

# **Continuity and Change of the Transition from School to Work of Russian Men and Women, 1966 to 2005**

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We analyze the transition from school to work in Russia over a 40 years period in order to explore how much this crucial period in individuals' occupational biography remained constant during periods of the Soviet Union and how it has changed after the breakdown of the Soviet system in 1991. Moreover, due to this long-term perspective basic questions about gender-specific continuities and changes over several decades in the Russian labor market can be addressed.

We utilize for our analyses a new data set about education and employment biographies of 6,455 Russian males and females aged 19 to 55 (Education and Employment Survey for Russia, EES, financed by the Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research). The period of observation starts in the year when a respondent became 17 years old and ends in April or May 2005, the date at which the personal interviews took place. The data, therefore, cover the age cohorts from 1950 to 1988 and provides information about 1,877 individuals who entered the observation period during Russia's transition, i.e. after 1991.

Evidence presented so far in the literature suggests that the period of system transition has fundamentally affected individual labor market careers, imposing high rates of job mobility, career instability, skill mismatch, occupational downgrading and reorientation, reeducation, discontinuity, and disorder in the life-course as well as parallel careers of main and additional jobs (Clarke 2000, Ashwin and Yakubovich 2005, Sabirianova 2002). However, this may not be the complete story. The system transformation, as we know from the experiences of other CEE-countries, has not only produced radical structural and institutional changes, but also institutional continuities. This applies particularly to the educational system, which is known to have a fundamental impact on labor market and mobility patterns of individuals. We, therefore, examine the transition from school to work in a long-term perspective comparing his-

torically defined birth-cohorts that experienced the process of entering and settling in the labor market under different socio-economic and political conditions. Although quite a number of studies exist that have investigated different aspects of labor market change in Russia (like wages, hiring practices, unemployment, or shadow economy), there is a lack of studies that a) deal with the labor market entry process, in particular the transition from school to work, and that b) follow long-term socio-economic changes in Russia, i.e. that go beyond the common dichotomy of the periods before and after the breakdown of the Soviet system in 1991.

## First results

### *Education*

Table 1: Type of the first educational period (at age 17 or later) by birth cohorts and gender

	1967-1979		1980-1984		1985-1990		1991-1998		1999-2005	
	fem.	male	fem.	male	fem.	male	fem.	male	fem.	male
less than 8-9 years unfinished secondary school	0.1	--	0.2	0.2	--	--	0.3	0.4	--	0.3
8-9 years secondary school	67.6	57.8	66.2	56.6	60.2	46.1	59.5	43.9	74.2	59.3
10-11 years professional education without sec. school	4.7	11.0	3.0	7.3	2.2	7.1	4.0	7.8	2.1	3.7
full-time profess. training courses	0.7	0.7	0.1	0.8	0.7	1.4	0.3	1.1	0.3	0.9
vocational college with sec. education	7.7	17.1	12.3	19.9	11.7	24.2	14.2	24.0	6.8	18.5
secondary special	17.5	10.1	16.4	13.9	21.7	17.2	18.9	19.6	11.6	13.1
other	0.6	0.9	0.7	0.9	2.4	2.0	1.3	1.1	2.9	2.1
N	1,137	557	990	593	452	297	402	271	380	324

Table 2: Type of the second educational period (at age 17 or later) by birth cohorts and gender

	1967-1979		1980-1984		1985-1990		1991-1998		1999-2005	
	fem.	male	fem.	male	fem.	male	fem.	male	fem.	male
professional educ. without sec. school	11.9	14.7	10.3	10.5	7.8	7.3	5.2	4.1	2.4	4.6
full-time profess. training courses	8.2	19.2	5.7	12.1	4.5	8.1	3.6	8.3	1.7	3.1
vocational college with sec. education	10.8	7.1	12.5	11.3	7.4	6.5	11.7	9.9	6.9	9.6
secondary special	35.4	19.2	37.0	19.4	39.1	18.7	38.7	20.7	32.8	20.8
higher	27.9	30.5	30.8	35.4	36.2	50.4	36.3	51.2	53.1	60.9
short-term	2.6	6.8	2.8	7.5	3.3	4.1	2.8	5.0	1.7	--
other	3.4	2.7	2.1	2.6	1.6	4.8	1.6	0.8	2.3	1.0
N	613	266	575	305	243	123	248	121	290	197

The results in Table 1 document a continuous change in education during Socialism which can be described as a movement from general secondary education towards a secondary education that is closely related to particular branches and professions. This tendency can also be observed for the period from 1991 to 1998. With respect to the second educational period, a

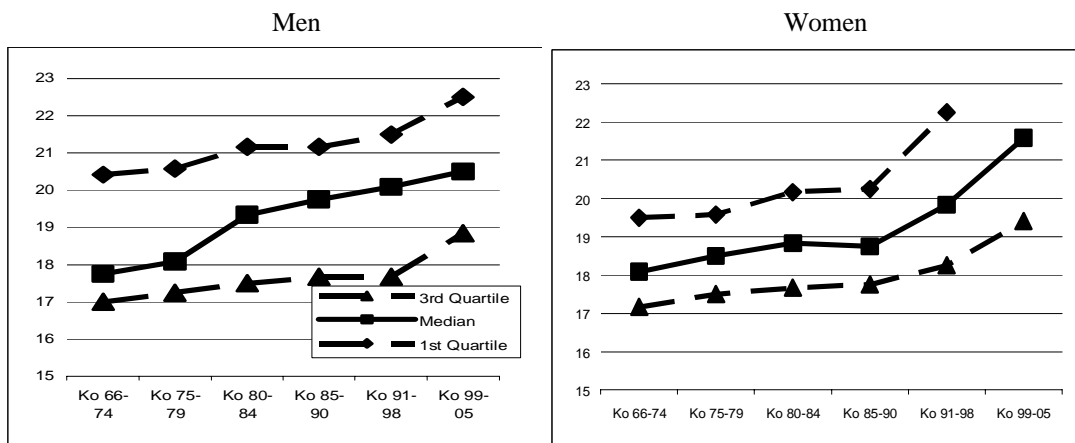
trend to specialized secondary education can be observed as well, but also increasing proportions of individuals who entered higher education, i.e. universities or similar institutions

*Educational differences in transition patterns to first job*

To be analyzed

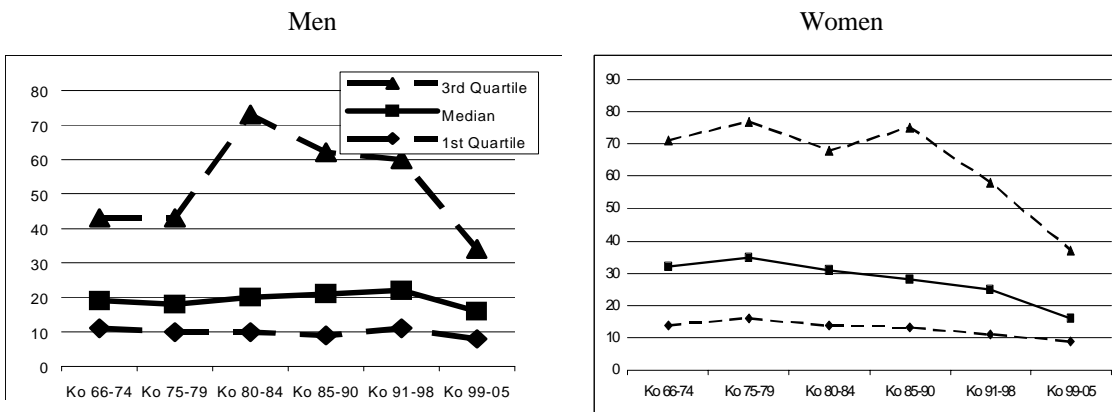
*First job*

Figure 1: Age at First Main Job – Labor Market Entry Cohorts (KM-Estimates)



According to Figure 1, the age at entering the labor market has increased over the cohorts. This holds both for men and women, but the graphs' shapes differ. The age dispersion was higher for men until the cohort 85-90. Afterwards, women's median age has increased beyond men's median age and their inter-quartile distance has exceeded men's one as well. For the youngest cohort, we can not compute the age value for the 3<sup>rd</sup> quartile due to right-censored cases.

Figure 2: Duration of First Main Job – Labor Market Entry Cohorts (KM-Estimates)



There are different trends for men and exist according to the duration of the first employment spell. The median duration of men's first job remained at a level of about 20 months and the 1<sup>st</sup> quartile of the duration has a value of about 10 months for the first five cohorts. The third quartile documents relatively longer job durations, which settled around a value of 5 years in the cohort from 1985 to 1990. For women, the data document declining median job durations.

With respect to the youngest cohort, the cohort 1999-2005, a tendency of a continuous decline of the duration of the first job can be found, both for men and women. However, these estimations are based on only half of the original sample, leaving the question open whether the cohort members, who will enter the labor market at a later point in time, will have longer job durations. Assuming that higher educated enter the labor market at higher ages, experience better job opportunities, and more stable jobs, these cohort members may counteract the trend of shorter job durations.

## **Conclusions**

Our first results document numerous changes in process of labor market entry in Russia, as there is a large variety of cohort-specific outcomes in the early careers of Russian men and women. However, the results also raise doubts about all-too-simple perceptions of economic shock/collapse in Russia after 1991. Period-specific features of economic collapse, wage losses and job losses do at least not tell the full story if it comes to the experiences of young adults in the labor market. The early careers have been changing with respect to many indicators, but they do not seem to follow catastrophic scenarios. Instead of pointing at 'life course collapse' in post-Soviet Russia, we obtain a differentiated picture of socio-economic change. The empirical patterns – rising ages at entry into employment, shorter employment durations, increased returns to education and higher risks of getting unemployed – are essential characteristics of changes in the early stage of individuals' working careers that have also been observed for many western European countries during the last two decades.

## **Literature**

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