

Russia's Billionaires Grow Richer, But Fall Behind International Peers

The pandemic has benefitted the world's richest, but Russia is slipping down the ultra-wealthy league tables.

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Russia's billionaires are the fourth richest cohort in the world. **Sergey Kiselev / Moskva News Agency**

Russia's billionaires have increased their net worth by 20% during the coronavirus pandemic, as a boom in global stock markets and asset prices has pushed the fortunes of the world's ultra-wealthy to dizzying new levels.

Despite the rapid growth — which comes against a backdrop of unprecedented economic uncertainty, with millions of Russians [losing their jobs](#) or seeing their wages shrink due to the pandemic — Russia's billionaires lag the rest of the world in terms of how fast they are expanding their fortunes.

The wealth controlled by Russia's richest has risen by 80% over the last decade, consultants PwC and Swiss bank UBS found in a [new report](#) — the smallest increase among the world's

top 10 billionaire locations, which includes rapidly accelerating markets like China and India, as well as developed economies such as the U.S., UK, Canada and Germany.

Global stock markets rose more than three-fold over the same period, as measured by the MSCI World Index, and the value of the world's billionaires increased at an even faster rate.

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Russia's billionaires — 102 in total, according to PwC and UBS — are still the fourth wealthiest cohort in the world, controlling a combined \$468 billion. That compares to the \$3.6 trillion owned by U.S. billionaires, \$1.7 trillion in China and \$600 billion in Germany. At current growth rates, Russia is likely to fall behind both France and India in the billionaire league table over the coming years.

Matching the economy's rapid expansion, China's billionaires have soared up the rankings over the last decade, with their combined wealth increasing more than ten-fold over the same period.

The pandemic has pushed the wealth of Russia's billionaires back above levels last seen in 2013, before Russia annexed Crimea, Western sanctions were imposed and a crash in global oil prices sent the ruble crashing and the economy into recession.

Russia's underperformance could be connected with the industries where Russia's billionaires are concentrated, as well as the wider economy's weak growth — which has averaged less than one percent per year since 2013. Technology and healthcare billionaires have expanded their fortunes at the fastest rates over the past year, the report found — sectors where Russia is underrepresented compared with the U.S., China and Europe.

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“The innovators and the disruptors, the architects of creative destruction in the economy, are still increasing their wealth,” the report states, pointing to “polarization” within the world's billionaire class. “Other billionaires, on the wrong side of economic, technological, societal and environmental trends are becoming less wealthy.”

Globally, billionaire wealth passed \$10 trillion for the first time in history at the end of July, the report found.

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