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ASSESSMENT OF LEGAL LABOR MIGRATION IN RUSSIAN REGIONS



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The relevance of the study is due to the growing role of external labor migration in the staffing of the Russian economy during the period 2022–2024. The research problem lies in identifying approaches to detecting the features of the territorial distribution of legal labor migrants and accordingly adjusting existing perceptions of migration flows based on official data on the employment of foreign workers in Russia's regions. The aim of the study is to identify the flow of international labor migration carried out within the framework of legal labor relations and, on this basis, to

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provide quantitative estimates of the employment of foreign workers in the regions of the Russian Federation. The information source used was official tax reporting data, which, in contrast to migration registration indicators, allow for a comprehensive picture of the results of labor activities carried out on a legal basis in the regions of the Russian Federation. The main findings show that the highest concentration of foreign workers is in the economic centers of the federal districts, while there is a significant increase in the employment of foreign workers in the regions of the Far Eastern Federal District, both in terms of numbers and total migrant income. The data obtained expand the scientific understanding of the distribution of foreign labor resources in Russia and make it possible to take migration flows into account when shaping the demographic and social policies of the regions.

Labor migration, foreign workers, Russia, regions, demographic policy, migrant income, territorial distribution.

Introduction

Amid tightening external economic sanctions and growing migration risks, there is an increasing need for a balanced migration policy that can ensure Russian industries are supplied with the labor resources they require (Rubinskaya, 2025). The importance of this issue stems from the large-scale employment of foreign nationals in key sectors of the economy: construction, agriculture, and services (Karabchuk, Salnikova, 2018; Sapryka et al., 2025). The favorable migration conditions created in recent decades have led to a rise in the number of foreign workers in the domestic labor market. According to the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs, more than six million foreign citizens were permanently present in the country in 2024 (Babkin et al., 2024). At the same time, expert estimates suggest that the total number of migrants staying in Russia (including those in violation of employment legislation) exceeds 10 million, and according to several specialists, up to half of all migrants work illegally (Kuprina, 2015; Altonji, Card, 2018; Alecu, Drange, 2019).

The research problem lies in the use of irrelevant sources of information on the

number and territorial distribution of legal labor migrants in Russia's regions. In practical terms, for regional authorities, inflated statistics based on data on migrants entering a region for "work" purposes lead to an erroneous assessment of the labor force actually available to the economy, distortions in forecasting when compiling the labor balance, and poor justification of a territory's investment potential. This creates uncertainty regarding the possibilities and forms of including foreigners in the guaranteed provision of social benefits in the region where they are employed. Accounting for legal labor migration makes it possible to weigh the benefits derived from foreign workers against the costs of providing them with benefits through the regional social system (Krivenko, 2024).

It should be emphasized that relying solely on data from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Rosstat on the number of issued work permits and patents does not allow an objective assessment of the scale of legal employment of foreign citizens in Russia's regions. Permits or patents alone do not

guarantee subsequent formal employment, nor do they account for cases in which migrants obtain documents but never actually start work or continue working outside the legal framework. As a result, statistics based on these indicators overstate the number of foreign workers, creating the illusion of a higher level of legal employment than actually exists. A substantial share of illegal migration remains outside the scope of official estimates, which hampers the development of adequate measures to regulate migration flows and effectively manage socioeconomic processes at the regional level.

Accordingly, we formulate the research hypothesis that using official tax reporting data as a source of information will provide an objective picture of legally employed foreign citizens in terms of their regional distribution, in contrast to data on border crossings and migration registration indicators. These figures lay the foundation for quantifying the contribution of labor migrants to the regional economy and for shaping regional demographic and social strategies.

The aim of the study is to identify the flow of international labor migration occurring within formal labor relations and, on this basis, to quantify the employment of foreign workers in Russian regions.

Theoretical and methodological foundations of the study

The free movement of foreign workers from certain countries and simplified hiring procedures were intended to help offset labor shortages in Russia's regions and thereby support economic development. However, findings from several studies show that the main flow of labor migrants concentrates in

the country's central regions – Moscow, the Moscow Region, the Leningrad Region, and others – where newcomers predominantly work in trade and services (Krasinets, 2023; Druzhinin, 2025). Migration processes have an ambiguous impact on the economic situation of recipient regions: competition in the labor market intensifies, income disparities widen, the burden on social infrastructure grows (leading to a decline in the quality and accessibility of education and healthcare), and problems of social adaptation and intercultural interaction of foreign guests emerge. Disproportions in migration pressure across Russian regions increase the strain on social systems, fuel informal employment and social tension, including the emergence of ethnic enclaves and the spread of xenophobia (Mentesoglu Tardivo, 2025).

Russia has several key mechanisms that allow foreign citizens to enter the Russian labor market legally (*Fig. 1*).

Free employment for citizens of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), the Republic of Armenia, the Republic of Belarus, the Republic of Kazakhstan, and the Kyrgyz Republic exempts workers from these countries from obtaining work permits and effectively equates them with Russian citizens in matters of employment (Galas, 2020). A foreigner becomes eligible for employment without additional permits if he or she already holds a temporary residence permit or a residence permit. In this case, migrants enjoy the same labor rights as Russian citizens. Foreign students enrolled in full-time and part-time programs at Russian institutions of higher and secondary vocational education are also entitled to formal employment (Rostovskaya, Vasil'eva, 2023).

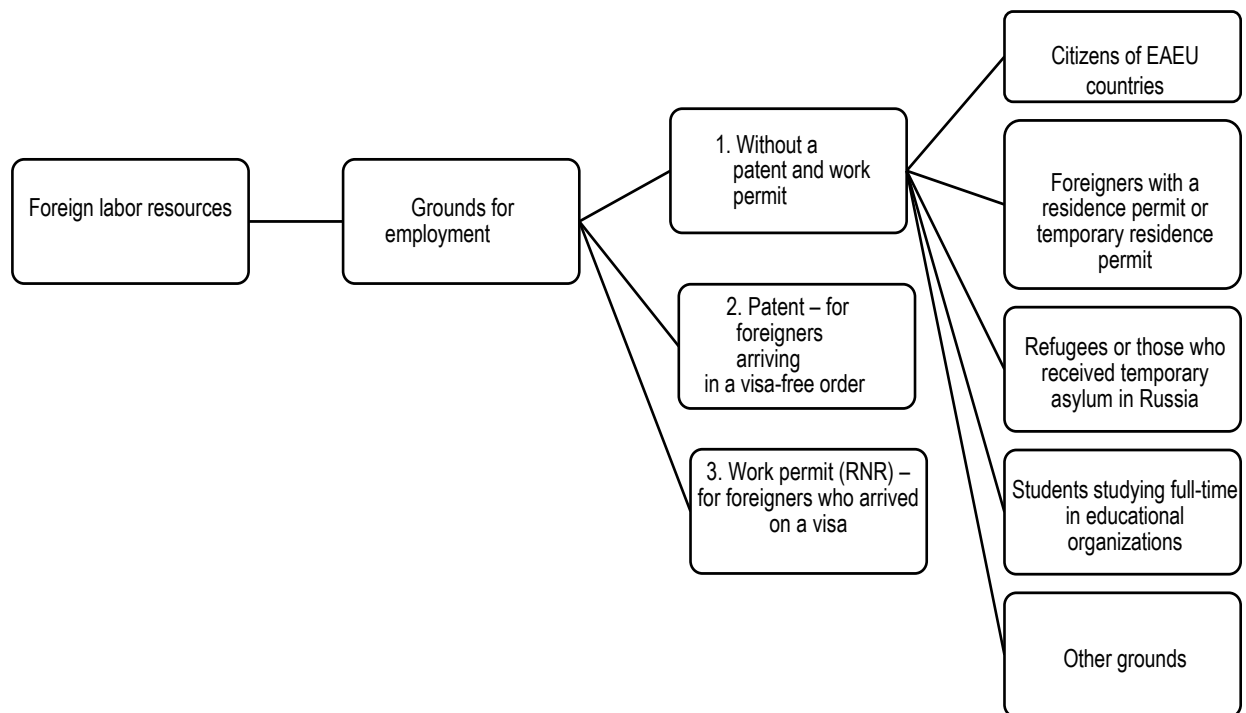


Figure 1. Grounds for legal employment of foreign citizens

Source: own compilation.

In addition to the above categories, certain groups of foreigners are exempt from special authorization procedures, including employees of diplomatic and consular missions, representatives of international organizations, accredited journalists, and other professions covered by special provisions.

A simplified procedure for obtaining the right to work in the form of a patent applies to citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Republic of Tajikistan, the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Republic of Moldova, and Ukraine, who do not need a visa to enter the Russian Federation.

For citizens of countries that require a visa to enter Russia, a quota system for attracting foreign labor is in place, under which the employer must obtain prior approval to hire an employee for an approved position. Employment outside the quota for residents of visa-required countries is possible on the basis of a list of professions, specialties, or

positions recognized as in demand. Highly qualified specialists are also employed outside the quota. If a foreign citizen receives an invitation from a Russian employer and meets the established qualification and salary requirements, he or she may work without quota restrictions.

The analysis of methodological approaches to obtaining data on the scale of legal migration in Russian regions is based on publications in leading Russian journals in the fields of Demography and Economics.

In her article, N.V. Smirnova provides quantitative estimates of migration flows based on Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) data on migration registration (Smirnova, 2023). She highlights the methodological limitations of this data source: “When analyzing the data, one notices differences in the methodology of collecting and recording statistical data used by the MVD over different periods. For example, before 2020,

the number of incoming migrants by purpose was counted only on the basis of primary registrations of foreign citizens and stateless persons at their place of stay, whereas after 2020 migration registration statistics began to be kept based on all facts of registration of foreign citizens and stateless persons at their place of stay over the period” (Smirnova, 2023). This means that, in addition to uncertainty about the actual employment of foreign workers, there is also a lack of control, allowing a single individual to be registered multiple times. Consequently, the number of foreign workers is overstated, and MVD estimates exceed 10 million people per year, while Federal Tax Service data for the same period show a figure ten times lower.

In their article, V.V. Fauzer and co-authors present the results of a study of foreign migration flows to the regions of the Russian North (Fauzer et al., 2026). The main data source for the recent period is the Rosstat statistical bulletin “Population and Migration in the Russian Federation” for 2018–2023. A description of this source shows that migration data are derived from processing statistical records of arrivals and departures submitted by territorial bodies of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation. These records are compiled at the time of registration and deregistration of the population at their place of residence, as well as when registering at a place of stay for a period of nine months or more. Accordingly, this source has limitations for assessing foreign labor in a region, related both to verifying actual employment and to the possibility of multiple registrations over the year, which overstates the number of migrants. Similar data sources are used in the work of S. Kalyugina and co-authors and E.S. Krasinets (Kalyugina et al., 2018; Krasinets, 2022; 2023).

Some studies use an approach that relies on MVD data on the patents and work permits obtained by migrants (Lifshits, 2016; Topilin, Maksimova, 2020; Kur’yan, Motrich, 2025). This approach makes it possible to determine the region where a foreign citizen is employed, since permit documents are valid within the constituent entity for which the document is issued. However, this data source does not guarantee the reliability of information about formal employment, because MVD data on patents and work permits reflect only the number of foreign citizens who have obtained the relevant documents, not actual formal employment figures. In addition, a significant group of potential workers – those arriving from EAEU countries, those holding temporary residence permits or residence permits, and foreign students – are not reflected in MVD data. Moreover, the validity period of work permit documents can be less than a year, leading to multiple counts of the same foreign worker who obtains permits several times a year. Thus, using MVD data on patents and work permits allows only a partial assessment of the scale of legal labor migration and does not reflect the full picture of formal employment of foreign citizens in the Russian Federation.

Some authors adopt a comprehensive approach to selecting information sources: data from the Federal State Statistics Service based on entries into the Russian Federation with the stated purpose “Work”; data from the Border Service of the FSB of Russia; MVD data on migration registration, patents, and work permits; indicators from sample surveys based on sociological questionnaires; values from recruitment agencies; and expert estimates (Florinskaya, 2022; Sedlov, 2024; Ryazantsev, Pismennaya, 2025; Bedrina et al., 2025).

In the article by E.L. Andreyanova, the incoming flow of foreign workers to the regions of the Siberian Federal District is assessed on the basis of data from a sample statistical survey of migrant labor. In describing the research procedure, the author notes that more than 130,000 households with residents aged 15 and older were surveyed across all constituent entities of the Russian Federation (0.24% of the total number of households). This means the information does not describe the general population, which makes it difficult to use this source as the main basis for quantitative estimates of migration flows.

In the study by V.I. Mukomel', survey data were used with a maximum number of 8,033 respondents. Given a total study population of 3.5 million employed migrants, the reliability of such data is extremely low (Mukomel', 2024). In the article by E.A. Edinak and D.M. Ksenofontov, the authors use data from the already mentioned Labor Force Survey, which is also the result of questionnaire-based research (Edinak, Ksenofontov, 2023).

Using data from the Federal State Statistics Service provides an overall picture of population movements but fails to capture the specifics of formal employment or the status of migrants. The limitations of this source for assessing legally employed foreign workers lie in the fact that information on entries for the purpose of "Work" does not reflect actual employment. Migration statistics also do not allow one to assess the distribution of foreign workers across the country's regions. This method yields only an approximate number of foreign nationals entering for employment purposes and does not reflect the real level of legal employment in Russia's regions.

To obtain an objective picture of the scale of labor migration, it is advisable to rely on Federal Tax Service data, which

reflect the actual number of foreign workers who received income on the territory of the Russian Federation. The source is the "Report on the tax base and the structure of personal income tax accruals, based on information provided by tax agents." This source makes it possible to assess the real number of legally employed foreign citizens in a given region and the amount of income they received, which in turn makes it possible to include foreign workers in the system of guaranteed social benefits. The reliability of the information is supported by a set of administrative procedures, including migration registration, employment of foreign workers, payroll accounting, tax reporting, and control. Missing or incomplete data can be compensated through appropriate requests to specialized bodies. A feature of using Federal Tax Service data is the lack of detail on categories of foreign workers by country of origin, although traditional sources also do not provide such information. This problem can be resolved by amending the tax reporting form to include details on the grounds for employment and the countries of origin of foreign workers.

Research results

Table 1 presents information on the number of foreign citizens who received income in the Russian Federation and the total amount from sources in the Russian Federation.

The largest number of legally employed foreign citizens is traditionally recorded in the regions of the Central Federal District: in 2024, 1,478,993 people worked there, which is almost half of the national total. With a noticeable lag follow the Siberian, Northwestern, and Far Eastern federal districts. In these regions, the labor of foreign workers is in demand in construction, industry, agriculture, and transport. The Southern Federal District is characterized

Table 1. Number of foreign citizens who received income and total income from sources in the Russian Federation, 2022–2024

Region	Number of foreign citizens who received income, people			Total income of foreign citizens, million rubles		
	2022	2023	2024	2022	2023	2024
Central Federal District	1228635	1293839	1478993	544398	647139	877863
Belgorod Region	6529	5822	5413	2491	2852	2393
Bryansk Region	7099	5886	5585	2093	2165	2701
Vladimir Region	12907	14129	16176	3210	4293	6481
Voronezh Region	11024	11573	12364	2297	3091	3913
Ivanovo Region	7947	9348	11226	962	1384	2028
Kaluga Region	32773	31058	31432	10755	11766	14961
Kostroma Region	5005	5467	5351	839	1527	1371
Kursk Region	6871	8546	10432	2434	2997	4185
Lipetsk Region	4692	5726	9101	1479	1946	4338
Moscow Region	329678	359209	430154	107083	137666	195510
Orel Region	2905	3040	4512	684	992	1766
Ryazan Region	15706	17198	18952	3197	4307	6151
Smolensk Region	25961	24190	25576	10377	18481	26209
Tambov Region	4246	4383	4851	742	930	1258
Tver Region	15864	16819	18047	3175	4287	5908
Tula Region	21137	22487	28264	5856	6696	10777
Yaroslavl Region	8111	9615	10981	1980	2614	3829
Moscow	710180	739343	830576	384744	439146	584084
Northwestern Federal District	362296	374689	422797	132266	156677	214883
Republic of Karelia	3325	3541	3740	965	1092	1256
Komi Republic	4265	4157	4608	1682	1865	2489
Arkhangelsk Region (including the Nenets Autonomous Area)	2684	2706	2858	1394	552	790
Vologda Region	9558	9374	12733	2381	2296	3870
Kaliningrad Region	13929	13781	15129	4890	5913	10698
Leningrad Region	67582	74185	93894	21824	29144	46005
Murmansk Region	30739	24436	25998	17534	15866	18593
Novgorod Region	3650	4159	4248	755	1147	1413
Pskov Region	5515	4159	5996	1174	1147	1924
Saint Petersburg	221049	234191	253593	79666	97655	127845
North Caucasian Federal District	12317	17011	22070	1812	2785	5352
Republic of Dagestan	2060	2912	4637	212	356	718
Republic of Ingushetia	375	530	994	30	57	159
Kabardino-Balkarian Republic	681	714	895	74	91	143
Karachayevo-Circassian Republic	1568	1675	1968	222	317	479
Republic of North Ossetia-Alania	1188	1103	1304	166	190	278
Chechen Republic	2031	3824	4224	300	587	1298
Stavropol Territory	4414	6253	8048	809	1187	2277
Southern Federal District	97588	101281	116199	27784	29489	46065
Republic of Adygea	2947	2381	1959	487	461	482
Republic of Kalmykia	742	0	4833	101	0	587
Republic of Crimea	10911	8515	9205	2646	2803	4091
Krasnodar Territory	43125	51962	57908	12033	16065	25494
Astrakhan Region	5891	6499	6669	1326	1506	1942
Volgograd Region	11983	11783	12672	4811	2439	2906
Rostov Region	17085	15817	17802	4673	4611	7614
Sevastopol	4904	4324	5151	1707	1604	2949

End of Table 1

Region	Number of foreign citizens who received income, people			Total income of foreign citizens, million rubles		
	2022	2023	2024	2022	2023	2024
Volga Federal District	139558	163976	212261	43641	55687	84507
Republic of Bashkortostan	11359	13084	15663	3343	3931	4659
Republic of Mari El	909	1139	1304	165	229	350
Republic of Mordovia	2924	3759	5571	398	640	1479
Republic of Tatarstan	33644	46804	63020	14285	17734	29670
Republic of Udmurtia	5319	5688	8674	762	960	1769
Chuvash Republic	1787	2347	2898	453	799	1310
Kirov Region	3399	4351	5267	766	1220	2104
Nizhny Novgorod Region	28520	31458	39995	10010	16013	21522
Orenburg Region	4130	4460	6819	1511	1832	2754
Penza Region	4388	4955	6271	758	1082	1698
Perm Territory	13037	12845	14978	3051	3092	4724
Samara Region	17600	19113	24685	5674	5329	8019
Saratov Region	7991	9067	11271	1810	2136	3337
Ulyanovsk Region	4551	4906	5845	654	688	1112
Ural Federal District	141376	160789	202996	46054	61478	90895
Kurgan Region	1647	2265	4147	268	363	798
Sverdlovsk Region	46356	53450	71540	10946	14663	23248
Tyumen Region (excluding the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Area – Yugra and the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Area)	19085	19820	25805	4214	5382	8908
Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Area – Yugra	31774	34301	38696	10963	14789	23022
Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Area	26221	30476	37424	15528	19768	26600
Chelyabinsk Region	16293	20477	25384	4134	6514	8320
Siberian Federal District	151216	163178	174809	48059	58430	82918
Altai Republic	2409	2623	1825	873	889	635
Republic of Tuva	893	947	984	848	753	842
Republic of Khakassia	1109	1350	1665	253	328	471
Altai Territory	5363	6377	6812	852	1550	2182
Krasnoyarsk Territory	28340	29220	35852	7536	9832	15019
Irkutsk Region	42953	48623	48411	17819	23970	30131
Kemerovo Region – Kuzbass	9028	12556	16399	4200	3344	10201
Novosibirsk Region	31788	36290	42507	8305	11272	16668
Omsk Region	17194	14007	11014	5236	3966	3679
Tomsk Region	12139	11185	9340	2138	2526	3089
Far Eastern Federal District	191729	202476	240368	83186	104648	159117
Republic of Buryatia	9784	10358	9866	3795	4564	5939
Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)	15049	17242	20353	6152	8272	12822
Primorye Territory	25375	28600	36558	11986	14164	19030
Khabarovsk Territory	21029	26039	32247	5925	9249	16523
Amur Region	56273	51329	68030	24248	26312	47918
Kamchatka Territory	10918	11816	13234	4828	5636	6312
Magadan Region	10421	10696	11032	6199	7512	9360
Sakhalin Region	21503	19834	18975	7070	10573	11757
Trans-Baikal Territory	16676	21947	24091	9651	14938	23737
Jewish Autonomous Region	1605	1971	2830	467	634	1277
Chukotka Autonomous Area	3096	2644	3152	2865	2795	4442

Source: Own compilation based on the report on the tax base and the structure of personal income tax accruals withheld by tax agents, broken down by region of the Russian Federation. Available at: <https://www.nalog.gov.ru/> Section "Statistics and Analytics" / "Data on statistical tax reporting forms" / "Report on Form No. 5-NDFL"

by moderate growth in the number of legally employed foreign workers, which amounted to 19.1% over three years, and a significantly higher increase in total income – 65.7%. Similar trends are observed in the regions of the Volga and Ural federal districts. The smallest number of labor migrants from abroad over the period under review remained in the North Caucasian Federal District – 22,070 people in 2024, due to the lower attractiveness of employment there because of relatively low wages.

The estimates reveal a heterogeneous composition of foreign citizens engaged in legal labor activity in Russia's regions. The most common way of obtaining the right to work among migrants is a patent. In the

Russian Federation as a whole, the share of employed foreigners with this permit is 72.8% of the total, reflecting the general dynamics of labor migration from countries with visa-free entry – Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The distribution structure differs across federal districts, reflecting the specific features of regional labor markets and migration policy. Nationwide, there is a stable share of legally working labor migrants who obtained the right to work on an equal basis with Russian citizens under special statuses: a) citizens of the EAEU; b) foreign citizens holding a temporary residence permit or a residence permit; c) refugees and temporary migrants accounting for 20% of the total number.

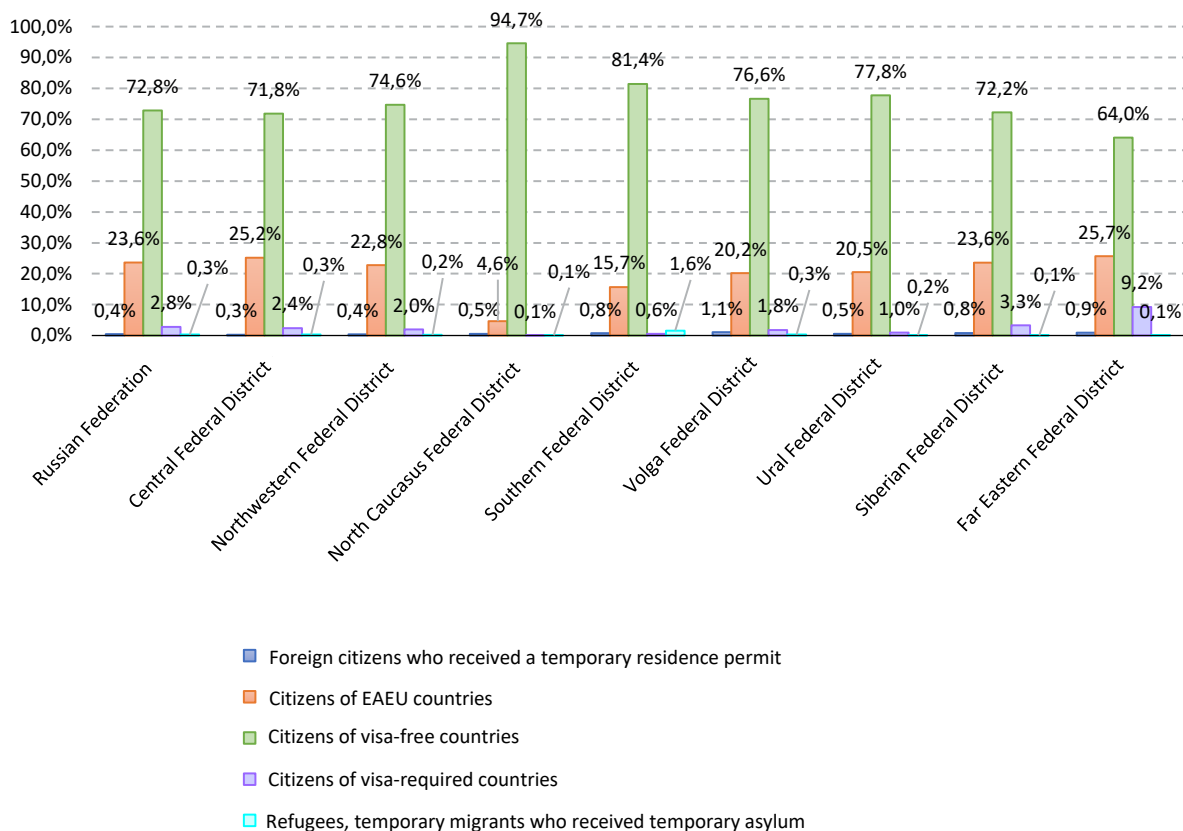


Figure 2. Structure of foreign citizens by grounds for employment in the federal districts of the Russian Federation, 2024, %**

Source: own compilation based on the statistical report:
Number of Foreign Labor Force (Work Permits).

The Central Federal District is dominated by foreign citizens employed on the basis of a patent, which is associated with a high concentration of jobs requiring unskilled labor and with the simplified procedure for obtaining one. The Northwestern Federal District shows a similar picture, but the share of labor migrants holding work permits is somewhat higher. This is due to the presence of large industrial enterprises and construction sites. In the Far Eastern Federal District, a significant share of labor migrants work on the basis of a work permit, which stems from the specifics of the migration inflow from the People's Republic of China.

Over the period analyzed, the number of legally employed foreign citizens increased substantially. Nationwide, the increase was 23.47%, reflecting both the overall growth in the participation of foreign labor in the Russian economy and the process of legalization of foreign workers. At the same

time, total income increased by 68.9%, which is significantly higher than the growth in the number of legal foreign workers and indicates an increase in the average income per foreign citizen. Based on surveys of labor migrants, V.I. Mukomel' concludes that a trend toward the restructuring of relations between foreign workers and employers has emerged (Mukomel', 2024). Employers have come to recognize their dependence on migrant labor, and migrants have realized that they have a certain freedom to choose where to work. Gone are the employer–foreign worker relationships that were common in the 1990s and early 2000s, namely non-payment of wages, confiscation of documents, and other forms of forced labor. This was facilitated by legal reforms and the activities of civil society institutions, which helped change the relationship between employers and migrants. The participation of foreign workers in total employment across Russia's regions is also mixed (*Fig. 3*).

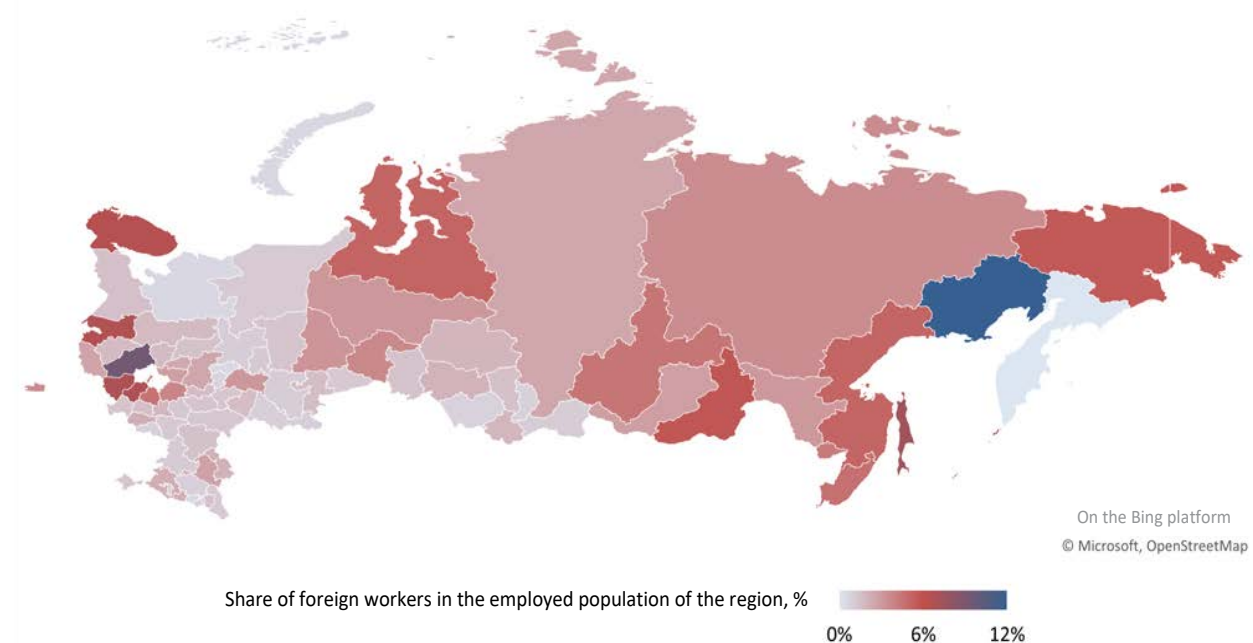


Figure 3. Share of foreign workers in the employed population of the region, 2024, %

Source: own compilation based on the report on the tax base and the structure of personal income tax accruals withheld by tax agents, broken down by region of the Russian Federation. Available at: <https://www.nalog.gov.ru/> Section "Statistics and Analytics" / "Data on statistical tax reporting forms" / "Report on Form No. 5-NDFL".

In 2024, the share of foreign workers in the employed population of the region varied significantly across the country's economic centers, such as Moscow, Saint Petersburg, the Krasnodar Territory, and the autonomous okrugs of the Ural Federal District, where the share of foreign workers exceeded the average regional level of 3%. This is due to the high concentration of enterprises in need of labor resources and to attractive living conditions for migrants. In regions with a predominance of low-skilled labor, limited opportunities for labor migration, and less developed economic structures (for example, in the Ivanovo, Tambov, and Kostroma regions, as well as in several republics of the North Caucasus and Siberia), the share of foreign workers in the employed population remains minimal. This stems both from low demand for foreign labor and from restrictions on migrants' access to the labor market. Next, we examine the ratio of foreign workers' income to the average regional wage of Russian citizens in 2024 (Fig. 4).

The ratio of foreign workers' income to the average regional wage of Russian citizens shows considerable variation across regions. In a number of regions, such as Moscow, the Smolensk Region, the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Area, and the Chukotka Autonomous Area, the income of foreign citizens approaches the average wage of local residents and in some cases even exceeds it. The highest income per foreign worker is recorded in the Smolensk Region – 1,025 thousand rubles per year, Moscow – 703 thousand rubles per year, and the Bryansk Region – 484 thousand rubles per year, which is linked both to the general level of wages in these regions and to the concentration of highly paid jobs. The lowest figures are typical of the Ivanovo Region (181 thousand rubles per year), the Tambov Region (259 thousand rubles per year), and the Kostroma Region (256 thousand rubles per year), where unskilled labor predominates and, accordingly, pay levels are much lower. This trend is associated with the high demand for labor migrants in sectors of the economy with higher salaries.

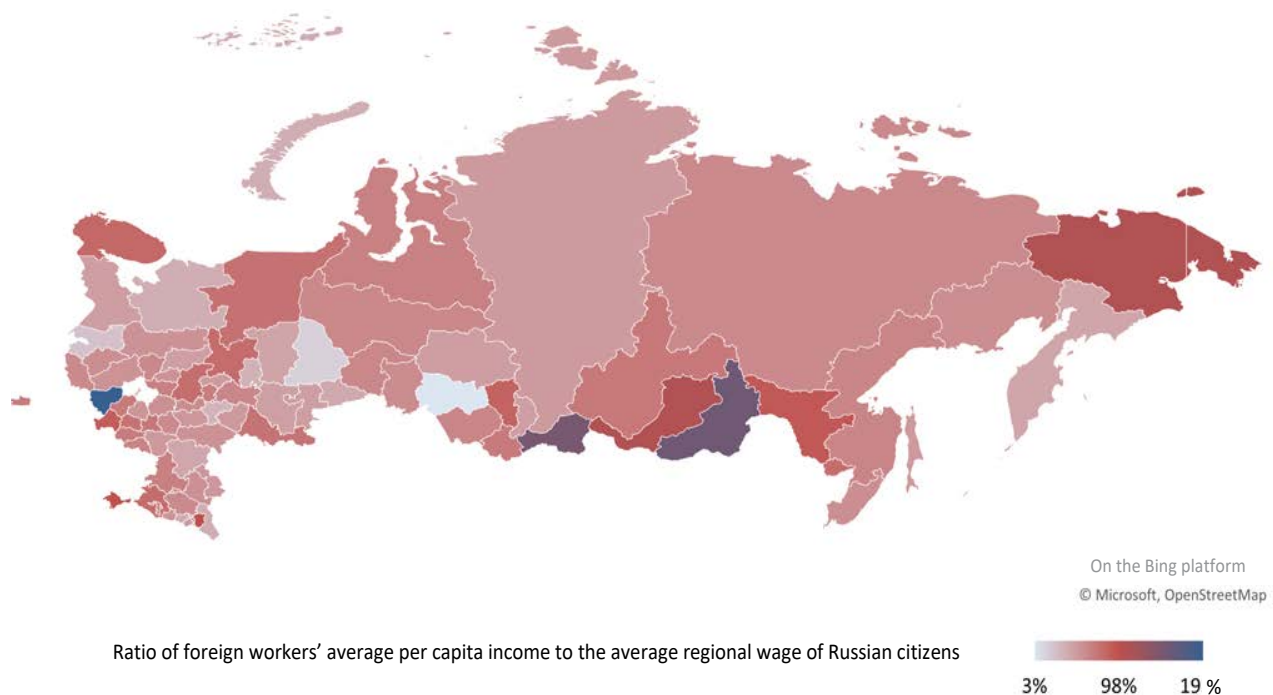


Figure 4. Ratio of foreign workers' income to the average regional wage of Russian citizens, 2024, %

Source: own compilation based on the report on the tax base and the structure of personal income tax accruals withheld by tax agents, broken down by region of the Russian Federation. Available at: <https://www.nalog.gov.ru/> Section "Statistics and Analytics" / "Data on statistical tax reporting forms" / "Report on Form No. 5-NDFL".

At the same time, in regions where low-skilled labor predominates and migration opportunities are limited (for example, in the Ivanovo, Tambov, and Kostroma regions, as well as in the Republic of Kalmykia and the Kurgan Region), the income of foreign workers is significantly lower than the average regional wage of Russian citizens. Overall, the analysis shows that the growth rate of labor migrants' income outpaces their numbers. This indicates an increase in average income per migrant and a gradual convergence with the wage level of Russian citizens in a number of regions. Considering the average annual income of foreign workers by region in 2024, the highest values were recorded in the Chukotka Autonomous Area – 1,410 thousand rubles, and the Trans-Baikal Territory – 985 thousand rubles. The implementation of the strategic goal of the demographic policy of the Far Eastern regions involves (in addition to preserving the indigenous population) actively encouraging foreign citizens to move to the Far East (Shmidt, Ivashina, 2021). To this end, within the framework of the program for the development of Priority Development Areas in the Far East, resident companies are granted, along with traditional benefits, a simplified procedure for attracting qualified foreign personnel outside the quotas established in the region (Borshchevskii, 2025).

Conclusion

Summing up and opening a scholarly discussion on the results of estimating the number of legally employed foreign workers in Russia's regions, it is necessary to outline the main findings and conclusions.

The data obtained show that the largest number of labor migrants is concentrated in the economic centers of federal districts. The leading regions in terms of the number of foreign workers and their incomes include Moscow and the Moscow Region in the Central Federal

District; Saint Petersburg and the Leningrad Region in the Northwestern Federal District; the Stavropol Territory and the Chechen Republic in the North Caucasian Federal District; the Krasnodar Territory and the Rostov Region in the Southern Federal District; the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Area, the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Area – Yugra, and the Sverdlovsk Region in the Ural Federal District; the Irkutsk Region, the Kemerovo Region – Kuzbass, and the Krasnoyarsk Territory in the Siberian Federal District; and the Amur Region, the Primorye Territory, and the Khabarovsk Territory in the Far Eastern Federal District. A high concentration of migrants is characteristic of regions with developed industry and infrastructure, reflecting the specific features of economic activity and labor demand in these territories.

An assessment of the comparability of our findings with figures presented in a number of studies reveals substantial differences in quantitative estimates depending on the source of information. For example, E.S. Krasinets notes that, according to data from the Border Service of the FSB of the Russian Federation, in 2023 compared with 2020, the number of foreign citizens entering Russia for the purpose of "Work" increased from 1.1 to 4.5 million people (Krasinets, 2025). According to Federal Tax Service data, the number of employed foreigners was 1,668 thousand in 2020 and 2,356 thousand in 2023, which is several times lower than the number of foreign citizens entering Russia for "Work", while the growth over the period 2020–2023 was 141%. This example clearly explains the differences between potential and actual foreign labor resources and makes it possible to set tasks for the relevant agencies to legalize the labor of foreign workers.

In her article, A.A. Sokolova provides a detailed regional analysis of the employment of foreign workers from visa-required countries in order to determine the role of quotas for

foreign labor resources (Sokolova, 2026). The information base consists of Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) data on issued work permits. A comparison of the findings reveals predictable discrepancies caused by the use of different sources of information and different objects of analysis. In our study, the object is the entire set of legally employed foreign workers, whereas in the cited article it is citizens of visa-required countries who have received work permits. At the same time, the groups of regions identified by the intensity of migrant labor use partially coincide: according to Federal Tax Service data, the Republic of Bashkortostan does not fall into the group with the lowest intensity, whereas the republics of the North Caucasus do. The groups with the highest intensity include the same regions as in the FTS data: Moscow, the Moscow Region, Saint Petersburg, the Republic of Tatarstan, and the Sverdlovsk Region.

The findings also differ somewhat from the picture formed in a number of studies concerning the territorial distribution of foreign workers across the country. While the regions of the Central and Northwestern federal districts are the unequivocal leaders in attracting foreign labor – both in the quantitative estimates of work permit issuance

presented in Yu.F. Florinskaya's article and in the values obtained in this study – the distribution of foreign workers is less clear-cut (Florinskaya, 2024). In the aforementioned study, the third-largest number of foreign workers is found in the Volga Federal District. Yet tax reporting data show that, over the period 2022–2024, the Far Eastern Federal District occupied this position. Together with information on the regional distribution of all foreigners registered for migration purposes, the discrepancy with the estimates obtained in this study becomes even more pronounced (Mkrtchyan, Florinskaya, 2018).

Thus, the study proposes and tests an approach to quantifying legal labor migration at the regional level based on tax reporting data. This approach yields more accurate indicators than traditional methods that rely on migration registration statistics. The analysis of a large body of data for 2022–2024 has revealed new trends in the territorial distribution of foreign workers across Russia's regions and has identified significant discrepancies between different sources of migration statistics. The findings extend scholarly understanding of how the foreign labor market operates in Russia and provide a basis for more effective regional demographic and social policy.

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ОЦЕНКА ЛЕГАЛЬНОЙ ТРУДОВОЙ МИГРАЦИИ В РЕГИОНАХ РОССИИ

Актуальность исследования обусловлена увеличением роли внешней трудовой миграции в кадровом обеспечении экономики Российской Федерации в период 2022–2024 гг. Научная проблема заключается в определении подходов к выявлению особенностей территориального распределения легальных трудовых мигрантов и соответствующей корректировке существующих представлений о миграционных потоках на основе официальных данных о занятости иностранных работников в регионах РФ. Цель исследования состоит в выявлении потока международной трудовой миграции, осуществляемой в рамках легальных трудовых отношений и проведение на его основе количественных оценок занятости иностранных работников в регионах Российской Федерации. В качестве источника информации использованы данные официальной налоговой отчетности, которые в отличие от показателей миграционного учета, позволяют получить комплексное представление о результатах трудовой деятельности, осуществленной на легальных основаниях в регионах Российской Федерации. Основные сведения показывают, что наибольшая концентрация иностранных работников приходится на экономические центры федеральных округов, при этом наблюдается существенный прирост значений занятости иностранных работников в регионах Дальневосточного федерального округа, как по численности, так и по совокупным доходам мигрантов. Полученные данные позволяют расширить научные представления о распределении иностранных трудовых ресурсов в России и учитывать миграционные потоки при формировании демографической и социальной политики регионов.

Трудовая миграция, иностранные работники, Россия, регионы, демографическая политика, доходы мигрантов, территориальное распределение.

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