

# Towards visibility

## the Latin American community in London

Trust for London funded Queen Mary, University of London, to undertake analysis of the size and socio-economic characteristics of the Latin American community in London and the UK, including a survey of recent Latin American migrants from mainland Europe. This work was done in partnership with the Latin American Women's Rights Service (LAWRS).

### Key Findings

1. Just under 250,000 Latin Americans live in the UK, of which around 145,000 are in London. Brazilians are the largest national group (over a third of Latin Americans) followed by Colombians (20%). The next largest groups are from Ecuador, Argentina, Venezuela and Mexico.
2. Latin Americans are a significant part of London's population, representing the eighth largest non-UK born population in the capital. The population is London's second fastest growing migrant population from outside the EU. Two-thirds have arrived since 2000.
3. The Latin American community is well-educated with around half having gained a university education, compared to a third for London as a whole. However, 20% struggle speaking English. This rises to half of Latin American migrants who are more recent arrivals from mainland Europe.
4. A quarter work in low-paid elementary jobs (for example, as cleaners, kitchen assistants, porters, waiting staff and security guards) and a further 20% in other low-paid sectors such as caring, sales and processing.
5. Half of Latin Americans live in private rental housing, double the average for London.
6. Onward migration of Latin Americans from mainland Europe to the UK has increased over recent years. 80% have arrived from Spain and over half since 2011. Nine out of ten have the right to live and work in the UK permanently, having either a British or EU passport. These onward Latin American migrants (OLAs) are more disadvantaged than Latin Americans who are more established in London.
7. OLAs have experienced significant downward occupational mobility. Two-thirds worked in cleaning when they first arrived in London (reducing to 50% after a period of settlement). However, only around 2% worked in cleaning in Latin America and only around 1 in 10 did so in their previous European country.
8. Incomes of OLAs are low. Three-quarters earn less than the London Living Wage, much higher than the London average of 20%.
9. Nearly half of OLAs have experienced problems at work. This included around 1 in 5 not being paid for work carried out and nearly 1 in 10 experiencing verbal abuse.
10. Access to health services remains low. Although 90% of OLAs have used the NHS for themselves or their family, around 1 in 6 are not registered with a GP and nearly 7 in 10 have not used a dentist.

## Background

This research is a follow up to the *No Longer Invisible* research undertaken in 2011. The latter was the first attempt to provide an estimate of the size of the Latin American population in the UK and also highlighted the main characteristics and experiences of the community. The current report builds on this work in two key ways. It updates the work using the most recent Census. However, it is important to note that while the Census provides an extensive and in-depth statistical profile, it does not capture the full range of experiences of Latin Americans. It is likely to exclude many who are undocumented, some migrants with legal status, yet living in precarious housing or labour situations and those with limited command of the English language.

The report also provides a detailed picture of recent Latin American migrants who have previously resided in another European country before moving to London. The most recent flows of Latin Americans into the UK are increasingly from other European countries, particularly Spain, yet little is known about this population.

## Growing population

Due to shortcomings in the way official data is compiled, including the lack of a separate ethnic category for 'Latin American', the research sought to estimate the size of the Latin American population in the UK. An analysis of several official datasets, including the most recent Census, produced an estimate of just under 250,000 Latin Americans in the UK, of which around 145,000 live in London. This includes regular, irregular and second generation groups.

Latin Americans are a significant part of London's population representing the eighth largest non-UK born population in the capital. The population is London's second fastest growing migrant population from outside the EU. Two-thirds have arrived since 2000.

Brazilians are the largest national group comprising over a third of Latin Americans and they are the most recent arrivals, with 80% migrating to the UK since 2000. Colombians are the second largest group and make up around 20% of the community. The next largest groups are from Ecuador, Argentina, Venezuela and Mexico.

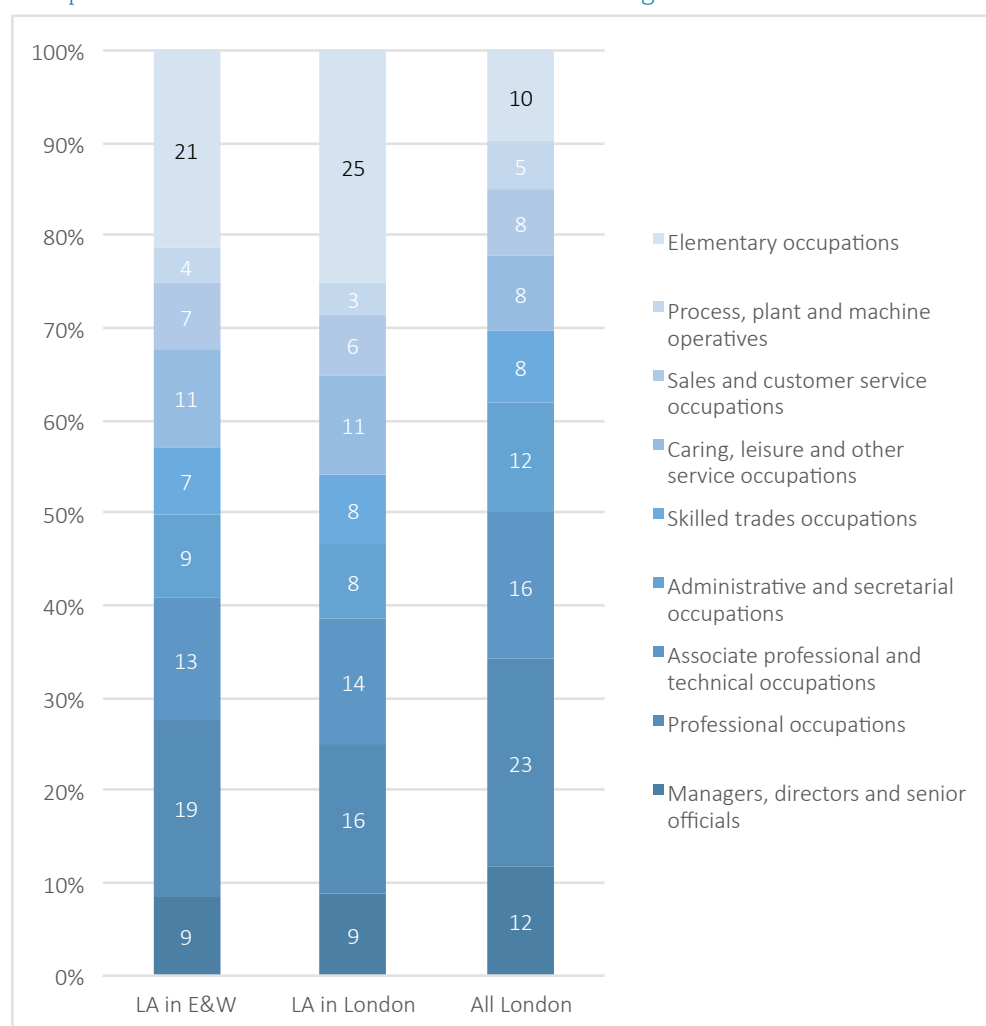
## Living and working in London

The Census shows that of those living in the capital, more than two-thirds reside in Inner London, with particularly large concentrations in Lambeth and Southwark, followed by Brent, Westminster, Wandsworth and Haringey.

It is a young population with two-thirds aged under 40, similar to other migrant populations in London. Nearly 90% are of working age which is significantly higher than London's working-age population which is just over 60%.

Latin Americans are well-educated with around half having gained a university education, compared to a third for London as a whole. However, despite high education levels, around 20% of Latin Americans struggle speaking English. This difficulty with speaking English is likely to contribute to the occupations Latin Americans find themselves in when they move to the UK.

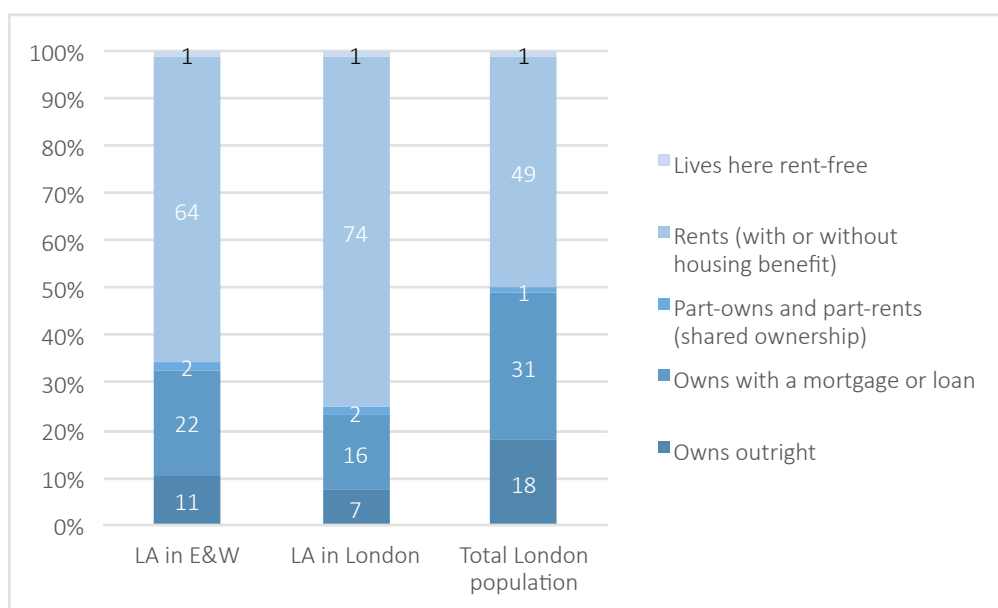
## Occupational status of Latin Americans in London and England & Wales



Source: Census 2011. All London data from Londoners born overseas, their age and year of arrival, GLA: London

Although employment rates are high at nearly 70%, much of this is due to the vast majority being of working age. Latin American men have higher employment rates than women at 77%, compared with 62%. A quarter work in low-paid elementary jobs (which includes cleaners, kitchen assistants, porters, waiting staff and security guards) and a further 20% in service, caring, sales and processing jobs. This is 50% higher than London's work force employed in these low-paying sectors. When compared with other migrant groups in London, only Romanians have higher proportions of those working in elementary jobs.

Around three-quarters of Latin Americans live in rental accommodation, which is significantly higher than London as a whole where half of the population rents. Among Latin Americans renting, 70% live in private rental housing. Overall, this means half of Latin Americans live in private rental housing, double the average for London. These concentrations in the private rental sector are especially significant given that social rents are much lower than the private sector, around a third of the cost.



Source: Census 2011

## Latin American migration from mainland Europe

Onward migration from mainland Europe is widely acknowledged to form the bulk of Latin American migration to the UK in recent years. Yet little is known about these new flows of Latin Americans. This survey is the first of its kind to provide an analysis of this community, drawing on a face-to-face questionnaire survey with 400 onward Latin American migrants (OLAs). Overall, the research indicates they are more disadvantaged than Latin Americans who are more established in London.

80% of OLAs moved from Spain, with just under 10% from Italy and a smaller number from Portugal. Colombians, Ecuadorians and Brazilians comprise the majority of OLAs most likely to move from Spain. Over half have arrived since 2011 and 9 out of 10 have the right to live and work in the UK, having either a British or EU passport.

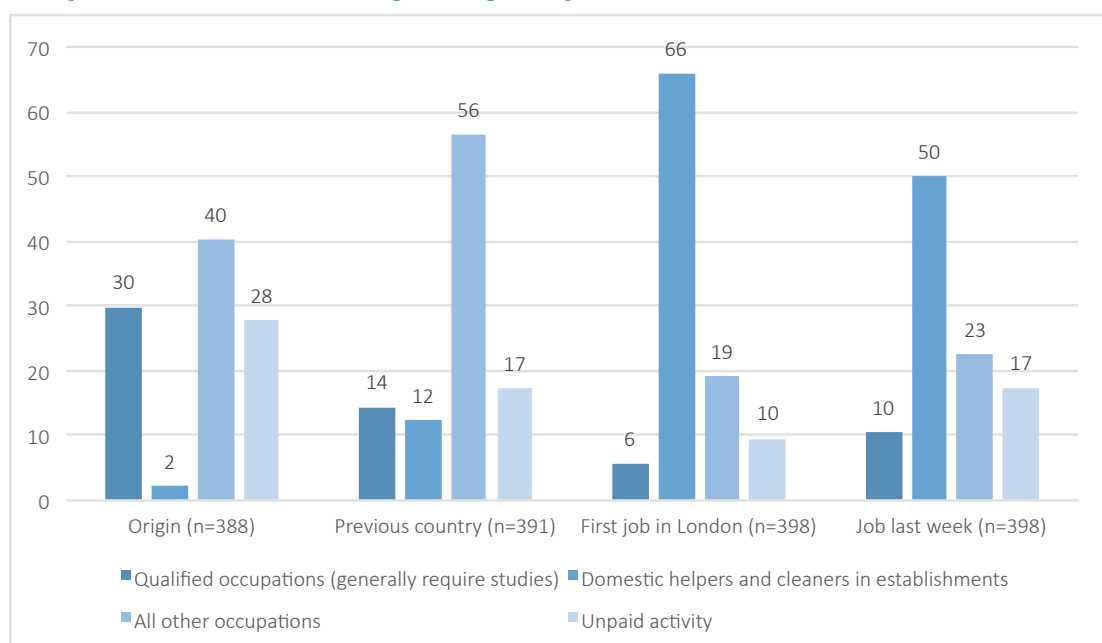
Economics was a key factor for OLAs leaving Latin America (cited by 50%) and also in moving from their previous EU country of residence to move to the UK (70% cited this). This was mainly due to unemployment and a lack of economic opportunities. The existence of family and friends in London was the single most important set of reasons for why OLAs chose the city over other destinations in their move from mainland Europe (43%). A further third stated that economic and professional opportunities played the most important role. More than 90% are of working age.

## OLAs living and working in London

OLAs are less well-educated than the wider Latin American population in London, though over a third have been educated to university-level. In addition, almost half speak little or no English. This has obvious effects especially in accessing the labour market. English language difficulties were identified as the main problem (90%) and the main service needed by OLAs.

Half of all OLAs work in cleaning, whilst only 1 in 10 work in professional and managerial jobs. When broken down according to nationality, Bolivians are the most likely to work in cleaning (70%) followed by Ecuadorians and Colombians (both over 60%). In contrast, only 15% of Brazilians work in cleaning, while 27% are employed in professional and managerial occupations.

## Occupation of OLAs at different stages in migration process



Source: Authors' survey (n=398)

OLAs experienced marked downward occupational mobility. This is evidenced by the fact that two-thirds worked in cleaning when they first arrived in London. Furthermore, only around 2% worked in cleaning in Latin America and only around 1 in 10 did so in their previous European country. In contrast, in Latin America 30% worked in jobs requiring qualifications, which were largely managerial and professional.

Three quarters earn less than the London Living Wage, which is significantly higher than the London average of 20%. In terms of nationality, around half of Brazilians earn more than the London Living Wage compared to only 3% of Ecuadorians and 10% of Colombians.

Nearly half of OLAs reported having experienced problems at work. This included around 1 in 5 not being paid for work carried out and nearly 1 in 10 experiencing verbal abuse.

As with the wider Latin American community in London, OLAs are overwhelmingly living in the private rental sector (78%), with 38% residing in a rented room. Conditions are generally poorer than the London average. For example, almost one-third feel their accommodation is overcrowded. Unsurprisingly, high housing costs and the poor quality of housing was cited by half of OLAs as one of the main problems which needed addressing.

Only 6% of OLAs claim an out-of-work benefit. Half receive welfare benefits, but these are primarily child benefit (which most parents are entitled to, unless one of them earns more than £50,000 per annum), housing benefit and tax credits.

Although 90% have used the NHS for themselves or their family, around 1 in 6 are not registered with a GP and nearly 7 in 10 have not used a dentist. This may be partly due to large numbers living in the private rental sector and as a result moving more frequently and being less likely to register. Some use alternatives such as private doctors (1 in 5) and around 1 in 8 have travelled abroad to access healthcare. In relation to other services, more than half have used the services of a migrant community organisation or another charitable group.

## Recommendations

### Ethnic monitoring

- Public bodies need to ensure their ethnic monitoring includes a ‘Latin American’ category in areas with large Latin American populations, following the lead of the London Boroughs of Southwark, Lambeth, Hackney, Islington and the Greater London Authority. Public bodies need to use the data to support the integration of the community and in the development of service planning and delivery.

### Employment

- Government, employers, trade unions and other civil society organisations need to increase greater awareness of employment rights and access to legal advice services (including for those with limited understanding of English).
- Better enforcement of labour rights, particularly in low-paid sectors such as cleaning. This should include the establishment of a London-wide body by the Mayor of London to tackle unlawful and exploitative employment practices.
- Support around re-validating qualifications and career development should be offered by employers and training agencies in order to fully utilise the skills and experience of those stuck in low-paid jobs. Funding for employability programmes should also target those in low-paid jobs.

### Language and access

- English language training is central to social integration and occupational mobility for Latin Americans and other migrant communities. The provision of high-quality, affordable and accessible language classes is essential, including provision by employers within the workplace.
- Translation and interpretation services in Spanish and Portuguese need to be made available by public service providers in areas of London with large concentrations of Latin Americans. This should include information, advice and support on access and entitlement to welfare benefits/tax credits and healthcare provision.
- Take-up campaigns targeting Latin Americans in their own language are needed to increase access to health services including GPs and dentists.

### Housing

- Advice around tenant rights, particularly for those in the private rental sector.
- Local authorities must monitor more closely housing conditions and take action where necessary. This could include greater use of landlord licencing and environmental health enforcement by local authorities.
- Local authorities should take proactive steps to identify and address hidden homelessness, including conducting a census.

### Immigration

- Naturalisation fees need to be revised to make it accessible for low-paid migrant workers and their families to be able to achieve naturalisation when entitled.

The full report and further details about the work are available from:

[www.trustforlondon/latinamericansinlondon](http://www.trustforlondon/latinamericansinlondon)

[www.geog.qmul.ac.uk/latinamericansinlondon](http://www.geog.qmul.ac.uk/latinamericansinlondon)

[www.lawrs.org.uk](http://www.lawrs.org.uk)

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