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### From Gorbachev to the Present: Russian Migration to the United States

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**From Gorbachev to the Present:  
Russian Migration to the United  
States**

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in  
Sociology of the City College of the City University of New York

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# Summary

Migration from Russia to the U.S. has been going on continuously for the last twenty-five years after the fall of the Socialist system. This migration occurs as Russia transitions from a closed society to an open one, and while the country is integrating into the international capitalist community. Clearly, not all Russians migrate; a selective group of Russians represents the migratory movement. Various estimates of the size of the Russian migration to the U.S. range from a few thousand to a half million people per year. Similarly, the motives behind someone's decision to come to the U.S. also vary.

My thesis will focus on two concerns: (a) the class structure of the people who migrate from Russia and (b) the motivations behind their migration. I hypothesize that throughout the years the class structure has changed. A large proportion of those who migrated during the last ten years are well-to-do Russians, and the current reasons for migrating substantially differ from the Gorbachev's era.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

It was a sunny day in the summer of 2010. Fifteen people were sitting on the terrace of a popular restaurant with a wonderful panorama of Neva River in the center of Saint-Petersburg. The people were young and prosperous, in their late thirties to early forties, good-looking, well-educated, and healthy. Everyone had a job and a home. They were talking about art and politics, drinking good wine, totally satisfied with their life and confident about their future. They could travel around the world, support their retired parents, raise and educate their children, buy good food and clothing. Generally, they were doing great.

Just a few years later, between 2010 and 2014, I was surprised to find out that more than half of these people left Russia. Some of them moved to the USA, others to Europe, China, Australia or Latin America. Everyone had a different reason: a job opportunity, education, business, or family issues. Of the fifteen subjects, only two actually emigrated. The others preferred to classify their leaving as temporary and keep open the possibility to come back some years later. But the fact remained, these people left their country for at least several years.

They represent the middle class, which is crucial for the economic and cultural health of the nation. It is not only the current generation, but the future generations are impacted as well. Children from emigrant families, if taken abroad during childhood, are very unlikely to return to their country of origin (Cassarino, 2004, 19). So, what happened?

Why were these accomplished citizens of modern Russia leaving the country and taking away their families, kids, money, and businesses?

Leaving Russia is much easier today. The emigrants are not compelled to break all ties with the homeland. Their family and relatives are not threatened. Their passports, citizenship, and property are not taken away from them, the way it happened in the former Soviet Union. They can come back as many times as they want without any obstacles. There is a downside of this situation - no one knows the exact number of them.

The outflow migration of Russian citizens decreased steadily between 2000-2008. (Singer at al., 2008). Sociological surveys of those years demonstrated that the level of life satisfaction in the Russian society was increasing, household incomes were going up, inflation stabilized, and unemployment rates were lowest in the preceding 5 years (Vechkanov, 2014). After 2008, the main economic factors were still the same, but the emigration picture began to change.

I tried to find different sources of information - from official Russian government statistics to newspaper and internet articles. In statistical data, the number of emigrants jumps from tens of thousands to one and a half million people per year. Accurate statistics do not exist; even a mechanism for collecting the data does not exist. Before the USSR had collapsed in 1991 and up to 1997, a residence registration “propiska”, which was an obligation, worked for public records database. After 1997, “propiska” lost its mandatory status and the record system does not provide any credible information for migration statistics anymore. A huge number of people do not live at places where they registered, especially in big cities, and the authorities have no mechanism to update this information. If a Russian citizen does not legally give up his Russian citizenship, he very unlikely

registered somewhere as an emigrant. Hence, the Russian official statistics can be used only with a certain degree of assumption.

Internet (ru-net) forums and conferences have reflected a raise of the emigration mood in recent years. ( [www.forum.awd.ru](http://www.forum.awd.ru) , [www.forum.exler.ru](http://www.forum.exler.ru), [www.forum.cofe.ru](http://www.forum.cofe.ru) , [www.forum.privet.ru](http://www.forum.privet.ru) , etc.). People have been asking each other about their experiences working abroad, looking for housing, and making comparisons between European and USA immigration procedures. For example, in 2002 on [www.forum.Cofe.ru](http://www.forum.Cofe.ru) - (a Russian forum where the main audience are educated professionals between 30-35 years old from Russia (58%), Ukraine (13%), USA (8%), and the site traffic is 750,000 visits per month (<https://www.similarweb.com/website/cofe.ru#overview>) - there were only two threads where emigration was the topic of discussion. On Forum.Exler.ru (a Russian forum, where the main audience are educated professionals 35-40 years old, from Russia (51%), Ukraine (8%), Western Europe (5%), USA (5%), the site traffic 3,000,000 visits per month (<https://www.similarweb.com/website/exler.ru#overview>), there were four emigration threads during the year. In 2014 that number of threads on the topic of emigration increased to 11 on Cofe.ru, and 14 on Exler.ru.

The Russian media demonstrates a rising interest in emigration theme as well. There are articles about prominent artists who recently left Russia, sport stars and scientists who received grants from foreign sources or signed long-term contracts, and businessmen who moved abroad along with their families. Overall, there are a lot of signs that something new and unusual is going on. Some have called it "Putin decade exodus." I believe we are seeing a new emigration trend, and I will try to describe it in this paper. I will focus on the emigrants from Russia to the USA, but these findings could be used for future research of the Russian emigration to other countries.

# Research question

In this paper, I will explore if there is a new emigration trend forming in Russia, specifically around emigration from Russia to the USA. I will find out who these new emigrants are; how they arrive at their decision to emigrate; what reasons they provide for leaving Russia at this specific time; how they choose a new country, specifically the USA.

# Hypothesis

I believe that the emigration flow from Russia has changed since the last Presidential election in 2008. The significance of this change is that while the absolute number of emigrants is not high, the quality of the current emigrants is substantially different in comparison to the emigrants of previous waves. The new emigrants from Russia to the USA are mostly middle-class people, with families and financial resources, and their main motivations for emigrating are not economical. They have enough money to set up in a new country without engaging in low grade jobs or illegal activity. They are not looking for social service support or government benefits. Those who move to the USA, often enter with non-immigration visas first, and after several years they decide to stay (apply for green cards), which creates some difficulty for the official information on emigration and immigration statistics.

# Study Design and Data Collection

I conducted qualitative research designed as a case study. Most of the existing migration studies are quantitative, focused on numbers, which shows a broad picture of migration changes over the years. I would like to concentrate on details and individual features of

a very particular process of Russian middle-class emigration to the USA, which I believe is underestimated in its significance. Despite there being a modest number of emigrants (though that number is growing steadily) a closer look at those people can expose a serious issue for the Russian culture and its future; and these small emigration figures can turn into big problem very soon.

I found the respondents for the study in two ways. The first group was made up of people who were personal acquaintances as well as their friends and relatives (16 people); otherwise known as a snowball sampling technique. The second group was picked from internet forums for Russian speaking emigrants. I opened a topic with a short description of my research project and chose my target population (18 people) from those who responded. The total number of participants is 32 Russian-speaking people, age ranged from 35-63, emigrated (got an official immigration status) to the USA no earlier than 2008, 12 men and 20 women. Two people included in this group had not emigrated yet, but have a definitive intention of doing so I did not reject them because their responses seemed informative and useful.

## **Research Method**

A semi-structured in-depth interviewing method was used for the study. I collected initial data from the respondents, including their educational level, and family and professional status. Then, I conducted an open-question interview for about an hour with each respondent. Most of the interviews were conducted in person, if a respondent was reachable, but about 5 interviews were conducted via Skype and 2 by phone. Two respondents outside of the US were interviewed via email due to the time difference

between New York and Russia. In two cases I followed up with participants a few days after the main interview to clarify their stories.

All the interviews were conducted in Russian and digitally recorded with the participants' informed consent. During the interviews, I took notes cataloguing non-verbal behaviors of the study's participants.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature review**

According to recent data from the Population Division of the UN, about 244 million people live in a country that is different from their country of birth (<http://www.un.org/>). Every year, the rate of people migrating around the world grows, but it is still unclear why some people emigrate when others with the same socio-economic status stay in their places of origin. Specifically, contemporary Russian emigration remains an underexplored phenomenon. Most contemporary Russian sociologists study internal migration more than out of country emigration (Rybakovsky, 2001; Vechkanov, 2014; Zaslavskaya et al., 2008, Tishkov, 2008). World researches show general emigration figures, but very few look for the motivations of new emigrants beyond the traditional economic, political, or environmental refugees. The changed quality of emigrants in comparison with the previous XX Century waves\* matters as well.

“In addition to quantitative indicators, the quality of the migrating population is also important. However, the extremely meager official statistics on migrants describe only

sex, age, type of populated area, and places of arrival and departure (not the specific population center).” (2015 International Migration Report).

I tried to gather some articles about the new contemporary theories of migration as well as studies for new issues that have been observed in the current migration picture. Also, I was looking for research regarding the characteristics of Russian society and its comparison with American society.

Per XX century’s sociology studies, the first and most important reason for global migration was due to economic factors. The massive migration all over the world was caused by wars, financial crashes, revolutions and subsequent reforms which led to the impoverishment of certain groups of people. The second reason for migration was due to genocide and persecution of specific groups of people for their religious beliefs, nationality, etc. (Brettel & Hollifield, 2008; Collier, 2013, Lee Everett, 1966).

The processes of massive emigration from Russia (the former Soviet Union) in XX Century are traditionally distributed by four main spikes, or “Waves”. The First Wave was the post-revolutionary emigration, or so-called white émigré that went on in 1917-20. There were people mostly belonged to a very thin layer of educated and intelligent people in the country.

The total number of people in this wave was estimated to be between 2 and 5 million (the real numbers could not be counted thoroughly due to lack of documentation). If we look into demographic data, the Russian population in 1897 was estimated at 126,4 million of people, using the one and only Census in the Russian Empire. In 1913 the population was 170 million and contained 12.5 per cent of the Upper classes (Royalty, nobility, higher clergy); 1.5 per cent of Middle classes (Merchants, bureaucrats,

professionals); 4 per cent of Working classes (Factory workers, artisans, soldiers, sailors); and the rest 82 per cent of Peasants (Landed and landless farmers) (Lenin, 1963).

Considering that the absolute majority of the White Emigre Waive were from the upper classes, we can assume that up to 17% of the upper classes of society, including middle class, that just had started to form, had left the country.

After 1927, emigration opportunities were practically closed, and people could not leave the country freely and willingly.

The Second Wave was the process of emigration of displaced people during the Second World War and right after that. By the end of the Second World War 5.6 million of soviet people were out of their country (displaced persons, or DPs). Soviet DPs were the Second World War's largest displaced population (Fateev, 1999, Janco, 2012). Following the terms of the Yalta conference in 1945, the victorious troops established a special order for the soviet people to be separated from others and returned to the USSR. This way by the August of 1945 almost half of the displaced population had returned. Some of them who were not going to return misrepresented their origin and forged documents trying to avoid being forcibly taken back to the Soviet territory. The Second Wave was estimated to have from 300 000 to 1, 200 000 people and lasted from 1942 to 1948. The exact number could not been calculated (Fateev, 1999).

The Third Wave (1970-1980) contained mainly ethnic and political emigrants. From 1950 to 1970 there were years of so-called cold war between the western world and the soviet bloc, and emigration from USSR was basically prohibited. In the seventies, after the problem of civil rights in the USSR was exposed, the authorities were forced to relax the

emigration law. The third wave of emigration over the next 10 years was estimated at 300,000 people. (Semenov, 1997) Among them there were many political dissidents, world-famous musicians and artists, scientists and writers. They had left the Soviet Union in this period because of their disagreement with the authorities. It was the most significant loss for the Russian culture and science after the first emigration wave.

The Fourth Wave was the economic emigration in 90ies. After the USSR collapsed in 1991, the economic situation in the new Russia was harsh. Government financing of science, technology, medicine and production was almost cancelled; the inflation skyrocketed; salaries and savings turned into nothing. When the borders were opened, a lot of people left the country. According to official statistics, about 1.000.000 of people emigrated in the 90ies. (Batalova et al., 2010)

In recent years, there has been some talk about a new, Fifth wave of emigration.

Sergei Stepashin, the former head of Russia's Audit Chamber (before 2013), suggested that about 1.25 million people fled the country over the past few years. (Loiko, 2011).

Gennady Gudkov, the former chairman of the security committee of Duma said that an average of 96 thousand people was leaving each year (Fyodorov, 2012).

Official data about immigrants from countries of destination are controversial as well. For example, information about the number of people who legally got immigration visas/resident status and came into the USA are published on the Citizenship and Immigration Services website ([www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov)), but a huge number of people start their immigration process with non-immigrant visas. The average time to have their status changed to the permanent resident is about 3 to 6 years ([www.migrationpolicy.org](http://www.migrationpolicy.org)); so

that the real picture of current immigration trend we can see is having a gap no less than 3 years.

“Almost one-third of people living in Russia’s large cities have expressed the desire to leave the country” (Levada, 2015)

“Many skilled specialists feel a push to leave Russia because of lack of demand and poor funding for science, unsatisfactory research conditions (including technical conditions), low remuneration, and a lack of comfortable housing for the scientists who have enlarged the country’s intellectual potential”()

Ryazantsev (Ryazantsev et al., 2002) explored contemporary Labor Migration by Russian Young People. Number of Russian Citizens Between the Ages of 15 and 29 Who Took Permanent Residence Abroad, 1994–2006 increased from 1884 in 1991 to 26000 in 2006 per year. Russian statistics shows only some of these migration flows. Based on Rosstat (Federal Service for State Statistics) data, it is possible to determine the dynamics of young people’s movement abroad to find a permanent place of residence. This source of information does not reflect the full scale of young people’s emigration from Russia, since not all those who have gone abroad have been taken off the books in the passport offices of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. According to our calculations, no fewer than 166,500 people left the country from 2001 through 2006.

A second source of information about young people’s emigration from Russia is provided by the data of the Federal Migration Service. Available statistics provide evidence that the flow of young labor migrants is increasing, reaching 27,200 in 2006. This accounts only for job placements through licensed companies that hire labor. A substantial number

of labor migrants from Russia end up in the West on tourist visas and stay there unlawfully.

In addition, migration statistics fail to take into account the number of people who have signed a contract directly with an employer, received work visas, and went abroad on a completely legal basis. These migration flows are hidden from the official statistics, but can be estimated. The Federal Migration Service indicates that about 113,000 young people between the ages of sixteen and twenty-nine left Russia to seek work between 1994 and 2006.

The data cited, however, does not reflect the actual situation. Labor emigration by young people can be viewed as an iceberg, most of which is not visible to statistics. The Federal Migration Service, for example, reports that 6,200 college students went abroad during vacation in 2004. At the same time, the U.S. embassy alone issued no fewer than 10,000 visas to Russian college students who took part in various job programs that year.

The scale of emigration can be assessed indirectly by the available investment statistics. In 2009, Russian citizens spent \$178 million on foreign real estate. In the first quarter of 2010, the volume of the real estate deals increased by 26% to \$225 million. In the first three months of 2012, per official statistics of the Central Bank, more than \$400 million was invested in foreign real estate; by the end of 2013, the volume of purchases of real estate exceeded \$2 billion (11 times more than in 2009). A significant portion of transactions is not registered with Russian financial authorities. In 2010, Russians invested \$4 billion just in London real estate. And this doesn't include deals with offshore companies where one cannot trace investors," real estate investment manager and founder of the consulting portal <http://Indriksons.ru> told.

In the years 2014-2016, the Russian investment market has changed substantially due to a series of significant events (Russian financial crisis 2014; Ukrainian Crimea crisis 2014; Western sanctions; Russian anti-sanctions). The political and economic climate between Russia and Western countries had been damaged again. As the result, the foreign investments capital return has plummeted while capital outflow put Russia in the top five countries with foreign investments in the world.

“...Russian capitalists no longer repatriate their capital from abroad to Russia as eagerly as they did before.” [13]. In other words, money is leaving Russia and this trend has been increased significantly during the last three years.

The current emigration trend also involves a big change in the social standing of people who are emigrating.

According to the sociological center Levada-Center, 75% of those who left Russia in recent years have a higher education. Only 40% of emigrants in the previous wave had higher education. [6]. The age of these people is younger as compared to the previous Forth Wave – their mean age is 35 years while the previous mean was 48 years. [6]

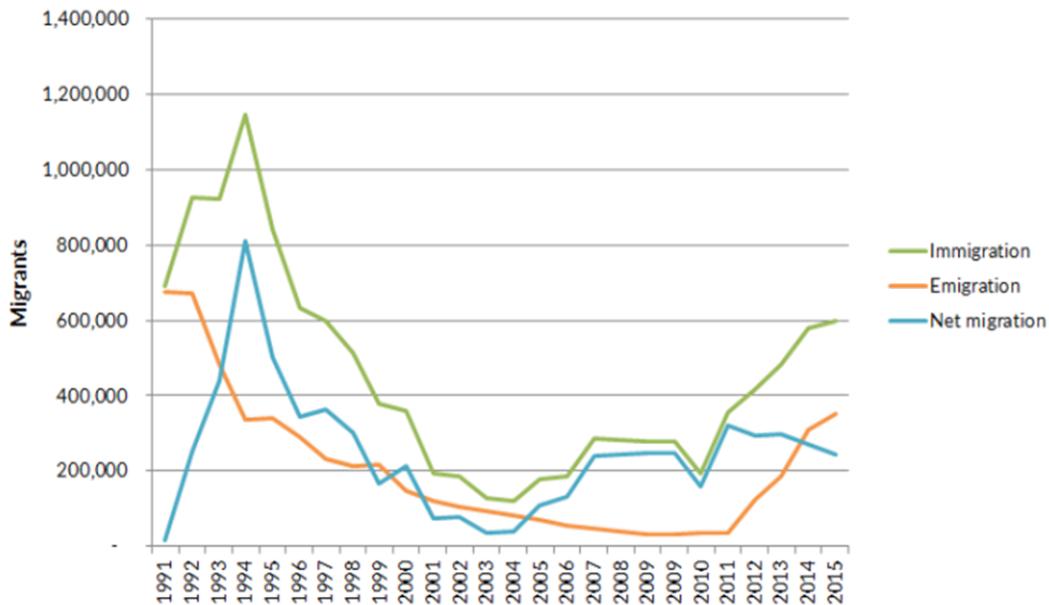
The graph 1 reflects yearly fluctuation of emigration flow in comparison to immigration flow, combined with net migration trend.

It is obvious that emigration is rising, but the immigration trend is growing at the same time, leading to the belief that Russia is not losing residents. Nevertheless, it makes sense to take a closer look at which people are coming into Russia and which people are leaving Russia.

Most of the immigrants are coming from the former soviet republics, such as Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, and countries of Caucasian Mountains,

Georgia, Armenia. The absolute majority of them are low skilled workers, who are looking for menial jobs with low skill requirements.

**Graph 1.**



<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/russia-migration-system-soviet-roots>

“Because immigration is not sufficiently controlled, the Russian economy has recently been filled with guest workers who do not speak Russian and do not have a profession, skills, or experience.”(40)

They arrive without families and send money abroad, to their wives and kids back home. So as a result, Russia is losing businessmen and scientists, and is instead getting low grade workers and housekeepers. Also, their money does not go to the Russian economy but flowing abroad as they send it to the families back home. For example, money transfers in favor of individuals from Russia to CIS-countries (the main recipients are Tajikistan, 18.4%, Uzbekistan 14.5%, and Ukraine 10.4%) increased by 55%,

totaling \$12.6 billion in 2008 in comparison to \$8.1 in 2007. An average remittance increased by 12% to \$698. ([www.cbr.ru/eng/statistics](http://www.cbr.ru/eng/statistics))

“In 2012, for example, of the 168,236 people who received permission to work in Saint Petersburg only 548 (0.326 percent) had professional skills.” (40)

“The largest streams of refugees and forced migrants came from Tajikistan (185,300 people), Kazakhstan (160,200 people), Uzbekistan (140,400 people), Georgia (119,200 people), and Azerbaijan (104,100 people). As of the beginning of 1996, they accounted for 72.8 percent of all refugees and migrants... People with higher education, unfinished higher education, and specialized secondary education accounted for 48.4 percent of refugees.” (40) In other words, more than half of the arriving people do not have any education beyond some high school. From the UN statistic, the number of immigrants to Russia with higher education is approximately 20%. (41).

“Russia’s immigration policy cannot copy those of the United States and other Western countries because domestic migration has ethnic characteristics, including the very low qualifications of immigrants and very high qualifications of emigrants (hundreds of thousands of candidates and doctors of sciences).”(40)

“Russia is a recipient country with respect to the CIS and a donor country with respect to the countries of the far abroad.”(40)

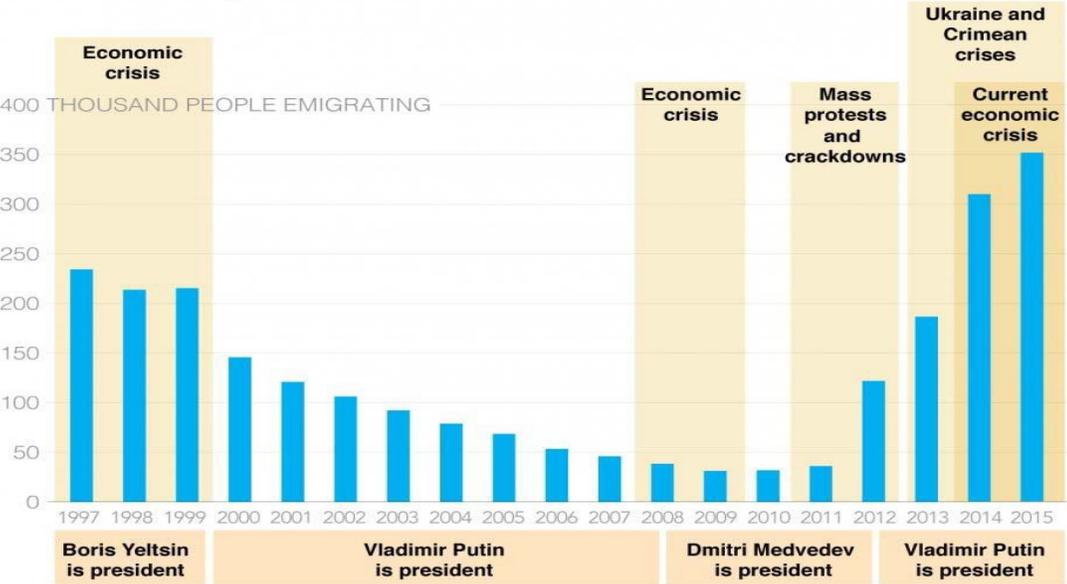
On the other hand, “In 1991 – 95, 44.8 percent of Russian migrants to the United States had higher education... People with a higher education accounted for 50.8 percent of emigrants to France, 51.3 percent of those to Australia, and 56 percent of those to Canada... In the past three years, 1.3 million people have left the country. Of these, 40 percent are highly qualified specialists.”

The graph 2 reflects yearly fluctuation of emigration flow combined with the timeline of some notorious events in Russian internal and foreign policy.

**Graph 2.**

**Russian Emigration and Key Events**

In the past five years, a series of economic and political crises erupted, driving the current rise in emigration from Russia. Before then, Presidents Vladimir Putin and Dmitri Medvedev had managed to keep emigration in check by developing Russia's economy and political base, as well as Russian identity.



Source: RosStat

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The level of emigration in 2015 is almost twice as high compared to 1997: 350,000 vs. 220,000 people. After Medvedev’s election (Putin was working as a Prime Minister during this term and actually stayed at the head of the country), and especially after raising president’s term up to 6 years, Russian society came to understand that they had received another long-term ruler (8,17,19). The conservative part of society seems to be okay with it – for them it means stability and consistency, which they have missed terribly during the first ten years after the USSR had collapsed.

But, for the certain part of society who was looking for democracy and freedom, having a long-term ruler again felt differently.

In addition to political issues, let's look at what happens with funding for science, education, sport, art and other essentials for quality of life in Russia. Quality of life was named as the most important reason people emigrate (1, 5,8,16,17).

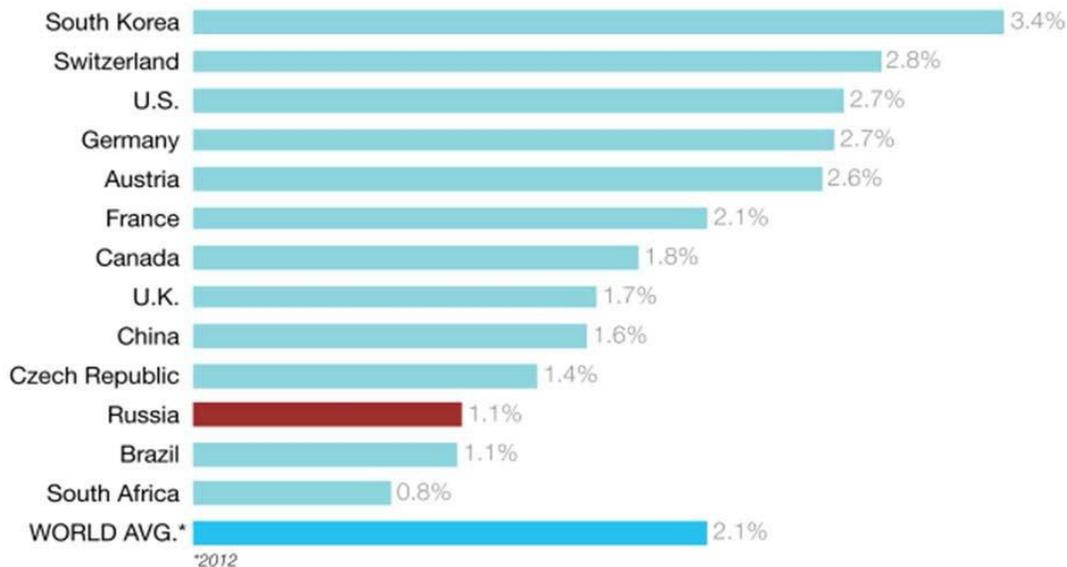
Let's look at the Graph 3. It shows the comparison between expenditures for Research and Development by various countries. The former Soviet Union spent 2.5% of GDP on Research and Development, putting it on the level of top 3 countries.

“in the United States, the U.S. budget finances 50 – 60 percent of science, state budgets finance 20 – 30 percent, and private investment finances 10 – 15 percent” (Vechkanov, 2010)

**Graph 3.**

**Expenditures for Research and Development (R&D)**

The amount of money directed to research and development is one indicator of a country's technological advancement. This shows the average yearly percentage of GDP that selected countries set aside for R&D from 2005-2013.



Source: World Bank World Development Indicators

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In Russia, private businesses do not invest in finance science programs, because they believe that the mission of their capital is to make profits (not 9 percent per year as in is the case with the rest of the world, but 50 – 250 percent or more).

In addition, the post-Soviet government does not finance applied science, including development activities. For example, the All-Union Academy of Agricultural Sciences (now the Russian Academy of Agricultural Sciences—Trans.) has to find funds from nonbudgetary sources: international contracts and nonbudgetary contracts with regional administrations and economic entities of the Russian Federation.

“The country currently does not have practical social and economic planning. The Russian Federation’s Ministry of Education and Science does not know the economy’s actual requirements for skilled workers and therefore does not give professional educational institutions targets for the graduation of specialists.” (40).

As a result, a lot of new engineers and scientists just cannot find a decent job after they have completed their degrees in the home country.

It takes a certain kind of dedication for the Russian Universities graduates with majors in hard sciences and technology like Biology, Chemistry, Physic, Math, Engineering, to stay in science and research, and not give it up for business – or go abroad, take the PhD degree programs and very likely not came back. “Russian nuclear physicist Vladimir Alimov, who now works at the University of Toyama in Japan, said he couldn't survive on the \$450 monthly salary of a senior researcher at the Institute of Physical Chemistry of the Russian Academy of Sciences.” (Loiko, 2011). “In 2011, out of 1.5 million young specialists, only one-third were working in their specialization, and about 20 percent were filling in the ranks of the unemployed.” (Vechkanov, 2012).

Frustration and disappointment in the quality of life are not the only reasons to leave a country. If a person's core values substantially differ from the majority, his natural desire is to find another environment, according to the Attraction-Selection-Attrition theory, or ASA (Schneider, 1987, 1992). The theory was developed by Ben Schneider. It describes a process of interaction a person and a job environment. Recently, the theory was applied for to the dynamic between an individual and a state (Tartakovsky and Sagiv, 2004; Tartakovsky et al, 2016). The model is based on the proposition that it is the collective characteristics of people that define an organization as well as society. Through the dynamic ASA process, organizations or societies become more homogeneous.

The Attraction Phase is the process of selection – people find organizations attractive when they see a semblance between their own characteristics and values to that of the organization. The Selection Phase is the recruitment process, when an organization hires individuals whose values are compatible with the values of the organization, and screens out those whose values are inconsistent. The last phase is Attrition, which outlines that the unsuitable people would be more likely to leave the organization/society. Hence, the people who do not fit, are leaving/forced to leave (Kristof- Brown & Guay, 2011).

In the study of emigration intentions among the Russian Jews (Tartakovsky, Patrakov et al, 2017), the researchers proved that an attitude towards the country of residence is a stronger predictor of emigration intentions rather than attitude towards the country of destination. In other words, people are developing emigration intentions mostly because

they feel uncomfortable in their country of origin; and only after that do they start to consider the idea of going to a new country and look for that countries' positive factors.

This study also confirmed that people whose value preferences are similar to preferred values of their country of residence, should report a lower desire to leave the country.

The personal values that are substantially different in comparison to the home society can increase the emigration motivation.

The Theory of Values is being developed by Shalom Schwartz (Schwartz, 2006; Schwartz et al., 2012) from 1992. At the heart of the theory is the idea that values are culturally universal. Values can be measured with a questionnaire and the results make cultural profiles of basic values, that can be used for human societies characteristics.

Schwartz questionnaire was used for analyzing and ranging values of inhabitants of 77 states all over the world. (Schwartz, 2008).

Schwartz noticed that countries are not homogeneous with common culture for everyone. The research results depend on what groups of people were taken to the research. By correlation comparison between the groups of participants the author concluded that there is an existing intrinsic unity of values hierarchy for one country.

After the multidimensional scaling of 10 basic values, Schwartz created a two-dimensional map of 7 cultural zones — Harmony, Egalitarianism, Intellectual and Affective Autonomy, Mastery, Hierarchy, and Conservatism (Schwartz et al, 2008). The map can be used as a tool of a visual assessment of a relative resemblance or difference of structure of values in presented cultures.

In comparing 22 samples from West Europe with 6 samples from USA, Schwartz and Ros found significant differences in 6 cultural zones. (Schwartz, Ros, 1995).

Egalitarianism, Intellectual Autonomy, and Harmony are higher in Western Europe; Mastery, Hierarchy and Embeddedness are higher in the USA.

Hence, collectivism is more valued in USA than it is in West Europe. It is consistent with an emphasis on religious, family-conservative values and non-tolerance of deviations, something that has been noted by other authors and researchers of American culture (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, Tipton, 1986; Etzioni, 1993).

Since 2000, the Schwartz Method is being used for Global European Social Research; Russia has been participating since 2006 ([www.europeansocialsurvey.org](http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org)). It is interesting that the position of Russia on the Schwartz's map is substantially closer to the USA than to most of Western European countries, which may be one of the positive factors of the decision to move to the USA for potential Russian emigrants. It would be interesting to conduct a study exploring value differences in Russian emigrants and non-emigrants as well as the Russian middle-class values versus other social classes, and I believe it is a fruitful direction for future research.

Postnikova (Postnikova et al., 2015) conducted research based on Schwartz's methodology. She got a description of an average Russian today - it is a person with a higher level of caution in comparison to inhabitants of other European countries; higher need of security and defense from a powerful state; with less expressed needs for creativity, freedom, self-direction, and stimulation. He prefers less risk and does not aspire to a hedonistic style of life. At the same time, an average person in Russia is looking for wealth and power as well as personal success and social recognition; more so than an average European person. Hence, he/she is less interested in benevolence, equality, and justice than the average Western European.

The data was gathered in the different regions in Russia; 695 persons from 18 to 83 years participated.

Magun (Magun et al., 2008) found two major subtypes in their study of the Russian society's value profile based on Schwartz' methodology, The first and the biggest (78%) is characterized by the following: the most important value (10 range) is Security; then Universalism and Benevolence (9 and 8 ranges); then Self-Direction, then Tradition. The less important values are Achievement (6), Conformity (5), Power (4) Wealth (3) Hedonism (2), and Stimulation (1). But the Russian community has about 22% of people (second subtype) whose order of values is substantially different. In the first place is Self-Direction, then Hedonism, Stimulation and Benevolence. The last places are taken by Security, Achievement, Conformity, and Tradition. This group's values are very similar to an average Western countries' value profile.

While the previous emigration waves were primarily economical or refugee, and the push-factors were playing the main role, I believe the fifth wave is mostly a planned move defined by the pull-factors. The process of adaptation in a new country is highly depended upon whether a person voluntarily left his/her country of origin or was forced out. The study of Refugees from the Former Soviet Union (Singer et al., 2008) has explored the differences in adaptation process between refugees and planned emigrants. Occupational adjustment is challenging for all migrants, but unlike refugees, voluntary migrants are better able to be strategic about the timing of the move or the location of resettlement.

In their study of skilled emigrants from the United Kingdom, India, and South Africa to New Zealand, Tabor (Tabor et al., 2015) explored intrapersonal and social factors of

emigration. The researchers stated that a process of emigration starts well before the actual move – a potential emigrant needs to consider not only his/her perspective but also the partner and immediate or extended family's opinion. The key factors of the migration decision of skilled migrants are Quality of Life (work/life balance, lifestyle, language, safety and job opportunities), Cultural Similarity, and Social Connections. These are more complicated than a Better Economic Condition factor in the classical push-pull theory. Only 11% of participants already have a job offer with the same salary level as they do at the home country; others are ready to look for a job once they emigrate. The time of emigration is the result of the many factors, but researchers define the concept of a catalyst, or the final straw – some issue, or situation after which the decision was made, and desire becomes reality.

## **Chapter 3.**

### **Findings**

The study was conducted in March 2015-March 2016. The people in the sample were from New York NY, Washington DC, Miami FL, San Mateo CA, Moscow Russia, Saint-Petersburg Russia, Nizhniy Novgorod, Russia.

The total number of participants is 32 Russian-speaking people, age range 35-63 (25-60 at the time of emigration process had started), who emigrated or started the emigration process to the USA no earlier than 2008, 12 men and 20 women. Two people haven't emigrated yet, but their responses seemed informative and useful.

Interviewing started with basic demographical questions.

## Age, Education, Family status

### Education at the moment of emigration

|                 | Some high school or less | High School, professional education (non-degree) | Bachelor degree, College degree (4 or 5 years of college) | MA, MBA (6 or more years of college) | Ph. D., MD (8 or more years of tertiary education) |
|-----------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| Total sample 32 | 0                        | 2                                                | 15                                                        | 10                                   | 5                                                  |
| Men 12          | 0                        | 1                                                | 6                                                         | 3                                    | 2                                                  |
| Women 20        | 0                        | 1                                                | 9                                                         | 7                                    | 3                                                  |

### Age at the moment of emigration

|                 | 25-35 | 36-48 |
|-----------------|-------|-------|
| Total Sample 32 | 22    | 10    |
| Men 12          | 9     | 3     |
| Women 20        | 13    | 7     |

### Family status at the moment of emigration

|                 | Single or Divorced, no children or children live separately | Single or Divorced, have children living together | Married or have a partner, no children | Married, adult children living separately | Married, have children | Widowed, have children |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Total Sample 32 | 7                                                           | 5                                                 | 6                                      | 4                                         | 9                      | 1                      |
| Men 12          | 5                                                           | 0                                                 | 2                                      | 3                                         | 2                      | 0                      |
| Women 20        | 2                                                           | 5                                                 | 4                                      | 1                                         | 7                      | 1                      |

Most of the studied participants are educated people, 30 out of 32 people (93% of the sample) hold a college degree or higher. Only two participants didn't graduate, but they are very accomplished: one woman is a successful hair artist and one man is a businessman who sold his Russian business for good money when he emigrated.

The age at the time of emigration was an important factor in the decision-making process. All participants left Russia in their adulthood, and emigrant adaptation processes for adults are more stressful and take longer than for children (20).

All of them carefully weighted their prospects.

"Yes, I was thinking I am too old to start a new life... I was 35. But eventually a thought came to my mind that my life experience, as well as my personal and financial independence, could be an advantage. I still think I am right. My 14-year son learned

English faster than me, but that is not the only thing that makes a successful emigrant,”  
– said Igor, a businessman from Miami, FL.

“Back in Russia, a woman in her 30ies is a middle-age woman. I used to think that it is just too late for me to do this or that. I should be married, have kids, should not embark on an adventure... what nonsense! I am young here. I can do whatever I want without paying any attention to what they say!” (Natalia, a hairdresser from New York.)

“It was amazing how I felt when I went to college here. It was like I suddenly went 15 years back in time. I needed to get a local accountant certificate, so I took classes, and I was not the oldest person there. In USA, people are not prejudiced about age, or just do not make a big deal about someone’s age, that’s one of the things that I like here.” (Anna, an accountant from Washington DC).

12 people in the sample group are single or divorced, 1 woman is a widow. 19 people have a spouse or a partner, and 15 have children living with them. In total, 25 people (78% of the sample) were not single – they emigrated with a spouse and/or their children. Most of the participants considered their family to be a powerful support for them, and it was helpful in dealing with emigration complications.

“I am not sure if I could get it done if I was single. I did it for my family, and my family gave me a great deal of support”, said Boris, a businessman who moved to New York in 2010 with an investor’s visa. He has a wife and 2 sons, 10 and 11.

“It is probably easier to move somewhere when you are alone, but it is definitely harder emotionally – I just need to have someone to talk to, to help make decisions, to share responsibility. We have gotten stronger as a family throughout these years.” – Marina, an

engineer, moved to Washington DC with her husband, an architect, in 2011. They won the Green Card Lottery.

However, not all the participants kept their families intact when they emigrated.

“My family did not pass the “emigration test”. When we finally got permanent resident status, my wife left me. She said we became different people. I agreed, emigration changed us. Nevertheless, it was painful.” – said Eugeny, an artist from Brooklyn, an emigrant since 2009.

“When I had got an opportunity to emigrate, I asked my boyfriend if he wants to go with me. He agreed initially, but that meant we should get married, then he doubted if he can find a job, then some other things just emerged... finally, we decided to split up. I moved as a single person and I don’t regret it. I am a different person now,” – said Lisa, an emigrant since 2012.

### **Reasons for emigration**

The central part of the interviewing was exploring the main reasons for emigration. I organized all reasons in two tables – push factors and pull factors. I found out that the reasons for emigration/immigration are not unique to each participant, and there is more than one reason in each case.

**A frequency distribution for the reasons of emigration (prospective emigration), push factors**

|                 | Quality of life in Russia , ecological problems | Don't like Russian Government policy/ social climate | Corruption /bad business or professional environment | Could not stay in initial profession because of low salary/economical reason | Could not find a spouse/ start a family | Don't like weather/climate in Russia | Political/Criminal danger, life threat |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Total Sample 32 | 32                                              | 31                                                   | 28                                                   | 20                                                                           | 11                                      | 11                                   | 8                                      |
| Men 12          | 12                                              | 11                                                   | 12                                                   | 8                                                                            | 3                                       | 4                                    | 5                                      |
| Women 20        | 20                                              | 20                                                   | 16                                                   | 12                                                                           | 8                                       | 7                                    | 3                                      |

**A frequency distribution for the reasons of immigration (prospective immigration), pull factors**

|              | Better life in general for the emigrated person | Political and personal freedom | Business perspectives/security | Better life in general for children/family | Work/ Education opportunities in the USA | Just wanted a new life | Medicine quality and social security in the USA | Get married/started a family |
|--------------|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Total Sample | 32                                              | 30                             | 27                             | 25                                         | 20                                       | 18                     | 16                                              | 13                           |

|             |    |    |    |    |    |   |    |    |
|-------------|----|----|----|----|----|---|----|----|
| 32          |    |    |    |    |    |   |    |    |
| Men<br>12   | 12 | 12 | 8  | 7  | 8  | 9 | 4  | 3  |
| Women<br>20 | 20 | 18 | 19 | 18 | 12 | 9 | 12 | 10 |

Even if the participants were successful in Russia financially, they said they were unhappy because of corruption, poor business and professional culture, social climate, or inability to stay in profession that they initially get. Out of 32 people in the sample, 12 were working within professional field of their education in Russia (37% of the sample). They were financial professionals (5), IT specialists (3), artist (1), scientists (3). The others had to change their career to make a decent income.

“I was educated as an engineer, but when I graduated in 1997, the best salary that I could get was about \$250 per month. After two years of trying I gave up and went into sales. I cannot say my education was totally useless; but when I was young I wanted to create machines, not just sell them. I finally built my own company which I sold when I left Russia. It was a wholesale company, we had been selling agriculture equipment for 13 years.” – says Boris, Florida.

“My educational background is in psychology and teaching. I still regret that it didn’t happen in my life. Now it is too late – most of my professional life I worked as an advertising specialist in a real estate company. It just paid well.” – says Lina, an emigrant from 2013.

Those who didn’t want to change their profession struggled.

I would like to introduce Anton's case as an illustration.

**Case study: Anton**

*Anton has a Ph.D. in neurobiology and is currently a research scientist in a one of the most prominent American universities. Anton completed his first degree in biology in Kursk, Russia in 2002 and tried to stay in science for the following 6 years. When he realized there was no way for him to do it in his home city, he applied to "aspirantura" (graduate school), went to Moscow, got a full-time position of "laborant" (technician) at the Center of Biomedical Studies and a part time lecturer position at a university, and tried to survive. It was not easy – the rental price for an apartment in Moscow was \$1000 when his salary was less than \$500. He moonlighted as a night cab driver and waiter, gave private lessons in computing and biology, but it was not enough. He was exhausted and had no resources to complete the dissertation in this condition. In 2007 he found an educational grant in the USA, applied to graduate school and was accepted for 3 years with paid educational expenses, stipend, and medical insurance. In 2008 he left Russia with his wife and their new-born child. He completed the grant program, and the Lab where he had been working made him a job offer. In the next couple of years, he got a permanent resident status.*

*"I am just happy to be here. I am a scientist, that's what I ever wanted. And I can have a normal life on my salary even now, when it is still not so big. It's ok, because I know in a few years I will make way more, like my colleagues, university professors and researchers. I remember the years when I tried to make a scientific career at Moscow as a nightmare. I don't know how many years it would take to get an opportunity just to keep a one decent job instead of three. My bosses at Moscow started their career in the USSR; at that time, the Soviet system paid a great deal of attention to core science, it supported researchers, but that time was over. I was not needed by Russian science anymore. I could go to some business to sell something, and I would make good money probably, but I did not want it. Neurobiology is much more exciting and I got my dream job."*

20 people (63%) from the sample were forced to change their professional career. They were teachers, scientists, doctors, engineers. They became accountants, businessmen, or sales professionals.

It was not surprising that all the emigrants were looking for better life for their families and themselves. This reason was voiced by 100% of participants. The concept of better life, however, is not restricted by apartment walls, or house fences. They wanted to belong to

a better society, better environment, and it was not possible even if a person could overcome their financial challenges.

### **Case study: Lisa**

*Lisa is in her late 30s; she is currently living in San Mateo, California. She arrived there 6 years ago with an H1B visa; now she has a permanent resident card and is going to apply for citizenship. Lisa left her family in Saint Petersburg – mother, father, grandmother, and a 20-year-old sister. Her parents are in their 60s, divorced, and have their separate apartments. They are both working and socially active, so Lisa is not worried about them too much; she says that once they are older she will have enough money to provide good assistance for them. She is right – as an IT professional in Silicon Valley, she can now make approximately 10 times more than she would have back in Russia, even though she was well off when she was living there.*

*In Saint Petersburg Lisa had her own apartment and a good job. But she realized that she wanted to leave when she went on a business trip to California. She said that she felt immediately that is the place where she wanted to live. “You know,” she says “we had the same computers in Saint Petersburg, but now when I finish my workday I come out to a quiet, clean street, drive my car 10 minutes and go home where if I meet my neighbors they are smiling to me even if I don’t know them. I would never get this quality of life in Saint Petersburg, never. I would make a great renovation in my apartment there, or might change it to a different apartment in better place, but anyway I should see the same ruined streets, buy food of questionable quality and use uncomfortable public transport. I had a boyfriend there, but when I’ve got a job offer from a company in California, I was sure that I had to go.”*

*Lisa does not watch Russian TV and does not like to discuss Russia’s politics. She is interested in what happens in Russia only in regards to her family; and she prefers to speak English more than Russian now - her current boyfriend is not Russian and she speaks Russian only to her parents once a week via Skype.*

*“I am not proud of what is going on with Russia,” she says. “They are building some horrible monster instead of a normal country again. I don’t want to be a part of it.”*

*She sold her apartment in Saint-Petersburg last year and put the down payment in her house in San Mateo. I asked her in which circumstances she would go back. She said that it is scarcely possible in observable future. “My first years in the USA were not easy. I spoke English but not as well as the natives, I missed my family and my friends awfully, and with an H1B visa I felt myself like a slave who cannot leave his master willingly. I worked hard and waited because I was sure that it would get better. It is now. I like my life as is, I moved on, and I do not want to look back.”*

When I started the interview process, I did not expect that 40% of women in my sample will adduce inability to get married or to find a partner in Russia as an emigration reason. They are good-looking, educated, healthy and independent women. I don't have a typical "mail-order bride" in my sample, they belong to a different social and cultural stratum and I did not include them initially. Nevertheless, better marriage prospects came up in nearly half of women's interviews.

### **Inna**

*Inna is in her mid-40<sup>s</sup>. She was an economist in Moscow, when she has no financial problems – she had a good salary and owned two apartments, one of which she rented out. She was divorced and her daughter was 15 years old.*

*Inna had been trying to find a husband in Moscow for about of 10 years before her emigration – she socialized a lot, used dating websites, even paid for a matchmaking service, but she was not successful. She said a woman after 35 with a child is just not a marriage material in Russia. It is a common thought there that there is not enough men and a surplus of women, so Russian men in their 40<sup>s</sup> are looking for girls in 20<sup>s</sup>. Inna finally registered at an international dating website and met an American man, who asked her to marry him soon. She came to the USA in 2012. She took her daughter with her, and in less than in a year gave birth to another daughter. At the same time Inna had got a CPA certificate of a local college and started her own business; that, along with her rent income from her Moscow apartments, gave her financial independence in USA. In 2015, she divorced her husband and got married again. Her last husband is a widower with two sons. Inna said she finally found her soulmate, and she is happy now. Her oldest daughter went to college already, and Inna now is living at her husband's house with their 3 youngest kids. She also said she has no doubts if something goes wrong, she can divorce again and will not stay alone for a long time.*

Inna's story is quite unique, but I found a certain familiarity in the other women's stories in my research: they felt themselves unwanted, rejected, and old in their motherland. Their emigration changed it. They stated the American society is less prejudiced towards aging, more open, and they can feel young here again.

Another story is about Russian gays, who had no chances for a family in Russia.

### **Alex**

*Alex is a physician. Alex is also gay. He always wanted a family and kids, but for obvious reasons it was impossible in Moscow. He came to USA in 2008, got enrolled to a residential program in a*

*teaching hospital, and met Dmitry, who was Russian as well. They got married officially in 2015. At the time of the interview, they were living in Manhattan and raising 3 kids. How come? Initially, they were going to adopt only one child. They found a 2-year old girl in the Ukraine who was left in orphanage by her alcoholic parents, but when they started the adoption process, they found out that the girl had a cousin – a girl of the same age and in the same situation. The girls' mothers were sisters and both were alcoholics. After that, they were informed the second girl has an older brother who was living in another orphanage in Kiev. They adopted all three children and brought them to USA. The kids did not talk and the girls did not walk. When I met them, the kids looked like any average American kids of the same age. Alex said there is still huge problems with their development, but he and Dmitry were carefully optimistic.*

*I asked Alex why he did not emigrate earlier to another country which could accept him as a refugee – for example, Denmark recognized a legal relationship of the gay couples from 1989, Netherlands in 2001, Canada in 2005 etc. Alex said, he was hoping that the gay rights would be recognized in Russia, but the recent years eliminated the hope. “the Russian society went into a different direction than I had hoped for. It became a lot less democratic, and more patriarchic. I didn't want to wait anymore. I could have waited for it all my life there and still be alone.”*

Almost all participants noticed that social climate in Russia had changed in the recent years. The first ten years after the USSR collapsed, the society became more open, democratic, and liberal. But in the last ten years, there was a significant recurrence of the closed, soviet-like mentality which dramatically differed from the mentality of the new Russian emigrants. The next case illustrated it.

### **Case Study: Alina**

*Alina already has her American Passport. Her father is an American. She was born in Moscow, where her father worked in 1980-1982, but her parents did not get married and Alina was raised by her mother as an average Russian kid. Nevertheless, she and her father kept their relationship, and when Alina was a teenager he filed a petition for her American citizenship. Alina came to the USA and stayed for 4 years; she got her bachelor in finance and even got some work experience through a summer internship. But when she was 22, she went back to Moscow – her boyfriend, who she dated since their schoolyears, proposed, and he did not want to go to the USA.*

*Alina got married, gave birth two children and everything was going on well.*

*She started to think about moving to the USA again several years ago, when her 4-years old son went to a kindergarten.*

*“He is a sensitive boy,” – Alina says. – “He did not like to fight, but their teacher did not pay attention when the other kids got aggressive. I already had two episodes when my son got back home with bruises and scratches and I could not do anything about it.”*

*Alina also got worried about some issues with educational program.*

*“They make our kids memorize war songs and put on them a uniform when they prepared the Victory Day show. My grandfather was a war veteran, I great deal respect the WW2, but I do not want the militarization for small kids and I do not want to see my son in the uniform and with a weapon, even though it is just for play...”*

*For Alina's husband these problems don't look like problems at all. But as a businessman he is very annoyed by the level of corruption in Moscow he needs to deal with. He wants a better future for their kids.*

*Currently, they are in the process of getting a Green Card for Alina's husband and planning to move in the USA next year. She and her husband are 35 years old now, they have savings and Alina's father promised to help. Alina speaks English fluently and has American education. They are optimistic about their future in the USA, and the main reason they are leaving is a social climate and mentality they want to raise their children in.*

Two people in my sample did not emigrate even though they have the same issues and concerns as the emigrants. One of the stories I would like to introduce.

### **Case study: Irina**

*Irina, 54, is a biologist. She started her career in 1987, right before the Soviet Union had collapsed. She says she has no sales skills, so even in hardest times – in nineties – she preferred to do what she liked. She supported herself and her family by moonlighting as a tutor, although for many years she had no vacations or holidays. She is married, her daughter is 28 years old now. Her parents are retired, and her mother has Alzheimer's. They are all living together in a spacious four-bedroom apartment – a common property of the family – in Saint-Petersburg.*

*Her husband has not been working for almost 10 last years – he lost his job in finance during the crisis of 2008 and could not find an equivalent position ever since; he started to drink a lot. He tried to work as an entrepreneur, Irina has been helping him to find a job through friends and acquaintances, sometimes he even goes to interviews, but it's very unlikely he would get back to his old normal life. When he was working, he could save a good amount of his earnings, but throughout his years of unemployment it is almost gone. He has never been officially diagnosed with depression, but he probably has it. However, he does not want to go to a psychiatrist. He spends his days lying on the couch with a beer and watching TV. He likes political shows, and now he and Irina are barely talking – their points of view are too far from each other on too many issues. Irina's husband changed his former neutral attitude to the Russian foreign and internal policy and now he mostly supports it. In 2014, when Crimea was taken by Putin's army, Irina and her husband argued a lot, and they did not find any consensus – they just stop talking.*

*They are not divorced – he has no place to live, and she cannot leave as well – her parents need her to stay, and they do not want to move from the apartment where they have lived more than 40 years.*

*Irina's daughter graduated as an economist and works for a private company; she is not married. Her salary does not allow her to afford a separate place of living: renting an apartment in Russia is not simple – there are no laws to defend tenants and one can be evicted whenever the landlord decides he does not want you to live there anymore. She does not have enough savings for buying an apartment and mortgage rates are too high for her income. She has a boyfriend; when*

*they find an apartment to rent they will probably move together, but for now she is living with parents.*

*Irina's parents are in their 80s. Social services in Russia are not good, especially for the elderly, particularly those with chronic diseases like Irina's mother. The opportunity to live separately for those who have no children are rare, and a home assistance system almost does not exist. Irina does not want to hear about the idea of moving her parents to a nursing home – they have a very bad reputation and she does not trust them.*

*Irina is working as a researcher and professor in the Saint-Petersburg State University. She holds a Ph.D. degree; her manuscripts are regularly published in journals. She is also regularly looking for personal grants in Russia and abroad, as an independent researcher, and it is her main source of income. The University pays Irina a salary of 23,000 rubles per month, equivalent to \$396.50. As an advanced researcher and publishing author she gets a monthly bonus – additionally about 7,000 rubles, or \$120. Scientists in Russia do not earn good salaries, so when Irina gave me these figures I was not surprised. However, something interesting attracted my attention: The Rector of the University recently published an article that reported an average salary of university employee about*

*70,000 rubles. Irina grins: "it is probably because of his salary, which is more than ten times higher than ours." She spends between 3 and 6 months annually working on grants in Finland and Sweden, so that the rest of the year she lives in Saint Petersburg with her family and working for the University.*

*When I asked Irina if she consider emigration as an option, she said: "I think about it every day, but it will probably never happen. I should have done it many years ago, when I was young, my husband was normal and my parents were healthy. I regret that I stayed."*

*From time to time she still gets job offers from Europe and USA, her work is prominent in her research area, but she feels too much pressure from her family; they want her to stay in Russia and not change anything. Irina has no will power to confront them.*

*"Graduate students and young researchers are leaving every year, of course," says Irina. "The bests of them have no reasons to stay, considering all open opportunities. When I was in their age, I believed in the future – I was sure that new Russia will be better place to live very soon. So huge a disappointment now it is."*

*Irina does not complain or whine. She is used to working a lot, she is organized, experienced, and an accomplished person. However, she just does not like the system where she is forced to live. "They are lying," she says. "The Rector is lying about salaries that we allegedly get, the management of the house where I live is lying about money that they spent for renovation this year, the Saint-Petersburg government is lying about the budget for small business support... we are living in deception. Last year there was an election to legislative assembly in Saint-Petersburg, I did not want to go because I don't believe that my voice means anything, but my husband went. He was very surprised when he found out that he, and me, and our daughter and even my parents had already voted! At least we were listed as voted... he made a big argument*

*and finally, they stated that mistake was made and he could vote, but in general that is the system.”*

*I asked Irina if she would go to vote in the municipal elections this year. She said yes but added that it is just to be sure that her vote would not be used by somebody else. “I do not believe them, at all. I will vote against everyone” she tells.*

*I asked Irina what she would say if her daughter decided to emigrate. “I would support it without any doubt,” she answered. “There is no future for her in Russia. For me as well, but it is too late.”*

Irina is not the only one who concerned about the age issue. Almost everyone in my group had doubts if it is reasonable to emigrate if you are not a young person. I believe there is a lot of those who chose not to just because of age. However, the oldest participants who took the risk said that it was right decision and the more time goes by the more certain they are. The health issues related with age are not the least reason of this certainty.

#### **Case study: Vadim**

*Vadim is 60, he is in an emigration process through family visa – his son is an American citizen. Vadim is a music teacher and he is going to work as a teacher in USA. He is living alone – his wife passed away due to cancer about 10 years ago. “I am afraid of aging in loneliness. You know how Russian elderly live. They are not secure; the government does not develop any real support system. Social workers are available only for 1-degree disabled and with a lot of restrictions. The pensions are so small that one cannot survive without support from children, if they are willing to help. The medical services... when my wife was terminally ill, I could not get painkillers in time because of the meaningless bureaucracy. She suffered a lot. I cannot think about it even today, it is too painful. I am still strong, so I can build up my retirement fund while I’m waiting for American citizenship and the pension is available. I can live with my son and his family at first, then at some point I can move to a designated community for seniors using the money that I can get for my Moscow apartment.” Vadim rationally thinks that for his son it will be more convenient as well, since he is very concerned about him being along in Russia.*

Most of the participants were concerned about the parents they left behind. There seems to be no universal decision which is good for everyone. For each family it is a complicated process and there is a lot of options to be considered. Some of my participants think they

might invite the parents later to live with them. Some decide they can make better money in USA and pay for the high quality home-aid for their elderly when the time comes.

The quality of healthcare and the lack of social support concern the participants not only not just regarding their parents. The next case demonstrates it.

### **Case study: Elena**

*Elena's family left for the US about 25 years ago, but they decided to stay in 2010 only. It took so long because her husband was an employee of Russian section of the UN. They were here on G4 visas, but in 2010 they applied for green cards, and in 2015 they got their American passports. Elena and her husband have 2 children. Their daughter Mila, 20, is a student at NYU, and the older daughter Maya, 24, has a disability – she is autistic. Maya's condition is the main reason why Elena's family has finally decided not to go home after UN contract is terminated. They had been thinking about it on and off, but in 2010 they visited Moscow with the children after a long absence, and this journey changed their way of thinking.*

*Elena said: "An attitude to disabled people in Russia is still almost the same as that I remember from my childhood; Russian society is not used to them being in public places, like restaurants, theaters and shopping centers. Fortunately, Maya can walk, but for those who cannot there is no accommodation. Even in Moscow, which is a modern city today, they cannot use the Moscow Metropolitan subway because most of the stations entrances are not equipped with elevators, and buses are not equipped with wheelchair platforms as they are in NY. People's reaction to Maya was upsetting as well. They stared at us, as if we had no right to be where we were. We are traveling a lot, and Maya learned how to behave at a restaurant, for example, but in Moscow a waitress asked us to move to another table without explanation when people from the table nearby told her something. In the train between Moscow and Saint Petersburg a couple of teens tried to provoke my daughter, teased her until I called security. She can speak a little bit, but only in English, because here she attends a special school where they train her to function in society. She cannot communicate in Russian and she could not understand what these boys wanted. I cried that day because I was not ready for all this. Also, I realized that Maya cannot survive in Russia when her father and I pass away, so the next morning we set up a meeting with a real estate agent to list our Moscow apartment for sale."*

Business and political issues were named as an emigration reason by 28 participants (87%). Even though most of the participants mentioned their dissatisfaction, Anna's case is outstanding. However, she said that for certain level of business, these kind of troubles is a scary reality but not everyone is ready to talk about it.

### **Case study: Anna**

*Anna's story is tragic – she lost her husband Andrey 10 years ago; he was killed by his business partner, more specifically, by a hitman who was hired by Anna's husband's former business partner. They were college friends a long time ago, then they started a business together. In 2007, Anna's husband's partner decided that he did not want a partner anymore and started to pressure the former friend to sell his share. Andrey did not agree. Gradually, the conflict had turned into a war – they both hired security details; Anna and her two kids did not leave their home without precautionary measures. But all the efforts were to no avail – one day Anna's husband was shot and died in the ambulance on the way to the hospital.*

*Anna sold his part of the business immediately, for the first amount that was offered. She was so scared for her kids' and her own life that she almost did not leave her home. Her husband was a successful businessman and she had some money after his death, but she was living in fear. The killers were not found; the case got cold and even though everyone around was sure by whom and why Andrey was killed, no one did not want to do anything. "They've been paid," said Anna. "I know who they paid to when they made business together – every business company has such contacts in the police and other state structures; if you don't have a one you are not able to keep your business – so it is very likely Andrey's partner finally paid for his murder to the same people." Anna still cries when she recalls the story. She did not know what to do, she was not sure if tomorrow "they" want to take back the money for the sold business, or just decide to eliminate her as unwanted witness.*

*"I did not have any money problem back then, but I was scared to death. I did not believe the Russian authorities anymore – they act only if they get paid, and somebody can pay more so you can lose everything in one moment."*

*Anna took her kids and went to Turkey, Istanbul where her husband had relatives, and a year later went to the USA. She refused to explain on what basis she came here. She sold all her property in Russia, and bought a small family house in Fairfax, Virginia. Her kids graduated college recently; she has been certified as an accountant and has a stable job.*

*She does not want to go back. During the last 10 years she went to Russia only twice and every time she had got severe cold while there – with high temperature, fever, and a hard cough. She told her sister she wouldn't visit anymore; from now on she pays for sister's ticket to USA instead of hers but does not want to fly back to Moscow.*

*"I know the corruption exists everywhere, I am not naïve," says Anna. "But I do believe that if I would be killed in USA the police at least would be looking for killers and my kids would have a chance to get closure. I don't know how I did not get crazy back then, just because of the kids, probably. I needed to take them out of Russia. I did it, I can relax now."*

8 participants (5 men and 3 women, 25%) named life danger as their reason of emigration. They were getting threats from business partners or competitors. Going to the police was not an option – the standard answer for complaining about threats was “come back when something real happens.” The Russian police does not investigate threats if you don’t have special social connections which can influence their attitude.

The results indicate financial reasons (even though our participants refused it as a main reason for the emigration) is still most important. It occupied second place in the distribution. 17 of the 32 people (53%) chose it as a reason. But it is not the same it was in the 90s – they can provide for the family, but they cannot provide by engaging in a specific activity. A doctor could not be a doctor, but he/she could work as a sales person; a scientist could not be a scientist etc.

However, some professions, such as businessmen, economists, accountants, were not necessarily underpaid back in Russia. They were successful enough and their income enabled them to keep the lifestyle of upper middle-class and save money.

The tables below illustrate the financial situation of participants.

**A frequency distribution for money saved for emigration**

|                 | \$500,000 and more | \$100,000 – \$499,000 | \$50,000 – \$99,000 | \$10,000 - \$50,000 | Less than \$10,000 |
|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Total Sample 32 | 3                  | 15                    | 7                   | 5                   | 2                  |
| Men 12          | 3                  | 5                     | 2                   | 1                   | 1                  |
| Women 20        | 0                  | 10                    | 5                   | 4                   | 1                  |

**A frequency distribution for property ownership before emigration**

|                 | More than 1 properties in ownership | 1 property in ownership | Part of a property in ownership | No property in ownership |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Total Sample 32 | 12                                  | 11                      | 7                               | 2                        |
| Men 12          | 5                                   | 1                       | 5                               | 1                        |
| Women 20        | 7                                   | 10                      | 2                               | 1                        |

**A frequency distribution for property ownership in the USA after the emigration**

|                 | 2 or more properties in ownership | 1 property in ownership | Part of a property in ownership | No property in ownership |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Total Sample 32 | 3                                 | 17                      | 2                               | 10                       |
| Men 12          | 2                                 | 7                       | 0                               | 3                        |
| Women 20        | 1                                 | 10                      | 2                               | 7                        |

Most of the participants had saved enough for the first, most hard years of immigration, but the bulk of the money came after they sold their apartments or other types of properties they owned in Russia. The medium price per square meter for property in Moscow in 2012 was 160,000 rubles (\$5,700). After the crisis in 2014 the price of ruble had dropped twice, (42) but even after that, a tiny apartment in Moscow could be sold for approximately \$100,000 at a minimum; in Saint-Petersburg - for \$80,000.

Before 1991, Russian emigrants did not have this advantage. They left the country without an opportunity to sell their property. Moreover, those who have had higher education had

to repay their education debt, which was several thousand dollars, depending on the university. After the privatization program took place, property prices had a steep increase, and all of my participants said that that was the most reliable investment in comparison with other available financial tools in Russia.

“We had been preparing our finances for 10 years prior to moving,” – said Igor. “I always tried to save, but the best what I could do was to buy an apartment and rent it out. Housing market in Moscow is wild and almost unregulated, so I had a lot of trouble as a landlord, but I got my money back in 7 years and when I sold it we were able to make a down payment for a house in Florida. Our other apartment in Moscow is still unsold, I was hoping the price would recover after 2014, but I think I should sell it as is, considering current situation.”

“I felt safe with my moving to the USA – my two apartments together cost around \$500,000” – said Inna. “I don’t spend much, and with my education and money management skills I can live independently in any family situation. My husband respects my independence, he knows I love him, not his money or American residency.”

There were two participants who came to the USA with less than \$10,000 savings. One of them was Anton, the neurobiologist who gained stipend from his grant, the other one was Natalia, the hairdresser. She said she had to leave her apartment to her mother in Nizhny Novgorod, and she was sure that her talent would enable her to set up in a new country soon without selling it. She was right – she is making around \$90,000 per year now and is going to buy a coop.

As showed, fewer participants are real estate owners in the USA compared to Russia, and they explained it is because the rental market is more stable here.

“I think it is more convenient for us to rent the apartment now than buy it. Renter’s rights are very well protected in NY, so we feel safe. We don’t have kids and prefer to stay mobile. We will decide later if we need to buy anything,” – said Lina, emigrant since 2013 currently living in NY City.

“When I rented an apartment in Moscow I had almost no rights. We could be kicked out at any time if my landlord changed her mind about me and my wife staying there. The only way to feel safe was to buy an apartment, but it was way out of my budget. I am perfectly fine renting it in the USA now, since we are not sure where we will live in the next couple of years, that’s why I am still not going to buy it,” – said Anton.

**Occupation in the USA**

**A frequency distribution for current occupation**

|                    | Professionals<br>Working full<br>time/part time | Business<br>owners | Students/continued<br>education | Retired | Not<br>working |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------|---------|----------------|
| Total<br>Sample 32 | 10                                              | 8                  | 8                               | 1       | 4              |
| Men 12             | 2                                               | 7                  | 2                               | 1       | 0              |
| Women<br>20        | 8                                               | 1                  | 6                               | 0       | 4              |

The current occupational level of our group is high – only 5 people are not working, and 27 (84%) are working or studying. The percentage of business owners are very high at

25% of the group. According to U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics there are around 13.3 percent business owners in the USA (23).

No one is getting any kind of financial support from local or federal government.

8 people (25%) decided to continue their education or get some additional education after becoming familiar with the labor market in the USA.

4 non-working people are full-time moms, who stay home with little kids. All of them are going to go back to work in a couple of years.

As we see, all participants are very active, capable and socially well-adopted people. They are actively integrating themselves in the labor market and society.

“I am working as an engineer as I intended,” – says Lisa. – “I enjoy my job and it pays really well.”

“I completed my CPA classes a year after I came here. I am not used to staying at home, so I am working even though I have a baby now,” – Says Inna.

“It is much easier to handle business in USA compared to Russia,” – says Igor, - “I am doing well and going to stay in business for a long time.”

Those who indicated themselves as students/continuing education are currently enrolled in universities, colleges, or graduate schools. Also, some people are on postdoctoral fellowship in a research center, Ph. D. program, MBA program, or take accounting classes.

### **Arriving to the USA and status change**

A frequency distribution for a time gap between an actual departure and getting an emigrant visa/green card

|                 | More than 10 years | 5-10 years | 3-5 years | 1-3 years | Less than a year |
|-----------------|--------------------|------------|-----------|-----------|------------------|
| Total Sample 32 | 1                  | 8          | 11        | 6         | 4                |
| Men 12          | 0                  | 6          | 4         | 1         | 1                |
| Women 20        | 1                  | 2          | 7         | 5         | 3                |

**A frequency distribution for the entry visa/document type.**

|                 | Tourist/business visa | Job visa | Student/scholar visa | Entrepreneur/Extraordinary skills visa | Family visa/Green card/passport | Refugee visa |
|-----------------|-----------------------|----------|----------------------|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Total Sample 30 | 2                     | 9        | 6                    | 2                                      | 9                               | 1            |
| Men 11          | 1                     | 4        | 2                    | 2                                      | 1                               | 0            |
| Women 19        | 1                     | 5        | 4                    | 0                                      | 8                               | 1            |

The two tables above represent how the participants got to the USA, what entry documents they obtained, and when they got an immigration status. There is a substantial gap between the time when a potential immigrant came to the USA and the time when he/she gets an immigrant status. For our group, this average gap was 3-5 years. The longest gap belongs to Elena, who has been living in New York with her family for more

than 10 years since her husband was an employee at the UN, the shortest gap is for Alina, who has got her American passport in 2 months through her American father's petition.

Also, those who won Green card lottery or got married, have entered the United States already with the status at the gate.

Most of the participants (19 people, 63%) did not arrive as immigrants. They obtained non-immigrational visas, such as H1B, J1, L1, E2, which gave them permission to work or study, usually for a specific company, and then after a certain period of staying they adjusted their status to immigration.

During the interview I asked them if they were not sure about their intentions to stay here when they get their visas. More than 80% of the group confirmed they were sure they wanted to immigrate eventually, but they needed a certainty that they would manage.

"I would say there was about 90% certainty that I would stay," – said Lisa. – "But I wanted to be sure that I have a good basis for it, such as a good job and professional reputation. How could I get it without American work experience? The only way was to get a job offer and try, that's what I did."

"I wanted to emigrate but before making the final decision I need to be sure that I can keep my life standards for my family and myself. That's why I filed for an investor's visa. I worked with a good lawyer to do everything correctly. I had no right for mistakes since I am responsible for my kid's future," – said Igor. – "I thought about immigration from the very beginning, otherwise I just would not have started the process, but I kept in mind that if something went wrong I could go back. I estimate my immigration intentions at 60% at that moment, I was not going to immigrate at any price."

“I went to the USA as a Ph. D. student, so getting a J1 visa initially was a regular thing to do. How could I possibly get an immigration visa? Yes, I was going to stay after completing the program. 100%.” – says Anton.

Two of the participants went to the USA on tourist visas and changed their status while in the country. They said that their intention changed during their stay, one of them got married, the other was accepted into a University. Both of them were helped by immigrational lawyers.

As the results indicate, the absolute majority of participants came to the US legally. 26% came on job visas, and 23% had family visas. 20% of the sample came as students and the same as entrepreneurs. Nevertheless, the immigration visas were initially obtained only by 7 participants (23%) and the other 77% got non-immigration visas and applied for immigration after several years.

### **Time of emigration**

I asked the participants to describe how and why they chose the specific time of their emigration\*.

They had both personal and social reasons, and here are some of their responses below.

As personal reasons they indicated family issues, financial unpreparedness, health issues, etc.

“I did not emigrate in 90s, when I had family and children. Then I divorced, so I was too busy to make some radical moves. Finally, when my sons have grew up I had time for myself. I decided if I didn't do it then, I'd never do it,” – said Igor.

“I wanted to get married fast, when I was still able to have kids, because I wanted to give birth to at least one more. So, I left as soon as I decided to marry Jeff, my husband.” – said Inna.

“I had enough money to arrange the investor entrepreneurship, after that I moved on. It took about 10 years to prepare.”

“When my parents were alive I had to stay. They needed my attention and help. They passed away in 2006 and 2007, after that I started my emigration process.” – said Boris. Also, the interviewees have identified social and political issues that impacted their final decision.

“No one leaves without serious reasons. The most frustrating thing that I realized after the President’s election is that I did not trust the Russian government anymore. So, 2008 was the year when I decided to emigrate.”

“I did not choose the time, it just came naturally. I won a Green card lottery, and in a few months Russia took over Crimea. That’s enough, I thought. I was offered the opportunity to leave and I took it. 2014 was the year of decision.”

“I could not plan my life for more than a year ahead, and even then it was uncertain. Laws don’t work, rules are changed all the time, money is not secure in any financial institutions... Life is insecure. I was tired of it. I lost hope of improvement in 2006, after Anna Politkovskaya’s assassination.” (Boris)

“My life and my job were about bribes, drinking with powerful people, bribes again, drinking again. Russian business is just it. I wanted something different. The President’s election in 2008 was the point when I understood I could not find it in Russia.” (Igor)

“I was afraid for the future of my kids. I was afraid for my own future. I did not have any certainty in tomorrow, not because I am crazy but because I could not get any help from the System when I needed it. The year of my husband assassination was the year of the decision.” (Anna)

The participants were asked about why they choose the USA as a country for immigration, and which country they considered as an alternative. The results are shown in the tables below.

**A frequency distribution for the reasons of choosing the USA**

|                 | High quality of life | Family and friends are there | Language and culture | Employment/educational opportunity | Existing Russian community | Political and economic system | Climate, ecology | Traditional emigration country |
|-----------------|----------------------|------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| Total Sample 32 | 29                   | 24                           | 18                   | 26                                 | 9                          | 20                            | 7                | 5                              |
| Men 12          | 10                   | 6                            | 8                    | 11                                 | 2                          | 8                             | 3                | 3                              |
| Women 20        | 19                   | 18                           | 10                   | 17                                 | 7                          | 12                            | 4                | 2                              |

I picked up more than one reason from each interview and put it in the table in descending order.

The results revealed that general quality of life is the main factor of choice. In comparison to previous emigrants from Russia and USSR, the participants saw a lot of other

countries. As tourists and businessmen, they traveled around the world frequently, most of them visited the US before they moved in.

“I found the USA to be a very comfortable country for living,” – said Victor. – “I have been here 5 times as a tourist. Yes, there is a big difference between tourism and emigration, but I made informed decision on the basis my own experience as I traveled a lot around the world.”

“I was choosing between the USA and Great Britain,” – said Lisa. – “but the quality of life in Silicon Valley is outstanding, that’s why I am here.”

“it is a good country to raise children.” (Inna)

“I do like my home in Fairfax. American houses are spacious and comfortable, and the price was reasonable.” (Anna)

“Even in a tiniest town you can set up with high level of comfort. We live in a suburbia of NY city, but I don’t feel cut off from civilization. In 20 minutes I can get to Manhattan, with the best theatres and museums, but everything I need for my everyday life I have here.” (Elena)

The other participants were talking about the world-class quality of medicine in the USA, the quality of education, the highest ecological standards, and other factors that make the US one of the most appealing countries for living.

It should be noted that the participants are fully aware about the current social and economic issues in the USA. They were talking about the high prices for medical insurance, education, cost of living in general. They are not completely satisfied with the American foreign policy. They have faced issues of inequality and social discrimination.

They saw inner cities and homeless people. But they still found the American social system better than the Russian system.

The participants often mentioned the English language as a reason for choosing the country. All of them spoke English before moving, although at different levels. 19 people (60%) indicated they had fluent English, 10 (31%) said the level was intermediate before moving, and improved during the first year of living up to an advanced level. The other 3 people defined their level of English as beginning since they had no practice for a long time before emigration, but it was the language they learned at school.

“We did not want to get more stress with a language barrier, the emigration itself is stressful... so our choice included only English-speaking countries.”

“I speak English fluently, so it was a no-brainer I would move into a country where I could use this advantage.”

“I spent a year in Turkey before I went to the USA, and the language barrier frustrated me a lot. My kids learnt Turkish pretty fast, but it was way too much for me. I preferred speaking English even there, so I am glad that I don't need to learn a new language here.”

American culture also is familiar to my participants, and most of them found it close to Russian culture.

“It is important if you understand and accept national culture. I like American movies, I understand American humor, I know American history and find it amazing. I feel myself comfortable here.”

“I don't think I could live in a very different culture, like China, for example. I need to understand of how people think, what they have in mind. This way I can function efficiently in society.”

“Americans and Russians have a lot in common. I am a big fan of American design school, it is very close to my own ideas of beauty.”

“In each national culture the ideas of what is good and what is bad are slightly different. American cultural/ethical structure works for me just fine.”

The study participants have mentioned that having someone from family or friends in the USA was a big help for them upon arrival.

“When you try to set up, there are a lot of things which you don’t know, and if you don’t have anyone who can tell how to do this and that, it’s hard. For us, for example, finding an apartment would be a big headache if my friends didn’t help. We had no idea how many documents had to be submitted, where to get recommendations, a credit report, how to check landlords... we didn’t know what neighborhoods to look at, since we were looking for a decent place for a reasonable price. It is such a quest in New York city!”

“I was living with my relatives for 3 months when I came here. I am grateful tremendously, it helped a lot. I had time to look around, to find out how to do things here, and a great deal of everyday chores in the USA are different from Russia. I needed to get my driver license, SSN, open a bank account, find English classes... there was a lot to be done.”

“I came alone, so it took some time to get friends in a new place. I was so glad to have someone just to talk, and, I got tons of useful advices from my friend who had been living here for 10 years. It was priceless.”

“I would feel lonely if nobody from my family lived here. We all need social contacts to be happy.”

However, the existence of a Russian community in the USA was not the biggest factor of decision making. Only 10 people (30%) have mentioned it in the interview as an advantage, the others 70% were not so sure.

“We were not looking for Russian community as is. What the difference if we don’t know anyone personally? Our American neighbors are friendly and welcoming, we speak English, so we don’t see any reasons to look for the Russian community only because they speak Russian. Otherwise, we have some reasons not to. Russian community in Brooklyn is idiosyncratic and we don’t have a lot in common.”

“Yes, I know the USA has the biggest Russian emigration population in the world. When I started work, I met a guy who was from Kazakhstan and spoke Russian. It is funny that for our American colleagues we both were Russians. No, we did not become friends. I have some Russian friends, but we don’t feel like we are members of such community... we are just people, just friends. It is good, however, to have someone who watched the same cartoons in childhood.”

“Russians don’t keep the close national ties as for example Armenians do, or Jews do. In my opinion, living in the so-called “Russian neighborhood” makes sense only if you cannot live anywhere else. We can, so we do.”

“We speak Russian at home, but I want my kids to become Americans. Living in a closed community would not help.”

Those who mentioned Russian community as a positive factor said:

“The USA is a traditional country of destination for thousands of Russian emigrants. There is a history of Russians in the United States, I believe it is great. In some cities we have

Russian neighborhoods, a lot of stores sell Russian food, there is a Russian TV, Russian churches... I think it helps to settle up.”

“When you arrive, and have very few ideas about how everything works, the existent community can be helpful. We went in Brooklyn and rented an apartment in one day, just by asking around. We lived there for about a year, until I found a decent job.”

“I spoke English, but my wife didn’t. However, she could go to Russian stores, to Russian doctors, so it was good to have it all when we were setting up.”

“I go to the Orthodox Church regularly. I am glad that we live nearby. We are Russians, it is good to keep our culture.”

“Yes, we have a lot of Russian friends. We have been working together for years, we live in the same neighborhood, our kids go to the same school, so we have a lot to discuss.”

**A frequency distribution for the alternative countries for emigration**

|                 | EU | Canada | Australia,<br>New<br>Zealand | Israel | South<br>Africa | Great<br>Britain | South<br>America |
|-----------------|----|--------|------------------------------|--------|-----------------|------------------|------------------|
| Total<br>Sample | 10 | 10     | 4                            | 2      | 1               | 1                | 1                |
| Men             | 4  | 8      | 4                            |        | 1               | 1                | 0                |
| Women           | 8  | 2      | 0                            | 2      | 0               | 0                | 1                |

30 people (93% of respondents) said that the USA was not the only choice for the upcoming emigration. They considered moving to European countries, such as France, Germany, and Italy. 10 people (32%) were interested in emigration to Canada. The less popular choice was Australia/New Zealand, Israel, Great Britain, and South America

countries. The reasons for considering these countries were the same: social tights, employment opportunities, climate, language and culture.

“We considered Canada, because it is similar to the USA, and they have a good immigration program for certain professionals. We had almost gathered all documents, but then we won Green card lottery.”

“New Zealand is a wonderful country. I was amazed when I traveled there, the nature is great, and it looks like old England... but it is so far from Moscow, and I need to fly there often.”

“I have a cousin who lives in Johannesburg, South Africa. So, it was my second choice.”

“I had 2 job offers at the almost same time – the USA and Germany. The salary proposal in the USA was substantially better.”

“As a Jew, I have a right to get Israel citizenship. If my American emigration failed, I would move to Israel.”

**A frequency distribution for the satisfaction of emigration**

|              | 100% satisfied | Mostly satisfied | Satisfied, still working on it | Someway satisfied, but mostly not | Not satisfied, wanted to go back |
|--------------|----------------|------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Total Sample | 6              | 12               | 10                             | 1                                 | 1                                |
| Men          | 2              | 1                | 8                              | 1                                 | 0                                |
| Women        | 4              | 11               | 2                              | 0                                 | 1                                |

The last part of the interview was dedicated to determining if our participants are satisfied with their decision to emigrate.

18 people (60%) stated they are satisfied or mostly satisfied with their emigration. They already achieved their basic level of well-being: bought a house or an apartment, got a job or an established business. 10 people (33%) have been experiencing some troubles which they define as temporary, such as looking for a job or business opportunities, improving language skills, etc. It is not surprising considering the most of them are relatively new immigrants (less than 10 years). 2 people are not satisfied, and their cases are below.

**Case study: Alexander**

*Alexander is 63, he is an IT developer. He went to the USA 15 years ago on H1B visa, obtained permanent resident status 8 years ago and recently got a citizenship. He has a wife and two adult sons.*

*When Alexander got his job in the USA, they did not sell the apartment nearby Saint-Petersburg, and every vacation he went there with his wife. She never worked and still doesn't speak English. They watch Russian TV and go to a Russian church. They keep strong social ties to Russia, their friends visit them in New-York often and they gather a lot of friends for parties when on vacation in Russia.*

*His mother died in Russia last year, his younger brother lives in Russia in the same town where Alexander's apartment is. Alexander's sons are both married, and he is living with his wife in a rented apartment in New York.*

*"Life in New York is too expensive. I don't think we will stay here when I retire. We will pay half of my pension just in rent, and we also have medical expenses. My Saint-Petersburg apartment costs almost nothing and its quality is much better compared to my New York apartment. With my American pension I can live without any problem in Russia. I hate the New York summer – the heat and humidity just kill me. We have so many friends there, we spend time wonderfully when visiting. My only concern is my kids, they stay here... but that is their decision, I am glad they have these opportunities. They have their own lives, and we should think about ours. I love Russian nature, the cool weather, I love fishing which is great there, I want to be close to my mother's grave. I want to go back. America did not become home for us."*

*Alexander said he went to the USA hoping for a better life for his children, but he never wanted leave Russia. He describes himself as an introverted person who is not interested in politics, didn't have an impressive career, and just wants to be happy.*

**Case study: Dina**

*Dina and her husband arrived 10 years ago on J1 visas (Ph. D. students). She used to be a physicist. She received a job offer after getting her Ph.D., but when her husband's career skyrocketed and he became a CEO of a successful startup, Dina resigned and has not worked ever since. She spends 3-5 months per year in Russia. She loves Russian countryside where they recently bought a house and says that at some point she will probably go back.*

*"I am a Russian woman, I cannot run from myself. I like Russian food, Russian songs, Russian movies... when I go to my house in Russia I feel so good that I don't want to go back to California. Dina wears long dresses which resemble national Russian women clothing. She brings gifts to her California's friends: wooden dolls, Russian vodka, babushka-scarves. She totally approves of the Russian government policy, and she likes Russian President.*

*Dina says she never liked America and stayed here only because of her husband.*

*"I got depressed a few years ago, I think it was because of my nostalgia. I don't like to live in America because it is not Russia, generally. I never got used to it."*

*Dina does support and approve of the Russian government and likes the President. She has a theory that tsarism works for Russians, and an archetype tsar figure should be present in government even if it is called "President". She thinks Putin is this figure.*

I was trying to understand how these two people were different from the rest of the group.

First of all, I think it has to do with keeping strong social and psychological connections with Russia even after years in the USA. They did not see themselves as Americans, did

not accept the USA as a new home, and did not perceive their future to be in the USA.

The reasons for this phenomenon are beyond this study's agenda. This kind of psychological distancing is not unique to Russian emigrants and could be explored in future research.

## **Chapter 4.**

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to establish whether a new emigration trend from Russia to the USA emerged between 2006-2010 and exists currently; the main reasons for

emigration; who the new emigrants are; and why they chose the United States as a country of destination.

The study participants have provided a great deal of very valuable information, which can be used for future research of Russian emigration/immigration studies.

According to interview results, many well-off Russians consider moving to another country as a good option for themselves and their families. However, initially they prefer to call their move “a change in the place of living”, “temporary moving”, or “a long-term business trip”, rather than not “emigration”. They arrive legally, usually with permission to work, but many of them do not obtain immigration status during the first 3-5 years. The initial visas are mostly non-immigration, such as working visas, entrepreneur visas, and student visas.

They arrive well-prepared financially; the average amount of money they bring in the USA upon arrival is \$50,000. Those who have a job from the moment of arrival have well-paid professional positions with a salary above the national average.

They do not participate in criminal activity or get illegal or low-paid/low-grade unprofessional jobs.

They often bring families along.

The major reasons for this new emigration trend are very different than the previous waves. Middle-class Russians adapted well in Russia and have few financial problems.

They usually have a job or a business, as well as some real estate and savings.

Before embarking on emigration, they engage in a long decision-making process, visit different countries, search for a job or business opportunities, and talk to consultants.

Some of them use immigration lawyers to help.

As shown above, the economical factor is not the main reason for emigration. However, when choosing where to move, financial security becomes a prime factor. Even if they are ready to spend savings initially, they always look at the bigger picture and evaluate their prospects. Usually, after the adaptation period, they reside in the same social strata as they were back in Russia.

The time of their emigration is not random. Before emigration, they worked on getting financial independence and saving money. They raised their kids and supported their parents. Gradually, they came to a decision that they wanted to live in another country. The reasons for their dissatisfaction are closely related to their social and professional life. For getting decent income, they often had to give up their profession, because it did not pay enough. If they ran a business, they regularly faced corruption and bureaucracy. They learned how to deal with the system, but they found it frustrating. During that time, they did not see any improvement and their dissatisfaction increased.

Specifically, many people were disappointed and lost their hope for positive changes in Russia after the Presidential election of 2008.

They had been trying to create a good environment for their kids and family, but they could only do it inside their home, and could not do anything about the bigger social structure. They didn't like how the city streets looked, they didn't agree with the social policy and a lot of government initiatives. Generally, they felt their values were different from other people values, and they felt like strangers in their country.

They named the following push-factors which impacted their decision to emigrate: quality of life in Russia, ecological problems, Russian Government policy/social climate, corruption, bad business or professional environment, inability to stay within their initial

profession because of a low salary or other economical reasons, inability to start a family, weather/climate in Russia, or criminal threats.

The pull factors of their moving to the US were: better life quality, political and personal freedom, security, business prospects, a better life for children and family members, work/educational opportunity, new life opportunity, healthcare quality, starting a family.

During the decision-making process they considered other countries for immigration. The list included European Union countries; Canada; Australia and New Zealand; Israel; South Africa; Great Britain; South America countries.

Besides the main push and pull factors listed above they had list of particular features for a potential country of destination: it should be an English-speaking country, open for immigration, democratically developed, preferably multinational. Having friends and family members who already resided in a country related positively to the decision to move there. Some of them preferred to be connected with the existing Russian community.

They like and understand American culture. They find many common features between American national character and their own values.

Finally, they chose the USA for the optimal combination of factors, and their actual ability to get there, such as winning a green card lottery, a job offer, or a family member with an American citizenship.

The level of satisfaction in the explored group is very high. 60% of participants are satisfied with their emigration, and 33% are still having some temporary issues. This result is closely related to the fact that the middle-class immigrants arrived after a thorough

preparation process: they traveled a lot, consulted with immigration lawyers, saved money and learned English. Their immigration process is deliberate and well-calculated. The study confirmed the existence of a new emigration trend. People who leave Russia are often well-off, educated professionals, who could bring a lot of good to Russia, but prefer to move to another country.

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