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# Assessment of the Significance of the Level and Quality of Life of the Population in Russia

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## ABSTRACT

It is necessary to identify the national features of development in Russia to establish appropriate methods, in view of the different approaches to the analysis and modelling of the standard of living and quality of life of the population in various countries and international integration associations. This article analyzes the practical aspects of the most significant areas of interaction and development groups of indicators of standard of living and quality of life in the Russian Federation. The study used a systematic approach and statistical methods. The groups of indicators of quality of life summarized by the author were compiled on the basis of normative legal acts and expert documents: material well-being, healthcare, education, environment, self-perception, power. The content analysis was conducted of open-source commentaries on the issue of representation of a "better life" to determine key problems and propensities. The most and least pronounced groups of preferences among the population are identified. Differences in the opinions of Russians on the importance of groups of indicators depending on gender, age and in connection with the pandemic are demonstrated. The author has come to conclusion about necessity to take into account such variables, it is substantiated the need to make changes to the current standards for the transition to new models of the standard of living and quality of life.

**Keywords:** quality of life; standard of living; citizens' preferences; aspects of living; quality of life; groups of indicators; content analysis

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## INTRODUCTION

The end of 2021 was a very important period for the population of the CIS countries: the states adopted a unified standard that provides standards of quality of life. Despite the recommendatory nature of the 33 standards, the document mentions the budgeting of the areas under consideration.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, there were news about plans to introduce a unified quality of life standard at the national level in Russia, as every year the question was raised that they should be fixed by regulations [1].

However, do not forget that modern methodologies do not have an established benchmark of the number of indicators, as well as the areas of life that require monitoring or assessment. Different methods dictate the rules. For example, in the same CIS database security indicators are used in the analysis of living standards, but in the index of the Analytical Centre of the Russian Federation they are not.

The study of issues is necessary for the inclusion of indicators in standards of living and is not a new area of research. Features of the formation of preferences in the population are analysed with age, regional, professional, educational and other aspects.

In a number of works universal application of integrated approaches in the assessment of the level and quality of life of the population, efficiency of methods on the basis of objective indicators is highlighted [2]. Other works is written that it is impossible to make progress in the country in assessing the level and quality of life with only quantitative or economic indicators [3, 4], a symbiotic relationship between objective and subjective factors [5]. Researchers consider the influence of different areas of life on subjective well-being [6]; the importance of safety [7],

scientific and technological progress [8]; the dependence of ecology on economic development [9]; and emphasize the need for accounting and objective, and subjective indicators [10, 11].

Based on an analysis of existing methodologies, many authors have worked to identify key groups of indicators of the standard of living and quality of life of the population, highlighting sometimes unique aspects: social environment [4], human genes [12], cognitive, emotional, rational expectations [13], social capital [14], socio-economic status [15].

The study proved the importance and effectiveness of using such methods in assessing the dependence of quality of life on medicine based on data from Germany [16], confirm insignificance the weight coefficients for analysis of life satisfaction [17], provide the method of assessment of the quality and standard of living of the population with weights of each indicator and possibility of easy replacement of variables on the example of Greek municipalities [18], demonstrate INVAR<sup>2</sup> based methodologies and their capabilities [19], assess weights by interviewing and applying hierarchy analysis [20].

This article analyzes how the preferences of the population of Russia are formed when assessing the level and quality of life, taking into account the prevailing mentality.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

In order to analyze the stated problem and achieve the goal of the study, the article studies normative-legal acts,<sup>3</sup> that determine

<sup>1</sup> Decision on quality of life standards: approved by the Economic Council of the Commonwealth of Independent States on 02.12.2021. Moscow. Unified register of legal acts and other documents of the Commonwealth of Independent States. URL: <https://www.un.org/ru/universal-declaration-human-rights/index.html> (accessed on 28.01.2022).

<sup>2</sup> The method consists of 10 sequential steps where the optimization of the criteria and the selection of the best alternative.

<sup>3</sup> GOST R ISO 37120–2015. Sustainable Community Development. Indicators of urban services and quality of life. M.: Standartinform; 2015. 70 p.; Human development index in Russia: regional differences: analytical note. Analytical Center under the Government of the Russian Federation, 2021. URL: [https://ac.gov.ru/uploads/2-Publications/analitika/2022/ICR\\_2021\\_long.pdf](https://ac.gov.ru/uploads/2-Publications/analitika/2022/ICR_2021_long.pdf) (accessed on 01.02.2022).



the method of assessment of the standard of life and quality of life of the population in Russia, and necessary indicators for this purpose.<sup>4</sup>

On the basis of the online survey of the population of Russia, conducted by the OECD within the project “Better Life Index”, data on preferences and ranking of 11 main aspects of life by the degree of importance were used.<sup>5</sup> During the research for 2011–2022 years, 3400 people were interviewed.

## RESULTS

The study of the standard of living and quality of life of the population shows that these concepts are becoming deeper and cover more and more indicators. There are traditional directions of analysis developed by the UN, which includes: “material well-being”, “issues of economic inequality and meet of basic needs” (food, housing, security), and also education and health, living and working conditions, recreation and entertainment. Then we added “subjective assessments”, “financial data”, “environmental aspects”, “attitude to free time”, “innovative activity”, etc.

Thus, the following main groups of indicators (structural elements and aspects of the standard and quality of life of the population) were formed to analyse comments from the open database:

1. Material well-being (earnings, monetary success, fair remuneration, economic inequality, housing, working conditions).

2. Healthcare (health and life expectancy, health system and institutions, quality of services).

3. Education (quality of education, number of students and ready to go to university, financial literacy).

4. Environment (sense of safety for your life, environmental issues, rights and liberties).

5. Well-being (life satisfaction, availability and quality of social connections, leisure, values, the relationship between free time and work).

6. Authority (quality of public goods provided, infrastructure, corruption, control, innovation and science, stability).

About 680 user comments from 3400 were analysed through content analysis. They did not affect the main results and were not reported and therefore require review.

In the analysis of emotional reports, it was identified that 80 comments (12%) made a negative assessment of the state of living and the quality of life of the population. And only 4 comments (0.5%) can be attributed to positive: “Enough money”, “I am not afraid”, “Everything is fine”, “I am not complaining”. The rest were neutral.

The most popular problem is financial status (30% of complaints): “lack of funds for needs”, “desire to earn more”, “unfair amount of income”. In second place — “respect for human rights and freedoms” (18%), “security” (18%), as well as “prevalence of ethical values” (18%). There were complaints about “small number of civil rights”, “the place of citizens in the priority of power”, “inequality”, “adequate laws”. Among the values met: “mutual respect”, “public consciousness”, “society without aggression”. And the vast majority (more than 90%) of respondents who noted the importance of moral values and security — young people, for whom the priority of these problems is significantly higher.

Half as often people worry about infrastructure, freedom, work-vacation balance, corruption, environment. Indirect or direct dissatisfaction with power is more common: excessive control and interference with life.

Neglected is the field of science and innovation (one answer), and it is this that contributes to creating conditions for improving the quality of life of the population.

To analyze preferences, refer to the comments and see the answers to the

<sup>4</sup> International definition and measurement of levels of living: an interim guide. New York: UN; 1961. 18 p.

<sup>5</sup> OECD Better Life Index. BLI Data Services v2. URL: <https://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/bli/> (accessed on 28.01.2022).

question: “What is a better life for you?” Non-representative responses deleted (120) — sarcasm, uncertain options, for example: “living with cats”, “...happily”, “...beautiful”, “to live in a country that likes” etc. If we group the variants of answers, we see that for Russians the most important thing is “material well-being”, “safety” (basic need) and “respect for rights and liberties” — efficiency of legislative and law enforcement systems (Table 1).

As before, we refer to the following values: “equality”, “respect”, “strong family ties”. Freedom can be considered both as “value” and as “respect for rights” in the group of indicators “security”. Depending on the point of view of value we can refer to the group “well-being” or to the group “power”, and “purity of the city and products” (ecology) can be attributed to the groups of indicators — “healthcare”, “environment” and “power”. Let’s assume that these answers refer simultaneously to several groups of indicators, then we will get that the most important group — are “environment”, “well-being” and “material well-being” (Fig. 1). This is followed by “power” and “healthcare”. In last place — “education”.

Finally, on to the structure of the responses to the question on the ranking of the 11 aspects of level of the standard of living and quality of life on a scale of 0 to 5 proposed by OECD. User responses for the period 2011–2022 are presented. The following aspects:

- (a) housing conditions;
- (b) income;
- (c) work;
- (d) quality of social communication;
- (e) education;
- (f) ecology;
- (g) civil rights;
- (h) health;
- (i) satisfaction;
- (j) safety;
- (k) work-leisure balance.

Of the 3 400 responses, those that gave an equal assessment of relevance for different

Table 1

**Distribution of comments on the priority of life activities of users from Russia by group over the past 20 years**

Field of life	Number of replies
Welfare, housing	156
Respect for the rights	119
Safety	113
Healthcare	96
Carrier, work	92
Family, values	91
Satisfaction, happiness	78
Ecology, climate	67
Infrastructure, progress	63
Stability	52
Education	45
Self-realization, rest, leisure	43
Harmony in everything	39
Liberty	30

Source: calculated by the author based on the OECD. URL: <https://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/bli/>.

aspects of life were removed (270 options). It turns out that for 7–8% of Russians are important or, on the contrary, not all aspects of life are equally important. Male respondents 60% more than female.

Also excluded were the options where more than 6 aspects were given zero significance estimates and the remaining part — the same or the estimates consist of two numbers (460 options). It is assumed that respondents decided not to distribute all aspects of quality of life correctly, but simply, without thinking, gave an express analysis of the most and least preferred: “important” or “not important”. Mode and median aspects of life in these

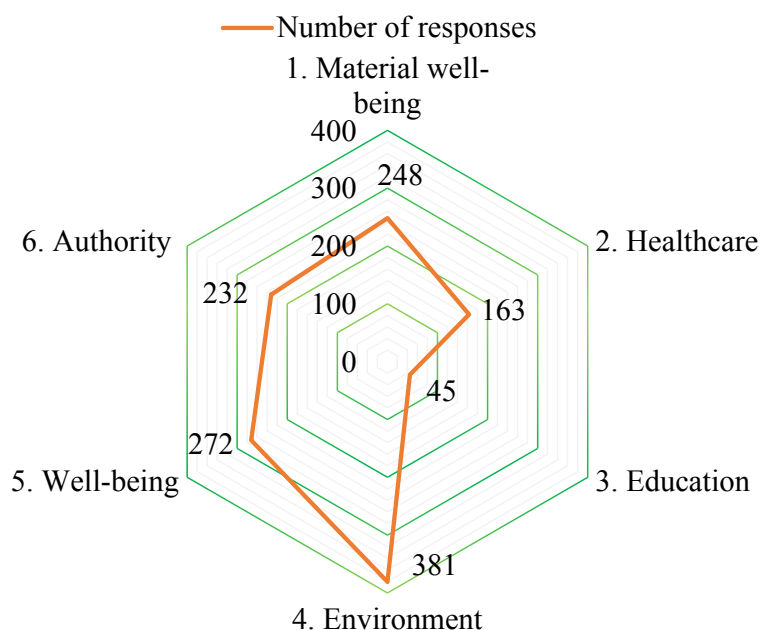


Fig. 1. The structure of the most important groups of indicators of standard of living and quality of life for the Russian population, number of responses

Source: calculated by the author based on the OECD. URL: <https://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/bli/>.

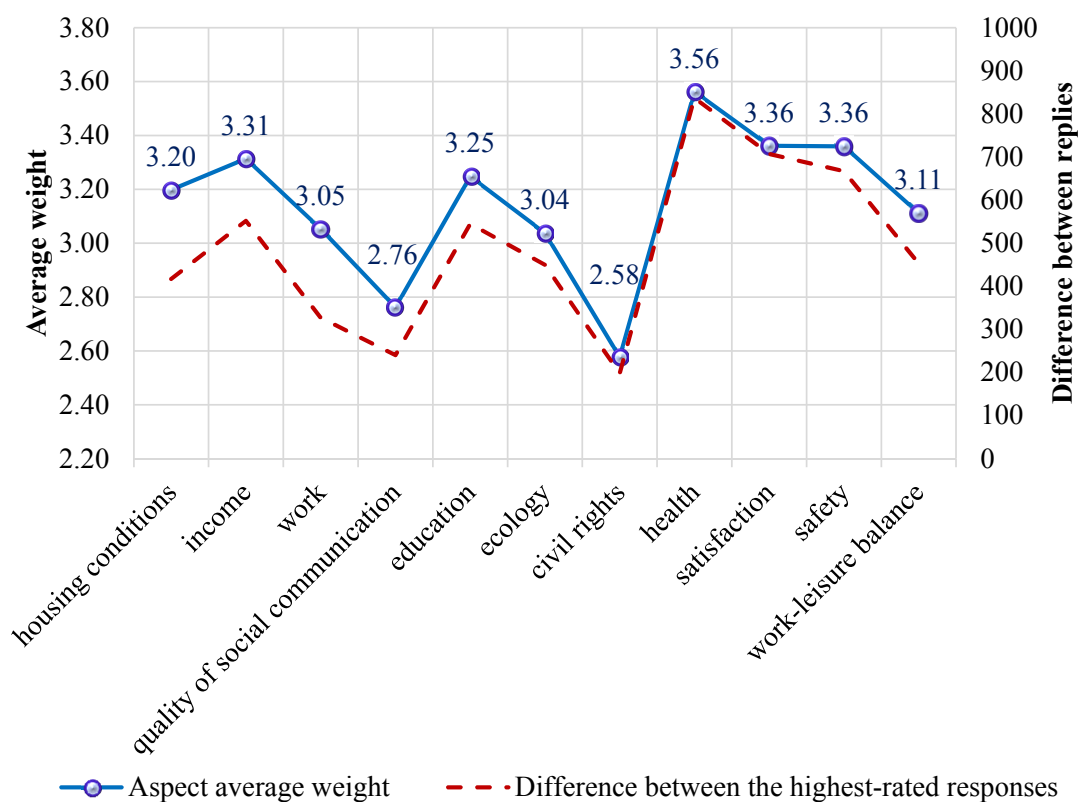
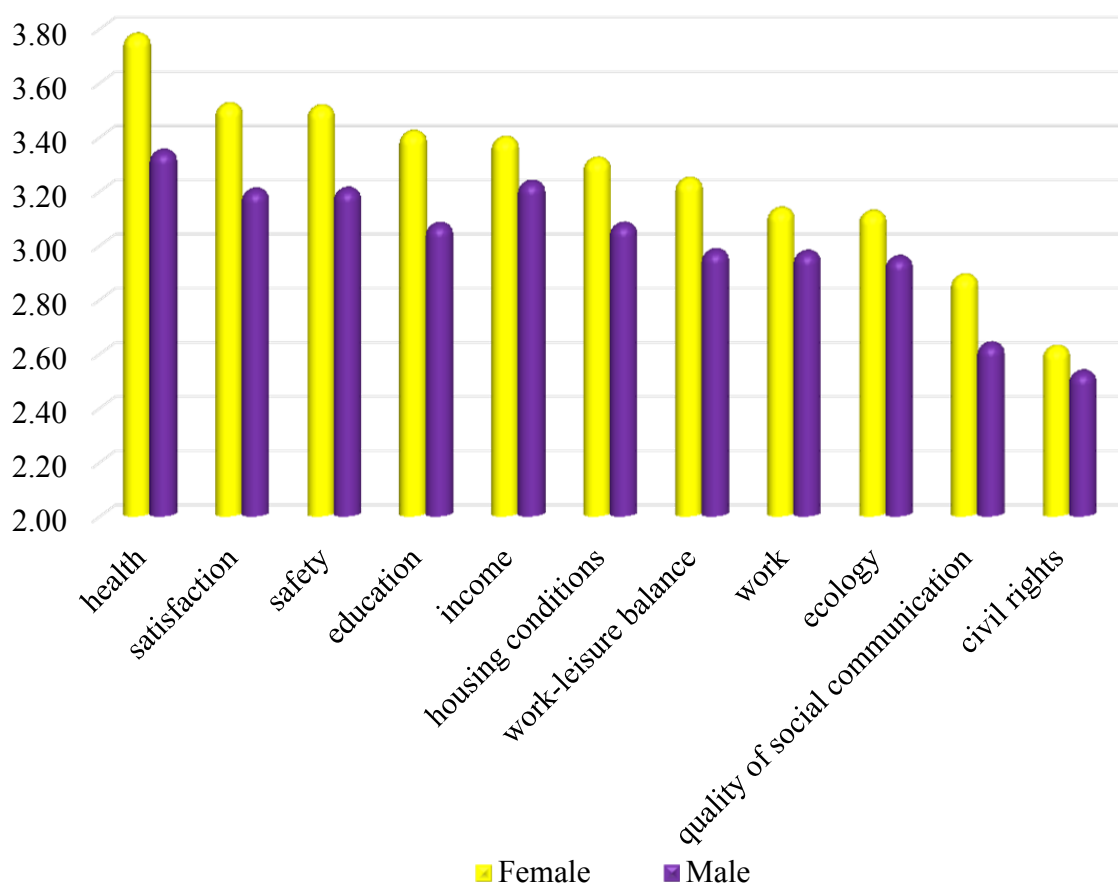


Fig. 2. The importance of standard of living and quality of life aspects for Russians on the "Better Life Index" scale, average score

Source: calculated by the author based on the OECD. URL: <https://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/bli/>.



**Fig. 3. Distribution of average indicators of the importance of aspects of the standard of living and quality of life in Russia, by sex, average score**

Source: calculated by the author based on the OECD. URL: <https://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/bli/>.

responses coincide and are 1. The most popular – “housing conditions and income”, then goes “work”, “security” and “education” with balance between “work” and “rest”. The least important are “quality of social relations” and “participation in democratic processes”. That is, everything is consistent with the data of *Table 1*, besides the education, which in this calculation is more important than satisfaction, ecology.

The remaining responses were analyzed in terms of averages in order to establish the significance of aspects of the standard and quality of life for Russia on average (*Fig. 2*). Equally divided by sex: 50% each. The most important were: “health”, “life satisfaction” and “safety”. Less important: “civil rights” as an aspect of measuring trust in government

according to OECD methodology and “quality of social relations”.

The obtained values contradict the results of content analysis: “respect for the rights” (civil rights) was the second indicator by weight, and “family and values” (quality of social relations) were more important than “ecology”, “education”, “satisfaction”. The first mismatch can be explained by the fact that the content analysis spoke not only about the trust in the Government, but also about the respect of all rights and freedoms, the effectiveness of the legislative system, and in the OECD methodologies into civil rights assessment includes such indicators as “transparency of power” and “voter activity”. They do not reflect respect for the rights of citizens or the country’s legislative system,



Table 2

**Average values of certain aspects of the standard of living and quality of life in Russia, by sex**

		Civil rights	Health	Satisfaction	Safety
Male	Mode	1	5	3	3
	Median	2	3	3	3
Female	Mode	3	5	5	5
	Median	3	4	4	4

Source: calculated by the author based on the OECD. URL: <https://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/bli/>.

Table 3

**Average values in assessing preferences for aspects of standard of living and quality of life in Russia depending on age**

Aspect	Average values change	Mode change	Median change	Is there a trend?
a	0.13	1	0	No
b	-0.55	0	0	Yes, marginally negative
c	-0.17	0	0	Yes, marginally negative
d	-0.41	0	-1	Yes, negative
e	0.07	2	0.5	No
f	-0.22	2	0	No
g	-0.28	-2	-1	Yes, marginally negative
h	-0.10	0	0	No
i	-0.35	-2	-1	Yes, negative
j	-0.53	-2	-0.5	No
k	-0.47	0	0	Yes, marginally negative

Note: (a) – housing conditions; (b) – income; (c) – work; (d) – quality of social communications; (e) – education; (f) – ecology; (g) – civil rights; (h) – health; (i) – satisfaction; (j) – safety; (k) – work-leisure balance.

Source: calculated by the author based on the OECD. URL: <https://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/bli/>.

but rather characterize civic activity. As the data show, civic activity in Russia is low (lower than the world average).<sup>6</sup> Similarly, the “quality of social relations” is measured by

the number of people who have support for their relatives, rather than the development of ethical values in society.

It is further analyzed to what extent the scores differ according to the gender of the respondent (Fig. 3). It turned out that women on average rated the importance

<sup>6</sup> International IDEA. Voter Turnout Database. URL: <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/voter-turnout> (accessed on 01.02.2022).

of each aspect for their lives 8% higher. “Education” and “health” are evaluated as the most significant: 3.42 versus 3.08 (average importance for women and men by education, respectively) and 3.78 versus 3.35 (average importance for women and men by health, respectively). Having placed in descending order of importance these aspects, we see that “incomes” in men are in 2<sup>nd</sup> place after “health”, while in women it is on 5<sup>th</sup>, after “health”, “satisfaction”, “safety” and “education”. For men, in addition to income, it is “security”, “satisfaction” and “housing conditions” that are important.

If we calculate the mode and the median for the values, we will get that the first 6 aspects and the latter have the same estimate of 3. For the remaining aspects of the assessment are changing (*Table 2*). Mode and median take into account individual differences in aspects. So, women have higher demand for decent “level of civil rights” (civic activity), “life satisfaction” and “security”.

The impact of age on preferences for groups of indicators of living standards and quality of life was also analysed (*Table 3*). Aspects that are less important with age — “quality of social communication” and “life satisfaction”. The analysis also found that in the pre-retirement and retirement age, the importance of education increases spasmodically and the importance of safety decreases. However, these conclusions are preliminary and require correction due to a small sample of data (80% of respondents are young).

There was a slight change in preferences during the pandemic: aspects such as “health” and “housing conditions” have become more important for people (average increase of 3%). Estimates of income, education and civil rights increased by 5–7%. The monetary issue overtook “satisfaction” and “safety”, taking second place after “health”. The primacy “health” failed to overtake any of the directions. This explains the small percentage increase in importance of this aspect (less than 1%): most already put “health” in the

forefront. It is assumed that the coverage of people with such opinions in the country has only slightly increased.

## DISCUSSION

The study concluded that there are different assessments of relevance for the various aspects and areas addressed in the methodologies for assessing the quality and standard of living of the population and have their own assessments of relevance. Percentage of people indifferent to the ranking and distribution of the presented indicators, small but not so small that forget the existence of such citizens. Despite the different criteria of relevance of people, the main problems are not always directly related to the areas that are most important to them: the most complaints and negative emotions on content-analysis were related to the group of indicators “income”, although “health”, “satisfaction” and “safety” on average are higher among the population of Russia.

Very few people are interested in the area of innovation, infrastructure and science, although this is necessary to improve the standard and quality of life of the population. There is a tendency to demand the development of society in terms of education of morality and ethical consciousness (“value”). Complaints often arise from discrimination, lack of respect for rights and freedoms, injustice, stereotyped thinking, lack of mutual respect.

The study showed that women in Russia give better ratings to all aspects of the population’s standard of living and quality of life. The most important groups of indicators for them are “health” and “satisfaction”. Taking into account individual differences and averages, it can be said that it is thanks to women in Russia that the importance of security and civil rights is significantly increased. In addition, as individuals mature, there are clear trends towards a downward trend in the quality of social interaction and life satisfaction.



## CONCLUSION

Thus, in Russia, citizens have formed individual preferences in the choice of the fundamental spheres of living standards and quality of life. At the present stage, when assessing them, depending on age, gender, situation (pandemics, crises), it is necessary to take into

account weights. As preferences may change, models and methodologies for assessing living standards and quality of life are expected to take these variables into account. Public entities and their facilitators need to investigate and consider these changes in order to optimally assess quality of life and standard of living.

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