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# Russia

**Total area:**

17,098,242 km<sup>2</sup>

**Population:**

144,463,451 (2017)

**Literacy:**

98%

**Official languages:**

Russian

**GDP (PPP) per capita:**

\$27,466 (2017 est.)

**Life expectancy:**

69 years

**Religions:**

63% Russian Orthodox, 30% Agnostic or Atheist, 2% Muslim, 1% other religions

## Prayer points

**Ingush people in the Russian Federation**

The Muslim Ingush people feel oppressed by the Russians and Ossetians, both known as majority-Christian peoples. Of the 415,000 Ingush, there are approximately 30 known believers living in scattered places, including a few inside Ingushetia. Pray for the Holy Spirit to work among these people. (WEC International - August 2021)

**Tatar in Central Asia**

The nearly 6.5 million Tatars are Sunni Muslims but there is some evidence that suggests they have a thirst for the word of God. Pray for labourers to work among the Tatars: evangelists, church planters, English teachers and those who can help to set up small businesses. (WEC International - July 2021)

**Crimean Tatar people, Russia**

The Crimean Tatars are descendants of the Mongols who swept through Eastern Europe in the 13th century. From the 1440s onwards, their homeland was established in the Crimean Peninsula. After many years of oppression, Stalin had the entire population deported to Soviet Central Asia in 1944. The Tatars are still longing and struggling to return to their former homeland. The older generation is trying to preserve their ethnic identity and culture, but their children have been assimilated into Russian culture. Pray for Tatars to have a thirst for the word of God and many opportunities to hear the good news of Jesus. (WEC International - February 2021)

**Buriat people in Mongolia & Siberia**

57,000 Buriats in Northern Mongolian live as semi-nomadic herdsmen, migrating seasonally with their animals. Urban Buriats live mostly in Soviet-built apartment complexes in major towns, where violence, alcoholism and gangs are significant problems. Northern Buriat Mongols were traditionally Shamanists, but most Mongolians have practised Tibetan Buddhism since the late 1500s. Today, about half of Buriat Mongolians are atheists, but many others have returned to Buddhist beliefs. These people need to find the true peace that can only come through knowing Jesus Christ. Pray for translators of the native Buriat language and for the distribution of Christian tracts, scriptures and testimonies. (WEC International - January 2021)

### **Pray for peace in the South Caucasus region of Nagorno-Karabakh**

Pray for peace in the South Caucasus region of Nagorno-Karabakh. Fresh fighting has broken out between Armenian and Azeri forces, with a ceasefire fast falling apart, and a real potential for escalation – with Russia having a defence pact with Armenia, and Turkey being allied to Azerbaijan. Please pray for peace. For both Azeri and Armenian believers to be kept safe, to be given ‘a peace that passes understanding’, for new opportunities to share their faith, and to show acts of kindness and love, so that the ‘compassion of Christ’ shines through amidst all the darkness. (People International - December 2020)

### **Prayer for the North Caucasus**

Lying at the southernmost point of the Russian Federation, the North Caucasus are some of the poorest republics in Russia. There are five million people in this region, who live in more than 40 ethnic groups, many of whom do not have access to the message of Jesus (Source: Joshua Project). Because of adherence to Islam, this is hard soil for the Gospel to take root, and committed, faithful prayer is crucial. Pray for God’s love to break through in this region and that His church will grow. Reaching the people of Dagestan is a real challenge. Over 90% are Muslim and they belong to diverse ethnic groups. The republic is also the poorest of the entire Russian Federation (source: Joshua Project). Pray for the people of Dagestan. The 1.7 million Chechens are almost all Muslims (source: Joshua Project). Historical conflict with Christians makes ministry extremely sensitive work. Pray for softened hearts and Holy-Spirit-prepared circumstances. Ingushetia is one of Russia’s smallest and poorest republics. It is dogged by corruption and deteriorating human rights. The people of Ingushetia need to know Jesus. Only a few of the scattered handful of Ingush believers actually live in Ingushetia. North Ossetia is the only majority Christian republic in the region. Most people are Orthodox Christians. Since 2010, they have a complete new Bible translation. Pray for a deep impact as the Scriptures are read. Kabardino-Balkaria has just two Muslim ethnic groups and a population of 600,000. Ask for the 100 or so scattered Jesus followers to shine as lights and for the New Testament published in 2011 to circulate widely. There are a few known Jesus followers amongst the people living in the republic of Karachay-Cherkessia but, as yet, very little ministry to the Muslim population. The New Testament and Psalms were completed in the local language in the 1990s. Pray that more individuals would have access to the local translation of God’s Word and that they’re eyes will be opened to His truth. The Kalmyks, like many other Russian ethnicities, suffered enormously under Stalin and the Soviet system that followed. They experienced deportation, relocation and the impoverishment of their land. The Kalmyks make up half of the population of Kalmykia, and many are Tibetan Buddhists. (Operation Mobilisation - November 2020)

### **Mari people**

Pray for the Mari people – Europe’s last pagans. A Finno-Ugric ethnic group who have traditionally lived along the Russian Volga and Kama rivers. Even though a significant number became members of the Russian Orthodox church during the Soviet era, many kept their pagan traditions. Mari tribes, which can be traced back to the 5th century, worship in Groves offering blood sacrifices. Please pray that the Gospel will take root amongst the Mari people – that they will come to see that Jesus made the once-for-all sacrifice for our sins. Pray for the church in Yoshkar-Ola, the capital city of the Mari El republic which has a population of about 700,000. (People International - September 2020)

### **Bible translation in one of the Menshevik languages**

Russia is the largest country on earth. More than 140 million people from nearly 100 people groups, and speaking 97 languages, live there. Bible translation is ongoing in dozens of languages throughout Russia, including ten minority people groups who are known by the cover term 'Menshevik' which comes from the Russian word for 'minority'. Praise God that the Bible in Cache\*, one of the Menshevik languages, has now been published. Many Cache speakers consider it taboo to possess a copy of the Bible – pray that attitudes will change and interest will grow in reading the Cache Bible. Pray that an audio recording of this Bible will soon be completed, providing another way for Cache speakers to access the Scriptures. \*Name changed for security reasons. (Wycliffe Bible Translators - June 2019)

### **An Instinct for Survival**

The Karachai people are a testament to mankind's will to survive. Their history includes being driven into the Caucasus Mountains by invading Mongols, forcible conversion to Islam, revolts against Russia, occupation of their homeland, and deportation to Central Asia. If God did not have a plan for the Karachai, they certainly would not have persevered through these and other violent acts. But He does have a plan and many Karachai have now returned to their homeland in the Russian province of Karachai-Cherkessia. As a people group the Karachai are proud, but demoralised; spiritually they are lifeless with little interest in anything beyond immediate physical needs and family honour. Pray that the wind of God's Holy Spirit would blow there, drawing the Karachai to Him. For God plan for them is not in vain after all this time. May their hearts be opened. (Frontiers - February 2017)

### **Drug rehabilitation programme**

Like so many young men in Russia, Evgeny was heavily addicted to drugs. However, after the birth of his son Artur\*, Evgeny's mother persuaded him to enroll in a drug rehabilitation programme run by *Salvation Centre*. Evgeny overcame his addiction, and left the centre a few months later full of hope in God. But his hope was tested when he returned home and found his partner, Lyuba, high on drugs, with Artur at her side. Evgeny returned to *Salvation Centre*, and asked them to help Lyuba. Months later, she too was free from addiction, ready to start a new life with Evgeny and Artur. Praise God for the work of *Salvation Centre* and pray for children like Artur, born into unstable homes, that they and their families will be offered the support they need. \*Name changed (Tearfund - July 2013)

### **Historic people groups**

The Siberian Christian Mission of Mercy (SCMM) works amongst the remote communities along the Yenisei River, the central of the three great rivers that flow into the Arctic Ocean. SCMM serves the region's historic people groups such as the Dolgans. Because of their isolation, many of these peoples still have their own unique language and culture. So far several small churches have been planted. Pray for these churches to grow and for the safety of SCMM's committed workers and their families, who occasionally face violent opposition. (WorldShare - March 2013)

### **Tackling stigma**

*Pure View* was founded in the Siberian city of Krasnoyarsk by a group of Christians who were passionate about improving the quality of life of people living with HIV - both within the church and in the wider society. Tackling stigma in the church through theological training and raising the awareness of pastors is a key part of this aim. In the past, pastors would openly condemn people with HIV as 'more sinful' than others, or refuse to marry couples where one of the partners was HIV positive. Although the situation is slowly improving, challenging convictions takes a long time. Pray for the ministry of *Pure View* as they work to help churches in the Siberian region to see the needs of people around them, understand their problems and respond with love. (Tearfund - September 2012)

### **Victims of violence**

A recent Russian government report estimates that 14,000 Russian women are killed every year by partners or other family members. However, many independent observers consider these numbers to be a gross underestimate. Drug abuse, alcoholism, poverty and poor living conditions are all major

contributors but the root cause of the violence often lies deeper, embedded in the unequal relations between Russian men and women. Many Russians consider a woman's place to be at home and blame the victims for provoking the attack. Pray for the victims of violence in Russia. Pray that they will be able to feel God's compassion, love and new hope in a future free from violence. Pray for the Russian government and churches to take the issue of domestic violence seriously and for Christians in Russia to be effective advocates for change and witness to God's redemptive power. (Tearfund - July 2012)

### **Overcoming addiction**

Drugs flooded Russia after the Iron Curtain fell. At the same time, organised activities for young people disappeared and social spending was slashed. Russia is still battling the ensuing drugs epidemic. Each year some 30,000 people die from narcotics abuse and more than 2 million Russians are registered addicts. The free Salvation programme balances the needs of body, soul and spirit: through sport, farming and other manual work, Bible study, counselling and skills training. After completing a first stage of recovery at the centre, participants are linked with a local church where they learn to serve others. Pray for those currently undergoing rehabilitation at the centre, that their addictions may be overcome, so they can enjoy His peace and comfort. Pray too for Russia's young people: ask for preventative measures to deter them from entering the self-destructive world of drugs. (Tearfund - November 2011)

### **Health advice for prisoners**

Almost 1% of Russia's population of 142 million people is in jail. Approximately 350,000 prisoners are released every year - many of them have tuberculosis, hepatitis and HIV. Light of Life has a small team in the Perm region of Russia, where 46 prisons house 32,000 people. As well as providing education classes, so far they have trained 1,500 inmates to offer health advice in Russian prisons. Pray for these trained prisoners, many of whom have experienced the healing of Christ from their addictions, and for good relationships with prison authorities. (Tearfund - November 2011)

### **Proclamation with demonstration**

The small republic of Chuvash is located in the centre of the European part of Russia. In the capital, Cheboksary, the churches there are combining proclamation of the gospel with demonstration of the gospel. They are working hard to make Christian radio programmes that reach their local community and also run a number of social outreach projects, including a rehabilitation clinic for alcoholics. Many alcoholics have become Christians, and now help others in the same boat to find faith in Christ. Pray for the funds to grow this work and for the new home-grown missionaries who are being sent out to other parts of Russia. (Reach Beyond - May 2011)

### **Vulnerable children**

There are thought to be almost 700,000 orphans in Russia. Many children live in orphanages or on the street and many more Children live in families that are dysfunctional or unhealthy. Neglect and abuse can ultimately lead to future generations becoming orphans too. Praise God for the work of the Russian Risk Network. By equipping and encouraging Christians to work with orphans, adopt or become foster families, they aim to give these children families that they can belong to. (Viva - March 2011)

### **HIV epidemic**

Russia has one of the biggest HIV epidemics in Europe, with 940,000 people living with the disease (mainly drug users). The problem is worsened by the ignorance and prejudice surrounding the disease within Russian society. However, the minority Protestant Church is playing a growing role helping people living with HIV. Veena O'Sullivan, Tearfund's HIV Unit Manager says, "Our partners (in Russia) are inspirational... I have never seen churches grow so quickly with so many lives transformed. At the heart of this is the fact that many churches are made up, started and led by people who have been on the margins of society, former drug users, former sex workers... This is our dream, this is our vision

and God is bringing it alive in a country where the Protestant Church is facing oppression and where denominational boundaries are well defined.” (Tearfund - January 2010)

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