



PROFILE

OFFICIAL NAME:

Russian Federation

Geography

Area: 17 million sq. km. (6.5 million sq. mi.); about 1.8 times the size of the United States.

Cities: *Capital*--Moscow (pop. 10.4 million). *Other cities*--St. Petersburg (4.6 million), Novosibirsk (1.4 million), Nizhniy Novgorod (1.3 million).

Images]

Terrain: Broad plain with low hills west of Urals; vast coniferous forest and tundra in Siberia; uplands and mountains (Caucasus range) along southern borders.

Climate: Northern continental.

People

Nationality: *Noun and adjective*--Russian(s).

Population (January 2008): 142 million.

Annual growth rate (2007 est.): -0.484% (population declining).

Ethnic groups: Russian 79.8%, Tatar 3.8%, Ukrainian 2%, other 14.4%.

Religion: Russian Orthodox, Islam, Judaism, Roman Catholicism, Protestant, Buddhist, other.

Language: Russian (official); more than 140 other languages and dialects.

Education (total pop.): *Literacy*--99.4%.

Health: *Life expectancy* (2007 est.)--59.12 yrs. men, 73.03 yrs. women.

Work force (73.88 million) (2006 est.): *Production and economic services*--84%; *government*--16%.

Government

Type: Federation.

Independence: August 24, 1991.

Constitution: December 12, 1993.

Branches: *Executive*--president, prime minister (chairman of the government). *Legislative*--Federal Assembly (Federation Council, State Duma). *Judicial*--Constitutional Court, Supreme Court, Supreme Court of Arbitration, Office of Procurator General.

Political parties: The December 2007 Duma elections were contested by United Russia, the Communist Party (KPRF), the Liberal Democratic Party (LDPR), For a Just Russia, the Union of Right Forces (SPS), Yabloko, and four other minor parties. SPS and Yabloko, parties favoring liberal reforms, failed to clear the 7% threshold to enter the Duma as a party.

Subdivisions: 21 autonomous republics, 47 oblasts, 2 federal cities (Moscow and St. Petersburg)



A full moon rises above a cathedral in St. Petersburg, Russia, June 14, 2006. [© AP

and 14 autonomous territories and regions.
Suffrage: Universal at 18 years.

Economy

GDP (2007 estimate): \$1.34 trillion.

Growth rate (2007 estimate): 8.1%.

Natural resources: Petroleum, natural gas, timber, furs, precious and nonferrous metals.

Agriculture: *Products*--Grain, sugar beets, sunflower seeds, meat, dairy products.

Industry: *Types*--Complete range of manufactures: automobiles, trucks, trains, agricultural equipment, advanced aircraft, aerospace, machine and equipment products; mining and extractive industry; medical and scientific instruments; construction equipment.

Trade (2007): *Exports*--\$355 billion: petroleum and petroleum products, natural gas, woods and wood products, metals, chemicals. *Major markets*--EU, CIS, China, Japan. *Imports*--\$223 billion: machinery and equipment, chemicals, consumer goods, medicines, meat, sugar, semi-finished metal products. *Major partners*--EU, U.S., CIS, Japan, China. *U.S. exports*--\$7.4 billion. *Principal U.S. exports* (2007)--oil/gas equipment, autos/parts, meat, aircraft, electrical machinery, medical equipment, plastics, cosmetics, and chemicals. *U.S. imports*--\$19.4 billion. *Principal U.S. imports* (2006)--oil, chemicals, aluminum, iron/steel, precious stones, nickel, fish and crustaceans, copper, base metals, and wood.

PEOPLE

Most of the roughly 142 million Russians derive from the Eastern Slavic family of peoples, whose original homeland was probably present-day Poland. Russian is the official language of Russia and is one of the six official languages of the United Nations. Russian is also the language of such giants of world literature as Pushkin, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Chekhov, Pasternak and Solzhenitsyn.

Russia's educational system has produced nearly 100% literacy. About 7 million students attended Russia's 1,090 institutions of higher education in 2006, but continued reform is critical to producing students with skills to adapt to a market economy. Because great emphasis is placed on science and technology in education, Russian medical, mathematical, scientific, and space and aviation research is still generally of a high order. The number of doctors in relation to the population is high by American standards, although medical care in Russia, even in major cities, is generally far below Western standards. The unraveling of the Soviet state in its last decades and the physical and psychological traumas of transition during the 1990s resulted in a steady decline in the health of the Russian people. Currently Russia faces a demographic crisis as births lag far behind deaths. While its population is aging, skyrocketing deaths of working-age males due to cardiovascular disease is a major cause of Russia's demographic woes. A rapid increase in HIV/AIDS infections and tuberculosis compounds the problem. In 2007, life expectancy at birth was 59 for men and 73 for women. The large annual excess of deaths over births is expected to cut Russia's population by 30% over the next 50 years.

The Russian labor force is undergoing tremendous changes. Although well educated and skilled, it is largely mismatched to the rapidly changing needs of the Russian economy. Official unemployment has dropped in recent years to 6.9%, and labor shortages have started to appear in some high-skilled job markets. Nonetheless, pockets of high unemployment remain and many

Russian workers are underemployed. Unemployment is highest among women and young people. Following the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union and the economic dislocation it engendered, the standard of living fell dramatically. However, real disposable incomes have doubled since 1999, and experts estimate that the middle class ranges from one-fifth to one-third of the population. By the end of the third quarter in 2007, 14.8% of the population lived below the subsistence level, in contrast to 38.1% in 1998.

Moscow is Russia's capital and largest city. Moscow is also increasingly important as an economic and business center; it has become Russia's principal magnet for foreign investment and business presence. Its cultural tradition is rich, and there are many museums devoted to art, literature, music, dance, history, and science, as well as hundreds of churches and dozens of notable cathedrals.

The second-largest city in Russia is St. Petersburg, which was established by Peter the Great in 1703 to be the capital of the Russian Empire as part of his Western-looking reforms. The city was called Petrograd during World War I and Leningrad after 1924. In 1991, as the result of a city referendum, it was renamed St. Petersburg. Under the tsars, the city was Russia's cultural, intellectual, commercial, financial, and industrial center. After Lenin moved the capital back to Moscow in 1918, the city's political significance declined, but it remained a cultural, scientific, and military-industrial center. The Hermitage, formerly the Winter Palace of the tsars, is one of the world's great fine arts museums.

Russia has an area of about 17 million square kilometers (6.5 million sq. mi.); in geographic terms, this makes Russia the largest country in the world by more than 2.5 million square miles. But with a population density of about 22 persons per square mile (9 per sq. km.), it is sparsely populated, and most of its residents live in urban areas.

HISTORY

Although human experience on the territory of present-day Russia dates back to Paleolithic times, the first lineal predecessor of the modern Russian state was founded in 862. The political entity known as Kievan Rus was established in Kiev in 962 and lasted until the 12th century. In the 10th century, Christianity became the state religion under Vladimir, who adopted Greek Orthodox rites. Consequently, Byzantine culture predominated, as is evident in much of Russia's architectural, musical, and artistic heritage. Over the next centuries, various invaders assaulted the Kievan state and, finally, Mongols under Batu Khan destroyed the main population centers except for Novgorod and Pskov in the 13th century and prevailed over the region until 1480. Some historians believe that the Mongol period had a lasting impact on Russian political culture.