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Improvements in use of administrative data for migration statistics

**Classification of international migration in Russia
based on administrative data**

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Abstract

The paper proposes an approach to the identification of the main classes of admission of foreigners to obtain residence permits and citizenship of the Russian Federation and, on this basis, an assessment of the composition of the flow of persons obtaining these statuses by the corresponding classes. This allows us to see what formal channels of admission to the right of residence and naturalization are most often used by foreigners in Russia. Unlike many countries, where, for example, residence permits already belong to a certain admission class at the time of issuance, and statistics are available in aggregate form, in Russia, there is almost no such practice. Statistical information of this kind is not produced on a regular basis and is not available in open sources. Based on the analysis of the administrative data of the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs, which shows the number of foreigners who have received different statuses in accordance with numerous provisions of the law, an attempt was made to group these provisions and identify classes of grounds (or classes of admission). Six classes were identified: family reunification, human capital, preferences based on country of citizenship, birth or residence, ethno-cultural ties with Russia, status regularization, and the class of international students. This made it possible to show that "Family reunification" was the largest class of admission among migrants who obtained residence permits and citizenship. Based on the statistics of citizenship acquisition our approach allowed us to demonstrate considerable differences in the ratio of classes and naturalization channels chosen by citizens of individual countries. The availability of statistics for previous years makes it possible to track the dynamics of this structure in retrospect. The main vulnerabilities of the administrative data used are noted - the inability to adequately reflect educational and skilled labour migration, but an assumption is made that this can be compensated by integrating data from other sources. In addition, the proposed approach showed that Russia's policy towards skilled labour migration is aimed at maintaining the temporary status of foreign workers.

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NOTE: The designations employed in this document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

I. Introduction

1. Researchers in many countries are able to study the composition of immigration flows by main classes of admission on the basis of ready-made, aggregated data published by national migration or statistical agencies¹. When it comes to migration of foreigners with the right of permanent residence, statistics on residence permits are often used. The grounds for obtaining a residence permit are immediately grouped into aggregated classes, which determine the type of residence permit. Published statistics are structured according to this variable, which allows us to see the ratio of migration flows through family reunification, skilled labour migration, migration for the purpose of education, asylum, etc. When discussing the international comparability of migration statistics, the most active debate revolves around the definition of long-term migrants, who change the size and composition of a country's resident population. Differences in criteria of migrant identification and count applied in individual countries contribute to the persistent problem of the international comparability of migration statistics. It is not always possible to effectively apply the time criterion (duration of residence in the new place of usual residence) in statistics production. Moreover, the use of only this criterion does not always allow for adequately measuring the scale and structure of migration flows, since the most important characteristic - the status of the migrant in the host country is left out of attention. Meanwhile, this is the most important variable from the point of view of the implementation of the country's migration policy.
2. In this context, it can be assumed that residence permits statistics (and probably naturalization statistics) are relatively comparable across countries. Even if the countries apply different approaches to the issuance of residence permits and admission to citizenship, these statuses imply many similarities. They remove restrictions on admission to the labour market, provide a migrant with some (or all) political rights, and, perhaps most importantly, mark the transition of most recipients of such statuses into the permanent population of the receiving country. In addition, statistics on residence permits and citizenship admission can show the ratio of channels of long-term migration of foreigners or their naturalization. Of course, these are the official or formal channels established by the country of destination, through which foreigners are allowed to obtain a residence permit and then citizenship. The real motives or purposes of migration may be different. Nevertheless, it is important to know what legal "gates" migrants choose to move to the country for residence and how the flow is redistributed when new formal channels appear or old ones are closed. This makes it possible to assess the nature of a country's migration policy and the results of its implementation.
3. Russia is one of the countries with very significant numbers of international migrant stock and immigration flows. According to the UN Population Division estimates for 2020, the stock of lifetime international migrants amounted to 11.6 million people². From 2010 to 2023, according to the Ministry of Internal Affairs³, 5.6 million residence permits were issued in Russia (of them - 2.4

¹ US Yearbook of Immigration Statistics 2022. (Table 6. Persons Obtaining Lawful Permanent Resident Status by Type and Major Class of Admission: Fiscal Years 2013 to 2022). <https://www.dhs.gov/ohss/topics/immigration/yearbook/2022> ; Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community, Federal Office of Migration and or Refugees (Germany). Migration Report 2021 (p.6)

Key findings. https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/EN/Forschung/Migrationsberichte/migrationsbericht-2021-zentrale-ergebnisse.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=6

² United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2020). International Migrant Stock 2020. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/content/international-migrant-stock>

³ The data was provided upon request to the Department of Economics at Lomonosov Moscow State University. (consulates), records are kept separately.

million temporary and 3.2 million permanent permits⁴), 4.4 million people were admitted to citizenship through the Ministry of Internal Affairs⁵. However we have a very vague idea of what grounds are most often used when the authorities make decisions on granting foreigners this or that status. There are no aggregated statistics of this kind in Russia, although there is information that sheds light on this important issue. For many years, the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs (and until 2016, the Federal Migration Service) has been developing statistical reporting forms on temporary residence permits, (permanent) residence permits and admission to citizenship. Although the latter is not migration proper, it can be considered as its final phase in the sense of changing the migrant's status. These statistics are not available in open sources. Since 2010 the Faculty of Economics of the Lomonosov Moscow State University has been receiving it upon request.

II. Data description and its limitations

4. Statistical reporting form - the so called form 2-RD⁶ of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia is a Microsoft Excel file with two sheets. In the first one, the row names are the countries of citizenship of migrants; in the second one, the row names are the regions of Russia. The names of the columns reflect various procedures or types of documents executed or issued in relation to foreign citizens: for example, decisions on issuing residence permits, on admission to citizenship, or on work permits issued. The Form 2-RD report is generated in three versions: "Permit and visa work" (including information on permanent residence permits and temporary residence permits), "Citizenship"⁷ and "International labour migration". The last type of statistics is not considered in this paper.
5. The peculiarity of the first two reports is that information on temporary residence permits, permanent residence permits or citizenship acquisition is detailed according to the individual provisions of the relevant laws: the law "On the Legal Status of Foreign Citizens..."⁸ (the so-called "Law No. 115") and the law "On Citizenship..."⁹ (the so-called "Law No. 62"). The wording of the law describing individual categories of foreigners eligible to obtain status - is quite verbose. It is difficult to use them as column headings in a table. Therefore, these formulations are "coded". Visually, in the column titles we can see a set of abbreviations denoting the corresponding subparagraphs or paragraphs of individual articles of the law. For example, in the statistics of permanent residence permits it is indicated how many permits were issued on the basis of subparagraph 1 of paragraph 2 of Article 8 of the Federal Law № 115; subparagraphs 2 and 6 of paragraph 2 of Article 8; subparagraphs 3, 5 of paragraph 2 of Article 8, etc. If we refer to the text of the law, we will get a deciphering of these abbreviations.

⁴ The data partially overlap, as the majority of persons with a residence permit must subsequently obtain a residence permit.

⁵ Admission to Russian citizenship is also formalized through foreign institutions of the Russian Federation (consulates).

⁶ <https://base.garant.ru/70145636/?ysclid=lvbfg231r9190591739>

⁷ In the tables with data on admission to citizenship, children and adults are distinguished. Over the last five years, the proportion of adults was 76%, children -24%.

⁸ Federal Law No. 115-FZ of July 25, 2002 "On the Legal Status of Foreign Citizens in the Russian Federation" (with amendments and additions)

<https://base.garant.ru/184755/?ysclid=lus031am7j84734668>

⁹ Federal Law "On Citizenship of the Russian Federation" dated 05/31/2002 No. 62-FZ (expired on October 26, 2023 due to the entry into force of a new law (see Federal Law No. 138-FZ of April 28, 2023 "On Citizenship of the Russian Federation") <https://base.garant.ru/406811055/?ysclid=lus0a06zn9102234638>

6. Subparagraph 1 of paragraph 2 of Article 8, refers to foreigners who were born on the territory of the RSFSR and were former citizens of the USSR. Subparagraphs 2 and 6 of paragraph 2 of Article 8, refer to children under 18 years of age (2) or incapable adults (6), whose parents or guardians have a residence permit and permanently reside in Russia. Subparagraph 4 of the paragraph 2 of the Article 8 refers to foreigners who have a parent/adoptive parent, guardian or son or daughter who is a Russian citizen and permanently resides in the Russian Federation; subparagraph 9 of the paragraph 2 of the Article 8 refers to highly skilled specialists, etc.
7. Statistics on the acquisition of Russian citizenship are presented in the same way. The abbreviations in the names of the columns of the table refer us to the text of the Citizenship law, from which we can understand, for example, that persons who acquired citizenship under subparagraph "б" of paragraph 2 of Article 14 of the Federal Law-62 - are foreigners who have been married for at least three years to a citizen of the Russian Federation residing on the territory of the Russian Federation. Subparagraph "в" of part 2 of article 14 concerns foreigners who have a capable, adult child who is a citizen of the Russian Federation. Persons who obtained Russian citizenship on the basis of part 2.1. of Article 14 of FZ-62 are so-called "native speakers of the Russian language", etc.
8. The specialists who designed the reporting form 2-RD already combined some categories of migrants that are homogeneous in meaning. For example, as mentioned above, the sum can include statistics on minor children and incapacitated adults who receive the status at the same time with their parents or because their parents already have this status. However, the law mentions these categories in different subparagraphs. Highlighting the common in the main content of these provisions, we were able to combine them, with a certain degree of conventionality, into enlarged classes and see what grounds are the main ones for issuing temporary and permanent residence permits and for admission to Russian citizenship.
9. Changes in legislation imply corresponding changes in the number and content of columns in the statistical report 2-RD. When amendments to the law introduce new categories of persons with special conditions for obtaining a residence permit or admission to citizenship (or cancel some of the previous ones), the corresponding columns are created in (or deleted from) the table. It is not always possible to make these changes promptly. Therefore, the table for the period during which these changes took place may, for example, have an unallocated balance - a number of migrants with an unspecified basis of status. However, these problems are resolved over time. We encountered this issue with the 2021 data on admission to citizenship - the unallocated balance was very significant and amounted to almost 131 thousand or 18% of the total number of naturalized persons.
10. In this paper we used the data available to us on the grounds on which foreigners obtain three types of status - 1) "temporary resident" - on the basis of a temporary residence permit (issued under a quota and out of quota, in a simplified procedure), 2) "permanent resident" - on the basis of a (permanent) residence permit and¹⁰ 3) citizenship of the Russian Federation. Statistics on temporary residence permits (TRP), permanent residence permits and admission to citizenship largely reflect different populations of foreigners. Formally, the first status on the way to citizenship is a temporary residence permit, which after a year gives a foreigner the right to apply for a permanent residence permit and then for citizenship. However, there are numerous exceptions, which concern very large populations of applicants. For example, participants of the State Program for Assistance

¹⁰ Law 115 defines: "a foreign citizen temporarily residing in the Russian Federation is a person who has received a temporary residence permit or a temporary residence permit for the purpose of education; a foreign citizen permanently residing in the Russian Federation is a person who has received a (permanent) residence permit". <https://base.garant.ru/184755/741609f9002bd54a24e5c49cb5af953b/>

to the Resettlement of Compatriots¹¹ have always been able to apply for citizenship immediately on the basis of a temporary residence permit, they did not need a residence permit. Since 2021, almost two dozen categories of applicants can bypass the temporary residence permit and apply for a residence permit (and then for citizenship). Previously, this was available only to citizens of Belarus. Since 2019, admission to citizenship on special grounds (for humanitarian purposes), without first obtaining a temporary or a permanent residence permit, has become a mass practice. By 2024, this practice has significantly narrowed down.

11. It should be noted that the lists of grounds for obtaining a residence permit, residence permit and citizenship considerably differ both in terms of the number of categories and in the wordings given in the relevant laws. Therefore, the occupancy of "classes" from the viewpoint of grounds for obtaining a temporary residence permit, permanent residence permit and admission to citizenship is different. For example, among those who received a temporary residence permit, the class "Ethno-cultural ties with Russia" includes only participants of the State Program (because they can acquire citizenship, bypassing a permanent residence permit). Among permanent residence permit recipients, the "Ethno-cultural ties" class was represented only by Russian language native speakers. However, among those admitted to Russian citizenship, this class included both categories.
12. We also found out that there is no strict connection or continuity between the grounds on which a foreigner can receive a temporary residence permit, permanent residence permit and citizenship. This is a peculiarity of the Russian legislation. A person who got a permanent residence permit without a TRP as a holder of a profession in demand, may apply for citizenship via another channel, for example, as a spouse of a Russian citizen, especially if there is a common child in the marriage. Migrants choose the fastest and most convenient algorithm for obtaining the status, apparently requiring the least number of documents. Moreover, when new, more convenient opportunities arise, the redistribution of flows occurs very quickly, which shows the high adaptability of migrants to changing circumstances. Therefore, it makes sense to separately examine each type of data: on temporary residence permits, permanent residence permits and acquisition of citizenship. It seems possible to combine, for example, data on temporary and permanent residence permits issued during the same calendar year, since one person cannot obtain both statuses within a year and the data do not overlap. However, the classes of admission will have different content. We can treat statistics on admission to citizenship as a "resultant" representation of grounds, if not of migration itself, then of its final stage (in the sense of migrant status).
13. In identifying classes of grounds, we encountered objective limitations. Statistics on temporary residence permits are detailed (since 2014) only for permits, which are issued outside the established quota. We do not know, what criteria are applied when issuing a permit under the quota. We assume that the availability of work and relatives in Russia may have a positive impact on officials' decision making. The statistics of permanent residence permits are detailed only from 2021 and in relation to those documents that were issued without a temporary residence permit. That is, permanent residence permits that were obtained on the basis of a temporary one also cannot be categorized by the grounds for obtaining them. Only statistics on citizenship are available in detail and from 2010 onwards (by country of migrants' citizenship or region of Russia).

¹¹This is the only full-fledged immigration program that exists in Russia and formally has a repatriation character. The program has been in effect since 2006. According to the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs, as of December 31, 2023, the stock of registered Program participants since 2006 amounted to 1 million 128 thousand people.

14. The data reflect only flows of persons receiving temporary or permanent residence permits, and citizenship. No data are developed for the stocks of foreigners holding valid temporary or permanent residence permits. The time horizon over which we show the main results of the work covers the last three years (2021-2023), as this was the period of the most significant changes in legislation regarding the categories of applicants for residence permits and citizenship. The objective of this work is rather to demonstrate the potential of administrative data than to analyze and explain trends and fluctuations in indicators. Citizenship acquisition statistics have been available since 2010, thus we have had an opportunity to perform a retrospective analysis of the data, taking into account changes in legislation. We did this kind of work several years ago¹². It very well demonstrated that the changes in legislation also affected the distribution of flows by classes of admission to citizenship. Migrants quickly adapt to increasingly complex conditions and seek more convenient naturalization channels, with simpler and more easily fulfilled requirements. In addition, over time, this leads to very significant differences between nationals of individual states in the choice of naturalization channels.

III. Approaches to distinguishing classes of admission for obtaining residence permits and Russian citizenship

15. We could only partly apply the traditional approach of classifying migration grouping of grounds related to family reunification, labour, educational or forced migration, including due to the peculiarities of Russian legislation on migration and admission to citizenship. When combining individual grounds for obtaining temporary and permanent residence permit or citizenship, we focused on the semantic content of each category. It allowed us to identify six classes of admission: 1. Family reunification; 2. Ethno-cultural ties with Russia; 3. Preferences based on the principle of country of citizenship, birth or residence; 4. Human capital bearers; 5. Regularization of status. An independent (sixth) class of persons who came to study appeared only in 2023 and only in relation to the temporary residence permit. Since 2023 a special type of TRP "for the purpose of education" was introduced¹³.
16. We could not identify the class "Asylum", although there are special provisions in the laws referring to such migrants. However in the context of the statuses we are writing about, data on refugees are statistically insignificant, and there are no data on persons granted temporary protection and then receiving other statuses. In the five years from 2019 to 2023 only 42 persons with refugee status were admitted to Russian citizenship (in 2023 - 3 persons) in accordance with par. "b" of part 2 of article 13 of the law "On Citizenship". In Russia, refugee status is virtually unavailable, with only 244 people registered as refugees at the end of 2023¹⁴. The main form of protection for migrants in Russia is temporary protection. Its widespread use began during the first wave of forced migrants from the southeastern regions of Ukraine in 2014-2015. At that time, a decision was made to allow those who received temporary protection immediately join the State Program for Assistance to Voluntary Resettlement of Compatriots (repatriates). They received all subsequent statuses - temporary residence permits and citizenship (bypassing residence permits) as participants of the Program. Therefore, the forced migrants actually ended up in a different class of admission after their initial status changed.

¹² Adaptation and integration of migrants in Russia: challenges, realities, indicators. Mukomel V. I., Grigorieva K. S., Monusova G. A. et al; ed. by Mukomel V. I., Grigorieva K. S. FCTAS RAS. In Russian. – M. 2022. DOI: 10.19181/monogr.978-5-89697-407-9.2022. с. 69-73. URL: <https://www.fnisc.ru/publ.html?id=11644&type=publ>

¹³ This type of document assumes study in full educational programs in the higher education system.

¹⁴ Rosstat 2024. The report "The socio-economic situation in Russia". January 2024, page 187. In Russian. <https://rosstat.gov.ru/storage/mediabank/osn-01-2024.pdf>

17. The first class - "family reunification" was relatively easy to identify. It includes situations related to obtaining the status of a minor child at the request of a parent who already has such status or simultaneously with him/her, foreign spouses, adult children or parents of Russian citizens. We associated the second class with the presence of certain ethno-cultural ties of a migrant with Russia, since this approach to granting preferences to migrants is emphasized in almost all fundamental documents related to Russia's migration policy¹⁵. Participants of the State Program for Assistance to Voluntary Resettlement of Compatriots and Russian language native speakers were included in this class. The third class of preferences is formed according to the "geographical" principle, which provides for the applicant's citizenship of a certain country, birth or residence in a certain territory (in the present or in the past). This approach is applied in several cases and unites, for example, persons born on the territory of the RSFSR and having citizenship of the USSR, citizens of Belarus, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Moldova, citizens of states that have agreements with Russia.
18. The greatest difficulties were caused by the attempt to distinguish the class of migration for the purpose of work (skilled labour migration). Formally, it can include (and these categories are listed separately in the legislation) highly skilled specialists and members of their families¹⁶, holders of professions in demand¹⁷ and IT specialists (this category is introduced from 2023). However, in the end, we came to the conclusion that it would be more correct to single out a class of not just "skilled workers", but a broader (fourth) class of bearers of human capital ("Human capital") and to include in it other categories of applicants who are interesting for Russia due to their special abilities, talents, and qualities. For example, these are graduates of Russian educational institutions of secondary and higher professional education (who unambiguously speak the Russian language and have been integrated into Russian society during their years of study), winners of Olympiads related to knowledge of Russia, and investors. These individuals can contribute to Russia's development in the same way as the skilled workers.
19. In relation to permanent residence permits and admission to citizenship, the fifth class "Regularization of status" was singled out, which is absent in the case of issuance of temporary residence permit. This class includes not only situations of regularization (the law has a special article for such cases¹⁸), but also restoration and recognition of Russian citizenship. Admission to citizenship of persons in regularization order is preceded by obtaining a permanent residence permit on the relevant grounds. Since 2023, it has been possible to allocate a sixth class - "Study". Students of the higher education system now can apply for a special type of temporary residence permit. This class can be distinguished only in the flow of migrants receiving temporary residence permits. When obtaining residence permits and citizenship simplified procedure of issuance of permanent residence permits and citizenship acquisition is defined only regarding graduates of Russian universities, but not students in the process of study. The internal content of each class of grounds is of great interest, but the limited volume of the report does not allow us to present this information in detail.

¹⁵ In paragraph 21 of the Concept of State Migration Policy of the Russian Federation for 2019-2025, the first task in the list of objectives is to facilitate the voluntary resettlement to the Russian Federation for permanent residence of compatriots living abroad, as well as other persons who are able to successfully integrate into Russian society.

https://base.garant.ru/72092260/#block_1000

¹⁶ A category of foreign workers with special terms of employment and guaranteed salary limit, the only class of workers allowed to bring family members and get a special residence permit

<https://base.garant.ru/184755/7cb9e0279cd84d282026d8d6345390d4/>

¹⁷ The list is regularly approved by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Russian Federation. Currently, it contains 202 positions, 71 of which are medical workers with higher (47) and secondary (24) vocational education.

<https://ivo.garant.ru/#/document/407038416/paragraph/10:0>

¹⁸ https://base.garant.ru/184539/96c297d9551856eaebdd4bf791f065eb/#block_4113

IV. The main results

A. Temporary residence permits

20. In 2021-2023, Russia decided to issue almost 443 thousand temporary residence permits, of which - within the established quota - 42 thousand (less than 10%) and outside the quota (with distribution by classes) - 401 thousand. For each year, respectively, the figures (total decisions) amounted to 167 thousand, 181 thousand and 95 thousand TRPs.

Table 1

Distribution of decisions on issuance of temporary residence permits by class of admission, Russia, 2021-2023, percent.

	2021	2022	2023	2021-2023
Within the established quota	13,4	6,6	7,8	9,4
Outside the quota, including: Family reunification	36,7	35,8	39,9	37,0
Ethno-cultural ties with Russia	27,8	24,7	29,6	26,9
Preferences by country of citizenship, birth or residence	17,7	28,9	4,4	19,5
Human capital	4,1	3,1	6,5	4,2
Students (from 2023)	n/a	n/a	11,3	2,4
Other unspecified categories outside the quota	0,3	0,9	0,5	0,6

Calculated on the basis of the data of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia

21. The main recipients of temporary residence permits were migrants belonging to the “Family reunification” class (Table 1). Their share averaged 37% (164 thousand over three years). Among them, the largest group were the spouses of Russian citizens (153 thousand). In second place (about 27%) were migrants of the "Ethno-cultural ties with Russia" class, which included the only category - participants in the State Program of Assistance to the Resettlement of Compatriots. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, about half of the participants of the State Program are family members of the applicants, so they can hypothetically also be classified as migrants through family reunification, which makes this class the largest in terms of the number of applicants for TRP and its share in the flow. At the same time, participants of the State Program are only formally refer to the class "Ethno-cultural ties...", just because of the definition of a compatriot¹⁹. In fact, they are subject to the requirements of age (only persons of working age are allowed to participate) and the availability of skills and professions in demand in the region of future residence²⁰. The federal law does not mention these requirements, but since the Program is implemented at the regional level, regional by-laws definitely contain these conditions and criteria. The absence of the

¹⁹ <https://ivo.garant.ru/#/document/12115694/paragraph/9989:3> , as well as the Federal Law of May 24, 1999 N 99-FZ “On the State Policy of the Russian Federation Concerning Compatriots Abroad”

<https://ivo.garant.ru/#/document/12115694/paragraph/14189:2> ; the Decree of the President of Russia introduced the concept of a “repatriate”. <https://base.garant.ru/408052315/?ysclid=luz86sxd6195772256>

²⁰ The decision to allow (or not) an applicant to participate in the State Program is made by the regional labour and employment office, see the example of the Leningrad Oblast:

https://mosaikki.info/rusinfofinland/texts/regions/documents/reglament_Leningradskay.pdf?ysclid=luz89g6to2273092653

required profession may be the reason for the refusal of admission of a migrant to participate in the State Program²¹.

22. Migrants who received a temporary residence permit in the class "Preference by country of citizenship, country of birth or residence" were also numerous. Their share averaged about 20% over three years and reached almost 30% in 2022. The main flow in this class are citizens of Belarus, Kazakhstan, Ukraine and Moldova, who in 2021 received – just on the basis of their citizenship a simplified access to a temporary residence permit and citizenship (from 2023 also to a permanent residence permit). The “Human capital” class accounts for only 4% of the flow. Among those who received temporary residence permit, this class included actually one category: graduates of Russian institutions of higher professional education (diploma without honors, since excellent students can apply immediately for a permanent residence permit). Previously, the class "Human capital" also included investors, but this status was not in demand. Only in 2021, five people of this category received a temporary residence permit. Since 2022, investors have been entitled to apply for permanent residence permits immediately, but the figures for 2022-2023 were zero.
23. Foreign students are not in a hurry to use the right to obtain a special temporary residence permit so far. Therefore, the numbers of issued temporary residence permit "For the purpose of education" in no way reflect the true scale of the presence of international students in Russia. Majority of them keep temporary status and legally stay in Russia with valid visa and/or confirmation from the university. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia, in 2023, only 12.7 thousand people applied for a temporary residence permit for the purpose of education, and only 10.1 thousand obtained it during the year. Same time, according to the Ministry of Education and Science, the stock of foreign students in the system of higher education in Russia at the beginning of the academic year 2023/2024 exceeded 356 thousand people. The enrollment of students in Russian universities in 2023 reached 124 thousand people²².

B. Residence permits (permanent)

24. Since November 2019, several categories of foreigners who previously could get an out-of-quota temporary residence permit, have been entitled to apply for a permanent residence permit, bypassing the temporary one²³. Therefore, the descriptions of these categories were redirected from the chapter 6 of the Law 115 on temporary residence permits to the chapter 8 on permanent residence permits. The list of persons receiving a permanent residence permit in a simplified manner has been extending. Citizens of Belarus have always had the right to a permanent residence permit without a TRP on the basis of the agreement on the union state Russia-Belarus. Numerous participants of the State program of resettlement of compatriots, who among the recipients of a temporary residence permit made up a very large class "Ethno-cultural ties with Russia", do not need a permanent residence permit. Having a TRP they can immediately apply for citizenship. Therefore, only so-called «native speakers of Russian language» represent this class of residence permit recipients.
25. In 2021, 2022 and 2023, 760 thousand decisions were made to issue permanent residence permits in Russia (248 thousand, 280 thousand and 232 thousand respectively). On average over the three years, 23% of permanent residence permits were issued to temporary residence permit holders, and thus cannot be categorized into any class of admission. Almost 57% of permanent residence

²¹ https://ruvek.mid.ru/upload/iblock/dd6/Programma-pereseleniya-_podprogramma-3_.pdf

²² <https://www.minobrnauki.gov.ru/action/stat/highed/>

²³ <https://base.garant.ru/72360792/?ysclid=lvdo1mhyus204139908>

permits were granted on grounds related to family reunification, and about 14% to preferences related to citizenship, place of birth or residence in a particular country. Other categories were disproportionately smaller (Table 2). Some of the persons who received a permanent residence permit without a temporary one were not assigned to any of the categories identified in the 2-RD statistical report. The unallocated balance amounted to 6,000 in 2021, 7,700 in 2022, and 7,600 in 2023, respectively. The share of this group with unspecified grounds of admission amounted to about 2% of the flow on average over the three years.

26. The class "Regularization" (settlement) includes three positions of Law 115 (paragraphs 12, 13 and 14 of Article 8) and concerns persons whose Russian citizenship has been terminated, the decision on admission to citizenship has been canceled or the previously issued citizenship has been recognized as invalid. The number of persons who received permanent residence permits on this basis amounted to 5.9 thousand people over three years, and their share in the total flow was less than half a percent. The class "Human Capital" includes 7 categories: graduates of Russian professional educational institutions with honors, highly skilled specialists, holders of in-demand professions, investors, from 2023 - winners and finalists of the contest "Russia - the Country of Opportunities"²⁴, IT specialists, etc. The share of migrants of this class did not exceed 2.3% in three years, and their number amounted to 17.2 thousand people.

Table 2

Distribution of decisions on issuance of permanent residence permits by class of admission, Russia, 2021-2023, Percent

	2 021	2 022	2 023	2021-2023
Residence permit on the basis of a residence permit (with unspecified class of receipt)	31,3	20,7	16,7	23,0
Family reunification	51,9	65,1	52,3	56,9
Ethno-cultural proximity to Russia (Russian language speakers)	3,1	1,9	1,2	2,1
Preference for country of citizenship or country of birth and historical justice	11,6	7,1	23,9	13,7
Human capital	1,8	2,4	2,6	2,3
Status regularization	0,03	0,04	0,02	0,03
Other unspecified	0,3	2,8	3,3	2,1

Based on the data of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia

27. Taking into account that it is impossible for one person to obtain a temporary and a permanent residence permit within a year, and the categories do not overlap, we can try to combine the flow of persons receiving temporary and permanent residence permits on comparable classes of admission and estimate the overall structure of the flow. In 2023, the class "family reunification" accounted for 49% of all issued temporary and permanent residence permits, 18% referred to the "Preferences by country of citizenship", 9% - to the class "Ethno-cultural ties with Russia" and 3.3% to the class "Students". Other categories (quota-based temporary residence permits and permanent residence permit on the basis of a TRP, as well as permits not distributed by the grounds of obtaining) accounted for 14% of the flow.

²⁴ <https://rsv.ru/?ysclid=luvh5j45xw682605078>

C. Citizenship acquisition

28. The statistics on citizenship acquisition are of a particular interest for two reasons. First, they are available in detail by categories of grounds since 2010, i.e., for a significantly longer period of observation than the data on temporary residence permits (since 2014) and especially residence permits (since 2021). Second, the number of categories to be classified is also more numerous. Statistical report 2-RD does not group indicators, even if the grounds for citizenship are essentially similar, so the number of categories included in the reporting is quite large (at least 30). Third, although admission to citizenship is not the same as migration, it can be considered as the resulting phase of the migration process. It should be emphasized that the distribution by admission classes has been shifted in recent years due to the implementation from 2019 of special conditions for Ukrainian citizens, most of whom lived outside Russia at the time of obtaining citizenship and were not migrants.
29. In 2021, 2022 and 2023, a total of 1.8 million people (respectively: 735 thousand, 691 thousand and 379 thousand) acquired Russian citizenship through the bodies of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia. The large values of recent years (the trend started in 2019) are related to the application, as noted above, since 2019, of a special provision of the Law on Citizenship on the admission to Russian citizenship for humanitarian purposes. We are mainly talking about citizens of Ukraine who meet the conditions established in the Decrees of the President of Russia in 2019²⁵. We included this category of applicants to the class "Preference by country of citizenship, birth or residence". In 2023, the number of such individuals decreased significantly. In 2021, it amounted for 324,000, in 2022 - 275,000, and in 2023 it dropped to 59,000.
30. Since the new provisions of the law came into effect in 2021 and the format of the table was not modified, there was a significant unallocated balance of 131,000 people by class of grounds. Therefore, we calculated the period average structure by grounds for two years (2022-2023) rather than three years.
31. In classification - 9 categories reflected different variants of kinship relations - spouses, children and parents and three reflected guardianship and custody situations, of which guardianship was the main one and the figures for others were close to zero²⁶. These 12 categories were grouped into the Family Reunification class. 7 categories of applicants belonged to bearers of human capital, 2 - to persons with ethno-cultural ties with Russia (State Program and Russian language speakers), 5 categories were united by the principle of belonging to a certain country of birth or citizenship (including in the past). In the group "Status regularization" we included 4 positions: regularization proper (settlement of the legal status of migrants who arrived many years ago, restoration of citizenship and recognition of citizenship).
32. In 2022-2023 most of naturalized foreigners belonged to "Family Reunification" (43%) and "Preference by country of citizenship, birth or residence" (41%) classes. In the "Family Reunification" class, more than half were parents of Russian citizens, about one-fifth were children

²⁵ <https://base.garant.ru/72236792/?ysclid=lutu453pw5678248567> ;
<https://base.garant.ru/72229888/?ysclid=lutu593mi8719889690>

²⁶ In addition to cases of guardianship (over children and incapacitated persons), the law provides for situations of acquisition of citizenship by persons staying in Russian institutions for orphaned children and incapacitated persons placed under supervision in Russian educational, medical, social, etc. organizations. Since we are talking about a collective household, these cases can be conditionally attributed to the "family" category. In three years - 2021-2023, citizenship was granted to 1.5 thousand children and incapacitated persons under guardianship, to 140 persons in organizations for orphaned children, and to 28 persons in social organizations for incapacitated persons.

(including adults), and the rest were the spouses of Russian citizens. In third place were migrants in the "Ethno-cultural ties with Russia" class (15%). The share of bearers of human capital remained very modest (0.4% or 4.7 thousand people over two years), of which the main category was persons with in-demand professions (3.4 thousand) and graduates of Russian universities and colleges (1.2 thousand).

33. The limitation of the classification of grounds for acquiring citizenship is connected with the extension (in 2023) of the list of categories of applicants for the simplified naturalization procedure was expanded. It was done within the framework of the old law. In October 2023, the new law on citizenship came into force²⁷. The approaches it applies to the allocation of categories of applicants are mainly inherited from the previous law.

Table 3

Distribution of persons granted citizenship of the Russian Federation, by class of admission, 2021-2023, percent

	2 021	2 022	2 023	2022-2023
Family reunification	16,0	36,2	55,9	43,2
Ethno-cultural ties with Russia	15,2	14,3	16,3	15,0
Preferences by country of citizenship, birth or residence	50,1	48,7	26,5	40,8
Human capital	0,2	0,3	0,6	0,4
Status regularization	0,6	0,5	0,7	0,6
In general procedure (without preferences)	0,05	0,03	0,03	0,03
In simplified procedure not specified categories	17,8	0,0	0,0	0,0

* The calculation for the period is made for the last two years due to a significant balance in 2021, not distributed by the grounds of citizenship. *Based on the data of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia.*

34. As we have noted earlier, the recipients of citizenship in 2019-2023 were to a large extent non-migrants, they did not require either a residence permit or a residence permit. On so-called humanitarian grounds, 1.2 million Ukrainian citizens acquired Russian citizenship in 2019-2023 (more than 40% of the total number of naturalizations in these years). Most of them did not reside on the territory of Russia at the time of their admission to citizenship. This category radically changed the structure of grounds for admission to citizenship and the ratio of admission classes. If we make a calculation without taking this category into account, in 2021-2023 the share of those naturalized through family reunification would have reached 67% (instead of 42%), and the share of the class "Preference by country of citizenship..." would have fallen to 14% (instead of 41%).

V. The potential of administrative data from the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs

35. The availability of data that we have worked with in the distribution by country of citizenship of foreigners or by regions of Russia allows us to perform a more in-depth analysis. We can see large differences between citizens of different countries in the choice of channels for obtaining residence permits or citizenship. Alternatively, it is possible to analyze regional differences in law enforcement practice, to see whether the structure of the classes of admission of foreigners differs

²⁷ <https://base.garant.ru/406811055/?ysclid=luz75utvdv341998839>

in certain regions of Russia. The built-in function of the 2-RD report allows to make uploads for an individual country of citizenship with distribution by all regions of Russia, or vice versa - for an individual region with detailing by country of citizenship of foreigners who received different statuses in this region.

36. To give an example, Table 4 shows the distribution of citizens of several states and stateless persons by classes of grounds for obtaining Russian citizenship in 2023. These countries accounted for 98% of all admissions to Russian citizenship. The minimum value of the number of naturalized persons was 1,029 (Germany²⁸), the maximum - 158 thousand (Tajikistan). Family reunification is by a large margin the main channel of naturalization of citizens of Tajikistan (86%), Georgia (80%), Azerbaijan (78%) and Armenia (70%).

Table 4. Distribution of citizens of individual countries granted citizenship of the Russian Federation, by class of admission, 2023, percent

	Family reunification	Ethno-cultural ties with Russia	Preferences based on the country of citizenship, birth or residence	Human capital	Regularization, restoration, recognition	General order, no preferences
Azerbaijan	55,9	16,3	26,5	0,6	0,7	0,03
Armenia	78,6	19,0	1,6	0,3	0,4	0,12
Belarus	69,6	28,8	0,6	0,8	0,1	0,06
Vietnam	6,3	0,3	92,3	0,0	1,0	0
Germany	85,4	12,6	0,0	1,0	0,0	0,95
Georgia	48,8	28,0	13,7	0,4	9,1	0
Kazakhstan	80,4	16,1	1,0	0,1	2,4	0
Kyrgyzstan	9,1	39,9	50,8	0,0	0,2	0
Moldova	71,8	22,8	4,1	1,2	0,1	0,02
Tajikistan	10,0	8,2	81,8	0,0	0,0	0
Turkmenistan	86,0	12,9	0,2	0,8	0,0	0,01
Uzbekistan	41,3	53,9	3,5	0,9	0,4	0,03
Ukraine	56,4	37,6	5,0	0,9	0,1	0,11
Stateless persons	2,1	0,4	97,0	0,0	0,5	0
Other countries	25,0	10,4	5,1	0,2	59,3	0
All countries	67,3	18,9	8,0	4,2	1,2	0,29

Based on the data of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia.

37. Citizens of Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova used the provisions of the law allowing them to obtain a Russian passport in an even more simplified procedure - only on the basis of their country of citizenship: respectively 97%, 92% and 82% of all applicants used this channel. Based on the grounds of the class "Ethno-cultural ties with Russia" 54% of citizens of Turkmenistan, about 40% of citizens of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan obtained Russian citizenship. Almost 60% of stateless persons were naturalized by grounds related to status settlement.

²⁸ Germany is one of the main destination countries for emigrants from Russia, mostly those who left in the 1990s. Some migrants or their descendants who lost or lacked Russian citizenship and returned to Russia subsequently regain it or acquire it on other grounds. In 2023, 27% of the 1,029 German citizens obtained citizenship through the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs as participants in the State Program and Russian language speakers. (In 2023, 2,650 people living in Germany obtained citizenship through Russian consulates).

VI. Concluding remarks

38. Suggested classification allows to get a clearer picture of the approaches used in Russia to organize formal channels of moving to Russia and admission to Russian citizenship. The proposed algorithm simplifies the description not only of international migration, but also of the nature of migration policy. Having distributed the detailed grounds for migrants' acquisition of residence status and citizenship into aggregated classes, we can objectively observe the predominance of grounds related to family reunification. This is very important, since the Concept of State Migration Policy of Russia does not reflect this type of migration at all²⁹. Despite the priorities emphasized in the Concept of State Migration Policy - attraction of compatriots and other persons with ethno-cultural ties and proximity to Russia, skilled labour migrants, etc., in practice the structure of flows shows a more humanitarian nature of migration. The clear dominance of the family reunification class of migration, the multiplicity of categories in this class, and the simplification of admission of migrants for family reunification in recent years show Russia's respect for human rights to family life (in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights) and family reunification.
39. At the same time, the absence of a pronounced labour migration channel in the statistics of residence permits suggests that the policy towards this type of migration is still aimed at maintaining migrants' temporary status. The absence of full-fledged immigration programs for skilled workers with the right to bring their families and receive other preferences does not allow this flow to grow. De facto, there is a redistribution of skilled workers through other channels and classes, including through their participation in the State Program. Forced migrants, if flows ever increase again, which we would not want, should be given more rights in their own status, rather than being redirected to other classes, as it happens in the current practice. Such terms can be created by appropriate amendments to the law. The hitherto unnoticed class of student migration may increase substantially in the future. The norm introduced in 2023 should become in demand among foreign students, as the temporary residence permit gives much more rights and comfort when living in Russia. Students from visa countries do not need to renew their visas repeatedly, and students from visa-free countries also get an opportunity to ensure a more relaxed - in terms of confirming the right to stay in Russia - mode of stay with one document.
40. The scale of long-term skilled labour migration or migration for the purpose of education, as well as forced migration, and their place in Russia's migration landscape cannot be assessed on the basis of statistics on residence permits or admission to citizenship. Foreign students have the right to live in Russia without applying for a residence permit. Highly skilled specialists can also live in Russia on the basis of a visa, without a residence permit. Persons holding a patent (among whom there may also be skilled workers) can extend it, thereby obtaining the right to long-term residence in Russia. Therefore, the estimates of the volumes of labour or educational migration should be based on relevant special data, respectively, data of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia on the issued permits for migrant workers, data on administrative registrations of potential foreign workers at a place of temporary residence, and data of the Ministry of Science and Education on foreign students.
41. The same applies to forced migration, which is accounted for by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, but the statistics covers only foreigners. The problem of measuring forced migration in 2022-2023 remains the availability of Russian citizenship for the majority of such migrants, which was actively granted to residents of Donbas and then other regions of Ukraine in recent years. In the future, when the new software of the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs is debugged, it will probably become possible to distinguish migrants with different classes of admission to long-term

²⁹ <https://base.garant.ru/72092260/?ysclid=lv0mdzvcoj588550241#friends>

stay and residence in Russia, migrants with different status and duration of stay in Russia. Information on their socio-demographic characteristics will also be available.

42. Russia is currently in the process of reforming its migration legislation. In 2023, a new law "On Citizenship of the Russian Federation" was adopted and came into force. As we noted above, it largely reflects the same approaches to granting citizenship and highlights categories that were present in the old law, which should ensure comparability of data in retrospect and in the future. An important draft law in the area of regulating the entry, stay and residence of foreigners in Russia is being prepared for adoption, which will replace several laws currently in force³⁰. The temporary residence permit system will be abolished, although the list of categories of foreigners receiving permanent residence permits will not change significantly. It is likely that the format of statistical report 2-RD will be changed in accordance with the provisions of the future law. In any case, the approach we have proposed to classify the channels for admitting migrants to reside and obtain citizenship in Russia can be applied under the new conditions.

³⁰ Draft federal law "On the conditions of entry (exit) and stay (residence) in the Russian Federation of foreign citizens and stateless persons".

<https://base.garant.ru/56883645/?ysclid=luz72qscr2190085111>