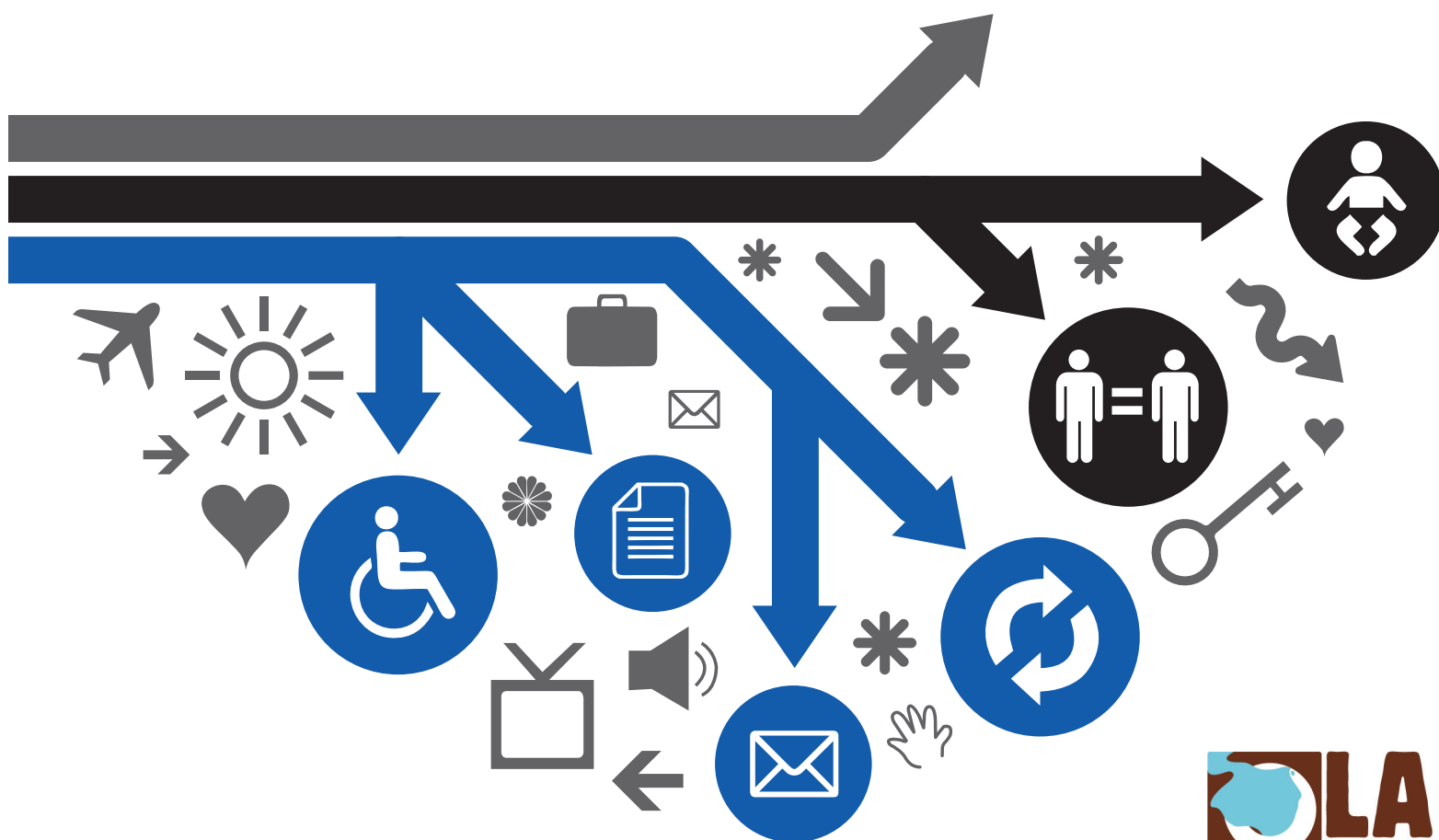


Latin Americans migrating from Europe to the UK: barriers to accessing public services and welfare



Key points

- Latin Americans migrating from other European Union (EU) countries to the UK face a range of difficulties when settling in London, where they often become employed in low-paid, fragmented and insecure jobs (particularly in the cleaning sector). These difficulties affect women particularly, as they are often the main carers for children and family.
- Reduced outreach, interpretation and information services from local authorities for new arrivals often result in 'practical exclusion' of migrants and their children from public services to which they are entitled, undermining their ability to integrate and secure appropriate standards of living.
- Diminished resources in public services provision and welfare restrictions for recent EU migrants (due to public misperceptions that these migrants overburden the welfare system) create barriers for vulnerable migrants to access social protection, particularly for women.
- Barriers of access have been identified in healthcare, education, housing and employment, which have particular detrimental effects for those migrants working in precarious jobs, making them vulnerable to labour exploitation and poverty.

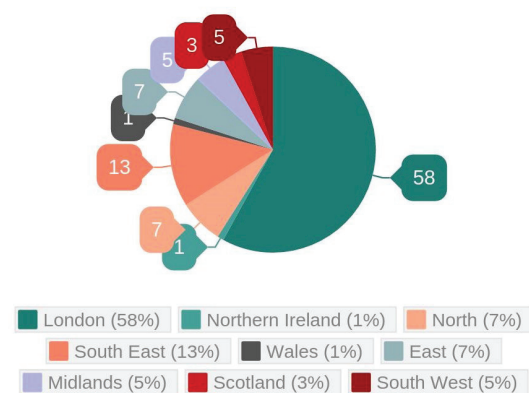
Introduction

The Latin American population in the UK has grown significantly in the last few decades, to an estimated total of 186,500 people in 2008 (including second generation individuals), 61% of them residing in London (McIlwaine et al., 2011, 7). The *2011 Census*, however, only registered 165,920 people born in Latin America living in the UK, of whom 58% lived in London and 13% in the South East of England (see figure 1). Voluntary organisations and some local authorities have highlighted that this is an under representation of the actual size of the population due to the exclusion of second generation Latin Americans from this count and to multiple barriers jeopardising Latin Americans' participation in the Census. Some of these barriers are linguistic (i.e. a high percentage of Latin Americans have a low command of English), socio-economic (e.g.

precarious living conditions in overcrowded accommodation, high incidence of 'in-work poverty', misconceptions about Census participation and reluctance to participate in official initiatives) and administrative (i.e. 'Latin American' has not been recognised as an ethnic minority group in the Census). In addition, they also report a notable increase of the population in the last few years with significant numbers arriving from other countries in Europe (CLAUK, 2015). For instance, many Latin American organisations such as the Latin American Women's Rights Service (LAWRS) report a 75% increase in demand for services from these 'new' arrivals.

Figure 1

Geographical distribution of the population born in Latin America residing in the UK in 2011
(Source: 2011 Census - ONS, NRS, NISRA)



Total population: 165,920

Residents in England & Wales:

55% arrived between 2001-11

28% arrived after 2007

18% have an EU passport

2009-2010: nearly a third of over 1,000 Latin Americans surveyed had lived in another country before settling in the UK - **Spain** 38%, **Portugal** 14%, **Italy** 6% (McIlwaine et al., 2011, p. 43).

This significant growth of the Latin American population has taken place in a context of increased migration restrictions to third-country nationals in the UK. For instance, since 2011, the government introduced a cap on skilled immigration and new requirements in terms of type of job and salary for non-EU workers. In

addition, the Tier 1 Post Study Work visa was discontinued (although a visa for PhD entrepreneurs was recently introduced). Student Visa holders also faced changes that regulate the hours they are allowed to work and various education institutions lost their accreditation. Furthermore, increasingly difficult language requirements were introduced for various migration paths and for settlement, while an annual income requirement was introduced for those intending to sponsor a non-EU family member (Gower, 2015). Being a non-EU born community, these restrictions have had significant impacts on the paths and conditions with which Latin American migrants can enter and settle in the UK.

The 2008 financial crisis and its harsher consequences in southern European countries has also contributed to reshaping the migration routes of Latin Americans arriving in the UK. In particular, there has been a significant increase in the number of Latin American migrants who, having lived and acquired citizenships in countries such as Spain, have opted to re-migrate to the UK when facing long-term unemployment and other socio-economic difficulties in their current EU countries of residence (e.g. McIlwaine 2011, 2012; McIlwaine et al. 2011).

The present report focuses on these 'new' arrivals from other European countries, paying particular attention to Latin American women who, in many cases, are heads of household, have scant knowledge of the public services and welfare system in the UK, face language barriers and are often at risk of abuse and exploitation. Despite, in many cases, holding EU citizenship, these 'new' arrivals face a range of difficulties when settling in London, where they often enter low-paid, fragmented and insecure employment. Their precarious socio-economic circumstances are compounded by a lack of economic resources and, in some cases, debts before re-migrating, older age at which the re-migration occurs and re-separation from family members who are often left behind in their previous country of migration (e.g. Herrera, 2012; McIlwaine, 2012).

Nonetheless, these are also resourceful migrants with experience of mobility and the challenges of starting a life in a new environment, and familiar with the pressures of providing for their families across geographical borders which often include two or more countries (e.g. McIlwaine, 2012).



Information event held in London on 21st June 2014

[This report](#)

This report draws from the findings of a small-scale study conducted by Mas Giralt (2014) at the University of Leeds, which involved 19 semi-structured interviews with key informants from migrant support and community organisations and staff in public services in the UK, Spain and Italy (two of the countries from which many Latin Americans have re-migrated). This study sought to develop a better understanding of the issues faced by people re-migrating (both at origin and destination), and more particularly, of the impacts that recent migration and policy reforms in the UK have had for those newly arrived. The issues identified by this study affected migrant women in particular due to their predominant role as heads of household and family carers.

Following these findings, and as a way of 'giving back' to the community, an information event was organised by Mas Giralt and LAWRS with the funding support of Care-Connect at the University of Leeds. During this event, which was held on 21st June 2014 and attended by over a 100 migrants, a consultation questionnaire was completed with 37 attendees, randomly chosen.

Due to the particular incidence, all respondents were Latin American women who had migrated to the UK from other EU countries. Most (27) were recently arrived migrants who had been in the UK for less than 5 years, and only 10 for over 6 years. The report also presents the results of this consultation, which further illustrate the issues analysed in Mas Giralt's (2014) research, and provides examples of migrant women's first hand experiences of the barriers highlighted by this study.



Information event held in London on 21st June 2014

Financial cuts and public service retrenchment: impacts on Latin Americans migrating from Europe

The public expenditure reductions and welfare policy changes introduced by the Conservative and Liberal-Democrat Coalition Government 2010-2015, have had important impacts on the living conditions and wellbeing of many disadvantaged population groups in the UK, (e.g. Kitson et al., 2011). This is particularly the case for migrant women who are affected by intersectional discrimination on the grounds of different characteristics, such as gender, nationality/migration status, class, sexual orientation, ability, 'race' or ethnicity (e.g. UK CEDAW Working Group, 2013). 'Financial cuts' have been applied across government and local authorities (including those with social services responsibilities) have seen their resources reduced dramatically, for example from 2011/12 there was an overall scheduled 43% cut in funding from central government to local authorities for a five year period (Local Government Association, 2013).

Mas Giralt's (2014) study found that reduced resources have meant a retrenchment of public provision and this has impacted both on the number and type of outreach services provided for migrants and their families, but also on the ability of local authorities to financially support third sector organisations which often fulfil important roles in migrant support provision and integration activities. In addition, as this briefing discusses, many of the migration/welfare policy changes introduced in the last few years focus on limiting EEA/EU (European Economic Area/European Union) migrants' entitlements to public services and assistance (i.e. healthcare and in and out of work benefits), which, as will be pointed out, has particular detrimental effects for migrant women and other migrants in vulnerable situations (e.g. Fawcett Society, 2012).

The next sections consider the ways in which these policy changes have impacted on the ability of recently arrived Latin American migrants (particularly women) with EU citizenship and their families to access services and social assistance (when this is needed), which has important detrimental effects on their wellbeing. To do so, it briefly explores different areas in which difficulties have been identified by Mas Giralt's (2014) study and the consultation questionnaire: healthcare, education, housing and employment.

Healthcare

EEA/EU migrants are entitled to free primary and secondary care, through the European Health Insurance Card system if they have been in the UK for three months or less, and as residents beyond this time period if they are jobseekers, full time students or economically active. If they are economically inactive, their access will depend on habitual residence status and right of residence (Benton, 2013).

Key informants from Mas Giralt's (2014) study highlighted that funding cuts have greatly reduced the outreach and specialised information and interpreting services which had been available formerly. This often results in 'practical exclusion' from health services for recently arrived Latin Americans who do not have the necessary information about their entitlement or about how to access NHS services. Existing research on the

Latin American population conducted in London in 2011 found that 19% of migrants from this group had never visited a family doctor (GP); this situation was predominant among those who had been in the UK for five years or less and included a significant proportion of migrants with EU citizenship – 20% of the total who had not visited a doctor (McIlwaine et al., 2011, p. 97). A recent HIV community testing campaign conducted by Naz Project London and the Coalition of Latin Americans in the UK also gathered information about NHS access among Latin Americans. Worryingly, the campaign results show that “more than two thirds (68%) of the total sample (137) had never accessed health services in the UK before” (Granada and Paccoud, 2014, p. 5).

In addition, a HealthWatch Southwark (2014) report, based on research carried out in collaboration with the Latin American Women's Rights Service, identified that insufficient English language skills and lack of information were key barriers for Latin American women trying to access NHS and social care services. According to the women consulted in the questionnaire, this is also an important issue encountered by recent arrivals. As shown in figure 2, a significant number of respondents did not know how to access dentists, consultants, or specialised health services such as sexual or mental health clinics.

Existing research has pointed out that facing barriers when trying to access primary care often results in the exclusion of vulnerable population groups and in the displacement of

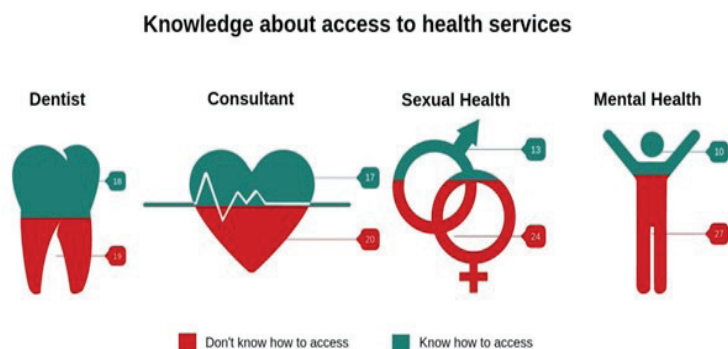
Amelia, a 51 year-old woman from Colombia with Spanish nationality, who works as a cleaner, has cancer and osteoporosis. She does not know how to access GP services or how to see a consultant in the UK. She lives in overcrowded conditions, sharing her room with her family and is not receiving benefits due to lack of knowledge.

Testimony from consultation questionnaire

treatment to Accident and Emergency (A&E) departments (e.g. Hargreaves et al., 2008).

Healthwatch Southwark and LAWRS (2014) found that barriers to access and “bad experiences have led to a breakdown of trust with GPs, and between GPs and Hospitals. Some implications included reverting to private services (accredited or not is another issue), and/or using the A&E as their ‘go-to’ place for care treatment” (Healthwatch Southwark & LAWRS, 2014, p. 11). In terms of the consultation questionnaire, 5 of the respondents reported having gone to A&E because they were not registered with a GP.

Figure 2



Education

The UK has universal free access to education and all school-age children have the right to register in a state school regardless of immigration or residence status - currently, in England and Wales, attending school is obligatory for young people of 5 to 16 years of age, or up to 18 for those born after 01/09/97 (Gov.uk, 2014). Furthermore, parents have a legal obligation to make sure that their children attend school.

However, and in spite of a growing population, funding cuts in education have led to limited school vacancies in many areas of the country; the Local

[Access to] health services should be universal but it is not. We have a project to inform migrants they have the right, that they do not have to show their passport, they do not have to show anything. But many people don't go because they are fearful, and then they end up getting stuck with worse things, [private services] who charge them a great amount of money, they rip them off, and they aren't even proper doctors.

*Coordinator of educational programmes
in a charity supporting migrants*

Government Association, for instance, has recently reported a £1bn shortfall in funding for school places (LGA, 2015). Overall, a Labour Party survey suggests almost 1 in 5 primary schools is already over capacity (Burns, 2015). This lack of spare capacity contributes to the difficulties that recent migrants face when trying to enrol their children in schools. In addition, the specialised information and interpreting services that used to be offered by local authorities to support the socio-economic integration of migrant parents and their children have been reduced, leading to misinformation on how to complete the necessary forms and procedures to access education.

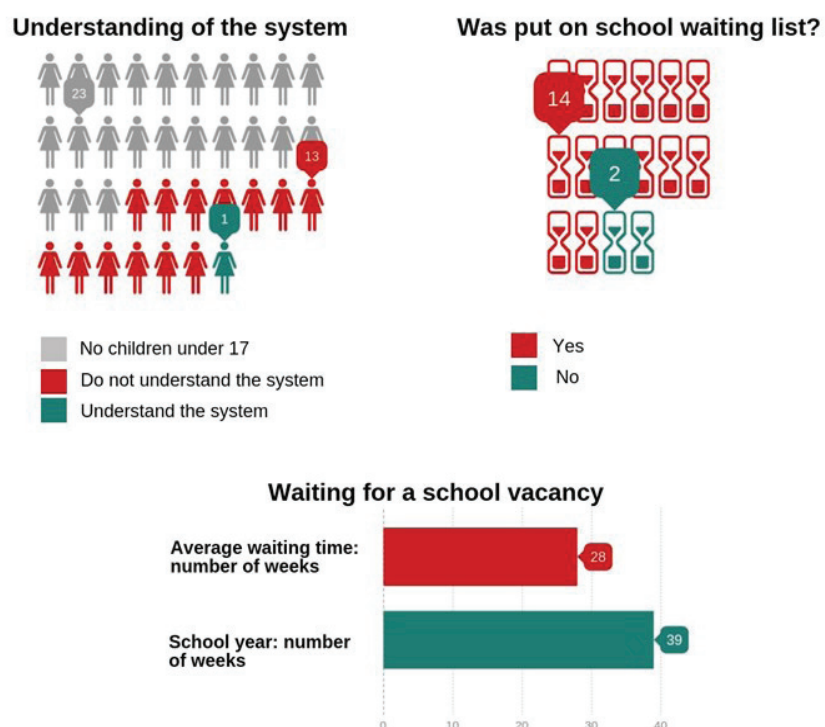
The consultation questionnaire asked mothers whether they felt that they understood the local education system, whether their children had been placed on a waiting list, and if so, for how long. Their responses seem to indicate that migrants continue to face significant barriers when trying to enrol their children into schools. Out of those mothers who had children of school age, only 1 felt that she understood the local education system. Significantly, the vast majority were placed on a waiting list, and the average waiting time for a school vacancy was 28 weeks (see figure 3).

In addition, and as will be discussed later, many Latin American families live in shared and overcrowded accommodation which prevents children and young people from having access to adequate study space, further compounding the difficulties they face in progressing with their education.

A fifth of the questionnaire respondents highlighted the lack of space for study and shortage of bedrooms in the places where they lived as an important problem affecting their quality of life.

Figure 3

Access to Education



Further issues affecting Latin American teenager girls and boys

Problems in accessing school places seem to affect teenage girls and boys particularly as the mismatch between the ages at which children transfer from primary to secondary school in different countries often leaves recently arrived young people outside of education for considerable periods of time. Further difficulties arise from the subject specialisation system (e.g. sciences, humanities, arts etc.) which characterises secondary educational establishments in the UK, which makes it important to match students with the education institution which provides the best teaching in the areas of interest of a particular pupil. Key informants from Mas Giralt's study (2014) highlighted that newly arrived young people often find themselves placed in schools where there is capacity, independently from the fact that they may not be the best choice for the educational interests of that particular young person.

This situation is worsened by the retrenchment of public integration programmes for migrant young people and the cutbacks in funding to third sector organisations which used to provide specialised clubs and activities for this group. Overall, despite having rights and entitlement to education, recently arrived children and young people are finding themselves excluded due to a lack of information and specialised services.

We see this a lot, young people who are out of the school for several months, even a whole year. From the youngest ones to the teenagers (...) but it happens a lot with young people of 16 to 18 years of age. They do not finish their education where they are coming from and they cannot finish it here (...) because the system is different here and then they are left stuck. Our project with families and young people (...) often works as an alternative education, so that during this period in which they do not have a school, they have a few educational activities.

Coordinator of volunteers in Latin American support organisation

Once girls and boys are able to access the education system, they face additional barriers to adapt including language difficulties, lack of understanding of the system and in some cases bullying and exclusion. These barriers are further compounded for teenage Latin American girls who are often objectified through the stereotype that “Latin Americans girls are sexy”, in some cases leading to harassment and abuse.

English Language

The ‘No Longer Invisible’ study highlighted that, despite generally being a well-educated group, a third of Latin American migrants cannot speak English (McIlwaine et al., 2011, p. 7). Lack of English Language knowledge does not only influence the type of work migrants are able to do, but also has indirect effects on their long-term situation, as it is the main means through which education that is relevant to the local labour market is acquired (Chiswick and Miller, 1995). Key informants in Mas Giral’s (2014) study confirmed that many of those currently arriving from Spain and other southern European countries also have

limited command of English which often means that they become employed in unskilled and low-paid jobs.

Daily experiences of the language barrier also have important consequences beyond the employment situation of Latin Americans. A lack of English skills, for example, is directly related to difficulties in obtaining the necessary information to access public services and to becoming familiarised with workers’ rights and the tax system in the UK. Moreover, in many cases, Latin Americans with limited or no English skills are forced to routinely rely on others to help them deal with important practical areas of life, such as finance, health and parental responsibilities which can, in turn, expose them to additional risks of abuse or exploitation (Granada, 2013).

In line with this, Latin Americans are highly motivated to learn English not only in order to improve their employment situation, but also for integrative reasons (Granada, 2013). However, access to English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses has become increasingly difficult for those working long hours in low-paid employment, particularly for those who work unsociable hours in the early morning or late at night. The situation is further compounded for many Latin American women who are both the main providers for their households as well as carrying out domestic and parenting responsibilities due to the persistence of traditional gender roles. The limited offer and timing of courses (e.g. shortage of evening classes and lack of crèche facilities) as well as the introduction of course fees for those not in receipt of unemployment benefits, are the main obstacles to accessing this training.

Language is the main barrier (...) and the most difficult situation is for older migrants, people who are 40 or 40 something, who lost their jobs in Spain, maybe one or two years ago, they don’t speak English and it becomes very difficult for them to start again here, very difficult.

Coordinator of volunteers in Latin American support organisation

In the case of the women who took part in the consultation questionnaire, although most reported only having elementary English language knowledge (25 out of 37), many expressed high motivation to undertake further education. For instance, 31/37 expressed a wish to pursue further education in the UK but cited lack of time, money and language as the main reasons why they were not able to do so.

Housing

There is a shortage of social housing in London (and across the country) and accommodation in the capital city is generally expensive. EEA/EU nationals are only entitled to access social housing if they have the right to reside and satisfy the habitual residency test, which may require up to two years of residence (Housing Rights Information, 2015). However, rules vary across local authorities and more or less restrictive guidelines may apply.

were living precariously, either staying with friends, living at a hotel, or in a situation of homelessness - see figure 4 for an overview.

The living conditions of the new Latin American migrants are horrendous, the level of abuse committed by private landlords is horrendous. I have whole families living in a room, they are paying £600 for a room, where the parents have one bed and two children another and they eat there. They share with other families, share the bathroom, and have no privacy.

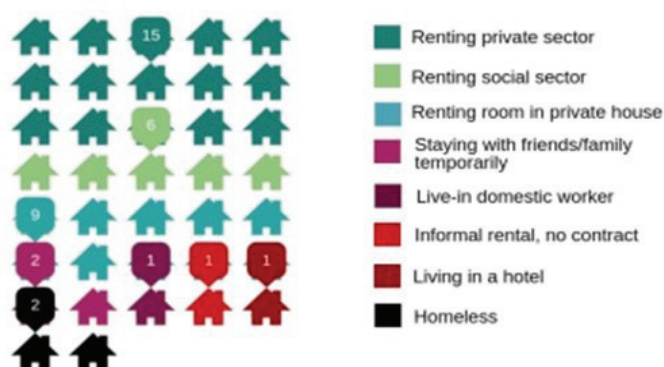
Coordinator of a project with Latin American women

The 'No Longer Invisible' study highlighted that Latin Americans in low paid jobs face great difficulties in securing appropriate housing in London, often living in unsanitary conditions and/or in overcrowded accommodation. Of the 1,000 Latin Americans surveyed by this project, two-thirds resided in private rented accommodation and 45% reported living in inadequate housing (McIlwaine et al., 2011, p. 73). Key informants in Mas Giralt's (2014) study highlighted that difficulties in securing adequate housing are also widespread among recent migrants. The situation for women and girls is more critical with many of them having to share bedrooms and facing challenges in relation to privacy and safety.

These difficulties were also echoed in the consultation questionnaire. Although nearly half of the respondents considered their living conditions adequate (16 out of 37), a significant number of them expressed concerns regarding the sanitary conditions of the houses where they were living, indicating problems with humidity, infestation, lack of heating, and defective toilets (see figure 5).

Figure 4

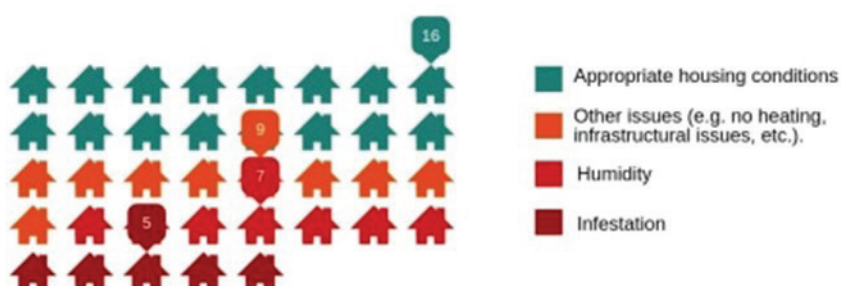
Housing situation



Existing research on migrant populations in the UK has found that the majority of recent migrants (i.e. those who have been in the country for 5 years or less) rent in the private sector, for example up to 80% did so in 2013 (Vargas-Silva, 2014, p. 2). In the case of the Latin American community, the 'No Longer Invisible' study showed that two-thirds lived in rented accommodation as named tenants or in sub-letting arrangements (McIlwaine et al, 2011, p. 75). The majority of respondents in the consultation questionnaire were also renting in the private sector, either as named tenants 15/37 or by subletting 9/37. A significant proportion

Figure 5

Housing conditions



Another existing provision is a cash social security benefit to help those on low incomes with their rent payments, known as 'Housing Benefit'. EEA/EU nationals can only receive this benefit if they have lived in the UK for at least three months and are considered habitually resident, which normally requires that they have been working at least for thirteen weeks and earning at least £149 per week (Housing Rights Information, 2014). In addition, recently introduced regulations (1st April 2014) stipulate that those who have a right to reside solely as a "jobseeker" will no longer be able to claim Housing Benefit (Kennedy, 2015, p. 17). Overall, within current regulations, the status of worker or retained worker is a necessary condition to be eligible for this type of housing assistance (and as will be pointed out in the next section, for other types of benefits as well) and recent migrants working in part-time, fragmented and unstable employment are likely to struggle to fulfil this requirement. This situation is more challenging for migrant women, as many times their combined work and care responsibilities make it harder for them to retain a status of worker. Additionally, migrants are vulnerable to the abuse of unscrupulous landlords who often rent rooms without formal contracts (see for example Perry, 2012; UK CEDAW Working Group, 2013).

Key informants in Mas Giralt's (2014) study also emphasised that even those recently arrived Latin American migrants who have requested help from local authorities when facing destitution, have often been refused assistance as the authorities consider that they have made themselves homeless on purpose by migrating to the UK from another EU country where they had accommodation and social support.

Access to housing is very problematic. It is more and more difficult to have access to housing benefits and a very large part of the [Latin American] community lives in overcrowded situations, that's also a problem that we see practically daily. Two or three families in a flat, in one room, that is one family [living] in one room.

Coordinator of educational programmes in a charity supporting Latin American migrants

This lack of social assistance in housing or, as will be considered next, other working benefits, makes the process of settlement difficult for recent migrants, particularly women, who are joining the low-paid unskilled labour market of London.

Employment

In 2011, 85% of Latin Americans in London were employed (McIlwaine et al., 2011, 52). However, in spite of high qualifications, more than half of them were working in unskilled low-paid jobs, particularly in the cleaning and hospitality sectors. It was also identified that 40% had experienced workplace abuse and exploitation, 11% were being paid less than the National Minimum Wage, and that 70% perceived discrimination as a major barrier to improve their quality of life (McIlwaine et al., 2011, p. 67).

The people that we see here are facing labour problems, they aren't being paid, they aren't given contracts, they aren't paid for their holidays, there are discrimination cases, cases of racism, of all types. Those are the same things that were happening when Latin American migrants were coming directly from Latin America, now they are happening to the people who are coming from Spain.

Coordinator of a support and advice service for Latin Americans in the UK

Furthermore, the EHRC's "Invisible Workforce" report unveiled that poor conditions and violations of employees' rights are an endemic problem in the cleaning sector. The report provides evidence of workers facing lack of payment for worked hours, unsafe working environments, a lack of access to redress, unequal treatment, and indicators of forced labour (EHRC, 2014).

Key informants in Mas Giralt's (2014) study confirmed that many of those arriving from Spain and other southern European countries at present are taking jobs in the same unskilled and low-paid sectors as their longer settled compatriots. This often also means insecure jobs and fragmented hours of work and, as participants explained, in many cases labour exploitation and discrimination. Additionally, as mentioned above, women are more vulnerable to sexual harassment and intersectional discrimination.

The predominance of employment in the cleaning sector was also evident among the consultation questionnaire respondents, 23/37 of whom worked as cleaners. The rest of employed respondents worked in unskilled positions in care, hospitality and factory work (6/37). In addition, there was a range of employment contracts among the consulted women. However, insecure conditions predominated, as the vast majority were working only for a few hours, employed with 0 hour or without contracts (see figure 6).

Lack of access to childcare and high childcare costs particularly affect those Latin American women trapped in situations of low income and “in work” poverty. For instance, among the questionnaire respondents, there were 4 cases of women with children under the age of 14 who were not accessing childcare and had no one to take care of their children while at work. Barriers to accessing childcare often mean that women struggle to make ends meet for themselves and their children, and lack any opportunity to invest in their own future and that of their families (e.g. UK CEDAW Working Group, 2013).

Figure 6



Some Trade Unions have started raising awareness and organising migrant workers affected by the issues outlined above (Wills, 2008; Fitzgerald and Hardy, 2010). However, it is difficult for Trade Unions to cope with the growing number of migrants who need practical and legal support with their cases. The recent introduction of additional restrictions on access to Legal Aid in the UK has put a stop to the universal character of this provision and has become a barrier for migrant workers without proper statuses to access legal advice and representation in cases of unfair dismissal or discrimination (e.g. House of Commons Justice Committee, 2015; Citizens Advice, 2015).

In and out of work benefits

Despite the over-representation of Latin American workers in low-paid, low-skilled and insecure jobs, the ‘No Longer Invisible’ study found that only 1 in 5 of those surveyed was in receipt of some form of benefit and those who were, were mainly claiming working tax credit, a cash payment to support workers with low incomes (McIlwaine et al., 2011, p. 95). In Mas Giralt’s (2014) study, key informants highlighted that recent migrants faced difficulties in accessing information about services, employment rights and other public assistance available for low-paid workers as a result of non-existent or discontinued outreach, information and interpretation services. For example, 28/37 questionnaire respondents did not know the benefit system and 18/37 did not know if they had the right to apply for any assistance.

All of those we see here, the majority are working, 10 hours a week, or 15 hours, if it’s a couple, the husband normally works 40 or 50 hours a week, and she works 10 or sometimes doesn’t work, but nearly everybody is working (...) they come here for information about the social services because the money they make is not enough [to survive], it’s not enough, not because they want to live on benefits.

Coordinator of a charity supporting Latin American migrants

In addition, recent measures to tighten EEA/EU migrants’ access to welfare in the UK (e.g. Kennedy, 2014) particularly affect those who are new to the country, who work fragmented hours and/or who are in unstable jobs. For instance, since March 2014, EEA/EU nationals will need to meet a minimum earnings threshold of £149 a week for a three month period to show that they are in ‘genuine and effective work’ and to be able to retain their status of worker. As was highlighted earlier, retaining the legal status of worker (or self-employed person status) is important in order to be able to claim in-work benefits such as Housing Benefit, tax credits, and Child Benefit (Kennedy, 2014, p. 15). Without the status of worker, many will be excluded from accessing in-work social security benefits, which will further exacerbate migrants’ vulnerability and exposure to exploitative work.

Conclusion

Despite a widespread public perception that the UK's public services and benefit system act as an attraction for EEA/EU migrants, existing research has shown that only a minority of these migrants are claiming in or out of work benefits, e.g. less than 5% receive Jobseeker's Allowance and less than 10% claim other DWP working age benefits (The Migration Observatory, 2014, p. 2). In addition, EEA/EU migrants who have arrived in the UK since 2000 have been found to be making a net contribution to the financing of public services, that is by having paid more in taxes than they have received in benefits (Dustmann and Frattini, 2014). Previous research on the Latin American population in London has also shown that these migrants make little use of public services and welfare benefits; findings in 2011 indicated that despite the predominance of low-paid employment among this group, only 1 out of 5 received any benefit or assistance - mainly in-work benefits (McIlwaine et al., 2011).

As this report has considered, recently arrived Latin American migrants (particularly women) with EU citizenship and their families are often unaware of existing social assistance benefits and face a range of difficulties when trying to enrol their children in schools, become registered with a GP or obtain support in securing appropriate housing (when this is needed). The retrenchment of outreach and specialised services provided by local authorities, which has taken place since 2010, as well as the reduction of resources available for third sector and community organisations, which have traditionally been key agencies in migrant support, plays an important part in the shortage of information available and difficulties in completing administrative procedures. Furthermore, the numerous changes in migrants' benefit and welfare entitlements introduced in the last few years and widespread public perceptions of 'abuse' of these entitlements also compound the difficulties that Latin Americans face in accessing services and benefits to which they are entitled.

In spite of a lack of English language skills and precarious re-migration circumstances, most 'new' migrants become rapidly employed, but they do so in low-paid, fragmented and insecure jobs, mainly in the cleaning sector. A lack of enforcement of

workers' rights in this sector place Latin American migrants - particularly women - in vulnerable situations and makes them susceptible to exploitation. As has been shown, the barriers they face in accessing the welfare system (e.g. social housing or benefits for those on low-incomes or Jobseeker's Allowance if they lose their job) and public services reinforces their dependency on exploitative labour and/or abusive employers. The findings of the small-scale study and the consultation questionnaire that underpin this report, reinforce the existing evidence of the links between the employment situation of important parts of the Latin American population, their limited access to public services and welfare, and the resulting conditions of poverty which affects many of these 'new' migrants and their families.



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Dr Rosa Mas Giral holds a PhD in Human Geography from the University of Leeds and is a cross-disciplinary social researcher focusing on international migration and processes of socio-economic and cultural integration of migrants and their descendants. She conducted the study on the access to social protection of Latin American onward migrants (with EU citizenship) in the UK during her Postdoctoral Fellowship on Work, Care and Global Transitions at the University of Leeds.

Dr Lucila Granada is the Advocacy and Campaigns Coordinator of the Latin American Women's Rights Service. She has recently completed her PhD at the School of Languages and Social Sciences of Aston University. Her work is an interdisciplinary study of the links between language, integration, and ethnic identity based on the Latin American migrant community of London.

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The Latin American Women's Rights Service

(LAWRS) is a human rights, feminist organisation working to support the practical, emotional and strategic needs of Latin American migrant women in the UK. We are a holistic organisation which provides support services while carrying out policy and advocacy work.

The difference we want is for Latin American women in the UK to be free from violence, abuse and exploitation, to be economically secure in the UK, to achieve their full potential and to fully exercise their human rights.

Care-Connect is one of University of Leeds' ground breaking sector innovation hubs which aims to use research to inform policy and practice, with the ultimate objective of supporting the creation and sustainability of caring, connected communities.

