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PUBLIC OPINION IN RUSSIA ON KEY ASPECTS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

Raisa E. Barash*

Institute of Sociology of the Federal Research Center, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, Russia

Abstract

The article is devoted to the study of the perception of social justice in contemporary Russian society. The main goal of the work is to analyze the key aspects of ideas about social justice among Russians, as well as to identify the factors influencing the formation of these ideas. The study sets several objectives and author analyses the significance of various criteria of justice for citizens, an assessment of the impact of economic inequality and access to social benefits on the perception of justice and the interpretation of the social justice ideas in different generations and social groups.

The hypothesis of the study is the assumption that in Russian society there is a complex system of views on social justice, in which both traditional values and modern realities are intertwined. The methodology of the study includes the analysis of sociological data and a comparison of various opinions among representatives of various social groups.

The author concludes that Russians today prefer a society of equal opportunities, but deep dissatisfaction with the current level of social inequality and injustice in the distribution of resources creates a strong demand for social guarantees from the state. The author argues that the majority of citizens support the concept of social justice based on equality before the law and equal access to basic social benefits such as health care and education. The article also highlights that there is a gap between citizens' expectations and reality, as many Russians do not feel that the system of remuneration for work and qualifications is fair.

Keywords

Sociology, quality of life, well-being, public opinion, social justice, social inequalities, mass consciousness, social transformations.

1. Introduction

Since the late 1960s, in Western European and North American societies, where citizens' basic needs for security and material well-being were largely satisfied, increasing attention has been paid to issues of social justice. Economic criteria of well-being have been replaced by an understanding of quality of life as an integral variable that includes not only material well-being, but also equal opportunities, respect for human rights and a fair social structure. Whereas previously well-being was measured only by income and consumption, it now includes access to education, medical care, participation in decision-making, environmental safety and the absence of systemic inequality and justice has become one of the key conditions for a truly dignified life.

Today, differences in income levels, education and employment of people, living in different types of settlements seriously affect their position in the system of social inequalities that has developed in society. A similar problem is also relevant for Russians,

*Corresponding Author: Raisa E. Barash, e-mail: raisabarash@gmail.com

many of whom consider life in a fairly organized society one of the most important components of a prosperous life (Barash, 2024). According to some studies, the majority of Russians consider the inequalities existing in Russian society to be unfair (Karavay, 2024) and the existing system of inequality supports a serious demand for justice (Gorshkov, 2022; World Bank, 2023).

The current situation in Russian public opinion determines the purpose of this article: to study the key aspects of ideas about social justice that have formed in Russian society. The achievement of this goal is facilitated by the implementation of a number of scientific tasks: a study of which criteria of justice are most significant for Russians, as well as how economic inequality, access to social benefits and opportunities for social mobility affect the perception of justice. The article will also study whether there are differences in ideas about social justice between different generations, social groups and residents of different regions.

Answers to these questions will not only allow us to better understand the values and expectations of Russian society, but also to identify potential areas of social policy that will help strengthen social stability and improve the quality of life.

2. On the relevance of social justice in the modern world

The idea of social justice is extremely relevant in the modern world: the persistent gap in income and access to life chances between the rich and the poor, the growing problems of discrimination and inequality in the quality of life strengthen the demand of people around the world for a fair social structure, universal access to resources and opportunities. The demand for fair access to benefits (World Inequality Lab, 2022) and social justice are closely related to the popularity of ideas of human rights, principles of democracy and active civic-political participation. The preservation of extreme inequality by the political system aggravates inequality, making the entire social system ineffective (Clifton, 2019). With the preserved inequality between different layers of society, people become increasingly frustrated that political systems have stopped responding to the problems of people suffering from the current state of affairs and the accumulated skepticism of citizens leads to the growth of electoral popularity of populists (Meyer, 2017).

Today, ideas for a just society are in demand all over the world: in the United States in November 2024, 51% of Americans called inequality between the rich and the poor an acute problem for their country (Pew Research Center, 2025a). Another third (31%) considered discrimination against some people based on their race or ethnicity to be problematic and 20% based on religion.

In the US, the problems of social and racial inequality and access to health care have led not only to the growth in popularity of "leftist ideas" and the growth in popularity of social movements such as Black Lives Matter and Occupy Wall Street, but have also provoked heated debates between ideological and political opponents. Some of the largest ideological divisions in the survey are in the US For example, 76% of US liberals say economic inequality is a very big problem in their country, compared with just 30% of conservatives. This 46% is the largest left-right differences across the countries surveyed (Pew Research Center, 2025b). American citizens are extremely concerned about social security issues, which is reflected in the desire of most Americans to maintain payments under social assistance programs such as Medicare, Medicaid, the Federal/State Health Insurance Program for Low-Income People etc. (Pew Research Center, 2024).

The United States has a long tradition of social and political activists fighting for social justice. The progressive wing of the Democratic Party of the United States plays a special role; its representatives, in particular, support the Medicare program. American trade unions actively defend labor rights: AFL-CIO, SEIU, Fight for 15. Finally, the fight against various forms of discrimination is a key part of public life in American society. The Black Lives Matter movement has changed the national discourse on racial justice, women's organizations are achieving gender equality and the LGBTQ+ community continues to defend equal rights and social inclusion.

The idea of social justice has traditionally received broad support in European countries where not only the tradition of a welfare state has historically developed. According to the European Social Survey (ESS), in 2022, the greatest concern about inequality was demonstrated by citizens of Portugal, who named the fight against all forms of inequality a priority (49%) or an important (41%) task for their country. The problem of inequality was also acutely felt by citizens of Iceland (40% called it the highest priority and 48% - important), France (39% and 43%, respectively), Italy (40% each), Slovenia (41% and 35%, respectively) (ESS ERIC, 2024).

Almost two-thirds of French (64%) and German (61%) citizens named the gap between rich and poor among the main problems of their country. French citizens, including due to historical heritage, demonstrated the most acute sense of social justice in 2024, more often than other Europeans indicating that discrimination based on race or ethnicity (59%), gender (56%) and religious identity (54%) is a pressing problem in their country.

In Europe, active social movements and political parties have traditionally advocated for workers' rights, environmental protection and the fight against discrimination: the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) and the Labour Party in the UK have traditionally advocated for social justice and support for trade unions. Environmental parties such as Alliance 90/The Greens in Germany and Europe Écologie-Les Verts in France not only advocate for environmental protection, but also for social reform. More radical left-wing forces such as Die Linke in Germany and La France Insoumise demand not just a reduction in economic inequality, but the nationalization of key sectors of the economy.

European social movements also demonstrate active social participation: the DGB in Germany and the CGT in France consistently advocate for higher wages and better working conditions.

Ideas of social justice are also in high demand in Russian society. In October 2024, according to sociological research, the demand for social justice clearly dominated in Russian society: 50% of Russians surveyed said that the idea of social justice best expresses their ideas about the desired future of Russia[2]. Sympathy for the ideas of equal distribution of resources and opportunities and the demand for reducing inequality and increasing the level of social guarantees is extremely relevant for the majority of Russians today.

[2]The empirical basis of the presented study is the data collected during the work on the project "Overcoming Excessive Inequalities as a Condition for Building a Fair Social State in Russia", carried out at the expense of the Fund of the Expert Institute for Social Research (EISI) "FMUS-2024-0015" at the Federal Research Sociological Center of the Russian Academy of Sciences. The sociological survey within the framework of the project was conducted in October 2024 in 22 constituent entities of the Russian Federation using a representative all-Russian regional quota sample. The sample size is 2,000 respondents representing the adult (18 years and older) population of the country by parameters of gender, age, socio-professional status, level of education and type of settlement of residence.

Ideas of social justice are much more in demand than patriotic and traditional values. The idea that "Russia should become a great power again" is popular with 39% of respondents and a return to national traditions and religious and moral foundations is popular with 36%. So the conservative demand that is noticeable in Russian society is nevertheless losing out in popularity to the ideas of a justly organized society.

Slightly less popular among Russians as an idea of a possible vector of social development (33%) are democratic principles: human rights, freedom of expression and political freedoms. Although democratic ideas are not at the top of the most popular strategies of national development among citizens, they are popular enough to talk about the importance of the principles of openness and pluralism for them.

At the same time, authoritarian principles of social development ("strong hard power" - 27%) and nationalistic ideas ("Russia first and foremost for Russians" - 24%) have limited but significant support. While liberal (12%) and pro-Western courses of development of the country (8%) remain the least popular, which reflects the skeptical attitude of the majority of Russians towards radical market reforms and orientation towards the West, but emphasizes the demand for social transformations aimed at ensuring social justice.

At the same time, understanding the concept of social justice in Russian society is a complex issue. Rimsky (2013) noted that the idea of justice traditionally occupies a central place in the system of values of Russian society, but citizens form an assessment of the fairness of the structure of a particular society, as well as the fundamental criteria of social justice subjectively, through the prism of personal ideas and interests. Therefore, such an abstract philosophical category as "justice", which generally prescribes the correspondence of the real to the due, gives rise to a variety of scenarios for the structure of a fair society.

3. The diversity of concepts of justice

Today a number of different ideas about a just social order have been formed in the European social-philosophical tradition, so that there is no consensus among social theorists about uniform criteria of social justice. Social justice is a multi-faceted philosophical concept, the key principles of which in the modern socio-political context are impartiality and equality (Abercrombie *et al*., 2008). However, one of the most popular interpretations of the concept of social justice in modern social science is that proposed by Rawls (1971) in his book "A Theory of Justice", he proposed an interpretation of justice as fairness and formulated two of its main principles: the principle of equal freedoms, which guarantees basic rights to everyone and the principle of difference, which allows social inequality only to the extent that it contributes to improving the situation of the least advantaged. A similar concept of justice as compliance with the principles of legality was defended by Nozick (1974) in his work "Anarchy, State and Utopia" and he proposed to consider a society where property is acquired legally as just.

Although the concept of J. Rawls and R. Nozick was based on the thesis of the priority of rights and freedoms, it was criticized by liberal thinkers, in particular Friedman (1962), Friedman and Friedman (1980) and Hayek (1973-1979) for the potential restriction of individual freedom and violation of property rights due to the redistribution of wealth to achieve greater equality.

In turn, criticism of the ideas of liberal individualism by followers of communitarianism, represented by MacIntyre (1984; 1988) and Sandel (1998; 2009), considers justice as a set of rights and obligations of people to their community.

Utilitarianism by Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, defines justice as that which maximizes the common good, that is, the happiness of the majority. This concept allows inequality if it contributes to the general growth of well-being. Bentham saw justice as a direct consequence of maximizing pleasure and minimizing pain, but believed that individual rights can be sacrificed for the common good. In Mill's view, justice is an important rule for long-term happiness and individual rights require protection because their violation undermines the general welfare.

It is obvious that such socio-political concepts are eclectic, hilarious projects and are not at all connected with specific examples of a just social structure. In this context, empirical research of ideas about justice in specific societies becomes relevant. The Russian case is of particular interest, since in Russian society the public demand for social justice is combined with a not always high level of trust of citizens in the institutional mechanisms for its implementation.

4. How modern Russians see a justly organized society

Sociological data demonstrates that Russians have extremely complex ideas about social justice: almost two-thirds of Russians (63%) find it difficult to accurately determine what is fair and what is not. The reason is not that the concept of social justice has lost its relevance in the modern world (only 8% believe that there has never been and will never be social justice in society), but in the desire of Russians to offer the most suitable form of social organization in which the principles of justice will be fully realized. In the current ideas of Russians about what social justice consists of, traditional values, the Soviet legacy and modern market realities are intertwined.

Russians' ideas about social justice are based on three basic attitudes. Firstly, Russians demonstrate a demand for equality before the law (61%), which is expressed in a categorical rejection of privileges for those in power and wealthy citizens (Figure 1). This aspect of justice is perceived as a basic guarantee against arbitrariness and corruption. At the same time, half of the population (51%) demonstrates a demand for equal access to key social benefits: medicine and education, considering them as mandatory conditions for a decent life for people of any material wealth.

An important, third place in the system of values is occupied by the principle of equal opportunities (41%), especially in the context of social lifts for children from different social strata. However, there is a clear contradiction here: while supporting meritocratic ideals and considering the dependence of the position of each member of society on his or her work to be a manifestation of social justice (30%), Russians are simultaneously skeptical about their implementation in practice. And only a fifth (21%) of respondents believe that social justice consists in equal access to good jobs, ending employment “by pull”.

At the same time, Russian society remains nostalgic for the Soviet model of social equality and a third of citizens (32%) believe that a roughly equal standard of living for all citizens is fair, when there are no very rich or very poor people in society.

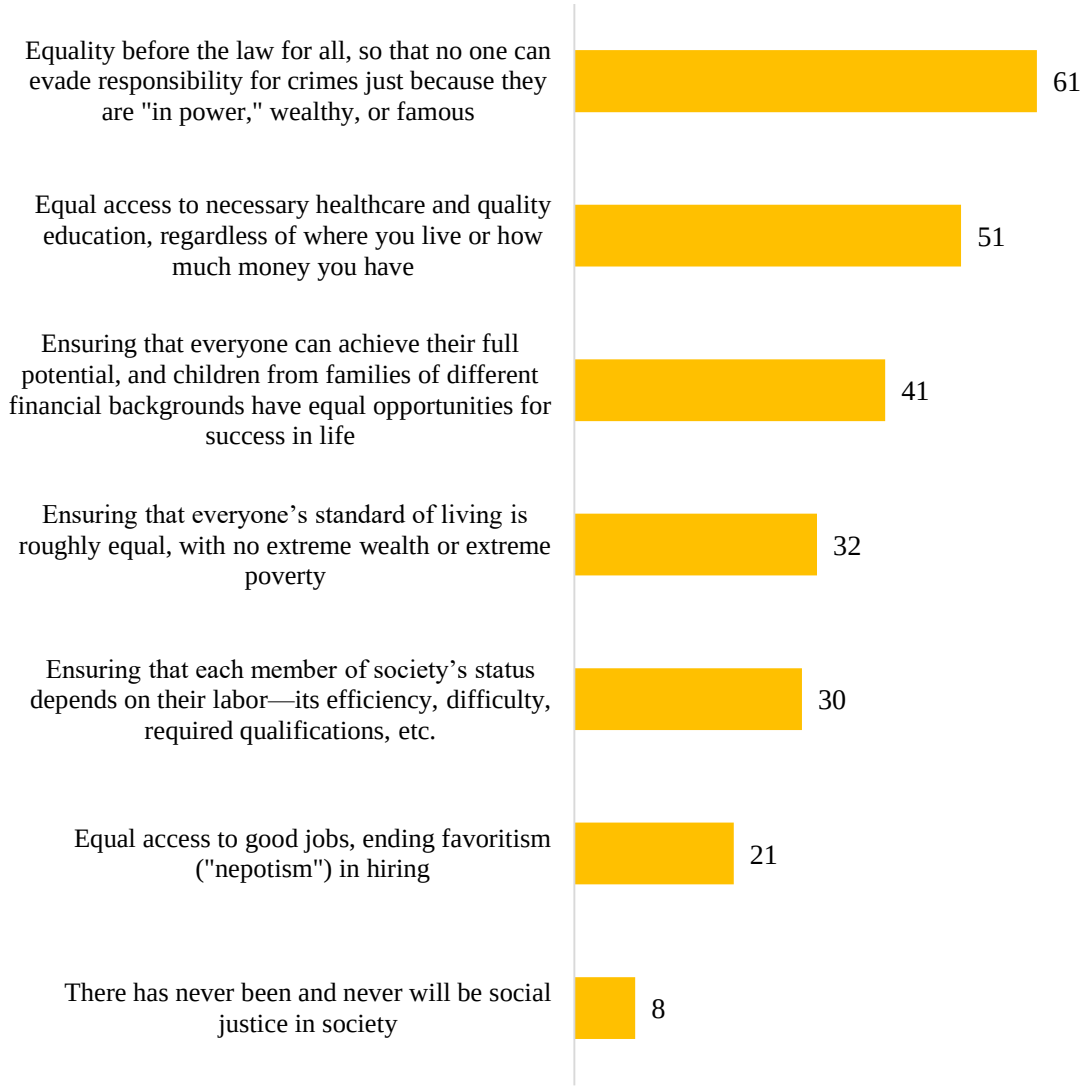


Figure 1. Opinion on the components of social justice, 2024, %

The spectrum of ideas existing in Russian public opinion about what social justice consists of can be reduced to two alternative interpretations: equalizing, which assumes an equal distribution of resources between citizens and distributive, aimed at ensuring universal equality of opportunity. Today, among the signs of a fairly organized society, Russians most often name those that guarantee citizens equal opportunities for self-realization: equality before the law (61%), equal conditions for fair competition and achieving success (41%) and equality in social mobility (30%).

The need for fair law enforcement is most often mentioned by wealthy Russians with an individual income of 2.1 settlement medians (73%), while fair conditions for honest competition are mentioned by middle-aged (43% among 31-40 year old persons) and middle-income respondents (44% among those whose income is 1.26 - 2 settlement medians). The demand for open opportunities for vertical mobility is expressed by the youngest (38%).

But the idea of social justice as equal access of citizens to basic material resources is less popular. But here too, half of the respondents (51%) associate a fair social order with equal provision of citizens with necessary medical care and quality education, a third

- with equality of the standard of living (32%), a fifth (21%) - with equal opportunities for citizens to get access to good jobs "without connections". The oldest and least well-off citizens associate social justice with equal access of citizens to health care and education resources. The youngest - with unlimited access to good jobs (Table 1).

Table 1. Opinion on the components of social justice of representatives of different age and property groups, 2024, % *

		Age groups					Individual average monthly income relative to the settlement median			
Social justice consists of…	All respondents	18-30 years old	31-40 years old	41-50 years old	51-60 years old	Over 60 years old	up to 0.75 medians	0.76 - 1.25 medians	1.26 - 2 medians	From 2.1 medians and above
…in equality of opportunity										
...in equality of all before the law, so that it is impossible to escape responsibility for various kinds of crimes just because you are a "boss", rich or famous	61	54	63	61	60	63	56	61	63	73
…that everyone can achieve everything they are capable of and that children from different backgrounds have equal opportunities for success in life	41	42	43	42	35	40	39	40	44	42
…in that the position of each member of society depends on his work – its efficiency, difficulty, the qualifications required for it, etc.	30	38	30	27	27	30	31	26	33	37
…in equal access to resources										
… in equal access to necessary medical care and quality education, no matter where you live and how much money you have	51	47	50	52	50	53	50	54	51	42
…that the standard of living for everyone was approximately the same, there were no very rich or very poor	32	30	28	33	33	37	36	32	32	21
…in equal access to good jobs, ending employment "through connections"	21	23	22	18	22	20	20	22	21	21
There has never been and will never be any social justice in society.	8	7	8	7	12	7	9	8	4	10

*The highest values for the row are highlighted in pink.
** Up to three answer options were allowed for this position, so the total number of answers is greater than 100%.

Thus, Russians interpret social justice in the spirit of J. Rawls, as a principle of social order based on "fair equality of opportunity" and proportional access of citizens to public resources, the amount of which depends on their contribution to the common good. In such a society, in theory, social mobility mechanisms function effectively, giving citizens the opportunity to realize their human capital (Mareeva & Slobodenyuk, 2022), not only allowing people to increase their individual well-being, but also ensuring the sustainable development of the country at the macro level (Kuzminov & Frumin, 2018).

5. What kind of social justice do Russians expect from their government?

It is natural that, when answering the question about what kind of society they would like to live in, Russians choose a society of equal opportunities (59%), rather than equal income and living conditions (41%). Over the past 12 years, since 2012, this proportion has remained unchanged, but compared to 1995, when the public mood was dominated by the dream of building a society of fair self-realization, the popularity of the idea of equal incomes has almost doubled, from 25% to 41% (Figure 2). Some authors interpret the growing interest of citizens in income equality as a consequence of their disappointment in both the current "rules of the game" (Mareeva, 2018), which do not contribute to the creation of fair inequalities and in the feasibility of a national development strategy based on human capital.

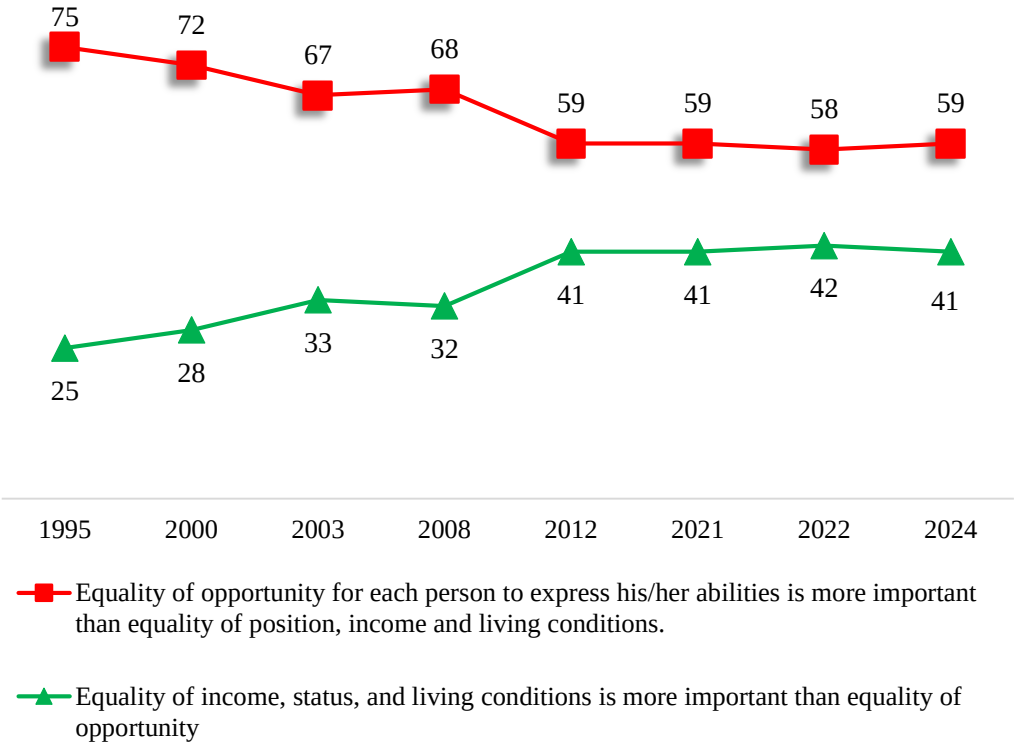


Figure 2. The dynamics of choice between equality of opportunity and equality of income, 1995-2024, %

Such statements may seem overly alarming, but they are not unfounded. Despite the stabilization in the early 2010s of the priority public demand for the creation of fair conditions for the equal realization of citizens' opportunities, the continuing popularity of ideas of equal living conditions indicates the continuing demand of society for the active participation of the state in ensuring the necessary living conditions for citizens. Today, in Russian society, social justice is perceived not only as a desired principle for organizing social relations, but also as a basic public demand for the state. After the attempt in the 1990s to apply the market model to the fair distribution of goods and opportunities only exacerbated existing forms of inequality, in the 2000s, society partially returned to the Soviet paradigm of the state as a guarantor of compliance with the principles of justice (Chernysh, 2021). It was not a question of returning to the paternalistic model, but rather of a kind of social contract with the state, which would provide citizens with basic living

conditions, leaving opportunities for personal initiative and responsibility. However, today, with the dominance of the idea of minimal state participation in the social sphere in public opinion, as a guarantor of providing citizens with a basic minimum of resources and rights (45%), more than a third of Russians (37%) support the idea of the state fully ensuring equality of all citizens (property, legal, political)[3].

The main paradox of Russians' ideas about social justice, which combine commitment to market economic principles and a demand for social guarantees, is that Russians simultaneously support meritocratic ideals, but at the same time sharply criticize the actual practice of distributing benefits. The majority of Russians (55%) agree with the fairness of income inequality with equal starting opportunities, but only 20-21% believe that Russia has developed a fair system of rewarding people for their hard and difficult work and their intellectual abilities and qualifications. And this indicates a deep gap between expectations and reality, where formal principles of justice are not embodied in everyday life.

This contradiction is especially evident in the attitudes of Russians towards private property: on the one hand, 76% of Russians consider the right to property to be inalienable - this demonstrates the post-Soviet ideological shifts of Russian society towards the unambiguous acceptance of liberal values of individual well-being. But, on the other hand, almost half of the Russians surveyed (46%) assess the current distribution of property as unfair, which reflects the rejection of inequality, perceived as a result of corruption or unfair rules of the game.

Today, Russians' attitudes toward injustice clearly depend on the area where it manifests itself. Thus, 43% of respondents admit that the rich can provide their children with a better education, but only 26% consider similar inequality in medicine acceptable. This “selective loyalty” demonstrates that in Russian public opinion there is a boundary between “acceptable” and “inadmissible” forms of inequality: the closer the area is to basic needs (health care, pensions), the more stringent the demand for equal access to their resources. Indicative in this sense is the criticism of the labor and pension system by Russians: only a third (33%) of respondents agree that the size of the pension should depend on the salary and almost half (46%) are sure that hard work in Russia is paid unfairly. This indicates the confidence of citizens that in the current situation, labor efforts guarantee a decent reward. It is not surprising that today in Russian society there is a demand for social justice: the majority, 67%, consider the current level of income inequality to be excessive and only 14% believe that greater differentiation of people's incomes is necessary for the country's economic prosperity.

The problem of economic inequality is perceived as particularly acute. Two thirds of respondents (67%) are convinced that income differences are excessive, while only one in seven (14%) sees economic benefits in this. It is noteworthy that more than half (55%) theoretically allow for income inequality under the condition of equal starting opportunities, but in practice 80% are sure that labor and abilities are not adequately rewarded. Almost equal shares of respondents find it difficult (29%) to define fairness and feel personally undervalued in the workplace (35%), which indicates the uncertainty and frustration that exist in society.

Thus, today many Russians support the idea of a social state (similar to Rawls's concept) with a developed system of redistribution. At the same time, there is a need for

[3]Another 16% of respondents believe that state aid should only be provided to the weak and 3% are completely against state social support.

"fair rules of the game" (meritocracy) and the fight against corruption (as in the Nozick's concept). The Soviet past contributes to the popularity of egalitarian ideas, but the market reforms of the 1990s introduced elements of libertarianism.

Table 2. Agreement and disagreement with judgments about social justice, 2024, % *

Statements	Generally Agree (%)	General Disagreement (%)
The right to private property should be an inalienable right of every person	76	3
Income disparities in Russia are currently too large	67	7
When some people have more money than others, it is fair if they had equal opportunities to earn it	55	9
It is fair when those who can afford it provide their children with a better education	43	18
It is fair that people with means can buy better housing than others	39	15
Given your qualifications and work effort, you are significantly underpaid at your job	35	22
It is fair that those with higher salaries will also receive larger pensions	33	25
These days, it is difficult to judge what is fair and what is not	29	21
It is fair that people with means can access higher-quality medical services than others	26	33
People in Russia receive fair compensation for hard and strenuous work	20	46
People in Russia receive fair compensation for their intellectual abilities and qualifications	20	36
High income inequality is necessary for the country's economic prosperity	14	29
Russia's current system of private property distribution is fair	8	46

*The table presents only data on unambiguous agreement or disagreement with the thesis. The answers of those who chose the "intermediate position" "Partly agree, partly disagree" or found it difficult to answer are not given.
**The row are highlighted in pink to indicates the agreement/disagreement values with each of the judgments that are more than 20% higher than the alternative disagreement/agreement position.

Despite the formal acceptance of the basic principles of a market economy, there is deep dissatisfaction with their practical implementation. Today, Russian society has formed a serious demand for three key demands on social policy: ensuring real equality of opportunity; creating mechanisms for fair remuneration of labor and guaranteed access to basic social benefits. Russians expect the state to combine measures to support economic activity and social security and social justice in the understanding of Russians is a balance between freedom and equality, where the state must guarantee the "rules of the game" but not suppress initiative. However, the current reality, in the opinion of the majority, is far from this ideal, which creates the potential for social tension.

Under the influence of economic instability increases the risks of unemployment and deterioration of the quality of life for the population, the idea of active patronage by the state is becoming increasingly relevant. In particular, the issue of accessibility of medical care is especially acute, especially for residents of border regions, as well as for participants in a special military operation and their families.

In the crisis situation, Russians' views on both a fair social order and the priority measures of fair assistance to citizens of their country in the current circumstances are changing. Today, Russians consider equal opportunities for citizens to receive medical care (54%) and their equal access to good jobs (41%) to be the most important principles of a fair social order. The least important are the reduction of the gap between the standard of living in cities and villages (18%), as well as a decrease in the share of the rich in society (11%) (Table 2).

Among the barriers preventing the establishment of principles of justice in Russia, citizens most often name: excessive gaps in income (33%) and living standards (29%) of the population, as well as inequality of access to medical services (30%). Least of all, Russians are concerned about non-compliance with the principle of equal pay (18%), as well as the significant number of rich and super-rich (15%).

Table 3. The opinions of Russians on which principles should be upheld in society in order to make it fair and which are least respected in Russia today, 2024, %

Principles	Must be observed first and foremost	Least observed today	The difference between due and actual observation of the principles**
Everyone has equal access to health care	54	30	24
Everyone has equal opportunities to get the education they want.	40	21	19
Everyone has equal access to good jobs	41	26	15
Equality of all before the law	49	35	14
Everyone has a real opportunity to solve the housing issue	37	28	9
There are few poor people in society	32	24	8
Equal pay for equal qualifications and education	23	18	5
Rich persons pay a larger share of their income in taxes than the poor persons	23	23	0
The differences in living standards between people are small.	29	29	0
There are few rich people in society	11	15	-4
Income differences between people are small	29	33	-4
The differences between life in the city and in the countryside are small	18	28	-10

*The data are ranked by the magnitude of the difference in assessments of due and actual compliance with the principles of social order.
**Up to five answer options were allowed for these positions, so the total number of answers is greater than 100%.
***Indicators where the difference between due and actual compliance with the principles exceeds 10 percentage points are highlighted in pink.

By comparing the answers of Russians to questions about what principles should be observed in a just society and which of these principles are least observed in Russia, we calculated an index of dissatisfaction with the state of affairs in various spheres of everyday life. The difference in assessments made it possible to identify areas of both obvious and hidden concern among citizens. The real opportunities for Russians to access health care (24 percentage points), education (19 percentage points), good work (15 percentage points) and fair law enforcement (14 percentage points) diverge most from their idealistic ideas about a just social order (Table 3). In addition, serious dissatisfaction with territorial inequality and the difference in living conditions in the city and in the countryside has formed in public opinion (10 percentage points). In the current circumstances, citizens do not consider this problem to be acute, but dissatisfaction with the state of affairs is accumulating here.

6. Conclusion

Thus, modern Russians demonstrate a complex system of views on social justice, combining sympathy for liberal values and a demand for a socially responsible state. The

majority of Russians consider the fundamental principle of a fairly organized society to be the equality of all citizens before the law, especially in matters of responsibility of the country's leadership, which reflects a serious demand for combating corruption in government bodies.

The second most important principle of a just society is equal access to basic social benefits. Most Russians believe that a mandatory condition of a just society is the provision by the state of affordable quality medicine and education to its citizens, regardless of place of residence and income level. Moreover, the provision by the state of equal access to medical care is perceived by the majority of Russians as an unambiguous attribute of a just state: only 26% of respondents allow inequality in this area, while for education this figure is 43%.

Paradoxically, the Russian public consciousness combines support for meritocratic principles with deep dissatisfaction with their implementation: although more than half of Russians agree with the fairness of income inequality among citizens given their equal starting opportunities, less than a quarter of them believe that in modern Russia, labor and qualifications receive a decent reward.

The key request of citizens to the state today is the request to reduce economic inequality, which most citizens consider excessive. And in the conditions of geopolitical tension, the desire of citizens to receive extensive social guarantees from the state is growing stronger. At the same time, a significant part of Russian society retains nostalgia for elements of the Soviet model of state care and a third of Russians consider a society with approximately the same standard of living for everyone to be ideal.

Thus, today in Russian society a complex idea has been formed about the basic components of a fairly structured state, combining in its policies guarantees of basic social support for citizens and support for their initiatives, primarily in the economic sphere.

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