University of Sunderland ICOS

AN EXPLORATION OF DISCRIMINATION EXPERIENCED BY EASTERN EUROPEAN WOMEN IN TYNE AND WEAR

UNIVERSITY OF SUNDERLAND
WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ICOS

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Research Team

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What do we already know?

- Hate crime
- Discrimination in employment
- Barriers to accessing services
- Brexit
- Impact of Covid-19

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Eastern European Population in Tyne and Wear

Almost 1% of the population of Tyne and Wear were born in Eastern Europe – around 6000 (Office for National Statistics (ONS), 2021).

Majority from Poland, with smaller numbers from Hungary, Latvia, Romania and Russia and fewer from other Eastern European countries (ONS, 2021).

Most applicants of the European Union Settled Scheme (EUSS) in Tyne and Wear are originally from Romania or Poland, with a significant minority also from Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Lithuania, and Slovakia (Home Office, 2021).

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Research Aim and Objectives

Aim:

- Understand the lived experiences of Eastern Europe women living in Tyne and Wear, in terms of discrimination, hate crime and access to health care and support services.

Objectives:

- Investigate the prevalence and frequency of discrimination against Eastern European women living in Tyne and Wear, in terms of the nine protected characteristics under the Equality Act (EA) 2010.
- Investigate the prevalence and frequency of hate crime against Eastern European women living in Tyne and Wear, according to the definition of hate crime by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS).
- Examine the barriers and challenges faced by Eastern European women living in Tyne and Wear, in terms of access to health care and support services.

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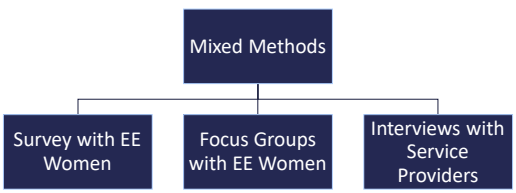
Research Design



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Survey Findings

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Survey Participant Demographics

- N = 127 EE Women, mean age = 35.3 years (18-62)
- Polish (68%), Bulgarian (10%), Czech (7%), Romanian (6%), Slovak (4%), Russian, Latvian, Albanian, Lithuanian and Serbian (5%)
- Bachelor's degree or equivalent (33%), school/high school level qualifications (26%), master's degree or equivalent (25%), college/FE level qualifications (13%), Doctoral degree/PhD (3%)
- Full-time employed (51%), part-time employment (17%), self-employed (11%), unemployed (14%), student (4%), furloughed (2%), long-term sick/ disabled (1%)
- Routine and semi-routine occupations (53%) vs higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations

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Incidence of discrimination towards Eastern European women by area/ setting

Area/ Setting	Yes (n)	Yes (%)	No (n)	No (%)	Total No. Responses
Employment	37	37.8%	61	62.2%	98
Businesses/ Services	25	25.3%	74	74.7%	99
Housing	19	19.2%	80	80.8%	99
Health Services	14	13.9%	87	86.1%	101
Public Bodies	12	12.5%	84	87.5%	96
Education	10	10.1%	89	89.9%	99
Transport	10	10.0%	90	90.0%	100

Equality Act 2010 areas where direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and victimization are protected

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Incidence of discrimination towards Eastern European women by area/ setting and protected characteristic (EA, 2010)

	Employment	Business/ Service	Health Care	Education	Housing/ Landlord	Public Body	Transport
Race/ Nationality (n/ %)	20	17	8	8	6	7	4
	46.5%	54.8%	50.0%	53.3%	54.5%	70.0%	66.7%
Sex (M/F) (n/ %)	10	5	2	2	1	-	2
	23.3%	16.1%	12.5%	13.3%	9.1%	-	33.3%
Age (n/ %)	3	3	2	1	1	1	-
	7.0%	9.7%	12.5%	6.7%	9.1%	10.0%	-
Pregnancy/ maternity (n/ %)	3	2	2	-	2	-	-
	7.0%	6.5%	12.5%	-	18.2%	-	-
Religion/ belief (n/ %)	3	2	2	2	1	2	-
	7.0%	6.5%	12.5%	13.3%	9.1%	20.0%	-
Disability (n/ %)	2	1	-	1	-	-	-
	4.7%	3.2%	-	6.7%	-	-	-
Marriage/ civil partnership (n/ %)	2	1	-	1	-	-	-
	4.7%	3.2%	-	6.7%	-	-	-
Total	43	31	16	15	11	10	6

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Incidence of hate crime towards Eastern European women according to CPS protected characteristics

Hate Crime Category	Yes (n)	Yes (%)	No (n)	No (%)	Total No. Responses
Verbal Abuse	45	45.9%	53	54.1%	98
Intimidation, Threats and Harassment	30	33.3%	60	66.7%	90
Property Damage	17	18.5%	75	81.5%	92
Physical Assault	11	11.6%	84	88.4%	95

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Incidence of hate crime according to CPS type and protected characteristic

	Race/ Nationality	Religion	Sexual orientation	Disability	Total
Verbal Abuse (n/ %)	25	5	2	-	32
	78.1%	15.6%	6.3%	-	
Intimidation, Threats & Harassment (n/ %)	20	3	2	1	26
	76.9%	11.5%	7.7%	3.8%	
Property Damage (n/ %)	14	-	-	-	14
	100%	-	-	-	
Physical Assault (n/ %)	7	1	-	-	8
	87.5%	12.5%	-	-	

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Access to Services

- Challenges in communicating with healthcare staff and service providers, and in understanding information relating to health care or other support services
- Refused health care, support services or other public services due to lack of correct documentation (such as proof of ID or address)
- 40% of women stated that they had concerns about their ability to access health care, support and public services post BREXIT
- 40% stated that that Covid-19 restrictions, such as lockdown, impacted on their ability to access health care, support services or other public services

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Discrimination Towards Eastern European Women in Employment

"They called me, 'Polish assassin'"

"He came when nobody was in the room. That was his tactic. I started crying and he said it's my fault. I said he shouldn't talk with me without a witness. He said, I will talk with whoever want, nobody going to do anything."

"On the Polish side, people are used by their employers. The women are fired because of their pregnancy."

He was undermining me, belittling me and I was his punch ball for everything, because I was foreigner, and I was a woman"

"I can't afford to be without work. I have two kids and I'm a single parent. So, I couldn't be without work."

"When I started there, I had, 'she's a Polish, she can't speak English.'"

Every time I was complaining, it never went resolved, never he was told off. There were ten grievances from me about his behaviour and he only got a verbal warning"

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Discrimination Towards Eastern European Women and Girls in Education

"Most of my experiences with discrimination and racism have happened when I was a student."

"This boy who would constantly say racial things about me, and like 'you should go back home,' and everyone would laugh."

"I've been a student at [Name of University] and I've been facing racist comments in private and in front of my classmates regarding my race. I've been asked to return to my home country by one of my lecturers."

"It was really bad at school. Boys would often call me, Bulgarian bitch, Bulgarian cow, Russian bitch."

"A senior lecturer, who was quite racist towards me. Everything I did was a problem. For example, coming a minute late, going to the toilet, she would give me a bad look. Yet when an English student did it there wasn't any problems."

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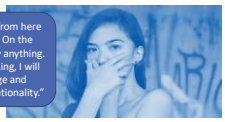
Discrimination, Harassment and Hate Crime Towards Eastern European Women in Public

"The most traumatizing was when I was on my way home. There was a group and they started the whole, 'Brexit, get out of here!' Then there's something flying, and it hit me. It was a bottle of water, but I thought it was something else, like bodily fluid. That shook me because they were all men, and about six of them."

"It [Brexit] made some people feel more empowered. They feel they have the right to be this way towards some people. So, some people were showing it more, like it was OK to be harassing people."

"When Brexit was happening, they were, 'no more foreigners coming in. I'm on my way home, at the bus and I get, 'go back where you came.'"

"People realise I'm not from here when I start speaking. On the metro, I prefer to not say anything. I know that if I start talking, I will hear abusive language and something against my nationality."



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Sexual Harassment and Sexist Discrimination Towards Eastern European Women

"They use, 'you Polish', 'Polish prostitute' and I remember my little boy was asking, 'what does that mean?' I said, 'Listen, don't listen, just ignore them.'".

"I've been to nightclubs. They think we're easier targets; we're more vulnerable; we're all poor, so one drink will impress us more. Men have said to me, 'Whereabouts you from? Oh, you're lucky here. Look, I'm rich' [waves hand with money]."

"It was sexual harassment too. He was talking about his penis. He started the conversation always when nobody was in the room. I said to him, 'I don't want to hear it', and he was continuing that conversation. It's happened a few times."

His neighbours said to him [women's partner], 'you know, Eastern European women are good looking but most of them are prostitutes."

"I'm not going clubbing pubbing, anything like it, anymore. Every time, I felt so uncomfortable and especially by sexist men. I'm not wearing makeup, and instead wearing my glasses, hoody, men's clothes, because that's not making attention."

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Challenges and Barriers in Accessing Health Care and Support Services for Eastern European Women

"When I went to the hospital, I had my blue card insurance card, but then they kept on saying but you are from Europe, not from England, so you have to give us all these documents."

"Some GP surgeries, when I tell them they need an interpreter, they're like we don't do such stuff. We don't provide interpreters"

"If it's a domestic violence, sometimes you don't want to your family to be involved in it because they could take sides. So, we would want to have someone who is impartial in this situation"

"I didn't want to go to my GP 'cause I didn't know if I'm eligible to get support here."

Say it's a private matter and but just because you have no one else to translate for you, you bring someone. Having an interpreter, it's confidential. I think if you don't know the person, but if you bring someone, but then everyone knows your health issues"

"They often take kids to the GP or for medical appointments to translate for them because of lack of any other support in terms of interpreter. It could really affect children in many ways if they hear things they shouldn't. If you imagine that someone could have cancer and that's a really, really difficult situation that you have to talk with your children to talk to your doctor"

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Interviews with Service Providers

We had this three way phone call going on, the interpreter would come on the line and then I have to wait for the woman, and so I guess that was kind of a solution in that it was positive that we did manage to find an interpreter, but in terms of like how smoothly that ran, I found that very difficult, especially when you're asking them quite personal things.

Child contact when social workers want it between the dad and the child and when mum who's working with us doesn't have any other friends or family network in the UK, you haven't got that third party they can rely on to do that contact so that makes it extremely hard for them."

Our biggest concern, something that's regularly coming from the women we work with is the impact of Brexit and the Settlement Scheme, and how that interlinks with the hostile environment, and knowing that Brexit is going to create a whole new category of women that have no recourse to public funds, women that have absolutely no status in the UK. We know that that's going to escalate the risk and the violence they're experiencing because, there's this perception that they have no status in the UK and therefore they have no right to safety and protection, from perpetrators and from services that regularly turn women away from refuges or from mainstream support.

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Conclusions

Eastern European women living in the UK face systematic and structural discrimination in all areas of public life due to their race and/or nationality.

Eastern European women also face distinct and intersecting sex-based discrimination, including maternity/pregnancy, alongside discrimination due to other aspects of their identity including age, disability, and sexuality.

Eastern European women are victims of frequent hate crimes, including verbal and physical abuse, threats and harassment, and damage to property.

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Conclusions

- Eastern European women face challenges and barriers in accessing health care, support, and other public services, due to language barriers, entitlement to services due to immigration status, residency and proof of ID.
- Eastern European women have experienced further uncertainty about their futures in the UK, in terms of access to welfare, health and support services, since the Brexit referendum and continue to face this uncertainty with the UK's departure from the EU.
- Covid-19 restrictions, including lockdown, have further restricted Eastern European women's access to health care, support and other public services, placing marginalised, minority and women vulnerable to abuse and exploitation at increased risk.

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Recommendations

I. Research team to gain funding to undertake further research into Eastern European women's access to health and other support services and identify potential solutions to the issues faced by Eastern European women living the UK

II. Heath care, support and other public service providers to provide more widely information translated in various languages. This is particularly import for local/community-based services, such as domestic abuse, family planning, women's only services

III. Public institutions such as schools, colleges, universities and other educational settings to raise standards in terms of monitoring and reporting discrimination and hate crimes towards the Eastern European community, and supporting victims of hate crime and discrimination

IV. Local authorities and regional/community decision makers to provide clear pathways to support for Eastern European migrants, in areas such as housing, welfare, employment, education residency etc

V. Public services and bodies and local authorities to establish strong links with local/community BME service providers to coordinate a more effective and efficient response to the needs of Eastern European migrants

VI. Funding bodies, public bodies, local authorities and service providers to consider translation and interpretation costs in the procurement of services to avoid exclusion of minority and marginalised groups

VII. Health care, support and other public services to receive training on the eligibility of services for EU citizens including healthcare, support services, housing

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Questions

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