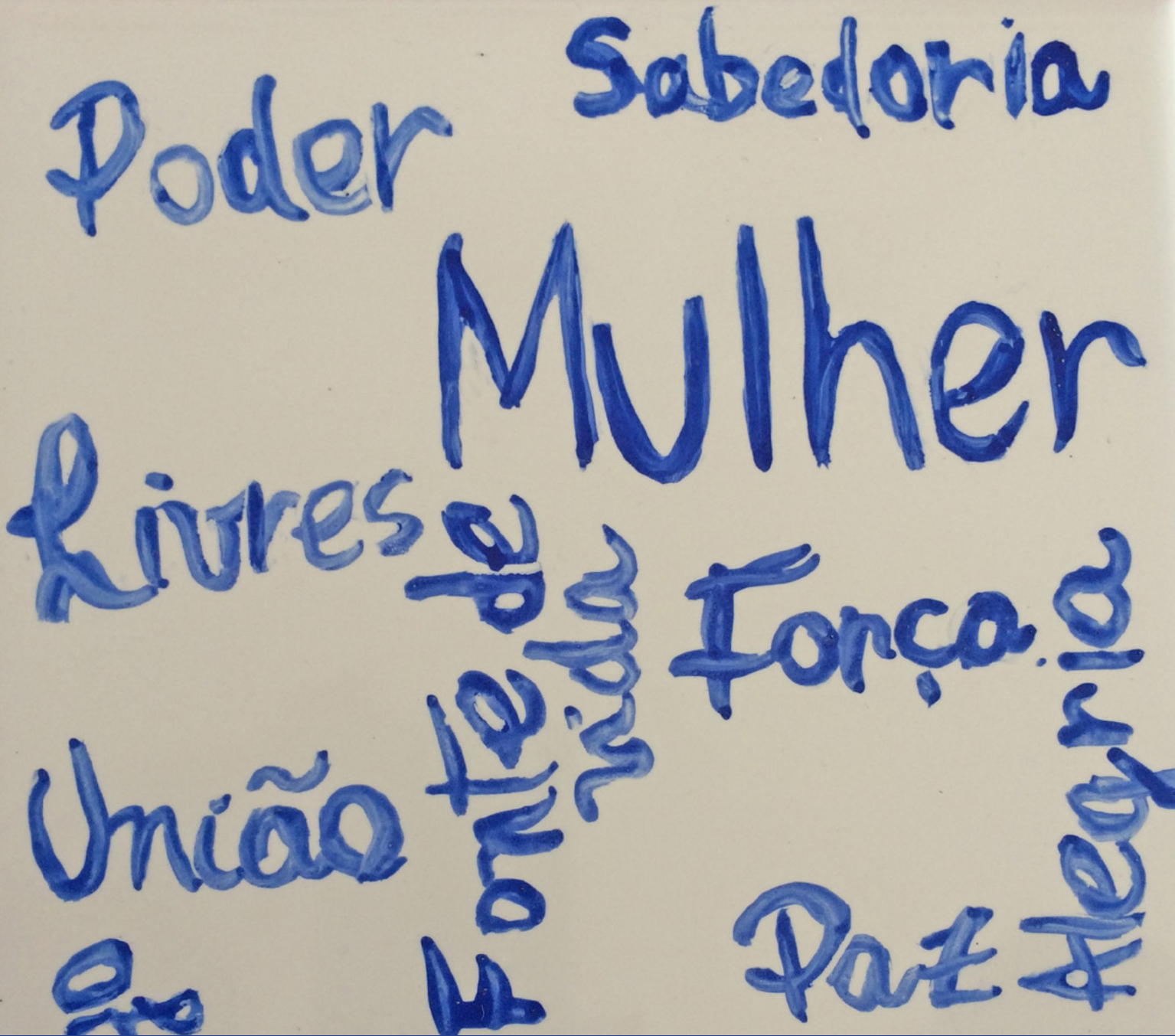


# Supporting Brazilian Women in London: Service Provision for Survivors of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

Yara Evans and Cathy McIlwaine April 2017



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***Supporting Brazilian Women in London:  
Service Provision for Survivors of  
Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)***

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**April 2017**



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## ***Acronyms***

BAME	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic
CPS	Crown Prosecution Service
DV	Domestic Violence
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
GBV	Gender-based Violence
GP	General Practitioner
INTERPOL	International Criminal Police Organisation
IP	Intimate Partner
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
MOPAC	Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls
VAW	Violence Against Women
WSP	Women's Service Provider

## ***Acknowledgements***

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We wish to thank all those service providers who kindly participated in our research, taking time to share with us a wealth of knowledge about the dynamics of VAWG in London, as well as offering their insights about the services they provide to women who suffer violence and about the wider landscape of service provision for survivors of violence. Their contribution has been invaluable in enabling a better understanding of how Brazilian women confront the challenges associated with accessing help to address their experiences of violence and their consequences.

## ***Key Findings***

- Most service providers did not record the nationality or country of birth of their clients
- Most common is referral of Brazilian women to service providers through ‘word-of-mouth’ by previous or existing users, although other referral pathways are also important, such as referral by social services, health services and GPs, and the police
- Service providers generally noted a growing demand for their services by Brazilian women, but it was difficult for them to establish whether increased demand is due to a rise in violence, or because more support services are becoming available, or because women are becoming more aware about violence and are seeking help
- Brazilian men were not always the main perpetrators, rather there was a combination of Portuguese and Brazilian with some British, Italian and Angolan men
- Perpetration of VAWG is linked closely with migration regularisation processes as women marry foreigners to secure their immigration status and so many women endure violence in order to regularise their status
- Most VAWG was IPV but there were also cases of trafficking for sex labour (by husbands or third parties), forced detention, domestic servitude, and violence against sex workers by clients, as well as some documented cases of femicide
- Online dating and internet encounters are also linked with VAWG among Brazilian women migrants
- Cases of undocumented women working in domestic servitude were not uncommon
- Several Brazilian women accessing services already had a history of experiencing and/or witnessing violence (usually intra-family) in Brazil (or Portugal) before moving to London
- It was most common for women to begin to experience violence after had they moved out of Brazil, whether in Portugal, the UK or any other intervening country
- Control over financial resources and lack of immigration status were seen as the most important factors that led to Brazilian women to experience violence in London
- Brazilian women seek help as a last resort when GBV is very severe and they realise they are no longer able to withstand or deal with the effects on their own
- It is very common for women to seek help for issues that do not directly relate to VAWG but this emerges through treatment
- There is considerable stigma associated with reporting VAWG among Brazilian women
- Lack of knowledge of English language is instrumental in compounding women’s vulnerability and susceptibility to GBV and their reporting of it
- Lack of secure immigration status heightens women’s susceptibility to GBV and ability to seek and secure assistance to service providers and the police
- Documented migrants also face barriers to securing assistance due to having ‘no recourse to public funds’
- Brazilian women with European passports were most likely to report incidents of GBV to the police
- Women with children were most likely to seek help from service providers linked with interventions by the school
- Women fleeing to Brazil with children can lead to child abduction charges despite experiences of GBV

- Brazilian churches in London, especially evangelical denominations, often prevented women reporting GBV due to a policy of encouraging women to stay in their relationship and censuring divorce
- Some women feel guilty about penalising their IPs disproportionately, they feel ashamed by the effects on children of having a father with a criminal record, or they fear that action will jeopardise their own financial security and that of their children
- The British criminal justice system generally fails to obtain justice for Brazilian women by not applying appropriate sanctions against male perpetrators for their crimes of VAW linked with a patriarchal legal system, cultural prejudice against Brazilian women and costs
- Perceived reluctance on the part of the criminal justice system to sanction the perpetrators of GBV dissuades Brazilian women from pursuing them through courts, exacerbated by the complexities of immigration status
- There is evidence of some police services taking VAWG seriously, especially in relation to coercion and sustained verbal abuse which are not considered to be crimes in Brazil
- Statutory services, such as social services, have sometimes failed to provide adequate assistance to Brazilian women victims of violence as a result of a narrow focus on their remit and lack of concern with the condition of being a migrant, such as lack of knowledge of the system, about rights, and lack of English language skills
- Educating women, men and children within the Brazilian community in London was seen as an important step towards helping prevent and combat VAWG
- There needs to be much greater resources available, including public funding, to expand the range and reach of provision by the voluntary sector as well as the statutory sector



## **1. Introduction**

This document reports on findings about the provision of services for Brazilian women in London who have experienced any of a number of forms of violence encapsulated in the notion of VAWG. The findings are the outcome 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 ESRC, and implemented by the research team at School of Geography, Queen Mary, University of London, in partnership with the School of English and Drama 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 examination of the scope and extent of services provided for Brazilian women who are survivors of violence aimed at identifying the types of violence they experience, outlining the factors that enable or condition their access to supporting services, documenting the manner of engagement with service providers as well as highlighting the outcomes and impacts of such engagement.

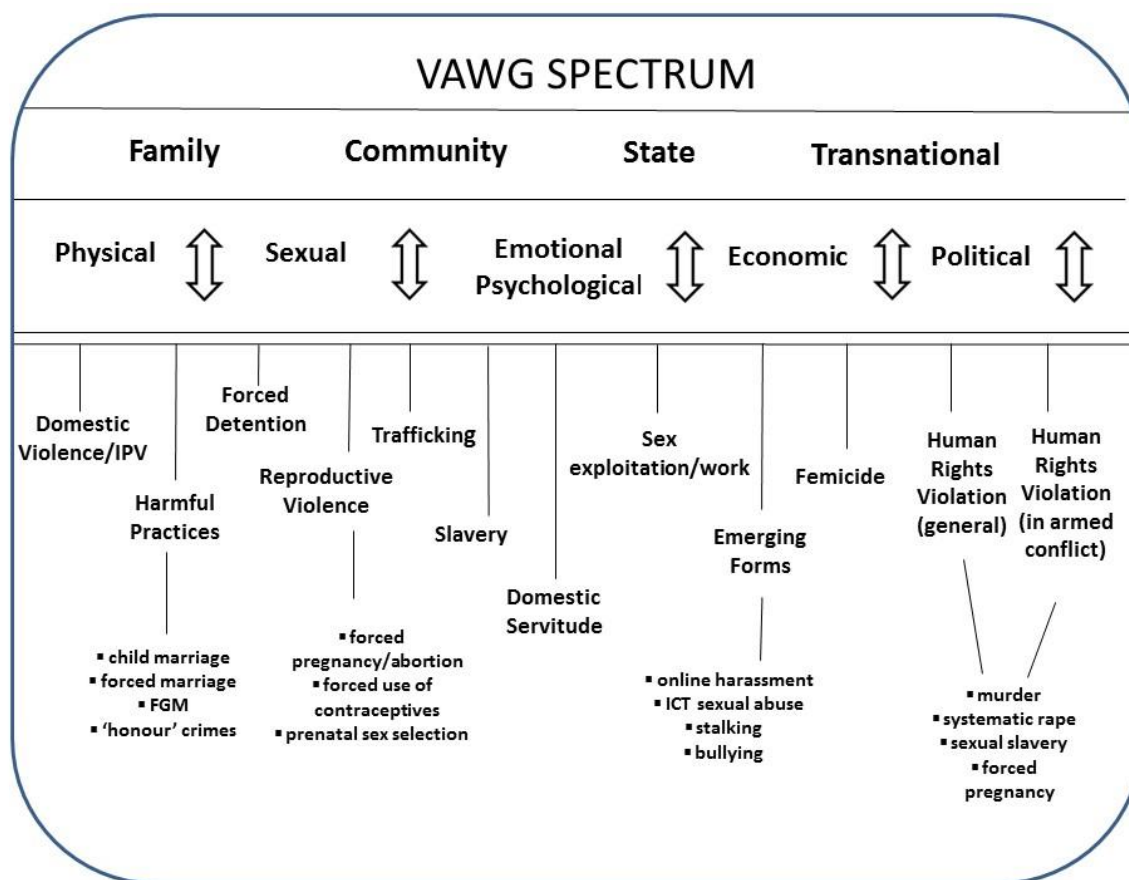
The report is organised as follows. Firstly, it introduces the conceptual context of the research, describes the methodology, and outlines the contours of the Brazilian community in London, before highlighting the wider policy background that has enabled the increased provision of VAWG services in London. It then moves on to relate the findings about service provision, including the remit of provision, the characteristics of service users and the perpetrators of violence, the types of violence that Brazilians experience, previous history of violence and the factors that give rise to violent behaviour (from the perspective of service providers). This is followed by a consideration of the factors that operate to encourage Brazilian women to seek help or discourage them from doing so. Next, the report documents the experiences of Brazilian women as they encounter the British support system, before examining how they engage with service providers and the outcomes that obtain. It then moves on to delineate the actions required to help address VAWG more widely and improve service provision, to conclude with an overview of the key findings and their implications.

## **2. Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)**

The definition of gender-based violence (GBV) adopted here is that put forward by the UN in Article 1 of the 1993 UN Declaration of the Elimination of Violence against Women, where violence constitutes '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 continues that it may occur in the 'family, community, perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs' and may refer to assault, sexual abuse, rape, female genital mutilation and other 'traditional' practices, as well as sexual harassment, trafficking in women, and forced prostitution. However, as violence may manifest itself through a great variety of forms, as has been well documented in the VAWG literature (McIlwaine, 2013, 2014, 2016 for references), the phenomenon may be more usefully understood as comprising a spectrum of forms of violence that helps capture the subtleties

and nuances of the violence experienced by women and girls in different contexts and locations (see Figure 1).<sup>1</sup>

**Figure 1: The VAWG spectrum**



Source: Evans and McIlwaine (2016)

It is also worth noting that VAWG is a global human rights violation, a major public health risk and a key form of gender discrimination (UNFPA 2013). Despite increasing recognition of GBV as a 'new dominant global agenda' (Moser and McIlwaine 2014) not least among UN agencies in relation to everyday GBV and that related with armed conflict, there remains a tendency to invisibilise the former, especially GBV within the private sphere of the home in contexts of marked political violence and armed conflict as well as among migrants.

Despite widespread under-reporting, where it has been suggested that only 7 % of women worldwide report to a formal source such as the police and/or some other judicial entity (Palermo *et al* 2014), estimates suggest that VAWG has reached epidemic levels with around 35 % of women globally having experienced some form of gender-based intimate partner or non-partner violence.

<sup>1</sup> Please note that the terms VAWG and GBV are generally used interchangeably here. However, it should also be noted that GBV can also refer to men-on-men violence that is socially motivated and gender-based (as in the case of men-on-men sexual violence during situations of armed conflict) (McIlwaine, 2014).

### 3. Methodology

Nearly 30 organisations were identified and approached with a request to participate in the research (see Appendix I for a full list). Some of these organisations are generic, in that they provide either a range of services to the public at large (e.g. women and men who suffer violence, or are the victims of trafficking), or provide services to women in general, or to Latin American and Brazilian women specifically. Approaching generic organisations aimed at obtaining information about issues on violence that affect women and society more widely and may therefore have a bearing on the experiences of Brazilian women in London.

A total of 12 organisations agreed to participate in the research and their representatives were interviewed between July 2016 and February 2017. The interviews were voice recorded and either transcribed directly (from English) or translated directly from the recording (from Portuguese). In some cases, two or more individuals participated in the same interview, whilst in others, different people within an organisation were interviewed separately. The interviews sought to establish the exact nature of the services provided for Brazilian women who experience violence as well as the perceptions of providers of issues that affect Brazilian women in particular. In addition, one service provider allowed us access to data about their Brazilian clients which was used to outline their key characteristics and highlight the issues that led them to seek help. Table 1 shows the codes assigned to each of the organisations that granted an interview, as well as the codes given to organisations that were mentioned or discussed in the interviews but did not participate in the research.

**Table 1: Service providers – coding**

<i>Code</i>	<i>Number ascribed to interviewees when more than one present or interviewed</i>
WSPA	
WSPB	
WSPC	
WSPD	WSPD1; WSPD2; WSPD3; WSPD4; WSPD5; WSPD6; WSPD7; WSPD8
WSPE	
WSPF	
WSPG	WSPG1; WSPG2; WSPG3
WSPI	
WSPJ	
WSPK	
WSPL	WSPL1; WSPL2
WSPM	
<i>Code</i>	<i>Providers mentioned in interviews that did not participate in the research</i>
WSPH	

In the process of identifying the relevant service providers that might participate in the research, it emerged that many do not record information about either the nationality or country of birth of their service users, whilst others would only monitor ethnic diversity, to meet the requirement by funding bodies. Some providers acknowledged that it was possible that Brazilian women would have used their services but they have no means of knowing for certain. As one provider noted [WSPA], some organisations may give users the option to classify themselves as Latin American on ethnic diversity forms but request no information about country of origin, whilst some recognised that failure to record this data is of concern and have recently taken steps to address it [WSPD1; WSPD6]. Hence, the lack of monitoring

for country of origin by service providers makes it difficult to map with precision the true extent to which Brazilian women who experience violence access help and support.

#### **4. The Brazilian Community in London**

Brazilian immigration to the UK has increased markedly since the late 1990s (Kubal, Bakewell, and de Haas 2011). 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 has not been evenly spread with life for the poor and lower middle classes changing very little (Sheringham 2013). 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, found that 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 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 (Kubal, Bakewell, and de Haas 2011; 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 Brazilian 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).

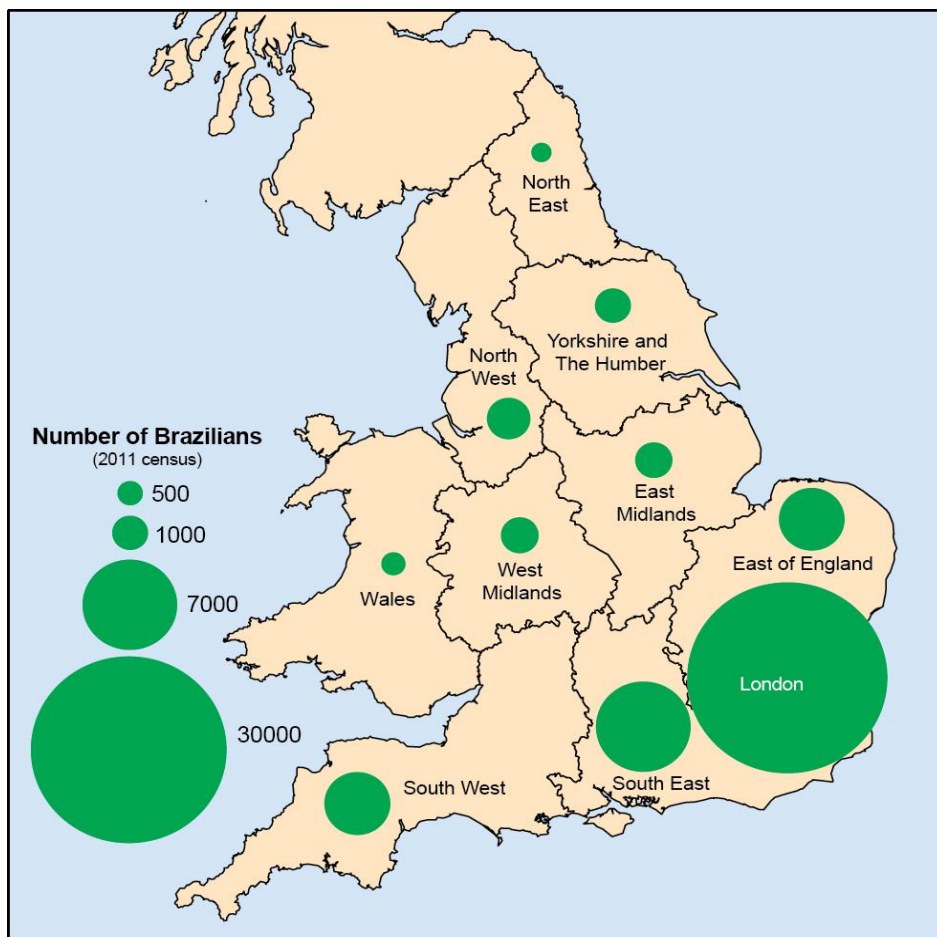
In terms of the profile of Brazilians according to the 2011 census, there are more women than men in London (53%) and in England and Wales as a whole (56%). This is also a youthful population with 83% of the London population and 71 % of that in England and Wales being aged under 40. Almost half of Brazilians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

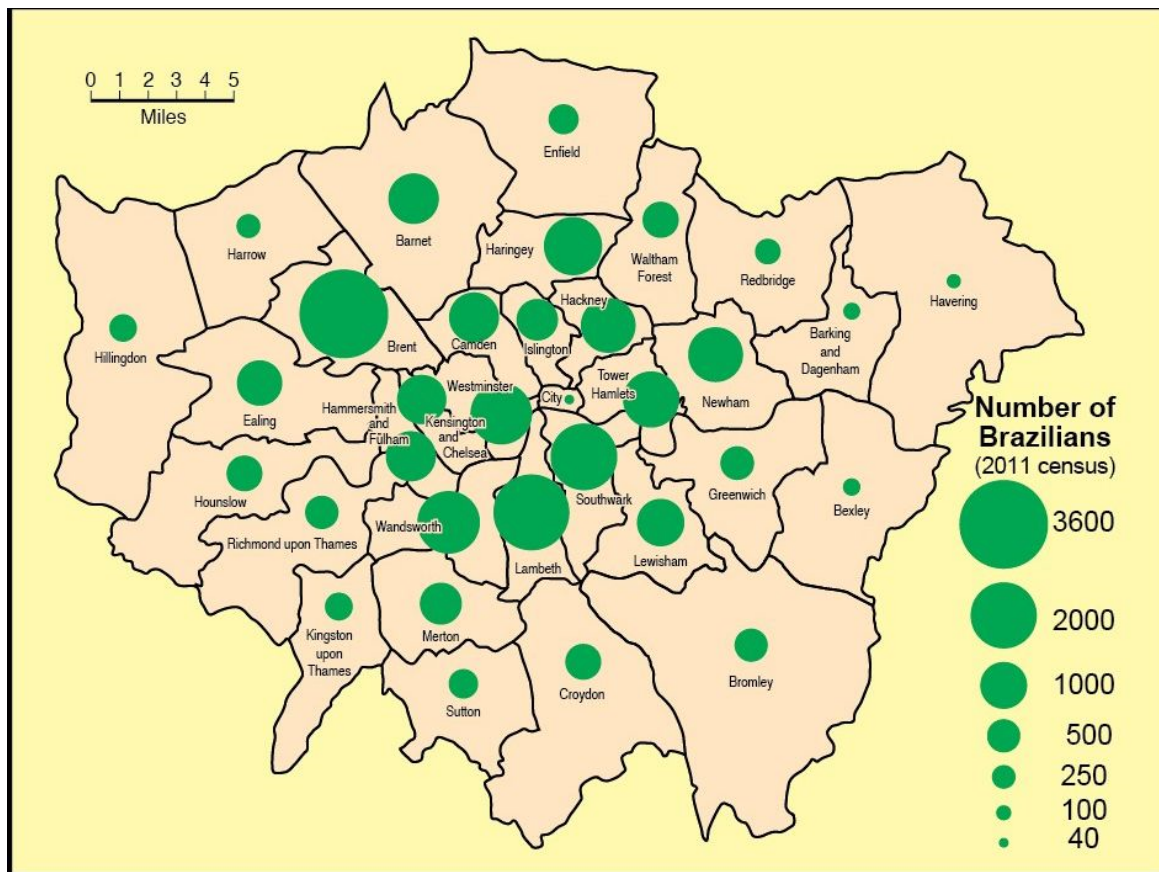
In terms of immigration status, the census shows that almost a third of Brazilians have an EU passport (32% in London and 29% in England and Wales), with 14% and 18% respectively having British passports. However, these figures hide the irregular and undocumented population which Evans et al. (2011) 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 2: Distribution of Brazilians in England and Wales (2011 census)**



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

**Figure 3: Distribution of Brazilians in London (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 (Piscatelli 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 eroticized, 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).

## **5. VAWG in London**

Concerted efforts to address VAWG in London, involving both local authorities, government agencies, and voluntary, private and statutory organisations have gained impetus from around the late 2000s, with the design and implementation of strategies emanating from the office of the Mayor of London after consultation with key stakeholders. The two strategies that have provided the wider policy framework for addressing VAWG in London since 2010 envisage measures that relate to prevention, provision of services, protection and prosecution. The most relevant elements of these policies and measures are outlined below.

### **5.1 The Way Forward: taking action to end VAWG**

The first integrated strategy and action plan for addressing VAWG in London was set out in *The Way Forward: taking action to end violence against women and girls* (GLA 2010), as a strategy to be implemented between 2010-2013. It was oriented by the following key objectives and associated measures:

1. London taking a global lead to end VAWG: reducing prevalence of VAW by addressing gender inequality with focus on cultural change
2. Improving access to support: building capacity across the voluntary sector to enable provision of better services
3. Addressing the health, social and economic consequences of violence: make VAWG a priority for service providers and promote integrated support services
4. Protecting women and girls at risk: work in partnership with key statutory and voluntary sector support services to improve support and safety of victims
5. Getting tougher with perpetrators: make the criminal justice work to deter crimes of VAWG and hold perpetrators to account, with tougher sanctions.

The strategy adopts the UN definition of VAWG and sees it as ‘a form of discrimination and a violation of the human rights of women and girls’ that is both ‘a cause and consequence of gender inequality’ and ‘one of the most serious inequalities facing women and girls in London today’ (GLA 2010: 13). The strategy covers various forms of VAWG, including domestic (DV)/intimate partner, female genital mutilation; forced marriage; ‘honour’ based violence; prostitution and trafficking; sexual violence (including rape); sexual exploitation; sexual harassment; and stalking.

The strategy highlights the extent and range of VAWG, where data shows that London:

- Has the highest rate of female victimisation in England and Wales
- Has the lowest percentage of successful convictions of prosecuted cases (62%; 72% for the UK)
- Has higher rates of DV than the average for England and Wales
- Women in London are more likely to report that they are worried about being raped (48%) and fear violent crime (70%)
- The London Ambulance Service is called to approximately 450 rape/sexual assaults incidents per year
- Some 2,180 rape offences were recorded in London between March 2008-March 2009 (an increase of 14.5% over the previous period)

- The majority of women in prostitution in London are foreign nationals, many of whom have been trafficked into Britain, most from Eastern European Countries, but also from China, various countries in South East Asia and Africa as well as from Brazil
- Women in prostitution in London suffer from a mortality rate that is 12 times the national average.

The strategy also noted that the intersection of aspects of a woman's identity and areas of London, an issue that was to be addressed in the new, revised strategy for VAWG in London, discussed next.

### **5.2 Mayoral Strategy on VAWG 2013-2017**

A review of *The Way Forward* was carried out by the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC), which noted that the original strategy had been highlighted as an example of good practice at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women in February 2013. The review produced the new VAWG strategy for London for the period 2013-2017, also referred to as the *PAN London VAWG Strategy*, which was launched in 2013. The review of the main objectives of the original strategy noted that:

- 48,873 DV crimes had been reported to the Metropolitan Police Service in London in 2012/2013
- Around one-third of the violence with injury in London occurs within the home
- 3,043 rape offences, 7,982 serious sexual assaults and 1,780 other sexual offences were reported to the Metropolitan Police Service in London.

The implementation of the *Pan London VAWG Strategy* has entailed commissioning a number of key programmes to address the various manifestations of VAWG, such as the Pan London DV Service, Rape Crisis Centres and London Havens, Harmful Practices Pilot, Children's Social Care Innovation Programme Fund (FGM Pilot) and Domestic Homicide Reviews.

The *Pan London DV Service*, launched in 2015 at a cost of £5 million, is the first ever London-wide service created for victims of DV and aims to ensure that local services are coordinated to provide victims with ready access to specialist support. The service is run by a consortium that works with the police, local authorities, the Crown Prosecution Service and voluntary organisations. Its key role is to coordinate the provision of services to victims to ensure they access practical and emotional support, housing, financial support, counselling and healthcare (MOPAC 2016).

### **5.3 The VAWG Consortium and ASCENT**

The London VAWG Consortium was set up around 2011, as a 'feminist, anti-racist model of consortia' (LVAWGC 2016). It comprises 22 organisations that work in partnership to provide 'comprehensive, cost-effective, high quality services' (specialist and generic) across London that address all forms of GBV. The consortium also aims to strengthen referral pathways across organisations, and to identify trends and emerging needs. Some of these organisations offer services specific to women of certain nationalities and/or ethnicities, as their own official names indicate, whilst others are more generalist and provide support to partners in



the consortium (see Appendix II for a list of the organisations that are members of the consortium).

The London VAWG Consortium is implementing ASCENT, a project funded by London Councils, a cross-party organisation that represents the 32 borough councils and the City of London and which has been undertaking a number of initiatives on VAWG in London (London Councils 2016). ASCENT provides various frontline services to women who have suffered domestic and sexual violence, along with support to voluntary and statutory organisations. The project is delivered through six strands, each of which is led by one specific organisation. The strands are: Prevention; Advice, Counselling, Outreach, Drop-in and Support for Access to Services; Domestic and Sexual Violence Helplines; Specialist Refuge Provision; Ending Harmful Practices; and Support Services to Organisations (London Councils 2016).

The London VAWG Consortium and the ASCENT project thus provide the backdrop to the provision of services to Brazilian women who experience violence in London, and some of the providers who participated in the research are members of the consortium and are also involved in the implementation of ASCENT through its different strands.

## **6. Service Provision for Brazilian Women Survivors of Violence in London**

This section reports on the research findings around a number of features related to the provision of services for Brazilian women who experience violence in London. It begins by identifying service providers according to the scope of their remit, describing how Brazilian women access services, as well as outlining the characteristics of service users and perpetrators, before identifying the types of violence Brazilian women in London have suffered and for which they have sought help. It then goes on to consider the role of past experiences of violence and the root causes of violence, to conclude with a consideration of levels of demand for services.

### **6.1 Service Providers: generalist and specialist**

In broad terms, service providers comprise *generalist* and/or *specialist* providers that range from individuals operating informally through to formal, large-scale organisations. Generalist providers may offer an array of services to clients who may include women who suffer violence, whereas specialist providers offer support services following specific criteria (e.g. nationality or ethnicity; victims/survivors of violence only). Support is commonly offered towards accessing statutory services directly or through referrals (i.e. benefits, social services, housing, health services, and schools), immigration advice, legal services, as well as counselling and psychotherapy, and may be provided by prior appointment or on a drop-in basis. In addition, a few providers run refuges where they accommodate women and their children for a period of time.

**Table 2: Service Providers according to nature of services provided**

WSPA	Generalist but support specific to women's organisations
WSPB	Specialist VAWG to all women
WSPC	Generic services to Brazilians

WSPD	Generic with VAWG services
WSPE	Generic but serving Latin Americans
WSPF	Generic services to Latin American Women with VAWG services
WSPG	Generic services to Latin American Women with VAWG services
WSPJ	Generic health services to people unable to access mainstream services
WSPK	Generic services to Brazilian women, including VAWG services
WSPL	Generic health services to sex workers, including Brazilian women
WSPM	Generic with VAWG services
<i>Code</i>	<i>Organisations mentioned by interviewees that did not participate in research</i>
WSPH	Specialist VAWG services to Brazilian women

## 6.2 Accessing Services

Brazilian women access service providers through a variety of routes. Most common is referral through ‘word-of-mouth’ by previous or existing users, identified by 9 out of the 12 providers [WSPC; WSPE; WSPD8; WSPF; WSPG2; WSPG3; WSPK; WSPL1; WSPM]. This practice was actively encouraged by one provider, for whom ‘the best way to disseminate my work is to use the women themselves’ [WSPL2]. Self-referral through use of the internet is also quite common [WSPC; WSPL1, WSPM], so that ‘women will just Google ... support for something ... and they come up with our name’ [WSPB].

A further important route for accessing service providers is through referrals of Brazilian women by statutory services, such as social services, health services and GPs, and also by the Police [WSPB; WSPD1; WSPF; WSPG2], who may learn about these services through dissemination by the providers themselves, as in the following case

‘...there is a lot [of women] that [come through] social services, the Police; so the [woman] doesn’t even know that we exist. They learn about us because the services send them to us. There are places in the Police where we’ve already left [materials]; for instance, Lambeth knows about our existence; Waltham Forest knows, both social services and the Police, they know we exist. [In] Brent, I’ve already made contact with a policeman, so he knows we exist’ [WSPF].

Referrals between service providers also constitute a very important route enabling Brazilian women to access support and help, and the nature of the help sought may determine, to a great extent, the provider that will actually take their case on. Amongst those providing services to Brazilian women survivors of violence, the WSPF (providing generic services to Latin American Women with VAWG services) is probably the most widely known. It has, over the years, received referrals from various other, less specialised providers [WSPC; WSPD8; WSPE; WSPK; WSPL1; WSPL2; WSPM], and has also referred Brazilian women to them and others [WSPJ; WSPL1; WSPL2]. Some providers have also worked closely with each other over the years [WSPC and WSPG; WSPC and WSPH; WSPG and WSPH; WSPD and WSPG; WSPE and WSPG; WSPJ and WSPL].

A final route for accessing services is via the Brazilian government, through its Brazilian General Consulate in London, which offers an important dial-in service for women who are

victims of DV, sexual labour exploitation and international trafficking. The service, known as *Dial 180 International*, is listed on the Consulate’s webpage and has run for several years. Victims themselves, or people who know women who may be at risk, can call the service and will be put in touch with support services in the UK. Importantly, the webpage also lists the contact details of WSPH and WSPF, whilst staff at the Consulate will often refer callers to WSPH and WSPC.

### 6.3 Service Users

Brazilian women in London who experience violence comprise a mixed population in terms of origin in Brazil, age, social class, ethnicity and education. However, broadly speaking, they are working age, in their 40s, with some education, and likely to have some means to be able migrate in the first place (see also Datta and McIlwaine, 2014 on a gender profile). However, the profile remains diverse (see comments by providers in Table 3).

**Table 3: Characteristics of Brazilian Women Survivors of Violence who Access Help**

Provider	Characteristics
WSPB	‘they are working women, in that they are usually within employment, [they] function at quite a good level... they seem to strive for self-sufficiency’
WSPC	‘you get women with university education, a professional in a good job, and ... they have a certain position over there, which they lose over here... but in general, [violence] cuts across all classes’
WSPD1	‘They are varied, really, the particular clients I mentioned, one was 28, the other was nearly 40’
WSPF	‘It is varied. At the moment, I [see] quite a number of women between 34 and 45 years of age, a very large number in this age bracket, and they are women who come, who have a long-standing relationship, marriages of 15 years, 20 years’
WSPG1	‘[in Brazil] I’d say a lot come from Fortaleza [ <i>Northeast</i> ], Belo Horizonte [ <i>South East</i> ], Londrina and Curitiba [ <i>South</i> ], Florianópolis [ <i>South</i> ]’... [and] another thing I notice is that women that are arriving now from Brazil, are less educated than the ones that I used to work with before’
WSPK	‘...they are all White... I don’t know about their lives in Brazil... but I can say that... if they managed to get here, they have some means’
WSPM	‘...few are single amongst those that I’ve seen, most are married, and in this age bracket, 30’.  ‘A lot of women [come] from Minas [ <i>Southeast</i> ], and ... there is a lot from Goiás [ <i>Centre West</i> ] in this borough here, and besides these, a lot of women are from the <i>North</i> ’.

Source: Interviews - service providers (July 2016 – February 2017)

Brazilian women who experience violence may also count as clients of those who provide support to specific groups of women, such as sex workers [WSPL1; WSPL2;] or vulnerable groups, such as undocumented immigrants [WSPJ]. Conversely, some providers may find Brazilian sex workers and undocumented Brazilian women amongst their user groups [WSPF, WSPM] (see Table 4).

**Table 4: Characteristics of Brazilian Women Who Access Help**

Provider	Characteristics
WSPJ	'Broadly speaking, most people that we see are sort of twenty to forty, in that bracket, but there is a fair spread'.
WSPL1	'Most of the women we see are over 20, a very small number are between 18 and 20. Nobody is under 18 because if they are under 18 then they can't be working in the sex industry, there are health and safeguarding issues, but most people are probably over 25, and it goes right up to 55.... I've got pockets of patients who are probably between 35 and 45. So it is not an exclusively young cohort, it is all across'.  'What I do get a sense though is that some people haven't had much schooling, so they might find it difficult to read some of the information that we give even in Portuguese'  'Lots of [women] have children, they are more likely to be 25 or above, so lots of people have children'.
WSPL2	'The women who I've seen here are women who had a profession in Brazil, some in very high positions, and many were, for instance, nurses'.  [they range] from 18 years old, through to 54, which I think was the oldest, but there were women from all backgrounds, those with a very high level of education as well as those with little education, who'd come from the back of beyond and could hardly speak or express themselves'.
WSPM	'It is a miscellanea. I've seen young women, about 20 [years old]. I think that women aged 20 or older, they have the option to leave [sex working] more quickly, but women around 30, the put up with it more. The younger ones, after one month, they get out. They'll look for another occupation, they may start in prostitution, but they won't settle. Now, those in the age bracket around 30, they put up with it more, let's say, they adapt. If a woman arrives here and then works for about five years in prostitution, it is very rare that they'll leave it'.

Source: Interviews - service providers (July 2016 – February 2017)

#### **6.4 Perpetrators**

The perception amongst service providers about the perpetrators of violence against Brazilian women in London was that, in general, Brazilian men were not the main perpetrators as noted by 7 providers [WSPC; WSPD1; WSPF; WSPG1; WSPG2; WSPL2; WSPM]. Most commonly, the perpetrators were a combination of Portuguese men [WSPB; WSPF; WSPG1; WSPM], followed by Brazilian men [WSPB; WSPD1; WSPF; WSPM], but other nationalities were also involved, such as British men, Italian men Angolan men [WSPG1; WSPG2; WSPM]. These perpetrators were, in their majority, intimate partners as identified by 8 of the providers [WSPA; WSPB; WSPC; WSPF; WSPG1; WSPJ; WSPK; WSPM].

Overall, these findings suggest that Brazilian women could not have anticipated that becoming involved in a relationship with non-Brazilians would entail living in violence in exchange for the right to be in the country lawfully. The following comment by one provider exemplifies the kind of rationale that might place Brazilian women in a position of

vulnerability whose resolution might require entering a relationship that may eventually lead to enduring violence:

‘there is the marriage to a foreigner [non-Brazilian man], because she’ll need a visa, so she becomes dependent on him ... the large majority are cases of women who marry foreigners and end up in violent relationships ... I don’t know whether it is only about visa, it is so interesting this, because when a [Brazilian] woman marries a foreigner [non-Brazilian man], she gets into this dream, she meets him, then goes to Brazil, the man becomes the Prince Charming; ... the other day, when I was in Brazil to give a talk, I talked about this, ‘Be careful that your Prince Charming won’t become the Frog Prince!’ especially because of these encounters through the internet’ [WSPC]

As the quotation above illustrates, and as will be discussed later, violence against Brazilian women in London intersects with issues around immigration status. This means that Brazilian women who marry Brazilians who hold dual nationality, British nationals or European nationals may find themselves in a position of vulnerability that derives from their dependence on their partners for resolution of their immigration status that may, in turn, entail being subject to different forms of violence (see also McIlwaine, 2010 on Latin Americans more widely).

### **6.5 Types of Violence against Brazilian Women in London**

As noted previously, VAWG can take specific forms (physical, sexual, emotional/psychological, economic and political) and entail various types of violence in different spaces and places (see Figure 1). Service providers identified several types of violence that Brazilian women experience and for which they seek help. The commonest by far is DV/IPV [WSPA; WSPE; WSPC; WSPD1; WSPF; WSPG1; WSPJ; WSPI; WSPK; WSPM], but there were also cases of trafficking for sex labour (by husbands or third parties), forced detention, domestic servitude, and violence against sex workers by clients, as well as some documented cases of femicide (see Table 5).

**Table 5: Types of Violence Against Brazilian Women in London**

<b>Provider</b>	<b>Types of Violence</b>
WSPC	‘she is locked up, she comes over with some history already, people will bring her here, telling her that she’ll work only a few hours, and they take away her documents and she is kept locked up inside, I’ve had cases like that, and it is very difficult for the woman to get out of this situation, because she becomes dependent, she may go out but only with the [perpetrator] or their children, they do everything together, they go to the supermarket, she has no freedom, she can’t take days off, and she becomes very scared’
WSPF	‘... and the types of violence are verbal, psychological, control, coercion; there is also physical and sexual, there is a high number of them, but it is not as high as the verbal and psychological violence; and also coercion and control, which are many cases, of women who are controlled by the husbands.’
WSPI	‘... there is the economic issue: there is the Brazilian woman who, I think, suffers violence that goes from physical through the psychological; she suffers mainly because she depends on her husband ... [there is] the issue visa: the issue of

	passport, and so that is why she lives in violence, which can be physical or not, it can be ... psychological, which has to do with the woman being unable to leave that situation’.
WSPJ	‘the main issues that we see there ... [we] will identify most when it is physical and maybe less so if it is emotional or psychological ..., but yes .... the majority of disclosure that we have .... is of DV, what we are talking is mostly physical abuse’.
WSPK	‘So there is, I think that here is much more financial the abuse, it is much more financial in this country ... because when the man abuses [a woman], especially here in this country, it is because he is in control of the situation ... So the biggest problem here in England is financial control that men have over women...’
WSPL1	‘So very often people come here [for] sexually reproductive health, and [then] we find that other things are going on, such as, sexual assault, rape, DV ... The commonest violence that we see here in the clinic is women who’ve experienced violence in their work setting, and that can be sexual violence, or non-sexual, so it can be that people are actually robbing them of money or goods, and/or sexual violence. They are either people who have been raped or sexually assaulted. And also ... customers come to see them and after one service, try something else, which often is rape or sexual assault’.
WSPM	‘I never imagined that there could be so much violence here. I think that the worst is emotional violence ... I don’t know what happens with these women here ... they are being beaten, being drugged, [the partner is] taking the money that she worked for, taking her stuff, and they can’t be break free’.

Source: Interviews - service providers (July 2016 – February 2017)

Some service providers noted a surge in recent years in online dating, a tool used by men (mostly Brazilian or Portuguese), to bring Brazilian women over to the UK, where they will subsequently subject them to various types of violence [WSPC; WSPF; WSPG1; WSPG2; WSPK; WSPM]. The dating will be conducted online, until both parties meet in person, which can happen in Brazil, in the UK, or also a third country (e.g. in Portugal, in the case of Portuguese men).

Commonly too, the man will organise to bring the woman to London, taking care of all expenses (e.g. obtaining a passport, the air ticket, money for travelling and personal effects). Conversely, the man may fly out to Brazil to meet the woman and her family, they may marry over there, and then return to Britain to live here, or travel together and marry here and settle. The following extracts illustrate the role of online dating in allowing women to become victims of violence:

‘these encounters through the internet, there used to be a lot of them; the [Brazilian] Consulate has started to warn about this now.... but we were already seen a lot of women here in this situation ... a great majority of them were turning into DV ... they were coming over here with Prince Charming, [who would] go over there [Brazil] and meet the family ... and would then bring her over to live here, they’d marry, and then ... disaster strikes! [WSPC]

One example of the type of internet encounters that end up in violent relationships is that of a Brazilian woman who first met a Portuguese man online, then met him in person in Brazil before moving with him to Portugal, where he began to subject her to various forms of violence which he carried on inflicting on her as they moved to London. She was pregnant

when they met, he adopted her son and they went on to have two children together. He had disabilities and so had his children and, as a result, the family depended on benefits, over which he had total control. She depended on him totally, and had also become undocumented. He then brought in a young woman from South Asia to be his girlfriend and live in the family home. Eventually, he went on to lock his Brazilian partner out of their home, keeping her away from her children. On one occasion, he even attempted to run her over as she tried to see the children as he collected them from school. She sought help to try and get custody of her children and managed to obtain Legal Aid and assemble the evidence to get the police to prosecute him for violence (which included detailed reports of the sexual violence and emotional and psychological manipulation that she suffered over the years). But, ultimately, she was scared off by his threats to block her access to the children altogether if she went ahead with any legal action so she dropped the case against him. As the service provider observed:

‘This is about control, he has control, he has the house, he has the money that is paid into his account every month, he has all the control, and on top of that, he has control over her, because of the children ... her biggest fear was to lose them, and she did end up losing them’ [WSPK]

Some providers identified a process whereby Brazilian women come to the UK as partners or wives of men whose will subject them to violence, as constituting ‘trafficking’, which may subsequently also characterise ‘trafficking for labour’, if the women are turned into sex slaves by their husbands [WSPG; WSPF].

Brazilian women may also enter into relationships or arranged marriages as a means of settling in the country legally, so the ulterior aim is to obtain British or European citizenship or simply a valid visa. Often the women will be based in Brazil and meet the future partner or husband via the internet, on their own, or on the recommendation by a friend in the UK, but many will already be living in the UK and will meet them here. However, once in the relationship or after married, many of these women will begin to suffer various forms of violence from their husbands or IPs [WSPC; WSPF; WSPK; WSPM]. One example is the case of an undocumented Brazilian woman who became involved with a Portuguese man expecting that they would get married and that this would help her regularise her immigration status. But that did not happen. Instead, the relationship became extremely violent and nearly destroyed her. She has recovered from the trauma of violence but remains undocumented [WSPK]. The following extracts also illustrate the argument:

‘the majority of women [that I helped] were [undocumented]; they are more vulnerable here because of this ... it is normal for women to arrive here and remain illegally here, for a period of time, and then meet a companion who is legal, they’ll start a relationship with the explicit aim of becoming legal’ [WSPK]

‘many [women] suffer violence to be able to get their document ... Most of those who I see here are in this situation. It is very serious issue here, this issue of the visa...They endure horrible things because of this document’ [WSPM]

Alternatively, Brazilian women will be encouraged to come to the UK by friends, acquaintances, or agencies on false promises of work and will find themselves being forced into sex working, or being turned into sex slaves or labour slaves [WSPF; WSPL2; WSPM;]. Thus, one service provider related the case of a woman who in 2016 was invited by her sister to come to the UK to work for her, helping her manage the properties that she owns in London, only to end up in domestic servitude and forced detention and at the risk of starvation. After a few months, she managed to escape, and turned into sex work as a last resort [WSPF].

Another service provider told of the case of a Brazilian woman who was trafficked by her Portuguese husband for sexual slavery in 2103. She was a primary school teacher in Brazil where she first met him on a visit from London, where he lived. They started dating and he flew out to Brazil several times over a period of two years when he got to meet her family. They got married in Brazil but she moved to London with him and soon after, he took her passport away, and placed her in forced detention, subjecting her to various forms of sexual violence, as well as forcing her into sex work that he managed himself and which also involved extreme forms of violence, including torture, even as she became pregnant. This lasted for about six months. It only stopped when a neighbour heard her repeated screams and called the police but as she spoke no English, the police wrongly arrested her on suspicion of sex working. But following intervention by WSPH, the case was recorded as one of DV on the basis that she was married to the perpetrator who had by then disappeared. She was released and WSPG took up her case, helping her regularise her immigration status. However, the service provider was highly critical of the police for recording her case as one of DV, noting 'You know, she is married to him, there is no trafficking issue here, because she is married' but the provider insisted that 'it is a trafficking case' (WSPG1; WSPG2].

Other cases of trafficking for sexual labour resulted from the involvement of organised international trafficking. In one case, a Brazilian woman in her early 20s who was living in Brazil had signed up with an agency to work as a model in London. The agency paid for her papers and travel expenses, and on arriving, she found out that she would have to undertake sex work for a gang run by Albanians. She refused the work and walked away, but months later she was kidnapped by the gang and taken into forced detention at a secret address where she was made to work as a sex slave so the gang would recoup their 'investment'. She worked alongside half a dozen other Brazilian women and many Eastern European women. After four years, she managed to evade her bodyguards during a visit to her doctor's and escaped, eventually finding WSPM. Meanwhile, the gang member who spoke Portuguese managed to track her family in Brazil. Initially, he contacted them by phone, posing as her boyfriend who was looking for her after a major row, but a few weeks later, he wound up at their door, telling a tale that he was madly in love with their daughter and needed to find her. The woman could not reveal the truth to her parents and jeopardise their safety, so she told them that she had broken up with the boyfriend and moved out of the UK and she has managed to keep safe and build a new life for herself. The service provider has seen several similar cases ('this is happening commonly') and has run a program of talks in Brazil over the years to raise awareness about trafficking [WSPM].

A similar case relating to organised international trafficking is that of three Brazilian women who were recruited in Brazil in 2010 to work in London, had all travel expenses paid for, and on arrival were forced into sex work by a gang of Romanians and Angolans. They were not in



forced detention nor had their passport confiscated by the gang. But they decided to contact a service provider to report that they were all working at the same brothel when they were attacked by three men who beat them with sticks, robbed and raped them. They wanted to report the incident to the police but could not do it themselves as they spoke no English. The service provider did report their case to the police, who went on to gather the evidence to prosecute the gang, taking care to remove the three women from London to a secure location whilst the case went to court. But once the police began to arrest members of the gang, the families of the women in Brazil began to receive death threats, and it later transpired that a man working for the police in Brazil was a member of the gang tasked with recruiting the women [WSPL2].

There have also been cases where women were exploited for labour, in that their employers failed to pay them their due wages. A service provider had seen several cases where employers would hire women, either knowing or suspecting that they might be undocumented, let them work for weeks or months without pay, and would at some point, (often after the employee demanded payment) dismiss them without paying them their due wages, on the grounds that they had no right to be working (a common process among the Latin American community more widely in London – see McIlwaine, Cock and Linneker, 2011; McIlwaine and Bunge, 2016). In one of these cases, the service provider threatened to report the employers to the immigration authorities for treating the employees as slave labour, arguing that this would prove much more expensive than simply settling the wages [WSPK]. Similarly, a wealthy Brazilian woman had employed another Brazilian woman who was undocumented to do domestic work at her home. The worker lived at the family home but was lodged in a shed outside, without heating, for which she had to pay rent that was deducted from wages that she was never actually paid. After eighteen months, the worker, who was virtually being kept in forced confinement, managed to seek help from the service provider who intervened, finding out that the employer was a close friend of a well-known religious leader amongst the Brazilian community in northwest London. The service provider approached the religious leader and gave him a week to prevail upon his wealthy friend to sort out the matter, reminding him that both women were ‘lambs of his flock’, and warning that failure to sort the matter out result in the police being notified. The employer then agreed to settle all outstanding wages at the National Minimum Wage rate. It turned out that the worker had already been in a similar situation of domestic servitude and enforced detainment by another Brazilian woman who had simply passed the worker on to her wealthy friend as she decided to move back to Brazil [WSPK].

Violence that resulted in the murder of Brazilian women (or femicide, broadly defined as the systematic killing of women and girls; WHO 2012) was also known by service providers to have occurred in London. There was the case, for instance, of a Brazilian woman who was found dead three years after seeking the help of a service provider. This led to an investigation by the police, and the service provider testified on behalf of the client, but the verdict was recorded as one of suicide. The service provider disagreed with this, contending that their knowledge of the client’s circumstances did not suggest that she was susceptible to suicide: ‘she was not that kind of person ... it doesn’t match .... something happened here’ [WASPG2]. But the service provider acknowledged that the experience of violence drove women to think of killing themselves, and estimated that at one point, around of 20% of their clients had contemplated committing suicide [WSPG1] and although they could try to track and monitor them, they conceded that ‘[we] don’t know what happens to all the numbers [of

women] that we have to deal with' [WSPG3]. Another service provider noted that two years ago news had spread through the Brazilian community of a Brazilian woman who had been murdered in west London causing a 'whole ripple of distress' [WSPL1].

Another case demonstrates that women may injure themselves seriously or even kill themselves by accident when trying to save themselves during an episode of violence that threatens their lives. Thus, the customer of a Brazilian sex worker went into her workplace and chased her brandishing a knife. She managed to lock herself in but the man kept shouting abuse and banging on the door. In her desperation, she tried to escape the first floor flat by jumping out of a window, and broke her legs on landing [WSPL2].

A further case illustrates how lack of knowledge about the previous history of violent behaviour of a current IP may place women in grave danger. One service provider told of a Brazilian who had been married in Brazil and had a son but divorced her husband after suffering violence for years and then went on to meet a Brazilian man on the internet whom she dated in Brazil during her adolescence. Following their meeting on Facebook, the man invited her to come to London to be with him. She travelled alone but later sent for her son. Not long after moving in with him, he took her passport away and began to subject her to coercion, control and physical and psychological violence: he hid her belongings, he tapped her mobile phone to track her movements, he hit her, and he often kept her in forced detention. He also began to abuse her son physically and intended to send him to a boarding school, but as the boy let it slip out in school that he was being beaten and maltreated by her mother's boyfriend, the school raised the alarm, reporting the case to social services and the police, who intervened to build a case for prosecution. The mother and the boy were placed in a refuge outside London, but being undocumented, she had no access to state benefits or Legal Aid, but managed instead to obtain financial help from her church community while her immigration status was sorted out, following an application for Leave to Remain on the grounds of a Human Rights claim. During the investigation, it was found out that her partner had been previously married to a Portuguese woman and who had later been found dead. The case was tried in court and returned a verdict of suicide. According to the service provider 'what the court here said was that she was driven [to take her own life], they call it suicide, but, in reality, it is not suicide, so the court was trying to do everything to incriminate him, because he was the culprit, but in the end, they didn't succeed' [WSPF]. The Brazilian woman only learned about this as the police prepared the case to prosecute him for violence against her, even though she had already been living with him for just over one year, although again, towards the end, she and her son had been terrified of him. He holds a European passport and is at large, but is being treated as a dangerous man [WSPF].

## **6.6 History of VAWG**

Service providers noted that some of their Brazilian clients already had a history of experiencing violence in Brazil before moving to London [WSPB; WSPC; WSPM; WSPG1]. The key argument here is that of an observable pattern whereby such history can generally be traced back to exposure to violent behaviour in the home as a child, either directly through suffering violence herself, or by witnessing violence meted out to their mothers, which may subsequently make them more susceptible to entering violent relationships (see Table 6).

**Table 6: History of VAWG in Brazil**

Provider	Comment
WSPC	'[Brazilian women in general who seek help] 'She already has a history of violence at home, she has a history there'
WSPG1	'...someone who does have a history of abuse, and then is in a relationship where there is DV, there is more of a tendency for them to fall back in those patterns, because it is what you've known, how you understand relationships as a child, so if your father has been abusive you, your brother has been abusing you, the perpetrator, if he only slaps you once in a while, but gives you a house, he is actually kind of better than your history of [being treated by] men'
WSPi	I also know that many of these women had problems at home, this thing that 'I watched my father beat my mother so it is OK, it is something that I accept'
WSPM	'... If you were raised in an environment of violence, you'll always tend to think that it is normal. This is a very strong factor, 'where I come from' ... I tell you, if you are raised in an environment of violence it will be very difficult for you not to reproduce it. We must take great care to treat seriously what happened in childhood, because of what it generates ... if you do examine it, you'll find the thread that will take you back to one's home'.

Source: Interviews - service providers (July 2016 – February 2017)

In relation to the continuity of violence, for instance, one service provider related the case of a Brazilian woman who had experienced violence from her husband for over 15 years of the 20 that they had been married. The violent behaviour started in Brazil and on one occasion she reported him to the police, he was prosecuted, convicted, and sentenced to community service, which he served. As they moved to London some nine years ago, he carried on subjecting her to DV, particularly emotional abuse. They had a daughter together, who is now a teenager. Recently, the husband had taken to reporting the wife to the police on false claims of negligence towards the daughter to have her taken away and build a case against her so she would eventually be made to leave home. But the service provider intervened on her behalf, putting in a complaint against the police for listening only to the husband, as well as starting legal proceedings against the husband for DV and to obtain custody of the daughter [WSPF].

Generally, though, it was more common for women to begin to experience violence after had they moved out of Brazil, whether in Portugal, the UK or any other intervening country, including those who had been trafficked in any manner, given that trafficking itself constitutes a type of violence [WSPC; WSPG1; WSPF; WSPK; WSPM].

### **6.7 The causes and risk-factors underlying VAWG**

It needs to be acknowledged that deep-seated patriarchal relations are at the root of VAWG in any context (McIlwaine, 2013). However, VAWG plays out in different ways according to place, space and affected by a range of structural and intersectional factors. It needs to be emphasised that explanations of GBV should not be attributed to natural and immutable factors (Green and Sweetman, 2013), but rather that they extend beyond individual relations to much wider structural processes within communities, cities and nations. Part

of this are the prevailing nature of gender roles, relations and identities and especially unequal power relations between women and men which are themselves affected and influenced by a wide range of issues such as socio-economic change, poverty and potentially international migration (McIlwaine, 2014; McIlwaine and Carlisle, 2011; Pickup et al., 2001). However, many aspects of these structural phenomena and different type of patriarchies intersect with a series of risk or precipitating factors that play out differently in different contexts.

Therefore, acknowledging that a combination of structural, individual and risks factors are more likely to explain the rise of VAWG than anyone single factor in isolation, control over financial resources and immigration status are important factors that led to Brazilian women to experience violence in London, and most commonly, from IPs [WSPD8; WSPI; WSPK; WSPM].

In terms of financial control, two distinct narratives are identifiable. On the one hand, there is the narrative about couples who come from Brazil to London in search of economic opportunities and the women are more likely to find work more quickly than men, particularly cleaning, which is commonly carried out informally and accessed via referrals by friends or acquaintances [WSPD8; WSPM] (see also McIlwaine, 2010 on the wider Latin American community). The following extract illustrates this narrative and the genesis of violent behaviour:

‘women manage to get work here much more easily. And they earn a lot more. So, that makes them independent, and the man is at home. Then she asks why he is not working, and he asks for her money, and that is the beginning of the violence. She gets home tired and he is at home, because he couldn’t find work. But he is upset because she is working and he is at home all the time’.  
[WSPM]

On the other hand, there is a narrative of men controlling the economic resources, whether those of the women or the household, or both, so that women become completely dependent on them, and thus susceptible to VAWG in various forms [WSPI; WSPK]. One particular interpretation of this narrative is that the existence of a much more developed welfare system in the UK than in Brazil encourages controlling behaviour among those with regular immigration status:

‘Here, in this country, the problem is even bigger because in Brazil there is not all this issue of benefits ... this infrastructure [of help] doesn't exist in Brazil ... here there is the house that the council will pay the rent for, there is the benefit that you can claim as a single mother, or the husband alone looking after the children, there is all this infrastructure that they don't want to lose... no matter how poor you are, there is still a benefit for this, a benefit for that... I think that here is much more financial abuse, it is much more financial in this country...’  
[WSPK]

Brazilian women were also susceptible or subjected to various forms of violence because of their immigration status, which was used to control, coerce, threaten or manipulate them (see McIlwaine, 2015 on the wider Latin American community) (see Table 7).

**Table 7: Gender-based Violence and Being Undocumented**

Provider	Comment
WSPB	'[undocumented women] are far more vulnerable to further exploitation... for example, if they might be working cash-in-hand.... [they] are not going to be paid Minimum Wage, if somebody knows that they can get away with exploiting; so [women] work incredibly long hours, or take whatever they can, and that is just... really not to have to face destitution, which they often do, and for us, those women are far more vulnerable to other forms of exploitation, domestic exploitation, sexual slavery, ... domestic servitude'
WSPD8	'that is a problem that you'll have with a migrant woman who is undocumented, if they have a partner, whose partner will be trying to threaten them with immigration, immigration becomes a tool of abuse'
WSPE	'someone who is married to a European national and [he] is telling the person 'you have to stay with me, otherwise I'll call the Home Office and then you'll be deported'
WSPK	'if the woman is in this country illegally, and the husband is legal, he will do whatever he wants with her, because she is [at his mercy]'

Source: Interviews - service providers (July 2016 – February 2017)

As will be seen later (section 7.4), immigration status plays a crucial role in conditioning Brazilian women's access to support services, social services, the welfare state, and the criminal justice system in the UK.

### **6.8 Demand for Service Providers**

It was often difficult for service providers to establish whether increased demand for their services was due to a rise in violence, or because more support services were becoming available, or still because women themselves were becoming more aware about violence and were seeking help. Whilst some stated that VAWG was on the increase, others thought it had remained the same as in recent years. However, such a difference in perception may well relate to the type of service provision (e.g. whether generic or specialist) (see Table 8).

**Table 8: Increased Demand for Service Providers**

Provider	Comment
WSPA	'I think it is a mixture, there is more reporting, women are getting more aware in certain services and in certain areas, MOPAC is collating more data, ASCENT is spreading and containing more women around the capital, together with local partners, but there is also an increase in violence'.
WSPB	'I'd say that VAW is increasing.... some sexual VAW is increasing...[and] we do see... a small but steady increase in the number of BAME women'
WSPD1	'I think that there has been an increase in Brazilians in the domestic field [DV] ... I've been in this project for three and a half years, there's definitely an increase, and I don't know whether that is because there is more reporting, but generally they come through police referrals, when there has been an incident, like a high risk incident'
WSPD8	'The problem is not going down, that we can establish as a fact, I think. I don't think there is less DV now, there might be more reporting'

WSPE	'of the cases that I see of the Latin American community today, the amount of people who are victims of DV is quite high... for example, I am going to see ten people today at the drop-in, probably two are going to be victims of DV... so it has increased... I can tell you, I have seen it more and more, it is an issue in the Latin American community'
WSPF	'the number of women went on increasing.... In the beginning, I used to see about two or three per week, then it went on increasing, increasing, and now, I've had days when I see five women per day'
WSPI	'I don't think it has grown, no. I think that maybe there is an average over the years that has remained the same, I don't see that it has grown'
WSPJ	'I think it has been fairly steady... the numbers... haven't changed significantly.... on our books, we might have more Latin American women that we are seeing, but I think that's not because necessarily of an increase in numbers [who suffer violence]... it is more women... themselves [seeking support]'
WSPG1	'I'd say in the past five years probably, because when I started, there were Brazilian women, but not as many as now'

Source: Interviews - service providers (July 2016 – February 2017)

## **7. Seeking Help**

This section focuses on the use of support services by survivors of violence, documenting the factors that condition access to support, such as the experience of GBV itself, self-awareness about GBV, immigration status, knowledge of the English language, having children and the role of religion and the church. Some of these can be said to prompt or enable women to seek help, whereas other may discourage them from accessing support.

### **7.1 Seeking help as last resort**

Some service providers highlighted that Brazilian women would generally seek their help when realising that they were no longer able to withstand the violence to which were being subjected or deal with their effects by themselves [WSPB; WSPC; WSPM] (see also Graça, 2015). This included women who had been subjected to violence in Brazil and found that this experience was impacting negatively on an ongoing, non-violent relationship in London [WSPB]:

'When she seeks us, it is because things have already turned very ugly; the threats that she receives, she believes in them, she does; like 'I am going to kill you!'; 'you won't be able to leave with the children', 'if you are illegal, then I am going to keep the children', or 'I'll take the children away and you'll be left all alone'. So, there are many threats and she believes in them and when she gets to the point of seeking help, it is because she can't take it anymore' [WSPC]

'when women suffer violence, by the time that they talk about it, and I am saying that based on my experience here of ten years plus, when they talk about it, it is because it has already exceeded all the limits' [WSPM]

## 7.2 Self-Awareness and Stigma

A further factor that may determine whether Brazilian women will seek help for addressing GBV is to be aware that what they have experienced constitutes violence, although the different forms that violence can take will also condition, to some extent, whether such awareness develops or not. One service provider, for instance, observed that several Brazilian clients had sought help who had also had miscarriages and had not been able to relate them to the treatment they received from their IPs, as they did not consider verbal abuse and psychological manipulation as violence: ‘it is one of the commonest things... there are so many miscarriages and [women] don’t make the connection’ [WSPF].

Many women are aware that they are victims of GBV and seek help to explicitly address it [WSPB; [WSPG3; WSPI; WSPM]. But it is also very common for women to seek help for issues that do not directly relate to violence and end up revealing or accepting that they have, in fact, been suffering violence, particularly in the case of DV/IPV [WSPF; WSPI]. There is also a stigma attached to GBV and to being a survivor of violence which can operate to prevent or delay approaching agencies for support (see Table 9).

**Table 9: Self-Awareness and Stigma**

Provider	Comment
WSPB	‘[women from] many cultures would simply not ... see themselves as having experienced sexualised violence ... they may be further victimised because of their experiences, rather than being supported for them... you often get women from one community not wanting to see somebody within their own faith or their own ethnicity because they feel there is a judgement or that... others will then find out that they are accessing services, so... sometimes they want anonymity’
WSPC	‘[they] come to us without knowing that they are suffering DV, they have no awareness of that... so, a pinch, hair pulling, the tone of voice, some symptoms, some reactions that are taking place... I say, ‘I am not sure whether you’ve noticed it, don’t you think that it is a little strange, that it could be violence?’ Then the woman stops to think... when they come to us, they come at their worst, because she doesn’t realise it, she’s accepted that she is guilty, she has been manipulated, she’s already suffered, she tries to resort to something and do the best for herself...’
WSPD1	‘Some of the Brazilians that I’ve reported have quite complex needs.... I find they minimise quite a lot, they may hide the abuse, almost; I don’t know what the law is in Brazil, I don’t know if maybe they are aware of what is happening, that it is against the law here’
WSPF	‘When I talk to women here, I ask them ‘Have you ever suffered violence?’ they reply ‘No, never!’ but then they start talking and [reveal that] they’ve lived under coercion, abuse, and control so much and that is worse than physical [violence]’
WSPI	‘It is very difficult for people to talk about this subject, it is very difficult still... [there] is still a stigma...It is very complicated to have a woman come to you and state up front ‘My husband beats me!’ She will start off by saying ‘I need to get a divorce, because I can’t be with my husband anymore because he’s seeing another woman’; and then you start querying her, bit by bit, until she’ll tell you about it; she’ll not tell you straightaway’
WSPG3	‘so we have social activities that we see very much as the way to engage women, because a lot of women don’t even want to talk about it at all, because the communities are very small, you don’t want someone else to hear what’s

	happening with your relationship, as the women will be saying ‘Oh but I know her husband, he is lovely, she must be lying!’
WSPM	‘they don’t talk about in the beginning, because they don’t want to expose themselves’

Source: Interviews - service providers (July 2016 – February 2017)

Previous experience of GBV in Brazil was also highlighted as a factor in leading women to downplay their current experience of violence in London and delaying their search for help. Thus, for instance, one service provider related how a high number of Brazilian women who were working in nightclubs in London had either experienced or witnessed high levels of GBV in Brazil, and had also been subject to violence in the manner they were brought to London, which made their current experience of violence pale by comparison, so that it was difficult persuading them that, nonetheless, it is still violence. Thus:

‘they must be in a better place; rather than challenging the exploitation that they are experiencing now... they say “Ok, here... yeah, he is really violent to me, and maybe he beats me and sometimes he is drunk, or he's taken drugs ... but ... you know, I've been shot ... I've seen people murdered”’[WSPB]

### 7.3 English Language

Lack of knowledge of the English language by Brazilian women was seen by some providers as instrumental in compounding their vulnerability, and susceptibility to GBV, by increasing their dependence on IPs or others to navigate their way through daily life in London. Thus, the provision of services in Portuguese (or the use of translating agencies where no in-house Portuguese-speaker was available), was highlighted as key to encouraging Brazilian women to seek support to deal with the various consequences of the violence they experience [WSPA; WSPB; WSPD8; WSPF; WSPG; WSPG2; WSPL1; WSPL2]. Interview excerpts shown in Table 10 illustrate the importance that some service providers attach to making support and help available in Portuguese, along with their observations about the limitations imposed by lack of knowledge of English.

**Table 10: Knowledge of English Language**

Provider	Comment
WSPA	‘anybody who answered the phone could contain the women in Portuguese, and say on the telephone ‘everything is going to be ok’; you could say ‘my Portuguese is horrible but...’, and I could see that Brazilian women appreciated that’
WSPB	‘if you can offer [a service] in your own language and that specific knowledge... [it is] a good thing for them...it is very different when you counsel women in their own languages, the depth and the way that they express is stilted and halted...and of course, if you are thinking in another language, you then have to translate, so there is a kind of stiltedness to it’
WSPD8	‘in terms of language, my experience is that people who come from Brazil... might have a little bit of English to survive...; this is not applicable to some communities; some people come here and have absolutely no idea of a word in English’



WSPE	'we have our webpage and we try to upload [content] in Spanish and in Portuguese too, because we know that the Portuguese, well, the Brazilian community is very [large]... we are very keen on having this improved... to have translators. we know that it is essential service to Brazilians'
WSPF	'I have some critical cases of Brazilian women who have been here for years and don't speak English'
WSPG1	'most Brazilian women, they speak more English than Latin American [women], they speak more English'
WSPG2	'normally Brazilian women tend to speak more English than the Latin-Spanish speakers, a lot more, I mean, that is something that is very clear... [still, it is] important for us to have people who speak Portuguese from Brazil, that is very important; one of the posts that we are advertising now, the essential requirement is that you need to speak Portuguese'
WSPL2	'we'd do the outreach, we'd go to their workplace, where I'd introduce myself and obviously, [they'd notice] 'Oh, you speak Portuguese, how great!' It is completely different'

Source: Interviews - service providers (July 2016 – February 2017)

#### 7.4 Immigration Status

As noted previously, immigration status emerged as an important factor which, on its own, or in intersection with others, made undocumented Brazilian women reluctant to seek assistance to deal with violence, as they feared being reported to the immigration authorities and deported to Brazil. Such outcomes could prove particularly problematic for women with children whose own immigration status was secured, and would likely remain in the UK under the custody of the IP [WSPE; WSPF; WSPG; WSPI; WSPK]. Although service providers in general did not make their provision of support contingent on immigration status, being undocumented meant that women were, for the most part, ineligible to use statutory services (e.g. social services, state benefits, housing), and publicly-subsidised refuges. Hence, being undocumented will dictate, to a significant extent, the kinds of help that are obtainable and how far any course of action can be pursued (see Table 11).

**Table 11: Being Undocumented**

Provider	Comment
WSPD1	'they do have immigration issues, maybe they'd rather stay underground and not come to the...police and these types of organisations just in case... the ones I ... worked with longer...these women did have immigration issues that they were relying on... it is very, very difficult to engage with them [Brazilians], because women can be deported, so they don't want to highlight their situation'
WSPD8	'Being an undocumented migrant keeps you out of a refuge not because you are undocumented, because there is a stigma, because there is something against undocumented migrants. It is more about: who pays for your refuge space?'
WSPF	'we have to fight a lot, lot, lot, Social Services for them to help undocumented women, the women who have children, that is, because those who don't, they haven't the slightest chance, unless there is an issue of very serious mental health, but even so, they are not too concerned, they say they don't have money, that the government is not giving them money, so there is no way, they don't have where

	to get it from to be able to help. So, in this sense, yes, the women who are undocumented, they can't get anything'
WSPI	'but undocumented women, I had a case... the woman didn't have papers, nor [the husband], and she'd say, 'My fear of reporting him to the police is that the police will then report me to the immigration [authorities], so he'll go to jail and I'll be deported!'
WSPL1	'It doesn't matter what their legal status is, that is something that we need to explain when someone comes in, and I think that's why people often come, because their friends have told them that it is OK, so they are OK. But if they are here illegally, then, obviously, there are issues around accessing other health services. So sometimes I will ask them on their legal status, and say it is not important for me because we see everybody, but obviously, I can't refer out to other services'
WSPM	'sometimes, they [women] will go [to the police] but then they drop [the case] along the way. It is very common that the prosecution is ongoing and women will drop it, they give up, because of fear of what might happen, of being deported'

Source: Interviews - service providers (July 2016 – February 2017)

A case related by WSPI illustrates some of the difficulties associated with assisting women who are undocumented. A Brazilian woman married a Portuguese man and had a son by him but became undocumented, as the husband failed to organise to obtain her a Portuguese passport, and she was out of work. Even though the husband worked as a builder, he subjected the wife to DV, and would also neglect her basic needs and those of the son (e.g. food and clothing). When she began to confront him, he became more aggressive, and she eventually fled with the son, managing to secure a place for both at a refuge. She then tried to regularise her immigration status with help from WSPI. But this has proved a very difficult task, as her situation does not fit any of the existing criteria to be allowed to remain in the country legally. She has considered enrolling on a repatriation program to return to Brazil but is prevented by the fact that the son does not hold a Brazilian passport and therefore needs authorisation from the father to leave the country. Thus, 'she can't stay because she doesn't have a visa; she can't leave for Brazil because of her boy, he only has a Portuguese passport, because no Brazilian passport was obtained for him, and to do that the father would have to sign [papers] anyway; the father is now at large' [WSPI]. The solution for her is to have a judge hear her case and authorise the granting of a Brazilian passport to the son. Cases of undocumented women whose situations do not match any existing criteria for regularisation are said to be quite common [WSPE; WSPF; WSPG1], often requiring an application for regularisation on the grounds of human rights.

Being undocumented also limits the scope for taking action to obtain justice for victims of GBV. One example is that of a Brazilian sex worker who had a history of suffering sexual and physical violence until she decided to seek help to report one perpetrator to the police. When she went to the police with sufficient evidence to press charges, the police officer told her that he would need to report her to the immigration authorities. The service provider intervened to remind him that the woman was the victim of violence and that her immigration status was irrelevant to the case: 'your job here is to deal with the report on violence, not with her immigration status' [WSPL2]. The police officer relented and reassured her that the Brazilian woman would not be deported, but told her that she would have to report to the

police once every so often so that they could ‘keep her under control’. The service provider told the police officer that such a policy is exactly what prevents women from reporting episodes of violence, and warned that faced with these conditions, the Brazilian woman would simply drop the case and disappear, which is what effectively happened. The service provider went on to note with frustration that ‘[I] had everything ready, all the evidence against the man, the blood sample, it was all there, intact’, but the victim did not take the case forward’ [WSPL2].

However, Brazilian women who are in the country legally are not exempted from many of the difficulties that confront undocumented women when seeking help to deal with violence, particularly in relation to accessing statutory services as, for the most part, they are only available to those with specific types of visa (see Table 12).

**Table 12: Being Documented**

<b>Provider</b>	<b>Comment</b>
WSPE	‘Many of them... are cases where [women] got a visa and they want to have these restrictions of ‘no recourse to public funds’ lifted’
WSPI	‘The majority, it is not that they are not documented, most have a spouse visa, so they depend on the husband, and she will become undocumented with the divorce if we can't prove that there is violence’
WSPE	‘Even those who are documented, the fact that never worked and paid taxes, [means that] they don't have access to benefits; for instance, if somebody needs to go to a refuge, the refuge will only take on people who have access to benefits, because it is the benefits that will pay for it, because refuges are generally very expensive, and if the person doesn't have access to, can't apply for housing benefit to be able to pay for the refuge, the refuge won't take them in’.

Source: Interviews - service providers (July 2016 – February 2017)

Moreover, whether documented women turn to service providers for help, reporting incidents of GBV, and seeking redress for their experience of violence, may also largely depend on personal circumstances. Thus, for instance, one service provider noted that Brazilian women who came into possession of European passports were most likely to report incidents of violence to the police, even though they were only a small minority [WSPL2]. Another case was that of one documented Brazilian woman who had sought help from one service provider but then abandoned the service likely for fear of reprisal from her violent husband. She had met a Portuguese man two years earlier, had moved in with him, and set up her own beauty parlour to service a Brazilian clientele. She went on to have two children with him, all the while experiencing DV. Eventually, the husband took over all her financial assets, and abandoned her, leaving her destitute [WSPF].

## **7.5 Children**

Being a mother also played an important role in the decision to seek help to deal with violence or its consequences. Quite often, Brazilians were driven to request assistance, following intervention by state agencies which are mandated to act to safeguard the well-being of the

children [WSPB; WSPD8; WDPF; WSPFI]. As one service provider highlighted, '[these agencies] have a responsibility to the child and they take their responsibilities seriously' [WSPD8]. Often, women would seek help after the school intervened, following disclosure by children of episodes of violence that they witnessed or suffered themselves [WSPF; WSPI]. Thus, one service provider noted that most women who sought their services had children and 'many would not [have] come if the school had not intervened' [WSPF]. However, as another service provider noted:

'where there are children involved, it always complicates things... It gets very messy because ... different communities see experiences of violence in different ways and the laws that might, the beliefs that might apply in your country of origin may not then be applicable in the UK; and that is really then frightening for women where they are then involved with social services, and safeguarding and the laws here, they find that quite difficult' [WSPB]

Whereas in some cases action to ensure the welfare of the children will be beneficial to mother and children (e.g. where safe accommodation is provided for mother and children, away from the perpetrator), in others, the measure taken may be seen to be detrimental to one or all parties (e.g. when mother and children are separated, especially if the mother is undocumented and the perpetrator retains custody of the children). Sometimes women are driven to take desperate action, such as fleeing the country with the children to return to Brazil, although this constitutes the crime of 'international kidnapping'. One service provider, who had heard of many such cases, also told of the case of a Brazilian client who had been bullied and abused psychologically by the Portuguese husband she had married eight years previously and planned to flee the country with their seven-year old child whilst the husband was away working in Europe. Although the husband had hidden the son's Portuguese passport, the mother had kept the son's Brazilian passport. The service provider advised the mother against this course of action, but heard from the client: 'I can't get divorced from him here because I won't have anything to live on; but in Brazil my family will help me' [WSPI]. The mother got financial help from the family in Brazil and carried out her plan, going back home with the son. But as soon as the husband found out that they were gone, he reported the wife to the authorities who then actioned INTERPOL, as Brazil is a signatory of the *International Child Abduction* convention, and the mother's failure to obtain the father's authorisation to remove the child from his country of residence constitutes a crime. A few weeks later, the child and the mother were escorted by the INTERPOL all the way back from Brazil to London.

## **7.6 Religion and the Church**

Being religious and belonging to a faith community can also be said to play a role in the decision by Brazilian women to seek help to deal with their experience of violence. Service providers observed that Brazilians tend to be religious and will commonly attend a church in London, and they also noted the growing number of churches that have been set up over the last decade or so, particularly evangelical denominations, mirroring a trend that is observable also in Brazil. There was a general sense that their policy regarding VAW tended to be one of

encouraging women who were subjected to violence by their IPs to stay in the relationship and for the couple to work together to solve their problems, a policy that is underscored by their censure of divorce. In addition, many churches offer counselling and therapy to women and couples as a way of helping them deal with violence which are oriented by their general policy towards VAW (see Table 13).

**Table 13: Religion, Church and VAWG**

<b>Provider</b>	<b>Comment</b>
WSPC	'There is a [client], I am not sure she still coming here, but she belonged to of one of these churches, she was a Psychologist, and she provided counselling... the fact that she has come here means that she has left behind that [religious] structure... so when she seeks us here, I know that she has left the church to come here, something is not working, otherwise she'd have stayed there... she is on the way out otherwise she'd stayed on with the [church leader] because he is the one who runs the sessions for couples...'
WSPD1	'I've one of the cases ... where [she has] gone to the [church leader] and there's has been great encouragement to stay in that relationship; that.... has gone up and can be really quite high... [that] women are exploited by their partners, they go to church, and they are told how to behave, and they are being exploited that way, [told to be] submissive to the [church leader]'
WSPD3	'there is a conflict of messages, isn't there? Where religious places are deterring women from... literally asking for help in the right places, and where they are pushing them back into a vulnerable situation'
WSPD8	'you have marriage counselling groups, it is 'just grow in the faith with your husband', and they don't know if any of those relationships are abusive or non-abusive.... how does that take into account the people who may be having violence issues?'
WSPE	'... I have come across clients who are victims of DV and decided 'I am not going to leave my husband because...I can't be divorced for religious reasons, 'I can't get divorced'
WSPF	'I think that there is this side, they think that the woman must not separate, that she has to put up with it, that this is the role of women, that is, including the suffering, that is what marriage is about, that it is for, in the eye of the church'
WSPG1	'they are very, they are deeply religious... religion ...[is] very, very important for them, that is another big, big issue... Brazilian women and religion... [and] most of them are evangelical'
WSPI	'All of them, all the churches run counselling services, for couples, for children, for women, but they all try to cover it up, you won't see a single church reporting a man who is a member of the church to send him to jail, you won't. [They'll say] 'I am against it [VAW] but we'll have to cover it up', because the [perpetrator] is a member of the church, the man is the provider.... I've heard it so many times, from church people, saying exactly that, 'That a woman has to obey the husband!' And, further, divorce is not accepted by any of the religions'
WSPK	'...well some churches, they tend to tell the woman that the right thing would be to try to rebuild the marriage, but if the marriage is so damaged, where there is violence, cheating, if you can't, you don't have to carry on... things have changed quite a lot too... because of the criminalisation of DV, this has changed a lot, within the churches too. No [church leader] in their right mind will tell women 'You have to remain married', he won't say that, he'd not do it, he'll try and talk to the husband, try to do a couple's therapy to see if there is a possibility for reconciliation,

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if it is possible for the marriage to carry on, if this possibility doesn't exist, well, best to split up, each to go their way'
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Source: Interviews - service providers (July 2016 – February 2017)

Service providers did acknowledge the important role of churches in fostering 'a sense of belonging and community' [WSPB], and many also knew of occasions where religious leaders and church members took action to help vulnerable Brazilian women, providing financial support for them to pursue legal action against the perpetrators and/or regularise their immigration status [WSPD8; WSPF]. Nonetheless, cases existed where the church had failed to support women at a crucial moment, as in the case of a Brazilian woman who pressed charges against the husband, and as the case went to trial, was put under great pressure by the church leader to drop the case, telling her that 'this is not what a good wife does', so that in the end the prosecution fell through [WSPD1]. In another case, a Brazilian woman prosecuted the husband, and asked for support from the leader in her church, who agreed to testify for her, but on the day, as he gave his evidence, he alleged that he couldn't remember anything; when the hearing was over, he sent her a message asking for her forgiveness, telling her that he couldn't do it [WSPF].

There was also the perception amongst some providers that it was necessary to avoid alienating church leaders and instead get them on side so as to get a foothold in the Brazilian community to be able offer their services to women [WSPD3; WSPD8; WSPG1]. As one provider considered

'the [church leader] ... is very sexist, *machista*... [but this] is a very important church for the Brazilian community... that is why we realised that we cannot approach this in a very defensive [manner], that is not the way to go, we need ... to be clever, because that is the only way we are going to be a real bridge' [WSPG1].

## **8. Violence Against Brazilian Women and the British system**

This section reports on the views and experiences of service providers regarding the treatment that different agencies that operate on behalf of the state - which can be said to constitute the British support system - have dispensed to Brazilian women who have approached them to help resolve matters related to their experience of GBV. It starts by examining the interactions with the British criminal justice system, and then moves on to briefly consider the encounters with social services.

### **8.1 The British Criminal Justice System**

The British criminal justice system encompasses the Home Office, which governs the Police, UK Visas and Immigration, and the CPS. These comprise key state agencies with which Brazilian women have engaged to address issues relating to their experience of GBV. Some providers expressed the view that the criminal justice system generally fails to obtain justice for Brazilian women by not applying appropriate sanctions against male perpetrators for their

crimes of VAW. This seems to result from a perceived institutionalised bias against women (and more so in the case of immigrant women), which may turn the victims into perpetrators, or dismiss the evidence as insufficient to obtain a conviction, or still, prioritises the rights of perpetrators over those of the victims (e.g. the parental rights of the father over those of the mother) (see Table 14).

**Table 14: VAWG and the British criminal justice system**

Provider	Comment
WSPB	'some women have been quite determined to go to court and ... you get hung juries, you get people undecided, not enough evidence ... we are protecting males who are abusive, and the criminal justice system supports that ... there is also a level of empathy for him ... "If he is that unpleasant, that awful, then he really should have help". No! He should be incarcerated, that is what he should be, and they can help him when he goes to prison'
WSPF	'solicitors don't have knowledge of DV, not all of them will have, they don't understand it, when the mother says, "I don't want the father to see my daughter", then the solicitor [says] "But he has a right to... he is the father, he has rights, it will be difficult in Court"; and we have to fight and try to explain to the solicitor why she is saying that'
WSPG1	'you know, in this country, unless you kill someone, you're not going to get much, if you are a man, well ... you are not going to the Criminal Law, you are going to go to Civil Law, and that means you are going to get community service at most ... because he is the Pater Family, and that is more important in British Law, but if it is a woman who is irregular ...'
WSPG2	'And when women come here and say, "Oh no, you know, men here are not so sexist and machos as in our countries"... I say ... "They don't need to be macho men, they can be as charming as they want, and as polite as they want because they have the whole system protecting men anyway, they are sexist but in a polite, institutionalised way". That has been my experience with the law system, and family and immigration'
WSPG3	'...and you see the gender-bias that we still have in this system, in so many levels, it is still there'

Source: Interviews - service providers (July 2016 – February 2017)

One case that illustrates this perceived bias towards perpetrators by agencies within the British criminal justice system is that of a Brazilian woman who went to the police to report her abusive ex-husband for stalking her and was refused assistance by a male police officer [WSPF]. She needed to obtain a record from the police so that her solicitor could apply for the renewal of an expired molestation order issued by the court against the father. Their older daughter accompanied the mother to the police station and the policeman who saw them refused to take down their statement, laughing and noting that 'He is the father, he has the right to see his children'. The daughter replied angrily, 'No! He has no right to see me, nor... my siblings! All he has ever been is a sperm donor and that doesn't make him a father!' A policewoman who witnessed the exchange intervened and helped them, and the service provider went on to lodge a complaint against the policeman [WSPF].

Another case exemplifies how this bias becomes apparent through failure by agents of the criminal justice system to take appropriate action against the perpetrator. Thus, a Brazilian woman met a Brazilian man in London, and they started a relationship: 'as he had no papers, and she had no papers either, it was for love, this marriage' [WSPF]. But soon after they got married, he began to subject her to intense violence, including physical violence, which culminated in one episode where:

'he was very violent, he put her in hospital so much he beat her up, she was all swollen, he nearly killed her, he banged her head against the wall... [but] she ran out into the street and the neighbours called the police. He was arrested, then the police instead of sending him to jail for the crime he had committed, deported him. What should they have done? He should have been sent to jail for the crime he committed, and when he finished his term then he should have been deported' [WSPF]

Yet a further case highlights how circumstances sometimes combine to conspire against women seeking to remove themselves from a position of vulnerability to GBV from their IPs. A Brazilian woman who had suffered various forms of violence at the hands of her Brazilian husband, with whom she had a baby, tried to leave their home to get into a refuge. She held an Italian passport but was not yet eligible for state benefits (by a matter of months only) and although the refuge offered her and her four-month old baby a place, social services turned the application down. The police were brought in to provide confirmation of the woman's vulnerability but instead argued that she could stay at home for a few more months, for although her Brazilian husband was out on bail, he was away. But the couple lived in shared accommodation and the husband held their only key to the front door, and as she was not named on the tenancy agreement, she was not allowed to obtain a copy of the key. She was afraid of leaving the flat and not being able to get back in, and worried that her husband could return to the flat at any time, attack her and throw her out. The service provider [WSPF] tried to reason with the police to prevail on social services by noting the client's vulnerability to violence from the husband and her urgent need to get into the refuge, but to no avail. The service provider felt compelled to point out the police officer:

'She is a woman who has suffered sexual, physical, verbal, financial, psychological abuse. She has a four-month old baby, she has an Italian passport, she is working to try and feed herself, pay for transportation, to survive, we are giving her vouchers to help her feed herself, and you are supporting the perpetrator, who is here undocumented, he is violent, commits crime because he drinks and uses drugs and drives, and you are defending him, instead of supporting her?' [WSPF]

Service providers also related how perpetrators themselves (Brazilians and non-Brazilians) have learned how to play the criminal justice system to their own advantage, often because of the power they hold over the women whom they subject to violence, such as a command of English, their documented status, or their better knowledge of the system (see Table 15).



**Table 15: Perpetrators and the British criminal justice system**

Provider	Comment
WSPC	'I've had cases here where the woman pulled a knife on the man as he was going to attack her and she ... [might] kill him, and then she'd be dubbed 'violent' and suffer, and he went and reported her and he came out unscathed ...'
WSPF	'Many times, the perpetrator manages to obtain things in Court, and that has to do with the judge too, because many don't have knowledge about DV. So, they get a woman who doesn't speak English, who doesn't know what is going on, against a man who speaks English, who is a manipulator ... who know how to charm up, they know how to make up stories, and have the support from the whole system'
WSPG1	'sometimes, we have to advise our women, when they are in these situations ... this catch-22 between their husband and the system, "Look, don't do anything ... and when he hits you, you call the police immediately, OK? Let's do that!" We have to advise that sometimes because otherwise ...'
WSPG2	'nothing will happen, so you report it immediately, because if you say afterwards, ... they'll say, 'Oh we don't see any marks, it is not a crime!'  'normally men ...that's the problem with this system ... when you report before the other person does ... the men will report anything to the police, "She is throwing things around"... because they've learned [how to play the victim]'
WSPG3	'the perpetrators have become very clever in the past five years, ... they learn to play the victim themselves ... we've had men call here saying ... "she is crazy"... the one who reports first [to the police] is the most believable, basically'
WSPi	'If a case comes to me, like, "My husband has beaten me, I called the police, I started a lawsuit", I say "'Then I can get you a visa"; only, about 90% of them don't ever do this; first they don't call the police; second, if they go to the police, many days have elapsed; so there are millions of situations'

Source: Interviews - service providers (July 2016 – February 2017)

One factor that some service providers thought might play a part in underscoring such institutionalised bias was stereotyping of Brazilian women by different agents of the establishment. Brazilian women were seen as passionate, emotional, aggressive or vocal when confronted with state agencies or requesting services that relate to their experience of violence (see above on these stereotypes). Such behaviour, though, might work against them, as it is seen at odds with their condition of victims, and this may also relate to a prevailing and highly sexualised stereotype of Brazilian women in British society [WSPB; WSPG1; WSPG2; WSPG3; WSPF]. Thus, one service provider would often explain to the Brazilian clients:

'I understand what you are saying, you're right, but in front of the authorities, in front of statutory services, you need to calm down, you need to listen, you need to, even if they don't have any justification to say what they are going to say to you' [WSPG1]

One case of a subjacent bias by the police, possibly informed by stereotype, was seen to have led to the wrongful detention of the victim some three years ago. A Brazilian woman had been placed under forced detention to work as a sex slave by her Portuguese husband and was one day heard screaming repeatedly because of the extreme violence he was inflicting on her. Someone heard her and called the police who stormed the place and found her. She did not speak any English and was extremely agitated and aggressive. The police detained her for

three days on suspicion of being a sex worker, until a service provider intervened, got her released and took up her case. In their view, the arrest by the police betrays a cultural prejudice, as their reading of the woman’s hysterical and aggressive behaviour was that it at odds with her condition of victim, ‘because if you are really a victim, you don’t react like that!’ [WSPG1].

Other factors also come into play in Brazilian women’s encounters with the criminal justice system which play a role in preventing the proper application of sanctions against the perpetrators. Commonly they are daunted by the system itself, about which they know nothing or very little and which they may also distrust or fear, especially the police and the immigration authorities. Many also may lack resources to build a case and prosecute the perpetrator, whilst many others may be driven by guilt, shame, fear of destitution, or be pressurised, to drop charges against the perpetrator. As one service provider summed up, ‘what I hear most from women is “If I’d known that it would be so difficult to [navigate] the system”, because the abuse by the system often is worse, in their view, than the abuse they suffered at the hands of the perpetrator”’ [WSPF] (see Table 16).

**Table 16: Brazilian Women and Action towards Perpetrators**

<b>Provider</b>	<b>Comment</b>
WSPD1	‘some women ... they’d rather not go down the police route, they’d rather not prosecute, whether that be for their own safety, due to repercussions, if they do go to the police, or potentially immigration issues, they may be reliant and dependent on the perpetrator, so if they prosecute him and the relationship is over, then they are out on the streets, you know, that is huge, they’ve got no money, no friends, no means to live’
WSPD8	‘It is a complex thing with migrants because you might have a client who’ll say “... he’s violent, but he is a migrant, he is undocumented, and I don’t want to turn him in to the police ... I’ll help, but I will not prosecute him because then he will be sent back to Brazil ... he is the father of my kids, he does give me some money, we both came from Brazil... he did this but I don’t really want to hurt him that much...”’
WSPE	‘then you have other cases where [women] even went to the police, and probably at the moment that they had to testify, they decided not to. They dropped [the case] at the last minute because... some are very scared.... some are ashamed because they think that “I don’t want people to know that I am a victim of DV” .... “I don’t want the father of my kid to go to jail” ... “I don’t want my kids to be affected”’
WSPF	‘I think there are many who give up for many reasons. One is the violence itself, this thing of being in a relationship and one day it is well, but it is bad other days, so she’ll end up...forgiving... there are the children, there are her values... there is the emotional side of the woman who cares for the man, ... there is the financial side of things’
WSPG3	‘but the other thing is also that a lot of women... don’t want to take their husbands [to court], when it is not these extreme cases, [they say], “Oh we don’t want him to have a criminal record”’
WSPI	‘women won’t take the matter further, or [would] not call the police when it was necessary... [because they think] “I don’t want that for him, poor him”; that’s what I hear the most’
WSPK	‘[women] would come to me ... who had been raped, and who didn’t know how to access the law because they were here illegally. Something that I’ve always told them was that the police is not interested in your immigration status in the country,

	they are interested in the violence that you suffered ... But women... are afraid, and [they think], "I am illegal in this country, I was raped, but I won't call the police because then the police will send me away"
WSPL1	'people are very reluctant to report to the police, on so many levels. One is that maybe individuals are here illegally. Secondly, it may be that, or they are frightened to talk to the police, and they feel that ... they've not actually got a strong case, they don't know how to do it; they don't trust the police because their experience in their country is very different, so they may well have feelings about law and the police and it might not be a very positive one ...'
WSPL2	'... there is always the question "What's your document? Where are you from?" In the long past there used to be quite a lot of that, many women were deported when they went to report, that is why they'd not report ... but [we] began to work together to change police behaviour ... and there was a big decrease [in attempts to deport] ... as a result, women began to trust them more, to make the decision to go to the police...but most wouldn't [go] ... it was very difficult to convince them to go'
WSPM	'sometimes, they [the women] will go [to the police] but then they drop it along the way. It is very common that the prosecution is ongoing and the women will drop it, they give up, because of fear of what might happen, of being deported'

Source: Interviews - service providers (July 2016 – February 2017)

One case of dropping charges against the perpetrator was that of a Brazilian woman who had married an Italian man in Brazil and began to experience DV after moving to London over a decade ago. She had planned on taking action against him but as she became pregnant, she became very scared of him and afraid for the baby. After the baby was born, the husband would disappear for a while and on returning, would inflict physical and sexual violence on the wife and this carried on for years, up until the day when a friend visited and, finding her in a bad state, called the police who advised the wife to press charges, which she did. The husband was taken to court and pleaded not guilty, but just before the final hearing before the judge, she decided not to testify against him, dropping the case as she did not want him to have a criminal record and shame the daughter by sending her father to jail. She approached the service provider to get help to sort out her immigration status, she only ever had had a residence visa, but now wanted to apply for permanent residence on account of her marriage to a European national although this was proving difficult, as she needed the husband to disclose his earnings, which he refused to do. The service provider was looking into other possible avenues to obtain her a permanent visa as a victim of DV. Meanwhile, she moved out but the perpetrator found her, and on one occasion, returning home, as she opened the front door to her flat, she found him inside waiting for her; he subjected her to heavy physical violence, which showed on a photo she gave to the service provider, who observed that 'she is totally harmed, bruises and everything' [WSPE].

Clearly, as evidenced by the various cases of Brazilian women who have experienced violence in London reported here so far, one key issue that may operate to prevent undocumented women from reporting an episode of violence to the police is uncertainty as to whether the police will prioritise taking action on the basis of their immigration status or their being victims of violence. Whilst some service providers were very clear that in terms of the law, violence must take precedence over immigration status [WSPG1; WSPK; WSPL2], others indicated that there was lack of clarity about it [WSPM], including amongst the police themselves [WSPL2].

But service providers acknowledged that there had been cases where Brazilian women had pressed charges and seen the case through to the end (sometimes securing a conviction, sometimes not), whereas others had dropped the charges altogether at some stage of the proceedings [WSPD1; WSPE; WSPF; WSPL1; WSPL2].

A success story was that of an undocumented Brazilian woman who had been raped by a man she knew and who was left traumatised by it, was persuaded by a service provider to take the case to the police who gathered all the evidence with her help and brought about a successful conviction. The perpetrator spent time in jail and on release, was given an injunction to keep him away from the victim. The police never once enquired of the woman's immigration status. According to the service provider:

'If you go to the police today and tell them "I am suffering abuse, DV" they'll do all that is within their power, and I know this because I've seen it, they'll do everything ... they are extremely careful, they are extremely cautious and empathetic!' [WSPK].

A further case illustrates how a Brazilian woman was distressed by the fact that the police had pressed charges against her husband following an episode of DV which led to his arrest and was likely to end in his conviction. She had a history of suffering verbal, psychological and physical violence from the husband, and on one occasion after he subjected her to a particularly vicious physical and sexual assault, she struck back at him and called the police to report the episode, leading to his detention. She began to feel guilty about this outcome and sought help from the service provider to lodge a complaint against the police for arresting her IP, arguing that it had been all her fault as she had only attacked him in self-defence, but she did not want him to be convicted and was ready to go to court to take the blame for the incident [WSPF].

Similarly, one service provider was highly assured that the police do take seriously their role in responding to reports of DV, in contrast to the view of those who were often critical of the quality and efficacy of interventions by the police on behalf of their clients. Thus, a Brazilian husband was arrested after his Brazilian wife of 30 years called the police to report that he had been abusive to her by taking her mobile off her and smashing it on the floor because she had not been paying attention to him. They were both in their 60s and had led a married life marked by tension ['they'd get through the day shouting at each other'; WSPI], but the mobile phone incident proved overwhelming, triggering the call to the police, to whom she reported that 'it had been thirty years of abuse' [WSPI]. The husband was arrested and the police built a case against him, taking the testimonies of their adult children, which confirmed a pattern of abusive behaviour towards the wife. The husband was prosecuted for DV and other offences which, as the service provider argued, may be minor offences in Brazil but in Britain constitute crime [e.g. damage to property; reading her private messages on her mobile without her consent] and was waiting for sentencing as the service provider was approached for legal advice. The family was distraught, and the wife deeply regretted involving the police, arguing that 'there was no need for this, I should really have divorced him, something that I didn't have the courage to do in 32 years, I should have' [WSPI]. According to the service provider, the husband could not accept nor understand the outcome, he still thought: 'I did not commit any crime! I was reading my wife's mobile, she is my wife!' [WSPI].

## **8.2 Social Services**

Statutory services, such as social services, have sometimes failed to provide adequate assistance to Brazilian women victims of violence as a result of a narrow focus on their remit and lack of concern with specificities associated with the condition of being an immigrant, such as lack of knowledge of the system, about rights, and lack of English language skills [WSPG1; WSPG2; WSPG3; WSPF]. Thus, for instance, one service provider told of the unacceptable treatment meted out by one social worker to a Brazilian mother whom she had referred to the service and who told the client ‘You are strong, I don’t see any marks on your body, why don’t you go and do some work?’ [WSPF], an episode that led the service provider to lodge a complaint. Indeed, this service provider further observed that ‘the social workers that I’ve dealt with, in general, I’ve had no luck with, [they’ve been] horrible’, which stood in stark contrast with one recent experience where a social worker had shown a good understanding of DV as well as showing empathy [WSPF]. Similarly, a service provider highlighted how women would often have to endure a tortuous journey in trying to access appropriate and effective assistance and the effects this had on them, which might discourage them from continuing to try:

‘And sometimes they’ve been through so many other failed services they have to try and tell their story, by the time they get to somebody [they think], ‘I just don’t want to have to tell it again, I’ll be reliving it again, and again, and again’ [WSPG3]

## **9. Service Provision: engagement and outcomes**

Service providers also considered the different ways in which Brazilian women approached and engaged with them, attributing some of their behaviour to cultural factors, whilst also assessing the outcomes of such engagement.

Cultural difference was seen by some service providers as a possible explanation for finding it difficult to engage with Brazilian women, as they either failed to understand that, what they had experienced at the hands of their IP actually comprises violence, or downplayed their experience. Thus, one service provider commented that:

‘I find they minimise quite a lot, they may hide the abuse, almost, I don’t know what the law is in Brazil, I don’t know if maybe they are aware of what is happening, that it is against the law here, and I do find quite hard to engage with them, but once they do engage, it is easy to tackle, I can get them into refuges, or get them away from the abuse’

Similarly, another service provider noted the striking similarities between the cases of two Brazilian clients who in counselling sessions appeared reluctant to pause and reflect, or seemed in denial about their episode of violence, and who would talk a great deal but not necessarily about what had happened to them. The impression was that:

‘they seem in a hurry, because it is engaging on an emotional level. It seems to be that they come in to the service, that they want the techniques, they want

to know how to get over this, they want to tell somebody that this has happened to them, but they couldn't necessarily bring themselves in to that ... I am not sure if that is a cultural attitude... but that is certainly my experience of the Brazilian women ... they just needed to get on with their lives' [WSPB]

Engagement with service providers entail different outcomes for the women, depending on the types of violence involved and specific circumstances. In the case of DV or IPV, which, as noted previously, are the most commonly reported experience for Brazilian women, various outcomes are observable: some women find it difficult to leave a violent relationship, whilst others are able to break free but will return later, others still will leave the perpetrator, only to find themselves involved with another perpetrator, and those who are able to leave a violent relationship altogether and move on to rebuild their lives [WSPB; WSPC; WSPG1; WSPF; WSPK; WSPI; WSPM]. Indeed, as service providers observed, these outcomes do not obtain among Brazilian women alone; rather they correspond to a more universal experience by women victims and survivors of violence, irrespective of nationality, age, ethnicity, social class, or religious affiliation (see Table 17).

**Table 17: Brazilian Women and Outcomes of Service Provision**

Provider	Comment
WSPF	'...the benefit cuts, this ends up hindering women from leaving violence, because [she] depends financially on [the perpetrator]. Of course, there is also the other part, the psychological dependence, there are the children, but many clients don't manage to break away because of the financial side'
WSPG1	'...it is very likely, probably 90%, when a woman comes and says, "My husband hit me for the first time yesterday", we take it seriously ... but we know 'this woman is going to go back' because it is the first time, it is a cyclical [thing] ... and normally they do, and after two or three years, you'll see her, you'll see them back [here]'
WSPG2	'... because we are migrants, we are more likely to go back with them [perpetrators] because we are isolated, and in a way "they are looking after me"'
WSPG3	'we always believe the client, we do not judge, we respect all their decisions ... obviously, we would like them to move on from abusive relations ... we understand that they need to fall back on abusive relationships and they come back ... we always have ... an open door'
WSPI	'... they allow horrible things to happen to them, from physical violence, to non-physical violence ... a treatment that is completely mad; I know clients who have even attempted to kill themselves because of bullying, and they won't leave [the perpetrator]'
WSPK	'...the most difficult thing is for you to manage to get this person to trust you, that she will really do what you're telling her is the best for her to do ... but it is very difficult for you to close this cycle ... it seems that the person is in a world of her own and she can't break out from it, this bubble ... if she doesn't have the right kind of support. If she doesn't have psychological support, her own corner ... [she won't]'
WSPM	'There have been women whose men have done terrible things done to them, and then they'd afterwards go back to them ... I couldn't understand that ... Then later I understood that ... there were cases that should have psychological support. It is really a medical issue'

Source: Interviews - service providers (July 2016 – February 2017)

Success stories whereby Brazilian women have managed to break away from violent relationships were noted by many service providers, who documented how their intervention was often crucial to set women on the right track towards accessing essential statutory services and the criminal justice system, as well as speeding up or rectifying ongoing actions, such as, for instance, highly bureaucratic applications to immigration authorities for temporary or permanent visas [WSPC; WSPE; WSPF; WSPK; WSPL; WSPM]. Thus, for instance, one service provider described the case of a Brazilian woman who had suffered physical, sexual, verbal, psychological violence, and control from her husband whilst they lived in Brazil and how such violence worsened as they moved to London with their three-year old daughter. The husband had attempted to kill the wife several times in sight of their daughter whom he also abused and who had problems at school because of her own experiences of violence. The wife obtained Italian citizenship through descent and went on to apply for a divorce, which came through, and they separated, but she still depended financially on him and he continued to treat her violently. She had gone to several places but only managed to get effective help after approaching the service provider who quickly put her case together, obtaining within days, a molestation order from the courts to keep the father away, and they also referred the daughter to the children's support service. The mother and daughter are now living in safety in their own accommodation; the daughter is doing well at school, the mother works and has also received counselling to address the emotional and psychological trauma of violence [WSPF].

Indeed, service providers emphasised the importance of offering psychological support to women even after they break away from the violent relationship, as it is a vital instrument in helping them start a new life free from violence [WSPB; WSPC; WSPD8; WSPG; WSPF; WSPK; WSPM]. Thus, one service provider [WSPC] who had referred a Brazilian woman to another service provider [WSPF] commented on the clear transformation she had noted on the ex-client, which she attributed to the support she had received: 'the woman was so strong, a fighter, ready for anything ... I was so proud of her ... you could see she had managed to change her life around, and become very strong ... it was a beautiful story!' [WSPC].

The various issues discussed by service providers regarding their services and their Brazilian clients can be usefully illustrated by the case of WSPF, shown in Box 1, which outlines the characteristics of the service provider as well as those of the clients.

**Box 1: Service provision to Brazilian women survivors of violence: the case of WSPF**

WSPF has been providing services to ethnic minority migrant women for over thirty years. It is oriented by a feminist approach to its key mission which is to address the needs of its clients and help empower them to become independent citizens conscious of their citizen rights and work collectively to effect social change. Their client base runs into several thousand users who benefit from a range of services offered in their first language and in a culturally sensitive manner.

Permanent staff assisted by a team of volunteers give information and advice on statutory services, legal services, immigration matters, education, employment, as well as referring clients to government agencies and other service providers, which is all offered on a drop-

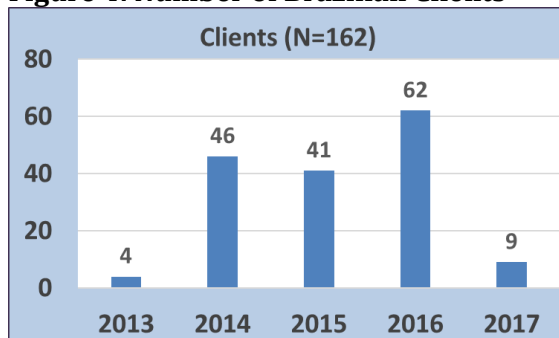
in basis. WSPF runs a specific programme for victims of DV which includes provision of counselling and psychotherapy. WSPF also runs various activities throughout the year, such as workshops, classes on various topics (including English language), social meetings and community engagement, as well as carrying out advocacy work and running projects. WSPF is a member of the London VAWG Consortium, as well as being a partner in the ASCENT project.

Brazilian women have been using WSPF services for a several years, including their DV programme. The section below highlights the key characteristics of a sample of Brazilian women who have used these services between 2013 and 2017.

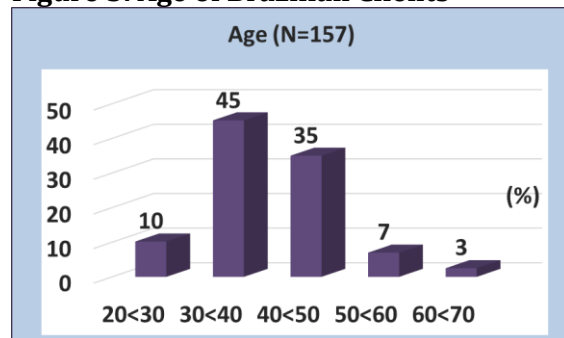
### The Brazilian clients

A total of 162 Brazilian women sought help from WSPF between late 2013 and early 2017. The highest proportion of cases were seen during 2016, representing an increase of 35% over the previous year (Figure 4). Just under half of the women (45%) were aged between 30-40 years old, and a further third (35%) were aged between 40-50 years old (Figure 5). One in ten women were aged between 20-30, and similarly, one in ten were aged 50 or older. Over three quarters (78%) had children, with a majority having one child alone (43%), followed by those who had two children (25%).

**Figure 4: Number of Brazilian Clients**

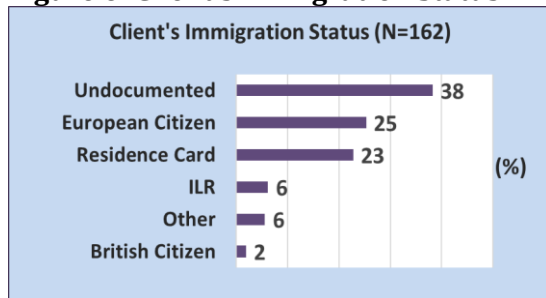


**Figure 5: Age of Brazilian Clients**

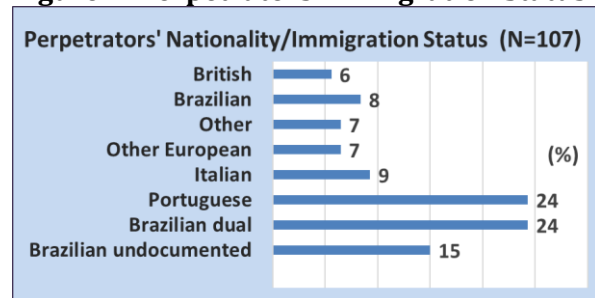


The immigration status of over one half of the women was regularised, but nearly two fifths were undocumented (Figure 6). Of those who were also European Union citizens, 53% were Italians, 10% were Portuguese, and 5% were Spanish. The rest were unspecified (32%). Just under half of all perpetrators were Brazilian (47%), followed by the Portuguese (24%), comprising the two largest groups. In addition, of those Brazilian who held dual nationality, about 30% were also Italian, and 22% were also Portuguese (Figure 7).

**Figure 6: Client's Immigration Status**



**Figure 7: Perpetrators' Immigration Status**

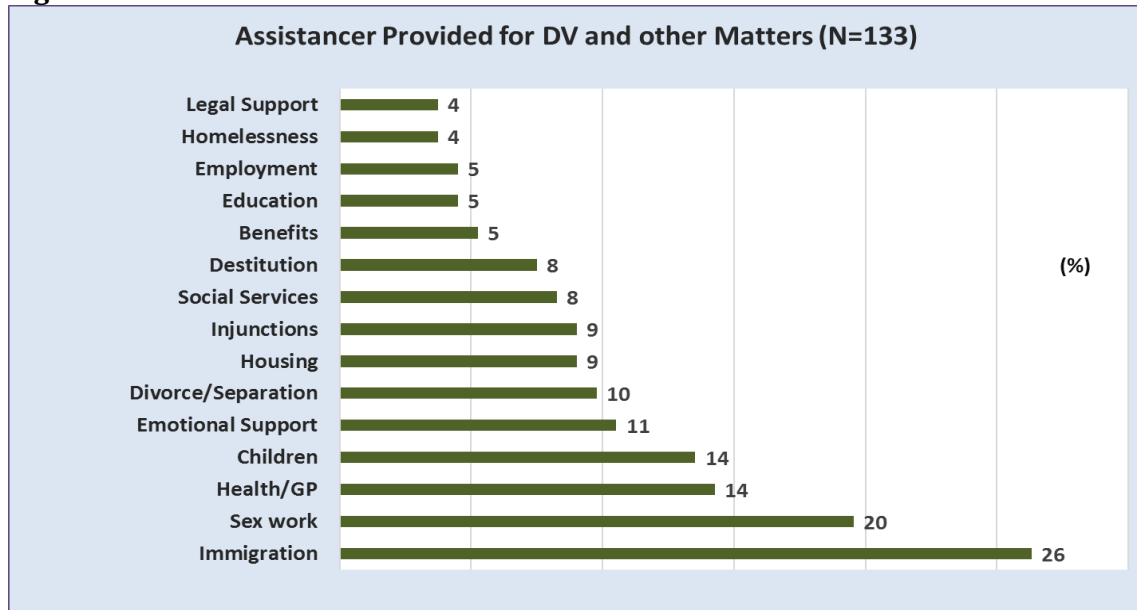


WSPF helped Brazilian women survivors of violence address a great variety of issues. Immigration status and issues arising from sex working were required the most, followed by problems with health or related to the welfare of children (Figure 8). By early 2017, over two thirds of the cases



(68%) were already closed (i.e. the issues had already been resolved), and 32% were open (i.e. the issues were being addressed).

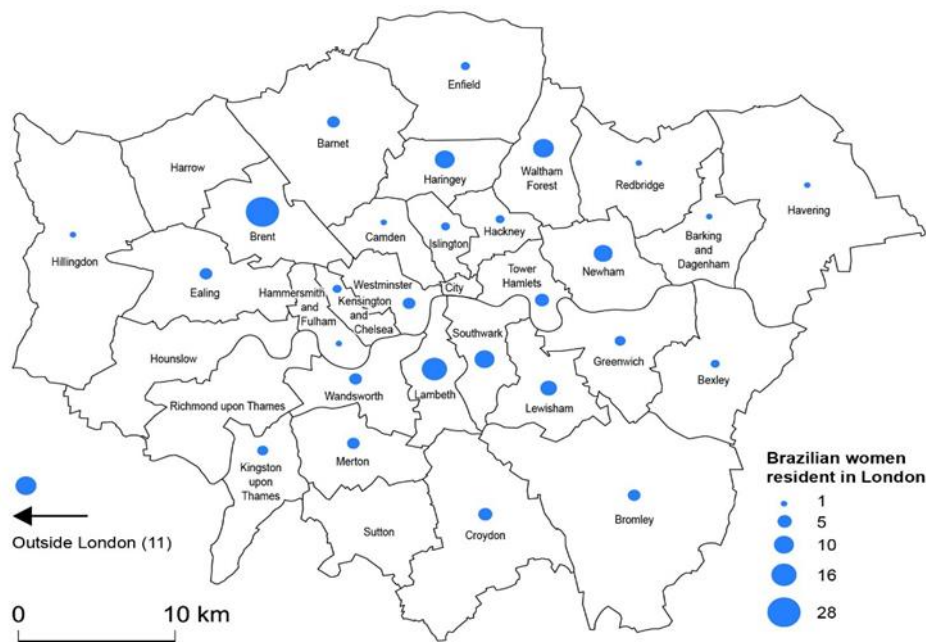
**Figure 8: Assistance Provided to Brazilian Clients**



In terms of outcomes, 56% of the women had left the perpetrator after seeking help from WSPF, but a quarter were still living with the perpetrator. One in ten had been abandoned by the perpetrator, and 10% had a different outcome (i.e. the perpetrator sent to jail or deported).

Brazilian women who have sought help from WSPF live across the whole of London (see Figure 9), although higher numbers are found in boroughs known to host sizeable concentrations of Brazilians, particularly Brent and Lambeth. But some clients also live outside London, which highlights the importance they attach to accessing the services provided by WSPF.

**Figure 9: Brazilian Clients in London**



Source: Data from WSPF (Winter 2016)

## 10. Addressing VAWG

Service providers considered the measures they see as necessary to help raise awareness about VAWG and address it, within the Brazilian community in London/UK, and also more widely through society (Table 18).

**Table 18: Addressing VAWG**

Provider	Comment
WSPB	'one is to do much more prevention work, and at a much earlier stage ... you are going to challenge grown adult people to change their opinion, you ... can try; I am much more interested in when we get into adulthood that our criminal justice system actually holds perpetrators responsible ... it is both about how the criminal justice system responds, but also much more prevention work, so and attitudes will shift, really, in terms of sexualisation of young women ... the pornography industry, and the media generally, how schools are set up, how police forces operate ... it is all institutionally; and also addressing inequalities, basic inequalities between men and women that continue to exist in the 21st century'
WSPC	'... more dissemination, more talks, I think there must be workshops, and people going into the community to draw attention to it, so that people realise that they are [at risk] before getting to the point where he tries to kill ... That's why the work of dissemination is important, to help people take notice'
WSPD8	'we have a lot of work to do with young people ... that is where the solution to the problem lies ... the boys and the girls are fertile ground ... we have more socially aware kids who might be dealing with and talking about sex in very violent ways ... it is a problem that has a solution and it lies in education'
WSPF	'[we] need to educate children from an early age because these children will become adults and this is where it makes the difference, because men will then be perpetrators and women will be submissive, thinking that it is normal ... to be beaten, that it is normal that men rule the home ... so, all of this, I think has to do with education, the manner that we educate our children'
WSPG3	'de-stigmatising these issues within our beneficiaries themselves, because it is more believable when they voice their experience ... I think that is a very important part of the work, ... understanding and being able to identify what violence is, because there is still this idea, the world has this idea that women and DV is somehow either because you want it or you are weak, or you don't recognise it as violence as such, which has a lot to do with gender roles in the world, what a woman is supposed to be able to take or not'
WSPK	'the first thing that [a woman] needs is support, and then attitude, that is the second, and very important, because if you have support and the right attitude, there is no way that you cannot resolve the situation; but if you have the support but not the attitude, then there is no point'

Source: Interviews - service providers (July 2016 – February 2017)

As the comments in Table 18 indicate, educating men, women and children within the Brazilian community in London was seen as an important step towards helping combat and prevent VAWG. A case related by a service provider illustrates the need for educating adults and parents. Thus, a Brazilian woman reported her Portuguese husband to the police for being aggressive towards her teenage son (from her previous marriage in Brazil), for trying to teach him a lesson on how to obey. The police then explained that 'this is not the way to do

it, because this is abuse'. Sometime later, the husband reported the wife in retaliation, following an incident in which she threw a jar on the floor to vent her frustration, although nobody was hurt. The police took him away instead because the stepson accused him of hitting his mother, which added to his previous record of violence towards his former wife; he was released on bail but unable to return home for months. The wife sought the service provider on the recommendation of a friend, as she did not speak English and could not understand what was happening. She was very distressed at the idea of being without the husband, on whom she depended for everything, noting that it was normal for them to row and shout at each other at home, a behaviour that she said was normal in Brazil. In the meantime, a social worker saw the Portuguese husband who openly admitted that he had slapped his wife a few times, arguing that this was normal behaviour in Portugal. The decision was taken that both parents would have to attend a weekly programme of education about DV, especially as it was revealed that the woman had suffered great violence from her first, Brazilian husband, whom she had reported to the police and left just before moving to London with their son [WSPF].

Emphasis was also placed on the need for victims and survivors of violence to receive strong support to encourage them to take legal action against the perpetrators, by helping build the case and gather the evidence to prosecute and obtain commensurate sanctions [WSPB; WSPG; WSPE; WSPF; WSPL2], thus sending a clear signal to society that VAWG constitutes crime that is taken seriously by the British judicial system. Thus, for instance, one service provider spelled out that that they would:

'try and encourage the woman to go to the police and report ... perpetrators, and it is not only for their protection but also in order to get evidence ... the evidence part is quite complicated ... because some women don't report it; some women, they suffer in silence, they go to the hospital, they go to the GP, they don't go to [WSPF], [WSPG], or these places for help. So, for you to prove that they were victims of DV is going to be very difficult if you don't have any evidence and if you don't report it .... So [we say] "if something happens, next time, go straight to the police away, get a report from the police"' [WSPE]

Indeed, gathering robust evidence is crucial for taking legal action against perpetrators forward, as the following comment indicate:

'if you are not willing to tell your story, it is more difficult for the police then to go by themselves to the CPS. When they go to the CPS, the CPS will ask them for good, collectible evidence. If not, the CPS will drop the case, it will not take it forward, it will die at the CPS stage ... it is the fact that he's done a crime, he's assaulted somebody, and that is under public interest [to prosecute]'

Considerations by some service providers about the enforcement of the law in cases where the women survivors of violence are undocumented migrants suggests that greater clarity is needed to ensure that they receive appropriate and standardised treatment from the police [WSPG; WSPD; WSPF; WSPE; WSPL2]. In other words, the police need to focus on the experience of violence and take action to address that, rather than focusing on immigration status. In turn, the survivors of violence need to be assured that action will not be taken against them because of their undocumented status when they come forward to report

episodes of violence. As one service provider explained, referring to the specific case of Brazilian sex workers:

‘They never went to the police, never. They always came to me, those who knew me, and if it had happened to a woman who didn’t [know me] but knew somebody who knew me, they’d give them my number ... and when they’d call ... I’d tell them “You are at risk, you have to go to the police” ... [they would reply] “But I can’t, because I am illegal”. I’d say, “It doesn’t matter, you may be in the country illegally, but there are human rights, you have the right to report it and the country has the obligation to protect you, you are a victim ... the police don’t have the right to use your immigration status against you ... you suffered violence, and this has to be reported to the police”’ [WSPL2]

A final important issue that has a bearing on the nature and extent of support offered to Brazilian victims of violence and was gleaned from considerations by service providers is that of financial resources, which will often limit the scope for action, whether by service providers, clients, statutory agencies, or the criminal justice system. The excerpts below, illustrate the argument, relating to public costs associated with prosecuting a perpetrator, the costs associated with providing refuge, and the recent abolition of legal services provided free of charge by the state to low-income groups:

‘... the thing is, even if the police believe your case, they need to see that there is enough evidence; if there is no evidence, they are not going to take the case to the CPS ... because every time the police take a case to court it is £25,000 that they need to pay, right? It is a big issue!’ [WSPG1]

‘Being an undocumented migrant keeps you out of a refuge not because you are undocumented ... it is more about who pays for your space.... [it] means that smaller organisations have a big issue, because if they [take in] one undocumented woman ... they can simply not afford to do that; but then a lot of the women who [might] approach [them] are undocumented. It is tricky! .... if somebody says, “I have a Brazilian woman”, I guess I’ll say, “How is the immigration status?”’ [WSPD8]

‘... unfortunately, Legal Aid has been cut ... [one client] managed to get Legal Aid, she went to court, we managed that, it was a success; but there are the cases that don’t get Legal Aid, so there is no solicitor, so many women wind up in court without a barrister, without knowing what they are supposed to do there, without any preparation, without speaking the language” [WSPF].

## **11. Conclusion**

The findings from our research have shown that Brazilian women who experience violence in London have recourse to the services offered by a number of providers, large and small, and generalist and specialist in terms of their remit. Most commonly, they access these services through ‘word-of-mouth’ from other users and also through referrals by other service providers as well as statutory agencies. More and more Brazilian women have been taking up these services, as reflected in the growing demand reported by service providers.

The Brazilian women who seek help from these organisations have a diversified profile (e.g. from various age groups, class backgrounds, educational levels, and ethnicity), a finding that reaffirms the long-established fact that the phenomenon of VAWG is universal in its incidence amongst women. In addition, it is not uncommon to find that many women had experienced violence in Brazil or elsewhere (e.g. Portugal) before moving to the UK. These women also tend to have children who depend on them, with most being born or living in the UK.

Amongst the perpetrators, though, Portuguese and Brazilian men are the most commonly identifiable groups that subject Brazilian women to various types of violence, and they tend to be their IPs, which indicates a predominance of DV over other forms of violence but, also, they are often implicated in the trafficking of these women, particularly through the use of online technologies. Although it is difficult to disentangle the role of different factors that help produce violent behaviour and which relate in various ways to patriarchal relations and the gendered exercise of power, control over financial resources and immigration status emerged as key risk factors that lead women to experience of violence, most commonly by their IPs. The narrative here is that Brazilian women tend to depend on their IPs both financially and also for securing a documented immigration status, whilst their IPs use these factors as tools to subject them to a variety of forms of violence, including control and coercion, abuse and bullying, forced detention, emotional violence, as well as physical and sexual violence, which may often extend to their children too.

A variety of factors were found to play a role in determining whether Brazilian women seek out and access services to help them deal with their experiences of violence in London. These include the offer of services in Portuguese (many Brazilian women have limited or no knowledge of English), the women's self-awareness that what they experience at the hands of their IPs or other men, actually constitutes violence and the stigma associated with being a survivor of violence, having children, having a religious belief and/or attending church. Immigration status stands out as the key risk factor within a web of intersecting factors that play a role in encouraging Brazilian women to seek help or deterring them from doing so. Thus, being undocumented at one time exacerbates women's vulnerability to GBV and discourages them from seeking help to escape violence and obtain redress through the justice system, for fear of being reported to immigration authorities and being deported back to Brazil, a fear that is further magnified where children are involved.

Nevertheless, where both undocumented and documented Brazilians seek help and take action to obtain sanctions against the perpetrators, they find themselves confronting a British system, as represented by the criminal justice system (involving the police, immigration authorities, and the prosecution service) that not only is difficult to navigate as well as costly, but is also perceived to favour the rights of men over the rights of women, as well as prioritising taking action on immigration status over taking action against crimes of violence. The perception of an establishment that is biased against women combines with other factors to prevent women from reporting episodes of violence, and taking action to prosecute IPs or from carrying the process through to the end once it is set in motion. Thus, women may feel guilty about penalising their IPs disproportionately, they may feel ashamed by the effects on the children of having a father who has a criminal record, or they may fear that action will jeopardise their own financial security and that of their children. Furthermore, they may be unable to build a sound evidence base to back up prosecution, or may be pressured by third

parties to cease any action. As a result, women will often drop their charges against the perpetrator who is then seen to be let off unpunished and, as many service providers worry, is free to reoffend.

These factors notwithstanding, a variety of outcomes obtain to Brazilian women who do access service providers to get help to deal with violence, which highlights the importance of having these services available. Thus, amongst the failed or abandoned prosecution cases, or the deportation of undocumented women, or failure to obtain help from some statutory services, to leave the perpetrators or to keep them away from their children, there are also success stories, where women have managed to obtain redress from the justice system, have managed to leave the perpetrator, have accessed support from state agencies, and moved on to rebuild their lives.

As service providers have noted, though, much more is needed to raise awareness of VAWG in society more widely, including greater efforts at educating current and future generations about VAWG. There is also a much greater need for having resources available, including public funding, to expand the range and reach of provision by the voluntary sector as well as the statutory sector. Enhanced provision of services is particularly needed for migrant and ethnic minority women, who should have much greater overall support to be able to report GBV and build the evidence base necessary to lead to successful and commensurate sanctioning of perpetrators.

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## ***Appendix I – Organisations approached to participate in the research***

<b><i>Organisation</i></b>	
ABRAS	Associação Brasileira no Reino Unido
ADVANCE	
AMAR	
AMBE	Apoio as Mulheres Brasileiras no Exterior
Bede House	
Casa do Brasil	
Casa Latino Americana	Latin American House
Doctors of the World	
HESTIA	
LAWA	Latin American Women’s Aid
LAWRS	Latin American Women’s Rights Services
NABAS LEGAL	
NAZ VIDAS	
NCDV	National Centre for Domestic Violence
NIA	
New Hope Church	
REFUGE	
Open Doors	
SOLACE	
Stockwell Partnership	
VAGN	Violence Against Girls Network
Victim Support	
Ugly Mugs	
WGN	Women and Girls Network
Women’s Aid	
Womankind	
Women’s Resource Centre	

## ***Appendix II – The London VAWG Consortium***

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### ***Member Organisations – London VAWG Consortium***

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Asiana Network

Asian Women's Resource Centre

Against Violence and Abuse (AVA)

Chinese Information and Advice Centre

EACH

FORWARD (Foundation for Women's Health Research and Development)

IMECE Women's Centre

IMKAAN

Iranian and Kurdish Women's Rights Organisation (IKWRO)

Jewish Women's Aid

Latin American Women's Rights Service (LAWRS)

Nia Project

Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre

Refuge

RESPECT

Rights of Women

Solace Women's Aid

Southall Black Sisters

TENDER

Women and Girls Network

Women's Aid

Women's Resource Centre

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Source: [www.thelondonvawgconsortium.org.uk](http://www.thelondonvawgconsortium.org.uk) (accessed 02/09/2016)

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