



**FRIENDS,
FAMILIES &
TRAVELLERS**

January 2025

Submission for the seventh periodic report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland on the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

This report is a joint submission from the following organisations:

**Friends, Families and Travellers
Roma Support Group
Gypsy and Traveller Empowerment Hertfordshire
Kushti Bok
Gypsy, Roma & Traveller Friendly Churches
Traveller Movement
Leeds GATE Gypsy & Traveller Exchange
York Travellers Trust**

Introduction

1. The following submission provides updated evidence to the Friends, Families and Travellers 2023 Pre-Sessional Working Group Report to the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights¹. Since the last review, the Government have failed to take adequate steps to respect, protect and fulfil the right to education, healthcare, work, social security and an adequate standard of living for Gypsies, Roma and Travellers in the UK.
2. There are many different and distinct communities under the umbrella term 'Gypsy, Roma and Traveller'. Romany Gypsies, Scottish and Welsh Gypsy Travellers, Irish Travellers and Roma are defined ethnic groups protected under the Equality Act 2010. Not all the issues and research outlined in the report apply to all groups. In places, the issues and research referred to also include New Travellers and Travelling Showmen who are not recognised as ethnic groups under the Equality Act (2010) but are entitled to the enjoyment of rights contained within the Convention. In some cases, Government departments aggregate ethnicity data into 'Gypsy/Roma'² or 'Gypsy/Irish Traveller'³ and therefore, the evidence we outline in this report reflects this in places. Data will not be representative unless the Government implements disaggregated ethnicity data collection and publication across all departments.

The right to work & non-discrimination | Article 6 and 2

Employment among Gypsies, Travellers and Roma

3. The 2021 Census revealed high levels of economic exclusion among Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller respondents. For example, 53% of people between the ages of 16 and 63 who identified as Gypsy or Irish Traveller were 'economically inactive' compared to 25% of the general population. 24% of Gypsies or Irish Travellers and 28% of Roma were working in jobs that required no qualifications, compared to 10% of the general population^{4,5}. Furthermore, according to the Centre for Dynamics of Diversity⁶, Gypsy, Traveller and Roma men were among those who were significantly more likely than White British men to be in precarious jobs⁷.

¹ Friends, Families and Travellers (2023)

² The Department for Education

³ The 2021 Census

⁴ Census 2021 Gypsy or Irish Traveller populations.

⁵ Census 2021 Roma populations.

⁶ Research used data from the Evidence for National Equality Survey (EVENS)

⁷ Ochmann et al (2023)

4. The underlying factors for this stem from education, health and housing inequalities, as well as societal prejudice. Research has highlighted that the communities face direct discrimination in employment. For example, a YouGov poll organised by Friends, Families and Travellers in 2021 found that 22% of respondents expressed discomfort with the idea of employing a Gypsy or Traveller person, while 34% indicated they would hesitate to purchase services from a small business if they were aware that it was operated by a Gypsy or Traveller person⁸. Furthermore, research by Greenfields and Rodgers 2020 revealed that 48% of the 88 Gypsy, Roma or Traveller respondents said they had experienced race hate within employment settings⁹.
5. To ensure the non-discriminatory implementation of Article 6, the Government must take steps to address precarious employment and increase employment in management, professional and senior roles among Romany Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller people in the UK.

Recommendations

6. **The Government should review employment legislation to address ethnic minority disadvantage in the labour market, including the experiences of Romany Gypsies, Roma and Irish Travellers.**
7. **The Government should ensure that the Equality (Race and Disability) Bill¹⁰ includes measures to ensure equal pay at work across ethnicities (in line with rights on pay based on gender) and introduce mandatory ethnicity pay gap reporting, including for Romany Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller employees.**

Right to Social Security & non-discrimination | Article 9 and 2

The adequacy of Social Security to meet financial needs

8. Welfare reforms in the UK have created severe economic hardship for certain groups. For example, the two-child limit¹¹ and benefit cap¹² disproportionately disadvantage larger families and families with health conditions¹³.
9. Research shows that Gypsies and Travellers tend to have larger families and suffer with poorer health compared with the general population. The 2021 Census found that Gypsy and Irish Traveller women at all ranges reported being economically inactive due to long-term sickness or disability at a higher rate compared with the general population. For

⁸ Friends Families and Travellers (2021)

⁹ Greenfields and Rodgers (2020)

¹⁰ This Bill was announced in the Kings speech but has not yet been published or reached Parliament at the time of writing.

¹¹ Child benefit is only paid for two children per family.

¹² The benefit cap is a limit on the total amount of benefit that can be claimed.

¹³ Beatty & Fothergill (2016)

instance, approximately 30% of Gypsy and Irish Traveller women (age 50-54) who responded to the 2021 Census reported they were economically inactive due to long-term sickness or disability, this is compared with approximately 7% for the general population¹⁴. Evidence from Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments indicates that 'ethnic Romany Gypsy and Irish Traveller women' had an average of between 3.5 and 5.9 children compared with an average of just under 2 for the general population in England and Wales in 2009^{15,16}.

Barriers to accessing Social Security

10. The national casework service delivered by Friends, Families and Travellers supports many Gypsies and Travellers who face barriers in applying for, receiving and maintaining benefits. Lower functional adult literacy, low digital literacy, data poverty and marginalisation contribute to a lack of awareness of the benefits system and entitlement. For example, research carried out by Friends, Families and Travellers in 2018 found that one in five Gypsy and Traveller participants had never used the internet, compared to one in ten members of the general population¹⁷. Research from 2023 also found that 50% of Roma survey respondents lacked confidence in using digital services in general¹⁸.
11. In addition to this, receiving post can be a challenge for those with no fixed address. Gypsy and Traveller people disproportionately experience post-exclusion. Letters regarding benefits can be missed, even where a care-of address is used. This can mean missing correspondence and appointments relating to benefits, which can lead to benefits being withdrawn or reduced, increasing financial hardship¹⁹.
12. Families living on Gypsy and Traveller sites usually pay rent for the pitch on which the mobile home is stationed and the rental of the mobile home itself. However, the housing element of Universal Credit²⁰ tends not to be sufficient to cover both rents and the process for applying is inaccessible, with reports of Jobcentre staff not knowing how to apply the housing element of UC to two rents²¹. The result is that residents are often left with a shortfall and must apply for a 'discretionary housing payment' (DHP) to cover the full cost of their rent, however, the DHP can only be applied up to a maximum of 6 months. The impact of these benefit restrictions limits the enjoyment of the right to an adequate standard of living.

¹⁴ [Census 2021 Gypsy or Irish Traveller populations.](#)

¹⁵ [Cemlyn et al \(2009\)](#)

¹⁶ [Office for National Statistics \(2024\)](#)

¹⁷ [Friends Families and Travellers \(2018\)](#)

¹⁸ [Roma Support Group & Friends Families and Travellers \(2023\)](#)

¹⁹ [Citizens Advice Bureau \(2020\)](#)

²⁰ Universal Credit is one single monthly payment which encompasses six 'legacy benefits': Income-based Jobseekers Allowance, Income-related Employment and Support Allowance, Income Support, Housing Benefit, Child Tax Credit, Working Tax Credit.

²¹ This is a common barrier reported by the Friends Families and Travellers service delivery team.

13. To ensure the non-discriminatory implementation of Article 9 the Government must take steps to ensure that Gypsy and Traveller families can access benefits and that those benefits are sufficient to meet the need.

Recommendation

14. **The Government should review and improve measures to ensure that benefits are accessible to those with low/no literacy, low/no digital literacy and those with no fixed address.**
15. **The Government should issue clear guidance for Department for Welfare and Pensions advisors on the application of the housing element of Universal Credit for Gypsy and Traveller sites.**
16. **The Government should ensure that the housing element of Universal Credit is sufficient to cover the rent for Gypsy and Traveller sites.**
17. **The Government should abolish the two-child limit and benefit cap.**

Right to an adequate standard of living & non-discrimination | Article 11 and 2

Lack of culturally appropriate accommodation for Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers

18. Despite the Committee's recommendation to the UK Government in 2016 to *'ensure adequate access to culturally appropriate accommodation and stopping sites for Gypsy and Traveller communities...'* a chronic shortage of local authority sites for Gypsies and Travellers persists. There has been a total failure at the national level to accept responsibility for this issue, which has instead been shifted onto local authorities.
19. Research conducted in 2024 revealed that just 9% of local authorities had transit provision in their area²². A 2023 research report, 'Kicking the can down the road'²³, found that out of the 100 planning authorities which formed part of the research, 64% had failed to allocate sites in their Local Plan as part of their development process²⁴. Furthermore, the same report found that of the 149 socially provided sites across the 100 Local Planning Authorities, 119 were built before 1994, with only 30 built since then (after the statutory duty to provide sites had been revoked). According to the Government Caravan Count figures, between January 2014 and January 2024, there was a decrease of 102

²² [Friends Families and Travellers \(2024\)](#)

²³ [Ruston \(2023\)](#)

²⁴ [Planning Policy for Traveller Sites](#) states that local planning authorities should set pitch targets for Gypsies and Travellers which address the likely permanent and transit site accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers in their area, working collaboratively with neighbouring local planning authorities.

permanent pitches^{25, 26}. The 2024 July Caravan Count found 3,658 caravans without a place they were permitted to stop²⁷.

Funding for culturally appropriate accommodation

20. In March 2022 the Government announced new ring-fenced funding under the 'Traveller Site Fund' for Gypsy and Traveller sites to be refurbished or built²⁸. In June 2023, they announced that nine local authorities had received a grant from the fund²⁹. However, not a single new permanent site will be created through the funding, and just one of the 16 grants awarded has gone towards the development of a new transit site. Most of the funding was awarded to the refurbishment of pitches, and whilst refurbishments are desperately needed, the fund has done nothing to address the chronic shortage of pitches nationally.
21. Local authorities can apply to a separate, broader funding program for social housing under the 'Affordable Homes Programme' 2021-2026. At the time of writing, just six local authorities were granted funding from the Affordable Homes Programme to build sites for Gypsies and Travellers. Although the fund will lead to the construction of eight new sites, this limited number does not adequately address the national shortage.

Living conditions on local authority sites

22. Many local authority-owned Gypsy and Traveller sites are in a state of disrepair, presenting serious health and safety risks to residents. Research carried out in 2024 found almost four in 10 sites in Great Britain are within 50 metres of at least one environmental hazard and more than half are within 100 metres. Among the 167 local authorities who responded, around three-quarters (73%) had received environmental complaints from Gypsy and Traveller sites within their areas. Of those local authorities that had received complaints around half (51%) had complained about vermin, followed by waste (38%)³⁰.
23. The Office for National Statistics 'lived experience' research with Gypsies and Travellers in 2022 revealed poor living conditions on sites, including fly-tipping, vermin infestation, proximity to environmental hazards, damp and leaks in communal facilities and the general need for repair. Research participants

²⁵ [Caravan Count \(2024\)](#)

²⁶ [Caravan Count \(2014\)](#)

²⁷ [ibid](#)

²⁸ [Department for Levelling up Housing and Communities \(2022\)](#)

²⁹ [Department for Levelling up Housing and Communities \(2022\)](#)

³⁰ [Bloch & Quarmby \(2024\)](#)

reported that the local authority often failed to deal with these issues in a timely manner^{31,32}.

24. The Housing Ombudsman Service has a legislative remit to investigate resident complaints against registered social housing providers, including (but not limited to) complaints regarding disrepair³³. However, families who live on local authority-owned, socially rented Gypsy and Traveller sites are excluded from accessing this service.
25. Furthermore, the Regulator for Social Housing sets standards for registered social housing providers, these standards include (but are not limited to) housing quality, decency, health and safety repairs, maintenance, planned improvements and adaptations. Where the Regulator finds significant failures, they have the power to hold registered providers to account³⁴. However, there are no clear protections laid out by the Social Housing Regulator for families living on Gypsy and Traveller sites owned by registered social housing providers.
26. This lack of clear protections for families living on socially rented Gypsy and Traveller sites has a discriminatory effect, impacting upon the enjoyment of the right to an adequate standard of living.

Fuel poverty & Gypsy and Traveller sites

27. In many cases, the energy arrangements on local authority Gypsy and Traveller sites exacerbate fuel poverty for residents. For example, research conducted in 2022 revealed that on 32% of permanent local authority sites in the South-East of England, the local authority was the account holder for the electricity contract to the whole site³⁵. Where this is the case, residents have no freedom to choose the electricity provider and secure a competitive rate. The research also showed that on 82% of the sites, residents were on prepayment meters for electricity use. Electricity is usually charged at a higher rate per unit when supplied via a prepayment meter and puts families at risk of being cut off from their electricity supply.
28. The research also showed that on 97% of permanent local authority sites in the South-East of England, there was no access to mains gas. Without a mains gas connection, households must purchase gas bottles for cooking and heating, which are comparatively much more expensive³⁶.

Police powers against encampments

29. The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 introduced further police powers targeting Gypsy and Traveller encampments which only exist because

³¹ [Office for National Statistics \(2022\)](#)

³² Based on 48 life history interviews with community members.

³³ [The Housing Ombudsman](#)

³⁴ [Regulator for Social Housing](#)

³⁵ [Friends, Families and Travellers \(2022\)](#)

³⁶ [ibid](#)

the Government have failed to ensure local authorities assess and meet the need for sites. In May 2024 the High Court ruled that certain provisions contained within the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Court Act 2022 (relating to the 12-month no-return period in sections 60C, 61, 62(1A)(a) and 62B) are incompatible with section 4 of the Human Rights Act 1998^{37,38}; *'The under supply of transit pitches renders it much less likely that the opportunity exists to move from one to another. In this way, extending the no-return period not only puts Gypsies at a particular disadvantage but also and of itself, compounds that disadvantage.'*

30. At the time of writing, the Government has yet to review and amend this section of the Act. Consequently, families remain subject to these discriminatory police powers despite the High Court ruling. Although the dilution of the Act in line with the judgment may ease the burden on Gypsy and Traveller families subject to these powers, the other sanctions contained within Part 4 of the Act remain disproportionate and discriminatory and should be repealed entirely.
31. The ongoing accommodation deprivation and criminalisation experienced by Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers who maintain their traditional way of life impacts upon their economic, social and cultural rights under the Convention and the lack of effective action from the UK Government is fundamentally at odds with Article 2 and 11.

Recommendations

- 32. The Government should reintroduce pitch targets and a statutory duty on local authorities to meet the assessed need for Gypsy and Traveller sites.**
- 33. The Government should repeal new police powers against Romany Gypsy and Irish Traveller encampments introduced by the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 (s61, s62A and s60C-E).**
- 34. The Government should hold local authorities to account for the environmental standards of their Gypsy and Traveller sites, and expand the protections afforded by the Housing Ombudsman and the Social Housing Regulator to include Gypsy and Traveller sites.**
- 35. Government should review and address fuel poverty and energy access on Gypsy and Traveller sites.**

³⁷ [Smith v SSHD & Orgs \(2024\)](#)

³⁸ [Garden Court Chambers \(2024\)](#)

Right to physical and mental health & non-discrimination | Article 12 and 2

National Health Service Data Dictionary

36. The National Health Service Data Dictionary for England does not include Romany Gypsies, Roma and Irish Travellers in ethnicity data collection and analysis despite longstanding calls for this change from community members and civil society actors, as well as inclusion health specialists^{39,40}. This masks health inequalities among the communities at the national level and limits the ability of health services to reach those who need them most.

Poor health outcomes of Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller people

37. Evidence from other data sources highlight a range of health inequalities experienced by Gypsies, Roma and Travellers. Estimates from the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights found that there was a 7 (women) and 10 (men) year difference in estimated life expectancy between Irish Traveller and Romany Gypsy women and men who were living in caravans compared with the general population^{41,42}.
38. Furthermore, Gypsies and Irish Travellers who responded to the 2021 Census were more than twice as likely to report bad or very bad health (12.5%) compared with the England and Wales population (5.2%). Roma people aged 65-69 years were also more than twice as likely to report bad or very bad health (20.2) compared to the general population (9.8) in this age group.
39. A 2021 study which analysed inequalities in health-related quality of life of those aged over 55 across all ethnic groups in England, found that the average health of 60-year-olds belonging to 'Gypsy or Irish Traveller', Bangladeshi, Pakistani, and Arab groups was similar to that of a typical 80-year-old^{43,44,45}.

³⁹ [Traveller Movement \(2014\)](#)

⁴⁰ [National Health Service Data Dictionary](#)

⁴¹ [European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights \(2020\)](#)

⁴² The surveys were conducted with 875 Romany Gypsies or Irish Travellers living in caravans in 2016. For more information on estimate methodology, refer to the full report.

⁴³ The research used the England-wide GP Patient Survey to analyse responses from almost 1.4 million adults aged over 55 surveyed between 2015 and 2017.

⁴⁴ [Watkinson et al \(2021\)](#)

⁴⁵ [University of Manchester \(2021\)](#)

Access to primary care

40. Gypsies, Roma and Travellers in England face longstanding barriers to primary healthcare services^{46,47,48}. For example, research carried out in 2021 on 100 GP surgeries found that 74 GP surgeries broke NHS England guidance by refusing to register the mystery shopper because they were unable to provide proof of identity, proof of fixed address, or register online. This finding highlights systemic malpractice which creates barriers to access health care for Gypsies, Roma and Travellers for the following reasons.
41. The Government Caravan Count showed over 3000 caravans without a place they were permitted to stop and therefore, do not have a fixed address⁴⁹.
42. Research also shows that Gypsies, Roma and Travellers experience high levels of digital exclusion. For example, research from 2018 found that one in five Gypsy and Traveller participants had never used the internet, compared to one in ten members of the general population. Additionally, research conducted in 2024 found that 50% of Roma respondents were not confident in using technology^{50,51,52}.
43. For Roma migrant communities, communication and language barriers have a significant impact on the accessibility of health services, awareness of screening and immunisation programmes and overall satisfaction with services. Even amongst Roma who speak some English, low levels of education and limited literacy may contribute to difficulties in understanding medical terminology and communicating needs to health professionals⁵³.

Mental health and death by suicide

44. Research indicates that Gypsies, Travellers, and Roma experience poor mental health in comparison to the general population. For example, a 2007 study found that Gypsy and Traveller participants were nearly three times more likely to be anxious and twice as likely to be depressed compared with the control group in the study⁵⁴. In addition to this, research conducted by Roma Support group found

⁴⁶ [Aspinall \(2014\)](#)

⁴⁷ [Friends, Families and Travellers \(2019\)](#)

⁴⁸ [Roma Support Group & Friends, Families and Travellers \(2024\)](#)

⁴⁹ [Caravan Count July 2024](#)

⁵⁰ [Friends, Families and Travellers \(2018\)](#)

⁵¹ [Roma Support Group & Friends Families and Travellers \(2024\)](#)

⁵² [47 Roma were surveyed.](#)

⁵³ [Roma Support Group \(2021\)](#)

⁵⁴ [Parry et al \(2007\)](#)

that 69% of Roma participants reported suffering from depression, compared with 17% across the general UK population in 2021^{55,56,57}.

45. Some studies have revealed significantly higher suicide rates among Gypsies and Irish Travellers compared to the general population. According to the All-Ireland Traveller Health Study, the suicide rate for male Irish Traveller participants was 6.6 times higher than the general population⁵⁸. A 2024 study for England and Wales found that Irish Traveller and Gypsy women⁵⁹ were twice as likely to die by suicide compared with the White British female population⁶⁰.
46. Research conducted by Friends, Families and Travellers in 2020 shows that of 89 local suicide prevention plans representing 110 local areas in England, only 5 mention Gypsy and Traveller communities. Of these 5, only 2 list any action to address the high suicide rate in their local Gypsy and Traveller communities⁶¹. The Government's 5-year Suicide Prevention Strategy 2023-2028 commits to conducting comprehensive research and developing a better understanding of national trends and suicide rates among Romany Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller people. However, in response to a Parliamentary Question in November on this commitment, the Government did not confirm any plans to monitor national suicide rates for Romany Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller people⁶².

Recommendations

- 47. The Government should ensure that Romany Gypsies, Roma and Irish Travellers are included in the NHS Data Dictionary as three separate ethnicity categories.**
- 48. The Government should develop a national accountability framework for GP registrations, in partnership with the Care Quality Commission and the voluntary sector.**
- 49. The Government should monitor and publish suicide rates among Romany Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller communities and take a cross-departmental approach to tackling the wider determinants of poor mental health and suicide.**

⁵⁵ [Office for National Statistics \(2021\)](#)

⁵⁶ [Roma Support Group \(2015-2021\)](#)

⁵⁷ [Roma Support Group Mental Health Project supported 753 Roma people.](#)

⁵⁸ [All Ireland Health Study \(2010\)](#)

⁵⁹ [Data was taken from the 2011 Census which used a 'Gypsy/Irish Traveller ethnicity classification.](#)

⁶⁰ [Knipe et al \(2024\)](#)

⁶¹ [Friends Families and Travellers \(2021\)](#)

⁶² [Parliamentary Question \(2024\)](#)

Right to education & non-discrimination | Articles 13, 14 and 2

Exclusion and discrimination in education

50. Romany Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller children regularly face racist bullying in school, are subject to disproportionate rates of suspension and exclusion and experience a lack of cultural representation across the curriculum. A survey conducted by Friends, Families and Travellers in 2019⁶³ asked Gypsy, Roma and Traveller young people what the biggest challenge they faced in school was. 86% of pupils reported the biggest challenge at school is bullying, followed by racism at 73%. Research carried out by Roma Support Group in 2019 found that out of 110 children surveyed, 34% held negative views when asked about their views on 'Roma/Gypsy' people⁶⁴.
51. In 2022/23 the permanent exclusion rate for 'Gypsy/Roma'⁶⁵ pupils was 0.43 and 0.35 for Irish Traveller pupils. This is compared to the overall permanent exclusion rate of 0.11. In the same year, the suspension rate for 'Gypsy/Roma' pupils was 33.71 and 21.77 for Irish Traveller pupils. This is compared to an overall suspension rate of 9.33⁶⁶.
52. Many schools do not include information about Romany Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller cultures and histories in their teaching, and often neglect to include information on the European Roma and Sinti people that were victims of the Holocaust. Furthermore, there is little representation of Romany Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller people in books used in schools, highlighted by a 2020 Council of Europe research project on 20 European countries, which showed the UK as joint lowest on coverage of Roma in school textbooks⁶⁷.
53. Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller pupils have the lowest educational attainment at all key stages up to and including KS4 of any ethnic group in the UK⁶⁸. For example, in the 2021 to 2022 school year, only 8.5% of 'Gypsy/Roma'⁶⁹ pupils and 14.4% of Irish Traveller pupils obtained a grade 5 or above in GCSE English and math's, compared to 49.8% for all pupils⁷⁰. The factors that influence education outcomes are complex and must be understood within the context of discrimination and exclusion in order for education outcomes to improve.

⁶³ [Friends, Families and Travellers \(2019\)](#)

⁶⁴ [Roma Support Group \(2019\)](#)

⁶⁵ [The Department for Education aggregates Gypsies and Roma into one ethnic category.](#)

⁶⁶ [Department of Education \(2022/23\)](#)

⁶⁷ [Council of Europe \(2020\)](#)

⁶⁸ [Gov.uk](#)

⁶⁹ [The Department for Education aggregates Gypsies and Roma into one ethnic category.](#)

⁷⁰ [The Department for Education \(2024\)](#)

Recommendations

- 54. The Government should re-introduce ring-fenced targeted funding for local authorities across the country to ensure Romany Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller children can be supported to access and maintain education (as formerly existed through a network of Traveller Education Services).**
- 55. Schools should receive the Pupil Premium for all Romany Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller children to provide resources to bolster their educational outcomes.**
- 56. The Government should implement the Council of Europe's recommendation of July 2020 that Romany Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller histories and cultures, including the Roma Genocide, be on the school curriculum.**
- 57. The Government should conduct a formal investigation into the disproportionate rates of suspensions, exclusions and appeals of Romany Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller pupils and eradicate all discriminatory practices.**
- 58. The Government should disaggregate Romany Gypsy and Roma into two separate ethnic categories in their ethnicity monitoring and publications.**

The impact of the EU settlement scheme on Roma in the UK

59. The Government have failed to ensure that migrant Roma populations living in the UK can access the European Union Settlement Scheme (EUSS) leaving many families without settled status or unable to use their settled status to access benefits, healthcare, and housing. A key issue in access has been the 'digital by default' approach to the scheme as research shows low digital literacy and language barriers in the migrant Roma population⁷¹.
60. Research conducted by Roma Support Group between 2020 and 2023 found that over 70% of Roma people interviewed reported needing help to access and update EUSS digitally, 75% did not know when and how to update to settled status and two-thirds of Roma respondents had pre-settled status^{72,73}.
61. Citizens with pre-settled status do not have the same rights as those with settled status and, therefore, cannot access benefits, healthcare or homelessness assistance, in violation of multiple rights under the Convention⁷⁴.

⁷¹ [Roma Support Group \(2024\)](#)

⁷² [Ibid](#)

⁷³ The data presented in this report was collected through EUSS-related work undertaken by RSG from 2020 to 2023. This included two surveys with responses from a total of 93 Roma individuals in London, focus groups engaging 21 Roma people, and interviews with 9 Roma individuals. The research engaged Romanian, Polish and Slovak Roma, all of whom were London-based.

⁷⁴ [The 3 Million](#)

Recommendations

62. The Government should provide funding and guidance to local statutory and non-statutory services to enable them to assist Roma who cannot access, update or prove EUSS digital status.
63. The Government should review the 'reasonable grounds' policy regarding late applications to the EUSS to include digital exclusion and literacy.
64. The Government should review its position on the digital-only immigration status and provide a physical alternative to those who need it.

About FFT

Friends, Families and Travellers (FFT) is a leading national charity that seeks to end racism and discrimination against Gypsies, Travellers and Roma communities and to protect the right to pursue a nomadic way of life.

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This report is a joint submission from the following organisations:

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