


Employment and Mobility of Russian Rural Population

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The mobility of population in any settlement depends objectively on two main factors: the character of employment and the amount of income. In rural Russia today, these indexes are highly connected. A form of employment which needs increased mobility gives better income.

In 2005, a special survey was carried out in 77 rural settlements in different regions of Russia: in settlements 100 km far from Moscow, as well as in settlements up to 8 500 km far away from Moscow. More than 1500 respondents were asked about their employment status, their income and their mobility opportunities. Analyzing the statistical data, we could divide the age-of-work rural population into five main groups according to their employment place:

1. employed out of their rural settlements, including those who are studying in cities;
2. employed in private farms;
3. employed in rural industries, transport and services;
4. employed in collective farms;
5. unemployed (representatives of a social “bottom”).

Each employment group has its corresponding level of mobility:

1 group – employed out of their rural settlements. About 7% of all respondents find jobs in the nearest city or in the centre of rural district (CRD)¹. Everyday commuting to the workplace is an ordinary feature of their lifestyle. But the majority of these people (more than 80%) do not go into regions outside where they live. 10% of all respondents are employed in regional centers and they commute there at least every week. But they do not go to far away regions or to Moscow often. The third sub-group consists of commuting laborers (9% of respondents). They are the most mobile persons. It's the single group which makes rather regular trips to other neighborhoods and to distant regions of Russia. Most of such workers are employed in non-professional jobs in big Russian cities such as Moscow, Novosibirsk, St. Petersburg and in the Extreme North. 2/3 of these people have been in Moscow – as the most attractive migration centre – in the last 15 years. People of this subgroup often go to centers of rural districts and regional centers as transit points during their way to the work place in a far region. These people have to spend most part of their life time far away from native villages, working hard and sending money to their families. All in all, the first group (25% of all respondents) is the most active and mobile one.

2 group – employed in private farms. Russian farmers, especially if they do not have a large scale agriculture production, they often need to sell their goods by themselves in a city or at roadside markets. That is why this form of employment is highly developed within roadside villages and their population commutes constantly. About 60% of the respondents from this group go in the Centre of Rural District or in the nearest cities every week (to sell goods there). But commuting in other directions - to the regional centre, out of the region or abroad - is not very common for this group. More than 50% have not crossed regional borders in the Post-Soviet Period. Nevertheless, these people have rather high incomes and some of them could enjoy cultural or recreational trips even far away from their rural region.

¹ There are 1871 rural districts in Russia. The average population number of one rural district is about 20 000 inhabitants, the territory – 1 500-3 000 km² in the Main Settled Area of Russia. The average number of rural inhabitants in one region (*область, край*) is 0.5-1.0 millions on 40-100 thousands km².

3 group – employed in local industries, transport and service sectors. This is the largest group (more than 40% of all respondents) in the employment structure in rural Russia. The employees in these sectors have a medium level of income and a medium level of mobility needs: there is only one place – the CRD - which almost all (96%) of the respondents in this group visit rather constantly, not less than once a month. 25% have not visited a regional centre in the Post-Soviet Period. People in this group go to cities and the centers of districts rather rarely for working purposes and more often in search of some services offered by the city. The 55% of them did not cross regional borders and 83% did not visit the Russian capital.

4 group – employed in collective farms. Those, who are employed in collective agriculture, are rather poor people. In order to survive, they need to work hard not only in a collective farm, but also on their personal auxiliary plots. They do not have enough time and money to make often trips, not even to the nearest cities. Most common for them is to visit a CRD and the nearby villages, one-two times a month or even in several months having shopping and other services-oriented purposes. More than half of the respondents in this group have not visited territories outside their rural district at all.

5 group – unemployed. A large part of rural citizens form the “immobility group”. This group is represented by an unemployed rural social “bottom” that does not have the needs or the means for going out of their villages. The majority visit one-two times a year only a CRD (as a rule it is not more than 30 km far from the village), more than 50% have not been out of their rural district in the last 15 years, and about 85% - have not been out of their region.

All these groups have existed since the Soviet Russia, but nowadays the latest tendencies are that of the rapid growth of the first and the last group. The number of employees in private farming as well as in collective farming has been declining and the group of “employed out of their rural settlements” has increased. Constant reforms in education, culture, social service, health care systems make some groups of rural intellectuals unemployed. They have been divided into those who fall down to social margins and those who could have found work out of their villages.

The first group – the most mobile one as mentioned above - shows rather high income indexes and may be seen as those who had adapted to capitalism in Russia. The majority of those who form the 3rd and 4th groups have not adapted, and even now they maintain a Soviet mentality, believing that the ‘Government’ will solve all their problems in future.

Another negative tendency is the decreasing level of the **youth mobility**. The survey shows that about 2/3 of rural respondents, who became adult in Post-Soviet Russia, have never been out of the regions where they are living. And 7/8 of all young people respondents have never been in Moscow! In some regions the situation is extreme: no young rural citizen in the Siberian Irkutskaya oblast or the Northern Arkhangelskaya oblast has ever crossed the border of their region.

Hard socio-economic conditions in some peripheral rural regions conceal high level of **potential migration**. According to the target research in Irkutskaya oblast, about 61% of the youth and 38% of adult respondents want to migrate from their villages. But only few percents of them could really do it, because they do not have enough money for it, their dwellings have very low or almost zero prices.

The **main conclusion** will be – the type of employment has a great influence not only on the income level, but also on the mobility level of rural citizens in Russia. The more “mobile” types of employment give opportunities for non-labor mobility. The low mobility level of rural Russian population today is an index that shows the absence of communication between rural citizens in different parts of the country and also emphasis a great socio-cultural crisis in rural Russia.