

[Joanna Marczak](#)

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# **Socioeconomic characteristics of Polish migrants in the UK by parity and gender**

Joanna Marczak<sup>1</sup>

The wave of migration from Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) following the enlargement of the European Union (EU) in 2004 was claimed to have created the largest inflow of immigrants in the history of the UK (Salt & Rees, 2006). Poles are the largest group of Eastern Europeans arriving in the UK and not surprisingly their presence has been widely debated by British media, the wider community and academia. The fact that this subject grew to be the focus of my interest is primarily because research concentrates often on Polish migrants approaching them as a group of young and childless people or the experiences of Polish families. The scholarly literature examining the socioeconomic characteristics of migrants depending on parity on a macro level is still limited. There have been a number of studies on migrants' economic activity, occupation, income, or social benefits; they, nonetheless, often portray Poles in the UK as a homogenous group (Drinkwater, Eade, & Garapich, 2009; Osipovic, 2010). We do not yet know whether migrants' characteristics such as age, area of residence, education, occupation, economic activity, income, housing and benefit uptake differ depending on the number of dependent children they have. Although childless people have been the biggest group of Polish migrants to the UK, parents have assumed a more prominent place within the Polish community since 2004 as not only births to Polish mothers increased drastically, in 2008 they constituted 2.3 % of all births in the UK up from 0.5 % in 2005 (ONS, 2009c) but also many parents came with children to the UK in recent years (White, 2010), therefore, this paper aims to present a holistic portrait of migrants' characteristics depending on parity and based on available statistical data.

## **Methodology**

Obtaining reliable statistics about migration and migrants is challenging since there is little control of the flows of migrants within the EU. The Labour Force Survey (LFS) is the largest regular household survey in the UK which aims to obtain data on the employment market and related issues and it is intended to be representative of the whole population. The LFS sheds light on the socioeconomic characteristics of Polish migrants as it contains a large enough migrant population for analyses and it has a wider range of variables than other data sources such as: the Census, birth registry data or Workers Registration Scheme. The LFS contains variables vital for describing Polish migrants, also parents, including: nationality, age, the number and ages of children, employment status, occupation, wages, social benefits and housing tenure. Since the accuracy of the analysis depends on whether the LFS includes enough Polish immigrants with children, I have combined samples from several years to obtain sufficient observations; the datasets cover years from 2006 to 2009. In the LFS, each respondent is interviewed in five successive quarters, which means that there is 80% overlap in the samples for each successive quarter. In order to obtain a sample of single observations, I have combined wave one in each quarter in one year and finally two successive years have been merged. I have made datasets with years 2006-2007 and 2008-2009. I present analyses of these in order to observe if there are any fluctuations in migrants' characteristics over time.

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<sup>1</sup> Joanna Marczak, PhD candidate at London School of Economics and Political Science, Department of Social Policy. Email: j.marczak@lse.ac.uk

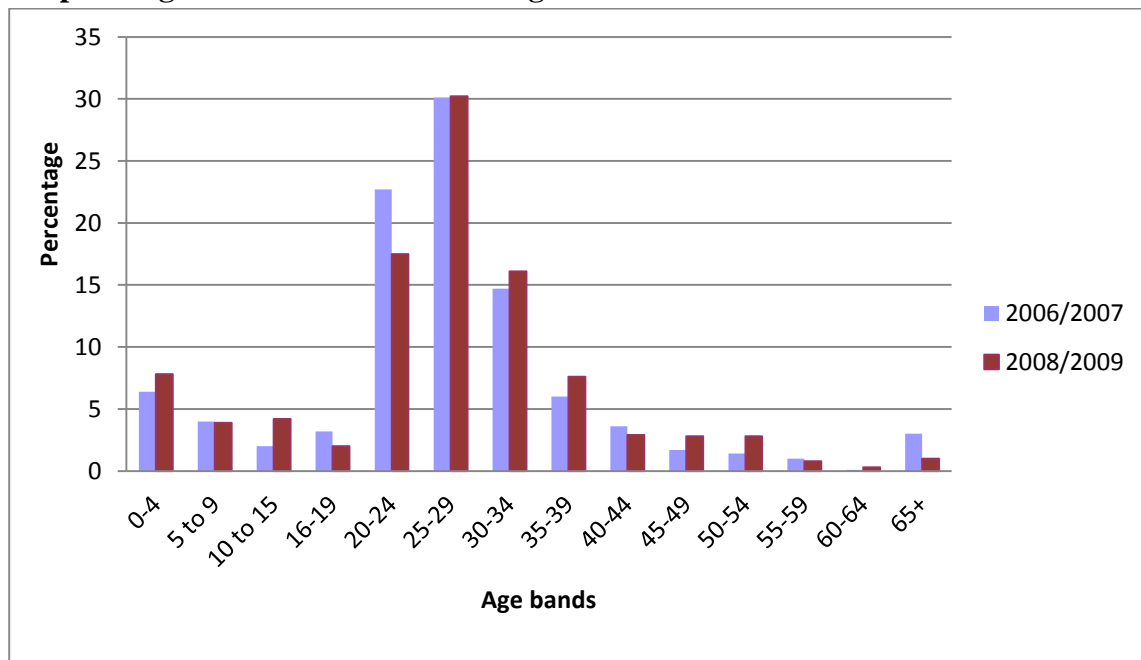
I aim at determining on a macro level what characterizes Polish childless people and parents in the UK to identify if the progression from parity zero to one and from parity one to two is accompanied by any differences in those characteristics. I included childless people and parents with one and two children in my investigation to establish whether there are similarities and/or dissimilarities with regards to age, area of residence, education, employment, occupation, income, housing tenure and uptake of social benefits between these groups of people. There were only 3 fathers and 5 mothers in 2006/07 and 11 fathers and 12 mothers in 2008/09 datasets with three or more children and due to small numbers I excluded them from this study.

For the purposes of this study, the term ‘childless’ is used to cover persons aged 16 and over who do not have dependent children under the age of 16, whereas the term ‘child’ refers to persons younger than 16 years old. There is no clear-cut definition of a child, mainly because it is impossible to select a definitive factor to characterise the transition to adulthood. The choice to set the upper age limit of a child as 16 is dictated by the fact that most variables in the LFS that relate to employment, income or benefits apply to individuals aged 16 and over, hence the decision to set the boundary between a child and an adult as 16.

## Age

Several researchers have reported that Polish migrants arriving to the UK have a young age structure: in the LFS the majority of migrants were aged 20-34 (see Graph 1 below).

**Graph 1. Age distribution of Polish migrants to the UK.**



Pooled total of surveyed persons, weighted.

Source: LFS 2006-2009

The young age structure of Polish migrants implies that they are at a stage of their lives when they are most likely to form relationships and to have offspring which can be significant for the destination country as they will require maternity services, nurseries and schools (Green

et al., 2008). Polish parents as well as childless people are young (see Table 1); so they may well intend to have (more) children. Trevena (2009), however, noted that parents may want to go back to Poland to bring up children there rather than staying in the UK permanently. The decision to return becomes complicated for parents as they need to consider their children's needs, schooling, language skills and parents are often faced with dilemmas of what is best for their offspring (White, 2009).

**Table 1. Mean age (years) of Polish migrants by fertility, 2006-9.**

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Childless</b>	<b>1 child</b>	<b>2 or more children</b>
<b>2006-2007</b>	30,8	30,5	30.4	31,6
<b>2008-2009</b>	31,2	30,3	30.2	33,1

Pooled total of surveyed persons aged 16 and over, weighted.

*Source: LFS 2006-9.*

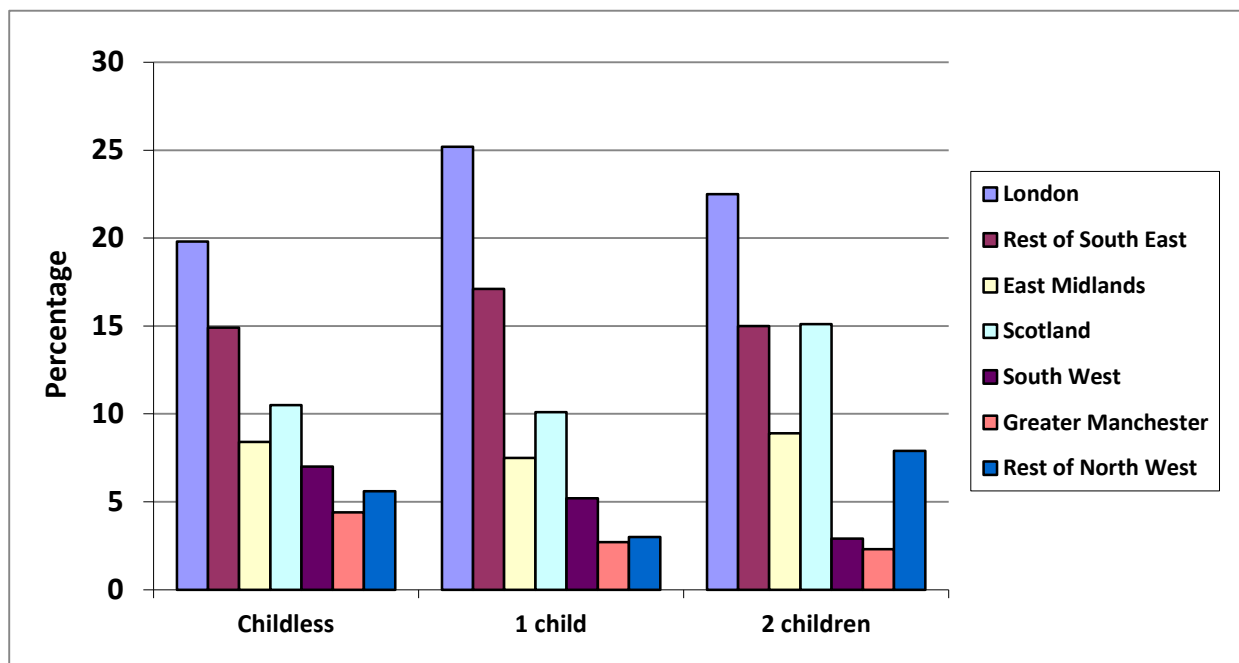
### Area of residence

Grabowska-Lusinska et al. (2008) have claimed that the post accession migration is more spread in different areas of the UK, while before 2004 the vast majority of Poles lived in London, and 'such a wide geographical dispersion of migrants of one single nationality is a new phenomenon in modern British history' (Trevena, 2009 p.14). The numbers of Polish migrants in London<sup>2</sup> have declined between 2006 and 2009 in the LFS, London, nonetheless, still remains the biggest agglomeration of Polish people. Parents more often lived in London than childless people (see Graph 2), and the trend is the same for 2006/07 and 2008/09. The last finding is unanticipated as among the native population in the UK parents are reported to live less often in London area than childless people as parenthood is often followed by a search for more living space which is easier to attain outside of London (Sear, 2010). More research is needed to establish reasons behind the selection process of the area of residence among Polish parents.

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<sup>2</sup> By London I refer to Inner and Outer London combined throughout. Inner London in the LFS includes: Camden, City of London, Hammersmith and Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea, Wandsworth, Westminster, Hackney, Haringey, Islington, Lambeth, Newham, Southwark, Lewisham, Tower Hamlets. Outer London: Barking and Dagenham, Bexley, Enfield, Greenwich, Havering, Redbridge, Waltham Forest, Bromley, Croydon, Kingston upon Thames, Merton, Sutton, Barnet, Brent, Ealing, Harrow, Hillingdon, Hounslow, Richmond upon Thames

**Graph 2. Region of usual residence for Polish migrants and number of dependent children.**



Pooled total of surveyed persons 16 and over, weighted.

Source: LFS 2008/09

## Education

With regards to education several authors have pointed out that there is a link between educational attainment of Polish women and fertility, namely females with higher education tend to have fewer children (Galezewska, 2009; Van Bavel & Rozanska, 2009). Galezewska (2009) found that women in Poland with tertiary education have lower propensity to have more than one child compared to those with secondary and primary education while the educational attainment of men does not have any impact on the number of children they have. It is not the level of education per se, however, that has an impact on fertility but the fact that better educated women tend to have jobs with higher wages and better prospects at establishing careers over time. The time off taken to look after a baby can be translated not only into lost immediate wages, but also into lost career prospects and promotion opportunities, and these are more severe in professional and skilled jobs that are often held by people with more education. Both short term costs of staying at home with a small child and the long term opportunity costs, therefore, are higher for women with more years of schooling (and higher incomes) even though these costs can be mitigated by purchasing of non-family childcare (Kravdal & Rindfuss, 2008) or men's involvement in parental care (Olah, 2003). Polish migrants in the UK, nevertheless, rarely have jobs that reflect their educational attainment and infrequently occupy skilled and professional positions (see Graph 3 and Table 5) which would lead to higher wages and better career prospects. One can argue, therefore, that the educational achievement of Polish migrants will have little impact on their childbearing. On the other hand, people with higher education may have different career aspirations than those with fewer years of schooling. Even if they perform jobs that are below their qualifications they may well plan to eventually enter professions for which they are

qualified. Their professional plans, in turn, may create a tension between the time and resources that both investing in one's career and childbearing require.

Several researchers have suggested that people with tertiary education are overrepresented in the post-accession migration to the UK compared with the population in Poland; Polish migrants were also found to have higher education levels compared to other European and English speaking migrants (Drinkwater, et al., 2009), and Polish pre-accession migrants (Fihel, Kaczmarczyk, Mackiewicz-Lyziak, & Okólski, 2009).

One has to be cautious, nonetheless, about figures on education of Polish migrants as definitive data on Polish migrants' educational attainment is not available. I have attempted to analyse educational status of Polish migrants based on the UK LFS but there are problems with the data. The LFS asks several questions about educational level of respondents, it has a variable on highest qualifications held and on type of qualifications held. Most migrants, however, have educational qualifications from Poland which differ from those in the UK and, despite attempts to harmonise information across EU countries, questions on education in the UK LFS reflect the British system and migrants' qualifications are often classified as 'other' and no further information is available. There is a question about the age at which full time education was completed and 97% and 95% of adult Polish migrants in 2008/09 and 2006/07 respectively gave responses to this question. This variable refers to continuous full time education<sup>3</sup>, it excludes people who completed their education part time, and can lower the level of qualifications held by migrants as part time studies are very popular in Poland. For example, in academic years 2007/2008 and 2009/2010 there were slightly more graduates from part time programmes than from full time courses in Poland (see Table 2). The age at which one completed full time schooling, therefore, gives only an indication of the educational level achieved.

**Table 2. Graduates of higher education institutions in Poland in academic years 2007/8 and 2008/09 (in thousands).**

	<b>2007/2008</b>	<b>2008/2009</b>
Full time programmes	188	202
Part time programmes	232	237

*Source: CSO 2010.*

Other researchers who analyzed the education of Polish immigrants found that they have on average just over 13 years of full time schooling and an average age when leaving full time school was 20 (Drinkwater, et al., 2009). We find similar results in our analyses of the LFS data. For 2008/09 the average age among Polish migrants when completed full time schooling was 20,3 years; 20,08 for men and 20,5 for women (see Graph 2). The latter finding is in contrast with study by Kępińska (2007) who reported based on Polish LFS 2003-2007 that Polish female emigrants tend to be better educated than men. The author examined educational status of migrants from Poland regardless of the country of destination and there could well be a selection process with regards to the destination country by educational level.

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<sup>3</sup> Education refers to education without a break; however, holiday jobs do not count as a break provided that the person intended to complete the course. A gap of up to a year between going to school and going to college or university does not count as a break; neither does National Service between school or college.

In the UK LFS the average age of completing full time education for parents was 20, similar for both fathers (20,1) and mothers (20,7) and similar to childless people. The 2006/07 LFS data reveals similar results, the average age at finishing full time education was just over 20, alike for all migrants regardless of sex and number of children in the family. Our study shows that Polish immigrants have about 13 years of full time schooling, which transfers into completed upper secondary education. The results also illustrate that Polish migrants in the UK have similar level of schooling regardless of gender and the number of dependent children which indicates that the educational attainment of migrants, neither male nor female, does not appear to impact their fertility.

## Economic activity

The literature on low fertility implies that factors such as employment instability, high unemployment rates and low incomes contribute to low childbearing in Poland (Kotowska, Jóźwiak, Matysiak, & Baranowska, 2008). Several studies (Billari, Philipov, & Testa, 2009; Mynarska, 2009) have also noted that economic considerations have higher importance with regards to the progression to higher parities than to the first birth. If one assumes that only economic situation is involved in decline in fertility among Polish people in Poland one could presume that high employment rates and higher income among Polish migrants in the UK should lead to higher fertility, in particular to more two child families. If other things, such as social norms about the number of children or social pressure to have a certain number of offspring are also involved, then one would not expect such a clear cut pattern.

Employment rates among Polish migrants are high, higher than the average employment rates for UK born citizens and among the highest of all migrant groups (Drinkwater, et al., 2009; Pollard, Latorre, & Sriskandarajah, 2008). This is visible in the LFS data, however, while employment does not vary among men regardless whether they have children or not, women's employment rates differ depending on the number of children they have. In 2008/2009 over 90% of men and 86% of women without dependent children were in employment; unemployment and economic inactivity were rare among this group of people. The situation changes drastically for women when they become mothers, in 2008/09 only 66,6% of women with one child were working, while the employment rate for fathers with one child was much higher at 88,5%; so there was a substantial drop in mother's employment associated with child but not for fathers. The employment rates for women with two children are even lower than for those with one child; in 2008/09 only 50,9% of mothers were in employment compared to 97,1% of fathers with two dependent children. Low levels of employment among mothers result mainly from economic inactivity, whereas unemployment rates among them are low. We observe an increase in the employment rates for all mothers between 2006/07 and 2008/09 and a decrease in economic inactivity (see Table 3). One of the explanations could be the financial crisis which, even if it did not have a substantial impact on unemployment rates which remained high for fathers, might have had an impact on men's employment security. The crisis could have created the need for women to seek work not only to contribute to the household budget but as a household strategy to increase financial security of the family in case one person lost their job. The employment status of men in 2006/07 and 2008/09 datasets remained similar with the vast majority in employment regardless of the presence and number of children (see Table 3).

**Table 3. Economic activity (reported), sex and number of dependent children (in percentages).**

<b>Men</b>				
	Total	In employment	ILO unemployed	Inactive
Childless	100 (100)	91,2 (88,1)	3,9 (2,7)	5 (9,2)
One child	100 (100)	88,5 (91,2)	4,9 (1,4)	6,6 (7,3)
Two children	100 (100)	97,1 (96,1)	1,5 (3,9)	1,4 (0)
<b>Women</b>				
	Total	In employment	ILO unemployed	Inactive
Childless	100 (100)	86 (84,7)	3 (3,5)	11 (11,8)
One child	100 (100)	66,6 (44,7)	4,3 (9,4)	29,1 (45,9)
Two children	100 (100)	50,9 (40,7)	2,5 (10,9)	46,6 (48,4)

Pooled total of persons aged 16-69, weighted.

In brackets data for 2006/07

Source: LFS 2006-2009.

The presence of children under the age of two has a further negative impact on mothers' economic activity, but not on fathers'. While the employment rate for fathers of small children is higher than for those of older children the opposite is true for mothers and women's employment rates were lower when they had a child under the age of two compared to those women with an older child in both 2006/07 and 2008/09 datasets (see Table 4).



**Table 4. Economic activity (reported) of parents, sex and child's age (in percentages).**

Number of dependent children	Men				
	Child's age	Total	In employment	ILO Unemployed	Inactive
One child	Under 2	100 (100)	96,4 (95,3)	2 (0)	1,6 (4,7)
	Age=>2 and <16	100 (100)	82,8 (89,7)	7 (2)	10,2 (8,3)
Two children	Under 2	100 (100)	100 (100)	0 (0)	0 (0)
	Age=>2 and <16	100 (100)	95,7 (96,3)	2,3 (3,7)	2 (0)
Number of dependent children	Women				
	Child's age	Total	In employment	ILO Unemployed	Inactive
One child	Under 2	100 (100)	57,3 (27,5)	2,8 (10,7)	39,9 (61,8)
	Age=>2 and <16	100 (100)	72,5 (52,4)	5,2 (8,8)	22,3 (38,8)
Two children	Under 2	100 (100)	67 (0)	0 (0)	33 (100)
	Age=>2 and <16	100 (100)	49,4 (48,6)	1,7 (8,1)	48,9 (43,3)

Pooled total of surveyed persons aged 16 and over, weighted.

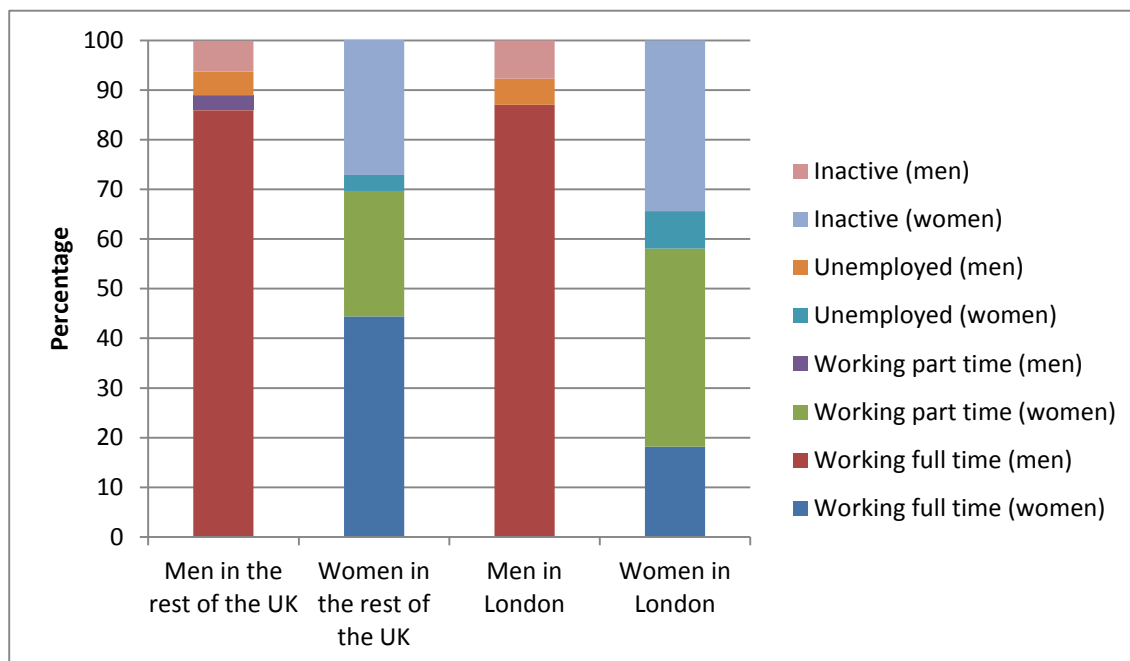
In brackets data for 2006/07.

Source: LFS 2006-2009.

A considerable percentage of women with children work part time while men tend to work full time whether they have children or not. Only 37,6% of all women with one child worked full time while 29% were employed part time (including economically inactive and unemployed). At the same time as many as 88,5% of all fathers worked full time (including inactive and unemployed).

London remains the biggest agglomeration of Polish migrants and we found differences in employment patterns between London and the rest of the UK, mothers in London not only worked less often than mothers in the rest of the country but when they had a job it was more often on a part time basis than elsewhere. At the same time most men were in full time employment regardless of their region of residence (see Graph 3).

**Graph 3. Employment patterns of parents with one child in London and the rest of the UK by sex.**



Pooled total of survey persons aged 16-69.  
The rest of the UK excludes Inner and Outer London.

Source: LFS 2008/09.

One of the causes of the higher percentage of women in London being economically inactive and working part time could be childcare expenses. London has the highest childcare costs in the UK (Daycare Trust, 2010a), while the wages of migrant mothers in London are only slightly higher than wages of mothers in the rest of the UK (see section on income). Mothers may be choosing to work part-time in order to be able to collect children from school or pre-school as part time pre-school and school hours hinder possibilities for full time work and increasing working hours may bring little financial reward if the extra income is spent on before and after school childcare.

Domestic commitments preventing full time work was the main reason (66%) for part time work among mothers with one child who did not want a full time job in 2008/09 while 20% said that they wanted to spend more time with their family, while the opposite was true for mothers with two dependent children. The vast majority of females with two offspring (66,5%) wanted to spend more time with their families while only 9,8% said that domestic commitments prevent them from working full time.

There are few women who said that insufficient childcare facilities are stopping them from taking up full time employment. This depends, however, on what individuals believe they are entitled to; in the UK only children aged three and four are entitled to 15 hours of free nursery education for 38 weeks of the year (Directgov, 2011). Unlike in the UK children over 3 years old in Poland are not guaranteed free pre-school education and parents can count on free education only when children enter reception at the age of six. Places in both pre-school and nurseries are also very limited in Poland, in 2010 there were enough pre-school places for 40% of children aged 3-6 and mere 2% of children below the age of 3 could count on a place in a nursery (Dziennik Gazeta Prawna, 2010). Possibly migrant women do not think that free

pre-school facilities ought to be provided as a basic right they are entitled to. There is a matter of costs of childcare too, even if childcare is available, the costs can make (full time) work not worthwhile especially if it is low paid since the economic benefits of working at all or working longer hours are outweighed by the (increased) expenditure on childcare.

As discussed previously, the vast majority of economically inactive Polish parents are mothers. Survey data show that the most common reason given by Polish migrant women for not looking for work in the 4 weeks preceding the interview was looking after family/home, in 2008/09 this was the case with as many as 88, 2% of inactive mothers with one child and 95% of those with two children. Few fathers remained economically inactive and those who did were twice as likely to report that their inactivity was due to undertaking education than due to looking after family/home. This further highlights that family responsibilities impact mothers' employment status to a far greater extent than fathers'; it also indicates that men's main responsibility remains that of providing financially for the family.

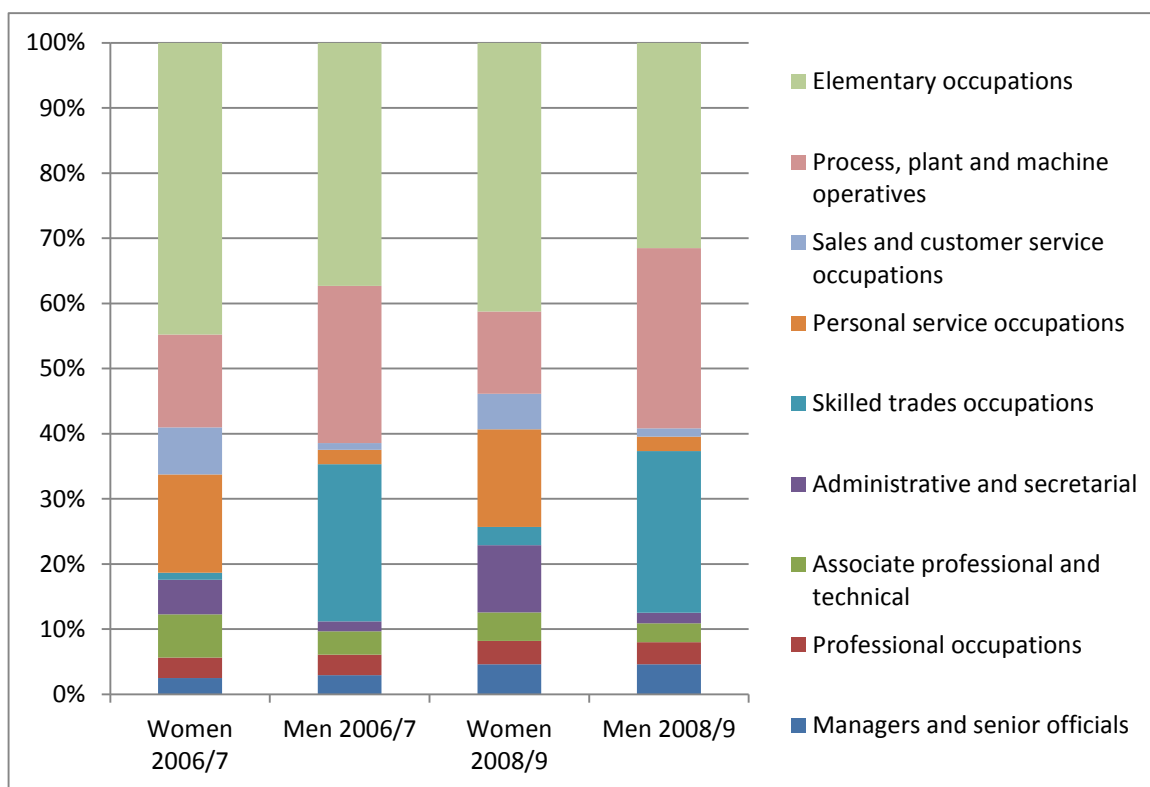
As we have demonstrated mothers are more often economically inactive and employed part time compared to childless women while fathers' employment rates and patterns are similar to those of childless men. Furthermore, since women with two children are far less likely to work than those with one child it remains uncertain if mothers of singletons anticipate further difficulties in entering/remaining in employment if they decide to have another child and if their and their partner's intention to have another baby is influenced by this. On the other hand it has been argued that full time employment has been historically 'forced' on women living in Poland (Einhorn, 1993), part time options have simply not been available, Plomien (2009) reported that in 2007 only 9% of women and 3,3% of men in Poland worked part time while exit from employment may not be an option for most mothers as one income is not enough to survive in Poland (Pascall & Kwak, 2005; World Bank, 2004). The UK, on the other hand, is based on a male breadwinner and female part time carer model (P. Davies, Freedland, & Sciarra, 2004) and short part time working hours have historically been popular among British mothers (Lyonette, Baldauf, & Behle, 2010). Migrant women, consequently, may well appreciate moving to a welfare state based on a breadwinner model and the possibilities of working part time or not at all and being able to spend more time with their families and children (Ackers, 1998; Ryan, Sales, Tilki, & Siara, 2009). Since migrants often occupy low skilled jobs regardless of their level of education (see Graph 3 and Table 5) the loss of career prospects/promotions due to economic inactivity or part time employment is lower for migrant females compared to both the native population in the UK and women in Poland. This may further act as an encouragement for migrant mothers to forego (full time) employment. Some female migrants, however, may well want to work (full time) but may not be able to do so faced with costly formal childcare in the UK, low incomes and lack of informal childcare (Ackers, 1998). Since most fathers with one child work full time (88,5%) compared to a minority of mothers (38%) and fathers receive considerably higher weekly wages than mothers (see section on income), the vast majority of men are the main breadwinners in Polish families in the UK. Working long hours and being the main breadwinner can be a source of stress and pressure while preventing fathers from greater involvement in family issues and care (Kilkey, Perrons, & Plomien, 2010). On the other hand good father has historically been defined as the main, if not the only breadwinner in many societies and it has been illustrated that paid work has been the main component of both fatherhood and masculinity (Ruddick, 1997) in the same way as caretaking and nurturing is tied to mothering and femininity (Dowd, 2000). Being the breadwinner, therefore, if achieved with success and if supported by the dominant ideology of masculinity and social norms may contribute to men's sense of pride and satisfaction if they feel that they have succeeded in fulfilling their role as a good father.

## Occupation

Occupation is linked to the level of wages and unskilled jobs often bring lower income than skilled professions while financial resources are important factors in fertility, especially for progression beyond the first birth (Billari, et al., 2009), thus jobs that lead to low income can have a negative impact on the number of children that people have. Migrants in unskilled jobs in the UK can, however, earn more than those working in skilled professions in Poland. On the other hand migrants who work in jobs that are below their skills' level may aim at improving their situation. The time and resources needed to attain aspired jobs can compete with the time and resources required to invest in one's family. The requirements to achieve one's career goals can, therefore, disrupt one's childbearing plans, especially for migrants who, for a variety of reasons, face more difficulties in attaining good jobs than natives. On the other hand, having children can hinder migrants' abilities to invest time and resources in bettering their professional positions and one could expect childless people to be in a better occupational and professional situation.

To see how recent Polish migrants have fared in terms of their occupation Graph 4 reports percentage of migrants in different occupational groups for main jobs for men and women in 2006/07 and 2008/09. I focus on the main job in my analysis as the LFS suggests that most migrants did not have a second job in the reference week, only 2,6% of Polish respondents in 2008/09 and 2,3% in 2006/07 reported having a second job. The vast majority of Polish migrants occupied low skilled jobs while the percentage in managerial or professional occupations was small, additionally, there has been little improvement in Polish migrants' occupations between 2006 and 2009. This supports findings of other researchers, for example Drinkwater et al.(2009) noted that about 70% of Polish migrants in Britain were employed in low skilled jobs.

**Graph 4. Major occupation group (main job) and sex 2006-2009.**



Pooled total of surveyed persons aged 16 and over, weighted.

Source: LFS 2006-2009.

There are, however, little differences in professions between people who have dependent children and those who have not. There are some differences in occupational groups between men and women, nonetheless, both sexes remain in relatively low skilled jobs, and the occupation of Polish migrants is unrelated to the presence of dependent children in the family (see Table 5).

What we do not know from the LFS is what migrants did before arrival in the UK, and how their employment position changed following migration. The lack of any change in terms of occupation structure between 2006-09 could be due to the fact that migrants are satisfied with the jobs they have; or, they may be planning to go back to Poland soon and they do not want to invest their time to look for a better job. Alternatively, they may plan to improve their employment positions and change their occupations and if so the so far unanswered question is whether these plans influence migrants' intentions for (more) children or are influenced by the number of children they have.

**Table 5. Major occupation group (main job), number of dependent children and sex (in percentages).**

	Men			Women		
	Childless	One child	Two children	Childless	One child	Two children
Managers and senior officials	4,6	5	5	5,5	0	9
Professional occupations	3,1	4,9	1,8	3	5,4	4,2
Associate Professional and Technical	2,7	4	0	4,5	5,6	0
Administrative and Secretarial	1,7	2,2	0	9	14,3	8,3
Skilled Trades Occupations	23,1	28	31,5	2,5	2,9	4,7
Personal Service Occupations	2,2	2,3	1,9	14,9	12,4	24,2
Sales and Customer Service	1,4	1,9	0	6,3	2,4	7,2
Process, Plant and Machine Operatives	29,2	24,7	22,3	14,9	7,7	6,8
Elementary Occupations	32	27,1	37,4	39,5	49,3	35,5
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Pooled total of surveyed persons aged 16-69, weighted.

Source: LFS 2008/09.

## Income

Migration is undertaken often in the light of improving one's economic situation and standard of living, though the costs of living in the UK are obviously higher than in Poland so it is hard to compare British and Polish wages. The Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) conversion rate gives an indication of what levels of income in different countries are needed to purchase the same volume of goods and services. According to the European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) in 2008 the average gross monthly salary in Poland<sup>4</sup> was 2264 PLN, at the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) implied PPP conversion rate from 2008 it was equal to £773. Based on PPP the average gross monthly salary of Polish migrants in the UK is, consequently, slightly higher than income of Polish people in Poland (see Table 6 and Table 7). The income situation of immigrants is, however, a peculiar one as migrants tend to refer to two points of reference with regards to their wages that are anchored in both origin and destination countries. The perceived financial situation of migrants vastly depends on who they compare themselves with, other people living in the UK or people in Poland which is not a part of this paper and will be further investigated in qualitative part of my research.

<sup>4</sup> Own calculations based on SILC 2008, the average salary in Poland was 599 Euros (although there are slight variations in income depending on sex and number of children) which at the exchange rate used in SILC, was equivalent to 2264PLN.

Polish migrants in the UK have been reported to receive low wages relative to other migrant groups and to natives (Drinkwater, et al., 2009) and their low income is also reflected in our data (see Table 6 and Table 7).

**Table 6. Gross weekly pay in main job, number of dependent children and sex (in percentages).**

Amount in £	Men			Women		
	Childless	One child	Two children	Childless	One child	Two children
0-99	1,3 (2,6)	0 (0)	0 (5,3)	4,8 (4,7)	11,7 (12,1)	21,2 (37,9)
100-199	7,1 (6)	2,6 (12,8)	3,8 (2,8)	17,6 (17,3)	28,2 (24)	28,4 (15,5)
200-299	40,4 (52,4)	35,1 (24,9)	35,9 (36,1)	52,3 (54,4)	40,5 (48,2)	43,7 (10,3)
300-399	31,1 (19,7)	36,6 (45,7)	25,5 (33,4)	19,4 (17)	15,7 (6)	3 (9)
400-499	13,7 (11,7)	12,8 (14,6)	15,9 (3,8)	3,5 (5,1)	1,6 (4,2)	0 (17,9)
500+	6,4 (7,6)	12,9 (2)	18,9 (18,6)	2,4 (1,5)	2,3 (5,5)	3,7 (9,4)
Total	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)

Pooled total of surveyed persons in employment 16 and over; weighted.  
In brackets data for 2006/07.

*Source: LFS 2006-2009.*

Women in both 2006/07 and 2008/09 datasets earned less than men whether they had children or not (see Table 7 and Table 8). Mothers in the two datasets were worst off regarding weekly earnings compared to both men and childless women, while the opposite was true for fathers but only in the latter years. In 2008/09 LFS mothers of one child received on average £100 less than fathers. In comparison weekly income of childless women was by £63 lower than the wage for childless men, however, it was higher than for mothers by £33 (see Table 7).

**Table 7. The average gross weekly pay in main job, number of dependent children and sex.**

The average weekly amount in £	Men				Women			
	Total	Childless	One child	Two children	Total	Childless	One child	Two children
2008/09	349	319	354	373	226	256	223	199
2006/07	319	309	305	343	257	255	233	283 (median 120)

Pooled total of surveyed persons in employment 16 and over; weighted.

Source: LFS 2006-2009.

Lower overall earnings for mothers are caused by reduced working hours among them, our data indicates that fathers work slightly longer hours than childless men, while the opposite is true for mothers. In both 2006/07 and 2008/09 datasets fathers with one dependent child worked just over 41 hours a week, compared to 39 hours for childless men. Meanwhile women's working hours went down considerably after the transition to motherhood, on average from 38 to 31 in 2006/07 and from 38 to 28 in 2008/09. The average gross hourly wage for mothers was slightly higher than the hourly wage among women with no dependent children in 2006/07 and 2008/09 datasets although it was still lower than the hourly wage for fathers (see Table 8). This indicates that mothers are worse off financially compared to childless women due to their short working week, rather than lower per hour earnings.

The decline in working hours for women between 2006 and 2009 may result from the economic recession. Lyonette et al. (2010) pointed out that the recession in the UK was accompanied by decrease in working hours and increase in part-time work as employees were forced to reduce their working hours. One of the explanations why the reduction in working week affected mothers rather than fathers is that the former may be more willing to accept reduction in working time than fathers as they may see it as an opportunity to spend more time with their families.

**Table 8. Average gross hourly pay by sex and number of dependent children.**

Mean gross hourly pay in £	Men				Women			
	Total	Childless	One child	Two children	Total	Childless	One child	Two children
2008/09	8	7,5	8,2	8,3	6,9	6,7	7,3	6,6
2006/07	7,3	7,1	7,2	7,6	7,3	6,4	7,0	8,5 (median 5,8)

Pooled total of all employees aged 16 and over, weighted.

Source: LFS 2006-2009.



Wages in London area tend to be higher, however, while in 2008/09 dataset fathers with one child in London earned on average £148 per week more than fathers in the rest of the UK, mothers received a mere £27 a week more compared to mothers living in other parts of the country. Mothers in London earned less than childless women while fathers received a higher weekly gross income than childless men. Nonetheless, the number of cases is very small when we analyse Londoners only and one needs to be very careful with interpreting the results.

## Welfare allowances

The availability of welfare benefits can have an impact on childbearing as social assistance reduces the costs associated with having children and can provide financial security for families. At the same time financial resources and financial security is significant for fertility and childbearing intentions (Mynarska, 2009). There is also some evidence that tax credits can improve the situation of many individuals and families on low income (W. Davies, 2007) but they have many pitfalls. According to Bryson (2003 p.93) tax credits create a disincentive to higher earnings as people focus on retaining them, moreover, tax credits serve as ‘a disincentive to two-earner status among couples’ as the non-working partner, usually woman, has no incentive to work, as this carries a financial penalty in the form of supplement decrease or withdrawal.

Polish migrants in the UK have limited access to state benefits until they have been in continuous employment (with breaks of no more than 30 days) for 12 months, although as EU8<sup>5</sup> nationals they have immediate access to (provided that they find a job) child benefit and tax credits (they lose these entitlements if they become unemployed during these 12 months). After being in employment for a 12-month period, Polish migrants gain rights to income-related benefits such as job-seekers allowance or housing benefits (Osipovic, 2010; Trevena, 2009). Osipovic (2010) demonstrated that Polish migrants have lower propensity to claim state benefits than UK citizens and also than other non UK nationals, including those from the EU 16<sup>6</sup>. However, as people receiving the universal child benefit were included in the analysis the data may only capture differences in family structure between groups.

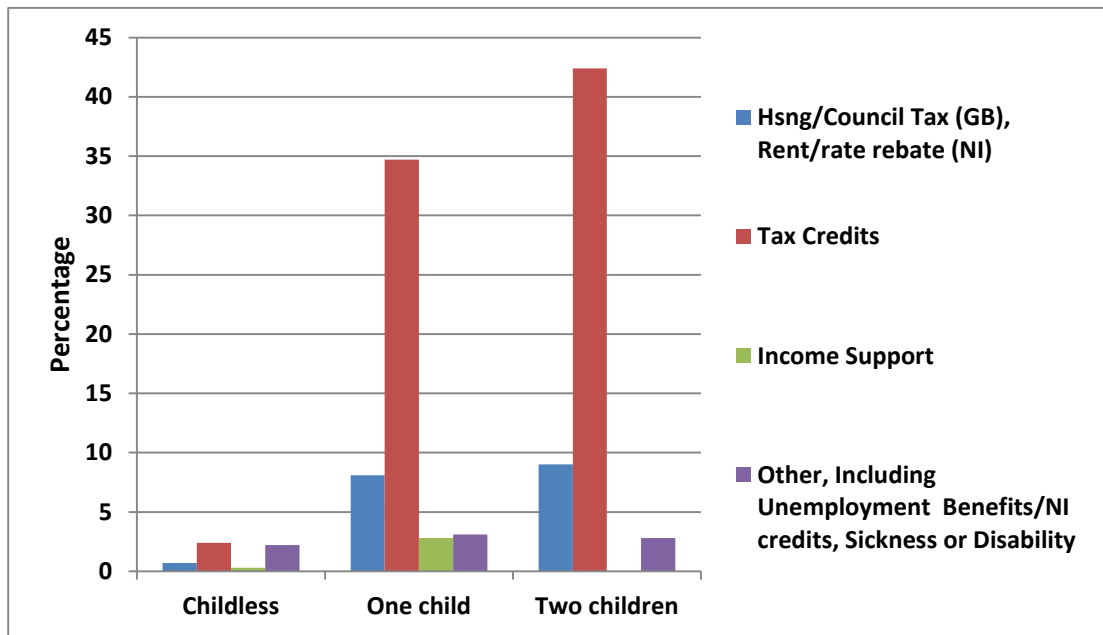
One of the shortcomings of the LFS is that it is only indicative of benefit uptake since comparison between the LFS and other administrative data shows that the former consistently undercounts benefit claimants (Office for National Statistics, 2009). Twenty four percent of Polish migrants claimed any state benefits in 2008/09 according to LFS (this variable includes child benefit). Child benefit was the most common and was claimed by 87% of beneficiaries followed by tax credits which were claimed by 46,3 % of all claimants. Even if we exclude the universal child benefit parents had still much higher propensity to claim benefits such as tax credits and housing/council tax (GB), rent/rate rebate (NI) compared to childless people (see Graph 5).

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<sup>5</sup> EU8: EU member states which joined EU on 1st of May 2004 (Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia)

<sup>6</sup> EU 16: Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxemburg, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden.

**Graph 5. Benefits uptake by number of children.**



Pooled total of all persons aged 16-69, weighted.

Source: LFS 2008/09

In 2006/7 dataset slightly fewer people claimed benefits (18,2%) than in 2008/09. Childless people were least likely to take any benefits (3,2%) compared to parents (54,9% and 58,5% with one and two children respectively). The child benefit was the most common and was claimed by 93,1% of all beneficiaries, the second most popular benefit was housing/council tax (GB), rent/rate rebate (NI) which was received by 40,3% of recipients. Unfortunately there is no data on tax credits in the LFS prior to 2007 although the system was launched in 2003.

It is visible from the statistical data that parents rely more on social assistance than childless people which can indicate that having children induces the need for state's help. The wages of Polish migrants are low relative to natives and other groups of migrants, moreover, only 37,9 % of Polish mothers with one child worked full time in 2008/09 while nearly 60% either did not work or worked part time (29% in each category). Consequently, Polish families with children in the UK often live on one or one and a half income and it is not surprising that parents more often than childless people rely on such benefits as tax credits or housing allowances. Recent plans to cut the public expenditure in the UK and to reduce benefits are, therefore, likely to impact parents' and their children's wellbeing to a much greater extent than non parents.

## Housing

New migrants in the UK are reported to reside in poor quality housing that is often unsuitable to their needs in terms of size and quality (Robinson & Reeve, 2007). This is not unexpected considering the low level of earnings of migrants on the one hand and the costs of living in the UK on the other. Only a minority of Polish migrants in the UK own a property (see Table 9) and rented accommodation is relatively expensive, therefore, in order to reduce the costs of living migrants often share with others resulting in the lack of space (Trevena, 2009). Accommodation shortages and affordability are severe problems in Poland (Domanski 2007

cited in Trevena, 2009 p. 19) and since we do not know in what conditions migrants lived before they came to the UK it is difficult to assess their relative housing situation here. Families with offspring are nonetheless in a different situation than childless people as they need more space to accommodate their child/ren, and space comes at a price; while owning a property can contribute to a greater stability which is particularly important not only for parents but also for those people who intend to have (more) children. For this reason dwelling type plays a role in fertility and childbearing intentions (Billari, et al., 2009).

The LFS, unfortunately, has no information on dwelling size and we can only investigate housing tenure based on available data. Polish migrants live mostly in privately rented housing (see Table 9) which is more expensive than renting from a social landlord, per capita floor space, therefore, is likely to be small for Polish migrants. In our data in 2008/09 the vast majority of people, regardless of the number of children and the area of residence lived in rented housing. People with two children more often lived in a purchased house (19,6%) compared to those with one child (5,9%) and to childless people (7,9%) (see Table 9). There may be a selection effect; people with better housing situation may find it easier to decide to have another child. Owning a property may give people more security and stability and they may feel that they are in a better position to have more children, while renting is seen as 'insecure', since even if it is affordable, one can be asked to move out at any time and to look for another accommodation which can be problematic for parents. A quick look at the rental property market in the UK alerts one to how many landlords specify 'no children' in their advertisements<sup>7</sup>, which also can make renting more difficult for parents.

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<sup>7</sup> For example 9 out of 23 advertisements on a Devon's lettings agent's website (<http://www.paulproperty.co.uk>) specified 'no children' on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2011.

**Table 9. Persons by housing tenure and number of dependent children (in percentages).**

Accommodation details	Childless	One child	Two children
Owned outright	3 (4)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Being bought with mortgage or loan	11 (3,9)	5,9 (6,8)	19,6 (18,8)
Part rent part mortgage (shared ownership)	2,1 (0,5)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Rented	82,2 (89,9)	94,1 (93,2)	80,4 (81,2)
Rent free	1,7 (1,4)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Squatting	0 (0,3)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Total	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)

Pooled total of surveyed persons aged 16 and over, weighted.

In brackets data for 2006/07.

Source: LFS 2006-2009.

Taking into account those migrants who lived in rented and rent free<sup>8</sup> housing, the vast majority (over 80%) in both 2006/07 and 2008/09 datasets had a private landlord. Only 9,5% of childless people, 10,9 % and 24,7% of those with one and two children respectively rent from a social landlord<sup>9</sup>.

Housing tenure in London is similar to the rest of the UK, the vast majority of migrants in London lived in rented housing (86,9%), regardless of the number of dependent children. Only a minority owned a property, although a slightly higher percentage of parents with two children owned a property (15,6%) compared to those with one child (5,6%) as well to childless people (11%).

It appears that there are little differences in housing tenure among different groups of migrants and the vast majority live in privately rented accommodation. Living in a (privately) rented house can contribute to the feeling of insecurity, instability and lower the living space available to people hampering their intentions to have (more) children as well as worsening the standard of accommodation, particularly for families with offspring. On the other hand it depends on previous personal experiences with housing. When people feel that renting is affordable and that they have adequate space they may perceive their housing situation as satisfactory and feel secure 'enough' to have (another) child living in rented accommodation. This issue will be further explored in in-depth part of this research.

<sup>8</sup> Rent free includes accommodation tied to job, rent free housing in relative's/friend's property but excludes squatting.

<sup>9</sup> Social landlords include: registered housing associations and cooperatives and local authorities.

## Conclusion

Poles have become the largest group of non-British nationality and the second largest group of non-UK born residents already in 2008 in the UK (ONS, 2009) and although there is a wide body of literature about the new waves of migrants, many aspects of their lives are still under-researched. This paper aimed at contributing to the existing scholarly literature by presenting a macro picture of Polish migrants in the UK by parity and based on statistical data. This paper has demonstrated that parents share some characteristics with childless migrants, namely age, education, occupations and housing tenure, in other respects such as: employment, income and the uptake of social benefits parents differ from non parents. Such characteristics as employment patterns and income, moreover, vary not only by parity but are also related to gender. As we have illustrated having children has a negative impact on women's employment and income but not on men's. Since mothers are often compelled to (temporarily) forsake employment or to work part time hours, many migrant families rely on one or one and a half wage. At the same time most migrants remain in low income professions and, not surprisingly, these with dependent children rely considerably more often on welfare benefits such as housing rebates and tax credits than childless migrants. Although welfare provisions may substitute for the absent second wage improving economic situation of families on low income, reliance on welfare allowances has many pitfalls as they may act as disincentives to two earner family status, since economically inactive mothers have no financial incentives to work (Bryson, 2003). Migrant mothers, therefore, become second class citizens since they depend on their male partners on social rights and income (Osipovic, 2010). While the contemporary role of working mother is associated with economic independence, self-reliance and self-actualisation (Kuperberg & Stone, 2008) the return to the traditional role of stay-at-home mom can bring additional penalties such as social isolation, lower self-esteem or the loss of English language skills which could make a return to paid employment in the future more so difficult. Insofar as the arrival of children means a transition from a dual earner to a male breadwinner family this also puts pressure on men as husbands and fathers to live up to these demands. However, the lack of welfare allowances for families on low income would not necessarily translate into an incentive to a double earner family if the second wage was spent on childcare, which is relatively expensive in the UK (Daycare Trust, 2010b), especially considering migrants' wages. The LFS indicated that family commitments prevent mothers with one child from undertaking employment rather than women choosing economic inactivity to spend more time with their children, while the opposite was true for females with two offspring. Although, according to the LFS data, the availability of childcare does not impede migrants' ability to work, unfortunately, the data did not allow us to investigate other processes underlying work family-reconciliation strategies, for instance, what role the affordability and quality of childcare plays in migrants' decisions.

While low fertility and net emigration are two of the major demographic challenges Poland will face in the future, with total population projected to decrease by 6 million by 2050 (United Nations, 2010). Polish nationals in the UK are perceived by the Polish and British press to have high fertility (Hardie, 2007; Marczuk, 2011; wPolityce.pl, 2011), partly due to their, arguably, better economic situation and more generous welfare provisions for families with children in the UK than in Poland. Recent research indicates that Polish migrants' TFR at 1,6 (Waller, 2010) is higher than in Poland, which was 1,38 in 2010 (CSO, 2011), it is, nonetheless, still lower than the TFR in the UK which, in 2010, was 1,98 (ONS, August 2011). This suggests that migrants' fertility is gradually adapting to local childbearing patterns, moreover, scholars suggest that, given the young age of migrants, we can expect a

further increase in their fertility (Green, et al., 2008; Trevena, 2009). More research is needed, however, to examine how living and working conditions in the country of destinations impact wellbeing of migrants depending on their gender and family situation, as well as what factors influence their childbearing and residency decisions. Migrants experiences in the UK with regards to employment, occupations, income, housing and the availability of social assistance are likely to influence their decisions whether to have (more) children and whether to stay in the UK or go back to Poland and these are very important to the policy makers and to the wider society in the UK as well as in Poland.

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