Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/cjms20

Polish women's experiences of domestic violence: intersecting roles of migration and socio-cultural, religious and policy contexts in Poland and in the UK

Sundari Anitha, Iwona Zielinska, Michael Rasell & Ros Kane

To cite this article: Sundari Anitha, Iwona Zielinska, Michael Rasell & Ros Kane (25 Feb 2025): Polish women's experiences of domestic violence: intersecting roles of migration and socio-cultural, religious and policy contexts in Poland and in the UK, Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, DOI: 10.1080/1369183X.2025.2467173

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2025.2467173

Published online: 25 Feb 2025.

JOURNAL OF ETHNIC AND MIGRATION STUDIES
https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2025.2467173

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Polish women's experiences of domestic violence: intersecting roles of migration and socio-cultural, religious and policy contexts in Poland and in the UK

Sundari Anitha[a], Iwona Zielinska[b], Michael Rasell[c] and Ros Kane[d]

[a]Department of Sociological Studies, University of Sheffield, Sheffield, UK; [b]The Business School, Edinburgh Napier University, Edinburgh, UK; [c]Department of Educational Science, University of Innsbruck, Innsbruck, Austria; [d]School of Health and Care Sciences, University of Lincoln, Lincoln, UK

ABSTRACT

Scholarship on domestic violence and abuse has sought to understand how women's experiences are influenced by gender and its intersections with other social relations of power. We draw upon life history interviews with Polish women and interviews with practitioners to contribute to this intersectional and transnational feminist scholarship by examining how intersections between the migration process, immigration status and socio-cultural, religious and institutional contexts of Poland and the UK shape Polish women's experiences of domestic violence and abuse. In doing so, we seek to redress the invisibilisation of Polish migrant women in the scholarship on domestic violence and abuse in the UK and beyond, in a context where they are invisibilised as 'white' and the particularities of their experiences neglected. Beyond a focus on the specificity of Polish women's experiences through utilising an intersectional lens to understand the difference that difference makes, we also draw attention to similarities in migrant women's structural location within exclusionary immigration/welfare bordering regimes in the UK, which creates conducive contexts for such violence. In doing so, we widen the lens used to understand domestic violence beyond family and interpersonal dynamics to the opportunities and constraints posed by intersecting social relations and gendered geographies of power.

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 2 February 2024
Accepted 10 February 2025

KEYWORDS
Intersectionality; migration; bordering regimes; religion and domestic violence; life history methods

This paper examines Polish women's experiences of domestic violence and abuse (DVA) in the UK, with a focus on how socio-cultural and institutional contexts in Poland as well as in the UK create barriers to recognising, reporting and addressing gendered violence. DVA encompasses a range of abusive and often interrelated behaviours including physical violence, verbal, sexual, psychological and economic abuse and coercive and controlling behaviour by a partner, ex-partner or other family member. Crenshaw's (1991) conceptualisation of intersectionality alerts us to how, while gender remains the most common predictor of DVA, the prevalence, nature

CONTACT Sundari Anitha S.Anitha@sheffield.ac.uk

of the violence and abuse and its impact, and service responses to DVA are shaped by women's location within intersecting social relations of power. For migrant women, inequalities related to their migration/immigration status intersect with gender, race/ethnicity, class, socio-cultural norms and religion – both in the countries of origin and in the diaspora – to shape their experiences of DVA.

The prevalence of DVA is higher among migrant women in diverse contexts (FRA 2014; Gonçalves and Matos 2016) and for women who migrate to the UK upon marriage, distance from familial sources of support may increase their isolation and impede help-seeking. Other research explores the role of socio-cultural norms in countries of origin, such as the notions of 'honour' and shame associated with women's sexuality, in preventing Black and minoritised women from disclosing DVA and escaping abusive relationships (Aghtaie 2016; Femi-Ajao 2018). However, a focus on intersectionality solely in terms of heightened vulnerability can reproduce harmful pathologising narratives about 'othered' communities which disregard the structural positioning of migrant women.

International feminist scholarship has extended the lens through which we understand DVA, beyond vulnerability associated with individual circumstances and family/community structures or cultures, to broader structural factors related to migration and immigration status and state policies (Anitha, Roy, and Yalamarty 2018; McIlwaine, Granada, and Valenzuela-Oblitas 2019; Voolma 2018). These factors may exacerbate the prevalence of the violence as well as create barriers to seeking support, as has been documented for racially minoritised victims of DVA in the UK (Femi-Ajao 2018; SafeLives 2015). Research also highlights how the precarity created by immigration policies (Segrave and Vasil 2024), the exclusions within welfare policies (Anitha 2010), service responses and transnational legal regimes can create a crucial 'conducive context' (Kelly 2003) that sustains the violence that takes place in private spheres.

Research on DVA is relatively recent in the Polish context (Michalska 2016; Pawłowska-Muc et al. 2023). Compared to the wide range of research on DVA among South Asian, Middle Eastern and more recently, African migrant populations in the UK (Aghtaie 2016; Anitha 2010; Anitha, Roy, and Yalamarty 2018; Femi-Ajao 2018), DVA experienced by Polish women living in the UK is significantly unexplored in peer-reviewed sources (an exception is the study by Sonowska-Buxton and Studsrød (2025) which draws upon interviews with 13 Polish women in Norway and the UK,) – a gap that this article addresses.

Anthias (2002, 500) highlights the complexity of migrant identities and their social connections across different contexts in communities of origin and those of destination, whereby 'the migrant is dynamically placed in three locales and their intersection: the society of migration, the homeland and the migrant group'. While our field of empirical inquiry is the lives and experiences of Polish women in the UK, Poland remains an important point of reference to enhance understanding of how gender ideologies are reproduced, contested and reconstituted transnationally and in local social spaces and across social relations. Drawing upon the first-ever UK-wide study of DVA experienced by Polish women, we explore how the migration process and the socio-cultural, religious and institutional contexts in both Poland and the UK influence the nature and patterns of DVA and responses to it.

Gendered migration from Poland to the UK and domestic violence and abuse within this population

Whilst there were waves of migration from Poland to the UK at several points during the twentieth Century, the largest movement came following Poland's accession to the European Union (EU) in 2004, and access to the UK labour market. By 2017, the Polish community had become the largest non-UK-born population in the UK and far outnumbered all the other migrants from Central and Eastern Europe (ONS 2018).

Driven largely by economic and employment-related motivations (in contrast to movement by other groups to the UK), the majority of Polish migrants are young people (up to 34 years) and along with EU-8 migrants, have the highest employment rates in the UK (80% for women, 90% for men) of all migrant populations, and higher than UK-born people (75% for women 78% for men) (Fernández-Reino and Rienzo 2022, 6). This data shows that Polish migrants in the UK are over-represented in low-paid semi-skilled and manual occupations in industry, hospitality, and agriculture, which indicates significant deskilling compared with their prior employment status. Polish-born women are more likely to be employed in 'elementary' occupations compared to Polish-born men (Aziz 2015, 91–95).

Polish women's economic migration was a response to the gendered impact of rising unemployment in local labour markets following the dissolution of the Eastern Bloc in 1989 (Aziz 2015; Coyle 2007). Research on male migration also documents how women play active roles in the decision-making process, suggesting a more collaborative migration trajectory (Ryan et al. 2009, 65–68). Other patterns of Polish migration include dual migration, where both partners move together (Ryan et al. 2009), and solo migration by single, child-free women or women leaving families behind in Poland (Lutz 2008; Urbańska 2016).

Beyond seeking economic opportunities (White 2011) in the wake of Poland's post-socialist industrial decline, Polish women's mobility can also be viewed as a form of resistance to the erosion of their rights (Coyle 2007; Pustułka 2015). The diverse contexts that have shaped Polish women's migration to the UK and elsewhere in Europe from 2004 onwards include inequalities and power imbalances in conjugal and family relations (Urbańska 2016), escape from violence and abuse from an intimate partner or within their natal family (Coyle 2007; Ryan et al. 2009, 71; Urbańska 2016), or being compelled into migration and transnational motherhood through the intersection of regimes of care, gender, migration (Lutz 2008) as well as legal regimes in Poland and Europe (Urbańska 2016). Urbańska (2016) documents how Polish women's migration occurred in the absence of effective support from family, local communities or the conservative state institutions in the face of violence.

Research on Polish women's experiences of migration explores their migration decisions, employment trajectories, practices and experiences in Western Europe, including the UK (Aziz 2015; Coyle 2007), where they perform gendered, low paid and insecure work as carers and domestic workers (Coyle 2007; Cyrus 2008; Praszałowicz 2008). Additional research focuses on family relations, new maternity practices and identities, care relationships and the nature of transnational mothering within gendered regimes (Urbańska 2016). Constructions of gender and gender relations are also analysed in scholarship that documents the complex co-existence of transnationalism and integration in

negotiations of gender and the process of reconfigurations of family, gender relations and masculinities among Polish migrants (Bell and Pustułka 2017; Leszczyńska, Zielińska, and Urbańska 2024; Slany 2018) and how such reconstructions may subsequently influence gender dynamics in Poland (Siara 2013).

However, this research on gender and migration only refers, *inter alia*, to gendered patterns of violence and abuse in relationships of Polish women (Coyle 2007; Ryan et al. 2009). Urbańska (2016, 113) notes this gap in relation to studies of Polish migration, 'where there has been no analysis of […] domestic violence, divorces and separations in the migration process and at the intersection of different types of regimes.' She attributes this silence to a focus on economic factors behind women's decisions to migrate, the absence of research focus on periods long before and after migration, and on recording changes in the relationship with the partner/husband (Urbańska 2016, 112–113). Our research responds to her call for more studies which encompass all the biographical, intersected trajectories of Polish women's migration and marital/intimate relationships in various socio-political and economic contexts, in the pre – and post-migration periods.

Any focus on DVA in the lives of Polish women in the UK needs to situate their experiences within the context of the nature of this problem in Poland. The prevalence of DVA among women in Poland is estimated to be between 19% for physical and/or sexual violence (FRA 2014) to and 63% for physical, sexual, psychological and/or economic violence (Kantar Report 2019), with the latter also noting a significant underreporting of its occurrence and frequency. The lack of disaggregated data within the racial category of 'White' in the UK Crime Survey hinders our understanding of DVA within the Polish community, as Polish individuals are categorised as 'White'. However, between 2009 and 2018, Polish-born victims were second in number only to UK-born victims of femicide and constituted 1.7% (24 women) of all victims (Long et al. 2020). This is disproportionate to their 1.2% share of the UK population and may indicate higher prevalence rates or greater barriers to leaving, thereby escalating the risk of serious harm and death.

The gendered nature of migration was originally theorised by Mahler and Pessar (2001) through their conceptual model of 'gendered geographies of power' which incorporates geographical scale, social location as well as women's 'corporal and cognitive' agency, 'given their own initiative as well as their positioning within multiple hierarchies of power' (Mahler and Pessar 2001, 447) in both the countries of origin and in the destination countries. Our article builds on Massey's (1994) gendered analysis of migration in relation to structural relations of power.

Research methods

Given the paucity of research on Polish migrant women's experiences of DVA and the sensitive nature of the topic, qualitative methods were employed to generate rich data.

Life history interviews were chosen to enable participants to give in-depth accounts of their lives and relationships and were conducted with 28 Polish women who had experienced DVA whilst living in the UK. Interview themes included childhood and early lives, migration decisions and processes, the context and nature of the abusive relationship, and experiences of help-seeking and services. Women were recruited using purposive sampling via practitioners/organisations who approached previous clients and upon

consent, passed on their contact details to us, and through snowballing and in response to adverts on UK-based Polish social media sites. Based on women's preference, eight interviews were conducted in English and 20 in Polish. The English-language interviews were conducted jointly by authors 1 and 2 (Polish-speaking), to reach a common approach to interviewing, as the topic of DVA and the UK context of DVA services were relatively new to author 2. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most interviews were conducted online; only two were conducted face-to-face in a public venue chosen by the participants during periods when the social distancing measures were not in place. Interviews lasted between 2 and 4 h and were recorded.

The women were aged 33–64 at the time of interview (mean age 41) and had between 0 ($n = 1$) and 4 ($n = 3$) children (mean number 2). All but two of the women we interviewed migrated to the UK after 2004 following the EU Treaty of Accession. They varied in terms of whether they came to the UK with/ to join their partner (17 women) or met their partner here (11 women). The ex-partners of 24 women were Polish (one woman recounted two abusive relationships, both with Polish men whom she met in the UK), two were British (one was Black African and one was White), one was Eastern European and one woman's partner was North African (exact country not disclosed to maintain anonymity) – she had migrated to the UK from Poland with him. All the women we interviewed had left the abusive relationship between 7 months and 13 years previously. A majority of the women had completed tertiary education, though three women did not attend high school. All the women identified as Catholic though the levels of religiosity varied, and for individual women it also varied across their life-course.

In-depth interviews were also conducted with 18 frontline professionals with experience of supporting Polish families on the issue of DVA. Practitioners from domestic abuse services, Polish community organisations, police, health and legal services were recruited through practitioner networks and snowballing. Interview themes probed their experiences of service provision for Polish women who had experienced DVA.

Data analysis

Interview data were transcribed and where necessary translated into English, including quality checks of translation by author 2. Key themes were identified inductively through a process that involved the reading and re-reading of a few transcripts by authors 1 and 2, to develop a coding tree. Some initial higher-level codes (e.g., on types of DVA) were also informed by our knowledge of existing scholarship. Thereafter, all interviews were initially coded by one of the co-authors and verified by a second team member. The team members met regularly throughout the process to refine the codes on the basis of the emerging data, and re-coded the earlier tranche of data till the codes stabilised.

Ethics

Ethical approval was granted by the Human Ethics Committee, University of Lincoln (Ref: 2019-May-0612) and consent granted prior to any data collection. Measures to

seek full, informed and ongoing consent included informing participants that they could choose not to answer any questions, or indeed withdraw from the interview. Given the potentially distressing nature of recalling traumatic experiences, information on services was at hand should participants have needed it. The names of all survivors have been changed to pseudonyms, while practitioners are identified with a descriptor of their organisation.

Limitations

It proved difficult to recruit staff from local authority and health services, which can be partly attributed to the immense pressure these services were facing during the pandemic. Women shared very valuable experiences of these services with us, but direct practitioner perspectives from statutory services are under-represented in the dataset.

Dominant socio-cultural, religious and state constructions of, and responses to domestic violence in Poland and within the Polish diaspora in the UK

Migrants' frame of reference is not only the destination country but also the country of origin, which together shape the global gendered geographies of power (Pessar and Mahler). This section examines how the axis of out-migration and the context of the country of origin, Poland, features within the experiences of Polish women in the UK. Our findings examine the complex interplay of dominant socio-cultural gender norms, state policies and practices relating to DVA and migrant women, the role of the Polish Catholic Church in framing DVA, and the interventions of women's organisations in both Poland and the UK.

Barriers to disclosing domestic violence and abuse

Practitioners and victim-survivors commonly referred to socio-cultural norms in Poland to account for Polish women's feelings of fear, guilt and shame in the face of their experiences. Sosnowska-Buxton (2022) argues that international domestic violence research does not engage with Polish culture, while there is little sociological engagement with the problem of DVA in Poland (Zielińska-Poćwiardowska and Sosnowska-Buxton 2023). This creates a gap in our knowledge of how dominant cultural norms shape attitudes to DVA and help-seeking behaviours of victim-survivors in Poland, and within the Polish diaspora.

Mirka (35) explained that it was simply not the done thing in Poland to talk about such 'personal' and 'private' matters, 'because in Poland, people do not speak […] I doubt that people there would understand, because they look at you like it's your fault'.

Sosnowska-Buxton and Studsrød (2025, 62) argue that in Poland, DVA is framed as an individualised failure of the woman, whereby women are constructed as weak and as deserving the abuse or requiring it. An EU survey on the perceptions of EU citizens about gender-based violence documented that 21% of respondents in Poland think that domestic violence is a private matter and should be handled within the family (as compared to 15% in the EU-28 as a whole) and 28% of respondents in Poland think

that violence against women is often provoked by the victim (compared to 17% in the EU-28) (EU 2016).

Polish migrants are connected to both the UK and Poland by a conception of space as open, networked and composed of multiple connections (Massey 1994) which White (2018) characterises as a single transnational social space, the 'Polish society abroad'. Within these spaces, while research documents the contestations and reconfigurations of gender regimes and relations, there is also scholarship that points to the strong attachment to a Polish national identity and the gender roles implied therein (Pustułka 2012, p. 164). The victim-survivors and the practitioners we interviewed reiterated how dominant constructions of the wife and mother in Poland served to constrain them and shaped family and community responses in Poland and within the UK-based Polish diaspora that exonerated the perpetrator and instead blamed them for the violence they faced, or indeed for refusing to remain silent:

> There are cultural barriers, and these are our barriers that we took with us [from Poland]. […] It's a belief that what goes on at home goes on at home, so as not to wash the dirt [in public]. And I think that's persistent. And also, the belief about what it means to be a good wife, to be a good mother. (Practitioner 12: Polish community support service)

Framing and responding to domestic violence and abuse: the role of police and Polish catholic church in Poland and in the UK

Practitioners also highlighted limited faith amongst Polish women in relation to support from the police. Such attitudes are influenced by the specific historic context of police's role in state socialism and limited legal frameworks and professional mandates to intervene in cases of abuse (Mijatovic 2019). One practitioner reported: 'And these are the cultural foundations that we have – don't snitch, don't cooperate with the police. It's a lack of trust when it comes to the police, for example' (Practitioner 12, Polish community support service). Victim-survivors also described previous negative experiences with the police service in Poland, where they felt that 'women are really left to their own. And the police, well, there is no support at all for these women in Poland' (Marta, 40). Others reported past police responses in Poland which resulted in a lack of trust or faith in them:

> She was afraid that there would be nothing here, no help for them. And they often say what kind of reaction they met with in Poland, even from the police! One woman told me that when her husband smashed the windows, the policeman who came said, 'My grandmother pissed me off, so I smashed the window too.' (Practitioner 13, 'by and for' DVA service)

> This policeman took my number and started calling, texting, coming to see me. I tell you, I had so much experience with policemen in Poland that I was … I was afraid to call the police. (Jola, 40)

These barriers are exacerbated by the highly patriarchal, anti-egalitarian Catholic Church in Poland that draws upon powerful intertwined discourses of religion, nationalism and tradition to construct the ideal of the self-sacrificing 'Matka Polka' – 'Mother Poland' or 'Polish Mother', who is confined to the spheres of domesticity and procreation (Sosnowska-Buxton 2022). Lack of state responses to DVA through protective services or policing are consequences of this ideology that women's safe space is in the home.

Challenges to these gender norms are not only seen as threats to the ideal of womanhood but also to the very idea of national identity.

For unmarried women, dominant discourses about the ideal wife and mother left them feeling excluded from the very construction of the family, whereby the harm they experienced within their relationship was perceived as less problematic than the nature of their family itself.

> They don't want to listen about this [the violence], it's a, a sin, I can't, I can't be an unmarried parent, my children are, you know, from a bad, bad relationship – so there's no understanding. […] Sadly, for me it is hard to pray in English, I have prayed all my life in Polish. So yeah, yeah, it has separated me from my Polish church [in the UK]. There were so many times when I was bruised, bleeding, and I ran away to the church just to sit on the bench and just pray by myself; there was no reaction from the people who were there. I tried, I, I was crying there and the priest would not approach me and he would not ask 'Can I help you? What's wrong?' So I stopped going there because there was no understanding. (Joanna, 42)

The invalidation of Joanna's experiences by the Polish Catholic church in the UK reflects the construction of DVA within Polish Catholicism as an anathema (as religiously understood) to the sacred 'natural' family (Graff and Korolczuk 2021) and the home as a safe haven for women. Church primates and Law and Justice politicians claim that DVA does not occur in the home when the church's teachings are adhered to (Grevio Response Poland 2021; Grzyb 2020). Responding to efforts by public officials to minimise the problem of DVA and present it as a feature of informal (rather than marital) relationships, more than 100 women's rights NGOs, experts and activists, signed a letter to the Polish Prime Minister, quoting from official government reports and academic research which had demonstrated that 50% of victim-survivors were in formal relationships (Mijatovic 2019, 28).

The Catholic church has a very important social role in Poland, having been a longstanding feature of Polish identity and resistance to state socialism and older waves of historical occupation. Religion played an important role in the identity and social context of many of the women we interviewed. The frequency of contact with the church and nature of confession meant that some women turned to the church to seek support for DVA. Oliwia recounted:

> It was terrible. The priest is definitely not the kind of person who would be supportive. It's that you just have to serve your husband. I don't know, maybe at confession, maybe if you mentioned something about your husband, it would be, like, you have to please him more, to give something of yourself, to try harder to make an effort and be nicer. Yes, yes! To do more, well, to cook something cool, to cook, to iron, and so on, isn't it? […] In the beginning I still went to church, we still went, even sometimes with my husband. But now … well, I just don't go. Even if someone in Poland found out that I simply wasn't with my husband, I don't care anymore. Well, maybe because I am here, maybe that is why. (Oliwia, 41)

Oliwia attributes her disregard for the stigma attached to her decision to leave the relationship to the social context of her life in the UK, where she is able to evade the judgement that would otherwise confront her – both for lack of attendance at her church and for her divorce, was she in Poland. Urbańska (2016) documents how Polish women migrants, facing unequal, often violent, and oppressive home lives, are driven to divorce – a previously unavailable option in Poland.

Dominant constructions of womanhood and Catholic church's responses to DVA in Poland suggest that women's endurance of abuse and suffering brings them closer to God (Sosnowska-Buxton 2022). In this context, it is their refusal to remain unheard and unseen in the face of violence that is constructed as the problem. Zusanna recounted her experience of disclosing the DVA she was experiencing, to her priest in the Catholic church in Poland:

> [The Polish Catholic Church] somehow forbids you to divorce, so you are stuck with someone, despite what he is doing to you, because the priests have decided otherwise. […] When I went to see the priest […] when I am saying umm that it is tough with him and that we have that problem [domestic violence], that perhaps my husband drinks too much. And I'd hear [from the priest] 'I am not saying that it is your fault but perhaps it's worthwhile to ask why?' […] That there is something that the wife is not providing […] that there is something *I* am not coping with […] in the sense that you aren't a good enough wife and that's why your husband behaves that way. […] so the church, did it help me [shakes her head]? (Zuzanna, 42)

Silence, denial and victim-blaming were common responses to disclosures of DVA, both in Polish Catholic churches in Poland and in the UK, an orientation that is common in other faith-based communities that emphasise forgiveness, acceptance and endurance on part of women (Truong et al. 2022). Within such constructions, it is women's own actions and behaviours that become the focus of enquiry and allocation of blame, absolving men of their behaviours.

Speaking about Polish mission organisations in the UK, three victim-survivors described the support they accessed through their church for the violence and abuse they were experiencing. This included Polish Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meetings for their husbands, and support groups for the wives of alcoholic men, facilitated by Polish churches in the UK. Such interventions have a long history in Poland, where following the end of the socialist regime, the Catholic church played an important role in addressing the problem of alcohol abuse through facilitating AA meetings (Jannasz 2018).

However, where these services were offered in the context of women's disclosures of DVA, they served to obscure the gendered power and control within their relationships and framed the problem as that of men's alcoholism rather than their violence, thus absolved men of responsibility for their behaviour (Holmila et al. 2014). This was the case even where the patterns of coercive control, economic abuse and sexual abuse preceded and outlived the occasional acts of alcohol-fuelled physical violence or verbal abuse. In the face of such constructions by the Polish church that extorted victim-survivors to 'forgive and love' (Joanna, 40), 'just listen, provide food, make sure that, you know, everything is clean. And so, your husband, you know, he's looked after' (Malwina, 36), victim-survivors such as Julia, 40, described how she hung on to the hope that she could 'save him'.

Information through UK-based 'by and for' DVA services for Polish women proved to be an important counterpoint to such constructions of the problem and helped some women to understand that men's alcohol abuse was not responsible for the DVA and that they were not responsible for 'curing' their partners' alcoholism by enduring the abuse.

Domestic violence and abuse in the context of migration to and settlement in the UK

Following this discussion of the specificities arising from the socio-cultural, religious and state contexts in Poland and in the Polish diaspora in the UK, we now examine the ways in which the DVA experienced by Polish women in the UK is shaped by the process of settlement and employment in the UK, and how conducive contexts for DVA are created by UK state policies and welfare/bordering regimes.

Masculinities, migration-related deskilling and compensatory violence

Several interviewees recounted how the negotiation and reshaping of masculinities in the context of migration shaped the gendered power relations and violence within their families. The gendered nature of the deskilling that workers experience upon migration, which particularly impacts women who migrate to marry has long been the subject of enquiry (Kofman and Raghuram 2006). Research also documents migrant men's experiences of deskilling, discrimination and inferiority in the employment realm (Batnizky, McDowall, and Dyer 2009; Sarti and Scrinzi 2010). This scholarship analyses how masculinities get (re)shaped by the process and type of migration undertaken, and the nature of gender regimes and social relations of power such as those based on race, ethnicity and religion in destination countries (Bell and Pustułka 2017; Donaldson et al. 2009; Leszczyńska, Zielińska, and Urbańska 2024). The impact of the migration process on dominant and context-dependent ideals of masculinity and its connection to DVA is explored here in relation to Polish migrants' gendered experiences of the UK labour market.

Marta found manual work as a cleaner soon after she migrated to the UK with her partner, though it took longer for him to find a job and he therefore struggled to establish his position as the head of the household. Marta was scathing in her assessment of her partner's expectations and behaviour:

> He was living at mummy's [prior to migration]. Mummy did everything for him. When he did something wrong, mummy quickly fixed it because it was her sonny. So I ended up with this kid, you know. A total adult kid. […] Here he had to be responsible for himself and also for me. And later, when our daughter came here, he also had to take care of us, right? It was like he … he was not able to manage things. It was a bit hard. And he just started drinking alcohol. And then everything [the violence] started. (Marta, 40)

Marta attributed his alcoholism and the severe physical and sexual violence he inflicted upon her to the dislocation in status that he experienced upon migration, and his inability to conform to the heteropatriarchal 'male breadwinner' ideal. Other women also referred to the potential renegotiations of gender hierarchies upon migration as they took up the opportunities offered in the UK's service sector, which contrasted with men's more insecure manual jobs or employment experiences that were marred by their dependency on alcohol.

For Krystyna, the success she made of her professional and social life following migration as a couple came at a heavy price. In the context of his sporadic periods of unemployment, she was expected to work to provide for the family but was resented for doing so:

> Despite all that [the abuse], I was still able to find the strength and motivation to do something, to change my life. And that's probably what frustrated him the most, that I did something […] Coming [to the UK], like him I didn't know the language, everything was the same, right? And I gradually got out of it and then, you know, I got a job, he didn't, I had more friends, he didn't, I already, you know … How to say it? I was getting back on my feet and he was always, you know, all over the place. (Krystyna, 47)

As Krystyna's professional career flourished and he remained confined to odd jobs, he compensated for his perceived loss of masculinity through an ever-escalating regime of control and violence, which included marital rape and an attempt to kill her, which precipitated her decision to leave the abusive relationship.

Men's strategies of control commonly reasserted their dominance in household decision-making and use of the household resources and were intended to establish the man's position as the master of the house, and her subservient position within the household. They can be seen as 'manhood acts' that signify membership in the gender category of men and thereby as attempts to reproduce gender-based inequality and claim gender privileges (Schrock and Schwalbe 2009). As men navigate social situations, their actions seek to present themselves as men, as recalled by Joanna whose husband who was confined to a low-paid, low-status job:

> When he was in Poland he was soldier in army and it was a permanent job, and when he came to UK he was […] embarrassed that he was such a great person in Poland 'I came to UK, couldn't find job and I have to be porter.' […] So he would pretend in Poland that he's not porter, he'd just make up some stories that he'd got a better job. […] And it was small money so he'd feel embarrassed that I earn more being a cleaner. 'Cos in his head and in the tradition he grew up in, the man should earn more, the man should be more important, it is only the man who has a voice, the woman shouldn't say anything. So when his aunt visited us I couldn't say a word, I couldn't discuss anything with them: 'You should be quiet, go to the kitchen.' (Joanna, 42)

In the context of the deskilling and the dislocation in his status upon migration, Joanna felt that her husband was reasserting his power and dominance over her through his treatment of her. It is important to note that although the notion of manhood acts centres on micro-level behaviours, these acts are constituted within and through larger social forces of patriarchy and structural masculine power (Morris and Ratajczak 2019). Schrock and Schwalbe (2009) argue that manhood acts are inevitably collective acts, interpreted socially by audiences and facilitated through the help of other actors. In this case, the presence of the aunt was recounted by Joanna as the pretext for his performance of masculinity.

The recollections of Polish women suggest that, faced with their diminishing power and a loss of status upon migration, men's feelings of emasculation can provide the context for their decision to reassert their masculinity through violence. Men's situational use of violence through such strategic manhood acts can be conceptualised as compensatory violence. For Polish women, their differential location in the labour market, compared to other migrant women, shaped somewhat different journeys out of the abusive relationships and towards recovery, as outlined below.

Impact of state policies and practice in the UK on Polish victim-survivors

Research documents how perpetrators weaponise their knowledge of the policy/service landscape and the prevailing hostile environment towards migrants to limit the lives

and possibilities of women (Anitha, Roy, and Yalamarty 2018; Segrave and Vasil 2024). Migration was a key factor that shaped the nature of control deployed by the perpetrators as well as exacerbated the impact of the control. Men's strategies of control were fine-tuned to women's position as recent migrants and designed to exploit women's sense of precarity.

When we asked Weronika about the difference that migration made to her experiences, she highlighted its isolating effect:

> Separation, separation from people who care about me. I couldn't call anybody, I couldn't send them an email – he was checking my phones, he was checking my email. He controlled me one hundred percent of the time; I couldn't move without his knowledge. […] I didn't have my passport because he hid it. (Weronika, 62)

This pattern of control and isolation was also mentioned by several practitioners from Polish 'by and for' DVA services.[1] While a few women reported that the regime of coercive control was imposed very soon after the start of the relationship or upon migration, a majority reported that the control gradually escalated as they were bound together through joint migration, marriage or pregnancy:

> And when I opened my eyes to all this, it was simply too late to run away from him. I was pregnant, I was here in England with my second son. And now I couldn't go to Poland, because he is the child's father after all! He can keep me, even though the child hasn't been born yet. He manipulated me in a very skilful way. He showed me his knowledge of the law over dinnertime conversations. He gave me, I suspect, some invented cases where a woman was pregnant and ran away with the baby, then got arrested and so on. I am an intelligent person […] but when I got such a dose of information every day and to such a very large extent … (Aniela, 39)

Aniela's pregnancy and her lack of knowledge about the UK law and her mobility rights became a tool in her partner's arsenal of control. When women eventually explored the possibility of leaving the abusive relationship, women found that hostile immigration and welfare bordering policies created barriers, while gendered transnational legal regimes also served to induce fears in victims, particularly those who had children. The knowledge of the inadequacies of these systems was commonly weaponised by the perpetrator. Joanna described constant threats from her partner to abduct their children and take them abroad while he also withheld his consent for her to travel with their children, thus preventing her from going to see her family in Poland. Other common modes of control intended to immobilise women were through taking away their official documents, such as passports.

Although EU nationality allowed unrestricted access to the labour market in the UK until the end of the Brexit transition period on 31 December 2020, Polish and other European Union nationals were affected by restrictions that prevented them from accessing welfare and housing benefits. In the UK, refuges that house victim-survivors of DVA derive most of their rental income from housing benefit, which means that they commonly refuse to house women with no recourse to public funds (NRPF), which deterred a few women from leaving abusive relationships.

> I don't know why, social services came to me and said they were taking me to a hotel. […] they took me to a neighbouring town, to a hotel, for two days. They said that afterwards they would go with me to get me some benefits or something, so that I could leave. Of course, it

> was of no use because I had just arrived, I didn't have a job, I didn't have anything, my child wasn't even born in England. So what could I get? Well, absolutely nothing! I spent two days in a hotel and that's all, I had hot water, I could take a proper bath and that's all. It was total nonsense. I came back to the house. (Paulina, 41)

It was several years before she was able to leave the abusive relationship. Practitioners articulated concerns that the treatment of Polish women was often shaped by an engrained xenophobia at the level of the individual practitioner whose racist attitudes might shape their service responses, as documented elsewhere (Schneider and Ingram 2005). The ambiguity written into the policy on the entitlement of mothers with NRPF (Anitha 2010) creates a service context where individual practitioners can determine the outcomes:

> I've met housing officers saying things like 'Oh you are coming to this country and you want to have, you want to have a house given by the council two months after you arrived in the country – yeah […] it's not fair, it's not right' without even checking properly the situation of this specific family who was asking for help. (Practitioner 2, Polish family worker in a school)

Gender intersects with immigration status to shape the very nature of DVA and its impact through the operation of welfare bordering and border regimes which function as conducive contexts that enable and sustain such violence for all migrant women (Anitha, Roy, and Yalamarty 2018; Segrave and Vasil 2024). However, while this commonality in migrant women's experiences of DVA is important to document, our findings show that Polish women's experiences are also shaped by their location within multiple intersecting regimes of inequalities based on race/ethnicity, class, position in the UK labour market, socio-cultural and religious contexts specific to their country of origin and their diasporas.

Both survivors and practitioners reported on how Brexit had also influenced public attitudes (including hate-crime) towards the Polish community, as documented elsewhere (Burnett 2017; Rzepnikowska 2019). Practitioners noted its impact on help-seeking and the increasing anxiety about accessing formal support:

> Also, after Brexit, people face additional bias, which is like hostility from not just ordinary people, but also from agencies, like a hostile environment […] people feel like that they will not be well-received when they go to British agencies and ask for help because they're not welcome here anymore, nobody cares about their problems anymore. (Practitioner 3, 'by and for' Polish DVA service)

As predominantly white Christians, Eastern European migrants can derive racialised privileges from their putative whiteness in relation to their position in the UK's segmented labour market (Fox 2012). Research also documents how Polish migrants racialised as not-quite-white in the context of Brexit have experienced xenophobia and racism (Rzepnikowska 2019) as well as their own investment into racial exclusions of other groups (Narkowicz 2023). The interviews were conducted during 2020–2022, in the aftermath of Brexit but in the midst of the deadline for the UK's EU settlement scheme, which generated glimpses of exclusionary welfare bordering practices within changing regulatory contexts. Other research has highlighted how barriers to accessing domestic abuse support services have increased for Eastern European migrant women living in England in the wake of Brexit (Phillips et al. 2024). Polish 'by and for' services compared bureaucratic gate-keeping by statutory services towards Polish women with much-

documented experiences of Black and racially minoritised women who lacked recourse to publicly funded support. Based on this, they argued for the funding of 'by and for' services for Eastern European women in the UK akin to those for Black and racially minoritised victim-survivors of DVA. During this research, the first 'by and for' refuge for Polish women opened its doors in Bristol. Future research is needed to document any specificities in Polish women's experiences of welfare bordering in order to understand how race, racialisation and whiteness are constructed by service providers and experienced, negotiated and performed by Polish migrant women seeking to leave abusive relationships and by the services seeking to support them.

Beyond the commonality in migrant women's experiences of welfare bordering, there were also particular features of Polish women's positionality within the UK labour market, including their high levels of employment that also shaped their exit strategies.

While two women who had entitlements to public funds sought safety in a refuge to enable them to leave the abusive relationship, most women we interviewed preferred to maintain their tenancies and employment by obtaining an injunction to exclude the abusive partner from the family home rather than relocate. Joanna recalled how her resolve to end the abusive relationship was weakened by the initial advice she received:

> So when I started my plan [to end abusive relationship], this person from [refuge] said, 'You can't stay in this house, […] come to me and I will try to find you a bed.' […] I was like, no, I will try another day and maybe they will help me with securing the flat. Then I found another person in the same place [refuge], she was a Polish speaker, and she said, 'OK, we can do this and he will have bail condition, you will stay in this house.' And then the housing association helped me too, with the contract just in my name. But if I had listened to this first person who picked up my phone call I would have believed her that I have to run away, I have to disappear. (Joanna, 42)

Malwina, who had to find work in a factory when she came to the UK but learnt English and eventually went on to build a professional career said:

> This is what they offered me. But I said, no, why on earth me, as a victim, I have to run away? Why can't you deal with the perpetrator? Why can't you remove the risk for me and my daughter, I wasn't ready for that. […] Changing your surroundings completely, going to the refuge where you do not know where you are. It's not the solution. It's simply not the solution. (Malwina, 36)

As first-generation migrants who had expended considerable resources into establishing themselves in their workplaces and communities and building up social networks in the UK, dislocating again to make a fresh start was a daunting prospect for many women we interviewed. Bowstead's (2015) characterisation of women's journeys to escape DVA as forced migration rang true for this category of our respondents.

The two women who decided to go to a refuge expressed their dissatisfaction at having to be uprooted from the life they had built in the UK for themselves and their children.

> I was the one who had to leave everything I worked for and I still didn't kind of, I couldn't understand why it was me again, you know, I left everything I knew, my friends, my work, my house, everything, I took my child, just few belongings, and I ended up two hundred miles away in the place where I don't know nobody, I was always working and now I'm going to be relying on benefits. (Julia, 40)

Apart from the forced nature of the migration, the women also reflected on how this move disrupted their dream of building an economically secure life through employment in the UK. In a context where self-reliance and achievement are strong elements of Polish self-identity, women conveyed to us their strong commitment to paid work. Moving to a refuge was seen to undermine this sense of self.

Contrary to what is documented in the scant scholarship on the medium – to long-term process of recovery from DVA in the UK (Kelly, Sharp-Jeffs, and Klein 2014; removed from peer review), all but two of the victim-survivors we interviewed were engaged in paid work. Further research is needed to understand the extent to which these initial findings of differential journeys towards recovery are shaped by the specificity of the gendered Polish migrant experience in the UK, especially the employment-related motivation for migration and the different employment trajectories of Polish women – compared to other migrant women – after exiting abusive relationships.

Conclusion

We draw upon Mahler and Pessar's (2001, 5) conceptual model of 'gendered geographies of power' to understand how 'gender operates simultaneously on multiple spatial and social scales (e.g. the body, the family, the state)' across transnational terrains and in the context of migration. Our analysis draws attention to the ways in which gender relations and ideologies are reaffirmed as well as reconfigured across transnational spaces to shape the nature and impact of DVA inflicted on Polish women in the UK. In particular, societal attitudes to family and women's roles in Poland – framed by positions from the Polish Catholic Church and the conservative government which limit legal and service provision around DVA in Poland – highlight the importance of context from countries of origin.

Our findings draw attention to *intersecting* social relations of power based on gender, race, religion, experiences of and discourses about migration and settlement, immigration status and the employment experiences of the women as well as their partners. In doing so, we draw attention to the commonalities in migrant women's experiences of DVA that are shaped by immigration and welfare bordering but also shed light on the specificities in relation to the Polish community – which has hitherto remained largely unexamined.

Our findings highlight the need for a more nuanced understanding of the links between migration and DVA rather than the grouping of all migrants together, or reduction of their experiences to either migration regimes or socio-cultural background. Research on DVA at the intersection of gender and migration has largely been examined in relation to the experiences of racially minoritised women. Polish women are invisibilised within DVA prevalence data that is gathered in the UK as they are categorised as 'white', but nonetheless experience – alongside other Eastern European women – a racialised othering in relation to the majority white British population, as reflected in their unequal economic and labour market positions in the UK as well as discrimination faced as migrants, especially in the context of Brexit. In this context, our research also draws attention to the need to examine the particular gendered and racialised experiences of EU migrants in a changing political context in the UK.

By widening our lens beyond individual relationships to the gendered geographies of power, we can understand the ways in which the violence that occurs within intimate relationships is shaped by broader socio-structural factors at the national and transnational levels including experiences of migration and the structural inequalities that shape migration policies and processes of settlement in the UK.

Note

1. 'By and for' organisations are those which provide domestic violence services for particular communities, and whose staff and trustees are from the same communities as the clients.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This work was supported by Marie Sklodowska-Curie Action [grant number 842854].

References

Aghtaie, N. 2016. "Iranian Women's Perspectives on Violence Against Women in Iran and the UK." *Iranian Studies* 49 (4): 593–611. https://doi.org/10.1080/00210862.2015.1017970.

Anitha, S. 2010. "No Recourse, no Support: State Policy and Practice Towards South Asian Women Facing Domestic Violence in England." *British Journal of Social Work* 40 (2): 462–479. https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcn160.

Anitha, S., A. Roy, and H. Yalamarty. 2018. "Gender, Migration and Exclusionary Citizenship Regimes: Conceptualising Transnational Abandonment of Wives as a Form of Violence Against Women." *Violence Against Women* 24 (7): 747–774. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801217720693.

Anthias, F. 2002. "'Where do I Belong?' Narrating Collective Identity and Translocational Positionality." *Ethnicities* 2 (4): 491–514. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468796802002040301.

Aziz, K. 2015. "Female Migrants' Work Trajectories: Polish Women in the UK Labour Market." *Central and Eastern European Migration Review* 4 (2): 87–105.

Batnizky, A., L. McDowall, and S. Dyer. 2009. "Flexible and Strategic Masculinities: The Working Lives and Gendered Identities of Male Migrants in London." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 36/10:1689–1708. https://doi.org/10.1080/13691830903123088.

Bell, J., and P. Pustułka. 2017. "Multiple Masculinities of Polish Migrant Men." *NORMA: International Journal for Masculinity Studies* 12 (2): 127–143. https://doi.org/10.1080/18902138.2017.1341677.

Bowstead, J. 2015. "Forced Migration in the United Kingdom: Women's Journeys to Escape Domestic Violence." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 40 (3): 307–320. https://doi.org/10.1111/tran.12085.

Burnett, J. 2017. "Racial Violence and the Brexit State." *Race and Class* 55:86–97.

Coyle, A. 2007. "Resistance, Regulation and Rights: The Changing Status of Polish Women's Migration and Work in the 'New' Europe." *European Journal of Women's Studies* 14 (1): 37–50. https://doi.org/10.1177/1350506807072316.

Crenshaw, K. 1991. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review* 43 (6): 1241–1299. https://doi.org/10.2307/1229039.

Cyrus, N. 2008. "Managing a Mobile Life: Changing Attitudes among Illegally Employed Polish Household Workers in Berlin." In *Migration and Mobility in an Enlarged Europe: A Gender*

Perspective, edited by Sigrid Metz-Göckel, Mirjana Morkvasic, and A. Senganata Münst, 249–280. Leverkusen: Verlag Barbara Budrich.
Donaldson, M., R. Hibbins, R. Howson, and B. Pease. 2009. *Migrant Men: Critical Studies of Masculinities and the Migration Experience*. New York, NY: Routledge.
EU. 2016. Special Eurobarometer 449. November. Accessed December 8, 2024. https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2115.
Femi-Ajao, O. 2018. "Intimate Partner Violence and Abuse Against Nigerian Women Resident in England, UK: A Cross- Sectional Qualitative Study." *BMC Women's Health* 18 (1): 123. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12905-018-0610-4.
Fernández-Reino, M., and C. Rienzo. 2022. *Migrants in the UK Labour Market: An Overview. Migration Observatory Briefing*. Oxford: COMPAS, University of Oxford.
Fox, J. E. 2012. "The Uses of Racism: Whitewashing new Europeans in the UK." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36 (11): 1871–1889. https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2012.692802.
FRA. 2014. *Violence Against Women: An EU-Wide Survey. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Violence against women: an EU-wide survey. Main results report | European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights.
Gonçalves, M., and M. Matos. 2016. "Prevalence of Violence Against Immigrant Women: A Systematic Review of the Literature." *Journal of Family Violence* 31 (6): 697–710. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-016-9820-4.
Graff, A., and E. Korolczuk. 2021. *Anti-gender Politics in the Populist Moment*. London: Routledge.
Grevio Response Poland. 2021. Comments Submitted by Poland on Grevio's Final Report on the Implementation of the Council Of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women And Domestic Violence (Baseline Report). https://rm.coe.int/grevio-inf-2021-10-eng-final-comments-gov-poland/1680a3d208.
Grzyb, M. 2020. "'We Condemn Abusing Violence Against Women': The Criminalization of Domestic Violence in Poland." *Archiwum Kryminologii XLII* 1:163–183. https://doi.org/10.7420/AK2020I.
Holmila, M., F. Beccaria, A. Ibanga, K. Graham, S. Hettige, R. Magri, and N. Tumwesigye. 2014. "Gender, Alcohol and Intimate Partner Violence: Qualitative Comparative Study." *Drugs: Education, Prevention & Policy* 21 (5): 398–407. https://doi.org/10.3109/09687637.2014.911245.
Jannasz, M. 2018. "Alcoholics Anonymous Comes to Poland: The Founding of the Polish AA and the American Connection." *European Journal of American Studies* [Online] 13 (3): 1–14. https://doi.org/10.4000/ejas.13694.
Kantar Polska. 2019. Ogólnopolska diagnoza zjawiska przemocy w rodzinie. Raport Kantar Polska dla Ministerstwa Rodziny, Pracy i Polityki Społecznej. https://static.im-g.pl/im/5/26198/m26198755,WYNIKI-BADANIA.pdf.
Kelly, L. 2003. "The Wrong Debate: Reflections on why Force is not the Key Issue with Respect to Trafficking in Women for Sexual Exploitation." *Feminist Review* 73 (1): 139–144. https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.fr.94000.
Kelly, L., N. Sharp-Jeffs, and R. Klein. 2014. *Finding the Costs of Freedom: How Women and Children Rebuild Their Lives After Domestic Violence*. Project Report. Solace Womens Aid, London.
Kofman, E., and P. Raghuram. 2006. "Gender and Global Labour Migrations: Incorporating Skilled Workers." *Antipode* 38 (2): 282–303. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8330.2006.00580.x.
Leszczyńska, K., K. Zielińska, and S. Urbańska. 2024. "From Hegemonic to Hybrid and Back? The Context-Adaptive Masculinity of Polish Male Migrants." *Men and Masculinities* 27 (3): 219–243. https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X241245097.
Long, J., H. Harvey, E. Wertans, R. Allen, K. Harper, K. Elliott, and D. Brennan. 2020. UK Femicides 2009-18. 010998-2020-Femicide-Report_V2 PDF (www.femicidecensus.org).
Lutz, H. 2008. *Migration and Domestic Work: A European Perspective on a Global Theme*. Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company.

Mahler, S. J., and P. Pessar. 2001. "Gendered Geographies of Power: Analyzing Gender Across Transnational Spaces." *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* 7 (4): 441–459. https://doi.org/10.1080/1070289X.2001.9962675.

Massey, D. 1994. *Space, Place and Gender*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

McIlwaine, C. J., L. Granada, and I. Valenzuela-Oblitas. 2019. *Migrant Women Facing Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) in the 'Hostile Immigration Environment' in London*. London: King's College.

Michalska, S. 2016. "Domestic Violence Against Women in Rural Communities in Poland." *Village and Agriculture*. Warszawa, PL 4 (173): 141–162. https://doi.org/10.53098/wir042016/08.

Mijatovic, D. 2019. *Report Following Her Visit to Poland from 11 to 15 March 2019*. Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe. Accessed December 8, 2024. https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2012799/CommDH%282019%2917+-+Report+on+Poland_EN.docx.pdf.

Morris, E. W., and K. Ratajczak. 2019. "Critical Masculinity Studies and Research on Violence Against Women: An Assessment of Past Scholarship and Future Directions." *Violence Against Women* 25 (16): 1980–2006. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801219875827.

Narkowicz, K. 2023. "White Enough, not White Enough: Racism and Racialisation among Poles in the UK." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 49 (6): 1534–1551. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2022.2154913.

ONS. 2018. "*Population of the UK by Country of Birth and Nationality: 2017*. Office for National Statistics." *Office for National Statistics*. Available at: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/internationalmigration/bulletins/ukpopulationbycountryofbirthandnationality/2017#:~:text=Poland%20was%20the%20most%20common,in%202017%20(Tab.

Pawłowska-Muc, A. K., A. B. Pilewska-Kozak, G. Stadnicka, J. J. Kęsik, and B. Dobrowolska. 2023, February. "Satisfaction with the Life of Polish Women Experiencing Domestic Violence." *Public Health* 11:1073612. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2023.1073612.

Phillips, C., J. Wysocka, L. Harvey-Golding, D. Simpson, and M. Chantkowski. 2024. "'They Have no Right to Safety and Protection': Brexit, Eastern European Women in the UK and Domestic Abuse." *Journal of Gender-Based Violence*, Online first. https://doi.org/10.1332/23986808Y2024D000000060.

Praszałowicz, D., et al. 2008. "Women at the Cross-Road: Poland and its Emigration and Immigration." In *Migration and Mobility in an Enlarged Europe: A Gender Perspective*, edited by Sigrid Metz-Göckel, 249–280. Leverkusen: Verlag Barbara Budrich.

Pustułka, P. 2012. "Polish Mothers on the Move: Transnationality and Discourses of Gender, Care, and Co-residentiality Requirement in the Narratives of Polish Women Raising Children in the West." *Studia Sociologica* 4 (2): 162–175.

Pustułka, P. 2015. "Escaping Workplace Gender Discrimination Through Mobility? Labor-Market Experiences of Polish Female Migrants in the West." *InterDisciplines. Journal of History and Sociology* 1:59–94. https://doi.org/10.4119/UNIBI/INDI-V6-I1-135.

Ryan, L., R. Sales, M. Tilki, and B. Siara. 2009. "Family Strategies and Transnational Migration: Recent Polish Migrants in London." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 35 (1): 61–77. https://doi.org/10.1080/13691830802489176.

Rzepnikowska, A. 2019. "Racism and Xenophobia Experienced by Polish Migrants in the UK Before and After Brexit Vote." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 45 (1): 61–77. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2018.1451308.

Safelives. 2015. *Supporting B&ME Victims – What the Data Shows*. https://safelives.org.uk/practice_blog/supporting-bme-victims-%E2%80%93-what-data-shows.

Sarti, R., and F. Scrinzi. 2010. "Introduction to the Special Issue: Men in a Woman's Job, Male Domestic Workers, International Migration and the Globalization of Care." *Men and Masculinities* 13 (1): 4–15. https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X10382.

Schneider, A. L., and H. M. Ingram. 2005. *Deserving and Entitled: Social Constructions and Public Policy*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Schrock, D. P., and M. Schwalbe. 2009. "Men, Masculinity, and Manhood Acts." *Annual Review of Sociology* 35 (1): 277–295. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-070308-115933

Segrave, M., and S. Vasil. 2024. *The Borders of Violence: Temporary Migration and Domestic and Family Violence*. London & New York: Routledge.

Siara, B. 2013. "The Construction of Gender in the Migration Space: Polish Women in the UK." *GENDER – Zeitschrift für Geschlecht, Kultur und Gesellschaft* 5 (1): 104–119.

Slany, K. 2018. "Family Relations and Gender Equality in the Context of Migration." In *The Impact of Migration on Poland: Eu Mobility and Social Change*, edited by A. White, I. Grabowska, P. Kaczmarczyk, and K. Slany, 108–130. London: UCL Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv550d7 m.10.

Sosnowska-Buxton, P. 2022, December. "Keeping mum: How Church and State Marginalise Polish Women Facing Domestic Violence." *The Sociological Review Magazine*, Online first. https://doi.org/10.51428/tsr.ocru7249.

Sosnowska-Buxton, P., and I. Studsrød. 2025. "Peripheral Embodiment: Polish Women Rebuilding Their Lives After Domestic Violence Through Their Bodies." *Violence Against Women* 31 (1): 61–78. https://doi.org/10.1177/10778012241275694.

Truong, M., M. Sharif, A. Olsen, D. Pasalich, B. Calabria, and N. Priest. 2022. "Attitudes and Beliefs About Family and Domestic Violence in Faith-Based Communities." *Australian Journal of Social Issues* 57 (4): 880–897. https://doi.org/10.1002/ajs4.210.

Urbańska, S. 2016. "Transnational Motherhood and Forced Migration: Causes and Consequences of the Migration of Polish Working-Class Women 1989–2010." *Central and Eastern European Migration Review* 5 (1): 109–128. https://doi.org/10.17467/ceemr.2016.11.

Voolma, H. 2018. ""I Must be Silent Because of Residency": Barriers to Escaping Domestic Violence in the Context of Insecure Immigration Status in England and Sweden." *Violence Against Women* 24 (15): 1830–1850. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801218755974.

White, A. 2011. *Polish Families and Migration Since EU Accession*. Bristol: Policy Press.

White, A. 2018. "The Impact of Migration on Poland: Eu Mobility and Social Change." In *The Impact of Migration on Poland: Eu Mobility and Social Change*, edited by A. White, I. Grabowska, P. Kaczmarczyk, and K. Slany, 186–212. London: UCL Press. https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv550d7 m.13.

Zielińska-Poćwiardowska, I., and P. Sosnowska-Buxton. 2023. "Przemoc Domowa w Polsce: Zaproszenie do Podjęcia Socjologicznej Analizy Zjawiska." *Studia Socjologiczne* 2 (249): 131–154. https://doi.org/10.24425/sts.2023.146172.