

*Maria N. Mukhanova*

## **Rural Youth in Russia: Their Status and Prospects for Development**

### **Abstract**

This article analysed the place of rural youth in the socio-structural processes taking place in the Russian countryside, using the findings of Russia Longitudinal Monitoring Survey of the population's economic condition and health (RLMS-HSU); conducted between 1994 and 2011, and of the Integrated Survey of the Living Conditions of the Population carried out in all 86 Russian regions in 2011. Rural youth (15 to 30 year-olds) are the first generation socialized in the period of cardinal institutional changes and market economy formation. They make up a great part of the rural population. This investigation showed that; in spite of the rise in the educational level, the share of the unemployed and occupied in the informal sector of the economy is great in the rural youth employment structure, which leads to the growth of poverty and migration. The material and financial status of young countrymen's households and rural youth's marital behaviour were also examined.

**Keywords:** rural youth, employment, education, occupational structure, unemployment, income, household, marital behaviour.

Cardinal changes took place in Russia in the 1990s. Free-market reforms eventuated in the transformation of the national social structure, the rural

social structure in particular. In the course of reforms in the Agroindustrial Complex, the number of agricultural enterprises decreased by 56% (this comes to 27,000 sovkhozes and kolkhozes) and the area under crops decreased by 41 mln ha against the 1990 figure. As a result of those shifts, agriculture has turned into an outsider in the contemporary Russian economy, and countrymen have fallen into the lowest paid category of the working population. The average wage in agriculture amounts to 50% of the average wage in the economy as a whole.

Today, 20 years after the period of reforms, more than half of agricultural enterprises in the Agroindustrial Complex are unprofitable. Price disparity is one of the main reasons of such situation, that is, the four- to fivefold growth of the cost of industrial production compared with the cost of agricultural production. Hence, agricultural enterprises are unable to cover their production expenses, and they are in debt to both the federal budget and private financiers. The continual growth of energy supply, fuel, and rail transportation prices aggravates the Russian countrymen's standings. They pay for these services two to three times more than Western European and American agricultural producers.

The question is how Russian rural youth adjust themselves to the changing conditions of living in the country, and what is their adjustment strategy? What are the status and the place of youth in the national social structure? What are the trends and development prospects for the young generation as a social group that has socialized in the rural space in conditions of market economy?

We shall consider the rural youth functioning and structuring by the adjustment level and type on the basis of two Russian research sources.

The first is the panel data on the population's economic condition and health taken from the findings of Russia Longitudinal Monitoring Survey conducted by the Higher School of Economics between 1994 and 2011 (RLMS-HSE). The investigations, carried out until 2009, covered yearly about 1000 rural households and more than 2300 rural residents aged 14 and over, living in 38 regions of the Russian Federation. In 2010, the sample population was expanded to 4747 respondents – members of 1606 households, which constituted a representation of the size of population aged 14 and over. This article used the findings of individual interviews obtained from rural young people aged between 15 and 30. They amount

to 968 persons or 20.4% of the sample population.<sup>1</sup> The results of this monitoring showed us the dynamic series of indicators characterizing changes in the rural youth structure.

The second source is the Integrated Survey of the Living Conditions of the Population carried out by the Russian Federal State Statistics Service (Rosstat) at the end of 2011 in all federal administrative okrugs of 84 regions of the Russian Federation. The survey was based on sample interviews of representatives of different population groups and strata, and covered 10 000 households and 20 000 household members aged 15 and over. The study of rural population covered 5763 members of 2835 rural households. We referred to the results of individual interviews with rural young people aged 15 to 29. They amount to 1250 persons or 21.7% of the sample population.<sup>2</sup> Other Rosstat data were used for the purpose of analysis.

### **Sociodemographic Characteristics of Russian Rural Population. Rural Population Distribution**

Russian rural population declined in the period of political and economic reforms. The decrease between 2002 and 2010 amounted to 1.2 mln people. Judging by the Rosstat data, there were 37 314 000 rural residents, which made up 26% of the total population (Otsenka chislennosti..., 2011). Natural loss among rural population fell between 2006 and 2010: the birth rate grew from 11.3 to 14.0 persons per 1000 rural population, while the death rate decreased from 17.3 to 16.1 (Chislennost..., 2010).

---

<sup>1</sup> The Russia Longitudinal Monitoring Survey of the economic welfare and health of Russian households and individuals (RLMS-HSE) is conducted by the National Research University – Higher School of Economics and ZAO “Demoscope” with the participation of the Carolina Population Center of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the RAS Institute of Sociology. The RLMS-HSE survey sites: <http://www.cpc.unc.edu/projects/rlms> and <http://www.hse.ru/rlms>.

<sup>2</sup> The Integrated Survey of the Living Conditions of the Population was carried out by the Russian Federal State Statistics Service (Rosstat) in 2011 in pursuance of the Resolution of the Russian Federation Government No. 946 of November 27, 2010 “On the Organization of a System of Federal Statistical Surveys of Sociodemographic Problems and the Economic Losses from Population Mortality, Morbidity and Disability Monitoring”. The Rosstat survey site: [http://www.gks.ru/free\\_doc/new\\_site/KOUZ/survey0/index.html](http://www.gks.ru/free_doc/new_site/KOUZ/survey0/index.html).

Migration outflow from countryside areas was observed in 2010 in three age groups: below working age, of working age, and above working age. During that year, 2.7% of the population left rural areas. On the other hand, migration gain was recorded in several age groups. Those were men and women aged 40 to 64, that is, the people having labour and life experience. More than half of the newcomers to rural areas were migrants from Russian urban localities (62%); the arrivals from other Russian villages made up 29%; and international migration came to 9%. It should be noted that migration to rural areas from both urban and rural localities took place mostly within the limits of the federal okrugs of the Russian Federation. Foreign migrants were mostly people aged 20 to 49. They made up 65% of total foreign migrants (Chislennost..., 2010).

According to the RLMS data for 2010, 34.1% countrymen lived in a particular village for not more than 20 years. Those who came from abroad beginning from 1991, mostly from the CIS countries, made up 13.4% of the rural population. More than half of them were secondary school students (36.6%) and higher school students (17.5%). Every fourth of the newcomers from abroad was engaged in economy in that period; pensioners and disabled made up merely 9.2%. The absolute majority of foreign migrants (82.2%) were Russians. In this way, the age composition of migrants to rural areas produced a favourable effect on the age structure of the rural population replenishing the ranks of able-bodied population.

A growth of uninhabited rural localities was recorded in Russia. The 1989 census registered 9000 such localities, 13 000 was registered by the 2002 census, and 19 000 by the 2010 census. The number of uninhabited localities grew by 48% in the last inter-census period.

The number of rural localities in Russia dropped by 8500 in the period between 2002 and 2010. This happened because many rural localities were included into cities, towns and urban-type settlements or were liquidated by the decision of local authorities by the reason of the natural loss and migration outflow of the population to other areas.

According to the data of the last, 2010 census, there were 134 000 inhabited rural localities in Russia. The migration outflow and the natural loss of the population caused an increase in the number of small rural localities having 10 and less inhabitants. They made up 27% of the total rural localities in Russia, and their residents made up 0.4% of the total rural population. The greater part of such localities were the “dying out

villages”, with the population mostly above the working age, and lacking or having poorly developed social and economic infrastructures. Every twentieth countryside resident lived in localities numbering from 11 to 100 people. Nearly one-fifth countryside residents lived in localities numbering 101–500 or 501–1000 people. More than half of rural residents lived in large and very large localities: 51.8% in 2002, and 54.8% in 2010. There was a noticeable growth in the percentage of rural residents living in localities numbering 3001 and more people (from 26 to 29.7%) in the period between the last two censuses (Okonchatelniye..., 2010).

The number of the people employed in agriculture dropped by more than 2.5 mln over the past 12 years. For this reason, the migration outflow from rural areas in 2011 turned to be the greatest over the past 11 years. The rise was connected to the migration of young people aged 14–29: their share was 58.3% (or 411 000 persons) in 2011 against 48% in 2009. The yearly outflow of youth from rural areas amounted to about 400 000 in recent years (Sostoyaniye..., 2012: 22–23). Young people migrated chiefly in search of jobs. Some moved to their oblast centres, but the greater part went to the capital cities – Moscow and St. Petersburg.

On the whole, the intensity of migration from rural areas stayed on a low level in the period between 1990 and 2002 and did not undergo essential changes, even though the majority of rural school graduates moved to cities and towns and would not return to villages. As it was said earlier, they were replaced by Russian speaking migrants coming from CIS countries in that period. This is clearly seen from Table 1. Having adjusted themselves to rural conditions, young migrants would later also move to cities and towns.

**Table 1.** Rural youth age indicators, Rosstat data for 1989–2012, %

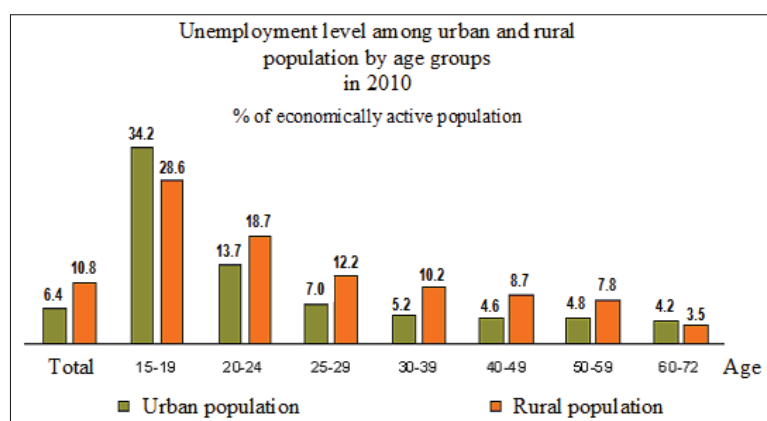
Year of observation	Ages 0–14	Ages 15–19	Ages 20–24	Ages 25–29
1989	25.0	5.7	6.0	8.0
2002	19.5	8.1	6.7	6.3
2008	17.0	7.4	8.1	7.0
2010	17.4	5.9	8.0	7.5
2012	17.8	5.5	7.3	7.7

*Source:* Calculated from Rosstat data of the 1989, 2002 and 2010 censuses.

The Rosstat data (Table 1) show that; at the end of the Soviet period (1989), the share of children up to 14 years of age was the highest (25%). Interest in this group is explained by its being the population that forms the rural youth cohort. In subsequent years, the size of this age group decreased, nearly to 18% in 2012, as a result of the birth rate decline. However, the age structure of rural youth practically did not change. Or it demonstrated the 20–24 age cohort growth in some years, which was chiefly due to the coming of Russian speaking migrants from the CIS countries.

Judging by the 2010 census data, the level of unemployment among rural youth was higher than in the older age strata and among urban youth. For instance, the unemployment level in the 20–24 and 25–29 age groups was 1.4 times higher among rural than among urban population.

Registered unemployment among rural population aged from 15 to 72 was 4.1 % and 1.9% among urban population in 2010. For instance, the 772 600 rural unemployed were registered out of the 2 042 000 assessed by ILO methods in 2010 (Sostoyaniye..., 2012: 44]. It means that 62% jobless rural residents were outside the labour market controlled by the government and; thereby, belonged to the unprotected contingent of the unemployed. Nearly 60% of the unemployed (Fig. 1) were rural young people aged 15 to 29 (Trud i zanyatost...).



**Figure. 1.** Unemployment level among urban and rural population

Source: Trud i zanyatost. Trudoviye resursy [Labour and employment. Manpower resources], URL: [http://www.gks.ru/wps/wcm/connect/rosstat\\_main/rosstat/ru/statistics/wages/labour\\_force/](http://www.gks.ru/wps/wcm/connect/rosstat_main/rosstat/ru/statistics/wages/labour_force/).

Table 2 also shows that the situation in youth groups did not change as of April 2013; they dominated in the unemployment structure as before. The level of unemployment in rural youth groups was higher than both in the older rural groups and in urban youth groups, with the exception of urban youth aged 15–19, where the share of the unemployed was higher than that of their rural peers. This was due primarily to their ambitious claims for high wages.

As to the educational structure of the unemployed, most of them had general secondary education without vocational specialization.

**Table 2.** Unemployment level by age groups among urban and rural population as of April 2013 (% of the economically active population, without adjustment for seasonal fluctuations)

Age group	Rural population	Urban population
15–19	24.5	26.2
20–24	17.1	10.6
25–29	10.7	4.1
30–39	9.1	3.9
40–49	7.6	3.0
50–59	7.0	3.7
60–72	5.1	3.5
Total	9.3	4.4

Source: Rosstat data [7].

### Rural youth education

The examination of the rural youth educational structure showed that persons with complete secondary education prevailed over the period of observation (Table 3), even though their numbers fell to 38.4% in 2011 against 1994, when their share was more than 50%. Noticeable changes took place in the structure of higher education: the number of young people having higher education rose to 60%. Impetus to this growth was given primarily by institutional changes in the sphere of higher education. In all probability, this was the result of large-scale development of the

higher education structure in the post-Soviet period. In particular, more higher school branches, including commercial ones, were established in medium and small cities; the network of evening, correspondence and distant education was expanded [8, pp. 125–140]. Nonetheless, only one fifth of rural young people had a higher education. As to those who had incomplete secondary education plus something else (a vocational school, vocational courses, and the like), their number rose in the 15–22 age group from 23% in 1994 to 37.2% in 2011, and nearly threefold in the 23–30 age group – from 6.5% to 19.1%.

Let us consider the orientations of future rural and urban school graduates aged 15 using the Rosstat data for 2011. The results of investigation showed that the aspirations of rural and urban school students were actually the same. Practically the same numbers of urban (62%) and rural (64%) school students wanted to continue studying at higher schools. Others planned to enter a high vocational school or college (25% and 30%, respectively). Primary vocational schools were chosen by 13% urban and 6.4% rural students. The 20–24 group did not demonstrate noticeable differences either. Practically equal numbers of rural (78%) and urban (74%) young people planned entering a higher school. The only exception was, perhaps, that the number of rural youths who intended to study at a primary vocational school was somewhat greater than the number of their urban peers (18% and 12%, respectively).

It is evident therefore that rural and urban young people had a common motivation to continue studying. The degree of educational orientation similarity among urban and rural youths was high: the vast majority in both contingents strove to continue their studies at higher schools, and a smaller part wanted to study at high vocational schools or colleges.

It is also obvious that objective factors influenced the educational orientation and strategy formation among rural youth, namely, living in the countryside with its poorly developed educational infrastructure and the lower level of schooling quality. The proximity of their villages to, or their remoteness from, urban agglomerations were also significant factors producing an effect on the rural youth's educational strategies. However, the socialization of rural youth was taking place along with large-scale transformation of social institutions and the onset of market economy. Parents wishing a decent life for their children understood that education as a social and cultural capital was the only chance for them to get a good



**Table 3.** Education of rural youth aged 15–30, RLMS data, 1994–2011, %

Education	1994		1998		2002		2006		2010		2011	
	Ages 15-22	Ages 23-30†	Ages 15-22	Ages 23-30	Ages 15-22	Ages 23-30	Ages 15-22	Ages 23-30	Ages 15-22	Ages 23-30	Ages 15-22	Ages 23-30
0-6 years of study	1.5	1.2	1.6	0.8	2.1	0.9	1.6	1.7	1.1	0.4	0.8	0.6
Incomplete secondary education (7-8 years)	16.5	8.0	15.5	6.3	10.3	7.0	12.1	3.0	10.4	3.5	11.8	3.6
Incomplete secondary education plus something else	23.0	6.5	34.2	6.3	32.6	11.6	40.0	20.0	38.0	20.8	37.2	19.1
Complete secondary education	51.0	55.6	36.6	57.3	41.5	57.0	37.6	39.0	39.3	37.7	39.2	38.4
Specialized secondary education	8.0	18.0	11.2	23.4	12.6	15.5	8.2	18.0	8.5	19.3	8.3	19.0
Higher education	0.4	11.0	0.9	6.0	0.9	8.2	0.5	18.5	2.5	18.3	2.0	19.0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total number of respondents	274	250	322	239	340	233	380	302	527	486	492	476

Source: RLMS data.

job and keep an urban-like mode of life. And they actively used the available opportunities offered by the higher education system for their children to achieve relatively advantageous positions in a society.

A whole generation of rural youth has grown in the environment of mass communications and consumer society, where hedonistic and consumerist values are cultivated, which make for the emergence of suspicious and alienating attitudes to rurality in rural youth. The problem is that graduates of higher agricultural schools stay in cities. According to the data of the personnel monitoring conducted by the Timiryazev Agricultural Academy, the leading Russian educational establishment training key agricultural specialists, merely 3% graduates return to the countryside. It is clear enough that practically all higher school graduates seek a higher school certificate rather than education as such. These factors stimulate and affect behavioural patterns of rural youth for whom the urban mode of life turns to be more preferable (Mukhanova et. al., 2014: 176).

RLMS data show that although educational indicators increased on the whole, only 7.5% of those employed in the Agroindustrial Complex had a higher professional education, while more than 47% did not have any professional education. The number of managers having higher education decreased annually in the agricultural business. To compare, they made up 40% in 2011 against more than 70% in 1994 (Mukhanova, 2012: 49–51).

### **Rural youth employment**

We shall examine the rural youth employment structure and dynamics on the basis of RLMS data. The modal group in the rural youth employment structure were people working at enterprises, organizations, sovkhozes, kolkhozes and cooperatives – 54.6% in the 23–30 age category. Considering employment by branches of economy, the greater part worked in the trade sector (19%), education and health (15.5%), agriculture (13.5%), construction (10%), and the food industry (7%). Although the number of organizations in the public sphere decreased over the past two decades, rural young people work at schools, medical centres, shops, public services, recreation centres, post offices, local administrations, etc. The specifics of work in the state-financed organizations is that they guarantee relatively stable employment to their personnel and monetary payments, even though they may be minimal.

**Table 4.** Employment structure of rural youth aged 15 to 30 in 1994 through 2011, %

Primary occupation	1994			1998			2002			2006			2010			2011		
	15-22	23-30		15-22	23-30		15-22	23-30		15-22	23-30		15-22	23-30		15-22	23-30	
Secondary school or primary vocational school student	30.7	-		38.8	0.4		37.0	-		33.0	-		29.4	0.2		30.0	-	
Higher school or high vocational school student	7.0	0.4		10.6	1.3		20.0	1.0		23.2	0.3		28.0	0.8		30.0	1.5	
Non-working by the reason of health or disabled	1.0	2.4		1.0	2.5		0.3	3.4		0.8	0.3		0.6	0.8		0.6	1.0	
Non-working pensioner	-	-		0.3	-		-	1.0		0.3	-		0.2	-		0.6	-	
On maternity leave	3.0	2.0		1.0	0.8		0.6	1.7		1.0	2.6		0.8	2.7		0.6	1.5	
On formal parental leave (care of child up to 3 years of age)	2.6	4.4		1.0	3.0		0.3	3.0		0.4	2.6		0.8	3.0		1.0	3.2	
Housewife caring for other family members, and/or raising children	6.2	9.2		4.0	13.0		5.3	8.6		3.0	7.6		3.8	11.0		3.3	10.7	
Not working temporarily for other reasons and looking for a job	16.1	15.6		20.2	23.0		14.0	21.5		16.6	20.0		7.0	11.3		8.7	14.0	

**Table 4.** Employment structure of rural youth aged 15 to 30

Primary occupation	1994			1998			2002			2006			2010			2011		
	15-22	23-30		15-22	23-30		15-22	23-30		15-22	23-30		15-22	23-30		15-22	23-30	
Not working temporarily for other reasons and unwilling to work	2.2	0.8		2.2	0.8		1.4	4.7		2.0	3.3		7.0	4.7		7.5	6.0	
Farmer	-	1.2		2.2	0.8		0.3	-		-	-		1.0	1.5		-	-	
Entrepreneur	-	2.0		-	1.3		0.6	2.6		-	0.7		-	1.0		0.2	0.6	
Working at an enterprise, organization, kolkhoz, sovkhos, cooperative	25.2	59.2		16.1	49.6		17.6	45.5		13.0	52.6		18.4	52.5		12.5	54.6	
Working not at an enterprise, organization, kolkhoz, sovkhos, cooperative	1.8	2.4		0.6	3.3		1.2	5.6		3.0	5.0		3.0	10.0		3.5	6.0	
Other (specify)	-						1.8	1.6		2.0	4.6		-	-		0.4	0.6	
Total	100	100		100	100		100	100		100	100		100	100		100	100	
Total number of respondents	274	250		322	240		340	233		380	302		527	486		492	476	

Source: RLMS data.

As it was noted earlier, changes that took place in education in the 1990s opened wide access to higher education. The number of higher school and college students grew. Higher education became available to the masses. The number of students among rural youth grew more than fourfold in 2011 compared with 1994. At the same time, the number of students in vocational schools that trained skilled workers dropped sharply.

There is a sizeable share of the jobless, people seeking for a job, and the unemployed who did not seek for a job and did not try to find a job in the rural youth employment structure. It should be noted that their numbers were growing from year to year. The lacking motivation for work and attempts to find a job may be explained by the people's way of life and forms of existence. Some might toil at their own land plots all day long, others might have a temporary job, did legwork, or were freelancers; still, others were probably asocial elements (spongers, drunkards, etc.).

The share of young countrymen in the 15–22 age category working at an enterprise, organization, kolkhoz, sovkhoz, cooperative dropped by half.

The share of working young people in the occupational groups requiring an adequate educational level grew in 2011 compared with 1994. As to the intergroup changes in professionals having higher education, there was a shortage of young agricultural specialists, such as agronomists, veterinarians, and livestock specialists. A particularly noticeable growth, nearly threefold, was recorded among those employed in trade and services (from 5.6% to 14.6%). The number of young professionals having specialized secondary education also grew on the whole. The share of unskilled workers in the same age category decreased from 22% in 1994 to 13.6%, evidently because of the bankruptcy of agricultural enterprises. The shares of industrial workers and craftsmen in the 15–22 age category also decreased in relation to 2011. There were no skilled agricultural workers among young countrymen.

A nine-point scale was used for the rural youth's professional self-assessment. 6.3% of young workers in the 23–30 age category placed themselves in the first, lowest position. The greater part (19%) placed themselves in the middle, fifth position, and 2% of the young countrymen indicated the highest, ninth place for themselves.

The analysis showed that Russian and foreign businesses, agriholdings, having high-tech equipment and production facilities, influence employment

**Table 5.** Rural youth distribution by occupational groups, 1994–2011, %

Occupational group	1994		1998		2002		2006		2010		2011	
	15–22	23–30	15–22	23–30	15–22	23–30	15–22	23–30	15–22	23–30	15–22	23–30
Servicemen	1.1	0.6	-	0.7	1.4	-	-	1.5	-	-	-	-
Law-makers, high-ranking officials, managers	-	1.0	-	1.4	-	3.0	2.0	2.0	1.0	2.4	1.0	1.0
Professionals having higher education	5.6	11.4	5.0	11.4	4.3	8.0	6.5	11.0	5.8	10.7	7.0	13.0
Professionals having specialized secondary education	12.5	14.7	3.5	17.0	7.0	8.0	8.0	18.0	15.8	16.7	17.0	17.0
Office clerks and clerks serving clients	5.6	5.6	8.5	6.5	4.3	4.5	6.5	4.0	5.8	3.3	7.0	5.5
Employed in the services sector	9.0	5.6	17.0	10.0	10.0	16.5	14.0	18.0	20.8	15.8	15.0	14.6
Qualified agricultural and fish industry workers	2.3	2.3	-	0.7	3.0	-	-	1.5	1.7	0.6	-	-
Craftsmen	21.3	13.0	12.0	10.0	13.0	16.0	25.0	11.0	15.8	18.8	16.0	15.0
Industrial workers	21.3	23.7	42.0	24.3	24.0	23.0	18.0	22.0	12.5	16.7	15.0	20.3
Unskilled workers	21.3	22.0	12.0	18.0	33.0	21.0	20.0	11.0	20.8	15.0	22.0	13.6
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total number of respondents	89	177	59	140	70	134	64	200	120	336	87	316

Source: RLMS data.

and unemployment in the regions, especially in the Southern and the Central-Chernozem regions, the leaders in agricultural production.

Agriholding, as part of the Agrindustrial Complex, is a new type of a large production enterprise located in a vast territory having a high-level agroindustry. There is a strict division of labour in agriholdings: agricultural production and agricultural processing. Agriholdings are multipurpose and multifunctional enterprises. As their activities are based on the principle of profit maximization, they are a powerful lever in market relations. Agriholdings practice rational types of worker's functioning and labour control. In fact, agriholdings act as the key factor in the agrarian market formation, the market of agricultural production and labour. They can also serve as an important channel of modernization in agriculture.

At a certain stage of structural reformation in agriculture, agriholdings became an important factor of influence on rural employment and rural socio-structural processes in general. It is apparent that high-tech equipment raises the demand for labour quality and lowers the demand for workplaces at agricultural enterprises. Business and government, interacting closely in the area of agricultural production with its rational forms and methods of work, exert influence on the social organization of rural economic activity constructing the Russian countrymen's social practices and behaviour in a similar way.

### **The material and financial status of rural youth**

The monthly average wage of agricultural workers in Russia was 11 200 roubles in 2010. Territorial differences in wages were very large. There were up to sevenfold fluctuation in the payment level over Russian regions, from 3500 roubles per month in Transbaikalia Krai, to 23 400 roubles in Krasnodar Krai (the latter is the leader in agricultural production). Meanwhile, the regional difference in the able-bodied population's living minimum was 2.8. To compare, the living minimum was 4480 roubles in Tambov Oblast and 12 330 roubles (the maximum) in Kamchatka Krai. On the whole, 37 000 agricultural workers in the Russian Federation (2.3%) were paid below the legally established living wage (4330 roubles per month). In eight regions, wages were even below the living minimum (Sostoyaniye..., 2012: 82).

We shall now examine working rural youth's wages in the last month before the 2011 RLMS survey by occupational groups. Half of specialists

having higher education and office clerks and clerks serving clients in equal shares (48%), more than a third of skilled and unskilled workers, also in equal shares (37.5%), and a third of trade and service workers (30.5%) earned only from 5000 to 10 000 roubles, that is, from less than one to less than two living wages. Meanwhile, 9% of them were high-level young specialists, 20% were specialists of the middle qualification level and officials, and 26% were trade and service workers. Thirty percent of unskilled workers earned less than 5000 roubles, which was far below the living minimum. In 2011, the working person's living wage in the Russian Federation was set at 6984 roubles (Prozhitochny...). Poverty in Russia is officially defined as the share of population having an income below the living minimum. In this way, nearly half young rural working people were on the poverty line, close to the poverty line, or below the poverty line.

Wages over 10,000 roubles were paid to equal shares of half of specialists having higher education, specialists of the middle qualification level, officials, trade and service workers, skilled workers using machines (drivers, tractor operators, and other machine operators). Workers engaged in manual labour constituted the majority (75%).

As a rule, wages rise with age due to the experience gained by the worker and the growing compliance of his/her skills with the employer's demand. However, as it was noted earlier, the objective conditions of the rural space are such that professions and qualifications determine; but minimally, the wage level not only in the agrarian sector but in the whole Russian economy as well.

It is seen from Table 6 that wages of young working countrymen do not differ much from the wages earned by rural workers in the older age categories.

Let us consider the financial and material status of young countrymen's households. Judging by their monetary incomes in the month before the survey, more than a third young countrymen lived on the poverty line: their incomes were on or below the living minimum level. As it was indicated above, in 2011, the average living minimum for the able-bodied population was set at 6984 roubles.

Occupational incomes or wages are the main sources of subsistence for the majority of rural households. On the other hand, household incomes depend significantly on the household members' labour market status.



**Table 6.** Wages of rural workers, including young workers, last month, 2011, rubls, %

	Wage in the last month before the 2011 survey								
Occupational group	Age	Up to 5000	5100-10,000	10,100-15,000	15,100-20,000	20,100-30,000	More than 30,000	Total number of respondents, pers	
Law-makers, high-ranking officials	15-30			2 pers			1 pers	3 pers	
	31 and over	13.0	40.0	17.5	19.0	30.0	7.8	63	
Specialists of high qualification level	15-30	8.7	48.0	26.0	4.3	4.3	8.7	46	
	31 and over	7.0	39.0	28.0	16.0	5.5	5.0	222	
Specialists of middle qualification level	15-30	20.0	34.4	15.5	15.5	11.0	4.7	64	
	31 and over	18.0	48.0	17.0	6.0	6.0	5.0	199	
Office clerks and clerks serving clients	15-30	26.3	47.4	10.5	10.5	5.3	-	19	
	31 and over	25.5	45.0	14.0	8.0	8.0	-	51	
Trade and service workers	15-30	20.0	30.0	27.0	12.0	5.5	5.6	56	
	31 and over	20.0	46.0	20.0	9.0	3.0	2.0	173	
Skilled manual workers	15-30	2.0	22.0	29.0	30.0	13.0	4.0	59	
	31 and over	8.0	25.0	28.0	18.0	17.0	4.5	131	
Skilled workers using machines and devices	15-30	13.0	37.0	16.7	21.0	11.0	1.3	72	
	31 and over	10.0	32.0	25.0	11.0	12.0	10.0	245	
Unskilled workers	15-30	30.0	37.0	16.5	11.0	2.0	4.0	54	
	31 and over	42.0	37.0	13.0	4.0	3.0	1.0	207	

Source: RLMS 2011 data.

Young countrymen's statements concerning the material status of their households may be taken as assessments and criteria of their level of living. About 40% of the households of young rural residents can be well ranked as belonging to the poor strata of the population.

**Table 7.** Rural youth's assessments of the material status of their households, 2011, %

Level of rural household material security	Ages 15–24	Ages 25–29	Older age groups
Incomes not enough even for food	4.6	7.7	5.2
Enough money for food, but hard put to buy clothes and pay for public utility services	34.6	40.4	37.2
Enough money for food and clothes, but cannot afford the needed durable goods (TV set, refrigerator, etc.)	45.0	38.0	41.5
Affording food, clothes and requisite durable goods, but not enough money to buy a new car	10.2	9.6	11.1
Flat in an urban locality, summer cottage	3.1	2.9	2.7
Enough money to buy all what is found needed	2.5	1.4	2.3
Total	100	100	100
Total number of respondents	324	208	2262

Source: Rosstat household survey data.

The current situation with the financial and material security of rural youth's households is due to the fact that half of the jobs offered by employers in the agricultural and wood industry sectors of the economy are paid below the able-bodied population's living minimum; that is, the jobs are physical rather than economic. A characteristic feature of the Russian labour market is the demand and supply balancing not by the release of the labour force, as it happened in other post-Soviet economies, but by maintaining super-flexible payment mechanisms which allowed to hold back the labour force under a considerable reduction of the labour compensation fund. The use of such scheme in the rural labour market brought about nonstandard ways of adjustment. These included, in the first place, engagement in the informal sector, delays of payment, forced

vacation, payment in kind, and production of agricultural products on household subsidiary plots.

While urban enterprises happened to pay bonuses to their workers from time to time, depending on the enterprise profitability, nonpayments in the Agroindustrial Complex, in agriculture in particular, took on overwhelming dimensions: practically all agricultural enterprises did not pay their workers for six to twelve months. Sometimes countrymen were paid in kind. For instance, they got fodder instead of money. The lack of monetary incomes and cash is a persistent problem for countrymen today too (Mukhanova, M. N. et. al., 2014: 176).

Judging by the Rosstat data, nonpayments to 15,100 agricultural workers amounted to nearly 215.9 mln roubles in 2010. The situation as of September 2013 was not much better. Payment arrears in agriculture, hunting and timber harvesting amounted to 464 348 000 roubles owed to 20 835 people. Enterprises operating in these sectors lacked cash to pay their workers (Prosrochennaya... 2013).

What is more, that labour market model created a rather contradictory current situation with personnel in agriculture. In spite of considerable unemployment in rural areas, many enterprises need workers. The survey of agricultural managers conducted in 2011 showed that 36% agricultural enterprises were short of work force. But payments offered in nearly half of vacancies were below the living wage. On the other hand, 10% of enterprises had redundant workers. They were not discharged however because they would not find another job and would add to the unemployment ranks in the region. In turn, personnel redundancy restrained the rise in payments to the really required working contingents. In this way, the vicious circle was closed (Sostoyaniye..., 2012: 53).

Hence the high unemployment levels in rural areas. Unresourceful and maladjusted young workers remained in low-paid jobs or did not have stable jobs. The informal employment sector began to serve as a cushion for many such workers and also helped to ease the social tension in rural areas. Cardinal changes in the agrarian sector speeded up the formation of informal economic relations which transformed the rural labour market. Mass informal occupation of the rural population occurred as a response to the changed methods of economic management and employment conditions.

### **Informal occupation of rural youth**

The sector of informal occupation of the rural population is a structure formed as a result of institutional and social transformations in the agrarian branch of economy in the 1990s. The informally occupied are classified by statisticians as “persons who, during the period of survey, were engaged at least in one production unit of the informal sector irrespective of their employment status and whether this job was primary or secondary for them. The absence of state registration in the capacity of a legal entity is taken as the criterion for an informal sector unit identification” (Ponyatiye... 2010).

The analysis of age groups by the data of the survey of rural households undertaken by Rosstat in 2011 shows that young people aged 15–24 made up the majority of those engaged in the informal sector – 40%; the share of young people aged 25–29 was 30%. Young people of the older age groups made up 24%. Jobs in the informal sector were a primary occupation for a third of rural youth (33%). They worked as hired labourers at the enterprises of individual entrepreneurs (43%), as labourers hired by physical persons or individual entrepreneurs (36%), or independently, on an individual basis, in the entrepreneurial sphere without registration as a legal entity, at farms, or on household subsidiary plots producing agricultural products (20%) (Mukhanova, 2013: 79–80].

It can be supposed that occupation in the informal sector might be a kind of practice for part of young people, where they get skills for independent work in a competitive environment and acquire elements of market behaviour. This would make for the selection of young rural residents capable of individual entrepreneurship. It is obvious that the present-day environment, viewed as a sociocultural field and its social institutions with the functioning consumer society values, exert influence on the young people’s social behaviour and determine their characteristics. In this way, a structure or layer could be formed, having certain chances and tending to a certain style and mode of life conditioned by the economic and social capitals possessed by individuals. And they would live the next periods of their lives in this continuum. However, the realization of individualist orientations as market-based values remains problematic for young countrymen, which is evident from the RLMS data for 1994–2011. The RLMS figures show that over the entire period of observation the great

majority (95%) of rural youth, as well as the people of the older generation, did not try to organize their own enterprise or to open their own business, that is, market-oriented behaviour was not characteristic of them. The number of those who tried to start their own businesses but failed (4%) was greater than the number of those who eventually gained success (1%). Among the reasons, why rural people do now wish to open their own businesses or fail to do it, is not only the lack of market experience but also their distrustful attitude to the officials and rich people (Mukhanova et. al., 2014: 61].

The informal sector of the Russian labour market is characterized by its high vulnerability. Informal workers are exposed to various risks of unstable working life. The informal sector of the economy is distinguished, in the first place, by low payments, its legal negation and unprotectedness, unavailability of labour rights and the absence of social security. Young rural informal workers are the most insecure contingent of all. The Rosstat sociological survey; carried out in 2011, confirms these inferences. The greater part of young working countrymen (about 70%) were not satisfied with the size of payments; half of them (50%) doubted the job stability and an opportunity for professional development, were dissatisfied with work conditions, and were not satisfied morally as they would rather have been regarding their work as “useful”.

The analysis of the rural youth working in the informal sector of the economy by the education level allowed a conclusion to be made that the prevailing categories were persons having primary vocational, general secondary, secondary vocational and incomplete secondary education. They made up 87% in aggregate. The greater part of young countrymen engaged in the informal sector of the economy (67%) worked not in the specialities they had been trained for.

Incomes of 41% of the households of young countrymen engaged in the informal sector ranged from 10 100 to 20 000 roubles; 32.4% had incomes from 5000 to 10 000 roubles. There were not enough money even for food in 9% of the households; 36% households had enough money for food only, but were hard put to buy clothes and pay for communal services. The cost of communal services in rural areas was 3000–5000 roubles on the average, that is, practically half of incomes went to pay communal services. Those who had enough money for food and clothes but could not afford buying durable goods (a TV set, refrigerator, etc.) made up 42% of young workers.

A comparison of the household monetary incomes of young countrymen working in the informal sector with the living minimum, which is the survival standard, showed that the dimensions of poverty among rural youth, and the rural population in general, are significant. That is, the survival model as a process and way of life remains a persistent qualitative characteristic of rural youth.

### **Marital behaviour of rural youth**

Marital behaviour of rural youth produces a great influence on the reproduction of rural population and family composition (Table 8). It is known that population mobility, the cost of living growth, and longer terms of study make for an increase in the young people's mean age at first marriage. The available data confirm this statement and hypotheses.

The nuptiality levels lowering in the 23–30 age category tells of changes occurring in the social behaviour of both partners.

Young men do not hurry to get married. Also, in all probability, early marriages, stimulated by premarital pregnancy, decrease. This is confirmed by the threefold nuptiality levels lowering in the younger, 15–22 age category. Young women tend to see their potential husbands as having a stable social and economic status. As to young men, the high level of unemployment among rural youth and the absence of a decent social and economic status make for their delayed marriages. Most probably, the marrying age rise is also due to the rise in the general education level, among women in the first place, longer terms of vocational training, as well as a wider spread of informal unions and common-law marriages among rural youth. The latter grew more than twofold. In all evidence, later marriages diminished divorce rates. True, divorce rates among rural population have been traditionally smaller than among urban population. Therefore, a trend of delayed starting of a family is observed among rural youth which together with unemployment, the growing cost of living, and longer studies are among the reasons leading to the rise in the mean age at first marriage.

**Table 8.** The dynamics of young countrymen's marital status indicators, 1994–2011, %

Year	1994			1998			2002			2006			2010			2011		
	15–22	23–30	15–22	23–30	15–22	23–30	15–22	23–30	15–22	23–30	15–22	23–30	15–22	23–30	15–22	23–30	15–22	23–30
Marital status																		
Never-married	59.0	16.4	83.0	28.0	85.0	32.0	91.0	38.4	85.4	36.6	87.6	37.0						
Registered marriage	25.0	77.0	11.5	62.0	9.5	47.0	6.3	43.4	8.2	43.2	7.5	44.0						
Common-law marriage	-	-	2.8	5.8	4.0	13.0	2.0	12.0	5.7	14.0	4.3	13.4						
Divorced and presently unmarried	-	-	2.0	3.0	1.0	5.6	-	5.0	0.6	4.1	-	4.6						
Widowed	-	-	-	0.8	-	0.4	-	0.7	0.2	1.0	-	0						
Marriage registered, but living apart	-	-	-	-	0.3	1.3	-	0.7	-	1.0	-	1.1						
Nil	14.6	0.4	0.6	-	-	0.4	-	-	-	-	-	-						
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100						
Total number of respondents	240	250	322	240	340	233	378	302	527	486	492	476						

Source: RLMS data.

### Conclusions

The analysis of the RLMS survey (1994–2011) and the Rosstat survey (2011) data proved that changes in the social structure are reflected in the rural youth's active and passive behavioural strategies. The level of the young countrymen's adjustment to the changed labour and living conditions depends on the quality of the social environment, which is manifested in the rural population's, including rural youth's, occupational dynamics and the transformations in the socio-professional structure. There are practically no young professionals, who used to serve various branches of agriculture, in the present-day rural social structure. Unemployment is high among rural youth, skilled workers are absent, and unskilled workers prevail. There are great numbers of working young people among poor countrymen.

Labour remains an important aspect of the rural youth life activity providing them with the means of existence. However, peripheral or marginal jobs make up a considerable part of the jobs offered on the rural labour market. These jobs do not ensure economic stability and career growth for the working young countrymen. The low level of economic stability and no prospects for career growth in the formal sector of agricultural production account for wide involvement of young people in the informal sectors of the economy. Informal sectors perform an important function in the Russian countryside by minimizing social expenses in the formal agrarian economy, but informal workers fall to and remain in the most vulnerable social category. Present-day institutional foundations in the countryside are of transitional character. Old institutions are combined with the new ones and penetrate into each other. What happens is not so much replacement of old institutions with new ones, but adjustment of the old institutional structure to new conditions. Both new and old social actors function in the heterogeneous agrarian economy, including agricultural enterprises (former kolkhozes and sovkhozes), owners of household subsidiary plots, individual farmers, and agriholdings, whose social interactions are complicated and contradictory. The process of the Agroindustrial Complex differentiation determines the new configuration of social groups, which incorporate rural youth.

In this way, many problems and characteristics inherent in the rural youth cohort stem from the objective processes going on in Russian society.



## References

- Chislennost i migratsiya naselenia Rossiiskoi Federatsii v 2010 g. [Size and migration of the population of the Russian Federation in 2010], bulletin, 2010 issue, URL: [http://www.gks.ru/bgd/regl/b11\\_107/Main.htm](http://www.gks.ru/bgd/regl/b11_107/Main.htm).
- Kapelyushnikov, R. I., 2009. *Konets rossiiskoi modeli truda?* [The end of the Russian labour model?], Moscow: Liberalnaya Missiya foundation.
- Kashin, V. I., 2013. 'V borbe za ekologicheskuyu i prodovolstvennuyu bezopasnostost Rossii' [In the struggle for the ecological and food safety of Russia], *Selskaya zhizn*, 4 July.
- Konstantinovskiy, D.L., Voznesenskaya, Ye.D., Cherednichenko, G.A., Khokhlushkina, F.A., 2011. *Obrazovaniye i zhiznenniye trayektorii molodyozhi: 1988–2008 gody* [Education and life trajectories of young people: 1998–2008], Moscow: TsSPiM.
- Mukhanova, M. N., 2012. 'Transformatsiya sotsialno-professionalnoi struktury rossiiskogo sela' [Transformation of the socio-professional structure of the Russian village (1994–2009)], *Obshchestvenniye nauki i sovremennost*, Vol. 1: 47–55.
- Mukhanova, M. N., 2013. 'Proizvodstvennaya deyatel'nost i tipy selskikh domokhozyaistv (na primere lichnykh podsobnykh khozyaistv)' [Productive activity and types of rural households (the case of family farms)], *Mir Rossii*, Vol. 1: 78–105.
- Mukhanova, M. N., Zhvitiashvili, A. Sh., Bessokirnaya, G. P., 2014. *Rossiiskoye selo: sotsialno-strukturniye protsessy ot proshlogo k nastoyashchemu* [The Russian village: socio-structural processes from the past to the present], Moscow: Knizhny dom Librokom.
- Okonchatelniye itogi Vserossiiskoi perepisi naseleniya 2010 g. [Final results of the 2010 All-Russia census], URL: [http://www.perepis-2010.ru/results\\_of\\_the\\_census/results-inform.php](http://www.perepis-2010.ru/results_of_the_census/results-inform.php).
- Otsenka chislennosti postoyannogo naseleniya na 1 yanvarya 2011 goda, na 1 yanvarya 2012 goda i v srednem za 2011 god [Estimates of the size of resident population for 1 January 2011, 1 January 2012 and 2011 average], URL: [http://www.gks.ru/free\\_doc/new\\_site/population/demo/Popul2011-2012.xls](http://www.gks.ru/free_doc/new_site/population/demo/Popul2011-2012.xls).
- Ponyatiye i opredeleniye v obsledovanii naseleniya po zanyatosti. 2010 [The concept and definition in population employment survey. 2010], URL: [http://www.gks.ru/bgd/regl/b10\\_30/main.htm](http://www.gks.ru/bgd/regl/b10_30/main.htm).

- ‘Prinyat dolzhniye mery’. Obrashcheniye rukovoditelei mezhregionalnogo obyedineniya APK Severo-Zapada k Predsedatelyu Pravitelstva RF D.A. Medvedevu [To take appropriate measures. The appeal of heads of the interregional association of the North-West Agro-Industrial Complex to Chairman of the Government of the Russian Federation D.A. Medvedev], *Selskaya zhizn*, 5 Sept. 2013.
- Prosrochennaya zadolzhennost po zarabotnoi plate na 1 sentyabrya 2013 [Overdue wage payments as of 1 September 2013], bulletin, URL: [http://www.gks.ru/wps/wcm/connect/rosstat\\_main/rosstat/ru/statistics/publications/catalog/doc\\_1237983568234](http://www.gks.ru/wps/wcm/connect/rosstat_main/rosstat/ru/statistics/publications/catalog/doc_1237983568234).
- Prozhitochny minimum [Living minimum], URL: [http://npoforex.ru/bigmoney/posost\\_132755051](http://npoforex.ru/bigmoney/posost_132755051).
- ‘Sostoyaniye sotsialno-trudovoi sfery sela i predlozheniya po yeyo uregulirovaniyu’ [The state of the rural social and labour sphere and proposals for its regulation], 2011 annual report on the monitoring results, Moscow: FGBNU Rosinformagrotekh, 2012, No. 13.
- Trud i zanyatost. Trudoviye resursy [Labour and employment. Manpower resources], URL: [http://www.gks.ru/wps/wcm/connect/rosstat\\_main/rosstat/ru/statistics/wages/labour\\_force/](http://www.gks.ru/wps/wcm/connect/rosstat_main/rosstat/ru/statistics/wages/labour_force/).