

Original article

The perception of Polish economic immigrants in Great Britain

Katarzyna Gierczak , Anna Kotasińska* 

Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Wrocław, Poland,

e-mail: katarzyna.gierczak@uwr.edu.pl; anna.kotasinska@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Great Britain is perceived as a traditional immigrant country. In relation to Poland, the process of immigration to the British Isles – especially for economic purposes – intensified after 2004, with the accession to the European Union. The perception of immigrants in the UK began to change in the first months after the referendum on Brexit, when there was an increase in hate crimes, mainly xenophobic crimes. The article presents the subject of Polish economic immigrants in the United Kingdom. Based on their own research conducted among Poles living in Leicester, the authors describe the perception of this group, taking into account positive and negative features of Poles, stereotypes associated therewith or the problem of discrimination (including language discrimination).

KEYWORDS

Poles, Great Britain, economic immigrants, perception, stereotypes

* Corresponding author



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Introduction

The British society is a multicultural mosaic, which also includes Polish economic immigrants. However, they are not a close community, and the influx of new compatriots to the British Isles is often associated with the disapproval of people who have lived there longer. There is a conviction that the mass, post-accession migration from Poland contributed to the deterioration of the opinion on the Polish community in Great Britain. The underlying causes of this phenomenon can be seen both in the changing social, political and economic situation of the host country and in the diversification of the incoming population, including those who are seeking benefits or have a criminal record. The last of the most important events for the entire European environment was the announcement by the United Kingdom of its intention to leave the European Union. This contributed to the intensification of social unrest, including among Polish economic immigrants fearing for the future. Perhaps, these fears are not justified and Great Britain will remain faithful to the idea of creating a multicultural society, but it is reasonable to try to determine the image of Poles living and working in the British Isles, which – being the subject of research in this article – should be considered as a result of the perception by both, the Poles themselves and the British.

The aim of this article is to determine – primarily based on own research – what is the self-image of members of the Polish community living in Great Britain and how in their opinion the British perception of Poles is shaped. Almost 15 years have passed since Poland became a member of the European Union, which is why it is worth considering, whether Poles, who migrate to the British Isles for work purposes have integrated or even assimilated with the host society and whether they perceive themselves from the perspective of their fully-fledged, accepted by the rest, British society – especially in the face of Brexit.

On the basis of the outlined objective, a research question was formulated: What self-image of Polish economic immigrants dominates among Poles living in Great Britain? In order to obtain an answer to the question, the authors conducted a research using qualitative methods, including the analysis of sources and structured qualitative interviews.

1. The multicultural society of Great Britain

The term “multiculturalism” appeared in the world of science in the second half of the 20th century. However, as early as in 1915 Horace Kallen used the concept of cultural pluralism, which concerned mainly economic contacts resulting from the coexistence of different ethnic groups in one market [1, p. 19-20]. Although Great Britain is perceived in the 21st century through the prism of tolerance for otherness, yet shortly after World War II, discrimination (on grounds of sex, race, religion, age, sexual orientation, disability) was regarded as an element of British culture. This situation began to change in the late 1950s [2, p. 3]. The British colonial history and Commonwealth cooperation have led to an influx of migrant populations and the formation of a mosaic¹ of the multicultural British society. Initially, they were residents of the Commonwealth of Nations². Already before World War II, the process of the so-called chain immigration was initiated. Originally, it consisted in the settlement of British soldiers and sailors in Great Britain and bringing together families and friends after some time. In the second half of the 20th century, immigration began to increase despite the introduction of legal restrictions [3, p. 30]. The 1950s and 1960s resulted in the influx of Cypriot Turks and the Muslim population from Malaysia, Morocco, Yemen and East Africa [4, p. 79]. Immigrants settled mainly in metropolitan areas, and this situation changed with the expansion of the European Union’s borders, especially in 2004 and then in 2007 [5, p. 1]. In just 10 years (1991-2001), the population of Great Britain grew by 2.2 million, of which around 1.14 million people were born outside the UK. The accession of countries to the European structures in 2004 resulted in the inflow of another 130,000 immigrants from newly admitted states in just one year [6, p. 1], although this figure applies only to registered immigrants.

According to Jerzy Nikitorowicz, “societies are and will become increasingly multicultural” [7, p. 57]. This cultural heterogeneity means “the conscious co-existence within the same space (either in the immediate vicinity without distinction or when aspiring to occupy the same space) of two or more social groups with relatively different cultural (sometimes racial)

¹ The concept of “Cultural mosaic” was developed in the late 1960s. See: E. Możejko. *Wielka szansa czy iluzja: wielokulturowość w dobie ponowoczesności*. In: Kalaga W (ed.). *Dylematy wielokulturowości*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Universitas; 2007.

² *Commonwealth of Nations* – one of the oldest international organizations, founded in 1913. It has 54 member-states sharing the same, postcolonial British culture. See: I. Penier. *Wstęp: Wielka Brytania i Commonwealth w XX wieku*. In: Penier I (ed.). *Wielka Brytania i Wspólnota u progu XXI wieku. Przeszłość, teraźniejszość, perspektywy*. Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego; 2014.

distinctive characteristics: appearance, language, religion, value system, etc., which contribute to the mutual perception of diversity with different consequences” [8, p. 64-65].

The influx of immigrants to the UK was accompanied by the creation of a system of a strict control and relevant immigration legislation, as well as an emphasis on integration and racial equality. This directly referred to the words of Roy Hattersley, a British politician, who pointed out that “integration without control is impossible, but control without integration is a pipe dream” [5, p. 3]. However, a peaceful coexistence of British citizens and immigrant populations in a spirit of mutual tolerance and understanding was not an easy task to achieve. This is evidenced by the rivalry of politicians accompanying the elections in the 1960s and the proclamation of controversial slogans on the need for immigrants to adapt to the society and the customs prevailing therein. This situation did not change until 1981, when the British Nationality Act introducing equal rights for citizens of other colonies and people applying for admission to Great Britain, was adopted. Openness to newcomers and historical conditions allow to perceive this country in the category of a traditional immigration state accepting workers, their families and asylum seekers [5, p. 3]. According to the data collected by the Office for National Statistics – ONS, in 2017 the annual (since 2004) increase in the inflow of foreigners to Great Britain continued. While in 2016 the number of British citizens born abroad was 9.2 million, a year later it was already 9.4 million, which is a 3% increase, and the number of foreign citizens temporarily residing in Great Britain increased in 2017 by about 4% compared to the previous year – from 6 million to 6.2 million [9].

Subsequent ONS statistics indicate that the most numerous immigrant groups in 2017 in Great Britain were: Polish (1 mln), Romanian (411k), Irish (350k), Indian (346k) and Italian (297k) nationalities. The structure of the data is slightly different according to the country of birth: 922,000 persons born in Poland, 829,000 in India, 522,000 in Pakistan, 390,000 in Romania, and 390,000 in the Republic of Ireland [9]. These are countries located in different cultural circles, hence different problems may arise through their assimilation. According to Anthony Giddens, cultural assimilation is one of the forms of cultural integration and is defined as ‘the recognition of a minority group by the majority when that group adopts the values and norms of a dominant culture’ [10, p. 718].

There are four stages in the adaptation of immigrants to the host society. The first one, the least advanced, is separation, when immigrants either isolate themselves or are marginalised and isolated by the rest of the society. This may be due to the immigration policy of the country, its historical background or current events leading to prejudices. The next step is adaptation, which in the context of the immigration process can be seen as the ability to survive in a given environment on the basis of minimum capacities. This process may involve different spheres of public life, from economic (primarily labour market) to cultural, leading to social interactions with indigenous peoples. In this context, adaptation will therefore mean securing the basic needs of the immigrant population to survive in the new environment. It requires adaptation to the norms and patterns of behaviour functioning in a given society, but without giving up one’s own values and beliefs. This stage should be followed by the integration of immigrants with the host society, based on lasting relationships established in different areas of social life. What distinguishes it from the previous phase, is the fact of trying by “newcomers” to become a part of a new society. To achieve this goal, consensus and commitment of both parties (including the state) is necessary, including in the area of cultural competence acquisition and acceptance of diversity. Only the last, fourth stage concerns assimilation of individuals, although according to many researchers this integration is the most optimal level of adaptation of immigrants to living in a new environment.

Etymologically, assimilation means as much as likeness, i.e. taking over a foreign culture and identifying with the members of a new ethno-cultural group. As far as culture is concerned, Polish immigrants in Great Britain tend to seek integration rather than assimilation, still identifying themselves with the culture in which they were brought up. However, entering the host society also concerns economic, socio-political and identity issues³.

It is not easy to adapt to an initially alien society and a new culture, especially when it is characterized by mosaicism and a gradual deformation by a mass influx of representatives of different cultures. Where there is a lack of cultural competence there are prejudices or stereotypes, i.e. assessing judgements connected with one's own conviction. These can lead to discrimination and even stigmatisation. "The modern world, as a result of demographic growth, migration, development of communication and information means multiplying the presence of Others, multiplying contacts between people, and therefore inter-cultural. Hence, the attitude towards Others takes on unprecedented importance; our perception of the representatives of other nations, races and religions" [11, p. 158]. This is a multicultural picture of the world that has been accompanying Great Britain for many years, and the growing number of immigrants arriving thereto shows that the beliefs and values are still upheld.

2. Polish economic immigrants in Great Britain

Poland also became a country from which, after 2004, citizens massively emigrated to work. According to available statistics, since 2015 Poland has been the country of birth of the largest number of immigrants among those arriving in the United Kingdom, which indicates long-term migration trends, and since 2007 the Polish nationality has been the most common in the United Kingdom, just after the British one [9]. After several years, the image of the Pole-immigrant has changed, especially its perception of the multicultural British society experienced by various problems. One of them was a dispute between citizens of Great Britain, divided into supporters and opponents of the country's withdrawal from the European structures, i.e. so-called Brexit under a referendum. Its effects will mean not only economic changes in the United Kingdom, but also a reorganisation of immigration policy, which may result in the return of some Poles from emigration, although their number has been growing steadily since Poland's accession to the European structures, as shown in Figure 1. A possible return may also be the result of a change in the attitude of British people towards economic immigrants, if the forecasts of a potential recession in the British economy are fulfilled [13, p. 128].

The phenomenon of economic emigration of Poles to Great Britain intensified after 2004, when Western markets opened up to the inflow of labour from other EU countries and over 2.2 million people decided to leave for Germany, Sweden, Great Britain and Ireland [14, p. 9]. It is indicated that in fiscal year 2004/2005 62.6k Poles applied for a social security number, and a year later there were 171.4k. On the other hand, in 2004 there were 71 025 people of Polish origin registered in the British Workers Registration Scheme, and in 2005, 127 320 [15, p. 5]. According to the statistics of the Central Statistical Office concerning the number of Polish emigrants temporarily staying abroad (for more than 3 months), at the end of 2016 there were 788 thousand Poles in Great Britain [16, p. 2]. These are approximate figures and should be treated as indicative data. They also do not take into account persons who have deregistered from their permanent residence in Poland due to their British citizenship.

³ For more on this topic, see: M. Budyta-Budzyńska. *Adaptacja, integracja, asymilacja – próba ujęcia teoretycznego*. In: Budyta-Budzyńska M (ed.). *Integracja czy asymilacja? Polscy imigranci na Islandii*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar; 2011.

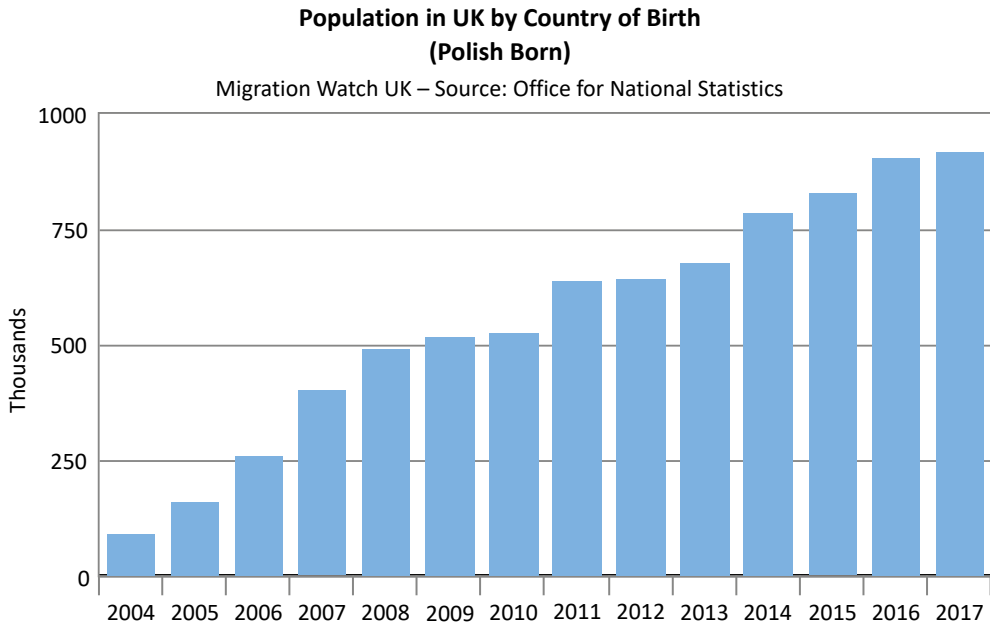


Fig. 1. Population of persons born in Poland and residing in Great Britain
Source: [12].

The Polish community residing temporarily or permanently in Great Britain is not a homogeneous entity, because it consists of people leaving Poland in different periods of time. One of the groups are post-war immigrants, who have been critical of their compatriots who have been coming to the British Isles since 2004. Those “younger” ones are divided into well-educated, entrepreneurial and self-confident, and those more distanced, less educated, undertaking small jobs, which is why they are sometimes identified with a social margin emigrating from their own country to obtain social benefits. The effect of this division is the existence of a disproportion between the strong bridging social capital of well-educated Poles who speak English freely and less significant bonding capital, which proves the weakening of ties between members of the Polish community. This is because they want to distance themselves from those worse perceived by the British Poles who came to the United Kingdom later than they did. On the other hand, their integration with the British society is deepening, which improves the image of Poles [17, p. 1].

The existence of such a division of the Polish community in Great Britain was confirmed by the research conducted on Polish emigrants in Bradford. They showed that in the opinion of respondents there are two groups of Poles – “we” and “they”. Accordingly, we can point to their opposing characteristics, such as: hard-working – lazy, speaking – not speaking English or brave – clumsy. The Poles’ own image is also influenced by the way they feel about the perception by the British. This is usually a positive impression [17, p. 5]. Although, according to the data presented by the Institute of Public Affairs, more than half of Britons believe that the influx of Poles to the British Isles has increased unemployment and reduced the level of wages, they nevertheless consider the opening of borders to members of the Polish society to be right, as it has resulted in an influx of cheap and conscientious workers [18, p. 5].

An important role in shaping the image and self-image of Poles abroad is played by heterostereotypes functioning among the British and autostereotypes reflecting the image

of themselves as part of the national identity. Stereotypes appear wherever members of a given community duplicate simplification functioning in an environment. They can therefore be regarded as a valuable judgement that is connected with one’s own conviction. The self-image of Poles living in Great Britain boils down to several basic features. These include: hard-working, diligence, responsibility, resourcefulness and independence. Moreover, they are courageous, have the ability to assimilate, but avoid their compatriots, towards whom they are less kind and distrustful [17].

However, hard-working can also be seen in a more pejorative way (despite high education and continuous improvement of qualifications), especially in the eyes of the British – as a sign of simplicity, backwardness, ability to do only physical work or simple manual work. This may be due to the limited knowledge of English by some Poles. There is also a group of Polish immigrants in the British Isles that do not want to work, but only receive social benefits, and it is this group that makes Poles gain the name of “socialists” among the British. Extremities and minorities are people with pathological behaviours, such as drunkenness and brawling associated with initiating fights [17].

This auto-stereotype is partly in line with the stereotypical image of the British people about the Polish community. Poles are perceived as hardworking and conscientious, but unqualified, although they are more appreciated and liked than immigrants from other countries. The British population even points to a certain cultural similarities between Poles and British people, which is natural if one considers the country of origin of other immigrants (such as India or Pakistan) [18].

3. The perception of Poles in the British Isles in the light of own research

3.1. Research methodology

The research was conducted from June to September 2017 in Leicester, a city in central England. As a pilot for further exploration of the subject, they took the form of a partially structured interview, which could be realized with Polish economic immigrants thanks to the use of snowball technology. The choice of the location was not accidental. Leicester is culturally diverse and, alongside Birmingham and Luton, it is one of the cities in which white, native British people are a minority in their own city. Figure 2 shows the cultural diversity of Leicester.

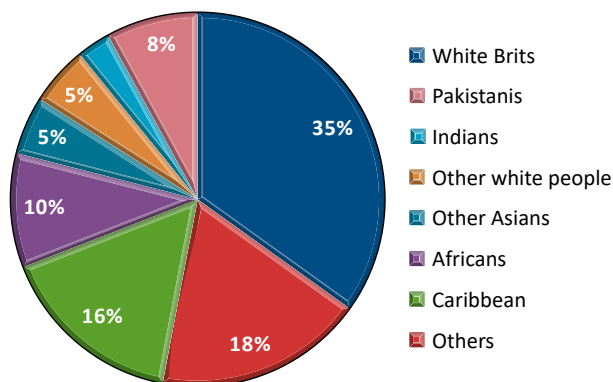


Fig. 2. Cultural diversity of Leicester
 Source: Own study based on [19].

Leicester can be described as a melting pot of cultures, composed of representatives of different nationalities, cultures and faiths. The highest percentage of the local community are white British, Pakistani and Indian people. In addition, what is important from the point of view of the conducted research, the city is also the largest Polish community in Great Britain after London, so it seems reasonable to conduct research on this part of immigrants.

Among the respondents to the qualitative interviews there were 32 Polish emigrants living permanently in the UK, including 15 women (47%) and 17 men (53%). All respondents were of working age and professionally active. The age distribution of survey participants is shown in Figure 3.

The largest group of respondents were people in three age groups, namely those aged between 26 and 30 (28%), 31 and 35 (28%) as well as 36 and 40 (28%). Representatives of these age groups constituted as much as 84% of all persons participating in the survey. An interesting sociodemographic feature of respondents is also their education. As many as 56% of respondents declared having secondary education, while 38% indicated higher education. Among the respondents there was also one person with primary education (3%) and one person with a doctorate (3%). Analysing the education declared by the respondents, it should be stated that most of them are well or very well educated people, often working in positions below their qualifications and competences. An important aspect of the analysis of the research sample is the respondents' length of stay in the UK, which is presented in Figure 4.

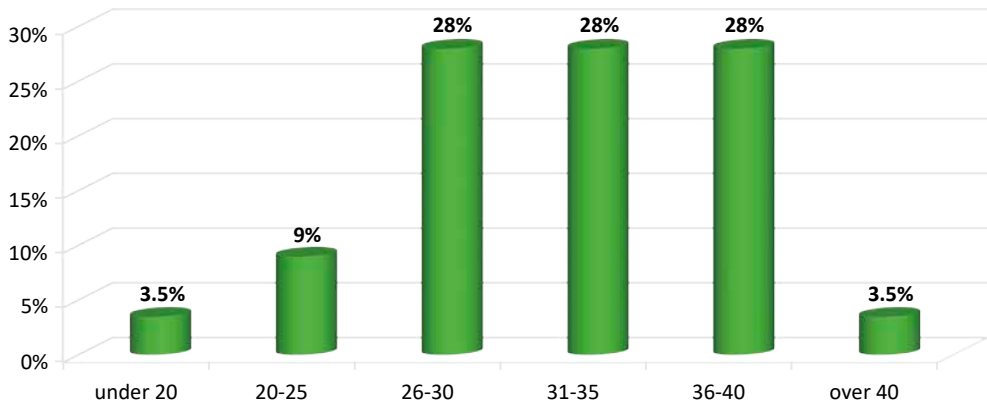


Fig. 3. Age distribution of survey participants
Source: Own study.

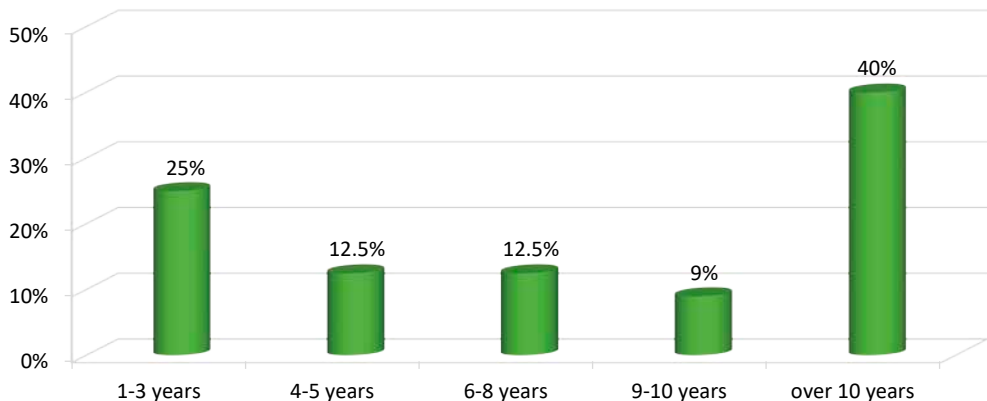


Fig. 4. Declared length of stay of respondents in the British Isles
Source: Own study.

The largest group of respondents were immigrants residing in Great Britain for over 10 years (40%), followed by 1-3 years (25%) and 4-8 years (25%). Such a high percentage of respondents with long experience in the UK will allow to try capturing the well-established image of Polish immigrants in the British Isles.

3.2. The image of Poles in the British Isles according to the respondents

The perception of Poles in Great Britain is influenced by many different factors. One of them, important in terms of the research, is the political situation and events related to Brexit. Already in the first months after the referendum on Brexit, it turned out that the primary consequences would not be political and economic changes, but changes in the issue of British social behavior. Immigrant communities living in the British Isles have often become victims of negative behaviours. Figure 5 shows the percentage increase in hate crimes in Great Britain from June to August 2016 compared to the same period in the previous year.

The data presented in Figure 5 clearly indicate an increase in hate crime both, in the week preceding the referendum and a few weeks after the results were announced relative to the same period of the previous year. This data is confirmed by numerous incidents on grounds of nationality against Poles, publicised in the Polish and British media. Examples of such behaviours include: xenophobic graffiti on the building of the Polish Social and Cultural Centre in London, laminated leaflets with xenophobic slogans calling on Poles to return to Poland, beating two Poles in Harlow because they communicated in their native language (resulting in the death of one of them) or beating a Polish woman in a London underground because of her Polish origin. Brexit therefore caused specific social and cultural threats, the victims of which are more and more often Poles.

The first question asked to the respondents concerned the perception of Polish immigrants in the British Isles and read: How do you think Poles are perceived in the British Isles? Most respondents indicated that this perception is positive (60%). Moreover, 13% of interviewees considered it very positive, neutral – 9%, negative – 12% and very negative – 6%.

The survey shows that according to the respondents the positive image of a Pole dominates in Great Britain. As many as 73% of respondents declared a very positive or positive image of Polish immigrants in Great Britain. Moreover, according to respondents, education and

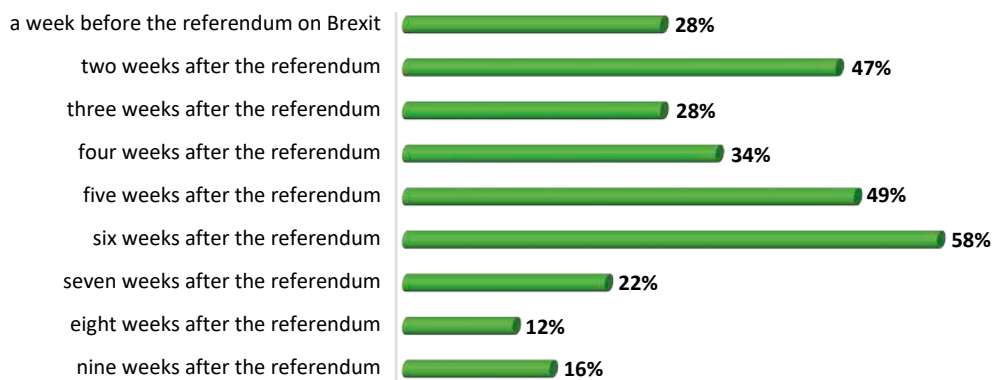


Fig. 5. Percentage increase in hate crimes in Great Britain from June to August 2016 compared to the same period in the previous year

Source: Own work on the basis of [20].

the place of residence of perceiving Britons have a significant impact on Poles' perception (city-village relation). It is worth quoting some of Polish immigrants' statements on the perception of Poles in Great Britain. Anna said:

Most opinions are positive, but it depends on who you are talking to. I noticed that when you talk to less educated people, those who are not working and who just benefit from social support, think that we are taking their jobs away from them. While, better educated people or entrepreneurs running their own business value Poles a lot and like to employ us because we are hardworking and honest. (Anna, 31)

Respondents particularly emphasize the high value of Poles on the British labour market. One of the respondents running her own employment agency indicated that employers seek to employ Poles. A significant correlation between the perception of Polish immigrants by the Brits and the level of their education and place of residence was also noticed by another respondents, who stated:

I think that our image is strongly influenced by who we ask about it. When we talk to educated and intelligent people, they think that Poles are a group that assimilates quite well, certainly quite well at work, but when I lived in a small town in the north of England, the approach to immigrants in general, including Poles, is more negative and a bit parochial. (Konrad, 28)

Summing up the statements of respondents to the survey, the image of Polish immigrants was assessed positively in the majority of cases.

When asked about the image of Polish immigrants, respondents also mentioned positive and negative features and behaviours which, according to them, are important in shaping the image of Poles living in the British Isles. The most frequently given answers are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics and behaviours of Poles influencing the image of Polish immigrants

Positive traits/behaviour	Negative traits/behaviour
Hard-working	Tendency to excessive use of alcohol
Precision	Misuse of state aid (benefits)
Creativity	Excessive directness
Resourcefulness	No willingness to learn the language
Entrepreneurial activity	No willingness to assimilate with the environment

Source: Own study.

Among the positive features influencing the creation of a positive image of Polish immigrants, respondents pointed to hard-working, precision, independence and creativity. Among the negative traits and behaviours, Polish immigrants mentioned the tendency to abuse alcohol, tendency to aggression, excessive directness, no willingness to learn English and passivity in assimilation with the environment. It is worth noting that these answers are mostly the same as the results of the research conducted by the Foundation Institute of Public Affairs on the image of Poland and Poles in the United Kingdom [17; 18]. It can therefore be concluded that this perception has not changed over the last few years.

3.3. The issue of discrimination against Polish economic immigrants

The issue of discrimination against Polish economic immigrants in the UK arose particularly in the run-up to the referendum on Brexit. Opponents of Britain's continued membership in the European Union have campaigned against the immigrant community. The next question asked to the respondents related to this issue. It read: Have you ever been the object of discrimination or witnessed discrimination against Polish immigrants in Great Britain? As many as 56% of respondents to the survey experienced or witnessed discrimination in Great Britain. Respondents pointed to various forms of discrimination they encountered, while living in the British Isles, among others:

I have heard comments about my nationality, in the street or at the shop in London. It also happened to me here, during one visit at my GP's (family doctor), when she stressed her nationality saying: "we, the British...". It ended with a complaint to the head of the surgery department, because the doctor not only verbally insulted us, but also acted to the detriment of our child. (Andrzej, 43)

Other statements confirmed such events:

Unfortunately, it has happened to me. I was coming back from shopping with a friend and we were talking in Polish on the bus. One Englishman approached to us and said that we were in England and we should be speaking English, and if not, we should go back to Poland. (Anna, 31)

It has happened to me more than once. I used to have two jobs, at the office and at a restaurant. Once, I heard very offensive words from a drunken customer, then the restaurant manager reacted quickly and forbid the customer to come to our restaurant. It happened in the office, too. One day, two other Polish women were employed and one man for a few weeks instead of calling us by our names, called us "polish", which I didn't like very much. (Marta, 36)

It only happened to me once. I was coming back from shopping with my mom and we were speaking Polish. Some Englishman came up to us and started calling us names and told us to speak English, because we were in England, not in Poland. (Tomasz, 34)

In addition to the problem of nationality discrimination, respondents also pointed to the problem of language discrimination in Great Britain. As many as 69% of respondents to the survey declared their experience of language discrimination in the workplace. Most often, the respondents pointed to the ban of communicating in their native language while performing work. Interestingly, some people participating in the survey supported such a ban, as evidenced by the statement of one of the respondents:

I have never personally experienced a ban on speaking Polish, but I will tell you something from a perspective of a person who is in a managerial position. I, as the manager of the warehouse, never forbade Poles to speak Polish, but I always asked them to deal with issues related to work in English. Because our office does not employ only Poles, the situation when a Pole enters the office and speaks Polish while others do not understand him, is weird. It's just a little awkward, that's all. So I'm in favour of speaking English at work. (Piotr, 48)

3.4. A stereotype of a Polish immigrant in Great Britain by respondents

One of the important factors influencing the image of the Polish community in Great Britain are stereotypes. Stereotypes are particularly unfair when representatives of other nations do not know the directly assessed nationalities and rely only on a prejudice based approach. When asked about the stereotype of a Polish immigrant, the respondents were very divided.

Table 2 presents positive and negative stereotypes about Polish immigrants indicated by the respondents.

Table 2. Positive and negative stereotypes about Polish immigrants indicated by respondents

Positive stereotypes	Negative stereotypes
Hard-working	Direct and impulsive
Well educated	Overuses alcohol
Resourceful	Overuses of social benefits
A good professional	Doesn't speak English
Economical	Doesn't want to assimilate with the environment
Precise	
Enterprising	

Source: Own study.

The majority of respondents directly emphasized positive stereotypes related to the presence of Poles on the British labour market, i.e. hard-working, good education, resourcefulness, economy, precision or entrepreneurship. However, the word “but” was always used in the statements of respondents, e.g. that Polish immigrants are hardworking but abuse alcohol. Among other negative stereotypes, respondents pointed to directness and impulsiveness, as well as the image of a Polish “beneficiary” who does not speak English and is closed to assimilation processes.

Conclusions

It is quite common belief that Polish immigrants negatively evaluate the community of Poles living in the British Isles, indicating, among others, problems with assimilation, lack of knowledge of English, non-compliance with the British law, what, in their opinions is the same with the Brit's opinion on the Polish community employed in Great Britain. However, the research carried out by the authors does not fully confirm such a state. It is true that Polish immigrants are able to critically evaluate the community of Poles living in the British Isles, but not all of them, only a part. The most important for them, is the length of stay in the British Isles and the education combined with the knowledge of the English language of their compatriots. Without this, assimilation with the rest of society seems to be a pipe dream, which, as Poles feel, affects the way the British perceive it. The negative features and stereotypes mentioned by the respondents referred mainly to the issues of alcohol abuse, impulsivity, isolation from the entire British society, reluctance to learn English and abuse of the social system. However, the positive opinions of respondents should also be mentioned. They assess their compatriots as hard-working, well-educated and trained, creative, entrepreneurial and precise in their work. On the other hand, according to the Poles, British opinions are divided. One of the respondents indicated that Poles are better perceived in large cities than in smaller towns. A few others stressed that they had heard the British criticise their use of the Polish language in Great Britain. However, these were incidental events. Interestingly, also among Poles one can find an opinion that Poles should assimilate and use English, especially at work.

As indicated in one of the publications, “Poles are liked by the British in personal relations and accepted as members of British society” [18, p. 5] and in the light of the research carried out, such a statement can be considered true. It turns out that creating a positive opinion of Poles by themselves is a bigger problem than gaining acceptance from the British society. In Great Britain it is divided and it will be difficult to change this tendency, as it has been conditioned by at least the last few decades of migration history, as well as by the uncertainty and fears of Polish economic immigrants that accompany this process.

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Conflict of interests

All authors declared no conflict of interests.

Author contributions

All authors contributed to the interpretation of results and writing of the paper. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Ethical statement

The research complies with all national and international ethical requirements.

ORCID

Katarzyna Gierczak  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0827-8782>

Anna Kotasińska  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1341-788X>

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Biographical note

Katarzyna Gierczak – MA, graduate of I and II degree studies in the field of national security at the General Tadeusz Kościuszko Military Academy of Land Forces in Wrocław.

Anna Kotasińska – MA, graduate of I and II degree studies in the field of national security at the General Tadeusz Kościuszko Military Academy of Land Forces in Wrocław, PhD student of III degree studies in political sciences, University of Wrocław, Faculty of Social Sciences.

Percepcja polskich imigrantów zarobkowych w Wielkiej Brytanii

STRESZCZENIE

Wielka Brytania jest postrzegana jako państwo tradycyjnie imigranckie. W odniesieniu do Polski proces imigracji na Wyspy Brytyjskie – zwłaszcza w celach zarobkowych – nasilił się po 2004 roku, wraz z akcesją do Unii Europejskiej. Postrzeganie imigrantów w Zjednoczonym Królestwie zaczęło ulegać zmianie już w pierwszych miesiącach po referendum w sprawie Brexitu, gdy odnotowano wzrost przestępstw motywowanych nienawiścią, przede wszystkim o podłożu ksenofobicznym. Artykuł prezentuje tematykę polskich imigrantów zarobkowych w Zjednoczonym Królestwie. W oparciu o badania własne, prowadzone wśród Polaków zamieszkujących Leicester, autorki opisują sposób postrzegania tej grupy, uwzględniając pozytywne i negatywne cechy Polaków, związane z nimi stereotypy czy problem dyskryminacji (między innymi językowej).

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE Polacy, Wielka Brytania, imigranci zarobkowi, percepcja, stereotypy

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