Russian Elites on Interpersonal Trust: Interview Evidence

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TRUST

2 of the 3 GSS standard questions on trust:

Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful dealing with people?

Do you think most people would try to take advantage of you, or would they try to be fair?

350 structured & open-ended in-depth interviews with Russian elites

4 wealthy regions --- 4 poor regions --- Moscow (nat/cap level)

QUESTIONS

- **What do elites understand by 'trust' and 'other people'?**

- **How big is their radius of 'most people'?**

- **Do elites answer the trust questions as professionals or ordinary citizens?**

- **Are questions answered generally or by referring to personal experience?**

ANSWERS

- **Trust to some extent linked to performance, but mostly used in general terms**

- **Other people predominantly understood in three ways:**
  - <u>Generally</u>: 'people', 'the majority', 'the average person'
  - <u>Personal sphere</u>: 'people in own circle' (relatives, friends, acquaintances)
  - <u>Professional sphere</u>: 'people one deals with at work'

- **Fairly general replies to first question, more personal/professionally-based responses to the second question**

- **Continuum of trust (question 1)**

- **Some skepticism to the standard questions (black and white; provocative, unclear)**

ANSWERS (CONTINUED)

- **Some differences, wealthy and poor regions;**

- **Government officials: highest percentage believing that people are negative to their profession,**

BUT

- **(together with judges): highest percentage thinking that other people can be trusted**

- **highest percentage thinking that people are likely to be fair**

Table 1 Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful dealing with people?	Russia – total	Wealthy regions	Poor regions	Moscow
Can be trusted	41	48	37	36
Should trust – but verify	5	5	7	3
Should trust – but cautiously	5	7	6	3
Can't be too careful	28	23	28	36
Mix	13	10	15	15
Neither	1	---	1	---
Other	7	7	6	8
N=	(356)	(135)	(143)	(78)

Note: **Entries are based on the percentages of relevant 'text units' – the total number of answers to a given question; so entries sum up to approximately 100% (decimals rounded up or down to the nearest whole number).**

	Elected reps	Government officials	Judges	Prosecutors	Police	Lawyers	Univ. teachers
Table 2 Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful dealing with people? BY Category of respondents (text units in %)							
Can be trusted	39	56	59	30	28	29	39
Should trust - but verify	5	5	4	9	7	---	4
Should trust - but cautiously	5	3	10	7	9	---	---
Can't be too careful	33	23	16	27	42	52	13
Mix	13	10	8	18	7	14	24
Neither	---	---	---	2	---	---	2
Other	6	3	4	7	7	5	17
N=	(64)	(61)	(51)	(56)	(57)	(21)	(46)

Note: Entries are based on the percentages of relevant 'text units' – the total number of answers to a given question; so entries sum up to approximately 100% (decimals rounded up or down to the nearest whole number).

Table 3 Do you think most people would try to take advantage of you, or would they try to be fair?				
	Russia - total	Wealthy regions	Poor regions	Moscow
Most people would try to take advantage	33	27	31	46
Most people would try to be fair	30	35	31	20
Mix	21	24	19	19
Other	16	14	19	14
N=	(346)	(133)	(134)	(79)

Note: **Entries are based on the percentages of relevant 'text units' – the total number of answers to a given question; so entries sum up to approximately 100% (decimals rounded up or down to the nearest whole number).**

	Elected reps	Government officials	Judges	Prosecutors	Police	Lawyers	Univ. teachers
Table 4 Do you think most people would try to take advantage of you, or would they try to be fair? BY Category of respondents							
Take advantage	*40*	25	19	*33*	*45*	*50*	*31*
Be fair	22	*43*	*34*	*35*	17	25	*33*
Mix	20	25	25	18	26	5	16
Other	18	8	23	14	12	20	20
N=	(60)	(61)	(53)	(49)	(58)	(20)	(45)

Note: Entries are based on the percentages of relevant 'text units' – the total number of answers to a given question; so entries sum up to approximately 100% (decimals rounded up or down to the nearest whole number).

Thank you for your attention!

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