

Serbia

According to the 2002 census, there were 108,193 Roma in Serbia. This is almost certainly an underestimation, as many Roma do not identify as such in censuses for fear of discrimination. Domestic and international sources estimate Serbia's Roma population to be 300,000-460,000, which would mean that Roma are the largest minority in Serbia. Roma are a diverse and dispersed group. Most speak Romani and some Serbian as their first language. There are high concentrations of Roma in Belgrade, Nis, Vojvodina and southern Serbia.

Roma face discrimination and exclusion in all spheres of life. Unemployment is particularly high among the Roma, and those who are employed are usually in low paid positions. Poverty is widespread and many people do not have access to such necessities as electricity or even clean water. Conditions are particularly appalling in informal settlements; these are makeshift temporary settlements populated mainly by Roma displaced from Kosovo or forcibly returned from abroad. In 2006, the Belgrade city government abandoned plans to build housing for Roma in the city following nearby residents' demonstrations.

Many Roma children do not attend school, and those who do are often placed in special schools for the mentally disabled simply because of their ethnicity. Roma are almost unrepresented in local and national governments, and are severely underrepresented in employment in state institutions. Hidden discrimination is widespread, including by public officials, negative stereotypes from the majority and other minorities prevail, and there are many reported cases of police ill-treatment. A national strategy for integration of the Roma has been elaborated and work is underway to try to improve the situation of the Roma as part of the Decade of Roma Inclusion.