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1 in 10 Russians Want to Emigrate — State Pollster

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Germany, the U.S. and Spain are the top destinations for young Russians who want to emigrate. **Sergei Vedyashkin / Moskva News Agency**

A recent survey conducted by the state-funded pollster VTsIOM shows that 1 out of 10 Russians want to leave the country. The pollster added it would be wrong to conclude that those emigrating were motivated by conditions in Russia. In its poll published on Monday, VTsIOM said that 10 percent of respondents expressed a desire to move away from Russia permanently.

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Young Russians were especially keen to move: Among those aged 18 to 24, almost one-third (31 percent) of respondents said they wanted to leave the country.

For decades, Russia has suffered a brain and youth drain: According to federal statistics agency Rosstat, more than 300,000 people left the country in 2016.

VTsIOM said that more than a quarter of those who thought of leaving had already begun preparing for the move by "collecting information about the destination country." Twenty percent are learning a foreign language.

The top three destinations were Germany (16 percent), the United States (7 percent) and Spain (6 percent), the pollster said.

Notably, one out of four of those questioned in the poll could name a relative or acquaintance who had moved away from Russia in recent years.

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The poll was conducted through phone interviews with 2,000 respondents on June 6-7.

The head of research at VTsIOM, Stepan Lvov, said it would be wrong to interpret the figures as a sign Russians wanted to "flee the horrible Russian reality."

"It is a testament to our youth's openness towards other countries, and could even be [interpreted as] a challenge to the outer world," he was cited as saying in an online analysis alongside the poll results.

"You don't want anything to do with us? We will come to you ourselves — look at your people, and show who we are."

A similar poll conducted recently by the independent Levada Center put the number of Russians considering emigration at 15 percent.

Muscovites were especially keen to move, the pollster found, with one out of five capital city residents thinking of packing their bags.

Includes reporting by Anton Muratov.

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