

PARCHEMINS STUDY

The well-being of newly regularized migrant workers. Determinants of their satisfaction with life as compared to undocumented migrant workers and regular local residents

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What was already known

Well-being research has developed by increasingly taking into account individuals' views on their own situation. Once a certain level of material resources is reached, it is expected that factors affecting quality of life broaden and encompass a larger range of aspects. Subjective assessments of well-being are thus becoming routine indicators, considering that material resources are insufficient to capture people's satisfaction with life.

In a high-income country like Switzerland, undocumented migrants' quality of life frequently falls short of the standards one could expect. The lack of a residence permit exposes them to low wages and limits their access to social insurance schemes and health care. In addition, their status often reduces their employment opportunities to professions with poorer conditions. While their migration project was motivated by their desire for a better life, undocumented migrant workers' rights remain limited in the destination country, thus hindering their life prospects.

What our study shows

Considering the unique situation of undocumented migrant workers, we assess their satisfaction with life and the factors that matter in their evaluations. To do so, we asked our participants divided into two groups – migrants who have just received a residency permit or about to obtaining it after submitting a regularization request *versus* those who were still undocumented – to assess their satisfaction with life (on a 0 to 10 scale). We then compared the assessments of both groups with a sample of regular local residents, composed of Swiss citizens and migrants with long-term residency permit. In a second step, we investigated the factors leading to report a better satisfaction with life within each of the three groups.

The results show that satisfaction with life is lower among undocumented migrant workers while those who are recently regularized and regular local residents report similar levels of well-being.

Participating in an association or club, being healthy and not being discriminated are associated with a higher level of well-being *among undocumented migrant workers*. *Among those being regularized*, having been longer in the country of destination is associated with lower well-being. *Among regular local residents*, the only significant factor for a higher satisfaction with life is having a partner.

Conclusion and recommendations

The results confirm that material resources do not influence satisfaction with life in these groups. Despite the high satisfaction expressed by those who have recently been regularized, policy intervention still have to pay attention to their persisting difficult socioeconomic circumstances amidst a context of overall affluence.

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