

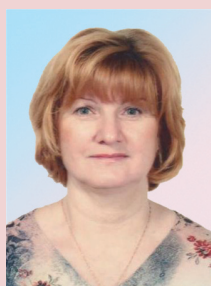
## Problems and Prospects of Spiritual and Moral Well-Being of the Russian People\*



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**Abstract.** The article reviews statistical and sociological characteristics of spiritual and moral well-being of the Russian people during 2000–2015. The authors present their own system of indicators consisting of three components: personal, family and social well-being. Special attention is paid to issues of mortality caused by external causes, harmful addictions, family breakdown, abortion, crime and economic inequality. The article suggests there is a nonlinear correlation between the level of economic development and moral and psychological climate in the society. It shows that Russian society starting from 2000 is characterized by a trend of spiritual recovery; however, some indicators indicate stagnation or

\* The authors express their sincere gratitude to Vladimir Mikhailovich Terebikhin for his support to the research.

**For citation:** Styrov M.M., Tikhomirova V.V. Problems and prospects of spiritual and moral well-being of the Russian people. *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, 2017, vol. 10, no. 4, pp. 180-195. DOI: 10.15838/esc/2017.4.52.10

even deterioration. The general level of population's spiritual and moral health is far from perfect and is nowhere near the indicators of many foreign countries. The authors characterize the recent positive changes in these spheres and stress the need to pay even more attention to the social and educational component in the government policy. The authors believe that Russia can and should become a state where common efforts ensure a high level of person's spiritual and moral well-being, close to best global standards and surpassing them eventually. They offer specific events and courses of action to achieve this goal and recommended making better use of the mentioned indicators of human well-being when evaluating the success of the socio-economic development, as well as implementing integral indices comprehensively characterizing this sphere into management practice. It seems appropriate to thoroughly study people's moral and psychological condition based on statistics, sociological surveys and expert estimates, with further continuous monitoring. The authors touch upon the development of concepts on spiritual and moral well-being of the Russian population. It is argued that people's spiritual and moral improvement is a joint responsibility of state authorities and religious organizations, with further review of individual principles of their interaction.

**Key words:** spiritual and moral well-being, state, individual, family, society, children, human.

### Introduction

Despite a significant success in the socio-economic development of Russia during the past 10–15 years the spiritual and moral condition of the society is still very far from perfect. In the early period of market reforms some of its aspects were paid more attention in strategic documents, others were not considered at all. Currently, however, public sentiment, scientific research<sup>1</sup> and the strategy of the country's authorities point to the need for systematic target policy in this sphere. It

has become clear that despite the moral and psychological environment in the society being only very slightly linked to the level of economic development this correlation is not always direct and linear; on the contrary, sometimes technological and economic advances may lead to cultural degradation. This is discussed in the works by E.V. Balatsky, N.A. Ekimova [1], A.A. Kuklin, E.V. Vasil'eva [9], A.V. Yur'evich [14] and others. "We need to be strong militarily, technologically, economically, but still the main thing that determines success is the quality people, the intellectual, spiritual, and moral quality of the society" – said Russian President Vladimir Putin<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> See, for example: [13; 16]; *Transformation and modernization: spiritual principles, goals, risks and chances*. Moscow: Institut ekonomicheskikh strategii RAN, 2011. Available at: <http://kpp-russia.ru/wp-content/uploads/2011/preobrazhenie-modernizacia-doklad-KPP.pdf>; Terebikhin V.M. *Society of solidarity in the Komi Republic: issues and prospects of establishment*. Official website of the Komi Republic Civic Chamber. Available at: [http://op.rkomi.ru/dictionaries/mnenie\\_ekspertov/52980](http://op.rkomi.ru/dictionaries/mnenie_ekspertov/52980) (accessed: 24.05.2016).

<sup>2</sup> Putin V.V. Speech at the anniversary meeting of Valdai Discussion Club. *Official website of the Russian President*. 19.09.2013. Available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/19243>, accessed 18.05.2016.

On the one hand, the inner world of a human which forms their goals, values, and behavioral standards is a very sensitive subject where rude ideological clichés are inappropriate. There are enough examples of it in the history. On the other hand, the state cannot ignore the sense-making, educational, and protective functions of education, health, culture, media, and nonprofit organizations which greatly influence the mental and physical condition of each person, family, and the society as a whole. The awareness of this is proved by the adopted regulations affecting the mental component of the Russian society<sup>3</sup>.

Any social deviation is a trouble for the person himself first of all, as they fail to fully reveal themselves, develop as a personality, and find the meaning in their lives. This is a tragedy for relatives and friends experiencing whose expectations collapse. Finally, it is a loss for the whole society which is deprived of its active member and a potential employee. That is why even from a purely utilitarian point of view, the country should be interested in long-term investment in improving

<sup>3</sup> For example, *Principles of the state cultural policy of the Russian Federation*. Official website of the Russian President. Available at: <http://static.kremlin.ru/media/events/files/41d526a877638a8730eb.pdf> (accessed: 20.05.2016); *Strategy for the development of education in the Russian Federation up to 2025*. Official website of Rossiiskaya gazeta newspaper. Available at: <http://www.rg.ru/2015/06/08/vospitanie-dok.html> (accessed: 20.05.2016); *Strategy for the state national policy of the Russian Federation up to 2025*. Garant.ru Legal Information Portal. Available at: [http://base.garant.ru/70284810/#block\\_1000](http://base.garant.ru/70284810/#block_1000) (accessed: 20.05.2016).

the spiritual and moral well-being of the population, not to mention dealing with these issues through the postulate that each soul is priceless.

#### Definition of terms

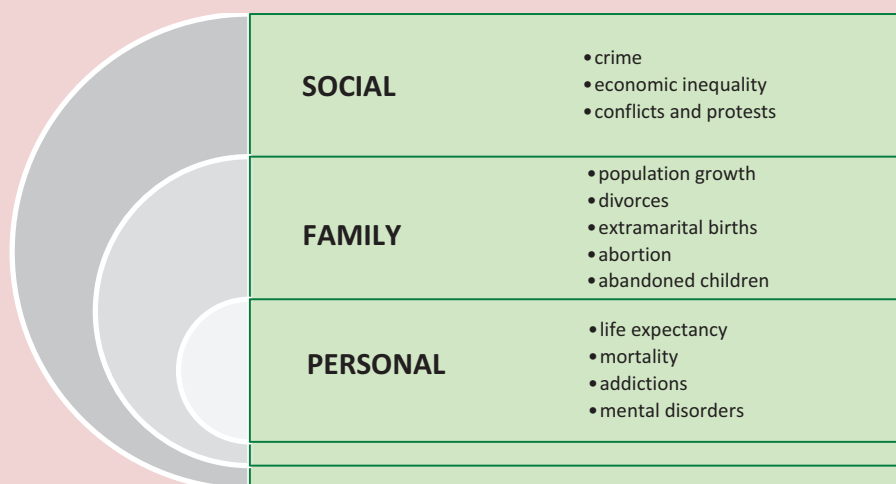
We understand spiritual and moral well-being of the society as correctness, lack of social “diseases”, closeness to the perfect image of social processes closely dependent on the values and motivational attitudes of a human<sup>4</sup>. Morality is referred to as ways, behavioral standards, people’s actions in interaction with each other; spirituality is considered as a system of highest ideals, aspirations of each individual, the direction of their soul. In this sense, spiritual and moral well-being is an important element of the concept of “health” which, according to the Constitution of the World Health Organization, is interpreted as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being<sup>5</sup>.

We offer to review the spiritual and moral well-being of the society at three levels – personal, family and social. This approach, in our opinion, will help distinguish between the phenomena in this sphere by degree of their influence, identify strong and weak

<sup>4</sup> The terms “moral-psychological”, “socio-psychological” and “spiritual-moral condition/environment/health” are used in the present paper as partial synonyms to the term “spiritual and moral well-being”.

<sup>5</sup> Constitution of the World Health Organization. Available at: <http://docs.cntd.ru/document/901977493>.

Figure 1. Structure and indicators of the spiritual and moral well-being of the society\*



\* Compiled by the authors (first published with slight differences: Styrov M.M., Tikhomirov V.V. Dukhovno-nravstvennoe blagopoluchie naseleniya Komi: nuzhna ser'eznaya strategiya [The spiritual and moral well-being of the Komi Republic: in need of a major policy]. Region, 2015, no. 7, pp. 2–4).

points more clearly and focus on them. We propose a system of indicators for a rapid assessment of each of the listed spheres<sup>6</sup> (Fig. 1).

The system is not intended to be more comprehensive or supreme over other known approaches. It is based mainly on official statistics and is intended to show the most acute problems of the spiritual and moral condition of the society. However, it can serve

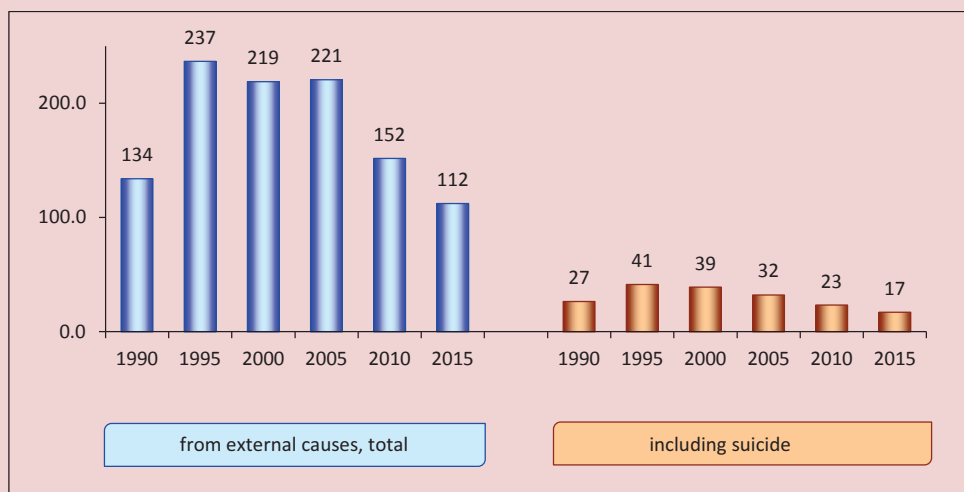
<sup>6</sup> The authors are aware that neither statistical indicators, nor sociological surveys are able to fully reflect a subtle sphere of a human life such as their spiritual and moral condition. Moreover, statistics are always exposed to various errors and the results of sociological surveys are very subjective and strongly depend on the value scale the researchers adhere to. However, for lack of better information we have to use the one available comparing facts from various sources with each other and one's own observations if possible.

as a starting point for more in-depth study of each block including subjective assessments of public opinion polls<sup>7</sup>.

During 2000–2015 all three blocks demonstrated predominantly positive changes; however, most indicators still reflect certain imperfection. Some phenomena demonstrate a slowdown in an upward trend or even the worsening of the situation. Let us consider official statistics and sociological surveys.

<sup>7</sup> On the example of family well-being we present in-depth analysis in the article: Styrov M.M., Tikhomirova V.V. Family life in Russia: success and challenges. *Proceedings of the Scientific Internet Conference "Pressing issues of the Russian society amid new modern challenges"* (Vologda, ISEDT RAS, March 27–31, 2017). Available at: <http://forum-ic.isert-ran.ru/viewtopic.php?f=27&t=175> (accessed: 27.03.2017).

Figure 2. Number of deaths from external causes in Russia, per 100 thousand people a year



## Main trends

### *Personal well-being*

Russia is currently demonstrating an upward trend in life expectancy – from 65.3 years in 2000 to 71.4 years in 2015<sup>8</sup>, which is certainly an evidence of both physical and mental recovery of the population. However, lack of will to live and motivation to creative work and personal development, and partly unfavorable living conditions suggest a very high level of mortality from external causes<sup>9</sup>, a wide scale of various addictions – alcohol, drugs, nicotine, toxic substance abuse, gambling, “digital” addiction.

<sup>8</sup> Life expectancy at birth. *Rosstat*. Available at: [http://www.gks.ru/free\\_doc/new\\_site/population/demo/demo26.xls](http://www.gks.ru/free_doc/new_site/population/demo/demo26.xls) (дата обращения: 07.06.2016).

<sup>9</sup> External causes of death include murder, suicide, accidents, poisoning, drowning, fires, road accidents, etc.

Thus, in 2015, the number of deaths from external causes per 100 thousand people in Russia amounted to 112.3 people, including suicide – 17.1 people per year<sup>10</sup>. This is much lower than in previous years (*Fig. 2*), but 2–2.5 times higher than in the developed countries [5].

Primary incidence of alcoholism and alcoholic psychosis per the same 100 thousand people accounted for 74.6 people, which, of course, does not reflect the real scale of the

<sup>10</sup> Hereinafter, if no other source is specified, numerical data in the text and in figures are taken from: Unified Interdepartmental Information-Statistics Service Rosstat. Available at: <http://fedstat.ru> (accessed: from 31.03.2016 to 30.01.2017); Russian regions. Socio-economic indicators. 2006: statistics book. Moscow: Rosstat, 2007; Russian regions. Socio-economic indicators. 2015: statistics book. Moscow: Rosstat, 2015.

problem<sup>11</sup>. The level of mental and behavioral disorders remains high and accounts for about 2.5% of the total population. There is an acute need to improve speech and communication culture, reduce the use of bad language which is resorted to by two out of three Russians<sup>12</sup>.

#### *Family well-being*

There are some significant improvements in this sphere, as evidenced, for example, by the increasing birth rate: during 2000–2015 – from 8.7 to 13.3 births per 1000 people a year. However, the level of natural reproduction only slightly exceeds zero (0.2–0.3‰<sup>13</sup>) and, according to forecasts, within the next few years may again become negative. This is explained by many various reasons: objective socio-economic issues, small number of people born in the 1990-s, Russia's transition to a modern “small family” type of population dynamics, as well as insufficient motivation of the population to continue the line and enrich their own kind, uncertainty about the future,

<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately, there are no valid data on bad habits: they are recorded only after committing an offence or applying to medical institutions. Moreover, there is no clear distinction between a taste, a habit and addiction. Yet sociological surveys help approximately estimate the prevalence of at a 30–35% level, alcoholism – 7–10%, drug abuse – 3–5%. Sources: *On smoking and breathing*. Public Opinion Fund. Available at: <http://fom.ru/Zdorove-i-sport/12483> (accessed: 20.05.2016); *On alcoholism and ways to fight it*. Public Opinion Fund. Available at: <http://fom.ru/Obraz-zhizni/11492> (accessed: 20.05.2016); *On drug abuse*. Public Opinion Fund. Available at: <http://fom.ru/Zdorove-i-sport/11685> (accessed: 20.05.2016).

<sup>12</sup> On bad language. Public Opinion Fund. Available at: <http://bd.fom.ru/report/map/d082925> (accessed: 20.05.2016).

<sup>13</sup> Natural population growth in the Russian Federation. *Rosstat*. Available at: [http://www.gks.ru/wps/wcm/connect/rosstat\\_main/rosstat/ru/statistics/publications/catalog/doc\\_1140096846203](http://www.gks.ru/wps/wcm/connect/rosstat_main/rosstat/ru/statistics/publications/catalog/doc_1140096846203) (accessed: 08.06.2016).

focus on short-term selfish interests. Some of these factors are reviewed in detail in the works of L.A. Popova, for example, [11].

The divorce rate remains extremely high without any sign of improvement. During 2006–2015 there were 8.5 marriages and 4.7 divorces a year recorded in Russia per 1000 people. Despite inaccurate direct comparison of these figures due to age shifts it is still obvious that more than a half of all families break up. The reason the marriage principle “once and for all” is violated is the vagueness of moral foundations of patience and loyalty, alcohol abuse or other bad habits. Family breakdown usually demoralizes both spouses and negatively affects the mental development of children, creating fear and anxiety as evidenced by large-scale sociological studies [18]. Common-law marriage is very widespread due to which almost every fourth child is born out of wedlock<sup>14</sup>, about the same number are further raised in single-parent families<sup>15</sup>.

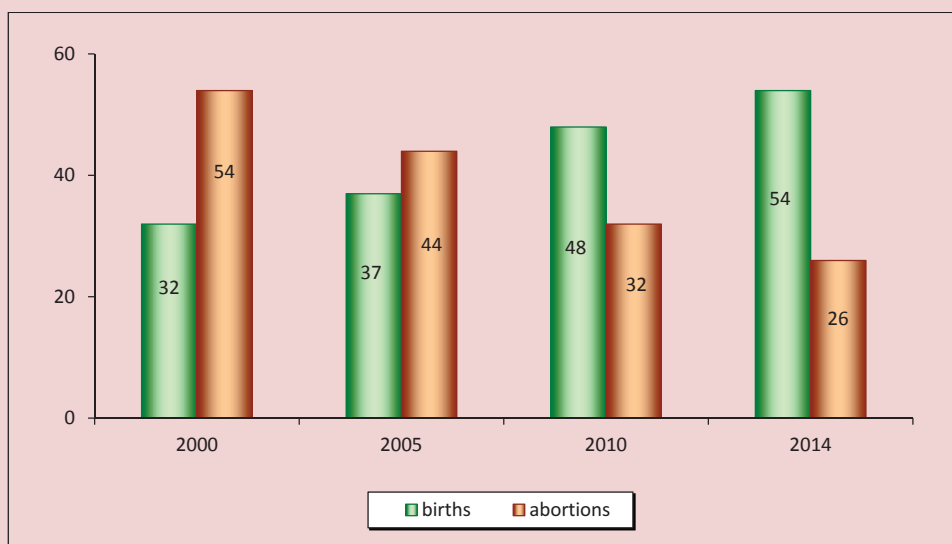
In Russia, there are 770 thousand children (i.e. every thirtieth; on average, one child from a regular school class or a kindergarten group) left without parental care<sup>16</sup>, the vast

<sup>14</sup> *Russian demographic yearbook. 2015: statistics book*. Moscow: Rosstat, 2015. P. 68. Available at: [http://www.gks.ru/free\\_doc/doc\\_2015/demo15.pdf](http://www.gks.ru/free_doc/doc_2015/demo15.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> Russian population census 2010. Volume 6: number and structure of households. *Rosstat*. Available at: [http://www.gks.ru/free\\_doc/new\\_site/perepis2010/croc/perepis\\_itogi1612.htm](http://www.gks.ru/free_doc/new_site/perepis2010/croc/perepis_itogi1612.htm) (accessed: 20.05.2016).

<sup>16</sup> *Russian statistics yearbook 2015: statistics book*. Moscow: Rosstat, 2015. P. 191. Available at: [http://www.gks.ru/free\\_doc/doc\\_2015/year/year15.rar](http://www.gks.ru/free_doc/doc_2015/year/year15.rar)

Figure 3. Number of births and abortions a year per 1000 women aged 15–49 years in Russia in 2000–2014\*



\* Compiled by the authors according to: Russian demographic yearbook. Pp. 64, 72.

majority of them are “social orphans” whose fathers and mothers are deprived of parental rights due to deviant behavior and failure to fulfil their duties. There is a number of cases of abuse against children, including those from wealthy families. Due to the ongoing prevention of family problems and child neglect the number of families in socially dangerous situation and registered at social services is currently reducing. But their number remains rather large: in 2011, there were more than 65 thousand families and about 120 thousand children being brought up in such families<sup>17</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> *Socially dangerous situations of families and children: analysis of the term and assessment methodology*. Moscow: Variant, 2015. P. 5. Available at: <https://www.hse.ru/pubs/share/direct/document/147052524>

The large number of abortions raises serious concern: in 2014 – 5 abortions per 10 births per year – more than 800 thousand small shower (*Fig. 3*)<sup>18</sup>.

A good point is that the scale of the phenomenon is declining every year; however, Russia remains one of the world’s “leaders” in the number of abortions<sup>19</sup>. The roots of infanticide lie in unawareness of the value of human life, promiscuity, disregard for one’s health in the long term, irresponsible attitude

<sup>18</sup> The figures reflect only official statistics. If illegal abortions and use of contraceptives is also considered, the real number of infanticides in the country according to some estimates is comparable to mortality rates during the Great Patriotic War [12].

<sup>19</sup> Ul’yanov A.S. Abortions in Russia: how to part with embarrassing leadership? Orthodox popular Charity and Social Activity Portal MILOSERDIE.RU. Available at: <https://www.miloserdie.ru/article/aborty-v-rossii-kak-rasstatsya-s-pozornym-liderstvom/> (accessed: 08.06.2016).

to contraception, and sometimes in financial and family problems. Most Russians consider abortion an acceptable though undesirable means of preventing health pathologies, single motherhood, poverty<sup>20</sup> etc. Professionals are well aware of its distant negative consequences for physical and mental health of a mother and the whole family.

#### *Social well-being*

Positive features of social well-being include a high level of population's support for the government at the election, rising national identity and patriotism against the background of political turmoil. Despite the economic recession, the "index of happiness" of Russians has for several years been the highest in the past 25 years: more than 80% of people are happy<sup>21</sup>. Attention of authorities is now given to public sentiment, introduction into the school curricula of the Basics of Religious Cultures and Secular Ethics, increasing wages in the social sphere, etc.

However, no full social solidarity has yet been achieved. Both implicit and explicit confrontation between the authorities takes

place along with aggressive dissatisfaction with the country's internal and external policy, tensions in interethnic and interreligious relations. From time to time it is manifested in major social unrest and protests.

However, analysis of protest activity requires the distinction between two components. The first – constructive (evolutionary) caused by actual problems and implemented by legal methods. The second – destructive (revolutionary) led by artificial slogans and myths and relying on illegal mechanisms of power. It has been noticed that antisocial behavior of the second type is often determined by distortions in upbringing and family life of the "rebels" rather than by actual external difficulties [19]. Clarification of the correlation between these two components requires a separate in-depth study, so we do not present digital data.

A major problem is the high crime rate – more than a thousand criminal offences per year per 100 thousand people including almost 8 murders (global average<sup>22</sup> – around 6). This is explained by problems in the population's socio-economic well-being, especially in single-industry towns and rural areas, dysfunctional family relations, upbringing and children's socialization, long neglect of education and culture, and often – by negative media influence. In 2015, for

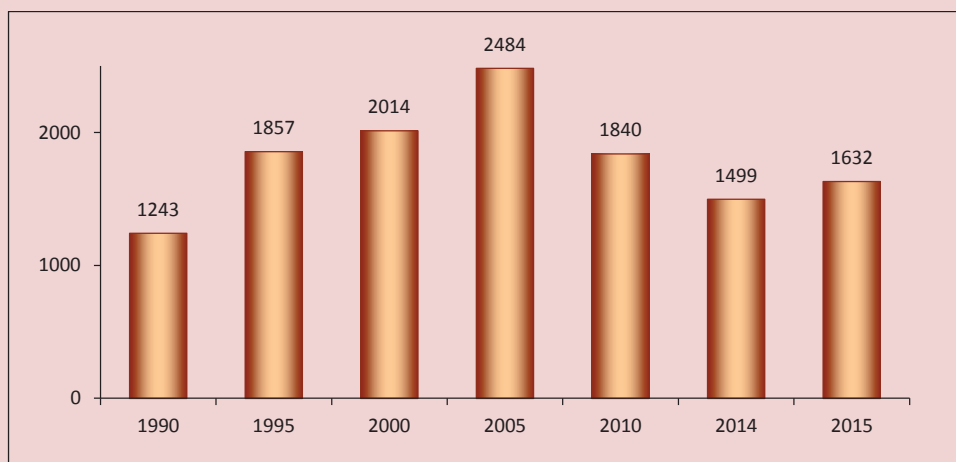
<sup>20</sup> In 2015, 86% of Russians considered an abortion morally acceptable, 51% of them – in any case at the woman's request, 35% – only under certain circumstances (The right of abortion. *Levada Centre*. Available at: <http://www.levada.ru/2015/07/02/pravo-na-abort/> (accessed: 07.06.2016)). According to other data, only 32% of Russians justify abortions (Ethical standards in modern Russia. Telephone survey of the Public Opinion Fund, June 22–23, 2013. Available at: <http://fom.ru/TSennosti/11069> (accessed: 08.06.2016)).

<sup>21</sup> Index of happiness in Russia – 2016. *All-Russian public opinion centre*. Available at: <http://wciom.ru/index.php?id=236&uid=115976> (accessed: 27.01.2017).

<sup>22</sup> *Global Study On Homicide – 2013*. United Nations Office On Drugs And Crime. P. 14. Available at: [https://http://www.unodc.org/documents/gsh/pdfs/2014\\_GLOBAL\\_HOMICIDE\\_BOOK\\_web.pdf](https://http://www.unodc.org/documents/gsh/pdfs/2014_GLOBAL_HOMICIDE_BOOK_web.pdf) (accessed: 28.03.2017).



Figure 4. Number of registered crimes in Russia a year per 100 thousand people



Source: Interdepartmental Information-Statistics Service Rosstat. Available at: <http://fedstat.ru>

the first time after a decade of crime rate reduction a 10% increase was noted (Fig. 4). More than 50% of criminal offences are economically motivated: theft, burglary, robbery, fraud, drug trafficking. Almost every fifth crime is committed under alcohol influence.

An important factor in social unrest is an extremely high economic inequality resulting from dysfunctional income distribution system, underpaid low-skilled labor, inefficient measures of social security, people's passivity and breakdown, and often – from lack of solidarity and compassion in the society. Each tenth person has incomes below living wage, every twentieth person of working age is unemployed, the R/P 10 ratio (the ratio of the average income of the richest 10% to the poorest 10%) amounts to

15 or 16 (according to some expert estimates, taking into account hidden incomes – twice as much<sup>23</sup>) with the unwritten international standard not more than 10. During 2000–2015, the population's per capita debt on loans increased in comparable prices from 1.1 to 72.6 thousand rubles, i.e. 65 times<sup>24</sup> (!). All this justifies the sense of injustice, creates an atmosphere of discontent and hostility, breeds personal and family problems.

#### Suggestions

The figures indicate a deep spiritual and moral decay of the Russian society. Of course,

<sup>23</sup> Kobayakov A. Bridging the gap. *Odnako Journal website*. Available at: <http://www.odnako.org/almanac/material/preodolet-razriv/> (accessed: 08.06.2016).

<sup>24</sup> Calculated by the authors according to data from: *Russia's Finance. 2002: statistics book*. Federal State Statistics Service. Moscow, 2002. P. 272; *Russian statistics yearbook. 2015: statistics book*. Rosstat. Moscow, 2015. P. 545; <http://top-rf.ru/places/324-zadolzhennost-po-kreditam-nadushu-naseleniya.html>

in many cases crisis phenomena are associated with poverty or depression caused by difficult life situations. Yet the main cause of this decay lies in the destruction of the most important centers of personal, family and social consciousness, i.e., erosion of the system of values, attitudes and behavioral motivations. Indeed, as evidences by practice, the cause of social deviancy is the loss of the meaning of life and moral degradation of rather wealthy and successful people.

However, it should be noticed there is a strong trend in spiritual recovery society starting from 2000. This suggests the awakening of people's inner forces, activation of self-preservation and purification mechanisms after critical situation of the 1990-s. Such cyclical nature of social consciousness is well known and is an object of study in the framework of the civilizational approach, in particular, in the works by B.N. Kuzyk [8]. Academician O.T. Bogomolov writes: "restore Russians' belief in noble ideals, revive the sense of pride in the history and great achievements of the past, awaken the spiritual and moral forces of the society – this is the most important task facing the country today"<sup>25</sup>.

History indicates that the moral health of the society is a key factor in its survival and further development at critical moments.

<sup>25</sup> *Economy and public sphere: unconscious mutual impact*. Moscow: Institut ekonomicheskikh strategii RAN, 2008. 440 p. Pp. 6-7.

Population surveys confirm the citizens' concerns with the issues of psychological conditions in the country and the understanding of the need for positive transformations in this sphere<sup>26</sup>.

In our view, the most important goal of fundamental development of Russia and each of its region and municipal unit is the preservation and strengthening of the long-term physical, social and spiritual health of the country's citizens. Russia must become a state where with joint effort of every citizen, the government and all organizations a high level of spiritual and moral well-being of a person is ensured, approaching best world indicators and exceeding them. The achievement of this goal will be evidenced by the country's stable position in top ten or twenty most prosperous countries by each of the target indicators discussed above (see Fig. 1) and/or the compliance of these indicators with threshold scientifically substantiated standards. Only in this case the nation's commitment to leadership on the international arena is justified.

It is necessary that the list of goals of the federal government, regional and local authorities include more vitals of human well-being rather than abstract economic indicators; for them to be used primarily for evaluating the success of the socio-economic

<sup>26</sup> What one must not but sometimes can do? *All-Russian public opinion centre*. Available at: <http://wciom.ru/index.php?id=236&uid=1434> (accessed: 07.06.2016).

development. A remarkable change would be the shift of the issues of human development in the structure of strategies, forecasts and programs of the socio-economic development from secondary and auxiliary positions to priority and target. In our view, it is useful to introduce into public administration one or more integral coefficients characterizing the public sphere. Attempts to develop and implement such indicators are made by many domestic researchers, for example, by V.V. Kossov [7], F.M. Borodkin and A.S. Kudryavtsev [2], M.V. Morev and V.I. Popova [10], E.V. Vasilyeva [4], O.A. Kozlova, T.V. Gladkova, M.N. Makarova, E.H. Tukhtarova [6]. Best known are the index of moral state of the society, composite index of macro-psychological state of the society developed by RAS Institute of Psychology under the coordination of A.V. Yurevich [15]. However, these indices do not reflect the blocks personal, family and social well-being separately; therefore they can be improved in this direction.

It is also necessary to conduct an in-depth study of people's moral and psychological condition based on both statistical indicators and public opinion polls and expert estimates, with further continuous monitoring (for example, an international scientific project of this kind – [20]). A number of scientists and public figures, in particular V.M. Terebikhin, advocate for the development of a full concept of spiritual and moral well-being of

Russia and each of its regions separately<sup>27</sup>. It should be noted that in some countries, for example in Kazakhstan, the development of such programs is an important area of the public policy [17]. It may be also useful to estimate the total economic damage from the manifestations of moral ill-being in the society for a more compelling justification of priority areas of the state policy in this sphere.

In each area of spiritual and moral well-being of the Russian population (personal, family, social) a series of certain objectives (actions to implement them) should be achieved. Some of them are reflected in *Figure 5*. These, in turn, must be implemented in the form of specific activities performed by the authorities in cooperation with public organizations.

#### **Interaction with religious organizations**

However, it is clear that growing material wealth and the efforts of public authorities alone do not ensure people's genuine joy of life. Both millennial religious experience of the mankind and latest neurobiological studies indicate the importance of the spiritual component in the human nature, its inseparability with the Divine [22]. It is no accident that abroad when the training professionals, in particular doctors, these issues are currently given more and more attention [21].

<sup>27</sup> Terebikhin V.M. *On the problem of moral and spiritual development*. Viperson.ru. Available at: <http://viperson.ru/articles/terebihin-v-m-o-probleme-duhovno-nravstvennogo-razvitiya> (accessed: 20.05.2016).

Figure 5. Goals of the policy of raising spiritual and moral well-being of the Russian population\*



Therefore in Russia it is also impossible to “heal” people’s souls without comprehensive interaction between the secular authorities with traditional religions. For example, about half of the population positively evaluate and wish more influence of the Russian Orthodox Church on the moral and spiritual life of the whole society, without considering that it interferes with political affairs<sup>28</sup>.

<sup>28</sup> *The Church and the society: together or apart?* All-Russian public opinion centre. 24.06.2015 [http://wciom.ru/index.php?id=236&uid=115295, accessed: 20.05.2016]; Approval of the role of the Russian Orthodox Church in the state has risen to record levels. Levada Center. 19.02.2016 [http://www.levada.ru/2016/02/19/odobrenie-rol-i-rpts-v-gosudarstve-vyroslo-do-rekordnogo-urovnya, accessed: 20.05.2016].

Indeed, a religious person constantly strives for freedom from passions and addictions, for good relations with family and all other people, for proper implementation of public duties. The Church considers the root of all social problems in disbelief, violation of certain biblical Commandments: “give honor to your father and to your mother” (Exodus 20:12), “do not put anyone to death without cause.” (Exodus 20:13), “do not be false to the married relation” (Exodus 20:14), “do not take the property of another” (Exodus 20:15), “be full of pity” (Luke 6:36), “do not take overmuch wine” (Ephesians 5:18), “..... Let everyone put himself under the authority

of the higher powers” (Romans 13:1), etc. “... let us put off the works of the dark, arming ourselves with light, with right behavior as in the day; not in pleasure-making and drinking, not in bad company and unclean behavior, not in fighting and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not give thought to the flesh to do its desires”, urges Paul the Apostle (Romans: 13:12–14). His Holiness Patriarch Kirill says: “Transfiguration is the goal that God assigned to the human race; our whole life should be focused on our own transfiguration, transfiguration of the world around us, transfiguration of personal, family, social relations, transfiguration and embellishment of the face of the Earth”<sup>29</sup>.

These objectives mostly coincide with the government’s interests. Although public authorities do not deal with a soul in the afterlife, they give priority to the issues of material prosperity and international competitiveness; however they want to see a free intelligent personality, a good family man/woman, an honest worker, and a good citizen in every person.

Of course, the improvement of the society can only be achieved with joint effort. The goal of the Church lies in preaching and in practice to demonstrate the ideal of moral and

spiritual purity, testify to the divine destiny of every human being. “Fulfilling the mission of salvation of the human race, the Church does this not only through direct preaching, but also through good deeds aimed at improving the moral and material state of the world. A Christian’s life must be based on the idea that the world, the society, and the state are the objects of God’s love, for they are designed for transformation and purification based on the principles of God-commanded love”<sup>30</sup>. Public authorities are responsible for helping people achieve this ideal through education, healthcare, culture, social security, and the media. But one must not forget that “the relations between the Church and the state should take into account the difference in their natures... The goal of the Church is eternal salvation of people, the goal of state is their well-being on earth”<sup>31</sup>. “A situation where the teachings of Christ are transformed into the state ideology is dangerous for both the Church and the state. Any ideology unites and divides people at the same time, opposes different community to each other” [3, p. 41].

Thus, when thinking about human fate must it is necessary to take care of both external conditions of human existence and

<sup>29</sup> Kirill, Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia. *Speech after a night service on Transfiguration of Jesus Eve at the Pskov-Caves monastery*. Official website of the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church. Available at: <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/1252275.html> (accessed: 18.05.2016).

<sup>30</sup> *Principles of the social concept of the Russian Orthodox Church*. Official website of the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church. 09.06.2008. Available at: <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/419128>, accessed: 18.05.2016.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*.

internal strengths and weaknesses of human mentality. This will require significant changes in the current system of socio-economic administration. It is faith in the high calling of a human being in general and in Russian

people in particular that was the main pillar of Russia as a civilization for millennia. It means that firm commitment to this belief can both transform the life in the country and proclaim right ideas to the world in the 21st century.

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Received February 03, 2017