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Official Poll Shows Russians Too Poor to Afford Shoes, Puzzling Kremlin

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An official survey on the extent of economic hardship that Russians currently face — including their inability to afford new shoes — has left the Kremlin scratching its head.

An extensive State Statistics Service, or Rosstat, survey said that four-fifths of Russian families had a hard time making ends meet — and one-third of households could not afford to buy a second pair of shoes.

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"Why shoes? Why one-third? Where are these figures from?" Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov asked reporters on a conference call, BBC reported on Wednesday.

In a response that followed later that evening, Rosstat explained that the "subjective" survey

“reflects the respondents’ idea of a decent standard of living, wealth and poverty.”

Russians’ ability to afford shoes — which improved from 50.3 percent in 2016 to 63.8 percent in 2018 — is one of several factors that should be considered on a holistic level, Rosstat said.

The statistics agency, which carries out the comprehensive survey on living conditions once every two years, polled more than 60,000 households across the country for this year’s data.

It has faced accusations of undermining its own credibility with upward revisions of economic data. Last month, it raised eyebrows with a decision to stop publishing monthly numbers that have shown declining disposable incomes for five straight years.

New Rosstat chief Pavel Malkov on Thursday rejected accusations that it is under pressure from the Kremlin to fudge economic data.

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