

# Social attitudes of indigenous and diaspora communities in the border areas of the Russian Federation regarding the presence of foreign labor migrants

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**Abstract.** The paper is based on the results of a sociological survey carried out in seven border regions of Russia based on a structured interview with representatives of the indigenous population and diaspora groups. An index of positive economic effect from the presence of foreign specialists in the border regions of Russia was built. Also, the regions were ranked according to the population's assessments.

**Keywords:** population, indigenous population, labor migrants, diaspora community, ethnic groups

## 1. Introduction

Appeal to the study of issues of migration movements and their consequences is of particular importance, because of their impact on the socio-political stability, economic and demographic development of both host countries and countries of origin of migrants [9]. Mass migration flows of labor migrants to Russia at the beginning of the century became an integral part of the sociopolitical environment and the subject of public and scientific discussion. In this context, the issues of determining the trends of labor migration to Russia, determining the extent to which these trends determine the specific characteristics of the economy, the social and demographic development of the country do not lose their relevance.

In the period of the last ten years, almost every CIS member state insignificantly, but increased the "donation" of its citizens to the Russian Federation. Only in 2018, according to the data of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia, 16,488.9 thousand foreign citizens and person without citizenship were registered for migration, 116,538 permits were issued to foreign citizens, of which 25,460 permits were obtained by highly qualified specialists, and a total 18,382 permits by the qualified specialists. Migration "infusions" have affected almost all regional labor markets, especially regions with high socio-economic attractiveness, convenient transit position, which in particular are regions of the Russian border area.

These processes are accompanied by the formation of various models of incorporating the migrants into the receiving social environment. The process of adaptation of migrants largely depends on the conditions in the country of entry. These conditions consist of three components, such as: (1) migration policies of the state, (2) the labor market response, and (3) the characteristics of local ethnic communities [7]. The theory of segmental assimilation, developed by A. Portes and M. Zhou, suggests the possibility of incorporating migrants into various strata of society, depending on the accumulated social capital, as a result of which different trajectories of their social mobility are formed [8]. What social status a

migrant will acquire in a host state depends on the particular perception of status by the migrant himself at a new place of residence [5].

The integration of foreign citizens into the economic models of the host region in modern society leads to the erosion of the boundaries of ethnic groups. The ease of movement around the world and the general availability of communications, especially the Internet, creates a situation in which leaving the country ceases to be perceived as a complete breakdown of ties with relatives and friends left at home [3]. As a result, the desire to establish new social ties in the place of arrival is not as great as it was before, but they are still being formed. According to the theory of N. Glick Schiller, migrants, joining the economic institutions of a new country, maintain ties with their homeland and as a result form a network of contacts on both sides of the border [4]. R. Alby and V. Nee in their concept recognize the existence of two processes of convergence of cultures side by side with the integration into the value system of the host society [1]. Both scholars argue that representatives of ethnic groups who enter the host state not only learn to one degree or another the social values and norms established in it, but also introduce elements of their own into the local culture.

At the same time, the processes of integration and mutual influence of cultures do not always go without conflict and in many respects their character is determined not only by the cultural and ideological distance between migrants and the indigenous people of the regions, but also by the economic needs in the labor of immigrants. The labor market is divided into two: (1) primary with prestigious and stable jobs; and (2) secondary with low pay and poor working conditions, which is not popular among the local population. The need to attract the labor from outside the country is shaped by the four features of an industrial society: structural inflation, problems of employee motivation, dualism between labor and capital, and a demographic structure of able-bodied citizens [6]. The nature of the adaptation and integration processes will depend on the degree of public awareness of this need, including filling the primary labor market due to staff shortages, especially typical of the Russian border area [2].

The topic for discussion in the framework of this report will be the results of assessing the social perception of the impact of foreign specialists on the country's economy, based on an index of social attitudes of the population in border regions of Russia, and their (regions) ranking on the indigenous population and the diaspora community.

## **2. Materials and Methods**

The basis for this paper was the results of a 2017 sociological survey in seven border regions of Russia, which was based on a structured interview with representatives of the indigenous population and diaspora groups in these regions aged 15 to 75 years ( $n = 3771$ ). The Altai Krai: population ( $n = 751$ ), diaspora community ( $n = 181$ ); Orenburg region: population ( $n = 428$ ), diaspora community ( $n = 72$ ); Murmansk region: population ( $n = 389$ ), diaspora community ( $n = 110$ ); Pskov region: population ( $n = 428$ ), diaspora community ( $n = 72$ ); Altai Republic: population ( $n = 277$ ), diaspora community ( $n = 55$ ); Republic of Dagestan: population ( $n = 462$ ), diaspora community ( $n = 57$ ); Rostov region: population ( $n = 396$ ), diaspora community ( $n = 93$ ). In this case, a diaspora community is understood as a group of members of an ethnic group living in the territory of a state that has its own national-territorial formations outside of it, its citizens, but not belonging to the indigenous nationality and aware of themselves as a national community.

According to the results of our study, an index of positive economic effect from the presence of foreign specialists in Russia was built. According to the population estimates (indigenous and diaspora) of the border regions of Russia, they (regions) were ranked according to the following position shared by the population: "Foreign experts have a positive impact on the economy."

For the analysis and visualization of data received, the sociological method for constructing indices was used (in this case, a private nature). The calculated index is an indicator of the state or tendency of change of the material under study, which is the mass consciousness of the population (indigenous and diaspora) living in the border regions of the Russian Federation, as a kind of single entity.

Based on the respondents' answers regarding the role of labor migrants, an index of the positive economic effect of the presence of foreign specialists in Russia was calculated, reflecting the social attitudes of the population in individual regions of Russia. The position used by the population is aimed at identifying positive or negative assessments (or directions for changing these assessments). The index is constructed according to the following procedure. First, a relative value is calculated for each question. It is equal to the ratio of the difference between the shares of positive and negative answers to the sum of the shares of positive and negative answers, then 100 is added to avoid the appearance of negative index values. The range of values that the index can take varies from 0 to 200.

### **3. Results**

According to the results of the analysis, we note that the assessments of the position, reflecting the assessment of the work of foreign specialists, are quite mismatched, both among the indigenous and diasporal population of the border regions of Russia. Thus, the population perceives and evaluates in different ways the positive effect of the work of foreign specialists on the Russian economy. In general, for all the regions covered by the study, the opinions of the indigenous population were divided along the two poles of the assessment almost evenly: (1) 39.6% of the population is more likely and totally agree with the statement about the positive effect of the foreigners' labor, (2) 44% are more likely and completely disagree with this statement, (3) when a total of 16.4 % found it difficult to assess. Representatives of the diaspora are a little more inclined towards the positive influence of foreign experts on the state of the country's economy. In general, all regions covered by the survey also showed a wide range of opinions: 52.2% of the population are more likely and completely agree with the statement that there is a positive effect of labor of foreigners, and 30.8% are more likely and completely disagree, with 17.0% of those who find it difficult to assess.

The trend requiring more in-depth analysis than provided by the report's framework, but the subject does not demand attention, there is a significantly wider prevalence of negative assessments of the economic contribution of foreign specialists among the indigenous population of the national republics of the Russian Federation, the indigenous population of multiethnic subjects to the positive pole of assessments. At the same time, the diaspora community of monoethnic (national) territories provides estimates similar to those of the multinational and multi-ethnic regions of the borderland.

The maximum share of negative assessments from the presence of foreign specialists was recorded among the indigenous population in the Orenburg region (14.4%), positive among the diasporas of the Republic of Dagestan (20%). The highest values of the index of positive economic effect of the presence of the foreign specialists in Russia, calculated according to the estimates of the indigenous population, were in the Pskov region (115 points), the Republic of Dagestan (97.1 points) ranked second, the Murmansk region ranked third (97.1 point). The index values below the average for the sample were in all other regions: Altai Republic (69.4 points), the Altai Krai (88.8 points), the Orenburg Region (89.8 points), and the Rostov Region (93.3 points).

The highest value of the index on the positive economic effect of the presence of foreign specialists in Russia, calculated on the basis of assessments of diaspora communities of the border area, was noted in the Republic of Dagestan (188.24 points). The index values below the average for the sample were only in the Rostov region (86.36 points) (Table 1).

Based on the calculated difference in average values of the index, we note that the most mismatched positions in the perception of labor of foreign specialists are characterized by massive creation in the Republic of Dagestan, where the "gap" in the index values was 83.94 positions; Altai Krai – 37.65 points, in the Murmansk region – 31.16 points, and the Orenburg region – 26.87 points. The most solidary in the estimates were residents of the Altai Republic – 16.99 points, the Rostov Region – 14.93 points, and the Pskov Region – 12.59 points.

**Table 1.** Distribution of assessments made by the residents in border regions of Russia (indigenous and diasporas) on the position “Foreign experts have a positive impact on the economy” (%),  $\chi^2$ ,  $p \leq 0.005$ ), as well as values of the index of positive economic effect on the presence of foreign specialists in Russia.

Region / Data source	Totally disagree	Rather disagree	Rather agree	Totally agree	Difficult to answer	Average values	
AK	population	11.60%	38.00%	31.80%	7.90%	10.70%	88.8
	diaspora	4.0%	28.9%	42.8%	13.9%	10.4%	126.45
OR	population	14.40%	25.40%	24.40%	8.00%	27.80%	89.8
	diaspora	5.6%	15.3%	25.0%	4.2%	50.0%	116.67
MR	population	11.40%	30.10%	32.70%	6.40%	19.40%	97.1
	diaspora	4.5%	25.5%	42.7%	10.9%	16.4%	128.26
PR	population	7.40%	29.40%	40.20%	9.40%	13.60%	115
	diaspora	5.7%	24.3%	42.9%	10.0%	17.1%	127.59
AR	population	12.80%	39.80%	24.60%	3.30%	19.50%	69.4
	diaspora	7.3%	38.2%	32.7%	1.8%	20.0%	86.36
RD	population	12.00%	29.10%	35.60%	9.20%	14.10%	104.3
	diaspora	1.8%	3.6%	67.3%	20.0%	7.3%	188.24
RR	population	12.70%	33.10%	28.10%	11.90%	14.20%	93.31
	diaspora	5.4%	36.6%	36.6%	12.9%	8.6%	108.24
BB	population	11.7%	32.3%	31.4%	8.2%	16.4%	94.8
	diaspora	4.8%	26.0%	41.1%	11.1%	17.0%	125.91

The following abbreviations have been used: AK – Altai Krai, OR – Orenburg Region, MR – Murmansk Region, PR – Pskov Region, AR – Altai Republic, RD – Republic of Dagestan, RR – Rostov Region, BB – Data in the entire sample.

#### 4. Discussion

When trying to interpret the data, we note that the differences obtained only demonstrate the presence of multidirectional trends in the perception of work among foreign citizens. A deeper analysis of the causation of polarization of public opinion is needed, including taking into account the ethno-cultural specificity of the border area, the socio-economic situation of the regions of Russia, and the results of the assessment of labor market tensions. Given that among the representatives of the diaspora community of border societies, there are both Russian citizens in the first generation and the ethnic population of the territories perceived as indigenous to the region, i.e. the residents with varying degrees of actualization of incorporation processes in the socio-economic ties of Russian society, it is advisable to conduct comparative observations on characteristics of public consciousness depending on the “length of service” of the citizenship in diaspora societies.

#### 5. Conclusion

Thus, the public opinion of both the indigenous and the disunited population of the border regions of Russia is very heterogeneous in assessing the positive or negative effect of the presence of foreign specialists in regional labor markets. The indigenous population of the regions is more likely to doubt the existence of an economic effect. This amounts to just over a third of the total positive ratings. At the same time, representatives of diasporas, whose ancestors either acted as “visitors” at some point in their life journeys, having migrated from the territories of traditional residence as “foreign workers,” tend to give more positive assessments (over 52% of the total positive assessments).

The population of the ethnic republics is very critical, they underestimate the economic feasibility of attracting foreigners to the regional economy. However, the preliminary findings need further study from the position of “ethnization” of the mono-ethnic regions’ economies that are distant from the “Russian core” of Russia.

Polarization of opinions regarding the labor of foreigners characterizes not only the public opinion of the indigenous and diaspora population. On the basis of the calculated index, it is also fixed within the regional communities differentiated along the “indigenous – not indigenous population” axis. The

strongest differences of opinion are in the Republic of Dagestan, where the average values of the index between the subsamples differ almost twice.

## **6. Acknowledgment**

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