## ARE RUSSIANS THE HIGHEST-PAID GOALIES IN THE NHL?

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Twenty years after Glasnost, Russians in the National Hockey League (NHL) are now among the highest-paid goaltenders. Of the eighty-nine NHL goalies who played at least one game in the 2008-09 season, over 33 percent were born outside North America (and 4.6 percent of the total were from either Kazakhstan or Russia). A few years after Glasnost, there was evidence that Russian-born NHL players were *under* paid (see Austin et al., *IAER*, 1998).

Salaries (in thousands of U.S. dollars) at the start of the 2008-09 season of all NHL goalies who played at least ten games in the 2007-08 season were regressed on goals against average (*GAA*) [equal to goals against multiplied by 60 and then divided by the goalie's minutes on the ice], the number of seasons (*Seasons*) played through 2007-08 (again, with a minimum of ten games played in each season), and the number of seasons squared (*Seasons*<sup>2</sup>). Ethnicity was initially broken down into four regional categories: Canadian, American, European, and Russian. Salary data are from <a href="https://www.nhlpa.com">www.nhlpa.com</a> and players' profiles are from <a href="https://www.nhlpa.com">www.nhlpa.com</a>.

Goalies receive significantly higher salaries for a lower GAA (p = .001) and experience, namely, the number of seasons played. [The coefficients on Seasons and  $Seasons^2$ , 1293.9 (p < .001) and -60.44 (p = .001), respectively, suggest  $\frac{\partial Salary}{\partial Seasons} = 0$  when Seasons = 10.7 or that compensation rises for the first eleven years in a goaltender's NHL career.] European-born goalies receive, on average, \$254 thousand less than their Russian counterparts (p = .825), Canadians \$1.592 million less (p = .146), and Americans \$2.676 million less (p = .034).

Ethnicity was then divided into a total of six regional categories. Western European goalies (from Sweden, Finland, Switzerland, France, and including one from South Africa) and Eastern European goalies (from the Czech Republic and Slovakia) receive \$181 thousand less

(p=.882) and \$981 thousand less (p=.547) than their Russian counterparts, respectively. Canadian goalies from the predominantly French-speaking province of Quebec receive \$1.481 million less (p=.208) and Canadian goalies from all other provinces receive \$1.681 million less (p=.168) than their Russian counterparts. In this regression, Americans receive \$2.691 million less (p=.038).