
ІМІГРАЦІЙНА СЛУЖБА ТА ПОЛІТИКА КОНТРОЛЮ В ОЧАХ УКРАЇНЦІВ З НЕВРЕГУЛЬОВАНИМ СТАТУСОМ У ВЕЛИКОБРИТАНІЇ

IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT AND CONTROL POLICIES IN THE EYES OF IRREGULAR UKRAINIANS IN THE UK

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АНОТАЦІЯ

У статті визначено форми нерегулярної міграції та розглянуто шляхи, через які мігрант може стати нерегулярним. Досліджено як українські нерегулярні мігранти сприймають імміграційну службу та політику імміграційного контролю у Великобританії. Показано, що імміграційний контроль українськими нерегулярними мігрантами у Великобританії сприймається як всюдисущий. Водночас, українські нерегулярні мігранти, як білошкірі європейці, вважають себе у групі меншого ризику, які можуть бути затримані імміграційною службою порівняно з іншими нерегулярними мігрантами у Великобританії. Результати якісного опитування показали, що рівень стресу зменшується з часом, тобто чим довше мігранти перебувають нелегально у Великобританії, тим менше вони бояться імміграційних контролів. Доведено, що українські нерегулярні мігранти мають стратегії навігації міграційного контролю і запобігання затримання при виборі житла та зайнятості. Ці дані отримано у ході якісних інтерв'ю з нерегулярними мігрантами у Великобританії у рамках проекту «Чи мають значення імміграційні контролі? Нерегулярні мігранти та політика контролю у Великобританії» (2013–2017).

Ключові слова: сприйняття; імміграційна служба; нерегулярні мігранти; страх; українці.

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ABSTRACT

This article starts with defining the variants of irregular status and the paths through which a migrant may become irregular. We explore how immigration enforcement is perceived by Ukrainian irregular migrants in the UK. The result of the study indicates that immigration enforcement is perceived as omnipresent. At the same time many Ukrainian irregular migrants believe that as white Europeans they are at lower risk in terms of checks/raids compared to ‘dark skin’ migrants. Our research suggests that irregular Ukrainians were more likely to display stress at the beginning of their irregular position and became more resilient the longer they managed to stay in the UK. We conclude that the interviewees were generally considering – or had already developed – strategies in terms of their residence, work, and other areas of their lives which they believed would help prevent detection. It is based on qualitative interviews of irregular Ukrainian migrants in the UK: for the ESRC-funded project “Does immigration enforcement matters? Irregular immigrants and control policies in the UK” (2013–2017).

Key words: perception; immigration enforcement; irregular migrants; fear; Ukrainians.

I. INTRODUCTION

Irregular migration is a complex phenomenon¹ that has attracted media attention and generated heated political debate since the early 2000s. It has risen to the top of the international security and political agendas because it is viewed as a threat to sovereignty, and has been often linked to problems such as crime and drugs.

This paper is based on findings from an ESRC-funded project “Does immigration enforcement matters? Irregular immigrants and control policies in the UK” (2013–2017) examining irregular migration and immigration enforcement in the UK. The study focused specifically on in-country immigration law enforcement and its effects, impacts and limits, a phenomenon that has so far received very little academic attention. What are sometimes lost in debates about irregular migration, are the voices of migrants themselves².

This paper focuses mainly on the findings based on qualitative interviews with Ukrainian irregular immigrants in the UK. It deals with the lived realities of the daily lives of irregular migrants, their perception of immigration enforcement and control policies in the UK.

¹ Castles S. (2010). Joint approaches to address irregular migration of vulnerable groups. *Migración y Desarrollo*. Vol. 8. No. 15. p. 45. URL: <https://estudiosdeldesarrollo.mx/migracionydesarrolloenglishversion/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/15ing-2.pdf>

² Uehling G. (2004). Unwanted migration: Combating and unwittingly creating irregular migration in Ukraine. Working Paper No 109. Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees CP 2500, 1211 Geneva 2 Switzerland. URL: <https://www.unhcr.org/uk/research/working/416b98dc6/unwanted-migration-combating-unwittingly-creating-irregular-migration-ukraine.html>

II. PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

In total 175 qualitative interviews with irregular immigrants of five nationalities – Australian, Brazilian, Ukrainians and Pakistani, and Turkish nationals (including ethnic Turks and Kurds) were conducted. The interviews were conducted in 2016 in 14 locations across the UK (London, one city and three rural towns in South England, five cities and towns in the Midlands, two largely rural areas in North England, and one city and a rural area in Scotland). They were conducted by eleven mother tongue interviewers.

Of the interviewees, 122 were male and 53 female, 136 were aged between 18–38 years, 34 were 39–57 and five were 58+, 68% had tertiary and 26% at least secondary education; 53% were single and 40% were married or in a partnership. About a third of the interviewees had children, with some of these children abroad and others in the UK. Our analysis suggests that children represent a significant proportion of the irregular immigrant population.

III. DESCRIPTION OF THE OBTAINED RESULTS

There is no definition of an irregular migrant in UK law. However, it is commonly held that there are four main ways in which a person can become an irregular migrant. Patterns of irregularity can include people who crossed a border unlawfully as well as visa over-stayers, children born to undocumented parents, migrants who lost their regular status because of unemployment or non-compliance with certain requirements, and rejected asylum seekers¹.

Many academic researchers believe that in the UK substantially greater numbers of people without regular immigration status arrived by air and entered regularly, rather than irregularly, and there is evidence to support this².

Irregular migrants come to the UK for a range of economic, political and social reasons. While economic factors are central to decisions

¹ Spencer S., Triandafyllidou A. (2022). Irregular Migration. In: Scholten, P. (eds) *Introduction to Migration Studies*. IMISCOE Research Series. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-92377-8_12

² Düvell F., Cherti M., Lapshyna I. (2018). Does immigration enforcement matter (DIEM)? Irregular migrants and control policies in the UK: Final report. Oxford, UK: Centre on Migration Policy and Society (COMPAS). URL: <https://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/DIEM-Irregular-Immigrants-and-Control-Policies-in-the-UK.pdf>

to migrate, it is essential that migrant networks are considered. Castles¹ stresses the importance of migrant social networks through which new migrants follow the initial migration of other members of their family or community. Such networks provide a basis for adaptation and community formation. Furthermore, it is increasingly acknowledged that a migration infrastructure, including travel agents, lawyers, labour recruiters and interpreters, develops from these networks.

In the UK, government immigration policy has, for a number of years, attempted to reduce irregular migration by making life as difficult as possible for those without, or in breach of, their official status. A concept described by Theresa May in 2012 as the “hostile environment” includes requiring banks, landlords, employers and public service providers to refuse to provide services without evidence of the applicant’s immigration status as well as requiring certain data sharing and reporting mechanisms of the various stakeholders with Immigration Enforcement².

While this “hostile environment policy” has been contentious to the extent that it has even been reframed, or rebranded, by the ex-Minister for Immigration Brandon Lewis under guidance of former Home Secretary, Amber Rudd, as the “compliant environment”, it remains in place and directly affecting large numbers of individuals and stakeholders. But despite the efforts of the UK Government, and the creation of a hostile/compliant environment, the UK still hosts a significant population of irregular migrants. Total numbers are unknowable based on current data and approaches to measurement, but are believed to be in the hundreds of thousands, at least³.

Fear of immigration controls and raids in daily lives of irregular migrants

“Now I’d like us to talk a little bit about the immigration service. No problem. As long as they don’t want to talk about me (both laugh)” [UMa29M1]⁴.

¹ Castles S. (2004). The factors that make and unmake migration policies. *International Migration Review*. Vol. 38. No. 3. pp. 852–884.

² Düvell F., Cherti M., Lapshyna I. (2018). Does immigration enforcement matter (DIEM)? Irregular migrants and control policies in the UK: Final report. Oxford, UK: Centre on Migration Policy and Society (COMPAS). URL: <https://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/DIEM-Irregular-Immigrants-and-Control-Policies-in-the-UK.pdf>

³ Там само.

⁴ UMa29M1: U – refers to Ukraine, Ma – refers to the research locality (Manchester), 29 is the number of the respondent, M is male, 1 – refers to the age group 18–38.

One of the greatest fears that irregular migrants have is being caught by immigration authorities. For 39% (16) undocumented Ukrainians interviewed, fear - and the stress that comes with it - is a constant part of their lives. Almost a third of our interviewees 29% (12) said that they were fearful at the beginning of their stay, but then they got used to being undocumented and were less afraid than before. At the same time, it was surprising to find that almost third 32% (13) said that they did not fear the immigration authorities.

Our findings revealed that 39 percent of Ukrainian interviewees reported they were afraid of immigration controls and raids. Some respondents reported that they were afraid all the time, comparing fear to a virus: once you got it there is no cure for it. Those who witnessed immigration raids were even more scared. Some got paranoid and couldn't sleep at night for the first couple of weeks after the immigration raid. Overall, they all agreed that it was a "horrible feeling".

Several male respondents expressed their feelings:

"You are afraid of this all the time. These things [immigration raids, controls] exist and they [law enforcement authority] are not stupid and we are not some naive little children. It is a grown up world" [UMa26M2].

"Of course, I am afraid of immigration law enforcement. You do not have to be very clever to know that this danger is everywhere around you" [ULe39M1].

Another male from Manchester who witnessed an immigration raid shared his emotions:

"I panicked because I thought they [immigration enforcement service] were after the entire street but they just went on one building site, took few people away and left. Three small vans. I must tell you that my hands were shaking so much that I couldn't paint straight after that. It was so scary. Like in a movie. You don't get it at first and then it hits you. It's a horrible feeling. I wouldn't want anyone to go through something like that" [UMa31M4].

Others emphasized that panic and fear the immigration raid had spread among immigrants in the house raided. Several interviewees explained that the fear reached far beyond just those who were the direct targets of the raids. The immigration raids create a climate of fear and paranoia, which often result in moving house where immigration enforcement actions have taken place, as illustrated by the following quote:

"The immigration officers came to our house. People panicked. It was something. I've never seen people so scared before. But then they

[immigration officers] only went into her room. They searched that room, took some things and left, taking her with them too. They did not let her go, and later, they sent her back home [Ukraine].

Everybody was very afraid after what happened. Luckily no one else was in the house at that time. It was day time and everybody was at work. Her boyfriend, who was released, told us about it. People went crazy when they found out. Everyone got so scared and paranoid. Some couldn't sleep at night for the first couple of weeks. I felt frightened. We were all horrified and afraid they might come back again. To stop all this madness, we simply had no other choice but to move out. We had had enough and one day moved into a different place overnight" [ULo18F2].

When asked about their strategies in case they were stopped by police or immigration authorities, our interviewees expressed their anxiety:

"I do not know. My heart is sinking just from hearing this from you. Imagine how would I feel if that happen? I would probably have a heart attack. I do not know. There is nothing you can do, I guess, in a situation like that" [UMa28F1].

"Whenever I enter the [Tube] station, and see a lot of police there, my legs go numb. Sometimes when I see a large gathering of people, and the police are there, I try to simply cross the road before I reach them" [ULo11F1].

Our study results indicated that 32 percent (13 people) of Ukrainians interviewed reported that they did not fear the immigration authorities. Among our five research groups Ukrainians were second to Australians (86 percent), who were not afraid of being caught.

Some interviewees said that they live normal lives, as illustrated by the quote from the interview with a female from Coventry:

"Life is normal. Nobody is hiding... it is just that you have to behave yourself and that is it" [UCo41F5].

Another female from London reported:

"I'm not afraid of anything. Absolutely nothing. Even if someone I knew or my friend was a victim of crime I'd still go and report it" [ULo14F2].

Often the main explanation given by interviewees' for not being afraid was the possibility, mainly financial, of returning to the UK if they were sent back home. Several interviewees from Manchester explained:

"If one day, God forbid, they come to my site, I'll probably tell them who I am and then it's all in God's hands. I mean I'm not too afraid of being sent back home. I've been working abroad for so many years. I guess I earned

enough money for my next trip back to the UK if I have to come back. If something like that happens to me, I'm not very worried" [UMa31M4].

"Some people are not afraid of immigration raids because after ten years here they've earned enough money and met enough people for coming back not to be a problem for them" [UMa36M1].

This echoed another female's account. However, another fear, fear of staying in a detention centre was revealed:

"I am not so afraid of being sent back home. I am more afraid perhaps of that process. That you will be taken away, that you'll have to stay in a deportation centre. That's my fear. That's what I am afraid of" [ULo11F1].

From the interviews with all irregular migrants, it became clear that while often saying that they were not afraid to be caught they admitted that they were more concerned about others: relatives left behind, employers (who sometimes became friends) if their firms were closed down as a result of an immigration raid or just about other co-workers who could not come back in case of deportation:

"I'm worried more about others on the site or what could happen to the firm. I know I can come back but not everyone who works with me can say the same. Also, what if they close my friend's firm because of me?" [UMa31M4].

Those who had fake or borrowed papers were relatively relaxed and the only concern was about denunciation, as illustrated by the quote of a male from Manchester:

"If they [immigration officers] come to my workplace I will do nothing. I will just carry on working as if nothing has happened. The papers I have go through the system so I'm not worried about that- unless someone reported me or the owner of the papers did something stupid" [UMa36M1].

Some of our interviewees reported that they were more scared in London than in other cities, like this female from Manchester:

"I don't know what I will do if I come to work one day and there're immigration officers waiting for me. I was worried about that hotel being checked. That hotel I worked at in London. But here [in Manchester]? I don't think so" [UMa35F3].

A male from Nottingham comparing London to Nottingham said it is different planet in terms of checks, controls and immigration raids:

"It was very intimidating back in London. I used to get very anxious because of them [immigration law enforcement]. Here [in Nottingham], it's like living on a different planet. Maybe this is because here they only keep

an eye on criminals and trouble makers. But people like me, who live and work and don't cause trouble here, have nothing to worry about. I haven't heard any stories about immigration raids or checks here even once in the past three years. I don't have any places here I wouldn't go to" [UNo20M2].

Almost a third of our interviewees (29%=12) reported that they feared immigration enforcement only at the beginning of their stay in the UK. They all agreed that later they 'got used' to it and were no longer afraid.

"I was scared at the beginning, when I just arrived. Now I am not afraid if I know that I am following the rules..." [ULo02F2].

Several of our interviewees recalled that at the beginning of their stay in the UK they did not dare to use the Tube or take a bus because of the higher risk of being checked there.

"I heard so many things about raids at work, especially on building sites, catching those [undocumented] migrants. I used to worry that they [immigration service] will come to my home or even catch me on a bus. I remember times when I wouldn't even take a bus or go by Underground (laughs) but walk home instead. Then I just got used to it. Since I started working here, there have been no raids, thank God, or anything like that. Nothing happened. They used to check documents at the Underground and Overground stations in London" [UNo20M2].

But later the situation changed and the same respondents reported:

"Later, I started using the Tube and trains too" [ULo16M2].

Several interviewees said that they were no longer scared of the police. 'Euromaidan' in Ukraine in 2014 also known as the Revolution of Dignity, indirectly contributed to this change. An active participant of 'London Euromaidan' explained:

"For the first half year when I saw police on the street, I was afraid. Here there are so many police sirens. Since 'Euromaidan' I am no longer afraid. Let me tell you a story. It was February and very cold. We were standing opposite to Downing Street gates. There were a lot of police. They approached us. To be honest I wish we had such police at home, in Ukraine. They were very friendly, knowledgeable, they knew where Ukraine was on the map, they knew that the capital of Ukraine was Kyiv, they were aware of the political situation in Ukraine, that Ukraine is a pro-European country. They probably found out all this during 'Euromaidan'. They asked us whether anybody was threatening us, maybe we needed a doctor. They were very supportive. One day I remember was very cold, we were standing there and

a policeman approached us and said: "You are jumping up and down, you are probably cold here, do you want to come to our police station to get warm". And we went there and got warm. One policeman had a sign with Ukrainian flag, another one learned how to say "Slava Ukraini" [it means "Glory to Ukraine"]. So after all these events at "Maidan" I am not afraid of the police" [ULo03M2].

In addition, the Euromaidan protests and Russia's aggression in Ukraine have done much to unite Ukraine and Ukrainians abroad and ignite feelings of national pride. After these events Ukrainians, including undocumented ones in the UK, were proud to show their identity and many of them were not scared of the police or immigration enforcement:

"I'm no longer scared of the police as I used to be at the beginning. I now openly go out in London in my vyshyvanka [a distinct traditional Ukrainian embroidered shirt] and sharovary [Ukrainian traditional bloomer trousers]. People see me and I feel fine about it" [ULo16M2].

Another interviewee from Manchester had a different reason not be afraid of the police or immigration enforcement. He like some other irregular immigrants bought papers, which allowed him to stay and work in the UK:

"I used to be afraid but now I have papers that "ring" [go] through the system so I kind of have nothing to worry about. I have real documents of a real person. It is just that person is back in Lithuania and has nothing to do with England. I am kind of him here" [UMa21M4].

Surprisingly, one Ukrainian lady from London who had already been detained before once because for using false papers also was not scared of immigration enforcement. She was aware of the risks of being irregular but did not want to use false documents again. She explained:

"I am not afraid. You are always afraid at the beginning when you only come. But now not. If I need to go home then I would go. I don't want to have false documents again because if they caught me second time..." [ULo07 F2].

Perception of immigration controls and raids

In our study we found out that irregular Ukrainians were very well aware of immigration controls in the UK. There was no single Ukrainian interviewee who had not heard about immigration enforcement. The vast majority of them (95%=39 persons) were aware or had heard of immigration raids and controls in the UK, very few respondents had

experienced workplace raids (1=2%) and two had been detained (2=5%).

A key thread running through the findings was that interviewees still considered life in the UK, including employment opportunities and rule of law, better than in their country of origin: “being an illegal in this country is still better than being legal in Ukraine” (ULo02F2). This explains the limited impact of the threat of enforcement on deterring irregular migration.

It was not surprising that migrants discussed immigration matters and one could hear a lot about raids, as illustrated by this quote from an interview with a male from London:

“I was lucky not to see anything like that. I think that God spared me. But I have heard so many times about raids at work. People tell each other. People I know and friends tell everyone when someone gets caught somewhere and is taken away. It gets into your head that, God forbid, this might happen to you. But well. If I get caught, they can only send me home. What else can they do?” [ULo15M4].

A female from London noticed that there were more talks about raids when Ukrainians shared a house. It led to anxiety among other irregular migrants:

“I never heard about raids from other people in the neighbourhood. It’s just where we used to live with that woman, because it wasn’t just two of us who lived there, there were other Ukrainians as well. They talked about people they knew, that someone somewhere had been taken away. It caused a bit of anxiety all round. When you do not hear about it, it’s nothing. You don’t think about it. I think it’s only our people [migrant community members] who talk about it” [ULo11F1].

Another male respondent from Manchester admitted that all these stories about immigration raids send panic through immigrant communities and put pressure on him:

“I heard other stories but I try not to listen too much. It’s too much pressure if you listen to all those negative stories” [UMa27M1].

Our study showed that irregular migrants were risk assessors constantly assessing and reassessing risks, as illustrated by this quote from the interview with another Ukrainian male from Manchester:

“I have heard about people being arrested when they worked through job agencies. That is why I do not know any Ukrainians who work through agencies now” [UMa32M3].

From the interviews with irregular migrants in London, it became clear that they know about places/districts of particular risk for them:

"I heard that there were checks on the underground but random ones" [ULo11F1].

"I would avoid the Ukrainian club; there are raids on the Ukrainian club. They could even come to the Church. Or if it is about fake marriage, they could come to the registry office. The registry office collaborates closely with the Home Office. Imagine, you are at the registry office, the doors are flung open, in come Home office officials in the middle of the ceremony, they grab the bride or groom and send them back home" [ULo02F2].

"I have heard that especially in Leyton there are many people from Eastern Europe. There is a Ukrainian food shop and off licence. There was a raid by the police and home office. They locked the door and did not let anybody in or out. They checked documents of everybody inside. They caught two illegal immigrants. I don't know whether they were Ukrainians. They could be from Moldova, I don't know. I think they were from Ukraine. They just took them to the detention centre" [ULo09M1].

Many Ukrainian irregular migrants believe that as white Europeans they are at lower risk in terms of checks/raids compared to 'dark skin' immigrants. A male respondent from Leister explained:

"I heard about immigration raids but I have never seen one. I was told they [immigration officers] shake down carwashes and petrol stations where Indians [used here as an umbrella term for Asian people] work. They [immigration officials] see a dark skin and get excited and they just go there and check up on the place. That is why I have never seen any Africans working in carwashes here. They know they are going to be checked out" [ULe39M1].

Similarly, an interviewee from Manchester said:

"I don't think they can detect me now. They detect those who cause problems. I don't cause any problems for anyone. I just go to work and come back home. I'm just like any of those Poles and Lithuanians who come here for work. How'd they know that this guy crossing the street is an illegal migrant? Unless you do something wrong. They're not interested in who you are or where you came from" [UMa36M1].

Ukrainians also referred to their 'good reputation' which helped to avoid risk.

“Maybe it’s just luck or maybe we have a good reputation and they [law enforcement authority] don’t target us for raids, unless you cause troubles, of course. They mainly check blacks and Asians” [UMa26M2].

The same interviewee observed that Ukrainians as white people were perceived like other Eastern Europeans by the immigration service:

“Our carwash has never been checked. Not that I know about. I would have heard about it by now if that was the case. I have not heard about it. But I think they [immigration service] do not come to our carwash because we are all white people. They do not know whether we are from Ukraine or some other Eastern European country so they just leave us in peace” [ULe39M1].

Where they had a choice, some Ukrainian migrants adopted a strategy of choosing work in sectors and geographical areas where they thought the authorities were less likely to investigate. Work in a family, private construction work, for example, were thought to be less risky than work on building sites, in hotels, restaurants or take-aways. Thus, those who could choose what they understood to be ‘safer’ types of jobs did so.

Several Ukrainian interviewees explained that work in informal private domestic work sector is ‘safer’ in terms of checks, controls and immigration raids:

“My employer has not been raided by immigration officers. I have only been working for one year on building sites, where this could happen. But most of my jobs are private” [ULo04M2].

“I have heard about the law enforcement officers catching people who work without permission in the UK. But it is when somebody is working for a company or an agency. Not if you’re working for a family. I have never heard about anyone working for families having any problems with law enforcement. I heard that hotels and restaurants used to be checked. But I don’t hear any of those horror stories now” [UMa28F1].

Bloch and McKay’s¹ findings on risk avoidance of irregular migrants from Bangladesh, China and Turkey were echoed in our research.

Many of our Ukrainian interviewees believed that ‘doing something wrong’ or ‘causing trouble’ might be a reason for immigration checks/controls and consequent deportation.

“I heard stories about people were caught and sent back home after they caused trouble or women having big problems after going to a hospital or

¹ Bloch A., McKay S. (2016). Living on the margins: Undocumented migrants in a global city. Bristol: Bristol University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1t8920p>

things like that. I also heard how people went to open a bank account and got caught because they were using IDs they had bought for work. They just wanted a bank account for their wages not to cheat on the bank, but they got caught and sent back home” [UMa27M1].

Several Ukrainian interviewees believed that it was unlikely that you would get arrested at your workplaces. Rather, the arrest would be caused by some ‘private problem’:

“It is usually stories about men causing a disturbance at home or in a public place and getting arrested and then sent back to Ukraine. I have never heard about any problems at the workplaces” [UMa36M1].

“In Manchester, our people get in trouble when they have a car accident or drive when drunk, or for other silly reasons like getting drunk and fighting at a barbecue, or when they don’t pay their medical bills. But I have never heard about anyone being taken away from their workplace” [UMa23M2].

Apart from workplace and home raids, one interviewee from Manchester mentioned another immigration enforcement action against irregular migrants:

“I heard that in the past they used to block people’s bank accounts and ask them to bring documents. But that was done at the banks not at the work places” [UMa23M2].

Those interviewees who had lived and worked in London in comparing London to other cities such as Manchester, Nottingham, Leicester, emphasised that in London one could hear a lot more about immigration enforcement controls.

“I heard a lot of stories when I was in London. Not so much here [in Manchester]. I don’t stay so close to the Ukrainian community here. I mean, I like them and have met a lot of good people here but I’ve sort of had enough of people who year after year get together and talk about the same things or only about their problems. I have a few good friends here but that’s about it. I now have Polish friends and Lithuanian friends as well as friends from other countries here. Maybe back when I was in London, I was sort of dependent on being close to our people. Here, I feel I miss them only socially” [UMa35F3].

Immigration raids on workplaces

On the question of workplace raids the majority of our interviewees said that they had heard a lot about them, especially in London:

“I lived in London for four or five months and I heard so many stories about our people being caught and sent back to Ukraine. They were all similar stories but I heard a new one almost every Saturday. People were raided in market places. People were raided at train stations. People were caught at work. Employment agencies were raided, checked for documentation and closed down. Building firms were checked. Take-away restaurants were raided and checked when customers were there. I heard a lot of stories like that” [ULe38M1].

Even though there was more talk about raids in London our interviewees also had heard about checks and arrests in other cities. For example, a male respondent from Manchester noticed:

“I have heard about agencies being checked and their businesses closed, and people being arrested. But it was like two years ago. I don’t know any agency personally. I just remember our people talking about it a lot about two years ago, and some of our migrant workers got caught up in all this. But I don’t know anyone personally who was caught at work” [UMa36M1].

The same respondent from Manchester admitted that many people he worked with before were also without papers. However, his firm did not experience any work raid:

“If immigration officers had come to any of the firms I worked for before I got borrowed documents, ‘they would’ve hit the jackpot. They would probably have run out of vans to pack us all in” [UMa36M1].

Another interviewee explained why he believed his employer’s construction site has never been raided:

“My site has never been raided. But this firm has been in the business for about nine years and they have never had problems. You see, [employer’s name] has standards. And he teaches you to stick to them and work to those standards. Health and safety comes first. Then it is cleanliness [environment]” [UMa37M3].

Another interviewee from Manchester believed that small construction sites where he worked could not be checked by immigration enforcement service:

“I have never seen any raids on any sites I worked at. But it’s a small company. Why would anyone be checking a small company?” [UMa29M1].

Some of our interviewees witnessed an immigration raid. A male respondent from Manchester shared his experience:

“I saw how they raided a place. I panicked because I thought they were after the entire street but they just went into one site, took a few people

away and left. Three small vans. I thought they'll come to ours too but they just took people from that other site and left. It was just a couple of houses away from where we were. It was so quick. Five minutes and they came out with four Asian men, packed them into vans and left. They could've come to us but they didn't" [UMa31M4].

Like Poles in Jordan and Düvell's study about irregular migrants¹, some Ukrainian interviewees believed that immigration officers would rather check non-European immigrants:

"They [immigration officers] see that there are too many Africans or Pakistanis working in one place and they go there and check the place out. They check out take-away restaurants, small hotels, cleaning agencies, petrol stations, shops at petrol stations and the car wash firms. They check anywhere they see Africans, Arabs or Pakistanis" [UMa37M3].

Almost all of our interviewees were well aware of sanctions against the employers who hire irregular migrants. Moreover, some claimed that the employers often knew *'when they will be raided/checked'* [ULo07F2].

Ukrainians pointed to *'collaboration'* between employers and employees:

"They [employers] could even let illegal workers know when there would be a raid. They don't want to be accused of hiring illegal workers" [ULo07F2].

Immigration raids on homes

Many of our interviewees had heard about home raids, witnessed them, but none of them had personally experienced a raid. Respondents often talked about houses being raided where several Ukrainians shared a house, as illustrated by one man from London:

"My husband witnessed a raid. One day they were repairing a house when suddenly a van came and stopped by a house opposite. Lots of officers jumped out of the van and surrounded that house. They were knocking on the door of that house and shouting something. I don't remember how it ended. But, thank God, it wasn't the house my husband was working in. It happened across the road from where he was. It was definitely the immigration service" [ULo17F1].

It was clear from several interviews that irregular migrants were very well aware of details of home raids, such as why and how it happened, or what was the usual time for home raid:

¹ Jordan B., Düvell F. (2002). Irregular Migration. The Dilemmas of Transnational Mobility. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing. 296 p.

“There were raids. A house where I moved from has been raided. In that case it all started from the hotel check. They found two Ukrainian women with fake documents in the hotel. Their address was at the house where I used to live. And they raided the house. At that time there were only two people at home, it was Saturday and everybody was at work. However, they were not deported. But any time be last time. They might send you to a special place where they detain illegals and then send you home” [ULo03M2].

“It was not very early, normally raids could be at 4 or 5 in the morning when people are asleep and do not expect it” [ULo03M2].

One of our interviewees from London told the story of witnessing a home raid when she shared a house with a couple. As a result, one of the girl they shared with was sent home:

“I heard stories how some market places were surrounded by the immigration services and a lot of people were taken away. Also, a young couple lived in the same house with us. Once, they went to visit their friends to celebrate someone’s birthday, and there was a raid on that place. They stayed overnight there after the celebration and the house got raided that night. The Home Office knocked at the door and started checking documents. Two of the guys who lived there were claiming asylum. They were later released. But two girls from that place were sent back home. One of them had lived in a room in a house we lived” [ULo18F2].

As mentioned before, irregular immigrants are risk assessors and as demonstrated below it applies also when they choose which house to rent:

“Some houses have a bad reputation. I mean, not because bad people live there, but because the police or immigration people have visited it. People are very careful not to live in houses that have a history of Home Office visits” [UMa36M1].

A similar response tendency ‘there are more workplace raids now’ was found when asking about home raids. One of our interviewees from London stated:

“People now talk about those raids and more people being caught and sent back home. Women I used to work with told me how a whole house full of migrants was surrounded once and everyone was taken away, and then all of them were sent back home. I wish there were less of those raids” [ULo17F1].

In general, our interviewees in London agreed that now there are more raids, more people are caught and deported.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The risk of an irregular immigrant encountering an immigration officer, being arrested at the workplace or in the community and/or subsequently removed, is rather small. This is reflected by the qualitative interviews suggesting that feeling safe and being resilient are prominent features amongst the irregular immigrant population: 'I'm not afraid of anything' (ULo14F2). Nevertheless, Ukrainian irregular migrants suggest that immigration enforcement is perceived as omnipresent. Interviewees speculated about the main strategies of immigration enforcement and talked about the threat of raids, and some accounts suggest a kind of panic discourse within certain social networks. Some interviewees displayed high and constant levels of stress whereas others showed high levels of resilience. Irregular migrants were more likely to display stress at the beginning of their irregular position and became more resilient the longer they managed to stay in the UK. Though some also became stressed over time. However, they still considered life in the UK, including employment opportunities and rule of law, better than in their country of origin.

The interviewees were generally considering – or had already developed – strategies in terms of their residence, work, and other areas of their lives which they believed would help prevent detection. These included avoiding or leaving London, avoiding certain locations or neighbourhoods, large companies or construction sites, morning shifts or wearing work uniforms. Irregular migrants moved out of areas where immigration enforcement raids were observed, moved addresses under which they had previously been recorded, avoided addresses that had been raided before, avoided houses of other immigrants, hid IDs at different addresses, and avoided the London Underground. Many suggested avoiding trouble, or other actions which would draw attention to them, and not disclosing their precarious status to anybody.

The respondents distinguished between raids, detection, detention and removal. Several seemed more likely to be frightened by the prospect of being detained, whilst removal was perceived with mixed feelings. For some, the degree of concern depended on the duration of their residence in the UK, on what they had achieved in terms of savings, whether they could afford returning home, and on their family situation. Some perceived removal as being 'sent home' and some suggested they would take this as a chance to see their family. Others felt this would be a threat to their

family or other acquaintances and employers in the UK. Some inferred they would be coming back, and the one respondent who had experienced removal to Ukraine was back within a month and a half. The deterrent effect of immigration visits and enforcement were varied, with some taking the risk very seriously, while others saw enforcement as either a temporary challenge to overcome or simply an irritation.

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