



Integration of russian-speaking migrants into brazilian society through mechanisms of intercultural interaction

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Abstract: Russian-speaking migrants are not the largest group in Brazil, but they occupy a prominent place in the host society. There have been several waves of Russian-speaking immigration to Brazil in the history of Brazil, and in 2022-2023, after the start of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, the number of immigrants from the former Soviet Union countries of different ethnic groups but speaking Russian increased. The adaptation and integration of Russian-speaking immigrants in the multicultural Brazilian society is generally successful, but has specifics depending on the time of immigration, socio-demographic composition and regions of residence. Integration of Russian-speaking immigrants faces some difficulties and barriers in Brazil.

Keywords: Russian-speaking emigration, Brazil, adaptation, integration, host society.

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Integração de migrantes de língua russa na sociedade brasileira por meio de mecanismos de interação intercultural

Resumo: Os migrantes de língua russa não são o maior grupo no Brasil, mas ocupam um lugar de destaque na sociedade anfitriã. Houve várias ondas de imigração de língua russa para o Brasil na história do Brasil e, em 2022-2023, após o início do conflito russo-ucraniano, o número de imigrantes dos países da antiga União Soviética de diferentes grupos étnicos, mas que falam russo, aumentou. A adaptação e integração de imigrantes de língua russa na sociedade multicultural brasileira é geralmente bem-sucedida, mas tem especificidades dependendo do tempo de imigração, composição sociodemográfica e regiões de residência. A integração de imigrantes de língua russa enfrenta algumas dificuldades e barreiras no Brasil.

Palavras-chave: Emigração de língua russa, Brasil, Adaptação, Integração, Sociedade anfitriã.

Integración de los inmigrantes rusófonos en la sociedad brasileña mediante mecanismos de interacción intercultural

Resumen: Los inmigrantes de habla rusa no son el grupo más numeroso en Brasil, pero ocupan un lugar destacado en la sociedad de acogida. Ha habido varias oleadas de inmigración de habla rusa a Brasil en la historia de Brasil, y en 2022-2023, después del inicio del conflicto ruso-ucraniano, aumentó el número de inmigrantes de los países de la ex Unión Soviética de diferentes grupos étnicos pero que hablaban ruso. La adaptación e integración de los inmigrantes de habla rusa en la sociedad multicultural brasileña es generalmente exitosa, pero tiene particularidades que dependen del momento de la inmigración, la composición sociodemográfica y las regiones de residencia. La integración de los inmigrantes de habla rusa enfrenta algunas dificultades y barreras en Brasil.

Palabras clave: Emigración de habla rusa, Brasil, Adaptación, Integración, Sociedad de acogida.

Introduction

Brazilian society is one of the most racially, ethnically, linguistically and culturally diverse in the world. The country's population has been shaped by different waves of immigration. By the early 2020s, there were about 800,000 immigrants living in Brazil. In addition, millions of Brazilians are descendants of immigrants, and although they were born in Brazil, they usually define themselves as members of different ethnic groups or people with certain ethnic backgrounds. The largest group by origin are Portuguese, Japanese, Italians, Paraguayans and Bolivians. In recent years there has been an influx of Koreans, Angolans, Haitians, Paraguayans and Nigerians. Russian-speaking migrants are not the largest group in the country, but they occupy a prominent place in Brazilian society. There have been several waves of Russian-speaking immigration to Brazil in the history of Brazil, and in 2022-2023, following the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, the number of immigrants from the former Soviet Union countries of different ethnic groups but speaking Russian increased. Adaptation and integration of Russian-speaking immigrants in the multicultural Brazilian society is generally successful, but has specifics depending on the time of immigration, socio-demographic composition and regions of residence. Also adaptation and integration of Russian-speaking immigrants face some difficulties and barriers in Brazil. These aspects have been studied in this article.

Literature review

This article uses the term “Russian-speaking migration” and “Russian-speaking migrants”, which is widely used in the world scientific literature in relation to the natives of the post-Soviet countries, which until 1991 existed as one country - the USSR. And despite thirty years of separate existence of fifteen countries, the migration histories, thinking, culture, and language of immigrants remain closely linked. Most immigrants from post-Soviet countries speak Russian. Statistical data on migration based on citizenship do not reflect these characteristics, so this article uses the term “Russian-speaking migrants” more often than citizens of the Russian Federation.

The history of Russian-speaking immigration and Russian-speaking communities in Brazil in the context of general migration to South America in different periods of time is studied in the some scientific articles. In joint research by Russian and Brazilian scientists S. Ryazantsev, A. Smirnov, O. Serra Truzzi, S. Ruseishvili, based on archival materials and materials from the pre-revolutionary press, the scale, ethnic and socio-demographic structure of migrants from

the Russian Empire to Brazil at the end of the XIX century are analyzed. It is noted that emigration from the Russian Empire began in 1870-1880 and reached its peak in 1891, amounting to 109,000 people. The migration flow from Russia to Brazil was represented mainly by Poles, Jews and Germans (mainly Mennonites) (Ryazantsev; Truzzi; Smirnov and Ruseishvili, 2023; Ryazantsev; Smirnov and Truzzi, 2023).

S. Ryazantsev, E. Pismennaya and M. Khramova described the factors and five historical waves of Russian-speaking immigration from 1870 to 2015 from the point of view of the socio-demographic characteristics of immigrants, and also gave estimates of the number and described the socio-demographic composition of Russian-speaking communities in Brazil (Ryazantsev and Khramova, 2016; Ryazantsev and Pis'mennaya, 2014).

Adaptation and transformation of the identity of Russian-speaking migrants in Argentina and Brazil are discussed in scientific articles by M. Phillips (2013, 2013a) Features of linguistic and sociocultural adaptation of Russian-speaking migrants in modern Brazilian society are considered in joint research by S. Ruseishvili and A. Smirnova-Enriques based on unique sociological surveys of Russian-speaking migrants studying Portuguese in Sao Paulo (Smirnova Henriques and Ruseishvili, 2019). A sociological study of young Brazilian users of social networks was carried out by Russian scientists S. Ryazantsev, E. Pismennaya and Yu. Pletneva, which opened new approaches to studying the role of digital resources in the adaptation and integration of Russian-speaking migrants in Brazil (Ryazantsev; Pis'mennaya and Pletneva, 2023).

Materials and Research Methods

The research included desk research and fieldwork. The desk research is based on the analytical method and included work with scientific literature and reports of international organizations (UN, UNHCR, IOM). Statistical data on migration from ministries and agencies of Brazil were also analysed.

Content analysis of Russian and Portuguese language websites and media of Brazil on migration, socio-economic and political activity of the Russian-speaking population was conducted. An analysis of telegrams channels in Brazil in terms of the number of users and the content they present on fertile migration issues was carried out.

Also used open data from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation and Latin American and Caribbean countries on border crossing regimes and residence opportunities for Russian citizens.

Field research is based on sociological methodology and included in-depth interviews with representatives of the Russian-speaking diaspora in different waves of migration to Brazil. Respondents lived in 12 different cities in Brazil (Brasília, Rio de Janeiro, Florianópolis, São Paulo, Campinas, São Carlos, São José dos Campos, Fortaleza, Salvador, Recife, Joao Pessoa, Curiciba). Interviewees will be sought through personal contacts, organisations of Russian-speaking compatriots, the Russian Orthodox Church, and embassies and consulates of the Russian Federation, using a “snowball” methodology. Representatives of Russian-speaking communities were surveyed through in-depth interviews in person (“face-to-face”) offline or online (Skype and Zoom) based on a guidebook in Russian and Portuguese.

From September 2022 to May 2023, 28 in-depth interviews with migrants were taken and processed. The study faced a limitation - many migrants in the wave 2022-2023 were wary of being interviewed due to certain life circumstances related to the political situation in Russia. Each interview took on average about one hour. Questions in the guidebook included migration background, adaptation and integration patterns, socio-economic status, political views, socio-cultural engagement, and contacts with Russia. Russian citizens who arrived in Brazil after 2012 for different socio-economic and political reasons (marriage, education, work, refugee) were selected as respondents. Most of the interviews were recorded with the consent of the respondents for further transcription and analysis.

Ten expert interviews were also conducted, including interviews with leaders of Russian-speaking migrant organizations, representatives of Russian embassies and consulates, academics, civil servants from receiving countries, NGO staff, migration lawyers and advocates assisting Russian-speaking migrants in Brazil. The expert interviews helped to obtain information on the reasons for migration, socio-demographic structure and key problems of adaptation of Russian-speaking migrants in the receiving countries, which was not available from other sources and could not be provided by the migrants themselves. On average, each interview with an expert lasted from 35 to 45 minutes.

Migration waves of emigration from Russia to Brazil: historical aspect

Migration from the territory of the Russian Empire, the USSR, the Russian Federation and other countries to Latin America took place in the form of several migration waves.

The first period – “pre-revolutionary” (late XIX century - early XX century) was characterized by the inflow of Russian-speaking migrants from the Russian Empire mainly to Argentina and Brazil. At this time, many Russian-speaking migrants were looking for better economic and social opportunities, as well as fearing Bolshevik repression, and headed to Latin America.

The second stage – “post-revolutionary” (from 1917 to 1940) was characterized by the arrival of natives of the Russian Empire and the USSR as refugees. First of all, these were cadre military personnel who remained outside the Empire after World War I and “white” emigrants from the Crimea, who came to Brazil *en masse*.

The third stage – “post-war” (from 1945 to 1950) Russian-speaking migration intensified at the expense of former prisoners of war who could not or did not want to return to the USSR, as well as emigrants from previous waves who were unable to integrate in other countries.

The fourth stage – “Soviet” (from 1950 to 1980) was characterized by a decrease in the volume of migration. The only opportunity for emigration from the USSR was the marriage channel: Soviet women married students from Latin American countries studying in the USSR and left with their husbands for their homeland.

At the fifth stage – “post-Soviet” (1990-2000s) Russian-speaking migration occurred to Latin America for socio-economic reasons. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, many Russian-speaking people faced changes in the political and economic situation, which contributed to increased emigration flows in search of a better life and new opportunities.

Modern migration wave of Russian-speaking emigration to Brazil

The “modern” wave of migration is characterized by the flow of forced migrants from the Russian Federation, Ukraine, and Belarus after 2014, which intensified after February 2022. A certain part of the Russian population does not accept the idea of military action. The main demographic consequences of the war have been the large-scale loss of life, the huge number of refugees and internally displaced persons in Ukraine, and the large-scale emigration of Russian and Belarus citizens who do not support the political situation. Since March 2022, the Brazilian government grants a temporary visa and a residence permit for humanitarian reception to Ukrainian citizens and stateless persons who have suffered or been displaced as a result of the armed conflict situation in

Ukraine. Once a humanitarian visa is granted, the recipient has up to 180 days to enter Brazil (CNN Brasil, 2022).

Another wave of emigration of people who disagreed with the official policy intensified with the announcement of a partial mobilisation of the military conscript population in the Russian Federation on September 21st, 2022. According to Forbes, during two weeks of mobilization alone, about 700,000 people left Russia (FORBES, 2022). Above all, young men of conscription age were leaving, actively “voting with their feet” against the political regime in Russia, unwilling to participate in military operations.

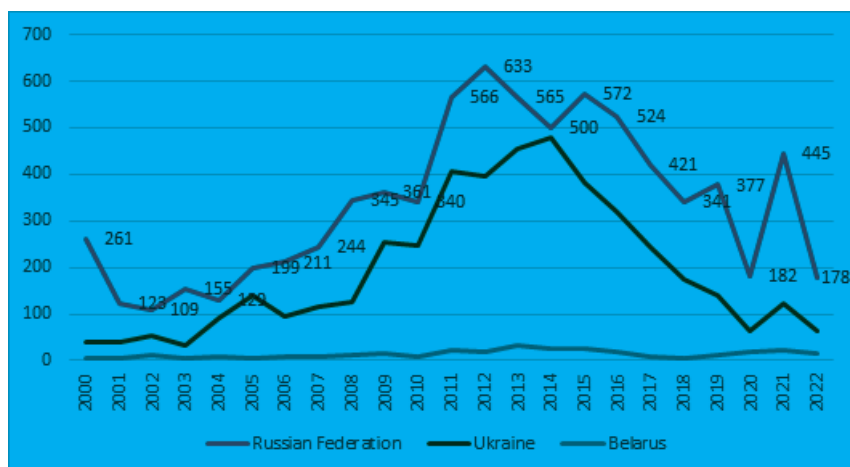


Figure 1. Number of immigrants from the Russian Federation, Ukraine and Belarus registered by the Brazilian Federal Police in obtaining residence permits in the country in 2000-2022, persons.

Source: Imigrantes Internacionais Registrados no Brasil (com Registro Nacional Migratório - RNM). Banco Interativo. NEPO. UNICAMP. URL: <https://www.nepo.unicamp.br/observatorio/bancointerativo/numeros-imigracao-internacional/sincre-sismigra/>

The wave of emigration from Russia in 2022-2023 was due solely to social and political circumstances. The rejection of the war, the total corruption of the authorities, the biased and dependent courts, the political press, the closure of independent media, the law on foreign agents, the punishment and expulsion of oppositionists, and the destruction of human rights and freedoms, forced young and middle class people to actively flee Russia. Many people who had previously participated in protests were subjected to political pressure, or seriously feared for their freedom and lives. Many emigrants left and continue

to flee urgently, unable to prepare for their departure, unable to obtain visas, remove property and transfer money. Sometimes people have left in one day, leaving behind possessions, relatives and animals.

Given the limited number of flights, emigrants primarily flew to visa-free countries - Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkey and others. One of the receiving countries for emigrants, citizens of the Russian Federation, despite geographical remoteness, was Brazil, which provides them with visa-free entry. Russians and Belarusians can stay on the territory of Brazil for 90 days and then they can extend their stay for another 90 days.

According to rough estimates, 750,000 to 1.5 million people emigrated from Russia during three waves. Russian emigrants have been caught between "two fires". On the one hand, many men subject to mobilisation, activists and opposition activists cannot remain in their country under political pressure. On the other hand, certain countries have reduced the possibilities for Russians to emigrate: they have closed the borders to Russian citizens, cancelled airline flights, restricted the issuing and renewal of visas and residence permits. Against this background, Brazil remains a country committed to humanitarian values, freedom and democracy, and continues to allow these people to enter the country. Unfortunately, however, administrative migration procedures in Brazil for Russians and Belarusians have not yet been brought to a logical conclusion. They are not granted humanitarian status and asylum as victims of political repression and people at risk.

Socio-demographic composition and settlement of Russian-speaking emigrants in Brazil

Russian-speaking immigrants are not the largest group, but according to a rough estimate, about 120,000–150,000 immigrants from the countries of the former USSR and their descendants of different migration waves live in Brazil, who are concentrated in large cities. Russian-speaking immigrants of the latest wave prefer large cities located on the shores of the Atlantic Ocean with beaches and comfortable living conditions (Florianapolis, Rio de Janeiro, Neteroi, Recife). For example, according to the Consulate General of the Russian Federation, about 30 thousand citizens of the Russian Federation live in the state of Sao Paulo (Consulado Geral da Federação Russa em São Paulo, s/d). This number includes permanent and temporary residents, as well as people on business trips and students. Russian-speaking associations are known for their active participation in cultural, scientific, educational, and economic projects. Many

Russians founded clubs, dance groups, opened companies and enterprises in tourism, restaurant business, and trade.

The current wave of emigrants from Russia and former Soviet Union countries consists of educated people. As a rule, these are people with higher education, specialists in information technology, design, innovative industries, banking and finance, science, journalism, culture and art. The majority of emigrants are active, creative, enterprising people who have developed the economy, business, culture, art, science, education, and sports in Russia.

The socio-demographic portrait of the average Russian emigrant fleeing from politic regime is as follows. He is a young man under 30 years of age, with a higher education, a city dweller, originally from a large city (Moscow, St. Petersburg, Novosibirsk, Yekaterinburg), an employee of a private company or a bank employee, a person who seeks to live in an economy with development opportunities, usually with middle-class income, who has had experience of study or travel abroad, who shares democratic values, who accepts the right to freedom of religion and sexual orientation, who does not support the war actions. His main value is freedom and his ideal state is a democratic society with the possibility of individual self-expression.

All over the world there is competition for qualified and educated people, especially in science and technology. In a situation where the authorities of the Russian Federation neglect their own population, which they do not consider a valuable human capital, a new emigration wave of Russians will certainly be beneficial for the receiving countries, including Brazil.

Russian emigrants are young people, men, sometimes with families, who usually have higher education, work experience, a profession, qualifications, and are proficient or able to master the language. There are businessmen, lawyers, actors, musicians, scientists, writers, journalists and sportsmen among emigrants. They are able to fit in fairly quickly in the host societies and bring real benefits to it. The host countries, including Brazil, receive a ready cadre of professionals, which requires a lot of funds for training.

Life orientations and political attitudes of Russian emigrants are based on democracy, human and minority rights, humanism, desire to live in peace and develop good neighbourly relations. These values were leveled by the political regime in Russia, but they are fully characteristic of the Brazilian society, into which Russian migrants may well fit, joining the ranks of respectable and responsible citizens. Russian emigrants in some time will compensate the costs and pay back the debt to the host countries, which extended a helping hand to them in difficult times, contributing to culture, science, education, economy.

Previous waves of emigration from Russia after the revolution and the Second World War have already proved this. And Brazil was no exception.

Brazil's integration policy: Features of the integration of Russian-speaking immigrants in the host society

According to the international Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX), reflecting the degree of integration of migrants in the host society, Brazil took tenth place (64 points out of 100, the MIPEX average is 49 points, the leader is Sweden with 86 points). Over the four years (2019-2022) of the study, MIPEX increased by 2 points on average in 52 countries, and by 12 points in Brazil (MIPEX, 2020). This was the maximum progress in integration indicators among all countries. Brazil has a better integration policy than Argentina, Chile and Mexico. However, Brazil's policies are less successful than those of other traditional countries receiving migrants (Canada, New Zealand, the US).

Immigrants in Brazil have more opportunities than barriers to integration. Migrants are in a fairly safe position and have basic rights with Brazilian citizens. But compared to other top ten countries, Brazil is still only on the path to providing equal opportunities for migrants. Contemporary Brazilian migration policies encourage locals to perceive immigrants as equals and potential citizens, but not fully as neighbors.

During the 2017 migration reform, Brazil adopted a comprehensive approach to the integration of migrants, which significantly improved the situation. Immigrants are generally in a better position to integrate into Brazilian society in many aspects, but above all in terms of access to permanent residence and citizenship.

Although immigrants in Brazilian society generally experience fairly favorable integration policies, different areas of migration policy differ. On the one hand, immigrants in Brazil have the opportunity to find work, reunite with their family, can obtain a residence permit and become a citizen fairly quickly, and are generally protected from discrimination. But on the other hand, immigrants enjoy less support in access to healthcare, education, and do not have the opportunity to participate in political life.

MIPEX assesses eight dimensions of integration policies, including access to the labor market, health care and citizenship, as well as policies aimed at combating discrimination, education, family reunification, permanent residence and political participation (MACLEOD, 2021). MIPEX (2020) includes indicators for the period 2014–2019 (estimate ranges: Favourable - 80-100 points;

Slightly favourable - 60-79; Halfway favourable - 41-59; Slightly unfavourable - 21-40; Unfavourable - 1-20; Critical unfavourable - 0).

The ranking of the favorability of immigrant integration indicators in Brazil is as follows.

The “*Long Term Residence*” indicator (96 points) is the best in the world in Brazil, along with Finland. The procedure for granting a permanent residence permit in the country has been simplified for such categories of migrants as spouses, close relatives, investors, and unique specialists. Obtaining permanent resident status provides equal access to social security. The problem for citizens of the Russian Federation remains access to permanent residence permits for labor migrants, students, and qualified specialists. For example, work provides grounds for obtaining only a temporary residence permit, but this, in turn, does not provide the opportunity to obtain a permanent residence permit and, therefore, in the future become a citizen of Brazil.

My husband is a Brazilian citizen. I came to Rio seven years ago. We had two sons born in Brazil. I lived with a Russian passport and residence permit and didn't even think that I needed Brazilian citizenship until 2022. But in the last year I thought about it and applied for citizenship. This will make it easier to travel to some countries. And in general it's more stable in the modern situation. (Interview with a migrant. Piano teacher, February 13, 2023, Rio de Janeiro).

The “*Family Reunion*” indicator (94 points) indicates that Brazil is very friendly to family migration. Immigrants can apply for family reunification for both economically dependent and independent relatives. For example, the birth of a child in Brazil allows his brothers and sisters, parents, and grandparents to obtain a residence permit. This strategy of acquiring Brazilian citizenship using the “Trojan horse” method is quite often used by Russian-speaking migrants. It is noted in telegram channels.

Also, many citizens of the Russian Federation come to Brazil to give birth to children. There is no such exact data, but it seems to me that the majority of Russian migrants who have come to Brazil now want to obtain Brazilian citizenship through the birth of children. Lots of young families. Many come to give birth to their second or third child, and then receive citizenship for the remaining children themselves. And even then on grandfathers and grandmothers. (Interview with an expert. Lawyer, head of the Russian-speaking society, December 10, 2022, Sao Paulo).

The “*Access to Nationality*” indicator (91 points). Brazil shares second and third place with Argentina in the world in terms of accessibility of citizenship for immigrants, second only to New Zealand (93 points). Immigrants can become Brazilian citizens in a relatively short period of time if they speak Portuguese at A2 level and have no criminal record. Brazil follows international trends and allows dual citizenship (since 2016), and children of immigrants born in Brazil receive Brazilian citizenship automatically at birth on the basis of “*jus soli*”.

Why do Russians want to obtain citizenship specifically, and not temporarily? Brazilian citizenship gives the opportunity to visit many countries, many countries are open to Brazilians, more than 150 countries. If you are Brazilian, you don't need a visa, that is, this is a good passport, good citizenship. Of course, Brazil has its problems, but it seems to me that a passport also has many opportunities. It is much easier to obtain if a close relative already lives in the country, then you can quickly obtain citizenship. Many lawyers help do this. (Interview with an expert. Lawyer, head of the Russian-speaking society, December 10, 2022, Sao Paulo).

The “*Anti Discrimination*” indicator (85 points). Despite the long history of migration and the multicultural composition of the population, Brazil was only 20th in the world according to this indicator. However, immigrants who were victims of discrimination enjoyed protection from discrimination and fairly strong enforcement mechanisms. At the time the index was assessed in 2020, Brazil did not have an effective specialized body mandated to assist victims in accessing justice.

The “*Labor Market Mobility*” indicator (67 points). Brazil's employment policies are generally quite favorable to immigrants who have the necessary documents to stay in the country, with work permit and registration procedures integrated into a single process, which provides migrants with access to employment and self-employment. Also, under the 2017 migration law, immigrants in Brazil received the right to change employers. According to this criterion, Brazil shares ninth place in the world with Spain and Italy. However, immigrants only receive access to the labor market, but do not have targeted support from the state to improve their professional skills, and there are no special programs for the employment of migrants.

It is impossible to obtain a work visa in Brazil. This can only be done in an international company or university, which must formalize everything for

you, make a call, in general, it is very difficult. Everyone who comes on work visas must do so only through international companies or universities. It is impossible to get a work visa to work in a hairdresser. Until 2018, you had to apply for a work visa outside of Brazil. (Interview with an expert. Migration activist, teacher, November 14, 2022, São Paulo).

The indicator “*Political Participation*” (35 points), which corresponds to 23rd place in the world. Immigrants in Brazil do not have the right to vote, although they can be members of political parties. Immigrants have the opportunity to receive information and advice, and since 2017 can join political parties, but cannot vote in local elections, unlike some countries in South America.

The most problematic integration indicators for Brazil remain indicators of immigrants’ access to the social security system. As such, there is no state social support in the country; these functions are performed by various non-governmental and international organizations.

The “*Health*” indicator (31 points) corresponds to 42nd place in the world. Immigrants and asylum seekers in Brazil have access to health care, but have limited information or support to access the national health care card - SUS. An obstacle to obtaining an SUS card is the need to obtain a personal tax number (CPF) and confirmation of the address of residence in Brazil (Comprovante de residência/Declaração de residência) from the owner of the rented apartment or house. With an SUS card, migrants can get tests, ultrasounds, doctor appointments and give birth in a public hospital for free (Birth in Brazil, s/d). Intermediaries have emerged (individuals and companies) who help Russian-speaking immigrants for money. In Florianópolis, cases of trafficking in medical services have been reported.

If the state of Brazil does not help, then there are Russians who make business on immigrants. There is an example in the state of Santa Catarina, in the city of Florianópolis. There, the Russians opened a company that sold free government medical services to Russian immigrants for large sums. But this is illegal. Of course, if you want to consult, then this is possible. But selling government services is prohibited in Brazil. They charged huge sums for services that are free in Brazil. They seem to help Russian immigrants, but they break the law. It seems to me that this practice was carried over from Russia, where there are many services around immigrants. The state will look at this more closely, especially in Santa Catarina and Florianópolis,

where there are many Russians. (Interview with an expert: Migration lawyer, January 20, 2023, Florianópolis).

The “*Education*” indicator (14 points) corresponds to 48th place in the world. Brazil’s migrant education policy is one of the least developed among MIPEx countries. And although immigrants have had equal access to education in Brazil since 2017, there has been a lack of targeted government action to address the inequalities and diversity associated with migration. Russian-speaking immigrants note that there are often no places in public schools in Brazil, and the wait on the waiting list ranges from three to five months. To enroll in a school, they require a large list of documents that immigrants do not always have in full, including the child’s birth certificate, identification card (RNM), parent’s CPF, proof of registration at the place of residence, vaccination certificate, certificate from the previous school. And although Russian-speaking migrants in Brazil, as a rule, are representatives of the middle class, not everyone has access to private schools with fees ranging from 200 to 600 USD per month (Birth Day, s/d).

Adaptation potential of Russian-speaking immigrants in Brazil

Despite the difficulties described above, the adaptation of Russian-speaking migrants of the latest wave in Brazil is generally successful.

This is due, on the one hand, to the openness of Brazilian society, which has traditionally accepted a large number of immigrants, including Russian speakers. The country has formed and successfully operates a network of government agencies and non-governmental organizations that provide support to immigrants in adaptation. Many government assistance programs apply only to officially registered refugees through the National Committee for Refugees (Comitê Nacional para os Refugiados – CONARE). Immigrants with a humanitarian residence permit have fewer rights and receive assistance from international and non-governmental organizations. For example, in Brazil, financial assistance to immigrants is provided by the Catholic organization *Cáritas*. In São Paulo there are also several centers for assistance to socially vulnerable groups (Centro e Referência Especializado de Assistência Social – CREAS), including the migrant accommodation center Centro de Acolhida para Imigrantes in the Bela Vista area.

Also, the Prefecture of São Paulo has a reception and assistance center for migrants under the department dealing with human rights (Centro de Referência e Atendimento para Imigrantes – CRAI). The Center provides free legal assistance related to the regularization of migrants in Brazil and the protection

of migrants' rights: assistance with making an appointment with the Federal Police when there are no places; assistance with preparing documents for requesting a humanitarian residence permit or refugee; regularization in all other situations; issuing a declaration confirming that the migrant can open a bank account simply with the RNM card request protocol; issues of obtaining Brazilian citizenship. General advice is also provided: how to get to migrant accommodation centers, how to apply for benefits, how to make an SUS card without proof of address. It is possible to get help with referrals to job search centers and Portuguese courses. But the staff at CRAI do not speak Russian, but they speak English and use an automatic translator or call someone to translate.

On the other hand, Russian-speaking migrants have a fairly good adaptation potential due to their high level of education, relatively young age structure and the availability of primary funds. Russian-speaking migrants learn Portuguese quite effectively and quickly. This is confirmed by studies of applicants for Brazilian citizenship when passing the Portuguese language exam CELPE-BRAS: Russian-speaking migrants relatively easily and quickly master the spoken level of the Portuguese language and are well immersed in the culture of the host society (Smirnova Henriques and Ruseishvili, 2019). The study of the Portuguese language is facilitated by the active work of Russian-speaking Portuguese teachers.

Example of advertising language courses on social networks:

In 2015, when I returned from France to Brazil, I already had experience in teaching a free course. Then, in the Russian church, for about a year I taught a free course for Russian girls who got married here, but never went to any courses Portuguese. I realized that this needs to be done... And I advertised "Portuguese course for Ukrainian refugees and Russian speakers in difficult situations." From the very beginning, this was served both for those and for all those who suffered from the war. As a result, there were almost 50 people at the first lesson. And I structured it all in such a way that there is a common part - an hour and a half lecture. Then they are divided into talking groups of 5 people. They are led by Brazilians. An important point. Since I am a teacher, I asked for help from Brazilians who would like to run conversation clubs with Ukrainian refugees and Russians in difficult situations. Mainly those who at least somehow speak Russian, because people unexpectedly arrived with just zero Portuguese. There was a huge number of people interested, I thought there would be a rotation, every Saturday about 7 people would come, I would give them a task, they would prepare. As a

result, those who came first were 10 people, 7 of them are still continuing and only missed two or three times. (Interview with an expert: Migration activist, and teacher, November 14, 2022, São Paulo).

The role of social networks in the adaptation of Russian-speaking migrants in Brazil

Research on political and civic engagement has identified the following needs that social networks satisfy: communication, entertainment, self-identity, and information (Valenzuela; Park and Kee, 2009). For members of diasporas, online interaction serves several main purposes: socialization through connection with other community members who have experience living in the host country; information search activities to understand immigration rules, seeking help in solving everyday issues; maintaining native culture (Ryazantsev; Pis'mennaya and Plentneva, 2023).

Social migration networks play a significant role in the adaptation of Russian-speaking migrants in Brazil (first of all, they help in finding housing, work, and paperwork), which are represented in the most common social Internet networks.

Russians integrate very well into Brazilian society. There are many Russian women who married Brazilian men. They are very well integrated. When there are conferences and platforms where Russians could express their point of view on migration policy, Russians do not participate. It is believed that these questions are not interesting to them. Migrants who arrived in recent years do not participate in the work of our organization. People are afraid, they think that the coordination council is connected with the embassy and the Russian state. I think that's why they don't participate. But when the coordinating council organizes cultural events. For example, a Christmas tree. All Russians are participating. Russians take part in non-political events with pleasure. We disseminate information through social networks: Instagram, Whatapp and Facebook groups. For example, Russians in Brazil, Russians in Sao Paulo, Russian speakers in Rio de Janeiro. (Interview with an expert: Interview with an expert. Lawyer, head of the Russian-speaking society, December 10, 2022, São Paulo).

A survey of Russian-speaking youth in Brazil showed that respondents followed news about Russia most often through online news portals (80%), Russian TV channels (39%), and Telegram channels (36%) (Ryazantsev; Pis'mennaya and Plentneva, 2023). Joining Russian-speaking groups on social networks and

various clubs helps migrants form a social circle in a new place, solve everyday and social issues, relying on the support and experience of compatriots.

A survey of Russian-speaking youth in Brazil showed that respondents looked for information about various cultural and sports events in online communities (67%). Social networks remain an important source of new acquaintances, including among the Russian-speaking population (54%). About 44% of respondents use online communities to establish connections with Russia, by searching for information about study, internship or work opportunities in Russia (Ryazantsev; Pis'mennaya and Plentneva, 2023). Communication of migrants on Internet networks helps to maintain communication, establish contacts, obtain information, transfer cultural values, and adapt to a new linguistic and cultural environment.

Informal Russian-speaking associations through social networks provide information support to immigrants in adapting to Brazilian society. The largest groups on Telegram have several thousand subscribers: Brazil chat - more than 6,000, No. 1 BUSINESS CHAT BRAZIL – 4,500, BRAZIL / Do it – 3,300, Brazil. News – 2,400 persons.

On the social network Facebook, at least four groups with several thousand participants have been identified: Brazil through the eyes of Russian speakers / Russian-speaking Brazil – 6,600, Russians in Brazil – 6,100, Brazil: Russian-speaking community – 4,000, Russos no Brasil – 3,700 persons.

Brazilian sociologists rightly introduced the concept of “Russian-speaking social space” in relation to language interaction (Smirnova Henriques and Ru-seishvili, 2019). Developing this approach, we can talk about the formation of a “Russian-speaking socio-economic space” in Brazilian cities with a large concentration of Russian-speaking immigrants. The Russian-speaking socio-economic space can be understood not only as the information space on social networks, but also as the socio-economic and socio-cultural activity of Russian-speaking migrants in Brazilian cities. Several forms can be distinguished.

Firstly, restaurants, cafes, services for the production and delivery of Russian products familiar to customers (dumplings, cakes, herring, caviar, kvass, pancakes). A specific feature of the Brazilian market is a small number of Russian restaurants (for example, there is the Barsky Dom restaurant in Sao Paulo), most of them are individual or family businesses that work for a stable segment of customers, and sometimes go to temporary trading platforms (fairs, holiday markets).

Secondly, delivery of Russian clothes and souvenirs (matryoshka dolls, keychains, hats, T-shirts) from Russia. As a rule, they are sold at events and

fairs. For example, the São Paulo Immigrant Festival is held annually at the Immigration Museum (Memorial). Here, several Russian-speaking families regularly sell Russian souvenirs in specialized stalls.

Thirdly, Russian-language services to serve the Russian-speaking population who have difficulties with the Portuguese language or are accustomed to a certain quality of services in their homeland. These are, for example, Russian-speaking language and music teachers, doctors, dentists, realtors, document legalization intermediaries, psychologists, translators, hairdressers, manicurists and pedicurists, air conditioning and car service specialists, and apartment repairmen.

Fourthly, cultural and religious projects, sociocultural activities (ensembles, dance groups, festivals, church holidays, children's parties). Through social networks, Russian-speaking immigrants gather for regular meetings, communicate with each other, whenever possible support each other in various social and economic issues, and celebrate holidays. It is known that Russian-speaking entrepreneurs support the Russian dance ensemble "Gruppa-Volga" in Sao Paulo.

These segments of the Russian-speaking economy perform a dual function. On the one hand, they fill market niches where consumers have limited Portuguese language skills and there are buyers who are accustomed to Russian-speaking services. On the other hand, these segments provide an opportunity to work and earn income for a significant part of Russian-speaking migrants who moved to Brazil.

Key problems and barriers to adaptation of Russian-speaking migrants in Brazilian society

However, sometimes Russian-speaking immigrants face problems and barriers to adaptation in Brazil. First of all, it should be noted that bureaucratic barriers in the field of registration and obtaining migration documents, coupled with ignorance of the language, often become an obstacle to the legalization of migrants. For example, in Brazil it is important to have a birth certificate apostilled in the country of origin. Without this document it is impossible to obtain a residence permit and other documents.

A significant problem is the lack of knowledge of the Portuguese language by Russian-speaking migrants, since it is not studied in Russian schools. Ignorance of the language makes it difficult for Russian-speaking migrants to communicate with authorities and local residents, limits social contacts, and complicates the search for work.

There are very few English-speaking officers in Federal Police offices, which, coupled with the lack of knowledge of Portuguese by Russian-speaking migrants, makes communication difficult. In Russian-speaking social networks, there are often advertisements for searches for intermediaries who provide translation services between Russian and Portuguese while escorting applicants for Brazilian residence to the Federal Police.

The biggest problem for Russian migrants is lack of knowledge of the Portuguese language. And if a Russian doesn't speak Spanish or English, then it's generally very difficult. Russian migrants more or less have economic opportunities, they can rent an apartment, buy a house, they have a reserve of money. Migrants of other nationalities usually do not have money. There is a system of assistance to migrants, but this system is not adapted for Russian-speaking migrants. Russian migrants find it difficult to understand rights. No information in Russian. Russians cannot receive services for migrants if there is no information in Russian. And information is very necessary for those who want to live in Brazil, who want to have children, who are in prison. Why is there no information in Russian? Because there are few Russians compared to other nationalities (Bolivians, Venezuelans and others). We need information materials for Russian migrants. The number doesn't matter - ten Russians and a million Russians. But there needs to be an initiative from Russian organizations here that work with Russians. (Interview with an expert: Lawyer, head of the Russian-speaking society, December 10, 2022, São Paulo).

Refugee status in Brazil, for objective and subjective reasons, is not claimed by citizens of the Russian Federation, since many of them were not directly persecuted, but left due to mobilization or the political situation and cannot formally claim refugee status, unlike citizens of Ukraine. In addition, many maintain ties to their homeland, and requesting refugee status significantly limits international mobility. In this regard, Russian citizens are looking for alternative channels for legalizing their migration status in Brazil. For example, it is becoming a popular channel for investors and digital nomads.

Despite the high adaptability potential of Russian-speaking immigrants, there are sociocultural barriers in Brazilian society. These include the peculiarities of the social situation in the country, the mentality of the local population, and the way of everyday life.

In each group, people face their own problems. Those who go to university have nothing but problems. Women who marry Brazilians have different problems. Migrants who come here illegally and do not have work - they have a third problem. In general, many Russians like it in Brazil. But there are women who got married but did not want to go to Brazil. They suffer because it is unsafe here. In Moscow you can send your child to buy bread. It is strictly prohibited here. Children under 12 years old cannot be left alone. Dangerous. Crime is high. Mostly they complain about crime. And to the Brazilian optionality. It's hard to make friends. It's difficult to agree on something. It's unclear whether you agreed or not. (Interview with an expert: Migration activist, and teacher, november 14, 2022, São Paulo)

And yet, despite the presence of some barriers (mainly administrative), the majority of Russian-speaking migrants have good adaptive potential and successfully adapt to life in Brazilian society.

Recommendations for the development policy of assistance to adaptation and integration Russian-speaking immigrants to the Brazilian society

Guided by humanitarian principles and democratic values, the Brazilian Government can take the following steps for the reception and adaptation and integration of Russian citizens into Brazilian society. First of all, Russian emigrants should be recognized as forced migrants internationally and nationally, who suppress the right to freedom and democracy and sometimes become life-threatening. Brazil, as a democratic country, could set an example to the whole international community in this regard.

It is important to open up opportunities and channels for legalisation to citizens of the Russian Federation in Brazil. A "humanitarian visa" (humanitarian migrant status similar to citizens of Ukraine) should be granted to emigrants from the Russian Federation who left their country after the outbreak of war and cannot return back to the motherland.

An important support for the adaptation of Russian migrants in Brazil is the provision of free learning of the Portuguese (Brazilian) language, assistance in finding a job, and access to medicine. Russian citizens can take courses together with citizens of Ukraine, which will contribute to reconciliation between the peoples.

Other measures could include:

- recommending Brazilian banks to open bank accounts and cards to citizens of the Russian Federation in a simplified procedure to enable transfer of savings

through the SWIFT system, which will allow them to buy tickets, pay for primary living expenses, and buy real estate in Brazil. Some Russians have savings but are unable to use them due to sanctions, bank restrictions on remittances from abroad and blocking of VISA, MasterCard and JMB bank cards;

- recommending Brazilian banks and retail outlets to expand their acceptance of Chinese UnionPay bank cards, which are issued by some Russian banks that have not been hit by sanctions;
- expanding opportunities for Russian scientists and PhD students to work in universities and research centres in Brazil for several years with a permanent residence permit and developing grant-based training programmes for students and postgraduates of the Russian Federation in Brazilian universities with the prospect of employment opportunities and permanent residence permits;
- reducing the amount of investment in real estate with a permanent residence permit from 1 million reais to 250,000-300,000 reais for citizens of the Russian Federation and the former Soviet Union. Some people have savings and can be attracted to Brazil to buy an apartment or house and stay in the country permanently.

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