

Well-being of old natives and immigrants in Europe: Does socio-cultural integration matter?

January 10 2023, by David Bradley



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The concept of socio-cultural integration refers to the processes through which individuals from different cultural backgrounds come to feel a

sense of belonging and acceptance within a new society having migrated from their homeland to somewhere new. Such integration might involve learning the language and customs of that new society, participating in social and community activities, and developing relationships with the members of that society.

There is perhaps a suggestion that individuals who become more integrated tend to have [better mental health](#), higher levels of social support, and a greater sense of belonging and purpose in their new community. Research in the *International Journal of Happiness and Development* has investigated whether or not this is true in the European context with regard to new migrants and natives.

Eleftherios Giovanis of the Nazilli Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences at Adnan Menderes University in Cumhuriyet and Sacit Hadi Akdede of Izmir Bakircay University in İzmir, Turkey, first looked at the degree of integration between first-generation and second-generation immigrants and the natives and then how this affected well-being. The study was based on an analysis of panel data from the Survey of Health, Aging and Retirement in Europe across the period 2004–2017 for 29 countries. The team used seemingly unrelated regressions (SURE) to explore whether there is in fact a relationship between socio-cultural integration and well-being.

The researchers found that first-generation immigrants represented in the data were less likely to participate in the socio-[cultural activities](#) that might lead to greater integration. However, they add that those who did engage in such activities, commonly participated more frequently than the natives. In addition, the team found that even though immigrants tended to report lower levels of subjective well-being, this is in fact greatly enhanced through socio-cultural integration.

This begs the question as to whether proactive immigrants see the value

of socio-cultural integration and so are motivated to participate in such activities that can help them feel more connected with their new community. Of course, this might come at a price for some individuals in terms of losing their own social and [cultural identity](#) but there are ways in which the pros and cons of integration might be more equitably balanced.

It is worth adding that while socio-cultural integration does seem to have a positive impact on well-being, it is not likely to be the sole factor that can affect the well-being of immigrants. Economic status and opportunities as well as access to health care and education will also affect well-being. There is also the question of discrimination to be taken into account with regard to socio-cultural integration and how this affects an individual's overall well-being. Indeed, there is evidence from other sources that discrimination might push those who might benefit away from activities that lead to greater [integration](#).

More information: Sacit Hadi Akdede et al, Well-being of old natives and immigrants in Europe: does the socio-cultural integration matter, *International Journal of Happiness and Development* (2022). [DOI: 10.1504/IJHD.2022.10053068](#)

Provided by Inderscience

Citation: Well-being of old natives and immigrants in Europe: Does socio-cultural integration matter? (2023, January 10) retrieved 10 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2023-01-well-being-natives-immigrants-europe-socio-cultural.html>

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