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Family-related considerations of the remigration decisions of ‘new’ Polish migrants to the UK

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'New' Polish migration to the UK



- Between Dec. 2003 and Sept. 2009 the Polish-born population of the UK increased from 75,000 to 520,000
but: immigration highest in 2007, declining since
 - Polish-born population widely spread across the UK:
 - the largest non-UK born group in Scotland and Wales,
 - the second largest in Northern Ireland,
 - either the second or third largest in each of the English regions.
- (ONS, 2010)
- Assumption – transient migration
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Demographic profile



- According to WRS data: young and arriving predominantly without dependents
 - 81% (of all A8 migrants) aged 18-34 at the time of registration, 12% aged 35-44
 - May 2004 – May 2009 only 8% of those registering with WRS had dependants living with them in the UK
 - but
 - March 2008 – March 2009: 12% of registering migrants had dependants
 - Rapid growth in number of births to Polish women residing in the UK: from 924 in 2001 to over 16,000 in 2008

(Accession Monitoring Report, 2009)
 - Polish is now the most commonly-spoken first language among non-English speaking newly-arrived migrant school children across England

(Department of Children, School and Families, 2008)
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Research design

- Qualitative research in 4 locations across the UK:
 - two in South England (Southampton, rural Dorset)
 - two in Scotland (Glasgow, Highland Perthshire).
 - Target: 80 in-depth interviews with Polish migrants
 - living in the UK for at least 12 months
 - aged 18+
 - 50/50 men/women
 - 60% with children.

and

 - persons household is shared with (family, friends, strangers; children/no children)
 - mixed nationality vs. all-Polish households
 - private-rented/owned vs. employer-rented/owned accommodation.
 - Completed fieldwork in urban locations: Southampton and Glasgow.
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Andrzej

- Age: 40
 - Martial status: married
 - Children: 3 daughters (16, 15 and 1.5 years)
 - Occupation: in UK - painter and decorator currently unemployed. In Poland 'family' smallholder, unsuccessful 'farm shop'.
 - Household: his wife and children live with him in Southampton (the family had not lived independently of relatives prior to arriving in the UK).
 - Migration pattern: Andrzej arrived in Southampton in June 2005, a few months later his wife arrived, a year after that his daughters arrived (when they were 13 and 12 years respectively). The youngest daughter was born in the UK.
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Barbara

Age: 49

Marital status: married

Children: Daughter 29 (single, Assistant Manager in Aldi), son 26 (Married, car mechanic).

Occupation: in UK: manual labour (fruit and veg. packer) this is Barbara's first experience of manual labour. In Poland she had worked as a manager; her husband had a successful business.

Household: lives with her husband in UK, son lives in Southampton with his fiancée, her daughter also lives in Southampton but independently. (Barbara, despite being a manual labourer, is middle class, she and her husband enjoy travelling and they own a 'very nice apartment' back in Poland. Their daughter has also taken out a mortgage on a flat back in Poland; and her son's in-laws to be have already bought him and his future wife a flat back in Poland).

Migration pattern: The eldest daughter was the 'pioneer migrant' she came to the UK (just for one year) after finishing her Masters degree in Poland in 2004. The son followed after a few months, then Barbara followed in June 2005. Barbara's husband arrived in October 2006.

Beata

Age: 30

Marital status: married (since arriving in the UK)

Children: Pregnant with first child.

Occupation: in UK: agency work (hotel cleaning; lens company); now on a permanent contract with lens company. In Poland: worked for local council.

Household: lives with just her husband in UK in a one-bedroom flat. In Poland, lived with her parents: moving to the UK made it possible for her and her partner to live together before marriage.

Migration pattern: Beata's partner arrived first in 2006 to work with a childhood friend; Beata arrived two months later. She had previously lived in the USA and Ireland for short periods of time.

Sylwia

Age: 21

Martial status: single

Children: five-year-old son.

Occupation: in UK: currently unemployed, but has worked in Polish food shops in the UK. In Poland: worked on a production line for a clothing manufacturer.

Household: lives with her son, her mother and her 12-year-old brother in a one bedroom flat. Initially lived with her father and 19 year brother too. Lived in similar conditions in Poland, but with less money.

Migration pattern: Sylwia's mother was the pioneer, arriving in 2006. A year later the rest of the family joined her, but her father and 19-year-old brother have now returned due to lack of work.

Conclusions

- The heterogeneity of A8 Polish migrants in the UK;
 - the different tensions associated with living ‘transnational lives’;
 - Some factors leading to ‘prolonged temporariness’:
 - economic factors;
 - eg. Pension contributions;
 - family factors
 - eg. Children’s education.
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Thank you for your attention!

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