



Russian Federation

- Population: 142.5 million
- GDP per capita (in US dollars): 12,735
- Presidential regime with a federal organization
- Human development index (HDI): 0.798 (50th rank among 187 countries)
- Gender inequality index (GII): 0.276 (54th rank among 147 countries)
- Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI): Score of 29 on a scale from 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean)

- No official national statistics on prostitution.
- Unofficial statistics: 3 million prostituted persons in Russian Federation (*The Moscow Times*, August 26th, 2015).
- Increase in sexual exploitation since the fall of the Soviet Union.
- Prostitution and human trafficking illegal, but the purchase of sexual service is legal.
- Prohibitionist regime. Current legislation prohibits prostitution and procuring, the clients remain unpunished.
- Human trafficking is punishable with 10 years imprisonment. But its legal definition is not sufficiently precise.
- Russian government is lacking in initiatives to prevent sexual exploitation and help victims.
- Very few convictions in comparison with the size of the problem.
- Trafficking routes from Russian Federation: 'Baltic' through Lithuania to Europe and USA, 'Caucasus' through Georgia to Turkey, Greece, and Italy, 'Middle Eastern' through Egypt to Israel and other Middle Eastern countries, and 'Asian' through Northern China (*CARIM*, May 2013).
- Huge problem with human trafficking for purposes of exploitation, along with child prostitution and sex tourism.
- Country of origin, transit, and destination for sexual exploitation
- Most victims from post-Soviet States, Southeast Asia, and Africa (*U.S. Department of State*, July 2015).

According to the 2015 U.S. Department of State Report on Trafficking in Persons, the Russian Federation is ranked as Tier 3, the lowest ranking in the report. The Russian

Federation, along with China and Uzbekistan, was downgraded from the Watch List of Tier 2 in 2013 as it became clear that the government was not taking adequate measures to combat this problem (*The Washington Post*, June 23rd, 2013). Russian Federation is an origin, a transit and destination country for human trafficking. Government corruption has only worsened this problem to a point where victims feel that there is nowhere for them to seek help. There are many corrupt businesses and officials that may provide fake documents for victims or act as fronts for human trafficking. There are a number of businesses fronting as tourism agencies to avoid suspicion from the authorities. Human trafficking has become such a large industry that it is evident it could not survive without “complicity with Russian authorities” (*Tulane Journal of International Affairs*, 2012).

Sex trafficking and forced prostitution of women and children have been increasing in the Russian Federation since the fall of the Soviet Union. Societal and economic changes brought about a new attitude and demand for sexual services. In his study on human trafficking in the Russian Federation, Dr. Vladimir Mukomel described that “poverty, scarcity of employment, and degradation of social security institutions were forcing individuals into risky behavior and careless actions, including consent to exploitation and slave labor conditions” (*CARIM*, 2013). He also explained that some progress was made in the early 2000s with the signing of the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. This resulted in the implementation of laws to prevent human trafficking, but, since then, the government has not efficiently used resources to carry out their purpose. With many women in poverty and unable to find work because of their gender, a number have had to resort to selling their bodies to help support themselves and their families.

Legislation and Convictions

Prostitution is illegal under Article 6.11 of the Code of Administrative Offences of the Russian Federation. Prostituted persons can be charged with fines of 1,500 to 2,000 RUB (20 to 27 US\$/18 to 24 €). In 2014, more than 9,000 fines were imposed on prostituted persons (*The Moscow Times*, August 26th, 2015). It is not considered a serious offense, but this arrest can prevent victims from ever escaping this trafficking and finding new jobs. The purchase of sexual services is not illegal, giving clients much control over prostituted persons. Because of this, there is very little that the exploited can do to protect themselves. Prostituted persons are stigmatized by society as criminals and often mistreated by the law enforcement, even if they are victims of human trafficking. This law greatly hurts vulnerable people that have been forced into prostituting themselves to survive.

In general there has been little effort to try and convict clients of sexual services, but in 2014 a municipal lawmaker in Saint Petersburg, Olga Galkina, drafted a bill that would impose heavy fines on clients of prostituted persons. This would create fines of between 4,000 RUB and 100,000 RUB (53 US\$-1,324 US\$/49 €-1,221 €) or from five to 15 days of imprisonment. This bill also included an interesting addition, if a client agreed to marry the prostituted person, the charges would be dropped (*RT-TV-Novosti*, October 27th, 2014). This bill did not pass, but it shows at least some effort to stop sexual exploitation in the Russian Federation.

Forced prostitution, procuring, and human trafficking for sexual exploitation are all illegal under the Russian Criminal Code (Articles 127, 240, and 241). Article 127 criminalizes the illegal deprivation of liberty and is used to prosecute human trafficking. This law has been criticized for being too vague and allowing traffickers to avoid sentencing. There is not a clear definition of what it means to be ‘exploited’ (*Tulane Journal of International Affairs*, 2012). Article 240 makes forced prostitution and organized prostitution illegal. Article 241 stops brothels or the “organization of hangouts for prostitution”. Each of these laws included punishments of fines and/or imprisonment of varying degrees, depending on the circumstances. These laws initially seem to be acceptable, but they are not always enforced and government officials have been known to accept bribes or even facilitate these practices. There are large gaps in the legislation, making it much harder to prosecute traffickers and abusers (*Tulane Journal of International Affairs*, 2012).

Human trafficking is a growing issue in the Russian Federation. Despite its increase over the past decade, there have been fewer and fewer convictions in recent years. The size of the problem does not correlate to the registered number of trafficking victims and the Russian government does not appear to be making an effort to correct this inadequacy. In 2014, three potential sex trafficking suspects were investigated by the government, compared to 15 in 2013 and 17 in 2012. A total of 14 traffickers were convicted in 2014 compared to 18 in 2013 and 22 in 2012 (*U.S. Department of State*, July 2015). It is evident that prosecutions are decreasing even while trafficking numbers have increased. These numbers are unacceptable and significantly contributed to Russia’s ranking downgrade in the U.S. Department of State Report on Trafficking in Persons.

The Victims of Sexual Exploitation

There are many profiles of victims of sexual exploitation in the Russian Federation. The most common groups at risk are young, uneducated women, unemployed people, poor people, immigrants, and children from disadvantaged families (*CARIM*, 2013).

Different regions of the Russian Federation have varying backgrounds for the most common prostituted persons. For example, in Kazan, most prostituted persons are single mothers, in Tomsk many are students paying for their education, and in Novosibirsk and Barnaul the women are most often drug addicts. Foreign victims usually come from post-Soviet states, Southeast Asia, and Africa. Over 80% of these victims are women and children, adding up to the hundreds of thousands of prostituted persons in the Russian Federation (*Tiurukanova*, 2006).

There has been a growing wage gap in CIS countries and Russian Federation’s economy has been lagging behind other developed countries, creating more poverty. Even though earning a living from prostitution is illegal, it is very hard for women, particularly single mothers, to find good paying jobs because of antiquated societal views of women in the Russian Federation. Prostitution is “an attempt at self-preservation in the Russian Federation: it is used to try to solve income problems and consequently to provide for families” (*Barents Studies: People, Economies and Studies*, 2014). Victims do not usually come from cities, but move there to find work and find themselves becoming sexually exploited. Women and children are usually from abusive families that they are trying to escape, but they find

themselves back in oppressive situations because of their vulnerability. The Putin Administration's initiative to ban U.S. adoption of Russian orphans has left more children vulnerable to trafficking (*The Washington Post*, June 23rd, 2013).

Sexually exploited victims in the Russian Federation experience many hardships outside from the scaring activity of prostitution. Prostituted persons in the Russian Federation are often subject to violence. Because their practice is illegal, they cannot turn to law enforcement if they are abused. There have been many cases of police violence against prostituted persons as well. Because prostitution is condemned by society, police consider abuse of prostituted persons to be acceptable. It is not uncommon for prostituted persons to be extorted or robbed by police officers (*The Moscow Times*, August 26th, 2015). They commonly develop a character of distrust and fear, thus causing even further psychological damage. The lack of hope that comes from being controlled and abused with no way out is incredibly damaging for these women (*Tulane Journal of International Affairs*, 2012).

Since the 1970s, the HIV/AIDS epidemic has been increasing in the Russian Federation. There is very little education supplied to the public to prevent STDs and prostituted persons are very likely to contract them from clients and spread them further through sex tourism and trafficking. Some clients also refuse to use protection, and prostituted persons have no choice but to comply. Finally, they very often develop drug addictions; either they start taking drugs and prostitute themselves to pay for their addiction, or they turn to drugs to cope with the difficulties of their lives. Women in this practice learn not to care about their safety and do not seem to worry about the dangers of hard drug use (*The Moscow Times*, August 26th, 2015).

The Varying Forms of Sexual Exploitation in the Russian Federation

Tens of thousands of people enter the Russian Federation every year through human trafficking. This phenomenon not only violates human rights, but also creates a national security issue for the country. Due to migration as well as human trafficking there are between five and 12 million foreign workers in the country and it is estimated that as many as 20% of them have been sexually exploited (*U.S. Department of State*, July 2015). The economic development in the 2000s increased the demand for prostituted persons, and traffickers responded quickly with increased supply. Women were promised jobs or education in Moscow but were recruited into prostitution agencies instead (*CNN*, July 18th, 2008). Because there is no visa requirement among the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the women and children from these countries are the most common victims. Vulnerable people can be trafficked across these borders in absence of any regulation.

Russian Federation does not take a victim-centered approach to stopping human trafficking and often punishes victims for crimes that they commit while being exploited. There are cases of officials deporting victims rather than investigating or prosecuting their traffickers. The Federal Migration Service (FMS) is not allowed to investigate suspected trafficking cases; consequently, they have no choice but to deport victims (*U.S. Department of State*, July 2015). If these victims are not deported, they are often returned directly to their traffickers, resulting in further vulnerability and abuse (*Tulane Journal of International Affairs*, 2012).

Russian women are also commonly exploited in foreign countries. Fake advertisements and internet sites for better jobs can entice women into trafficking networks that they can never escape. Many victims reported that they were misinformed about their purpose of being taken abroad. They were often offered jobs as dancers, waitresses, models, housemaids, or nannies (*Tiurukanova, 2006*). Once abroad, their documents were taken away and they found themselves forced into the sex industry. Because they travelled willingly and legally, it is very difficult to prove and prevent these scams.

The Russian Federation is experiencing the issue of a declining population, and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has reported that between 30,000 and 60,000 women and children are trafficked into prostitution each year and over the last two decades more than 500,000 women have been sold from the Russian Federation and sent to other countries (*CARIM, May 2013*). Sex tourism is very popular in the Russian Federation, especially in cities such as Saint Petersburg and Moscow. Tourists come from all over the world because they know that it is not illegal for them to purchase sexual services there. There are also many websites advertising Russian women and promoting this practice. Sexual exploitation of children in the Russian Federation has also become more frequent. Since the 1990's child pornography has become more commonly produced in the Russian Federation. Today more than half of all child pornography websites worldwide are Russian (*Tiurukanova, 2006*). These children usually come from abusive backgrounds and are trying to escape their parents. Once involved in the sex industry they are encouraged to drink alcohol or take drugs, making them easier to control. As the HIV/AIDS epidemic increased through the 1990's, sexual services from minors became more popular as people viewed them as less likely to have STDs. As a result, a majority of prostituted persons infected by HIV/AIDS now are younger than 30 (*Tiurukanova, 2006*).

Sochi Olympic Games

The 2014 Olympic Games in Sochi involved human trafficking in much of its construction. Many of the workers were trafficked from CIS countries and exploited in the Russian Federation. There was a very large number of human rights violations that occurred during the creation of the most expensive Olympic Games to date. The worry about being ready for the Games overshadowed any concern for human rights (*TakePart, February 7th, 2014*). In general, there are already large imports of prostituted persons for sporting games. Even though prostitution was supposedly not allowed in the Olympic Village, the purchase of sexual services was still frequent. The Games were also used by sex traffickers as a way to attract foreign women into their network. An American sports reporter was actually recruited into a very convincing sex trafficking scheme. Brittney Cason was told that she was being hired to be a broadcaster for a major news network at the Sochi Olympics and only realized days before she was supposed to leave that the entire process had been a scam to recruit her into sex trafficking (*Business Insider, February 25th, 2014*). It is certain that many other women experienced similar schemes and were not lucky enough to make it out in time.

Implemented Initiatives

The Russian government has made very little effort to combat sexual exploitation other than creating laws against forced prostitution and human trafficking. Additionally, they have not helped increase awareness or prevention efforts, and there is close to no funding for aid programs for victims. They have neither a National Coordinator for human trafficking nor a national action plan. There is no system for identifying victims or a basic law defining victims' rights (*CNN*, July 18th, 2008). There is some training for authorities on how to handle human trafficking, but it was not used in 2014. Most often, foreign victims are deported rather than receiving help. Even though Russian Federation was involved and agreed upon the CIS Anti-Trafficking Plan, they have not yet implemented it and have not shown sufficient evidence that they will any time soon (*U.S. Department of State*, July 2015). On the whole, the Russian system on sexual exploitation is completely inadequate.

Most of the aid for victims comes from NGOs such as the Angel Coalition, an organization that provides counseling, victim assistance, and rehabilitation programs in Moscow (*Tulane Journal of International Affairs*, 2012). However, the government does not seem to be willing to work with these organizations and the NGOs often work in fear of being shut down. Because of this, most NGOs only work to raise awareness rather than directly working with victims. Putin's administration has actually been harmful to nonprofits trying to help victims (*The Washington Post*, June 23rd, 2013). An international organization reported that they were only able to identify and help 170 trafficking victims. Considering the extent of the problem in the Russian Federation, this number is quite low and probably due to a lack of cooperation from the government. During 2014, one of the only programs that had help from Russian authorities was a Russian Red Cross that gave shelter to trafficking victims with aid from the Saint Petersburg municipal government (*U.S. Department of State*, July 2015).

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, the number of victims of sexual exploitation has been increasing. In the last few years this trend has continued and become even graver. This is evident by its downgrade from the Tier 2 Watch List to Tier 3 in the U.S. Department of State Report on Trafficking in Persons. In the recent economic crisis, the lives of prostituted persons have become even more difficult. They have had to raise their rates by 30-40% to counter inflation and the decreased demand (*CNBC*, December 4th, 2014). In the future, the Russian government needs to make a huge change in how they handle sexual exploitation. They must develop a national action plan, create a budget, use training programs for authorities, have better coordination among government programs and NGOs, increase awareness for the issues, and provide aid for victims. On the whole, the entire system needs to be reorganized and the Russian government needs to make the effort to help these thousands of victims.

Sources

- « Clients must marry prostitutes or face jail – St Pete deputy », *RT TV-Novosti*, October 27th, 2014.

- « Russia, China continue to allow human trafficking », *The Washington Post*, June 23rd, 2013.
- « Russian Inflation: Now prostitutes raise rates », *CNBC*, December 4th, 2014.
- Chance M., « Russia's Sex Slave Industry Thrives, Rights Groups Say », *CNN*, July 18th, 2008.
- CRIDES/Fondation Scelles, *Revue de l'actualité internationale de la prostitution*, 2013.
- CRIDES/Fondation Scelles, *Revue de l'actualité internationale de la prostitution*, 2014.
- Gaines C., « Female Broadcaster: 'I almost became a victim of human trafficking at the Sochi Olympics' », *Business Insider*, February 25th, 2014.
- Ivakhnyuk I., Ionstev V., *Human Trafficking: Russia*, Consortium for Applied Research on International Migration (CARIM East), CARIM-East Explanatory Note 2013/55, May 2013.
- Litvinova D., « Amnesty International Highlights Russia's Prostitution Problem », *The Moscow Times*, August 26th, 2015.
- Mazur L., « Human Trafficking in the Russian Federation », *Tulane Journal of International Affairs*, Vol.1, no.2, 2012.
- Mukomel V., *Combating Human Trafficking: The Russian Federation*, Consortium for Applied Research on International Migration (CARIM East), CARIM-East Explanatory Note 2013/30, 2013.
- Parvini S., « Is there a link between Major Sports Events and Sex Trafficking », *TakePart*, February 7th, 2014.
- Skaffari P., Väyrynen S., « Prostitution as a Social Issue: The Experiences of Russian Women Prostitutes in the Barents Region », *Barents Studies: People, Economies and Studies*, Vol.1, Issue 1, 2014.
- Tiurukanova E.V., *Human Trafficking in the Russian Federation: Inventory and Analysis of the Current Situation and Responses*, Institute for Urban Economics for the UNI/IOM Working Group on 'Trafficking in Human Beings', UNICEF, ILO, CIDA, Moscow, 2006.
- U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report*, June 2014.
- U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report*, July 2015.