

Russian population: Desired political and economic system (Levada Center)

Random-sample questionnaire-based nationally representative polls conducted as omnibus surveys 1996-2021

The Levada Center has been conducting omnibus surveys of the Russian population on a regular basis. This data collection includes three questions about the desired political and economic system and the preference concerning great power status or wealth for Russia (plus standard socio-demographic data). In total this collection includes the respective data from 51 separate surveys conducted from 1996 to 2021.

This documentation of data collection documents the questions included in the dataset and provides information about the random-sample questionnaire-based nationally representative polls conducted as omnibus surveys. The original data file is in Russian, but this file includes translations into English of all questions and answer options.

Included in this data collection are the relevant questions from the Levada omnibus surveys copied into one file. The SPSS file (.sav) is the original file provided by the Levada Center. It has been exported into an Excel file. The content of the respective xlsx-file should be identical with the original sav-file. In addition, the data collection contains the file “main results” which for each of the three questions presents the simple distribution of answer options over time (i.e. for each survey) in a graph.

The data presented in this dataset have been compiled by the Levada Center. The dataset has been provided to the Research Centre for East European Studies at the University of Bremen for open access publication (non-commercial use) on the DiscussData-platform.

Questions included

The dataset contains the following three questions:

- **КАКАЯ ПОЛИТИЧЕСКАЯ СИСТЕМА КАЖЕТСЯ ВАМ ЛУЧШЕЙ? / Which political system do you consider to be the best?**
 - 1 - Советская, которая была у нас до 90-х годов / The Soviet one, as it existed in our country until the 1990s
 - 2 - Нынешняя система / The current system
 - 3 - Демократия по образцу западных стран / Democracy as in Western countries
 - 4 – Другое / other
 - 9 - Затрудняюсь ответить / difficult to answer
- **КАКАЯ ЭКОНОМИЧЕСКАЯ СИСТЕМА КАЖЕТСЯ ВАМ БОЛЕЕ ПРАВИЛЬНОЙ? / Which economic system do you consider to be more appropriate?**
 - 1 - та, которая основана на государственном планировании и распределении / the one based on state planning and distribution
 - 2 - та, в основе которой лежат частная собственность и рыночные отношения / the one which is based on private property and market relations
 - 9 - Затрудняюсь ответить / difficult to answer

- КАКОЙ СТРАНОЙ ВЫ БЫ ХОТЕЛИ ВИДЕТЬ СЕЙЧАС РОССИЮ? / As what kind of country would you like to see Russia at the moment?
 1 - великой державой, которую уважают и побаиваются другие страны / a great power, respected and feared by other countries
 2 - страной с высоким уровнем жизни, пусть и не одной из самых сильных стран мира / a country with a high standard of living, even if not one of the most powerful countries in the world
 9 - Затрудняюсь ответить / difficult to answer

In addition, the dataset includes standard social-demographic and political data for all respondents:

- gender (SD1 with 1=male, 2=female),
- age (SD2 indicates age in years, S2_AGE gives age groups: 1=18-24, 2=25-39, 3=40-54, 4=55+),
- education (SD3a with 1= higher, 2= professional, 3= other, SD3b with 1= higher, 2= middle, middle professional, 3= lower than middle, 9= no answer),
- voting EITHER in the most recent national presidential elections (SD4: “Did you vote in the most recent presidential election?” with 1=yes, 2=no, 9=no answer / SD4a-f lists the specific voting options – the full list is available in the SPSS file)
- OR in the most recent national parliamentary elections (SD5: “Did you vote at the national parliamentary election?” with 1=yes, 2=no, 9=no answer / SD5a-g lists the specific voting options – the full list is available in the SPSS file),
- type of profession (SD6 with 1= independent entrepreneur, 2= team leader, 3= specialist without leadership functions (with special education), 4= employee without special education, 5= worker (including master, group leader), also in agriculture, 6= army, ministry of the interior, public prosecution, 7= pupil, student, 8= pensioner (non-working), 9= housewife, 10= unemployed, 99=answer rejected),
- marital status (SD8 with 1= married, 2= not registered, but living together, 3= widow(er), 4= divorced, 5= living separately, but not divorced, 6= single (never married), 7= not registered, living separately, 9=answer rejected),
- number of people living together with respondent (SD9: How many people live together with you, yourself and all children included? / SD10A: How many children up to 16 years old live together with you in your family? / SD10B up to 18 years / SD10C up to 17 years),
- material situation of the own family (SD11 with 1=We hardly manage. Money is not even enough for food products, 2=We have enough money for food products, but buying clothes causes financial problems, 3=We have enough money for food and clothes, but the purchase of durable household goods (e.g. TV, fridge) causes problems, 4=We can buy durable household goods without problems, 5=We can afford expensive things like a flat and a datcha, 9=answer rejected),
- place of living - mega-region/federalny okrug (qFO with 1=Northwestern, 2=Central, 3=Southern+North Caucasus, 4=Volga, 5=Ural, 6=Siberia, 7=Far Eastern),
- place of living - number of inhabitants (qRNP with 1=Moscow, 2= over 500,000, 3=from 100,000 to 500,000, 4= city of up to 100,000, 5=village / qRNP2 with 1=Moscos, 2= big city, 3= small city, 4= village).

In total four variables describe the survey: The variables MONTH and year in the dataset refer to the time the respective survey has been conducted. The variable opors gives the name of the respective poll. The variable qID is the identification number of the respective respondent.

If any of the questions included in this data collection has not been asked in the respective survey, the data file shows missing values. That means a missing value always indicates that the respective question has not been asked.

The Levada-Center

The Levada-Center (<https://www.levada.ru/en/about-us/>) began to take shape in 1987 as All-Union Center for the Study of Public Opinion (VTsIOM) of the Soviet Union. It conducted its first country-wide representative opinion poll in 1988.

In August 2003, the Ministry of Property Relations of the Russian Federation adopted a decision to change the status of the Center, resulting in a change of the Center's management. The research team rejected the changes and left the organisation to create a new independent pollster called "Analytical Service Polls" VTsIOM-A". However, usage of the new name was forbidden by court order, so the organization continued to operate under the name "Yuri Levada Analytical Center" (Levada-Center).

Opinion polls conducted by the Levada Center follow the principles of WAPOR (World Association for Public Opinion) and ESOMAR (European Society for Opinion and Market Research). Senior staff of the Center have been trained in the USA and Western Europe.

The omnibus surveys of the Levada-Center

The Levada Center holds monthly omnibus surveys. The omnibus survey is based on the nationwide, multi-stage, stratified and probability sample that represents the adult population of Russia over 18 years of age. For the "Courier" Survey the number of respondents amounts to 1,600; for the "Monitoring" Surveys the respective number was 2,500. The statistical error of both surveys does not exceed 3.4%.

The omnibus survey covers the entire adult population of Russia excluding the following categories:

- a) persons doing their military service by conscription (around 0.8% of the total adult population)
- b) persons under imprisonment before trial or already convicted (around 0.6% of the total adult population);
- c) persons living in remote or difficult to access regions of Far North (around 1.8% of the total adult population);
- d) persons residing in rural settlements with not more than 50 inhabitants (around 0.8% of the total adult population);
- e) persons with mental illnesses constantly living in psycho-neurological hospitals (about 1.2% of the total adult population).

Additionally, homeless people are also not included in the sample (about 1.5% of the total adult population). Consequently, around 6.7% of Russia's total adult population are excluded from this survey.

The omnibus survey is conducted in the form of face-to-face interviews at the home of respondents. Usually, the questionnaire comprises 80-100 questions, including the demographic section.

Sample Design

At the first stage, urban settlements and rural administrative districts are selected as primary sampling units (PSUs). The nationwide sample (N = 1,600) is divided among:

- 8 large geographical macro regions (Federal Okrugs) – North-West, Central, Volga, South, North Caucasus, Ural, Siberia, Far East — proportionate to the size of the local population aged 18+ of each macro region, in addition to Moscow as a macro region and self-representative stratum.
- 5 types of settlements in each of the macro regions in proportion to the size of the local population aged 18+ of each type:

cities > 1,000,000 inhabitants;

cities 500,000 – 1,000,000 inhabitants;

cities 100,000 – 500,000 inhabitants;

urban settlements < 100,000 inhabitants;

rural administrative districts.

In the North-West region there are no cities with 500,000 – 1,000,000 inhabitants, in the Far East region and in the North Caucasus there are no cities with more than 1,000,000 inhabitants, and Moscow is considered as a separate stratum. As a result, the total number of strata is 38 (Table 1).

Table 1. Distribution of adult (18+) population and sample among macro regions and settlement types

Geographical macro region (Federal Okrug)		rural administrative districts		urban settlements < 100K inhabitants		cities 100K-500K inhabitants		cities 500K-1'000K inhabitants		cities > 1'000K inhabitants		Totals	
		%	interviews	%	interviews	%	interviews	%	interviews	%	interviews	%	interviews
1	North-West	1,52	24	2,41	39	1,99	32			3,77	60	9,69	155
2	Central	4,93	79	5,71	91	6,29	101	1,17	19	0,75	12	18,85	302
3	Volga	5,66	91	4,46	71	2,59	41	3,44	55	4,04	65	20,19	323
4	South	4,16	67	2,08	33	2,53	40	0,97	16	1,52	24	11,26	180
9	North Caucasus	2,99	48	1,16	19	1,56	25	0,38	6			6,09	98
5	Ural	1,51	24	2,47	40	1,90	30	0,50	8	1,84	29	8,22	131
6	Siberia	2,91	47	2,74	44	1,21	20	2,02	32	2,70	43	11,58	186
7	Far East	1,40	22	1,54	25	1,58	26	0,87	14			5,39	87
8	Moscow									8,73	140	8,73	140
TOTAL		25,08	402	22,57	362	19,65	315	9,35	150	23,35	373	100,00	1 602

Selection of primary sampling units (PSUs):

All cities with over 1,000,000 inhabitants are included in the sample as self-representative units. The number of interviews in each of these cities is determined in proportion to its size in the adult population of the Russian Federation.

Other urban settlements and rural districts are considered as primary sample units (PSUs). In each stratum (except a stratum of cities over 1,000,000 inhabitants) the number of PSUs is calculated with an average of at least 10 interviews per PSU (but not more than 12), and the PSUs are selected with the probability proportional to the size (PPS) method as well. The total numbers of interviews calculated for a stratum are distributed approximately equally among selected PSUs.

In total, 137 PSUs are selected including 97 urban and 40 rural PSUs (Table 2).

Table2. Distribution of adult (18+) population and number of PSUs among macro regions and settlement types

Geographical macro region (Federal Okrug)		rural administrative districts		urban settlements < 100K inhabitants		cities 100K-500K inhabitants		cities 500K-1'000K inhabitants		cities > 1'000K inhabitants		Totals	
		%	PSUs	%	PSUs	%	PSUs	%	PSUs	%	PSUs	%	PSUs
1	North-West	1,52	2	2,41	4	1,99	3			3,77	1	9,69	10
2	Central	4,93	8	5,71	9	6,29	10	1,17	2	0,75	1	18,85	30
3	Volga	5,66	9	4,46	7	2,59	4	3,44	5	4,04	5	20,19	30
4	South	4,16	7	2,08	3	2,53	4	0,97	1	1,52	2	11,26	17
9	North Caucasus	2,99	4	1,16	2	1,56	2	0,38	1			6,09	9
5	Ural	1,51	2	2,47	4	1,90	3	0,50	1	1,84	2	8,22	12
6	Siberia	2,91	5	2,74	4	1,21	2	2,02	3	2,70	3	11,58	17
7	Far East	1,40	3	1,54	3	1,58	3	0,87	2			5,39	11
8	Moscow									8,73	1	8,73	1
TOTAL		25,08	40	22,57	36	19,65	31	9,35	15	23,35	15	100,00	137

The sample includes:

- 15 cities over 1,000,000 inhabitants;
- 15 cities with 500,000 – 1,000,000;
- 31 cities with 100,000 – 500,000;
- 36 urban settlements less than 100,000;
- 40 rural administrative districts.

At the second stage, the secondary sampling units (SSUs) are selected from the lists of electoral districts (blocks, streets) in urban settlements and villages in rural districts. The number of surveyed SSUs is defined by 5-12 interviews per SSU; 14 SSUs are selected in Moscow, 6 SSUs in St. Petersburg. Overall, about 163 SSUs are selected.

At the third stage, the households are selected by a random route method. From this route lists interviewers approach each 7th household in blocks with multi-storey apartment buildings and each 3th household in blocks with individual houses.

At the fourth stage, one household member is selected based on the question whose birthdays is closest to the interview date. Once a person has been selected as respondent in a particular household, this person may not be substituted with another person of the same household.

Soft quotas (sex and age) are used only at this last stage (i.e., the selection of a respondent in a household). They are applied after 75% of the sample is collected and when the deviations resulting from the “next birthday method” are +/- 15%. Quotas for the selection of respondents are used to increase accessibility of some problem groups (e.g., younger persons, males) and to decrease some groups that often are oversampled, for example, women over 55 years of age.

If nobody is at home or the selected member of a household is absent, an interviewer is required to visit this household again. In order to reach those who work late hours and those who leave for the weekends, interviewers are required to visit households at different times of the day and at different days of the week.

The stages of the selection process are based on the following data:

- Russian Federal State Statistics Service: Population Census 2010 (gender/age/education distribution);
- Federal State Statistic Service: Resident population of the Russian Federation by municipalities on January 1, 2018 (rural/urban population, gender/age distribution);
- Lists of electoral districts (blocks/streets in urban settlements or villages in rural districts) with located buildings in each of sampled settlements.