in similar situations.



What could have been done differently?

Social Prescribing and Practice Support:

- Offering social prescribing would have been valuable in addressing Mary's mental and physical wellbeing. This could have included connecting her with local support groups for Irish Traveller women, mental health support groups, or fitness and wellbeing activities such as gentle exercise, yoga, or mindfulness classes for women.

Financial Advice & Support:

- Mary may have benefited from financial advice, especially regarding any available benefits or support for families in temporary or unstable housing situations. Services could have signposted her to financial advisors or organizations offering budgeting help or support with accessing grants or subsidies.



Common Barriers to Access



Literacy Poll



Issues around Literacy

- Around **half** of the community members supported by FFT's advocacy casework team have little or no literacy skills
- According to the [National Literacy Trust](#), in England, 16.4% of people (7.1m people), can be described as having 'very poor literacy skills'
- Individuals with low levels of literacy are more likely to experience poorer employment opportunities and poorer health outcomes
- 'Designing for inclusion' improves the experience of all service users



Improving Access for Service Users who Struggle with Literacy

- **Discreetly**, ask service users if they require any support with form filling
- **Avoid** jargon; ensure your message is clear, simple and concise
- **Use** supporting images on posters, leaflets and letters
- **Incorporate** assistive technologies such as BrowseAloud
- **Introduce** QR codes on leaflets and flyers (these can be used to redirect service users to an 'easy-read' or audio version of the text)
- **Consider** using alternative communication methods such as WhatsApp (voice notes)



Wider Barriers



Wider Barriers

- Many Gypsies & Travellers feel mainstream services are 'not for them' – processes are in place which disadvantage nomadic Gypsies, Travellers and Boaters;
 - Proof of address for some primary care registrations
 - Repeated removal from NHS waiting list if living nomadically
- Negative connotations that community members have when trying to access services include:
 - Sense of fatalism and low expectations (health)
 - Bad past or historical experiences, including fear of prejudice, discrimination and unintentional bias
 - Assumption by some staff that service users do **not** struggle with literacy



Recommendations



Recommendations

Be conscious of the barriers some community members face such as low/no literacy and digital exclusion.

- Use [FFT's Services Directory](#) to find Gypsy and Traveller organisations in your area you can collaborate with
- Introduce culturally pertinent toys in waiting rooms, such as horses, trailers & vardos
- Have culturally pertinent magazines in waiting areas ([Traveller Times](#))
- Celebrate GRTHM at your organisation (June)

If you're unsure, **ask!**

- If you are unsure how to approach something or what to say, simply acknowledge this and ask questions – it's better to ask rather than assume and offend





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Thank you

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Questions & Answers

