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Abstract

Like many countries, Scotland has its population challenges, including a low birth rate and an ageing population. Some countries have sought to offset these challenges by the promotion of 'replacement immigration' or by economic policies to attract migrants. But, as part of the United Kingdom, Scotland lacks many of the policy levers available to promote wide-ranging socioeconomic development and has no powers over immigration, as this is reserved to the U.K. Government. In this paper, we explore the potential for attracting members of the Scottish diaspora as a means of boosting population growth, using data from a series of surveys we have undertaken during the last decade. Although Scotland's quality of life may be attractive to returners, employment opportunities are crucial. However, the coronavirus pandemic has shown the potential for widening home-based working and this demonstrates additional possibilities for returners to live in Scotland while working elsewhere.

KEYWORDS
demography, diaspora, migration policy, population, Scotland

1 | INTRODUCTION

Many societies (particularly western societies) are facing the related demographic challenges of sluggish population growth coupled with an ageing population (Vanhuysse & Goerres, 2012). This means that there are proportionately fewer people of working age to fund the social expenditure necessary to support those who have retired. The combination of these two trends is a relatively recent phenomenon within many societies and, to a large extent, reflects cycles of fertility in previous decades (Reher, 2015). Thus, the baby-boomer generation of the late 1940s has become the older retired generation of the early 21st century and this trend is particularly noticeable in certain European countries, such as Italy, Spain, Slovenia and Austria. In time, the present pattern of ageing is likely to come to an end with the

disappearance of the baby-boomer generation, and fertility levels may begin to rise again. But Reher (2015) believes that these changes will tend to be gradual, and societies will remain top heavy for the foreseeable future. Societies have also, in many cases, become more mobile and another cause of demographic restructuring is the increasing fluidity of the life course, often including not one but several migrations (Findlay & Wahba, 2013).

Of course, population change, including changes in fertility cycles have occurred throughout history but, as Coleman and Rowthorn (2011) point out, have previously been associated with famine, epidemic or war. The current trends of low fertility coupled with low mortality and ageing, present significant challenges because an ageing population results in increasing public expenditure on pensions, social security, community care and health services.

When there is a decreasing percentage of people of working age, then the result is an increasing burden on those in employment in terms of taxes, other contributions and family support (Bijak et al., 2007).

Although the United Kingdom as a whole has not suffered from low fertility as much as some other European countries, there are significant variations within the United Kingdom and here, we explore the case of Scotland. In part, Scotland's challenges are exacerbated by previously high levels of emigration, leaving the country with low net population growth. In addition, migration policy is a reserved power, formulated at Westminster and applied to the whole United Kingdom, despite the fact that some areas (including Scotland) have different migration needs to London and southern England (Sumption, 2017).

We start by considering Scotland's contemporary demographic profile before exploring policies pursued by the Scottish Government, operating within the confines of devolution and then we consider arguments for a more localised or devolved migration policy. We specifically explore the contribution which might be made to population growth by returning members of the Scottish diaspora, supporting our arguments with reference to research we have carried out with diaspora returners and with members of the diaspora currently living in other countries.

2 | SCOTLAND'S DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Scotland's population was estimated, at mid-2020, to be 5,466,000—its highest ever total (National Records of Scotland, 2021a). The overall rise, however, disguises key underlying trends. The first of these is the fact that recent population increase has occurred purely because of inward migration. Scotland has a low rate of natural change and the number of births has been falling for the last 10 years; in 2019–2020, there were 14,500 more deaths than births. By contrast, migration patterns have changed significantly. In the decades up to 2000–2001, Scotland was primarily a country of net emigration but in that year, the position shifted and by 2003–2004, net migration was +18,600, the change primarily a result of increased migration from eastern European countries, following their accession to the EU in 2004. In 2019–2020, it was +16,900, slightly lower than recent years . Between 2001 and 2020, the number of EU nationals living in Scotland increased massively (from 41,836 in 2001 to 231,000 in 2020), with the largest numbers coming from Poland. By 2020 there were 88,000 residents recorded to be of Polish nationality, comprising around 1.6% of the overall Scottish popula-tion. In addition, there were 178,000 non-EU nationals living in Scotland in 2020 (National Records of Scotland, 2021b).

The 2021 Scottish Census was delayed until 2022, so precise internal migration figures are unavailable. The Scottish Government estimates 41,800 U.K.-based migrants moved to Scotland in 2019–2020, while 32,800 left for other parts of the United Kingdom, a net gain of 9000 people (National Records of Scotland, 2021c). In both cases, these were the lowest figures since the 1980s. Generally,

in-migration to Scotland from the rest of the United Kingdom has exceeded equivalent out-migration, with the exception of the period between 1995 and 2001.

The second key demographic trend within Scotland is the ageing resident population. Migrants tend to be younger than the general population and, in 2019–2020, people aged 15–34 accounted for 60% of all people moving to Scotland. In contrast, only 25% of Scotland's population as a whole are aged 15–34 (National Records of Scotland, 2021a). But the low birth rate, coupled with a greater life expectancy, means that the country's population growth has not been consistent across all ages. In the last 20 years, the number of people aged 0–15 years has decreased by 68,000 people (−7%), those aged 16–64 years has increased by 214,400 people (+6%), while the number aged 65 plus has increased by 257,000 people (+32%) (National Records of Scotland, 2021a).

An older population, of course, need not necessarily be a problem. Many of those of state pension age are not 'dependent' in the sense of requiring support but can and do continue to make a valuable contribution to the economy. A number of employers have widened their recruitment processes to take on older staff and the Scottish Government has aimed to improve and increase older people's participation in the labour market (Loretto et al., 2017). In addition, the U.K. state retirement age has been raised, keeping increasing numbers in employment for longer. But employers also need to examine their practices in relation to training, promotion and retention of older workers to allow, for example, greater flexible working and flexible retirement (Hollywood et al., 2007).

While reflected in other similar societies, these demographic challenges appear to be particularly acute in Scotland. Data from the European Commission (2021) illustrate the Old Age Dependency Ratios across the EU. This is the ratio between the number of people aged 65 and over and those of working age (aged 15–64). It is expressed as a figure per 100 persons of working age and the EU average is 32.0, meaning that for every 100 people of working age, there are 32 people who are aged 65 and over. We have calculated the figure for Scotland as 34.6 and, within the EU, this places the country behind only Italy, Finland and Greece in terms of the ratio. The equivalent figure for the United Kingdom as a whole is 28.9, well below the EU average.

Furthermore, the trends identified are projected to continue. The National Records of Scotland (2022) suggests that the Scottish population will grow relatively slowly until mid-2028, peaking at 5.48 million. It is then projected to fall by 1.8% to 5.39 million by 2045. This projection is lower than previous ones, mainly due to declining fertility rates and Scotland is the only U.K. country where the population is projected to fall during the next 25 years. The population is also projected to age, with the number of people aged 65+ projected to grow by mid-2045, from 1.06 to 1.37 million.

It is unsurprising therefore that the Scottish Government (2018) has identified the continuation of inward migration as crucial to Scotland's future economic growth and prosperity. Kelly and Mitchell (2019) agree that the defining challenge for Scotland in the future will be a shortage of workers and they identify the distribution and

hospitality industries and lower-skilled occupations as being heavily dependent on immigration as a source of labour; in 2017, just over 15% of those employed in these occupations were non-U.K. nationals. Immigration is therefore a priority in ensuring an adequate labour supply. Other European countries besides Scotland have also focused on replacement migration as a means of coping with ageing and shrinking populations (Muenz, 2007), although as Wilson and Rees (2003) point out, immigration may slow population decline but can make little difference to population ageing.

Scotland's demographic challenge has been exacerbated by the U.K.'s departure from the EU. It was estimated that in June 2020, 231,000 EU nationals lived in Scotland but growth in the number of EU nationals had slowed since the EU referendum. It was estimated that there was a shortfall of 188,000 workers in hospitality and over 9000 in seasonal agriculture—jobs that would previously be filled by EU workers (Scottish Government, 2021a). Thus, the ending of freedom of movement and a reduction in immigration means that it is already proving difficult for Scotland to attract the working-age migrants that it needs. As Kelly and Mitchell (2019) point out, Scotland's population needs are different to England's and so a U.K.-wide immigration policy may not be appropriate to addressing the future socioeconomic needs of Scotland.

We therefore move on to explore the initiatives which have so far been taken by the Scottish Government to address population and skills shortages, and the arguments for a bespoke immigration policy specifically for Scotland

3 | POST-DEVOLUTION INITIATIVES

Although population decline in post-war Scotland had been identified as an important policy concern (Webster, 2000), it was only the establishment of the Scottish Parliament in 1999 that allowed policy to be developed within Scotland itself. And, although the early Scottish Governments saw advantages in promoting immigration, the Parliament had limited policy levers with which to influence it directly (McCollum et al., 2014).

3.1 | Early initiatives and fresh talent

The initial focus of the Scottish Government was on upskilling those already in the labour market through lifelong learning, but this changed in 2004 with the launch of the Fresh Talent Initiative (Scottish Executive, 2004). This allowed international students to remain in Scotland after graduation for a period of 2 years, during which they could undertake any type of work, after which they were then able to transfer to other migration routes. The scheme was seen as being generally successful (Cavanagh et al., 2008), and a total of 7620 students were able to stay in Scotland after their studies (House of Commons Written Answers, 2014).

The initiative also recognised the role which might be played by the Scottish diaspora. Some members of the diaspora might be

persuaded to return home, while relationships with the diaspora would be strengthened through organisations like GlobalScot. This is a network established by the Scottish Government in 2001, to build business connections across the world, particularly with those people who have been born, educated, worked or with family in Scotland (Scottish Executive, 2004). In addition, the then First Minister Jack McConnell travelled to North America to encourage the use of U.K. 'ancestry visas' to return to Scotland (Hutcheon, 2005). Although the message was well-received within the diaspora, and Scotland was recognised as having a good quality of life for potential returners, the possible lack of career prospects in Scotland was an obstacle (Boyle & Motherwell, 2005). This illustrates the difficulties caused by the Scottish Government, which as a devolved body, lacks many of the policy levers for economic development.

Although the Fresh Talent Initiative was viewed within Scotland as successful, the U.K. government became concerned that many of those who had remained in Scotland were doing relatively menial jobs rather than jobs for which they were actually qualified and that there had been some instances of people overstaying their visas (Scottish Government, 2018). The scheme was therefore subsumed into a new U.K. government points-based system in 2008 and this flexibility in regard to migration, focused in Scotland, was removed. The U.K. government has recently (July 2021) introduced a Graduate Immigration Route, which is essentially a post-study work visa, but it applies across the United Kingdom and is not targeted at particular areas (UK Government, 2021).

3.2 | Post-Brexit initiatives

Probably the greatest threat to continued inward migration/population growth in Scotland has resulted from Brexit. It is generally accepted that concerns about immigration were key to the Brexit referendum result (Coleman, 2016) and the U.K. Government intends to reduce immigration substantially in the future. Nonetheless, policy rhetoric and public attitudes to immigration are generally more positive in Scotland (McCollum et al., 2014) and Scotland voted heavily to remain in the EU.

Scottish Government policy since Brexit has sought to influence the U.K. Government's approach in two ways (Kelly & Mitchell, 2019). First, it has argued that the 'shortage occupation list' drawn up by the Migration Advisory Committee to identify post-Brexit skills shortages should be widened in the case of Scotland but this has had the very limited success of adding Gaelic teachers to the list; chemical scientists in the nuclear industry are also listed as a 'Scotland-only' shortage. Second, they have argued that the imposition of a £30,000 salary threshold for migrants to obtain a visa was too high as many people in Scotland earn less than that amount. Although this figure has now been reduced to £25,600, the average income in Scotland is £25,616, so it may still serve as a barrier to future inward migration (Aiton, 2021).

In addition, the Scottish Government has launched a 'Stay in Scotland' campaign to persuade EU citizens living in Scotland to

remain and to apply for 'settled status'. The First Minister wrote an open letter, confirming a package consisting of £250,000 for community-based support across Scotland, a support and advice service for EU citizens with more complex needs or particular challenges, a toolkit for employers, including posters, factsheets, digital content and guide directing EU citizens to further guidance, and social media activity using the hashtag #StayinScotland (Stay in Scotland—gov.scot (www.gov.scot).

Research by Teodorowski et al. (2021) has shown that these actions helped to mitigate feelings of rejection experienced by EU residents after the referendum. Participants in almost all their focus groups commented approvingly on the letter they received from the First Minister, which reassured them that they were 'welcome', 'wanted' and 'needed' in Scotland and several participants contrasted Scotland favourably with other parts of the United Kingdom. By March 2021, 257,500 EU migrants had been granted settled status within Scotland, 5.5% of the U.K. total (Home Office, 2021).

4 | A BESPOKE IMMIGRATION POLICY?

The divergent migration needs of Scotland and England are reflected in longstanding arguments that Scotland needs its own bespoke immigration policy. For example, a Scottish Government (2018) discussion paper explored why migration was crucial to Scotland's future prosperity, how it believed current U.K. Government migration policy was not appropriate for Scotland; and how a tailored approach to migration for Scotland could operate. A subsequent Scottish Government report on migration (2020) developed the theme by looking at delivery models for a 'Scottish Visa' which might be targeted specifically at rural areas. These were areas where significant numbers of EU nationals were employed in the hospitality industry and were likely to be particularly affected by Brexit and future restrictions on immigration. The report suggested that both the Scottish and U.K. governments should work together to design, develop and evaluate pilot schemes and the Scottish Government believed that a 'Scottish Visa', with recipients required to live and work in Scotland, could ultimately offer a pathway to permanent settlement.

It should be noted that devolved migration schemes such as this are not unusual. Possibly the best examples are in Canada and Australia, where regional differences are key elements of the immigration system. Most migrants enter Canada as a result of the skills they offer and their ability to contribute to the economy and, although migrants are admitted at the federal level, individual provinces have the flexibility to attract the migrants that they need. Applicants face a lower immigration threshold if they agree to live, work and stay in a particular province or territory for a minimum period of time—usually 3 years—which is the minimum requirement to be eligible for Canadian citizenship (Kelly & Mitchell, 2019, Wright, 2013).

A similar scheme operates in Australia, which has implemented a range of state-specific and regional migration programmes for many years. As in Canada, the rationale is to encourage the settlement of skilled migrants across different parts of the country, counteracting a concern that they are too heavily concentrated in the large metropolitan areas (New South Wales in the case of Australia, Ontario in the case of Canada). States can nominate migrants with skills appropriate to their local needs and there is 2-year residency requirement (Boswell et al., 2017).

The Scottish Government has long sought control over immigration and this was one of the arguments in favour of independence which it used in its pre-referendum White Paper (Scottish Government, 2013). Despite the failure of the independence vote, the need for immigration to be devolved was recognised by the ensuing Smith Commission in 2014. Responding to arguments for the reintroduction of a form of Fresh Talent Initiative, the report (at paragraph 96(2)) recommended that the Scottish and U.K. governments should work together to 'explore the possibility of introducing formal schemes to allow international higher education students graduating from Scottish further and higher education institutions to remain in Scotland and contribute to economic activity for a defined period of time' (Scottish Parliament Information Centre, 2015). No such scheme was, however, introduced.

Likewise, in 2016, Westminster's Scottish Affairs Committee in examining Scottish demographic challenges, concluded that there was a case for subnational migration powers for Scotland to be further considered based on the evidence which they had received (Scottish Affairs Committee, 2016). The House of Lords also explored the issue of immigration and stated that they were persuaded that there was merit in a regional immigration system for Scotland and also for London (House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee,2017). Finally, the U.K. Government's All-Party Parliamentary Group on Social Integration (2017) stated that responsibility for migration should be devolved and the U.K. Government should explore the introduction of a regionally-led migration system with region-specific visas.

These recommendations should also be seen against the background of differing attitudes to immigration across the United Kingdom (Oxford University Migration Observatory, 2014). In Scotland, 49% of their interviewees believed that immigration was good for the country (with 17% taking a neutral view), while in England 49% believed that immigration was bad for the country (with 14% neutral). This may reflect the political rhetoric within Scotland where support for immigration has generally been cross-party. The Oxford research also found that a clear majority (60%) of people in Scotland believed that the Scottish Parliament rather than Westminster should take decisions on immigration.

5 | THE ROLE OF THE DIASPORA

As we have noted above, the launch of the Fresh Talent Initiative led to a focus on the Scottish diaspora and attracting back some who had previously emigrated. The term 'diaspora' is of Greek origin and refers to a sowing or scattering of seed; the Greeks themselves used it to

refer simply to migration. In recent years, however, the term 'diaspora' has been used to cover a range of emigrant groups (Cohen, 1996).

The Scottish Government has included within its diaspora strategies, the *lived* diaspora, consisting of individuals who were born, lived or worked in Scotland and who had subsequently emigrated, the *ancestral* diaspora, consisting of those who can trace their heritage and familial roots to Scotland, and the *affinity* diaspora, which consists of those who simply feel a connection to Scotland, possibly through cultural or extended family groups (Rutherford, 2009). The Scottish 'diaspora' is therefore seen as wide and diverse and has been estimated at between 30 and 80 million people (McAskill & McLeish, 2007). It is potentially a significant resource and may contribute to Scotland in a number of different ways—for example, through investment, trade, tourism, international influence and immigration; this last reflecting the Fresh Talent Initiative's focus on encouraging diaspora return. This was echoed by the Scottish Government's Diaspora Engagement Plan (Scottish Government, 2010), which talked of bringing the diaspora to Scotland to 'live, learn, visit, work and return'.

The reasons for return migration are varied and there may be no such thing as a typical migrant; motivations to migrate (and return) 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 such factors.

There is evidence that increasing return migration to Scotland began in the 1990s. Findlay et al. (2008) showed that, between 1991 and 2001, the Scots-born population of London fell by 4% and that of the wider south east of England by a dramatic 19%. Within 2000/2001 alone, 14,539 individuals moved back to Scotland from England; this, they suggest, is evidence of Scots seeking a different future. The demographic profile of returners is also interesting, with two thirds of all the return Scots coming from south east England being aged between 15 and 44. 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 employed 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.

Diaspora returners can therefore play a significant role in the economic wellbeing of their homelands. Many countries (Scotland included) may have strong economic incentives to accept immigrant labour but they may be hesitant to do so because of a possible hostility towards immigrants from the indigenous population. However, diaspora return migration may solve this dilemma because the immigrants are either native born emigrants or descendants of emigrants and so can provide a much-needed skilled labour force without causing any 'ethnic disruption' (Tsuda, 2010).

Indeed, a number of European countries have had policies to facilitate diaspora return and Kulu and Tammaru (2000) examine the case of Estonia which was able to develop such a policy after independence in 1991. Some Estonians returned from within the Soviet Union but there was also return migration of Estonians from the West. Such diaspora return helped to rebuild the country after independence.

Diaspora policies and programmes tend to be particularly significant for developing countries and also for smaller developed countries which have experienced a 'brain drain' with emigration of skilled people from the workforce. Larner (2007) specifically identifies countries such as New Zealand, Canada, Australia, Singapore, Ireland and Scotland.

Scotland was only able to develop a diaspora policy after devolution in 1999, but the importance of the diaspora is now well understood. Kelly and Mitchell (2019) suggest, however, that in contrast to countries like Ireland, Australia and New Zealand, Scottish Government policy has been insufficiently targeted at cultivating its diaspora and encouraging its return. We therefore move on to consider the prospects for diaspora return, using information from our own research.

6 | REALISING DIASPORA RETURN

During 2020, we undertook an online questionnaire of returned members of the Scottish diaspora, advertised online, through social media, and cascaded through local and regional organisations. Our approach was also influenced by the ongoing pandemic, which prevented us from holding face-to-face interviews or from controlling the representativeness of our responses. We had 49 completed responses, with 34 Scots-born returners and 15 second generation migrants. We recognise these numbers are limited but the respondents raised a number of important issues for wider consideration and we have no reason to believe that the issues raised are unrepresentative of the views of the wider diaspora. To offset the small numbers in this study, we have also employed information obtained in previous diaspora studies we had undertaken in the United States (Leith & Sim, 2016, Sim, 2011) and in northern Europe (Leith & Sim, 2017, Sim & Leith, 2014). In these studies, we had also raised the issue of diaspora return.

All responses were analysed through NVivo and a number of key themes identified. The major themes that emerged were; employment/business opportunities, quality of life/family and social attitudes and norms. While these were positive driving factors, other factors impeded potential return, and these were around the ideas of change/time passing. In addition, it is important to note that respondent comments often linked these themes together. As we note above, this is a limited insight, but the emergence of these themes was across our sample and illustrates the need for wider, and

TABLE 1 Summary of questionnaire responses

Birthplace	Scotland		Elsewhere within the diaspora	
Total responses	34		15	
Average age when left Scotland	23		N/A	
Average age at return	44		47	
Marital status	Single	3	Single	0
	Married/in relationship	29	Married/in relationship	11
	Divorced	2	Divorced	4
Area of employment	Education	3	Education	2
	Health	4	Health	3
	Other professional	11	Other professional	2
	Charitable sector	2	Charitable sector	0
	Industry	3	Industry	0
	Retired	11	Retired	8
Main reason for return	Education	3	Education	2
	Employment	6	Employment	2
	Personal/family	11	Personal/family	9
	Quality of life	6	Quality of life	20
	To retire	3	To retire	
	A mix of reasons	5	A mix of reasons	0

deeper study on these aspects. We illustrate some of our arguments with quotations from our respondents and interviewees to highlight the variety around these principal themes.

Table 1 summarises our key responses and shows that the average age of the interviewees in our 2020 survey, at the time of their return, was their mid-40s. Only 12 were aged 60 and over, and so the majority were economically active; our findings align with Findlay et al. (2008). Of those who specified their employment, five worked in education, seven in the health services, thirteen in various professional or managerial jobs, two in the charitable sector, and three in industry; the majority were therefore in 'white collar' jobs. That said, of our 49 respondents, only eight gave employment as the main reason for return, while 20 stated family or personal reasons, three retirement and another eight highlighted quality of life as the primary factor.

6.1 | Employment/business opportunities

Those respondents citing employment reasons referred to 'an offer of promotion', 'the right work opportunity', 'the chance to do a dream job' and 'return to take on the family business'.

The job. It was a challenge—a huge challenge—and I wanted that before I retired. It was a critical job at the time for the service and I knew that my experience and skills were perfectly suited to do it (Male returner from Australia).

There is no doubt that employment opportunities are crucial in attracting back the diaspora. One interviewee in France told us:

I would [return] and my wife would be over the moon. She has lived over here for x amount of years for me, so why not? I am not against moving back, but I don't think, work wise, it is advantageous though (Male, living in France).

Some people had their own business or were thinking about setting one up:

We did a house exchange in Troon and we met really good friends in Troon through that house exchange … We ended up buying a house together as an investment, formed a Scottish corporation, and we're renting that house out (Female, living in USA).

Scotland has grown in confidence and prosperity post-devolution and there is the chance of a more positive optimistic and internationalist future for Scotland. We wanted to put our money where our mouth is and take our business to Scotland (Male returner from England).

I just want to go back. I've always said I'm just visiting here. A long visit but still … I would like, once we're 60, to go back and do something like bed and breakfast (Female, living in the Netherlands).

The importance of employment is certainly well understood by the Scottish Government. In an interview with a Government Minister, he reflected on Ireland's success as an independent country in having all the necessary economic levers to promote business:

I remember being in Chicago and the point was made to me by Chicago Scots and a lot of them are first-generation Scots working in finance. But nobody had ever had anybody coming to them and saying, 'Want to come back?' Now part of that's down to the state of the Scottish economy. In Ireland, it was the turning round of the economy that saw the bars empty in Boston and New York. Now there are people in places like New York—well, America is for them. But there are plenty of others, if you said, 'Look, we're actually looking for people and we can pay you big bucks', a lot of people would say, 'Time to go home and have a

family or whatever, it's a good place to live' (Scottish Government Minister).

6.2 | Quality of Life/Family

The reference to Scotland being a 'good place to live' illustrates that any decision to relocate is a complex one, involving a number of factors. We have already noted how the government aim of attracting back the diaspora needs to relate to both employment opportunities and the Scottish quality of life (Boyle & Motherwell, 2005) and family connections are also clearly important. These different factors were often intertwined:

> I had sold up my home in England four years previously and did a bit of travelling so then I was free (pretty much) as to where I chose to live. There was a resurgence in a general desire for political autonomy in Scotland over the period I was away, some of my postgrad studies looked specifically at that, so it seemed like a somewhat logical move. Tied to that was an elderly parent and siblings so care issues were cropping up and I wanted to assist with that. Housing was more affordable too (Male returner from England).

> 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 (Male returner from England).

> I love the landscape, the culture and the people. I enjoy the outdoors and so it was perfect for me (Male returner from England).

A number of those who returned remarked on the ways in which Scotland had positively changed while they had been away, and this was often an added incentive to move back.

> I think Scotland has changed significantly. Attitudes to women especially are much more positive but it is also much more open on issues of race/immigration, sexuality, disability, etc. These differences are both in relation to how it used to be but also compared to other countries I lived in (Female returner from England).

> It's changed for the better in many ways—Glasgow in particular feels cleaner and a much more vibrant, modern, international city (Male returner from England).

> We felt it was time to move from London. We then had to decide whether Scotland or England. We chose Scotland because of personal reasons (nearer to remaining family and friends) but also for cultural reasons. By this I mean both that attitudes in Scotland seem more caring, and less hostile to others, and also that the culture itself (especially musical) is livelier. I think the whole Brexit affair has underlined that the Scots and the English are now much more two different peoples and so we opted for the former. And the countryside's better! (Male returner from England)

> 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 (Male returner from England).

6.3 | Change/time passing

That said, there was also a realisation that moving back might be hard, as either Scotland or the diaspora members themselves might have changed to the extent that a homecoming would be difficult:

> Well, we still have a house in Penicuik. We kept that on because we thought we were only going to be here for two years. But things change and the last time we went back, we felt a bit more like tourists (Female, living in the Netherlands).

> You get homesick for Scotland as it was, not Scotland as it is. And to actually go back, you've got this idea in your head that you can just pick it up as it was 16 years ago, forgetting that if you'd been there for those 16 years, everything would have moved on. I miss the Scotland I left 16 years ago, not the Scotland you left last week (Female, living in the Netherlands).

> I think the conclusion I am drawing is that Scotland is my head and heart ... It occurred to me that, when I think of Scotland, when I think about being Scottish, I'm possibly harking back to a Scotland and concepts that no longer exist (Female, living in France).

The responses clearly illustrate how complex decisions to return are. While employment opportunities are crucial, the perceived good quality of life in Scotland together with family ties are also enormously significant. That said, it was recognised that return is

not always easy, as personal circumstances—and Scotland itself—have changed over time.

7 | DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Within Scotland, there is a recognition that the country needs to address its population challenges. While immigration cannot prevent the ageing of a population (Wilson & Rees, 2003), it can slow decline, and, if migrants are younger and economically active, may in turn lead to both population and economic growth and help society in its ability to support those who have retired or are no longer in employment. Policies which are targeted at boosting immigration and discouraging emigration are hugely important.

But Scotland has limited ability to tackle its population challenges because immigration policy is a reserved matter, with Westminster retaining oversight and control in this area. There appears to be an agreement across all Scottish political parties that population growth is important to Scotland's economic future and, given the country's low birth rate, this can only be achieved through immigration. Yet immigration, particularly from Europe, is likely to fall significantly following Brexit.

The Fresh Talent Initiative (Scottish Executive, 2004) clearly demonstrated that a system of post-study visas could be effective in encouraging foreign graduates to stay on in Scotland after university, but it seems unlikely that the current Westminster government would agree to the reintroduction of such a scheme. Consequently, alternative approaches need to be considered.

On the one hand, the Scottish Government is likely to continue to press for some devolved powers over immigration. Griffith and Morris (2017) suggest alternative models of either a substate system where there would be some variation in immigration rules but control would ultimately rest with Westminster, or a devolved system which would allow the nations and regions of the United Kingdom to decide and set their own immigration rules. The latter is the preferred option of the Scottish Government. While the present Westminster government does not seem minded to adopt any decentralised policy at present, there is now a growing body of evidence that subnational immigration policies can be highly effective (see e.g., Wright, 2013).

Alternatively, the Scottish Government may look to other ways of operating within the post-Brexit immigration framework, and the Scottish diaspora is increasingly seen as a possible source of eligible migrants. While many members of the diaspora are older and settled elsewhere, and probably unlikely to return, Findlay et al. (2008) have shown that younger Scots working in England have shown a willingness to move back. Many of these individuals are skilled graduates and university alumni (Burnside, 2004), who left Scotland to obtain work in London and elsewhere but who may be willing to return to what is seen as a better quality of life in Scotland to raise a family. Such individuals, by virtue of being U.K. citizens, are free from any immigration constraints. Whether currently resident in other parts of the United Kingdom or overseas, the diaspora provides clear potential for inward migration to Scotland.

While quality of life issues are important, nevertheless the health of the Scottish economy and the availability of economic opportunities are crucial. Boyle and Motherwell's (2005) research of Scots in Dublin, for example, showed that employment and lifestyle issues were intertwined and, while many of their research participants would like to return to Scotland, the lack of career prospects made that difficult. While the significance of economic prosperity is not lost on the Scottish government, however, the country does not possess many of the levers necessary to achieve this within the current devolution settlement (McCollum et al., 2014).

That said, Scotland may be helped by the spread of new technology and working practices, and this has been particularly evident during the 2020–2022 coronavirus lockdowns, with many people working from home. Research by Felstead and Reuschke (2020) showed that 88.2% of employees who worked at home during the lockdown would like to continue working at home in some capacity, with 47.3% wanting to work at home often or all of the time. This suggests that the 'new normal' may include higher levels of homeworking than in the past. For Scotland, it means that it may become easier for individuals to live there, while working in a range of other countries and work environments—what Choudhury (2020) refers to as 'our work-from-anywhere future'. The Scottish Government's investment in upgrading broadband and IT facilities, particularly in rural areas (Philip et al., 2015), may help to encourage employment growth.

Again, given the likely reductions in immigration to the U.K. post-Brexit and the impact which that may have on Scotland's population, we believe that the Scottish Government should continue to advance the arguments for either devolved or partnership powers over immigration and also to encourage emigrants to return. Government policies towards the diaspora have sometimes been rather confused in the past and ministers have been accused of viewing the diaspora merely as a 'cash cow' and a source of financial investment in the homeland (Leith & Sim, 2016). Even the most recent Scottish Government policy document aimed at addressing the country's population challenges (Scottish Government, 2021b) uses the word 'diaspora' only once, although to be fair, it emphasises the need for enhanced engagement:

> We will continue to engage with those networks, encompassing, but not limited to, those groups with a historic or familial identity, alumni, business and cultural networks, incorporating Scotland Is Now messaging into our activity and communications. Scotland's overseas presence with its network of international offices is key in engaging with the traditional and widened diaspora and a wide range of stakeholders in order to promote Scotland as an attractive, modern and welcoming place to live and work, do business and study (Scottish Government, 2021b, p. 63).

In pressing the case for a clearly tailored Scottish-focused immigration policy and engaging with the diaspora, the Scottish

Government can take advantage of a wide political consensus in this area. The Scottish Green Party, for example, has argued for a Scottish-specific policy, in part because of the U.K. Home Office's 'hostile environment (https://greens.scot/ourfuture/equalities). The Scottish Labour Party too has devoted space on its party blog Labour Hame to what is clearly a live issue:

> Labour must be the party that unashamedly says that immigration is good for Scotland and the U.K. and migrant workers are welcome here. That is why it is now time for Scottish Labour to embrace the devolution of immigration powers to the Scottish Parliament —to boost our economy and communities and to secure economic growth … In today's hostile environment created by the Conservatives in Westminster there is an ever-increasing divide, as the U.K. immigration system fails to take into account Scotland's demographic, economic and labour market needs (https://www.labourhame.com/its-time-for-devolved-immigration).

Even the Scottish Conservatives, deviating from their Westminster colleagues, have argued that Westminster policies need to be more flexible (Carrell, 2020). It is clear therefore that a cross-party campaign for greater powers may yet yield results.

As we have stressed throughout, the challenges facing Scotland in terms of its declining birth rate and ageing population are not unique. But with a devolved rather than an independent Parliament and with no regional or nationally deviating U.K. immigration policy, Scotland lacks a number of the powers necessary to tackle the issue. Without certain major economic levers and with no powers over immigration, the country could look increasingly towards its diaspora as a source of population growth. and not only could but should increase its efforts to encourage emigrants to return. While we would not wish to over-exaggerate our findings and indeed a larger study would be both helpful and provide greater depth and validity of data to operate from, we believe that our research does suggest that members of the diaspora are would be helpful, we believe that our research does suggest that members of the diaspora are often willing to consider a return move if the circumstances are right, and thus argue that Scottish Government should explore this option more strongly. In addition, the increase in homeworking during the recent pandemic has shown that living in Scotland while working worldwide is an increasing possibility and reinforces Scotland as a destination. The political consensus on the country's immigration needs within the Scottish Parliament and the lack of an agreed dialogue with the U.K. Government suggest that this will be an ongoing issue for some time to come.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

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