



THE UNEVEN HUMAN COST OF RUSSIA'S WAR IN UKRAINE

REGIONAL LOSSES AND THE LIMITS OF PER CAPITA COMPARISONS

What named-death datasets show about Russia's regional burden, recruitment patterns and the limits of the map circulating online.

DATE

30 September 2026

GEOGRAPHIC AREA

Russian Federation; Ukraine

INTELLIGENCE DOMAIN

OSINT; force generation; demography

Executive Summary

The named-death record compiled from public evidence shows a pronounced regional imbalance in Russian military deaths. Per-capita comparisons repeatedly place Tuva, Buryatia and several other peripheral regions well above Moscow. This is evidence of unequal exposure to recruitment and combat losses; by itself, it does not establish that ethnicity caused the disparity or that the state deliberately selected particular ethnic groups.

The supplied map is directionally consistent with that broad pattern, but its individual rates cannot be independently reproduced from the graphic. It gives no data cut-off or calculation note. The map should therefore be treated as illustrative, not as a verified current statistical table.

The Evidence Base

The named-death project records Russian military fatalities when a death can be supported by public evidence, including official statements, local media and relatives' posts. The list is deliberately conservative: it excludes deaths that have not surfaced publicly and is not a complete estimate of fatalities. An update dated 21 September 2026 reported 258,989 names. A separate estimate based on excess male mortality and probate-register data is higher; the two measures answer different questions and should not be combined.

Regional comparisons use different denominators. One comparison against the male population reported 120 deaths per 10,000 men in Tuva, 91 in Buryatia and 3 in Moscow. A later comparison per 100,000 residents reported 476 in Tuva, 400 in Buryatia, 362 in Zabaykalsky Krai and 316 in the Altai Republic. These results support the same broad contrast, but their rates cannot be compared directly without matching the denominator, date and geographic assignment.

Regional Pattern and Data Vintage

The strongest recurring signal is the relative position of Tuva and Buryatia, with Zabaykalsky Krai and the Altai Republic also high in the per-resident comparison. Moscow sits at the low end of the male-population comparison. Earlier reporting had already found a 30–40-fold difference between recorded risk in Tuva and Buryatia and in Moscow. Recurrence across successive snapshots makes the regional disparity more robust than any one map's precise values.

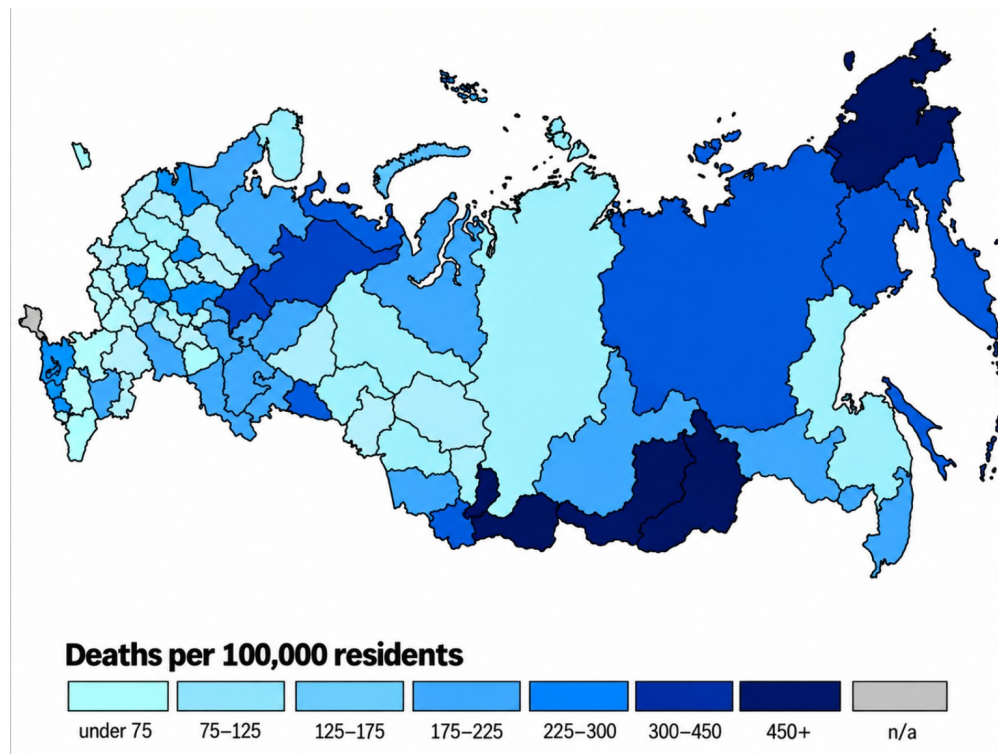


Figure 1. Illustrative map. The statistical calculation is based on information collected through the count of confirmed fatalities identified via social media channels.

Drivers of Uneven Losses

The available reporting points to a combination of economic incentives, recruitment composition and local military structures. High per-capita losses are associated with poorer republics where contract payments can provide a rare source of income. Recruitment profiles also differ by region: volunteers form a substantial share of recorded deaths in Buryatia and the Altai Republic, while prisoners and pre-war professional personnel are more prominent in Tuva. These profiles do not establish that any single factor explains the disparity.

Unit presence and mobilization also matter. A motorized rifle brigade based in Kyzyl was committed to Ukraine from the opening phase of the full-scale invasion, while Buryatia experienced comparatively heavy mobilization. A region's rate can therefore reflect losses among formations recruited or stationed there as well as residents' willingness to sign contracts. The evidence supports a multi-causal explanation. It does not support reducing the pattern to ethnicity alone or establish a centrally directed policy to maximize losses among minority populations.

What the Map Can and Cannot Show

Three limitations are decisive. First, confirmed names are a floor: reporting access, family decisions, censorship, the time required to identify remains and the verification threshold all affect when a death enters the list. Urban losses may be more visible in public reporting than rural losses. Second, small regional populations make per-capita rates sensitive to relatively small changes in numerator or denominator; sparsely populated Chukotka is sometimes excluded from descriptions of the highest-rate regions. Third, the denominator must be stated: a rate per resident, adult resident or male resident produces materially different numbers.

Geographic assignment also requires care. The underlying projects may prioritize a residence stated in an obituary, then an address in public records, place of birth or, when necessary, place of burial. Residence can be misidentified, and large military cemeteries can raise counts in their host regions. The supplied map does not state whether it uses the same location hierarchy, denominator or data cut-off.

Implications

The regional pattern is relevant to Russian force generation. It suggests that the human cost of sustaining the campaign is distributed unevenly and that poorer, remote regions and communities connected to particular formations may bear a larger recorded burden. The relationship between poverty and recruitment is plausible and consistent with reporting on contract incentives and volunteer composition, but the available comparisons are descriptive. They do not isolate the effects of income, ethnicity, unit deployment, age structure, mobilization or reporting completeness. The evidence supports disparity; on its own, it does not prove intent.

Indicators to Monitor

Useful indicators include changes in the named list and the separate probate-based estimate; regional counts by recruitment category; consistency in how residence is assigned; and revisions to regional population denominators. Any map used publicly should state its cut-off date, numerator, denominator, source version and treatment of Chukotka and other low-population regions. A gap between named deaths and probate estimates can indicate undercounting, but not necessarily a uniform undercount across regions.

For interpretation, compare regions at the same cut-off and with a consistent population base. Track whether high rates persist after accounting for male population, recruitment channel and units stationed in or raised from each region. If the ordering changes as the verified list expands, reporting coverage may be affecting the map; if it remains stable across named and statistical estimates, the case for a structural regional imbalance would strengthen.

Overall Assessment

The evidence strongly supports an unequal regional burden of confirmed Russian military deaths, with Tuva and Buryatia repeatedly near the top of per-capita comparisons and Moscow far lower. The most defensible explanation is cumulative: economic incentives, recruitment pathways, mobilization, pre-war military presence and unequal public visibility of deaths all contribute. The exact values in the supplied map remain unverified because its data cut-off and denominator are unstated. Its broad message is credible; individual rates should not be quoted as current or definitive until the underlying calculation is documented.