

Experiencing different cultures and meeting different people

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I travelled from London to seven other cities in England, and **Santander Travel Award** made this possible. The purpose of my trips was to interview Filipino migrants living in and outside London as I undertake my research on the effects of migration on Filipino migrants' mental health and emotional wellbeing.



There are over 200,000 Filipino migrants in the U.K. but very few studies have looked into the effects of migration on their mental health and emotional well-being. My research explores this topic to understand the factors affecting them and how they cope in all stages of the migration process. My research is qualitative and looking into the experiences of Filipinos who have been in the UK for at least 10 years.

In order to meet my respondents, I went to their places of worship, attended celebration events, joined picnics, and visited their homes. I met over 100 Filipino migrants and their families and interviewed 25 respondents in Birmingham, Bradford, Cheshire, Derby, Leicester, Liverpool, London, and Manchester.

Filipinos are known for their hospitality, kindness, and generosity, and these I have personally experienced as they welcomed me to their homes and invited me to eat with their family. I enjoyed authentic Filipino food, the community spirit and sense of belongingness, as well as the scenery and the different culture in all those places. It's fascinating to meet friendly locals and to experience waiting for half an hour for buses in almost empty bus stops.

Filipinos have good stories to share about coming to U.K. and the challenges they encountered, how they adapted to the new community, and how they built their own Filipino community and networks. They all miss the Philippines and the relatives and friends they left behind, but equally appreciate their life in the U.K. and the opportunities this country has to offer. They have successfully established life here and are thriving in their chosen careers. Filipinos are hardworking people and this is evidenced by the fact that all of the respondents and adult members of their family are gainfully employed and contributing to the society. Children are doing well in school, a testament to the value Filipino families put on education.

Interviewing respondents from cities outside London enabled me to compare and contrast the dynamics of an immigrant's life, their access to social networks, employment, and how they cope with challenges of adapting to the new culture and being away from some of their family members and childhood friends.

Overall, it's been a good experience. And again, I'm thankful for the Santander Travel Award that made my trips possible.