

Russian Emigration at the Turn of the 21st Century

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The article deals with the evolution of the Russian emigration processes at the turn of the 21st century. Based on the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the Russian emigration flows over the past 25 years, the authors highlighted five emigration waves characterized by their main emigrant categories and emigration channels. Attention has been given not only to the size of the emigration flows but also to the emigration flow's own compositional characteristics, especially age structure. The authors' benchmark analysis of the Russian emigration data provided by the Federal State Statistics Service of the Russian Federation and the data on Russian immigrants provided by the national statistics services of foreign countries showed the overwhelming quantitative discrepancies in the migration flows set out in the Russian statistics, thus underestimating the intensity of emigration.

Keywords: international migration of population, emigration, emigration from Russia, migration flow, migration channels

INTRODUCTION

The term *emigration* (derived from Latin “emigro”, which means “evict”) is the act of leaving one's resident country to come into another country to live permanently or for a certain period of time due to various reasons.

Like any other migration type, the emigration can be voluntary or forced. The voluntary emigration means that the country, where emigration originates, offers living conditions or prospects worse than those of the host country. Given the fact that the voluntary emigration does not move from better to worse, any country facing emigration should admit that its living conditions or prospects for population are worse than those in the countries where the emigrants go to. Therefore, the analysis of Russian emigration processes can help identify social, economic, political, ecological and other circumstances that do not satisfy the Russians and encourage their emigration.

The social, economic and political transformations caused highly intensified cross-border migrations among the former USSR citizens in the second half of the 1980s and the beginning

of the 1990s. Over a few years time, Russia, previously a closed country, transformed into an active participant of the international migration processes, acting simultaneously as a country of origin, a host country, and a transit country (Iontsev 1999; Iontsev, Aleshkovski 2008).

The voluntary emigration from Russia began to gain momentum in the late 1980s, alongside with the loosening of the emigration regime and control over departure registration procedures. There was a considerable increase of emigration starting from 1 January 1993, when entry and exit rules were liberalized (i.e. when the Law on Entry and Exit, adopted earlier by the USSR people's deputies, came into force). The Russian Constitution of 1993 also stipulated the right of citizens to freely leave the Russian Federation and the right to return to the country ("Everyone may freely leave the Russian Federation. The Russian citizens shall have the right to freely return to the Russian Federation.")

The research on the emigration from Russia (Aleshkovski 2011; Aleshkovski, Botcharova 2014; Akhiezer 1999; Denissenko 2003; Iontsev 1999, 2001; Zaionchkovskaya 2001; Polyan 2005; Ushkalov, Malakha 1999; Rybakovsky, Lokossov 2014; Ryzantsev, Grebenyuk 2014, et al.) shows that the process of emigration from Russia between 1990 and 2000 was not static, its structure and intensity evolved with time. While some drivers stimulating emigration slackened, others came into existence. Those processes weakened the emigration sentiments of some social groups and strengthened the leaving aspirations of the others.

Such transformation of the migration moods and channels resulted in several emigration waves from Russia between 1990 and 2000.

Thus, the initial emigration from the USSR was triggered by the severe economic and political crisis in the country, caused by the transformation processes and reformation of social and economic relations. Given that the early emigration opportunities depended largely on the actions and migration policies of the host country, so the first emigration waves were mostly ethnic (ethnic German, Jewish and mixed families were the most frequent emigrants), because the legislation of the host country encouraged mostly ethnic grounds. As a result, the main immigration countries for the Russians were Israel, Germany and the USA. Of course, this does not mean that those countries were the only migration destinations for the Soviet and Russian emigrants, but during the first half of the 1990s the migration flows to those countries were the largest.

The emigration moods of the subsequent years prevailed mostly among those social groups in Russia who used the opportunities to freely leave the country to find qualified and more highly paid jobs, to carry their business more safely, and to live permanently in a more comfortable and secure environment. The opportunities to study abroad also widened. The legalization channels in the host countries changed as follows: refugees, ethnic migrants, scientists, employment, entrepreneurship, middle class emigration, students, reunification of families.

THE SCALE OF THE EMIGRATION FROM RUSSIA IN 1990S–2000S

According to Rosstat, approximately 4.3 mln people left the Russian Federation during 1993–2016 (see Table 1). Most of them left Russia in the early 1990s. For instance, about 500,000 people emigrated in 1993. In the following years, the number of emigrants gradually decreased and reached its minimum of 32,500 in 2009, according to Rosstat. Since 2010, the number of emigrants from Russia has been once again steadily increasing.

It should be noted that the benchmark analysis of the data from the foreign local and international statistics organizations with the data provided by Rosstat demonstrates significant discrepancies in the relevant quantitative indicators of Russian emigration flows – the Russian statistics tending to underestimate the intensity of Russian emigration into each compared country (Table 2).

Table 1. The number of emigrants from the Russian Federation in 1993–2016

Year	Number of emigrants from the Russian Federation, persons	Year	Number of emigrants from the Russian Federation, persons
1993	493,119	2005	69,798
1994	345,623	2006	54,061
1995	347,338	2007	47,013
1996	291,642	2008	39,508
1997	232,987	2009	32,458
1998	213,377	2010	33,578
1999	214,963	2011	36,774
2000	145,720	2012	122,751
2001	121,166	2013	186,382
2002	106,685	2014	310,496
2003	94,018	2015	353,233
2004	79,795	2016	313,210

Source: based on the data from the Federal State Statistics Service of the Russian Federation (<http://www.gks.ru/dbscripts/cbsd/dbinet.cgi>).

Table 2. The comparative analysis of the Russian and Foreign Statistics on the emigration from Russia

	2012		2013		2014	
	Rosstat	Foreign Statistics	Rosstat	Foreign Statistics	Rosstat	Foreign Statistics
Germany	3,781	20,714	3,979	33,233	4,780	23,352
USA	1,561	9,969	1,485	9,753	1,937	9,079
Israel	1,104	3,566	1,090	4,094	1,139	4,647
Australia	220	1,177	255	1,399	308	1,220
Spain	405	7,820	403	8,617	437	8,286
Czech Republic	292	3,201	281	3,050	303	5,862
Switzerland	125	2,057	96	2,145	166	1,914
Canada	494	1,960	536	2,350	691	1,780
UK	242	4,300	255	1,300	399	3,200
Japan	86	3,829	134	2,540	146	3,047
Austria	122	3,438	141	3,471	157	3,139
South Korea	136	2,723	474	2,846	417	3,207
Poland	114	1,871	133	1,894	192	1,113
Austria	122	3,438	141	3,471	157	3,139
Finland	572	3,050	715	2,875	1,016	3,179

Source: data from the Federal State Statistics Service of the Russian Federation, Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), foreign statistics offices.

For some countries, there are significant discrepancies in the figures being tens of times as great. It must be admitted, therefore, that the gaps in the migration registration system lead to the significant portion of people leaving Russia not being documented by Rosstat. For example, the number of emigrants from Russia to Israel in 2014 provided by Rosstat is 4 times lower than the number demonstrated by the Israel Ministry of Aliyah and Integration; the Rosstat's number of emigrants to the USA is 4.7 times lower than the number shown by the US Census Bureau; the Rosstat's number of emigrants to Germany is 5 times lower than that of the German Federal Statistical Office, etc.

Thus, we believe that, on average, the data provided by the Russian Federal State Statistics Service should be multiplied by 3–4 to give a true picture of emigration from Russia. However, such correction should not be mechanical and should reflect the changes in the emigration recording principles in Russia and the host countries. For instance, in 2011, Russia passed a sweeping overhaul of the procedures for statistical recording of incomers (to include all those who arrived and lived in Russia for 9 months vs 12 months as it was until 2012). As a result, in 2012, as compared to 2011, the number of people incoming as well as leaving for Russia significantly increased, and the migration balance also increased several-fold. In fact, however, this migration flow, which has increased since 2012, reflects the data on the majority of labour migrants (the CIS countries constitute three quarters in the structure of the migrants' exit countries and the directions of their departure from Russia, but there are no active migrations with regard to permanent residence change to/from those countries). Until now, this information has not reflected the true picture of emigration.

Our analysis of the Rosstat's data on the geography and structure of emigration flows enabled us to identify the following aspects of the emigration from Russia:

- The emigration flow from Russia to the developed countries is characterized by high quality human capital (high educational and professional levels, relatively young age structure), meaning that the most economically active individuals leave Russia;
- The geographic area of people leaving Russia increases; there is also an increase in the number of emigration flows from boundary regions and regions with a high economic growth rate. The minimum levels of emigration are observed in the Russian regions with depressive social and economic situation.
- According to Rosstat, the main reasons for emigration are personal and family motives; while according to surveys, among these reasons are poor prospects for the improvements of material welfare, social status, personal stability and economic security.

RUSSIAN EMIGRATION WAVES IN 1990–2016

The analysis of the quantitative and qualitative indicators of the national and foreign statistical data on emigration from the Russian Federation allows some generalizations and periodization of the processes in question.

We propose to use as a segmentation criterion the qualitative changes of the structure and geography of emigration flows and channels, through which immigrants from Russia legalize in their new host countries, instead of the scale and volume of emigration, which naturally evolved during the considered years.

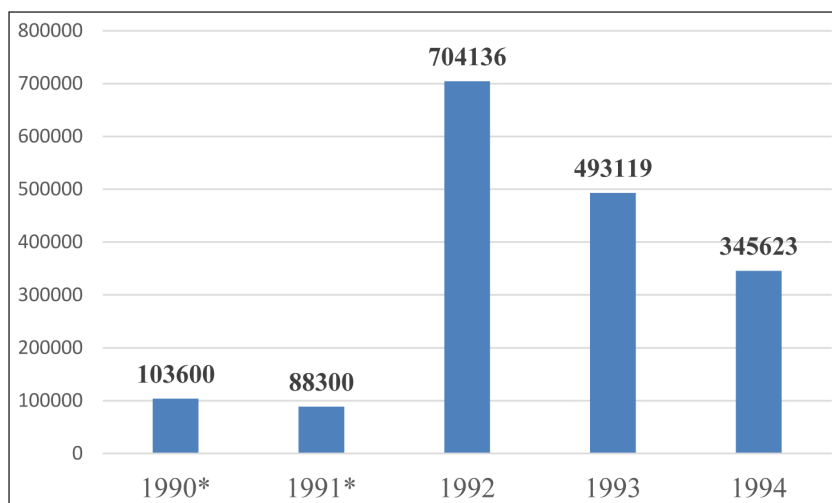
On the basis of our analysis, we identified five “waves” (stages) of the new Russian emigration. The shift from one stage to the next was caused by the social political and economic changes of the situation within Russia, as well as by the legislation changes in the host countries.

Wave I (1990–1994). The first half of the 1990s saw the intense acceleration of emigration processes (Fig. 1). The ethnic migrants and the intellectual elite (scientists and highly skilled professionals) had the biggest chances to enjoy support when moving to live abroad under the relevant hosting or refugees programs. The overhaul of political and economic reforms in Russia led to the mass unemployment and provoked labour emigration processes. The emigrants of the first post-Soviet wave faced unfamiliar and sometimes frightening conditions.

The first wave was the largest in the modern Russian history. There are no accurate Russian statistics for 1990–1991. There is only the number of exit permits with the purpose of permanent residence. The data for 1992–1994 shows the emigration of approximately 1.5 mln people. According to our expert estimates, approximately 2 mln people left Russia during that wave. The Western experts made “apocalyptic” forecasts stating that tens of millions of people could leave the country in case the negative social and economic trends in the former Soviet Union prevailed further. Nevertheless, the crisis soon reached its bottom, the situation, as bad as it was, became steadier, the most mobile Russians already left, and starting from 1993 the quantitative indicators of the Russian emigration began to decrease (Fig. 1).

Furthermore, it is necessary to go back here to the discrepancies between the Russian and foreign statistics on the emigration of Russian citizens. For example, while in 1992, according to the German Federal Statistics Office, the number of the Russians who arrived in Germany was 25% higher than the same number according to Rosstat, in 2002 Rosstat failed to record more than just 45% of this emigration flow (Table 3).

The migrants were mostly middle class representatives who highly appreciated migration support programs. The emigration age structure consisted primarily of persons of middle working age or beyond with a high professional level, or scientists and experts with unique knowledge in their domains. The shares of men and women in this emigration wave were approximately equal.



Source: Rosstat.

* The data for 1990 and 1991: the number of exit permits for permanent residence.

Fig. 1. Emigration from Russia in 1991–1994, persons

Table 3. The comparative analysis of the Russian and German statistical data on the Russian emigration to Germany from 1992 to 2014

	1992	1997	2002	2007	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
The data according to the German Federal Statistical Office, persons	84,509	67,178	77,403	20,487	18,671	19,696	20,714	33,233	23,352
The data according to Rosstat, persons	62,700	48,363	42,231	6,486	3,725	3,815	3,781	3,979	4,780
The difference value of the Russian and German data	21,809	18,815	35,172	14,001	14,946	15,881	16,933	29,254	18,572
The share of the migration flow not recorded by Rosstat	25.8%	28.0%	45.4%	68.3%	80.0%	80.6%	81.7%	88.0%	79.5%

Source: data from the Federal State Statistics Service of the Russian Federation, German Federal Statistical Office.

The main host countries for the Russian emigrants were Germany, Israel and the USA. For example, in 1993 those three countries received 94.2% of the Russian emigrants leaving for the far-abroad countries, in 1994 this share equalled 94.4% (Fig. 2).

Wave II. In the second half of 1990s, the Russians looking for paid employment joined the increasing number of temporary labour migrants filling various niches in the developed labour markets (from low qualified jobs to positions requiring better education and high qualifications) (Fig. 4). The original accumulation of capital was still in progress in Russia; that is why large-scale business emigration (exporting large capitals to live abroad as an independent) was

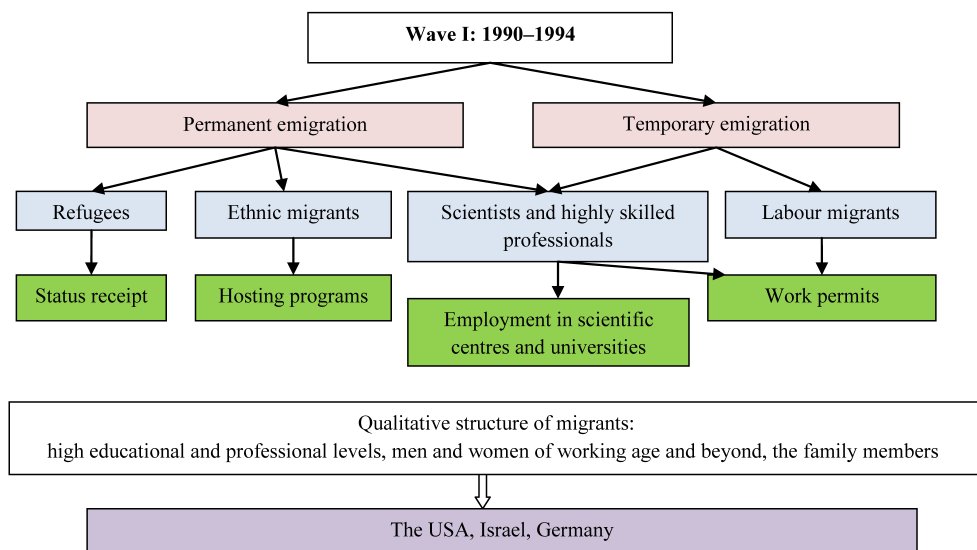
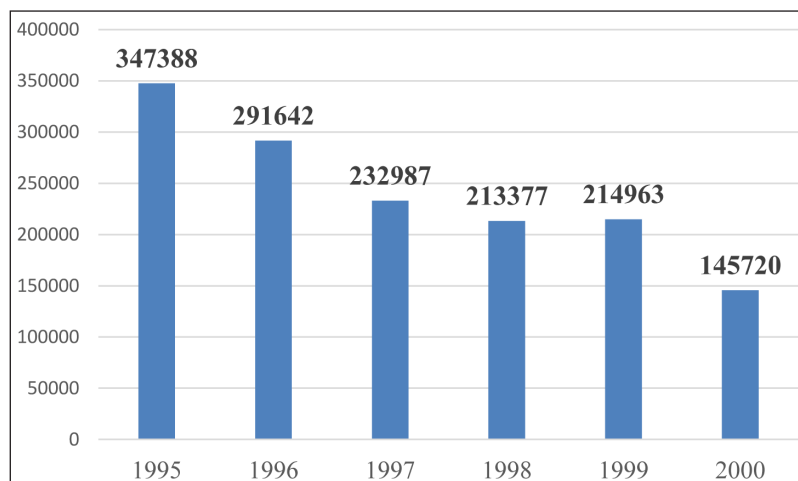


Fig. 2. The first wave of emigration from contemporary Russia

not present yet. The Russians started to rapidly explore commercial and entrepreneurial activities. However, the family members with children did not follow their family heads immediately.

According to Rosstat, 1.46 mln people left Russia during this period (1995–2000). It should be also noted that the emigration volume decreased. This was due to two factors: relative weakening of the social crisis and the departure of a large portion of the most mobile social groups (Fig. 3). At the same time, according to our expert estimate, the total number of second wave migrants was roughly 2 mln people.



Source: Rosstat. Fig. 3. Emigration from Russia in 1995–2000, persons

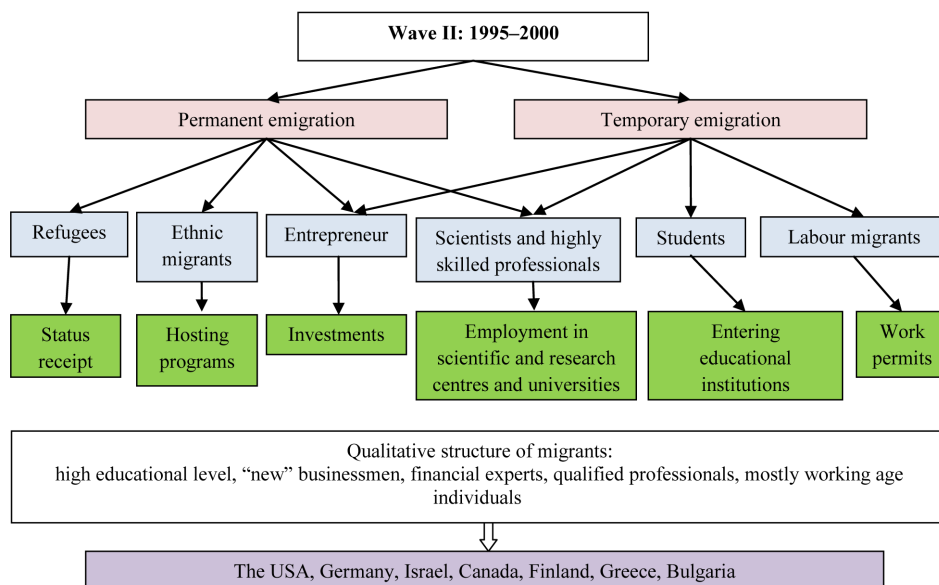


Fig. 4. The second wave of emigration from contemporary Russia

The educational migration increased during that period, but just as a step towards further emigration and integration into the new host society. The marital migration, mostly female, became more organized and actively grew. The opportunity to get a refugee status was still in place but not so widely.

Wave III (Fig. 5). In the early 2000s, the interest in economic partnership with other countries became one of the significant emigration drivers. At this stage, business emigration from Russia was gathering strength (Russian businessmen focused on more quiet and secure Western markets to continue their commercial and entrepreneurial activities).

Affluent social groups had the opportunity to buy real estate with the purpose of permanent or temporary residence. Sending children abroad to study became the most popular form of pushing them to live in the more developed (economically and democratically) countries. As a rule, those children never returned to Russia after graduating. This period was characterized by an increasing outflow of young people who received good technical education in Russia, but could not find highly paid jobs in public or private corporations. The marital migration developed further. The internal geography of Russian emigration extended, and citizens of all Russian regions started to participate in the emigration processes. For example, the share of Muscovites and Petersburg residents emigrating to the USA shrank from 30 to 9%.

As has been noted above, the quantitative indicators of the third emigration wave provided by Rosstat significantly differ from the foreign statistical data. While the Russian statistics show that a little under half million people left Russia at that period, according to our expert estimates based on the foreign statistics, about a million of Russians left the country.

Wave IV. The second half of the 2000s (2006–2010) was characterized by yet another economic crisis. The outburst of unemployment and shrinking internal market of goods and services pushed the Russian businessmen to go abroad to look for the opportunities to apply their capitals and develop business. According to experts, it was they who made the largest portion of emigrants at that time. The other channels for the Russian emigrants' exit and naturalization continued to function actively, including going abroad to study and finding jobs for those who already graduated (Fig. 6).

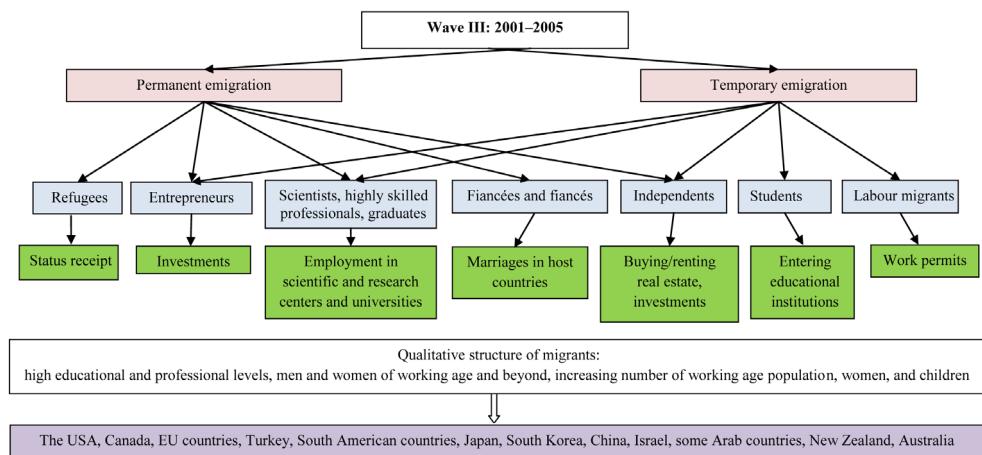


Fig. 5. The third wave of emigration from contemporary Russia

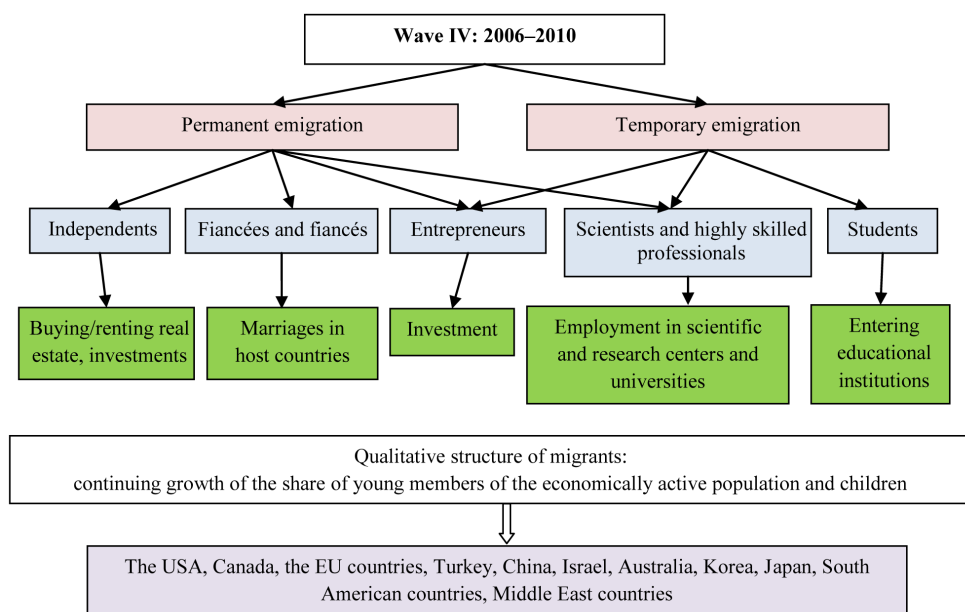


Fig. 6. The fourth wave of emigration from contemporary Russia

To estimate the quantitative scale of emigration during that period is even harder than before. The official statistics recorded only about 30% of the total flow. For example, according to Rosstat, as many as 205,000 people left the country during the fourth emigration wave. However, the official statistical data from the USA, Germany, Spain and Israel show approx. 209,000 immigrants from Russia (Table 4). Therefore, if we take into account all the countries attractive to Russian emigrants, the number of which had greatly increased by that time, the total number of those who left the country can be as many as 300,000 people.

At this stage, the Russian communities, which comfortably established themselves in the major host countries for Russian emigrants, served as a magnet for their close and distant relatives and acquaintances who began thinking about emigrating.

The successful experience of employment, the ability to solve their housing and other social problems, availability of social services equal to indigenous population attracted potential

Table 4. Data on immigration from Russia

Country	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	Total
USA	18,055	13,159	9,426	11,695	8,238	60,573
Germany	23,241	20,487	18,611	18,615	18,671	99,625
Israel	3,602	3,370	2,693	3,314	3,515	16,494
Spain	8,041	7,276	5,752	5,288	6,171	32,528
Total	52,939	44,292	36,482	38,912	36,595	209,220

Source: OECD.

emigrants from Russia. The material well-being of those leaving the country grew. No wonder that Russian regions with relatively good social and economic indicators were among those with a high outflow rate. The independents included more and more former civil servants and their families, as well as the families of political, bureaucratic and financial elites who preferred the peaceful, regular and secured living in Western countries to the Russian reality.

At this stage, the Russian emigrants started to settle in more distant countries and continents. The contingent of Russian emigrants became younger and more adapted for new conditions and rules of living in the host countries, and the language barrier diminished. At the same time, the emigration started to pose a threat to the demographic, social and economic development of Russia.

Wave V. The last emigration wave started in 2010 and still continues. The development of emigration processes at this stage does not essentially differ from the previous one (Fig. 7). The number of Russian emigrants in various countries has reached the level when the most common entry and naturalization channel is family reunification. The new emigrants – family members of yesterday’s emigrants – represent all the social groups and layers of the Russian society: businessmen, students, independents, scientists and professionals. The high number of emigrants from boundary regions grows even higher during these years.

At this stage, the emigration moods in Russia gather momentum transforming themselves into the next emigration wave significantly greater than the previous one. According to Rosstat, in 2010–2016 as many as 319,000 people left Russia (including the CIS countries where almost no Russians go). However, the analysis of foreign statistical data enables to estimate the number of people who emigrated during this period as being about 700,000 persons.

The selective approach used by the economically developed countries continues to pull the valuable human capital out of Russia – educated and energetic young people (aged under

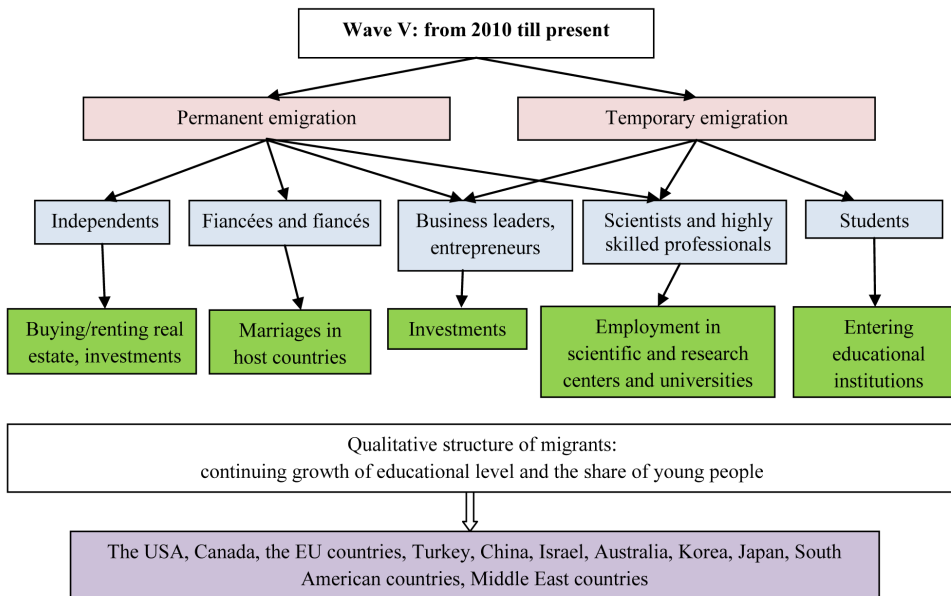


Fig. 7. The fifth wave of emigration from contemporary Russia

30–35), willing to improve the quality of their work and life. According to surveys, the representatives of this age and social group are not only dissatisfied with the current economic and social situation in the country, but they do not see any chances of improvement for themselves in the Russian reality surrounding them. The fact that the regions with the highest social and economic development rates are among those with the high outflow rate makes it evident that the internal opportunities to improve the living standards are exhausted.

CONCLUSIONS

The quantitative and qualitative analysis of emigration flows from Russia during the past 25 years enabled us to make the following conclusions on the emigration process in Russia.

First, the actual emigration numbers significantly exceed the official statistical data. According to our expert estimate, about 6 mln people left Russia in 1991–2016 (Table 5).

Second, emigration becomes increasingly threatening for Russia potentially leading to the loss of its demographic, socioeconomic and intellectual potential.

Third, the exit channels in the 1990–2000s evolved as follows: refugees, ethnic migrants, scientists, employment, entrepreneurship, middle-class emigration, students, reunification of families.

Fourthly, the common feature of all emigration waves is the high qualitative characteristics of emigrants (high educational level, qualification, professional skills, material wealth) and their relatively young age.

Fifthly, the nature of emigration from Russia has changed during the last decade. Today's emigration is largely characterized by economic motivation connected, inter alia, with the difference between the level and quality of life in Russia and in many host countries.

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Table 5. Emigration from Russia in 1991–2016, mln of people

Emigration waves	Rosstat	The authors' expert estimate
Wave I (1991–1995)	1.5	2.1
Wave II (1996–2000)	1.46	2.0
Wave III (2001–2005)	0.5	1.0
Wave IV (2006–2010)	0.2	0.3
Wave V (2011–2016)	0.3	0.6
Total	3.96	6.0

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