

# The Impact of Region on the Perception of Psychological Well-being: Comparative Study in Russian Federation

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## ABSTRACT

The impact of ethnocultural identity on psychological well-being is considered within the framework of psychological functioning and in relation to identity clarity, minority population life quality, and harmonious self-concept formation of immigrants. The aim of the research is clarifying the role of regional specificity in the psychological well-being. The study was conducted in six Federal Districts of Russia: Central, Southern, North Caucasian, Volga, Siberian, and Northwestern (1,322 people). After analysis of objective indicators of well-being and social situation in the different regions of Russia the authors have measured the subjective experience of the social situation and psychological well-being by the population, relied on the subjective assessment of social stability, physical health, emotional state, and safety degree in various life spheres. The results showed that Russians feel quite protected, and the level of their subjective safety is quite high. However, there can be some differences between objective indicators of well-being of the region and the subjective experience by the population. Mental well-being as a personal feeling is ethnoculturally mediated perception of the social situation and need to be measured not only with objective well-being values on a scale of a country, but in relation on the subjective experience of the population.

**Keywords:** psychological well-being, ethnocultural identity, Russian Federation.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Psychological well-being involves the ratio of positive and negative emotions that arise as a result of evaluating the events of life as corresponding or not to needs and motives of a

person. The analysis of the ethnocultural features' influence on life satisfaction may contribute to the study of this aspect. International comparative studies of life satisfaction showed sustainable differences in average values of this indicator between different countries [1].

Most studies concerning influence of culture and ethnocultural identity on psychological well-being are focused on global cultural differences (Eastern and Western cultures, individualistic and collectivist societies), as well as on comparison of the indicators of stability and well-being in different countries and political or territorial associations of states (European Union, North America, Eastern Europe countries, etc.). However, up to now, no attention was paid to such important issue as the influence of regional sociocultural characteristics on psychological well-being and social stability in the context of a particular country.

## 2. LITERATURE OVERVIEW

Due to the intensive development of research on psychological well-being, the various determinants of this phenomenon have been revealed and described [2], [3]. Many studies have focused on different factors contributing to psychological well-being such as respective roles played by autonomy, positive interpersonal relationship, environment, self-acceptance and the purpose of life [4], [5], and much less attention was paid to study such a factor as ethnocultural identity [6]. Meanwhile, in cross-cultural studies it has been highlighted the power of cultural identity by demonstrating that it can affect a range of psychological processes [7].

The impact of ethnocultural identity on psychological well-being can be considered in several directions. As a general matter it is proposed that individuals with a weak cultural

identity may experience difficulties in formation of personal identity and therefore may face with lower psychological functioning [8]. Strong cultural identity provides the individual with a clear prototype that helps to construct a clear personal identity and, by extension, to achieve well-being [9]. For more specific context the decrease of psychological well-being occurs at a higher rate in minority populations in contrast to majority group, but this effect to be pronounced when individuals are living in areas with a majority ethnic population in contrast to individuals who are living in predominantly ethnic minority neighborhoods [10]. The ability of immigrants to integrate the cultural identity of their country of origin and the cultural identity of their new country for harmonious self-concept is positively related with psychological well-being [11], [12], [13]. While in some researches it is argued that a strong identification to both the original and the new groups maximizes well-being [14], in others it is insisted more on the importance of maintaining a coherent identity, regardless of the strength of identification [15]. And there are even some evidence that no statistically significant relationship between cultural identity and well-being is found [16]. To better understand the nature of the relationship between ethnocultural identity and psychological well-being it is necessary to make use of validated means of determining cultural identity [17]. Currently, researches that study the role of the region in psychological well-being are considered very important [18].

### 3. METHODOLOGY

#### Sample

The study was conducted in eleven constituent territories of six Federal Districts of Russia: Central, Southern, North Caucasian, Volga, Siberian, and Northwestern. We have previously analyzed the objective indicators of well-being in each region. The study engaged 1,322 people in total (516 men and 806 women aged 15 to 83 years).

#### Method

In analyzing subjective experience of the social situation, we relied on the following values:  
 subjective assessment of social stability in general;  
 subjective assessment of physical health and emotional state;  
 assessment of safety degree in various life spheres.

For each value, we developed a question or a statement, the answer to which is its index. Below one may find the results of the comparison of eleven constituent territories of the Russian Federation by these indicators.

We have conducted an empirical study to reveal and analyze the features of a personal experience of social situation and the level of psychological well-being of people living in different constituent territories of the Russian Federation, a country with a high level of ethnic, cultural and religious diversity. We believe that objective statistical indicators of social situation and population well-being are not sufficient to form a scientific, objective view of these phenomena. It needs to be compared with indicators of subjective experience of this situation by population of constituent territories mediated by a specific ethnic and cultural context. Thus, this study was aimed at revealing the ethnocultural background of the social situation experience and psychological well-being. In the first place, we analyzed the objective indicators of well-being and social situation in different regions of Russia.

## 4. RESULTS

### Subjective assessment of social stability in general

We asked respondents to evaluate the current state of Russian society on the whole. The following possible answers were available: good, calm, tense, critical.

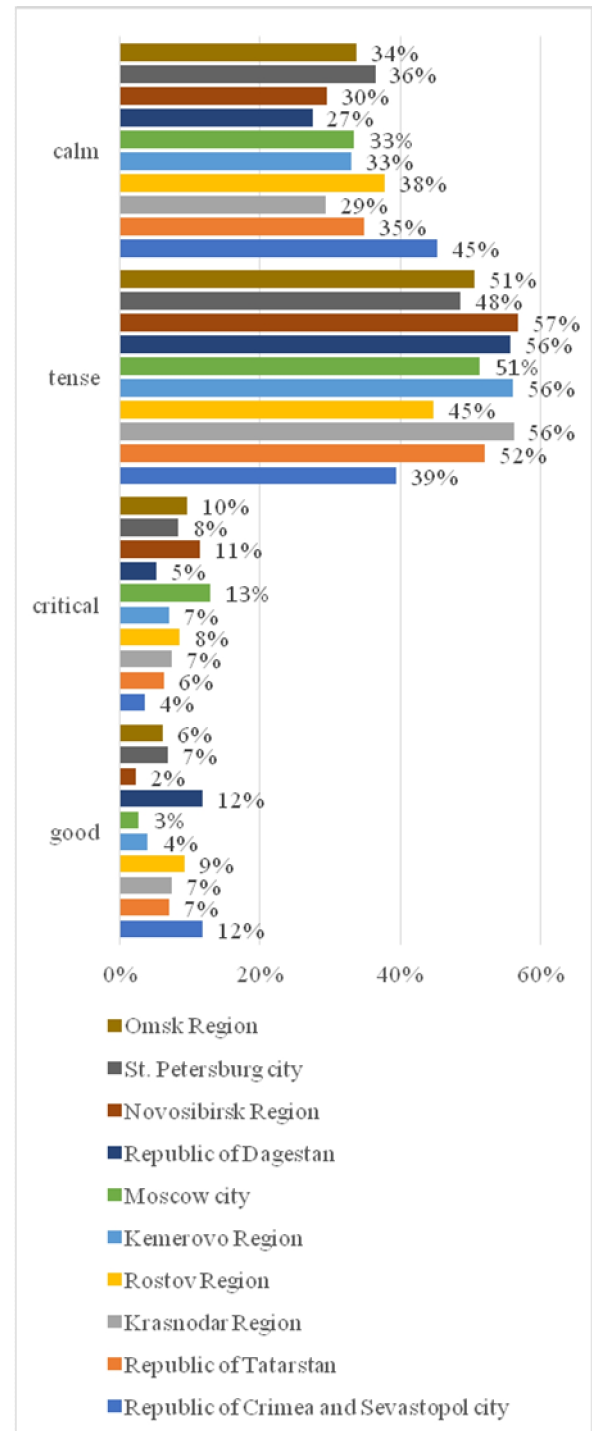
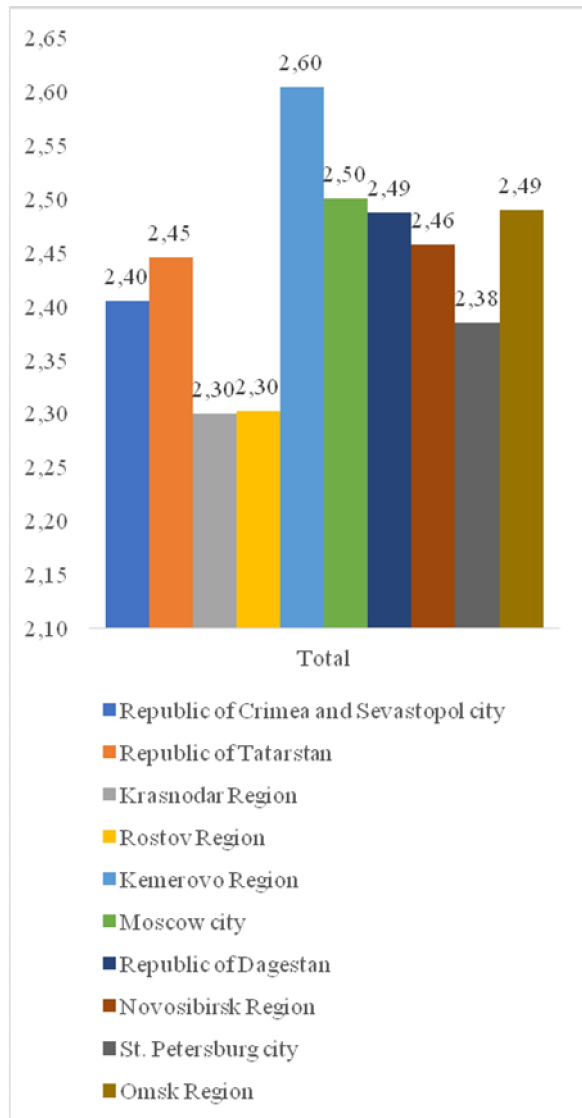


Fig. 1. Assessment of social stability in Russia, per constituent region, percentage

When comparing the results of Russian society state assessment in different constituent territories, the chi-square

criterion was calculated, which equaled  $\chi^2 = 58.7$  with a critical value  $\chi^2 = 50.9$ , number of degrees of freedom  $df = 36$ , and significance level  $p < 0.05$ , which allowed to reject the zero hypothesis and accept an empirical hypothesis about the existence of differences in the assessment of Russian society state in different constituent territories.

The results showed that almost half of the respondents or even more from the city of Moscow, Kemerovo and Novosibirsk Regions, Krasnodar Krai and the Republic of Dagestan characterize the Russian society state as tense (fig. 1). Residents of St.Petersburg, Republic of Tatarstan and Rostov Region give Russian society a slightly more positive estimation. The only region where more respondents (40%) believe that Russian society is relatively peaceful is the Republic of Crimea.

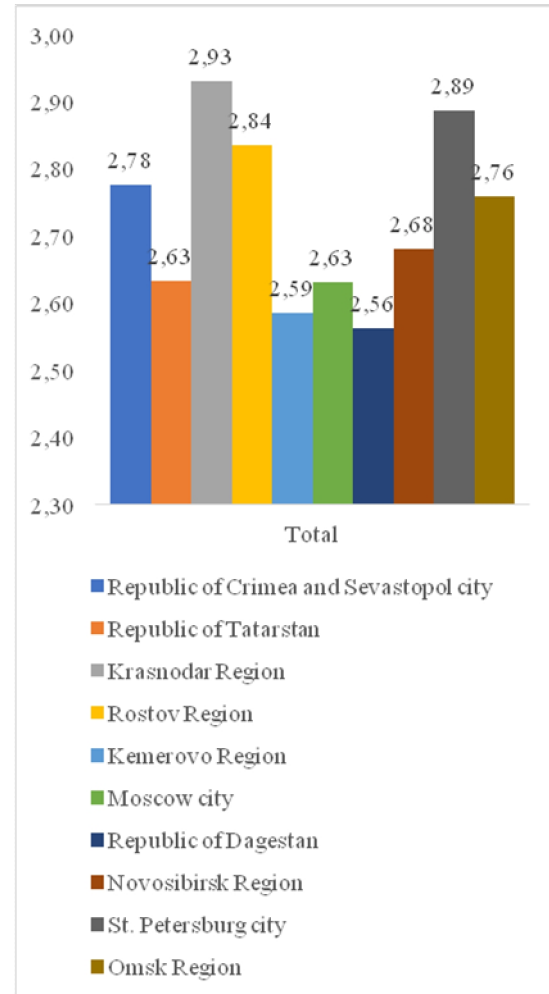


**Fig. 2.** Dissatisfaction with the respondents' own health condition (weighted average, with breakdown by constituent region of the Russian Federation)

**Subjective assessment of physical health and emotional state**

Respondents were requested to evaluate their own health condition at present on a scale from one to five from "very good" (score 1) to "very bad" (score 5).

Comparison of the results (weighted averages) shows that residents of Kemerovo Region are most worried about their health condition. Residents of the two other Siberian Regions, as well as Moscow, Republic of Dagestan and Republic of Tatarstan (fig. 2) have average results. And respondents from Krasnodar Krai, Rostov Region, the city of St. Petersburg and the Republic of Crimea are most satisfied with their health condition.



**Fig. 2.1.** Assessment of own emotional state (weighted average, with breakdown by the constituent territories of the Russian Federation)

When assessing their own emotional state, respondents answered on the question, how often they feel nervous or are under stress on a scale from one to five from "all the time" (score 1) to "never" (score 5). Comparison of weighted averages with breakdown by the constituent territories of Russia demonstrated that respondents from the same constituent territories where the least satisfaction with health condition was realized experience stress most often: in Kemerovo Region, in the Republic of Dagestan, in the city of Moscow and in the Republic of Tatarstan (fig. 2.1) Lowest level of stress is registered in the same constituent territories where higher satisfaction with physical health condition was

observed, namely Krasnodar Krai, Rostov Region and the city of St. Petersburg.

### Psychological safety

The results show that in general, Russians feel quite protected, and the level of their subjective safety is in general quite high. Respondents feel most safe when they are between family members (M=1.23) and at home (M=1.34), as well as at work and at school (M=1.76), meanwhile they feel least safe outside Russia (M=2.41) and on the Internet (M=2.41) (table 1; M – mean score).

**Table 1**

Subjective assessment of the degree of safety in different aspects of life (weighted average, with breakdown by the constituent territories of the Russia)

	Omsk Region	Krasnodar Region	Novosibirsk Region	Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol city	St. Petersburg city	Rostov Region	Kemerovo Region	Moscow city	Republic of Tatarstan	Republic of Dagestan
in my country	1,92	1,88	1,95	1,94	1,98	1,98	2,02	2,12	2,01	2,11
in my region	1,79	1,74	1,92	1,99	1,93	1,90	1,89	2,06	1,89	2,00
in my city, village	1,68	1,74	1,85	1,84	1,86	1,91	1,85	2,03	1,78	1,86
in my district	1,69	1,74	1,81	1,78	1,87	1,79	1,94	2,00	1,83	1,85
at home	1,23	1,26	1,28	1,37	1,25	1,35	1,19	1,43	1,29	1,51
among family members	1,19	1,19	1,23	1,21	1,23	1,25	1,14	1,30	1,23	1,50
at work, at study place	1,59	1,76	1,71	1,74	1,69	1,86	1,90	1,76	1,90	1,94
abroad	2,35	2,40	2,11	2,52	2,42	2,59	2,72	2,31	2,90	2,70
on the Internet	2,24	2,34	2,28	2,28	2,46	2,42	2,53	2,28	2,54	2,61

At the same time, unlike residents of other constituent territories of Russia, respondents from Moscow feel less safe in their country, region, neighbourhood or even at home, but they feel safer outside Russia and in the Internet. Comparison of the result of a survey with the results of survey that we conducted in 2015 demonstrates that in general Russians feel less secure, which is the case with almost all aspects that we reviewed [19], [20].

### 5. CONCLUSIONS

Modern Russia with its unique geopolitical and ethnolinguistic diversity offers large possibilities for studies, comparisons and consideration of sociocultural and ethnocultural peculiarities when analyzing the issue of well-being at all levels: well-being of the society, different groups and individuals. The results of the empiric study that we carried out explicitly showed that mental well-being as a personal feeling is ethno-culturally mediated perception of social situation and cannot be measured only with objectively. A large number of analyzed objective indicators shows the best well-being in the cities of Moscow and St. Petersburg, Republic of Tatarstan, Republic of Dagestan and Krasnodar Krai, while the worst objective indicators are in the Republic of Crimea and in the city of Sevastopol and the Kemerovo Region. Novosibirsk, Omsk and Rostov Regions fall within the “interim area” where some

values tend to be positive and others are negative. Analysis of subjective well-being of respondents from the considered constituent territories of Russia and their comparison with objective situation demonstrate that the level of subjective well-being can in some cases be higher than the level of objective well-being, while in other cases it can really reflect the level of objective situation. In the latter case, some parameters of objective situation and subjective well-being can coincide, while some parameters may differ. Or, the level of psychological well-being may be in total lower than the level of objective well-being.

From the constituent territories of the Russian Federation that we reviewed, the Republic of Crimea and in the city of Sevastopol clearly belong to the first category. Despite the fact that most parts of objective values are lower compared with other regions of the Russian Federation that we reviewed and the country in general, residents of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol demonstrate positive assessment of Russian society condition, high level of psychological safety and average satisfaction with the emotional state. The city of St. Petersburg, Republic of Tatarstan, Kemerovo Region, Novosibirsk Region, Rostov Region and Krasnodar Region fall within the second category, where in general the values of subjective well-being reflect the objective social situation. The third category includes the city of Moscow and the Republic of Dagestan. In Moscow, all subjective values illustrate a lower level of subjective well-being compared with the level of objective well-being and in general with the positive social situation compared with other constituent territories of the Russian Federation that we reviewed, judging by the statistical data that we analyzed. In the Republic of Dagestan, where most of objective values describe the social situation as quite positive, all subjective well-being values are at a lower level.

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