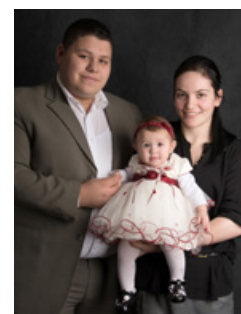


ROMA: ONE PEOPLE – MANY LIVES



The Term Roma

Within the European Union (EU) the term Roma is used to describe groups of people with more or less similar cultural characteristics, such as Roma, Sinti, Kale, Travellers (including Irish Travellers) and Gens du voyage.

Racism and the Roma Community

The Holocaust had a devastating impact on the Roma community. While there is no definite figure available, estimates put the number of people killed in the hundreds of thousands.

Experiences of racism and discrimination continue today across Europe. For example:

- public leaders have used racist language against Roma and Travellers;
- in some European countries violence and hate crime against Roma is rising;
- many Roma children are educated separately from other children;
- Roma and Traveller families are repeatedly at risk of forced eviction from their homes.

Many members of the Roma community living in Ireland are making this country their home. However, inclusion in Irish society is not an easy journey.

It's a better life here in Ireland than back home. I am working here. But it's not easy for a Roma woman, wherever we go we face racism and discrimination. It never stops. (Monika)

Roma in Ireland

There are approximately 10-12 million Roma people living in Europe. This means they are the largest ethnic minority group in Europe. While there are no official statistics, Pavee Point estimates that there are around 5,000 people living in Ireland. Many Roma are Irish citizens and many more are EU citizens who have come here with the hope of a better life for their families.

I came here to look for work. It was very hard in the beginning – having no English. Then my children started going to school and I now speak better English and have found work – so has one of my sons. (Daniel)

Some of the Challenges Faced By Roma in Ireland

Members of the Roma community face many challenges in Ireland. Many find it difficult to gain employment, others report experiences of discrimination when trying to access housing and supports and services such as social welfare and healthcare. Pavee Point and Nasc have noted high levels of violence including attacks on houses and verbal abuse. Roma are often portrayed in a negative light in the Irish media and associated with criminal activities and 'organised begging'.

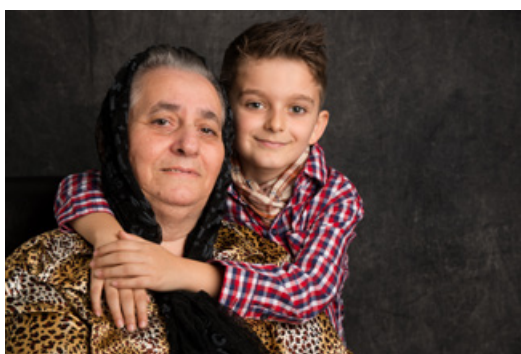
Everyone sees begging as part of our culture. We're not cultural beggars. This is not in our culture. People beg because they are forced to – they have no choice. (Gabi)

ROMA: ONE PEOPLE – MANY LIVES



Customs and Cultural Practices

Roma are not all the same. Many of those living in Ireland may share some of the same customs and cultural practices but there are also many differences amongst them. Like Irish people, there are local traditions that are not shared by all; there are differences in language between people from different regions; and there are customs that are unique to some depending on where people are from and how they are raised.



What Can You Do To Help Challenge Stereotypes and Stop Discrimination?

- Host the exhibition *Roma: One People, Many Lives*, in your community or organisation. For further information please contact The Equality Authority, email: info@equality.ie telephone: (01) 417 3336 or (0505) 24126.
- Help tackle existing stereotypes of Roma people, for example let others know that begging is not a cultural norm and explain that many Roma, as EU citizens have the right to live and work here in Ireland.
- Talk to your local politicians about what can be done to promote greater inclusion of Roma and Travellers within local and national policies, including a progressive National Traveller/ Roma Integration Strategy in Ireland.
- Inform yourself further about the situation facing Roma people in Ireland by contacting groups such as the Equality Authority (www.equality.ie), Nasc (www.nascireland.org), Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre (www.paveepoint.ie) or The European Roma and Travellers Forum (www.ertf.org) and see what you can do.

I hope in the future to have a better life. I hope that people will see us as human, that the discrimination will stop and that people will think how it makes us feel. This is the only way we can have a chance to realise our dreams. (Emilia)

THE LAST WORD

So to end I just want to say that I am proud to be Roma and I want to keep this tradition and wish it for my children and their children as well. (Lorin)

I want our children to think of themselves as Roma and as Irish. Not thinking about who I am and where my parents are from—just go to school and get a good education. (Gabi)



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