Migrants From Central Asia in the Moscow Agglomeration: Social Well-Being and Demographic Attitudes

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ABSTRACT

The relevance of this study lies in the fact that it addresses the lack of empirical data needed for evidence-informed policy-making in the social, economic, and demographic realms in Moscow and the Moscow Oblast. It aims to explore migrants' emotional and evaluative attitudes toward their social reality, their role in it, and the unique demographic factors influencing their behavior. Specifically, the article seeks to characterize migrants' social well-being, identify factors detrimental to well-being, and outline conditions that facilitate trust, cooperation, and respect among individuals. The ultimate goal is to enhance socio-demographic well-being, unlocking migrants' full potential not only for socio-economic and demographic development in the Moscow agglomeration and society but also to help them achieve personal goals. The findings are based on a survey conducted in February–March 2023 in Moscow and Moscow Oblast, involving 766 migrants from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. The article analyzes how the problem of well-being is discussed in contemporary academic literature, refines the definition of the key concept, and substantiates the factors influencing the formation of migrants' social well-being and their demographic attitudes. The article provides an evaluation of the demographic situation in the Moscow agglomeration, along with some insights into the social well-being of migrants and their demographic attitudes. It also identifies problematic areas that pose challenges to the successful social adaptation of migrants.

KEYWORDS

migration, migrants, Central Asian countries, Moscow agglomeration, social well-being, demographic attitudes

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Introduction

Factors that make Moscow and Moscow Oblast, the largest and most developed agglomeration in Russia, particularly attractive to foreigners include favorable conditions for work, business, and education, thus leading to the growth in the number of foreigners residing there (Kolichestvo inostrantsev, n.d.). Most migrants come from Central Asian countries such as Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan (Stalo izvestno, 2022; V RF na zarabotki, 2023). Migration processes affect the labor market and alter the socio-demographic structure of the population. For migrants to contribute positively to the socio-economic development and demographic situation in the Moscow agglomeration, it is essential that they should have a positive perception of their living conditions, maintain positive relationships with the local community, and actively participate in social interactions. However, a clear understanding of what constitutes migrants' social well-being appears to be lacking. This challenge arises from the need to comprehensively measure individuals' emotional and evaluative attitudes towards their social environment, their role in it, and the demographic factors influencing their behavior. The current dearth of empirical information further exacerbates the issue by hindering initiatives fostering the integration of newcomers into the local community and influencing policy-making in the social, economic, and demographic spheres of Moscow and Moscow Oblast.

In light of the above considerations, the purpose of this study is to analyze the results of empirical sociological research and to propose a set of measures to improve the social well-being of migrants, foster trust, cooperation, and respect in society, enhance overall socio-demographic well-being in the Moscow agglomeration, and optimize the use of migrants' potential.

Literature Review

The concept of *social well-being* was introduced and delved into the works of such renowned scholars as Bekhterev (1997), Le Bon (1895/2006), Lippman (1922/2004), Parygin (1996), Tarde (1895/1996), and Viktorov (1903). These studies interpreted social well-being as a subjective characteristic representing the self-perception of the surveyed respondents as representatives of society.

Nowadays social well-being is examined from various perspectives and encompasses different aspects within the research field. This concerns the evolution of the concept, the primary factors influencing social well-being, the reasons for differences in opinions among various population groups, structural elements, and potential levels of expression. Scholars identify various parameters and criteria for delineating components of social well-being, along with its key characteristics (for more on this see, for example, Argunova & Kodina, 2013; Kornilova, 2015; Osinsky & Butueva, 2015; Usova, 2017).

Social well-being comprises both subjective and objective assessments as it reflects social moods, emotional nuances in relationships between members of society and groups, social hierarchy, activity in various spheres of social life, and confidence in the future.

The measurement of social well-being comprises various aspects of life and psychological comfort, including satisfaction with safety, health, family relationships, a comfortable living environment, and opportunities for creative self-realization (Kuchenkova, 2016, p. 118).

Lapin's comprehensive approach to measuring social well-being provides a means to describe an individual's self-perception of their status and satisfaction with existing needs. The characteristic feature of this approach is that it does not solely rely on emotional self-assessments (Lapin, 2007).

Addressing the elements of social well-being, distinctions are drawn between evaluations of internal states, i.e., health, mood, emotional states, dominant feelings, and evaluations of external conditions such as perception of the situation in the country and time in which a person has to live, confidence in the future (Zinurova & Fatykhova, 2011, p. 247).

Measurements of social well-being often rely on a tool known as the Integral Index of Social Well-Being (IISW) calculated based on indicators of social goods that cover key areas of life. These indicators form the value foundation of social activities: subjective satisfaction with one's life, opinions about one's current situation, and one's intentions for their future (Golovakha et al., 1998, p. 45).

The sociological category of social well-being has multiple aspects; hence, there can be variations in both its theoretical interpretation and empirical measurement. The index of social well-being can be calculated as the weighted arithmetic mean of several groups of specific indicators.

Lately, researchers have been increasingly focusing on the topic of the socio-economic well-being of migrants. Sadovskaia (2001) considers the social well-being of migrants as a factor contributing to their adaptation in a new society. Kobozeva (2008) studies the social well-being of labor migrants in the sociocultural conditions of the host region. Hasbulatova & Egorova (2002), as well as Poletaev (2018), consider the gender aspects of migrants' social well-being.

Importantly, socio-economic well-being is symbolically characterized by a positive or negative sign, serving as a summary indicator of the overall value within a specific social group, with a positive sign representing favorable conditions like high income and prosperity, and a negative sign indicating adverse factors such as economic instability or poverty (Klichenko, 2017). Thanks to such gradation, we have the opportunity for heuristic application of this approach when studying the socio-economic well-being of migrants.

Social well-being influences people's attitudes and behaviors, encompassing aspects like demographic attitudes. Traditionally, social attitudes are viewed as psychological and behavioral patterns based on an individual's own experience and their close social environment.

There are various kinds of social attitudes, including demographic ones. *Demographic attitudes* refer to a person's predisposition that determines his or her choices and is driven by positive or negative evaluations of particular demographic actions (Shakhot'ko, 2003). Demographic attitudes can be divided into matrimonial, reproductive, health-preserving, and migratory. They influence people's actual behavior.

Beck (1986/1992) and Giddens (1990) argued that the weakening of traditional family structures is inevitable in post-industrial societies. People are faced with a wide range of acceptable alternatives in almost every aspect of life, including the way they organize their family and approach childbirth.

Studies provide evidence of fundamental changes in demographic attitudes and behaviors among Europeans, including the delay in childbirth, cohabitation replacing official marriage, and so on. Modern processes are supposedly determined by changes in attitudes and values. And here, predictors include the economic development of states and other specific characteristics of countries (Aassve et al., 2013). Demographic attitudes and value orientations, however, play a key role in explaining people's demographic behavior (Moors, 1997; Thornton et al., 2007). The decline in mortality and fertility rates is a consequence of technological advancements as couples adapt to new circumstances by reducing their desired and actual number of children (Lesthaeghe & van de Kaa, 1986). In the new circumstances, there is no longer a need for having a large number of children as a means to guarantee support in old age. In countries with strong government support and social welfare, a liberal attitude towards demographic attitudes and behaviors prevails, often accompanied by a trend where individuals and couples are less reliant on the family and children in providing care in the old age and instead depend more on external support systems (Aassve et al., 2013).

During the demographic transition, there was a shift from high mortality and high fertility to low mortality and low fertility. As mortality rates began to decline, fertility rates also decreased (Lesthaeghe & van de Kaa, 1986). Individuals are increasingly prioritizing their own self-realization over having family or children, seeking not only economic but also psychological well-being. Low birth rates serve as an expression of demographic attitudes. Parents are becoming less reliant on children for support in old age and potential parents are more focused on satisfying their own needs and desire for self-realization (van de Kaa, 1994).

However, today we see a significant degree of heterogeneity in demographic attitudes worldwide, including in Europe. In certain countries, such as Scandinavia, divorce, cohabitation, and non-marital childbirth are widespread. Meanwhile, in other nations, notably in the Mediterranean region, there is a stronger emphasis on traditional perspectives regarding family and childbirth. In affluent countries, people have access to higher levels of education and education is of better quality. It has been proven that education promotes the spread of nonconformity, diminishes the significance of religion, and increases tolerance towards non-traditional demographic behavior (Thornton et al., 2007). There is also evidence that education is associated with a more respectful attitude towards the family (De Feijter, 1991).

Another important aspect is that men and women are playing increasingly similar social roles. Interestingly, traditional gender differences persist primarily among individuals with lower levels of education (Oláh et al., 2023). In conditions of gender equality, women can make decisions about entering into marriage or cohabiting, having or not having children, and continuing to work while raising children (Aassve et al., 2013).

Significant changes have also occurred in the composition of families and households, particularly there has been a substantial increase in the number of childless couples and one-person households (Jain, 2023). In general, there is a dual trend towards re-traditionalization and liberalization, while there is also continued support for traditional values (Spéder, 2023). Evolving demographic attitudes have a direct influence on people's well-being.

Methodology

We interpret the socio-economic well-being of migrants as an indicator that reflects the extent of their successful adaptation. It also serves as a comprehensive measure of personal life satisfaction and orientation towards perspectives and opportunities for implementing life strategies. It is the result of an individual's awareness and experience of the objective conditions and the meaningful content of their life (Bochkanova, 2007; Petrova, 2000; Rubina, 1996; Volkov, 2003).

Considering that there is a lack of universal sociological methods for measuring social well-being, this study uses the following empirical indicators of socio-economic well-being. In the economic sphere, these indicators include employment, job satisfaction, relationships at work, the ability to provide for the family, and satisfaction with one's financial situation (financial security). In the social sphere, these indicators are family relationships, satisfaction with the place and conditions of living, education opportunities, access to health care, opportunities for taking vacations and opportunities for recreation, physical activity, and sports. Additionally, the study takes into account migrants' evaluations of social mood, prospects, and opportunities for realizing their life plans.

To calculate the level of social well-being, we used the methodology for calculating indices developed by Krasil'nikova (2003). The composite index of social well-being is calculated as a simple arithmetic mean of individual indices (p. 51). If the index is equal to or greater than 160, it indicates a high level of social well-being; if it is equal to or less than 40, a low level; if it falls within the range of 80 to 120, an average level; if it is in the range of 121 to 159, it is above average; and if it is between 41 and 79, below average.

Demographic attitudes are understood here as the subjective preferences of migrants related to specific aspects such as the number of children they wish to have, the age at which they enter into marriage, migration, etc. These preferences regulate individual behavior, shape a specific type of demographic reproduction in the population of the Moscow agglomeration, and determine the current direction of key demographic processes (Antonov & Medkov, 1987; Antonov, 2013; Antonov & Laktiukhina, 2012).

Empirically, the study relies on the results of a questionnaire survey conducted from February to March 2023 in Moscow and Moscow Oblast. The survey covered 766 people (201 from Kazakhstan, 175 from Kyrgyzstan, 199 from Tajikistan, and 191 from Uzbekistan). Respondents were chosen through a non-random, non-representative purposive sampling method. The selection was based on three criteria: citizenship (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan), location (Moscow and Moscow Oblast), and age (18–45 years).

The sample includes age cohorts of 18–25, 26–35, and 36–45 years in equal proportions. The proportion of men and women aligns with the approximate gender structure of migrants, providing grounds for comparing data on the social well-being and demographic attitudes of migrants from Central Asia in Moscow Oblast. Since the sample does not pretend to be representative, it was decided to focus on general characteristics that give an idea of the reproductive and matrimonial attitudes of migrants in Moscow.
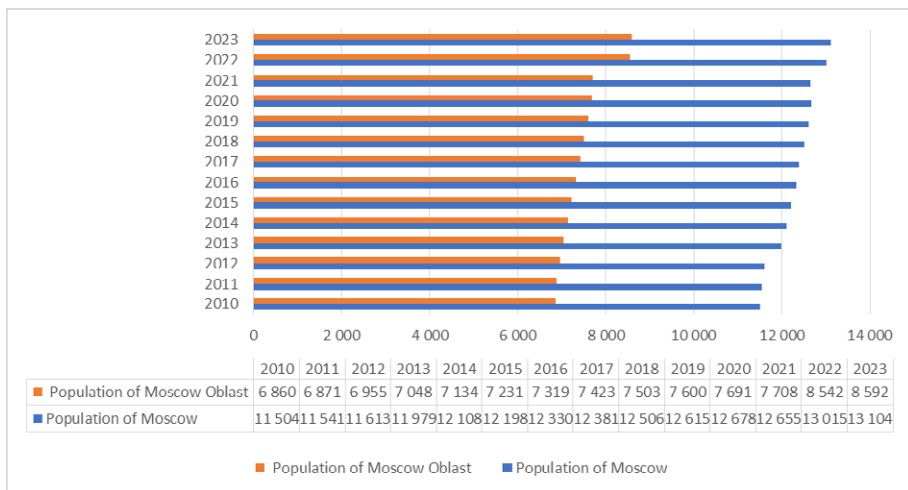
Results

Demographic Situation in the Moscow Agglomeration

The history of the Moscow agglomeration attests to the constant growth in its population. In the 2000s, the increase in population became particularly noticeable. According to official data, in 2010, 11,504 thousand people lived in Moscow and 6,860 thousand in Moscow Oblast; in 2023 there were 13,104 thousand people, that is, the population increased by 1,600 thousand people in Moscow and 8,592 thousand people in Moscow Oblast increasing by 1,732 thousand people (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Population of Moscow and Moscow Oblast in 2010–2023 (Thousand People)

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
■ Population of Moscow Oblast	6 860	6 871	6 955	7 048	7 134	7 231	7 319	7 423	7 503	7 600	7 691	7 708	8 542	8 592
■ Population of Moscow	11 504	11 541	11 613	11 979	12 108	12 198	12 330	12 381	12 506	12 615	12 678	12 655	13 015	13 104

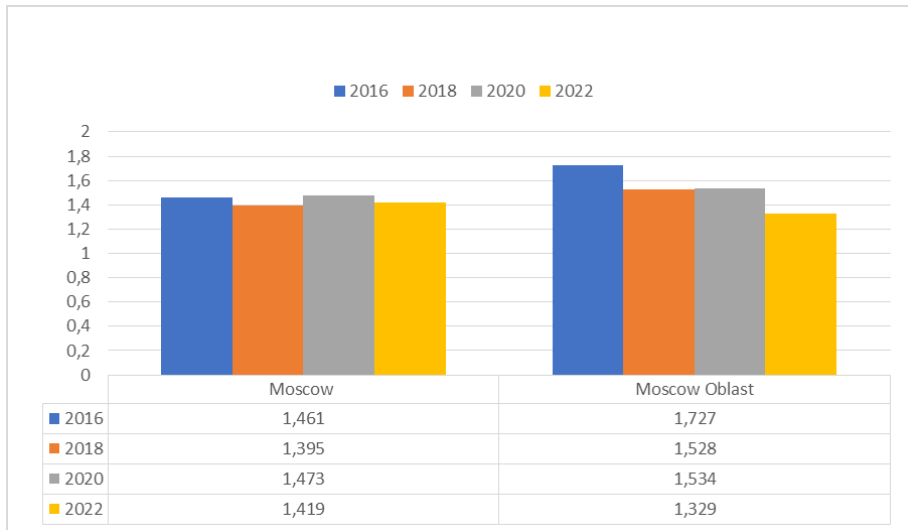■ Population of Moscow Oblast   ■ Population of Moscow

Note. Source: Mosstat (n.d.-a, n.d.-b).

In the capital region, according to experts, a large number of people live and work without registration or work permits, making it impossible to accurately determine the actual population of the Moscow agglomeration. It is also worth noting that there is the imbalance in the age and gender structure of the population, with the predominance of elderly individuals in the distribution across age groups and a shortage of the necessary labor resources for socio-economic development (Mosstat, 2023a, pp. 15–16, 19–20).

As for the demographic situation, it should be noted that Moscow and Moscow Oblast mainly grew due to migration. Additionally, the capital also expanded through direct administrative annexations, where neighboring settlements and villages became part of the city. The total fertility rate (the number of children per woman) in Moscow decreased from 1.461 to 1.419 in 2016–2022, while in Moscow Oblast, it declined from 1.727 to 1.329, indicating a 23% decrease (Figure 2).

Figure 2

The Total Fertility Rate in Moscow and Moscow Oblast
(Number of Children per Woman) in 2016–2022

	Moscow	Moscow Oblast
2016	1,461	1,727
2018	1,395	1,528
2020	1,473	1,534
2022	1,419	1,329

Note. Source: Mosstat (n.d.-a, n.d.-b).

Since 2020, a natural population decline has become characteristic of Moscow's population, while in Moscow Oblast, it increased 17 times over the period from 2017 to 2021. This was due to a decrease in birth rates and an increase in mortality, which became particularly noticeable in the COVID-19 year of 2021 (Table 1).

Table 1

Natural Population Growth and Decline in 2017–2021 in Moscow
and Moscow Oblast per 1,000 People

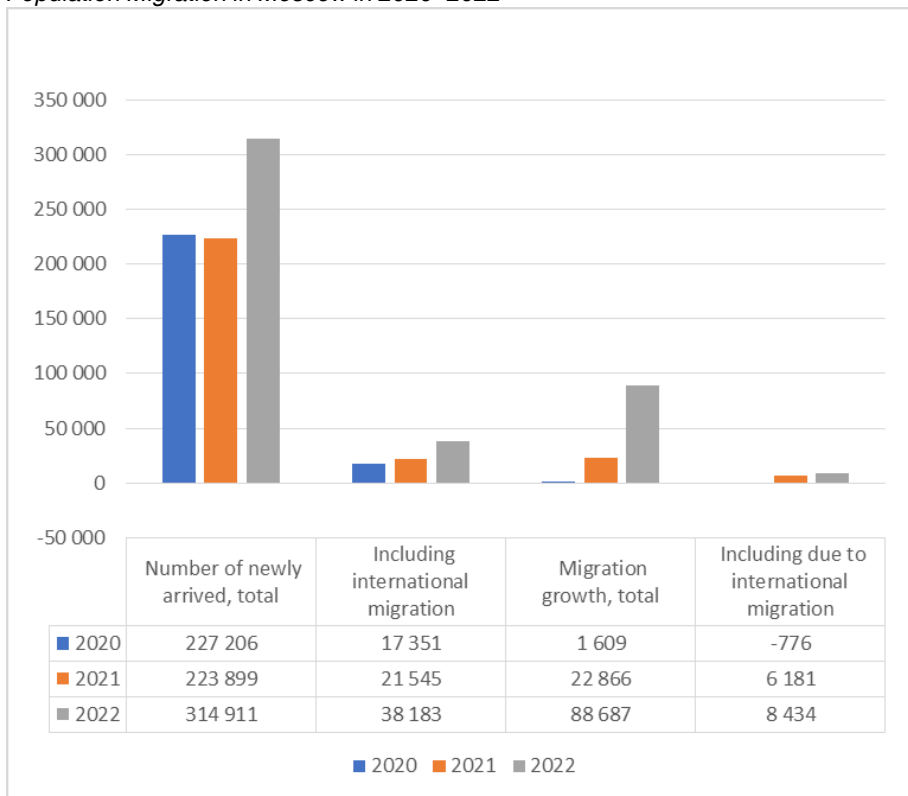| Year	Moscow	Moscow Oblast
2017	1.1	−0.4
2018	0.8	−1.2
2019	1.2	−2.5
2020	−2.0	−4.2
2021	−3.3	−6.8

Note. Source: Mosstat (2020, p. 41, 2022a, p. 21, 2022b, p. 29).

The trend of a later marriage, especially among women, does not give hope for an improvement in the situation. According to the data of the Moscow Civil Registry Office, the average age of brides today is 32 years, and of grooms, 34.1, with 31% entering into a second marriage[1]. In 2022, 20.3% of babies in Moscow and 21.3% in Moscow Oblast were born outside of a registered marriage (Rosstat, 2023).

Despite the gradual recovery of migration growth to Moscow in recent years to its pre-pandemic levels (Mosstat, 2022a, 2023a), Rosstat [Federal State Statistics Service] reported a decline in these rates for the period from January to July 2023. While migration growth amounted to 38,035 people in January–July 2022, for the same period in 2023, this figure was only 10,088 people (Mosstat, 2023b; Figure 3).

Figure 3

Population Migration in Moscow in 2020–2022

	Number of newly arrived, total	Including international migration	Migration growth, total	Including due to international migration
2020	227 206	17 351	1 609	-776
2021	223 899	21 545	22 866	6 181
2022	314 911	38 183	88 687	8 434

■ 2020 ■ 2021 ■ 2022
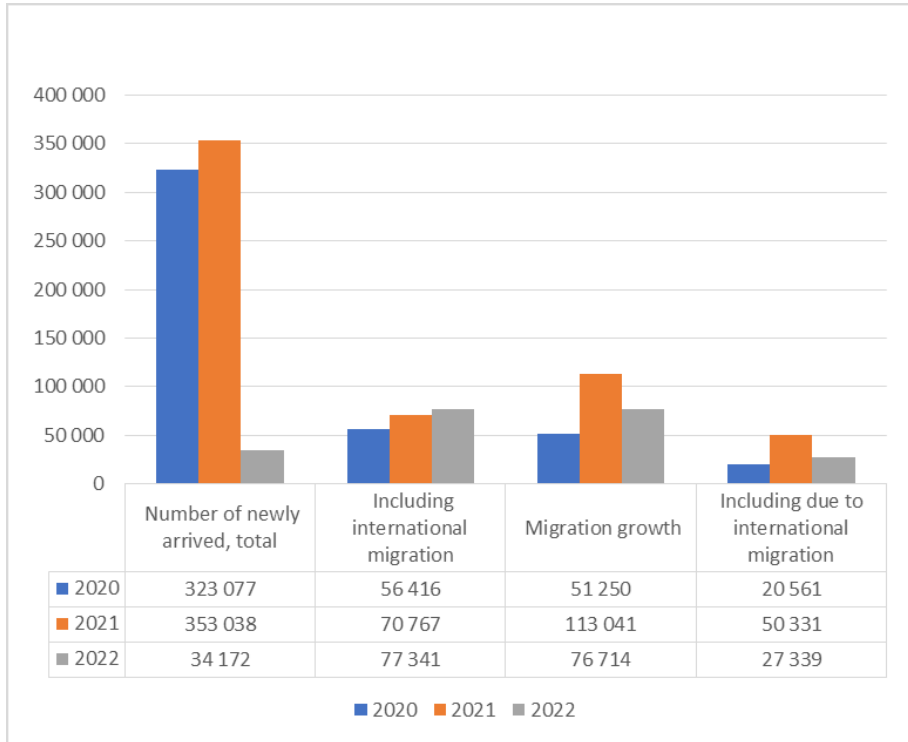
Note. Source: Mosstat (2023b, p. 18).

Moscow Oblast, however, maintained its attractiveness for foreigners from 2021 to 2023 and became a leader in migration growth (Figure 4). Here, not only are the chances of employment higher than in the capital but also more affordable urban housing is being developed, which enables migrants to retain the opportunity to find employment within the city (Nikitina, 2021). In January–July 2022, there was an

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[1] https://zags.nalog.gov.ru/analytics/marriage

increase of 39,095 people, while for the same period in 2023, it was 47,586 people (Mosstat, 2023a).

Figure 4

Population Migration in Moscow Oblast in 2020–2022

	Number of newly arrived, total	Including international migration	Migration growth	Including due to international migration
■ 2020	323 077	56 416	51 250	20 561
■ 2021	353 038	70 767	113 041	50 331
■ 2022	34 172	77 341	76 714	27 339

■ 2020   ■ 2021   ■ 2022

Note. Source: Mosstat (2022a, p. 21, 2023a, pp. 21–22).

The majority of migrants that arrive in the Moscow agglomeration come from such Central Asian countries as Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan (V RF na zarabotki, 2023). They influence the social and demographic well-being of the region, alter its age and gender structure, and impact the reproduction regime, social well-being, and the quality of life. In the Moscow agglomeration, during the period between the censuses of 1989–2010, migration not only compensated for natural population decline but also contributed significantly to population growth, making a substantial contribution to births (Doronina, 2019, p. 131).

Experts predict a decline in birth rates and an increasing trend of population aging in several Central Asian countries over the next 15 years. For example, according to the official data of the Kyrgyz Republic, these trends are already evident today. The birth rate in the country has been decreasing in recent years. While in 2015, there were 3.9 births per woman aged 15 to 49, by 2022, this indicator had decreased to 2.81 births per woman. Each year, the proportion of the population aged over 65 is increasing

(Osadchaya et al., 2023). This could influence attitudes towards migration to Russia, provided that there is an improvement in the conditions of regional labor markets.

As we can see, the demographic situation in the Moscow agglomeration is somewhat challenging. As a result, the extensive and diversified labor market of Moscow and Moscow Oblast experiences a high demand for personnel with any level of education and qualification. Both entry-level and highly skilled workers are needed. In this situation, migrants typically occupy positions in the economy of Moscow and Moscow Oblast that are not actively sought after by the locals. Social well-being, which is not just an indicator of how people perceive social reality, including labor relations, but also a catalyst for both active and passive social behavior, finds direct expression in the political and economic activities of a country's population. This is what determines the need for the sociological analysis of social well-being.

Social Well-Being of Migrants From Central Asia to the Moscow Agglomeration

To assess the integral index of social well-being, we divided social well-being into three aspects: well-being in the economic sphere; well-being in the social sphere; and socio-psychological well-being, which was measured by the index of social expectations.

A high level of social well-being in the economic sphere is characteristic of migrants from Kazakhstan. It should be noted that this estimate is at the very bottom end of its value range. The opportunities for good nutrition, the wage level, the ability to dress well, as well as the alignment of the job with migrants' knowledge, skills, and capabilities receive the highest evaluations. The level of social well-being among migrants from the other three countries (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan) is above average. Migrants from all the four countries assess wage levels as high. Despite these assessments, the lowest scores were given to financial security, which could be explained by the fact that migrants have to send a significant portion of their income back to their home country (Table 2).

Table 2

*Composite Index of Social Well-Being in the Economic Sphere
and Its Component Sub-Indices*

	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Uzbekistan
Wage levels	163.2	166.9	164.9	160.2
Match between the job and the person's skills and qualifications	162.2	162.2	170.0	157.0
Job satisfaction	160.2	165.8	158.8	164.4
Financial security	147.7	146.3	142.2	139.3
Nutrition	165.7	156.6	162.3	162.3
Clothes	162.7	153.1	153.1	155.0
Composite index of social well-being in the economic sphere	160.3	158.5	158.9	156.4
	High	Above average	Above average	Above average

Note. Source: authors' calculations.

The level of well-being in the social sphere is assessed by migrants from all four countries as above average; however, this figure significantly varies among migrants from different countries. The highest level is characteristic of migrants from Kazakhstan, while the lowest, from Tajikistan. We believe that the above-average level is influenced by the health status index, rated as high by migrants from all countries, which is quite understandable: migration typically involves the younger generation and young people do not yet face serious health problems.

For migrants from Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, the most problematic areas in the social sphere are the opportunities for taking vacations and holidays. Opportunities for taking vacations and holidays also present a significant issue for migrants from Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, but they expressed even greater concern about the limited opportunities for education. The challenges in obtaining education for migrants from these countries, in our opinion, are primarily linked to the fact that they are less proficient in the Russian language compared to migrants from Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan (Table 3).

Table 3

Composite Index of Social Well-Being in the Social Sphere and Its Component Indices

	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Uzbekistan
Health status	173.1	170.3	163.3	164.4
Housing conditions	157.2	153.2	134.2	142.9
Health care	152.2	141.1	131.6	138.2
Opportunities for taking holidays and vacations	134.4	132.0	126.6	120.9
Opportunities for recreation and leisure	158.7	150.3	136.7	151.3
Opportunities for physical activity and sports	160.2	154.3	142.3	144.0
Education opportunities	144.3	130.9	119.1	119.9
Social services	146.2	134.9	124.6	132.0
Composite index of social well-being in the social sphere	153.3	145.9	134.8	139.2
	Above average	Above average	Above average	Above average

Note. Source: authors' calculations.

We proceeded from the premise that the realization of migrants' social expectations is one of the key indicators influencing their perception of their socio-economic, socio-political, and spiritual opportunities, as well as their perception of their income and social status (Morev & Kaminskiy, 2014). This, in turn, has a certain impact on the social activity of migrants (Yatsenko, 2006), shaping the socio-psychological aspect of well-being.

According to our calculations, migrants from all countries have shown a high level of fulfillment of their social expectations. The expectations were least fulfilled for migrants from Tajikistan (Table 4).

Table 4

Index of Social Expectations

	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Uzbekistan
Index of social expectations	184.6	184.4	172.3	184.3
	High	High	High	High

Note. Source: authors' calculations

Table 5

Integral Index of Social Well-Being

	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Uzbekistan
Composite index of social well-being in the economic sphere	160.3	158.5	158.9	156.4
Composite index of social well-being in the social sphere	153.3	145.9	134.8	139.2
Index of social expectations	184.6	184.4	172.3	184.3
Integral index of social well-being	166.1	162.9	155.3	160.0
	High	High	Above average	High

Note. Source: authors' calculations.

The integral index of social well-being points to the fact that the social well-being of migrants from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan in the Moscow agglomeration can be assessed as high, while that of people from Tajikistan is above average. High evaluations of social well-being are primarily linked to the realization of the expectations that migrants had upon arriving in Moscow.

Our analysis of social well-being among two groups of migrants: those who plan to return to their home country and those who do not plan to do so, shows that those who are more satisfied with the economic, social, and socio-psychological aspects of their life in Russia do not plan to return to their homeland. We have also found that the integral index of social well-being is high for the second group, and above average for the first group. Despite being less satisfied with their economic status and even less so in the social sphere, migrants in this group have high social expectations from migration, which compensates for the lower ratings in other areas of life.

Table 6

Integral Index of Social Well-Being in the Economic Sphere and Its Component Sub-Indices Among Migrants (Those Planning to Return to Their Home Country and Those Not Planning to Do So)

	Planning to return to their home country	Not planning to return to their home country
Economic sphere		
Wage levels	143.5	175.2
Match between the job and the person's skills and qualifications	151.6	177.7

Table 6 Continued

	Planning to return to their home country	Not planning to return to their home country
Job satisfaction	149.7	179.2
Financial security	134.7	155.5
Nutrition	153.7	168.4
Clothes	146.3	168.8
Composite index of social well-being in the economic sphere	**146.6**	**170.8**
	Above average	High
Social sphere		
Health status	159.6	174.9
Housing conditions	138.1	156.8
Health care	123.2	156.0
Opportunities for taking holidays and vacations	118.1	145.2
Opportunities for recreation and leisure	138.5	160.7
Opportunities for physical activity and sports	142.5	155.6
Education opportunities	116.0	145.5
Social services	120.1	149.9
Composite index of social well-being in the social sphere	132.2	155.6
	Above average	Above average
Index of social expectations	174.3	182.5
	High	High
Integral index of social well-being	151.0	169.3
	Above average	High

Demographic Attitudes of Migrants From Central Asia

Demographic priorities are shaped by numerous factors, including individual characteristics, health status, satisfaction with personal life, social status, confidence in the future, and others. However, as our study demonstrates, a crucial determinant is shared values. Eight out of 10 respondents highlighted the significance of national and religious traditions and customs. The overwhelming majority of respondents consider starting their own family as the main life goal/achievement (Yes, completely agree/ more yes than no, migrants comprise 83.6%).

Marital orientations. According to our research, 37.6% of migrants are officially married, and 40.2% are single (not married). It should be noted that among the respondents, there is no significant difference in marital status across Central Asian countries. The number of single men is higher compared to the number of unmarried women (43.6% of men, 35.4% of women). This confirms the hypothesis that women

more often migrate with their husbands. By the age of 36–45, 61% of the respondents are officially married.

In the surveyed age groups, 12.0% are in a "civil marriage" (cohabiting). Extramarital relationships indicate the development of various forms of cohabitation in Moscow, reflecting a tolerant attitude towards both unregistered partnerships and extramarital births. This confirms experts' opinion that living conditions in migration, in particular detachment from the family, reduce the taboo among migrants on unregistered forms of marriage.

It is possible that the survey data may not fully reflect the situation in the marriage market of the capital region. Studies of family-marriage behavior of labor migrants provide evidence that there has been an increase in bigamy (Barsukova & Chasovskaia, 2016). The main reasons cited for married labor migrants in Russia entering into another relationship include a desire to obtain local registration in Russia, practical conveniences, support from local women, and the pursuit of emotional and sexual relationships that migrants may lack when separated from their families. Experts have highlighted the emergence of an illicit industry, noting an increase in facilitating marriages with the primary aim of obtaining Russian passports (Ul'masov, 2019).

The facts of entering into new relationships (cohabitation or forming another family in Russia) while having a family in the home country confirm our research findings. A fifth of the respondents themselves had to deal with such cases, while about half of them reported hearing about it. These data were obtained in all respondent groups, by gender and age.

The majority of respondents consider mutual love, respect, and fidelity to their partner as essential values for creating and functioning in their family. The older our respondents are, the more they value loyalty to their partner and agreement between spouses on all key matters.

Most respondents favor the hierarchical family structure over more egalitarian models. They are oriented towards the patriarchal model, which represents an authoritative system led by a husband or someone from the older generation. However, it should be noted that younger respondents more often demonstrate commitment to a democratic, egalitarian distribution of roles in the family.

Reproductive Attitudes. To obtain a clearer insight into the reproductive behavior of respondents, inquiries were made regarding the exact number of children under their care. A quarter of migrants have one child and a fifth have two children. 15% of migrants have three or more children. Migrants from all countries take care of approximately the same number of children (both in the Moscow agglomeration and in the home country). In other words, there is a prevalence of families with 1–2 children among respondents aged 18 to 45.

Remarkably, there is a disparity in the age at which migrants and residents of the Moscow agglomeration have their first child. Newcomers to the Moscow agglomeration opt for having children earlier, which improves the prospects for future births. In the group of migrants aged 18–25, 13.9% of the respondents already have children. As the survey revealed, some migrants would prefer not

to have any children; 41.5% of migrants would like to have 1–2 children; 42.1% are oriented towards a large family by Russian standards (three or more children). Thus, we can conclude that migrants from the Central Asian republics maintain a higher potential for reproductive behavior. However, it is important to note that there is always a gap between the desired and actual number of children as people's ideal reproductive plans are often not attainable due to various life circumstances and unexpected events.

Migration Attitudes. Among those surveyed, 38% plan to return to their home country, 34% do not plan, and 28% are undecided. Less frequently, return migration strategies were demonstrated by migrants from Kazakhstan, that is 28%, which can be explained by Kazakhstan's shift

> away from the widespread use of the Russian language, gradually displacing it from all spheres, from education to government administration, from culture to industry. This is coupled with a policy of gradually filling leadership positions in government, education, and industry with national personnel. Additionally, there is an effort to provide children with quality education in the Russian language, which opens up significant employment opportunities across the entire space of the former Soviet Union". (Koloskov, 2023; Trans. by Ekaterina Purgina)

Citizens of Kyrgyzstan tend to be oriented towards return migration more often with 43% planning to return. Kyrgyzstan is followed by Tajikistan, with 44% of those who plan to return, and 39% from Uzbekistan (Figure 5).

Figure 5

Percentage of Migrants Planning to Return to Their Home Country
(In Percentage of Those Surveyed)
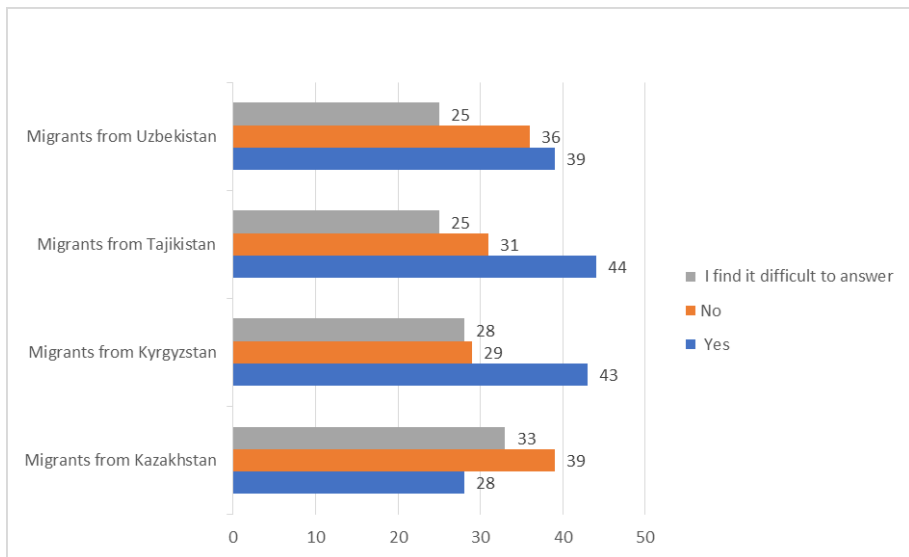
In each group, there is approximately an equal number of men and women, both single and married, in an official or civil partnership. Among those planning to return, there are 1.8 times more respondents in the 26–35 age; 12.3% more individuals with incomplete secondary and secondary education; and those living in the capital on their own, without a family. Among those planning to stay in Russia, there are twice as many individuals with higher education, those who combine studies and work, and 3.8 times more individuals who see themselves as future citizens of Russia (Table 7).

Table 7

Socio-Demographic Profile of Respondents Planning to Return to Their Home Country (In Percentage of Those Surveyed)

|	Variable	Yes	No	Undecided
Gender	Male	42 (row-wise) 64.6	32 (row-wise) 55.6	26 (row-wise) 55.4
	Female	33 (row-wise) 35.4	37 (row-wise) 44.4	39 (row-wise) 44.6
Age	18–25	33.9	46.2	43.3
	26–35	44.6	24.4	32.8
	36–45	21.4	29.5	23.9
Education	Incomplete secondary/ secondary education	45.6	30.9	24.4
	Secondary vocational education	36.1	30.9	48.8
	Higher education	17.6	37.1	23.9
Marital status	Single	37.4	41.3	42.7
	Married	42.5	34.7	34.3
	In a civil partnership	11.6	12.4	12.2
In Moscow	Alone	41.2	29	37.1
	With a spouse	13.6	15.4	18.8
	With a spouse and a child/ children	16.3	17.0	14.1
Employed		73.8	61.4	70.9
Study and work		11.9	23.9	17.8
See themselves as citizens of Russia in the future		10.9	41.3	19.7

Migrants in the group planning to return place greater importance on religious and national traditions. Additionally, they self-report lower proficiency in the Russian language compared to those who do not intend to return. Meanwhile, the groups not planning to return exhibit higher satisfaction ratings with daily life and accessibility of social and medical services. They also have a good to excellent level of proficiency in the Russian language (Figure 6).

Figure 6

Respondents' Satisfaction With Various Aspects of Everyday Life Depending on Migration Strategies (As a Percentage of Those Surveyed)
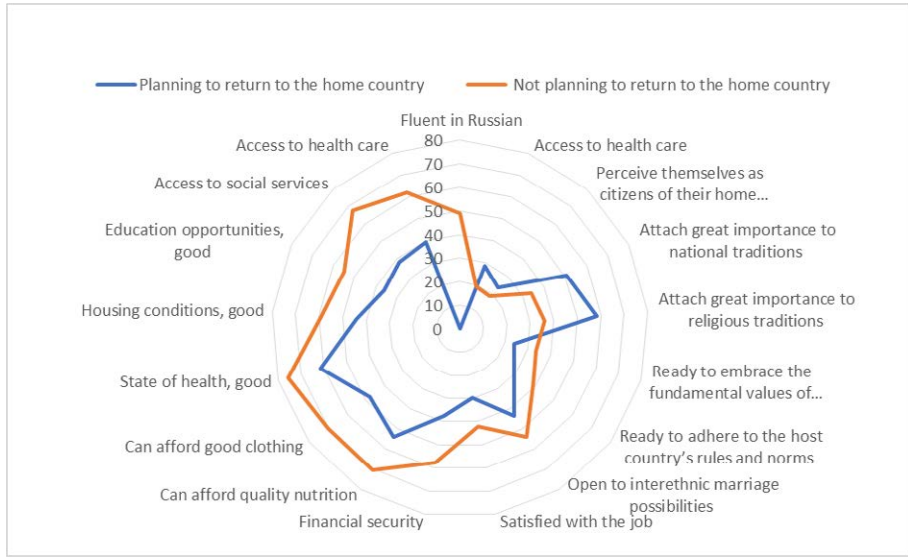
The main distinctions in this group hinge on whether migrants' expectations were met upon arriving in the Moscow agglomeration, the availability of interesting job opportunities, the chance to showcase their skills and talents, and the aspiration to obtain Russian citizenship (Figure 7).

Figure 7

Factors Influencing Respondents' Choice of a Migration Strategy (In Percentage of Those Surveyed)
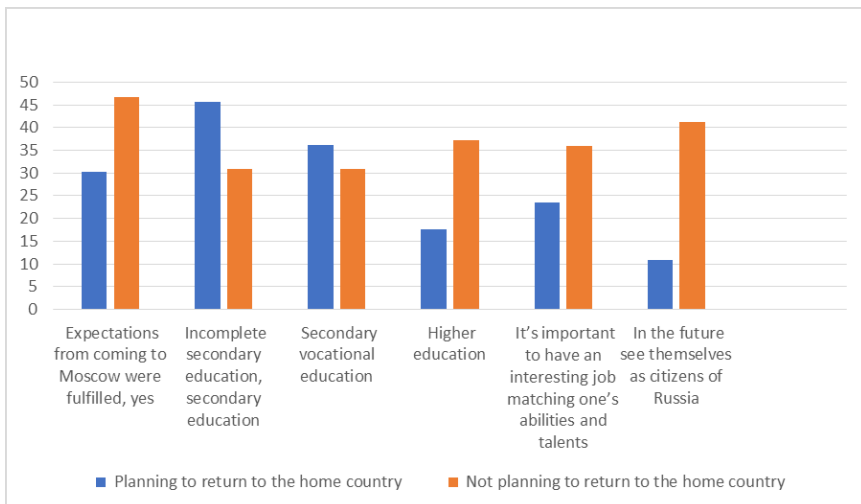
Discussion and Conclusion

Due to the unfavorable demographic situation in the Moscow agglomeration, there is a high demand for skilled personnel in the labor market. The migration decisions of citizens from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan are influenced by their social well-being in the capital region. Thus, respondents who do not plan to return to their home country have a higher integral index of social well-being. In this group, there is a higher percentage of people satisfied with the economic, social, and socio-psychological aspects of their life in Russia. For those migrants who plan to return to their home country, the level of social well-being is above average. There are, however, some differences depending on migrants' country of origin. The integral index of social well-being points to the fact that migrants from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan enjoy a high level of social well-being in the Moscow agglomeration, while for migrants from Tajikistan its level is above average.

A high level of social well-being in the economic sphere is characteristic of migrants from Kazakhstan, while migrants from the other three countries experience it at an above-average level. Wage levels are assessed as high. The lowest scores were given to financial security by migrants from all the four countries.

The level of social well-being in the social sphere for migrants from all four countries is above average. The highest level is characteristic of migrants from Kazakhstan, and the lowest, from Tajikistan.

For citizens of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, the most problematic areas in the social sphere are opportunities for taking vacations and holidays while migrants from Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are more concerned about the lack of opportunities for obtaining education. Difficulties in obtaining education for migrants from these countries, in our opinion, are primarily linked to their insufficient proficiency in the Russian language compared to migrants from Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. We found that for migrants from all the four countries, their social expectations are realized at a high level. The expectations were least fulfilled for migrants from Tajikistan.

The demographic attitudes of migrants are influenced by national and religious traditions. The overwhelming majority considers their main life goal/achievement to be the creation of their own family. The older the respondents, the larger the proportion of those who are oriented towards the patriarchal model. Young respondents more frequently demonstrate a commitment to a democratic, egalitarian distribution of power within the family. Meanwhile, there is a growing trend of labor migrants entering into second unions, with one in eight respondents engaging in informal cohabitation or "civil partnerships" while maintaining their original family ties.

Migrants from the Central Asian republics exhibit higher fertility rates: 42.1% of migrants are oriented towards a large family model by Russian standards (three or more children). A notable characteristic of the age-related birth pattern among newcomers to Moscow Oblast is the occurrence of earlier childbirths, which improves the prospects for future births. Approximately one-third of migrants plan to return to their home country, while an equal proportion has no such plans. Citizens of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan are more often oriented towards return

migration. Respondents that are not planning to return exhibit higher satisfaction with daily life, find social and medical services more accessible, demonstrate advanced or excellent knowledge of the Russian language, feel that their expectations upon arriving in Moscow region were fulfilled, aspire to have an interesting job, matching their abilities and talents, and are willing to obtain Russian citizenship.

The novelty of the research is determined by the distinctive nature of sociological analysis, manifested in the ability to examine the social well-being and demographic attitudes of migrants from Central Asia based on direct empirical data. This includes characteristics of personal life satisfaction across various aspects (spheres, domains), the living environment, and orientation towards perspectives and opportunities for implementing life strategies.

Studying the well-being and attitudes of migrants from Central Asia in Moscow helps improve our understanding of socio-economic and demographic issues in Russia. It includes broadening our theoretical and methodological understanding of the issue, offering significant explanatory potential. This expands the research scope of demography and migration sociology, providing new insights into issues related to the growing role of migrants in the socio-economic and demographic development of the Moscow agglomeration.

The research findings can be valuable for policy-makers in designing and implementing measures to enhance the social, economic, and demographic well-being of the capital. The most prominent concerns among migrants are such issues as obtaining registration documents, securing social insurance, and navigating administrative barriers in employment. Therefore, to enhance conditions for their adaptation, more institutional support is needed in these areas.

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