

New study suggests migration does not bring happiness

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The grass might not be greener on the other side of the border, a new study from the University of Leicester has found.

Economic migrants travelling to different shores for greater income could be set for [disappointment](#) - because the pursuit of wealth does not equate with happiness.

[Sociologist](#) Dr David Bartram carried out the study: "Economic Migration and Happiness: Comparing Immigrants' and Natives' Happiness Gains from Income." It was published by *Social Indicators Research* online on 27th August and will be printed next year.

He sought to establish whether those people who were motivated by higher incomes in a wealthy country actually gain greater happiness via migration. He also examined whether these economic migrants might have exaggerated expectations about what they will achieve and experience, such that there is some significant disappointment.

Dr Bartram, of the Department of Sociology, said: "The study of happiness tells us that people generally do not gain greater happiness from earning higher incomes - which suggests that migrants might be mistaken in believing that they will be better off if they can move to a wealthy country.

"I also considered whether those who choose to migrate to a wealthy country are different from most people in this regard - perhaps they do

gain greater happiness from higher incomes. So, the research seeks to determine whether in general we should be pessimistic or optimistic about the consequences of migration for the migrants themselves.

"The results suggest that economic migrants might well experience disappointment. Migrants do gain happiness from higher incomes, to a greater extent than natives - but the relationship is weak even for migrants. In fact, it also works out that migrants are less happy than natives. The probable reason is that they expect to be happier by virtue of earning the greater incomes available in a wealthy country - but they end up wanting even more after they get there: aspirations probably increase at least as much as incomes.

"In short, even after an increase migrants find it difficult to feel satisfied with their incomes - just like the rest of us.

"Many of us are guilty of believing that money is more important for happiness than it is - and this research suggests that migrants are not terribly different in this regard. Life as an immigrant in a wealthy country can be very hard."

The research examined responses from 1400 people in the World Values Survey (existing survey data).

Dr Bartram said that the research might also serve to allay some media fears and people's concerns about being "overrun" by [immigrants](#): "The fact is, most people around the world do not want to move to a wealthy country like the UK: perhaps they understand that money is not the most important thing, that there would be a real price to pay in leaving one's family and community.

"Perhaps the research could also help potential [migrants](#), especially those who are attracted by wealthy-country income prospects, to develop a

better understanding of what life as an immigrant in a wealthy country would really be like."

More information: The article is available at:
www.springerlink.com/content/j4184317421x856p/

Provided by University of Leicester

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