Self-reported Identities and Well-being in the Regions of Russia

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Why to study cross-regional differences in Russia?

- Income level, quality of living and SWB vary a lot, great differences between Moscow and the other parts of the country.
- Despite statistically approved poorer standards of living in some Russian regions, opinion surveys show higher level of SWB of their population, compared to both country average and capital cities inhabitants` estimates.
- This research can contribute to the study of determinants of SWB in comparative regional perspective.
- Russian population is very heterogeneous when seen as inhabitants of different regions, distinguished according to their self-reported identities, life satisfaction and socio-economic environment, therefore it is hardy possible to consider the people of this highly differentiated country as a monolithic society.
- Using the data of the 6th wave of the World Values Survey in European countries and 9 representative samples from regions of Russia, this research will examine differences in self-reported identities and the well-being of Russians living in varied socio-cultural and socio-economic environments, varying from those close to western life to rather pre modern conditions.

What`s new?

- A vast amount of literature, discussing determinants of well-being, ranging from rather objective factors, like ***economic conditions***, ***income inequality***, ***socio-economic status*** and ***socio-demographic characteristics*** to more subjective ones, based on self-reported estimations of the respondents like ***values***, ***individual aspirations***, ***self-identifications***, ***attitudes***, ***social capital*** and ***agency***.
- However, the existing literature is analyzing well-being in comparative perspective mostly on the data collected on national samples or in regions within developed states. As for the regions of Russia, the sociological data obtained with a representative regional samples were ***not available for quantitative research before***.
- The previous study of income level and inequality measures as determinants of SWB led to ***controversial empirical results*** (did not prove to be true explanation for all regions) and led to the conclusion that there are other factors of socio-cultural nature, contributing for self-reported well-being.

The empirical basis of the research:

WVS data, **Russia**, all-country sample, 2011 and

9 regional samples, 2011 -2012:

- **Moscow** and **Saint Petersburg**, well-known for their cosmopolitanism, socio-economic development, higher level of income and job market opportunities;
- **Tambov**, a typical city of Central Russia;
- **Leningrad oblast** - a region located in the North-West of Russia, which is geographically close to Europe;
- **the Altay**, representing a cold and inhospitable region of Siberia;
- ***four ethnic republics*** as regions representing the Caucasus, Central Russia, the Volga region and the Urals, respectively, with uneven levels of socio-economic development – **the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic**, **the Chuvash Republic**, **the Republic of Tatarstan** and **the Republic of Bashkortostan**.

Theoretical background:

- Income as a predictor for SWB (Inglehart, 1990; Diener, 1995); income inequality issues (Alesina et al., 2004)
- Neoclassical utility theory (Easterlin, 1994, 2001; Heady, 1991) – a weak and controversial correlation between income and happiness, life cycle matters
- Relative deprivation theory (Runciman, 1966; Yitzhaki, 1979; Welzel, 2011) – "a theory of social justice", "frustrated achievers theory"
- Reference group theory (Easterlin, 1995; Clarck and Osvald, 1996; Ferrer-i-Carbonell, 2005) – people are likely to make reference to other people`s state of happiness; SWB depends on income relative to some reference income, which is based on the predicted income of people alike.
- Positional identity theory (Akerlof and Kranton, 2000; Davis, 2006, 2007; Chang, 2012) an increase in relative income leads to a gain in positional identity and therefore raises the level of subjective well-being.
- Conceptual-referent theory (Rojas, 2005, 2007) – individuals have different conceptions of happiness when answering survey questions
- Personal values and beliefs (Kasser and Ryan, 1996; Georgelis, Tsitsianins and Yin, 2008: Ahuvia and Wong, 1995)
- Social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979) - a person's need for positive self-identity can be satisfied by membership in prestigious social groups

The main research question:

What explains the differences in self-reported well-being in regions of Russia, especially higher level of SWB in peripheral regions of the country, that are characterized by notably lower levels of income and standards of life?

Hypotheses:

- According to reference group theory, social, national and ethnic identities are important factors influencing the level of happiness and financial satisfaction at the individual level. The SWB is conductive to self-identification with a reference group, a model society that the respondents attribute themselves to and compare with.
- As a measure of comparison with internal or external reference population group, self-identification in the spatial dimension has significant impact on subjective well-being.
- Self-identification with a religious group has greater effect on SWB, compared with other social identities of a respondent.

Methodological issue: income variables in WVS:

- Financial satisfaction is measured by question “How satisfied are you with the financial situation of your household?”, with a scale ranging from 1 to 10, where 1 is “completely dissatisfied and 10 is completely satisfied.
- Level of income is evaluated by the self-reported belonging of a respondent to a particular income category in 10 steps income scale. National and regional samples of WVS data in Russia in the 6th wave do not contain a variable on income, measured in local currency, so it is not possible to measure self-declared income directly.
- The positioning of a respondent into income brackets can be considered as a more accurate indicator, compared to self-reported income, which is often falsified and underreported in interviewer-assisted field surveys, since respondents avoid telling how much they earn in exact numbers (Verme, 2011).
- There is no special question to address the relative income self-assessment in WVS. To the estimate relative income position contrary to objective level of income within a region of residence of respondents, the measure of relative income has been introduced. Relative income is constructed as income of an individual according to positioning on 10 brackets scale, divided by mean income indicator on the same scale within the region of residence. For regression analysis, relative income was logged.

Measures for testing reference group hypothesis:

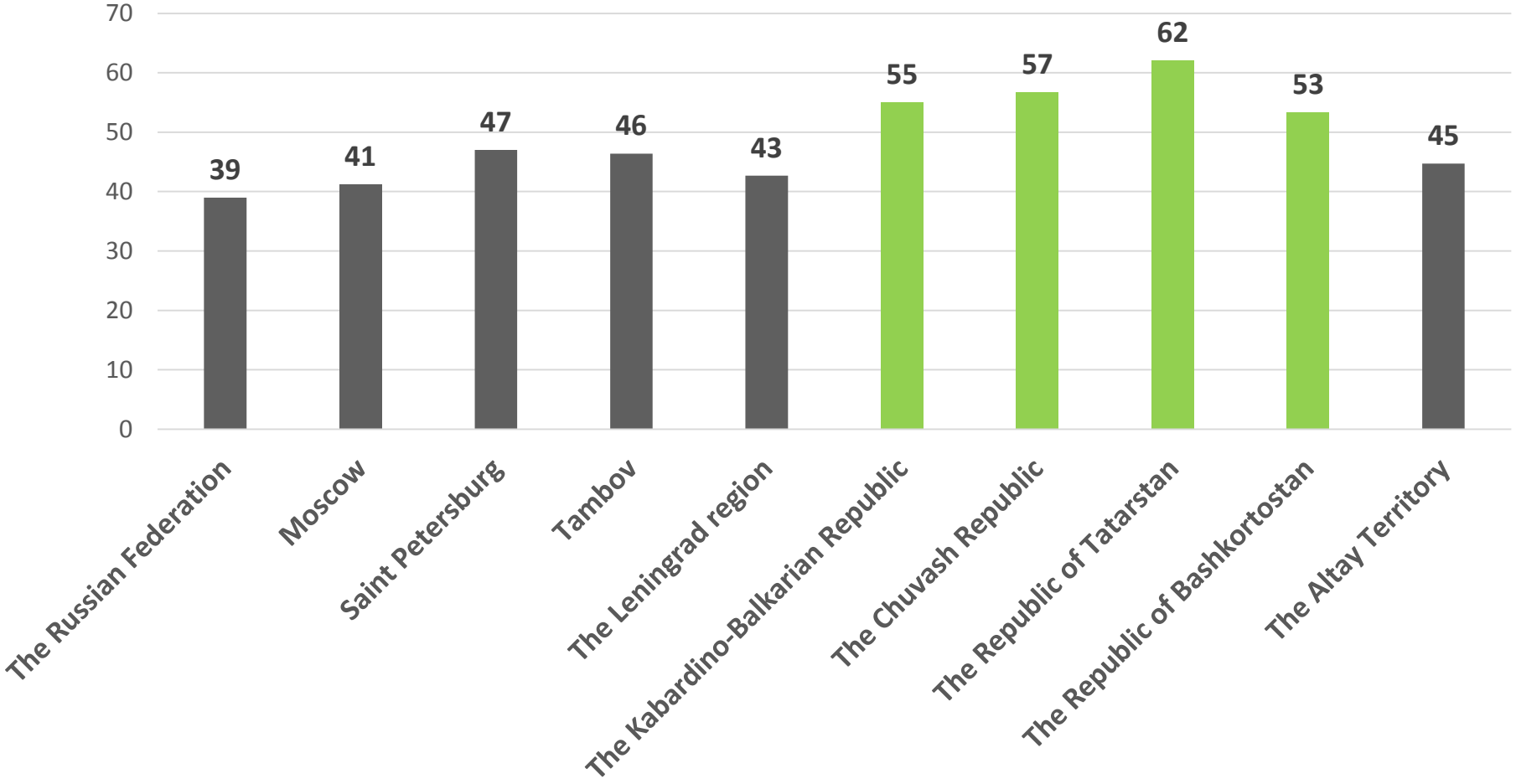
- **relative income indicator** – based on subjective assessment of one`s income level
- **self-identification in the spatial dimension**: **world, national, and local identity**
- **cosmopolitanism index** (A. Koustov), or **a relative cosmopolitan identity** RCI - (NI+LI)/2 (WVS variables V210,V211,V212; CL – cosmopolitan identity, NI – national identity, LI – local identity)

Dependent variable: SWB Index

Independent variables: self-reported and relative income, socio-economic status/social class, religiosity, religious denomination, self-identification in the spatial dimension/ regional identity

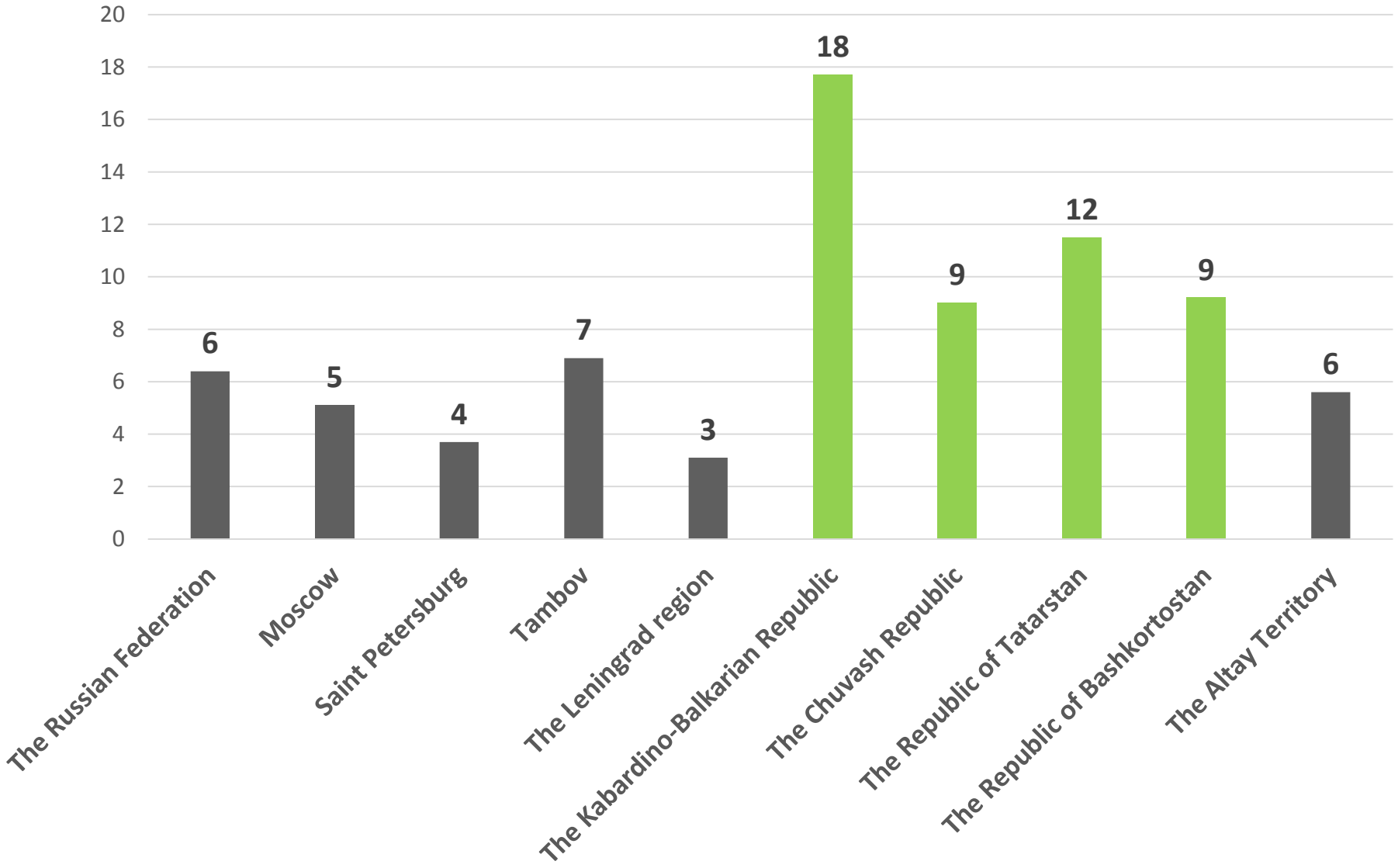
Controls: age, gender, education, partner\mate, the number of children, place of residence, employment status

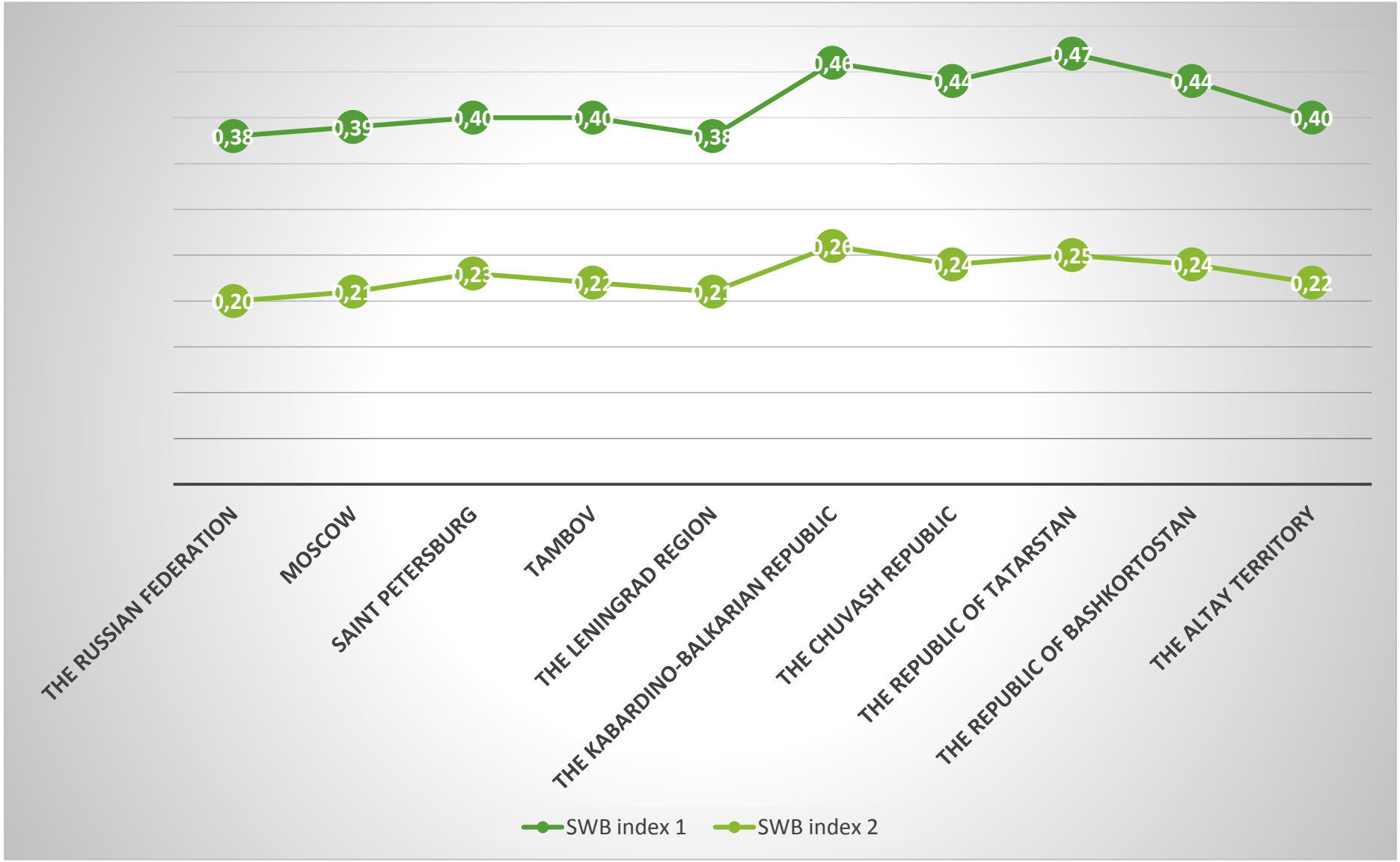
Subjective Well-being Index, WVS, 2011-2012



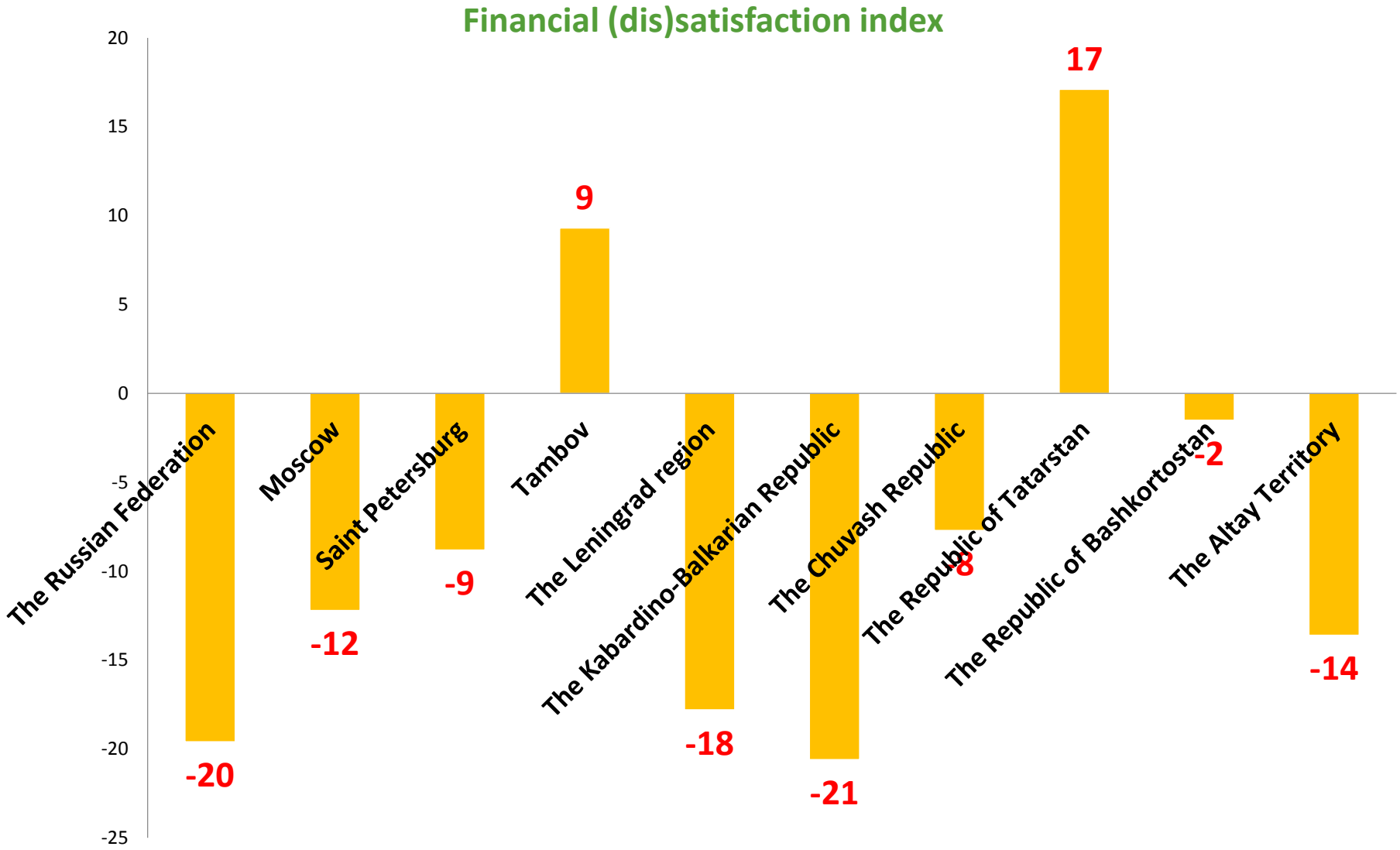
The subjective well-being index reflects the average of the percentage who describe themselves as "very happy" or "happy" minus the percentage who describe themselves as "not very happy" or "unhappy"; and the percentage placing themselves in the 7-10 range, minus the percentage placing themselves in the 1-4 range, on a 10-point scale on which 1 indicates that one is strongly dissatisfied with one's life as a whole, and 10 indicates that one is highly satisfied with one's life as a whole. (*Inglehart R., 2000)*.

Percentage of respondents “completely satisfied” with their lives, WVS, 2011 – 2012



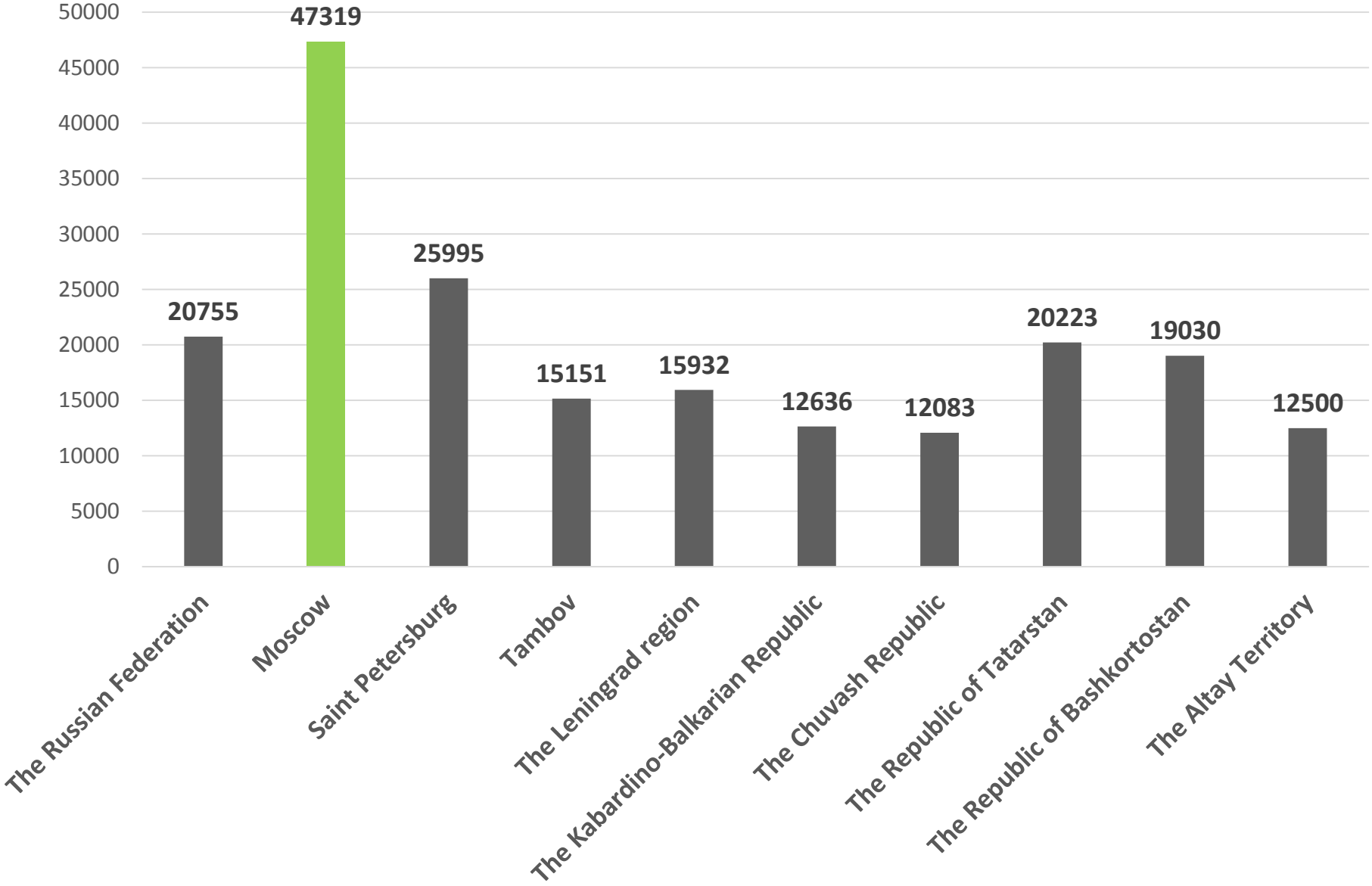


Subjective well-being index (dependent variable), ranging form 0 to 1, mean values.
SWB1 comprises of self-estimations of life satisfaction and happiness.
SWB2 is constructed of self-estimations of life satisfaction, happiness and health. Source: WVS data, 2011-2012.

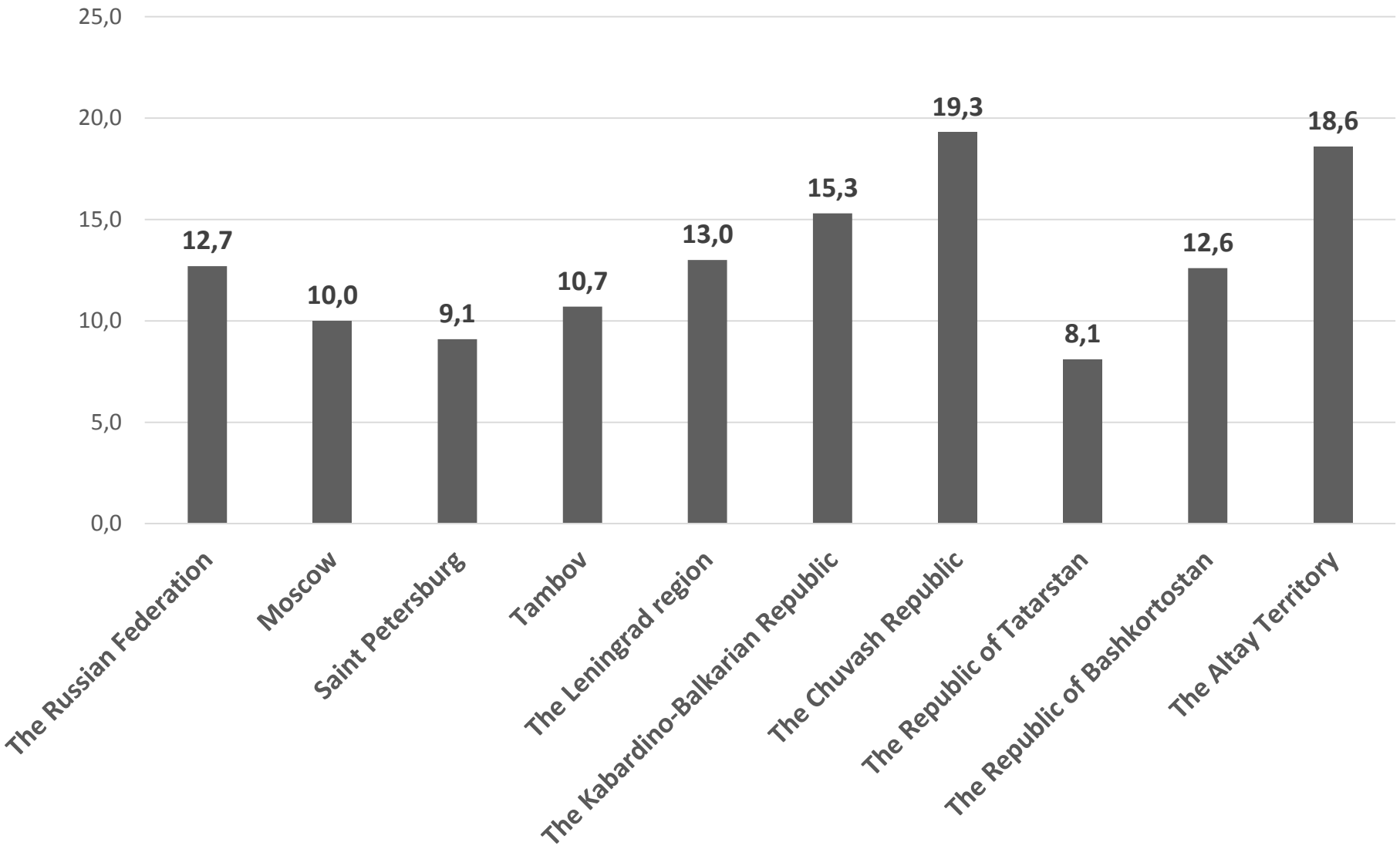


The financial satisfaction index reflects the percentage placing themselves in the 7-10 range, minus the percentage placing themselves in the 1-4 range, on a 10-point scale on which 1 indicates that one is strongly dissatisfied with the financial situation in theirs household, and 10 indicates that one is highly satisfied with the financial situation in theirs household.

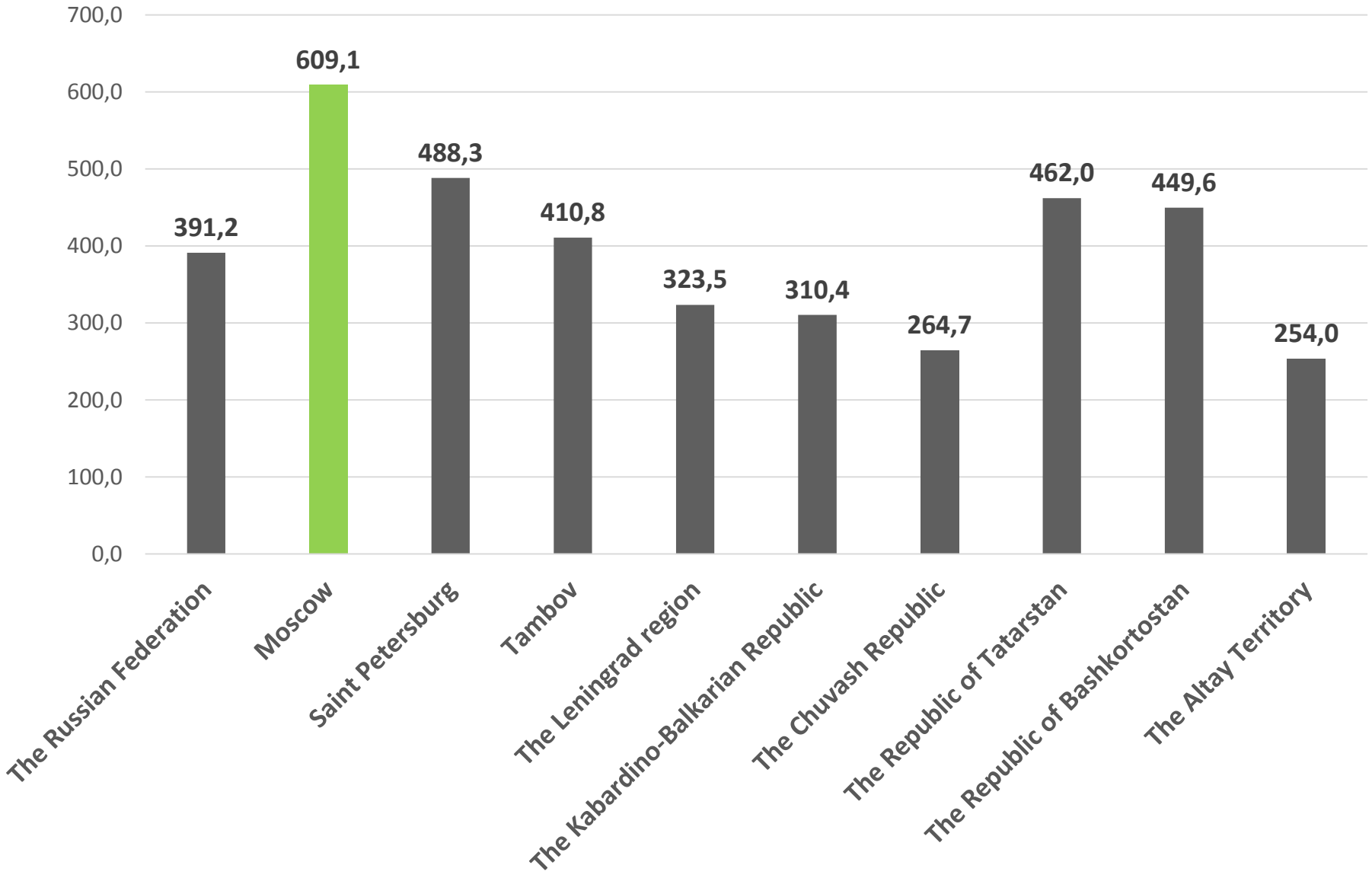
Average income per capita, in rubles, 2011

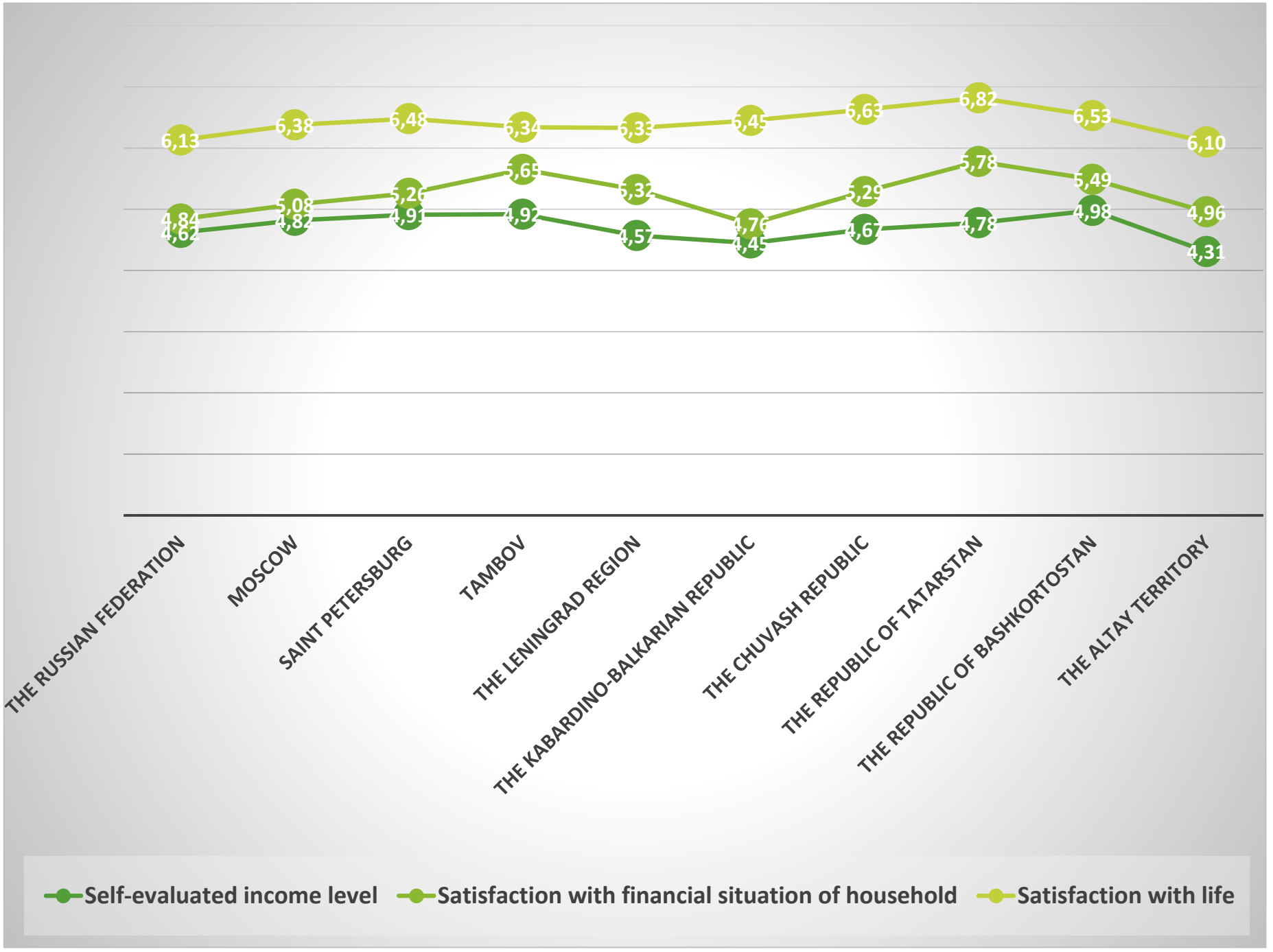


Share of population living below the poverty line, 2011



The balance of average income and the cost of living, %, 2011

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5,65
5,32
4,76
5,29
5,78
5,49
4,96
4,62
4,82
4,91
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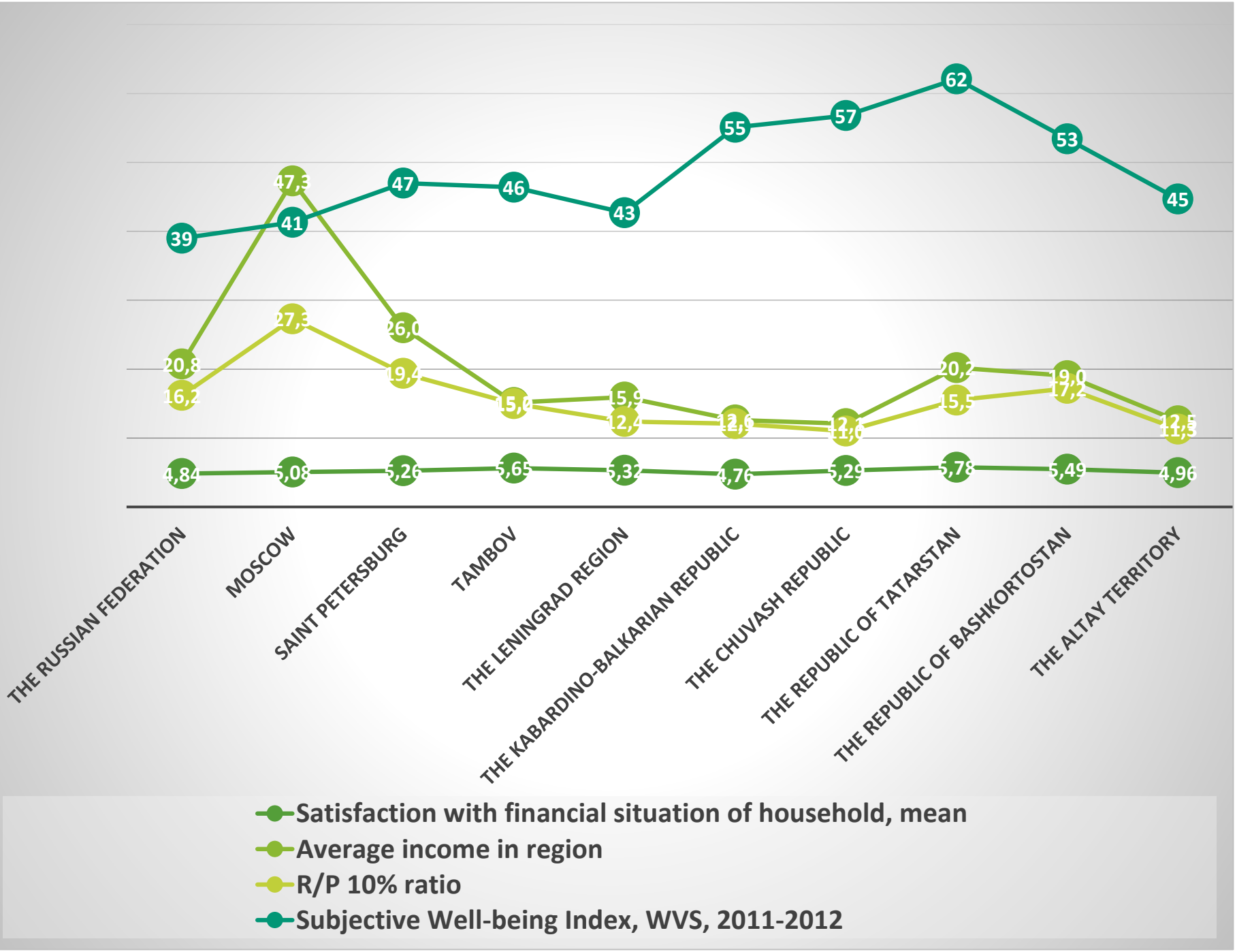
4,31
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION
MOSCOW
SAINT PETERSBURG
TAMBOV
THE LENINGRAD REGION
THE KABARDINO-BALKARIAN REPUBLIC
THE CHUVASH REPUBLIC
THE REPUBLIC OF TATARSTAN
THE REPUBLIC OF BASHKORTOSTAN
THE ALTAY TERRITORY
Self-evaluated income level
Satisfaction with financial situation of household
Satisfaction with life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26,0
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12,6
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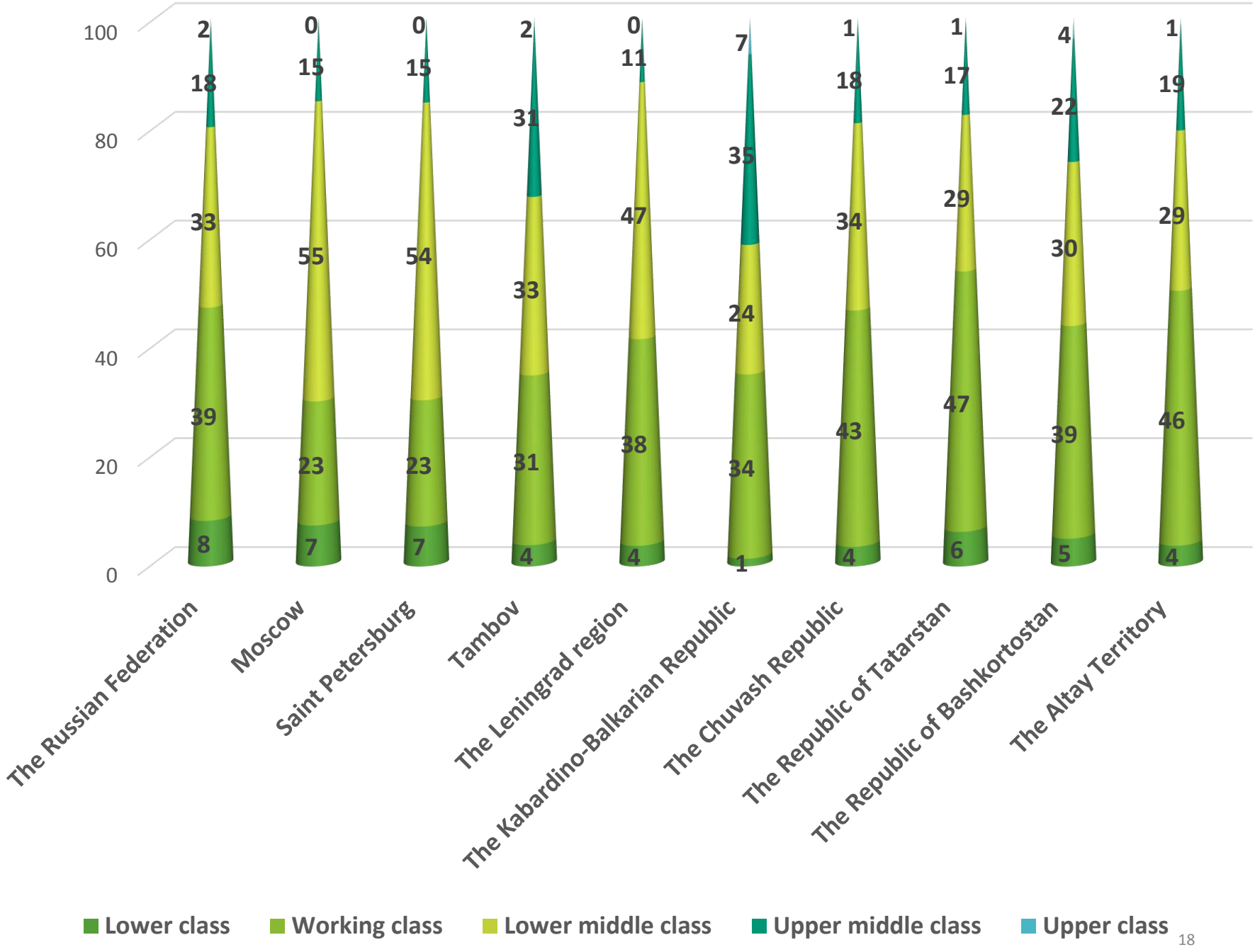
THE REPUBLIC OF TATARSTAN
THE REPUBLIC OF BASHKORTOSTAN
THE ALTAY TERRITORY
Satisfaction with financial situation of household, mean
Average income in region
R/P 10% ratio
Subjective Well-being Index, WVS, 2011-2012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18
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43
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29
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6
4
22
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1
19
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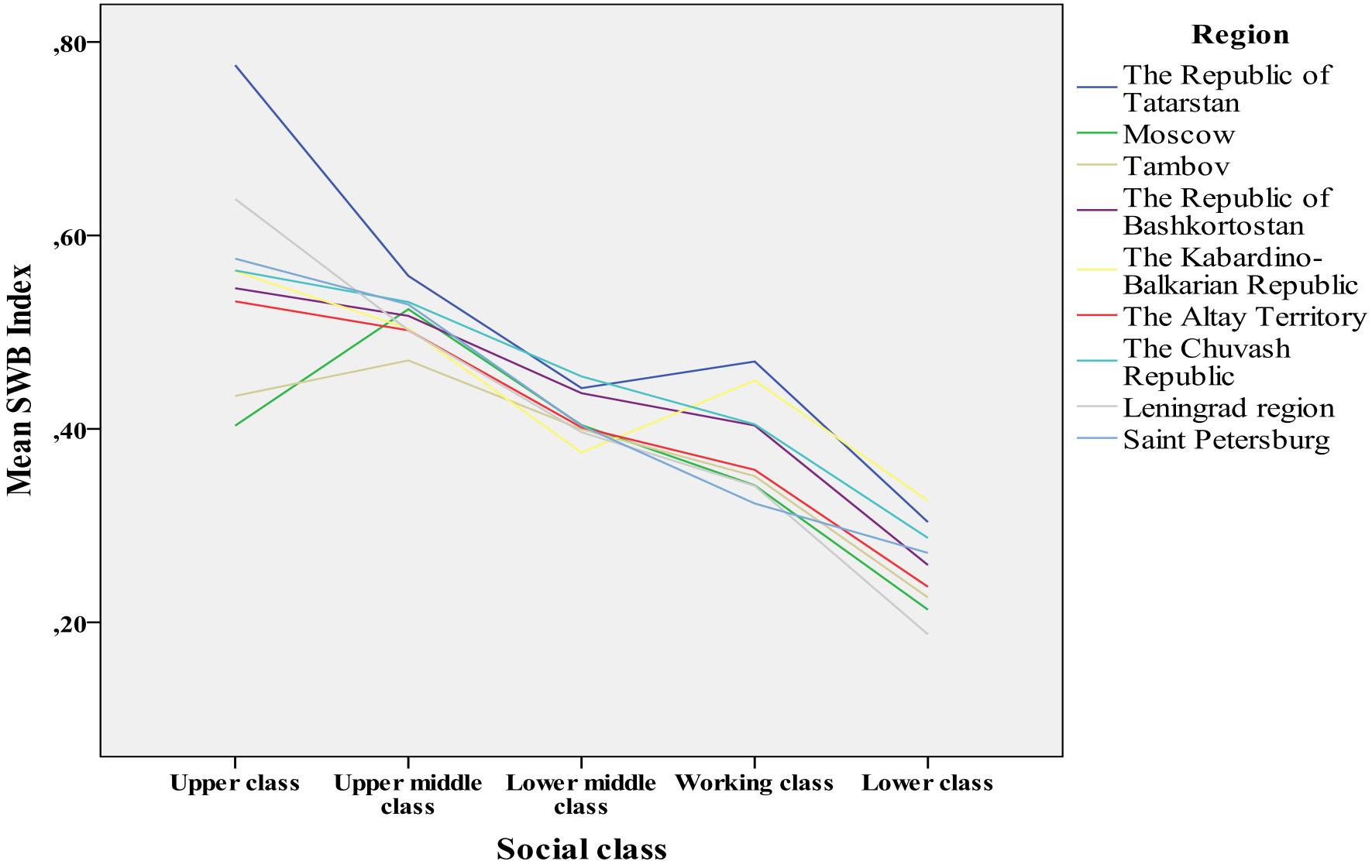
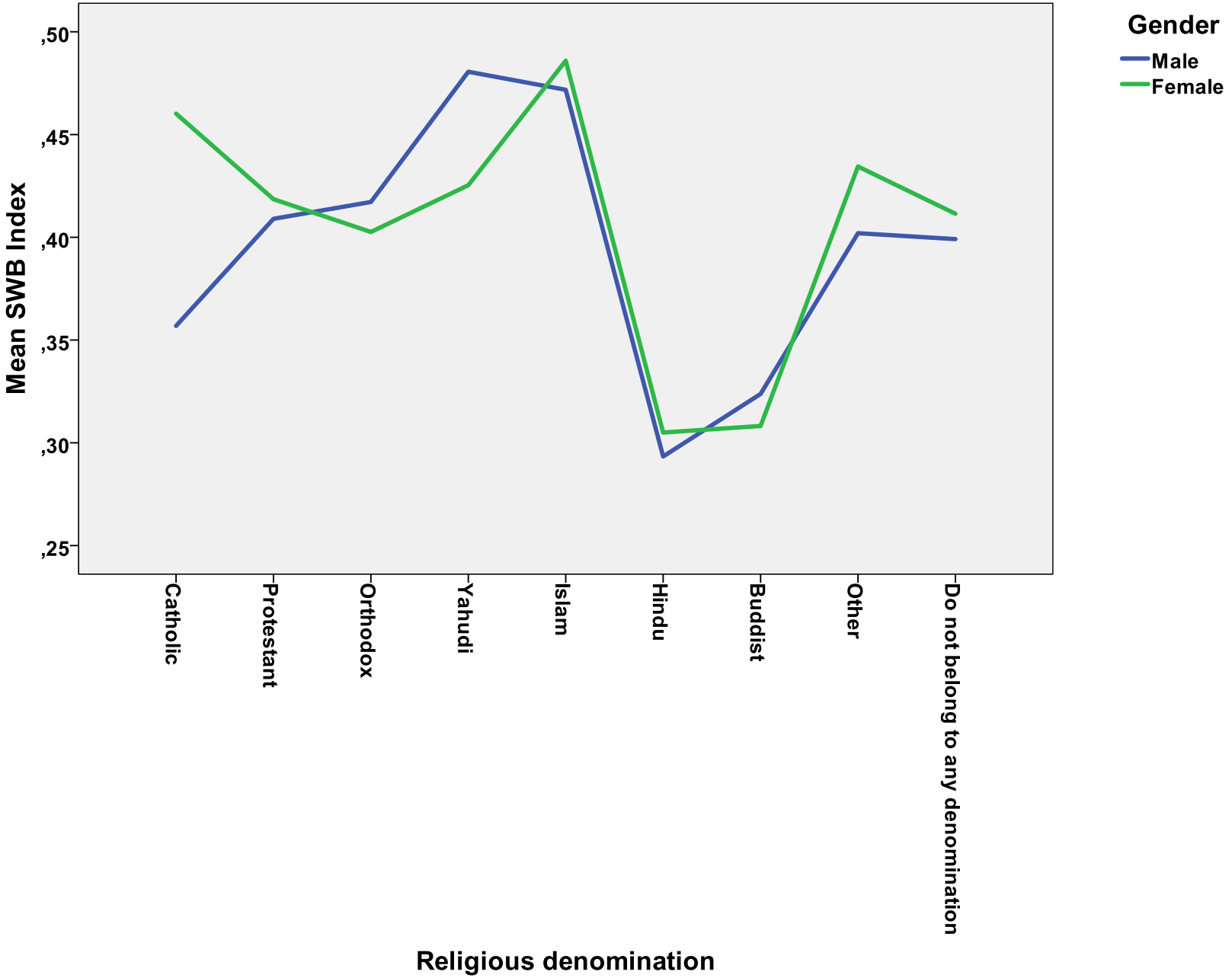
46
4
The Russian Federation
Moscow
Saint Petersburg
Tambov
The Leningrad region
The Kabardino-Balkarian Republic
The Chuvash Republic
The Republic of Tatarstan
The Republic of Bashkortostan
The Altay Territory
Lower class
Working class
Lower middle class
Upper middle class
Upper class

Controlled comparison for the SWB Index and social class



Controlled comparison for the SWB Index and religious denomination



Pooled sample OLS regressions	R^2	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	n of cases
Income scale	0,106	0,042	0,001	**0,326*** **	31,941	8601
Relative income	0,087	0,178	0,006	**0,294*** **	28,553	8599
Logged relative income	0,073	0,130	0,005	**0,270*** **	29,438	8599
Financial dissatisfaction	0,055	-0,024	0,001	**-0,235*** **	-22,539	8730
Financial dissatisfaction lg	0,035	-0,080	0,005	**-0,187*** **	-17,507	8418
Family savings	0,010	0,027	0,003	0,100***	9,210	8365
GINI	0,001	-0,187	0,061	-0,033**	-3,054	8763
R/P 10% ratio	0,001	-0,002	0,001	-0,035**	-3,311	8763
Education	0,011	0,013	0,001	**0,106*** **	9,926	8736
Age	0,034	-0,003	0,000	**-0,185*** **	-17,577	8756
Age squared	0,029	-2,745E-5	0,000	**-0,170*** **	-16,158	8756
Health	0,132	0,118	0,003	**0,364*** **	36,446	8713
Partner / mate	0,006	0,038	0,005	0,079***	7,439	8712
Married	0,007	0,039	0,005	0,082***	7,675	8712
Divorced / separated	0,017	-0,100	0,008	**-0,130*** **	-12,258	8712
Living with parents	0,006	0,041	0,006	0,075***	6,957	8645
Number of children	0,002	-0,010	0,002	-0,045***	-4,226	8719

Pooled sample OLS regressions	R^2	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	n of cases
Employed person	0,001	0,017	0,006	0,032**	2,956	8687
Breadwinner	0,006	-0,037	0,005	-0,078***	-7,239	8645
Retired person	0,010	-0,067	0,007	-0,098***	-9,223	8687
Being a boss	0,002	0,028	0,006	0,049***	4,528	8362
Physical vs intellectual labor	0,012	0,009	0,001	0,109***	10,114	8537
Routine vs creative labor	0,013	0,010	0,001	0,113***	10,546	8527
Locus of control	0,124	0,040	0,001	**0,353*** **	35,152	8693
Independence in work	0,026	0,014	0,001	**0,162*** **	15,187	8521
Afraid of losing a job	0,003	-0,012	0,002	-0,053***	-4872	8499
Deprived of cash	0,051	-0,050	0,002	**-0,226*** **	-21,542	8600
Deprived of med. care	0,024	-0,050	0,003	**-0,156*** **	-14,553	8484
Deprived of safety	0,015	-0,044	0,004	**-0,123*** **	-11,489	8532
Deprived of food	0,039	-0,063	0,003	**-0,198*** **	-18,766	8616
Secure neighborhood	0,026	0,055	0,004	**0,162*** **	14,965	8308
Trusting others	0,017	0,067	0,006	**0,130*** **	11,850	8231

The explanatory variables on social identities

Pooled sample OLS regressions	R^2	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	n of cases
Social class	0,057	0,064	0,003	0,239***	22,627	8487
Local identity	0,005	0,035	0,005	0,071***	6,544	8361
National identity	0,001	0,033	0,010	0,034***	3,216	8691
World identity	0,005	0,033	0,005	0,069***	6,362	8495
Relative cosmopolitan identity	0,001	0,012	0,006	0,024	2,230	8289
Religious person	0,004	0,033	0,006	0,066***	5,892	7877
Not a religious person	0,003	-0,028	0,006	-0,053***	-4,734	7877
Atheist	0,001	-0,032	0,011	-0,032***	-2,818	7877
Islam	0,015	0,071	0,007	0,122***	10,662	7547
Orthodox	0,013	-0,063	0,006	-0,113***	-9,884	7547

Methodological limitations

- Multilevel analysis is not possible due to small sample of regions (10 cases);
- Place of residence is not marked in the WVS files, so it not possible to nest people in cities with attributable objective socio-economic conditions either.

Steps to proceed in the research

- Employ new dummy variables depicting socio-demographic, socio-cultural and political etc. situation in a region (Gini, R/P 10% ratio and the balance of average income and the cost of living were used in the previous research on income inequality as predictor of SWB);
- Build OLS regressions on a pooled sample and controlling for region of residence;
- Apply path-analysis to explore the effect of social identities as a mediating factor between socio-economic position and SWB.

Thank you for your attention!

Questions, comments and suggestions are welcome!

This report was presented at the training methodological workshop
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http://lcsr.hse.ru/en/seminar_m2015

Настоящий доклад был представлен на методологическом учебном семинаре
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31 марта – 6 апреля 2015 года – Турция.

http://lcsr.hse.ru/seminar_m2015