



GEN-MIGRA PROJECT

*Gender, mobilities and migration during and post
Covid-19 pandemic: Vulnerability, resilience and renewal*

T-AP Final Conference, May 2025





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The aims of the project were to:

- Transform our knowledge about the vulnerabilities experienced by women engaged in international mobilities and their agency and resilience strategies during and post Covid-19 pandemic
- Explore how migrant women have faced these challenges and produced movements of resistance and renewal, strategising and repositioning themselves in the labour market and the implications of these decisions for (transnational) family life

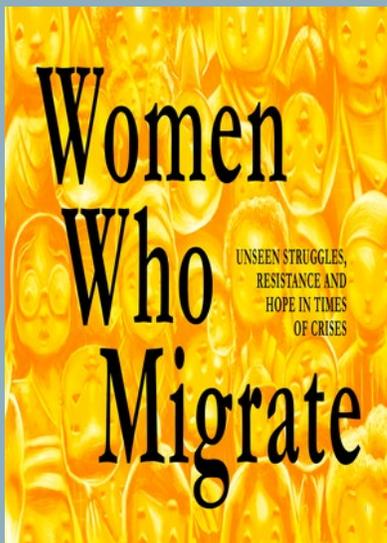
Overarching research questions:

1. What inequalities have emerged or worsened for women engaged in international mobilities during the pandemic and what role have state policies and community and kinship networks played in mitigating or increasing these inequalities?
2. What are evidence-based gender-responsive policy solutions to support women involved in international mobilities long-term, especially those most vulnerable, through sustainable state interventions of labour market (re)insertion and social protection?

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GENDER, MOBILITIES AND MIGRATION



Brazil



The impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on migrant women in Brazil

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University of São Paulo,
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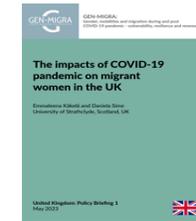


The COVID-19 pandemic and labour market inequalities experienced by migrants in Brazil

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UK



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Germany



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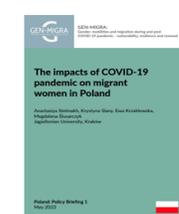


The COVID-19 pandemic and labour market inequalities experienced by migrants in Germany

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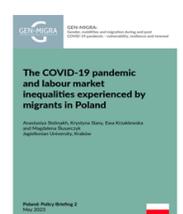
Poland



The impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on migrant women in Poland

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Krystyna Slany, Ewa
Krzaklewska, Magdalena
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Key findings - Brazil

- 1- In the context of the pandemic, there was not a national migration policy. Federal government priorities were predominantly oriented towards the regulation of migratory movements across land borders by military forces, accompanied by a substantial escalation in the number of deportations.
- 2- The documentation process for migrants was reduced by 50 per cent. The consequences of this reduction proved detrimental to migrants and asylum seekers, as it rendered them ineligible for Emergency Aid, a crucial economic aid package offered by the government, implemented in April 2020. The absence of documentation also restricted migrants' access to vaccines and health services in São Paulo.
- 3- Race, gender and national origin are crucial in understanding the insertion and permanence of migrants within the labour market. African migrants, particularly women, are disproportionately affected by instability and low wages. During the pandemic, women, predominantly employed in sectors such as cleaning, retail and restaurant services, received wages that were 70 per cent lower than those of men and constituted the majority of the unemployed population.
- 4- According to the interlocutors, situations of domestic violence, which have increased during the pandemic, have been accompanied by other violences considered to be equally damaging, if not more so, in their migratory journeys. These include experiences of violence at borders and bureaucratic-state violence in the migratory context, permeated by racism and xenophobia.
- 5- Poverty and a scarcity of employment opportunities, in conjunction with the dynamics of affective, domestic, familial, and national arrangements, has given rise to circumstances that bear similarities to the practices of slave labour and human trafficking.
- 6- Collectives of migrant women have been a fundamental source of support during the pandemic, offering material aid and networks of affection and solidarity
- 7- The post-pandemic period proved to be more challenging than the pandemic itself. This is due to the fact that while the pandemic period was characterised by an escalation in precariousness, migrant women, who lacked specific public policies, derived significant benefits from the universalist policies that were implemented during that period. Maintenance and subsistence policies, including emergency aid, were instrumental in ensuring minimum living conditions and enhanced social security. The post-pandemic 'crisis' has seen a marked intensification of violence characterised by racism and xenophobia, including instances of police violence. In the context of border control policies, there has been a recent shift in focus towards air borders. Since August 2024, the introduction of novel border policies related with the externalisation of the US border, has resulted in the restriction of entry for foreign asylum seekers, with their entry being denied. This has had a particular impact on women, with pregnant women being denied entry.

Key findings - Poland

1. Intersecting crises in the Eastern European region have significantly influenced migrant women's lives, especially in relation to their mobility decisions and patterns, access and conditions of employment, economic situation, health and well-being and relationships.
2. Overall vague, unsupportive and selective migration policy in Poland combined with diverse responses to intersecting crises have created unequal access to legal status, social services, welfare, support, and resources for different groups of women.
3. Whilst Ukrainian refugees were almost immediately granted access to legal status, the labour market, shelter, education, healthcare, and social security, even if of a temporary character, their long-term socially sensitive needs, including protection from gender-based violence, mental health assistance, access to stable housing, quality employment, integration measures, have not been sufficiently addressed.
4. Experiences of inequalities and precarities in the labour market, especially deskilling and ghettoisation in the low-level gendered sectors (care, cleaning, hospitality, services, agriculture), discrimination and exploitation, further exacerbated by the overlapping pandemic and mass arrival of Ukrainian refugees.
5. Migrant women from the former USSR countries have been actively and collectively shaping their livelihoods via various practices of resistance, activism, formal and informal self-organisation, and solidarity with other women.
6. The intersecting crises significantly impacted inter- and intra-group contacts and relations in Poland. We observe new divisions, conflicts, and distances in (transnational) migrant families as well as between and within migrant populations and the host society.
7. Poland's recent rapid transformation into a country of immigration requires complex policy solutions in relation to diverse migrant integration issues. Particular attention must be paid to the migration of women with children, given the feminised structure of refugee populations.

Key findings - Germany

1. Exacerbation of gender-specific inequalities

The pandemic intensified existing inequalities, especially in sectors like hospitality, retail, care work, and health, where migrantized women were overrepresented. Many lost their jobs without access to social protection and faced increased care responsibilities.

2. Restricted access to state services

Office closures and digitalization limited access to welfare benefits and legal procedures. Many women lacked digital skills, devices, or language proficiency to navigate new online systems.

3. Structural bureaucratic barriers

Even before COVID-19, complex procedures and discretionary decisions hindered participation. The pandemic deepened delays in residency and citizenship processes, adding stress and legal uncertainty.

4. Role of non-governmental organizations

NGOs and welfare groups filled critical gaps, offering legal aid, translation services, and emotional support—often the only consistent help available during lockdowns and office closures.

5. Psychological stress and ongoing uncertainty

Isolation, insecurity, and bureaucratic challenges increased mental health issues. Many women felt overwhelmed, helpless, and under constant pressure to avoid mistakes in unfamiliar systems.

Key findings – United Kingdom

Key Finding 1: The Covid-19 pandemic has increased existing gender inequalities for migrant women in the UK. Our findings show that migrant women were particularly affected by the cumulative effects of service closures, increased care responsibilities and mobility restrictions imposed during the pandemic.

Key Finding 2: Migrant women faced significant barriers in accessing essential services (healthcare, mental health and domestic violence support, housing and education) as a result of service closures, language barriers and lack of specialist support.

Key Finding 3: Grassroots community groups and NGOs provided crucial support to mitigate the impacts of the pandemic and lack of state support.

Key Finding 4: The pandemic exacerbated delays for refugee status and citizenship applications, increasing women's precarity. The No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) visa condition increased vulnerability for many women and children.

Key Finding 5: Travel restrictions inadvertently undermined women's ability to draw on the kinship and community networks and led to poor mental health outcomes.

Key Finding 6: Post-pandemic, migrant women and their families require intersectional, gender-responsive policies and targeted initiatives to support their wellbeing and recovery.