

Russians want church to stay out of politics

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A poll taken in Russia shows that 75% of the population wants the Russian Orthodox Church to stay out of politics.

Half of Russians (50%) have noted the presence of the Orthodox Church in the state's domestic policy, with people increasingly noticing this over the past two years (44% in 2010), say sociologists from the All-Russian Center for the Study of Public Opinion (VTsIOM).

Another 43% of respondents are still feeling the Church's influence in Russia's international affairs as well, sociologists said.

The Church's influence is weakest in the lives of ordinary Russians: half of respondents (49%) said this institution has no meaning for them, an increase of 6% from two years ago.

The broadest sphere of influence of the Russian Orthodox Church is the spiritual and moral state of the society, according to 63% of 1,600 respondents polled by VTsIOM in 138 towns across 46 Russian regions in June. Only 16% thought religious institutions should be actively involved in all spheres of public life, including politics.

Confining the Church's influence to the matters of faith is favoured mainly by young (37%) and highly-educated (33%) people and those who distrust the clergy (42%), the VTsIOM poll showed. On the other hand, support for such a limitation was lower among pre-retirement age respondents without higher education (18–19%), villagers (22%) and those who trust the clergy (21%).

The sociological survey revealed that a significant proportion of Russians regard the current relations between the Orthodox Church and the state as being well-balanced and harmonious (43%). This is normally the view of those (57%) who believe that the main sphere of influence of the Orthodox Church is the spiritual moral side of public life. A quarter of respondents (23%) said the Russian Orthodox Church's participation in public life is insufficient. This is primarily the view of those (39%) who expect the Church to be actively involved in addressing all problems of the state, and not just in the sphere of morality and religion.

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