

RUSSIA OVERVIEW

BASIC STATISTICS

- **Total population:** 145,470,197 (Ranked 6th in the world by the US Census Bureau).
- **National GDP:** US \$620.3 billion (1999 est.).
- **GDP per capita:** US \$4,200 (1999 est.).
- **Median Age:** 37 years old.
- **Infant Mortality:** 22.74 per 1,000 live births.

GEOGRAPHY

- **Location:** Stretches from Eastern Europe through the Continent of Asia in the north to the Pacific Ocean.
- **Borders:** Azerbaijan, Belarus, China, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Mongolia, North Korea, Norway, Poland, and Ukraine.
- **Area:** 6,592,800 square miles—the largest country in the world.
- **Topography:** Vast and diverse landscape including a broad plain with low hills, the Urals, a large coniferous forest, tundra in Siberia and mountains along southern borders.
- **Climate:** Nearly every climate but tropical.
- **Capital:** Moscow.
- **Major cities and population:** Moscow, 9,321,000; St. Petersburg, 5,133,000; Nizhniy, 1,458,000; and Novosibirsk, 1,478,000.
- **21 republics:** Adygeya, Altay, Bashkortostan, Buryatiya, Chechnya, Chuvashiya, Dagestan, Ingushetiya, Kabardino-Balkariya, Kaliningradskaya, Kalmykiya, Karachayevo-Cherkesiya, Kareliya, Khakasiya, Komi, Mariy-El, Mordoviya, Sakha, Severnaya Osetiya-Alaniya, Tatarstan, Tyva, Tyumenskaya, Udmurtiya.
- **10 autonomous okrugs:** Aginskiy Buryatskiy, Chukotskiy, Evenkiyskiy, Khanty-Mansiyskiy, Koryakskiy, Nenetskiy, Komi-Permyatskiy, Taymyrskiy, Ust'-Ordynskiy Buryatskiy, Yamalo-Nenetskiy.
- **6 krais:** Altayskiy, Khabarovskiy, Krasnodarskiy, Krasnoyarskiy, Primorskiy, Stavropol'skiy.
- **2 federal cities:** Moskva (Moscow) and Sankt-Peterburg (Saint Petersburg).
- **1 autonomous oblast:** Yevreyskaya.

DEMOGRAPHY

- **Population:** 145,470,197 (Ranked 6th in the world by the US Census Bureau).

- **Population density:** 22 per square mile.
- **Children 0-14:** 17.4%—25,320,367.
- **Teenage 10-19:** 16.1%—23,429,267.
- **Youth between 15-24:** 15.9%—23,082,221.
- **Seniors Over 70:** 8.7%—12,681,584.
- **Male to female ratio:** 87.9 males for 100 females.
- **Birth rate:** 9.02 per 1,000 people.
- **Life expectancy at birth:** 59.06 for males and 71.81 for females.
- **Infant mortality rate:** 22.74 per 1,000 live births.
- **Official Language:** Russian.
- **Ethnic Groups:** Russian and Tatar.
- **Religious affiliations:** 56.5% Christians (83,695,900), 27.5% Nonreligious (40,409,724), 7.6% Muslims (11,137,043) and 5.2% Atheists (7,633,658). The following represent less than one percent of the total: Ethno-religionists, Jews, Hindus, and Buddhists.
- **Education:** Free and compulsory from 7-17.
- **Literacy rate:** 99%.

ECONOMY

- **Currency:** Ruble.
- **GDP per capita:** US \$4,200 (1999 est.).
- **National GDP:** US \$620.3 billion (1999 est.).
- **Major Industries:** Steel, machinery, machine tools, vehicles, chemicals, mining, footwear, textiles, appliances and paper.
- **Chief crops:** Grains, sugar beets, vegetables, sunflowers.
- **Electricity production:** 771.947 bil kWh (1998).
- **TV Sets:** 389 per 1,000 people.
- **Radios:** 417 per 1,000 people.
- **Telephones:** 29,031,300 main lines.
- **Daily newspaper circulation:** 105 per 1,000 people.

POLITICS

- **Government type:** Federal republic.
- **Head of state:** President Vladimir Putin.
- **Head of government:** Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov.
- **International organization memberships:** United Nations (UN), Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Group (APEC), Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).
- **Historical Background:** Prior to the 9th century, Russia was populated by Slavic tribes, which were the ancestors of the following modern ethnic groups: Moravians, Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, Serbs, Croats, Slovenes,

Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians. In 980, AD Vladimir I became ruler of Kievan Rus (pre-cursor to Modern Russia). He eventually converted to Orthodox Christianity and made this the official religion of the region. This significantly linked Russia with the Byzantine Empire spiritually, culturally, and economically; in effect, this union sheltered Russia from the influence of the Western Latin Church or Islam. After Yaroslav the Wise's rule in the 11th century, the Kievan Rus became splintered, especially during the 12th and 13th centuries. This was the turbulent time of the Mongol invasions, the establishment of the Golden Horde and a variety of attacks from the West. From the mid 13th century until the reign of Ivan III Vasilyevich, Ivan the Great, Russian princes submitted as vassals to the Golden Horde. In 1480, Muscovy stopped paying tribute to the Golden Horde and the rulers began to refer to themselves as Russian tsars (this would not be an official title until the 16th century). After the fall of the Byzantine Empire in 1453, the Muscovy emerged as the only remaining Orthodox state and established its own army. Ivan IV Vasilyevich, Ivan the Terrible, conquered the khanates of Kazan and Astakhan and developed trade relations with England, but his rule deteriorated as he became increasingly violent and irrational, leaving the state in an economic crisis after his death. Between his death in 1584 and the rise of the Romanov tsars in 1613, leadership was uncertain in what came to be known as the Time of Troubles. The Romanov tsars ruled until the revolution of 1917. Russia's primitive agricultural economy changed with the reign of Peter I, who sought to westernize the economy, the military, and expand Russia's influence. Increasingly, in the later half of the 19th century, the tsars implemented totalitarian policies and sought Russification of the diverse cultures encompassed by the Empire. In the early 20th century, Russia government met increasing protests and uncertainty. In 1914, Russia reluctantly joined the WWI effort against Germany and its allies. In 1917, the Russian Revolution began, which overthrew the Russian Empire and eventually led to communist rule in 1922. From then until 1991 Russia was a part of the communist rule, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, USSR. In 1991, Russia became an independent state and since experienced the pains of rebuilding. Russian President Boris Yeltsin faced political, economic, and regional instabilities in his term from 1991 to 2000. Yeltsin's chosen successor, President Vladimir Putin, now faces the challenge, as Russia moves into the 21st century.

TRENDS AND SOCIAL ISSUES

Understanding the trends and social issues of a particular country should always take into consideration the opinions of persons within the country. The Center for Youth Studies is looking for contributors from each country to add to our

appreciation and understanding of its culture, potential, trends and critical issues. If you have insight as to what is important to Russians, please contact us.

We look forward to hearing the insights on what insiders consider the most important issues facing them. From an outsider's perspective, current issues would include the role of Russia in world politics, the bloody conflict with Chechnya, increasing government stability, economic development, and generational differences among the Russian population. What are the most important issues for Russians today? This will be added as we receive this information.

SOURCES

TEXT

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[US Census Bureau, International Database.](#)

[US Central Intelligence Agency. World Factbook.](#)

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. How important do you see Russia's role in Europe, Asia, and in the world?
2. What most impresses you about the above information?
3. Do you take issue with any of the above? If so, how would you express it differently?
4. What strikes you most about the population of Russia? Why?
5. What do you see as the historical and cultural contributions of Russia to the world?
6. How has Russia handled its part in Chechnya revolt?
7. What can we learn from Russia and the Russian people?

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