# Aspirations and Happiness of Potential Latin American Immigrants

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## Abstract

*The migration literature shows that Latin American emigrants, in addition to immigrants generally, report lower happiness levels and satisfaction with financial success than natives do in their destination country. We use a survey question from the Latinobarometro on intent to migrate to shed light on attitudes and aspirations prior to migration. We find that potential migrants report the qualities of "frustrated achievers" (e.g. respondents with high objective success in terms of income, but who report low satisfaction with their economic gains) and are less happy than average. Our analysis supports the hypothesis that unhappiness drives migration, while not disproving that migration also creates unhappiness; it is likely that these factors are not mutually exclusive and that they reinforce one another. Our work addresses the broader question of whether unhappiness is a necessary condition for major societal change.*

**Keywords:** Happiness, Migration, Subjective Income, Latin America.

## Introduction

There is a nascent body of literature examining the impact of migration and income on happiness. Several studies show that Latin American emigrants, in addition to immigrants generally, demonstrate lower happiness levels than natives do in their destination country. In trying to explain this finding, researchers have asked whether unhappiness drives migration or whether the results of migrating make people unhappy. A major challenge in answering this question is the difficulty in acquiring and thus the absence of longitudinal data that follow individuals before and after the migration process.

This paper seeks to provide additional insight into the relationship between migration and unhappiness, but in lieu of longitudinal data, we utilize a survey question from the Latinobarometro survey on the intent to migrate to identify attitudes and aspirations prior to migration. Through this analysis, we are taking an initial step to answer the larger theoretical question: is unhappiness necessary to drive progress and major change in a society? Our results suggest this is the case: those that intend to migrate demonstrate the qualities of "frustrated achievers" (e.g. respondents with high objective success in terms of income, but who report low satisfaction with their economic

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gains) and are less happy than average. These findings provide support for the reasoning speculated in the literature as explaining lower happiness levels among Latin American migrants.

## Background: Literature on Happiness, Income and Migration

Attempting to create new linkages outside the happiness economics discipline, researchers began applying a subjective well-being or happiness framework of analysis to the field of migration. Traditional, behavioral economics expected migrants to have higher, or at least not lower than average, utility levels, as people surely would have not made the decision to sacrifice the pleasure of living among their family, friends and country to do something that would make them unhappy.

A wide body of research in happiness economics has demonstrated that income and happiness do not always increase in a linear manner, although there is significant debate about this, even today (Easterlin, 2001; Graham, 2011a). Challenges to the assumption that immigrants are necessarily better off rose from this assumption (Bartram, 2010). Rather, research has consistently demonstrated that immigrants report lower levels of subjective well-being (this term will be used interchangeably with happiness and life satisfaction throughout this paper) compared to natives in their destination country. This finding has held for immigrants across different originating countries.[3]

Bobowik (2011) analyzed happiness levels of immigrants in Europe and found lower happiness across the diverse immigrant population. Knight (2010) looked at internal migration in China and found that rural to urban migrants report lower happiness than both rural and urban households. Safi (2010) demonstrated that the disparity in happiness levels between immigrants and natives persisted even after individuals had spent 20 years in their destination country, and that the lower happiness levels carried over into second generation immigrants. Finally, Bartram (2011) confirmed Safi's findings, demonstrating that immigrants to the U.S. similarly display lower happiness levels than natives.

In light of these findings, the literature has generally been optimistic in suggesting that it is not that potential immigrants are necessarily naïve or irrational in choosing to embark in something to make that ultimately makes them unhappy, but rather there are other forces at work. Knight (2010) and Bartram (2011) posit that when deciding to migrate, potential immigrants miscalculate how their happiness levels will be affected — they do not anticipate their aspirations will rise once they make more money in their new country. The result of this adaptation of aspirations, the authors hypothesize, is an unexpected decline in happiness. The authors also hypothesize and provide some support that immigrants do not anticipate their reference group will adjust to include natives, resulting in lower happiness. Wright (2010) found some support that potential immigrants do not anticipate or appreciate how poor their living conditions will be in the new country and how this will affect them. As is described in Easterlin (2001), people project they will be happier in the future, when they are making more money, but in fact, as they make more money their aspirations adjust upward and they are less happy.

Outside of Easterlin's framework, Bartram (2011) provides some evidence that while, on average, happiness does not increase with income, economic immigrants may be a special case: they derive more happiness from marginal income than people do in general. He posits this special association between income and happiness for certain people may explain why they would immigrate. This finding did not, however, explain why immigrants then still have lower happiness levels overall; Bartram shows that dissatisfaction with one's financial situation largely explained this phenomenon. He also reveals a paradox: immigrants gain greater than average happiness from increased income, and then, perhaps as a result, they are less happy than average because they are frustrated with their income situation.

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[3] For a review of the various terms used in the literature to describe happiness or well-being, and the substantive differences across them, see Graham (2011b).

It is generally agreed that across countries, the very poorest citizens are least likely to migrate (Pellegrino, 2004). Migrating abroad requires a threshold of financial resources that the very poorest individuals cannot afford. Additionally, there is consensus that migration trends vary across countries; however, patterns that relate the trends from one country to another are contested. Connor and Massey (2010) use survey data of immigrants in Spain and the U.S. to understand the relationship between income and migration. The authors found that Latin American immigrants to Spain are more likely to have originated from South America with middle class origins, while immigrants in the U.S. are more likely to be from Central America and Mexico (hereafter referred to as Central America) and come from a lower income class.

Pellegrino (2000) similarly reports that immigrants from Central America that cross to bordering countries demonstrate lower educational attainment than the average in the destination countries and in their country of origin, but that South American immigrants typically have had higher educational levels compared to their peers. Nevertheless, the massive wave of migration from Latin America to the U.S. has resulted in greater diversification of the profile of Latin American immigrants; for example, Mexican emigrants make up the largest immigrant class in the U.S., with many coming from low income backgrounds, but with many also coming from professional ones.

A 2007 OECD report asserted that immigrants from low income countries are primarily high-skilled while emigrants from middle income countries tend to be lower skilled. In contrast, Connor and Massey posit that low-income countries, such as those in Central America, are more likely to export low income, low-skilled labor, while middle income countries, mostly found in South America, are more likely to export moderate to highly-skilled, middle-class labor.

Using a happiness economics framework, several authors have begun reconciling conflicting findings related to income and migration, by not looking at "income" generally and undefined, but rather by breaking down "income" into absolute and relative income measures and exploring the differential effects of these facets of income on happiness. In his 2011 work, Bartram built on the assumption that although immigrants may make more absolute income in their destination country, they are likely to report lower relative income levels, as their "reference group" shifts to include residents of their destination country.

Valencia (2008) similarly found that the willingness to migrate is influenced by both relative deprivation as well as family income, especially the interaction between these two variables. Valencia reported that those families who are most willing to migrate were those who stood to gain the greatest decreases in relative deprivation. Additionally, Wood et al. (2010) researched the impact of being a crime victim on the intent to migrate using multivariate regression analysis. The author reported opposing effects of objective versus subjective income, but he did not offer an explanation as to why this was the case or why he chose to include both income measures.

This paper then builds on that literature by attempting to answer the question of whether unhappiness, particularly unhappiness derived from dissatisfaction with one's financial situation, drives migration, or, if the experience of migrating leads to the lower happiness levels reported by migrants. In answering this question, this paper additionally considers a final hypothesis posited but then refuted by several authors: that lower unhappiness levels among immigrants can be explained by a disposition that is generally less happy, and that immigrants would have been just as unhappy had they remained in their home country. The authors use several methods to try to answer this question of endogeneity regarding happiness and disposition, but without longitudinal data, or at least data that assess the profile of immigrants prior to moving, the results have been inconclusive. We attempt to shed light on this question by looking at those who have yet to move but intend to migrate.

## Data and Methods

### *Data*

This analysis utilizes the Latinobarometro attitudinal survey, which is administered annually in 18 countries in Latin America.[4] The work is primarily limited to the surveys given in the years 2004, 2006, 2007, 2008, and 2009, as the variables of interest to this investigation overlap then. The intent to migrate serves as a proxy for actual migration trends, with the advantage that it allows for the assessment of attitudes *prior* to migration.

Intent to migrate is measured with the question: "Have you and your family ever seriously considered moving abroad?" This variable is labeled *intent*. This question presents several challenges in analyzing actual migration, as well as intent. First, those who answer this question have *not* migrated, and they may never move abroad. This creates a selection problem, in that those individuals who have actually migrated abroad are not included in the survey. The inclusion of the word "seriously" is meant to counter this in order to better gauge those who are most likely to move or consider moving, but it is obviously an imperfect proxy. This limits the conclusions that can be drawn about our findings to those in the sample who have not moved yet, although their direction and consistency (discussed below) suggests that they may be helpful in explaining the differential levels in happiness between migrants and non-migrants in the destination countries.

Additionally, because of the modifier "you *and your family*", those individuals who have considered moving abroad alone, especially single people, may answer this question in the negative (Wood et al., 2010). This could also result in error, as it is common for single people, rather than entire families, to migrate abroad. Finally, another issue is that the very poorest respondents in Central America who have to migrate illegally are probably less likely to honestly report their intent. These potential sources of error suggest caution when drawing conclusions. Nevertheless, the question has been productively used by other authors to analyze migration trends and can offer unique insights into attitudes toward migration (Wood et al., 2010; Cardenas, 2009).

Several survey questions are used to assess "income" and financial satisfaction and their impact on the intent to migrate. The Latinobarometro does not include a question that directly measures the monetary income level of respondents. Thus, in order to measure absolute income the analysis relies on a composite wealth index developed by Wood et al. (2010). The index is a 0-3 score based on three household goods: the presence of hot running water in the respondent's home, ownership of a washing machine and the ownership of a home telephone. This measure is referred to as *wealth.*

Subjective wealth or economic status is measured in three ways. First, relative wealth compared to others is assessed using an economic ladder scale (ELS) question: "Imagine a 10 step ladder, where in '1' stand the poorest people and in '10' stand the richest people. Where would you stand?" This measure is aggregated into three wealth groups: *poor* for ELS scores of 1-3, *middle* for ELS scores of 4-6, and *rich* for ELS scores of 7-10. This allows greater attention to be focused on the middle class, a population with attitudes that have been under scrutiny as the literature argues they are a driver of development (see Frank, Markowitz & Graham, 2011).

The analysis attempts to measure financial satisfaction, by considering how respondents compare their economic situation to personal expectations for themselves, based on their past personal economic experiences and their personal aspirations. We attempt to disentangle the different influences of past assessments and future aspirations on responses, recognizing that they likely have inter-acting effects.

Economic status relative to one's aspirations is measured using the question: "In general, how would you describe your personal economic situation and that of your family: very good, good,

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[4]  Graham has worked with the survey team for years, and therefore has advance access to the data.

average, bad, or very bad?" This variable is labeled *econ_aspirations*. Economic status relative to past experiences is measured with a question related to recent mobility: "Do you consider your economic situation and that of your family to be much better, a little better, about the same, a little worse or much worse than 12 months ago?"  This variable is referred to as *econ_experience.* Finally, subjective well-being is measured with the open-ended, ordinal scale question: "Generally speaking, would you say that you are: not at all happy, not very happy, quite happy, or very happy? This variable is labeled *happy.*

There is an additional question in the Latinobarometro for select years that provides further insight into our analysis. The 2002-2004 questionnaires include a follow-up to *intent*, with the question: "To those who answered yes [my family and I have considered going to live abroad], to which country would you consider moving?" This question helps to assess the effectiveness of using intent to migrate as a proxy for actual migration.

### *Methods*

We first present descriptive statistics on migration levels, general wealth and happiness levels, and wealth and happiness levels for those who expressed intent to migrate compared to those who have not. In addition, given the differential trends in Central America versus South America demonstrated by Connor and Massey (2010), these statistics will be broken down by region. We then supplement these descriptive statistics with econometric analysis, using a probit model reporting marginal effects to measure the likelihood that, yes, the respondent and his or her family have considered migrating or, no, they have not considered migrating.[5]

The complete regression model will include all economic status measures to estimate their "inter-action" effects, that is, to measure the change in the relationship between subjective wealth and the intent to migrate when objective wealth is held constant and vice versa. Like other well-being regression models, we incorporate controls for happiness and other socio-demographic variables.

As a first step in assessing the relationship between intent to migrate and actual migration, we compare *intent* tabulations to expectations based on empirical evidence. Connor & Massey (2010) argue that the location of the United States in the Western Hemisphere reduces the costs of movement to that destination compared to a country like Spain. In contrast, because Spain shares colonial and cultural history with Latin America, it offers a closer social proximity for Latin Americans compared to the U.S., especially in terms of language.

Aspiring migrants from South America face significant physical distances (and thus high costs) whether they choose to migrate to the U.S. or Spain. Therefore, South Americans emigrating from Latin America will largely choose to go to Spain, as the physical costs will be great in either case, but the social costs will be less there. Further, those who migrate from South America tend to be at least from the middle class in order to afford the costs. Connor and Massey support this argument with evidence that Latin Americans surveyed in Spain tend to be from South America, and they are from middle-class origins with at least a secondary education and an ability to get a job in the service sector. In contrast, the costs for Central Americans to migrate to the U.S. are lower, thus, permitting lower class residents from Central America to move there. These findings are reinforced by the work of Padilla & Peixoto (2007), Kyle & Goldstein (2011), who

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[5]   Probit models assess the probability of a respondent being in a particular binary, ordinal category rather than attempting to impose a cardinal order. Probit models are deemed appropriate in this case, because the dependent variable, intent to migrate, reports only two categorical values: the respondent has considered migrating abroad or the respondent has not considered migrating abroad, with no differential cardinal values attached to either of the categories. The coefficients are reported as marginal effects, that is the change in the probability of intent to migrate that comes from moving from one category to the next of the independent variables (such as from being married to unmarried).

in particular shed light on the Ecuadorian migration boom to Spain which faded out in the early 2000's, and Terrazas et al. (2011).

Our analysis considers the extent to which intentions to migrate follow this pattern, by asking the question: *are those individuals considering moving to Spain more likely to be from South America and of middle-class status, while those considering moving to the U.S. are more likely to be from Central America and of lower economic class status?*

The sample size of this question is considerably smaller than our full sample, narrowed first by the fraction of people who answer yes to *intent*, and then the fraction that consider moving to each specific country. Yet it sheds light on whether the data conform to expectations and on the disparity or similarities between actual migration trends and the intent to migrate. Although important, this disparity is often neglected in the propensity to migrate literature. Researchers assume there are consistent and high levels of association between how individuals answer survey questions on intent to migrate and actual migration trends. The reality may be that the intent to migrate is a reflection more of life satisfaction, or other variables, rather than of actual migration trends. We attempt to provide insight into the relationship between intent and actual migration trends, although further research is needed.

## Findings

### *Descriptive Statistics*

Descriptive statistics related to migration, wealth, happiness and region are depicted in Figure 1 and Tables 1 and 2. Figure 1 shows that across Latin America, the intent to migrate fluctuated between 22% and 25% during the period 2004-2009, with intent to migrate dropping to its lowest value during the period, 18%, in 2009. Table 1 shows that those expressing intent to migrate generally report higher objective *wealth* values and rank themselves higher on the economic ladder scale (ELS) compared to those without intent to migrate. However, those with intent to migrate assess their present economic situation, measured by *econ_aspirations and econ_experience*, lower relative to those who do not express interest in migrating. Further, Table 2 demonstrates that potential immigrants also report lower happiness levels generally compared to non-immigrants. These findings hold across both South and Central America.

Without controlling for other variables, these findings suggests that only those with a certain level of wealth are able or willing to consider migrating, and that the likelihood of migrating increases with absolute wealth, on average, across Latin America. The ELS responses mirror this finding: the wealthier one is compared to others, the more likely one is to consider migrating. However, measures of economic status relative to one's expectations of self reveal an opposing trend. The more respondents' economic status matches or exceeds their expectations of themselves, based on past experiences or aspirations, the less likely they are to migrate. The lower their economic status relative to their expectations, the more likely they are to consider migrating. This finding follows Graham's (2009) "frustrated achievers" theory: individuals, who, in an objective sense are wealthy, but perceive themselves to be less successful than others, leading to dissatisfaction or lower happiness levels. The lower happiness levels provide some confirmation of this to be the case. The theory of frustrated achievers builds into happiness economics, in that, happiness does not increase linearly with income/wealth.

Tables 3 and 4 assess wealth levels of those considering emigrating from Central America versus South America. In raw numbers, South Americans considering migrating have higher wealth levels across all measures compared to Central Americans. However, South Americans in general report higher wealth levels than Central Americans, as would be expected given the generally higher levels of development in South America compared, on average, to Central America. Thus,

we converted the wealth measures to standardized scores in order to compare between South and Central Americans. The standardized scores were calculated as such: z= $(X_i − mean)$/standard deviation (Table 4). Using these calculations, South Americans who have considered migrating have higher wealth levels relative to their peers (other South Americans) than Central Americans do relative to their peers (other Central Americans), confirming Connor and Massey's (2010) theory that there are greater barriers to exit (migration) for South Americans compared to Central Americans. However, Central Americans considering migration have higher ELS scores, and higher *econ_aspirations* and *econ_experience* than South Americans do. This profile suggests that the South Americans considering migration are objectively wealthier than the Central Americans considering migration, but they perceive themselves to be less wealthy compared to others and to their own expectations of themselves.

Table 5 shows that Central Americans are overwhelmingly likely to intend to migrate to the U.S., as predicted, while South Americans are about equally as likely to migrate to the U.S. or Spain and are, at least, more likely to consider migrating to Spain compared to Central Americans. Table 6 measures the *wealth* of respondents and shows that in Central America, the wealthier than average are significantly more likely to go to Spain, while the rest are equally likely to go to the U.S. or to not migrate at all, largely confirming Connor and Massey's finding that there are lower barriers for middle class and less wealthy people to migrate from Central America (and/or that the poorest that have to migrate illegally do not report *intent*). From South America, similar to Central America, the wealthiest are most likely to migrate to Spain, middle-income respondents are more likely to migrate to the U.S., and the poor are the least likely to migrate. The distance respondents who are willing to travel increases with wealth, and these differences are statistically significant. Because Connors and Massey argue that the financial cost of traveling to the U.S. and Spain are both high, while the social costs are lower in Spain, we would expect that wealthier respondents would go to Spain, and that less wealthy respondents from South America will go to the US. For the most part, this holds up in our data and provides some confirmation of validity of intent to migrate as a proxy for actual migration.

## Regression analysis

The following analysis uses a probit regression with marginal effects. The base model controls for several socio-demographic variables shown to be associated with the intent to migrate. The socio-demographic correlated with intent to migrate are explained in Table 7. Therefore, the base model can be summarized as follows:

Intent= age + gender + married + education + capital + crime victim + fear of unemployment + happiness + epsilon

We also include but do not report controls for country and year. The results of our analysis of the base model, by specifications, which control for objective and subjective wealth, are reported in Table 8.

We find that the descriptive trends related to wealth, happiness and intent to migrate hold even when controlling for other significant drivers of immigration, such as being young, living in a capital city, being a crime victim, and fearing unemployment. Increasing absolute wealth is associated with increased intent to migrate. Wealth relative to others, measured using the ELS-based *poor* and *rich,* shows that the self-identified "rich" are more likely to consider migrating than the self-identified "middle" and "poor" (there is no significant difference between the latter two).

Subjective wealth measures, that compare the respondent's wealth relative to their expectations for themselves, reveal a contrasting relationship between economic status and the intent to

migrate. As people become more satisfied with their economic situation, they are less likely to consider migrating.

Finally, above and beyond the effects of satisfaction with wealth, people who intend to migrate are less happy than the average population. In particular, the results report that the explanatory power of *happy* doubles when we include controls for objective wealth, but then goes back to original levels when controls for subjective wealth are included. This suggests that the influence of happiness on the decision to migrate is significantly influenced by one's satisfaction with their financial situation, as shown by Bartram (2011).

These trends give support to the role of the "frustrated achiever" in driving migration, which may, in turn, explain conflicted associations between income and intent to migrate recorded in the migration literature. The coefficients demonstrate that increased absolute wealth is associated with increased propensity to migrate, although the trend is not consistent across the entire sample. While being objectively wealthy increases the propensity to migrate, being satisfied with the wealth level opposes this propensity, decreasing the likelihood of migrating. In contrast, if one is objectively wealthy but is still unsatisfied with his/her economic situation, then one will feel additional pressure to migrate. These opposing trends may partly explain why associations between income and migration are often inconsistent.

These findings potentially give support to the hypotheses of "false expectations" held by potential immigrants. The image of the frustrated achiever supports Bartram's (2011) finding that income gains or losses have a greater impact on the happiness of immigrants compared to other people. In particular, the extent that unhappiness pushes people to consider migrating is mediated by their satisfaction with their economic situation. Yet, these findings do not give conclusive support to the question of whether unhappiness drives migration or whether migration makes people unhappy. At the least, it demonstrates that people were already frustrated and unhappy prior to migrating. The lower happiness levels that are observed in migrants in the new countries could be a continuation of these attitudes.

Alternatively, these findings could signal that potential migrants are frustrated and thus more demanding for improvements in their situation through migration, setting them up for the "false expectations" described above. We obviously need longitudinal data to disentangle the two potential channels: do immigrants begin more frustrated than the average, as observed here, or do they arrive in their new country with average initial happiness levels, but then soon thereafter experience a drop after expectations are unfulfilled?

Safi's (2010) analysis of immigrants in Europe suggest the latter may be the case, as satisfaction decreases the longer immigrants are in the new country, and then begins increasing again after 10 years. Nevertheless, she finds that immigrants are still significantly less happy than natives even after having lived in the new country for 20 years.

## Conclusion: Implications

These findings are a first step in bridging the link in immigrant experiences and attitudes pre-departure and post-migration and particularly in highlighting the role of frustration driving migration. They continue to suggest the need for longitudinal data to better understand the changes in attitudes during the migration process.

Our analysis supports the hypothesis that unhappiness drives migration, while not disproving that migration also creates unhappiness; it is likely that these factors are not mutually exclusive and more likely that they reinforce one another. The profile of Latin American emigrants provided suggests they are unhappy with their current situation prior to migrating, above and beyond considerations of wealth level, fears of unemployment, and feelings of insecurity (such as being a crime victim). Complementing this, Latin American emigrants are frustrated with their economic

situation in particular. This frustration is not derived from low economic achievement—they objectively and subjectively rate themselves as attaining high wealth levels relative to others—but rather from the expectations they impose on themselves derived from their past experiences and aspirations.

Given these traits, it is likely that these frustrated achievers continue to project high expectations on themselves once they migrate. Those frustrations can easily become further agitated when language barriers, obstacles in recognizing technical abilities, and a lack of established social networks prevent immigrants from meeting their expectations. This may lead to the observed low happiness levels abroad. Still, our results do not discount the possibility that immigrants are less happy than the average population and would have been less happy whether they migrated or not.

This leads to the broader theoretical question: is unhappiness necessary to drive major societal change? In Graham (2009), we find that in some very desolate conditions, such as in Afghanistan, people adapt their expectations downward; thus they report to be happier than others with much better security, health, and so forth. Is it necessary to disrupt the happiness of those that have adapted in order to realize quality of life improvements in such a setting? Our findings in this paper suggest that happy people, including people who are satisfied with their economic situation regardless of their actual income level, are not willing to undergo the major change entailed by migration. This is not to say that they are opposed to other major changes, but they are not considering a common solution utilized in the Latin American context today.

Further research is needed to identify other changes, comparable in impact to migration, that could be undertaken to improve one's situation; and, second, whether those changes are being made by those happier people who do not report considerations to migrate; and third, whether those changes have a similar negative impact on happiness as migration does—is migration making people better or worse off compared to the alternatives? Better answers to these questions, in turn, could help us understand the relationship between happiness and societal change, especially economic development.

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## Annexes
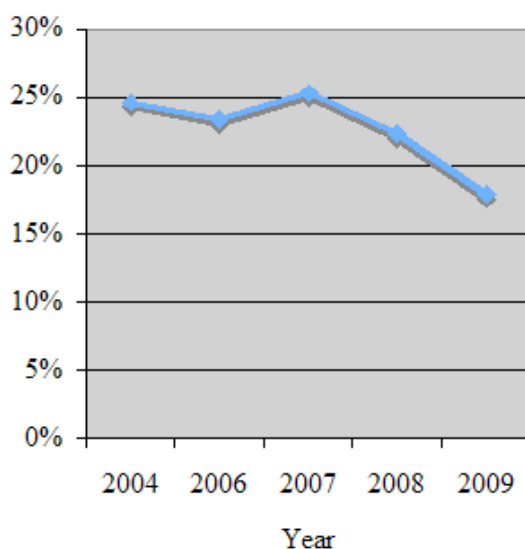


**Figure 1:** *Intent to migrate. Time trends across countries.*

**Table 1:** *Income by Migration Intentions.*

| INCOME MEASURES | Intent to Migrate: YES | Intent to Migrate: NO |
|---|---|---|
| **Objective Income** | | |
| *Wealth* | 1.32 | 1.22 |
| **Subjective Income: Relative to Others** | | |
| *ELS* | 4.37 | 4.24 |
| **Subjective Income: Relative to Expectations of Self** | | |
| *Inc_aspirations* | 3.01 | 3.06 |
| *Inc_experience* | 3.03 | 3.09 |

**Table 2:** *Happiness Across Different Migration Intentions and Region.*

| Region | Migration Intentions: Considering Migrating? Yes/No | Mean Happiness Level |
|---|---|---|
| Across Sample (Central and South Americans) | Yes | 2.9182 |
| Across Sample (Central and South Americans) | No | 2.9753 |
| South Americans | Yes | 2.8065 |
| South Americans | No | 2.8915 |
| Central Americans | Yes | 3.0378 |
| Central Americans | No | 3.1013 |

**Table 3:** *Raw Income of Potential Immigrants by Region.*

|  | Central America | Central America | South America | South America |
|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | Intent to Migrate: Yes | Intent to Migrate: NO | Intent to Migrate: YES | Intent to Migrate: NO |
| Overall Migration Rates | 24% | 76% | 20% | 80% |
| INCOME MEASURES |  |  |  |  |
| Obj. Income |  |  |  |  |
| Wealth | 1.22 | 1.05 | 1.42 | 1.28 |
| Sub. Income: Relative to Others |  |  |  |  |
| ELS | 4.09 | 3.91 | 4.36 | 4.26 |
| Sub. Income: Relative to Expectations of Self |  |  |  |  |
| Inc_aspirations | 2.90 | 2.93 | 3.09 | 3.13 |
| Inc_experience | 2.96 | 2.98 | 3.07 | 3.14 |

**Table 4:** *Standardized Income of Potential Immigrants by Region.*

|  | Central America | Central America | South America | South America |
|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | Intent to Migrate: Yes | Intent to Migrate: NO | Intent to Migrate: YES | Intent to Migrate: NO |
| Overall Migration Rates | 24% | 76% | 20% | 80% |
| Income Measures |  |  |  |  |
| Obj. Income |  |  |  |  |
| Wealth | 0.06 | -0.02 | 0.12 | -0.03 |
| Sub. Income: Relative to Others |  |  |  |  |
| ELS | 0.07 | -0.02 | 0.05 | -0.01 |
| Sub. Income: Relative to Expectations of Self |  |  |  |  |
| Inc_aspirations | -0.03 | 0.01 | -0.05 | 0.01 |
| Inc_experience | -0.02 | 0.01 | -0.06 | 0.01 |

**Table 5:** *Migration Destination by Region of Origin.*

| Destination | Overall | Central Americans | South Americans |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2002 | 23.66% | 22.78% | 24.22% |
| U.S. |  | 13.71% | 6.61% |
| Spain |  | .56% | 5.19% |
| Costa Rica |  | 1.94% | .08% |
| Argentina |  | .11% | 1.55% |
| 2003 | 23.39% | 21.22% | 24.75% |
| U.S. |  | 12.50% | 6.83% |
| Spain |  | .95% | 6.77% |
| Costa Rica |  | 1.77% | .09% |
| Argentina |  | .07% | 1.43% |
| 2004 | 24.62% | 23.05% | 25.54% |
| U.S. |  | 65.04% | 29.06% |
| Spain |  | 4.39% | 30.75% |
| Costa Rica |  | 8.48% | 0.4% |
| Argentina |  | .06% | 6.98% |

**Table 6:** *Wealth of Migrants by Region of Origin.*

|  | Central America | Central America | South America | South America |
|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | Intends to Migrate to U.S.: YES | Intends to Migrate to U.S.: NO | Intends to Migrate to U.S.: Yes | Intends to Migrate to U.S.: NO |
| Wealth | 1.10 | 1.10 | 1.50 | 1.40 |
|  | Intends to Migrate to Spain: YES | Intends to Migrate to Spain: NO | Intends to Migrate to Spain: Yes | Intends to Migrate to Spain: NO |
| Wealth | 1.83 | 1.09 | 1.57 | 1.39 |

**Table 7:** *Correlates with Intent to Migrate.*

| Drivers of Intent to Migrate | Supporting Literature |
|---|---|
| Being under 40 years old | Studies have shown that older people are less likely to migrate (Pelligrino, 2004). For those under 40, reports have given contradictory trends. Wood et al. (2010) show that migration decreases (linearly) with age, while others report a curvilinear effect related to age (Connor and Massey, 2010). |
| Being male | Traditionally men were the most likely to migrate (and thus presumably most likely to consider migrating) (Wood et al., 2010); however, more recently there has been documentation of a "feminization" of migration from Latin America. This trend has been followed by increased male migration, as family members follow the wives, mothers, girlfriends, etc. (Pelligrino, 2004). These ebb and flows in regards to gender may explain the not completely conclusive relationship between gender and intent to migrate. |
| Increased Education | The more educated endure lower risks when migrating as they can more easily acquire employment and enjoy higher returns on their migration compared to the less educated (Pelligrino, 2004; Connor & Massey, 2010; Wood et al., 2010; Defoort, 2008). |
| Living in a capital city | It is presumed that those who live in the capital are more likely to consider migrating because they have greater access to information, lowering the risks of migrating to a new country (Wood et al., 2010). |
| Being a Crime Victim | Wood et al. (2010) used the Latinobarometro to demonstrate the clear relationship between being a crime victim and reporting increased intentions to migrate. |
| Increased Fear of Unemployment | Those with lower economic prospects, especially an increased likelihood of unemployment, report higher levels of immigration (Horton, 2008; Briquets, 1983). |
| Knowing of and having support of others already living abroad (measured by proxy with *remittances*) | Having the support of others living abroad is demonstrated to increase access to information, especially as it relates to housing, jobs, etc. Networks can also provide less tangible support, that overall decreases the risks of immigrating (Horton, 2008; Wood et al,. 2010; Pelligrino, 2004; Connor & Massey, 2010). |

**Table 8: Base** *Probit Model Analyzing Impact of Happiness and Income on* Intent.

Outcome Variable: Have you and your family seriously considered moving abroad? Yes=1 No=0.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Young: 18-29 (omit over 40) | 0.0799*** (0.0035) | 0.0851*** (0.0035) | 0.0850*** (0.0036) | 0.0872*** (0.0040) |
| Middle-aged: 30-39 (omit over 40) | 0.0667*** (0.0040) | 0.0705*** (0.0040) | 0.0702*** (0.0041) | 0.0718*** (0.0045) |
| Gender: 1=male 0=female | 0.0110*** (0.0028) | 0.0105*** (0.0028) | 0.0105*** (0.0028) | 0.0117*** (0.0031) |
| Married: 1=yes 0=no | -0.0116*** (0.0029) | -0.0100*** (0.0029) | -0.0101*** (0.0029) | -0.0118*** (0.0032) |
| Education | 0.0101*** (0.0003) | 0.0086*** (0.0003) | 0.0086*** (0.0004) | 0.0089*** (0.0004) |
| Lives in capital city 1=yes 0=no | 0.0575*** (0.0040) | 0.0494*** (0.0041) | 0.0492*** (0.0041) | 0.0544*** (0.0045) |
| You/Your Family Crime Victim in Last 12 mo. 1=yes 0=no | 0.0625*** (0.0029) | 0.0618*** (0.0029) | 0.0621*** (0.0030) | 0.0609*** (0.0033) |
| Fear of unemployment: 1=no fear to 4= much fear | 0.0207*** (0.0011) | 0.0215*** (0.0011) | 0.0214*** (0.0011) | 0.0204*** (0.0012) |
| Happy 1=very unhappy to 4=very happy | -0.0193*** (0.0016) | -0.0213*** (0.0017) | -0.0214*** (0.0017) | -0.0180*** (0.0019) |
| **Objective Income** | | | | |
| Wealth (index) | | 0.0205*** (0.0016) | 0.0201*** (0.0016) | 0.0216*** (0.0018) |
| **Subjective Income: Relative to Others** | | | | |
| ELS-Poor (omit middle) | | | 0.0004 (0.0033) | -0.0001 (0.0036) |
| ELS-Rich (omit middle) | | | 0.0100** (0.0048) | 0.0126** (0.0056) |
| **Subject Income: Relative to Personal Expectations** | | | | |
| *Inc_aspirations* 1=very bad to 5=very good | | | | -0.0120*** (0.0023) |
| *Inc_experience* 1=very bad to 5=very good | | | | -0.0048*** (0.0019) |
| Observations | 96011 | 94142 | 93031 | 73856 |
| Pseudo R-squared | 0.0872 | 0.0881 | 0.0879 | 0.0890 |

Note: Probit regression reporting marginal effects. *** denotes sig. at 1% **denotes sig. at 5% *denotes sig. at 10%. Standard errors in parenthesis. Year and country controls not shown—coefficients available from authors at request.

*Special Cases*

**Table 9:** *Probit Model Analyzing Impact of Happiness and Income on Intent to Migrate, Differentiated by Destination Country.*

Outcome Variable: What country have you considered moving to?

| | (1) | (2) |
|---|---|---|
| | Intent to Migrate to the U.S. | Intent to Migrate to Spain |
| **Young: 18-29** (omit over 40) | 0.0440*** (0.0032) | 0.0141*** (0.0017) |
| Middle-aged: 30-39 (omit over 40) | 0.0336*** (0.0037) | 0.0106*** (0.0019) |
| Gender 1=male 0=female | 0.0001 (0.0024) | 0.0023* (0.0012) |
| Married 1=yes 0=no | 0.0015 (0.0024) | 0.0006 (0.0012) |
| Education | 0.0027*** (0.0003) | 0.0015*** (0.0002) |
| Lives in Capital City 1=yes 0=no | 0.0179*** (0.0031) | 0.0035** (0.0015) |
| You/Your Family Crime Victim in Last 12mo. 1=yes 0=no | 0.0196*** (0.0025) | 0.0092*** (0.0013) |
| Fear of Unemployment: from 1=no fear to 4=much fear | 0.0064*** (0.0009) | 0.0026*** (0.0005) |
| Region: 1=Central America 0=South America | 0.0877*** (0.0105) | -0.0685*** (0.0059) |
| **Happy** 1=very unhappy to 4=very happy | -0.0079*** (0.0014) | -0.0029*** (0.0007) |
| **Objective Income** | | |
| Wealth | 0.0159*** (0.0014) | 0.0044*** (0.0007) |
| **Subjective Income Relative to Expectations for Self** | | |
| *Inc_aspirations* From 1=very bad to 5=very good | -0.0046*** (0.0016) | -0.0038*** (0.0009) |
| *Inc_experience* From 1=much worse to 5=much better | -0.0010 (0.0013) | -0.0025*** (0.0007) |
| Observations | 53591 | 53591 |
| Pseudo R-squared | 0.0836 | 0.1328 |

Note: Probit regression reporting marginal effects. *** denotes sig. at 1% **denotes sig. at 5% *denotes sig. at 10%. Standard errors in parenthesis. Uses years 2002, 2003, 2004. Year and country controls not shown—coefficients available from authors at request.

**Table 10:** *Probit Model Analyzing Impact of Happiness and Income on Intent to Migrate When Controlling for Remittances in 2009.*

Outcome Variable: Have you and your family seriously considered moving abroad? 1=Yes 2=No

| | |
|---|---|
| Young: 18-29 (omit over 40) | 0.0707*** (0.0074) |
| Middle-aged: 30-39 (omit over 40) | 0.0639*** (0.0084) |
| Gender: 1=male 0=female | 0.0097* (0.0057) |
| Married: 1=yes 0=no | -0.0168*** (0.0059) |
| Education | 0.0079*** (0.0007) |
| Lives in Capital City: 1=yes 0=no | 0.0561*** (0.0093) |
| You/Your Family Crime Victim in Last 12mo. 1=yes 0=no | 0.0486*** (0.0059) |
| Fear of Unemployment: from 1=no fear to 4=much fear | 0.0162*** (0.0022) |
| Remittances 1=yes, receives  0=no, does not receive | 0.0811*** (0.0090) |
| *Happy* 1=very unhappy t0 4=very happy | -0.0176*** (0.0036) |
| **Objective Income** | |
| Wealth | 0.0092** (0.0036) |
| **Subjective Income: Relative to Others** | |
| *ELS-Poor (*Omit Middle) | 0.0044 (0.0065) |
| *ELS-Rich* (omit middle) | 0.0003 (0.0094) |
| **Subjective Income Relative to Expectations for Self** | |
| *Inc_aspirations* From 1=very bad to 5=very good | -0.0093** (0.0041) |
| *Inc_experiece* From 1=much worse to 5=much better | -0.0053 (0.0035) |
| Observations | 18128 |
| Pseudo R-squared | 0.1112 |

Notes: Probit regressions reporting marginal effects. *** denotes sig. at 1% **denotes sig. at 5% *denotes sig. at 10%. Standard errors in parenthesis. Includes only year 2009. Year and country controls not shown—coefficients available from authors at request.

**Table 11:** *Income Levels of Remittance Recipients.*

| Income Values: ELS-Based Categories | Percent that Receive Remittances | Income Values: Composite Wealth Index | Percent that Receive Remittances |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Poor* | 13% | **0** | 16% |
| *Middle* | 15% | **1** | 14% |
| *Rich* | 21% | **2** | 15% |
| | | **3** | 23% |