

Russians Unsure When Their Country Actually Started Being Russia – Poll

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The latest poll by independent pollster the Levada Center has revealed that Russians are divided on what constitutes their country's historical starting point.

One in four respondents, or 26 percent, said they believed that Russia's history begins with the early-medieval conglomerate of East Slavic tribes collectively known as the Kievan Rus.

However, another 12 percent pinpoint Russia's defining historical moment as the period when those pagan tribes adopted Orthodox Christianity, which is officially 988 AD, but the year is disputed by historians.

Another group of all polled tie Russia's birth with various stages of statehood: 7 percent named the emergence of the first princely states in the 12th century, ruled by princes from the Rurikid dynasty. 5 percent said Russia began with Peter the Great, the passionate reformer tsar. The Russian revolution of 1917, shedding the centuries of monarchical rule, was Russia's defining moment for 3 percent of polled.

A minority of respondents think Russia was born out of the ruins of the USSR (2 percent), or, more precisely, when the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic declared its sovereignty in 1990.

But for a majority of respondents, 36 percent, Russia's origins were impossible to pinpoint. When asked which era, specific date or event marked the beginning of Russia, most respondents said Russia dates back "to the dawn of time."

The Levada Center's report concluded that Russians "are losing interest in history." The group told the Interfax news agency that this could be due to "fatigue" from the frequent reevaluation of different periods of Russian history.

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