

MIGRATORY RATIONALE OF INTER-REGIONAL FLOWS SLOVAK NATIONALS IN THE CZECH LABOR MARKET

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Abstract

Gender differentiated data indicates that there is a significant gap between respondents pre and post migration. Variation in responses to a survey conducted among Slovak migrants working in the Czech Republic demonstrates that a persistent wage gap exists between genders. Individuals reflect on their decision to make a move utilizing non-traditional explanations leading the researchers to define this flow as a mixed flow involving lifestyle migration which has as secondary effect of improving the economic situation of individuals perceive a lack of opportunity in source regions.

Keywords: Migration, gender, rationale, mobility, highly educated, Czech Republic

Introduction

Authors analyzing the migratory experience of Slovak citizens moving into the Czech Republic and have found that neither economic differences nor differing unemployment rates in the two countries play a great role in influencing migratory trends. (Strielkowski 2007, Brücker and Schröder 2007/27) Strielkowski has shown that levels of migration do not exceed 2% between the two countries even though there are significant differences in income between the two countries and limited administrative and linguistic burdens to deter would-be migrants. (2007) If Strielkowski's findings are accurate the question that then arises is, if indeed the majority do not choose to migrate regionally, then how and why do those few who do make a migratory decision come to this decision.

The intention of the original research project was to determine the migratory intentions and experience of highly educated Slovak nationals in order to elucidate their rationale for making a migratory decision. The survey itself was comprised of a variety of questions related to: migratory experience, success, individual behaviour as well as basic demographic data related to sex, region of origin, educational achievement, data related to salary, region of origin, and location of current residence in the Czech Republic. Additional questions related to 'experience', 'perception', 'satisfaction' and remittance behaviour were also asked. The projects outcomes were compared to previous surveys conducted by researchers in similar contexts in order to ensure comparability and also in order to confirm the findings. (Baláž and Williams 2004, Drbohlav 1994, IOMa 2004)

This paper will present gender differentiated data collected during the course of a survey conducted in the Czech Republic in summer of 2012. During the course of the original analysis several interesting variations in responses provided by individuals of differing genders came to the attention of the researchers.

In order to provide context for the reader there are approximately 84,380 Slovak citizens (target population) living in the Czech Republic, 37,792 (47% of the total) of whom

reside in the capital region. In total, however, 149,140 individuals living in the Czech Republic claim to be of Slovak ethnicity. (Czech Statistical Office 2012)

Survey Design and Implementation

The survey was originally disseminated directly to Slovak nationals and acquaintances whom were known to the researchers via social media and email in the form of a 'link' to an online digital survey. This 'snowball' sample led to the accumulation of approximately fifty individual respondents. To increase the sample size the researchers opted to post the survey to a publicly available internet forum. The intentions of the survey and a link to the electronic survey were posted on a website used extensively by Slovak nationals in the greater Prague Region.¹ Via this online platform nearly 200 additional respondents participated in the survey. Within our sample of 222 respondents, 155 were deemed valid as they fit the criteria of being highly educated having been awarded a title of Ba, Ma, PhD or equivalent. (ISCED 4 or above) ²

Limitations

The survey was intended to be completed by a random sample of individuals living in the Czech Republic, however, the data shows that the majority of respondents (95%) currently reside in the Prague Capital Region and close surroundings. This geographic concentration is partly due to the large number of respondents sourced via a popular social media website (somvprahe) and partly due to the fact that 18.4% of the population of Prague and the surrounding region is composed of foreigners. While the data set is somewhat biased in terms of regional sampling and cannot be fully representative the authors assume to have a substantial sub-sample of the Slovak population living in the Czech Republic.

Understanding that the sample is non-representative the data indicates that the respondents are relatively representative of the source population; demographically, regionally, and with a wide range of individuals coming from different socioeconomic backgrounds. While it is clear that a wider sampling from other destination regions would improve the quality of the data online distribution has resulted in a balanced convenience sample.

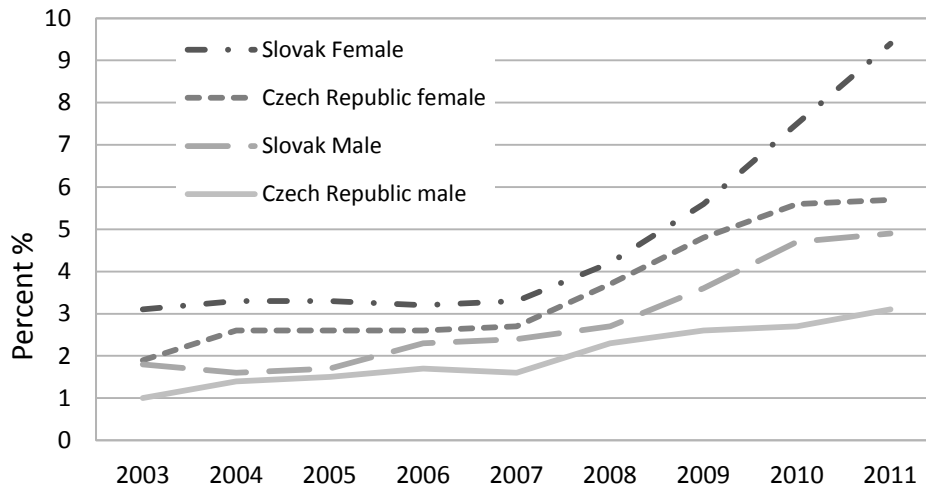
Results

The majority of respondents live in the Czech Capital and surrounding region (95% of respondents) with others being scattered across the country. The gender balance of respondents is balanced and is nearly the same as that of the general population, 52% female and 48% male within our sample compared with 50.9% female 49.1% male in the general populace. (Czech Statistical Office 2012) Even though the original research design targeted highly educated individuals the voluntary survey was distributed online, thus the majority of respondents (77%) hold higher level degrees, 18% have completed basic secondary education and 2% indicate that they hold another qualification. (i.e. apprenticeship)

¹ <http://www.somvprahe.sk> – (I'm in prague.sk) A member's only website which claims to have more than seventeen thousand members – This website is commonly used for networking, information gathering and ride sharing and is used primarily by the Slovak community in the Prague region.

² ISCED – the International Standard Classification of Education

Figure 1 Education levels male vs. female by country



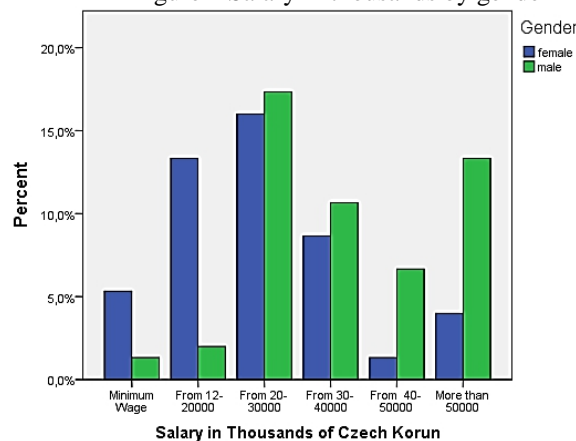
Source: Eurostat 2012

Considering the rapid increase in attainment of higher levels education in Slovakia (Figure 1) it is unsurprising that our data shows roughly twice as many respondents have received their highest level degree from their home country of Slovakia when compared to those having received their highest qualification from the Czech Republic. (77%) Of some surprise to the researchers was the fact that males respondents were more likely have obtained a degree from the Slovak Republic (70%) while female respondents were relatively less likely to have a degree from home (53%) as opposed to the Czech Republic (47%).

Salary Gap

Once data was differentiated according to gender a clear difference in salary levels was exposed which is not affected by to length of residence. Figure 2 shows the gap in salary levels by gender. Although possible explanations for existing differences in salary are outside of the scope of this research, it is clear that the salary gap which is demonstrated within our data replicates that within the labour market. According to Eurostat the Czech Republic exhibits the highest pay gap within the European Union. The private sector and public sector exhibit a pay gap of 26% and 22% (respectively) while the “highest pay gap within the financial and insurance sector [in all of the European Union] was recorded in the Czech Republic (45%)” (Eurostat 2013)

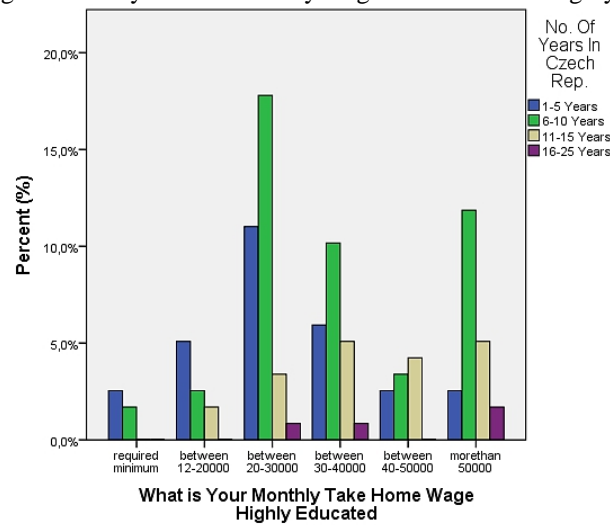
Figure 2 Salary in thousands by gender



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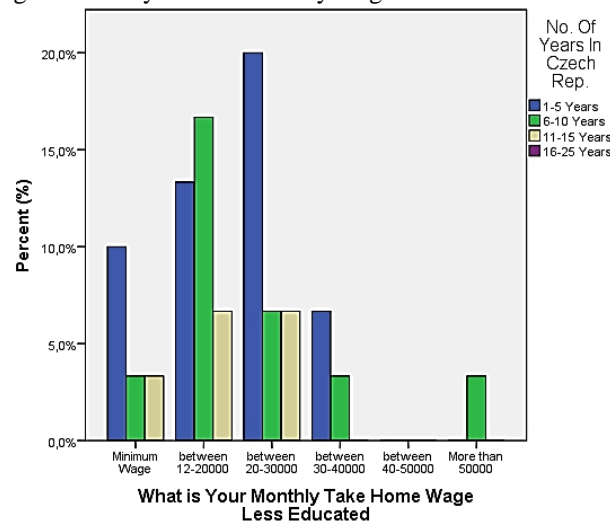
Data presented in Figure 2 Salary in thousands by gender shows that significantly more males than females earn over fifty thousand Kč (roughly two thousand Euro). The majority of female respondents indicated that they make close to or slightly more than the Czech average. (between 20-30 thousand Kč)³ Figure 3 Salary in thousands by length of residence clearly shows that long term migrants earn above average salaries, an expected response from ‘successful’ migrants. There is clearly a connection between educational level and earnings potential, with those who lack higher level education being less likely to increase their earning potential over time. Figure 4 provides as comparison with Figure 3 Salary in thousands by length of residence and indicates that the lower educated population is likely to remain in low-end employment with reduced potential for enhancement in terms of earnings. Figure 3 Salary in thousands by length of residence is indicative of the fact that education combined with experience tends to lead to higher earning potential in the long run.

Figure 3 Salary in thousands by length of residence- Highly Educated



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Figure 4 Salary in thousands by length of residence- Less Educated



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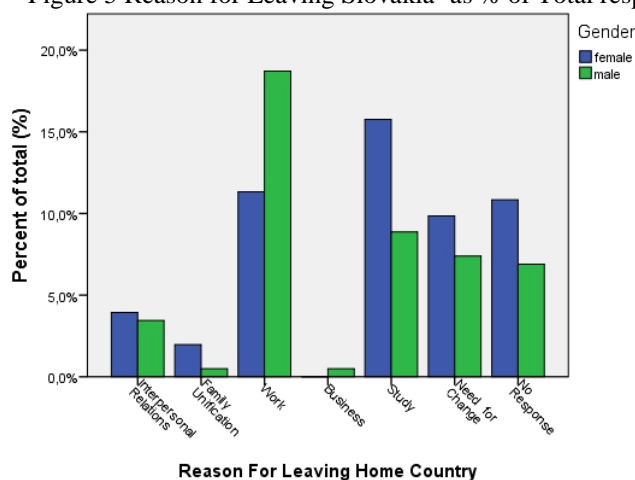
³ Prague residents earn the highest average wage of 31,845 Kč gross. Even if the Czech Average is 24,436Kč (Czech Statistical Office)

Reported Rationale

When discussing factors which lead to a migratory decision there was significant divergence in the percentage of respondents who claimed to have moved for purposes of ‘work’ or study. (see Figure 5) The higher percentage of females who claim to have come in order to study compliments our previous discussion related to the divergence in educational attainment by country and gender, where women were more likely than males to have a degree from the Czech Republic. Figure 5 demonstrates that significantly more females than males indicated that they came to the Czech Republic in order to study. Our findings are corroborated by a similar survey undertaken by the European Commission in 2010 which found that “a quarter of respondents moved in order to study.” (European Commission 2010, 5)

It is clear from our data that a large number of those who moved in order to study have stayed on and have become gainfully employed in the Czech Republic with more than half of all respondents who being employed in the Czech Republic. Additionally, 28 percent of respondents indicated that they moved in order to seek out ‘change’ or for ‘interpersonal reasons’, nearly as many as claimed to have moved for work. (38%) Our results show that although individuals may not always perceive their rationale for migration in terms of employment it is clearly one outcome. This is perhaps due to the relative myopic view taken by younger migrants, who focus on the current task at hand (education) and ignore the long term implications of their migration decision or see it as beneficial to remain in the country. It should be noted that many Slovak nationals do not perceive their move to the Czech Republic as ‘real migration’ which stems from a history relationship and common citizenship the two nations once shared.

Figure 5 Reason for Leaving Slovakia- as % of Total respondents



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Reported Intentions and Experience

Women were somewhat more likely than males to indicate that they ‘intend to stay’ in the Czech Republic for less than 5 years. It is clear that a majority of respondents intend to stay indefinitely, with more than 30 percent of individuals indicating that they intend to stay for an ‘unlimited’ amount of time, ‘more than 5 years’ or ‘forever’. Clearly a majority intend to settle in the Czech Republic. It is also apparent in the data that those who are better established (having been in the country 5 years or more) are far more likely to indicate that they plan to stay for the long term than those who are recent arrivals. This may be connected to the relative large cohort of students and recent graduates in the sample. In addition those who are ‘settled’ will have established business and personal contacts/networks and are more likely to have invested into property which could have the potential to reduce their mobility.

One question asked respondents to indicate how 'prepared' they were upon arrival after migrating. Far more women indicated that they were 'unprepared on arrival for their first day'. The variation indicates that either women are more likely to migrate with little preparation or that more women felt uneasy with the radical change in their life situation. The variance in responses may also be a result of the difference in data quality provided by female respondents in comparison to males as female respondents invested far more time in providing detailed explanations when asked for additional information in contrast to men who were curt in their responses.

In order to better understand individual's level of preparation for migration the authors asked about respondents first day(s) upon arrival in the Czech Republic and whether or not they were aware of what was required of them administratively. Slovak nationals are required to report their residence to local authorities; however the process is not nearly as onerous for Slovak nationals as other foreigners due to bilateral agreements which have been in place between the two countries since the 1990's.

The majority had some idea of what was required of them; such as registration with the Police and registration at the employment office (several of the requirements that Slovaks must undertake to ensure health coverage, pension insurance and the like). However, a quarter of respondents (25%) complained that there was insufficient practical information available to them. Much in line with surveys conducted under the auspices of the European Commission (2010) the authors have found that respondents believe that the bureaucratic requirements are 'problematic' (34%) for new arrivals. These responses were unsurprising to the authors considering that many foreigners claim to have negative experiences when dealing with the Czech bureaucratic offices.

While several respondents indicated that they had no trouble in settling in the Czech Republic 11% indicate that they have experienced some form of discrimination in the Czech Republic. Often in the form of condescension from locals, apparent incompetence or unwillingness of bureaucrats to aid newcomers in registration and also what has been described as the 'remoteness' of people in the Czech Republic. When asked 'Do you think that officials in the Czech Republic are well trained in dealing with foreigners?' only 40% of people agreed. Female respondents were 10% more likely to respond negatively to such a question. This finding is much in line with the European Commission's report on Cross-border Mobility which found that a common issue individuals encountered in dealings with administrative offices was a lack of knowledge on the part of officials about the rights individuals have as EU nationals. (2010, 24)

Employment Status

In terms of employment differences between the gender groups' males are somewhat more likely to be self-employed. (5% percent male in comparison to 1% female self-employment) Unemployment is relatively minimal for both groups, which may indicate poor sampling of the target population or self-selection of migrants through time, with unsuccessful migrants returning home. Data indicates that women are significantly more likely than men to return home is they find themselves unemployed for more than 6 months. (28% vs. 18%) Males may be less likely or less willing to 'give up' in the face of unemployment or may be unwilling to risk unemployment at home. Anecdotal evidence suggests that high unemployment in an individual's region of origin is considered a significant barrier to return.

Conclusion

In order to better understand the rationale of individuals who have made the decision to migrate across borders the authors sought out respondents from the Slovak community in

the Czech Republic. Individual rationales were recorded through the use of a survey questionnaire which was distributed through personal contacts and an online forum. Rationale was anticipated to be quite clear given the vast differences in regional unemployment across the source region in question. However, even though employment was a significant factor leading to migratory decisions, it was not the only significant rationale indicated by respondents. Individual rationale was often ambivalent with individuals claiming to have moved in order to study or for personal reasons such as 'a need for change' the long term result of making a move is employment in the local market.

The rich detail of responses allowed the authors to demonstrate that individual rationale often exhibits variation within groups. In the case of this study individuals have easily been grouped according to those who came for 'work' (38%), to 'study' (28%) or in order to seek out 'change' or for 'interpersonal reasons' (28%). Men were far more likely to indicate they moved in order to 'work' while women were more likely to have moved in order to seek 'change' or for personal reasons or in order to study. Something confirmed by the relatively high number of women who completed their education within the Czech system.

Data indicates that women are generally reimbursed at a level lower than their male colleagues for similar work. An unfortunate, yet entrenched systemic inequality. In addition the authors have found female respondents to be more likely to share their negative experiences when dealing with bureaucratic institutions. Female respondents were also more willing to return home if unsuccessful in terms of finding employment or when losing employment.

When discussing the permanence of migration less than 12% of respondents indicated that they plan to stay in the Czech Republic for less than 5 years. The majority indicate an intention to stay for the long term. This may be connected with the general lack of opportunities in their region of origin, the relative proximity to family who have remained in Slovakia, or indeed due to the fact that a large percentage of individuals have left small or mid-sized towns in order to move to the capital region of the Czech Republic- rural-urban migration within the regional migratory system. Previously internal migration has, as a result of the fissure of Czechoslovakia, become international. This political division is not demonstrated by individuals who do not perceive their action as classical 'migration' but to quote one respondent it is simply 'moving to Prague'.

This survey has emphasised the gendered aspect of the Slovak-Czech Migratory system and demonstrated that determine individual rationale for migratory decision making varies according to gender. The authors have not analyzed push factors or limitations which prevent migration as the scope of the original survey was focused on the lived experience of migrants, although we recognize that only a small percentage of potential migrants ever make the journey. Future work will aim to clarify and contrast the experience of these 'nearly invisible' Slovak migrant in the Czech Republic with more visible migrants who are a part of the regional migration system.

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