



SCIENCE AT RISK Monitoring Report

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Russia 2022/2023: Persecutions in the academic sphere and forced emigration

Nikolai Petrov

**SCIENCE
at RISK**

Emergency Office by akno e.V.

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SCIENCE AT RISK Monitoring Report

Russia 2022/2023: Persecutions in the academic sphere and forced emigration¹

Revised version December 2023

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¹ The issues explored in this research extend beyond the scope of the title. It is probably more accurate to speak of emergency emigration instead of forced emigration for political reasons, as the emigration in question is linked to both pressure and repression, as well as changes in the character of the regime, rendering it unworkable for some and precluding future possibilities. This especially applies to academics who have departed Russia due to its war of aggression against Ukraine.

About the study

This study was conducted by Nikolai Petrov on behalf of the SCIENCE AT RISK Emergency Office from May to October 2023. The formulation of the research questions and the choice of methodology were left to the author. The text of the report was authored by Nikolai Petrov and Anastasia Petrova. The interviews for the survey were conducted by Nikolai Petrov and Nikita Sokolov. The results were processed by Artem Demidov and Anastasia Petrova. The survey, which is a part of this study, expresses the opinion of the 48 respondents, all of whom have been verified by the SCIENCE AT RISK Emergency Office and who clearly and unequivocally oppose Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the view of the SCIENCE AT RISK Emergency Office.

About the author

Nikolai Petrov is a visiting fellow at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP, 2023-present). Previously, he was a senior research fellow in the Russia and Eurasia Programme at Chatham House in London (2019-2022) and a professor of political science at the Higher School of Economics in Moscow (2013-2021).

Editorial note

This study is a pilot project of the SCIENCE AT RISK Emergency Office with the aim to collect data from academics affected by political repression in Russia, while providing them with financial support. The study has several limitations: the respondents (48 in total) represent Russia's major universities/academic institutions, which are traditionally based in Moscow/Saint-Petersburg and belong to the country's liberal elite. The situation in other regions of Russia, which might differ fundamentally, is not examined in this study. The same applies to the case chosen – the Higher School of Economics in Moscow – which is one of the academic and liberal beacons in Russia.

Although the study is not representative and does not provide a general overview of the situation in the country, it does provide valuable first-hand insights from an increasingly isolated country and a largely self-contained exile community, which can serve both as a basis for ongoing research on academic freedom in Russia and for comparison with its post-Soviet neighbours.

Philipp Christoph Schmädke,
SCIENCE AT RISK Emergency Office

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1. Introduction:

Academic emigration from Russia

Various estimates exist regarding the scale of emigration from Russia, primarily ranging from 300,000 to over a million. Regardless, the scale of the current wave of emigration from Russia due to its war of aggression against Ukraine is comparable to the emigration during the time of the revolution and the civil war over a century ago. The foundation of this new wave consists of representatives from the most modernised, educated, and socially successful class of Russians, who are closely associated with the post-industrial economy. Many of them participated in the 2011-2012 protests. The exodus of this vast human capital significantly alters not only the current balance of power but also the prospects for the development of Russian society.

There are highly disparate estimates regarding the potential return of those who have left Russia. During the summer, Vladimir Putin stated that “according to our modest calculations,” 50% of emigrants have returned to Russia. A survey by Emile Kamalov and Ivetta Sergeeva from the European University Institute (EUI)² conducted among 5,000 “military relocations” reported that only 15% have returned. Meanwhile, the process of re-emigration is ongoing with Israel and Armenia transformed into front-line or near-front-line states in the fall of 2023 furthering this development.

Emigration of academic community members may not be as extensive in absolute numbers, but it is highly significant because they are responsible for educating students and are often highly capable learners. Additionally, they represent a modernising fraction of society.

There have not been many attempts to assess the scale of academic emigration, and it is challenging to do so accurately. In one recent study, for instance, the websites of ten leading Russian universities were compared between February 24, 2022, and the summer of 2023. The comparison revealed that 8,600 people had discontinued working at these universities during the past 18 months. To understand how many of these individuals had left the country, the researchers tracked the subsequent paths of 2,300 academic staff through Google and social media. It was found that 270 individuals, or 12% of them, had left the country. Interestingly, approximately half of these 270 individuals publicly expressed their anti-war stance by posting on social media and signing an open letter by scientists protesting Russia’s aggressive actions in Ukraine.³

2 OutRush. A research project on Russian Emigration. <https://www.outrush.io/eng#abouttheproject> (Accessed: 13 November 2023).

3 Blog: kakov byl masshtab iskhoda uchenykh iz Rossii posle fevralya 2022 goda? (2023) Wisconsin Russia Project. Available at: <https://russiaproject.wisc.edu/2023/09/06/test-post/> (Accessed: 13 November 2023).

Among these 270 individuals, 195 were classified as Russian scientists, with the remaining 75 being foreigners.⁴

A preliminary assessment suggests that around 10-15% of academics working in prominent universities across major cities such as Moscow and St. Petersburg have emigrated from the academic sphere. It is worth noting that these percentages do not represent the average trend, but rather reflect the emigration of highly influential professors, teachers, and researchers connected to global academia. Their departure, although making up a relatively small portion of the overall emigrants, is likely to be permanent, causing a significant setback for Russian academia for many years to come.

⁴ Sledite za ukhodom mysli. 270 uchenykh uvolilis' iz topovykh rossiyskikh vuzov posle nachala voyny i uyezhali za granitsu: issledovaniye 'Novoy-yevropa', Novaya gazeta Yevropa, <https://novayagazeta.eu/articles/2023/08/17/sledite-za-ukhodom-mysli> (Accessed: 13 November 2023).

2. The Higher School of Economics: a case study

The Higher School of Economics (HSE) can serve as an interesting case for analysing what is happening in the Russian higher education and academic system. It is still the largest school among liberal universities in Russia and the most liberal among the big ones.

Until recently, the Higher School of Economics was considered the flagship of change in Russian higher education, a haven of efficiency, and a success story.⁵ However, the recent changes, which are now heading in the opposite direction, are most noticeable at the HSE, primarily due to its size and status.

In the last year or two, there has been a change in leadership at several leading Russian universities: HSE (Rector Yaroslav Kuzminov, 1992-2021), RANEPA (Vladimir Mau, 2002-2023, under arrest in 2022), Shanyinka – The Moscow School of Social and Economic Sciences (Sergei Zuev, 2011-2023, under arrest since October 2021), Smolny College – The Faculty of Liberal Arts and Sciences of Saint Petersburg State University (Alexey Kudrin, 2011-2022), and the Russian Economic School (Ruben Enikolopov, 2018-2022).

At the HSE, the replacement of the founding rector marked the end of the first phase of relatively soft de-modernisation and de-liberalisation, with internal purges, and the beginning of a second, harsher phase, consisting of an external purge carried out by the new team that came from outside. During the first “Kuzminov” stage, dozens of political scientists, lawyers, sociologists, and others were forced to leave the university under pressure, and many programmes were significantly restructured. The second phase largely coincided with the departure of researchers due to Russia’s military aggression against Ukraine.

Systemic changes for the worse at the HSE began after the mass protests of 2012, Putin’s return to the presidency, and the Kremlin’s increased attention to youth and universities. Immediately after the annexation of Crimea in April 2014, Vyacheslav Volodin, the first deputy head of the Presidential Administration, became the chairman of the HSE Supervisory Council. At the time, Rector Kuzminov explained this by the fact that the university, as a centre of expert analysis, worked directly with the government and the Presidential Administration, so it was decided to put a representative of the latter at the head of the board.

⁵ See Vladimir Gelman, Exceptions and Rules: “Success Stories” and “Unworthy Governance” in Russia, 2018. https://eusp.org/sites/default/files/archive/M_center/M_64_18.pdf (Accessed: 13 November 2023).

Control over what happened at the HSE, not only by the Presidential Administration but also by the Federal Security Service (FSB), intensified, and political censorship emerged and gained strength. Initially, it took rather soft forms, such as informal warnings and admonitions from the university leadership, but it became more severe. For instance, in 2015, during my time as a professor in the Department of Political Science, I was suspended from teaching for a year by the rector for comparing Russia's trajectory after the annexation of Crimea to a plane in a nosedive in a newspaper interview.

Another episode from my time at the Higher School of Economics is also quite illustrative. In 2018, I was at a conference in St. Petersburg, and in the middle of the conference, the dean, with whom I had just spoken to the day before, called me. He asked, "What did you tell the Germans about Putin's legitimacy?" At first, I was stunned, but then I realised that he was referring to my meeting with the Vice President of the European Parliament, which had taken place three days earlier at the Konrad Adenauer Foundation office. Only three people had attended that meeting: the Vice President, the head of the Moscow branch of the Foundation, and myself. However, the Foundation's office was located on Lubyanka Square, between the buildings of the FSB headquarters. This story is quite revealing in many ways: the pettiness of control, the model of "FSB – University Rector" response, and the speed of reaction – within three days, a transcript of our conversation had reached someone in the FSB, who then sent a report to the HSE rector, who, in turn, called the dean, who then immediately called me.

Following the youth protests during the 2019 Moscow elections, and especially with the enactment of the constitutional reform in 2020, which was publicly criticised by constitutional law professors at the HSE, the government tightened control over the "breeding ground of liberalism." A code of ethics for employees was adopted, essentially prohibiting them to speak out on political issues. Group "purges" of teachers began, including the dismantling of the constitutional law department, the dismissal of several teachers from the political science department, the philosophy department, and others.⁶

The beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine then led to another significant exodus of HSE professors and researchers, largely of their own volition.

Konstantin Sonin, a former Vice Rector of the HSE who has been a professor at the Harris School of Public Policy at the University of Chicago since 2015, estimated the HSE's losses since the introduction of foreign agent status in late 2022 at more than 150 faculty members. Another former Vice Rector of the HSE, Andrey Yakovlev, who was instrumental in the early days of the HSE and currently works at the Hanse-Wissenschaftskolleg, estimated in September 2023 that around 700 of the HSE's faculty and researchers had left the country.

⁶ For a detailed analysis, please see Dmitry Dubrovsky, Higher School of Economics - The history of rise and fall, October 27, 2023, at <https://freeuniversity.pubpub.org/pub/p7-303/release/1?readingCollection=2b3ac641> (Accessed: 13 November 2023).

A highly detailed analysis of the HSE's losses was conducted by Mikhail Sokolov of the Center for Russia, East Europe, and Central Asia (CREECA) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He compiled a list of recipients of all types of bonuses for international publications in 2021⁷ and cross-referenced it with data on Moscow campus staff on the HSE website. It turned out that about three-quarters, or 75.3%, of Moscow-based bonus recipients in 2021 could not be found on the HSE website two years later in September 2023.

Correspondingly, 24.7% (177 people) left the HSE. The losses of researchers are extremely unevenly distributed; there are programmes that lost 60% of their faculty in a year and a half, while others were minimally affected. Surprisingly, fields such as political science and sociology suffered less, while biology and medicine were hit the hardest. According to Sokolov, this calls for a new perspective on the decision of academics to emigrate from Russia. Besides political risks or disagreement with the policies of the Russian leadership, more pragmatic considerations may influence such decisions. These considerations may encompass issues such as the loss of research opportunities due to unavailability of equipment and reagents, as well as assessing one's chances of securing an attractive position in a foreign university. This explains why emigrating may have been particularly attractive for natural science representatives.⁸

In the year and a half since Russian military aggression against Ukraine began, the HSE has closed at least six scientific departments, with many staff members leaving the country. One of them is the Institute of Quantitative Finance and the Laboratory for financial engineering and risk management – its head, Victor Lapshin, signed a letter of scientists against the invasion and subsequently found employment in Dublin, in August 2022. The university has significantly reduced its collaboration with foreign universities, which used to be the HSE's main distinguishing feature. Today, only 11 out of 61 double degree programmes remain at the HSE, and most foreign researchers from “unfriendly” countries have left the university.⁹

7 Surprisingly, the bonuses for publications in foreign journals are still in place at HSE, even though for several years voices from the Kremlin suggested that in the social sciences, this is more of a reason for suspicion.

8 Blog: How many scientists left Russia due to war? (as footnote 4).

9 Sledite za ukhodom mysli, Novaya gazeta Yevropa (as footnote 5).

3. Survey: The situation of Russian researchers who have left the country

Before presenting the main results of the research, I would like to express my personal gratitude and that of the majority of the respondents to Germany, its government, and its citizens for the support they have given to us during a challenging time for both us and for democratic Russia as a whole. The group portrait resulting from this study of representatives of the Russian academic sphere in Germany, compared to other countries, is intended to capture the situation as of mid-2023 and to help understand how it may change in the future, as well as what can be improved for those who have left and for the countries that have welcomed them.

► **Research Description**

The project “Russia 2022/2023: Persecutions in the academic sphere and forced emigration” was conducted from May to October 2023 by the initiative of the SCIENCE AT RISK Emergency Office of the Akademisches Netzwerk Osteuropa e.V., Berlin. During the project, 48 in-depth/extended interviews were conducted with representatives of the academic community who left Russia after the start of the full-scale invasion in Ukraine.

The total number of respondents does not constitute a strict sample; rather, it is an expanded focus group composed of initially planned respondents who were acquaintances of the contractor and interviewers, with the addition of “acquaintances of acquaintances.” The advantage of this method of sampling was the trustful nature of the interviews and the possibility of reaching respondents who would have difficulty making contact with an unfamiliar interviewer.

The survey was conducted using a specially designed questionnaire in the form of individual Zoom interviews. The average length of an interview was 30-50 minutes.

► **The overall situation and prospects for development**

The scale of the departure of representatives from the academic sphere in Russia is significant, but it should not be exaggerated. Academics emigrated mainly from the major cities of Moscow and St. Petersburg, where the country’s leading universities are located and where there is greater involvement in international cooperation, resulting in more connections with foreign colleagues and opportunities to leave. Many researchers have left not only the HSE, but also institutes such as the Academy of Sciences, Shanyinka, Smolny, Memorial, and others.

The outflow from Russia had two peaks, one starting with the outbreak of the Russian military aggression against Ukraine in February 2022 and the other with the announcement of mobilisation in September 2022. It has not completely ceased, but in the absence of additional factors that would push it further (e.g., a new mobilisation or a wave of repression), it will continue as a small stream, mainly consisting of those who couldn't leave immediately, are still looking for their place and are dealing with personal issues. In the interviews, it was mentioned that some of those who stayed are actively seeking for opportunities in the West, while others are considering leaving, including for Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan) and China. The Chinese are actively offering jobs to emigrants who have moved to Europe or the US but have not yet found permanent employment.

Respondent's assessment of the potential among their colleagues, friends, and acquaintances to leave Russia vary. On the one hand, the answers were "Most of my friends and acquaintances have left. Who remains? 1) Those who can work discreetly; and 2) retirees or internal emigrants," or "Everyone else stayed. The prevailing ideology is to hold on and not to leave. Some have mortgages, and others, like PhD graduates, don't want to start over and enter a five-year PhD programme." On the other hand, it was stated that "Those who have remained at the HSE don't see a future there and want to leave. Those aged 25-35 are applying for PhD programmes, while those aged 35-45 are looking for employment opportunities."

Moreover, there has also been an outflow to Russia, especially when it became impossible to earn a living by working remotely in Russia.

As for those who have already relocated, many of them took advantage of support programmes that were designed for a relatively short period of time. Now, after a year or two, even if they have managed to extend them, the effectiveness of these programmes is coming to an end, and emigrants are faced with the question of what to do next. This question concerns not only financial support but also legal status and the ability to stay in the host country. In many cases, however, returning to Russia is not an option due to the high risks not only for a normal life but also for maintaining freedom. Several individuals have already applied for political asylum and are awaiting the outcome, but they cannot be sure that they will be successful. In case of rejection, there is the option of moving to a visa-free country, as mentioned by one of the respondents who was denied a visa extension and applied for political asylum.

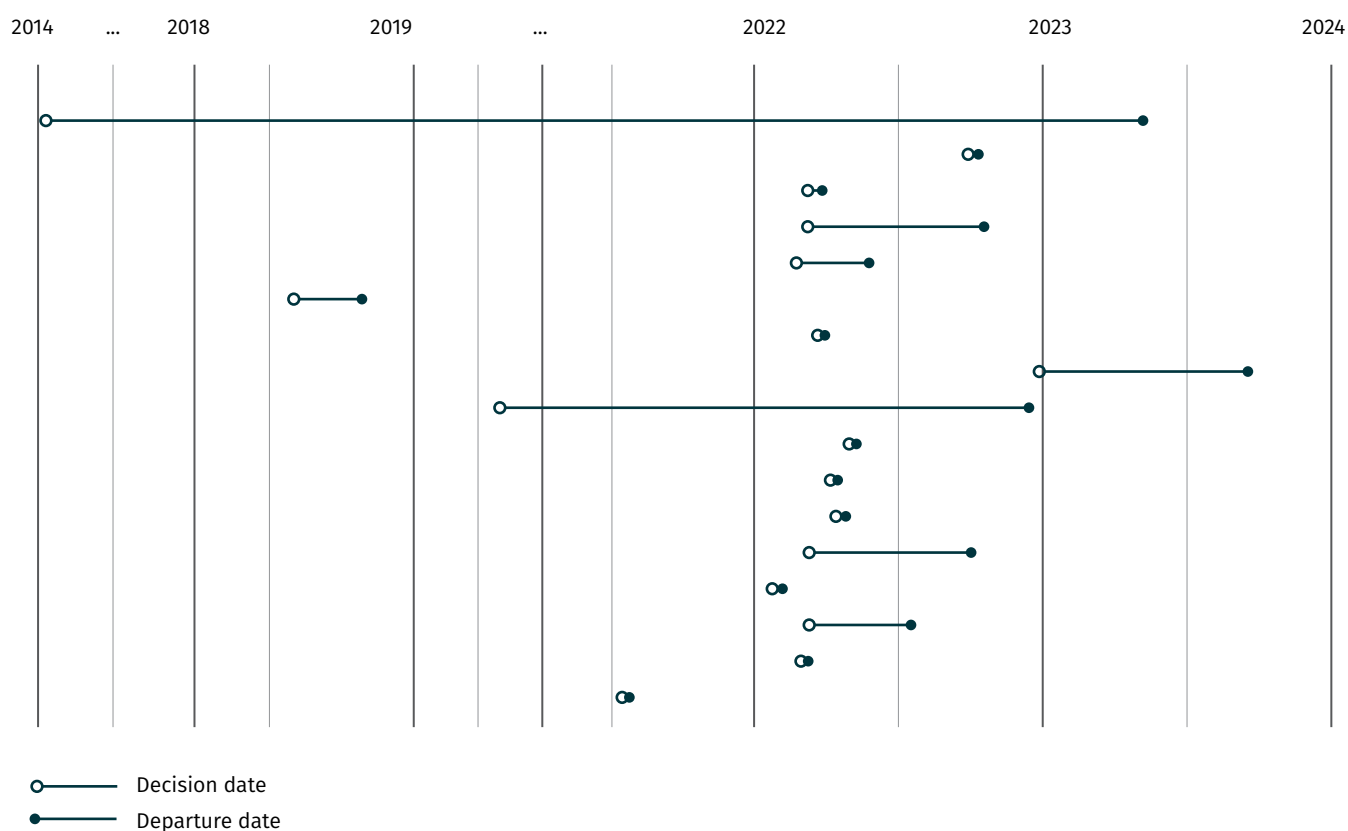
► **Decision-Making on Departure**

The majority of respondents made their final decision to leave Russia with the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. In many cases, the start of Russia's military aggression against Ukraine itself played the role of the last straw, but people had been contemplating leaving even before that. This was a consequence of the escalat-

ing authoritarian tendencies in the country, in general, and in the academic sphere in particular. It was also a reaction to personal difficulties related to increased censorship, administrative persecution, and fear of criminal prosecution. In some cases, respondents faced job terminations, designation as “foreign agents,”¹⁰ the closure of the organisations in which they worked, or the designation of these organisations as “undesirable.”¹¹

Among the respondents, there are people who left shortly after the annexation of Crimea in 2014 or were already in the West by the start of Russia’s full-scale invasion in 2022. However, the majority left between March and October 2022 (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Timing of making decision and leaving Russia



10 The status of a “foreign agent” was introduced into Russian legislation in 2012 along with amendments to the law on non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The media have been subject to this designation since 2017, individuals since 2020, and un-registered associations since 2021. Foreign agents are required to label their materials with a prominent disclaimer (including a lengthy disclaimer screen for audio and video materials). They are also banned from teaching in state schools and universities, creating materials for minors, receiving state support, and holding public office, among other restrictions. Currently, there are over 600 individuals and entities listed as foreign agents. Six individuals from this list are among our respondents.

11 Cooperation with “undesirable” organizations entails administrative and criminal penalties. As of October 18, 2023, the Russian Ministry of Justice has included 114 foreign and international non-governmental organizations in a list of cooperations whose activities are considered “undesirable” on the territory of the Russian Federation. Among the organizations with which the respondents collaborated are the Oxford Russia Fund (2021), the European Network of Election Monitoring Organizations (2021), Chatham House (the Royal Institute of International Affairs) (2022), the Heinrich Böll Foundation (2022), the Legal Initiatives Institute for Central and Eastern Europe (2022), the Woodrow Wilson International Science Center (2022), Transparency International (2023), Free University (2023), Greenpeace International (2023), Central European University (2023), and others.

It was enough to call the annexation an annexation, or even to express doubts about the government's actions, to incur punishment, whether in the form of strict reprimands and warnings from superiors, suspension from teaching, or even online harassment. Moreover, the HSE operated a well-established system of real-time monitoring of all public statements made by teachers and staff members who criticised the government, resulting in their inclusion on special lists.

While it was still possible to dissent quietly within the institutions of the Academy of Sciences, universities were both more public and more noticeable. The government imposed special requirements on them, as they were seen as places for educating the youth. Stern control over universities intensified after the mass political protests by young people in 2011-2012 and several subsequent flare-ups.

Not all of the respondents personally experienced pressure and persecution from both the authorities and the leadership of their institutions, although many reported a deteriorating general atmosphere and the problems faced by their colleagues. A 37-year-old respondent for example described it as follows: "I'm not an opposition figure or an activist, just a critical-minded scientist." He has not been back to Russia since he left in 2021 and is afraid to return. Meanwhile, a 36-year-old respondent, also a type VI, moved to Armenia after completing an internship in the European Union. He explained, "I haven't been back to Russia – initially for moral and ethical reasons, and now for safety concerns since I worked with undesirable organisations; I'm afraid they might not let me leave."

In addition to persecution, both institutional and personal, another important factor in people's decision to leave was the prospect, or more precisely the disappearing of the prospect of conducting research in their respective academic fields, analysing situation in the country, or participating in international projects.

► **General Characteristics of Relocations**

A total of 48 individuals were surveyed, 38 men and 10 women.

Their distribution by country of residence is as follows: Germany (25), USA (6), Israel (3), Armenia (2), Latvia (2), Lithuania (2), Austria, UK, Georgia, Denmark, Kazakhstan, Poland, Czech Republic, and Finland (1 each).

Within Germany, the distribution of respondents is as follows: Berlin (9), Bremen (3), Jena (2), Bonn, Hamburg, Leipzig, Munich, Osnabrück, Ravensburg, Frankfurt am Main, Hagen, and Erfurt (1 each).

Visa Status: 28 individuals hold residence permits, typically for 1-2 years; 15 possess visas, and 4 hold citizenship. Two individuals reside in visa-free countries for Russian passport holders.

The age distribution of the respondents is as follows: The most numerous cohort consists of individuals in their forties, followed by those in their thirties. Fifty-year-olds make up the third largest group. The youngest respondent is 27 years old, and the oldest is 73.

Regarding their scientific specialisation, the distribution of respondents is as follows: history (15), political science (9), sociology (8), economics (4), international relations (4), communications (2), linguistics (2), other (4) – see Figure 2.

Academic Degrees: 28 respondents hold a Russian candidate of sciences degree, 5 have doctor of sciences degrees, and 1 is an academicien of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Four individuals hold a PhD degree, and 10 have not (yet) obtained an academic degree.

Figure 2. Respondents by field of studies

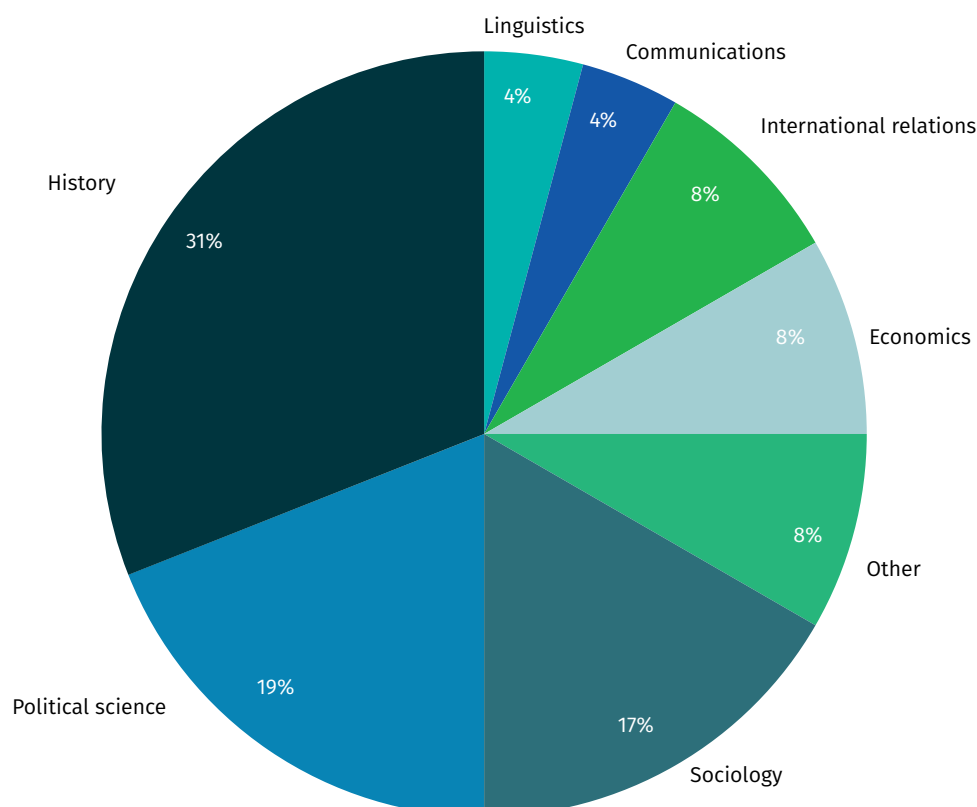
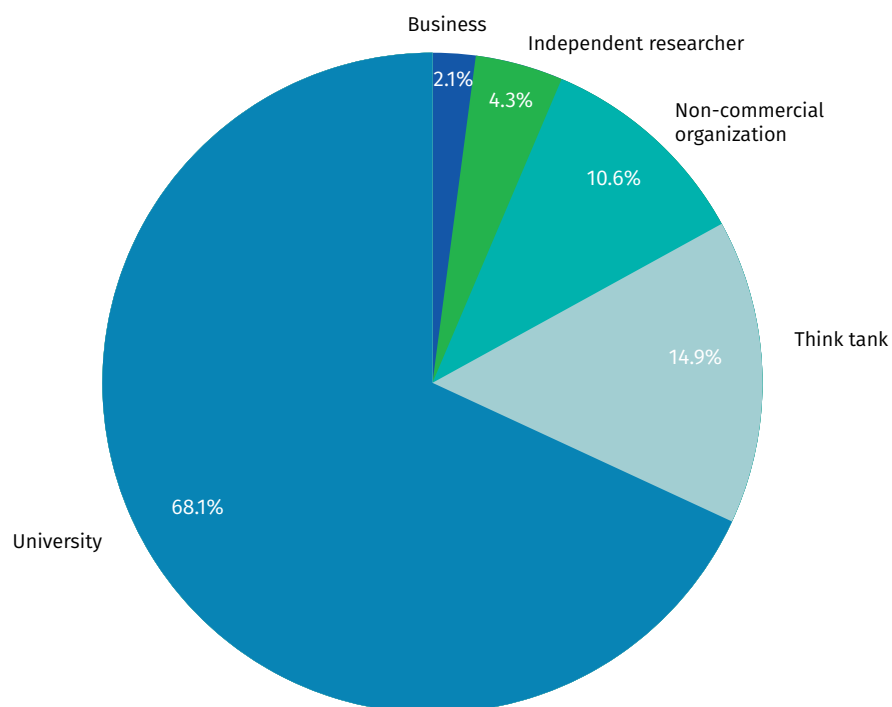
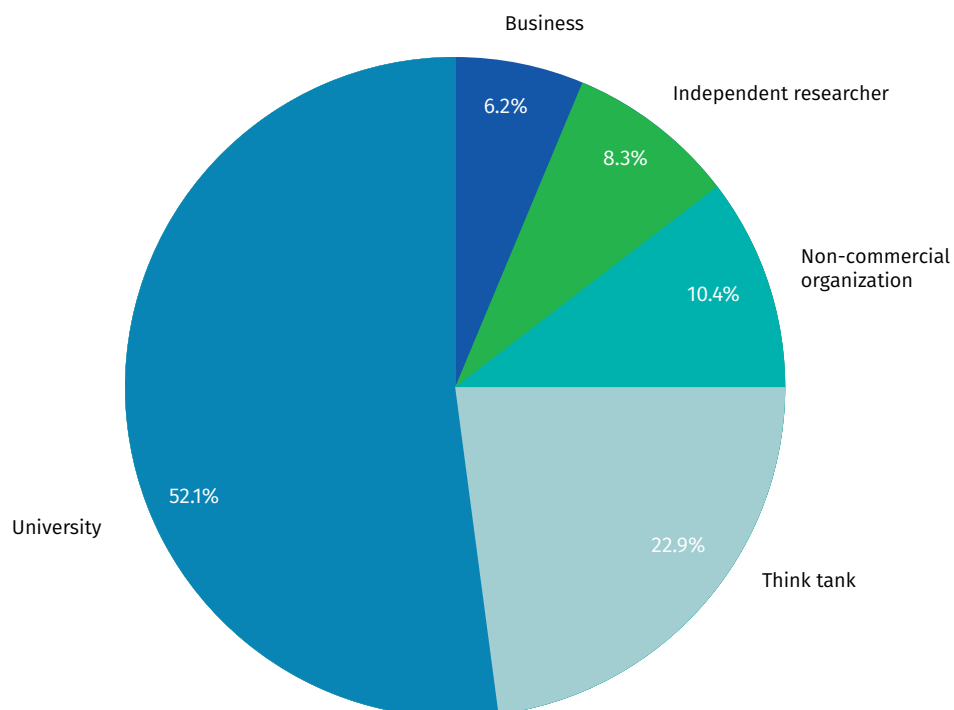


Figure 3. Respondents by type of institution before and after relocation.

Before relocation



After relocation



Before leaving Russia, 32 respondents worked in universities, 7 in think tanks, 5 in non-profit organisations, 2 were independent researchers, and 1 had their own business. Currently, their distribution by place of employment is as follows: 25 in universities, 5 in think tanks, 4 in non-profit organisations, 11 as independent researchers, and 3 are involved in business. See Figure 3.

Half of the respondents – 24 – worked at the HSE (Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Perm campuses) before relocating. Four worked in the Russian Academy of Sciences, 3 in RANEP, 2 in Shanyinka, 2 in the Sakharov Center, 2 at Moscow University, 2 at Memorial, and the remaining 10 individuals worked in various other places.

► **Types of Relocations**

Even with our relatively small sample size, we can clearly distinguish several different groups of individuals, mainly according to their age and the stage of their academic career.

- 1) **Young cosmopolitans.** These are young people in the early stages of their academic careers, typically doctoral students and newly minted PhD holders. They find positions as PhD students or engage in post-doctoral studies, often securing grants. They tend to move with minimal difficulties for a number of reasons: they are usually not burdened by family or children, they do not face language issues – both in daily life and in their scientific work, but particularly in terms of research methodologies and integration into the global academic community. They are easily trainable and are flexible when it comes to their research topics, which do not necessarily have to be related to Russia.
- 2) **Young refugees.** Another category of academic youth are those who left abruptly due to the declaration of mobilisation in September 2022 and the risk of closed borders. They did not have time to look for a place to stay or to get a visa, so they often went to “visa-free” countries, such as Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Serbia, or Montenegro, and then looked for a place to settle permanently. Many of them, unable to find a long-term position, make ends meet by hopping from one short-term grant to another, changing not only cities but also countries in the process.
- 3) **Renowned professors.** Mid-career researchers with some accumulated scientific capital and connections to colleagues in Western universities and research centres. Oftentimes colleagues extended a helping hand at first, but in many cases, this only turned out to be an opportunity to get by for six months to a year without prospects for extension. The situation for this type of academic emigrants is exacerbated by the fact that 1) they are not ready to start over and want to use their accumulated capital, which limits the range of employment opportunities; 2) most of them have families and children, which poses additional settlement challenges.

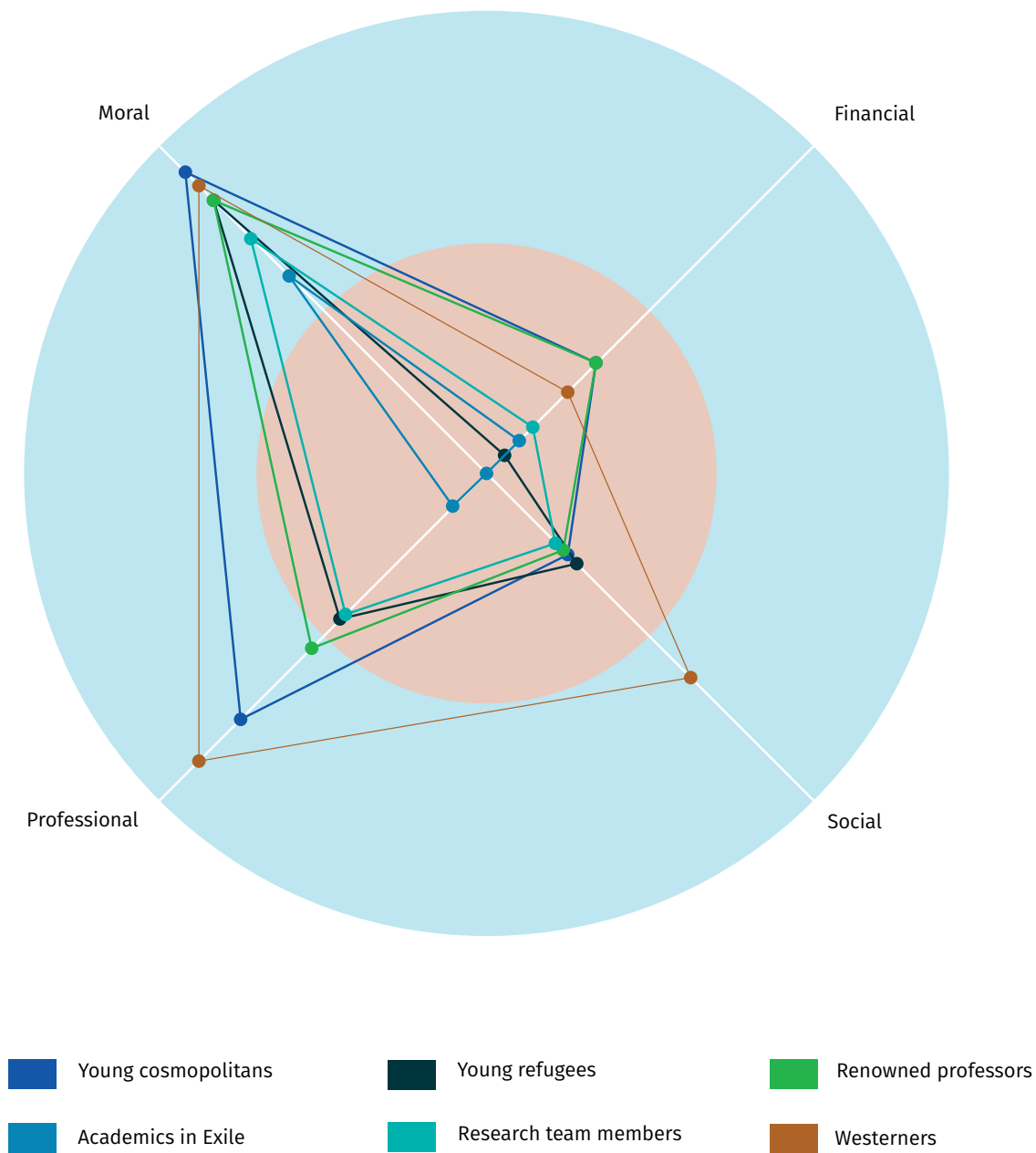
- 4) **Academics in Exile.** This special category includes politically active academics who have been subject to administrative pressure in their home countries, leading to dismissal from their jobs and the risk of criminal prosecution. In their case, leaving is more of a form of escape rather than a planned move to a more favourable environment. They have connections – colleagues who are willing to help them. However, those who have worked in non-governmental organisations (NGOs), which is usually the case, cannot easily resume an academic career or fully engage with Western NGOs, even if such a possibility exists in theory.
- 5) **Research Team Members.** Another group consists of researchers of various ages who have often worked in think tanks and NGOs that have been declared undesirable by the authorities or that have been closed down, such as “Memorial,” which has many distinguished individuals of pre-retirement and retirement age, the “Sakharov Center,” the Moscow Carnegie Center, and Transparency International. Thanks to mass emigration, they manage to retain the core of their teams and even the institutional framework. Shanyinka also falls into this category, with former employees setting up a college in Montenegro.
- 6) **Westerners.** Some researchers who were abroad at the beginning of the conflict, on internships, short- or medium-term contracts, did not have to leave the country; they simply did not return, which eased their problems related to departure and initial adaptation. This also gave them a head start over the “renowned professors” when their initial contracts expired and they urgently needed to find something new.

The most common type among our respondents was Type III - 15 individuals; followed by Type II - 10; Type V - 7; Type I - 6; Type IV - 5; and Type VI - 4, as shown in Figure 4.

Westerners (VI) and Young cosmopolitans (I) experience the greatest benefits and the least losses from relocation. Moreover, among Westerners, there is a positive impact on the social environment, the highest professional component of all types, and a moral-psychological aspect close to the highest. In financial terms, Renowned professors (III) and Young cosmopolitans (I) incurred fewer losses than others, while Academics in Exile (IV) experienced higher financial losses compared to others. The latter group gave significantly lower ratings to all other parameters of their situation after leaving Russia.

The greatest differentiation in evaluations is observed in the professional component: half of all types (VI, I, and III) indicate a positive impact, while the rest show a negative effect. The least differentiation is found in the assessment of the moral-psychological state, where all respondents feel they are in a better position after relocation, and in the evaluation of the social environment, where in five out of the six types, respondents feel they have experienced similar losses; only the emigrants of type VI feel they have benefited from the relocation.

Figure 4. Self-evaluation of changes by types of respondents



► Key Relocation Challenges

The main problem that most emigrants have encountered or continue to face, in one way or another, is their **legal status**, in particular visas and residence permits. This includes difficulties in obtaining entry visas, often with long waiting periods, and challenges related to visa renewal and/or obtaining a new visa/residence permit when the current one expires. This is especially burdensome for emigrants who are in Germany on short-term grants, as the transition from one grant to another often requires leaving the country to complete the application process for a new visa. The overall issue is one of uncertainty about long-term residency prospects in the country. Furthermore, some respondents face issues with their Russian passports. Some passports are about to expire and it is difficult or even impossible for those who have faced political persecution in Russia to obtain new ones. For others, their current passports still have considerable validity, but there is limited space for visas and stamps, forcing individuals to ration their travel outside the Schengen area to attend conferences.

One of the respondents mentions waiting for over a year for a US visa for their son, who has been accepted to college. Another story involves a person who, after staying in Berlin for six months after leaving Russia, finds a place at a British university. They applied for a British visa in Berlin and received a rejection with a recommendation to apply at their place of residence. Despite the risks, they had to travel to St. Petersburg, where the visa was finally granted.

Second in terms of mentions is the issue of **finding accommodation**. This is a challenging task as well, especially in cities like Berlin. Negotiating with landlords becomes complicated if your registration status is uncertain, or if you have a Russian passport and no German bank account, work contract, etc. Many of the respondents managed to find housing “miraculously” through personal connections and the help of their German colleagues.

A significant proportion of the respondents have experienced challenges in **finding employment**, with many currently in the position of “independent researchers.” This essentially means that they do not have a permanent position and often move from one project to another. This situation may be due to a number of factors, such as a limited command of the German language or the exhaustion of resources within the German institutions that initially provided support in the early stages of relocation. There is also a scarcity of centralised programmes that help emigrants.

It is rare to find a respondent who does not complain about the complexities of the German **bureaucracy**, which many find unconventional and unfamiliar. The assistance of colleagues, both German and fellow Russian-speaking expatriates, is often crucial. German non-profit organisations, especially those that assist political migrants, often offer support to newcomers.

Opening a bank account in Germany poses yet another challenge that almost all respondents have encountered. There are general and bank-specific regulations that make opening an account with a Russian passport incredibly difficult or almost impossible. Even more concerning is the fact that **bank cards** from Russian banks are often blocked by payment systems, even if the existing bans are circumvented in some way. As a result, individuals who have fled from the Russian political system often find themselves virtually without funds, and their savings, if any, remain in Russia. This is particularly challenging when newcomers need substantial resources to address various relocation issues, such as housing, furnishings, and basic living expenses, before receiving their first salary under a new employment contract.

In addition to the challenges of adjusting to their new lives, some respondents, when discussing their problems, mention a sense of **“mission loss”**: while their work in Russia had meaning, this feeling is now gone. Beyond the practical, day-to-day problems faced by any emigrant, it is important to remember that many of those who have moved, especially if they worked in Russia in fields such as political science, sociology, economics, history, and others, were motivated by a desire to contribute to the modernisation and progress of their country and society. Thus, in addition to the basic necessities of food and shelter, they need to find a new purpose for their professional lives after relocation. This sentiment is expressed almost identically by three respondents aged 44, 53, and 59, all categorised as Type III: “We have lost the ability to think strategically and patriotically about the future. Our efforts have been devalued. We have lost our mission.”

Figure 5. Main problems encountered by respondents



► The Situation of Emigrants and Their Self-Perception

Any migration, especially emergency migration, is usually associated with a loss of status. Our respondents are no exception. The generalised assessment of their status in the academic system appears as follows:

In Russia before departure: 1 (lowest position) – 1 person, 2 – 12 people, 3 – 29 people, 4 – 2 people. 4 people were outside the system – they were dismissed before departure.

After relocating, 7 people were on the first, lowest level, 23 on the second, 10 on the third. 8 people were outside the system. In other words, in terms of their academic status, people generally moved down one level.

The self-assessment of their current situation on a scale of 1 (completely unsatisfactory) to 5 (completely satisfactory) is as follows: 1 – 6 people, 2 – 11 people, 3 – 12 people, 4 – 6 people, 5 – 11 people. It can be assumed that this self-assessment is overly optimistic because people compare their current situation with what they were running away from or what they feared.

Comparing their current situation with what it was before they left, 13 people thought their situation had improved, 23 thought it had got worse, and 12 people rated their current situation as the same. In terms of material improvement, 11 people noticed an improvement, 5 noticed a decline, and for most of the respondents (31) the situation remained unchanged. The assessment of their social status provides a similar picture: 10 improved, 7 worsened, 30 remained the same. The situation changes when it comes to assessing the respondent's professional environment and opportunities: 10-19-18.

In particular, there is a noticeable difference in the assessment of their moral and psychological state: 35 of them reported improvement, 5 reported worsening, and 7 reported no change.

At the same time, as one Type V respondent put it, civil and political freedoms more than compensate for the reduction in comfort.

If we compare the evaluation of changes in the situation of emigrants in Germany and emigrants in other countries, it turns out that in Germany the assessment of the financial situation and social environment is lower, but the assessment of the moral-psychological situation and the professional opportunities is significantly higher (see Figure 6).

It should also be noted that the assessment of the situation depends on age and is not linear (see Figure 7).

Figure 6. Self-evaluation of changes in personal position

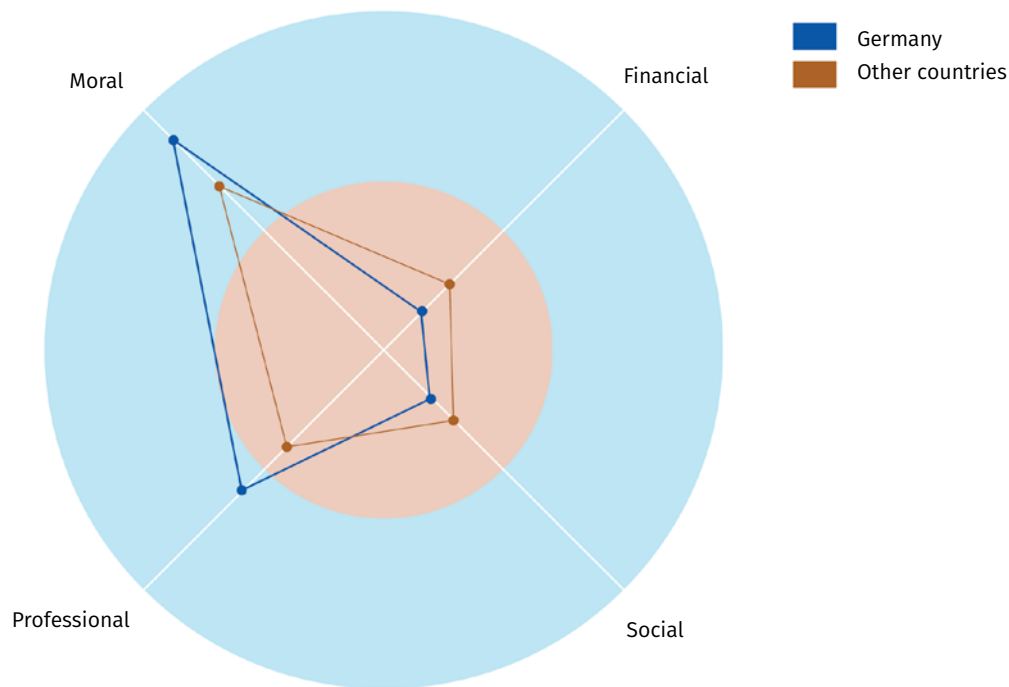
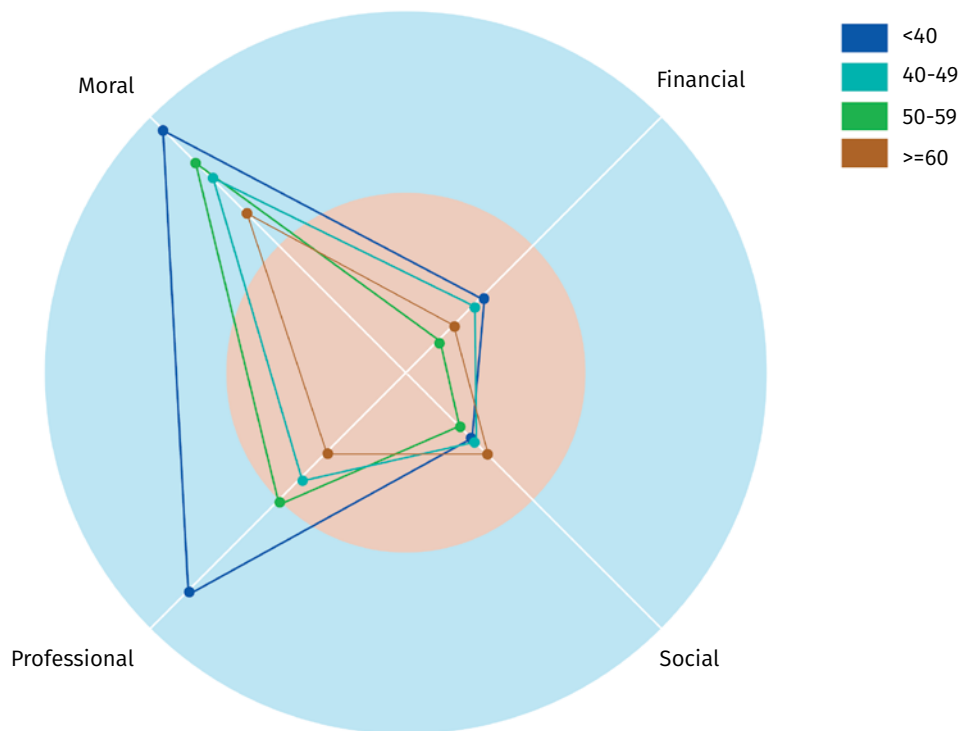
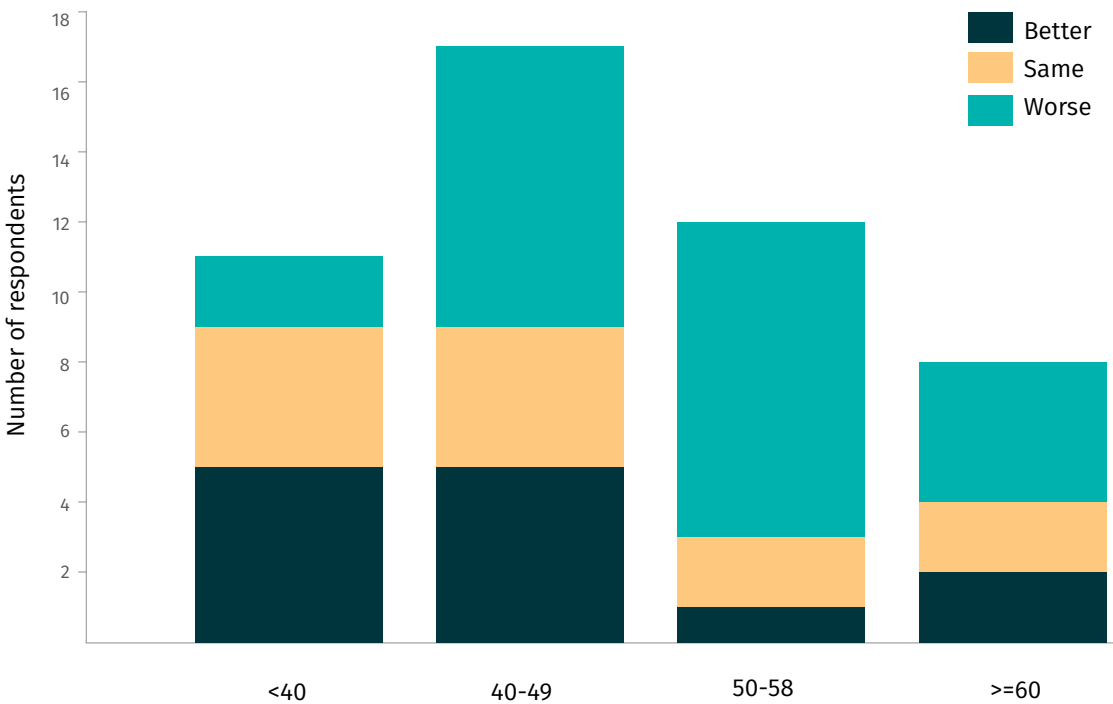


Figure 7. Self-evaluation of changes by age groups



The most positive assessment appears in the youngest group of emigrants, corresponding to the Type I group we have described. This is followed by the 50-59 age group, with the 49-50 or mid-career group clearly lagging behind in our typology. Finally, those who have experienced the greatest losses due to relocation, as they perceive it, are emigrants in the 60+ age group. Interestingly, even they have gained in moral and psychological terms.

Figure 8. Status' changes by age groups



It is worth noting that our instrumental assessment of the relocater's status (see Figure 8) differs slightly from the self-assessment of our respondents. Here we find a systematic deterioration in status from younger ages to older age groups, with the exception of a slight improvement in the oldest age group (over 60).

► **Preservation/Recreation of the Academic Community**

Relocation disrupts established connections in one's scientific community and, in principle, helps to build them in another. However, the process of integrating newcomers into a new scientific community is much more time-consuming than breaking away from the old one.

The connections between those who have left and those who have stayed are generally maintained, but in a much reduced form. When communicating with colleagues who have stayed in Russia, our respondents exhibit increased restraint and caution, avoiding discussions about Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. On the one hand, they try not to harm those who remain in Russia, given the tightly controlled social networks, and on the other, the subject of the war is uncomfortable, dangerous, and excluded from public discourse in Russia itself.

In some cases, previously initiated joint projects continue, including the preparation of publications. In several cases, the emigrants' links with Russian institutions are maintained, including online teaching and leadership of scientific centres.

There are more intensive connections between the emigrants themselves, and these connections involve not only friendships but also discussions about collaborative projects. Among the projects, some of which are partially start-ups, involving multiple respondents, the aforementioned project to establish a college in Montenegro with participants from Shanyinka and a complex project on the future of Russia based on one of the informal seminars at the HSE stand out. "Loners don't survive," said one of the respondents when discussing collaboration with emigrated colleagues.

When it comes to networks for self-organisation of relocators, several options exist: In our interviews, Scholars without Borders was mentioned – "I observe, but don't actively participate; they conduct training sessions, meetings on neutral ground, and distribute microgrants"; and Academic Bridges – "we have been working since January 2023; it all started with a conference, then a core group of 6 people formed from a couple of dozen conference participants (2 in Germany, 2 in Armenia, 3 in Russia), to which a seventh person was added, also in Germany; we've already conducted 6-7 seminars."¹²

¹² Academic bridges. YouTube. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/@academic_bridges (Accessed: 14 November 2023), Available at: <https://www.academicbridges.sbs/> (Accessed: 14 November 2023).

► Views on the future and intentions to return

When asked about their plans to return, most respondents said that this would require not only a change of regime but also a normalisation of the overall situation in Russia, which does not seem realistic in the near future. Many emigrants, especially the younger ones, said that they planned to spend at least ten years in the West in order to settle down, obtain citizenship, and provide education for their children.

A respondent under 60, Type III, stated the following: “Returning? If you count on that, you’ll lose hope. To scratch the ground with your nose, you need to live as if you won’t return.”

However, a 37-year-old respondent, Type I, mentioned that: “I do see the possibility of returning, but it’s unclear when. I’m investing in integration: learning the language instead of writing articles. I’m exploring options to leave the academic world, where everything is overcrowded, though it’s not clear where to yet.”

For respondents over 50, whose careers are not primarily in academia, the situation is somewhat different. They have “their own bubble without much integration into local life.” A 48-year-old respondent, Type V, explains: “You have to be prepared for the long term, but there is hope, and we’ve decided not to sell our apartment in Moscow for now. I mainly work with compatriots, and if I wanted to integrate into Germany with the language, etc., I would have to exit all our projects, which I don’t want to do.”

However, just over a third of respondents are satisfied with their current situation and exactly a third are either not at all or only slightly satisfied.

Figure 9. Recommendations cloud



► Recommendations to Authorities

Respondents' suggestions to host country authorities, aimed at both alleviating the challenges of relocation and maximising the effective utilisation of newcomers, are largely derived from the list of problems identified.

The most common recommendations related to the legal status of the respondents, such as visas and residence permits. Wishes included making them longer in duration and not requiring temporary departure from the country while waiting for a permit to be renewed, as is currently the case in Germany, for example.

There was also significant discussion about supporting migrant academics in terms of integration into their new, often unfamiliar environments. This includes long-term, transparent support programmes and a sort of welcome package to help newcomers navigate the intricacies of life and bureaucratic institutions. Suggestions were made to actively involve civil organisations, which often provide more efficient assistance to emigrants and require considerably fewer resources than the already overburdened government bureaucracy. On the private side, it was suggested that those not in need of social assistance should have the possibility to leave the federal states to which they have been assigned.

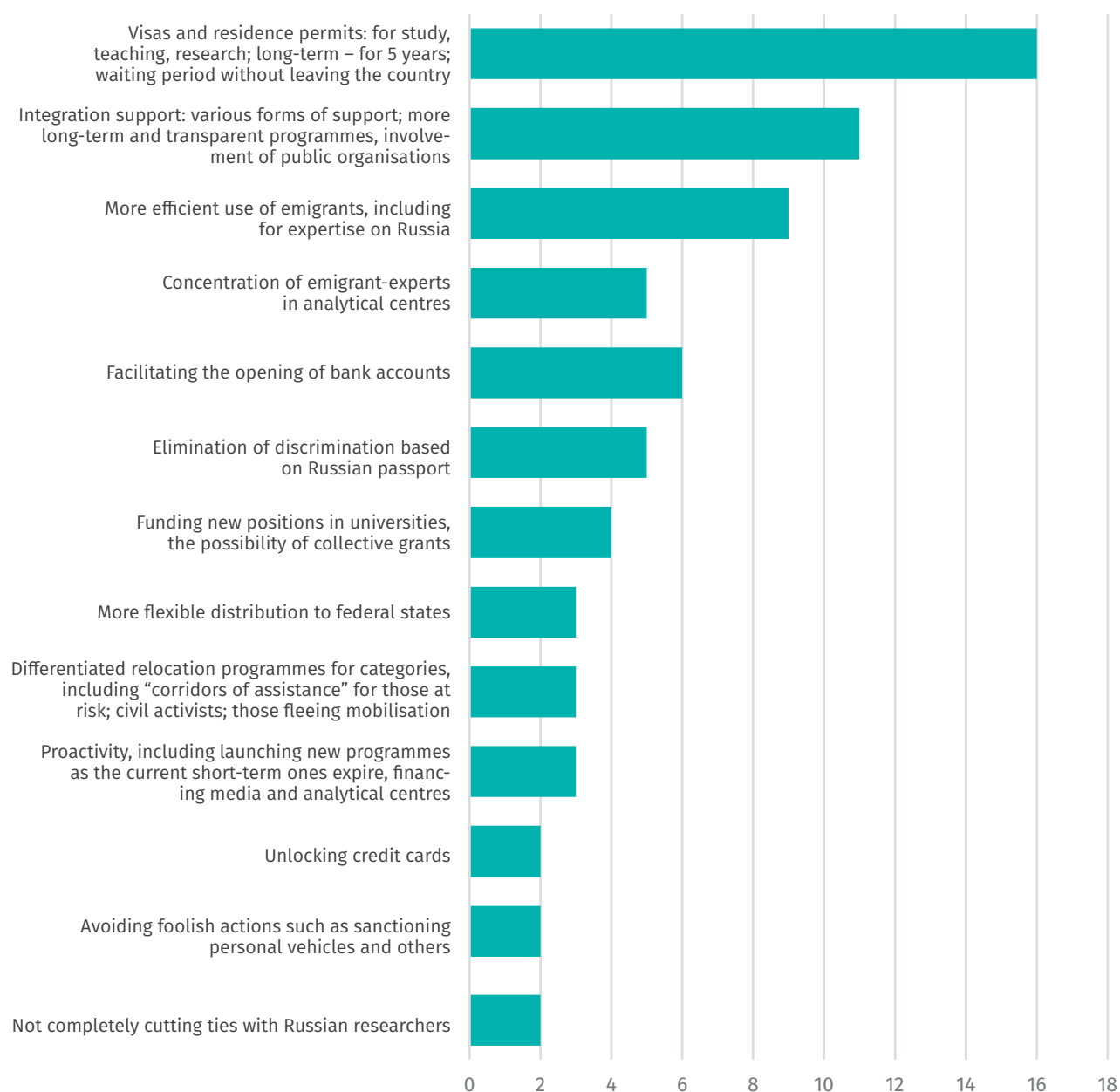
Many of those who have arrived believe they could make a significant contribution to the host country as experts on Russia, particularly in the current situation of continuing Russian aggression against Ukraine. Respondents expressed surprise at the lack of demand for this capacity. Respondent K: "Let the assistance to Russians, assistance driven by humanitarian motives, be more pragmatic."

From their point of view, it would make sense not to scatter academics individually throughout various centres, but rather to concentrate them in several larger ones, including the offer of collective grants, especially in cases where a whole team of researchers with experience in joint projects arrives from Russia. In the case of Germany, this would mean that the federal government would centrally allocate a certain number of research and teaching positions to regions or even specific universities and centres in order to maximise the concentration of resources and their impact.

There have been calls to remove discrimination against Russian passport holders, particularly those who oppose the Putin regime and face persecution for doing so. This concerns the ability to open bank accounts and the removal of restrictions on credit cards issued by Russian banks.

It would be worth considering to encourage talented young scientists to leave Russia in order to weaken the Putin regime, while at the same time attracting highly skilled professionals to Western countries. If all current support programmes are geared towards individual emigration, it might be worth considering collective grants, preferably for two years, which would enable research groups and teams of several individuals to travel.

Table 1. Recommendations to authorities from respondents



Special relocation programmes should also be introduced for those at immediate risk, including civil society activists, and possibly those seeking to avoid conscription. We should “Stop pushing those who have left to return to Russia (for documents, etc.) and help them integrate into the Western space. Those who left for ideological reasons are more restricted in their rights as a result than pragmatists who maintain ties with the regime.”

Perhaps there should not be a complete break with researchers who remain in Russia and who, for various reasons, either do not want to or cannot leave the country. Their personal participation in scientific collaboration and joint projects with Western colleagues could be mutually beneficial, both for the researchers themselves and for the projects in the West.

4. Conclusions

As Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine enters a protracted and open-ended phase, it is necessary to rethink the West's strategy towards Russia as a whole and also towards Russian emigrants.

So far, the assistance provided by Western countries to people in need has been severely delayed. New approaches need to be considered, such as strategies that promote mutually beneficial collaboration. Instead of "just giving away money," an infrastructure needs to be created that makes the most of the potential of the emigrated "academics." One solution could be to preserve and exploit economies of scale: it was suggested that Russian researchers who have moved to Germany should be grouped together, especially when it comes to entire research teams, such as Shanyinka or the Center for the Study of Development Institutions at the HSE.

The creation of a network of research centres would help to address the issue of missing expertise on Russia, which is becoming increasingly acute. It should be understood that there are fewer and fewer good analysts in Russia (and Western experts relied on them), yet Russian emigrant analysts are not in demand in the West. Russia is changing rapidly, and the expert and analytical support for decisions made by Western politicians relies on pre-war knowledge of experts. Without research, these experts are reduced to mere commentators. It is essential to initiate a series of research projects, including network projects, in various areas such as economics and the social sphere, internal political development, political elites, socio-economic and political processes in the regions, relationships between the regions and the centre, local governance, and more.

The situation of emigration from Russia has stabilised to some extent. Those who were ready to leave have already done so. A new wave of emigration is only likely in the event of further significant changes either internally (mobilisation, repression, exhaustion of the labour base) and/or externally (introduction of more comprehensible long-term programmes that allow individuals to build a new life abroad without significant savings and with the framework of established reputation and connections).

Until now, the push model has been in operation, allowing those who could not stay or had other opportunities to leave. For the future, it is essential to move to a pull model that attracts strong, capable, and proactive individuals, enhancing the quality of expertise on Russia and preventing the Putin regime from having a future.

A particular issue is the extension of stays for those who came under the previous short-term programmes and have not found work within a few months. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that grant application processes are quite lengthy. If a researcher with a valid visa or residence permit does not meet the respective timelines, they must leave the country and wait for a response in a country that is visa-free for Russians. Furthermore, their bank accounts are closed upon the expiration of their residence permits. There is thus a need for special long-term programmes for Russians that facilitate integration into the German academic community; this would also avoid direct competition with Ukrainians, whose priority status is understandable and fair.

It is worth noting that references to the heavy and strict German bureaucracy, which is difficult to make more efficient, are not always true. Many emigrants find ways around it by getting earlier appointments through acquaintances and opening bank accounts with their help. All of this should however be inherent in the system itself, rather than as ways of getting around it.

Many of the respondents emphasised the significant role played by already existing institutions of German society in helping them to adapt and integrate into a new and unfamiliar environment. It may therefore be more effective to provide support to already existing and proven civil society organisations, rather than to increase state involvement.

A change in the understanding of the time horizon of Russia's aggressive actions against Ukraine and the resulting strained relations between Russia and the Western countries also imply the need for a transition from initial programmes aimed at helping those who left to endure the nightmare, which are now coming to an end, to new, more long-term programmes that will benefit Germany.



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