



# **Labour Migration in Latvia after the EU Accession: Trends and Challenges**

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# Data and methods

- Data
  - **Project “The Geographic Mobility of the Labour Force” results**  
(No.VPD1/ESF/NVA/04/NP/3.1.5.1/0003, was part of a national programme related to the European Union’s Structural Funds, “Labour Market Research”)
  - **Statistical data**
  - **Policy documents related to migration**

# Data and methods

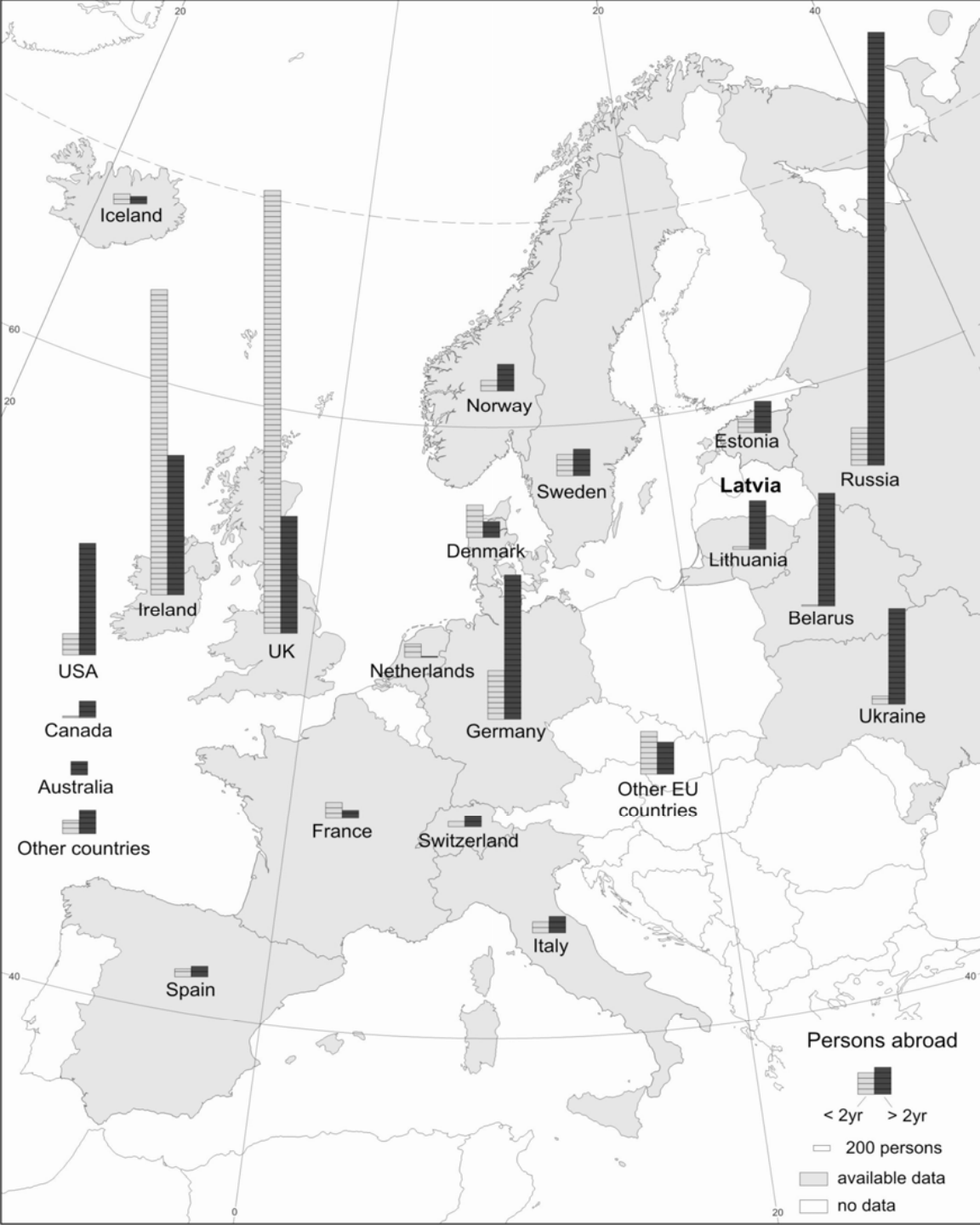
The research has involved qualitative and quantitative research methods:

- survey of Latvian residents,
- interviews with experts,
- formalised interviews with residents of Latvia who are working abroad,
- statistical analysis of the data

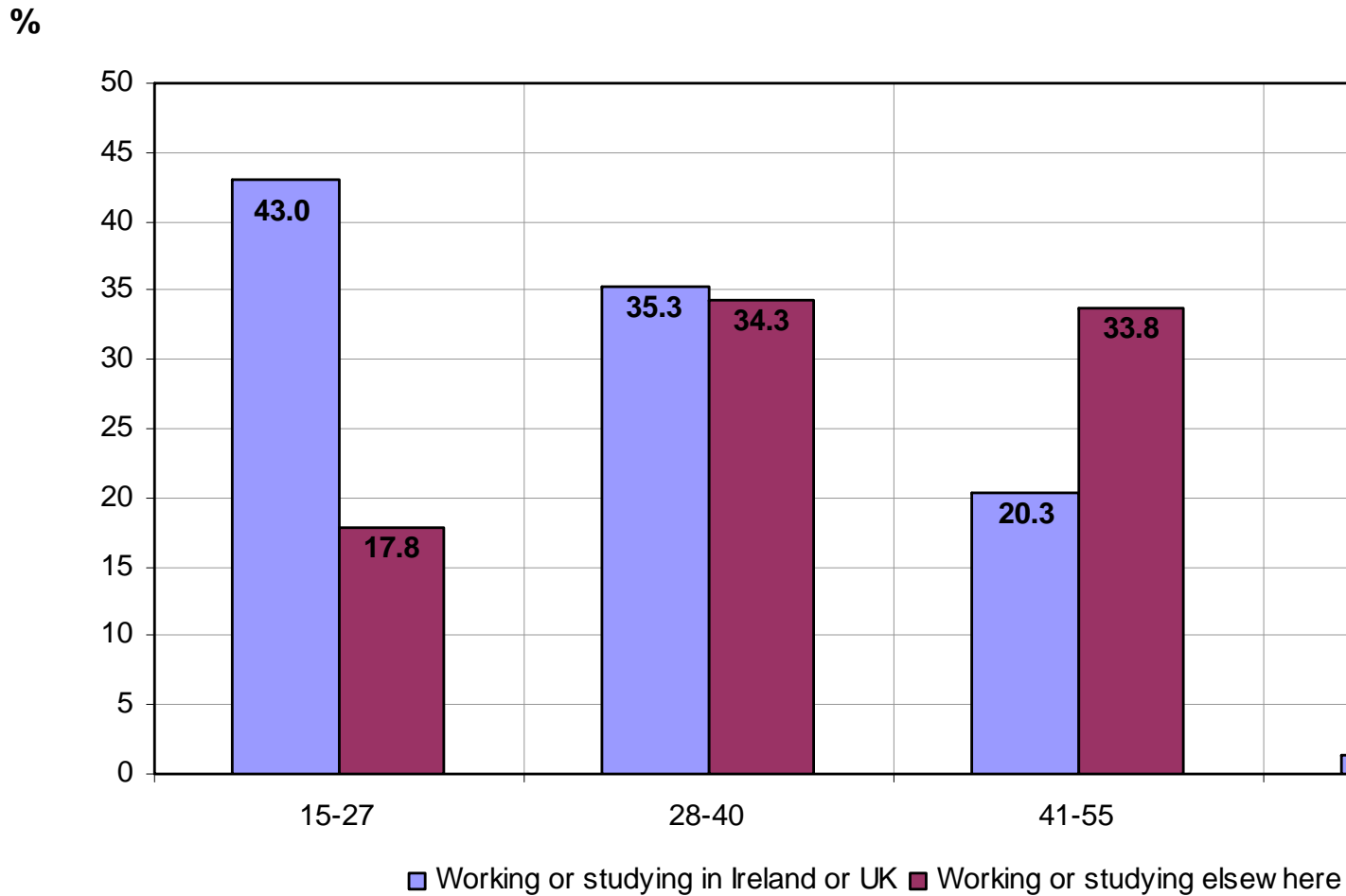
# Volume of international migration

- **Official information about these processes is incomplete. People in Latvia who have been abroad for a long time are still registered as living in the country.**
- **Experts set the figure at 50-120 thousand**
- **Data from survey – 86 thousand persons of working age**
- **5-7% of the population of working age in Latvia**

# Volume and destination of international migration before and after EU enlargement (distribution of relatives working abroad)



# Age groups of migrants from Latvia



# **Profile of potential Latvian migrant**

**The respondents who said that they would like to move abroad to find work were**

- more often young people younger than 24,**
- men,**
- people with a primary or general secondary education,**
- people living in the Zemgale and Latgale regions of Latvia,**
- qualified or less qualified blue collar.**

# Plans for staying aboard

- **Survey data clearly show that most respondents link their near-term or long-term future to life and work in Latvia.**
- **Even those who are thinking about moving abroad, plan to stay there for no more than a year.**
- **They want to spend the money which they earn in Latvia – buy or renovate a home or flat, or invest in their own education.**

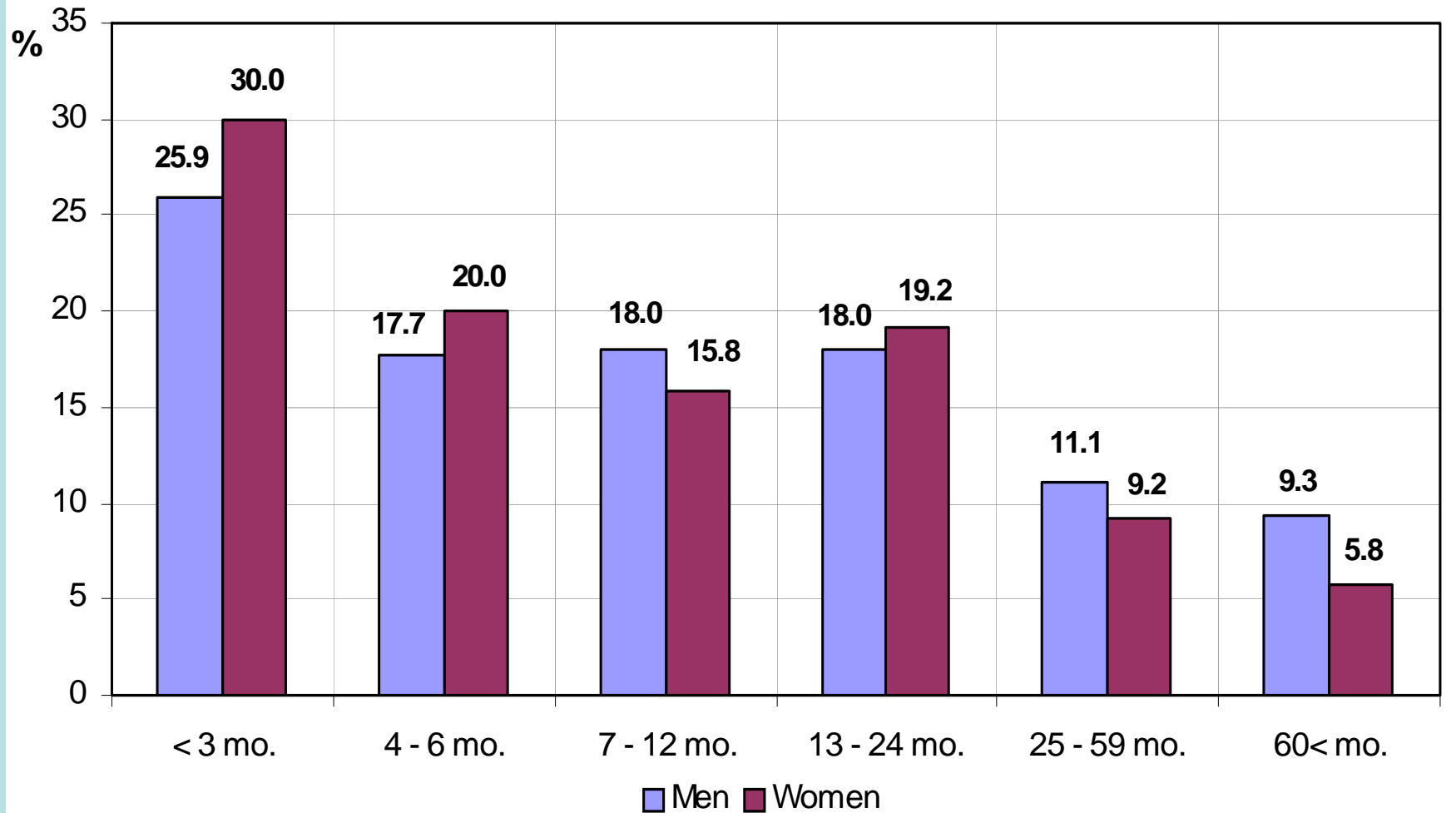
# Main destinations for potential migrants

Countries	%
UK	48,8
Ireland	31,8
Germany	16,9
USA	11,2
Sweden	6
Norway	5,6
Not know	2,5
Other EU countries	25,8
Other countries	16,9

# Temporary or permanent migration?

- Many Latvians say that they would like to return to Latvia after a certain period of time.
- This is a new trend in migration, the desire to go abroad to earn money, gain knowledge, and experience and then to return to Latvia.

# Time spent working abroad, %

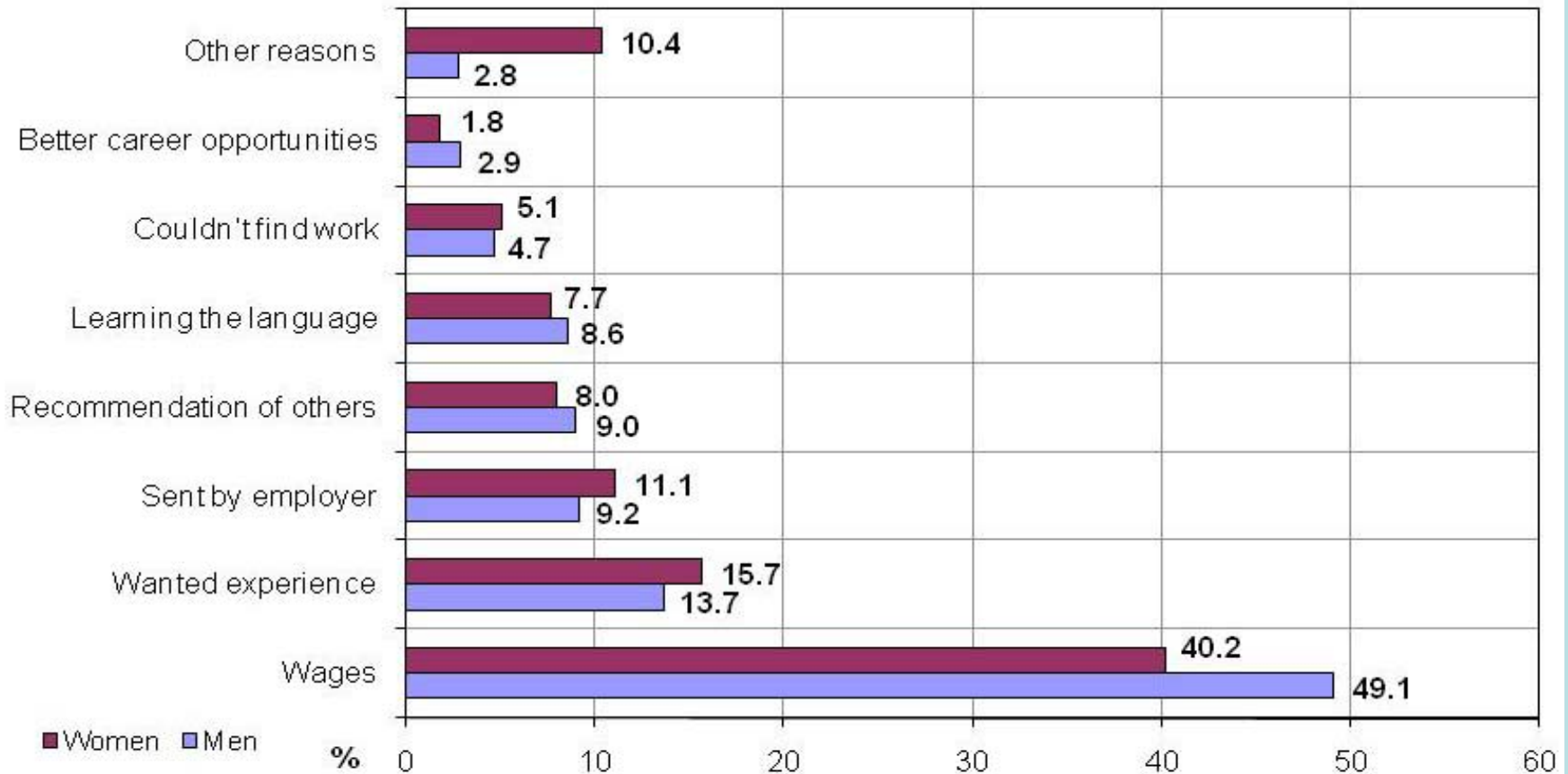


# Labour migrants abroad

According survey results, 2006

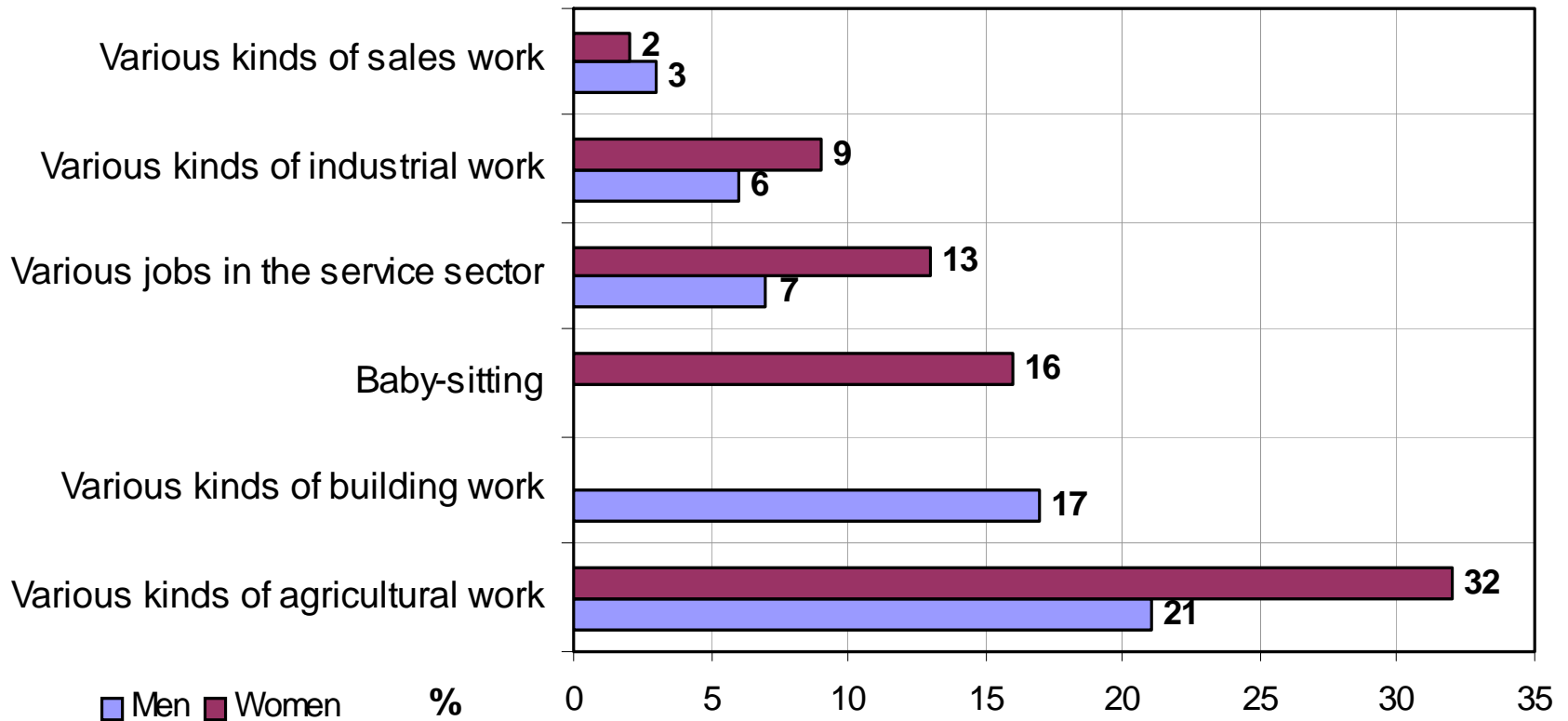


# Reasons for working abroad, by gender



Economic motivations were of key importance to labour migrants, particularly in terms of the ability to earn more money. Wages were the dominant motivation for migration in all age groups.

# Areas of employment abroad, % of mentioned jobs



# What were the main factors that might encourage people to return?

- In the interviews of those who are still living outside of Latvia was to find out what would encourage workers to return home.
- Respondents said that the main thing is that they want to earn more money, but they also talked about family support and about being treated like a human being by employers and the government.
- Some respondents talked about lower levels of bureaucracy in establishing and managing businesses.

# Negative consequences of labour out migration

- The country loses its investments in education and in the development of a skilled labour force;
- Emigration reduces the size of the labour force, which keeps companies from expanding or seeking new opportunities;
- The country loses its future child-rearing generation, which in turn implies population loss;
- The dependency ratio between the working population and the dependent population turns increasingly unfavourable.

# Positive consequences of labour out migration

- The level of unemployment declines;
- Those who remain in Latvia receive higher wages (that is, because of an increasing labour shortage in some sectors)
- Remittances from abroad improve the standard of living in Latvia;
- People are encouraged to learn foreign languages;
- Return migrants often bring increased skills and new experiences with them.

# Migration and Latvia's labour market

The flow of migrants in Latvia right now involves both extensive emigration and a concentration of workers in the central part of the country.

After 2010 there will quite possibly be serious labour shortages because of the far smaller number of local young people who join the labour market.

# Migration and Latvia's labour market

Latvia's National Development Plan for 2007-2013 is based on the need for economic development, and it speaks to a knowledge-based economy, as opposed to the current labour-intensive economy.

The in-migration of poorly skilled workers is therefore not a preferable option, whereas the marketing of Latvia as an attractive labour market for professionals within select shortage branches should be brought to the fore as an important policy.

Furthermore, as demand for qualified specialists expands, it is necessary to support education within various professional fields, or to send young people abroad to complement their knowledge and experience.

# Proposals on improving migration policy

A set of direct and indirect methods to regulate migration has been developed in tandem with the national development plan and its relevant employment and regional policies such as:

- Improving working conditions throughout the country, increasing the level of education among young people and expanding lifelong learning as a guarantee for being appropriate for work in the demanded professions
- Ensuring more complete employment of existing labour resources, attracting economically passive and retirement age residents;
- Simplifying the method for launching new businesses.

# Conclusions

- **Labour migration processes have been influenced by EU enlargement.**
- **The majority of the out-migrants from Latvia belong to the young adult category of the population.**
- **What was initially not expected, but which has increasingly become evident, is that the current migration story is having an impact on the Latvian labour market.**
- **One solution related to future migration policies would be to eliminate the reasons why people are emigrating.**

**Thank you for your attention!**



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