

# RUSSIA

## Country Profiles



This profile is a part of our Leading Multiculturalism: Canada's Impact on Global Diversity Policies series

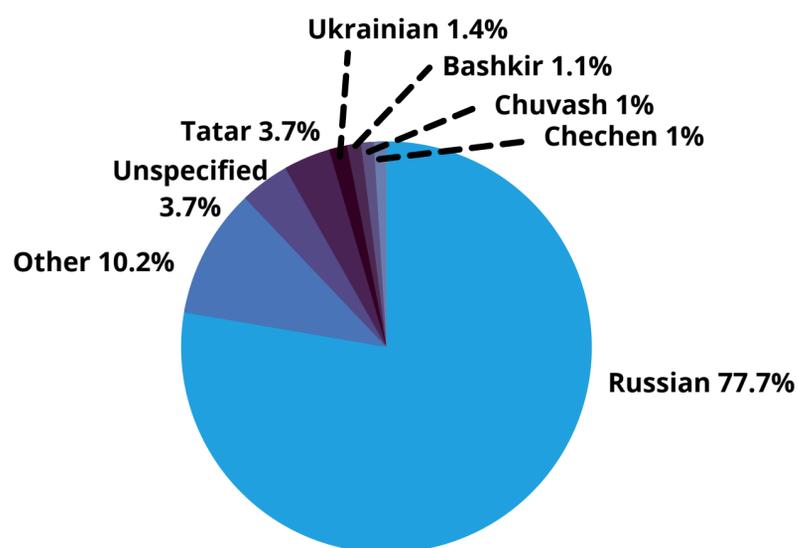
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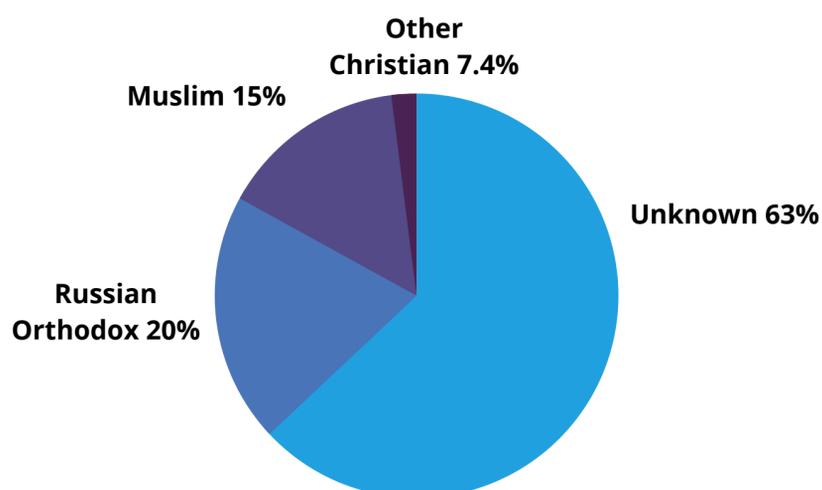
## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

As the centre of the former Soviet Union (1922-1991), Russia (the Russian Federation) has a unique makeup of ethnic groups and federal subjects. There are 85 federal subjects, each with distinct government and legal structures.

## DEMOGRAPHICS



## RELIGION



## MULTICULTURALISM POLICY

- **Term:** multinational nation.
- **Approach:** top-down, as federal legislation establishes the rights of ethnic groups and federal subjects.

## DOMESTIC

- The Constitution protects basic freedoms and the rights to heritage, nationality, religion, and language. Its preamble recognizes the multinational structure.
- A distinction between "Russian citizen" and "ethnic Russian" still exists.
- There are no affirmative action policies or multicultural approaches to integration.
- 2020 constitutional amendments place the constitution above international law.

## INTERNATIONAL

### Treaties

- ✓ International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
- ✓ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

# Russia

## Background<sup>i</sup>

- **Population:** 141,722,205 (9<sup>th</sup> in world; 2020 est.)
- **Demographics:** Russian, 77.7%; Tatar, 3.7%; Ukrainian, 1.4%; Bashkir, 1.1%; Chuvash, 1%; Chechen, 1%; other, 10.2%; unspecified, 3.9%
- **Languages:** Russian, 85.7%; Tatar, 3.2%; Chechen, 1%; other 10.1%
- **Religion:** Russian Orthodox, 15-20%; Muslim, 10-15%; other Christian, 2% (note: estimates of practicing worshippers)
- **Term:** Multinational Nation<sup>ii</sup>
- **Top Down or Bottom Up:** Top-Down/Statist (to the extent a policy exists)

Russia is the world's largest country by landmass and the ninth largest by population. Stretching from the forests of Eastern Europe to the Barents Sea in Northeast Asia, the Russian state has a unique multinational character that differs from, yet presents many of the same challenges as, Canadian multiculturalism.

The legacy of the Soviet Union exerts a significant influence in Russia's ethnic diversity policies. A stated goal of equality, albeit not necessarily fulfilled, the USSR developed one of the world's first affirmative action programs and an extensive "ethnic federalism"<sup>iii</sup> structure. After the collapse of the USSR, Russia abandoned the former,<sup>iv</sup> but nonetheless continues to be shaped by the latter.

The result has been a Constitution that explicitly defines Russia as a "multinational" nation and stresses the upholding of that heritage,<sup>v</sup> along with a federal structure that delegates significant authority on cultural issues to federative republics. These republics, such as the Republic of Tatarstan, have their constitutions<sup>vi</sup> and often specify their own 'state' language alongside Russian.

For groups without their own sub-national entity, or who are minorities in regions outside their sub-state, Russia also has a unique institution called National Cultural Autonomy. While largely symbolic, with no regular funding from the state, National Culture Autonomies are specially designated types of Non-Governmental Organizations that are intended to focus on promotion of a group's language and culture within a region.<sup>vii</sup>

## Comparative Analysis: Domestic Legal

### ***Approach***

To the extent one exists, top-down (statist).

### ***Constitutional Protections<sup>viii</sup>***

Article 2 calls for the state to recognize, observe, and protect "human and civil rights and freedoms."

Article 14 stipulates separation of church and state and that all religions should be equal before the law.

Article 17 of the 1993 Constitution further calls for the protection of basic rights.

Article 19(1-3) protects the equality of rights regardless of race, gender, religion, convictions, association, or "other circumstances."

Article 26(1) protects the right to identify as a particular nationality and bans anyone being forced to "determine or declare" their nationality.

Article 26(2) provides the right to speak one's own language in "communication, upbringing, education, and creative work."

Article 28 provides for freedom of conscience and religion.

Article 29 provides for right for thought and expression and bans "propaganda or agitation" to incite hatred.

Article 30 provides for the right of association.

Article 43 provides for the right to education, but does *not* make provision for education in one's primary tongue.

Chapter 3 governs the federal structure of the Russian Federation, with Article 68 both assigning Russian as the state language and permitting federal republics to establish their own state languages. Article 68(3) further provides for the right to preserve one's native language.

- For example, the Constitution of the Republic of Tatarstan – a constituent republic of the RF – places the Tatar language as an official state language (Article 8[1]).<sup>ix</sup>
- The Tatarstan Constitution also speaks to its "multinational" people (Article 3[1]).
- This state structure has been called "Ethnic Federalism."<sup>x</sup>

### ***Explicit Recognition of Multiculturalism***

Somewhat. The preamble of Russia's Constitution states that "We, the *multinational* people of Russia..."<sup>xi</sup>

A 2020 Constitution amendment further required the state to "support and protect culture as a unique heritage of Russia's multi-ethnic nation."<sup>xii</sup>

However, "multiculturalism" in the Canadian sense has not taken hold. Emil Pain, Professor at HSE, Moscow: "The idea of a multicultural society is absolutely foreign to current powers and the majority of Russian population."<sup>xiii</sup>

"Today Russia remains probably the most constitutionally complex, ethnically multifarious and numerically multiple federation in the world."<sup>xiv</sup>

## **Comparative Analysis: Domestic Practical**

### ***Valuing and Active Promotion of Diversity***

The Soviet Union had a 'matrioshka' (матрёшка) model, after the famous Russian doll. The idea was that several layers of ethnicity would "nest within each" with the Soviet identity at the top and then the identities of small groups below.<sup>xv</sup>

- Despite the Soviet Union's complex ethnic policies, Russia does not have a coherent and well-developed policy to manage cultural diversity.<sup>xvi</sup>

- Under Yeltsin, the policy was to delegate powers to ethnic republics, which has since been abandoned, but left some lasting impacts. For example, the number of languages taught in school increased from 40 in 1989 to 80 by 2003.<sup>xvii</sup>

- Under Yelstin, a distinction was also made between российский (Russian citizen) and русский (ethnic Russian), which remains present in the language today.<sup>xviii</sup>

- Under Putin, there was a renewed focus on centralization<sup>xix</sup> and loyalty to the state, using "statist nationalism" with the goal of solidifying control.<sup>xx</sup>

- 1996 Federal Law on National-Cultural Autonomy: a law that allows for recognized minority groups to create a “national-cultural autonomy” in the form of a special kind of NGO, which is permitted to focus on “preserving identities, promoting the language, education, and national [ethnic] culture”<sup>xxi</sup>

- Russia has limited these to one association per ethnic group within a jurisdiction (local, regional, federal) and has placed other restrictions on their activities, such as a prohibition on participating in election campaigns.<sup>xxii</sup>
- Furthermore, the state does not provide regular funding and has not delegated responsibility for education, etc. to these groups.<sup>xxiii</sup>
- There is a Federal Council on NCA Affairs that allows these NCAs to act in an advisory capacity.
- These groups are “highly valued” among Russian policymakers but are largely relegated to a symbolic function in practice, with ordinary NGOs able to achieve similar goals and objectives.<sup>xxiv</sup>

- No or few active efforts to remove barriers in society.

### ***Multiculturalism as a Means to Integration***

There are no domestic policies that promote Multiculturalism as a means to integration.

### ***Affirmative Action Policies***

No. Dating back to 1932, the Soviet Union used to identify ethnicity on internal passports, which was used throughout the existence of the USSR as both a tool for positive (affirmative action) and negative discrimination. Russia abolished this practice in 1997, switching to a system “in which individual ethnicity is supposed to be, at least for official purposes, invisible and irrelevant.”<sup>xxv</sup>

## Comparative Analysis: International

### ***International Treaties***

Russia (as the Soviet Union) signed the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 1968 and ratified the treaty in 1973.<sup>xxvi</sup>

Russia (as the Soviet Union) signed the International Covenant on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination in 1966 and ratified the treaty in 1969.<sup>xxvii</sup>

The new constitutional amendments in 2020 placed the Constitution above international law,<sup>xxviii</sup> in contrast to Article 15(4) of the 1993 Constitution which applied the Russian Federation’s international obligations above domestic law.<sup>xxix</sup> Article 15(4) was, however, not formally repealed.<sup>xxx</sup>

### ***International Promotion of Multiculturalism***

No promotion in the international sphere.

<sup>i</sup> “Russia,” The World Factbook, Central Intelligence Agency, accessed November 19, 2020, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rs.html>

<sup>ii</sup> “Russian Federation’s Constitution of 1993 with Amendments Through 2014,” Constitute Project, accessed November 19, 2020, [https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Russia\\_2014.pdf?lang=en](https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Russia_2014.pdf?lang=en)

<sup>iii</sup> Peter Rutland, “The Presence of Absence: Ethnicity Policy in Russia,” in *Institutions, Ideas and Leadership in Russian Politics*, ed. Newton J. and Tompson, W. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2010), 116, DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230282940\\_6](https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230282940_6)

<sup>iv</sup> Şener Aktürk, *Regimes of Ethnicity and Nationhood in Germany, Russia, and Turkey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 256-257, doi:10.1017/CB09781139108898.

<sup>v</sup> Constitute Project. “Russian Federation’s Constitution of 1993 with Amendments Through 2014.”

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- vi "Constitution of the Republic of Tatarstan," Government of Tatarstan, accessed November 19, 2020, <https://tatarstan.ru/file/Constitution%20of%20the%20Republic%20of%20Tatarstan.pdf>
- vii Alexander Osipov, "National Cultural Autonomy in Russia: A Case of Symbolic Law," *Review of Central and East European Law* 35, no. 1 (2010): 49-53, doi: <https://doi-org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/10.1163/157303510X12650378239955>
- viii Constitute Project, "Russian Federation's Constitution of 1993 with Amendments Through 2014."
- ix Government of Tatarstan, "Constitution of the Republic of Tatarstan."
- x Rutland, "The Presence of Absence: Ethnicity Policy in Russia," 116.
- xi Constitute Project, "Russian Federation's Constitution of 1993 with Amendments Through 2014."
- xii "Law on amendment to Russian Federation Constitution," President of Russia, Government of the Russian Federation, accessed November 19, 2020, <http://en.kremlin.ru/acts/news/62988>
- xiii Victoria Levin, "The Changing Nature of Ethnic Politics under President Putin," meeting report 2, no. 7, at Carnegie Moscow Centre, <https://carnegie.ru/2000/10/30/changing-nature-of-ethnic-politics-under-president-putin-event-219>
- xiv Sergei Akopov, "Multinationalism, Mononationalism or Transnationalism in Russia?," in *Challenging Multiculturalism: European Models of Diversity*, ed. Raymond Taras (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 282.
- xv Rutland, "The Presence of Absence: Ethnicity Policy in Russia," 118.
- xvi Rutland, "The Presence of Absence: Ethnicity Policy in Russia," 117.
- xvii Rutland, "The Presence of Absence: Ethnicity Policy in Russia," 119.
- xviii Rutland, "The Presence of Absence: Ethnicity Policy in Russia," 121.
- xix Akopov, "Multinationalism, Mononationalism or Transnationalism in Russia?," 284.
- xx Rutland, "The Presence of Absence: Ethnicity Policy in Russia," 132.
- xxi Osipov, "National Cultural Autonomy in Russia: A Case of Symbolic Law", 39-42.
- xxii Osipov, "National Cultural Autonomy in Russia: A Case of Symbolic Law," 46.
- xxiii Osipov, "National Cultural Autonomy in Russia: A Case of Symbolic Law," 49.
- xxiv Osipov, "National Cultural Autonomy in Russia: A Case of Symbolic Law," 53.
- xxv Aktürk, *Regimes of Ethnicity and Nationhood in Germany, Russia, and Turkey*, 256-257.
- xxvi "International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights," United Nations Treaty Collection, United Nations, accessed November 19, 2020, [https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg\\_no=IV-4&chapter=4&clang=\\_en](https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-4&chapter=4&clang=_en)
- xxvii "International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination," United Nations Treaty Collection, United Nations, accessed November 19, 2020, [https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=IND&mtdsg\\_no=IV-2&chapter=4&lang=en](https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=IND&mtdsg_no=IV-2&chapter=4&lang=en)
- xxviii Government of the Russian Federation, "Law on amendment to Russian Federation Constitution."
- xxix Constitute Project, "Russian Federation's Constitution of 1993 with Amendments Through 2014."
- xxx Johnathan H. Hines, Jennifer A. Josefson, Vasilisa Strizh, and Vasily V. Marchenko, "Russia Adopts Major Amendments to Its Constitution," *Lexology*, July 13, 2020, <https://www.lexology.com/library/detail.aspx?g=9173f461-a6e0-4b5d-9964-c2632abc2fc6>