**EU Nationals’ Vulnerability in the Context of Brexit: The Case of Polish Nationals**

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**Abstract**

Since the late 1990s, populist discourse based on anti-immigration sentiments has been on the rise in Britain. This phenomenon reached a peak during the EU Referendum (ER) campaign and shortly thereafter. The ER has been linked to the upsurge in racially and religiously aggravated offences recorded post-July 2016. Polish nationals, who constitute the largest group of EU nationals in the UK, were targeted by many of these incidents. It could therefore be argued that, in the last years, and particularly, since the ER, EU nationals living in the UK have become more “vulnerable”. To test this hypothesis, this contribution is based on an interdisciplinary project that collected socio-legal evidence to compare the vulnerability of the Polish community in Southampton before and after the ER. The paper draws on vulnerability and psychology literature to differentiate between “objective” and “subjective” vulnerability. Our study deploys mixed methods (qualitative and quantitative) to test changes in objective and subjective vulnerability among Southampton-based Poles before and after the ER. Our findings suggest that, following the ER, Poles felt significantly more vulnerable, especially in terms of subjective vulnerability, even if they had never experienced overt hate incidents or discrimination (objective vulnerability) before.

**Key words:** vulnerability, discrimination, hate crime, Brexit, EU nationals

**1. Introduction**

Since the late 1990s, populist discourse based on anti-immigration sentiments has been on the rise in the UK, with such feelings being increasingly expressed among the establishment (McLaren and Johnson 2004). This phenomenon reached a peak during the EU Referendum (ER) campaign and shortly thereafter. Indeed, in July 2016, following the ER, there was a 29% increase in the hate crimes recorded in England and Wales, 78% of them were racially motivated whereas 7% were religiously motivated (Home Office 2016). Polish nationals, who constitute the largest group of EU nationals,[[1]](#endnote-1) were targeted by many of the post-ER hate crimes (ONS 2016).

Besides the post-referendum *objective* increase in recorded racist hate crime, the politicization of Englishness (Virdee and McGeever 2018) has also “othered” EU nationals (Cohen and Page 2018), who increasingly *feel* that they do not belong in the UK. Whilst the manifestation of racism post-ER has taken many shapes (including hate incidents), it has also created a more nebulous -yet tangible- “hostile environment” (Travis 2013) where many Britons seem to feel more entitled to express xenophobic views (UN Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance2018), leading those foreign-born to *subjectively* “feel unwelcome” and to perceive that their nationality may *now* start to be an aggravating problem.

We draw on the notion of “vulnerability” developed by Fineman (2008) and psychology literature to build a theoretical framework that distinguishes between *objective* and *subjective* vulnerability. We apply those concepts to the experiences and perceptions of Southampton-based Polish nationals *before and after* the ER.[[2]](#endnote-2) On this basis, our key research question is: How has the ER campaign and vote impacted on the Objective Vulnerability (OV) and Subjective Vulnerability (SV) experienced by Poles in Southampton?

Based on evidence from this theoretical framework and the analysis of data collected via mixed methods (survey, focus groups and interviews) among Southampton-based Poles between April and July 2018, the paper makes original analytical and empirical contributions to the emerging literature on Brexit and the vulnerability of EU nationals. *Analytically*, it provides a new conceptualisation of “vulnerability” (the distinction between OV and SV), which sheds light on the type of experiences that Polish (and EU nationals) have been facing since the ER campaign. *Empirically*, the paper provides new evidence of how Polish migrants perceive the new realities generated by the ER vote, such as uncertainty about their legal status and discriminatory incidents.

We start by developing the theoretical framework, based on the distinction between OV and SV (section 2) and we discuss whether EU nationals were already vulnerable before the ER (section 3). We then introduce the key features of our methodological approach (section 4). Finally, on the basis of our data, we analyse how the ER campaign and vote have affected Poles’ vulnerability (section 5) and we conclude (section 6).

**2. Vulnerability: an objective and subjective concept**

Our theoretical framework revolves around the idea of “vulnerability”. This section considers the most relevant uses of “vulnerability” in socio-legal and psychological studies and clarifies how it is used in this work.

Fineman (2008) claims that everybody is vulnerable because we are all susceptible of being harmed or dependent on others; “susceptibility is an ontological condition of our humanity” (Mackenzie et al. 2014:4). Thus, despite the *universal* character of human vulnerability, the concept may also be used to describe the relationship between the *individual* and *objective* factors outside his/her control. Indeed, most international and national institutions that have relied on this concept for policy or legal interventions have done so on the basis of the *objective* characteristics of specific groups. For instance, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities suggests that girls and women with disabilities are more vulnerable than other groups because they are “at greater risk of violence, abuse or exploitation”.[[3]](#endnote-3) Similarly, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) has relied on the higher vulnerability of certain groups according, mainly, to *objective* factors. For example, it has referred to the “vulnerable position of Gypsies as a minority” due to “their different lifestyle”[[4]](#endnote-4) compared to the majority (Peroni and Timmer 2013:1063).[[5]](#endnote-5)

However, the concept of vulnerability can equally be defined and applied according to the *subjective* perceptions of the relevant groups. This dimension of vulnerability relates to how *we comprehend* our relations with *others*. The ECtHR itself has acknowledged the relevance of *individuals’ feelings* in relation to the vulnerability of women victims of domestic violence or subject to precarious reproductive health situations. In these contexts, the ECtHR refers not only to objective factors (e.g. abuse history), but also to the woman’s “*fear* of further violence”[[6]](#endnote-6) or “distress”.[[7]](#endnote-7) In some national jurisdictions, the *subjective* vulnerability of certain claimants is also considered legally relevant. For instance, the UK concept of harassment requires consideration of both the *subjective* perception of the claimant (i.e. “whether the person *feels* that his dignity has been violated”) and whether it was *objectively* reasonable for the claimant to take offence (Equality Act 2010, s 26(4)).

The idea of “SV” has primarily been used in socio-psychological research to describe a belief that one is “unprotected from danger”, e.g. due to feelings of potential personal fragility, economic insecurity, or stressful life events (Perloff 1983:43). SV can, therefore, be described as feelings of anxiety, fear and apprehension in anticipation of uncertainty and threat (Loewenstein et al 2001), or concern in response to the possibility of victimisation (Weinstein et al 2007) linked to past or potential incidents of hostile treatment. Some psychologists linked SV to perceptions of anxiety (Riskind 1997): a person who experiences threats as rapidly growing “has a painful sense of looming vulnerability to harm and becomes more anxious and threatened as a result” (Riskind 1997:688). The mere possibility of perceived threat and discrimination, or cumulative experiences of “everyday indignities” (Beckford and Gilliat 1998:84) may have negative effects on one’s mental and social well-being, which, in practice, entail feeling *subjectively vulnerable*.

SV is also linked to ontological insecurity. Indeed, “ontological security” and “existential threat” are key concepts in Giddens’ (1991) theory of human existence. In brief, ontological security describes a “person’s fundamental sense of safety in the world and includes a basic trust of other people. Obtaining such trust becomes necessary in order for a person to maintain a sense of psychological well-being” (Giddens 1991:38-9). Ontological security is linked to agency: individuals need to feel secure in who they are as identities, which can be threatened by uncertainty linked to one’s cognitive environment, i.e. what to expect (Mitzen 2006:342).

We argue that the idea of SV can also be applied in socio-legal contexts. The concept of “vulnerability” can thus be understood as having an *objective* dimension, based on attributescharacterising a certain group (e.g. their foreign look), often leading to one-off *incidents* experienced by its members, and a *subjective* one, which focuses on the individual’s *feelings* (which may be linked to external events directly suffered by them and/or to wider social trends and debates).[[8]](#endnote-8)

*Both* OV and SV are based on people’s *individuals perceptions* because measuring exposure to racial discrimination or hate “requires making attributions about another person’s motivation” in a specific situation (Brondolo et al 2005:361). While occasionally hate incidents may *overtly* refer to the attributes of a certain minority group (e.g. the national origin), this is often not the case. In fact, even the official recording of hate crimes and incidents by the UK police (which falls under our concept of *OV*) is based on “the *perception* of the victim, or any other person”.[[9]](#endnote-9)

In the following sections, we argue that the political debate and institutional attitude towards migrants, the media discourse and consequent changes in social behaviour linked to the ER have led not only to changes in *OV* (xenophobic incidents experienced by national/ethnic minorities living in the UK) but also to changes in *SV*, including ontological security, that we illustrate with our case study based on the Polish community in Southampton.[[10]](#endnote-10)

**3. EU nationals’ vulnerability before the EU Referendum**

Even before the ER, UK-based EU nationals were vulnerable due to institutional discrimination and barriers to enjoy their free movement and social rights (O’Brien 2017). There are studies focusing on the vulnerability of certain groups before the ER, particularly since 2005, when the public opinion started to be increasingly negative about immigration (Migration Observatory 2018). According to existing literature, the vulnerability experienced by EU nationals before the ER can be easily identified in at least three areas: (a) institutional discrimination, (b) negative media coverage and hostile political discourse, and (c) discriminatory and hate incidents at grass-roots level.

***a. Institutional discrimination***

EU migrants arriving in the UK from 2005 onwards have been “racialised”, not due to their “biological difference” but rather due to “socially constructed […] practices of exclusion” (Fox et al 2012:681). For instance, in the 2000s, the Home Office migration policies differentiated between various groups of EU nationals according to their alleged desirability, which produced “racialised effects”: e.g. A2 nationals (Romanians and Bulgarians) were subject to stricter migration controls than A8 migrants (Fox et al. 2012:685). O’Brien (2017) has also found recurrent policies of institutional discrimination.[[11]](#endnote-11) She reveals, *inter alia*, that UK decision-makers considering EU residence and welfare claims “don’t look at [EU] *law*. Just [at the UK] *guidance*” (2017:201, 207-209) and systematically dismiss cases without having sought enough evidence.[[12]](#endnote-12) Other studies recount difficulties and delays to obtain residence documents, particularly for non-EU family members (see e.g. Nicolau 2018:7-9, 16, 23).

***b. Negative media coverage and political discourse***

The so-called “politics of othering” (Looney 2017) was also gaining significant media coverage before the ER.From the mid-2000s, the media discourse blamed EU migrants for socio-economic problems. For example, Allen (2016:2) found that, between 2006-15, “[e]conomic arguments dominated the discussion of problems related to both EU and illegality” in tabloid, midmarket and broadsheet press. The higher than expected influx of Eastern Europeans led tabloid media to depict negatively such arrivals as “floods” (Allen and Blinder 2013).[[13]](#endnote-13) The negative media rhetoric also portrayed migrants as responsible for higher levels of crime (Fox et al 2012:687-688),[[14]](#endnote-14) as a social and economic threat (Hoffner and Cohen 2013), as the cause of unemployment and housing shortage,[[15]](#endnote-15) and as a strain on public services.[[16]](#endnote-16)

This discourse was embraced by far-right parties, such as the UKIP, which took advantage of the 2008 recession and public concern over immigration to gain supporters. UKIP’s strategy was based on “a moral *panic* narrative framed around negative stereotypes of foreigners” (Morrison 2016), who were presented as scapegoats for increasing pressure on struggling public services (Tucket 2017). Similarly, the BNP’s success was largely built on *anxiety* and *alarm* about the volume of migration and its alleged (negative) cultural and economic consequences.[[17]](#endnote-17)

This anti-EU and anti-migration narrative was also endorsed by mainstream parties.[[18]](#endnote-18) For instance, PM Cameron’sBloomberg speech in “full of radical rhetoric for renegotiating the UK’s relationship with the EU” (Emerson 2014) to end “what he termed abuse of the right to free movement” and “gain greater control over migration” (Craig 2016:102). These claims legitimised public opinions against (EU) migrants and led to a “nasty rhetoric from elite pro-Brexit campaigners’ based on racism, xenophobia and Islamophobia” (Outhwaite 2017:62).

***c. Discrimination and hate incidents***

These developments paved the way for discriminatory and hate incidents even before the ER. Already in 2011, Polish migrants in the UK perceived both a negative “attitudinal climate” and “receiving context”, particularly “towards the new immigrant groups from Eastern Europe”, which was “fuelled by the radical right-wing parties […] [and] group-specific stereotypes articulated in public debates” (McGinnity and Gijsberts 2015:21). Despite being nominally “white”, Eastern European migrants who arrived in the UK post-2004 were “racialised as different” (Fox 2013; Dawney 2008) according to attributes such as having foreign registration plates, foreign TV satellite dishes, speaking foreign languages or having a foreign accent or look (Rzepnikowska 2018:10).

The labour market is one of the areas where being identified as Eastern European could have more significant consequences. Indeed,70% of UK-resident Polish respondents to a FRA survey (2010) considered that being of “a minority background was a burden in the labour market”.[[19]](#endnote-19) For instance, Acik et al (2014) note that A8 migrants tend to suffer “ethnic penalties” in the high-end labour market, and they are likely to be overqualified and underpaid in the elementary occupations they tend to be employed at.[[20]](#endnote-20)

Eastern Europeans have also experienced a rise in xenophobic hate crime: in 2013, 585 people were arrested for hate crimes (e.g. violent assault, vandalism) against Poles, which constitutes a tenfold increase from 2004 (McDevitt 2014). Rzepnikowska (2018:8-10) also reports how her Polish interviewees lived “in fear” and experienced “general hostility” by British neighbours, including damage to property.[[21]](#endnote-21)

This section has shown that EU nationals (especially, Eastern Europeans) had already been experiencing some levels of vulnerability before the ER. However, the grass-roots level incidents had often not reached the overtness and frequency they did in the months preceding the Referendum and afterwards. Additionally, these phenomena arguably had relatively limited subjective repercussions on those whom they targeted. Publicly available information and our own data show that the ER led to an increase not only in OV of EU nationals but also in their SV (section 5).

**4. Methodology**

The key arguments developed in this contribution draw on mixed methods and different data sources. Whereas the literature relies on either qualitative methods based on interviews and/or focus groups (Rzepnikowska 2018) or quantitative strategies based on the application of statistical methods to surveys (McGhee et al. 2017), here we combined both qualitative and quantitative approaches to investigate whether Poles who had lived in Southampton since at least 2014 experienced changes in their OV and SV in connection with the ER.

1. ***Data collection design***

This study was based on a ‘convergent parallel mixed methods’ design (Cresswell 2014:219), i.e. collecting qualitative and quantitative data in parallel and analysing them separately to understand how the findings relate or compare to each other. This design was chosen to (a) gain an in-depth understanding of the key issues at stake through the qualitative data and (b) to verify whether those findings could be extended to the Polish population based in Southampton through the quantitative data.

Our qualitative approach consisted in four focus groups with Polish nationals[[22]](#endnote-22) and seven semi-structured interviews with local “contact points” for the Polish community. The purpose of the focus groups was to better understand the narratives of different demographic and socio-economic groups of Poles in relation to the research question, and whether their vulnerability experiences varied according to these factors.[[23]](#endnote-23) We had 21 focus groups participants, 76% of which had been in the UK for more than five years. While the sample was quite diverse, most of them were students or employees aged 45 years or less.[[24]](#endnote-24) On the other hand, through the semi-structured interviews with professionals who have regular contact with a large amount of Southampton-based Poles,[[25]](#endnote-25) we sought to find out what might be the key trends linked to our research questions and whether, through their contact with Poles, they could perceive certain vulnerability issues that might not have been so obvious to identify at individual level.

For the quantitative approach, we designed a survey to assess whether Polish nationals experienced changes in OV and SV due to the ER campaign and results. The questionnaire was adapted from the “Perceived Ethnic Discrimination Questionnaire” (PEDQ) from Contrada et al (2001), which has been widely used to measure several subdimensions of racism, which are closely linked to our concepts of OV and SV. We replaced references to ‘ethnicity’ by ‘national origin’. We also introduced questions specifically relevant to the SV of the Polish community in Southampton[[26]](#endnote-26) and we reorganised questions to start with respondents’ general impressions, followed by the least serious discrimination incidents gradually increasing to more serious ones. Instead of a seven-point scale, a Likert-like 5-point scale from ‘never’ (value 1) to ‘very often’ (value 5) was used to avoid large variances.[[27]](#endnote-27)

To measure changes in perceptions linked to the ER campaign and vote, the participants were asked about changes in their own experiences and in the experiences of Poles living in Southampton (according to their knowledge) in two periods:[[28]](#endnote-28) 2014-15 (before the ER was announced) and 2016-17 (once the ER was announced, the campaign and vote took place and Brexit negotiations started). For both periods, participants answered the same set of 22 questions:[[29]](#endnote-29) 12 were linked to SV, whereas 10 were linked to OV (see details in Appendix, Tables A4, A5).

1. ***Participants’ selection and recruitment***

As discussed, the aim of the semi-structured interviews was to develop an in-depth understanding of changes in OV and SV, so we used purposeful sampling strategies (namely, snowball sampling instead of random sampling) to select an appropriate and diverse range of experts who were considered to be ‘information rich’, starting with the EU Welcome independent advisor. The sample intentionally included official advice providers and bodies which have extensive contact with the Polish community, and both Polish and non-Polish interviewees.[[30]](#endnote-30)

Given the absence of contact details and demographic data of Polish nationals living in Southampton, for the survey and the focus groups, we used snowball and convenience sampling methods. To minimise online survey biases we used “active data collection” strategies (McGhee et al. 2017; Couper 2000), which included approaching Polish participants in “Polish hubs”,[[31]](#endnote-31) promoting the survey via the local Polish radio, magazine and social media (i.e. Polish Facebook groups and Twitter), and using a Polish public relations/marketing specialist firm to recruit demographically and socio-economically diverse participants.[[32]](#endnote-32)

1. ***Implementation***

Focus groups and interviews were conducted on the basis of guides which contained opened-ended, non-leading questions, which started with an introduction to the project and a warm up question. Both interview and focus groups questions were pilot tested.

The focus groups guides were closely linked to the themes and questions of the survey, whereas the interview guides aimed to establish first what was the type and frequency of contact of the experts with the Polish community in Southampton and then gave the expert the opportunity to mention potential OV and SV incidents and trends. Each focus group was led by two researchers, one of whom was always a Polish national. Hence, participants were expressly given the chance to speak either in English or in Polish (although the former was always preferred).

Most of the interviews were conducted in English by a member of the research team. However, to facilitate empathy, trust and smoother communication with the interviewee, on the two occasions where a Polish national was interviewed, the interviews were conducted in Polish by a Polish research team member. The latter were then translated into English by an independent translator. Both interviews and focus groups were transcribed verbatim from the audio recording.

The survey was translated into Polish to ensure that the sample was as diverse and representative as possible[[33]](#endnote-33) and to avoid language confusion. It was opened between the 28th of April and the 24th of June 2018.

1. ***Analysis***

The qualitative analysis of the interviews and the focus groups was done manually and separately. Following Creswell (2014), the coding framework was based on three levels of abstraction: (1) at the highest level, the themes were predefined according to the research questions, (2) at the intermediate and lower levels, codes and sub-codes were derived through non-linear iterations from the interviews and focus groups data, respectively. The separate coding and analysis of interviews and focus groups allowed us to compare them and identify potential divergences and/or similitudes in the emerging codes and sub-codes.

The quantitative approach involved inferential statistical analysis of data from the tailored online survey, which collected responses from 142 participants. We took precautions to minimise survey participants’ “recollection bias”[[34]](#endnote-34) (e.g. Viscusi and Zeckhauser 2005) between the two periods considered: 62 participants responded the survey questions starting with the 2014-15 period, while 80 participants started with the 2016-17 period. We found no significant statistical difference between the responses of the two groups.

While it was difficult to test the validity of the survey because there is no ‘gold standard measure’ (Epstein and Martin 2014:57) of vulnerability, following Ekinci (2015:128-130), the survey was pilot-tested with two potential respondents and two fellow researchers, who confirmed its face validity. To assess the reliability of the survey (internal consistency) we used Cronbach’s alpha reliability test (Cronbach 1951). Specifically, we tested the internal reliability of the 21 quantitative questions for each period (i.e. 2014-15 and 2015-16). We found that the alpha coefficients were, overall, 0.920 and 0.935 for each period, respectively. Moreover, the alpha coefficients for each of the 21 quantitative items were always equal or higher than 0.910 and 0.930 for each period, respectively. These relatively high alpha coefficients suggest that the scale used in the survey is reliable (Appendix, Table A6).

We used the 21 quantitative survey items to test whether there is a significant statistical difference between the distributions of responses on each statement/question *before* the ER campaign and vote compared with the distributions of responses on the same statement/question *after* the ER campaign and vote. For this purpose, we used the parametric t-test and the non-parametric two-sample Wilcoxon signed-rank test because the distributions were skewed in some cases. We then compared the t-test and Wilcoxon signed-rank test for items linked to OV and to SV to identify potential differences. Table A5 (in the Appendix) reports the means of responses for each statement/question before and after the ER, together with the results of testing for the difference between the distributions.

The key results from our qualitative and quantitative data (and their interpretation) are discussed in section 5, where official governmental documents, policy reports and studies by key stakeholdershave also been used to provide context for our data and analysis.

**5. Vulnerability after the EU Referendum**

Immediately before the ER, the Leave campaign instrumentalised the immigration debate with arguments like “we need to leave the EU to stop immigration”, which generated a heightened feeling, among EU nationals, that there was a “threat in the air” (McGinnity and Merove 2015). This has also been boosted by the uncertainty about EU nationals’ status and rights post-Brexit. Numerous reports have, indeed, warned about a peak in discrimination and hate crime incidents registered immediately before and after the ER which were *overtly* linked to their foreign origin (OV) (see e.g. Burnett 2017).

We argue that, regardless of whether that perception of “threat” materialised in *OV* incidents or not for a specific individual, there was a generalised *feeling* of higher *SV* among EU migrants, i.e. increased anxiety, fear, ontological insecurity and distress because of their foreign origin, and self-consciousness about being different, in line with the psychological attributes of SV (section 3). This is supported by *our quantitative data*. Applying the t-test and the Wilcoxon matched-pairs test to our survey data, which included 21 closed questions (52% linked to SV and 48% to OV), we find statistically significant changes in 43% items (56% relating to SV). Importantly, the changes in SV were statistically *more* significant (most of them at 1%) compared to the changes in OV (significant at 5% and 10%), which suggests that respondents may have experienced SV *even without having been subject to discrimination or hate incidents* obviously linked to their foreign origin. In terms of OV, respondents experienced a significant rise in offensive comments (spoken at them or behind their backs), unfair treatment at school or by service people. They also perceived that Britons avoided contact with them more frequently. In contrast, regarding SV, respondents *felt* notably less welcome and perceived that they “didn’t fit” more acutely; they also thought about going back to their country more often. Linking these results to the literature, we can affirm that the ER acted both as a realistic and symbolic threat (cf Stephan and Stephan 1996) to Southampton-based Poles (see below). In the following, we use our qualitative evidence to explain the four main triggers for this increase in Poles’ SV linked to the ER, whether they experienced OV at personal level or not.[[35]](#endnote-35)

1. ***Higher levels of objective vulnerability***

According to official reports, in the weeks preceding the ER and after the vote, the levels of racial hate crime increased substantially. While until April 2016 the number of racially aggravated offences reported to the police per month remained roughly similar, racially motivated hate crimes increased from 49,419 incidents reported in 2015/16 to 62,685 in 2016/17 (+268%) and 71,251 in 2017/18 (+442%) (Home Office 2018). Long-term increases in hate crime may partly be due to an improvement in hate-crime recording, but events like the ER in June 2016 seem to also have had an impact on the short-term increases (Home Office 2018:12).[[36]](#endnote-36) Indeed, the unofficial Leave slogan of “taking the country back” and racialising public debates may have encouraged these behaviours (Burnett 2017). This is in line with Stephan and Stephan’s (1996) concept of “realistic” threats suffered by Poles, namely threats posed by the outgroups (Britons) to the very existence of the ingroup (Poles).

Unfortunately, while the concept of “race hate crime” includes offences with xenophobic elements (i.e. offences targeting certain individuals due to their nationality and/or national origin) (Home Office 2018:8; College of Policing 2014:2-4), the official figures on recorded race hate crime do not identify the number of hate crimes that were motivated by the nationality or national origin of the victim/s. Nevertheless, several sources confirm that many -although not all- of the incidents that occurred shortly before or after the Referendum targeted EU nationals. For example, research by the Institute of Race Relations on 134 incidents of racial violence reported in the mass media in the month after the ER reveals that “the most frequent “targets” were European migrants (particularly, Eastern Europeans) and Muslims” (Burnett 2017:87).

The *qualitative evidence* from *our research* mirrors these post-Referendum emergent trends. Polish nationals in Southampton experienced verbal abuse, with frequent references to “going back to their country”,[[37]](#endnote-37) incidents in schools (e.g. bullying by British classmates),[[38]](#endnote-38) smashing of Polish shop windows or being called names.[[39]](#endnote-39) Our participants mentioned problems with neighbours and derogatory comments linked to being Polish.[[40]](#endnote-40)

Employment was a prominent area of discrimination and abuse. Poles were particularly targeted by their peers or managers. In this regard, *one of our interviewees*, the CAB officer reported that:

We have received reports of […] employers mistreating Polish citizens on the basis of their nationality, the race, the language […] [Poles] have been asked not to talk Polish, even […] during break times […], verbally abused, or sometimes they complain that because they don’t understand English … their colleagues make jokes about them.

*Our survey participants* also experienced incidents that they considered to be based on their Polish origin, e.g.:

I [had] difficulties at work because of my foreign origin (discussions about Brexit, comments and different treatment of me [sic] [#2931585]

I informed my managers about humiliating me and physical threats from other employees. Eventually, I have changed my job. [#2933958]

Harassment and verbal abuse by service providers or clients were also fairly common. For example, users of buses swearing at the Polish bus driver referring to his foreign/Polish origin,[[41]](#endnote-41) supermarket clients “suggesting” that a Polish citizen should buy British -and not French- cheese,[[42]](#endnote-42) or landlords saying that they would not rent their property to a Pole because “[they] might have to go back soon”.[[43]](#endnote-43)

These incidents reflect what many of *our participants* noted: that Britons’ “attitude […] towards immigrants has not changed. They just started to openly express what they thought before”[[44]](#endnote-44) and felt “more confident in showing their dissatisfaction towards immigrants”.[[45]](#endnote-45) The ER results were interpreted by some Britons as a legitimisation of the Leave campaign’s anti-immigration agenda and an entitlement to openly express xenophobic views. “[The] Brexit vote gave people a perceived right to say […] nasty things to Polish people”.[[46]](#endnote-46)

In light of the above, it can be argued that Southampton-based Poles experienced the objective dimension of vulnerability: they suffered discriminatory and harassment incidents where the perpetrators *overtly* referred to their foreign origin, which made them more vulnerable from an *objective* standpoint. Arguably, these incidents have heightened not only the victims’ feelings of anxiety, fear and apprehension (i.e. their *SV*), but also those of their Polish/EU relatives and friends who heard about the incidents, even if they did not experience *OV* themselves.

1. ***Heightened sense of being different***

*Our data* show that another trigger for SV is Poles’ heightened self-awareness of their *difference* (i.e. their *non-Britishness*). As *our participants* explained, they are more sensitive to comments about their origin, more aware that they are “outsiders” and that they may be judged differently or negatively for that reason:

It makes you so visible to suddenly have this tag: “*I’m a migrant*”… *I didn’t feel it before* Brexit.[[47]](#endnote-47)

After Brexit *[Poles] have become aware* that people are watching them ... [Poles] are aware they are not English, they are not Irish, *they are Polish*.[[48]](#endnote-48)

In 2014-15, I paid less attention to what British people thought and said about us. Currently, […] I hear more often the comments that after the UK leaves the EU, there will be less problems with immigrants. The current atmosphere is much worse than it was before. [#2857984]

Among the “difference markers” mentioned in section 3, Poles feel particularly self-conscious that certain “signs” can generate the “*migrant tag”*, such as buying Polish products (see below) and the language (i.e. speaking Polish, the accent or “having a poor English”):

People [are] picking on my accent … when I talk to my neighbours I’m *self-conscious* about it.[[49]](#endnote-49)

I think that I would be better treated if I spoke with a British accent and I am seriously considering taking lessons to learn it. [#2856645]

This self-awareness about being a migrant is exacerbated by Britons’ frequent questions about Poles’ country of origin, often in a random fashion, which constantly reminds the latter that they do not belong here:

Putting obvious discrimination aside, there is a large amount of behaviours that are considered acceptable but make people feel interrogated, e.g. asking *where you’re from* when it doesn’t have anything to do with the situation, asking if you are happy to be in the UK out of the blue. [#2878410][[50]](#endnote-50)

The literature indicates that already before the ER, Poles adopted “avoidance strategies” to protect themselves from hate incidents and/or discrimination.[[51]](#endnote-51) However, according to *our results*, the post-Referendum feeling that “the threat is in the air” has reinforced this type of strategies as a defensive reaction to the new environment and to the higher self-consciousness of the “migrant tag”. Importantly, the phenomenon of avoiding Polish shops or not engaging with the Polish community for fear of having one’s own identity disclosed has affected *both* Poles who have experienced *OV* (e.g. #2931585) *and* those who feel more integrated and/or have never suffered any discrimination or hate incident (e.g. #2878410):

From 2015 […] I felt that British people and my friends changed their attitude towards me. There were more *comments and discussion about immigrants*. […] At the moment, I feel *very unwelcome* here. I am afraid to buy Polish products in shops like Tesco or to speak in Polish on the street. [#2931585]

I’m married to a Brit and do not really engage in the Polish community, thus *I never had the chance to experience any [discrimination incidents]*. However, after the Brexit vote there was a slight hesitation from me to e.g. go into a Polish shop, or *a worry that I actually might look or sound different and so might be identified as a foreigner and verbally abused*. No such thing happened. [#2878410]

From a psychological perspective, this heightened sense of being different has contributed to feelings of suspicion of being perceived and treated differently in the post-ER social climate. Indeed, these feelings are consistent with what psychology literature calls the symbolic group threats (Stephan and Stephan 1996), i.e. threats to a group’s religion, values, belief system, attitudes… which affect group esteem (Cameron, Duck, Terry and Lalonde 2005), and ultimately their status. These affective responses of fear and anxiety in anticipation of potential threats can clearly be linked to the concept of *SV* as defined in Section 3.

1. ***Feeling “unwelcome”: various degrees of “otherness” perception***

From a quantitative perspective, *our survey* also revealed that the number of respondents who felt less welcome in 2016-17 than in 2014-15 is statistically significant at 1%.[[52]](#endnote-52) This finding is supported by comments made by *our project participants*, which show different levels of perceived “otherness” varying from the milder feeling of “awkwardness” to feeling “unsafe”:

After the vote, [Polish] clients were saying “I just *feel* really bad. I *feel awkward* now”’.[[53]](#endnote-53)

After the referendum […] I started to *feel unwelcome* and that I am worse than British people, because of my foreign origin. [#2856590]

[After the Brexit vote] *I felt really vulnerable*… I mean, I still feel very vulnerable.[[54]](#endnote-54)

Since the referendum *I feel* that the British nation is more hostile towards immigrants […] *I do not feel safe here anymore*. [#2860947]

The perception of feeling unwelcome is both compounded by the widespread media coverage of the issue of immigration and its connection to the Brexit debate and/or by the Poles’ direct contacts with Britons. Even those who have not experienced OV may feel “unwanted”[[55]](#endnote-55) or “guilty” about the ER result,[[56]](#endnote-56) and/or may be more aware that the mainstream society is “watching them”.[[57]](#endnote-57) Due to the migration-centred discourse that dominated the Referendum campaign, many Poles reckon that the general atmosphere has changed and that British society has become more hostile towards them. The following comments from *our participants* clearly illustrate this increased *feeling* of SV (whatever OV experiences might be at individual level):

Since 2016, I *feel* like I live in a different country, less tolerant. […] *Hearing* about anti-immigration campaign, discrimination and attacks towards EU immigrants is also disturbing. [#2860873]

The most profound change […] has been in the public discourse of the presence of Eastern European in the UK which changed from positive to very negative; *it did not affect me directly* *but made me feel less welcome*. [#2879319]

What has changed is probably *my perception*… I got much more *sensitive* and much more *suspicious*… I … started to look for some kind of signals and things.[[58]](#endnote-58)

The decision to leave the EU resulted from antipathy towards immigrants, therefore *I took personally the result of the referendum*, since it shows how much English people do not want us \*immigrants\* here. [#2860947]

Accordingly, the strong presence of anti-migrant rhetoric in the ER campaign and the understanding that the result somehow legitimised it, left many Poles *feeling* collectively prejudiced, judged, and thus, *subjectively* vulnerable, by the very fact of the ER result.[[59]](#endnote-59) This is consistent with the ontological insecurity and existential anxieties triggered by Brexit among EU nationals (see Browning 2018) as it amounts to the insecurity of the self or of the subjective sense of who one is (Mitzen 2006), which had been threatened by Brexit.

1. ***Uncertainty and anxiety about the future legal status and rights***

Another key contributing factor to the Poles’ SV is the uncertainty about their future legal status, including their right to reside in the UK and their entitlement to access social rights post-Brexit. In this regard, the literature has shown that Poles’ anxiety about their future legal status and rights has been the main factor pushing them away from “indeterminacy” in their migration strategies and towards formulating more concrete plans for their future (McGhee et al 2017). According to McGhee et al (2017), Poles anxious about Brexit are 3.2 times more likely to plan to leave the UK and 2.5 more likely to want to apply either for permanent residence or for British citizenship. *Our own survey* revealed a statistically significant increase (at 1%) in respondents who started to think about returning to Poland during the ER campaign or shortly after the vote,[[60]](#endnote-60) which may be linked to the so-called “Brexit anxiety” (Currie 2016).

Moreover, the multiple options to secure residency rights and the contradictory -or outright lack of- official guidance, the little clarity regarding the evidence required by EU nationals when applying for the post-Brexit “settled status” scheme (O’Brien 2019), together with high levels of administrative injustice experienced by EU nationals claiming free movement rights already before the ER (O’Brien 2017), have also notably contributed to the “Brexit anxiety”.[[61]](#endnote-61) *Our participants* confirmed these feelings as follows:

Because of Brexit, there was unnecessary confusion created, a lot of Polish people became *unsure about their future* and they decided to leave the UK. [#2914717]

There is a lot of *distress* […] People, you know, coming, *being uncertain*, “What is going to happen to me, to my family? Should I become British?” And trying to save this money in order to make their [naturalisation] applications to become British because they are afraid, they are in fear about what is going to happen.[[62]](#endnote-62)

Some reports already point to the difficulties experienced by Poles and other EU citizens (and their non-EU family members) when using existing routes to gain long-term residence rights (mainly, applying for permanent residence, and often, subsequently, for citizenship). For instance, many Poles ignored that under the transitional arrangements that followed A8 countries’ accession, they were required to register for at least “twelve months of uninterrupted work”.[[63]](#endnote-63) Individuals, who started working in the UK after 30 April 2004 but without registering, were considered to be unlawfully in the UK until the “Workers Registration Scheme” stopped in 2011. Accordingly, the Home Office does not count those periods towards their permanent residence or citizenship applications.[[64]](#endnote-64) In fact, *our CAB interviewee* revealed that even some Poles who had naturalised as British citizens *before* the ER have had their British citizenship revoked when they applied for passport renewal *after* the ER for this very reason.[[65]](#endnote-65)

More generally, *our CAB interviewee* confirmed that she has had many cases which exemplified various levels of “administrative injustices” towards EU nationals. For instance, a non-EU family member, spouse of a Pole, who was lawfully residing and working in the UK, applied to have his visa renewed. Instead of checking his national insurance contributions to verify he was still working, the Home Office called his company, where somebody mistakenly stated that he was not working there anymore. Consequently, the visa renewal was refused, the passport was retained and the applicant was told that “he could get hold of [his] passport at the airport when leav[ing] the UK”, without even attempting to contact the applicant to check what the real situation was.[[66]](#endnote-66)

This “hostile environment” has affected Poles, and EU nationals, in several spheres of life. For instance, *our CAB interviewee* noted that Polish nationals have been wrongfully denied access to the NHS, to homelessness assistance and social housing from the local social services on the basis of not being British nationals or due to their inability to speak English, despite having acquired British nationality.[[67]](#endnote-67)

All these administrative injustices and legal status uncertainty created by Brexit, along with the realisation that belonging is suddenly contingent, have contributed to the fear and heightened sense of fragility, and thus, *SV*, experienced by EU nationals, including Poles, post-ER. Overall, Brexit was a source of destabilisation and ontological anxiety, particularly to those who “lost” the referendum, like EU nationals (Browning 2018).

**6. Conclusion**

This paper explored the effects of the ER on the OV and SV of Polish nationals in Southampton. While Polish nationals had experienced racial hostility before the Leave vote, the frequency and seriousness of the latter surged significantly after June 2016, which increased Poles’ OV in terms of the individual incidents they suffered. This reflects that the ER has exacerbated the pre-existing “hostile environment”, leading many Britons to feel more entitled to express xenophobic views against foreigners (UN Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance2018). Following the public and media rhetoric against foreigners that characterised the ER campaign, Poles (and arguably, many EU nationals) also *feel subjectively (more)* unwelcome and *suspect* that their national origin, foreign names or accent, may *now* start to be a problem –or a *greater* problem than before– in their dealings with UK institutions and in social interactions. This SV is closely linked to the ontological insecurity experienced by Poles and is generated by both realistic and symbolic threats stemming from the Brexit context.

Our quantitative and qualitative evidence confirms that, comparing the 2014-15 and 2016-17 periods, Southampton-based Poles perceived significant changes in *both* their OV and SV. Crucially, however, changes in SV seem to have been more substantial than those in OV and not always linked to having suffered OV in the first place: i.e. experiencing feelings of anxiety, distress and insecurity was not necessarily linked to having suffered direct hate or discriminatory incidents before at individual level.

We took precautions to maximize the validity and reliability of our study, but our findings may have some limitations. Our case study specifically focuses on the Polish community in Southampton and our survey is based on a relatively small sample (n=142), so results could vary for the whole UK-based Polish community and/or the wider EU nationals’ community. Furthermore, both the survey and the focus groups results are based on participants’ *subjective* perceptions (not on *actual* occurrences of hostility or vulnerability incidents).

Nevertheless, this work sets the ground to start using the concepts of OV and SV as *prescriptive* tools (Peroni and Timmer 2013:1059) to claim that the state should actively “respond” to and reduce vulnerability (Fineman 2008). Further research could explore to which extent, under the Equality Act 2010, central and local government have a duty to intervene to address the vulnerabilities identified in this paper. According to section 149 of that Act, public authorities have a general equality duty to have due regard to the need to “eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation” and “foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not”, which, arguably, is currently not being complied with as regards EU nationals in the Brexit context. While some pro-bono initiatives, like the “Existential Academy”,[[68]](#endnote-68) have emerged to provide emotional support to EU nationals, local and central authorities have so far done little to address the heightened sense of vulnerability linked to the uncertainties, discourses and social climate generated by the ER.

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**APPENDIX.**

**Table A1. Demographic and socio-economic data from survey (S) and focus groups’ (FG) participants.**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **S** | **FG1** | **FG2** | **FG3** | **FG4** |
| **1. What is your age group?** |  |  |  |  |  |
| 18-25 | 14 | 3 | 2 |  | 1 |
| 26-35 | 53 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| 36-45 | 41 | 1 |  | 3 | 1 |
| 46-55 | 7 | 1 |  |  |   |
| 56 or older | 1 |  |  |  | 1 |
| **2. What is your main activity?** |  |  |  |  |  |
| I am a student | 9 | 1 | 2 |  | 1 |
| I work for a company | 83 | 8 | 2 | 3 | 3 |
| I am self-employed | 21 |  |  | 1 | 1 |
| I am unemployed |  |  |  |  |   |
| I am retired | 1 |  |  |  |   |
| Other | 2 |  |  |  |   |
| **3. What is your highest education level?** |  |  |  |  |  |
| Basic (School level) |  |  |  |  |   |
| Basic (College level) | 38 | 3 |  |  | 3 |
| Apprenticeship | 8 |  |  |  |   |
| Higher education (Graduate) | 40 | 5 | 1 | 4 | 1 |
| Higher education (Postgraduate) | 27 | 1 | 3 |  |   |
| Higher education (PhD) | 3 |  |  |  |   |
| **4. How long have you been in the UK?** |  |  |  |  |  |
| Between 1 year and 3 years | 3 | 2 |  |  | 1 |
| Between 3 years and 5 years | 24 | 2 |  |  | 1 |
| More than 5 years | 89 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 3 |
| **5. How long do you intend to stay in the UK?** |  |  |  |  |  |
| Less than 3 months | 1 | 2 |  |  |   |
| Between 3 months and 6 months | 3 |  |  |  |   |
| Between 6 months and 1 year | 1 |  |  |  |   |
| Between 1 year and 3 years | 10 |  | 3 |  |   |
| Between 3 years and 5 years | 14 | 2 |  |  |   |
| More than 5 years | 83 | 4 |  |  | 4 |
| I don't know |  |  | 1 | 3 |   |
| Prefer not to say | 2 | 1 |  | 1 | 1 |
| **6. To which extent do you agree with the following statement: “Being Polish is an important part of who I am”?** |  |  |  |  |  |
| Strongly disagree | 9 |  |  |  |   |
| Disagree | 4 |  |  |  |   |
| Disagree somewhat | 8 |  | 1 |  |   |
| Neutral | 14 | 2 | 1 |  |   |
| Agree somewhat | 44 | 1 | 1 |  |   |
| Agree | 27 | 1 |  |  | 3 |
| Strongly Agree | 10 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Prefer not to say |  |  |  | 3 |   |

Note: The total number of responses was 116 for all the questions, except for question 5, which had 114 responses.

**Table A2. Occupations of EU nationals in the UK (2017) compared to pilot project survey and focus groups’ participants**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Occupation** | **EU nationals**(%) | **Survey participants**(%) | **Focus groups participants**(%) |
| **Employed** | 54 | 72 | 72 |
| **Self-employed** | 10 | 18 | 9 |
| **Unemployed** | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| **Other:** | 34 | 10 | 19 |
| **-Students** | n/a | 8 | 18 |

**Table A3. Interviews’ summary.**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **No.** | **Date** | **Interviewee** | **Type of expert & nationality** | **Language of interview** |
| 1 | 6 June 2018 | Citizens Advice Bureau Officer | -Official advice provider-Non-Polish | English |
| 2 | 6 July2018 | EU Welcome advisor | -Official advice provider-Non-Polish | English |
| 3 | 18 July 2018 | Southampton City Council, Engagement Officers (3) | -Body with extensive contact with the Polish community-Non-Polish | English |
| 4 | 11 July 2018 | Priest | -Body with extensive contact with the Polish community-Non-Polish | English |
| 5 | 23 June 2018 | Principal of Polish School | -Body with extensive contact with the Polish community-Polish | Polish |
| 6 | 26 June 2018 | Teacher at Polish School | -Body with extensive contact with the Polish community-Polish | Polish |
| 7 | 29 July 2018 | Director of Public Relations and Marketing agency specializing in the Polish community | -Body with extensive contact with the Polish community-Dual: Polish/UK | English |

**Table A4. Survey questions on Polish nationals experiences and feelings in the two relevant periods (2014-15 and 2016-17).**

|  |
| --- |
| **Q1.** Did you feel welcome in the UK in the period [2014-15] / [2016-17]? |
|
| **Q2.** Did you ever consider **going back to your country** in the period [2014-15] / [2016-17]? |
|
| **Q3.** If you considered going back to your country in the period [2014-15] / [2016-17], **please explain why.** |
|
| **Q4.** In [2014-15] / [2016-17], how often did others **avoided contact** with you because of your foreign origin? |
|
| **Q5.** In [2014-15] / [2016-17], how often were you made feel as though **you don’t fit in** because of your dress, speech, or other characteristics related to your foreign origin? |
|
| **Q6.** In [2014-15] / [2016-17], how often was it **implied or suggested that because of your foreign origin you must be**: |
| a. Dishonest? |
| b. Violent or dangerous? |
| c. Dirty? |
| d. Lazy? |
| e. Willing to accept lower wages? |
| f. Taking advantage of the UK benefit system? |
| **Q7.** In [2014-15] / [2016-17], how often were you subjected to **offensive comments** about your foreign origin (e.g. stereotypic statements, offensive jokes), spoken either in your presence or behind your back? |
|
|
| **Q8.** In [2014-15] / [2016-17], how often were you **denied access to a public facility or organization** because of your foreign origin? |
|
| **Q9.** In [2014-15] / [2016-17], how often did you receive **unfair treatment** because of your foreign origin: |
| a. From school officials? |
| b. From school pupils or their families (towards you or your children)? |
| c. From service people (e.g., waiters, bank tellers, security guards? |
| d. From work colleagues (e.g. boss, supervisor, peer workers)? |
| e. In access to housing (e.g. when trying to rent or buy a property)? |
| **Q10.** In [2014-15] / [2016-17], how often did others **threatened to**: |
| a. Hurt **you** because of your foreign origin? |
| b. Damage **your property** (e.g. house, car, etc.) because of your foreign origin? |
|   |
| **Q11.** In [2014-15] / [2016-17], how often did someone: |
| a. Damaged **your property** (e.g. house, car, etc.) (or intended to) because of your foreign origin? |
|  b. Hurt **you** physically (or intended to) because of your foreign origin? |
|   |

Note:For Q1 and Q2, participants chose between ‘yes’ and ‘no’; for Q3 the answer was open text; for Q4-Q11 participants chose between 1 (never), 2, 3 (sometimes), 4 or 5 (very often).

**Table A5. Survey questions and derived variables.**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Question | Vulnerability | **2014-15** |   | **2016-17** |   | t-test | Wilcoxon matched-pairs |
| Obs | Mean | Std. Dev. |  | Obs | Mean | Std. Dev. |  |
| Q1 | Subjective | 116 | 0,87 | 0,337 |  | 116 | 0,76 | 0,430 |  | 0.004 \*\*\* | 0.005 \*\*\* |
| Q2 | Subjective | 115 | 0,16 | 0,365 |  | 116 | 0,31 | 0,465 |  | 0.001 \*\*\* | 0.001 \*\*\* |
| Q4 | Objective | 116 | 1,34 | 0,734 |  | 116 | 1,46 | 0,888 |  | 0.080 \* | 0.074 \* |
| Q5 | Subjective | 114 | 1,50 | 0,895 |  | 115 | 1,74 | 1,140 |  | 0.007 \*\*\* | 0.007 \*\*\* |
| Q6 a | Subjective | 116 | 1,44 | 0,878 |  | 116 | 1,52 | 1,059 |  | 0,227 | 0,179 |
| Q6 b | Subjective | 116 | 1,18 | 0,537 |  | 115 | 1,30 | 0,649 |  | 0.023 \*\* | 0.018 \*\* |
| Q6 c | Subjective | 116 | 1,07 | 0,367 |  | 116 | 1,12 | 0,478 |  | 0.057 \* | 0.046 \*\* |
| Q6 d | Subjective | 116 | 1,14 | 0,509 |  | 116 | 1,13 | 0,568 |  | 0,863 | 0,730 |
| Q6 e | Subjective | 116 | 1,94 | 1,294 |  | 116 | 1,91 | 1,361 |  | 0,777 | 0,952 |
| Q6 f | Subjective | 116 | 1,76 | 1,177 |  | 116 | 1,87 | 1,322 |  | 0,118 | 0.063 \* |
| Q7 | Objective | 116 | 1,61 | 0,911 |  | 116 | 1,84 | 1,139 |  | 0.019 \*\* | 0.032 \*\* |
| Q8 | Subjective | 116 | 1,09 | 0,417 |  | 116 | 1,10 | 0,482 |  | 0,798 | 0,741 |
| Q9 a | Subjective | 113 | 1,19 | 0,635 |  | 115 | 1,21 | 0,628 |  | 0,408 | 0,520 |
| Q9 b | Objective | 112 | 1,22 | 0,611 |  | 112 | 1,33 | 0,752 |  | 0.033 \*\* | 0.009 \*\*\* |
| Q9 c | Objective | 112 | 1,30 | 0,733 |  | 115 | 1,41 | 0,897 |  | 0.032 \*\* | 0.049 \*\* |
| Q9 d | Objective | 116 | 1,74 | 1,128 |  | 116 | 1,81 | 1,208 |  | 0,327 | 0,356 |
| Q9 e | Objective | 116 | 1,45 | 0,936 |  | 115 | 1,50 | 0,977 |  | 0,499 | 0,169 |
| Q10 a | Objective | 115 | 1,16 | 0,571 |  | 116 | 1,16 | 0,553 |  | 1,000 | 1,000 |
| Q10 b | Objective | 116 | 1,10 | 0,517 |  | 116 | 1,11 | 0,524 |  | 0,843 | 0,994 |
| Q11 a | Objective | 116 | 1,09 | 0,395 |  | 116 | 1,08 | 0,353 |  | 0,672 | 0,703 |
| Q11 b | Objective | 116 | 1,11 | 0,524 |  | 116 | 1,15 | 0,548 |  | 0,319 | 0,210 |
| Notes:  |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| \* Denotes that the test-statistic is significant at the 10% level. |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| \*\* Significant at the 5% level. |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| \*\*\* Significant at the 1% level. |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

**Table A6. Cronbah’s alpha coefficients.**

(Test scale = mean(standardized items))

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Period 2014-15** |  |  |  |  | **Period 2016-17** |  |  |  |
| Item | Obs | Sign | alpha |  | Item | Obs | Sign | alpha |
| q1\_1415 | 116 | - | 0,916 |  | q1\_1617 | 116 | - | 0,934 |
| q2\_1415 | 115 | + | 0,924 |  | q2\_1617 | 116 | + | 0,937 |
| q4\_1415 | 116 | + | 0,913 |  | q4\_1617 | 116 | + | 0,930 |
| q5\_1415 | 114 | + | 0,913 |  | q5\_1617 | 115 | + | 0,930 |
| q6a\_1415 | 116 | + | 0,914 |  | q6a\_1617 | 116 | + | 0,930 |
| q6b\_1415 | 116 | + | 0,921 |  | q6b\_1617 | 115 | + | 0,933 |
| q6c\_1415 | 116 | + | 0,921 |  | q6c\_1617 | 116 | + | 0,931 |
| q6d\_1415 | 116 | + | 0,918 |  | q6d\_1617 | 116 | + | 0,937 |
| q6e\_1415 | 116 | + | 0,915 |  | q6e\_1617 | 116 | + | 0,931 |
| q6f\_1415 | 116 | + | 0,915 |  | q6f\_1617 | 116 | + | 0,930 |
| q7\_1415 | 116 | + | 0,916 |  | q7\_1617 | 116 | + | 0,930 |
| q8\_1415 | 116 | + | 0,915 |  | q8\_1617 | 116 | + | 0,931 |
| q9a\_1415 | 113 | + | 0,917 |  | q9a\_1617 | 115 | + | 0,934 |
| q9b\_1415 | 112 | + | 0,919 |  | q9b\_1617 | 112 | + | 0,935 |
| q9c\_1415 | 112 | + | 0,914 |  | q9c\_1617 | 115 | + | 0,931 |
| q9d\_1415 | 116 | + | 0,914 |  | q9d\_1617 | 116 | + | 0,931 |
| q9e\_1415 | 116 | + | 0,915 |  | q9e\_1617 | 115 | + | 0,930 |
| q10a\_1415 | 115 | + | 0,916 |  | q10a\_1617 | 116 | + | 0,932 |
| q10b\_1415 | 116 | + | 0,917 |  | q10b\_1617 | 116 | + | 0,930 |
| q11a\_1415 | 116 | + | 0,919 |  | q11a\_1617 | 116 | + | 0,934 |
| q11b\_1415 | 116 | + | 0,915 |  | q11b\_1617 | 116 | + | 0,930 |
| Test scale |  |  | 0,920 |  | Test scale |  |  | 0,935 |

**Notes**

1. Poles are the largest group of migrants in the UK: in 2017, 1,021,000 Poles lived in the UK (Sturge 2018:26-27). [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. The geographical scope is limited to Southampton because this city hosts one of the largest Eastern European (EU8) communities in the UK (ONS 2018, Table 2.2). The most recent official data indicate that, in 2011, Poles accounted for approximately 3.5% of Southampton population (ONS 2011). [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. See also e.g. the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child on the vulnerability of children due to their “physical and mental immaturity” (Art 20(1)). [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. ECtHR, *Chapman v the United Kingdom,* App. No. 27238/95(2001) para 96. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Timmer (2013, 152-162) has also identified other groups considered to be vulnerable by the ECtHR on account of objective characteristics. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. ECtHR, *Opuz v Turkey*, App. No. 33401/02, para 160. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. ECtHR, *Tysiac v Poland*, App. No. 5410/03 (2007); *RR v Poland*, App. No. 27617/04(2011). [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Section 5. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. See further College of Policing (2014:5). [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. See also evidence of subjective changes reported by the Polish community in other areas of the UK in Rzepnikowska (2018), Kempny (2011). [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. See also Ehata and Seeleib-Kaiser (2017). [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. This can be particularly disadvantageous for individuals with non-standard employment records (O’Brien 2017:201-209). [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. After 2010, there was also more discussion about “limiting” migration and EU migrants, especially after 2014 (Allen 2016). [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Allen and Blinder (2013:3) also found that tabloids frequently used the word “immigrant” with terms that “indicate concerns around security or legality”. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. See e.g. Allen and Blinder (2013). [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. See e.g. McLelland (2016). [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. Ford and Goodwin found that reading anti-immigrant tabloid press had a statistically significant effect as a predictor of BNP support (2010). On the influence of media discourse, see Fox et al (2012), Gavin (2018). [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. On the spillover effect of extremist anti-migrant discourses on mainstream parties/press see Looney (2017). [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. See also Ashe and Nazroo (2017). [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. See also Dawney (2008:13). [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. Areas identified as inhabited by “poor British white people” seemed to be the most problematic but incidents were also recounted in “posh” neighbourhoods (Rzepnikowska 2018). [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. Conducted in English and Polish (n=22 participants). [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. See Appendix, Tables A1, A2 for demographic and socio-economic data. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. See further Tables A1, A2. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. See Appendix, Table A3. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. Questions 1 to 3, see Table A4. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. Except in questions 1 and 2, which were specifically introduced for this study and had dichotomous scales (‘yes’/’no’). [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. According to Enoksen, (2016:75) and literature cited therein, both direct and indirect experiences can have an influence on personal judgments’ of discrimination and crime-related judgments. [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. 21 quantitative ítems and one qualitative item. [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. E.g. Polish shops, school and mass. [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. See Tables A1, A2. While the broader use of the internet and social media is lessening the risk of “coverage bias” in online surveys targeting migrants (McGhee et al 2017; Dekker and Engbersen 2014), these active targeting strategies are considered good practice for online data collection (Temple and Brown 2012). [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. See Tables A1, A2. [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. I.e. their stated recollection of pre-event and post-event experiences at a particular moment in time implies searching their memories, which may lead to cognitive errors. [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. We denote survey participant comments by a “#”, followed by an 8-digit number. [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. E.g. Home Office (2017/18, Figure 2.2). [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. Marketing agency interview; CAB interview; Focus Group #3. [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. Polish Teacher interview; #2910837, Focus Group #3. See also Table A5. [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
39. CAB interview; Focus Group #3. [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
40. CAB and Polish teaching interviews; Focus Group #2. [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
41. Polish Teacher interview. [↑](#endnote-ref-41)
42. #2931585. [↑](#endnote-ref-42)
43. EU Welcome interview; see also Table A5, Q9c. Incidents with landlords were equally reported by the CAB interviewee and Focus Group #2. [↑](#endnote-ref-43)
44. #2928879. [↑](#endnote-ref-44)
45. #2910837. Another participant highlighted that “before Brexit […] there was already a lot of […] hatred towards immigrants, however people were showing […] it less. After the referendum, people started to openly express their antipathy, therefore the atmosphere has changed” [#2903336] [↑](#endnote-ref-45)
46. EU Welcome interview. Similar views were expressed by our CAB interviewee and Focus Groups #1, #2. [↑](#endnote-ref-46)
47. Focus Group #2. [↑](#endnote-ref-47)
48. Church representative interview. [↑](#endnote-ref-48)
49. Focus Group #2. [↑](#endnote-ref-49)
50. Similar views were expressed by Focus Group #2. [↑](#endnote-ref-50)
51. Section 4c. [↑](#endnote-ref-51)
52. Table A5. [↑](#endnote-ref-52)
53. EU Welcome interview. [↑](#endnote-ref-53)
54. Focus Group #2. [↑](#endnote-ref-54)
55. Church Representative interview. [↑](#endnote-ref-55)
56. EU Welcome interview. [↑](#endnote-ref-56)
57. Church Representative interview. [↑](#endnote-ref-57)
58. Focus Group #2. [↑](#endnote-ref-58)
59. ibid; see also Remigi et al (2017) and Duda-Mikulin’s (2019). [↑](#endnote-ref-59)
60. Table A5, see also Prospect (2018). [↑](#endnote-ref-60)
61. See additional evidence in Casalicchio (2019) and testimonies submitted to In https://www.ourbrexitblog.org/in-limbo-testimonies. [↑](#endnote-ref-61)
62. CAB interview. [↑](#endnote-ref-62)
63. <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20080911095157/http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/workingintheuk/eea/wrs/>. [↑](#endnote-ref-63)
64. CAB interview. [↑](#endnote-ref-64)
65. ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-65)
66. ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-66)
67. ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-67)
68. https://www.existentialacademy.com/esse/. [↑](#endnote-ref-68)