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# WE'RE NO' AWA' TAE BIDE AWA': SCOTLAND'S RETURNING DIASPORA

Murray Stewart Leith and Duncan Sim

## Abstract

At a time when the world is becoming more mobile, and migration levels are high, relatively limited attention has been paid to return migrants. Yet returners can play an important role in their homeland. In Scotland, with a sluggish population growth fuelled entirely by immigration, return movement is an important way of growing the population and the economy. This paper reports on a study of return migrants to Scotland in 2019/20 and discusses their reasons for return, their experiences and their long-term commitment to the country. Respondents generally felt positively about their return and there was considerable support for Scottish independence, particularly if that led to rejoining the European Union. Brexit was an important factor in making Scots feel unwelcome in England and helping to encourage return to Scotland.

## Keywords

Scottish diaspora, return migration, identity, constitutional change, Brexit

## Introduction

The United Nations estimates (2020) that, in 2019, the number of migrants globally reached approximately 272 million, 51 million more than in 2010. International migrants now comprise 3.5 per cent of the global population but, although we are perhaps familiar with this increasing scale of migration, we pay less attention to those who return. As Varricchio (2012: 9) points out, 'return migration remains heavily underexplored not only in comparison with emigration but also with respect to the actual significance of the phenomenon, in both relative and absolute terms.' The result is that the voices of return migrants are seldom heard (Harper 2005, King 2000) and there is less academic research regarding the motives and experiences of those who return 'home',

Return migration is a significant issue for contemporary Scotland but only limited Scottish-related work, slightly dated or with small samples, exists (see Findlay *et al* 2008, or McCrone and Bechhofer 2012). Scotland has an ageing population, and recent population growth has been entirely driven by inward migration (National Records of Scotland 2020) yet immigration powers are reserved to the UK level and, post-Brexit, stricter immigration controls are coming into effect. This may well result in population growth in Scotland stalling, if not reversing and is clearly a matter of concern for the Scottish Government, who have strongly argued for the devolution of immigration policy (2018). However, attracting (back) members of the Scottish diaspora (who already hold UK citizenship) is possible under current policy frameworks and could form part of any immediate action plan. Indeed, Dickerson

and Ozden (2018) refer to the significant role which may be played in the home country's economic development by diaspora returners and their investments. It is important therefore to examine those who are already returning, their experiences of return, and their motivations for doing so.

Our study is of return migrants to Scotland, carried out in 2019/20. We begin by exploring theories of return, the reasons why some migrants come home and the difficult adjustments which return often entails. We use data from our own study to discuss the characteristics of returners to Scotland, their demographics, and their experiences, and we discuss the policy implications for Scotland of the returning diaspora.

## Theories of Return

One of the key studies of the motives, aspirations and expectations that drive people to return home is that of Cerase (1974). In his study of returning Italian migrants from the United States, he identified four different categories of return:

- *Return of Failure*, where migrants had found it difficult to integrate into their destination country's labour market, and to adapt to its societal norms and values;
- *Return of Innovation*, where migrants achieved success but chose to take their skills and savings home and tried to use their new values and practices to good effect there. Cerase describes this group as 'carriers of change';
- *Return of Retirement*. This group comprises those migrants who achieved success but decided after retirement to return home, perhaps to be with younger family;
- *Return of Conservatism*. This group succeeded in their destination country in that they earned and saved money but they never fully integrated and their minds were fixed on using the income gained to buy land or property in their homeland. Their migration was therefore for a limited period only.

This typology has provided a valuable basis for exploring return migration, albeit there are other ways of approaching the topic. King (1986), for example, points out that return migration can be classified in a temporal way. Thus, there are *occasional* returns, such as visits to friends or relatives, *periodic* returns, which are similar, but on a more regular basis, and *seasonal* returns. These include periods of employment, related perhaps to crop harvesting, construction work or the hospitality industry. King also notes that some returns of a longer duration may be divided into *temporary* or *permanent* returns. Some migrants may return on only a temporary basis, for example at the end of a job contract and remain at home in another job. But their long-term aim is to emigrate as soon as an appropriate opportunity presents itself.

There are other migrants who perhaps fit into neither Cerase's nor King's classifications. Students, for example, move to attend educational institutions elsewhere (Dustmann *et al*/2011). In a sense, they may be seasonal migrants, migrating during term-time and returning home during vacations but, as a group, they are highly mobile and may move elsewhere – to study abroad, to undertake summer jobs and so on. Indeed, Sussman (2000: 356) suggests that the late twentieth

century became characterised by an extremely mobile population, with individuals migrating 'for study, evangelism, business, government, economic and humanitarian aid, or temporary refuge' before returning. She described such individuals not necessarily as migrants but as 'sojourners.'

In addition, there are individuals who move backwards and forwards across borders on a regular basis in their jobs. Within the UK, for example, it was once common for chapmen and peddlers to move freely across the border between Scotland and England (Brown and Kennedy 2018). In Manchester, at the beginning of the twentieth century, 'Scotsman' could still mean a hawker peddling wares from door to door (Kiernan 1978). More recently, we have become familiar with individuals travelling regularly between Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and England for business purposes.

Finally, much return migration literature refers solely to the return of first-generation migrants – and excludes second generation returners. Yet, as Tsuda (2009) points out, the 'return' of second and subsequent generation immigrants to their country of ancestry or heritage, after having been born and brought up abroad, is increasingly important. Although they may never have lived in the country they view as their homeland, they may feel a strong personal and emotional attachment to it. Diaspora return has become more common as the internet has allowed individuals to explore their ancestry and to make temporary or permanent moves back to their homeland (Leith and Sim 2014). Some second-generation members of the diaspora visit homelands simply as tourists to undertake genealogical research or to visit sites of personal or ancestral significance (Basu 2007, Sim and Leith 2013) but they are not our focus here.

### **How many migrants return?**

The limited literature on return migration is surprising, given that this has been an important aspect of migration for many years and given the numbers involved. Smith and Edmonston (1997) estimate that between 35 and 45 per cent of immigrants to the United States subsequently return to their countries of origin, although they acknowledge that data are scarce and elusive, a position with which Guzzetta (2004) concurs, remarking that hard data was difficult to determine.

That said, Harper (2005), for example, suggests that, between 1870 and the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, approximately 40 per cent of all English and Welsh emigrants returned home while Scotland saw more than a third of its emigrants returning. In relation to the United States specifically, Wyman (1993) used Secretary of Labor Statistics to show that 13 per cent of Scots who emigrated to the US between 1908 and 1923 returned home.

The 1930s and the Great Depression saw many migrants returning to Scotland but return migration was not solely due to failing economic fortunes. As Harper points out, society was becoming more mobile and, for some, 'the decision to return was built into the relocation venture from the start, and demonstrated success in playing the international labour market' (2012:77).

Such numbers have remained significant in more recent times. Richmond's (1968) study illustrated that, between 1956 and 1965, approximately 19 per cent of UK immigrants to Canada returned (around 4000 per annum). Numbers returning from the United States to the UK between 1980 and 1990 were around 9000 per annum (Harper 2005), while around 7000 per annum were reported to be returning from Australia to the UK around 2016 and almost half returned home within five years (Harper 2018).

Within the UK, it had been common for many Scots to move to England where there were often greater job opportunities and (often) more money. But Findlay *et al* (2008) show that this had begun to change noticeably from the 1990s onwards. Between 1991 and 2001, the Scots-born population of London fell by 4 per cent and that of the wider south east by a dramatic 19 per cent. Within one year alone (2000/1), 14,539 individuals moved back to Scotland from England. This, they suggest, is evidence of Scots seeking a different future, and of regional or international relocation.

The demographic profile of returners is also of interest. Pooley and Turnbull (1998), exploring return migration across the UK over two centuries, came to the view that return migrants tended to be older, married and less likely to move alone. They were likely to be moving later in the life cycle, presumably for retirement. This, however, seems no longer to be the case. Findlay *et al's* (2008) work shows that two thirds of all return Scots coming from south east England were aged 15-44 years. The flow was therefore predominantly of younger economically active people. This is supported by McCollum's (2011) study for the Scottish Government of migrants who left and returned between 1991 and 2001. They were typically at an early stage in their working lives and more likely to be in work and economically active than the Scottish population as a whole. It would appear therefore that many young Scots are seeking to return as a result of job opportunities within Scotland or perhaps to a better quality of life.

### **Why do they come back?**

The reasons for return migration are varied and involve a number of factors. De Haas *et al* (2015) suggest that there is no such thing as a typical migrant and that initial motivations to migrate (and return) differ strongly among migrants and may change over time, due to personal experiences and contextual factors such as discrimination, social exclusion and access to labour markets. Rogers (1983) suggested that reasons included changes in the home country which made return attractive or feasible; changes in the host country which made staying there no longer attractive or feasible; family reasons; and failure to achieve the aims of the original emigration, such as economic or employment failure. Later, King (2000) summarised the reasons as essentially falling into four main categories – social, economic, political and family. Of course, return migration may be the result of a complex interplay of factors and the decision to return may cut across categories.

For many migrants, a key reason for return relates to employment. This would correspond to Cerase's (1974) 'return of failure', where the migration experience did not yield the expected benefits, either through a failure to secure employment or to

secure employment at an acceptable wage level. This may, of course, be a reflection of unrealistic expectations or erroneous information about the economic opportunities available in the host country (Borjas and Bratsberg 1996). It may also be the case that economic opportunities improve in the home country. We have already seen (Findlay *et al* 2008), that there is a significant flow of return migrants from south east England back to Scotland. While economic factors are not the sole reason for this trend, it is a factor. Indeed, White (2003) suggests that, for the educated and professional classes, it may be possible for economic ambitions to be fulfilled in Scotland itself without the need to take the road south.

Unlike decisions to emigrate, which are usually taken because of the opportunities available elsewhere, decisions to return are not necessarily linked to economic cycles, because personal motives may be more important (Virtanen 1984). Thus, an important factor in the decision to return relates to family. Harper (2018) quotes emigrant correspondence across the centuries which testifies to serious bouts of homesickness amongst emigrants, with women (who were often confined to the home with childcare responsibilities) particularly affected. Richmond (1968) states that 28 per cent of UK returners from Canada cited homesickness as their reason to return. That said, there may be a tendency to mythologise the homeland through stories, nostalgia and memory, although the ties to the homeland may nevertheless remain sufficiently strong, such that migrants sometimes wish to be buried in their homelands (Kunuroglu *et al* 2016).

The importance of family issues in the decision to return is often related to the life stage at which the original emigration took place. Children's experiences of migration may be negative, if they feel they had only a limited role in the initial decision to migrate and are removed from their schoolfriends; as a result, they may feel resentful about moving and fail to settle (King and Christou 2011). And some children, born post-migration, may hanker after their parents' homeland which they may never have seen; 'second generation' return migration is becoming increasingly important (King and Christou 2011).

Those who migrate during their working life may feel forced to return if parents or other older family members become ill or die (Appleyard 1962) and they may then decide to remain. We have already referred to those who return in their retirement – perhaps to ensure they are buried at home (Kunuroglu *et al* 2016). Indeed, Pooley and Turnbull's (1998) work refers to return migrants in the later stages of the life cycle.

A third and important factor in return migration relates to quality of life and, again, this is often related to the life cycle. Adults who start a family abroad may decide to return home in order to give their children a better quality of life during their upbringing, and to be close to family and friends. A study of returning Irish migrants highlighted 'the better quality of life for children, having more time, the ease of Irish sociability, the quality of friendship, and the slower pace of life' (Corcoran 2002:190). Returning Scottish migrants noted being near family and a better childhood experience (Pires and MacLeod 2006) and quality of life factors (Findlay *et al* 2008).

Of course, some migrants simply never settle. A number may live with or associate with other immigrants from their own country and, particularly if they fail to learn a new language or culture, fail to integrate. Ultimately, these difficulties may result in a return home (Wyman 1993). A failure to integrate may lead members of the host society to become hostile to immigrants who are seen as being different or 'other' and such hostility or xenophobia may drive a return. Finally, there may be political aspects to a return decision and Wyman (1993) cites the example of eastern Europeans (such as Czechs, Poles and Lithuanians) in America after the First World War who returned home to help rebuild their homelands.

### **Adjusting to change at home**

Whatever the motives for return, the experience is not always a straightforward one and many returners have found it difficult to adjust to life 'back home'.

Migrants who return to their country of origin undergo two powerful life events. Having adjusted first to a strange land and customs, they return to a homeland which is different from that which they remembered, and to people who do not share a knowledge of the experiences they have undergone (Burke 2005: 184).

This is echoed by Virtanen (1984) who suggests, in his study of returning Finnish migrants, that return did not necessarily mean that the migrants would be happy back in Finland, since so many changes would have taken place, not only in the homeland but in the migrants themselves. Indeed, some migrants, on returning home and experiencing such changes, may choose to 're-migrate' and Holmes and Burrows (2012), for example, refer to migrants 'ping-ponging' between the UK and Australia as a result.

Ireland, in its 'Celtic Tiger' period in the late 1990s and early 2000s illustrates this point well. Immigration, not emigration was seen as a positive and 'homecomers' officially encouraged. But studies illustrate the official welcome was not reciprocated socially (Ni Laoire 2008; Ralph 2012). Returners were pejoratively stereotyped as 'Plastic Paddies' or 'Returned Yanks' and mocked for accent, dress sense or social attitudes. Certain groups, such as gays, or single mothers had particular difficulties (Ralph 2012).

While limited work has been done in Scotland, it has been suggested that the Scottish experience may differ:

How, for example, do they feel now that they have returned and do they feel Scotland has changed in their absence? What is striking is what they don't say. No one says that they have come back to a Scotland so changed that they hardly recognise it (McCrone and Bechhofer (2012: 270).

This has been attributed to keeping in regular touch with the homeland through visits. This also illustrates that returner experiences vary due to the extent of close contact, but experiences of reverse culture shock or 'repatriation distress' (Sussman 2000) allow us to 'shed light on the complex politics of belonging in today's immigrant-receiving societies' (Ralph 2012: 457).

## **Identity and transnationalism**

The literature on transnationalism is often employed to emphasise the importance of boundary crossing and 'in-betweenness' in understanding return migration and identity dynamics (Ni Laoire 2008, Carling and Erdal 2014). The issues of belonging / not quite belonging result in 'transhybrid identities' where returners have a sense of belonging to both homeland and host societies (Christou 2006). Such identities are often labelled as transnational and such new identities are not always abandoned on return to the homeland, as returners adapt and adjust as part of the reintegration process (Cassarino 2004). Nor should transnationalism be dismissed as a one generation phenomenon, as the second generation, through phone calls, visits and the internet, grow up in a socially transnational environment (Somerville 2008). Therefore, those who return will, while maintaining their homeland identity, have often adapted a dual or transnational identity that will reflect the time and engagement spent in the host country.

Within the context of the UK, migrants across national boundaries – for example from Scotland to England – may retain their home identity or in some cases will adopt as their transnational identity a more all-encompassing 'Britishness'. Rosie (2012), using data from the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey, shows that returners to Scotland who were born in Scotland retained their Scottish identity but this was less true for second generation returners. Only 17 per cent of those born in England and 30 per cent of those born elsewhere claimed a Scottish identity. Most of those born in England simply described themselves as 'British', suggesting that place of birth was a crucial marker of identity in most cases.

## **Study focus and methodology**

In light of our discussion above, our study considers key questions such as the demography of returners and their stage in the life cycle; what connections they maintained while outwith Scotland; their reasons for return; and their sense of identity and ability to culturally re-integrate. In addition, given current and ongoing socio-political changes in Scotland, we also considered their attitudes to constitutional change and if these influenced their decisions. Finally, we differ from previous studies in that we have not confined our discussion to individuals born in Scotland but include second-generation returners in our analysis.

We undertook an online questionnaire, advertised via the web, wider social media, and cascaded through local and regional organisations. Our approach was also influenced by the ongoing pandemic situation which made interviewee selection and face-to-face interviewing impossible. Our questionnaire asked respondents for basic personal and demographic data but many questions were open-ended as we felt this would allow respondents the maximum opportunity to tell us their 'stories' and their experiences. In the end, we had 49 completed responses, with 34 Scots-born returners and 15 second generation migrants. Where possible (and appropriate) we have distinguished between these groups in our analysis below.

A larger data set would, of course, have been welcome but, given the constraints in undertaking research during 2020, we believe the information we have gathered is

sufficient to provide a reasonably rounded picture of return migration to Scotland. We illustrate our points with quotations from our interviews.

## **Analysis of survey**

### *Returner Demography*

The average respondent age (at the time of interview) was 59 and 80% were married or co-habiting; 18 people had returned with children. Of the 15 second generation returners, eight had been born in England. In terms of employment, 19 people were retired, five worked in education, seven in the health services, 12 in a range of professional or managerial jobs, two in the charitable sector, one in tourism and three in industry. The majority were therefore in 'white collar' jobs.

The 34 Scots born returners had generally left Scotland before the age of 30 (76%) and such moves were to study (during teenage years) or work (during their twenties). Their time outwith Scotland ranged considerably, with one less than five years away and one third (11) for over thirty years or more. Our 15 second generation migrants belonged to families who had left much earlier; nine before the Second World War, with seven families migrating to England and eight internationally. Four moves were due to military service and seven to employment.

### *Maintaining a Connection*

Key in maintaining a homeland connection was family in Scotland, and 43 individuals had frequent contact through telephone and letters, and 37 regularly visited Scotland at least once a year. In addition, Scottish television, newspapers and the growth of the internet also contributed, with 31 people regularly using Scottish media.

[I visited] as often as I could. I used to beep my horn at the 'Welcome to Scotland' sign.

BBC1 Scotland was set on our Sky box as our automatic channel. Watched Scottish news every day and on BBC online, I would check the news page. My ex-husband kept up with football. I even looked at the weather! Facebook was good for keeping up with friends all over Scotland.

I would often speak to family and friends about what was happening. I used to find it interesting if I was flying between London and Glasgow, to pick up English and Scottish editions of the same newspaper and compare the editorial differences.

The importance of this 'connectedness' was evident in other ways, most notably in identity maintenance. Only nine respondents believed that neither they nor their family had maintained their sense of a Scottish identity while being away from Scotland, with 18 people stating that they were very much aware of its importance.

On occasion, I was gently told by colleagues that I was going on about Scotland too much! We continued our collection of Scottish antiques, Scottish pottery and even attended a Burns Supper.

In Canada, when you ask someone about their background, they'll tell you where the family emigrated from. My grandfather maintained his Scottish accent. We all felt very close to our Scottish roots.

Some people, however, believed that, being away from Scotland made them feel more transnational in their identity (see Ni Laoire 2008):

Yes and no. I am Scottish but my time away strengthened my European identity ... I would say home is Edinburgh but I'm currently from ... when asked where I was from.

Although Scots sometimes have a reputation for organising and joining diaspora organisations (Hague 2001), only 10 of our respondents had done so. These included clan societies, country dance groups and, in two cases, the Scottish National Party (SNP).

We were particularly interested to explore how Scottish migrants were viewed in other countries and the impact that this might have on the maintenance of a Scottish identity. 37 respondents believed that Scots were viewed positively elsewhere, although some believed that there was a degree of negative stereotyping of Scots (for example in relation to being fiscally prudent or liking alcohol). There was also an interesting distinction made by a number of respondents between their experiences in England and elsewhere. There was a clear sense of a growing hostility towards Scots in England, which had grown since the Brexit vote in 2016. This would support the idea that there has been an increase in English nationalism, due to Brexit (O'Toole 2020).

A very interesting shift in how we are viewed by others ... I generally feel that, as Scottish people's confidence in their identity has grown, the respect given to us by the rest of the world has increased.

Outside of the UK positively for sure, but less so within the UK. And that differed in England, depending on how far south one was. Further south the more hostile.

[Scots] used to be special. My father went to New York in his kilt in the late '70s and they thought he was a real character. Now I am not so sure. We are just a nuisance to the English.

Fondly regarded generally – particularly in mainland Europe, but there was some sneering contempt from London colleagues, with tiresome tropes and stereotypes quick to surface. Liverpool was generally a more welcoming place – although there were notable incidents of racism such as me being told to 'go back home' ... And a couple of racist incidents with taxi drivers who picked me up from Lime Street Station and ended the journey with abuse about

Jocks if I only had Scottish notes. These incidents increased post-Brexit and contributed to our return home and relocating our business.

Clearly any increase in hostility towards Scots since the Brexit vote must be a matter of concern and we will return to this later in the paper.

### *Reasons for Return*

Considering the typologies of Cerase (1974) and King (1986), the reasons for return are illuminating. The average age of our interviewees at the time of their return was 44, with only six aged 60+ and the majority remain economically active; our findings therefore align more with Findlay *et al* (2008) than with Pooley and Turnbull (1998). Only eight gave employment as the return reason, while 16 stated family, three retirement and another eight highlighted quality of life as the primary factor. Whatever the specific factor, the decision-making process was often very complex.

I had sold up my home in England and did a bit of travelling, so I was free as to where I chose to live. ... [I had] an elderly parent and siblings so care issues were cropping up and I wanted to assist with that. Housing was more affordable too.

A number of reasons. I always intended to spend some time at home at some point closer to retirement. I felt disaffected by Brexit ... saw a house I liked ... and my weekly commute was easier from Glasgow.

We always said Scotland was home and where we should be. It's hard to describe what it is – being in Scotland makes me feel complete. I love being around Scottish people. They understand banter and are very self-deprecating. Coming home was the easiest decision I've ever made and definitely the correct one for us.

Scotland's perceived high quality of life was a significant – if not necessarily the main – factor influencing a decision to return. This echoes the research carried out in Ireland by Corcoran (2002). For some, the impact of the Brexit vote on quality of life in England was mentioned.

I grew up in the south of England (near Cambridge) but studied and trained in northern England. When I qualified, I returned to Cambridge to work but found it too expensive and stuffy. My partner still owned a flat in Glasgow (despite living in London) and I suggested we relocate to live in it as our quality of life could be much better. I was in love with Glasgow and its beautiful architecture.

Primarily for an opportunity to have a better standard of life. The chance to do a dream job came up and this, coupled with the much lower cost of living here, compared with the south east of England could mean a much more comfortable existence. The opportunity to be closer to family and friends again also appealed. Finally, the turn that English politics and society had

started to take had worried me slightly and I welcomed the opportunity to live in a country that seemed much fairer and more welcoming to all.

England has changed negatively post Brexit. Scotland has grown in confidence and prosperity post devolution and there is the chance of a more positive optimistic and internationalist future for Scotland. So push factors and pull factors. But we wanted to put our money where our mouth is and take the business to Scotland

We did ask how the children of our interviewees had responded to a move to Scotland, as some of them had been born elsewhere. In most cases, children were grown up and so were relatively unaffected but in eighteen cases, children moved with their families and most were of school age. Only in two cases had they felt unsettled or experienced some bullying at school.

### *Identity and Adjustment*

Difficulty in settling back due to homeland or personal changes had been previously highlighted, so we focused on this in our questioning. Among our 34 Scots-born respondents, 24 said they were made to feel welcome. Six felt little had changed, and two were unsure, but the other 26 identified greater prosperity, the ongoing constitutional debate, and a more multicultural society as positives. Glasgow was specifically singled out as 'vibrant'.

The industry and the cityscapes have changed. There are more immigrants and foreign nationals living here which is a huge positive.

Attitudes to women especially are more positive but it is also much more open on issues of race and immigration, sexuality and disability.

A bit more confident in itself culturally and politically.

Changed much for the better, more confident, stylish. I think much of the Scottish cringe has evaporated since devolution.

Of those returners who were born outwith Scotland, ten of the 15 respondents felt that Scotland was more or less as expected, but four specifically identified positive changes.

It's more progressive and honest, so that makes it much better than I expected.

It (especially Glasgow) is much nicer than I had been told to expect.

For second generation returners, there were small issues of adjustment to be made:

There were small things I had to get used to. Some social attitudes were a bit conservative in 1970. The pubs closed at 10 and our attitude to alcohol was

different. Remembering never to ask for bitter in a pub but heavy.  
Remembering the difference between plain and pan bread. That sort of thing!

Others remarked on subtle differences in the legal and policy frameworks which needed to be learned, especially for public sector workers moving from England. One Canadian returner was surprised at the continued existence of the class system, while others noted the pockets of poverty which continued to exist.

We were particularly interested in returners' sense of identity and so all were asked the 'Moreno question' (Moreno 1988). In this case, we asked returners about their sense of a Scottish identity relative to the identity of the country from which they had returned ('X' in the table). The results are shown in Table 1.

<TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE>

While not surprising that Scots-born respondents held a strong sense of Scottishness, this was clearly the case in the non-Scots-born too, as such identity also translated to second generation migrants. Out of 49 respondents, 30 had children and 19 of these stated their children identified as Scottish. Seven children brought up in England identified as British. Of the 15 non-Scots-born returners, 12 had children and all but one stated that their children identified as Scottish. This supports the idea of Scottish identity as a strong element passed on to second and subsequent generations. Among the written responses to this issue, terms that frequently emerged were 'roots', 'pride', 'heritage' and 'culture', while one respondent summed up his feelings by referring to Scotland as a 'small country punching above its weight'.

#### *Attitudes to Constitutional Change*

Given the rise of the SNP, their being the party of Scottish Government since 2007, the independence referendum of 2014, and the series of polls during 2020 indicating majority support for Scottish independence in the likelihood of another referendum, we were very keen to explore if returners kept abreast of Scottish political matters (and especially the constitutional debate). Likewise, we sought insight into their opinions.

Of our 49 respondents, only one reported not keeping abreast of political matters (and they were born outwith Scotland). Among the other 48, 24 supported independence, 14 opposed it, and the remaining 11 reported ambivalence. This high level of support (50% of our sample) seems slightly surprising, given that previous suggestions have indicated that many members of the Scottish diaspora in England, were unhappy about the possibility of independence, leaving them marooned in a 'foreign' country (Mycock 2014). However, it may well be that 'returners' are generally more supportive due to their motivations and geographical shift back to the homeland.

Independence support was evident, although opponents professed sadness:

It'll take me a week to sober up!

Oh man!!! I would die happy.

It's part of the reason we relocated our business to Scotland – we are counting on independence happening. We would be excited and optimistic and eager to roll up our sleeves.

I would be very happy, particularly once we had been able to rejoin the European Union. I would also be apprehensive as there would still be many people who had voted against independence and I would be aware that some of them would be very apprehensive and anxious and unhappy about the change.

I'd be likely to leave Scotland. Nationalism is wrong.

I would feel like leaving.

We directly asked returners if they planned to stay in Scotland if independence occurred. Overall, 36 people would definitely stay, 11 were unsure and only two people believed that they would leave. What is clear is that Brexit was clearly impacting on people's thinking:

I was extremely anti-independence whilst living in England. However, following Brexit and the changes to behaviour and politics in England, I would be more welcoming of another vote and would give more consideration to independence.

I think that this would depend on the circumstances of Scotland's independence. An amicable separation from the rest of the United Kingdom and re-entry into the EU would be ideal. A hostile independence with no support from a political economic block like the EU would, in my opinion, be difficult.

Given the close alignment between the SNP and the constitutional debate, we asked about attitudes towards the party. 23 people were favourably inclined towards the party (with two being party members), while 13 were hostile and 14 ambivalent or indifferent. Many people believed that the SNP had done well in government, with many mentioning poor opposition. It was argued that voting for the SNP was necessary in order to achieve the goal of independence.

The SNP are very good. I support them fully in political initiatives and policy and for their social and health policies.

The only way that Scotland will become independent is to vote for the SNP (or in some circumstances the Greens) ... Labour has been falling apart - they need to become agnostic on independence to win back many of their voters.

The Liberals – I don't know what is happening now. The Conservatives are too close to Westminster, which in recent years has not been a good thing.

All the political parties are more relevant, connected and community based than in England ... the SNP has done a really good job compared to governments elsewhere and has saved Scotland from some of the worst effects of the austerity agenda. I have been able to contrast the two governments and folk in Scotland don't really know how good they have got it. Like any party that has been in power for a while, the SNP has got a wee bit tired and frayed and needs constant reinvention and renewal but in general is very competent and ambitious.

Nicola Sturgeon is a fantastic statesperson, and is an asset to the party and country.

However, opposing views were also present:

I see the SNP as single-minded and focused on one issue, independence, and as a result they have failed in their first responsibility to improve our devolved services.

## **Discussion and Conclusions**

Research into diasporas has increased in recent years and this is partly the result of a greater engagement between diasporas and homelands occasioned by the growth of mass travel and the internet. There has also been an increasing interest in the contributions which diasporas can make to their homeland. Many diasporas have returned home and employed their acquired wealth – the 'carriers of change' in Cerase's (1974) phrase. Other diasporas return to assist in the reconstruction of their homelands after war or independence (Wyman 1993). There are other examples of the political involvement of diasporas, for example the raising of funds by Noraid in North America to benefit the Republican movement in Northern Ireland (Wilson 1995).

To Scotland, the diaspora has been hugely significant within the tourist industry, as individuals explore family and clan heritage (Basu 2007, Sim and Leith 2013) and often funding the restoration of historic buildings and castles. More recently, interest has grown in the possibility of attracting back the diaspora on a permanent basis (Kelly and Mitchell 2019). Part of the drive behind this is Scotland's sluggish population growth which is entirely dependent on immigration. UK-wide restrictions on immigration post-Brexit will have a serious impact on an ageing population and potentially reduce the proportion of economically active individuals within Scotland. That said, a potential decline in population can be partially offset if Scotland is able to attract back members of its diaspora – either from elsewhere in the UK or from overseas – who, by virtue of being British citizens would have the right to live and work in Scotland.

Our analysis shows that our interviewees moved back in their mid-forties and so were generally economically active and many had families, which presents an opportunity to grow the population. They had mostly retained their Scottish identity and their 'connectedness' with the home country and appeared to be committed to returning to and settling in Scotland long term. They may perhaps be characterised as 'returners of innovation' or 'carriers of change' (Cerase 1974). Family ties and better quality of life in Scotland were important 'pull' factors contributing to their decisions. A possibly unexpected finding from our research which was mentioned by a number of respondents as a 'push' factor was Brexit and the resultant changed political atmosphere in England. Respondents stated that they were beginning to feel they were unwelcome. This may account for the significant number who supported Scottish independence and also expressed the hope that an independent Scotland would eventually rejoin the EU. This possibly echoes Wyman's (1993) reference to the political aspects of return migration.

We appreciate that our research raises many questions and we believe that it has important implications for Scottish Government policy in this area, albeit that primarily a larger study is needed. Diaspora policy is increasingly out-of-date, compares unfavourably with that of Ireland (Ancien *et al* 2009) and is not well understood within the diaspora itself (Leith and Sim 2016). The Government is aware of this and a policy review was planned but was overtaken by the Brexit debate and then the Covid pandemic. Once work begins on updating this policy, we hope that our research will inform the process.

Thus, the issue of attracting back the Scottish diaspora to offset a potential reduction in immigration resulting from leaving the EU is a very important one for the Scottish government to address. The apparent increase in hostility to Scots in England following Brexit is another important issue, reflecting a potential increase in negative rhetoric. We intend to explore these issues further as we continue with this research and we will be publishing in due course another paper on the returned diaspora focusing specifically on the policy implications.

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## Tables

	<b>Those born in Scotland</b>	<b>Those born outwith Scotland</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Scottish, not X	21	1	
More Scottish than X	5	7	
Equally Scottish and X	5	3	
More X than Scottish	2	0	
X not Scottish	1	4	Answers included European, British and New Zealand of Scottish extraction

### **Note**

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