

***‘We can’t fight in the dark’:***  
**Violence Against Women  
and Girls (VAWG) among  
Brazilians in London**

2018

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# ***'We can't fight in the dark':*** **Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) among Brazilians in London**



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1 LAWRS is organisation led by and for Latin American women that has provided a range of services for over thirty years. It is oriented by a feminist approach to its key mission, which is to address the needs of its users and help empower them to become independent citizens conscious of their rights, and work collectively to effect social change. Their client base runs into several thousand users who benefit from a range of services, including specialist VAWG advice and counselling, which are offered in their first language and in a culturally sensitive manner (further information available at <http://www.lawrs.org.uk/>).

## CHAPTER 1

## Introduction

Although research on VAWG (Violence Against Women and Girls) among migrant women is slowly emerging, there is a tendency to concentrate on domestic violence in the home rather than across the public-private domains (Dominguez and Menjívar, 2014; Menjívar and Salcido, 2002). There is also burgeoning work on the risk factors affecting the propensity of migrant women to experience VAWG in terms of immigration status, language, poverty and access to information, and on levels of reporting (Erez et al, 2009; Loya, 2014).

In the UK, where estimates suggest that 1 in 4 women experience domestic violence in their lifetime, equivalent to 1.2 million women, and up to two women are killed every week by a current or former partner, most research with migrants has focused on domestic violence among South Asians (Gill and Rehman, 2004), with limited attention paid to other groups. There is even less research on VAWG among Latin Americans, despite the fact that they are one of the fastest growing populations in London and in the UK more widely. Brazilians are the largest group of the UK's Latin American migrants (McIlwaine et al, 2011; McIlwaine and Bunge, 2016; McIlwaine and Carlisle, 2011). VAWG is thought to be more prevalent among Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) and migrant groups in the UK than among the population as a whole, and it is exacerbated by the considerable difficulties facing these women in accessing support. In a study among BME groups, a woman facing domestic violence has to make, on average, 11 contacts with agencies before receiving the help she needs; this rises to 17 if she is from a BME community (cited in Anitha, 2008: 197). Migrant women tend to be especially vulnerable because many have 'No Recourse to Public Funds' (are unable to access any state support) because of their immigration status. Indeed, LAWRS estimate that undocumented Latin American women are assaulted 60 times before their first call to the police, compared to 35 assaults among women in general. There is therefore considerable scope to document migrant women's experiences of VAWG, and in this case, among Brazilians, as well as the continuities and differences that emerge transnationally in coping with and resisting violence, together with analysing the causal links between the two, and the extent to which VAWG ameliorates or intensifies over space.

This project was therefore driven by the limited empirical evidence relating to migrant women's experiences of VAWG, and especially Latin American women and those from Brazilian backgrounds who make up a large proportion of the Latin American population in London and the UK more widely. Similarly, the lack of information around women living in marginalised neighbourhoods in Brazil with reference to gender-based violence (GBV) provided further justification for this transnational research project. Indeed, the findings outlined here are the outcome of the London-focused component of research that has been conducted as part of the wider project entitled '*Healthy, Secure and Gender Just Cities: Transnational Perspectives on VAWG in Rio de Janeiro and London*', which is being funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and the Newton Fund, and implemented by a research team first at the School of Geography, Queen Mary, University of London and then at the Department of Geography at King's College London in partnership with the School of English and Drama at QMUL and a number of organisations in the UK (Latin American Women's Rights Services, CASA Latin American Theatre Festival, People's Palace Project), and also in Brazil (Redes da Maré, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro).

The main aims of the project were to develop empirical and theoretical understanding of urban VAWG through transnational recalibration and learning between the UK and Brazil. More specifically, it aimed to explore the nature of VAWG transnationally, in terms of incidence, perpetrators, causal and risk factors and outcomes. It also proposed to explore reporting of VAWG and service provision, and ultimately to improve services and develop effective policy tools on the basis of the research. Methodologically, in the London context, the research draws on recent engagements with Brazilian migrants in London involving a quantitative survey with 175 women, together with 25 in-depth interviews and five focus group discussions, as well as service mapping of organisations providing support for women victims-survivors of violence based on interviews with representatives from 12 providers (see Evans and McIlwaine, 2017 on the latter; see also the Appendix).

### THE BRAZILIAN COMMUNITY IN LONDON

Brazilian immigration to the UK has increased markedly since the late 1990s. While some Brazilians migrated in the 1970s, flows burgeoned after 2000 with the spread of neoliberal macro-economic policies throughout Latin America in the 1980s and 1990s leading to increasing inequalities that prompted much movement. Although until very recently, Brazil subsequently experienced an economic boom, the effects of such growth have not been evenly spread with life for the poor and lower middle classes changing very little. As a result, Brazilians, especially those from the southeast, continue to be attracted to economic and educational opportunities in London despite the global economic downturn (Evans et al, 2011).

Such growth is evidenced by data from the British Census, which in 2001 recorded around 8,000 Brazilians living in the UK, whereas in 2011, the date of the last Census, the Brazilian population had risen to around 52,000 (Evans et al, 2015). Furthermore, census analysis from 2011 has also shown that in England and Wales, 81% of Brazilians had arrived between 2000 and 2011 (84% among those living in London).

However, these official figures are thought to represent a significant undercount of the actual size of the Brazilian population living in the UK. Estimates of the total population, which aim to account for the undocumented population, have been highly variable, ranging from tens of thousands (McIlwaine, Cock and Linneker, 2011), to over 100,000 (Evans et al 2015; MRE, 2015). In recent years, repeated changes in immigration legislation to tighten control of inflows from non-European countries have led more and more Brazilians to seek to remain in the UK as documented migrants, particularly by claiming European citizenship, either by ancestry or through marriage (Evans et al 2011, 2015; Evans, Tonhati and Souza, 2013).

It is well accepted amongst Brazilian authorities and organisations based in the UK that a majority of Brazilians have tended to settle in London, a claim that is borne out by data from the last Census, in 2011, which shows that 60% (31,357) of all Brazilians in the UK lived in London (Evans et al, 2015) (see Figure 2). Within London itself, there are concentrations in Brent, Lambeth, Southwark and Haringey (see Figure 3).

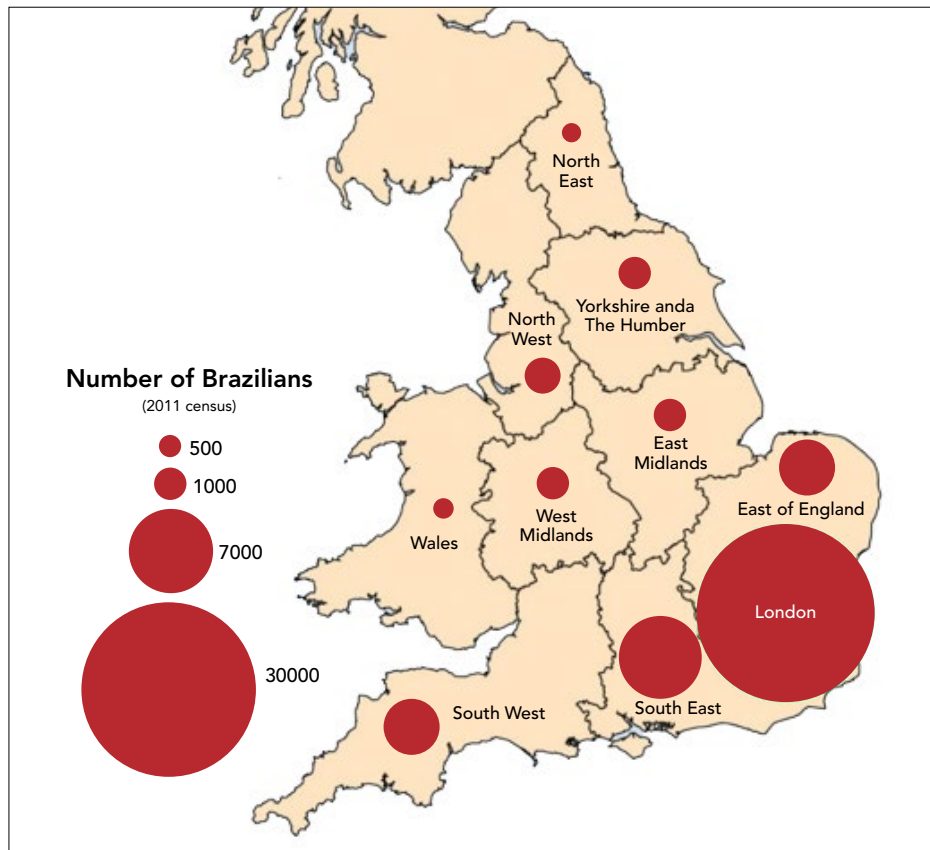
In terms of the profile of Brazilians according to the 2011 census, there are more women than men in London (53%) and in England and Wales as a whole (56%). This is also a youthful population with 83% of the London population and 71% of that in England and Wales being aged under 40. Almost half of Brazilians are married in London (46%) and in England and Wales (49%), with more than a third being single (37% in England and Wales and 39% in London) (see also McIlwaine and Bunge, 2016).

Research has shown that Brazilians that come to the UK tend to be well-educated, and from a middle or lower-middle class background, and whilst most have come in search of better economic opportunities, many have also come to study (Evans et al 2011, 2015; McIlwaine, Cock and Linneker, 2011). Indeed, the Census shows that 42% have some form of tertiary education in London. Yet, while employment rates are very high at 70% and 71% respectively for England and Wales and London, a quarter are working in the elementary sectors of the economy everywhere. This reflects marked downward mobility in the labour market where the only options available are low-skilled and low paid work, largely as a result of visa restrictions, and limited knowledge of the English language (Evans et al 2011, 2015; McIlwaine, Cock and Linneker, 2011; McIlwaine and Bunge, 2016). Indeed, the census shows that one in five have problems with English, with 18% speaking none or only a little in England and Wales.

In terms of immigration status, the Census shows that almost a third of Brazilians have an EU passport (32% in London and 29% in England and Wales), with 14% and 18% respectively having British passports. However, these figures hide the irregular and undocumented population which Evans et al (2011) found to comprise around a third of their sample (29%). The *No Longer Invisible* research (McIlwaine, Cock and Linneker, 2011) showed that Brazilian men were more likely to be irregular than women (42% compared to 34%), and that women were more likely to be British citizens than men (11% compared with 2%).



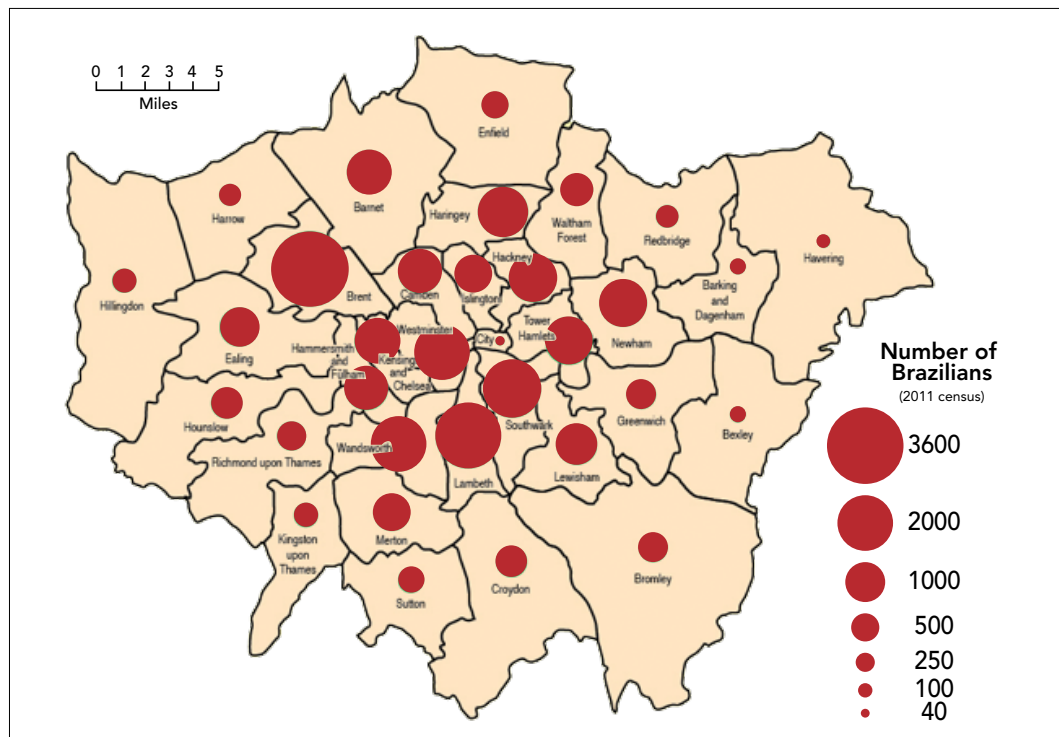
FIGURE 1.1 DISTRIBUTION OF BRAZILIANS IN ENGLAND AND WALES (2011 CENSUS)



Source: ONS Census 2011, Office for National Statistics © Crown Copyright 2013

In terms of the nature of gender identities among Brazilians in London, these reflect wider patterns found among Latin Americans and rooted in deep-seated inequalities related to machismo (see McIlwaine, 2010). Yet there are also some differences linked with notions of 'Brazilianness' as well as what Beserra (2005) calls '*latinidad*' (referring to the *latino* character and condition). This corresponds to a complex racialization and sexualisation of identities that are fluid and situational yet ultimately essentialist (Margolis, 2013). In the context of migration, such Brazilian identities are also intersectional and dependent on migrants' social background, skin colour, occupational and immigration status, and so on (Piscitelli, 2008). While hegemonic Brazilian femininities tend to revolve around an exoticized submissiveness, domesticity and predilection for sexual activity and sensuality, for men, hegemonic masculinities are similarly sexualised and hyper-erotized, while also focusing on aggression, possessiveness and other characteristics linked with machismo (ibid.). This is reinforced, for both women and men, by associations with various national symbols such as carnival, soccer, coffee and dance (McDonnell and de Lourenço, 2009). Previous research in London has shown how these stereotypes tend to prevail, with men asserting their Brazilian and Latin American subjectivities in different ways from women. While women reported that they came across such stereotypes in the British context, they were keen to challenge and distance themselves from them, whereas men were happy to stress their 'Brazilianness', potentially because men felt their representations were more positive than the women (Datta and McIlwaine, 2014).

FIGURE 1.2 DISTRIBUTION OF BRAZILIANS IN LONDON (2011 CENSUS)



Source: ONS Census 2011, Office for National Statistics © Crown Copyright 2013

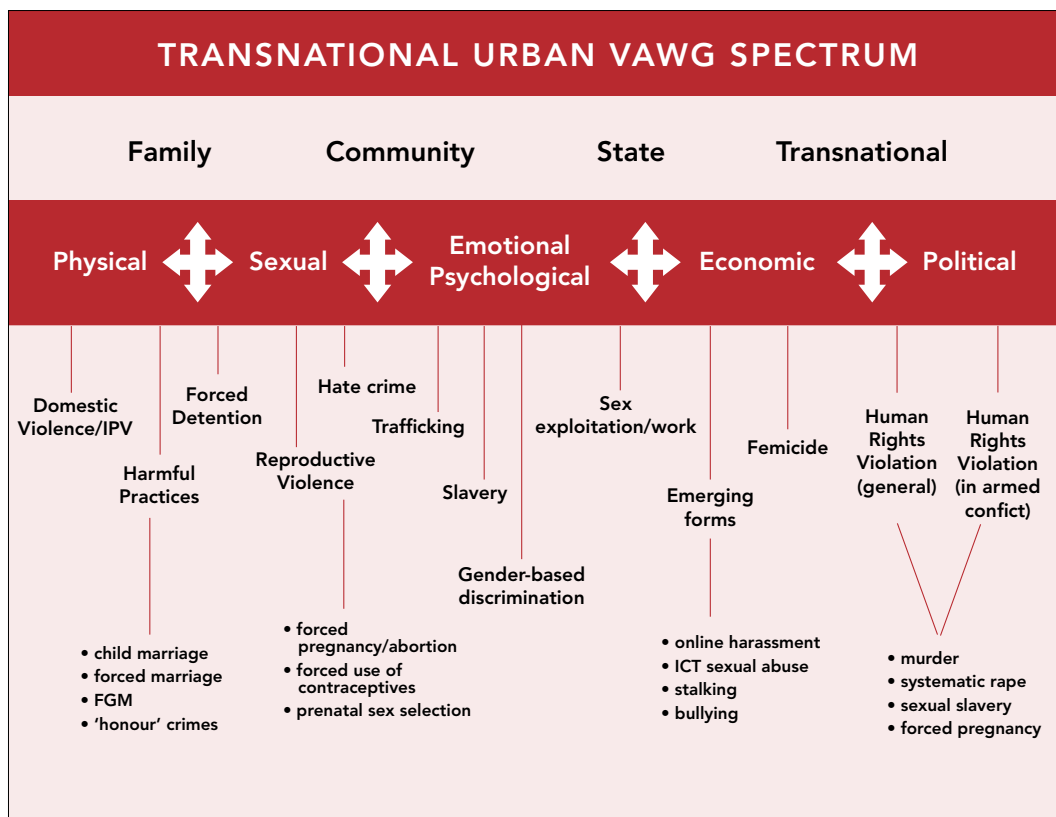
**TRANSNATIONAL URBAN VAWG SPECTRUM**

Violence against women is defined by the UN, in Article 1 of the 1993 UN Declaration of the Elimination of Violence against Women, as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life (UN 1993). Article 2, in turn, notes that such violence may occur in the 'family, community, perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs' and may involve assault, sexual abuse, rape, female genital mutilation and other 'traditional' practices, as well as sexual harassment, trafficking in women, and forced prostitution.

Violence may, however, manifest itself through a great variety of forms (see McIlwaine, 2013, 2014, 2016). They can be visualised as being distributed along a transnational urban VAWG spectrum (Figure 1.3) that captures the most pronounced, as well as the subtler manifestations of violence that women and girls may experience in different contexts and locations. The foundation for a holistic and scalar perspective for understanding VAWG lies in Liz Kelly's (1988) pioneering work on a continuum of sexual violence against women. Through analysis of types of sexual violence affecting women that are underpinned by threat, intrusion, intimidation, abuse and coercion, Kelly suggested that it is important to categorise different types of sexual violence as interconnected and specifically to show how violence identified as a criminal act such as rape is reinforced by other behaviour such as harassment (Kelly, 2013). The continuum also highlights the invisibility and routinisation of extreme and everyday GBV against women (Boesten, 2017). It has been especially useful in exploring GBV during armed conflict (ibid; Moser, 2001) and in exploring links between 'intimate' and other forms of urban violence (Hume, 2009; Wilding, 2010). Although Kelly (1988) was careful not to hierarchise types of sexual and related violence, others have used continuum thinking to place more extreme forms at one end and less extreme at another, and to suggest a link between violence in the home, structural and ecological violence, and the violence of war.

However, while we endorse the utility of a continuum approach along the lines mentioned above, we argue that there is too much focus on sexual violence and too much emphasis on binding the ends of the continuum. Indeed, types of VAWG are not continuous or sequential and so it is important to challenge any assumed severity-lenience dichotomy, and conceive of VAWG as being spatially extended and transnational. We propose that the taxonomy of a spectrum is more able to capture these discontinuities and spatialities. Thus, a spectrum approach encompasses the diversity of VAWG in a specific country, but also the transnational links between them, particularly those associated with international migration between cities of the global South and global North.

FIGURE 1.3 TRANSNATIONAL URBAN VAWG SPECTRUM



Source: Updated from Evans and McIlwaine (2016), adapted from Kelly (1988).

Note: All specific types of VAWG identified in the lower half can be physical, sexual, emotional/psychological, economic and political forms of violence.

IPV refers to intimate partner violence.

## Brazilian Women in London: a profile

### KEY POINTS

- Most Brazilian women were aged over 30 years of age, white and educated to degree level
- Most were in stable relationships and many shared their home with their companions
- One in two women had children, and one in three lived with their children
- Most were employed in paid work with many in professional occupations
- Most had migrated directly to London, predominantly from São Paulo
- Most were well-established in London, having lived there for at least five years
- Most had entered the UK on temporary visas but were now permanent residents through obtaining European passports

This chapter sets out the key characteristics of the Brazilian women who participated in the research, with a particular focus on the survey. Although this is not strictly representative of Brazilian women in London given the size and nature of the sample (see appendix), it is broadly indicative of the experiences of many such women and provides the context for understanding their experiences of GBV.

### BRAZILIAN WOMEN INCLUDED IN THE SURVEY ARE YOUNG, WELL-EDUCATED AND ETHNICALLY WHITE

The Brazilian women surveyed online were relatively young, with over half (53%) aged 31-40. Those aged 41-50 were the next largest group (21%), and other groups were younger (21-30, 15%) or older (51 and above, 11%). Nearly three quarters (72%) had obtained a university degree. Of these, two fifths (43%) had obtained postgraduate qualifications. The remainder were educated up to secondary school level. Almost three-quarters (73%) identified themselves as ethnically White, whereas just over two fifths (21%) reported being Mixed. Other groups were Asian (4%), Black (2%) or Indigenous (1%). Most women did not follow any religion (33%), but Catholics were an important group (29%), followed by Spiritualists (16%) and Evangelicals (11%). Others were Protestant, Jewish, and Afro-Brazilian (2% respectively) or Muslim (1%).

### MOST BRAZILIAN WOMEN EMIGRATED FROM THE STATE OF SÃO PAULO TO STUDY OR EXPERIENCE ANOTHER CULTURE, AND MANY SETTLED IN LONDON WHERE THEY HAD BEEN LIVING FOR SEVERAL YEARS

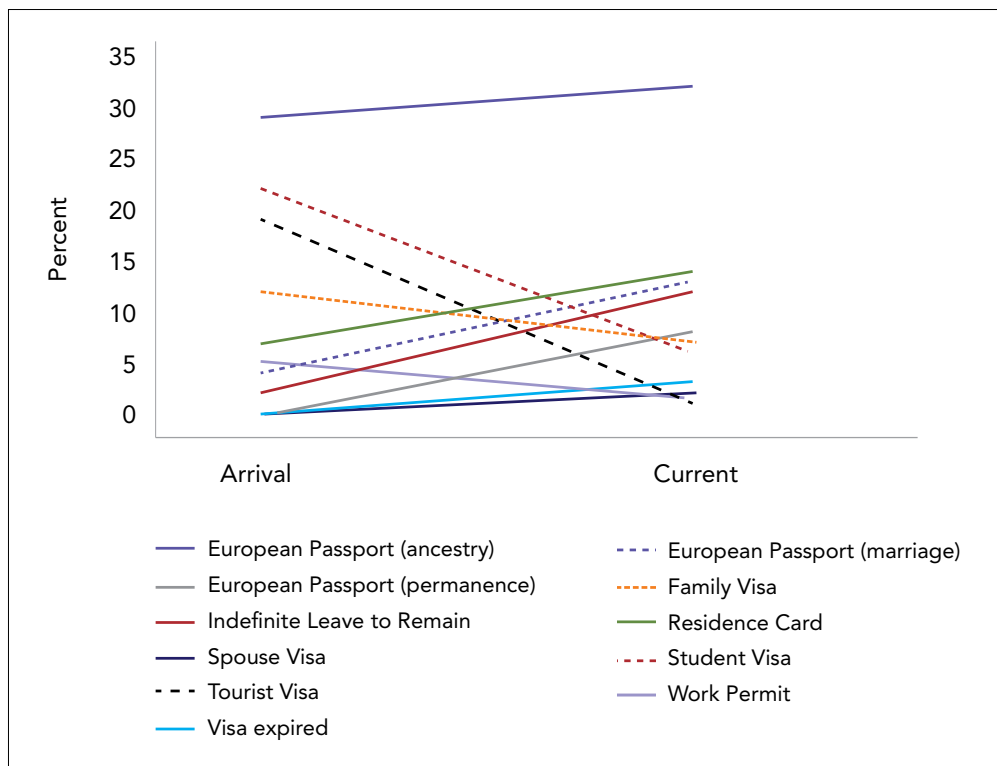
A majority of the Brazilian women surveyed migrated to the UK to study (29%), with nearly a quarter (23%) moving in search of adventure or new cultural experiences. Some had also migrated in search of work (18%) or to accompany their partner (11%). In terms of where they came from in Brazil, over two fifths (42%) came from the state of São Paulo compared with only 10% from Rio de Janeiro, 9% from Minas Gerais and Paraná respectively.

The Brazilian women surveyed were well-established in London with over one third (35%) having resided there for 10-20 years. Although more than one third (35%) had lived there for less than five years, 65% had lived in London for five years or longer. Two thirds (66%) had come directly from Brazil to the UK, with one third having lived abroad prior to migrating to London (especially in Italy, the US and Portugal).

**TWO THIRDS OF BRAZILIAN WOMEN ENTERED THE UK ON TEMPORARY VISAS, BUT ALMOST 80% HAD ATTAINED PERMANENT RESIDENCE (MAINLY THROUGH EUROPEAN PASSPORTS)**

Reflecting the diversity of pathways for admission into the UK, Brazilian women reported a variety of immigration status on entering the country. The largest group had entered on an EU passport obtained through ancestry (29%), with the remainder arriving with a student visa (22%), a tourist visa (19%), and a family visa (12%). Therefore, most women had entered on temporary visas (65%) with the rest using European passports that allow for permanent settlement. Changes in immigration status since arrival shows that there has been a decline in the proportion of women holding temporary visas (tourist, student, residence, family), and an increase in settled status (see Figure 2.1). This may reflect a strategy to obtain regularised status in a context of increased tightening of immigration laws to curb overstaying and because the lack of secure immigration status is an important factor in discouraging women from seeking help to address violence (see below; also Evans and McIlwaine, 2017). Indeed, of those women who declared to be undocumented, only one of the two had reported her experience of violence in London.

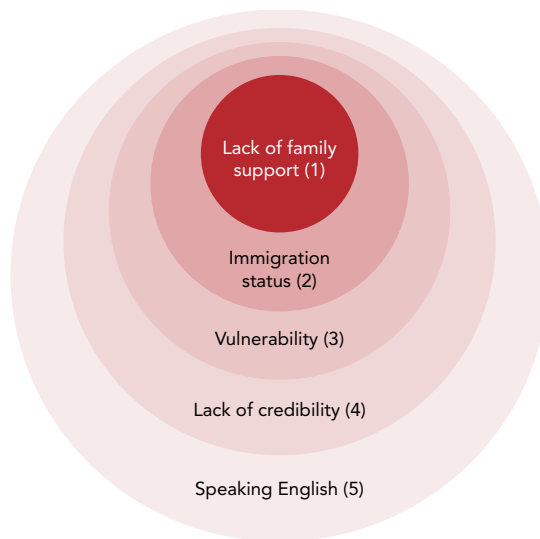
**FIGURE 2.1 CHANGE IN IMMIGRATION STATUS AMONGST BRAZILIAN WOMEN IN LONDON**



Source: Authors' survey (N=175)

However, it is very likely that the very small proportion of those without regular immigration status (3%) represents an under-estimation of the wider patterns among the Brazilian community. Indeed, this emerged as a major issue in the qualitative research; for example, in one focus group with three women all aged between 32 and 37 and from either Rio de Janeiro or São Paulo thought that immigration status was the second most important problem affecting Brazilians in London (Figure 2.2).

**FIGURE 2.2 PRIORITISATION OF THE MAIN PROBLEMS AFFECTING THE BRAZILIAN COMMUNITY IN LONDON (BY THREE WOMEN AGED BETWEEN 32 AND 37 YEARS)**



Source: Focus group workshops (2017)

**MOST BRAZILIAN WOMEN WERE IN STABLE RELATIONSHIPS, WITH ALMOST HALF HAVING CHILDREN AND LIVING MAINLY IN PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING**

Most Brazilian women were in a stable/long-term relationship (69%), with only 15% separated or divorced, 13% single, and a small minority being widows (3%). Over half had children (55%), and of these, another half had one child (48%) with 40% having two children, and only 12% with three children or more. Many women (45%) shared their home with their companions, and nearly a third (31%) lived with their children. Only a small minority lived alone (5%), or shared their home with friends/acquaintances (7%), or relations (4%). In terms of housing, the great majority rented (74%), mainly in the private sector (58%) or sharing privately-rented accommodation (11%). The rest lived in social housing rented from the local authority. Only one in five (21%) were home owners.

**MOST BRAZILIAN WOMEN ENGAGED IN PAID WORK, WITH MORE THAN HALF EMPLOYED IN PROFESSIONAL AND SKILLED JOBS AND AS MANAGERS OR DIRECTORS**

Over two-thirds (68%) of women were employed in paid work, with most employed formally (48%), only 15% being self-employed and only 5% working informally. One in ten were students or homemaker (11% respectively), and only a minority were unemployed (7%). While most (45%) were employed in professional (29%) or semi-professional (16%), a further 8% worked as managers/directors. Only 14% worked in elementary occupations, such as cleaning with a further 17% working in caring and services.<sup>2</sup> Although a quarter of the

women had been in their current job for between 10 and 20 years in aggregate, almost 60% had been working in their current occupation for less than 5 years, with one-fifth being employed for less than a year. About three fifths (63%) worked full-time (over 35 hours per week), the remainder worked shorter hours (15-35 hours per week).

#### **ANNUAL MEAN AND MEDIAN SALARIES AMONG BRAZILIAN WOMEN WERE LOWER THAN THE BRITISH AVERAGE, AND WOMEN THEMSELVES PROVIDED THE MAIN SOURCE OF INCOME IN THE HOUSEHOLD**

Although a large proportion of the Brazilian women surveyed worked in professional and related occupations, mean and median salaries were lower than those for the UK more broadly. Average annual salaries stood at only £23,105, with a median of £20,200.<sup>3</sup> Overall, most women (70%) earned salaries between £10,000 and £30,000. The main source of income in the household was that derived from women themselves (39%), followed by the income earned by partners (29%), and income earned jointly with a partner (23%). A very small minority had no income at all (2%) and a small group depended on other income sources (7%).

A broadly similar profile of Brazilian women emerged from the qualitative research. The average age of the Brazilian women who were interviewed was 41, whereas those who participated in the focus group workshops had an average age of 42. Most had migrated from the southeast of Brazil (especially São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Minas Gerais). But there was a slight difference in terms of length of residence in London, with over half of the women interviewed having lived in London for between 10-20 years (52%), whereas in the focus groups, most women were recent arrivals, having lived in London for up to five years. In terms of immigration status, 19 out of the 25 women interviewed held European passports, whilst in the focus groups, five were European citizens, three held a spouse visa, three were undocumented, and the rest held other types of visa (e.g. tourist). In terms of racial, class and occupational identities, there were greater variations among those included in the qualitative research than shown in the survey work. For example, more women of Afro-Brazilian backgrounds were included as well as those working in low-paid manual jobs, such as cleaning.

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2 These findings are consistent with other recent research (Evans et al, 2015) that shows that Brazilians in the UK have been experiencing occupational upward mobility, as opposed to the more common migrant experience of deskilling and downward mobility that results from knowledge of the English language, limitations on employability imposed by visa restrictions, and lack of recognition of foreign educational qualifications by the British establishment (Wills et al 2010), especially among Latin Americans (McIlwaine and Bunge, 2016).

3 The median annual earnings for full-time employees in the UK for the year to April 2016 was £28,200 (ASHE – Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings; data available at <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/bulletins/annualsurveyofhoursandearnings/2016provisionalresults>).



CHAPTER 3

## Brazilian women's experience of VAWG in London

### KEY POINTS

#### INCIDENCE AND NATURE OF VAWG

- The majority of Brazilian women experienced some form of GBV in their lifetime (82%)
- Two in five had experienced it both in Brazil and in the UK, one third had experienced it only in Brazil, a small minority had experienced it only in the UK
- Nearly half (48%) of all women had experienced some form of GBV in the UK
- Emotional/psychological violence was the commonest type of violence experienced (48%), followed by physical (38%), and sexual violence (14%)
- Unwelcome physical contact was the commonest specific form of violence (experienced by 42%), followed by physical assault (36%), and being humiliated or suffering discrimination (33%)
- Women experienced diverse forms of violence in aggregate and over their lifetimes; one 40-year-old woman had experienced 22 different forms of GBV over her lifecourse

#### PERPETRATORS AND PLACES OF VAWG

- Two-thirds of VAWG was perpetrated by men known to the women; almost a quarter was by an intimate partner (IP), whilst employers and colleagues in the workplace together accounted for over a quarter
- Most VAWG in London/UK was perpetrated in the public sphere (78%), especially in the workplace

#### DIVERSITY OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE (DV)

- DV was widespread, diverse and likely to be carried out by an IP, especially sexual violence
- DV was often extremely severe; physically and sexually, it entailed injuries including broken bones, attacks with instruments such as knives as well as rape; emotionally it involved long-term coercive control, repeated insults and attacks to self-esteem and financial manipulation

#### VAWG IS INTERSECTIONAL, ESPECIALLY AFFECTED BY IMMIGRATION STATUS

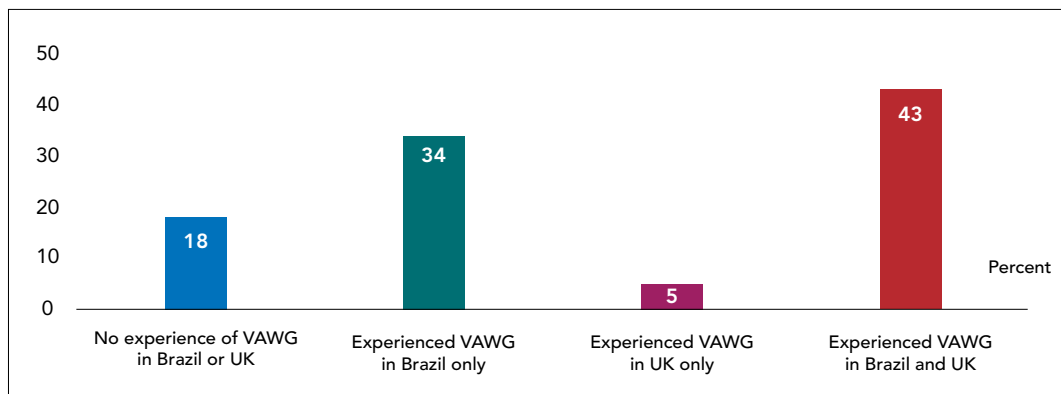
- VAWG is intersectional; women of mixed race were more likely to experience violence (64%) than white women (44%)
- Different immigration statuses can increase risk of VAWG; being subject to immigration control makes migrant women more vulnerable
- Women as migrants are more vulnerable to trafficking and forced labour

This chapter examines the incidence and nature of GBV experienced by Brazilian women in London drawing on the survey as well as the interviews and focus group material. As outlined in chapter 1, VAWG comprises a wide range of different types of physical and non-physical violence across a spectrum of forms, and transnationally across borders. However, not only do Brazilian women as a group experience many different forms of GBV, but individual women themselves often experience multiple forms in their lifetime.

**FOUR OUT OF FIVE BRAZILIAN WOMEN HAVE SUFFERED SOME FORM OF GBV IN THEIR LIFETIME**

The vast majority of women (82%) had experienced some form violence over the course of their lives. While 43% had experienced violence both in Brazil and in the UK, 34% had experienced it in Brazil only and 5% in the UK only. Only 18% had never experienced any of the forms of violence (Figure 3.1). It is also notable that 52% of women who suffered GBV in Brazil went on to suffer more in the UK indicating a high degree of continuity across borders. In turn, 48% of women suffered GBV in London.<sup>4</sup>

**FIGURE 3.1 BRAZILIAN WOMEN'S EXPERIENCE OF VIOLENCE**



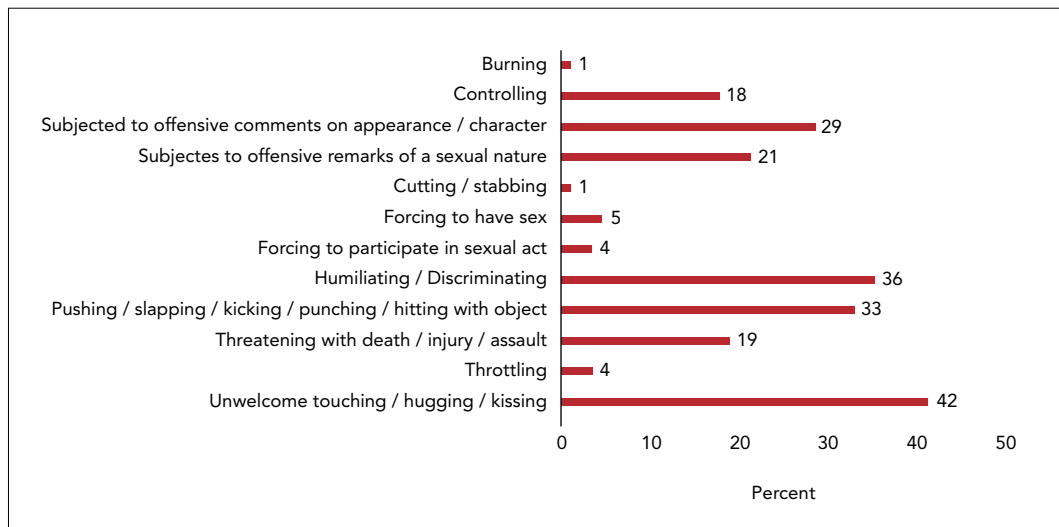
Source: Authors' survey (N= 175)

**VAWG IS HUGELY DIVERSE BUT WITH CONCENTRATIONS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL/ EMOTIONAL VIOLENCE, WITH UNWELCOME PHYSICAL CONTACT BEING THE MOST COMMONLY EXPERIENCED SPECIFIC TYPE**

Brazilian women experienced a diversity of forms of violence relating to physical, psychological/emotional, sexual, and economic violence in varying degrees and combinations which were manifest through a multitude of often interrelated forms that occurred in the domestic arena as well as in public spaces (Figure 3.2). Emotional violence was the commonest type experienced (48%), followed closely by physical violence (38%), with 14% experiencing sexual violence. In terms of specific forms, unwelcome touching, hugging, or kissing was the commonest form reported (42%), followed by humiliation/discrimination (36%), and pushing/ slapping/kicking/punching/hitting with an object (33%) (Figure 3.2).

<sup>4</sup> This must be contextualised within a global incidence of around one in three women experiencing GBV in their lifetime (UN Women, 2013).

**FIGURE 3.2 TYPES OF VIOLENCE EXPERIENCED BY BRAZILIAN WOMEN IN LONDON**



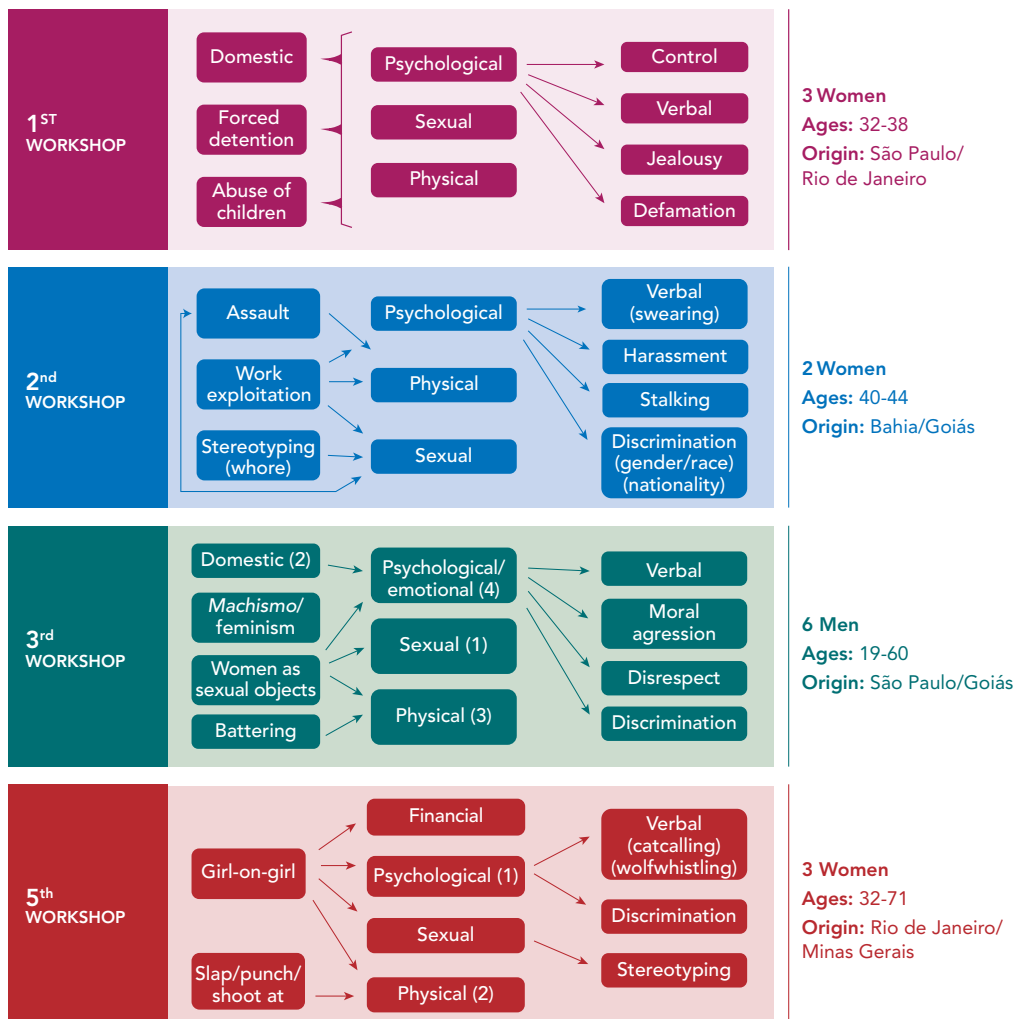
Source: Authors' survey (N=84)

Note: more than one form of violence was experienced by some respondents

When the types of GBV experienced by women was explored in more depth, even more diversity emerged. For example, in the focus groups, a total of 18 different types of VAWG were identified. In addition to the main forms of psychological/emotional, sexual and physical, they included, in their words, other specific types such as forced detention (referring to being locked in at home or somewhere else - *cárcere privado* in Portuguese); jealousy (which included possessive behaviour), defamation, stalking, moral aggression, femicide, financial abuse and stereotyping (which can denote gender discrimination) (Figure 3.3).

Also extremely significant is that individual women experienced multiple and diverse forms of violence over their lifetimes. For instance, one 40-year-old woman, Sofia, had experienced 22 different forms of GBV over her lifecourse, including being beaten, kicked, throttled, forcibly detained, controlled, financially manipulated and being sexually harassed at her church by a fellow congregant. Similarly, another woman, Cristina, 37, had experienced 21 different types, including being kicked, slapped, throttled, controlled, defamed, stalked and threatened with a knife and scissors, all by a partner. Indeed, while many of the specific types of GBV were perpetrated by intimate partners (IPs) in the home, many took place in the public sphere (see below).

FIGURE 3.3 TYPES AND FORMS OF VAWG IDENTIFIED IN FOUR FOCUS GROUPS



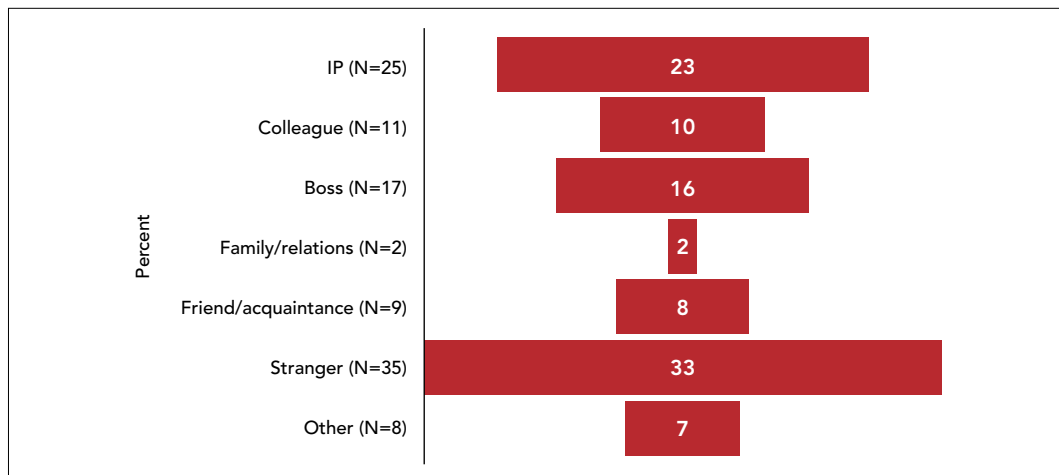
Source: Focus group workshops (2017)

**MOST VAWG IS PERPETRATED BY MEN KNOWN TO THE WOMEN AND IN PUBLIC SPACES**

According to the survey, two-thirds of VAWG was perpetrated by men known to the women. Almost a quarter was by an intimate partner (IP), whilst employers and colleagues in the workplace together accounted for over a quarter. However, it is also worth noting that a third of perpetrators were strangers (Figure 3.4). More specifically, most violence was perpetrated by non-IPs outside the home. Most physical (76%), sexual (61%) and emotional (54%) violence was perpetrated by men who are family members and relations, work bosses and colleagues, friends and acquaintances, and unknown men, and were perpetrated in diverse places, such as the workplace, learning establishments, spaces of leisure (coffee shops, bars, restaurants), as well as in shopping areas, public areas (streets, parks, gardens), and in transportation systems.

Overall, most VAWG was perpetrated in the public sphere (78%) (Figure 3.5). However, the single most commonly identified public place where violence occurred was in the workplace (23%), followed by cafés and bars (16%), transport (10%) and public areas (10%).

**FIGURE 3.4 PERPETRATORS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST BRAZILIAN WOMEN IN LONDON**

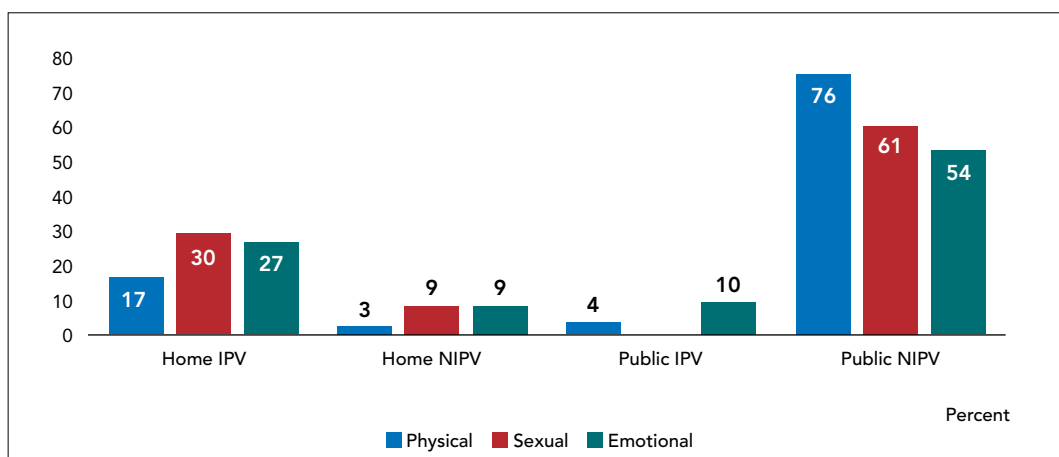


Source: Authors' survey (N= variable)

Certain forms of violence that took place in the public domain were more likely to be perpetrated by non-IPs, such as unwelcome physical contact (e.g. touching/hugging/kissing), and specific forms of emotional violence (e.g. humiliating/discriminating against and threatening behaviour). Sexual harassment in the public sphere was reported by many women, such as 31-year-old Camila, from Bahia, who experienced sexual harassment by an immigration officer at a London airport. She recalled:

*'After I'd been interviewed for three hours, I was released to go get my luggage. An immigration officer accompanied me into the lift to take me to where my luggage was. Inside the lift he said, "Wow, you've got beautiful breasts. Can I touch them?" Something like that. I looked at him and thought, "I've just arrived, and the harassment has already started?" I told him no and felt afraid inside the lift. He continued to praise me and chat me up, but I was shocked, not understanding how something like this could happen in such a formal place, inside immigration?'*

**FIGURE 3.5 PERPETRATORS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST BRAZILIAN WOMEN: PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SPACES**



Source: Authors' survey (N= 84) IPV = Intimate Partner Violence; NIPV = Non-Intimate Partner Violence

**THE MOST COMMON SPACE OF PERPETRATION OF VAWG IS THE WORKPLACE, ESPECIALLY UNWELCOME PHYSICAL CONTACT, PHYSICAL AND SEXUAL ASSAULT AND GENDER DISCRIMINATION**

About two out of five (42%) of the women who had suffered violence had experienced unwanted physical contact, involving hugging/kissing/touching comprising the single commonest form of violence. For the most part, such contact only happened once (80%), but one in five women had experienced it many times. Indeed, reflecting the fact that 26% of perpetrators were work-based, it is not surprising that the single most common space where VAWG occurred was in the workplace (23%). For example, 41-year-old Gabriela spoke of how she was harassed by clients through her job as a cleaner:

*'The old man is sweet, but he's a bit of a pervert too. At the beginning they're all prim and proper. After you get to know them, they think they've earned your trust ... after a while I started to notice that when I arrived and said hello, he started to hug me, putting his hands round my waist ... I'd slap his hands saying, "Get your hands off me, what are you thinking!" I make light of it, but the reality is that it shouldn't happen.'*

One in three women (33%) who had suffered violence had been subjected to physical assault, involving being pushed/slapped/kicked/punched/hit with an object. Three out of four women had suffered physical assault once, whilst one in four had been subjected to it often. This commonly occurred in the workplace and was often sexual in nature. For instance, Isabel worked at a hotel, and was both physically touched and sexually assaulted by a male colleague. In one incident, he pushed her into an empty guest room, holding her arms in a lock and fastening his legs to hers to immobilise her, and then threw her on top of a bed, throttling her whilst trying to have sex, but she fought him off and managed to escape. Similarly, Gisleine, 39, spoke of her experiences while working at a bar in London: 'Yes, in a hotel, a Portuguese man pushed me against the bar, and tried to grope me, and that frightened me a lot, it was in 2002'.

While the commonest form of emotional violence amongst Brazilian women was verbal abuse involving humiliation/discrimination (36%), followed by verbal abuse relating to offensive remarks about their appearance/character (29%), much of this also occurred in the workplace. One instance of gender-based verbal abuse was experienced by 27-year-old Fernanda from São Paulo, when she had worked as a teacher in London:

*'We had this ... annual conference with all schools ... [dress code] was corporate, say, everybody with shirts and suits, but I decided to wear a skirt ... I would be with my colleagues, all professionals, here in London, at the Excel Centre ... for 32 academies. Then one lunchtime, this new fourth grade teacher, he came up to me and said, "With those skirts you could make 200 bucks!" I told him to disappear, and I carried on with my life, but that got stuck in my throat, you can't say that to someone.'*

Although workplace GBV predominated, sexual harassment on public transport was also widespread, as noted by Gisleine:

*'I was in the Tube, going to Elephant and Castle, I was reading the newspaper, it was the last train, at around midnight ... I saw this hand, and I remember the fear, it scared me, because I still had to catch a bus.'*

### DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS WIDESPREAD, DIVERSE AND LIKELY TO BE CARRIED OUT BY AN IP, ESPECIALLY SEXUAL VIOLENCE

The home emerged as the second most commonly identified place where VAWG occurred (noted by 22% of women). Brazilian women experienced a wide diversity of DV at the hands of their IPs, encompassing physical, emotional/psychological/, sexual and economic violence. Indeed, individual women often experienced different types of DV at the same time. For example, Paula, 36 and from Paraná told how her Brazilian partner, who was an alcoholic, would constantly abuse her verbally as well as rape her:

*'He'd call me a bitch and a slut, "You don't do anything, you're trash! Grab your garbage and get out of my house", "You're a waste of space! You're mean nothing to me, you're only here because of my daughter, otherwise you'd be on the streets... He would be verbally aggressive and then he would want to have sex and I'd say no. I would put the baby on the bed with me to prevent him from coming, but he'd pick up the baby and put her on the sofa, because she didn't have a cot, she slept on the sofa. Then he'd come over, he'd rip my clothes off and wanted to have anal sex with me.'*

Physical assault perpetrated by IPs in the home were also common. For example, 36-year-old Laura recalled how her former Portuguese boyfriend (who was high on drugs at the time) assaulted her with a knife:

*'On this day I argued with him, and he got a knife and held it to my neck. He pushed me against the kitchen wall with the knife at my neck. But the neighbours had already called the police and the police saw him do this through the window in the kitchen. They broke the door down and arrested him.'*

Not surprisingly, the most severe forms of control and manipulation took place within the home among conjugal partners. As well as severe verbal abuse, such as that identified by Paula, financial manipulation was frequently discussed. Miriam, 46, for instance, spoke about how her husband had never worked in London and he ended up stealing from her:

*'He's been here for 14 years and I think he worked for two months ... And he wanted me to work and give him my money ... by then in 2011, he'd already stolen from me. I say stolen, because he took it dishonestly. In 2009 when my daughter was born, my money was in his account, because I didn't have a bank account. I was hospitalised, and he went to the bank, withdrew £15,000 and put it in his name. And to this day I haven't seen a penny of this money!'*

In some cases, this type of behaviour caused severe hardship. Valentina's husband worked and received some state benefits, yet he withheld this from her and their daughter:

*'Lots of times I didn't have money to buy bread ... I'd say [to my daughter] "let's see if we can find some coins. Let's pretend that we're looking at the price tags on the shelf, but you look on the floor and if you see a coin, get it and if Mummy finds one, I'll get it too." And we used to go round the supermarket aisles to see if we could find money to buy bread.'*

Another emerging type of VAWG was social media violence which was reported by several women. This entailed abuse of power and trust by male partners who posted threatening posts, as in Laura's case whose ex-husband posted in Facebook that she was responsible for him breaking his foot after he had tried to break down her door when she would not let him see their child:

*'He tagged over 100 people whom I didn't know as well as friends who knew us and they all took his side. They were all calling me, a bitch, a cow, a shit ... And that's when I took him to court, because he tried to kick the door in, one more kick and the door would have broken and because of the Facebook post'.*

### VAWG AMONG BRAZILIAN WOMEN IS INTERSECTIONAL

It is now acknowledged that an intersectional approach is essential to understanding the experiences of BME and migrant women in the UK and beyond, especially in relation to VAWG (IMKAAN, 2017; Kelly, 2013). This recognises that these women experience multiple forms of discrimination, particularly on gender, race and class grounds, as well as other social identities, such as sexuality, faith and so on, that are not additive but rather intersectional and situated within specific contexts. Migrant women, in particular, can also experience further types of discrimination on the basis of their immigration status and related language proficiency which can not only affect their exposure to VAWG but also their disclosure and reporting of it.

Focusing first on ethnicity, it is worth noting that race and experiences of VAWG are linked in intersectional ways. For example, drawing on the survey, women of mixed race were more likely to experience violence (64%) than white women (44%).<sup>5</sup>

Among black Brazilian women who were interviewed, several discussed how racism intersected with sexism and was manifested in abuse. Bianca, who was 71, spoke of how her first Brazilian husband verbally abused her by, among other things, insulting her skin colour:

*'On the honeymoon, when I was lying down on the sofa with him ... he said, "Look how Black you are! Look at how White I am, you're too Black!" And I would just cry and cry. I had a serious problem with my children about this ... They are all White. My grandson says, "Look what the price you paid to have White children, can you see how prejudiced they are?" So, the same prejudice that I suffered from the teacher and the girl in the salon, I suffered from my children too. I used to work with some psychologists who told me, "Your children are ashamed of you because you're Black. And the prejudice starts with your husband.'"*

Ethnicity also intersected with gender in discriminatory ways in London according to one participant in a focus group:

*'Once I went into a shop in Oxford St, I remember that clearly, when I went in, I noticed that my shoes were dirty, the saleswoman kept looking at me. I am not sure if it in this context, but because we are Black, we suffer more still ... yes, there is much more discrimination [against Black women] than against White Brazilian women'.*

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<sup>5</sup> High proportions of Asian and Black women had also experienced violence, but the numbers are too small to make any accurate inferences.



At the same time, women spoke of the fact that VAWG also happened to everyone, especially in Brazil, regardless of whether they were educated or middle-class. Ana Clara made this point:

*'In Brazil, I think women are always very vulnerable, and they find themselves in difficult situations many times, irrespective of social background, education. Look at me, I had a degree and a postgraduate degree, so it's not to do with your level of education, it's the situation that you find yourself in.'*

Immigration status also emerged as a major factor affecting Brazilian women's experiences of VAWG in London. More specifically, lack of secure immigration status often left women extremely vulnerable at the hands of their partners and in relation to the authorities. Among partners, men were found to exert power and control over women if he had secure status and she did not. For example, several service providers noted that reporting women without documented status to the authorities becomes a tool of abuse: 'if the woman is in this country illegally, and the husband is "legal" (sic), he will do whatever he wants with her, because she is at his mercy' (see Evans and McIlwaine, 2017). This also makes it very difficult for undocumented women to report VAWG to the authorities for fear of deportation, not being believed or not being able to explain what had happened in English (see Chapter 4).

Another aspect of this is Brazilian women ending up in extremely abusive relationships when the regularisation of their own immigration status becomes contingent on that of their husbands or partners who then fail to regularise it as required. For example, another service provider stated that many relationships and marriages sourced through the internet, while not sham marriages, end in VAWG:

*'The [Brazilian] Consulate has started to warn about this now ... a great majority of them were turning into domestic violence ... they were coming over here with Prince Charming, who go over there and meet the family ... and would then bring her over to live here, they'd marry, and then ... disaster strikes!' (see Evans and McIlwaine, 2017).*

Reflecting this, Miriam had been undocumented in London for five years when she met a Portuguese man whom she went on to marry. They had a daughter together and over the years he subjected her, and later, the daughter, to various forms of violence. She noted:

*'So, if you think for whatever reason you will marry someone who has documents, you need to be aware, because at the beginning it's a fairy tale, and after while they start to crush you. So, you have to be careful with whom you get involved'.*

In other cases, some women whose own immigration status was secure found themselves vulnerable to unscrupulous and manipulative IPs, whose goal in being married or in a relationship was to regularise their own immigration status. For example, Paula, 36 recalled how her Brazilian boyfriend who had shown no interest in being with her or their baby until she secured an Italian passport. He subsequently moved in with them but then began to subject her to various forms of verbal, physical and sexual violence until he was ultimately arrested.

Language proficiency was also part of being a migrant and important in recognising the importance of an intersectional approach to VAWG. Valentina from Minas Gerais spoke of how her husband prevented her from learning English as a way of controlling her:

*'I tried to learn English several times and always had to give up because he always created difficulties for me to learn the language. Today I can see that it was on purpose – "If she learns the language, she'll be able to take care of herself". So, he created difficulties in every way.'*

This exacerbated her feelings of being marginalised in British society, far from support structures, as she stated: 'We are far from our country, don't speak the language, don't have the professions that we would have in our country, we don't belong to society, we're very much on the margins.'

### **HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND MODERN SLAVERY IS AN ISSUE FOR SOME BRAZILIAN WOMEN IN LONDON**

A further form of violence that emerged in the research was human trafficking and modern slavery of women which is also often linked with insecure immigration status. The 2015 Modern Slavery Act defines it as slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour and human trafficking. While trafficking can entail movement across borders, this is not always the case. Indeed, it is important to note that a person becomes a victim of trafficking not because of the journey they undertake but because of the exploitation they experience during or at the end of that journey. They can therefore end-up in a trafficked situation even if they did not enter the country against their will.<sup>6</sup> The types of trafficking and modern slavery ranged across very severe to less severe and many of the perpetrators were other Brazilians. Some cases emerged of forced labour and severe labour market exploitation which reflect extremely precarious working practices, and which some would define as forms of structural violence (Dominguez and Menjivar, 2014)

One example relates to Camila, a 31-year-old from Bahia, who had met her Brazilian husband on the internet when she was still in Brazil and he was already living in London. On her third trip to London and after they got married, Camila eventually realised that she had become a prisoner in her own home:

*'I think the worst type of abuse I suffered was psychological abuse because I lived with him for many years without being able to speak when he called his mother, inside my own home. I couldn't sneeze, I couldn't move in case she discovered there was someone there with him. He isolated me from the world in a sense because no one knew that we were married.'*

An example of trafficking and labour exploitation is Sabrina, 44 and from Ceará, who was approached in Brazil by a family of Brazilians to come to London to work as a nanny for their children. They organised the paperwork and paid for her air ticket, and she entered the UK on a tourist visa. The couple then confiscated her passport and made her work an extra four hours each day cleaning at a restaurant and at two shops as well as carrying out her domestic chores, earning only £100 per week. She also endured sexual harassment from her male boss who threatened her with a kitchen knife if she told his wife. Sabrina was terrified but could not report him to the police for fear of being deported as she was undocumented. She took to locking her bedroom from the inside to stop him. Eventually, she managed to get another job and leave them.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/crime-threats/human-trafficking> (accessed 6/10/17).

## CHAPTER 4

## Reporting VAWG amongst Brazilian women in London

### KEY POINTS

- A majority (56%) of women never reported an episode of violence in London, mainly because they thought nothing would be done about it, lack of information, shame, and fear of deportation due to insecure immigration status
- Among women who had reported a serious episode of violence, most had told their friends or the police
- Reporting to the police was mainly a negative experience, especially when women had irregular immigration status
- Women in their 40s, who had been in London for less than a year, were single and dependent on state benefits or on a partner's income were the least likely to seek help
- Lack of awareness about what constitutes VAWG delays help-seeking; many women only disclose when seeking help for other problems
- There is limited take up of services offered by organisations, but support by specialist organisations is vital for survivors of VAWG

This chapter documents the different ways in which Brazilian women have dealt with the episodes of violence that they experienced in London. It first outlines the various reasons women gave for not reporting episodes of violence. It then moves on to consider the various organisations and services to which they turned to obtain help to address the consequences of violence. The chapter then explores the ways in which women perceive and recognise GBV.

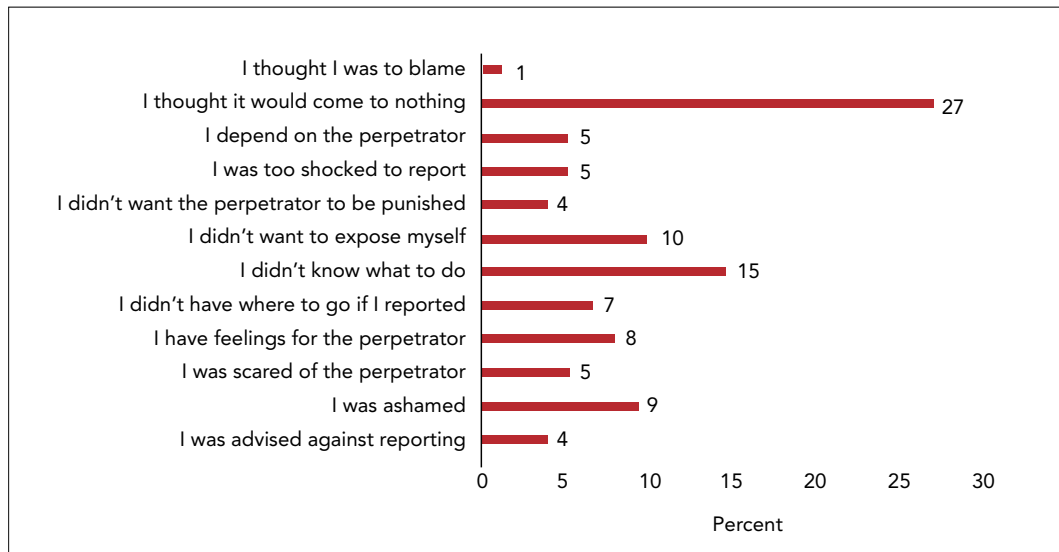
### OVER HALF OF BRAZILIAN WOMEN WHO HAD SUFFERED VIOLENCE IN LONDON NEVER REPORTED IT

Around half of the Brazilian women who had experienced one or more types of VAWG, never reported it, giving various reasons for it, mainly because they felt that nothing would come of it, because they did not know what to do, or felt exposed or ashamed (Figure 4.1).

More specifically, the nature of the perpetrator and the situation in which the violence had taken place affected whether and how women reported, including shame, fear of being left alone in London, or concern about the effects on their children. Carolina's decision not to report her partner, for instance, resulted from a combination of factors:

*'... the shame of it! I felt so bad, so humiliated! ... I didn't know how I was going to be treated here, because given that in my own country, in my own language, nobody had ever done anything to help me, here I thought, "I'm nothing, I'm no one. They won't help me at all".'*

**FIGURE 4.1 REASONS FOR NOT REPORTING AN EPISODE OF VIOLENCE IN LONDON**



Source: Authors' Survey (N=34)

Again, being undocumented, or waiting for regularisation of immigration status emerged as crucial in preventing or delaying seeking help. This was the case, for instance, of Cristina, who had irregular status in London for years and was unable to obtain help from a specialist service provider to leave her violent husband:

*'... as I was here illegally, they [service provider] couldn't offer me anything. If I'd had documents, Brent council would have removed him from the house and given me some support, but as I didn't ... I didn't have the Italian passport and didn't have the money to go to Italy to get it. I felt like my hands and feet were tied, I had no way out.'*

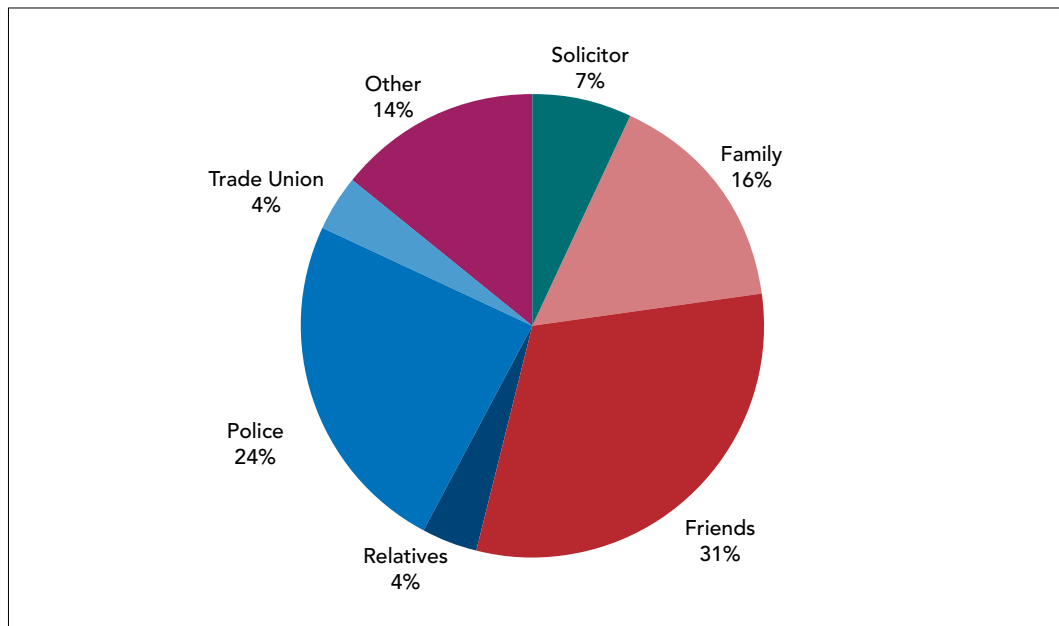
Reporting was often a last resort. For example, Valentina observed when talking about other Brazilian women, but also reflecting on her own experiences at hands of her husband:

*'When they open their mouth, it's because they've reached the limit; they've already gone through everything they could bear ... so when they get to that point they need a lot of help because it's their last attempt. Because usually you stay silent for many years, always full of shame, ashamed of your family, your friends knowing that you're going through this, afraid of your aggressor, of what might come after you've decided to speak up ...'*

**MOST BRAZILIAN WOMEN WHO HAD EXPERIENCED A SERIOUS EPISODE OF VIOLENCE IN LONDON HAD SOUGHT HELP FROM FRIENDS AND THE POLICE**

Levels of reporting of severe violence were much higher. For instance, among the women who had experienced a serious episode of violence in London, most had reported it, especially to friends (31%) and the police (24%) (Figure 4.2). More specifically, support from the state in the form of health services and social services was sought by one out of five women, as were organisations providing generic or specialist services. Only very small proportions of women sought legal support (7%), or help from churches (2%).

**FIGURE 4.2** REPORTING VAWG TO PEOPLE OR ORGANISATIONS IN LONDON



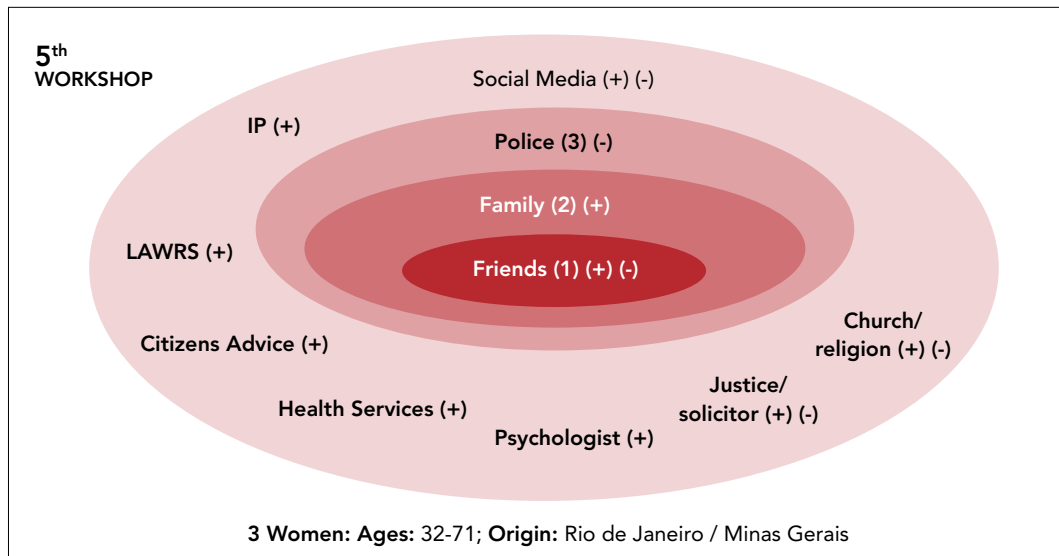
Source: Authors' survey (N=37)

Note: 'Other' includes the range of organisations to which women report

In terms of who reported VAWG, women in their 40s were the least likely to report, along with those who had been in London for less than a year, the latter presumably linked with lack of knowledge. In turn, single women were less likely to seek help as well as those who were dependent on state benefits or who depended on a partner's income. This suggests that women living in more precarious financial circumstances felt less able to seek help than those with access to an independent income, linked with the freedom that economic independence can provide (see also McIlwaine, 2010).

The support sought was not always positive. For example, while women in a focus group from Rio de Janeiro and Minas Gerais identified a wide range of sources of assistance, prioritising friends, family and police, they were ambivalent about some of the support; the police were identified as negative, while friends were both positive and negative as were solicitors, the church and social media, whereas family was perceived as always helpful (Figure 4.3).

FIGURE 4.3 INSTITUTIONAL MAPPING OF SOURCES OF HELP USED BY BRAZILIAN WOMEN IN LONDON



Source: Focus group workshops (2017)

### REPORTING VAWG TO THE POLICE WAS MAINLY A NEGATIVE EXPERIENCE

While some women were positive about their experiences with the police, others spoke of how it made their situation worse and how they ended up being accused, usually because of their lack of English language abilities, their insecure immigration status and manipulation on the part of their IPs. Valentina, for instance, ended up being accused of violence herself because of her husband's manipulation, following an episode where she slapped him (after years of abuse from him) and he called the police:

*'I went and slapped him. He just turned, and I slapped him again ... Then he said, "I'm going to sort your problem now, this is domestic violence, did you know?" Then he called the police ... when the police arrived, I had her [daughter's] uniform and her rucksack. He explained the situation, and as I don't speak English, the police didn't have a way ... So, he told them "She broke my laptop, she slapped me", etc, etc. The police asked me "Was it you who damaged the laptop? How did it happen?" They wanted me to tell them, but I said "I don't speak English". So, they said "OK we'll take you [with us]" and they took me. I got a change of clothes, my medicines, as I'm on medication, and they took me to the police station. It was already almost 1pm, and an interpreter didn't turn up until 6pm. So, from victim, I went to being the aggressor. And then from that point onwards, my life became hell'.*

However, some women praised the police, such as Carolina, who talked about her experience of reporting IPV to them:

*'... Here, if you call the police, they take action immediately. I have a gadget with me, it's like a little mobile phone. When I reported him for the first time, and they gave me this, wow. And they told me, "If there is a situation, you pull on this alarm and the nearest police will be with you in seconds'.*

### LACK OF AWARENESS ABOUT WHAT CONSTITUTES VAWG DELAYS HELP-SEEKING

Many women were unaware that they were suffering GBV, which prevented them from seeking help sooner. Marcia's reflection, for instance, highlights, how she came to realise that what she had experienced at the hands of her IP for so long actually constitutes violence, illustrating the experience of many others:

*'I picked up a leaflet that explained what it was. All these years ... I didn't think I was suffering DV, with the exception of the time when he punched me. But when I read the information on the leaflet, I was shocked to find that I had spent half my life suffering psychological, emotional abuse, without realising it. I didn't understand what I was living with.'*

While some women were unaware, others were unwilling in some way to acknowledge that they were experiencing violence, usually due to manipulation on the part of their partners. Others also spoke of how they had been brought up in Brazil thinking that this type of violence was normal. For example, Valentina noted:

*'I didn't even realise that it was violence because as I was used to hearing the stories from my grandmother, from my mother, my cousins and my sisters who went through this; for me that wasn't even abuse, it was normal, for me it was part of every marriage'*

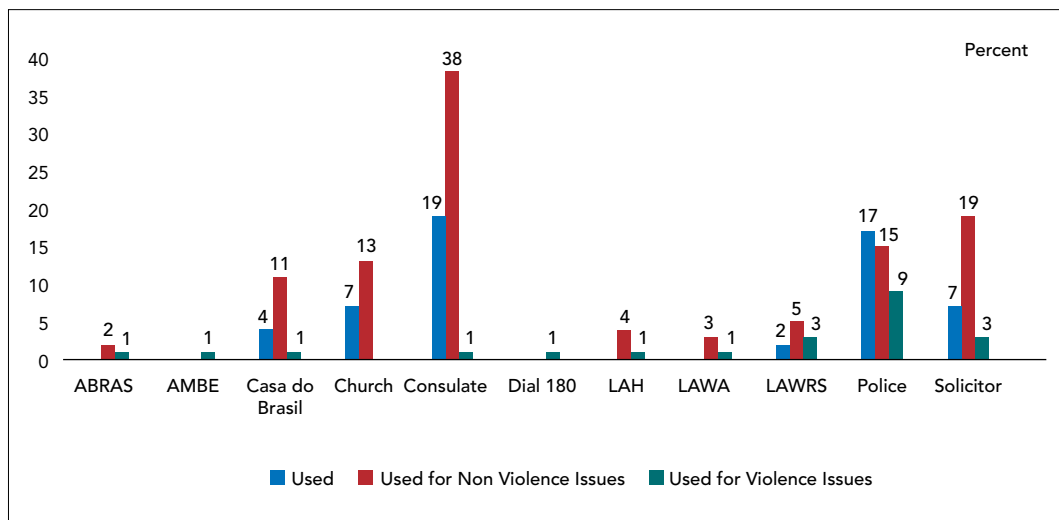
Indeed, it was common for women to access other services for services, immigration, housing or employment advice to then end-up disclosing experiences of VAWG. Ana Clara, for instance, 'found out' when she visited her GP:

*'The situation was so toxic, so harmful to me, but I didn't realise it ... I felt bad, I felt ugly, I became depressed, I went to the GP because of depression, but I didn't think it was to do with the relationship, I thought it was because of lack of vitamin D and sunlight.'*

### THERE IS LIMITED TAKE-UP OF SERVICES OFFERED BY ORGANISATIONS, BUT SUPPORT BY SPECIALIST ORGANISATIONS IS VITAL FOR SURVIVORS OF VAWG

Related to this was that there was limited take up of services offered by various organisations for Brazilians or Latin Americans with many only discussing VAWG as a secondary issue. The Brazilian Consulate was the most consulted organisation (58% of all women), although most approached it to deal with issues not related to violence (38%). Next came the police (41%) but with only 9% seeking help for VAWG. The services of a solicitor were also enlisted by many women (29%), although again, only a very small group used them to address VAWG (3%). Indeed, in terms of accessing support for assistance with GBV, most went to the police, followed by LAWRS and solicitors (Figure 4.4). It is also interesting that even those consulting LAWA, which focuses specifically on VAWG were more likely to do so for reasons not related to violence.

FIGURE 4.4 BRAZILIAN WOMEN'S USE OF SERVICES BY ORGANISATIONS IN LONDON



Key: ABRAS (Brazilian Association); AMBE (Support to Brazilian Women); Casa do Brasil (Brazilian Association); Dial 180 (Brazilian Emergency Phone Number for victims of VAWG); LAH (Latin American House); LAWA (Latin American Women's Aid); LAWRS (Latin American Women's Rights Services)

Source: Authors' Survey (N= 175)

However, those who accessed migrant organisations found that they provide a lifeline (see also chapter 7). Some spoke of how the organisation helped them to acknowledge that they were experiencing GBV. As noted above, many women visited an organisation about a different issue only for case workers to uncover abuse (Evans and McIlwaine, 2017). In addition, some women said that they felt more empowered after visiting an organisation, with many expressing gratitude for the assistance they received. Miriam, for instance, recalled:

*'They helped me a lot. They gave me guidance and supported me from the beginning to the end, through two and a half years of court hearings. It wasn't easy, to be always fighting for your objectives. I won my case, thankfully, with the support of LAWRS ... [they] helped me a lot and as I don't speak English very well, I had the help of a lot of volunteer interpreters who helped me in my journey.'*

Laura, in turn, spoke of how the organisation provided support of various kinds, including therapy, to help her deal with the effects of VAWG, for which she was thankful:

*'Everything I needed, they gave me. I had therapy and they also had a crèche, so I could be more relaxed during the appointments and wouldn't have the pressure of looking after the children, because I was looking after them on my own. They offered me everything - courses, talks and meetings with other mothers who suffered similar experiences, I am very thankful and I recommend [them] to everyone that I know who is going through things like this, I send them all here.'*



## CHAPTER 5

## Transnationality of VAWG: Brazilian women's experiences of violence back home

### KEY POINTS

- The vast majority of women experienced GBV in Brazil before migrating (77%)
- In Brazil, physical violence was the most common type experienced (42%), followed by emotional (36%), and sexual (22%)
- Unwanted physical contact was the commonest specific type, followed by physical assault, verbal abuse, and humiliation/discrimination
- Individual women arrive in London with prior experiences of up to 20 different types of GBV perpetrated back home
- Most perpetrators of VAWG in Brazil were men known to the women, with most GBV occurring in the public sphere, especially the workplace
- Non-IP VAWG in the home was more common than IP violence in Brazil, in contrast to London, and related with widespread incestuous sexual abuse by uncles, fathers, step-fathers and others which affected future relationships
- Most women never reported VAWG because they thought nothing would be done about it, but those who had suffered a serious episode did report it, mostly to family and friends as well as the police
- Slightly more women perceive that VAWG in London occurs more or as frequently as in Brazil linked with social isolation, lack of English language skills and intersectional exploitation through hyper-sexualised stereotyping/gender discrimination experienced by migrants
- VAWG and international migration are interrelated in complex and transnational ways; 52% of women who suffered GBV in Brazil also experience it again in the UK

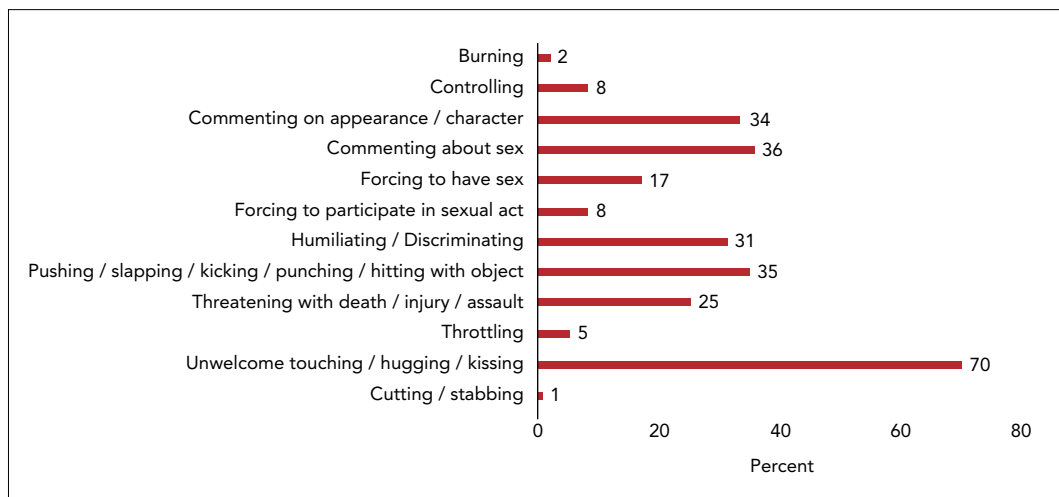
This chapter examines Brazilian women's experiences of violence in Brazil prior to migrating to London to help understand the factors that may play a role in any current situations as well as the role of migration in this process. Indeed, migrant women often arrive in the UK with existing experiences of VAWG back home as well as entrenched attitudes about this form of violence. This chapter explores this issue along with the nature of the assistance that women accessed back home to address VAWG, before discussing Brazilian women's perceptions about differences and similarities in the nature of VAWG in Brazil and London.

**THREE QUARTERS OF WOMEN HAD SUFFERED GBV IN BRAZIL BEFORE MIGRATING TO LONDON**

Over three quarters (77%) of all the women surveyed had suffered some form of GBV in Brazil prior to migrating to London. The commonest type was physical violence (42%), followed by emotional (36%), and sexual violence (22%). These include a variety of specific types, the most common of which was unwanted physical contact (70%) followed by verbal abuse of a sexual nature (36%), physical assault (35%), verbal abuse relating to appearance or character (34%), and humiliation/discrimination (31%) (Figure 5.1).

As in the case of VAWG in London, women's experiences in Brazil reflected an alarming diversity of multiple experiences both in aggregate and within individual women's lifetimes. For example, Camila, 31, had experienced 11 types of DV at the hands of her partner in Brazil including being punched, pushed, kicked, controlled, verbally threatened and manipulated. In addition, her older brother abused her physically, verbally and emotionally, her mother hit her, and her husband's family verbally attacked her within domestic spaces. In her workplace, Camila had been sexually abused and manipulated by several male bosses, including one rape attempt (see below), as well as suffering a sexual attack on the part of her boyfriend's friend. Similarly, 71-year-old Bianca had been neglected, coerced, racially and verbally abused by her husband, as well as being sexually assaulted by an uncle, being physically abused by her father, being forced to marry, experiencing attempted rape by a mechanic while getting her car fixed, and being sexually manipulated by her boss in work. Therefore, Brazilian women arrive in London having already experienced up to 20 different types of GBV in their earlier lives.

**FIGURE 5.1 FORMS OF VIOLENCE WOMEN EXPERIENCED IN BRAZIL**

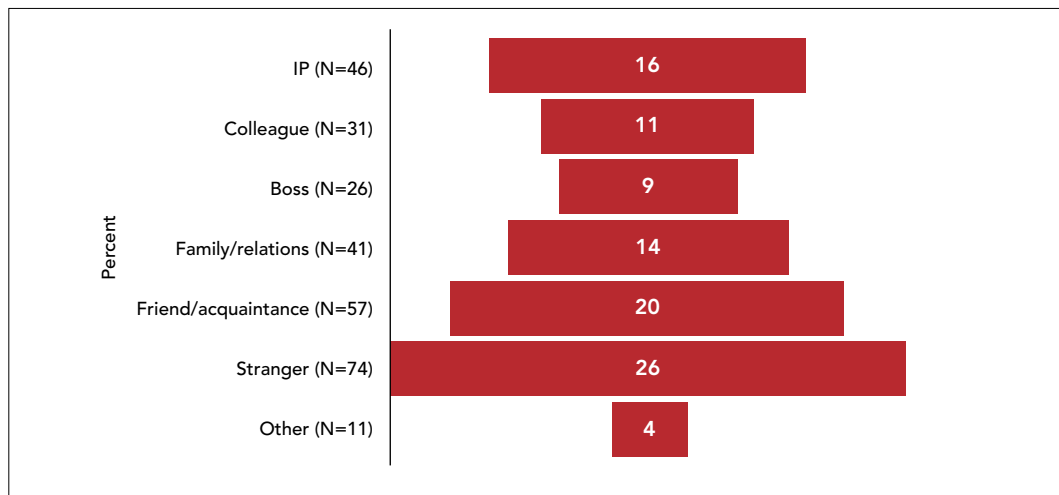


Source: Authors' survey (N=134)

**MOST VAWG IN BRAZIL IS PERPETRATED BY MEN KNOWN TO THE WOMEN AND IN PUBLIC SPACES**

Most perpetrators of VAWG in Brazil were men whom the women already knew. Friends and acquaintances were the most likely to commit GBV, followed by work colleagues and employers. IPs were less frequently cited, as were family and relations. But strangers comprised the largest single category of perpetrators (Figure 5.2).

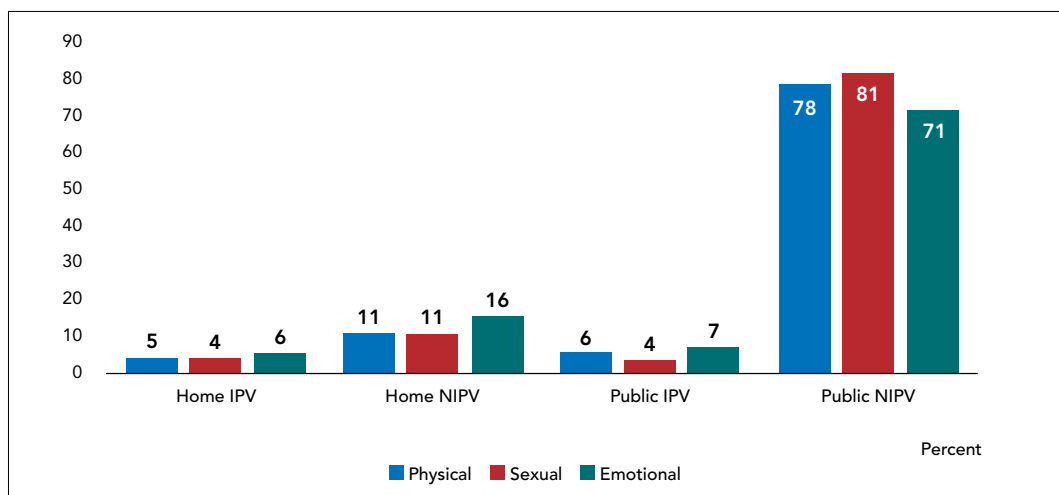
**FIGURE 5.2 PERPETRATORS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN BRAZIL**



Source: Authors' survey (N=variable)

Therefore, most perpetrators were non-IPS outside the home (Figure 5.3). Sexual violence (primarily offensive sexual remarks) was experienced by four out of five women (81%). Physical violence (mostly unwanted physical contact) was perpetrated by 78%, whilst 71% of women were subjected to emotional violence (largely involving humiliation and/or discrimination, and offensive remarks on appearance and/or character).

**FIGURE 5.3 PERPETRATION OF VAWG IN BRAZIL: PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SPACES**



Source: Author's survey N(=134)

### THE MOST COMMON SPACE OF PERPETRATION OF VAWG IN BRAZIL WAS THE WORKPLACE, ESPECIALLY UNWELCOME PHYSICAL CONTACT, PHYSICAL AND SEXUAL ASSAULT

In general, a third of women had experienced violence at the hands of male friends and acquaintances in Brazil, mainly unwanted physical contact (41%). However, another third had been victims of workplace GBV, which was the most common space of perpetration of such violence. Camila, for instance, related how she narrowly escaped being raped by her boss in the office where she had just started on a job:

*'He asked me to go upstairs to sort out some CDs and then he came in, closed the door of the office and tried to throw me on the table to have sex with me. I was only 17 years old and he was an old man. He told me that he'd give me all the money I wanted, he'd help me with everything. I told him that I didn't want it and I managed to get out of there. I was very ashamed, the next day I went to work, but feeling very ashamed. He moved me to another shop that he owned on another street and there he started to offer me to his son ... So, one day I decided to quit and told him that I wasn't coming back.'*

Elisa, in turn, observed how harassment of women in the workplace in Brazil was extremely common, especially in banking and IT where she had worked in the 1980s and 1990s:

*'You know, it was something so normal ... This for us, at the time, it was considered normal to be harassed by the boss, by colleagues, to be accosted, to be handled, which is never accidental, we know that, or to say something lewd to you, twisting something that you said, which is very typical of Brazilian men's chat, to give everything a double meaning; that happened so many, many, many times, I lost count, because we practically thought it was normal.'*

### NON-IP VAWG WAS MORE COMMON THAN IP VAWG IN PRIVATE SPACES OF THE HOME IN BRAZIL

While VAWG in the workplace was widespread in Brazil, it was also common in the home. Indeed, non-IP violence in the home was more common than that perpetrated by IPs. For example, 38% of specific incidences of VAWG in the home was non-IP violence in Brazil, compared with 15% of IP violence (Figure 5.3). This contrasts to London where incidences of IP violence in this space was much more common than non-IP (74% compared with 21%). While these patterns may be linked with vagaries of the sample, they can also partly be explained by the fact that many women had left Brazil before they had married or lived with a partner. Yet, it is important to note the widespread prevalence of historical intra-family violence on the part of uncles, and step-fathers, in particular (see Bianca's case above). As noted previously, nearly a quarter of women identified male family members and relations as the perpetrators of incestuous violence against them in Brazil. Among those interviewed, eight out of 25 reported being subjected to some form of incestuous sexual abuse by fathers, uncles, and cousins, and many have yet to come to terms with the trauma of their experiences which continue to affect them today. For example, Paula recalled how she was subjected to sexual abuse from an uncle as a child:

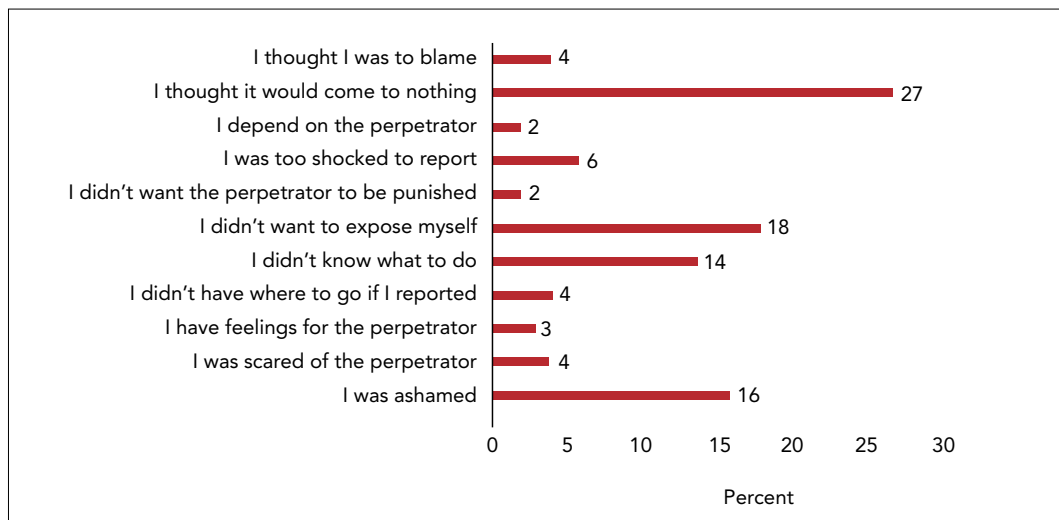
*'I was very young, I think I must have been about four or five, an uncle came to live with us ... I remember that he used to ask me to touch him. He'd put my hand on his genitals and ask me to hold it. And you're a child, you're very scared, you don't tell anyone ... And even now, I've not told anyone, because so much time has gone by. The only thing is, you never forget it, you just grow up and remember it'.*

Again, to reiterate, Brazilian women carry this type of trauma with them after they migrate, affecting their relationships as adults in different contexts overseas.

### THE MAJORITY OF WOMEN DID NOT REPORT VAWG IN BRAZIL

Among women who had suffered any form of violence in Brazil, a majority (60%) never reported it. As in London, this was related to thinking nothing would come of it, not wanted to feel exposed, feeling ashamed and not knowing what to do (Figure 5.4).

**FIGURE 5.4 REASONS FOR NOT REPORTING VIOLENCE IN BRAZIL**



Source: Authors' survey (N=55)

Reflecting these reasons, Natalia explained why she never reported her abusive father who had also subjected her mother to violence:

*'When you're a child, you don't have any idea of the kind of help that might be available. At the time, nobody talked about violence and abuse at school, so I don't remember there being a space for me to be able to say something. It wasn't like it is today: when I see that children write to their teacher that they are being abused by the father, it's because somebody has mentioned this so that they can feel that they can ask for help. I don't remember this in my school'.*

Marcia also explained why she refrained from taking action against her employers, after a male manager had learned that she was pregnant and suggested that she should have an abortion, otherwise she would not get promoted. Although she felt discriminated against, she said:

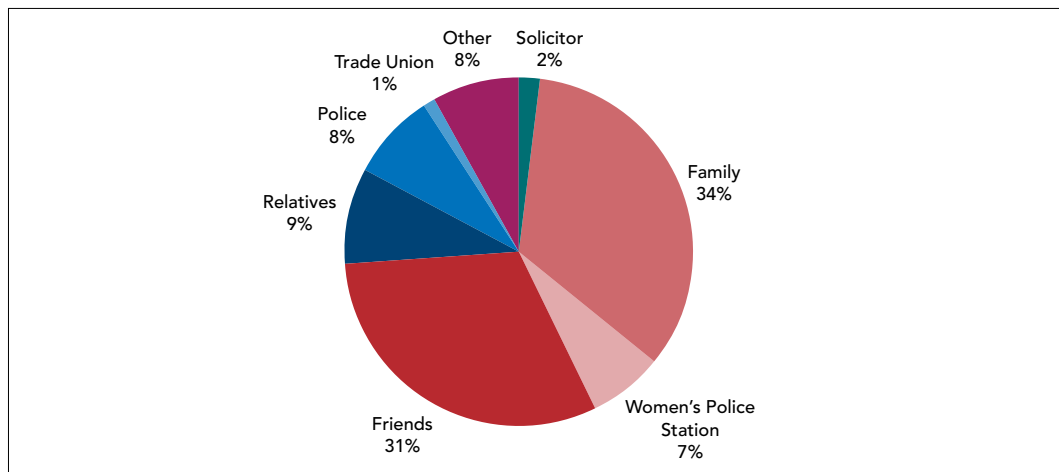
*'If I had taken them to court, they would have fired me. So, I decided it was preferable to keep my job and not say anything'. Women who had suffered a serious act of violence in Brazil were much more likely to report it, especially to family and friends'*

However, when the violence was very severe, women were more likely to report it (87%), especially to family (34%) and friends (31%) (Figure 5.5). The reasons why women choose to relate their experiences of violence included, again, thinking people would not believe them, fear, shame and assumptions about the violence being their fault. Camila, for instance, was nearly raped by the abusive boyfriend of her best friend yet she did not report this to the police because she did not want a scandal, nor did she tell it to her mother, because she was afraid her mother would blame her for it. But she did go and see the perpetrator's mother, and recalls the 'victim-blaming':

*'... what I heard was that it was my fault. "How can a woman be in a car alone with a man?" They made it clear that I was to blame, the whole family went against me and said that if I did anything against her son, if I reported him, they'd kill me... They called me lots of names, they said that I had brought it on myself... So, I had to drop it.'*

Although 15% of women sought assistance from the police and the Women's Police (*Delegacia da Mulher*), there were mixed outcomes. Several women spoke of the inefficiency of the police in taking cases seriously and in actively pursuing perpetrators. Paula recalled how her husband arrived home and started attacking her, head-butting her and punching her. Although a neighbour called the police, her husband had run away. Despite reporting him formally, her husband was never arrested, and no action was ever taken against him.

**FIGURE 5.5 REPORTING SERIOUS ACT OF VIOLENCE IN BRAZIL**

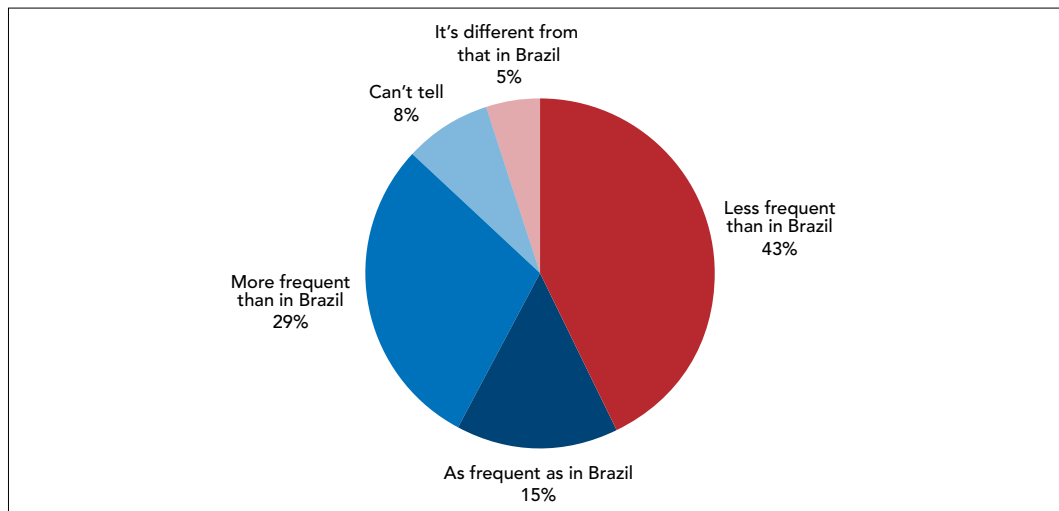


Source: Authors' survey (N=49)

**BRAZILIAN WOMEN PERCEIVE THAT VAWG IN LONDON OCCURS MORE OR AS FREQUENTLY AS IN BRAZIL**

Women's perceptions about the frequency of VAWG in Brazil and London were mixed. On one hand, 44% thought that VAWG occurs as frequently in London as in Brazil or more. Yet on the other, almost the same proportions (43%) thought that VAWG occurs less frequently in London (Figure 5.6).

FIGURE 5.6 HOW VAWG IN LONDON COMPARES TO VAWG IN BRAZIL



Source: Authors' survey (N=171)

The reasons for this are complex but in terms of the slightly greater perceived frequency, life as a migrant played an important role. As noted in chapter 3 and linked with intersectionality, some women spoke of how being a migrant in London made them feel marginalised, which could exacerbate experiences of VAWG. According to Marcia:

*'I think that when we're outside Brazil, we're more vulnerable ... when I was in Brazil, I had my family, my friends, and here I don't have anyone ... here you're on your own. That is what I noticed with my husband, he took advantage of that because he knew I had nowhere to go ... I think the abusive man takes advantage of the fact that we're far away from family and friends. Because when we were in Brazil, he didn't abuse me in the same way. I don't know whether he was scared of my family, or my friends' reaction ... he becomes stronger here.'*

As also noted in chapter 3, English language difficulties played a part, as Juliana reported: 'here [in London], especially when you are dealing with emotional issues, women aren't able to express what they need to because of the language issue'.

The issue of intersectional exploitation through sexual stereotyping or hyper-sexualisation of Brazilian women by men in the UK was also raised by many women, itself identified as a form of VAWG. Alana, for instance, told of how men in London would be surprised when she revealed that she was Brazilian because she did not look like what they expected. Alana explained:

*'There is ... the fame of Latin women, there is this thing that has always bothered me, to try to fit me into a Brazilian stereotype, so often people would get surprised because I am not the stereotypical Brazilian. Firstly, because I am not a mulata [Mixed, Black and White]. They'll say 'You don't look Brazilian'. And another reason is because I am dressed normally, not sexy, so they think all Brazilian women must be sexy, and I understand why that happens, because we have a tropical culture, but it is so blatant that they will say 'You're not as sexy as the others!', as if it were a positive thing.'*

Yet, while VAWG was identified in both places, it was often considered to be more severe in Brazil because of impunity, access to firearms and higher levels of societal violence, as noted by Laura:

*'[Perpetrators] don't stop to think much; they just kill you. I have two friends whose daughters have been killed. One of them decided to leave her husband, because he drank and beat her up a lot. He'd go to work and would leave her locked up in the house with three children. So, one day, she got her son and said that she was leaving, that she was going back to her mother's house because she couldn't bear it anymore. He said 'OK!' and when she was walking out, he got his gun and killed her and the son.'*

**VAWG AND INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION ARE INTERRELATED IN COMPLEX AND TRANSNATIONAL WAYS; 52% OF WOMEN WHO SUFFERED GBV IN BRAZIL ALSO EXPERIENCE IT AGAIN IN LONDON**

There are marked continuities in experiences of VAWG across borders. For example, as noted in chapter 3, 52% of women who suffered GBV in Brazil experienced it again in London.

Experiences of VAWG that underpin the nature of much international migration between Brazil and London can be related to three processes; first, there is evidence that women flee abusive partners in Brazil and move to London to escape them; second, VAWG intensifies as a result of migrating with perpetrator; and third, some women experience VAWG for first time after migration. Sometimes these processes overlap.

For example, Juliana, from Paraná, had survived violence at the hands of her alcoholic husband in Brazil and came to London to escape him and to force their divorce. But in London she met another Brazilian man and after marrying and becoming pregnant, he started to subject her to violence of various kinds, including attempts to kill her. In another example, Flávia, from Bahia, had little experience of violence in Brazil, but on moving to London, she met her Italian husband who began to abuse her physically and emotionally following the birth of their second son. Finally, Marisa, from Rio de Janeiro, married a man who was born in Brazil, but raised in the UK and a British citizen. They met when he moved to Brazil for work and from the beginning he subjected her to various forms of emotional abuse. When they moved to the UK with their children, the abuse intensified and widened to include other forms, such as sexual abuse, threatening behaviour, including letting her become undocumented and reporting on her, and physical assault (see chapter 6; McIlwaine, 2010).



## Causal and risk factors of VAWG among Brazilian women in London

### KEY POINTS

- Gender inequalities and patriarchal relations are the main causes of VAWG among Brazilian women in London and Brazil, rooted in *machismo* and affecting many aspects of social relations
- Misogyny and *machismo* travel with migrants although they are manifested differently in London and Brazil
- Different risk factors make VAWG more or less likely to occur in London
  - sexual abuse as a child
  - substance abuse
  - pregnancy and miscarriage
- Socio-demographic risk factors
  - London* > women were more likely to experience VAWG if they had lived in the city for between 10 and 20 years, were aged in their 40s, were educated to postgraduate level, of mixed race rather than white, were separated or divorced, worked in service sector occupations and had access to their own income.
  - Brazil* > women were more likely to experience VAWG if they were in their 20s, had secondary education, were of mixed race rather than white, were single, worked in service sector occupations, and had joint income with their partner.

This chapter briefly examines the causal and risk factors associated with VAWG among Brazilian women in London. UN Women (2013: 8) identifies the causes of VAWG as deep-seated gender inequalities and discrimination rooted in patriarchal relations reflected in structural power imbalances between men and women. Yet VAWG can be precipitated by a range of risk factors that intersect and operate at different levels (individual, relationship, community, and society) (McIlwaine, 2013), some of which relate to the international migration process (McIlwaine, 2010). While patriarchal relations 'travel' across borders as women move from Brazil to London, there are also risk factors that can increase the likelihood of experiencing violence, whether in Brazil or in London, although some only pertain to the context of international migration.

### CAUSES OF VAWG: MACHISMO

Although machismo is a contested concept, it can be defined as a 'system of patriarchy ... [that] derives from the Spanish word 'macho' meaning male and is often associated with male control (both ideological and physical) of women, virility, sexual prowess, courage and competition between men' (Chant, 1991: 21). As a form of Latin American patriarchal relations, it is played out in the home, the workplace and wider society more broadly. It is generally manifested in misogyny and the exercise of power over women often through violence. In the case of Latin American migrants, it has been shown that machismo is remarkably resilient when people migrate internationally, even if every day gender practices change. Furthermore, the experience of being a migrant can lead to men feeling emasculated because of lack of access to decent work, low pay, and discrimination in wider society resulting in them using force to exercise power and control over their own lives (McIlwaine, 2010; McIlwaine and Carlisle, 2011).

The issue of machismo emerged as important in Brazilian women and men's perceptions of the causes of VAWG in London. A man who participated in a focus group defined machismo as 'to think that he is more, that he wants to dominate over her, that is machismo'. A woman from another focus group described it more detail:

*'The man is dominant, and the woman is submissive. He can have several [women], she can only have one man, if he wants to cheat on her, OK, but she needs to be careful with her clothes, make up ... the man can cheat because he is a man, with women there's this from the cradle 'Be careful!' Like, you have to ask for permission about what to wear, your make up ... So, a 'controller'.*

While she also commented that there was more freedom for women in London in general, VAWG still occurred among Brazilians, and other women because of what she called 'Gabriela's syndrome' to highlight how enduring machismo was:

*It is Gabriela's syndrome 'I was born like this, I was brought up like this, I am going to be like this always and you, woman, you simply accept it because it hurts less!' I'd hear that a lot from a literature teacher, and I'd not examine it, but it is astonishing how, as time goes by, that which you end up experiencing, and you realise that unfortunately it was not good advice.'*

Indeed, while some women commented that gender inequalities were more marked in Brazil than in the UK, others said there was little difference. For example, a woman in one of the focus groups noted:

*'Men remain very much machista in this respect. Over there and here. It is the same. Just check how he thinks. When I was working, he was not. I'd get home, he'd been looking after our boy who was about one year and a bit, he'd then pass him to me, saying 'Take him now, I've been with him all day!''*

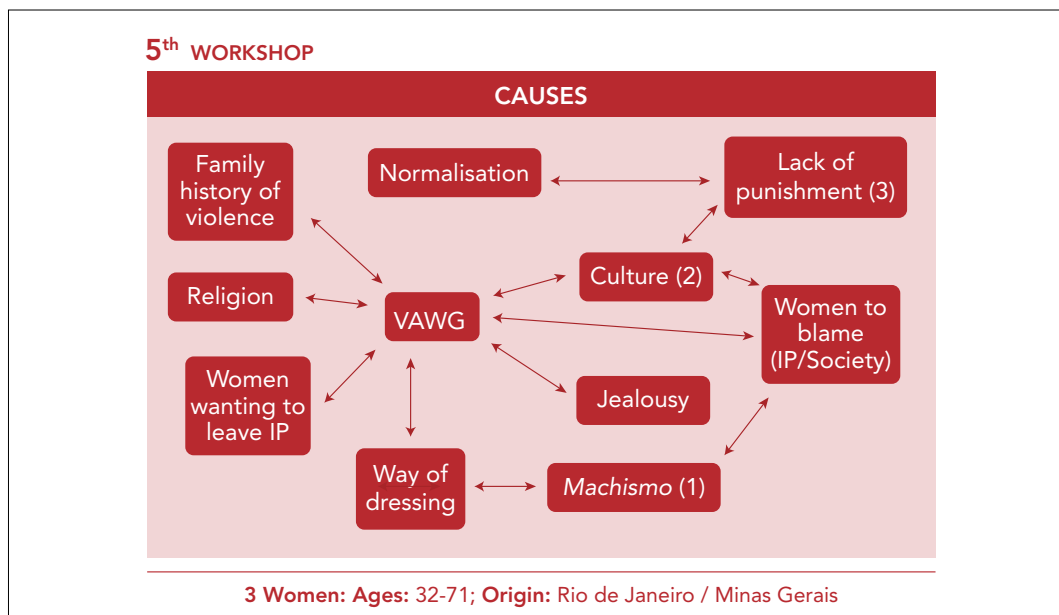
Indeed, another survey respondent stated how machismo and misogyny are merely disguised in London:

*'In Brazil, it is all out in the open. It is common to see men humiliating and swearing at women everywhere. It is a cultural thing, the disrespect for women. It happens [in London] too, of course, but this disrespect is disguised.'*

While *machismo* was identified as a specific cause of VAWG on its own, it was also related with cultural norms, jealousy, and victim-blaming. For example, a focus group discussion with three women, prioritised *machismo* as the most important cause, followed by culture and lack of punishment (Figure 6.1). Ana Clara's comments reflect many aspects of *machismo* in relation to why she thought her husband had been violent towards her:

*'I think it's because we live in a very male chauvinist society. This is very clear to me because many times he said very sexist things, as did his family. His sister told me that I was to blame for the end of the marriage and one of the reasons given was that he worked hard all day and when he got home, he was still expected to play with his son, as if that was extremely painful to him! ... So, it's a very male chauvinist society.'*

FIGURE 6.1 CAUSES OF VAWG IN LONDON



Source: Focus group workshops (2017)

Misogynist attitudes encompassed in *machismo* did not automatically lead to violence, but they certainly underlay it when it did emerge. Whether VAWG was perpetrated or not, and especially in the cases of physical and sexual GBV, depended on a range of risk factors that contributed to the likelihood of violence occurring.

**RISK FACTORS: SEXUAL ABUSE AS A CHILD**

The witnessing or experiencing violence as children are risk factors associated with experiencing sexual abuse in later life for girls. As noted in chapter 5, many Brazilian women who had suffered GBV had also experienced violence perpetrated by men early in their lives, especially incestuous sexual abuse by fathers, uncles, brothers and cousins.

Marisa, for instance, recounted how she had experienced sexual abuse on the part of her half-brother that might have developed into full assault, had her mother not learned about it and intervened:

*'When I was a child, my half-brother was older than I, and there was some inappropriate touching. Once he said, "Now we're going to try something else, but it's a bit more painful." I became scared and I ran away, I must have been eight or nine at the time. I don't know to what extent my mother found out about what was going on, if it was because I told her, or I ran away, I don't know, but she sent me to live with my grandmother, so I lived with her for a while, away from my brother.'*

#### **RISK FACTORS: SUBSTANCE ABUSE**

Alcohol and drug abuse among perpetrators were also identified as precipitating VAWG. Paula, for instance, told how alcohol and drugs were linked to the severe violence that she suffered in Brazil from her first boyfriend. After drinking or taking drugs, he would punch, slap, hit her on the head, beat her up, tie her up and lock her at home, and he would also fire shots with a gun into the wall. After moving to London, she found herself involved with a Brazilian man with whom she had worked in Brazil twenty years previously and accidentally got pregnant by him; they stayed together, but he would drink every day and routinely subject her to physical assault, emotional abuse and sexual violence (including rape), as well as endangering their young baby by picking her up and moving her about when drunk.

#### **RISK FACTORS: PREGNANCY AND MISCARRIAGE**

Becoming pregnant, and then having children or miscarrying also emerged as a risk factor for VAWG for some women. For example, Juliana spoke of how when she was pregnant, her husband began to change and became progressively violent. Initially, he would shout, kick and punch walls, but then began to abuse her verbally, moving on to threaten to cause physical injury, chase her around the house brandishing a knife, and eventually control her, not allowing her to go out alone. His abusive behaviour worsened after the baby was born, culminating in physical assault (punching, slapping, throttling). A further extreme case was Valentina who suffered five miscarriages over the 22 years that she was married to a Brazilian man, two of which happened in Brazil, and three in London, all of which were related to the emotional violence to which she was subjected by her husband.

#### **RISK FACTORS: IMMIGRATION STATUS**

As already discussed in chapter 3, immigration status emerged as a risk factor for some Brazilian women in London. On the one hand, lacking a secure immigration status meant that some women found themselves at the mercy of IPs whose own status was secure and who would use this as a device to abuse, control, manipulate and threaten them. Part of this power play, involved cases of men/partners promising to arrange regularisation and then subsequently reneging on it. On the other hand, some women whose own immigration status was secure could find themselves prey to unscrupulous IPs, whose goal in being married or in a relationship was to regularise their own immigration status.

**RISK FACTORS: SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS**

As already partly discussed in chapter 3 in relation to intersectionality, it is also possible to delineate a broad set of socio-demographic characteristics based on the survey data that seem to make it likely, to some extent, that Brazilian women will experience violence, in London and in Brazil.

In London, broadly speaking, women were more likely to experience VAWG if they had lived in the city between 10 and 20 years, were aged in their 40s, were educated to postgraduate level, of mixed race rather than white, were separated or divorced, worked in service sector occupations, rather than professional or managerial jobs and had access to their own income rather than no income. In contrast, women who had not experienced any violence in London were white graduates in their 20s who had recently arrived and worked as managers or directors. They were also in long-term relationships and their main source of income was their partner's.

Those most at risk of VAWG in Brazil before they moved, were likely to be in their 20s, have secondary education, be mixed race rather than white, were single, worked in service sector occupations, and had joint income with their partner. Those who had no experience of GBV in Brazil, were in their 50s, were white postgraduates working as professionals, who were married or in a long-term relationship, and had a joint income with their partner (Table 6.1). It is important to note that the ages that women experience VAWG in Brazil is affected by when the migrated and because most migrated between 21 and 30.

**TABLE 6.1 SOCIO-ECONOMIC VAWG RISK FACTORS AMONG WOMEN IN LONDON AND BRAZIL**

|                           | <i>London</i>           |                                      | <i>Brazil</i>             |   | <i>London and Brazil</i> |   |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|---|--------------------------|---|
| <b>Demographic</b>        | Most likely             | Not at all                           | Most likely               | Not at all                                | Most likely              | Not at all                                |
| <b>Time in London</b>     | 10-20 years             | Up to 2 years                        |                           |   |                          |   |
| <b>Age</b>                | 41-50                   | 21-30                                | 21-30                     | 51-60                                     | 21-30                    | 31-40                                     |
| <b>Education</b>          | Post-graduate           | Graduate                             | Second grade (14-17)      | Post-graduate                             | Post-graduate            | Graduate                                  |
| <b>Race</b>               | Mixed                   | White                                | Mixed                     | White                                     | Mixed                    | White                                     |
| <b>Marital status</b>     | Separated or divorced   | Married or in long-term relationship | Single                    | Married or in long-term relationship      | Single                   | Married or in long-term relationship      |
| <b>Occupation</b>         | Caring Leisure Services | Managers and directors               | Caring Leisure Services   | Associate professionals and professionals | Caring Leisure Services  | Associate professionals and professionals |
| <b>Main income source</b> | Own income              | Partner's income                     | Joint income with partner | Partner's income                          | Own income               | Joint income with partner                 |

Source: Author's survey (N=variable)

## Addressing and preventing VAWG among Brazilian women in London

### KEY POINTS

- Psychological support is the most important short-term response and most commonly cited intervention to deal with VAWG
- Education is the most important long-term measure to prevent VAWG
- Society, as a whole, is perceived as responsible for eradicating VAWG by a quarter of women

This chapter concludes by considering Brazilian women's views on the actions needed to address and prevent VAWG in the short- and long-term, in terms of dealing with symptoms and underlying causes at individual and societal levels.

### PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT SHORT-TERM RESPONSE AND MOST COMMONLY-CITED INTERVENTION TO DEAL WITH VAWG

Many Brazilian women thought that the survivors of VAWG required psychological support to deal with its traumatic effects in the immediate short term. Although financial assistance and access to state services (benefits, social services, the police) were also identified, they were far outnumbered by the need for psychological help. In terms of specific interventions to deal with VAWG, more than a third of Brazilian women again identified psychological support as the most important way of addressing it in London. Also important was improved access to better services from the state and NGOs, as well as education of women about key issues (recognising violence and seeking help, knowing their rights, and reporting perpetrators) (Figure 7.1).

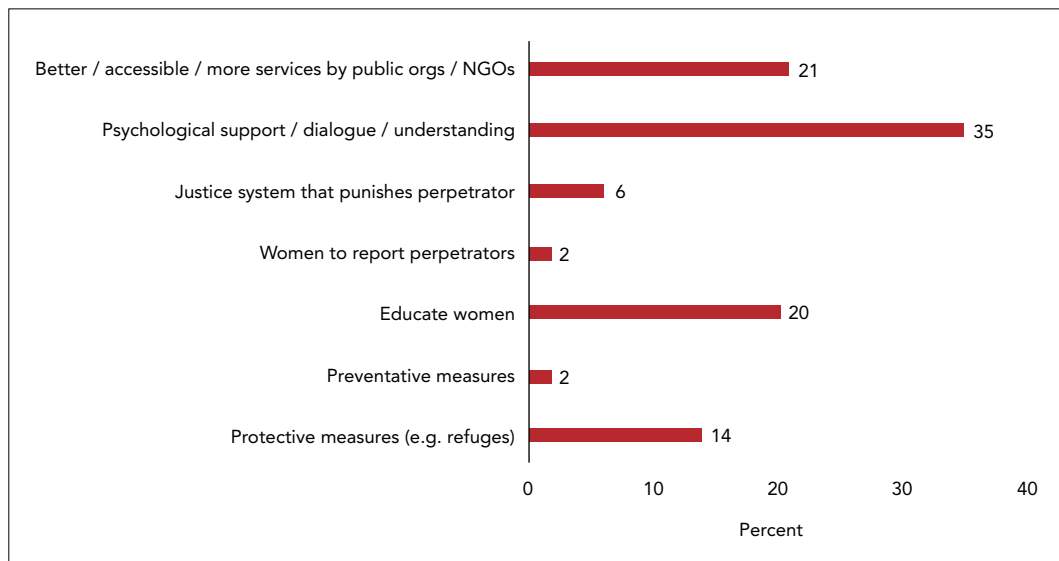
Carolina spoke of the life-saving importance of therapy that she managed to secure from LAWRS after experiencing GBV:

*'At the beginning the biggest impact was the therapy, because I would have jumped in front of a train or a bus, I would have destroyed myself. I was so desperate, I didn't speak the language, no one to hold on to. And [the provider] made all the difference.'*

Psychological support also needs to be accompanied by other measures and especially awareness-raising in terms of women's rights. Vitoria, for example, highlighted the need for women to recognise and confront GBV:

*'... [it is necessary] to raise awareness about women's rights because sometimes you're living through a situation that seems normal for us, but when you become aware, you realise that it isn't ... I came from a family with very sexist values ... I was raised like that, I still have to stop myself from being so submissive, because in my context that was normal. So, first of all, it's important to educate yourself, so that you can know yourself.'*

**FIGURE 7.1 INTERVENTIONS NEEDED TO HELP BRAZILIAN WOMEN DEAL WITH VAWG IN LONDON**



Source: Authors' survey (N=114)

Therefore, as also noted in chapter 4, it is essential that women are made aware of what constitutes VAWG, as Juliana stated:

*'I think once women know that what is happening is serious, that it is a type of violence, and that they don't have to accept the violence, then they will take stock, and do something and they will need to access support'.*

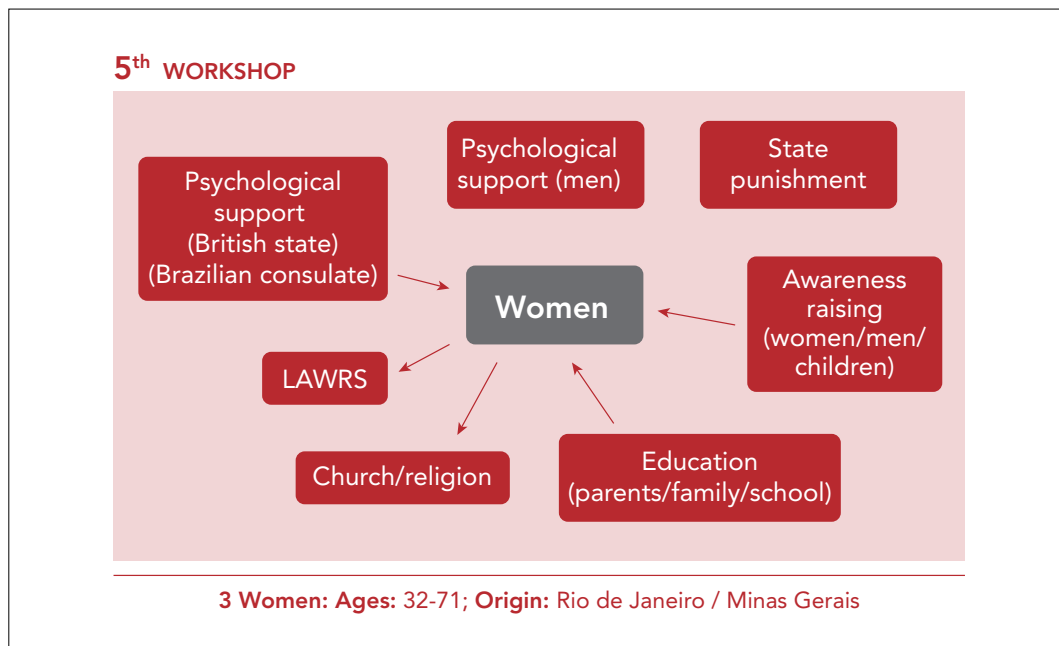
More generally, women also spoke of the need to raise awareness of VAWG more broadly in ways that will reduce the stigma and, also, encourage women to report VAWG as Flavia argued:

*'... what is needed is to expose it, because ... Society doesn't want to believe that this happens every day, leaving deep scars in many people, because it affects everyone, not just the woman herself, but everyone around her'.*

While most specific interventions relate to assistance for women, there was also awareness that men as perpetrators need to be included if VAWG is to be prevented in the first place. For example, a focus group of women identified psychological support for both victims-survivors of violence and perpetrators as well as awareness raising for men and women (Figure 7.2). This is echoed by Alana, who noted:

*'I think we need to involve the men more in this conversation, they can't be left out, we can't have this division 'us' and 'them', they must be included, and made to become aware of it, to think about what happens to women, because if they are not together in the battle to change this view, it won't change'.*

FIGURE 7.2 MEASURES TO HELP WOMEN DEAL WITH VAWG IN LONDON



Source: Focus groups (2017)

### EDUCATION IS THE MOST IMPORTANT LONG-TERM MEASURE TO PREVENT VAWG

Education emerged as the single most important measure to prevent VAWG (44%). This extended beyond school-based education to focus on information and rights in the long-term in wide-ranging ways, as noted by Fernanda:

*'... education, but not education in school only, or of the kind 'You've got to treat women with respect', because if things don't change in the home, if at home your father beats your mother, it will be a very difficult for you to recover from that or not to reproduce it; so, education in a wider dimension, in the long-term, which doesn't involve school alone but family education ... a re-education of the media, of many things'.*

Education was also required through campaigns and disseminating information on VAWG identified by 18% of women in the survey, and as explained by Marcia:

*'So, I think education, information as well as greater awareness among women. Like, for example, that leaflet, such a simple thing, it landed on my hands at the right time and it made me realise the harm that I was doing to myself'.*

Other measures identified included the need to promote gender equality by eradicating machismo (18%), more effective punishment of perpetrators as a measure to prevent VAWG (9%), women needing to speak up for themselves (5%) or for society not to blame women for GBV (3%).



### SOCIETY AS A WHOLE IS PERCEIVED AS RESPONSIBLE FOR ERADICATING VAWG BY A QUARTER OF WOMEN

Just over a quarter of women (26%) thought that society, as a whole, should be involved in preventing and eradicating VAWG. Others felt that the state was most responsible (18%), while some thought it was women's responsibility (17%). Surprisingly, only a small minority of women (6%) thought that men and boys should be involved in helping effect societal changes on VAWG. However, it needs to be remembered that 'society as a whole' refers to men and boys. Indeed, Natalia commented on the importance of parental education within this process:

*'... when you have sons, you must teach them to respect women ... the person who's with them has a mother, a grandmother and a sister in the same way that they do, and whatever they wouldn't want for the women in their family, they mustn't do to the family of others ... There are lots of people who still teach their sons that the woman is like a slave, so we need to change the way we teach our children. Not just mothers ... fathers too.'*

As a final point, it is important to return to the starting point of this report which is the importance of elucidating the nature of VAWG and raise awareness of how it affects Brazilian women in London. A central aspect of this process is acknowledging not only the role of research and service provider organisations within this, but also the bravery and resilience of women victims-survivors in speaking out. It is appropriate to conclude with the words of one woman, Valentina:

*'So, when this reaches the public, when there is greater awareness, to say look, this happens, it's no use overlooking it, it's no use closing your eyes, this is the reality of many homes, then we can talk about the subject. Then we'll be revealing the painful truth. Then everybody who's going through this pain, will feel "I have the right to say what's happening to me, I'm not alone, I'm not the only victim". Then that will encourage other women to speak up, to identify the problem, so we can fight it, because if we can't identify it, we can't fight it. You can't fight in the dark if you don't know who the enemy is, or what the enemy is.'*

## Policy recommendations

### INCREASED SAFE REPORTING:

- Safe reporting mechanisms ensuring migrant women victims of crime the ability to report safely (in their own language) to the police and other agencies, including the NHS, local councils, social services, schools, etc. without fear of having their details shared with the Home Office for immigration control purposes, effectively establishing a firewall to protect victims' rights over immigration control.
- Safeguarding of migrants' personal data to ensure that victims of crime with insecure immigration status are able to report to the police, testify in court and access justice and other remedies.
- Inclusion of training module within police and employment enforcement agencies on the circumstances of migrant victims of crime, barriers to reporting and types of support required, to improve the identification of migrant victims.
- Domestic Violence and Abuse Bill to set standards for the protection of migrant victims' rights above immigration control.

### SUPPORT TO ENABLE WOMEN EXIT VIOLENCE AND LEAD INDEPENDENT LIVES:

- Extension of No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) provision to victims of DV to migrant women who are not dependant on UK nationals, especially in relation to difficulties in providing evidence to prove that DV occurred and the short three month time frame permitted.
- Training for agency officials (including police, social services, schools, job centres, medical staff), on the circumstances of migrant women facing VAWG, barriers, needs and support available to increase the number of women in contact with agencies who are able to access support.
- Training for agencies on the impact of less known types of VAWG, including psychological violence/coercive control, financial abuse and honour based violence and their incidence in different communities.
- Appropriate resourcing of specialist VAWG services for migrant women, including casework support and legal advice on the different forms of violence, as well as counselling support in community languages via a commissioning model that is aware of BME and migrant women's need for longer term, holistic support, and of the importance of maintaining women only spaces to enable access.
- Resourcing of refuges, particularly BME women's refuges which have lost around half of their annual council funding between 2009 and 2016.
- Increased collaboration between agencies and governments and specialist VAWG providers and other non-governmental organisations combatting VAWG.

**PREVENTION:**

- Prevention work in schools, training for students, teachers and school staff on healthy relationships and on the signs of abuse, how to tackle it, etc.
- Specialist VAWG training and awareness raising campaigns in Portuguese, aimed at increasing understanding of VAWG and the legal options of victims in the Brazilian community.
- Outreach work aiming at raising awareness of the spectrum of VAWG and combating stigma, targeting Brazilian women.

**OTHER:**

- Central government to take the necessary steps for the appropriate implementation of the Istanbul Convention, the EU Victims Directive and CEDAW (Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women).
- Increased legal aid support to ensure that victims of VAWG are able to access justice regardless of migrant status.

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## Appendix

### METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The research employed a mixed methodological approach. This included an online questionnaire survey, interviews with Brazilian women survivors of violence, interviews with representatives from organisations that provide support services for these women, and focus group workshops conducted with Brazilian women and men. All of these activities were conducted in the period between July 2016 and June 2017.

The **online questionnaire survey** gathered data on the key characteristics of participants, as well as information about episodes of violence that women may have experienced in Brazil and in London. These included the types of violence experienced, the sources of support to which women turned to help, their reasons for not seeking help, as well as their views about societal perceptions towards VAWG and the measures needed to support survivors of violence and prevention efforts. The online questionnaire was accessible to participants via a link that was circulated widely on social media networks, and was open to adult Brazilian women (18 years of age or older) who had been living in London for at least six months. A pilot version of the survey was run between October and November 2016, followed by the final version, which was available online between December 2016 and February 2017. The survey produced a sample of 175 completed questionnaires.

The **in-depth interviews** with Brazilian women survivors of violence explored in greater detail the main types of violence they experienced in Brazil and in London, identifying the factors associated with the emergence of violence, the effects, the sources of help that women seek, and factors that inhibit the search for help to deal with violence. They also charted the personal trajectories involving the move from Brazil to London to ascertain the role that immigration status, ability to speak English, and knowledge about and eligibility to British public services play in influencing the experience of VAWG. A total of 20 women were recruited from a pool of clients with a specialist organisation who have sought help to deal with their experience of VAWG. In addition, five Brazilian women were recruited from among those who had participated in the online survey and who had not necessarily experienced VAWG so they could offer their views about VAWG more widely. All participants were adult Brazilian women who had been living in London for at least six months at the time of the interview. The interviews were carried out between October 2016 and March 2017. They were conducted in Portuguese, lasting on average one and a half hours, and were audio-recorded and transcribed and translated into English.

**In-depth interviews were also conducted with the representatives of organisations** that provide support services to women survivors of violence, comprising a mix of generic organisations and specialist organisations. The aim was to examine issues relating to violence that affect women and society more widely and thus relate to the experiences of Brazilian women in London, as well as establishing the nature of the services provided for those who experience violence and the perceptions of providers. In total, 12 interviews were carried out between July and February 2017. These were voice recorded and either transcribed directly (from English) or translated directly from the recording (from Portuguese). The key findings from these interviews are reported in Evans and McIlwaine (2017).

**Focus group workshops** (5) were also run with Brazilian women (nine) and Brazilian men (six) to discuss their views on VAWG, the factors that play a role its emergence in Brazil and in London, the forms of VAWG and the measures needed to address it. Participatory appraisal methodologies were used to foment discussion around these topics. The workshops were conducted between April and June 2017, and were audio-recorded and translated into English.

All the interviews with women victims-survivors and all the female focus groups were carried out at the migrant organisation with a trained counsellor on hand in case the situation was distressing.