

Barriers in education – young Travellers in London



SUPPORTED BY

MAYOR OF LONDON

This booklet has been produced for the Greater London Authority's Citizen Led Engagement project.

The project was led by the Traveller Movement with input from ACERT and Southwark Traveller's Action Group (STAG).

11 young peer researchers were trained in basic qualitative research skills and assisted in creating a questionnaire.

The peer researchers interviewed forty four 15 - 25 year old Travellers in London about the barriers they have faced in education; these are their findings.

Demographics

20



Irish Traveller girls / young women

24



Irish Traveller boys / young men

Leaving school

61%

left school straight after primary or during secondary school



63% Girls

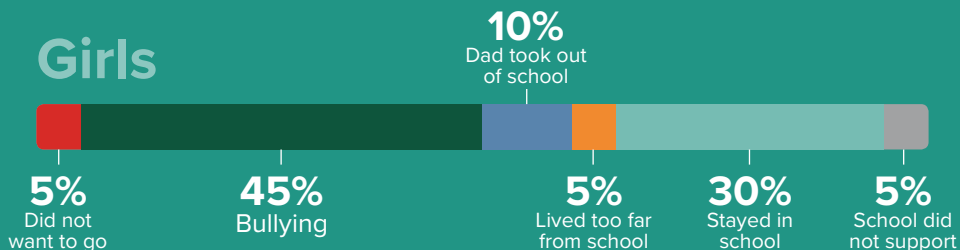


61% Boys

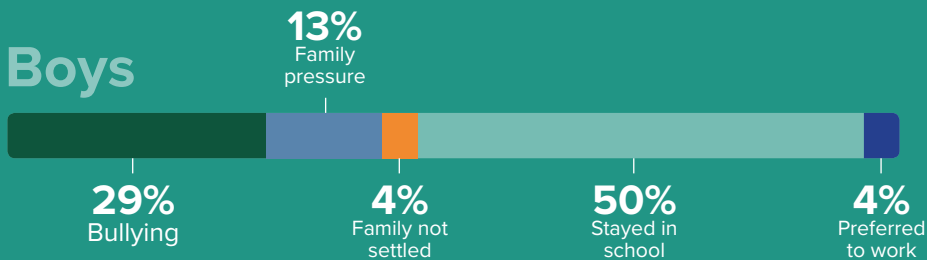


Reason's for leaving school

Girls



Boys



If you could now choose, how long would you have stayed?

41%

Wanted to stay in school for longer but were taken out because of bullying, family reasons, or because of a lack of support from their school (SEN).

23%

Would have liked to stay in school for longer but couldn't because of bullying.

Bullied by other pupils

40%
Were bullied by
other pupils



“Yes. I was held up by neck by a boy and his friends and was called things such as ‘smelly pikey’ and ‘trailer tramp’ and “don’t go around and affecting us with travelleritus”. I was so scared to tell anyone so I’ve kept it to myself for years.”

58%
Of the **girls**
were bullied by
other pupils.



“Yes in primary school I was pushed over twice and ended up with a scar under my chin and under my eye. We moved schools after that.”

26%
Of the **boys**
were bullied by
other pupils.



“Yes very badly, people would call me gypo, inbred, pikey, dirty etc. and I would get that everyday which caused me to get into fights as I would retaliate.”



“Other boys would want to fight you to see if they could beat a Traveller. People would sometimes call you names but we just stuck together and dealt with it”

Bullied by teachers

67%
Say they have
been bullied
by teachers
because they
are Travellers

74%
of the **girls** and
61%
of the **boys** have
been bullied by
teachers because
of their ethnicity/
because they are
Travellers



Good teachers

“My teacher in year 4 was very good. She made sure everybody knew the right things about Travellers and made me feel safe.”



“Year 6 my teacher would keep me out of situations that I could possibly be bullied in. She would always look out for me as well and check up on me because of the fact that I was a Traveller.”



Bad teachers

“I would be bullied to no ends and the teachers didn’t care ... My year 4 teacher stood me up in the class, mocked my accent and the way I spell certain words.”



“Mr X was a racist and prejudiced, he kept doing racist slurs such as ‘people like you’ and ‘pikeys’. I told him it’s Traveller/Gypsy and he got me sent home”

Family support

61%

Of parents
are/were very
supportive

18%

Of parents wanted
them to *'just learn
to read & write'*

20%

Of parents
didn't support
their children's
education



Support

"My parents wanted me to learn to read and write because they can't do it. They couldn't help me with my homework."



"As they said you need your education cos the world is changing and you won't get anywhere if you can't read or write."



Lack of support

"As long as I could read and write it was fine. They didn't really see the point of some lessons."



"My mother and father would rather me to stay home and learn how to cook and clean etc. But I think I'd like to just finish high school, not college just high school."



"I personally want to stay and my mother wants me to stay but my father wants me to work with him instead of going to school."

Home life – school work

75%

Of the **girls** say responsibilities at home negatively affected their school work, these responsibilities including cooking, cleaning, and taking care of siblings and elderly relatives.

“In my family school work was always pushed to side until everything such as the cleaning was done. So in some ways my home life didn’t help with my school work and learning.”



“I had lots of younger siblings and I’d have to help get them ready and bring them to school and pick them up so I didn’t stay late or do clubs.”



58%

Of the **boys** say responsibilities at home negatively affected their school work, these responsibilities included boxing, and helping with the family business.

“Yes a lot as I had to go boxing 5 days a week.”

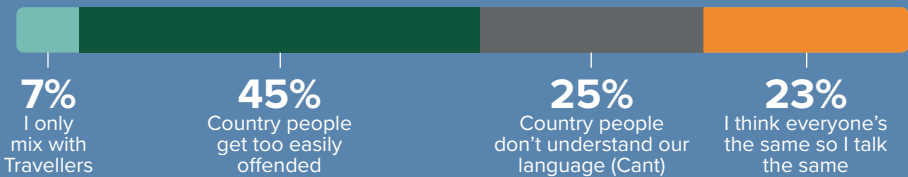


“I’d have to help with the family business. Even when I went away to uni there was a lot of pressure as the only boy in the family.”



Jeer / banter

The peer researchers felt that it was important to ask how 'jeering' or 'banter' affects young Travellers' experiences in school. Some of them had experiences of getting sent home, excluded or getting into fights because a teacher or a non-Traveller pupil (i.e. 'country people') did not understand their banter and took it too seriously.



"Sometimes when talking to country people they can't take the banter that us Traveller people have. Because of this, it makes it harder to communicate with each other."



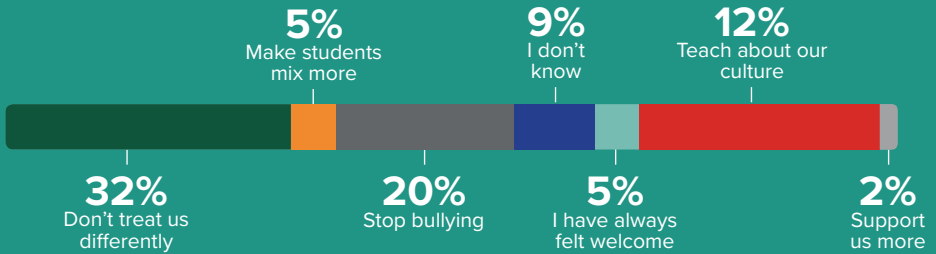
"Travellers can take the jeering but country people are too serious and get offended easily."



"I mostly mix with Travellers but when I was at school you couldn't use Cant with country people. At school they'd think you were being thick if you were just messing and sparring."

How to make school better

The majority of the young Travellers think school would be a better and safer place for them if they were not treated differently than other pupils, teachers would do something about the bullying, GRT history & culture were included in the curricula.



“Don't separate us and make us feel different, and how you put time to country people, put time to us too.”



“Stop bullying, there's no need for it. Don't make us feel like we have to change because we are Travellers.”



“Traveller history in the curriculum. Being firm on bullying and recognising that Pikey, Gypo, Knacker are offensive terms.”




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