



Uneven Paths: Socio-Economic and Structural Inequalities Facing Women from Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller Communities

February 2026



Executive Summary

This briefing highlights the intersecting socio-economic and structural inequalities faced by women and girls from Romani (Gypsy), Roma, and Irish Traveller communities. It draws on evidence from public data, casework, and research to identify barriers across education, employment, health, social care, violence, and criminal justice, and outlines key recommendations for policy and practice.

About the Organisations

The Women's Budget Group (WBG) is a UK-based think tank of researchers, academics, and practitioners committed to achieving gender equality. It analyses budgets and policy through a gender lens, focusing on the distributional impacts of public policy on women and marginalised groups.

The Traveller Movement (TM) is a national charity working to promote equality and human rights for Romani (Gypsy), Roma, and Irish Traveller communities. TM provides advocacy, research, and casework support, and campaigns to challenge discrimination and systemic inequalities.

Key Points:

- **Women and girls from Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller communities experience compounded disadvantage** at the intersection of ethnicity and gender, including systemic discrimination in education, health, employment, social care, and the criminal justice system.

- **Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller women are underrepresented in national data**, with inconsistent ethnic monitoring and limited gender disaggregation, impeding evidence-based policy development.
- **Educational barriers are severe:** Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller girls have lower attainment and higher exclusion rates; while bullying and racism frequently lead to families withdrawing children into elective home education without adequate support.
- **Employment outcomes are poor:** only 37.4% of Romani (Gypsy) or Irish Traveller adults are economically active compared with 74.4% of the White British population, with women disproportionately affected. Cultural preference for self-employment is constrained by legislative restrictions, discrimination, and limited access to business support.
- **Health outcomes are stark:** Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller women have lower life expectancy and higher maternal mortality, with barriers to maternity and mental health services. Child protection interventions without cultural sensitivity exacerbate distress.
- **Violence against women and girls is underreported;** practices of “shaming” and reputation damage which may be considered forms of honour-based abuse continue to affect Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller women. Services often lack cultural competence.
- In the **criminal justice system**, Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller women are significantly overrepresented (6% of female prisoners vs. 0.1% of population) due to over-policing, poverty-related offences, and judicial bias. Proposed changes to sentencing guidance could undermine progress towards equitable sentencing.

Key Recommendations:

Foundational Recommendation: Data & Evidence

Robust, disaggregated data is essential to making Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller women visible in policy and service design. Without consistent ethnic monitoring and gender-disaggregated evidence, inequalities remain obscured and interventions risk being ineffective.

Immediate priorities / quick wins

- Adopt the ONS 19+1 ethnic monitoring framework across all public bodies as a minimum standard¹.
- Ensure GDPR-compliant collection and management of pupil registers, with safeguards against discriminatory use.
- Include Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller women and children in existing maternal and child health monitoring programmes.

Longer-term objectives

- Commission and fund dedicated research on the intersecting inequalities facing Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller women and girls.
- Improve gender and ethnicity disaggregation across administrative datasets to enable intersectional analysis and accountability.
- Where survey or administrative data are limited by small sample sizes, public bodies should supplement quantitative evidence with qualitative and community-led methods, including interviews, focus groups and participatory research.

¹ While the ONS 19+1 ethnic monitoring system represents a significant improvement, it continues to aggregate distinct communities. While Roma are recorded as a separate category, Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller groups remain combined under the category “Gypsy or Irish Traveller.” Greater disaggregation, recognising Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller as three distinct ethnic groups within data collection, would enable more accurate representation and evidence-based policymaking, and is an approach we advocate.

Education

Immediate priorities / quick wins

- Systematically record reasons for elective home education, including experiences of racism, bullying and exclusion.
- Introduce mandatory reporting, investigation and follow-up of racist incidents in schools.
- Provide proactive local authority outreach and support to families affected by exclusion or discrimination.

Longer-term objectives

- Develop and embed culturally responsive educational programmes in partnership with Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller communities.
- Address structural drivers of exclusion and low attainment through inclusive curriculum design and teacher training.

Employment & Economic Participation

Immediate priorities / quick wins

- Tailor employment, skills and apprenticeship programmes to the needs of Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller women.
- Address digital exclusion through targeted access to devices, connectivity and digital skills training.

Longer-term objectives

- Support self-employment through accessible grants, loans and culturally appropriate business support.
- Strengthen enforcement of anti-discrimination measures in recruitment, employment and access to enterprise support.

Health & Social Care

Immediate priorities / quick wins

- Provide culturally competent maternity and mental health services, including targeted outreach.
- Train healthcare and social care professionals in Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller cultural competence.

Longer-term objectives

- Embed recognition of cultural identity, family structures and community ties within care planning and service delivery.
- Reduce health inequalities through sustained investment in preventive and community-based services.

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

Immediate priorities / quick wins

- Train frontline professionals to recognise and respond appropriately to forms of abuse affecting Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller women, including “shaming” and reputation-based harms.
- Develop safe, non-punitive and culturally appropriate reporting mechanisms.

Longer-term objectives

- Establish specialist, community-based VAWG services led by or working in partnership with Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller organisations.
- Explicitly include Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller women’s experiences within national VAWG strategies and commissioning frameworks.

Criminal Justice

Immediate priorities / quick wins

- Mandate pre-sentence reports for all women with protected characteristics, including Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller women.
- Deliver cultural competency training for police, probation and judiciary professionals.

Longer-term objectives

- Expand and invest in community-based sentencing alternatives to reduce the disproportionate imprisonment of Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller women.
- Collect, publish and use disaggregated criminal justice data to monitor disparities and inform reform.

Cross-Cutting System Change

Immediate priorities / quick wins

- Introduce mandatory cultural competency training across public services.
- Ensure Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller women are meaningfully involved in service design, research and policy consultation.

Longer-term objectives

- Target sustained funding to areas of greatest inequality.
- Embed accountability mechanisms to ensure progress on equality commitments over time.

Introduction

This briefing is a joint publication by the Women's Budget Group (WBG) and The Traveller Movement (TM). It aims to highlight the socio-economic inequalities facing women and girls from Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller communities. Both organisations bring expertise in gender equality, human rights, and community advocacy, and share a commitment to challenging structural discrimination. The briefing draws attention to the intersection of ethnicity and gender, where women experience compounded disadvantage. It also notes the historic and ongoing exclusion of these communities from public services and national datasets, alongside the impacts of systemic racism, misogyny, and discrimination. The erasure of Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller women in public data sources contributes to a lack of representation in feminist policymaking, research, and funding landscapes.

Data and Evidence Gaps

One of the most significant barriers to understanding and addressing inequalities faced by Romani (Gypsy), Roma, and Irish Traveller women is the lack of reliable, disaggregated data. National datasets often fail to capture these communities

adequately, or group together distinct populations in ways that obscure critical differences. For example, Roma are frequently excluded as a distinct category, while Gypsy and Traveller categories are inconsistently applied across public bodies. Gender disaggregation is also limited, meaning that the specific experiences and needs of women are frequently invisible in statistics. This invisibility has a direct impact on policymaking, as services cannot be effectively tailored without accurate evidence.²

There are also longstanding issues of mistrust within these communities. Historical misuse of data, over-surveillance, and punitive approaches to Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller families have contributed to deep scepticism about data collection, which can limit engagement with public services. Recent legislative developments, such as the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill, introduce new requirements for pupil registers. Safeguards are essential to ensure that this data is deleted when children reach the age of 18, used in compliance with GDPR, and does not exacerbate community distrust.³

The Traveller Movement's 2024 submission to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) highlighted significant gaps in ethnic monitoring and data collection. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) 19+1 system, first used in the 2021 Census, captures 'Gypsy or Irish Traveller' and 'Roma' as separate ethnic groups under the White category and represents the current gold standard for ethnic monitoring in the UK.⁴ However, this system is not consistently adopted across public bodies. While most organisations collect some form of ethnic data, monitoring of Romani (Gypsy), Roma, and Irish Traveller populations is often insufficient compared with other ethnic minorities.

For decades, the NHS Data Dictionary omitted distinct categories for Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller people, meaning that health data relating to these communities was rarely recorded in a consistent or systematic way. In 2025, however, NHS England announced that this would change, recommending that health-care bodies across the UK include Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller people in patient data, aligning health-service data collection with the

² The Traveller Movement (2017) Briefing on Gypsy, Roma and Traveller women (<https://bit.ly/48PFmw2>)

³ UK Parliament (updated Dec 2025) Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill (<https://bit.ly/4plo0XG>)

⁴ Traveller Movement (2024) Submission to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (<https://bit.ly/3XwmLPt>)

broader ethnic categories used in the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Census⁵. This is a really positive step forward: for the first time, the health-service data model officially recognises these communities, making it possible to gather accurate information on their health outcomes and experiences. That, in turn, should improve the ability to cross-reference data across sectors - and lay a stronger foundation for evidence-based policies and interventions designed to address the overlapping inequalities faced by Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller women and other members of these communities.

The Traveller Movement has repeatedly called for the adoption of the ONS 19+1 system across all public bodies, and for full disaggregated data collection to inform resource allocation and service design. Priority areas include maternal and child health: Romani (Gypsy), Roma, and Irish Traveller women and children must be included in programmes such as the Maternal, Newborn and Infant Clinical Outcome Review Programme (MNI-CORP) within MBRRACE-UK. Failing to investigate adverse outcomes in these communities perpetuates preventable harm and inequity.⁶ Importantly, disaggregated data collection also avoids the frequent confusion between ethnic Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller communities and non-ethnic Traveller groups such as Showmen, Boaters and New Age Travellers, who may also experience disadvantage but have entirely different histories, needs, cultural practices and barriers⁷. Ensuring clear differentiation is essential both for accuracy and for designing appropriate, targeted interventions.

Addressing these gaps is critical: accurate, consistent, and disaggregated data collection is a necessary foundation for designing interventions that respond to the complex socio-economic and health inequalities experienced by Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller women and children.

⁵ Friends, Families and Travellers (2025) FFT welcomes inclusion of Romany Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people in NHS data capturing - Friends, Families and Travellers (<https://bit.ly/4ilrmrC>)

⁶ The Traveller Movement (2025) The Importance of accurate ethnic monitoring and data inclusion for Romani (Gypsy) Roma and ethnic Traveller (Irish/Scottish) communities (<https://bit.ly/3Y5UNKn>)

⁷ The Traveller Movement (2025) The Importance of accurate ethnic monitoring and data inclusion for Romani (Gypsy) Roma and ethnic Traveller (Irish/Scottish) communities (<https://bit.ly/3Y5UNKn>)

Addressing Data Reliability and Sample Size in Intersectional Evidence

Concerns are sometimes raised that disaggregating data by ethnicity and gender to the level of Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller women undermines statistical reliability due to small sample sizes. While this trade-off is real, it is methodologically manageable and does not justify exclusion.

A substantial body of social and health research shows that small population groups can be analysed robustly through appropriate design and analytical techniques, including oversampling, stratified sampling, multilevel (hierarchical) modelling and Bayesian approaches. These methods allow estimates for smaller groups to draw on information from larger datasets, reducing instability while preserving meaningful differences and making uncertainty explicit rather than erasing marginalised groups from analysis^{8 9}.

Where data remain underpowered, good practice is to report effect sizes and confidence intervals rather than relying solely on binary significance thresholds. This approach is increasingly recommended in public policy and health inequalities research, as it avoids the false conclusion that “no evidence” of inequality exists when data have not been collected at sufficient resolution^{10 11}.

Aggregation itself can also introduce bias. Combining Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller women into broader categories masks documented disparities in maternal health outcomes, educational exclusion, poverty and access to services, creating a form of statistical invisibility that acts as a structural barrier to evidence-based policy¹².

⁸ Office for National Statistics (2023) Ethnic group, national identity and religion: guide for collecting and classifying ethnic group data (<https://bit.ly/4jxPq0y>)

⁹ Gelman, A. and Hill, J. (2007) Data Analysis Using Regression and Multilevel/Hierarchical Models (<https://bit.ly/4jA53EJ>)

¹⁰ Office for National Statistics (2022) Policies on data quality, statistical accuracy, avoiding bias and clear communication (<https://bit.ly/4jBnCbv>)

¹¹ Department of Health and Social Care (2021). Women’s Health Strategy: Call for Evidence (<https://bit.ly/49k2Tpi>)

¹² Equality and Human Rights Commission (2018) Is Britain Fairer? (<https://bit.ly/4bsldg8>)

Mixed methods approaches, combining quantitative analysis with qualitative and community-led evidence, can further strengthen findings by contextualising small-sample data and ensuring that lived experience informs policy where quantitative evidence alone is limited.

Although intersectional data collection and analysis are more resource-intensive, the alternative of designing policy without evidence on some of the most marginalised women risks ineffective interventions and continued inequality. In this context, the ethical and policy cost of exclusion outweighs the methodological cost of inclusion.

Education

Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller girls face persistent barriers to education. Rates of school attendance and attainment remain far lower than for other groups, with exclusions disproportionately high. People who identify as Romani (Gypsy) or Irish Traveller are three times more likely to have no qualifications. The difference was particularly noticeable for the 20 to 21 years age group. Females in this age group were over eight times more likely to have no qualifications compared with females of this age in the England and Wales population (44.4% compared with 5.1%).¹³

Bullying and racist incidents are widely reported in schools, leading many families to withdraw children into Elective Home Education (EHE).¹⁴ While parents often take this step to protect children from harm, they are rarely provided with adequate support to manage home education. Digital exclusion and low literacy compound these challenges.

At present, schools are not required to record the reasons why parents opt for EHE, masking the role of racism and discrimination in this trend. The Traveller Movement has recommended reforms, including proactive support for home-

¹³ Office for National Statistics (2022) 2021 Census data on Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller populations (<https://bit.ly/4izV0yV>)

¹⁴ The Traveller Movement (2022) Education policy submission (<https://bit.ly/3MhD8Np>)

educating parents, mandatory reporting of racist incidents, and requirements for schools to document why families leave the system.¹⁵

Employment and Economic Participation

Women from Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller communities face significant barriers to accessing stable and secure employment, contributing to long-term economic insecurity. Overall, only 37.4% of people identifying as Gypsy or Irish Traveller are economically active, compared with 74.4% of the White British population¹⁶. Economic inactivity is particularly high among women, driven by low educational attainment, early school leaving, and caring responsibilities, as well as discrimination and cultural exclusion in workplaces¹⁷. Many young people report hiding their ethnicity when seeking work or avoiding applications altogether due to anticipated bias¹⁸.

Romani (Gypsy), Roma, and Irish Traveller people are more likely than White British individuals to be self-employed, reflecting a cultural preference for independent work. However, traditional forms of self-employment have been restricted by legislation such as the Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013, and opportunities remain constrained by limited access to business support, loans, and training. Economic inactivity is further compounded by poor health outcomes and welfare conditionality, which disproportionately affect women¹⁹.

Addressing these disparities requires targeted interventions that account for the intersecting effects of gender, ethnicity, and social disadvantage. Employment services and apprenticeships should be specifically designed for Romani (Gypsy),

¹⁵ Equality and Human Rights Commission (updated 2020) Healing a Divided Britain: the need for a comprehensive race equality strategy (<https://bit.ly/4pLXDQD>)

¹⁶ Office for National Statistics (2022). 2021 Census data on Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller populations (<https://bit.ly/4izV0yV>)

¹⁷ The Traveller Movement (2023) Making sense of the Census 2021 for the outcomes and experiences of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people (<https://bit.ly/4oyeipW>)

¹⁸ The Traveller Movement (2023) Making sense of the Census 2021 for the outcomes and experiences of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people (<https://bit.ly/4oyeipW>)

¹⁹ Traveller Movement (2024) Submission to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (<https://bit.ly/3XwmLPt>)

Roma, and Irish Traveller women, providing career counselling, job placement assistance, and guidance navigating the labour market. Support for self-employment should include access to business grants, loans, and training in financial literacy and business management. Such culturally informed programmes are essential for improving economic participation and reducing the long-term inequalities faced by women in these communities.

Health and Social Care

Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller people experience some of the worst health outcomes of any group in the UK. Life expectancy is 10-12 years lower than average, and maternal mortality rates are higher²⁰. Women often face particular barriers in accessing maternity care and reproductive health services. For instance, a 2023 systematic review of perinatal health outcomes found that women from Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller communities across Europe are more likely than the general population to experience adverse outcomes including higher rates of preterm birth, low birthweight, intrauterine growth restriction, and infant mortality²¹. Mental health challenges are widespread, fuelled by poverty, discrimination, housing insecurity and social exclusion.²²

Those who identified as Gypsy or Irish Traveller in the 2021 Census reported worse health across all age groups and in both sexes than other ethnic groups within the England and Wales population. The biggest difference was among those aged 60 to 64 years: 38.7% of females who identified as Gypsy or Irish

²⁰ The Traveller Movement (2023) Making sense of the Census 2021 for the outcomes and experiences of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people (<https://bit.ly/4oyeipW>)

²¹ Ekezi. W, et al(2023) Perinatal health outcomes of women from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities: A systematic review (<https://bit.ly/48g9INC>)

²² NHS Race and Health Observatory (2023) Ethnic health inequalities and the NHS: Driving progress in a changing system (<https://bit.ly/48ExrAD>)

Traveller reported bad or very bad health in this age group compared with 9.9% of all females aged 60 to 64 years²³.

The Traveller Movement has highlighted growing concern over Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller women experiencing extreme distress, including taking their own lives, following child protection interventions related to domestic abuse.²⁴ For many Romani (Gypsy), Roma, and Irish Traveller women, it is vital that their children are raised within their cultural context, and the fear of children being placed in transracial care causes profound distress. Care planning must therefore ensure children have meaningful opportunities to maintain and take pride in their cultural identity, mitigating long-term impacts of cultural disconnection.

Barriers to accessing healthcare include mistrust of services, lack of cultural competence among providers, and systemic obstacles such as deregistration from GP practices when families do not have a fixed address. Increasing digitalisation of healthcare services further excludes those without reliable internet or digital literacy.²⁵

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

Whilst there is no reliable data on the prevalence of violence against women and girls (VAWG) within the communities, survivors from the Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller communities often face increased barriers to reporting domestic abuse and accessing support. As such, incidents of domestic abuse are chronically underreported. Women often fear engaging with police or safeguarding professionals due to a lack of trust, previous discriminatory experiences, and fears of child removal. Within communities, stigma around disclosure creates additional barriers.²⁶

²³ Office for National Statistics (2022). 2021 Census data on Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller populations (<https://bit.ly/4izV0yV>)

²⁴ Traveller Movement (2024) Submission to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (<https://bit.ly/3XwmLPt>)

²⁵ The Traveller Movement (2021) Submission to Covid-19 Committee Inquiry - Life Beyond Covid (<https://bit.ly/4pRNvWI>)

²⁶ The Traveller Movement (2023) Written evidence to the Public Bill Committee of the Victims and Prisoners Bill: Joint submission from VAWG organisations (<https://bit.ly/4oFi44Z>)

Within Romani (Gypsy), Roma, and Irish Traveller communities, “shaming” or “scandalising” may be used to publicly condemn individuals for behaviour deemed unacceptable by community norms, including sexual orientation, clothing, relationships, or seeking a divorce. This can take the form of online “shame pages” and has been linked to high rates of suicide. Shame and reputation damage may be considered forms of honour-based abuse most commonly experienced by these communities. Honour-based abuse is distinct in that it often involves collusion or approval from family or community members. National action is needed to address this form of abuse through specialised training and its inclusion in domestic abuse strategies.²⁷

Services are rarely designed with Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller women in mind and often fail to provide safe, culturally appropriate support. Survivor-led recommendations include the creation of specialist services embedded in Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller communities, training for frontline professionals, and ensuring that reporting mechanisms do not penalise women.²⁸

Criminal Justice System

Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller people are vastly overrepresented in the criminal justice system. Indeed, Romani (Gypsy) and Irish Traveller women comprise around 6% of the female prison population despite representing only 0.1% of the general population²⁹. This disparity is driven in part by over-policing of Romani (Gypsy), Roma, and Irish Traveller communities, yet their distinct needs and circumstances are often misunderstood and overlooked within the justice system.³⁰ Women are particularly vulnerable to imprisonment for minor, poverty-related offences due to experiencing multiple, intersecting disadvantage(s).

²⁷ Women’s Budget Group (2022) Violence Against Women and Girls (<https://bit.ly/3KqZTOk>)

²⁸ The Traveller Movement (2023) Written evidence to the Public Bill Committee of the Victims and Prisoners Bill: Joint submission from VAWG organisations (<https://bit.ly/4oFj44Z>)

²⁹ The Traveller Movement (2021) Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Women in Prison: (<https://bit.ly/3Mr2PuR>)

³⁰ The Traveller Movement (2021) Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Women in Prison: (<https://bit.ly/3Mr2PuR>)

Bias and prejudice influence sentencing decisions, with Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller communities ethnicity sometimes wrongly treated as a risk factor for flight. A lack of cultural awareness among judges and magistrates exacerbates disparities. The Sentencing Guidelines (Pre-sentence Reports) Act prohibits specific guidelines requiring PSRs for minority groups. This undermines years of progress towards equitable sentencing, contradicting evidence from the Lammy Review and HM Inspectorate of Prisons.³¹ Pre-sentence reports play a crucial role in contextualising defendants' life experiences, challenging bias, and enabling community-based alternatives to custody.³² These alternatives - such as the "Women's Centre Model" - tend to have better outcomes and are far more cost-effective than prison time³³.

Traveller Movement Caseworker Helpline

Over the past fourteen months, the Traveller Movement's casework service has supported Romani (Gypsy), Roma, and Irish Traveller community members — primarily women, who make up 82% of callers — with education and discrimination issues. Around 35% of calls relate to education and 40% to discrimination, with nearly half from Irish Traveller communities and just under a third from Romani (Gypsy) communities. Key issues include assumptions of domestic abuse by social services, discrimination by local councils, concerns over sex and relationship education, challenges navigating home education, and lack of support for children with SEND. The Traveller Movement highlights the need for cultural competency training across public services to improve engagement and outcomes.

³¹ Lammy, D. (2017) The Lammy Review: An independent review into the treatment of, and outcomes for, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic individuals in the Criminal Justice System (<https://bit.ly/4pf7fDz>)

³² The Traveller Movement (2025) Statement – 03.09.2025 (<https://bit.ly/48hORUG>)

³³ The Women's Budget Group (2025) The Women's Centre Model - the Financial Case for Alternatives to Prison (<https://bit.ly/444q9oj>)

Policy Recommendations

Core Recommendation: Data and Evidence

- Adopt the ONS 19+1 ethnic monitoring system across all public bodies, including Roma and Gypsy/Irish Traveller as separate categories, with gender disaggregation.

Further Data and Evidence Recommendations

- Include Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller women and children in maternal and child health programmes (e.g. MNI-CORP, MBRRACE-UK).
- Ensure pupil register data under the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill is deleted at age 18 and GDPR-compliant.
- Commission research on intersectional inequalities affecting Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller women to inform policy and resource allocation.
- Where survey or administrative data are limited by small sample sizes, public bodies should supplement quantitative evidence with qualitative and community-led methods, including interviews, focus groups and participatory research.

Education

- Require schools to record reasons for Elective Home Education (EHE).
- Mandate local authorities to provide proactive support for home-educating parents.
- Introduce mandatory reporting of racist incidents in schools with follow-up support.
- Develop culturally responsive education programmes to improve engagement and reduce exclusions for Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller girls.

Employment and Economic Participation

- Create employment and apprenticeship programmes tailored to Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller women, including career counselling and job placement.

- Support self-employment with access to grants, loans, and training in financial literacy and business management.
- Implement anti-discrimination measures in recruitment and workplace support services.
- Address digital exclusion to enable access to jobs, training, and business resources.

Health and Social Care

- Provide culturally competent maternity and reproductive health services.
- Embed mental health support within communities, addressing poverty, discrimination, and social exclusion.
- Ensure care planning preserves children's cultural identity and supports mothers.
- Train healthcare providers in Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller cultural competencies to reduce bias.

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

- Establish specialist VAWG services embedded in Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller communities.
- Include Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller specific evidence on shaming and reputation damage as forms of honour-based abuse in national strategies.
- Train frontline professionals to recognise and respond to culturally specific forms of abuse.
- Develop safe reporting mechanisms that do not penalise women.

Criminal Justice System

- Maintain PSRs for Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller women under Sentencing Guidelines to ensure equitable sentencing.
- Provide cultural competency training for judges, magistrates, and probation officers.
- Expand community-based sentencing options that are culturally and gender responsive.
- Collect and publish disaggregated data on Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller women in the criminal justice system.

Cross-cutting Measures

- Deliver mandatory cultural competency training across all public services.
- Include Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller women in policymaking, research, and service design.
- Target funding to areas of greatest inequality affecting Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller women.

Conclusion

Women from Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller backgrounds face entrenched and intersecting inequalities across public services, employment, health, education, and the criminal justice system. These disparities are not inevitable but result from policy failures, institutional neglect, and systemic racism. Urgent, targeted interventions are needed to address these injustices. Government must commit to inclusive data collection, equitable access to justice, and gender and culturally sensitive services that empower and support Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller women.

The Traveller Movement
40 Jeffrey's Road, Stockwell
London
SW4 6QX

<https://travellermovement.org.uk/>

For further information contact [**info@travellermovement.org.uk**](mailto:info@travellermovement.org.uk)

About the Traveller Movement The Traveller Movement is a registered UK charity promoting inclusion and community engagement with to Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Travellers. The Traveller Movement seeks to empower and support Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller communities to advocate for the full implementation of their human rights.

Women's Budget Group
10 Salamanca Place
London
SE1 7HB

<https://www.wbg.org.uk/>

For further information contact [**press@wbg.org.uk**](mailto:press@wbg.org.uk)

The UK Women's Budget Group is the UK's leading feminist economics think tank
We are the only UK-wide think tank focused on exploring the economy through a gendered lens and we are the leading feminist organisation dedicated to the economy.

© 2026 The Traveller Movement and The Women's Budget Group

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without full attribution.