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Indigenous People of Northern Siberia: Human Capital, Labour Market Participation, and Living Standards

Zemfira Kalugina, Svetlana Soboleva, and Vera Tapilina

Introduction

This paper reports on the results of a pilot project, “Optimizing Social Policy in the Siberian Federal District (SFD),” conducted in partnership with the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Canada, Carleton University (Joan De Bardeleben), and the Institute of Economics and Industrial Engineering, Siberian branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences (director professor Z.I. Kalugina). The objective of this project is to develop an effective mechanism to coordinate the activities of all levels of government in order to improve labour market participation and quality of life among Indigenous peoples of Siberia. The target region is Tomsk Oblast, or province, where an Indigenous people called the Selkup reside.

The study is based on data from the Russian state censuses and a sample of quantitative sociological studies. Pursuant to the available information, the authors attempted a macro-meso-micro analysis of the Russian Federation, Siberian federal district, Tomsk Oblast, and Yamalo-Nenets Okrug (a small local territory made up of compact communities where most of the Selkup live).

A Historical Overview

The Selkup are descendants of an ancient people who lived in western Siberia between the Ob and Yenisey rivers. The Selkup comprise two major groups: the southern Ob group who live in Tomsk Oblast on the Ob and its tributaries; and the northern Taz-Turukhan group who live in Tyumen Oblast on the Taz River and in Krasnoyarsk Krai on the Yenisey tributaries (**Figure 16.1**, page 302).

The Ob Selkup were hunters and fishermen. The Selkup borrowed deer-raising, which is common only in the northern area of the Selkup territory, from the Nenets and Ents. In the Taz-Turukhan area, Selkup deer-raising is of a taiga type in which the size of herds and routes of seasonal movement are not large. The Selkup, unlike Nenets, did not use herdsmen’s dogs. Deer pasturage was rarely used, even in winter.

Figure 16.1: The Area of Selkup Settlement in Russia

With Russian settlement in Siberia in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, Selkup–Russian economic and cultural bonds, as well as mixed-ethnicity marriages, increased. Under Russian influence, the Selkup began to settle in communities, take up animal breeding, and cultivate vegetables. Later on, most of the Selkup, like people of other ethnic groups in Tomsk Oblast, started to work in grain growing and animal breeding, which contributed to the loss of their traditional hunting and fishing skills. In the Soviet period, the creation of the Tym ethnic administrative unit, which brought immigrants from the basins of the Vasyugan, Chuzik, Parabel, Chan, and Keti rivers as well as the Tomsk part of the Ob area, brought the Selkup and Russians into even closer proximity. Given serious communication problems between the Selkup and new settlers, and among different groups of Selkup, Russian became the primary language used in everyday communications; it slowly replaced the Selkup dialects in the domestic sphere as well. After the liquidation of the Tym unit in 1950, Russian became the dominant language in the Selkup population of Tomsk Oblast.¹

Contemporary Demographic Profile of Selkup

Age and Sex Structure of the Population

According to the 2002 population census, there are 4,056 Selkup people in Russia, 84.1% of whom live in rural areas (**Table 16.1**).

A portion of the Selkup population (45.8%) lives in Tyumen Oblast in which roughly equal numbers live in Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug, and Tomsk Oblast. Only 10.2% of the Selkup live outside of these areas. The population is

Table 16.1: Number of the Selkup by Area of Residence, 2002 (Persons, %)

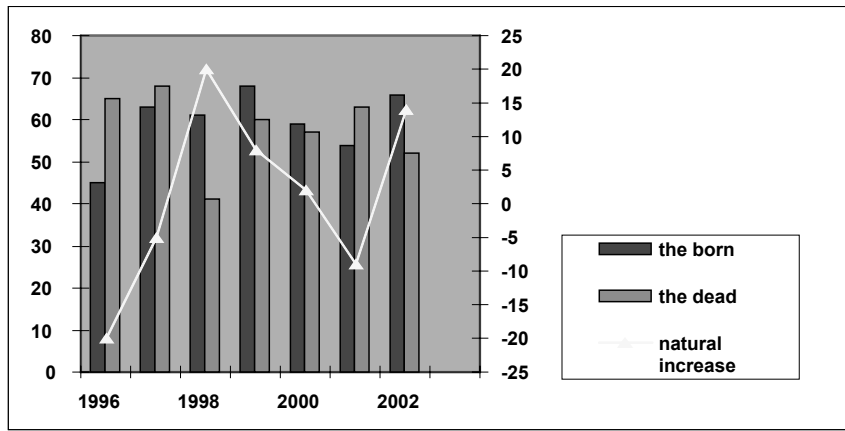
Area	Total	Urban		Rural	
	persons	Persons	%	Persons	%
Total	4,056	645	15.9	3,411	84.1
Tyumen province	1,857	275	14.8	1,582	85.2
Tyumen province including the Yamalo-Nenets autonomous okrug	1,797	228	12.7	1,569	87.3
Tomsk province	1,787	312	17.5	1,475	82.5
Krasnoyarsk krai	412	312	14.1	354	85.9

Source: Itogi Vserossiiskoi perepisi naselenia 2002 god. Korennye malochislennye narody Rossiiskoi Federatsii (The Results of the 2002 State Census of Population. Indigenous Peoples of the Russian Federation). Volume 13. M., 2005, p.9.

largely rural in Tomsk Oblast (82.5%). Over the period between the 1989 and 2002 censuses, the number of Selkups increased by 400 persons, but did not surpass the record number (4,300 Selkup) reported in the 1959 census.

In rural places where there are high density Selkup communities the percentage of children and adolescents (29.3%) is higher than average and the percentage of people past retirement age (10.1%) is lower than average. These data suggest that the Selkup population is younger than the general Siberian population. Thus, the Selkup living in cities and rural areas are, on average, 2.3 and 5.3 years younger respectively than the population of the Siberian Federal District (SFD). The younger age structure, which is found among all Indigenous peoples in Siberia, is the consequence of their higher birth rate.

The percentage of the working-age persons is similar to the non-Selkup population but varies between rural (60.6%) and urban (70.2%). Among the population of working age, the percentage of young people aged 16–24 is relatively high. They make up 30.1% of the population in cities and 26.6% of the rural population. The 25–44 age group, who represent the bulk of working-age persons, account for 49.3% of the population in urban areas, and 52.6% in rural communities. For women aged 45–54 and men aged 45–59, who are considered to be the senior-working age population, the proportions are smaller. We find that this age group makes up 20.6% and 20.8% of the population in urban and rural communities respectively. Based on the present trends in Selkup demography, no intensive aging of the working population is anticipated, and the size of the retirement-age population will not surpass that of the working age. The relatively high labour potential of the Selkup, combined with a lower life expectancy, contributes to a lower than average dependency ratio, which refers to the proportion of dependent persons (who are younger or older than working age) relative to the working age population, compared to the general SFD population. We find that there are 651 dependent persons per 1,000 of working age in rural okrug communities versus 706 dependent persons per 1,000 of working age in rural communities of the general non-Selkup population.

Figure 16.2: Natural Movement of Selkup Population in Tomsk Oblast

Source: Ekonomicheskoe i sotsialnoe razvitiye korennykh malochislennykh narodov Severa (Economic and Social Development of the Indigenous Northern Peoples) 2002. M., 2003, pp. 13–15.

The population structure of the Selkup has been characterized by the prevalence of women of working age and, in particular, retired age. The latest data from the 2002 census, indicates this trend has continued, but with certain variations. While the male-female ratio among those under 40 is satisfactorily balanced (with a slightly larger number of women), among those over the age of 40 a significantly larger number of women relative to men is observed, which is mainly the result of extremely high death rates among men. Thus, in the 40–49 age group the percentage of men is 2.9 percentage points lower than women in urban communities and 4.9 percentage points lower in rural communities. In the post-working-age group, this difference is more pronounced. Thus, in city communities, there are twice as many women of retirement age compared to men, and in rural places, the difference is 4.5 percentage points. A higher death rate for Selkup men comparative to Selkup women is also demonstrated by the lower average age among men. The difference is 4 years in city communities and 3.2 years in rural communities

Birth Rate and Natural Increase

The high rate of marriage among the Selkup of Tomsk Oblast (74.6% of men, and 68.6% of women) provides a base for a significantly higher birth rate than the non-Selkup in the SFD. In 2002, the rate of marriage of the SFD population was 9.0 persons per 1,000, while for the Selkup it was 16.3 per 1,000.

A distinctive feature of Selkup families is the presence of a relatively large number of children. The average number of children per family by the end of the fertility period is 3.1, and a relatively high percentage of families have four children or more (11%+). This notwithstanding, if we compare the number of children per family in the cohort who have just completed the fertility period to those in the cohort whose fertility period was finished two decades ago, there

is a reduction in the number of children born. For the Selkup of Tomsk Oblast, the number of children per woman in the senior generation was 3.3, while in the present generation it is 2.9.

Another feature of the Selkup birth rate is a long fertility period. For non-Selkup women in Russia, this period typically spans 10–12 years and the terminus age is 34–35 years of age. For Selkup women, it is 5–10 years longer, and the fourth and additional children are born to women 40 years of age and over.² However, the high birth rate among the Selkup is balanced by the high death rate. Since the second half of the 1990s, the natural increase among the Selkup has been negligible and, in certain years, there has even been a decline (**Figure 16.2**).

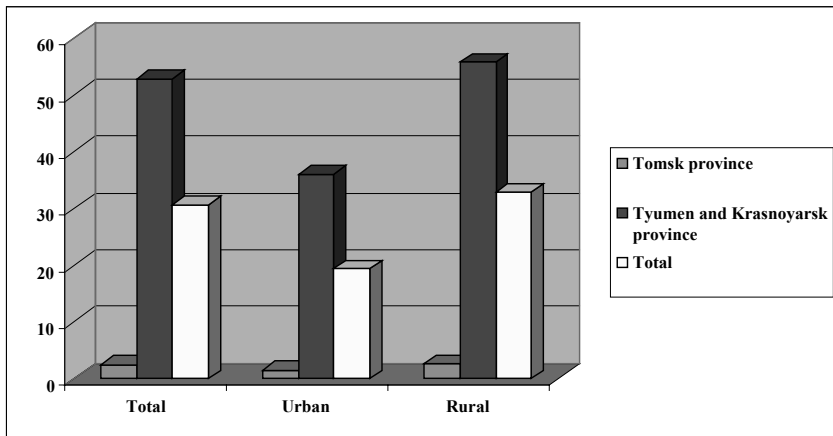
On the whole, the percentage of the Selkup population that was born between 1996 and 2002 was 1.4–2.2%, and the percent who died during these years was 1.9–3.0%. Therefore, we can see that there is a slow net decline in the Selkup population.

Social and Cultural Characteristics of the Selkup

Knowledge of Native Language

The Selkup of Tomsk province are classified as an endangered group of Aboriginal peoples. However, the knowledge of the native language, which is a major sign of ethnical identification, is consistently falling among the Selkup. According to the 1979 census, 16.8% of the Selkup reported that their native language was Selkup. By the 2002 state census, only 2.5% of the Selkup living in Tomsk Oblast had command of their native language. The result is a shrinkage in the ability to communicate in this native language. This decline is disturbing, because language, along with behavioural norms, morals, law, and folk and professional art, are the key elements of ethnic culture, and a crucial element of self-perception and self-identification of the ethnic community. If we examine **Figure 16.3** (page 306), we see some interesting comparisons.

The figure indicates that the Selkup of Tomsk Oblast are more assimilated into Russian culture than the northern Selkup living in Tyumen Oblast and Krasnoyarsk Krai. Northern Selkup have experienced intensive cultural and elevated intermarriage, and had more preservation of their ethnic individuality. In ethnically mixed areas in the North, both the Selkup language and Russian language are used in everyday communications. The retention of the native language is not due to its being taught in school. Over the 1996–2003 period, the proportion of Selkup who were taught their native language as a subject at the comprehensive school was only 4% in Tomsk Oblast, which is much lower than the 25% average across all Selkup territories.³ In addition, there is not a single public library with literature in any of the languages used by northern Aboriginal peoples in Tomsk Oblast. In the region where these Indigenous peoples live, there are no schools close to the place of parents' places of work. We would argue that the differences in knowledge and

Figure 16.3: Knowledge of Native Language (%) in 2002

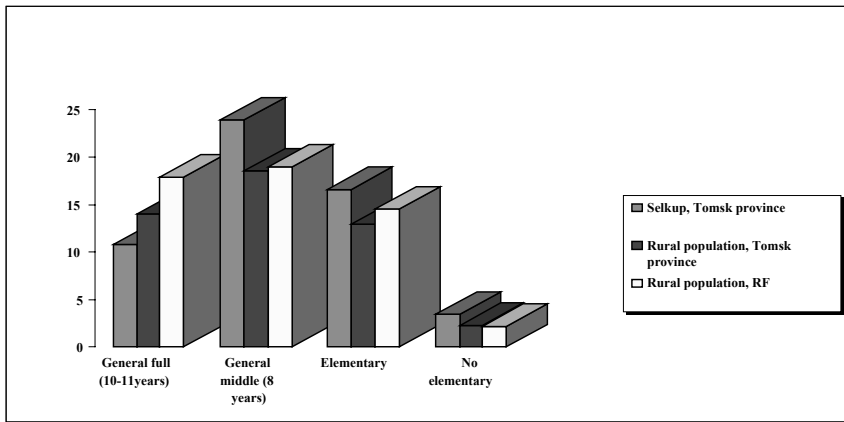
Source: Korennye i malochislennye narody Rossiiskoi Federatsii. Itogi Vserossiiskoi perepisi naselenia 2002 goda. Ofitsialnoye izdanie. (Indigenous peoples of the Russian Federation. The results of the 2002 State Census of the population. Official edition). Volume 13. M.:Federalnaya sluzhba gosudarstvennoi statistiki. 2005, p. 19.

everyday use of traditional languages is explained primarily through living conditions and extent of traditional work and activities still pursued by the different territorial groups of the Selkup.

The way of life of the northern Selkup (Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug) is more traditional than that of the southern Selkup (Tomsk Oblast). The majority of the northern Selkup population are employed in deer breeding, hunting, and fishing. According to many scholars, deer breeding remains the only sector of the traditional economy able to support the Selkup culture, including the use of native language, and all other traditional occupations.

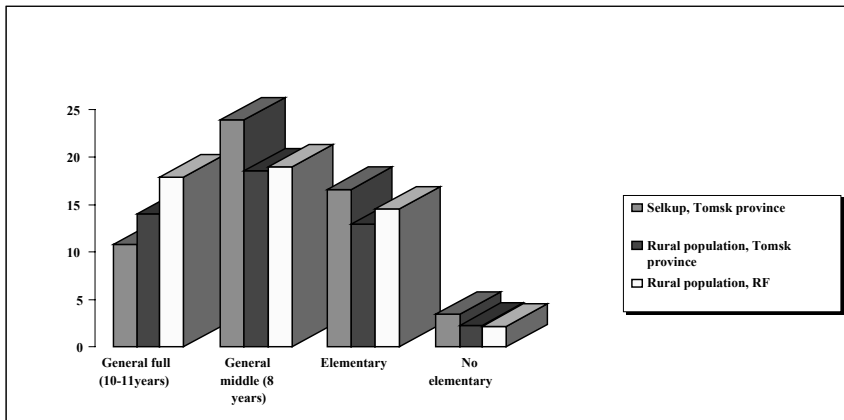
Level of Education

The overwhelming majority of Selkup in Tomsk Oblast have undergone school and vocational training. Approximately 1% of the Selkup population over 15 years of age are illiterate. Almost half of Selkup in Tomsk Oblast (48.2%) have completed some post-secondary training, including post-graduate, graduate, undergraduate, middle special, and primary special (vocational schools based on general education) levels. But among those who have some kind of professional training, those with elementary vocational training dominate (44.4%). Specialists with graduate and undergraduate education make up 6.4% of urban Selkup and only 4.0% in rural areas, which is much lower than the corresponding percentage for the general rural population of Tomsk Oblast, the SFD, and the national average (**Figures 16.4 & 16.5**).

Figure 16.4: Composition of Rural Population by General Education

The Results of the 2002 State Census of the Population, %

Source: Korennye i malochislennye narody Rossiiskoi Federatsii. Itogi Vserossiiskoi perepisi naselenia 2002 goda. Ofitsialnoye izdanie. (Indigenous peoples of the Russian Federation. The results of the 2002 State Census of the population. Official edition). Volume 13. M.:Federalnaya sluzhba gosudarstvennoi statistiki. 2005, pp. 238–239.

Figure 16.5: Composition of Rural Population by Professional Education

The Results of the 2002 State Census of the Population, %

Source: Korennye i malochislennye narody Rossiiskoi Federatsii. Itogi Vserossiiskoi perepisi naselenia 2002 goda. Ofitsialnoye izdanie. (Indigenous peoples of the Russian Federation. The results of the 2002 State Census of the population. Official edition). Volume 13. M.:Federalnaya sluzhba gosudarstvennoi statistiki. 2005, pp. 238–239.

Table 16.2. Distribution of Selkup Aged 15–64 by Occupational Classification, %

Classification	Tomsk Oblast	The Yamalo-Nenets AO
Administrators	5.1	2.5
High skilled professionals	9.9	9.1
Middle skilled professionals	9.6	11.8
Office workers	2.5	1.3
Workers in trade, housing and utilities, attendants	12.1	12.2
Skilled agricultural workers	3.5	26.8
Skilled labour	34.1	15.4
Unskilled labour	21.0	17.
Unidentified	2.2	3.3

The Results of the 2002 State Census of the Population, %

Source: Korennyye i malochislennyye narody Rossiiskoi Federatsii. Itogi Vserossiiskoi perepisi naselenia 2002 goda. Ofitsialnoye izdanie. (Indigenous peoples of the Russian Federation. The results of the 2002 State Census of the population. Official edition). Volume 13. M.:FSGS. 2005, pp. 467–468.

Table 16.3. Distribution of Selkup by Sector

Sector	Tomsk Oblast	The Yamalo-Nenets AO
Agriculture, hunting, forestry	14.6	18.7
Fishing, fish breeding	1.9	19.5
Industry	9.0	5.3
Construction	5.7	3.5
Trade	5.7	1.7
Transportation and communications	13.1	2.1
Real estate business	10.5	4.4
Administration	9.9	5.8
Education	17.5	17.0
Public health	8.3	12.1
Housing and utilities	2.2	7.7

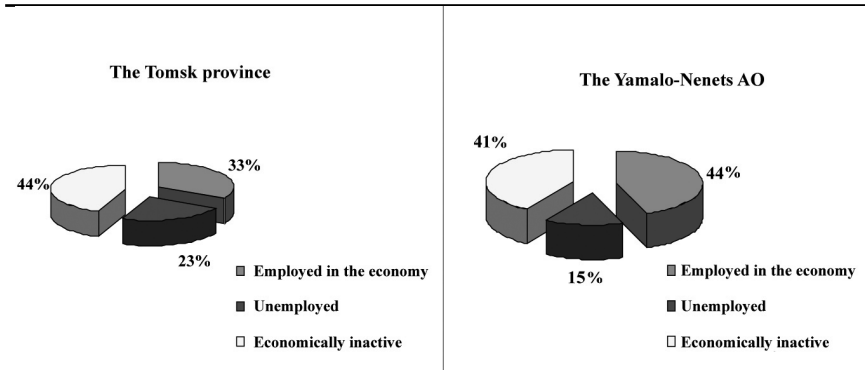
Results of the 2002 State Census of the Population

Source: Korennyye i malochislennyye narody Rossiiskoi Federatsii. Itogi Vserossiiskoi perepisi naselenia 2002 goda. Ofitsialnoye izdanie. (Indigenous peoples of the Russian Federation. The results of the 2002 State Census of the population. Official edition). Volume 13. M.:FSGS. 2005, pp. 418–419.

The Selkup in the Labour Market

If we examine the tables above we see some interesting patterns. The data indicate that the Selkup are generally employed in a range of occupations. A quarter are managers of different ranks, specialists in the top or middle categories; another quarter are in skilled occupations in different sectors of the economy and 21% are unskilled labourers (Table 16.2).

Figure 16.6: Distribution of Selkup Aged 15–64 by Participation in the Economy, the Results of the 2002 State Census of the Population, %



Source: Korennyye i malochislennyye narody Rossiiskoi Federatsii. Itogi Vserossiiskoi perepisi naselenia 2002 goda. Ofitsialnoye izdanie. (Indigenous peoples of the Russian Federation. The results of the 2002 State Census of the population. Official edition). Volume 13. M.:FSGS. 2005, pp. 385

Those living in Tomsk Oblast have a higher concentration in the agrarian-industrial category. Besides agricultural production, the Aboriginal people of Tomsk Oblast are involved in the production of oil and electric power, wood carving, wood-related industries, and the conservation and preservation of fish and other sea life.

Those in Tomsk Oblast are involved in different kinds of manufacturing, construction, transport and communications, infrastructure-related services, and horticulture and animal breeding (mainly home production).

By employment status, 98% of the employed in the economy are wage workers and only 2% are self-employed, mostly without hired labour. However, the employment in the sphere of the official economy provides incomes to only one of four Indigenous persons.

Over 40% of the Selkup reported that home food production was their main source of income, while 23% received most of their income from pensions and over 7% from unemployment benefits. There were no notable differences in the income structure between urban and non-urban places, which, in our view, is caused by the tightness of the labour market in Tomsk Oblast, as well as high rates of unemployment (**Figure 16.6**).

The large proportion of the Indigenous population that does not participate in the labour market is noteworthy. According to the 2002 state census, the level of economic activity and employment among the Selkup was far below the national and the SFD average; in addition, unemployment among the Selkup appreciably exceeded these averages. Thus, the share of the Selkup in the economically active population was 55.8% in 2002, while the SFD average was 64.3% and the national average was 65.0%. The level of employment in this period was 33.0%,

Table 16.4. The Distribution of the Selkup Living in Rural Places, Source of Livelihood

Sources of Livelihood	The Selkup of Tomsk Oblast	The Selkup of the Yamalo-Nenets AO
Income from working activity	22.8	29.4
Home food production	47.5	5.8
Stipend	1.6	0.1
Pension (excepting disability pension)	23.1	10.1
Disability pension	3.9	3.7
Benefit (excepting unemployment benefit)	21.5	19.0
Unemployment benefit	8.1	3.0
Other kind of social security	0.1	11.0
Savings	0.2	0.6
Income from property lease	-	0.4
Live in dependence	38.3	43.8
Other source of subsistence	1.0	7.7
Number of reported sources:		
one source	38.1	66.2
two sources	55.9	30.9
three sources	5.8	2.1
four sources	0.2	0.1

% of the Population with these Sources of Livelihood

Source: Korennye i malochislennye narody Rossiiskoi Federatsii. Itogi Vserossiiskoi perepisi naselenia 2002 goda. Ofitsialnoye izdanie. (Indigenous peoples of the Russian Federation. The results of the 2002 State Census of the population. Official edition). Volume 13. M.: FSGS. 2005, pp. 418-419.

57.7%, and 61.2% respectively. The unemployment rate among the Selkup was 22.8% compared to 10.1% for the SFD, and the national average of 8.1%.⁴

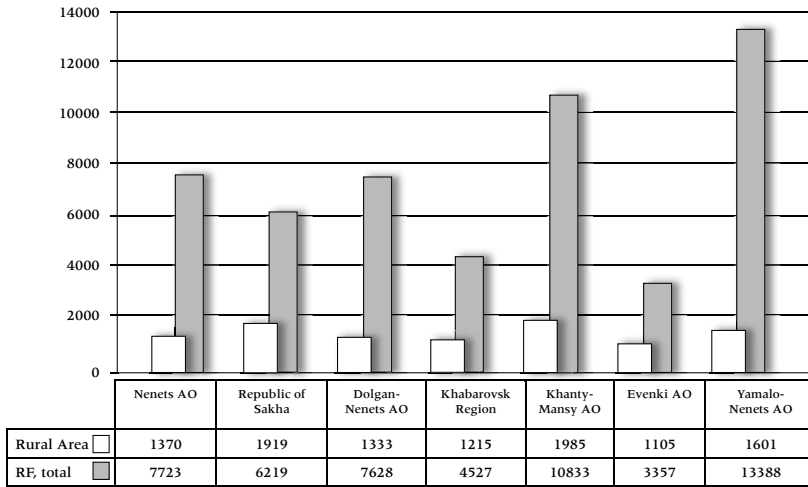
In sum, we note that part of the Selkup population has adapted to contemporary economic conditions, occupy relatively high-status positions in the labour market, and are employed in both traditional and modern types of economic activity. However, a considerable proportion of the Indigenous population has insufficient social capital (general and professional education, health status, social networks, etc.) that would allow them to reach high-status positions in the contemporary labour market. A distinctive feature of this group is their low levels of involvement in independent business.

Quality of Life Among Indigenous People in Siberia

Sources and Levels of Income

The sources of income among the Selkup living in rural areas are presented in **Table 16.4**. The range of sources among the Selkup of Tomsk Oblast is broader than that of the northern Selkup. Particularly noteworthy is the relatively small amount of income from employment, compared to the amount from household production (vegetables, potatoes, milk, and butter for both commercial purposes

Figure 16.7: Average Size of Monthly Per Capita Monetary Income in the Indigenous Living Areas (rubles)



Source: Ekonomisheskoye i sotsialnoye razvitiye korennykh malochislennykh narodov Severa. 2002 god (Economic and social development of Indigenous peoples of the North. 2002). M: Goskomstat of the RF, 2003, pp. 23-30.

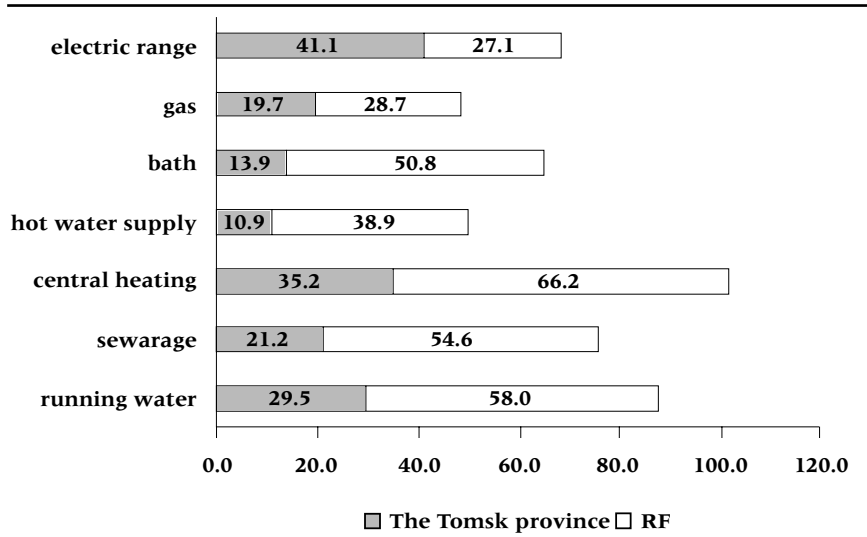
and personal consumption) in Tomsk Oblast compared to the Selkup of the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug. From this perspective, the Ob Selkup are not unlike the majority of rural inhabitants in Russia.

The data from our sampling of surveys on household budgets show that the difference between per capita monetary incomes of different Indigenous peoples in the north and their respective subjects in the Federation is from 12% to 33%, which is a large income gap (**Figure 16.7**). At the same time, we should note that these figures indicate not only the difference in per capita income between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, but the essential agricultural-industrial payment disparities. Thus, in 2002, the monthly nominal assigned wage in agriculture was 34.2% of that in industry.

A similar situation can be found in the level of income received by Selkup households in Tomsk province where most live in rural areas. Based on data from our sampling of surveys examining household budgets conducted at the state committee of statistics of the Russian Federation in Quarter II 2002, the per capita monetary income of the rural inhabitants of Tomsk Oblast was 1690 rubles, which is in the mid-interval of household incomes for Indigenous people on the whole.

The income distribution reveals very high inequality: Individuals in the 10% highest income group had incomes that were 16.8 times as high as the 10% lowest income group. Within the observed level of per capita monthly monetary income, 66.8% of rural inhabitants had incomes below the subsistence norm; that is, the level of indigence of the rural population was in fact 67%, while in the urban

Figure 16.8: Supply of Housing with Public Utilities in the Indigenous Area of Tomsk Oblast and Russian Federation, 2002, %



Source: Zhilishchnye usloviya naseleniya. Itogi Vserossiiskoi perepisi naseleniya 2002 goda (Housing situation of the population. The results of the 2002 State Census of Population). Volume 11. M:FSGS, 2005, pp.33, 676-677..

population indigent inhabitants made up 42%. It should be noted that the poverty level in the rural population was, at the time, at the national rural average (the percent of the poor was 72.3%, the poverty deficit, 37%). This again confirms that the main source of poverty within the Indigenous population is among those living in rural areas; in particular, the Selkup of Tomsk Oblast experience high levels of poverty, not so much because of their status as Indigenous people, but rather their much lower level of paid employment, and lower per capita monetary income among rural inhabitants. The high concentration of poverty among the Selkup is also associated with their incumbency in lower positions in the occupational status hierarchy as a result of the Selkup generally being less competitive candidates compared to other groups in the population.

Housing Situation

According to the 2002 national census data, about 40% of housing in rural areas of Tomsk Oblast, the main area where the Selkup live, is very old (35 years and over) and dilapidated, as 89%–99% of residential houses of this age are made of wood. The rural housing stock also has few amenities. Only 11.5% of rural households live in buildings and apartments with comforts such as running water, sewage disposal, central heating and hot water, bath or shower, gas or electric ovens, and home telephones. Overall, less than half of the houses in the territory where the Indigenous people of Tomsk Oblast live have amenities commonly found in houses within the Federation (**Figure 16.8**). A comparison of the housing stock according to rooms per occupant reveals a structural deficit; that is, there is an

inconsistency between the number of rooms and household membership. Thus, about half of rural households with three or more members had fewer rooms than members, which means that rooms are shared.

Nutrition of Indigenous People

Nutrition is one of the important components of standard of living that influences rates of reproduction, and life expectancy, which, in turn, determine the supply of labour. The low level of incomes among Indigenous people limits the amount of money available for food expenditures. Food expenditures are structured so that the cheapest items, bread and bakery products such as sugar, confectionery, vegetable oil, and other fats, make up the largest part of dietary goods (20% to 35%). The diet of Indigenous people is characterized by low consumption, and even malnutrition. This trend is seen both in the amount of the foods consumed by food group and their caloric value, which is below the national average.⁵ In the areas of the north where the Selkup live, 70% of calories consumed come from carbohydrates; whereas, according to medical-environmental studies, the climatic conditions of the northern areas of Siberia require a diet where 15–16% of calories come from protein, 40%–41% from fat, and 40–42% from carbohydrates. Therefore, the diet of Indigenous peoples in the north do not, in general, provide enough calories or the proper proportions of calories from each food group.

Health Status of the Indigenous Population

Health status is the one of the important characteristics of the pool of potential labour. Individuals must have the capacity to meet the physical and intellectual duties of their work in order to be competitive in the job market. Health, in its turn, is dependent on living conditions, such as income level, quality of nutrition, housing adequacy, personal safety, and social stability in society. These factors account for a great part of changes in health indicators, primarily the death rate. We have already cited data that shows that the proportion of retired age persons among the Selkup is 1.6 times below Tomsk Oblast average and 1.9 times below the average for the non-Indigenous population. The small portion of people living up to retirement age is evidence of the high rate of premature death among the Selkup.

At present, basic medical services that are needed to maintain the health of the population are inadequate to satisfy the demand in areas where the Selkup live. The lack of medical services is the result of the liquidation of medical-obstetric dispensaries, limited access to telephone services, and lack of transportation to centres where these services are available. These deficiencies have contributed to the high and, still rising, morbidity rate. The Selkup, more often than other inhabitants of Tomsk province, and also more often than the inhabitants of the SFD and the Russian Federation, are subject to diseases with “social” origins (e.g., active tuberculosis, alcohol addiction, and psychotic disorders as a result

Table 16.5. Morbidity Rates in Indigenous Area of Living, by Some Classes of Illness per 1,000 Population, Persons:

Class of illness	Tomsk province	Russia
Registered with initial diagnosis	1,032.2	618.3
Neoplasms	11.1	5.2
Mental disorders	12.5	7.3
Blood circulation diseases	23.9	18.4
Respiratory diseases	413.7	267.0
Digestive diseases	47.1	39.5
Bone-muscular diseases	70.4	32.1
Traumas, poisonings, suicide, etc.	88.8	58.4

Source: Ekonomicheskoye i sotsialnoye razvitiye korennykh malochislennykh narodov Severa. 2002 god (Economic and social development of Indigenous peoples of the North. 2002). M:Goskomstat of the RF, 2003, pp. 109–117.

of alcohol consumption) (**Table 16.5**). Among Indigenous peoples, including the Selkup, 19% to 20% of the adult population meet the criteria for excessive alcohol consumption and/or addiction. It should be noted that the Selkup are ailing more often than both the non-Indigenous population and other Indigenous people in the North. As a rule, morbidity rates among Indigenous people in Tomsk Oblast are 1.5 times higher compared to other Indigenous peoples in all classes of disease.

Our analyses support the conclusion that the Selkup, who are one group of Indigenous people in Siberia, are not a kind of pariah or outcast in present day Russian society. Many problems related to the low quality of life among the Selkup are not the result of their ethnicity per se, but of social and territorial conditions specific to the rural communities in which they live. In addition, the Selkup, like other Indigenous people, face challenges related to poverty, unemployment, inadequate housing, poor health, as well as problems associated with their status and interaction with other cultural groups and changes in their environment. These problems include retention of the language and culture, rights to land and use of natural resources, political self-determination, and development of self-government.

The distinctive feature that characterizes the situation among the Selkup of Tomsk Oblast is that they have assimilated into Russian society, and have lost much of their native language and culture, but have retained their ethnic identity. So, it is not accidental that the Selkup were the first among the Indigenous people of Tomsk Oblast to take part in the formation and development of the social movement aimed at ethnic revival. In September 1989, the foundation congress was held with 87 members of the administrative units from the compact dwellings of the Selkup in attendance. In this congress, the ethnic society of the Tomsk Selkup—Kulta Kup—was established and its charter and program adopted. One of the basic tasks the society articulated at the congress was the creation

of cultural, political, and economic structures in the compact dwellings of this group and formation of ethnic rural (village) communities. The ethnic community was seen as one of the main means through which to revive the culture of the Selkup people by restoring its ethno-cultural environment and native language. The authors of the paper "Concept of the Ethno-Political, Economic, and Cultural Development of Indigenous Peoples of the North of Tomsk province"⁶ believe that the restoration of ethnic communities that have occupancy of hunting and fishing lands will make it possible to increase interest in these trades among Indigenous people. School curricula teaching trades, physical exercise, local history and geography, and other subjects will make it possible, in the authors' opinion, to transmit knowledge, and skills related to hunting and fishing, to future generations.

The time that elapsed after the Kolta Kup statement of these goals has shown that self-government is one of the most acute and unresolved problems, not only for the Indigenous people of the North, but for the whole population of Russia. The establishment and organization of Indigenous self-government has produced practical difficulties in the harmonization of interests of numerous parties (governments and administrations of different levels, non-Indigenous groups within the population, and various departments and organizations). Apart from this, there is no clarity as to whether this self-government will include all or selected spheres of activity, and cover the whole population or organize strictly according to ethnicity. The main difficulty with using foreign experience as a template is that, where self-government has been implemented in Alaska, Canada, and Greenland, Indigenous peoples make up the majority, while Indigenous people of Siberia, including the Selkup, comprise only a small part of the population in the respective administrative units. This makes it difficult to solve the problem of self-government. The solution seems to be not in searching for a universal approach, but in some non-conventional and non-standard solution. And, finally, it is especially important that the members of Indigenous areas are active participants throughout every step of this process, from the statement of goals, development of tasks, formation of programs, and their implementation in practice. This, however, presupposes that special surveys of the population would be conducted in an area where Indigenous peoples are concentrated to gather information about the matters discussed above. These surveys will yield reliable data about the perceptions of Indigenous inhabitants about the current situation and their views of possible solutions to problems, and possibilities around the creation of the rural ethnic communities, and economic structures in places where there is a concentration of Indigenous peoples.

Conclusions

1. The Selkup, who represent only one group of Indigenous peoples in Siberia, are not pariahs or outcasts in Russian society.
2. Low quality of life is not an issue that is limited to the Selkup popula-

tion; many other segments of Russian society also experience poor living conditions.

3. Many of the existing problems are determined by the specific conditions found in rural communities, which is where 82% of Selkup live, as opposed to by ethnicity itself.
4. Priorities for social policy are to raise employment levels and competitiveness in the labour market; reduce rural–urban disparities in employment income; and reduce unreasonable social regional disparities.
5. The mechanisms that have been used to improve quality of life for all people in Russia should be used to achieve the same goal with the Indigenous people in Siberia.
6. A distinctive feature of the Selkup population in Tomsk Oblast is that in spite of being highly assimilated and having lost their native language and culture, they have retained their ethnic identity.
7. Dealing with political-legal and ethnic-cultural problems requires special approaches and unique solutions.

Endnotes

- 1 Vassilev, V.I. and S.M. Malinovskaya. Kontsepsiya natsionalno-politicheskogo, ekonomicheskogo i kulturnogo razvitiya malochislennykh narodov Severa Tomskoi oblasti (Concept of ethnic-political, economic and cultural development of Indigenous people of the North of Tomsk Oblast). In *Issledovania po prikladnoi i neotlozhnoi etnologii*, No. 54.
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- 6 Vassilev, V.I. and S.M. Malinovskaya. Kontsepsiya natsionalno-politicheskogo, ekonomicheskogo i kulturnogo razvitiya malochislennykh narodov Severa Tomskoi oblasti (Concept of ethnic-political, economic and cultural development of Indigenous people of the North of Tomsk Oblast). In *Issledovania po prikladnoi i neotlozhnoi etnologii*, No. 54.