Life-Course Patterns of Young Russian-Origin Estonians: An Origin-Destination Comparison

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Abstract

Using extensive census data from Russia and Estonia and employing a synthetic cohort approach, I conducted the first origin-destination comparison of key life-course statuses during the transition to adulthood to provide holistic insights into the demographic dynamics among Russian-origin Estonians (aged 15–35). The analysis scrutinized the degree of similarity or dissimilarity between Russian-origin Estonians and their native counterparts in Russia and Estonia across three dimensions: timing (i.e., age-specific status prevalence), ordering (i.e., proportions of noncompleted status pairs), and heterogeneity (i.e., age-specific status combinations). Overall, findings suggest a semblance of demographic similarity between Russian-origin Estonians and native Estonians in family domains (i.e., union status and parenthood), indicating an adaptation to family life-course patterns. Dissimilarities in the timing, ordering, and heterogeneity of key statuses between Russian-origin and native Estonians predominantly manifest in nonfamily domains. Descriptively, I observe signs of immigrant disadvantage (pertaining to school attendance and employment) alongside facets of cultural maintenance (regarding residential independence).

Keywords

first life-course statuses; Russian-origin Estonians; young people; adulthood; origin-destination comparison; Estonia; Russia

An increasing number of studies have delved into the transition to adulthood among young adults with a migratory background in Europe (Huschek et al., 2010, 2012; Hannemann and Kulu, 2015; Kleinepier et al., 2015; Lübke, 2015; Baykara-Krumme and Milewski, 2017; Ferrari and Pailhé, 2017; Impicciatore et al., 2020). While research has predominantly focused on migrants from Mediterranean and North African countries (e.g., Turkey and Morocco) in Western Europe (e.g., Huschek et al., 2010, 2012; Ferrari and Pailhé, 2017), studies examining Russian migrants in European countries remain relatively scarce (Rahnu et al., 2015; Puur et al., 2017, 2019; Sakkeus et al., 2019; Hannemann et al., 2020).

This study adds to the literature on the family dynamics and life-course patterns of Russian migrants and their descendants. Specifically, I investigate the transition to adulthood of Russian-origin Estonians by comparing key

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life-course statuses across origin-destination contexts; Russian-origin Estonians are defined as individuals born in Estonia with at least one Russian-born parent. Estonia serves as an ideal setting for this investigation. First, ethnic Russians constitute the largest national minority in Estonia, consistently comprising around a quarter of the total population since the 1990s (Statistics Estonia Statistical Database, 2021). Among all ethnic Russians, Russian-origin individuals account for the largest share and form a sizable subpopulation. Second, prior research has revealed significant disparities in the transition to adulthood between Estonia and Russia (e.g., Billari and Liefbroer, 2010; Van den Berg and Verbakel, 2021), with Estonia exhibiting greater evidence of postponed, prolonged, and complex life-course transitions.

In contrast to previous family demographic research regarding Russian migrants in Estonia (Rahnu et al., 2015; Puur et al., 2017; Hannemann et al., 2020), this study goes beyond singular aspects of the transition to adulthood. Instead, I concurrently examine five key life-course statuses: the nonfamily statuses of school attendance and employment, as well as the family statuses of residential independence, union status, and parenthood. Utilizing census data from Estonia and Russia for young adults aged 15–35 years, I compare the timing, ordering, and heterogeneity of these five key life-course statuses between Russian-origin Estonians and native populations in both Estonia and Russia.

Conceptually, this study is grounded in the prevalent notion within the literature that differences and similarities in the transition to adulthood between migrants and natives reflect the extent of migrants' sociocultural integration into the host society (e.g., Pailhé, 2015). Methodologically, I employ descriptive metrics, drawing from a well-established body of demographic research that captures cross-national and cross-temporal patterns in the transition to adulthood concerning key life-course statuses (Modell et al., 1976; Fussell, 2005; Fussell et al., 2007; Grant and Furstenberg, 2007; Chaloupková, 2010; Tian, 2016). In a novel approach, I complement this literature by conducting the first joint origin-destination comparison of life-course patterns in the transition to adulthood, with a particular focus on Russian-origin Estonians and native populations in both Estonia and Russia. Such a joint origin-destination comparison is crucial for comprehending family demographic similarities and dissimilarities between migrants and nonmigrants, in both the country of origin and destination (Glick, 2010; Van Mol and de Valk, 2016).

I. Sketching the study's backdrop

1. Migration from Russia to Estonia

Estonia was part of the Russian Empire from 1721 to 1917, and according to the 1922 Estonian census, approximately 8.3% of the country's population was ethnic Russian at that time (Viikberg, 1999). The Soviet occupation prompted a

significant influx of immigrants to Estonia since the 1940s, characterized by distinctive features of post-1940 migration from Russia. Notably, this migration exhibited a regional concentration, primarily in the Ida-Viru and Harju counties, as well as the cities of Tallinn, Paldiski, Sillamäe, and Narva. Additionally, the educational composition of migrants underwent a transformation, initially dominated by relatively highly educated individuals but transitioning to lower-educated migrants by the early 1980s (Saar and Titma, 1992; Tammaru and Kulu, 2003). During the Soviet era, the proportion of ethnic Russians in the Estonian population reached a peak of 38% in 1989. However, with Estonia's independence in 1991, migration patterns from Russia and other former Soviet states reversed, resulting in a decline in the ethnic Russian (and Russian-speaking) population.

The formative impact of the long-standing migration from Russia to Estonia is apparent in Estonia's resident population and social structure. In 2011, ethnic Russian migrants and their descendants constituted 25% of the total population—among them, 38% belonged to the first generation and 62% belonged to the second generation (Statistics Estonia Statistical Database, 2021). Ethnic Russians are still geographically concentrated in northern and eastern Estonia and in larger cities, forming a majority of the population in eastern Ida-Viru County and a sizable population share in Tallinn; in contrast, the ethnic Russian population is smallest in rural areas (Mägi et al., 2016; Statistics Estonia Statistical Database, 2021).

The geographical segregation of ethnic Russians and native Estonians is often invoked as a structural barrier to the (demographic) integration of Russian-origin Estonians (e.g., Van Ham and Tammaru, 2011; Hannemann et al., 2020), because it is likely to reduce interethnic contact in various areas of life. Another structural barrier is the acquisition of the Estonian language. A legacy of the Soviet era, separate Estonian- and Russian-language schools have continued to operate in Estonia (Skerrett, 2013), resulting in a relative lack of proficiency in Estonian among older cohorts of Russian-origin Estonians. This language barrier may restrict access to higher education and employment opportunities and, to some extent, exacerbate occupational segregation between Russian-origin Estonians and native Estonians (Tammaru and Kulu, 2003; Saar, 2010). Since the 2000s, efforts to mitigate language-based segregation in the education system and labor market have been undertaken, including the introduction of bilingual or Estonian-taught classes in Russian-language secondary schools in 2007. These initiatives have contributed to noticeable improvements in Estonian language proficiency among (young) native Russian speakers over the past few decades (Vihalemm, 2007); however, despite advancements in language acquisition, occupational sorting along ethnic lines persists (Saar et al., 2017).

2. An origin-destination perspective on life-course patterns

Building on recent debates in demographic research on migrants and their descendants (e.g., Glick, 2010; Lübke, 2015; Van Mol and de Valk; 2016; Baykara-Krumme and Milewski, 2017; Puur et al., 2017, 2019; Sakkeus et al., 2019;

Impicciatore et al., 2020), I adopt a joint origin-destination comparison as an empirical approach. This approach posits that two spatiotemporal reference points are necessary to better understand whether and to what extent various integration processes have commenced in the lives of descendants of migrants (i.e., Russian-origin Estonians): the population in the destination country (Estonia) and the population in the origin country (Russia). For example, if the life-course patterns of Russian-origin Estonians resemble those prevailing in Estonia, we might assume that the descendants of Russian migrants have gradually adapted to the sociocultural context. The adaptation hypothesis recognizes that migration involves significant changes in the social and cultural contexts in which migrants and their descendants gradually adapt to various aspects of their lives (Alba and Nee, 1997).

Only through comparing Russian-origin Estonians to natives in Russia—a counterfactual benchmark—can we attempt to disentangle adaptation processes from other mechanisms proposed to interpret the life-course patterns of migrants' descendants—namely, selection and socialization (Kulu and González-Ferrer, 2014). The selection hypothesis posits that the migration process is not random and that individuals who choose to migrate possess certain characteristics that distinguish them from those who do not. While self-selection issues may be less relevant for Russian-origin Estonians, because they themselves did not migrate to Estonia (Adserà and Ferrer, 2014), the life-course patterns of Russian-origin Estonians may still be indirectly influenced by the characteristics of their parents, who self-selected for migration.

Finally, the socialization hypothesis highlights the ongoing role of social interactions, family dynamics, community support, and the broader social context in shaping the practices and behavior of the descendants of migrants. Hence, the life-course patterns of Russian-origin Estonians are likely shaped by sociocultural norms internalized during childhood and adolescence. However, as Russian-origin Estonians are exposed to multiple socializing agents, including parents who may adhere to values differing from mainstream social norms in Estonia and Estonian peers, they may either maintain life-course patterns typical of Russia or converge toward those typical of Estonia (Kulu and González-Ferrer, 2014).

3. The contexts at origin (Russia) and destination (Estonia)

Estonia and Russia have distinct sociocultural institutions and historical backgrounds, which contribute to differences in the transition to adulthood between the two countries. Again, I contend that assessing similarity and dissimilarity in life-course patterns necessitates a joint examination by comparing Russian-origin Estonians with both natives of Estonia and Russia. The particular origin and destination contexts of these countries serve as crucial backdrops for such evaluations. Consequently, Table 1 presents compiled

country-level indicators for 2011, roughly corresponding to the year for which census data are available.

Table 1 reveals broad similarities between Estonia and Russia regarding legal adulthood and the ages at which young adults are considered capable of making decisions related to education, work, and marriage. However, disparities emerge in educational achievement, with Russia demonstrating more favorable outcomes than Estonia. For example, larger proportions of both men and women aged 25–34 in Estonia than in Russia have not attained upper secondary education. Furthermore, Russia boasts a more highly educated population, with 50% of men aged 25–34 and 63% of same-aged women having achieved tertiary education, compared with 30% and 49%, respectively, in Estonia. Despite lower enrollment rates in upper secondary and postsecondary education in Russia, the overall shorter educational durations are still associated with comparable or even higher educational qualifications than in Estonia.

Table 1. Selected country-level indicators for Estonia and Russia, 2011

Domain/indicator	Estonia	Russia
Legal		
Age at ending mandatory education[a]	15	15
Employment age (with parental consent)[a]	15	15
Age at marriage (without parental consent)[a]	18	18
Education and employment		
% of men without upper secondary education (aged 25–34)[b]	19.0	7.0
% of women without upper secondary education (aged 25–34)[b]	10.0	5.0
% of men with tertiary education (aged 25–34)[b]	30.0	50.0
% of women with tertiary education (aged 25–34)[b]	49.0	63.0
Enrollment rate (students as % of total 15- to 19-year-olds)[b]	87.0	78.0
Enrollment rate (students as % of total 20- to 29-year-olds)[b]	29.0	22.0
Labor force participation rate of men (aged 15–24)[c]	43.4	45.8
Labor force participation rate of women (aged 15–24)[c]	36.0	37.0
Gender equality		
Gender Inequality Index[d]	0.2	0.3
Employment rate (%) of mothers (15–64 years old) with a child < 15[a]	64.4	72.3
Female part-time employment (as % of total female employment)[c]	26.7	11.5
Family and fertility		
Crude marriage rate (marriages per 1,000 people)[e]	4.1	9.2
Crude divorce rate (divorces per 1,000 people)[e]	2.3	4.7
Mean age of men at first marriage[e]	30.8	27.9
Mean age of women at first marriage[e]	28.2	25.3
Total fertility rate[e]	1.6	1.6
Adolescent fertility rate (births per 1,000 women aged 15–19)[e]	16.2	26.7
Mean age of women at first birth[e]	26.4	24.9

Note: Gender inequality index (0–1) is a composite metric of gender inequality based on reproductive health, empowerment, and the labor market; a low value indicates low inequality between women and men.
Sources: (a) Family Database, n.d.; (b) OECD, 2013; (c) Labour Force Statistics Database, n.d.; (d) Human Development Report, n.d.; (e) UNECE Statistical Database, n.d.

This contrast could be attributed to differing completion requirements and classifications of educational programs, but notably, larger proportions of students in Russia opt for shorter program durations (e.g., short-cycle tertiary education) than in Estonia (OECD, 2013).

Labor force participation rates among individuals aged 15–24, and the gender gap therein, are strikingly similar in both countries. The composite index of gender inequality is higher in Russia than in Estonia, suggesting greater disparities between women and men (in the measured dimensions of human development). Women participate in the labor market differently in the two countries: In Russia, mothers of young children exhibit a higher labor force participation rate than their counterparts in Estonia, often juggling full-time work with parenthood. Part-time employment is more prevalent in Estonia, accounting for 27% of total female employment, compared with only 12% in Russia. Marriage typically occurs in the mid- to late-20s in both countries, with a more pronounced overall retreat from marriage in Estonia (as indicated by the lower crude marriage rate). Although overall fertility levels in the two countries are the same, Russian women tend to commence motherhood somewhat earlier; this trend is partially attributed to the elevated fertility rate among 15- to 19-year-olds in Russia.

4. The transition to adulthood in Estonia and Russia

Estonia and Russia exhibit distinct patterns in the transition to adulthood, characterized by varying degrees of postponement and destandardization in life-course trajectories, aligning with the observed trend toward diversity in such patterns across Europe (Billari and Liefbroer, 2010). The variability in the transition to adulthood and family formation can be understood through different demographic schools of thought. First, such diversity may arise from country-specific institutional settings, such as welfare regimes (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Mayer, 2001). Second, it may stem from country-specific socioeconomic contexts, including labor and housing markets (Mulder and Billari, 2010). Third, variations can be attributed to country-specific sociocultural heritage, such as historical marriage patterns or the strength of family ties (Hajnal, 1965; Reher, 1998), and their respective associations with individuals' life-course trajectories. Finally, the process of individualization and family change specific to each country, as outlined in the second demographic transition (SDT) theory (Lesthaeghe, 2010), can also contribute to such differences.

Regardless of their source, tangible differences in the transition to adulthood between Estonia and Russia manifest more specifically as follows: In Estonia, leaving the parental home occurs early and is increasingly decoupled from union formation (as indicated by the high prevalence of single living immediately after leaving home for the first time, for example); marriage and family formation occur later in the life course, and the prevalence of unmarried cohabitation and children born outside married unions are high (Billari and

Liefbroer, 2010; Van den Berg and Verbakel, 2021). The comparatively early diffusion of cohabitation, separation, and repartnering makes Estonia like Scandinavian countries, which are other SDT forerunners (Katus et al., 2008). In Russia, leaving the parental home also tends to occur early in the life course but is more closely synchronized with partnership and family formation; the proportion of individuals living alone immediately after leaving home for the first time is low but has increased in younger birth cohorts (Billari and Liefbroer, 2010; Van den Berg and Verbakel, 2021). Unmarried cohabitation and births outside of marriage have risen in the post-Soviet era, signaling a "retreat from marriage" (Perelli-Harris and Gerber, 2011, p. 337), although they remain lower than in Estonia. Additionally, while Russia increasingly exhibits key markers of SDT, such as solo-living, unmarried cohabitation, and nonmarital childbearing, alongside an early initiation of the transition to adulthood, intergenerational coresidence and non-neolocal family formation (i.e., family formation commencing in the parental home) are more prevalent in Russia than in Estonia (Permyakova and Billingsley, 2018).

Education completion and labor force entry of cohorts born in the mid-1970s to early 1990s in Estonia and Russia were shaped by the institutional transformation of the educational system and labor market following the collapse of the Soviet Union. In both countries, this transformation entailed the abolition of central planning, the establishment of markets, and the expansion and partial privatization of tertiary education (Saar et al., 2008; Konietzka and Bühler, 2010). Consequently, there was a diminished signaling power of educational qualifications and a growing mismatch between these qualifications and the skills demanded by jobs, resulting in a typically prolonged transition from school to work. Despite experiencing somewhat similar institutional changes in the post-Soviet era, each country pursued distinct transformation paths with different strategies of institutional restructuring and market regulation (Saar et al., 2008). Following the initial privatization and expansion in Estonia, there has been a notable reorganization of the tertiary education sector, leading to differing school-to-work transitions than in Russia. Russia now has relatively weak employment protection (compared with the Soviet system), which appears to reinforce gender-specific labor market entry and employment trajectories favoring men (Kosyakova and Kurakin, 2015). Additionally, as Konietzka and Bühler (2010) demonstrate, labor market entry had already begun to grow more uncertain during the late Soviet era, and the subsequent post-Soviet devaluation of vocational training was less severe for those leaving school in Russia around 1990, who were not generally disadvantaged compared with those leaving school between 2000 and 2005. In contrast, Estonia has low social expenditure and robust family policy programs, which seem to mitigate men's advantage in labor market entry and employment trajectories (Saar et al., 2015). However, the continued reliance on educational qualifications makes school-to-work transitions riskier for the less educated (Saar et al., 2008).

5. The transition to adulthood of Russian-origin Estonians

Transitions in the family domain

Previous research has noted tentative signs of convergence in some—but not all—family transitions among Russian-origin and native Estonians (Rahnu et al., 2015; Puur et al., 2017; Hannemann et al., 2020). Rahnu et al. (2015) find that second-generation Russian men resemble native Estonians in terms of transitioning to their first union, and both second-generation Russian men and women resemble native Estonians in union dissolution and divorce of first partnerships. However, this research also highlights that the demographic behavior of Russian-origin Estonians retains distinctive features, notably a preference for marriage over unmarried cohabitation and a subsequent rapid transition from cohabitation to marriage, as well as lower rates of repartnering after the dissolution of the first union. Similarly, Puur et al. (2017) discovered that Russian-origin Estonians tend to give birth at younger ages and exhibit limited fertility in higher parities, making them less similar to native Estonians and more like native Russians in terms of fertility behavior. Moreover, there is only modest evidence of intermarriage between Russian-origin Estonians and native Estonians (Van Ham and Tammaru, 2011; Hannemann et al., 2020).

Residential independence represents another pivotal milestone in the transition to adulthood, closely intertwined with union and family formation; however, quantitative research focusing on migrant-native differentials in young adults' residential independence in Estonia remains scarce. While Katus et al. (2005) provided a descriptive overview of the transition to adulthood in Estonia, including residential transitions, their study primarily examined older birth cohorts born until 1968. Descriptive tables derived from the 2004 Generations and Gender Survey suggest that non-Estonians leave the parental home relatively early (on average, only 1 year later than Estonians) and exhibit similarly low rates of intergenerational coresidence as Estonians (Puur et al., 2009).

Transitions in the nonfamily domain

School-to-work transitions in Estonia are generally characterized as competitive, indicating a weak linkage between the educational system and the labor market, thereby resulting in a relatively unstable transition from school to work (Saar, 2005; Saar et al., 2008). These institutional characteristics often disadvantage those with lower levels of education; if migrants are disproportionately represented in lower-education groups, their position in the labor market tends to be particularly vulnerable. Occupational disparities are also evident between Estonian natives and Russian-origin Estonians. Compared with native Estonians, Russian-origin Estonians are overrepresented in blue-collar occupations, exhibit higher rates of

unemployment and job precarity, and derive lower gains from education (Tammaru and Kulu, 2003; Leping and Toomet, 2008; Saar and Helemäe, 2017). In summary, prior research illustrates the disparate socioeconomic experiences of Russian-origin Estonians compared with native Estonians; however, it remains unclear whether these disadvantages extend specifically to the school-to-work transitions of Russian-origin Estonians in Estonia.

6. Hypotheses

Building upon the theoretical approaches and previous research presented earlier, I explore two hypotheses. First, I hypothesize that Russian-origin Estonians born from the mid-1970s to the early 1990s, having been socialized in Estonia and exposed to mainstream norms and institutionally scripted social timetables in the transition to adulthood, are expected to exhibit life-course patterns similar to those of native Estonians concerning the timing, ordering, and heterogeneity of life-course statuses—an adaptation hypothesis. However, despite their Estonian socialization experience through interactions with Estonian peers and the broader social environment, Russian-origin Estonians are also influenced by the cultural values and norms transmitted from their parents and internalized during childhood, potentially leading to cultural maintenance. Consequently, Russian-origin Estonians are alternatively expected to display life-course patterns similar to those of native Russians regarding the timing, ordering, and heterogeneity of life-course statuses—a socialization hypothesis. A critical inquiry pertains to whether adaptation or socialization (or cultural maintenance) manifests across multiple or only selected life-course domains.

II. Data and method

1. Sample

I primarily used data from two population data sources to compose the study sample, the 2010 census for Russia and the 2011 census for Estonia, which offer detailed coverage of second-generation migrants and allow for cross-country comparability. The data from the Russian census were a 5% random sample harmonized by the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) International project (Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, International: Version 7.3, 2020).(1) For Estonia, I drew on the 2011 full population census (Eesti Rahvastik Rahvaloenduste Andmetel, 2011). I restricted the analyses to young adults from birth cohorts 1975–1996, who are either Russian-origin Estonians in Estonia, natives in Estonia, or natives in Russia.

(1) I apply IPUMS' weights to correct for the probability of being selected into the 5% Russian census sample.

I defined *young adults* as respondents aged 15–35 because of conventions in cross-national studies on the transition to adulthood (e.g., Billari and Liefbroer, 2010); thus, the results can be more easily compared with extant research. I also applied the following definitions: *Russian-origin Estonians* are respondents born in Estonia and have at least one Russian-born parent; *native Estonians* are respondents born in Estonia with two Estonian-born parents; and *native Russians* are respondents born in Russia with either two Russian-born parents or whose mother tongue is Russian.(2) These restrictions resulted in a study sample of 1,738,732 native Russians, 260,204 native Estonians, and 64,102 Russian-origin Estonians.

Table 2 presents the study sample sizes and distributions of key background variables for men and women separately. Greater proportions of both native Estonian and Russian-origin Estonian men and women than of native Russians had low education, and lower proportions had medium and high education (the latter among men only). Notably, a greater proportion of Russian-origin

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for the Estonian and Russian study samples

Variable	Men			Women		
	Native Russian	Native Estonian	Russian-origin Estonian	Native Russian	Native Estonian	Russian-origin Estonian
n	854,234	133,395	32,618	884,498	126,809	31,484
Education (%)						
Low	16.94	38.85	29.55	12.88	28.28	20.09
Medium	61.92	45.38	53.04	57.13	42.62	47.76
High	21.11	14.19	15.26	29.96	28.41	31.06
Unknown	0.03	1.58	2.14	0.03	0.69	1.08
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Employment (%)						
Employed	68.75	55.35	55.96	59.39	49.65	51.63
Unemployed	8.05	7.77	14.04	7.22	6.65	10.87
Inactive	22.99	33.81	26.30	33.20	41.19	34.60
Unknown	0.21	3.06	3.70	0.19	2.51	2.90
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Residence (%)						
Urban	75.23	58.33	82.64	77.86	61.96	83.57
Rural	24.77	41.67	17.36	22.14	38.04	16.43
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Note: Unweighted number of observations (*n*) and percentages (%). The total sample size was 260,204 native Estonians, 64,102 Russian-origin Estonians, and 1,738,732 native Russians. The total percentage does not necessarily sum to 100 due to rounding. For residence, cut-off between urban and rural was 1,000 inhabitants.
Source: Census data for Russia: Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, International: Version 7.3. (2020) and for Estonia: Eesti Rahvastik Rahvaloenduste Andmetel (2011), and author's calculations.

(2) This is because mother's and fathers' country of birth is not available for 51.3% of the Russian IPUMS sample, namely those living in a different household than their parents. Based on estimations for respondents for whom information on parents' country of birth is available, defining native Russians by mother tongue alone is incorrect for 10.3% of the sample.

Estonians than of native Estonians had medium education. Across all three groups, a noticeable gender gap in educational attainment is evident, with a higher share of women than of men attaining a higher level of education. However, there was minimal disparity in the proportions of young men and women with high education between Russian-origin Estonians and native Estonians. Furthermore, discernible differences in labor force participation exist between Russian-origin Estonians, native Estonians, and native Russians. Overall, economic inactivity was more prevalent among native Estonians than among Russian-origin Estonians or native Russians; however, Russian-origin Estonians exhibit the highest prevalence of unemployment. Gender disparities in labor force participation are also notable, with lower employment rates and higher rates of inactivity among women across all three groups. Additionally, more than 80% of Russian-origin Estonians resided in cities of more than 1,000 inhabitants, compared with roughly 60% of native Estonians and about 75% of native Russians; urban-rural differences across genders were minimal for all three groups.

2. Life-course status measures

Five key life-course statuses—school attendance, employment status, residential independence, union status, and parenthood—were considered. Each status was operationalized as a binary variable: attends school or not (0/1);[3] employed or unemployed/not in the labor force (1/0); residentially independent or not (1/0);[4] ever entered into a union or not (1/0);[5] and has had at least one child or not (1/0). In both the Estonian and Russian censuses, information on children ever born was collected only for female respondents aged 15 years and older; thus, through binary operationalization, it was possible to capture in the analysis 32 different life-course status combinations for women and 16 for men.

3. Analytic plan

The analysis proceeded in three steps, distinguished by sex and origin (i.e., native Russians, native Estonians, or Russian-origin Estonians). First, I approximated the timing of life-course statuses, indirectly measured as the proportion of young adults experiencing their respective statuses at every age between 15 and 35 years. Next, I approximated the ordering of life-course status pairs, by calculating the proportion of noncompleted status pairs to determine whether two statuses were occupied simultaneously and the extent

(3) School attendance is not mutually exclusive from employment.

(4) Respondents who reported living in their own household (as head or spouse/partner of the head) were considered as residentially independent.

(5) Respondents who reported being married/partnered, divorced/separated, or widowed were considered as having ever entered into a union. Those respondents who reported not to be in a union and to have never been married were considered as never having entered into a union.

to which pairs of statuses were coupled or decoupled. This approach was suggested by Stevens (1990) and allowed me to examine the congruity of a pair of life-course statuses; the congruity of life-course status pairs refers to the degree of interrelatedness and ordering of life-course statuses. If pairs are congruous, they are occupied simultaneously and coupled, which implies an aligned ordering. Conversely, if pairs are incongruous, they are not occupied simultaneously and decoupled, which implies an unaligned ordering. In the third step, I evaluated the heterogeneity in the life course between ages 15 and 35. Heterogeneity measures the diversity of age-specific status combinations held by young adults and simultaneously captures the timing and complexity of multiple life-course statuses as a whole. I used the entropy index (Fussell, 2005) to summarize the degree of heterogeneity in combinations of life-course statuses (in a given age cohort group):

$$H = \sum_{i=s}^{S} p_s \times log \left(\frac{1}{p_s}\right) \quad (1)$$

where S is the number of life-course status combinations and p_s is the proportion of young adults in each status combination s, with a total of 32 status combinations for women and 16 for men. The entropy index ranged from zero to 1.51 for women and 1.20 for men; a higher value indicates a higher degree of heterogeneity. To make the index's interpretation more intuitive, I transformed it into a percentage of the maximum entropy. Thus, the closer it is to 100%, the greater the dispersion of young adults in different status combinations, whereas the closer it is to 0%, the greater their concentration in different status combinations.

The measures described for the census data in the three analytical steps were derived from synthetic cohort data via an indirect method, which has proven useful in prior research (e.g., Fussell, 2005; Fussell et al., 2007; Grant and Furstenberg, 2007; Chaloupková, 2010; Tian, 2016) but also needs to be cautiously considered. Status reversals cannot be identified using cross-sectional census data, which can deflate the prevalence of life-course statuses. For example, if respondents temporarily drop out of the labor force in the census, then labor force participation over the life course would be underestimated. Alternatively, if respondents were never married and without a cohabiting partner at the time of the census but had experienced one unmarried cohabitation, then union entry over their life course would be underestimated. If respondents had returned to the parental home at the time of the census (as approximately 20% of the 1975–1996 birth cohorts did in Estonia and Russia[(6)]), then the first residential independence over the life course would be underestimated.

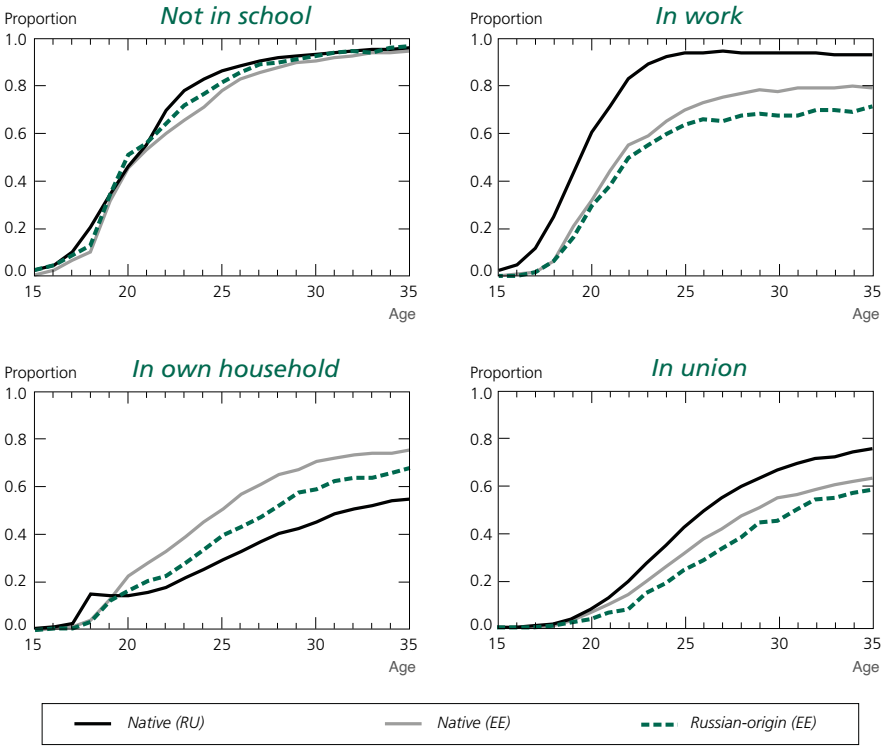
(6) Based on own calculations for data from the European Social Survey (available upon request).

III. Results

1. Timing of life-course statuses

Figure 1 shows the age-specific prevalence of each life-course status for men, revealing substantive cross-group variations between native Russians, native Estonians, and Russian-origin Estonians, except for school attendance. Regarding employment, lower proportions of both native Estonians and Russian-origin Estonians than of native Russians reported working between the ages of 15 and 35; among native Estonians and Russian-origin Estonians, however, a disparity in employment emerged but stabilized after the age of 25. Higher proportions of native Estonians and Russian-origin Estonians than of native Russians reported residential independence between the ages of 20 and 35; however, at the same age, a greater proportion of native Estonians than of those of Russian origin were residentially independent. And in terms of union

Figure 1. Age-specific prevalence of life-course statuses of men



Note: The age distribution of the sample (15–35) was treated as if it were a cohort passing through time when it was, in fact, subjected to period prevalence and, thus, should not yield "true" cohort interpretations. RU = Russian. EE = Estonian.

Source: Census data for Russia: Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, International: Version 7.3. (2020) and for Estonia: Eesti Rahvastik Rahvaloenduste Andmetel (2011), and author's calculations.

status, Russian-origin Estonian men resemble native Estonians more closely; the proportion of those in union throughout the life course is lower for both groups than for native Russian men. Among all three groups, Russian-origin Estonian men have the lowest proportion of being in a union between the ages of 15 and 35.

Figure 2 shows the age-specific prevalence of each life-course status for women, revealing that Russian-origin Estonians and native Estonians more closely resemble each other than either do native Russians (with only minor differences in age patterns); the resemblance is particularly apparent in union and parenthood, for which the two groups show only the smallest differences between the ages of 15 and 35. Regarding school attendance, the differences among the three groups were relatively minor and, as anticipated on the basis of the country-level indicators (Table 1), higher proportions of both native and Russian-origin Estonian women than of native Russians reported attending school between the ages of 25 and 30. And for employment, the figure shows a slight increase for all women after the age of 25, with Russian-origin Estonians having the lowest proportion of employment between the ages of 20 and 35. In terms of residential independence, higher proportions of both native Estonians and Russian-origin Estonians than of native Russians reported residential independence between the ages of 20 and 35.

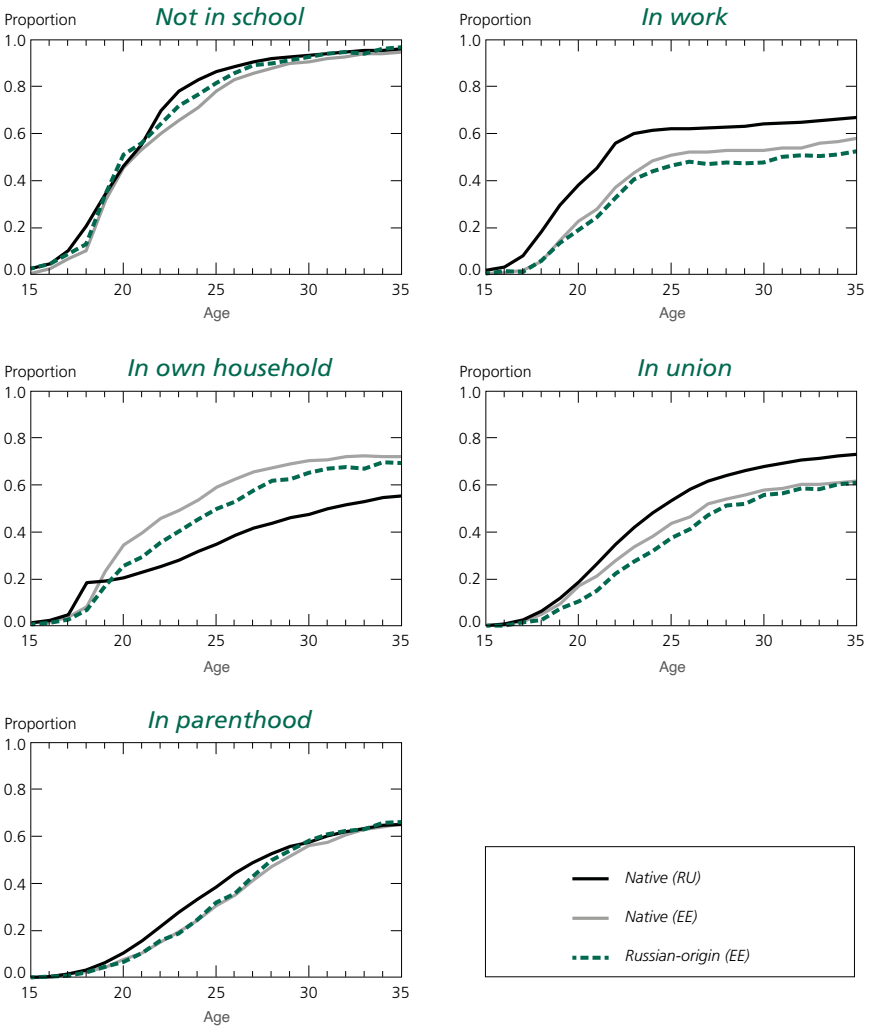
2. Ordering of life-course statuses

Table 3 presents the proportion of men and women who completed the first status of a pair of life-course statuses, but not the second.(7) The lower the proportion, the higher the congruity among the status pairs, and the closer the two statuses occur simultaneously (and vice versa). If a status pair is congruous, establishing one life-course status is coupled with establishing the other; if a status pair is incongruous, establishing one life-course status is decoupled from establishing the other.

Clear differences in the congruity of family statuses between native Russians, native Estonians, and Russian-origin Estonians are evident. For men and women in Estonia, natives and those of Russian origin alike, being in union is age-congruous with residential independence, as the proportion for the status pair "in union – not in own household" does not exceed .05; the same is true for being in parenthood and residential independence among women. For native Russians, however, both being in union and being in parenthood (for women only) are age-incongruous with residential independence. Furthermore, among native Russians, residential independence is tied to unmarried or married cohabitation, as indicated by the low proportion for the status pair "in own household – not in union" for native Russian men and women. For both native and Russian-origin Estonians, these two statuses are

(7) I consider different combinations of status pairs, but the aim was to primarily examine the congruity between nonfamily statuses, as well as between nonfamily and family statuses.

Figure 2. Age-specific prevalence of life-course statuses of women



Note: The age distribution of the sample (15–35) was treated as if it were a cohort passing through time when it was, in fact, subjected to period prevalence and, thus, should not yield "true" cohort interpretations. RU = Russian. EE = Estonian.

Source: Census data for Russia: Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, International: Version 7.3. (2020) and for Estonia: Eesti Rahvastik Rahvaloenduste Andmetel (2011), and author's calculations.

less age-congruous, suggesting that residential independence does not occur simultaneously with unions.

Differences in the congruity of nonfamily statuses between native Russians, native Estonians, and Russian-origin Estonians are less pronounced but still evident (Table 3). For both men and women, the proportion of the status pair "not in school – not in work" is highest for Russian-origin Estonians, which suggests less smooth school-to-work transitions for this group. Among

Table 3. Proportion of men and women who completed the first status of a pair of life-course statuses, but not the second

Status pair	Men			Women		
	Native Russian	Native Estonia	Russian-origin Estonian	Native Russian	Native Estonian	Russian-origin Estonian
Not in school – not in work	0.052	0.178	0.273	0.135	0.203	0.289
Not in school – not in own household	0.419	0.228	0.338	0.323	0.114	0.187
Not in school – not in union	0.302	0.345	0.444	0.194	0.227	0.306
Not in school – not in parenthood	—	—	—	0.261	0.238	0.274
In work – not in own household	0.443	0.163	0.202	0.333	0.093	0.123
In work – not in union	0.330	0.269	0.287	0.223	0.209	0.250
In work – not in parenthood	—	—	—	0.315	0.260	0.236
In own household – not in work	0.030	0.120	0.132	0.111	0.231	0.249
In own household – not in union	0.075	0.186	0.169	0.079	0.204	0.189
In own household – not in parenthood	—	—	—	0.136	0.258	0.198
In union – not in own household	0.175	0.016	0.027	0.197	0.018	0.026
In parenthood – not in own household	—	—	—	0.166	0.026	0.051

Note: Shown are the proportions of each gender and origin group, aged 15–35, who occupy the first life-course status of the status pair, but not the second. The lower the proportion, the higher the congruity and vice versa. For example, native Russian men have a proportion of 0.075 for the status pair *In own household – not in union*. This represents the proportion of native Russian men (of all ages) who are residentially independent but not simultaneously in a union. As this proportion is very low (0.075), we can conclude that both life-course statuses (residential independence and union) are often congruous. Conversely, native Russian men have a proportion of 0.175 for the status pair *In union – not in own household*. This represents the proportion of native Russian men (of all ages) who are in a union, but are not simultaneously residentially independent. In this combination, both life-course statuses are clearly less often congruous. This suggests that while establishing residential independence is closely coupled with union formation among native Russian men, being in union in itself is less of a "push factor" for establishing one's own household.
Source: Census data for Russia: Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, International: Version 7.3. (2020) and for Estonia: Eesti Rahvastik Rahvaloenduste Andmetel (2011), and author's calculations.

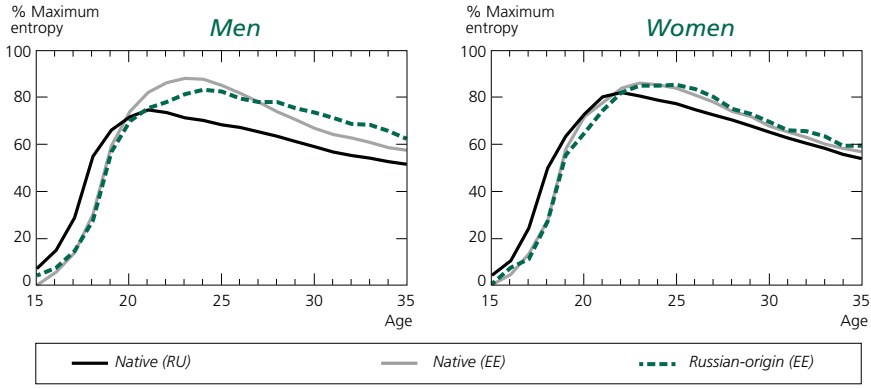
Russian-origin Estonians, school attendance and residential independence were more closely coupled, though not very strongly, similar to native Estonians rather than native Russians. For example, the proportion for the status pair "not in school – not in own household" is 0.19 for Russian-origin women and 0.34 for Russian-origin men. Finally, for both men and women, the congruity between employment and residential independence among Russian-origin Estonians is more similar to native Estonians than to native Russians, suggesting that residential independence is less closely coupled to employment in the Estonian context (although the proportions for the status pair "in own household – not in work" for Russian-origin Estonians do not exceed .13 for men and .25 for women).

3. Heterogeneity of conjoined life-course statuses

Figure 3 shows the normalized entropy for men and women. Entropy is generally lowest at age 15, when most young adults have not yet experienced

any changes in any of the life-course statuses. As age advances and young adults start experiencing status changes, the normalized entropy begins to increase until reaching a peak, which characterizes the age at which there is the greatest life-course heterogeneity.

Figure 3. Age-specific percentage of normalized entropy of men and women



Note: The age distribution of the sample (15–35) was treated as if it were a cohort passing through time when it was, in fact, subjected to period prevalence and, thus, should not yield "true" cohort interpretations. RU = Russian. EE = Estonian.

Source: Census data for Russia: Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, International: Version 7.3. (2020) and for Estonia: Eesti Rahvastik Rahvaloenduste Andmetel (2011), and author's calculations.

Group differences among native Russians, native Estonians, and Russian-origin Estonians are evident for both men and women, and are more pronounced after age 20. For men, a notable divergence in life-course heterogeneity is observed between Russian-origin Estonians and native Estonians (Figure 3). Russian-origin Estonian men fully resemble neither native Estonians nor native Russians. Until age 18, the dynamic changes are almost indistinguishable between Russian-origin Estonians and native Estonians, perhaps reflecting the almost universal enrollment in secondary education in Estonia. After that, however, entropy peaks at age 22 among native Estonians, whereas it peaks later—at approximately age 24—among Russian-origin Estonians, and then gradually levels off. This leveling off could reflect the disparate socioeconomic experiences of the two groups.

For women, a strong congruence in life-course heterogeneity is observed between Russian-origin Estonians and native Estonians (Figure 3), which are quite distinct from native Russians. For both native Estonian and Russian-origin Estonian women, entropy starts to increase slightly later than among native Russians, peaking around the mid-20s, and then slowly declining until age 35. This indicates that many young adults' onset of experiencing life-course statuses occurs later, and the heterogeneity of multiple life-course status combinations in the mid- and late-20s is larger in Estonia than in Russia.

IV. Discussion and conclusion

Using extensive census data from Russia and Estonia, this study offers a descriptive origin-destination comparison of the key life-course statuses of Russian-origin Estonians during their transition to adulthood. Specifically, it investigates the extent to which the life-course patterns of Russian-origin Estonians align with those of both native Estonians and Russians, using a synthetic cohort approach to approximate the timing (by age-specific status prevalence), ordering (by proportion of noncompleted status pairs), and heterogeneity (by age-specific status combinations) of life-course statuses. The findings suggest that Russian-origin Estonians exhibit greater resemblance to native Estonians than to native Russians, particularly concerning family statuses (i.e., union, parenthood, and residential independence), while dissimilarity among Russian-origin Estonians, native Estonians, and native Russians is more pronounced in nonfamily statuses (i.e., school attendance and employment).

Several key findings contribute to the existing literature on Russian migrants in European countries (Rahnu et al., 2015; Puur et al., 2017, 2019; Sakkeus et al., 2019; Hannemann et al., 2020), shedding light on the interplay between adaptation and socialization processes in shaping life-course patterns. First, tentative evidence supports the adaptation hypothesis. The timing and congruity of life-course statuses in the family domain among Russian-origin Estonians, along with the heterogeneity of conjoined life-course statuses among Russian-origin Estonian women, more closely resemble those of Estonian natives and diverge from those of Russian natives. This finding is consistent with previous research indicating that Russian-origin men exhibit similar first partnership patterns to native Estonians (Rahnu et al., 2015). However, Russian-origin men's lower prevalence of being in union compared with native Estonians may also be partly attributed to their limited employment opportunities, given that union formation among men is often contingent on employment (Vergauwen et al., 2016). Additionally, the observed adaptation in first birth patterns among Russian-origin women born between 1975 and 1996 builds on earlier research (Puur et al., 2017). Nevertheless, further studies should contextualize the adaptation of Russian-origin Estonian men within the family domain by incorporating men's parenthood status.

Second, there is tentative support for the socialization hypothesis. Among Russian-origin Estonians, residential independence appears decoupled from union formation and family formation occurs later in the life course after establishing residential independence. Of the life-course statuses considered, residential independence is the one in which Russian-origin Estonians exhibit the most distinctive timing profile compared with both native Estonians and native Russians. However, Russian-origin Estonians also follow similar initial pathways out of the family home as native Estonians—with marriage being of lesser importance—and a comparable order of life-course statuses. Taken

together, this pattern could be cautiously interpreted as reflecting intergenerational coresidence—a phenomenon persistent and accepted in Russia (Permyakova and Billingsley, 2018), which appears resilient within the Estonian context and likely transmitted to Russian-origin Estonians through socialization and social learning. The disparate socioeconomic experiences of Russian-origin Estonians relative to native Estonians (Tammaru and Kulu, 2003; Leping and Toomet, 2008; Saar et al., 2008; Saar and Helemäe, 2017) could certainly contribute, in part, to the observed patterns of residential independence, potentially because of economic constraints rather than cultural preferences. However, cultural maintenance likely plays a role in this explanation, especially considering the higher reported prevalence of multigenerational households among ethnic minority communities in Estonia, such as Russian-speaking populations (Katus et al., 2002).

In terms of life-course statuses in the nonfamily realm, neither the adaptation nor socialization hypothesis finds support. There is notably less similarity in the timing of school attendance and employment between Russian-origin Estonians and native Estonians and Russians. Furthermore, a larger share of Russian-origin Estonians than of native Estonians exhibited a desynchronization of school attendance and employment. This aligns with prior research indicating that Russian-origin Estonians face disadvantages in educational returns and labor outcomes (e.g., Tammaru and Kulu, 2003; Leping and Toomet, 2008; Saar and Helemäe, 2017), suggesting that the less smooth school-to-work transitions characteristic of the Estonian context (Saar, 2005; Saar et al., 2008) tend to be experienced by Russian-origin Estonians. More broadly, these findings indicate an "immigrant disadvantage," in which Russian-origin Estonians encounter challenges in leveraging the benefits of education to the same extent as native Estonians or native Russians. Proficiency in the Estonian language is pivotal for integration, labor market outcomes, and socioeconomic mobility (Saar et al., 2017). Despite efforts aimed at language support, approximately one-third of young second-generation Russians reported having no command of Estonian in 2011 (Statistics Estonia Statistical Database, 2021). Two structural barriers contribute to the limited language proficiency among Russian-origin Estonians: a linguistically segregated school system (Saar, 2010; Skerrett, 2013; Tammaru and Kulu, 2003) and the significant geographical segregation between Russian-origin migrants and native Estonians (Van Ham and Tammaru, 2011; Hannemann et al., 2020). Regions with sizable Russian-speaking populations also tend to have a higher prevalence of Russian-speaking schools, reinforcing this linguistic divide.

While this study offers significant insights into the life-course patterns of Russian-origin Estonians, it is essential that I acknowledge several limitations. First, the operationalization of "native Russians" based solely on mother tongue may be flawed, as it does not perfectly correlate with parents' country of birth. Incorrectly specifying the origin group—by including both

second-generation migrants in Russia or excluding native Russians with a mother tongue other than Russian—could lead to an inaccurate understanding of disparities in life-course patterns, which in turn could overstate or understate the magnitude of differences among Russian-origin Estonians, native Estonians, and native Russians. Second, the underreporting of labor force participation in the 2011 Estonian census primarily arises from individuals who were working abroad (for instance, in neighboring Finland) or temporarily absent, leading to their inadequate capture in the census data (Tiit, 2013). Consequently, the number of young adults classified as employed is likely underestimated. For instance, while the employment rate (i.e., the proportion of employed persons in the population aged 20–64) is reported as 67.1 in the 2011 census, it is 70.1 in the 2011 Estonian Labour Force Survey. This has implications for the accuracy of measuring employment using census data, and the resulting lower proportions of both native Estonians and Russian-origin Estonians relative to native Russians. However, the overall conclusion that Russian-origin Estonians are disadvantaged compared with native Estonians is consistent with findings from the Estonian Labour Force Survey (Ministry of Social Affairs, 2012).

Third, the use of cross-sectional census data generally introduces a potential downward bias in life-course event prevalence, as life-course statuses held at any given age during the census are measured. Because all statuses except parenthood are potentially reversible, I can only cautiously approximate whether a young adult has experienced a specific life-course transition. The issue of status reversals is evident in the observed age prevalence of employment for women; the distinct plateau after age 25 at a relatively lower level than men is likely an artifact of temporary inactivity in the measurement based on census data. Women often experience work interruptions related to childcare or other caregiving responsibilities, making them more likely to not work at the time of the census snapshot. Although the 2011 census data suffer from workforce underreporting, the lower employment rate for mothers in Estonia could at least partly account for the differences in age-specific employment patterns between the two countries. Another consequence of status reversals is the potential underestimation of residential independence over the life course. If returns to the parental home (rather than delayed exits) were the driver behind the residential status measured in the census solely among Russian-origin Estonians (not among native Estonians), the observed patterns could be distorted. As noted earlier, the overall incidence of returning home is not small in Estonia, but other research suggests that it does not strongly correlate with unemployment (Mazzotta and Parisi, 2021) and, thus, does not disproportionally affect Russian-origin Estonians.

Fourth, the results may be influenced by the birth cohorts' (1975–1996) exposure to the collapse of the Soviet Union and its aftermath. The resulting economic and sociocultural transformations may have influenced the observed

life-course patterns, albeit likely in different ways because of the two countries' distinct sociopolitical contexts. Cross-sectional census data have clear limitations in exploring how historical changes shape the transition to adulthood, either within or between countries. Further research on the differences between cohorts within Russian-origin Estonians in terms of life-course patterns—based on large-scale longitudinal data for both countries once available—is warranted.

Fifth, and in a similar vein, it is possible that Russian-origin Estonians' life-course patterns (and their respective adaptation or cultural maintenance vis-à-vis native Estonians) are shaped by other uncontrolled characteristics. Geographical segregation and socioeconomic profiles (see Table 2) are examples of these characteristics. It remains to be established whether (and which) individual or contextual characteristics underlie the life-course status-patterns of Russian-origin Estonians.

Sixth, Russian-origin Estonians—as descendants of migrants—should not be affected by self-selection into migration (Adserà and Ferrer, 2014). However, similarity or dissimilarity in the life-course patterns of Russian-origin Estonians and natives in Estonia could still be influenced by parental selective migration, with the latter influenced by both observed and unobserved characteristics (Kulu and González-Ferrer, 2014). One example of such selection is the specific intra-Russian region from which Russian-origin Estonian parents originated. Demographic behavior varies regionally within Russia and is likely influenced by cultural and historical differences across regions (for fertility, see e.g., Popova and Shishkina, 2017). Therefore, if Russian migrants predominantly originated from specific regions within Russia, this could influence the life-course patterns of Russian-origin Estonians; however, this issue cannot be effectively addressed without additional information on parents' backgrounds beyond what is available in the census data.

Despite these limitations, which are crucial to consider when interpreting life-course patterns across all groups, this study offers valuable and comprehensive insights into the transition to adulthood among Russian-origin Estonians. The utilization of census data and synthetic cohorts serves as both a limitation and a strength, particularly in the absence of longitudinal data. Unlike many other cross-sectional survey data sets, the comprehensive coverage of Russian-origin Estonians and relatively young birth cohorts—along with the cross-national comparability and compatibility of (most) measures—provides complete snapshots of the populations in Estonia and Russia, facilitating meaningful and robust origin-destination comparisons. Through this novel origin-destination comparison of life-course patterns, which has been rarely explored previously, this study makes a significant contribution to the existing research on the demographic behavior of Russian-origin Estonians (Rahnu et al., 2015; Puur et al., 2017, 2019; Sakkeus et al., 2019; Hannemann et al., 2020). Moving forward, delving deeper into understanding the drivers behind the similarity or dissimilarity in life-course patterns for Russian-origin

Estonians holds promise. Census data—with its ability to offer valuable insights into such factors as language proficiency and characteristics of residential neighborhoods—presents an avenue for further investigation into this topic.

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Résumé

Katrin Schwanitz • **PARCOURS DE VIE DES JEUNES ESTONIENS D'ORIGINE RUSSE : UNE COMPARAISON DES PAYS D'ORIGINE ET DE DESTINATION**

Cette étude analyse les dynamiques démographiques des jeunes Estoniens d'origine russe (âgés de 15 à 35 ans) en explorant les principaux statuts qui marquent le passage à l'âge adulte. Elle mobilise pour cela, à partir de données de recensement exhaustives recueillies en Russie et en Estonie, une approche par cohorte synthétique origine-destination. Elle éclaire ainsi les similitudes et les différences concernant ces différents statuts, entre les Estoniens d'origine russe et leurs homologues Russes et Estoniens natifs, selon trois critères : le calendrier (la prévalence des statuts par âge), l'ordonnancement (les proportions d'individus par paire de statuts) et l'hétérogénéité (les combinaisons de statuts par âge). Dans l'ensemble, les résultats indiquent une certaine proximité démographique entre les Estoniens d'origine russe et les Estoniens natifs dans la sphère familiale (situation conjugale et parentalité), ce qui témoigne d'une adaptation aux modèles de vie familiale estoniens. Les différences entre les Estoniens d'origine russe et les Estoniens natifs se manifestent principalement dans les domaines non familiaux. L'analyse descriptive fait apparaître certains signes de désavantage dans la population immigrée (sur les plans éducatifs et professionnels), et de maintien de la culture d'origine (en matière d'indépendance résidentielle).