

Three in Four Russians Expect Military Victory over Ukraine

But they are more ready than ever to enter peace negotiations.

[Dina Smeltz](#), Vice President and Senior Fellow, Public Opinion and US Foreign Policy, Chicago Council on Global Affairs

[Lama El Baz](#), Research Assistant, Public Opinion and US Foreign Policy, Chicago Council on Global Affairs

[Denis Volkov](#), Director, Levada Center

February 2025

Despite suffering heavy military [casualties](#), [recruitment](#) and [equipment challenges](#) in its conflict with Ukraine, Russia continues to make slow but significant gains on the battlefield. A just-completed Chicago Council on Global Affairs-Levada Center survey, fielded January 23-29, 2025, suggests the Russian public feels the wind at its back, as a majority of the population expects the Russian side to prevail in the conflict.

Russians also seem to credit the military operation in Ukraine with boosting their country's international clout and political stature. For now, at least, they prioritize Russia's projection of power and strength internationally over improving the country's living standards. At the same time, perhaps to cement current battlefield gains, more now than ever before support starting peace negotiations.

Key Findings

- Majorities of Russians express pride in their country's history (94%), political influence in the world (74%), and cultural, military, and economic achievements (88%, 82%, and 57%, respectively).
- For the first time, a majority of Russians say they would like to see Russia as a great power that is feared and respected by other countries (55%) rather than a country with a high standard of living (41%).

- As in past surveys, three in four support the continued military action in Ukraine (78%) and think Russia will emerge victorious (76%).
- Yet there are some indications that continued support for the conflict could be softening: the highest percentage yet (61%, up from 54% in 2024) believe it is time to start peace negotiations rather than continue military operations in Ukraine.
- Almost twice as many say Russia should start negotiations so it reduces costs to households (59%) as say it should continue the military operation (32%).
- More than twice as many say Russia should start negotiations to prevent additional deaths of Russian soldiers (65%) as say it should continue military operations (26%).
- More Russians distrust (50%) than trust (35%) reports from the Kremlin about exact civilian and military casualties resulting from the conflict.

Russian Pride in Country Highest in 30 Years of Polling

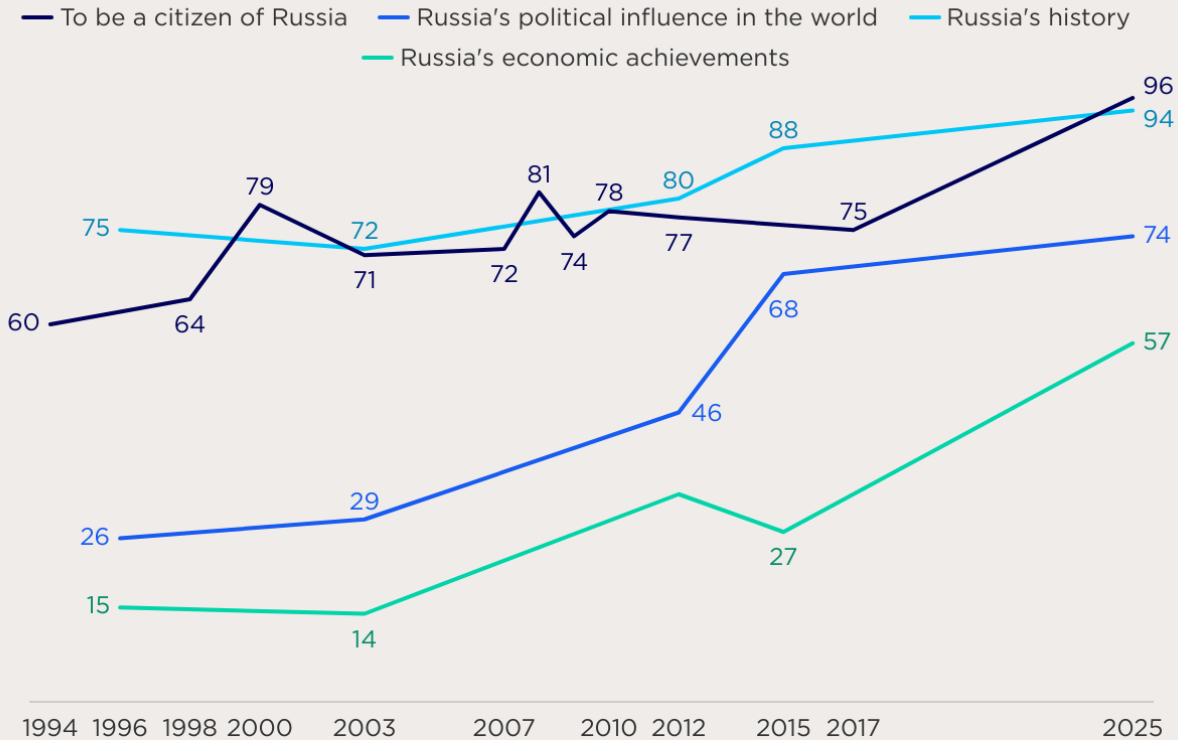
Public opinion [surveys conducted in Russia over the last decade](#) have tracked [wartime spikes in public approval](#) of Russian President Vladimir Putin and state institutions. During times of conflict, they also tend to express higher levels of nationalism, confidence, and pride in their country—and this particular moment is no different.

The most recent Council-Levada Center survey finds that Russians are prouder than ever of their country (96%, with 76% being very proud), history (94%, 68% very proud), and political influence in the world (74%, 34% very proud).¹ They have also grown more proud of Russia’s economic achievements but to a lesser degree (57%, with 21% being very proud).

¹ Between 1994 and 2017, the Levada Center asked Russians “How proud are you of being a citizen of Russia?” in a stand-alone question.

Russian Pride over Time

Are you very proud, somewhat proud, not very proud, or not proud at all of the following:
(% somewhat + very proud)



January 23-29, 2025 | n= 1,615

CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS-LEVADA CENTER



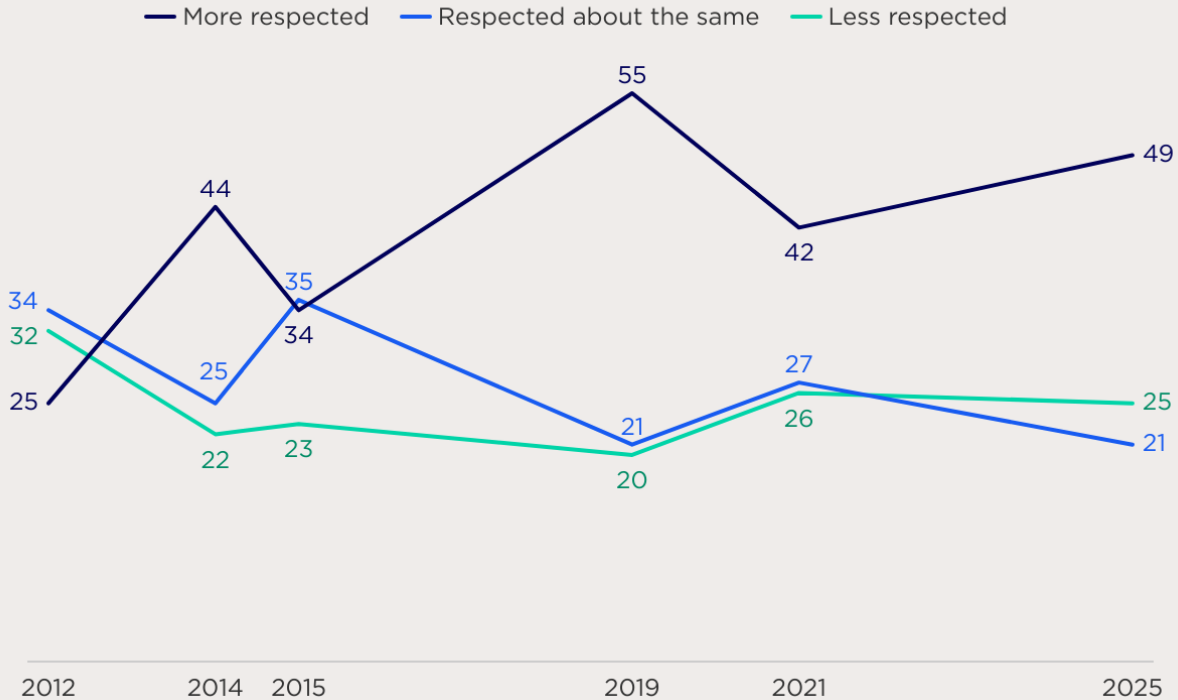
In new questions that were not asked in previous Levada Center polls, at least eight in 10 Russians also say they are proud of their country's military achievements (82%, 49% very proud) and cultural contributions (88%, 58% very proud).

Public Believes Russia is Respected More Now than a Decade Ago

This increase in national pride coincides with the growing sense that Russia is more respected in the world today than it was 10 years ago (49%, 21% about the same, 25% less respected). Although Russians were more likely to say their country commanded greater respect in 2019, this level is still one of the highest recorded in Levada polling. Underpinning these sentiments is widespread approval for Putin (87% approve of his performance) and the overarching belief that the country is on the right track (71%, 17% wrong path) (see Appendix Figure 1 and Table 1).

International Respect for Russia

Do you think Russia is more respected, less respected, or respected about the same in the world as it was 10 years ago (%)



January 23-29, 2025 | n= 1,615

CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS-LEVADA CENTER



Public Favors Power Projection over High Standard of Living

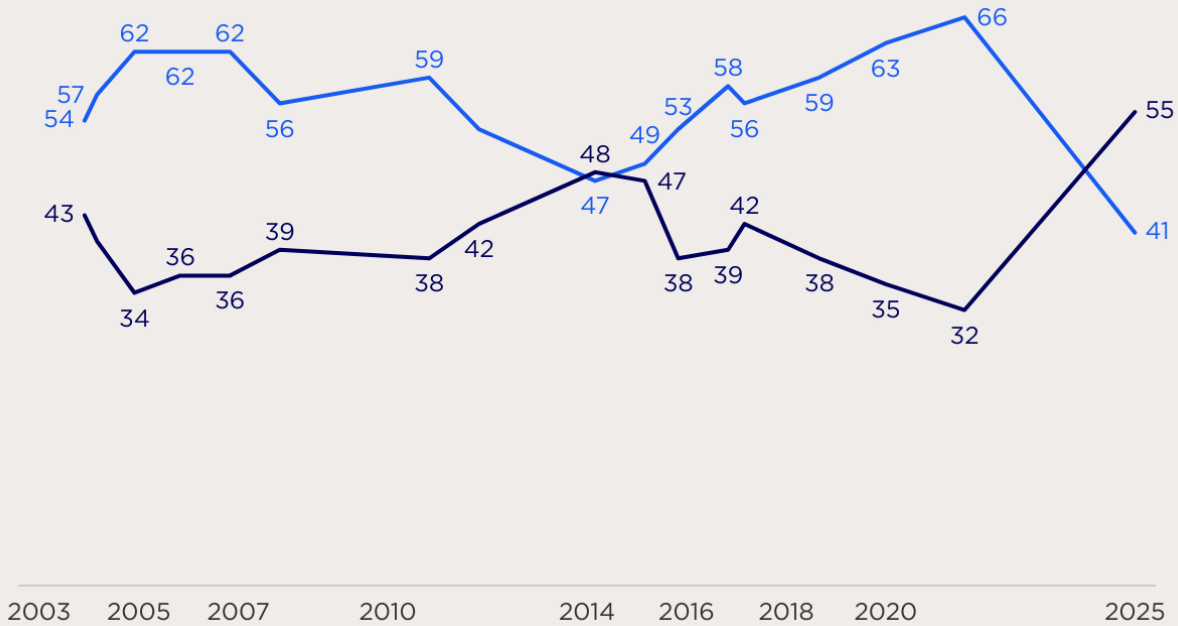
With the military conflict with Kyiv in the backdrop, the Russian public seems to have shifted its preference in the primary goal for their country. For the first time, a majority of Russians say that above all, they would like to see Russia as a great power that is feared and respected by other countries (55%) rather than a country with a high standard of living, even if it is not one of the most powerful countries in the world (41%).

For the last two decades, the majority of Russians preferred the opposite tradeoff (for Russia to be a country with a high standard of living, even if that meant it wasn't one of the most powerful countries in the world), with the exceptions of 2014 and 2015, at which points opinion was divided. Those exceptions likely reflected a war footing as well, with a shift in public priorities in the wake of the "reunification" of Crimea.

Russia's Role in the World

What, above all, would you like to see Russia as today? (%)

— As a great power that is respected and feared by other countries — As a country with a high standard of living, even if it is not one of the most powerful countries in the world



January 23-29, 2025 | n= 1,615

CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS-LEVADA CENTER



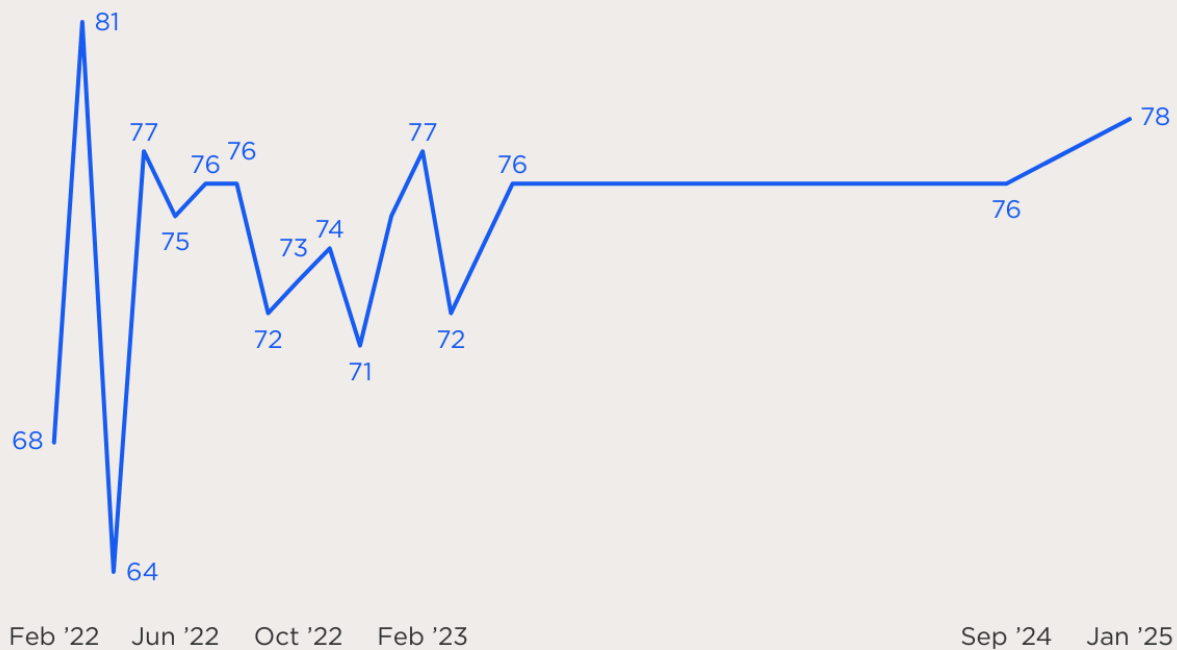
Consistent Support for Russian Military Operation in Ukraine . . .

Most Russians tend to trust official reports from the government about the successes of the Russian armed forces in Ukraine (69% trust, 25% distrust) (see Appendix Table 2). It follows then, that most also think the military action will end in a victory for Russia (76%), while virtually no one expects Ukraine to win. However, 15 percent expect it to end in a stalemate, believing that neither side will gain the upper hand. These expectations have remained consistent since April 2022 (see Appendix Table 3).

Consistent with past surveys, a large majority of Russians continue to support the actions of Russia's armed forces in Ukraine (78%). Just 15 percent oppose the action; no more than 23 percent of the public has ever expressed opposition.

Support for Special Military Operation in Ukraine

Do you personally support or oppose the actions of the Russian armed forces in Ukraine? (% somewhat + definitely support)



January 23-29, 2025 | n=1,615

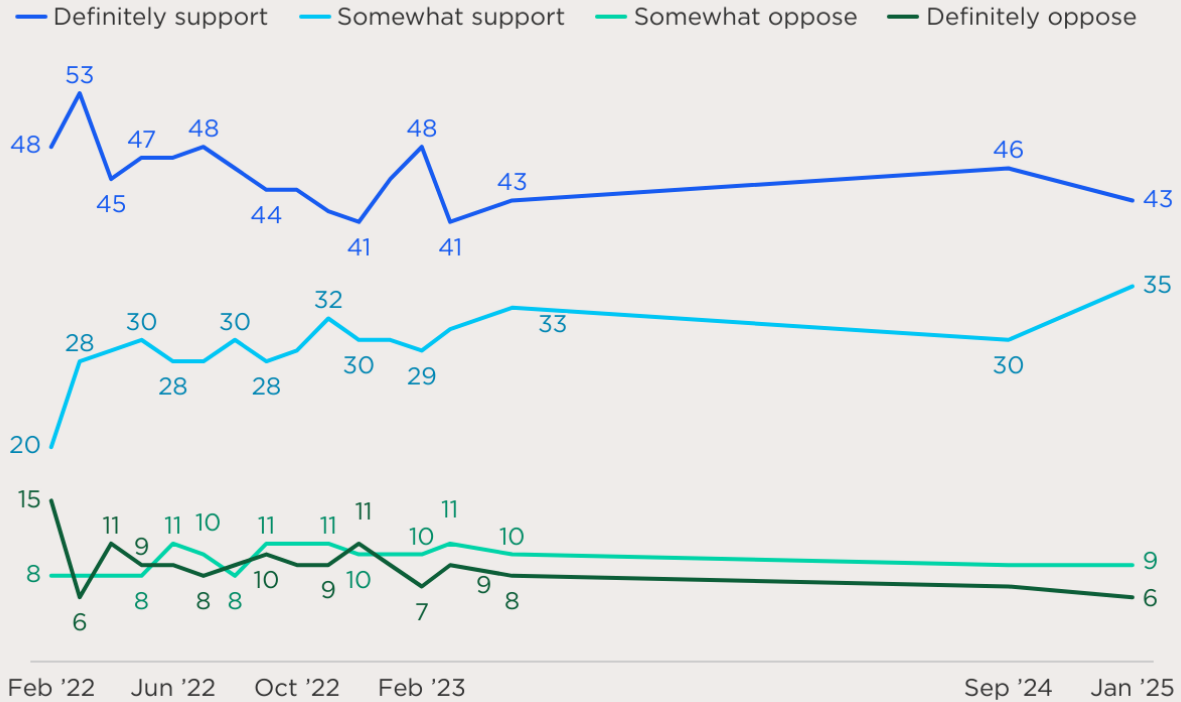
CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS-LEVADA CENTER



Given the government restrictions on anyone in the country criticizing the [military operation in Russia](#), it is important to examine the ratio between committed and passive supporters. The most recent Council-Levada Center survey finds that 43 percent of the Russian public definitely support the military operation, while 35 percent somewhat support it. The difference between the two options tilts toward “definitely support” with a gap of 8 percentage points—the narrowest gap between strong and passive support since Levada first started asking this question in February 2022. Back then, “definitely support” weighed in at 28 percentage points higher than “somewhat support.”

Support for Special Military Operation in Ukraine

Do you personally support or oppose the actions of the Russian armed forces in Ukraine? (%)



January 23-29, 2025 | n=1,615
 CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS-LEVADA CENTER

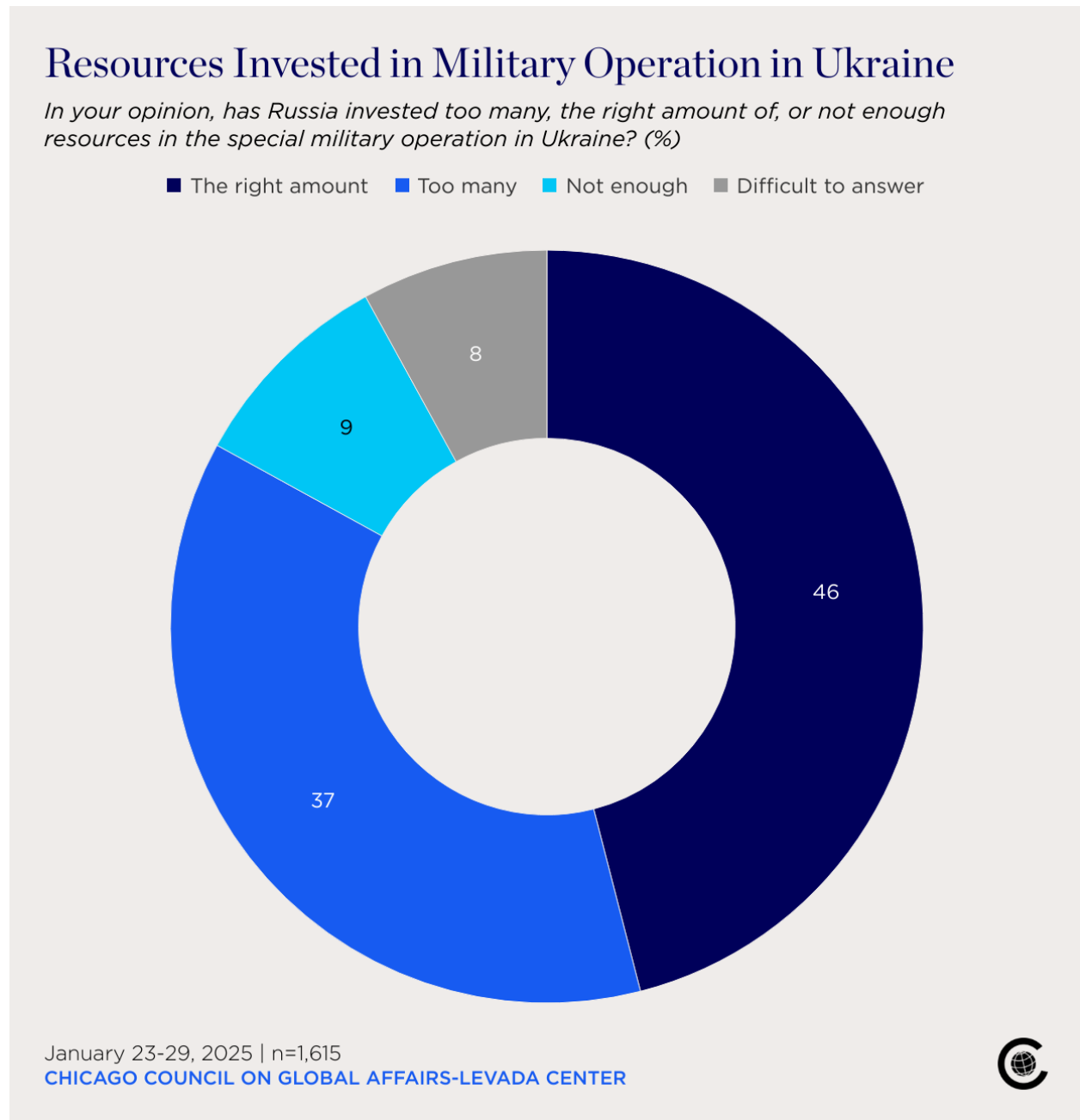


... But the Data Reveal Some Signs of War Fatigue

Heading into its third year, the special military operation in Ukraine is reported to have cost Russia up to [\\$211 billion to fund](#), in addition to billions in [sanctioned assets and losses in trade and oil revenue](#). Although the Russian economy has largely [adapted to the international sanctions](#) and severance of trade relations with Moscow, reports suggest that the conflict has [exacerbated economic inequalities and worsened the quality of life](#) for everyday Russians.

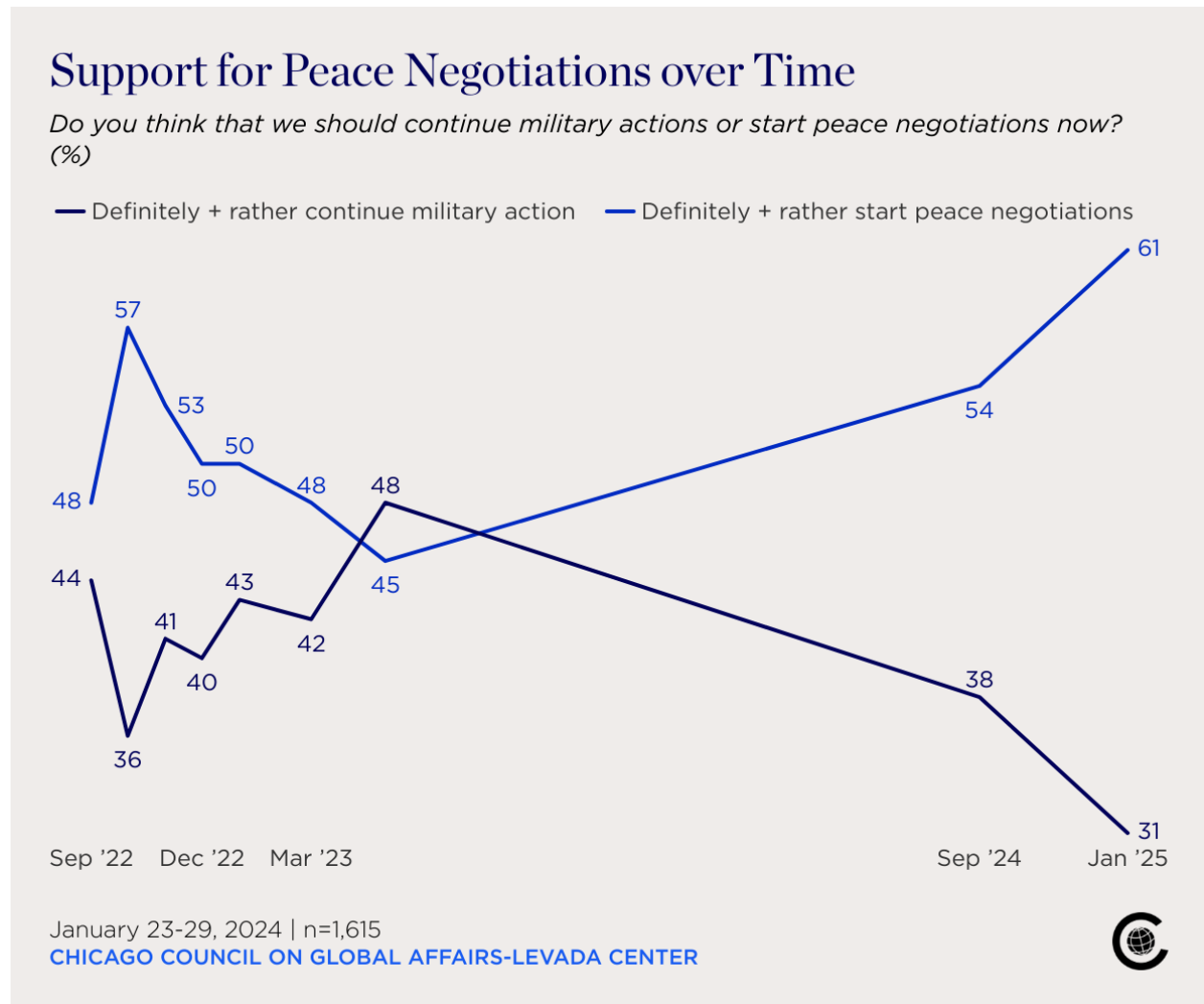
The data show some indications of war fatigue among the Russian public. A combined majority expect the fighting to continue for six months to a year (27%) if not more than a year (32%), and a growing percentage are not sure when it will end (25%, up from 18% in May 2023) (see Appendix Table 4).

While a plurality of the public say Russia has invested resources to the military operation in Ukraine appropriately (46%), the public is somewhat divided on whether to trust (51%) or distrust (36%) reports from the Russian government about the number of resources being spent on the operations (see Appendix Table 2). A sizable minority think too many resources have been spent on the conflict (37%) and just 9 percent believe not enough has been allocated.



Even more revealing is the finding that 61 percent of Russians believe it is time to start peace negotiations—the highest percentage yet to express this view

(up from 54% last September). Yet, earlier Council-Levada Center surveys have found that when Russians envision a peace settlement, they are [not willing to settle for anything less](#) than keeping the Donbas and Crimea as part of Russian territory. While some Russians may believe their country should negotiate now in a position of strength, the wartime sacrifices people have had to make could also contribute to this response.



A case in point: when a random half of the survey respondents are asked about costs to households, 59 percent say Russia should look to enter peace negotiations as soon as possible so the costs aren't as great compared to 32 percent who disagree and say the fighting should continue regardless of higher prices.

And when the other half of respondents are asked about the tradeoffs with Russian casualties, an even larger majority say Russia should start

negotiations as soon as possible to avoid the loss of more Russian soldiers (65%). Only a quarter think Russia should continue even if results in more casualties in its armed forces (26%). Russians are not sure the government is being transparent about casualties in the war: by nearly a five to three ratio, more say they distrust (50%) than trust (35%) reports from the Russian government about the number of Russian civilians and military personnel killed as a result of the special military operation (see Appendix Table 2).



Conclusion

With high expectations for the conflict’s outcome, Russians are still broadly supportive of the special military operation in Ukraine. While they may not be fully aware of the true casualty count or the amount of money being spent on it, they perceive their country to be under siege and, therefore, believe their government should prioritize winning.

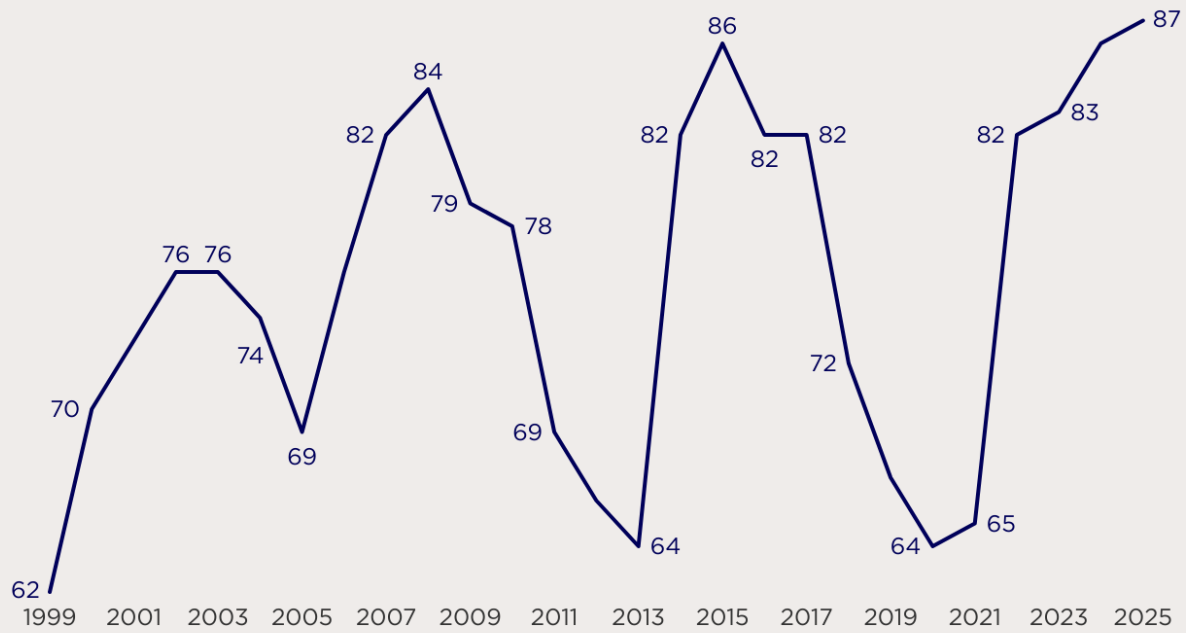
A growing tide of everyday Russians would rather the Kremlin move to peace negotiations than continue the conflict, but earlier surveys show that they would [only accept a political solution](#) if it meant that Russia continues to occupy, if not fully take over, the territories it has gained from the war (even if Putin initiated an agreement that did allow for territorial concessions). These

findings highlight how difficult it may be to find areas of agreement for both sides to enter into meaningful negotiations at this point in time.

Appendix

Appendix Figure 1: Approval of President Vladimir Putin

Do you approve of the activities of V. Putin as the President (Prime Minister) of Russia? (% approve)



January 23-29, 2025 | n=1,615

CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS-LEVADA CENTER



Appendix Table 1: Russia's Direction

Do you think things in the country are generally heading in the right direction today or do you think the country is heading in the wrong path? (%)

	Things are going in the right direction	The country is going down the wrong path	Difficult to answer
1996	23	54	23
1997	19	62	18
1998	13	70	17
1999	13	73	15
2000	30	50	20
2001	38	43	19
2002	40	43	17
2003	38	48	14
2004	44	44	12
2005	35	51	15
2006	40	42	18
2007	50	34	17
2008	56	28	17
2009	45	36	19
2010	48	33	19
2011	41	41	18
2012	44	38	18
2013	41	42	18
2014	57	26	17
2015	58	26	17
2016	51	32	18
2017	55	30	16
2018	51	36	13
2019	48	42	10
2020	47	41	12
2021	48	43	9
2022	63	26	11
2023	66	23	12
2024	71	18	12
2025	71	17	12



Appendix Table 2: Trust in Government Reports

To what extent do you trust reports from the Russian government about the following? (%)

	Definitely trust	Somewhat trust	Somewhat don't trust	Definitely don't trust	Difficult to answer
Successes of the Russian armed forces in Ukraine	24	45	16	9	5
Amount of resources spent on the special operation in Ukraine	17	34	24	12	13
Toll of Russian civilians and military personnel killed as a result of the special operation	12	23	30	20	16
Impact of Western sanctions on the Russian economy	18	39	21	9	13

January 23-29, 2025 | n=1,615

CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS-LEVADA CENTER



Appendix Table 3: Predicted Outcome of Russia-Ukraine War

How do you think the military actions in Ukraine will end? (%)

	Russia's victory	Ukraine's victory	Neither side will be able to gain an upper hand	Difficult to answer
April 2022	73	1	15	11
May 2022	75	1	15	9
January 2023	71	2	17	10
January 2025	76	0	15	8

January 23-25, 2025 | n=1,615

CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS-LEVADA CENTER



Appendix Table 4: Estimated Length of Military Actions in Ukraine

How long do you think the military actions will last in Ukraine? (%)

	No more than a month	One to two months	Two to six months	Six months to a year	More than a year	Difficult to answer
May 2022	2	9	26	23	21	19
June 2022	3	7	23	22	27	18
July 2022	0	5	21	24	28	21
August 2022	2	4	18	24	31	22
November 2022	0	3	13	23	41	19
May 2023	1	2	8	26	45	18
January 2025	2	2	13	27	32	25

January 23-29, 2025 | n=1,615

CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS-LEVADA CENTER



Methodology

This Council-Levada Center survey was conducted January 23-29, 2025, among a representative sample of all Russian urban and rural residents. The sample consisted of 1,615 Russians aged 18 or older from the 137 municipalities within the 50 regions of the Russian Federation. Researchers from the Levada Center conducted personal interviews in respondents' homes.

The distribution of responses is given as a percentage of the total number. The data set is weighed by gender, age, level of education for each type of settlement (large cities, medium cities, small towns, villages) within each Federal district independently, in accordance with Rosstat data. The statistical error of these studies for a sample of 1600 people (with a probability of 0.95) does not exceed: 3.4 percent for indicators around 50 percent, 2.9 percent for indicators around 25 percent/75 percent, 2.0 percent for indicators around 10 percent/90 percent, and 1.5 percent for indicators around 5 percent/95 percent.

About the Chicago Council on Global Affairs

The Chicago Council on Global Affairs is an independent, nonpartisan membership organization that provides insight—and influences the public discourse—on critical global issues. We convene leading global voices, conduct independent research, and engage the public to explore ideas that will shape our global future. The Council is committed to bringing clarity and offering solutions to issues that transcend borders and transform how people, business, and governments engage the world. Learn more at globalaffairs.org and follow [@ChicagoCouncil](https://twitter.com/ChicagoCouncil).

About the Lester Crown Center on US Foreign Policy

Established in 2018 with a transformative gift from the Crown Family, the Lester Crown Center on US Foreign Policy is driven by the belief that the public plays a critical role in determining the direction of US foreign policy and that an informed and engaged public is critical for effective policymaking. The centerpiece of the Lester Crown Center is its annual survey of American public opinion and US foreign policy, the Chicago Council Survey, which has been conducted since 1974.