

# Do a third of Russians believe the sun spins around Earth?

Survey points to low science literacy ... but Americans aren't brilliant, either



Viktor Korotayev / REUTERS

An Orthodox cathedral is silhouetted as the sun sets in the village Zelyonaya Sloboda, 30 miles southeast of Moscow. A survey suggests that many Russians believe the sun spins around Earth rather than vice versa.

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MOSCOW — Does the sun revolve around the earth? One in every three Russians thinks so, a spokeswoman for state pollster VsTIOM said Friday.

In a survey released this week, 32 percent of Russians believed Earth was the center of the solar system; 55 percent said that all radioactivity is human-made; and 29 percent said that the first humans lived when dinosaurs still roamed the Earth.

The study found that women were more likely than men to believe the scientific fallacies. "It's really quite amazing," spokeswoman Olga Kamenchuk said of the survey, which polled 1,600 people across Russia's regions in January, with a 3.4 percent margin of error.

"All of them (the questions) were absolutely obvious. ... The data speaks of the low levels of education in the country."

However, people tend to forget what they have been taught at school if it is not part of daily use, she added: "I wonder whether our colleagues in other countries would find any different."

Some of the questions are similar to those that were asked of Americans:

- Seventy-two percent of Americans agree with the scientific view that Earth goes around the sun, based on a 2008 poll cited in the National Science Foundation's Science and Engineering Indicators 2010.
- Sixty-three percent of Americans surveyed correctly answered that not all radioactivity is human-made, in a quiz conducted as part of a 2009 Pew Research Center study.
- And 59 percent of the respondents in a 2009 Harris poll agreed with the scientific view that the earliest humans and dinosaurs did not live at the same time.