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Changing Homes, Changing Lives: A Study on Roma Housing Transitions

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Cooperation agreement UNAR-ISTAT

WHO, WHEN: UNAR (*National Office Against Racial Discrimination*) and Istat (*National Statistic Institute*) signed a cooperation agreement for a statistical information framework on housing conditions and social deprivation of Roma people (2018).

WHAT: Building an information framework on inclusion/exclusion, social hardship and housing conditions of the Roma people.

WHY: fill the information gap on the most vulnerable, exposed to the risk of social exclusion and/or discrimination. Provide official data to support targeted and effective programming of inclusion policies.

Survey on Housing Transition Projects in Municipalities: 1st step of the project

- The survey on housing transition projects was the first step of a wider research involving Istat, Unar and Roma representatives of the National Roma Associations Platform, instituted at Unar.
- The main objective of the survey was **to map housing transition projects targeting Roma population carried out by municipalities with almost 15,000 inhabitants.**
- Additionally, a **short questionnaire** has been sent to **Regions and to Associations belonging to the Roma National Platform** (79 associations) established at Unar.
- Data collection was carried out through **CAWI** (Computer Assisted Web Interview) **technique**. It **started in September 2019 and ended in January 2020.**
- **42 municipalities** with a total of **89 housing transition projects** targeting Roma population.



E-book available for download
<https://www.istat.it/it/archivio/254436>

Survey on Housing Transition Projects in Municipalities: main results 1st step of the project

- 635 out of 745 municipalities filled in the questionnaire (**85,2%**);
- **42** municipalities declared to have led housing transition projects after 2012;
- **96** is the total amount of projects detected (complete information has been provided for 89 projects);
- **1.342** households have participated in the projects;
- **3.104** individuals moved to proper housing solutions as a result of participating in the housing transition projects.
- **373 settlements** were recorded to exist in 126 municipalities.
- Almost half of the settlements is spontaneous or unauthorized. Authorized/recognized settlements are **144**.
- **83 municipalities** (out of 126) have **never** developed housing transition projects, although the presence of settlements is declared. No projects are planned for 192 settlements between 2012-2020.
- Data on people living in the settlements were provided only for 222 settlements and the total amount of people is over 14.000 (this figure is incomplete because not all municipalities have up-to-date or complete information on population in settlements).
- 73% of the settlements have existed for more than 10 years and almost 17% for 5-10 years.

Survey on Housing Transition Projects in Municipalities: Impact of the National Strategy for Roma inclusion

36 projects act simultaneously on the four axes of the Strategy, 3/5 on 2 axes. Only 2/5 are based only on axis 4 (housing).

Importance of a comprehensive approach, involving the four axes of the Strategy for Roma inclusion

4 main axes of the Strategy 2012-2020 are:

Education,
Employment,
Housing,
Health

Figures on the starting date of the projects can help to size the growing impact of the National strategy for Roma inclusion

10 projects out of 89 started in 2012; 13 between 2013 and 2015, 66 project has been launched between 2016 and 2020. Most of the projects are ongoing (at the data of 2020).

Survey on Roma households: 2nd step of the project

The Survey carried out by Istat in 2023, concerns Roma people **moved from settlements to other forms of housing** (e.g. social housing) and Roma people **still living in settlements**.

The Survey aims at providing an **overview** of the main socio-demographic variables of the respondents, living conditions, access to services (education, work, housing, healthcare etc.) and at understanding if and to what extent housing transition project have contributed to the inclusion of the targeted population.

The respondents (mainly head of household) were asked to provide information also on the family members.

The ultimate goal of this project is to provide a set of **indicators in order to measure the inclusion gap** between the Roma people living in the settlements and those living in adequate housing.

An e-book of the 2nd step of the project will be soon released.



Survey on Roma people

2 groups of respondents: Roma people in Housing and in Settlements.

Principle of **self-identification**: the survey is based on the self-identification of the respondents.

Roma people who participated in the housing transition projects: the municipalities had provided a list of people involved in such projects. Additionally, they had provided the addresses of Roma settlements.

Difficulty in conducting the survey: in 2021 the effect of COVID-19 pandemic led to postpone the interviews. As a results, names and addresses changed and needed to be updated.

Update **July 2022**: municipalities were asked to update the contacts (name and surname, telephone, address, municipality, etc.) of people who had participated in the housing transition projects, and to update the settlements addresses.

Important aspects for the survey: the interviewers selected by the field company had already taken part in a survey carried out by the F.R.A. (Fundamental Right Agency) in Italy among Roma people; in some cases, the interviewers were Roma cultural mediators.

Survey on Roma households: target interviewed

223

Households living in adequate housing

Who has been interviewed?

- Tenant or his/her spouse/partner or other adult (+18) member of the family, who define himself as belonging at Roma groups and participated at transition project

→ List provided by the municipalities

269

Households in settlements

Who has been interviewed?

- Householder, his/her spouse/partner or other adult (+18) member of the family, who define himself as belonging to Roma, Sinti or Caminanti group

→ RANDOM WALK technique

Survey on Roma households: main topics

ADEQUATE HOUSING

Main features (nr of rooms, size, facilities etc.)

Utilities (sewerage, electricity, etc.)

Housing-related issues

HOUSING UNITS IN SETTLEMENTS

Type of settlement

Utilities (sewerage, electricity, heating, etc.)

Presence of private or shared facilities

PUBLIC SERVICES, COMMUTING, AREA-RELATED ISSUES

Distance to School/Work/Travel and Commute Times/Means

Presence of Services and Area Issues

Survey on Roma households: main topics (2)

EXITING THE SETTLEMENT AND VIEWS ON IMPROVING CERTAIN ASPECTS OF LIFE

- ✓ Opinion on the transition project
- ✓ Length of stay in housing and intentions to stay
- ✓ Perception of one's economic status
- ✓ Primary assets owned by the family and items the family is unable to purchase

SOCIAL BONDS AND RELATIONSHIPS

- ✓ Family and friendly ties within the Roma community and outside (frequency of encounters)

HEALTH

- ✓ National Health Service enrollment
- ✓ Specialist visits taken and visits that had to be waived (in the last 12 months)

Survey on Roma households: Initial findings 1/4

We are finalizing the processing and the final stages of dissemination. The final data will be officially communicated through a joint document with UNAR

Women are almost 40% of respondents in housing and 30% in settlements.

The average age of respondents is around **43 years old**.

Respondents provided proxy information about other household members: **for a total of 1.516 individuals**

Over 71% of respondents declare themselves as Rom or of Romani origin; over 28% identify as Sinti or of Sinti origin. 0.4% identify as Caminanti, all living in housing.

More than 2/3 of respondents in housing and just over half in settlements were born in Italy.

In the week prior to the interview, about half of the respondents in housing and over two-thirds in settlements declared to be employed.

Survey on Roma households Initial findings 2/4

Hoseholds in adequate housing:

- a perception of **improvement** of social relations with the Romani or Sinti family and friends, even with friends/ acquaintances outside the community;
- a perception of **improvement** in employment/occupational inclusion
- a perception of **improvement regarding** access to public services (schools, hospitals, pharmacies, post offices, etc.);
- A large share of respondent indicated an **improvement** in health condition;
- Around **1/3** of respondent consider their accommodation too small for household's needs;
- General **housing conditions** have **improved** in the perception of **three-quarters** of the respondents;
- More than 40% of respondents perceive that access to public services such as schools, hospitals, pharmacies, post offices, etc. has improved.



Survey on Roma households Initial findings 3/4

Housing deprivation

We compared the presence of basic services in housing units within settlements and in adequate housing .

- In **adequate housing**, almost all respondents have access to at least one bathroom, most of which include both a bathtub and a shower. In contrast, a significant portion of the housing units **in settlements** lack any in-house bathroom or sanitary facilities. These needs are generally filled with chemical toilets, shared showers, and communal bathrooms..
- Additionally, the **absence** of a **sewage network** in the majority of these settlement poses a severe issue, as it likely leads to the use of non-standard methods for wastewater disposal.
- Access to local services in residential areas is perceived as satisfactory by households who have moved to adequate housing, due to the proximity and availability of shops, schools, post offices, healthcare facilities (pharmacies, hospitals), law enforcement, leisure spaces (cinemas, theaters, etc.), cultural and social centers, places of worship, parks, and green areas.
- However, households in the settlements gave a more negative assessment of the accessibility of the same services.

Survey on Roma households Initial findings 4/4

Ownership of goods

- Households in **settlements** face **greater challenges** and have **limited** access to goods that require stable connections and basic infrastructure such as water and electricity.
- This might reflect the priority given to certain consumer goods, such as cars or vans, which can facilitate transportation (especially for families residing in less connected areas) and are directly linked to work.
- Analyzing the ownership of goods in relation to the perception of one's economic conditions, we observe that in settlements a significant percentage of households evaluate their economic resources as **limited** and have classified them as "poor" or "absolutely insufficient". In adequate housing, 22% of them lament economic discomfort (i.e., they consider their resources poor or insufficient), compared to 71.7% in settlements.

Looking at European level

In 2023, Eurostat, in collaboration with DG Justice, established the Task Force on “**Equality and Non-Discrimination Statistic.**” The Task Force's main goal was to harmonize concepts and taxonomies and ensure their practical implementation.

The initial phase involved collecting participants' experiences to review the definitions and methodologies in use. Due to the complexity and diversity of the issues, the Task Force structured its work into three specialized sub-groups:

- a) Sex, gender, and sexual orientation.
- b) Ethnic origin and religion.
- c) Experiences of discrimination.

These sub-groups are operating in parallel, collaborating and comparing their findings in plenary meetings.



At international level

- The **Task Force on Equality and Non-Discrimination Statistics** was created to enhance and build upon existing equality data work, including guidelines and reports from international working groups such as:
- The **Praia Group on Governance Statistics**, established in 2015 by the United Nations Statistical Commission. This group developed a comprehensive Handbook for National Statistical Offices, which outlines methodologies for measuring governance across eight dimensions, including non-discrimination, equality, participation, and access to justice.
- The **EU High-Level Group's Equality Data Subgroup**, which was formed to support Member States in enhancing the collection and use of equality data. Such data is crucial for evaluating the effectiveness of policies aimed at promoting equality and addressing discrimination.

ISTAT actively participates in the work of these groups, contributing at the development and harmonization of equality data standards and methodologies.



Field Experimentation Driving European Data Harmonization

- Various countries are actively conducting survey experiments on equality and inclusion data. These field tests are crucial for developing and refining data collection methodologies.
- The insights gained from these national experiments contribute significantly to the ongoing efforts of harmonizing equality data across Europe, ensuring more comparable and comprehensive statistics.
- Despite progress, the harmonization process must adapt to the constraints imposed by local legislative frameworks.



Thank you for the attention