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Understanding motives for international migration: A survey of Dutch retirement migrants in forty destinations

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Abstract

Prior studies have examined why people emigrate from their country of birth during retirement. By focusing on describing motives for international retirement migration, these studies overlook what inhibits or enables people to have particular motives to migrate. We collected data from a representative sample of Dutch nationals aged 66–90 who were born in the Netherlands and migrated after age 50. We distinguish seven—not mutually exclusive—migration motives: longing for tranquillity, the culture in the destination, to start a new life, a better climate, economic reasons, health reasons and dissatisfaction with the origin country. Using Ordinary Least Square regressions, we estimate how people's socioeconomic status, premigration health, premigration residential environment, cultural values and personality traits explain migration motives. We examine how motives relate to destination countries. The results show that there are various motives for which people migrate and that different types of motives are systematically related to the types of people who migrate. For example, people with a lower socioeconomic status are more likely to migrate for economic and dissatisfaction motives and less likely to migrate for tranquillity than people with a higher socioeconomic status. By distinguishing migration motives in 12 destinations, we broaden our understanding of out-migration from high-income countries.

KEYWORDS
cross-national design, international retirement migration, late-life mobility, lifestyle migration, migration destination selection

1 | INTRODUCTION

Since the 1970s, a growing number of senior citizens from high-income countries have moved abroad to a new country upon retirement (Warnes, 2009). This type of international retirement migration is, despite its small scale, important as it relates to a broader change in the societal understanding of old age. As a result of demographic changes, such as increased life expectancy, income and wealth, retirement has become a life course stage in and of itself, a so-called 'third age' (Laslett, 1996). Changes in material and social contexts and cultural views about postworking life have given people more potential agency and a higher ability to take charge of their own life (Gilleard & Higgs, 2007). In a postmodern culture, a traditional life path, which guided people's roles, actions and beliefs, has been replaced by what has been called 'self-realisation' projects (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). The retirement process requires people to

reevaluate their priorities and allows them to pursue (new) activities of their own choice (Van Solinge, 2013). With the loss of their role as a worker, older adults who were previously bound to stay near the workplace might be 'freed' from this tie and can move away.

Relocating during old age to receive care, to return to one's place of birth, or for amenity reasons is not uncommon (Longino & Bradley, 2006). Particularly, in the United States, retirement migration from individuals crossing state boundaries has a long history of receiving scholarly attention (Litwak & Longino, 1987; Wiseman & Roseman, 1979). However, internal migration differs from international migration because crossing international borders comes with additional challenges, such as language barriers, dealing with cultural differences and difficulties accessing welfare (Warnes, 2009). The international migration of older adults to new countries has sparked the interest of researchers from different fields, such as human geography, sociology, social anthropology and gerontology. The variety of disciplines from which the study of international retirement migration has been approached relates to the intriguing nature of the phenomenon, as challenges relating to ageing and migration intersect. For example, although direct support from family members increases with age (Fokkema et al., 2008), most retirement migration involves people who leave their family and social network behind. Studies on international retirement migration have examined patterns of migration, characteristics of migrants and how people manage life abroad, particularly in light of ageing (King et al., 2000; Oliver, 2012; Warnes, 2009).

One of the more often studied questions in studies of international retirement migration has been: why do people move (Savaş et al., 2023)? There are two common ways to understand migration behaviour. The first is a causal approach in which studies identify factors associated with the risk of moving by comparing migrants to nonmigrants in a longitudinal design. However, due to data limitations, this has not been done in the retirement migration literature. The second and more common approach is descriptive, by considering, after migration, who migrated and what motivated people to migrate.

In prior studies, apart from the stereotypical motive of the search for better weather or a different climate, six different motives are most prominent (Casado-Díaz, 2006). The second motive is the longing for a more tranquil environment with fewer stimuli (Benson, 2012; Sampaio & King, 2019). A third motive concerns the culture in the destination country, such as the slower pace of life (Howard, 2008; Casado-Díaz, 2006). Fourth, retirement migration might be motivated by a search for a new life, adventure or new experiences (Bolzman et al., 2021; Hayes, 2021). Fifth, retiring abroad could be economically motivated: a strategy to improve one's standard of living (Hayes, 2015; Repetti et al., 2018). The sixth motive of particular interest to older migrants is the factor of health, that is, when people migrate to improve health conditions (Casado-Díaz, 2006; Hayes, 2021; Unguren et al., 2021). Finally, some people are motivated by a sense of dissatisfaction or even antipathy with the social and political public domain in the origin country (Truly, 2002; Unguren et al., 2021).

Prior studies have described the diversity in migration motives. They have shown that although the lives of retirement migrants in various places might seem similar at first sight, in reality, migration serves different functions. Lowered economic and social costs for migration have led to a greater variety of people's backgrounds, motives and destinations (King, Cela, & Fokkema, 2021). By focusing on describing migration motives in specific destinations, current studies overlook what factors inhibit or enable people to have particular motives to migrate, such as the importance of people's backgrounds and sociohistorical context. To our knowledge, no studies have yet explained for whom, and in which circumstances and destination countries, motives for migration differ. Insight into the precursors of motives helps to understand the heterogeneity in the retirement migrant population regarding backgrounds and retirement preferences (Ebrahimi, 2021). For example, although the average retirement migrant appears relatively healthy (La Parra, 2008), obviously, health status may play a significant role for people who migrate with a health motive. To understand the emigration of older adults to new countries, we examine three research questions: (1) which motives play a role in the decision to migrate? (2) for whom and in which circumstances do particular motives play a more significant role in the decision to migrate? and (3) to what extent do motives for migration vary between destination countries?

This study contributes to the literature in three ways. First, we offer a comprehensive perspective of retirement migration from a single origin country to multiple destination countries. As such, our design includes more isolated retirement migrants or those in less common destinations who remain out of sight because they are difficult to reach through commonly used convenience and snowball sampling techniques. Second, we develop and test hypotheses about how people's motives are explained by: (a) socioeconomic status, (b) premigration health, (c) premigration residential environment, (d) cultural values and (e) personality traits. These factors have been shown to affect lifestyle preferences in retirement, and are, as discussed below, plausible candidates for understanding the migration decision. Third, we show how motives are linked to destinations. Even though the geographical scope has broadened (King, Cela, & Fokkema, 2021), studies on British retirees in Spain and US retirees in Mexico still maintain a prominent position in the field. By sampling on destinations, prior studies may implicitly select on motives. These studies might, for example, overestimate the importance of the climate motive for retirement migrants.

We collected data from a nationally representative stratified random sample of Dutch nationals aged 66–90 who were born in the Netherlands but moved abroad at a later stage in the life course. This new survey of Dutch Retirement Migrants Abroad (Henkens et al., 2022) targeted retirement migrants from the Netherlands in 40 destinations, which makes it the first study allowing for the comparison of retirement migrants from a single country of origin in many destinations. It covers a wide range of topics, such as individual background and the migration process, health, well-being and values, which allows us to disentangle motives and predictors of the motives. Throughout the paper, it is important to remember that we are not

concerned with who migrates, which would require a comparison group of nonmigrants, but instead with distinguishing what motivated the move for those who emigrated. We are also not concerned with migrants in the Netherlands who return to their origin country after retirement as the precursors are likely to differ substantially, because of differences in entitlements to state welfare and healthcare, social networks and language competence (Warnes, 2009).

2 | THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES

Retirement is an event that comes with changes in needs and resources, requiring adjustment to and developing a new lifestyle (van Solinge & Henkens, 2008). Two elements stand out that set retirement apart from other phases of life. First, retirement affects people's resources. For example, people's economic resources change upon transitioning from a working-wage income to a pension consisting of state pension rights, employment-related pension entitlements and possibly wealth accumulated through savings and investments. Second, and related, upon retirement, people depart from their role as a worker, which loosens people's ties to time and place. When people leave their nine-to-five jobs, they must reorganise their day-to-day activities and leisure time. These factors provide people with more freedom to act and open up the possibility of migrating in retirement.

Building on economic, sociological and psychological theories, we assume that certain factors are associated with different motives for retirement migration. The seven motives we are going to explain are (1) longing for tranquillity, (2) attractiveness of another culture, (3) to start a new life, (4) attractive climate, (5) economic reasons, (6)

health reasons and (7) dissatisfaction with the home country. The explaining factors are (a) socioeconomic status, (b) premigration health, (c) premigration residential environment, (d) cultural values and (e) personality traits. We elaborate on these mechanisms below and provide a schematic overview of our hypotheses in Table 1. Note that not all explaining variables predict each motive. For example, we expect cultural views to predict the tranquillity motive but not the health motive.

2.1 | Socioeconomic status

One factor that might influence people's migration motives is socioeconomic status. For people with a lower socioeconomic status, lower costs of living abroad might be of greater importance than for people with a higher socioeconomic status. For example, some North American retirees reported that economic and financial insecurity played a considerable role in deciding to migrate to Ecuador, where living and real estate costs were much lower than in the United States (Hayes, 2015). Although socioeconomic status most clearly affects people's financial resources, it may also have social–psychological implications. Some studies show that a lower economic status is connected to social and political withdrawal and political distrust (Goubin & Hooghe, 2020). When a lower socio-economic status predicts political disengagement, migration might be a way of expressing discontent with the public domain.

People's socioeconomic status affects not only their financial resources but also their attitudes, habits, social networks and personal biographies (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). People with higher socioeconomic status have a higher degree of consumption of luxury goods and social and cultural participation (de Graaf &

TABLE 1 Hypotheses for factors predicting migration motives.

Variable	Tranquillity	Culture	New life	Climate	Economic	Health	Dissatisfaction
SES factors							
Level of education (ISEI)	+	+			-		-
(Last) occupation (ISLED)	+	+			-		-
Health factors (premigration)							
Physical chronic health conditions				+		+	
Psychological chronic health conditions			+			+	+
Residential environment (premigration)							
Busy living area	+						+
Cultural factors							
Postmaterialism	+	+					
Counterculture identity	+		+				
Personality traits							
Adventurousness		+	+				
Extraversion		+	+				

Kalmijn, 2001; Scherger et al., 2011). Luxury is not merely an economic concept but, in a wider sense, serves as a signifier of difference between people so that common objects can become a sign of taste and class (Mortelmans, 2005). This broader definition of luxury extends to intangible goods, such as tranquillity. For example, research in the Netherlands has shown that people with a higher income value 'silence' as a luxury good and are more willing to pay for noise reduction compared to people with a lower income (Udo et al., 2006). Furthermore, studies have shown that older adults with more education spent more time travelling and were more likely to engage in active leisure retirement lifestyles, characterised by a great variation in the types of activities that people undertake (Wanka, 2020). More educated people are believed to be more tolerant and open to other cultures (van Doorn, 2014; Vogt, 1997), which might result in having culture as a motive for migration.

> **H1.** People with higher socioeconomic status are less likely to migrate for economic and dissatisfaction motives, and more likely to migrate for tranquillity and cultural motives.

2.2 | Health

Older aged individuals have been found to anticipate their future health in their residential reasoning (Koss & Ekerdt, 2017). For some, migration may be part of a 'health investment strategy'. The healthy ageing perspective characterises people as active agents of their physical and mental well-being (Bartlett & Peel, 2005), and explains how even in the face of ill-health, people may search for ways to improve their quality of life (Kahana et al., 2012). For people with chronic health conditions, leisure has been found to be a strategy for healthy ageing (Hutchinson & Nimrod, 2012). Retirement migration may render the opportunity to pursue these circumstances. For example, some retirement migrants in Thailand considered their (future) health and moved directly into a long-term care facility in Thailand to receive the intensive care they could not receive in Germany (Bender et al., 2020). There is some evidence that a warm climate improves people's perception of their health status, and reduces chronic musculoskeletal pain, such as rheumatism (Beukenhorst et al., 2020).

Few studies of retirement migration have examined mental health before migration, even though mental health issues, such as boredom and loneliness, are known problems after migration (Huber & O'Reilly, 2004). In light of the healthy ageing perspective, similar to physical health issues, psychological health issues are a driving force in searching for ways to improve health conditions (Bartlett & Peel, 2005). For people whose expectations have not been met in life or who experienced a disruptive life event, such as widowhood or divorce, retirement migration could offer an opportunity to 'redesign' their life (Bolzman et al., 2021). Societal norms and expectations about the retirement phase may motivate people to leave their country of origin behind. Gambold (2013), who studied female retirement migrants from the United States, summarised this as a

'fear of the known' and migration abroad as a way to free oneself from the burden of not adhering to societal expectations.

> **H2.** People with more physical health problems are more likely to migrate for health and climate motives, and people with psychological health problems are more likely to migrate for the motives of health, a new life and dissatisfaction.

2.3 | Premigration residential environment

The Netherlands is the second most densely populated country in the world (Eurostat, 2023), which makes crowdedness a particularly salient issue. People who negatively evaluate their environment, for example, in terms of population density and noise pollution, are more likely to intend to migrate and undertake preparatory migration behaviour (van Dalen & Henkens, 2007). For retirement migrants from Britain, the Netherlands and Germany, the absence of nuisance from urbanisation, noise or industry was found to be an important factor for the selection of a destination and a property (King, Cela, Fokkema & Morettini, 2021). The importance of these factors could partly stem from experiences at home, as most retirement migrants compare places of origin and destination. In these cases, a busy area in the home country may stimulate a desire for tranquillity. In this sense, retirement migration can be seen as a process of counter-urbanization (Benson, 2012). The subjective evaluation of the residential area contributes to older people's psychological well-being (Phillips et al., 2005). A residential environment that is experienced as too busy could add to feelings of dissatisfaction, such that migrating abroad could be an appealing option.

> **H3.** People who lived in a busy area before migration are more likely to migrate for tranquillity and dissatisfaction motives.

2.4 | Cultural values

The majority of the current generation of retirement migrants came of age in the 60s and 70s of the 20th century, a period characterised by increased prosperity and consumerism. Part of this generation of baby boomers is thought to have undergone changes in value systems, with greater emphasis on choice, autonomy and self-expression (Gilleard & Higgs, 2007) and a greater focus on nonmaterial goals, such as self-development, equality and freedom (Inglehart, 1971; Strenze, 2021). There is evidence that some retirement migrants are driven by postmaterialist values. For example, retirement migrants in Italy were drawn to a 'simpler, more genuine way of life' (King, Cela, Fokkema & Morettini, 2021, p. 1), which fits the idea of a postmaterial attitude. Moreover, a study on the tourist behaviour of older people found that people with more materialist cultural values were less likely to have travel motives relating to nature, such as trying to get back to nature on vacation

(Iversen et al., 2016). The desire to migrate for people with postmaterialist ideals might thus be driven by their longing for particular experiences, for example, relating to tranquillity or culture, rather than being monetarily driven.
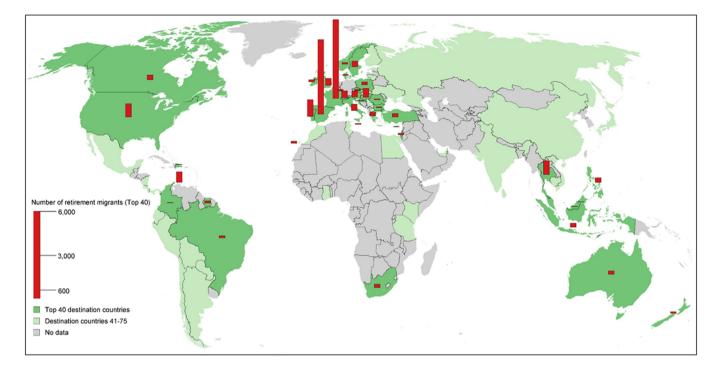
The change in value systems gave rise to the emergence of countercultural movements, such as the hippie culture, antiestablishment movements and alternative lifestyles. The effects of being part of a countercultural movement in youth may have left its marks on part of the current generation of retirement migrants. Although some studies considered retirement migrants' life course histories shortly before migration (Benson, 2012), experiences in early adulthood have not been considered, despite evidence that identities are primarily shaped in early adulthood, long-lasting and relatively stable (Milfont et al., 2016). For example, a study on older adults suggests that identification with countercultures in youth affects how retirees envision retirement: Dutch retirees who had greater identification with a counterculture in youth have more active views about their retirement (Tunney et al., 2022). People who identified with a counterculture of the 60s and 70s may, therefore, be drawn to more nonconventional ways of retiring, leading to a desire for tranquillity or the search for a new life.

H4. People with more postmaterialist attitudes are more likely to migrate for tranquillity and culture motives, and people identifying with the counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s in youth are more likely to migrate for tranquillity and new life motives.

2.5 | Personality traits

Some studies have pointed to the link between migration and personality (Boneva & Frieze, 2001). In particular, the personality traits of extraversion and openness to new experiences are positively associated with migration intentions and behaviour (van Dalen & Henkens, 2013; Jokela, 2009). The risky nature of emigration explains how personality differences influence people's willingness to emigrate, but they could also help to understand differences in motives. Extraverted individuals are considered active, assertive and outgoing (McCrae & John, 1992). One of the central features of extraversion is the tendency to engage in and enjoy experiences related to social interaction, such as interacting with friends or socialising with new people (Ashton et al., 2002). The need for social interaction associated with extraverted personality traits could translate into a greater interest in others. Although few authors have linked personality characteristics to migration motives, we expect that more extraverted people would be more likely to migrate because of their interest in other cultures and that migration for new life motives could reflect their active and assertive nature.

People with a higher degree of openness to experience in their personality profile are more interested in new intellectual experiences, have greater curiosity, have a wide range of interests and have original ideas (McCrae & John, 1992). People with openness to experience are found to be less risk-averse (Pavlíček et al., 2021). These traits fit the

aspects of adventure and new experiences in the new life motive. People with greater openness to experience are more likely to retire with aspirational motives in mind, such as pursuing new opportunities outside of work (Robinson et al., 2010). Respondents in a study of US retirement migrants in Mexico considered the need of having an adventurous personality and a willingness to accept and adapt to Mexican culture (Rojas et al., 2014), which corroborates the idea that migrating to a country with a different culture might be appealing to people with adventurous personalities.

H5. People who are more extraverted and who are more open to new experiences are more likely to migrate for culture and new life motives.

2.6 | Destination selection

Early studies on retirement migration envisioned migration as a two-step process: first, people decide to migrate, followed by the selection of a destination (Wiseman & Roseman, 1979). In practice, the two decisions overlap, although the relative importance attached to each decision differs per person. Prior studies distinguished between destination-specific migrants, who specifically choose a single destination and destination-selecting migrants, who select between alternative sites (Haas & Serow, 1993). In both cases, people gather knowledge of the attributes of a country and assess whether a particular destination would fulfil their migration desires.

People's motives for migration are likely to affect the selection of a destination country. Climate is an obvious example: people who migrated for the climate, for example, are likely to choose destinations known for their sunny weather, which often coincide with popular holiday destinations in Europe, such as Spain (Rodriguez, 2001). But several other linkages can be expected. People who migrate for new life motives, for example, may be choosing destinations that are at a greater distance or have greater cultural differences to the origin country. People who are economically driven may be drawn to destinations with a lower gross domestic product per capita, or to places with a lower-valued currency. These examples illustrate how some motives can be expected to be more common in some destinations and less common in others. We do not develop explicit hypotheses for different destinations, because the number of hypotheses would be too high given the large number of countries. Rather, we explore how the correlations between motives and countries could provide insights into the migration process to different countries using a selection of common and distinctive countries.

3 | METHODS

3.1 | Data and sample selection

We collected data for the Survey of Dutch Retirement Migrants Abroad (Henkens et al., 2022), a survey based on a national stratified random sample of Dutch nationals between the ages of 66 and 90 who reside

FIGURE 1 Geographical spread of the population of Dutch retirement migrants in top 75 destinations in 2021. The population of Dutch retirement migrants reflects persons aged 66–90 with Dutch nationality who receive their public pension abroad and who accumulated at least 70% of the public pension scheme. Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao were combined into a single bar for readability. *Source*: DRM v1.0, own calculations.

abroad but were born in the Netherlands. We excluded people in the neighbouring countries of Belgium and Germany, due to people living in the border regions. Figure 1 shows the geographical spread of the population of Dutch retirement migrants in the top 75 destination countries. The figure illustrates that Dutch retirement migration is not limited to Southern European destinations, but has a global character. The sample was drawn by the Dutch Social Insurance Bank (SVB), which is responsible for distributing public pensions.[1] We selected people in the top 40 destinations (covering 98% of the population) who accumulated at least 70% of public pension, meaning they were registered in the Netherlands for at least 35 years between the age of 16 and 66. In total, 6110 people responded to the self-administered computer assisted web interview or paper-and-pencil questionnaire; the response rate of 45.1% is relatively good considering the decline in survey response that has been observed since the 1990s (Beullens et al., 2018; Massey & Tourangeau, 2013). Although the response was dependent on age, marital status and the type of country, the degree of selectivity is modest. Keep in mind that nonresponse is not always caused by a respondent being unwilling to participate. In some countries, the mail system may not have worked as well as in others. A detailed nonresponse analysis can be found in the codebook of the data (Henkens et al., 2022, p. 11).

We excluded respondents from the sample who did not fit our selection criteria. First, we excluded people who migrated before age 50 (n = 529). The official retirement age in the Netherlands used to be age 65 and is now gradually rising to at least 67 years and 3 months. However, as retirement requires preparation and planning, solely taking the retirement age into account would be too narrow. Second, we excluded people who returned to the Netherlands, Belgium or Germany (n = 13), as they did not fit the study population. Finally, we excluded those over age 91 (n = 3). The analytical sample consisted of 5565 individuals.

3.2 | Measures

For the seven dependent variables of motives for migration, respondents were asked retrospectively: 'To what extent have the following matters played a role in your decision to emigrate to the country you are currently living in?' with answer options (1) did not play a role, (2) played a role or (3) played a big role. Some motives were captured by one item in the questionnaire, while others combined two or three items. The motives and their items are outlined below.[2] For each motive, we

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[1]From the two 'largest' destination countries (France and Spain), a sample of 40% was selected; from the next seven largest destination countries, a sample of 60% was selected; from the remaining destination countries, all respondents were selected (Table A3). This approach yielded a sufficient number of cases in each destination without making the sample too large (Henkens et al., 2022).

[2]Missing values for items were replaced with the score respondents assigned to the 'other' motive when applicable. Remaining missing values were replaced with ' played a big role' when respondents listed the item in the question 'which above outlined motive was most important?'. Item values were replaced with the score of the 'other' motive when the score was higher than the score initially assigned to the item. Item values were replaced with 'played a big role' when the item was the 'most important motive'.

calculated the mean of the items and standardised their values, as this allowed us to compare effect sizes across models.[3]

- *Tranquillity*: 'nature, peace and quiet, and space in the destination country' and 'crowdedness and population density in the Netherlands' ($\alpha = 0.69$);
- *Culture*: 'culture and people in the destination country';
- *New life*: 'to start a new life' and 'adventure and new experiences' ($\alpha = 0.50$);
- *Climate*: 'better weather, better climate';
- *Economic*: 'lower costs of living';
- *Health*: 'my health';
- *Dissatisfaction*: 'manners and mentality in the Netherlands', 'rules and regulations in the Netherlands' and 'trustworthiness of politics/government in the Netherlands' ($\alpha = 0.83$).

Socioeconomic status was measured by the level of education and last occupation before retirement. The respondent's highest attained level of education could range from primary school to a university master's degree or higher and was included as a linear variable based on the international standard level of education (ISLED) scale (Schroder & Ganzeboom, 2014). Preretirement occupation was measured by a self-classification of the respondent's last occupation in the Netherlands in one of eight occupational groups based on a modified version of a question designed by Ganzeboom (2005). The measure was scaled to average international socioeconomic index (ISEI) of occupational status values, an internationally comparable measure of occupational status (Ganzeboom & Treiman, 1996).

Health was separated into people's physical and psychological chronic health conditions. To determine people's chronic health conditions, they were asked for 10 conditions (Table A2): 'Did you have one or more of the following long-standing diseases (as diagnosed by a doctor) prior to migration?' (Vanajan et al., 2020). Physical health was based on nine items and grouped into three groups: (1) no physical chronic health conditions, (2) one physical chronic health condition and (3) more than one physical chronic health condition. Whether someone had psychological health problems was determined based on the item 'psychological issues' from the list of chronic health conditions, which we dichotomised into having and not having psychological problems.

The premigration residential environment was measured by the perceived busyness of the premigration residential area. To determine how busy people perceived their living area before migration to be, respondents were asked: 'How would you describe your living area before migration?' with answer options ranging from (1) busy to (5) quiet, which we reverse-coded for the analysis. We included perceived busyness as a linear variable for ease of interpretation;

treating the busyness measure as an interval variable did not alter the main effects in a significant or substantive way.

To examine the respondents' cultural values, we included postmaterialist attitudes and whether they identified with a counterculture in youth. For postmaterialism, we followed the measure developed by Inglehart and Abramson (1999). Respondents were asked to prioritise four statements into most important and second most important (Table A2). We distinguished three groups based on the combination of the most and second most important statement: (1) materialist, for two material statements; (2) mixed, for a combination of a material and a postmaterial statement and (3) postmaterialist, for two postmaterialist statements (Halman, 2009). For identification with a counterculture, we used a shortened version of the counterculture measure in Tunney et al. (2022). Respondents were asked: 'Did you identify with one of the following counterculture movements from the 1960s and 1970s in youth?: (1) hippie culture, (2) protest generation/antiestablishment, (3) feminism and (4) alternative lifestyles, on a scale of (1) no to (4) a lot. A scale was calculated by taking the average of unstandardised items when the respondent answered at least three items.

Personality traits focused on extraversion and openness to experience, both part of the Big Five measure of personality (Goldberg et al., 2006). The question was: 'Could you describe how accurately each statement describes your personality? Please describe how you generally are now and not how you aspire to be in the future'. Extraversion and openness to experience were measured by seven items each (Table A2), with options ranging from (1) completely wrong to (5) absolutely correct. For openness to experience, we used a subscale of adventurousness because the items were more suitable for the migration experience. Although we cannot rule out the possibility that the migration experience changed people's views of themselves, personality characteristics have been shown to be relatively stable (Roberts et al., 2003).

For the country analysis, we included 12 destination countries as dependent variables. We selected the nine most popular destinations and three countries from the top 20 to show a variety of countries (Table A3). The countries included in the analyses in order of popularity are France, Spain, Portugal, Thailand, the United States, Hungary, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Italy, Sweden, South Africa and Turkey. For each destination country, we computed dummy variables, with (1) indicating that someone migrated to the destination country and (0) indicating that someone migrated to one of the other 39 destinations.

For the motives and country analyses, we controlled for the age at migration, whether people had a partner at the time of migration and their gender, and whether people had children at the time of the questionnaire. The descriptive statistics for all variables can be found in Table 2.

3.3 | Analysis plan

We performed ordinary least square (OLS) regression models of migration motives. OLS models can be combined with the multiple

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[3]The correlations between the motives were relatively low (Table A1) indicating that the motives reflect different aspects of the migration decision.

TABLE 2 Descriptive statistics of independent variables, control variables and countries of destination.

	Count	Missing[a]	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Migration motives						
Tranquillity	5463		2.31	0.71	1	3
Culture	5419		2.13	0.78	1	3
New life	5390		1.83	0.65	1	3
Climate	5457		2.35	0.81	1	3
Economic	5439		1.91	0.85	1	3
Health	5307		1.47	0.72	1	3
Dissatisfaction	5449		1.81	0.71	1	3
Independent variables						
SES						
Level of education (ISLED)	5509	1.0%	60.71	20.74	22.98	87.13
(Last) occupation (ISEI)	5186	6.8%	59.09	15.72	21	82
Health factors (premigration)						
Chronic health conditions (CHC)						
Physical CHCs	5174	7.0%				
None	2495		48.2%			
One	1372		26.5%			
More than one	1307		25.3%			
Psychological CHC	4966	10.8%				
No	4807		96.8%			
Yes	159		3.2%			
Residential environment (premigration)						
Busy living area	5427	2.5%	2.60	1.43	1	5
Cultural factors						
Postmaterialism	4626	16.9%				
Materialist	646		14.0%			
Mixed	2644		57.2%			
Postmaterialist	1336		28.9%			
Counterculture identity	5061	9.0%	1.51	0.64	1	4
Personality traits						
Adventurousness	5067	8.9%	3.22	0.54	1.14	5
Extraversion	5066	9.0%	3.41	0.70	1	5
Control variables						
Age at migration	5438	2.3%	62.28	6.45	50	89
Premigration partner × gender	5434	2.4%				
Single women	368		6.8%			
Partnered women	1325		24.4%			
Single men	709		13.1%			
Partnered men	3032		55.8%			
Childless (dummy)	5382	3.3%				
Has no child(ren)	4032		74.9%			
Has children	1350		25.1%			

TABLE 2 (Continued)

	Count	Missing[a]	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Destination countries						
France	1096		19.7%			
Spain	793		14.3%			
Portugal	333		6.0%			
Thailand	252		4.5%			
United States	188		3.4%			
Hungary	164		3.0%			
United Kingdom	131		2.4%			
Switzerland	110		2.0%			
Italy	128		2.3%			
Sweden	225		4.0%			
South Africa	81		1.5%			
Turkey	73		1.3%			

Note: Some errors may occur due to rounding.
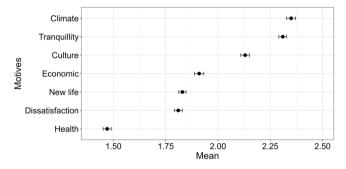[a]For imputed variables.
Source: DRM v1.0, own calculations.

imputations by chained equations (MICE) approach, which we employed to deal with missing data (White et al., 2011). We ran 25 imputations and applied Rubin's rule to pool the results from each model into a single set of estimates and standard errors (Rubin, 1987). The OLS models were performed on the nonmissing cases for each motive separately, resulting in different Ns across models. As a robustness check, we performed seemingly unrelated regression (SUR) models, which account for the fact that the regressions on the motives are correlated within individuals but not between individuals (Zellner, 1962); however, this did not alter the findings.

We employed logistic regression models to analyse how the motives predicted 12 destination countries. We chose logistic regressions rather than multinomial logistic regressions. In our approach, the parallel logistic regression models address the choice of moving to a particular country instead of any other country. In a multinomial logistic regression, the reference category would be retirement migrants in one particular country rather than all retirement migrants combined. All models were estimated in STATA 16.

4 | RESULTS

4.1 | Motives for migration

We begin by examining which motives played a role in the decision to migrate. Figure 2 shows the mean for each motive to migrate, with a higher mean indicating that more people considered the motive to have played a role in their decision to migrate. The most important motive was the climate (mean = 2.35

FIGURE 2 Mean of motives that played a role in the decision to migrate. Motives for migration range from (1) played no role to (3) played a big role. Dots represent the mean score and the error bars represent the 95% confidence intervals. *Source*: DRM v1.0, own calculations.

on a scale from 1 to 3). Only one in five did not consider the climate to have played a role. The climate motive was closely followed by a longing for tranquillity (mean = 2.31). The culture in the destination country was the third most important motive (mean = 2.13), with three out of four considering the culture and people in the destination country to have played a (big) role. The economic motive played a role for about 60% of the retirement migrants (mean = 1.91). Starting a new life and dissatisfaction were less common, with means of 1.83 and 1.81, respectively. Finally, the health motive was least important (mean = 1.47), although still, 31% considered health to have played a role. Only 4% had one motive for migration and 59% even more than four motives (not shown), which confirms the idea that it is often a combination of motives that leads to migration.

4.2 | Socioeconomic status

Table 3 presents the regression results for each of the seven motives. We discuss the findings for the variables and motives for which we developed hypotheses. We expected that people with a higher socioeconomic status were less likely to have economic and dissatisfaction motives and more likely to migrate for tranquillity and cultural motives (Hypothesis 1). Our results confirmed that people with a lower socioeconomic background were more likely to migrate for economic and dissatisfaction motives. Contradicting our expectations, a higher socioeconomic status was not necessarily predictive of motives for tranquillity and culture. Although more educated people were indeed more likely to migrate for the tranquillity motive, education and occupation were not associated with having a cultural motive. Overall, the level of education appeared to be a stronger predictor for migration motives than occupational status.

4.3 | Premigration health

We hypothesised that people with more physical chronic health conditions were more likely to migrate for health reasons and the climate (Hypothesis 2). Our results confirmed this hypothesis. This suggests that people facing physical constraints take their health into account when migrating and might be drawn to a better climate to alleviate symptoms. As expected in Hypothesis 2, psychological health issues were positively associated with the motives of health, starting a new life and dissatisfaction with the origin country. The differential effects for physical and mental components of health underline the importance of separating the two in understanding retirees' strategies for living a happy and healthy life in old age.

4.4 | Premigration residential environment

We considered the premigration residential environment in terms of the perceived busyness of the area. We expected that people who experienced their residential area before migration to be busier were more likely to migrate for tranquillity and dissatisfaction motives (Hypothesis 3). This was confirmed for both tranquillity and dissatisfaction, indicating that both motives relate to how the physical surroundings are perceived.

4.5 | Cultural values

We expected that people with more postmaterialist values were more likely to migrate for tranquillity and the culture in the destination country, and people who had a stronger identification with the countercultures of the 1960s and 1970s in youth to be more likely to migrate for the motives of tranquillity and starting a new life (Hypothesis 4). This hypothesis were only partly confirmed. There were no significant associations between postmaterialist values and the motives of tranquillity and culture. Our results confirmed the

hypothesis for counterculture identification and the motive of starting a new life, but not for the longing for tranquillity. The positive association between counterculture identification and the new life motive supports the idea of a greater attraction to nonconventional ways of retiring for people who identified with, for example, being a hippie, feminist or part of the antiestablishment movement. As such, some attitudes developed in youth appear to have long-lasting effects.

4.6 | Personality traits

We expected that people with more extraverted and adventurous personalities were more likely to migrate for the motives of culture and to start a new life (Hypothesis 5). This hypothesis was confirmed for extraversion and partly confirmed for adventurousness. People with a more extraverted personality were more likely to migrate for the culture in the destination and to start a new life, which fits the ideas of extraverted individuals being social and active. More adventurous people were more likely to migrate to start a new life, but not for the culture motive. The difference in outcomes for extraversion and adventurousness indicates that extraversion relates more to the social setting, whereas this is not necessarily the case for openness to new experiences.

4.7 | Control variables

We included the control variables of age at migration, whether people had a partner at the time of migration by gender, and whether people had children, as they could affect why people want to migrate in retirement. In terms of the age at migration, most striking was that younger people were significantly more likely to migrate to start a new life. Partnered people were more likely to migrate for tranquillity, whereas single people were more likely to migrate to start a new life. Men, in general, were more likely to migrate because of dissatisfaction with their origin country, and single men were more likely to have an economic motive. People who did not have children were more likely to migrate for the culture, to start a new life, because of the climate or for economic reasons.

4.8 | Destination selection

We examined how motives for migration predicted having migrated to a specific destination country compared to migrating to any of the other destinations (Table 4). We expected people's motives for migration to differ between countries, which was found to be the case. The motive of longing for tranquillity was most important for people who migrated to France and Sweden, which share the image of having plenty of nature while being relatively similar culture-wise. The culture motive played a big role for retirement migrants in Italy. People who wanted to start a new life were more likely to migrate to Thailand, for whom distance and cultural differences may be

TABLE 3 Estimation results for ordinary least square regressions of migration motives.

	Tranquillity	Culture	New life	Climate	Economic	Health	Dissatisfaction
SES factors							
Level of education (ISLED)	0.04*	0.01	0.00	−0.05**	−0.10**	−0.08**	−0.07**
	(2.29)	(0.48)	(0.16)	(−2.91)	(−5.65)	(−4.53)	(−4.05)
(Last) occupation (ISEI)	−0.01	−0.02	−0.03˜	0.04*	−0.07**	−0.01	−0.06**
	(−0.77)	(−1.07)	(−1.72)	(2.17)	(−3.69)	(−0.54)	(−3.26)
Health factors (premigration)							
Chronic health conditions (CHC)							
Physical (ref. = none)							
One CHC	0.11**	0.11**	0.06˜	0.13**	0.14**	0.34**	0.10**
	(3.21)	(3.09)	(1.67)	(3.93)	(4.14)	(10.10)	(2.83)
More than one CHC	0.03	0.03	0.01	0.14**	0.12**	0.58**	0.21**
	(1.01)	(0.96)	(0.35)	(4.12)	(3.42)	(16.27)	(5.97)
Psychological (ref. = none)	0.09	−0.07	0.25**	−0.21*	−0.09	0.31**	0.23*
	(1.12)	(−0.85)	(3.09)	(−2.52)	(−1.06)	(3.62)	(2.60)
Residential environment (premigration)							
Busy living area	0.19**	0.08**	0.02	−0.00	0.02	0.02˜	0.09**
	(13.98)	(5.93)	(1.49)	(−0.18)	(1.13)	(1.75)	(6.73)
Cultural values							
Postmaterialism (ref. = materialist)							
Mixed	0.07	−0.05	−0.03	−0.01	0.04	−0.01	0.08˜
	(1.59)	(−1.05)	(−0.60)	(−0.29)	(0.81)	(−0.33)	(1.84)
Postmaterialist	0.09*	−0.01	0.03	−0.05	0.06	0.04	0.11*
	(2.02)	(−0.24)	(0.74)	(−0.94)	(1.26)	(0.73)	(2.30)
Counterculture identity in youth	0.02	0.04**	0.11**	−0.01	0.02	−0.00	−0.04**
	(1.56)	(2.81)	(7.82)	(−0.85)	(1.60)	(−0.11)	(−3.11)
Personality traits							
Adventurousness	0.03˜	0.03˜	0.08**	0.00	−0.02	−0.02	0.01
	(1.81)	(1.87)	(5.20)	(0.21)	(−1.06)	(−1.18)	(0.58)
Extraversion	0.03*	0.08**	0.05**	0.07**	0.03˜	0.04*	0.05**
	(2.06)	(5.05)	(3.55)	(4.44)	(1.72)	(2.55)	(3.28)
Control variables							
Age at migration	0.01	0.02	−0.13**	0.03*	0.05**	0.04**	0.05**
	(0.61)	(1.45)	(−9.40)	(2.40)	(3.35)	(3.19)	(3.88)
Premigration partner × gender (ref. = single men)							
Single women	0.02	−0.06	−0.01	−0.12˜	−0.34**	0.09	−0.31**
	(0.35)	(−0.86)	(−0.19)	(−1.85)	(−5.32)	(1.45)	(−4.79)
Partnered women	0.35**	0.03	−0.19**	0.02	−0.32**	−0.03	−0.21**
	(7.55)	(0.72)	(−4.06)	(0.44)	(−6.78)	(−0.69)	(−4.59)
Partnered men	0.23**	0.04	−0.23**	0.01	−0.13**	−0.06	−0.03
	(5.48)	(0.84)	(−5.64)	(0.27)	(−3.18)	(−1.35)	(−0.70)

(Continues)

TABLE 3 (Continued)

	Tranquillity	Culture	New life	Climate	Economic	Health	Dissatisfaction
Childless	0.06~	0.07*	0.07*	0.09**	0.07*	−0.02	−0.01
	(1.85)	(2.24)	(2.15)	(2.87)	(2.30)	(−0.74)	(−0.23)
Constant	−0.33**	−0.05	0.14*	−0.07	0.05	−0.21**	−0.07
	(−6.28)	(−0.84)	(2.56)	(−1.25)	(0.96)	(−3.88)	(−1.35)
Observations	5463	5419	5390	5457	5439	5307	5449
Adjusted R^2	0.06	0.02	0.06	0.01	0.04	0.09	0.05

Note: t statistics in parentheses.
$~p < 0.10$; $*p < 0.05$; $**p < 0.01$.
Source: DRM v1.0, own calculations.

important. Although the climate was important in many other destinations, it was the most important predictor for Spain and Portugal. People whose migration was economically motivated were more likely to migrate to Hungary, where people could benefit from lower costs of living compared to the Netherlands. The health motive was an important factor for people who migrated to Turkey, which is known as a healthcare tourism destination (Kahveci et al., 2020). Finally, people who were dissatisfied with the Dutch public domain were more likely to migrate to Switzerland and Thailand. Here, people's dissatisfaction may have different underlying causes, as Switzerland and Thailand differ from the Netherlands and each other in terms of culture, laws and regulations and institutional context.

5 | DISCUSSION

In the last half-century, some older adults nearing retirement have taken advantage of the freedoms and possibilities postworking life offers by retiring abroad for their next stage in life. By distinguishing motives for migration, this study draws attention to the diversity in motives and backgrounds within the retirement migrant population, as well as its global character. We collected unique data on Dutch retirement migrants, which captured this heterogeneity by drawing on a representative stratified random sample of retirement migrants from a single country of origin in 40 destinations. In doing so, we broaden our understanding of out-migration later in the life course in high-income countries.

The results of this study contribute to the literature on international retirement migration and migration studies in general. Our results show that there is much diversity in people's motives for migration in late life, which go beyond 'amenities' in the destination. The findings demonstrate that, counter to what the stereotype would lead us to believe, the climate is only one of many motives that play a role in the decision to migrate. Lesser known drivers of migration, such as economic reasons, health concerns or dissatisfaction with the origin country, are not uncommon. For example, our results suggest that even in a generous welfare state like the Netherlands, the costs of living appear to play a substantial role, as shown by the number of

people who have an economic motive to migrate. Prior studies examined migration motives, but mostly in a partial way: focusing on a single destination country, a subset of the population that was reachable or describing rather than explaining differences between individuals. Migration studies and official documentation often classify migrants in an exclusive manner based on their migration motive, as economic, political or environmental migrants or as participating in family reunion migration. Although retirement migrants are different from other migrants—they are older and often in a relatively stable financial position, their life or livelihood is not in danger before migration and most retirement migrants leave their family and social network behind—our findings reiterate the importance of considering that multiple motives play a role in deciding to migrate.

We examined how socioeconomic status, health before migration, the premigration residential environment, people's cultural values and personality traits were associated with different motives for migration. We demonstrated significant differences in retirement migrants' backgrounds when considering their motives to migrate. People who migrated for tranquillity often did so to escape their busy surroundings before migration in favour of a calmer environment in retirement. These could be the 'rural idyll' seekers as described in Benson (2012). The culture motive was compelling to people with an interest in other people and original ideas, as shown by their extravert personalities and countercultural identities in youth. People who had the start a new life motive used migration as a strategy to manage their mental health, and they were often younger, single and childless. People who migrated for the climate motive were often less educated but had a higher occupational status, which supports the idea of a cultural and an economic component of socioeconomic status. Economically driven migrants, often single men, enhanced their relative status by migrating from places where they occupy a lower socioeconomic position (Hayes, 2015). The health motive was not only of concern to those with physical health conditions but also to those with psychological problems. The motive of dissatisfaction with the origin country appeared to constitute people with lower socioeconomic status and more mental health issues and was often

TABLE 4 Estimation results of logistic regressions of destinations on migration motives.

	France	Spain	Portugal	Thailand	United States	Hungary	United Kingdom	Switzerland	Italy	Sweden	South Africa	Turkey
Motives												
Tranquillity	-0.32**	0.97**	0.18*	-0.82**	-0.32**	0.38**	-0.13	-0.09	-0.21~	0.95**	-0.06	-0.92**
	(-5.99)	(18.21)	(2.19)	(-9.53)	(-3.32)	(3.29)	(-1.20)	(-0.72)	(-1.89)	(9.11)	(-0.47)	(-5.97)
Cultural	-0.17**	-0.10*	0.23**	0.24**	-0.41**	-0.31**	0.27*	-0.30*	0.60**	-0.02	-0.36**	0.24~
	(-3.38)	(-2.30)	(3.15)	(2.95)	(-4.04)	(-3.20)	(2.38)	(-2.43)	(5.13)	(-0.18)	(-2.77)	(1.65)
New life	-0.15**	0.04	-0.12~	0.17*	0.10	0.09	0.14	-0.40**	0.11	0.10	0.05	0.05
	(-3.31)	(0.94)	(-1.95)	(2.24)	(1.11)	(0.97)	(1.38)	(-3.23)	(1.16)	(1.33)	(0.41)	(0.38)
Climate	0.81**	0.22**	0.57**	0.33**	-0.18*	-0.13	-1.56**	-0.07	0.31**	-0.92**	0.69**	0.18
	(12.26)	(5.04)	(6.06)	(3.43)	(-2.07)	(-1.26)	(-9.93)	(-0.64)	(2.66)	(-11.80)	(4.13)	(0.99)
Economic	0.39**	-0.40**	0.28**	0.45**	-0.18~	0.80**	-0.33*	-1.22**	-0.18~	-0.12	0.32*	0.63**
	(8.33)	(-9.51)	(4.21)	(5.48)	(-1.80)	(7.50)	(-2.45)	(-6.64)	(-1.67)	(-1.42)	(2.55)	(3.94)
Health	0.25**	-0.14**	-0.06	0.04	-0.48**	-0.23*	0.08	0.18~	-0.11	0.15*	-0.35*	0.63**
	(6.23)	(-3.49)	(-0.95)	(0.61)	(-3.56)	(-2.53)	(0.66)	(1.72)	(-1.03)	(2.07)	(-2.43)	(5.65)
Dissatisfaction	0.16**	-0.47**	-0.10	0.36**	-0.01	0.26**	-0.11	0.51**	-0.48**	-0.13	-0.25~	0.21
	(3.25)	(-10.60)	(-1.41)	(4.54)	(-0.08)	(2.73)	(-0.89)	(4.50)	(-4.05)	(-1.53)	(-1.80)	(1.45)
Control variables												
Age at migration	0.19**	-0.12**	0.17**	0.01	-0.36**	0.26**	0.05	-0.25*	0.34**	0.16*	-0.29*	0.03
	(4.26)	(-2.95)	(2.69)	(0.18)	(-4.19)	(2.93)	(0.50)	(-2.33)	(3.48)	(2.11)	(-2.28)	(0.21)
Premigration partner × gender (ref. = single men)												
Single women	1.04**	0.49*	-0.02	-3.82**	-0.23	-0.57	0.14	0.19	1.25**	1.10*	0.71	0.56
	(4.44)	(2.39)	(-0.07)	(-3.74)	(-0.56)	(-1.32)	(0.33)	(0.32)	(2.77)	(2.55)	(1.14)	(1.32)
Partnered women	1.41**	0.82**	-0.13	-2.56**	-0.35	-0.32	-0.42	0.07	1.06**	0.93*	0.71	-0.17
	(7.73)	(5.23)	(-0.65)	(-7.55)	(-1.14)	(-1.23)	(-1.10)	(0.15)	(2.64)	(2.51)	(1.50)	(-0.44)
Partnered men	1.05**	0.57**	-0.25	-0.99**	0.13	-0.58**	0.28	0.55	0.54	1.16**	0.63	-0.59~
	(6.17)	(3.85)	(-1.40)	(-6.63)	(0.53)	(-2.61)	(0.90)	(1.35)	(1.39)	(3.28)	(1.41)	(-1.74)
Childless	0.09	-0.11	-0.06	0.37*	-0.51*	-0.50*	0.14	-0.18	0.25	-0.05	0.76**	0.25
	(0.90)	(-1.28)	(-0.44)	(2.41)	(-2.30)	(-2.22)	(0.59)	(-0.67)	(1.16)	(-0.31)	(3.22)	(0.89)

(Continues)

TABLE 4 (Continued)

	France	Spain	Portugal	Thailand	United States	Hungary	United Kingdom	Switzerland	Italy	Sweden	South Africa	Turkey
Constant	-3.21**	-2.20**	-2.87**	-2.54**	-3.82**	-3.43**	-5.22**	-5.13**	-4.84**	-4.71**	-5.41**	-4.93**
	(-18.94)	(-15.56)	(-17.01)	(-17.39)	(-15.34)	(-16.08)	(-14.56)	(-12.17)	(-12.78)	(-13.40)	(-12.20)	(-14.50)
Observations	5222	5222	5222	5222	5222	5222	5222	5222	5222	5222	5222	5222

Note: t statistics in parentheses.

$\tilde{}p < 0.10$; $*p < 0.05$; $**p < 0.01$.

Source: DRM v1.0, own calculations.

of importance to men. These findings emphasise the importance of going beyond describing the average migrant or classifying migrants into mutually exclusive categories and show that examining people's motives might be a way to do so.

We have shown that people with different backgrounds had different motives for migration, but motives were also strongly linked to selecting a destination. Particularly insightful were the differences in motives for migration between countries in Southern Europe, which are often assumed to have similar attraction factors. Unsurprisingly, the climate played a role in France, Spain, Portugal and Italy alike; however, no other motive had the same effect in all four countries. For example, people with the tranquillity motive were more likely to go to France or Portugal but less likely to go to Spain. The motives for migration provided important insights into retirement migration to less often examined destinations, such as Hungary (economic), South Africa (climate) and Turkey (health). The comparison of countries showed that the combination of motives matters. For example, when only considering the dissatisfaction motive, it appeared as though people in Thailand, Hungary and Switzerland had similar preferences. However, a more detailed examination showed that they were different in terms of the other motives that played a role: in addition to the dissatisfaction motive, economic motives predicted having Hungary and Thailand as the destination and 'avoiding' Switzerland, the tranquillity motive predicted selecting Hungary and not selecting Thailand, and the culture motive predicted the destination of Thailand and not Hungary and Switzerland. The different combinations of motives per country underline the importance of considering motives in tandem to understand the selection of a specific destination.

Our findings underline the importance of considering the country context. For destination countries, gaining a population of foreign older adults is not without consequences. Their arrival potentially affects the demographic makeup of communities, increases the demand for (healthcare) services, increases land and property prices and affects spatial planning (Zasada et al., 2010). However, as we have shown, the retirement migrant population in one country is not the same as in others. This is particularly important for institutes of receiving countries, as the issues that will arise are likely to depend on the composition of the retirement population in a country. Generally, the arrival of older adults increases the demand for specific (English language) services, such as healthcare, but when people migrate specifically for their health, this issue is likely to be even more salient. Studies employing a postcolonialism perspective have drawn attention to how the composition of retirement migrants vis-à-vis the local population might reproduce inequalities (Hayes, 2022), which is of more concern in some countries than in others. Although the number of Dutch retirement migrants is small, the implications can become substantial when people from different countries have similar motives, such as retirement migrants from the United Kingdom and Germany.

There are some potential limitations of this study. First, the study focused on a subset of those participating in international retirement migration. We focused on permanent migrants who moved to a

country that is not their country of birth, although seasonal migration is possibly even more widespread. To those who can afford it, it might be more attractive to partake in seasonal rather than permanent migration (Breuer, 2005). Future studies could compare permanent and seasonal retirement migrants to examine, for example, whether socioeconomic status effects differ. Second, we examined the migration decision on an individual level, even though it is a household decision. In some cases, the migration might be a form of return migration, as the partner returns to the country of origin. In our sample, 26% had a partner who was originally from the destination country, which is likely to have played a substantial role in the decision to migrate. In these cases, retirement migration can be seen as a form of return migration (Bolzman et al., 2006). Third, the study does not include retirement migrants who remigrated to the Netherlands, which might bias the results. For example, retirement migrants with severe health conditions may have already returned, leading to an overrepresentation of healthy individuals. A longitudinal approach following retirement migrants over an extended period could overcome such limitations, but data are scarce. Finally, the motives we considered are not exhaustive. For example, transnationalism studies draw attention to the role of family members residing in the destination country, which was beyond the scope of this paper as it pertains to a select group of migrants and should be studied in its own right.

This study is among the first to show the diversity of retirement migrants in terms of backgrounds, desires, and destinations based on a representative part of the retirement migrant population. It has shed light on how people have seized the opportunity of migrating to a new country to benefit from increases in life expectancy, wealth and greater mobility during retirement.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The Research Ethics Committee (REC) of the Faculty of Spatial Sciences of the University of Groningen (RUG), the Netherlands, granted ethical clearance on June 1, 2021.

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APPENDIX A

TABLE A1 Correlations between seven migration motives (N = 5222).

	Tranquillity	Culture	New life	Climate	Economic	Health	Dissatisfaction
Tranquillity	-						
Culture	0.44	-					
New life	0.18	0.19	-				
Climate	0.29	0.33	0.12	-			
Economic	0.18	0.22	0.17	0.37	-		
Health	0.13	0.12	0.11	0.20	0.16	-	
Dissatisfaction	0.43	0.33	0.08	0.20	0.26	0.20	-

TABLE A2 Detailed description of the variables health, postmaterialism, extraversion and adventurousness.

Variable	Question	Items	Answer options/coding
Chronic health conditions (CHC)	'Did you have one or more of the following longstanding diseases (as diagnosed by a doctor) prior to migration?'	(1) Problems with hands or arms (such as arthritis, rheumatism or RSI) (2) Problems with hips, legs or feet (also arthritis or rheumatism) (3) Problems with back or neck (also arthritis or rheumatism) (4) Migraine or severe headaches (5) (Cardio)vascular diseases (6) Asthma, bronchitis or emphysema (7) Stomach or intestinal disorders (8) Diabetes (9) Life-threatening diseases (10) Psychological complaints	Yes, No Physical CHCs Items 1–9 (1) None (2) One (3) More than one Psychological CHC Item 10 (1) No (2) Yes
Postmaterialism	'Please, prioritise four statements into most important and second most important'	(1) Maintaining the rule of law (2) Giving people a bigger say in important government decisions (3) Stimulating economic growth (4) Protecting free speech	(1) Materialist: statement 1 and 3 (2) Mixed: (1 or 3) and (2 or 4) (3) Postmaterialist: statements 2 and 4
Extraversion	'Could you describe how accurately each statement describes your personality? Please describe how you generally are now and not how you aspire to be in the future'	(1) Don't talk much (2) Feel good in the company of people (3) Stay in the background (4) Start conversations (5) Have little to say (6) Talk to many different people at parties (7) Am quiet in the company of strangers	(1) Completely wrong to (5) absolutely correct α = 0.83

TABLE A2 (Continued)

Variable	Question	Items	Answer options/coding
Adventurousness	'Could you describe how accurately each statement describes your personality? Please describe how you generally are now and not how you aspire to be in the future'	(1) Prefer variety to routine (2) I like to keep everything the way it is (3) Love to start something new (4) Am attached to fixed patterns and habits (5) Hate change (6) Am a creature of habit (7) Am interested in many things	(1) Completely wrong to (5) absolutely correct α = 0.80

TABLE A3 The population and study sample of Dutch retirement migrants by country.

Nr	Country	Population	Sampling frame[a]	Sample	Response
1	France	5910	0.4	2364	1178
2	Spain	5605	0.4	2242	837
3	Portugal	1265	0.6	759	351
4	Thailand	1028	0.6	617	258
5	United States	987	0.6	592	237
6	Hungary	667	0.6	400	170
7	Great Britain	530	0.6	318	167
8	Switzerland	528	0.6	317	127
9	Italy	512	0.6	307	150
10	Austria	472	1	472	239
11	Sweden	463	1	463	230
12	Curacao	439	1	439	149
13	Canada	360	1	360	170
14	Philippines	343	1	343	141
15	Indonesia	326	1	326	97
16	Greece	295	1	295	125
17	South Africa	291	1	291	99
18	Turkey	285	1	285	77
19	Australia	273	1	273	147
20	Poland	247	1	247	127
21	Bonaire	210	1	210	84
22	Ireland	204	1	204	94
23	Surinam	197	1	197	57
24	Brazil	184	1	184	82
25	Canary Islands	175	1	175	72
26	Aruba	160	1	160	55
27	New Zealand	158	1	158	91
28	Israel	157	1	157	59

(Continues)

TABLE A3 (Continued)

Nr	Country	Population	Sampling frame[a]	Sample	Response
29	Norway	134	1	134	80
30	Luxembourg	126	1	126	38
31	Czech Republic	124	1	124	70
32	Romania	105	1	105	40
33	Denmark	95	1	95	50
34	Malta	93	1	93	26
35	Bulgaria	87	1	87	30
36	Malaysia	61	1	61	27
37	Colombia	55	1	55	18
38	Cyprus	46	1	46	17
39	Croatia	44	1	44	20
40	Dominican Republic	43	1	43	10

Nr	Country	Population	Sampling frame	Sample	Response
41+	Finland, Chili, Mexico, Monaco, Kenya, India, Gambia, Costa Rica Morocco, China, Ghana, Slovakia, Argentina, Tunisia, Serbia, Lithuania, St Martin, United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Slovenia, Vietnam, Panama, Peru, Sri Lanka, Ecuador, Singapore, Bolivia, Tanzania, Ukraine, Japan, Estonia, Republic of Northern, Macedonia, Paraguay, Nicaragua, Cambodia, Andorra, Cape Verde, Russia	587	0	0	0
Total		23,871		14,085	6110

Note: Dutch retirement migrants are defined as persons aged 66–90 with Dutch nationality who are receiving their public pension abroad and who have accumulated at least 70% public pension.

[a]We adopted a sampling frame to yield a sufficient number of cases without making the sample too large. From the two 'largest' destination countries (France and Spain), a sample of 40% was selected; from the next seven largest destination countries, a sample of 60% was selected; from the remaining destination countries, all respondents were selected.

Source: DRM v1.0, own calculations.