



Poverty and Ethnicity Northern Ireland: An Evidence Review

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OFMDFM Lunchtime seminar

Dr Alison Wallace, University of York
Dr Ruth McAreavey, Queen's University Belfast

Overview



- Evidence Review – aims and methods
- Background – poverty, migration, policy
- Low incomes – earnings and benefits
- Experiences of accessing other services
- Barriers to moving on
- Recommendations

Review Aims



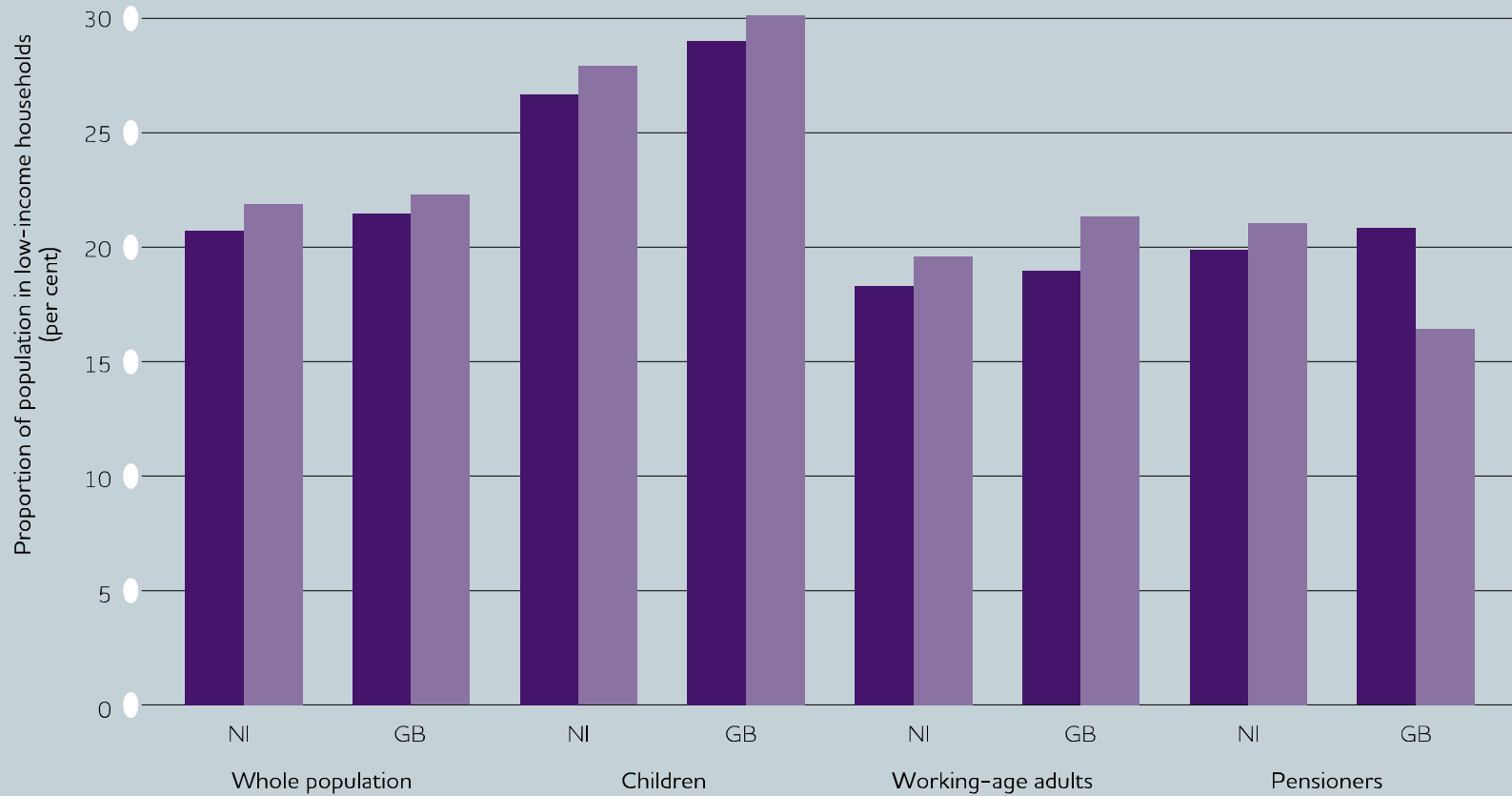
- What research has been carried out in relation to poverty and ethnicity in Northern Ireland?
- What does the current evidence tell us about how poverty and ethnicity interact in Northern Ireland?
- How far does the current evidence base consider the intersection of ethnicity with other dimensions of identity and what can we learn from this?
- What does the current evidence base suggest should be done?
- What are the priorities for improving the evidence base to enable more effective action to be taken to tackle poverty across ethnicities in Northern Ireland?

Review Methods



- Literature Review- empirical research
 - 1998 onwards (Belfast Agreement)
 - #poverty and NI / #ethnicity and NI
 - Databases (academic and grey lit), websites, reference checking
 - Focus on ethnicity, but porous boundaries
- Focus Groups- to act as check on research
 - 32 people from Roma, Polish, Somali and Chinese communities
 - Local stakeholders
- Evidence base - relatively weak

Poverty in NI



A Changing Demography

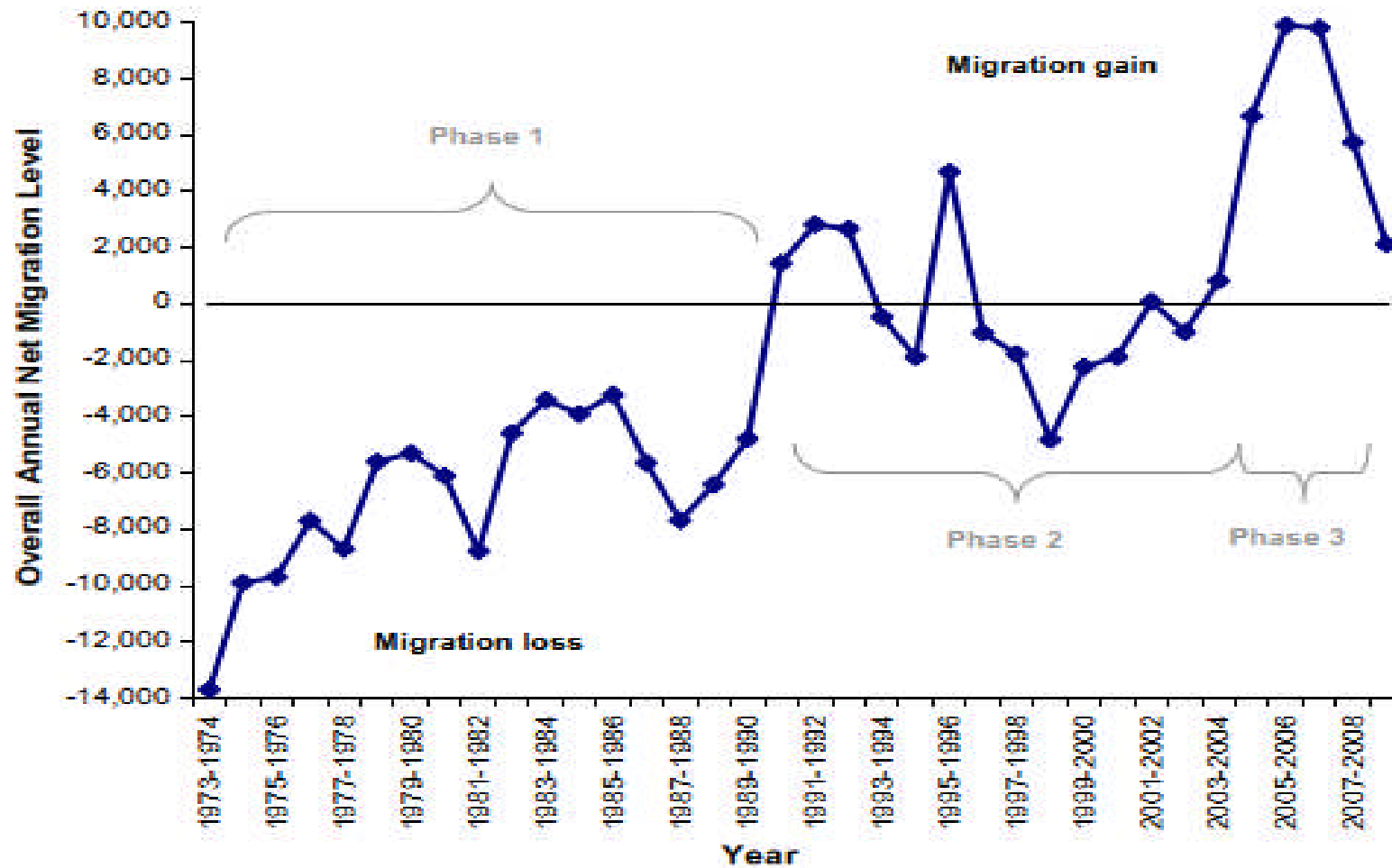


Census 2011

- 1.8 per cent (32,400) of the usually resident population of Northern Ireland belonged to minority ethnic groups in 2011, more than double the proportion in 2001 (0.8 per cent).
- English was not the main language for 3.1 per cent (54,500) of usual residents aged 3 years and over. The most prevalent main language other than English was Polish (17,700 people, 1.0 per cent).

‘X says that he absolutely feels at home here and he gets on with his neighbours, most of whom are Irish. He’s not sure how he would feel if he moved back to Poland having lived here for 2 years’.

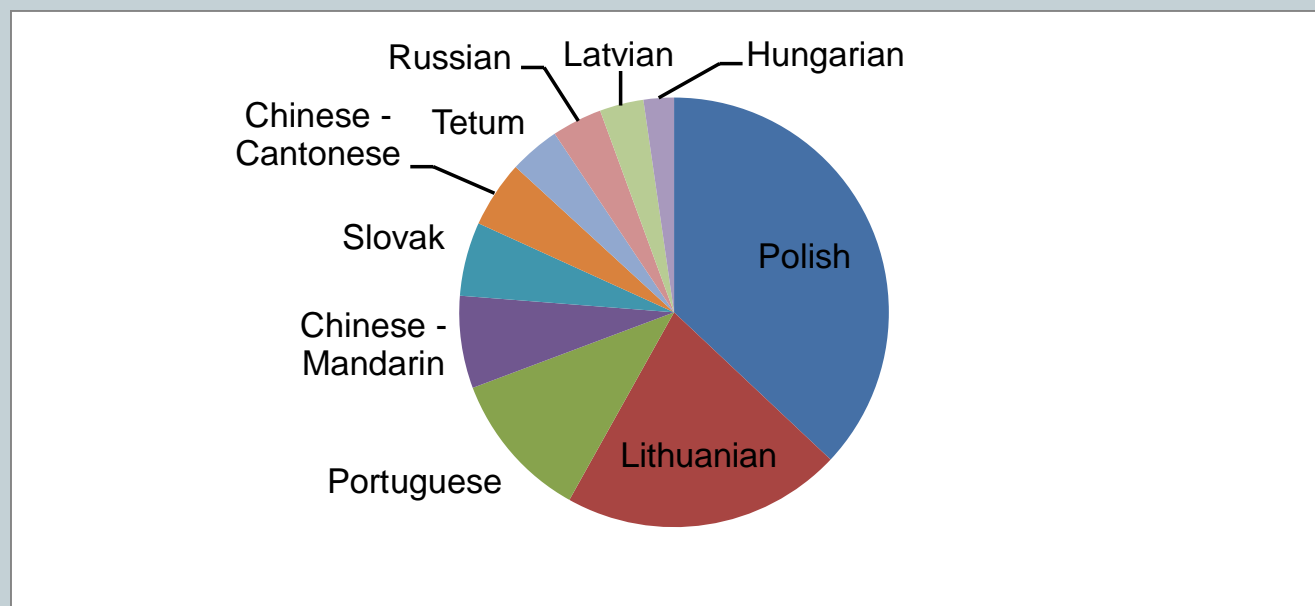
Migration to NI



Languages requested in health services



Figure 2.1: Top 10 languages requested for interpretation services in health service Northern Ireland Q4-2011



Source: NIHSCIS (Northern Ireland Health and Social Care Interpreting Service 2012)

N=63,868.

Policy development



- Race Relations (NI) Order 1997
- Good Friday (Belfast) Agreement 1998
- Racial Equality Strategy 2005
- A Shared Future: Policy and Strategic Framework for Good Relations in Northern Ireland 2005
- Cohesion, Sharing and Integration ?????
- Preserved vs. devolved powers
- Anti poverty strategy and Child Poverty strategy - 'no data' on people from minority ethnic groups

Diversity within and between ethnic groups



Complex stories & identities

- *'She can't save any money because she is always borrowing money to pay for the rent. Her house is split between her family and her sister's family...most times she doesn't have money for food because she spends money on the electricity metre...Her children go to primary school and they are lucky because they get the food at the canteen, otherwise they might have to go without.'* (Roma)

Cultural norms & values

What type of things do you not buy?

Clothes, or you cut down on your food bill...Because of our experience of living in a hardship, even if we have a little money we are able to survive, we know how to economise and not to spend money on things that are expensive. (Polish)

Low incomes



- People from minority ethnic communities represented across the workforce, but over-represented in some low grade work
- Wages below average, even for bottom two occupational classes
- Sharp employment practices and forced labour
- Evidence of underemployment – overseas qualifications not recognised.
- Lack of training and progression
- Childcare – shifts, costs, availability

‘There are a lot of people in [the meat processing plant] who are well qualified e.g. teacher, historian and they work alongside them in the meat processing – they are happy to do this because they get paid more money than they would do in Poland’

Social security

- Half married with children, suggestions of in-work poverty
- Possibility of higher unemployment among some people from minority ethnic groups
- Tax credits important but limited evidence on housing benefit
- Some excluded or limitations to engagement with employment or social security
- Destitution a concern

'This lady made an application 12 months ago for child benefit and working tax credit and she has heard nothing yet and when she phones they tell her that it has not yet been processed....'

Roma FG

Accessing services 1



- **Housing**
 - Mostly PRS, subject to problems lower end market
 - Tied accommodation, expensive, poor,
 - Overcrowded
 - Victimization feared in some areas
- **Health**
 - Health outcomes uncertain- but travellers health very poor, Chinese woman and Somalis high stress and anxiety
 - Overall satisfied NHS - issues waiting times, appointments
 - Language provision rolled out
 - Service and GP registration frustrated by 'front desk' problems (racism)

Accessing services 2



- Education

- Little known about attainment of young people
 - ✦ Except travellers, very poor outcomes
- English as Additional Language provision in NI widespread
- In 2009, only 10% schools Inclusion and Diversity Service that supports individual schools in this area
- Problems confidence and training teachers –to promote diversity, to handle bullying/harassment
- Language barrier to parental involvement in school life despite desire to do so

- *‘XX found that not having English is her main barrier; she has found that things like homework are becoming a bit of a problem...because her English is not that great...’
(Chinese)*

Barriers to moving on 1

- Some issues same as other low income workers
 - Monitoring and compliance employment regulation
 - Conditions bottom end PRS
 - Childcare
- Some specific to people from minority groups
 - Conditions above compounded if additional vulnerabilities: insecure status, lack of awareness, isolation, language
 - ✦ i.e forced labour, issues tied accommodation
 - Language provision, ability to participate independently
 - Overseas qualifications, guidance issued but uncertain impact

- *“But one issue is the language barrier because they are working at the lowest of the low [jobs] and that creates a vicious circle where they are dependent on that particular employer and in that particular sector, and for many men and for many women it would be the cleaning sector. So we would see a lot of people like that – they are completely dependent and helpless.” (Polish)*

Barriers to moving on 2

- Racism in an already divided society
 - Life in NI viewed positively, certainly in comparison to previous experiences
 - Examples of neighbourliness and integration
 - ‘Race hate capital Europe’?? Racist attitudes increasing, associated with sectarianism
 - Verbal abuse, harassment, attacks in workplace, street, neighbourhood, home, accessing services
- Much activity on the ground and in some statutory agencies, but political inertia
- Where do minorities fit into wider good relations agenda?

‘Even if you are poor here, there is still some dignity in your life; you can survive one week to the next. You realise that you cannot buy this or you cannot buy that, but you can have a good life’.

A. explains how Y went to give his wife a lift at 11pm at night and his car wouldn’t start – his neighbour came out and handed him her car keys and let him take the car, he didn’t even have to ask.

Actions



- Range of responses as some people more distant from others from education and employment
 - Pool of unutilised skilled labour - qualifications, language support, employer training
 - People distant from labour market – examine skills, training, childcare, language support, what barriers?
 - Community groups important conduit- work with them to engage employers and people from minority groups in training, skill recognition, childcare etc.
 - Fundamental questions of integration between minority and majority communities
 - But permanent population- work needs mainstreamed
 - ✦ Consider role of social security support (job centre) to minorities, support for job seekers, benefit delays, childcare
 - ✦ Longer term consideration of economic and social mobility

Strengthen evidence base



- **Better data sources**

- Booster samples in key datasets
- Universal calls for greater monitoring
- But, no evidence found where use made of data already collected
- No panacea without action to utilise and act on findings to improve *outcomes*

- **What works?**

- Government to pull together learning across statutory and voluntary sector to determine what works to mitigate low incomes among minorities