

## **Xenophobia has no effect on migrants' happiness, says study**

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Employment and health problems, rather than the xenophobia in their new country, are the biggest reasons that migrants feel less happy than average, a new study says.

The British Sociological Association's annual conference in London heard today [**Friday 5 April 2013**] that moving to a country where people were particularly negative about immigration had no significant effect on migrants' wellbeing.

Professor Andreas Hadjar and Susanne Backes analysed data from the European Social Survey on 32,000 first or second generation migrants and 164,700 non-migrants in 30 European countries, including the UK. They compared the migrants' self-reported wellbeing with that of non-migrants for each country.

The researchers, from the University of Luxembourg, found that migrants who moved to countries where people expressed negative views about immigrants scored around 2% lower on their assessment of their wellbeing than the rest of the population in that country, which was not statistically significant.

However, those who were unemployed were almost 7% less happy, those who earned low wages were around 11% less happy, and those with health problems around 9%.

The longer they had been in the country also mattered: first generation migrants living for less than 10 years in a new country scored around 7% lower than the rest of the population. Those living for 10 or more years in a new score around 3.5% lower on their wellbeing than non-migrants.

The results also found that the richer the country the migrants – or their parents if they were second-generation – had moved into, the less happy they were compared to the rest of that country's population. However the higher a country's commitment to equal rights for migrants and non-migrants, the happier were the migrants.

The researchers found that migrants aged 41 to 60 were the least happy, reporting a wellbeing score of 6% less than those aged 22 to 30.

“Xenophobia showed no significant impact on the difference between migrant groups and non-migrants on subjective wellbeing,” the researchers say. They suggest the reason for this is that xenophobia harms both the migrants and the rest of the society too, so that the gap between migrants' and others' wellbeing does not increase.

“Both unemployment and deprivation appear to show strong negative impacts on subjective wellbeing. However, results also show that on average people with migration background do rather well integrating themselves into European societies – particularly in countries with constructive integration policies.”

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**Notes:**

1. Country-specific xenophobia among the non-migrants was calculated by analysing responses to three statements in the survey: 'Immigration bad or good for country's economy' (responses ranging from 0 'bad for the economic' to 10 'good for the economy'), 'Country's cultural life undermined or enriched by immigrants' and 'Immigrants make country worse or better place to live'. Greece and Russia showed the highest xenophobia scores and Sweden and Luxembourg showed the lowest.

2. The researchers used the European Social Survey database, comprising five waves of data-gathering (2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010). The 30 countries in the study are (with dates of waves):

Austria (AT) (2002, 2004, 2006)  
Belgium (BE) (all)  
Bulgaria (BG) (2006, 2008, 2010)  
Switzerland (CH) (all)  
Cyprus (CY) (2006, 2008)  
Czech Republic (CZ) (2002, 2004, 2008, 2010)  
Germany West (D-W) (all)  
Denmark (DK) (all)  
Estonia (EE) (2004, 2006, 2008, 2010)  
Spain (ES) (all)  
Finland (FI) (all)  
France (FR) (all)  
United Kingdom (GB) (all)  
Greece (GR) (2002, 2004, 2008)  
Hungary (HU) (all)  
Ireland (IE) (2002, 2004, 2006, 2008)  
Israel (IL) (2002, 2008, 2010)  
Italy (IT) (2002, 2004)  
Luxembourg (LU) (2002, 2004)  
Netherlands (NL) (all)  
Norway (NO) (all)  
Poland (PL) (all)  
Portugal (PT) (all)  
Russia (RU) (2006, 2008, 2010)  
Sweden (SE) (all)  
Slovenia (SI) (all)  
Slovakia (SK) (2004, 2006, 2008)

Turkey (TR) (2004, 2008)

Ukraine (UA) (2004, 2006, 2008)

Germany East (D-E) (all)

3. The University of Luxembourg, founded in 2003, is a multilingual, international research university and currently has nearly 6500 students. With students from 100 different countries, researchers from 60 countries, and exchange agreements with over 50 universities around the world, the University of Luxembourg offers a truly multilingual environment with degrees taught in English, French or German.

4. The 2013 British Sociological Association annual conference is being held at the Grand Connaught Rooms, Holborn, London, from 3-5 April. Over 400 social scientists will present their latest research, and 700 people will attend. The British Sociological Association's mission is to represent the intellectual and sociological interests of its members. The BSA is a Company Limited by Guarantee. Registered in England and Wales. Company Number: 3890729. Registered Charity Number 1080235 [www.britsoc.co.uk](http://www.britsoc.co.uk)