

ETHNIC RELATIONS AND MIGRATION

REPRODUCTIVE AND MIGRATION ATTITUDES OF CONTEMPORARY YOUTH OF THE EAEU STATES (RUSSIA, KAZAKHSTAN, KYRGYZSTAN: A CASE STUDY)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37178/ca-c.21.2.11>

Evgenia SIGAREVA

*Ph.D. (Econ.), Leading Researcher,
Institute for Demographic Studies, Federal Center of Theoretical and
Applied Sociology, Russian Academy of Sciences (IDR FCTAS RAS)
(Moscow, Russian Federation)*

Svetlana SIVOPLYASOVA

*Ph.D. (Econ.), Associate Professor, Leading Researcher,
Institute for Demographic Studies, Federal Center of Theoretical and
Applied Sociology, Russian Academy of Sciences (IDR FCTAS RAS);
Associate Professor, Department of Economics,
Moscow Aviation Institute (National Research University)
(Moscow, Russian Federation)*

The reported study was funded by RFBR, project number 20-311-70020.

The authors are grateful to Ainura A. Kocherbayeva, D.Sc. (Econ), Professor, Professor of the Department of Management of the Kyrgyz-Russian Slavic University and Leila F. Delovarova, Ph.D., Acting Associate Professor of the al-Farabi Kazakh National University for invaluable assistance in collecting empirical material, which made the implementation of this international project possible.

ABSTRACT

The article is devoted to the current aspects of demographic development in the EAEU member states in the context of studying the specifics of the reproductive and migratory behavior of young people in Russia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. The modern generation of young people in post-Soviet countries over the past three decades has been influenced by various factors that have radically transformed their views on family, childbirth and migration. Their attitudes towards reproductive and migratory behavior will dominate the future demographic trends not only in each of the studied countries, but also in the Eurasian space as a whole. Therefore, a detailed study of the attitudes of the young and educated generation is the most important task of demographic and sociological sciences. Based on the results of a sociological survey conducted using a unified methodology, the article examines the features of reproductive and migratory behavior in countries at different stages of the "demographic transition." It reveals the peculiarities of the respondents' attitude from the three states to official marriage, age preferences for starting a family and giving birth to their first child. Reproductive judgments regarding anticipated and ideal number of children are identified. The use of the ranking method allowed to detect the normative childbearing models in the three countries and the differ-

ences between them. The conclusion states that in all the states in question, the prevailing socio-economic conditions are an obstacle to the implementation of the existing ideal reproductive attitudes. The gender peculiarities of the views of young people in the three countries on extramarital unions, reproductive patterns and "planned childlessness" were noted. The article demonstrates that, with regard to the results of the study, in the next 25 to 30 years families in Russia will likely have a small number of children, in Kazakhstan—an average number, and reproductive behavior in Kyrgyzstan will likely retain its tendency towards having many children.

The article also contains conclusions about specific migration attitudes based on the replies to questions about the preferred place to apply professional skills, create a family and have children. The dependence of migration attitudes on gender and country of residence has been revealed. Based on empirical data, the groups of respondents characterized by pragmatic, patriotic and antipatriotic migratory behavior have been identified. It was determined that young people who live in Kyrgyzstan are more focused on moving to a new place of residence, while all respondents are quite cosmopolitan in regard to the place of application of their professional skills, and students are most patriotic about the place to start a family.

KEYWORDS: *reproductive behavior, sociological survey, birth rate, number of children, gender, migratory behavior, youth, Central Asia, Russia, respondents.*

Introduction

Back in the Soviet period, when the country was unified, there was a significant differentiation in the demographic trends by republic due to variations in reproductive behavior. Demographers at that time noted significant differences in birth rate intensity and varying rates of the downward trend

for the population of various Soviet republics. For instance, half a century ago, in 1970, the birth rate in the R.S.F.S.R. was 14.6%, in the Kazakh S.S.R.—23.4%, and in the Kirghiz S.S.R.—30.5%. Even then, these three republics were characterized by three types of birth rate: low, medium and high.

In the 1980s, due to the formation of significant labor surplus contingents in Central Asia and the increasing imbalance in the conditions of a single Soviet labor market, dozens of dissertations and scientific monographs were written on the government measures that would increase the population's migration mobility from labor surplus republics to labor-deficient regions. The change of geopolitical scenery in the Soviet space altered both the vector of migration movements and labor surplus severity. Thus, in order to determine the long-term prospects for the EAEU common market, it becomes important to study and compare the specifics of the population's reproductive and migratory behavior in these states, which, in fact, underlie the formation of disproportion in labor potentials.

Under the influence of historical events (the collapse of the U.S.S.R.), as well as many international processes, including globalization, the cultural expansion of Western values, consumerist ideology, population's demographic behavior, including reproductive and migratory behavior, began to transform rapidly.

In modern society, it is important to examine the gender role transformation and instability under the rapidly changing conditions in the context of studying the actors of reproductive behavior. For instance, men today can go on maternity leave and raise children, women can independently decide to terminate a pregnancy starting at the age of 15, marriage no longer has to be a once-in-a-lifetime event, the concept of "head of the family" is devalued, premarital/extramarital sexual relationships and a child-free rhetoric are becoming increasingly more common, etc.

The transformation of reproductive behavior, conditioned, in the opinion of many demographers, by the "second demographic transition," is gradually affecting both traditional societies and countries. However, whether men or women are subject to a more intense transformation in reproductive behavior still remains to be seen. Therefore, it was important for the purposes of this project to identify the specific perceptions among men and women in relation to various aspects of reproductive behavior in countries with low fertility (Russia), average fertility (Kazakhstan) and high fertility (Kyrgyzstan).

Migratory behavior is shaped by numerous factors, first and foremost, economic ones. In the overwhelming majority of cases, it is the insufficient income level, the inability to get a job in the place of residence, and poor working conditions that induce people to move to a new place of residence, including looking for ways to apply their abilities abroad. Secondly, there are social factors. Traditions of the recipient and donor countries, mental characteristics of the population, religion and level of religiosity in the country affect the scale, direction of migration, and the gender structure of the migration flow. Thirdly, there are political reasons, including military actions, harassment on the basis of gender, nationality, or race, that often force people to change their place of residence.¹

Apparently, people's migratory behavior differs depending on the socio-demographic characteristics of the population, i.e., gender, age and country of residence. Therefore, it is important to study the general transformation of the migration attitudes of the population, as well as with regard to these specific parameters.

Methods and Materials

This article is based on the results of a large-scale sociological survey conducted in Russia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan based on the author's integrated methodology developed in the Depart-

¹ See: L.L. Rybakovsky, *Migratsiia naseleniia (voprosy teorii)*, Moscow, 2003, available at [<http://rybakovsky.ru/migracia2.html>], 2 September, 2020.

ment of Population Reproduction and Reproductive Behavior of the IDR FCTAS RAS.² The questionnaire contained 24 questions, grouped into several blocks that seek to collect empirical information: the address block; questions related to the preferred age of marriage, birth of the first child; a block of questions on the assessment of demographic policy measures; a block of questions related to the assessment of extramarital unions and large families; a block of questions related to the reproductive experience in the parental family; a block of questions related to migration intentions, etc. In general, over 2,000 respondents were interviewed in 20 Russian regions in 2012-2020. In addition, representatives of the younger generation of other EAEU member countries (Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan) were interviewed using an adapted version of this method.

For the purposes of the research specified in the article subject, we selected the empirical material that allowed to analyze not only the specific features of the reproductive and migratory behavior of the countries of Central Asia and Russia, but also their group and gender specificity, in addition to the general characteristics of the reproductive and migratory behavior of young people.

Russian youths were interviewed in five cities in different regions of the country (Karachaevsk, Ufa, Maikop, Kursk, Kaliningrad). In Kazakhstan, the survey was conducted in the cities of Almaty and Nur-Sultan (Astana), in Kyrgyzstan—in the cities of Bishkek and Osh. The research was carried out in the form of a questionnaire. During the analysis of empirical materials, 939 questionnaires were selected. Of these, 544 were filled out in Russia, 214, in Kazakhstan, and 181, in Kyrgyzstan. Among the respondents, 53% were women, 47% were men.

The empirical material allowed to obtain extensive information on various aspects of reproductive and migratory behavior concerning the views of young people related to a wide range of issues related to the formation of behavior, including matrimonial and family. The article will only touch upon some aspects of the study, which characterizes the differences and similarities between the attitudes of young people in these countries to reproduction and migration.

Discussion and Approaches

Due to the orientation of Russian society towards the preservation of traditional family relations, enshrined in the new Constitution of the Russian Federation in 2020,³ researchers are interested in the transformation of young people's reproductive behavior in the current social reality. Due to the current pandemic-related problems, the interest in the trends of international population exchange in the EAEU member countries has reemerged. That, in turn, determines the scientific interest in migratory behavior. Notably, the study of reproductive and migratory behavior has a decades-long history. Research attention to demographic, including reproductive and migratory, behavior was due to the appearance of a new approach to understanding human behavior, namely, behaviorism. Its founder John B. Watson touched upon some aspects of the transfer of reproductive experience from mother to children. In his work *Psychological Care of the Infant and Child* there is a separate chapter devoted to the sex education of children.⁴ Well-known behaviorist Burrhus Skinner assumed a high probability of control over human behavior in his *Science and Human Behavior*. In an attempt to create a comprehensive theory of human behavior, he believed that people could be controlled and directed by changing the environmental conditions.⁵ After the recognition of this approach by Soviet

² The former Institute of Socio-Political Research, Russian Academy of Sciences.

³ See: New text of the Constitution of the Russian Federation with additions and amendments adopted in 2020, available in Russian at [<http://duma.gov.ru/news/48953/>].

⁴ See: J.B. Watson, *Psychological Care of Infant and Child*, First Edition, W.W. Norton & Comp., New York, 1928.

⁵ See: B.F. Skinner, *Science and Human Behavior*, Free Press, New York, 1965.

psychology in the 1970s, the study of human behavior, including reproductive and migratory, received a new impetus, both in theoretical and applied research.

The theory of behavior is based on the fact that it is a consequence of the interaction of the psychological structure of the individual (needs, interests, moral convictions, motives, goals, attitudes, decisions) with the social environment. Therefore, a change in the social environment caused by the modification of the fundamental factors of the society's existence will undoubtedly entail a modification of both reproductive and migratory behavior.

The first definition of "reproductive behavior" in Russian science was provided by Vladimir Borisov: "a system of actions, relationships and mental states of the individual associated with the birth or refusal to give birth to children of any order, in marriage or out of wedlock."⁶ Anatoli Antonov,⁷ Vladimir Arkhangel'sky,⁸ Dmitri Valentyev,⁹ Anatoli Vishnevsky,¹⁰ Valeri Elizarov,¹¹ Alexander Kvasha and others all addressed this subject.

The works of Tatiana Zaslavskaya,¹² Zhanna Zayonchkovskaya,¹³ Vladimir Iontsev,¹⁴ Viktor Perevedentsev,¹⁵ Leonid Rybakovsky,¹⁶ Sergey Ryazantsev and others were devoted to examining migratory behavior. Each author introduces their own research into the elaboration of theoretical and applied aspects of migratory behavior, which makes it possible to detail a wide range of emerging patterns in the sphere of formation and manifestation of migratory behavior.

Recent historical events have provided a new impetus to scientific research in the field of reproductive and migratory behavior. They include a new wave of depopulation, which has engendered the need for a new demographic policy vector, and a global social reality crisis associated with the global pandemic. Therefore, numerous works began to appear in the scientific information field, detailing the world, country, regional and generational aspects of reproductive and migratory behavior. An example of such research projects is the specialized issue of the *Nauchnoe obozrenie* (Scientific Review) journal, dedicated to COVID-19 and mobility,¹⁷ as well as the National Demographic Report *Demographic Well-Being of Russian Regions*¹⁸ and others.¹⁹

It is becoming obvious that the development of modern demographic trends, both at the global and national levels, increasingly determines the interest of the scientific community in the analysis of reproductive and migratory behavior.

⁶ See: V.A. Borisov, *Demografiia i sotsialnaia psikhologiia*, Moscow, 1970.

⁷ See: A.I. Antonov, *Sotsiologiia rozhdaniia*, Moscow, 1980.

⁸ See: V.N. Arkhangel'sky, "Reproduktivnoe i brachnoe povedenie," *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniia*, No. 2, February 2013, pp. 129-136.

⁹ See: D.I. Valentyev, A.Ya. Kvasha, "Osnovy demografii: [Textbook], Mysl Publishers, Moscow, 1989, 284 pp.

¹⁰ See: A.G. Vishnevsky, *Izbrannye demograficheskie Trudy*, Nauka Publishers, Moscow, 2005.

¹¹ See: V.V. Elizarov, *Perspektivy issledovaniy sem'i*, Moscow, 1987.

¹² See: *Migratsiia selskogo naseleniia*, ed. by T.I. Zaslavskaya, Corresponding member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Mysl Publishers, Moscow, 1970, 312 pp.

¹³ See: Zh.A. Zayonchkovskaya, "Migratsiia," in: *Naselenie Rossii 1994*, Moscow, 1994.

¹⁴ See: V.A. Iontsev, *Mezhdunarodnaia migratsiia: naseleniia: teoriia i istoriia izucheniia*, Issue 3, Dialog-MGU, Moscow, 1999, 370 pp.

¹⁵ See: V.I. Perevedentsev, *Metody izucheniia migratsii naseleniia*, Nauka Publishers, Moscow, 1975.

¹⁶ See: L.L. Rybakovsky, op. cit.

¹⁷ See: *Nauchnoe obozrenie*, Series 1: *Economics and Law*, No. 3, 2020.

¹⁸ See: T.K. Rostovskaia, A.A. Shabunova, V.N. Arkhangel'sky et al., *Demograficheskoe samochuvstvie regionov Rossii. Nacionalny demograficheskii doklad—2020*, ed. by T.K. Rostovskaia, A.A. Shabunova, Federal Center of Theoretical and Applied Sociology, Russian Academy of Sciences (IDR FCTAS RAS), ITD "Perspektiva", Moscow, 2021, 214 pp.

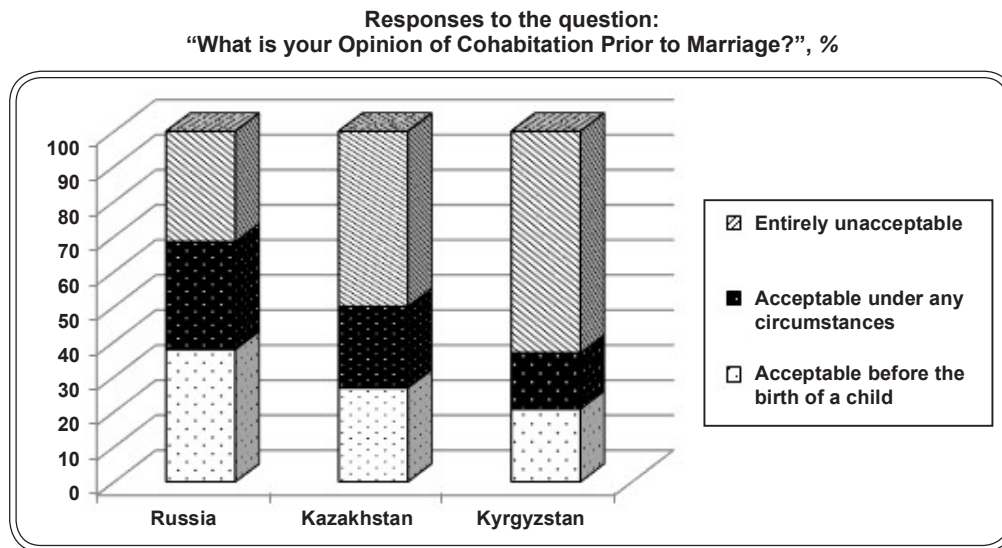
¹⁹ See: A.G. Grishanova, N.I. Kozhevnikova, E.S. Krasinets, "Migratsionnye problemy soiuznogo gosudarstva v period pandemii," in: *Instituty razvitiia chelovecheskogo potentsiala v usloviakh sovremennykh vyzovov: sbornik statey XI Uralskogo demograficheskogo foruma*, in two vols., Vol. I, Institute of Economics of UrO, Russian Academy of Sciences, Ekaterinburg, 2020, pp. 136-141.

Results

Country and Gender-Specific Features of the Reproductive Behavior of Youth in Russia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan

The results of a sociological study of the reproductive behavior have demonstrated the great importance of an officially registered marriage union in countries with medium and high birth rates (see Fig. 1). Marriage as an integral part of the family is typical of the overwhelming majority of young people in Kyrgyzstan (63%), for half of young people in Kazakhstan (50%) and only 31% of young people in Russia.

Figure 1



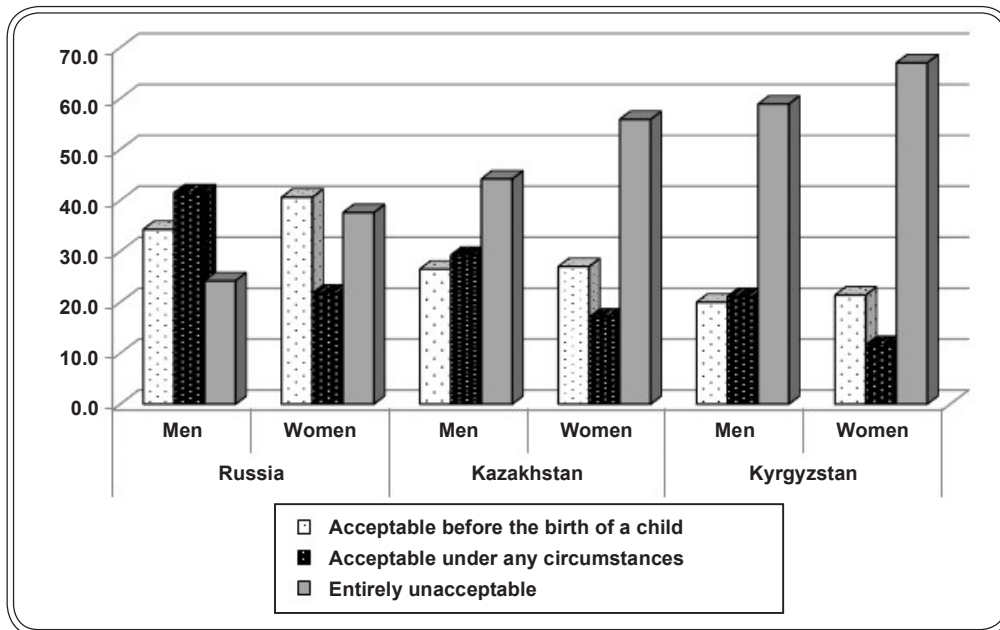
Young people from Russia (31%) are the most tolerant of extramarital affairs. In Kazakhstan, 23% of respondents hold similar views, and in Kyrgyzstan, the number is almost two times smaller than in Russia—16%. Let us begin by examining the perceptions of young people from Kazakhstan. In most of the questions related to reproductive behavior, they consistently occupied the middle position between their counterparts from Russia and Kyrgyzstan.

In regard to gender differences in the views on premarital unions, it should be noted that, among the respondents in each country, female respondents (37.6% to 67.0%) were more uncompromising than men, and considered it unacceptable to live together outside of a registered marriage (see Fig. 2).

Young men in Russia turned out to be the most tolerant towards premarital cohabitation. 41.5% of them consider such relationships acceptable in any case. Among young men from Kazakhstan, almost 30% hold the same opinion, and just over 21% of young men from Kyrgyzstan adhere to the same views. Young women in Russia are more inclined to believe that premarital relations are acceptable before the birth of a child (40.6%), but also a significant part of them (37.6%) do not approve of pre-marital relations at all. In Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, the opinion about the priority of officially registered marriage still prevails. Moreover, this view is typically dominant among young men and, to a greater extent, among young women.

Figure 2

Distribution of Responses to the Question:
 “What Is Your Opinion of Cohabitation Prior To Marriage?” by Gender and Country, %



One of the typical features of the “demographic transition” theory, along with a rise in the marriage age, is the decision of young parents to postpone the birth of their first child until a later age. If we estimate the average age at which a child is born (regardless of the priority) in the countries under examination, it turns out that it is approximately the same: 28.7 years in Russia, 28.7 in Kazakhstan and 28.0 years in Kyrgyzstan. It should be borne in mind that the dynamics of this indicator is under a differentiated influence of the reproductive model dominant in a particular country.²⁰ The most important evidence of the nature and stage of the “demographic transition” is the indicator of the age at which a woman gives birth to her first child.

Fig. 3 demonstrates the respondents’ choice of the most favorable age for the birth of their first child. The opinions of the respondents from Russia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan were monolithically concentrated within the so-called “golden decade” (21 to 30 years). During this period, an entire range of interests and life tasks appears in front of the young generation. These tasks require time to be realized. They include getting an education and a profession, starting a career, creating a family, and giving birth to their first child. It should be noted that the current average age of a woman giving birth to her first child in Russia has actually shifted to the second half of the golden decade (26 years), although over half of Russians (56%) pinpointed the preferred first birth age range as 21-25 years.

The data obtained in our study demonstrated that regardless of the survey country and the respondent’s gender, the most frequently preferred age for the birth of the first child in the “golden decade” is its first half: 21-25 years (see Table 1). 26-30 years was the second most suitable age pe-

²⁰ See: E. Shcherbakova, “The Average Age of a Mother at Childbirth Remained Quite Stable: Its Median Value for All Countries of the World was 28.8 Years in the 1970s, and 28.7 in the 2000s,” available at [<http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/2011/0489/barom03.php>].

riod for childbirth as indicated by the respondents. This choice was common among both men and women. Thus, 21-30 years is the unanimous preferred age range for the birth of the first child, both for the male and female populations of these countries.

Figure 3

**Distribution of Responses to the Question:
“Which Age Do You Consider Best for Giving Birth to the First Child?”, %**

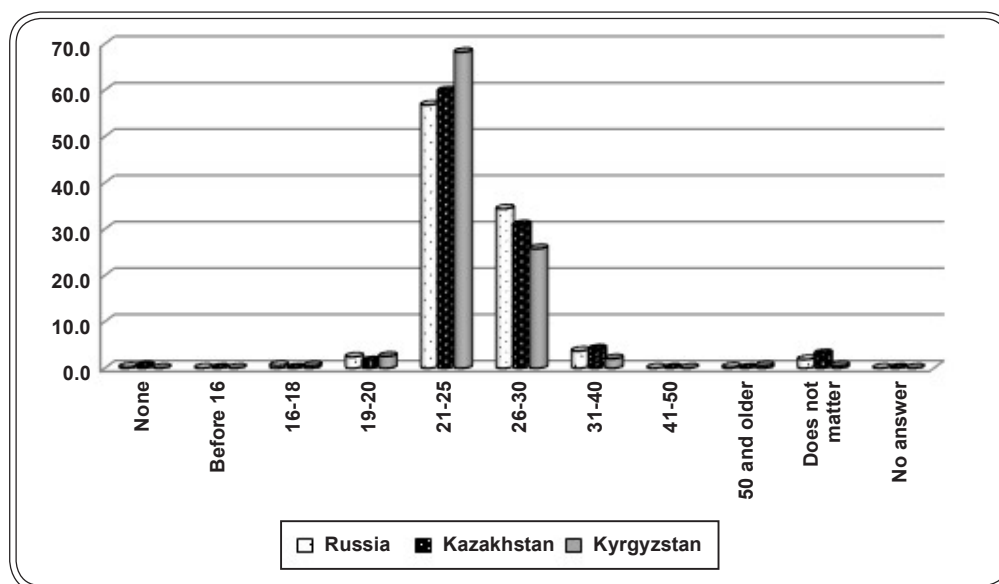


Table 1

**Responses to the Question:
“Which Age Do You Consider Best for Giving Birth to the First Child?”, %**

	Russia		Kazakhstan		Kyrgyzstan	
	men	women	men	women	men	women
None	0.4		1.2			
Before 16						
16-18	1.2					0.9
19-20	2.8	2.0	3.6		5.5	
21-25	46.2	65.7	63.9	56.8	53.8	80.4
26-30	39.7	30.0	22.9	36.9	35.2	17.8
31-40	6.1	1.7	4.8	3.6	4.4	
41-50						
50 and older	0.4				1.1	
Does not matter	3.2	0.7	3.6	2.7		0.9

Among the female respondents, the preference for having a child at the age of 21-30 is more clear-cut than among the males. This age is preferred by 98.1% of young women in Kyrgyzstan, by 93.7%, in Kazakhstan and by 95.6%, in Russia. Among men, this age range was a priority, but less significant: 89.0%, in Kyrgyzstan, 86.7%, in Kazakhstan and 85.8%, in Russia. The most diverse attitudes to the preferred age of giving birth to the first child were demonstrated by Russian men, and the most homogenous—by Kyrgyz women. Among the latter, over 80% of the respondents consider 21-25 to be the most favorable age for the birth of their first child. This is evidence that young women in Kyrgyzstan have the most traditional idea of the age at which their first child should be born, their behavior has been least transformed at this point and they are far less inclined to delay the fulfillment of their reproductive function.

The survey also found that, when responding to the question about the most favorable age for the birth of their first child, some of the Russian and Kazakh youths chose the “None” alternative. We can assume that these are supporters of the widely discussed, but still relatively uncommon child-free stance. Moreover, as the survey data show, only men from Russia and Kazakhstan chose this response. None of the respondents from Kyrgyzstan agreed with this statement, which further emphasizes the traditional reproductive model dominant in this country.

Speaking directly and specifically about reproductive plans, the study focused on identifying their different aspects. In the studies of demographers and sociologists, reproductive intentions are traditionally divided into real (expected) and ideal, which are assessed using various questions. Thus, the answer to the question: “How many children do you intend to have?” is usually identified with the respondents’ real plans. On the other hand, the answer to the question: “How many children would you like to have?” is identified with the desired number of children.²¹ In our work, we use differently formulated questions about the reproductive intentions of young people in the countries under consideration, which accentuates the results of the survey in a new way. Thus, survey results related to the expected number of children among the respondents from the three countries are ranked in the same way as half a century ago (see Fig. 4). The respondents from Russia are inclined towards having few children. The reproductive plans of young people from Kazakhstan are shifting towards an average number of children. Young people from Kyrgyzstan would like to have the largest number of children.

As for the approximate number of respondents who do not intend to have children, thus falling into the “planned childlessness” category, 3.4% of young people from Russia and 1.8% of those from Kazakhstan chose this option. According to our data, this phenomenon is statistically negligible in Kyrgyzstan.

If we rank the planned reproductive choice of the number of children, we will notice clearer trends in the reproductive plans of young people in the three countries. In total, the first three ranks of reproductive choice cover the vast majority of respondents. Also, there is a certain polarization of the reproductive choice in Kyrgyzstan between the average and large number of children. For Russians, the highest ranks of answers are as follows: 2 children (40%), 3 children (26%), 1 child (12%). For Kazakhstani, the ranking is as follows: 3 children (32%), 2 children (30%), 4 children (14%). Young people from Kyrgyzstan clearly have the expected large number of children: 4 children (31%), 3 children (30%), 6 and more children (13%). Together, these three dominant ranks covered the overwhelming majority of the survey participants: 80% of Russians, 78% of Kazakhstani and 74% of Kyrgyzstani.

Fig. 5 shows the ideal number of children for young people from Russia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. The reference to “ideal” reproductive behavior was reinforced by the modification of the

²¹ See: S.G. Ivchenkov, M.S. Ivchenkova, “Osobennosti reproductivnykh ustanovok sovremennoi molodezhi: mneniia ekspertov i realnost,” *Alma Mater* (Bulletin of the Higher School), No. 11, 2020, pp. 36-44.

Figure 4

Distribution of Responses to the Question: "How Many Children Do You Intend to Have?", %

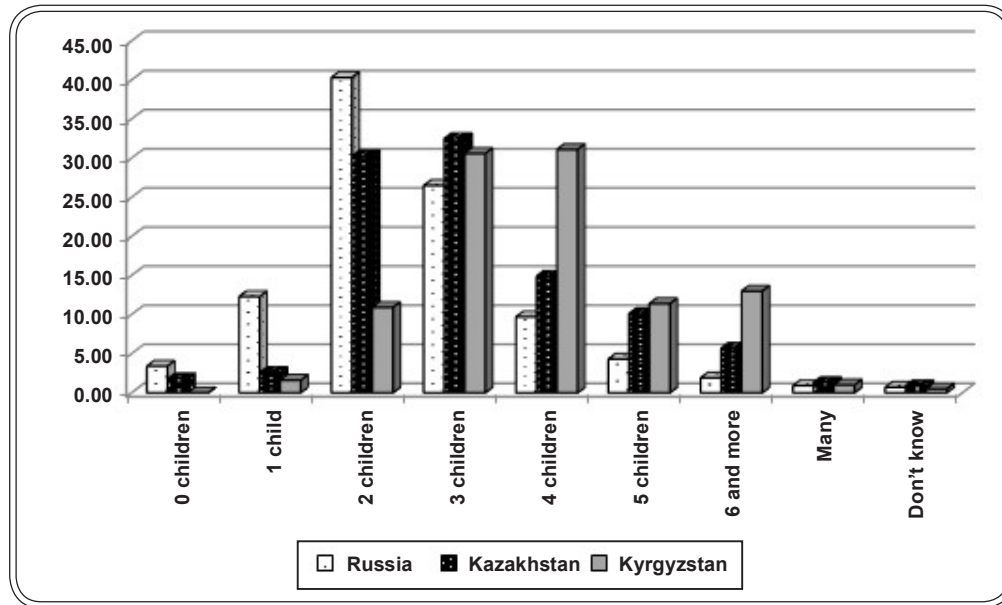
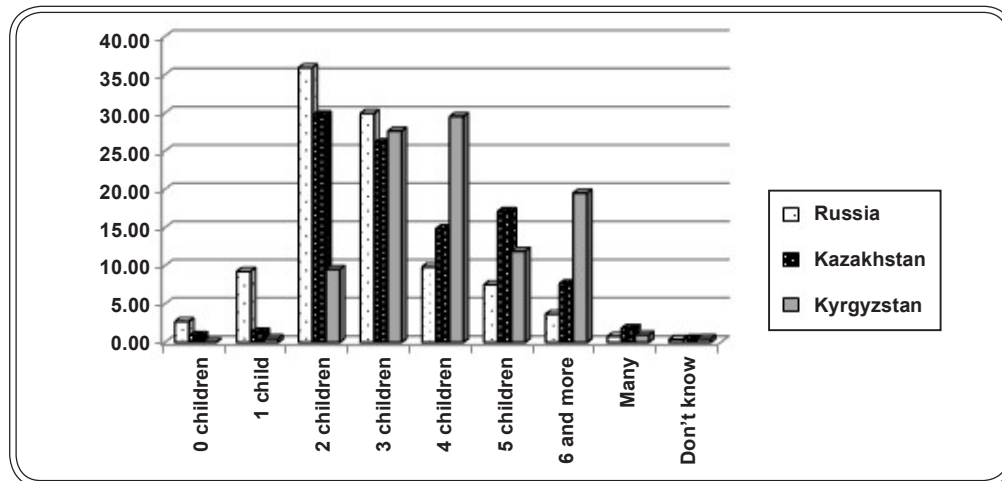


Figure 5

Distribution of Responses to the Question: "How Many Children Would You Like to Have if All the Required Conditions were in Place?", %



formulation of the question in our survey. We did not just ask: "How many children would you like to have?", as is usually done in other similar studies, but reinforced this "ideal nature" in the question with "ideal" circumstances: "...if all the required conditions were in place." This allowed to identify

the **maximum** reproductive intentions of these countries' youth today. An analysis of the responses to this question revealed a certain shift in the reproductive choice of respondents in all countries towards an increase in the number of children. However, these shifts are not equally sized.

Among the Russian youth, the reproductive choice to have 4 children was in the third place, the choice to have 2 children slightly decreased, and the choice to have 3 children slightly increased. The choice to have 1 child has moved down one rank. The views of young people from Kazakhstan have also shifted. The first place was taken by the 2-children choice, followed by 3 children, but the third place was taken by 5 children, which indicates the emergence of a shift in the views on the ideal number of children among Kazakhstani respondents. In Kyrgyzstan, the ranks of the preferred number of children, under ideal conditions, has not changed. The groups intent on having 4 and 3 children slightly decreased in size, but the group oriented towards 6 and more children has grown significantly (by up to 20%). Note also that in Russia and Kazakhstan, fewer respondents chose the planned childlessness option (2.7% and 1%, respectively), but still exist.

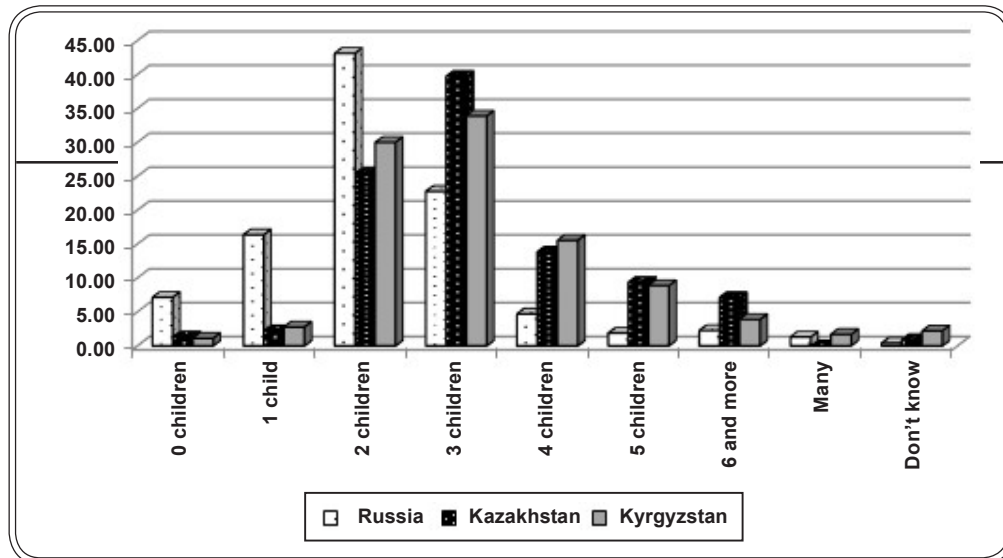
On the contrary, the share of respondents who declared their desire to have many children in the presence of all the necessary conditions increased along the north/south geographical vector: in Russia—53.4% (women) and 47.9% (men); in Kazakhstan—72.0% and 59.9% (respectively); in Kyrgyzstan—86.8% and 91.1% (respectively).

For a more detailed study of the reproductive attitudes of young people in Russia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, we also used the question that characterizes the reproductive choice under the current socio-economic conditions in these countries (see Fig. 6). In the context of this issue, it proved possible to compare current living conditions and ideal reproductive attitudes. Thus, its results can be compared with the responses to the previous question about the desired number of children, given all the necessary conditions.

In the figure, we see that reproductive views are more concentrated and begin to lean towards fewer children when the question is formulated this way. Compared to the choice of the ideal number

Figure 6

**Distribution of Responses to the Question:
“How Many Children Is It Best to Have in Our Times in Your Country?”, %**



of children, in Russia, the one-child and two-children options are growing more popular, and the support for the three-children option is declining. In Kazakhstan, the number of respondents who selected the two-child option is decreasing, of those who made the three-child choice is increasing and of those who opted for the five-child choice is sharply falling, while the four-child choice has the same number of supporters. In Kyrgyzstan, the transformation of reproductive choice is even more significant. Here it is shifting towards a decrease in the number of children, even when compared with the planned reproductive attitudes. The three-children choice ranks first. Moreover, against the background of a significant increase in the child-free choice in Russia and its slight increase in Kazakhstan, respondents who believe that it is not necessary to have children in the current conditions are even appearing in Kyrgyzstan.

At the same time, despite the decreasing effect of modern conditions on the realization of ideal reproductive behavior, the potential of the traditional reproductive views of the Central Asian republics is still high, both for the entire population of these countries, and for the male and female populations (see Table 2).

Table 2

**Responses to the Question:
“How Many Children Is It Best to Have in Our Times?”, %**

Number of Children	Russia		Kazakhstan		Kyrgyzstan	
	men	women	men	women	men	women
0 children	8.8	5.8	0.9	1,8	2.5	
1 child	16.3	16.5	3.6	0,9	1.3	4.0
2 children	38.8	46.7	27.0	23,9	23.8	35.0
3 children	23.8	22.0	45.9	33,6	33.8	34.0
4 children	6.3	3.4	9.9	17,7	21.3	11.0
5 children	2.1	1.7	9.0	9,7	6.3	11.0
6 children and more	2.1	2.4	2.7	11,5	6.3	2.0
Don't know	0.4	0.3	0.9	0,9	2.5	2.0
Many	1.7	1.0			2.5	1.0

This comparison showed that, due to the modern life conditions, the desire to have many children is sharply reduced in Russia and Kyrgyzstan (in both women and men), but remained practically unchanged among the respondents from Kazakhstan, even increasing slightly. Thus, only 29.5% of Russian female respondents believe that it is best to have 3 or more children at present. Among Russian men, this figure reaches 34.3%. In Kyrgyzstan, women who wish to have many children currently account for 58.0%, and men—67.7%. These data show that women in Russia and Kyrgyzstan do not currently intend to have many children compared to men in the respective country. However, this ratio is the opposite in Kazakhstan: women lean more towards having many children than men—72.5% versus 67.5%, respectively.

In addition, with a question formulated in this manner, an increased leaning towards childlessness was revealed even among respondents from Kyrgyzstan. Men from Russia, as well as women from Russia: 8.8% and 5.8% (respectively) have expressed their preference for the child-free ideology. There are respondents who hold this opinion among men (0.9%) and women (1.8%) in Kazakh-

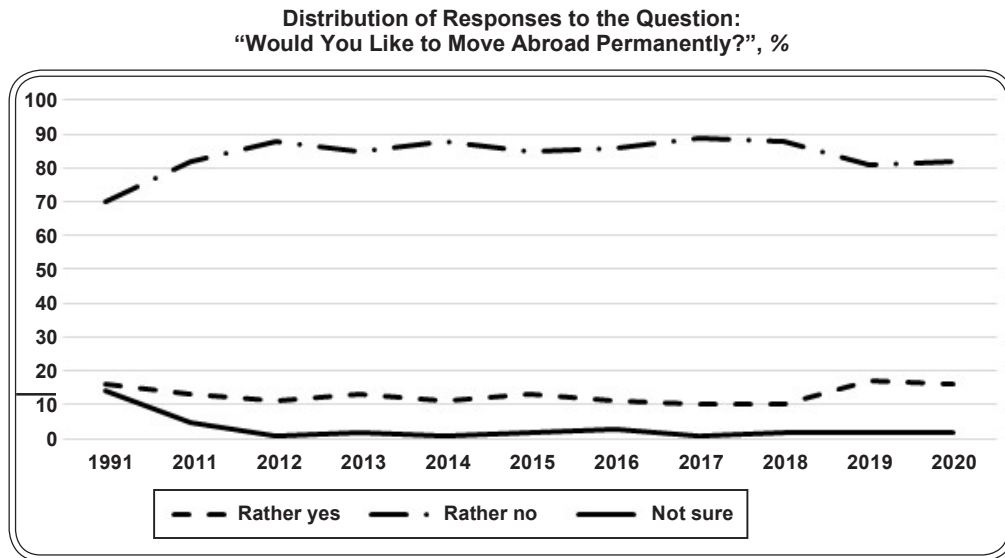
stan. Modern conditions had an impact on young men from Kyrgyzstan, 2.5% of whom believe that it is better not to have children at the present time. However, there were no adherents of childlessness among women from Kyrgyzstan.

Migratory Behavior of Youth in Central Asia and Russia: Inter-Country, Inter-Group, and Gender Specifics

The specifics of the population’s migratory behavior often become the subject of research by sociologists. This is hardly surprising, since migration is an important component of the demographic environment in any country, which affects the quantitative and qualitative parameters of the population structure.

Thus, the All-Russia Center for the Study of Public Opinion conducts an annual sociological survey in order to identify the migration attitudes of Russians. According to a study conducted in 2020, about 16% of Russians people would like to move abroad (see Fig. 7). At the same time, over the past 30 years since 1991, this parameter has changed insignificantly (from 10% in 2017 and 2018 to 17% in 2019) and strongly depends on the age of the respondents. While almost 40% of young people under the age of 24 have thought about moving to another country, people over the age of 60 are 10 times less likely to consider it (see Fig. 8).²²

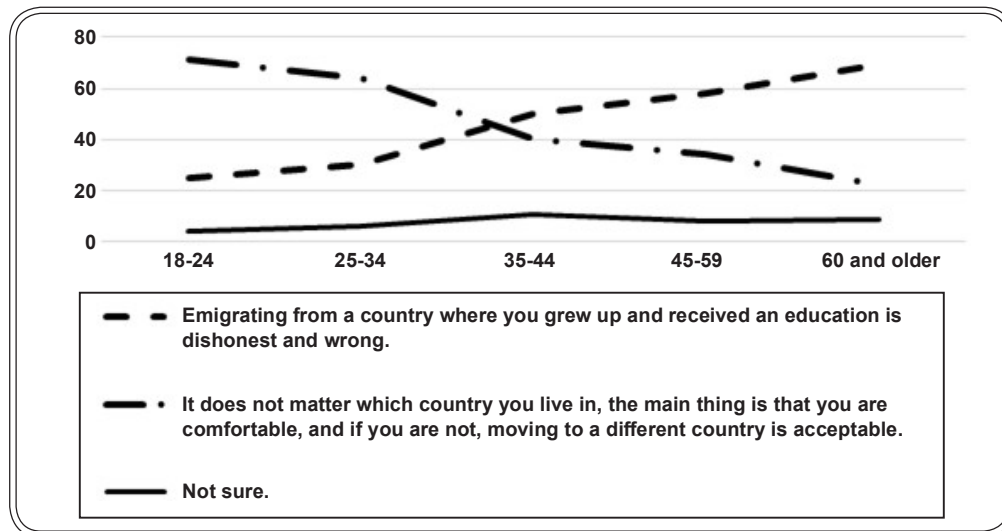
Figure 7



According to VTsIOM, the majority of the respondents have formed their judgments regarding emigration from the country. Young people demonstrate more “pragmatic” views (for 71% of respondents aged 18-24 it does not matter which country you live in). The older generation is more “patriotic” (for 69% of those over 60, it is unpatriotic to emigrate from the country).

²² See: “Emigratsionnye nastroyeniia—2020: gde rodilsia, tam i prigodilsia,” VTsIOM, No. 4325, 7 September, 2020, available at [<https://wciom.ru/index.php?id=236&uid=10431>].

Distributions of Responses to the Question:
 “Which of the Statements Do You Most Agree With?”, %



The present sociological study of the migration intentions of young people from the three countries, Russia, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan, was based on three questions that indirectly characterize the views on participation in migration movement and possible vectors of resettlement:

- Where would you apply your acquired professional skills?
- Where would you like to start a family?
- Where would you like your children to live?

The following alternatives were proposed:

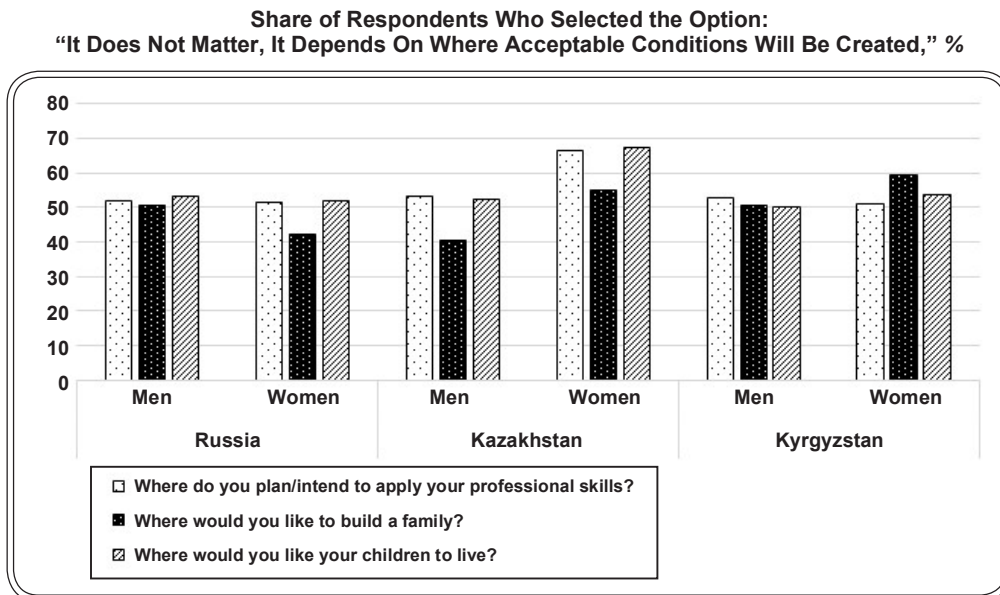
1. Only in Russia
2. In Russia and CIS countries
3. Only outside Russia and CIS countries
4. It does not matter, it depends on where acceptable conditions will be created.

This progression allows to split the respondents into three groups, conventionally called “patriots,” “anti-patriots” and “pragmatists.”

Analysis of the research results revealed that modern youth in all three countries most often adheres to pragmatic approaches in migration-related behavior choices.²³ More than 50% of the respondents selected the option “It does not matter, it depends on where acceptable conditions will be created” (see Fig. 9). This confirms that the modern youth in the three countries is chiefly guided by pragmatic reasons and rationally refers to the socio-economic conditions available at home in regard to the use of their professional skills, the creation of a family and the place of residence of their children.

²³ See: S.Yu. Sivoplyasova, E.P. Sigareva, “Nekotorye aspekty migratsionnoi motivatsii rossiiskoi molodezhi,” *Narodonaselenie*, No. 2, 2014, pp. 65-71.

Figure 9



At the same time, the choice of this answer option differs significantly depending on the gender, country of residence and the question posed. Thus, the greatest pragmatism in choosing the place to apply professional skills and the place of children’s residence was demonstrated by Kazakhstani women (66.7% and 52.3% of the total number of women who answered each question in Kazakhstan, respectively), and in relation to the place to start a family—by women from Kyrgyzstan (59.4% of respondents). The least pragmatic were Kazakhstani men and Russian women with regard to the choice of the place to start a family (40.6% and 42.2% of respondents, respectively).

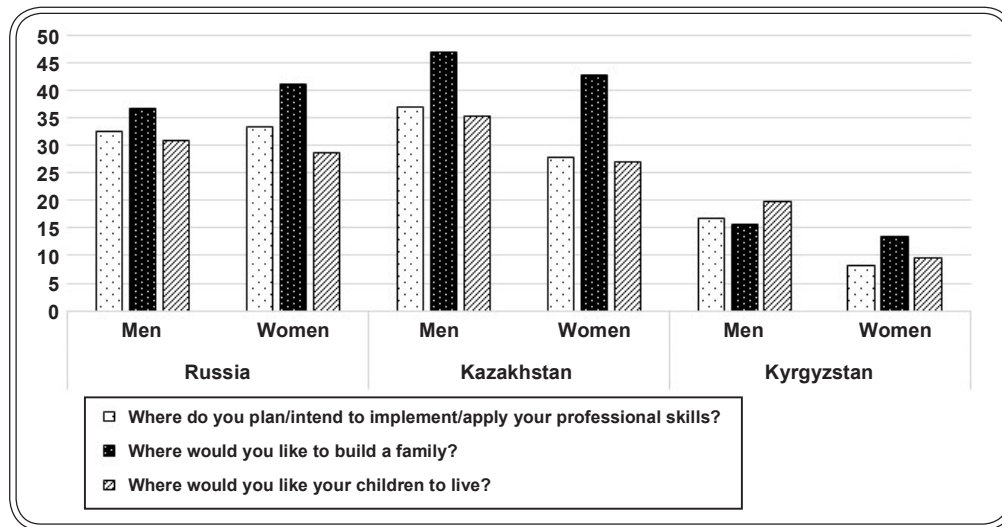
There are gender subgroups among the respondents that are characterized by significant differences in the implementation of pragmatic approaches in relation to certain migration-related plans. Thus, Russian women, as well as young men and women in Kazakhstan, have approximately the same attitude towards choosing a place to apply their professional skills and a place of residence for their children. At the same time, respondents from these groups define the desired place for creating a family in a more specific manner. Further research has shown that most often the choice is made in favor of the country in which the respondents lived at the time of the survey.

The second rather large group of respondents can be conditionally called “patriots.” These are the people who associate their future and the future of their descendants with the country where they lived at the time of the survey (for the purposes of this study, these countries will be called “home-land”). The results of the study show that the respondents are most “patriotic” about the place to start a family (see Fig. 10). Moreover, students in Kazakhstan generally demonstrate a more restrained attitude towards marriage migration, and wish to create families in their country. At the same time, they are ready to apply professional knowledge and raise children in other countries.

It is interesting to note that men from Kyrgyzstan showed patriotic feelings towards the country of their children’s residence more often than towards the place of application of professional knowledge and the place of creating a family. This may indirectly indicate a positive assessment of the country’s socio-economic development, as well as a desire to instill in children and preserve national cultural and mental traditions.

Figure 10

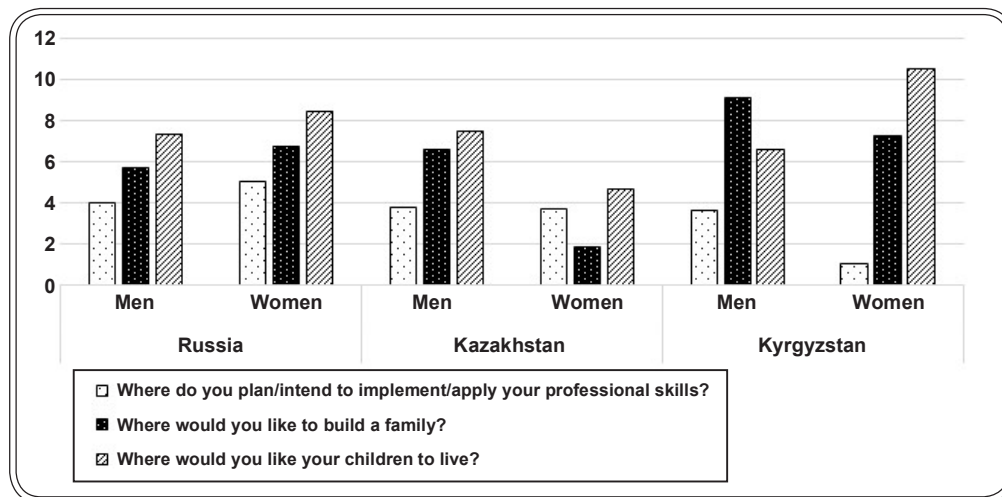
Share of the Respondents Who Selected the Option
“Only My Own Country,” %



An important direction of the study was to identify the attitudes of young people towards migration to non-CIS countries. Such respondents were united in a group provisionally named “anti-patriots.” Notably, this group name does not carry any evaluative political meaning and is exclusively applicable for research purposes. An analysis of the survey results revealed that few people demonstrate a desire to leave their country and the CIS countries (see Fig. 11).

Figure 11

Share of Respondents Who Selected the Option:
“Only Outside of My Country and the CIS Countries,” %



There are also several key points in the formation of the youth migratory behavior in the context of the desire to move to non-CIS countries.

- First of all, many groups of respondents (men and women in Russia, men in Kazakhstan, and women in Kyrgyzstan) are characterized by an increase in the so-called “anti-patriotic”²⁴ sentiments from the question of the place of application of professional knowledge to the question of the preferred place of residence of the respondents’ children.
- Secondly, the least patriotic students are in Kyrgyzstan. Thus, over 10% of women stated that they would like their children to live in non-CIS countries, and 9.1% of young men from Kyrgyzstan would like to create families away from home.
- Thirdly, less than 2% of women in Kazakhstan wish to marry outside their own country or another CIS country, which is the lowest value among the indicators obtained. That is, Kazakh women are either determined to start a family strictly at home, or have hardly thought about the place of marriage.
- Fourth, women in Russia and Kyrgyzstan are slightly more anti-patriotic than men in their countries. Meanwhile, the situation in Kazakhstan is the opposite.

The following results can be generally noted with regard to migration attitudes by country and gender. In all countries, young people demonstrate pronounced “pragmatic” or “patriotic” insistence on the choice of the location for the key life events. The share of “anti-patriots” ranges from 2.2% to 8.8%. The “pragmatists” are the largest in all countries. In Kazakhstan, the most “pragmatic” attitude towards the choice of the place of application of professional skills and the desired place of children’s residence is noted (60.1% and 59.8%, respectively). In Kyrgyzstan, the most “pragmatic” attitude is noted towards the choice of the place of marriage.

In Russia and Kazakhstan, young people are the most “patriotic” about the place to start a family. They are the least “patriotic” regarding their children’s place of residence. The most “antipatriotic” claims made by young people in Russia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan refer to their children’s place of residence.

The minimum number of respondents would like to move to a non-CIS country for employment. The least patriotic students live in Kyrgyzstan. About 4.2% of students in Kazakhstan wish to marry outside their own country or another CIS country, which is the lowest value among the indicators in question.

Conclusion

Thus, the study sets the ground for the following conclusions.

1. The reproductive plans of young people in these three countries show that within the life span of the next generation the demographic potential ratio will remain the same as half a century ago. Russia will have a low birth rate, Kazakhstan will have an average one, and Kyrgyzstan will have a relatively high birth rate. Thus, in the next 25-30 years, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan can continue to be migration donors for the Russian Federation.
2. In Russia and Kazakhstan, reproductive plans are more monolithic, while in Kyrgyzstan there is a significant differentiation. This means that in the first two countries, the so-called normative reproductive models have already been formed, although they differ in type.

²⁴ Ibidem.

3. The ideal reproductive choice in regard to the number of children in all surveyed countries naturally increases the prospects for improving the demographic situation. However, in the respondents' opinion, the current conditions for the implementation of the reproductive plans of the younger generation are particularly unfavorable. This is especially evident from the assessments of respondents from Kyrgyzstan.
 4. The study demonstrated the peculiarities of gender-specific ideas about the reproductive behavior of young people in the three post-Soviet states, which include a conservative traditional opinion on the unacceptability of extramarital unions, especially among the women from Central Asian states. For both men and women, the first pregnancy at the age of 21-25 years remains significant. There is also a stronger motivation of the male population for a large family. At the same time, it is vital to remember that current socio-economic conditions significantly reduce the likelihood of the implementation of ideal reproductive plans for large families, both for women and men.
 5. Based on the conducted research in the context of migratory behavior, it can be concluded that the conditions of professional realization and comfort in the place of residence are essential for modern intellectual youth. Therefore, the creation of the required infrastructure and guarantees of decent wages will reduce the scale of migration in the countries under consideration, especially in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, which are the labor donor countries. In addition, many respondents intend to create families in their "home" countries. From this we can conclude that married persons will migrate, and, therefore, either the scale of migration will increase (if whole families move to another country), or the flows of money sent by labor migrants to their homeland will grow. Finally, the desire to send children to non-CIS countries to live indicates a predominantly negative assessment of the level of the countries' socio-economic development, a lack of faith in the country's future positive development, and an unwillingness to associate their future with that country. It is important to take all these conclusions into account when developing and implementing socio-demographic and migration policy measures in Russia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.
-