

Russia has the world's second largest number of billionaires

By [Global Research](#)

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The number of Russian billionaires has grown by nearly 12 times since 2002. Analysts explain this by high commodities prices, asset consolidation, and an unfair social policy.

Forbes has published a new list of 1,125 people whose private fortunes exceed \$1 billion, placing Russia, with 87 billionaires, second after the United States and ahead of Germany (59), which had held second place for six years.

Igor Nikolayev, chief strategic analyst at the FBK private auditing firm, said: "The record increase in the number of billionaires in Russia can be explained by high economic growth rates, active consolidation of assets, and continued income stratification in the country."

He said the number of Russian billionaires was abnormally large considering the size of the economies of the United States, Germany and Russia.

"The German economy is approximately 50% larger than the Russian economy, yet Russia has nearly 25% more billionaires. There is a similar imbalance compared with the United States," Nikolayev writes.

He said the Russian policy of encouraging asset consolidation was an additional booster of the number of billionaires.

Andrei Shastitko, director of the Moscow-based Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) Foundation, said: "Russians' rapid rise on the Forbes list was ensured by the growth of global commodities prices and glaring social stratification."

He said large Russian companies were taking over core and non-core assets, so that the gains from the favorable situation on global markets were accumulating in the hands of a small group of owners.

"Russia is rapidly approaching the Latin American inequality model in terms of incomes," Shastitko said.

Analysts say Russia is unlikely to cede its second place in terms of the number of billionaires even to such rapidly developing economies as India and China.

"Prices of Russian energy, metal and other export commodities will most likely remain high, helping Russians on the Forbes list to increase their wealth," Shastitko writes.

"The Chinese authorities are trying to curb aggressive growth of millionaires and billionaires, and so China is unlikely to vie with Russia for top rankings on the Forbes list," Nikolayev adds.

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