

Describing topic

The report is devoted to analyzing the factors influencing the migration intentions of the population in small and medium-sized cities of Russia. The research focuses on the role of migration activity, a composite indicator that integrates past experience and current mobility practices. While existing studies primarily concentrate on socio-demographic characteristics or interregional contrasts, this research addresses a gap by systematically examining how accumulated migration capital and engagement in various forms of spatial mobility shape the desire to move. The scientific novelty lies in integrating various forms of migration experience and current mobility into a unified analytical model for the Russian context. This approach makes it possible to overcome the traditional "migration vs. sedentariness" dichotomy.

Theoretical focus

This study is grounded in the life course theory (Elder & Johnson, 2003; Billari & Liefbroer, 2010), which emphasizes the interconnectedness of life events. Within this framework, migration intentions are viewed not as a one-time reaction to current conditions, but as the outcome of accumulated mobility experiences embedded within an individual's biography. A key concept for this work is "migration activity", which encompasses: 1) accumulated migration experience, i.e., the experience of lifetime migration and changing one's permanent place of residence (Zayonchkovskaya, Nozdrina, 2008), and 2) current spatial mobility (Lyalina, Voloshenko, 2024) – diverse forms of temporary movements, namely shift-work labor migration, commuting, visits to friends and relatives (VFR), and tourism. This approach allows us to move beyond the traditional "migration vs. sedentariness" dichotomy and interpret migration decisions through the interplay of past moves and present mobility.

Data & Methods

The empirical basis of the study comprises the results of a street survey of 8,232 residents from 27 settlements across 13 regions of Russia (2018–2024). A non-

random quota sampling method was used to represent the gender and age structure of the population. Data analysis employed a combination of methods:

1. Analysis of descriptive statistics and cross-tabulations to identify primary differences in the proportions of those wishing to leave across groups with different migration experiences and mobility patterns.
2. Binary logistic regression to assess the influence of various factors on the likelihood of having migration intentions, while controlling for socio-demographic variables (micro-level) and settlement characteristics (macro-level).
3. Models with interaction terms to test hypotheses about the mutual reinforcement or weakening of the effects of different forms of migration activity.

The key dependent variable is the presence of migration intentions (response to the question: "Would you like to leave this settlement?"). Independent variables at the micro-level include indicators of lifetime migration, involvement in shift work, and the frequency and purposes of current trips within and outside the region. At the macro-level, the model incorporated settlement characteristics, such as population size, population dynamics, the ratio of the average wage to the subsistence minimum, and the prevalence of shift labor migration.

Findings

The results indicate that accumulated migration experience increases the likelihood of having migration intentions. Return migrants, those born in the city who left and returned less than ten years ago, demonstrate higher odds of intending to move. Long-term migrants (residing in a new location for over ten years) also express a greater readiness to relocate compared to native residents, whereas recent settlers show a relatively low level of migration intentions, possibly indicating an adaptation phase.

Current spatial mobility increases the odds of having migration intentions. Regular trips outside the region, especially for tourism, foster readiness to move. In contrast, VFR (Visiting Friends and Relatives) is associated with a lower desire to relocate, confirming the compensatory role of such trips – maintaining social ties reduces migration aspirations.

Special attention is given to shift work migration. Respondents' personal experience with shift work is not associated with increased readiness to move. However, having family members, particularly parents or spouses, with shift work experience significantly strengthens migration intentions. The multiplicity of shift work destinations also predicts a higher probability of having migration intentions, reflecting a sense of instability. At the settlement level, a high prevalence of shift labor serves as an indicator of socioeconomic vulnerability and is accompanied by an increased share of people wishing to leave.