The Social Disposition of the Inhabitants of Tyumen Oblast in Respect of Interethnic Relations in the Region

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Abstract: The article presents the findings of a study into the public opinion on the level of interethnic tension experienced by the inhabitants of Tyumen Oblast, based on a poll conducted in early 2013. The poll surveyed 1200 respondents residing in Tyumen, Tobolsk, Yalutorovsk and Ishim, as well as the Tyumensky, Tobolsky, Yalutorovsky and Ishimsky districts and Zavodoukovsky Urban Okrug of Tyumen Oblast. The author has analyzed specific indicators characterizing interethnic relations and uncovered specific trends through an analysis of responses to the survey’s questions based on the major socio-demographic indicators (gender, age, place of residence, education, marital status, one’s own assessment of one’s personal material situation, etc.). The results of the public opinion poll have led the author to conclude that, according to the region’s inhabitants, the situation with regard to interethnic relations in Tyumen Oblast is more stable and trouble-free than across Russia at large.

Key words: Tyumen Oblast • Ethnicity • Interethnic tension • Interethnic relations • Traditions • Tolerance

INTRODUCTION

One of the key characteristics of Tyumen Oblast is, as is the case with Russia’s many other regions, its polyethnicity. The region’s largest ethnicities are Russians, Tatars and Ukrainians. According to the 2010 all-Russian population census, the region is home to over 143 nationalities and ethnic groups [1].

To determine the levels of interethnic tension with the inhabitants of Tyumen Oblast, a public opinion poll was conducted in early 2013, which surveyed 1200 respondents. In this sample, 43.8% were male and 56.2% female respondents residing in Tyumen, Tobolsk, Yalutorovsk and Ishim, as well as the Tyumensky, Tobolsky, Yalutorovsky and Ishimsky districts and Zavodoukovsky Urban Okrug of Tyumen Oblast.

The respondents’ answers to the question ‘What feelings does your belonging to your ethnicity evoke in you?’ were taken as the indicator characterizing interethnic relations in the region [2]. Just over half of the respondents (64.1%) stated they were proud to be part of their ethnicity; around a third of the respondents (31.4%) confessed they were not particularly preoccupied with it; 4.5% of the respondents said they preferred to conceal or would rather not talk about their ethnicity. These indicators haven’t changed noticeably over the last half a year.

The analysis of responses to the question about what feelings one’s belonging to one’s ethnicity evoked in one depending on particular socio-demographic indicators (education, marital status, place of residence, occupation, type of marriage (intraethnic or interethnic)) didn’t reveal any significant patterns. The emotional overtone was observed in the responses of women, married respondents and those aged 18-29. These respondents in their answers more often than the rest confessed to their belonging to a particular ethnicity as “being proud of it”, “being not particularly preoccupied with it” and “being inclined to conceal or not to talk about it”. A significant trend was revealed in the respondents’ answers to the same question based on which faith they followed. The respondents who followed Judaism (100%), Islam (70.2%) and Orthodox Christianity (67.0%) evinced pride in their ethnicity. The respondents who called themselves Atheists (48.6%) and those who considered themselves as not following any particular faith (40.7%) had no special feelings about it.
The study’s findings revealed that the majority of the respondents (84.0-100.0% of all the respondents) said they considered their language to be their native tongue. One’s national language was specified as one’s native tongue by all the Armenians, Azerbaijanis, Georgians, Kyrgyzians, Uzbeks, Tajiks, Chechens and some others. The Bashkirs, Tatars, Kazakhis and Ukrainians specified two languages as their native tongues (one’s mother tongue and Russian). Our studies do not confirm the apprehensions of Russian sociologists about the weakening of the functional role of native tongues amid the diversity of ethnicities and ethnic groups in the territory of Tyumen Oblast with the Russian speaking population dominating the region.

The 2013 poll revealed that the share of the respondents who try to or “definitely” uphold their national traditions in daily life was 65.0%. This said, the share of the respondents who adhered to their national traditions depending “on the situation” was 21.2%; 9.2% of all the respondents said they did not uphold the traditions of their people.

At the beginning of 2013, it was found that the majority of the respondents who said they “definitely” or “by and large” uphold the traditions of their people resided in Tobol and Tobolsky District (71.8 and 70.0% respectively) and Tyumen (67.5%). It was found that the respondents residing in Yalutorovsk and Yalutorovsky Municipal Okrug and Ishim and Ishimsky Municipal Okrug predominated as those who did not uphold their people’s traditions in daily life.

The author has revealed a link between one’s gender and educational background and the way one upholds one’s people’s traditions in daily life. Women more often than men uphold their people’s traditions in daily life and vice versa. The higher the level of one’s education, the more often one admits to upholding one’s people’s traditions in daily life and vice versa. If among the respondents who have received a primary education, every third (30.0%) upholds the traditions (40.0% do not), among the respondents with a specialized secondary education 66.7% and among those with a higher education 69.0% do uphold the traditions (9.9% do not).

One’s professional occupation has no significant impact on one’s decision as to whether to uphold or not one’s people’s traditions: 55 to 68% of the respondents try to uphold their people’s traditions in daily life.

A correlation was detected in analyzing responses to the same question based on one’s marital status as well: three-fourths of widows/widowers “definitely” or “by and large” uphold their people’s traditions in daily life. Among those married 68.0% and among those single just 60.0% uphold the traditions.

There is a link between one’s assessment of one’s material situation and one’s decision as to whether to uphold or not one’s people’s traditions as well. Those less well-off are more inclined to uphold their people’s traditions in daily life than those more well-off. Among those who do uphold their people’s traditions in daily life “definitely” or “by and large”, there were three-fourths of the respondents who said they “hardly make ends meet”, while those who said they “can afford to buy expensive things” constituted 62.3%.

The respondents in an intraethnic marriage uphold their people’s traditions more often than those in an interethnic marriage (67.4 and 63.5% respectively). The older the respondents, the more often they uphold their people’s traditions in daily life: among those aged 18-29 61.4% do, while among those aged 50-59 – 69.2%. Three-fourths of the religious respondents “definitely” or “by and large” uphold their people’s traditions in daily life, while there are twice as fewer Atheists who do – 37.3%.

The study revealed that one’s national identity has a considerable effect on one’s decision as to whether uphold or not one’s people’s traditions [3]. Practically all the respondents who came to Tyumen Oblast from the republics of the Caucasus and Middle Asia, fully abide by their people’s traditions. With the region’s indigenous inhabitants (Tatars, Kazakhis, Bashkirs), the number is lower.

Next, the respondents were invited to assess the current situation in respect of interethnic relations in Russia at large and Tyumen Oblast in particular. About half of the respondents said they saw the interethnic situation as quiet in Russia at large, while 60.5% of the respondents found it to be quiet in Tyumen Oblast. Table 1 demonstrates that the respondents found the situation across Russia to be tenser than that in Tyumen Oblast. Apparently, the reason behind the majority’s worries about the interethnic situation across Russia and the region is, primarily, the unabated increase in migration flows.

A positive appraisal (the situation is absolutely quiet) of the interethnic situation in Tyumen Oblast was more often given by the respondents residing in Ishimsky District (66.7%), Yalutorovsky District (68.9%) and Tyumen (70.5%). For instance, in Tobolsk this opinion was voiced by 33% of the respondents. A negative
Table 1: Respondent assessments of the current situation in respect of interethnic relations in Tyumen Oblast and in Russia at large, in % of the total number of the respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents’ appraisals</th>
<th>In Russia at large</th>
<th>In Tyumen Oblast</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The situation is absolutely quiet</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relatively quiet</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>44.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is some tension</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>23.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The situation is tense</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The situation is highly tense</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have trouble responding or have no answer</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

appraisal is given by every fifth respondent residing in Tobolsk and the Tobolsky and Yalutorovsky municipal district.

The older the respondents, the more often they call the situation quiet. If among those aged 18 to 29 over half of the respondents (60.7%) called the interethnic situation quiet, the opinion was shared by three-fourths of those aged 50-59 (78.6%). A negative appraisal, as has been noted above, was given by young people aged 18-29 (17.1%). For comparison, only 3.2% of those aged 50-59 thought this way.

The situation was found absolutely quiet by the respondents with an incomplete secondary, secondary and specialized secondary education (71.1; 75.9; 71.7% respectively). Every third respondent with a primary education or no education said the situation was tense (30.0%).

There was revealed no positive correlation between one’s gender, marital status, assessment of one’s material situation and type of marriage (interethnic or intraethnic) and one’s appraisal of the interethnic situation. In this regard, a negative appraisal was detected in the responses of 15.2% of men, 13.2% of those single and 15.1% of those in an interethnic marriage.

The prolonged residence of representatives of various ethnicities in the territory of Tyumen Oblast, their active interethnic interaction in the socio-economic, ethnocultural and other areas have led to that many Tyumenians, while preferring the mode of life of their own people, approach the culture, traditions and customs of other peoples with great interest [4]. Therefore, many of the region’s inhabitants are prepared to embrace ethnic diversity and tolerant interethnic interactions, which, in essence, is the primary reason behind the stability of the interethnic situation in Tyumen Oblast. That said, a negative appraisal of the situation in Russia in the public consciousness of Tyumenians is an effect of their belief in Tyumen Oblast as one of the most trouble-free regions. Nevertheless, a fourth of the respondents do not have confidence in the stability of the interethnic situation.

The respondents who found the interethnic situation tense were invited to name the reasons behind this appraisal. Out of the 1200 respondents, 304 pointed up the instability of the interethnic situation. Table 2 lists the opinions of these respondents on the causes behind the tenseness of the interethnic situation in Tyumen Oblast. An analysis of these responses leads us to conclude that the respondents competently assess the current situation and correctly identify the sources and causes behind the interethnic tension in the region:

- The prevalence of migrants and foreign manpower from the republics of the Caucasus and Middle Asia on the labor market.
- High “non-Russky” population growth rates.
- Non-compliance with common rules of conduct on the part of aliens.
- Enmity and intolerance towards representatives of other ethnicities.
- Differences in the culture of conduct, character and mode of life of representatives of different ethnicities.
- Ineffective control and regulation of migrants’ labor behavior.
- The promotion of interethnic enmity on the part of the media and TV.

Note that the respondents were allowed not to necessarily pick the tension causes from a prepared list of variants and were permitted to state their own opinions.

It should be noted that major causes in the poll’s list matched those named by respondents in the polls for the inhabitants of Tyumen Oblast, which were conducted by regional sociologists over the period of 2003-2013 [1, 2].

No understanding between representatives of different ethnicities can be attained so long as they have a poor notion of each other [5]. Misunderstanding breeds contempt, leads to confrontation and interethnic conflicts [6]. The emergence and augmentation of tension and conflictogenicity in the process of development of interethnic relations is a reaction to attempts at clamping
Table 2: Respondent appraisals of the degree of animosity experienced towards oneself and felt towards representatives of other ethnicities, in % of the total number of respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appraisal</th>
<th>Towards oneself on the part of representatives of other ethnicities</th>
<th>Towards representatives of other ethnicities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very often</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quite often</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>32.9%</td>
<td>34.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never/practically never</td>
<td>42.7%</td>
<td>37.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have trouble answering or have no answer</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

down on the ethnic rights and interests of representatives of a particular ethnicity [7, 8]. The next question helped reveal whether the respondents had ever been part of interethnic conflicts or experienced oppression based on ethnic identity. The analysis of the responses revealed that every second respondent had never been part of interethnic conflicts or experienced oppression based on ethnic identity. An opposite opinion (have been in that situation) was voiced by a little over a third of the respondents.

For comparison, we’ll take a look at responses to a similar question, which were obtained in the polls mentioned above. The findings of the 2010 poll confirmed the supposition that Tyumen Oblast is the most trouble-free region, which is home to numerous ethnicities living comfortably next to each other.

To the question ‘How often do you experience infringement on the rights or oppression of representatives of different ethnicities, denominations, convictions, etc.?’, two-thirds of the respondents responded positively: have experienced often – 19.5%, rarely – 49.1%. A contrary opinion was (have not experienced) voiced by one in five respondents. That said, the same number of the respondents had trouble responding to the question.

Feeling animosity towards representatives of other ethnicities or feeling it towards oneself is an important indicator characterizing the current state of interethnic relations [8, 9]. It was revealed that 42.7% of the respondents had virtually never experienced animosity towards themselves on the part of other ethnicities. 37.6% said they didn’t feel animosity towards representatives of other ethnicities (Table 2).

Males twice as often as females admit to having experienced animosity towards themselves on the part of representatives of a different ethnicity (18.5 and 10.1% respectively). The respondents aged 18 to 39 more often than others confessed to feeling animosity towards themselves on the part of representatives of a different ethnicity. Almost three-fourths of the respondents with no education or with a primary education (70.0%) very often felt animosity on the part of representatives of a different ethnicity. Every second respondent with a specialized secondary, higher, or unfinished higher education had a contrary opinion (felt no animosity).

The analysis of responses to the same question based on one’s professional occupation revealed that a third of service-members and policemen, a fourth of high- and medium-skilled workers and every fifth worker felt animosity on the part of representatives of a different ethnicity. At the same time, every second authority-holding worker and high- and medium-skilled employee did not feel animosity on the part of representatives of other ethnicities.

The study revealed a link between one’s material situation and what attitude towards oneself one feels on the part of representatives of other ethnicities: less well-off respondents more often feel animosity on the part of representatives of other ethnicities and vice versa.

The findings of the public opinion poll lead us to conclude that the interethnic situation in Tyumen Oblast, according to the opinions of the region’s inhabitants, is more trouble-free and more stable than that across Russia at large. Although there is a little negativity in the public opinion on the interethnic situation in the region (not without some impact from the situation across Russia at large), we observe no real ethnic discord in the region whose population is multiethnic in its composition.

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