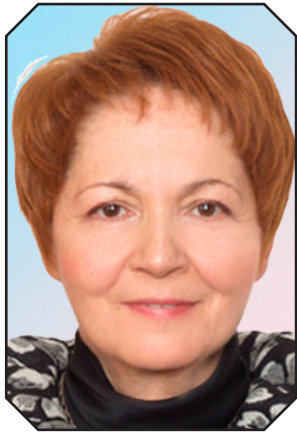Polina Kozyreva, Elizaveta Blagodeteleva

The 3rd Russia Longitudinal Monitoring Survey of Higher School of Economics User Conference, May 19–20, 2017, Moscow, Higher School of Economics: Conference Report[1]

KOZYREVA, Polina — Doctor of Sciences in Sociology, Vice Director, Institute of Sociology, Russian Academy of Sciences (IS RAS). Address: 24/35 Krzhizhanovskogo str., 117218, Moscow, Russian Federation.

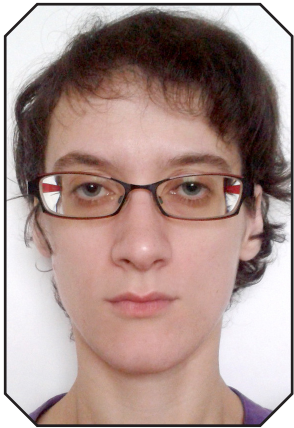**Email:** pkozyreva@isras.ru

Abstract

The 3rd Russia Longitudinal Monitoring Survey of Higher School of Economics (RLMS-HSE) User Conference, held May 19–20, 2017, at the National Research University Higher School of Economics with the support of Research Center Demoscope, Institute of Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences and University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill, aimed to provide a forum for the discussion of the research projects based on RLMS-HSE. It brought together nearly one hundred scholars from Russia, the United States, the United Kingdom, and the European Union, whose scientific interests spanned various fields of economics, demography, sociology, political sciences, public health, and psychology. The papers, presented at the plenary and parallel sessions, discussed multiple research problems pertaining to labor market and wages, education, retirement, health, ethnicity, migration, and subjective well-being and attitudes. Although an overwhelming majority of the research topics had been recurring themes at the RLMS-HSE events since the inception of the project, the papers did not fail to demonstrate the wealth of opportunities the RLMS-HSE data had to offer. What set this conference apart from previous ones was a pronounced interest in those sections of the RLMS-HSE data that contain detailed information about health. The sessions on this matter included many fruitful discussions concerning objective indicators of health status, a healthy lifestyle, and the use of healthcare services.

Keywords: Russia Longitudinal Monitoring Survey of Higher School of Economics; RLMS-HSE; longitudinal studies; transition; household; labor market; consumption; health.

The 3rd RLMS-HSE User Conference, held on 19–20 May 2017, at the National Research University HSE with the support of Research Center "Demoscope," Institute of Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences and University of North Carolina—Chapel Hill, aimed to provide a forum for the discussion of the research projects based on RLMS-HSE. It brought together almost one hundred scholars from Russia, the USA, the United Kingdom, and the European Union whose scientific interests spanned various fields of economics, demography, sociology, political sciences, public health, and psychology.

BLAGODETELEVA, Elizaveta — Candidate of Sciences (PhD) in History, Centre for Longitudinal Studies, Institute for Social Policy, National Research University "Higher School of Economics" (HSE). Address: 20 Myasnitskaya str, 101000, Moscow, Russian Federation.

Email: eblagodeteleva@ hse.ru (corresponding author)

RLMS-HSE is a series of nationally representative surveys launched by G7 countries in 1992 to collect objective information on health, economics, and social behavior of the Russian population during the period of political and economic transition[2]. The ongoing phase of the project (Phase II) spans the period between 1994 and 2016, with the exceptions of 1997 and 1999, which makes it one of the longest longitudinal surveys, along with the U.S. Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID), British Household Panel Survey (BHPS), German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP), and Luxembourg Household Panel (PSELL). RLMS-HSE includes both a cross-sectional and longitudinal component. The cross-sectional component is based on the first nationally representative sample of households, designed under the supervision of Leslie Kish and Steve Heeringa, two prominent experts in survey methodology. Between 2000 and 2010, the sample was replenished several times to account for attrition and to increase the sample size. The longitudinal component of RLMS-HSE strives to follow households and individuals throughout Phase II, even if they moved out of the initial household units.

One of the salient features of RLMS-HSE is that it covers a wide range of topics, including household-level income, expenditures and service utilization, individual education, the history of employment, details of a working life and retirement, a health status and dietary intake. RLMS-HSE also contains detailed information on health, education, and the patterns of time use among minors living in the surveyed households. The data collected on the household and individual level is conveniently supplemented with the region-specific prices and community infrastructure data. Since the RLMS-HSE questionnaires were designed to match the best international practices, and to put the Russian experience of economic transition into a broad international context, it forms an essential part of the Cross National Equivalent File (CNEF), a project that brings together the data of various national longitudinal surveys, including surveys carried out in the USA, Canada, Great Britain, Germany, Switzerland, Australia, and South Korea, to promote and enhance comparative studies of national economies and societies across the world.

In 2010, the National Research University Higher School of Economics began to provide funding for the RLMS-HSE project. Since then the university has successfully hosted three international conferences for current and prospective RLMS-HSE users. Researchers from Russia, the USA, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Germany, Spain, Italy, Poland, Finland, and Japan came together to share their user experience and discuss the multiple applications of the RLMS-HSE data in the various fields of economics, sociology, and health studies. Presentations at the first and second conferences focused on labor market and wage inequality, economic returns on education, households' responses to economic shocks and poverty, self-assessed health and the demand for healthcare, and alcohol and tobacco consumption. An overwhelming majority of those presentations were subsequently developed into academic papers published in

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[2]   "Russia Longitudinal Monitoring Survey of Higher School of Economics" (RLMS-HSE) is available for public use at: https://www.hse.ru/en/rlms/. For more information on the history of RLMS-HSE, survey methodology and attrition, please, see: [Gerry, Papadopoulos 2015; Kozyreva et al. 2016; Kozyreva, Sabirianova Peter 2015].

international peer-reviewed journals. Furthermore, in 2015, the journal *Economics in Transition* released a collection of the selected papers from the 1st RLMS-HSE User Conference as a special issue dedicated to the Russian economic transition. This issue not only gives a comprehensive overview of the ongoing economic trends, but also clearly demonstrates the wealth of opportunities that RLMS-HSE data presents to researchers worldwide.

The 3rd RLMS-HSE User Conference became the latest in a series of events dedicated to the RLMS-HSE project at HSE. It began with Maria Yudkevich, vice-rector of HSE, and Klara Sabirianova Peter, Associate Professor of Economics and Principal Investigator of the RLMS-HSE at Carolina Population Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, welcoming all the participants and briefly outlining the agenda for the upcoming conference sessions[3]. The plenary and the two streams of parallel sessions were organized around the following themes: labor market and wages, education, retirement, health, ethnicity and migration, and subjective well-being and attitudes.

Hartmut Lehmann (University of Bologna, Italy & IZA, Germany) opened the plenary session with a keynote address, discussing the wage gap between workers in formal and informal employment in Russia during the global recession of 2008 and 2009. Prof. Lehmann stressed the crucial role that the definition of informality plays in assessing the incidence and determinants of informal employment. To analyze informal employment in Russia, he suggested the use of a segmented model where an upper tier is constituted by voluntary informal employees and self-employed individuals, and a lower tier encompasses all the instances of involuntary informal employment. While the selection into an upper tier is contingent upon a university degree, involuntary informal employment is strongly associated with the previous history of immigration and lower levels of education. Being male, along with having a positive attitude toward risk-taking, generally increase the likelihood of informal employment. Both voluntary and involuntary informal employment result in a wage penalty, which is small for involuntary employees and almost negligible for those who entered the informal labor market out of their own volition. The only group that seems to derive any benefit from informality is self-employed (mostly male) individuals.

The participants continued to discuss the peculiarities of the Russian labor market in a stream of sessions, "Labor Market and Wages 1 & 2". The presentations, featured in the sessions, were primarily concerned with establishing causal relationships between the distribution of real wages and various socioeconomic and political phenomena, such as informality, gender inequality, discrimination against the disabled, job seniority, wage arrears, and recent changes in the tax code. Particularly noteworthy were the papers presented by Vladimir Gimpel'son, Rostislav Kapeliyshnikov, and Aleksey Oshchepkov (HSE, Russia), and Anna Demianova and Anna Lukiyanova (HSE, Russia).

The paper by Gimpel'son et al. discussed a wage premium awarded on the grounds of seniority. According to the results of the previous studies, seniority in general used to yield no wage premium in Russia until the late 2000s. Gimpel'son et al. show that the incidence, amount, and growth rate of a wage premium varied at the early stages of economic transition, depending on whether workers were employed in the state or private sector of the economy, and whether they started their careers in the Soviet times or later. The paper by Demianova and Lukiyanova analyzed the discrimination against the disabled at work. The presented findings suggested that while the effect of health limitations per se is rather small, people face a high level of discrimination on the basis of a legal disability status. Nonetheless, the authors were cautious to attribute a sizeable thirty-percent gap in employment between people with and without a disability status entirely to discriminating practices, since the data does not allow the researchers to thoroughly account for all work-related differences.

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[3]   The program of the 3rd RLMS-HSE User Conference is available at: https://www.hse.ru/en/rlms/conference2017/

The papers presented at the "Education and Labor Market" session dealt with issues such as the intergenerational transmission of educational attainment and earning capacity, the impact of the unified state exam on the choice of an academic major in non-metropolitan areas, the expansion of higher education in general and the relationship between this expansion, assortative mating and rising income inequality in particular. Klara Sabirianova Peter presented one of her latest papers, prepared in collaboration with Olga Belskaya (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, USA) and Christian Posso (Central Bank of Colombia, Colombia). The paper evaluated the socioeconomic consequences of a recent surge in the number of university campuses in Russia. It revealed that although newly opened campuses attract individuals with lower returns on higher education, the marginal individuals who are directly affected by the establishment of an additional campus gain considerable benefits in terms of a prospective wage. This effect is much more pronounced in smaller non-capital cities or municipalities that did not have institutions of higher education before the expansion. Compared to private institutions, the campuses of public universities have proven to be more effective in bringing in new students.

The "Work and Retirement" session focused on the sensitive issue of extending an active working life beyond the age of retirement. The participants discussed various socioeconomic factors that influence the decisions of the elderly to stay at or return to paid work after the age of retirement. At the beginning of the session, Irina Denisova (New Economic School, Russia) offered an exhaustive overview of the current "exit-to-inactivity patterns" that are characteristic of the Russian elderly. She demonstrated rather conclusively that gender does not affect the decision to exit the labor market directly, however, elderly men are more likely to stay at work if married, while elderly women are more likely to retire if there are children in the household (the latter obviously supports the common interpretation of 'babushka' as a primary caregiver in the Russian context). The likelihood of retirement also decreases if a person belongs to the top occupational groups according to the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) classification, works at a position that does not require a high level of skills, works as an entrepreneur or, conversely, in a public sector enterprise. The lower replacement rate also impacts the decision of high-earners to stay in the workforce. The paper by Loretta Platts (Stress Research Institute, Stockholm University, Sweden) and Karen Glaser (Institute of Gerontology, King's College London, the United Kingdom) made a valuable contribution to the discussion by analyzing the return to work after retirement, or "unretirement", in a comparative study of Russia, Germany, and the United Kingdom. The authors suggested that, unlike gender, age, education, health, and high income, financial concerns do not play a crucial role when people make a decision to return to work.

The "Consumption" session gathered researchers with a particular interest in the relationship between the consumption of goods and services and the financial behavior of Russian households. The participants discussed the impact of credit on disposable household income, the association between the returns on assets, indebtedness, and the growth of consumption. The session started with Vadim Radaev presenting the paper prepared in collaboration with Zoya Kotelnikova (Higher School of Economics, Russia). The paper outlined consumer strategies during four economic shocks the Russian population went through between 1994 and 2014. It describes a relatively stable pattern of consumer responses, which includes a decrease in all types of consumption, with food expenditures suffering fewer cuts compared to spendings on non-food goods and services. The authors also detected a temporary leveling effect that each economic shock had on the living standards of different income groups.

The stream of sessions dedicated to the topic of health reflected the growing interest in the RLMS-HSE among health researchers. The papers, presented at the sessions, made ample use of the RLMS-HSE data on chronic diseases, self-reported health, and the utilization of health services. Researchers from the Centre for Health Economics, Management and Policy (CHEMP), that is currently led by Christopher Gerry and resides at the HSE campus in St. Petersburg, appeared as major contributors to this conversation. Paul Kind, an international research advisor at CHEMP, (Institute for Health Sciences, University of Leeds, the United Kingdom) set the

tone by discussing the prospective use of the RLMS-HSE data for the purposes of adjusting an international standardized system "European Quality of life in five dimensions" (EQ-5D) to suit the needs of the Russian healthcare system. Prof. Kind argued that the indicators of various health statuses, obtained on the basis of the 2005 RLMS-HSE questionnaire, may well help to make the decisions about the allocation of national resources available to healthcare more efficient. Other topics explored were the influence of health shocks on labor market outcomes (both in terms of wages and working hours), the relationship between chronic diseases, self-reported health, and the demand for healthcare, moral hazard in a private insurance market. A promising research project by Margarita Gladkaya (HSE, Russia) and Diana Quirmbach (London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, the United Kingdom) focused on the nutritional outcomes of the decrease in consumer choices resulting from the import ban in 2014. Other presentations particularly worth mentioning were by Natalia Permyakova (University of Southampton, the United Kingdom) who discussed her findings on the relationship between intergenerational living arrangements and men's health, and Yana Roshchina (HSE, Russia) outlining the determinants of a healthy lifestyle among Russian adults.

Anti-immigrant sentiments, ethnic tensions, and xenophobia were the central topics of the "Ethnicity and Migration" session. Participants explored the socioeconomic background and identity of those afflicted by such attitudes and sentiments to define the roots of the phenomenon. The papers presented mostly by the researchers from the Institute of Sociology, Russian Academy of Science (IS RAS) drew on the data of the 2015 RLMS-HSE round, which is only partially available for public use. In his presentation, Vladimir Mukomel (IS RAS, Russia) brought together the results of RLMS-HSE and a number of focus groups conducted by IS RAS in 2015 to show that intolerant individuals lag behind in terms of accumulated social and human capital; moreover, they are unwilling or ill-prepared to invest in these types of capital. Intolerant individuals demonstrate lower trust levels in hypothetical situations, presented to them by an interviewer, and are less likely to identify with the Russian citizens, residents of the same region or settlement, or people of their own ethnicity and religion.

At the last session of the conference, "Subjective Well-Being and Attitudes," participants addressed various questions pertaining to the studies of well-being, including how the subjective assessment of wealth, respect, and life satisfaction changes over time and what it tells the researchers about the reliability of such measurements, whether university education results in positive attitudes toward market economy, and what factors contribute to the higher levels of life satisfaction among entrepreneurs, compared to the population in general. At the beginning of the session, Francesca Dalla Pozza (European Bank for Reconstruction and Development [EBRD], the United Kingdom) presented the comparative study dedicated to the evaluation of the impact that political and economic transition had on objective and subjective well-being in different post-communist countries. The study was carried out by an impressive international team of researchers and used the RLMS-HSE data to corroborate the results of the Life in Transition Survey (LiTSIII), which was funded by the EBRD and the World Bank. The authors found that, although those who were born during the transition suffered significant socioeconomic deprivation, as measured in terms of height, these birth cohorts ended up better educated and more satisfied with their lives.

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