

The project topic: The research concerns the link between international mobility and disruption in fertility patterns of migrants from or to countries with low fertility rates, such as Poland (as a sending and receiving country) and Ukraine - the country of origin of the highest number of migrants to Poland.

Rationale for the research: The recent decades have seen a decline in fertility rates in Poland, manifested in the early 2000s by a Total Fertility Rate (TFR) level below 1.3, one of the lowest in world history. In the same period, due to the 2004 EU-enlargement and the opening of European labour markets, Poland experienced one of the most intense outflows of its population in history. It is estimated that between 2004 and 2017 the number of Poles living abroad increased by 1.5 million. Although there is a lack of accurate data on this subject, several times more people were engaged in mobility (including the one that ended with return) at some point. At the same time, the influx of Ukrainians to Poland is increasing: on average, during a year, about 1 million Ukrainians work in Poland (National Bank of Poland estimates). In 2019, over 200 thousand of them had various types of residence permits, including permanent ones.

At a time in which fertility rates in Poland, and Ukraine alike, were reaching record lows, there were signs of a reversal of the downward trend in highly developed countries; and these were the most frequently chosen destinations for Polish migration. When Western researchers analysed the interrelation between migration and the time distribution and fertility levels of migrants, they were usually concerned with immigrants from countries with high fertility rates and the issue of whether (and if so, when) they would adapt to the local fertility model in the new country or stick with traditional large families. Meanwhile, the migrations of hundreds of thousands of Polish women and men make us consider whether after moving to the countries with higher fertility rates these migrants will achieve higher fertility rates than in Poland. We also do not know how the fertility rates of migrants who decide to return to their country of origin will develop. In particular, we lack knowledge about the transfer of fertility patterns from the country of residence of migrants with higher fertility rates to the country of origin with low fertility rates, such as Poland.

Scientific aims: Firstly, the project will look for appropriate measures of migrants' fertility, taking into account their age at and time since migration. Secondly, we will try to understand if and to what extent the migration experience of women and men affects their beliefs about having children and their perception of social norms on fertility and of differences in societal context for childbearing in the countries of origin and of residence.

Research plan and methods: We will work towards achieving our research aims by using Polish and foreign survey data and varied quantitative analysis techniques. We will attempt a systematic quantitative comparison of the reproductive behaviour of Poles in the main countries of emigration and Polish return migrants with non-mobile Poles. We will carry out our own survey of immigrants from Ukraine living in Poland to investigate how, in their case, the moment of migration to Poland is related to the birth of their children and what are their age specific fertility patterns. We will investigate how different migrant fertility measures reflect their fertility patterns according to their age at arrival and the time since migration.

The framework for our analysis will be a model for reproductive decision making based on beliefs leading to the intention to give birth to a child. Understanding these elements is possible only with the use of qualitative methods (in-depth interviews with people who are only planning to have children or are already parents, women and men aged 25-40). To ensure that the conclusions of our analyses are as certain as possible, in the part concerning Poles we will apply an innovative (for social sciences) way of selecting participants, bringing the scheme of our research closer to the classic experiment. Apart from migrants and people who have returned from migration and lived in Poland for a longer period of time, we will also interview their adult non-mobile siblings. Based on this we can assume that they do not differ in the context of their upbringing, norms and beliefs shared by family members and many other factors and, as a result, capture the essence of the difference resulting from the experience of migration as one that can potentially influence their reproductive behaviour. We will also conduct in-depth interviews with Ukrainians about their migratory biographies and discuss their beliefs about having children, social norms and factors shaping their reproductive intentions and behaviour.

Results: Our research has a potential to substantially improve the methods of measuring migrants' fertility and to deepen the current understanding of disruption of fertility due to migration, which was elaborated in the countries of Western Europe, in different from the Polish societal context. By applying an innovative method of siblings sampling for a qualitative study, we will be able to make a valuable contribution to the methodology of social sciences. The results of the conducted research will be useful for more accurate forecasting of the demographic effects of emigration and immigration and will serve as a basis for analysing the response of Poles and people migrating from countries with low fertility rates (prevailing among immigrants in Poland) to various social (especially family) and population policy measures.