



# EVIDENCE REVIEW: ACCOMMODATION NEEDS OF GYPSY/TRAVELLERS



**PEOPLE, COMMUNITIES AND PLACES**

# **Evidence review: accommodation needs of Gypsy/Travellers in Scotland**

Housing and Regeneration Research  
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## 1. Introduction

This report provides a review of literature on the accommodation needs and experiences of Gypsy/Travellers in Scotland. The report forms part of a larger review of literature on the accommodation needs of minority ethnic groups as part of the housing research actions outlined in the *Race Equality Action Plan 2017-2021*<sup>1</sup>. A number of research questions have been developed to inform this report, which can be found in Annex 1.

The report begins with a brief note on terminology. It then assesses the evidence base, drawing on both academic and grey<sup>2</sup> literature sources, and discusses the evidence in five sections:

- Background – Gypsy/Travellers in Scotland
- Current provision
- Key accommodation issues
- Accommodation needs and aspirations
- Examples of housing approaches

The report concludes by presenting key findings from the review, and discusses further research possibilities.

## 2. The evidence base

The literature on the accommodation needs of Gypsy/Travellers is largely made up of quantitative research, focusing on demographics and the quantification of sites and encampments. Some studies adopt a mixed methods approach to assessing need, using qualitative methods to gain insight into the accommodation preferences and aspirations of Gypsy/Travellers. The body of literature using a solely qualitative approach, particularly in Scotland, is relatively small. This report focuses on academic and grey literature on the accommodation needs of Gypsy/Travellers in Scotland published over the last 20 years, taking its starting point from the Equal Opportunities Committee (EOC) report *Gypsy Travellers and Public Sector Policies*<sup>3</sup>. References are also made to studies from across the UK, where the findings are likely to be relevant or can supplement the Scottish studies. Two case studies have also been selected, which illustrate specific approaches to Gypsy/Traveller accommodation.

### 2.1 Terminology

The term ‘Gypsy/Traveller’ is used throughout this report to refer to the distinct groups who consider travelling as part of their cultural or ethnic identity. This includes groups such as Roma, Romany Gypsies, and Irish and Scottish Travellers.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/fairer-scotland-race-equality-action-plan-2017-2021-highlight-report/>

<sup>2</sup> Grey literature relates to research published outwith academic channels. This includes a wide range of material, such as government publications, reports, white papers and other online materials.

<sup>3</sup> <https://archive.parliament.scot/business/committees/historic/equal/reports-01/eor01-01-vol01-02.htm#1>

This definition recognises that Gypsy/Travellers are not a homogenous group and that, although there are cultural similarities, such as a history of nomadism, these groups are considered to be distinct. These groups do not include occupational (e.g. Travelling Showpeople) or New Age Travellers, who are not recognised as ethnic groups. However, it is recognised that there may be some cross-over in the accommodation needs of these various groups.

The terms 'bricks-and-mortar' housing and 'settled housing' are used interchangeably throughout the literature to refer to conventional housing. As far as possible, where these terms are used, this report will use the term used in the original literature.

## **2.2 Type of research**

Quantitative studies estimate the size of the Gypsy/Traveller population and accommodation needs in a number of ways, with researchers using a mixture of available data sources such as the 2011 Census and data returns provided by local authorities or registered social landlords (RSLs) to provide an estimate across Scotland. Some studies have also carried out bespoke large-scale household surveys, which are then cross-checked with secondary data (Craigforth 2007; Home & Greenfields 2006).

In the literature reviewed for this report, most studies focused on Gypsy/Traveller households living on sites provided by local authorities/RSLs, privately owned sites and unauthorised encampments. One study specifically focused on the needs of housed Gypsy/Travellers living in England. Some studies also conducted research with landlords and stakeholders. Study samples included specific geographical communities in Scotland and England, and members of particular groups such as Gypsy/Travellers with caring responsibilities, young people, older Gypsy/Travellers and households with members with a disability or long-term health condition.

A variety of techniques were used to recruit participants. The use of intermediaries, such as housing services, site managers, health visitors or an organisation already known to the community, was common (PAS 2019; Craigforth 2007; Parry et al. 2004). Snowball sampling was also used to gain access to family networks (Craigforth 2007; Home & Greenfields 2006).

One study in England was notable for its use of trained, paid community interviewers (recruited from each main nomadic group in the locality) who were involved in all aspects of the project design and data collection. The interviewers were personally recommended through pre-existing community contacts and organisations working with the community (Home & Greenfields 2006).

## **2.3 Limitations and assumptions**

Some studies have methodological limitations, such as the time of year when the survey or interviews were conducted. Given the seasonality of travelling, the size of the population and its needs are likely to change over the course of the year. A few of the studies are relatively old and, as many of the policy developments have taken place in the last 10 years, the policy and social context is now likely to be different.

Therefore, some findings may no longer apply. In particular, quantitative data on the Gypsy/Traveller population in Scotland is dated and is limited in terms of quantity. For example, the 2011 Census remains the most comprehensive data set available. As previously noted, some studies have been included that are not based on research undertaken in Scotland, and although the findings are likely to be relevant it is possible that they do not apply in the Scottish context. Similar caveats are attached to the selected case studies.

### 3. Background

#### 3.1 Gypsy/Travellers in Scotland

Gypsy/Travellers are recognised as a distinct ethnic group by the Scottish Government. The population has a long and diverse history in Scotland and includes a range of communities who regard nomadism as an integral part of their cultural identity. There is a large body of evidence, both in Scotland and the UK, which positions lack of access to culturally appropriate housing as a major contributory factor in the poor health, educational and societal outcomes experienced by Gypsy/Travellers (EOC 2013; Equality and Human Rights (EHRC) 2015; Shelter 2008; Parry et al., 2004). There is a high degree of diversity amongst Gypsy/Traveller groups in Scotland, with different groups speaking a variety of languages, such as Cant, Gammon or Romani<sup>4</sup>, and holding to distinct customs and traditions. Some Gypsy/Travellers travel all year round, while others maintain a permanent site or live in settled housing. Crucially, travelling is not only the physical act of moving but is considered *a way of looking at the world*, which is evident in every aspect of their lives (Shubin & Swanson 2010). The Scottish Government recognises that Gypsy/Travellers are a particularly marginalised population and discrimination continues to be a part of everyday life for many (Scottish Government 2019). This is reflected in the extent to which Gypsy/Travellers have been a focus of Scottish Government policy development in recent years – across planning, housing and equalities.

#### 3.2 Policy Context

In 2013, the Equal Opportunities Committee published their report *Where Gypsy/Travellers Live*<sup>5</sup>, which examined the issues around the quality and quantity of Gypsy/Traveller sites. The report highlighted the poor quality of many sites across Scotland, a lack of transit and stopping places and the fact that high levels of discrimination are faced by the community. The report made a number of recommendations aimed at improving site provision, local strategic planning and strengthening leadership at all levels, with community participation.

The Scottish Government's *Race Equality Action Plan 2017-2021*, sets out key actions for the current parliamentary session to drive positive change for minority ethnic groups in Scotland. The action plan reinforces the findings of the EOC 2013 report and includes a specific section on Gypsy/Travellers, recognising that outcomes remain poor across all indicators. It established a Ministerial Working Group, chaired by the Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities, with the aim of determining priorities for action and driving forward the changes required on a range of issues, including accommodation (housing and planning), employment, health and education (Scottish Government 2017a).

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<sup>4</sup> Some form of Cant is spoken by both Scottish and Irish Travellers, while Gammon (or Shelta) is the language of the Irish Traveller community. Romani is the indigenous language of Roma Gypsies and it is the only language in the UK with Indic roots. <https://travellermovement.org.uk/about/gypsy-roma-traveller-history-and-culture>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/49027.aspx>

The work of the Ministerial Working Group resulted in the Scottish Government and COSLA publishing the joint action plan *Improving the Lives of Scotland's Gypsy/Travellers 2019-2021*<sup>6</sup>. The plan sets out agreed actions to be taken forward across local and national government to ensure that Gypsy/Travellers are treated fairly, have positive experiences of public services, and can access all of their rights and entitlements. Progress on these actions was set to be reviewed on a six monthly basis by Ministers and community members.

A short life working group and a subsequent stakeholder group on Gypsy/Traveller accommodation convened in 2019, are currently taking forward the accommodation actions from the action plan, including further data collection, with the involvement of members of the Gypsy/Traveller community (Scottish Government 2019a).

In the 2018-19 Programme for Government, the Scottish Government made a commitment to plan together with stakeholders how homes and communities should look and feel in 2040 and how to get there. The draft vision, which has now been consulted on<sup>7</sup>, includes the provision of 'culturally appropriate sites and accommodation for Gypsy/Travellers that meets their needs and aspirations' (Scottish Government 2019c). Culturally appropriate accommodation denotes the provision of accommodation such as sites and stopping places which allow Gypsy/Travellers to maintain their travelling lifestyle and fulfil their cultural needs.

In April 2020, the Scottish Government published a framework to help local authorities support Gypsy/Traveller communities living on public and private sites, and on unauthorised encampments during the Covid-19 pandemic. A revised framework was published in June 2020<sup>8</sup>. The revised framework recognises that there is an opportunity to build on the positive work done by Local Authorities to support people living on public sector sites and the roadside during the lockdown and to continue to provide for the needs of Gypsy/Travellers, including to support the right to travel, and progress the objectives of the Gypsy/Traveller action plan.

### **3.3 Population**

Currently, there is limited data on the size of the Gypsy/Traveller population in Scotland and what does exist is either dated or incomplete. The 2011 Census is the most current and comprehensive source of data available on the size and profile of the population in Scotland (see Annex 3). The 2011 Census was also the first to include an option for Gypsy/Travellers in the ethnicity category, enabling the collection of baseline data for the first time. In 2011, 4,212 people identified themselves as White: Gypsy/Traveller, however, this data is generally agreed to be an underestimate of the population. This can be attributed to the reluctance of individuals to identify as Gypsy/Traveller for fear of discrimination and the challenges that exist in accessing the population living on sites and at the roadside for data collection purposes (Craigforth & Engage Scotland 2018). Organisations that work with Gypsy/Travellers believe Scotland's community is much larger, comprising somewhere between 15,000 to 20,000 individuals (EHRC 2013).

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/improving-lives-scotlands-gypsy-travellers-2019-2021/pages/7/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/housing-to-2040/>

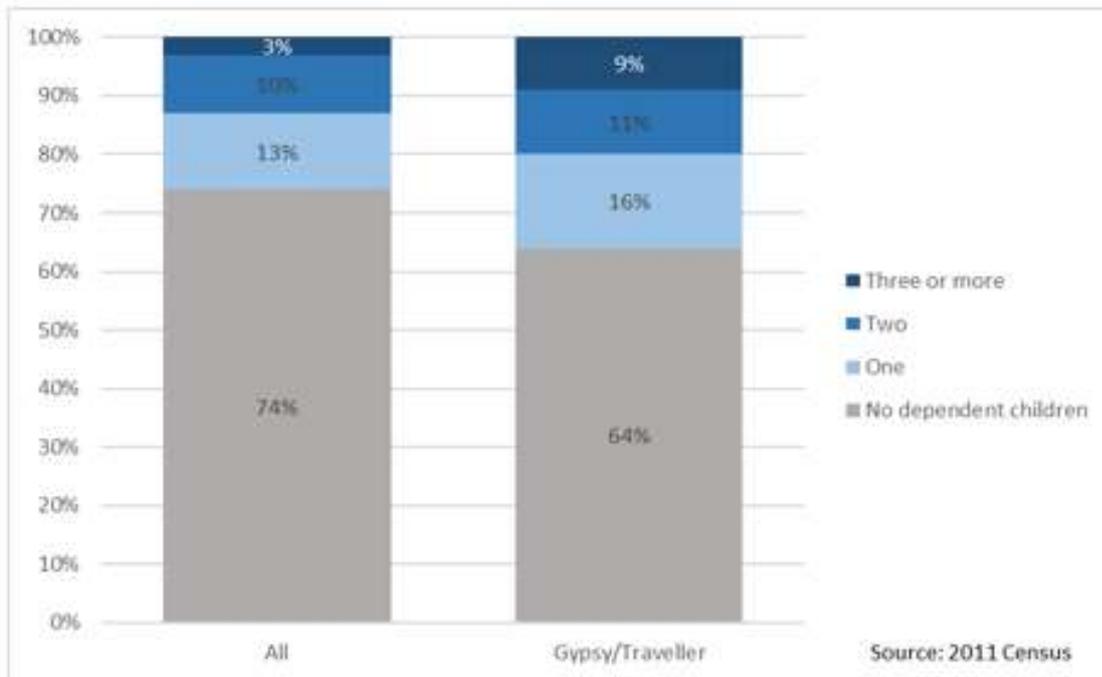
<sup>8</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-supporting-gypsy-traveller-communities/>

In the last official count of Gypsy/Travellers, commissioned by the Scottish Government in 2009, over 2,000 individuals were living on local authority/RSL sites, private sites and unauthorised encampments in Scotland (Scottish Government 2009). However, concerns around the accuracy and robustness of count data have been raised, specifically in relation to undercounting and inconsistencies in how the count is conducted across local authority areas. Insufficient capacity and knowledge amongst designated officers has also been noted as an issue (Scottish Government 2010). The review of the count in 2010 estimated that it may only record between a third and a half of the total Gypsy/Traveller population (Scottish Government 2010). More recent data from the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR), found that there were around 2,000 Gypsy/Travellers living on RSL sites in 2018 alone. Taken together, these figures suggest that current administrative sources (such as data from the Census and last official count) when compared to estimates from the third sector, likely underestimate the true size of the Gypsy/Traveller population in Scotland. Most of the available evidence also focuses solely on those living on official sites and encampments, meaning there is likely to be a largely invisible population in settled housing that is unrecorded. As one study notes, the inaccuracy of information is therefore a key issue (Clydeplan 2015b).

### **3.4 Household composition and characteristics**

Analysis of the 2011 Census data shows that members of the Gypsy/Traveller community differ from the wider community in a number of key ways. For example, Gypsy/Travellers are twice as likely as those in the wider population to live in a lone parent household and are much more likely to have dependent children, (36%) compared to the rest of the population (26%). Gypsy/Traveller households are also three times as likely to contain three or more dependent children.

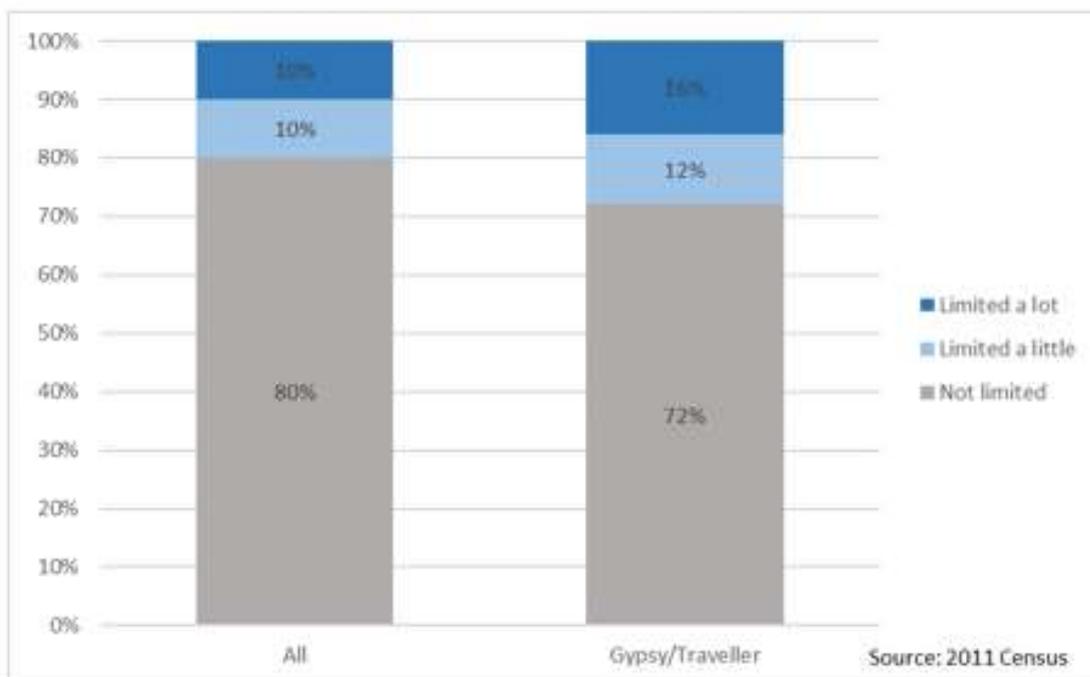
*Chart 1: Gypsy/Traveller households by number of dependent children, Scotland, 2011*



Source: National Records of Scotland, 2011 Census

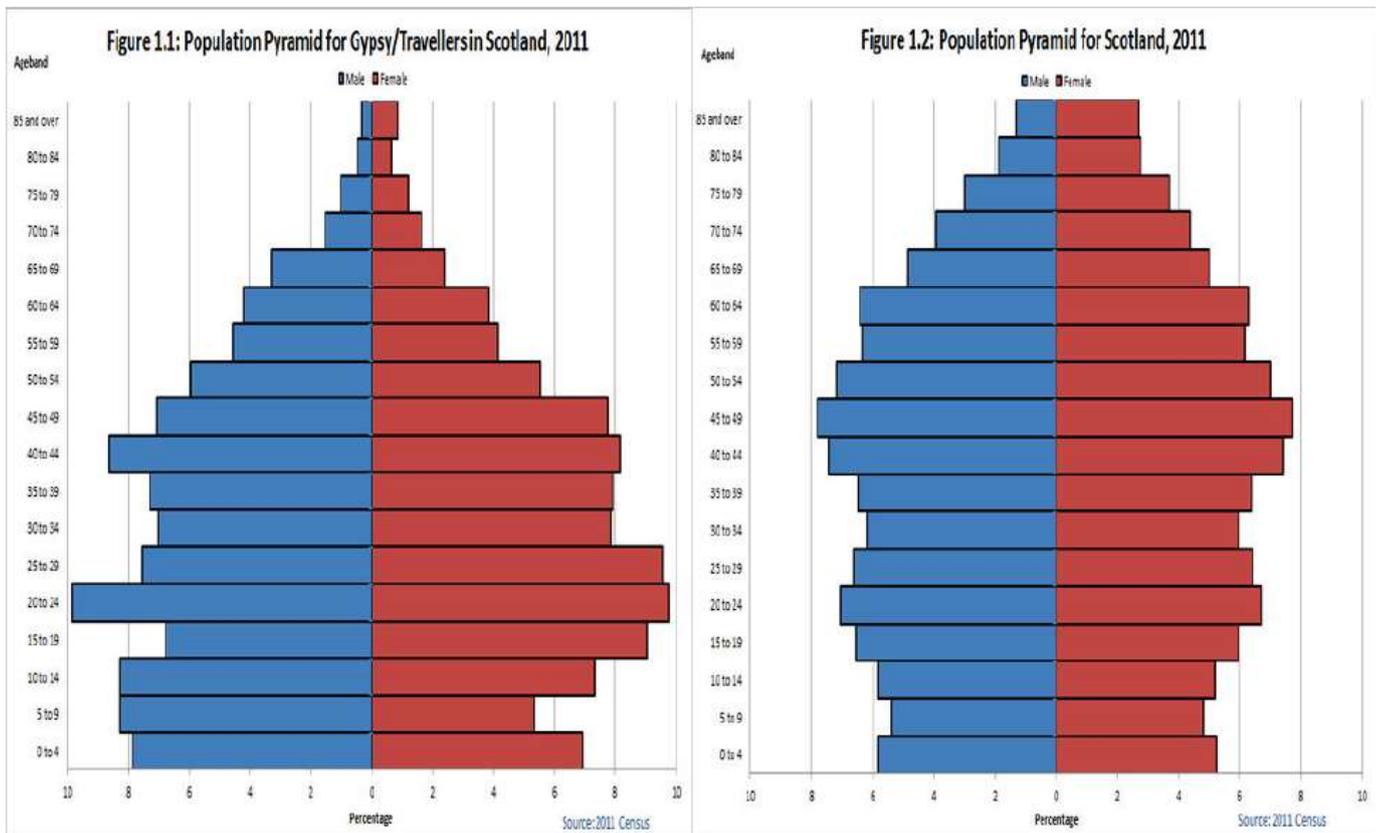
The Census also collected data on the health of Gypsy/Travellers, which shows that they are more likely than the general population to have a limiting long-term health problem or disability; 28% compared to 20%.

*Chart 2: Gypsy/Travellers by Long-term Health Problem or Disability, Scotland, 2011*



Source: National Records of Scotland, 2011 Census

The Census indicates that the age profile of Gypsy/Travellers was much younger than the population as a whole. Only 28% of Gypsy/Travellers were aged 45 or over compared to 44% of the population as a whole, and only 4% were aged 70 or over compared to 12% of the population as a whole. The gender split amongst Gypsy/Travellers was largely reflective of the population as a whole, with 49% of Gypsy/Travellers identifying as male and 51% as female (Scottish Government 2015a).



Source: Scottish Government (2015a). *Gypsy/Travellers in Scotland: A Comprehensive Analysis of the 2011 Census*

### 3.5 Discrimination against Gypsy/Travellers in Scotland

There is a large body of evidence that the Gypsy/Traveller population continues to face high levels of discrimination and harassment in Scotland (Craigforth & Engage Scotland 2018; Grampian Regional Equality Council (GREC) 2017; EHRC 2015; Scottish Government 2015b). Data from the Scottish Social Attitudes<sup>9</sup> survey shows that Gypsy/Travellers, as a group, are the subjects of ‘fairly widespread discriminatory attitudes’. For example, respondents indicated that they would be unhappy if a close relative married someone who was a Gypsy/Traveller (31%) and a third (34%) viewed them as being unsuitable to be a primary teacher (Scottish Government 2015b).

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-social-attitudes-2015-attitudes-discrimination-positive-action/>

Research undertaken by Amnesty International on the media coverage of Gypsy/Travellers in Scotland suggests that these negative attitudes may, in part, be reinforced by the media. The study found that the Gypsy/Traveller community received disproportionate coverage across media platforms and that nearly half (48%) of this coverage was negative, while positive coverage accounted for 28% (Amnesty International 2012a). In a study carried out in England, such negative coverage was found to put off those Gypsy/Travellers who were literate<sup>10</sup> from reading the media, with the result that they were less well-informed (Home & Greenfields, 2006). These findings were recognised in a resource produced by the EHRC, which sought to assist journalists in presenting informed and balanced coverage of Gypsy/Travellers (EHRC 2013).

Some evidence suggests that a lack of appropriate housing often forms a key part of the discrimination that Gypsy/Travellers face. This is due to the fact that inadequate site provision often leads to an increase in unauthorised encampments in an area, putting Gypsy/Traveller communities into conflict with the settled population (GREC 2017; EHRC 2015; EOC 2013). For example, one respondent to the Committee inquiry stated that they had found local communities to be supportive of Gypsy/Travellers until they stopped in their area (EOC 2013). Research carried out by the EHRC concluded that addressing the accommodation needs of Gypsy/Traveller communities is the shortest and quickest route to ensuring positive outcomes and good relations (EHRC 2015).

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<sup>10</sup>Levels of literacy within the Gypsy/Traveller population in Scotland remain unclear. Much of the evidence refers to 'low levels of literacy' without citing specific data, suggesting that this assertion is anecdotal based on levels of school attendance and educational attainment. These figures can be found here: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/improving-educational-outcomes-children-young-people-travelling-cultures/pages/2/>

## 4. Current provision

The evidence base suggests that there continues to be a shortage of permanent sites for Gypsy/Traveller communities in Scotland and where sites do exist they can be of poor quality or do not adequately serve those living there (Craigforth & Engage Scotland 2018; Craigforth 2007). In 2018, research based on local authority data returns found that there were 29 sites across the country, provided by 19 local authorities and one social landlord (Craigforth & Engage Scotland 2018). When this data is compared to numbers from the last official count in 2009, when 31 sites were recorded, this represents a small reduction in site provision. The 2018 data returns also identified 25 private sites across the country. Together, these 54 sites provide a total of 613 pitches, the majority of which are let on a permanent basis. In addition to these sites, a total of 406 locations were found to have been used for unauthorised Gypsy/Traveller encampments over the last 3 years.

### 4.1 Public Gypsy/Traveller sites in Scotland

The study carried out by Craigforth and Engage Scotland identified a total of 29 public Gypsy/Traveller sites across Scotland, providing a total of 397 active pitches. This represents a reduction in public site provision of 62 pitches, a fall of -14% since 2008. However, it was noted that the overall supply of active pitches has remained largely unchanged since 2009. Site occupancy can also vary significantly across local authorities. The study found that 351 pitches are currently let, this compares to 259 households identified in the 2011 Census. As a result, the study suggests that the Census may have under-counted the number of households on public Gypsy/Traveller sites by 8-18% (Craigforth & Engage Scotland 2018).

The SHR requires all social landlords to include annual performance information in their Annual Return on the Charter (ARC). Where applicable, this includes details of the two Scottish Social Housing Charter Indicators specifically relating to official Gypsy/Traveller sites, namely weekly pitch rents and service user satisfaction with the landlord's management of the site. In 2018/2019 this return indicated that the average weekly rent charged per pitch varied from £48.50 to £91.80 per week, with an average rent per pitch of £69.52 a week (SHR 2019). This is a slight increase on the previous year where the average weekly rent per pitch was £68.06. The annual data return also measures the percentage of Gypsy/Travellers who are very or fairly satisfied with the management of their site, with an average of 79.3% expressing satisfaction in 2018/2019. However, as landlords are allowed flexibility in how this data is collected it is unclear how comparable this data is across different areas or how representative the results are for all service users of a site.

Under paragraph 11 of Schedule 1 to the Caravan and Control of Development Act 1960, a Gypsy/Traveller site run by a local authority does not need to have a caravan licence<sup>11</sup>. However, many of the implied terms contained in Part 1 of Schedule 1 to the Mobile Homes Act 1983<sup>12</sup> (which were amended by the Mobile Homes Act 1983 (Amendment of Schedule 1) (Scotland) Order (SSI 2013/219<sup>13</sup>)) do apply to tenancy agreements entered into by site tenants. This means that the terms

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Eliz2/8-9/62>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1983/34>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2013/219/made>

of any tenancy agreement between site tenant and site owner should reflect these rights. For example, the rights include the right for a site tenant to be able, on request, to see documentary evidence for anything for which they pay the site owner and to have parts of the site for which the site provider is responsible maintained in a clean and tidy condition. The majority of the rights apply to those living on local authority and RSL Gypsy/Traveller sites and automatically apply to site tenants, these cannot be overridden (Scottish Government 2018d).

In 2015, the Scottish Government published guidance on minimum site standards *Improving Gypsy/Traveller Sites: Guidance on minimum site standards and site tenants' core rights and responsibilities*<sup>14</sup>. The minimum site standards cover two broad areas, setting physical standards for sites in relation to physical facilities and fabric (such as the quality of fixtures and fittings, lighting and heating), as well as core rights and responsibilities that should be reflected in tenancy agreements (Scottish Government 2015c). All those local authorities and RSLs providing sites were required to meet these standards by June 2018 (Scottish Government 2018d). However, research by the SHR found that by October 2018, 14 of the 27 sites assessed had not yet met the minimum standards (SHR 2018).

A recent study conducted by the National Panel of Tenants and Service Users (set up by the SHR) interviewed tenants of socially rented Gypsy/Traveller sites, conducting a total of 55 interviews across 10 sites. The study found that the majority of participants interviewed had concerns about their site. The most common of these related to the overall condition and cleanliness of sites as well as concerns around a lack of investment. This view was found to be even more prevalent on those sites which did not meet the minimum standards. It was recognised that although some sites had made improvements following the introduction of minimum standards, specific concerns persisted in relation to the condition of amenity blocks, limited facilities, heating and a lack of ventilation (SHR 2019a). Findings which accord with other studies in the literature (GREC 2017; Craigforth 2007; Home & Greenfields 2006). According to the SHR website in August 2019, 23 out of 28 sites now meet the minimum standards, although there are still five sites provided by four social landlords that do not<sup>15</sup>.

## **4.2 Private Gypsy/Traveller sites in Scotland**

Data from 2018 indicates that there are 25 active private sites across Scotland, providing a total of 216 pitches. This represents a small increase from the 22 private sites reported by the last official count in 2009. Most of the local authority areas with private site provision are found to be relatively rural in nature, with the majority of private site provision in the centre and east of Scotland (Craigforth & Engage Scotland 2018).

The preference for private sites amongst Gypsy/Traveller communities has been well documented in the literature (Planning Aid Scotland (PAS) 2019; EHRC 2015; Craigforth 2007). This was clear in a study carried out in the Glasgow and Clyde

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<sup>14</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/improving-gypsy-traveller-sites-guidance-minimum-sites-standards-site-tenants/pages/2/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.housingregulator.gov.scot/about-us/news/gypsytravellers-raise-concerns-about-site-conditions-in-regulator-s-new-report>

Valley area where it was concluded that although there was no significant unmet need, there was evidence of demand for more land for private sites to accommodate family groups (Clydeplan 2015a). Reasons for this preference are varied and can often differ depending on the individual preferences of each household. However, the need to maintain a sense of control over their choice of accommodation and the ability to decide for themselves whether or how they continue the travelling lifestyle has been cited as of fundamental importance to their sense of independence and autonomy (Parry et al. 2004). The importance placed on privacy was also found to be a significant factor in a preference for private sites (PAS 2019; Parry et al. 2004). In the Parry et al. (2004) study, this was attributed to the importance placed on cultural values around gender roles and for women, in particular, the need for privacy was closely linked to 'cultural rules' concerning women's behaviour with the opposite sex.

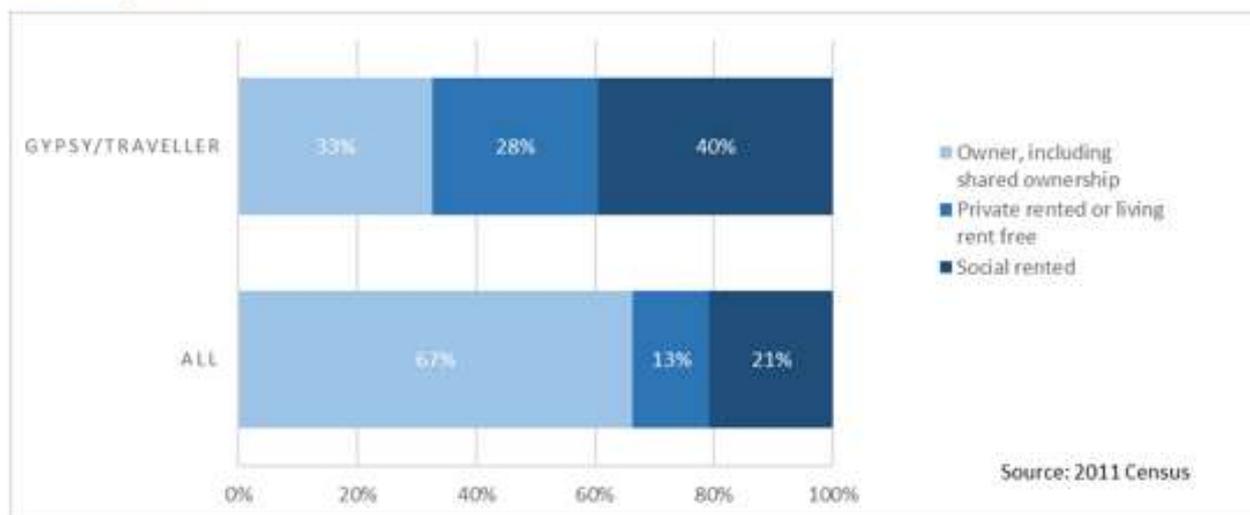
Other reasons private sites were seen to be preferable were because they were perceived to be without the neighbourly disruption from other families, and harassment from the local community that is often present on local authority/RSL sites (EHRC 2015). In particular, feuds between families were considered to be relatively common and in one study were found to increase the likelihood that families will move on from that location. Private sites were considered to avoid these issues (Craigforth 2007).

The importance of family in Gypsy/Traveller culture has been well documented in the literature (e.g. PAS 2019; Shelter 2008; Parry et al. 2004) and in this respect private sites were viewed by many Gypsy/Travellers as a practical way of ensuring that their children can access safe and secure site-based accommodation as they grow older and form families of their own (EHRC 2015). The ability to pass a site onto children not only provides a sense of security to those children but it also ensures access to the travelling lifestyle is maintained for the next generation.

### **4.3 Housed Gypsy/Travellers**

It is generally agreed that in Scotland there are now more Gypsy/Travellers living in conventional housing than living on sites or unauthorised encampments. The 2011 Census confirmed this, with 85% of the Gypsy/Traveller population found to live in some form of conventional housing (Scottish Government 2015a). The data shows that Gypsy/Travellers were twice as likely to live in rented accommodation compared to the population as a whole, with two fifths (40%) living in social renting compared to one fifth (21%) of the wider population. Hence they were also half as likely to own their own home.

Chart 3: Gypsy/Travellers by tenure – all people in households aged 16 and over, Scotland, 2011



Source: National Records of Scotland, 2011 Census

There is limited evidence on the experiences of Gypsy/Travellers living in conventional housing in Scotland. They are largely invisible as a group and where the experiences of Gypsy/Travellers are researched, those in housing tend to be ignored. The evidence that does exist indicates that while some Gypsy/Travellers do choose to live in 'bricks and mortar' housing by choice, many are forced to through lack of authorised sites or because the sites that are available are of poor quality and fail to meet their needs (Welsh Government 2015; Shelter 2008; Craigforth 2007). A report produced by the Welsh Government suggested that housed Gypsy/Travellers may experience 'cultural aversion':- a struggle to adapt to living in conventional accommodation, leading to higher levels of anxiety and depression within the housed population (Welsh Government 2015) This view is broadly confirmed by studies that show that housed Gypsy/Travellers experience poorer health outcomes, either because they have been forced to move into conventional housing as a result of ill health or because once housed this has had an adverse impact on their health, particularly in relation to their mental health. High levels of harassment and discrimination; feelings of isolation and loss of support networks have also been reported amongst the housed population (Shelter 2008; Greenfields et al. 2007; Parry et al. 2004).

Other studies suggest that the move to housing is complex and can be influenced by a number of 'push' and 'pull' factors. These range from a lack of space on existing sites; disputes with other families, and official sites with unused pitches not being seen as a viable option. Other factors include wanting to improve their health circumstances, looking for a change and 'to have a break from relatives' (GREC 2009; Shelter 2008; Craigforth 2007). Given the small sample sizes in some of these studies, it is unclear to what extent these factors are prevalent in the wider Gypsy/Traveller community, but they do offer some insight into the motivations behind living in settled housing.

## 4.4 Planning

In 2019, the Scottish Government published a 10-point action plan, *Gypsy/Travellers and the planning system*<sup>16</sup>, which recognised that planning can play a vital role in ensuring that Gypsy/Travellers have safe and secure places to stop and settle. The action plan outlines key actions on accommodation needs, and recommends further research and engagement with Gypsy/Traveller communities to ensure they have a strong voice in guiding future development (Scottish Government 2019). Alongside this, the Scottish Government funded a project by Planning Aid Scotland (PAS) to increase awareness of the needs of Gypsy/Travellers in accessing the planning system. This resulted in five planning guides aimed at Gypsy/Travellers, planning professionals, elected members, community councillors and the media<sup>17</sup>. Following the introduction of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, stronger engagement with Gypsy/Travellers in local development planning is now a statutory requirement<sup>18</sup>.

Research commissioned by the Scottish Government in 2018 identified a total of 88 planning applications for private Gypsy/Traveller sites across Scotland, with the majority of these being received between 2005 and 2018. Of the 88 planning applications, 35 were approved at the initial application stage, 34 were refused and a further 19 were pending or withdrawn. The majority of refused applications proceeded to appeal (29 of 34) and the majority of appeals were approved. This is equivalent to around half of all proposals refused at the application stage. In total 53 planning applications for Gypsy/Travellers sites were approved at application or on appeal, equivalent to 60% of all applications recorded (Craigforth & Engage Scotland 2018). These figures indicate the particular significance of the appeal process in achieving planning permissions, a fact which has been recognised by previous studies (EOC 2013; Brown, Niner & Lomax 2009; Home & Greenfields 2006)

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<sup>16</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/gypsy-travellers-and-the-planning-system-action-plan/>

<sup>17</sup> <http://pas.org.uk/news/recognition-of-unique-gypsytraveller-culture/>

<sup>18</sup> Planning Aid (Scotland) Act 2019, s. 4(a)(ii)

Chart 4: Planning applications for private sites, Scotland, 2005-2018



Source: Craigforth Consultancy & Research and Engage Scotland (2018) *Gypsy/Traveller Sites in Scotland*.

Reasons for refusal were published for 28 of the 34 applications which were refused at the application stage. These notices indicate that reasons for refusal most commonly relate to proposals being contrary to the Local Development Plan and Strategic Development Plan policies, and/or having an adverse impact on the character of the local area (Craigforth & Engage Scotland 2018). Other reasons for refusal found in the literature relate to local opposition from both local politicians and the settled community (Amnesty International 2012b; Greenfields et al. 2007).

#### 4.5 Housing need and demand assessments

Local authorities report challenges in developing new sites, whether private or for rent, including issues in securing planning permission, identifying funding for new developments and determining what is likely to be needed in the future. Since the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, local authorities have been required to carry out Housing Need and Demand Assessments (HNDA), which are required to consider the accommodation needs of Gypsy/Travellers. These are prepared by local and planning authorities to estimate need and form the basis of Local Housing Strategies and Development Plans.

Following updated guidance from the Scottish Government in 2018, there is now a requirement on Local and Planning Authorities to consult with Gypsy/Travellers or their representatives about their accommodations needs during the preparation of HNDAs (Scottish Government 2018a). Given the often strained nature of existing relationships with the local Gypsy/Traveller community, the extent to which this has been achieved is understood to be variable. Up to date data on the needs of Gypsy/Travellers is limited and current methods face challenges in adapting to assessing the needs of a nomadic and largely private community.

## 4.6 Unauthorised encampments

Unauthorised encampments are typically the result of Gypsy/Travellers stopping for a short period of time when travelling through or visiting an area. The Scottish Government recognises that Gypsy/Travellers have a right to their traditional way of life, but that right must be exercised responsibly, and be balanced against the rights of the wider community (Scottish Government 2017b). In acknowledgement of this, the Scottish Government published updated guidance on managing unauthorised encampments in 2017, following a review in 2014. The guidance is intended to assist local authorities to develop policies and strategies for responding to unauthorised sites, and outlines two basic principles which should be followed:

- Local authorities should seek to manage unauthorised sites to minimise disruption for all concerned and ensure that any anti-social behaviour is tackled firmly, regardless of who the perpetrators are.
- The same standards of behaviour should be expected from all members of the community, whether Gypsy/Travellers or the settled community, based on mutual respect and with regard to the rights and responsibilities of all those concerned.

Reliable data on the number of unauthorised sites is scarce, as due to the nature of encampments the likelihood of undercounting is relatively high. However, comparing recent available data with figures from the last official count (although acknowledged to be unreliable), there appears to have been a 40% decrease in encampment activity since 2009 (Scottish Government 2018, 2009). Although it should be noted that more recent figures were unable to include data from some local authorities and so true numbers are likely to be higher.

Some studies have suggested a correlation between a lack of appropriate site provision and traditional stopping places, and the number of unauthorised encampments (EHRC 2015). Seasonality has also been linked to an increase in numbers, with numbers tending to be higher in the summer months during the traditional travelling season, while lower numbers in the winter reflect caravans being put into store or sold, or in locations where they are not recorded (Home & Greenfields 2006; EHRC 2009). Local authorities have indicated that the number of encampments also fluctuates from year to year. Measuring encampment activity accurately will therefore require more trend information to determine if there is a sustained reduction in activity long-term.

## 5. Key issues in the literature

The barriers that Gypsy/Travellers experience in accessing culturally appropriate accommodation can be broadly divided into the following categories:

- barriers to site development,
- inadequacy of current site and stopping place provision
- lack of access to services.

### 5.1 Barriers to site development

As previously noted, Gypsy/Travellers experience significant barriers in accessing the planning process. In 2006, PAS conducted a study into barriers to Gypsy/Travellers engagement with the planning system, which identified several key issues. These included: a lack of understanding and awareness, or negative views of the system, cultural difficulties in accessing information due to technical language and jargon, the prevalence of tokenistic consultation with lack of feedback and a lack of Gypsy/Traveller representation (PAS 2006). Such barriers were viewed as discouraging Gypsy/Travellers from applying for planning permission and preventing them from being fully aware of their rights. Some studies have also cited the low levels of literacy and lack of educational attainment within the community as contributing to the lack of understanding around the planning process (EOC 2013). This has particular relevance for the appeal process, which has been described as lengthy, costly and complicated (Greenfields et al. 2007).

It is clear from the literature that public opposition is also a major barrier to site development (Niner 2003). In the EHRC's report *Developing Successful Site Provision for Scotland's Gypsy/Traveller Communities*<sup>19</sup> the levels of opposition from the public were seen to have a direct impact on the number of sites that had planning permission approved (EHRC 2015). A more recent study in Aberdeenshire, which surveyed the views of the settled community, found that although a majority were in favour of increasing site provision for Gypsy/Traveller communities, when they were asked about site provision in the local area, a majority of comments were negative or stated that Gypsy/Travellers should meet the cost of further sites themselves (GREC 2017). Reasons behind these views seem to draw on stereotypical tropes, with reference most commonly made to increased levels of mess; crime (GREC 2017; Amnesty International 2012a) and doorstep selling (GREC 2017). These negative perceptions were also reinforced in language used by many local politicians (Amnesty International 2012a) and were seen to prevent the identification of land for future site provision (Amnesty International 2012b).

Levels of funding and uncertainty about the level and nature of need were also raised by some studies as barriers to developing new site provision (EHRC 2015; Niner 2003).

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/developing-successful-site-provision-scotland%E2%80%99s-gypsytraveller-communities>

## 5.2 Inadequacy of current site and stopping place provision

The inadequacy of current site provision for Gypsy/Travellers is well documented in the literature, and it is widely accepted that there is a chronic shortage of pitches in Scotland (PAS 2019; EHRC 2015, EOC 2013). This shortfall can be divided into two types: a shortage of permanent sites for long-term settlement and a lack of suitable stopping places for those who travel seasonally or maintain a permanently nomadic lifestyle. This shortfall in site provision has been suggested as one factor behind a rise in unauthorised encampments in an area (Richardson & Codona 2016; EHRC 2015). Put simply, as one study states, if sufficient provision does not exist then Gypsy/Travellers have neither the option of site-based living which is an integral part of their culture nor the ability to move on and travel (Craigforth 2007). Transit and stopping places have been recognised as significant in allowing Gypsy/Travellers to maintain the emotional affiliations of travelling, such as movement motivated by attendance at weddings, births, funerals and religious festivals (Shubin & Swanson 2010). A lack of such places, as well as their closure along traditional travelling routes mean that Gypsy/Travellers are left with little option but to camp on unauthorised sites if they wish to maintain their transient lifestyle (EOC 2013; Amnesty International 2012b; Home & Greenfields 2006).

Several participants in the studies made reference to the poor quality of existing sites (SHR 2019; SHR 2018; Scottish Government 2015c; EOC 2013). For example, participants in the Craigforth (2007) study indicated that key drivers of dissatisfaction were poor quality sites (amenity blocks in particular), poor site layout and design, overcrowding and disruptive behaviour, problems with rats and drainage, arrangements for mail delivery and problems with electricity supply. Poor site conditions were also recognised to have an effect on the health outcomes of Gypsy/Travellers (PAS 2019). This confirmed previous research carried out by Parry et al. (2004), where accommodation, particularly low site standards and poorly located sites, was mentioned by every respondent in the context of health effects. However, a study in Cambridge found that wider accommodation issues, such as the impact of increased evictions, restricted access to healthcare, education and a loss of social and community networks can also impact on the health of Gypsy/Travellers (Home & Greenfields 2006). Health considerations were also found to be a contributing factor behind a move into settled housing in a number of studies (Craigforth 2007; Home & Greenfields 2006; Parry et al. 2004). For example, one participant in the Grampian study moved the family into housing due to the effect of site-living on their child's asthma (GREC 2017).

A UK wide study found that multiple layers of conflict surrounding the delivery and management of Gypsy/Traveller sites contributed to the inadequacy of current provision. This included internal conflict between different departments of a council and external conflicts between neighbours, the wider community and politicians. The study concluded that effective management of sites, using conflict resolution and negotiation approaches, played a key role in resolving conflicts, and ensured that resident's needs are met and standards are maintained. Well-managed sites were also found in large part to be self-financing and sustainable, and that where Gypsy/Traveller sites are managed well, there was less likelihood of objection to proposals for new sites. In particular, a proactive approach to site management,

referred to in the study as ‘grasping the nettle’, was identified as crucial to achieving positive outcomes (Richardson & Codona 2016).

### **5.3 Lack of access to services**

Evidence suggests that Gypsy/Travellers can experience a number of difficulties in accessing services which the settled community take for granted. Across the literature, accommodation was found to play a significant role in the extent to which services can be accessed. Due to site locations, local amenities can be hard to get to and a transient lifestyle can make it difficult to access consistent support, while the stigma of living on a site can lead to discrimination (GREC 2017; EOC 2013). Barriers to accessing health care include the reluctance of some GPs to register Gypsy/Travellers or visit sites, and more practical problems of mobility – either as a cultural lifestyle pattern or being “moved on” through enforcement (Parry et al. 2004). This can be exacerbated by a lack of understanding among professionals of the specific needs and culture of Gypsy/Travellers. Some studies have found that because of this, individuals are often willing to travel long distances to access a GP or support worker that they particularly like or trust (MECOPP 2015; Craigforth 2007).

A number of studies also made reference to a cultural pride in self-reliance within the community, described variously as a “making do” (MECOPP 2015), or a “make do” attitude (Craigforth 2007). This sense of stoicism has been described as being a contributory factor behind a tendency to be in denial about health care needs and a delay in accessing health care services (Parry et al. 2004).

Some studies noted that similar issues are experienced by Gypsy/Travellers in accessing education. Explanations given for this were varied but included cultural motivations, for example relating to roles within the family (Craigforth 2007), and the experience or anticipation of racism. One participant specifically referred to this, stating: “The minute anyone sees your address is a caravan site they treat your children different.” (Home & Greenfields 2006). The transient lifestyle was again seen to be a major factor in this respect, as children’s schooling was routinely disrupted through enforced movement (GREC 2017). For example, in one study the largest percentage of Gypsy/Traveller children attending school were those in housing, whereas only 15% of eligible children from local authority sites were attending and no ‘roadside’ children were attending school (Home & Greenfields 2006).

Findings from the literature indicate that there is a lack of recognition and understanding of Gypsy/Traveller culture across services, which can result in inadequate policy responses. In research carried out by MECOPP (2015), families often felt like they were being blamed for their own problems on the basis of their ethnicity, rather than due to the fact the service itself was inappropriate or inflexible. Some studies also made reference to a perceived pressure to keep their ethnicity hidden for this reason (MECOPP 2015; Shelter 2008).

For housed Gypsy/Travellers in particular, the availability of responsive advice and information services has been identified as important in providing them with the knowledge to navigate the complexities of the housing system, and to access

appropriate support and maintain their tenancies (Shelter 2008). In research carried out by Shelter, statutory and voluntary organisations were viewed as an invaluable resource for Gypsy/Travellers, providing them with the information they need to move into the accommodation of their choice, find out about benefit entitlements, and find schools for their children (Shelter 2008). This suggests a clear need for a range of services to provide support which is responsive to the cultural needs of Gypsy/Travellers and flexible enough to serve a transient population.

## 6. Gypsy/Traveller accommodation needs and aspirations

Across all the studies, the assessment of Gypsy/Traveller housing need and demand was considered a complex process involving a range of factors. There is no agreed methodology for quantifying the need for different types of accommodation among the population, particularly when attempting to account for future demand and cultural differences within Gypsy/Traveller communities. Quantification is made more difficult by a lack of visibility and information on large sections of the community, particularly those living in housing and on unauthorised encampments. There are also difficulties around what constitutes need, taking into account the existence of unused or underused site provision, transit or stopping places, and variation in accommodation aspirations. Further, Gypsy/Travellers as a group cannot be considered homogenous and a “one-size fits all” approach is inappropriate. Therefore, different groups require responsive and flexible approaches to meet their specific needs and contexts.

### 6.1 Assessing accommodation need

In those studies which sought to assess the accommodation needs of Gypsy/Travellers in a given area, robust data on population, sites and pitches was identified as key to measuring current provision and planning for future demand. In Scotland, the guidance on completing HNDAs requires local authorities to take into account evidence on the current type and level of needs and provision; any gaps or shortfalls in needs and provision, and the future type and level of needs and provision required. As previously noted, it also includes a requirement to consult with Gypsy/Travellers in planning for any future provision (Scottish Government 2018a).

In England and Wales, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) in England (2007) and more recently, the Welsh Government (2015) have produced comprehensive guidance on conducting Gypsy/Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessments (GTAA). Local authorities in England and Wales are required to undertake a GTAA and to make provision for sites where the assessment identifies an unmet need for mobile home pitches. The guidance produced by the DCLG has also been adapted for use in accommodation needs assessments in Scotland (Craigforth 2007). The guidance outlines the initial step as the development of robust data on the profile of the population, household characteristics and accommodation circumstances of Gypsy/Travellers in a given area. This should take account of the demographics of the population, current site provision and accommodation preferences. The guidance produced in both England and Wales identified the following groups as particularly likely to give rise to pitch need, and which should provide inputs for baseline data:

Mobile home dwelling households:

- Who have no authorised site on which to reside;
- Whose existing site accommodation is overcrowded or unsuitable and are unable to obtain larger or more suitable accommodation;
- Who contain households who are unable to set up separate family units and who are unable to access a place on an authorised site or develop their own site.

‘Bricks and mortar’ dwelling households:

- Whose existing accommodation is overcrowded or unsuitable (unsuitable in this context includes unsuitability by virtue of psychological aversion to bricks and mortar accommodation);
- Which contain concealed households who are unable to set up separate family units and who are unable to access suitable or appropriate accommodation.

Concerns around the practicalities of quantifying some of these elements were raised in research undertaken in Scotland by Craigforth (2007). For example, difficulties were seen to exist where the need for accommodation arises from overcrowding if, for reasons of privacy, households choose not to disclose exact details of current living arrangements. However, arguably this holds true for several of the elements in the guidance.

One study carried out across the UK highlighted the importance of conducting Gypsy/Traveller accommodation needs assessments separately from wider generic needs assessments. An assessment of need that is specific to Gypsy/Travellers and actively engages with the community was seen to be important to ensuring that meaningful data is gathered, thus preventing the assessment becoming merely a ‘tick-box’ exercise (Richardson & Codona 2016).

The location of any new provision was also cited as a key factor in assessing need. Gypsy/Travellers have often not been able to access culturally appropriate sites in the areas they wish to live and enforcement activity may have distorted where they have settled (Welsh Government 2015). The literature suggests that Gypsy/Travellers prefer sites that strike a balance between access to local urban centres and some degree of seclusion, with access to public transport; shops; health services and education identified as key drivers of satisfaction (Craigforth 2007). Data on unauthorised encampments should be analysed to identify numbers, most occupied locations, the number of caravans present, and duration and reason of the stay to identify location for future provision (Welsh Government 2015). One study noted the importance of historical trends and seasonal fluctuations in a region, and recommended this data be taken into account in any assessment (Home & Greenfields, 2006). Where possible, local authorities may also need to work in partnership to find a shared solution to meet regional need (Welsh Government 2015; DCLG 2007). Such partnerships have also been identified as a way of saving costs and of improving baseline data (Welsh Government 2015). In one study, qualitative evidence provided by specialist Gypsy/Traveller Liaison Officers (GTLO) and Site Managers provided valuable insight into the level of need in an area as well as the challenges facing the local Gypsy/Traveller community (Clydeplan 2015b).

Secondary data analysis is also identified as a crucial component across the literature in estimating the size of the Gypsy/Traveller population and measuring or assessing need (Welsh Government 2015; DCLG 2007). Survey data should therefore be cross-checked against existing regional and national data. Possible sources used in the literature include the 2011 Census, housing records, local authority planning records, the caravan count, traveller education records and numbers from GTLOs and support organisations (Welsh Government 2015; Home & Greenfields 2006; DCLG 2007; Craigforth 2007).

## 6.2 Accommodation aspirations

As has been noted previously, the inadequacy of current site provision emerges as a theme throughout the literature (see section 5.2: Inadequacy of current site and stopping place provision). In Scotland, where minimum site standards have been in place since 2015, several sites are still failing to meet the standards, leaving many Gypsy/Travellers with little choice but to live in accommodation which does not meet their needs.

In addition to the guidance on undertaking Gypsy/Traveller accommodation needs assessments, the Welsh Government (2015b) and the DCLG in England (2008) have also produced guidance for local authorities on designing Gypsy and Traveller sites and making sure they are fit for purpose. The guidance outlines a number of factors that should be taken into account in site design, including size and layout, location, road access, access to local services, suitability of land and the surrounding environment (Welsh Government 2015b).

In the accommodation needs assessment carried out by Craigforth (2007), the majority of those consulted favoured living on official sites and wanted to continue to do so. This included the majority of older people interviewed as well as those with a disability. Participants in the Grampian study expressed similar preferences but only rated their accommodation as adequate given it is not permanent and there were ongoing concerns about the quality of sites (GREC 2017). Similar findings emerged in a study in England, where the need for further site provision was spoken about more than any other topic. Those in the English study expressed a preference for small, self-owned long stay sites for family groups, preferably on the edge of a village, and near established Gypsy/Traveller communities. (Home & Greenfields 2006). This echoes wider findings across the literature, which indicate the importance of family connection (Shelter 2008), access to services (GREC 2017) and support from the wider community (MECOPP 2015) as major factors influencing accommodation preference. In one study, having a warm and easy to heat home was also a driver in accommodation satisfaction (Craigforth 2007).

Two studies conducted in the Grampian area, as well as an additional study used in the development of the more recent study in 2017, indicated that there were mixed views in terms of ideal site size, though more participants would favour a small site i.e. less than 10 pitches (GREC 2009, 2015, 2017). Some participants expressed a need for more space on existing pitches to allow for separate sleeping arrangements for boys and girls, as well as to allow for more flexibility to accommodate friends and relatives (Home & Greenfields 2006). Another consideration noted by one study is that smaller sites can be easier to manage and are more likely to attract compatible family units, whereas as larger sites were seen to impact on community cohesion (Welsh Government 2015b). The need for privacy was also viewed as a key consideration in accommodation preference, particularly in relation to site design, layout and orientation. For example, where sites are shared by different communities a 'tree branch' design may be preferable to a 'circular' design (see Annex 4; Welsh Government 2015b).

The most common accommodation preference was for plumbed-in mobile homes on a fully-serviced site, in the form of static caravans (GREC 2017; Craigforth 2007) or

larger chalet homes (Craigforth 2007). However, one study noted that accommodation preference can be particularly localised and can differ considerably between different cultural groups (Craigforth 2007).

In relation to private sites, participants indicated that there were too many barriers to developing private sites and due to the likelihood of inter-family tensions it was felt such an approach would only work on a one family per site basis (Craigforth 2007). This was confirmed by another study, where a majority (49%) wanted to own their own site but were put off by multiple barriers, including costs and difficulties with planning permission (Home & Greenfields 2006).

The reasons behind a move into housing were various but participants commonly referred to health considerations, or being fed up with living on site with other travellers or with the travelling lifestyle more generally. Those interviewed in the Scottish studies expressed a preference for social landlord housing over privately rented/owned accommodation (GREC 2017; Craigforth 2007). For a small number of participants there was no interest in permanent housing. However, they were interested in temporary housing for the winter period, to secure a healthier place to spend the harsher months of the year (Craigforth 2007). A factor which was also mentioned by one respondent in the Grampian study (GREC 2017).

One study which looked at the accommodation experiences of older Gypsy/Travellers, emphasised the need for flexibility in accommodation provision. In particular, to account for the high levels of health conditions and disability within the population. This means that provision should be able to adapt and accommodate changing needs over an individual's life course. As Gypsy/Travellers get older, for many the frequency of travel also declines, often resulting in a move into 'bricks and mortar' accommodation. Where this occurs, ways of facilitating the move while maintaining family networks and access to services should be explored (Hodges & Cemlyn 2013). Building the ability to adapt to changing circumstances as individuals age into the accommodation stock for Gypsy/Travellers will ensure resilience and longevity.

The importance of selecting the correct location for sites was implicit across the literature. Local authorities were often seen to favour sites which already benefited from planning permission for a caravan site or sites which were likely to raise a relatively low level of opposition from the local community (EHRC 2015). Concerns about living in towns were raised in two of the studies, particularly by people with children, where fears about drugs and anti-social behaviour were commonly mentioned. In these cases, for this reason, a more rural setting was considered preferable by participants (Home & Greenfields 2006; Craigforth 2007).

Several studies also noted the importance of horses to Gypsy/Traveller culture (Richardson & Codona 2016; Welsh Government 2015b; DCLG 2008). The provision of grazing land, in consultation with residents and depending on resources available, may be appropriate if a clear plan can be agreed (Richardson & Codona 2016).

A small number of participants in the Craigforth study expressed an interest in the concept of grouped housing, where Gypsy/Travellers can live together as a group or community. Such developments have been used in Northern and the Republic of

Ireland as an alternative approach to meeting needs (Craigforth 2007). In Scotland, a similar purpose-built development has recently been completed in South Ayrshire, which is described in the next section of this report.

## 7. Examples of housing approaches

### 7.1 Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland

#### Grouped Housing:

Grouped Housing is a relatively new development in provision for Irish Travellers. According to the *Irish Traveller Movement*<sup>20</sup>, housing for Irish Travellers was previously poorly designed and mainly situated sites on the outskirts of towns and cities, leaving individuals feeling isolated and without access to local services. This isolation has been found to have a detrimental effect on mental health, and poor site standards, combined with lack of access to basic services, negatively impacted on the physical health of Irish Travellers.

Grouped housing is described as a type of residential housing development with additional facilities and amenities specifically designed to accommodate extended families of the Irish Traveller community on a permanent basis. Piloted in Northern Ireland, these dwellings are small groups of purpose built bungalows or houses in small enclaves, which depending on site size, can also include a community house, play area, stables and grazing. Houses are built to permanent housing standards with large yards to accommodate space for lorries, vans and/or caravans. Sites tend to range from 4 to 16 properties. Consultations were held with the Irish Traveller community in the developing the layout, design and facilities. Tenants are also allowed to travel for prolonged periods of time in agreement with the landlord (Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission 2018).

This scheme was piloted in Northern Ireland in 2002 under the New Policy on accommodation for Gypsy/Travellers, by the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland. Grouped Housing is run by either the Northern Ireland Housing executive or by individual housing associations.

It is worth noting that grouped housing is considered to be an expensive option, due to the fact that each scheme is specifically designed in consultation with the prospective tenants. Each scheme may have limited longevity, as they were built for particular extended families and any new tenants must claim a connection and compatibility with the core family group. Persistent vacancies are therefore common (Equality Commission for Northern Ireland 2009).

### 7.2 South Ayrshire, Scotland

#### South Ayrshire Council<sup>21</sup>

In 2019, work began on a £1.54 million project, funded by South Ayrshire Council and Scottish Government, to create purpose-built homes in Girvan for Gypsy/Travellers. The project saw six, three-bedroom homes and one six-bedroom property built and replaced a former site which was destroyed by storm damage in 2015.

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<sup>20</sup> <https://itmtrav.ie/strategic-priorities/accommodation/accommodation-key-issues/>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.south-ayrshire.gov.uk/news/work-to-create-modern-new-travellers-site-in-girvan-gets-underway.aspx>; <https://www.scottishhousingnews.com/article/new-gypsytraveller-site-set-for-girvan>

The site was chosen as it provides good access to schools, public transport, health and other services and because it was a site already known to Gypsy/Travellers. The new site aims to provide a modern living environment while respecting the cultural requirements of the residents. Engagement with residents of the previous site also took place to ensure their needs were met. The site was completed in September 2019.

### **7.3 Worcestershire, England**

#### Rooftop Housing Association<sup>22</sup>:

Rooftop Housing Association is an active member of the Worcestershire Gypsy and Roma Traveller Partnership, which aims to improve the lives of the county's Gypsy and Traveller community. Rooftop is involved in a number of projects, such as undertaking the refurbishment of and extension to caravan sites at Houndsfield Lane in Wythall, and delivering a new 11 pitch site at Gables Close in Solihull. They are also currently negotiating to undertake the management of a second site in Solihull.

Rooftop employs a dedicated Gypsy and Traveller Project Manager, who manages and develops new and existing Gypsy and Traveller sites as well as communicating with residents, both on site and in the local area. Rooftop also provides advice and guidance for other organisations that wish to deliver their own affordable housing for Gypsy/Travellers.

The refurbished units at Houndsfield Lane provide kitchen, bathroom and living space for all pitches. Rooftop Housing has responded to the needs of an ageing population on site by ensuring each unit has:

- Wider doorways
- Access ramps
- Wet room style bathrooms

Each plot at the Gables Close site includes two permanent pitches for two caravans, two car parking spaces, and studio accommodation containing a living/bedsit, kitchen, bathroom, storage and utility room. Gables Close also benefits from a large communal open space with play area, eight parking spaces for vans/lorries, 18 visitor parking spaces plus CCTV security.

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<sup>22</sup> <https://www.rooftopgroup.org/gypsy-and-traveller-accomodation>

## 8. Conclusions

This report has provided an overview of Gypsy/Travellers in Scotland and has sought to assess the existing evidence base on their accommodation needs. From this, several patterns emerge across the studies with relevance for further research:

### Accommodation

- Gypsy/Travellers are not a homogenous group and have differing cultural needs and practice varying degrees of nomadism. A 'one-size fits all' approach to accommodation is therefore not appropriate and unlikely to work in practice. Accommodation needs are also likely to change over an individual's life course
- There is limited available evidence on the current population, specific accommodation aspirations and travel patterns of Gypsy/Travellers in Scotland
- There is no agreed methodology for understanding Gypsy/Traveller accommodation needs, but evidence suggests that, particularly when attempting to meet aspirations, a degree of collaboration with the local Gypsy/Traveller population is key
- Accommodation preferences of Gypsy/Travellers are diverse, and influenced by a number of factors, including privacy, proximity to family, access to services and health considerations

### Site provision and management

- Ways of engaging Gypsy/Travellers in the research planning, design and implementation of accommodation needs assessments, should be considered carefully, including ways of reaching households in conventional housing. GTLOs, site managers and organisations working with the community may be valuable sources to facilitate this
- Partnership and sub-regional working are crucial to the completion of robust Gypsy/Traveller needs assessments, particularly where travel patterns cross local authority boundaries
- Despite the introduction of minimum standards, the poor quality of sites continues to be a major issue for many Gypsy/Travellers on local authority/RSL sites
- A proactive approach to the management of sites could improve standards, reduce conflict with the settled community and make sites more sustainable in the long-term
- Failure to meet the accommodation needs of Gypsy/Travellers is a key factor in the discrimination that they face, and often places them in conflict with the settled community
- Opposition from the settled community continues to present a significant barrier to further site provision. Ways to alleviate this tension and engage the wider community in the planning process should be considered

## **Access to services**

- A lack of understanding of Gypsy/Traveller culture persists across many statutory and voluntary services, including health and housing

### **8.1 Further research**

The findings above are drawn from a range of studies, most of which focus on known sections of the Gypsy/Traveller community living on official sites or encampments known to local authorities. The findings offer a picture of what life is like for the research participants and provide some insight into what progress has been made in recent years towards meeting the accommodation needs of Gypsy/Travellers in Scotland. It demonstrates that Gypsy/Travellers currently live in a variety of different types of accommodation, which can differ according to their personal and cultural needs. These cultural needs principally relate to the ability to maintain a travelling lifestyle but can include preferences around privacy, proximity to family and land for horses. The findings indicate that Gypsy/Travellers continue to face significant levels of discrimination in Scotland, both from the settled community and in accessing a range of services. Discrimination which can have a significant impact on their housing experiences and decisions. The case studies included in this report offer examples of approaches which could be adapted to the Scottish context. However, attached costs remain unclear and to mitigate the risk of underuse, consultation with local Gypsy/Travellers will be required before these approaches can be implemented.

Insightful though these findings are, this report remains a partial view and gaps in the evidence exist. In particular, the experience of housed Gypsy/Travellers remains largely under-researched and there is little evidence on the preferences of different cultural groups. The available evidence on the demographic and geographic profile of the population is dated and limited in terms of accuracy, and this restricts the insight it offers. There is also little research on traditional travelling routes in Scotland and as such, it is unclear where sites should be re-opened or if further provision is needed. What is evident, is that travelling is currently being suppressed below the level of aspiration, and this suppression is understood to threaten group identity and culture.

### **8.2 Gaps in evidence that could be addressed by further research**

- the current demographic and geographic profile of Gypsy/Traveller population
- the experiences of housed Gypsy/Travellers
- discriminatory attitudes within the settled community
- preferred locations of transit and stopping places, including traditional travelling routes
- meaning of culturally appropriate accommodation for different groups

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## **ANNEX 1 – Research questions**

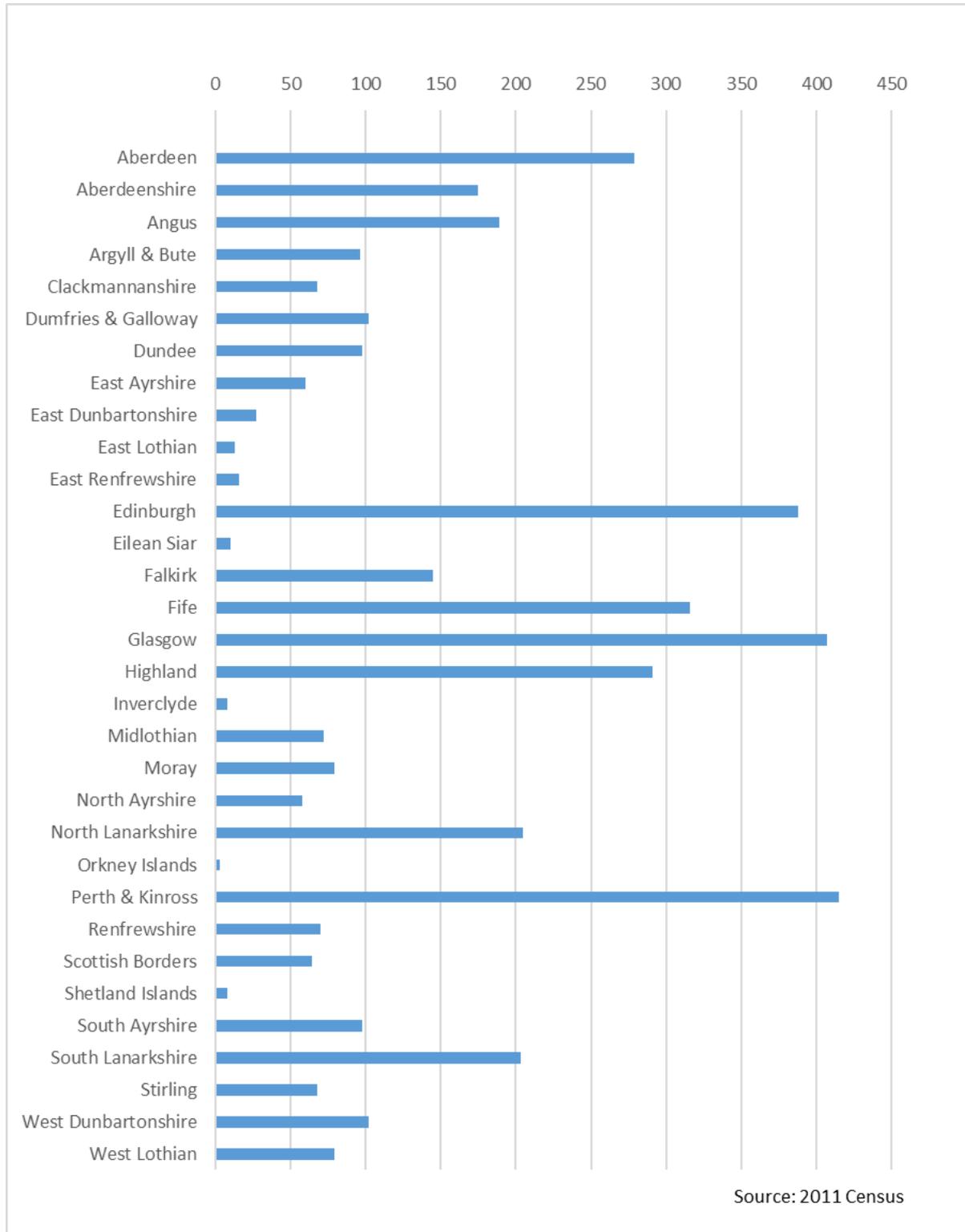
1. What types of accommodation do Gypsy/Travellers currently live in?
2. How many Gypsy/Travellers live in Scotland, where are they living and where would they like to live?
3. What are the cultural needs of Gypsy/Travellers in their accommodation?
4. What forms of accommodation meet the cultural needs of Gypsy/Travellers and which of these are most popular among Community members?
5. What are the traditional travelling routes in Scotland? Where have stopping places been blocked to stop Gypsy/Travellers using them and which of these are priorities to be re-opened?
6. What are the specific housing experiences of Gypsy/Travellers?
7. What is done elsewhere in the UK and beyond to address the housing needs of Gypsy/Travellers and how successful is this? What sorts of costs were attached?
8. What barriers and forms of discrimination do Gypsy/Travellers face in accessing housing and housing services? role, if any, does housing play in the discrimination faced by Gypsy/Travellers?
9. To what extent does a lack of appropriate housing play a role in the discrimination/prejudice that Gypsy/Travellers face?

## **ANNEX 2 – Acronyms**

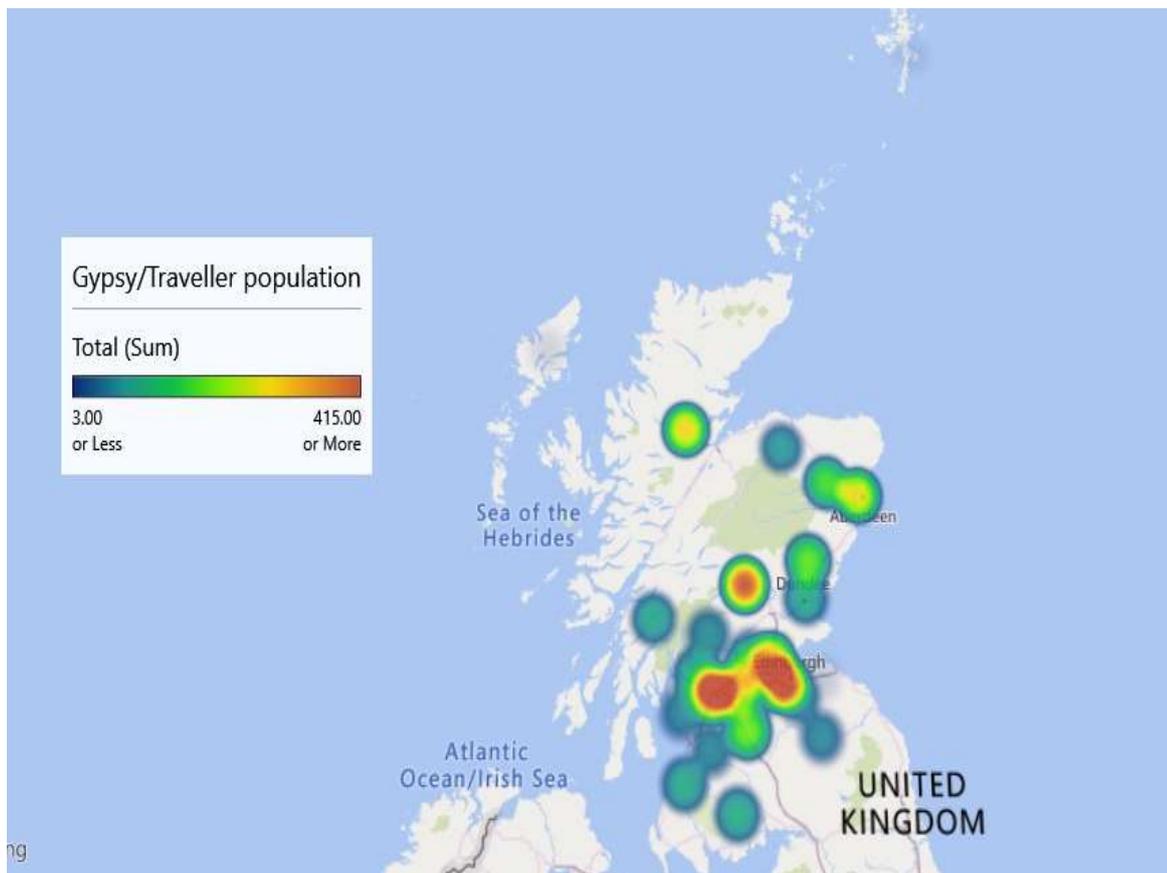
ARC	Annual Return on the Charter
EHRC	Equality and Human Rights Commission
EOC	Equal Opportunities Committee
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
GREC	Grampian Regional Equality Council
GTAA	Gypsy/Traveller accommodation assessment
GTLO	Gypsy/Traveller Liaison Officer
HNDA	Housing need and demand assessment
MECOPP	Minority Ethnic Carers of Older People Project
PAS	Planning Aid Scotland
RSLs	Registered social landlords
SHR	Scottish Housing Regulator

## ANNEX 3 – Gypsy/Traveller population in Scotland

Chart 1: Gypsy/Traveller population by local authority area



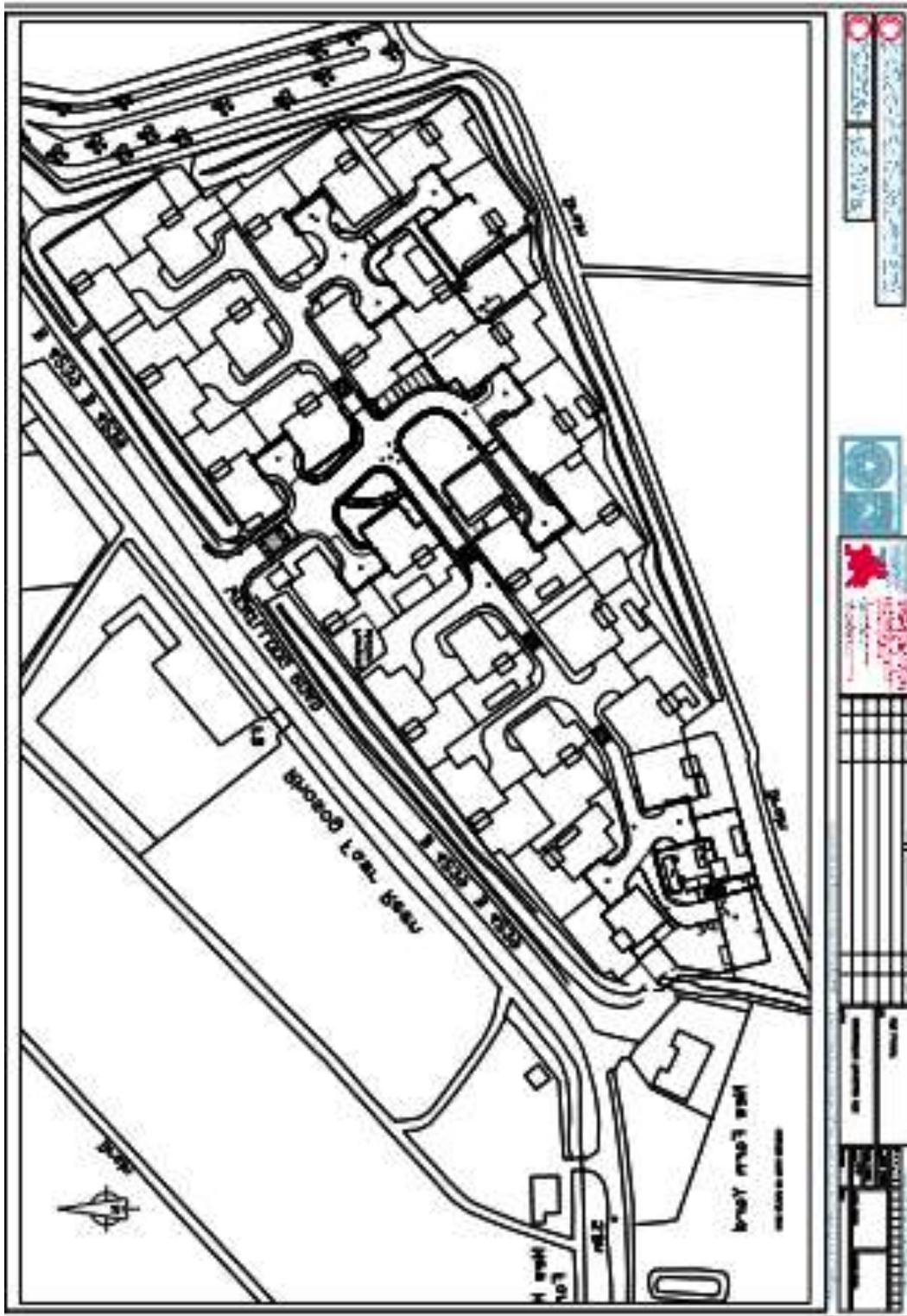
**Chart 2. Heat map of Gypsy/Traveller numbers in Scotland**



Source: 2011 Census



## Example of 'tree branch' design



(Photos taken from Welsh Government (2015b). *Designing Gypsy and Traveller sites*)



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