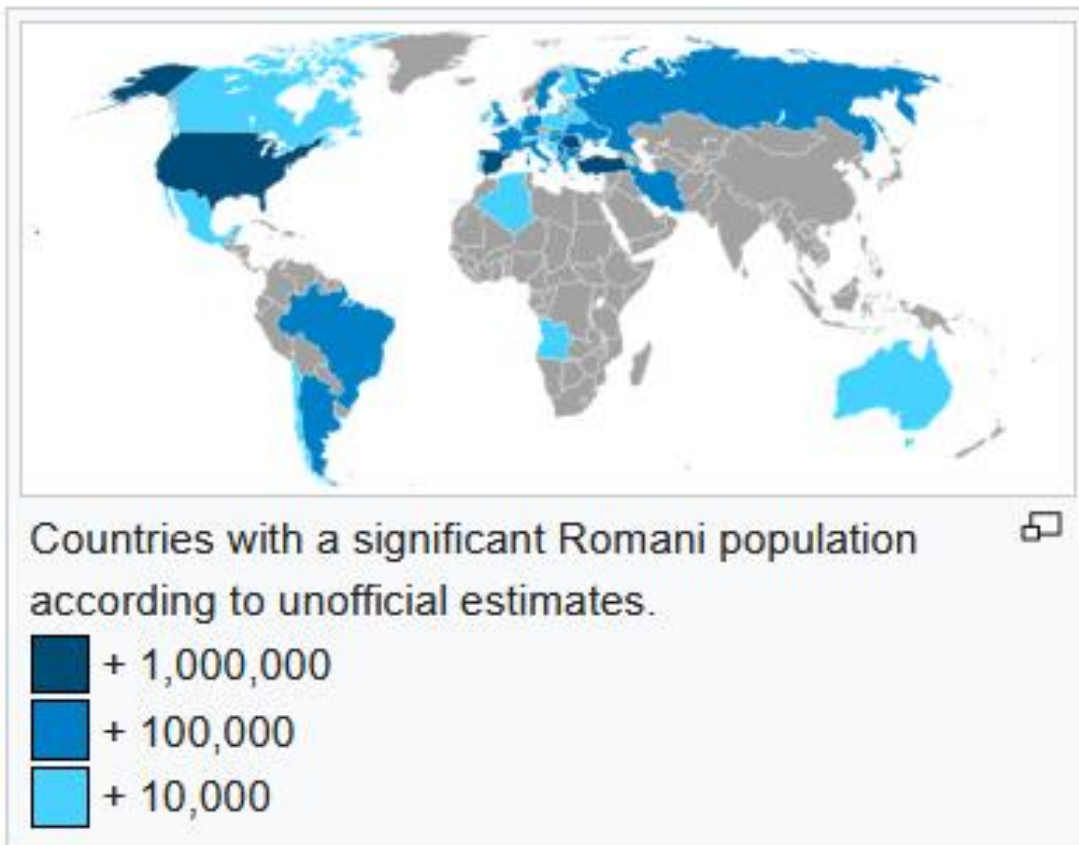


## Roma (Romani) People



- Originated in the northern regions of the Indian subcontinent; in particular, the Rajasthan, Haryana, and Punjab regions of modern-day India.
- Left about 1,000 years ago, probably to escape persecution by the Afghan general Mahmud Ghazni who invaded India.
- Arrived in West Asia and Europe around the 14th century.
- Most concentrated populations are located in Europe, especially Central, Eastern and Southern Europe (including Southern France), as well as Western Asia (mainly Turkey).
- Estimated 10 million Romani people in Europe.
- Estimated 12-15 million Romani worldwide.
- Estimated one million Roma in the United States and 800,000 in Brazil, most of whose ancestors emigrated in the 19th century from Eastern Europe.





- Most Romani speak one of several dialects of the Romani language, an Indo-Aryan language, with roots in Sanskrit.
- Assimilated into surrounding religions
  - Romanis in Middle East and Iran are Muslim
  - In South America, Romanis are Catholic
  - Protestant in N. America and Europe
- However, kept many of their traditions wherever they go
  - Performing arts
  - Metalworking
  - Flamenco dancing originated among the Romani in Andalusia

**History of Persecution/Enslavement**

- Initially welcomed into Europe after arrival in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, but eventually resented and blamed for crime and witchcraft
- Enslaved by some European countries in the Middle Ages
  - In 1450, Vlad Dracul (Dracula) captured 10,000 Romani and sold them in Romania as slaves
- European imperial powers used Romani as slave labor or indentured servants in their colonies
- American Romanis first arrived in large numbers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, fleeing from persecution/famine in the Balkans and Russia.
- Later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Romani immigration was forbidden on a racial basis in areas outside Europe, mostly in the English-speaking world. In 1880, Argentina prohibited immigration by Roma, as did the United States in 1885.
- Victims of the Holocaust in Germany. Forced to wear black or green triangular patches. Approximately 1.5 million were executed. The Great Devouring.



- In 2010 French government broke up Romani camps in the countryside and deported many to Romania.

### **Contemporary Issues**

- In Europe, Romani people are associated with poverty and blamed for high crime rates, and they are also accused of behaving in ways that are perceived as being antisocial or inappropriate by the rest of the population.
- Amnesty International reports continued to document instances of Antizigan discrimination during the late 20th century, particularly in Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, and Kosovo.
- Czechoslovakia carried out a policy of sterilization of Romani women, starting in 1973. The dissidents of the Charter 77 denounced it in 1977–78 as a genocide, but the practice continued through the Velvet Revolution of 1989.
- In 2008, following the rape and subsequent murder of an Italian woman in Rome at the hands of a young man from a local Romani encampment, the Italian government declared that Italy's Romani population represented a national security risk and it also declared that it was required to take swift action in order to address the emergenza nomadi (nomad emergency).
- The 2019 Pew Research poll found that 83% of Italians, 76% of Slovaks, 72% of Greeks, 68% of Bulgarians, 66% of Czechs, 61% of Lithuanians, 61% of Hungarians, 54% of Ukrainians, 52% of Russians, 51% of Poles, 44% of French, 40% of Spaniards, and 37% of Germans held unfavorable views of Roma.
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Sources:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romani\\_people](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romani_people)

[https://media.nationalgeographic.org/assets/file/romani\\_MIG.pdf](https://media.nationalgeographic.org/assets/file/romani_MIG.pdf)