

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Populations in Southwark: *Factsheet*

Southwark's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

Southwark Public Health Division

July 2024

Report title: Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Populations in Southwark

Status: Public

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Suggested citation: Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Populations in Southwark. Southwark's JSNA. Southwark Council: London. 2024.

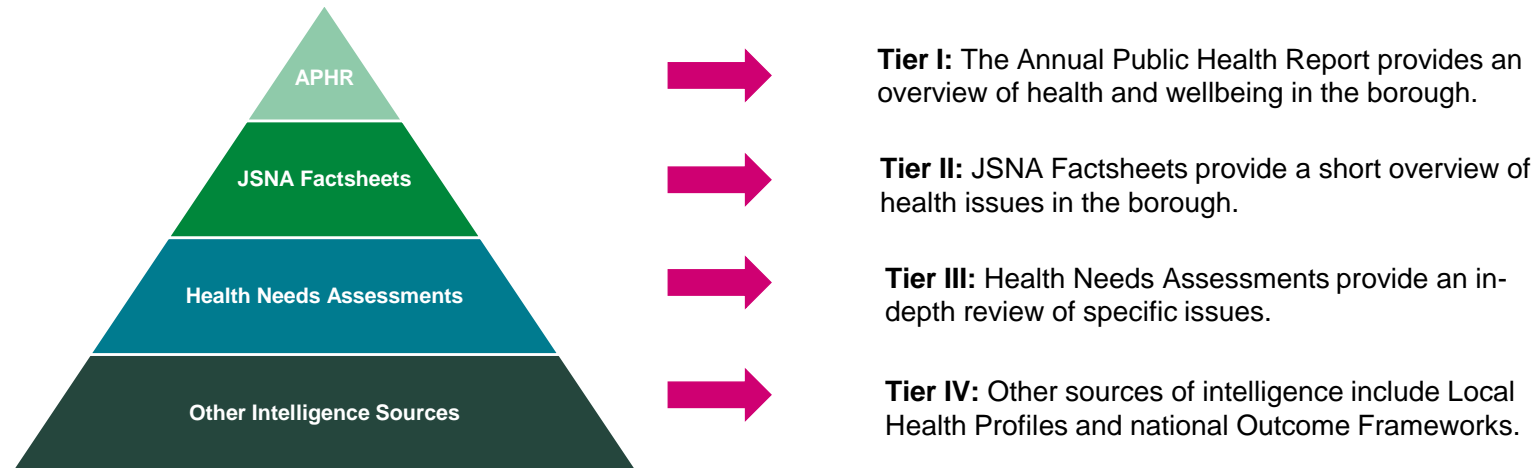
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Date of publication: 29 July 2024

JSNA Factsheets form part of Southwark's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment process

The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) is the ongoing process through which we seek to identify the current and future health and wellbeing needs of our local population.

- The purpose of the JSNA is to inform and underpin the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy and other local plans that seek to improve the health of our residents.
- The JSNA is built from a range of resources that contribute to our understanding of need. In Southwark we have structured these resources around 4 tiers:



- This document forms part of those resources.
- All our resources are available via the following link: www.southwark.gov.uk/JSNA

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Section 1: Introduction

Gypsy, Roma and Travellers are distinct ethnic groups, representing people with a traditionally nomadic lifestyle

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller populations are distinct groups with different origins, cultures and traditions, all of which are important in understanding the social, economic and health barriers they face.

- In the UK, it is common to differentiate between different groups, including English/Scottish/Welsh/Irish Gypsies with specific heritage, and Roma people who have often migrated from central and Eastern Europe.
- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people have a traditionally nomadic lifestyle, living in mobile homes such as caravans. However, it is important to note that many live in permanent housing. In Southwark in 2021 nearly all Roma residents lived in bricks and mortar accommodation, as did 69% of Gypsy or Irish Traveller residents.¹
- Based on national data and literature, it is widely documented that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller populations experience poor health outcomes compared to the general population, and often face barriers which prevent access to healthcare.
- However, information on these specific ethnic groups is lacking, with most data based on qualitative research and specific studies, rather than national datasets.

JSNA Factsheets are data packs on specific topic areas and are designed to provide a short summary of key facts

The aim of this factsheet is to provide a baseline of information on the local Gypsy, Roma and Traveller population in Southwark.

- Different sources of information group these populations in different ways. The majority of information in this factsheet was gathered from the 2021 Census which included the ethnic group categories 'Roma' and 'Gypsy or Irish Traveller'. This factsheet has been divided accordingly, to reflect the individual demographics, situations and needs of these distinct populations.
- It is important to note that census data is likely to undercount the size of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller population ². This has been attributed to low trust levels between some in these groups and the state, which contributes to under-engagement with the census ³.
- The 2023 GP Patient Survey included the ethnic groups of Roma and Gypsy or Irish Traveller, providing some indication of healthcare need and GP practice experience of these populations. However, general NHS ethnicity coding does not include Gypsy, Roma or Traveller groups.
- The factsheet also contains information gathered by Southwark Travellers Action Group (STAG), based on analysis of their annual survey (2023) which covers the Roma, Gypsy and Irish Traveller population on the following topic areas: Well being & Community, Health & COVID, & Health Services.

Over 2,000 Gypsy, Roma & Travellers reside in Southwark and they often experience poor health and social outcomes

In 2021, there were 1,579 residents identifying as Roma and 157 identifying as Gypsy or Irish Travellers, most being aged under 40. Italian was the most commonly spoken language for Roma residents in Southwark.¹

- **General health:** 17% of Gypsy or Irish Travellers rated their health as bad or very bad across Southwark, with Gypsy and Traveller communities experiencing a **10 to 12** years lower life expectancy than the general population. This is in sharp contrast to **6%** of Roma rating their health as bad or very bad in 2021.
- **Access and experience with healthcare:** **35%** of Roma residents rated their experience with a GP as poor or very poor, notably higher than **16%** experienced by the general population. This is linked to reported discrimination and cultural insensitivity in service provision.
- **Housing:** Almost all Roma residents in the borough live in bricks and mortar accommodation, with **73%** living in privately rented accommodation. Roughly half of Gypsy or Irish Traveller residents lived in a flat, maisonette or apartment.
- **Education:** **18%** of Roma residents and **43%** of Gypsy or Irish Travellers reported having no qualifications, higher than the borough average of **14%**.
- **Employment and deprivation:** A high proportion of Roma residents are economically active. Only **12%** being economically inactive - lower than the general population of **24%**. However, **43%** of Gypsy or Irish Travellers were economically inactive in 2021, **16%** due to sickness or disability.

Section 2: The National picture

Multiple studies show poorer physical and mental health outcomes faced by Roma, Gypsy and Traveller people

Each of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller populations are distinct groups with differences in origins, cultures and traditions, all of which are important in understanding the social, economic and health barriers they face.

- In the 2021 Census, 3% of Roma across England and Wales rated their health as bad or very bad, increasing to 13% among Gypsy or Irish Travellers.¹
- This was similar in London, where 2% of Roma and 14% Gypsy or Irish Travellers reported bad or very bad health.
- In comparison, 4% of London's population as a whole reported having bad or very bad health.
- Further health inequalities faced by Gypsy and Traveller communities include:⁶
 - **10 to 12** years lower life expectancy than the general population
 - **39%** have a long-term illness compared to only **29%** of the general population
 - **25%** report mobility problems compared to **15%** of the general population
 - **3x** more likely to have a chronic cough; **4-5x** more likely to suffer from bronchitis
- Gypsy and Traveller communities also face poor mental health outcomes, compared to the general population, and are estimated to be at 6 to 7 times greater risk of suicide than the general population.⁵
- Studies into Roma, Gypsy and Traveller communities have found that 28% had lost at least one relative to suicide, and 82% of Irish Travellers and 32% of Romani Gypsies had relatives who had attempted suicide in the last five years.⁷
- Other studies have shown Gypsy and Travellers being twice as likely to be depressed and three times more likely to be anxious than the general population.

Roma, Gypsy and Traveller communities experience significant barriers to accessing healthcare

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities also face a number of economic and social inequalities that contribute to poor health.

- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller students are the least likely of any ethnic group in the UK to remain in school after the age of 16. Low educational attainment creates barriers to employment and health-seeking behaviours, especially as many health interventions for children and young people are delivered in schools.⁸
- A chronic shortage of sites means many Gypsies and Travellers do not have authorised places to stop. Nationally, 12% of caravans in 2022 were on roadsides or unauthorised sites, which often have limited or no access to clean water or sanitation, leading to increased spread of diseases.⁹
- Discrimination and hate crime is also detrimental to mental health and wellbeing. In 2017, 91% of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people surveyed had experienced discrimination.¹⁰
- Discrimination has been repeatedly reported by Gypsy, Roma and Travellers being illegitimately refused registration to GP and dental practices.¹¹
- There is wide mistrust of the healthcare and wider social care system among these communities, which acts as a barrier to accessing support.¹¹
- A lack of cultural sensitivity in healthcare is also frequently reported by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities as well as a lack of suitable languages which cater to these communities.¹²

Section 3: Southwark's Roma Population

At the time of the 2021 Census, there were 1,579 residents of Southwark who recorded their ethnicity as White: Roma

This was equivalent to 0.51% of the resident population, and 4% of the total Roma population across London.¹

- Roma residents were only identified within the 'White' broad ethnic group.
- A greater proportion of Roma residents were male, at 63%, compared to 37% female
- Of the Roma population, 75% were aged 20-39
- There are a higher proportion of Roma resident in Southwark aged between 20-39 when compared to London's 20-39 Roma population.

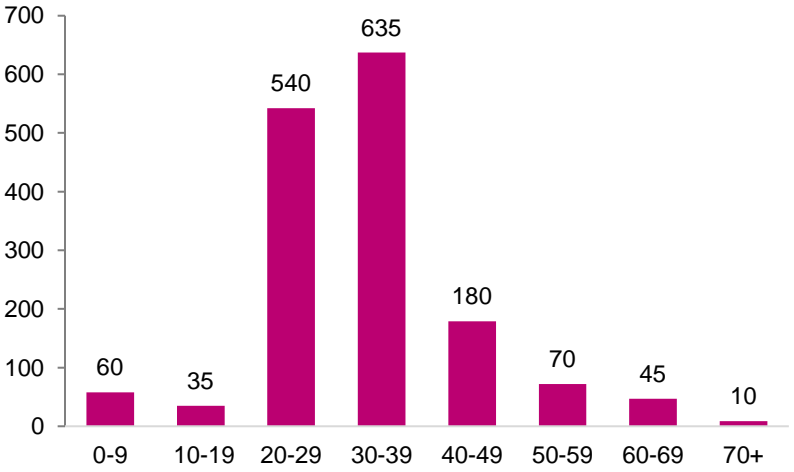


Figure 1: Roma residents in Southwark by age group (2021)

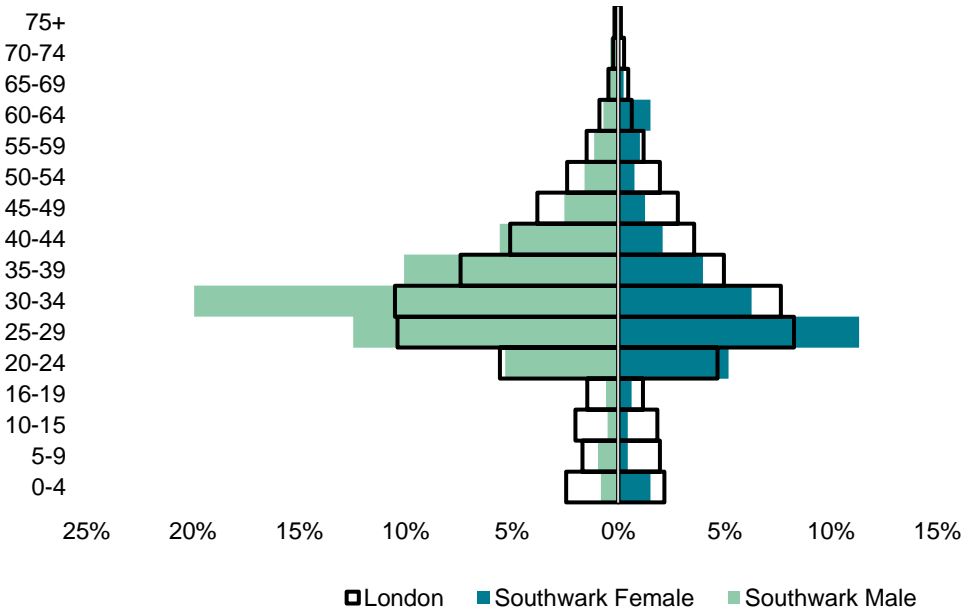


Figure 2: Age-sex pyramid comparing Southwark's Roma population vs London's Roma population (2021)

The majority of the Roma population are concentrated in the north of the borough, around Rotherhithe and Bermondsey

The distribution of Roma populations is spread across London, although there are higher concentrations in certain areas (as shown in figure 4).

- The map on the left shows the number of Roma people across Southwark. The map on the right shows the percentage of the population in each area who are Roma.

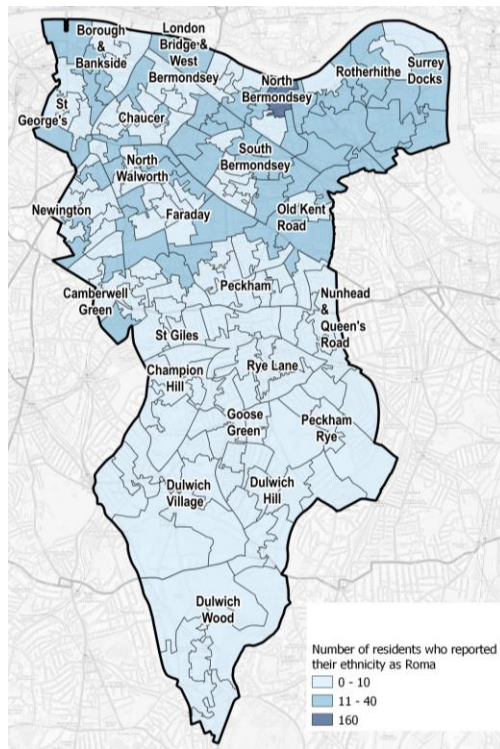


Figure 3: Roma location of residence (2021) ¹

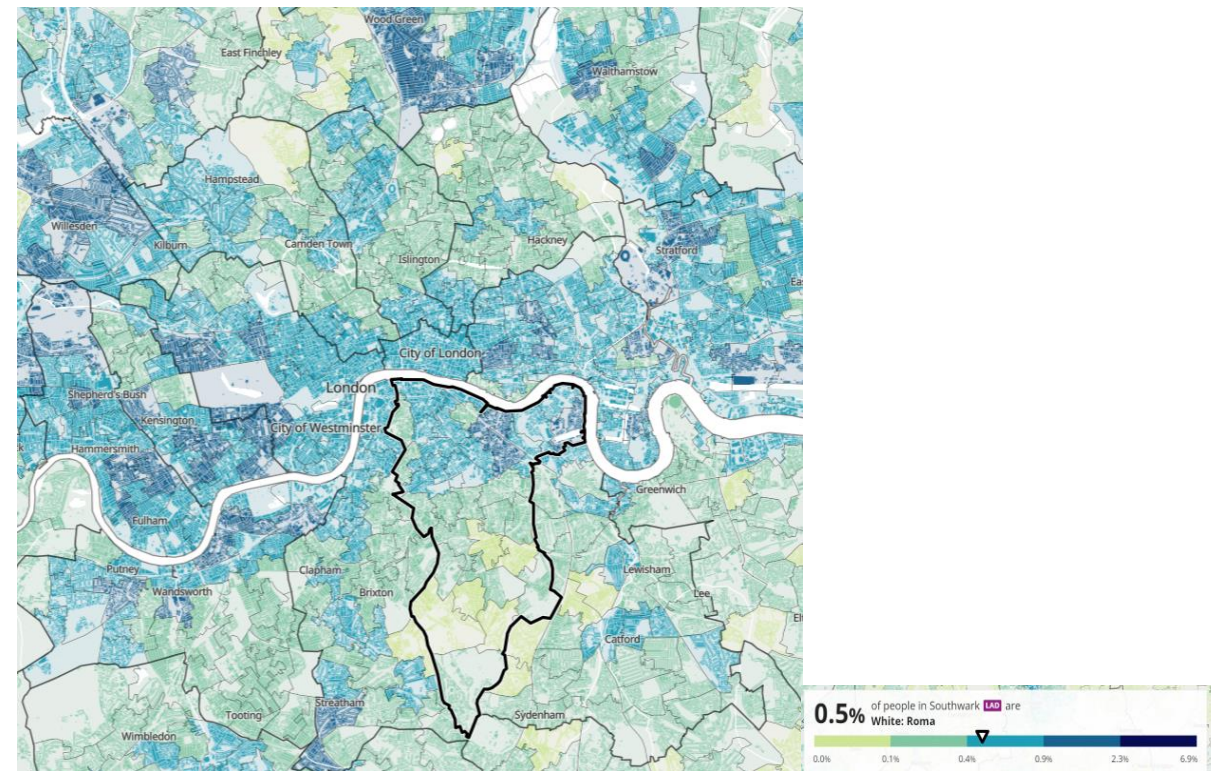


Figure 4: Roma location of residence, as percentage of the population (2021) ¹

The majority of Southwark's Roma population were born in Europe, with smaller numbers from Central & South America

A further 200 residents whose ethnic group was Roma were from Central and South America.¹

- Specific country of birth data is not available for Southwark, however across London 44% of Roma residents are from Italy, rising to 48% across South East London (Southwark, Lambeth, Lewisham, Bexley, Bromley and Greenwich).
- Despite being known as a traditionally transient population, 62% of Roma residents reported living at the same address within Southwark 1 year before the Census, with a further 31% living elsewhere in the UK prior to the 2021 Census, reflecting that many may be settled in Southwark on a semi-permanent or permanent basis.

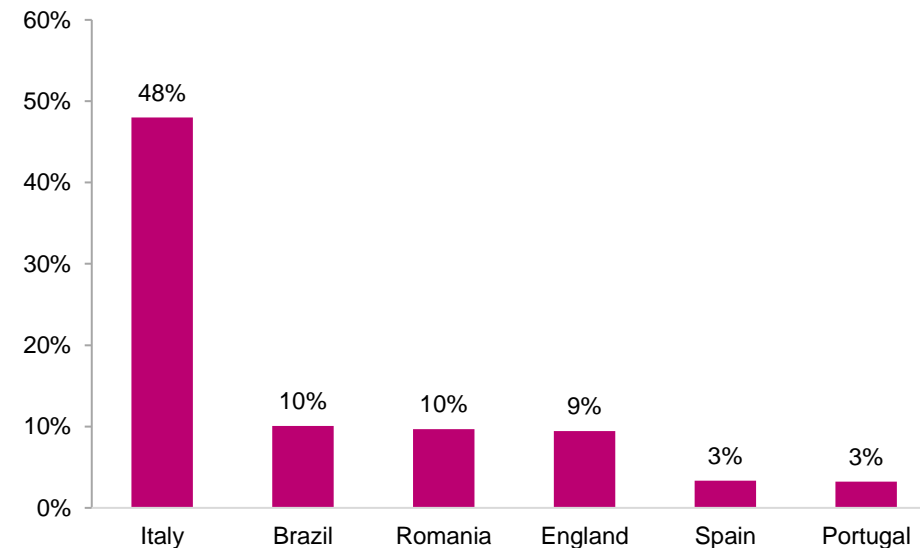


Figure 5: Roma residents across South East London, by their country of birth as of 2021 (6 most common countries only)

Italian was the most common language spoken by Roma residents in Southwark

53% of Roma residents spoke Italian as a main language at the time of the Census, with only 21% speaking English as a main language, much lower than the borough average of 79%.¹

- Languages spoken by Roma residents varied across England by region, but Italian was the most common across London.
- Of the Roma resident population in Southwark, 20% have English as a main language - significantly lower than the borough average of 79%.
- Of the Roma population in Southwark, 9% (142) reported not being able to speak English well or very well, higher than the borough average of 4%.

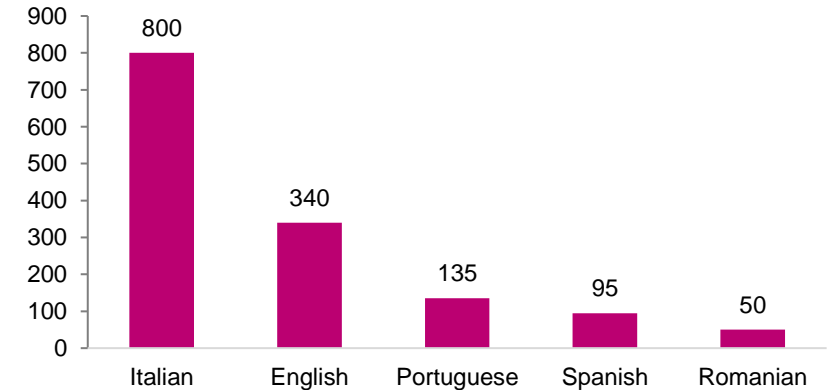


Figure 6: Main language spoken by Roma residents in Southwark (2021)

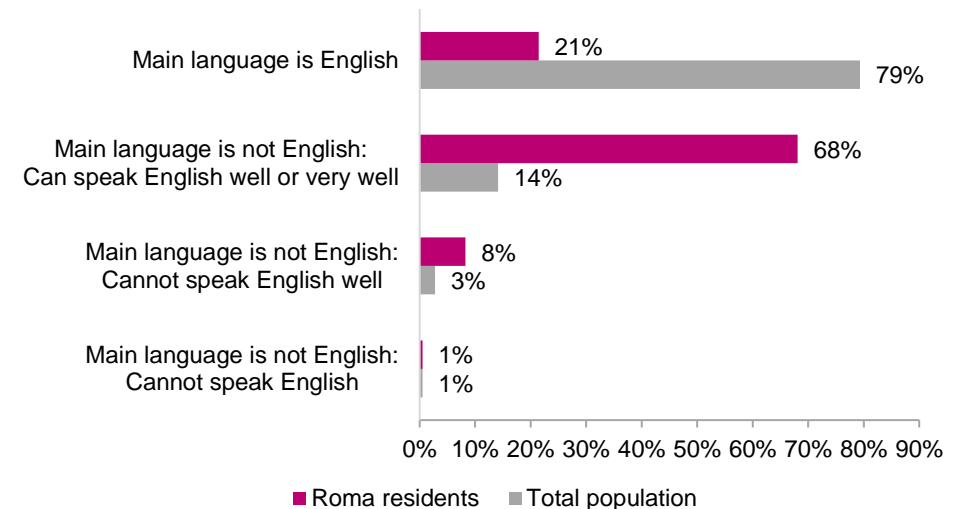


Figure 7: English proficiency of Roma residents compared to all residents in Southwark (2021)

There are approximately 675 households whose reference person was Roma at the time of the 2021 Census

Of the 1,560 Roma residents, 57% lived in a household that was disadvantaged in at least one dimension. This is broadly comparable to the average for all residents in Southwark.¹

- Household disadvantage can be determined on a number of conditions, including disability, education, employment and overcrowding.
- The majority of Roma residents lived in private rented accommodation at the time of the census (73%), fewer Roma residents either own their home or rent socially compared to the borough averages.
- Almost all Roma residents lived in bricks and mortar accommodation: 88% of Roma residents lived in a flat, maisonette or apartment and 12% lived in a whole house or bungalow.

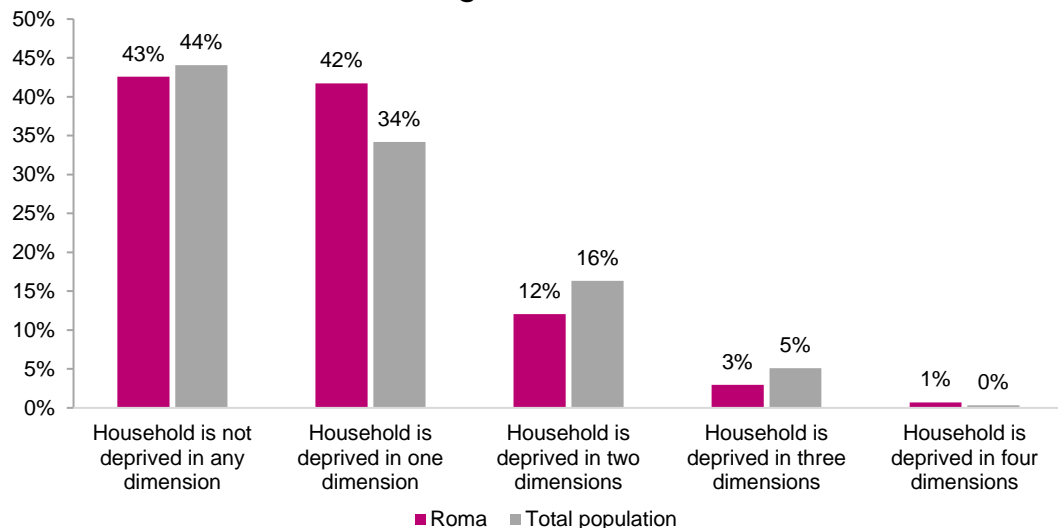


Figure 8: Percentage of Roma residents who live in households of various deprivation levels, compared to the overall population of Southwark (2021)

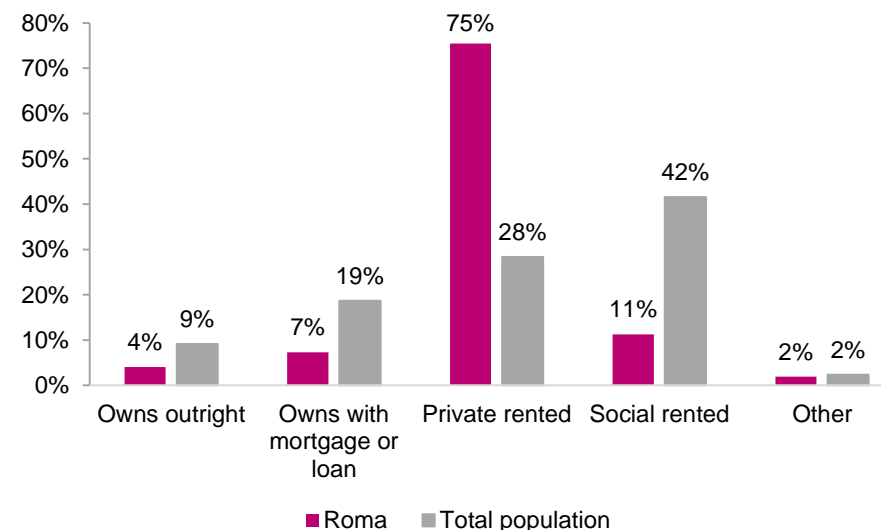


Figure 9: Percentage of Roma residents living in households with various tenure types, compared to the overall population of Southwark (2021)

87% of Southwark Roma residents aged 16 or over are economically active, higher than the borough average of 71%

The 2021 census provided a range of information on the population, including education, economic activity and socio-economic status.¹

- The proportion of Roma residents with different levels of education mirrored those seen across Southwark's population: 42% of Roma residents have a level 4 qualification or above (equivalent to a degree), only slightly less than 46% of the overall population.
- Of Roma residents, 18% reported having no qualifications, slightly higher than the borough average of 14%.
- Only 12% of Roma residents in Southwark are economically inactive i.e. not in employment and not seeking work within the last month and / or unable to work in the next fortnight. This is half the average of Southwark as a whole (24%).
- One of the metrics reported by the Census is the National Statistics Socio-economic Classification (NS-SEC). This indicates a person's socio-economic position based on their occupation and other job characteristics.
- Roma residents in Southwark have job positions broadly comparable to the rest of the borough population, with a noticeable disparity in routine occupations: 19% of Roma residents work in routine occupations, compared to only 8% of the total population.

A higher proportion of Gypsy, Roma and Travellers are eligible for free school meals than the overall population

The School Census provides further information on local populations, which can be broken down by ethnicity.

- Ethnicity categories do not exactly match those in the 2021 Census; the options in the School Census are Gypsy/Roma and Traveller of Irish Heritage.¹³
- In 2022/23, 70% of Gypsy/Roma children were eligible for free school meals, greater than the borough average of 36%.
- This was also higher than the average eligibility of Gypsy/Roma children across London, which was 40%.

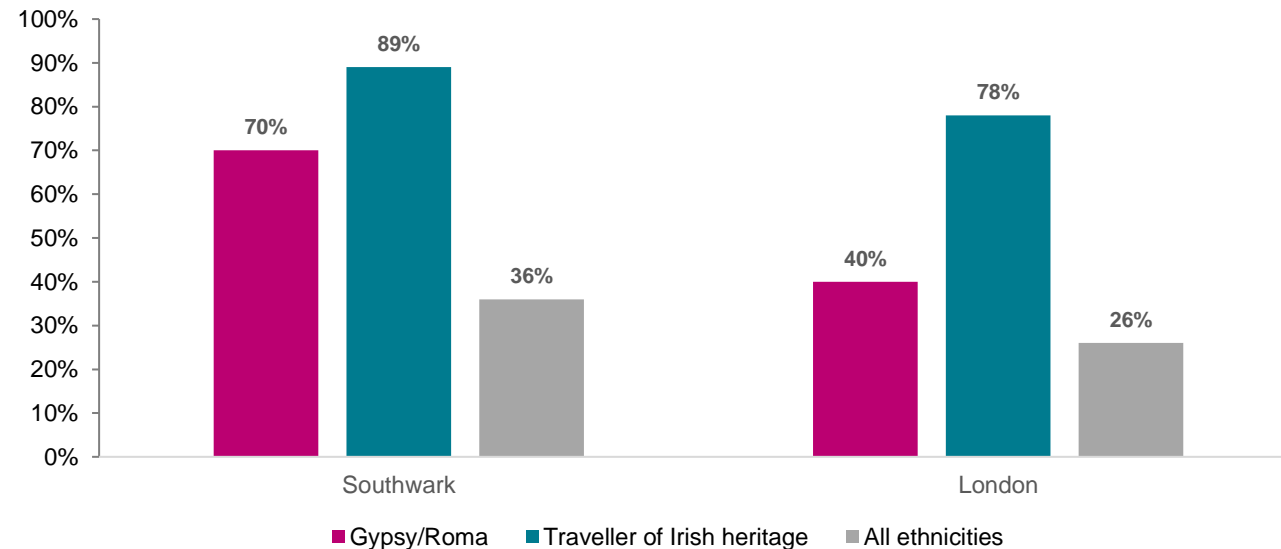


Figure 10: 2022/23 free school meal eligibility by ethnic group and for the whole school population in Southwark schools. Base numbers: 37 for Gypsy/Roma and 27 for Traveller of Irish heritage

94% of Southwark Roma residents reported being in good or very good health at the time of the 2021 Census

Self-reported health status among Roma residents is higher than the general population, with 94% reporting good or very good health compared to 86% for Southwark as a whole.¹

- 4% of Southwark's Roma population reported having a disability, again lower than the general population of Southwark at 14%. Disability is defined in the 2010 Equality Act as a physical or mental health condition which limits day-to-day activities.
- The generally good health and low disability levels among the Roma population is likely influenced by the young age profile of Roma residents as younger people tend to have fewer health concerns.
- A lower percentage of Roma residents provide some level of unpaid care, 3%, compared to Southwark's total population at 6%.

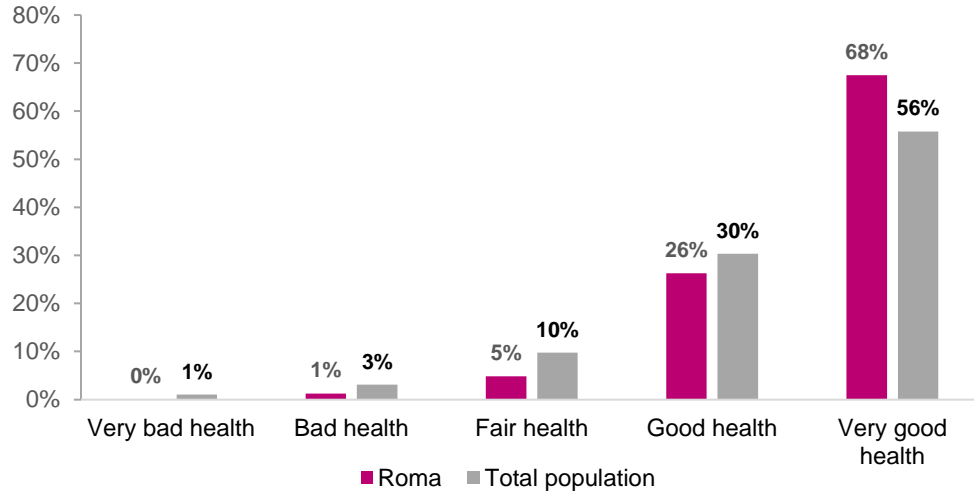


Figure 11: Percentage of Roma residents with self reported health rating of very bad, bad, fair, good or very good, compared to the overall population of Southwark (2021)

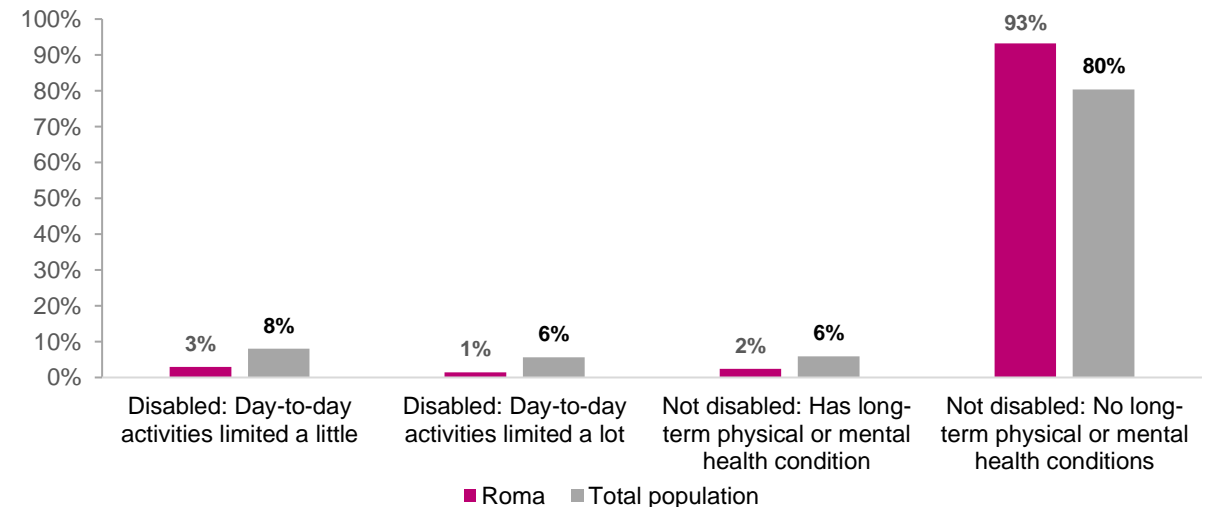


Figure 12: Percentage of Roma residents with a disability or long term health condition, compared to the overall population of Southwark (2021)

The 2023 GP Patient Survey included views from Roma residents across South East London

The 2023 GP Patient Survey asked about health and long-term conditions and experiences of primary care services. The results shown were calculated from a sample of residents from across the 6 South East London boroughs.¹⁴

- Of Roma respondents, 43% replied 'yes' to having any long-term physical or mental health conditions, disabilities or illnesses; this was lower than the response of 50% from the whole population.
- Of conditions asked about in the survey, the most common which Roma residents responded to having was high blood pressure (16%).
- A high percentage (compared to the overall population) also said they had 2 or more falls in the past 12 months requiring medical attention.
- Of Roma respondents, 24% said they did not feel confident managing their conditions, similar to the overall response of 23%.
- Of Roma respondents, 2% said they had a mental health condition, noticeably lower than for overall responses (13%).

Table 1: Reported long-term conditions from South East London Roma patients compared to the total population (2023)

Survey response	Roma population	Total population
High blood pressure	16%	13%
A breathing condition, such as asthma or COPD	12%	10%
2+ falls needing medical attention	12%	2%
Diabetes	11%	6%
A heart condition, such as angina or atrial fibrillation	7%	5%
Kidney or liver disease	4%	2%
Long COVID	3%	4%
A mental health condition	2%	13%
Feeling isolated from others	0%	8%
Another long-term condition or disability	2%	13%

35% of Roma residents rated their overall experience of their GP practice as poor or very poor

This was much higher than the general population where only 16% rated their experience as poor or very poor.¹⁴

- In regards to long-term conditions, only 27% of Roma respondents said they had enough support from local services in the last 12 months to help manage their condition, lower than the overall response of 44%.
- Of Roma residents, 30% said they had a conversation with a healthcare professional from their GP practice to discuss what is important when managing their condition, slightly lower than the overall population at 35%.

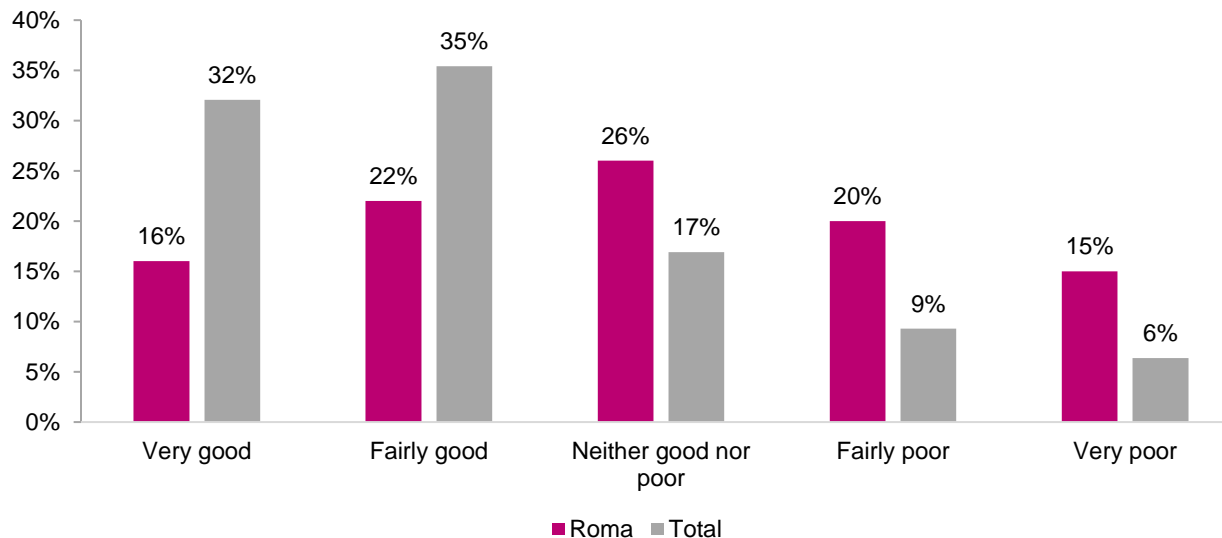


Figure 13: Percentage of Roma patients who rated their overall experience of their GP practice as very good, fairly good, neither good nor poor, fairly poor or very poor, compared to all patients surveyed (2023)

*Percentages are calculated using weighted population sizes.

64% of Roma respondents said their experience of making an appointment at their GP practice was poor or very poor

This was much higher than the response from the total population of 33%.¹⁴

- A higher than average proportion of Roma patients felt their needs were not met and they lacked trust and confidence in their provider.
- However, Roma residents did feel their mental health needs were met during their last appointment.

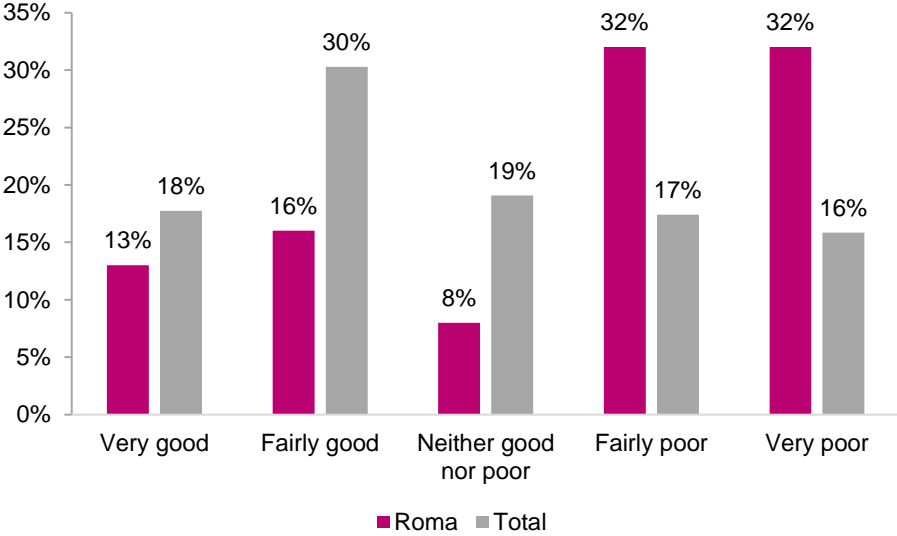


Figure 14: Percentage of Roma patients who rated their experience of booking an appointment at their GP practice as very good, fairly good, neither good nor poor, fairly poor or very poor, compared to all patients surveyed (2023)

Table 2: Survey responses from Roma population compared to the total population, on selected questions related to primary care access and experience (2023)

Survey response	Roma population	Total population
Not very or not at all easy to reach GP over the phone	61%	49%
Receptionist at GP was very or fairly helpful	62%	77%
Used none of the listed online GP services	42%	44%
Had no confidence and trust in the healthcare professional seen at last GP appointment	26%	8%
Needs were not at all met at last GP appointment	26%	10%
Any mental health needs (where relevant) were not at all recognised/understood during last appointment	9%	10%

Section 4: Southwark's Gypsy and Irish Traveller Population

As part of the 2021 Census, 157 Southwark residents reported their ethnicity as White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller

This was equivalent to less than 1% of the overall population of Southwark.¹

- Of Southwark’s Gypsy and Irish Traveller population, 76% are under the age of 50, similar to that of London (80%).
- Analysis on the following slides should be viewed at with caution due to the small sample size of this population.



Figure 15: Gypsy or Irish Traveller residents by age band in Southwark and London (2021)

There are small concentrations of Gypsy or Irish Traveller residents in Peckham and Old Kent Road

The local Gypsy or Irish Traveller population recorded in the Census is small, reflected in the numbers on the map key.¹

- The majority of Gypsy and Irish Traveller residents live in the central and north east of the borough.
- Of Gypsy or Irish Travellers in Southwark, 31% live in a caravan or other mobile or temporary structure. The 4 official Travellers sites in Southwark are shown on the map for reference. Springtide Close site, located in Peckham, has been closed since 2019.
- In terms of movement, 87% of residents had the same address one year prior to the Census as their address on Census day (135 residents), a further 11% had moved from elsewhere in the UK in the year prior to the Census. This suggests that while the Gypsy or Irish Traveller population may be traditionally nomadic, the vast majority of those in Southwark are longer-term residents.
- According to the site survey there are currently no travelling show-people residing in Southwark.

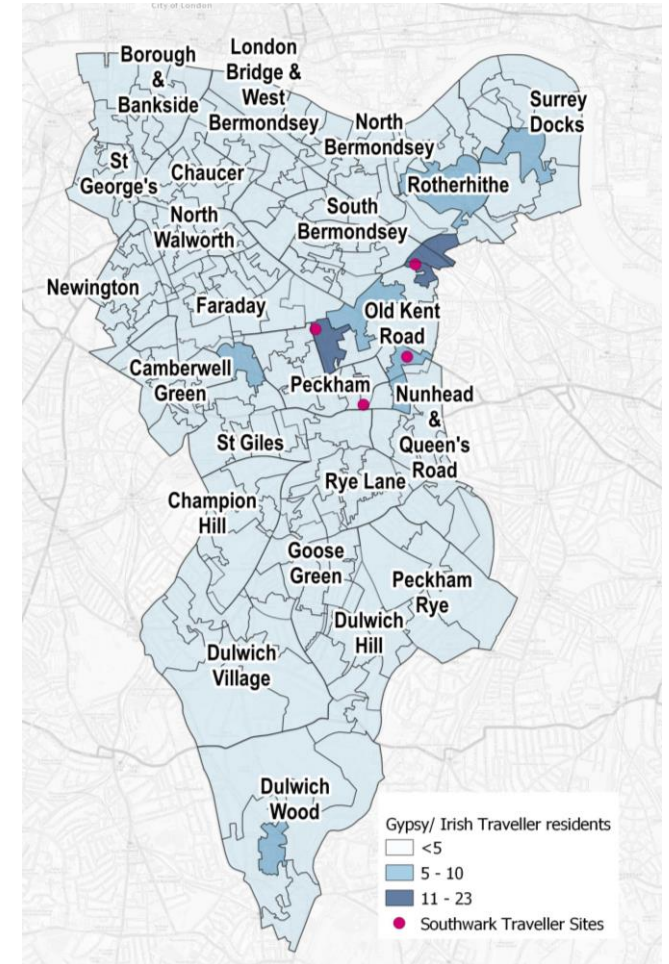


Figure 16: Gypsy or Irish Traveller residents in Southwark (2021)

English is the main language for the vast majority of Gypsy or Irish Travellers in Southwark

78% of Gypsy or Irish Traveller residents spoke English as a main language according to the 2021 Census; the majority of the remainder spoke various European languages.¹

- Among the Gypsy or Irish Traveller residents in London, 73% reported speaking English as a main language.
- 122 out of the 146 Southwark residents spoke English as a main language. The next most common language was 'other European', followed by Spanish.
- Of those who did not speak English as a first language, the majority (83%) said they could speak English well or very well. No one reported not being able to speak English at all.
- 72% of Gypsy or Irish Traveller residents in Southwark were born in the UK, 11% were born in Ireland, and 15% were born elsewhere in Europe.

69% of Gypsy or Irish Traveller residents lived in bricks and mortar accommodation according to the Census

Roughly half of Gypsy or Irish Traveller residents lived in a flat, maisonette or apartment; a further 31% lived in a caravan or other mobile or temporary structure (49 residents total).¹

- The percentage of Gypsy or Irish Travellers living in caravans or other mobile temporary structures was much higher in Southwark compared to London as a whole, where only 9% of residents lived in mobile accommodation.
- Of Southwark Gypsy or Irish Traveller residents, 63% lived in social rented accommodation, either from the Council or other social landlords.
- 86% of Gypsy or Irish Travellers had the same address 1 year prior to the Census, and a further 11% had moved from elsewhere within the UK in the year prior to the Census.

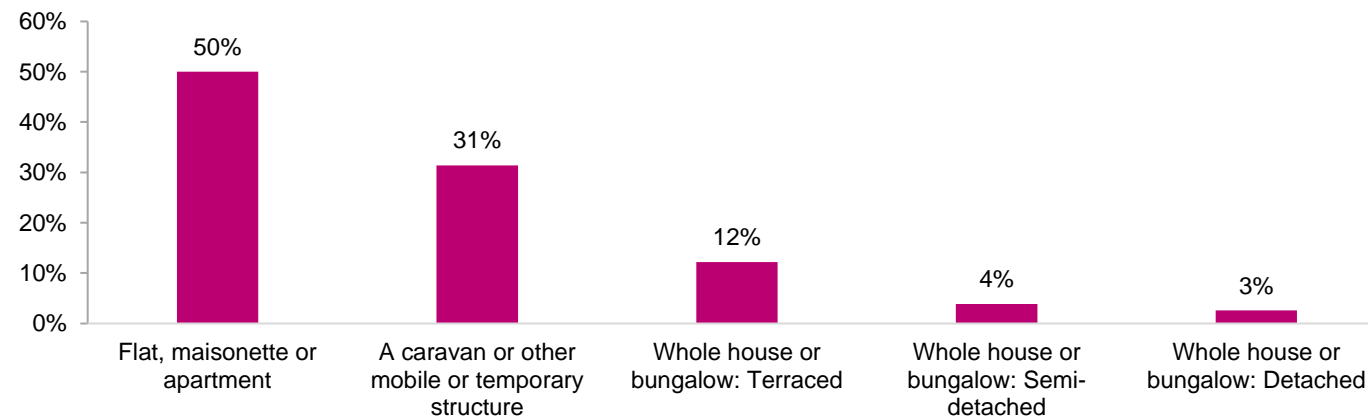


Figure 17: Gypsy or Irish Traveller residents by their household tenure type (2021)

There were 86 Gypsy or Irish Traveller households responding to the 2021 Census

This uses the number of household reference people identifying as Gypsy or Irish Traveller as a proxy for the number of households.¹

- The two most common reasons for household disadvantage were health & disability, and housing.
- Of the 155 Gypsy or Irish Traveller residents, 94 lived in a household disadvantaged in the health and disability dimension – meaning at least one person in the household was disabled.
- Of the 155 residents, 72 lived in a household classified as disadvantaged, indicating their accommodation was either overcrowded, in a shared dwelling or had no central heating.

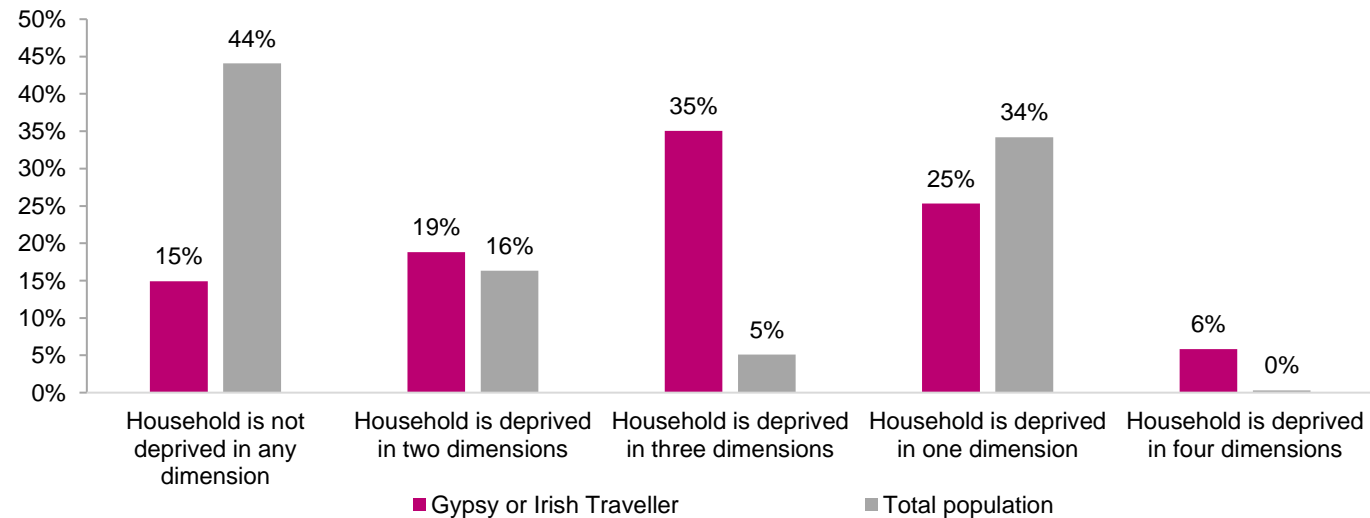


Figure 18: Gypsy or Irish Traveller residents by their household deprivation status, compared to that of all Southwark residents in households (2021)

43% of Gypsy and Irish Travellers aged 16 and over in Southwark reported having no educational qualifications

This is much higher than the borough average (14%) for having no qualifications.¹

- Of those in the Gypsy or Irish Traveller population with qualifications, the majority had a level 4 qualification or above i.e. degree level.
- This translates to 26% of those over 16 or over, equivalent to 31 residents.

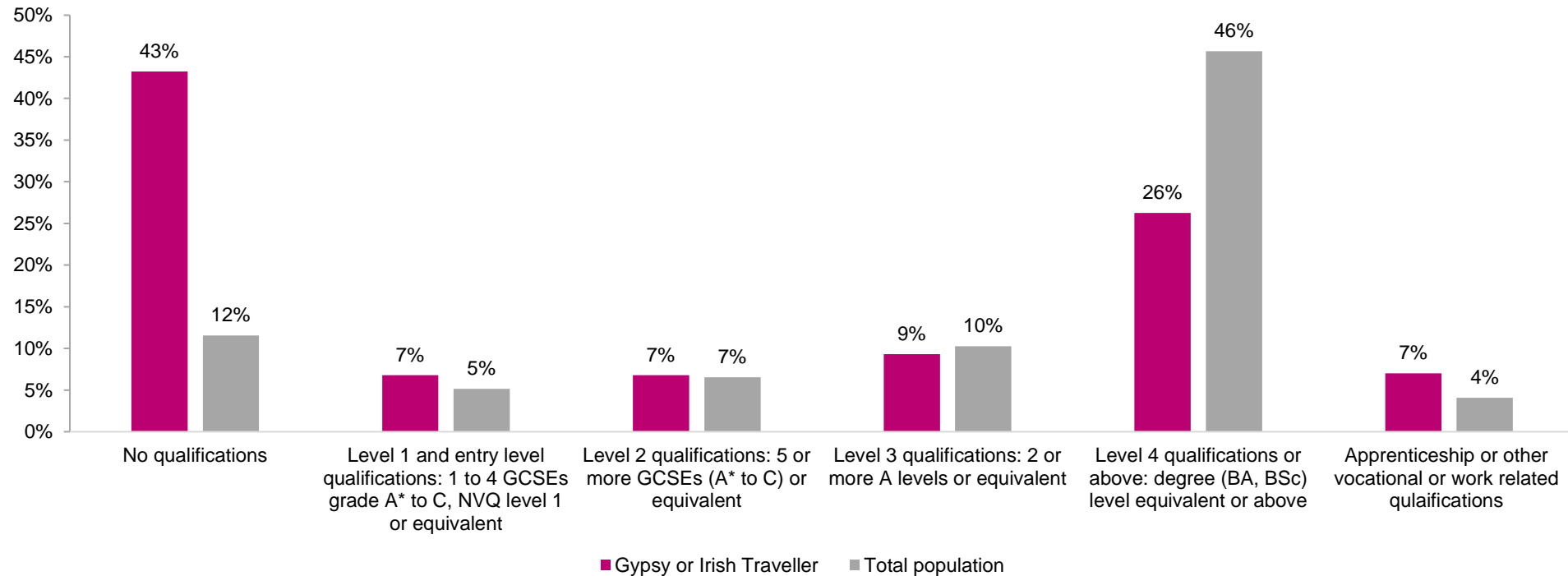


Figure 19: Gypsy or Irish Traveller residents by highest level of qualification, compared to those of all Southwark residents (2021)

43% of Gypsy or Irish Traveller residents were economically inactive in 2021 - 16% due to long term sickness or disability

This was higher than the overall population of Southwark, where 24% of the population were economically inactive - 3% due to long term sickness or disability.¹

- Only 26% of the Gypsy or Irish Travellers population were economically active, much lower than the borough average of 54%, however this is similar to the proportion of Gypsy or Irish Travellers across London who are economically active, which is 28%.
- In terms of socio-economic status, the most common NS-SEC category does not apply (as it only applies to those over 16); after this the three most common categories for Gypsy or Irish Travellers in Southwark is 'never worked' (24%), 'routine occupations' (10%) and 'lower professional & higher technical occupations' (9%).

Table 3: Gypsy or Irish Traveller residents by economic activity status, compared to all Southwark residents (2021)

Economic activity status	Gypsy or Irish Traveller	Total Population
Economically active, in work and/or studying	26%	54%
Economically active, seeking work	8%	5%
Economically inactive, long term sick or disabled	16%	3%
Economically inactive, looking after home or family	11%	3%
Economically inactive, retired, student or other	16%	18%

A higher proportion of Gypsy or Irish Travellers are eligible for free school meals than the overall population

The School Census provides further information on local populations, which can be broken down by ethnicity.¹³

- As previously stated, ethnicity categories do not exactly match those in the 2021 Census - the options in the school census are Gypsy/Roma and Traveller of Irish Heritage.
- For Travellers of Irish Heritage, the percentage of free school meal eligibility was particularly high, 89% in Southwark and 78% across London.
- This is much higher than the overall base populations for Southwark (36%) and for London (26%).

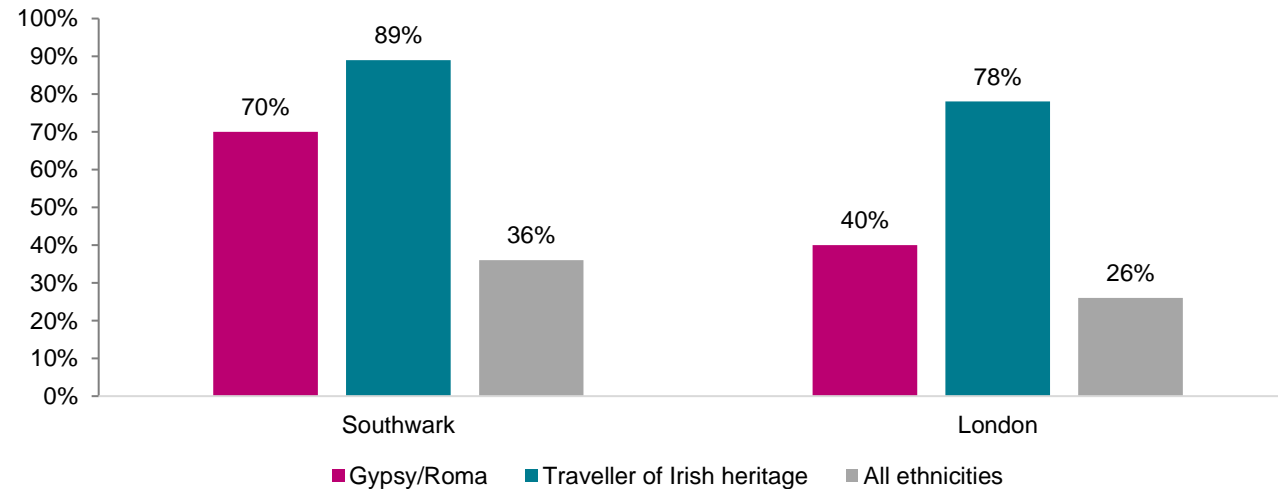


Figure 20: 2022/23 free school meal eligibility by ethnic group and for the whole school population in Southwark schools. Base numbers: 37 for Gypsy/Roma and 27 for Traveller of Irish heritage

17% of Gypsy or Irish Traveller residents reported being in bad or very bad health in the 2021 Census

This is higher than the overall borough average (4%) of residents reporting being in bad or very bad health.¹

- In terms of numbers of residents, 57 Gypsy or Irish Traveller residents reported a disability and 26 reported being in bad or very bad health.
- Furthermore, 37% of Gypsy or Irish Traveller residents were disabled at the time of the 2021 Census, much higher than the borough average of 14%.
- A further 4% reported having a long-term physical or mental health condition (similar to the borough average of 6%).
- 17% of Gypsy or Irish Travellers provided unpaid care in 2021, this was higher than the borough average of 6%.

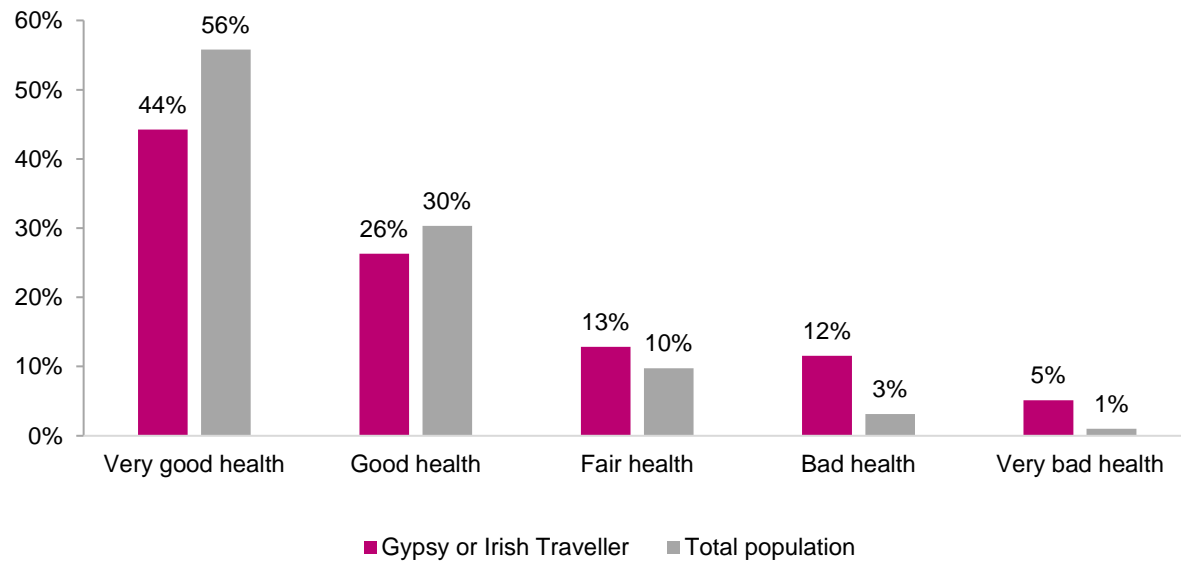


Figure 21: Self-reported health status of Gypsy or Irish Traveller residents, compared to all Southwark residents (2021)

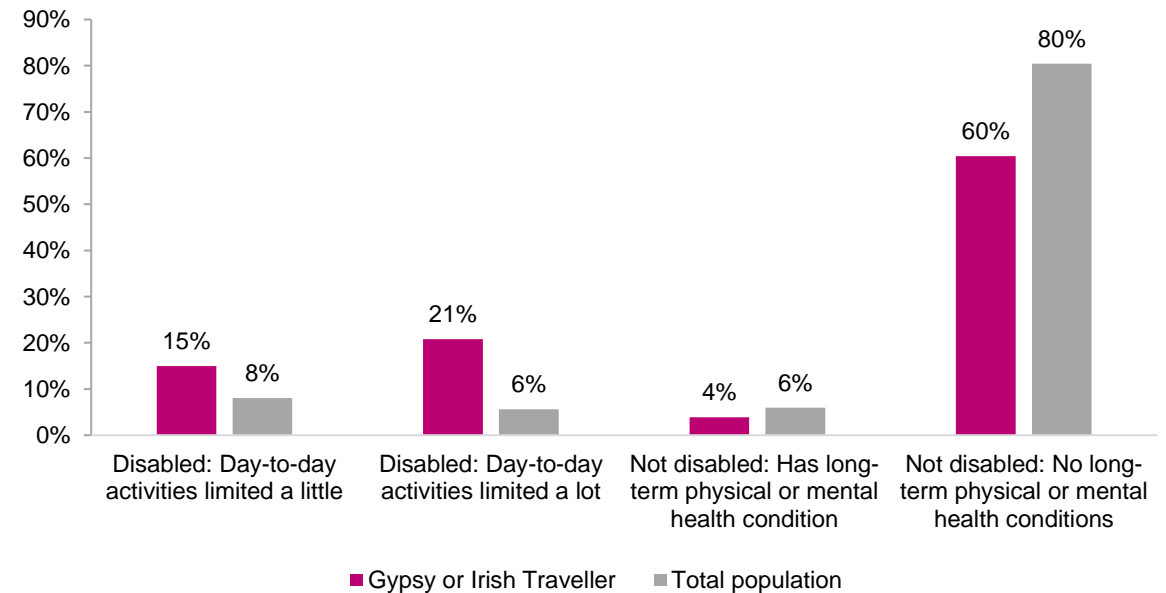


Figure 22: Disability or long-term condition status of Gypsy or Irish Traveller residents, compared to all Southwark residents (2021)

The 2023 GP Patient Survey provided more detail into the long-term conditions affecting Gypsy or Irish Travellers

78% of Gypsy or Irish Traveller respondents across South East London reported having a long-term physical or mental health condition, disability or illness, higher than the population average of 50%.¹⁴

- Of conditions asked listed, arthritis was the most commonly reported among Gypsy and Irish Traveller patients, followed by problems with physical mobility.
- Of Gypsy or Irish Travellers respondents, 71% said they had not had a conversation with a healthcare professional from their GP practice to discuss what is important to them when managing their condition.

Table 4: Reported long term conditions from South East London Gypsy or Irish Traveller patients compared to the total population (2023)

Survey response	Gypsy or Irish Traveller population	Total population
Arthritis	43%	15%
Problems with physical mobility	31%	12%
High blood pressure	27%	13%
A breathing condition, such as asthma or COPD	23%	10%
Diabetes	18%	6%
A mental health condition	17%	13%
Another long-term condition or disability	22%	13%

*Percentages are based on weighted population numbers (19 respondents total weighted number)

27% of Gypsy or Irish Traveller patients said their overall experience of their GP practice was fairly poor or very poor

Resident response increased when asked about experience of making an appointment: 37% of Gypsy or Irish Travellers patients said their experience was poor or very poor, higher than the population average of 33%.¹⁴

- When asked about steps taken prior to booking a GP practice appointment, only 3% of Gypsy or Irish Travellers said they used an NHS online service – 37% looked elsewhere online for information.
- The majority (54%) said they tried treating themselves, though 23% did say they spoke to a pharmacist (higher than the average population, 18% of whom said they spoke to a pharmacist).
- In terms of mental health, 62% of Gypsy or Irish Travellers said this did not apply to their last appointment or they did not have any needs; 34% said they did have mental health needs which were met by the healthcare professional, similar to the overall population.

Table 5: Survey responses from Gypsy or Irish Traveller population compared to the total population, on selected questions related to primary care access and experience (2023)

Survey response	Gypsy or Irish Traveller	Total population
Not very or not at all easy to reach GP practice over the phone	69%	49%
Receptionist at GP was very or fairly helpful	77%	77%
Used none of the listed online GP services	64%	44%
Found it very or fairly easy to use GP practice website to look for information or access services	6%	39%
Had no confidence and trust in the healthcare professional seen at last GP appointment	30%	8%
Was not involved as much as they wanted to be in decisions about care and treatment	31%	10%
Needs were not at all met at last GP appointment	19%	10%

*Percentages are based on weighted population numbers (19 respondents total weighted number for Gypsy or Irish Traveller)

Section 5: STAG Survey Results

The STAG survey indicates lower levels of happiness and higher levels of stress and anxiety among respondents

The average score (on a scale of 1 for not at all happy to 10 for completely happy) for respondent's happiness was 5.53, which is less than 7.39 for the general population in England.⁴

- Around a quarter (26%) of respondents felt anxious or stressed “often or always”. This is higher than the figure for the UK general population of 20%.
- 84% of respondents said the high cost of living was making them anxious or stressed.
- The most common responses to dealing with stress and anxiety were:
 - Go for a walk (24%)
 - Talk to someone (17%)
 - Smoke a cigarette (15%)
- 58% of respondents saw family or friends every day. This is a much higher proportion than in the general population, reflecting close family ties within the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community.

The STAG survey indicates both poor access and experience of health services

When asked if they felt they could always get the health services they needed, 58% of respondents said no, with the most common issue being difficulty with getting appointments.⁴

- 26% of the 80 people who answered said they had used mental health services, most commonly counselling and CBT. Comments about these services were mainly negative, with examples including:
 - “CBT - it didn't help”
 - “Counselling - didn't find very useful”
- 80% of respondents said they were registered with a GP, which is less than 94% in the STAG 2021-22 survey.
- 58% answered “Yes” when asked if they had ever gone straight to A&E because they couldn't get a GP appointment.
- Comments regarding experiences of health care suggest feeling discriminated against by services, with examples including:
 - “Racist surgery, hates Travellers/Gypsies - so many Travellers and Gypsies badly treated by this surgery but I rarely need a doctor so never had time to change surgery and don't know how to”.
 - “I have used midwives. They don't understand Gypsies & Travellers”.
 - “Hospital – helps. Doctors - ignores us, refuse to help us or treat us. Especially because I haven't had the jab. Opticians - refuse to explain things to me. Dentists - very commonly want to remove teeth from Travellers/Gypsies”.

The STAG survey indicates that roughly a quarter of respondents have “bad or very bad” physical health

When asked, 24% of respondents rated their physical health as “bad” or “very bad”, which is comparable to last year’s survey score.⁴

- 63% of respondents said that they had had COVID-19 symptoms and/or a positive COVID test.
- 41% of respondents had not had a single COVID-19 vaccination, which is significantly higher than the general population. The top reasons for not getting the vaccine was that they “did not trust it” and that they thought the vaccine caused illness / medical problems / death.
- 28% of respondents said they smoked, which is much higher than among the general population (12%). Vaping was also reported in 14% of respondents.
- Of those who answered the question about stop smoking services, 33% reported that they had used one.

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Find out more at:
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