

Surnames Distribution as Evidence of Interregional and International Migration in Russia¹

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Annotation. *The paper uses multidisciplinary approach implemented at the crossroads of geography, anthropology, demography and history. Based on phone subscriber data, we are trying to answer how migration influences the surnames variation in Russian regions. We found that the regions with a high variety of surnames are located within the Russian main belt of settlement, which has fostered a more active exchange and admixture of the population. Several regional cases are explored too.*

Key words: *migration, surnames distribution, ethnicities*

Background: Surnames are studied for onomastics purposes (Kalinin 2018; Unbegaun 1989; Zhuravlev 2005) and especially for ethnographic, genetic (Du et al. 1992; Balanovskaja et al. 2005; Balanovskaja, Balanovskij 2007; Graf et al. 2010) and migration purposes (Nikonov 1988; Legay, Vernay 2000; Temirgaleev 2016;), as well as for the study of social mobility (Clark, Cummins 2014). The interest in the study of Russian surnames has increased since Unbegaun (1972) published his book with the same title in 1972, though two years earlier, two collections of articles on onomastics were released too (Nikonov, Superanskaja 1970; Nikonov 1970). Later, like Unbegaun's study, large-scale projects continued to rely on telephone directories in one or several cities, mostly Moscow and St. Petersburg (Nikonov 1987; Zhuravlev 2005; Nazarov 2018). Other sources of information were address books, directories from the countryside and small cities (Balanovskaja et al. 2005) and the database on losses in The Great Patriotic War, 1941-1945 (Kalinin 2018). Among the limitations of these studies, are outdated and inconsistent sources, small territorial coverage and population samples. Zhuravlev highlights that these studies examine an incidence, not a prevalence (Zhuravlev 2005). Moreover, researchers often narrow surname variety, picking up only Russian ethnic surnames. However, Russia is a multi-national state with over 186 ethnic groups, living mainly in national republics and autonomous districts. To the best of our knowledge, no one has yet investigated surnames in modern Russia in a representative way for all regions.

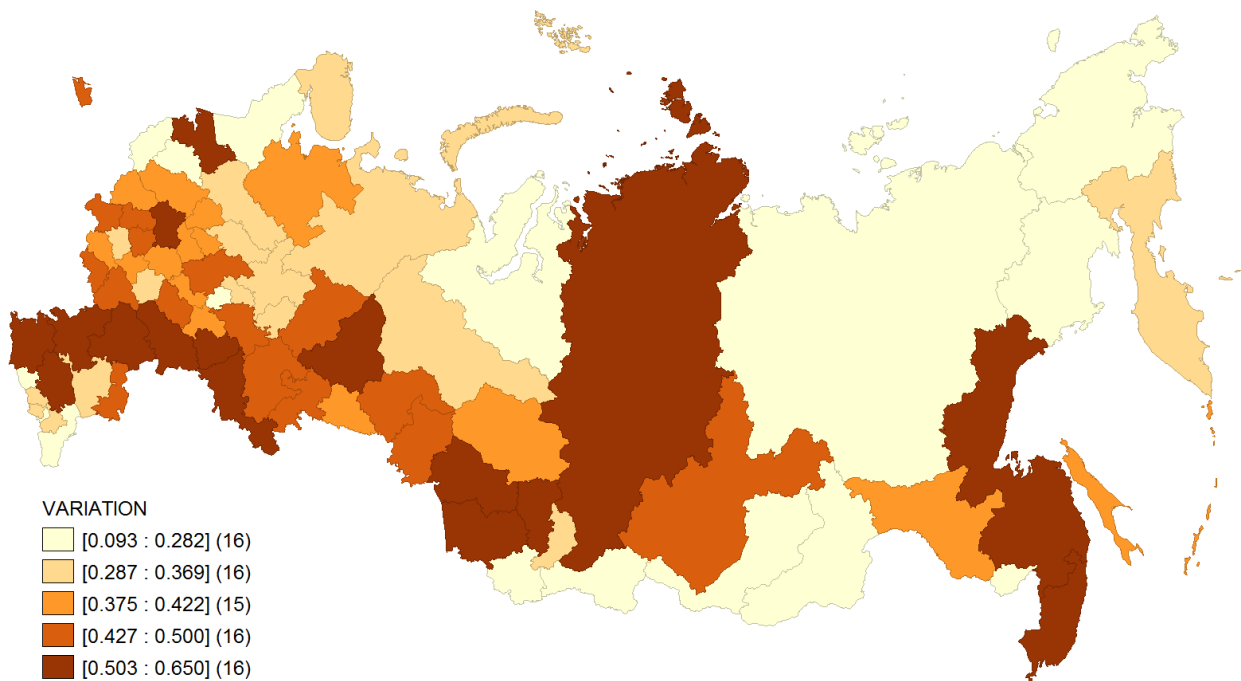
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Data. We are using phone subscriber data. Our data covers about a third of the Russian adult population in all regions, as of January 2019. We did not exclude migrants, as they add surname variety to the present population, especially in the capitals and border regions. Our sample, which followed the same pattern as in other studies, was restricted to male subscribers. The sample included twenty nine million persons, with a variation of three hundred and eighty thousand surnames.

Methods. We calculated variation of surnames in Russia and its regions. To calculate the variation and avoid the influence of population size on heterogeneity, we randomly picked up seven thousand surnames (the number of persons in the smallest region of our sample) from each region. Next, we made one thousand iterations of this procedure, after which we calculated the average and median number of distinctive surnames in each region, and they did not differ by more than two surnames. Finally, we divided the median to the subsample value (seven thousand) resulting in the so called adjusted variation.

Results. Map 1 shows the variation of surnames in Russian regions. Moscow, St. Petersburg, most subjects of the Volga and Ural economic regions, as well as the Siberian regions (Altai krai and Krasnoyarsk krai, Novosibirsk and Kemerovo oblast), and two krai of the Far Eastern regions (Primorsky and Khabarovsk krai), are characterised by high heterogeneity.

Tyva Republic and Ingushetia have the smallest variation. The scarcity of effective surname number in the regions can be partly attributed to the particular frequency distribution of surnames. For example, in these republics, the most popular 500 surnames in each region are used by 94% of the population. Each tenth person in Ingushetia may have one of the six major surnames. Evloev, Ozdoev, Mal'sagov, Aushev, KHamkhoev or Nal'giev surnames are among them. The concentration of namesakes in the Tyva Republic is even higher. Damba et al (2018), studied two numerous clans in the republic: Mongush and Oorzhak. We can confirm that the share of the first clan in the regional population is eleven per cent, while the second one takes six per cent. Another big clan is Ondar, with four per cent. This means that each fifth person in Tyva holds one of the mentioned surnames.



Map. 1. Adjusted variation of surnames in Russia

We can find some ethnic surnames in the regions as well. For example, there is a common surname Kanev in the Komi republic that derived from the word ‘Kan’, which means a ‘cat’ in Komi language, and was used as a spirit animal for some ancient clans. The Buryat surname Dorzhiev comes from ‘Dorje’, which in Tibetan language stands for ‘holy weaponry’ or ‘wand’.

Surnames Aliev and Mamedov, which have Azerbaijani origin, are very popular in the Tyumen oblast and Khanty-Mansi Autonomous district. These regions have drawn many oil specialists from Azerbaijan in 1980’s. Earlier than this, since the 1960’s, Tatars and Bashkirs came to the regions for the development of oil and gas fields (Stas 2017), and this may explain the appearance of the Turkic surname, Karimov.

Border regions have surnames that represents nationals or ancestors of neighbouring country citizens. The Primorsky krai, which has a common border with China and North Korea, has the East Asian surnames Li, Van and Kim. The high proportion of Chinese and Korean surnames in the Russian Far East testifies to the strong relationships between Russia and Eastern Asian countries, which may be expressed through migration and intermarriage. Other frontier regions, which have experienced the influence of a neighbouring country, are the Belgorod oblast and the Krasnodar krai. Sorokina and Krikun (2015) noted a high share of Ukrainian surnames in the Belgorod oblast too. Nevertheless, border regions do not always have a high variation of surnames, as might be implied, due to migration. For example, Russian regions – the Republics of Altai, Tuva, Buryatia and the Zabaykalsky krai – bordering Mongolia and China (Inner Mongolia) have a low variation of surnames. This may be explained by ethno-geographical factors: these regions are far from the main roads and populated mostly by Buddhists. Other border regions with low surname variations are

the Pskov and Novgorod oblasts, where we observe the hollowing out of these poor regions due to the huge magnets of Moscow and St. Petersburg. Many people shun depressed regions for better opportunities elsewhere. We can say that one-way flows dominate there, which is comparable to the extinction of some names. In addition, the Pskov and Novgorod oblasts share a border with Latvia and Estonia, and a visa is required to enter the countries. Russian regions, which are located south of the Pskov oblast, adjacent to Belarus and Ukraine, have high surname variation due to the free circulation of the population between these countries.

People that live in Norilsk, Chukotka, and Magadan feel their isolation from the mainland (though geographically they do not live on islands). There is a distinctive expression used with regard to people living close to the main belt of settlement, “to live on the mainland” (“жить на материке”) (Zamyatina 2014). This isolation is expressively reflected in their surnames, which are not common in Russia. For example, Chuvans, local ethnos in Chukotka, have specific for this people surname, D’yachkov, which formed from ‘Deacon’. D’yachkov surname, same as Popov (formed from ‘Priest’), was given to Chuvans by missionaries in the time of Christianization (Tklich 2017). We may conclude that the surnames carry specifics of the historical exploration of the territory and settlement patterns.

Discussion. We examined the heterogeneity of surnames in the regions with the ratio we called adjusted variation. The higher the ratio, the higher the pattern spread and vice versa. At its extreme point, the ratio equals one, meaning that every person in the region has their own unique surname. In our sample, Moscow and the Moscow oblast have the highest ratio, equaling 0.65, that is there are 65 different surnames among 100 persons. We think this ratio mostly demonstrates an extremely mixed population in Moscow. Adjusted variation compared to conventional variation is less prone to the influence of population size. For example, in calculating the conventional variation (as a ratio of the number of distinctive surnames to the population size) in Moscow, we divide a large number of distinctive surnames to the much larger population size. This gives us little surname diversity in the region that goes against the logic. In contrary, while counting adjusted variation, we made one thousand standard subsamples, each of seven thousand random people, from every region. As a result, the adjusted variation has weak positive correlation with the population size, while conventional variation shows weak negative correlation.

Overall, the territories of the main belt of settlement have a higher adjusted surname variation. Historically, the regions became connected by the Siberian Route, which was later superseded by the Trans-Siberian Railway and the Amur Cart Road, which fostered a more active exchange and admixture of the population. Our analysis has shown a diverse palette of surnames in Russia, which is determined by various geographical landscapes, historical pathways of settlement, ethnic, cultural and religious plurality.

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