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The role of diverse family arrangements in shaping integration outcomes of Ukrainian migrants in Poland

Extended Abstract for European Population Conference 2026

Introduction and theoretical focus

The full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine induced massive Ukrainian migration to Europe and particularly to Poland in 2022 (Duszczuk and Kaczmarczyk 2022). The media image of an average Ukrainian post-war migrant is a woman migrating alone with children in search of a safe place to stay. However, over three years since the outburst of the war, the structure of Ukrainian population has become much more complex, especially in the case of Poland, where over 1 million of Ukrainians had been residing already before the war (Duszczuk et al. 2023). Some women leaving Ukraine due to the full scale war joined their partners in Poland, other formed new families in Poland, some families managed to evacuate together, while selected members of families returned to Ukraine or migrated elsewhere. While there is some local evidence of Ukrainian war refugees' family arrangements (Górny, Bijwaard, and Grabowska 2025; Kohlenberger et al. 2023), these family processes have not yet been studied in a systematic way, while their effects have important demographic and socio-economic consequences for quickly ageing societies of Poland and Ukraine, where the war additionally aggravated this process in the context of sizeable outmigration and low fertility (Perelli-Harris and Hilevych 2023).

In general, international migrants' family situations and arrangements – places of residence (the country of origin, destination and other) of family members, particularly spouses and children, but also grandparents – are shaped by preferences and limitations. The latter may be linked to economic barriers (lack of means to migrate with the whole family) or specific policy regulations (cf. Wray 2009). For example, in the case of Ukraine martial law restriction for emigration of men in the conscription-age could have been the reason of migrant family separations.

The situation that members of the family live in different countries is linked to the concept of transnational family. Such families have been studied in different contexts in relation to their different forms (extended families, single parents families etc.) (Caarls et al. 2018) and ways of pursuing different family goals, especially child carrying duties (Mazzucato and Dito 2018). In particular, a more general framework of the economics of transnational living (Erdal and Carling 2021) proposes a perspective in which family transnational and cross-border practices can be seen in a holistic way covering production, consumption, income generating activities, care and other activities serving everyday life.

At the same time, the research in the field of migrant families is still limited as regards topics covered. These include various studies on family migration (e.g. migration under the auspices of family reunification), its consequences and policy-related outcomes, as well as studies on

intermarriage (Eggebo and Brekke 2019) or refugee's family arrangements (Kraus 2024). At the same time, it has been observed that family setting in the destination country influence stress and ways of coping with it also in the domain of adaptation in the destination country (Al-Smadi et al. 2017; Yakushko 2010). It can be argued, however, that research (especially quantitative research) on how migrants' family situation and arrangements in the destination country influence their integration outcomes is still limited. Our research is to contribute to filling this gap by examining the case of Ukrainian migrants in Poland two years after the outburst of the full-scale war in Ukraine.

Objectives and research questions

The goal of the presentation is to identify types of Ukrainian migrants' in Poland household structures/family arrangements and relationships between these types and selected indicators of migrants' integration outcomes and intentions. With respect to integration outcomes, we focus on an objective indicator of economic integration (labour market status) and on a subjective measure of migrants' life satisfaction attending to the recently growing discussion about the importance of taking this subjective component into account while analysing migrants' integration (Zafar and Ammara 2023). The studied intentions include migration-related (stay-return intentions) and family-related (fertility intentions) ones. We address the following research questions:

RQ1. What is the spectrum of family arrangements among Ukrainians in Poland with the focus on country of residence of different family members?

RQ2.1. How different family arrangements influence migrants' **labour market status**?

RQ2.2. How different family arrangements influence migrants' **life satisfaction**?

RQ2.3. How different family arrangements influence migrants' **stay-return intentions**?

RQ2.4. How different family arrangements influence migrants' **fertility intentions**?

The planned research is to contribute to the literature on family arrangements in the case of forced migrants and, especially in situations when movement of whole families is restricted by certain policy regulations. Importantly, it will help to better understand the situation of numerous Ukrainian migrant families displaced during the ongoing war, which is a of highly societal and political relevance. Our research is also to contribute to the field of interrelations between family factors and integration outcomes, as well as migrants' intentions/aspirations that are still understudied fields deserving more attention (cf. Eggebo and Brekke 2019).

Data and methods

Data analysed in the paper derive from a country-wide online survey of Ukrainian migrants in Poland conducted in April-July 2024 (N=2118) on a unique research panel of Ukrainian migrants "Between Ukraine and Poland". The research panel was established in Centre of Migration Research, University of Warsaw in 2022, shortly after the outburst of the full-scale war in Ukraine. Importantly the studied group includes both pre-war and post-war migrants, which allows for accounting for differences between these two groups.

In the first step, to operationalise diversity of family arrangements, we construct a typology (using cluster analysis) based on the composition of the household and place of residence (Poland, Ukraine, other country) of migrants' selected close family members (particularly the partner and children). The dimensions taken into account include: composition of the household in Poland accounting for the number of generations living in it (compare Bartova et al. 2025), partnership characteristics (partner's place of birth and country of stay, partner's labour market status), place of residence and age of children, as well as the incidence of visits in Ukraine relating to transnational practices in

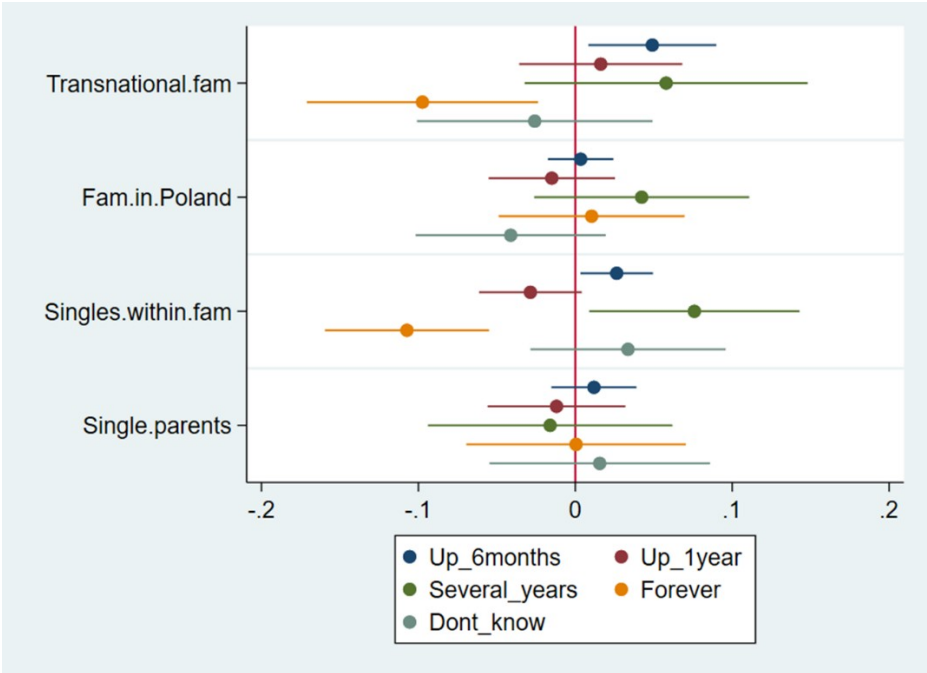
everyday life. In the second step, to identify interrelations between family arrangements and migrants' integration, and migration-related and family-related intentions for future, we conduct a series of regression models separately for each studied dependent variable (labour market status, life satisfaction, return intentions and fertility intentions).

Expected results

In the preliminary classification analysis (with the use of cluster analysis) we have identified four types of migrants' families: childless couples living mainly in Poland (26%), transnational families with children (9%), families with children living in Poland (28%), and single parents living in Poland (13%). Pre-war and post-war migrants differ in the distribution of family types. These results indicate that the incidence of families running transnational life is not as high as one might expected.

At the same time, our preliminary regression analysis suggest that the type of family arrangement can be an important (and significant predictor) of integration outcomes as well as migration-related and family-related intentions for future. For example, respondents in childless couples living in Poland had the highest declared life satisfaction among family types. At the same time, it is particularly unlikely for transnational families and families of single parents living in Poland to plan to stay in Poland forever (see, exemplary Figure 1).

Figure 1. Marginal effects for plans about duration of stay in Poland (ref. category: childless couples living in Poland)



On the basis of our preliminary results, we expect that the type of family arrangement is a significant predictor of integration outcomes and migrants' intentions, although different family types can impact each of these aspects differently. In particular, we suppose that transnational families have less stable situation on the Polish labour market and relatively low life satisfaction (due to the pain of separation). We also presume that these families are less likely than others to plan settlement in Poland and to have children in the short run. Overall, we argue that taking into account diversity of migrants' family arrangements in the transnational perspective sheds more light than just individual

characteristics and situation in the country of residence and allows for better understanding of integration outcomes and migrants intentions.

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