

SNAPSHOT: SITUATION OF ROMA IN EUROPE

GENDER EQUALITY & WORK-LIFE BALANCE

28%

of Roma women aged from 20 to 64 are in **employment**

compared with

58%

of Roma men

Roma women make up

69%

of Roma who are **not in employment, education, or training** – NEET

while Roma men constitute

44%

40%

of Roma women are **not in employment** or looking for work **because of taking care of children / elderly / sick relatives.**

Roma women **live**, on average,

11

years less than non-Roma women

compared to Roma men who **live**, on average,

9

years less than non-Roma men.



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Roma women across Europe find themselves at the sharpest edge of inequality, as they continue to face systemic, persistent, and deeply entrenched forms of intersectional discrimination. Their lived realities are shaped by the compounding impacts of ethnicity, gender, and class, resulting in pervasive exclusion from social, economic, and political life.

Antigypsyism and gender segregation on the labour market means that Roma women are overrepresented in low-paid, precarious frontline sectors, such as domestic work, care, retail, and cleaning, where they are exposed to poor working conditions, exploitation, and health risks, as became starkly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their essential contributions in these roles have gone unrecognised and unrewarded, with little to no social protection or labour rights enforcement.

The pandemic also revealed and deepened pre-existing inequalities, with Roma women bearing the brunt of unpaid care responsibilities due to school closures, reduced public services, and healthcare system failures. Caring duties, which disproportionately fall on Roma women even in non-crisis times, act as structural barriers to accessing employment, education, and lifelong learning opportunities. This is compounded by the lack of accessible, affordable, and culturally competent childcare, eldercare, and other support services –often due to poor territorial coverage, financial barriers, and institutional antigypsyism.

Moreover, Roma women remain systematically excluded from decision-making spaces, public leadership, and political representation—both in Roma communities and broader society. Their voices are rarely heard in policy design or implementation, and their specific needs continue to be overlooked or sidelined in mainstream gender equality and Roma inclusion strategies.

Historically, Roma women have also been subjected to severe human rights violations, such as forced sterilisation. While no longer a systemic practice, sporadic cases have continued to be reported, and the legacy of reproductive violence in countries like the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary remains largely unacknowledged and unredressed. This constitutes a grave breach of bodily autonomy and reproductive justice and reflects ongoing structural racism and gender-based violence in health systems.

Despite EU-level commitments – including the Racial Equality Directive, the Employment Equality Directive, and the Gender Equality Strategy – their implementation at the national level remains fragmented and insufficient. The failure to mainstream an intersectional approach into policies is not only a moral and legal failure, but also an economic one: according to EU data, ineffective implementation of equality directives costs the EU up to €305 billion in lost GDP and over €100 billion in tax revenue annually.

Roma women's challenges are further rendered invisible due to the lack of disaggregated data and research grounded in intersectionality. This absence impedes evidence-based policymaking and hides the true scale of marginalisation Roma women experience. The recommendations below call for the specific experiences, rights, and leadership of Roma women to be placed at the centre of policy development.



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The umbrella term “Roma” encompasses diverse groups, including Roma, Sinti, Kale, Romanichels, Boyash/Rudari, Ashkali, Egyptians, Yenish, Dom, Lom, Rom and Abdal, as well as Traveller populations (gens du voyage, Gypsies, Camminanti, etc.), in accordance with terminology used by the [European Commission](#).

Recommendations:

- **Place intersectional justice at the core of EU and national policy-making**, and recognise and address the specific barriers faced by Roma women and other racialised women experiencing multiple and compounded discrimination. Policy frameworks must be co-created with Roma women and reflect their lived experiences at the intersection of gender, ethnicity, class, and systemic exclusion.
- **Guarantee access to affordable, high-quality healthcare for Roma women and girls**, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, maternal care, contraception, and family planning, grounded in bodily autonomy and reproductive justice. Health systems must be responsive to the structural inequalities Roma women face, which requires targeted outreach, culturally competent services, and community health initiatives.
- **Close the gender and ethnic pay and pension gaps**, an income disparity that doubly penalise Roma women in the labour market. Ensure equal pay for work of equal value and actively monitor labour rights violations through disaggregated data and enforcement mechanisms. Address long-term consequences by tackling present gaps in Roma women's pension entitlements, linked to precarious employment and unpaid care work.
- **Invest in quality, free, community-based childcare and long-term care services** in Roma neighbourhoods, ensuring cultural sensitivity and inclusion by recruiting and training Roma professionals. Care work must be recognised as a public good that enables women's (and other carers') access to employment, education, and public life.
- **Support Roma single-parent families**, by providing tailored financial assistance to Roma single-parent households – most of which are led by women – covering essential needs such as childcare, rent, utilities, and education.
- **Challenge gender roles and combat gender-based violence.** Dismantle harmful stereotypes that place the burden of unpaid care work on women, promote shared responsibilities, and engage Roma men and boys as allies. Combat high rates of gender-based violence against Roma women and girls through intersectional, culturally sensitive, and trauma-informed measures, co-designed with Roma women.
- **Amplify Roma women's voices** in the public discourse and in policy-making, within their communities as well as in broader decision-making spaces. Their full participation is essential to creating inclusive policies and dismantling the structures of discrimination and oppression that continue to marginalise and silence them.

