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## HISTORY



### THE EVOLUTION OF SETTLEMENT AREAS OF INGRIAN FINNS IN NORTHWEST RUSSIA IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY

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*Based on the nation-wide censuses conducted between 1959 and 2010 in the Soviet Union and in the Russian Federation, as well as on the contemporary data of the Estonian Department of Statistics, the author of this article studies the spatial aspects of the dynamics of the ethnic area of Ingrian Finns within their main settlement area. This is done through utilizing ethnicity-related statistical data of the district at the lowest level of administrative division. The author emphasises a significant increase in the rates of degradation of the Ingrian settlement area in the post-Soviet period, identifies the factors behind it, and considers district differences in the rates of depopulation and assimilation of the Russian Finns. The results of research make it possible to foreground and describe in detail the available information on the spatial organisation of Russian Finnish population in the North-western region of Russia.*

**Key words:** Ingrian Finns, ethnic settlement, Russian Northwest

This article aims to identify and define the recent trends in the ethnodemographic development of Russian and Estonian Finns and the consequent evolution of the settlement areas of this ethno-territorial group.

Ethnodemographic and ethnogeographical problems are in the focus of

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Russian Finno-Ugric studies<sup>1</sup>. The 2010 census provided a large body of ethnostatistics, which requires summarising and interpreting. In view of the paucity of the studied ethnic territorial group, it is of importance to analyse the data of the lowest levels of administrative division. We believe that this data is insufficiently used in ethnogeographical research. Probably, it is a result of the traditional inaccessibility of statistics (not only ethnic statistics) of the lowest levels, which dates back to the Soviet times.

Earlier we addressed this problem when studying the Finns of the Leningrad region and Saint Petersburg [18]. However, we did not get access to the regional results of the 2002 census due to their delayed publication. Later published information made it possible to update and expand the data on the development of the settlement area of Russian Finns.

Russian Finns (or Ingrian Finns) are a small ethnic subgroup descending from the Finnish migrants who moved to the territories that had been ceded to Russia and Sweden under the Treaty of Stolbovo (1617) in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and later constituted the Grand Duchy of Finland. Political seclusion was one of the key factors of the ethnocultural isolation of Ingrian Finns from Suomi Finns. The question as to whether Ingrian Finns became an independent ethnic group as a result of these processes is still open to discussion; however, it is not directly relevant to our study. Since most Finns living in the post-Soviet space are descendants of the 17<sup>th</sup> century migrants, the ethnonyms *Finns* and *Ingrian Finns* will be used interchangeably.

In the course of the 17<sup>th</sup> century migration, most Finns settled on the territory of today's central Leningrad region (LR). The largest settlement areas developed at the Karelian Isthmus (today's Vsevolzhsk district) and at the northeastern edge of the Izhora Plateau (today's Gatchina district and part of the Lomonosov district). A significant number of Finns lived in other regions of historical Ingria — today's Volosovo, Kingisepp, and Kirovsk districts. However, the specific weight of Finns was not high, they settled alternately with other peoples — Izhorians, Votes, Russians, and later Estonians.

The Finnish population remained numerous and stable in the Leningrad region until the 1930s, when it was affected by negative demographic trends. The key reason behind it was the increasing scale of internal migration processes in the USSR, which resulted in widespread exogamous marriages. This led to the development of genetic assimilation processes. However, the impact of this fundamental process was reinforced by two other factors that contributed to accelerated destruction of the Finnish settlement area:

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<sup>1</sup> Recent works on the topic include [1], [3], [9], [20], etc.

1) World War II, which led to an ethnodemographic catastrophe among Ingrian Finns. Some Finns fell victim to the Siege of Leningrad, some of them found themselves in Nazi-occupied areas, which resulted in further demographic losses;

2) the repressive policy of the Soviet authorities towards Finns who were deemed unreliable and were gradually deported from the Leningrad region in the 1930—40s. Its finale was the deportation of Finns from the Leningrad region in 1947, after which only 5,700 Finns remained in the region and 500 Finns in Leningrad (in 1939, 106,700 and 7,900 respectively). Restrictions on entry to the region were lifted in the late 1950s, however, only part of the deported Ingrian Finns returned to the LR.

This policy resulted in a dramatic transformation of the Finnish ethnic territory; three spatially isolated settlement areas — in Karelia, the LR, and Estonia<sup>2</sup> — replaced a single settlement area in the central and eastern parts of the LR. Moreover, there appeared numerous small areas of Finnish settlement populated by Finnish deportees and repatriates. Almost in none of these regions, Finns formed large territorial groups; they “dissolved” in the Russian ethnic environment. In these conditions, the processes of genetic assimilation had to accelerate, which resulted in a higher depopulation rate.

Since the mid-1960s, the population’s demographic situation deteriorated. According to A.S. Khtushev [1], in 1959—2000, 2784 Finns were born and 6437 died in the “Ingrian” districts of the LR. The data is apparently incomplete; however, it seems to reflect the correlation between the birth and mortality rates. Depopulation, which became pronounced in the 1960s, was increasing over the next decades and made a significant contribution to the erosion of the traditional Finnish settlement area.

Table 1 shows the process of dissolution of the Finnish population in the region. Over 30 years, the numbers of Finns dwindled by 41 % across the region and by 43.7 % in the Ingrian districts. The inter-district differences in the population decrease rates are significant; however, they are most probably explained by random factors. It is worth noting a dramatic increase in the number of Finns in Leningrad — a 70 % growth over the 30 years. Of course, the city became the “melting pot” for Ingrian Finns — having moved to Leningrad, they rapidly assimilated. The number of St Petersburg Finnish population reached its maximum in the 1970s and then started to decrease.

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<sup>2</sup> For the history of the development of such areas see [10].

Table 1

**Dynamics of the Finnish population size and distribution  
in the Leningrad region in 1959—2010**

LR districts	1959	1989	1989,% of 1959	2002	2002,% of 1989	2010	2010,% of 2002
Volosov	2150	766	35.6	431	56.3	253	58.7
Vsevolzhsk	3974	2874	72.3	2058	71.6	1078	52.4
Gatchina	8525	4803	56.3	3319	69.1	1890	56.9
Kingisepp	874	466	53.3	315	67.6	167	53.0
Kirovsk	461	305	66.2	197	64.6	102	51.8
Lomonosov*	2433	1188	48.8	762	64.1	442	58.0
Tosno	845	445	52.7	253	56.9	125	49.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>19 262</b>	<b>10 847</b>	<b>56.3</b>	<b>7335</b>	<b>67.6</b>	<b>4057</b>	<b>55.3</b>
Other districts	780	966	123.8	595	61.6	309	51.9
<b>LR total</b>	<b>20 042</b>	<b>11 833</b>	<b>59.0</b>	<b>7930</b>	<b>67.0</b>	<b>4366</b>	<b>55.1</b>
Saint Petersburg	3150	5469	173.6	3980	72.8	2559	64.3

*Sources:* [12; 13; 18].

\* Including the town of Sosnovy Bor.

In the post-Soviet period, the rate of Ingrian population dissolution increased in the LR, which is explained by two new facts against the persistence of the old ones:

- the demographic crisis in post-Soviet Russia, which reduced the already weak reproductive potential of the Finnish population;
- mass migration of Ingrians to Finland caused, on the one hand, by economic considerations, and, on the other, by a rise of Finnish national identity in the late 1980—90s.

Table 1 shows that the numbers of Finns in the LR reduced by one third over the inter-census period of 1989—2002 and by 45 % in 2002—10. Therefore, the annual average decrease rate of 17.4‰ in 1959—89 rose to 30.3 ‰ and to unprecedented 71.7 ‰ in 2002—2010.

The inter-district differences in the scale and rate of decrease in the Finnish population are narrowing. They are the lowest in the Gatchina district — the core of the ethnic territory of Ingrian Finns (a decrease rate of “only” 60.6 % in 1989—2020) and the highest in the peripheral Tosno district (71.9 %).

The lowest decrease rate is observed in St Petersburg, which is explained by two factors: *a)* the continuing Finnish migration from the region and

b) the younger age structure of St Petersburg Finns in comparison to the LR ones, which results in a lower mortality rate.

In all LR districts, including Ingrian ones, Finns are a typical ethnic minority that hardly stands out. For instance, in the Gatchina district, it is the fourth largest ethnic group following Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians. At the level of the district's urban and rural settlements, only in the Bolshye Kolpany, Novy Svet, Pudost, and Sääskelä ones, Finns are the largest ethnic minority accounting, however, for not more than 4 % (the Pudost settlement) [13]. Ten years earlier, there were settlements where Finns accounted for more than 10 % of the population [1].

A decrease in the Ingrian population can be easily explained. It is widely known that the settlement network of the Russian non-black earth area became polarised in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is a combination of a small number of large settlements where most of the population and infrastructure (trade, education, healthcare, etc.) of the lowest-level administrative unit is concentrated and a large but constantly decreasing number of small villages characterised by the absence of infrastructure and a small permanent population mostly of retirement age. This polarisation is even more pronounced on the regional periphery and less pronounced in the central parts contiguous with the centres of regions and capitals of republics.

During the formation of this polarised network, the Finnish working age population concentrated in large settlements. However, their specific weight is rather low even in such settlements situated in the districts of traditional residence. In most cases, they are members of mixed-ethnicity families. Mainly people of retirement age stay on the periphery; however, there are small settlements, where the percentage of Finns is rather high or they constitute the largest ethnic group. Nevertheless, due to physical depopulation, such villages rapidly become excluded from the area of Finnish settlement, which narrows down becoming an agglomeration of large nodes (central settlements) where Finns are “dissolved” in the Russian environment and are destined to assimilate. The only alternative is emigration to Finland.

In the Soviet period, Karelia was the major centre of Finnish settlement. Finns appeared in the area that today constitutes the territory of the republic in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They were migrants from the Grand Duchy of Finland moving to the Olonets province being driven by economic considerations. There were 365 Finns in the province in 1858, 991 in 1865, 2622 in 1883. By the end of the century, the number of Finns in the province reached 3,000 and remained stable until 1917. However, after the revolution, almost all Finns returned home [2].

After the Civil war in Finland, most of defeated “red” Finns fled to Russia. Several hundreds were sent to the Karelian Labour Commune becoming a significant part of its political and economic elite. According to the 1920 census,

990 Finns lived in the Karelian ASSR, most of them concentrated in Petrozavodsk and its environs [6].

The next wave of mass Finnish immigration into the republic took place in the early 1930s, where several thousand descendants of residents of the Grand Duchy of Finland moved from the USA and Canada. At the same time, people were driven from Finland to the USSR by the economic crisis. The number of Finns in Karelia reached 12,088 [16] in 1933 and 14,024 in 1937 [4, p. 94]. However, it dramatically decreased afterwards. In 1938, Karelian Finns fell victim to repressions, which almost led to the total destruction of the ethnic group [19]. By 1939, the population decreased to 8,322 people [5]. The remaining Finns were deported from the republic during World War II. Thus, in the 1930—40s, the rather numerous Karelian Finnish population did not have any connection to Ingrian Finns.

The last wave of Finnish immigration dates to the late 1940s. It included two groups. The first, more numerous one, brought together Ingrian repatriates who returned from Finland in 1945 (having moved there in 1943—44 from the occupied territory of the LR) and did not obtain a permit to reside in the LR. Unwilling to live in the neighbouring non-black-earth regions, this group preferred Karelia, where they were engaged by the republican government in the local lumber industry [3], [10]. The other group included Finns who were deported from Leningrad to the eastern parts of the USSR in 1942. The attitude of the Soviet authorities to deportee Finns became more moderate after the war; some of them were allowed to return from the Asian part of the USSR to Karelia.

According to the 1959 census, 27,829 Finns lived in Karelia (more than in Leningrad and the LR). Later, the population was falling at a stable rate and reached 18,420 in 1989.

Table 2

**Dynamics of the number and distribution  
of Finnish population in Karelia in 1989—2010**

Districts of the Republic of Karelia	1989	2002	2002, % of 1989	2010	2010, % of 2002
Petrozavodsk	9359	7383	78.9	4493	60.9
Pryazha	1736	1141	65.7	672	58.9
Kondopoga	1497	1192	79.6	755	63.3
other districts	5828	4440	76.2	2657	59.8
<i>Total</i>	<i>18 420</i>	<i>14 156</i>	<i>76.9</i>	<i>8577</i>	<i>60.6</i>

*Sources:* [8; 11; 14].



In both the LR and Republic of Karelia, the number of Finns is decreasing. These processes accelerated in the 1990s and even more so in the 2000s. They are rather extensive, but still less pronounced than in St Petersburg and the Leningrad region. It is explained by a more favourable demographic situation of Karelian Finns in comparison to that in the area of traditional Ingrian residence. The reason behind it is a “younger” age structure of the Karelian population in comparison to that of the residents of the LR and Saint Petersburg. According to the 2002 census, people of retirement age accounted for 27.8 % of Karelian, 40.4 % of the LR, and 31.6 % of St Petersburg Finns. The median age of Karelian Finns is (43.8 %, of those living in the LR) is 51.0 years, and in St Petersburg 47.6 years [7]. By 2010, the situation deteriorated, but the ranking of regions remained the same<sup>3</sup>.

The most important geographical feature of the Karelian area of Finnish settlement is the pronounced concentration of the ethnic group in the capital of the Republic — Petrozavodsk. It was home to almost third of Karelian Finns in 1989 and more than half in 1989. In 2010, 52.3 % of Karelian Finns lived in the capital. This feature of the population’s territorial organisation facilitates assimilation processes. This explains the relatively slow increase in the specific weight of Petrozavodsk Finns in the total Finnish population of Karelia.

Karelian Finns are the most urbanised territorial subgroup of the ethnic group in the post-Soviet space. Urban residents account for 77 % in the Republic of Karelia and only 55 % in St Petersburg and the LR. This circumstance is explained by historical reasons — in the 1940s Finns migrated looking for a job in industrial manufacturing, i.e. to urban areas. The indigent rural population was almost absent in the region (unlike the LR).

There are numerous representatives of the ethnic group in the areas contiguous with the capital — the Pryazha and Konopoga districts. The percentage of Finns has once exceeded 14 % in the former Pryazha district (even 32 % in its urban areas in 1959). Later, it was gradually decreasing to reach 4.6 %. However, it is an extraordinarily high percentage for a municipal district. In the LR, such a high specific weight is not observed in any rural or urban settlements. In the other Karelian districts, this percentage is even lower (1.9 % in the Kondopoga district). In the Pitkyaranta, Prionezhsky, and Muyezerzsky districts, it is above 1 %. In the Pryazha dis-

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<sup>3</sup> As of 2010, the median age of Finns in the RK increased by seven years in comparison to 2002 and reached 51.0 years. Unfortunately, neither Rosstat, nor Pterosts published similar data on the LR.



districts Finns are the largest ethnic minority, in the other districts, they are ranked fourth and lower [11].

The above analysis is not exhaustive unless it is supplemented with data on the condition and evolution of the settlement area in the neighbouring countries, where the Ingrian population is rather numerous, namely, Estonia and Finland. As a result of migration processes, Finland became the fourth settlement area of Ingrian Finns in the post-Soviet period. Finnish statistics suggest that in 1992—2013, the positive net migration rate with Russia reached 46,200 people<sup>4</sup>. Moreover, 44,300 people moved from Estonia to Finland in 1991—2013. By 2013, 53,700 people born in the USSR lived in the country (39,500 from Estonia and 11,100 from Russia) [24].

The information provided by Statistics Finland does not make it possible to identify Finns within this massive (by Finnish measurements) migration inflow. Statistical data on ethnic groups is not collected in Finland, and only the language structure of population is taken into account. However, the information on language composition is not published. Nevertheless, it would be of little help, since Finnish is not the native tongue of all Ingrians. On the other hand, we believe that Finns that left Russia and Estonia can be considered isolated from the Ingrian sub-ethnic group. For them, emigration to Finland is reincorporation into the “maternal” ethnic group as an alternative to the inevitable assimilation and acculturation in the post-Soviet space. Thus, emigration to Finland can be considered as another variation of the acculturation of Ingrians that results in the same population losses as Russification and Estonianisation.

While the Finnish statistics does not make it possible to identify Ingrians among other immigrants from Russia and Estonia, Statistics Estonia publishes detailed information, which makes it possible to analyse the features of territorial organisation of the country’s Finnish population.

Finns have been living in Estonia for a long time; however, their population was not numerous until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century being limited to several hundred people. According to the 1897 census, 461 Finns resided on the territory of modern Estonia (based on the native language data), including 274 in Reval (Tallinn) and 99 in Narva [15]. According to the 1934 census, 1,088 Finns resided in the republic, most of them living on the eastern bank

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<sup>4</sup> According to Rosstat, this rate is three times lower. However, experts stress that immigration is recorded in the target country more accurately than in the source one. Thus, we rely on the Finnish rather than Russian data.

of the River Narva — now a territory of the LR. Tallinn was home to 258 Finns, Narva to 145 [22, lk. 48]. After World War II, the Finnish population of the Estonian SSR was significantly increased by immigrants from the RSFSR. After Finns had been prohibited from residing in the LR (1947), many of them, unwilling to move to the designated neighbouring regions, settled in Estonia [10]. As a result, in the late 1940s-early 1950s, the third area of Finnish settlement emerged in the USSR.

According to the 1959 census, 16,699 Finns lived in the ESSR in 1959 and 18,537 in 1970 [21]. The migration inflow of Finns to Estonia soon interrupted (unlike that of Eastern Slavic peoples) and their number started to decrease under the influence of assimilation and acculturation processes. The results of these processes shortly became noticeable, especially in terms of language.

In 1959, only 59.8 % of Estonian Finns spoke Finnish as their native language. The second most widespread language was Estonian (and not Russian, as one could expect) spoken by 24 % of Finns followed by Russian (16.1 %). However, in the urban areas, the most spoken language was Russian followed by Estonian; in the rural areas, more than half of Finns spoke Estonian [21, lk. 100—115].

The number of Finns decreased to 17,753 people by 1979 and 16,622 and 1989 [21, 1995, lk. 56]. In the post-Soviet period, the demographic crisis and emigration to Finland accelerated the processes of “dissolution” of the Finnish population. By 2000, the number of Finns reduced to 11,837 people (by 28.8 % in comparison to 1989), by 2022, to 7,589 [23]. Therefore, if the average annual rate of the Finnish population decrease was 6.6 ‰ in 1979—89, it reached 30.4 ‰ in 1989—2000, and 43.5 ‰ in 2000—2011.

It is worth noting that the Finnish population decrease rate is higher in Estonia than in Karelia, LR, and St Petersburg. Overall, the demographic crisis, which affected the states of the European part of the former USSR in the post-Soviet period, was less pronounced in Estonia than in Russia. In the 2000s, the republic’s Finnish population outnumbered that of the neighbouring Russian region — the historical core of the Ingrian settlement area.

The Finnish settlement area in Estonia, which emerged in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, has many similarities with the areas of Russian settlement in the republic. The largest Finnish territorial groups developed in the “capital” Harju County and in the north-east of the country — the Ida-Viru and Lääne-Viru Counties. In 1989, the Võru County was home to 31.7 % of Estonian Finns, the Harju County to 30.1 % (including 19.7 % in Tallinn). Another 11.9 % resided in the Tartu County, which incorporates the repub-

lic's second largest city. The other 26.3 % of the Finnish population were more or less evenly spread throughout Estonian counties. Over the post-Soviet period, the geographical distribution of Estonian Finns has changed. Today, the north-east accounts for 25.7 % of the population and the Harju County for 38.2 %. Therefore, the capital and its county became the principal region of Finnish settlement in Estonia. Tartu is home to 12.8 % of Finns, the other districts — to 23.3 %.

Of course, there is no city or county where the percentage of Finns is significant. It does not exceed 2 % in the administrative units of the lowest level; in most settlements, it is below one percent. There are few cities and settlements with the Finnish population of above 1 % — not more than two dozen (mostly, these would be the cities). The level of urbanisation of Estonian Finns is rather high (71.4 %), although it is lower than in Karelia.

This settlement feature makes the Estonian (as well as Russian) Finnish population susceptible to the processes of genetic assimilation, which became the key factor behind the decrease in Estonian Finnish population taking place since the 1970s.

The demographic situation of Estonian Finns was highly unfavourable and rather typical for a small and actively assimilating ethnic group. As to the age structure, people of retirement age accounted for 48.4 % in 2011 [23]. The situation is significantly worse than in Karelia.

In 1989—2012, 1,905 Finns were born and 6,239 died in Estonia [23]. Therefore, due to depopulation, the number of Finns reduced by 4,334 people — a fourth of those residing in the country in 1989. The number of births per 100 death averaged 31 in 1989—2012.

The level of endogamy — an important indicator of population stability — is very low in Estonian Finns. In 1989—2013, only 84 people were born of endogamous marriages — 4.34 % of the total number of children born to Finnish families. All others were born into mixed-ethnicity families. In some post-Soviet years, no children were born of endogamous Finnish marriages [23].

Estonian statistics identify the national composition of the population through not only census results but also current records of the ethnic structure based on the observations of demographic events and population migration. Through comparing the two methods, one can estimate the scope of assimilation processes within a population. 7,589 Finns resided in the republic according to the 2011 census; whereas current records based on the 2000 census estimated their number at 10,369 (+36.6 %). Of course, it is

partly explained by the unrecorded migration of Finns, but the key reason behind this difference is the processes of genetic and cultural assimilation<sup>5</sup>, which cannot be taken into account by current records. Therefore, only in 2000—2011, assimilation process resulted in a one-third decrease in the number of Estonian Finns. Their effect on the population dynamics was stronger than that of depopulation.

In Estonia, the assimilation of Finns follows two patterns — Estonianisation and Russification. Unfortunately, Estonian statistics do not publish sufficient data to make a conclusion about the prevalence of a certain method. Based on the available information, the following territorial differences can be identified:

- rural/urban differences: assimilation towards Russification takes place in urban areas, whereas Estonianisation is prevalent in rural ones. According to the 2011 census, 41.7 % of Finns spoke Russian, 25.7 % Estonian, and 31.1 % Finnish as a native language in the urban areas. In the rural areas, these figures are 16.0 %, 52.3 %, and 30.7 % respectively.
- west/east differences: in the Harju and Tartu Counties Estonianisation prevails, whereas, in the Võru County, Finns live in Russian ethnic environment, which determine the pattern of assimilation.

Therefore, an analysis of the demographic development of Finnish population in the LR, St Petersburg, Karelia, and Estonia shows an acceleration of downward trends in the new century as opposed to the 1990s and earlier periods. The lowest rate of Finnish population decrease is observed in Estonia, the highest in the LR. The difference is almost twofold. At a lower level of administrative division, the least favourable region for Finns from the perspective of demography is the Estonian capital county of Harju, the most favourable one is the traditional area of Ingrian settlement in the LR.

Despite pronounced territorial difference, the same trend is observed throughout the areas of Finnish settlement — the accelerating demographic collapse, which will result in that Finns will share the fate of numerous small Finno-Ugric peoples of North-West Russia. A reversal of the trend seems to be impossible. A reversal of the trend seems to be impossible. If a decrease rate characteristic of the 2000s remains stable, the number of Finns will decrease to 3,500 people in the LR and St Petersburg, 4,600 in Karelia, and 5,300 in Estonia by 2020. By the mid-21<sup>st</sup> century, the size of Finnish popu-

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<sup>5</sup> The total population of the republic according to the 2011 census was only 3.5% lower than suggested by current records.

lation in Russia will be measured in hundreds rather than thousands within each of the mentioned Russian regions. Only the Finnish population in Estonia will exceed 1,000.

It is worth noting that the decline of these ethnic territorial groups, which emerged as a result of the 1617 Treaty of Stolbovo, is simultaneous. The Karelians who moved from Sweden to Russia and settled in and around the city of Tver outnumbered the Karelians residing in the Karelian ASSR before the Great Patriotic War. However, in the post-war period, their numbers dwindled mostly due to the acculturation processes. In 1939—2010, the population decreased from 120,000 to 7,400 people (sixteen-fold). The total population size and decrease rate are very similar in Karelians and Finns. Today, the demographic situation of this sub-ethnic group is even less favourable than that of Russian Finns, since the negative trends developed in their population earlier than in Finns. However, these differences are not significant in the long-term perspective, therefore, it is possible to state that the two emigrant groups emerged and entered the stage of decline almost simultaneously.

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