

# A LONGITUDINAL STUDY OF FACTORS AFFECTING MIGRANT SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING: EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FROM LATVIAN EMIGRANT SURVEYS

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**Abstract.** *People migrate for a variety of reasons, not only economic ones, but most expect to increase their quality of life and happiness by changing their place of residence. Most research on the integration of Eastern European migrants focuses primarily on their structural integration into the labour market, much less is known about the implications of migration on the general subjective well-being (SWB) of individuals. The terms ‘SWB’ and ‘happiness’ refer to people’s evaluations of their life which can be either cognitive or affective (e.g. Diener, 2009). From a theoretical perspective, migration decision-making can still be encompassed within a utility-maximising framework. Now, however, utility is captured by subjective judgements of satisfaction rather than monetary income. Quantitative data from two waves of a large-scale longitudinal survey of Latvian emigrants (2014<sup>1</sup>-2019<sup>2</sup>) were used to identify the determinants of SWB and explore the impact of different factors (such as changes in family status, employment or health) on changes in life satisfaction over time.*

**Keywords:** *migration; life satisfaction; subjective well-being; well-being.*

## Introduction

Human history is characterised by countless migratory flows with the goal being the search for a better life (Massey et al., 2005). Consequently, studies on whether migrants’ lives are actually better after moving to a new country (Borjas, Bronar, & Trejo, 1992) have shown to be prominent in the migration literature. Traditionally, when analysing the gains from migration, researchers have focused more on comparisons of objective indicators, such as wage growth (Yankow, 2003), employment prospects (Lersch, 2016). While the impact of migration on an individual’s subjective well-being (SWB) is less frequently discussed than the economic consequences of migration, there is a growing body of research in the migration literature that focuses on and provides evidence of the individual’s own subjective feelings, satisfaction, happiness, mental health, and there is evidence now that while migrants experience gains in one area of life (for instance, an

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<sup>1</sup> Quantitative survey within the framework of the ESF project “The Emigrant Communities of Latvia: National Identity, Transnational Relations, and Diaspora Politics”

<sup>2</sup> Quantitative survey within the framework of Latvian Council of Science project “Exploring Well-Being and Social Integration in the Context of Liquid Migration: A Longitudinal Approach”.

improved material situation), they often suffer losses in other areas of life, such as lack of family or friends or social support in their new place of residence (Nisic & Petermann, 2013; Nowok et al., 2013). Based on data from two waves of a longitudinal study of emigrants, this paper will discuss the answers to two main research questions: RQ1: How migration affects satisfaction in different domains of life and RQ2: At the individual level, what factors determine changes in emigrants' SWB.

### **Measures of subjective well-being: life satisfaction**

The history of subjective well-being (SWB) research was initially associated with the field of psychology. From the outset of studying the problem, researchers empirically demonstrated that, if quality of life remains constant, feelings will determine what an individual will focus on – the positive aspects of life or look for problems (Diener, 1984; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985).

Interest in the meaning of subjective life evaluations peaked in the 1960s and 1970s, when SWB indicators became the subject of numerous comparative international studies that found statistically significant differences between countries in people's perceptions and evaluations of life (Inglehart, 1977; Gallup 1976; Gallup & Kettering, 1976). The conceptual approaches of these studies were based on the assumptions of resource theory that SWB depends on the objective quality of life, the availability of resources and the level of satisfaction of basic needs, leading to the conclusion that people living in better conditions should have higher levels of life satisfaction. But comparative studies have shown a paradoxical trend: even very significant increases in national economic indicators have not been able to significantly increase people's life satisfaction – these indicators tend to remain relatively stable. This finding is known in economics as the Easterlin paradox, after a study published in 1974 by the author of this idea (Easterlin, 1974).

Almost twenty years later, Diener published a major critical review which focused on theories emphasising the role of psychological factors in the determination of SWB (Diener, 1984). It was Diener who first defined the concept of SWB in psychology, explaining it as a multidimensional construct consisting of three distinct components: the presence of “positive affect, infrequent negative affect, and a global sense of satisfaction with life”, which is a cognitive evaluation of one's life (Diener, 1984; Myers & Diener, 1995).

Throughout the decades that followed, these two main approaches dominated both theory and research in the study of SWB. One is concerned with identifying the demographic, social and personal factors that correlate with SWB, both at the individual level and across countries (Argyle, 1999; Clark & Oswald, 2002; Diener & Lucas, 1999; Easterlin, 2002; Oswald, 2002; Warr, 1999). Another approach is characterised by theories and models that identify and

measure the factors that determine a particular state of SWB (whether expressed in terms of satisfaction, happiness, success or emotional evaluation) (Brickman & Campbell, 1971), based on the assumption that most changes in the experience of SWB are transitory and temporary (Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999; Diener, 2009).

Subjective assessment is increasingly being used as an indicator of well-being not only by psychologists, but also by economists and sociologists. In sociological research, subjective evaluations of the quality of life become the object: satisfaction with life as a whole, and with individual areas of life, assessment of happiness in life (Andrews & Withey, 1976; Costa & McCrea, 1980).

### **SWB in the context of migration**

In the context discussed above, international migration, moving from one country to start one's life in another, is seen as a radical turning point, providing a completely new context for every aspect of life. It can open up opportunities for a better life, but it can also create new challenges and problems that one would not otherwise have experienced. The advantage of a subjective measure of overall well-being is that it is provided by the individual, who measures and scales all the gains and losses from migration across all aspects of life.

According to neoclassical economic theories, migration is driven by economic factors. However, research shows that, as far as migrants themselves are concerned, economic reasons (wages, lack of jobs, etc.) do not necessarily account for the majority of reasons for leaving. The Latvian diaspora also most often points to more abstract reasons, such as improving the quality of life for themselves or their children, the desire to live in a stable, orderly country, the lack of future prospects in Latvia, etc. Research shows that subjective assessments of well-being, expressed in terms of satisfaction categories, vary depending on the reason given for migration – the search for a better job and salary, family, studies or other reasons (Bryant & Merwood, 2008) and are an important antecedent of people's expectations about their future life. In any case, most migrants expect to improve their quality of life and become happier when they move.

Although migration mostly improves an individual's economic situation, it can also be associated with psychological discomfort (separation from family, friends, problems due to perceived discrimination or other reasons) (Nikolova & Graham, 2014; Borjas, 1987; Chiswick, 1999; Sjaastad, 1962). Several researchers point to the vulnerable balance between the economic benefits of migration and the 'sacrifices' - the emotional 'price', most often identified with the loss of contact with children and family members, the loss of social support networks, which affects the individual's satisfaction and level of SWB (Skrbiš, 2008; Sime, 2018).

Consequently, there can be large differences between objective outcomes from migration and SWB. Researchers have come to the unanimous conclusion that income-based measures are insufficient to judge people's well-being, as objective well-being can coexist with unhappiness and frustration (Stiglitz, Sen, & Fitoussi, 2009).

When asked to directly compare two situations before and after emigration, migrants are more likely to report higher levels of satisfaction with life after moving than before moving (De Jong, Chamrathirong, & Tran, 2002). However, when analysing the long-term changes in SWB, researchers reach rather contradictory conclusions. Sylvia Melzer argues that the increase in SWB after relocation should be sustained because migration (like other career investments) is a long-term investment (Melzer, 2011). With reference to the cumulative returns to migration, theoretical concepts and empirical observations from both sociological and economic research suggest that economic migration may be another critical life event that has a permanent impact on happiness (Melzer, 2011). This research suggests that happiness levels increase as individuals gradually become familiar with local opportunities and customs, spending more time in the host country (Safi, 2010).

An alternative approach to the development of SWB is offered by the psychological literature: the initial increase in SWB immediately after migration may be reduced in later periods by processes involving adaptation, expectation and comparison. On arrival in another country, an individual may initially compare himself/herself with those who remain in the country of origin, and later begin to compare him/herself with others (immigrants and locals) in the host country. Individuals adapt to repeated stimuli (Scitovsky, 1992), quickly become accustomed to better living conditions and standards, followed by a decline in the level of SWB. In turn, higher incomes may raise expectations with regard to wages and economic status (Stutzer, 2003). Moreover, categories of reference change: as migrants' incomes rise, so do their hopes and expectations of life, as they compare themselves to the higher-earning and more affluent locals in host countries (Nikolova & Graham, 2014).

Returning to Brickman and Campbell's (1971) model, which argues that any critical life event (such as marriage or childbirth) - positive or negative - affects happiness only temporarily and can cause only temporary deviations from innate levels of individual happiness, economic migration can have the same transitory effects on well-being as these critical life events (Kratz, 2020).

It is on the basis of these two approaches that researchers are now arriving at competing hypotheses that are being tested to explain potentially contradictory processes: the relative stability of SWB over long periods of time, and the simultaneous impact of different conditions (e.g. changes in marital status, employment, health status) on changes in life satisfaction. Here, it is worth pointing out the invaluable importance of longitudinal data in SWB research, as

only such data provide the opportunity to test alternative theories concerning the stability or change in SWB at the individual level over different human life cycles (Lucas, Clark, Georgellis, & Diener, 2003; Fujita & Diener, 2005). Ideally, this would be data on SWB before and after migration, but such data are rarely available.

## Methods

This analysis of subjective wellbeing is based on unique empirical materials provided by the data from two phases of a longitudinal study of Latvian emigrants and return migrants: the first wave of the study or the baseline survey of Latvians and Latvian nationals living outside Latvia, conducted in 2014 within the framework of the European Social Fund grant “The Emigrant Communities of Latvia: National Identity, Transnational Relations, and Diaspora Politics” (sample size  $n = 14\,048$ , including respondents from 118 countries) and the second wave of the study, carried out in 2019 within the framework of the Latvian Science Council (LZP) grant “Exploring Well-Being and Social Integration in the Context of Liquid Migration: A Longitudinal Approach” (the second wave sample includes 6242 Latvian nationals living outside Latvia and 1400 return migrants)<sup>3</sup>. This analysis uses only the responses of respondents living outside Latvia who took part in both the 2014 and 2019 surveys ( $n = 1073$ , data weighted<sup>4</sup>). This is longitudinal data that, for the first time, allow researchers to assess the subjective well-being of Latvian emigrants and to track changes in satisfaction levels.

To measure satisfaction with life in general and with different aspects of it, a scale  $n = 0-10$  was used in both phases of the study (ranging from "very dissatisfied" to "very satisfied").

To measure changes in satisfaction, new variables have been calculated that describe, at the individual level, positive or negative changes (increase or decline in satisfaction) or stability in satisfaction levels over the five years between the two surveys. The estimated variables were included as dependent variables in logistic regression models. The set of regressors was determined by means of block regression to determine the extent to which independent variables help to explain the changes in satisfaction. Separate regression models were estimated for negative and positive changes in life satisfaction over the five-year period.

Three types of independent variable were used in modelling: original variables, which were measured directly in the surveys, computed variables, which extract or aggregate data for a given survey wave, and computed indexes, which track changes between waves: (1) socio-demographic characteristics

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<sup>3</sup> Data file (Mierina et al., 2021)

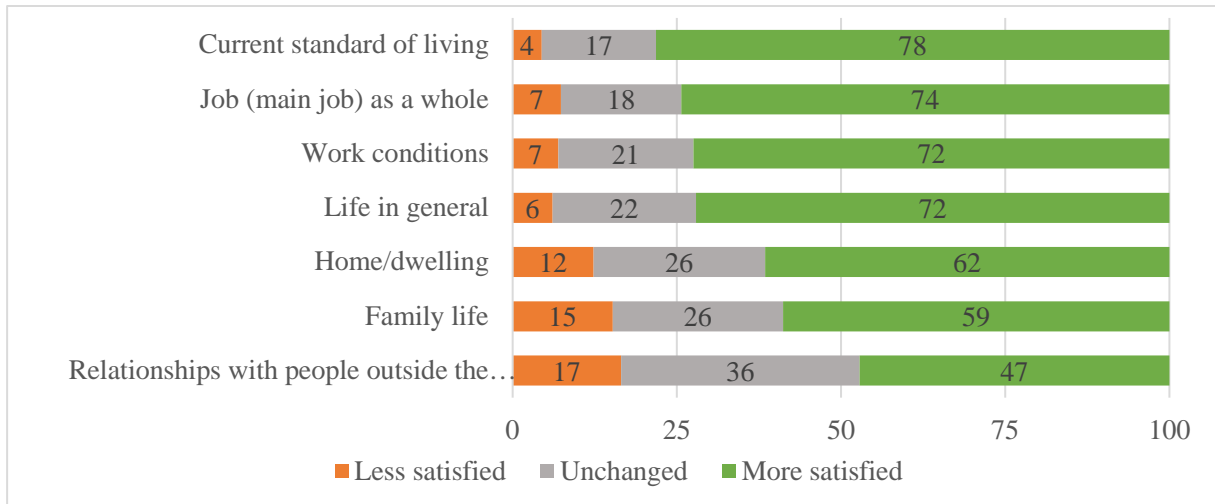
<sup>4</sup> Data weighted by equalising the panel distribution to the 2014 population, multiplied by the inverse of the panel probability calculated in the logit regression. For more details on data weighting in the emigrant survey, see Goldmanis, 2015.

(gender, age, education and education change index, employment and employment change index, self-assessment of health), (2) living conditions and material status (subjective assessment of material situation – 'making ends meet' – and index of change, household composition (living alone/ with partner and/or children/ with parents or close relatives/ with friends/ with strangers) and index of change, characteristics of place of residence (capital/other city/small town/rural) and index of change, living in private house or apartment, (3) time spent in emigration (grouped), repeated migration as the number of moves to another country, migrant group by type of migration (liquid migrants/transnationals and migrants permanently residing in the host country), factors related to migration: to reduce the multivariate answers, factor analysis was employed as an auxiliary method for grouping the multiple reasons for emigration. In the next step, the quartiles of the factor loadings were recoded into individual categorical variables that were included in the regression model.

The data was analyzed in IBM SPSS 26 using bivariate and multivariate statistics.

## **Results**

First, we look at whether a respondents' satisfaction with life in general and in different areas of their lives has changed in their own estimation after emigration. As we do not have measures of respondents' satisfaction levels before emigration, the survey asked directly whether you have become more or less satisfied after moving abroad, or whether your satisfaction levels have remained the same in the areas of your life listed, with three response categories: more satisfied, remained the same, become more dissatisfied. The answers to this question lead to the conclusion that, in general, for most migrants the level of satisfaction has increased in almost all areas of life. However, the degree of increase varies significantly across different areas of life. The greatest increase in satisfaction is observed in the assessment of the standard of living, work, working conditions and satisfaction with life in general (72% - 78% of diaspora respondents have become more satisfied) (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1 Satisfaction with various areas of life after emigration: respondent self-reports**

Source: author’s estimates. Data: The Emigrant Communities of Latvia survey, n=11342

A significantly smaller proportion of respondents became more satisfied with their housing, family life and, in particular, relationships with people outside the family after moving. Correspondingly, a higher proportion of respondents (15%-17%) indicate a decline in satisfaction in these areas of life.

At the individual level, the analysis of changes over five years (see Figure 2) also shows that the most sensitive areas of life affected by migration are family life, relationships with people and living standards. When comparing the satisfaction rates of different groups of migrants, a higher level of satisfaction, which has also not changed significantly over the five-year period, is observed among emigrants living outside Latvia permanently. The group of liquid migrants and transnationals is characterised by the lowest satisfaction with family life, although it has increased significantly compared to the measurement 5 years ago. In this group, satisfaction has also increased in other areas of life, with satisfaction with housing and working conditions rising significantly. It is also important to mention here the return migrant group, which will not be included in the following analysis. As expected, the return migrant group has the lowest level of satisfaction before return compared to the others, which may have been the reason for the decision to return. Moreover, after returning to Latvia, satisfaction has further declined in all areas of life (except family life, where it has increased). The most significant drop is in satisfaction with the standard of living, with a less significant, but declining, reduction in satisfaction with housing and working conditions.

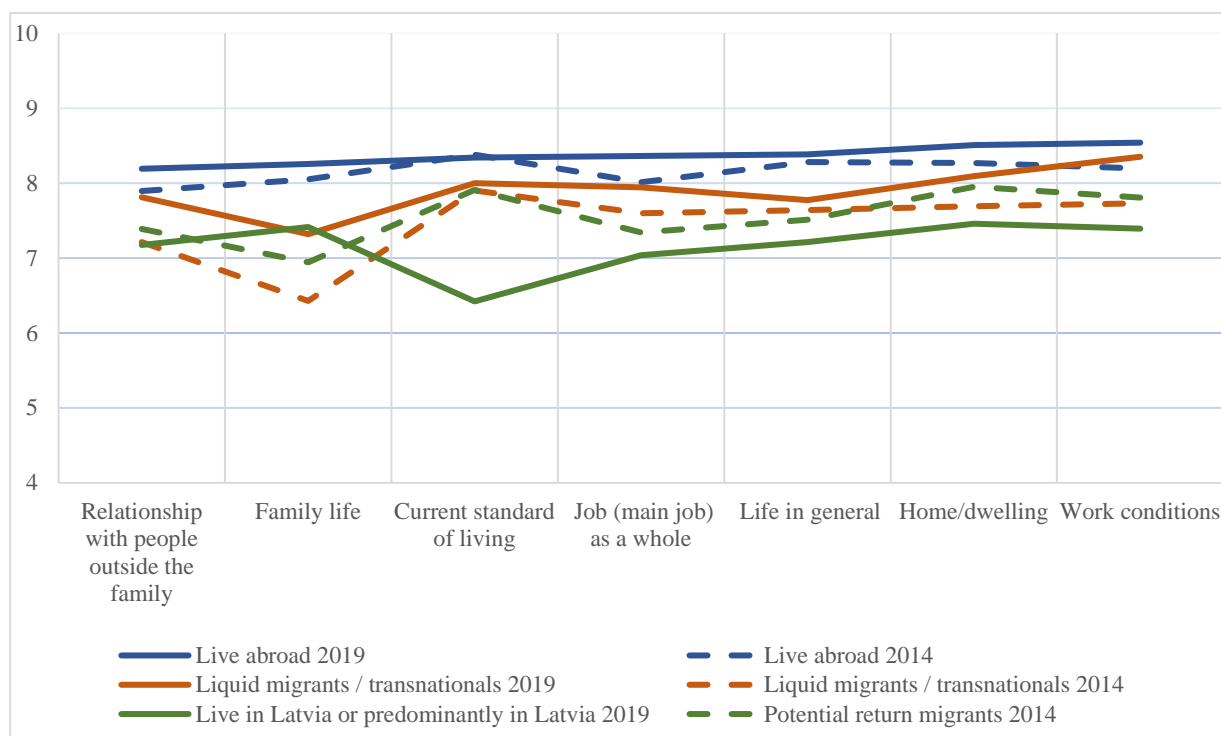


Figure 2 *Changes in satisfaction between 2014 and 2019 in groups of migrants (mean)*  
 Note: author's estimates. evaluations on a scale from 0 to 10; n=1073.

### **Prediction for increase in satisfaction**

Two logistic regression models were estimated to assess the impact of different life events on changes in life satisfaction: (1) for negative changes and (2) for positive changes in life satisfaction over a five-year period (see Table 1). Only those variables that were statistically significantly correlated with the dependent variable were included in the models.

The regression model for increase in satisfaction shows that among socio-demographic indicators, only age is statistically significant.

Contrary to expectations, the results of the analysis show that satisfaction increases with the age of the respondent, as do the chances of a positive change in life satisfaction. Regarding age, many studies have found that SWB in adulthood can be represented by a U-shaped curve with the lowest level of happiness occurring in middle age (Nowok, van Ham, Findlay, & Gayle, 2013), this is partly confirmed by the emigrant survey data, as young people aged under 25 have the lowest satisfaction levels.

The living conditions indicators, which were added as a further block of variables, show that living in a city, especially a metropolis, is a statistically significant factor associated with an increase in satisfaction. Cities and agglomerations offer better opportunities to earn a living, get a higher return on skills, learn from other people, have a higher level of amenities and a wider cultural offering (Combes et al., 2008; Glaeser & Resseger, 2010). Living in the



capital city, compared to living in the countryside, increases the predictor of increased satisfaction more than 24 times. Moving to the city also increases satisfaction. The deterioration of one's material situation between the two waves of the survey reduces the chance of an increase in life satisfaction.

In the set of family life indicators, a stable partnership (even if the spouse lives in Latvia), living with a partner/spouse as well as having a child are statistically significant indicators, which predicts a positive change in the level of satisfaction. Changes in household composition due to the addition of a partner/spouse/minor child to the respondent's household have a similar positive impact. The family is a resource that helps to better integrate into the new country of emigration, is the basis of the ontological or social security of the individual (Sime, 2018). Individuals migrating with family members or to join family already in the host country may have access to more support than individuals who migrate alone (Dykhhoorn et al., 2019, p. 269).

The reason for emigration factors included in a separate block in the model significantly help to explain changes in the level of SWB. Emigrants who emigrated because of social exclusion factors such as lack of future prospects or dislike of the political processes in Latvia are more likely to experience an increase in satisfaction after emigration. Family factors, including cohabitation or marriage with a foreigner, emigration with a partner or spouse also predict an increase in satisfaction, but those who have emigrated to study and see the world are less satisfied, and their satisfaction diminishes over time). Different reasons for migrating are likely to be associated with different outcomes (Bryant & Merwood, 2008). For instance, most migrants moving for family reunification satisfy an important social need by living closer to particular family members. In family-reunification migration, success with regard to the core motivation might seem obvious because the goal is achieved via the migration itself (Hendriks & Bartram, 2019, p. 287).

Analysis of the variables characterising the migration experience has led to a number of unexpected results. Time spent in the host country has a negative correlation with both current satisfaction and increase in satisfaction between the two waves of the survey. The less time spent in the host country compared to those living for more than 15 years, the higher the odds of an increase in satisfaction (it should be noted here that respondents who had lived abroad for less than 5 years could not be included in the longitudinal panel). This is consistent with the findings of other migration researchers, which point to a number of reasons why the initial increase in SWB immediately after migration may be mitigated in later periods by mechanisms involving adaptation, expectation and comparison (Scitovsky, 1992); as wellbeing increases, so do people's hopes and expectations of life, expectations about salary, economic status, etc., which can undermine satisfaction (Stutzer, 2003; Nikolova & Graham, 2015). Repeat migration (moving from one country to another) also predicts an increase in satisfaction.

Contrary to predictions, emigrating with relatives or friends or being welcomed by relatives/friends in the host country reduces the likelihood of an increase in satisfaction levels.

### ***Prediction of decline in satisfaction***

The decline in SWB scores between the two phases of the study has a statistically significant association with age and gender. The probability of a negative change in SWB declines as the age of the respondent increases. Women have a reduced risk of negative changes in satisfaction. Higher levels of education and better health reduce the probability of negative changes, but controlling for other variables, these indicators lose statistical significance in the final model.

As for living conditions, as in Model 1, living in the capital or another city compared to living in the countryside, as well rural-urban migration, is a statistically significant factor that reduces the likelihood of negative changes. In turn, a decline in wealth, one's material situation, predicts a decline in satisfaction. Employment, entrepreneurship reduces the chance that satisfaction will decline.

Among family characteristics, registered or civil partnership declines the likelihood of negative changes.

As in Model 1, the reasons for emigration factors makes an important contribution to explaining negative changes in satisfaction. Social factors (including reasons such as a desire to improve one's quality of life, etc.) may predict a decline in satisfaction. Individuals who went abroad to pursue studies, explore the world, reported lowered satisfaction. In turn, emigration associated with family reasons reduces the likelihood of negative changes in the level of SWB. A decline in satisfaction is predicted by moving with relatives or friends, or by the fact that relatives/friends welcomed them in the host country.

Permanent residents are less at risk of negative changes in comparison with liquid migrants and transnationals, but at the same time a similar effect is observed with multiple relocations. Those who have lived abroad for a relatively shorter period are less likely to experience a drop in satisfaction.

Variables such as education level, changes in employment status, household composition, which are statistically significantly correlated with changes in satisfaction levels, lose their significance in the final model when controlled for other variables.

***Table 1 Factors affecting changes in satisfaction level: logistic regression results***

*(created by the author)*

	<b>Model 1</b> Increase in satisfaction level		<b>Model 2</b> Decrease in satisfaction level	
	B	Exp(B)	B	Exp(B)
<b>Gender:</b> female	-0.057	0.944	-0.886*	0.412
<b>Age</b> (scale)	0.040***	1.041	-0.067***	0.935
<b>Level of education:</b> Ref.: Primary education, incomplete secondary				
General upper secondary	1.462	4.317	0.378	1.459

	Model 1 Increase in satisfaction level		Model 2 Decrease in satisfaction level	
	B	Exp(B)	B	Exp(B)
Secondary vocational	0.891	2.437	0.482	1.619
Higher	0.322	1.380	1.028	2.797
Change in education: higher level of education attained	0.391	1.479	-0.331	0.718
<b>Health:</b> good or very good	-0.801	0.449	0.321	1.379
<b>Changes in household composition:</b> Ref.: no changes				
Lived with family, started living alone / started living with strangers	-0.612	0.542	0.000	1.000
Lived with parents / friends, started living alone	0.621	1.861	-0.522	0.593
Started living with family/ partner/ children	1.706**	5.507	-1.750**	0.174
<b>Place of residence:</b> Refr.: rural area				
Metropolis, capital city	3.214***	24.880	-3.293***	0.037
Other large city	2.052***	7.786	-2.003**	0.135
Small town	1.277	3.584	-1.405	0.245
<b>Change of place of residence:</b> Ref.: No changes				
Moved from a bigger city to a smaller one or to countryside	1.494	4.454	-1.727**	0.178
Moved from a smaller town/ rural area to a larger city	0.600**	1.822	-1.303**	0.272
Living conditions: in own house or apartment	0.675	1.965	-0.437	0.646
Employment status: business owner or employed	1.060*	2.885	-1.640**	0.194
<b>Change of employment status</b> Ref.: No changes				
Transition from entrepreneurship or employee to unemployment	1.306	3.693	-0.837	0.433
Transition from employment to study, maternity leave	-0.758	0.469	0.270	1.309
Transition from unemployment to paid work/ entrepreneurship	0.112	1.118	0.369	1.446
<b>Changes in material wealth ("make ends meet")</b> Ref.: No changes				
Material situation worsened	-1.424**	0.241	1.041**	2.831
Material situation improved	0.846*	2.330	-1.102*	0.332
Birth of a child or child joins the family	0.954**	2.596	0.234	1.264
<b>Partnership</b> Ref.: No partner/husband				
Live-in Latvian or Russian partner	1.302**	3.675	-1.607**	0.200
Partner/husband in Latvia	1.613**	5.020	-1.126	0.324
Partner of foreign nationality	1.132*	3.100	-1.374**	0.253
<b>Marital status</b> Ref. Single, no partner				
Married, registered civil partnership	-0.095	0.909	-0.768	0.464
Living in an unregistered partnership	0.567	1.764	-0.647	0.523
<b>Reasons for emigration (factors)</b>				
Socio push factors	1.319**	3.739	-1.910***	0.148
Socio pull factors	-0.769	0.463	1.585***	4.879
Economic factors	0.056	1.057	-0.158	0.854
Human capital factors (world knowledge, education)	-0.977	0.376	1.388**	4.008
Family factors	2.207***	9.087	0.054	1.056
Other personal factors	0.205	1.227	0.857	2.357

	Model 1 Increase in satisfaction level		Model 2 Decrease in satisfaction level	
	B	Exp(B)	B	Exp(B)
<b>With whom emigrated /</b> Who greeted emigrant in the host country Ref.: Emigrated by themselves				
With spouse/ children/ one's parents	-0.122	0.885	0.275	1.316
With relatives/ friends	-2.170***	0.114	2.063***	7.872
<b>Total time spent in emigration:</b> Ref.: More than 15 years				
Up to 5 years	-0.224	0.799	-0.371*	0.690
6-10 years	1.969***	7.167	-1.071*	0.343
11-15 years	1.465***	4.327	-1.257**	0.284
<b>How many times migrated from one country to another since 2014</b> Ref.: none				
One	-0.974	0.378	1,500*	4,484
Twice and more	2.588***	13.299	-3,067***	0,047
<b>Emigrant group:</b> living permanently in host country				
Constant	-0.043	0.958	-1,057*	0,347
	-8.515	0.000	9,156	9472,596
Nagelkerke R Square	0.591		0.595	

\*\*\*  $p < 0,001$ , \*\*  $p < 0,01$ , \*  $p < 0,05$

## Conclusions and discussion

While appreciating the invaluable role of longitudinal data in the analysis of the given problem (besides being the first and so far, the only data of this kind on the Latvian emigrant community), the analysis also allowed us to realise the limitations of these data. Longitudinal methods, which focus on observation of the same objects over a long period of time, involve the collection of data in a format whereby recording of the timing of the most important events in a person's life and incorporating the method of life event history analysis, ultimately the processual nature of the "flow" of life is reconstructed (Allison, 1984; Mayer & Tuma, 1990). In SWB research, such data would be needed to explain the relative stability of SWB over a long period of time and, at the same time, the impact of different events, such as changes in marital, employment status etc., on changes in life satisfaction. The Latvian Emigrant Community Survey does not provide such a data format due to both the reach of the target group and the survey format (web). Therefore, certain life events or changes in status, the impact of which was tested on satisfaction in the proposed model, are based on estimated variables (comparison of two statuses between waves), which could affect both the significance of this factor in the model and its interpretability. However, despite these shortcomings, the analysis identified factors that influence the subjective well-being of migrants.

Testing the competing hypotheses about effects of time spent in emigration on changes in SWB, our results did not support the more common assumption, that the longer migrants live in the host country, integrating into the labour market, learning the language of the host country, the easier their lives will become. Our

study shows that emigrants tend to report an improvement in life and an increase in satisfaction following emigration (Hagerty, 2003), but after the initial increase in SWB, satisfaction declines. Time spent in the host country has a negative correlation with both current satisfaction and increase in satisfaction between the two waves of the survey. This is in line with the findings of other researchers who suggest that as time passes, the emigrant's standard of living rises and they compare themselves to the local population, their expectations and demands also increase, which may reduce satisfaction levels (Scitovsky, 1992).

Somewhat surprising is the effect of age, which suggests that the satisfaction increases and likelihood of experiencing negative changes in SWB levels declines with increasing age. Even more – General Health Questionnaire GHQ-12 (included as a module in the emigrant survey) also showed a similar and unexpected effect of age: the risk of psychoemotional health problems decreases significantly with increasing age (unpublished estimates).

Many studies have found that higher levels of education as well as better health are associated with higher levels of well-being (Yang, 2008). Our analyses show that the effect of educational level, good health in both models becomes insignificant when controlling for other variables.

Cities offer people much better job opportunities, higher wages, better opportunities to study, access to culture, etc. (Combes et al., 2008; Glaeser & Resseger, 2010). The hypothesis of an increase in SWB for rural - urban migrants is supported, as well as living in a city, and in particular in the capital, has a highly significant correlation with an increase in satisfaction.

Comparison of the two waves of the study shows that satisfaction with family life is one of the most sensitive domains. Controlling for other variables, a stable partnership, living with a partner/spouse, having a child/joining family in the host country, shows a positive association with an increase in satisfaction.

Our data confirm the relationship between emigration patterns and migrants' SWB after emigration already found in previous migration studies (Bryant & Merwood, 2008). Controlling for other variables, economic factors lose importance in the final models, while a set of social factors retains significance and leads to both positive and negative changes. A lower sense of satisfaction is characteristic of those emigrants who have left with the aim to study, see the world, while family reasons, which include emigration with a partner, cohabitation/marriage with a foreigner, significantly predict an increase in satisfaction.

As already noted, SWB research to date suggests that critical life events have short-term and transitory effects on happiness and satisfaction; longitudinal data are needed to assess migration processes and their impact on people's lives, and in particular the causal links between this impact. Only by following migrants' life trajectories and changes in SWB can data be obtained to test alternative theories concerning SWB stability or change. Therefore, it would be necessary to not only

undertake new studies, but to continue this unique study of the Latvian emigrant community.

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