

Most Russians' Religious Sensibilities Never Offended – Poll

August 13, 2015



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A majority of Russians have never had their religious sensibilities insulted, an offense that was criminalized in 2013 and has subsequently been used to prosecute artists addressing religious topics, according to a survey released by state-owned pollster VTsIOM on Thursday.

A total of 73 percent of respondents told VTsIOM that they had never experienced insults to their faith while just 1 percent said they experienced such insults every day.

Since it became a criminal offense, insulting religious sensibilities has been used in high-profile cases, including against the director of a new staging of Richard Wagner's opera "Tannhauser" in the city of Novosibirsk.

Those found guilty of offending another's faith can be sentenced to up to three years in prison. The more serious crime of inciting religious hatred carries a maximum jail sentence of five years.

While 72 percent of Orthodox believers said their religious sensibilities had never been offended, this fell to 60 percent for adherents of other religions, according to VTsIOM. After Orthodoxy, the largest religion in Russia is Islam, with an estimated 20 million Muslims living in the country.

The poll was conducted April 4-5, among 1,600 respondents in 46 Russian regions. The statistical error does not exceed 3.5 percent, according to VTsIOM.

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