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## HATE: “As regular as rain”

A pilot research project into the psychological effects of hate crime in Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities

By: Margaret Greenfields and Carol Rogers for Report Racism GRT/GATEHerts





## Background to the project

- Commission to undertake research builds upon significant levels of anecdotal evidence of suicide rates amongst GTR communities
- Earlier research from Traveller Movement (2017) and Report Hate GRT (2019/2020); offer underpinning evidence of extraordinarily high levels of experiences of racism/discrimination experienced by communities
- Emergent body of research on other BAME communities on detrimental mental and physical health occasioned by experiences of racism (e.g Wallace et. al (2016, UK) found that even 2 significant incidents of racism/discrimination reduced mental wellbeing amongst BAME victims of hate crimes by 2.35% compared to people who hadn't had such experiences.
- G/T identified as Number One group targeted on social media for hate speech (Shubber, 2014)



## Aims and objectives

The pilot study, undertaken between December 2019 and July 2020 aimed to establish a preliminary evidence base for the significant anecdotal evidence that highlights the 'ripple effect' of experiencing hate crime on mental health, suicide and para-suicide.

The project had the following objectives:

- To undertake a scoping exercise to identify incidences (and repeat incidents) of hate crimes across the UK experienced by GTR communities.
- To explore if (in the subjective opinion of respondents) there is an association between hate crime, poor mental health and incidents of suicide and para-suicide amongst GTR community members.
- To identify early experiences of hate crime (bullying and discrimination) in educational environments considering the impact on the mental health of children and young people subject to racist bullying.



## Methodology

- Literature Review
- Social Media Analysis (2000+ items examined)
- Survey – self-selected respondents x 88
- Interviews (1-2-1) [n = 8]
- Focus Groups x 3 [n=19]
- **Nb:** 3 x Workshops with children in schools on bullying/racism had to be abandoned re Covid restrictions



# Demographics

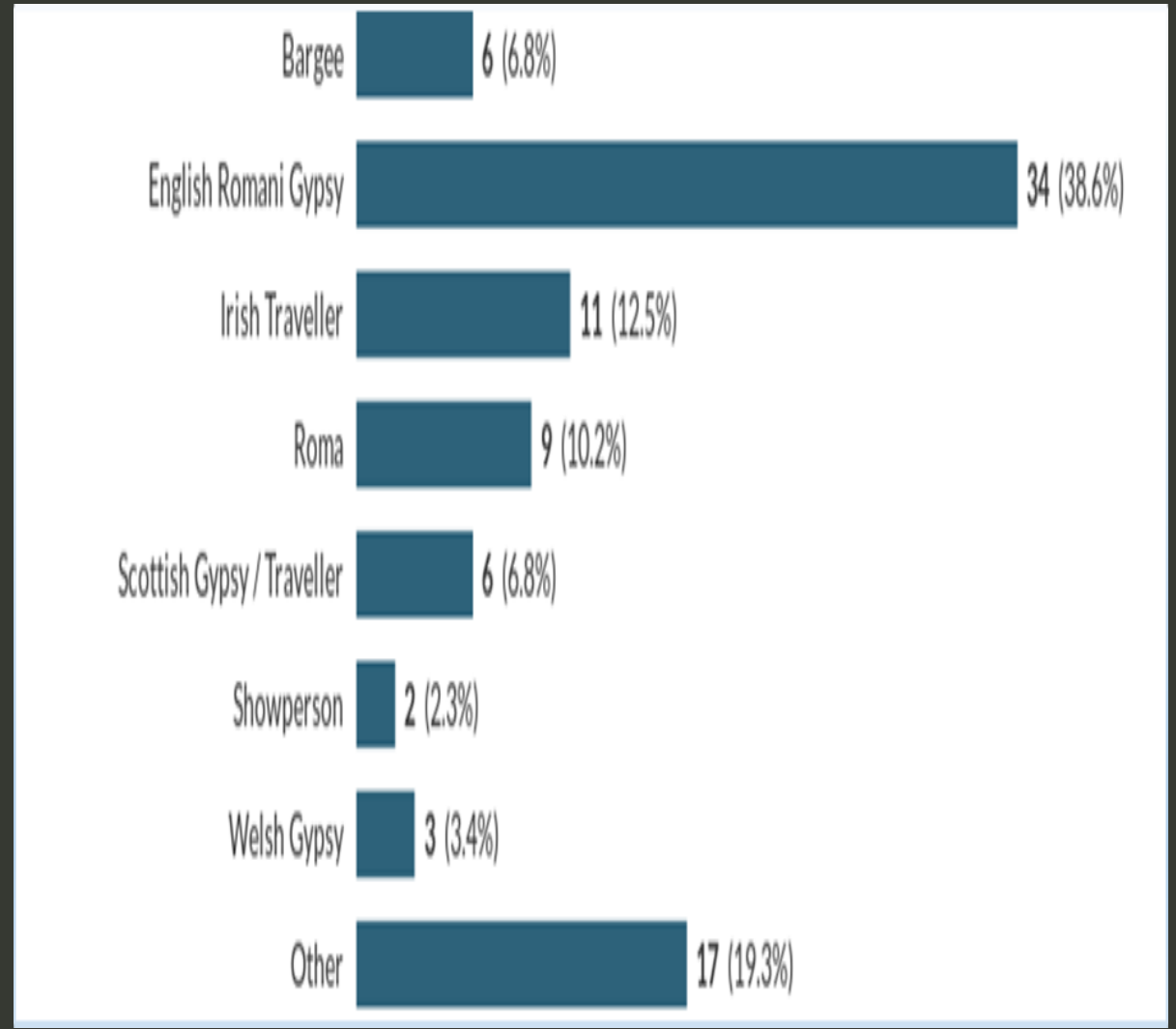
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Summary Browse responses Views Advanced

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3 Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Age						No answer	Totals
	Under 20	21 - 30	31 - 40	41 - 50	51 - 60	over 60		
Bargee	0	0	2	2	2	0	0	6
English Romani Gypsy	2	4	8	7	8	3	2	34
Irish Traveller	0	5	3	2	1	0	0	11
Roma	0	2	4	1	2	0	0	9
Scottish Gypsy / Traveller	0	3	2	1	0	0	0	6
Showperson	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
Welsh Gypsy	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	3
Other	0	1	2	4	6	4	0	17
No answer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	2	18	21	17	21	7	2	88





## Hate crime is defined as:

Any criminal offence which is perceived, by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by hostility or prejudice towards someone based on a personal characteristic... Race hate crime can include any group defined by race, colour, nationality or ethnic or national origin, including countries within the UK, and Gypsy or Irish Travellers (Home Office,2018).

The fact that Gypsies and Travellers are specifically identified within the definition of race hate crime is perhaps indicative of the significant levels of hate crime incidents they experience.



## Key findings

- **78%** of our survey respondents suggest that incidents of hate speech/crime happen very often (with some comments suggesting this took place on a constant or daily basis)
- **18%** selected 'often' and only **3%** of respondents indicated 'sometimes'.
- **Most common forms of hate speech/crime the survey participants experienced:**
  - exclusion and discrimination from and within services (e.g. health, education) experienced by **94%** of respondents
  - reinforcement of negative stereotypes experienced by **89%** of respondents
  - social media abuse, experienced by **87%** of respondents
  - media incitement to racial hatred, experienced by **82%** of respondents
- Concerningly, given that bullying in school is associated with poor outcomes and **adverse childhood experiences**, **78%** of respondents highlighted school bullying as significant hate related incidents experienced by themselves and/or their children E.g. early and life-long victimisation through hate incidents





## Impacts of hate speech

- **77%** of respondents provided additional comments (on top of reporting ‘types’ of hate crime/speech) on the impacts of hate speech which broke down into the following categories:
- Mental Health impacts: depression/anxiety
- Withdrawal from, anger and suspicion of ‘mainstream’ society
- Learning to ‘live with it’
- ‘Self-medication’/harmful behaviours/(emphasis on masculinities)
- Suicide

*“Derogatory terms are often so engrained people fail to hear it. From a local level to a national level from the word ‘Gypo’ being used to describe something that is dirty by another school child, to politicians in parliament using language to divide Gypsy and Traveller communities from ‘law abiding citizens’, to the media positioning us as invaders, swarms and using other military-like terms to dehumanise us” (Romani, female, aged 21–30 years, survey respondent).*



## Key findings by theme: Incidents and experiences of hate crime

- Gypsies and Travellers have been identified in the literature as the number one targets of online hate speech in the UK accounting for 15% of racist or discriminatory slurs overall. In part, this fairly widespread failure by members of the public to identify and challenge hate speech or offensive language uttered against the GTR population may be because there is limited awareness that many GTR communities are protected under the Equalities Act as ethnic minorities. Typically, instead, the populations are frequently presented as having selectively adopted a ‘problematic’ lifestyle often conflated with the negative tropes of criminality.
- Analysis of reports made to GATE Herts “Report Racism GRT” website identified 172 reports made through their web portal between April 2019 and February 2020 (Galloway/GATE Herts, 2020).
- A major peak in cases submitted to the Report Racism GRT occurred following the broadcasting of the April 2020 Dispatches programme “The Truth About Traveller Crime”, accounting for 45 reports in that month alone. In total between February and May 2020, 92 additional cases of hate crime/hate speech were reported to the Report Racism GTR website.



## Reporting of Hate Incidents Remains Low

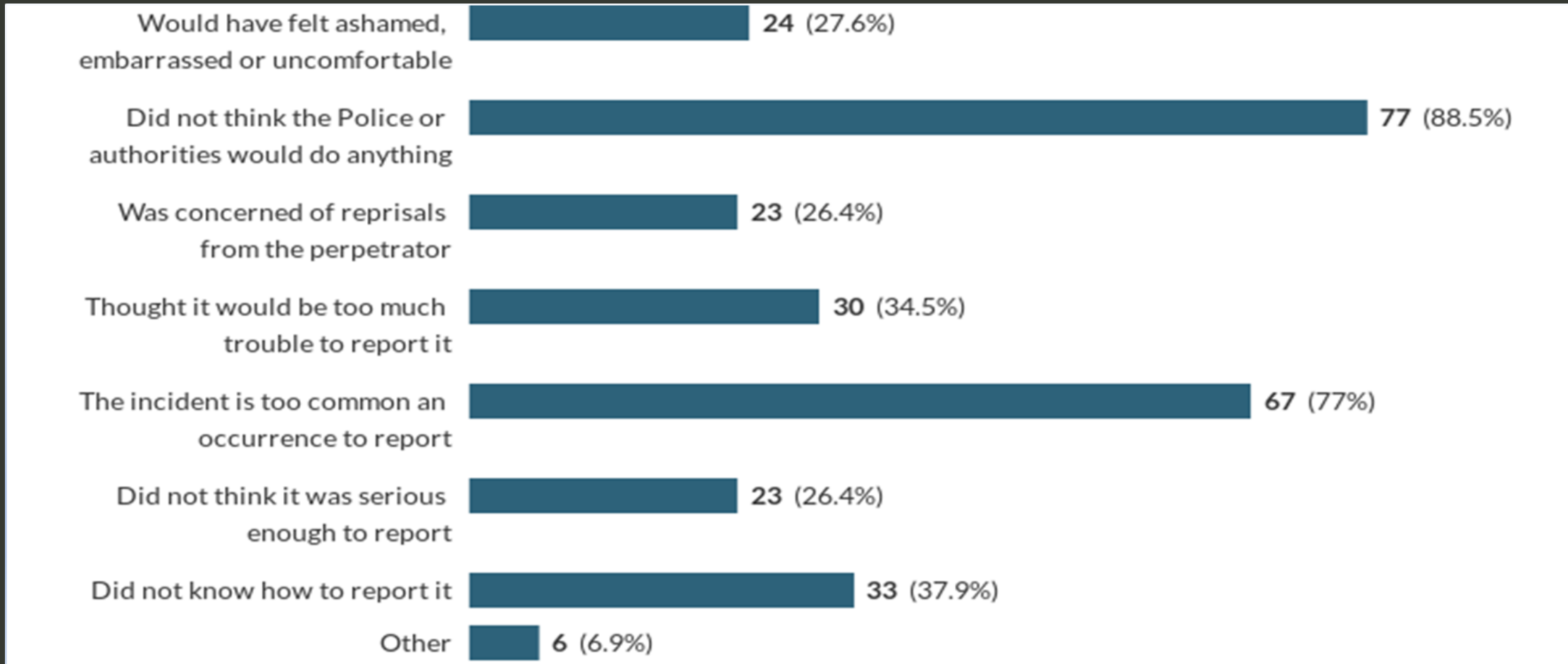
- As a result of the toxic combination of ‘normalisation’ of hate incidents and a lack of trust in the police and other authorities, often including schools, to take any action on complaints of hate crime/speech, only 10% of survey respondents indicated that they would formally report hate crime and hate speech incidents.
- 77% of our survey respondents indicated that the commonality of their experience represented another reason for not reporting hate crimes or hate speech.
- Between 38% and 35% of respondents (varying by ethnic group) noted that they neither knew how to make such a report, or felt that it would be too much bother.

*“Fatigued from reporting before and no consequences for the perpetrators Police are just as much part of society as the perpetrator Because I know we get looked down on like lower class citizens so what’s the point? Racism comes from the authorities, who do you trust and would they believe you?” [Would be] concerned that may be further victimised by police or court processes (Showman, no gender stated, 51–60 years)”.*



## Key findings by theme: Incidents and experiences of hate crime

### Survey responses for not reporting hate crime or hate speech to the police





## Key findings by theme: Media influences and impacts

- There is a complex and often toxic interplay between mainstream media, social media and the attitudes of and behaviours by staff within statutory authorities and services. There was a general agreement that service providers' exposure to racist stereotypes feeds into and enhances further the risk of institutional racism. Similarly, respondents repeatedly and clearly emphasised the role of the media and indeed politicians in creating spikes in hate speech and hate crime.
- A theme that emerged during the media focus group, and was also alluded to in other interviews, was how broadcast and print media use very specific non-verbal imagery used to create bias or influence tone of communication. It was suggested by participants that the creation of such tropes then acts as a visual 'nudge' to people viewing or reading about GTR communities, further feeding into the negative perceptions
- intergenerational and long-term impact of negative media representations of their communities and also damage to relationships with neighbours, peers and colleagues, suggesting cross-generational impacts of hostile reporting, exacerbated by ubiquitous social media amplification, which people were are unable to 'get away from'.



## Key findings by theme: Media influences and impacts

*“I think the media plays an important and considerable role in the constructing of the social image of Travellers in the public domain. This dictates how the majority of the public view and ultimately treat Travellers, the Channel 4 documentary will likely follow with a spike in anti-Traveller hate crime “ (Irish Traveller, female, 21–30 years)*

*“Media reports, High profile evictions. Planning permission notices in the press, political issues/elections. TV programmes. MBFGW [My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding television programme] has done so much damage to Travelling communities it’s unbelievable! Maybe media business is guilty, when they show us in the negative light. But also in times like now (COVID-19 pandemic), Roma are most vulnerable, and police and the public are reinforced to treat us bad Travellers being used as a political football during elections Within the Roma community, I have to say that many of us try to hide our identity. Many Roma people do not want to say that they are Roma. Instead, they say, ‘I am Romanian ... Bulgarian’, anything” (New Traveller, female, 41–50 years)*

*“There have been 34 reports in two weeks since the Channel 4 documentary, so it causes a huge spike in hate crime” (GATE Herts Hate Crime Support worker).*



## Key findings by theme: Educational experiences

- School bullying was highlighted by 78% of our survey respondents as one of the most common forms of hate speech/crime experiences. This was noted as an ongoing issue by participants of all ages and in particular all ethnic GTR communities, sadly demonstrating little intergenerational change and continuing discrimination within schools.
- GTR children continue to have the poorest educational outcomes of all ethnic minority groups as they often leave school earlier than other ethnic groups, historically because formal education has not been a priority for families, often resulting in teachers and education authorities having low expectations of GTR children (WEC, 2019). However, for many GTR children, early removal from school (whether home schooled or not) can be attributed to parents seeking to remove children from the impacts of discrimination and bullying.
- Interviews and survey responses found that (particularly for young men) where gendered expectations exist in relation to 'standing up for yourself', there can be a vicious cycle set up where taunting or name calling leads to physical fights, school exclusions leading to a downward spiral of disengagement from education, sometimes obtaining 'a reputation', or even criminal convictions for fighting .
- Adverse childhood experiences (ACE) which include bullying and bereavement are known precursors to poor mental health, half of all mental health problems are established by the age of 14 years old (WHO,2020) This should raise significant concerns for GTR children who frequently experience bullying and family bereavement.



## Key findings by theme: Educational experiences

*“Racial slurs against Gypsies aren’t dealt with in the same way as other racial groups. It’s seen as a big deal for other racial groups but not for us” (Half-Showman, half-Romani, male, 31–40 years Young GTR person, gender/ethnicity unspecified).*

*“It is often the underlying reason, e.g. a young male is affected by bullying so leaves school early – no qualifications so ends up with intermittent work, affecting his standing in the community; he may get involved in low level crime to earn some money and get sent to prison, or get into drugs and alcohol to self-medicate his struggle with self-worth and his position in the community” (‘Other’ Irish heritage, community worker in NGO, female, aged 51–60).*





## Key findings by theme: Mental health, wellbeing, and suicide

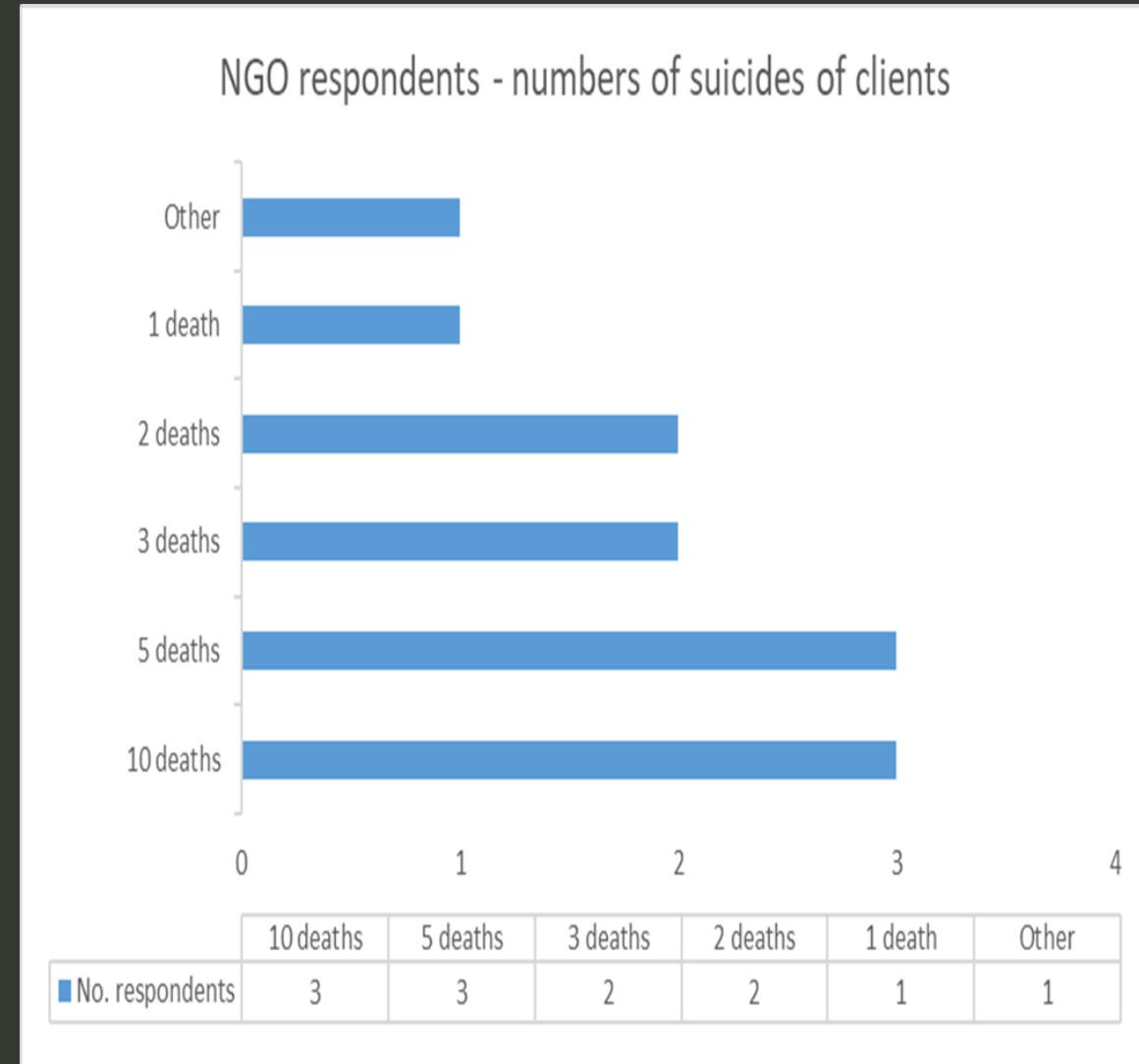
- Participants in this study have repeatedly stressed the persistent grinding and demoralising effect of hate crime/hate speech and discriminatory representations of their communities on their lives. Accordingly, we argue that our data further reinforces previous evidence for other populations, that being a victim of hate crime has a greater impact on the emotional wellbeing of victims than non-hate crimes, with potentially devastating effects which may be linked to and exacerbate the risk of suicide.
  
- We asked our survey participants if they were able to identify the most common reactions of GTR community members to experiencing hate speech/crime Sixty-eight out of 88 respondents (**77%**) provided additional comments which, whilst often overlapping, can essentially be broken down into the following categories:
  - Mental health impacts: depression/anxiety
  - Withdrawal from, anger and suspicion of ‘mainstream’ society
  - Learning to ‘live with it’
  - ‘Self-medication’/harmful behaviours/ (emphasis on masculinities)



## Reported Suicides (NGOs) service users

**43%** of survey respondents who worked for NGOs (this category includes both 'Other' / non-GTR community members (12 respondents) and individuals who work for NGOs and who are a member of the communities (20 respondents) indicated that they had clients who had either killed themselves or attempted suicide in the last 5 years.

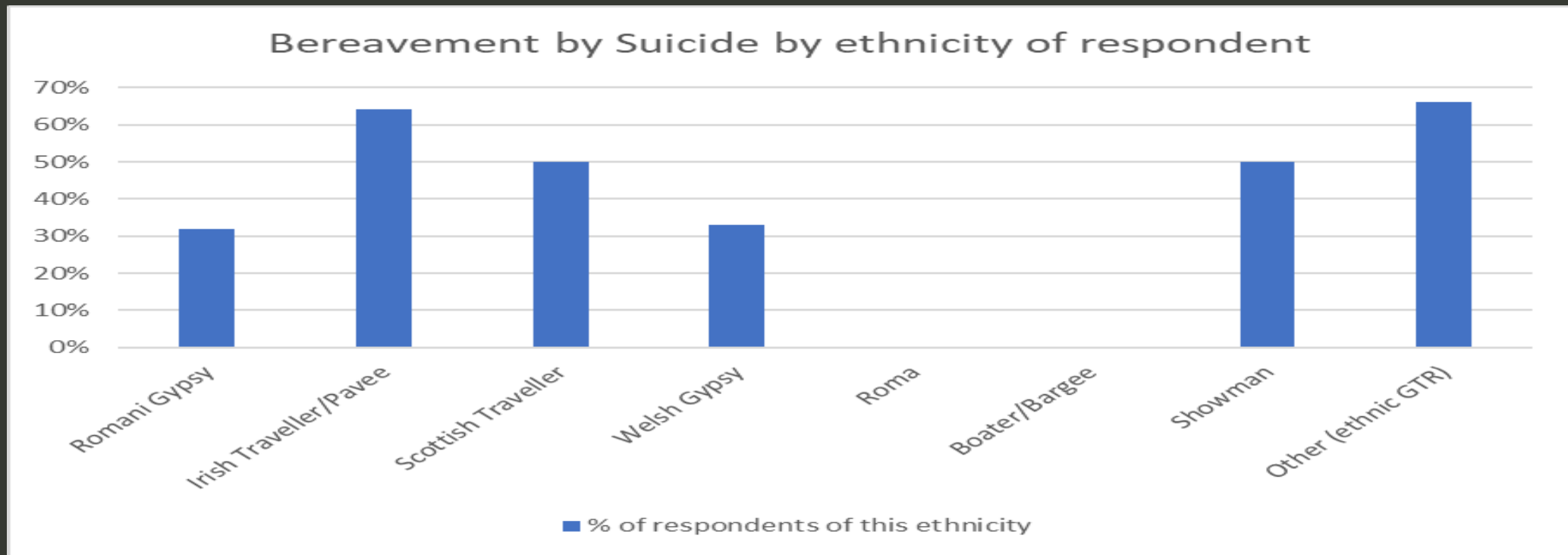
**56 examples of service user deaths from suicide in the last 5 years.**





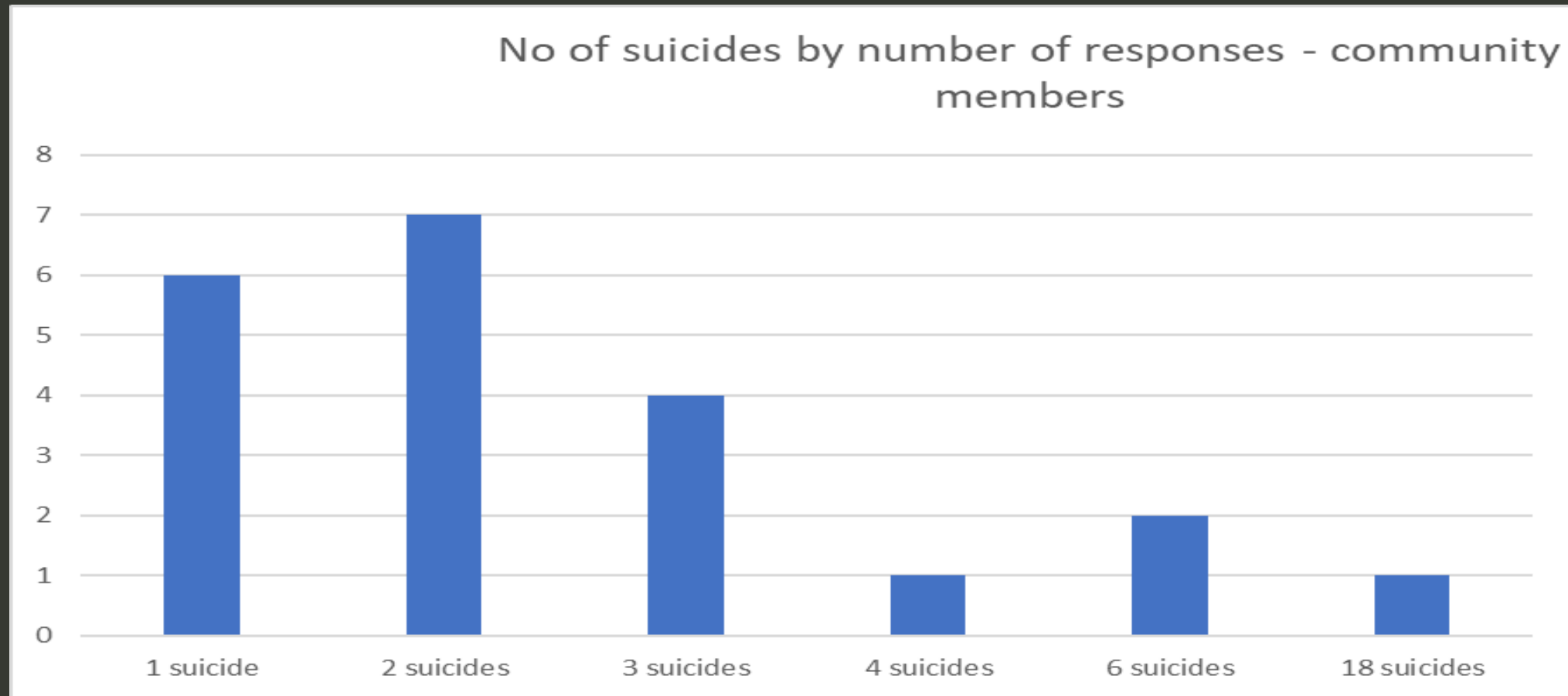
## Reported Deaths by Suicide in family (community respondents)

**39%** of all survey respondents who answered this question had family members who had died through suicide. Of this sub-sample, **55%** of community members who had responded to our survey had experienced the death of **at least one** family member by suicide





## Bereavements by Suicide in Family (25 respondents. 62 suicides) in previous 5 years





## Summing up: Mental health, wellbeing, and suicide

- We would argue strongly that our findings add a highly nuanced and persuasive layer of evidence to the suggestion both that Gypsies and Travellers are more likely than not to be over-represented in figures for those taking their own lives, and also that hate speech/hate crime are an exacerbating factor precipitating suicide in these populations.



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# Thank you for listening

## Any Questions?

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Link to full report : Hate: “As regular as rain” A pilot research project into the psychological effects of hate crime on Gypsy, Traveller and Roma (GTR) communities.

<https://gateherts.org.uk/as-regular-as-rain>



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