

Motives of Youth Migration to the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation at the Present Stage



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Abstract. The relevance of the study is that migration plays a significant role in the population decline and changes in the socio-demographic structures of the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation. Taking into account the negative demographic trends that hinder real opportunities to natural reproduction of the population, it is necessary to consider the existing potential for youth migration to the Arctic zone and to study the motives for migration substantively. The main idea of the study lies in the fact that motives for youth migration to the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation have place-specific characteristics, and studying the motives for migration will potentially strengthen the motivational tools for population attraction. The aim of the work is to identify the motives for youth migration to the Russian Arctic in the context of the relationship between the meaning of migration for a person and the specifics of the territory. The scientific novelty of the study lies in the identification of the features of motives for migration behavior of young people who have experience of migration to the Russian Arctic from non-Arctic constituent entities of the Russian Federation. The revealed and substantiated features of the motives for youth migration to the Russian Arctic have practical and epistemological significance in the development of motivational tools for attracting qualified young people to the Arctic zone within the framework of demographic and employment policy. The main methods are statistical analysis, in-depth interview method, thematic analysis. Further research can be aimed at specifying and detailing the motives for migration in terms of gender aspect; features of return skilled

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migration of young people who left the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation to receive education; and supplemented by expert interviews on the problems of organizing the system of attracting qualified personnel from non-Arctic territories to the region.

Key words: interregional migration, migration motives, in-depth interview, thematic analysis, Arctic zone of the Russian Federation.

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Introduction

Preservation and reproduction of Russia’s population is a key priority of state policy in the sphere of national security. The task of population preservation is relevant in the context of socio-economic development of the geopolitically and economically significant Arctic zone of the Russian Federation (AZ RF), where population decline is declared to be one of the main threats to national security¹. At the same time, *positive migration balance*, which is one of the factors contributing to demographic well-being in the region, is named among the targets of the “Strategy for socio-economic development of the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation through to 2025” (Ryazantsev

et al., 2022). Achieving positive migration balance is especially important given the current negative demographic trends in the Russian Arctic (Shelomentsev, 2020; Sushko, Plastinin, 2021). Today in the AZ RF outgoing migration is not compensated by “incoming” migration (*Tab. 1*).

Despite the positive migration balance in youth ages, the share of the youth cohort in the age demographic structure of the AZ RF population is significantly decreasing (*Fig. 1*).

Moreover, this process is faster in the AZ RF than in Russia as a whole (*Fig. 2*). The share of young people in the Murmansk and Arkhangelsk oblasts (the population of these regions accounts

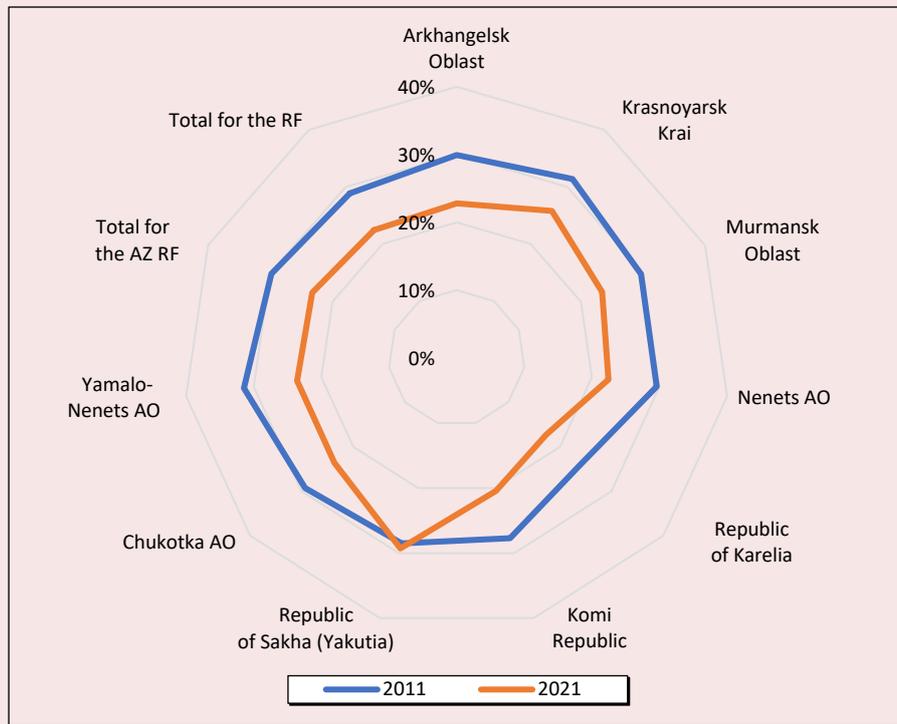
Table 1. Age structure of interregional migration in the Arctic territories of the constituent entities of the AZ RF in 2021

Age	Migration increase rate per 10,000 people*	Relative migration balance, %	Incoming, %	Outgoing, %
0–4	11.3	106.4	4.4	3.5
5–9	-25.5	89.2	5.8	5.5
10–14	-36.2	80.2	4.3	4.5
15–19	-173.9	57.2	6.0	8.8
20–24	187.1	145.6	13.6	7.9
25–29	23.6	105.8	10.6	8.5
30–34	-19.8	94.6	11.5	10.3
35+	-66.5	72.9	43.9	51.0
Total	-42.0	84.7	100.0	100.0

* For Murmansk Oblast in the municipal statistics for 2021, population data are presented by the same ages (so the total is incomplete). Source: own compilation according to Database of municipalities. Available at: <https://rosstat.gov.ru/storage/mediabank/Munst.htm> (accessed: December 20, 2022).

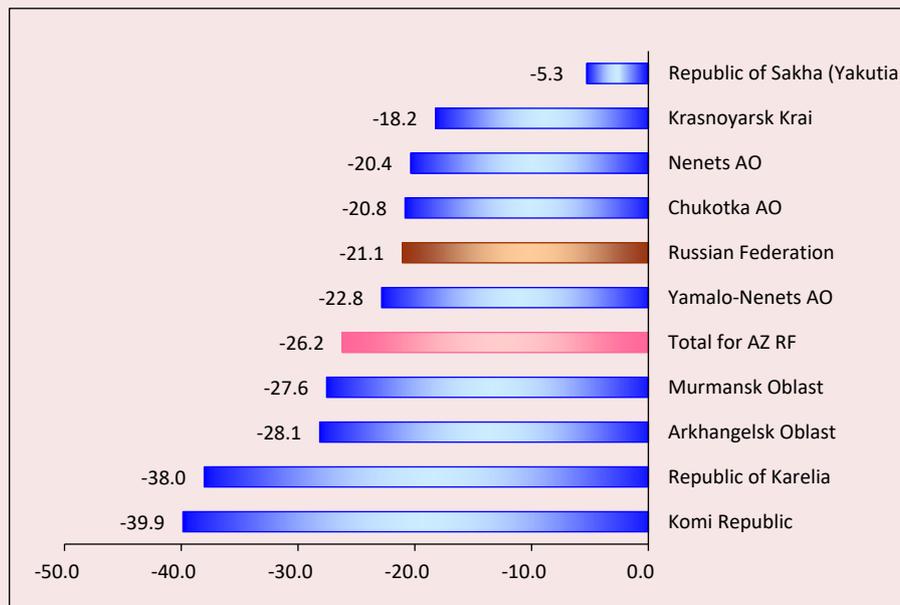
¹ Principles of the State Policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic through to 2035.

Figure 1. The share of young people (aged 16–34 years) in the total population of the Arctic territories of the constituent entities of the AZ RF in 2011 and 2021, %



Source: own compilation according to Database of municipalities. Available at: <https://rosstat.gov.ru/storage/mediabank/Munst.htm> (accessed: December 20, 2022).

Figure 2. Change in the number of young people aged 16–34 years in the AZ RF, 2021 vs 2011, %



Source: own compilation according to Database of municipalities. Available at: <https://rosstat.gov.ru/storage/mediabank/Munst.htm> (accessed: December 20, 2022).

for 53% of the total population of the AZ RF) is decreasing more intensively than on a nationwide scale, causing the risk of worsening demographic trends for the Russian Arctic.

Population migration plays a significant role in the decrease in the AZ RF population and changes in the socio-demographic structures of the Russian North along with natural decline (Fauzer et al., 2018). According to V.A. Fauzer and colleagues, migration restrains population aging and is one of the leading drivers of population growth in the northern territories. However, the components of the population dynamics of the AZ RF from 2014 to 2021, showing that negative migration balance significantly exceeded the natural increase until 2019, together caused a decline in the population of the AZ RF, and the share of young people among those who left the region in 2021 amounted to 38.6% (retired people – 22.7%) (Khoteeva, Stepus', 2023). In the foreign Arctic, however, the situation is different: in the North American Arctic, the northern territories of Canada, the Norwegian Arctic regions, and Iceland, the population has grown, so studies of internal and rural-to-urban migration are more relevant (Heleniak et al., 2020).

Given the above, it is relevant to study the ways of attracting young people to the Arctic region, which requires determining the features of migration motives. The studies analyze socio-economic, climatic and personal-family motives for migration to the AZ RF in combination with assessments of the attractiveness of the territory (Nedoseka, Karbainov, 2020; Nedoseka, Sharova, 2020; Simakova, 2019; Ljovkin et al., 2020; Osipova, Maklashova, 2016; Rozanova-Smith, 2021). Sociological studies concerning migration plans and strategies in the context of the standard of living and quality of life, identification of vulnerabilities of economic and social development of regions, also reveal public opinion on the causes of migration outflow (Ivanova, Klyukina, 2019; Potravnaya, Tishkova, 2022; Simakova et al., 2022; Pitukhina et al., 2021).

One of the approaches to the study of migration intentions is represented by the axiological aspect of student youth's attitude to the Arctic as part of territorial (Arctic) identity (Filippova, 2022). The generational approach has a high explanatory value in analyzing the dynamics of migration attitudes and motives of population mobility, which describes the relationship between migration motives and age cohorts and reveals the specifics of migration drivers for different age groups. Within the framework of qualitative analysis, V.I. Il'in shows how generational specificity stimulates youth migration through the development of global virtual reality, consumer society, and transformation of forms of employment (Il'in, 2022). Another approach to the study of interregional migration motives, including through the interview method, is revealed in the relationship between migration and life course events (life plans: education, employment, family formation, etc.) (Kartseva et al., 2021).

Experts examine the reasons for outgoing migration from the Arctic territories. Sociological studies related to the topic of moving to the AZ RF are not so widely represented in the scientific field. For example, one of the works reveals personal-family, economic and psychological motives for moving to the Murmansk Oblast using the biographical method (Suleimanova, 2020). Demographic researchers N.V. Mkrtchyan and Yu.F. Florinskaya used qualitative methods to study migration motivation related to places of origin and settlement (Mkrtchyan, Florinskaya, 2020). Sociologists explain such motives of the young people outflow as unattractiveness of territories and low level of opportunities for self-realization on the basis of expert interviews and observation (Nedoseka, Sharova, 2020).

According to the results of the literature review, a research gap is the lack of knowledge about what motivates individuals to migrate to the AZ RF. We can identify the following reasons for the insufficient study of migration motives in the AZ RF: 1) due to the dominance of questionnaire

methods, the migration motives are too generalized and presented in the context of migration outflow from the regions of the Russian Arctic; 2) it is insufficiently reflected how the motives for migration in the direction of the Russian Arctic are related to reasons for residence and implementation of life plans in the Russian Arctic; 3) the use of the interview method to identify the characteristics and contexts of migration motivation is not widespread. Given this, the aim of the study is to determine the features of the motives of youth migration to the Russian Arctic in the context of the interrelation between the meaning of migration for a person and the specifics of the territory of the AZ RF. The goal setting is conditioned by the specifics of Arctic territories development, reflected in the works of specialists in Arctic studies (Zamyatina, Pilyasov, 2018). We conducted the research on the materials of interviews with migrants.

We set the following objectives to achieve the goal: 1) to determine the methodological, theoretical and methodical framework of the study; 2) in the course of analyzing the conducted interviews to substantiate the features of motivation of youth migration in the AZ RF; 3) to determine the areas of work and social institutions in the AZ RF, within which one can use the obtained results of the study on the features of motivation of youth when moving to the AZ RF.

Scientific novelty is determined by the lack of knowledge about the motives of young people moving to the Russian Arctic and lies in the identification of the features of motives for moving to the Russian Arctic from non-Arctic regions. The specification of migration motives is of scientific importance in the development of motivational tools for attracting qualified young people to the AZ RF and, in general, in the improvement of demographic policy in terms of improving the potential for movement to the Arctic territories.

Methodology and methods of research

The focus is on interregional migration (from non-Arctic territories to the Arctic territories of the constituent entities of the AZ RF) with a period of residence in the AZ RF of more than a year. It is explained through the drivers and causes of migration as well as the motives of individuals. According to L.L. Rybakovskii, migration drivers are “certain components of objective conditions” and “factors-conditions” that act as determinants (driving force) of migration (Rybakovskii, 2017). Factors as components of objective conditions are confirmed in the actual works related to the study of the AZ RF and were initially built-in in the research methodology. The cause of migration lies at the intersection of objective and subjective factors. To concretize the concepts of the subjective side of migration determination, let us turn to the categories of “value”, “value orientation” and “motive”. M. Weber, the founder of “understanding” sociology within the interpretive paradigm, determined that a value subjectively significant for an individual acts as a motive for activity. The development of this idea in the works of T. Parsons led to the introduction of the category of “value orientation”, which is a criterion for making key life decisions (Evdokimova, 2018). Value orientations to achieve goals that determine the main content of life represent the meaning of life plans of an individual (Toshchenko, 2016) and are based on needs. Thus, migration from the point of view of the individual has a motivated character, conditioned by the needs and values of the individual, and in terms of meaning correlates with the social and economic specifics of the society of the place of settlement or departure. The migration motive should be understood as a combination of need and value orientation of an individual, the insufficient degree of realization of which in the place of residence induces the individual to change the place of residence and is associated with the expectations of life in the place of settlement.

The features of migration motives are aspects that show the interrelation between an individual's life plans and objective socio-economic territorial factors related to the place of arrival (as a territory for the realization of life plans) in the context of the interrelation between the meaning of migration for a person and the specifics of the territory.

The theoretical framework for the study of migration motives is also determined by the sectoral sociology of migration, aimed at explaining "factors that determine the motivations behind migrants' decisions to move and choice of destination" (Yudina, 2002). One of the basic theories of migration sociology is the pull-push theory (E. Lee), which structures the variety of motives for migration through the conditional attractiveness/unattractiveness of a place of residence. The synthetic theory of migration (D. Massey) provides an understanding of the motives for migration through social interactions of individuals within social groups and communities, as well as belonging to them (family, friends, professional community, etc.) (Blinova, 2009).

The main research method is a semi-structured in-depth interview with representatives of young people who moved to the AZ RF for permanent residence. The interview guide is designed to take into account the operationalization of motive and the outlined theories on the motives for migration. Due to the less directive nature of the researcher, it allows directing the conversation in favor of those topics, "vulnerable" or "inspirational" moments and attitudes that the informant thinks about and that trigger reflection on the "points" of attachment to the place of residence (the Russian Arctic) as part of territorial identity; and the experience of migration to the Russian Arctic as a meaningful life plan. Covering issues of personal tangible and intangible motivations for migration, projection of

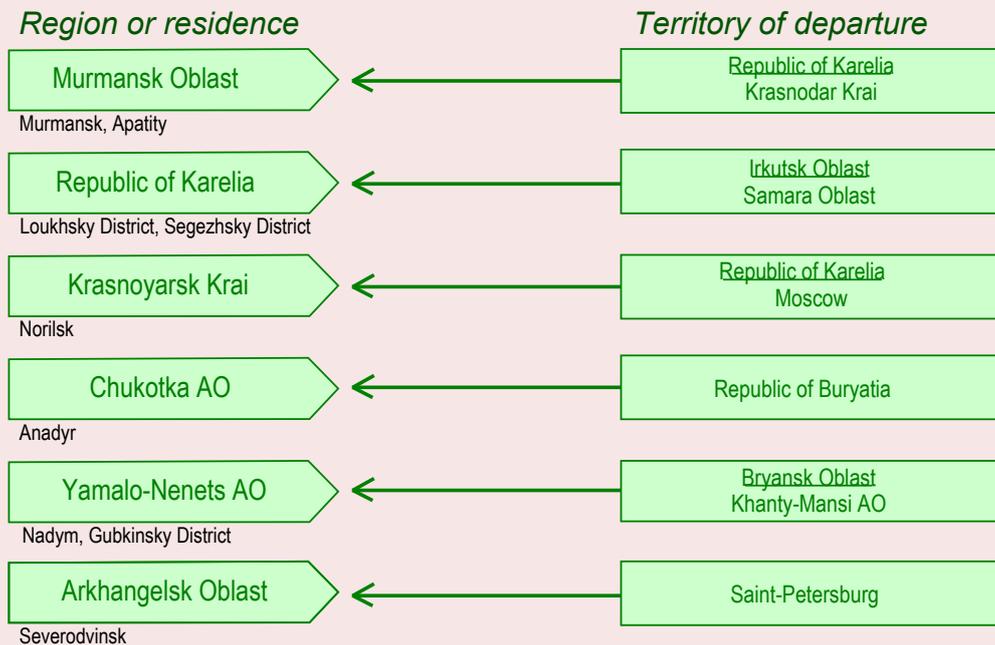
life plans in relation to the Arctic region, social well-being and generational commitment, the interview guide provides an opportunity for a comprehensive study of the motives for migration.

We conducted the research on the territories of the constituent entities that are fully or partially included in the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation. The terms "Arctic zone of the Russian Federation" and "Russian Arctic" are identical. The terms "North" and "Extreme North" are also used to refer to the northern part of the Russian Federation, which has climatic and economic features in relation to other (central, southern and eastern) territories of Russia. During the field stage, the author conducted 10 in-depth interviews with representatives of young people aged 18 to 35 years who had experience of migration to the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation for permanent residence in the range from 1 to 7 years. We selected informants based on the results of a survey of young people carried out by Internet survey method in the AZ RF in November – December 2022, covering 8.5 thousand people, in the course of which the respondents independently indicated their willingness to participate in the interview. Interviews, ranging in length from 40 to 80 minutes, were conducted via Zoom videoconference or by telephone. Industrial workers (3 people), social sector workers (3 people), self-employed (1 person), municipal employees (2 people), student (1 person) participated in the interviews by type of employment. The geography of the survey is presented in *Figure 3*.

We analyze the qualitative data using a thematic analysis procedure that allows reducing the data set to compact semantic themes² to identify unifying trends in individual biographies. We derive themes through inductive-deductive analysis directly from empirical data, analyze and combine

² Polukhina E.V. (Ed.). (2023). *Praktiki analiza kachestvennykh dannykh v sotsial'nykh naukakh: ucheb. posobie* [Practices of Qualitative Data Analysis in the Social Sciences: Textbook]. Moscow: Izd. dom Vyshei shkoly ekonomiki.

Figure 3. Geography of in-depth interviews with youth representatives with migration experience in the AZ RF



Source: own compilation based on the results of the field stage of sociological research.

them as characteristics of migration motivation. Each defined theme is a dominant compact semantic generalization through the analysis of the subjective experiences of people who provide their understanding and explanation of the motive for moving to the Arctic. Ultimately, the study identifies the importance of living in the Arctic from the perspective of individuals. By revealing and substantiating these positions, the potential for displacement to the Russian Arctic can be strengthened.

Findings

In accordance with the objective determinants of migration, based on the analysis of interviews we formulated the themes that clarify and explain the features of migration motivation of young people regarding moving to the AZ RF for permanent residence (Tab. 2). The themes show how the meaning invested by the recipients in migration in the territory of the AZ RF is clarified and explained.

The financial incentive of arrival in the AZ RF, which is one of the most basic in the structure of migration motives and retains its dominance along with other meanings of migration, is revealed most fully through the identified themes. An in-depth look at the money motive show that earning finances “in the North” is often not an end in itself, but a necessity to make major purchases (real estate: buying an apartment, “paying off” a mortgage, building a house, etc.). Usually forced migration is considered force majeure when there is a threat to life, but in the stories of informants who moved to the Russian Arctic there is a characteristic of “forced” migration due to the inability to achieve the desired standard of living in the previous place of residence.

“It is a forced measure to stay because of a strong need, a large debt. I haven’t met many who would choose to stay if it weren’t for the money issue. Some claim there is a romance in the north, they

Table 2. Structure of topics that clarify and explain the motivation of youth migration to the AZ RF

Objective factors in the AZ RF as a territory of arrival	Themes derived from in-depth interview narratives
High indicators of average accrued wages in the constituent entities of the AZ RF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income in the Arctic as a solution to the acute problem of financial shortages • Earning money in the North is not an end in itself, but a means of solving the problem of lack of finances for large purchases, most often real estate (buying an apartment, “paying off” a mortgage, building a house). • Financial opportunities to earn money in the North: compensation not only for material, but also for emotional and stressful difficulties • Agreements in the family about the timeframe of migration: migration to the Arctic as one of the life stages to achieve certain goals
Labor deficit of the economy and urbanization of the Arctic territories of the constituent entities of the AZ RF	Arctic cities – an alternative to megacities (comfort of life rhythm and stress minimization)
Specifics of the economy of the constituent entities of the AZ RF; dominance of the industrial complex and military infrastructure	Unique professional experience in the Arctic as an opportunity for professional and career development
Employers provide assistance in obtaining housing upon employment in the AZ RF	Provision of housing as an opportunity to separate from parents and have “own” accommodation
Availability of educational organizations	The effect of educational migration: living arrangements during adulthood and separation from the family
High rates of migration intensity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circulation of migrants – economic and social norm for the Arctic • Return skilled migration: background for starting (continuing) labor activity in the Arctic (influence of reference environment)
Stereotypes about the North	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The character of northerners: “the world of real people”, responsiveness, sincerity • Romanticized perception of the features of life in the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation through their uniqueness, unusualness – “not to be in the trend”
Source: own compilation based on the materials of in-depth interviews of the sociological survey.	

are drawn to the north, but I think it's purely financial. Perhaps a few individuals feel a spiritual connection to Chukotka and don't want to move, but this is likely uncommon” (Chukotka AO, male, 29 years old).

Wages are perceived as a means of compensating for the difficulties one faces living and working in the Arctic regions. Wages compensate not only for the high cost of living, but also for the emotional and stressful difficulties imposed by the harshness of the climate on physical and emotional health, including the longing for family and friends who remain in another region. We should note “*delayed life syndrome*”, “*fear of missing out*”, which can lead to serious emotional distress and burnout.

“It feels like while I'm here, life's going on somewhere else. It's just all about relationships and connections. It's all about socialization,

dynamic life, and it's difficult here because of the harsh weather and polar night” (Chukotka AO, male, 29 years old).

“I feel sorry for parents who still say: “I will save up now, put money aside, the working year will be over”. The whole older generation says (the informant quotes parents' statements): “Do the same thing: now save money, work for a while, then just leave, you don't need it. We are the generation that came to build” (Yamalo-Nenets AO, female, 21 years old).

The phrase “*wages keep me here*” has become common and widespread when explaining the habitability of the population in the Arctic. Certainly, working in the Arctic presents a challenging goal for attaining high income compared to many other regions, particularly those from which one has relocated.

“Here you get into the mood, you feel the money and you want more and more. I came here to pay back the loan, the mortgage. Well, for 5 years, roughly speaking, it all depends on whether you get good position and higher earnings, and you won’t want to come back. People who live here for a long time, get a good salary, and when they leave for the mainland, they come back because they can’t get used to the standard of living on the mainland, it’s different there than in Anadyr. It’s a common occurrence” (Chukotka AO, male, 29 years old).

To determine the main “points” of attraction of young people to the Arctic, let us turn to the statistical data on the municipal entities of the AZ RF, reflecting the changes in population size, the intensity of migration increase and the level of wages (Tab. 3). The population is growing most massively in those settlements of the AZ RF, the economic impetus of development of which is based on the oil and gas producing sectors of the economy. In fact, the popularity of this destination among incoming migration flows and positive population growth are explained by the higher than average wage level in the AZ RF.

The financial factor, being the strong point of the attractiveness of working in the Arctic, in

combination with the urbanized environment has the potential to make the Arctic cities *an alternative to large agglomerations-megacities* that traditionally attract young people due to the diversity of socio-cultural infrastructure, high level of development of professional and business environment. At the same time, the advantage of Arctic cities over megacities is a more balanced rhythm of life, a lower level of social race and competition.

“I think it’s nice in our north, the salary level is the same, but there are no traffic jams, well, to each their own. I enjoy visiting Saint Petersburg, its theaters, cinemas, and Nevsky Prospect. I also like going to Moscow, to visit the Bolshoi and other theaters, dine at restaurants. I have such an opportunity and I like it better, to go out and relax, but I am not drawn to live there” (Murmansk Oblast, female, 31 years old).

“My income tripled, I started to work in a more stable and balanced way, not the way I was working before. Roughly speaking, I started living. Living in a big city you spend a lot of time in traffic, you don’t sleep much, and here everything is near and there is everything you need, just on a different scale” (Krasnoyarsk Krai, male, 31 years old).

Table 3. Leaders among municipalities in the AZ RF in terms of population and migration increase within the framework of interregional migration, indicating the share of young people in the total number of arrivals and average accrued wages (AAW), 2021

Municipal district	Population, people	Population change from 2011 to 2021, people	Migration increase rate per 10,000 people	Share of youth in total arrivals in 2021	AAW, rubles	AAW/LW*
Labytnangi	32,586	6,014	27	37.1%	95,931	5.6
Gubkinsky	38,336	12,488	19	40.4%	120,924	7.1
Purovsky District	42,693	-9,109	69	40.8%	121,660	7.1
Salekhard	52,272	7,639	27	38.6%	125,666	7.4
Nadymsky District	67,273	-1,054	129	40.4%	145,196	8.5
Novy Urengoy	118,667	6,475	-48	35.6%	127,031	7.5
Norilsk	184,645	6,506	-35	44.3%	122,922	9.2
AZ RF	2,473,086	-127,839	-41	41.7%	86,180	4.9

* LW – living wage (the whole population), 2021.
 Source: own compilation according to the database of municipalities. Available at: <https://rosstat.gov.ru/storage/mediabank/Munst.htm> (accessed: December 20, 2022).

*“I’ve noticed that **there is even no competition here, and people are very relaxed.** If people go to the mainland, they return. Perhaps the reason is tough competition, with 100 applicants per job there, and here the number of applicants is negative”* (Chukotka AO, male, 29 years old).

Thus, one of the basic meanings of moving to the AZ RF is the possibility of high earnings on its territory, which allows solving significant financial problems for migrants who were unable to earn money for large purchases in their previous place of residence. At the same time, earnings “in the North” are perceived as a compensation for experiences and difficulties caused by the feeling of isolation of northerners and other difficulties of living in harsh conditions.

Combined with the financial component, confirmed during the research and provided with context, another motive to stay in the Arctic for the long term emerges – the opportunity for *unique professional experience and development in the profession and career*. The economic orientation of the AZ RF and the high science intensity of the Russian Arctic economy allow developing professionally with major employers and gaining unique and competitive experience.

*“Having got here, I realized that there was a **unique opportunity to participate in scientific activities, in the elimination of a major environmental disaster in Russia – it was a unique opportunity to apply all my knowledge, experience, skills and abilities in real life. It was a very big boost to my professional growth**”* (Krasnoyarsk Krai, male, 31 years old).

*“I have an acquaintance who studies whales and people. **This work inspires him and he gets a kick out of it.** It might be **interesting on the research side, but nothing more than that**”* (Chukotka AO, male, 29 years old).

“In fact, my husband, if I probably didn’t push him all the time, he would have stayed here

*another year, maybe another year and a half. Because **he’s doing what he likes** – emergency volunteer development, basic military training. He likes all this stuff”* (Yamalo-Nenets AO, female, 26 years old).

Given this motive, we can conclude that the opportunities for professional development are determined, on the one hand, by the economic characteristics of the macroregion, which is the basis of its crucial importance and noteworthy emphasis in management practice. On the other hand, the biggest vertically-focused companies of the extracting complex and manufacturing industry operate in the Arctic territories, which provide opportunities for building a professional career through the system of personnel recruitment. The mentioned professionalization and earnings form the basis of informants’ rational motivation to migrate.

The study shows that there is also a specific irrational motive that romanticizes life in the AZ RF through its uniqueness, originality and complexity: life is perceived through the attitude *“not to be in the trend”, “to overcome oneself”*.

*“I was drawn to the chance to call myself a polar explorer, a northerner. **The contrast of the region is appealing because most individuals prefer the south, but here I wanted to preserve my uniqueness. It’s a distinctive philosophy and approach that requires love and dedication. A different type of character, it is shaped here in a different way**”* (Krasnoyarsk Krai, male, 31 years old).

*“They say that Chukotka is a world of real people due to the distinct identity and values found here. **Trust and morality are highly emphasized. Living here requires good moral character as not everyone can adapt to this lifestyle. Providing assistance to those in need is a norm and people here value kindness and things that are often disregarded on the mainland**”* (Chukotka AO, male, 29 years old).

“These thrilling snowmobile and fishing trips are activities for real men. I mean, ‘I am a real man, I live here in the north, in such a harsh region’, and this is their attitude to the north, to the self. Only those with strong spirits can survive and thrive here. If you are strong in spirit, then living in the north is the perfect place for you” (Krasnoyarsk Krai, female, 33 years old).

Working in challenging climates can be a personal ambition that tests one’s resilience, competitiveness, and strength. It presents a “challenge to oneself” that, once overcome, leads to personal growth and development. This formula resembles the idealized message of the Soviet era, when young people went to “build” northern cities for future generations, stood at the origins of the development of hard-to-reach and climatically complex territories. The romantic message of today takes on a new meaning of “not being in the trend”, not living “like everyone else”, not being in the stream of “fashion trends”, but being unique and special in some way. Living and working in the Arctic provides a unique and special experience, which builds human and social capital and holds a favorable position as an advantage for Arctic residents.

We should note that the gender context is evident in the romanticized meaning of life and stay in the AZ RF, as reflected in the informants’ statements. In male migration, the predominant motive is the aspiration for professional development and resolving financial and material tasks. This is viewed as improving the overall standard of living for the family. Women’s motivation is often rooted in following their male partner or spouse, guided by their desire for relational growth, support for their partner, and the arrangements of family life. It is clear from the interviews that professional fulfillment increases the chances that men will stay in the AZ RF. Women tend to compare cities in terms of aesthetics. Industrial northern cities “lose” in this comparison and are described with such epithets as “gray”, “provincial”, “dark”.

*“When I think of a provincial town, I have a picture in my mind of such a **small, dreary** town. I think of towns in the Sverdlovsk Oblast, where I used to live. They had a lot of heavy industry, and **were usually built around factories and industries** of some kind. That’s why I still think of provincial Ural towns as being industrial and gray, **without much effort to develop or beautify** them. Nadym felt like one of those kinds of towns to me”* (Yamalo-Nenets AO, female, 26 years old).

Despite the unique urban conditions in northern regions, migration to the urbanized Arctic serves as a social ladder for inhabitants of non-Arctic rural settlements and small towns, who were previously unable to secure well-paying jobs in their previous place of residence. It offers the opportunity to gain higher wages, along with fully or partially paid housing provided by the employer as a job perk, as well as social security and broader financial prospects for vacations, loan payments and major purchases (real estate, cars, etc.).

*“Moving to an unfamiliar place can be frightening. **But we didn’t have our own apartment** there, we lived with our parents, and now we have the apartment provided with the job”* (Republic of Karelia, female, 34 years old).

Educational migration for young people from non-Arctic rural areas plays a similar function as separation and social ladder.

*“What made me feel confident was that I didn’t want to go to Petrozavodsk because it’s nearby. I **wanted to go somewhere further for a new experience** since many people I know went to Petrozavodsk. Basically, I got what I wanted. The university is amazing, with engaging classes and extracurricular activities”* (Murmansk Oblast, female, 19 years old).

Migration, in a sociological context, involves enhancing living standards through increased earnings, improved housing, and the ability to make significant purchases. It also fulfills the need for

professional development and recognition through professionalization. Migration also offers individuals an opportunity to obtain autonomy, independence, and separation. Additionally, it can lead to family formation and change in social status.

The motives for migration are confirmed by the synthetic theory of migration and lie in the context of maintaining certain social ties (following a husband, parents or relatives; following the experience of friends, etc.), the essential traits of a certain social group. Social networks play a crucial role in the process of migration: “family and friends effect”, “chain reaction”, and “migration capital”. It is important that decisions to migrate are influenced by reference groups (parents, relatives, friends, colleagues), and the motives for migration are correlated with the goal of improving the well-being of families.

Thus, we can summarize what are the features of motivation to migrate in the AZ RF.

1) The motivation for migrating to the AZ RF among individuals who are dissatisfied with the high levels of competition and fast-paced lifestyles of megacities is driven by the desire to earn money. Arctic offers the opportunity to make money while avoiding the stress of social race, competition, and busy schedules. It is more difficult for migrants from regions with not very high economic potential to succeed in large agglomerations, while the labor-deficient regions of the Arctic offer job prospects and scope for growth.

2) For some representatives of the young generation, development in the harsh North, rather than in a large metropolis, is determined by the motive to get a unique experience – “not to be in the trend” and to test themselves for “strength”, to strengthen their skills, to “harden” their character; as a way to be successful. Young people are attracted to the differences in lifestyle between the northern regions and large cities (contrasts in leisure

activities, climate, rhythm of life). Simply residing in the North is indicative of strong and determined character.

3) The Arctic’s romanticization reflects young people’s longing for moral virtues like kindness, helpfulness, and trust. The close social ties in Arctic cities offer an escape from the “loneliness of large urban areas”.

4) When looking for a job or education opportunities in the Arctic, young people are motivated by the desire for novelty, the opportunity to establish new social connections, and the prospect of experiencing something different. Concurrently, the recruitment practices of companies operating in the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation, including remote interview options, housing provisions, and accessible transportation, facilitate migration, especially from rural locations.

In the statements of some informants there is a rational connection between the reason for migration and the ultimate goal of staying in the Arctic, which confirms the so-called phenomenon of *the temporary worker* in the North (Burtseva et al., 2020) – the stigmatization of a person with a delayed life syndrome for the sake of material purpose and benefit. This is the reason for the generational turnover in the Arctic, called *commuting* (Zamyatina, Pilyasov, 2018), which is the social and economic norm for the Arctic macroregion.

“There is such a movement of people in our region. Young people from the province, small towns, and rural areas move here to work, to settle down, and the elderly who have accumulated wealth, tend to relocate to warmer regions, often closer to their family. When we were looking for housing in Severodvinsk, the real estate agent asked ‘why we chose to move there when many others are leaving?’” (Arkhangelsk Oblast, female, 35 years old).

Table 4. Areas of scientific and managerial work in the AZ RF and the activities of social institutions, in which the findings on the features of young people's motives for moving to the AZ RF can be used

Themes clarifying and explaining migration to the AZ RF revealed through in-depth interviews	Areas of scientific and managerial work	Social institutions
The effect of educational migration: living arrangements during adulthood and separation from the family	Assessment of educational migration opportunities for young people in the AZ RF	Enrollment campaign of vocational education organizations in the AZ RF; career guidance institute
Return skilled migration: background for starting (continuing) labor activity in the Arctic (influence of reference environment)	Ensuring return skilled migration to the AZ RF	Territorial bodies of the employment service in the AZ RF
Unique professional experience in the Arctic as an opportunity for development in profession and career; income in the Arctic as a solution to the acute problem of financial shortages	Highlighting the benefits of employment with the AZ RF employers	Personnel recruiting system of employers of the AZ RF; career guidance institute
Nature of northerners: "the world of real people", responsiveness, sincerity; romanticizing the features of life in the AZ RF as unique, unusual – "not to be in the trend"	Positioning information about life and employment opportunities in the romanticized context of the Arctic lifestyle	Formation of an attractive image of the AZ RF and branding of territories
Housing provision as an opportunity to separate from parents and have "own" accommodation	Comprehensive development of the housing market in the AZ RF; increased demand for the services of construction companies in the AZ RF	Promotion and expansion of the "Arctic mortgage"
Arctic cities – an alternative to megacities (comfort of life rhythm and stress minimization)	Using urban technologies to improve the socio-cultural infrastructure of Arctic cities; development of research in the field of environmental sociology	Formation of positive image and branding of territories
Source: own compilation based on the materials of in-depth interviews of the sociological survey.		

Commuting actualizes the purpose of the study and raises the main question of attracting migrants and stimulating migration inflows to the Arctic. The opinion of one of the informants, aimed at long-term residence in one of the Arctic constituent entities, very accurately complements the significance of the topic of migration motives: *"The problems of the Russian Arctic are not from cold and climate, but from economic and social infrastructure"*. A deep dive into the reasons for migration reveals additional contexts of motives, sharpened by both tangible and intangible components, the consideration of which will allow forming a more positive image of the AZ RF to attract young people (Zamyatina, 2016). Based on the formulated themes that clarify and explain the motivation of migration in the AZ RF, we identify the following areas of work and social institutions in which the findings can be used (Tab. 4).

Discussion and directions for further research

In general, we can conclude that the features of the motives of youth migration to the Russian Arctic through the search for the interrelation of life purposes and the specifics of living in the Russian Arctic have the potential for scaling up in terms of strengthening the attractiveness of the Russian Arctic. However, researchers speak of "mythologizing the well-being of the North, tightening structures of inequality and extensive use of infrastructure, which is reflected in the decline in the standard of living and quality of life of northerners. Only a small part of them receive high incomes, but even they no longer compensate for the costs associated with working in harsh climatic conditions and expensive living in the North" (Lytkina, Smirnov, 2019).

Avoiding the stress of large megacities can be replaced by stress and burnout from living in remote

northern territories. Experiences are conditioned by climatic inconveniences, feeling of isolation, specificity of industrial northern cities. All this is consistent with the so-called “topophobia affecting the population of the cities of the Kola North” (Burtseva et al., 2020). “Topophobia” weakens the connection with cities due to indifference and negative perception of climate, environmental situation, etc.

Arctic cities may find it difficult to compete with megacities due to “the formation of a mature virtual reality, <...> radically changing the space of comparison of models of self-actualization” and “the emergence in Russia (especially in the capital and large cities) of developed centers of consumer society that form powerful fields of attraction for the hinterland” (Il’in, 2022).

We see the prospect of further analysis of the results taking into account the gender aspect, aimed at identifying the features of migration

behavior of male and female population. We also plan to expand the research in terms of forming expert opinion on the mechanisms of organizing interregional labor migration to study the ways of attracting population to the region and introducing knowledge about the migration behavior of young people. The issue of return skilled migration is also of scientific and applied interest: weather young people, adapted from childhood to life in the Arctic, after receiving education outside the AZ RF, return to their native northern regions to work.

The results of the study on the structure and interrelations of the features of motives for moving to the AZ RF have high practical and epistemological significance in the development of a more accurate and detailed motivational toolkit for attracting the population to the Arctic zone within the framework of demographic and human resource policy of the macroregion.

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