

Securities/insecurities and EU citizenship: attitudes of residents from Central and Eastern Europe to the two Referendums

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SSAMIS
Social Support and
Migration in Scotland

Exploring ‘Social Security’

‘Experiences of social security and prospects for long-term settlement among migrants from Central Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union’ (4-year ESRC-funded project; Nov 2013-Nov 2017):

- People produce securities (social, economic, personal and cultural) through a combination of public/private resources, formal/informal networks, state/non-state structures (von Benda-Beckmann and von Benda-Beckmann 1988; 1994)
- Material and emotional aspects of security are of equal importance and often intersect/co-produce one another
- Importance of temporal dimensions - interconnectedness of past, present and future in people’s understandings and negotiations of what it means to be ‘secure’ (von Benda-Beckmann & von Benda-Beckmann 1994; Thelen&Read 2007; Kay 2012).



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- 207 migrant interviews
- 60+ expert interviews
- observations
- video & photo diaries

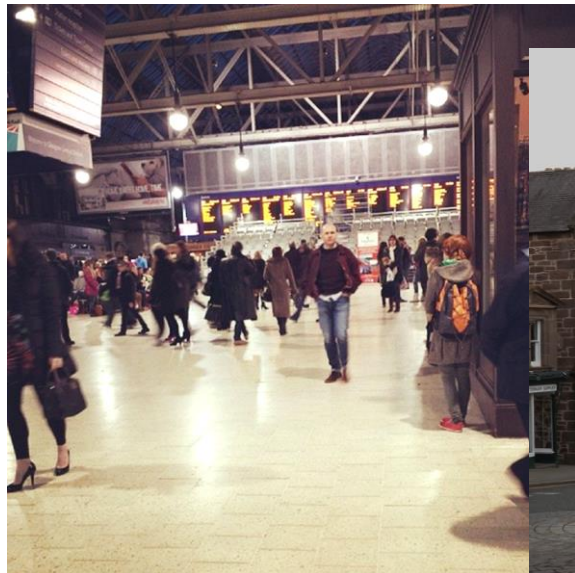


Aberdeenshire

Aberdeen

Angus

Glasgow





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Overview of data collection

Locations	Aberdeen (n27); Glasgow (n37); Peterhead (n41), Fraserburgh (n9), other rural locations in Aberdeenshire (n25); Arbroath (n39), Montrose (n12), Brechin (n9), other rural locations in Angus (n8)
Employment sectors	beauty and hairdressing; care industry; cleaning services; hospitality & catering; construction; farm work; food processing; interpreting/translation; IT; office work; oil industry; retail; third sector
Employment status	agency workers; (full time/part-time) employees; self-employed; stay-at-home parents; students; unemployed
Gender	women (n129); men (n78)
Age group	18-24 (n13); 25-34 (n66); 35-49 (n91); 50+ (n36); unknown (n1)
Country of origin	Azerbaijan (n2); Bulgaria (n8); Czech Republic (n6); Estonia (n1); Hungary (n18); Kazakhstan (n1); Kyrgyzstan (n1); Latvia (n42); Lithuania (n28); Poland (n83); Romania (n5); Russia (n5); Slovakia (n4); Ukraine (n3) [= 195 EU citizens]

EU residents' political rights in Scotland/the UK

- Right as EU citizens to vote in sub-national elections: local elections in the UK and European Parliament elections
but – do CEE citizens use these rights?
e.g. Pietka & McGhee 2014 – online survey of 245 Polish migrants in Scotland → exclusive voting behaviour as dominant pattern: 49% voted in either Polish or Scottish elections
- Given right to vote in the Scottish Independence Referendum if resident in Scotland for at least 12 months
- NOT given right to vote in the EU Referendum

Attitudes towards right to vote in Scottish Independence Referendum

- Polish migrants' voting intentions:
 - Pietka & McGhee (2014): 85% declared they will vote;
 - Mulvey and McGarvey (2014): 83% declared they will vote;
 - both studies – if refraining from vote – moral grounds

I was generally taken aback that foreigners were given the right to decide about freedom, about a nation.

Henryk, Polish

I believe that Scottish referendum was a business of Scottish people, and immigrants should not have participated.

Tadas, Lithuanian

We shouldn't have the right to vote because of...

- Citizenship status (nationality/citizenship/belonging)

I haven't voted, because I am a resident, but not a citizen. I wasn't born here, I did not grow up here, so I don't think I have a right to vote together with people, who lived here all their lives. It is their decision, whether they want to be independent or not.

Viktoras, Lithuanian

- Not being/feeling settled (belonging)

In this weird way they give rights to those who live here, to have a say, but what if I go home in two years?

Anna, Hungarian

We shouldn't have the right to vote because of...

- Feeling incompetent
 - lack of knowledge/understanding of the historical context

I shouldn't [be able to] cast a vote, I don't know Scottish history, I didn't know what exactly this was all about, right?

Henryk, Polish

- lack of information & confusion about 'what's best'

We were looking for information (...). Scotland said they had oil and other different things and England is this and that. We just wanted to know what to do and what to vote for.

Madara, Latvian

Feeling of civic responsibility

[T]he problem is, that I am really undecided, what I should vote for with a good heart? For independence, but I don't know, whether that's good for them? Do they want it?

Anna, Hungarian

I did not vote because I did not want to make a mistake. I still believe it would be better for Scotland to be independent.

Daiva, Lithuanian

I wouldn't like foreigners to vote for Lithuanian independence. That is why I have not participated.

Viktoras, Lithuanian

We should have the right to vote because...

- We share the same obligations as other UK residents (e.g. paying taxes) so should have the same rights
- We live here, our future is here, the referendum outcome affects us (→ feeling settled, feeling of belonging)

Other opinions:

- nice gesture
- why allowed to vote but not become citizens in an independent Scotland?

Arguments for/against Scottish independence

- ‘Yes’:
 - CEE countries fought for independence, Scots are also entitled to freedom and to be an independent state
 - Scotland has rich natural resources, it will benefit from independence
 - local governance works better than central governance
 - to counter Cameron’s plans of leaving the EU and curbing migration
- ‘No’:
 - uncertainty re EU migrants’ rights (→ future) in Scotland
 - uncertainty re Scotland’s economic future (→ migrants’ future)
 - Scotland will become a peripheral, unimportant country in Europe
 - Scotland will pave the way for further separatist disintegration of Europe (Catalonia, the Basque country, Silesia)

Insecurity – impact on voting behaviour

It was a bit scary during the [Independence] Referendum because there were rumours saying that we would have to leave if Scotland became independent. Then we voted for independence and were like ‘oh no, we’re stupid’ because it meant we would be kicked out as there would be no EU, and how long it would take to get back in?

Madara, Latvian

[W]e voted no simply because... Well, we were afraid about our future, that’s what it was. (...) [S]imply, things are good for us here when they’re together and you don’t know what would have happened... You know, that uncertainty, what will happen. [W]e weren’t sure what awaits us here as immigrants, right? Leaving the EU and other issues would be connected with this. And the money and everything... so we voted no.

Kornelia, Polish

Attitudes & reactions to the EU Referendum

- Uncertainty, fear about the future, maintaining right to live and work in the UK
- Concerns about the effect of Brexit on people's family situation (curbs on freedom of mobility)
- Dissatisfaction at not being given the right to vote in a matter that affects them
- Concerns about personal safety in view of the anti-immigration rhetoric in the media
- Looking for ways to make oneself more secure in legal terms – applying for permanent residency or British citizenship

Conclusions

- Scottish Independence Referendum
 - widespread interest in Referendum and strong feelings of civic responsibility;
 - attitudes to and voting behaviours point to strong link between citizenship and feeling of belonging;
 - would promise of granting citizenship rights post-referendum change its outcome?
- EU Referendum
 - widespread interest but feeling of helplessness;
 - rapid increase in applications for British citizenship as way of securing legal status in UK;
 - spurred new forms of civic activism - certain groups constituted/coming together to have a say in negotiations on what will happen to EU citizens post-Brexit (e.g. New Europeans).



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