



Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series (KESS)

...is a forum that encourages debate on a wide range of research findings, with the overall aim of promoting evidence-based policy and law-making within Northern Ireland



Poverty, ethnicity and International migrants to Northern Ireland: new opportunities or new vulnerabilities?

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Overview

- Outline of study
- How data was collected
- Defining ethnicity and poverty
- Context for migration to Northern Ireland
 - Key migration patterns
 - Employment and minority ethnic communities
 - Attitudes
- **Accessing the labour market**
- **Getting help**
 - **Community and voluntary sector**
 - **Government**
- Final thoughts

About the research

Funded by Joseph Rowntree Foundation (see <http://www.jrf.org.uk/work/workarea/poverty-and-ethnicity> for more information)

Carried out with McClure Watters

Questions:

1. How are poverty and ethnicity connected? How do other aspects of identity such as gender, age, religion, disability and health impact on poverty?
2. What are the impediments to economic and social mobility for individuals from ethnic groups?
 - What is the role of mainstream services?
 - What is the significance and role of the labour market vis-à-vis:
 - a. *Employers*
 - b. *Government and Policymakers*
 - c. *The contribution of individuals from ethnic minorities*



Data collection

Desk Based

Census;

Invest NI – RSI Data

Primary Research

- Interviews with 20 individuals from minority ethnic communities
- Focus Groups (total 25 participants);
 - a. Asian IT and Hospitality workers, Indian Restaurant
 - b. Nigerian Association, Donegal Pass Community Centre
 - c. Mix of refugees, Northern Ireland Council for Refugees and Asylum Seekers
 - d. Polish Women, Chrysalis (Women's) Centre, Craigavon
- Roundtable

'...in Poland people are more stressed out because of the job situation. Here there is a different kind of stress connected with immigration and separation and isolation. But still people are more secure economically' (Interview 19, Polish, F).



Why move? Primary reasons:

- Economic
- Study & education
- Refuge

Ethnic communities

- Protestant and Catholic communities
- Travellers
- Longer established ethnic groups
- Recent migrants
- Refugees and asylum seekers

Poverty – different but related ideas connected to low income: income poverty, deprivation, inequality and social exclusion. A fluid and relative measure with individuals moving in and out of poverty...

Ethnicity - experiences, expectations and socio-economic status; qualifications; ancestry culture (e.g. religion, customs and language), nationality and geography (Hutchinson and Smith 1996, Barnard and Turner 2011).

Shifting demography – Census 2011

4.5% of all Census respondents in NI (around 80,000), were born outside UK and the Republic of Ireland, compared to only 1.8% in 2001.

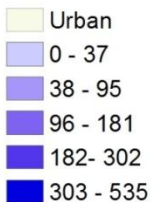
Dungannon was recorded as having the highest proportion of people born in EU accession countries (6.8%); within this district council area the Ballysaggart ward includes 825 people or 30% of the population who are EU and other migrants.

Most prevalent main language other than English was Polish (1%, 17,700)

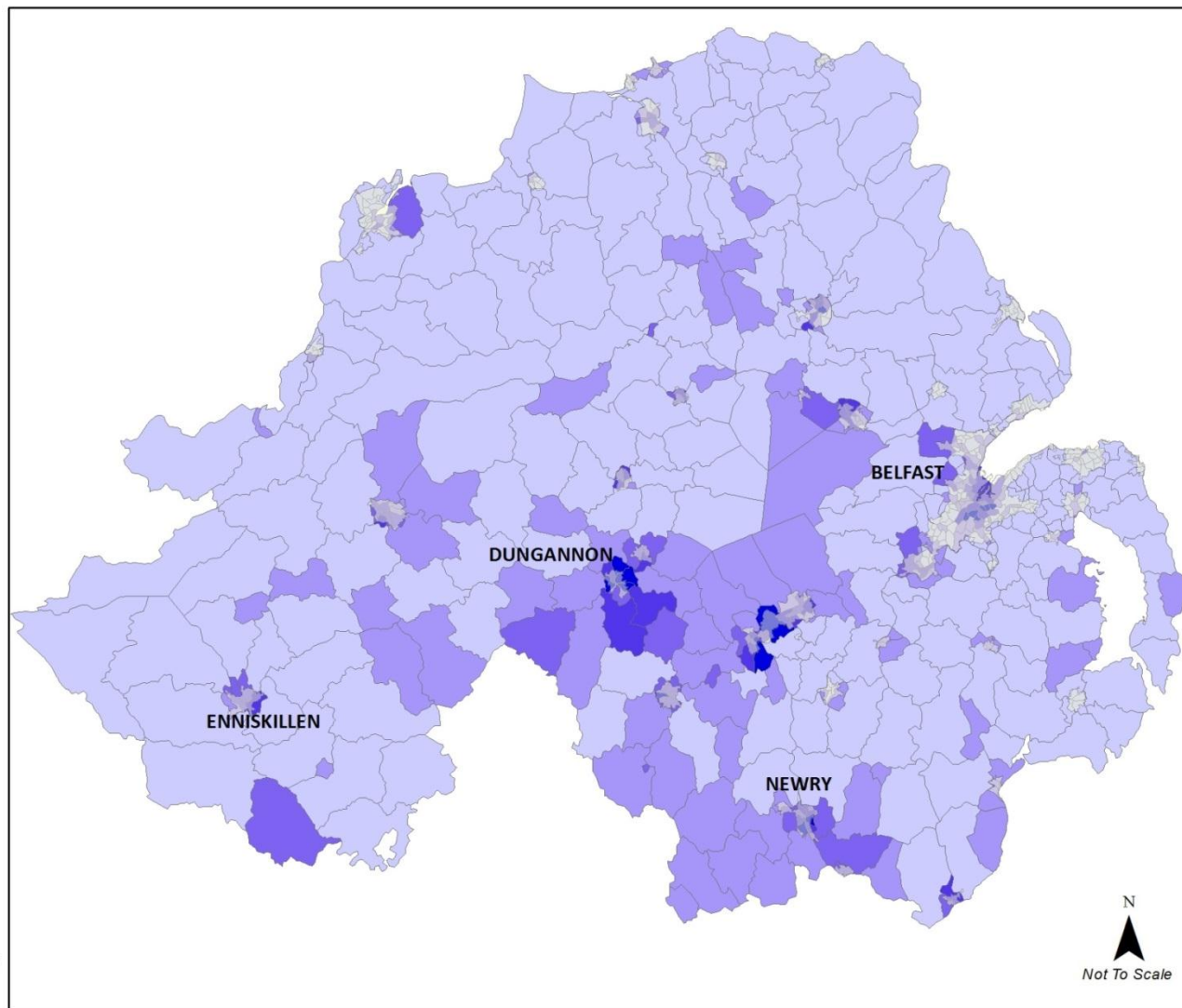
The overall figure (the stock) of A8 nationals that remain is estimated to be around 39,000 in 2009 (NIAR 2011) as compared to 700 at the last Census.

A8 Migration Northern Ireland Rural or Urban?

Legend



Population Count
Ward Level
2011 Census
KS204 - Country of Birth
EU Post 2004 (A8)
NISRA Urban Boundaries



Map created by Carey Doyle, PhD researcher, QUB

<http://www.qub.ac.uk/research-centres/TheInstituteofSpatialandEnvironmentalPlanning/PostgraduateResearch/CurrentPhDProjects/DoyleCarey/>

Economic activity

Across the UK, ethnic minority status can result in **disadvantage** in relation to recruitment, promotion, training and retention and more likelihood to be engaged in low-paid and low-status work.

Small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) (the main source of employment for migrant workers to the UK) have been shown to be more discriminatory than larger employers. [*In Northern Ireland 98% had fewer than 50 employees (ECNI, 2010)*].

Exploitation & inequalities persist in NI:
paying wages below the minimum wage,
debt bondage, retention of passports,
workplace discrimination and harassment;
failure to deliver on promised work contracts.

Labour market segmentation...intra-ethnic connections & chain migration:
Broad generalisations include Portuguese speakers and Eastern Europeans working in food processing; Chinese nationals employed in the catering industry; Filipino nurses recruited to the health sector, Eastern Europeans employed in the mushroom sector and in meat processing, and Indian graduates working for ICT businesses

Fostering good relations

Attitudes to diversity have become more negative.

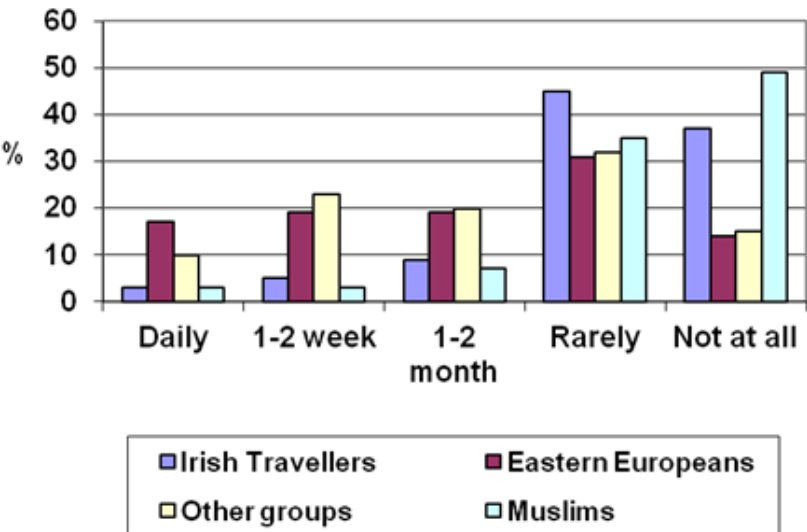
Positive relationship between people who are more accepting of minority ethnic groups and those with regular contact.

Belfast Mela 2013



HAPANI sports initiative

Figure 2: Frequency of contact (Devine, P. 2013)



A racist society?

Deep seated social
attitudes

Ignorance & lack of
interaction

'Chill' factor & subtle forms
of discrimination

Individuals versus
institutions

Political leadership

'...sometimes I go to the job centre and I have to teach them how to deal with me. The people there, I think they get the jobs through friends; I don't think they get them through skills. In Belfast sometimes you meet people and they are friendly and sometimes I would like to see an educated enemy, better than friendly, stupid... A lot of people in Belfast are not educated at all, they don't have the same experiences as immigrants' (#1, FG 15.06.13, Sudan, M).

The labour market

Access

- Formal & informal routes
- English language proficiency
- Affordable childcare

Workplace culture and progression

- Positive and negative
- Poor shifts & tasks for minority ethnic workers
- Lack of training & progression for minority ethnic workers
- Different wages/salaries

Labour market **curtailment & segmentation**
(employability schemes and importing labour)

In-work poverty

'... most organisations have huge application forms... They will ask for the qualifications, subjects and the time when you did it. This is extremely hard for people from abroad to fill in, because even if I have a similar thing the grades are not the same ...[so] I just googled everything (laughs), just as much as I can I filled in – I will put in things that I believe are the equivalent. I will say that I have what I believe is the equivalent to something and they can check if they want and if they want to refuse then that's fine'. (Interview 8, Poland, F).

Getting help

The centre here is a great place [voluntary resource centre], I remember that my English was really poor and I had a huge problem communicating with people and my children were crying in the crèche and I couldn't do any courses because my English was so poor. But still I could come and talk with the people here, leave my children in the crèche, they had their time in the crèche and I had a chance through wee steps to develop my language and then to do other courses, like computer courses. And then now I'm able to use all of these skills in my job. That's why I said I'm a really lucky person to have my job...It's very, very difficult and I think that the application forms are like huge books and really a lot of help is needed. Because sometimes we possess some skills and we don't know that they are important and so we need help with the application forms. There probably are some courses to help teach people how to do this, because that is very, very difficult (No 4, FG 20.06.13, Poland, F).



Third sector

Pathways to employment, education & training

- Homework
- Informal training
- Mentoring
- Advocacy

Safe environment

Self-belief

Identity and integration

‘They don’t get enough help at school with their English and they can’t do coursework and their parents can’t help them. We are working with the 14-16 year olds now and every year this group come parachuting in because the parents pick up this story of the good education system and they arrive here. But they are too late to achieve anything, and the firms are saying that unless you speak English you will not get a job. The demand for jobs has changed and firms can impose this rule...’ (Interview 14, support worker).

Government

- Legislation
- Political will and leadership – proactive, reactive or combination
- Strategies, policies and partnerships, e.g.
 - *Racial Equality,*
 - *NI Strategic Migration Partnership,*
 - *Together Building a United Community Strategy,*
 - *Framework for recognising overseas qualifications*

DEL service to **recognise overseas qualifications**.

Piloted in 2012 the service

Utilised 823 times

Mostly used by people of Polish origin, 148 (17.9%).

Overall 36.3% (299) of users from post-2004 A8 countries.

Otherwise most users were from Spain, 94 (11.4%), followed by Portugal, 65 (7.9%).
145 (17.6%) cases did not have the country of origin of the individual recorded.

DEL admitted inconsistencies in recording information

'I think the [professional] Society in Northern Ireland is quite closed and it is extremely difficult to fit in from the outside' (Interview 19, Poland, M).

Conclusions

- Economic mobility
 - Patchy access to the labour market
 - Underemployment due to the lack of recognition of overseas qualifications.
 - Workplace progression and pathways out of poverty affected by: English language proficiency, modes of entry into the job market, family circumstances & networks; and self-esteem and personal motivation to progress.
 - Precariousness associated with some sectors e.g. agency working, mushroom farming
- Intra-ethnic differences
- Society and attitudes
- Support structures
- Political leadership
 - Robust data & ethnic monitoring
 - Racial equality strategy
 - Legislation

“But one issue is the language barrier because they are working at the lowest of the low [jobs] and that creates a vicious circle where they are dependent on that particular employer and in that particular sector, and for many men and for many women it would be the cleaning sector. So we would see a lot of people like that – they are completely dependent and helpless.” (Interview 14, support worker).

Problems with generalisations: individuals matter

*'I used to work in the restaurant, maybe one or two splits in the day, but now I am not working as I am sick, but whenever I am not sick I have a job waiting for me in the restaurant...the boss said that when I want to come back, even for a few hours, that is ok'.
(Interview 3, Poland, F).*

'My brother and his wife both work in [the meat processing factory] and in January they applied for holidays in August because they wanted to get cheaper tickets and the manager has told them to go to HR and HR has said that they have to go back to their manager. The only response that they had once was that both family members cannot take holidays at the same time, even if they are a couple. Up to now my brother and his wife who work different shifts don't know if they can go on holidays or not'. (#1, FG 20.06.13, Poland, F).



Northern Ireland
Assembly



The Open University



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