

Summary

Building a future in the Netherlands

The life situation of Polish migrants who registered in the Netherlands after 2004

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Summary

S.1 Labour migration from Poland

The number of Polish migrants in the Netherlands has increased rapidly since the accession of a number of Central and Eastern European countries to the EU in 2004. Until 2007, Polish migrants were free to settle in the Netherlands, but restrictions remained in place regarding employment. Since 2007, Poles have no longer required a work permit (TWV) to work in the Netherlands and Polish migrants have been free to both live and work in the Netherlands. On 1 January 2017, approximately 160,000 Polish migrants were recorded in the population register. Poles have thereby rapidly become the sixth largest migrant group in the Netherlands. In addition to registered Polish migrants, there is also a sizeable group of Poles who work in the Netherlands but are not registered as residents with Dutch local authorities. On 1 January 2016, this group amounted to around 90,000 people.

A survey conducted among members of the Polish community in 2015 (Survey Integration Migrants 2015) who registered in the Netherlands after 2004 makes it possible to describe the current life situation of this group. It relates to Poles who have been in the Netherlands for a maximum of eleven years, but in many cases for a much shorter period. Here, we focus on Polish migrants who have been registered as residents in the Netherlands since 2004, and not on unregistered Polish migrants.

Only those who are planning to stay in the Netherlands for more than four months are required to register in the population register. Poles who come to the Netherlands for a short period, for example to engage in seasonal work in agriculture and horticulture, were therefore excluded from the study, as well as those who stay longer without registering. The same applies to Poles who registered before 2004, or those who were born in the Netherlands.

What is missing from this study is a picture of unregistered Polish labour migrants, who have frequently come to the Netherlands on a temporary basis. Whether or not Poles and other migrant workers are registered with the local authorities is a question of circumstance. Some Poles come to the Netherlands with the intention of engaging in short-term work, and then decide to stay on. From that point they may or may not register as residents. Others may register upon arrival but quickly decide to leave again. There is also the phenomenon of 'permanently temporary' residents, although the extent of this phenomenon is unknown. This relates to an often stable group of people who are recruited to work in the Netherlands on a temporary basis but who keep coming back. Migrant workers who have not registered with their local authority but who are in employment are required to register with the RNI (Register of Non-residents). This is the only way to obtain a citizen service number for tax and social security purposes and be able to work formally in the Netherlands. In addition, there is a further category of people who are unregistered and work in areas such as decorating jobs for private Dutch households. No details at all are available on this kind of informal employment.

At various points in this report, we make comparisons with other migrant groups and with native Dutch migrants. Clearly, these differences are partly due to differences in the composition of these groups. For example, the Polish migrants in this study are relatively young and have only lived in the Netherlands for a short time. These comparisons are therefore primarily intended to provide a frame of reference.

Immigration from Poland is continuing

Despite the economic crisis, the numbers of Poles coming to the Netherlands have fluctuated around an average of about 23,000 per year in recent years (figure S.1). Some companies in the municipality of Westland expressed concerns in early 2017 that it was becoming increasingly difficult to recruit Polish workers. The most recent immigration figures fail to show whether the number of Poles coming to the Netherlands has indeed fallen. Preliminary figures show that almost 24,000 Poles came to the Netherlands in 2017 - a few hundred more than in 2016. This figure relates to Poles registered as resident with their local authority. Neither is any downward trend visible in the number of Poles registered in the Netherlands as employees only (Register of Non-residents). However, it may have become more difficult for employers to recruit staff because, for example, the characteristics of those coming have changed or because the demand for labour has increased. And of course, it is also possible that it has become more difficult to find suitable staff in particular areas of the country or in particular industries.

Since its accession to the EU, Poland has become the primary country of origin for immigrants in terms of annual immigration into the Netherlands. The annual influx of Poles is greater than that of people from the four traditional groups combined (Turkey, Morocco, Surinam and the Dutch Antilles), and was higher than the number of Syrian migrants up to and including 2015. Only in 2016 did the number of Syrian migrants, at 28,000, exceed the number of Polish migrants (5,000 more Syrians than Poles). Immigration from Bulgaria and Romania remains at a considerably lower level than that from Poland. In the period 2012-2016, an average of slightly below 5,000 Bulgarians and almost 4,000 Romanians came to the Netherlands each year, each less than a quarter of the number of Polish migrants.

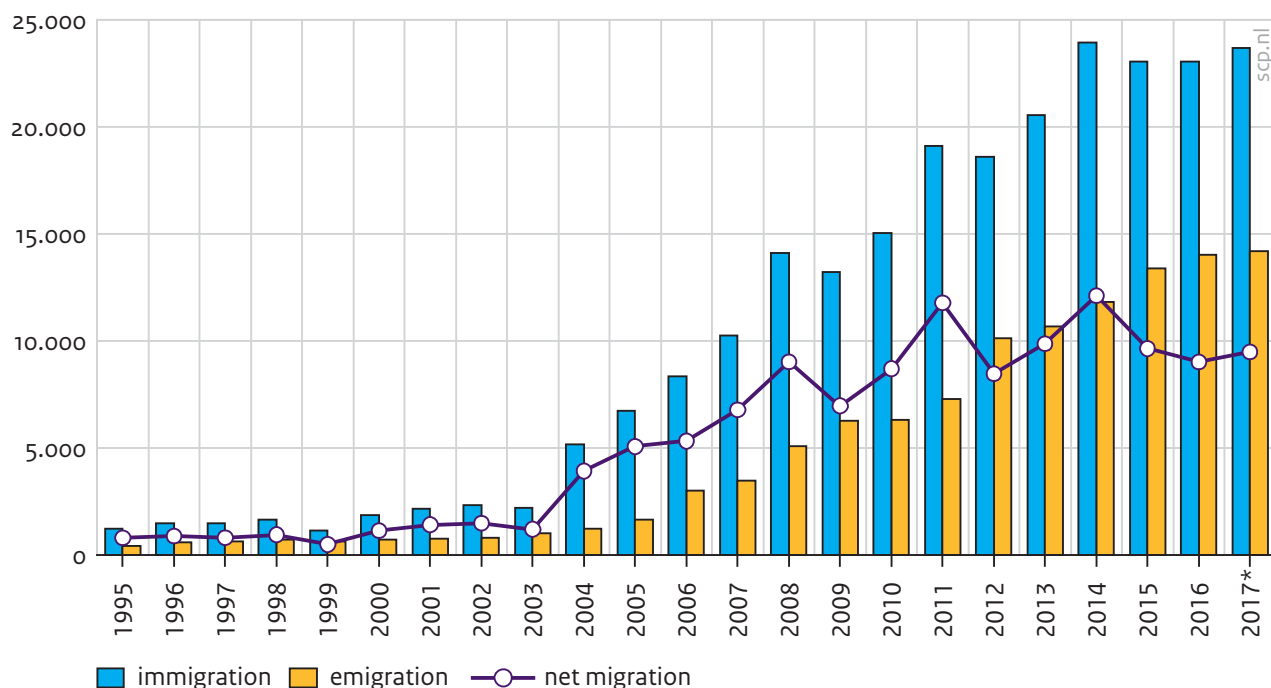
Looking at neighbouring countries, we see that by far the majority of Poles have migrated to Germany and the United Kingdom. As far as Germany is concerned, in addition to the special relationship between Germany and Poland, geographic proximity also plays a role. In the case of the United Kingdom, Polish migrants were free to seek employment as soon as Poland joined the EU and did not require a work permit to do so.

Emigration among Poles in the Netherlands has increased considerably in recent years. More than half of Polish migrants who came to the Netherlands in the first decade of this century (and were registered as residents with their local authority) have since left again. In net terms, approximately 10,000 has been added to the population of Polish migrants in the Netherlands every year since 2007. This increase was interrupted briefly in 2009, and a clear dip is evident between 2011 and 2012. The economic crisis seems to have been

responsible for this. In recent years, the net figure has fallen slightly because of increasing numbers of departures from the Netherlands.

Figure S.1

Net immigration, emigration and migration of Polish migrants, 1995-2017 (absolute numbers)



* Provisional.

Source: CBS (Population statistics)

S.2 Characteristics and expectations of staying among Poles who have migrated since 2004

Young group, often without children, mainly with a Polish partner

The Poles in this study have been registered as residents in the Netherlands for a maximum of eleven years, and some much less than that. It is therefore a group of new migrants who are still settling down. Those who have come to the Netherlands since 2004 have a low average age (most are between 25 and 35 years old). They usually come as labour or family migrants. Slightly more than half of Polish households consist of single people, about 20% are couples without children, and 20% are couples with children. The proportion that started a family in the Netherlands increased between 2005 and 2017. Poles with children have, in most cases, one child (so far), who is often young and attends school in the Netherlands. There is little support in our data for the image of migrants who come to the Netherlands solely to work, and who have a partner and/or children at home in Poland. Only a small proportion have a partner and/or children in Poland. By far the majority of Poles with partners who registered in the Netherlands after 2004 have a Polish partner (81%); 11% have a partner of Dutch origin, and 7% have a partner with a different ethnic background.

Level of education is lower than native Dutch migrants

The Poles who have arrived since 2004 largely completed their education in Poland. This means that they acquired most of their educational qualifications before coming to the Netherlands. Of the Poles who have registered since 2004, 21% are educated to higher education (HBO) / (wo); 39% are educated to a level similar to senior general secondary education (HAVO)/pre-university education (vwo) or senior secondary vocational education (MBO); 31% are educated to preparatory vocational education (vbo)/ junior general secondary education (MAVO); 10% have completed only primary education. This means that they are clearly educated to a lower average level than the population of the Netherlands. A majority (60%) have the level of basic qualifications required for participation in the Dutch labour market, but 40% of all Poles do not meet this standard and have been educated to a maximum of vbo/MAVO level.

As in previous research among Polish migrants in the Netherlands, we see that Polish women are better educated than Polish men. Polish women are more likely to hold degrees from higher professional education/university than Polish men: 26% versus 16%. We see no such male-female disparity among the general population of the Netherlands. The composition of the group's educational level did not change much in the years between 2009 and 2015, despite a considerable influx of 'new' Polish migrants during that period.

Two in three Poles can speak English

One assumption that is often heard specifically in relation to the situation in the Netherlands is that immigrants to the Netherlands find it difficult to learn Dutch, because native Dutch people speak to them in English. Approximately one in three Poles say they can speak English quite well. A further one in three say they sometimes have trouble with the English language. The remainder do not speak English or only very little. The younger age groups (up to 35 years old) speak much better English than the older Poles, and the same applies to better-educated Polish migrants.

Resident in the west and south of the Netherlands

In absolute terms, most (registered) Poles live in the west and south of the Netherlands. The Hague has the highest number of Polish residents, at 12,000. In proportion to the population of the municipality, Zeewolde tops the table with 4.3% Polish residents, followed by Westland, Noordwijkerhout, Zundert and Maasdriel, with 3% Polish residents or higher. There are relatively large numbers of Poles in northern Limburg, the northern part of Noord-Holland, Westland and parts of Noord-Brabant. Relatively few Poles live in large areas of the east and north of the Netherlands. Polish migrants (like all persons of a migrant background) change location more often than native Dutch people.

Housing situation relatively favourable

Our study shows that the vast majority of Poles live independently (81%), while a small minority have to share facilities. Some one in four Poles are homeowners. Poles who live in

rented accommodation are relatively likely to rent from a private landlord (43%). Three-quarters of Poles who have registered since 2004 are satisfied or very satisfied with their housing situation. The difference with the native Dutch population is considerable, which is unsurprising given that Poles stay in the Netherlands is recent. Native Dutch migrants are more likely to own their own home and live independently, and are more likely to be satisfied with their housing situation. Nevertheless, we can see an improvement in the housing situation of Polish migrants compared to six years earlier (in 2009).

Looking at the proportion of Poles who own their own homes, we see that better-educated Poles and the age group between 35 and 44 years are more likely to be homeowners. The length of their stay in the Netherlands is the major factor here. Of those Poles who came to the Netherlands before 2007, 37% now own their own home, compared to 11% of those who registered in the Netherlands in the past two years.

Many Poles wish to stay in the Netherlands

Three-quarters of Polish migrants who have arrived since 2004 think they still live in the Netherlands five years from now. 19% wish to live in Poland forever. The likelihood that they believe they will still be here in five years decreases with age, but increases the longer the period of residence becomes. Poles with a partner or with a partner and children are more likely to want to stay longer than single Poles. Level of education has no effect on whether people expect still to be living in the Netherlands in five years.

S.3 Orientation towards the Netherlands and/or Poland

Significant difficulties with the Dutch language

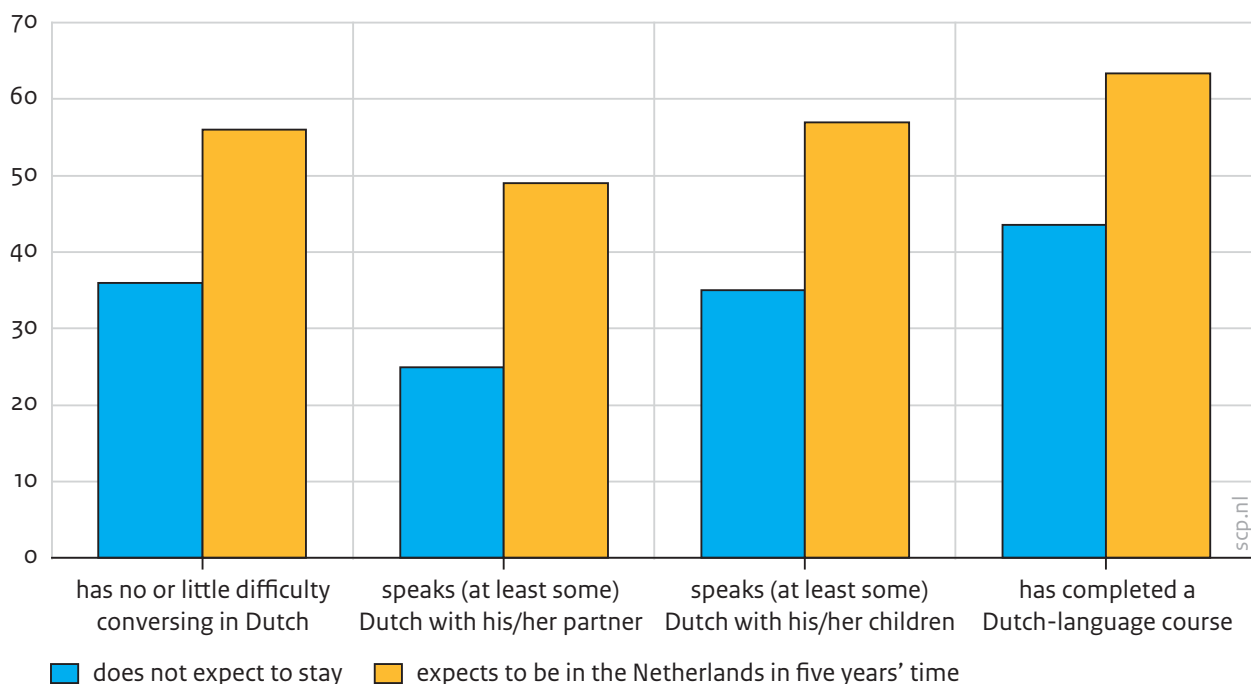
Most Poles who have come to the Netherlands since 2004 experience significant difficulty with the Dutch language. Only around 10% indicate that they never have any difficulty. Younger migrants, and those who arrived less recently have significantly less trouble with the Dutch language, and the same applies to Polish women and better-educated Poles. In total, 58% of Polish migrants have followed a civic integration and/or language course, or are currently doing so. In 2009 this proportion was 33%.

Plans to stay longer associated with better language proficiency

Polish migrants who expect to stay in the Netherlands for the longer term also speak better Dutch, speak it more often with their partner and/or children and are more likely to have completed a Dutch-language course (see figure S.2). It is therefore clear that those who intend to stay invest more in learning the language.

Figure S.2

Indicators of level of proficiency and frequency of usage of the Dutch language among those who expect to be in the Netherlands in five years' time, Polish migrants registered since 2004, 2015 (in percentages)



Source: SCP/CBS (SIM'15)

Desire for more interaction with native Dutch population than is currently the case

Polish migrants, despite their open attitude to social integration in the Netherlands, have relatively few links with the native Dutch population. On the one hand, Polish migrants do not seek to distance themselves from the native Dutch population: hardly any would rule out friendships or marriage, for instance. On the other hand, 25% to 30% never or hardly ever have contact with native Dutch migrants. A large proportion of Polish migrants (44%) would like more contact. What undoubtedly plays a role here is that this group has only been in the Netherlands for a relatively short period, and their command of the Dutch language remains insufficient to be able to interact with native Dutch people easily (this will usually be done in English). It may also be relevant that, given the size of the group, Poles have more opportunity to socialise with other Poles. There are often other Poles at their place of work and where they live. Establishing and maintaining contacts may also be impeded by the fact that some of the Polish population in the Netherlands is only here on a temporary basis.

Strong focus on Poland

One in ten Poles feels (very) strongly Dutch, almost one-third feel a little Dutch, and about six in ten do not feel Dutch at all. The Polish identity is felt more strongly: 83% feel (very) strongly Polish and there are very few Poles who do not feel Polish (at all) (3%). Identification with Poland remained stable between 2009 and 2015, but identification with the Netherlands increased slightly.

In addition, Poles focus strongly on media from their country of origin. Nearly two-thirds of Polish migrants watch Polish television channels several times a week; Dutch channels are watched less frequently. They mainly visit Polish internet sites: 80% of Poles in the Netherlands visit these sites several times a week.

S.4 Work and Income

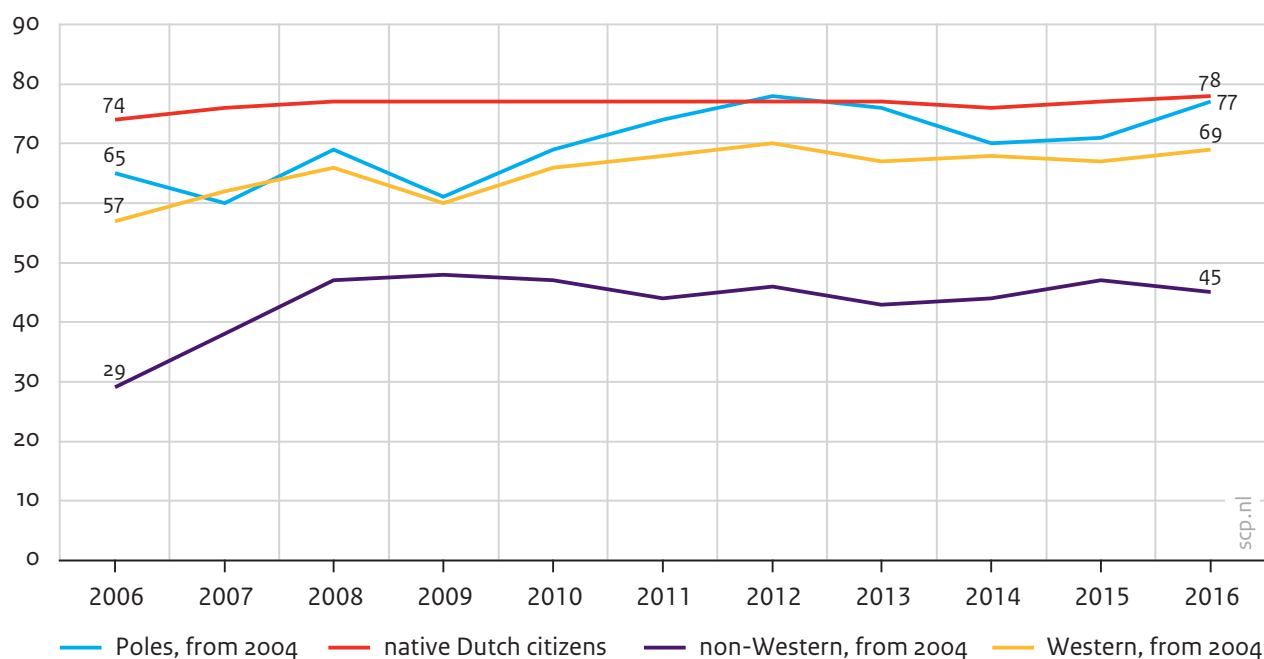
High level of labour market participation and low unemployment rates

Three-quarters of Polish migrants who have registered as resident in the Netherlands since 2004 are in paid employment. This is a high level compared with other migrant groups, and about the same as native Dutch migrants (77%). Organised labour migration plays a role in this high level of participation: many temporary employment agencies bring Polish migrants to work in the Netherlands directly. On average, Polish women are higher educated, but this is not reflected in higher labour market participation (66% versus 85% among Polish men). Moreover, Polish women are significantly more likely to work in lower-status jobs than Polish men: 57% of Polish women work at the lowest level of employment, while this number is 38% among Polish men. Labour market participation among Polish migrants increased between 2006 and 2016 (figure S.3). This may indicate that they are increasingly better-equipped for the labour market, but it may also reflect the selective mobility of this group: migrants who become unemployed return home.

The unemployment rate among Polish migrants who have registered in the Netherlands since 2004 is a little higher than that among native Dutch migrants (6.7% compared to 4.9%). Unemployment is considerably lower among Polish migrants than among Western migrants as a whole (9.7%) and among non-Western (19.7%) migrants who have come to the Netherlands since 2004. Again, Polish women are more likely to be unemployed (8.7%) than Polish men (4.1%).

Figure S.3

Net labour market participation, persons aged 15-64 years, by origin, 2006-2016 (in percentages)



Source: CBS (EBB'06-EBB'16)

Rate of self-employment is relatively low

12% of Polish workers are self-employed. This percentage is slightly lower than among native Dutch migrants in employment (15%). There are big differences within the Polish group. Men (17%) are considerably more likely to be self-employed than women (7%), and the same applies to Polish migrants over 35 years of age. Among Polish workers who came to the Netherlands before 2007, one-quarter are self-employed. This high proportion is related to the requirements for the work permit (twv) which were in force until 1 January 2007. Self-employed persons did not have to comply with these requirements. For employers it was also easier to hire a nominally self-employed worker than to apply for a work permit.

Many temporary employment contracts at the lower end of the labour market

A large proportion of Polish migrants (42%) work on flexible employment contracts. This is about twice as high as among native Dutch migrants (22%), and is also higher than among the largest four non-Western groups in the Netherlands. In the cohort that arrived in the Netherlands before 2007 - which has not only been in the Netherlands for longer but also has a higher average age than the other migration cohorts - the picture is very different: only about a quarter (26%) work on flexible employment contracts. This indicates that Polish migrants gain a foothold in the Dutch labour market when they stay in the country for longer.

A large proportion of Polish migrants (47%) work at the lowest levels. Only 8% are professionals working at the highest level. Polish migrants are also underrepresented in the

upper end of the labour market compared to other migrant groups, and overrepresented at the lower end. We saw the same picture in previous studies involving Polish migrants. One important reason for this is that many Poles have come to the Netherlands to earn money in sectors where a great deal of low-skilled labour is required, and in which a high level of education or proficiency in the Dutch language is not required or less relevant.

Long working hours and physically demanding conditions

Almost four in five Polish employees work 35 hours or more per week (78%), whereas this proportion is around half among native Dutch migrants in employment. Earlier research has also indicated that Polish employees work long hours on average. Within this group, men (92%) are significantly more likely to work full-time than women (62%), but these differences are smaller than among native Dutch migrants in employment (76% and 19% respectively).

Working conditions are more physically demanding than among native Dutch migrants. More than one in four Polish migrants indicates that they are always expected to work quickly (among native Dutch migrants, this is one in ten). Polish workers often do physically demanding work too. More than one-third indicate that they often or always have to do such work. Although only a small proportion of Polish employees (11%) state that they often or always have to do work that is dangerous, this is still almost four times as many as native Dutch migrants who say the same thing (3%). The sectors in which many Polish migrants are employed is a relevant factor here: construction, industry and agriculture. Polish women are more likely than Polish men to indicate that they never do dangerous and physically demanding work; the proportion that is often required to work quickly does not differ between men and women.

Very low welfare dependency

Of the Polish migrants who have settled in the Netherlands since 2004, only 1.8% depend on welfare support, which is lower than the percentage among native Dutch migrants (2.3%). This low proportion relates to Polish migrants' strong focus on employment and labour market participation, but it also reflects the fact that not all Polish migrants are entitled to welfare support because they have been living in the Netherlands for less than five years.

Lower incomes and higher incidence of poverty

The wages earned by Polish migrants are about one-third lower than those of native Dutch migrants (an average of €17,600 and €26,300, respectively). This is also lower than the average for all Western and non-Western migrants. In relation to wages earned by workers in Poland (€6,200), wages earned in the Netherlands are still almost three times as high, however. Previous research showed that recent Polish migrants are satisfied with the wages they receive from working in the Netherlands, although levels of satisfaction have fallen over time. Their frame of reference is likely to shift to other groups in the Netherlands as migrants stay in the country for longer.

Polish migrants are more than three times more likely to live in poverty than indigenous Dutch migrants (17% and 5%, respectively). The incidence of poverty is higher than among other Western migrants, but less than among non-Western migrants. Among Polish migrants who came to the Netherlands most recently (2013-2014), about one-quarter are classified as living in poverty. Poverty is lower among Polish migrants who have been living in the Netherlands for longer.

5.5 Health and well-being

Good health and relatively little use of Dutch healthcare system

Polish migrants are generally healthy: 84% report being in (very) good health. The physical and psychological health of Polish migrants compares favourably with that of native Dutch migrants. The difference in physical health can be explained by the age difference between the two groups: Polish migrants are on average younger, and younger people are generally physically healthier. However, the difference in psychological well-being cannot be explained by the difference in age between the two groups. Perhaps this is due to the 'healthy immigrant' effect, whereby positive selection occurs (fitter people are more likely to migrate), and this selection never took place in the Dutch population as a whole. The good perceived health of Polish migrants is reflected in the extent to which they use (Dutch) healthcare facilities. Polish migrants visit their GP less often and are less likely to see a medical specialist than native Dutch migrants. When we take into account the difference in (perceived) physical health, both groups visit their GP equally often. More than one-quarter of the Polish migrants in our study returned to Poland to consult a doctor there in the past year, however.

Poles experienced more discrimination in 2015 than in 2009

The perception that Polish migrants as a group suffer from discrimination was expressed more frequently than actual experiences of discrimination. Over half of Polish migrants have not experienced discrimination personally, but over three-quarters believe that other Polish migrants sometimes suffer discrimination. About a quarter state that Poles (very) often face discrimination, and a further half state that this is at least sometimes the case. In relation to actual experiences of discrimination, over one in ten (very) often experience this, and one in three sometimes do. When we compare the two studies available, we see that Polish migrants experienced more personal discrimination in 2015 than they did in 2009: the proportion that face discrimination at least sometimes rose from 38% to 46%. Perceptions of an inclusive climate among Polish migrants in the Netherlands are higher than among other migrant groups, among whom a much larger proportion feel that migrants in the Netherlands (very) often suffer from discrimination. However, at the personal level, Polish migrants experience discrimination to around the same degree as other migrant groups.

Generally satisfied with the Netherlands, but without feeling entirely at home

Polish migrants are fairly positive about the Netherlands. They give the Netherlands an average rating of 7.1. This is a higher rating than native Dutch migrants give to Dutch society (6.6). It is also a high rating compared to other major non-Western migrant groups. Although Polish migrants are generally satisfied with Dutch society, they do not all feel completely at home: 36% feel at home in the Netherlands, half sometimes feel at home, and about one in ten do not feel at home at all. The proportion that feels at home has fallen in comparison with 2009, when 42% responded that they felt at home.

5.6 Conclusion and expert reflection

What are the main conclusions from the survey that we carried out among Poles who *registered as residents* in the Netherlands between 2004 and 2015? For the purpose of this final section, we presented the experiences reported by Polish migrants to a number of experts with extensive knowledge of migrant workers in the Netherlands, and Polish migrants in particular, for further validation and interpretation. The first conclusion was that the Polish group has grown enormously in size within a short period of time. When we include Poles who are not registered as residents in the Netherlands, there are around a quarter of a million Poles in the Netherlands and a substantial number of these are in the process of settling in the Netherlands. The second conclusion is that those Poles who are registered as residents in the Netherlands are consolidating their position in the Dutch labour market, but that they are still predominantly to be found at the lower end of the labour market. Despite this, rates of unemployment and welfare dependency are low. The fact that few Polish migrant workers claim social welfare benefits is not only due to their high rates of participation in the employment market. For those who remain in the Netherlands for a short period (less than five years), the possibility of obtaining welfare benefits is limited. If and when they stay for longer periods, it is not inconceivable that welfare dependency and unemployment benefit claims will increase, precisely because Polish migrants predominantly find themselves at the bottom end of the labour market.

The third conclusion is that Poles' well-being in the Netherlands (with regard to feeling at home and feeling accepted, for example) is not keeping pace with the improvements in their structural position. In many respects, Poles have a profile that is consistent with that of any new group of migrants - in terms of their command of the Dutch language, their contact with Dutch people, their overrepresentation in flexible employment and their position in the housing market, for instance. The fact remains that most Poles have not been here for very long (up to eleven years, at the time of the study) and that they are clearly still finding their way in Dutch society.

This study has mainly focused on registered migrants who plan to stay for a longer period. Those who are not registered as residents in the Netherlands are much more likely to stay only temporarily, and we have a less detailed picture of their situation. The position of this latter group would appear more vulnerable, but because we have no home addresses for

unregistered Poles, it is difficult to approach them for the purposes of research. However, the lack of reliable data is a good argument for trying to reach these unregistered Poles in future studies. On the other hand, it is not unreasonable that a study into migrant integration should focus research primarily on those migrants who intend to remain in the Netherlands in the longer term and build their lives here.

The experts consulted agreed that action is still required concerning unfavourable working conditions and housing. In part, policy measures often focus mainly on Poles who are resident here on a temporary basis (who are often unregistered), but of course, policy measures regarding these issues also benefit those who are registered. The way in which labour migration from Poland is organised plays an important role in this. A large proportion of migration from Poland is arranged by employment agencies. The experts almost all indicated that improvements have been made, in particular through policy measures such as new employment legislation (the *WAS Act*) and quality control and certification by the Labour Standards Foundation (SNA) and the Flexible Living Standards Foundation (SNF), but that abuses nevertheless continue to occur. Unscrupulous employment agencies are still operating, and unlawful deductions from the minimum wage are still being made for housing and insurance costs, as a result of which some Polish migrants find that they do not have much left in their pay packets. According to the experts consulted, these problems are persistent; new ways to circumvent the law are continually being devised. There are still indications of poor-quality housing, which is inadequately maintained and for which inflated rents are charged.

Over the last decade, the public debate has often focused on the drawbacks of labour migration for the native population, in the form of unfair competition and labour market displacement. In the *Continuous Survey of Citizens' Perspectives* conducted among the Dutch population a few years ago, this emerged as an important area of concern. The question of the extent to which labour market displacement is occurring is not a simple one, and certainly differs from sector to sector. The transport sector and construction are often mentioned in this context. With regard to agriculture and horticulture, it is argued that native Dutch citizens have not wanted to work in these sectors for many years, and that the sector has been dependent on labour migrants for over thirty years already. The SCP and the CPB will publish a joint report on this subject later this year. Tackling labour market displacement will ultimately benefit from countering deceptive working arrangements and the underpayment of labour migrants. Fair competition is better for both labour migrants and Dutch employees.

Those who have registered as residents in the Netherlands are, by and large, planning to stay in the country. For these Polish migrants, it is important that they are educated about Dutch procedures regulations, as well as being given the opportunity to learn the Dutch language. Facilitating their acquisition of the Dutch language will promote participation and self-sufficiency within society and on the labour market, and will also prevent the

underutilisation of labour potential - in particular: many Polish well-educated workers are currently not achieving their potential in the employment market and are working in positions below their educational level. An inadequate command of the Dutch language plays an important role in this. Furthermore, it is important for new migrants to be helped on their way. Polish migrants have an advantage over other labour migrants in that the size of this group means that there are many facilities designed specifically for Polish people and where the Polish language is spoken. For example, in several municipalities where many Poles live and work, there are information desks where Polish migrants can go for support and advice. Such facilities are important not only to help people to settle in, but also to protect them from potential abuses. With regard to registration as residents, several municipalities are actively trying to encourage as many new migrant workers as possible to register. These local policies regarding registration and information provision should be implemented more widely in order to give Polish migrant workers the best possible start in the Netherlands and to track developments among this group. This is an important requirement for being able to implement effective policies on working conditions, housing and participation, and it could help prevent these labour migrants from remaining trapped at the lower end of the labour market, mainly in temporary employment.