

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

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## Trust and responsibility: the regional dimension

Evgeniya A. Kogay

Dr. Sci. (Philos.), Professor, Head of Department of Sociology,  
Kursk State University (Kursk, Russian Federation)

ORCID: 0000-0002-2950-5710  
eakogay@mail.ru

**Abstract.** The issue of developing strategic trust at different levels of self-organization of territorial communities gains increasing importance in Russia. This article considers trust and responsibility as integral components of forming a sustainable society and implementation of modernization processes. The author turns to the problem of the relationship between these concepts and reveals trends in the dynamics of trust relationships in Russia and its regions. This article relies on the results of comparative sociological and cultural studies in the Tomsk (2015), Kursk (2016), and Tyumen (2016) regions, as well as in Russia overall (2015). The comparison of results from sociological researches shows the characteristics of institutional and interpersonal trust. The author notes that the new challenges to the development of society associated with the tasks of transition to system modernization create an increased demand for strengthening social partnership and the establishment of qualitative and constructive public policy. There is a trend to activate the position of citizens in defending their rights, as well as in helping vulnerable categories of the population. In conclusion, the author shows practical steps of individual regions on the way of creation of solidary society.

**Keywords:** trust, responsibility, challenges to the development of society, territorial communities, self-organization, strategic trust.

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### INTRODUCTION

The current geopolitical situation sees the growing interconnection and interdependence of various territorial entities. This causes the actions of some regions to affect the interests of other regions and regional systems. It is an important priority of regional social policy to ensure the effectiveness of strategic management of the regions, taking into account external and internal determinants of economic, socio-cultural, and political development.

Trust at the same time is an important factor that determines the nature of social relations and contributes to maintaining the stability and integration of the territorial community [2]. Trust should be

viewed as a multidimensional phenomenon, as well as an indicator of the effectiveness and significance of various institutions of society. American sociologist A. Seligman points out the possibility of maintaining order in the long term precisely on the basis of trust in the institutions of power [3].

Trust and responsibility are important elements in the formation of a sustainable society, and are also the necessary conditions for the implementation of modernization processes. "We have seen that modernization and its attendant social isolation begs numerous questions about trust, in all its multivariate and multidisciplinary character" [7, p. 8]. For a society to be stable and prosperous, it is not

enough to establish a legislative agreement and strictly follow the principles of economic expediency. The fulfillment of moral obligations, the implementation of responsible behavior, and the establishment of trust relationships are important conditions for its successful development. However, the strengthening of globalization and modernization processes is accompanied by systemic transformations, exposing as social costs such phenomena as anomie, social exclusion, increased risk, and a number of others [5, 6, 10].

Trust, when considered as a social mechanism, characterizes the effectiveness of existing social institutions, as well as the degree of approval in the countries that are gradually losing their communist past. It can also characterize the effectiveness of new principles and relations that are in line with the norms of a modern legal and democratic society. Fukuyama focuses on such important functions of trust as the reproduction of the social structure, the maintenance of moral foundations and social norms, as well as ensuring the self-organization of society [1, p. 52]. This acts as a certain guarantee of reducing the risk of social behavior, and promotes integration of an individual, a social community, and the society as a whole. However, the achievement of an optimal correlation of trust and mistrust provides another adequate response to the challenges of modernity. This is suggested by A. B. Kuprichenko: "Trustees, that is, those that are important for each other, are interested in cooperation and peaceful co-existence, and are conscious of their own responsibility for the development of relations. These partners should develop safety measures and control in potentially dangerous areas and situations of interaction" [3, p. 58].

A study done by the "Levada-Center" in 2012 clearly demonstrated that the formation of a trustable relationship in the field of consumer behavior helps to strengthen the areas of personal control that are connected with a heightened sense of personal responsibility. There are many examples of the relationship between trust and responsibility.

Responsibility takes the form of an ethical and legal category, which establishes the dependence of the individual from the social environment, society

and state, and indicates the extent to which individual behavior conforms with the ideal models. Responsibility is an integral element of the system of normative regulation of social behavior [4].

In the crisis within the Russian society, there are two interrelated trends. On the one hand, there is a stimulation of people to a more responsible attitude to their duties. A focus on overcoming the crisis will mobilize the will and moral qualities of a person to overcome obstacles. On the other hand, the crisis affects both the socio-economic moral sphere, as well as the political and cultural moral spheres. In this regard, the crisis takes various form, including debt, moral relations, norms, and increasing tension and conflict in society.

## METHODS

To gauge the levels of trust and responsibility in various Russian regions, this article examines the results of regional studies. Most of the results gathered in a number of Russian regions were obtained using the method "Sociocultural Portrait of a Region", a field of sociological research. The methodology was developed by the Center for the Study of Socio-Cultural Changes of the Institute of Philosophy of the Russian Academy of Sciences. The results of the latest wave of nationwide survey "Our values and interests of today", which was carried out by the center in 2015, are also present in this analysis.

## RESULTS

The first object examined in the survey is interpersonal trust. Respondents were asked to rate, on a 10-point scale, their answer to the question "Do you think that most people can be trusted, or do you think that being extra cautious around people is the right course of action?" (Table 1).

*Table 1. The level of trust in people (out of 10)  
Таблица 1. Уровень доверия к людям (от 0 до 10)*

Place	Level of confidence
Kursk Region (2016)	4.3
Tomsk Region (2015)	4.0
Tyumen Region (2016)	4.5
Russia (2015)	4.2

We see that the level of trust in these regions and Russia as a whole is less than the average value of 5. This situation refers not only to particular regions in Russia, but also the country as a whole.

Interpersonal trust is primarily formed within a person's surrounding environment. In the study, the respondents were asked: "Do you have a friend, whose help you can rely on in difficult times?" The distribution of their answers is given in Table 2.

Table 2 shows that the Kursk and Tomsk regions demonstrate a similar situation. In the Tyumen Region, more than 40% of respondents did not give a definite answer. In this region (the studies show), the system of values is quite close to the Moscow system, in which liberal values of freedom are dominant. The top two lines of Table 2 show that the Kursk and

Tomsk regions show a level of interpersonal trust above the all-Russian level (79% and 81.4% vs. 74.3%), and the Tyumen Region displays a much lower level — 50.7%.

The answers to the question "Do you feel close to the following groups of people?" clearly show how people define their circles of intimacy (Table 3).

The majority feel close to the people in their immediate surroundings, such as those living in the same town. Outside of these regions, the number is almost half as little. We conducted a number of studies in 2007, 2009, 2012, and 2016. Each time we analyzed the feeling of intimacy among the people of the former Soviet republics. In all regions, the number of those who felt close to the residents of the whole earth was insignificant. The identification

*Table 2.* Distribution of answers to the question about the existence of a friend  
*Таблица 2.* Распределение ответов на вопрос о наличии друзей

Answers	Kursk Region (2016)	Tyumen Region (2016)	Tomsk Region (2015)	Russia (2015)
Yes, I have such a friend	48.0	38.8	48.0	45.1
Perhaps	31.0	11.9	33.4	29.2
I think not	8.6	4.4	10.1	10.5
I don't have such friends	9.2	0.9	5.4	11.9
No answer	3.2	43.9	3.1	3.3

*Table 3.* Distribution of answers to the question of closeness to the following groups  
*Таблица 3.* Распределение ответов на вопрос о близости с людьми

Groups	Kursk Region (2016)	Tomsk Region (2015)	Tyumen Region (2016)	Russia (2015)
Residents of the settlement, in which I live (village, town, city)	72.8	62.9	56.1	73.5
Residents of my region (area)	40.4	36.2	35.2	56.4
Residents of my Federal County	23.0	23.3	22.3	36.2
Residents of Russia	35.6	28.3	25.8	38.1
Residents of the former Soviet republics	23.6	17.5	18.1	25.1
Residents of the whole Earth	15.8	15.5	14.9	23.1

*Table 4.* Distribution of answers to the question "In recent times, do you think that there is more agreement or disagreement between people?" (%)

*Таблица 4.* Распределение ответов на вопрос: «Как Вы считаете, в последнее время между людьми больше согласия или больше разногласия?» (%)

Possible answers	In your personal circle	In your place of residence	At the regional level	At the country level
More agreement	65.6	49.8	33.2	21
More disagreements	29.2	42	50.8	57.8
I'm not sure	5.2	8.2	16	21.2

with the federal district among respondents in all regions was rather small as well. This is not surprising, because the federal districts are administrative and management distinctions and they are rather heterogeneous (in their relation to the socio-cultural aspect).

Comparing this data with the results of the field study in the Kursk Region in 2013 (Table 4), we see a decreasing level of agreement from the immediate surroundings of a person (65.6%) to the level of the country (21%). However, the level of disagreement in the same direction increases — from 29.2% to 57.8%. The turning point is the place of residence, since the agreement and disagreement are approximately equal here.

These responses indicate a fragmentation of the social and cultural integrity in the regional community, because it is difficult to build a constructive relationship when solving many of life's problems in the background of disagreement.

Surveys conducted in several Russian regions still record a low level of trust towards most of the social

institutions, and the pattern shows that the decrease will likely continue. At the same time, interregional comparisons show that the distrust for social institutions in regions is not the same. The Kursk Region (as a typical region of Central Russia) has an institutional distrust more clearly displayed than in the Tyumen Region. However, if we compare the figures of the Kursk Region with the data obtained in the Tomsk Region, we can see that the level of distrust in the latter exceeds the numbers of both the Tyumen and Kursk regions (Table 5).

The lower levels of confidence in the population of the Russian regions indicate an increased tension in the socio-cultural space, which does not contribute to the sustainable development of the territorial communities. In the latest studies, respondents expressed the greatest distrust towards the mass media and regional branches of political parties. A low degree of trust was also noted towards government bodies, regional parliaments, and municipal governments. The Tyumen Region is the only one that shows a favorable situation for institutional

*Table 5.* The level of distrust of the population to regional social institutions (the sum of the responses “not very much trust” and “do not trust”, %)

*Таблица 5.* Уровень недоверия населения к региональным социальным институтам (сумма ответов «не очень доверяю» и «не доверяю», %)

Place/Social institution	Police	The Government of Region	Regional political party offices	Parliament	Mass media	Municipal organizations
Kursk Region (2016)	34.0	37.0	39.0	36.0	43.4	37.0
Tomsk Region (2015)	38.7	38.0	46.7	43.4	45.0	37.4
Tyumen Region (2016)	25.2	21.8	27.3	22.3	30.3	23.0
Russia (2015)	37.3	30.5	42.0	33.8	33.5	35.8

*Table 6.* Distribution of answers to the question about how much of life is improved by people and government institutions

*Таблица 6.* Распределение ответов на вопрос о зависимости улучшения жизни от людей и институтов власти

Answers	Kursk Region (2016)	Tomsk Region (2015)	Tyumen Region (2016)	Russia (2015)
From yourself	88.2	88.7	86.3	79.2
From close relatives	71.4	60.1	57.8	58.0
From friends, countrymen	27.8	27.5	36.5	35.4
From the Chief of Work	43.8	45.7	45.5	39.3
From the district, city authorities	49.2	45.9	44.3	57.3
By regional authorities	45.8	38.8	43.5	52.1
From Federal Russian government	66.8	77.8	51.5	61.3

trust. It is evident in the regular holding of sociological forums organized by representatives of the Tyumen Regional Duma and the scientific community of the region.

The relationship of trust and responsibility clearly manifests itself in the question of how much the improvement of our life depends on the individual, close relatives, and friends, as well as on the institutions of power (Table 6).

The second and last lines of the Table 6 indicate significant influence the federal government has on the life of Russian citizens, almost equal to the influence which respondents' close relatives have.

Sociologist L. D. Gudkov said that low interpersonal trust in our country “correlates with a low level of acceptance of individual responsibility, civic solidarity, distrust for politics or public life, alienation, and distancing oneself from the politics” [2, p. 17]. Based on the evidence presented, his statement seems valid.

At the same time, recognizing how dependent people are on their own efforts, close relatives, and leaders at different levels, increases both trust and responsibility.

### CONCLUSION

New challenges to the development of society, caused by the transition to systemic modernization, require

strengthening the social partnership based on trust and responsibility to establish constructive public policy. Studies on civil society issues in the Central Black region show a trend towards activating the citizens' position in upholding their rights, as well as in helping vulnerable categories of the population. In some Russian regions, practical steps are planned for building a society of solidarity.

The issue of developing strategic trust at different levels of self-organization is an increasingly relevant topic in Russia. E. Uslander defines this kind of trust as faith in a particular person, arising from our knowledge of him and our past experience [11]. In the post-Soviet society, researchers record a generally negative balance between trust and mistrust. At the same time, a positive image of the future and trust should become the basic tools for the development of Russian regions. A conceptually designed image of the desired future in combination with strategic trust forms a reliable foundation for territorial development.

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## НАУЧНАЯ СТАТЬЯ

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**Доверие и ответственность в региональном измерении**

Евгения Анатольевна Когай

доктор философских наук, профессор,  
заведующая кафедрой социологии,  
Курский государственный университет (г. Курск, РФ)  
ORCID: 0000-0002-2950-5710  
eakogay@mail.ru

**Аннотация.** В статье рассматриваются доверие и ответственность как неотъемлемые составляющие формирования устойчивого общества и реализации модернизационных процессов в современной России. Цель настоящей статьи заключается в исследовании формирования стратегического доверия на разных уровнях самоорганизации территориальных сообществ, которое приобретает в современной России все большее значение. Авторы изучают проблему взаимосвязи концепций доверия и ответственности, раскрывают тенденции в динамике доверительных отношений в России и ее отдельных регионах. Статья опирается на результаты компаративных социокультурных исследований, проведенных по сопоставимой методике в Курской (2016 г.), Томской (2015 г.) и Тюменской (2016 г.) областях, а также в России в целом (2015 г.). На основе сравнительного анализа результатов социологических исследований представлены характеристики институционального и межличностного доверия. Отмечается, что новые вызовы развитию общества, связанные с задачами перехода к системной модернизации, создают повышенную потребность в укреплении социального партнерства и формировании качественной и конструктивной государственной политики. В статье показана тенденция активизации позиции граждан в защите своих прав, а также в оказании помощи уязвимым категориям населения. Сформулированы практические рекомендации для отдельных регионов на пути создания солидарного общества.

**Ключевые слова:** доверие, ответственность, вызовы развитию общества, территориальные сообщества, самоорганизация, стратегическое доверие.

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