

New research reveals that people who migrate to wealthier countries aren't any happier

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Do migrants from Eastern European countries become happier once they have settled in Western Europe?

A University of Leicester sociologist has investigated this question—and the answer might make potential [migrants](#) think twice before packing their bags. Most migrants were no happier after [migration](#)—and migrants from Poland were significantly less happy.

In a paper published in '*Migration Studies*', Dr. David Bartram analyses data from the European Social Survey of more than 42,000 people to try and determine whether happiness can be gained by moving to another country.

Dr Bartram's research compared the happiness of migrants to the happiness of people remaining in the country the migrants had left ('stayers').

"Migrants from eastern Europe do not appear to have gained happiness via migration to western Europe. Migrants are happier than stayers—but the analysis suggests that migrants were already happier than stayers, even prior to migration. So, the happiness advantage of migrants doesn't emerge as a consequence of migration; that advantage was already present before migration," he said.

"In general, research on happiness indicates that people don't make lasting gains in happiness when they gain an increase in their incomes",

said Dr Bartram.

"Migrants, however, might be able to increase their incomes quite a lot by moving to a wealthier country. Even if they do, though, they might end up in a lower 'relative' position in the destination country—and relative position usually matters more for happiness than one's 'spending power' or 'absolute income'".

Dr Bartram, of the Department of Sociology, found that migrants from Eastern Europe as a whole do not appear to have gained happiness by migrating to Western Europe. However, it depends on where the migrant comes from.

He said: "If average happiness is quite low in the origin country such as Russia and Turkey, then an increase in happiness would likely occur. However, for a country such as Poland where people are generally happier (at least in comparison to Russia, for example), there appears to be decrease in happiness for those who go to western Europe."

Dr Bartram explains that his research is important for those who are considering migrating to a wealthier country in order to try and gain income and become happier.

"It raises the possibility that people who think life is better in wealthier countries—and who thus go to a wealthier country to try and improve their own lives – might be disappointed by what they experience there."

Provided by University of Leicester

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