

VOICES OF YOUNG LATINAS

PEER RESEARCH ON ONLINE ABUSE AND THE IMPACT OF FETISHISATION

Young Women's Advisory Board
Latin American Women's Rights Service (LAWRS)

London, February 2026

Supported by
Partnership for Young London
Paul Hamlyn Foundation



This publication is produced by the Latin American Women's Rights Service (LAWRS) through its *Sin Fronteras* project.

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> ***About the cover artwork.*** The cover contrasts survey words reflecting exoticised, sexualised stereotypes of the 'Latina' image on social media with words we selected in Portuguese, Spanish, and English to represent our true identities. A detailed description can be found in the '*Artivism Pieces and Our Message*' section.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the young Latin American women who participated in this study for trusting us with their experiences and for sharing their views with the hope of building a safer online world for ALL women. We are grateful to LAWRS staff and volunteers for their support and continuous feedback: Gisela Valle - Director, Macarena Valdebenito - Girls and Young Women Counsellor and Psychotherapist, Carla Pagliarini - Project Assistant Volunteer, Monserrat Escudero - Policy Officer on Young Women and Girls, Isabella Rooney - Research and Engagement Policy Officer, Carla Rossini - Communications Officer, Giorgina Mendez - VAWG Service Manager. We also thank our external partners for their guidance and contributions: Carolina Cal - Survivor Services Facilitator at CHAYN, Ximena Ruíz del Río - Artivist, and Matthew Walsham - Policy and Campaigns Lead at Partnership for Young London.

This research was made possible through the generous financial support of the Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

LAWRS, London, 2025.

**“People still rely on a ‘Latina’ stereotype.
They expect us to be loud, curvy, sexy, fiery,
‘spicy’, very confident, funny, jealous, emotional,
always dancing. And if you don’t fit that image,
people sometimes act surprised. There’s a lot of
fetishisation. People sexualise us
without even knowing us (...)
Even when a Latina creator posts something normal,
the comments are often men sexualising her
or comparing her to a stereotype (...)
And sometimes I feel like society doesn’t
take us seriously or assumes we only fit
into certain types of jobs.
It’s definitely still a very narrow view of us.”**

Young Latin American woman (interview answer).

Content Warning and Reader Care

This report contains material that may be upsetting or distressing.

This document contains an in-depth analysis of sensitive topics, including misogyny, racism, and xenophobia. Some sections may reference experiences related to sexual and gender-based violence. We encourage readers to engage with this material thoughtfully and with care, acknowledging the potential emotional impact it may have.

We suggest avoiding this content if you are feeling emotionally depleted. Taking breaks as needed, staying grounded, and reaching out to a trusted person if difficult feelings arise may be helpful. Prioritising rest and engaging in gentle movement afterwards can also support your wellbeing. If feelings of distress become overwhelming or persistent, seeking professional support is strongly encouraged.

If you require additional assistance or guidance, you may contact LAWRS for support. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you need help, support, or clarification.



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About this report

This report shares the views, experiences, insights, and suggestions of 13 young Latin American migrant women, aged 18 to 25, living in London. They are members of **LAWRS' Young Women's Advisory Board (YWAB).** As peer researchers, they designed and carried out a comprehensive study, including a survey, fifteen interviews, and a social media content analysis.

The report reflects YWAB members' commitment to peer research, leadership, and advocacy as forms of activism to challenge and eradicate all forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG). Between 10 May 2025 and 7 February 2026, the group took part in twelve training sessions run by LAWRS and Partnership for Young London, preparing them to explore their research question: **What is the impact of the fetishisation on TikTok and Instagram of the 'Latina' image on the identities of young Latin American women aged 18 to 25 living in London?**

Their findings will guide LAWRS' policy and campaigning work, ensuring that the voices and experiences of young Latin American migrant women are central to our efforts to create safer and more equitable spaces online and offline.

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 part of *Sin Fronteras*, a project of the Latin American Women's Rights Service (LAWRS), and is designed by and for young Latin American women and girls. The programme provides **a space for leadership, advocacy, and participation in policy and campaigning.** Its core aim is to create a safe, collaborative environment where participants can develop the skills and confidence to influence decision-making for the benefit of young Latin American migrant women in the UK.

The 2025–2026 YWAB cohort is a collective of 13 young Latin American women, aged 18-25. Together, they focus on tackling gender-based violence at the intersections of gender, race, ethnicity, migration, and Latin American identity. Through discussions of their shared experiences, the group chose to centre their research on the fetishisation of the 'Latina' image on social media and its impact on young Latin American women's identities.

A central part of this work is being feminist activists who care for each other. As Julia, a YWAB member, explains: "*As members of the YWAB, we approach our roles from a shared feminist foundation that reflects and influences our understanding of the world. At the same time, we all agree that our feminism is personal and individual.*"

The poem that follows reflects the group's collective understanding of feminism, as well as their personal relationships with the term. It is composed of quotes gathered during the Feminist Activism session in June 2025.



Feminist to Me, Feminism to Us

Our Feminism is intersectional,
My Feminism is personal.

Our Feminism is a social movement,
My Feminism is a feeling.

Our Feminism is a never-ending struggle,
My Feminism is hope.

Our Feminism is a collective force, uplifting one another,
My Feminism is grounding.

Our Feminism is the pursuit of equality,
My Feminism is the navigation of womanhood.

Our Feminism is inclusive,
My Feminism is connection.

Our Feminism is community,
My Feminism is friendship.

Our Feminism is Mine,
My Feminism is Ours.

LAWRS' Young Women's Advisory Board members.

Our Understanding of VAWG, Online Abuse, Fetishisation, and the 'Latina' Image

We believe that a world free from Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) is possible. We are part of this project because we have powerful voices that deserve to be heard. As peer researchers, we see ourselves as agents of change, committed to building a fairer and more inclusive world for all women.

We believe that activism, combined with research and art, can contribute to the eradication of all forms of VAWG. Through this work, we advocate for a United Kingdom that recognises Latin Americans as an integral part of society, and Latinas as active citizens who help shape a better British society for all women.

In examining the core concepts of this research (VAWG, online abuse, fetishisation, and the stereotype of the 'Latina' image) we recognise that these can be interpreted in different ways. It is therefore important to clarify the definitions that underpin and guide this peer research project.

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

We recognise that violence against women and girls (VAWG) is a complex societal issue. It is a global public health problem, a threat to girls and women's rights and freedom, and a profound social justice issue that demands collective action.

Defining this term is central to our work, as this project seeks to platform and challenge the many forms that VAWG can take. For the purposes of this research, we adopt the definition set out in the United Nations Declaration, while acknowledging that no single definition can fully capture the intersections of diverse identities and lived experiences.

> *"Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is a gendered act of violence that causes or could cause physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of harm or coercion, in public or private life[1]." (UN General Assembly, 1993).*

[1] UN General Assembly, Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, A/RES/48/104, UN General Assembly, 20 December 1993, https://www.refworld.org/legal/resolution/unga/1993/en/10685

Online Abuse

Online abuse is one of the many forms that VAWG can take. There are several terms used to describe this social problem, including online abuse, tech abuse, and online harms. For this report, we draw on the UN General Assembly's definition of technology-facilitated violence against women and girls:

> *"Any act that is committed, assisted, aggravated, or amplified by the use of information communication technologies or other digital tools, that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual, psychological, social, political, or economic harm, or other infringements of rights and freedoms[2]." (UN General Assembly, 1993).*

The current digital revolution "has both exacerbated existing forms of gender-based violence (such as sexual harassment, stalking, hate speech, misinformation, defamation, and impersonation) and created new forms of abuse"[3] (UN Women, 2023). Technology can therefore reinforce online misogyny, which refers to content that actively encourages or reinforces misogynistic ideas and behaviours, including the normalisation of sexual violence (Ofcom, 2025), and in doing so, enable harm against women both online and offline.

Tech abuse works as a broader term that refers to the use of technology to control, harm, or exploit someone. While it includes online abuse, it extends beyond the internet. For example, tech abuse can involve stalking through GPS trackers or spyware, monitoring someone's texts, calls, or browsing history, using smart home devices (such as cameras, locks, or alarms) to intimidate or surveil, or misusing banking systems and identity verification technologies to control a person's finances or restrict their access to essential services.

In our understanding, **online abuse** is a form of tech-facilitated abuse. It refers to harms that occur on the internet or are committed or amplified through digital technologies. Online abuse can take place on any device connected to the web, including computers, tablets, and mobile phones, and across a wide range of online spaces such as social media platforms, text messages, messaging apps, emails, online forums and chats, gaming platforms, and live-streaming sites (NSPCC, 2024)[4].

This form of abuse includes behaviours such as hacking, trolling, harassment, threats, cyberstalking, doxxing, cyberflashing, digital morphing and deepfakes, revenge porn and other forms of image-based abuse, hate speech, and online grooming among others.

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[2] UN General Assembly, Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, A/RES/48/104, UN General Assembly, 20 December 1993, https://www.refworld.org/legal/resolution/unga/1993/en/10685
[3] UN, 2023. Expert Group Meeting report: Technology-facilitated violence against women: Towards a common definition. https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2023/03/expert-group-meeting-report-technology-facilitated-violence-against-women
[4] NSPCC, 2024. Responding to online abuse. https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/online-safety/responding-to-online-abuse

Social media can be a powerful tool of harm, often propagating fetishistic stereotypes. For this research, we focus primarily on social media platforms, particularly Instagram and TikTok, as these are widely used by young people today.

It is important to recognise that abuse is experienced differently across platforms. On TikTok 'For You Page' (FYP) amplifies content based on engagement, not safety. It amplifies content showing 'Latina' women dancing, wearing makeup, or embracing their cultural identity which may be sexualised by the algorithm and viewers, even when not intended. Abuse often appears as: hypersexualised comments on dancing or beauty videos, use of emojis or innuendos that objectify (suggestive remarks with sexual undertones), stitch/duet videos that reframe the original content in sexualised or mocking ways, viral "trends" that exoticise Latinidad (e.g., audios with stereotypical 'Latina' labels).

On Instagram, abuse manifests in DMs with sexual propositions or racialised compliments (e.g., "I've always wanted a Latina girlfriend"), comment sections full of flirtation masked as praise, double meaning comments, fetish accounts reposting images with objectifying captions and hashtags (#latinasexy, #latinamami). DMs, particularly from strangers, often include unsolicited sexual messages or images, degrading racialised fetish comments (e.g., "I bet you're wild in bed like all Latinas"), and threats or coercion when ignored. Finally, comment sections act as public sites of abuse or surveillance, with the 'Latina' body praised in sexualised terms ("Latina baddie"), shamed ("too much makeup," "attention seeker"), or exoticised and racialised ("Where are you from? You don't look British.").

Fetishisation

Our research specifically focuses on fetishisation, commonly defined as: *"A sexual interest in an object, a part of the body that is not a sexual organ, or a person as if they are an object.*[5]*".*

However, as a group, we agreed that this definition does not fully capture the phenomenon we explore. Janice Gassam (2021) offers a broader perspective: *"fetishisation is the act of focusing on, fixating on, or turning a person, or a part of them, into an object of sexual desire, often based on superficial characteristics like race, gender, or body type."*

For this research, we focus on a specific form: racial fetishisation. The definition we use is:

> *"When someone's racial and/or ethnic identity is made the object of sexual desire, often reinforcing harmful stereotypes.*[6]*"*
> *(Gassam, 2021).*

[5] Cambridge Dictionary. 2026. "Fetishization." @CambridgeWords. January 7, 2026. https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/fetishization.
[6] Gassam, Janice. 2021. "What Is Fetishization and How Does It Contribute to Racism?" Forbes. February 7, 2021. https://www.forbes.com/sites/janicegassam/2021/02/07/what-is-fetishization-and-how-does-it-contribute-to-racism/.

In the context of this report, the fetishisation of ‘Latinas’ is how the Latin American identity is made into an object of sexual desire by non-Latin Americans.

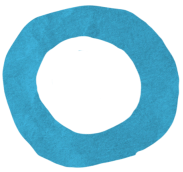
The ‘Latina’ image

Within our community, we are aware of the vast diversity of Latin American women, and we recognise that there is no single way to define us. However, social media representations often fail to reflect this diversity. Instead, Latin American women are frequently portrayed in dehumanising, sexualised, and infantilised ways, often emphasising curvier body types, lighter skin, and strong accents.

We focus on the ‘Latina’ image because it reflects a shared experience of being reduced to a stereotype that diminishes our identities and reinforces institutional marginalisation. Being constrained by this image directly impacts our political, social, and professional opportunities and experiences.

Chesney and Citron (2019) note that deepfakes also help spread false narratives that are designed to influence public opinion and emotions. This is done by reinforcing existing biases, these false narratives often rely on existing stereotypes. In the case of Latin American women deepfakes can reinforce sexualised and racialised stereotypes that portray them as exotic, overly sexual, or submissive. Because these stereotypes already exist in popular media, false content that reflects them is more likely to be believed and shared. This can lead to harassment, shaming, and social judgement directed at Latin American women, even when the content is fake.

Taken together, online abuse, racial fetishisation, and the ‘Latina’ image illustrate how digital spaces can amplify harm, enforce stereotypes, and constrain the lived experiences of Latin American women in the United Kingdom.



Research Process and Methodology

The YWAB 2025-2026 designed and carried out a comprehensive peer research to support their advocacy efforts aimed at influencing decision-making for the benefit of young Latin American migrant women in the UK. This research was conducted in partnership with LAWRS and PYL through a training programme consisting of twelve sessions held between 10 May 2025 and 7 February 2026. The sessions covered topics such as feminist activism, self-care for activists, understanding VAWG, tech and online abuse, artivism, and peer research methods, including developing a research question, designing interview guides and survey questions, writing key findings, and policy recommendations.

The training programme followed 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 YWAB 2025–2026 focused specifically on tackling Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), with an emphasis on online abuse, the fetishisation of the 'Latina' image on social media, and its impact on young Latin American women's identities.

Focus Groups and Research Question

As a first step, we conducted focus groups with board members who have lived experience as young Latin American women, including both first- and second-generation migrants living and/or studying in London. These discussions helped us identify common experiences and refine the topic for research. Collectively, we decided to focus on racial fetishisation and online abuse due to their contemporary relevance and connection to our lived experiences.

From these discussions, we formulated our research question:

What is the impact of the fetishisation on TikTok and Instagram of the 'Latina' image on the identities of young Latin American women aged 18 to 25 living in London?

Research Methods

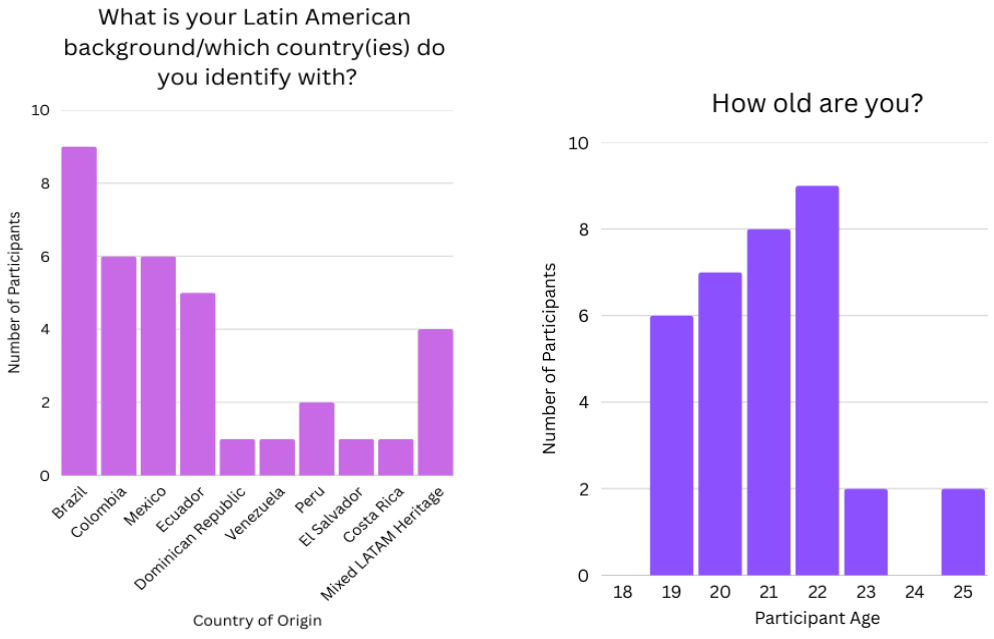
To explore this question, we used a mixed-methods approach combining three methods: semi-structured interviews, an online survey, and social media content analysis. The YWAB group collectively designed the interview guides, survey questionnaires, and data collection plans.

Interviews

We conducted 15 semi-structured interviews with Latin American women aged 18–25 living and/or studying in London. Semi-structured interviews allowed us to cover the same key topics across all participants while providing flexibility to ask follow-up questions and explore responses in more depth.
Interviews were transcribed and analysed using thematic content analysis[7]. Members read each other's transcripts, adding codes in the margins to organise quotes into recurring themes, which informed the key findings.

Survey

To complement interview data, we conducted an online survey, primarily distributed via social media, which received 36 responses. The survey collected both quantitative and qualitative data, allowing us to capture perspectives from a broader sample. Participant demographics are illustrated in Figures 1 and 2.



Young Latin American women (survey answers). Figure 1 and Figure 2.

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

Social Media Content Analysis and Video

To better understand the scope of online abuse, we conducted a content analysis of social media posts, focusing on damaging reels on TikTok and Instagram. Posts were categorised to identify patterns of racial fetishisation and sexualised representation. This analysis also informed the creation of a video to disseminate our research findings and raise awareness.

Data analysis

Data from interviews, surveys, and social media content were integrated to identify common themes. Thematic analysis of qualitative data was complemented by quantitative survey evidence to develop the key findings. These findings were then used to create policy recommendations, categorised as short-, medium-, and long-term actions, mapped to relevant stakeholders.

During this process, we revisited interview transcripts to select representative quotes for each theme. Using a collaborative document, we summarised conclusions and refined our policy recommendations by considering: 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 fetishisation of the 'Latina' image on social media?

The research draft was refined through collaborative feedback sessions with LAWRS members. While all members contributed to the findings, editing and finalisation were carried out in pairs or small groups assigned to specific sections.

Creative Methods

Alongside the research, participants engaged in creative methods[8] to explore and communicate the research topic. 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 individual pieces of artwork reflecting the research themes. These are presented in the section 'Artivism Pieces and Our Message'.

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

Key Findings

Based on thematic analysis of data drawn from interviews, survey responses, and social media content analysis, the LAWRS Young Women's Advisory Board identified the following key findings:

1. The fetishised 'Latina' image on TikTok and Instagram reinforces a racialised and patriarchal image of Latin American women.
2. Social media perpetuates a 'Latina' stereotype of being 'angry' or 'feisty' but also 'submissive' and 'controllable'.
3. TikTok and Instagram amplify fetishising content about 'Latinas,' which means they are consistently exposed to it, reinforcing and normalising harmful stereotypes.
4. Hyper-sexualised physical expectations of the 'Latina' stereotype on Tiktok and Instagram negatively impacts young women's relationship with their own body.
5. Exposure to fetishising content on TikTok and Instagram can create a sense of detachment from the self.
6. TikTok and Instagram push colourist and colonial standards of what Latin American women "should" be.
7. Fetishising content about 'Latinas' on TikTok and Instagram contributes to feelings of alienation from their community due to narrow and distorted representations.
8. The normalisation of fetishising content about 'Latinas' on TikTok and Instagram desensitises users and discourages reporting to social media platforms.
9. Online fetishisation deters political participation, as it devalues Latin American women's voices and public involvement.

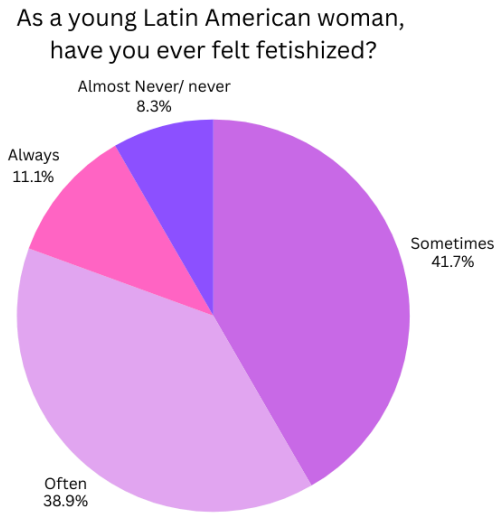
Each finding reflects the lived experiences of young Latin American women aged 18–25 in London. Taken together, they illustrate how racial fetishisation and online abuse shape identity, belonging, wellbeing, and political participation for young Latin American migrant women in the United Kingdom.

The following section provides a detailed analysis of each finding, supported by qualitative and quantitative evidence.

Key Finding 1. The fetishised 'Latina' image on TikTok and Instagram reinforces a racialised and patriarchal image of Latin American women

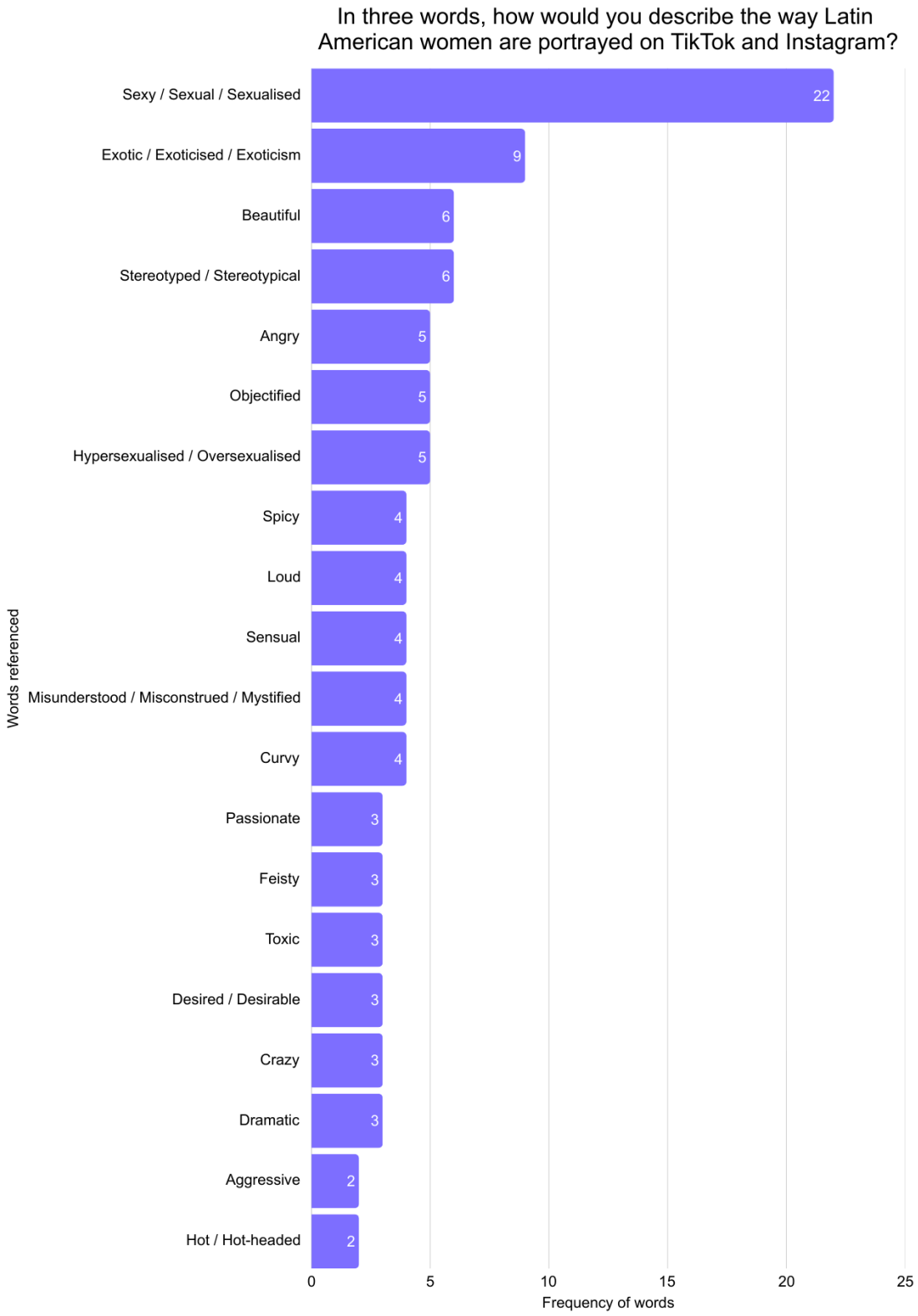
On TikTok and Instagram, there are established physical and behavioural traits attributed to Latin American women, which are fetishised and negatively impact their sense of self. Concerning physical features associated with the 'Latina' image, participants named the following traits: curvy, short, and having long hair. When asked about how these representations made them feel, **52.8%** of respondents indicated that their body image was most affected by fetishising content. Concerning behavioural features, participants referred to the stereotype of being “angry” or “feisty” but also “submissive” and “controllable”.

The effect of fetishising content goes beyond the digital landscape. **91.7%** of respondents felt that, as a Latin American woman, they had been fetishised due to their identity, as shown in Figure 3. As a consequence of the 'Latina' image, many participants felt pressure to conform to what was represented on TikTok and Instagram, whether they acted on it or not.



Young Latin American women (survey answers). Figure 3.

Within the survey, respondents were asked to provide three words to describe how they feel Latin American women are portrayed on TikTok and Instagram. The most commonly occurring words were related to the sexualisation of Latinas, illustrated in Figure 4:



* The graph shows the words which were referenced more than once in the survey.

Young Latin American women (survey answers). Figure 4.

This matters as it raises the question of how normative identity expectations impact Latin American women's mental health. Expected standards of physical appearance affect how Latin American women view themselves and may result in external or internal pressure to conform to stereotypes. Furthermore, when Latin American women's displays of anger and other emotions are interpreted through a lens of fetishisation, it can impact the way in which their emotions and mental health are minimised and ignored, preventing them from being taken seriously.

Drawing from the participants, the image of the 'Latina' is that she is curvy, with a specific focus on her having a 'big bum' and a 'small waist'. The imagined body is paired with long hair and a short stature. Participants discussed that TikTok and Instagram content heavily spotlight the 'Latina' body, and when women felt they did not meet this normative ideal, they received comments or experienced pressure:

- *"The general idea of a Latina body type... brown-skinned, long hair... big boobs, tiny waist."*
- *"I've seen a lot of bodies. That's all I see, bodies, like the perfect Latina, very all, the curves and stuff."*
- *"Big hips, tiny waist, big boobs."*
- *"Long dark hair, small waist, big hips, tan skin, very feminine and sexy."*
- *"You have to have like a lot of curves, like big booty, like huge way, like a little small waist, huge hips."*
- *"They expect us to be loud, curvy, sexy, very confident, emotional. And if you don't fit that image, people sometimes act surprised."*
- *"Whenever I would… like, people would ask me... they would be like, oh, but you don't look Latina."*

Young Latin American women (interview answers)

The behavioural facet relates to behavioural attributes considered "attractive" and contributing to the fetishisation of Latin American women. There is a focus on them being "angry", "toxic", and "feisty", often paired with being "dumb" or "can't speak English".

Paired with our video analysis, memes, and video skits on TikTok and Instagram[9], frequently reference these stereotypes in a comedic manner, treating them as "jokes" rather than challenging their harm.

- *"In society, mostly in social media, they're refer to as toxic."*
- *"And then Latina woman… it's like fiery, aggressive, passionate."*
- *"There's all like toxic behaviour in relationships… I don't have like the whole mindset of… the whole games."*
- *"I think that from an outside perspective, we're seen as super dramatic… over the top."*

[9] Memes and video skits were created by both non-Latin Americans and Latin American women themselves, suggesting an externalisation and internalisation of stereotypes.

- *“We like, exaggerate stuff.”*
- *“They’re like… always arguing over a man.”*
- *“You know she’s feisty.”*
- *“It was kind of exoticised, so it was like, Oh my God, you’re Latina. Like you’re probably really loud.”*
- *“They're referred to as toxic, being ill-tempered.”*
- *"The spiciness, the bossiness, the anger."*
- *"It's almost like a warning. It's like... 'if you're dating a Latina, it's gonna be tricky'."*
- *"They can either be this sexual, hypersexual, like sex slave being like the Latin lover... or they can be dehumanized like in the shadows cleaner."*
- *"She's going to cook you real good... But then if you misbehave, she's going to hit you with a chancla."*
- *"She's spicy Latina. You know, you can't even look at her funny."*
- *“And personality-wise: fiery, loud, funny, jealous, “spicy”, emotional, always dancing.”*

Young Latin American women (interview answers)

The ‘Latina image’ on TikTok and Instagram also negatively impacts the relationships and dating lives of Latin American women as they are expected to conform to the sexual, emotional, and physical expectations that social media encourages

Latin American women being systematically depicted as hypersexual, bossy, and spicy, but ultimately willing to become submissive to a male partner, could negatively impact their dating lives and relationships. Being consistently exposed to content amplifying these messages could lead to attempts to conform to the sexual, emotional, and physical expectations associated with these stereotypes, as well as feeling external pressures to agree with these depictions.

Fetishisation could further exacerbate these pressures by introducing an objectifying narrative to which women from Latin American communities are exposed, where dating a Latina woman is potentially understood as an experience of consumption, instead of a genuine connection with another human being. Like some participants shared:

- *"It's almost like a warning. It's like... "If you're dating a Latina, it's gonna be tricky'.”*
- *“They can either be this sexual, hypersexual, like sex slave being like the Latin lover... or they can be dehumanized like an in-the-shadows cleaner.”*
- *“Guys say that you know if you're dating a Latina, you're supposed to be bossy and be questioning your partner.”*
- *"I get like, the occasional like, white guy who's doing stand up... doing his bit about dating a spicy, sexy mommy."*

Young Latin American women (interview answers)

Feithisation then is part of the day-to-day life of a lot of Latin American women. It ranges from romantic relationships where partners show themselves to be attracted to their perceived

feistiness, or even in educational settings where they are not taken seriously because of a different perception of this attribute.

Participants expressed they felt fetishised within different areas of their life, ranging from their experiences in romantic relationships to their treatment within academic institutions and professional settings.

- *“And so yeah, there's like this expectation that, like, you have to look this certain way and then in turn it's for, like, the fantasy for the purposes of the fantasy”*
- *“I also think there’s a lot of fetishisation - people sexualise us without even knowing us.”*
- *“I just, I guess, like in the moment, I never considered them like fetishizing and so like up to now, like I've never, it's never been a thing that I've considered for myself. But like now I'm reconsidering a lot.”*
- *“I had a white British partner who… was very into my Latino heritage… it felt fetishising. And I think it's the way that it was done… It's because, you know, [participant name] is feisty or [participant name] is this, you know.”*
- *“I mean, maybe not outwardly like sexual, but like, you know. [Participant name], you're so pretty. It must be because you're Bolivian.”*
- *“I would say mildly fetishistic things… maybe not fetishistic, exactly, but, like, stereotypical… but almost as a defence mechanism. I've already said the microaggression… You can now you can shush.”*

Young Latin American women (interview answers)

Internalised Pressure

Whether or not participants actively changed their appearance and behaviour, they felt significant pressure to conform to the ‘Latina’ image represented online. Much of this pressure was felt internally, as women questioned whether they had to “look” or act like the representations they see online.

- *"Sometimes you feel like you should look a certain way to fit in."*
- *"I guess I could put on a full face of makeup and, you know, do the full contour... and the lashes... because that's the standard."*
- *"I realised that I've gotten more obsessed over my physical appearance... because she's a very, like, stereotypical Latina."*
- *"If I see specifically a Latina showing me her gorgeous outfit, I'm like, beautiful, gorge. But I'm not thinking like, oh ****, like I have to look like that."*
- *"I want us to be portrayed as more than just our physical aspects."*

Young Latin American women (interview answers)

Key Finding 2. Social media perpetuates a 'Latina' stereotype of being “angry” or “feisty” but also “submissive” and “controllable”

Social media platforms, particularly TikTok and Instagram, promote contradictory stereotypes of Latin American women. Latinas are simultaneously portrayed as "spicy," "feisty," and "temperamental," yet ultimately “submissive,” “controllable,” and “in service of male desire.” These contradictory images reduce complex individuals to one-dimensional fantasies that serve patriarchal expectations.

Social media has gained an increasingly significant role in bolstering a stereotypical image, reinforcing misogynistic and patriarchal standards and expectations on how women should act. In romantic relationships, it perpetuates the harmful idea that Latin American women should serve their partners, and that all Latin American women should behave in a specific, narrowly defined way.

The unrestricted creation of content portraying the stereotype of the 'Latina' image on platforms such as TikTok and Instagram has led to an increase of fetishising content, as the policy of social media companies do not include the fetishisation and perpetration of stereotypes as a safety risk for the Latin American population.

Latin American women are expected to be passionate and strong-willed, but this "feistiness" is framed as ultimately manageable and serving men's desires. Participants described being reduced to dehumanising stereotypes:

- *"She's going to cook you real good... But then if you misbehave, she's going to hit you with a chancla."*
- *"It's part of this, like, sexual fantasy of men, of just coming home and... having food on the table."*

Young Latin American women (interview answers)

This contradiction positions Latin American women as accessories to men's lives rather than autonomous individuals. A key component of fetishisation is portraying them as ideal domestic partners who naturally serve men, combining racial and gender stereotypes. Women described being reduced to domestic roles:

- *"For them having a Latin American girlfriend is quite like a prize, something to brag about."*
- *"They can either be this sexual, hypersexual, like sex slave being like the Latin lover... or they can be dehumanized like an in-the-shadows cleaner."*

Young Latin American women (interview answers)

For Black Latin American women, these stereotypes compound with anti-Black racism, creating multiple layers of harm. Black Latin American women experience compounded stereotypes:

- *"Because I'm a Black woman, I think I got hit with two different stereotypes: the Black women stereotype of always angry, always fighting, always loud, and wrong and like masculine. And also the stereotype of like Latina mami who is sexy."*
- *"You get, for example, sexualised and fetishised as Black women. And then they're like, oh, you're also Latina. So they also fetishize that. And they're like, OK, that's now double."*

Young Latin American women (interview answers)

These findings demonstrate that contradictory stereotypes create what participants described as an impossible bind: if they are assertive or passionate, they risk being seen as "the angry/feisty Latina stereotype." If they are accommodating or caring, they risk being seen as "the submissive Latina stereotype." Either way, their behavior is interpreted through the lens of stereotype rather than individual personality.

This bind could impact identity formation, as contradictory expectations potentially hinder the development of coherent concepts of themselves and their ethnic identity. The result is either identity fragmentation, where women hide parts of themselves to avoid stereotypes, or identity confusion, where they question whether they are "doing" Latin American womanhood "correctly". As one participant summarised: *"Latin American women can be two things and both are dehumanising."* The impact on identity is that participants feel they cannot simply be themselves; they are constantly navigating stereotypes that reduce them to one-dimensional characters rather than complex individuals.

Key Finding 3. TikTok and Instagram amplify fetishising content about 'Latinas', which means they are consistently exposed to it, reinforcing and normalising harmful stereotypes

TikTok and Instagram amplify content that fetishises Latin American women as well as gendered racial microaggressions online, ranging from inappropriate compliments to harassment, often disguised as "admiration". Participants were regularly exposed to images and videos which sexualised or stereotyped them, whether or not they actively sought out such content. This repeated exposure contributes to the normalisation of harmful stereotypes.

When asked about the likelihood of viewing this content, **97.2%** of respondents identified that they had seen fetishising content of Latin American women on TikTok and Instagram, either often, sometimes, or always. Even in cases where participants spoke about creating a more personalised algorithm, fetishising content still appeared on their feeds.

This highlights the need for stronger content moderation on social media platforms to prevent the mainstreaming of racist, misogynistic, and fetishising content. The frequency with which fetishising content appeared on participants' social media feeds suggests that the algorithms favours this type of content, a documented phenomenon, with research finding an increase of misogynistic videos on the TikTok 'For You' page over just five days on newly created accounts[10].

It is important to consider how this content shapes both internal perspectives—how Latin American women see themselves—, and external perspectives—how non-Latin Americans perceive what Latin American women should look like and how they should behave.

Participants noted that Latin American women are consistently exposed to fetishising content on TikTok and Instagram. This content is created both by non-Latin Americans and Latin American women themselves, and appeared consistently in their feeds even when they weren't actively searching for it.

- *"Like, people feel too comfortable doing such things as fetishising or sexualizing online."*
- *"I get, like, the occasional, like, white guy who's doing stand up... doing his bit about dating a spicy, sexy mommy."*
- *"They are a bit sexualized. There are males creating comedy content about sexualizing Latinas, and picturing them as drama seekers and even joking about achieving certain Visa Status." .*
- *"Content that refers to Latinas often talks about their bodies - fitting a specific aesthetic. You also have some content fetishising the idea of a "crazy Latina" which is degrading. In general, across social media, I feel that Latinas are massively sexualised and objectified, like we are trophies or wild."*
- *"I mean, I kind of. Occasionally, I'll get some, like, random TikTok about some guy talking about Latina women in, like, a very. I know this is about fetishes… But, like, about, you know, just like, oh, I need a Latina baddie, or whatever"*
- *"I see a lot of dance videos, beauty routines, "Latina POV" jokes, videos about Latina mums shouting or cooking, and jokes about Latina girlfriends being jealous or "crazy". There's also a lot of content focused on our bodies."*
- *"All her videos have a certain pattern of wiggling the breasts at the start saying like, 'See guys, they're real, it's the Latina genes'."*
- *"It feels it fits a lot into that, Oh my God, you have to have like a lot of curves, like big *****, like huge way like a little small waist, huge hips. Dancing that you're always a sex, showing some sort of way, which is quite weird."*

Young Latin American women (interview answers)

This illustrates how the amplification of fetishising content on social media not only enforces harmful stereotypes but also pressures Latin American women to conform to narrow and sexualised ideals of the 'Latina' image, impacting their self-perception, wellbeing, and social interactions.

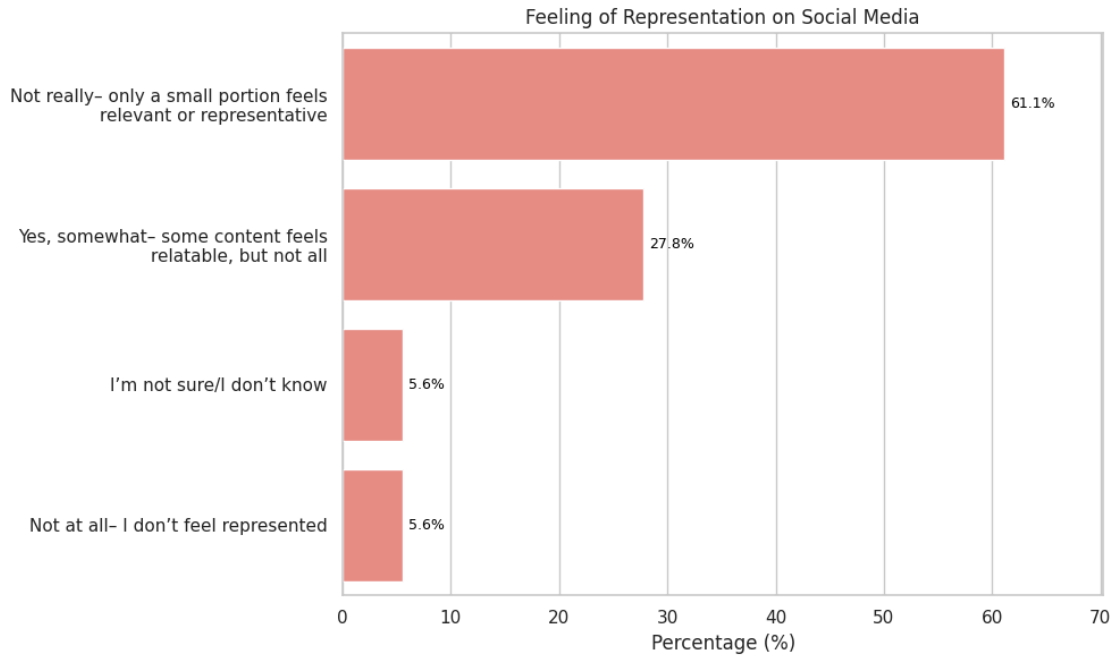
[10] UCL. 2024. "Social Media Algorithms Amplify Misogynistic Content to Teens." UCL News. February 5, 2024. https://www.ucl.ac.uk/news/2024/feb/social-media-algorithms-amplify-misogynistic-content-teens.

Key Finding 4. Hyper-sexualised physical expectations of the 'Latina' stereotype on Tiktok and Instagram negatively impacts young women's relationship with their own body

The fetishised portrayal of young Latin American women on Tiktok and Instagram negatively impacts their relationship with their own bodies as their value is diminished to how close they meet hyper-sexualised physical expectations. Across our survey and interviews, a consistent description of the Latin American female body on social media emerged. A narrow expectation was characterised by a "small waist" and "exaggerated curves," particularly in the hips and bust. These hyper-feminine body standards are unrealistic for the majority of women to meet considering the large diversity of body types.

Many survey respondents reported increased insecurity, body dissatisfaction, and a feeling that their bodies were being evaluated primarily through a sexualised lens. Data collected from the survey demonstrates how most Latin American women feel their bodies have been sexualised to an unrealistic extent:

- ***55.6%** agreed or strongly agreed that the content they see online makes them feel worse about their body.*
- ***Only 27.8%** of survey respondents stated that they felt somewhat represented by some of the content about Latin American women on Tiktok and/or Instagram.*



Young Latin American women (survey answers). Figure 5.

- ***69.4%** of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that this misrepresentation has negative consequences for the Latin American community.*

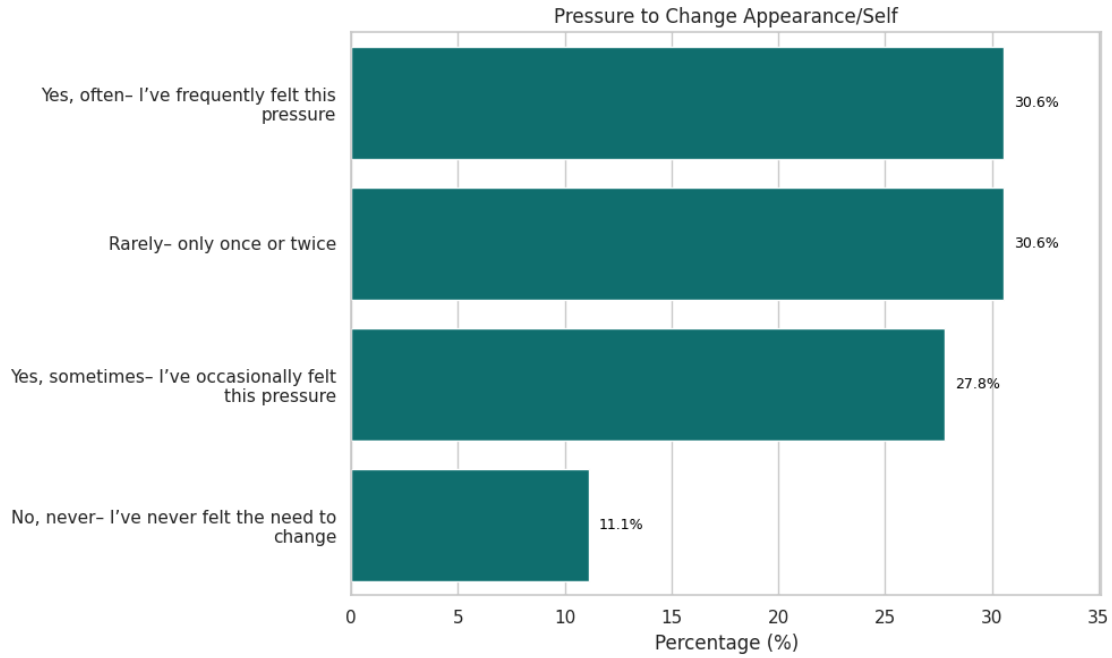
Furthermore, constant exposure to unrealistic, sexualised body standards can lead to internalised objectification, where women begin to view themselves through an external lens rather than focusing on their own comfort, health or identity. Over time, this negatively impacts self-esteem and reinforces the idea that a woman's value is tied to how closely she aligns with stereotypical representations rather than her individuality or lived experience.

Objectification theory explains this phenomenon, arguing that repeated exposure to sexualised representations leads women to internalise an external gaze and evaluate bodies through appearance-based standards[11]. Since this sexualised "criteria" is not realistic for all Latin American women, many internalise the message that something is wrong with their bodies. Some participants mentioned have even felt a pressure to modify themselves to fit this standard. The interviews we carried out reflect this sentiment:

- *"After seeing constant 'Latina body type' content, I started comparing myself more, wishing I had a smaller waist, bigger hips… things like that. It created insecurities I didn't have before"*
- *"I've seen a lot of bodies [online]. That's all I see, bodies like the perfect Latina, very all the curves and stuff."*
- *"I'm naturally slim, and growing up online made me feel like I didn't look Brazilian enough. I compared myself to influencers all the time"*

Young Latin American women (interview answers)

[11] Bonnie Moradi and Yu-Ping Huang, "Objectification Theory and Psychology of Women: A Decade of Advances and Future Directions," *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (December 2008): 377–78, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.2008.00452.x.



Young Latin American women (survey answers). Figure 6.

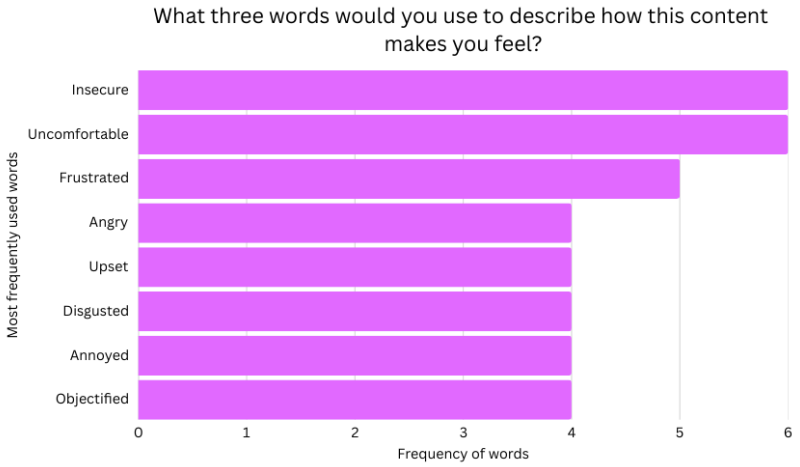
Beyond influencing individual body image, these standards could potentially create markers of authenticity within the Latin American community. For many participants failing to have the "ideal" Latin American body made them feel excluded and inauthentic within their own Latin American identity. These findings suggest how fetishised body standards work as cultural benchmarks where having certain features signals "authentic" Latin American identity. This is significant because young women's confidence and self-esteem are negatively impacted since their value is reduced to how close they meet unrealistic, sexualised body standards. Participants described these pressures in detail:

- *"My ass grew a little, and like my arms grew a little and my thighs grew a little, and I was finally like, I'm finally, you know, like Latina baddie, and it's like, why am I thinking about that?"*
- *"After seeing constant 'Latina body type' content, I started comparing myself more, wishing I had a smaller waist, bigger hips… things like that. It created insecurities I didn't have before"*
- *"Especially with body image. Sometimes I feel pressure to dress more tight, to look more feminine or curvy, because that's what social media promotes as the 'Latina look'."*

Young Latin American women (interview answers)

Key Finding 5. Exposure to fetishising content on TikTok and Instagram can create a sense of detachment from the self

Constant exposure to content that fetishises Latin American women can lead young Latin American women to feel detached from their own self-identity, both as women and as Latin Americans. Survey respondents were asked to provide three words to describe how viewing fetishising content on social media made them feel. The most frequently recurring words were: insecure, uncomfortable and frustrated. Survey data also showed that **69.4%** of women felt fetishising content impacted their sense of identity.



Young Latin American women (survey answers). Figure 7.

These findings indicate that fetishising content affects Latin American women's mental health, as many exist in a constant state of discomfort, vulnerability, and confusion. Respondents also felt a sense of conflict and confusion when navigating being proud of being Latina, but also conscious of stereotypes imposed upon them. This tension impacts their sense of self and how they relate to their own Latinidad.

Young Latin American women expressed feeling confused and conflicted about the stereotypes they are subjected to. They described feeling dehumanised by these stereotypes, while also being taught that they should feel flattered by them and enjoy them. As participants explained:

- *"It's a mix of fascination and objectification, which is a stereotype that can feel both flattering and dehumanising at the same time"*
- *"I feel conflicted with the stereotypes associated with being Latina, but I'm proud of my heritage"*
- *"It makes me feel like I've been approaching Latin womanhood wrong."*

Young Latin American women (interview answers)

Participants also recognised that their sense of self is impacted and shaped by what they see on social media, and that resisting these stereotypes requires conscious effort. They described the emotional labour involved in navigating distorted representations:

- *"This content is putting out a distorted image of us that you have to be very intentional about. Not letting it get to you and letting it alter the way you view and engage and relate with other fellow Latin Americans."*
- *"You see [Latina] women out there, having really good bodies and, like, curves and whatever, like a big ass, and like, it just makes me want to build on that… it's, like, super bad to say, but, like, that's why I tried to go as much to the gym and that shouldn't be my main priority"*
- *"Sometimes what I see [on social media] takes over what I… like, I actually believe in"*
- *"A woman exploring herself and her path, often fighting against stereotypes of a certain image of what a Latina is, but having different personalities and nuances that may or may not adhere to this stereotype"*

Young Latin American women (interview answers)

These accounts demonstrate how repeated exposure to fetishising content can create a fractured relationship between external representation and internal identity. Young Latin American women are not only navigating stereotypes imposed upon them, but are also actively negotiating how to preserve their individuality, values, and cultural pride in the face of distorted portrayals.

Key Finding 6. TikTok and Instagram push colourist and colonial standards of what Latin American women "should" be

Online content shared through TikTok and Instagram perpetuates the stereotype of a standardised 'Latina image.' The idea that there is only one way to be a Latin American woman pushes colourist and colonial standards of how they should look. Colourism is a manifestation of racism which uses the status of skin tone to differentiate and value racialised bodies, centring a skin colour continuum within a group[12],[13]. Standards of what Latin American women should be —more specifically, how they should look— are reinforced by popular content about 'Latina' women. The repercussions are significant: **over 66%** of survey participants responded that the representation of Latin American women on social media has negative consequences on their daily lives and the overall Latin American community.

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[12] Hunter, 2021. Colorism and the racial politics of beauty. https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9780429283734-11/colorism-racial-politics-beauty-margaret-hunter

[13] Angela R. Dixon, Edward E. Telles. 2017. Skin Color and Colorism: Global Research, Concepts, and Measurement. Annual Review Sociology. 43:405-424. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-060116-053315

Within the Latin American community, there is recognition of the significant diversity among women. However, this is not apparent on social media when looking at how Latin American women are represented. Instead, platforms often amplify content that presents a unified and homogenised construct, showcasing dehumanising, sexualised, and infantilised traits. These portrayals frequently centre women with a certain curvier body type, light skin, and heavy accents. The 'Latina' image captures a shared experience of being reduced to a stereotype that diminishes young women's identities and reinforces marginalisation. Being constrained to this image can negatively affect political and social opportunities and experiences.

Findings indicate that almost **56%** of participants viewed the representation of Latin American women on TikTok and Instagram negatively. Amplified content stereotyping negative representations of Latin American young women could potentially lead to social constructs that hinder or deter political participation, which compounded with structural racism further marginalises women from these communities.

There is also a clear homogenisation of Latin American women into categories of being either lightly tanned or white. Consequently, Black, Brown, and Indigenous Latin Americans are erased in favour of a more Eurocentric understanding of what it means to be a 'Latina' in online spaces.

Black Latin American women are particularly underrepresented, leading to frequent comments that they "do not look Latin American" or assumptions that they would not be able to speak Spanish. The presumption that Latin American women are always white or light-skinned reinforces exclusionary and colonial narratives. Participants described these experiences directly:

- *"He was like 'Oh, you're quite dark to be Colombian'."*
- *"They don't expect me, as a black woman, to speak Spanish, which is quite weird."*
- *"Pretty white to be honest, especially Brazilians in London compared to my family who are all Afro Brazilian."*
- *"Sexualised, WHITE, loud."*

Young Latin American women (interview answers)

These findings demonstrate how social media platforms reproduce colourist hierarchies and colonial beauty standards, narrowing the public understanding of Latin American identity. By centering whiteness and Eurocentric features as the dominant representation of 'Latina,' TikTok and Instagram contribute to the erasure and marginalisation of Black, Brown, and Indigenous Latin American women.

Key Finding 7. Fetishising content about 'Latinas' on TikTok and Instagram contributes to feelings of alienation from their community due to narrow and distorted representations

The fetishisation of Latin American women on social media platforms leads participants to distance themselves from both their Latin American identity and their communities. Constant exposure to stereotypes makes some young women hesitant to publicly identify as Latin American and creates barriers to connecting with other Latin Americans.

Participants described avoiding discussing or revealing their Latin American identity in order to prevent being reduced to stereotypes:

- *"When you go out and you meet people and they're like, oh, where are you from and stuff like that. Then it goes into this conversation of having to prove yourself and having to prove where you are from."*
- *"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."*
- *"I used to feel like super connected to being Venezuelan... now I do feel, I definitely feel British."*

Young Latin American women (interview answers)

This constant need to "prove" authenticity while simultaneously avoiding stereotypes creates emotional exhaustion. Some participants reported gradually shifting away from their Latin American identity altogether to avoid these interactions and the burden of explanation.

Participants also described feeling disconnected from their own cultural practices and expressions because of how Latin American women are portrayed online:

- *"I feel like sometimes in character I don't click with like what it means to be a Latina anymore."*
- *"It makes me feel almost as if... I have been approaching Latin womanhood wrong. It makes me feel like a dork."*

Young Latin American women (interview answers)

When participants' authentic expressions of Latin American identity do not align with the narrow stereotypes they see on social media, they begin to question whether they are "doing it right." This creates confusion, self-doubt, and detachment from their heritage.

Participants further reported that experiences of fetishisation are often dismissed or not taken seriously. Survey data showed that ***33.3%*** *of respondents reported limited community support for those affected by fetishisation.* As one participant explained:

- *"When somebody does it, they are persecuted in a way... and for when it's to do with other stuff, they're not taken seriously."*

  Young Latin American woman (interview answer)

The absence of adequate support networks means that experiences of fetishisation are often invalidated, which intensifies feelings of isolation.

When young Latin American women feel they must distance themselves from their cultural identity to avoid fetishisation, they lose access to crucial sources of identity affirmation and support, which are a critical component of identity development as well as sense of belonging. This alienation creates identity fragmentation: participants feel disconnected from both their heritage and their broader social contexts, unable to find spaces where they are recognised as complex individuals rather than stereotypes. As one participant described: *"It makes me feel almost as if...I have been approaching Latin womanhood wrong,"* hinting at how fetishisation leads young women to question their authentic identity expression during a critical developmental period.

Key Finding 8. The normalisation of fetishising content about 'Latinas' on TikTok and Instagram desensitises users and discourages reporting to social media platforms

Only 16.7% of those surveyed said they would consider reporting content on TikTok and Instagram that fetishises Latin American women, while **41.7%** felt neutral or unsure about reporting. This low reporting rate highlights a sense of apathy among young women, many of whom feel that reporting will not lead to meaningful change. This perception reinforces a cycle in which social media platforms are not held accountable for the content they promote and amplify.

When fetishisation becomes normalised, it blurs the boundaries between acceptable representation and online violence. It signals to both perpetrators and audiences that racialised sexual objectification is socially permissible. If young Latin American women grow accustomed to seeing their identity framed through sexualised and stereotyped lenses without intervention, this may contribute to the internalised minimisation of abuse. Harm and discomfort risk becoming something to tolerate rather than challenge.

In addition, some women and girls are unaware of the safety features available to them or how to use reporting mechanisms effectively. This reinforces the need for platforms to appropriately safeguard women and girls, while also empowering them to take action when confronted with online violence against women and girls (VAWG).

Participants also noted structural limitations within reporting systems. Platforms often do not efficiently review or remove hateful or fetishising content immediately. It may take weeks for

content moderation teams to respond to reports, and in some cases, reports receive no response at all. The majority of the social media platform reporting systems are designed so users can only report one hateful post or account at a time, making the process time-consuming and discouraging. When harmful content remains visible despite reports, or when users receive no feedback about outcomes, platforms inadvertently communicate that such harm is tolerable. Over time, this may contribute to desensitisation, and reporting may increasingly be viewed as ineffective and pointless.

Latin American women described feeling deterred from reporting fetishising content:

- *"If it's like a normal video and people are like, fetish, then I don't think it should be reported."*
- *"It didn't occur to me [to report] Like, I feel like a lot of it, I wouldn't expect it to actually get taken down."*
- *"Why would I. And like, if there are so many people as well, seeing this content, like, making this content so normalised"*
- *"It doesn't feel like it's worth flagging. It just feels like that's a part of being on social media, being Latina is just that."*
- *"Sometimes it can feel like it's just like, too big of a problem to even. Like, where do you even start?"*

Young Latin American women (interview answers)

These responses illustrate how the normalisation of fetishising content fosters resignation and emotional fatigue. When harmful representations are perceived as inevitable or systemic, individual action feels insignificant.

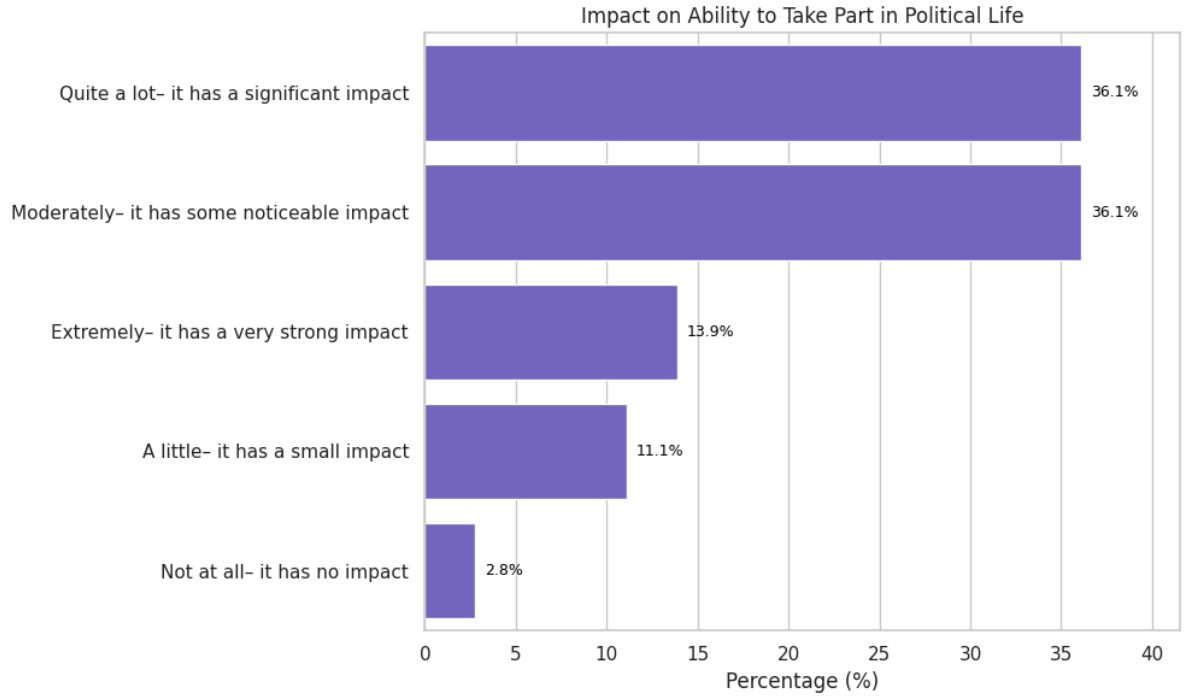
This finding demonstrates that the issue is not only the presence of fetishising content, but also the institutional and cultural conditions that allow it to persist. Without effective moderation systems, visible accountability, and accessible reporting mechanisms, platforms risk reinforcing desensitisation and discouraging resistance to racialised and sexualised harm.

Key Finding 9. Online fetishisation deters political participation, as it devalues Latin American women's voices and public involvement

On TikTok and Instagram, it is common to see videos and images of infantilised Latin American women who are portrayed as having little to no agency outside of highly emotional outbursts. This content imposes the idea that their voices are only valuable when they fit into the 'toxica' (toxic woman) stereotype. Though this is not content that these young Latin American women feel represented by, it is normal for them to come across it when consuming any kind of content around Latin America.

Our research identified a concerning link between this social media stereotype and the way in which young Latin American women participated politically. **Over 85%** of survey respondents

reported that encountering fetishising content deterred their political participation. This demonstrates how normalised online stereotypes can diminish confidence and create barriers to participation in public spaces.

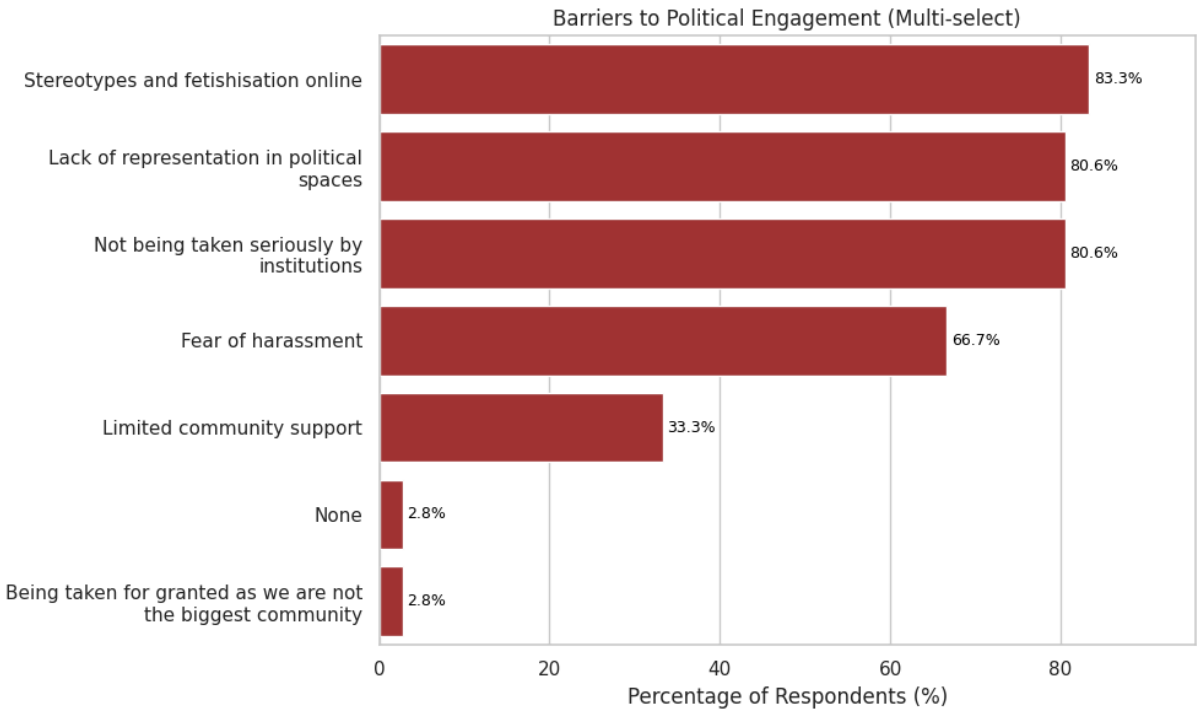


Young Latin American women (survey answers). Figure 8.

Interviews provided further insight into how these stereotypes affect political engagement and their confidence in political spaces:

- *“People only see the stereotype, they won’t imagine Latina women as activists, leaders, or professionals.”*
- *“I feel like people already have assumptions about me before I say anything. And my accent sometimes makes me nervous. I’ve had people make comments about it before.”*
- *"I want us to be portrayed as more than just our physical aspects."*

Young Latin American women (interview answers)



Young Latin American women (survey answers). Figure 9

These findings suggest that the fetishisation and stereotyping of Latin American women online impacts both their online and offline lives, not only constraining self-expression but also discouraging young women from contributing their voices to political discussions, limiting their representation, visibility, and influence in wider societal and political contexts.

Policy Recommendations

The YWAB 2025–2026 have identified the social changes we want to see in the UK in response to online abuse driven by fetishising content about Latin American women that is amplified by social media platforms.

This research illustrates how fetishising content impacts young women's mental health, as well as their sense of identity and belonging. There is an urgent need for coordinated action across multiple levels. Social media platforms must more effectively flag, monitor, and ban fetishising content. Governmental authorities must legislate accordingly to ensure young women's rights are protected and guaranteed. Other stakeholders, including organisations and educational settings, must promote prevention programmes that equip young people to recognise, challenge, and report such content. Young women must also be supported to acknowledge this form of violence, recognise it as harmful, and feel empowered to report it, in order to mitigate its impact on body image, self-esteem, and sense of identity and belonging. Without intervention, these stereotypes continue to devalue their voices and deter their political participation.

We have developed the following recommendations, organised into short-term, medium-term, and long-term actions.

Short-Term Recommendations

Social media platforms should integrate comment sentiment analysis as an additional risk assessment tool to identify and address harmful content

We found that TikTok and Instagram amplify fetishising content of young Latin American women and normalise negative stereotypes. Many participants described feeling desensitised to this content or discouraged from reporting it, due to a lack of trust that platforms would take meaningful action.

97.2% of participants regularly encountered fetishising content. **89.9%** felt pressured to change their physical appearance.

- *"In general, across social media, I feel that Latinas are massively sexualised and objectified, like we are trophies or wild."* Young Latin American woman (interview answer).

Algorithms currently prioritise engagement metrics (likes, shares, views) as the primary indicator of content quality. A post with high engagement receives amplification regardless of its actual impact on users, creating a feedback loop where harmful content is rewarded simply because it generates reactions.

Sentiment analysis tools already exist in business contexts—companies like YouScan analyse social media conversations to identify themes and patterns. Similar technology could be adapted for content moderation. Rather than classifying comments as 'positive' or 'negative,' platforms could analyse comments to identify recurring themes such as body comparison, objectification, or identity pressure.

When comment analysis reveals high concentrations of these themes, this pattern could serve as an indicator that content may be causing harm to specific communities. Currently, platforms can measure engagement but lack visibility into the nature of that engagement. Integrating thematic comment analysis would provide additional data points about content impact, particularly for marginalised communities where harm manifests through specific discourse patterns rather than obvious policy violations.

Tiktok, Instagram and other social media platforms to introduce a review mechanism for posts where significant numbers of users flag/filter/block the content posted

We found that normalisation of fetishising content deters Latin American women from reporting this content to social media platforms.

Only **16.7%** of participants would consider reporting fetishising content, while **66%** indicated they are 'Neutral/Unsure' or ''Very unlikely' to report.

- *"It didn't occur to me [to report]. Like, I feel like a lot of it, I wouldn't expect it to actually get taken down."*
- *"Why would I [report]? And like, if there are so many people as well seeing this content, like, making this content so normalised."*

Young Latin American women (interview answers)

Current reporting systems appear to operate individually; when someone reports or blocks content, it may only affect their personal feed while remaining accessible to others. This creates a situation where individuals protect themselves but the content continues harming the broader community.

A collective threshold system could address this gap. When significant numbers of users independently flag, filter, or block the same content, this pattern might suggest widespread harm. Platforms could implement review mechanisms triggered by these collective signals (for example, if 100+ users block the same post within 48 hours, it could automatically trigger human review).

This approach might recognise users as active indicators of harm. Rather than waiting for individual reports to accumulate slowly, platforms could respond to collective patterns more proactively. Young Latin American women currently feel their reports "make no difference" because they see content continue circulating to others. A threshold-based system could demonstrate that collective action leads to systemic response rather than just individual feed curation.

The current model asks: "Does this violate policy?" A collective threshold model would also ask: "Is this causing widespread harm to specific communities?" This could help identify content that disproportionately affects marginalised groups, where harm may be cumulative and community-specific rather than obviously policy-violating.

Latin American and VAWG organisations to develop training and workshops with young Latin American women on the topic of online abuse and fetishisation

Latin American women said they feel alienated from their community due to content on Instagram and TikTok. Additionally, there is limited community support when facing fetishisation and online harassment.

- **33.3%** of respondents experienced or believed there was limited community support when facing fetishisation and online harassment.
- **97.2%** of respondents regularly encountered fetishising content (58.3% "often" and 8.3% "always"), yet many lack knowledge about how to respond to or challenge this harm (shown by the 66% that are 'Neutral/Unsure' or ''Very unlikely' to report).

- *"I think the stereotype of Latin American women has maybe changed the way I talk to Latin American men when I meet them. I feel like maybe I put some more distance between me and them."*
- *"Sometimes it can feel like it's just like, too big of a problem to even. Like, where do you even start?"*
- *"It doesn't feel like it's worth flagging. It just feels like that's a part of being on social media, being Latina is just that."*

Young Latin American women (interview answers)

Established Latin American and VAWG organisations could create training and workshops alongside young Latin American women on what online abuse and fetishisation are, how they impact the community, how to recognise them, how to report, and what can be done. These training sessions might be delivered to young Latin Americans (across genders) so they can recognise abuse and better protect themselves by knowing how to report and what to do.

These workshops could be developed and delivered with the support of young women who have lived experience. They might be delivered in schools with significant Latin American

student populations, youth centres, and community spaces that young people frequent. After developing and delivering the workshops, a trilingual guide (English, Portuguese, and Spanish) summarising the content could be produced to ensure information remains accessible and quick to reference.

Recognising, acknowledging, and actively educating young people on the issues of online abuse and fetishisation might begin to shift attitudes towards young Latin American women. This could lead to greater understanding within the community around the issues that impact women and girls both on and off social media. This directly links to Key Finding 7, as more knowledge, empathy, support, and solidarity amongst Latin Americans could lead to less alienation and a stronger sense of community. Additionally, this approach might give young women opportunities to actively engage in social change, providing them with skills and confidence.

Latin American community leaders to post positive, empowering content on social media

Given the findings above, we encourage Latin American community leaders to use social media to directly challenge the prevalence of fetishing and harmful content. This could include:

- Posting content demonstrating the necessary steps to report harmful content on social media and how to spot fetishising content.
- Inviting Latin American influencers to workshops/reaching out to promote posting empowering content, e.g. personal accomplishments in different areas
- Posting content that demonstrates the diversity of Latin American communities and the experiences of young Latin American women in the UK.

Medium-Term Recommendations

Ofcom to commission a report on Violence Against Women and Girls that specifically investigates online abuse towards marginalised communities, including Latin American women and girls

This research demonstrates that online abuse and fetishisation targeting young Latin American women is widespread, normalised, and intersectional, yet remains largely invisible within existing regulatory frameworks.

- Participants consistently reported that fetishising content on platforms such as TikTok and Instagram negatively affects their mental health, with many describing feeling ***insecure, uncomfortable***, and ***upset*** (Figure 7).
- These harms extend beyond emotional wellbeing: **64.4%** of surveyed women reported that exposure to fetishising content negatively impacted their sense of identity.

- The pervasiveness of such content may also help explain why **98.2%** of Latin American women indicated that fetishisation affects their ability to participate in political life (Figure 8).
- Despite the scale and impact of this harm, reporting remains low, with only **16.7%** of respondents stating they would consider reporting fetishising content, largely due to desensitisation and a lack of confidence that platforms or regulators would take meaningful action.

Currently, there is limited data that specifically examines how online abuse affects marginalised communities, particularly Latin American women, who are not yet recognised as an ethnic category within UK data collection. This institutional invisibility means that the unique forms of racialised and gendered abuse they experience are overlooked in policy responses. Commissioning a dedicated Ofcom report would allow for the systematic collection of evidence on how online abuse disproportionately impacts marginalised groups, ensuring that regulatory interventions are informed by lived experience and address structural inequalities within digital spaces.

This recommendation is directly linked to key findings showing that fetishisation and online abuse deter Latin American women from reporting harmful content and from engaging in public and political life. A targeted Ofcom investigation would represent a critical step towards accountability, improved platform regulation, and more inclusive protections under the UK's online safety framework.

Mainstream VAWG organisations and other actors to undertake training by Latin American organisations to understand issues impacting the community

Young Latin American women reported that they feel there are no safe spaces and opportunities for them to seek support and voice their concerns when they encounter fetishising content on TikTok and Instagram. They also often encounter fetishising content online that impacts them in a variety of areas of life: including political participation, body image and relationship to their communities.

- **Over 80%** of respondents in the survey expressed that they are not being taken seriously by institutions, and lack representation in political space. In addition to this, young Latin Americans feel that non Latin Americans often don't understand the impact this has on them.

Established 'by and for' Latin American organisations need to create training and workshops alongside young Latin American women to be delivered to mainstream VAWG organisations and other actors, such as police and local authorities. The training should include a comprehensive understanding on the issues impacting the community. This needs to include intersecting vulnerabilities, such as being a migrant woman, having No Recourse to Public Funds, and being racialised. Training should also include what online abuse is, the impact it

has on Latin American women, and how organisations can support in a way that is intersectional and informed. This will also make organisations and actors aware that Latin American VAWG organisations exist and they can signpost for specialist support where needed.

Furthermore, the opportunity for young women to develop and deliver a training programme alongside a Latin American VAWG organisation provides them with the chance to start getting involved in political spaces and policy work. It provides a space where they can start to advocate for further issues impacting the Latin American community. This will create an increased sense of belonging and confidence in young Latin American women. Evidence of how effective this could be is this LAWRS' YWAB programme.

Community leaders and community organisations to develop tailored support and mentorship programmes to support Latin American women and their access to political participation

Young Latin American women reported that fetishisation created a barrier to accessing political participation. Whether it be related to the sexualised stereotypes of Latin American women or assumptions made about those with accents, women found that their political participation was deterred, and there is a desire for Latin American women to be seen beyond their bodies.

- *"We don't see anything in parliament... You don't see anything like that, so I think it does, (...) affect."*
- *"I also think there's a lot of fetishisation… And sometimes I feel like society doesn't take us seriously or assumes we only fit into certain types of jobs."*
- *"And my accent sometimes makes me nervous - I've had people make comments about it before."*

Young Latin American women (interview answers)

Due to institutional invisibility and the absence of an ethnic category in the UK, Latin American women are excluded from initiatives, scholarships, and internships to support the social mobility of Black and minoritised communities. The lack of systemic support can be supplemented by community support while formal recognition is pursued.

We propose that existing community leaders and community organisers develop tailored support and mentorship programmes to help Latin American women participate in politics. We believe it is possible to draw inspiration from pre-existing mentorship programmes coordinated by community organisations which aim to support young Latin Americans - for instance, Empower LATAM UK's *Latin American Mentorship Programme*, which aims to help young Latin Americans in the UK to develop their career. Organisations like the Latin American Women's Right Service (LAWRS) and Latin American Women's Aid (LAWA) should be consulted in developing these mentorship programmes to ensure tailored support that acknowledges the intersectional challenges of being a woman, a Latin American, and a migrant.

Recognise ‘Latin American’ as an ethnic group in the UK

The government has started to recognise the importance of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) through the ‘*Freedom from violence and abuse*’ strategy paper.[14] Additionally, the 2026 ONS Census Consultation[15] demonstrates a willingness to listen to unrecognised minority ethnic communities. However, we want these to intersect to recognise not only Latin Americans but specifically Latin American women and how they are affected by VAWG. Without a formal recognition of ‘Latin American’ as an ethnic category, official datasets on the community cannot be produced, preventing Latin American women from being taken into consideration in policy development, data collection, and service provision.

Our participants reflected this sentiment when pointing out the following: "*We don't see anything in the parliament,”* suggesting the absence of Latin American governmental representatives, and how *“it does affect”* the community. Other participants discussed that *“Afro-Latinas are still underrepresented,”* indicating the importance of recognising Latin Americans as a heterogeneous ethnic group, encompassing intersections such as Black and Indigenous Latin Americans.

We have seen the importance of recognising ethnic groups in the past. The monumental decision to include ‘Roma’ on the census in 2021 helped to tackle the institutional inequalities this minority ethnic community experiences. We believe that the recognition of ‘Latin American’ as an ethnic category will allow for policy development to take into consideration the plethora of institutional barriers, including VAWG, as community-led research demonstrates that Latin American migrant women are vulnerable to multiple forms of violence[16],[17]. Currently, Latin American communities are invisibilised through their categorisation as ‘Other’. By introducing a ‘Latin American’ category, the rapidly growing community will be recognised in its many colours and complexities, like other communities.

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[14] Policy paper. Freedom from violence and abuse: a cross-government strategy, 2025. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/freedom-from-violence-and-abuse-a-cross-government-strategy

[15] https://consultations.ons.gov.uk/harmonisation/gss-ethnicity-harmonisation-consultation/

[16] McIlwaine, Cathy. 2008. “Negotiating Gender-Based Violence: The Paradoxes of Migration for Latin American Women in London.” Department of Geography. https://www.academia.edu/27278226/Negotiating_gender_based_violence_the_paradoxes_of_migration_for_Latin_American_women_in_London

[17] Modern, Dolores, Luísa Calvete, Portela Latin, and American Women's Rights Service. 2023. “Behind closed doors. Experiences of Latin American Domestic Workers in the UK.” https://lawrs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Behind-closed-doors_domestic_work.pdf.

Long-Term Recommendations

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Safeguarding and Violence Against Women and Girls (Jess Phillips MP) to commission reports and research into the abuse and violence that young women, specifically ethnic minorities, face on social media

The topic of online abuse is one that has appeared to be brushed under the carpet in parliamentary discussions. However, with the new VAWG Strategy, this topic has come to a new light. Jess Phillips, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Safeguarding and Violence Against Women and Girls, has commented on its importance:

- *"We will ramp up our efforts to take perpetrators off our streets. And we will pursue them online too. Following the approach long applied to disrupting child sex abusers and acknowledging that violence against women and girls is increasingly happening online"*

- *"We will also make the UK one of the hardest places for children to access harmful content and misogynistic influences online"*

It is great that this has finally been acknowledged because as the world becomes more digital, forms of abuse evolve with it, particularly with the rise of AI as a tool for online sexual harassment[18]. However, in order to understand the complex intersection between abuse and the online world there needs to be further funding for research focused on this that is more ethnically diverse. Racism in social media indicates to be ever present. A research report done by Goldsmiths University showed that 95% of young people had encountered violent or abusive racist content online, with 16% seeing it everyday[19]. David Woodger Senior Lecturer points out:

- *"Young people appear to be experiencing social media as a place where racism thrives unchecked – with explicit racism, polarised debates and backlash as part of their experiences of encountering racial content on social media[20]."*

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[18] Mouse. 2026. "Grok and the Rise of Digital AI-Based Sexual Abuse - Survivors Network." Survivors Network - Supporting Survivors of Sexual Violence and Abuse in Sussex. January 9, 2026. https://survivorsnetwork.org.uk/grok-and-the-rise-of-digital-ai-based-sexual-abuse/#:~:text=AI%2Dbased%20sexual%20abuse%20can,sexual%20content%20involving%20real%20people.

[19] "Black and Racially Minoritised Youth See Online Racist Content at Least Once a Week." 2025. Goldsmiths, University of London. April 23, 2025. https://www.gold.ac.uk/news/2025/bsa/#:~:text=Alongside%20the%20survey%20of%20Black,day%2C%20including%20violence%20and%20abuse.

[20] "Most young people from Black and racial minoritised communities see racist online content at least once a week, report says". 2025. Britsoc.co.uk. 2025. https://britsoc.co.uk/media-centre/press-releases/2025/april/most-young-people-from-black-and-racial-minoritised-communities-see-racist-online-content-at-least-once-a-week-report-says/.

Due to facing both abuse because of their gender and background, racial and ethnic minority women and girls could potentially be in a more vulnerable position to receive online abuse than their white counterparts. In a research report about the online abuse spike during Covid, it was found that Black, Asian and ethnic minorities were almost as likely to be abused based on ethnicity as they were to be abused by gender. However, sample sizes were too small to further look into this intersection and research was limited due to funding[21].

It appears that though we can understand that young women experience online abuse due to their gender, and ethnic minorities experience abuse due to their ethnic background, often research falls short for young women who are from an ethnic minority. For this reason, it is important that Jess Phillips, if she wishes to respond in a way that addresses all forms of abuse to all young women and girls, funds research reports that explore these intersections. Being able to do that would allow a clearer image of what online abuse looks like for a far more diverse range of young women and girls considering all the complexities in their identities.

Greater London Assembly and Local Authorities to ensure young Latin American women and girls are at the forefront of developing inclusive programmes that encourage their political participation, while considering online and physical safety

The Greater London Assembly and Local Authorities should actively engage with Latin American girls and young women when designing and implementing youth justice and civic engagement programmes, ensuring that online safety is addressed alongside physical safety. Our findings demonstrate that online fetishisation and stereotyping directly impact young Latin American women's confidence, sense of belonging, and willingness to participate in public and political life. Youth programmes must therefore recognise online harm as a structural barrier to civic engagement.

While initiatives encouraging youth political participation and further political literacy, like the *Young Futures Hubs,* have begun to address youth engagement more broadly, our research highlights the urgent need for these programmes to meaningfully include young Latin American women and girls. Without intentional inclusion, existing inequalities are reproduced within civic spaces.

Additionally, the voting age is being lowered to 16, it is particularly important that workshops are delivered to students in Years 11–13 to promote the importance of registering to vote and participating in democratic processes. This is especially relevant in London boroughs with higher populations of Latin American female students, such as Lambeth and Southwark.

Furthermore, Latin American female students should not only be participants but also involved in organising and co-designing these workshops. Ensuring their active involvement is essential

[21] Ripple. 2019. "GLITCH - Ripple Effect Report.pdf." Google Docs. 2019. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1WwvjjT8WstM52ibSLIWMYNcM9jdjO8PY/view.

to guarantee that their lived experiences are reflected, their voices are heard, and programmes are culturally relevant and empowering.

By integrating online safety awareness with civic education and investing in inclusive, community-informed programmes, Local Authorities and the Greater London Assembly can help remove barriers to political participation and strengthen the representation, confidence, and leadership of young Latin American women and girls.

Social media companies to introduce Third-Party Ethical Filtering System

A third-party filtering system for social media posts should be implemented, in which the development takes in consideration the ethical concerns of women's online and digital abuse. Reviewing comments and filtering "bullying" content is not enough, there must be legal action targeted towards creators. The UK Online Safety Act (2023)[22] is required to regulate, assess, and report harmful content online through pre-meditated guidelines (UK GOV, 2023). This duty should be strengthened to explicitly recognise systemic and intersectional harms, such as the racialised and gendered fetishisation of women, which this research finds deters young Latin American women's political participation.

[22] UK Online Safety Act, 2023. https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/50

Artivism Pieces and Our Message

As part of the peer research process, the YWAB 2025–2026 explored creative methods and developed an artivism social media campaign. The campaign includes 11 art pieces and a video, representing the group's commitment to highlighting the fetishisation of the 'Latina' image as a form of online abuse and its impact on the identities of young Latin American women.

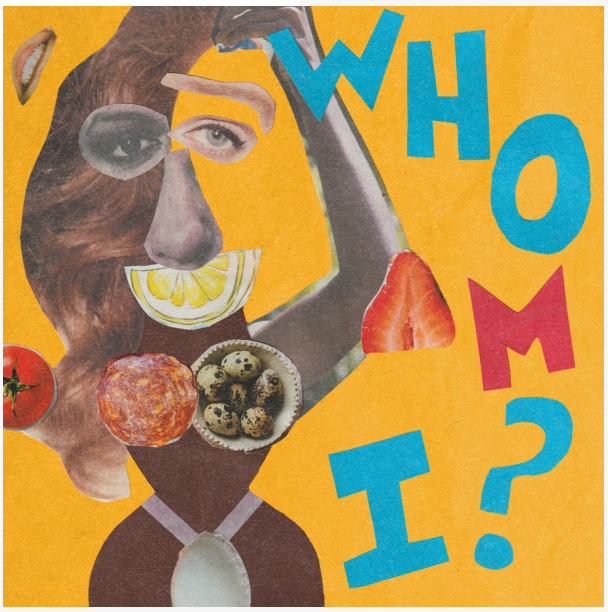
This campaign serves as a tool for advocacy, promoting the rights of young migrant women and supporting efforts to eliminate all forms of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) in the UK.

The campaign was published in the *Sin Fronteras* - LAWRS project Instagram accounts, and on the LAWRS' website.



✊ **Fight the feed, fight the fetish** ✊

💬 This is a call for resilience and resistance for Latin American women and allies, confronting Instagram and TikTok which enables harmful and fetishing content that dehumanises us. The piece stands for refusal and action, by rejecting these feeds, reporting what objectifies us and fighting back. The destruction of the phone is an act of defiance, a protest against platforms that profit from our bodies and silence our humanity. - Jessica 💬





🤔 **Who am I?** 🤔

💬 My aim was to critically engage with the idea of the 'perfect' Latina body through an abstract representation of the 'ideal'. Using food to represent sexualised parts of the body highlights how Latin American women are viewed and treated as objects for literal consumption. As we try to understand ourselves and our bodies outside of the fetishised stereotypes it leaves us wondering: Who Am I? - Julia 💬



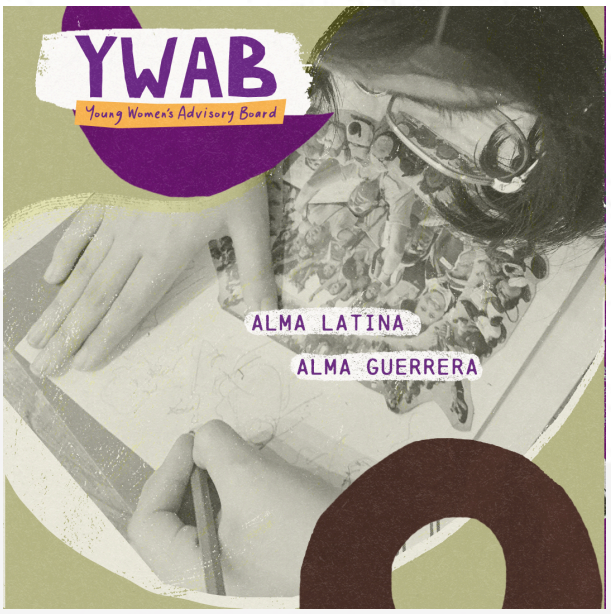


✊ **My anger is not your fetish** ✊

💬 I had a deep dive looking into social media content that supposedly represents us, one thing that came up consistently was that our anger was sexy and endearing. These labels overshadow what our anger means, if it's fetishised it can never be taken seriously. Whether

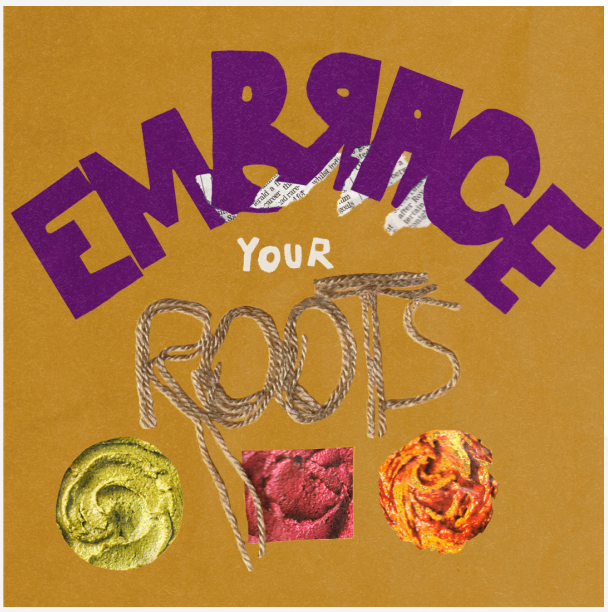
that be in political spaces, reporting sexual assault or trying to be open about my emotions. I urge those who connect with this material to think about how seeing Latin American women's anger as sexy means shutting our voices down - Male 💬

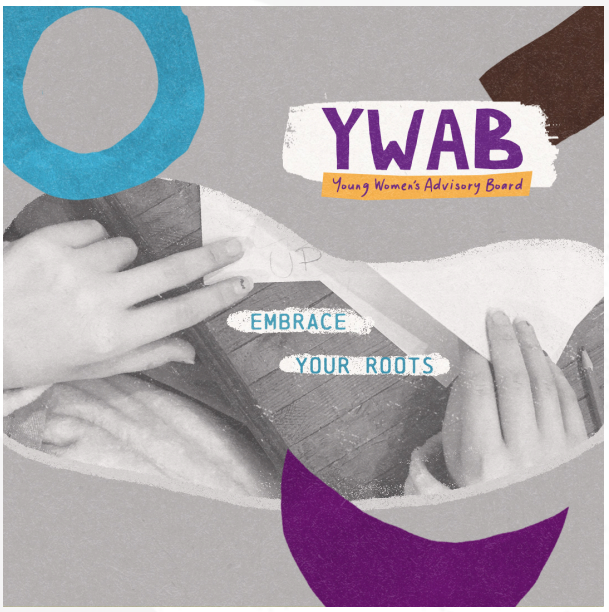




🔥 Alma latina, alma guerrera 💜

💬 I was surprised by how many people had media showcasing harmful stereotypes of Latin American women because there is so much content made by Latin Americans talking about culture, humour and social issues that isn't pushed by the algorithm. This ring of people represents everyone impacted by this, a more authentic reflection of the Latin American experience with the stereotypes towering behind them. The piece wants to provide a visual representation of where authentic Latin American voices stand when people engage with their default algorithm. - Angie 💬





💜 **Embrace your roots** 💜

💬 The fetishising content of Latin American women in social media has impacted the connection they have with their community where some might feel alienated and isolated. This piece seeks to remind Latin American women that they deserve to feel comfortable and proud in embracing and reclaiming their roots. A reminder to hold space on social media in diverse ways. - Val 💬 (Val uses women as an inclusive term, embracing diverse experiences of womanhood and socialisation).



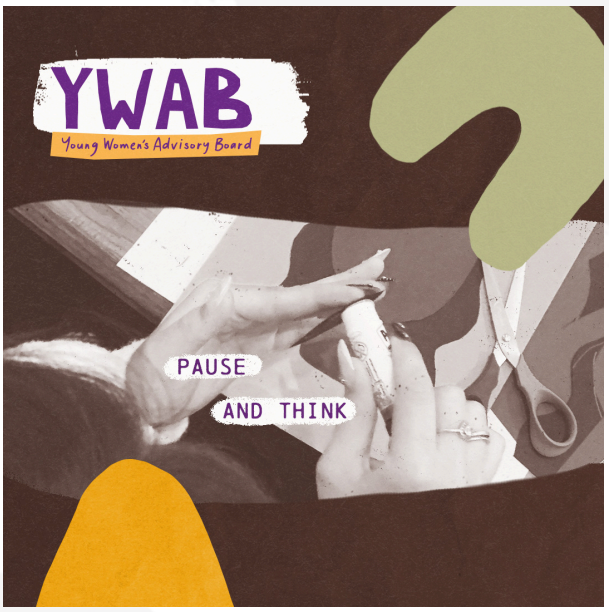


🤷🏾‍♀️ **Not ur mami** 🤷🏾‍♀️

💬 The term 'Latina Mami' reinforces the stereotype of the Latina as a caregiver, but also embraces the fetishisation of that role. This art aims to show that we can control what we

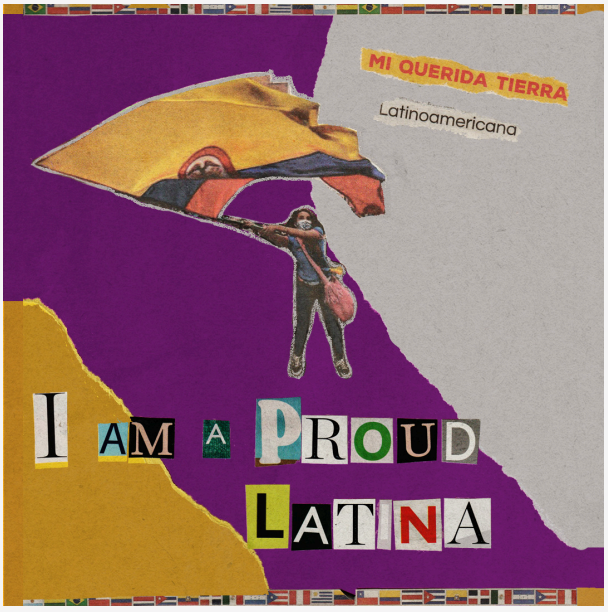
excrete: How we understand, engage and react to the sexualised and fetishised stereotypes we are subjected to. We are not responsible for cradling grown men at our breasts. - Julia 💬

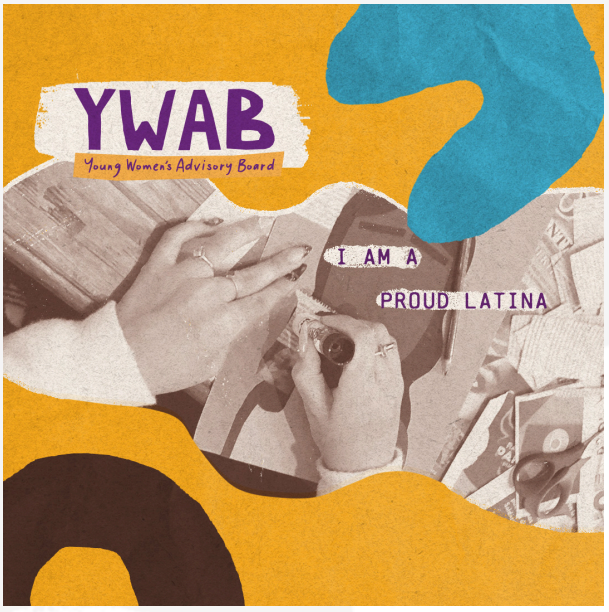




✋🏾 **Pause and Think** 💜

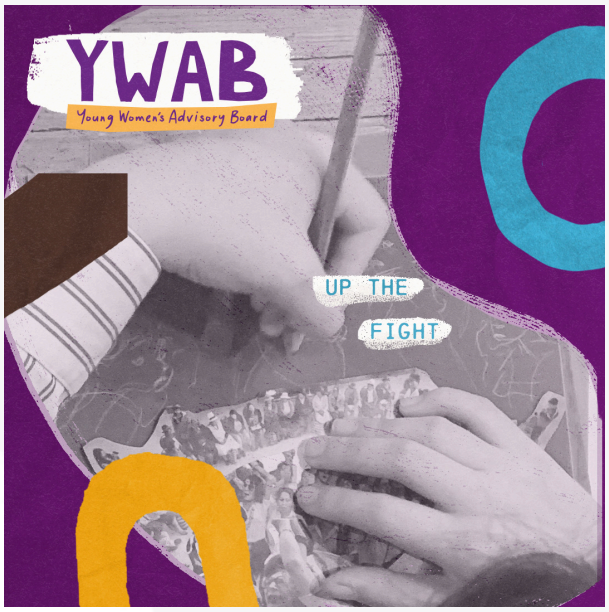
💬 In a culture of fast scrolling and hypersexualised content, Latina women's bodies are often consumed without reflection. "Pause and Think" challenges viewers to stop before liking, sharing or engaging with content that objectifies and dehumanises Latina identities. By placing this message across the eyes, the artwork symbolises both visibility and the constant gaze placed upon Latina women online. The piece calls for accountability, awareness and critical engagement as a form of resistance against digital fetishisation. - Cleo 💬





🙋🏽‍♀️ **I am a proud Latina** 🙋🏽‍♀️

💬 Despite negative narratives and stereotypes that are linked to being 'Latina', I love being one. Latin American culture is very diverse and is not limited to what is usually reduced and shown on social media. The report we produced was based in London, where we're a community that exists, even though we're not counted in National Census statistics and are considered as 'Other'. I love seeing how every day people of our community showcase their achievements and share their stories in the UK. That is what our culture is about: community. Being able to come together and share, despite being on the other side of the pond. We're joy, resilience and love.- Caro 💬





🔥**Fed Up** 🔥

💬 Social media has created an image portraying Latin American women as both angry / feisty and submissive and controllable. This piece is a reminder that this community has had a long way of fighting for their rights. It also aims for people seeing this piece to unlearn expectations forced upon them by society and rebel against them. The initials form the word "FED UP" which summarises how many Latin American women feel about fetishisation online, affecting their wellbeing and relationships. - Val 💬 (Val uses women as an inclusive term, embracing diverse experiences of womanhood and socialisation).





🔥 **This is me** 🙋🏽‍♀️

💬 I wanted to reflect on myself as a femme Latine person (identifying politically as a woman despite being non-binary). The fetishisation of Latina women is a consequence of overlapping systems: white supremacy, patriarchy and coloniality resulting in 'sexual racism'. Like the quote "niñxs libres de la cultura sexista", I want to be free from this image, existing as I am: a proud queer, neurodivergent British-Latine, fighting for freedom and liberty for all people. I included both Spanish and Portuguese to show solidarity across all Latina women. With coloniality and white supremacy homogenising our vibrant cultures into a universal tropicalised idea of 'Latina', let's embrace our heterogeneity. " Lore 💬



💜🔥 **The cover of our report!** 🔥💜

💬 We asked participants for 3 words to descibe how Latin American women were portrayed on TikTok and Instagram which are featured on the left. These words are sexually charged and feed into the exoticised, racialised and fetishised understanding of the Latina. The use of English words on the left was a deliberate choice to highlight how these expectations are imposed on us. In contrast, the right side consists of words that we feel truly represent us as Latin American women. These are a mixture of Portuguese, Spanish and English to express the complexities of our identities and the nuances of being Latina in London. - Julia 💬

Video

As part of the dissemination and advocacy phase of this peer research, we launched our latest video, *´Fight the feed. Fight the fetish.*' Collectively created by the YWAB, the video serves as an artivist response to the research findings and as a powerful tool for public engagement.

In the video, the peer researchers share key insights from their investigation, challenge the hypersexualisation and stereotyping of Latina women and girls, and call for safer, more equitable digital spaces. Drawing on real examples of fetishising and harmful online content, they expose the scale and normalisation of this issue while centring the lived experiences behind the data. By combining testimony, analysis, and creative expression, the video translates research evidence into an accessible and compelling narrative.

Bringing together the group's feminist analysis, the video clearly presents their findings and articulates concrete demands for change. At the same time, it celebrates their Latin American roots, highlights their sisterhood and resilience, and reaffirms their collective commitment to upholding the rights of ALL women and girls.

The video can be watched here.

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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