



Migration in Russia



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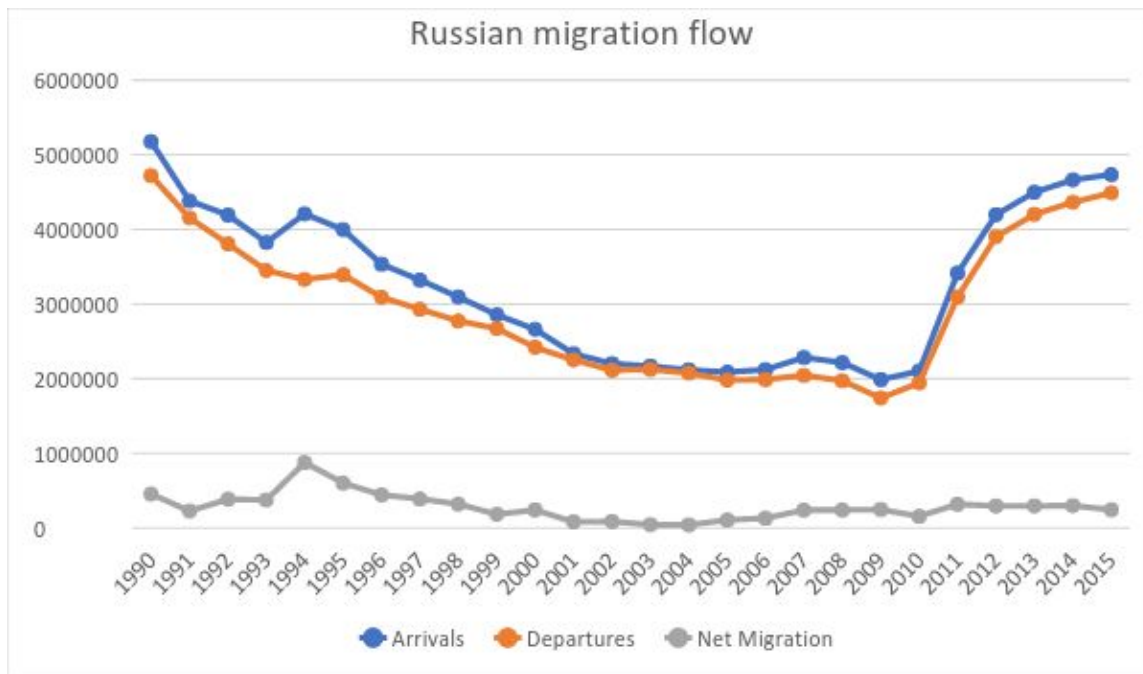
International migration in Russian Federation

by Francesco Alfonsi, Rebecca Ghio, Lorenzo Pantano, Alexander Startsev

External migration during the Soviet period was generally not allowed and insignificant. Migration flows from and to the Republic were limited to the territory of the USSR. Migration became noticeable in 1988, when the permission to migrate was granted to ethnic Jews, Greeks and Germans, as well as the permission to travel abroad to all citizens. The geopolitical scenario has radically changed since the collapse of the USSR. The period from 1991 to 1995 was mostly characterized by ethnic-related migrations, counting at least 1.3 million refugees, 6 million former Russians returned from ex-sovietic republics, while emigration sparked to Germany, Israel, USA (1.5 million). Worth a mention also the flow of commercial circular migrants (*chelnoks*) moving from and to Poland, Turkey and China. The trend changed from 1996 to 2001, showing a rise of economically motivated migrations, around 1.5 million migrant workers arriving to the country. However, in 2001 started a rigid migration policy turn in Russia, generating rapidly increasing numbers of unregistered labor migrants (estimated around 5-10 million people). On the other hand, Russia became a host and a transit country for refugees from Afghanistan and Central Asia. In 2002, there were at least half a million of transit migrants from Afghanistan, China, Angola, Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Turkey, Ethiopia and other countries 'stuck' in Russia, consequently increasing the number of irregular migrants. Since 2007 there has been a revaluation of the role of migration for the country, leading to the liberalization of the Russian migration policy towards the CIS citizens, an active intra-regional cooperation and an increased inflow to Russia from CIS countries and the feminization of labor migration flows. In 2015, the immigrant population of Russia was 8.12% of total resident population.

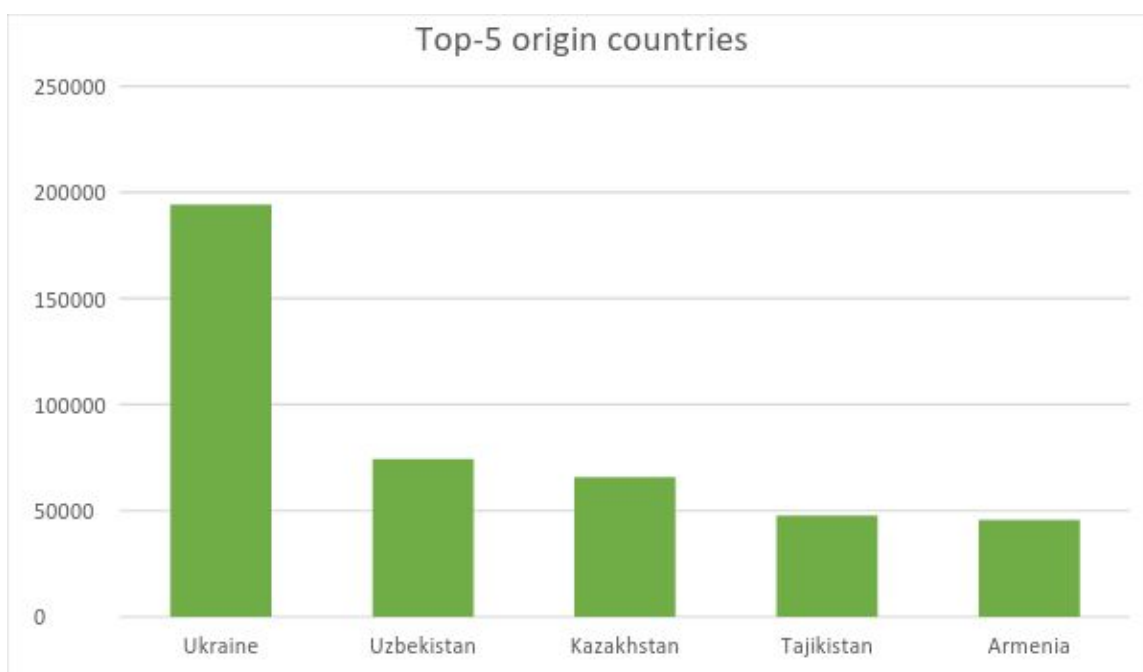


Source: United Nations Population Division, 2016

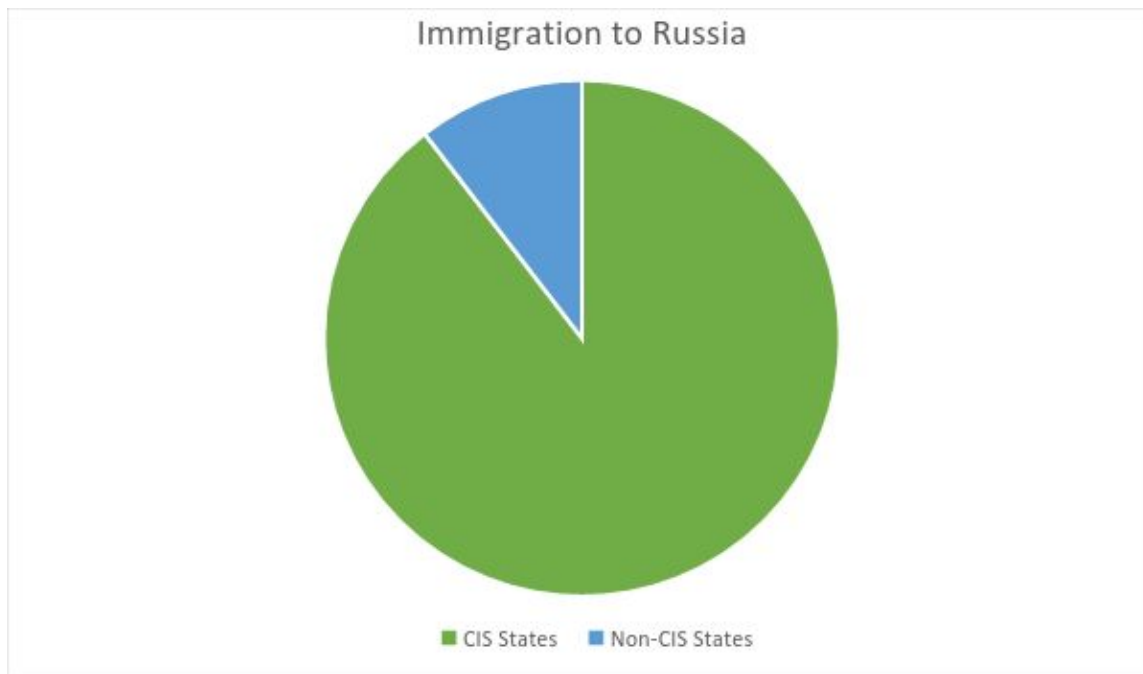


Source: Rosstat, 2016

The focus of the 2006 migration policy reform was on generating more favorable conditions of residence and employment in Russia for citizens of the CIS countries. The main objectives of the new laws were to simplify the procedure for recruiting a foreign citizen, issuing permits for temporary residence/stay and for registration. The amendments apply primarily to migrants from the CIS countries entry without a visa, with a notification-based registration and with simplified work permit. This opened Russian labor market to citizens of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Moldova, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Ukraine. For 2007, Russia set a quota of 6 million work permits to foreign citizens from countries that enjoy a visa-free regime with Russia. In fact, over 1.2 million work permits were issued to migrant workers from the CIS countries which was twice as much as in 2006 and three times as much as in 2005. CIS countries are nowadays the main source countries of migration to Russia, accounting for almost 90% of cross-border movements.

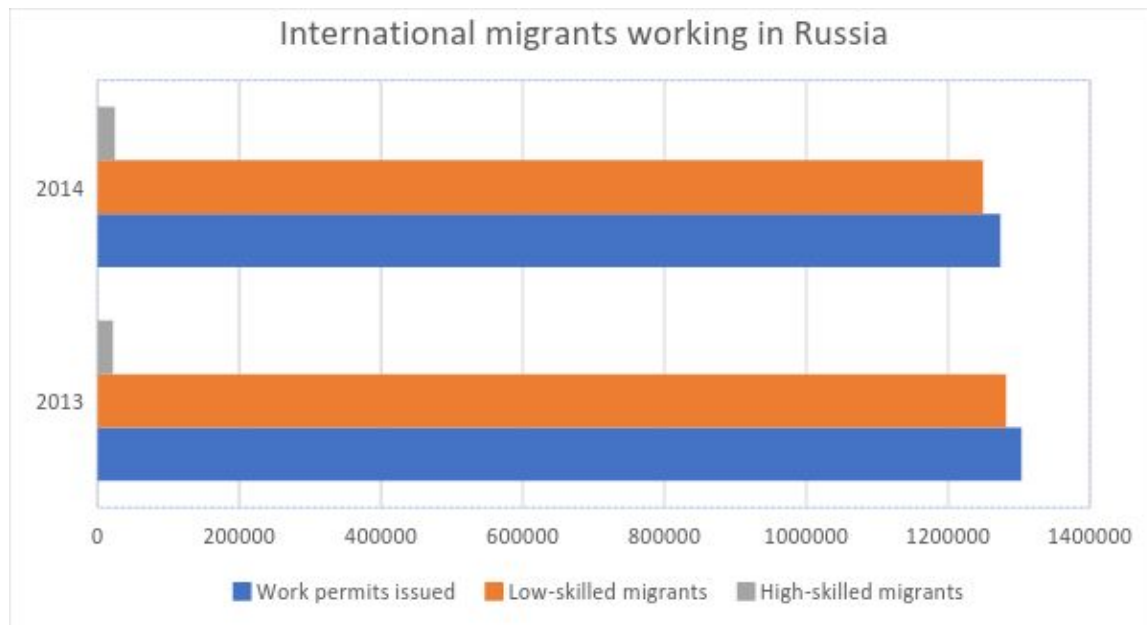


Source: Rosstat, 2015



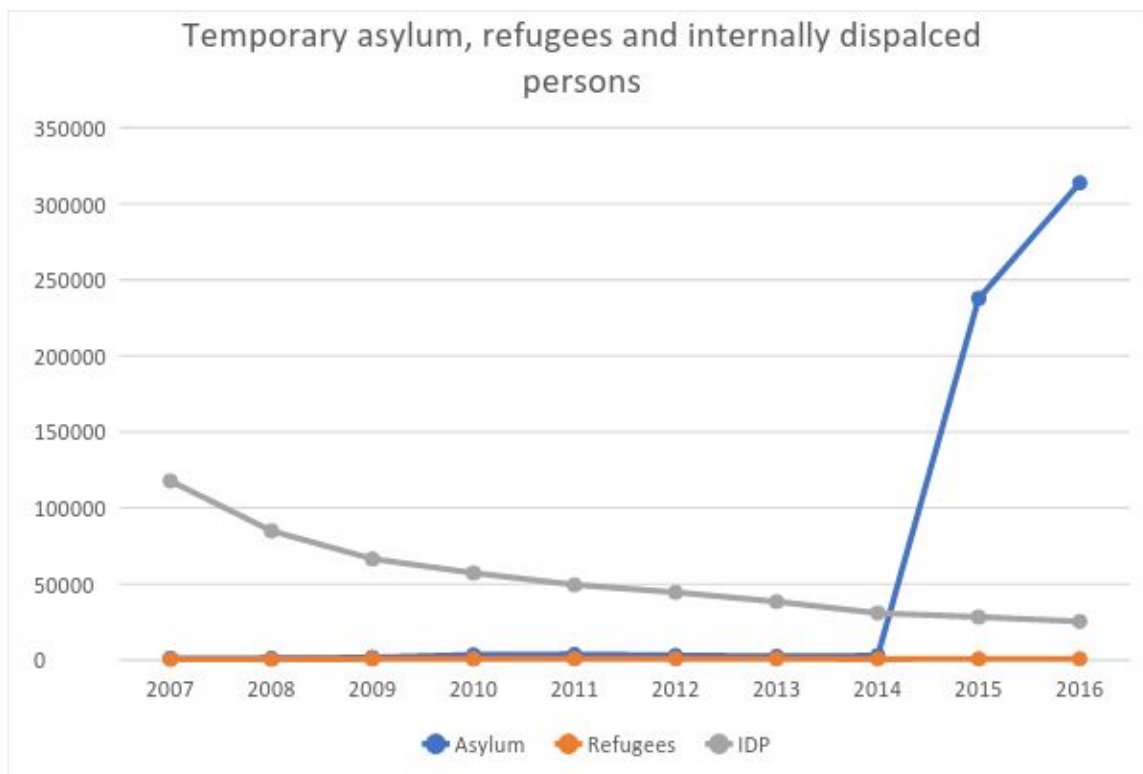
Source Rosstat, 2015

2010 marked the beginning of the differentiation of migrant inflows to the country. Following the intensive post-Soviet economic growth based on natural resources combined with demographic decline, Russian Federation pursues an active immigration policy, attracting both skilled and unskilled migrants. However, a special focus is put on highly skilled migrants, who enjoyed preferences in employment: work permits are issued for 3 years and a multi-entry employment visa is provided; family members can get work permits as well; no quotas are applied and some reductions on taxation. Family reunification as a channel of entrance is not considered by national statistics, as it is mostly linked to high-skilled migrants. Overall, international migrants in Russia impact around the 3% of the country's GDP. Demographic crisis makes immigration and especially import of labor a key factor of development of the Russian Federation, at least in the short-term and medium-term perspective. By admitting annually about 1.5 million of regular migrant workers and estimated 5-6 million of irregular ones Russia absorbs 'excessive' labor resources of the CIS countries and provides them with employment and earnings.



Source: Rosstat, 2014

Forms of protection are granted in the Russian Federation: refugee status and asylum. To apply for refugee status a request must be submitted to the Diplomatic or consular mission (outside of Russia), border guard service (at the moment of border crossing) or the Federal Migration Service (on the territory of Russia). The status is approved by the Federal Migration Service. While waiting, the asylum seekers may stay in temporary accommodation centers. Even if in Russia access to services as emergency medical assistance are mostly free of charge, it is noted that persons with temporary asylum status do not have access to the state healthcare facilities and services or, indeed, to any social security.



Source: Rosstat, 2015

In Russian society, there is a lack of understanding of the role of migration for economic and demographic

development of the country. Russian citizens disapprove inflow of foreign workers, particularly irregular ones. Disregard of integration policies introduced in Russia, xenophobia, ethnic-based tension, and general negativisation of migration emerge from the socio-political debate.