

A Quarter of Russians Are All For Extramarital Affairs

By [Gabrielle Tetrault-Farber](#)

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Just as Dr. Zhivago was torn between his steadfastly loyal wife and his long-time lover, one quarter of Russians have no reservations about seeking sexual fulfillment beyond the marital bedroom, a new poll revealed.

But the majority would beg to differ. A survey published Thursday by Moscow-based independent pollster the Levada Center revealed that in Russia, those who condemn infidelity outnumber those who approve of extramarital relations.

The poll showed that 63 percent of Russians have no patience for cheating hearts. Most Russian men and women — 55 and 70 percent, respectively — seem to agree that taking a lover is simply out of line. Russian women are, perhaps unsurprisingly, less likely than men to stray from their marriages.

Although the poll revealed that marriage means "game over" for most Russians, it also found that they are generally not opposed to sexual exploration before walking down the aisle. The Levada Center revealed that 54 percent of Russians do not object to premarital sex, while only one-third of the population believes brides and grooms should cling to virginity until the wedding night.

But even if performed prior to marriage, many Russians believe intercourse must be underpinned by love. The survey showed that nearly half of Russians think sex without love is unacceptable, while one-third of the population thinks sexual relations without a romantic connection are permissible.

Russian men and women, it would seem, are more conservative in their sexual views than some of their European counterparts. An online poll published by the French Institute of Public Opinion last month found that extramarital affairs were on the rise in France, a country that for centuries has been reputed for its libertinism. According to the survey, every second French man and nearly one-third of French women have had extramarital affairs. The French have been increasingly unfaithful, the poll found, with the number of cheaters having surged by 24 percent since 1970.

While Russians tend to condemn marital indiscretions more than the French, they are also less conservative about adultery than many other populations. A poll from Washington-based think tank the Pew Research Center released last January found that 84 percent of Americans viewed cheating as morally unacceptable. In countries where religion plays an important role in government and society — including the Philippines and Pakistan — at least 90 percent of the population thinks adultery is wrong, the survey revealed.

The Levada Center poll was conducted between Jan. 23 and 26 of this year, among a representative sample of 1,600 adults across 46 Russian regions, and had a margin of error not exceeding 3.4 percent. The French Institute of Public Opinion poll was conducted from Jan. 7 to 9, 2014 among 804 individuals. Its margin of error was not immediately clear. The Pew Research Center poll was conducted between March and April, 2013 among 819 people, and had an average margin of error of 4.1 percentage points among the U.S., Pakistan and the Philippines.

Contact the author at g.tetrautfarber@imedia.ru

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