Destination Integration: Third Country Nationals in the North of England. Final Report

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Author(s)
Ahmed, Anya; Brown, Philip; Duda-Mikulin, Ewa; Martin, Philip and Scullion, Lisa.

Aims

The research was undertaken in 2014-2015 by Migration Yorkshire in partnership with Migration Works and the University of Salford as part of the Integration Up North project (IuP) funded by the European Integration Fund (EIF). The research element of the project was undertaken by the Sustainable Housing in Urban Studies Unit at the University of Salford. The aim was to fill gaps in knowledge about the experiences of Third Country Nationals (TCNs) living and working in the North of England.

Methodology

Following a review of datasets on TCNs a qualitative approach was taken, engaging with people in Yorkshire and Humber who fell into one of the following categories:

- highly skilled migrants
- family joiners
- former asylum seekers with cases handled by the government's framework for resolving outstanding applications from pre-2007.

A two-stage methodology was used. Semi-structured interviews were undertaken with 52 individuals. 34 of these participated in a second, more reflective interview. Seven participants also took part in a photo survey element, followed by a further semi-structured interview.

Key issues

- Belonging, home and integration: the research found that TCNs' experiences of settling in the UK varied depending on their route. For example highly skilled migrants were able to exercise the most autonomy, compared for instance with family joiners, who were mainly women married to British citizens and with limited control over decision-making. Overall TCNs saw the value in English language skills, and were keen to interact with people outside their own community.
- Social relations: overall TCNs saw the UK as welcoming, and were keen to integrate. The researchers found that contact with diaspora was important for some on arrival, but that

most TCNs focused on developing connections with people in the host population. Family joiners were often found to have been abused by extended family members, and there was support for them to leave that situation. Some case resolution and family joiner participants expressed a sense of loss having had to separate from family members. This was less evident for highly skilled migrants who were more likely to be able to visit their families and communicate via social media.

- Work: participants saw employment as important, and key for integration, with those working finding that it helped them develop social networks, and that employers were a good source of advice on settlement issues. Family joiners and case resolution migrants often felt they needed to improve their English language skills before being able to work. Highly skilled migrants were keen to further develop their skills and experience. Case resolution migrants had not been allowed to work on arrival, and were now hoping to return to their original careers, or move into new areas of employment. Unpaid work was seen as helpful for gaining experience, improving language skills and developing social networks.
- The experiences of women migrants: for some participants, integration was hindered by family responsibilities and traditional gender roles, however most women participants reported more freedom and equality than in their countries of origin, which tended to positively impact experiences of integration. Female family joiners tended to be particularly vulnerable, with many having been abused by family

members. Case resolution migrants needed to meet particular criteria in order to be reunited with family members still in their country of origin.

- The role of support services in integration: the researchers considered the role of services such as education, housing, health, police, social care, employment and advice in integration, and found some differences between migrant groups in terms of support accessed. For example case resolution migrants were more likely to access specialist advice services. Highly skilled migrants were less likely to access support services, using the internet to find information, and accessing healthcare services as necessary. There was a general desire for greater opportunities to improve English language skills. Those who had had contact with the police reported positively on this experience.

Conclusion

The authors found that TCNs' aspirations centred around feeling settled and independent, and finding employment. They reported that migrants' routes to the UK depended on factors such as power, wealth and education, which also shaped people's experiences of integration here. Successful integration cannot be achieved only through education and information, and isn't just concerned with language and employment. It means different things to different individuals, and involves the receiving community as well as the migrant community.

Connections and relationships are a crucial part of integration

Recommendations

The authors recommended the following:

- sufficient ESOL classes at all levels to meet demand
- paid and unpaid work opportunities to be provided
- continued funding for specialist services, and increased capacity where needed
- effective strategies to rehouse family joiners to avoid domestic abuse, segregation and isolation
- use of a range of media networks to spread information
- develop digital skills among TCNs
- further research to be conducted to understand the insights of key people involved in migrants' lives such as employers and neighbours
- ensure an understanding of people's integration aspirations, and work within these.

Migrant Group
Asylum seekers
Non-EU migrants
Topic
Access to employment
Community and society
ESOL
Family migrants
Integration
Migrant workers

Migration
Women
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Email
shusu@salford.ac.uk
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