



THE SCOTTISH WOMEN'S CONVENTION

A BLETHER ON...

World Population Day



July 2024

World Population Day 2024

On the 11th of July 2024, the SWC Team invited women to take part in an informal conversation surrounding population changes in Scotland, as part of our 'A Blether on...' series. This chat was held in conjunction with World Population Day, which is held annually to highlight the importance of population levels across the globe. In 2021, the world's population reached 7.9 billion, with this being estimated to increase to 8.5 billion by 2030. Scotland has contributed to this rise, with the 2022 census finding that the country's population had rose to 5.4 million, largely due to increases in migration levels.

While having a blether, women clearly highlighted this latter point, explaining that migration and immigration were key to the development of Scotland's economic landscape. Under the umbrella of immigration/migration, attendees outline key themes including **work quality, public perceptions of immigration/migration, racism** and **how migration interacts with depopulation**. The following report provides a summary of each theme, alongside four key recommendations which focus on how policymakers can improve migrant women's experiences.

4 Recommendations:

1. Evaluate professional qualification requirements, integrating options awarded in countries out with the UK.
2. Implement comprehensive education surrounding colonisation.
3. Take an anti-racist approach across all public service provision.
4. Improve employment opportunities in rural communities, to retain populations.

The Scottish Women's Convention (SWC)

The SWC is funded to engage with women across Scotland to ensure that their views are represented in policy and decision-making processes. The SWC uses the views of women to respond to a variety of parliamentary, governmental, and organisational consultation papers at Scottish, UK, and international levels.

The SWC gathers information using different methods, including roadshows, thematic conferences, surveys, and both in-person and online roundtable events. This submission presents the views of a range of women, reflecting their opinions, ideas and lived experience. Working together with many other equalities organisations and community groups, we use our broad network to ensure that women from a range of backgrounds are heard and acknowledged. We are continually reviewing innovative ways of engaging with women and developing our trauma-informed and culturally sensitive practice to support vital contributions from as many women as possible.

Women's Views:

Migrant Work Quality

"I think...there's no point saying to migrants to come here, when there are no opportunities, or all employment opportunities are care work or whatever."

Attendees began by discussing the quality of work carried out by migrant and immigrant women, explaining that often it is low-paid and insecure. Women felt that this contributed to poor outcomes for migrants and immigrants, forcing some to leave Scotland in search of better opportunities. Attendees also highlighted much of this poor-quality work was within the care sector and that many workers were over-qualified for the roles given. It was proposed that this was highly linked with an undervaluing of qualifications gained in other countries, having racist undertones. Women suggested that due to Scotland's skills shortage across healthcare, it would be valuable to re-evaluate educational requirements.

- "In most cases, most migrants who have come to do care work, most of them are professionals back home...I just think that it's so sad"
- "Qualified nurses come from other countries, especially Africa, West Africa, that was a British colony, so what's the difference?"

Public Perception of Immigration/Migration

"Britain is trying to tell you that you're not invited here, but years ago, they were the ones who went to different countries and said, 'this is British now'...we are all in this world...We all have to look after each other."

Women went on to explain that the perception pushed by the media of immigration and migration was highly damaging. They proposed that sectors of the media actively pushed an anti-immigration agenda, with this being highly visible during the 2019 General Election. It was suggested that this was fuelled through the UK and Scottish Government's continued ineffective poverty-tackling strategies. Women stated that due to the constant battle for resources across the country, individuals may feel threatened by incomers. This threat was then actively pushed by the media and politicians, making immigrants and migrants the scapegoat for a larger societal problem. Migrant women in attendance were frustrated by this issue, emphasising the UK's significant role in colonialisation, feeling that anti-immigration sentiments were contradictory, and ultimately, racist. However, some women did feel that despite the negative press attention, Scotland on a wider level had accepted that immigration and migration was vital to ensure the continuation of public and private services. Overall, attendees believed that the media and politicians had a responsibility to improve public perceptions of migrants/immigrants, suggesting that educational establishments could also play a role in tackling negative views.

- "So, I think that the Government must make sure that everybody's basic needs are met, but then...the media uses the whole thing, which makes it very negative...the migrants are why you're in poverty. No! Because migrants are here, you're in a better position."
- "I think in Scotland, that they realise that we need immigration, we need people to come and help our economic growth, but the media made it out, and the politicians, that that was an issue...but it wasn't, it isn't."

Racism

"I had some woman tell her kids not to play with my children because they were black...These are the types of things that we go through that people don't understand...but it's hurtful, really hurtful."

Linking with the previous point, attendees focused on the lived reality of media provider's and politician's actions, with migrant and immigrant women facing racism and discrimination as a result. Attendees provided examples of terrible experiences in Scotland, which had impacted their wellbeing, contributing to a sense of anxiety. It was also stated that migrant and immigrant women's children often faced discrimination, highlighting the obvious racism at play, with children's skin colour becoming the focal point of abusive behaviour. This racism followed women throughout their lives in Scotland, in both a personal and professional capacity. Attendees explained that this had resulted in young women moving away, seeking a more multicultural community in England. Women strongly advocated for a clear anti-racist commitment from the Scottish Government, which should be utilised across service providers.

- "I mean my daughters studied in Scotland, one of them had a better opportunity in England...and she could so easily see the difference there. I mean NHS everywhere is racist, but the level of racism in more multicultural places isn't as high."
- "...deal with racism, discrimination, good guidelines and laws to protect people from being attacked."

Migration and Depopulation

"...there aren't many opportunities for locals...most migrants are looking for opportunities, they're working hard, they're not looking to move somewhere where there are no opportunities, no employment...they want to work hard, to reach their dream"

Lastly, women were questioned on how migration and immigration could tackle rural Scotland's depopulation issue. Depopulation has been raised as a problem facing rural communities throughout [SWC Roadshow events](#), with poor housing, health and employment pushing many young people to move to the Central Belt. Women explained that these issues should be tackled by the Scottish Government, with improved employment opportunities being key. However, it was raised that due to the poor options for migrant and immigrant women, it was unlikely they would choose rural locales as their place of residence. Additionally, attendees stated that some migrants and immigrants may have preconceptions surrounding rural areas, with ethnic diversity being low. It was proposed that it is therefore easier and more comfortable for migrant and immigrant women to remain in larger towns and cities, allowing them access to a sense of community.

- "...my opinion is that the people up North, they're already there...it's just a question of keeping them up there, and that's where employment comes in."
- "Well, moving to rural communities, there's this perception that these groups aren't as exposed to diversity or multiculturalism...and I think most BME people that I know, are fearful of moving there and not being accepted."

Thank You!

Thank you to the women who shared their experiences with us. We will continue to advocate for women across Scotland so that their views are included in the policy-making process.



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