# Ukrainian Catastrophe: Ukrainians and the Ukrainian Language in Russia in the Mirror of 1989–2021 Russian Censuses\*

This article consists of two parts.

The first part provides data on Ukrainians recorded by the Russian population census of 2021 compared to previous censuses (2010, 2002, sometimes 1989). This part can be difficult for the reader to perceive due to the large volume of data, so reading it requires special concentration.

The second part contains both analytical materials and materials from other sources of information. It is easier to perceive because textual information prevails.

## Note:

\*/\*\* One asterisk (\*) means that the data are given without taking into account the territory of the annexed Crimean Peninsula in order to comply with the territorial principle of comparing the results of the 2021 census with the results of past censuses, i.e. within internationally recognized borders of Russia; two asterisks (\*\*) mean that the data also include results for the annexed Crimean Peninsula due to the impossibility of excluding them from the general data set (for example, when there are no regional data for an indicator, and data for Crimea is impossible to exclude).

I.

## Ukrainians in the population structure of Russia

According to the 2021 Russian Census [9], 0.6% of its participants identified as ethnic Ukrainians (884,007 people, among them 712,847 within the internationally recognized borders of Russia). Ukrainians are found to be the eighth largest ethnic group after Russians (71.7%), Tatars (3.2%), Chechens, Bashkirs, Chuvashs, Avars and Armenians. Meanwhile, according to 2010 Census results [8] and earlier [7, 19], Ukrainians were the third largest ethnic group in Russia. The Ukrainian population dynamics in Russia can be characterized as catastrophic, although there is an opinion that such a reduction is a natural process due to the USSR collapse and several other factors. Below are some indicators of the Ukrainian diaspora in Russia in dynamics (Table 1).

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<sup>\*</sup> This article in Ukrainian; in Russian.

Table 1 Ukrainians of Russia by sex and settlement type (2002–2021)

| Census   | 2002              |           | 2010              |           | 2021*           |          |
|----------|-------------------|-----------|-------------------|-----------|-----------------|----------|
| Total    | 2,942,961 (2.03%) |           | 1,927,988 (1.35%) |           | 712,847 (0.60%) |          |
| Sex      | males             | females   | males             | females   | males           | females  |
| - by sex | 1,410,164         | 1,532,797 | 887,737           | 1,040,251 | 323,440         | 389,407  |
|          | (47.92%)          | (52.02%)  | (46.05%)          | (53.95%)  | (45.37%)        | (54.63%) |
| Urban    | 2,251,198 (76.5%) |           | 1,475,951 (76.6%) |           | 551,033 (77.3%) |          |
| - by sex | 1,088,279         | 1,162,919 | 682,850           | 793,101   | 250,128         | 300,505  |
| Rural    | 691,763           | (23.5%)   | 452,037           | (23.4%)   | 161,814         | (22.7%)  |
| - by sex | 321,885           | 369,878   | 204,887           | 247,150   | 72,732          | 88,901   |

During the 2002–2021 period, the number of Ukrainians in Russia fell by 75.78%, or by 3/4, and during the 1989–2021 period by 83.66% [33]. The Ukrainian diaspora in Russia is characterized by a high urbanization level.

Table 2 Number, share and sex composition of the Ukrainian population of Russia, 1926–2021 censuses

| Census | Total     | Share, % | Females   | Share, % | Males     | Share, % |
|--------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|
| 1926   | 6,870,976 | 7.41     | 3,530,483 | 51.38    | 3,340,493 | 48.62    |
| 1939   | 3,205,061 | 3.07     | 1,441,578 | 44.98    | 1,763,483 | 55.02    |
| 1959   | 3,359,083 | 2.86     | 1,645,875 | 48.98    | 1,713,208 | 51.02    |
| 1970   | 3,345,885 | 2.57     | 1,577,780 | 47.16    | 1,768,105 | 52.84    |
| 1979   | 3,657,647 | 2.66     | 1,770,032 | 48.39    | 1,887,615 | 51.61    |
| 1989   | 4,362,872 | 2.97     | 2,438,554 | 55.89    | 2,194,318 | 44.11    |
| 2002   | 2,942,961 | 2.03     | 1,532,797 | 52.08    | 1,410,164 | 47.92    |
| 2010   | 1,927,988 | 1.35     | 1,040,251 | 53.95    | 887,737   | 46.05    |
| 2021*  | 712,847   | 0.60     | 389,407   | 54.63    | 323,440   | 45.37    |

It should be noted that the 2021 census became the first census in Russian history where it was possible to declare not just one ethnic identity, but several (like, for example, in Canada), which may be relevant for descendants from ethnically mixed families. However, only 10,877 Ukrainians indicated other ethnic identity together with their Ukrainian identity. The low percentage of respondents indicating other ethnic identity together with their primary one shows that the population was not aware of this possibility. But there may be other reasons. For example, for a person with Ukrainian (or some other) roots, but identified as Russian or someone other, without indicating their second (Ukrainian or other) identity may also be a sign of a fear of stigmatization, an unwillingness

to be considered as a representative of ethnic minorities despite the presence of such self-identification (this may be especially true among the descendants of mixed families like Russian-Ukrainian and Russian-Belarusian – it is clearly seen from the statistics of ethnically mixed couples presented below). [4]

As for the difference in the number of those who identified as Ukrainians and born in Ukraine, the dynamics of the last 30 years is as follows:

- in 2021\*, 1,484,831 natives of Ukraine lived in Russia (1.03% of the Russian population, or 771,984 more than those who identified as ethnic Ukrainian),
- in 2010, 2,942,018 natives of Ukraine lived in Russia (2.06% of the Russian population, or 1,014,030 more than those who identified as ethnic Ukrainian),
  - in 2002 3,559,975 (2.45%, or 617 014 more than those who identified as ethnic Ukrainian),
  - in 1989 4,595,811 (3.13%, or 232 939 more than those who identified as ethnic Ukrainian).

There is both an accelerating rate of assimilation (the number of Ukrainians is declining much faster than the number of those who were born in Ukraine) and an increase of the proportion of ethnic Russians who were born in Ukraine and have moved to Russia from Ukraine. However, a slight slowdown in the decline of those who were born in Ukraine compared to the decline of those who identify as Ukrainian is apparently associated with an insignificantly increased influx of forced migrants from Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts of Ukraine in 2014–2021 (they were listed as natives of Ukraine in the 2021 census data) (see Fig. 1).

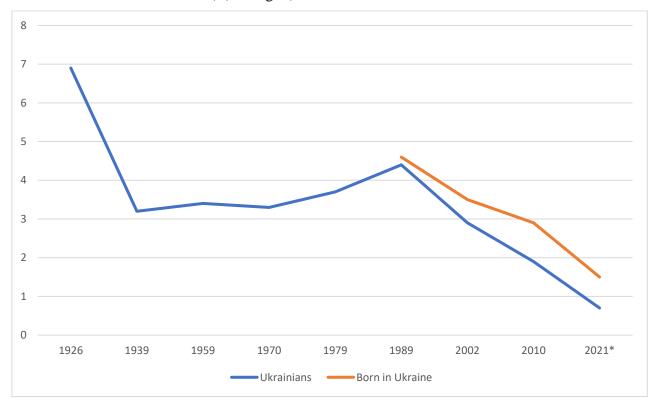


Figure 1. Dynamics of the Ukrainian population in Russia (1926–2021) and natives of Ukraine in Russia (1989–2021), mln.

Ukrainians have been living in Russia for centuries. Their number and share in the territory of contemporary Russia differs significantly from region to region. Ukrainians live compactly in the areas bordering Ukraine, as well as in the so-called *gores* or *wedges* (*klyn*). Ukrainians in the course of time (before the Revolution of 1917) formed their settlement colonies which later became the places of their traditional settlement. However, it should be noted that only a few traces remain today, they have almost disappeared during the course of time. In the Far East, groups of Ukrainian settlements are called "Green Ukraine" (Amur Oblast², Primorski and Khabarovsk krais), in Siberia – "Grey Ukraine" (Omsk, Tiumen, Tomsk, Novosibirsk oblasts, Altai Krai, northern regions of Kazakhstan), in the Volga region – "Yellow Ukraine" (Orenburg, Saratov, Volgograd, Ulianovsk, Penza oblasts, Bashkortostan, western regions of Kazakhstan), in the Kuban region – "Raspberry Ukraine" (Krasnodar and Stavropol krais, Rostov Oblast, Adygea, Karachay-Cherkessia, Kabardino-Balkaria). Nowadays there is even faster assimilation of Ukrainians and the loss of the Ukrainian language observed.

Below is the dynamic of the number of Ukrainians in top 10 Russian regions. The 2021 census data are compared to previous censuses (Tables 3, 4).

Table 3 Regions of Russia with the largest Ukrainian population in 2021 compared to 1989–2010, thsd.

| Regions                        | 2021* | 2010 | 2002 | 1989 |
|--------------------------------|-------|------|------|------|
| Moscow                         | 59    | 154  | 254  | 253  |
| Moscow Oblast                  | 54    | 119  | 148  | 185  |
| Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug  | 42    | 91   | 123  | 148  |
| St. Petersburg                 | 29    | 64   | 87   | 151  |
| Krasnodar Krai                 | 29    | 83   | 132  | 182  |
| Rostov Oblast                  | 26    | 77   | 118  | 179  |
| Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug | 18    | 49   | 66   | 85   |
| Omsk Oblast                    | 18    | 51   | 78   | 105  |
| Cheliabinsk Oblast             | 17    | 50   | 77   | 110  |
| Orenburg Oblast                | 17    | 50   | 77   | 102  |

The presented data show that the number of Ukrainians is steadily decreasing by about 1.5-3 times from census to census. The fewest number of Ukrainians in Russia live in Ingushetia -34 people, Tyva -107 people, and Chechnia -154 people.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> There are six types of regions (federal subjects) in Russia: a republic (a nation state for indigenous peoples, but in some of them ethnic Russians prevail), an oblast, a krai (both types are similar to provinces where ethnic Russians prevail), an autonomous okrug (a territory for indigenous peoples, but ethnic Russians prevail in all of them), an autonomous oblast (only one – Jewish, but ethnic Russians prevail there), a federal city (two – Moscow and St. Petersburg).

A similar picture is observed in the regions with the largest share of Ukrainians in a region's ethnic structure. Here are the top 10 regions in 2021 compared to the data for 1989–2010 (Table 4).

Table 4 Regions of Russia with the largest share of Ukrainians in 2021 compared to 1989–2010, %

| Regions                        | 2021* | 2010 | 2002  | 1989  |
|--------------------------------|-------|------|-------|-------|
| Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug | 3.57  | 9.37 | 13.03 | 17.18 |
| Chukotka Autonomous Okrug      | 3.21  | 5.68 | 9.22  | 16.84 |
| Magadan Oblast                 | 2.48  | 6.28 | 9.89  | 14.85 |
| Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug  | 2.43  | 5.96 | 8.60  | 11.57 |
| Murmansk Oblast                | 2.00  | 4.31 | 6.37  | 9.02  |
| Komi                           | 1.50  | 4.00 | 6.10  | 8.33  |
| Kamchatka Krai                 | 1.33  | 3.57 | 5.82  | 9.11  |
| Kaliningrad Oblast             | 1.22  | 3.48 | 4.94  | 7.20  |
| Nenets Autonomous Okrug        | 1.19  | 2.34 | 3.16  | 6.91  |
| Karelia                        | 1.05  | 1.97 | 2.69  | 3.57  |

The smallest share of Ukrainians in the ethnic structure is observed in Ingushetia -0.01%, Chechnia -0.01%, and Tyva -0.03%.

At the time of publication, data on the ethnic composition of regions' municipalities had not yet been published, that is why we address 2010 and 1989 censuses data. The largest share of Ukrainians in the ethnic structure of municipalities (>20%) in 2010 was in Olkhovatskii district of Voronezh Oblast (32%), Pavlogradskii (24.7%) and Odesskii (21.4%) districts of Omsk Oblast. But in 1989, the share of Ukrainians (>25%) in regions' districts was as follows: Olkhovatskii (75.9%), Rossoshanskii (65.1%), Podgorenskii (53.3%) districts, Rossoshanskii City Council (34.3%) of Voronezh Oblast, Rovnenskii district of Belgorod Oblast (74.6%), Pavlogradskii (42.4%), Poltavskii (31.2%) and Odesskii (29.3%) districts of Omsk Oblast, Rodinskii (29.6%) and Burlinskii (25.1%) districts of Altai Kai, Samoilovskii district of Saratov Oblast (27.6%), Shmidtovskii district of Chukotka Autonomous Okrug (25.5%). [17] To date, the share of Ukrainians has fallen below 20% in most of these municipalities.

### Ukrainian language proficiency in Russia

The dynamics of the Ukrainian language proficiency in Russia by ethnic groups according to 2021, 2010 and 2002 censuses data, incl. as native, is presented in the table below (Table 5).

Table 5 Ukrainian language proficiency in Russia according to 2021, 2010, and 2002 population censuses

| Indicators                         | 2021**   | 2010      | 2002      |
|------------------------------------|----------|-----------|-----------|
| Proficient in Ukrainian, total     | 427,086~ | 1,129,838 | 1,815,210 |
| % of the population of Russia      | 0.30%    | 0.79%     | 1.25%     |
| incl. Ukrainian as a mother tongue | 294,952  | 499,466   | no data   |
| - among them Ukrainians            | 277,014  | 669,246   | 1,267,207 |
| % of all proficient                | 44.17%   | 59.23%    | 69.8%     |
| % of Ukrainians of Russia          | 31.34%   | 34.71%    | 43.1%     |
| incl. Ukrainian as a mother tongue | 254,528  | 466,548   | no data   |
| - among them Russians              | 307,122  | 412,668   | 483,715   |
| % of all proficient                | 48.97%   | 36.5%     | 26.5%     |
| incl. Ukrainian as a mother tongue | 27,338   | 23,714    | no data   |
| - among them Belarusians           | 3,031    | 7,540     | 14,412    |
| incl. Ukrainian as a mother tongue | 137      | 309       | no data   |
| - among them Jews                  | 1,539    | 5,225     | no data   |
| incl. Ukrainian as a mother tongue | 193      | 283       | 110 data  |
| - among them Moldovans             | 1,089    | 3,556     | no data   |
| incl. Ukrainian as a mother tongue | 119      | 334       | no data   |
| - among them Tatars                | 1,953    | 3,446     | 4,809     |
| incl. Ukrainian as a mother tongue | 101      | 120       | no data   |
| - among them Armenians             | 1,020    | 1,773     | 2,365     |
| incl. Ukrainian as a mother tongue | 27       | 71        | no data   |
| - among them Greeks                | 671      | 1,125     | no data   |
| incl. Ukrainian as a mother tongue | 51       | 74        | 110 data  |
| - among them Germans               | 502      | 956       | 2,066     |
| incl. Ukrainian as a mother tongue | 51       | 85        | no data   |
| - among them Chuvashs              | 353      | 730       | 1,148     |
| incl. Ukrainian as a mother tongue | 11       | 45        | no data   |

Over the 10 years of the intercensal period (2010–2021), the number of those who speak Ukrainian has decreased by almost 3 times, while in 2002–2010 by a third. The data presented in the table also testify to the high rate of assimilation of Ukrainians. This is clearly seen in the difference between Ukrainians and Russians who speak Ukrainian. If before the 2010 census the number of

<sup>~ 427,086</sup> without Crimea (627,106 with Crimea). 2021 column data include Crimea.

Ukrainians who spoke Ukrainian prevailed over other ethnic groups, then the 2021 census showed that there were suddenly more Russians who could speak Ukrainian than Ukrainians themselves, which is the clearest confirmation of the identity shift (Fig. 2).

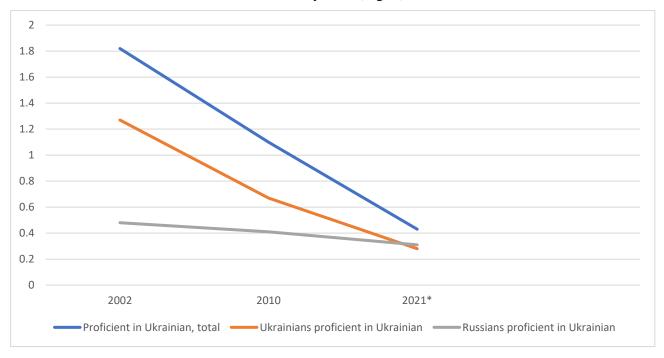


Figure. 2. Dynamics of changes in the number of those who are proficient Ukrainian in Russia in 2002–2021, mln.

The above graph clearly demonstrates the rapid decline in the number of people who can speak Ukrainian in Russia for more than 4 times over 20 years.

Negative dynamics are also observed in the context of regions. The top 5 regions by the number and share of those who are proficient in Ukrainian without reference to ethnic groups is as follows (Table 6).

Table 6
Largest number and share of those who are proficient in Ukrainian in regions of Russia

| Largest number of those who are proficient in |        |                      | Largest share of those who are proficient in Ukrainian in |       |      |  |
|---|--------|----------------------|---|-------|------|--|
| Ukrainian in regions of Russia                |        | regions of Russia, % |   |       |      |  |
| Regions                                       | 2021*  | 2010                 | Regions   | 2021* | 2010 |  |
| Moscow  | 41,955 | 106,033              | Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug                            | 1.83  | 5.72 |  |
| Moscow Oblast                                 | 33,905 | 82,386               | Chukotka Autonomous Okrug                                 | 1.80  | 4.56 |  |
| St. Petersburg                                | 21,844 | 49,667               | Magadan Oblast  | 1.38  | 4.23 |  |
| Rostov Oblast                                 | 19,081 | 44,806               | Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug                             | 1.11  | 3.70 |  |
| Krasnodar Krai                                | 19,051 | 46,901               | Komi  | 0.91  | 2.59 |  |

The smallest number of those who are proficient in Ukrainian in Russia is observed in Ingushetia -25 people, Tyva -91 people, and Chechnia -188 people. The smallest share is observed in the same regions and fluctuates in the range of 0.00-0.03%.

The dynamics of the share of those who are proficient in Ukrainian among the Ukrainian population of regions also differs significantly. Here is the data for the regions where the largest/least number of Ukrainians were proficient in Ukrainian according to the 2010 census. The largest share of those who were proficient in Ukrainian among Ukrainians was observed in: Dagestan – 59.10% of Ukrainians were proficient in Ukrainian, Vladimir Oblast – 57.15%, Murmansk Oblast – 49.47%, Vologda Oblast – 49.04%. On average, 35–40% of Ukrainians were proficient in Ukrainian in Russia. The smallest share of them was observed in the traditional regions of Ukrainian settlement (in regions in which the Ukrainian population array was formed in the late 19th – early 20th centuries or earlier – the so-called *wedges*): Omsk Oblast – 14.42%, Orenburg Oblast – 15.86%, Voronezh Oblast – 17.47%, Altai Krai – 17.54%, etc. The highest share of Russians who were proficient in Ukrainian was observed in Chukotka Autonomous Okrug – 3.29% of Russians were proficient in Ukrainian, Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug – 2.43%, Magadan Oblast – 1.97%.

## Ukrainian language usage in everyday life

The 2021 census collected data on language usage for the first time in Russian history (however, without reference to any ethnic group). There were 147,501 of those who indicated that they had used Ukrainian in everyday life in 2021\* (with the occupied Crimean Peninsula – 208,854 people). This is 34.54% of those who could speak Ukrainian, or 0.10% of the total population of Russia.

Table 7
Regions of Russia by the largest number of people who use Ukrainian in everyday life, and by the largest share of those who use Ukrainian in everyday life among Ukrainian speakers in 2021\*

| The largest number of people using U | Ukrainian in | The largest share of those who use Ukrainian among Ukrainian speakers in the regions of Russia, % |       |  |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|---|-------|--|
| Regions of Russia                    | N            | Regions of Russia   | %     |  |
| Moscow                               | 14,960       | Karachay-Cherkessia   | 76.39 |  |
| Moscow Oblast                        | 10,576       | Bashkortostan   | 60.27 |  |
| Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug        | 9,669        | Nizhnii Novgorod Oblast   | 57.55 |  |
| St. Petersburg                       | 6,529        | Dagestan  | 56.45 |  |
| Krasnodar Krai                       | 6,277        | Kabardino-Balkaria  | 55.37 |  |

The number of those who use Ukrainian in everyday life is partly proportional to the number of Ukrainian speakers, i.e., about 3–4 times less. However, there are regions which stand out from these statistics, like those where more than half of Ukrainian speakers use it in everyday life. For example, in Karachay-Cherkessia, 699 people can speak Ukrainian, and more than 3/4 use it in

everyday life – 534 people; in Bashkortostan, 7,543 people can speak Ukrainian, and more than 60% use it in everyday life – 4,546 people. The smallest share of those who use Ukrainian in everyday life compared to the number of Ukrainian speakers is in Oriol Oblast – only 18.92% of those who speak Ukrainian use it in everyday life, in Kursk Oblast – 22.12%, in Smolensk Oblast – 22.92%. If we consider this indicator in quantitative terms, then the smallest number of people who use Ukrainian in everyday life lives in Ingushetia – 9 people, Tyva – 48 people, and Jewish Autonomous Oblast – 92 people.

## Ukrainian as a mother tongue

The data on Ukrainian as a mother tongue regardless of ethnicity, as well as what languages Ukrainians of Russia consider mother for themselves, is as follows (Table 8).

Table 8 Mother tongues for Ukrainians and Ukrainian as a mother tongue among other ethnic groups

| Top 5 mother tongues for Ukrainians of Russia |         |           | Top 5 ethnic groups by the number of those |         |         |  |
|---|---------|-----------|--|---------|---------|--|
| Top 5 mother tongues for Oktamans of Russia   |         |           | who consider Ukrainian a mother tongue     |         |         |  |
| Mother tongues                                | 2021**  | 2010      | Ethnic groups                              | 2021**  | 2010    |  |
| Russian                                       | 614,370 | 1,455,577 | Total                                      | 294,952 | 499,466 |  |
| - % of Ukrainians of Russia                   | 70.6%   | 75.5%     | - % of population of Russia                | 0.20%   | 0.35%   |  |
| Ukrainian                                     | 254,528 | 466,548   | Ukrainians                                 | 254,528 | 466,548 |  |
| - % of Ukrainians of Russia                   | 29.3%   | 24.2%     | Russians                                   | 27,338  | 23,714  |  |
| Moldovan                                      | 198     | 505       | Jews                                       | 193     | 283     |  |
| Tatar   | 98      | 592       | Belarusians                                | 137     | 309     |  |
| Belarusian                                    | 57      | 141       | Moldovans                                  | 119     | 334     |  |

Ukrainian as a mother tongue for Ukrainians in 2021 has slightly strengthened its position (by 5% compared to 2010 data), although it lost almost 2 times in number. In the context of ethnic groups, Ukrainian as a mother tongue has also slightly strengthened its positions among Russians – by 3.5 thousand people. It testifies the breakdown/shift of the Ukrainian identity in Russia. Ukrainian was indicated as a mother tongue by almost 2 times fewer Census participants in 2021 than a decade before.

The statistics on what languages Ukrainian population of Russia speaks is below (Table 9).

Ukrainians in Russia are gradually losing the Ukrainian language since the proportion of those who speak it is getting lower and lower from census to census. But it remains around 1/3 of the entire Ukrainian population of Russia. Also, the number of Ukrainians who speak languages other than Russian is declining disproportionately faster.

| Languages                   | 2021**  | 2010      | 2002      |
|-----------------------------|---------|-----------|-----------|
| Russian                     | 872,626 | 1,922,155 | 2,935,845 |
| - % of Ukrainians of Russia | 98.71%  | 99.70%    | 99.76%    |
| Ukrainian                   | 277,014 | 669,246   | 1,267,207 |
| - % of Ukrainians of Russia | 31.34%  | 34.71%    | 43.06%    |
| English                     | 43,535  | 96,428    | no data   |
| German                      | 11,434  | 35,895    | 70,929    |
| French                      | 2,453   | 8,124     | no data   |
| Polish                      | 2,411   | 10,992    | 18,164    |
| Moldovan                    | 1,399   | 5,405     | 9,399     |
| Belarusian                  | 1,051   | 4,702     | 9,510     |
| Tatar                       | 899     | 2,807     | 3,688     |
| Spanish                     | 852     | 2,306     | no data   |

Situation with the Ukrainian language in Russia

Ukrainian is one of the most widely spoken languages in Russia and ranked 10th in 2021 in terms of the number of speakers (in 2010 it was 7th, in 2002 it was 5th). At the same time, there is not a single school where the Ukrainian language is the language of instruction in Russia. Ukrainian is taught as an elective discipline in a few schools throughout the country, as well as in some universities (Moscow State University, Moscow State Linguistic University, Moscow State Institute of International Relations). Previously, the main way of learning Ukrainian in Russia was the free language courses offered by many Ukrainian not-for-profit cultural organizations, but most of them are now closed. We may say that Ukrainian is not taught in Russia as of 2024.

Russia is often criticized for the lack of conditions for learning Ukrainian in educational institutions. The position of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia, voiced in 2009 [21], was that there was no request from Ukrainians to open schools with the Ukrainian language of instruction in Russia due to long-standing historical ties between Ukrainians and Russians, a certain similarity of Ukrainian and Russian languages (although, Russian in terms of vocabulary by kinship for Ukrainian is only fourth after Belarusian, Polish and Slovak), and also because the Ukrainian community cannot collect the required number of signatures to open such a school (such attempts were in Moscow and St. Petersburg, but they were not successful). Also, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia, Ukrainian not-for-profit cultural organizations were doing enough to ensure language needs of Ukrainians, but the problem was that quite a lot of such organizations are closed today. In addition,

according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia, Ukrainians in Russia and Russians in Ukraine were in different ethno-cultural reality, so it was incorrect to compare the number of schools because Russian-language education in Ukraine has a historical basis, while Ukrainian-language education in Russia does not (in fact, it does – in the 1920s–1930s there were many schools with the Ukrainian language of instruction in Russia in places densely populated by Ukrainians: Kuban, Volga region, Far East, other large cities and villages of Russia [2, 6, 11]; before the 1917 Revolution, Ukrainians often opened their athenaea or *reading rooms* (*chytalni*) in villages for education purposes.

## Other characteristics of Ukrainians of Russia

Population censuses also provide data on the population distribution by age groups, by education level, by marriage rate of certain ethnic groups, etc. Below is the distribution of Ukrainians of Russia by age groups over the past 20 years (Fig. 3, Table 10).

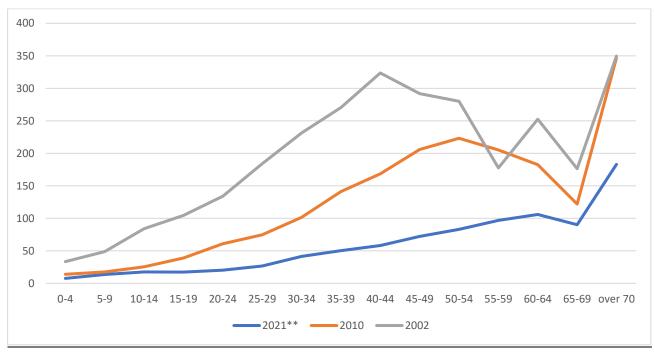


Fig. 3. Distribution of Ukrainians of Russia by age groups according to 2002–2021 censuses data, thsd.

Table 10 Distribution of Ukrainians of Russia by working age

| Indicators                 | 2021**          | 2010              | 2002              |
|----------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Ukrainians, total          | 884,007         | 1,927,988         | 2,942,961         |
| - younger than working age | 42,064 (4.8%)   | 63,257 (3.3%)     | 187,133 (6.4%)    |
| - at working age           | 441,867 (50%)   | 1,104,744 (57.3%) | 1,885,872 (64.1%) |
| - older than working age   | 400,076 (45.2%) | 759,969 (39.4%)   | 869,408 (29.5%)   |
| median age                 | 56.9            | 52.5              | 45.9              |

Extremely high rate of population ageing is observed among Ukrainians in Russia: the working-age population share has decreased by 14% over 20 years, the share of the retired population has increased by almost 16%. The graph illustrates it distinctly – the peak of the number of Ukrainians of a certain age from census to census shifts to the right demonstrating a rapid population ageing rate and low reproduction. Even though in 2021 there was a slight increase in the proportion of Ukrainians younger than working age compared to 2010, it is hardly worth linking this with the birth rate increase simply because senile mortality has increased (especially during the COVID-19 pandemic); infant and child mortality has generally decreased. The median age also increased by 11 years in the last two decades. All these indicators clearly demonstrate progressive extinction.

The following is the dynamics of the education level of Ukrainians in Russia over the past 20 years (Table 11).

Table 11 Education level of Ukrainians in Russia, 2002–2021 censuses

| Education levels                 | 2021**                 | 2010                   | 2002                   |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| postgraduate                     | 16,138 (1.8%)          | 11,603 (0.6%)          | 11,185 (0.4%)          |
| higher                           | 242,832 (27.8%)        | 471,346 (24.5%)        | 543,477 (19.6%)        |
| incomplete higher                | 15,945 (1.8%)          | 49,333 (2.6%)          | 67,655 (2.4%)          |
| secondary vocational             | 332,356 (38.0%)        | 647,557 (33.6%)        | 855,426 (30.8%)        |
| initial vocational               | not taken into account | 89,397 (4.6%)          | 345,852 (12.5%)        |
| secondary (complete) general     | 135,239 (15.5%)        | 308,718 (16%)          | 421,032 (15.2%)        |
| basic general                    | 52,913 (6.1%)          | 171,788 (8.9%)         | 291,830 (10.5%)        |
| primary general                  | 28,502 (3.3%)          | 111,771 (5.8%)         | 209,768 (7.6%)         |
| preschool                        | 11,073 (1.3%)          | not taken into account | not taken into account |
| have no education                | 3,273 (0.4%)           | 9,132 (0.4%)           | 23,388 (0.8%)          |
| - of them illiterate             | 273                    | 3,294                  | 10,469                 |
| did not indicate education level | 36,081 (4.1%)          | 480                    | 5,815 (0.2%)           |

Due to the rapid decline of the Ukrainian population of Russia, it is difficult to trace the dynamics of their education level in quantitative terms, but it is possible to consider the share of a certain education level in the overall structure. It is worth mentioning that compared with other education levels, the number of Ukrainians with postgraduate education (postgraduate studies, Candidates of Sciences, Doctors of Sciences) has increased significantly. It may look that from census to census the education level of Ukrainians increases. Rapid ageing is the reason: the proportion of older generations steadily increases from census to census, so the education level does (the share of

lower levels of education also decreases due to low birth rates and rapid assimilation, and the identity shift, when the children of Ukrainians identify as Russians under social influence).

The 2010 population census contains data on ethnically homogeneous and ethnically mixed couples. According to the husband's ethnicity (when the husband is Ukrainian), the share of ethnically mixed married couples (when the wife is non-Ukrainian) is 80.2% – the wife's and husband's ethnicity coincides in 58,808 pairs (when both are Ukrainians) but differs in 237,544 couples (when a wife is non-Ukrainian). According to the wife's ethnicity (when a wife is Ukrainian), the share of ethnically mixed married couples (when a husband is non-Ukrainian) is 77.2% – the wife's and husband's ethnicity is the same in 58,808 couples (when both are Ukrainians) but differs in 199,314 couples (when a husband is non-Ukrainian).

## II.

## Ukrainian not-for-profit cultural organizations of Russia

In order to assess the dynamics of legal registration/closure of Ukrainian not-for-profit cultural organizations in Russia (those organizations which are created by Russian citizens of Ukrainian origin, whose statutory goal is the development of Ukrainian culture and language), the Unified State Register of Legal Entities (USRLE; Единый государственный реестр юридических лиц, or ЕГРЮЛ) screening was carried out. The data on Ukrainian not-for-profit cultural organizations were extracted from USRLE by searching for the words which contain the Ukrainian root word ("украинский", "украинская", "украинское", "Украина", "украини", "украиниев", etc.) with the reference to the region of registration as of January 11, 2023. This screening allowed to cover about 95% of all Ukrainian not-for-profit cultural organizations of the Russian Federation (about 220 organizations), but we assume that some may have not been screened due to the search volume). A table of such organizations was compiled, indicating their registration/closure year and the reason for closure. Then this information was generalized. The USRLE contains information about all legal entities of Russia that were active on July 1, 2002, and/or registered after that date (in the column "before 2002" in Tables 12 and 13, only those organizations that were defined as registered in 2002 were taken into account; organizations closed before 2002 are not included in the USRLE). Tables 12, 13 contain data on the dynamics of registration/closure of such organizations.

Table 12

Dynamics of legal registration/closure of Ukrainian not-for-profit cultural organizations in Russia according to the USRLE as of January 11, 2023

| Organizations | before 2002 | 2002–2013 | 2014–2021* | since 2022* | total |
|---------------|-------------|-----------|------------|-------------|-------|
| Registered    | 82          | 111       | 22         | 2           | 217   |
| Closed        | N/A         | 86        | 56         | 7           | 149   |

The general dynamics show that more organizations were registered than closed before 2014, but the situation has changed dramatically since 2014 – fewer of them are being registered, and more are being closed. As of January 11, 2023, 68 Ukrainian not-for-profit cultural organizations were active in Russia (Tables 13, 14).

Table 13
Reasons for the closure of Ukrainian not-for-profit cultural organizations in Russia according to the USRLE

| Reasons for closure                                | 2002–2013 | 2014–2021* | since 2022* | total |
|--|-----------|------------|-------------|-------|
| self-dissolution                                   | 3         | 10         | 4           | 17    |
| defined as "inoperative" and closed by authorities | 45        | 21         | 1           | 67    |
| by court decision                                  | 38        | 25         | 2           | 65    |

If until 2014 Ukrainian not-for-profit cultural organizations in Russia had been mostly closed as "inoperative" by authorities (an organization may be defined as "inoperative" on the basis of not submitting of the obligatory annual activity reports), then since 2014 the "court decision" reason slightly prevails (i.e., "violation of legislation"). Ukrainian not-for-profit cultural organizations did not tend to self-dissolve until 2022, and it is not expected that this tendency will rise significantly. Authorities will try to find other formal reasons for their closures.

The creation period in which Ukrainian not-for-profit cultural organizations which were defined as active as of January 11, 2023, is considered below (Table 14).

Table 14

Active Ukrainian not-for-profit cultural organizations in Russia as of January 11, 2023, by their creation period according to the USRLE

| before 2002 | 2002–2013 | 2014–2021* | since 2022* |
|-------------|-----------|------------|-------------|
| 15          | 37        | 14         | 2           |

As of January 11, 2023, 68 Ukrainian not-for-profit cultural organizations were registered as active in Russia: out of 82 organizations which were registered as of 2002, 15 were active; out of 111 organizations registered in 2002–2013, 37 were active; out of 22 organizations registered in 2014–2021, 14 were active, and both organizations registered in 2022 were active.

Some quick facts about Ukrainian not-for-profit cultural organizations from the USRLE:

- Not a single Ukrainian not-for-profit cultural organization was created in 22 regions in 1991–2023.
  - All Ukrainian not-for-profit cultural organizations were closed in 20 regions.

- More than 5 Ukrainian not-for-profit cultural organizations were registered during the entire period of study (1991–2023) in the following regions: 16 in Moscow, 11 each in Kaliningrad Oblast, Rostov Oblast, Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug, 9 each in Tiumen Oblst, Primorski Krai, 8 in Krasnodar Krai, 7 in Omsk Oblast, 6 each in Komi, Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug, Krasnoiarsk Krai, Novosibirsk Oblast.
- 2 or more active Ukrainian not-for-profit cultural organizations as of January 11, 2023, were registered in the following regions: 4 in Tatarstan, 3 each in Ulianovsk Oblast, Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug, Krasnoiarsk Krai, 2 each in Komi, Rostov Oblast, Nizhni Novgorod Oblast, Samara Oblast, Saratov Oblast, Sverdlovsk Oblast, Novosibirsk Oblast, Omsk Oblast, Altai Krai, Primorski Krai.
- The oldest still operating as of January 11, 2023, Ukrainian not-for-profit cultural organization, which has never interrupted its activities as a legal entity and has been operating since 1991, is the Tomsk Regional Not-for-profit Organization "Centre of Ukrainian Culture "Dzherelo".
- The newest Ukrainian not-for-profit cultural organizations registered in 2022 are the North Ossetian Regional Not-for-profit Organization "Ukrainian Cultural Society "Slavutych" named after Bohdan Khmelnytsky" and Regional Public Organization "Krasnoiarsk Regional Cultural Society "Ukrainian House".

The data from the USRLE were compared with the data from the directory "Not-for-profit Organizations of Ukrainians in Russia" dated March 2014 [10], and 21 more organizations were identified, data on which are not available in the USRLE since they acted as unregistered.

But the reality is more "prosaic" than the USRLE "dry figures". In some regions, even despite the official closure, Ukrainian not-for-profit cultural organizations continue to act as voluntary associations of citizens (for example, in Irkutsk Oblast). However, the lack of legal status significantly limits their rights and opportunities (there is no possibility, for example, to apply for grants and subsidies, and many organizational issues that require any legal support are solved either through other organizations or by the goodwill of local authorities).

Another picture is also observed among organizations that are legally defined as active, but in fact do not carry out any activity (there are no statistics on them, but according to the author, who deals with this issue quite deeply, such organizations comprise the vast majority). Also, most of them experience difficulties in financing their activities, because they are forced to exist on donations only, and any sponsorship from business or financial support from authorities is extremely rare and small. Many of them have a chronic problem of the absence of offices to conduct activities. These are the main reasons why many organizations exist "on paper" only (other reasons are described below).

There is no umbrella (one that unites others) Ukrainian not-for-profit cultural organization in Russia. Previously, there were two organizations that united local Ukrainian organizations in Russia:

there was the Federal National and Cultural Autonomy of Ukrainians of Russia which existed from 1998 to 2010, and the Association of Ukrainians of Russia which existed from 1994 to 2012 – both were liquidated by court order, and with a big scandal since political reasons are considered by activists as main for closing them [5]. The Ukrainian World Congress was recognized as an undesirable organization in Russia a bit later, which only confirms the political motives, especially because it constantly pointed violations of rights of Ukrainians in Russia (it is worth reading the materials of the website "Kobza – Ukrainians of Russia" [32]).

There is not much Ukrainian diaspora press in Russia either: a few years ago, there were a couple of newspapers and magazines, but now only the websites "Union of Ukrainians of Russia" [34] and "Kobza – Ukrainians of Russia" [35] remain operating (this situation is typical for all ethnic minorities of Russia).

Therefore, it is impossible to provide accurate assessment of the activities of Ukrainian not-for-profit cultural organizations in Russia based on figures and facts. It may only be stated that their condition is, to put it mildly, deplorable, not even taking into consideration the question of the pro-Ukrainian position of certain organizations and their members [27].

It is also worth mentioning that the Russian Association of Ukrainianists operated until 2014, the Library of Ukrainian Literature in Moscow until 2018 (it was a state institution of Moscow which was destroyed, and its director was investigated and received a term in jail – more can be read in the materials of the website "Kobza – Ukrainians of Russia") [29, 37, 23], the Cultural Centre of Ukraine operated until 2022, and the Centre for Ukrainian Studies at the Institute of Europe of the Russian Academy of Sciences is still operating [24], consisting of as much as one employee. [12, 13] There is no need to talk about Ukrainian church life – Ukrainian Christianity in Russia almost does not exist [30]. Moreover, sometimes activities in the field of Ukrainian culture can lead to mutilation and murder [31, 38, 39].

The topics of infiltration camps for citizens of Ukraine [36] and numerous prosecutions of pro-Ukrainian activists after the full-scale invasion of February 24, 2022, also clearly show what it means to have a pro-Ukrainian position in Russia.

Brief description of contemporary immigration of Ukrainian citizens to Russia

230,558 citizens of Ukraine permanently resided in Russia in 2002; 93,390 in 2010, as of January 2014 – 1,559,921, as of March 2016 – 2,501,784. A significant increase (+55%) of the number of citizens of Ukraine in Russia was associated with the war in the east of Ukraine. In 2015, 170,000 citizens of Ukraine became participants of the "State Program to promote voluntary resettlement in the Russian Federation of compatriots living abroad" – 63% of all participants in 2015 were Ukrainian citizens [1, 15]. In 2014–2019, 278.5 thousand citizens of Ukraine became

participants of the program (30.3% in 2014–2019) [14]. The number of Ukrainian citizens wishing to participate in this program has significantly decreased in recent years: Ukrainian citizens accounted for no more than 5% of all program participants in 2020–2022 [16]. Below are the main indicators of Ukrainian immigration to Russia in 2019–2022 (Table 15).

Table 15 Selected indicators of immigration of Ukrainian citizens to Russia in 2019–2022 [22]

|   | 2019**    |                     | 2021**    |                     | 2022**    |                     |
|---|-----------|---------------------|-----------|---------------------|-----------|---------------------|
| Parameters  | Number    | % of all foreigners | Number    | % of all foreigners | Number    | % of all foreigners |
| Registered immigrants   | 1.6 mln.  | 8.4                 | 792 thsd. | 8.1                 | 1.1 mln.  | 6.3                 |
| Removed from the immigration register                           | 1.3 mln.  | 7.9                 | 732 thsd. | 8.2                 | 832 thsd. | 5.7                 |
| Employment reason   | 436 thsd. | 8.0                 | 148 thsd. | 6.3                 | 102 thsd. | 0.9                 |
| Private reasons   | 550 thsd. | 21.8                | 204 thsd. | 23.5                | 759 thsd. | 28.5                |
| Held a temporary residence permit                               | 115 thsd. | 27.3                | 69 thsd.  | 22.4                | 36 thsd.  | 17.2                |
| A decision was made<br>to issue a temporary<br>residence permit | 54 thsd.  | 22.0                | 20 thsd.  | 15.6                | 29 thsd.  | 16.3                |
| Held a permanent residence permit                               | 156 thsd. | 24.9                | 125 thsd. | 20.1                | 71 thsd.  | 13.3                |
| A decision was made to issue a permanent residence permit       | 53 thsd.  | 29.0                | 37 thsd.  | 16.5                | 25 thsd.  | 9.1                 |
| Acquired citizenship of Russia                                  | 299 thsd. | 60.1                | 410 thsd. | 62.4                | 297 thsd. | 43.0                |

A significant increase in the acquisition of Russian citizenship in 2019 is associated with the issuance of Russian passports to residents of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts of Ukraine under a preferential regime, and this trend continued until the recognition of their "independence" in 2022 (a total of about 7 thousand "citizens" of these "countries" received Russian citizenship in 2022) [20]. Below some indicators of Ukrainian immigration in dynamics are considered (Fig. 4).

The number of Ukrainian immigrants in Russia tends to decrease – there are less people who go to Russia for work, as well as less temporary and permanent residence permit holders. The increase of 2022, compared to the COVID-2020 and Recovery-2021, is more of a stabilization matter in terms of indicators, but not of a stabilization matter due to the ongoing war started on February 24, 2022. The number of Ukrainians who come to Russia for private reasons (like visiting relatives) will increase later, but other reasons (employment, study, etc.) will continue decreasing.

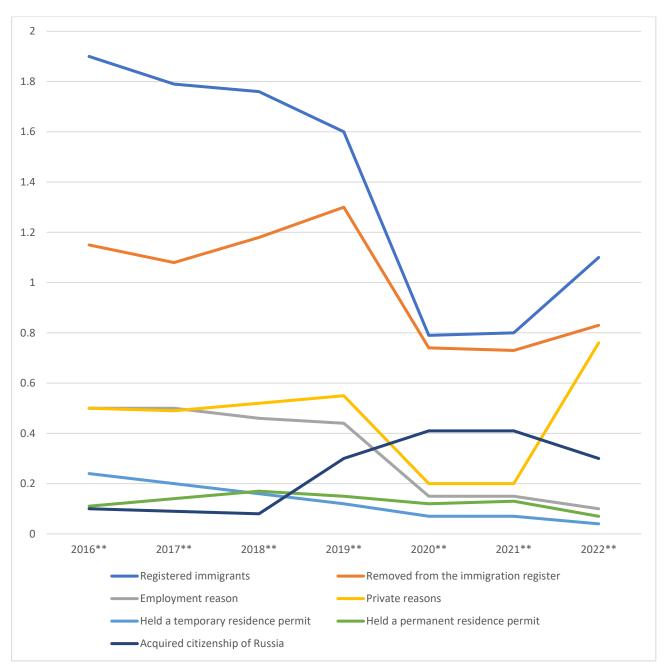


Fig. 4. Selected indicators of the immigration of Ukrainian citizens to Russia in 2016–2022, mln.

## *Not the first anymore*

Before the 2021 Russian census, the Ukrainian diaspora in Russia was considered the largest Ukrainian diaspora in the world. Canada was the second with 1,359,655 Ukrainians (3.95% of the country's population) in 2016, and the United States was the third with 1,028,492 (0.3%) in 2016. However, the 2021 census data turned all the numbers upside down, literally shocking many. The first three look like this (Table 16).

How many people of Ukrainian origin live in which country is even more difficult to measure because of the ongoing war since 2014, which led to a huge scale of forced emigration from Ukraine. The situation is especially difficult in the European Union member states, which have taken over the main wave of Ukrainian refugees.

Top 3 countries of the Ukrainian diaspora in terms of size and share in the population structure

| Country | Number    | Share, % | Year      |
|---------|-----------|----------|-----------|
| Canada  | 1,258,635 | 3.45     | 2021 [25] |
| USA     | 980,819   | 0.30     | 2020 [26] |
| Russia  | 712,847   | 0.60     | 2021*     |

## Instead of a conclusion

There are several reasons why in Russia there is such a sharp drop in the number of Ukrainian population and those who speak Ukrainian, but none of them is dominant, and all of them were at their peak at different times. It is a whole set of factors that together contribute to the negative dynamics that are observed today.

- 1. High mortality, low birth rate. Over the last 20 years the median age of Ukrainians increased by 11 years, to 56.9 years, i.e., on average an ordinary Ukrainian in Russia today is about 57–58 years old, which is a high figure. At this pace, over the next few years, the decline in the Ukrainian population will only accelerate. Low birth rate there are few Ukrainian people of childbearing age in Russia, and, accordingly, the number of children born by them will also be insignificant compared to other ethnic groups. A similar situation is observed among Belarusians, Jews, Germans, Koreans, Udmurts, Mordovians, Maris, etc.
- 2. Identity shift, the choice of the identity of the majority. This can be seen both in marriage statistics, where most Ukrainians are in mixed couples (about 80%), and they usually have children who identify as Russians. There are several studies [3, 18] that research the motives for choosing one or another identity in mixed Ukrainian-Russian families, border areas and areas of traditional settlement of Ukrainians in Russia.
- 3. Identity breakdown is clearly seen in the statistics of Ukrainian language proficiency, when it suddenly turns out that more Russians speak Ukrainian than Ukrainians a vivid example of assimilation tendencies simply because such a number of Russians would not learn Ukrainian for such a short period of time simply because there are no suitable conditions for this. This can also be seen in the number of natives of Ukraine, which significantly exceeds the number of ethnic Ukrainians themselves twice according to the 2021 census, which was not observed at all in 1989 (the return of Russians from Ukraine born in Ukraine also has its weight, but not as much significant as it may seem at first glance).
- 4. The reasons for the identity shift or its breakdown, for not indicating the knowledge of Ukrainian even if a person speaks it, are also quite diverse. Someone wants to break with their past, and someone is afraid of being a stranger, unreliable, a potential enemy to the majority this became

especially relevant after 2014 and escalated with renewed vigor in 2022 – an extremely unhealthy social ecology, fueled by hatred from the media and politicians, is forcing many people to set their priorities differently, including in matters of self-awareness and a sense of belonging, which is also an adaptation strategy in an extremely controversial and difficult time.

- 5. This is also facilitated by the formation of a negative image of the Ukrainian language by the media as a "new", "ridiculous", "pathetic likeness of the Russian language, perverted by the Poles and Austrians", and, accordingly, a dismissive attitude towards it as a "misunderstanding", and a projection towards Ukrainians as to illiterate, ridiculous and miserable nation which is unable to build a well-functioning state. Knowledgeable people understand that such an image of the Ukrainian language and Ukrainians is a lie and speculation with historical facts, because the language itself (as well as the nation), is much older than just "a hundred years", but in order to achieve certain goals, the media and politicians continue to distort the facts. Among Ukrainians in Russia one can also hear (but not often) phrases like "There is no point in learning Ukrainian, because we live in Russia", "No one needs Ukrainian here and we do not plan to move to Ukraine", "Why?", which further aggravates the situation of the Ukrainian language and contributes to the erosion of Ukrainian identity.
- 6. Extremely weak immigration inflow from Ukraine, which has only been decreasing over the past 30 years. Russia no longer looks in the eyes of most Ukrainians as a desirable place for work and relocation. The changed political guidelines, the opening of borders with the European Union have redirected the main streams of Ukrainian emigration to the west. There is also a return of Ukrainians from Russia back to Ukraine this trend is also observed among those who were born in Russia and define themselves as Ukrainians.
- 7. The work of Ukrainian not-for-profit cultural organizations in Russia is in a practically paralyzed state today. In a few regions, they continue to act "both thanks to and in spite of" (in modern conditions, it is difficult to call such an activity anything other than heroic, because one can encounter great skepticism and neglect, including hostility). For fear of incurring the wrath of "hotheads", the activity of these organizations is curtailed, Ukrainian language courses are not conducted, meetings are held rarely, which contributes to the gradual disappearance of the Ukrainian component from the visual "palette" of the peoples of Russia. The lower the visibility of Ukrainian culture, the less people will associate with it.

How many people who identify Ukrainians, and how many who speak Ukrainian live in Russia, we are unlikely to ever know. According to the 2021 census, 16.5 million census participants (11.3% of the total population of Russia) did not indicate their ethnicity. Among them, 7 million respondents refused to indicate it consciously (in 2010, 5.6 million, or 3.9%, did not indicate their ethnicity; in 2002, 1.5 million, or 1%); 12 million people (8.9% of the population of Russia) did not indicate language proficiency (in 2010 there were 5 million, or 3.5%, in 2002 – 1.4 million, or 1%).

What is the proportion of Ukrainians and those who speak Ukrainian among them is unknown. However certain trends are well observed. And these trends are not optimistic: the number and share of Ukrainians will decline as quickly as the number of those who speak Ukrainian. Ukrainians, who 30 years ago were the third largest ethnic group in Russia, will move into the second ten, and the Ukrainian language will become a rare phenomenon for Russia, just like Ukrainian not-for-profit cultural organizations.

Finally, it is necessary to say that Ukrainians of Russia found themselves in a very difficult situation. After the end of the war, Ukraine should pay special attention to them. One of options is to develop a special immigration program for Ukrainians from Russia, paying special attention to safety measures, so that those Ukrainians who love Ukraine and are ready to help develop it, they do not lose contact with Ukraine, while anti-Ukraine Ukrainians lose such access. Implementation measures are to be developed [40], but the world experience of such programs for return of Germans to Germany, Jews to Israel, Kazakhs to Kazakhstan, Latvians to Latvia shows that such a policy has proven itself. At the time of this publication (2024), this is a question of the future. But the vast majority of those who consider themselves Ukrainians do not want to lose ties with their Motherland and sincerely support it.

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