

Are migrants better off through migration? The what, why, and how of considering immigrant happiness

Martijn Hendriks
Erasmus University Rotterdam, Netherlands

David Bartram
University of Leicester, United Kingdom

Paper Abstract:

To make the most out of migration, both (prospective) migrants and policy makers benefit of understanding the *overall* outcome of migration and its determinants. However, despite abundant knowledge about various domain outcomes, remarkably little is known about the broad well-being outcome of migration as it has rarely figured as an explicit object of research. The main reason is that human well-being is difficult to study empirically due to its numerous subjective and objective determinants with varying importance across individuals and groups. This article explains what migration scholars can learn about the consequences of migration from assessing a “better life” by considering migrants’ subjectively experienced well-being via their self-reported happiness and life satisfaction. We also address the importance of subjective forms of well-being compared with objective forms of well-being, the role of happiness when migration is not completely voluntary, and the importance of considering happiness in relation to other migration stakeholders (e.g., natives and stayers) and other contexts (e.g., migration behaviour).