

**Who will live in small Russian towns?
(estimating the migratory mobility of the youth from small Russian towns)**

Given the growing shortage of labor, which is gradually extending to most of the Russian regions, the suggestions are progressively made about the possibility of solving this problem, in particular, at the expense of the population living in small towns of the country where the employment problems are still urgent enough. Since the matter concerns the prospects of the Russian economy's development, the life plans of those who have yet to find their place in the labor market are of special interest.

A study of the rate of migratory mobility of young people living in small Russian towns was carried out in 2005-2006, sponsored by the Independent Migration Research Council of the CIS and Baltic Countries. The survey covered four small towns: Vyazniki in Vladimir oblast, Yartsevo in Smolensk oblast, Shar'e in Kostroma oblast, and Buinsk in the Republic of Tatarstan. The chosen towns are unified by a common feature— these towns are former monofunctional centers that are typical for the urbanization of the Soviet period. The economic instability and social troubles of such towns became particularly apparent in the postsoviet time.

Pupils in the eleventh (graduation) grade were interviewed. There was a total of 500 respondents (100 in each settlement). Schools were chosen arbitrarily.

The questionnaire form included 32 questions. The emphasis was placed on the educational and professional plans of the youth, on their readiness to migrate to other regions, to leave their relatives, home, customary environment for these purposes. The questions of the inquiry form also concerned the dependence of the youth's migratory plans on a modern economic situation in a concrete small town, aspects of the possible return to hometowns in the event of their economic survival. Expert interviews with the administrators of towns, workers of district public education authorities, employment agencies, headmasters and teachers of schools served as an additional source of information.

Migratory intentions and the direction of supposed migrations

The overwhelming majority of school leavers (64%) does not intend staying in their towns after finishing a secondary school and only 14% of them said that they did not have migratory intentions. 22% of young people could not yet make an exact decision, but the analysis of their answers to other questions of the inquiry form permits one to make the conclusion that they will rather supplement the rows of school students planning to go away than those of students planning to stay.

Girls turned out to be more mobile than boys: 70% of them are firmly sure in the intention of leaving a hometown, 17% of them still hesitate, meanwhile the share of sure boys is equal to 54%, and that of hesitating boys is equal to 28%.

The headmasters' estimate of the annually increasing flow of school leavers going away from home confirms the fact that the migratory intentions of school students living in small towns are really serious. In addition, this fact is also evidenced by the observations of school students themselves. Answering the question about the

migratory intentions of their companies, 70% of school students said that there were “many people wishing to go away” among their friends and acquaintances, and 15% of respondents asserted that “everybody would go away if possible”. Certainly, when the matter concerned the accomplished facts of departure in the inner circle of school students, the results turned out to be somewhat moderate (54% of respondents said that there were many or very many gone people among their acquaintances, and 39% of respondents said that their gone acquaintances were not numerous but that there were some), but in this case the migratory trend was also predominant.

The migration planned by school leavers is directed predominately to regional centers and neighboring large cities. For the most part, these are the towns that students visited in the course of short-term travels.

Contrary to the common opinion that “the entire country” aspires to settle in Moscow, the sociological survey revealed different intentions. Moscow attracts only 14% of school leavers from Yartsevo, 7% from Vyazniki, and 2% from Shar’e. As a whole, Moscow turns out to be more attractive than St. Petersburg only by 1% and obviously yields to regional centers. Certainly, the choice in the disfavor of Moscow can be explained by the very high cost of life in it and by the high competition between entrants to Moscow universities, but the above-indicated trend is also confirmed in the course of other investigations.

A constant versus temporary migration what will school leavers prefer?

Nowadays 23% of school leavers are sure that they will leave their hometown forever (the pupils who gave this answer are most numerous (32%) in Vyazniki and least numerous in Buinsk (13%)). Other 21% of pupils prefer to go away for a period of more than 5 years, i.e., to return after their studies not at once. Taking into consideration the experience of previous school leavers, about which expert-teachers spoke, one can class both above-mentioned categories among constant migrants with great probability.

The school leavers who plan to get a specialty and return home account for approximately one third of respondents. Supposedly, the pupils of this category can be referred to as temporary migrants. However, when answering the following question about the circumstances of return, only 1% of pupils (!) firmly declared that they would not stay too long in another town, having obtained a diploma. In addition, according to the evidence of experts, even those who nevertheless return to their hometowns after studies do not stay too long there in any case.

Consequently, it is most probable that the total amount of students who prefer constant rather than temporary migration will be more than half.

The factors influencing the migratory behavior of pupils

It turned out that the presence of a high-paid job exerted the most essential influence on the school leavers' desire to stay in a hometown after finishing a school (or their desire to return to it after getting a special education in other town) (more than 40% in Vyazniki, Yartsevo, and Shar’e). Moreover, a character of job proper is still of

secondary importance for pupils—only 4% noted the presence of an occupational work.

The opportunity of getting higher education was mentioned by pupils as another important factor influencing migratory plans (13% of respondents). The pupils who planned to go away expressed an apparent dissatisfaction with the set of educational institutions in small towns: 54% of them estimated the possibilities of getting education at home as being unsatisfactory.

The decision about departure that was made by 17% of pupils is so firm that they do not see even theoretically any reasons, for which they could voluntarily stay, and approximately a quarter of pupils declares that no objective or subjective circumstances can prevent them from going away.

School leavers consider that the absence of money for payment of studies (24%), absence of an apartment in another town (18%), failure in entrance to a university (chargeless departments are meant) (6%), and lack of information about other towns (7%) are the most essential objective factors that can break migratory plans.

Main conclusions

The conducted research clearly shows how much the potential level of the migratory mobility of the youth living in small towns is high: according to direct and indirect estimates, approximately three thirds of young people are ready to leave their “native land.” Initially, this is temporary migration with the purpose of getting education, but the plans for a post-university future that are formulated by students show that the overwhelming majority of them does not bind a further life with a hometown. Consequently, temporary migration has every prospect of turning into the constant one.

The obtained conclusions contain many facts that are positive for the country as a whole. There has appeared a new generation of the Russians, whose educational pretensions considerably exceed the level of education that their parents formerly got. They are ready to change a residence place with ease to achieve their purposes. Consequently, a number of problems connected with the deficiency of labor resources in large cities of various Russian regions can be solved in prospect with their help. However, the presence of the supply of high-paid jobs is one of the major factors influencing their migratory intentions, i. e., the size of wages is presently more important for them than the content of work proper.

The revealed picture is hardly favorable for small towns. Certainly, there was always a migration from small towns to large cities that formed in them not only marginal strata of society, but also the intellectual elite of large cities. However, this migration has never had such a mass character. The prospect that is expected for small towns at the retention of modern migratory trends seems to be threatening. This is not simply the outflow of population but the leakage of young generation that will lead to the accelerated (even against the background of All-Russian demographic trends) ageing. In addition, it will sharpen even greater the problem of the outflow of qualified personnel, as young specialists usually stay in large cities, having got professions necessary to a city (this problem is acute in small towns even without this owing to

the participation of more active population in the processes of labor migration). As a result, the situation is possible, when no investments will be able to revive township-forming enterprises and, consequently, small towns.