

## State of Trust?

### Trust Analysis in Moscow, Russia

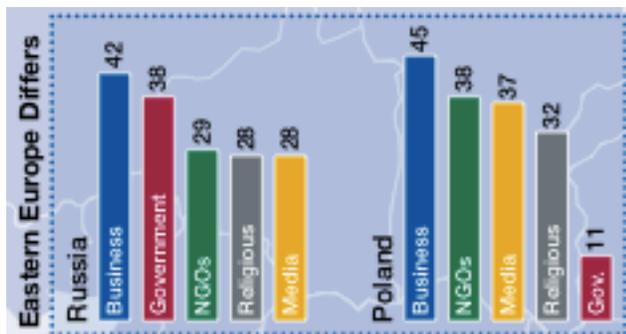
*Having spent many years trying to define the essentials of trust, I arrived at the position that if two people could say two things to each other and mean them, Then there was the basis for real trust. The two things were: “I mean you no harm” and “I seek your greatest good.”*

- Jim Meehan, psychologist and poet (via [The Speed of Trust](#))

*Who we are cannot be separated from where we're from—and when we ignore that fact, planes crash.*

- Malcolm Gladwell, [Outliers](#)

An annual report published by the largest public relations firm in the world, the Edelman Trust Barometer, conveyed some fascinating information in the 2008 report ([http://www.edelman.com/trust/2008/TrustBarometer08\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.edelman.com/trust/2008/TrustBarometer08_FINAL.pdf)). Comparing a number of European countries, the trust levels in Eastern Europe were significantly lower than all of the other comparative countries.



With none of the five categories crossing the 50% mark in Russia or Poland, the data indicates two countries with abnormally high levels of distrust in a range of areas. Arguably trust is one of the most important issues people face in society, with neighbors, peers, in business to business relationships, and all other areas of human interaction including all aspects related to religion and mission.<sup>1</sup>

Based on research that a private firm was developing, a more detailed analysis of the five key areas outlined by Edelman were explored for Moscow. For the study to be of greater value for mission purposes, it was expanded to compare and contrast the Russian adult on the street to the Russian adult in a Russian Baptist Union (RBU) church. While this will not give a full understanding of the Russian mind, it gives insight into one of the fundamental areas that impact an individual's world-view, decision-making, etc. Conducted in Moscow, the research represents information that is pertinent to the capital city. While the findings might not pertain to all of Russia in every aspect, there are aspects that will have overlap with shared nationality, history, culture, influences, etc.

<sup>1</sup> For additional reading: Edelman Trust Barometers annual reports and [The Speed of Trust](#) by Stephen M.R. Covey. Also a review of the Gospels when considering the subject may prove worthwhile.

## Methodology

The data collection tool was a one-page survey that was distributed in Russian.<sup>2</sup> All of the research was conducted in May and June 2009. The original research--unpublished--characterized the Russian professional. This was expanded to some degree for this research. Samples were taken from a broad cross-section of society including business persons, university students, teachers, and among some Alcoholics Anonymous attendees. The man on the street respondents were not asked if they participated in an RBU church.

For data collection among RBU churches, information was gathered in the following congregations:

1. (names suppressed)
2. (names suppressed)
3. (names suppressed)

|            | Age   |       |       |       | Gender |      | Education |       |       |
|------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|------|-----------|-------|-------|
|            | 18-24 | 25-34 | 35-50 | 50-65 | Female | Male | H.S.      | Univ. | Grad. |
| RBU        | 5     | 12    | 14    | 2     | 15     | 16   | 31        | 18    | 1     |
| Man on st. | 34    | 17    | 15    | 6     | 51     | 19   | 71        | 68    | 3     |

Total respondents are 33 and 72 respectively. While these sample sizes would be small by some standards, each is bigger than the sample size used for the annual trust barometer reports. Limitations of sample size were allowed for in data analysis.

One problem with the tool was that a large percentage of respondents did not complete the trust ranking on each of the five category headings. As a result, this makes strict comparison with Edelman results from 2008 difficult, though significant divergences may be observed. The reasons for these divergences could be multiple including different data tool and collection methodology, significant change in world events with the onset of the global financial crisis, etc.

This research would simply be a heap of numbers without the able analysis and commentary of CW in Italy. Most of the comments and ideas set forth here are his contribution. Many thanks also go out to A, P, B, A, G, M, A, A, L, A and others. There would have been nothing to analyze without your help on the ground.

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<sup>2</sup> See Addendum A.

## Trust vs. “Trust”

As a percentage, how much an individual trusts something could be somewhat misleading. For an individual to have a 40% or 60% trust level in something may be sufficient for voting for a politician, but probably not sufficient to merit a ride in an airplane. One anecdotal way to consider trust is to think of a small child on a table. Asked to jump to an adult, the child will quickly decide whether there is a sufficient amount of trust to make the leap of faith or not. This becomes a yes or no decision.

For this reason, the data was compiled in two ways. The first is based on the yes/no decision of trust. For respondents that marked a 4 or 5 out of 5, this was counted as a “yes” response to trust in that category. A ranking in the range of 1 to 3 counted as a “no” response to trust. This is consistent with Edelman’s analytical methodology. **(The yes/no trust representation will always be presented first in this report.)** However, to ensure that results were consistent with the overall data, it was also compiled as a total average score of all responses. In a category where many respondents put a “3”, this would indicate that it is not at an extreme on either end of the trust spectrum. For this category, moving to a level of trust would, in theory, be an easier or quicker process. When both sets of results report a high or low number, then an extreme level of trust may be concluded in this area. To summarize the graphic representation, each may be described respectively as:

1. The percent of people who trust this entity or type of entity, and
2. The cumulative trust average expressed as a percent.<sup>3</sup>

It is important to differentiate between the concept of trust versus “trust”. In other words, some things have earned our trust, while other things are simply yet to lose it. On a survey, both of these perspectives can show up as a 4 or a 5 on the trust scale, but they are very different. When it comes down to it, a person’s allegiance will always lie with that which has earned his or her trust. However, to lose trust or to *lose faith* in a group is a much more fragile and transitory thing.

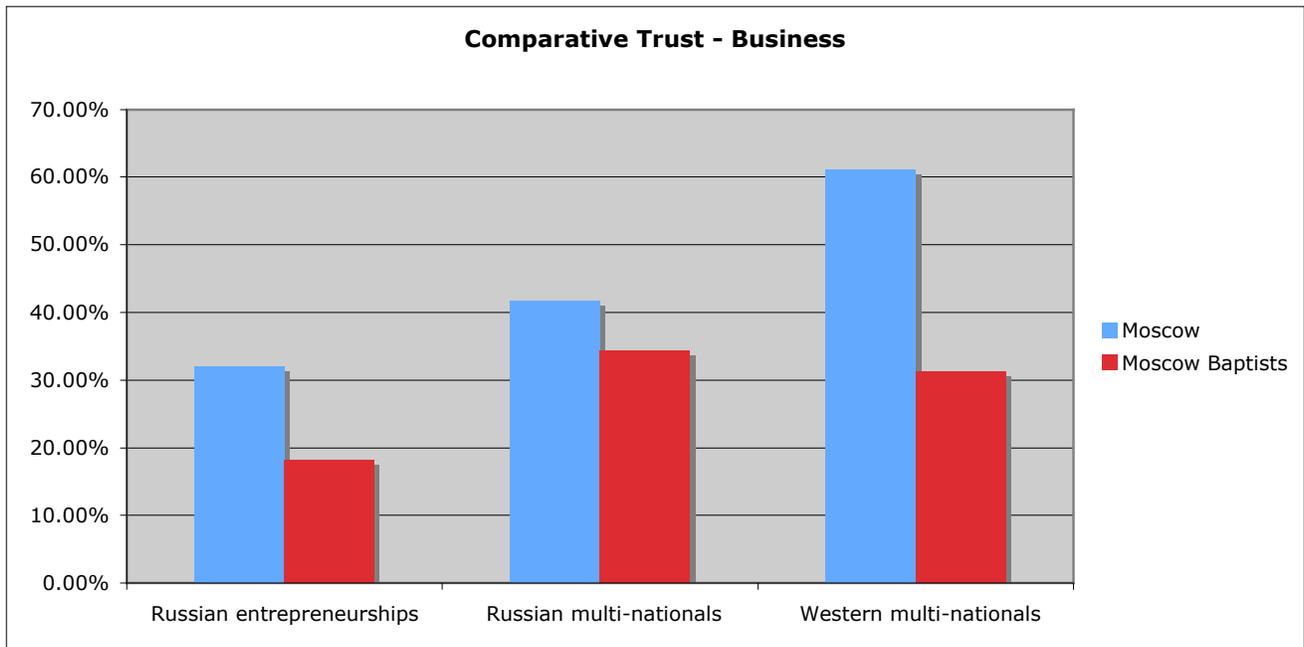
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<sup>3</sup> On a scale of 1 to 5, a 1 would be equal to 20% while a 5 would equal 100%. This creates a unique aspect in reporting that the lowest score the cumulative average could be is 20%. (In spite of this, there were participants that wrote in their own “0” for their selection. However as this does not fit the data set, it was recorded as a “1”. For this reason, scores in the 20-40% range should be viewed as extraordinarily low (subtract 20% in this context). However as scores climb into the 50% and above range, then it may be assumed to more accurately reflect the trust level of the individual.

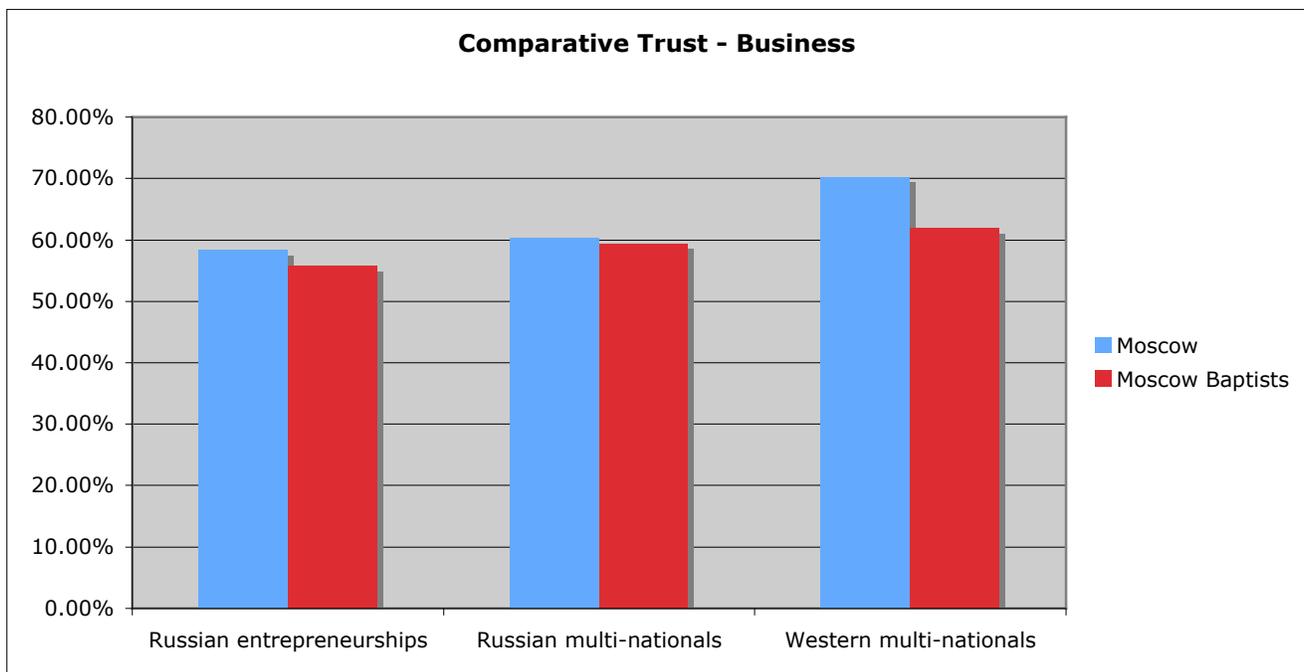
## Data Analysis

### Business

% OF PEOPLE WHO TRUST...



CUMULATIVE TRUST AVERAGE (%)



Surprisingly, this is one of the most complex and telling of the five topics included in the survey. It seems to indicate some very different attitudes based on age and religious affiliation. The results found in this area are probably wildly different than they would have been 15 or 20 years ago. First, it's pretty obvious that no Russian has much trust in any Russian based business. Remarkably, this seems

to be even more pronounced when talking about smaller, local businesses. Whereas you would find the opposite attitude in the States and many western countries, where the entrepreneur is considered one of the things that makes the economy great, Russians do not have very much trust for them. Instead, Russians, regardless of category, prefer larger business structures.

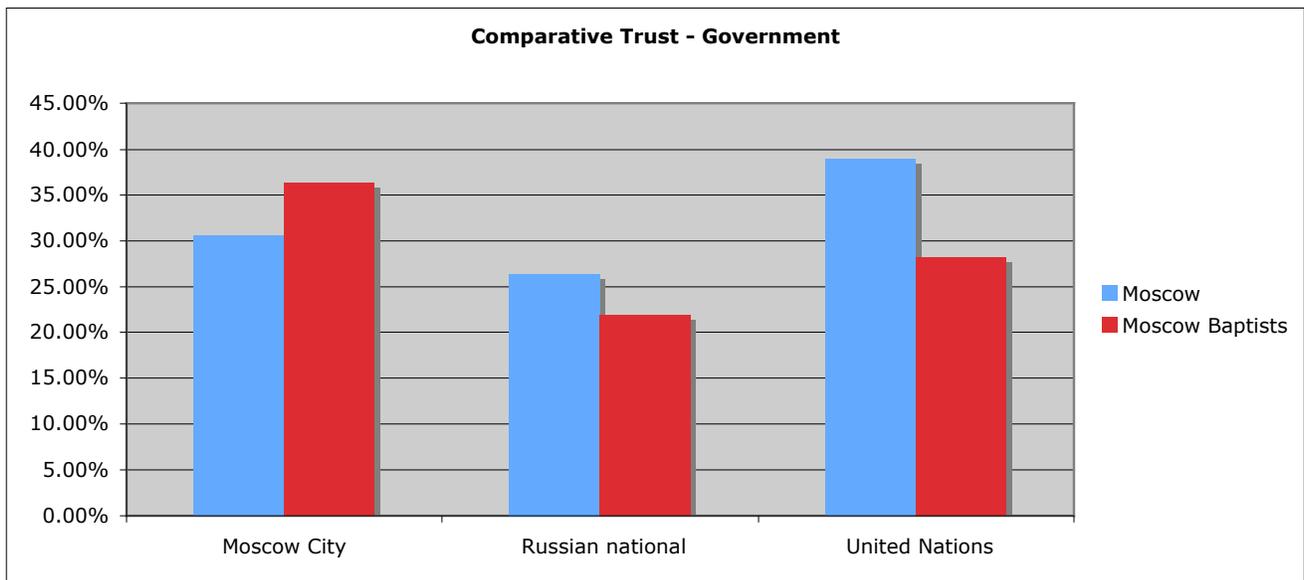
This trend is even stronger among younger respondents, who view small business even more warily, and are much more trustful of large companies, especially international ones. Brand recognition would seem to be of great importance among this generation. They seem eager to embrace the trends and products that the rest of the western world enjoys. Even older Russians are slightly more trustful of large international companies than they are of large Russian ones. This attitude may very well be based on the same reasons mentioned above (corruption, inefficiency, etc.). It is also worth noting that when scandals and problems strike a large Russian company, or the store next door, the population of Moscow is much more likely to hear about it than when the same scandal strikes a company that is based 5,000 miles away. In this case, it is simply a lack of information that breeds an ignorant trust. These companies would fall into the category of having not lost trust yet. Finally, when looking strictly at older Muscovites, you will see trust levels that register well below the average. This is consistent with attitudes that are still a little wary of capitalism in general and regret that a more democratic governmental structure does not provide the financial safety net they saw during the Communist era.

Interestingly, Moscow Baptists are significantly less trustful of business in general than are their secular counterparts, especially foreign companies (by an astounding 29%). This may have everything to do with the age of the respondents, as you might find much more similar numbers if you isolate only middle aged respondents to the general Moscow poll. However, on the surface, it would seem to indicate that Baptists are much less excited by Western commercialism and prefers a more traditional culture. If this is true, it could signal some difficulties as Baptists seek to relate to young, secular Russians. Their cultures do not have much overlap, and they may find attractional ministry very difficult, as “they just don’t get it” and appear, in the eyes of the lost, to have very little that is relevant to offer.

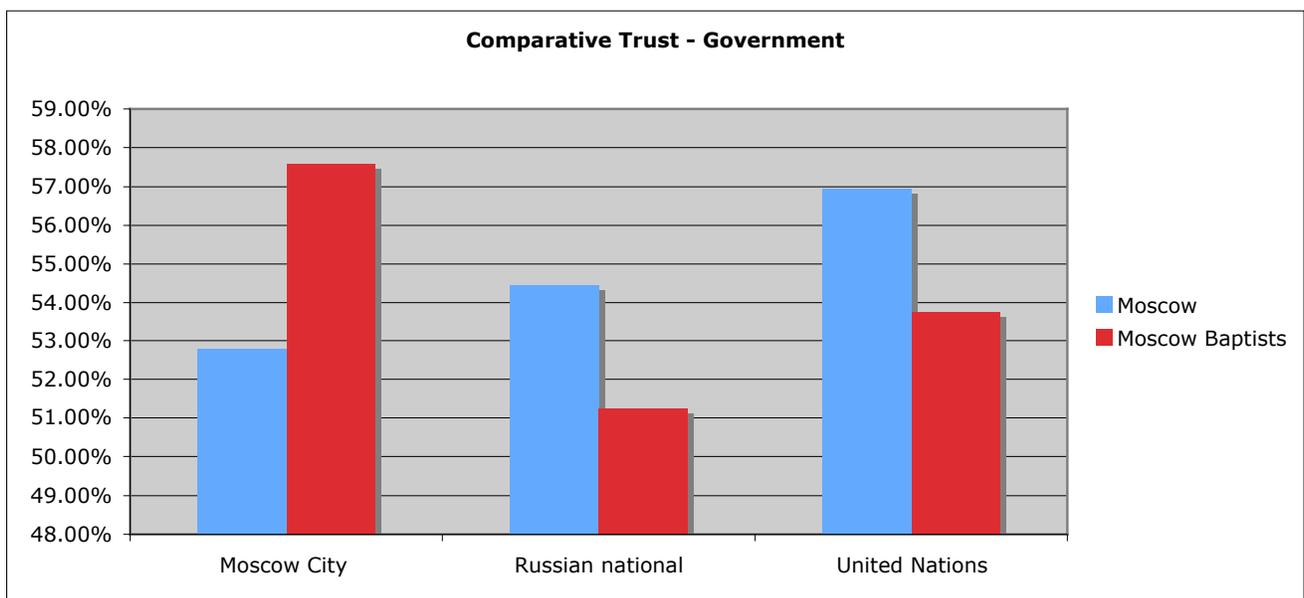
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### Government

% OF PEOPLE WHO TRUST...



CUMULATIVE TRUST AVERAGE (%)



In general, this is probably the hardest area in which to draw Moscow vs. Baptist comparisons because of the drastic demographic differences that were discussed earlier. However, it is fairly obvious that no one seems to have a great deal of trust in any level of Russian government.

Older Muscovites demonstrate an interesting inverse relationship here to what is observable in the Business category. They seem to continue to carry a little more trust in the government than they do in business, backing up the conclusions drawn in the last section. However, it should be noted, that while they trust government more than business, the majority still do not trust either. Younger generations, though, seem to have made their position very clear, almost showing disdain for the Russian

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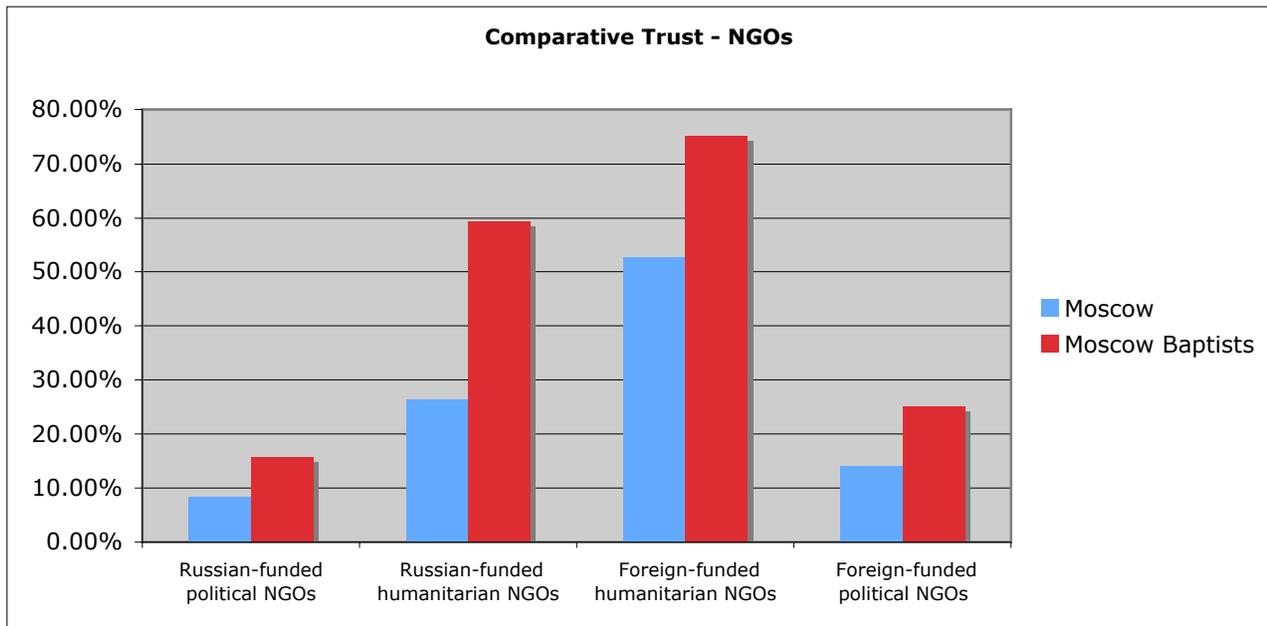
government and placing more of their faith in international governing bodies, like the UN. They may very well feel that the government is often dishonest with the people and has hidden agendas and motives. This could present some challenges for government attempts to centralize and strengthen its' position, as the younger generation begins to take a more active role in civic affairs.

For whatever reason, Moscow Baptists seem to place the highest level of trust in their local government, unlike their secular counterparts. This may be because they feel that they have more say in what happens on a local level, or they may continue to carry resentment for the national government for some persecution that occurred in the past. As in the Business category, Baptists seem wary of outside influence, showing less trust for the UN than the average Russian.

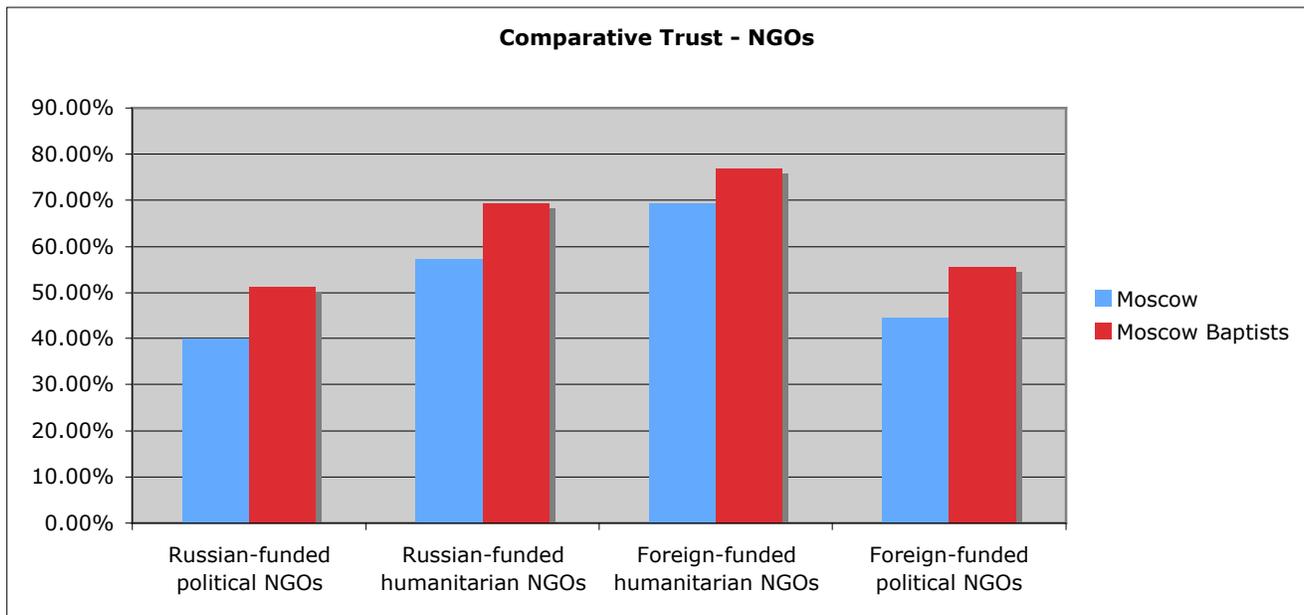
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### NGOs

% OF PEOPLE WHO TRUST...



### CUMULATIVE TRUST AVERAGE (%)



The dramatic point in this section is the huge difference in trust for political NGOs versus Humanitarian ones. The political organizations, and especially Russian funded ones, score even lower numbers than the government itself, garnering almost universal disdain. While humanitarian NGOs are seen as being much more trustworthy, foreign organizations are seen in a far more favorable light than Russian ones. It is likely that the reasons for this are similar to those that you find in the Business section. Russian funded NGOs may be seen as corrupt or inefficient. Also, it's very interesting to note that while their numbers are strong, foreign NGOs still do not score as high on the trust scale as do

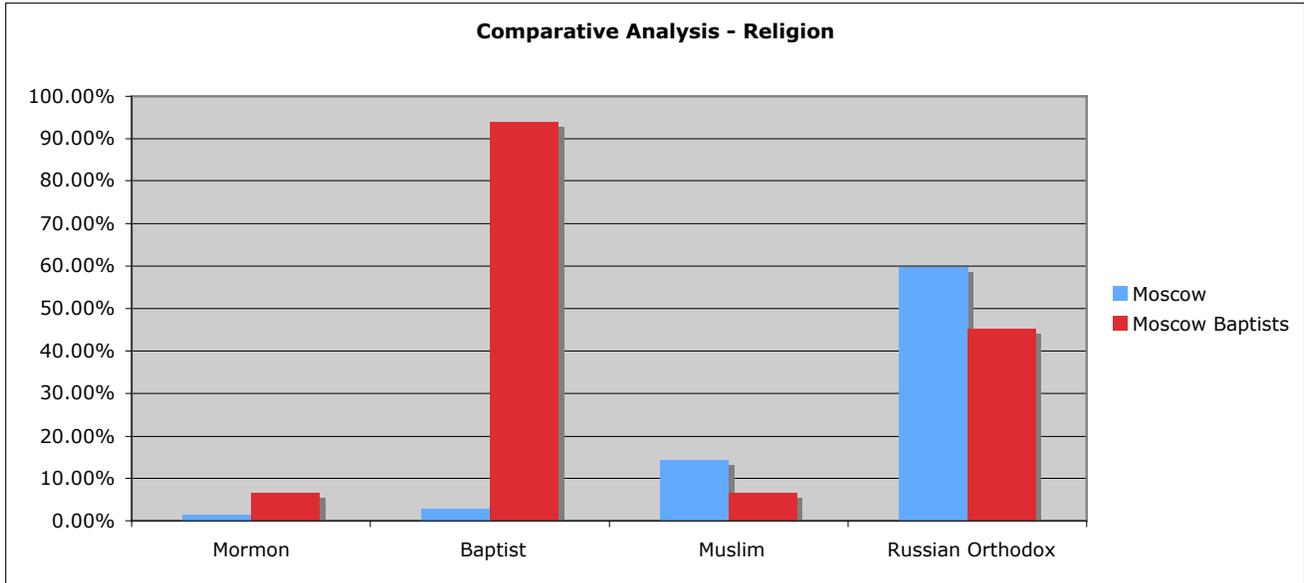
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foreign businesses. Again, this seems to relate to motives. Oftentimes, NGOs are seen as having hidden motives for the things they do, while a company's motives are clear and upfront—make money. Generosity and compassion simply for their own sake are just a little too good for some people to believe.

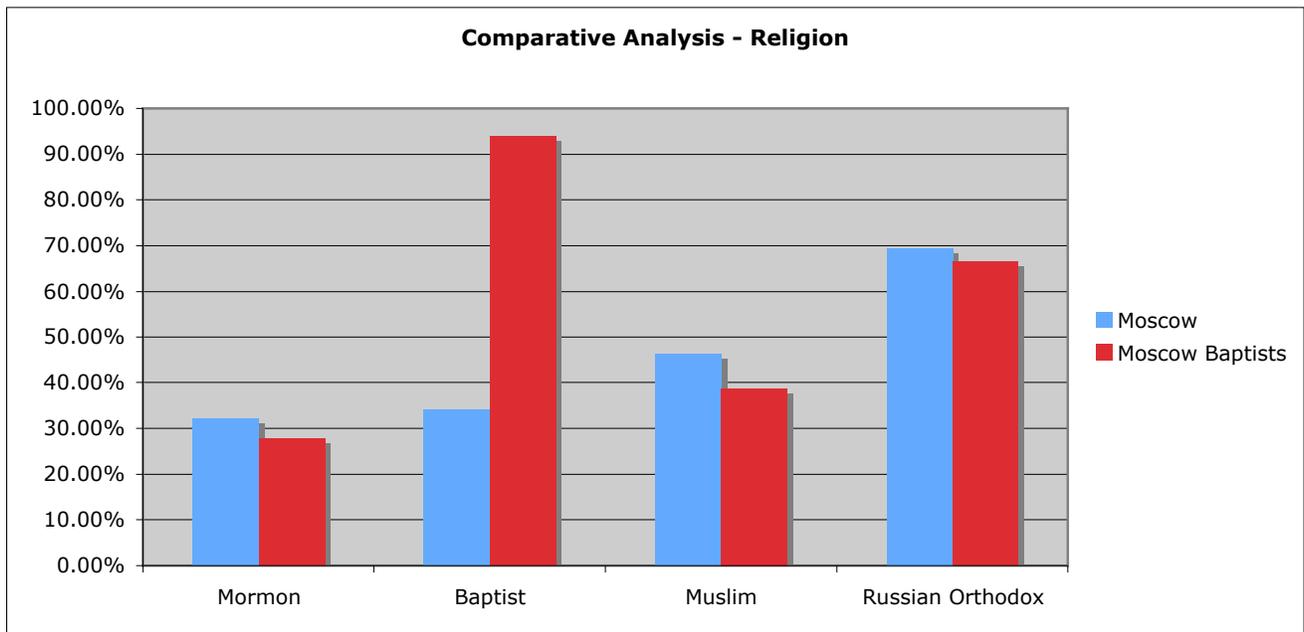
Among Baptists, here we seem to have an outlier. While in all other categories Baptists are distrustful of foreigners, they have scored foreign NGOs with the highest marks of the entire survey. Being believers, Baptists likely have less of a problem understanding an organization seeking to do something good for humanity without ulterior motives. At this point is an area of real potential for the Baptist church in Russia. There is a strong point of commonality between both groups in the emphasis placed on and respect for those who help the less fortunate. Potentially, this could be an area where the Baptists could demonstrate their trustworthiness to the secular population. They could show a real sense of relevance and true community involvement by participating strongly and intentionally in this area.

**Religion**

% OF PEOPLE WHO TRUST...



CUMULATIVE TRUST AVERAGE (%)



While noteworthy, the low scores in this area are consistent with expectations. However, there are a couple of points of information that are surprising. First, the high trust scores received by the Russian Orthodox Church on the part of presumably secular respondents are higher than anticipated. Though the numbers were slightly lower for the younger generation, they were not significantly lower. The level of trust here is likely connected to the inter-connectedness between nationality and the state religion. While the majority of participants (especially the younger ones) probably do not actively practice the Orthodox religion, it is a part of their culture, and it has been so for centuries.

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Interestingly, when you look at the raw data, you'll see that most respondents gave the exact same score to Mormons and Baptists. This seems to indicate that in the eyes of the average Russian, there is little or no known difference between these groups. They do not have any understanding of different denominations, sects, or cults, and they certainly do not trust them. Excluding Orthodoxy, other religions are the only things that young Russians trust less than politics, and their rejection of this imported religion seems, on the surface, to be almost complete. They seem to be exponentially more likely to embrace foreign commercialism and humanitarian aid than foreign morality.

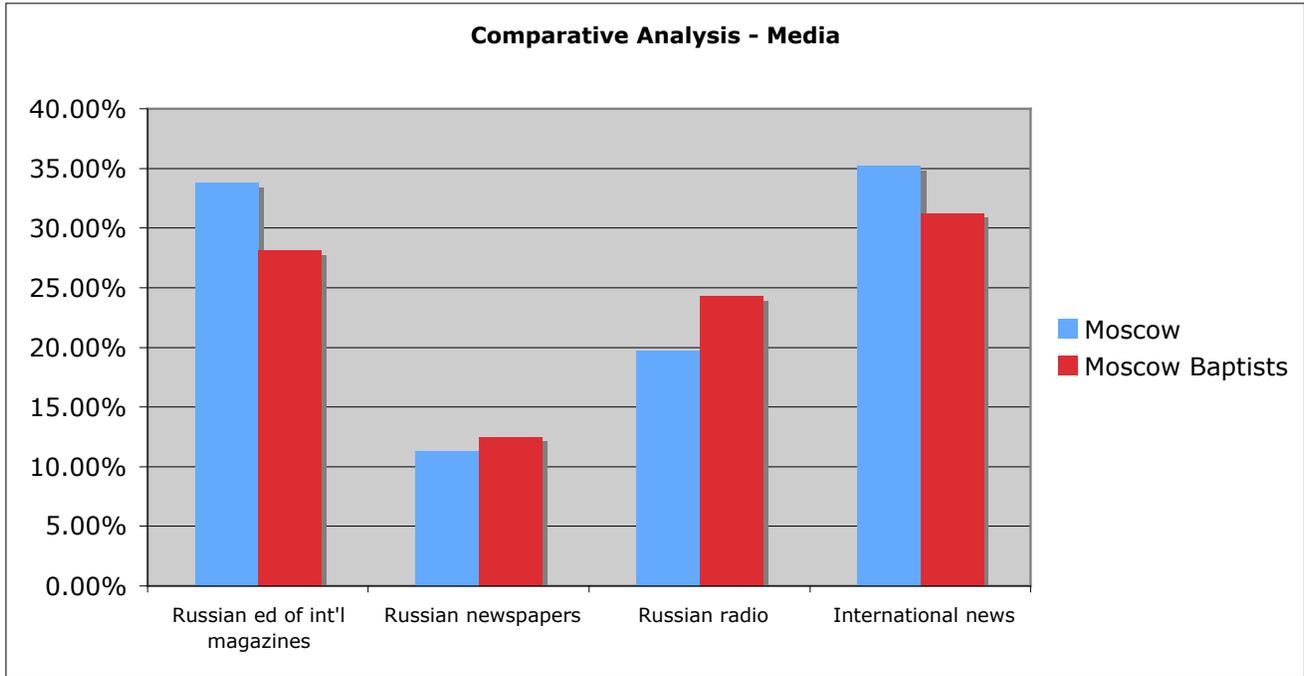
While the Baptist responses in this area were pretty much what one would expect, it is surprising that almost half still trust the Russian Orthodox Church. This is much higher than expectations among other countries such as Italian Baptists and the Roman Catholic Church.

Both at barely observable levels, trust of Baptists and Mormons by the man on the street are not significantly different. However, that trust levels of the ordinary Russian for Muslims is some 5 times higher than that of Baptists or Mormons is statistically significant. As the Orthodox Church allows those of Muslim descent to continue to be Muslim without serious attention or criticism, this follows with a theme of the integration of religion and nationality.

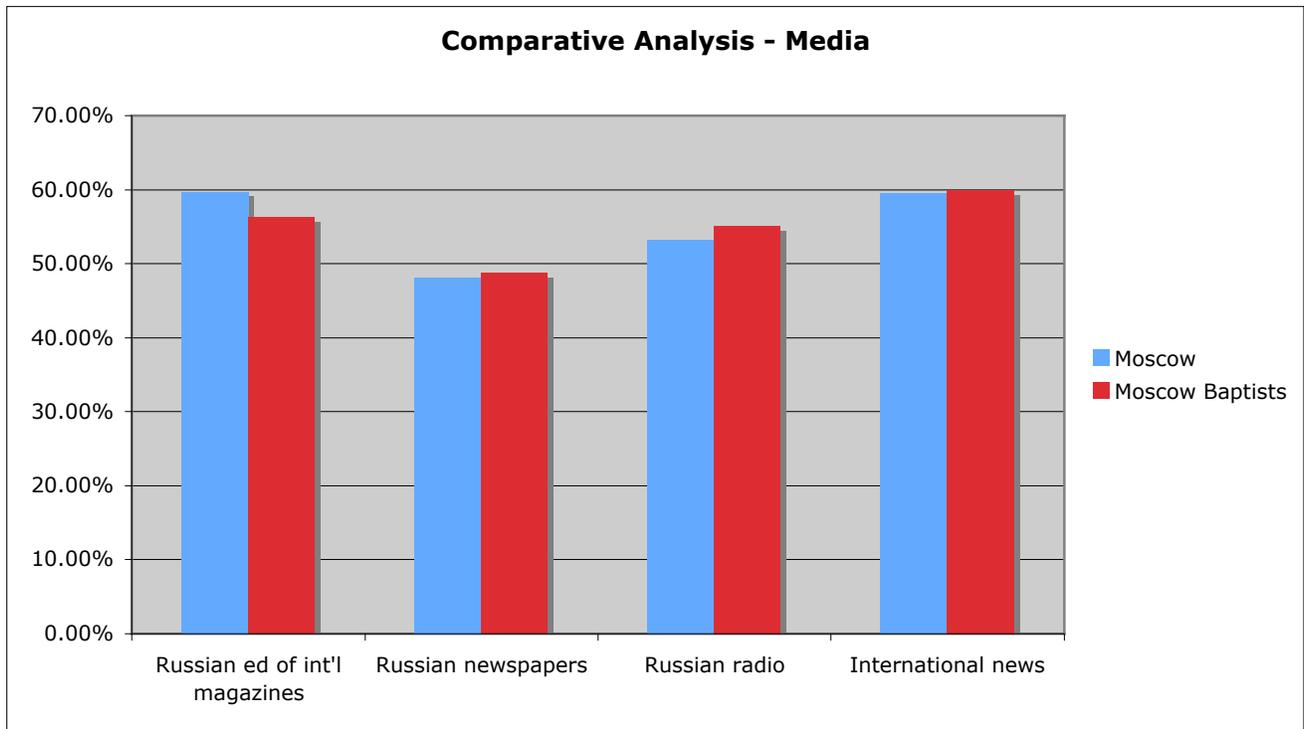
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**Media**

% OF PEOPLE WHO TRUST...



CUMULATIVE TRUST AVERAGE (%)



It seems obvious that decades of state controlled information have greatly influenced this subject area. Russians, both secular and Baptist, have almost no trust in news originating in Russia. They seem to be much more apt to get news that they feel is reliable from outside the country. Interestingly, this area

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saw the smallest differences between Baptist and non-Baptist Russians. The government mouthpiece identity of the Russian media with its' hidden agendas and intentional misinformation has led to very low levels of trust in the media in general.

One thing that would have been interesting here would have been to find out what proportion of Russians are now getting their information in traditional ways versus the internet. This would tell us who is controlling what young Russians are hearing and thinking.

## Conclusions

From my observations of this data, I can draw what seem to me to be a few key conclusions. They are, of course, open to more interpretation, but there are a few points that seem pretty safe and obvious.

**It's all about Motives:** One thing that these results make abundantly clear is that their trust is directly proportional to the motives that exist or are perceived. Companies, organizations, and institutions with clear, up front motives are much more likely to be trusted than those with unclear or hidden motives. This was demonstrated in every single one of the five topic areas on this survey. We know exactly what Coke is about, and so we trust it, but that Russian company is probably in bed with the government, and so we don't. The Russian government has not always been straightforward, so we don't trust them, but we've seen what the UN has done, and so we have more faith in them. Political NGOs are just puppets for the government, which we hate, but humanitarian ones are actually trying to do some good in our country. Even though we don't love them, we trust the Orthodox Church because we understand it and know what they are about, but other sects are just importing morality and have hidden agendas, and so we don't trust them. The Russian media has never been trustworthy, and so we have to find reliable information elsewhere that can't be influenced by our government or other agendas.

It's clear that to garner the trust of Russians, the motives for your actions must be up-front and obvious. It seems that even self-serving or immoral motives are better than hidden ones. The particular history of the Russian people has apparently made them highly suspicious and careful in what they place their trust. They no longer want to have things controlled for them, and want to make up their own minds and form their own opinions.

**The Evil Government:** In a similar vein to this, it is clear that Russians mistrust anything that is in any way related to government. If the government is perceived to have touched something, it automatically becomes untrustworthy. This is particularly true of the younger generations, who are much less apt to have faith in institutions of any kind, especially governmental ones. Gone are the days when the state's seal of approval brought credibility. Now it just brings skepticism and suspicion.

**The Baptist Culture:** It's pretty clear that Russian Baptists have a culture in their faith and in their churches that dramatically sets them apart from secular Russians on many levels. They are less open to new trends, less involved in change, more disposed to trust the government (at least locally), and less accepting of outside influences. While this traditional approach has its virtues, it will continue to alienate them from their neighbors as time goes on, and make them increasingly irrelevant in their communities. They must look for points of commonality to avoid this fate at all costs. Relevance often breeds trust, and without it, they will continue to score 3% among Russians in general. If 97% of the population finds you unworthy of their faith, then it's time to take a hard look at changing something. Moscow will never be won by people who are disconnected from its society.

While this research was specific to views about Mormons and Baptists, the reality is that trust levels of other religious groups including Protestant groups or denominations would likely score low. The low levels of trust in these groups indicate a lack of trust in groups that they have heard bad things about and/or with whom people have not had positive experiences.

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## Addendum A: 2009 Вопрос доверия

Выберите соответствующий Вам ответ:

**Возраст:**  18-24  25-34  35-50  50-65  65+

**Пол:**  Мужской  Женский

**Образование:**  Средняя школа  Университет  Научная степень

**Я** (обведите все, что вам подходит):  Студент  Дипломированный специалист  Рабочий   
Безработный

Выберите соответствующий Вам ответ на каждой строке. (1 = нет доверия, 5 = максимальное доверие)

**Я доверяю:**

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|   |   |   |   |   | <b>Бизнес</b>   |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Российское предпринимательство                                    |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Российские мультинациональные компании (п-р: Лукойл)              |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Западные мультинациональные компании (п-р: Microsoft, McDonald's) |
|   |   |   |   |   | <b>Правительство</b>  |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Правительство Москвы  |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Высшее российское руководство                                     |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | ООН   |
|   |   |   |   |   | <b>Негосударственные структуры</b>                                |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Российские общественные организации (п-р: движение Наши)          |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Российские гуманитарные организации (п-р: Матери Беслана)         |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Иностранные гуманитарные организации (п-р: Красный Крест)         |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Иностранные политические общественные организации                 |
|   |   |   |   |   | <b>Религия</b>  |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Мормоны   |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Баптисты  |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Мусульмане  |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Православные  |
|   |   |   |   |   | <b>Медиа</b>  |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Российские варианты западных изданий (п-р: Forbes)                |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Российские газеты   |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Российское радио  |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Международные новостные агентства (п-р: CNN)                      |

Дополнительные комментарии по поводу вопроса доверия в России: