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## THE INFLUENCE OF CHANGES IN THE ETHNIC STATUS POSITION OF THE RUSSIAN POPULATION IN THE PERCEPTION OF MULTIETHNIC YOUTH OF THE CAUCASUS REPUBLICS

**Abstract:** *in the article, the authors analyze the causes of intolerance, religious extremism, terrorism, radicalism among youth, problems in interethnic relations. Factors of interethnic tension that have regional specificity, in contrast to continental Russia, are considered. Particular tension in interethnic relations is caused by territorial disputes, the solution of which, even in the legal field, carries the danger of interethnic split, especially in such multi-ethnic entities as the Republics of Dagestan, Ingushetia, Adygea, Chechnya and the southern regions of the Stavropol Territory. The authors believe that the reason for this situation in the southern regions of the Russian Federation is the unovercome consequences of the political and economic crisis in the North Caucasus. The significant outflow of the Russian population from the region associated with the dramatic events of the 1990s, the subsequent low rates of socio-economic development and negative demographic dynamics led to a decrease in the role of Russians in the North Caucasus. This actualizes the scientific significance of the issues of changing the ethnostatus positions of the Russian population in the views of modern multiethnic youth.*

**Key words:** *extremism, radicalism, interethnic schism, North Caucasian republics, polyethnicity, outflow of the Russian population, identity, restoration of ethnic business, modernization, development of the regions of the North Caucasus Federal District, rights of peoples, migration problems, Russian Federation, Soviet history, social memory, Russian population, the youth, North Caucasus.*

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### Introduction

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When studying socio-political processes in the North Caucasus in the USSR, Russians made up a quarter of the population. The Soviet period is important for the analysis of the role of the Russian population for the national republics of their rural population on the dynamics of its influence on the loyalty of the Caucasus to the USSR and were one of the main actors in the socio-economic and cultural development of their regions. The dramatic events of the 1990s, a sharp decline in the level and quality of life and the subsequent low rates of socio-economic development led to a decrease in the number of Russians living in the North Caucasus.

The North Caucasus is a “frontline” region where peoples and cultures interact. Features of the North Caucasus region is the interaction of peoples with different sociocultural traditions, different ethnocultural and religious foundations. In the region, there is an interaction between different civilizations, religions and cultures, the stabilizing basis of which is the all-Russian identity. Russians, acting as carriers of the Russian language, culture and statehood, have historically contributed to the inclusion of the North Caucasian peoples in the single socio-cultural space of Russia. The decrease in their numbers, associated with migration and negative demographic trends, affects the pace of socio-economic development of the region and can actualize the destructive potential of interethnic relations. The article focuses on the ideas of the region's youth about the role of Russians in the North Caucasus in the Soviet and post-Soviet periods. This issue is relevant for understanding the dynamics and direction of modern socio-cultural and socio-economic processes in the region, scenarios for their further development and assessing the risks of potential conflict.

The purpose of the study is to determine the perceptions and assessments of multiethnic youth of the North Caucasus about the role of Russians in the region in the Soviet and post-Soviet periods.

Russians in the North Caucasus have become, along with state authorities, the main actor in the formation and strengthening of the Russian state in the region, and conductors of Russian cultural institutions. During the Soviet period, they played a significant role in the development of the economy, social sphere, education and culture of the national republics. In modern Russia, the politicization of the past, the transformation of historical memory into a resource for the development of the North Caucasus is determined by the difficult period of deep socio-political transformations of the 1990s. and a painful exit to the path of stabilization and development. This occurred in connection with the discrediting of Soviet

ideological narratives, a painful process of democratization that made possible the “public articulation of versions of the collective past that were previously suppressed and hushed up.” Social memory is one of the basic elements in the formation of conceptual models of modern all-Russian identity in the North Caucasus. An all-Russian identity will make it possible to integrate the multinational North Caucasus into the large Russian multicultural community. In this regard, a number of Russian historians emphasize the important role of public strategies in shaping attitudes towards the past, as well as commemoration practices in the formation of unifying historical narratives. The reflection and perception of these changes on the part of individuals is of great importance. Scientists from the South of Russia dealt with the issues of changing the ethnic status positions of the Russian population and the problems of interethnic relations in the North Caucasus. The study of young people's ideas about the role of Russians in the North Caucasus makes it possible to determine the state, nature and direction of changes in the position of the Russian population in the region. Consideration of the role of Russians in the North Caucasus is assumed within the framework of several methodological approaches identified by the authors, namely:

- an ethnic approach that allows us to identify the social well-being of the Russian population, the presence/absence of migration attitudes;
- a regional approach, which involves determining the role and place of Russians in the socio-economic development of the region, the position of Russian culture and the Russian language in the national republics;
- an institutional approach that allows us to determine the implementation of the main socio-cultural institutions that underlie the all-Russian identity, the implementation of the main strategies of national and youth policy of the Russian Federation in the North Caucasus.

Russians in the North Caucasus have historically acted as carriers of the all-Russian institutional matrix, which they implemented in the sociocultural relations of the various peoples of the region. This position actualizes the present study of assessments and ideas of modern multiethnic youth in the region about the role of Russians in the history of the North Caucasus and their modern significance. Considering the ideas of young people, the authors proceeded from the fact that the individual ideas of young people include a collective memory that goes far beyond the boundaries of personal experience. As the authors note, in the human mind the memory of an individual, a social group, the political collective of a nation and the memory of culture are always combined.

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According to research results, young people are especially susceptible to the experience gained; the age period from twelve to twenty-five years becomes decisive in the formation of ideas and attitudes for the rest of a person's life. Determining the assessments and perceptions of modern youth in the region will make it possible to clarify the policy of constructing and strengthening the all-Russian identity of youth in the region, and make an additional contribution to knowledge about the role of Russians in the North Caucasus in history and modern times. Empirical data revealing young people's assessments and ideas about the role of Russians in the North Caucasus in the Soviet and post-Soviet periods was obtained based on a questionnaire survey conducted in February-March 2022 d. The instrument included checklist, tabular, rating, and open-ended questions. The subjects of the survey were students aged 18–24 years from leading universities of the North Caucasus, accumulating young people, representatives of all subjects of the North Caucasus Federal District: North Caucasus Federal University, Stavropol State Agrarian University and Stavropol State Medical University (Stavropol), Pyatigorsk State University . The choice of students from leading universities in the North Caucasus as an object is due to their significant share in the cohort of young people aged 18–24 years old receiving higher education in the region and their leading role in the formation of the value foundations of identity in the region due to their education and socio-political activity.

The sample by gender was 54% girls and 46% boys. To analyze the results of the study by ethnicity, answers to the question “What nationality do you consider yourself to be?” were united into two main groups: 1) Russians; 2) the peoples of the North Caucasus. The 2022 sample included 50% Russians.

40% are North Caucasian peoples and 10% consider themselves to be other peoples of the region. The presence among the respondents of a significant number of young people who came to study from the republics of the North Caucasus allows us to extrapolate the results of the study to the youth of the North Caucasus region. The division of the sample population into ethnic Russians and those who classified themselves as North Caucasian peoples is due to the objectives of the quantitative study: identifying and comparing similarities/differences in respondents' ideas about the role of Russians in the region. In total, more than a thousand respondents were surveyed. The survey was conducted online.

In the North Caucasus, those problems that are characteristic of Russia as a whole are presented in concentrated form. What today belongs mainly to this region, tomorrow may become the “property” of the entire country. The North Caucasus still remains a testing ground for social experiments by the authorities, and some crisis management technologies

that have been tested in the south are already recognizable in other regions of Russia.

In the perception of the majority of residents of the country, the North Caucasus is not just one of the subsidized territories of the Russian Federation. This is a “hot spot”, a zone of smoldering war, which was “pressed down” in Chechnya, but which has spread throughout the entire region.

Almost every day, the media report new terrorist attacks, killings of security forces and militants. Despite the victorious reports, the terrorist underground remains in the republics. According to the Prosecutor General of the Russian Federation Yu. Chaika, in 2011, 576 crimes of a terrorist nature were committed in the region. According to official data, 204 militants were killed and 187 wounded in Dagestan alone last year. At least 169 armed clashes took place. According to estimates by the Memorial human rights center, in 2011, 171 law enforcement officers were killed in the North Caucasus and another 327 were injured. This, however, is a third less than in 2010, but still too much to talk about qualitative changes in the fight against terrorism.

Russian public opinion has developed a stable idea of the North Caucasus as a problem area and a source of increased danger. Residents of other regions of Russia do not understand the Caucasians, do not know their culture and customs, and see the peoples of the North Caucasus (it does not matter whether they are Muslims or Christians) as a potential threat. All this creates an unfavorable psychological atmosphere in the country. As a July 2012 study by the Public Opinion Foundation showed, for more than half of Russians the phrase “North Caucasus” evokes purely negative associations, such as war, hostilities, armed conflicts (22%); explosions, terrorist attacks, militants, bandits, crime (10%); violence, death, anxiety, fear (10%); disorder, instability, tense situation, “pain point” of Russia (8%); excessive spending of funds, money laundering, ruin, unemployment (2%); rejection of Caucasians, reluctance to live with them in the same country (3%). 62% of respondents say that the situation in the North Caucasus remains unstable; 55% believe that the situation is not changing or is even getting worse; 40% are convinced that the authorities do not control the situation in the region. Russians look with great concern at the flow of refugees, displaced persons and labor migrants coming from the North Caucasus, who, due to ethnic, religious, and cultural differences, create problems for the indigenous population and cause hostility on their part, which, in turn, provokes conflicts and clashes.

Gradually, an increasing number of people are coming to the conclusion that financial injections cannot solve the problems of the North Caucasus. If in 2005 20% of respondents believed that the Russian authorities should pay more attention to the North Caucasus than to other regions, now only 12% share

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this point of view. A concentrated expression of this kind of sentiment was the slogan “Stop feeding the Caucasus!”, which was supported not only by the nationalist audience.

These sentiments are also known to many residents of the North Caucasus republics:

As I see it, the North Caucasus is a thorn, a sore point for Russia, but one that Russia does not want to solve at all. There is absolutely no national verified policy that would be understandable to the population, which would be implemented in stages, and we would see a certain meaning in the movement (Kabardino-Balkaria, focus group, older age).

This, so to speak, is the Caucasian problematic background at the level of mass consciousness. But, despite the reality of the problems noted above, the situation in the republics of the North Caucasus is much more complex and multifaceted. The Caucasus is seething and creating difficulties for the rest of Russia because it is an area of complex socio-economic disaster and acute ethno-confessional contradictions.

To clarify the essence of numerous problems in the region, their causes and possible ways to mitigate,

including with the help of republican and federal authorities, the Institute of Social Marketing conducted in 2011 a comprehensive sociological study “Public opinion and the effectiveness of state policy in the North Caucasus”, which included mass population surveys (sample of 3,500 respondents, representing the population of all six republics of the North Caucasus Federal District), as well as a series of focus group discussions and expert interviews. The materials of this study formed the basis of this article. The study revealed a high degree of dissatisfaction among Caucasians with the state of affairs in their republics. In the region as a whole, 60% of respondents are dissatisfied with them to one degree or another versus 39% of those who are satisfied. Residents of Dagestan (76% completely or rather dissatisfied), Kabardino Balkaria (70%) and Karachay-Cherkessia (68%) assess the situation in their republic most negatively. The population of North Ossetia (62%) and Ingushetia (56%) are slightly less pessimistic. Chechnya stands out sharply against the general background, with the state of affairs in which 85% of residents are satisfied (Table 1).

**Table 1. Results of a survey of dissatisfaction with violence among residents of the Caucasus republics**

	North Caucasian Federal District	DD	AI	KB	CC	CCO	HH
Completely satisfied	8	33	99	22	33	33	333
Rather satisfied	31	119	335	227	228	334	552
Rather not happy	43	552	337	449	550	551	111
Completely dissatisfied	17	224	119	221	118	112	11
I find it difficult to answer	1	22	00	11	11	11	33

**Main part**

The settlement of Russians in the North Caucasus has historically been a multidirectional and complex process. The areas of Russians in the region changed depending on government policy, sociocultural and demographic processes in Russia. Modernization development in the North Caucasus mainly occurred during the Soviet period of history. The significant role of Russians in the modernization of the region was determined to a greater extent not by the national policy of the Soviet state, but by their contribution to the development of industry, education, health care and culture of the region. The Russification of the sociocultural life of the North Caucasus was a logical continuation of modernization, which included industrialization, the development of collective forms of agriculture, education and healthcare, and the propaganda of

Soviet ideology and culture. This position of Russians followed from the logic of Soviet modernization, based on industrial development and the formation of a supporting social sphere. The Russian population was the bearer of the basic institutions of Russian culture, statehood, and the core of the scientific and technical intelligentsia. Russian specialists made a great contribution to the formation and development of the national intelligentsia of the North Caucasian peoples and became conductors of Soviet modernity. They contributed to the modernization of the main state, social and economic institutions of the national republics. In the late Soviet period, the territorial expansion of Russians ended, their demographic indicators deteriorated, and processes of depopulation and aging of the Russian population in the North Caucasus began.

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The main factors determining the position of Russians in the post-Soviet period were disintegration trends associated with the collapse of the Soviet Union, a deep crisis in the socio-economic sphere, and the weakening of state power, which led to a surge of separatism and nationalism. During this period, a large-scale and intensive outflow of the Russian population began, and the role and social status positions of Russians in the region decreased. The large and quite influential Russian population in the national republics of the region began to experience socio-psychological discomfort, which they did not encounter in Soviet times. A significant factor, most acutely manifested in the 1990s - the first half of the 2000s. and what contributed to the increased outflow of the Russian population from the regions of the North Caucasus was the combination of the high birth rate of the North Caucasian peoples and the lack of active economic growth. This led to mass unemployment, especially among young people. In the 2020s, despite a significant increase in the level of security and intensification of the anti-corruption fight, measures to support the socio-economic development of the North Caucasus Federal District did not ensure rapid development. It was not possible to significantly reduce the unemployment rate, and the average salary in the regions is still below the Russian average. The problems of subsidizing the budgets of the subjects of the North Caucasian Federal District of the Russian Federation and the development of social infrastructure continue to persist.

Low rates of modernization development in the 2020s. contributed to the high level of corruption and low efficiency of public administration in the regions of the North Caucasus. A serious obstacle to the development of the region was the outflow of the most qualified specialists - representatives of the Russian population. The vast majority of Russians who left the republics of the North Caucasus were representatives of the humanitarian and technical intelligentsia - teachers, doctors, engineers, scientists, and specialists in the field of high technology. For example, the activities of enterprises of the military-industrial complex in Dagestan, which provided 80% of the republic's economy, were stopped. The change in the position of Russians in the North Caucasus in the post-Soviet period was influenced by such factors as:

- accelerated development of economic processes based on market relations, leading to the transformation of values, social roles, norms and rules of behavior;
- intensification of migration processes due to the destruction of Soviet industry and the agro-industrial complex, rising unemployment, falling living standards, and lack of personal prospects;
- the outflow of the Russian population from areas of outbreaks of interethnic conflicts, including those of an armed nature;

- the hidden squeezing out of Russian specialists from the spheres of public administration, education and healthcare, the creation of moral and psychological discomfort in various spheres of public life;

- the impact of globalization processes on the Russian urban population, the formation of new living standards, modern values and life strategies;

- the ongoing movement of the Russian rural population to cities due to the technologization of agriculture, growing unemployment in rural areas, as well as the departure of young people to study and work in cities.

One of the most important factors in the situation of Russians in the North Caucasus is the social well-being of the Russian population, while young people are not in sufficient demand and are at risk of deteriorating their social position. The region's youth make up a significant part of its population, are distinguished by a high level of socio-political activity, and the demand for their potential remains low. The social well-being of young people is a kind of marker that includes the level of consumption, the degree of social security, opportunities for personal success and self-realization. At the personal level, this is a balance between the level of people's social aspirations and the degree of satisfaction of their most important needs. The main concerns of young people, which are exacerbated during the crisis, are associated with a drop in living standards, income levels and job loss. The social well-being of young people in the North Caucasus is characterized by a tendency towards a decrease in the level of satisfaction with living conditions in the region, opportunities for self-realization and prospects for further personal and professional growth. In the course of a study of the social well-being of youth in the North Caucasus, the degree of concern of young people about the main problems of public life was determined. The biggest problems, according to the young people surveyed, are economic, such as inflation, rising prices for goods and services, falling income levels and unemployment. At the same time, unemployment is more of a concern for the youth of the North Caucasian peoples. Also of great concern are socio-political problems, such as social justice, clannishness and corruption, democracy and human rights, as well as extremism and radicalism. Problems of social justice, clanism and corruption, democracy and human rights are of greater concern to the youth of the North Caucasian peoples (Figure 1).

The religious factor does not play a noticeable role when considering the main problems troubling the youth of the region. Respondents, regardless of religious affiliation, consider economic problems such as inflation and rising prices for goods and services, falling income levels and unemployment to be decisive for themselves. Socio-political problems are no less significant for them (Figure 2). It can be

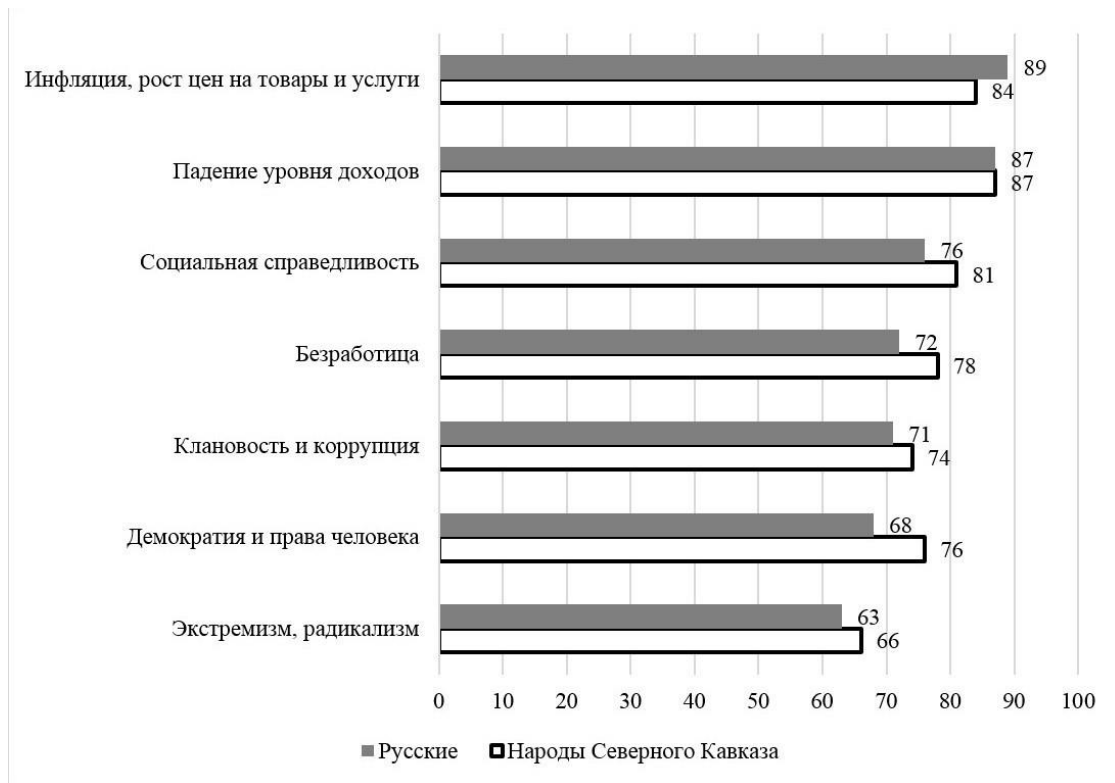
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assumed that national and religious factors have virtually no influence on young people’s perception of the main problems of public life. The concern of the vast majority of young people about these problems increases migration sentiment among young people. A significant part of young people do not see prospects for personal growth and successful self-realization.

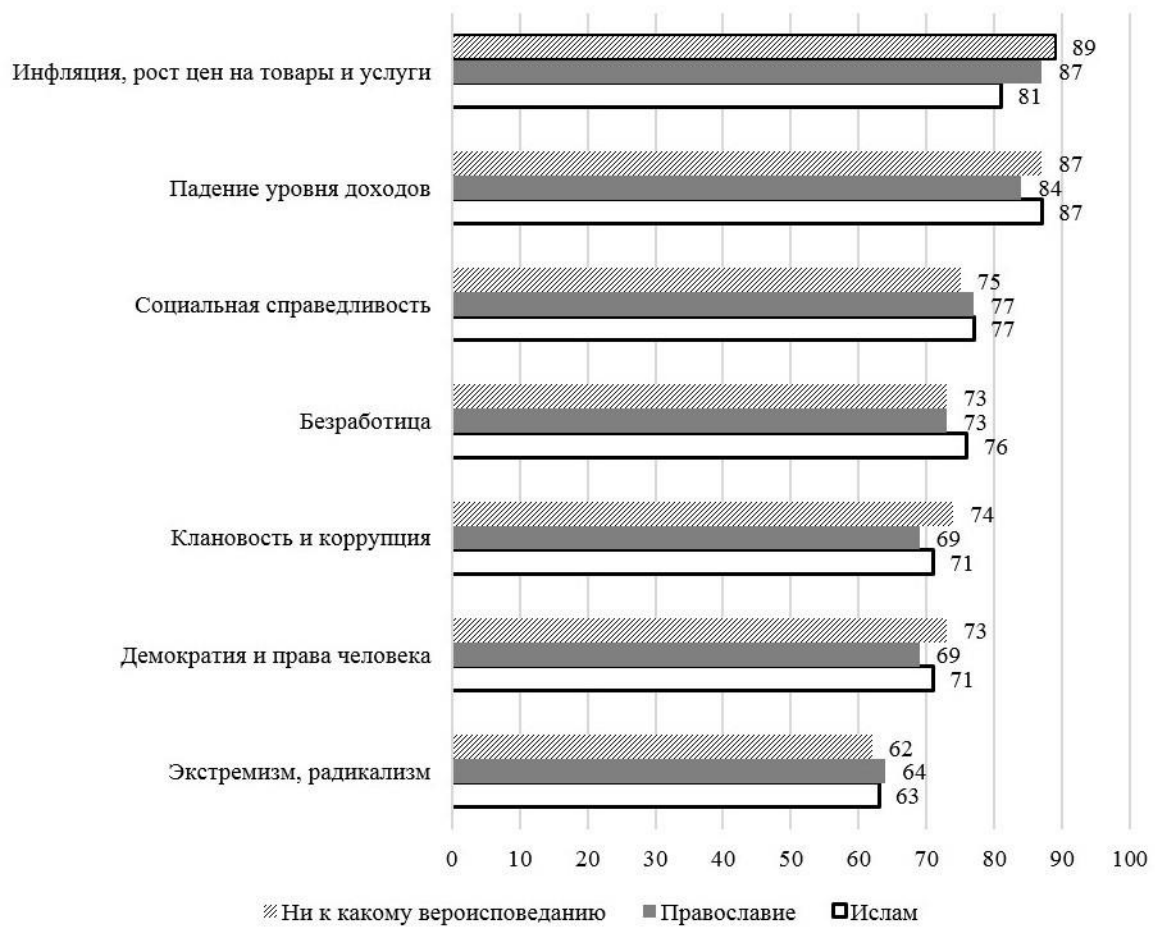
Migration sentiments are manifested in the desire of respondents to continue their studies and

search for work in another region. So, when answering the question “Do you plan to continue your studies or look for work in another region?” 51% answered “yes” or “most likely yes.” The religious and national affiliation of respondents also has virtually no effect on their migration attitudes (Table 2).



**Picture 1. Distribution of respondents’ answers to the question “Are you concerned about the following problems of social life?”**

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**Figure 2. Distribution of respondents' answers to the question "Are you concerned about the following problems of social life?"**

**Table 2. Distribution of respondents' answers to the question "Do you plan to continue your studies or look for work in another region?"**

Possible answer	Nationality		Religion			Total, n=1235
	Russians	peoples North Caucasus	Orthodoxy	Islam	to no purpose	
Yes	25	26	27	25	24	26
Most likely yes	25	25	22	25	29	25
Probably not	21	22	22	21	17	20
No	13	10	13	11	12	12
I find it difficult to answer	16	17	16	18	18	17

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**Figure 3. Distribution of respondents' answers to the question "If yes, then for what reasons?"**

As the main reasons for the desire to leave the region, respondents identified the lack of prospects for development and self-realization, poverty and unemployment, as well as clanism and corruption. Other reasons are less significant (Figure 3).

Along with problems of social well-being, the desire of some young people to leave the region is influenced by a number of long-term factors, such as:

the desire of young people to receive a quality education and find a prestigious job;

- insufficient demand for highly qualified labor due to the small number of high-tech companies and modern industrial enterprises;

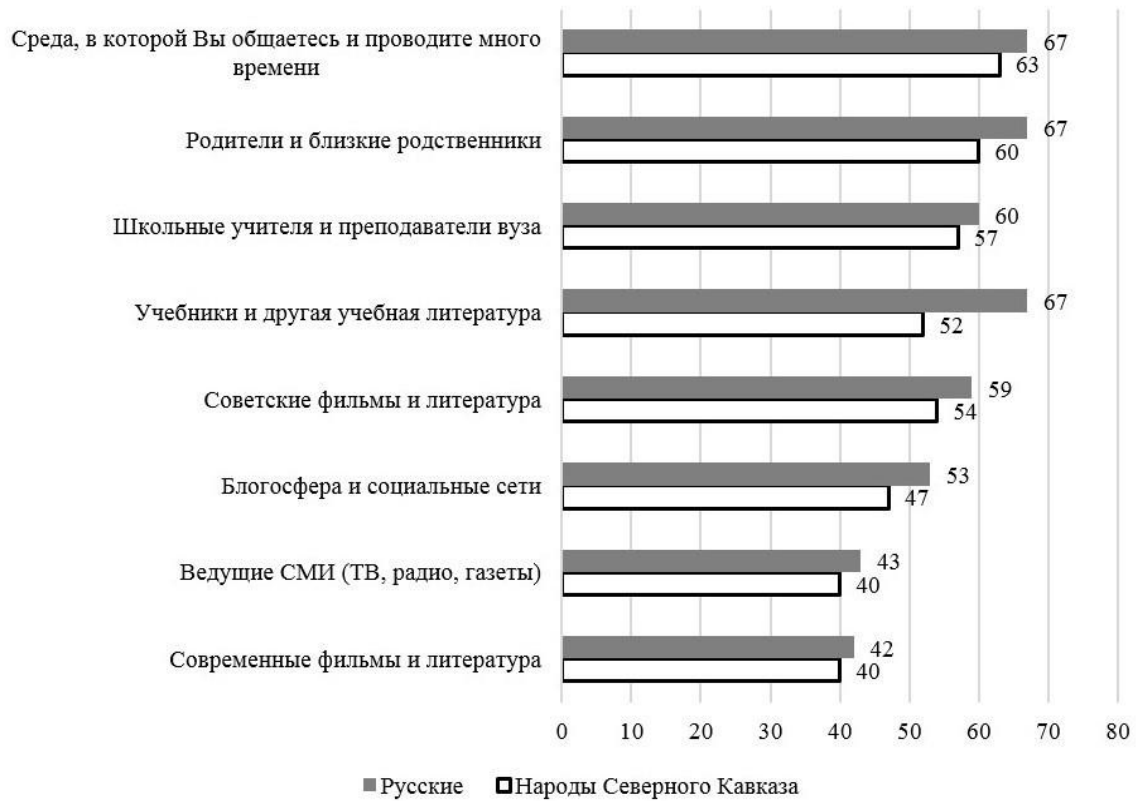
- the transformation of cities primarily into centers of trade and services that do not require highly qualified specialists and do not have a large number of highly paid jobs;

- partial archaization of social relations, re-actualization of such phenomena as clanism, ethnic complementarity, which sharply reduces the functioning of the mechanisms of vertical mobility. The ideas of modern youth about the role and place of Russians in the North Caucasus during the Soviet period, mainly, due to their age, are formed not with the help of their own life experience, but on the basis of perception and reflection on social memory, including the experience of previous generations, its representation in the media and in the education

system. Parents, teachers and the environment in which young people communicate play an important role. According to respondents, the determining factor in the formation of ideas about Soviet history and the role of the Russian population of the North Caucasus in it is the inner circle, parents, relatives and communication environment, school teachers and university professors, as well as textbooks and educational literature. The Soviet cultural heritage - films and fiction - plays a large role in shaping the views of young people, while the blogosphere and social networks, leading media, modern films and literature play a lesser role. The perceptions of Russian respondents by nationality are more influenced by the environment in which they communicate, parents and close relatives, educational literature, as well as Soviet films and literature, than the surveyed North Caucasian youth by the place of Russians in the North Caucasus during the Soviet period. It can be noted that the blogosphere and social networks of peoples (Figure 4). It can be assumed that young people of the North Caucasian peoples are more interested in subjects related to the history of national republics and the historical fate of their peoples. The problem of Russians in the North Caucasus during the Soviet period is not so relevant for them.



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**Figure 4. Distribution of respondents' answers to the question "Do the following reasons, in your opinion, contribute to the outflow of Russians from the regions of the North Caucasus?"**

The religious factor does not play a significant role in the formation of young people's ideas about the role and most influence the views of young people who do not identify themselves with any religion, and least of all the ideas of Muslims.

An important component of the study was determining the impact of Russians during the Soviet period on the economy, social sphere and culture of the regions of the North Caucasus. Respondents were asked to rate their influence on a 5-point scale (extremely negative - 1; and 2, 3, 4, 5 - completely positive). 52% of respondents assessed the influence of Russians positively (as "4" and "5"). There are 66% of such assessments among Russians, and 46% among respondents of North Caucasian peoples. This can be explained by the fact that for ethnic Russians, the

contribution of the Russian people to the development of the North Caucasus during the Soviet period is more significant, due to greater complementarity and ideas about the achievements of the Soviet period that are preserved in social memory. Negative ratings ("1" and "2") range from 1-5%, regardless of nationality (Table 3).

At the end of the Soviet period, the outflow of the Russian population beyond its borders began in the North Caucasus. If during most of the Soviet period the Russian population in the region grew and reached its maximum values in 1989 (3,089 thousand people) - 42.4%, then later the outflow of Russians from the region began, caused by a complex of socio-economic, ethnopolitical and demographic factors.

**Table 3. Distribution of respondents' answers to the question "Assess the influence of Russians during the Soviet period on the economy, social sphere and culture of the regions of the North Caucasus?" (not at all satisfactory - 1; and 2, 3, 4, 5 - completely satisfactory)**

Answer options	Nationality		Religion			Total, n=1235
	Russians	peoples of the North Caucasus	Orthodoxy	Islam	to no purpose	
1	1	3	1	4	1	2
2	1	5	1	5	1	3
3	32	46	29	45	42	38

**Impact Factor:**

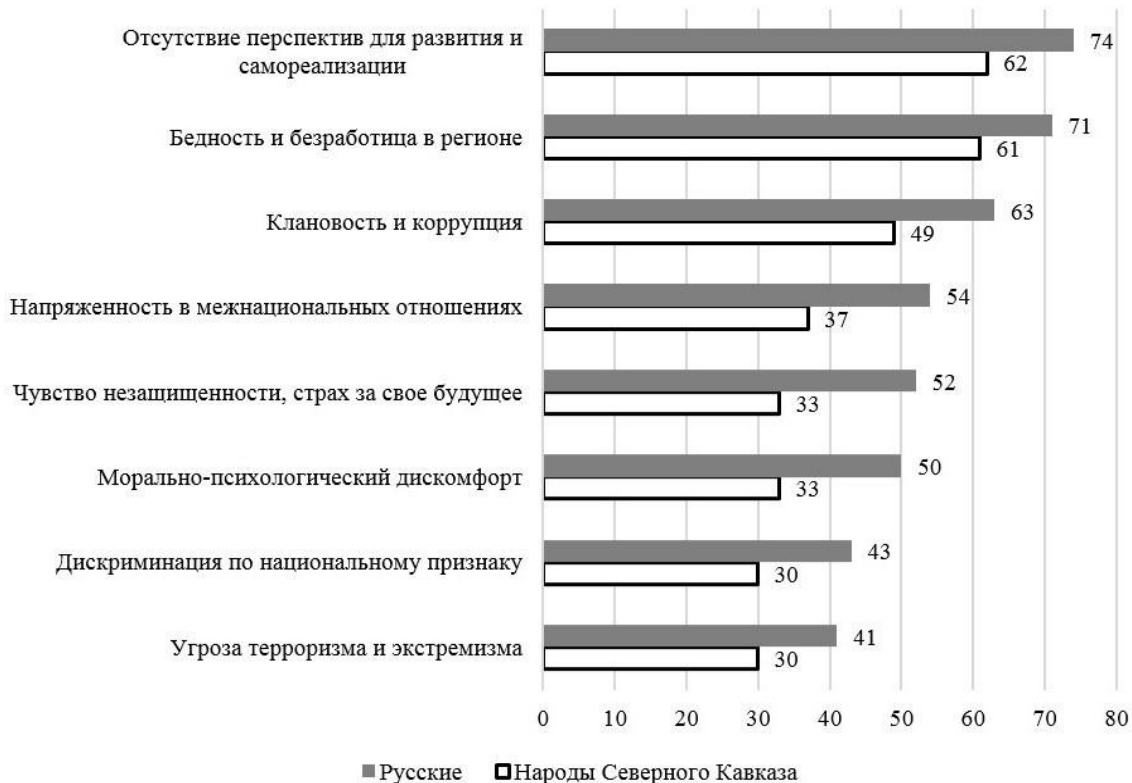
<b>ISRA (India) = 6.317</b>	<b>SIS (USA) = 0.912</b>	<b>ICV (Poland) = 6.630</b>
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<b>GIF (Australia) = 0.564</b>	<b>ESJI (KZ) = 8.771</b>	<b>IBI (India) = 4.260</b>
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4	36	27	35	25	33	32
5	30	19	34	21	23	25

According to the 2020 census, the Russian population of the region decreased to 2,854 thousand people, which is 30.2% of the population of the North Caucasus Federal District, of which the majority live in the Stavropol Territory - 2,232 thousand people. Thus, in 2020, only 622 thousand Russians lived in the national republics of the North Caucasus Federal District. In general, since 1959, the national republics of the North Caucasus have lost approximately half of their Russian population. The decrease in Russians in Chechnya and Ingushetia was catastrophic (by 12.5 times), in Dagestan there was a decrease by 2.5 times, and in Kabardino-Balkaria by 2 times. The trajectory of internal migration of the population of the mountains and foothills of the North Caucasus to the plain, which took shape back in the 1960s. and received a “second wind” after the collapse of the USSR, changes the ethnic composition of the population, contributes to the growth of sociocultural contrasts and creates additional risks of interethnic tension.

During the study, respondents were asked to indicate the main reasons for the outflow of Russians from the regions of the North Caucasus. The most important reasons, according to respondents, are

socio-economic: lack of prospects for development and self-realization, poverty and unemployment. The second most important reasons are ethnopolitical: clanism and corruption, tension in interethnic relations. Next come moral and psychological reasons: a feeling of insecurity, fear for one’s future and moral and psychological discomfort. The least significant, from the respondents’ point of view, are discrimination based on nationality and the threat of terrorism and extremism. These are the reasons that were decisive in the 1990s. and the first half of the 2000s, are today the least significant for young people, which indicates the continued macropolitical stabilization in the region. There is a big difference in determining the reasons for the outflow of Russians from the region depending on the nationality of the respondents. Russians, more than the peoples of the North Caucasus, point to socio-economic, ethnopolitical and moral-psychological reasons for the outflow of the Russian population (Figure 5). It can be assumed that, despite the stabilization of the situation in the region, Russian youth are more aware of possible threats and risks for their future and the lack of prospects for development and self-realization.



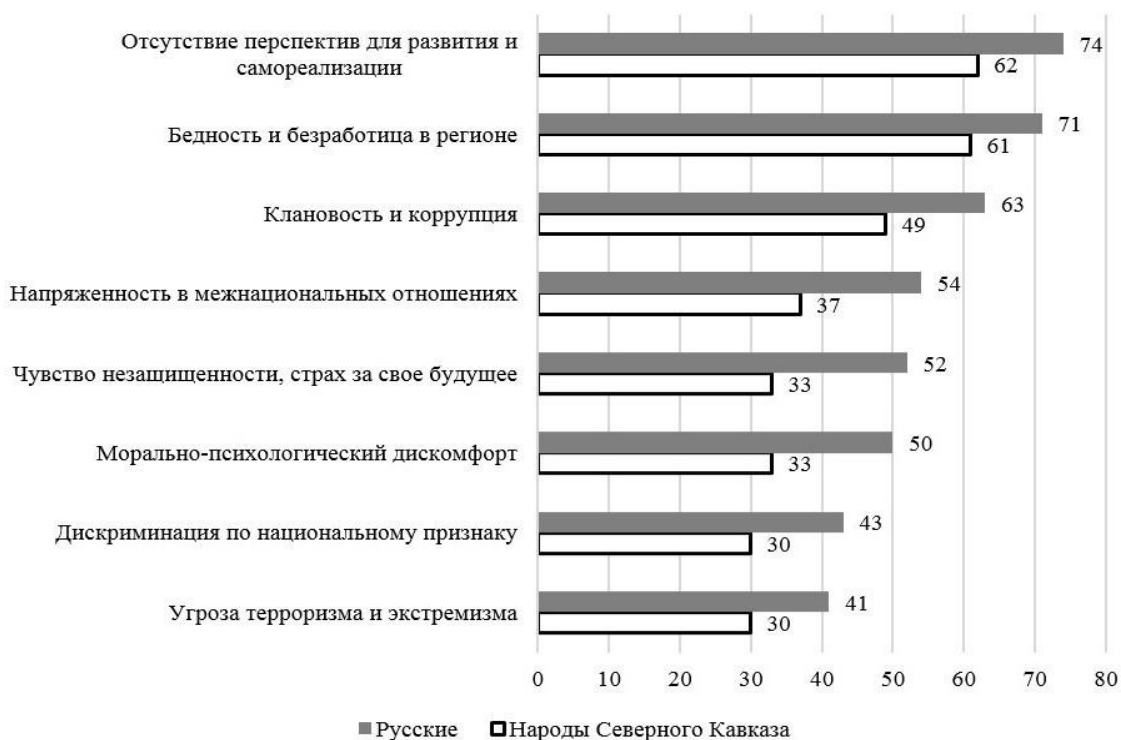
**Figure 5. Distribution of respondents’ answers to the question “Do the following reasons, in your opinion, contribute to the outflow of Russians from the regions of the North Caucasus?”**

**Impact Factor:**

<b>ISRA (India) = 6.317</b>	<b>SIS (USA) = 0.912</b>	<b>ICV (Poland) = 6.630</b>
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In determining the reasons for the outflow of Russians from the regions of the North Caucasus, the religious factor mostly coincides with the ethnic one. Among the young people surveyed from the North Caucasus, 85% consider themselves Muslims, and among Russians, 57% consider themselves Orthodox. There are differences in the degree of concern about the reasons for the outflow of Russians between

Muslims, Orthodox Christians and those who do not identify themselves with any religion. Most of all, the reasons for the outflow of Russians from the regions of the North Caucasus are pointed out by Russians who consider themselves to be Orthodox and do not consider themselves to be of any religion (Figure 6).



**Figure 6. Distribution of respondents’ answers to the question “Do the following reasons, in your opinion, contribute to the outflow of Russians from the regions of the North Caucasus?”**

The population of the North Caucasus is constantly compares living conditions in his republics with the situation in neighboring regions and Russia as a whole. And, as a rule, this comparison is not in favor of the republics, which encourages Caucasians to move to other regions of the country.

Despite a very critical attitude towards the situation at home, residents of the North Caucasus differ in their assessment of specific problems in their republics, their severity and the urgency of measures to solve them. At the same time, there are major problems that are common to all, affecting all others and creating an atmosphere of popular discontent and protests.

Contrary to popular belief, the problem of terrorism, religious extremism and armed clashes between security forces and “forest brothers,” while certainly extremely relevant, is not the main one for

residents of the region. The main problem of the North Caucasus is economic stagnation caused by the collapse of the Soviet economic system, and its most important consequence is the degradation of the traditional labor market, mass unemployment, which primarily affects young people. The problem of corruption is also extremely acute there, both in the upper echelons of power and in the everyday lives of people. As for other (and very numerous) social problems, the degree of their urgency varies from republic to republic (Table 4).

The number one problem for the North Caucasus is unemployment. It leads in the perception of residents of five of the six North Caucasus republics, and assessments of its importance are on average twice as high as assessments of the importance of the next problem, namely, corruption.

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**Table 4. List of social problems of violence that residents of the Caucasus republics are not happy with**

	North Caucasian Federal District	DD	AI	KKB	KKCH	CCO	HH
Unemployment, creation of new jobs	42	440	447	446	338	338	448
Corruption; corruption in government and law enforcement agencies	21	333	221	221	118	88	113
Terrorism, fight against terrorism	15	442	33	114	00	44	33
Low level of salaries and incomes of the population, rising prices	15	88	223	119	225	118	55
Underdevelopment of industry, agriculture, road construction, science, personnel problems	10	77	227	110	118	99	55
Healthcare	6	44	55	66	99	22	112
Education, lack of schools, child care facilities	6	11	111	44	55	88	110
Low quality of social security, social protection, low level of pensions, scholarships, benefits	9	22	110	77	113	116	55
High cost, inaccessibility of housing, low quality of housing and communal services	8	33	113	66	118	115	44
Religious extremism	3	44	00	110	11	00	11

Only in Dagestan are concerns about unemployment somewhat inferior to concerns about terrorism. Surveys record the difficult emotional state of the population, their fatigue and irritation due to the inability to find work. It is precisely the lack of work that respondents often explain when young people go

“to the forest.” The dynamics of perception of the unemployment situation by republic are reflected in Table 7.

An equally important problem in the regions in the eyes of public opinion is the dynamics of the unemployed in them.

**Table 7. Dynamics of the unemployed in the Caucasus republics**

	North Caucasian Federal District	DD	AI	KKB	KKCH	CCO	HH
Improved	6	33	110	33	22	11	221
Hasn't changed	40	338	550	334	223	334	662
Worsened	51	555	335	661	772	664	115
I find it difficult to answer	3	44	55	22	33	11	22

**Impact Factor:**

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In the North Caucasus. Everyday corruption that permeates all spheres, corruption in law enforcement agencies, lower and higher authorities has turned into a kind of regulator of social relations, defining the rules of people’s behavior.

In the republics of the North Caucasus, which are relatively small in terms of territory and population,

facts of corruption in the upper echelons of power quickly become known to a wide range of citizens, fueling general ideas about the corruption of management structures. At the same time, the majority of the population believes that the situation with corruption continues to worsen (Table 8).

**Table 8. Characteristics of corruption in the republics of the North Caucasus**

	North Caucasian Federal District	DD	AI	KKB	KKCH	CCO	HH
Decreasing	5	33	99	77	22	66	110
Rising	41	554	336	334	550	225	331
Does not change	46	338	554	551	440	555	448
I find it difficult to answer	8	55	11	88	9 8	114	111

When assessing the extent of corruption in this way, the population’s perceptions of the government’s position become extremely important—whether it is trying to cope with corruption (and if so, how successfully) or, due to its own corruption, has no desire to fight this evil in principle. The distribution of opinions on this matter is reflected in Table 9.

The scope of corruption is indicated not only by residents’ general assessments of the state of affairs in the republics, but also by their descriptions of their

personal experience of involvement in corrupt practices. The survey results are impressive: about half of respondents report that over the past year or two they have encountered a situation where an official asked or expected from them “unofficial payment or favors for their work.” It is equally important that many have come to terms with the need for bribes. They see no other way to solve their life problems.

**Table 9. The effectiveness of the fight against corruption in the republics of the North Caucasus**

	North Caucasian Federal District	D D	AI	KKB	KKCH	CCO	HH
Effectively	7	11	111	77	55	77	117
Not effective	50	449	553	446	552	446	555
Has no desire to fight corruption	34	442	336	336	336	229	119
I find it difficult to answer	9	88	00	111	77	118	99

For a fifth of the residents of the North Caucasus, corruption has already become the norm of life, and they give bribes without hesitation, and half are ready to “give” depending on the effectiveness of the offering, that is, on the degree of adequacy of the amount requested to the expected result. And only a quarter of Caucasians are not going to give bribes (and, apparently, do not) “under any circumstances.”

These sentiments and attitudes can be clearly seen in group discussions.

The culture of giving bribes has become so ingrained in our country that it will take a long time for it to leave our country. This cannot be eradicated

at once, with reforms alone. If a person knows that in order to do something, he needs to unfasten himself, this is even without question (Karachaevo - Cherkessia, middle age).

The problem of terrorism, whose rating is on average equal to the rating of the problem of poverty, is very unequal for the population of individual republics. Dagestanis are most concerned about it: 42% of them consider it the most acute problem, even surpassing in severity the problem of unemployment (40%), which is explained by the real prevalence of terrorism in Dagestan. At the same time, in other republics this problem is not perceived as the main

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one: in Kabardino-Balkaria it was considered such by 14% of respondents, in North Ossetia - 4%, in Ingushetia and Chechnya - 3% each, and in Karachay-Cherkessia it was not included in the list of the most acute ones at all.

What was introduced to us - Wahhabism, militants, bandits - is the most painful topic. We live under fear, I have children. Until people feel calm, there will be no schools, no hospitals, nothing will be here (Ingushetia, focus group, older age).

In our republic there is such a problem connected with extremism. We constantly carry out some kind of operations with Wahhabism. Like some kind of crowd of people, some kind of sound, something was blown up again. I want to live a simple, peaceful life. There is a little bit of this fear. Wahhabism. Terrorism (Dagestan, focus group, middle age).

Naturally, there is high unemployment, a shortage of jobs. People are ready to work, ready to work. And these shortages, this instability create the ground for the next stage: this is a terrorist threat. There is fertile ground for this... If a person does not know how to work, does not have the opportunity to exist normally, he searches. Or rather, they search for him, and on this basis they put him in a negative position (Ingushetia, expert).

Whether people feel protected in their cities, villages and the republic as a whole or, on the contrary, they fear for themselves and their loved ones, largely depends on trust in law enforcement agencies - the police, the prosecutor's office, the courts. The level of trust in these bodies in all republics, with the exception of Chechnya, is extremely low and is one and a half to two times lower than the level of mistrust. Even in Chechnya, where trust exceeds mistrust, about 35% of the population does not trust law enforcement agencies.

Participants in group discussions, as well as experts, universally expressed little trust in these structures.

I think that terrorism is not so dangerous for us as our valiant police are dangerous, because there are

many cases where people disappear, when young people are beaten and maimed. There are no changes due to the fact that the police were renamed to police (Dagestan, focus group, older age).

There, in the police, there are a lot of scoundrels, a lot of scoundrels, some of them are frostbitten scoundrels. This is one of the reasons that pushes people into the forests (Dagestan, expert).

We don't have honest cops like in "Our Russia". An honest cop is a dead cop (North Ossetia, focus group, younger age).

It should be noted that most of the terrorist acts are directed specifically against law enforcement officers - as revenge for the illegal, violent actions of the law enforcement officers themselves, which causes implicit approval of the population.

To public opinion in Russia, the North Caucasus appears to be a single "hot zone" with regular terrorist attacks, widespread religious fanaticism and extremism, and constant national conflicts, where the majority of the population does not feel safe. As the study showed, in the eyes of the residents of the North Caucasian republics themselves, the situation does not look so gloomy and hopeless, and its assessments in different republics differ greatly.

In two republics the situation is assessed as alarming. These are Dagestan, 52% of whose residents say that security problems are growing versus 4% who hold the opposite opinion, and Kabardino-Balkaria, where the ratio of people reporting a deterioration and improvement in the security situation is 40 to 12. In Karachay-Cherkessia, Ingushetia and North Ossetia the level anxiety is significantly lower, although even there the proportion of those indicating some decrease in security exceeds the proportion of those who record the opposite process (21 to 15, 20 to 18 and 19 to 17, respectively). And finally, Chechnya stands out in particular, with almost half of the population feeling an increase in security and only 9% - a weakening (Table 10).

**Table 10. Characteristics of the safety of the population of the republics of the North Caucasus**

	North Caucasian Federal District	DD	AI	KKB	KKCH	CCO	HH
Improved	17	44	118	122	115	117	449
Hasn't changed	48	440	558	443	660	663	335
Worsened	30	552	220	440	221	119	99
I find it difficult to answer	5	44	44	55	44	11	77

People's ideas about the increase/decrease in the level of security in their republic closely correlate with assessments of the authorities' success in the fight

against terrorism. Over the past year or two, the overall situation with terrorism in the region has improved somewhat: 34% of Caucasians are

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convinced that countering terrorism has been successful, 43% do not notice any changes, and 18% believe that it has become worse. At the same time, the state of affairs in this area in the republics is far from the same.

The most difficult situation is developing in Dagestan: 33% of respondents pay attention to the worsening situation in the field of countering terrorism there, and only 15% believe that it has improved. In Kabardino-Balkaria, where the terrorist

underground has noticeably intensified over the past two years, people, nevertheless, note serious successes in the fight against terrorism: according to 47%, the effectiveness of this fight has increased. Significant progress in terms of countering terrorism is felt by the population of Ingushetia, as well as, although to a lesser extent, Karachay-Cherkessia and North Ossetia. But the residents of Chechnya feel the calmest, the vast majority of whom (70%) talk about the success of the fight against terrorism (Table 11).

**Table 11. Assessment of the struggle of the population of the North Caucasus republics against terrorism**

	North Caucasian Federal District	DD	AI	KKB	KKCH	CCO	HH
Improved	34	115	335	447	229	227	770
Hasn't changed	43	446	448	228	558	556	222
Worsened	18	333	113	220	77	116	44
I find it difficult to answer	5	66	44	55	66	11	44

These problems, which are largely specific to the republics of the North Caucasus, are followed, in order of importance from the point of view of mass consciousness, by social problems that are, in principle, characteristic of modern Russia: shortcomings in the healthcare system, education, social security, and the housing problem. This hierarchy of problems in the perception of the population of the North Caucasus republics largely determines their expectations regarding the federal and regional authorities.

Here, for example, are statements from participants in a youth focus group in Dagestan.

Where to find a job? How to get children into kindergarten?.. How to get kids into school? What kind of education will they even receive, considering the current level in general? I wonder whether we will see each other tomorrow or not, because this is what we have now. Terrorism. Corruption. It's all over here. Even if there are jobs, the wages are low. Here are the most pressing problems identified in mass surveys. They are constantly repeated in people's assessments.

The main problem is power. All the forces of the republic, all its capabilities are in the hands of a few people who sit higher in position. And people do not receive the raw materials, not only natural ones, that they can have in the republic and realize themselves in this, in this same republic, but they get leftovers and what they throw in. So that we don't rebel (North Ossetia, focus group, younger age).

A person cannot go to a hospital and receive qualified medical care. This is the most painful topic (Ingushetia, expert). The main mass problem is housing. And housing and communal services. Over

the past 10 years, or even more, there was no concept of "municipal, social housing"; not a single person received housing. There is no social housing (Kabardino-Balkaria, expert).

Residents of the North Caucasian republics feel like strangers in Russia, relegated to the status of second-class citizens. Proposals coming from the central government to improve life at home, rather than come to more prosperous regions "with their own rules," are perceived as discrimination. The feeling of alienation in one's own country creates an almost irresistible negative emotional background. This provokes the strongest to fight, which in the North Caucasus most often takes the form of religious confrontation. The Islamic factor works as a protective mechanism that allows one to preserve identity and rely on the brotherhood of fellow believers. The feeling of lack of rights and alienation from power is recorded by both mass surveys and expert interviews. We need to give people the opportunity to become participants in certain decisions. This means that it is necessary to create a normal political system and institutions of civil society. Media, plus civil society. There is no other way out..For the regions of the North Caucasus this is the most painful issue (North Ossetia, expert).

Measurements show: three quarters of the population of the republics have no doubt that both the central and republican authorities are well aware of their needs. A completely different result is obtained when people are asked whether the government takes these needs into account when making important decisions, whether it listens to the opinion of the people. Two-thirds of Caucasians believe that they

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“mostly” or “not at all” listen. This point of view is especially characteristic of Karachay-Cherkessia, Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkaria and North Ossetia; it is shared to a slightly lesser extent by residents of Ingushetia. Against this background, Chechnya again

stands out sharply, where the majority believes that their opinion means something to the authorities, although here, too, 30% believe that this is not so (Table 12).

**Table 12. Characteristics of the population of the North Caucasus republics on the interest of the authorities to be aware of the needs of the population**

	North Caucasian Federal District	DD	AI	KKB	KKCH	MTR	HH
Always listening	5	22	77	33	22	11	115
Listens more often	26	118	336	224	116	118	552
Doesn't listen often	40	443	334	443	551	447	223
Doesn't listen at all	23	331	222	226	226	222	77
I find it difficult to answer	6	66	11	44	55	112	33

Residents of the North Caucasus rate the effectiveness of the state's solution to the problems that concern them rather low. The republican authorities are the ones most criticized. If we exclude from consideration Chechnya, whose population in recent years has expressed (at least in public opinion polls) satisfaction with the activities of the republic's leadership, it turns out that only 1% to 9% of regional residents give a “high” assessment of the work of the republican authorities (table 13). In all republics,

except Chechnya, the activity of the federal government is rated somewhat higher than that of the republican government. It is noteworthy that, at the same time, Chechnya also stands out for its unusually low share of those who question the effectiveness of federal structures - 7% versus 27-41% in the other republics. The study showed that negative attitudes towards the republican authorities continue to intensify (Table 14).

**Table 13. Assessing the work of the Republican authorities**

	North Caucasian Federal District	DD	AI	KKB	KKCH	CCO	HH
How high	10	11	99	11	22	11	556
Like average	37	330	445	445	331	446	330
How low	45	559	445	448	554	447	44
I find it difficult to answer	8	110	00	66	114	66	110

**Table 14. Characteristics of the assessment of the population in relation to the regional branches of power in the North Caucasus**

	North Caucasian Federal District	DD	AI	KKB	KKCH	CCO	HH
Do not notice	18	112	222	111	117	88	446



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Intensifies	43	550	335	555	443	556	111
Remains unchanged	28	330	334	226	331	330	118
weakens	5	22	99	44	11	22	118
I find it difficult to answer	6	77	11	55	88	55	77

Similar results were obtained during surveys conducted in the North Caucasus republics in April and July 2022. Participants in group discussions also demonstrated deep dissatisfaction with the activities of the authorities. I would take pictures of all the leaders, organize a referendum, find out what the people want. After that I would start doing it. I would take off the heads of absolutely everyone (North Ossetia, middle age).

We are a subsidized republic, why not control where this money goes? (Karachaevo - Cherkessia, older age).

They adopted the "South of Russia" program. Did anyone notice something? Although tens, hundreds of billions have left (Karachaevo-Cherkessia, older age).

According to the results of the study, elders enjoy the greatest trust in the North Caucasus. The level of trust in them exceeds 70% everywhere, and in Kabardino-Balkaria and Chechnya reaches 84 and 90%, respectively. Next come the President and Head of the Government of the Russian Federation. On average across the republics, about 65% trust them. They inspire especially high trust in Chechnya and

Karachay-Cherkessia, the lowest in Dagestan and Ingushetia. People express almost the same trust (from 63 to 65%) in republican and central media - television, radio, newspapers. Then come religious figures - representatives of the muftiate, Islamic clergy, imams, whom on average are trusted by 60% of the region's residents (in Chechnya and Ingushetia the figures are 86% and 75%, in North Ossetia with a predominantly Christian population - 19%). In most republics, trust in them is one and a half to two times higher than distrust. An average level of trust, but still exceeding the level of distrust, is shown by Caucasians towards the Russian army, the United Russia party and scientists. The Russian army is most trusted in Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachay-Cherkessia; "United Russia" - in Karachaevo-Cherkessia and Chechnya; scientists - in Karachay-Cherkessia and North Ossetia. Formally, the heads of the republics also fall into the same category (with the exception of R. Kadyrov, whose level of trust is 93%), however, despite all this, the residents of the republics (again, except for Chechnya) perceive them as Moscow appointees and, if they will, - and free, fair elections - would change their leaders (Table 15).

**Table 15. Level of trust of the population in the republican authorities**

	North Caucasian Federal District	DD	AI	KKB	KKCH	MTR	HH
Current leader	29	112	228	332	116	222	885
Another man	47	558	772	445	339	555	33
I find it difficult to answer	24	330	00	223	445	223	112

The least trusted people in the region are the authorities at both the federal and republican levels, big business and Wahhabis, and religious extremists: there are fewer people who trust them than those who don't. Particularly prominent in this regard are religious extremists who call themselves fighters for the purity of the Muslim faith. In four out of six republics, distrust in them exceeds trust by 85%, and in the remaining two - Ingushetia and Chechnya - they are trusted by only 12 and 9% of residents, respectively.

Dissatisfaction with the state of affairs in the republics, disbelief in the ability and desire of the

authorities to solve pressing problems create the ground for protest sentiments, which, in turn, can result (and are already resulting) in protest actions. The possible range of such actions in the North Caucasus republics is wider than in other regions of Russia, and the population evaluates all these options one way or another.

One of the forms of protest actively used by residents of the North Caucasus over the past two decades is moving to other regions of the country or abroad. The most legitimate, democratic way is a change of power through elections. Considers the population and the possibility of participating in

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various kinds of street actions, rallies, etc. Specific North Caucasian forms of protest include support for the terrorist underground, “forest brothers,” and religious extremists. And finally, the most radical option is the separation of the region from Russia, as Chechnya tried to do during the time of Dudayev.

An important indicator of people’s dissatisfaction with life in their republic is the number of those who have chosen to move to other regions of

the country or abroad or are planning to do so as a means of solving their own problems. The results of the study showed to what extent and why the population of the region “votes with their feet.”

From the responses of survey participants, it follows that half of the residents of the North Caucasus republics have one of their close relatives who has already left for other regions of Russia or abroad (Table 16).

**Table 16. Characteristics of those who left the republics of the North Caucasus and the reasons for their decision**

	North Caucasian Federal District	DD	AI	KKB	CC	CCO	HH
No, no one left	51	41	68	47	62	53	44
Yes, we went to other regions of Russia	39	50	19	46	29	40	36
Yes, we went abroad	14	12	14	9	7	10	32
I find it difficult to answer	1	1	1	0	2	0	2

And this process continues: answering the questionnaire, 18% of respondents reported that they themselves or their close relatives were going to leave the republic in the foreseeable future. The most people affected by “suitcase sentiments” are in Dagestan (26%), the least in Ingushetia (11%).

It is important to note that, although only a little more than a third (34%) of those planning to leave have definitely decided to change their place of residence, that is, to leave their republic forever, in reality a little more than half (53%) intend to return. The rest have not yet decided. Thus, almost half of those who go to work or study in other regions of Russia or abroad are considering the possibility of staying in a new place. It is clear that their final choice will largely depend on whether they will be able to solve the acute problems of the republics discussed above. Focus group participants spoke about the reasons that encourage people to leave their republics, citing, among other things, their own experience.

I left here because I couldn’t find a job in my specialty and according to my needs. I returned here again, and it has become much worse here, enterprises are closing, specialties such as economist and lawyer are not in demand (North Ossetia, middle age).

Because of terrorism, many young people form this opinion in order to leave Dagestan. I myself think that after graduating from my university I will go

where I need to go, to Russia (Dagestan, younger age). Survey data indicate that the population of the North Caucasus does not believe in the effectiveness of elections as a means of expressing mass requests and demands and an instrument for changing the government itself, and cast doubt on the high activity of North Caucasian voters. Judging by the responses of respondents, almost half of the residents of the republics, as a rule, do not go to vote (Table 16). One can only guess where the almost universal turnout for the elections, recorded in the official reports of election commissions, comes from. The non-participation of residents of the region in the elections is largely explained by their doubt that the expression of the will of citizens has any influence on the outcome of the electoral process. In most republics, less than a third of the population believes in the integrity of elections, and only in Ingushetia and Chechnya - about half (Table 16). And this is not just about the electoral procedure. People do not believe in the political system itself, its ability to nominate representatives of the people to government bodies who are ready and able to express their interests. Therefore, their main reaction to the situation is not a demand to ensure the integrity of the elections, but a boycott of them. It is no coincidence that the slogans of the Moscow rallies do not enjoy any significant support here.

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**Table 16. Assessing the reliability of the elections taking place in the Caucasian republics**

	North Caucasian Federal District	DD	AI	KKB	KKCH	MTR	HH
Honestly	6	32	111	33	33	33	221
Generally fair	20	110	229	221	117	118	336
Generally not fair	38	443	336	440	445	441	119
Totally unfair	22	332	221	221	119	119	111
I find it difficult to answer	14	114	22	115	1177	220	114

According to the results of the study, the majority of residents of the North Caucasus have never encountered situations in which they would want to take personal part in collective protests. And although up to a third of respondents do not exclude the possibility of such participation (for example, in Kabardino-Balkaria, where 11% answered the corresponding question: “definitely yes”, and 22% - “rather yes”), from declaration to real actions - quite long distance.

### Conclusion

Thus, respondents, regardless of nationality and religion, identify socio-economic factors as the main reasons for the outflow of Russians from the regions of the North Caucasus. Ethnopolitical and socio-psychological reasons are of less importance for young people. Differences in the degree of significance of the reasons for the outflow of Russians from regions of the North Caucasus, related to the ethno-religious identity of respondents. It can be assumed that Russians are more concerned about the main reasons for the outflow of the Russian population from the regions of the North Caucasus.

The results of the study showed that young people’s ideas about the role and place of Russians in the North Caucasus are characterized positively. The vast majority of respondents, regardless of nationality and religion, positively assess their contribution to the development of the economy, social sphere and culture of the regions of the North Caucasus. However, when answering questions requiring analytical assessments and determining forecasts for the situation of Russians in the region, about half of the respondents found it difficult to answer. This indicates the insufficiency of the cognitive foundations of the views of the young people surveyed. It can be assumed that analytical questions that require a deeper understanding of the socio-political problems of the region cause difficulties for them. The ideas of modern youth about the role and place of Russians in the North Caucasus during the Soviet period were mainly formed under the influence of their close circle of friends, parents, teachers and

teachers. The Soviet cultural heritage - films and fiction - played a major role in shaping the views of young people. During the study, respondents noted that the decline in the Russian population, associated with the outflow of Russians from the regions of the North Caucasus, is of concern to many young people, regardless of nationality. As the main reasons for the outflow, respondents identified the lack of prospects for development and self-realization, low living standards and high unemployment, clanism and corruption, as well as tension in interethnic relations. No less important was the feeling of insecurity and moral and psychological discomfort. The majority do not consider reasons such as discrimination based on nationality, the threat of terrorism and extremism, to be significant. Russian youth are more aware of possible threats and risks for their future and the lack of prospects for development and self-realization. Most likely, these same reasons have led to the fact that about half of young people want to continue their studies or work in another region. Young people are concerned about problems such as rising prices, falling income levels, unemployment, as well as issues of social justice, democracy and human rights.

Historically, the Russian population acted as the bearer of the basic institutions of Russian culture, statehood and the core of the scientific and technical intelligentsia. The Soviet period in the history of the North Caucasus was determined by the significant role of Russians in the modernization of the region, their contribution to the development of industry, education, healthcare and culture. This position of Russians followed from the logic of Soviet modernization, based on industrial development and the formation of a social sphere that supported it. The return of Russians to the region is a complex and systemic task that can only be solved within the framework of successful modernization of the economy, social sphere and cultural life. Modern modernization of the North Caucasus, based on the development of new high-tech industries, can make the region attractive to young people, solve problems of employment and social ill-being. The development of interethnic relations along the lines of goodwill,

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respect for the traditions and cultures of the peoples of the region, and the formation of attitudes towards cooperation and solidarity are still significant.

**Results** studies have shown that the vast majority of respondents, regardless of nationality and religion, positively assess the contribution of the Russian population to the development of the economy, social sphere and culture of the regions of the North Caucasus. Respondents consider the main reasons for the outflow of Russians in the post-Soviet period to be changes in the socio-political life of the region, lack of prospects for development and self-realization, low living standards and high unemployment, clanism and corruption. The Soviet period of the history of the North Caucasus in the views of young people was determined by the significant role of the Russian population in the development of the region. The outflow of Russians from the regions of the North Caucasus continues to be a pressing problem and reduces the possibilities for further socio-economic development. Reducing the outflow of the Russian population and reducing the migration attitudes of young people is possible as part of the successful modernization of the economy, social sphere and culture.

Focus group participants in Kabardino-Balkaria listed a number of factors preventing the widespread spread of public protests in the republic. These include:

— national mentality, which is characterized by showing respect for authority;

- traditions that do not allow a member of the clan to go against their own (younger members of the clientele still consider themselves part of the family and hope that they will be protected, and perhaps rewarded). In Kabardino-Balkaria, with its complex interweaving of kinship relations, both voting “for” and speaking “against” depend on whether the subject is one of the relatives or not;

- unemployment, when any not only action, but also word can lead to loss of work, and, consequently, to loss of livelihood;

— fear of reprisals: any protester can be labeled a terrorist and be not only punished, but destroyed;

- lack of organizations capable of leading masses of people;

— discrediting (and self-discrediting) of potential leaders of the protest movement, who are suspected (and not always without reason) of self-interest.

Under these conditions, protests in the republic are usually local in nature, and for them to arise a specific reason is needed that directly affects people: arrest, disappearance or murder of a relative, seizure of land or house, dismissal, etc.

It is known that public opinion polls are not always able to capture the seriousness of the population’s protest intentions, which inevitably affects the forecasts based on them. In this regard,

focus group monitoring and expert panels are a more sensitive tool.

Until a mass of anger accumulated sufficient to bring people out into the streets (Cool, focus group, Russians).

There was a very criminal situation, people took to the streets and attended rallies. Both the parents of militants and the parents of policemen (Nalchik, focus group, Kabardians).

Why is there no protest? I protest. Why can’t we make sure there are decent salaries? Why are salaries different in different regions? Why is the standard of living different in different regions? Only I protest “to myself” (Prokhladny, focus group, Russians). Protest rallies achieve nothing! (Expert).

The anti-terrorist fight and the fight against extremism, this fight has a very negative impact on the opinion of residents. The authorities need to be more open in this matter, especially the federal authorities... (Kashkhatau, focus group, Balkars).

We are more inclined to wait for a very long time. It’s very patient to wait and hope that a miracle will happen and that something will change (Nalchik, focus group, Balkars).

Despite the active fight against terrorism, the terrorist underground continues to be fueled, support for the “forest brothers” and militants who provide armed resistance to the authorities and security forces continues. It is clear that the degree of people's involvement in terrorist activities and the population's support for them is difficult to measure. At the same time, some information on this matter can be provided by respondents’ assessments of the “personnel reserve” of the resistance. These assessments are based to a greater extent on the personal experience of the respondents rather than general assessments of the success of countering terrorism, which are based more on media materials and official statements by authorities.

In all republics except Chechnya, from a third to a half of respondents say that the terrorist underground has a “personnel reserve”; in three republics it is noted that there are more people ready to join its ranks, in three others - that there are fewer of them, while in Chechnya, according to residents of the republic, they have almost disappeared. It is quite remarkable that in the same Karachay-Cherkessia, which, from the point of view of its population, has achieved tangible success in countering terrorism, 24% indicate an increase in supporters of the “forest brothers” - the second highest figure after Dagestan, where the problem of terrorism is most acute (Table 17). This kind of data testifies not only to the unresolved problem of terrorism in the region, but also to the contradictory perception of the situation in this area by public opinion. It cannot be said that the idea of creating an independent state or federation of the North Caucasian peoples is completely alien to the inhabitants of the region, but most of them consider

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such a turn of events disastrous and unacceptable. No matter how critically the population assesses the situation in Russia.

**Table 17. Characteristics of countering terrorism in the North Caucasus republics**

	North Caucasian Federal District	DD	AI	KKB	KKCH	CO	HH
More	22	39	14	22	24	13	3
As many	18	22	20	24	13	17	8
Less	21	10	28	28	5	12	52
There are no such people at all	16	2	36	6	24	17	22
I find it difficult to answer	23	27	2	20	34	41	15

The overwhelming majority (82%) cannot imagine the existence of their republic outside of Russia, be it in the form of an independent state or as part of some kind of federation. Even in Ingushetia

and Chechnya, where separatist sentiments are strongest, more than two-thirds of citizens choose Russia (Table 18).

**Table 18. Attitude of the population of the North Caucasian republics to living outside Russia**

	North Caucasian Federal District	DD	AI	KKB	KKCH	CO	HH
As part of Russia	82	85	67	89	85	98	68
Independent state	7	2	17	3	6	1	15
Federation of Caucasian Peoples	5	3	15	4	2	1	8
I find it difficult to answer	6	10	1	4	7	0	9

The population of the North Caucasus is expressing growing dissatisfaction with both numerous socio-economic problems, the main of which are unemployment and low living standards, and the poor performance of government structures in solving them. The stagnation of the regional economy does not allow the allocation of significant funds to the social sphere, and subsidies from the federal budget often do not reach the population due to the corruption of republican and local authorities. Popular discontent is still only smoldering and for the most part does not manifest itself openly. Residents of the republics do not believe that electoral mechanisms are capable of bringing honest people who care about the interests of citizens into power, and they boycott the

elections. Fear of losing their jobs and being subject to reprisals keeps them from participating in public protests. The consequence of the ineffectiveness of democratic methods of influencing the authorities is the undying support of the terrorist underground. Another, sometimes the only method of protest available to Caucasians is “voting with their feet,” a mass exodus to other regions of Russia or abroad in search of work and a better life. Solving the problems of the North Caucasus, including those related to the “spreading” of terrorism, requires a significant increase in the effectiveness of state policy, regional and federal, and bringing it into line with the real demands and priority needs of the population.

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