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Data sources on international migration:
Case of the Russian Federation *

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Data sources on international migration: Case of the Russian Federation

Russian Federation (RF) statistics on migration was traditionally presented by two main sources of data – Population Census and current statistics of migration flows based on administrative records data. These systems worked quite effectively under the condition of low level of international migration and therefore produced statistics of internal rather than international migration. Since the early 1990s after the frontiers were established between Russia and republics of the former USSR, flows of international migration had to be registered and observed by statistics within old and newly created systems that were not affiliated to Rosstat. This paper presents a review of main systems of data collection in the field of international migration in the RF, although quite a few of them are available to Rosstat and other users of statistical information – for instance for researchers.

I. ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEMS OF MIGRATION FLOWS CONTROL

Administrative systems of migration flows control include visa system (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Federal Migration Service); Border control (Border Service) and system of foreigners registration in the RF (Federal Migration Service).

Visas. There are several types of visa used currently in the RF:

1. Private
2. Business
3. Tourist
4. Student
5. Job
6. Humanitarian
7. For asylum

Except tourist visa all the rest are valid for 3 months and some categories could be extended till 12 months. Before the visa expiry date a foreigner can apply for another visa extension and stay in the RF for a long period of time. (See the attached Statement of the RF Government № 335 on purposes of trips and types of visa). According to bilateral agreements citizens of all CIS countries except Georgia and Turkmenistan can enter each other's country without visa. Different rules of stay in the RF exist for foreigners who need visa and those who do not need it.

Russian Law permits a foreigner (from the countries without visa regime) to stay temporarily in RF for 90 days. If a person has a job contract, he or she can prolong the presence in the RF but not for more than one year. After one year is over, the person must leave the RF (for at least one day). Students can stay in the RF for the period of education. Citizens of the countries with visa regime find themselves in a more favorable state. If they have a visa which can be extended, theoretically they can live in the RF for as long as they want. They do not need to apply for any residence permit although they are definitely long-term migrants. Two bodies are responsible for visa statistics - Federal Migration Service (visas issued in the RF) and Ministry of Foreign Affairs (consulates abroad). Data based on visa issuance are not published and not available.

Border control. Federal Border service conducts its own control over entries and exits of nationals and foreigners. Main aggregated data are received by Rosstat annually (entries and exits of foreigners by purpose of trip and country of origin/destination). Basic aggregated data on entries and exits of foreigners by country of origin and destination and by purpose of the trip is sent to Rosstat and published in Official statistical yearbooks ("Population and Migration of the RF"). Data is collected basically in electronic form in the check-points at the borders. (Input is done directly by an officer of the border service).

In addition, there is one more system of data collected at the borders: since 2002 migration cards are used in the RF as an additional tool of migration policy. Federal Migration Service is the responsible body for migration card collection and processing. Migration card is to be filled out **by a foreigner** when he or she enters the RF. Nationals do not need to fill out any card. It contains 2 identical parts: one to be left for processing at the time of entry, the second – when a foreigner is leaving the country. Cards are to be collected by a Border service officer and later they are transferred to the local border point of the Federal migration service for processing. The card contains the following information: full name, date of birth, sex, passport no., citizenship, purpose of visit, inviting entity, visa ID, period of stay. At the bottom there is a space for special stamps (arrival, departure, and registration in the RF). Data are processed partially due to technical limitations. Migration card is necessary for any foreigner, both with or without visa, to be registered and to prove legal entry to the RF.

Administrative registration system. Federal Migration Service is responsible for registration of all categories of foreigners and foreign population related procedures in the RF:

- work permits
- foreign workers employed within the calendar year
- RF citizens employed abroad through licensed recruitment agencies in the RF
- residence permits (temporary and permanent)
- migration (border) cards processing
- temporary stay registration in the place of stay
- permanent residence registration in local police agencies,
- refugees and asylum seekers registration
- citizenship acquisition and renunciation concerns

Data is used mostly for internal administrative purposes and in many cases not available to Rosstat, except statistics of refugees and foreign workers. Data on registration of residents partially is sent to Rosstat but since 2002 seems to be not correct (see the explanations below in the paragraph “Rosstat data”).

According to the Law all foreigners except Ukrainians must be registered within 3 days after arrival in a place of stay, initially permitted period of stay is defined by visa type or is equal to 3 months if a person does not need visa. Ukrainians do not need registration for 90 days, however, after this period is over they must demonstrate a job or training contract or another document in order to be registered, otherwise a foreigner that does not need visa must leave the RF. Local agencies of the Federal Migration Service are responsible for registration of foreigners.

As a rule de-registration is not obligatory. If a person has residence permit he must inform local police office about his departure. However this process is not strictly controlled. RF citizens that leave for abroad also often do not declare their departure as there is not any special motivation. If a RF citizen wants to go abroad he or she must get a passport to travel abroad. This is the only possibility for the RF authorities to check if a person has any “debt” from the viewpoint of legislation violation, or if he or she earlier had an access to secret information. In such case the applicant may be refused issuance of the passport. “Clearance” of a potential migrant is done by a migrant’s request if he or she must provide a certificate of a “good character” to the immigration authorities in the country of destination.

If a foreigner applies for a *temporary residence* permit¹ in the RF, he also needs to provide such a certificate, issued by police authorities in the country of origin. When RF citizen arrives from abroad, he or she is more likely to be registered as it gives an access to free health care, education etc.

The status of all categories of foreigners in the RF (independently of purpose of arrival and duration of stay) is determined by several Federal Laws of the RF, among them – the Law on foreign citizens' status (2002) and derivative acts. Rules of entry and exit are defined by the Law of 1993. The Federal Migration Service of Russia registers refugees, asylum seekers, work permits issued for foreign citizens entering Russia and employment permits for Russian citizens abroad. Besides, there are data on foreign workers who were employed within a calendar year. Foreigners with *residence permit* (both temporary or permanent) and Belarus nationals are not included into statistics as they do not need any work permit. Rosstat receives data on employed foreign workers with work permits, relating to issued work permits. There is a set of tables based on this data (composition of foreign workers by country of origin, sphere of occupation, age and sex, etc.) These data are sent from FMS to Rosstat in aggregated form for further publication.

Registration of the RF nationals abroad and functions of the RF consulates. According to information received from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the RF consulates prepare a standard statistical report which includes the following information:

- RF citizens who stay abroad with a mission on behalf of the RF federal agencies and international organizations
- RF citizens who are temporarily registered in a RF consulate abroad (as registration is voluntary, not many of them declare their arrival)
- RF citizens who permanently reside in the country and registered in the RF consulate (with a special seal in the passport- “Registered in the consulate”)
- data on acquisition and termination of the RF citizenship (if application was done abroad)
- visa issuance statistics.

As mentioned above, all these data are for official use only and are never published.

Data on *refugees and asylum* seekers are collected by FMS according to standard norms and procedures and seem to be rare sources of statistics that are reliable. Rosstat receives and publishes information on application for refugee status, on how many individuals and families applied for this status, were granted it and on refugee stock as well. However, this category of migrant is not numerous and can not influence the whole situation of statistics of international migration. (For instance, in 2005 there were 1661 applications for the status² and 8914 applicants, including those who had applied before 2005, were granted the refugee/of forced migrant status. Majority of applicants are forced migrants, only 25 of them are refugees.)

II. ROSSTAT DATA ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

Rosstat is the main producer of official statistics on migration in the Russian Federation. In every Demographic Yearbook one can find data on migration flows based on information obtained from the police and based on registration in a place of residence procedure. Census is the main source for migrant

¹ Application for a permanent residence permit is possible after one year of stay on the basis of temporary residence permit, therefore “good character” of these applicants is proved by local police authorities.

² It means both status of a forced migrant and/or a refugee.

stock estimation, although “foreign born” criteria is not very popular. Regular household-based labour force surveys conducted by Rosstat as a rule are not used for migration research purposes.

Census. The last Soviet Census was conducted in 1989 and the next census for the RFP was planned for 1999. Due to financial and organizational considerations the census was delayed till 2002. Therefore it was a thirteen-year interval between two censuses. Microcensus that was carried out in 1994, covered 5 % of population and to a certain extent helped fill the gap in information: we could observe basic trends in international migration and collect data on migrants composition and reasons for their move. It was the first time that a question about reason for move was included into a census questionnaire³ (although it was a Microcensus). Besides traditional reasons for moving like job and education, it included such reasons as increase in crime, aggravation of ethnic conflicts, necessity to speak the titular ethnic group language. These helped to describe better the motivation for international migration in the first half of 1990s. (Later some of these reasons were included into the primary forms which are used as a basis of Rosstat data on migration flows).

The last All-Russia Census was held in October 2002. A set of migration related questions was included in the questionnaire: place of birth, citizenship; Russian language abilities⁴; other languages abilities; ethnicity; period of uninterrupted residence in the settlement (reside since birth or not, if not – since what year, if since 1989-2002, where resided in January 1989- region and type of settlement – rural or urban). No questions were devoted to reason for move of parents’ background.

The Census gave an opportunity to apply two main approaches to *definition of migrants stock* - either by citizenship (1455304 persons or 1 % of RF residents were foreigners), or by place of birth (11976822 persons were born outside of the RF, or 8.3%). (Although it is difficult to agree that USSR citizens who moved to RF before the dissolution of the USSR are international migrants).

Table 1. Basic categories for migrant stock and ethnic composition estimation in RF (RF Census 2002 data)

	RF	Not RF	Russian	Other
Place of birth	131608720	11976822		
Citizenship	142442404	1455304		
Ethnicity			115889107	27816873
Language abilities			142573285	1337545

However we must emphasize that ethnicity criterion could hardly be used for migrant stock estimation as RF has always been a multi-ethnic country.

³ The formulations were as follows: education continuation, place of work change, impossibility to get a job, impossibility to go in for agriculture (farming) as a self employed worker, impossibility to go in for own business, ethnic relations aggravation, obligatory knowledge of titular ethnic group language, increase in crime, poor living conditions, unsatisfactory climate, unsatisfactory ecology, Chernobyl nuclear power station catastrophe consequences, unwillingness to live in urban (rural) area, family circumstances, other reason.

⁴ The question did not imply assessment of the level of proficiency in Russian, respondent just had to answer whether he or she knew Russian language.

The 2002 Census tried to observe new trends in international migration. A special short questionnaire was used to collect data on foreigners temporarily staying in the Russian Federation.

Table 2. Temporary foreign migrants in RF by reason of stay and area of origin

	Total	Job	Business	Tourism and treatment	Transit	Other reasons	Did not identify reason of stay
Total	239018	156317	13542	26537	2677	37668	2277
CIS	152806	106713	5343	15510	2067	22309	864
Other countries	63488	36762	6928	8725	264	10432	377
Did not identify country of origin	22724	12842	1271	2302	346	4927	1036

Table 3. Composition of temporary foreign migrants by reason of stay in the RF and area of origin

	Total	Job	Business	Tourism and treatment	Transit	Other reasons	Did not identify reason of stay
Total	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%
CIS	63,9%	68,3%	39,5%	58,4%	77,2%	59,2%	37,9%
Other countries	26,6%	23,5%	51,2%	32,9%	9,9%	27,7%	16,6%
Did not identify country of origin	9,5%	8,2%	9,4%	8,7%	12,9%	13,1%	45,5%

It is clear that the Census included only part of the foreigners who stayed in RF. Many of them could avoid meeting with the census enumerators. However, the composition by reason for stay and area of origin seems to be believable – about 70% of migrants either from the CIS or from the other countries were temporary foreign workers.

Current statistics of migration flows. According to official statistics definitions, international migrants are those people who cross the border of the RF to change place of residence (both foreigners and nationals).

In-migration. Before 2002 definitions of migration flow for foreigners and nationals were almost the same. Duration of stay is not defined for statistical purposes, data on duration of stay are not available. When a person was registered in another place of residence a special questionnaire (so-called coupon of statistical observation) was filled out and sent to Rosstat regional divisions. According to the law, place of residence has a rather complicated definition: it is “a dwelling space, where a person lives permanently or predominantly as an owner, or according to a tenancy contract, ... a house, a flat, a sheltered housing etc.”. Therefore nothing is said about period of stay or residence in this place. All persons that had

changed place of residence within a year should have been counted as migrants. It is quite clear that within one year a person can change his or her place of residence not once, but statistics will observe two facts of migration. People that are registered in a place of stay (not residence) are not included into statistics, although period of stay may last longer than one year. It is one of the main problems of Russian statistics of migration. (Place of stay is defined as any dwelling space “that is not place of residence of a person”.) Place of residence of a foreigner is defined as a place of his or her official registration.

Until 2002 foreigners who were granted residence permits were supposed to be registered in police departments and included (via primary statistical form) into annual reports of Rosstat. The same procedure was obligatory for nationals. However in 2002 legal base of foreigners’ status in RF was changed. Since that time Rosstat no longer has juridical right to receive either individual or aggregated and tabulated information from the Ministry of Interior. We can not say anything about how many foreigners arrived in RF for permanent residence or for a long stay. Data that Rosstat receives from the Ministry of interior are more likely to be not reliable.

Out-migration. Estimation of emigration is one of the most important problems that could hardly be solved. As it is not necessary to declare emigration, many people do not do that. Only those people who declared their departure for abroad (both nationals and foreigners) were included into statistics. Duration of absence is not taken into account. Underestimation of emigration seems to be considerable. As was mentioned above, a RF national who resides abroad can apply to the RF consulate for deregistration. In this case information should be sent to his or her place of residence in the RF and the applicant should be deregistered and counted as an emigrant. However, it does not look that many of RF emigrants apply to the consulates for deregistration.

Processing data on migration flows. Rosstat used to apply the same methodology of data processing for foreigners and nationals. In annual Population and migration yearbooks one could find about 50 tables, some of them containing information directly on foreign and international migration in the RF. In 2005, for instance, immigration inflow included 162646 RF nationals and 14584 foreigners and stateless persons. High ratio of RF nationals seems to be a result of citizenship acquisition, not migration, but available sources of information can neither prove nor refute this suggestion.

**Table 4. Composition of immigration flow in RF by country of origin and citizenship⁵
2005, Rosstat data**

	Total	RF nationals		Foreigners and stateless persons
		RF	Double citizenship	
Total	177230	152980	9666	14584
CIS	168598	146430	9188	12980
Other countries	8632	6550	478	1604
Total	100	86,3	5,5	8,2
CIS	100	86,9	5,4	7,7
Other countries	100	75,9	5,5	18,6

⁵ Double citizenship is allowed by the Main Law (Constitution) of the RF. Primary statistical forms filled in for migrants contain information about double citizenship.

Data processing capabilities of Rosstat are quite good: we produce information not only on age and sex composition of migration flows, but also a detailed distribution by region and country of origin and destination, by marital status, education level, reason for move and some other parameters that are useful for migration flow analysis. The main problem is to get good and complete primary data from population registration authorities.

Data received by Rosstat from administrative sources. As has been mentioned above Rosstat regularly receives aggregated data only on three categories of long-term international migrants (foreigners):

- *Foreign workers*, employed in the RF within the calendar year,
- *Refugee and asylum seekers* (data are sent from FMS to the Rosstat Demographic statistics division). I do not comment on these data, as they seem to be quite normal and standard.
- *Foreign students* who study in federal or municipal colleges and universities. Information about private schools is not collected. (By special decision of Rosstat, these data are transferred directly from the colleges and universities to the regional departments of Rosstat and then are sent to the centre.)

III. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Russian official statistics has an opportunity to measure migrant stock on the basis of population census, which provided data on citizenship and place of birth. Citizenship criterion is preferable since the major part of “foreign born” migrants moved within the USSR before its dissolution. Annual statistics based on administrative registration data decreased its coverage and quality owing to gaps in registration legislation which occurred during the recent years. New laws devoted to regulation of registration and migration data collection are to start working in a few months and we expect the situation to improve considerably.

Annex. Information on data sources for international migration statistics

Data source	Responsible institution/agency (a)	Whether used for measuring:			Whether data are on:	
		(b)			(c)	
		Stock	Inflows	Outflows	Foreigners	Citizens
Administrative register						
Population register						
Register of foreigners	Federal migration service (FMS)	+	+	+		
Registration at national consulates	Ministry of foreign affairs (FMS)			+		+
Register of refugees/asylum seekers			+		+	
Others specify:						
Other administrative sources						
Residence permits	(FMS)		+	+	+	
Work permits	(FMS)					
Application for asylum	(FMS)		+	+	+	
Exit permits	-					
Clearance of migrant workers	-					
Other, specify						
Border statistics	Border service		+	+	+	+
Border collection (entry/exit forms)	(FMS)		+	+	+	+
Border sample surveys						
Others, specify:						
Household-based field inquiries						
Census		+			+	+
Household surveys						
Other, specify:						
Other sources:						