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*Polish migrants survey results*  
*Commissioned by the BBC Newsnight*

**Key findings:**

- Polish migrants demonstrate a highly complex set of migratory patterns reflecting the growing fluidity and ease of mobility within the European labour market. As shown below, migration patterns can be divided into three broad, numerically equal categories: seasonal migrants, long term settlers and undecided.
- 22% of the respondents identified themselves as seasonal migrants and almost a third of respondents stated that they intended to stay less than two years in the UK. Seasonal workers and short term migrants tend to be young (aged below 24 years), with lower levels of education, are concentrated in big cities like London and work in construction or hospitality/catering industries.
- However, around 30% do not know how long they will stay in the UK. This indicates that a relatively high proportion of recent migrants are adopting a 'wait and see' approach to the duration of their stay. Those aged between 24 and 34 were most likely to be found in this category. The remaining respondents were split relatively equally between staying 2-5 years, over 5 years and permanently.
- 15% of respondents said they wanted to stay in the UK permanently.
- 30% of respondents said that they intend to bring their families and children over or that their families are already in the UK. The highest

proportion was among the 35-45 age groups, followed by those in the 24-35 groups. However, a relatively high percentage (28%) did not answer the question but of those who did, just under 60% said that they do not intend to do bring their families over. Education or sector of employment does not seem to play a decisive role here.

- Financial reasons and unemployment in Poland is the main factor driving people to migrate to the UK (mentioned by almost 60% of respondents). However, younger respondents and those with higher levels of education are more likely to stress non-financial motives like “easier to live in the UK” and “personal or professional development”.
- Polish migrants are very happy with their reception by the British public. 90% of surveyed say that they have been received ‘well’ or ‘very well’ with only 10% stating that they have been received ‘badly’ or ‘very badly’. Those in the latter two categories were more likely to be older and male.
- 64% of respondents declared that they had registered on the Workers Registration Scheme. People living in smaller towns were more likely to have registered, as were older workers and those intending to stay in the UK for longer periods.

## METHODOLOGY

1. Sampling. In our survey we wanted to explore: 1) people's migration patterns 2) planned length of stay 3) reasons for migrating 4) willingness to bring families. In order to do so, we needed to make several assumptions about the migrating population as no overall data (such as the 2001 Census) exists about Polish migrations, except data from the Workers Registration Scheme gathered from 2004 by the Home Office. We then chose our sample in following way:
  - a) We generated a sample according to basic demographic features (age, gender, geographical distribution and sector employed) adopted from the Workers Registration Scheme.
  - b) Time of arrival: Because migration from Poland took place well before 1<sup>st</sup> of May 2004, we included people who arrived to the UK after 1<sup>st</sup> of May 2003. This is because we wanted also to determine the extent to which Polish migrants register on the Workers Registration Scheme – and according to the rules of registration on the Scheme people who worked more than 12 months prior to the EU enlargement do not have to register. Our choice of the year before enlargement comes from the fact that many Poles, anticipating the influx of other Poles, migrated before the 1<sup>st</sup> of May. In 2002, for example, 210,000 Polish citizens came to the UK (International Passenger Survey) and in 2003 that number jumped by almost 80% - to 360,000 (these data include visitors as well as migrants but are indicative).

Of course, May 2003 is a methodological boundary not an actual one. However, we needed to limit ourselves somehow, otherwise there would be no reason for excluding migrants who arrived say 17 years ago – just after the collapse of Communism in Poland. Our sample, therefore, includes people who came to the UK during the last three years which fits the general debate concerning 'new migrations' (93% since 2004). Also this group's life plans and long terms settlement aspirations are still largely unknown since someone, who has been in the UK for more than five years, may be considered well settled already (this is obviously a sensitive issue for them).

- c) Education. Again we have no data on general demographic features about the education background of Polish migrants. However, several assumptions can be made: Poland has one of the lowest percentages of those with higher education in the EU (10% according to the National Census in 2002). Also, according to the WRS, 85% of Poles who registered were under 34 years of age. Additionally, we conducted our survey right at the end of school and academic year. Taking all that into account, we therefore assumed the number of educated migrants to be around 25-30%. During the survey this assumption was borne out since 28.9 % of respondents said they had a degree. This, of course, does not mean that 28.9 % of Poles in UK have tertiary education. We were exploring people's settlement/migration plans and reasons of migration not demographic features. Having said that, it is important to note that according to our surveyors in some places it was easier to find people with

higher education (for instance, Edinburgh or some parts of London) while in other places it was much easier to find people with basic/vocational education (like Slough).

2. Surveying: In total six trained and experienced surveyors took part in the research which used the technique of a street face-to-face survey. The surveyors have already been trained about sampling and questioning. Respondents were approached in bars, workplaces, shops (Polish delis), supermarkets (like LIDL), outside churches, meeting points and streets with high concentration of Poles – all places where Polish migrants gather. In total the surveyors questioned 505 people in 7 locations:

<b>location of interview</b>	Frequency	Percent
London	151	29.9
Bournemouth	79	15.6
Edinburgh	100	19.8
Peterborough	45	8.9
Liverpool	53	10.5
Slough	26	5.1
Luton	51	10.1
Total	505	100.0

The basic demographic features of our sample are as follows:

<b>SEX</b>	Frequency	Percent
male	285	56.4
female	217	43.0
Total	502	99.4
Missing System	3	.6
Total	505	100.0

<b>AGE</b>	Frequency	Percent
below 24	154	30.5
24-34	257	50.9
35-45	55	10.9
46 and over	36	7.1
Total	502	99.4
Missing System	3	.6
Total	505	100.0

<b>EDUCATION</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
elementary - equivalent to approx 8 years of education	33	6.5
secondary - equivalent to approx 12 years of education	322	63.8
higher - equivalent to university level education	146	28.9
Total	501	99.2
Mis sing System	4	.8
Total	505	100.0

<b>Sector of occupation in UK</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Administration Business & Management	51	10.1
Agriculture	7	1.4
Food / Fish / Meat Processing	8	1.6
Hospitality & Catering	122	24.2
Manufacturing	61	12.1
Construction & Land Services	80	15.8
Government Health & Medical services	22	4.4
Transport	29	5.7
Retail related services	60	11.9
Other	65	12.9
Total	505	100.0

*Note: These basic characteristics are broadly consistent with the data from the Workers Registration Scheme (except for education which does not feature in the WRS). As surveyors were instructed to filter out respondents who migrated to the UK prior 2003 and to keep the gender balance, the above characteristics supports the known features of migrants from Poland: as young (over 80% below 34 years of age), and working in particular sectors of the UK economy.*

## FINDINGS:

### A. Stated length of stay

how long intends to stay in UK	Frequency	Percent
less than 6 months	94	18.6
between 6 months and 2 years	64	12.7
between 2 years and 5 years	63	12.5
more than 5 years	56	11.1
permanently	78	15.4
don't know	150	29.7
Total	505	100.0

The first question informs us already about different categories of migrants that need to be distinguished.

1. Short time stayers – people who plan to stay less than two years – 31.6%. Almost 34% of people under 24 stated that they will stay less than 6 months – almost double the average for the whole sample. Also people with the lowest level of education tend to choose that option. As for locations London has a highest concentration of short time stayers, along with Slough.
2. People, who declared their length of stay as between 2 and 5 years, are an important, although relatively small group. Nicknamed *hamsters* they represent a group which migrates in order to accumulate capital and come back to invest in property. The age group, which chooses this option most frequently, is the 46 years and above (reflecting the difficulties of that age group in the Polish labour market).
3. The same age group chooses most frequently the option of staying more than five years (although not permanently).
4. 15% of respondents said that they wanted to settle permanently in the UK. Almost 30% in that group belong to the 24-34 age group; 20% of London respondents wish to settle with similar numbers in Edinburgh.
5. The biggest of all groups answering the question about length of stay are people who chose the option: “I don’t know”. Educated people tend to choose this option with most coming from London, Luton and Bournemouth. This reflects not only a degree of indeterminacy in these migration flows but also a strategy of what we call “intentional unpredictability” where people choose to be open to all options that arise so as not to restrict their life plans by fixing into it a specific time frame.

## **B. Seasonality**

One of the features of Polish migration is its seasonality and circularity – for example, migrants who undertake the strategy that can be nicknamed *stork migrations*. We then inserted a question which explicitly asks a respondent whether they have undertaken seasonal/back and forth trips between Poland and UK.

<b>Seasonal migrant?</b>		Frequency	Percent
	yes	111	22.0
	no	392	77.6
	Total	503	99.6
Missing	System	2	.4
Total		505	100.0

Although the amount of seasonal migration may not seem that large, we conclude that a considerable number of people who answered “no” to the question may become seasonal as it may be their first trip to the UK. People, who undertake that strategy, tend to be young (33% amongst the under 24s) less educated (respondents with higher education tend not to move back and forth) and, not surprisingly, concentrate in sectors such as catering and construction predominantly in larger cities as seasonal migration bases. Two thirds of the group declaring that they will stay less than 6 months identified themselves also as seasonal migrants.

## **C. Registration on the Workers Registration Scheme**

<b>whether registered with WRS</b>		Frequency	Percent
	Yes	323	64.0
	No	152	30.1
	don't know what WRS is	29	5.7
	Total	504	99.8
Missing	System	1	.2
Total		505	100.0

Registration on the WRS is subject to several requirements (i.e. people working as self-employed do not have to do so) but an interesting regularity can be observed here. Only 57% of London respondents stated that they have registered compared with 80% in Slough or 70% in Peterborough. Only 31% of those who come for less than 6 months register as compared with 80% of those who come with an intention of staying more than 2 years. Those under 24 years of age are also less likely to register.

## **D. Migration reasons**

Respondents were asked to choose their reason(s) for migrating to the UK. Stating more than one option was possible.

1. **Financial/lack of jobs in Poland – 58.4%**
2. **More options/easier to live – 41.4%**
3. **Personal or professional development – 31.3%**
4. **Getting away from political and economic situation in Poland – 17.8%**
5. **Better future for children – 13.9%**

Although financial reasons and a lack of jobs in Poland was at the top of the options chosen by our respondents, a considerable number of people referred indirectly to money-oriented motivations as shown by “easier to live” and “personal/professional development” options. These options are also much more likely to be chosen by younger people with higher education. Only 55% of people below 24 chose the financial reasons option as opposed to 83% of those above 46 years of age. In brief, it tells us that the set of migration motivations is complex and dependent on age and education – younger and educated migrants stressing the will to live in a foreign country, language acquisition, making friends and living in a global city.

## **E. Reception:**

<b>How was received by British society?</b>		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
	very well	176	34.9
	well	287	56.8
	badly	24	4.8
	very badly	3	.6
	don't know any British	14	2.8
	Total	504	99.8
Missing	System	1	.2
Total		505	100.0

Overall about 90% of our respondents reported a positive experience with being received by British society. Young respondents tend to be more enthusiastic about their reception than the older ones – with 95% of those under 34 stating that they were “very well” or “well” received. Negative experiences are noted mostly by men in the older age group than females.

## **F. Bringing family in:**

<b>whether intends to bring family to UK</b>		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
	yes	83	16.4
	no	212	42.0
	They're already here	70	13.9
	Total	365	72.3
Missing	System	140	27.7
Total		505	100.0

The question was intended to target the migrant's plans towards children and close family – but 28% chose not to answer the question. More than 30% intend to bring their family or have them in the UK already. Of those most likely to be in this group are respondents within the 35-45 age group. Geographically this is evenly distributed except for Liverpool and Luton where almost a half of respondents expressed their desire to bring their family/or that they are already in the UK. The impact of industry wherever migrants wish to settle permanently is less clear. Generally sectors like construction and catering and hospitality are dominated by seasonal and short term migrants but respondents, who want to settle permanently or bring their families over, are also found in that group in significant numbers. Again this supports the highly dynamic and fluid feature of these recent migrations flow along with high mobility within sectors. That dynamism in relation to bringing families to the UK is reflected by one interviewee comment: “I don't know now. But I can make that decision any day”.