

MIGRATION

DOI: 10.14515/monitoring.2018.5.15

Правильная ссылка на статью:

Рязанцев С. В., Сивоплясова С. Ю. Российские женщины на международном брачном рынке: пути миграции и траектории адаптации в принимающих обществах // Мониторинг общественного мнения: Экономические и социальные перемены. 2018. № 5. С. 183—203. <https://doi.org/10.14515/monitoring.2018.5.15>.

For citation:

Ryazantsev S. V., Sivoplyasova S. Yu. (2018) Russian women in the international marriage market: ways of migration and adaptation in host societies. *Monitoring of Public Opinion: Economic and Social Changes*. No. 5. P. 183—203. <https://doi.org/10.14515/monitoring.2018.5.15>.



S. V. Ryazantsev, S. Yu. Sivoplyasova RUSSIAN WOMEN IN THE INTERNATIONAL MARRIAGE MARKET: WAYS OF MIGRATION AND ADAPTATION IN HOST SOCIETIES

RUSSIAN WOMEN IN THE INTERNATIONAL MARRIAGE MARKET: WAYS OF MIGRATION AND ADAPTATION IN HOST SOCIETIES

РОССИЙСКИЕ ЖЕНЩИНЫ НА МЕЖДУНАРОДНОМ БРАЧНОМ РЫНКЕ: ПУТИ МИГРАЦИИ И ТРАЕКТОРИИ АДАПТАЦИИ В ПРИНИМАЮЩИХ ОБЩЕСТВАХ

Sergey V. RYAZANTSEV^{1,2} — Dr. Sci. (Econ.), Professor, RAS Corresponding Member, Head of the Department of Demographic and Migration Policy; Director of Institute of Socio-Political Researches
E-MAIL: riazan@mail.ru
ORCID: 0000-0001-5306-8875

РЯЗАНЦЕВ Сергей Васильевич — доктор экономических наук, профессор, член-корреспондент Российской академии наук; заведующий кафедрой демографической и миграционной политики, Московский государственный институт международных отношений (Университет) МИД России; директор Института социально-политических исследований Российской академии наук, Москва, Россия.
E-MAIL: riazan@mail.ru
ORCID: 0000-0001-5306-8875

¹ MGIMO-University

² Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, Russia

Svetlana Yu. SIVOPLYASOVA^{3,4} — *Cand. Sc. (Econ.), Associate Professor, Leading researcher; Associate Professor, Department of Information Technology in Economics and Management*
E-MAIL: svetlankamos84@rambler.ru
ORCID: 0000-0002-3239-4230

³ Center of Social Demography, Institute of Socio-Political Researches Russian Academy of Sciences

⁴ Moscow Aviation Institute (National Research University) (MAI), Moscow, Russia

СИВОПЛЯСОВА Светлана Юрьевна — *кандидат экономических наук, доцент Московского авиационного института, старший научный сотрудник Института социально-политических исследований Российской академии наук, Москва, Россия.*
E-MAIL: svetlankamos84@rambler.ru
ORCID: 0000-0002-3239-4230

Abstract. The inter-marriage market should be viewed not only as a demographic category but also as a socio-cultural phenomenon determined by international migration. After the collapse of the USSR, the scale of marriage migration from Russia began to increase sharply. Moreover, a significant share of this migration flow was women and girls. In this regard, the term “Russian wife” was formed in international practice and became kind of a brand. Women tried to find wealthy, attentive, caring companions who have no addiction to alcohol, in this regard; they were looking for husbands abroad. The increase in the scale of marriage migration stimulated the creation of a special infrastructure of the marriage market: marriage agencies, professional matchmakers, dating sites, etc. However, this led to the formation of the shadow sector of this market, which was represented by groups engaged in illegal activities related to trafficking. At the moment, Russian women can be found in many countries, but there are four priority areas of marriage migration: North American, European, Asian, and Middle East. Moving to another country, women hope for a prosperous, happy life, but they often face difficulties on the way of adaptation. Most often, such barriers

Аннотация. Брачный рынок следует рассматривать не только как демографическую категорию, но и как социально-культурное явление, обусловленное международной миграцией. После распада СССР масштабы брачной миграции из России стали резко возрастать. Значительная доля этого миграционного потока приходится на женщин и девушек. В связи с этим в международной практике возник термин «русская жена» и стал своего рода брендом. В поисках состоятельных, заботливых, не имеющих алкогольной зависимости спутников жизни, женщины обратили свой взор за границу. Рост потоков брачной миграции привел к созданию специальной инфраструктуры брачного рынка: брачные агентства, профессиональные свахи, сайты знакомств и т. д. Это, в свою очередь, вызвало формирование теневой стороны рынка, представленного группировками, занимающимися незаконной деятельностью и торговлей людьми. Сегодня русские женщины встречаются во многих странах, но есть четыре приоритетных направления брачной миграции: североамериканская, европейская, азиатская и Ближний Восток. Переезжая в другую страну, женщины надеются на благополучную, счаст-

are poor knowledge of the language, mental and cultural differences with a foreign husband. Misunderstanding often leads to a break-up in relations. However, even in the event of divorce, women are rarely return home and try to find a husband abroad again.

Keywords: marriage market, marriage migration, “Russian wives”, ways to find foreign partners, marriage agencies, direction of marriage emigration

Acknowledgments: The study was performed by a grant from the Presidential Grants Council, Project № МК-2984. 2017.6.

Theoretical background

The term “marriage market” appeared in the 1970s. This socio-demographic phenomenon is complex and multifaceted. One of the first scientists who began to deal with the problem of formation and functioning of the marriage market was Harry A. Bekker. He researched this issue from the perspective of Economics and explained the characteristics of the individual’s marriage behavior by the feasibility and benefits of marriage. The marriage market considered as the search for the best partner by a person (in terms of benefits from marriage), taking into account market restrictions [Bekker, 1974: 300].

In a similar economic context, T. Bergstrom studied the problem of the marriage market. Despite the fact that the term “marriage market” in his interpretation has a general nature (“marriage market”, in his opinion is the space of potential partners — men on the one hand and women on the other, between whom a match (i. e. marriage) must be established [Bergstrom, 1997: 46]), he concentrated on the explanation of the marriage behavior of the individual in terms of the costs of finding a partner and the benefits of creating a family.

A number of foreign publications are devoted to the study of demographic components of the marriage market. Goldman, Westoff, and Hammerslough [Goldman et al., 1984: 5] considered the age and sex structure of the marriage market. Marriage behavior of Americans is analyzed, including patterns of remarriage.

ливую жизнь, но часто сталкиваются с трудностями на пути адаптации. Чаще всего эти трудности вызваны языковыми барьерами, а также интеллектуальными и культурными различиями с выбранным спутником. Непонимание часто приводит к разрыву отношений. Однако даже в случае развода женщины редко возвращаются на родину, пытаясь снова найти мужа за границей.

Ключевые слова: брачный рынок, брачная миграция, «русские жены», поиски международного партнера, брачные агентства, траектории брачной миграции

Благодарность. Исследование выполнено при финансовой поддержке Совета по грантам Президента Российской Федерации, проект № МК-2984. 2017.6.

More recent studies [Jang, Casterline, Snyder, 2014: 1339] analyze the patterns of life strategies of American citizens in terms of competition of choice of migration and marriage.

Russian researchers often consider the socio-demographic nature of the marriage market. For example, L. Chuiko, A. Volkova, L. Darskiy, A. Vishnevsky studied in detail the demographic characteristics of the components of the marriage market, namely the number and sex-age structure of the population, the dynamics of marriage and divorce, and others. The marriage market meant a system of ratios of the numbers of different groups of the marriageable population [Chuiko, 1975; Volkova, Darskiy, 1975: 7; Vishnevsky, 1977: 56].

More recent studies of Russian scientists also maintain a socio-demographic focus. Thus, A. Sinelnikov explains the marriage behavior of men and women based on the objective demographic characteristics of potential grooms and brides and their personal aspirations (the social status of the partner, the level of his education, etc.). In this regard, the scientist offers a broad interpretation of the term “marriage market”, comprising of: the entire set of potential brides and grooms in the population, as well as the entire system of their mutual claims and requirements for future spouses¹.

Thus, the marriage market is a complex phenomenon that should be considered as an economic, socio-cultural, demographic and legal category.

The structure of the marriage market consists of unmarried men and women of marriageable age. At the same time, when citizens of one country get married, we are talking about the marriage market of a separate state. If the bride and groom are citizens of different countries, we can talk about the formation and functioning of the international marriage market. The existence of the international marriage market is due to special migration flows — international marriage migration.

The term marriage migration, as well as the marriage market, has no definite interpretation. However, unlike differentiation in the interpretation of the term “marriage market”, differences in the understanding and use of the term “marriage migration” will have significant implications for the analysis and evaluation of the scope and results of this phenomenon.

According to the first approach, marriage migration means moving to a new place of residence for the purpose of marriage and family creation, as well as moving to a migrant spouse (that is, actually family reunification). The second approach restricts the flow of marriage migrants only to those people who move to create a family and register a marriage [Iontsev, 2001: 98]. Obviously, in the first case, the migration flow will include a large population. For the purposes of this study, we will follow the second approach, and use the following definition of “international marriage migration” — the movement of people abroad for the purpose of marriage with a foreign citizen.

Marriage as a social and economical phenomenon has existed for a long time. In monarchical states of the middle ages, marriages were often concluded between representatives of the ruling dynasties of different countries. But in these cases, the marriage migration was organized, the marriage was concluded by prior agreement,

¹ Sinelnikov A. (n.d.) Marriage market. URL: <http://rybakovsky.ru/uchebnik1a2.html> (accessed: 08.08.2018). (In Russ.).

with the participation of intermediaries, and the most important criterion for choosing a spouse was the economic or geopolitical benefit [Sivoplyasova, 2018: 163].

At present (the time of freedom movement) the nature of marriage migration has changed significantly. The marriage market has become more “spontaneous” and therefore difficult to assess. The flow of migrants moving to a new place of residence for the purpose of marriage increased significantly, and the effects of marriage migration became more diverse and began to affect not only the spouses themselves, but also various spheres of society.

The present study focuses on determining the place of Russian women in the international marriage market, the analysis of marriage migration of women from Russia and the problems of their adaptation to the host society. The article considers the trends and forms of migration from the country, assesses age and sex structure, determines the role of marriage migration in the overall migration flow, identifies the main factors and directions of marriage migration of Russian women, and establishes the ways of adaptation and integration of Russian women in host societies.

Research methods and sources of information

This study is a comprehensive analysis of the migration of Russian women abroad for the purpose of marriage. The theoretical basis of the study are publications of Russian and foreign scientists on the subject, as well as statistical data from Russian and foreign sources on the number, structure and directions of migration flow. The empirical base of the study consists of the results of interviews with Russian women married to foreigners, employees of embassies and consulates of the Russian Federation, as well as publications in the media and the Internet about the fate of Russians who created families and lived abroad.

Currently in Russia there are two main sources of migration statistics. First, the Federal State Statistics Service data, which contains information about the migration for permanent residence abroad for a period of nine months or more. However, the use of these data for purposes of this study is complicated by several factors. First of all, the statistics do not include those who moved to or left the country for a shorter period. In addition, the analysis of the scale of migration is significantly complicated due to the existing rules of statistical registration of emigrants. On the one hand, persons moving abroad are not obliged to be removed from the registration at the place of residence in Russia, and, therefore, for statistics, they “continue to live in the country”, and on the other hand, according to the rules of the Federal State Statistics Service, migrants who have previously entered the country, are subject to automatic inclusion in the number of those who leave the state at the end of their legal residence, regardless of whether they actually left country or not. Finally, the third and main factor hindering the use of these statistics is the lack of accounting for marriage migration.

The second source of data on migration is the data of the Federal Migration Service, which existed until 2016 as an independent body of state power, and now is a part of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia. However, these statistics have significant limitations when used for the purposes of this study: they take into account only temporary registered labor migration. Statistical data does not include information about marriage migration.

The use of foreign statistics on the extent of migration makes it possible to partially compensate for the shortcomings of domestic statistics on marriage migration from the country. Some countries (for example, the United States) issue special visas to immigrants when they come to the country for the purpose of marriage with a citizen of the state, and keep a current record of the number of such visas. Other countries (e. g. Japan) include the question of the nationality of spouses in the census form, thus the number of inter-ethnic marriages can be determined. Also, in a number of countries (for example, many European countries), the number of registered marriages of the bride and groom is recorded. It is important to note that in the first case the statistics will show the volume of marriage migration when marriage is the reason for moving to another country. In two other cases, statistical data allows to estimate the real extent of participation of Russian citizens (in particular women) in the international marriage market.

Fifty four semi-structured interviews were conducted to analyze the socio-cultural features of the international marriage market, as well as to identify the causes of migration and strategies of marriage behavior of Russian women abroad. The choice of the research method was determined by its objectives, namely the need to identify the underlying motives and opinions of the respondents on the issue under consideration.

The interviews face-to-face communication with the respondents in the form of a focused interview without structured questions but based on an interview guide. Registration of responses was carried out by recording conversation by the interviewer.

The respondents were Russian women married to foreigners and moved to another country for permanent residence, Russian-speaking women from the former republics of the Soviet Union in marriage with foreign citizens, diplomatic employees of embassies and consulates of the Russian Federation in foreign countries. The interviews were conducted in seventeen countries, including Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Vietnam, Germany, Greece, Egypt, Spain, Italy, Canada, China, Korea, USA, Turkey, Finland, France, and Japan. The choice of countries is determined by the scale and priority directions of emigration from Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union, as well as the size of the Russian-speaking communities in the host countries. Interviews were conducted not only in the countries of so-called classical emigration (for example, Germany, Israel, USA), but also in new popular destinations (for example, Greece, Korea, Japan, etc.).

Interviews of Russian women emigrants in the press, blogs and social networks about personal experience of their marriage migration and the problems of adaptation and integration into the host society were also analyzed. An important source of information for the study was television programs (for example, the project "Russian wives"), which included the biography of Russian women married foreigners and lived abroad.

Thus, the research included interviews with Russian women (married emigrants and employees of diplomatic missions of the Russian Federation abroad), analysis of information from print, electronic and television sources, and processing of statistical data.

The scale and forms of migration from Russia

Following the collapse of the USSR, several factors led to Russia's actively incorporation in the international migration processes. First, the "opening" of borders un-

leashed freedom of movement. Second, the economic reforms of the early 1990s led to a significant decline in living standards, which led people to go abroad in search of a “better life”. Third, political instability and military actions in a number of former Soviet republics provoked a massive exodus of the Russian-speaking population. Thus high level of immigration as well as emigration were recorded in Russia. Total external migration turnover in the early 1990s exceeded 1.5 million border crossings per year, the share of trips ranged from 40% to 49%². The year 2016 saw a decrease in migratory movements, with about 900,000 border crossings. At the same time, the share of visits decreased to 35%³. However, it is important to note the fact that the rules of statistical accounting do not fully reflect the whole picture of migration from the country. Most likely, its real volumes are much larger.

In the modern history of Russia there are three waves of migration, each of which is characterized by similar predominant causes, forms and directions.

The first wave took place from 1991 to 1998, that is, during the period of political and economic transformation. During this period, several forms of mobilities could be observed. The first was, ethnic migration. During this period, a number of countries (for example, Germany and Israel) began implementing state programs of voluntary ethnic repatriation. Russia was inhabited by a fairly large number of ethnic Germans (whose mass migration began in the days of Catherine II) and Jews. They formed the basis of this migration flow.

The second form of mobility was labor migration. A characteristic feature of this period was the fact that the country was left mostly by highly qualified specialists. They found themselves in a difficult socio-economic situation in their homeland and tried to find better living and working conditions abroad. This phenomenon was called the “brain drain”.

Marriage migration constituted the third form of mobility. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, young girls and women began to seek life companions abroad. The reasons were the difficult economic situation in the country, low income, and therefore the attractiveness of Russian grooms, their massive social degradation. In addition, the possibility of obtaining citizenship of the country of migration in a simplified manner (this was the cause of fictitious marriages with foreigners) was very attractive.

Finally, children adopted by foreign couples comprised the fourth form of mobility. Given the large number of children left without parental care, this type of migration was assessed as positive: the burden on the state budget was reduced, and children were able to live and grow up in a family.

The second wave of migration in modern Russia is migration in the inter-crisis period from 1998 to 2008. This period is characterized by a revival of the economy, political stability and active implementation of social programs for supporting families. This led to an increase in labor migration in Russia. Unlike the previous wave which saw the arrival predominantly of, highly qualified specialists this phase led to arrival of a large number of unskilled or semi-skilled workforce, prepared to do “dirty” jobs.

² The number and migration of population 1993—2016. Moscow: Federal statistic service. URL: http://www.gks.ru/wps/wcm/connect/rosstat_main/rosstat/ru/statistics/publications/catalog/doc_1140096034906 (accessed: 16.08.2018). (In Russ.).

³ Ibid.

The second form of migration during this period was, political and economic, closely related to the movement of capital. The newly-rich classes and entrepreneurs who owned large businesses ("oligarchs"), began moving their assets abroad and settling there.

The third form of migration was a forced migration. This form of migration was typical for the Chechens, who fled from the war and found refuge in Europe. However, when there were quite a lot of ethnic Chechens in European countries, the states began to feel the negative consequences of "open doors" policy.

Marriage migration constitutes the fourth form of mobility. This form of migration has retained its popularity in the second stage of Russia's migration history. However, as well as other forms, it has undergone changes. During this period, the infrastructure of the marriage market was actively developing — marriage agencies were formed. There were professional matchmakers who provided services to search for foreign husbands, as well as mass distribution of dating sites. Among such a large number of intermediaries appeared unscrupulous entrepreneurs who covered their illegal activities under the guise of harmless firms (modeling agencies, dance schools, acting courses and more). Many young Russian girls and women often found themselves in slavery, were subjected to violence, and were forced to provide sexual services.

The fifth form of migration is that of pensioners. People older than the working age, having finished work, began to move to other countries. Independently or with the financial support of children, they purchased real estate. Taking the decision to migrate, older people were looking for a more comfortable living environment, well-developed social infrastructure, the best medical care, or favorable climate.

The third wave of emigration took place from 2008 to 2018. The structure of migration of this stage was predetermined by the global financial crisis, the complication of the foreign policy situation and the imposition of sanctions. The third period is characterized by the following forms of migration. First, it is business migration and migration of investors. Currently, entrepreneurs are becoming more mobile. The decision to organize business abroad is made not only by the owners of large capital, but also by businessmen who own much more modest assets. As in the previous stage, they move to other countries.

Secondly, it is the migration of the middle class. The spread of this form of migration indicates that international migration ceases to be "elite", moving to another country becomes available and does not require special expenses and preparation.

Third, it is educational migration. This form of migration is widespread in the modern period. At the same time, the state should foresee the negative socio-economic and demographic consequences that it has. Therefore, educational migration should be under close attention of public authorities.

Fourthly, it is the migration of highly qualified specialists. This form of migration has become widespread. People move abroad to "sell" their labor at a higher price. Thus, a special class of super-mobile specialists is formed, however, if the conditions are met, they may return to the country.

Fifthly, this is a "sanction" migration. This form of migration is vividly illustrated by the so-called "Abramovich's case", when Russian citizens, under the pressure of sanctions, are forced to move to other countries. That is, a kind of "secondary migration".

Sixth, marriage migration. The third stage is also characterized by this form of migration. However, it, according to O. Makhovskaya, “has no more” sausage”⁴ — economic, background. The main reason for the desire of Russians to marry abroad is the crisis of the domestic family model⁵. Russian women have accumulated enough knowledge about the “dangers» of interethnic marriage (the probability of getting into the system of international trafficking, cases of weaning of children, etc.), so marriage with a foreigner is most likely a deliberate step.

Thus, labor and marriage migration were stable and did not lose their popularity throughout the modern history of Russia. At the same time, if labor migration often takes the form of return migration, the marriage, as a rule, becomes permanent. That is, the country is losing people who left it to create families in other states. In this regard, there are specific socio-demographic and economic consequences for both the people and the country as a whole. Marriage migration has an important demographic impact on the country: there is not just a “direct” decline in the population of the state, but also “indirect” (the number of children born in the country is decreasing).

Features of marriage migration from Russia

Marriage migration is a very specific phenomenon. Its distinctive feature is that it is characteristic of female migration. According to experts, as well as foreign statistics, the vast majority of people who move to other countries to create families are women. They make up 98% of the migration flow.

It is difficult to estimate marriage migration from Russia. The main problem is that the statistics on migration to permanent residence collected by the Ministry of internal Affairs and developed by Rosstat do not provide a reason for “marriage”. The extent of female migration from the country can serve as an indirect source of information.

Russian women are active participants in migration. In 1997, the share of women in the total international migration turnover was 49.4%. In 2016, this share decreased slightly (to 43.3%), but continues to be at a fairly high level. At the same time, in the first half of the 2000s, this figure exceeded 50%, which means that Russian women were more mobile than men.

In the migration flow, the proportion of women is currently about 40 per cent. However, between 2000 and 2010, their share was higher than 50%, which means that women were more active than men in leaving the country. At the same time, such migration had the most negative impact on the dynamics of the country’s female population in 2006—2011, when the share of women among the departures exceeded the share of women among the arrivals, that is, Russia more actively lost the female population than accumulated it⁶.

⁴ The term “sausage” emigration comes from the popular in the 1990’s songs of the Russian band “Combination” “Two pieces of sausage” (words — A. Shishinina, music — V. Okorokov). The song was about how a man conquered the heart of a Russian woman by treating her with sausage. In this case, the sausage served as an attribute of the economic viability and well-being of the groom.

⁵ Konygina, N. (2016) Married to foreigners do not go because of money. URL: <https://iz.ru/news/272196> (accessed: 01.11.2017). (In Russ.).

⁶ The number and migration of population 1993—2016. Moscow: Federal statistic service. URL: http://www.gks.ru/wps/wcm/connect/rosstat_main/rosstat/ru/statistics/publications/catalog/doc_1140096034906 (accessed: 16.08.2018). (In Russ.).

In General, according to official statistics for the period 1993 to 2016, about 1.2 million women left the country for permanent residence abroad. At the same time, the reasons for migration were different. Taking into account the fact that other forms of migration (e. g. educational, labour, etc.) can pass into marriage migration, it is possible to estimate its scale only with the help of expert assessments. According to experts, almost every third woman who moved to another country from Russia is related to the marriage channel of migration. Thus, during this period, at least 350,000 women left to set up family abroad.

Describing the flow of marriage migration from Russia, it should be noted that young beautiful girls comprise a much higher share of those who leave the country. The average age of migrants is 28 years, as a rule, they have higher education, do not have children and often were not married before [Tyuryukanova, 1996: 91]. Thus, it is obvious that against the background of marriage migration, our country is losing its gene pool. Marriage migration becomes irreversible more often than any other form of migration.

It is interesting to note that even if life with a foreign husband does not develop, a woman usually stays abroad and continues to look for a new husband among foreigners. Women are looking for husbands not only among the citizens of the country of residence, but also subjects of other countries. Thus, within the framework of marriage migration, the flow of “secondary” migrants is quite numerous.

An important feature of marriage migration from Russia is that it is a socio-cultural phenomenon. The concept of “Russian wife” has become a kind of brand. At the same time, the word “Russian” has little to do with the ethnic characteristics of the migration flow. “Russian wives” are often called women who came from the former Soviet republics, for example, Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova. This phenomenon was formed due to the fact that brides from these countries have a similar phenotype, as well as they have similar patterns of family behavior, which attracts foreign grooms.

Reasons for the high demand for Russian women and foreign men in the international marriage market

The high demand for Russian women by foreign grooms is due to the stereotypes that have emerged in some countries. First of all, Russian women are very beautiful. Slavic type of appearance is very popular abroad, especially in Asian countries. It is considered prestigious to have a Russian wife. It becomes a matter of pride for her husband and the cause of envy from neighbors.

In addition, it is believed in foreign societies that the Russian wife is better than any other takes care of her husband, caring for him, watching his appearance and health.

Wives from Russia often devote themselves entirely to home and family. They are diligent Housewives. They do all the housework well. For them, the interests of the family always come first.

Russian wives are wonderful mothers. They carefully monitor children, educate and develop them. A distinctive feature of many women who moved from Russia to foreign countries is desire to have many children and big family. This distinguishes them from many “local” brides.

Many foreign husbands note special moral and psychological qualities of Russians: they always listen to the opinion of a man, allow him to feel like the head of the family, and do not seek equality and emancipation.

And finally, Russian wives demand less “costs” and are ready to tolerate inconveniences and lack of money.

Of course, there are also opposing statements, which, unfortunately, are not groundless. But in general, the “Russian wife” is an expensive brand that implies certain qualities.

Marriage migration would not have been so widespread if foreign grooms did not attract Russian women. The reason for the high demand for foreigners on the part of Russians is quite a lot. And they do not always lie in the plane of subjective tastes. First of all, there is a belief among Russian women that a “foreign husband” has a lot of money, earns well, and, therefore, will better provide for the family. Most likely, such an opinion was formed under the impression of foreign films, which massively began to show on television since the 1990s. As a rule, such films demonstrated “beautiful life”: attractive, well-earning men tastefully furnished big house, women in expensive jewelry. All this created an image of a successful life abroad.

Another distinctive feature of foreign grooms and the reason for their high attractiveness for Russian women is a commitment to a healthy lifestyle and lack of addiction to alcohol. This factor was significant in the 1990s, when the economic crisis was accompanied by the social degradation of Russian men.

Not the last role in the formation of compelling image of foreigners playing their visual appeal. Russian women find especially beautiful Spaniards and Italians, they like tall blue-eyed Scandinavians, and generally well dressed in European style “overseas princes”. On the one hand, a well-groomed, attractive man next door is the pride of a Russian woman. On the other hand, the girls intend to “improve genes”. They hope that their joint children will also be beautiful.

Many Russian women pursue pragmatic goals when looking for a foreign husband. They believe that foreigners live in better, more comfortable conditions. And finding a foreign groom the girls hope that he will take them out of Russia. In addition, they expect that children will receive the citizenship of a foreign country and will live in another country.

Thus, the international marriage market has generated a high demand for both foreign men and Russian women, which has a kind of stimulating effect on marriage migration from Russia.

Ways to search for foreign husbands by Russian women

Certainly, marriage and the creation of a family is a personal matter for everyone. And marriage with a foreigner often is the result of a random meeting. However, many Russian women and girls are purposefully looking for a partner abroad. In this case, the ways of finding a foreign partner in the international marriage market are quite diverse.

The first pattern is *using the help of marriage agencies for a fee or free of charge*. Their mass appearance began in the 1990s in Russia and largely contributed to the increase in marriage migration from the country. Demand gave rise to supply. Currently, marriage agencies have become important agents in the Russian marriage market.

There are more than 100 marriage agencies in Moscow (were counted agencies that have websites). Some of them work in the marriage market for more than 25 years. They have an extensive database of potential brides and grooms (more than 5,000 people).

The stimulating effect of marriage migration from the country is supported by the fact that some of the marriage agencies focus exclusively on international marriages: they work only with foreign grooms and Russian brides, as well as a number of marriage agencies charge only foreigners, while for Russian girls placing profiles in the database is free.

The work of a marriage agency is a profitable business. The average cost of placing the questionnaire is about 30 thousand rubles, or about 500 dollars. In addition, marriage agencies provide all kinds of "related" services: the selection of the bride or groom, preparation of astrological forecasts, numerologist services, etc. These services are provided on a fee basis.

Many women, using the services of a marriage agency, are satisfied; they write testimonials for help in finding beloved spouse. It is interesting that the women who became one of the first clients and found a foreign husband, plan to choose a life partner for their daughters in the same way. The marriage market in Russia is highly commercialized, it is dominated by market mechanisms, and ethical and moral standards are secondary.

Irina, 25 years old, from Ukraine. *She posted a questionnaire on the website of the marriage agency from China. The Chinese, working in Tokyo in an Internet company, 36 years old, was looking for a wife in Russia or Ukraine. His first marriage was with the Chinese woman unsuccessful. "My mother advised me to look for a wife abroad. I paid the agency 10 thousand US dollars. I chose 3 girls. I wrote them. I liked Irina", he says. He invited her to Japan. He will soon be presenting to his mother.*

The second pattern is *purposeful, independent and separate search of a foreign partner or husband via the Internet*. The absence of intermediaries in this model is often very conditional, because often women and girls are trying to find a life partner through dating sites. This method of search does not require significant costs, but at the same time, is much more risky. Pages of grooms may be invalid or contain false information. Sometimes the criminal is hiding under the guise of a respectable man. Although this method of dating is one of the most popular, its effectiveness is not too great.

Svetlana, 42 years old, from Krivoy Rog, Porto Alegre (Brazil). *I met my Brazilian husband via the Internet. There is no desire to return to Russia, but I would like to keep the passport of Ukraine. No one knows how my life will turn out. Life in Ukraine is hard; I thought how I could go abroad. With a Brazilian passport I feel more comfortable: work, travel to Europe, benefits, insurance, and pensions.*

The third pattern is *acquaintance or marriage of a Russian woman in the course of another type of migration through personal acquaintance*. Women and girls often find a foreign husband while abroad for another purpose (for example, getting an education, tourist trip, work). At the same time, acquaintance and marriage with a foreigner are either unexpected or become a passing goal.

Olga, from Kirov, 25 years old, Paris (France). *Trained in Geneva. Actively I was looking for a husband in Switzerland. I returned to Russia after an internship. After 6 months I have*

moved to Moscow. Worked in the state structure. As a result I married a French citizen who worked in Moscow. Now we are living in Paris.

Natalia, 32 years old, from Moscow, Cairo (Egypt). *I went on vacation in Egypt. I met a man, an Egyptian, I fell in love. Remained in Egypt. Now in divorce. I am works as an interpreter in Cairo.*

Lyudmila, 38 years old, from Novorossiysk, Rhodes Island (Greece). *I went to work in Greece, the Rhodes Island. Got a job as a waiter in a restaurant. I married the owner of the restaurant — a Greek citizen. I am happy very much with him, I like Greece as well.*

Eugenia, 30 years old, lives in Vung Thau (Vietnam). *Works as an interpreter. I came to a joint Russian-Vietnamese company to work. I met my husband at work — he is a Vietnamese citizen. Two children were born in marriage.*

The fourth pattern is *acquaintance with a foreign groom through relatives or friends*. Many Russian women ask relatives, friends and acquaintances in other countries to help in finding a groom, due to the mass migration of Russian citizens and a large number of compatriots living abroad. This search model is one of the safest, but perhaps the longest.

Russian women who decide to marry a foreigner often use a combination of several patterns at the same time.

Olga, from Moscow, lives in Porto Alegre (Brazil). *I met my husband in Thailand. Met by the will of fate, because Brazilians are rarely in Thailand. We got married in Brazil. We live in Porto Alegre. There are 50—60 Russian — speaking people here—Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians. Of course, all speak in Russian. But almost all of them are women. Age is over 35 years. All of them moved to get married. This is a second marriage for many of them. They were looking for a husband in the Internet. They were looking for husband purposefully, as they were intended to leave Russia. There were practically no examples of “live dating”.*

Examples of interviews show that women, as a rule, do not plan to return home, but do not intend to completely lose contact with it. Often they tend to leave Russian citizenship as a kind of security guarantee.

Geography of marriage migration from Russia. The geography of the marriage migration of women is quite extensive. There are four main directions: North American (USA, Canada), European, Asian and Middle Eastern. At the same time, you can find Russian women — “Russian wives” practically in any country in the world [Ryazantsev, Sivoplyasova, 2017: 5645].

The most popular country for the migration of women in North America is the United States. This is one of the few countries that keeps a statistical record of immigrants by type of issued visas, including the so-called “visas of brides”. This makes it easier to assess the extent of marriage migration to the country. As a rule, the “bride visa” is issued for three months, during which the couple must take a decision and marry. Otherwise, the woman must leave the United States. Thus, according to the US State Department, for the period of 20 years from 1997 to 2017, Russian women were issued about 21,700 marriage visas (Fig. 1)⁷.

⁷ Report of the Visa Office 2017. U.S. Department of state — Bureau of Consular Affairs. URL <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/legal/visa-law0/visa-statistics/annual-reports/report-of-the-visa-office-2017.html> (accessed: 16.08.2018).



Fig. 1. The number of «bride visas» issued by US to the citizens of the Russian Federation in 1997—2017. Source: Report of the Visa Office 2017. U. S. Department of state — Bureau of Consular Affairs⁸

The maximum number of visas of brides was noted in 1999—2007. During this period, more than a one thousand Russian women annually moved to the United States for the purpose of marriage and family creation. Such high rates of migration were probably due to the difficult socio-economic situation in Russia after the financial and economic crisis 1998. Since 2008, there has been a reduction of number of issued visas, which was most likely due to the stabilization of socio-economic situation in Russia, the beginning of the implementation of an active social policy, in particular demographic and family policy aimed at supporting families with children. In the later period (2014—2017), the decline in the popularity of marriage migration to the United States may have been influenced by the introduction of sanctions, the complexity of the visa issuance procedure. Nevertheless, marriage migration to the United States retains its relative popularity among Russians today.

There are several reasons for the prevalence of marriages between American grooms and Russian brides. The first, the United States in the view of our compatriots is an economically developed and socially prosperous country where wealthy people live. The second, there is practically no language barrier. English is taught by almost everyone, starting from school, and its popularity is only increasing. Third, the mentality of Americans is relatively clear to Russians. In addition, the Russian women like to be treated with respect for their rights and freedoms by American men. There are the difficulties and barriers to a happy family life. It is necessary to note the existing differences in culture, which are most acute when the relationship does not develop.

The second popular destinations for Russian women's marriage migration are European countries, and the first three include Germany, Spain and France.

The leader is Germany among European countries in the number of migrants from Russia. According to the OECD, about 20,000 Russian people annually move to Germany,

⁸ URL <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/legal/visa-law0/visa-statistics/annual-reports/report-of-the-visa-office-2017.html> (accessed: 16.08.2018).

including 60% women [OECD, 2017]. Quite often, women indicate marriage as the reason for migration. Germany also issues a “bride visa”. Marriage migration from Russia to Germany has recently increased, and not the last role in the development of marriage migration is also played by the community of Russian-speaking Germans, formed as a result of active migration in the 1990s from Russia and Kazakhstan. In 2010, the Russians were issued 1,500 “bride visas” and about 2,000 visas in 2016⁹.

Another European country, where Russians most often move to create a family, is France. This country is wrapped in many myths and stereotypes. It attracts young romantic Russians as a magnet. According to the French national Institute of statistics and economic research, 4.2 million of foreigners and 6 million of migrants lived in the country in 2014. At the same time, about 51% of migrants were women. According to the National Institute of statistics and economic research, marriage migration has always occupied a significant place in the migration flow of women to France. This is largely due to the fact that the marriage with a citizen of the country makes it easier to obtain citizenship. About 5% of migrants coming to France are related to marriage migration¹⁰.

About 4,300 people from Russia move to France every year. Moreover, the overwhelming majority of migrants in this stream are women (about 70%). In total, currently about 115,000 Russians live in France. The number of women, who have acquired the citizenship of the country due to the fact that they are married to French, can serve as an indirect assessment of the marriage migration of Russian women to France (Fig. 2).

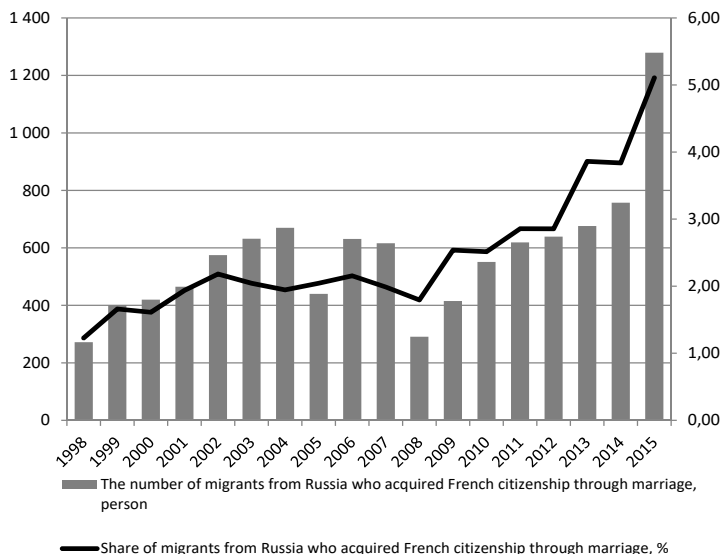


Fig. 2. The number of migrants from Russia who acquired French citizenship through marriage, person/percent.
Source: *Institute national de la statistique et des etudes economiques*¹¹e

⁹ Einreise und Aufenthalt aus familiären Gründen (Ehegatten — und Familiennachzug) (2012) Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, P. 10.

¹⁰ *Institute national de la statistique et des etudes economiques*. URL: <https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques?debut=0&dpred=2381757&theme=5> (accessed: 10.08.2018).

¹¹ URL: <https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques?debut=0&idpred=2381757&theme=5> accessed: 10.08.2018).

Figure 2 shows that the number of Russians who received French citizenship in connection with marriage with a citizen of the country has increased steadily in 2008—2015, reaching 1279 people. The migration legislation of France was amended in 2006. The right to citizenship is granted to persons who have entered into an official marriage with French and have lived in France for at least four years. Therefore, we can say that a significant increase in marriage migration began in the middle of 2000.

Currently, the share of Russians who obtain French citizenship on the basis of marriage is 5.1 % of the total number of persons receiving citizenship on this basis. At the same time, Russia is one of the four countries, migrants from which most often receive French citizenship in connection with marriage (second only to Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco).

The third attractive country for marriage migration is Spain. Every year 150,000—230,000 people come to the country. 7,000—8,400 people from them are migrants from Russia. The share of Russians in the migration flow is greater than 60 % [OECD, 2017].

Unlike many other countries, including Europe, the basis of the migration flow to Spain are not labor migrants, but people who buy real estate, creative intelligentsia, specialists, as well as Russians who married the Spaniards [Sivoplyasova, 2018: 170].

During recent history the number of marriages between Russians and Spaniards were at a fairly high level in 2000—2016 (fig. 3). During this period the maximum was reached in 2008. This year the number of registered marriages has reached 910. Currently, despite a slight decrease in the number of registered marriages between Spaniards and Russians, their number annually exceeds 600¹².

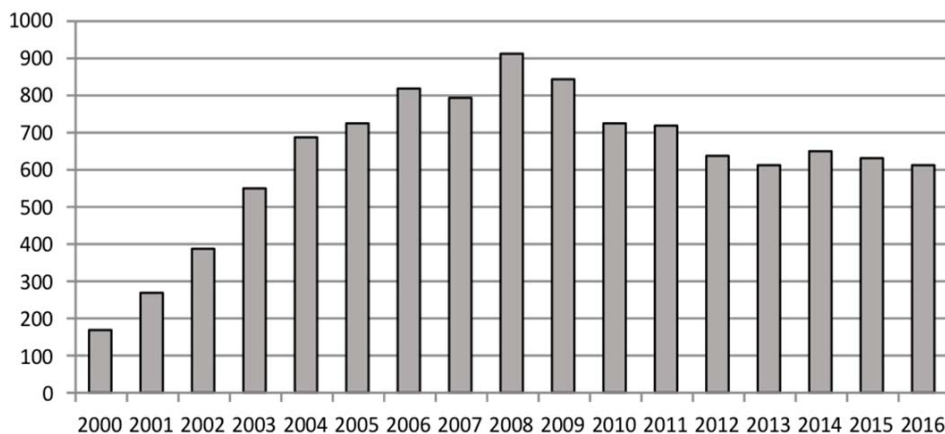


Fig. 3. Number of registered marriages between Spaniards and Russians.

Source: Instituto Nacional de Estadística¹³

¹² Instituto Nacional de Estadística. URL: <http://www.ine.es/jaxiT3/Datos.htm?t=9674> (accessed: 10.08.2018).

¹³ URL: <http://www.ine.es/jaxiT3/Datos.htm?t=9674> (accessed: 10.08.2018).

Thus, marriage migration from Russia to Europe is a very common phenomenon. Such popularity of this migration direction is caused by several factors. The first, the geographical proximity of the countries. The second almost complete absence or weak language barriers, as children in Russia begin to learn the main European languages (English, German, French, and Spanish) at school. The third, long-term socio-cultural relations between Russia and European countries and similar cultural traditions, which, on the one hand, facilitates mutual understanding between people creating a new family, and on the other hand — simplifies the adaptation and integration of the Russian wife in the host society.

The third popular vector of marriage migration from Russia is the Asian direction. It is relatively new, but due to the geopolitical transformations of recent times, as well as the increasing interest of Russians in Asian culture, its attractiveness and the volume of migration will increase. In this direction, the flow of migrants to China and Korea is the most numerous.

Currently, migration to China tends to increase. The number of Russians living in this country is about 15,000 people. 1,000—1,500 of them are the Russian women who live with Chinese men [Sivoplyasova, 2017: 170].

There are several reasons for the popularity of marriage migration to China as a form of relocation. First, the demographic policy pursued in China for many years and aimed to reducing the population has led to a sharp gender imbalance in the country. 120 boys were born for 100 girls in the late 1980. Therefore, nowadays brides are “not enough” for all young people. They are forced to seek wives abroad. Secondly, the Slavic type of appearance is recognized in China as very attractive. Russian wife is considered to be very prestigious.

At the same time, marriage migration to China, unlike migration to European countries, is associated with more serious difficulties and barriers. First of all, it is a language barrier. Asian languages are more difficult to learn, so “Russian wives” often either do not know the Chinese language, or know it at an elementary level. This does not allow you to talk to husband “heart to heart”. This significantly complicates the process of adaptation of Russians in the new country. In addition, there are sharp differences in mentality and cultural traditions. Things that seemed beautiful and attractive in Russia can cause bewilderment and irritation in China.

Despite this, Chinese men are very attractive to Russian women. Our brides expect care, attention, financial solvency, lack of addiction to alcohol from the grooms. And, as examples show, expectations of girls, as a rule, are justified.

The situation with marriage migration to Korea is somewhat different. Korea is one of the countries where the share of international marriages is extremely high. Currently, it is about 10%. It was even higher — 30—40% in the 1990s. Moreover, the vast majority in this migration flow are women from Vietnam and China [Sivoplyasova, 2017: 171].

The scale of migration from Russia to Korea has a wave-like dynamics, although they are characterized by high rates. According to the OECD, the number of migrants from Russia decreased in 2003—2011 (from 9,300 to 2,600 people), and it increased to 8,300 people by 2015. At the same time, more than 40% of the total number of migrants is women [OECD, 2017]. It is obvious that not all women have moved to Korea through the marriage migration channel, but they are quite in demand in the

Korean marriage market. High demand for Russian women is primarily due to the attractiveness of their Slavic appearance. Korean men represent a model of high moral qualities and economic viability for women.

However, such international marriages often face a number of difficulties and challenges. The first, the language barrier. The Korean language is quite difficult, so not all Russian brides know it at a sufficient level. The second, differences in mentality. The third, the extremely high requests from the Russian wives.

The fourth popular destination of marriage migration from Russia is the Middle East. Turkey is the most popular country for the Russian migrants. It is extremely difficult to determine the number of Russian citizens who have moved to this eastern country. However, according to the Ambassador of the Russian Federation in the Republic of Turkey V. Ivanovsky, about 50,000 Russians lived in Turkey in 2009 [Davtyan, 2009: 6]. However, most likely, the real figure is 2—4 times higher. Moreover, the vast majority of migrants are women.

According to the site www.trt.net.tr currently, 60,000 Russians live in Antalya, 95% of which are women. At the same time, about 70% of the Russian women are women who married Turkish men. In total, according to the Embassy of the Turkish Republic in Moscow, there are about 105,000 “Russian wives” in Turkey.

After the complication of political relations between the two countries, Russian women began to actively move back to Russia, taking their children with them. However, when the contradictions were resolved, 1000—2000 “Russian wives” with children returned to Turkey to their husbands¹⁴.

Such a high level of feminization of the migration flow from Russia to Turkey is explained by the extremely high demand for Russian women from the Turks and their high attractiveness for our compatriots. At the same time, Russians often purposefully went to the country to find a husband. Other forms of migration were less frequent in marriage migration. Probably, the social phenomenon “Natasha” was formed for this reason.

Russian women do not just have an attractive Slavic appearance. Modern the Russian women hold more free views in relations with men in comparison with Turkish women, and are often ready to change belief for the sake of the Turkish beloved. In addition, they are good housewives and wonderful mothers. All this makes women and girls from Russia desirable partners for the citizens of Turkey.

However, the Turks are considered attractive young people: beautiful, well-groomed and brutal. They are ready to take responsibility for the family, independently solve complex issues, and take care of its well-being. Therefore, life in Turkey seems to our compatriots beautiful bright Eastern fairy tale.

In reality, it is quite difficult for Slavic girls to get used to and accept many national traditions of this country, to learn quite difficult Turkish and to adapt in the new country. Therefore, unfortunately, many marriages break up in 1—3 years after registration. This simultaneously entails some difficulties in determining the place of residence of the children.

¹⁴ Russian residents of Antalya are returning to Turkey (2017). URL: <http://www.trt.net.tr/russian/iz-rossiiskogo-i-turietskogo-mira/2017/04/03/russkie-zhitieli-antalii-vozvrashchautsia-v-turtsiiu-704887> (accessed: 19.08.2018). (In Russ.)

Thus, despite the high rates of marriage migration, moving to another country for permanent residence is always associated with a number of difficulties that significantly complicate the process of adaptation to the host society that often leads to a break in relations with foreign husbands.

Conclusion

Inclusion of Russia in the international marriage market occurred relatively quickly in the 1990s due to active emigration after the collapse of the USSR. The position of Russia in the international marriage market is determined by the ethno-cultural characteristics of Russian women. The phenomenon of “Russian wives” has become a national brand in the international marriage market. “Russian wife” is a collective image that includes women from Post-Soviet area, but usually only of the Slavic type of appearance. For example, a woman from Muslim regions or ethnic republics of the Northern Caucasus, North, and Siberia in the international marriage market is unlikely to be associated with the “Russian wife”. At the same time, a woman from Ukraine or Belorussia will be more often called a “Russian wife” than a “Ukrainian wife” or “Belorussian wife”.

For many Russian women, marrying a foreigner is a way of migrating abroad. Many of them are ready to go for it, despite the lack of deep feelings and love. This strategy allows you to obtain legal status in the country of migration and then citizenship, which sometimes become the goal of marriage. As a result, many marriages involving Russian women break up after they obtain citizenship of the host country.

The increase in marriage migration from Russia led to the formation and expansion of the infrastructure of marriage migration, the appearing of specialized marriage agencies, professional intermediaries working in the countries of the former USSR and Russia, the operating of many dating sites. However, in parallel with this, a shadow segment was formed, which is the involvement of young women and girls in prostitution and the entertainment industry. This refers to the spread of trafficking schemes from the countries of the former USSR under the guise of marriage emigration.

The geography of marriage migration of Russian women is very extensive and includes many countries of the world. Sometimes these countries are far enough away from Russia and very exotic. We can say that Russian women have mastered the vast geographical space and their marriage migration is sometimes very adventurous in nature and daring in areas. However, the problems of Russian marriage migrants are very similar; first of all, they are faced with a language barrier, differences in mentality, cultural characteristics, complex relationships with husband's parents. It complicates the adaptation and integration of the Russian wives in the host society. Many Russian women, despite the failure of marriages and family relationships, successfully integrate into societies, study the language and remain in host countries, but as a result of women's migration, Russia bears significant losses of the gene pool.

It is possible to formulate the following recommendations for the migration policy of Russia in relation to the marriage migration of women.

1. Russia shall sign special agreements on the regulation of international marriages in order to protect the rights of women abroad. Many agreements between Russia and host countries are aimed to protect labor rights and do not cover the protection of

women's rights, do not regulate the protection of children in international marriages, and do not provide for mechanisms to protect Russian women from violence.

2. The need for control over marriage agencies on the part of the state in order not to allow cases of trafficking. Marriage agencies operating in Russia shall be licensed by the state and report (at least for the first two or three years) on the situation of Russian women whom they have helped to find a groom or husband abroad.

3. Russian need to open especial courses for Russian woman for preparation for life in another country, primarily language and culture courses. Courses shall be open and supervised by Russian consulates and embassies abroad. This will allow having close contact with Russian women and help to support them in matters of integration. In addition, it will remove many problems from Russian diplomats who are often forced to solve the problematic issues of Russian women in international marriages.

References

Becker G. A. (1974) Theory of Marriage. In: *Th. W. Shultz (Ed.): Economics of the Family. Marriage, Children and Human Capital*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. P. 299—351.

Bergstrom T. C. (1997) A Survey of Theories of the Family. In: *M. Rosenzweig, O. Stark. (Ed.): Handbook of Population and Family Economics*. Amsterdam: Elsevier Science. Vol. 1. P. 21—79. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1574-003X\(97\)80019-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1574-003X(97)80019-0).

Chuiko L. V. (1975) Marriages and divorces (Demographic study on the example of the USSR). Moscow: Statistics. (in Russ.)

Davtyan O. (2009) A new stage in Russian-Turkish relations. *Konsul*. No. 4 (19). P. 4—7. (In Russ.).

Goldman N., Westoff C., Hammerslough C. (1984). Demography of the marriage market in the United States. *Population Index*. Vol. 50. No. 1. P. 5—25. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2736903>.

Iontsev V. A. (2001) Population migration. Issue. 3: International migration (Appendix to the journal «Migration in Russia»). Moscow. (In Russ.)

Jang B., Casterline J., Snyder A. (2014) Migration and marriage: Modeling the joint process. *Demographic research*. Vol. 30. P. 1339—1366. <https://doi.org/10.4054/DemRes.2014.30.47>.

OECD (2017), *International migration Outlook 2017*, OECD Publishing, Paris. URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/migr_outlook-2017-en (accessed: 10.08.2018).

Ryazantsev S., Sivoplyasova S. (2016) Womens Emigration from Russia Factors, Trends, Geography. *The Social Sciences*. Vol. 11. No. 23. P. 5643—5647. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3923/sscience.2016.5643.5647>.

Sivoplyasova S. Yu. (2017) Russian women in the marriage market of Japen, Korea and Chin. In: *Sergey V. Ryazantsev and Marina N. Khranova (Ed.) Migration Bridges in Eurasia: Models for the Effective Management of Migration in the Context of the*

Development of the Eurasian Integration Project. The materials of the IX International Scientific and Practical Forum. Moscow: Economic Educational Publishing House. Vol. 1. P. 169—173. (In Russ.)

Sivoplyasova S. Yu. (2018) Transformation of marriage emigration of women from Russia. *MOLDOSCOPIE (Probleme de analiză politică)*. Chișinău: USM, USPEE, AMSP, No. 2. (LXXXI). P. 163—176. (In Russ.).

Tyuryukanova E. V. (1996) Migration of women from Russia: one more “strategy of success”? *Gender aspects of social transformation*. Moscow: Institute of socio-economic problems of population RAS. P. 84—103. (In Russ.)

Vishnevsky A. G. (ed.). (1977) Marriages, births and deaths in Russia and in the USSR. Moscow: Statistics. (In Russ.).

Volkov A. G., Darsky L. E. (1975) Marriage and the family. Demographic aspect. Translated in English, Franch, Czech. Moscow. Statistics. (In Russ.)