Main Approaches to Assessing the Scale of Settlement of Russian-Speaking Population Abroad

Olga D.
VOROBIEVA
Higher School of Contemporary Social Sciences, Lomonosov Moscow State University
Moscow, Russian Federation
e-mail: 89166130069@mail.ru
ORCID: 0000-0003-1304-3715; ResearcherID: H-9920-2016

Alexander A.
SUBBOTIN
Higher School of Contemporary Social Sciences, Lomonosov Moscow State University
Moscow, Russian Federation
e-mail: aasubbotin@yahoo.com
ORCID: 0000-0001-5016-0473; ResearcherID: AAG-6149-2021

Svetlana N.
MISHCHUK
Higher School of Contemporary Social Sciences, Lomonosov Moscow State University
Moscow, Russian Federation
e-mail: svetamic79@mail.ru
ORCID: 0000-0002-8117-6352; ResearcherID: B-2042-2014

Abstract. Russian diaspora is one of the largest in the world and, according to various sources, includes from 10 to 40 million expatriates. It has been forming since the 18th−19th century during periods of unrest, wars and political change. Natural decline of Russian population, reduction in the migration growth of the population of Russia, and changes in ethnic composition determine the need and relevance of assessing the scale of the country's repatriation potential. The aim of the work is to analyze existing data sources and approaches to estimating the number of Russian-speaking population and to identify the countries in which it is concentrated, for subsequent assessment of Russia's repatriation potential. The article presents main approaches to identifying Russian expatriates, estimates the number and describes the geographical distribution of Russian-speaking communities abroad. The interpretations of such widely used concepts as "emigrants", "diaspora", "compatriots" and "Russian-speaking communities" are considered in detail and comprehensively, as well as the specifics of their definition and statistical accounting. We use data from the United Nations, national statistical services of various countries, and expert assessments. The data presented emphasize the importance of Russian-speaking communities in the context of globalization and international migration. The article provides statistics on international migration flows from Russia, including an analysis by country of residence and the dynamics of the number of emigrants since 1990. We discuss differences in migration statistics presented in Russian and foreign sources, methods of determining the basis (by place of birth, by ethnic origin), as well as new forms of emigration, including labor emigration and episodic emigration. The analysis of the territorial distribution of Russian-speaking communities shows their geographical diversity with significant presence in Russia's neighboring countries (Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan) and in other regions, including North America (USA, Canada), Europe (Germany, France, Baltic countries), and the Middle East (Israel, Türkiye, UAE). The findings of our research can be useful in the development of state migration policy and assessment of geopolitical implications of migration processes, including the repatriation potential of the Russian Federation.

Key words: Russian expatriate community, emigration, diaspora, compatriots, Russian-speaking communities, migration statistics, globalization, international migration.

Introduction

Russian diaspora is one of the largest in the world and, according to various sources, includes from 10 to 40 million expatriates. It has been forming since the 18th−19th century during periods of unrest, wars and political change.

The main stages of emigration from Russia are described in sufficient detail in Russian and foreign literature: emigration waves are highlighted (Iontsev et al., 2001; Ryazantsev, Grebenyuk, 2014; Ryazantsev, Khramova, 2018); its causes and consequences are investigated (Ryazantsev, 2017; Ryazantsev, Pismennaya, 2016; Ryazantsev, Bragin, 2023); its scale is estimated (Andryushchenko, 2020; Denisenko, 2003; Korobkov, 2020 Subbotin, Aref, 2021; Subbotin, 2024); individual regions are analyzed (Dezhina et al., 2020; Pismennaya, Nioradze, 2022; Sulpasso et al., 2023; Osadchaya et al., 2023), etc. However, there is still no unified approach to understanding the terms such as "emigrants", "diaspora", "compatriots", "Russian-

speaking communities", etc. The accuracy of assessing each category depends on their clear definition.

The relevance of the study is due to the need to conceptualize these terms and quantify the number of Russian expatriates in order to understand their scale and geography of settlement. In the context of globalization and increased international migration, attention to Russian-speaking diasporas on the world stage increases as well. Analyzing their number and territorial distribution not only makes it possible to identify current trends in migration processes and track their transformations, but also contributes to the development of a more effective state migration policy and helps to assess geopolitical implications of population migration. The aim of the research is to analyze existing data sources and approaches to estimating the number of Russian-speaking population and identify the countries in which it is concentrated, for subsequent assessment of Russia's repatriation potential, i.e. the maximum possible number of population that is ready, under certain conditions, to return to their country of origin.

The results of the study are of great practical importance for strategic planning and decision-making at the state level.

Basic concepts and literature review

The most widely used and generally accepted term "emigrant" is not so unambiguous from the point of view of statistical accounting. Simply put, an emigrant is a person who leaves the country of their permanent residence. But a number of circumstances clarifying the reasons for departure, period of absence from the place of permanent residence, purpose of departure and others do not allow all those leaving to be united into a common group of "emigrants". That is why statistical observation of this category of migrants differs significantly in each country. The data obtained also differ with respect to a seemingly homogeneous group of migrants. Many countries classify emigrants as citizens who have left for at least three months (Denisenko, 2003). Pointing out the period of absence from the country of one's citizenship, after which a citizen who has left can be classified as an emigrant, becomes practically a key criterion. According to the UN recommendations, this period is one year or more; nevertheless, it is often defined as three months. The goals and channels of departure are not considered as determining criteria (Ryazantsev, 2017).

A fairly broad interpretation is used in relation to the term "emigrants from Russia". The phenomenon of mass departure from the Russian Empire, the USSR and the Russian Federation has been noted repeatedly for more than a hundred years and had a wave-like character; thus, the term is applied in different historical periods to people who went abroad for permanent residence or for long periods to live and work there (Ryazantsev, 2017). Emigrants from Russia and their descendants of the second and third generation can be found in almost all countries of the world, and their number is difficult to determine.

The term "diaspora" in the classical version means "a part of the people (ethnos) living outside their country of origin, forming cohesive and stable ethnic groups in the country of residence and having social institutions to maintain and develop their identity and community" (Gritsanov et al., 2003). However, in reality, cohesive and stable groups can be formed by people from the same country or region, not necessarily on an ethnic basis, but rather on the principle of "fellow country people" in order to support each other in difficult conditions outside their country of origin. The main goal of such an association is to more successfully solve their problems related to integration into the host community and even for the purpose of greater security. In addition, in reality, immigrants from the same country who do not live as a community in the host country can identify as a diaspora, but precisely for the same reasons that their former

compatriots prefer to settle as a community. We agree with those authors who define diasporas as "stable communities of people of common origin, language, cultural traditions, and mentality that have developed outside the historical homeland" (Medvedeva, Bushueva, 2016).

Migration attitudes of those who have left their country of origin depend on the success of adaptation and further integration. They range from "staying forever" to "I will definitely come back if...". Both the conditions in which migrants find themselves and the circumstances that forced them to leave their country of permanent residence are important. Diasporas can be organized spontaneously and exist for a short period of time, uniting migrants who were forced to leave a country or region due to an emergency; or they can exist for several generations of migrants, ensuring the preservation of culture, language and supporting their members in difficult life circumstances. There is a pattern: the more successfully migrants integrate into the host community, the less necessary and stable are their social ties within the diaspora.

The term "compatriots" is more difficult to define, despite the existence of a legislative framework and relevant programs for this category of migrants[1]. For the situation that has developed in the former USSR, the category of "compatriots" includes not only those who left Russia and found themselves outside their country of origin, but also those who did not move anywhere at all, but found themselves outside their historical Homeland. Moreover, in this case, the term does not define ethnicity, but rather the past, civic essence of the Soviet period (Gerasimova, 2019).

In the early 1990s Russians made up about a third of the population in some union republics and were the second largest people in the state

(Kazakhstan — 37%, Latvia — 33%, Estonia — 30%), in Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan they also became the second largest ethnic group, accounting for more than a fifth of the population of these countries (Sushchiy, 2020). In general, according to the 1989 census, there were 25.3 million Russians outside the RSFSR (Uryadova, 2024). In our opinion, compatriots abroad can be understood as all those who came from the same country or region, regardless of the form of their settlement, relationships, goals and duration of stay and further migration sentiments. This understanding makes it possible to unite all migrants who left the same country at different times and for various reasons, or who lived outside Russia from birth, but were connected by former Soviet citizenship. This approach makes their quantitative assessment somewhat difficult. In addition, it would be a mistake to take into account only those who go abroad from the territory of Russia, and ignore departures from other former Soviet republics, and to use the concept of "Russian expatriate community" to assess the scale of repatriation potential.

The most significant migration flows from the territory of all the republics of the former USSR have been occurring for almost four decades. All immigrants from the republics are united by knowledge of the Russian language, which allows them to communicate with each other in any country of the world. The Russian language is successfully used by migrants from the Caucasus, Central Asia, and Russia to communicate with each other. Any community abroad may include representatives of various ethnic groups who lived in Russia, left under the influence of various factors and reasons, and have different migration intentions.

In this regard, for the purposes of our study, in which we attempt to assess the quantitative scale of residence of natives of Russia and other republics in various countries as well as their descendants of

[1] See for example: Federal Law 99, dated May 24, 1999 "On the state policy of the Russian Federation in relation to compatriots abroad".

at least the first generation, it will be most accurate to use the general concept of "Russian-speaking community" (Ryazantsev, 2016; Ryazantsev et al., 2021).

Data and methods

Administrative sources of data such as population censuses, registration data (current accounting) and statistical reports are usually used to determine the number of Russian-speaking communities abroad. There are two main ways to assess the extent of departure from the country and the relatively long-term residence of its former citizens abroad.

The first way is to rely on various sources of information in the country of departure. The second one is to use data from various sources in the host country. The most accurate result will be given by data obtained separately for each country that accepts Russian or former Soviet migrants in great numbers.

Rosstat (Federal Service for State Statistics of the Russian Federation) and the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia are official data sources for accounting for citizens who have left Russia. At the same time, the Russian statistics service receives information from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which receives it from passport offices (Vorobieva, Grebenyuk, 2017b). Taking into account those who have left for permanent residence is based on de-registration or renunciation of citizenship, which does not always happen. Many people choose "living in two countries", which is not reflected in current statistics (Vorobieva, Grebenyuk, 2017a).

There is a hypothesis about significant discrepancies between Russian migration data and the information from countries hosting emigrants (Subbotin, 2021; Subbotin, 2024). The entry of migrants is recorded by the country of destination with greater accuracy than the departure by the country of origin. This is due to the fact that it is important for the state to know the size of the actual population in order to effectively allocate

resources, plan social infrastructure, etc. For example, S.V. Ryazantsev and E.E. Pismennaya revealed a significant underestimation of emigration numbers by Russian statistics: for Spain — 22 times, for France — 14 times, for Germany — 8 times (Ryazantsev, Pismennaya, 2016, p. 20). O.D. Vorobieva and A.A. Grebenyuk argue that in order to obtain the real scale of emigration, Rosstat data should be increased at least 3–4-fold (Vorobieva, Grebenyuk, 2017a, p. 19).

In addition, researchers point out that at the current stage of migration processes in Russia, new forms of emigration have appeared, including labor and episodic (Iontsev et al., 2016). However, accounting for external labor migration in Russia is also provided by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and is based on information provided by specialized agencies licensed to carry out activities related to the provision of employment services for Russian citizens abroad[2].

In recent years, alternative sources of information are becoming increasingly important; they allow estimating the number and activity of Russian-speaking communities using data from the Internet and social media:

— search queries — analysis of the data from search engines such as Yandex, Google, allows assessing interest in the Russian language resources and topics in different countries;

— social media platforms such as VKontakte and others provide an opportunity to analyze accounts, groups and pages oriented toward Russian-speaking audience; the number of participants in such groups and their activity can serve as indicators of the number and level of integration of Russian speakers into local communities;

— statistics of online trade and delivery services — online trading and delivery platforms such

---

[2] Rosstat Order 220 dated March 31, 2017 "On approval of statistical tools for the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation to organize statistical monitoring of external labor migration". Appendix 2, Form 1-T (migration).

as Amazon, eBay and local delivery services can provide data on orders and deliveries in Russian; analysis of such data allows assessing the concentration of Russian-speaking consumers in different regions; orders for Russian-language literature, products and cultural goods can serve as indicators of the presence of Russian-speaking communities;

— mobile applications and messaging platforms — applications popular among Russian speakers, such as Telegram and WhatsApp, can provide data on the number of users and their geographical distribution, for example, large Russian-language channels and Telegram chats often include participants from different countries, which allows estimating the number and activity of the diaspora.

The combination of administrative and alternative sources helps to obtain a more complete and up-to-date understanding of the number and characteristics of Russian-speaking communities abroad, taking into account both official data and dynamic indicators from additional information sources.

The article uses UN data characterized by long-term dynamics covering the period from 1990 to 2020. When estimating the number of international migrants, the latter are classified as the population born abroad when such information is available, which is typical for most countries. In cases where there is no data on the place of birth, international migrants are classified as foreign citizens on the basis of information on the nationality of the registered persons. The use of such a unified methodology in data collection and processing makes it possible to conduct a comparative analysis in both temporal and spatial aspects, i.e. it is sufficiently reliable to assess changes in the number and geographical distribution of Russian expatriates, ensuring a high degree of accuracy and comparability of the results throughout the period under consideration. The work also uses data from official statistics of national statistics services of various countries (including population censuses).

Scale and geography of settlement of Russian-speaking communities abroad

According to the latest available data from the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in 2020 there were 280.6 million international migrants in the world, while in 1990 their number was 153.0 million people (*Tab. 1*). That is, over 30 years, the number of international migrants (world diaspora) increased by 83% (almost doubled). This is mainly due to the processes of globalization taking place all over the world.

Meanwhile, according to the same UN estimates, the number of migrants from Russia from 1990 to 2020 decreased from 12.7 to 10.8 million people. A detailed study of the dynamics shows that the analyzed period can be divided into two stages: from 1990 to 2010, when there was a decrease in migrants from Russia (the main decrease occurred in the 1990s — almost 2 million people), and from 2010 to 2020, when the number of international migrants from Russia increased by 640 thousand people, or 6.3% (from 10.12 to 10.76 million people). At the same time, according to the UN, the share of migrants from Russia in the total number of international migrants has been decreasing (from 8.3% in 1990 to 3.8% in 2020).

Table 1. Dynamics of the number of international migrants in the world and Russia in 1990–2020, thousand people

	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020
World	152 986.2	161 290.0	173 230.6	191 446.8	220 983.2	247 958.6	280 598.1
Russia	12 653.3	11 588.0	10 664.8	10 302.9	10 118.7	10 180.0	10 756.7
Share of migrants from Russia, %	8.3	7.2	6.2	5.4	4.6	4.1	3.8
Compiled according to: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. (2020). International Migrant Stock 2020.							

The availability of statistics by sex makes it possible to determine migration specifics among men and women. In 1885, E. Ravenstein published eleven patterns of migration he had identified, many of which have not lost their relevance and have become even more pronounced (for example: the main causes of migration are economic ones; large cities grow mainly due to migration). One of the migration patterns is that men are more mobile in international movements than women. This hypothesis is confirmed by the UN statistics. If we look at the sex structure of international migrants in the world, we see that men averaged about 51% throughout the period under consideration. However, if we look at the Russian situation, we see a different picture: the vast majority of emigrants from Russia are women, whose share in the total number of international migrants is 57%.

Territorial distribution of international migrants from Russia (*Tab. 2*) shows that more than half of them live in Ukraine (31%) and Kazakhstan (23%). In 2020, 75% of international migrants from Russia lived in ten neighboring countries; in 1990 this figure exceeded 89%.

The largest number of migrants from Russia to foreign countries is concentrated in Germany (1.2 million people), in the USA their number is three times less (397 thousand people), in Israel — 10 times less (111 thousand people), Spain (96), Canada (85), Italy (83), France (73), Greece (55), Poland (50), Czech Republic, UK, Austria and Bulgaria (33−37 thousand people each); in other countries − less than 30 thousand people (less than 0.3% of all international migrants born in Russia).

According to SIL Ethnologue[3] (USA), a well-known reference book on world languages, in 2010 the number of native speakers of Russian living

outside Russia was about 30 million (Lewis et al., 2014).

Ethnic Russians make up a significant part of the population living outside the Russian Federation. According to various estimates, their number varies from 20 to 40 million depending on how ethnicity is defined[4]. However, it is not easy to determine the exact number of ethnic Russians abroad because of differences in the way ethnicity is accounted for from country to country. Many national statistics services tend to count only one ethnicity. However, there are countries that provide more detailed information on citizens, including data on multiple ethnicities. A prime example is Canada, where the national statistical office gathers detailed population statistics, including data on migrants.

Thus, the official website of Statistics Canada, based on the results of the 2021 census, presents the following data on the number of Russian expatriates[5]:

1) by place of birth − 87,380 people;

2) by ethnic or cultural origin − 548,145 people.

That is, depending on the method of determination, the number of Russian expatriates can vary more than 6-fold. We should note that the concept of "ethnic or cultural origin" in Canada refers to the origin of the individual's ancestors. It can encompass both indigenous ancestry and ancestry related to different countries. A person in the census may identify with more than one ethnic or cultural group. That is, the total sum of data on people with ethnic or cultural backgrounds may exceed the total population because respondents may indicate more than one ethnicity.

---

[3] The most famous reference publication on languages of the world, developed and published by SIL International (formerly known as the Summer Institute of Linguistics) in print and online.

[4] See for example (Diamant, 2017).

[5] Statistics Canada. (2023). Census Profile. 2021 Census of Population. Statistics Canada Catalogue No. 98-316-X2021001. Ottawa. Available at: https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E (accessed: August 1, 2024).

Table 2. Distribution of migrants from Russia by country of residence (top 35 countries) in 1990–2020

Country of residence	1990		2000		2010		2020	
	thousand people	% of all migrants from Russia	thousand people	% of all migrants from Russia	thousand people	% of all migrants from Russia	thousand people	% of all migrants from Russia
Ukraine	5018.1	39.66	3745.8	35.12	3265.8	32.27	3330.6	30.96
Kazakhstan	2474.1	19.55	2032.9	19.06	2211.9	21.86	2476.0	23.02
Germany	77.3	0.61	903.8	8.47	857.2	8.47	1198.8	11.14
Uzbekistan	1267.2	10.01	1067.2	10.01	913.7	9.03	871.0	8.10
Belarus	791.5	6.26	708.0	6.64	688.4	6.80	672.5	6.25
USA	190.7	1.51	348.8	3.27	405.7	4.01	397.1	3.69
Tajikistan	363.6	2.87	252.1	2.36	238.1	2.35	235.0	2.18
Estonia	283.5	2.24	189.0	1.77	154.7	1.53	119.1	1.11
Latvia	473.2	3.74	234.8	2.20	163.6	1.62	116.8	1.09
Israel	175.9	1.39	162.2	1.52	111.1	1.10	111.3	1.03
Kyrgyzstan	349.2	2.76	212.4	1.99	126.9	1.25	108.9	1.01
Spain	3.1	0.02	8.3	0.08	58.5	0.58	96.1	0.89
Canada	95.3	0.75	50.3	0.47	73.0	0.72	84.7	0.79
Italy	7.4	0.06	14.8	0.14	79.6	0.79	82.9	0.77
Turkmenistan	118.3	0.93	79.2	0.74	75.5	0.75	74.6	0.69
France	21.4	0.17	22.8	0.21	60.1	0.59	73.2	0.68
Greece	28.3	0.22	72.0	0.68	57.4	0.57	55.3	0.51
Lithuania	158.4	1.25	95.3	0.89	70.3	0.69	51.7	0.48
Poland	77.0	0.61	56.3	0.53	39.6	0.39	50.3	0.47
Moldova	225.6	1.78	102.7	0.96	52.1	0.51	40.0	0.37
Czech Republic	3.3	0.03	6.6	0.06	28.5	0.28	37.5	0.35
Georgia	151.1	1.19	35.7	0.33	34.2	0.34	37.3	0.35
United Kingdom	4.2	0.03	15.1	0.14	26.8	0.26	36.2	0.34
Austria	17.1	0.14	21.4	0.20	26.4	0.26	34.7	0.32
Bulgaria	6.9	0.05	11.0	0.10	17.0	0.17	32.8	0.30
Australia	8.4	0.07	16.8	0.16	20.8	0.21	29.3	0.27
Azerbaijan	39.2	0.31	34.7	0.33	30.2	0.30	27.5	0.26
Türkiye	11.4	0.09	18.5	0.17	19.7	0.19	27.3	0.25
Switzerland	5.9	0.05	12.3	0.12	16.2	0.16	24.7	0.23
Sweden	5.1	0.04	6.5	0.06	14.4	0.14	22.2	0.21
Armenia	62.2	0.49	20.4	0.19	11.2	0.11	19.1	0.18
Norway	0.1	0.00	3.1	0.03	13.7	0.14	18.5	0.17
Finland	1.9	0.02	2.6	0.02	7.3	0.07	15.2	0.14
Cyprus	3.2	0.03	5.9	0.06	13.6	0.13	12.9	0.12
Romania	7.2	0.06	7.7	0.07	8.1	0.08	9.6	0.09
Compiled according to: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. International Migrant Stock 2020.								

Table 3 presents top 30 countries in terms of the number of ethnic Russians based on data from national statistical services of different countries and expert estimates from open sources (although, given the context of the article and the specifics of data collection, it would be more correct to speak not of ethnic Russians, but of people of Russian origin or with Russian roots).

Table 3. Distribution of ethnic Russians (persons of Russian origin) by country of residence (top 30 countries) for the year for which the data are available

Country of residence	Number of ethnic Russians, thousand people	Year for which the data are available
Ukraine	8334.0	2001
Kazakhstan	3512.9	2020
USA	2538.4	2020
Brazil	200.0–1 800.0*	2015
Israel	1216.7	2022
Germany	1213.0	2018
Uzbekistan	839.973	2019
Belarus	706.992	2019
Canada	548.145	2021
Türkiye	150.0–500.0	2022
France	100.0–500.0	2015–2022
Latvia	441.305	2021
Turkmenistan	314.000	2003
Estonia	306.801	2023
Argentina	300.0	2020
Kyrgyzstan	283.0	2022
Italy	170.0	2022
UAE	60.0–150.0	2021
Lithuania	141.100	2021
Moldova	112.0	2014
Australia	98.110	2021
Finland	93.535	2022
United Kingdom	50.0–90.0	2023
Spain	82.380	2022
Azerbaijan	71.0	2019
Belgium	70.0	2012
Austria	36.0	2018
Romania	36.0	2016
Tajikistan	35.0	2010
Sweden	32.0	2018

* According to the author of the book Imigrantes russos no Brasil e seus descendentes (Chnee, 2016), about 1.8 million descendants of Russian emigrants and refugees (including Russian Germans and Russian Jews) lived in Brazil in the 2010s.
Compiled according to: Population, employment and living conditions in the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States: Statistics Collection. (2023). Moscow: Interstate Statistical Committee of the CIS. P. 48; data from national statistical services of individual countries.

The data analysis shows a significant number of people of Russian origin living outside the Russian Federation. The largest number of ethnic Russians is concentrated in the countries of the former Soviet Union, such as Ukraine (8.334 million people), Kazakhstan (3.512 million) and Belarus (707 thousand). This is due to the historical resettlement and the presence of Russian communities in these regions. Outside the former USSR, significant Russian-speaking communities are also present in the USA (2.538 million), Germany (1.213 million) and Israel (1.217 million). These figures reflect waves of migration, including emigration for political and economic reasons.

Some countries, such as Brazil and Türkiye, demonstrate a wide range of estimates of the number of Russians (from 200 thousand to 1.8 million people in Brazil, and from 150 thousand to 500 thousand people in Türkiye), which indicates difficulties in accurate accounting and once again emphasizes a wide range of approaches to defining the concepts. European countries such as Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania also have significant Russian diasporas, which is associated with historical factors and migration processes.

In general, the data emphasize geographical diversity of Russian-speaking communities with their significant presence both in neighboring countries (Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan) and in other regions of the world, including North America (USA, Canada), Europe (Germany, France, Baltic countries) and the Middle East (Israel, Türkiye, UAE).

Conclusion

The analysis of the number and geographical distribution of Russian-speaking communities abroad is important for both science and practice. The results of the study demonstrate significant changes in migration processes related to the Russian-speaking diaspora over the past decades.

Special attention is paid to a reduction in the number of emigrants from Russia in the period from 1990 to 2020, which may be due to many factors, including economic and political transformations both in Russia and in the international arena.

However, despite this reduction, we should note that Russian-speaking communities still play an important role in the socio-economic and cultural life of their host countries. The largest communities are concentrated in neighboring countries, such as Ukraine and Kazakhstan, which indicates the preservation of close ties between these countries and Russia. Besides, the number of Russian-speaking emigrants in non-CIS countries, such as Germany and the United States, has increased significantly, indicating the global nature of migration processes.

At the same time, it is obvious that the methodological difficulties associated with assessing the number and characteristics of Russian-speaking communities require further close attention of researchers. This article illustrates a significant discrepancy in the figures presented in Russian and foreign sources, which makes it difficult to accurately estimate the number of Russian-speaking emigrants and their descendants. Moreover, modern forms of emigration, such as labor and episodic, significantly complicate migrants' registration and require revision of generally accepted approaches.

Traditional data have certain inertia, an inability to respond instantly to changes taking place in the world. It usually takes time to adjust such indicators, since they are collected and processed with a delay (statistics collection may even cease due to certain circumstances). This sometimes leads to a situation where data do not reflect current events in a timely manner and, accordingly, become useless for making timely decisions.

In this regard, when conducting such studies, it is necessary to take into account the role of alternative data sources: social media, various online platforms and mobile applications that can provide valuable information about the number and activity of Russian-speaking communities abroad. Such sources can complement traditional administrative data and expand the understanding of current trends and dynamics of the distribution of Russian-speaking migrants.

In conclusion, we emphasize the importance of research in this area. In the context of globalization and expanding migration processes, it is necessary to regularly clarify the number and geographical distribution of Russian-speaking communities abroad. This will make it possible to more accurately assess the scale of migration and develop effective measures to support compatriots abroad, as well as to manage migration flows. Only an integrated approach to the study of Russian-speaking communities, including both traditional and innovative methods, will provide objective and relevant data necessary for the formation of public policy and strategic planning in this area.

Understanding the repatriation potential of Russian-speaking communities in key countries of their settlement will help to develop effective strategies for their return to Russia, design a balanced and reasonable migration policy that contributes to the sustainable socio-economic development of the country.

References

Andryushchenko K.D. (2020). Analysis of the results of the transformation of Russian emigration at the present stage. *The Newman in Foreign Policy*, 1(52)(96), 15−18 (in Russian).

Chnee I. (2016). *Imigrantes russos no Brasil e seus descendentes.* San Paulo.

Denisenko M.B. (2003). Emigration from Russia according to foreign statistics. *Mir Rossii=Universe of Russia*, 12(3), 157−169 (in Russian).

Dezhina I.G., Soldatova S.E., Ushakova S.E. (2020). Migration of researchers in the Baltic region: A forecast and factors. *Baltic Region*, 12(1), 115−131. DOI: 10.5922/2079-8555-2020-1-7

Diamant J. (2017). Ethnic Russians in some former Soviet republics feel a close connection to Russia. *Pew Research Center*. Available at: http://pewrsr.ch/2eHLrSS (accessed: August 1, 2024).

Gerasimova V.A. (2019). Russian compatriots abroad. *Postsovetskie issledovaniya*, 2(1), 904−922. DOI: 10.24411/2618-7426-2019-00009 (in Russian).

Gritsanov A.A., Abushenko V.L., Evel'kin G.M., Sokolova G.N., Tereshchenko O.V. (2003). *Sotsiologiya: entsiklopediya* [Sociology: Encyclopedia]. Minsk: Knizhnyi Dom.

Iontsev V.A., Lebedeva N.M., Nazarov M.V. (2001). *Emigratsiya i repatriatsiya v Rossii* [Emigration and Repatriation in Russia]. Moscow: Popechitel'stvo o nuzhdakh ros. repatriantov.

Iontsev V.A., Ryazantsev S.V., Iontseva S.V. (2016). Emigration from Russia: New trends and forms. *Ekonomika regiona=Economy of Region*, 12(2), 499−509. DOI: 10.17059/2016-2-15 (in Russian).

Korobkov A.V. (2020). Russian academic diaspora: Its scale, dynamics, structural characteristics, and ties to the RF. In: *Migration from the Newly Independent States: 25 Years after the Collapse of the USSR.* DOI: 10.1007/978-3-030-36075-7

Lewis M.P., Simons G.F., Fennig C.D. (2014). *Ethnologue: Languages of Africa and Europe.* SIL International.

Medvedeva T.A., Bushueva S.V. (2016). The Russian diaspora of the twentieth century: The features of formation, adaptation and preservation of the national identity of Russian emigration. *Vestnik Nizhegorodskogo universiteta im. N.I. Lobachevskogo*, 2, 32−41 (in Russian).

Osadchaya G.I., Yudina T.N., Volkova O.A., Kireev E.Y. (2023). Return migration from Russia to Kyrgyzstan: Dynamics, causes, and structure. *Changing Societies & Personalities*, 7(3), 122–140. DOI: 0.15826/csp.2023.7.3.244

Pismennaya E.E., Nioradze G.V. (2022). Emigration of Russian pensioners to Vietnam (and other countries of Southeast Asia). *The Russian Journal of Vietnamese Studies*, 6(4), 33–41. DOI: 10.54631/VS.2022.64-101666

Ryazantsev S., Bragin A. (2023). The influence of political and economic factors on emigration from Russia to Europe. *Journal of Population & Social Studies*, 31, 152. DOI: 10.25133/JPSSv312023.009

Ryazantsev S.V. (2016). Russian diaspora abroad or Russian speaking communities? *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniya=Sociological Studies*, 12, 84–94 (in Russian).

Ryazantsev S.V. (2017). Conceptual approaches and key concepts of emigration from Russia and Russian-appropriate population abroad. *Nauchnoe obozrenie. Seriya 2. Gumanitarnye nau*ki, 6, 5–15. DOI: 10.26653/2076-4685-2017-6-01 (in Russian).

Ryazantsev S.V., Grebenyuk A.A. (2014). *"Nashi" za granitsei. Russkie, rossiyane, russkogovoryashchie, sootechestvenniki: rasselenie, integratsiya i vozvratnaya migratsiya v Rossiy*u [Our fellow-countrymen Abroad. Russians, Russian Speakers, Compatriots: Resettlement, Integration and Return Migration to Russia]. Moscow: ISPI RAN.

Ryazantsev S.V., Khramova M.N. (2018). Factors of emigration from Russia: Regional features. *Ekonomika regiona=Economy of Region*, 14(4), 1298–1311. DOI: 10.17059/2018–4–19 (in Russian).

Ryazantsev S.V., Pismennaya E.E. (2016). Emigration of scientists and highly qualified specialists from Russia: Trends, consequences and governmental policy. *Sotsiologiya=Sociolog*y, 4, 18–27 (in Russian).

Ryazantsev S.V., Pismennaya E.E., Ochirova G.N. (2021). Russian-Speaking population in Far-Abroad countries. *Vestnik MGIMO-Universiteta=MGIMO Review of International Relations*, 14(5), 81–100. DOI: 10.24833/2071-8160-2021-5-80-81-100 (in Russian).

Subbotin A., Aref S. (2021). Brain drain and brain gain in Russia: Analyzing international migration of researchers by discipline using Scopus bibliometric data 1996–2020. *Scientometrics*, 126(9), 7875–7900. DOI: 10.1007/s11192-021-04091-x

Subbotin A.A. (2021). The scale of migration from Russia (based on American and Russian statistical data). *Sotsial'no-gumanitarnye znaniya*, 6, 329–335. DOI: 10.34823/SGZ.2021.6.517735 (in Russian).

Subbotin A.A. (2024). *Mezhdunarodnaya intellektual'naya migratsiya v Rossii: vyzovy i perspektivy* [International Intellectual Migration in Russia: Challenges and Prospects]. Moscow: Znanie-M. DOI: 10.38006/00187-744-8.2024.1.272

Sulpasso B., Piccolo L., Accattoli A. (2023). Thirty years of studies on Russian emigration to Italy. *Studi Slavistici*, 181–198. DOI: 10.36253/Studi_Slavis-14993

Sushchiy S.Ya. (2020). The Russian population of the near abroad: Geodemographic dynamics of the post-Soviet period. *Demograficheskoe obozrenie=Demographic Review*, 7(2), 6–30 (in Russian).

Uryadova A. (2024). Russian diasporas of the Near Abroad in the Post-perestroika period: Phantom or reality? *Quaestio Rossica*, 12(1), 96–109. DOI: 10.15826/qr.2024.1.867 (in Russian).

Vorobieva O.D., Grebenyuk A.A. (2017a). Comparative analysis of domestic and foreign statistics on the emigration of Russian citizens. *Voprosy statistiki*, 9, 64–73 (in Russian).

Vorobieva O.D., Grebenyuk A.A. (2017b). Emigration from Russia according to national statistics. *Voprosy statistiki*, 11, 44–53 (in Russian).

Information about the Authors

Olga D. Vorobieva – Doctor of Sciences (Economics), Professor, professor of department, Higher School of Contemporary Social Sciences, Lomonosov Moscow State University (1, Leninskie Gory, Moscow, 119991, Russian Federation; e-mail: 89166130069@mail.ru)

Alexander A. Subbotin – Candidate of Sciences (Sociology), associate professor of department, Higher School of Contemporary Social Sciences, Lomonosov Moscow State University (1, Leninskie Gory, Moscow, 119991, Russian Federation; e-mail: aasubbotin@yahoo.com)

Svetlana N. Mishchuk – Candidate of Sciences (Economics), Associate Professor, associate professor of department, Higher School of Contemporary Social Sciences, Lomonosov Moscow State University (1, Leninskie Gory, Moscow, 119991, Russian Federation; e-mail: svetamic79@mail.ru)