

# Domestic Abuse, Migrant Women and the Domestic Abuse Act

London PLUS : The New Domestic Abuse Act

Latin American Women's Rights Service

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LATIN AMERICAN WOMEN'S RIGHTS SERVICE  
Servicio por los Derechos de la Mujer Latinoamericana  
Serviço pelos Direitos da Mulher Latino-americana



Step Up  
Migrant  
Women  
UK

LAWRS



We are a feminist, and human rights organisation led **'by and for' Latin American women** that has worked for over 37 years supporting, advocating and campaigning for the rights of Latin American and other migrant women in the UK.

At the heart of our work, is the conviction that all survivors, regardless of their immigration status, must have the right to live a life free from violence and to be protected from abuse.

# Migrant women experiences of VAWG

## Barriers experienced by migrant women are often structural

- Multiple perpetrators
- Language barrier
- Isolation
- Limited understanding of the UK system
- Longer periods enduring abuse (SUMW, 2019)
- Exclusion from Criminal Justice System (EVAW & University of Bristol, 2018)
- Immigration abuse



# “The Right to be Believed” (2019)

## Key findings

- Almost **6 in 10** women having received **threats of deportation** from abusers;
- **More than half of the women** feared that they **would not be believed by the police because of their immigration status**;
- **More than than half** felt that the **police and the Home Office would support the perpetrator over them**;
- **Almost half of the women** found that **women’s organisations were the most important place to report VAWG**.

# Migrant women, VAWG and the *Hostile Environment*

## Hostile environment (Compliant Environment)

- Immigration checks
- Charges
- Extension of the No Recourse to Public Funds rule
- **Data-sharing with the Home Office for immigration control**

**In practice immigration enforcement has been prioritised over safety of vulnerable victims**

# Step Up Migrant Women Campaign

- 2017 – LAWRS Establishment of safe reporting mechanisms for victims/survivors of Violence Against Women and Girls
- Supported by + 50 organisations
- Campaign and influence key decision-makers
- **Centre the voices of migrant survivors and led 'by and for' BME organisations**
- Evidence-based work – “The Right to be Believed”



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# Domestic Abuse Bill/ Domestic Abuse Act



- Once-in-a generation opportunity to tackle domestic abuse
- Ratification of the Istanbul Convention
- Scrutiny - improving remedies available for survivors/victims
- Failing to ensure Bill protects migrant survivors
- Support for Migrant Victims (SMV) Pilot Scheme

# Migrant Women amendments

- Non-discrimination clause (EVAW)
- Extension of the Domestic Violence Rule (DV Rule) and the Destitute Domestic Violence Concession (DDVC) (Southall Black Sisters)
- **Safe Reporting mechanisms (LAWRS)**



## Safe Reporting mechanisms

- Amendment to ensure that the personal data of migrant survivors of domestic abuse that is given or used for the purpose of their seeking or receiving support and assistance is not used for immigration control purposes.
- Super-complaint findings.

# Lack of protection for migrant survivors/victims



Latin American Women's Rights Service - LAWRS

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The [#DomesticAbuseBill](#) will receive Royal Assent today. Despite the multiple improvements to tackle this heinous crime, we cannot celebrate its movement towards becoming an Act because it fails to protect migrant women. [#StepUpMigrantWomen](#) 1/8

DOMESTIC ABUSE  
BILL RECEIVING  
ROYAL ASSENT  
STATEMENT



Step Up  
Migrant  
Women  
UK



ALL WOMEN HAVE THE RIGHT TO A LIFE FREE FROM VIOLENCE, REGARDLESS OF THEIR IMMIGRATION STATUS

*“When you have insecure immigration status you are forced to choose between many impossible choices. You have to choose between letting your employer steal away half your wages or keeping your children fed. **You have to choose to either stay with a violent man or choose to sleep on the street.** [...] Your life becomes a series of impossible choices. You just have to choose the one that makes you sleep a little bit better at night.”*

Carmen\*, Ecuador



Thank you

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