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Nowhere Better Than Here?
The Subjective Well-Being of German Emigrants and Remigrants

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Abstract: The paper investigates in the question if and how the subjective well-being (SWB) of German emigrants, German non-migrants, and German remigrants differ. Based on regression analyses of data from the European Social Survey (ESS) the analyses focus on life satisfaction and happiness as main indicators of SWB. It turns out that German emigrants show increased SWB compared to German non-migrants or remigrants. However, these findings cannot be explained by differences in the socio-economic or socio-demographic group structure. In fact, the increased SWB of emigrants is much more an effect of psychosocial differences and differences in the individual evaluation of household income.

Keywords: Life-satisfaction · Well-being · Emigration · Remigration

1 Introduction

Considering the not only quantitatively but also culturally significant immigration to Germany in the second half of the 20th century in particular, until the recent past the phenomenon of emigration from Germany appeared to be neither an issue in public debate nor in migration research. If at all, the term "emigrant" was mainly associated with the cliché of the "dropout" seeking new or apparently old freedoms, preferably in climatically pleasant regions of the world, beyond the confines of the modern working society. Not until after the most recent economic crises and mainly in the face of yet high unemployment rates has the issue of emigration again become more the focus of the public, politics, and science since the mid-1990s. Additionally, interest in emigration from Germany has lately increased due to the growing understanding of migration as an uncompleted and at least partly transnational process of mobility (*Pries* 1996; 2007).

Unlike the analysis of immigration, as yet there are only a few studies dealing with emigration from Germany. Most of these studies examine the re-migration of

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immigrants to their former homelands (cf. e.g. *Jankowitsch et al.* 2000; *Constant/Massey* 2003). With regard to the emigration of Germans, there is hardly any scientifically valid data apart from anecdotal evidence and individual case descriptions in the media (cf. e.g. *Preuß* 2009; *Heinrich* 2010). Furthermore there is hardly any information on the living conditions of emigrants from Germany after their arrival in their new home – aside from television soaps such as "Good Bye Germany" or "Auf und davon" [up and away]. The number of research works dealing with the phenomenon of German emigration is growing only gradually. These works first were limited to mainly aggregated migration data in the official statistics, which were then supplemented by non-representative quantitative and qualitative studies of specific emigrant groups, in particular highly skilled workers (cf. *Enders/Bornmann* 2002; *Mohr* 2002; *Diehl/Dixon* 2005). Representative analyses based on large individual datasets remain rare and can be counted on the fingers of one hand. Prominent studies are those of *Schupp et al.* (2005) and *Erlinghagen et al.* (2009), who analysed the social structure of German emigrants on the basis of the data of the German Socio-Economic Panel (GSOEP). There is also an extensive study by *Ette/Sauer* (2010), who examined the socio-economic characteristics of Germans living abroad in particular on the basis of the European Labour Force Survey.[1]

While *Ette/Sauer* (2010) focus mainly on the earning situation of German emigrants, so far – with the exception of a small GSOEP pilot study (*Schupp et al.* 2008; *Erlinghagen/Stegmann* 2009) based on a few individual cases – no studies have examined the subjective well-being of emigrants in their new domicile. If we understand individuals as (bounded) rational actors who try to maximise their subjective expected utility, it would be particularly interesting to learn the extent to which the search for a "better life" assumedly associated with emigration was successful. This article takes this up by aiming to compare the subjective well-being of German emigrants, German non-migrants, and German remigrants. The chief aspects of subjective well-being in this context examine subjective general life satisfaction and happiness. The explanations begin in Section 2 with the theoretical background of the following analysis, an outline of the state of research and the wording of the research questions to be examined in the following. Section 3 presents the study's data basis and explains the analysis strategy before the results of the analysis are presented in Section 4. The article closes with a summarising conclusion (Section 5).

[1] There are also a few studies on the emigration willingness of migrants (cf. e.g. *Haug* 2001) or Germans (cf. e.g. *Diehl et al.* 2008). However, we must keep in mind that ensuing actual migration movements can only be conditionally predicted on the basis of expressed migration intentions for a number of reasons.

2 Theoretical background and state of research

2.1 Reasons for emigration

Emigration is not a monocausal process and the reasons that people leave their homeland can be highly different and diverse. In addition to personal reasons, for example, unemployment in the native country or a better job market abroad, the economic, social and political situation in the home and host societies also play a chief role. Moreover, the literature draws attention to specific personality traits such as adventurousness, readiness to assume risks, or even an optimistic and confident basic attitude, which can favour emigration (cf. e.g. van *Dalen/Henkens* 2007). Furthermore it is important to stress that emigration decisions should be observed in a family context when possible, in other words emigration can often also be a consequence of the emigration of family members and that therefore in such cases migration is only indirectly a consequence of the living conditions of the "followers" (*Haug* 2000 and *Kalter* 2000 offer an overview of the different migration theory approaches).

In the "classical migration model" (*Braun/Recchi* 2008: 162), migration is the more probable the greater the difference is in the living conditions in the home and host societies. In this respect it is understandable that migration research in highly developed industrial countries such as Germany focus in particular on the causes and consequences of immigration from far poorer regions of Europe and the world that is again increasing in the course of globalisation. Even if the different migration theory approaches are particularly explanatory in these cases, if e.g. the prosperity gap is great or the differences with regard to political liberties are particularly striking, basic assumptions should also apply when explaining emigration from countries with an overall relatively high standard of living (such as Germany) (cf. *van Dalen/Henkens* 2007). *Santacreu et al.* (2009) refer in this context to various personal reasons for emigration, whereby those surveyed repeatedly indicate in addition to vocational and family-related reasons the (aspired for) improvement of quality of life. If we base our assumptions on the premise of the action theory of limited rational actors who base their decisions on expectations (not on knowledge!), who are at the same time embedded in (in the broadest sense) social contexts, and under these preconditions attempt (!) to maximize their benefit (*Lindenberg* 1989; 1990, *Esser* 1999), then we can anticipate that German emigrants also (should) promise themselves an increased benefit from the decision to emigrate, regardless of their personal reasons for migration.

First, we must clarify what we understand as "benefit" or how "benefit" can be empirically measured and operationalised. *Braun/Recchi* (2008), for example, examine the extent to which emigration is linked to social mobility. Moreover, the relevant primary economic research discusses other options for measuring benefits (*Diener/Suh* 1997). While for a long time benefit was frequently equated with income, in economics not least there has increasingly been a departure from such objective indicators and now indicators that illustrate people's subjective assessment of their quality of life (*Frey/Stutzer* 2002) are instead favoured to measure benefits. Here,

various facets of subjective well-being can be considered, whereby in practice in particular the question of subjective general life satisfaction and subjective happiness plays a chief role in research (cf. *Haller/Hadler* 2006) and therefore will be drawn upon in this study to measure subjective well-being.

Regardless of the actual operationalisation of individual benefits, it is clear that the increased benefit supposedly expected from emigration is dependent upon a number of socio-economic and socio-demographic attributes and correspondingly differs among different groups of the population. In other words, emigration is more worthwhile for some people than for others. Theoretically, it is at first unclear what personal, family or social factors systematically enhance the emigration probability for Germans. Empirically, however, it is shown that German emigrants are recruited primarily from younger, well-educated, and unattached persons. Furthermore, there are more women than men among the emigrants. Also, there is increased emigration probability both among executives and among the unemployed (*Erlinghagen et al.* 2009). Moreover, the great majority of German emigrants move to other highly developed industrial nations. Frequently, these are directly neighbouring states (in particular Switzerland and Austria), but also the United Kingdom and the classical emigration country of the USA are the goal of German emigrants relatively frequently (*Erlinghagen/Stegmann* 2009). In their extensive study, *Ette/Sauer* (2010) furthermore point out that for Germans in most cases emigration is merely a limited episode in their life course and that therefore there is a considerable amount of re-migration. The group of remigrants is also chiefly made up of younger and highly qualified individuals.

It is *not* the primary aim of this essay to explain socio-structural differences in the composition of the emigration or re-migration populations (cf. in particular Chapter 2 in *Ette/Sauer* 2010; *Erlinghagen et al.* 2009; *Braun/Recchi* 2008). Here it is only important to ascertain that German emigrants and remigrants are a selective group. Hence, if we would wish to compare the subjective well-being of German emigrants and remigrants with that of German non-migrants, this selectivity would have to be correspondingly taken into consideration in the empirical analysis. This is important in particular because the relevant research has shown that the subjective assessment of one's own quality of life is systematically influenced by fundamental personal, family, and context-dependent factors.

2.2 Determinants of subjective well-being

A large number of studies find a correlation between age and subjective well-being – however with inconsistent findings (cf. *Brockmann* 2010). If we at first do not consider familial, health, and economic circumstances, there is an inverted U-shaped correlation and in particular people of middle age appear to have the highest quality of life (cf. e.g. *Easterlin* 2006). However, if we consider influencing factors such as family and health there is instead a U-shaped correlation, i.e. young and older people show greater well-being than middle-aged people (cf. e.g. *Blachflower/Oswald* 2008). *Yang* (2008) and *Brockmann* (2010) additionally refer to cohort effects. Consequently, we can assume distinct interactions between age, life course, and

subjective well-being. Familial events in particular (marriage, birth of children, separation) and state of health have a distinct influence on subjective quality of life (*Plagnol* 2010 offers a detailed overview of the literature).

Gender differences with regard to subjective well-being are seen in particular in the differing significance of different factors influencing quality of life. For example, employment status: "In the overall population, men's happiness is significantly dependent on employment status. Compared to those who are not employed, nearly any other employment status makes men happier, higher ranked positions do in particular. […] In contrast, West German women report no significant emotional benefit from any engagement in the labour market" (*Brockmann* 2010: 34). Accordingly, unemployment has a distinctly negative influence on the well-being of men (*Winkelmann/Winkelmann* 1998), while this is comparatively less important for women (*Lucas et al.* 2004). Independent of gender, *Lucas et al.* (2004) also reveal that unemployment lowers the quality of life for the long term even if the individuals have found a new job.

In addition, the endowment with resources (financial capital, human capital, social capital) is significant. Not surprisingly, wealthier individuals are in fact more satisfied with their lives (cf. e.g. *Blanchflower/Oswald* 2004; *Shields/Wheatley Price* 2005). However, there is no linear correlation between income growth and subjective well-being, but from a specific income level no further growth in quality of life is observed (cf. e.g. *Frey/Stutzer* 2002: 409-410). Rather there are indications that it is not the absolute income level or absolute income growth that have a positive effect on well-being, but that positive effects then result when an advantageous or better income status is achieved compared with other individuals (cf. e.g. *Clark et al*. 2008). The correlation between well-being and educational level appears to be unclear. Some authors find a positive correlation between skills and well-being, others in turn prove no or even a significantly negative correlation (for a brief overview cf. *Dolan et al.* 2008: 99-100). Furthermore, it has been shown that social capital in the form of involvement in social networks is also accompanied by increased well-being (cf. e.g. *Bjornskov* 2003).

Finally, there are distinct indications of context-related influences through cultural factors and institutional circumstances. For example, there are clear national differences observed with regard to the social extent of subjective well-being (cf. e.g. *Borooah* 2006). Causes for these differences may lie, for one, in the actual economic, political, and social circumstances of the people. *Haller/Hadler* (2006) refer in particular to the fact that subjective well-being rises in societies with relatively equal income distribution, a functional democracy, and a well-structured social welfare state (cf. also *Veenhoven* 2009). In addition to such institutional influences, cultural factors must also be taken into consideration. It seems very dubious whether there are actually nations that are fundamentally happier or more satisfied than others (cf. *Haller/Hadler* 2006: 174-175). However, it seems plausible that national differences with regard to the extent of subjective well-being may well be related to a culturally different way in which emotions are dealt with or expressed: "A substantive explanation for differences between nations in SWB [subjective well-being] is that cultures may differ in the norms regulating the momentary experience of

emotions" (*Diener et al.* 1995). In assessing international comparisons of subjective well-being this basic problem in social research of the international comparability of survey responses must be taken into consideration accordingly (cf. for example *Johnson et al.* 2005).

2.3 The subjective well-being of emigrants and remigrants

Up to now there have been comparatively few research works dealing with the subjective well-being of migrants. The great majority of these analyses examine the extent of and the influencing factors on the well-being of migrants either within a group of immigrants itself (cf. *Neto* 1995; *Amit/Litwin* 2010) or in a comparison with the domestic population in the host country (*Verkuyten* 2008; *Safi* 2010), whereby the latter reveal that immigrants exhibit generally lesser well-being.

According to our state of knowledge, there is only one study that examined the correlation between subjective general satisfaction and emigration. *Erlinghagen et al.* (2009) were able to show that emigrants from Germany exhibited no greater general dissatisfaction and also no greater dissatisfaction with their household income than German non-emigrants. And, with regard to changes in general life satisfaction *after* emigration, there is – as far as we know – also only one finding, which, however, is based on the non-representative data of the GSOEP pilot study mentioned above. In it, the levels of satisfaction indicated by the GSOEP participants before their emigration were compared with the results of the follow-up survey following their emigration. It showed that the general satisfaction of 20 of the 32 emigrants surveyed (hence about 62 %) increased, while it remained the same among seven persons (22 %). Only five emigrants (16 %) indicated a lower rate of general life satisfaction (cf. *Erlinghagen/Stegmann* 2009: 21). Therefore, what is lacking to date is a comparison of the subjective well-being of non-migrants with emigrating or re-migrating fellow nationals. This paper intends to make an initial contribution to this.

3 Data and methods

3.1 Fundamental methodological problems in surveying emigrants

Quantitative empirical analyses of emigrants are faced with special methodological challenges. It is less problematic that migration, as other social phenomena, is a process. In other words, not solely the singular event of crossing a border is of significance for researching migration, but the interest actually refers, firstly, to the developments leading to the migration event and, secondly, to the events following this singular migration event in the life course of the migrants. Mapping such life course processes has always been the source of methodological problems in empirical social research. However, panel studies now conducted for many years offer the opportunity to map and study the processes of a large number of interesting social phenomena, surely first and foremost the German Socio-Economic Panel (GSOEP) (*Wagner et al.* 2007). Nonetheless, the range of such panel data is restrict-

ed not only chronologically due to the respective survey periods, but also spatially by the boundaries of national states. This national restrictedness can be explained in the context of the generation of such data. The objective of population surveys was and is primarily to provide representative information for *one* society, which can still be spatially described quite well (in spite of increasing internationalisation and globalisation) by means of national borders.

For most questions in the social sciences, this national restrictedness is, for the rest, relatively unproblematic, since certain research issues are meant to be explored only in the institutional and social context of a single, specific society anyway. An international comparison is not fundamentally prevented by nationally restricted survey data, since harmonisation is possible, thus allowing for comparisons. Yet, the data situation is particularly dissatisfactory for migration research, since the theoretically well-substantiable processes of the migration occurrence can commonly not be mapped continuously. Using panel data, emigrants from a home society can only be "followed" until the emigration event, since they then leave the geographical observation region of the national panel. Conversely, immigrants do not enter the methodological sights of national surveys until they cross the border.

Due to this assessment problem, migration research consequently is faced with the problem that it cannot map the complete life courses of migrants. Although it is basically possible for a national panel to continue to survey emigrating respondents in their new domicile, a pilot study based on the GSOEP data has also shown that follow-up surveys of emigrated panel members is highly problematic and as yet hold little promise of success (cf. *Schupp et al.* 2008). Therefore, retrospective surveys are one suitable means to nonetheless study the effects of the "emigration" event on the individual life course. This pathway was taken by the PIONEUR project, a project funded within the EU and considered innovative in a variety of respects (cf. *Rother* 2005). In order to analyse the living conditions of emigrants, separate samples were drawn in Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, and Spain with immigrants from these very countries and compared with the populations of both the home and the host society (cf. e.g. *Braun/Recchi* 2008). Also, in the recent past initial studies have begun to make use of internationally harmonised cross-sectional surveys in order to identify emigrants in their host society and compare this group either with emigrants in other countries (*Geis et al*. 2011) or with respondents left behind in the home society (*Ette/Sauer* 2010). While *Ette/Sauer* (2010) make use of data from the European Labour Force Survey, *Geis et al.* (2011) work with national datasets, which they harmonise themselves for their own purposes. Given the lack of uncensored panel data, this procedure is quite adequate. Nonetheless, we must assume two fundamental methodological problems when using this strategy in particular, which lead to coverage problems of immigrants in national surveys and therefore also had to be considered in this study:

Undercoverage of emigrants – There is a danger that emigrant populations are not sufficiently covered even during sampling. The extent to which this problem of undercoverage occurs (cf. in general *Biemer/Lyberg* 2003: 63-64; *Groves et al.* 2004: 54-55; *Lohr* 2008) depends decisively on the procedure taken for sampling. Some sampling for surveys is based, for example, on voter registrations in which,

of course, only those persons are listed who possess voting rights. Depending on voting law, this is probably only limited in the case of emigrants. Another sampling strategy is based on addresses found in telephone directories. Here, as well, emigrants would probably only appear after a while and thus be undercovered (cf. *van Goor/Rispens* 2004).

Non-response of emigrants – Non-response problems (cf. in general *Schnell* 1997; *Biemer/Lyberg* 2003: 63-64; *Lynn* 2008; *Haunberger* 2011) would occur primarily because internationally harmonised surveys are conducted in the national languages of the respective survey countries. In this respect, participation in the survey requires considerable knowledge of the national language (cf. *Feskens et al.* 2006; *Deding et al.* 2008). We can therefore assume that in internationally harmonised surveys mainly those emigrants are underrepresented who recently entered the country. In the scope of the PIONEUR project mentioned above, not only were bilingual questionnaires used for surveying emigrants, but also interviewers who speak the languages of the home and the host society (*Santacreu Fernandez et al.* 2006: 87).

Due to undercoverage and non-response problems, foreigners or immigrants are frequently underrepresented in national population surveys (cf. *Blohm/Diehl* 2001; *Rendall et al.* 2003). We can therefore also assume that only a selective number of German emigrants are covered in foreign surveys.[2] In the description of the analysis strategy applied further on (Section 3.3), we will explain how this problem can be dealt with in the analyses to be carried out.

3.2 Data basis

The European Social Survey (ESS) served as the data basis for the following analyses. The ESS is a survey funded together by the European Commission, the European Science Foundation (ESF) and national research funding institutions. The survey has been conducted regularly every two years since 2002. At time of the analyses, four waves were available for evaluation (2002, 2004, 2006, and 2008). It is important to note that the ESS is not a longitudinal, but a repeated cross-sectional survey and that new representative samples are drawn for the individual countries in each wave. The core of the participating countries is represented in all waves, but there are also countries that have only taken part in single waves. The number of participating countries thus deviates from wave to wave. With the exception of some country-specific questions, the interview sheet primarily consists of a number of

[2] Another fundamental problem is how long a person must have lived abroad to actually describe them as an "emigrant." Since a chronological definition is problematic, emigration is commonly considered the case when the person has shifted their focus of life abroad. In the following, we assume that this is given when Germans abroad occur in the respective population samples and therefore also as respondents in the ESS and are therefore understood in the further course as "emigrants." Moreover, it was discovered that far more than 80 % of the German ESS participants surveyed abroad lived longer than five years and almost 60 % even 20 years or longer abroad (cf. Table 2 below). Against the background of the sampling and the actual duration of stay, we can continue quite confidently to speak of "emigrants."

modules that are uniform in all countries. Two of these modules form the solid 'core' of the survey, that is, these modules were used in all survey waves (core modules). The other modules are variable and have had different content in the survey waves conducted so far (rotating modules) (cf. *Stoop et al.* 2010; detailed information can also be found at www.europeansocialsurvey.com).

A pooled dataset from all four available ESS waves was used to increase the number of cases of available German emigrants in the dataset, whereby understandably only information from the core modules surveyed in all of the waves could be used. In the following, we define German emigrants as survey respondents who did not live in Germany at the time of the survey and who possess German citizenship or were born in Germany. A more restricted definition of German emigrants as only those who live abroad and were both born in Germany and possess German citizenship was not implementable since no citizenship information is available in the ESS for a large number of persons living abroad and born in Germany. We know only that they do *not* possess citizenship of the emigration country. This means that this also covers a certain number of persons as emigrants who were born in Germany as the second immigrant generation. However, this does not appear unduly problematical for our study purpose since it deals with the correlation between leaving the home country of Germany and for such a classification there is no basic difference between people who were born here with and without foreign roots.

Using this method, we were able to identify 1,010 German emigrants in 24 ESS countries. The largest group by far reside in Switzerland (311 emigrants), followed by Austria (126), Luxembourg (74), Greece (65), the Netherlands (57), and the United Kingdom (56). Cyprus and the Czech Republic are at the bottom end of the list, where only one German emigrant each is contained in the ESS data (Table 1).

Two factors must be considered here. For one, using the data of the ESS means that only those emigrants are covered in countries that take part in the ESS and consequently important host countries such as the USA, Canada, and Australia cannot be included. The second is that there are deviations with regard to the quantitative significance of emigration compared with the information on host countries recorded by the Statistische Bundesamt (cf. relevant figures in *Erlinghagen*/*Stegmann* 2009: 12) or also by international bodies such as EUROSTAT (cf. for more information *Herm* 2008). It appears that emigrants to Greece and Luxembourg are overrepresented in the ESS dataset used here, while emigrants in Turkey, France, and Spain are undercovered. This can be a result of the deviating coverage problems in each country (cf. explanation on "undercoverage" and "non-response" above) for the national ESS surveys in those countries. Moreover, the data from the official German statistics are not unproblematic since they can only record such emigrations according to the host countries if the migrants properly give notice of departure with their registration office according to German registration law and thereby the host country is also effectively recorded. Similar haziness possibly also occurs with regard to the registration of the number of German immigrants by overseas statistical offices. In addition, the ESS data used here refers only to adult individuals, while the number of German emigrants recorded by the official statistics commonly also includes children. In this respect there are a variety of methodological reasons for

Tab. 1: Number of the German emigrants identified in the ESS in the respective survey countries and percentage among all identified German emigrants

	N	Percentage		N	Percentage
Switzerland	311	30.8	Norway	21	2.1
Austria	126	12.5	Ireland	19	1.9
Luxembourg	74	7.3	Spain	15	1.5
Greece	65	6.4	Portugal	10	1.0
Netherlands	57	5.6	Russia	8	0.8
United Kingdom	56	5.5	Turkey	7	0.7
Sweden	42	4.2	Ukraine	7	0.7
Poland	35	3.5	Italy	6	0.6
Denmark	30	3.0	Estonia	5	0.5
Belgium	29	2.9	Finland	5	0.5
France	28	2.8	Hungary	3	0.3
Israel	27	2.7	Cyprus	1	0.1
Slovenia	22	2.2	Czech Republic	1	0.1
			Total	1,010	100

Source: ESS 2002-2008 (own calculations)

these deviations sometimes observed between the ESS data used here and the data from the official statistics.

Hence, when we speak of "emigrants" in the following, we are always referring to people living abroad at the time of the survey who originally came from Germany. Consequently all relevant assertions are not based in the present occurrence of emigration, but always on persons a great number of whom have lived for many years or even decades abroad. Under this assumption, we have broken down emigrants in the following into three groups according to their time spent abroad so far (Table 2). We differentiate between emigrants who have lived abroad for a maximum of five years (150 cases), emigrants who have lived abroad for between six and twenty years (264 cases), and emigrants who left Germany over 20 years ago (596 cases). The following analyses compare this emigrant population with Germans who have remained in Germany, who were both born in Germany and possess German citizenship. Under these conditions, we have data for 10,122 Germans in Germany. The third group of persons, finally, are German remigrants who are compared both with the emigrants and with the non-migrants. We understand remigrants to be persons born in Germany with German citizenship who are living in Germany at the time of the survey, but indicate in the ESS that they have worked for at least six months

Tab. 2: Number and percentage of non-migrants, emigrants, and re-migrants in the dataset

	N	Percentage in dataset
Non-migrants	10,122	89.3 %
Re-migrants	202	1.8 %
Emigrants	1,010	8.9 %
of which:		Percentage of emigrants
0-5 years abroad	150	14.9 %
6-20 years abroad	264	26.1 %
More than 20 years abroad	596	59.0 %

Source: ESS 2002-2008 (own calculations)

abroad in the previous 10 years. Under this condition, we could identify 202 persons as remigrants.[3]

3.3 Analysis strategy

The analyses first begin by estimating various binary logistical regression models (cf. *Hosmer/Lemeshow* 2000) in order to analyse the primary socio-structural differences between emigrants, remigrants, and non-migrants. This is then followed by the actual analyses of the subjective well-being of German emigrants and remigrants. Subjective general life satisfaction and subjective happiness are primarily used as indicators in the international research of subjective well-being (cf. *Haller/Hadler* 2006). Both are also measured in the four available ESS waves with the following questions:

> All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole nowadays?
> Taking all things together, how happy would you say you are?

The respondents assess their general satisfaction and happiness on an eleven-figure scale, whereby zero means entirely dissatisfied or unhappy and 10 means entirely satisfied or happy. Multivariate regression analyses are a good strategy for examining the correlation between non-migration, emigration, or re-migration on these two indicators using further control variables. In the relevant research literature, both ordered logit or probit regressions and Ordinary Least Square (OLS) regressions are used for this purpose. Corresponding method comparisons consistently find, however "that assuming cardinality or ordinality of the answers to gen-

[3] In the ESS, re-migrants can only be identified to a limited extent, since the relevant question about longer stays abroad (longer than six months) during the past 10 years is only asked of those participants who were gainfully employed at least once in their lives.

eral satisfaction questions is relatively unimportant to results" (*Ferrer-i-Carbonell*/*Frijters* 2004: 655; cf. also *Studer*/*Winkelmann* 2011). In the following, we examined general life satisfaction and happiness using multivariate OLS regressions.

The regression analyses are used to examine the extent to which emigrants and remigrants systematically differ in comparison to non-migrant Germans with regard to subjective happiness and general life satisfaction. A number of relevant factors (cf. Section 2) are used as control variables in the following regression models to take both the selectivity of emigration and re-migration and important general determinants of subjective well-being into account. In addition to gender, also age and squared age are used as socio-demographic variables. Socioeconomic status is recorded using the educational level (years of full-time education) and employment status. Others are household status (single vs. with partner; children vs. no children in the household), frequency of contacts with friends, and subjective health. Differences in attitudes and convictions are recorded using the extent of general trustfulness (0 = no trust, 10 = great trust in other people), satisfaction with the democracy in the (host) country (0 = completely dissatisfied, 10 = completely satisfied), and religiousness, which is measured by the frequency of prayer (regularly or frequently vs. rarely or never). Moreover, the assessment of income is used as an explanatory variable, whereby three groups were differentiated: comfortable livelihood with the income, income sufficient for subsistence, and (very) problematical income. To account for economic or political influences, moreover the survey time is used as a control variable. The basic composition of the analysis dataset is contained in Table 3.

In order to counteract the above-described undercoverage and non-response problems, in addition to the analyses of the total dataset, also regressions are estimated that account only for the German emigrants living in Austria and Switzerland and compare them with the German non-migrants and remigrants. Since the ESS questionnaire is provided in the German language in both Austria and Switzerland, the non-responses due to language problems should be of little significance for our study purpose. Nonetheless, undercoverage problems cannot be completely excluded even using this method due to the sampling strategy, in particular in Switzerland. While in Austria a mixed sampling strategy of telephone directory and the random route method should reduce undercoverage problems of immigrant households (in particular in cases of relatively short stay durations), the Swiss ESS sample is drawn only from the national telephone directory (including unlisted numbers and mobile phone connections) (information on the sampling strategy can be found in *ESS* 2011). However, all in all a comparison of the estimation results of the total emigrant population and the emigrant population living in Austria and Switzerland is probably the best-possible strategy under these circumstances to assess possible distortions of the findings based on these methodological problems.

Tab. 3: Descriptive statistics

	Non-migrants		Emigrants		Re-migrants	
	Average/ Percentage	n	Average/ Percentage	n	Average/ Percentage	n
Subjective well-being						
Happiness (0-10)	7.1*	10,086	7.7*	1,008	7.2*	202
General satisfaction (0-10)	6.8*	10,103	7.5*	1,008	6.8*	202
Demographics						
Men	49.3	4,992	41.0	414	69.3	140
Women	50.7	5,130	59.0	596	30.7	62
Age (in years)	48.3*	10,122	49.6*	1,010	42.9*	202
Employment status & education						
Education duration (in years)	13.2	10,122	13.4	1,010	15.6	202
Employed	40.9	4,144	42.0	424	55.5	112
Self-employed	5.8	585	6.8	69	13.9	28
Unemployed	7.0	704	3.6	36	7.4	15
Retired. etc.	26.1	2,641	28.1	284	9.9	20
Non-employed	19.9	2,012	18.9	191	12.9	26
Meet friends						
Never/rarely	18.5	1,875	17.4	176	18.3	37
Regularly	44.9	4,543	39.5	399	40.6	82
Frequently	36.5	3,695	42.7	431	41.1	83
Family						
No partner	38.6	3,905	42.2	426	37.1	75
Has partner	61.4	6,217	57.8	584	62.9	127
No children	67.5	6,828	67.3	680	64.9	131
Has children	32.5	3,294	32.7	330	35.2	71
Subjective health						
Poor/satisfactory	40.2	4,068	25.6	259	22.3	45
(Very) good	59.8	6,054	74.4	751	77.7	157
Attitudes						
General trustfulness (0-10)	4.7*	10,122	5.3*	1,010	5.1*	202
Satisfaction with democracy (0-10)	5.0*	10,122	6.1*	1,010	5.1*	202
Pray: never/rarely	70.7	7,158	56.0	566	75.7	153
Pray: regularly/frequently	29.3	2,964	44.0	444	24.3	49
Assessment of income						
Comfortable	27.2	2,802	43.9	443	36.6	74
Adequate	55.8	5,651	38.3	387	47.0	95
(Very) problematical	15.6	1,583	15.0	151	14.4	29
ESS wave						
2002	26.3	2,663	28.9	292	-	-
2004	24.7	2,497	26.8	271	28.2	57
2006	25.2	2,552	21.5	217	38.1	77
2008	23.8	2,410	22.8	230	33.7	68

* Arithmetic mean (metric variable).

Source: ESS 2002-2008 (own calculations)

4 Results

4.1 Structural differences between non-migrants, emigrants, and remigrants

Table 4 documents the coefficients of the different binary logistical regression estimations, which is initially intended to provide further information about the dif-

ferent structure of the non-migrants, emigrants, and remigrants. We emphasise once more that this study is not (!) an analysis of the present migration occurrence; rather it covers individuals who are presently living abroad and at some point in their lives emigrated from Germany. This study therefore refers to emigrants who (still) live abroad at the time of the survey and whose emigration in many cases took place years or even decades ago. Under these conditions, model 1 compares non-migrants (0) with emigrants (1), whereby model 1a considers all emigrants and model 1b only those Germans living in Austria and Switzerland. Model 2 compares non-migrants (0) with remigrants (1), and model 3 finally compares emigrants (0) with remigrants (1).

This reveals that even when controlling for the other factors, a larger number of women are among the emigrants; however the group of remigrants is dominated by men. This possibly indicates different gender-specific migration motives: perhaps women remain abroad permanently because their emigration is more strongly family-related and they have perhaps followed their (foreign) husbands. Possibly there are so many men among the remigrants because their emigration is more employment-related and therefore to a greater extent was planned from the outset as a limited episode.

For both emigrants and remigrants an inverted U-shaped correlation is recognisable with regard to the ages, i.e. both emigration and re-migration is a phenomenon of people of middle age. Model 3 furthermore shows that there is also an inverted U-shaped age correlation when comparing the remigrants with the emigrants. This is not surprising and reveals that emigration and ensuing re-migration occur in a chronological sequence in the life course and in this respect remigrants tend to be older than emigrants.

It is moreover interesting that there is no difference with regard to the skills of non-migrants and emigrants, however at the same time the remigrants on average are better educated than the emigrants and the Germans who remain at home. This finding is clear proof that emigration from Germany does not lead to a loss of human capital in society as a whole (brain drain), but rather that we can anticipate an increase in human capital (brain gain) by highly qualified returning persons enriched by their experience of living abroad (cf. also the corresponding results in *Ette/Sauer* 2010).

Compared with the total German population, German emigrants are with significantly lesser probability not unemployed, which indicates the strong employment orientation of emigrants. At the same time, there is no notable difference with regard to employment status if we compare remigrants with the total population. However, this also means that remigrants exhibit an increased risk of unemployment in comparison to Germans who remain abroad (model 3). In my opinion, these findings are lesser an indication of problems of remigrants, but underscore in general how successful German emigrants are and that the majority of those who remain abroad have (temporarily) better job opportunities than in their homeland.

With regard to their social involvement, the group of German emigrants manifests a conflicting picture. Compared with non-migrants their probability is higher both to meet friends more frequently and more rarely at the same time. There are

Tab. 4: Coefficients of the binary logistic regressions for the comparison of non-migrants, emigrants, and re-migrants

	Model 1a	Model 1b	Model 2	Model 3
Demographics				
Women (ref.: men)	0.32***	0.51***	-0.55***	-1.02***
	(0.08)	(0.11)	(0.17)	(0.20)
Age	0.03**	0.10***	0.13***	0.11***
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Age^2	-0.00*	-0.00***	-0.00***	-0.00***
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Education & employment status				
Education in years	-0.00	-0.00	0.14***	0.09***
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Employed	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Self-employed	0.13	-0.20	0.60*	0.43
	(0.17)	(0.25)	(0.33)	(0.40)
Unemployed	-0.46**	-0.53	0.44	1.12**
	(0.21)	(0.34)	(0.39)	(0.48)
Retired, etc.	0.17	0.17	0.45	0.05
	(0.15)	(0.21)	(0.41)	(0.45)
Non-employed	-0.26**	-0.49**	0.08	0.41
	(0.13)	(0.20)	(0.34)	(0.38)
Meet friends				
Never/rarely	0.23**	0.06	0.34	-0.14
	(0.10)	(0.16)	(0.21)	(0.26)
Regularly	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Frequently	0.22***	0.22*	0.20	0.07
	(0.08)	(0.12)	(0.17)	(0.20)
Family				
Has partner (ref.: no partner)	-0.26***	-0.50***	0.02	0.45**
	(0.08)	(0.12)	(0.18)	(0.22)
Has children (ref.: no children)	0.10	-0.25*	-0.32*	-0.50**
	(0.08)	(0.13)	(0.18)	(0.22)
Subjective Health				
(Very) good (ref.: poor/satisfactory)	0.69***	1.05***	0.50***	-0.31
	(0.08)	(0.14)	(0.18)	(0.23)
Attitudes				
General trustfulness	0.05***	0.07***	0.01	-0.03
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.04)
Satisfaction with democracy	0.16***	0.29***	-0.03	-0.13***
	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.04)
Prays regularly/frequently	0.51***	0.61***	-0.01	-0.56***
(ref.: never/rarely)	(0.07)	(0.11)	(0.17)	(0.20)
Assessment of income				
Comfortable	0.64***	0.91***	0.26	-0.66***
	(0.08)	(0.11)	(0.17)	(0.21)
Adequate	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
(Very) problematical	0.63***	0.45**	0.17	-0.72**
	(0.11)	(0.19)	(0.24)	(0.28)
Constants	-5.23***	-8.83***	-8.99***	-3.89***
N	11,121	10,506	10,175	1,171
Pseudo-R^2	0.084	0.154	0.111	0.207

Model 1: non-migrants (0), emigrants (1); (1a: all emigrants; 1b: only emigrants in Austria and Switzerland). Model 2: non-migrants (0), re-migrants (1). Model 3: emigrants (0), re-migrants (1).

*** $p < 0.01$ ** $p < .0.05$ * $p <= 0.1$; standard errors in brackets.

All models controlled for ESS wave (results not shown).

Source: ESS 2002-2008 (own calculations)

two possible explanations for this. It is possible that the German emigrant population is polarised, so that some of this group is well integrated and actively maintains social contacts while the other part of this group is more strongly affected by social isolation. However, the more plausible assumption is that this finding uncovers dynamic processes, which cannot be further examined in this analysis. By nature, establishing new social networks takes a certain amount of time, meaning that a time effect is hidden behind the simultaneous isolation and integration in social networks. Correspondingly, the results are then not evidence of polarisation, but should correlate highly with the duration of residence in the new domicile.

Compared with the total German population, emigrants are more often single (cf. also the findings in *Erlinghagen et al.* 2009), while remigrants are more often childless. These findings are clear evidence that the family or household context has a major influence on emigration and re-migration decisions. It would be easier for singles to decide to emigrate, since they need not reach consensus with a partner, whereas having children possibly makes the decision to re-migrate more difficult, because remigration by their parents would mean removing the children from their familiar school surroundings. Moreover both emigrants and remigrants report significantly better health than the total German population, which is not surprising since moving (particularly across national borders) is a physical and psychological burden that can only be undertaken in good health. An inverted causal direction is also imaginable (although rather unlikely), i.e. experience living abroad increases health and well-being (for example, through greater self-confidence).

In addition to the socio-demographic and socio-economic structural differences outlined above, there are furthermore distinct differences observable in individual attitudes. Compared with non-migrants, emigrants have significantly greater general trustfulness in other people, are more satisfied with the democracy in their respective country of residence, and are more religious. All of these correlations are statistically highly significant and indicate the special significance of psychosocial factors in the emigration decision. If we assume that trustfulness and religiousness are long-term behaviours, which formed prior to the decision to emigrate, then these results are evidence that primarily confident and optimistic character traits enable emigration decisions. The fact that additionally the democracy in the new host society is better assessed than the situation in Germany by the total German population could possibly also be evidence of greater optimism in the emigrant population. It may possibly also be a sign that understandably the political events in a foreign land are less critically assessed by immigrants. However, it may be that the status of the democracy in at least some of the countries is simply essentially ("objectively") better than in Germany and in this respect has nothing to do with emigration as such. It is furthermore striking that compared with the emigrants who remain abroad remigrants do not manifest lesser general trustfulness but significantly lesser religiousness. There appears to be further need for research here in future in order to better understand the correlation between religiousness, emigration, and re-migration.

Moreover there are striking differences between emigrants and the total German population with regard to assessment of personal income. Compared with non-

migrants, emigrants not only assess their household income to a greater degree as comfortable, but also report problematic incomes more often. This indicates that emigration is not always successful per se, but can very well also lead (temporarily) to poorer living conditions than may be the case in comparison to Germany.

4.2 The subjective well-being of emigrants and remigrants

The results of the regressions used to determine the determinants of subjective happiness and general life satisfaction are found in Table 5 and Table 6 respectively. Six models were estimated for each, whereby models 1 to 5 use reduced variable sets and model 6a/b (full dataset and emigrants in Austria and Switzerland) include all control variables.[4] The aim of the reduced models is mainly to learn more about the reciprocity between subjective well-being, emigration status, and psychosocial factors by always only adopting single, isolated variables in the model to measure personal attitudes or the assessment of income.

This article is particularly interested in the correlation between emigration/remigration status and subjective well-being, which is why the other explanatory variables take up mainly a control function in the models. Nonetheless, before interpreting the main results, we will take a look at the significance of the control variables in a brief summary. We will look at the findings concerning happiness and general life satisfaction together, since there are hardly any differences in the comparison of the two partial analyses. In summary, we can say that this calculation on the basis of the ESS data largely confirms the chief determinants of subjective well-being (cf. Section 2.2) known from relevant research. Women appear to have greater well-being than men, there is a U-shaped correlation between age and well-being, a higher educational level makes people happier, while unemployment has a negative effect on well-being. Having many friendship contacts, good health, and living in a partnership make people more satisfied and happier, while having children does not lead to any original effect. The assessment of income as comfortable correlates with greater well-being while a problematic financial situation has a negative effect on happiness and life satisfaction. Moreover, religious people tend to feel better, and both trustfulness in other people and satisfaction with the political system increase well-being. In the correlation with psychosocial factors it is furthermore interesting that women in particular show a correlation between well-being and religiousness (cf. in particular model 3). It is also striking that in each of the models 1 to 5 parents have significantly decreased satisfaction or decreased happiness – with the exception of model 4, in which the assessment of income is included. This indicates that the subjective well-being of parents in particular is more highly influenced by their financial situation. The two latter findings in particular of the correlation between

[4] The results of the dataset reduced to emigrants in Austria and Switzerland are very similar to the results achieved on the basis of the whole analysis dataset. This indicates for one that methodological problems such as non-response or undercoverage are in this case negligible. It is also an indication that the 'broad' operationalization chosen for this study of emigrants and the partial coverage of emigrants with migration backgrounds born in Germany do not notably influence the results.

Tab. 5: Coefficients of OLS regressions on subjective happiness

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6a	Model 6b[1]
Emigration & re-migration							
Non-migrants	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Emigrants (<= 5 years)	0.36**	0.34**	0.29*	0.28*	0.19	0.12	0.16
	(0.15)	(0.15)	(0.15)	(0.15)	(0.15)	(0.15)	(0.19)
Emigrants (6-20 years)	0.34***	0.32***	0.30***	0.24**	0.18*	0.12	0.11
	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.15)
Emigrants (> 20 years)	0.44***	0.41***	0.39***	0.43***	0.33***	0.31***	0.42***
	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.11)
Re-migrants	-0.04	-0.04	-0.03	-0.05	-0.03	-0.04	-0.04
	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.12)
Demographics							
Women (ref.: men)	0.08**	0.05	0.08**	0.09**	0.11***	0.10***	0.10***
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.04)
Age	-0.05***	-0.05***	-0.05***	-0.04***	-0.05***	-0.04***	-0.04***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Age^2	0.00***	0.00***	0.00***	0.00***	0.00***	0.00***	0.00***
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Education & employment status							
Education in years	0.05***	0.05***	0.04***	0.03***	0.04***	0.02***	0.02***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Employed	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Self-employed	-0.13	-0.12	-0.10	-0.16**	-0.11	-0.13	-0.12
	(0.08)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.08)
Unemployed	-1.17***	-1.14***	-1.09***	-0.65***	-0.99**	-0.53***	-0.56***
	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.08)
Retired. etc.	-0.12	-0.10	-0.10	-0.04	-0.09	-0.01	0.00
	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)
Non-employed	0.07	0.06	0.05	0.09	0.05	0.05	0.06
	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.07)
Meets friends							
Never/rarely	-0.57***	-0.57***	-0.52***	-0.48***	-0.52***	-0.42***	-0.42***
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)			(0.04)	(0.05)
Regularly	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Frequently	0.23***	0.22***	0.20***	0.21***	0.21***	0.18***	0.18***
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Family							
Has partner (ref.: no partner)	0.97***	0.97***	0.97***	0.81***	0.96***	0.82***	0.84***
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Has children (ref.: no children)	-0.12***	-0.13***	-0.12***	-0.04	-0.12***	-0.04	-0.05
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Subjective Health							
(Very) good (ref.: poor/satisfactory)	0.89***	0.89***	0.83***	0.76***	0.81***	0.67***	0.69***
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Attitudes							
General trustfulness	-	-	0.11***	-	-	0.07***	0.07***
			(0.01)			(0.01)	(0.01)
Satisfaction with democracy	-	-	-	-	0.14***	0.10***	0.10***
					(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Prays: frequently (ref.: never/rarely)	-	0.20***	-	-	-	0.10***	0.11***
		(0.04)				(0.04)	(0.04)
Assessment of income							
Comfortable	-	-	-	0.45***	-	0.35***	0.33***
				(0.04)		(0.04)	(0.04)
Adequate	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
(Very) problematical	-	-	-	-1.05***	-	-0.95***	-0.95***
				(0.05)		(0.05)	(0.05)
Constants	6.50***	6.42***	6.21***	6.69***	5.86***	6.02***	6.07***
N	11,296	11,296	11,296	11,296	11,296	11,296	10,725
R^2	0.176	0.178	0.193	0.227	0.208	0.254	0.254
Adjusted R^2	0.174	0.176	0.191	0.225	0.206	0.252	0.252

[1] Model 6b: only emigrants in Austria and Switzerland.

*** p < 0,01 ** p < 0,05 * p <= 0,1; standard errors in brackets.

All models controlled for ESS wave (results not shown).

Source: ESS 2002-2008 (own calculations)

religiousness, gender, and, happiness/satisfaction and between parenthood, assessment of financial situation and happiness/satisfaction should be more closely examined in future studies.

If we now turn to the underlying question of this study, we first see that without taking psychosocial factors into consideration such as attitudes or the assessment of income (model 1), regardless of their duration of residence, emigrants are happier and more satisfied than non-migrants. If we then insert individual attitude factors in the estimations (models 2 to 5), it becomes clear that there are definitely reciprocal effects between religiousness (model 2), general trustfulness (model 3), and above all the assessment of income (model 4) and the well-being of emigrants. However, the correlation between happiness/satisfaction and emigration always remains highly significant. Not until we control for satisfaction with the democracy in the respective country of residence (model 5), can no more significantly increased levels of happiness and life satisfaction in emigrants be found in comparison to Germans who remain in Germany. The differentiated observation of the influences in particular of psychosocial factors and of attitude parameters shows that emigrants have better well-being than non-migrants, but this better well-being can be explained mainly by a better-assessed personal income and by greater satisfaction with the respective political system.

All in all, we therefore see that with regard to their subjective well-being non-migrants and remigrants basically do not differ (model 6). This is true, however, only with one restriction: if emigrants have already been abroad for a very long time and left their homeland more than 20 years ago, even when controlled for all of the variables integrated in the model, they manifest a greater feeling of happiness and greater general life satisfaction in comparison with Germans who remained in Germany. No significant correlation can be ascertained for rather short to medium-term stays abroad of up to 20 years. The explanation of this finding may be selective remigrations, which extend over a more or less long period of time and where those who are especially well integrated in the host country or are bound to a long-term life abroad remain in the new domicile permanently. In such cases, these are very deliberate decisions, which actually do lead to improved quality of life.

If we return again to the significance of attitudes and psychosocial factors, it was revealed that satisfaction with the democracy in the respective country of residence is an important element for understanding the greater well-being of emigrants. Yet, it is the case that the emigrants covered in the ESS live in very different countries (cf. Table 2) and in this respect it is interesting to question in what host countries the German emigrants are more satisfied with the function of democracy. This is quite conceivable at least for some countries. For example, the German emigrants living in these countries may quite positively assess Switzerland with its direct elements of democracy or Sweden with its well-developed welfare state. But it is hard to conceive the same for Russia, Hungary, or the Ukraine. In order to gain a bit more clarity about this, Figure 1 shows the assessment of satisfaction with the democracy on a scale of eleven (0 to 10). The figures refer to German emigrants in the countries under each column (Switzerland, Luxembourg, Sweden, Austria, the Netherlands, the

Tab. 6: Coefficients of OLS regressions on general satisfaction

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6a	Model 6b[1]
Emigration & re-migration							
Non-migrants	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Emigrants (<= 5 years)	0.49***	0.46**	0.39**	0.36**	0.20	0.09	0.02
	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.17)	(0.17)	(0.16)	(0.21)
Emigrants (6-20 years)	0.37***	0.34***	0.30**	0.20*	0.12	-0.00	0.03
	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.17)
Emigrants (> 20 years)	0.45***	0.40***	0.38***	0.42***	0.27***	0.23***	0.44***
	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.13)
Re-migrants	-0.12	-0.12	-0.12	-0.14	-0.11	-0.13	-0.13
	(0.15)	(0.15)	(0.14)	(0.14)	(0.14)	(0.13)	(0.13)
Demographics							
Women (ref.: men)	0.10**	0.06	0.11***	0.12***	0.15***	0.14***	0.13***
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Age	-0.06***	-0.06***	-0.06***	-0.04***	-0.05***	-0.04***	-0.04***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Age^2	0.00***	0.00***	0.00***	0.00***	0.00***	0.00***	0.00***
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Education & employment status							
Education in years	0.05***	0.05***	0.04***	0.02***	0.04***	0.01	0.01
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Employed	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Self-employed	-0.08	-0.07	-0.04	-0.13	-0.05	-0.09	-0.08
	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.09	(0.09)	(0.09)
Unemployed	-2.05***	-2.00***	-1.94***	-1.23***	-1.79***	-1.04***	-1.08***
	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.09)
Retired. etc.	-0.06	-0.04	-0.04	0.06	-0.01	0.11	0.11
	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.08)
Non-employed	0.14*	0.13*	0.10	0.17**	0.10	0.11	0.10
	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)
Meets friends							
Never/rarely	-0.62***	-0.61***	-0.54***	-0.48***	-0.53***	-0.38***	-0.38***
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.05)
Regularly	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Frequently	0.25***	0.24***	0.21***	0.22***	0.23***	0.18***	0.19***
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Family							
Has partner (ref.: no partner)	0.73***	0.73***	0.72***	0.48***	0.72***	0.49**	0.51***
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Has children (ref.: no children)	-0.15***	-0.16***	-0.14***	-0.01	-0.15***	-0.03	-0.02
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Subjective Health							
(Very) good (ref.: poor/satisfactory)	1.10***	1.10***	1.00***	0.89***	0.97***	0.76***	0.76***
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Attitudes							
General trustfulness	-	-	0.16***	-	-	0.10***	0.10***
			(0.01)			(0.01)	(0.01)
Satisfaction with democracy	-	-	-	-	0.22***	0.15***	0.15***
					(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Prays: frequently (ref.: never/rarely)	-	0.31***	-	-	-	0.16***	0.16***
		(0.04)				(0.04)	(0.04)
Assessment of income							
Comfortable	-	-	-	0.77***	-	0.62***	0.60***
				(0.04)		(0.04)	(0.04)
Adequate	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
(Very) problematical	-	-	-	-1.62***	-	-1.47***	-1.48***
				(0.06)		(0.05)	(0.06)
Constants	6.03***	6.05***	5.66***	6.37***	5.07***	5.33***	5.39***
N	11,313	11,313	11,313	11,313	11,313	11,313	10,742
R^2	0.184	0.188	0.210	0.278	0.238	0.322	0.322
Adjusted R^2	0.182	0.186	0.208	0.276	0.236	0.319	0.320

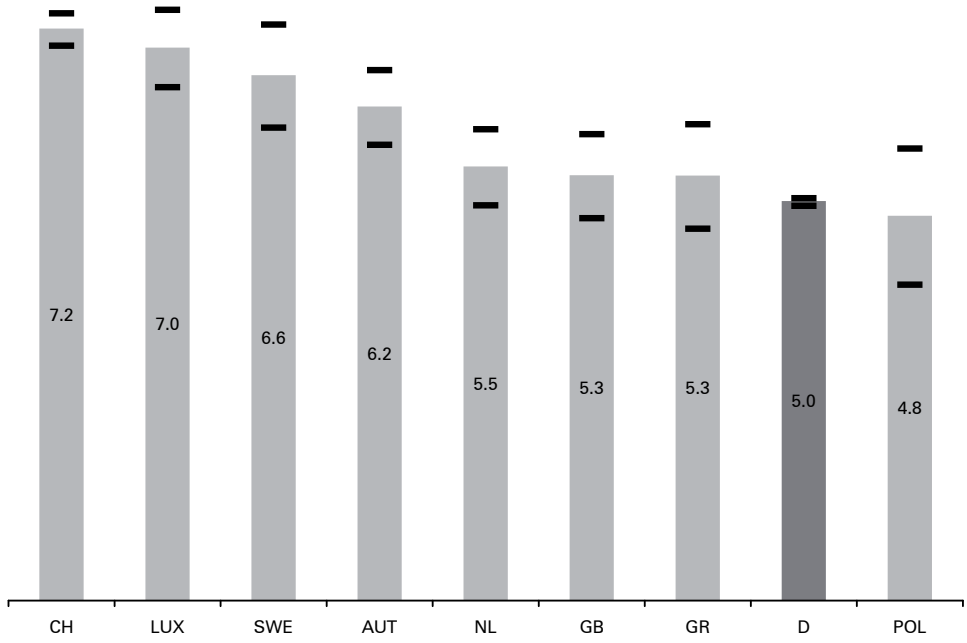
[1] Model 6b: only emigrants in Austria and Switzerland.

*** p < 0,01 ** p < 0,05 * p <= 0,1; standard errors in brackets.

All models controlled for ESS wave (results not shown).

Source: ESS 2002-2008 (own calculations).

Fig. 1: Average satisfaction of German non-migrants / emigrants with the democracy in the respective country



Source: ESS 1-4, own calculations

United Kingdom, Greece, and Poland) and to German non-migrants, who continue to live in Germany.[5] The black crossbars depict the confidence intervals (95 %).

Figure 1 shows that German emigrants in Switzerland assess the political system there most highly at 7.2 on average, followed by Luxembourg (7.0), Sweden (6.6), and Austria (6.2). As the displayed confidence intervals show, these differences are also significant. In the other countries as well (with the exception of Poland), the emigrants assess the function of the democracy on average more positively than Germans living in Germany – however these differences are not significant. These are indications that future studies of the living conditions of emigrants and therefore in that context of the possible influencing factors on re-migration decisions should take the institutional context including the corresponding personal assessment by the emigrants into consideration. Similar questions can be raised with regard to the actual wage situation of Germans abroad, the assessment of income, and subjective

5 This restricted selection of countries is due to the corresponding numbers of cases, since only those countries are taken into account in which more than 30 emigrants could be identified in the ESS dataset.

well-being. However, this is beyond the scope of the questions chosen for this study and can therefore not be taken into consideration here.[6]

5 Summary and concluding remarks

Existing studies have shown that on average, German emigrants are happier and more satisfied than Germans who remain in Germany or German remigrants. This greater sense of well-being is however not due to differences in the socio-demographic or socio-economic structure of the various groups under study. We were able to show that the enhanced subjective well-being of emigrants is related primarily with psychosocial differences or better assessment of their income abroad. The better assessment of the political situation in particular, at least in some of the main emigration countries (e.g. Switzerland, Sweden) has a key role in understanding the positive emotional state of emigrants. If such factors are taken into consideration, there are no more ascertainable differences between non-migrants and emigrants with regard to happiness and life satisfaction. The exception here, however, are those emigrants who left Germany over 20 years ago and, even when considering attitude variables, manifest significantly improved life satisfaction and increased happiness. This may be due to the effects of positive selection, i.e. these are persons who remain abroad for a very long time, feel especially comfortable there, and are well integrated in the host society.

Pertaining to remigrants, there is absolutely no evidence that they differ significantly with regard to happiness or life satisfaction than Germans who remain in their homeland. Since no causal analyses are possible on the basis of the cross-sectional data used here, we can only speculate when interpreting this finding. One the one hand, the remigrants could be failed emigrants who are now happy to be back in their homeland, but this is not expressed in increased levels of satisfaction or happiness, because this relief only compensates the previous reduced well-being while abroad to a "standard measure." On the other hand, these results may indicate that temporary emigration and ensuing re-migration are phases in the life courses of people that appear appropriate under the respective life circumstances, but in comparison to non-migrants are not accompanied by any general increased benefit but also not by any general loss in benefit.

Since no causal analyses are possible based on the ESS data used here, it must ultimately remain uncertain how emigration and subjective well-being are precisely related to one another. Nonetheless, it appears plausible that enhanced well-being actually only arises once one resides abroad and is not due to the fact that generally more satisfied or happier people tend to emigrate. *Erlinghagen et al.* (2009) were

6 On principle it may well be possible to methodologically take into consideration differences with regard to institutional contextual circumstances, e.g. by including the host countries as control variables in the regression model. However, due to the in part very low number of cases in some host countries, this approach did not appear adequate and must therefore be left to future research works.

able to show, for one, that there is no correlation between general satisfaction prior to emigration and the emigration decision. Moreover, the results of *Erlinghagen/Stegmann* (2009) also indicate that the general satisfaction of emigrants tends to increase following their arrival in the new domicile. The particular significance of psychosocial factors in the assessment of life circumstances in the new domicile, finally, indicates that emigrants possibly react especially positively to new impressions and experiences. This, in turn, would mean that emigration per se does not make them happy and satisfied, but that emigrants are the type of people who, due to their personality make-up, are easier to make happy or for whom the challenge of new life circumstances in particular increases their satisfaction.

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