Stuck on London's hard shoulder

Social needs in a fast moving city

Will Norman & Rushanara Ali

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1 Introduction

London is one of the wealthiest cities in the world, and it has seen rapid economic growth in recent years. Yet it is characterised by stark inequalities, containing some of the richest and poorest parts of the country, often very close together. The capital is a vast, complex city whose needs are as varied as its people. But there are some striking common patterns, distinct from other cities in the UK and distinct from the UK as a whole. For example, its population is younger; it is ethnically, linguistically and culturally more diverse; disparities between rich and poor are greater; and it has high rates of migration and mobility.

More than any other city in the UK, and perhaps even in Europe, London has become a city for the mobile. It provides economic opportunities on a large scale, for everyone from investment bankers to cleaners and builders. London attracts the world's elites, the well-educated, the well-qualified, the well-connected and they thrive in multinational corporations, in financial institutions and businesses which, in spite of the economic downturn, continue to service the global economy. It also attracts the poor; those wanting to take full advantage of London's opportunities and improve their lives. Most come, work hard and succeed. It can take time to move out of the slow lane, but they do succeed. London's mobility is one of its strengths. But it is also one of its weaknesses. If you are not part of the fast moving city and are not able to make the most of its opportunities and advantages, London is an easy place to become stuck. The high cost of living makes it a harder place to be poor and a place where you are more likely to become trapped on benefits.

In this report we argue that the Londoners who are losing out most are now the immobile and the stuck. Our analysis shows that 16 per cent of the population – about a million people – are living in material poverty and are unhappy with their lives. These are predominantly among the elderly, sick and disabled, and lone parents. They are the people who are living in the middle of a great world city but are afraid to go out, or lack the resources to take advantage of its opportunities. They feel stuck, bypassed by the world, ignored and forgotten. Many are not good at asking for help and their social networks are small. Many were born and brought up in London, but have seen their traditional sources of support disappear.

By contrast, many of the recent arrivals in London are also poor and insecure, but are plugged into dynamic social networks (albeit often small) and dynamic cultures. The extraordinary flourishing of churches, temples and mosques, community groups and centres across the poorer parts of London has been accompanied by a growth of the arts, music and dance. These are all examples of communities meeting their own needs. London is welcoming economically but not so welcoming socially. So many have had to create their own social support structures to enable them to cope and get by.

The Government's recent emergency budget included drastic cuts for many local authorities in London. Many local authorities are facing 25 per cent cuts or more in public spending over the next three years – with the prospect of further and higher cuts in subsequent years. These austerity measures and far reaching cuts in public spending will worsen the situation of those who are already trapped in poverty or facing job insecurity and are struggling to cope with living in a city where the cost of living is high. The numbers of people who are stuck, isolated and living in material poverty are likely to grow. Foundations and civil society organisations are likely to face even greater pressures to act and provide support where Government steps back. More than ever before, individuals and communities will be expected to do much more for themselves – at a time when

they face economic insecurity. Doing 'more for less' is becoming the mantra for the coming years.

The implications for London are profound. The people most missing out are often invisible – poor at articulating their needs or accessing the networks that link into funding. Public spending cuts are going to have a huge impact on civil society organisations, most of who depend on local government and charitable sources for the bulk of their incomes. These organisations are vital sources of support for those who are stuck on London's hard shoulder and those who are struggling in the slow lane. Cuts in their budgets will significantly reduce London's capacity to cope with social needs that are likely to intensify.

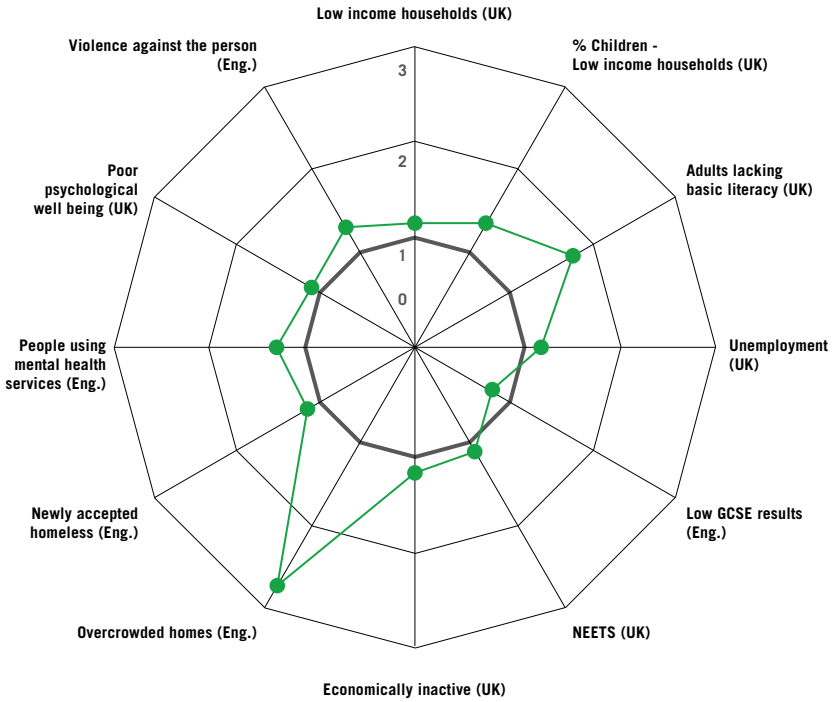
In this report we look at how London's needs differ from the rest of the country. We look at some of the implications of the city's stark inequalities and, using the lens of mobility, we explore the needs of three particularly vulnerable groups: undocumented workers, older people and some of the city's younger generation.

2 Where London differs from the rest of the country

As the capital city, the largest metropolitan area in the UK and the largest urban area in Europe, London is unique. It has the biggest GDP of all European cities, with a financial centre second in scale only to New York. It is known around the world as a symbol of power, wealth and influence. London's scale brings with it a unique set of advantages, but it also presents a set of needs that differ from the rest of the UK.

Figure 1 compares various need indicators to the national average (1 being the national average). It shows that the most prominent disparity was recorded for overcrowded households, followed by adults lacking basic literacy and people from low-income households (especially children). Violent crime and unemployment were also all above the national comparator. The level of poor psychological wellbeing in London was similar to the rest of the UK but the rate of people accessing mental health services was higher. There are slightly fewer children with low GCSEs than nationally.

Figure 1: Need indicators for London compared with the national average



Housing is the main area in which London differs radically from the rest of the country. The chart shows that London has almost three times more overcrowded households than the national average. In the Inner London boroughs almost a quarter of all households are classed as being overcrowded.[1] Nearly half of all overcrowding is found in social housing, although the levels of overcrowding in the private rentals are increasing. Black and minority ethnic households are disproportionately more likely to be overcrowded.

Living in an overcrowded household increases levels of stress and depression. One young woman we spent time with, Jess, lived in a two-bedroom maisonette with two other adults and three children. She shared the top bunk of a bunk bed with her daughter. The levels of tension and stress in the house were obvious as soon as we walked in the door: tired, irritable adults shouting at each other and the children, no personal space, noise, toys, furniture and food everywhere. Not long after we interviewed Jess these tensions became too much. She had a big argument with her aunt and left home. Jess has now dropped out of her college course and is living in temporary accommodation with her one-year-old daughter. She has no idea what she is going to do.

The impact of homelessness has long-term consequences for the whole family. Homeless children are three or four times more likely to have mental health problems than those in good housing. They are also at greater risk of having behavioural problems such as aggression, hyperactivity and impulsive behaviour, all of which can affect educational attainment and progress at school.

While overcrowded housing is a significant problem in London, this is not usually the first thing that comes to mind when we talk about housing needs and homelessness. The more common association is of rough sleepers: the image of someone huddled under a dirty blanket in a dark doorway. Rough sleeping is the most extreme, and most visible, form of housing need. And, as with overcrowded households, London has significantly more rough sleepers than anywhere else in the country. The most recent count show that nearly half the country's rough sleepers are on the streets of London (248 on any one night).[2] Over the course of a year outreach teams contact almost 3,000 people sleeping rough in the capital. Many of those on the street suffer from other significant needs, 45 per cent have alcohol, drugs or mental health problems, and 40 per cent have been in prison, 12 per cent in care and 7 per cent in the armed forces.[3]

The city's housing problems are likely to intensify in the coming years. Government reforms to housing benefits are likely to hit London hard because of its high housing costs. London Councils estimates that more than 82,000 households, many of them in work but on low incomes, could lose their homes – thereby affecting some 250,000 Londoners. Many of these will have to move, leaving the more expensive inner boroughs and moving further out. The impact of this will be, for many, to sever their local networks of informal support at a time when they are most vulnerable.

If we return to Figure 1, while housing needs are a clear area where London differs from the rest of the UK, for most other needs indicators the differences between London and the rest of the country are not particularly significant. In fact, to focus on how London averages relate to the national averages misses the point completely. It is the inequalities and difference within the city that make London unique.

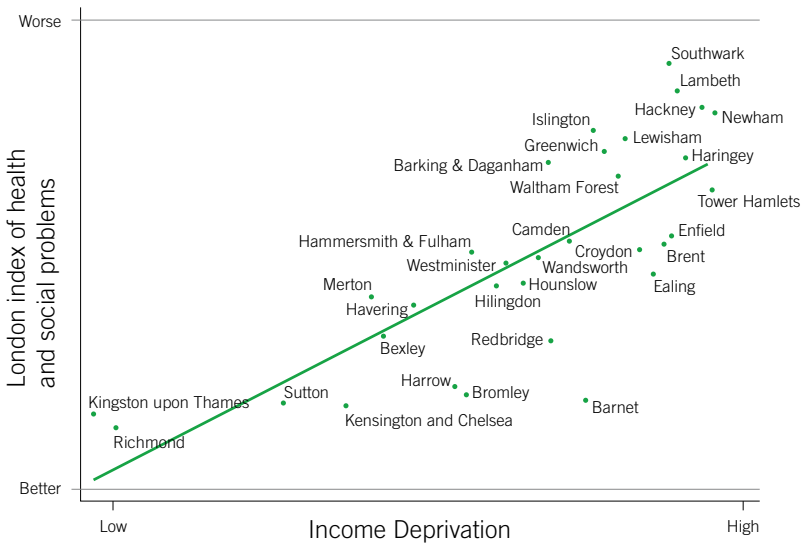
3 Inequalities: A tale of two cities

Cities have always been the places where society's inequalities are most stark. 2500 years ago Plato wrote that "any city however small, is in fact divided into two, one the city of the poor, the other of the rich."[4] Nowhere is this more apparent than in London today. The city is one of the most unequal in the world. Home to some of the wealthiest people in the country and to some of the poorest, the size of the gap between London's rich and poor is shocking. The wealthiest 10 per cent of Londoners are 273 times wealthier than the poorest 10 per cent: a tenth of Londoners each have wealth estimated, on average, to exceed £933,563 compared to the assets of the bottom tenth which have at most £3,430.[5]

While the economic difference between London's rich and poor is more chasm than gap, London is also unique because the two groups live and work in close physical proximity. Inner London is more divided than any other region in England. 19 per cent of the population are in the richest 10 per cent of people in the country and another 16 per cent are in the bottom 10 per cent. Differences can be even more localised. The steel and glass investment banks of Canary Wharf overlook some of the capital's poorest communities in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. Even within these towers the city's rich and poor brush against each other on a daily basis. We spoke to night cleaners earning the minimum wage who empty the bins and clear the desks of people earning unimaginable multiples of their salaries.

Inequalities in income are closely associated with a whole range of other inequalities. In their book The Spirit Level, Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett argue that almost every modern social and environmental problem – from obesity to violence, from drug abuse to longer working hours – are significantly worse in unequal societies.[6] Much of the analysis in The Spirit Level is based on national data, comparing countries rather than regions within them. In 2010 Wilkinson and Pickett undertook a review of the inequalities in London that showed how closely social and health problems are related to deprivation.[7] Figure 2 below is taken from their recent report on inequality in London and plots levels of economic deprivation in the 32 boroughs against indicators including life expectancy, infant mortality, mental illness, drug abuse, violent crime, teenage birth rates and GCSE results. There is a clear relationship – the poorer areas have far more social and health problems.

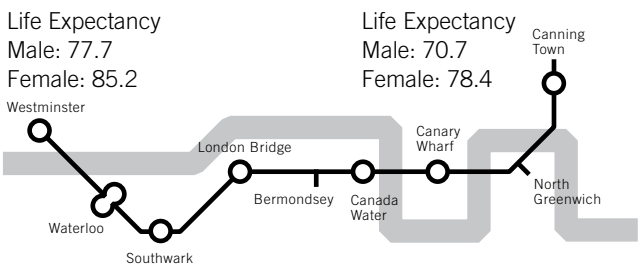
Figure 2: Health and social problems in London are closely related to deprivation[8]



London is a city with profound health inequalities. Between 1991-93 and 2005-07 London saw the highest increase in life expectancy at birth of all UK regions. Male life expectancy rose by over four years to 78 years and for females it increased by three years to 82 years. However, the difference between the borough with the highest life expectancy and that with the lowest life expectancy in London continues to increase. In the wealthiest part of London, one ward in Kensington and Chelsea, a man can expect to live to 88 years, while a few kilometres away in Tottenham Green, one of the capital's poorer wards, male life expectancy is 71.[9] This inequality is clearly demonstrated in the diagram below, which shows that life expectancy declines by one year for each underground station you pass through as you head east from Westminster.

Travelling east from Westminster, each stop represents nearly one year of life expectancy lost ➡

Electoral wards just a few miles apart geographically have life expectancy spans varying by years. For instance, there are eight stops beteen Westminster and Canning Town on the Jubilee Line – so as one travels east, each stop on average, marks nearly a year of shortened lifespan.



London Underground Jubilee Line

Source: London Health Commission[10]

As with the rest of the UK, cardiovascular diseases and cancers are responsible for the most deaths in London. However, in addition to these 'big killers', London's population faces its own set of specific health challenges. The prevalence of infectious diseases such as TB and HIV is especially high in London. London accounts for approximately 40 per cent of TB cases in the UK and 57 per cent of England's known cases of HIV. New diagnoses of HIV in England remain highest in London: in 2005, 42 per cent of all new HIV diagnoses were from the London area, including 319 among 16 to 24-year-olds.[11]

Inequalities are also evident in terms of mental health. London has a considerably higher percentage of inpatients with psychotic disorders than elsewhere in the

country, at 23 per cent of inpatients compared to a national average of 14 per cent.[12] Within this certain groups fare worse than others. London has a large refugee population and self-reported mental health problems are around five times higher among refugees than in the general population. People with mental illness from minority ethnic communities in London face a number of particular challenges and barriers in accessing appropriate services. Some individuals are more likely than the average population to be treated in inpatient and forensic psychiatric services, and black people are less likely to be offered 'talking therapies' than the white population. Individuals from minority ethnic groups can find mental health services difficult to access because of language problems or cultural issues. Less than half of mental health services provide information about themselves in other languages. Mental health services have far fewer connections with minority religious organisations. All have connections to Christian churches while 80 per cent have connections to Islamic organisations and 55 per cent have connections to Hindu organisations.[13]

High levels of inequality are not good for society. Plato's complete quote on equality reads, "any city however small, is in fact divided into two, one the city of the poor, the other of the rich; *these are at war with one another*" (italics added). While nobody is arguing that London's rich and poor are at war, the cuts in public spending will increase the gap between them. The private sector is showing signs of economic growth and the salaries of top executives have increased by 55 per cent since the financial crisis, according to recent newspaper reports.[14] At the other end of the scale, the people who are most dependent on the public purse will be most vulnerable to cuts being made by central and local government. These will, ultimately, be the poorer members of society. As the gulf between the rich and poor continues to grow it is likely that tensions in communities will increase. Whether this will spill over into protest and civil unrest will remain to be seen. The warning from countries around the world is that violence is more common in more unequal societies (where status competition is intensified) because it is so often triggered by people feeling looked down on, disrespected and humiliated.

Looking at 21st century London through the lens of inequality reveals a disturbing picture where the gulf between the haves and have-nots is as wide as that of the Victorian era – although the main reason for this is due to the astonishing rise in wealth and not the widespread abject poverty seen in the 19th century. Analysis such as that in the Spirit Level shows that greater equality would seem to improve the quality of life for almost everyone.[15] However, short of a large-scale redistribution of income – for which there is little appetite from any mainstream political party – the lens of economic inequality is not adequate in helping to find solutions to the problems that clearly exist in the city. Inequality links everything together, but we suggest that to tease out solutions and new ideas, London's needs should also be looked at through other lenses – one of these is the lens of mobility.

4 The city of the mobile

More than any other city in the UK, and perhaps Europe, London is a city of the mobile. In 2008-9 over 700,000 people moved in or out of the city – this is not to mention the thousands of people who move within the city. The average length of residence in the city is less than four years. In one London borough, Newham, officials reported a 30 per cent turnover of pupils in schools during a single year.

London is the dynamo of the UK economy. Its size, status and its offer of opportunity attracts people from elsewhere in the UK, predominately young people. Figure 3 show that in 2009 there was a net inflow of over 53,000 people aged between 20 and 30 years into the capital from elsewhere in the UK – mainly looking for work or education. This is likely to increase if job opportunities remain limited in other areas of the country. The table also shows that overall there was a net outflow of people to other regions. The people moving out tend to be older, either those with families (hence the 41,000 children) or older people looking to retire out of the city.

Figure 3: Net migration in and out of London to other parts of the UK 2009

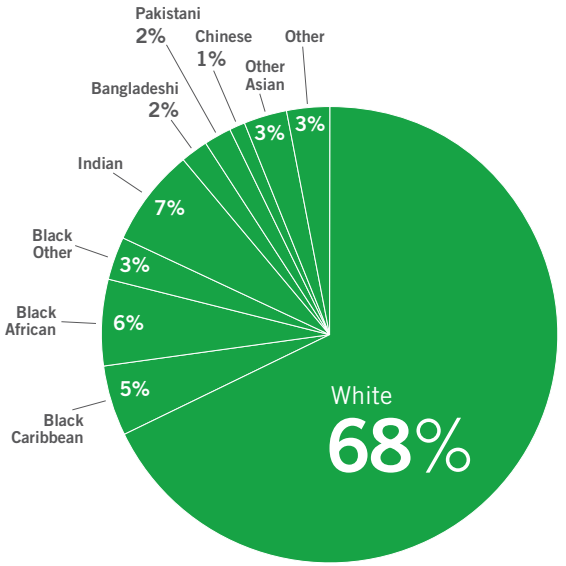
Age range	Net inflow/outflow of people
0-19	Outflow of 41,882
20-30	Inflow of 53,414
30-50	Outflow of 49,038
50+	Outflow of 48,645

Source: Office of National Statistics

But London is not only the dynamo of the UK economy; it is one of the few global cities. Its economic, political and cultural influence stretches way beyond the UK's borders. People are drawn to the city from all over the world, as visitors, on business, to study or looking to find a job. Its five airports make it the busiest urban airspace on the planet and one of them, Heathrow, has the highest number of international travellers in the world.

Accelerated globalisation and the changes that have occurred to the global economy over the last 30 years have radically altered London's role as a world financial and services centre. However, London has always attracted people from around the world. The city's population has been shaped by successive waves of immigration and is characterised by its hyper-diversity. It is the most ethnically diverse city in the UK: in some boroughs, such as Newham, the proportion from minority ethnic groups exceeds 50 per cent. More than 300 languages are spoken by London's schoolchildren.[16] There are 34 communities of foreign nationals in London with more than 10,000 members, and a further 20 communities with more than 5,000 members.[17]

Figure 4: London's Diverse Population



Source: Greater London Authority 2005

Historically, the majority of London's immigrant communities came from areas of the world that used to part of the British Empire and from a relatively small number of countries. While historical links remain strong, the chart below shows that London's population is becoming increasingly diverse and less likely to be from former British territories.

Figure 5: The increasingly diverse nature of London's population 1986-2006

	1986	2006
Foreign born population	1.17 million	2.23 million
Proportion of total	17.6%	30.5%
Share coming from former British territories	76%	59%
Number of countries contributing majority of migrant stock	6: Ireland, India, Kenya, Jamaica, Cyprus, Bangladesh	15: Previous 6 + Nigeria, Poland, Sri Lanka, Ghana, South Africa, Pakistan, Somalia, USA, Turkey

Source: Labour Force Survey[18]

The new arrivals come from many places, but are – like the internal migrants – mainly young and, contrary to common stereotypes, have above average qualifications. Those who come from richer countries tend to stay in London for shorter periods (particularly the most qualified), while those from poorer countries are far more likely to want to make London their long term home. Migrants work in all sectors of the economy in London. Those from richer areas of the world tend to work in the financial sector and in other business services. Many migrants work in the catering and hospitality industry. Those from the new European member states (commonly referred to as the A8 countries) are more likely to work in construction. Those coming from poorer countries tend (at least initially) to take up lower status jobs than their qualifications would warrant.[19]

Most people coming to London find work and their needs differ little to those of anyone else in the city. However, some specific groups of new arrivals are more vulnerable and do face challenges and particular needs – most vulnerable are those who have arrived here without any documentation.

Undocumented migrants

Undocumented migrants (people who do not have a settled UK immigration status), by definition, fall under the official radar – they are not reflected in government statistics and it is difficult to build a detailed picture of their numbers or their needs. The Office of National Statistics estimates that there were between 300,000 and 570,000 undocumented migrants in the UK in 2005 – most of these are believed to have overstayed their visas rather than entered the country illegally.[20]

While detailed information about this group is particularly difficult to gather, there is little doubt that London is home to the majority of undocumented migrants in the UK. The Greater London Authority estimated that 380,000 undocumented migrants live in the city, almost 5 per cent of the total population. A Home Office survey of illegal detainees showed that most migrants had lived in the capital and two-fifths of the interviewees had never left the city.[21] With such a high concentration of the undocumented migrants living in London, we were keen to go beyond the official statistics, estimates and guesstimates, to find out more about what it was like to live in London without any legal status. Through London-based civil society organisations we contacted undocumented migrants from several different countries who shared their stories and experiences.

Having no legal status leaves people in limbo. They are unable to work legally, yet they need an income to survive; they are among society's most vulnerable, yet they are unable to access formal support; they need stability, yet they are unable to plan for the future. Many have come to help support their families and live in

fear of being discovered or, even worse, being physically or sexually abused. This leads to considerable psychological strain.

Despite the difficult circumstances, we found that there was a strong desire to work and to be able to contribute to society. This desire was coupled with frustration of not being able to be an active citizen, particularly for those who were well educated and had held positions of responsibility or authority in their home country.

> *I really want to get status and then I want to work, to contribute, to benefit the society and the economy. I am not used to doing nothing and to be given hand outs. I used to be hard working and I want to be like that again. I want to work and to give back to the community. You might work but if you don't have status you don't feel free. You think the police will appear at any time.*

The fear of being discovered without the appropriate legal documentation was another shared experience. This was a constant strain which not only affected psychological wellbeing, but left people vulnerable to abuse. In the case of one person we spoke to, this was at the hands of their landlord:

> *I worry that they will catch me or deport me, my husband or my daughter. You have to keep the fact that you don't have documentation very quiet – people take advantage – you can't stand up for yourself. My previous landlord didn't give us our deposit back for no reason at all, but he knew we couldn't complain to anyone about it.*

Unable to work legally, people are forced to work without documentation, leaving them without protection or any rights in the workplace. One of the support workers we spoke to explained that it was common for people to be forced to work long anti-social hours on very low wages, with wages often being withheld. They also reported casese of physical abuse.

The fear of physical abuse was prevalent among the female interviewees who were working illegally. Some referred to their own experiences of violence or the threat of physical violence; all had heard stories from friends. One interviewee, Lara, shared her traumatic experience of being raped when looking for a new house (see text box).

LARA'S STORY

Lara is from a small town in rural Ecuador. She had been abused by her husband and decided to try to make a new life for herself in London 2000, leaving her three children with their grandparents. When she arrived Lara attempted to get status as an asylum seeker, but was robbed by the man who was claiming to be her lawyer. "I wanted to bring my children over here with me. I was told about a lawyer in Liverpool who could help me. I handed over my passport, all my documentation and quite a lot of money … he turned out not to be a lawyer, just another crook. He left me with nothing."

Without any legal documentation or money, Lara sought any job she could get. She eventually found work as a cleaner:

"I work mainly for my children and my father. I send money home. One of my daughters is studying at university and she needs financial support. She wants to be a businesswoman. I have to support them; I am both a mother and a father for them … It is hard to make ends meet, but I get by. I am alone; no one else will help me."

In 2008 Lara was sexually assaulted when she was visiting a flat to rent:

"There was a man showing me around and we were alone in the building … he forced himself on me … I didn't know what to do … I didn't call the police, I couldn't call them, I was too scared so I didn't do anything … I don't have legal status here so there was nothing for me to do … A few months went by and I was feeling so awful … I didn't know what was going on, so I went to hospital – it turned out that I was pregnant. No, no it cannot be, I said ... I tried to be strong … how? Why? It can't be."

She contacted a charitable organisation that worked with women refugees and asylum seekers. They were able to help, offering her emotional support as well as sessions with a psychiatrist. But Lara still feels lonely and vulnerable: "I have no family here – I am alone".

Despite all that has happened to, Lara wants to stay in London:

"My dream is to be here legally – there would be more work for me, I could support my family properly and afford to go back home. I want to pay tax, I want to work hard, that's what all immigrants want to do here … I am alive, at least I am alive. Ugly things have happened, but what can you do? I have three kids that still depend on me … I have to send money back to my father who is very ill … these are the things that I need to think about, that keep me going."

Many of those with no documentation are most in need of support. However, the lack of legal status makes accessing health and other services difficult and very stressful. Being unable or unwilling to risk finding support exposes the undocumented migrants and, when they are here, their families to considerable risks. One of the people working for a charity that provides support to migrants shared her concerns with us:

> *The exclusion of vulnerable groups from health care brings along major risks like individual suffering and exploitation, a risk for public health in general, demand for emergency services which are far more expensive, the creation of backstreet services ... Not being regular migrants means that they don't have a lot of rights to services or benefits …The other big issue is health. We have had people who have come to us and said in the later stage of their pregnancies 'help, I am pregnant – I haven't gone to get any of my scans' and this is almost at the point of giving birth because that is when they feel it is safest to go. People fear they can't access health care or will be found out. They don't know whether they should register their children in this country or not.*

Seeking support from formal sources was risky and difficult. Instead people turned to each other. There was widespread dependence on informal support from friends, family, often established through churches, mosques and community centres. These informal networks provided emotional support, practical advice (such as how to find work or accommodation) as well as financial assistance in times of absolute crisis. Faith and religion were also important in terms of keeping people going in the face of seemingly impossible odds. As one Bolivian migrant said, "The only things that are really important to me are my friends and the church. I have a tight circle of Bolivian friends and we all work together and help each other if anyone has a problem."

As well as these informal social and family networks, the undocumented migrants we interviewed depended heavily on charitable and third sector organisations working in this field for signposting to appropriate help such as vouchers, clothes and other material support, as well as advice on accessing healthcare, counselling and other services.

NINA'S STORY

Nina came to London six years ago as a student. She dropped out of her course but remained here. Her husband and her daughter joined her three and a half years later.

"Now that I have my daughter here I am much happier. When she wasn't here I had to work every hour of the day not to think about her. I feel much more at peace now. My daughter is happy here. At first she didn't want to come over but now she is happy – she has good teachers and lots of friends. Now she doesn't want to go back."

Despite her illegal status she has managed to find work but her jobs are tedious and she works very long hours:

"It is easier to make money and make ends meet here but I work much longer hours here, six days a week and usually 12 hours a day. To start with I used to clean offices in the morning and houses in the afternoon; then I would work in a restaurant every evening until 11. Now I work as a cleaner in an underground station and I still work at the restaurant on weekends. I would like to work fewer hours. I don't see my daughter enough. I leave at 6am and I come home at 11pm; I leave her sleeping and I come home when she is asleep."

Even though life as an undocumented migrant is often uncertain and insecure she would like to remain in London. She says that her faith and her family give her courage, "I am always optimistic; I do not like negativity or negative people. I am happy here; I thank God that I am here. Nothing bad has ever happened to me in this country. I have met good people."

Undocumented migrants are a largely hidden workforce in London, doing the jobs few of us want to do for low pay with few rights and in poor conditions. Their experiences and stories show the enormous strain and pressure they are under and yet most of those we interviewed were keen to stay. The tightening of immigration controls will increase the number of undocumented migrants in London. Most do not arrive illegally but remain after their visas expire. As it becomes harder to renew visas and to stay in the country legally, more will stay illegally – leaving more people vulnerable to the abuse and psychological hardships we found during our interviews.

5 The city of the stuck

London's economy, its glitz, its culture and its overall reputation attract people from across the UK and from around the world. But while it is a city of and for the mobile, this leaves some immobile and stuck. Our analysis shows that 16 per cent of Londoners – about a million people – are living in material poverty and are unhappy with their lives. These are the people who are living in the middle of a great world city but are afraid to go out, or lack the resources to make anything of the city. They feel stuck, bypassed by the world, ignored and forgotten. Many are not good at asking for help and their social networks are small. Many were born and brought up in London, but have seen their traditional sources of support disappear.
In this section we look at two groups who are particularly vulnerable, older people and some of the city's younger generation.

Older people

One of the groups most at risk of being stuck are London's elderly population. Nationally, our research has shown that as people reach older age the number and quality of relationships with other people can deteriorate, leading to unmet needs for companionship and social support. Half of all people aged 75 and over live alone (since 2000 the figure has reached 50 per cent for the first time).[22] Nearly half of all older people (about 4.6 million) consider the television as their main form of company.[23] Over 500,000 older people spent Christmas Day alone in 2006.[24] Just over one million older people (11 per cent) in England always or often feel lonely.[25] Twelve per cent of older people (over 1.1 million) feel trapped in their own home. Further, 17 per cent of older people have less than weekly contact with family, friends and neighbours.[26] Ipsos MORI research shows that the problem is more common among older people who are on low incomes or who have poor health. They are three times more likely to be isolated than older people in general and three times more likely to feel trapped in their own home. The most severely isolated and lonely are people over 75, particularly older women, those who are widowed and those living alone.[27]

Although London has proportionately fewer older people than other parts of England, there are still a lot of older residents. More than 15 per cent of Londoners - nearly 1.17 million people – are aged 60 or over. Almost a quarter of a million people in London are aged over 80. Our analysis shows that a higher proportion of older people in London live in poverty, in poor health, in inadequate housing and with little or no support from family or friends, than in other regions. These high levels of deprivation, particularly in inner London, lead to comparatively high levels of demand for care services. As with the undocumented migrants, we spent time with some of London's older population and find out more about their lives and experiences. We found that the high levels of population churn and international migration have left many older people living in communities that have changed dramatically. Their social networks have shrunk as families and friends have moved away or died, leaving many isolated, lonely and unhappy.

Most of the older people we interviewed did not see London as an age-friendly city; they see it as big, impersonal and anonymous. It can be a hostile place for many older Londoners. Poor public transport facilities and the lack of accessible public toilet provision were commonly mentioned as limiting mobility and acting as barriers to independence. The reduction of independence can lessen opportunities for leisure, physical activity, and engagement with other members of the community.

While older people are entitled to free public transport, more specialist transport services, such as Dial-a-Ride, are a priority for older people in the capital. Concerns about transport were linked to the fear of crime. Two interviewees

recounted stories of being victims of crime on buses. One lady had been pick-pocketed without noticing, "One of them sat down next to me on the bus. I'd got my bag like this [clutched across lap]. She got her hand underneath my bag and how she ever did it I'll never know … I don't think you'd ever win they are so clever." Another man had been mugged by two young men: "They work two as a team … A guy standing on my shoes, I can't move. I said 'Excuse me I'm trying to get off the bus.' Of course, by the time it was sorted out, the other guy behind me had my wallet, credit cards and everything."

The fear of crime was not limited to public transport but also in the home. Tom (see text box) lived in purpose-built accommodation, yet the lack of security systems and staff left him and the other residents feeling vulnerable to crime. His story particularly shows how those without support networks of family and friends feel particularly at risk.

TOM'S STORY

Tom lives in sheltered accommodation in West London, built especially for older people. He is happy with the quality of accommodation but he, and many others who share the sheltered housing, live in fear of crime. There are no security staff, just cameras, and no staff at all after 6 o'clock. He says safety and security are big issues:

"There are many infirm people living on their own in one-bedroom flats leaving their door open for their carer because they can't get up to open the door and that is how people go in. They [thieves] pick on people on their own without families coming in – they pick on the vulnerable. People with family have lived here without having things stolen."

He feels London has changed compared to what it used to be and he thinks that his neighbourhood has changed on every level. Tom doesn't find his neighbours friendly and he puts it down to the increase in cars and traffic: "It's changed completely, absolutely completely. We used to play out in the street, y'know, but kids miss that now." He feels that he is now in a minority of real Londoners: "It's not London anymore. There's not many of us left."

Much of the fear of crime was directed at young people. Older people viewed the younger generation with fear, suspicion and bewilderment. One man in his eighties struggled to understand the young people he saw on the street, "When we were young it was a completely different world. You wouldn't have gangs fighting with knives and all that … it's changed completely, absolutely completely." The other change that was commonly raised was the changing

ethnic composition of the communities in which they lived. As we have seen, international migration has changed London's demographics significantly. Many of the older white Londoners struggled to cope with these changes. They missed their old neighbours and the communities in which they grew up. Many were suspicious of the new arrivals and were reluctant to engage with them.

MARGARET'S STORY

Margaret is 80 years old and has lived in London all her life. She is disabled in one leg and the opposing arm. Margaret lives alone. She used to have the support of a carer, but was unable to continue paying for their help. A local voluntary organisation sends someone round to help her wash, do chores and provide some transport. Since having a recent hip replacement, Margaret has found it difficult to get around and it takes a lot of energy to make basic physical movements. When we asked how she was finding things since her operation, she said:

"Not fine at all. I'm worse off now than I was before. I was in pain before with my hip but now I cannot get about – whereas I could before. Now I have to keep sitting down to rest because I get out of breath and it takes me a long time to do anything."

The most significant impact of the operation has been that she is no longer able to care for her husband at home and he has had to move into a residential care home. Despite Margaret's mobility problems, she is able to take a taxi to visit her husband once during the week and at weekends, "I do look forward to seeing him but I find it a big effort. As much as I like it I get worn out ... I feel very tired by the time I get up there."

Both of Margaret's children live in London. Her daughter lives nearby but she rarely sees her. She is, however, in good contact with her son, but he lives on the opposite side of the city. He tries his best to visit, but it's not always easy for him. When he does come, he helps with shopping and visits his dad in the care home. She doesn't have many friends living nearby and feels isolated:

"The ones across the road, that have moved in over there, they are these ... Somalis are they? Whatever they are called. I don't see nothing of them, they are in and out … I miss my old neighbours, yeah definitely … Now people are not very friendly. All my old neighbours have died off. They have all gone and so now everyone that comes in are all foreign, it's not like your own … it's not like what used to be there. Before you would stop and have a little chat but you don't get that now."

Changes in older people's social networks and the local environment were often felt to be beyond people's control. This included relationships with families, friends and neighbours and changes in the community. One of the consequences of an increasingly transient population is that traditional sources of support – family, community and social networks – have been eroded. The absence of friends and neighbours was a cause of loneliness. One person said that without family, weekends were the worst part of the week:

> *Weekends are difficult for people if you don't have family to see ... We all get a bit upset Friday night knowing Saturday and Sunday will be grim. [Have you any friends in this block?] None at all. I miss my old neighbours, yeah, definitely.*

London's rapid change and hyper-mobility risks leaving certain groups stuck on the hard shoulder. Elderly people are one of the groups who are most at risk. If their families have moved away or their neighbours and communities change, many are left isolated and alone. We saw how loneliness can result in the fear mistrust of others and lead some older people to retreat further from the communities around them.

Young people

Older people's fear of crime and sense of insecurity is all too often focussed on young people but we found that some younger residents of London shared this sense of fear. While London can be a land of opportunity and potential for many young people, others are left behind. Some young people from the more deprived areas of the city do not have the same opportunities as their peers in more affluent communities and, as with the older people and undocumented migrants, we spent time with young people who were living in some of the less affluent areas of London to find out about their lives and experiences.

LAUREN'S STORY

Lauren is 16 years old. She spends most of her time watching DVDs or daytime television. Before she became pregnant she would spend time shopping with friends or they would hang out in waste ground near the train lines. She points out a local park, "They've made this look really nice with new swings and things. But it's for little kids and Mums, not for teenagers."

There is patch of ground behind this park that is overgrown with brambles with a clearing where the older children tend to socialise. "This is called The Bricks. It's where people come and drink. Some of the boys have burnt out

cars down here." The clearing is scarred by a large black charred area and beer cans and other drink bottles are scattered around. "I don't know how they get the cars down here, but they do."

Lauren would like to see more things for teenagers to do in her neighbourhood, "there are things for little kids but not us. Ice rinks or go-carts, that sort of thing. You can have fun just watching, even if you don't have a go."

The young people we talked to were overwhelmingly negative about the areas in which they lived. As Lauren's story shows, they saw a lot of investment in facilities for younger children, but felt ignored and abandoned by society themselves. Many of those we spoke to were not in education, employment or training and with few qualifications stood little chance of finding a job in an increasingly competitive job market. They were in danger of becoming the lost generation which is being commonly referred to in the press.

PATRICK'S STORY

Patrick is 18 years old and has lived in South East London all his life. He dreams of moving away:

"Look, it looks like a slum. London is messed up. Knife crime and all. Everyone is carrying a blade or worse. They raided a house round the corner from my Mum's and found a load of Uzis. I mean there are some serious tooled up people around. Kids all carry knives. But people have nothing to do. Young people are bored. A few of us hang around together and the next thing is that you're beating up on someone. It then just blows up."

He attributes many of the problems to boredom and the lack of provision of appropriate services for young people:

"They do summer schools and stuff, but they've got it wrong. They do the wrong stuff. Take me, I'm like most boys. I like spitting, rapping, putting down beats you know. They should have studios in the community. We'd do that. All the stuff they do is for young kids, parks and shit."

Counter-intuitively, young people became less mobile as they got older. They talked about their parents taking them as young children to leisure centres or to activities which were on the other side of the borough or in another part of London. As they grew up and became teenagers, they gained greater independence. However, this independence did not translate into greater mobility.

As they were now travelling alone, without parents, the young people we spoke to said that they were reluctant to travel outside their immediate neighbourhood on their own. This was due to the fear of being attacked by groups of young people in other areas who would identify them as being an outsider. Whether this fear was grounded or not was difficult to establish, but it was certainly real. One young man we spent time with had been attacked with a knife after visiting his girlfriend in a neighbouring postcode area (see Sean's story). Another would not travel outside his neighbourhood without a group of four or five of his friends. This not only affected the boys, but also girls. Two of the girls we interviewed would not travel far from home due to this sense of fear. They both said that this affected their ability to access services as the sexual health clinic they wanted to use, which was in the territory of a rival group of young people.

SEAN'S STORY

Sean is 15 years old and lives with his mother and father in London. Personal safety is a major concern to Sean. He talks about a constant feeling of fear and how he has to consider the risks, and potential risks, he might face on even the most local of journeys. A couple of years ago he attended a boxing club in a neighbouring borough and regularly used a local leisure centre. Because he was younger, his parents would take him back and forth. Now that he is older, and expected to make this journey himself, he doesn't feel that it is safe to travel to either of these clubs, "I don't do it no more. There are the wrong people hanging around when I go there. I don't want to walk up there or get on them buses."

Sean thinks street violence is getting worse:

"I can't walk around without someone probing me. The other day, when I got this cut [pointing to a scar on his face], this boy just wanted a fight. I knew he'd bring his friends so I said just him. But then he pulled out a blade. I just ran. He would have stabbed me … you can't walk around here any more. People look at you and you know they've got a knife. You can't get on the bus. For me to get to my girlfriend's house it's difficult because I'm not from round there."

It was not just physical mobility which was limited. In terms of social mobility, the young people we spoke to were cut off from the opportunities which make London such an appealing place for so many from around the world. One young man we talked to could see the towers of Canary Wharf from his bedroom, but had no idea what they were or what goes on inside them. Others had been brought up in workless households and in communities with high levels of unemployment and had little knowledge of the diversity of the labour market. Their understanding

of work was shaped by a couple of weeks of work experience when they were at school, usually in hair salons or in retail outlets. This lack of exposure to work severely limited their aspirations.

London is a city of opportunity, particularly for the young. However, many are cut off from the opportunities. They feel abandoned and marginalised from mainstream society and become increasingly stuck in their local neighbourhoods which offer no routes out.

6 Conclusions

London is a city for the mobile. Many of those who come seeking success do prosper. However, it is a hard city in which to be poor. High living costs and poor social networks leave many vulnerable to isolation, loneliness and poverty. For those who become stuck, London is a difficult city in which to get started again.

What should London and Londoners do? The city is not good at dealing with isolation. It may well be densely populated but it is not densely connected. Particular groups – the elderly especially – can end up cut off and isolated as the communities around them change. It is not good at managing transitions, infrastructures of training and opportunity are balkanised and the borough system breaks the city into units that have no meaning in people's lives. And there has been a deliberate neglect of the undocumented migrant communities which have been overlooked as they worked in the jobs nobody else wanted for low pay in poor conditions and with no rights or recognition.

London benefited from the financial boom, but those who gained most are not those who will pay the costs. The fast lane slowed during the banking crisis and recession, but it did not stop. Now it looks like it is recovering, picking up speed and moving onwards and upwards. It will be the people in the slow lane who are left to pay the price. The £150,000 lifetime cost of repaying the deficit and the costs of bailing out the banks will fall on every adult in the country. The cuts to public spending required to pick up this bill will hit those who have just been getting by and the poorest hardest. In the coming years, London's gulf between the haves and have-nots will widen. More families and individuals will end up on the hard shoulder. And the support services needed to get them going again will be over-stretched and unable to cope.

London has the resources and creativity needed to cope and overcome with the coming crisis. The city is home to some of the wealthiest individuals and institutions in the world. Some of the most enterprising and most creative minds live and work here. London's strengths have the potential to shore up its weaknesses. However, despite the very welcome work of the likes of the Evening Standard and Capital Community Foundation, there are only crumbs of charity coming from the city's wealth creators. The sums are tiny compared with the wealth and the need. Widening social and economic inequalities between people living in London bring the dangers of social division and unrest. We may well be hitting angrier times when these crumbs may no longer seem acceptable.

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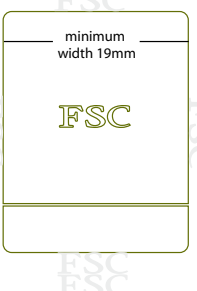
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London is one of the wealthiest cities on the planet, but also suffers from serious levels of poverty and unemployment. London's top 10% benefited greatly from the financial boom – but relatively little wealth trickled down and now the cost of dealing with its consequences are being shared out across the whole population, with public spending cuts likely to hit the poorest hardest.

This report forms part of a larger programme of work to understand and map the UK's changing needs. It looks in detail at poverty in London, as well as the problems of isolation and blocked opportunities. It predicts that the gulf between London's haves and have-nots is likely to widen over the next few years. While many enjoy life in the fast lane of the global economy, hundreds of thousands of families and individuals will end up stuck on the hard shoulder, as opportunities pass them by. The report explores in particular the needs of three particularly vulnerable groups - undocumented workers, older people and some of the city's younger generation - and sets out what London should be doing to support those in greatest need.

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