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## **9. SPATIAL MOBILITY OF YOUNG PEOPLE MODERN „BRAIN DRAIN”**

### **Keywords**

mobility, migration, resource

### **Introduction**

Poor economic conditions in Poland resulted in increasing willingness to move abroad, however, they aren't the only reason for growing migration. The amount of people thinking of leaving Poland is terrifying but only a few people are surprised. The worst aspect of this problem is that more and more well-educated people leave Poland, they are the ones the future of our country depends on. Moreover, they possess a “lion share” of knowledge resources in society. Does the „brain drain” really endanger Poland (the first definition was given in 1962, it describes migration of highly qualified personnel from one country to another)? Are society's most precious gems- young, intelligent and well-educated people-leaving their homeland to more developed countries in order to look for a better job? To get a better job, competitive qualifications and achievements are required as competition becomes fiercer.

The aim of this article is to analyze reasons for mobility of young people, the research was conducted among students of the Faculty of Economics and Management of the University of Szczecin and laid the foundation for the analysis. The results only pay attention to this problem and it's difficult to generalize them but, at the same time, they show some trends among young people.

### **Migrations in the 1980's and 1990's**

Humans are known to have extensively migrated throughout history and the literature is full of various definitions. Some of them refer to a change of territory or place of living, moving from one society to another one or change of cultural or social environment (Liberska 1988, p. 16). Such terms as short- and long- term migration are known as well, a 1-year stay abroad is regarded as the latter one, the international organizations recommended introducing such a taxonomy (Okólski, 1994, p.69). The further part of this article will describe the scale of migration in the 1980's and 1990's which was really big.

The census conducted in the 1980's by the Public Opinion Research Center (known in Poland as CBOS) proved that over 200 thousand people aged 18–29 left Poland for more than two months. The number of absent inhabitants amounted to 508 thousand people, 214 thousand of them had secondary or tertiary education (Latuch, 1999, p.69). Already at that time, a situation was alarming and a strong inclination of young people to migrate was

observed. Therefore, CBOS conducted a research between 1983 and 1989 and asked the following question: „If you had an opportunity to migrate, would you leave Poland?”, the results were as follows:

Table 1. The scale of migration in the 1980's.

Responses (in %)	1983	1986	1988	1989
Yes, even for good	8,7	8,0	14,4	15,1
Yes, but for a short time	48,1	51,0	54,3	62,2
No way	4,0	3,4	3,0	2,8
Other answers	3,2	3,6	3,9	1,9

Source: Research conducted by CBOS between 1983 and 1989.

Additionally, it was observed that Poles migrated in order to enhance material and non-material living conditions. People wanted to change their status, gain prestige and wealth. Hence, „human migration proves social mobility on a global scale” (Ochocki 1986, p. 185).

The liberalization of the passport policy started in 1985 and it was a slow process, the most momentous change was made in 1989 when regulations on free access to passports and foreign trips came into force, many restrictions were abolished and contracts on traveling to 45 countries without visas were concluded ( Iglicka-Okólska, 1999, p.37).

From the perspective of this article, the most important data shows that a tendency in migration of well-educated people is dropping. It started in 1988 but it surely doesn't last until now. However, migration of uneducated people is growing significantly and the table below proves it:

Tabela 2. Migrants by gender and education level (tertiary and primary) between 1998 and 1994 (in %)

Years	Men - education		Women – education	
	tertiary	primary	tertiary	primary
1988	11,7	39,7	6,2	24,7
1989	8,2	36,5	5,6	35,3
1990	5,5	51,2	4,1	53,1
1991	3,7	59,5	2,9	62,6
1992	3,6	66,4	2,7	67,3
1993	2,8	70,2	2,1	71,9
1994	2,4	69,3	2,1	69,5

Source: M. Okólski, Migracje siły roboczej, in: M. Okólski, W. Sztanderska ed.: Studia nad reformowaną gospodarką. Aspekty instytucjonalne. PWN, Warszawa 1996, p. 64.

It's clear that share of women migrating in the late 1980's was significantly lower than a share of men. The difference that was significant at the beginning with the time being they evened up and it became very slim in 1994 year. It is not without significance that fluctuations in the number of migrants, in terms of both: gender and level of education, became stable in the 1990's. However, did migration change the direction?

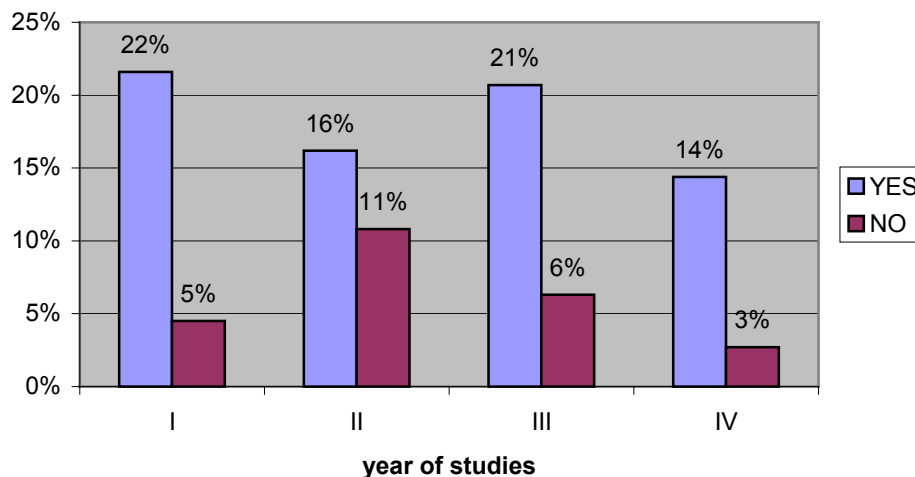
### Modern „brain drain”

How does the situation look like at present? Will data showed above be proved or on the contrary. Looking for an explanation to this situation, results of a survey were analyzed, questions concerned not only future migration but also plans and public sentiment among young people who continue their education at the moment.

Therefore the survey didn't cover the entire society but 110 students of the Faculty of Economics and Management at the University of Szczecin. The survey conducted for the needs of this article proved that at present migration is rather a kind of fashion than leaving Poland for good.

The first main question showed how many of the surveyed have ever been abroad. The overwhelming majority (73%) have already been abroad (see chart 1).

Chart 1. Trips abroad made so far by year of studies.



Source: Own compilation based on the survey results.

The data shows that the oldest students went abroad the least. It can be assumed that there will be bigger and bigger gap between the oldest and the youngest students provided that the migration trend is stable. However, there are no reasons for assumption that direction or scale of migration will change in the nearest future.

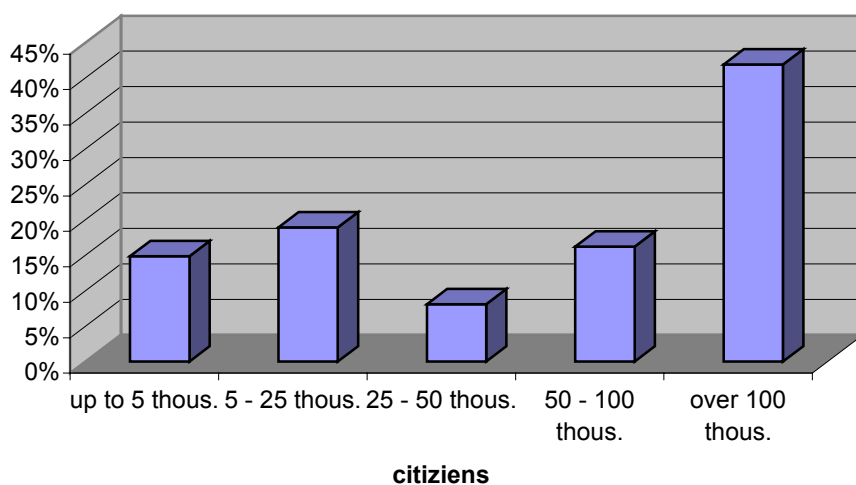
At present, the reasons for mass migration are the most striking. Poland is a developing country where its citizens are fascinated by culture and living standards in the countries with better economic situation, willingness to know “the world” better tempts the most. Second most frequent reason for migration was an opportunity to improve language skills due to the fact that the University of Szczecin doesn't provide students with efficient

language teaching particularly due to the fact that they learn a foreign language for four terms only. I would like to pay attention to a singular form of language used here. Unfortunately only one language is taught within four terms. It's not good but half a loaf is better than none. The reasons mentioned above are being changing at present as those who migrate mostly like being away. In most cases they have already been abroad and still travel to achieve their goals. They want to earn money to cover at least the cost of staying abroad (Latuch, 1999, s.69). The reasons for migration will be described in details later on.

As we have already mentioned the reasons for migration, let's focus on reasons why some students have never been abroad before. The results of the survey are quite surprising: patriotism, close family ties or even poor knowledge of foreign languages didn't matter too much, it turned out that they didn't go abroad due to lack of money. Financial situation of 15% of them was so bad that they couldn't afford going abroad even for a short time. Hence, lack of money was the main reason why Poles didn't travel at all.

The next question concerned going abroad but in the future i.e. after having graduated from the university. Only 4 % of the surveyed declared that they aren't going to migrate, it means that only four students want to stay in Poland. Is it sad or terrifying? These people are a minority among their peers: they love their homeland the way it is and we could only assume that the awareness they live in their homeland satisfies them. The chart below shows the share of the surveyed who will migrate for sure.

Chart 2. A scale of the future migration by place of living



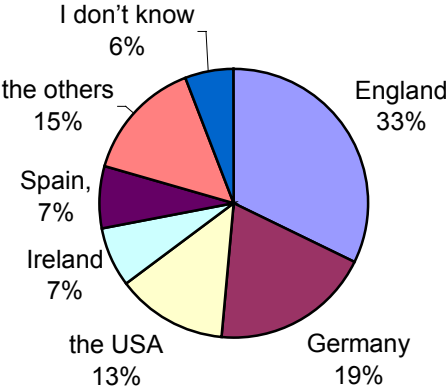
Source: Own compilation based on the survey results.

As the data shows, most of the future migrants will leave big cities, due to probably better opportunities or maybe its easier for them to migrate. In case of inhabitants of small towns or villages, moving to a big city in order to improve their living conditions is enough big challenge not to mention migrating to another country.

The survey results are convergent with the survey conducted by Pentor Research International for the "Wprost" weekly in 2004, according to it: 60% of people aged 15 – 29 would like to work abroad (Krzyżak, Sieradzki, 2004, p.10). They are optimists as no less than 68% surveyed students of the University of Szczecin want to migrate but the question is

where to? Most of them think of the UK, Germany is ranked as 2<sup>nd</sup>, what is a little bit surprising, the USA was ranked 3<sup>rd</sup>. The detailed data is shown in the chart below:

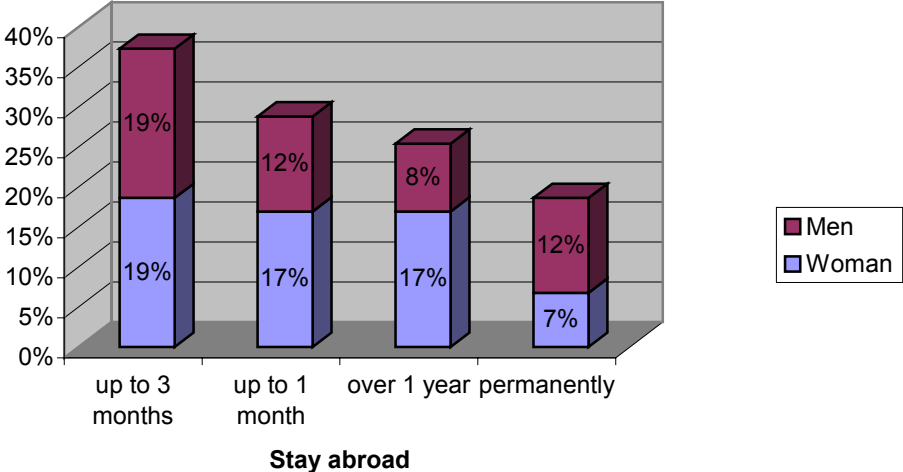
Chart 3. Countries mostly preferred by students.



Source: Own compilation based on the survey results.

The surveyed also answered the question „How long are you going to stay there?” Some 38% (50% of men and 50% of women) wouldn't like to live abroad longer than three months. The answers concerning the time spent abroad were quite interesting due to a gender what is shown in the chart below.

Chart 4. Time the surveyed are willing to stay abroad.

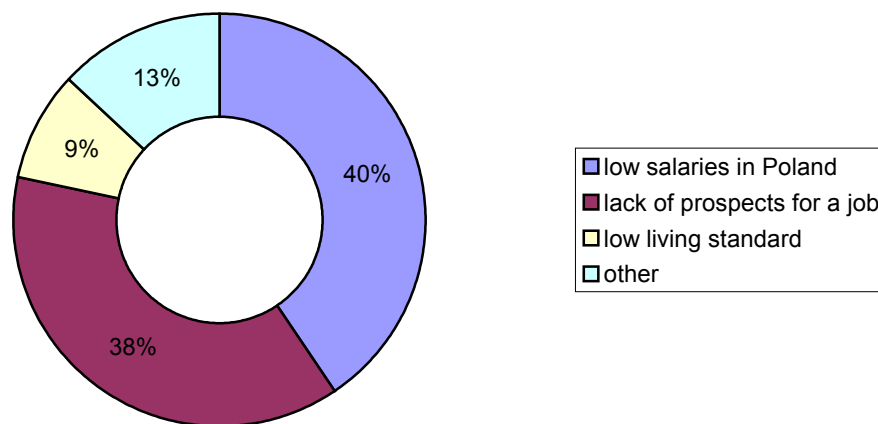


Estimated time of stay abroad  
Source: Own compilation based on the survey results.

As the chart shows, women prefer shorter stays abroad. Not so many of them would decide to migrate for good. However, men are in majority here, perhaps it's easier for them to make such important life decisions. According to the stereotype of women, they are more emotional, easier and faster attach importance to people, places, or things, in this survey women fit the stereotype.

Moreover, reasons for mass migration are worth mentioning, there are two main reasons for migration: low salaries in Poland and lack of prospects for a job. Detailed distribution of answers are shown in the chart below.

Chart 5. Reasons for present migration.



Source: Own compilation based on the survey results.

We have to face the truth – the situation on the Polish labour market isn't satisfactory. Young and ambitious people want to achieve in their life more than just hand-to-mouth existence. Almost all of them dream of their own houses, cars, high living standard not of having difficulties with making ends meet and giving up going out to the theatre, cinema or just for a meal. Hence, they decide to migrate not because they have to but they want to live in better living conditions, they want to have a normal life. Although they are young, they are aware that life's too short to waste time ( Passent, 1987, p.16). But is migration the best way to make the most of life? „Polish citizens work abroad and join the ranks of „gastarbaiters”. They don't comply with employment requirements as they aren't registered labour force what deprives them of any social and insurance privileges. They do the worst job for the lowest wage(Chodorecki 1998, sp.209 – 210). However, many of them believe that's the way it should be, moreover they're satisfied with this situation! The countries they work for use them and gain profits from their work. However, it doesn't matter for some of migrants as they are willing to work hard in tough conditions for even 100 hours a week and they'll receive ¼ of average wage of unskilled workers( Życie Warszawy, p.6). But thanks to this job they can provide their families living in Poland with financial support so earning money takes priority and many educated people sacrifice their time and health.

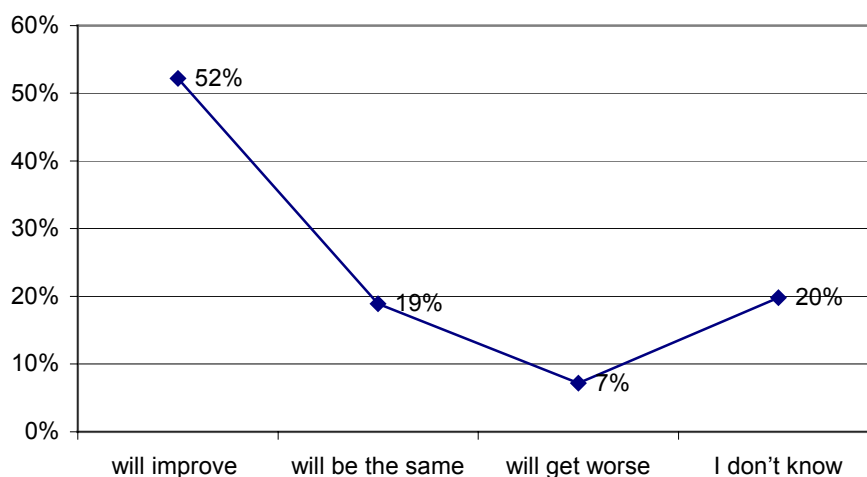
People who stay in Poland usually belong to one of the four groups: they are afraid of any changes, they don't know language well, they don't feel like working on the foreign labour market, their financial situation is pretty good as they simply don't want to migrate. Brave, educated and full of energy people usually take the first opportunity they get to migrate as they are realists who believe that they will achieve more in more developed countries.

The survey proves that Poland faces a growing migration wave that becomes a serious problem but has our government noticed it? If yes what they do to solve this problem? What steps should be taken to counteract migration? According to over half of the surveyed, it's not

important if the authorities do anything because even if they do something, it's fruitless. They don't think that the government takes any steps to encourage young people to stay in Poland. Almost 40% of them don't have any opinion on the issue if the Polish government counteracts the migration wave or not. Hence it proves that they don't really care as they have already made a decision on leaving Poland for shorter or longer period of time. Remaining 7% of the surveyed students believe that the government is aware of the problem and takes some steps to stop the migration wave. However, the attempts aren't successful. One of the journalists of the „Wprost” weekly observed it as he wrote in the above mentioned article „a new migration wave is a non-confidence vote for those who can't stop migration as they didn't create conditions for working and living in Poland”. They are right as Poles don't „flee” from Poland because of invaders but from the authorities of the independent and democratic country. Although Poland is independent, less and less young people want to live here.

The last but not least topical question as it concerns attitude of these people toward accession of Poland to the European Union, “Do you think that a situation in Poland will change after accession to the EU?” The majority thinks that it will change but after a while/it needs time. We need time until effects will be visible and let's hope those people were right. The responses are shown in the chart below.

Chart 6. What will be the situation like after Poland's accession to the European Union?



Source: Own compilation based on the survey results.

## Summary

Having analyzed the results of the survey, a drawn conclusion is obvious: a majority of the surveyed want to migrate, it means that Poland will lose qualified labour force, however, thanks to migration people will have an opportunity to better know other cultures or people. When they come back, entire society will gain profits. It's profitable for communications and transport providers as well as they obtain additional profits. It's worth mentioning that a majority of migrants is going to come back after a while so their qualifications will be improved and they'll invest capital in Poland. However, who will work in Poland at the time of migration of the others? It's very difficult to predict. As the survey showed, only a few students are aware of the problem or it's a side issue for them. The main goals are to be rich enough, enjoy a high social status and have a more comfortable life. Moreover, it's of key importance for people who know their own value to have an interesting

and rewarding job that is profitable as well.

Regardless of the reasons for mass migration, more and more students migrate. It's a painful truth we will have to face sooner or later. The best solution to the problem is making the Polish labour market as attractive as possible, not only for Polish citizens but also for migrants from more developed countries. The EU funds could have helped but will there be people able to use them efficiently? It's another problem.

### Comprehension Check

1. Answer questionnaires' questions and compare them to research results, please.
2. How the preferences have changed since 2002 year in the outgoing students? Carry out similar poll in your own group and compare the answers, please.
3. What kind of action is undertaking by Polish government to convince young persons to stay in the country?

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