

## Russia



**Capital City:** Moscow.

**Background:** Founded in the 12th century as a principality, it began to conquer and absorb surrounding principalities. By the early 17th century it had expanded across Siberia to the Pacific. Under Peter I (1682-1725), it extended to the Baltic Sea and was renamed the Russian Empire. During the 19th century, more territorial acquisitions were made. Defeats of the Russian army in World War I led to the overthrow in 1917 of the imperial household. The Communists seized power soon after and formed the USSR. The brutal rule of Josef Stalin (1928-53) strengthened communist rule and Russian dominance of the Soviet Union. Mikhail Gorbachev (1985-91) introduced openness and restructuring in an attempt to modernise Communism, but by 1991 his initiatives had splintered the USSR into Russia and 14 independent republics. Since then, Russia has struggled in its efforts to build a democratic political system and market economy, but while some progress has been made on the economic front, recent years have seen a recentralisation of power under Vladimir Putin.

### Geography:

- **Location:** Northern Asia, bordering the Arctic Ocean, between Europe and the North Pacific Ocean.
- **Area comparative:** 243 times the size of Ireland.
- **Climate:** From steppes in the south to humid continental in European Russia; sub-arctic in Siberia to tundra climate in the polar north.
- **Natural resources:** Major deposits of oil, natural gas, coal, minerals, timber.
- **Natural hazards:** Permanent frost over much of Siberia; volcanoes and earthquakes; spring floods, summer forest fires in Siberia and parts of European Russia.
- **Environment issues:** air pollution, emissions of coal-fired electric plants; pollution of inland waterways and coasts; deforestation; soil erosion; toxic soil contamination.

### Government:

- **Type of government:** Federation.
- **Administrative divisions:** 48 oblasts, 21 republics, 9 autonomous okrugs.
- **Independence:** 24 August 1991, from Soviet Union.
- **National holiday:** Russia Day, 12 June (1990).



**Religion:** Russian Orthodox 15-20%, Muslim 10-15%, other Christian 2%.

**People:**

- **Population:** 142,893,540
- **Birth rate:** 9.95 births per 1,000.
- **Infant mortality:** 15.13 deaths per 1,000 live births.
- **Life expectancy:** *Total population:* 67.1 years, *male:* 60.45 years, *female:* 74.1 years.

**Economy:**

- **Unemployment:** 7.6%
- **Population below the poverty line:** 17.8%
- **Agricultural products:** Grain, beet, sunflower seed, vegetables, fruits, beef, milk.
- **Industries:** Coal, oil, gas, chemicals and metals; aircraft and space vehicles; radar, missile production; electronic components; shipbuilding; road and rail equipment; communications equipment; tractors and construction equipment; medical and scientific instruments; textiles, foodstuffs, handicrafts.

**Education:**

- **Literacy:** *Definition:* age 15 and over can read and write. *Total population:* 99.6%, *male:* 99.7%, *female:* 99.5%.
- **Language:** Russian, many minority languages.

**Communication:**

- **Telephone lines:** Landlines: 39.616 million, Mobile lines: 74.42 million.
- **TV stations:** 7,306
- **Internet users:** 23.7 million.

**Asylum:** According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) statistics in 2005 there was less than 100 asylum claims by Russian nationals.

**Internally Displaced Persons:** UNHCR estimated in June 2006 that there was an internally displaced population of 170,000 persons throughout the Russian Federation.

**Migration:** In the first ten months of 2006 the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment issued 410 work permits to Russian nationals.

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