

How Russia's Place in the World Has Changed in the Eyes of Its Citizens

A critical and more realistic perception of the country's world ranking has increased over the past two years.

By [Pavel Aptekar](#)

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Andrei Lyubimov / Moskva News Agency

A considerable percentage of Russian citizens have a fairly objective view of Russia's place in world rankings in terms of economic development, material well-being and legal compliance. This is good news, but it means that it's harder for Russians to believe in the reality of the president's campaign platform, which set the goal of bringing Russia closer to standards exhibited in more advanced countries.

In December, the Public Opinion Foundation asked respondents to share where they think Russia falls in world rankings in four separate areas: economic development, material well-being, protection of personal rights and freedoms, and personal safety. The past two years

have seen a growth in the number of participants with a more critical view of current affairs.

As in 2016, the overwhelming majority (37 percent in 2016, 39 percent in 2018) believes that Russia ranks somewhere between 10th and 50th in the world for economic development, which is consistent with Russia's actual ranking (13th place in terms of GDP in 2018, according to the IMF). Over the past two years the percent of respondents who believe that Russia ranks in the top ten has shrunk from 29 percent to 20 percent, and the number of those who believe that Russia falls somewhere between 50th and 100th has grown from 14 percent to 20 percent.

In terms of material well-being, 30 percent of respondents (compared to 36 percent in 2016) placed Russia between 10th and 50th in the world. However, the percent of respondents who believe Russia to be an outsider has grown from 15 percent to 21 percent. 28 percent of respondents (a small change from 2016's 27 percent) were close to the actual ranking, placing Russia between 50th and 100th. According to the IMF, in 2018 Russia ranked 73th in terms of GDP per capita.

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The perception of the country's situation in terms of protection of personal rights and freedoms is somewhat better, but here again the number of participants who believe that Russia ranks towards the higher side has decreased, and the number believing Russia to be an outsider has grown. According to data from the Rule of Law Index and compiled by the international non-governmental organization World Justice Project, Russia ranked 89th out of 113 countries in 2018.

Rankings vary based on age, education and income: the wealthy believe the situation to be more favorable than the poor. For instance, 26 percent of respondents with average or lower than average levels of education are certain that Russia ranks in the top ten for most developed countries of the world, whereas only half of respondents with higher education support this opinion.

The more critical perception of Russia's place in the world reflects a general decline in Russian national sentiment, primarily caused by the pension reforms. Irina Osipova, an analyst for the Public Opinion Foundation, notes that people are more acutely feeling the effects of government policies and injustice.

The media continues to focus on the successes of international policy without noting that the agenda has changed and people are less concerned with the international situation, says Higher School of Economics sociologist Grigory Yudin. More and more people are using alternative sources of information, which allows them to form a more objective picture of what's going on in the world.

Pavel Aptekar is a columnist at the Vedomosti business daily, where a [version](#) of this article was originally published. The views and opinions expressed in opinion pieces do not necessarily reflect the position of The Moscow Times.

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