Is NATO bigger than Russia?

Yes: NATO is far bigger than Russia in people, money and troops. Its members have about seven times Russia's population and some 23 times its economy.

Figures are from NATO, the IMF, SIPRI and Eurostat.

People

NATO describes its members as one billion people on both sides of the Atlantic. Russia had about 144 million in 2025, by the IMF's count. That is roughly seven to one. The European Union alone, with 452 million inhabitants at the start of 2026, has more than three times Russia's population.

Economy

NATO's statistics put the combined GDP of all 32 allies at $59.2 trillion in 2025, at current prices and exchange rates. Set against the IMF's figure for Russia, $2.57 trillion, the allies' combined economy is about 23 times larger. By the IMF's count the United States alone produced $30.9 trillion, and the European Union $21.3 trillion, about eight times Russia.

Exchange rates flatter the gap, because a rouble buys more at home than its dollar value suggests. Adjusted for purchasing power, the IMF puts Russia's economy at $7.2 trillion; the United States and the EU together still produce more than eight times as much.

Military spending

SIPRI, which compares military budgets on a common basis, puts the combined spending of NATO's members at $1,581 billion in 2025, 55 % of the world total. Russia spent an estimated $190 billion. That is more than eight to one.

The European part alone is large. SIPRI counts $559 billion for the 29 European members, almost three times Russia's budget. The European Defence Agency, which covers the 27 EU states, puts their 2025 spending at €418 billion against about €132 billion for Russia at market rates, or about €282 billion once Russia's lower prices are taken into account. On either measure the EU spends more. The full series is in European defence in numbers.

Russia spends a far larger share of a far smaller economy: 7.5 % of GDP in 2025, by SIPRI's estimate, and a fifth of all government spending. By NATO's own count, the allies as a whole spent about 2.75 % of GDP, the European allies and Canada 2.31 %.

Troops

NATO counts 3.32 million military personnel across its members in 2025, 2.02 million of them in Europe and Canada. Russia's authorized strength, raised by decree in September 2026, is 1,550,500 servicemen; the IISS, as cited by Greenpeace, estimates the active force at about 1.26 million. Either way NATO has more than twice as many, and the European allies and Canada alone have more than Russia. The breakdown is in How many troops does NATO have?

Bigger is not the same as stronger

Size is not strength. Russia matches NATO in nuclear warheads, with a military stockpile of about 4,400 against 4,215 American, French and British by SIPRI's estimate, and it decides faster under one command. Equipment, combat experience and who would win are compared in NATO vs Russia.

Europe already has the people and the money to outweigh Russia several times over. It has not yet turned that weight into one defense.

All questions →

FREQUENTLY ASKED

Is NATO bigger than Russia?

Yes, on every measure of size. NATO's members have about one billion people to Russia's 144 million, an economy about 23 times larger, more than eight times the military spending and over twice as many military personnel. Russia matches NATO only in nuclear warheads.

How does NATO's economy compare with Russia's at purchasing power?
The gap narrows but stays wide. Adjusted for what money buys at home, the IMF puts Russia's 2025 economy at $7.2 trillion, against $30.9 trillion for the United States and $29.5 trillion for the EU. The two together produce more than eight times Russia's output on that basis.

Is Europe alone bigger than Russia?
Yes. The EU has 452 million people, more than three times Russia's population, and an economy about eight times larger. The 29 European NATO members spent $559 billion on their militaries in 2025 by SIPRI's count, almost three times Russia's $190 billion.

How many soldiers does NATO have compared to Russia?
About 3.32 million military personnel in 2025 by NATO's estimate, 2.02 million of them in Europe and Canada. Russia's authorized strength is 1,550,500 servicemen since September 2026; the IISS, as cited by Greenpeace, estimates its active force at about 1.26 million.

Why does Russia spend so much more of its economy on defense?
Because it is at war. SIPRI estimates Russian military spending at 7.5 % of GDP in 2025 and 20 % of all government spending, the highest share it has recorded for Russia. By NATO's own count, its members together spent about 2.75 % of GDP, the European allies and Canada 2.31 %.

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- Eurostat: EU population on 1 January 2026 (7/2026) – 452.0 million
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- EDA: Defence Data 2025–2026, pp. 10–12 (7/2026) – EU-27 spending €418 billion; Russia about €132 billion at market rates, about €282 billion in purchasing-power terms (Janes, IMF)
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- SIPRI Yearbook 2026: World nuclear forces (6/2026) – military stockpiles, January 2026: Russia 4,400, United States 3,700, France 290, United Kingdom 225