

Fear as a Factor in the Social and Cultural Deformations of Russians' Life World



Nemirovskiy Valentin Gennadievich –
Doctor of Sociological Sciences, Professor,
Editor-in-Chief of the Academic Journal
“Siberian Socium”, University of Tyumen, Tyumen,
Russia

E-mail: valnemirov@mail.ru



Nemirovskaya Anna Valentinovna –
Candidate of Sociological Sciences,
Senior Research Fellow, Laboratory for Comparative
Social Research, National Research University
“Higher School of Economics”, Moscow, Russia

E-mail: annanemirov@hse.ru



Bulatova Tatiana Alekseevna –
Candidate of Medical Sciences, Associate Professor,
Chair of the Department of Advertising and Public
Relations, Tomsk State Pedagogical University,
Tomsk, Russia

E-mail: bulatowa@mail.ru

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Abstract. This article reveals the specifics of social and cultural deformations in the life world of Russian people in general, compared to similar deformations among the population of several eastern regions of the country. These are territories representative of the Ural (Tyumen Province), Western (Tomsk Province) and Eastern Siberia (Krasnoyarsk Region). Social fears recorded within the “Regional socio-cultural portrait” method (Center for the Study of Social and Cultural Change, the Institute of Philosophy of the RAS) are considered to be factors of life world deformation. This study was carried out in the entire country of Russia in 2015, in Tyumen and Tomsk Provinces in 2016, in the Krasnoyarsk Region – in 2014. Three essential characteristics of life world – which have not been previously evaluated within this particular context – were highlighted for analysis: control locus, temporal stability (degree of pessimism/optimism) and life satisfaction as one of the key parameters of its harmony. The differences between the life world of Russians in general and that of those who inhabit the country's eastern regions are determined within the context of the aforementioned characteristics. It is revealed that fears in the face of social dangers have a considerable deforming effect on the population's life world. Determined are two types of deformations: nationwide and regional. The first type includes fears while facing ecologic threats and oppression due to age and gender. The latter's level is generally much higher than the equivalent values obtained in the country's three eastern regions. Fears while facing other sorts of threats and dangers, which are highlighted in the study, are considered to be specific regional deforming factors. The following conclusion is made: social fears deform the control locus, the harmony and temporal stability of the life world of the entire country's population to a considerably greater degree compared to respondents from Tyumen and Tomsk Provinces, as well as the Krasnoyarsk Region. Revealed is a certain distinctive “Ural-Siberian” regional specificity of life world deformation, namely the sense that superiors in the workplace represent one of the social institutions of government. It is assumed that such specifics can be explained by regional frontier peculiarities.

Keywords: social fears, socio-cultural deformations, lifeworld, locus of control, satisfaction with life, optimism, frontier regions

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The relevance of sociological analysis of deformations of the life world as a holistic phenomenon is largely associated with social and economic, as well as sociocultural processes, which have substantially transformed the Russian society over the past 25 years. In our opinion, among its causes are profound changes in values, senses and behaviors of the country's population due to the change in the economic and social framework. It was followed by de-industrialization – on the one hand, and not always successful attempts of country's modernization, insufficiently elaborated reforms of various social institutes – on the other hand, which also contributed to the process. Many objectives, values, senses and life strategies seemed to be very stable and quite effective back in the late 1980s, but as soon as in the 1990s they transformed into simulacra being regularly replaced by new ones generated by subsequent collisions of the transitive Russian society. Not only researchers, but also some managers gain an increasingly clear understanding of the fact that the single holistic life world of Russians is a simulacrum, nothing more than a figure of speech. The life world is specific not only in most separate regions, but also in the major country's macroregions. This requires using special research strategies in science, and new unconventional management technology – in social practice.

Previous research on the issue

As is commonly known, various aspects of the life world were actively examined by the classics of the world sociology: E. Husserl, A. Schütz, P. Berger, T. Luckmann, J. Habermas, etc. As an interdisciplinary phenomenon, starting from the 1990, it has become the subject matter of multiple empirical studies by Russian researchers. Therefore, one should not ignore publications in the field of psychology [Nekrasova, 2008], [Personality and its..., 2013], etc. For instance, one merit of the paper by Ye.V. Nekrasova is that it distinguishes the stages of life world formation in terms of spatio-temporal design. The author regards this phenomenon as a manifestation of self-organization in psychological systems that acts as a mechanism of stability of human existence [Nekrasova 2008: 107]. In the course of socio-philosophical analysis, due to the increased rate of socio-cultural changes, the deformation of an important socio-cultural indicator of the life world – identification – was reviewed [Yemelin, Tkhostov 2015].

Several researchers apply the well-known concept by J. Habermas on the colonization of the life world to studying present-day Russian realities [Habermas 1993]. In the opinion of I.B. Przhilenskaya, “in the course of its evolution, the Russians’

life world was subjected to colonization by the systems being transformed (institutional and ideological). Uninterpreted meanings were integrated into symbolic universes, thus violating both their organic integrity and social functionality. The colonization of the Russians' life world by the system has led to the misalignment of its three fundamental levels: objectives, values and life strategies" [Przhilenskaya 2008: 20].

S.B. Abramova holds a similar view: in her opinion, "the colonization of life world sense and value structures takes place, which leads to all social and personal spheres being monetized" [Abramova 2010: 33]. As a result, "figuratively, one may say that two generations co-exist: 'witnesses to the colonization of the life world' and 'residents of the colonized world'" [Abramova 2010: 29]. Such trends were also identified by several other authors [Anisimov 2015]. Among publications issued in recent years, which provide insight into the life world phenomenon and changes it undergoes, we should, first of all, note the fundamental works by Zh.T. Toshchenko and his colleagues [Life world... 2016; Toshchenko 2016a; Toshchenko 2016b; Toshchenko 2016c] etc.

In our opinion, it would be expedient to define socio-cultural deformations of the life world as its distortions that arise due to the impact of particular socio-cultural factors. However, socio-cultural deformations have various specifics. Considering the life world and its deformations, Zh.T. Toshchenko lists their forms in detail relying on multiple writings of contemporary sociologists: trauma, alienation, anomy, frustration, deprivation, and imitation [Toshchenko 2016c: 257–297]. As the author reasonably concludes, "sociological studies allow saying that, among indicators of differences, the socio-cultural factor, which determines the specific essence of the population's life world in different regions to a large extent, holds a high position. In our opinion, such differences comprise unequal levels of prosperity (income), depend of the cultural level (level of education, scientific development and availability of spiritual and cultural institutions), innovation activities, and community participation in the management of state and public affairs" [Toshchenko 2016a: 104].

Research approach

This study relies on theoretical and methodological concepts of the sociology of life, as well as on the directions of the socio-cultural approach developed by N.I. Lapin and his colleagues [Lapin 2006]. In particular, we draw on the life world understanding articulated by Zh.T. Toshchenko: "...the life world is the world of a Human, world of people, world of the

human dimension, existence and functioning of human potential, world of capabilities of people and their perceptions, responses to changes that take place in the society, and willingness to understand, accept/deny, assist in/be passive/oppose to transformations carried out by the society and government” [Toshchenko 2015: 115].

Many authors fairly consider senses to be the key life world components. However, we believe that other life world characteristics also play an important role in its functioning. Thoroughly studied by foreign and domestic authors in general, they have not been actually considered in the context of a person’s life world so far. In particular, this article analyzes its dimensions as follows:

- locus of control that defines the social subject’s perception of the capability to change his/her life by himself/herself (or the subject confers responsibility for that on some other phenomena being social subjects in our case). Therefore, the locus of control delimits the “boundaries”, within which a person can control his/her life world independently;

- harmony of the life world, a relevant indicator of which is the individual’s overall satisfaction with his/her life;

- temporal stability of the life world, which is expressed in the person’s degree of optimism-pessimism.

A strong deforming factor for the life world is its subject’s exposure to hazards or risks. In other words, the sensation of fear. It is examined as part of the sociology of emotions. Notwithstanding the minor presentation of this area of sociology in our country, the phenomenon of fear has not been ignored [Ivanova, Shubkin 2005; Russia... 2009; What fears... 2008], etc. Without doubt, the following conclusion is justified: “contemporary studies of social fears and anxieties of population show that fears develop into a common social phenomenon. Such development gives evidence of the fact that the present-day society, including the Russian society, becomes the society of total risk” [Vitkovskaya 2003: 78]. A pointed reference should be made to the fundamental work based on the nation-wide sociological study performed by the specialists of the Institute of Sociology the Russian Academy of Sciences (IS RAS) and dedicated to phobias and threats existing in the mass consciousness of Russians [Russia... 2009]. The authors found that “the majority of Russians experience particular fears from time to time (69%)... Furthermore, one in four respondents may be called highly anxious (23%)”. In the course of the study, specific features of anxiety in different social, socio-economic and socio-demographic population groups were distinguished [Russia... 2009: 96]. In our opinion, identifying

the situations, in which respondents feel fear, and sources of threats is apparently of interest [Russia... 2009: 97–101]. By analyzing social anxieties and concerns of Russians, the authors of the monograph reasonably noted in 2009 that “the economic crisis that broke out dramatically increases both economic and political risks for the country and its certain citizens” [Russia... 2009: 97–129]. Unfortunately, the empirical study methodology we used does not enable comparing the results obtained against the data that are provided in the work cited.

Public opinion surveyors have also been recording fears of Russians for a long time. For instance, in September 2017, Levada Center’s sociologists found that 63% of respondents are most afraid of diseases of their relatives and friends, 48% – problems associated with their own health, etc. [Sociologists found out..., 2017]. The results of studies of Russians’ fears dynamics are regularly published by the Russian Public Opinion Research Center (VTsIOM) [Map of fears... 2017].

We examined social fears during the studies performed as part of the Problems of the Socio-Cultural Evolution of Russia and Its Regions program (lead by N.I. Lapin, Professor, Associate Member of the RAS). Based on the results of analysis of data obtained, two major groups of social hazards and, consequently, feelings of being exposed to/protected from them were distinguished [Nemirovskiy, Nemirovskaya, 2015]:

1. Objective external conditions that an individual would like to change, isolate himself/herself from them: environmental threat, abuse of power by civil servants, abuse of power by law enforcement agencies, poverty, solitude and abandonment, crime;

1. Hazards associated with social, demographic, subjective characteristics of an individual that he/she is unable or unwilling to change, because it may destroy his/her socio-cultural self-identity, self-consciousness, and inner self. These include social harassment due to age or gender, discrimination due to ethnicity, bullying tied to religious beliefs, and persecution for political opinions.

In accordance with the hazard classification provided, a typology of societies depending on hazards to an individual produced by them was developed (in the case being considered – at the regional level, while this principle may be extended to the state level). The specific feature of the first society type is the exposure of individuals living in such society to objective external hazards and threats, which may, however, potentially be eliminated or at least reduced. Another society type produces threats to the individual’s subjectivity, his/her socio-cultural and psychological integrity. We defined the first society type as posing threats to the person’s social life, and the second society type – as posing threats to the person’s social individuality. It

should be emphasized that both the social life and the social individuality of a person are important components of such person's world.

According to the poll data reviewed using the factor analysis, Russia as a whole and almost all regions of Siberia that have been studied may be classified as the society type that produces threats to the social life of people [Nemirovskiy, Nemirovskaya 2015]. Looking into the impacts of fears generated by such threats on various aspects of the life world, one should definitely not disregard their territorial specifics. Considering the socio-cultural specifics of the country's regions that were identified by results of multiple studies carried out by domestic researchers, including those performed as part of the Socio-Cultural Evolution of Russian Regions program (lead by N.I. Lapin), one may expect unequal manifestations of destructive impact of various fears on the life world of the population of the said areas.

Two **hypotheses** were presented. In accordance with the first one, judging by the characteristics we analyze, the life world is not uniform for the entire population of Russia; instead, it consists of specific life worlds of people residing in different regions of the country.

Pursuant to the second hypothesis, one of the most important factors of the life world deformation is fears caused by threats to the social life of people.

Research methodology

Polls were conducted using the methodology developed as part of the Socio-Cultural Evolution of Russian Regions program by the employees of the Center for the Study of Socio-Cultural Changes of the Institute of Philosophy of the Russian Academy of Sciences (IP RAS) lead by N.I. Lapin, Associate Member and L.A. Belyaeva, Professor [Lapin, Belyaeva 2010]. In the regions, it was carried out by means of a structured interview at the respondents' places of residence based on the stratified, multi-stage, area, and quota sample. Regional samples comprised 1,000 respondents; in the Tomsk and Tyumen Regions, the poll was conducted in 2016, and in Krasnoyarsk Territory – in 2014. In the latter case, the questionnaire included additional indicators, and the semi-structured interview method was applied. In addition, we used data obtained by results of the 7th wave of the “Values and Interests of the Population of Russia” Russian National Monitoring (2015), which was also led by N.I. Lapin. The poll was performed using the standardized integrated interview method (sample – 1,031 respondents), the toolkit for which was developed in 1990 [Lapin 1992].

Types of fears and quality of life perception

Social aspects of the locus of control delimit the boundaries of the person's life world, the social space such person considers to be in his/her power, the areas and levels of social life where he/she may act with confidence. The sense of fear and exposure to some threats or hazards deforms such boundaries making the occurrence of certain events relevant to such person or development of an important situation in a direction desired by such person impossible. In accordance with the perceptions established in the contemporary psychology that are based on multiple and long-term studies, persons with an external locus of control prevailing are prone to anxiety, stable fears (including social) and depression.

This study has demonstrated a higher internal locus of control among the population of three eastern regions as compared to respondents interviewed across the country (see Table 1). It is hard to escape the conclusion that in the regions under review representative of the Ural, Western and Eastern Siberia the locus of control as a component of the life world of their population is less deformed than in other macroregions of the country, in particular, in the Central, Northwestern and Southern Federal Districts.

Table 1

Respondents' locus of control index, %¹

To what extent does the improvement in your life currently depend on:	Russia	Regions		
		Tyumen Region	Tomsk Region	Krasnoyarsk Territory
You	66.6	81.4	82.7	89.9
Your close relatives	32.1	38.6	37.6	54.1
Your friends and countrymen	-5.7	-12.8	-14.7	7.0
Your superior in the workplace	-10.8	20.4	12.4	15.1
District, municipal authorities	32.9	20.7	15.7	12.9
Republican, regional authorities	25.2	19.7	2.2	17.9
Russia's national government	41.1	31.6	34.0	16.2

Several years ago we tested the hypothesis, according to which individuals with an internal locus of control are less prone to the feeling of being exposed to various hazards [Nemirovskiy, Nemirovskaya 2015]. The analysis performed as part of this work enabled clarifying this thesis. It was found that the higher the internal locus of control of respondents is, the fewer fears of

¹ The index is calculated based on the sum of "completely depends" and "partially depends" responses less the sum of "marginally depends" and "does not depend" responses.

threats to the social life they have. In other words, an external locus of control is one indicator of deformation of the social subject's life world.

Table 2

**Results of respondents' answers to the question:
"To what extent do you feel protected from the following hazards?", %
(sum of "rather unprotected" and "not protected at all" answers)**

Threats, hazards	Russia	Regions		
		Tyumen Region	Tomsk Region	Krasnoyarsk Territory
Environmental threat	49.4	25.8	45.7	40.3
Due to age or gender	23.6	13.7	16.4	14.9
Abuse of power by civil servants	46.2	36.6	51.9	48.5
Due to ethnicity	11.4	9.0	8.2	7.4
Due to your religious beliefs	12.0	9.5	8.5	9.9
Abuse of power by law enforcement agencies	37.3	29.0	40.4	37.8
Persecution for political opinions	19.4	17.4	23.1	22.5
Poverty	56.6	40.6	54.4	48.0
Solitude and abandonment	34.0	26.4	38.1	34.2
Crime	44.6	34.0	49.7	54.2

Fears experienced by respondents were assessed by two parameters:

1. Nation-wide or region-specific fears (prevailing among respondents across the country as compared to the population of the regions, or vice versa).

1. Relevance (or intensity) of fears both for respondents from across Russia and those residing in the regions being studied – Tyumen and Tomsk Regions, Krasnodar Territory.

As shown in Table 2 (parameter 1), nation-wide figures of respondents' exposure to the "environmental threat" and "harassment due to age or gender" exceed those identified in the said eastern regions. In our opinion, they may be classified as *nation-wide* factors that deform the population's life world. Therefore, the remaining threats and hazards distinguished in the study toolkit, the figures for which notably vary both across the country and in certain regions, logically fall into the category of *region-specific deforming factors*.

Speaking about parameter 2, it should be noted that the most significant factors deforming the life world, according to respondents surveyed across Russia, are social fears of poverty (56.6%), environmental threat (49.4%), abuse of power by civil servants (46.2%) and crime (44.6%). In certain regions, fears of abuse of power by civil servants (Tomsk Region), abuse of

power by law enforcement agencies (Tyumen Region), crime (Krasnoyarsk Territory) and poverty (Tomsk Region) prevail. As we can see, the fears that are highly relevant to the country-wide population are most relevant to the population of its eastern areas, but slightly vary by region.

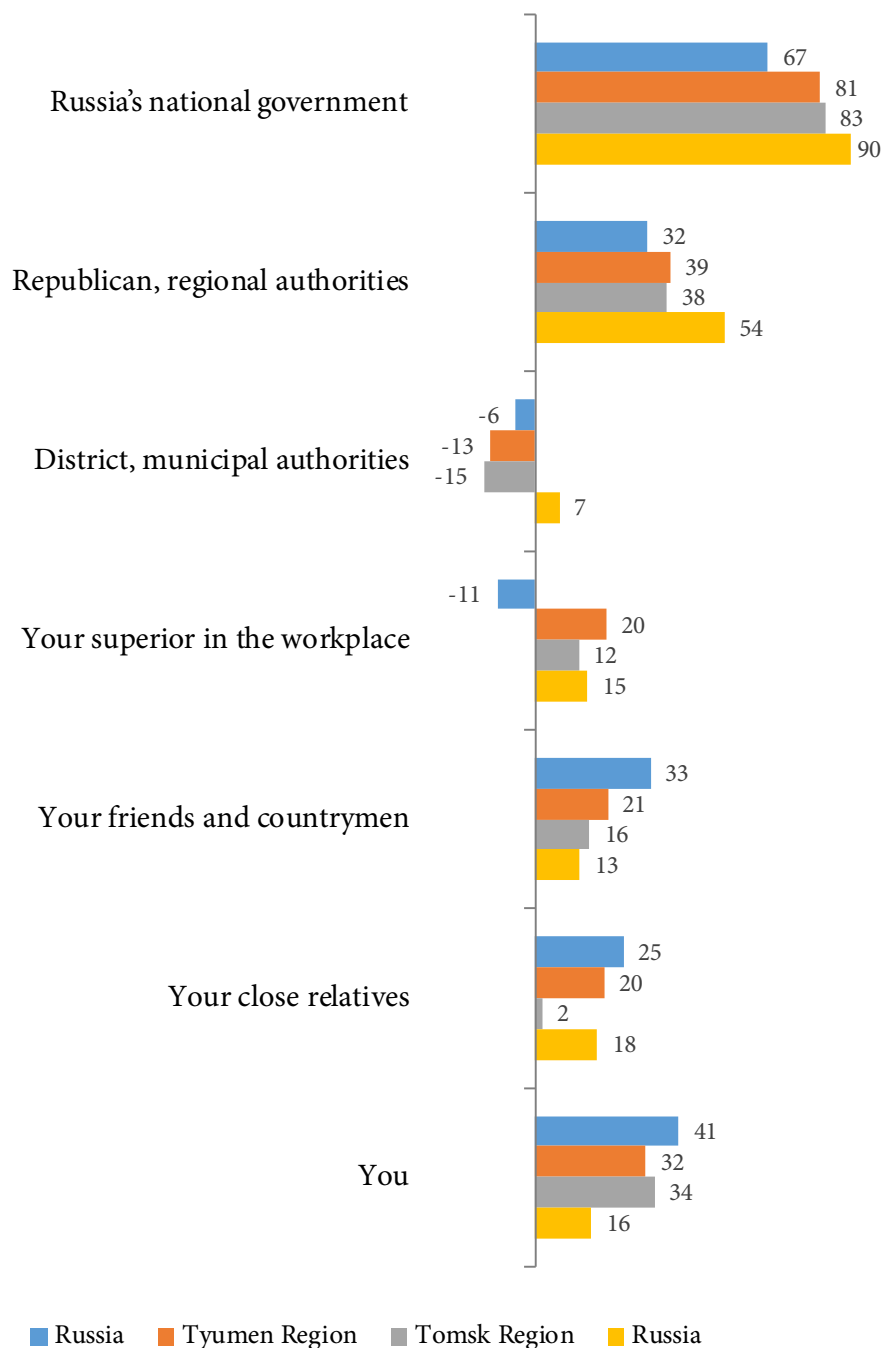


Figure 1. Distribution of respondents' answers to the question on the dependence of their living conditions on...

Table 3

Results of the factor analysis of respondents' answers to the question: "In your opinion, what does the improvement in your life depend on...", %

Factor	Factor's characteristics	Russia	Regions		
			Tyumen Region	Tomsk Region	Krasnoyarsk Territory
F-1	Factor's content	Social institutions of government	Social institutions of government + superior	Social institutions of government + superior	Social institutions of government + superior
	Factor's descriptive power	39.0	42.8	34.2	40.2
F-2	Factor's content	Social micro-environment + superior	Social micro-environment	Social micro-environment	Social micro-environment
	Factor's descriptive power	24.5	22.5	23.3	24.0

The factor analysis used demonstrated that there are two latent variables in the life world of the population of both three eastern regions and Russia as a whole. The first one having a higher descriptive power expresses an external locus of control: perceptions that the improvement in person's life depends on social institutions of government (national, republican, regional, municipal, district), as well as such person's superior in the workplace. The second one having a notably lower descriptive power describes the dependence of the respondent's life improvement on such respondent himself/herself (internal locus of control), as well as on his/her close relatives, friends and countrymen (that may be notionally called the person's microenvironment). It is specific that for Russians across the country, as distinct from residents of the Tyumen and Tomsk Regions, as well as the Krasnoyarsk Territory, the second factor also includes the superior in the workplace. Apparently, in case of the population of the said areas, it stems from their historically formed mentality: traditionally, residents of the Ural and Siberian Federal Districts are psychologically more distanced from any authorities and do not regard their superior in the workplace as a friend or a "countryman". For the majority of them, their superior personifies one of the power guises, which one should typically be wary of. This phenomenon expresses an important feature of socio-cultural deformations of the life world.

As seen from the data provided in Figure 2, the smallest share of respondents that are not satisfied with their lives to some extent ("not really satisfied" + "not satisfied at all") reside in the Krasnoyarsk Territory – 17%, and the largest share of such respondents is identified for Russia as a whole – 26%.

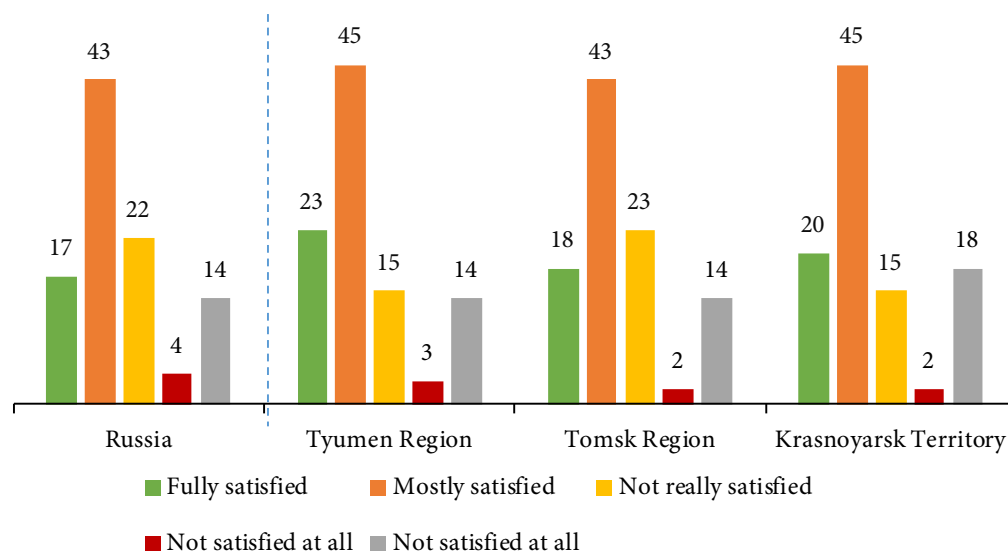


Figure 2. Distribution of respondents' answers to the question on the satisfaction with their lives

These data generally correspond to the degree of respondents' pessimism: “more likely not confident in my future than confident” + “completely unconfident” (see Figure 3). The largest share of such pessimists are noted country-wide – 28%. Their shares in the Tomsk Region (22%), Tyumen Region (22%) and Krasnoyarsk Territory (16%) are substantially lower. As we can see, the degree of pessimism in the said regions is lower than across the country.

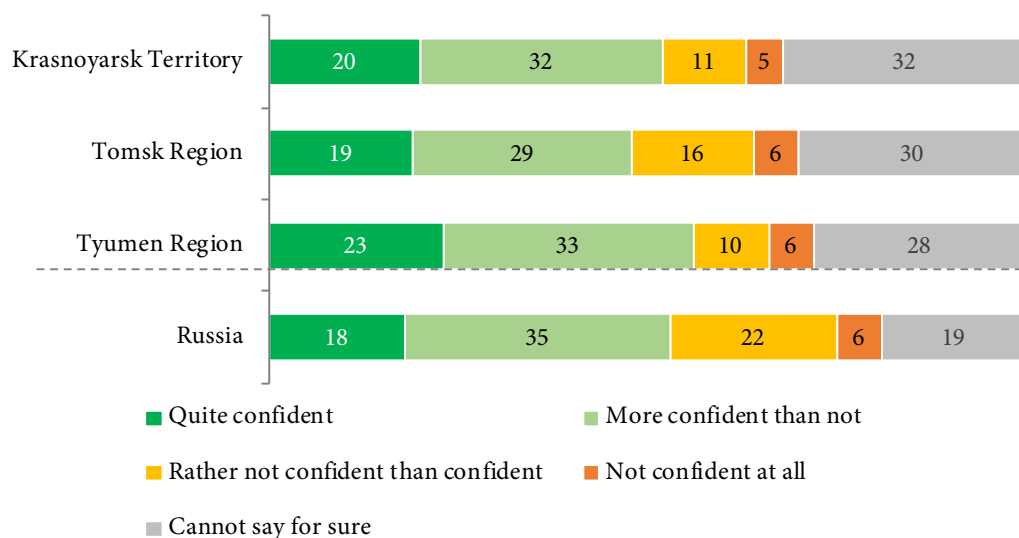


Figure 3. Distribution of respondents' answers to the question on their confidence about the future

Coefficients of correlation between the sense of being protected from various threats and the degree of optimism for residents of Russia as a whole are slightly lower than those in three of its eastern regions we consider (see Table 4). The variables being correlated use a five-grade scale: “confident about my future” – 5, ... “completely unconfident” – 1; “protected” –

5, ... “unprotected” – 1. The mark ** demonstrates the statistical significance of 0.01, and the mark * demonstrates the statistical significance of 0.05. Overall, the population of these regions and Russia as a whole shows the highest coefficients of correlation between the degree of optimism and the sense of being protected from poverty, or, in other words, considering the scale orientation, the absence of the fear of poverty (with the Tomsk Region leading), abuse of power by civil servants (Tyumen and Tomsk Regions correspondingly), crime (Krasnoyarsk Territory), and environmental threat (Tyumen Region). A similar picture is observed regarding the fear of *harassment due to age or gender*.

Table 4

Pearson correlation coefficients for the sense of being protected from various threats and the degree of respondents' optimism

Threats	Russia	Tyumen Region	Tomsk Region	Krasnoyarsk Territory
Environmental threat	.192**	.244**	.251**	.189**
Due to age or gender	.147**	.249**	.250**	.209**
Abuse of power by civil servants	.211**	.270**	.301**	.227**
Due to ethnicity	-	.136**	.128**	.165**
Due to your religious beliefs	-	.146**	.118**	.128**
Abuse of power by law enforcement agencies	.150**	.186**	.290**	.221**
Persecution for political opinions	.063*	.174**	.149**	.147**
Poverty	.292**	.293**	.364**	.297**
Solitude and abandonment	.224**	.236**	.253**	.265**
Crime	.186**	.228**	.240**	.257**

A fairly strong correlation is seen between the degree of respondents' optimism and the sense of being protected from the *abuse of powers by law enforcement agencies*, and the Tomsk Region also takes the lead here. Relevant factors that deform this component of the population's life world are fears of *solitude and abandonment*, as well as *persecution for political opinions*. In the latter case, the highest correlation coefficient is noted among residents of the Tyumen Region. The coefficients of correlation between the degree of optimism and the absence of fear of *discrimination due to ethnicity or religious beliefs* are notably lower (and in some cases such correlation does not exist).

Among residents of the eastern areas of Russia in question, almost all fears distinguished as part the methodology reduce the extent of their satisfaction with their lives to a much greater degree than among the entire country's population (Table 5). These differences are especially significant for the three fears distinguished as part the methodology: fear of *persecution due to*

ethnicity, religious beliefs, or for political opinions, which do not correlate with the extent of respondents' satisfaction with their lives among respondents across Russia.

Table 5

Pearson correlation coefficients for the sense of being protected from various threats and the extent of respondents' satisfaction with their lives

Threats	Russia	Tyumen Region	Tomsk Region	Krasnoyarsk Territory
Environmental threat	.157**	.200**	.167**	.206**
Due to age or gender	.174**	.231**	.251**	.214**
Abuse of power by civil servants	.201**	.210**	.240**	.196**
Due to ethnicity	-	.136**	.071*	.144**
Due to your religious beliefs	-	.146**	.105**	.131**
Abuse of power by law enforcement agencies	.116**	.186**	.201**	.242**
Persecution for political opinions	-	.174**	.138**	.136**
Poverty	.229**	.293**	.286**	.289**
Solitude and abandonment	.194**	.236**	.197**	.242**
Crime	.162**	.228**	.171**	.202**

Conclusions

The data provided in this article verify the hypotheses we presented. The life world of the Russia's population represents a multicolor palette of original life worlds of people residing in different regions of it. Socio-cultural specifics of each one of them are determined by a contradictory combination of various factors: social and economic, cultural and historic, national and ethnic, etc. The latter include specific features of so called frontier regions of our country. To distinguish them, at least the following parameters are used: "remoteness from central authorities, population due to migration flows, low population density in the area" [Nemirovskaya, Foa 2013; Foa, Nemirovskaya 2016]. Thus, one region of the Ural Federal District and two regions of the Siberian Federal District, the population of which was part of our study object, represent frontier regions.

In the context of fears of socio-cultural threats, both nation-wide factors (values for which far exceed the same in the regions) and regional factors deforming the life world of the country's population are distinguished. The former include the fear of "environmental threat" and "harassment due to age or gender". The latter comprise the remaining factors included in the methodology we used. Furthermore, fears of poverty,

environmental threat, abuse of power by civil servants and crime are the most relevant fears, both country-wide and for the regions in question. About a half of respondents experience such fears.

A distinctive, region-specific “Ural-Siberian” feature of life world deformations has been revealed: within the general meaning, residents of three eastern areas perceive their superior in the workplace as one of social institutions of government. The life-world temporal stability among the population of the Ural and Siberian regions studied (social optimism) is higher than the same across Russia.

The studies demonstrated that one of the most important factors deforming the life world’s temporal stability is fears caused by threats to the social life of people: fear of discrimination due to ethnicity or religious beliefs.

Significant differences between the answers of the Russia-wide population and residents of its three eastern regions regarding the satisfaction with their lives have been found. For instance, respondents from across Russia demonstrated no correlation between the said life world characteristic and the fear of persecution due to ethnicity, religious beliefs, or for political opinions. To recap, the satisfaction with life describes the extent of harmony of the person’s life world. Apparently, in most Russian regions, as distinct from the three eastern areas we have considered, these threats do not act as deformers of the population’s life world. It is logical to assume that this phenomenon is associated with the specifics of formation of the eastern areas’ population. In part, it comprises forced migrants, descendants of those exiled (during various periods of our history and for different reasons), who settled there following their release from detention facilities, or their family members.

Overall, it is hard to escape the conclusion that the sense of fear deforms the harmony of the life world of the country-wide population to a much greater extent than the same of respondents from the Tyumen and Tomsk Regions and Krasnoyarsk Territory. The above is also true for the temporal stability of the life world.

It is uncontroversial that the sense of fear is the strongest destructive factor, and its preservation and reproduction in the society may generate a whole range of negative processes of the life world deformation. Therefore, this phenomenon requires further thorough study by sociologists and representatives of allied academic disciplines.

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