



# Fact Sheet

## Gypsy and Traveller Myth Buster

### **What is the difference between a gypsy and a traveller**

Romany gypsies are thought to have lived in the UK since the early 1500s, having migrated across Egypt (hence the word gypsy being a derivative of Egyptian) and later Europe.

Therefore, while gypsies have their roots in a number of European countries, travellers tend to originate from Ireland.

### **What is the legal definition of gypsies and travellers?**

Gypsies and Irish travellers are recognised ethnic groups for the purposes of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, identified as having a shared culture, language and beliefs.

### **Is it ok to call someone a gypsy, or is it a derogatory term?**

It is perfectly ok to use the word gypsy and/or traveller, neither are classed as derogatory. Most gypsies and travellers are very proud of their heritage and would be more than happy to clarify their ethnicity if you are in doubt.

### **How many gypsies and travellers are there in the UK?**

No one knows precisely how many gypsies and travellers live in the UK. Estimates show the number living in caravans is between 90,000 and 120,000, with up to three times this number living in housing. Doncaster has the highest population, estimated at between 4,000 and 6,000 people.

### **Why do many gypsies and travellers no longer travel?**

Following the Public Order Act (1984) Local Authorities no longer had an obligation to provide sites for gypsies and travellers. There are now too few sites to accommodate this community and so many have settled in housing. 90% of gypsies and travellers around the world now live in houses.

### **Is a person still classed as a gypsy or traveller if they no longer travel?**

The courts have confirmed that, for many gypsies and Irish travellers, living in a caravan is not a 'lifestyle choice' but a result of their social and cultural heritage and an essential part of their ethnic identity. Even when gypsies and travellers live in houses their culture and heritage stays with them.

### **Do gypsies and travellers work for a living?**

Yes, many gypsies and travellers traditionally work as landscape gardeners, tarmacers, motor trade workers, scrap metal dealers, tree fellers and so on. It is also more common nowadays for gypsies and travellers to be employed as teachers, academics, health workers etc.

## Do gypsies and travellers pay taxes?

Yes, gypsies and travellers do pay taxes. All gypsies and travellers living on a local authority or privately owned site pay council tax, rent, gas, electricity and all other associated charges. These vary between sites but are often higher than comparable charges for conventional housing.

## Is there a high criminal rate amongst the gypsy and traveller community?

Criminal justice agencies do not collect information about gypsies and travellers as separate ethnic groups but there is no evidence that offending is any higher among these groups than among others.

For further information on gypsies and travellers please visit:

- [www.cre.gov.uk](http://www.cre.gov.uk)
- [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)
- [www.travellerslaw.org.uk](http://www.travellerslaw.org.uk)

Also please visit the equality and diversity section on St. Leger's website:

- [www.stlegerhomes.co.uk](http://www.stlegerhomes.co.uk)

## For further information:

Please contact the Diversity Team.  
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