

**Middle class in the
Republic of Tatarstan:
Analysis of the results of
sociological research**

MIDDLE CLASS IN THE REPUBLIC OF TATARSTAN: ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS OF SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH

CLASE MEDIA EN LA REPÚBLICA DE TATARSTÁN: ANÁLISIS DE LOS RESULTADOS DE LA INVESTIGACIÓN SOCIOLÓGICA

ABSTRACT

The article presents the results of the authors' sociological study of the middle class, conducted in the Republic of Tatarstan. Based on the data obtained, the authors define its general stratification characteristics, and regional specific features of employment behaviour, consumer practices, life values and attitudes.

Keywords: middle class; self-identification; social well-being, socio-economic status, entrepreneurial activity, standard of consumption, occupational level, professionalism, leisure practices.

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RESUMEN

El artículo presenta los resultados del estudio sociológico de los autores de la clase media, realizado en la República de Tatarstán. Sobre la base de los datos obtenidos, los autores definen sus características generales de estratificación y las características específicas regionales del comportamiento laboral, las prácticas de los consumidores, los valores de la vida y las actitudes.

Palabras clave: clase media; autoidentificación; Bienestar social, estatus socioeconómico, actividad empresarial, nivel de consumo, nivel ocupacional, profesionalidad, prácticas de ocio.

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 **YULDUZ R. KHAYRULLINA**
 Kazan Federal University, Russian Federation
 iouldouz@yandex.ru

 **MARIA YU. EFLOVA**
 Kazan Federal University, Russian Federation
 meflova@gmail.com

 **EVELINA R. GALIEVA**
 Kazan Federal University, Russian Federation
 evelinalim@gmail.com

 **REGINA R. GARIPOVA**
 Kazan Federal University, Russian Federation
 regina2873@rambler.ru

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INTRODUCTION

In modern conditions, the most important and significant indicator of the economic and social well-being of the region, and society as a whole, is the population's satisfaction with the quality of living, economic processes, social infrastructure, its social well-being and the degree of civic participation in the reforms. Middle class is the basic human capital of the region, its strategic potential. This actualizes the research of middle class as the main guarantor and social partner of domestic reforms.

The role and place of middle class is indicated in Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly, within the framework of the program of spatial development of Russia, including the development of cities and other settlements [1]. It is noted, that such a large-scale project is a new economic and social prospects for people, modern environment for life, for cultural and civic initiatives, for small businesses and start-ups. All this will contribute to the formation of mass, active middle class in Russia.

At the same time, there is no unambiguous interpretation of the essence of middle class, its basic characteristics, conditions of formation, and developmental features, in domestic and world science [2, 3, 4]. When defining the middle class, Russian researchers took into account the following criteria: education - not lower than secondary level; monthly income per capita is median and higher in the Russian Federation and each region; nonmanual kind of work; self-identification (not lower than 4 or 5 by a ten-point scale) [5]. There are the assessments of the middle class, based on the results of applied sociological surveys in the subjects of the Russian Federation, at the regional level, for example, the so-called nuclear

model, which is divided into "core", "reserve" and "periphery" [6].

Within the framework of the authors' studies, carried out in the Republic of Tatarstan, the middle class is divided into the proper middle class and the core of middle class. The middle class is a group of respondents – the representatives of a social group with a key criterion "monthly income". The people, surveyed by such criteria as education, self-identification, the type of work activity and trust in power, were identified as the core of the middle class [7].

So, theoretical and applied study of the middle class is extremely relevant, as it has serious social significance in the structure of society; it contributes to the social stability and innovative development. Considered social stratum can ensure the competitiveness of the region. This requires the development of a strategy for its development, the comprehension of needs and priorities.

METHODS

Based on domestic approaches to the analysis of the middle class, within the framework of the authors' empirical research, carried out in the Republic of Tatarstan in 2016-17, under the guidance of Professor Khayrullina Yu.R., the respondents were interviewed, using the key criterion: "monthly income" (from 7 to 70 thousand rub.), and the additional criteria: education, the type of work activity, self-identification. The purpose of the study is to determine the social well-being of the middle class in the region, to analyse its power of consumption, property indicators, behaviour patterns in the spheres of labour, education, leisure; satisfaction with the social infrastructure and life as a whole, for the development of demanded targeted social and economic policy in the country, ensuring its stability and competitiveness.

The sociological survey was conducted with a quota targeted representative sample, consisting of 1206 people [8]¹. Total population was calculated according to the official statistics of the age and sex composition of population of urban districts, and regions of the Republic of Tatarstan: Laishevsky District,

1. Note. The sample, including 1206 people provides accurate information about the distribution of this indicator among total population. Source: Empirical Sociology: Textbook/ Comp. by L.A. Mironenko, Komsomolsk-on-Amur: Federal State Budgetary Educational Institution of Higher Professional Education "Komsomolsk-on-Amur State Technical University", 2013. - 176 p. - Pp. 46-49.

Aktanyshsky District, Atninsky District, Tyulyachinsky District, Tetyushsky District. The proportions of the sample correspond to the socio-demographic structure of the population of the Republic of Tatarstan. The level of confidence interval of the permissible statistical error in the presented study (sampling error) was 4% [9]². The data was processed using the statistical software package IBM® SPSS® Statistics Version 20.

RESULTS

According to the research results, the representatives of the middle class are the following people: employees of the budgetary sphere (13.2%), workers, engaged in industry and agriculture (18.0%), office workers and specialists of organizations (15.0%), corporate leaders and public officers (16.8%), as well as pensioners, students, representatives of uniformed services, etc.

For 47.3% of them, the work is, first of all, a source of livelihood, for 23.4% - the opportunity for self-expression, self-realization, for 29.4% - this is the opportunity for communication.

The respondents assess their position (status) in society as quite high: 29.5% rank themselves to the upper middle stratum, 42.3% - to the middle, and 26.7% - to the lower middle class (See Figure 1).

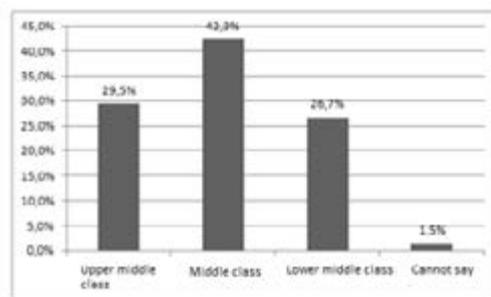


Figure 1. Respondents' assessment of their status in society, in %

The respondents believe that their place in society is determined, first of all, by the job position, then the amount of income and manner of living (See Figure 2).

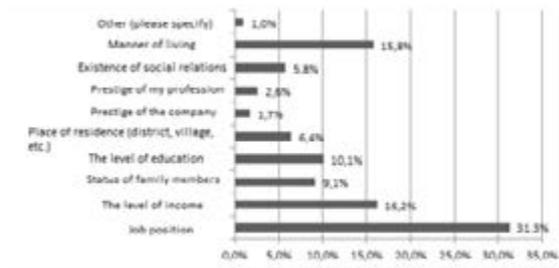


Figure 2. Opinion of respondents about characteristics, which determine their place in society, in %

One-third of the respondents (33.5%) believe that their financial situation will remain the same in the near future; a quarter (26.4%) believes that it will improve; one in ten respondent fears the deterioration of his financial situation. At the same time, many people find it difficult to predict this change (30.3%) (See Figure 3).

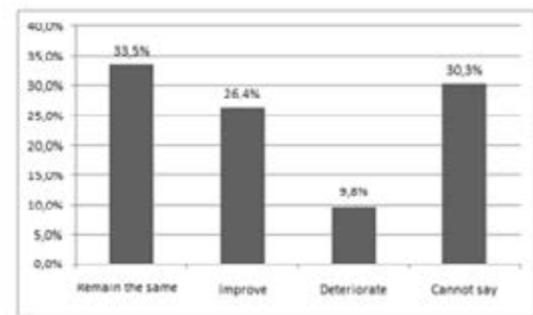


Figure 3. Opinion of respondents about the change in their financial situation in the near future, in %

The surveyed people say that they mainly do not have an opportunity to rest abroad. Such possibility is absent in 69.2% of respondents. One third of respondents have a rest once a year – 27.7%; very few people have a rest 2-3 times a year – 3.1%.

If the respondents had free money, they would spend them as follows: for entertainment and family vacation - 49.2%, for help to relatives - 33.1%, for savings deposits - 17.8%. If they unexpectedly received a large sum of money in 1 million rubles, they would spend it as follows: 44.9% would invest them in order to receive income, 24.5% would open their own business, 30.7% would lead a care-free life.

The representatives of middle class, according to their answers, have the following borrowings: mortgage loan - 9.9%, loan for the

2. The calculation of sample was carried out according to the sampling methodology, taking into account random errors, related to the nature of any statistical errors. V.I.

firm - 2.3%, consumer loan - 39.4%, do not have a loan - 48.5%. At the same time, they are going to improve their housing conditions in the near future - 31.3%, to change the car - 23.8%. 24.1% of respondents have a new car.

As for the social well-being of the middle class representatives, their assessment of social and economic transformations in the region, the following should be noted. 41.1% of people are going to continue to live and work in the Republic of Tatarstan, only 8.4% are going to leave the country. 51.6% of respondents believe that now is a good time to make major purchases, 12.7% think that now is a bad time. Most people have a quite high level of material consumption; 30.0% can buy durable goods. More than a half of respondents are sure in the stability of their position in the labour market - 54.5%, almost a quarter plan to receive additional education -24.9%.

CONCLUSIONS

So, in classical and modern stratification concepts, the middle class includes several social and professional groups, which have similar basic characteristics. The results of empirical studies at the federal and regional level also show the complex structure of representatives of the middle class in Russia [10, 11]. They have both a community of status identity, and features of socio-economic and consumer behaviour. According to multi-year applied research, carried out in the Republic of Tatarstan, we note that in 2008-2009 [12] the middle class had the following characteristics: stable social well-being, labour and educational mobility, significant consumer potential, high self-esteem and trust in power. According to the results of research, conducted among the middle class representatives in 2016-17, it can be stated that they save labour and educational mobility, significant consumer potential, high self-esteem and, completely or rather, are satisfied with life as a whole (62.2%). At the same time, the respondents do not have significant savings. They do not have real material resources for the realization of their entrepreneurial activity. However, they are aimed at increasing professional qualifications and strengthening their social status.

So, these investigations show that there is a serious request from the middle class for targeted, long-term measures of strategic and tactical support of regulatory and adminis-

trative authorities, at the federal, regional and municipal levels, primarily in the financial and economic spheres, as well as in the field of education and informatization. 

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