

UDMURTIA. POLITICAL CONTEXTS

as of October 2025



Afrikan Berkutov (1852–1901), an Udmurt man and an Udmurt woman with a gusli

Demography of the region and ethnocultural specifics

As of the beginning of 2024, the population of the Udmurt Republic amounted to [1.4 million](#) people, two-thirds – urban residents.

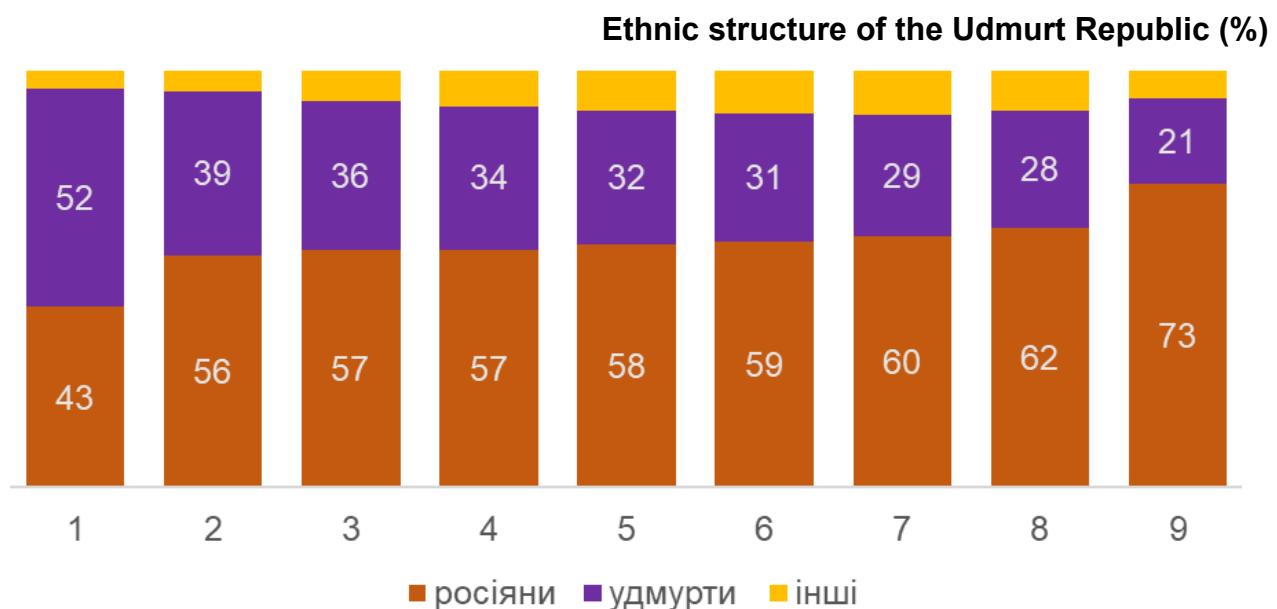
Since 2017, the region has been experiencing a natural population [decline](#) (with peak values in 2020–2021). Migration decline has persisted for more than 20 years. According to the forecast of the republican statistics service, the population of the region will [decrease](#) by 5–7 thousand people annually — over the next 25 years, this will amount to more than 10% of the total population.

In 2023, the Udmurt Republic ranked fifth in its federal district in terms of the birth rate coefficient, behind Orenburg Oblast, Bashkortostan, Perm Krai, and Tatarstan. In July 2025, the head of the republic, Aleksandr Brechalov, during a [meeting](#) with Putin, stated that the goal was to increase the birth rate in the region from 1.39 to 1.6 by 2030. Putin remarked that this target was too low and that the indicator should be at least 2.1.

In terms of mortality rate, Udmurtia is among the top three regions of the Volga Federal District — a worse situation is observed only in Perm Krai and Orenburg Oblast.

The share of the working-age population is about 56%. More than a quarter of the region's population are people of retirement age (their share increased by 9 percentage points from 1989 to 2020). The number of children in the republic during the same period decreased from 439 thousand to 272 thousand (by almost 40%). Thus, over three decades, classical demographic aging has occurred in Udmurtia, creating additional pressure on the social protection system, healthcare, and labor market.

Udmurts are the indigenous population of the republic's territory. Over the last almost one hundred years, their [share](#) in the total population has decreased by 2.5 times: from 52% to 21%.



In 2021, 29.1% of Udmurts living directly in the republic identified Russian as their native language. In 1959, this figure was only 7%.

If in the 1990s one-third of children born to Udmurt women had fathers of another nationality, then by 2010 more than 40% of marriages involving Udmurts were mixed, which leads to a decrease in the degree of ethnic self-identification of the following generations. In addition, during the 2021 census, about 210 thousand residents of Udmurtia did not indicate their nationality, which complicates accurate accounting. Thus, the ethnocultural background of Udmurtia is defined not only by the reduction in the number of the titular ethnic group but also by the transformation of its cultural identity under the pressure of integration and [assimilation](#) processes.

Socioeconomic features of the region

Over the past two decades, Udmurtia has consistently acted as a “migration donor”, losing population to more economically attractive regions of Russia. Moscow and Moscow Oblast, Saint Petersburg, the Republic of Tatarstan, and Tyumen Oblast are the main directions of migration. This is explained by several factors: a) higher salaries in the capital and Western Siberia (oil and gas); b) a more developed labor market; c) educational and scientific migration; d) transport accessibility. Young people and specialists with technical education are the most vulnerable categories – they leave the region after completing their studies. This creates structural risks for the development of the region and strengthens its socio-economic dependence on the federal center.

In 2024, the average monthly [salary](#) in Udmurtia amounted to 65.7 thousand rubles — this is the 6th place among the regions of the Volga Federal District. Almost a quarter of the region's workers [earn](#) more than the average salary level across Russia.

In 2023, Udmurtia entered the TOP-20 regions of the Russian Federation with the lowest [subsistence minimum](#) (13.6 thousand rubles). In the same year, every 10th resident of the republic lived below the [poverty line](#), but by 2025 this figure had [decreased](#) to 7%. Udmurtia demonstrates one of the lowest [unemployment rates](#) in the country — 1.4% (11th place among the subjects of the Russian Federation). At the same time, the Udmurt Republic leads in the distribution of [taxes](#) in favor of the federal budget — in the first quarter of 2025, [more than 75%](#) of tax payments collected from residents and businesses of Udmurtia were transferred to the federal treasury.

In January–April 2023, manufacturing in Russia grew by 3%, with Udmurtia being one of the drivers of this growth — here an [increase](#) of 21% was recorded, which is significantly higher than the average indicators even in industrially developed regions (Sverdlovsk Oblast — 10%, Chelyabinsk Oblast — 10%, Omsk Oblast — 9%).

Evolution of the political process in the republic

In the late Soviet period, the course toward sovereignty was established by the Council of the Udmurt ASSR with their Declaration of State Sovereignty (September 20, 1990), after which, from October 11, 1991, Udmurtia acquired the name “the Udmurt Republic”. The

current Constitution of Udmurtia was adopted by the State Council of the Udmurt Republic in 1994 and remains the basic act of the constitutional organization of power in the region.

In the 1990s, a bipolar structure of power was formed in the region — the head of the republic and a unicameral parliament consisting of 60 deputies elected for a five-year term. During this period, an informal rule emerged that Udmurts should be represented in one of the key leadership positions (either the head of parliament or the head of the republic), which reflected the interests of the titular ethnic group. Such a configuration contributed to the activation of local elites who sought to integrate into power institutions, forming support groups around themselves. In the political space of the 1990s, this took the form of internal regional competition, which researchers describe as a division into “northern” and “southern” [groups](#) relying on local socio-economic and clan-network resources.

By the mid-1990s, representatives of the so-called “southern” group dominated the political life of Udmurtia. However, the influence of the “northern” (“Glazov”) clan gradually increased, [Aleksandr Volkov](#) is a symbolic figure of this clan. From 1995 to 2000, he served as the head of the State Council of Udmurtia, and from November 2000 to February 2014 — as the President of the Republic. His political longevity made it possible to form a stable system of personalist leadership based on loyal personnel in the executive and legislative branches of government, as well as in key sectors of the economy.

The economic [interests](#) of Volkov’s circle were primarily connected with the construction industry (Volkov’s own professional field) and the agro-industrial complex. These spheres became the basis for consolidating resources and influence at the regional level. At the same time, in public discourse, critical assessments were [spread](#) regarding the closed nature of the economic model and the concentration of control over key assets in the hands of a limited group of individuals.

The case with the [Breguet watch](#) was the reputational breaking point for Volkov. It became a symbol of the demonstrative lifestyle of regional leaders and caused a wave of criticism from the opposition and the public. The end of Volkov’s political era was determined by changes in federal priorities and the strengthening of the course toward [centralization](#).

Aleksandr Volkov promotes the Izhevsk Zoo wearing a Breguet watch worth 120,000 dollars (four times more expensive than the Patriarch Kirill’s watch), 2012.



[Aleksandr Solovyov](#) was Aleksandr Volkov's successor. He held the position of Head of the Republic from 2014. By origin, he belonged to the Udmurt ethnic group and in previous years he was closely connected with the "Glazov" clan. However, after being elected, he gradually distanced himself from their representatives, forming his own team within the administrative and economic structures. Researchers and analysts informally refer to this network as the "[road clan](#)", meaning the concentration of economic interests around infrastructure projects and road construction.

In 2017, Solovyov's activity ended [prematurely](#): he was detained and removed from power by a [decree](#) of the president of the Russian Federation "due to loss of trust". This step was part of a broader federal practice aimed at strengthening control over regional elites and was accompanied by a criminal case related to corruption charges. In 2020, Solovyov was [sentenced](#) to 10 years in prison.

After Solovyov's removal, leadership passed to a new team formed around Aleksandr Brechalov, informally known as the "Varyag" (outsider) group. Its core consisted of individuals from public and political structures at the federal level, particularly from the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation. Most members of this group had no previous experience working in regional executive institutions.

In the first years, personnel turnover was quite dynamic: some managers failed to secure their positions due to managerial miscalculations, while others viewed the region as a stage in their career advancement and moved to other positions outside Udmurtia. As a result, over eight years, the composition of the government underwent significant changes. Today, only the Head of the Republic, Aleksandr Brechalov, has retained his position from the original "Varyag" core, while most key posts have gradually passed to representatives of local administrative circles.

The modern political process in Udmurtia is characterized by several stable trends:

1. Replacement of the "Varyag" team with local personnel. The first wave of managers who came with Brechalov has largely left, and the vacant positions have been filled by representatives of the regional bureaucracy and business. This has increased the adaptability of the administrative elite to local specifics.
2. Strengthening of the role of the [security structures](#). Their anti-corruption course has led to personnel purges and a change in the balance of influence, which has been reflected in the growing share of representatives from the security bloc among the most influential figures.
3. Shift of centers of influence in favor of defense-industrial corporations. The growth of military production in the context of the full-scale war has strengthened the position of defense plant directors.
4. Limited competition in the political field. The dominance of "United Russia" is combined with the presence of a "controlled opposition", which maintains the illusion of political pluralism but does not determine key decisions.

5. Dependence on the federal center remains decisive: personnel appointments, defense orders, and strategic investments are controlled by Moscow, which limits the autonomy of regional elites.

Main groups of influence

Several centers of power can be distinguished in the Udmurt Republic, forming a multipolar model of influence:

- Administrative system. The main pole of power in the region.
- Federal representation of the region. Senators and State Duma deputies from the region.
- Federal structures. Security agencies, the Prosecutor's Office, the FSB, the Chief Federal Inspector, etc.
- Heads of enterprises of the defense-industrial complex.
- Representatives of large businesses in the region, including owners and top managers of agricultural and development companies.

Administrative system (Executive power)



In the republican-level executive branch, the core figure is the head of the region, **Aleksandr Brechalov** (born 1973). He assumed office in September 2017 as a result of [early elections](#). He ran as a Kremlin protégé (or a [protégé](#) of Vyacheslav Volodin) and was often referred to in the media as a "[Varyag](#)" due to his non-Udmurt origin and limited knowledge of the region. Following that year's elections, Udmurtia ranked among the TOP-7 Russian regions with the [lowest voter turnout](#) — 34.6%. At the same time, Brechalov's campaign [expenses](#) were several times higher than those of his competitors: 27 million rubles compared to the combined 13 million rubles budget of the other four candidates.

Biographical [background](#) of Brechalov before the Udmurt period:

- In 2010, while heading the non-profit organization "[OPORA](#)" supporting small and medium-sized businesses in Krasnodar Krai, Brechalov attracted additional off-budget financing (+360 million rubles in less than a year).
- In a competition for small and medium-sized entrepreneurs, Brechalov awarded a "business idea" for a portable sauna on wheels (2011).
- In 2012, an assassination attempt was made on Brechalov by hired [killers](#) — virtually under the windows of the FSB.
- In one [interview](#), Brechalov admitted to the questionable utilization of 36 billion rubles allocated to support entrepreneurs (over two years).

- In 2013, the Cypriot Prosecutor General's Office initiated an investigation into the UniAstrum Bank, where Aleksandr Brechalov served as chief legal officer. The bank was suspected of an illegal deal worth [50 million euros](#).
- From 2013, he was co-chair of the Central Headquarters of the All-Russia People's Front. After an RBC [investigation](#) into the organization's expenses, Brechalov denied the calculations and advised the investigators "[to be more careful](#)" — however, he did not disclose the actual figures.
- Between 2014 and 2017, he served as secretary of the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation.
- In 2016, he publicly [called](#) on people to vote for "United Russia", even though the [Code of Ethics](#) of the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation prohibits public support for political parties.
- In 2016, the Civic Chamber [commissioned a report](#) on human rights from a company specializing in clothing manufacturing.
- It was during this period that Brechalov [became close](#) to Vyacheslav Volodin, which largely predetermined his later appointment as head of Udmurtia.

In May 2022, a "[governor reshuffle](#)" occurred in several regions of Russia; however, Brechalov managed to [secure the support of the Kremlin](#) and proceed to a [second term](#). While he received 71% of the vote in his first term, in the 2022 elections he won with 64% of the vote. His closest competitor was [Aleksandr Syrov](#) from the CPRF (20%), despite [numerous violations](#) as a candidate (tax evasion, traffic accidents, etc.) that could have disqualified him from registration. Another competitor, [Vadim Belousov](#) from the party "Just Russia – For Truth", had been sentenced to ten years in prison for large-scale bribery but still participated in the elections and received 3%. Two candidates — [Vladimir Segal](#) from the "Pensioners' Party" and [Georgiy Leshchov](#) from "Green Alternative" — withdrew from the elections voluntarily. Only one candidate without a criminal record contested Brechalov — [Timur Yagafarov](#) from LDPR (10%).

Since 2023, Brechalov's activities have focused on economic development and support for the defense-industrial complex. He demonstrated confidence in increasing exports, announcing a [twofold growth](#) in supply volumes even under sanctions (including the export of powdered milk to African countries, as well as to Mongolia, Saudi Arabia, and Southeast Asia). He paid significant attention to infrastructure modernization and the social sphere: construction of schools, development of domestic tourism, and transportation accessibility projects, including the new terminal at [Izhevsk Airport](#). At the same time, in public reports, he acknowledged the problems and mistakes in communal services and healthcare, which prompted criticism from the population and local elites.

During this period, against the backdrop of personnel changes in municipal authorities, a high-profile [scandal](#) unfolded around the former head of Izhevsk, Oleg Bekmemetyev. He was charged with abuse of power in the management of land plots, which resulted in his resignation in 2023 and subsequent arrest. This reflected the Republic's characteristic policy of strengthening anti-corruption control, which aligned with the federal center's course and helped consolidate Brechalov's position as a manager integrated into the Kremlin's system of power.



Roman Yefimov (Head of the Government) is one of the key representatives of the new managerial generation in Udmurtia. He assumed the position of head of the republican government in 2023. Prior to this, Yefimov worked as deputy head of the Cabinet of Ministers of Udmurtia, particularly in the financial and economic bloc, which provided him with experience in managing budget flows and familiarity with key players in industry and the agricultural sector.

Currently, Yefimov oversees the most resource-intensive and strategic areas. He is responsible for implementing strategic national [projects](#): “Effective and Competitive Economy”, “Tourism and Hospitality” (the development of domestic routes and urban wellbeing of historical cities), “International Cooperation and Export” (aimed at increasing non-resource exports), as well as a program for the development of [unmanned aviation systems](#) based on the ZALA AERO cluster. Additionally, he manages the digitalization of the economy and public services, support for the IT sector, and modernization of industrial enterprises, making him a key technocrat responsible for combining traditional and new drivers of regional development.



Tatyana Churakova (First Deputy Head of the Government) is one of the small number of managers who have remained in the executive system since the early years of Brechalov’s rule. At the beginning of 2024, she was appointed First Deputy Prime Minister of the region for healthcare (a problematic sector previously headed by a manager with a questionable reputation, [Elvira Pinchuk](#)) and currently effectively serves as the second-in-command after the head of the cabinet.

On this position, Churakova’s sphere of responsibility is traditionally linked to the social bloc — social protection, support for vulnerable groups, implementation of programs in employment, work with veterans and participants of the “SMO”. She is one of the key balancing figures between regional social expectations and budgetary capabilities.



Igor Asabin (Deputy Prime Minister for Construction, Communal Services, and Road Infrastructure) headed the Sarapul District for over ten years and in 2023 was promoted directly to the level of deputy head of the government of Udmurtia. Asabin is responsible for one of the most problematic sectors in the region — construction, communal services, and road infrastructure. This area is traditionally a source of social discontent in Udmurtia, as it combines high public expectations with limited budget resources, long-term construction projects, and poor road quality. In 2025, on Asabin’s initiative, the scope of [road overhaul](#) and resurfacing works were significantly increased both in Izhevsk and across the republic.



Ilyas Khannanov (Deputy Prime Minister for Security) is a retired lieutenant general with combat experience and a reputation as an authoritative security figure, which allows him to maintain a special position within the regional administrative system. Khannanov is responsible for coordinating security structures, working with veterans and participants of the “SMO”, as well as for preventive measures in the field of internal stability.



Roman Gabdrakhmanov (Deputy Prime Minister for Agriculture) has [held the position](#) since 2024. Prior to this, he headed the veterinary department and gained administrative experience in the agricultural sector, shaping his profile as an “agricultural technocrat”. His promotion was linked to the resignation of Olga Abramova, who had coordinated the agricultural bloc for many years and was renowned as the “engine” of the dairy industry. Gabdrakhmanov’s task is to maintain the achieved production rates — in particular, the record of over 1 million tons of milk per year.



Timur Medzhitov (Deputy Prime Minister for Digital Development and Sports) headed the republican Ministry of Digital Development in 2023 and later moved to the position of deputy head of the republic’s government. He is entrusted with a combined portfolio (digitalization and sports), which seems unusual but symbolizes the authorities’ aim to integrate the IT sector with social and youth policy. Medzhitov is perceived in the region as one of the few “new faces” capable of giving Udmurtia a boost in digital transformation.



Aleksandr Zhuravlyov (Head of the Administration of the Head and Government of Udmurtia) has led the Administration since 2023. He moved from Krasnodar Krai at the request of Aleksandr Brechalov, who is also originally from Krasnodar.

Zhuravlyov actively takes part in “symbolic” politics: in 2023, he represented Udmurtia in the „LPR”, where he took part in the [opening of the Eternal Flame](#) brought from the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Moscow. Such actions strengthen his image as an official capable of combining bureaucratic work with the execution of federal-level tasks.



Vera Sukhikh (Minister of Finance) has headed the Ministry of Finance since 2022, although she has worked in the republic’s financial system since the early 2000s. Her career developed within the ministry itself, allowing her to gain a reputation as a professional bureaucratic financier, well-versed in all nuances of the budgetary process.

Despite the absence of high public visibility, Sukhikh plays a significant role in the administrative system. She coordinates the government’s

financial policy, liaises with federal authorities regarding transfers, and monitors expenditures under conditions of limited resources.



Anna Slugina (Minister of Economy) has headed the relevant ministry since 2023, with prior experience in the government's financial and economic blocs. In her work, Slugina emphasizes high-tech sectors, digital transformation, and human capital development.



Eduard Petrov (Minister of National Policy) has headed the ministry since 2021. Prior to this, he was elected twice as a deputy of the State Council of Udmurtia, where he worked on the commission for science, education, culture, tourism, and national policy. He also led the local branch of the public organization "Udmurt Kenesh", which secured his reputation as a consistent advocate of the "national bloc" in regional politics.



Mikhail Baranov (Minister of Construction, Communal Services, and Energy) assumed office in the summer of 2024, moving into public service from the corporate sector — he previously worked at "Udmurtneft" as deputy director for construction. His arrival coincided with a period of acute social challenges in the housing and communal sector: corruption scandals, criticism of road and utility infrastructure conditions. The introduction of differentiated electricity tariffs at the beginning of 2025 was the most high-profile decision of his ministry. It sharply increased the [burden](#) on households and provoked a negative public reaction.

Baranov inherited a massive set of problems: from dilapidated housing and a shortage of quality roads to the need for modernization of heating networks. For the regional administrative system, Baranov is considered a "crisis manager", tasked with bringing order to a complex and corruption-prone sector, but at the same time, his decisions demonstrate a limited sensitivity to social concerns.



Mikhail Fominov (Minister of Digital Development) assumed office in the fall of 2023. He worked in the ministry for over ten years, overseeing digitalization and telecommunications, and thus already had significant experience in this field prior to his appointment. Before moving into public service, he was associated with the banking sector, which influenced his tendency toward clear managerial schemes and a focus on technological discipline. Fominov's main tasks are related to expanding the Republic's digital infrastructure, including the promotion of import substitution programs in the telecommunications and defense industries.



Sergey Bagin (Minister of Health) has held the position since 2023. A specialist in oncology and vascular surgery (a Candidate of Medical Sciences), he worked at the Central Military Hospital, and headed several hospitals in Moscow Oblast. He came to the position in Udmurtia as a “Varyag” technocrat, tasked with restoring the ministry’s reputation after a series of corruption scandals.



Olga Lubnina (Minister of Social Policy and Labor, Deputy Prime Minister) has headed the ministry since 2024. Previously, she led the executive committee of the regional branch of “United Russia” and also had experience working in the administration of the head and government of the republic. This provided her with an understanding of Udmurtia’s political “kitchen”, which is important in a sector where any decisions carry high social sensitivity.



Svetlana Bolotnikova (Minister of Education and Science) is one of the “long-serving” figures in Brechalov’s team, heading the ministry since 2017. Her career path is atypical: she previously worked as principal of the [Sarapul College](#) and had no political experience, but impressed leadership with her presentation skills and vision for educational reforms.

The reform of first-grade enrollment is one of her key initiatives as minister. She introduced a [two-tier system](#) starting in 2024: first, children assigned to a school based on their territory, all others are admitted later. This partially alleviated the issue of overcrowded classes. Bolotnikova also oversees leadership changes in several higher education institutions in the republic, where there were risks of scandals.



Yulia Badash (Minister of Tourism) headed the Udmurt Republic’s [tourism agency](#) in 2022, and two years later, in 2024, this sector was elevated to ministerial status. Her appointment took place in the context of the region seeking new points of economic growth beyond the traditional sectors of the defense industry and agriculture.



Vladimir Solovyov (Minister of Culture) has held the position since 2009, despite two changes in the republic’s political leadership. Solovyov does not present himself as a prominent politician; rather, he cultivates the image of a “manager” who keeps his domain under control. During his tenure, several programs were implemented: [modernization](#) of rural cultural centers, [festivals](#) of the Udmurt

language and culture, large-scale cultural events for the anniversaries of Pyotr Tchaikovsky, a figure of symbolic importance for the region.



Anna Botalova (Minister of Property Relations) has headed the ministry since 2023. Between 2024 and 2025, the region was implementing a large-scale [program](#) to transfer cadastral and registration processes into digital format. Botalova and the Ministry of Property Relations are actively working to bring previously unregistered or underutilized real estate assets [out of the shadows](#) and integrate them into the economic turnover.



Svetlana Palchik (Chair of the Electoral Commission of Udmurtia) moved from her position as Head of the Press Department of the Head of the Republic in 2023. Her appointment to the electoral committee was a response to criticism of the previous commission by the federal center: following low evaluations of its work and the loss of its status as a “central” electoral commission, new leadership was needed that combined bureaucratic experience with political loyalty.

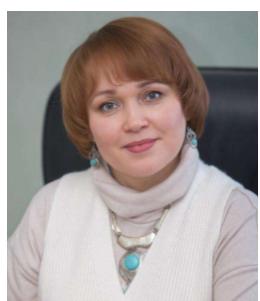
The 2024 presidential elections were Palchik’s first major test, in which Udmurtia recorded one of the lowest voter turnouts in the FD (62.55%), prompting remarks from Moscow. She is now responsible for preparing the elections for municipal and republican authorities in 2025–2026, where the Kremlin expects greater voter mobilization.

(Legislative power)



Vladimir Nevostruev (Chair of the State Council of Udmurtia) is one of the most experienced politicians in the region. In the past, he worked as a kolkhoz chairman, headed a district administration, served as the republican Minister of Agriculture, Deputy Head of the Government, and in 2007 moved to the parliament, where he progressed from commission chair to speaker. In 2013, he became Chair of the State Council, later stepped down for several years, but regained the position after his successor’s resignation.

Nevostruev is characterized as an “old-school” bureaucrat — experienced and non-confrontational. Deep connections in the agricultural sector and among regional elites is his main resource, making him convenient for cooperation with the government. In 2022, the State Council [abolished](#) the term limit for the Head of Udmurtia, significantly expanding the powers of Brechalov’s team.



Tatyana Ishmatova (Deputy Chair of the State Council) represents the national wing in regional politics. Her career has long been associated with activities aimed at supporting Udmurt identity and maintaining interethnic balance. Ishmatova’s presence in the parliamentary leadership serves a primarily symbolic function: she embodies the

“national component” within the system of power, which is especially important for republics with a non-Russian population.



Nail Mukhamedzyanov (Deputy Chair of the State Council) began his political career as a deputy in the Izhevsk City Duma, after which he was repeatedly elected to the State Duma and became one of the leading specialists in the budgetary and financial sphere. He currently chairs the board of directors of the “Orbita M” group, which operates in communal services and development. This background gives him additional weight in the eyes of both deputies and the executive branch.



Ivan Cherezov (Deputy Chair of the State Council) is a three-time world champion and two-time Olympic medalist in biathlon. In 2021, he was elected as a deputy of the State Council of Udmurtia and later became Deputy Chair of the Council. He also heads the Udmurtia Biathlon Federation, which is traditionally supported by the Kalashnikov Group.

Other influential figures within this group of influence include:

- **Anatoly Naumov** – head of the United Russia faction.
- **Dmitry Arsibekov** – State Duma deputy and head of the system-forming enterprise “Elekond”, which manufactures capacitors, including for aviation, space, and military equipment.
- **Sergey Zuyev** – deputy and assistant to the general director of JSC “Votkinsk Plant”.
- **Aleksandr Prozorov** – chair of the permanent commission on state construction and local self-government of the State Council of Udmurtia.
- **Yelena Derbilova** – chair of the commission on labor, social policy, and veterans’ affairs of the State Council of Udmurtia.
- **Mikhail Tumin** – head of the State Control Committee (oversight body).

(Judicial power)



Aleksandr Polushkin (Chair of the Supreme Court of Udmurtia) has held the position since 2020. Under his leadership, decisions of the Supreme Court of Udmurtia are rarely overturned by higher instances. It indicates a relatively high quality of law enforcement. At the same time, he maintains internal discipline: in recent years, only isolated cases of judge dismissals have resulted from serious violations, which helps create an image of control and predictability.



Vladimir Kalugin (Chair of the Arbitration Court of Udmurtia) was appointed in January 2025, and is just beginning to shape his own approach within the regional judicial system. Originally from the neighboring Perm Krai, Kalugin has many years of experience in arbitration justice and a reputation as a “pure-school” professional specializing in economic and corporate disputes. His appointment was accompanied by a symbolic gesture: he assumed leadership of the new Arbitration Court [building](#) in Izhevsk, commissioned specifically for his tenure. It highlights a modernization course in the justice sector.

(Local government)

Izhevsk	<p>Dmitriy Chistyakov (mayor)</p> 	<p>He replaced Oleg Bekmemyetyev in 2023 following Bekmemyetyev’s high-profile resignation and arrest. During several years of leadership, he has been unable to restore trust in the city administration, primarily due to inability to manage communal issues effectively. According to forecasts, following the 2025 City Duma elections, his dismissal is almost certain.</p>
	<p>Farit Gubarev (Head of City Duma)</p> 	<p>In 2021, he relinquished his deputy mandate in the State Council of Udmurtia to head the Izhevsk City Duma. His move was explained by his business interests in the communal services sector.</p>
Sarapul	<p>Viktor Shestakov (mayor)</p> 	<p>In 2018, he ran for the post of head of Izhevsk. Since 2021, he has served as head of Sarapul and succeeded in transforming the city’s image from a “forgotten periphery” to an investment-attractive center. Under his tenure, Sarapul has seen the establishment of a technopark, a Wildberries logistics center, and active development of the tourist potential of the historic merchant city.</p>

Glazov	Sergei Konovalov (mayor) 	He comes from business structures associated with the “Komos” group, which was established by representatives of the “northern clan”. In his work, he has focused on the renovation of medical facilities. He is active on social media and open to dialogue.
Votkinsk	Aleksey Zametaev (mayor) 	He rose from being a janitor at the Votkinsk Plant to becoming the city's mayor. He has not been involved in scandals, but at the same time, it is difficult to call him a charismatic leader.

Federal representation of the region

It is a specific center of influence that significantly determines the Udmurt Republic's opportunities in relations with the federal center. It is primarily composed of State Duma deputies, senators, and federal-level officials who have direct access to Moscow's budgetary and political resources. They act as a kind of “lobby” for Udmurtia, promoting the interests of the local economy—from the agro-industrial complex to defense-industrial enterprises.

This group is somewhat heterogeneous. Some members retain real influence and maintain important connections within the federal political class, while others serve a more symbolic function, representing the region's national component. The influence of the “federal” representatives on internal republican processes is limited, but their role is critical in securing investments, subsidies, and protection of the defense complex's interests at the Moscow level.



Andrey Isayev (State Duma deputy of the Russian Federation, deputy head of the faction) has long been considered the main parliamentary lobbyist for Udmurtia in Moscow and maintains close ties with law enforcement agencies. In 2013, he caused a [disturbance](#) on board a passenger aircraft.



Oleg Garin (State Duma deputy of the Russian Federation) previously served as Minister of Transport and Road Management of Udmurtia. In the federal parliament, he actively promotes the interests of the [transport sector](#) and infrastructure, introducing initiatives to support the Volga FD. He maintains influence in his home region through parliamentary activity and the allocation of federal funds.



Larisa Buranova (State Duma deputy of the Russian Federation) previously served as Minister of National Policy of Udmurtia. She functions as a symbolic “national figure”, representing the region on issues of interethnic relations and cultural policy.



Yuri Fyodorov (Senator from Udmurtia) is Deputy Chair of the Committee on Economic Policy. In the past, he played hockey with Putin, which adds to his influence. He maintains connections with [business groups](#) led by Ingush entrepreneur Mikhail Gutseriev. In the Federation Council, he promotes initiatives in subsoil legislation, which is important for resource-extracting regions.



Lyubov Glebova (Senator from Udmurtia). Her husband, [Kirill Komarov](#), is the First Deputy General Director of the state corporation Rosatom. Glebova has long-standing [close ties](#) with [Sergey Kiriyenko](#). Her significance for Udmurtia is linked to the Chepetsky Mechanical Plant, which is a part of Rosatom.



Olga Abramova (advisor to the Minister of Agriculture of the Russian Federation). Prior to her promotion, she served as First Deputy Prime Minister of the Udmurt government. Abramova maintains strong connections within the federal agricultural lobby and retains her status as a “representative of the republic in Moscow”.

Federal security and supervisory structures

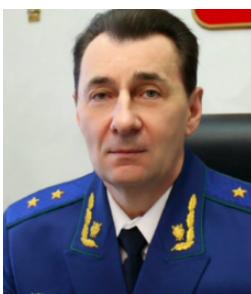
It is one of the key poles of power in the region. Leaders of security and supervisory institutions are appointed by Moscow, have short tenures, and are strictly oriented toward the federal agenda. This block functions as an “external arbiter”: it monitors the regional elite, prevents uncontrolled conflicts, and is often the main determinant of personnel “red lines”. Following high-profile cases against former leaders (Aleksander Solovyov, Aleksander Volkov, Oleg Bekmemetyev), Udmurtia has gained a reputation as a “red region”, where large criminal structures cannot regain influence due to the dominance of the security bloc.



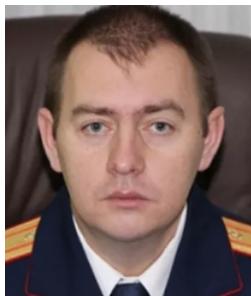
Maksim Tikhonov (Minister of Internal Affairs of Udmurtia). He has held the position since 2021. He supports the region’s image as a territory with strict criminal control, which is important for the “arms capital of Russia”. During his tenure, crime rates in the region have [decreased](#), and there have been no large-scale protest actions.



Sergey Kashtanov (Head of the FSB Directorate for Udmurtia). [Transferred](#) to Udmurtia from Adygea in 2022. He is one of the most secretive members of the political elite of the Udmurt Republic.



Artyom Nikolaev (Prosecutor of Udmurtia). Originally from Tatarstan, he has been with the prosecutor's office since the 1990s and has served as Udmurt Prosecutor since 2021. He became notable during a scandal over uncompleted [repairs](#) in schools, taking the matter under his control and resolving the issue without attracting the attention of federal officials.



Rustam Tugushev (Head of the Investigative Directorate of the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation for Udmurtia). He gained prominence by exposing [corruption crimes](#) committed by a former regional Minister of Construction, as well as a high-profile violent crime in the village of [Lukshudya](#). Thus, Tugushev has cultivated an image of a leader who maintains a balance with the local establishment while simultaneously pursuing high-profile cases under the oversight of the federal center.



Sergey Pryazhentsev (Head of the Main Directorate of the Ministry of Emergency Situations for Udmurtia). He was appointed head of the directorate in 2022 and was awarded the rank of Major General of the Internal Service in 2024.



Aleksey Vorobyov (Chief Federal Inspector for Udmurtia). Appointed in 2024, he previously worked in Perm Krai. His role is to ensure communication between the regional administration and the Plenipotentiary Representative of the President in the Volga Federal District, as well as to inform the Kremlin about moods and potential risks. He oversees issues of support for „SMO” participants and control over defense enterprises.

Heads of defense industry enterprises

Udmurtia provides [over 90%](#) of Russia's small arms production and is one of the key manufacturing sites in the fields of air defense and missile technologies. For this reason, the directors of defense industry enterprises hold significant political weight in the region, and their position is important both for Moscow and for the local administrative system. Their influence is based on the following factors: 1) the strategic significance of the enterprises; 2) control over large workforces; 3) access to federal resources and contracts.



Fanil Ziyatdinov
"Kupol" Plant (Izhevsk)
Air Defense System "Tor"



Alan Lushnikov
Kalashnikov Group + ZALA Aero
Kalashnikov assault rifles, "Vykhhr" missiles, "Strela", drones "Kub", "Lancet", "Takhion", "Granat"



Igor Churbanov
Votkinsk Plant
Strategic missile systems "Topol", "Yars", "Bulava"



Aleksander Mayer
Izhevsk Radio Plant (servicing "Roscosmos", Russian Railways, and the defense sector)



Anatoly Naumov
"Elekond" Plant (Sarapul) — produces capacitors for military equipment
Deputy of the State Council of Udmurtia and head of the United Russia faction



Sergey Chineykin
"Chepetsky Mechanical Plant" (Glazov) — production in metallurgy and nuclear materials. Deputy of the State Council, actively involved in the committee on agriculture and agro-industrial complex issues



Gennady Kudryavtsev
"Aksion-Holding" — specialized in instrument engineering, but recently diversified production toward medical equipment

Representatives of large business

This block does not have as much formal power in the region as the government or the security structures, but the influence of business groups is felt in the social sphere, media space, and politics. Large businessmen act not only as economic actors but also as “informal politicians”, able to support their people in the republican parliament, local self-government bodies, or lobby interests through federal contacts. At the same time, some representatives of large business are directly elected as deputies, combining economic and political power.

Agro-industrial complex



Andrey Oskolkov (Komos Group)



Andrey Shutov (Komos Group)



Aleksey Maliuk (Udmurt Bread Company)

The agro-industrial sector is one of the key pillars of Udmurtia's economy alongside the defense complex. It is particularly significant in the dairy sector: Udmurtia is among the largest milk [producers](#) in Russia. Udmurt products are actively supplied to the markets of neighboring regions and have [export potential](#). The largest player here is “Komos Group”, co-owned by **Andrey Oskolkov and Andrey Shutov**. They control the lion's share of dairy and meat processing, own federal brands, and have access to Moscow through the Ministry of Agriculture and relevant business associations. Although neither of them is a deputy, their lobby operates through a network of business alliances, and in past years through connections with Olga Abramova, who works in the federal Ministry of Agriculture.

Another model was demonstrated by **Aleksey Maliuk**, owner of the “Udmurt Bread Company”, which specializes in flour production and supplying bread to state institutions. Unlike the partners from “Komos”, he is himself a deputy of the State Council of Udmurtia and directly uses his mandate to advance interests in parliamentary commissions, especially regarding state contracts and financing of the agro-industrial sector.

Construction, development, and urban real estate

Aleksey Chulkin
(UDS Group)



Rustam Khabibulin
(Asso-Bud)



Viktor Ruskikh



Andrey Oskolkov
(Komos Group)

The construction industry of Udmurtia is one of the most dynamic sectors of the regional economy and at the same time one of the most corruption-prone. First, the allocation of land plots, especially in Izhevsk, depends on administrative decisions (this creates a ground for behind-the-scenes agreements). Second, the volume of budget funds directed to road management, social construction, and infrastructure projects makes the sector attractive for kickback schemes. For example, the arrest of the former head of Udmurtia, Aleksandr Solovyov, in 2017 was directly related to receiving bribes in the "road" sector. From time to time, high-profile scandals arise over inflated contract prices in "Udmurtavtodor". Developer companies such as "Asso-Bud" faced protests from residents due to the construction on [green areas](#), accompanied by accusations of non-transparent decisions by the authorities.

Among the leading players in the construction industry of Udmurtia, it is worth highlighting **Andrey Oskolkov**, who, within "Komos Group", expanded activities to development, implementing large-scale residential projects in Izhevsk. **Aleksey Chulkin** is the most systematic entrepreneur in this sector. His "UDS-Group" implements large-scale residential and commercial projects. **Rustam Khabibulin** ("Asso-Bud") specializes in mid-range residential complexes and, thanks to his experience in the authorities, skillfully balances between the interests of business and administration, although his company has repeatedly been criticized for building on green zones. **Viktor Ruskikh** is a kind of "veteran" of the market. After the telecommunications business he focused on elite development, creating image-building projects that change the architectural appearance of Izhevsk.

 Oil industry

Oil production in Udmurtia has long-standing traditions. „Udmurtneft” (under the management of "Rosneft") and "Belkamneft" (the "Safmar" group of Ingush businessman Mikhail Gutseriev) are the largest companies in the sector. Besides its strategic significance, the oil sector also performs a social function: it finances local infrastructure, participates in rural development programs, and supports numerous charitable projects.

Andrey Topal, CEO of "Udmurtneft" is among the key players. Under his leadership, the company consistently produces about 6 million tons of oil annually (approximately 60% of the total Udmurtia output), operating at 33 fields across 14 districts. Topal's deputy, **Rashid**

Abashev, is a State Council deputy, overseeing material and technical support and transportation (a key figure in the company's interaction with local contractors and authorities). The head of "Belkamneft", **Dmitry Arsibekov**, is also a State Council deputy and simultaneously leads the Udmurtia Hockey Federation.



Andrey Topal
(Udmurtneft)



Rashid Abashev
(Udmurtneft)



Dmitry Arsibekov
(Belkamneft)

The connection of the oil sector with the government is manifested through **Mikhail Baranov**, Minister of Construction, Communal Services, and Energy of Udmurtia, who before his appointment in 2024 worked at "Udmurtneft" as Deputy Director for Construction. Thus, he remains linked to the oil business and is well aware of its needs. This creates an additional channel of influence on the administrative system for the sector.

□ *Transport*



Aleksandr Sinelnikov
(Izhavia,
Udmertavtodor)

Aleksandr Sinelnikov is a key figure here. He simultaneously heads the airline "Izhavia", JSC "[Izhevsk Airport](#)", and since 2023 has also been responsible for "Udmurtavtodor". Sinelnikov effectively serves as a crisis manager in the region: in the field of air transportation, he managed to preserve the uniqueness of "Izhavia" as a regional airline with its own fleet, as well as increase passenger traffic after the coronavirus pandemic. The construction of the new terminal at Izhevsk Airport was one of the key infrastructure projects in recent years.

In managing the road sector, Sinelnikov faced challenges: "Udmurtavtodor" has traditionally been a problematic structure with corruption risks. Transferring it under the control of the head of "Izhavia" indicates an attempt to unite crisis areas under the leadership of a manager trusted by the regional governor's administration. Politically, Sinelnikov's influence is limited: he does not have his own lobby in the parliament or business, but his significance lies in functional control over critical infrastructure.

Civil society, opposition, media environment

Civil society in Udmurtia is weakly developed, mostly focused on socio-cultural and charitable initiatives. Some activists work in the fields of ecology, protection of local identity, and promotion of the Udmurt language and culture. At the same time, politicized forms of civic activity are under pressure. **Albert Razin** is a symbol of protest activism. In 2019 he committed an act of [self-immolation](#) in defense of the Udmurt language, which became a marker of both the weakness and radicalization of cultural resistance. This event was ignored by regional media.

Act of self-immolation by Albert Razin

The opposition space is formally represented by local branches of the CPRF, LDPR, and "Just Russia", but they function as a systemic opposition and do not influence decision-making. Non-systemic opposition structures operate mainly outside the republic. For example, the "[Udmurtia Against Corruption](#)" movement, led by **Ivan Yeliseev** (former head of Navalny's Udmurt headquarters), now functions abroad and focuses on informational and educational activities in exile, maintaining its own YouTube and Telegram channels. The "[Free Udmurtia](#)" movement, led by **Sergey Antonov**, became active in 2024–2025, promoting narratives about regional autonomy and criticism of the federal center. In particular, in 2025 Sergey Antonov presented the documentary film "[His Poison](#)" about political assassinations of critics of Putin.

Inside Udmurtia, critical voices were present in the form of individual activists operating mostly in "grey zones", mainly via social media. Before the full-scale invasion 20-year-old **Anastasia Ponkina**, who publicly criticized the authorities, was a notable figure. As a result, she received a suspended sentence, which served as a signal to others about the limited opportunities even for relatively mild opposition activity.

Anastasia Ponkina one year after her arrest
(September 2022)



"In fact, over this year, while the court case has been ongoing, a lot has changed. I got married and now I work in a field I love. I was taken on full-time (even despite the weekly court sessions). I work as a marketer in a media holding. And also – I no longer want to talk about politics".

The media space is characterized by almost complete loyalty of the main information resources to the regional and federal authorities. Leading regional online media – **Udm-info**, IA “**Susanin**”, **Izhlife**, and **Udmurt.ru** – cover local news within the limits of the permitted discourse. The public image of Aleksandr Brechalov becomes the subject of criticism on semi-anonymous Telegram channels that highlight the failures and mistakes of his team – these are “**Ochki Brechalova**” and “**Soyuz Bercha i Orala**”. A separate “**Udmurtia**” section exists on the NocCor portal, dedicated to corruption and kompromat in the regions. **The Kompromat-Ural** website regularly publishes analytics regarding business and officials of the Volga Federal District, including the Udmurt Republic.

Thus, in modern Udmurtia, civil society is limited to cultural and social initiatives, the opposition is fragmented and operates mainly outside the region, and the media space is under government control. At the same time, new opposition structures in exile and digital platforms create information channels that maintain a noticeable level of criticism of the official discourse.