

Why do we resist?

We resist for a fairer life

We resist for the most oppressed and the less privileged

We resist to fight against the status quo, and against all that we have been taught as the truth when it's in fact not the reality

We resist so other latin american girls have the chance to grow up in a better world

We resist for our mothers and their mothers, for our children and for yours

We resist for a world where our identity doesn't affect our safety

We resist because resistance is in our blood,

because our ancestors fought for freedom in the colonies,

because our ancestors weren't passive,

because our ancestors knew that the master's tools would not, and never will, dismantle the master's house.

We exist because we resist.

LAWRS' Young Women's Advisory Board (YWAB) members.

Important Content Warning

This document contains an in-depth analysis of sensitive topics, including racism, xenophobia, sexual harassment, and misogyny, which may evoke scenarios of sexual and gender-based violence. We encourage readers to approach the material with care and consideration, recognising the potential emotional impact.

Please take time to reflect on the content, and do not hesitate to reach out for support or clarification if needed.

If you require further assistance, you can contact LAWRS for support and guidance.

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A special thank you to the members who took the time out of their busy lives to work collectively to write up this document and make it what it is today. Your efforts have not gone unnoticed.

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¹ This includes first and second-generation young women with Latin American ethnicity and European/UK nationality.

About this report

The findings presented in this report reflect the views, experiences, and suggestions shared by the peer researchers, based on a thorough research process that included a survey and interviews. They are a group of twelve young Latin American migrant women aged 18 to 25 who live in London, members of the Latin American Women's Rights Service - **LAWRS' Young Women's Advisory Board (YWAB)**.

This report represents the YWAB members' commitment to exploring peer research, leadership, and advocacy as a form of activism to eradicate every form of violence against women and girls (VAWG). They participated in peer research, leadership, and advocacy training between the 27th of April 2024 and the 15th of March 2025, carried out by LAWRS and Partnership for Young London. Their work was guided by the research question: **What is the impact of Sexual Harassment within higher education on 18-25-year-old Latin American women studying in London?**

This work will inform LAWRS' policy work to ensure the voices and experiences of young Latin American migrant women are part of our campaigns.



The Latin American Women's Rights Service (LAWRS) is a 'by and for', feminist and human rights organisation with a mission "to provide Latin American migrant women with tools to assert our rights, and pursue personal empowerment and social change". Latin Americans are one of the fastest-growing ethnic minorities in the UK, but despite this, they remain invisible. Founded in 1983, we offer culturally and linguistically specialist advice, information, counselling and psychotherapy, advocacy, development programmes, and workshops.



Sin Fronteras is the LAWRS' project to support Latin American girls and young migrant women. We are a safe space for them to be empowered, express themselves, develop their potential, improve their critical thinking, take action to ensure their rights are recognised and engage in social change.



Partnership for Young London believes in a future where every young person's right to wellbeing is recognised and fulfilled. With young people making up a quarter of London's population, we have to respect that they are crucial to its future.

LAWRS' Young Women's Advisory Board

The YWAB is an initiative by *Sin Fronteras*, the Latin American Women's Rights Service's project for young women and girls. The YWAB programme provides young Latin American migrant women with **a space for policy and campaigning participation** where they develop their leadership and advocacy skills. The main objective of the programme is to develop a safe and collaborative space where participants increase their ability to influence decision-making to the benefit of young Latin American migrant women.

The LAWRS Young Women's Advisory Board 2024-25 is a collective of young, Latin American women aged 18-25. Our aim is to target gender-based violence at its intersections with 'race', ethnicity, migration and Latin American identity. Through discussing shared experiences, a research gap was discovered around how Latin American women's intersecting identities affect their experience of sexual harassment in higher education and the impact this has on them when navigating university spaces. For this reason we have decided to carry out the following peer research project.

Research Process and Methodology

The training programme used the Partnership for Young London methodology, using peer research as a form of Participatory Action Research. Peer research aims to discover new information or reach a new understanding of a subject; however, it is steered and conducted by people with lived experiences of the studied issue.

The LAWRS Young Women's Advisory Board 2024-25 focused their work on tackling violence against women and girls (VAWG), with a particular emphasis on sexual harassment. As a group, we agreed to adopt the following as our common definition of sexual harassment, which is how sexual harassment is defined in law:

In England and Wales, the legal definition of sexual harassment is when someone carries out unwanted sexual behaviour towards another person that makes them feel upset, scared, offended or humiliated. It is also when someone carries out this behaviour with the intention of making someone else feel that way. This means that it can still be sexual harassment even if the other person didn't feel upset, scared, offended or humiliated.

Rape Crisis. 08/10/2024.

<https://rapecrisis.org.uk/get-informed/types-of-sexual-violence/what-is-sexual-harassment/>

As a first step, we carried out a focus group² with members of the board to discuss our lived experiences³ of sexual harassment through the lens of being Latin American women, both first

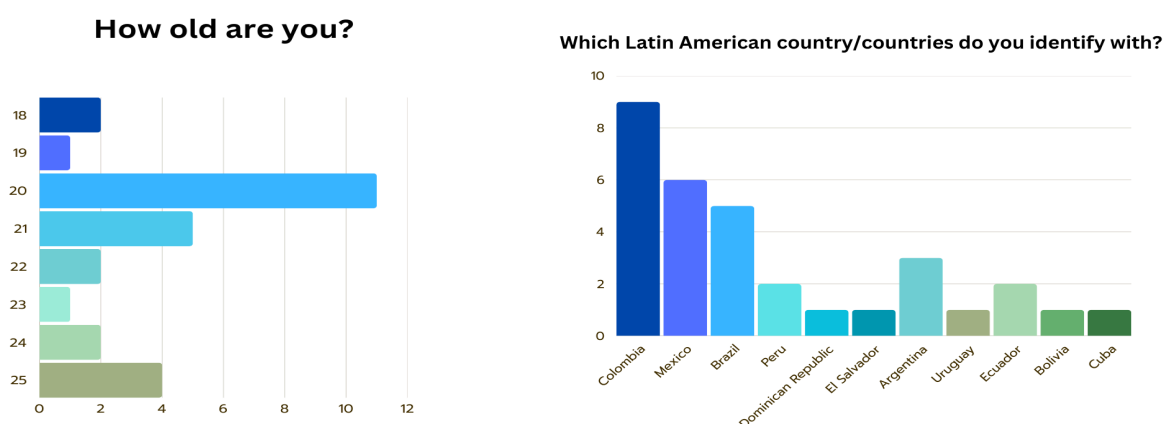
²A gathering of deliberately selected people who participate in a facilitated discussion intended to elicit perceptions about a particular topic or area of interest.

³ Lived experience is defined as "personal knowledge about the world gained through direct, first-hand involvement in everyday events rather than through representations constructed by other people" (Oxford Reference 2025).

and second-generation, living in and/or studying in London. Through these discussions, we were able to identify common experiences, which would be used in the process of developing interview questions. We initially developed three questions which looked at sexual harassment in different contexts: public transport, education settings and the workplace. As a collective, we decided to focus on education settings, narrowing this down to higher education, particularly in relation to the following research question:

What is the impact of Sexual Harassment within higher education on 18-25-year-old Latin American women⁴ studying in London?

Following the finalisation of the research question, we individually carried out **13 interviews** with Latin American women aged 18 to 25 years old studying in universities based in London⁵. We decided on a semi-structured⁶ interview - this allowed us to have a 'guide' which would ensure we would all cover the same topic but would still provide flexibility to us as researchers to ask follow-up questions to gain a more detailed response from participants. Due to interviews being time-consuming, the addition of a survey allowed us to collect data from a larger sample of Latin American women aged 18 to 25. The survey was primarily shared via a link on social media, where we received **32 survey responses** - thus, we had a total sample size of 45. Graphs were created to reference the survey results in combination with the interview's key findings.



Young Latin American women (survey answers).

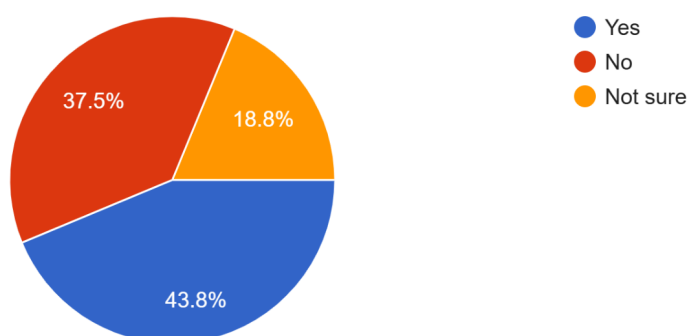
⁴At *Sin Fronteras* we use an inclusive definition of 'woman'.

⁵ Some of the Universities where the interviews were conducted are: St. Mary's University, Twickenham, University College London, and Goldsmiths.

⁶ A combination of both structured and unstructured interviews such as, a researcher will come up with a list of questions to be asked in the interview, but they can also ask follow-up questions to get deeper detail or explanation from the respondent on the basis of their response.

During your time at University, did you experience some form of sexual harassment?

32 responses



Young Latin American women (survey answers).

Once each member of the board submitted their interview for transcription, we began the process of data analysis via thematic analysis⁷. The process began with members reading the interview transcripts before adding codes at the margins of the page. The codes were cut up which allowed us to organise them into categories based on recurring themes. During the categorisation process, five key themes came up: stereotypes and accents, norms and minimising, university support and procedures, the impact of sexual harassment, and reporting. Upon identifying our key themes, we began to develop policy recommendations divided into short, medium and long-term recommendations, alongside whom we considered our stakeholders.

Following this, we reviewed the interview transcripts once more to select quotes for each theme, and in groups via a collaborative document, wrote a summary of the main conclusions for each theme. Taking into consideration our research themes, we returned to our drafted policy recommendations to consider the following:

- What is the recommendation?
- Which research themes or categories does this relate to?
- What supporting evidence links this to the data and findings?
- Why is it important in addressing the impact of sexual harassment on Latin American students?

We continued to work collectively via the collaborative document before working with various LAWRS members to refine the peer research draft through collaborative feedback and discussion. It was through this feedback session that we decided that we would write the document as a Peer Research Report which could later be turned into a Policy Brief. All members collectively wrote up the research findings, however, editing was carried out by pairs/groups assigned to different sections of the results.

⁷ A form of qualitative research which allows for analysis by identifying and interpreting patterns of meaning (or 'themes') within data collected.

Alongside the research, we were also introduced to creative methods⁸ to supplement our peer research. Creative research approaches provide an alternative medium of exploring and communicating ideas. In utilising creative research approaches alongside our peer research, we were able to offer a more immersive and emotional understanding of the topic being researched. Each participant created two individual pieces of artwork based on the research topic. Please see the 'Activism Pieces and Our Message' of the document for the images produced.

Key Findings

The LAWRS' Young Women's Advisory Board worked on analysing the information from the interviews conducted and identified the following 5 key findings:

- 1) Sexual harassment has a significant negative impact on Latin American women's mental health and their sense of safety in the United Kingdom.
- 2) University procedures for reporting sexual harassment are broken, making them an inaccessible and time-consuming process which deters reporting.
- 3) Multiple stigmatisation of being a migrant, Latin American, and a woman dissuades women from reporting as it positions them as more vulnerable.
- 4) Stereotypes surrounding Latin American women make them more vulnerable to sexual harassment as they're perceived as more 'sexually available'.
- 5) The frequency of sexual harassment paired with the stereotyping of Latin Americans in the U.K. results in these behaviours and acts being perceived as the 'norm'.

Each key finding represents a significant insight drawn from the interviews, highlighting key themes and issues that are important to the young women interviewed. Following are the descriptions of these findings, which provide a deeper understanding of their experiences and challenges.

Sexual harassment has a significant negative impact on Latin American women across multiple areas of life.

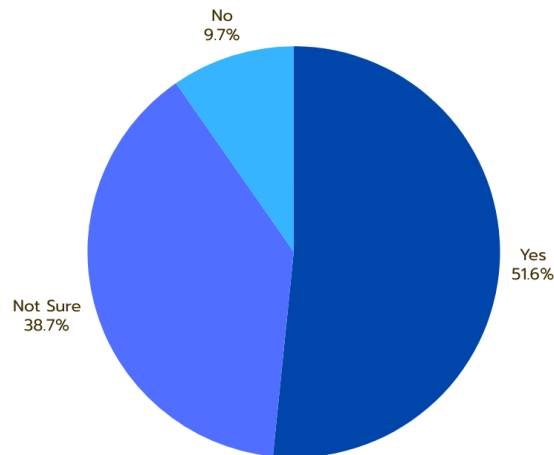
The young women interviewed reported that their experiences of sexual harassment in the United Kingdom had many negative impacts in various areas of their lives. Sexual harassment impacts people in different ways, however from this research we can conclude that there are common negative impacts. Impact was identified primarily across the following four areas: mental health, social life, academic and personal development and identity. Some women reported that experiencing sexual harassment impacted them in all these different areas, while others reported combinations of the following.

⁸ The use of art-based methods, photography, drawing, video, film, visual and artistic expression,

- Women reported their mental health being affected by experiencing sexual harassment. Women reported feeling anxious, paranoid and an overall sense of isolation because of sexual harassment.
 - *"I'm quite hyper vigilant, I'm always kind of paranoid and on edge, something's gonna happen to other people"* **Young Latin American woman (interview answer).**
 - *"I just kind of wanted to look... like masculine and no hips or curves, no long hair and curly hair, (it) definitely impacted my mental health in terms of feeling very separated from my body"* **Young Latin American women (interview answer).**
- Women reported social impacts of sexual harassment, including social isolation, social anxiety, fear of going out and spending less time in social circles.
 - *"I didn't feel respected by others, so it gave me that level of social anxiety"* **Young Latin American woman (interview answer).**
 - *"In the past few months, I genuinely have felt myself like becoming a bit more muted just because I'm so scared that I'm actually gonna get attacked"* **Young Latin American woman (interview answer).**
 - *"I used to be someone with a big group of people around me, I think I've found that like, I kind of de-centred away from that"* **Young Latin American woman (interview answer).**
 - *"I have felt myself become more secluded because I'm so scared that I'm actually going to get attacked"* **Young Latin American women (interview answer).**
- Young women's personal growth has been affected in the face of sexual harassment. Their academic journey, academic performance and relationships with their peers has also been affected by experiences of sexual harassment.
 - *"[sexual harassment] impacts students' progression, development and mental health."* **Young Latin American women (interview answer).**
 - *"I feel like there's a barrier in communication between me and men, I can't actually work [at university] with them"* **Young Latin American women (interview answer).**
- Women have reported that their sense of personal identity and their relationship with their Latin American roots has suffered as a result of sexual harassment.

- *“I try not to mention that I’m Mexican sometimes, because I just don’t want to be associated with the concept of Latinas and Mexicans” Young Latin American woman (interview answer).*
- *“I felt sexualised and so harassed that I cut all my hair off, and I, like I wanted to appear as masculine as I could... [not] being Latina and having like curves and like that type of body...” Young Latin American women (interview answer).*

Do you feel being a Latin American woman contributed to your experience of sexual harassment?



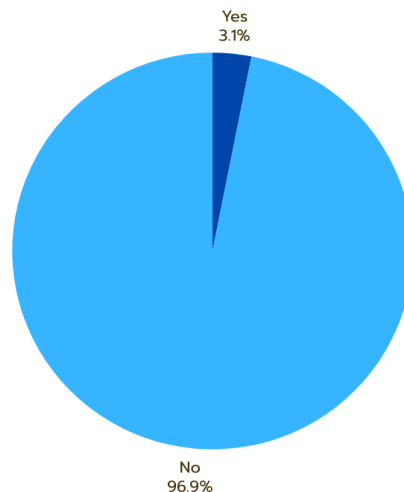
Young Latin American women (survey answers).

University procedures for reporting sexual harassment are broken, making them an inaccessible and time-consuming process which deters reporting.

When it came to reporting attacks, women mentioned that the complex nature and lack of accessibility to these processes made them second-guess about following up. Most of our interviewees identified that their universities have procedures and policies in place. They mention that resources are briefly referred to at the beginning but this does not show to be consistent or easy to access later on. Most students don’t mention knowing anything about the policy on sexual harassment outside of knowing it exists. It became apparent to them that most people don’t use, or consider using, the resources for various reasons. Some report that it is due to procedures being incredibly delayed, while others share that reporters are not taken seriously even when the procedures are accessible. Subsequently, it can be very intimidating and scary to report sexual harassment, and the perception of reporting continues to be heavily stigmatised. Universities seem to be putting considerable effort into the management of these cases, which comes off as performative, yet results in making it hard for survivors to raise complaints and cases.

- Young women in higher education have stated that there are not enough consistent informative talks and reminders which highlight the support they can access.
 - *“(when asked about guidelines or policies around sexual harassment being mentioned to her) Probably at some point but it was not something that I remember...It’s not something that is made really clear or like it’s not concerned...They’re not really accessible”* **Young Latin American women (interview answer).**
 - *“Yeah, after the introduction meetings and like, the first few weeks of the course, I don’t remember any other conversations about it, there were conversations around mental health a bit more because of certain things that happened at the time, but not specific to sexual harassment”* **Young Latin American women (interview answer).**
 - *“I’m not aware..of where I can find those resources”* **Young Latin American women (interview answer).**
- There is a clear perception that reporting is not a safe pathway for those who face sexual harassment.
 - *“(when asked if she thought of reporting) I didn’t because I thought they weren’t going to believe me”* **Young Latin American woman (interview answer).**
 - *“I didn’t take it further to the university or anything like that because, even though it made me uncomfortable, I didn’t feel safe”* **Young Latin American women (interview answer).**
 - *“So you’re not gonna walk up to a bunch of people that you barely know, specially the consultant, and you’re like sorry I couldn’t finish history because I got sexually harassed”* **Young Latin American woman (interview answer).**
 - *“I lost faith in my university’s response (after) my friend who reported had an awful experience”* **Young Latin American woman (interview answer).**

Have you ever reported sexual harassment to your University?



Young Latin American women (survey answers).

- The overall perception of sexual harassment by students it's that for anything to be worthwhile to report there needs to be a physical component to the act.
 - *"(People are more likely to report) anything physical..verbal harassment I feel like there is no way to report it"* **Young Latin American woman (interview answer).**
 - *"(If) I was actually injured...(it) would be kind of..an easier thing to prove."* **Young Latin American woman (interview answer).**
 - *"The sexual harassment that's been reported the most is physical harassment...I feel like there should be the same importance given to verbal sexual harassment"* **Young Latin American woman (interview answer).**
 - *"If it became physical in any way I would be more likely to report"* **Young Latin American woman (interview answer).**
- Those who report claim to have unsuccessful procedures that get closed with no real resolution.
 - *"(when being asked about reporting her sexual assault case) They said there was not enough evidence. So they just left it...at some point they closed the case"* **Young Latin American woman (interview answer).**
 - *"(action) wasn't taken pretty fast so the harassment continued"* **Young Latin American woman (interview answer).**

- When trying to access resources provided by the university it seems that there is a struggle to find a clear pathway to report.
 - *“(when mentioning using resources for victims of sexual harassment) I’ve used that service, and it can take a while for them to get back to you. So apart from that now..I actually don’t know how to report it” Young Latin American woman (interview answer).*
 - *“I did not report it because there is no clear way to and you don’t know who these people are” Young Latin American women (interview answer).*
- Most of the interviewees communicate a desire for more diversity in the staff who they can report to and in the sexual harassment policy.
 - *“I would say, obviously, hire more, hire more staff from different places...I would still at least feel more comfortable talking about it, with someone that understands the nuances of not being like white or European” Young Latin American women (interview answer).*
 - *I don’t think they mention anything about Latin American women...most of the staff, probably, I would say don’t because they’re mostly British and they just don’t understand the experience” Young Latin American women (interview answer).*
 - *“I still feel like I wouldn’t feel comfortable telling a man about any experience that had to do with sexual harassment” Young Latin American women (interview answer).*

Multiple stigmatisation of being a migrant, Latin American, and a woman dissuades women from reporting as it positions them as more vulnerable.

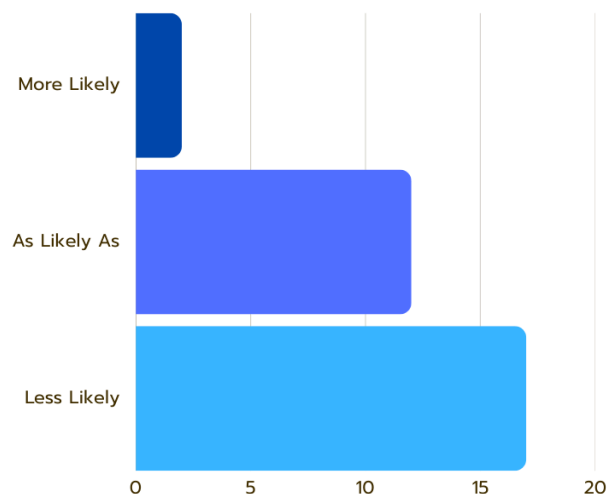
Intersectionality⁹ is key to understanding how Latin American women navigate sexual harassment - participants don’t just experience sexual harassment through the lens of gendered violence, but also through racialised violence. Thus, it is the overlap between being a woman, Latin American, and a migrant (for first-generation participants) that constructs a multiple stigmatisation which makes women not only feel more vulnerable to sexual harassment but also discourages them from reporting instances of sexual harassment.

Various barriers which emerge for women include: Language, distrust in U.K. reporting systems, isolation, alongside the feeling that they won’t be believed if they don’t come forward without sufficient evidence.

⁹ A term developed by American civil rights advocate Kimberle Crenshaw (1989); it refers to how categories like ‘race’, ethnicity, and gender are not mutually exclusive, but overlapping categories which shape lived experiences.

- Latin American women are dissuaded from reporting based on their intersecting identities. There is an idea of multiple stigmatisation which makes them feel more vulnerable in terms of experiencing and reporting sexual harassment.
 - *“There is discrimination and xenophobia and racism against Latin American women a lot of times. So I believe that that, in relation to sexual harassment, can be a sort of double stigmatisation.” Young Latin American women (interview answer).*
- Additionally, the perception of Latin American women as ‘loud’ or ‘argumentative’ may make women reconsider reporting their experiences of sexual harassment, as well as stereotypes that sexualize Latin American women, which place the blame on the victim rather than the perpetrator.
 - *“So you must be really loud or really confrontational and things like that. So I feel like they don’t understand that there are lots of layers to it.” Young Latin American woman (interview answer).*
- Migrant women are less likely to report sexual harassment as their immigrant position makes it harder to trust systems in the U.K.
 - *“Being in an immigrant position it’s harder, or it sometimes feels more difficult to report or trust systems in place.” Young Latin American woman (interview answer).*

Are Latin American women more, or less likely to report sexual harassment to their University compared to non-Latin American women?



Young Latin American women (survey answers).

- Language barriers are a significant barrier which prevents Latin American women from reporting sexual harassment - even when women have a high level of English

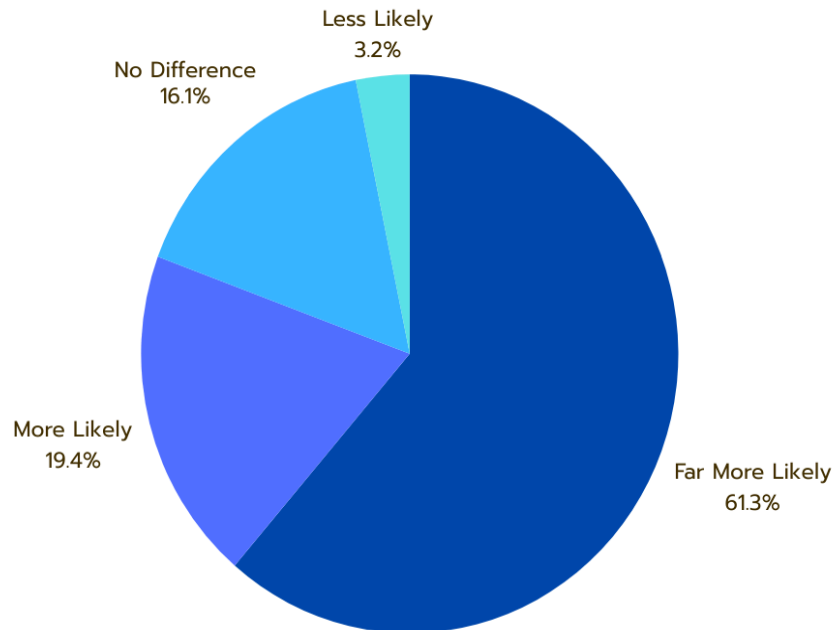
language acquisition, they can still find it difficult to articulate themselves in their second language.

- *“If English isn’t their first language, they might not be able to convey what they’re actually trying to.” Young Latin American woman (interview answer).*
- Latin American women are deterred from reporting sexual harassment as many feel they will not be believed without ‘proof’. Fear may also be a result of the possible repercussions reporting could bring to their personal, social and professional life.
 - *“What’s the evidence that this has happened?” Young Latin American woman (interview answer).*
 - *“Hard to report something when that person, the person who has done the sexual harassment, might share the same tutor” Young Latin American woman (interview answer).*
 - *“That is an embarrassing process, in my opinion” Young Latin American woman (interview answer).*
- When Latin American women migrate to the U.K., they experience isolation and loneliness, which means they lack a support system when reporting sexual harassment.
 - *“you’re here, like, essentially, by yourself, if you’ve moved here from Latin America.” Young Latin American woman (interview answer).*

Stereotypes surrounding Latin American women make them more vulnerable to sexual harassment as they’re perceived as more ‘sexually available’.

Fetishization plays a significant role in sexual harassment, by way of the objectification of women's bodies and erasure of their nuanced and autonomous identities. This fetishization manifests even in intimate relationships, with women's presence or speech being sexualized in an unwanted and invasive manner. Similarly, some perpetrators feel entitlement over women's bodies. Certain body types and cultural identities have been fetishized within white-dominated societies, leading to further objectification and harassment.

Do you feel Latin American women are more, or less likely to be sexually harassed compared to non-Latin American women?



Young Latin American women (survey answers).

- Latin American women's ethnicity is weaponised against them and is used to objectify them, leading to Latin American women being perceived as 'trophy'. Diminishing them from being a person to being 'something you carry around as an accessory'.
 - *"For them having a Latin American girlfriend is quite like a prize, something to brag about" Young Latin American woman (interview answer).*
 - *"I feel like, obviously women will have this [situations] where you're seen as a trophy type of thing. Then adding like, 'oh, it's like you're so exotic'" Young Latin American woman (interview answer).*
- One aspect of identity which made Latin American women more susceptible to sexual harassment was having a non-British accent.
 - *"I was with my ex-boyfriend at the time, and we were in a bus going somewhere, and I was just talking about my day, it was so mundane and so normal. And out of nowhere, he grabs my hand and puts it in his crotch area and tells me: 'This is how excited I get when you speak to me.' I was like, 'Whoa yeah we are in public transport.'" Young Latin American woman (interview answer).*
- Another aspect which made Latin American women more susceptible to sexual harassment as their identities were reduced to their 'bodies' which are imagined with hypersexualised features, which was used to 'differentiate' them from white British/European women. The Latin American woman's body was used to justify

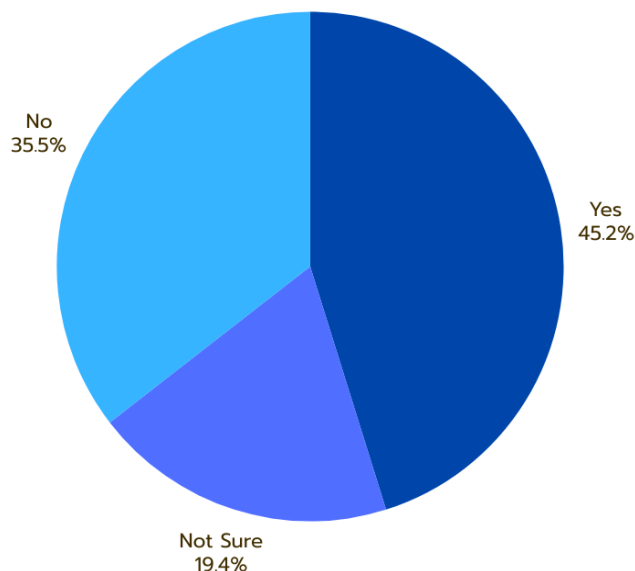
crossing physical boundaries as they became conflated with abstract ideas of promiscuity and lewdness.

- *“Just because of the way our bodies are built and how that has been fetishized in white cultures.” Young Latin American woman (interview answer).*
- *“It’s more of a systemic change that needs to happen to deconstruct these thoughts of making people think they have the right to call on someone’s body or touch or do anything non-consensual.” Young Latin American woman (interview answer).*
- *“I definitely do know that sometimes people, because they perceive you as someone who is from Latin America, they might have less boundaries... in the way that they touch you as well.” Young Latin American woman (interview answer).*
- *“They look at you, [and] they’re looking obviously at your body, and you feel uncomfortable.” Young Latin American woman (interview answer).*
- Latin American women’s politeness and friendly attitude are perceived as more sexually available; which makes them more susceptible to sexual harassment as they are presumed to be ‘easy’.
 - *“I feel like we’re genuinely charismatic and very friendly. They get the wrong idea either on purpose, or they do it because they don’t know how to tell it apart. I think we’re kind of friendly with everyone, not just women, men, too” Young Latin American woman (interview answer).*
 - *“It’s assumptions of Brazilians being like, very sexual and that kind of thing” Young Latin American woman (interview answer).*
- The association between Latin American women and dancing makes them more susceptible to sexual harassment as Latin American dance styles are perceived to be ‘more sexual’.
 - *“I feel like every time that I’ve mentioned that I am Chilean, definitely a lot of the response from the guys is “Oh, that’s hot” or weird comments from a westernized point of view, [like] “they’re quite sexualized, these dances.” You are sexually harassed once you dance in these dances. People are going to think ‘Well, you were already dancing a sexual dance anyway.’” Young Latin American woman (interview answer).*

The frequency of sexual harassment paired with the stereotyping of Latin Americans in the U.K. results in these behaviours and acts being perceived as the 'norm'.

There is a pervasive cultural normalisation and minimisation of sexual harassment within London universities. The frequency of sexual harassment results in a sense of apathy and helplessness in Latin American women which results in minimisation as a coping mechanism. Sexual harassment is rooted in the negative stereotyping of Latin American women as 'crazy', 'promiscuous', and 'loud'. Consequently, Latin American women feel there is no reason to speak out as these stereotypes have been ingrained in society, and thus, normalises sexual harassment against Latin American women in a university context. The content of these stereotypes allows for the fetishisation and dehumanisation of Latin American women.

During your time at University, did you experience some form of sexual harassment?

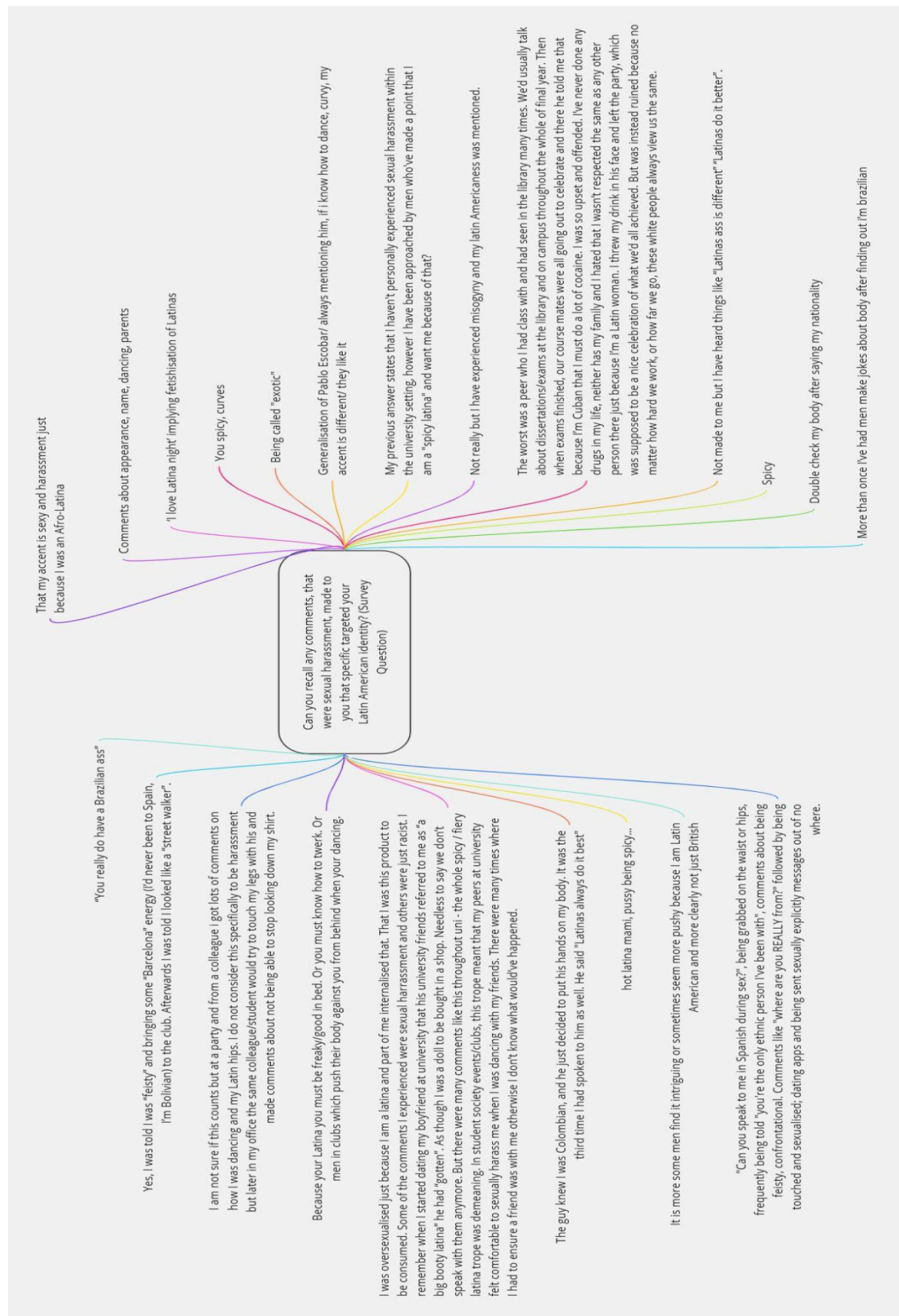


Young Latin American women (survey answers).

- Many women admitted to becoming desensitized to harassment, viewing it as routine or unworthy of confrontation, as seen in the remarks about "brushing it off" and accepting it as "not awful." It speaks to the expectation that women should tolerate such behaviour, choosing silence instead of speaking out of fear that this response will be unacceptable or ineffective.
 - *"The severity and intensity [of sexual harassment] isn't as shocking... I will say to what I'm used to, it's not awful"* Young Latin American woman (interview answer).
 - *"We've been conditioned into brushing it off and just accepting it for how it is"* Young Latin American woman (interview answer).

- *“A lot of women feel like they shouldn’t speak out... they don’t have a reason to speak out because it’s become their norm”* **Young Latin American woman (interview answer).**
- *“I feel like it wasn’t that bad like it was a sort of throwaway comment”* **Young Latin American woman (interview answer).**
- *“If a man actually respects you saying no and respects consent, that means he’s a really good guy”* **Young Latin American woman (interview answer).**
- In the UK, Latin American women are often perceived as crazy, loud, big-mouthed, sexual, and promiscuous. These imaginaries are rooted in problematic stereotypes that continue to be used to fetishize and dehumanize young Latin American women in the U.K.
 - *“Latin women are crazy”* **Young Latin American woman (interview answer).**
 - *“It makes me uncomfortable because being just described as crazy or very exotic... just for being of Latin American background is uncomfortable”* **Young Latin American woman (interview answer).**
 - *“Men usually refer to Latina women as hot women or good in bed or more explicit phrases like that and it’s very degrading”* **Young Latin American woman (interview answer).**

Young Latin American women (survey answers).



Policy Recommendations

The LAWRS' Young Women's Advisory Board, have identified the social changes we want to see in the UK regarding sexual harassment within higher education. We have developed the following recommendations, organised into short-term, medium-term, and long-term actions.

Short term

Universities should implement mandatory and consistent training on sexual harassment, consent and cultural competency for staff and students.

Young Latin American women reported a clear lack of visibility of resources for survivors of sexual assault and harassment. It was found that some universities lacked appropriate and consistent protocols and procedures for dealing with sexual harassment and assault. It should be mandatory for all academic institutions to implement clear, consistent and comprehensive policy on dealing with cases of sexual harassment. This should be done with sensitivity and anonymity, and in a trauma-focused and informed way.

In line with this, every student and member of staff needs to be fully briefed on what constitutes as sexual harassment and sexual assault. Training ought to be mandatory to attend (for example, during Freshers Week). For said training to be well-rounded and extensive, it must cover adjacent topics - not solely harassment. This should include, but not be limited to consent and boundaries. Moreover, due to the contemporary diverse student bodies and the intersectional nature of the issue of sexual harassment as relating to young Latin American women students (i.e., involving the issues of fetishization, objectification, hyper-sexualization and racism) the approach to delivering this training ought to include a chapter on cultural competency.

The implementation of mandatory and consistent training on sexual harassment will enable staff and students to understand the matter through a nuanced and intersectional lens. It will also ensure a space where everyone is aware of the expectations and which behaviours are acceptable and which are not.

Universities must promote awareness of services providing support to Latin American students.

A frequently raised issue was the lack of awareness among students about existing resources and reporting channels within their university. We believe this is in part due to inadequate promotion of the resources and spaces available to students. We therefore recommend that universities have permanent information, resources and material widely available around campus which promotes services that can support students who have experienced sexual harassment. This can take the form of leaflets, posters, and other visuals. This should be available within all university spaces, including but not limited to lecture halls, classrooms, corridors, food halls and accommodation, and student websites. Material must be accessible to all students, for example, available in multiple languages or in video form; this can be done

via a QR code. This is important as it serves as a constant and accessible reminder of expectations and reporting procedures.

Universities should offer wellbeing sessions and peer support to survivors.

Providing a safe space for victim-survivors to heal is crucial to the reporting process as it allows women to discuss their experiences of sexual harassment with women who have gone through similar experiences. A survivor-centric approach ensures that women are put first in these processes and their dignity and boundaries are respected. With peer support women can build community to share their stories and gain support.

Peer support in universities should go on to include creating a culture of consent and awareness of what sexual harassment looks like - this can look like encouraging universities to train students to recognise the signs of sexual harassment. The offering of active bystander training is one way of doing this - said training provides students with the skills to intervene and provide support for women experiencing sexual harassment.

Universities to develop/implement support networks for Latin American women to come together and share stories alongside organising Latin American cultural events to celebrate the culture.

When navigating sexual harassment, Latin American women are made vulnerable based on their intersecting identities as Latin American, women, and for some, also being migrants - this constitutes a form of racialised sexual harassment that can only be understood when taking into consideration ethnicity, gender, and migration status. Developing support networks for Latin American women allows them to come together to discuss their lived experiences. Having Latin American spaces also allows for challenging cultural stereotypes about Latin American culture, and provides a way for non-Latin Americans to be exposed to the culture, rather than basing their ideas of Latin American women on stereotypes.

Medium term

Universities to improve process of reporting sexual harassment and assault to make it less traumatic, bureaucratic and insensitive for victims

Universities must move beyond having policies on sexual harassment and assault and implement reporting processes that consider trauma-informed practices. These processes should be designed to reduce bureaucracy, minimise trauma, and support victim-survivors. They should prioritise: safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration, empowerment, and cultural sensitivity.

For Latin American students, these improved processes enhance anonymity, minimise the disruptive effects of sexual harassment, support mental wellbeing, protect dignity, and allow

students to continue their academic journey. Additionally, they bring accountability to perpetrators and ensure consequences are enforced.

Universities to set up a specific team that specialises in sexual harassment and assault

Universities should establish a dedicated team specialising in handling reports of sexual harassment and assault. This team would ensure that reports are processed correctly, victims receive support to navigate legal procedures, and perpetrators are held accountable, preventing further harm to women. The team must be trained in cultural stereotypes and intersectional trauma-informed approaches.

For Latin American students, having a specialised team ensures a holistic approach to supporting survivors, minimizing the long-term impact of sexual harassment, and delivering culturally sensitive care.

Universities to improve mental health services for survivors such as long-term therapy and advertising these services and making them more targeted to survivors.

Universities should enhance mental health services for survivors, offering long-term therapy and targeted support. Sexual harassment and abuse are often normalised, especially for Latin American women, who may not seek proper mental health support or have difficulty processing trauma. Increased funding for mental health services can reduce wait times and make these services more accessible.

For Latin American students, providing comprehensive mental health support reduces the long-term impact of sexual harassment and ensures culturally specific care that addresses their unique needs.

Universities to develop partnerships with local and national organisations to better protect and support survivors

Universities should develop partnerships with local and national organisations (such as LAWRS, NHS, charities, and the police) to support survivors. Universities should ensure that victims are signposted to appropriate services when necessary and follow up to confirm that the victim receives the support they need.

For Latin American students, these collaborations help deliver a more holistic and intersectional approach to supporting survivors, considering both cultural and individual needs.

Long term

For universities to make sexual harassment easier to report and less stigmatized.

Our interviewees saw reporting as a last desperate resort in sexual harassment cases. They felt there should be a physical component to the assault and that even if it was reported very little came out of it and often the harassment continued. This shows a clear broken system that deters victims from reporting and creates a greater stigma and fear around it.

All barriers to guidelines and support should be removed. Guidelines and support need to be more comprehensive to student needs, so all groups of people can access them in equitable ways. e.g: providing guidelines in different languages, versions for those visually impaired, etc.

All universities should make reporting easier for anyone facing sexual harassment. Making it a time-accessible and caseworker-sensitive procedure to not further traumatize victims.

Additionally, universities have to take the role of breaking down the stigma in reporting sexual harassment, specially in cases of normalised harassment such as cat calling.

For government to ensure the guidelines and sexual harassment policies are applied consistently rather than performatively in higher education.

Through our research we have found that most of the people we interviewed did not have a strong grasp of what the sexual harassment policy was in their respective institutions. It felt that the university's role was often performative and unhelpful. We believe that universities should ensure that policies and guidelines for reporting become easier to find. This could be done by providing clear advertisement of services for support that are shown beyond freshers week.

For Universities to have and clearly portray a clear perspective of what sexual harassment is.

Creating a consistent criterion of what constitutes sexual harassment across all universities promotes accountability where clear understandings of expectations and behaviours for perpetrators as well as universities are established. Where there is no definition of sexual harassment, it can be argued that some women's lived experiences weren't 'really' sexual harassment. We propose the 'Rape Crisis' definition which emphasises that sexual harassment can be intentional or unintentional. We also believe that there should be clear accountability from perpetrators that does not allow them to get away with less severe forms of sexual harassment, such as cat calling. Clear consequences should be given to those who uphold a sense of unsafety for students through normalised acts of sexual harassment.

Government to fund educational programmes to prevent sexual harassment, as part of its approach to the prevention of Violence Against Women and Girls. This could include working with organisations like LAWRS to develop prevention programmes on defining and challenging sexual harassment

The information collected from the interviewees shows that perpetrators use a woman's Latin American identity as an entry point for harassment. There is also a lack of understanding or definition of what harassment is; therefore, more education is needed in regards to the distinct forms that Latin American women experience sexual harassment.

Government to fund and conduct further research into the impacts of sexual harassment on Latin American and other ethnic minority students.

There is a general research lacuna on the Latin American community in the U.K. To better understand the impacts of sexual harassment on Latin American students, more funding and research must be conducted on the community and their needs. Without research, there are few accounts as to how Latin American women in London experience sexual harassment which further obfuscates an already institutionally invisible community. The government should ensure that this certain age group, 18-25, is included (Department for Education and the Home Office as the lead for the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy). This could be enhanced by providing prevention workshops for university students that have experienced violence but are not aware of it.

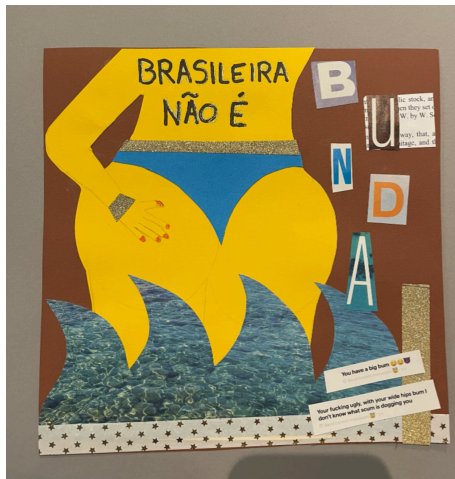
The government to formally and consistently recognise the Latin American community as an ethnic minority group so that research can be conducted.

Formally recognising 'Latin American' as an ethnic minority group ensures that the needs of the community are met. It aids researchers identify and target the needs of the community and make the changes required for the wellbeing of the community. The 'Latin American' ethnic minority group should be consistently included in forms that collect users' personal information. The Latin American community should not be forced to select their ethnic group as 'Other', 'Other White', 'Caribbean', etc.; when that is not what represents many of us. The Latin American community should be institutionally visible in a multicultural city such as London.

Artivism Pieces and Our Message

As part of the peer research process, during the leadership and advocacy training, the LAWRS' Young Women's Advisory Board created a social media campaign. This represents their commitment to explore the impacts of sexual harassment, and to advocate for young migrant women's rights and the eradication of every form of VAWG in British society.

The campaign was published in the *Sin Fronteras* - LAWRS project Instagram account: https://www.instagram.com/sin_fronteras_lawrs/ and on the LAWRS' website.



“Brazilian women are not just bums”

By Julia

"This piece intends to combat the common stereotype around Brazilian women and our bodies. It makes the point that Brazilian women are not just bums and that we should be allowed to exist and wear whatever we want without being subjected to sexual harassment."



“Walk a mile in my shoes”

By Itzel

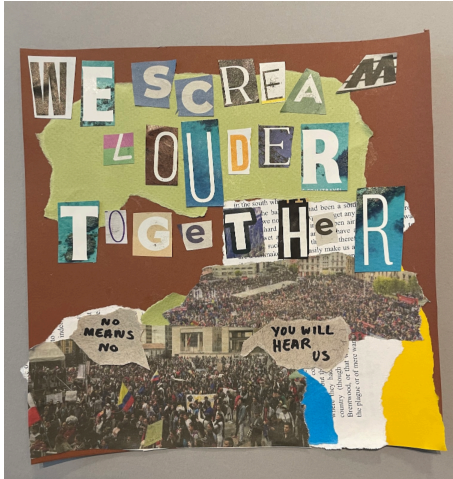
"I thought I'd take a commonly known saying and give it a Latin twist! The shoes represent all the women in Latin America speaking out against gender inequality and for those who've suffered from S.A., we're all in this fight together."



“No estabas provocando a nadie”

By Monserrat

"This work is meant to confront the pervasive victim-blaming narratives that attempt to justify sexual harassment or assault by scrutinizing a victim's choices, behaviour, or appearance. It asserts that no one deserves to experience harassment, and challenges the harmful idea that a victim is ever responsible for the actions of their harasser. By rejecting this blame-shifting narrative, the phrase reaffirms the dignity and autonomy of all individuals and insists on accountability where it truly belongs—with the perpetrators."



"We scream louder together"

By Lorena

"For me, combatting sexual harassment at university requires community care and forming a collective of women, femmes, and misogyny-affected people. When we come together, we can dismantle the patriarchy that is deeply ingrained in academic institutions."



"When in doubt, talk it out"

By Angie

"As someone with autism, I found myself in a lot of situations where in the moment I didn't realise I was being sexually harassed. There is a lot of guilt induced in people, especially in women, when they find that something makes them uncomfortable, especially in the grounds of sexual harassment. Even when you can't put a name to it, your body will react negatively. Trust your gut senses, talk it out with someone who you can trust, especially those whose main involvement is to help your mental well-being."



"My identity/ethnicity/nationality is not yours to exoticise"

By Monserrat

"This work challenges the harmful practice of reducing Latin American women's identities to stereotypes rooted in fetishization, tokenization, and oversimplification. Oftentimes, attacks toward Latin American women are reliant on employing negative narratives and co-opting stereotypes for the purpose of hypersexualizing us. My vision was to condemn these dehumanizing ways often used to approach us, as part of the process of affirming our own identities and be seen in our full complexity, beyond the lenses of objectification and stereotype."



"You don't get to tell me who I am"

By Valeria

"There is no one single way to be Latinx. As a Colombian non-binary person who was born in Spain, my identity always gets questioned, even by my own family. In a university context, our identity often gets questioned by others upon on how we look, sound like and other stereotypes of Latinx "women". "You don't get to tell me who I am," represents the multicultural layers and intersectionality of our identity."



"Take my hand"

By Valeria

"'Take my hand' aims to remind women who have suffered from SH that they will always have someone who can help them. Coincidentally, the graphics of this work are similar to awareness campaigns seen on TfL (Transport for London), which makes reference to the potential campaign ideas we discussed: SH in London's public transport."



"It doesn't have to be this way"

By Malena

"I saw this statement as an opportunity to explore the loneliness that victims of sexual assault can face. To let the young women and girls that they are not alone and that united we are stronger. Women spaces should be an opportunity to feel comfort and safety for victims, especially within the Latinx community where sometimes men can be protected more than women. "



“Feminismo e Progresso”

By Julia

"A twist on the Brazilian flag which officially reads "Order and Progress". "Feminism and Progress" highlights the importance of feminism for the fight towards gender equality."



“Machismo”

By Itzel

"A simple image saying 'No' to machismo. We're giving it the red light and will stop it when we see it. "



“Silence will not set you free”

By Angie

"Sometimes the lines of what will help us heal can be blurred out by contradicting suggestions and opinions around us, especially in a world where the lines of what is socially considered sexual harassment are often misunderstood. The overgeneralised view that anything but silence is inadequate has seeped its way into our contemporary understanding of "peace". "Silence will not set you free" highlights the treacherous nature of healing, for what we view as an instigator to chaos ends up being an imperative part of gaining back hold of our autonomy in a pre-imposing world."



“Si ella quiere perrear sola, dejala”

By Lorena

"This was made referencing Bad Bunny's song 'Yo Perreo Sola'. Sexual harassment needs to be considered intersectionally, so the reference to perreo, brings a Latinx twist to the main message of this collage - if a woman wants to dance alone, let her."



“I want to dance but not with you”

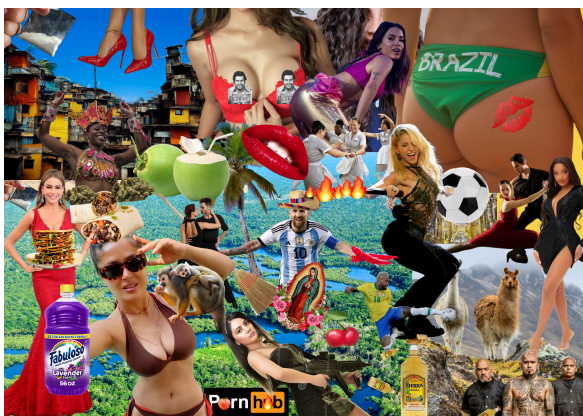
By Malena

"I thought this was a playful statement that responds to a common stereotype of Latinx women which is that we are good dancers. It just plays on the exoticism linked with our identities and I wanted to give a different outlook to that by saying that I exist outside of this stereotype and my identity doesn't have to be tied up to it. "



How do Latin American women see themselves?

By Itzel, Angie, Monse & Malena



What is the perception of Latin American women perpetuated by the media?

By Julia, Lorena & Alanis

LAWRS

Latin American Women's Rights Service

Pursuing equal rights and social justice for all
Latin American women and migrant women in the UK

www.lawrs.org.uk

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