



# HISTORY

## Bridging Work

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The focus of this unit is on key developments in Russia from the accession of Nicholas II in 1894, through years of growing unrest including the revolutions of 1905 and February 1917, to the October revolution and the consolidation of Bolshevik power under Lenin.

Students will be required to place documentary extracts in their historical context, but the knowledge they will need to have will be central to that specified in the topics.

In order to get an appreciation of the nature of the Russian Empire in the 1890s, consider the following information about the 1897 Census of Russia:

### 1897 Russian Empire Census

The 1897 census was the only universal census in tsarist Russia. It was conducted on January 28, in the middle of the winter because this was the time when the populace was least mobile. On the appointed day, 150,000 census takers spread out into the environs of the nation and completed over thirty million sheets of returns by direct questioning of the population. Some census workers travelled as much as forty miles to gather the required data.

The census project was suggested in 1877 by Pyotr Semenov-Tyan-Shansky, a famous Russian geographer and chief of the Central Statistical Bureau, and was approved by Tsar Nicholas II in June 1895.

The census was performed in two stages. In the first stage (December 1896 – January 1897) the counters (135,000 persons: teachers, priests, and literate soldiers) visited all households and filled in the questionnaires, which were verified by local census managers. In the second stage (9 January 1898 [O.S. 28 December 1897]) the counters simultaneously visited all households to verify and update the questionnaires. Despite this being the only census they ever took, Historians were able to find out the Russian Empires population in earlier periods of time still from collecting city censuses.

The data processing took 8 years using Hollerith card (punched cards) machines. Publication of the results started in 1898 and ended in 1905.

The questionnaire contained the following questions:

- Family name, given name, patronymic or nickname
- Sex
- Relation with respect to the head of the family or household
- Age
- Marital status
- Social status: *sosloviye* (estate of the realm), rank or title

- Place of birth
- Place of registration
- Usual place of residence
- Notice of absence
- Faith
- Mother language
- Literacy
- Occupation (profession, trade, position of office or service), both primary and secondary

In the census summary tables, nationality was based on the declared mother language of respondents.

The Census of 1897 was the first and only comprehensive census of the Russian Empire. It cost the state 7 million roubles. In total, 119 volumes for 89 **guberniyas** (major and principal administrative subdivisions of the Russian Empire) were produced, as well as a two-volume summary, issued, under the title "*The first general census of the Russian Empire in 1897*". A copy was made locally and both copies forwarded to the provincial census commission. One of these was kept by that commission and the other sent to the Central Census Bureau in St. Petersburg. The St. Petersburg copy no longer exists but the local copy has survived in some regional archives.

### Results of the Census

A general census of the population of the Russian empire was conducted as of 28 January 1897 under the leadership of P.P. Semenov.

Census registered 125.6 million inhabitants in Russian Empire, of whom 13.4% lived in cities. So Russia was mainly an agrarian country with 86% of population living in small villages.

Literacy rate was 21.1%. Among men the rate was significantly higher than among women (29.3% and 13.1% respectively).

By religion: Orthodox – 69.3% , Muslims – 11.1% , Roman Catholic 9.1% – and Jews – 4.2%.

By native language – the largest language group was Russians – 44.3%, then Ukrainians – 17.8%, Poles – 6.3%, Belarusians – 4.3%, Jews – 4.0 %.

By class – the peasantry – 77.5% , meschanins – 10.7% , foreigners – 6.6% , the Cossacks – 2.3%, noblemen ( hereditary and personal ) – 1.5% , clergy – 0 , 5%, honorary citizens (hereditary and personal ) – 0.3% , merchants – 0.2% other – 0.4%.

Largest cities of the Empire according to the census: Saint-Petersburg – 1,264,900 people, Moscow – 1,038,600, Warsaw – 626,000, Odessa – 403,800, Łódź – 314,000, Riga – 282,200, Kiev – 247,700.

However, the majority of the census forms were destroyed. Fully preserved are the questionnaires for Tobolsk and Arkhangelsk provinces and only partially for other provinces.

Surviving questionnaires are stored in the archives of federal funds (the Interior Ministry and Main Census Commission) and of regional archives

The statistical results were published in two main volumes and 89 separate volumes (119 books) for each province, region, four main cities (St. Petersburg, Moscow, Odessa, Warsaw) and Sakhalin Island. Publication continued from 1898 until 1905.

These volumes are publically available today on internet. They contain only statistical information about provinces and its people but nevertheless are very important in understanding of how people lived in Imperial Russia. A short summary for Tambov province looks like this:

*Farmers were the predominant class in the Tambov gubernia (province) totalling 97% of whom 95% were Russian. 92% of the population engaged in agriculture in all its forms. From various types of agriculture in the province, cattle and horse breeding were the most important. In pre-revolutionary Russia, Tambov Province belonged to the "impoverished" agrarian area with underdeveloped industry, focusing mainly on the processing of agricultural and economic resources. 32% of women married at the age of 17-19 years and remaining in the 20-29 years age brackets. Men were not in a hurry. Only 17% were married at 17-19 years of age and majority 77% at the age 20-29 years. Literacy among the population of Tambov Province was not developed. Three quarters of the male population and 13/14 of the female population were illiterate.*

In practice, because of the low literacy, most census forms were filled by 'counters'. About 150 thousand counters participated in census, completing about 30 million forms.

Apparently a man (more likely a peasant) was asked to fill out the questionnaire. The question about his wife's name was answered as follows: "Shall I call her 'Baba' (i.e. woman) and there is no more to her name". The field 'date you were born' most people answered: "Sometime in January 1897". 'Birthdays' were yet to come and birth certificate were never required and collected. A person could live all his life without a 'paper' birth certificate.

A second census in Imperial Russia was supposed to happen in 1912. At first it was postponed and then cancelled due to World War I. The next census to take place in Russia only occurred at the end of 1926, almost three decades later.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian\\_Empire\\_Census](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Empire_Census)

### **TASK:**

Using the information above and internet links, find out as much as you can about the state of the Russian empire in the 1890s. You can organise your information how you wish but should consider the following aspects:

- Geography of Russia
- Economy of Russia
- Population
- Cities
- Administration
- Government

Can you foresee any potential problems Russia would face at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century? Consider comparing the state of Russia with other countries at this time – e.g. Britain, Germany, and U.S.A.