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## **THE STUDY OF FOREIGN LABOR MIGRATION CAUSES OF THE RA WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF PUBLIC OPINION ANALYSIS**

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Key words: labor migration, potential migrant, sample survey, circumstances of departure, reasons to return

**Introduction.** The aim of the article is to highlight the causes of foreign labor migration among the Armenian society through sociological methodology, to find out which countries the residents of RA want to go to, specifying the circumstances determining migration in the donor country, RA, through understanding the migration tendency of the population discuss the possibilities of overcoming them or mitigating their severity, as well as to develop and present constructive recommendations. The aim of the research was to acquire statistical data that would be representative at the regional level. Taking into account the dual purpose of the research, namely measuring migration flows and explaining the migration process, an applied sociological migration survey was implemented through which it was possible to get information on both individuals and households.

**Methodology.** Before the implementation of the sections planned by the structure of the article, the methodology provided by the sociological research project was outlined and included in phased work. The research methodology and questionnaires were developed with representatives of interested institutions and applied experts in the field. The above mentioned was carried out on the basis of defined goals, which were based on the international standards regarding the collection of migration data and distribution in Shirak Marz, RA. In order to increase the quality of work with households, the “snowball” and “combination” methods were planned and implemented (the “snowball” method was used in order to verify new, more in-depth information about migrants through interviewed migrants, and the “combination” method was used to fully implement the sample provided by the sociological research project, as well as fill in the gaps). There are a number of important methodological and data issues that users should be aware of when using the data from this study. As with all sample surveys, this household survey on migration and remittances can only provide estimated data and they are limited by a number of factors, in particular, sample dispersion, i.e., samples may be randomly disordered from “the whole”. This is called “sampling error”. The results from the study seem to confirm previous results from other studies on specific factors, but in this study, if the sample poorly represents parts of the population, or if most people do not answer certain questions, estimates that are not the result of coincidence may significantly be

different from the reality (that is, it is possible that there may be deviations in the sample regarding migration in the Republic of Armenia) [Poghosyan, 2016, 50, 56, 115].

***Initial hypotheses:***

1. The competitiveness of returning labor migrants in the Armenian labor market increases.
2. The reasons for people applying for migration are mainly psychological, caused by post-war fears and negative expectations.

*The objects of the research* of this article were the citizens of RA aged 18-55 who were potential migrants or had direct relations with foreign labor migration. The necessity to study the presented topic arose recently due to geopolitical and socio-economic problems, when unstable moods and fears began to spread among the society. Those sentiments intensified even more when the Russian-Ukrainian war started and is still going on. In the article, we found it necessary to highlight the key issues that put pressure on the society and unintentionally create migration sentiments.

The selection of the research in the given article is mainly conditioned by the clarification of the migration causality from rural areas in RA, and more specifically from Shirak Marz. The surveyed population was considered to be well-defined and specific, and the target group was selected from that part of population. However, in this sample survey there are specific studied groups: current migrants (immigrants and emigrants), return migrants (migrants who previously lived abroad but returned), internal migrants, and persons who have never migrated (to assess their movement intention or as a comparison group).

***Literature review.*** The studies on the topic of the given article are very diverse, the reviews have some differences. In Russian sociology, the main attention is paid to the social characteristics and institutions of the diaspora, the problems of adaptation of migrants. J. T. Toshchenko and V. I. Chaptikov's works emphasize the ability of diasporas to prevent cultural assimilation through social institutions. O.E. Brednikova's, E.U. Firsov's, O.V. Pachenkov's and S.U. Romyantsev's studies have revealed the problems of settling migrant workers and the social "formation" of the Armenian and Georgian diasporas in Russia [Alexeenkova, 2015, p.,53], [Poghosyan, 2016, p 24].

***Scientific novelty.*** The presented article, being highly topical (due to the recent events in Armenia), at the same time contains an appreciable scientific novelty. The article is written on the basis of the sociological research methodological measurements, which was carried out with potential migrants of the current stage, as well as migration-oriented people, in particular with the households defined by the sample. The scientific novelty of the research lies in the fact that the war, socio-political, socio-economic, military and political changes and problems touched also RA. Due to these changes,

domestic and foreign migration movements in RA households have also arisen, and the presented article was also aimed at conducting a scientific study of these movements.

**Analysis.** Taking into account the peculiarities of the problem, a mixed method of research was carried out: quantitative survey (face-to-face), in-depth interview, traditional analysis of documents and expert survey (online questionnaire was also used). The quantitative survey sample is quota based on gender (male, female) and age (18-25, 25-35, 35-45, 45-55). 1 urban and 14 rural settlements were selected, where face-to-face surveys were carried out, and after obtaining data in the settlements, telephone surveys were also performed (again in order to specify the reasons for relocation). The selection of expert and in-depth interviews is type-based. 14 experts were selected according to the field of activity (academic, state, private). The migrants or related persons participating in the in-depth interviews were selected mainly from the participants of the quantitative sociological survey. In particular, the criteria of the participant survey are *the level* (low, medium, high), which was evaluated according to Likert scale, and *the gender* (male, female).

**Table 1.** Settlements included in the sample (Shirak Marz, RA)

	Settlements	Number of families surveyed	Percentage %
1	Gyumri town	103	30,1%
2	Ashotsq	60	17,5%
3	Sizavet	15	4,4%
4	Saragyugh	10	2,9%
5	Ghazanchi	14	4,1%
6	Zuigaghbyur	10	2,9%
7	Karmravan	10	2,9%
8	Hartashen	7	2,0
9	Berdashen	3	0,8
10	Aregnadem	3	0,8
11	Pokrashen	15	4,4%
12	Maisyan	25	7,3%
13	Tsoghamarg	15	4,4%
14	Torosgyugh	17	4,9%
15	Azatan	35	10,2%
	Total	342	100,0

The questionnaire was mainly composed of open-ended questions, including percentage and numerical values. In addition to the above, we developed a questionnaire for the survey of 14 experts specialized in migration issues. The surveyed Armenian experts were mainly scientists: sociologists, political scientists, economists, social workers and employees of the migration service. Each expert's opinion was anonymous. During the

survey of experts, in addition to the option of face-to-face survey, the possibility of filling in the questionnaire by e-mail was used.

The demographics of the total surveyed households, including household composition, age, place of birth, citizenship, marital status, and education are presented in the article to help build an overall picture and typology of different migrant and migration-related households. Of the citizens who participated in the survey, 135 (39, 47%) were male, 205 (59.9%) were female, and 2 persons did not specify their gender (0.58).

Age distribution of survey participants: 120 respondents aged 18-25 (35.08%), 90 respondents aged 25-35 (26.29%), 27 respondents aged 45-55 (7.89%), 13 respondents aged 55 years and older (3.8%).

To the first question of the questionnaire “What is the main reason for moving from one place to another?” the majority of respondents answered “due to the quality education of our children”. The question was followed by “Please, specify”. The vast majority of the respondents from rural areas expressed dissatisfaction with the fact that the level of education in suburban areas is decreasing, the main reason of which is the implementation of teaching processes in joint classes. Three of the respondents from the villages selected for the research emphasized that their schools have two-set, three-set, and even four-set classes (this refers to joint classes comprising of 3 or 4 different age-group pupils during the same class period). Among the participants of the survey there were people with a high level of education (we are talking about rural areas with higher pedagogical education specialists), who complained citing other reasons, in particular, low-paid work, again pointing to the problem of joint classes, which obviously had a negative impact on teachers' salaries, depriving many of them of the only job opportunity in the rural area, and for some teachers lowered their workload. However, as a reason for emigration, parents mostly mentioned the low quality of children's education, due to which many households have moved to such settlements where similar problems do not exist (minimum conditions of an acceptable educational environment are preserved). The respondents also highlighted some other disappointing reasons that have a demotivating meaning for living in the given region. In particular, in the list of mapped and analyzed problems, the most prominent ones were: improvement of irrigation systems, irrigation of pastures, creation of cultural institutions, organization of youth employment, centralized fight against pests of agricultural crops, etc. In this context, some of the respondents also singled out lack of work, lack of professional work, undesirable moral and psychological atmosphere feeling of uncertainty about the future.

To the question “Do Armenian youth imitate the elements of foreign culture?” mostly they answered yes (90%), noting that they bring many negative influences with them to the Republic of Armenia, due to which the manifestations of antisocial behavior among teenagers and young people are increasing. The remaining 10% believe that a

dialogue of civilizations will take place, which will affect our culture and positive disposition of the society. According to the percentage ratio, in response to the question whether the young people who returned to RA found a job with a high salary or not, the following results were recorded: 5 people (0.05%) of the surveyed participants think that 25-35% of the young people who returned to RA can find a highly-paid job; 27 people (0.27%) think that 35-50% can do it, 45 people (0.45%) believe that these people make up 50-75%, 145 people (1.45%) think that 75-95% will be successful, and according to 120 people (1.2%) all these people (100%) have opportunity to find a highly-paid job.

Let's look at the question: "What problems does labor migration cause in the family and intra-family relations?". In order to clarify this question, the respondents were also offered to give judgments, with which they expressed their positions regarding whether they agreed or disagreed. Among those positions, the negative impact of this phenomenon on the migrant and his family occupies a special place. Due to the long-term absence of the migrant from the family because of working abroad for years, his contacts with other family members become limited, which in its turn causes a psychological phenomenon such as homesickness. 97.7% of the surveyed participants agreed with that idea. According to 90.1% of the respondents labor migration has a serious negative impact on health. An average of 10-12 hours a day, often without days off, hard physical work, irregular eating and improper sanitary conditions promote the emergence of a number of diseases. On the other hand, the number of HIV/AIDS sexually transmitted infections is also increasing in Armenia year by year, which, according to experts, is mainly caused by the behavior of migrants going to the Russian Federation to work. Young and middle-aged migrants get STDs there and pass them on to their families after returning [Poghosyan, 2022, 87]. 89.4% of the respondents are in favor of the opinion that as a result of foreign work, husband-wife relations in the family are strained, 87.7% - the number of divorces increases, 87.2% - the work of raising children suffers. Important life stages of family formation are disrupted due to labor migration. Going to a foreign country to work immediately after marriage, being in a foreign work place during the birth of the first or second child, sometimes also not participating in the engagement and marriage of children have a negative impact on the strength of the family. As a result, the number of divorced, abandoned families have increased in the communities.

According to the interviewees, migrants in these families play a lesser role in the socialization and upbringing of children. Migration has an impact on the demographic behavior of these families, resulting in an increase in the number of unmarried young people. Labor migration has also become an important way for young people to emigrate from the republic, according to which, the number of elderly families resembling "empty nests" has increased in Armenia. It also affects the issue of providing necessary care to the elderly and the sick in the family.

To the question "In case of emigrating from RA which is the desired destination country you would like to stay?" the following answers were received: USA (20,46%), Russian Federation(19,0%), Germany (15,78%), France (13,74%), Italy (7,3%), Egypt (5,8%), Iran (5,8%), Canada (4,3%), India (4,09%), Japan (2,04%), Algeria (1,46%).

Eight out of ten of the household members surveyed had friends and/or relatives in the destination country before leaving the Republic of Armenia. This is a very large number and is connected with Armenia's long history of migration in the previous XX century and now. The existence of a large diaspora and the continuous flow of refugees over the past two decades assure newcomers of the low risk of migration and explain migrants' decision-making about specific location through three ways: firstly, they provide information about the host country's (region's) labor market; secondly, migrants' living expenses increase with the number of ethnic goods available in a given location, and thirdly, migrants expect former migrants to help them settle.

The impact of those network externalities may differ for different types of migrants. For example, migrants with irregular status or migrants working in informal labor markets may be more dependent on migration networks than migrants with legal status [Alexeenkova, 2017, 48]. The flow of labor migration is confirmed by the fact that 79.3% of emigrants intended to work abroad before leaving RA. Among the members of the surveyed households 71.5% received a promise of employment before leaving the Republic of Armenia, 4.4% received a written employment contract and 1.1% received another employment agreement. 22.9% of respondents did not have any kind of job offer or agreement on it.

Future migration plans seem to depend on the social and economic development of the Republic of Armenia and the host country. 37.8% of emigrants have the intention to return in 2024, 5.1% intend to return in 2025, 10.8% will eventually return (it is necessary to emphasize that 54.7% of the total number of respondents have the intention to return). For 22.7%, it will depend on the development of the situation, 12.7% are considering not returning to RA, 5.1% intend to reunite with their family in the host country, a very small number (0.2%) is considering the issue if emigrating to another host country. The main reasons for return are family-related, they are: family reunification (34.9%), marriage (5.7%), other family circumstances (9.9%), completion of the migration program (22.8%), lack of work in the host country (12.9%), job offer in RA (3.8%), poor working conditions (3.7%), education or qualification (0.5%), other reasons (5.8%). While most of the migrants have not accepted the citizenship of their current place of residence, the main part of the recently emigrated population (6.8%) has already accepted the citizenship. The vast majority of them had legal status, a large proportion of them (two out of three) had only temporary or non-permanent registration. 4.9% of the total number of the respondents in the host country had an irregular status in the host

country. Household expatriates generally live in rented apartments/houses (34.5%), rented rooms (23.7%), a relative or friend's house (15.6%), dormitories (11.5%), non-residential accommodation (8.2%) and private houses (5.1%).

As for health insurance, 76.7% of the total number of identified emigrants did not have it, 6.1% had permanent insurance, and 12.6% had temporary insurance.

Summarizing the phase of analysis of the article, we should note that a multi-phase analytical framework was applied to design this article. Data analysis contained a set of methods for working with data (information) obtained through research. The goal and task of data analysis was to obtain as much information as possible related to the research question. Most of the results were obtained using statistical tabulations, providing overall statistical data. The results of the research confirmed the initial hypotheses:

1. The competitiveness of returning labor migrants in the Armenian labor market increases.
2. The motivations of people applying for migration are mainly psychological, caused by post-war fears and negative expectations.

The results of the household surveys on migration in the Republic of Armenia provide an opportunity to characterize recent migration flows. There is a large-scale outflow of Armenian citizens to various destination countries, although the Russian Federation is considered the predominant destination for nine out of ten migrants [Poghosyan, 2022, 58]. In contrast, the countries of the European Union account for less than 5% of the migration outflow. The available facts prove that Armenia is at the intersection of two different migration systems: the European migration system and the Eurasian migration system, that is, it belongs to both, but with different degrees of involvement.

**Conclusion.** Thus, taking into account the long-standing demand for improved data on migration in the Republic of Armenia, the above mentioned rural and urban household sample surveys provide a small but effective opportunity to collect accurate and currently needed data in the country. However, due to the limitations, expensiveness and complexity of the household survey, it is in the interest of the Republic of Armenia to try and better develop the administrative data sources at its disposal. On the other hand, due to the prevalence of undocumented migration in the country, this may be limited unless there is cooperation with destination countries. In addition to conducting large-scale specialized migration surveys, some migration information should be obtained regularly and consistently through ongoing household surveys. A quality research sample and a questionnaire design are needed, as well as the applicability of the necessary tools to reinforce that quality and professional research. Without migration data and standardized statistics from the entire territory, the full picture will continue to be unclear and the ability to effectively communicate migration data low. Taking into



account the limitation of the scope of the article, we presented the content of the work carried out by us as much as possible in a compressed format, in order to apply it later.

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*Key words: labor migration, potential migrant, sample survey, circumstances of departure, reasons to return*

The presented article deals with a study of the causes of external migration movements of RA conducted in accordance with the methodology of sociological research. This research is selective preserving the standards used in Sociology. 1 urban and 14 rural settlements in Shirak Marz of Armenia were included in the sample of the sociological research. The sample survey is compiled with regional, professional, migration as well as gender and age characteristics so that valuable and relevant information could be extracted for further study and usage in the development of migration policy. In this regard, there was a problem of assessing the role and importance of migrants in the development of households in Shirak Marz. At the same time, it was necessary to understand what existential problems were created by the outflow of the workable population from Armenia in recent years, in particular, due to the demographic decline and depopulation. The scope of this topic also covers the question of where the Armenian youth currently wants to go and what are the reasons for the migration trend. The data, obtained in the framework of the article, will be valuable for scientific and public circles, for institutions dealing with migration issues.

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