

LESTER
CROWN CENTER
ON US FOREIGN POLICY



US-Russia Relations in a Changing World

Shifting Public Opinion on Foreign Policy from 2021-2025

About the Council

Founded in 1922, the Chicago Council on Global Affairs is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing knowledge and engagement in global affairs. Our in-depth analysis and expert-led research influence policy conversations and inform the insights we share with our growing community. Through accessible content and open dialogue of diverse, fact-based perspectives, we empower more people to help shape our global future.

About the Lester Crown Center on US Foreign Policy

We believe 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. We aim to influence discourse and decisions on important US foreign policy and national security issues by researching public opinion and producing original policy analysis.

About the Levada Center

The Levada Center is a Russian non-governmental research organization. The center conducts regular monitoring of Russian public opinion, and also conducts research projects on order. The Levada Center conducts research for companies, universities, NGOs in Russia and across the world, as well as for international organizations.

The Chicago Council on Global Affairs is an independent, nonpartisan organization. All statements of fact and expressions of opinion contained in this report are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Chicago Council on Global Affairs or of the project funders.

Copyright © 2025 by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs. All rights reserved.

Cover photo: Canva

This report may not be reproduced in whole or in part, in any form (beyond that copying permitted by sections 107 and 108 of the US Copyright Law and excerpts by reviewers for the public press), without written permission from the publisher. For further information about the Chicago Council or this study, please write to the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, Prudential Plaza, 180 North Stetson Avenue, Suite 1400, Chicago, Illinois 60601, or visit thechicagocouncil.org.

Table of Contents

Introduction	p. 3
2021 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• SolarWinds Hack: Americans Prefer Sanctions over Retaliatory Cyberattack against Russia• In Russia, Alexei Navalny Inspires Respect for Some, Indifference for Most• Despite Political Tension, Americans and Russians See Cooperation as Essential	p. 4
2022 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Americans Support Ukraine—but Not with US Troops or a No-Fly Zone• Russians and Americans Sense a New Cold War• Russian Public Accepts Putin’s Spin on Ukraine Conflict• Growing US Divide on How Long to Support Ukraine• Many Russians Support• Ukraine Peace Talks but Not Letting Territory Go	p. 34
2023 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Few Russians Are Anxious about Western Sanctions• Russians Are Split over Benefits of Military Action in Ukraine• Majority of Russians Still Unwilling to Return Occupied Parts of Ukraine• Do Russians Fear the West?• Western Sanctions Have Largely Spared Ordinary Russians	p. 96

Table of Contents

2024 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Generation Putin: Proud Russians but Disengaged• Young Russians Feel More Threatened by Terrorism Than War in Ukraine• Young Russians Are Skeptical of Most Media Outlets• Young Russians See Brighter Future Than Young Americans Do• Russians Tend to Say Neither Israel nor Hamas Are Justified in Military Actions• Russians More Interested in Peace Talks with Ukraine, but Most Oppose Making Major Concessions• Russians are Indifferent Toward 2024 US Presidential Election	p. 152
2025 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Russians Rally Around Putin's Foreign Policy• Three in Four Russians Expect Military Victory over Ukraine• Russians Rather Endure Sanctions than Concede Ukraine War• Russians Feel Mixed Impacts from Kremlin's Foreign Policy Moves• Russian Public Makes Fewer Demands of Government During Wartime• Plurality of Russians Support Military Withdrawal from Syria	p. 247

Introduction

Since 2017, the Chicago Council on Global Affairs and the Levada Center have jointly conducted opinion surveys in both the United States and Russia. During most of this period, official relations were in a diplomatic paralysis and public opinion surveys have been critical to monitoring the bilateral relationship.

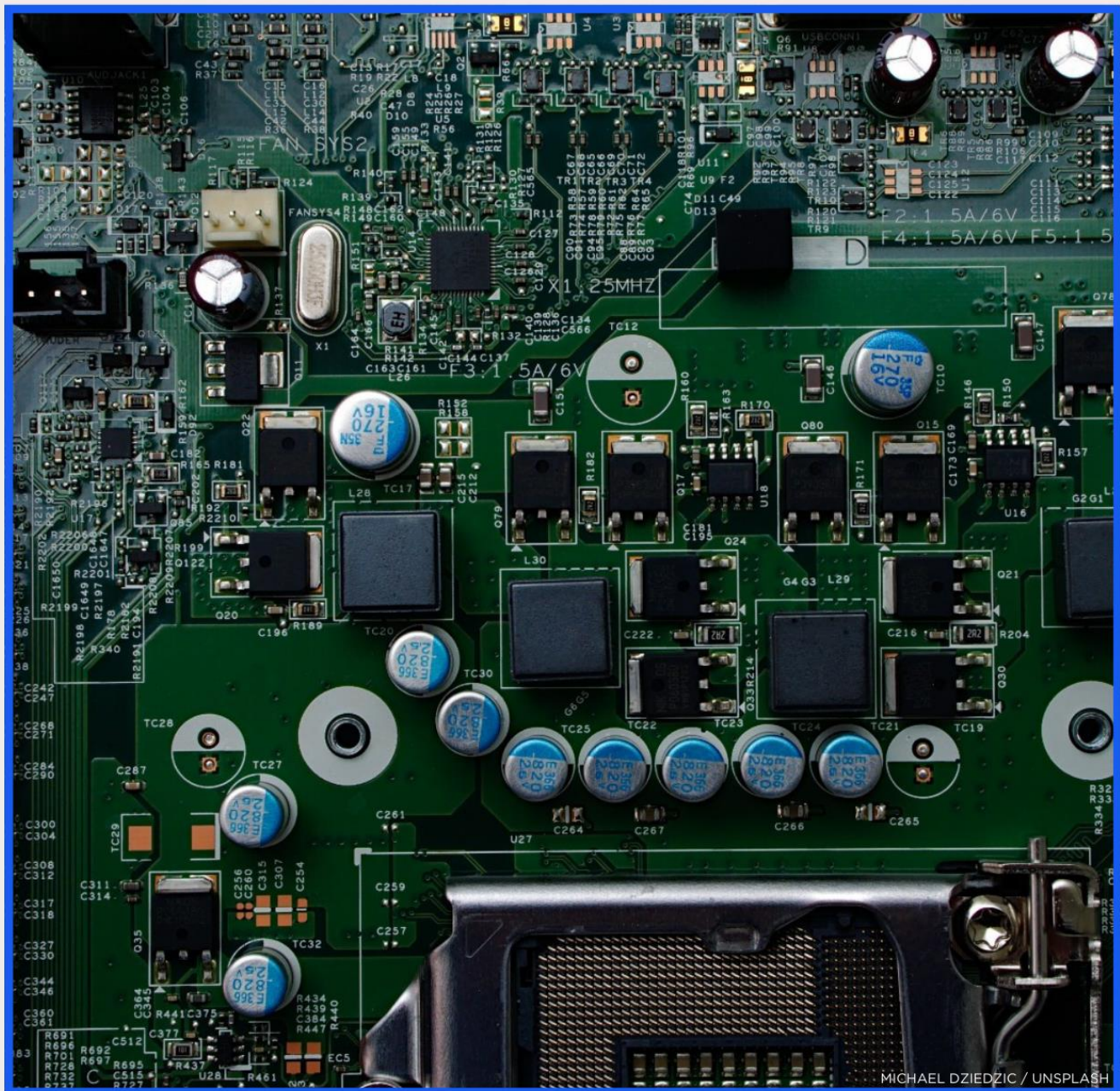
Thanks to generous funding from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the two organizations shed light on public perceptions of the domestic, regional, and international dynamics of US-Russia ties in the hopes that these data would help guide relations in a peaceful direction.

Americans and Russians were polled about their respective foreign policies, and most recently with a special focus on the conflict in Ukraine. Most Russians support the military operation and have expressed increased confidence in Russia's international clout. At the same time, they seem fatigued by war, and a growing percentage favors peace negotiations while they perceive having a battlefield advantage. Yet they are unwilling to make meaningful territorial concessions to resolve the conflict and remain defiant in the face of Western sanctions. Americans, meanwhile, have become more polarized in support for continuing US military and economic aid to Kyiv.

The goals of the multi-year Chicago Council-Levada survey project aimed to generate new public knowledge on critical issues in the US-Russia relationship; to inform and influence the policy and scholarly foreign policy discussion around those issues; to help shape media coverage of these issues; and to provide a lasting resource for scholars of American and Russian foreign policy and public opinion. We hope these results will continue to shed light on these important bilateral connections in the years to come.

FEBRUARY 2021

SolarWinds Hack: Americans Prefer Sanctions over Retaliatory Cyberattack against Russia



By Dina Smeltz and Brendan Helm

The Biden administration has ordered a broad assessment of recent Russian actions, including the [SolarWinds hack](#), the poisoning of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny, and using violence against protesters, to weigh whether and how the United States should respond. While surveys over the past few years have shown that Democrats have been more wary of Russia than Republicans, partisans agree that a limited response is appropriate.

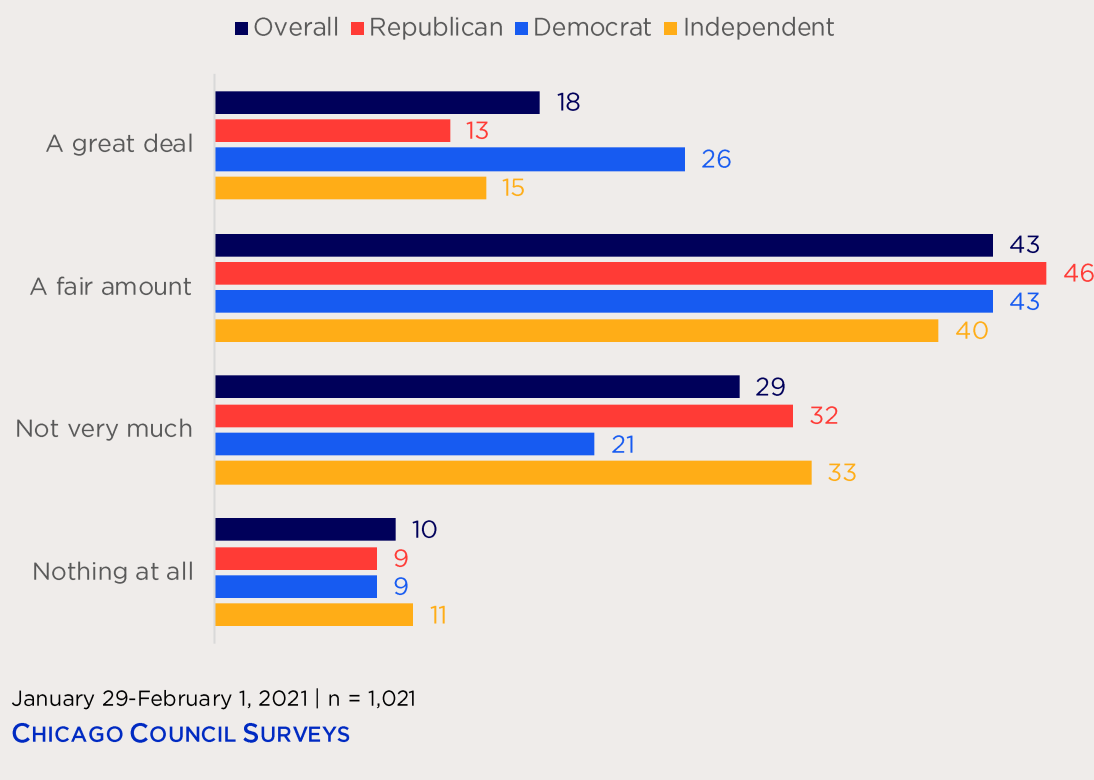
Most Americans Aware of SolarWinds Hack

Late in 2020, cybersecurity experts alleged that Russia's foreign intelligence service carried out a [massive cyberattack](#) on US government and private company networks around the world. To accomplish this, hackers infiltrated [SolarWinds' Office 365 system](#) for months until they had the opportunity to plant a malicious software patch, which SolarWinds then unsuspectingly sent out to its customers. Former President Donald Trump's homeland security adviser [Thomas Bossert](#) has said "the magnitude of this ongoing attack is hard to overstate."

According to the January 2021 Chicago Council survey, six in 10 Americans say they have heard or read at least a fair amount about the recent hacking of US government agencies and private companies over the past year (61%), including 18 percent who have heard or read a great deal. Three in 10 have heard something, but not much, about it (29%).

Knowledge of Government Hack

How much have you heard or read about the Russian hacking of US government agencies and private companies over the past year? (%)



Nearly Half Favor Retaliatory Cyberattacks on Russian Government

In response to the hacking, the Biden administration is considering different options, and the president's chief of staff, [Ron Klain](#), has [said](#) these include financial penalties like sanctions or retaliatory hacks of Russian infrastructure and people. Others, like [Hal Brands](#) of the American Enterprise Institute, have said this attack demonstrates that the US response cannot be solely defensive and that the United States must show it can reciprocate equally or with an even greater cyberattack. Still [others](#) suggest the United States should aim to target Russian President Vladimir Putin personally.

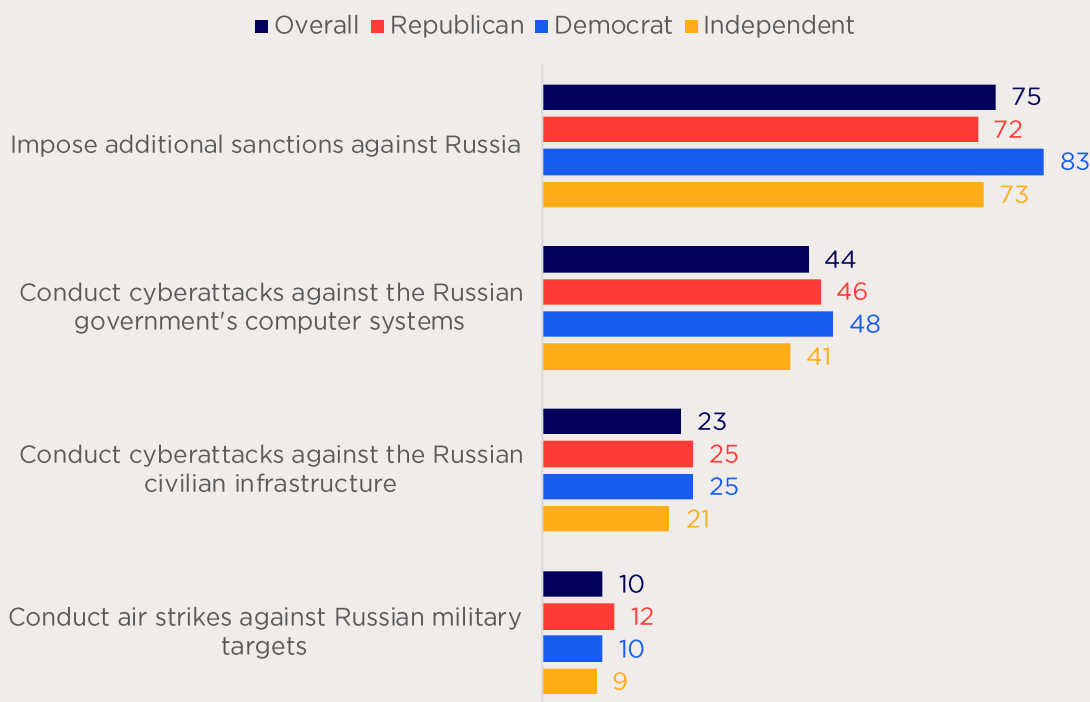
Chicago Council surveys have found partisan differences in [how best to deal with Russia](#): Democrats prefer active efforts to limit Russia's influence (66% in 2019), while Republicans prefer friendly cooperation (49% in 2019). Though neither group appears particularly concerned

about a threat from Russia relative to China or extremist groups in the United States the January 2021 survey shows that more Democrats (14%) than Republicans (5%) sense a critical threat from Moscow.

Despite these partisan gaps, there is broad agreement across the board in how to respond to the SolarWinds hack. At least seven in 10 across political affiliations support imposing additional sanctions against Russia. A sizable portion of Democrats (48%) and Republicans (46%) favor retaliating with cyberattacks against the Russian government's computer systems, but no more than a quarter favor conducting cyberattacks against Russian civilian infrastructure. Even fewer (no more than 12%) support conducting air strikes against Russian military targets. Those who have followed the story most closely are slightly more inclined to favor cyberattacks against Russia's computer systems (60%) and civilian infrastructure (33%), but they are no more likely to favor air strikes (13%).

US Response to Russian Hacking

In response to the recently discovered Russian hacking of US government agencies and private companies, would you support or oppose the following actions: (%)



January 29-February 1, 2021 | n = 1,021

CHICAGO COUNCIL SURVEYS

Conclusion

While during the Trump administration Republicans and Democrats diverged in the sense of threat from Russia—no doubt related to Russia's interference in the 2016 US presidential election—these data show there is partisan agreement on how best to respond to the recent hack. Rather than escalate the situation, most Americans prefer adding more sanctions than taking a more assertive response. Informed Americans, however, would be comfortable with a retaliatory hack against Russia's computer networks but would stop short at affecting civilians.

Methodology

This analysis is based on data from a January 2021 Chicago Council survey of the American public on foreign policy, a project of the Lester

Crown Center on US Foreign Policy. The January 2021 Chicago Council survey was conducted January 29–February 1, 2021 by Ipsos using its large-scale nationwide online research panel, KnowledgePanel, among a weighted national sample of 1,021 adults, 18 years or older, living in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The margin of error is higher for partisan subgroups or for partial-sample items.

Partisan identification is based on respondents' answer to a standard partisan self-identification question: "Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what?"

FEBRUARY 2021

In Russia, Alexei Navalny Inspires Respect for Some, Indifference for Most



By Dina Smeltz, Brendan Helm, Denis Volkov, and Stepan Goncharov

Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny has been sentenced to three and a half years in prison after he returned to Russia from Germany, where he was being treated for [exposure to a nerve agent](#) in August 2020. [An investigation](#) into the poisoning, conducted with the help of Navalny, has implicated Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB). Following Navalny's arrest and the release of a separate investigation into Russian President Vladimir Putin's wealth conducted by Navalny, tens of thousands of protesters have taken to the streets across the country to march in support for the jailed Navalny. They were met by a heavy show of force from Russian riot police that included batons, shields, and thousands of arrests. This repressive response [prompted US Secretary of State Antony Blinken](#) to condemn "the persistent use of harsh tactics against peaceful protesters and journalists."

Navalny has inspired popular protests and gathered a large international following. But recent surveys by the Levada Analytical Center, including one in partnership with the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, show that the overall Russian population is generally indifferent to his actions, and more suspect that he staged his own poisoning or it was a "provocation from the West" than believe the Russian government targeted him.

Key Findings

- More Russians express an unfavorable view (49%) of Navalny than a favorable view (25%).
- About half of Russians (51%) say they are neutral or indifferent about his decision to return to Russia (22% approve, 25% disapprove).
- Most Russians (78%) have heard at least something about Navalny's poisoning. Only 15 percent think it was carried out by the Russian government.
- Navalny's support is concentrated among younger Russians, aged 18-24 (48% favorable view), and those who get their news from the application Telegram (49% favorable view) as well as other online sources.

More Express Unfavorable than Favorable View of Navalny

Western media sources have applauded Navalny's bravery in returning to Moscow after his recovery in Germany, but new Levada Center-Chicago Council survey results conducted January 29–February 1, 2021 find that just 25 percent of Russians express a favorable view of Navalny. About half of Russians (49%) say they have an unfavorable view of Navalny while 26 percent respond that it is difficult to say. By contrast, 67 percent have a favorable view of Putin.

[A January 2021 Levada Center](#) poll also found that Russians generally view Navalny's activism negatively. Fifty-six percent of Russians say they disapprove of Navalny's activities (up from 50% in September 2020) while just 19 percent approve. When asked about Navalny's return to Russia, 51 percent described their feelings as neutral or indifferent. Among the rest, about as many approve (22%) as disapprove (25%).



Indifference Is Overwhelming Reaction to Navalny's Activities

In fact, the general public affect toward Navalny is one of indifference. The prevailing view among Russians is a neutral reaction when

presented with a list of words to describe their feelings toward the opposition leader: 29 percent say they are indifferent to him; 16 percent say they cannot say anything good about him; and 14 percent say they cannot say anything bad about him. More Russians say they dislike (12%) or are irritated by (9%) Navalny than say they respect him (10%) or are sympathetic toward him (7%). Supporters of Navalny's activities more often feel a sense of respect for him (45%) or cannot say anything bad (31%). Navalny's critics are more likely to be neutral about him (31%) or cannot say anything good (23%).

Attitude toward Navalny

What words could you use to describe your attitude toward Navalny? (%)



January 29-February 2, 2021 | n=1,616

LEVADA ANALYTICAL CENTER

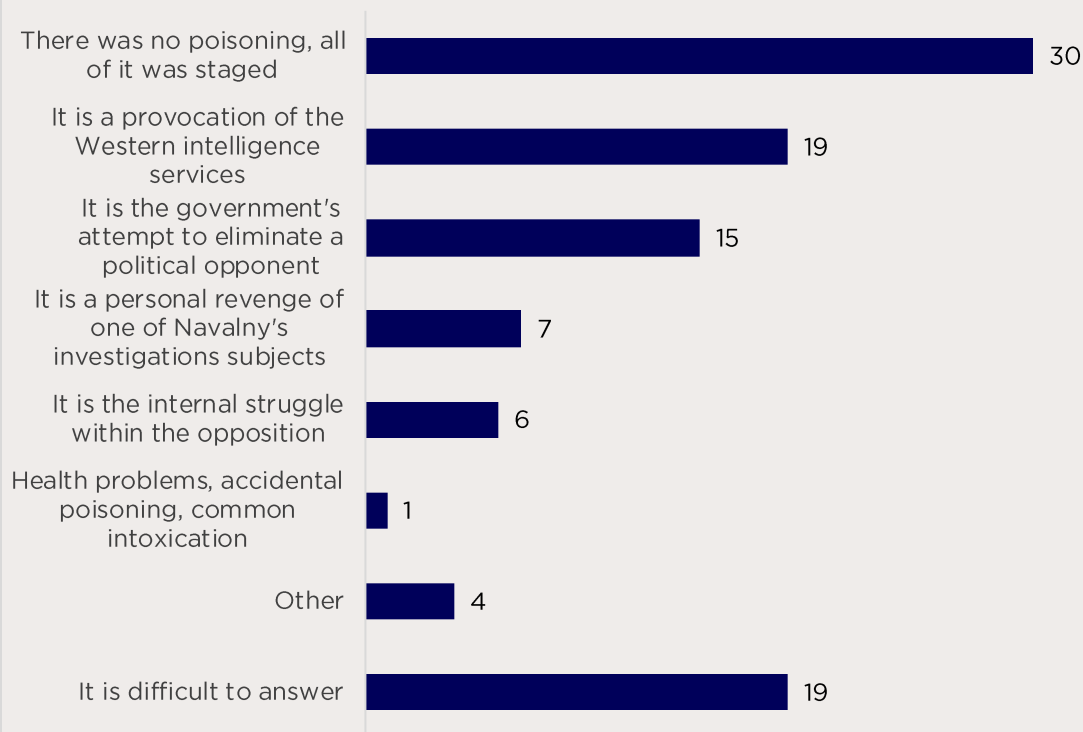
Plurality of Russians Suspect Navalny Staged His Own Poisoning

[Levada Center poll](#) found that most Russians have heard about Navalny's poisoning: 17 percent had been watching the story closely, and an additional 61 percent have heard at least something about it. When asked their assessment of what happened, a plurality believe that Navalny staged the poisoning himself (30%). An additional 19 percent

consider it a provocation of Western intelligence services. Fifteen percent see the poisoning as an attempt by the Russian authorities to eliminate a political opponent, and 7 percent say it was an act of personal revenge from one of Navalny's targets of investigation. At the same time, those who closely follow the case are most likely to consider the poisoning of Navalny by Russian authorities to be the most accurate version.

What Happened to Navalny?

There are multiple versions of what happened to Alexei Navalny. Which of them seems the most plausible to you? (%)



January 29-February 2, 2021 | n=1,616
LEVADA ANALYTICAL CENTER

Navalny's Base: Younger Russians and Frequent Internet or Social Media Users

Younger Russians, those who use social media, and those who get their information from online sources are most likely to support Navalny. Those 18 to 24 are more likely to approve of Navalny's activities (36%) and view Navalny favorably (49%) than older Russians.

In addition, those who use internet sources and social media are generally more likely to hold a favorable view of Navalny.

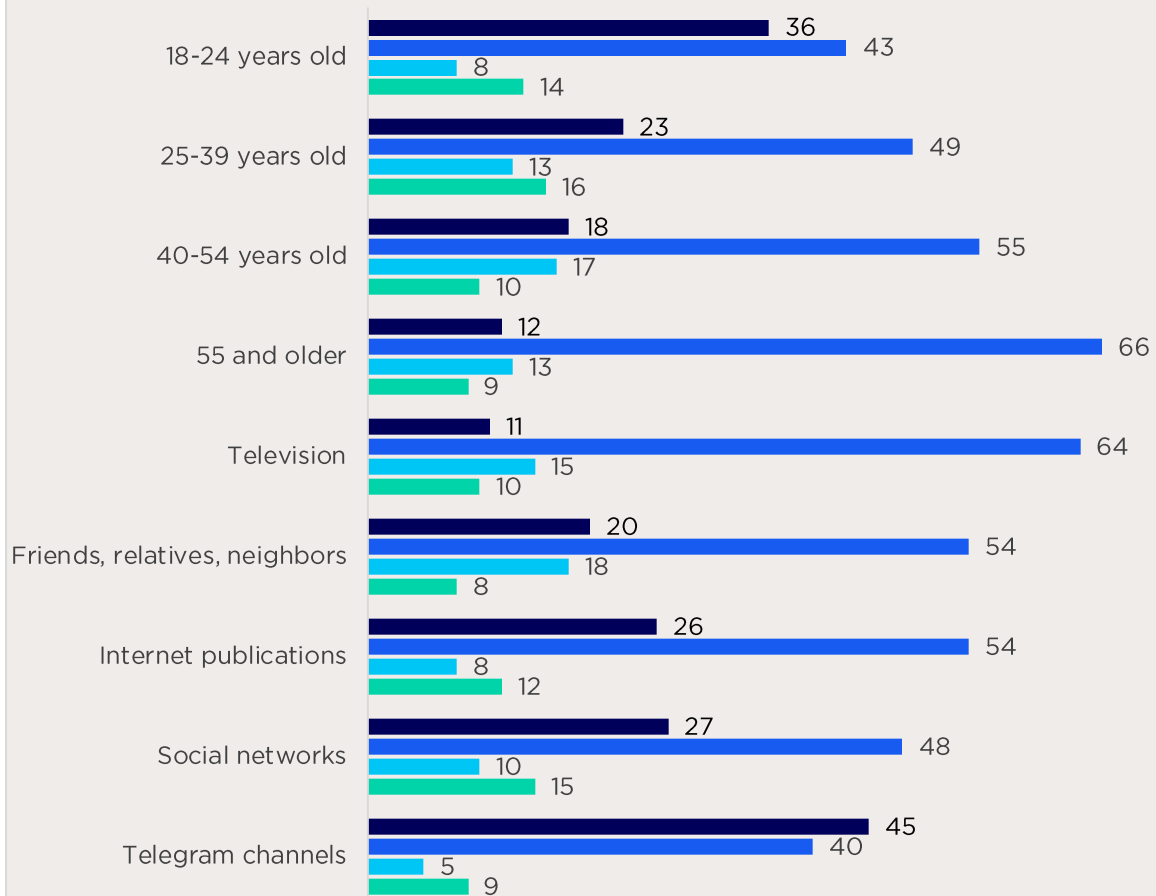
More generally, daily users of the internet (30%) and social media (33%) are more likely than average to have a favorable view of Navalny.

TikTok (41%), Instagram (38%), or YouTube (36%) users are more likely to support Navalny than those who use the Russian social media site Odnoklassniki (27%). And those who use the messaging app Telegram are especially likely to express a favorable view of Navalny (50%) and to approve of his activities (45%).

Attitudes Toward Navalny's Activities by Age Group and Information Source

(%)

■ Approve ■ Disapprove ■ I have not heard about him ■ It is difficult to say



January 29-February 1, 2021 | n=1,021

CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS-LEVADA ANALYTICAL CENTER

By contrast, level of education and region of residence have almost no effect on views of Navalny. Russians with a university degree or higher (27% favorable) are only slightly more likely to have a favorable view of Navalny than those who have only completed high school (21% favorable). And Russians who live in Moscow (27%) or other large cities with more than 500,000 people (26%) are nearly as likely to have a favorable view of Navalny as those who live in rural areas (29%).

Many Familiar with *Palace for Putin* Film; Little Effect on Views of President

Just two days after Navalny's arrest, the Anti-Corruption Foundation (FBK), an organization founded by Navalny, released [its investigation](#) into Putin's wealth, which centers on a [\\$1- billion-plus palace](#) on the Black Sea. The protests that have erupted after the release of this investigative documentary, *Palace for Putin*, are the most widespread in recent years, stretching from Moscow to Vladivostok.

[A January–February Levada survey](#) reports that 26 percent of the Russian adult population watched the film and an additional 10 percent are familiar with its content. While more than half think some aspects of the film may be true to some extent, it seems to have had little impact on views toward Putin. The overwhelming majority of those who watched the film, knew its content, or had at least heard about it (77%) did not change their attitude toward the president after its premiere.

The research showed that the investigation of Navalny's team hasn't influenced the opinion of Putin's supporters but rather entrenched negative attitudes of his critics. Among respondents who have unfavorable views of Putin, 38 percent worsened their attitude to him. Among supporters, only 3 percent declared that their attitude toward Putin worsened. This could be a sign of deepening social conflict in Russian society.

Conclusion

Navalny occupies a unique role in Russia. As the most prominent opposition figure in Russia, he has inspired people to take to the streets from one end of the country to the other to protest Putin's regime and corruption. The advent of social media has helped Navalny connect to younger and more independent-minded citizens and underscores the impact of independent news sources among the next generation. But Navalny will now be muzzled to some extent behind bars. Beyond that, these results show that any efforts to change the system run up against not only the strong hand of the state but also a sense of [social inertia](#) and doubt that there is any alternative in today's Russia.

Methodology

This analysis is based on data from two Levada Analytical Center surveys, conducted in December 2020 and January–February 2021. The surveys were conducted December 21–23, 2020, and January 29–February 2, 2021, among a representative sample of all Russian urban and rural residents. The samples respectively comprised 1,617 and 1,616 people 18 or older. In December, the survey was conducted as telephone interviews (CATI) on a random sample (RDD) of personal phone numbers and landlines. In January, the survey was conducted as a personal interview in respondents' homes.

The Levada Center has been included in the Russian registry of noncommercial organizations acting as foreign agents.

[Read the director of the Levada Center's statement of disagreement with this decision.](#)

MARCH 2021

Despite Political Tension, Americans and Russians See Cooperation as Essential



By Dina Smeltz, Brendan Helm, Denis Volkov, and Stepan Goncharov

According to a January–February 2021 joint survey by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs and the Levada Analytical Center in Moscow, neither Russians nor Americans expect the new US administration to prompt a reset in bilateral relations. While many Russians have yet to form an opinion of US President Joseph Biden, few in either country expect great changes to US-Russia ties now or even in the next 10 years. Despite this anticipated stasis, both publics acknowledge the importance of bilateral cooperation on a number of long-term foreign policy issues.

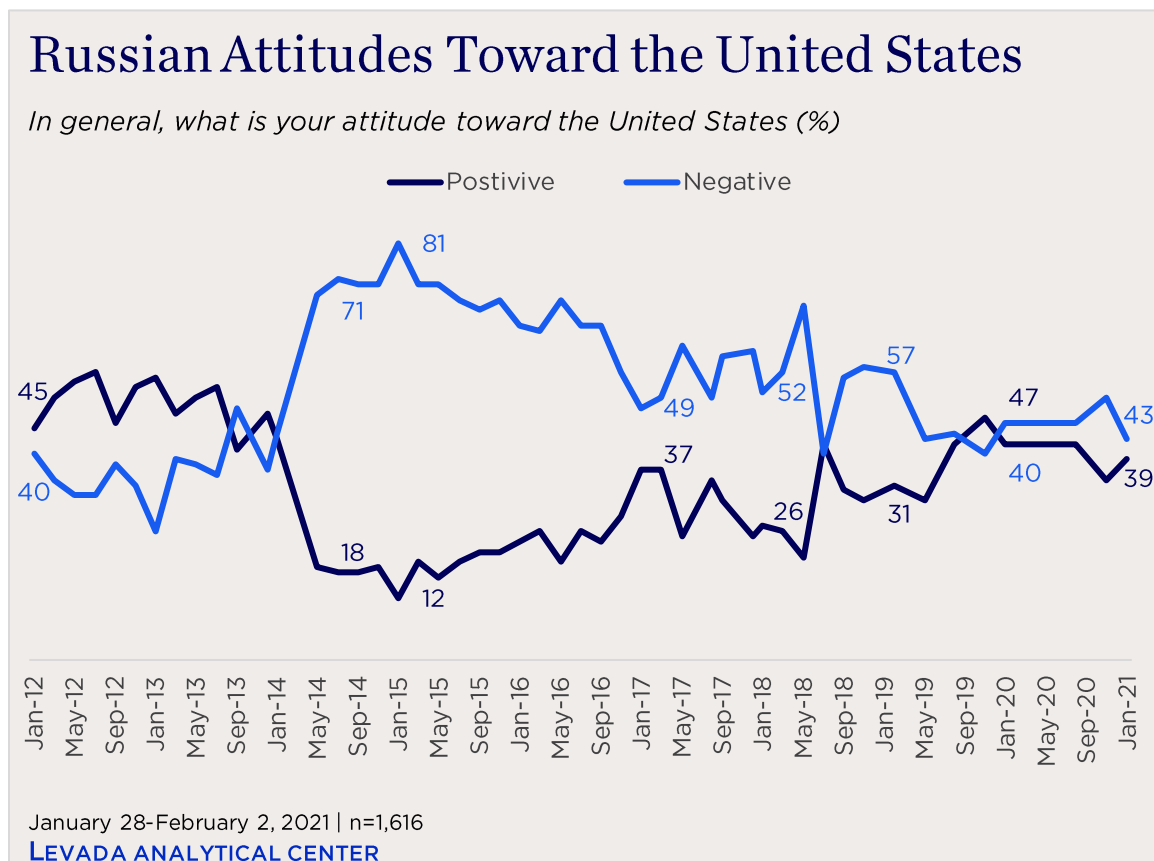
Key Findings

- Russians are now only slightly more likely to say they have a negative (43%) than a positive (39%) opinion of the United States. Over the past two years, negative views have declined significantly.
- Asked to rate their feelings toward Russia on a zero-to-100 scale, Americans give Russia an average of 29, the lowest reading since 1982.
- Expectations for an improvement in US-Russian relations during the Biden presidency are slim: about four in ten Americans (43%) and Russians (42%) expect relations to remain the same, while four in ten Americans (44%) and three in ten Russians (29%) expect them to worsen.
- Despite pessimistic views about the bilateral relationship, Americans and Russians think it is essential the countries cooperate on several issues, including preventing Iran and North Korea from developing nuclear weapons and limiting the buildup of nuclear weapons in Russia and the United States.
- Nearly half of Russians (47%) are unfamiliar with Biden; of the rest, 19 percent have a positive view and 35 percent hold a negative opinion. Nearly nine in ten Americans (87%) express an unfavorable view of Russian President Vladimir Putin (11% positive).

Russians Grow Less Negative toward the United States

According to a recent headline in *Foreign Affairs*, “[Russia Will Never See the United States the Same Way Again](#)” after four years of the

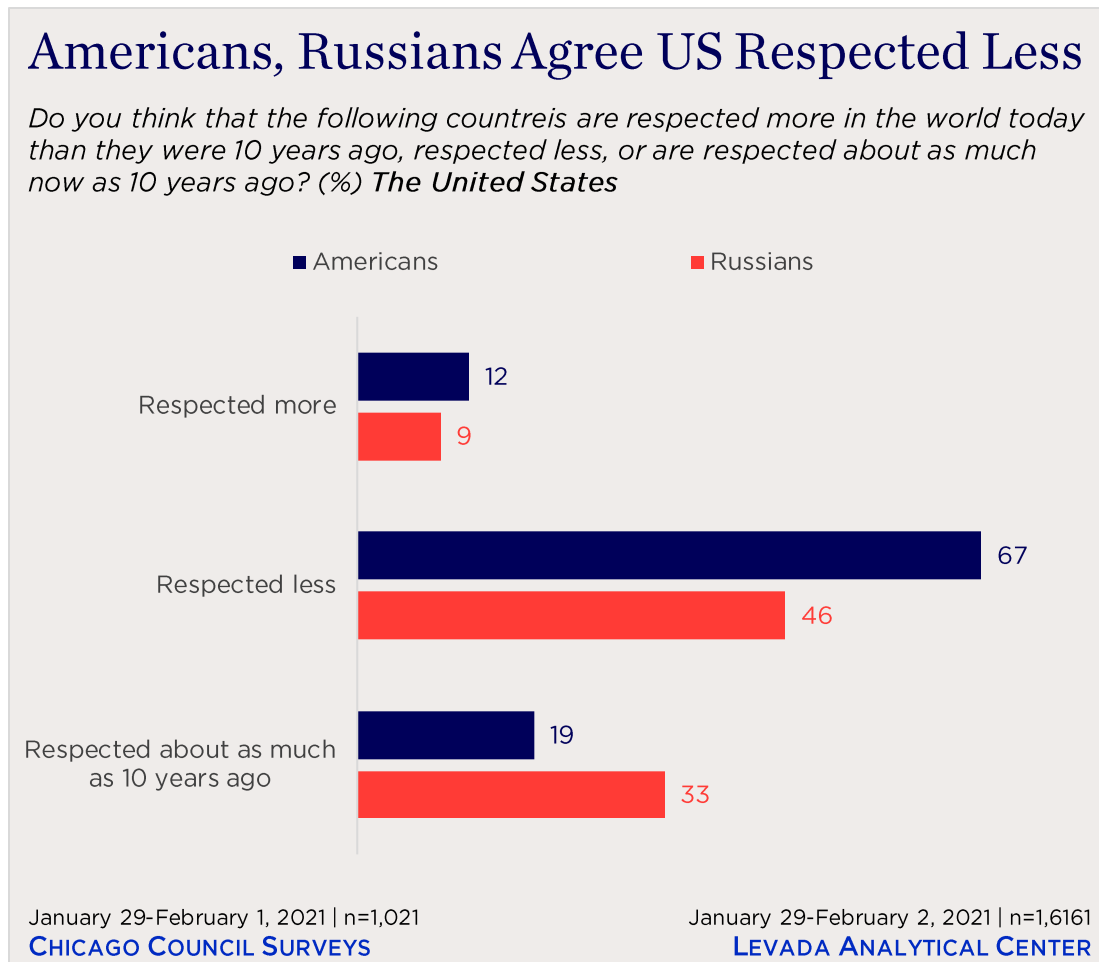
Trump administration and the January 6 mob attack of the US Capitol building diminished US international standing.¹ But according to the recent joint Chicago Council-Levada survey, Russians' opinions of the United States are more favorable than they have been in recent years. A plurality of Russians still has a negative view of the United States (43%), but nearly as many now say they have a positive view (39%). In fact, the current readings are among the least negative toward the United States since before the fallout between Moscow and Washington after the 2014 crisis in Crimea and Ukraine. In the past two years, the difference between positive and negative views has narrowed significantly to the point where they almost resemble pre-Crimea readings. As Biden begins to confront Russia with newly announced sanctions, however, Russian sentiments may change.



Russians have also tempered their perceptions of US respect in the world. Slightly more now (33%) than in 2019 (28%) say the United

¹ To read about American opinion on the January 6 attacks and US influence, see Dina Smeltz and Brendan Helm, [Americans Expect Temporary Drop in US Influence Due to Capitol Attack](#), Chicago Council on Global Affairs, February 9, 2021.

States is respected about as much as 10 years ago. Currently, 46 percent of Russians say that compared to 10 years ago, the United States is less respected, down from 53 percent in 2019. One in ten (9%) continue to say the United States is respected more.



Those Russians who have heard something about the January 6 attack of the US Capitol by supporters of President Donald Trump (58% overall) are somewhat more likely than others to say the United States has lost respect (55%). These informed Russians are also more likely to say the events of January 6 show the American political system is in crisis (53%) relative to those who haven't heard anything about it (30%).²

² Asked what they think of the political unrest in the United States, 43 percent of Russians say it is a sign of crisis in the United States, 42 percent say it is a normal process, and 15 percent say they don't know.

Strikingly, Russians are less critical toward the United States than Americans are. More Americans (67%) than Russians say the United States is respected less compared to a decade ago. In fact, this represents the largest proportion of Americans who say the United States has lost respect since 1982 (when 65% said the United States was respected less).³ Americans also say the mob attack on January 6 has a [negative effect on US influence](#) in the world (61%), but mostly a temporary one (46%).⁴

Americans Grow More Negative toward Russia since 2019

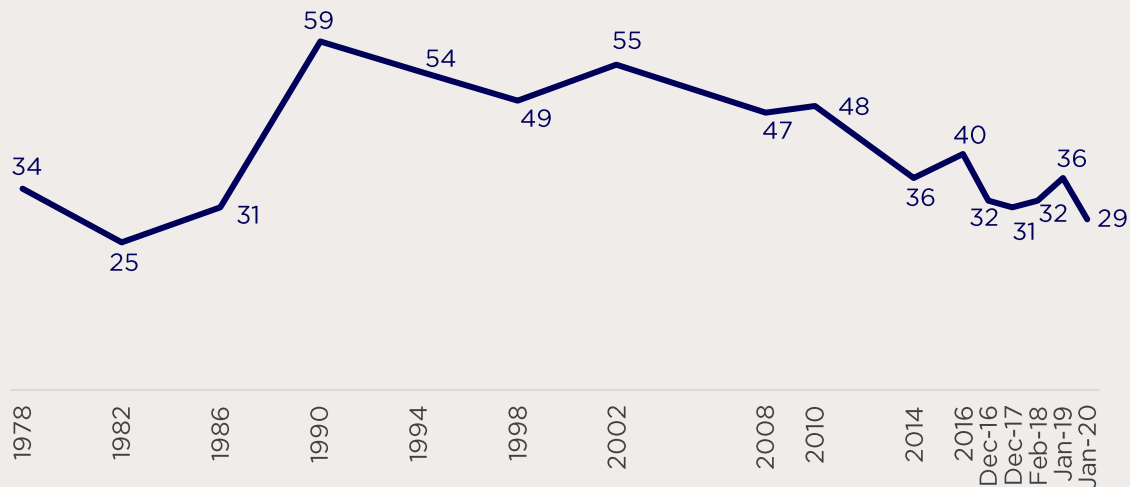
While Russian attitudes toward the United States are now less downbeat, American opinion has gone in the other direction. When asked to rate their feelings on a thermometer scale, with 100 meaning a very warm, favorable feeling and zero meaning a very cold, unfavorable feeling, Americans give Russia an average rating of 29—the lowest reading recorded in Chicago Council surveys since the final years of the Cold War. Feelings toward Russia have been moving consistently downward since 2002 and have remained especially low in the years since the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and Russian interference in the 2016 elections.

³ Nineteen percent of Americans say the United States is respected as much as 10 years ago, and 12 percent say it is respected more.

⁴ For more on US attitudes toward the January 6 attack, see Smeltz and Helm, [Americans Expect Temporary Drop](#).

American Sentiment toward Russia

Please rate your feelings toward some countries and peoples, with 100 meaning a very warm, favorable feeling, 0 meaning a very cold, unfavorable feeling, and 50 meaning not particularly warm or cold. You can use any number from 0 to 100; the



September 7-18, 2023 | n=1,617
CHICAGO COUNCIL SURVEYS

Identical to results in 2018, half of Americans (51%) say Russia is less respected today than it was 10 years ago. Slightly more (36%) than in 2018 (31%) say Russia is respected about as much as 10 years ago. And fewer than in 2018 say Russia is respected more (9% versus 16% in 2018). Americans have also grown less likely to say Russia is important to the United States. About six in ten Americans (58%) say so, down from 71 percent in 2010 and 76 percent in 2008.

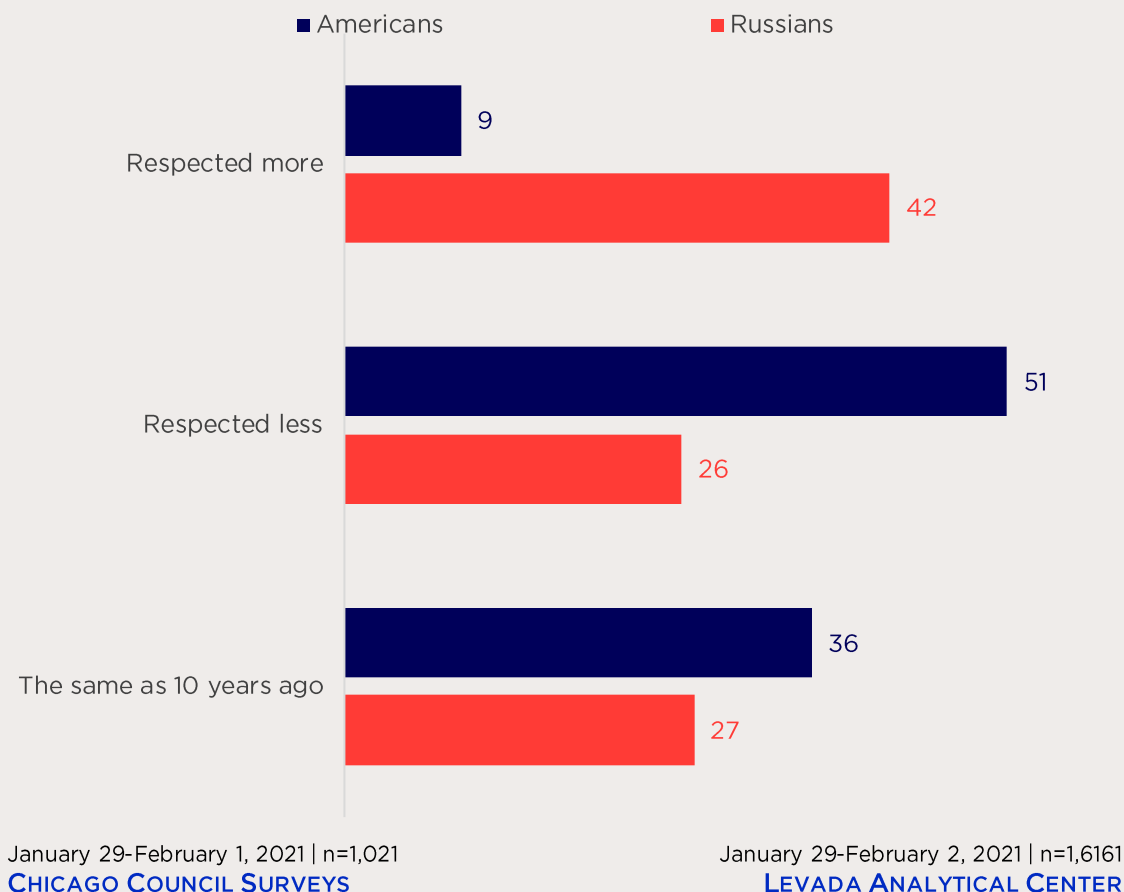
For their part, Russians also sense that international respect for their country has declined. A plurality still say Russia is respected more (42%), but this has slipped from survey results two years ago, when 55 percent said the same. About as many now say Russia has lost respect (26%) as say it is as respected as it was 10 years ago (27%). This decline may be due to diminishing power of the “[Crimea effect](#).”⁵ After Russia annexed Crimea in 2014, Russian pride in this achievement led to increased favorable ratings of Russian authorities, state institutions, and

⁵ For example, see Dina Smeltz and Lily Wojtowicz, [Russians Say Their Country Is a Rising Military Power: And a Growing Percentage of Americans View Russia as a Threat](#), Chicago Council on Global Affairs, March 21, 2019.

Putin.⁶ But in recent years, the Russian public has turned inward and begun to focus on domestic issues.

Americans Say Russia Respected Less, Russians Disagree

Do you think Russia is respected more in the world today than it was 10 years ago, respected less, or respected about as much now as 10 years ago? (%)



Few Russians or Americans Expect Improvement in Bilateral Relations

Given Biden's [experience](#) with Putin, his approach toward Moscow will not include resetting relations like several past presidential administrations. According to the White House, Biden's first presidential

⁶ Data from the Levada Analytical Center shows that following the events in Crimea in February 2014, there was a sustained increase in approval for Putin and positive assessments of the situation in the country. Additionally, when asked about events in Russian history that made them proud in September 2020, 30 percent of Russians chose the annexation of Crimea, down from 45 percent in December 2018.

call to Putin in January 2021 included his concerns over the SolarWinds hack—a massive cyberattack against US government agencies and private businesses that [US intelligence has blamed on Russia](#)—the poisoning and imprisonment of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny, and reports of Russian bounties on US soldiers in Afghanistan. On March 2, Biden imposed [sanctions](#) against Russia in coordination with the European Union in response to treatment of Navalny.⁷ Administration officials have said further penalties would be imposed [in the next few weeks](#) as retaliation for the SolarWinds hack.

Survey data suggest that Russians will not be surprised by these new sanctions. According to the Chicago Council-Levada Center survey, few Russians expect the US diplomatic and economic sanctions placed against Russia to be loosened during the Biden presidency (13%). A majority of the Russian public thinks the sanctions will remain in place (35%) or be tightened (36%).

More broadly, relatively few Russians predict the US-Russia relationship will improve even within the next 10 years. Just two in 10 (19%) say the countries will grow closer. More believe US-Russia relations will remain the same as they are now (42%) or the two countries will grow further apart (29%) in the next decade. In a [January 2020 Levada survey](#), just 12 percent of Russians believed that US-Russia relations would improve under the Biden administration, compared to 46 percent who expected improvement under Trump in 2017.

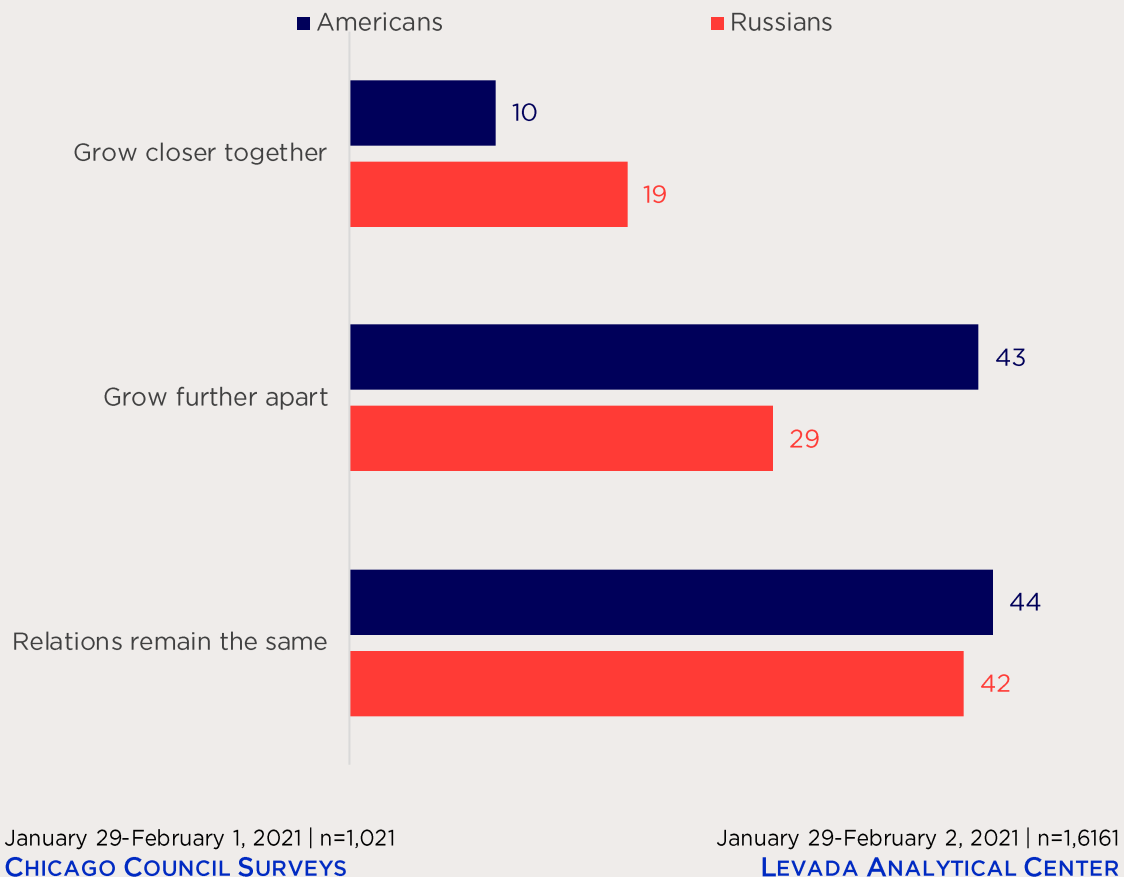
Americans are similarly pessimistic. Most Americans split between those who believe the two countries will grow further apart (43%) and those who say relations will remain as they are now (44%). Just one in 10 Americans (10%) says the United States and Russia will grow closer. And only 16 percent expect Russian-American relations to improve under the Biden presidency. A majority expect relations between Russia and the United States will either worsen (46%) or stay the same as now (36%).

⁷ Though US intelligence officials blame the Kremlin for Navalny's August 2020 poisoning, Levada polling shows that most Russians are not convinced that the Russian government is to blame. For more, see Dina Smeltz, Brendan Helm, Denis Volkov, and Stepan Goncharov, [In Russia, Navalny Inspires Respect for Some, Indifference for Most](#), Chicago Council on Global Affairs, February 22, 2021.

US-Russian Relations in the Next 10 Years

US: "Over the next ten years, how do you think the relationship between United States and the following countries will change?" (%) Russia

Russia: "Over the next ten years, do you think that Russia and The United States will grow closer together, further apart or that relations will remain as they are now?"



There is a partisan dimension to the question of US-Russian relations during the Biden administration. Nearly two-thirds of Republicans (64%) but only one-third of Democrats (34%) believe the bilateral relationship will worsen during the Biden presidency. Democrats are more likely than Republicans to expect relations to remain the same (38% of Democrats, 24% of Republicans). This divide seems more indicative of Republican views toward Biden than Republican views toward Russia. Republicans and Democrats agree on major Russia policy questions, including shared support for imposing sanctions against Moscow for the [SolarWinds](#) breach (72% of Republicans, 83% of Democrats) and for participating in the [New START](#) treaty (65% of Republicans, 81% of

Democrats).⁸ And there is minimal difference in partisan assessments of the future state of US-Russian relations.

Majorities View Cooperation as Essential

Despite large portions of Russians and Americans having rather pessimistic projections for US-Russian relations and negative views of the other nation's leader, strong majorities of both Americans and Russians say it is essential for the two countries to cooperate on key international initiatives.

Given the worldwide preoccupation at the moment on the coronavirus pandemic, Russians are more likely to say cooperating to confront and prevent future pandemics is essential (82%), while nearly two-thirds of Americans agree (63%). Majorities of both Americans (52%) and Russians (60%) also say it is essential to work together on the global challenge of limiting the effects of climate change.

Yet Americans are especially interested in US-Russia cooperation on preventing nuclear proliferation. Seven in 10 Americans and Russians each say it is essential to prevent a nuclear arms race between the two countries. Large majorities of both Americans (73%) and Russians (80%) have expressed support for participating in or extending the [New START Treaty](#).⁹ And seven in 10 Americans and six in 10 Russians also say it is essential for the two countries to work together to prevent Iran and North Korea from developing a nuclear weapons capability.¹⁰

The idea of an international treaty between Russia and the United States to address cyberattacks may seem [infeasible](#) given Russia's interference in the 2016 US presidential election and, more recently, the SolarWinds cyberattack. But majorities in both countries say it is essential that they work together on signing an international agreement

⁸ For more on American preferences for a response to the SolarWinds attack, see Dina Smeltz and Brendan Helm, [Solar Winds Hack: Americans Prefer Sanctions over Retaliatory Cyberattack against Russia](#), Chicago Council on Global Affairs, February 11, 2021. For more on attitudes toward New Start, see Dina Smeltz and Brendan Helm, [Russians and Americans Welcome Extension of New Start Treaty](#), Chicago Council on Global Affairs, February 19, 2021.

⁹ For Americans, 73 percent overall said the United States should participate in the New START treaty, including majorities of Republicans, Democrats, and Independents. Similarly, for Russians, a strong majority either strongly (56%) or somewhat (24%) supports extending the treaty.

¹⁰ Asked about the Iran nuclear deal, 57 percent of Americans said the United States should participate, and Russia has publicly expressed its desire for the United States to rejoin the deal.

to refrain from using cyberattacks against other countries (54% of Americans, 62% of Russians).

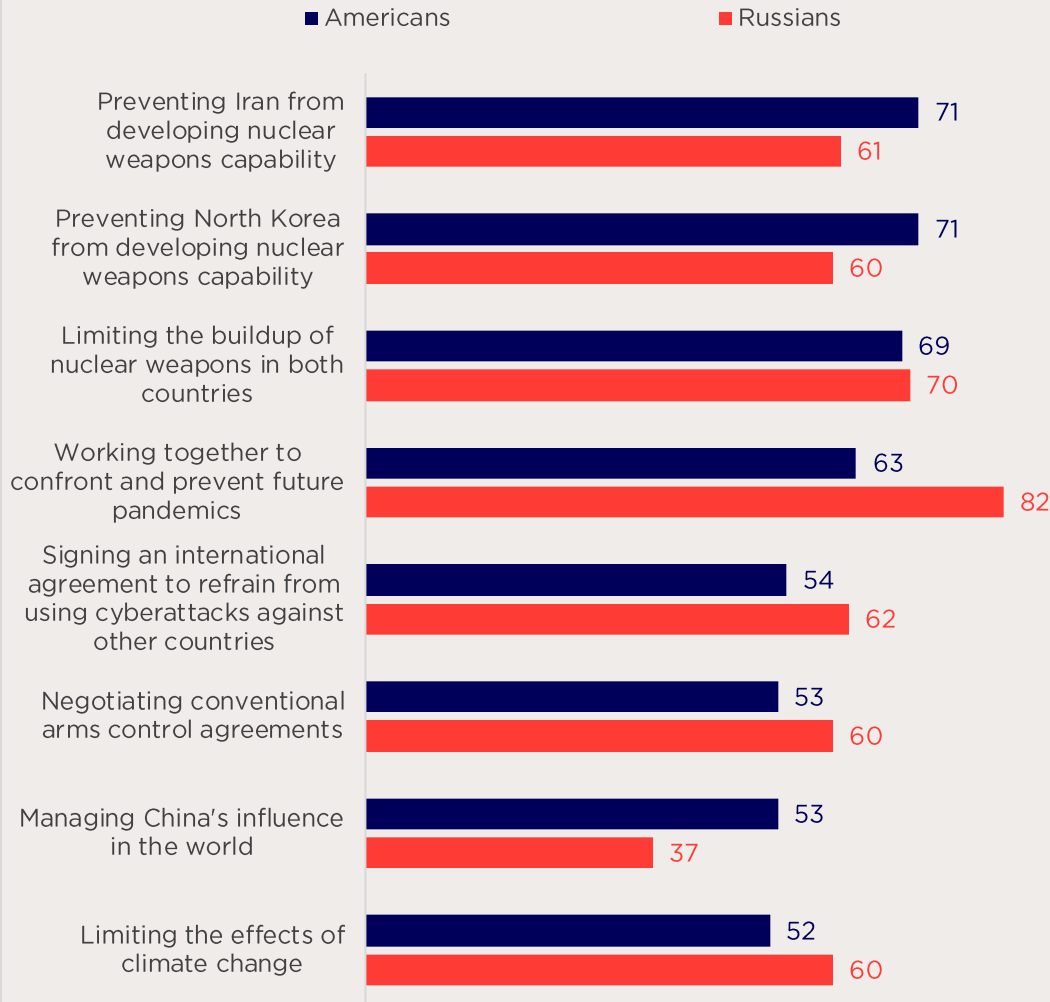
The greatest divergence in preferences for cooperation is on managing China's influence. Only a minority of Russians (37%) see a need to work with the United States to manage China's international influence, reflecting Russians' positive views of China and perceptions of Beijing as a partner to Moscow (84% in 2019).¹¹ Just more than half of Americans (53%) say it is essential for the United States and Russia to cooperate on managing China's rise, pointing toward [growing perceptions](#) among Americans that China is a critical threat.

¹¹ See Dina Smeltz, Brendan Helm, Denis Volkov, and Stepan Goncharov, [Russians See Greater Reward than Risk in Relations with China](#), Chicago Council on Global Affairs, March 10, 2021.

Areas of US-Russian Cooperation

US: How great a priority is it for the United States and Russia to work together on the following issues: (% it is essential)

Russia: How great a priority is it for the United States and Russia to work together on [x]? (% it is essential)



January 29-February 1, 2021 | n=1,021
CHICAGO COUNCIL SURVEYS

January 29-February 2, 2021 | n=1,616
LEVADA ANALYTICAL CENTER

There are some partisan differences on these priorities, reflecting varying weight that Democrats and Republicans assign to potential threats. Democrats are much more likely than Republicans to say it is essential to cooperate with Russia on limiting the effects of climate change (75% Democrats, 25% Republicans) and negotiating conventional arms control agreements (65% Democrats, 41%

Republicans). Republicans are more likely to say it is essential to cooperate on managing China's influence (70% Republicans, 46% Democrats).

Biden a Relative Unknown to Russians; Americans Negative toward Putin

While the Kremlin knows Biden from the Obama presidency, many everyday Russians have yet to become familiar with him. When asked whether they have a favorable or unfavorable view of the new American president, nearly half of Russians (47%) say they don't know, perhaps indicating that Biden has yet to make an impression in Russia. Of the rest, 19 percent express a favorable view while just over a third (35%) have unfavorable views.

Although many Russians were [initially hopeful](#) that US-Russia relations would improve under the Trump administration, currently more Russians have a negative (49% unfavorable) than positive opinion of the former US president (25% favorable).

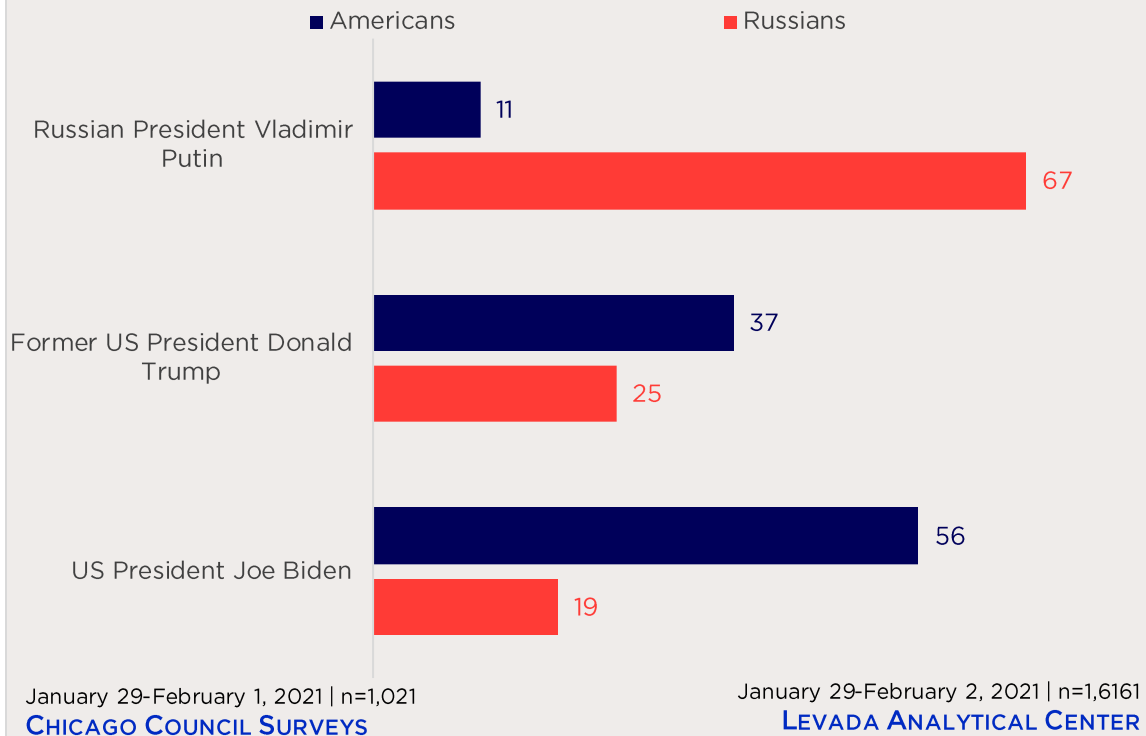
For their part, a majority of Americans continue to express unfavorable views of Putin. Nearly nine in 10 (87%) Americans say they have a somewhat (31%) or very (56%) unfavorable view, a slight increase from when this question was last asked in 2018 (83% net unfavorable).¹² Republicans have similarly favorable views of Putin (18%) and Biden (15%). This harkens back to results from a [2017 Economist/YouGov survey](#) in which Republicans gave higher ratings to Putin than to then-President Barack Obama.

¹² Two-thirds of Russians have a somewhat (38%) or very (28%) favorable view of Putin. While this is slightly lower than his approval rating between 2014 and 2018, it remains in line with his historical trend of being a favorable figure in Russian public opinion.

Views of World Leaders

US: Do you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable or very unfavorable view of the following world leaders? (% favorable)

Russia: Do you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable view of [leader]? (% favorable)



Conclusion

As Biden begins his term as president, the US-Russia relationship is in a difficult place. American sentiments toward Russia are the lowest since the end of the Cold War, and Russian sentiments toward the United States have been mostly negative for the last seven years. Despite these negative sentiments and low expectations for change any time soon, both publics do express support for cooperation on a number of key foreign policy issues. In addition, the Russian public's decreasing hostility toward the United States, at least at the time this survey was fielded, suggests a window for potential improvement in Russian public opinion toward the United States.

Methodology

This analysis is based on data from a January–February 2021 Chicago Council-Levada Analytical Center joint survey of the American and Russian publics on foreign policy topics, a project of the Lester Crown Center on US Foreign Policy. The Chicago Council survey was conducted January 29–February 1, 2021, by Ipsos using its large-scale nationwide online research panel, KnowledgePanel, among a weighted national sample of 1,021 people 18 or older, living in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The margin of error is higher for partisan subgroups or for partial-sample items.

The survey was conducted January 29–February 2, 2021, among a representative sample of Russian urban and rural residents. The sample comprised 1,616 people 18 or older in 137 municipalities of 50 regions of the Russian Federation. The survey was conducted as a personal interview in respondents' homes.

Partisan identification is based on respondents' answer to a standard partisan self-identification question: "Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or something else?"

APRIL 2022

Americans Support Ukraine— but Not with US Troops or a No-Fly Zone



By Dina Smeltz and Craig Kafura

In response to Russia's aggression toward Ukraine, the United States and its allies have imposed sanctions on Russia that are striking in their scope and severity and represent a broad effort to impose serious economic costs on Russia for its invasion of Ukraine. For their part, a March 25-28 Chicago Council survey finds that Americans support all measures to help Ukraine and pressure Russia short of direct US involvement in a military conflict. And while the public views the broad sanctions imposed on Russia as generally effective at punishing, weakening, and deterring Russia from further aggression, they doubt that sanctions will be enough to persuade Moscow to withdraw troops from Ukraine—the key condition Americans identify as necessary for lifting sanctions.

Key Findings

- Americans now see the risk of a nuclear exchange between the United States and Russia (69%), Russian territorial ambitions (67%), Russian power and influence in the world (60%), and Russian military power (54%) as critical threats to the United States.
- To respond to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Americans support providing military (79%) and economic (78%) assistance to Ukraine, imposing sanctions on Russia (77%), and taking in Ukrainian refugees (74%).
- Americans see sanctions on Russia as an effective tool for weakening the Russian economy (77%), punishing Russia for invading Ukraine (67%), weakening Russia's ability to engage in future military actions (65%), and deterring Russia from taking military action against its NATO-member neighbors (60%).
- Two-thirds of Americans (67%) say the United States and other allied nations should require the withdrawal of Russian military forces from Ukraine before lifting sanctions.

Americans Now View Russian Ambitions and Power as a Critical Threat

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has led Americans to see Russia as a greater threat to the United States than in the past. Two-thirds (67%) now say Russia's territorial ambitions present a critical threat to the

United States, up from just 30 percent when last asked in 2016. Six in ten Americans (60%) see Russia's power and influence in the world as a critical threat, up from 45 percent in 2020. And a majority (54%) say the military power of Russia is a critical threat, up from 41 percent in 2020.

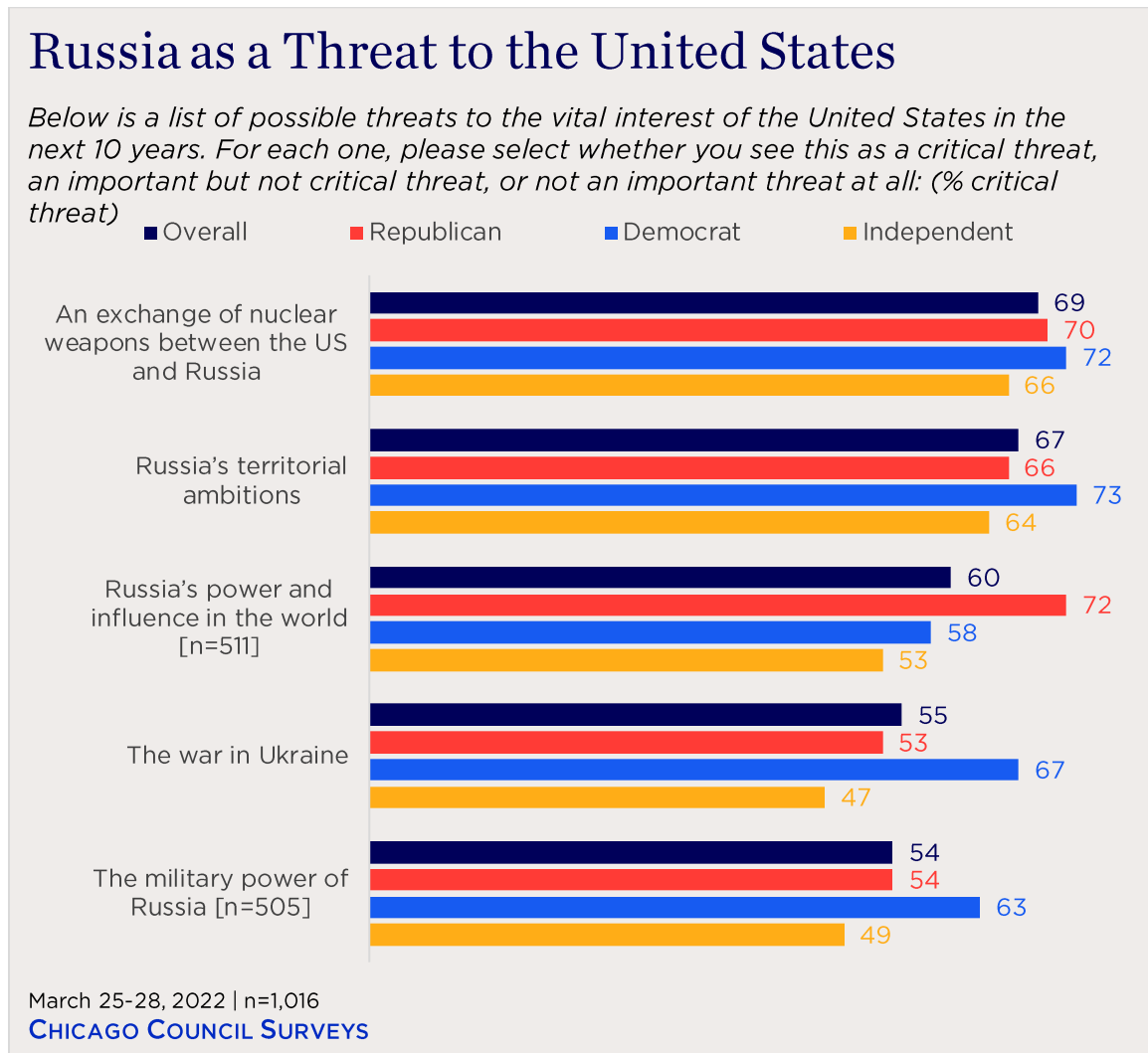
Americans are somewhat less concerned by the war in Ukraine itself, though not by much; a majority (55%) view it as a critical threat to US interests. And with Russia's recent [nuclear saber rattling](#), Americans are very concerned about the potential for the use of nuclear weapons: seven in ten Americans (69%) name the risk of a nuclear exchange between Russia and the United States as critical threat.

Threats Posed by Russia

Below is a list of possible threats to the vital interest of the United States in the next 10 years. For each one, please select whether you see this as a critical threat, an important but not critical threat, or not an important threat at all: (% critical threat)



Russia's willingness to use military force to invade a neighboring sovereign country has clearly changed American perceptions in a way that even Russia's threats earlier in the year did not. In January, [according to Pew polling](#), only a quarter of Americans (26%) viewed Russia's military buildup near its border with Ukraine as a major threat to US interests. After the war began, the proportion viewing Russia's invasion of Ukraine as a major threat nearly doubled to 50 percent.



The sense of Russia as a threat to the United States also crosses party lines, though there are cases where one partisan group is more concerned than others. Republicans, for example, are notably more concerned than others about Russian power and influence in the world, while Democrats are more concerned about the war in Ukraine and Russian military power.

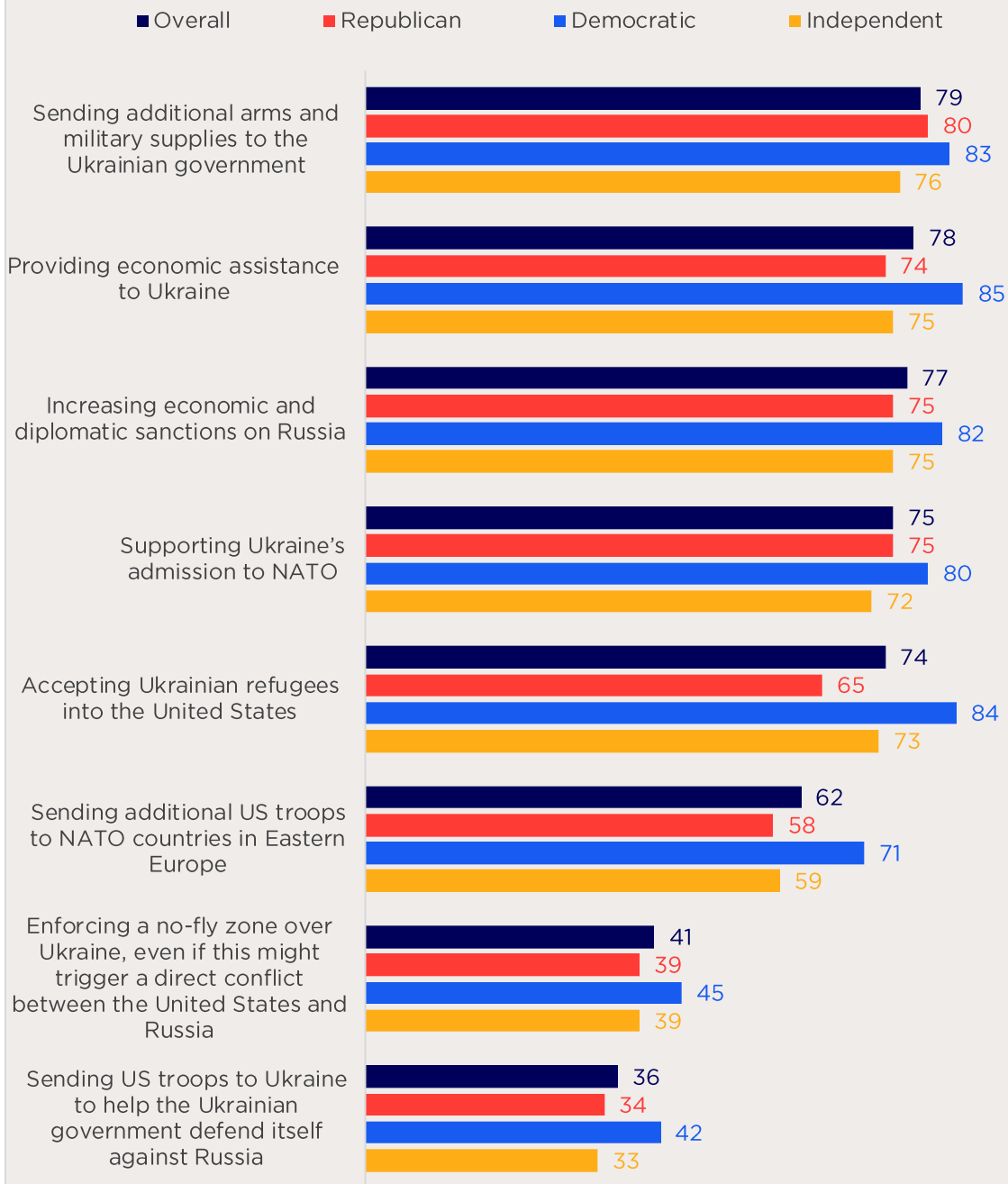
Americans Support All Measures Short of War in Response to Russian Aggression

This survey as well as those by several other polling organizations finds the American public supports a wide range of assistance to Ukraine. Large majorities of Americans support sending additional arms and military supplies to the Ukrainian government (79%), providing economic assistance to Ukraine (78%), and increasing economic and diplomatic sanctions on Russia (77%). And three-quarters of Americans (74%) support accepting refugees from Ukraine into the United States, including majorities of Democrats (84%), Independents (73%), and Republicans (65%).

Americans are also more supportive of assistance to Ukraine than they were in 2015, following Russia's annexation of Crimea. At that time, while a majority supported sanctions on Russia (60%), Americans were split on the question of economic assistance to Ukraine (50%), and only a minority favored providing arms and military supplies (40%). Today, majorities of Americans strongly support all three policies.

American Policies on Ukraine

In response to the situation involving Russia and Ukraine, would you support or oppose the United States: (% support)



March 25-28, 2022 | n=1,016
CHICAGO COUNCIL SURVEYS

Three in four Americans (75%) also support Ukrainian membership in NATO, a long-standing Ukrainian aspiration [written into the Ukrainian constitution](#). But this question, like those asked in the past, does not mention that this means the United States and other NATO countries would be obliged to defend Ukraine. For this reason, Ukrainian membership has historically received [tepid support](#) from NATO leaders seeking to avoid being drawn into a direct military confrontation with Russia. At the same time, supporters of extending NATO membership to Ukraine [argue that had Ukraine been a NATO member](#), the alliance would have been able to deter Russia from invading.

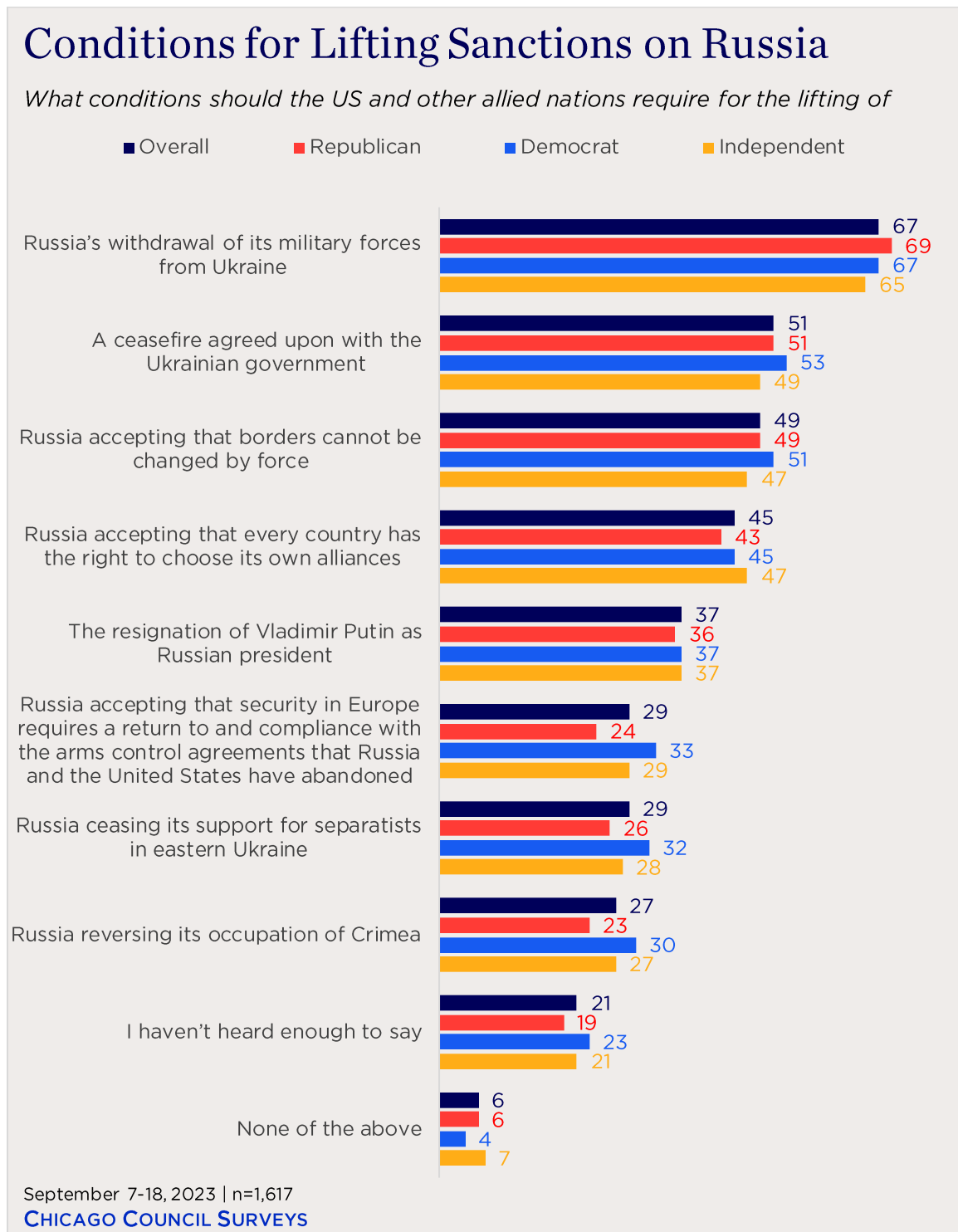
Americans draw the line at the potential direct involvement of US forces in the conflict. Only four in ten (41%) support a no-fly zone over Ukraine, even if it might trigger a direct US-Russia conflict, and just over a third (36%) favor sending US troops to Ukraine to help the Ukrainian government defend itself against the Russian invasion.¹ But Americans support a stronger US presence in Europe to defend their NATO allies: six in ten (62%) say the United States should send additional troops to NATO-member nations in Eastern Europe. And a majority (56%) support sending US troops to defend a NATO ally like Latvia, Lithuania, or Estonia if Russia were to invade them.

Russian Withdrawal from Ukraine Seen as Precondition for Lifting Sanctions

The United States and its allies have imposed sanctions on Russia so swiftly that [many wonder](#) at what point they will roll back some of the pressure. Some argue that while the sanctions themselves are justified, there is a [lack of clarity](#) among those imposing them on what Russia can do to get the sanctions lifted.

For Americans, the key condition is straightforward: two-thirds (67%) say the United States and other allied nations should require the withdrawal of Russian military forces from Ukraine before lifting sanctions. Half (51%) also point to a ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine, and nearly as many (49%) say Russia must accept the principle that national borders cannot be changed by the use of force. A smaller proportion (45%) would condition sanctions relief on Russia accepting

that every country has the right to choose its own alliances—a key point of tension between Moscow and Kyiv in recent years.



Other, more-expansive demands receive less backing by the American public as a trigger for sanctions relief. For example, while some commentators (and, [in a slip, President Joe Biden](#)) have called for an end to Vladimir Putin's leadership of Russia as part of a winddown of US pressure, only 37 percent of Americans would condition an end to sanctions on an end to his being in power. Nor do most Americans think Russia must first end its support for separatists in eastern Ukraine or reverse the occupation of Crimea.

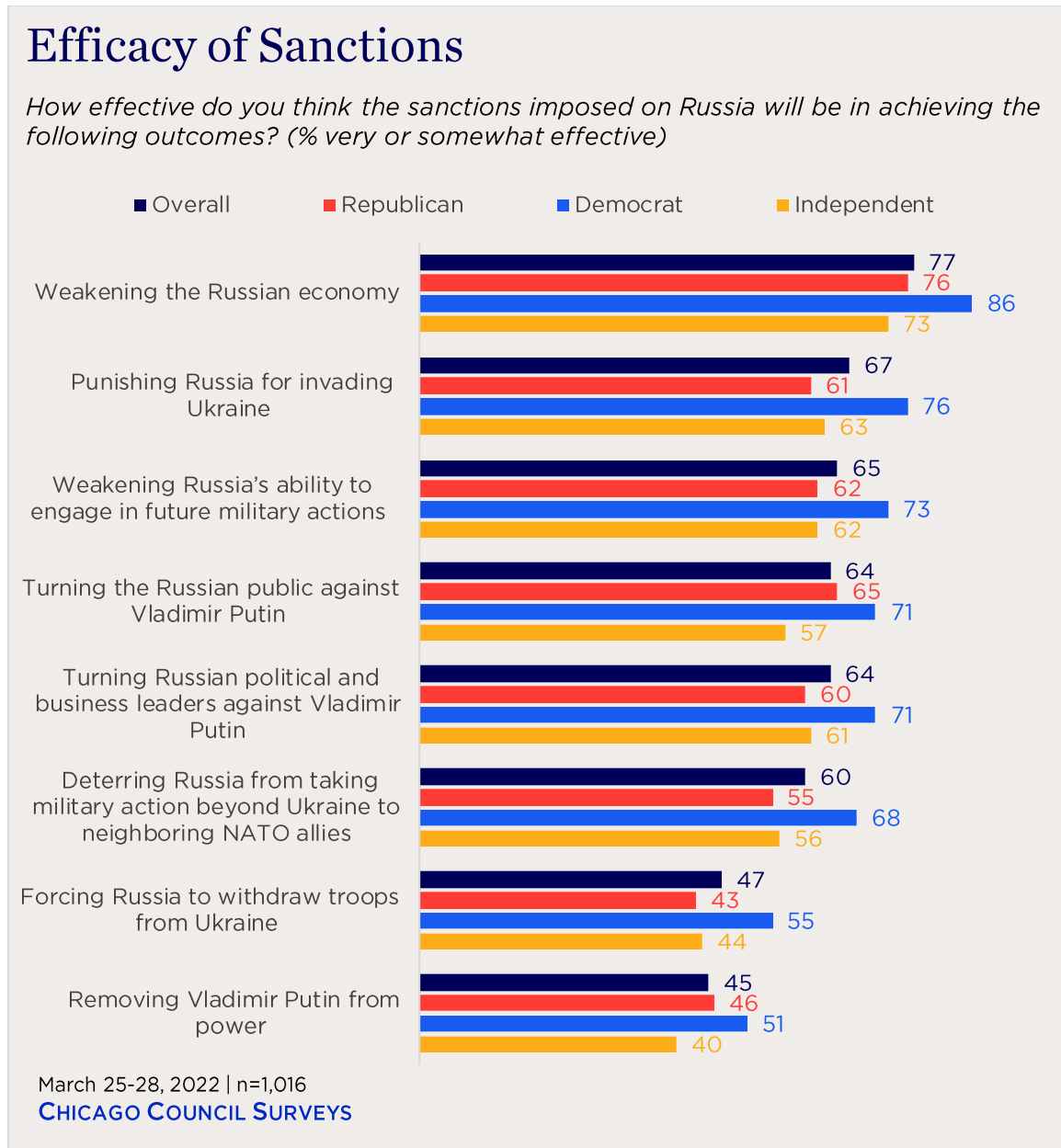
The sanctions imposed on Russia will also have costs to Americans, particularly at the gas pump, but polls indicate that the public is willing to bear those costs. [Quinnipiac polling conducted March 4-6](#) found that the [ban on imports](#) of Russian oil, gas, and coal is broadly supported by majorities of Democrats (82%), Independents (70%), and Republicans (66%), and a March 1-2 [NPR/PBS/Marist poll](#) found that seven in ten Americans (69%) support sanctions on Russia even at the cost of higher energy prices. A [March 16-28 University of Maryland survey](#) similarly found that most Americans (65%) are willing to bear at least some inflationary costs in order to help Ukraine. One reason for that support could be democratic solidarity. As a [March 7-8 survey by Reuters/Ipsos](#) found, nearly two-thirds of Americans (63%) say they are willing to pay more for fuel and gas because "it is worth it to defend another democratic country."

Sanctions Seen as Effective Tool to Punish, Weaken, and Deter Russia

Americans generally consider sanctions on Russia an effective (though not very effective) means of achieving a range of policy outcomes. These include weakening the Russian economy (77%), punishing Russia for invading Ukraine (67%), weakening Russia's ability to engage in future military actions (65%), and deterring Russia from taking military action against its NATO-member neighbors (60%). However, Americans are split on whether the sanctions will be effective at forcing Russia to withdraw its forces from Ukraine: 47 percent say they will be effective in achieving a Russian withdrawal, while 50 percent say they will not.

Americans also expect the sanctions to have effects on the political dynamics inside Russia. Majorities believe the sanctions will be effective at turning the Russian public and Russian political and business leaders

(64% each) against Putin. However, a narrow minority of Americans (45%) say the sanctions will be effective at removing Putin from power; a majority (52%) think they will be not very or not at all effective in forcing regime change inside Russia.



Conclusion

On balance, Americans are united in their condemnation of Russia's actions in Ukraine and feel threatened by Russian power, ambition, and

the potential for escalation to a nuclear exchange between the United States and Russia. The US public is also supportive of the sanctions and, at least for now, tolerant of gas-price increases as part of the consequences of those sanctions. In their view, any sanctions relief should be tied to a Russian withdrawal of troops from Ukraine and a ceasefire. In short, Americans appear invested in Ukraine in ways not previously seen.

Methodology

This report is based on results of a survey conducted March 25–28, 2022, by Ipsos using its large-scale nationwide online research panel, KnowledgePanel, among a weighted national sample of 1,016 adults, 18 or older, living in all 50 US states and the District of Columbia. The margin of sampling error for the full sample is +/- 3.0 percentage points and is higher for subgroups or partial-sample items.

Partisan identification is based on respondents' answer to a standard partisan self-identification question: "Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what?"

APRIL 2022

Russians and Americans Sense a New Cold War



By Dina Smeltz, Lily Wojtowicz, Denis Volkov, and Stepan Goncharov

The current conflict in Ukraine is described by some as an inflection point in world history, and perhaps [the end of the post-Cold War era](#). Russian President Vladimir Putin increasingly seems to make foreign policy decisions designed to upend the US-European security order and dominate the countries he considers to be in Russia's orbit. At the same time, US President Joe Biden has pitted the NATO struggle with Russia as well as the US competition with China as contests between democracies and autocracies. A recent public opinion survey from the Chicago Council on Global Affairs and the Levada Center in Moscow shows that Russians and Americans view global divisions along Cold War lines. And in what may be the most alarming throwback to those days, large majorities in both countries fear an escalation to nuclear war.

Key Findings

- The most recent survey readings show that Russian and American favorable views of the others' country and leader have plummeted.
- Both publics express strengthened appreciation for those countries considered friendly and growing hostility toward those they see as adversarial.
- Russians are overwhelmingly positive toward Belarus (87%) and China (83%), compared to very few with favorable views of the United States (17%), the European Union (21%), and Ukraine (30%).
- Americans tend to consider the United Kingdom (66%), France (53%), Poland (49%), the EU (48%), Germany (47%), and Ukraine (46%) as allies. By contrast, majorities view Russia as an adversary (57%) and China as either an adversary (22%) or rival (31%).
- Most Russians (62%) and Americans (55% when last asked in 2019) support a containment strategy rather than one of cooperation toward the other country.
- Both publics fear a nuclear exchange between Russia and the United States (69% in the United States and 83% in Russia consider this a critical threat).

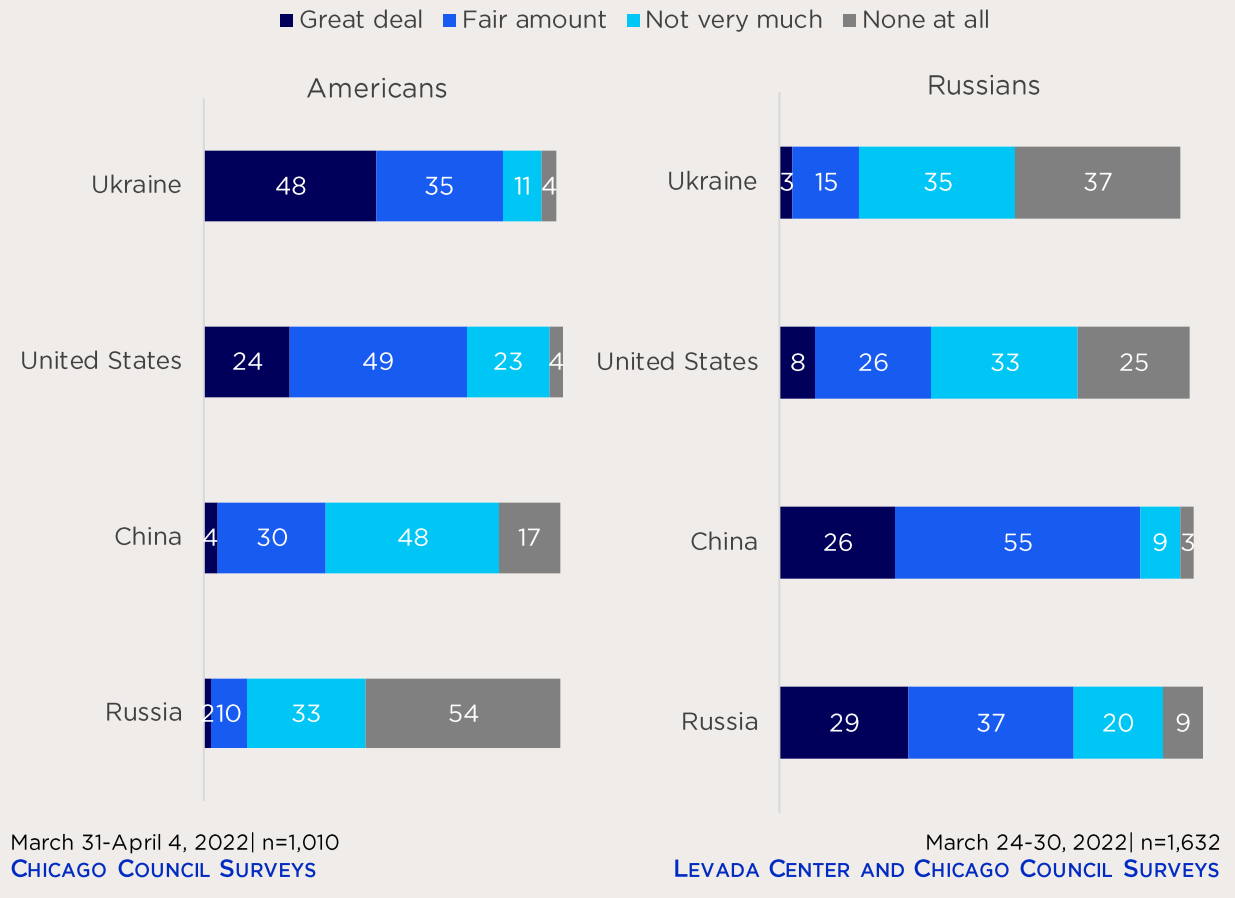
The Enemy of My Enemy

Since the 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea, Russian and American views of each other have tanked. The most recent readings show these negative feelings have only hardened. Moreover, both see the other country's allies as enemies, and enemies as allies.

When asked how much respect various countries have in the world today, Russians and Americans have polar opposite views on their own countries, China, and Ukraine. Eight in ten Russians say China is at least somewhat well respected, compared to two-thirds who say the same about Russia. Only a third believe the United States commands at least a fair amount of respect, and just 18 percent think similarly of Ukraine. By contrast, nearly three-quarters of Americans say the United States is at least somewhat well respected, and an even larger majority believe Ukraine garners respect from the world. But only one-third believe China is respected, and just 12 percent say the same about Russia.

Country Respect

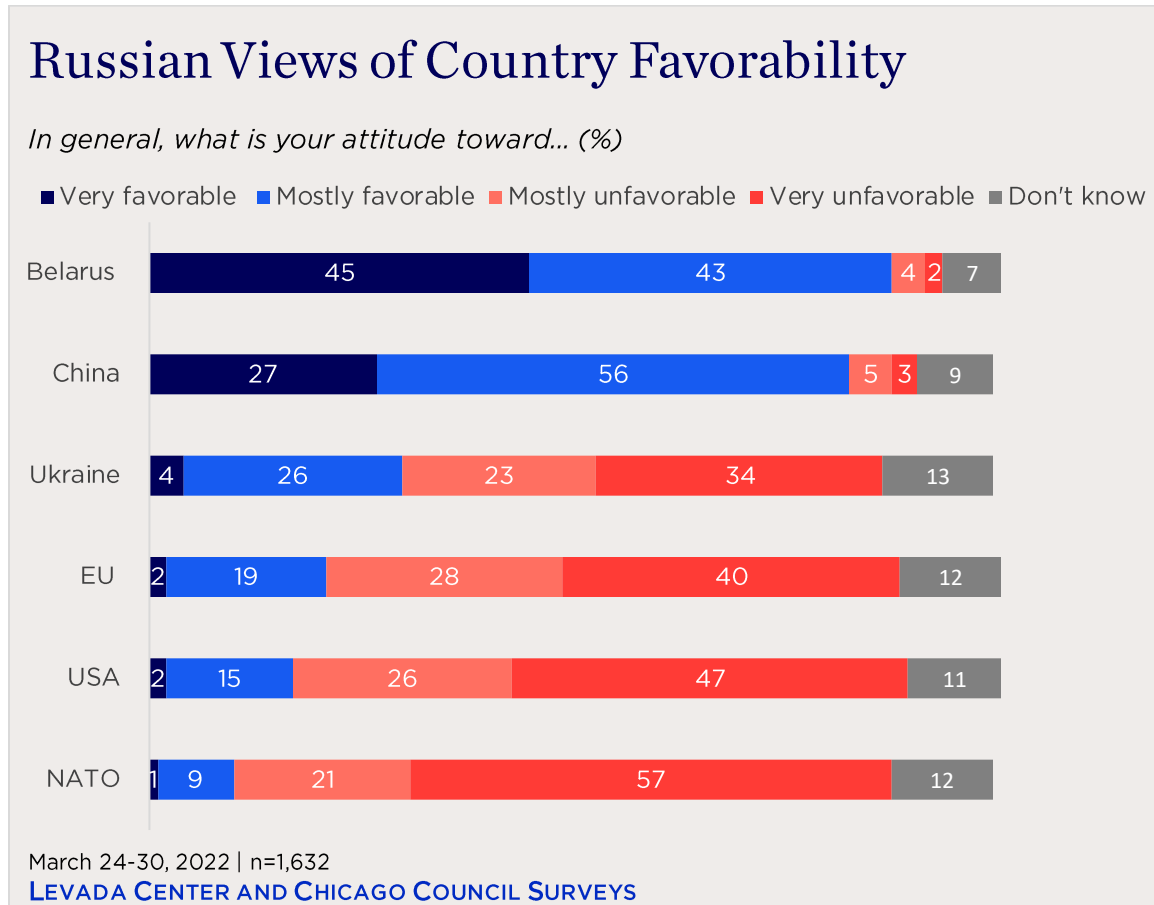
How much respect do the following countries have in the world right now—a great deal, a fair amount, not very much, none at all? (%)



Russians Consider China and Belarus to Be in Their Corner

Belarus has been an active participant in Russia's military operation, [hosting Russian troops, offering Putin support](#), and [possibly even preparing](#) to send its own troops to Ukraine. While China has not actively supported Russia in its mission, [it also has not condemned Russian actions](#). Russians, in turn, have overwhelmingly positive views toward Belarus (87% favorable, up from 84% in 2021) and China (83%, up from 70% in 2021). Russians are much less favorable toward the

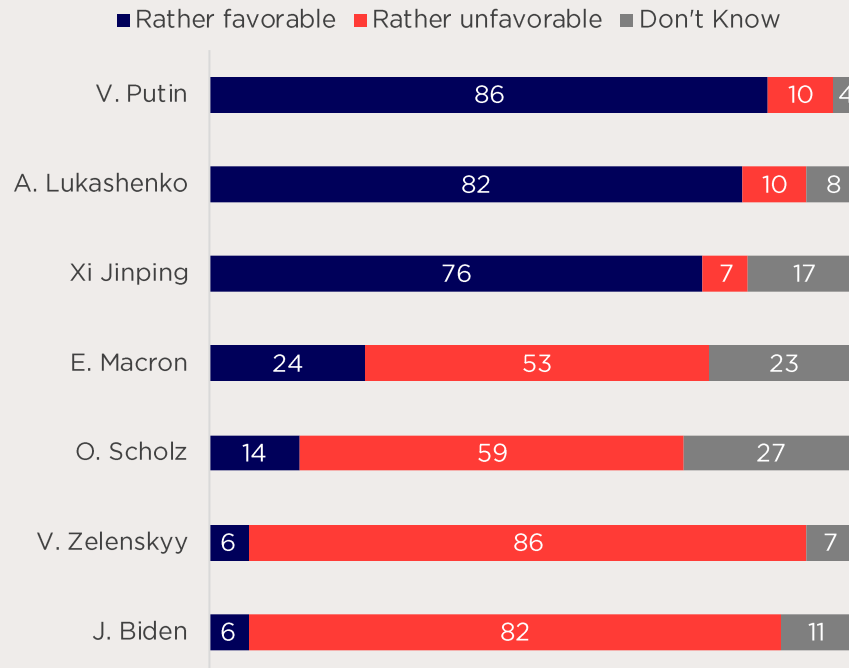
United States (17%, down from 33% in February), the European Union (21%, down from 37% in February) and Ukraine (30%, down from 35% in 2021).



When it comes to political leaders, the pattern is much the same. Russians approve of the job President Putin is doing (83%), up 12 percentage points since just one month prior (71% in February). Putin's overall favorability is even higher (86%). A majority also give glowing ratings to Belarus President Aleksandr Lukashenko (82% favorable) and Chinese leader Xi Jinping (76%). Ratings for Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy (6% favorable) and President Biden (6%, down from 19% in January 2021) are nearly rock bottom, while those for French President Emmanuel Macron (24%) and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz (14%) are slightly more favorable but still low overall.

Russian Views of Leader Favorability

What is your opinion of the following leaders? (%)



March 24-30, 2022 | n=1,632

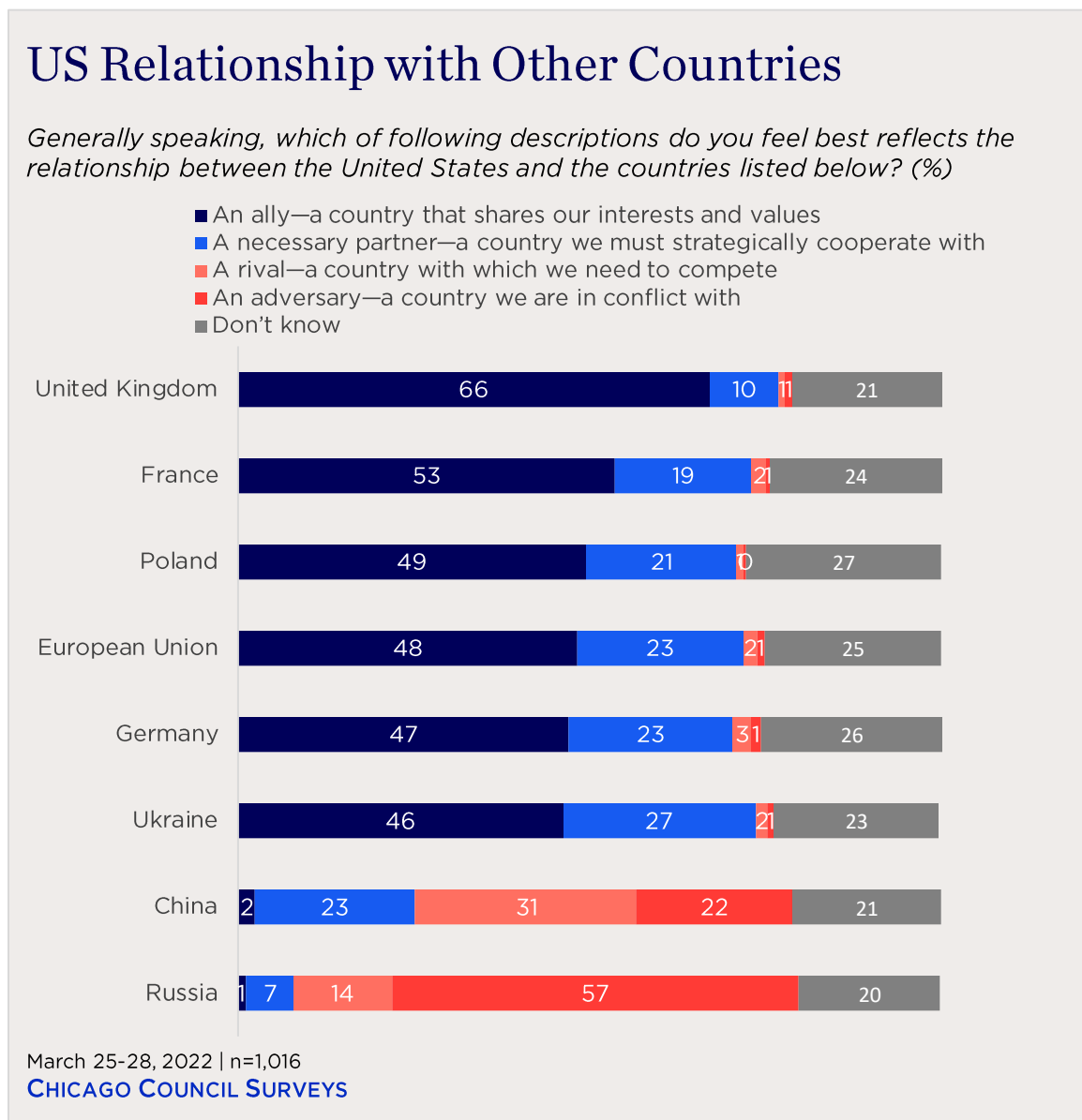
LEVADA CENTER AND CHICAGO COUNCIL SURVEYS

Americans Consider Europeans and Ukraine to be Part of “Team USA”

When asked whether they consider several countries to be allies, necessary partners, rivals, or adversaries, Americans are most likely to classify the United Kingdom (66%) and France (53%) as allies, defined as “a country that shares our interests and values.” Nearly half also consider Poland (49%), the European Union (48%), Germany (47%) and Ukraine (46%) to be allies, and solid majorities of at least seven in ten describe these countries as either allies or partners.

By contrast, a majority of Americans consider Russia an adversary (57%, up from 39% in 2021), described as “a country we are in conflict with,” and 14 percent say it is a rival, or “a country with which we need to compete.”¹ Relative to ratings that Russia receives, Americans consider China more of a frenemy: 22 percent consider it an adversary, while 31

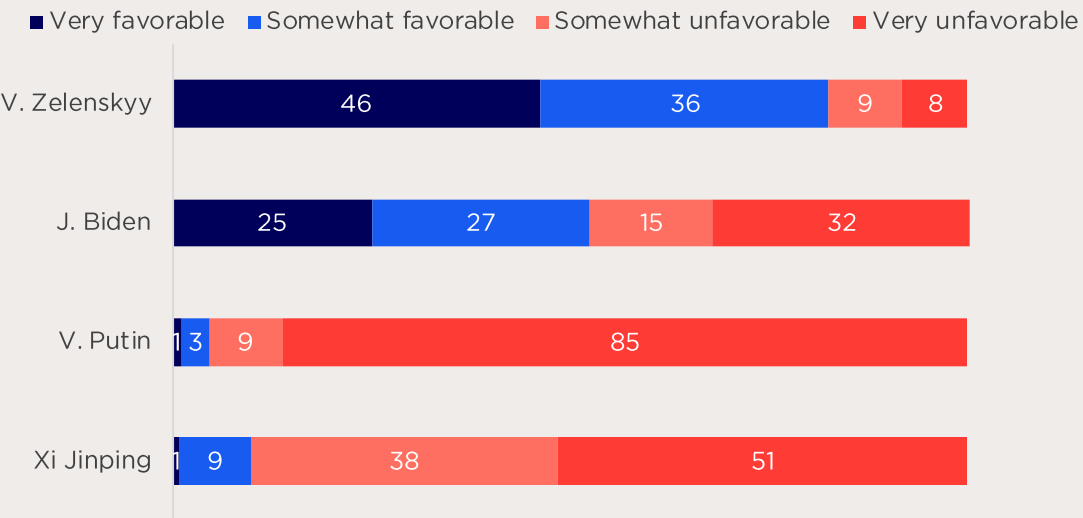
percent say it is a rival, and 23 percent say it is a necessary partner (in 2021, 32% saw China as a rival, 29% as an enemy, 21% as a partner).



The pattern for political leaders is similar. Ukrainian President Zelenskyy has apparently inspired a wide majority of Americans (81% favorable), while 52 percent of Americans express a favorable view of US President Biden—with large partisan differences for the latter (87% Democrats, 14% Republicans and 48% Independents). One in ten or fewer are favorable toward Xi (10%, 13% in 2021) and Putin (4%, down from 12% in 2021).

US Views of Leader Favorability

Do you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable view of the following world leaders? (%)



March 25-28, 2022 | n=1,016
CHICAGO COUNCIL SURVEYS

Majorities on Both Sides Fear Nuclear Threat

In addition to expressing a sense of geopolitical division between Russia on the one side and the United States and Europe on the other, Russians and Americans each communicate an increased sense of threat from the other country.

When Putin announced [Russia's "special military operation"](#) in Ukraine,² he warned that "no matter who tries to stand in our way" they will meet consequences that "you have never seen in your entire history." This comment was broadly interpreted as a threat to use nuclear weapons against any Western country trying to interfere with Russia's goals. Russian media have circulated propaganda about a Ukrainian nuclear weapons program and US aid in bioweapons facilities—both of which the US intelligence agencies have [firmly denied](#).

Publics in both countries are alarmed by these messages. Majorities in both countries fear the risk of a nuclear exchange between Russia and the United States (69% in the United States and 83% in Russia consider

this a critical threat). In addition, a majority of Russians view US military growth as a critical threat (58%), while a majority of Americans describe Russia's military power similarly (54%, up from 41% in 2020).

In light of Russia's military action in Ukraine, two-thirds of Americans (67%) say Russia's territorial ambitions are also a critical threat, up from 30% when last asked, in 2016. Six in ten Americans (60%) view Russia's power and influence in the world as a critical threat, up from 45% in 2020. The military conflict in Ukraine is perceived as slightly less of a threat to the United States (55% critical).

Russian concern about threats from the West also extends beyond a potential nuclear exchange. Russians also fear a Western-initiated cyberattack on their country (56%) and an information war between Russia and Western countries (54%).³

Back to A Containment Strategy?

[Many](#) foreign policy experts are advocating a renewed policy of [containment in light of the situation between Russia and Ukraine](#). Americans tend to agree with this line of thought and action. In this survey, only 7 percent agreed that Russia is a necessary partner with whom we must cooperate. And when [last asked in 2019](#), a majority of Americans (55%) preferred that the United States actively work to limit Russia's power (compared to 44% who thought the United States should undertake friendly cooperation and engagement).

For their part, Russians largely accept the official narrative that the United States and NATO [are the main sources of tension](#) between Russia and Ukraine. In 2016, Russians told interviewers that the goal of the economic sanctions placed on their country in response to the [annexation of Crimea was to weaken Russia](#) (74%) rather than to stop the fighting in the Donbas (6%) or to return Crimea to Ukraine (17%). And even before the recent escalation between Russia and Ukraine, [a February 2022 Levada survey](#) found a majority of Russians (60%) blamed the United States and NATO for the tensions in eastern Ukraine. Fourteen percent blamed Ukraine, and just 4 percent blamed Russia. These opinions help to explain the current survey results showing twice as many Russians believe that Russia should try to limit US power and

influence in the world (62%) as say their country should be open for cooperation with the United States (30%).

Conclusion

Regardless of the foreign policy merits of the United States adopting a strategy of containment toward Russia, it seems unlikely that the American public would support anything else. With opinions of Russia and Putin so low, and the strong sense that Russia presents a critical threat to US interests, it is difficult to envision enthusiasm among Americans for another reset of bilateral relations. While Russian opinions of the United States had appeared to be moving in a less negative direction in Council-Levada surveys from 2021, it seems very unlikely the Russian public will push for improved relations now, given their currently dim view of the United States. In this moment, the animosity between the two countries appears mutual.

Methodology

The US data in this report are based on results of a survey conducted March 25–28, 2022, by Ipsos using its large-scale nationwide online research panel, KnowledgePanel, among a weighted national sample of 1,016 adults, 18 or older, living in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The margin of sampling error for the full sample is +/- 3.0 percentage points and is higher for subgroups or partial-sample items.

Partisan identification is based on respondents' answer to a standard partisan self-identification question: "Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what?"

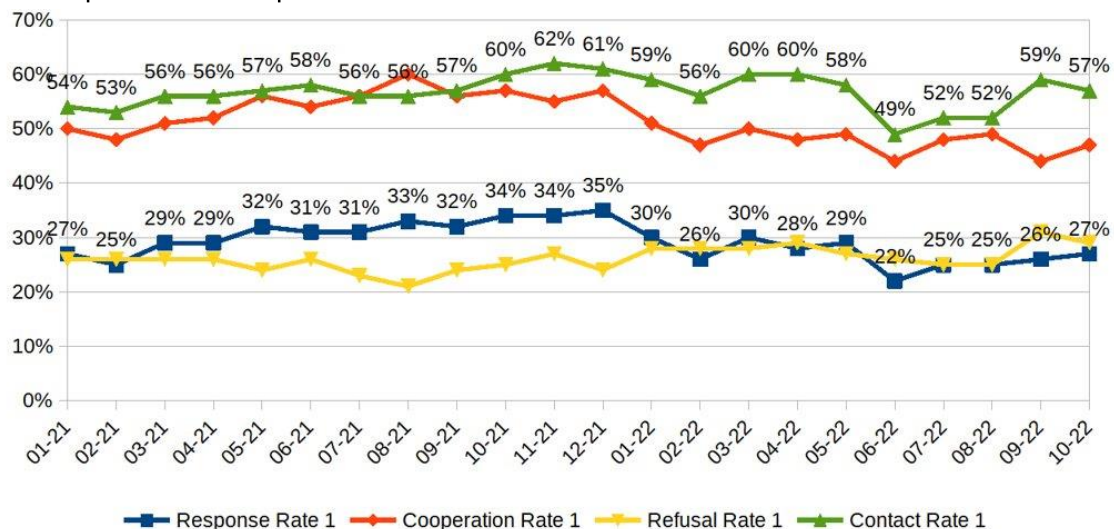
Additional US data come from an AmeriSpeak® survey conducted March 31–April 4 with a sample size of 1,010. Funded and operated by NORC at the University of Chicago, AmeriSpeak® is a probability-based panel designed to be representative of the US household population. Randomly selected US households are sampled using area probability and address-based sampling, with a known, non-zero probability of selection from the NORC National Sample Frame.

The Russian data in this report come from a survey conducted March 24–30, 2022, by the Levada Center. The survey was conducted among a representative sample of 1,632 Russians 18 or older, including urban and rural residents. The sample included people from 137 municipalities within 50 regions of the Russian Federation. The survey was conducted as a personal interview in respondents' homes. Quotas for gender and age are used in the final stage of respondent selection to increase accessibility of some problem groups (younger people, males) and to decrease some groups that often are oversampled (for example, women 55 and older). These quotas are applied after 75 percent of the sample is collected and when the deviations after the next birthday method are +/- 15%. For more information about Levada sampling, please see <https://www.levada.ru/en/methods/omnibus/>

The statistical error of these studies for a sample of 1,600 people (with a probability of 0.95) does not exceed:

- 3.4 percent for indicators around 50 percent
- 2.9 percent for indicators around 25/75 percent
- 2.0 percent for indicators around 10/90 percent
- 1.5 percent for indicators around 5/95 percent

While surveys conducted in nondemocratic contexts can be [criticized](#), the survey's response rate, contact rate, and refusal rate are generally consistent with past readings since January 2021 (see below). In other words, there is no clear evidence that Russians have become less willing to cooperate with pollsters since the conflict in Ukraine started.



The following indicators are calculated using American Association for Public Opinion Research formulas.

- Response rates—The number of complete interviews with reporting units divided by the number of eligible reporting units in the sample.
- Response Rate 1, or the minimum response rate, is the number of complete interviews divided by the number of interviews (complete plus partial) plus the number of noninterviews (refusal and break-off plus noncontacts plus others) plus all cases of unknown eligibility (unknown if housing unit, plus unknown, other).
- Cooperation rates—The proportion of all units interviewed of all eligible units ever contacted.
- Cooperation Rate 1, or the minimum cooperation rate, is the number of complete interviews divided by the number of interviews (complete plus partial) plus the number of noninterviews that involve the identification of and contact with an eligible respondent (refusal and break-off plus other).
- Refusal rates—The proportion of all cases in which a housing unit or the respondent refuses to be interviewed, or breaks off an interview, of all potentially eligible cases.
- Refusal Rate 1 is the number of refusals divided by the interviews (complete and partial) plus the nonrespondents (refusals, noncontacts, and others) plus the cases of unknown eligibility.
- Contact rates—The proportion of all cases in which some responsible housing unit member was reached.
- Contact Rate 1 assumes that all cases of indeterminate eligibility are actually eligible.

APRIL 2022

Russian Public Accepts Putin's Spin on Ukraine Conflict



By Dina Smeltz, Emily Sullivan, Lily Wojtowicz, Denis Volkov, and Stepan Goncharov

While the whole world seems to be watching the Russian “special military operation” in Ukraine,¹ a new joint survey by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs and the Levada Center conducted March 24–30 shows that most people living in Russia are not following these events closely. Nevertheless, a majority of Russians say they support their country’s military action—with just over half strongly backing it. For the most part, Russians think these actions are being taken to protect and defend fellow Russians and Russian speakers in Ukraine, to protect Russia itself, or to “denazify” Ukraine—story lines that have been amplified by the Russian government’s media apparatus.² But as the conflict drags on, it may become more difficult to sustain this support, especially as the casualty rates are uncovered and the economic repercussions of the Western sanctions begin to more seriously affect Russian households.

Key Findings

- A majority of Russians strongly (53%) or somewhat (28%) support their country’s military operation in Ukraine.
- Few who support the military action believe it is motivated by Russia’s desire to annex Ukraine and/or the Donbas region.
- Those who rely on internet sites, social media, or family/friends for information are roughly 15 percentage points less likely to strongly support the military operation than those who get their news from television, radio, or newspapers.
- While there have been significant protests in Russia against the military action, most Russians are not closely following them.

Wide Support for “Military Operation” in Ukraine, but Some More Committed Than Others

Seven weeks into the Russian military action, Ukraine is bracing for a Russian offensive in eastern Ukraine with troops rerouted from the northern regions of the country. While Western media are [broadcasting](#) images of atrocities committed by Russian forces in Ukraine, Russian media are [pushing back](#) against the “West’s information war,” claiming these atrocities are staged and doubling down on the “denazification” narrative.³

The joint Chicago Council-Levada survey finds that a limited segment of Russians is following the situation very closely (29%), while an additional 35 percent are following it somewhat closely. Yet an overall majority of Russians support their government's action in Ukraine. Fifty-three percent strongly support, and 28 percent somewhat support, the military operation. Just 14 percent oppose the military operation, and an additional 6 percent decline to respond.

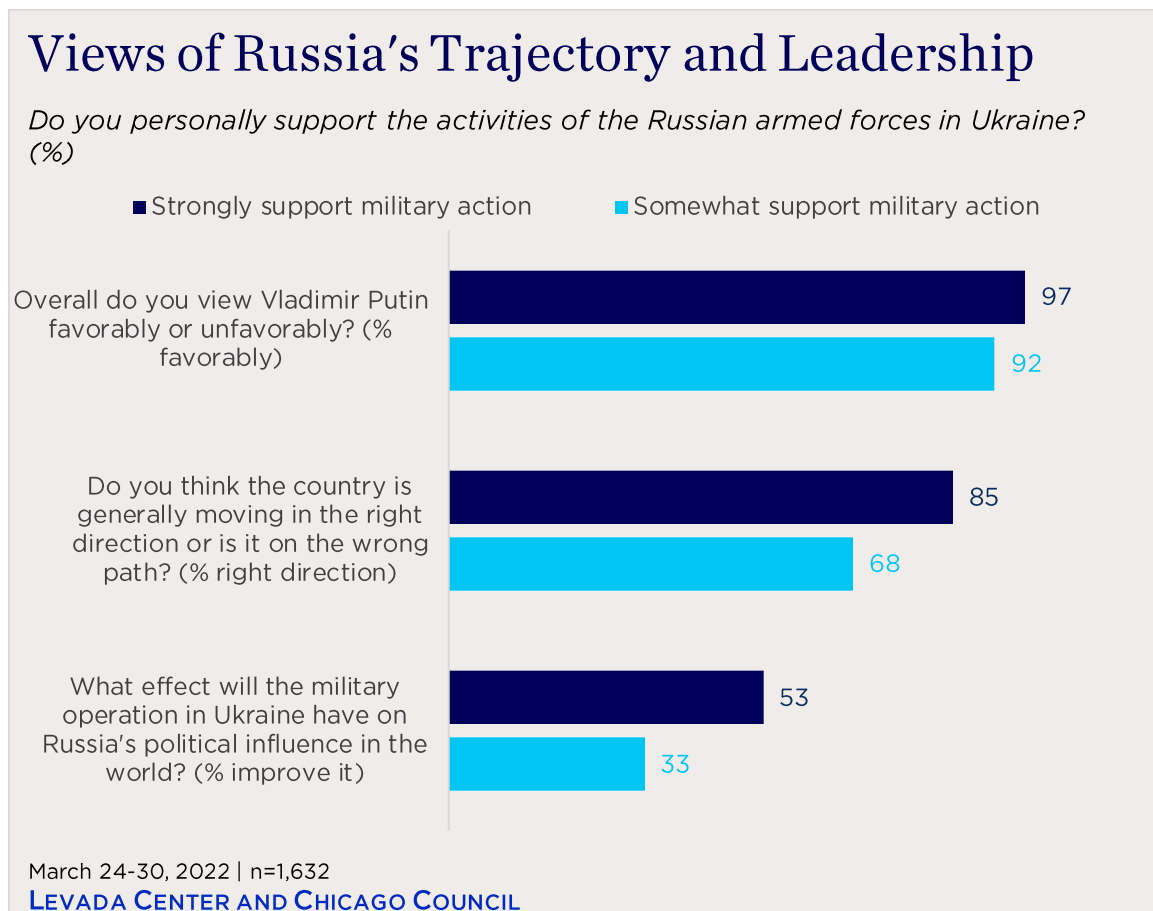
Although many observers have raised questions about how free Russians feel to express their true opinions in the current political climate, the response rate, refusal rate, and percentage responding “don't know” to various questions are generally in line with [previous Levada surveys](#) conducted since January 2021. This suggests there is not a significant change in Russian willingness or sense of freedom to participate in surveys in light of the situation in Ukraine.

A February 2022 Levada Center survey before the military operation began found that half of Russians (49%) thought it was not very likely or not likely at all that the tensions in eastern Ukraine would boil over into a war between Russia and Ukraine. In this March Chicago Council-Levada survey, 43 percent of Russians say the military operation personally makes them feel shocked, anxious, or fearful. But a slight majority say it makes them feel proud of their country (51%). Additionally, two-thirds think Russia is somewhat (37%) or very (29%) respected in the world today, compared to just 18 percent who say the same about Ukraine. Amid this atmosphere, most Russians also express a favorable view of Vladimir Putin (87%) and approve of his performance as president of Russia (83%).

Those who “strongly” support the military action are also more convinced than other supporters that it is good for the country: they are significantly more likely to say that the action will improve Russia's political influence in the world (53% vs. 33% somewhat support) and believe that Russia is generally going in the right direction as a country (85% vs. 68% who somewhat support the action). Yet nine in ten among all supporters are positive about Putin and his performance as president. These patterns could be interpreted to mean that those who strongly support the military action believe in the mission—whatever they believe the mission to be—while those who support it only

somewhat may do so out of a sense of loyalty to the president, group think, or even general apathy.

When Putin annexed Crimea in 2014, Russian opinion surveys registered comparably high ratings for Putin to those we are seeing today. But unlike the public reaction when Russia took Crimea, there are no signs of celebration within Russian society. As one Russian sociologist remarked in a recent [New York Times article](#): “Enthusiasm—I don’t see it. . . What I rather see is apathy.”



Military Action Seen as Defensive Operation

At the outset of the military action when Putin announced the “special military operation,” the Russian government [outlawed](#) the use of the terms “war” and “invasion,” in effect shutting down independent reporting and making the government-run media outlets the voices of record for the Russian public. [Depicting](#) Ukraine’s fighters as terrorists

and rebels, and NATO as their “overseas master,” the rhetoric has only grown more extreme as the crisis continues, painting the Ukrainians as [genocidal Nazis](#).

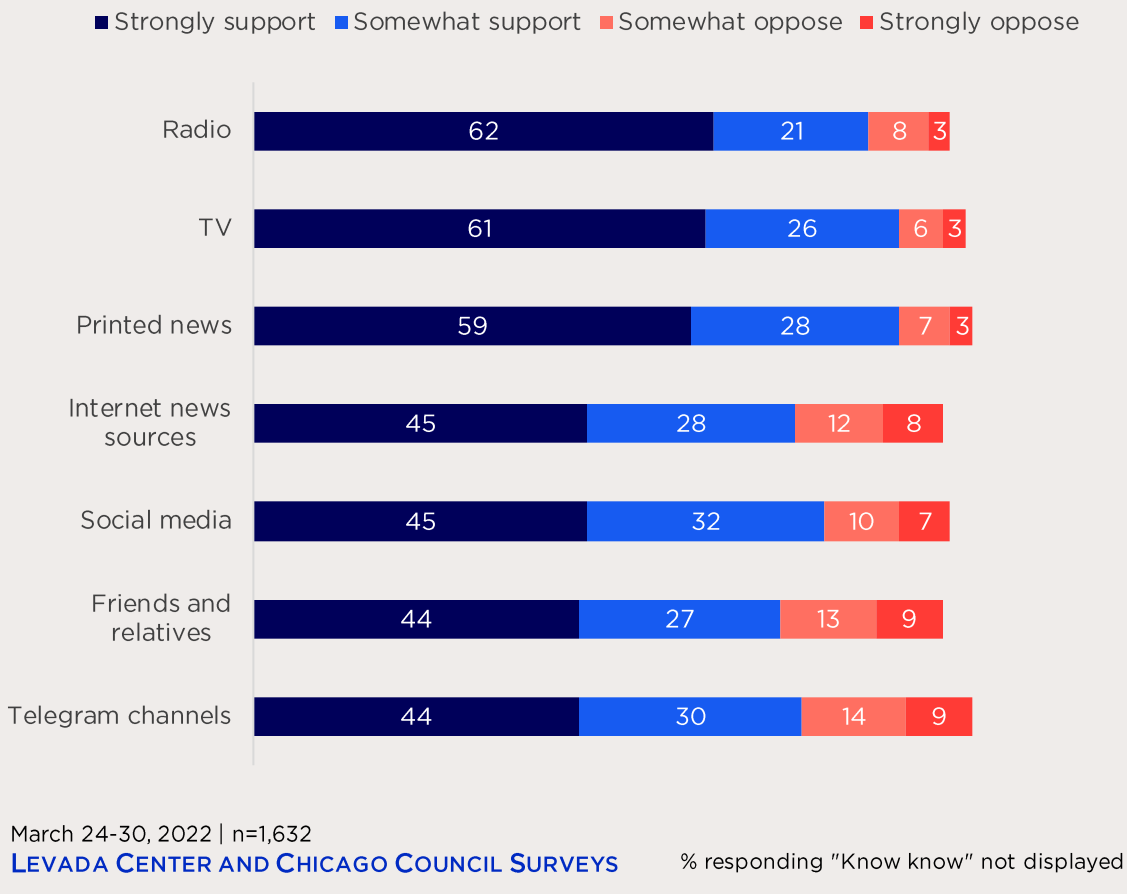
When asked in an open-ended question why they think the military operation is taking place, a plurality (43%) say it is to defend civilians, ethnic Russians, or Russian speakers, including those in eastern Ukraine. This seems to resonate with most Russians: nearly all Russians agree that their country is the rightful defender of Russian speakers abroad (78% strongly agree, 16% somewhat agree).

Other messaging from the Kremlin also gets some traction among the public. A quarter of Russians (25%), according to the open-response question, think the military operation is a preemptive measure to prevent an attack on Russia, and 21 percent say it is to get rid of nationalists and “denazify” Ukraine. Few Russians (3%) appear to view the operation as an attempt to incorporate Ukraine and/or the Donbas region into Russia. Nor do Russians actively support that goal: in a separate question, only 26 percent believe that Russia and Ukraine should be united into one state. Instead, a majority of Russians (69%) think the two countries should remain separate, either completely independent (20%) or as friendly states with open borders and no visa or customs requirements (49%).

While television, radio, and printed publications are the media sources over which the Russian government exerts the most pronounced influence (and are used most often), majorities of Russians say they support the operation no matter what form of media they turn to most often. But there is a difference in degree of support between those who mainly consume news sources that tend to be state-run (TV, print and radio) and those who look to other sources.⁴ Russians who consume news from online media sites (30%), social media (38%), the Telegram messaging app (14%), and family, friends, and neighbors (18%) are roughly 15 percentage points less likely to strongly support the military operation than those who get their news from television (70%), radio (10%), and printed publications (6%).

Media Source and Military Operation Support

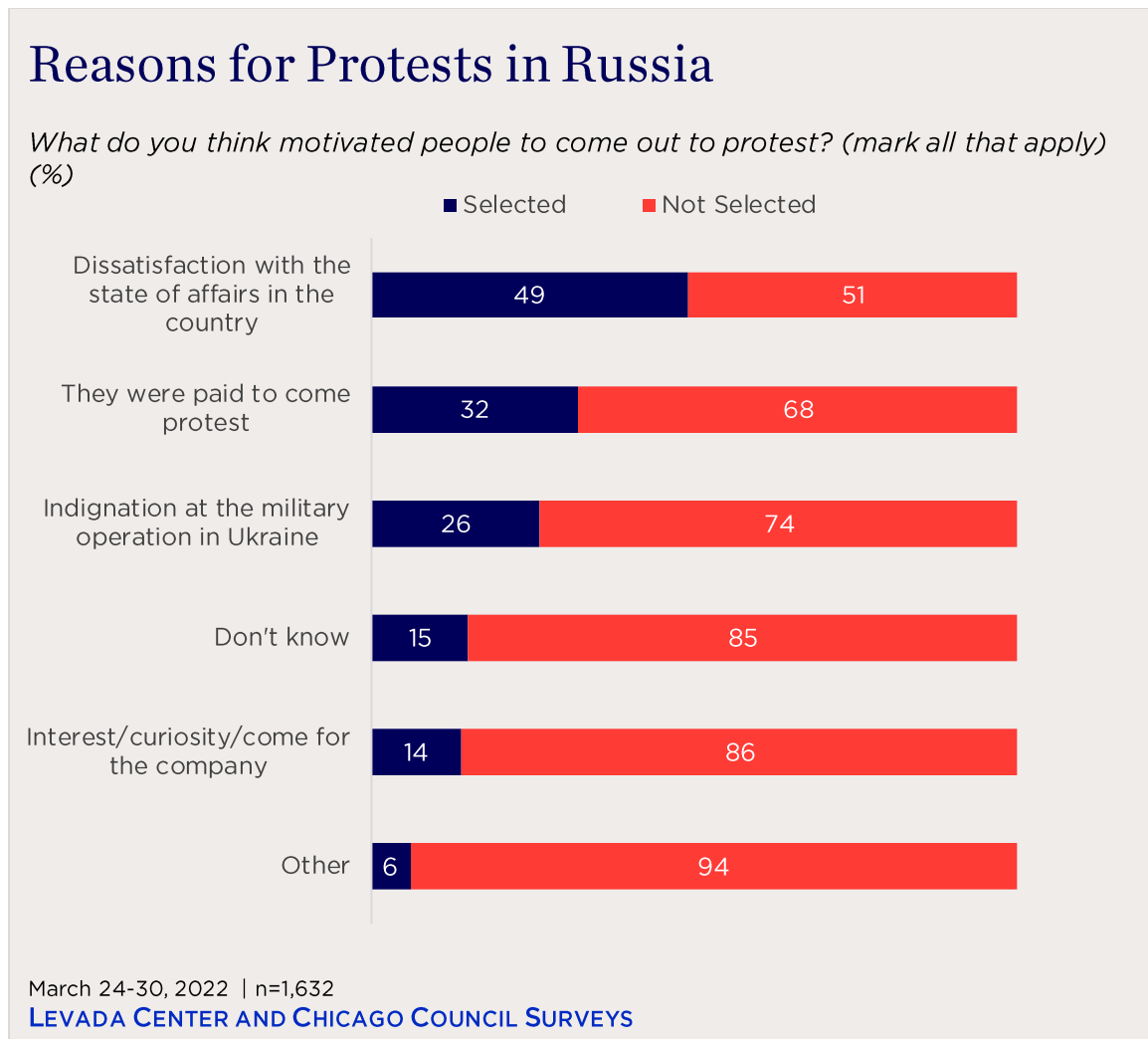
Do you personally support the activities of the Russian armed forces in Ukraine? (% among those who use each type of media)



Increased Concern about Sanctions' Impact, but Strong Rejection of Compromise

The United States and its allies have placed [unprecedented sanctions](#) on Russia; last week the US Treasury Department [increased the targets of these sanctions](#), including Putin's adult daughters. Among the Russian public, slightly more say they are not concerned (53%) than are concerned (46%) about the impact of Western political and economic sanctions. But the percentage who are concerned has increased since December 2021, when it was only a third (32%). In turn, those who say they have been personally financially impacted by the sanctions has increased from 10 [percent in 2020 to 29 percent](#). And while in 2020 a

majority of Russians (57%) said sanctions had not created any problems at all for them and their family, only a third (30%) say the same today. In a separate question, a clear majority think the sanctions will affect the general population (67%) rather than a narrow circle of people who are responsible for Russian policy toward Ukraine (26%).



The Russian ruble appears to have rebounded after a sharp fall in response to sanctions, although some think this [rebound is artificial](#). Just last week, inflation hit a [seven-year high](#), raising consumer prices. Despite these rising worries about the economic impact of sanctions, a large majority of 80 percent say Russia should not make any concessions to Western countries to get the sanctions lifted (13% think they should, 7% don't know). When asked specifically about various negotiating points, Russians are most resistant to ceasing economic and

military assistance to the breakaway regions in eastern Ukraine (87% oppose). Majorities also oppose returning Crimea to Ukraine (64% oppose, 27% support) and withdrawing Russian forces from Ukraine (64% oppose, 27% support) in exchange for sanctions relief.

Conclusion

Today, a critical factor in Russian attitudes is likely the muzzling of independent media. [In the first week](#) of the war in Ukraine, Russia passed laws criminalizing publishing “false information,” restricted Russians’ access to much foreign news and social media sites, and banned referring to the military operation in Ukraine as a “war” or “invasion.” Many [Western news](#) outlets suspended operations in Russia in light of the current restrictions, while the government restrictions forced the [closures](#) of the few remaining independent Russian news organizations. The findings from our survey likely reflect this media landscape.

The vastly different understandings of Russians compared to publics in the West over the situation in Ukraine underscores just how powerful government control of information and media has become within Russia.⁵ With many commentators now expecting the military operation to drag on for a considerable time, further polling will be essential in determining what, if anything, could act as a tipping point for the Russian population to turn against the operation. Russian leaders have publicly admitted that there have been [significant losses](#) of Russian soldiers, a situation different from Russia’s retaking Crimea in 2014. This fact, along with the economic strain from Western sanctions on Russians’ living standards, may prove to be factors in how long Putin can retain public support for this operation.

Methodology

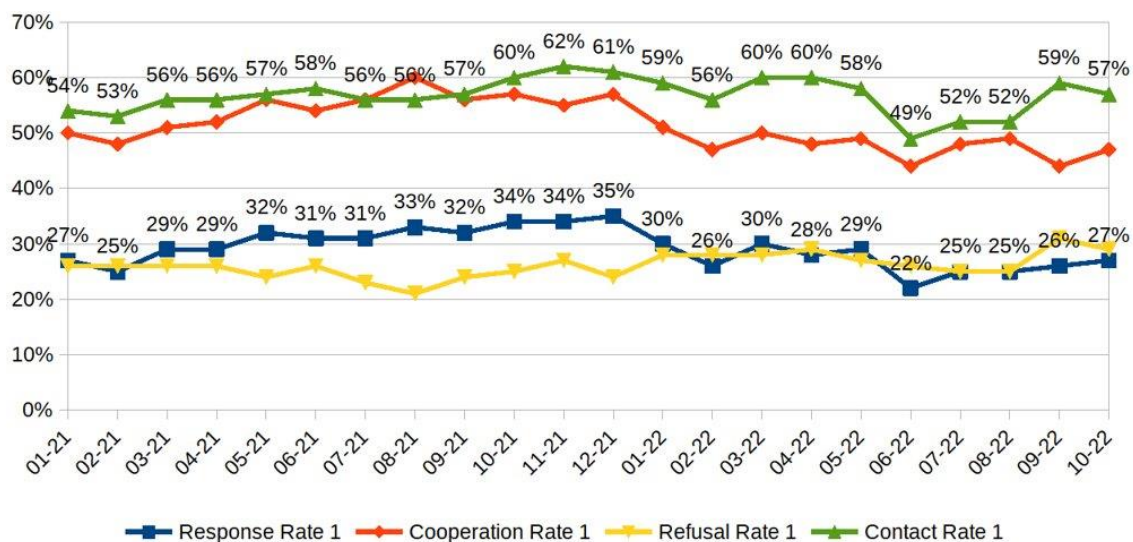
The data in this report comes from a survey conducted March 24–30, 2022, by the Levada Center. The survey was conducted among a representative sample of 1,632 Russians 18 years of age or older, including urban and rural residents. The sample included people from 137 municipalities within 50 regions of the Russian Federation. The survey was conducted as a personal interview in respondents’

homes. Quotas for gender and age are used in the final stage of respondent selection to increase accessibility of some problem groups (younger persons, males) and to decrease some groups that often are oversampled (for example, women 55+). These quotas are applied after 75 percent of the sample is collected and when the deviations after the next birthday method are +/- 15%. For more information about Levada sampling, please see <https://www.levada.ru/en/methods/omnibus/>

The statistical error of these studies for a sample of 1,600 people (with a probability of 0.95) does not exceed:

- 3.4% for indicators around 50%
- 2.9% for indicators around 25%/75%
- 2.0% for indicators around 10%/90%
- 1.5% for indicators around 5%/95%

While surveys conducted in non-democratic contexts can be [criticized](#), the survey's response rate, contact rate, and refusal rate are generally consistent with past readings since January 2021 (see below). In other words, there is no clear evidence that Russians have become less willing to cooperate with pollsters since the war started.



- Response rates - The number of complete interviews with reporting units divided by the number of eligible reporting units in the sample.

- Response Rate 1 (RR1), or the minimum response rate, is the number of complete interviews divided by the number of interviews (complete plus partial) plus the number of non-interviews (refusal and break-off plus non-contacts plus others) plus all cases of unknown eligibility (unknown if housing unit, plus unknown, other).
- Cooperation rates - The proportion of all cases interviewed of all eligible units ever contacted.
- Cooperation Rate 1 (COOP1), or the minimum cooperation rate, is the number of complete interviews divided by the number of interviews (complete plus partial) plus the number of non-interviews that involve the identification of and contact with an eligible respondent (refusal and break-off plus other).
- Refusal rates - The proportion of all cases in which a housing unit or the respondent refuses to be interviewed, or breaks-off an interview, of all potentially eligible cases.
- Refusal Rate 1 (REF1) is the number of refusals divided by the interviews (complete and partial) plus the non-respondents (refusals, non-contacts, and others) plus the cases of unknown eligibility
- Contact rates - The proportion of all cases in which some responsible housing unit member was reached.
- Contact Rate 1 (CON1) assumes that all cases of indeterminate eligibility are actually eligible

DECEMBER 2022

Growing US Divide on How Long to Support Ukraine



By Dina Smeltz, Craig Kafura, and Emily Sullivan

At the end of November, the United States authorized its latest assistance package to Ukraine, valued at [\\$400 million](#) to bolster the country's security and defense in the war against Russia, now beginning its 10th month. A just-completed November 18-20 Chicago Council survey finds that large majorities of Americans continue to support US assistance to Ukraine, both economically and with military equipment. But as the fighting drags into winter, the overall US public is now divided on whether the United States should support Ukraine as long as it takes or if it should urge Kyiv to settle for peace as soon as possible. These findings are updates to findings of a [Chicago Council Survey conducted in July](#).

Key Findings

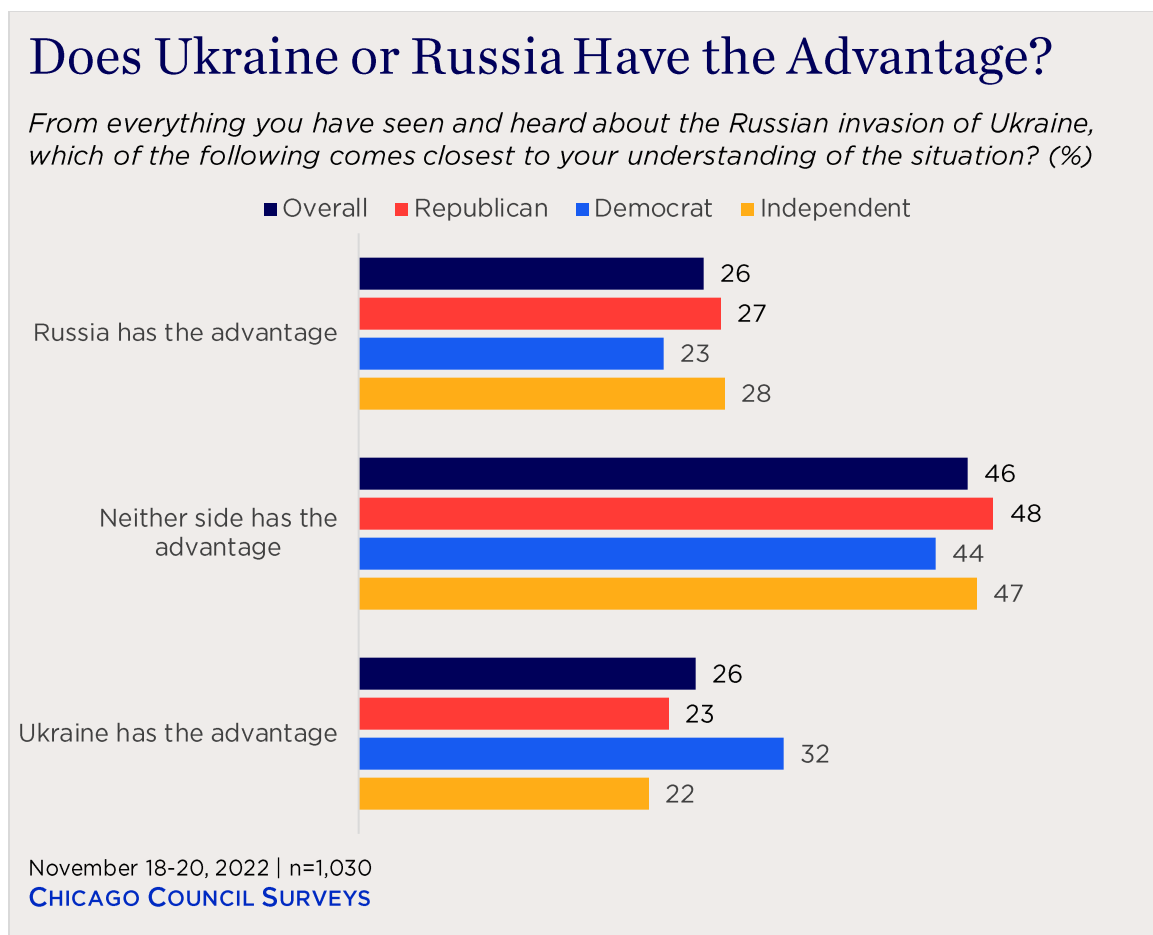
- An equal percentage of Americans say Russia (26%) and Ukraine (26%) has the advantage in the current conflict. But a plurality (46%) believes that neither country has the advantage.
- Solid majorities of Americans continue to support supplying Ukraine with arms (65%) and economic aid (66%), accepting Ukrainian refugees (73%), and sanctioning Russia (75%).
- A plurality believes the United States should maintain its current level of support for Ukraine indefinitely (40%). Nearly three in 10 each say that the United States should intervene militarily to tip the advantage to Ukraine and end the war as soon as possible (27%) or that the United States should gradually withdraw support for Ukraine (29%).
- Separately, Americans are now closely divided on whether Washington should support Ukraine “as long as it takes” (48%, down from 58% in July 2022) or whether Washington should urge Ukraine to settle for peace as soon as possible (47%, up from 38% in July).
- Perceptions of who is winning have a great bearing on support for Kyiv.

Neither Ukraine nor Russia Seen as Having the Advantage

At the recent NATO summit of foreign ministers in Bucharest, NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg said Ukraine could expect further Russian attacks because [“Russia is failing on the battlefield.”](#) Ukrainian

counteroffensives put Moscow on the back foot in some areas of the country.

But Americans are not so sure that Russia is failing. The Chicago Council survey shows that as many Americans think Russia has the advantage in the current conflict as think Ukraine does (26% each). Democrats are more likely to say Ukraine has the advantage (32%, compared to 23% of Republicans and 22% of Independents). But an overall plurality (46%) believes that neither Ukraine nor Russia has the advantage.¹



There are some hints that media sources could affect these views. For example, 26 percent of Americans who trust Fox News the most for accurate information say Ukraine has the advantage, compared to relatively higher percentages of those who most trust MSNBC (48% say

¹ These results contradict [University of Maryland](#) October survey results that found 48 percent of Americans thought Russia was failing. When asked about Ukraine, 43 percent responded that Ukraine was succeeding. But neither question on that poll included a third option, that neither side has the advantage, like the middle option in the Council survey.

Ukraine has the advantage), NBC (36%), public television (33%), and CNN (32%).²

Perceptions of who is winning versus losing are important because they have a bearing on support for various policies. In an October [University of Maryland](#) poll, Americans who thought Ukraine was succeeding and Russia was losing were more willing to pay higher energy prices and tolerate increased inflation. There are similar relationships in the Council survey, as the following analysis illustrates.

Public Supports Existing US Policies on Ukraine

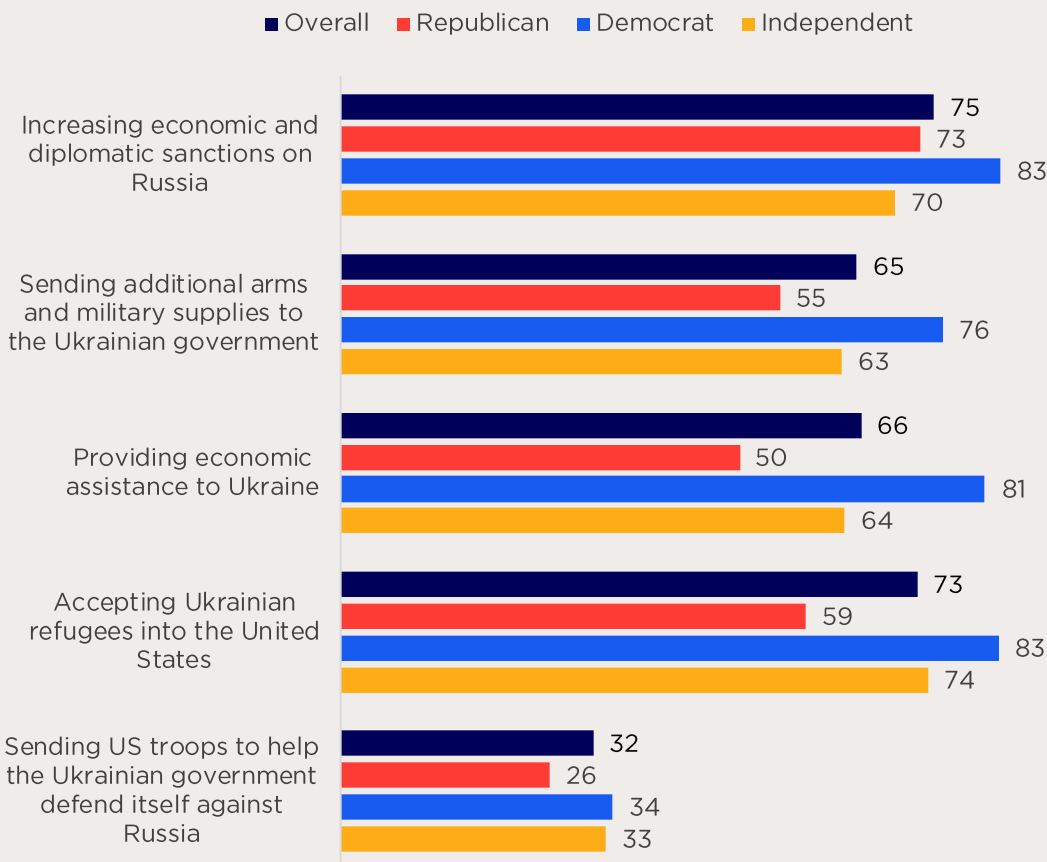
In addition to the \$400 million defense package, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced [\\$53 million in assistance](#) to support Ukraine's electrical system to help it recover from Russia's bombardment of the country's energy grid. Americans favor continued assistance to Ukraine, with majority support for supplying the country with arms (65%) and economic aid (66%), accepting its refugees (73%), and sanctioning Russia (75%).

But, Republican support for aid to Ukraine has declined notably over the course of the year. A smaller majority of Republicans now support the United States giving military aid (55%, down from 68% in July and 80% in March) and economic assistance (50%, down from 64% in July and 74% in March). Meanwhile, Democratic and Independent support for these policies has shown relatively little decline since March. One-third of Americans overall support sending US troops to Ukraine (32%, down from 38% in July)(see Appendix Figures A-E).

² The subsample sizes for these results about trust in media are fairly small. Therefore, these results are merely suggestive of patterns in the data.

US Policy on Ukraine-Russia

In response to the situation involving Russia and Ukraine would you support or oppose the United States: (% support)



November 18-20, 2022 | n=1,030

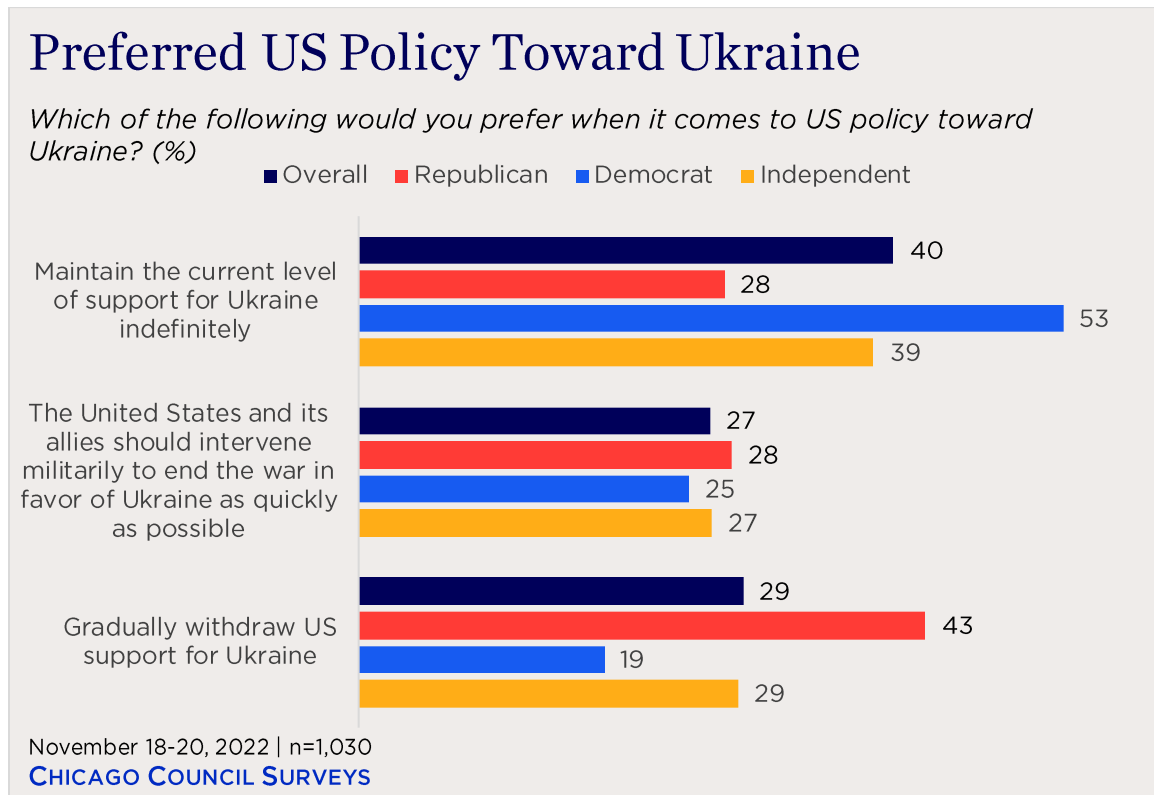
CHICAGO COUNCIL SURVEYS

Those who sense that Ukraine has the advantage in the war support each of these policies at above-average levels, with the exception of sending US troops to help Ukraine defend itself. Those who sense that Russia has the advantage are slightly more likely (36%) to support sending troops than those who think Ukraine (30%) or neither side (32%) has the edge in the conflict.

Americans Divide Along Party Lines on Approach to Ukraine Conflict

The Chicago Council survey tested American tolerance for continued support for Ukraine in various questions. When asked whether the United States should support Ukraine at current levels indefinitely, intervene militarily to decisively end the war, or gradually withdraw US

support for Ukraine, a plurality prefers to continue the current levels of support indefinitely (40%). This is also the preferred approach for a narrow majority of Democrats (53%) and a plurality of Independents (39%). Republicans tend to prefer to gradually withdraw US support (43%).

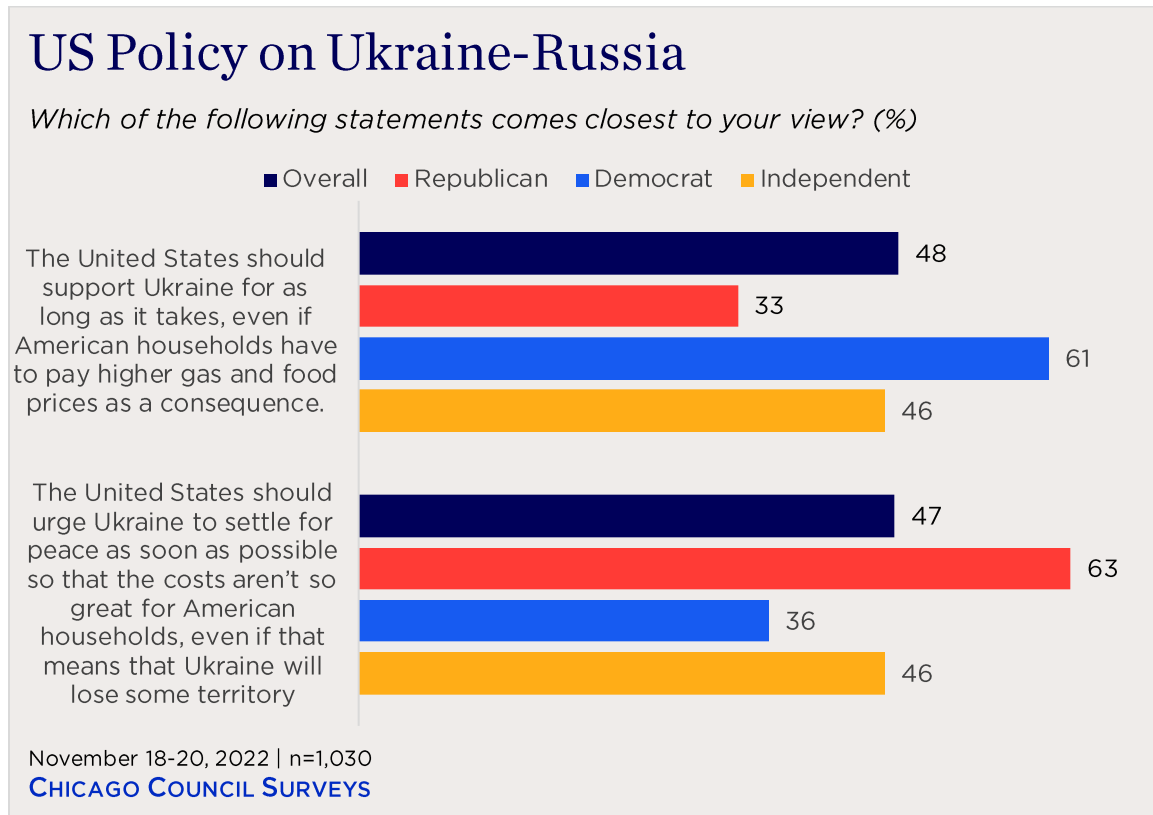


Besides partisan identification, perceptions on who is thought to be winning the war are a key factor in these responses. A majority of those who think Ukraine has the advantage say the United States should continue the current level of assistance indefinitely (56%). On the other hand, those who think Russia has the advantage are more likely than others to prefer that the United States gradually withdraw its support for Ukraine (36%) or intervene militarily to bring the war to an end (33%).

Fewer Say United States Should Support Ukraine “As Long As It Takes”

A separate question asked in July and November finds that Americans are now divided over whether the United States should support Ukraine for as long as it takes or urge Kyiv to settle for peace. Half now (48%)—

compared to 58 percent in July—say the United States should support Ukraine for as long as it takes, even if American households have to pay higher gas and food prices as a consequence. A similar proportion, 47 percent—up from 38 percent in July—say the United States should urge Ukraine to settle for peace as soon as possible so the costs aren't so great for American households, even if that means Ukraine will lose some territory (Appendix Figure F).



Last July, the data revealed sharp partisan divisions on this question, with Republicans more split than Democrats in support (see Appendix Figure G). In the November reading, six in 10 Democrats (61%) continue to favor supporting Ukraine even at cost to the United States, down from seven in 10 last July (69%). Republican opinion, however, has shifted more dramatically. Today, only a third of Republicans (33%) say the United States should back Ukraine for as long as it takes, down from 50 percent this summer. Instead, a majority of Republicans favor pushing Ukraine to settle for peace to reduce costs to American households (63%, up from 46% in July 2022).

Corroborating the patterns above, a large majority of those who think Ukraine has the advantage in the current conflict say the United States should support Ukraine for as long as it takes (71% vs. 48% overall). By contrast, a majority of those who think Russia has the advantage think the United States should pressure Ukraine to settle for peace as soon as possible (60% vs. 47% overall).

Conclusion

While Americans are divided on supporting Ukraine for as long as it takes, support for the current US policies of assisting Kyiv economically and militarily is still solid. The influence of perceptions of which side is being successful on the battlefield illustrates the important role that media spin can play in affecting public views about the situation on the ground and, in turn, on continued backing for US support to Ukraine.

Methodology

This analysis is based on data from a survey conducted November 18-20, 2022, by Ipsos using its large-scale nationwide online research panel, KnowledgePanel, among a weighted national sample of 1,030 adults 18 or older living in all 50 US states and the District of Columbia. The margin of sampling error for the full sample is +/- 3.1 percentage points. The margin of error is higher for partisan subgroups or for partial-sample items.

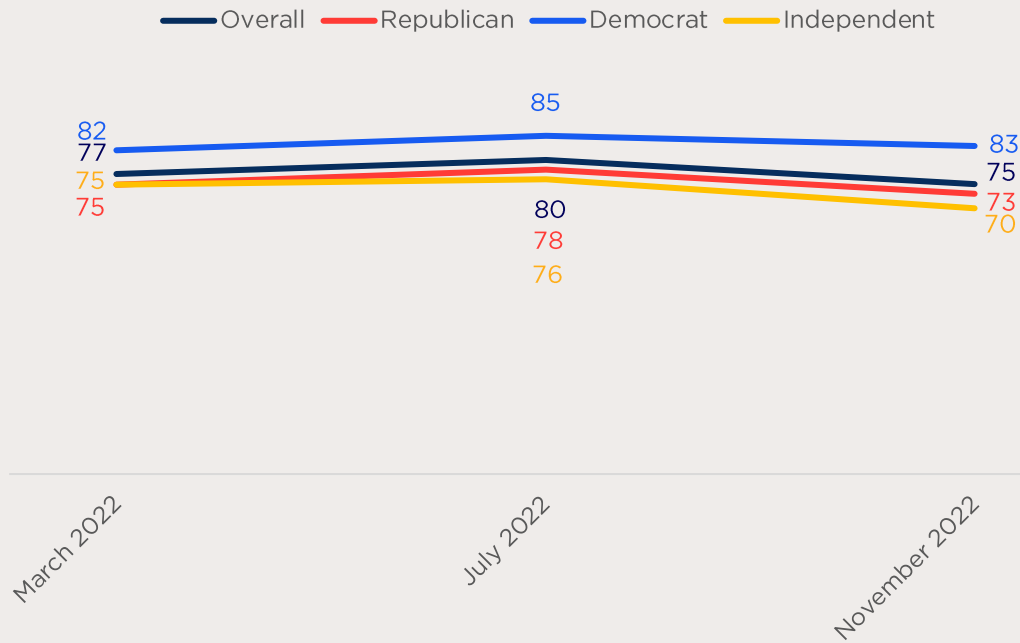
Partisan identification is based on how respondents answered a standard partisan self-identification question: “Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or something else?”

This work is made possible by the generous support of the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

Appendix

Figure A. Support for Sanctions on Russia

In response to the situation involving Russia and Ukraine would you support or oppose the United States: Increasing economic and diplomatic sanctions on Russia (% support)

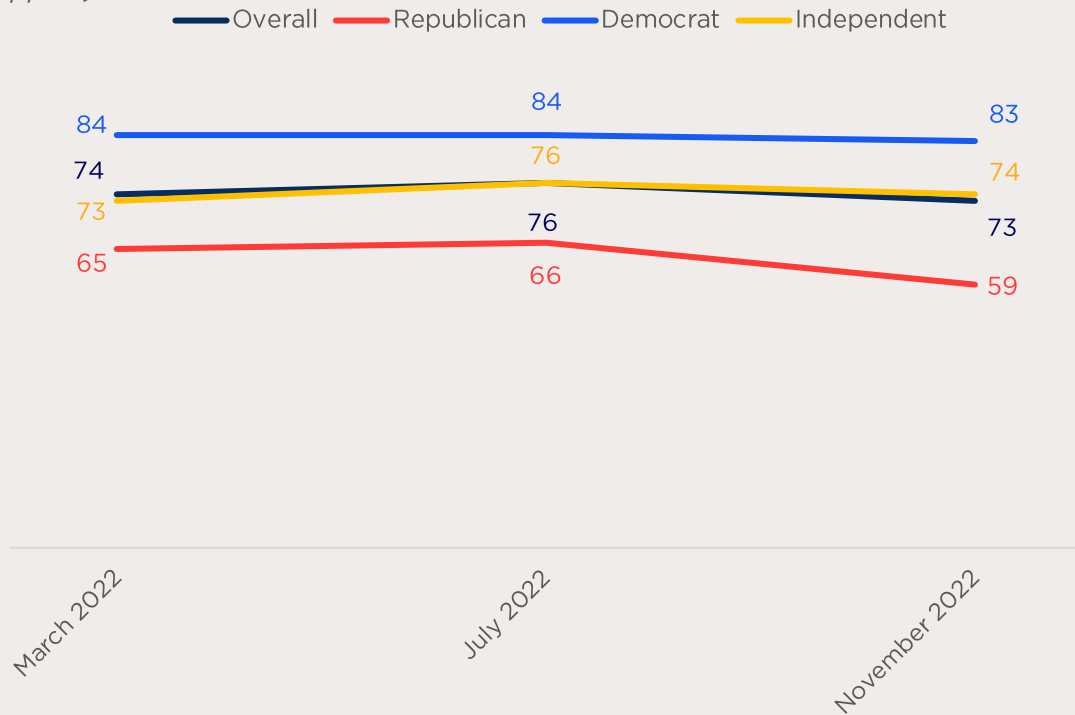


November 18-20, 2022 | n=1,030

CHICAGO COUNCIL SURVEYS

Figure B. Support for Accepting Ukrainian Refugees

In response to the situation involving Russia and Ukraine would you support or oppose the United States: Accepting Ukrainian refugees into the United States (% support)

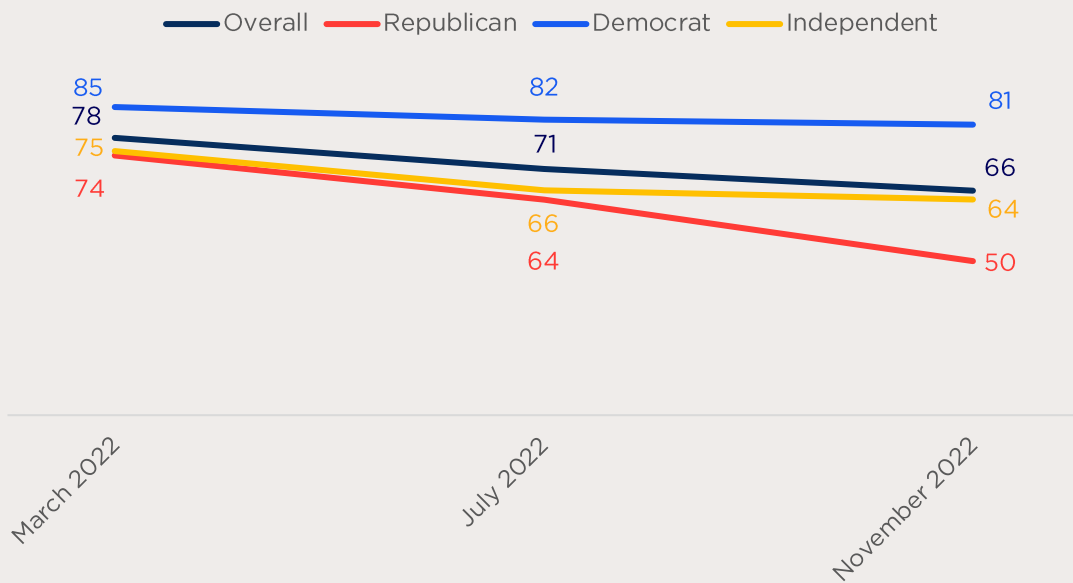


November 18-20, 2022 | n=1,030

CHICAGO COUNCIL SURVEYS

Figure C. Support for Economic Assistance to Ukraine

In response to the situation involving Russia and Ukraine would you support or oppose the United States: Providing economic assistance to Ukraine (% support)

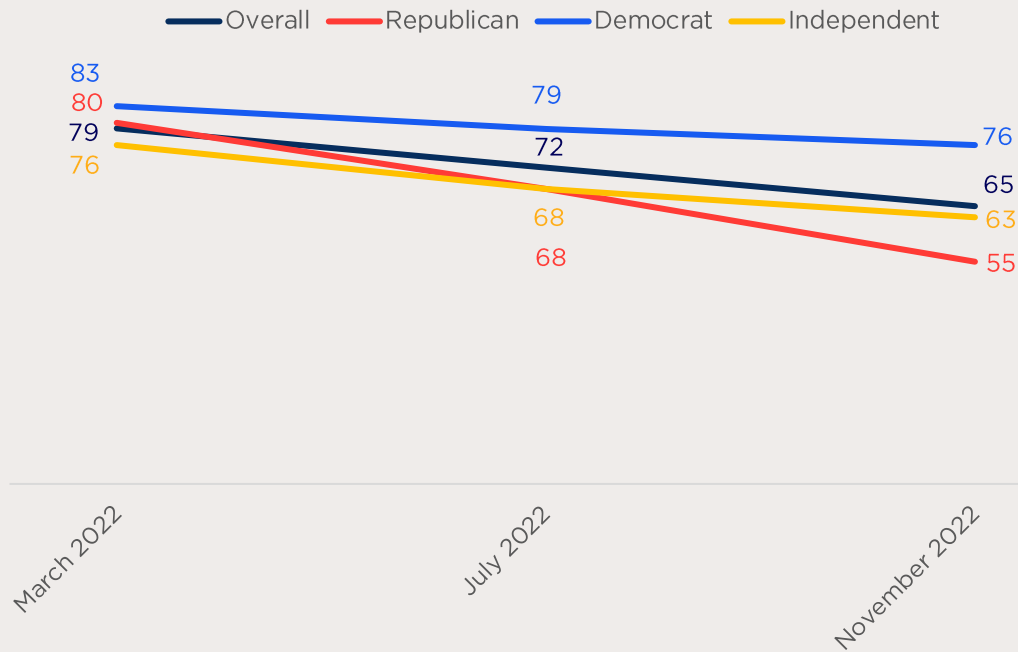


November 18-20, 2022 | n=1,030

CHICAGO COUNCIL SURVEYS

Figure D. Support for Sending Arms to Ukraine

In response to the situation involving Russia and Ukraine would you support or oppose the United States: Sending additional arms and military supplies to the Ukrainian government (% support)

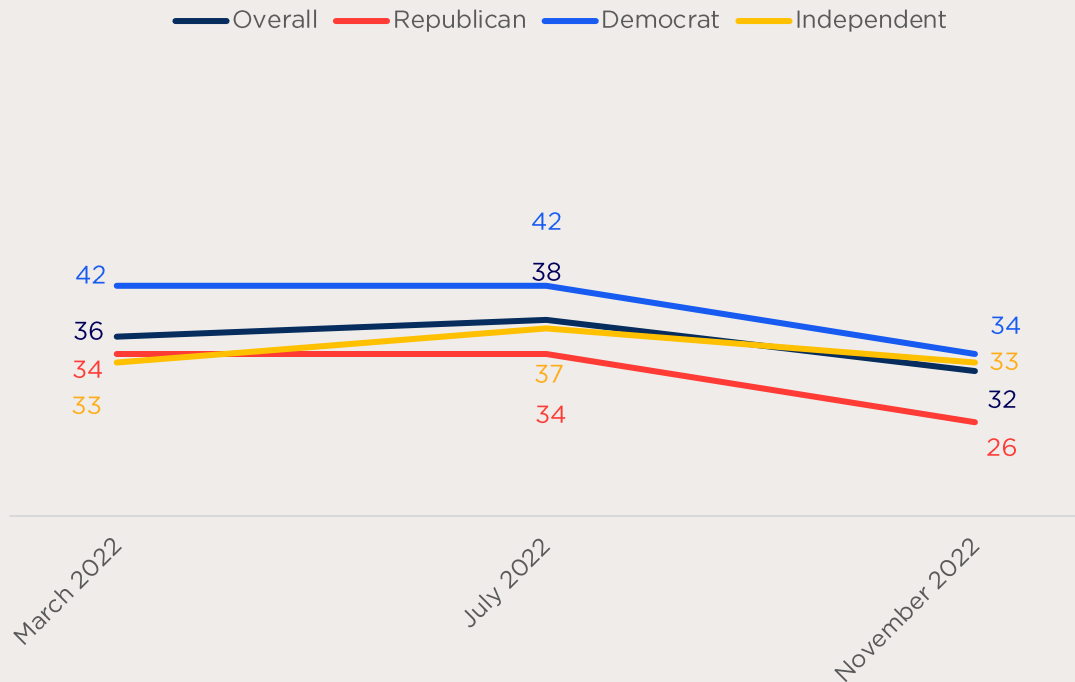


November 18-20, 2022 | n=1,030

CHICAGO COUNCIL SURVEYS

Figure E. Support for Sending US Troops to Ukraine

In response to the situation involving Russia and Ukraine would you support or oppose the United States: Sending US troops to Ukraine to help the Ukrainian government defend itself against Russia (% support)

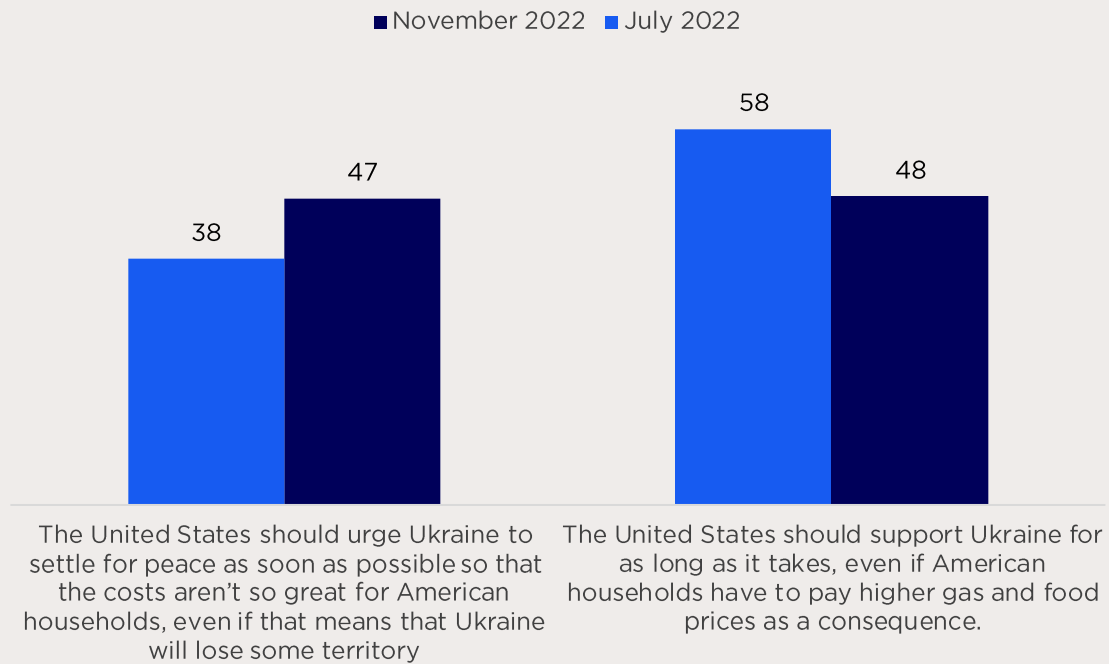


November 18-20, 2022 | n=1,030

CHICAGO COUNCIL SURVEYS

Figure F. US Policy on Ukraine-Russia

Which of the following statements comes closest to your view? (%)

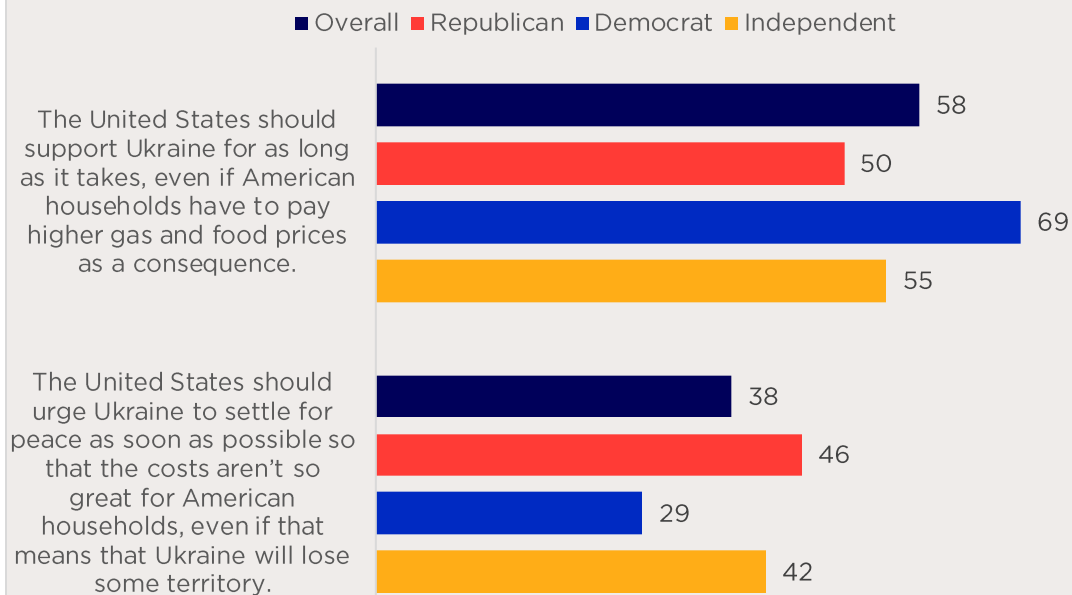


November 18-20, 2022 | n=1,030

CHICAGO COUNCIL SURVEYS

Figure G. Willingness to Endure Costs for Ukraine

Which of the following comes closest to your view: (%)



July 15-August 1, 2022 | n = 3,106

CHICAGO COUNCIL SURVEYS

DECEMBER 2022

Many Russians Support Ukraine Peace Talks but Not Letting Territory Go



By Dina Smeltz, Emily Sullivan, Denis Volkov, and Stepan Goncharov

A just-completed November 24–30 Chicago Council-Levada Center survey in Russia finds that on the surface, a majority of Russians still support Russia’s “special military operation” in Ukraine. But a growing percentage of Russians are unsure of the reason for the invasion, and a sizable portion think Moscow should open up peace negotiations rather than continue fighting.

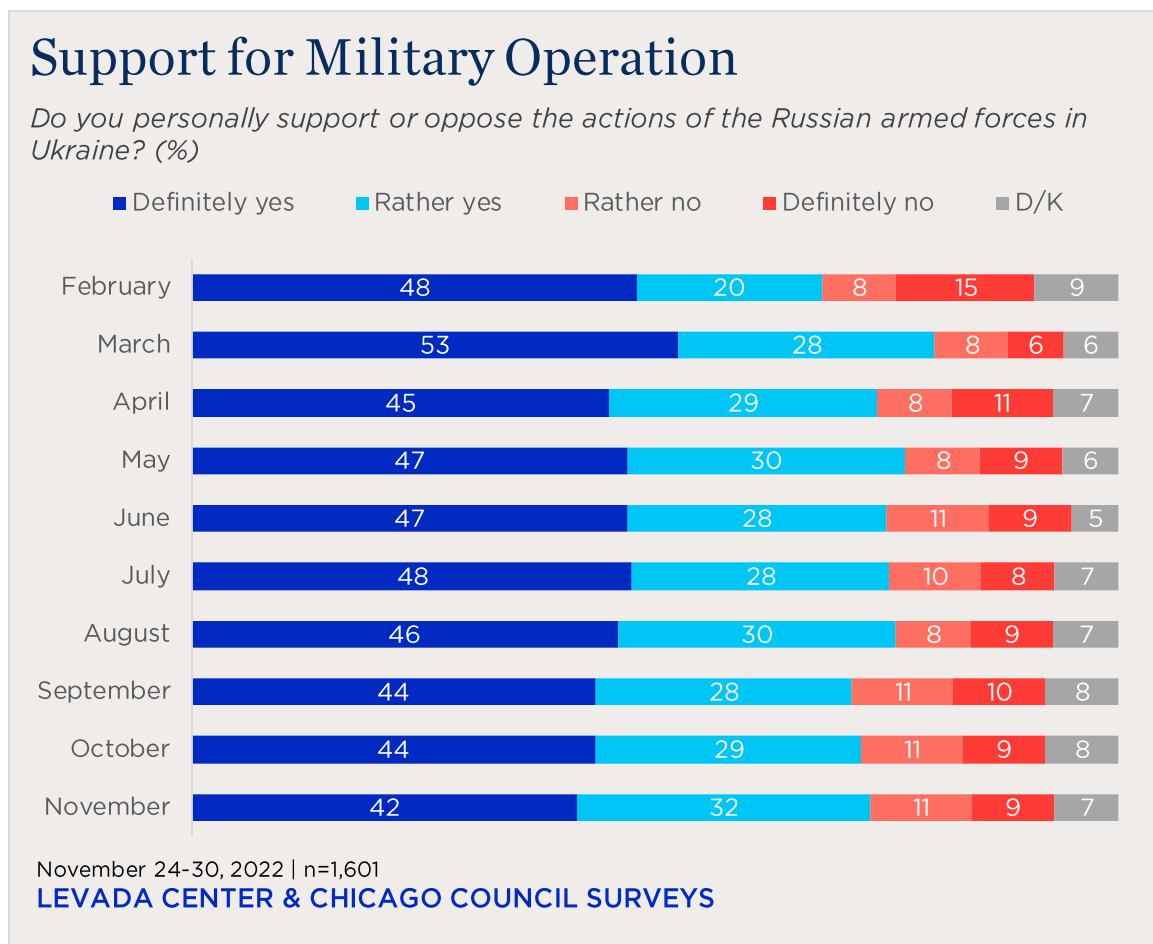
Key Findings

- Three-quarters of Russians actively or passively support the Russian military operation in Ukraine (74%).
- But an increasing percentage are unsure of the reasons behind the ongoing military action and what benefits it might bring to the country.
- A narrow majority of 53 percent of Russians think the operation in Ukraine has been successful, compared to 31 percent who say it has been unsuccessful.
- By a 5 to 4 ratio, Russians think their government should start peace negotiations (53% vs. 41%) over continuing the special military operation.
- When Russians are reminded of the costs associated with the war, they also express a preference for negotiations. Russians prefer peace negotiations over continued fighting that would bring the deaths of more Russian soldiers (62% vs. 31%) or higher prices for Russian households (53% vs. 41%).
- Despite some support for negotiations, the territorial concessions that Russia would likely be asked to make are unpopular. Solid majorities say it is unacceptable for Russia to return Crimea (78%) or the occupied Donbas region to Ukraine (66%).

Majority Continue to Support “Special Military Operation”

Four in 10 (42%) “definitely support” the actions of the Russian armed forces in Ukraine, and an additional 32 percent somewhat support it. These figures are broadly in line with polling conducted over the last

few months, though strong support for the military operation¹ has waned since it began (from 53% in March to 42% in November).



The Kremlin's tight control over traditional media sources continues to influence Russian support toward the military operation, especially among those who most trust television news, major print sources, and the radio. Russians who trust these news sources are more likely to express strong support for the war than those who turn to more-independent outlets.²

¹ Because of the Russian government restrictions on the use of [certain terms](#) to describe the Russian military action in Ukraine, the joint survey used either "[special] military operation" or "military action" in these questions. To be true to the results, we use that language throughout this report.

² A separate question (not included in this report) shows that television is the most trusted news source (46%), followed by social media (19%), internet websites (17%), Telegram channels (14%), friends and

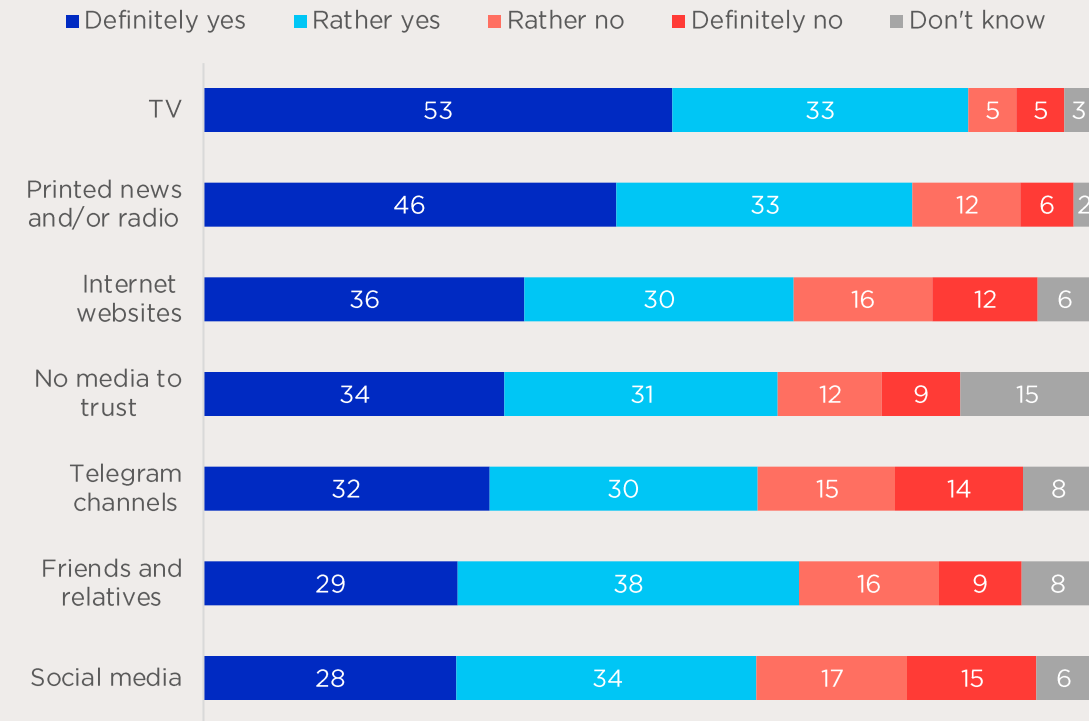
A slim majority of those who trust television news (53%) and 45 percent each of those who trust printed news and radio strongly back the military operation. Strong support is lower among those who trust internet news sites and significantly lower among those who trust Telegram channels, friends and relatives, and social media.

Another way that people in Russia seek to access independent media is through virtual private networks (VPNs). Asked in a separate question from the other media sources, only 27 percent of the public overall uses a VPN. Those who use a VPN to access the internet are significantly less likely to express strong support for the military operation (28%) than those who use the internet without a VPN (46% strong support), or those who do not use the internet at all (49% strong support). This correlation is consistent with data from the [Council-Levada March 2022 survey](#), which also found lower support for the conflict among independent media users.

relatives (11%), radio (8%), and printed news (5%). Seventeen percent of respondents say there is no media to trust (17%). Respondents were able to select multiple news sources they trust.

Support for Military Action by Media Source Trusted Most

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



November 24-30, 2022 | n=1,601

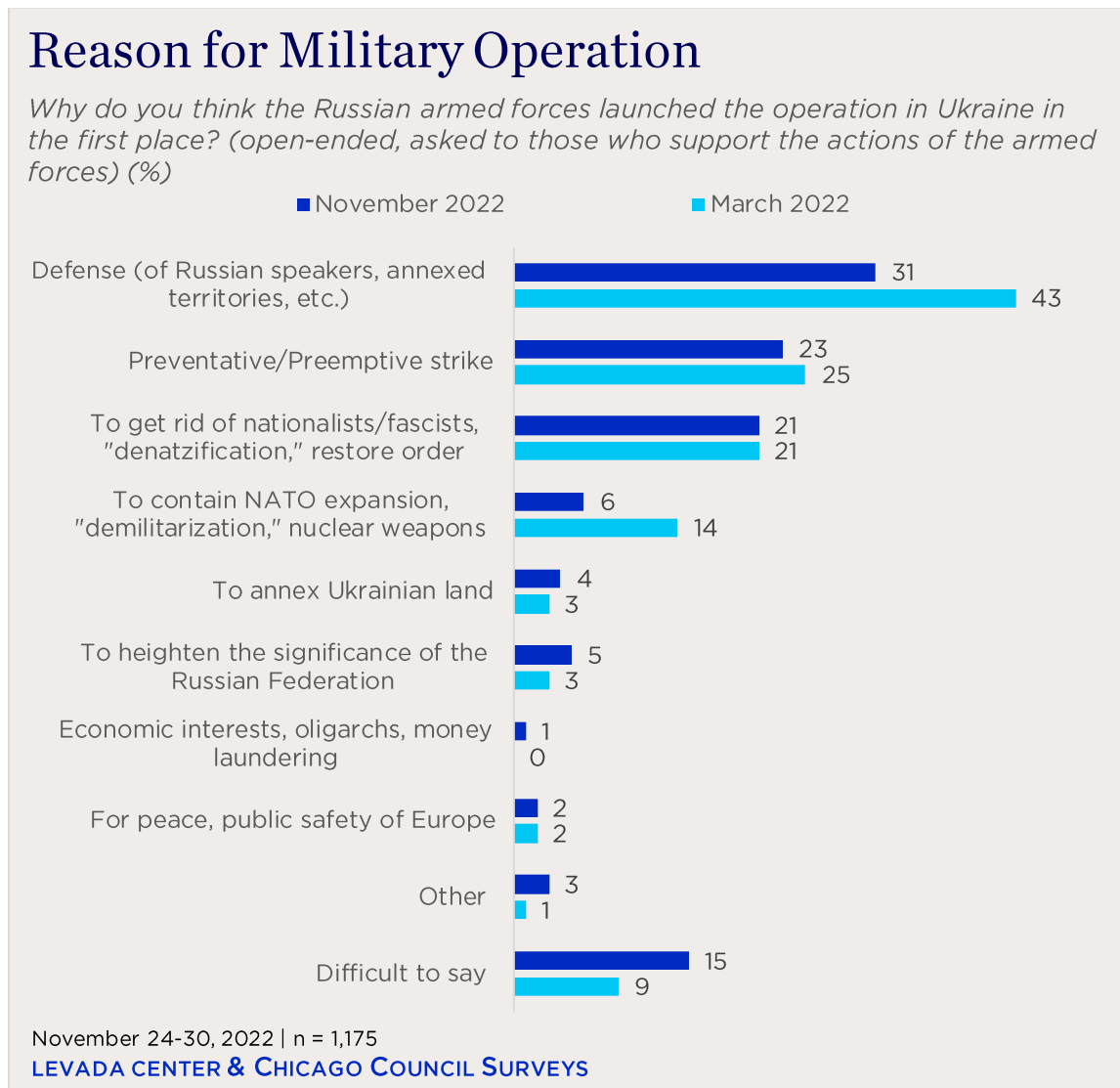
LEVADA CENTER & CHICAGO COUNCIL SURVEYS

Pride Versus Anxiety

Different emotions are attached to the strong supporters (“definitely yes”) versus the more passive supporters (“rather yes”) of the war. Strong supporters are more likely to express pride when reflecting on the military action (64% vs. 44% passive supporters). Passive supporters are more divided between those who express pride (44%) and those who express anxiety, horror, or fear (37% of passive supporters vs. 25% of strong supporters). (Appendix Figure A)

Increasing Percentage Unsure about Operation Objectives

When asked in an open-ended question what the primary reason is for the Russian military operation, the relative rankings are largely unchanged from last March. But a larger percentage now (15%) than in March (9%) responded that it is “difficult to say” or that they don’t know the main purpose of the operation.

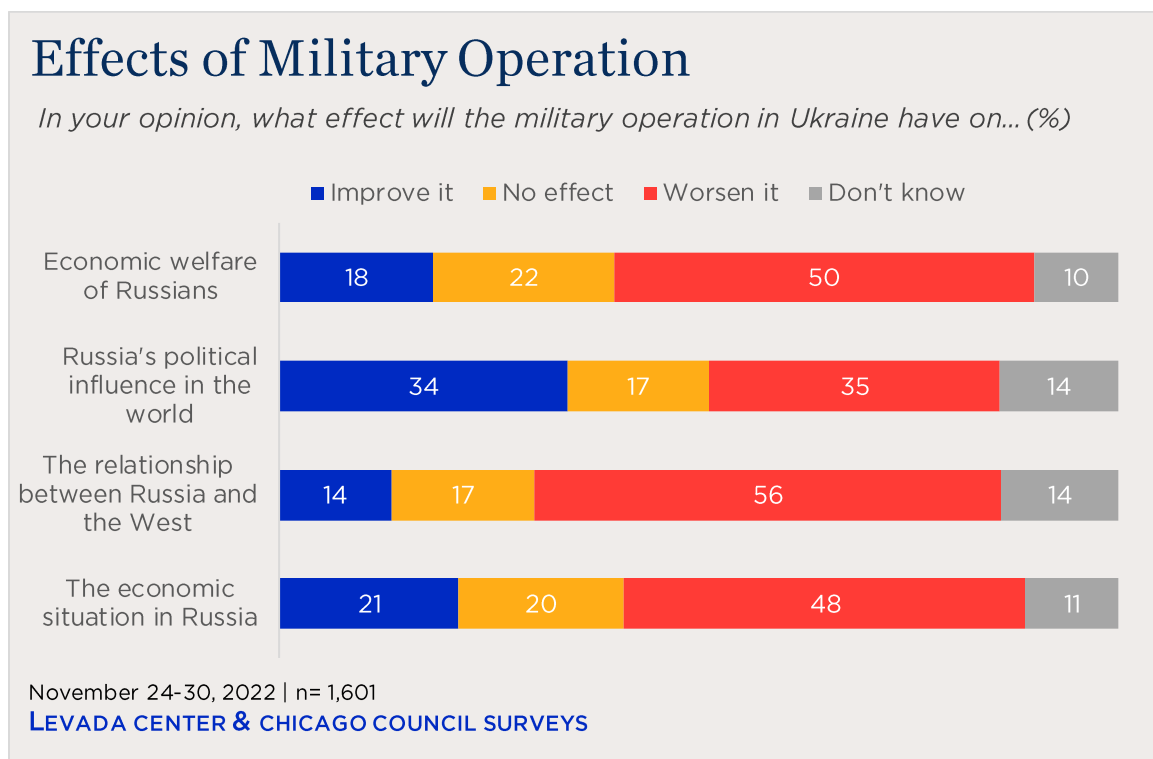


Few Russians say the primary reason behind the military operation is to annex Ukraine or part of Ukraine (4%). For the most part, the Russian public accepts the line put forth by the Kremlin that the military operation aims to protect the Russian-speaking population in Ukraine including in the Donbas (31%), prevent an external attack on Russia

(23%), or to rid Ukraine of “nationalists,” “Nazis,” and “fascists” (21%). Only 6 percent believe it is mainly to contain NATO expansion.

Uncertainty about Benefits of the Military Action

While support still seems to be fairly solid at first glance, there are some signs Russians are beginning to question what benefits the military operation will bring. A majority (56%) think the action will worsen Russia’s relations with the West, though previous polling suggests that even if this is the case, it is not much of a concern for everyday Russians. More say it will worsen than improve the economic welfare of Russians and the economic situation in the country. And as many say it will worsen as say it will improve Russia’s political influence in the world.



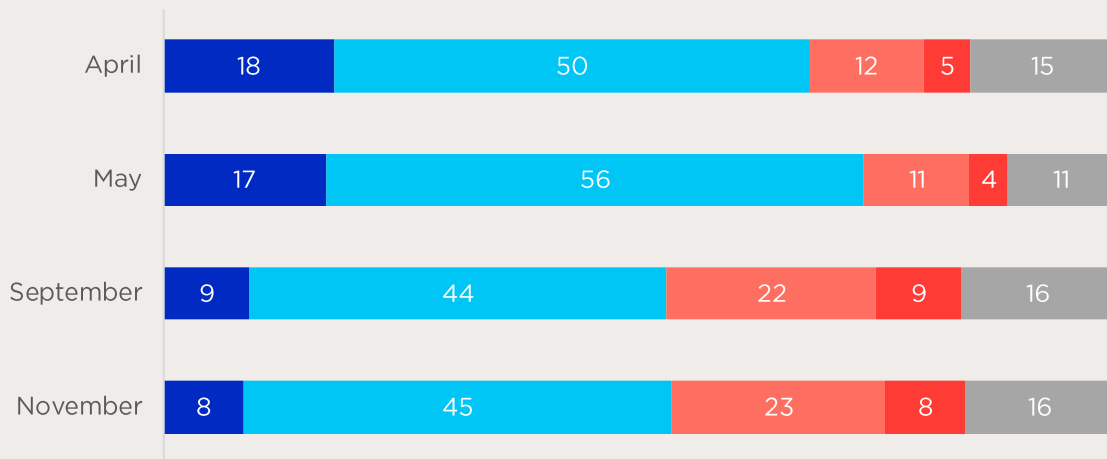
Only a Narrow Majority Think Military Operation Has Been Successful

While overall support is still at majority levels, confidence in the success of the operation is less widespread. A slim majority of 53 percent think the operation in Ukraine has been successful compared to 31 percent who say it has been unsuccessful. An additional 16 percent are unsure.

Perceived Success of SMO

How successful is the special military operation in Ukraine? (%)

■ Very successful ■ Rather successful ■ Rather unsuccessful ■ Very unsuccessful ■ Don't know



November 24-30, 2022 | n=1,601

LEVADA CENTER & CHICAGO COUNCIL SURVEYS

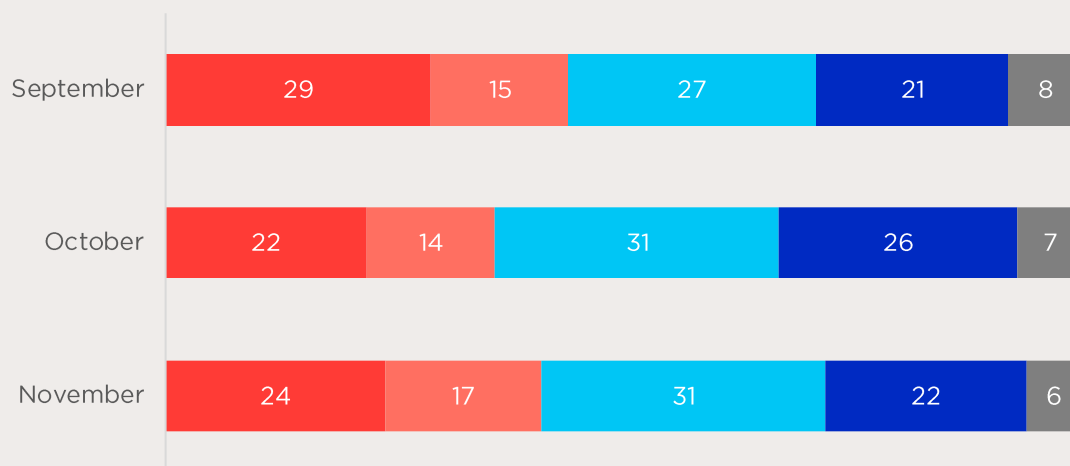
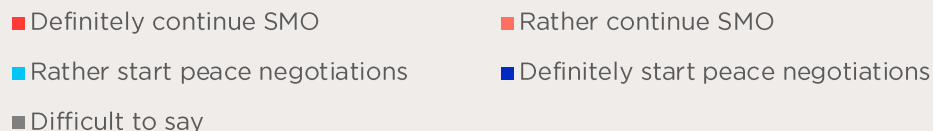
A majority of those who think the operation has been successful support continuing the effort (51% vs. 46% negotiate), but most of those who think the operation has been unsuccessful would rather support peace negotiations (65% vs. 31% continue operation). Majorities of both the groups that see the operation as successful and unsuccessful say they support the operation, although support is stronger among those who think Russia is succeeding.

Many Russians Seem Ready to Move toward Negotiations. . .

By a 5 to 4 ratio, Russians think their government should start peace negotiations (53%) over continuing the special military operation (41%).

Views on Beginning Negotiations

Do you think it's necessary to continue military actions or start negotiations? (%)



November 24-30, 2022 | n=1,601

LEVADA CENTER & CHICAGO COUNCIL SURVEYS

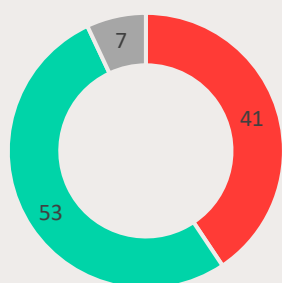
When specific costs of war are included in the question—inflated prices and the risk to soldiers' lives—an even higher percentage choose negotiation over continued military action. By a 5 to 4 ratio, more Russians choose the path of peace negotiation so that “costs aren’t as great for Russian households” versus continuing the military operation even if Russian households would have to endure higher prices due to sanctions. The ratio increases to 6 to 3 in favor of peace negotiations when the question frames negotiations as “to avoid the loss of life of more Russian soldiers.”

Willingness to Endure Costs for Special Military Operation

Which of the following statements is closest to your view?(%)

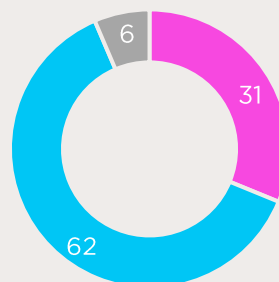
Higher Prices

- Russia should continue the special operation for as long as it takes even if this means Russian households will have to pay higher prices due to sanctions
- Russia should seek to enter peace negotiations as soon as possible so the costs aren't as great for Russian households
- Don't know



Russian Soldiers

- Russia should continue the special operation for as long as it takes, even if this means more Russian soldiers will be mobilized and risk their lives
- Russia should seek to enter peace negotiations as soon as possible to avoid the loss of life of more Russian soldiers
- Don't know



November 24-30, 2022 | n= 779 each

LEVADA CENTER & CHICAGO COUNCIL SURVEYS

...But Are Opposed to Territorial Concessions

While there seems to be some appetite for negotiations to end the conflict—whether it is to cement Russia's current territorial gains on the battlefield or to avoid another mobilization or protracted war—it's unclear what Russians would be willing to concede. Solid majorities of Russians say it is unacceptable to return Crimea (78%) or the occupied Donbas region (66%) to Ukraine.

Eight in 10 say it is at least acceptable that Ukraine resumes shipping grain and other products to other countries (78%), and nearly all Russians support a reciprocal POW exchange (94%) and a cease-fire (88%). And developments in Russia's favor are considered acceptable if

not preferred, including Ukraine declaring neutrality and not joining NATO (76%) and assurances for the security of Russians and Russian speakers in Ukraine (90%). (Appendix Figure B)

Recent polling in Ukraine show Ukrainians are also unwilling to give up the occupied areas to Russia. In a [September 2022 Kyiv International Institute of Sociology\(KIIS\) survey](#), nearly nine in 10 Ukrainians said that under no circumstances should Ukraine give up territories to Russia, even if this meant prolonging the war (87%, up from 82% in May 2022). These results, combined with Russian refusal to cede their military gains, underscore the challenge of territorial control for any negotiations. In May, KIIS polling found that a plurality of Ukrainians was willing to accept security guarantees from key NATO members in place of actual acceptance into the alliance. If that willingness among Ukrainians still holds, Ukraine's NATO aspirations could be one potential area of compromise between the two countries. (Appendix Figure C)

Conclusion

Taken together, the data show that the majority support among Russians for the military operation in Ukraine is softer than it might seem at first glance. A sizable portion of the Russian public say they would be willing to end the military operation and move to peace negotiations. But it is unclear what meaningful concessions Russians would be willing to make to Ukrainians, aside from a cease-fire and prisoner exchanges.

Methodology

This survey was part of Levada's monthly omnibus survey. [Read the full methodology.](#)

For this particular wave of the Levada Center's monthly omnibus survey, the interviews were conducted between November 24–30, 2022 among a representative sample of all Russian urban and rural residents. The sample was comprised of 1601 people aged 18 or older in 137 municipalities of 50 regions of the Russian Federation. The survey was conducted as a personal interview in respondents' homes. The answer distribution is presented as percentages of the total number of participants along with data from previous surveys.

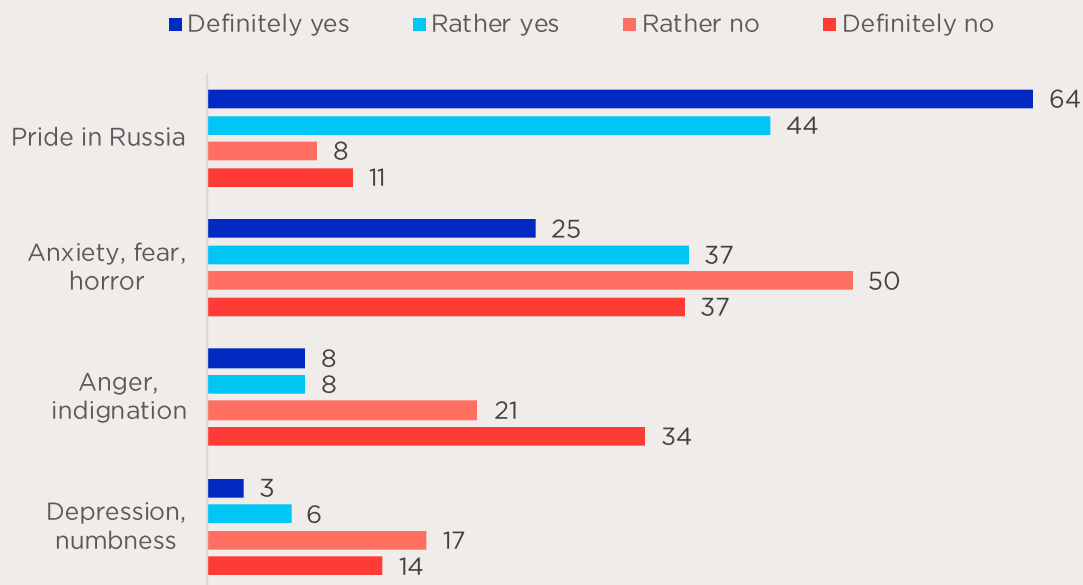
The statistical error of these studies for a sample of 1600 people (with a probability of 0.95) does not exceed:

- 3.4% for indicators around 50%
- 2.9% for indicators around 25%/75%
- 2.0% for indicators around 10%/90%
- 1.5% for indicators around 5%/95%

Appendix

Figure A. Feelings about Military Action by Support Level

Feelings caused by special military operation (open-ended %) among those who support or oppose the actions of the Russian military forces in Ukraine? (%)

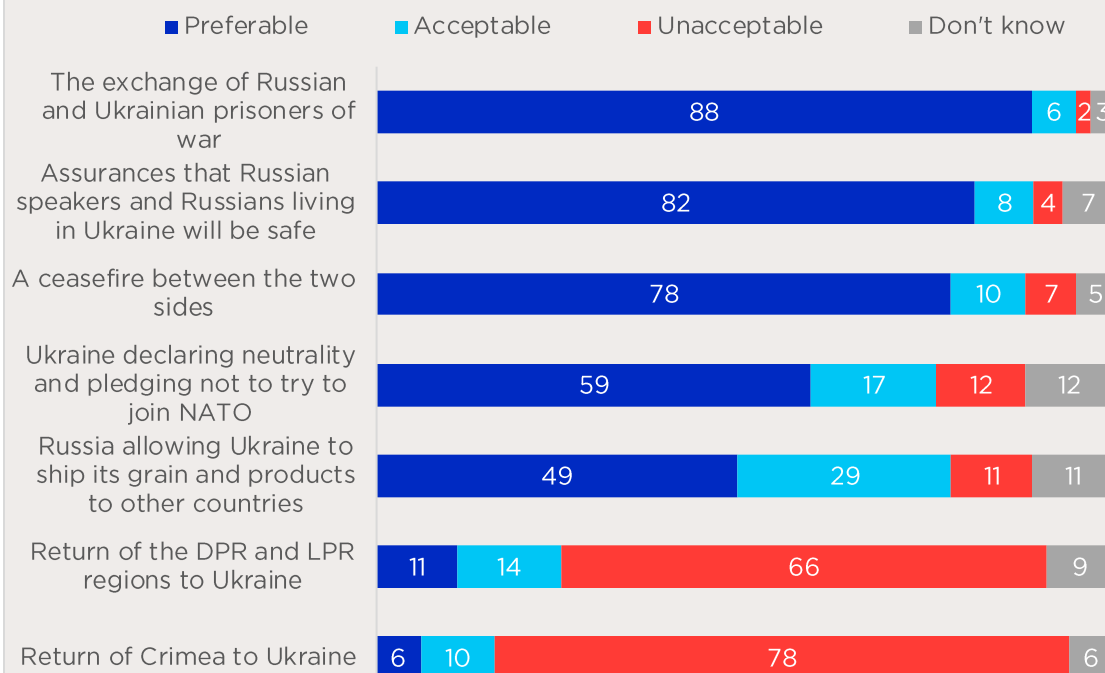


November 24-30, 2022 | n = 1,601

LEVADA CENTER & CHICAGO COUNCIL SURVEYS

Figure B. Conditions for Negotiated Settlement

To bring an end to the conflict in Ukraine, would you find the following conditions preferable, not preferable but acceptable, or unacceptable as part of a negotiated settlement? (%)



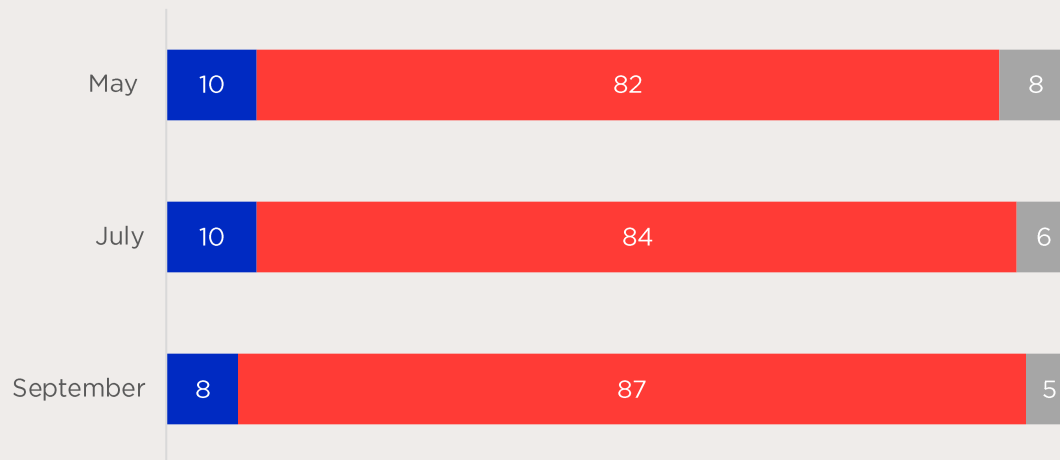
November 24-30, 2022 | n= 1,601

LEVADA CENTER & CHICAGO COUNCIL SURVEYS

Figure C. Ukrainian Willingness to Negotiate

With which of these statements regarding possible compromises to achieve peace with Russia do you agree to a greater extent? (%)

- In order to achieve peace and preserve independence as soon as possible, Ukraine can give up some of its territories
- Under no circumstances should Ukraine give up any of its territories, even if because of this the war will last longer and there will be threats to the preservation of independence
- Difficult to say



September 7-13, 2022 | n= 2,000

KYIV INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF SOCIOLOGY

JANUARY 2023

Few Russians Are Anxious about Western Sanctions



By Emily Sullivan, Dina Smeltz, Denis Volkov, and Stepan Goncharov

According to the [US State Department](#), the unprecedented Western sanctions against Russia have slowed down the Russian weapons industry, limited the flow of advanced technology into the country, and financially impacted oligarchs through restrictions on the import and export of luxury goods. For the US public, sanctions are also the policy response of choice to pressure Moscow. But sanctions may not be turning the tide of public opinion in Russia itself. A November 24–30 Chicago Council-Levada Center poll reveals that most Russians are unconcerned about sanctions and say they have not created serious economic problems for their households.

Key Findings

- Only about two in 10 Russians say the Western sanctions have caused serious problems for their household (18%). An additional 27 percent report that sanctions have created some problems but not serious ones. But a narrow majority of Russians say that sanctions have not created problems for them or their families (53%).
- Six in 10 Russians are somewhat (30%) or very unconcerned (30%) about Western political and economic sanctions on Russia, while only four in 10 are somewhat (20%) or very (19%) concerned.
- Russians who have faced problems as a result of sanctions are more likely than those who have not to say that the government should enter peace negotiations.
- But very few Russians volunteer that sanctions relief should be a top priority for future peace negotiations.

Most Russians Not Seriously Impacted by Sanctions

While Western sanctions against Russia are first and foremost targeted toward President Vladimir Putin and his inner circle; Russian government officials; executives in the financial, energy, and technology sectors; and the [defense industrial base](#), Western policymakers also hoped they would squeeze [Russia's economy and increase public disaffection toward their government](#). Russia's overall economy has [contracted](#) over the last year, but according to a large majority of Russians, sanctions have created no problems (53%) or only minor

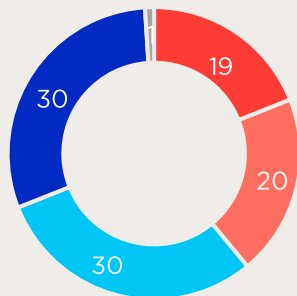
problems (27%) for their families. Only a fifth of Russians say they have faced quite serious (13%) or very serious (5%) problems because of the sanctions levied against the country.

Similarly, the majority of the Russian public remains quite (30%) or totally (30%) unconcerned about the current sanctions, with only two in 10 each saying they are very or quite concerned. Levada polling further shows that among those who have experienced problems as a result of the sanctions, the [main issues](#) have been price increases (32%), the disappearance of certain goods or brands from store shelves (26%), and difficulties traveling (11%).

Attitudes Toward Sanctions

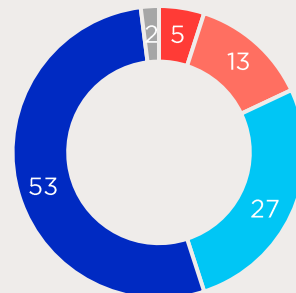
Are you concerned by Western political and economic sanctions on Russia? (%)

- Very concerned
- Quite concerned
- Not too concerned
- Totally not concerned
- Difficult to say



Did these sanctions create problems for you and your family? (%)

- Yes, very serious
- Yes, quite serious
- No, did not create serious problems
- No, did not create any problems
- Difficult to say

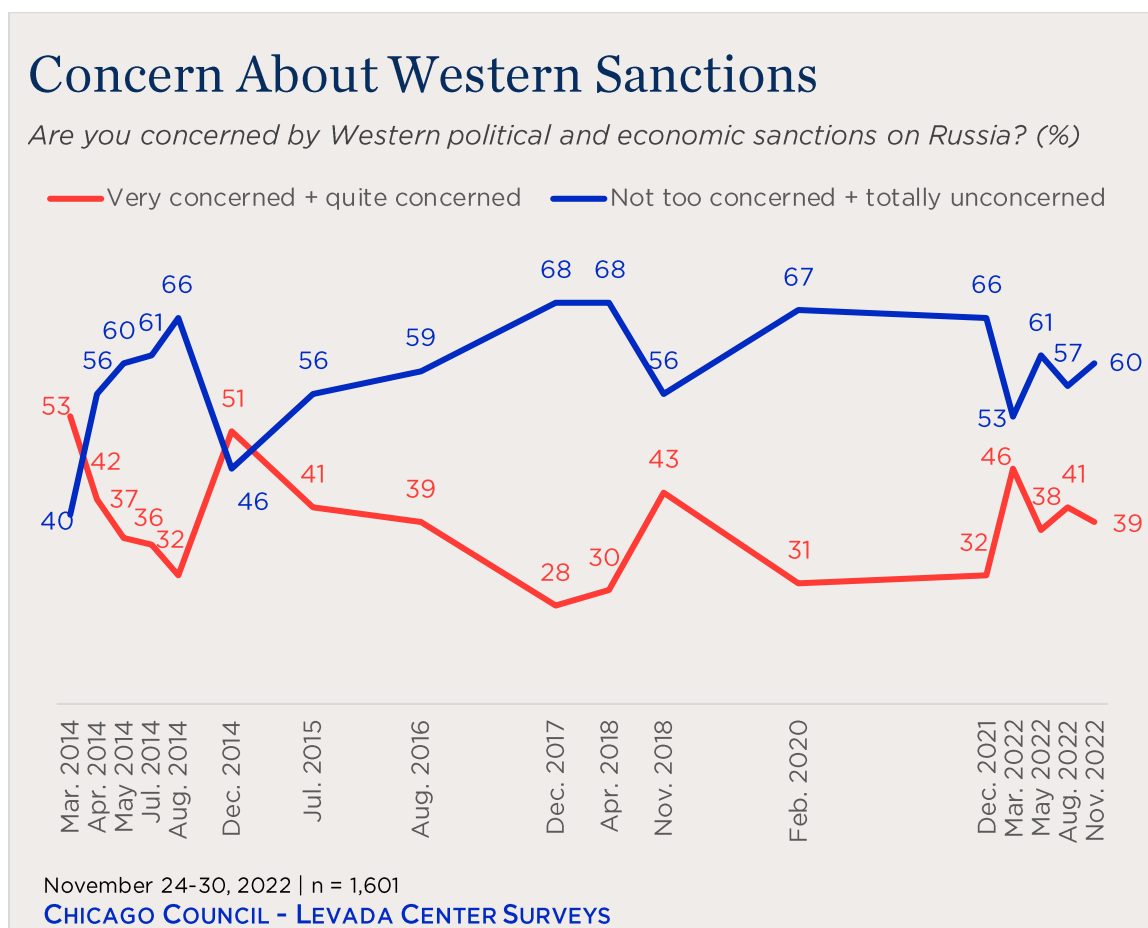


November 24-30, 2022 | n= 1,601

LEVADA CENTER & CHICAGO COUNCIL SURVEYS

This relatively low level of concern is consistent with how Russians have reacted to sanctions throughout this year as well as during past periods of heightened tension between Russia and the West. Concern about sanctions spiked in March 2022, with 46 percent of the public saying they were very (19%) or quite (27%) concerned about the sanctions at that time (see figure). This elevated concern was likely due to a spike in prices in Russia just after sanctions were imposed, but prices have since declined along with the public's stated level of concern.

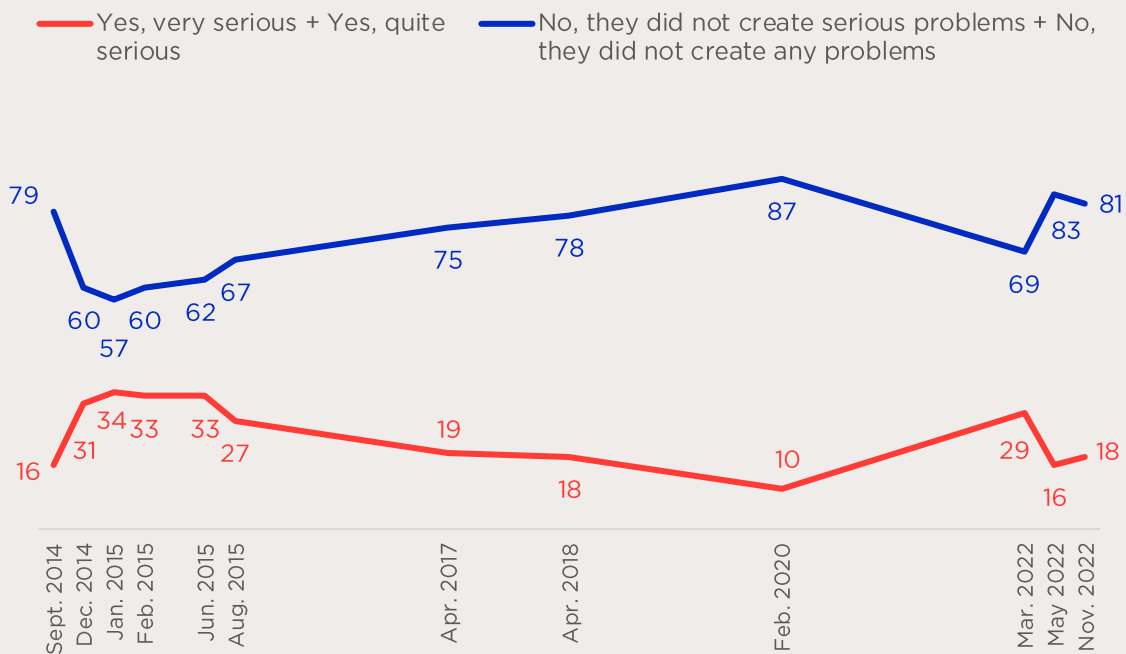
In 2014 when the United States and its partners imposed sanctions on Russia in response to the Kremlin's annexation of Crimea, the Russian public was similarly undaunted by Western sanctions. Only once, in December 2014, has the public been more concerned (51%) than not (46%) about the impacts of these policies.



When it comes to sanctions creating problems for everyday Russians, no more than a third of Russians (apart from 34% in January 2015) has ever expressed that sanctions were creating very or quite serious problems for their families. And despite the unparalleled nature of the West's 2022 sanctions, fewer Russians have faced sanctions-related problems this year than did during the 2014-15 period.

Problems Created by Sanctions

Did these sanctions create problems for you and your family? (%)



November 24-30, 2022 | n = 1,601

CHICAGO COUNCIL - LEVADA CENTER SURVEYS

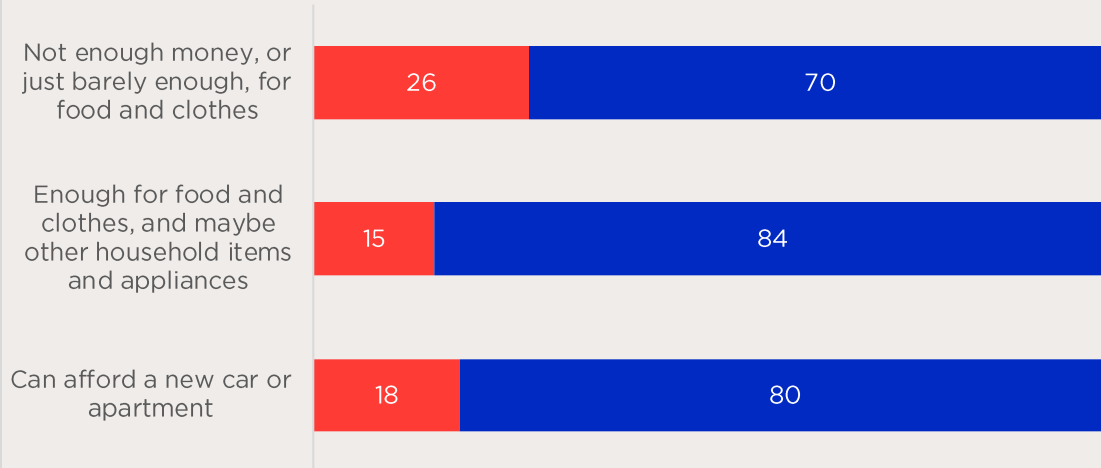
But Who Is Being Impacted?

While the majority of the population remains unconcerned about sanctions, some Russians are feeling more of a pinch than others. One group that has been impacted is poorer Russians because they do not have the flexibility in their budgets to respond to price increases. Russians with tighter financial circumstances are more likely to report having faced serious problems as a result of the sanctions. A quarter of Russians who do not have enough money for food, or just barely enough, have faced very or quite serious problems (26%) because of the sanctions. That compares to 16 percent of those who can afford food and clothes, but not much more, and 14 percent of wealthier Russians who could afford to buy something like a new large appliance, car, or apartment. Also, Levada Center analyses show that poorer Russians are typically more critical of government policies and how state institutions perform. Russians with low incomes may tend to think that the state deals badly with economic issues in general.

Problems Created by Sanctions

Did these sanctions create problems for you and your family? (%)

■ Yes, very serious + Yes, quite serious ■ No, they did not create serious problems + No, they did not create any problems



November 24-30, 2022 | n=1,601

LEVADA CENTER & CHICAGO COUNCIL SURVEYS

Sanctions also impact the Russian public by limiting availability of Western goods and travel opportunities. This tends to affect well-off Russians and those living in Moscow and other big cities who have more geographic and financial access to such amenities, and are therefore more likely to suffer as these things are restricted within Russia. And it may help explain why even though the wealthiest Russians are much less likely to say they have faced serious problems as a result of sanctions, they show a similar level of concern about sanctions compared to other groups. About four in 10 Russians in all groups—those who can afford only food (40%), food and clothes (41%), and large consumer goods (35%)—are very or quite concerned about sanctions.

There is also some evidence that people who are already more sympathetic to the West and critical of the Russian government and military operation are more likely to face problems because of the sanctions. This is evidenced by the fact that those who view the United States favorably, do not support the military operation, or think Russia is on the wrong track as a country are more likely to report facing

problems as a result of sanctions than those who view the United States unfavorably or those who approve of Russia's current trajectory.¹ Therefore, concern about the sanctions could be a part of a critical political position toward the government. It is unlikely that a person can assess the sanctions' effects independently from the general attitudes to the conflict in Ukraine and to the Russian government.

Negotiations

One potential goal of sanctions is to motivate the public in the target country to pressure their government to change course. While Western countries have not explicitly stated this as a goal of the current sanctions, there is a correlation among Russians between having faced problems because of the sanctions and wanting the Russian government to enter peace negotiations. Two-thirds of those who have faced quite or very serious problems because of sanctions want the government to enter negotiations (65%), compared to half of those who have not faced serious problems (50%).

On a separate open-ended question, respondents were asked what issues they think should be priorities for negotiations if and when Ukraine and Russia enter peace talks. Overall, fewer than 1 percent of respondents volunteered sanctions relief or having sanctions lifted. Issues including a cease-fire, settling issues of territorial claims, and limits on Western influence in Ukraine were more likely to be seen as a priority. Prior [polling](#) and focus groups conducted by the Levada Center have found that rather than viewing the sanctions as a complete setback, a considerable portion of the Russian public sees the sanctions as an opportunity to strengthen industries within Russia in the absence of international competition.

Conclusion

Sanctions have been a central component of US-Russia policy in response to the crisis in Ukraine. However, while a sizable minority of

¹ A quarter of those who view the United States favorably have faced very or somewhat serious problems as a result of sanctions compared to 15 percent of those who have an unfavorable opinion of the United States. Supporters of the military operation were less likely to report facing problems (15%) than opponents of the operation (26%). Similarly, 29 percent of those who think Russia is on the wrong track report very or somewhat serious problems compared to 12 percent of those who think Russia is on the right track.

the Russian public is concerned about these sanctions to some degree, few are facing material hardships in their day-to-day lives as a result of the policies. This could mean that the sanctions are working as officially intended: to target businesses, banks, and oligarchs rather than Russian citizens at large. The sanctions do not appear to have brought about economic pressures on the public that might trigger political backlash.

Methodology

This survey was part of the Levada Center's monthly omnibus survey. The full methodology can be found [here](#).

Interviews for this wave of the Levada Center's monthly omnibus survey were conducted from November 24 to 30, 2022, among a representative sample of all Russian urban and rural residents. The sample comprised 1,601 people age 18 or older in 137 municipalities of 50 regions of the Russian Federation. The survey was conducted as a personal interview in respondents' homes. The answer distribution is presented as percentages of the total number of participants along with data from previous surveys.

The statistical error of these studies for a sample of 1,600 people (with a probability of 0.95) does not exceed:

- 3.4% for indicators around 50%
- 2.9% for indicators around 25%/75%
- 2.0% for indicators around 10%/90%
- 1.5% for indicators around 5%/95%

JUNE 2023

Russians Are Split over Benefits of Military Action in Ukraine



By Dina Smeltz, Denis Volkov, and Stepan Goncharov

A May 25-31, 2023 joint Chicago Council-Levada Center survey—conducted before the destruction of the Kakhovka dam and the start of Kyiv’s counteroffensive—finds that Russians are feeling more positive about their military’s performance in Ukraine than they were in November. Public support for the military operation² remains stable compared to previous surveys, but Russians are sharply divided on whether the conflict has helped or hurt the country. Taken together, the data seem to indicate that the public is much more mixed in their views than it appears at first glance.

Key Findings

- More Russians now believe their country’s military operation in Ukraine has been successful (61%) than did in November (53%).
- Russians are now evenly divided between those who think Moscow should continue the military operation (48%, up from 38% in April) and those who think it should move to peace negotiations (45%, down from 51% in April).
- At the same time, support for the Russian military action has neither increased nor decreased. Three in four Russians (76%) continue to say they support the military operation, with 43 percent expressing strong support and 33 percent somewhat supporting it.
- A smaller majority of 66 percent say they would strongly (33%) or somewhat support (33%) a family member or close friend who voluntarily participated in the military operation.
- Other results reveal more division among the public. Nearly as many Russians say the special military operation in Ukraine has created more harm (41%) than more benefit (38%).
- If they had the opportunity to go back into the past, a plurality of Russians say they would have supported the start of military action against Ukraine (48%), but a sizable minority indicate they would have “cancelled” it before it started (39%).

²² Because of the Russian government restrictions on the use of certain terms to describe the Russian military action in Ukraine, the joint survey used either “military operation” or “military action” in most of these questions. To be true to the results, we use that language throughout the report.

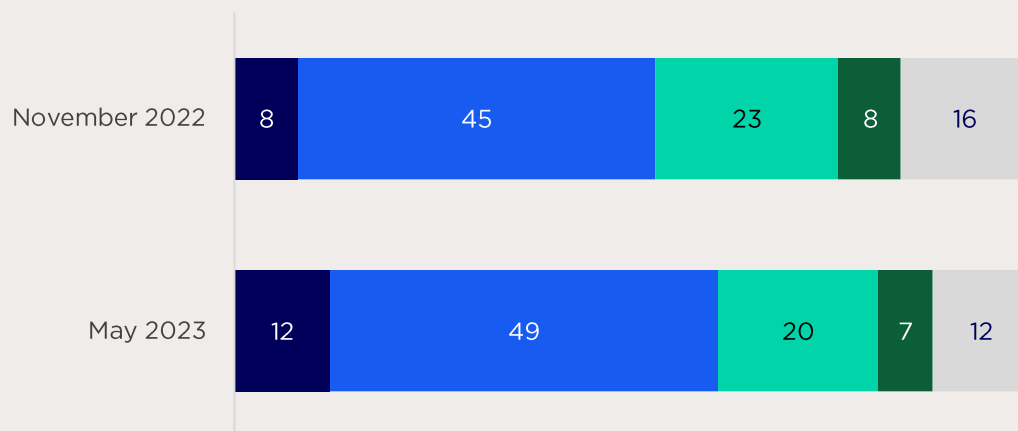
More Russians Now Sense the Military Operation Has Been Successful

As Ukraine begins its counteroffensive against Russian military forces, new polling finds greater optimism among the Russian public about their armed forces' performance. Six in 10 (61%) Russians say the special military operation (SMO) has been at least somewhat successful, up from 53 percent in November 2022. The percentage who thinks the military operation has been unsuccessful has dropped slightly from 27 percent from 31 percent in November, and slightly fewer now indicate that it is "difficult to say."

Success of the Special Military Operation

How successful is the special military operation in Ukraine? (%)

■ Very successful ■ Rather successful ■ Rather unsuccessful
■ Very unsuccessful ■ Difficult to say



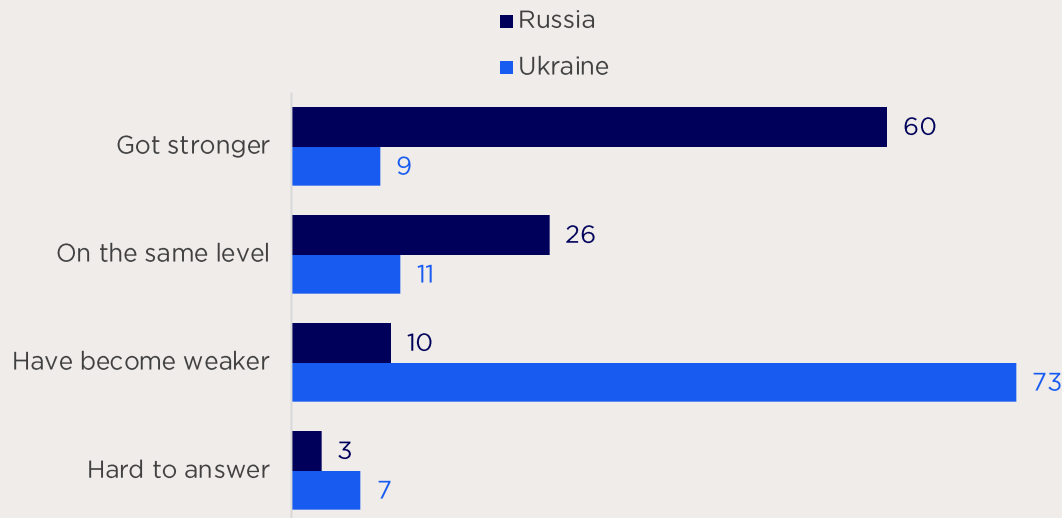
May 25-31, 2023 | n = 1,603

LEVADA CENTER / CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS

Underscoring the perception that Russia's position has improved, 60 percent of Russians say that over the past year, their country has become stronger, while 73 percent say Ukraine has become weaker. Both of these more positive assessments about Russia's strength and the success of the military operation coincide with the [Wagner Group's](#) ([a private for-hire military organization](#)) major battlefield gains for Russia in the city of Bakhmut in Ukraine's eastern Donbass region.

Getting Stronger or Weaker?

During the last year, did ____ get stronger, stay the same, or get weaker? (%)



May 25-31, 2023 | n = 1,603

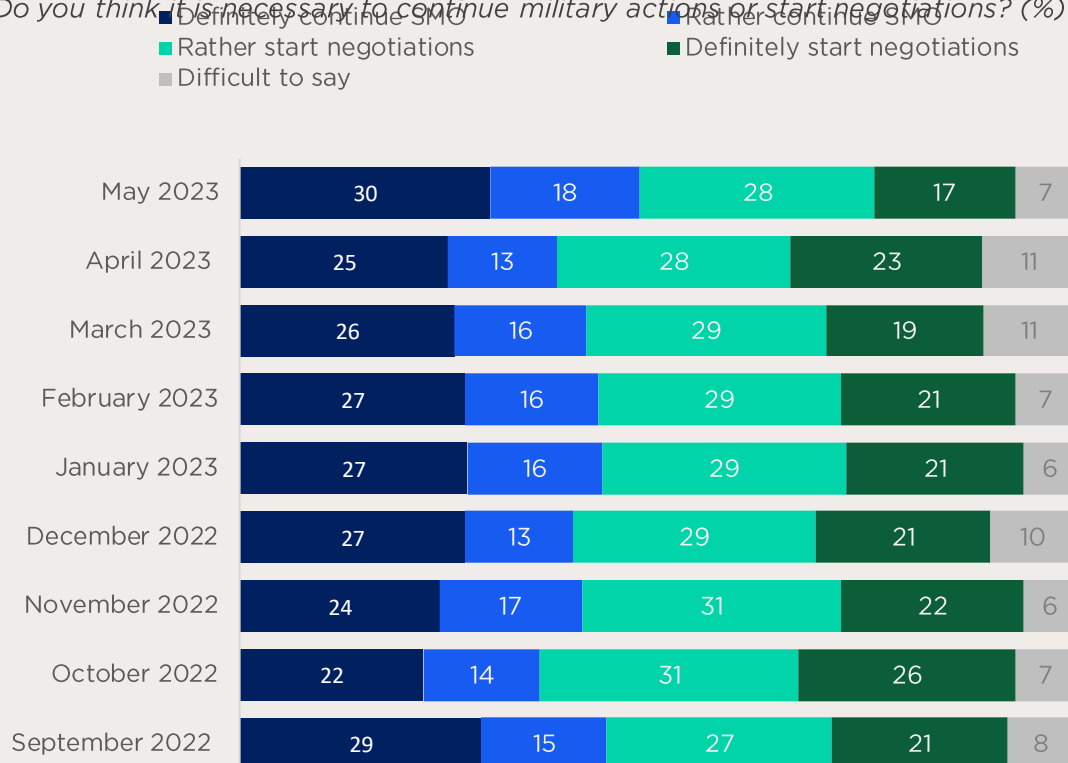
LEVADA CENTER / CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS

Slight Increase in Support for Continued Fighting

In addition to potentially reacting to the news of battleground success in Bakhmut, some Russians are now directly feeling the impact of the war. There have been increased attacks [on the Russian side of the border](#) that have killed more than a dozen civilians and displaced thousands from their homes. There have also been drone attacks in Moscow itself. As a result, some Russians may be sensing both greater success and increased bitterness about the conflict. As an example, Russians are now less keen to stop fighting than they were in April. While evenly divided between those who think Russia should continue the military operation (48%) and those who think it should move to peace negotiations (45%), the percentage who prefer to continue fighting has increased (from 38% in April to 48% now).

Start Negotiations or Continue Military Actions?

Do you think it is necessary to continue military actions or start negotiations? (%)



May 25-31, 2023 | n = 1,603

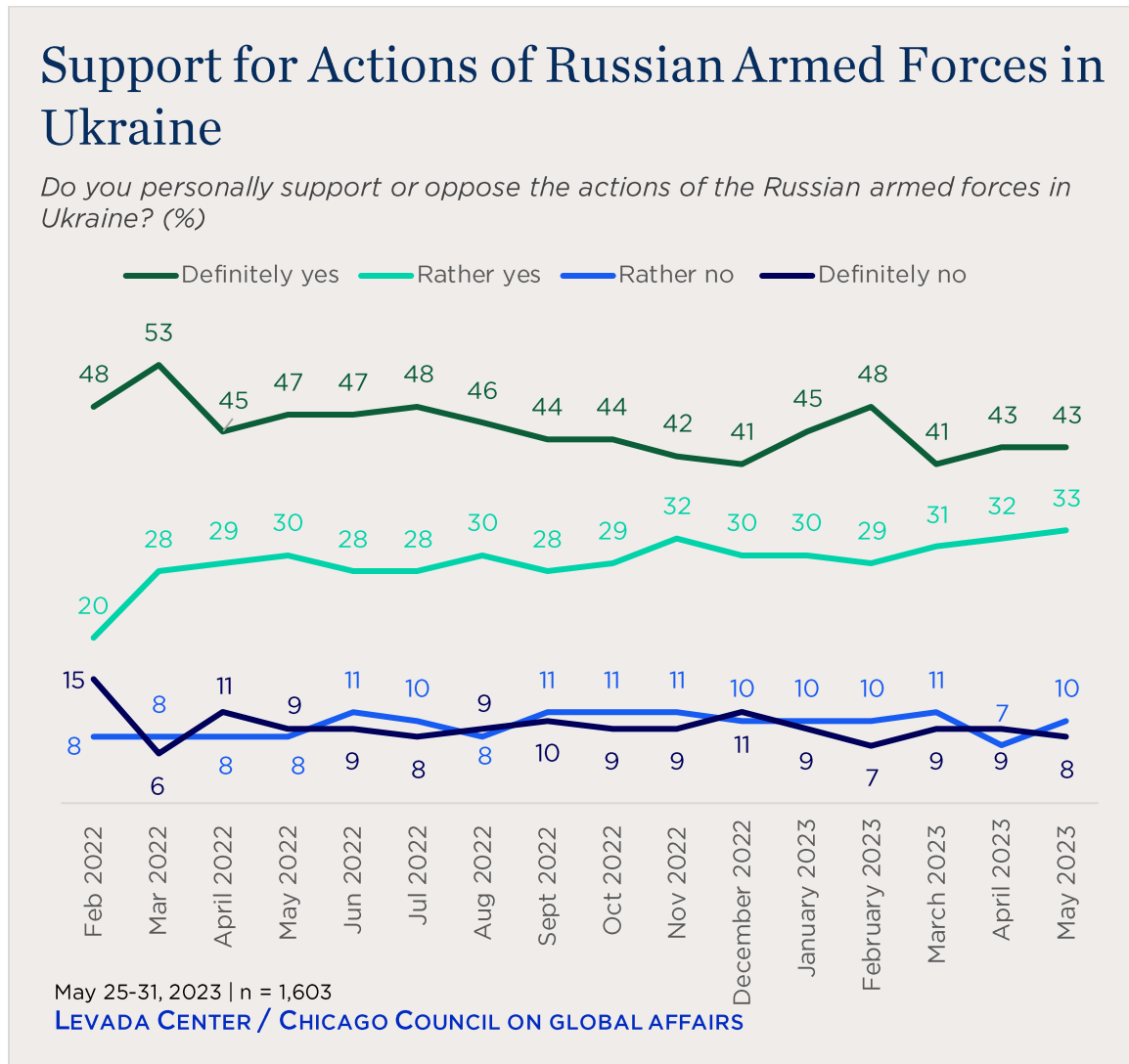
LEVADA CENTER / CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS

Focus group discussions conducted on April 20, 2023, among Muscovite men and women help to illustrate these mixed views. “Regardless of his or her position, no one wants this [war] to continue, in the sense that . . . everyone wants the war to end as soon as possible. At the same time, regardless of their position, everyone still supports their country,” one woman elaborated. Another woman added, “you can’t retreat and you can’t betray your citizens either.”

Three in Four Russians Continue to Support the Special Military Operation

As in November, four in 10 “definitely” support the actions of the Russian military forces (43%) and another third (33%) somewhat

support the special operation. Two in 10 oppose the operation, and just 6 percent indicate that it is too difficult to answer. Older Russians, those who follow news about the conflict closely, and those who have a close friend or family member in the military services, are more likely to strongly support the military action against Ukraine. Younger Russians, the better-educated and heavy internet users are more likely than others to oppose the action.



Focus group comments shed light onto some of the motivations for this support. Participants seemed determined to support their country's aims even if they hadn't necessarily supported the idea of the military operation from the start. Several discussants evoked the language of patriotism and defense of the country, some of which has been undoubtedly transmitted through state-dominated media. "The fate of

our country is at stake,” one male participant asserted, “to lose is to tear [Russia] into pieces.” Another man added that Russia’s success in the war is linked to “what our generation, our children, will inherit from us, that is what kind of country we leave them: either a big, strong, powerful Russia or just some fragments.” One of the men posited that “the feeling of patriotism should unite people; that is, even if people do not agree. . . somewhere in their soul they need to understand that defending common interests. . . the interests of the Russian people, the Russian language, Russian culture and so on, this should unite one way or another.”

While the survey finds that women are slightly less likely than men to support the military operation (74% versus 79% in the May survey), at least one female focus group participant was also moved by patriotic messages though she was somewhat skeptical to what end. “Probably there is something in the character of our people that, no matter what, they go to defend,” one female in the focus group stated, “only I do not know what they are going to protect.”

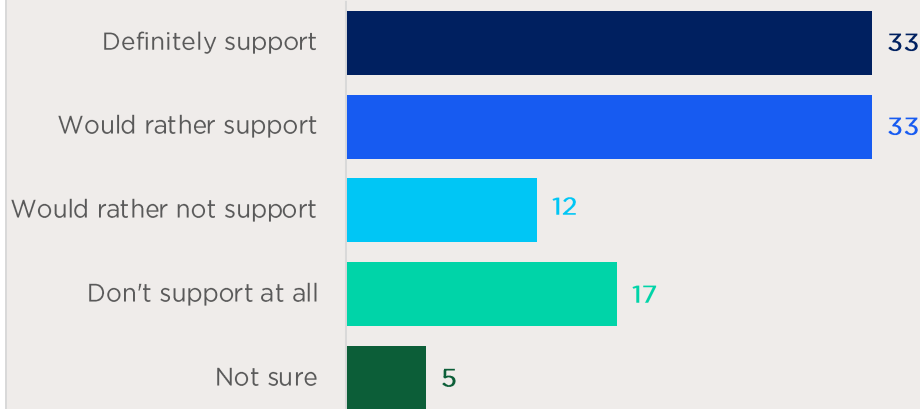
Both men and women remarked that since Russia in the war now, their side should succeed. For example, one woman said that “it seems to me that the people think, even those who are against the war, believe that we should . . . win anyway.” A male participant similarly stated, “We have to finish what we started.”

Two-Thirds Support Family Member or Close Friend Volunteering to Fight

The survey also included a more stringent level of support for the military operation: whether Russians would support a family member or close friend deciding to participate in the war. Under this more stringent test, a smaller majority of Russians (66%) say they would strongly (33%) or somewhat support (33%) a family member or close friend voluntarily participating in the military operation.

Respect for Voluntary Military Participation

Would you support or oppose the decision of a family member or close friend if they participated voluntarily in a special military operation in Ukraine? (%)



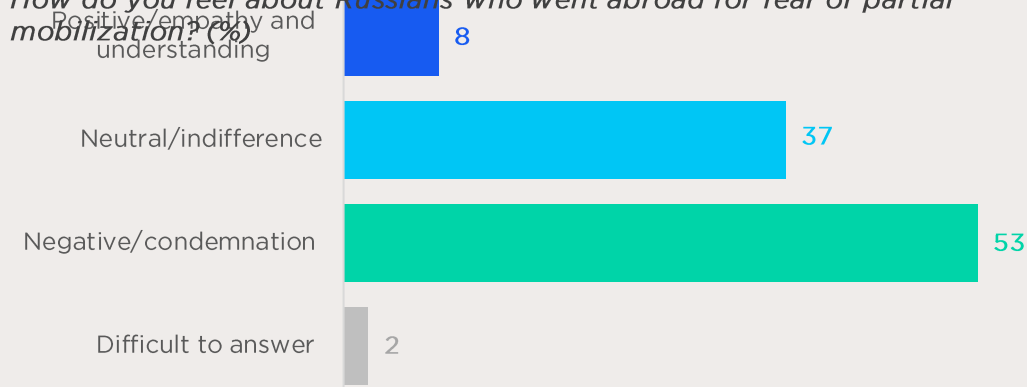
May 25-31, 2023 | n = 1,603

LEVADA CENTER / CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS

Though this is lower than the overall level of support for the military operation, most Russians do not outwardly support those who have fled the country to avoid participating. When asked about those Russians who left the country to prevent being conscripted in the partial mobilization set in motion last September, few say they are sympathetic (8%), although many say they feel indifferent (37%). A slight majority say they feel negatively toward those who fled the country (53%). There is a strong correlation of attitudes with age: younger respondents have rather neutral feelings (52%), whereas respondents older than 54 predominantly think in a negative way about those who left Russia. Young people most likely have more personal contacts with emigrants and are probably more mobile themselves.

Feelings Toward Russians That Fled Mobilization

How do you feel about Russians who went abroad for fear of partial mobilization? (%)



May 25-31, 2023 | n = 1,603

LEVADA CENTER / CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS

But in focus group comments among Muscovite women³, most participants seemed to be understanding of those who left the country to avoid being conscripted. One woman even admitted that her own son had fled for that reason. “I don’t judge anyone,” another woman remarked, while others sympathetically commented, “I am for men who will do everything not to serve,” and “No man wants to be a murderer.” This topic was not addressed in the men’s focus group, but survey analysis shows no statistically significant difference between men and women in how they perceive those who moved outside the country.

Russian Public Much More Divided on Benefit or Harm from Conflict

While the preceding results suggest continued public backing for the military action, other questions reveal more discomfort with the war among many Russians. When asked whether the special military operation in Ukraine has brought more benefits or harm to Russia, the public is nearly evenly divided (38% benefit, 41% harm), with a full 20 percent indicating it is too difficult to say. In sharp contrast, Russians

³ According to Levada researchers, Muscovites have greater experience with people leaving and therefore might be more sympathetic than the average Russian.

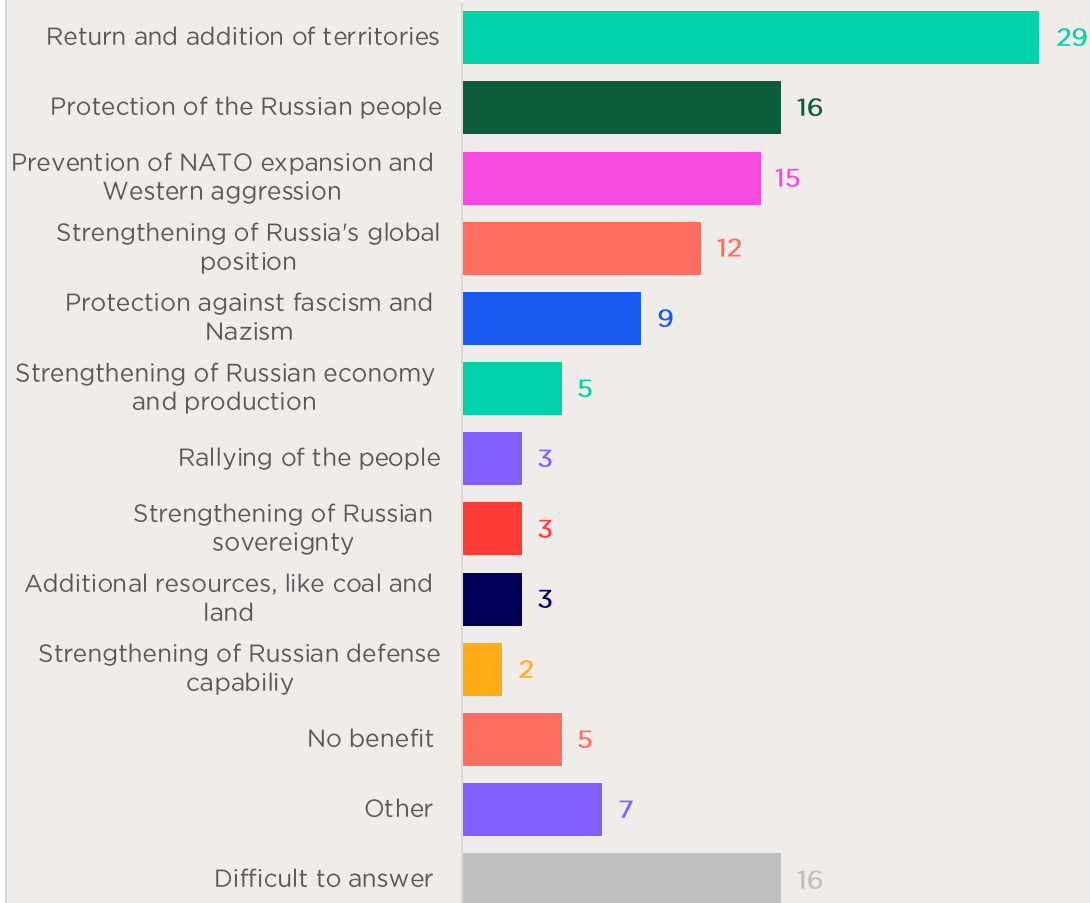
are much more convinced of the benefit to Russia from annexing Crimea (69% benefit vs. 18% harm), which occurred without violence.



When those survey respondents who think more benefits have been achieved from the military action in Ukraine are asked to specify what advantages they have in mind (in an open-ended question), the most frequent mentions include the return/addition of new territories (29%), the protection of Russian speakers and the people in eastern Ukraine (16%), preventing NATO expansion or aggression from the West (15%), strengthening Russia's position in the world (12%), and protection against fascism (9%). Focus group participants were also asked about any positive impacts from the special military operation, but few were able to articulate solid responses aside from increased cooperation with China. But even that was qualified with warnings that "China will always pursue its own interests in everything."

Benefits of Special Military Operation

In your opinion, what benefits did the special military operation bring to Russia? (%) [OPEN END]

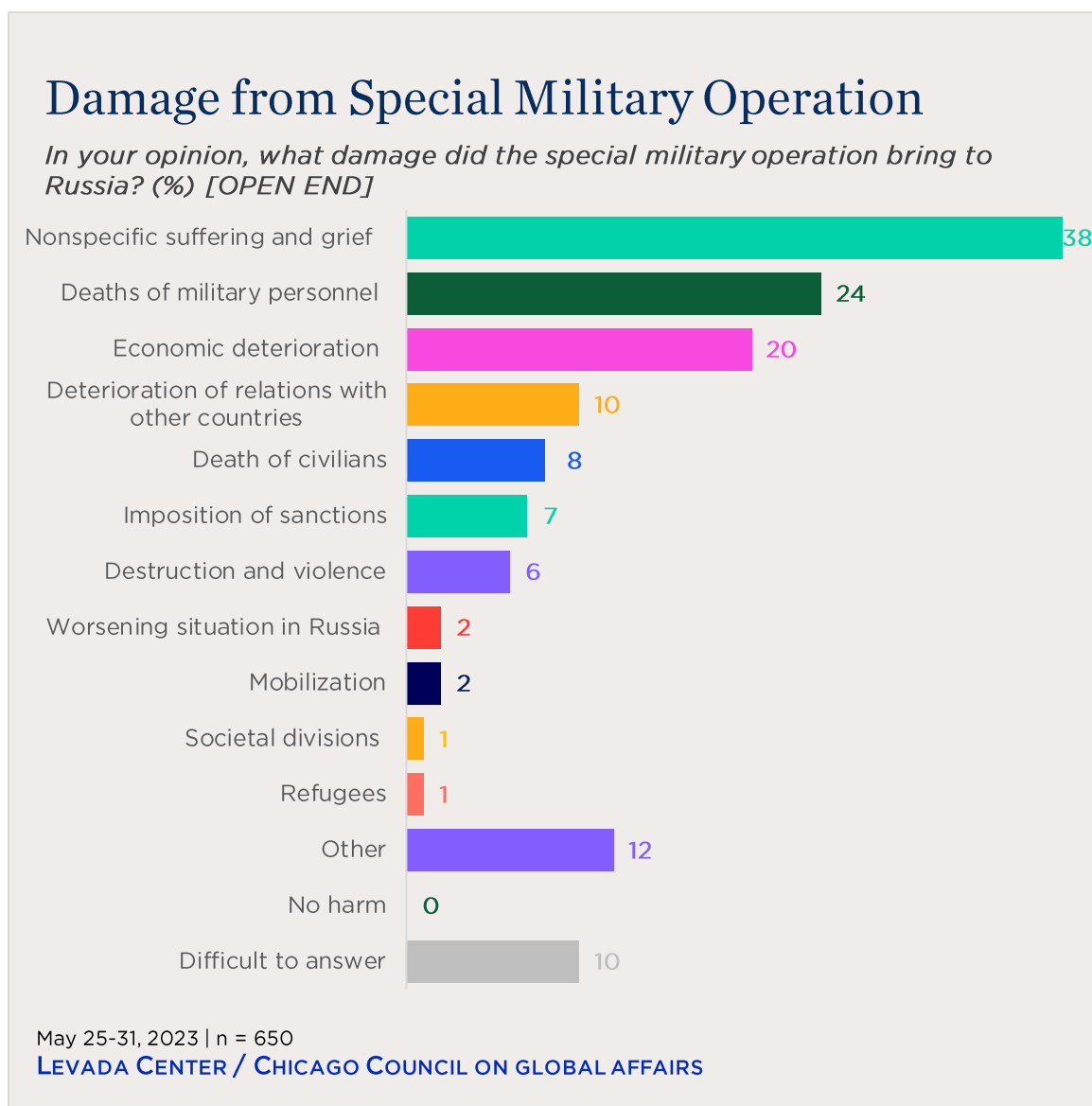


May 25-31, 2023 | n = 616

LEVADA CENTER / CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS

When those survey respondents who perceive more harm than benefit are asked to volunteer (in an open-ended question) what damages they see from the military operation, a majority focus on the death of civilians and soldiers (70% combined), followed by economic deterioration (20%) and international isolation (10%). Focus group participants also described damages caused by the conflict, including the human costs on both sides and the loss of many Russians who left the country because of the war.

Focus group members also talked about personal challenges related to the conflict: difficulties in traveling abroad, the inability to obtain certain goods and medicines, an increase in political repression for those disagreeing with government policy, and polarization within Russian society between those supporting and opposing the war. Participants described an overall collective sense of uncertainty and anxiety that “aggravates the general psychological atmosphere in the country.” One man seemed to hint at even being internally conflicted: “Over the past year, I don’t remember a single positive moment. Anytime you watch the news you feel like you are fighting yourself.”



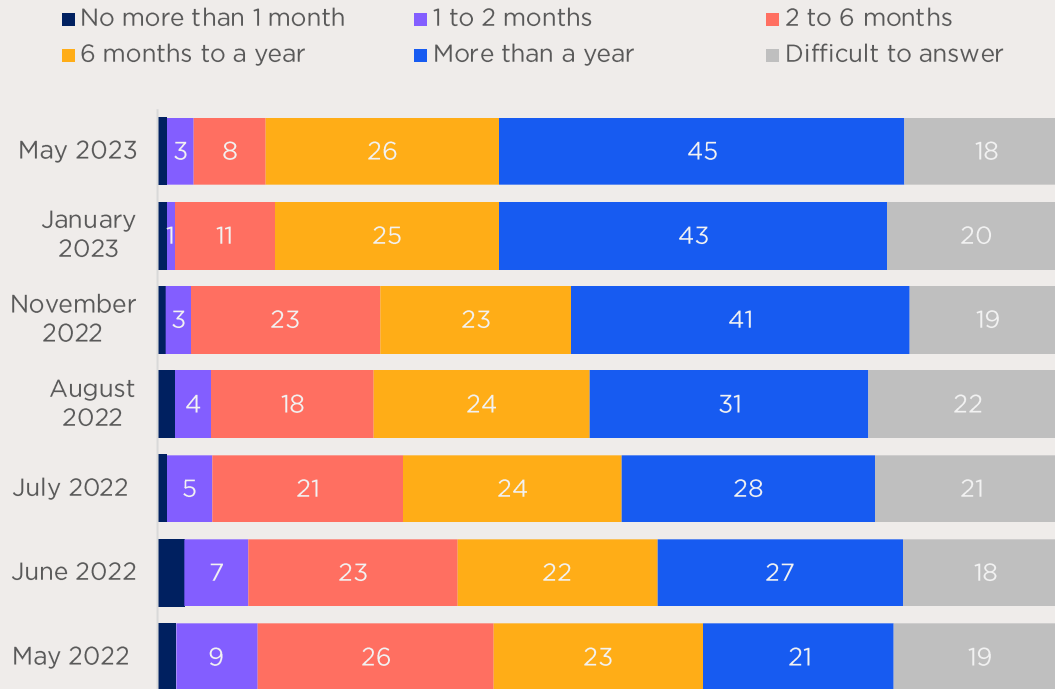
Given the significant harm that Russians perceive from the war, in hindsight, would they have preferred to prevent it? Not exactly. If they had the opportunity to go back into the past and “cancel or support the start of the military operation in Ukraine,” a plurality say they would support the military action (48%). But a sizable minority say they would cancel it (39%), once again suggesting that a significant portion of Russians, including some who say they support the war, are conflicted about its impacts. Women focus group participants were especially likely to say they would have opted to prevent the conflict. “I would have made sure that on February 24, Russia did not invade Ukraine,” and “Every sane person, of course, wants there to be no war but we were convinced it was inevitable,” were two typical comments. Another reflected wistfully, “We lived normally [before February 24]: one dollar cost 30 rubles . . . the borders were open, everything was calm and free.” And one woman went back even further, saying “We should have changed 2014, not 2022, so that Russia doesn’t take Crimea at all. What do we need it for?”

Russians Are Bracing for a Long Haul

Russians initially thought the special military operation would last for a year or less, but the results show that they are increasingly resigned to a longer fight. In the latest data, nearly half expect the conflict to last beyond another year (45%). This is up considerably compared to last May, when only 21 percent thought it would last that long. Few Russians now expect the war will end before six months from now.

Perceived Length of Hostilities

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



May 25-31, 2023 | n = 1,603

LEVADA CENTER / CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS

Parsing Support for the Military Operation

Many analysts and commentators who are closely following the situation in Ukraine have raised important questions about the high levels of Russian public support for the war, given the increasingly repressive atmosphere in the country. While response and refusal rates in Levada surveys have not shifted dramatically from previous surveys, data analysis reveals differences on questions that ask direct support for the military operation versus indirect support. As a rule of thumb, readers can assume that those who say they strongly (“definitely”) support the military action are akin to committed supporters, while those who somewhat (“rather”) support are more passive in their backing. As the table below shows, strong supporters are much more likely than passive supporters to:

- Definitely support a family member or close friend who voluntarily participated in the military operation in Ukraine (51% strongly support vs. 23% somewhat support)
- Sense more benefit than harm as a result of the conflict (56% vs. 35%)
- Prefer to continue the military action rather than move to negotiations (67% vs. 46%)
- Prefer to support rather than cancel the military operation if one could go back in time (68% vs. 47%)
- Condemn those who fled the country to avoid conscription (70% vs. 48%)

Support for 'Special Military Operation' across Russian Society on Several Dimensions				
<i>% among those who support/oppose the actions of the Russian armed forces in Ukraine:</i>	Definitely support	Rather support	Rather oppose	Definitely oppose
Definitely support voluntary participation of family/friend	51	23	11	17
SMO brought more benefits	56	35	11	12
SMO brought more damages	23	44	78	83
Continue SMO	67	46	17	18
Start peace negotiations	39	48	80	73
Negative view of those who fled conscription	70	48	32	29
Support the start of military operation if could go back in time	68	47	14	11
Cancel the start of military operation if could go back in time	23	38	83	82

Conclusion

In sum, the Russian public as a whole feels more positive now than in previous surveys about the performance of their armed forces in Ukraine, but there are clear differences within Russian society on the effects of the conflict and whether it is time to negotiate or continue fighting. The results from this survey and other Russian polls show that widespread support for the military action is differentiated between true believers and some who are at least mildly skeptical. The survey and focus group results point to a need to study Russian public opinion holistically from many angles, and not hinge analysis on any single result.

Survey Methodology

This survey was part of Levada's monthly omnibus survey. [Read the full methodology.](#)

For this particular wave of the Levada Center's monthly omnibus survey, the interviews were conducted between May 25–31, 2023, among a representative sample of all Russian urban and rural residents. The sample comprised 1,603 people 18 or older in 138 municipalities of 56 regions of the Russian Federation (including Crimea). The survey was conducted as a personal interview in respondents' homes. The answer distribution is presented as percentages of the total number of participants along with data from previous surveys.

The statistical error of these studies for a sample of 1,600 people (with a probability of 0.95) does not exceed:

- 3.4 percent for indicators around 50%
- 2.9 percent for indicators around 25%/75%
- 2.0 percent for indicators around 10%/90%
- 1.5 percent for indicators around 5%/95%

Focus Group Methodology

The group discussions were conducted on April 20, 2023, at the Levada-Center's Studio, among eight men and eight women aged 20 and older. Participants were selected by professional recruiters in

Moscow using the “snowball” method through recruiters’ networks as well as those of previous participants of Levada-Center’s focus groups and were screened by age and gender. Any person who had participated in a focus group less than one year prior to this study and anyone who worked in the field of marketing or political and social sciences was excluded from the selection process. All 16 participants represented average Muscovites with some level of awareness about political news and with a variety of political attitudes.

JUNE 2023

Majority of Russians Still Unwilling to Return Occupied Parts of Ukraine



By Dina Smeltz, Lily Wojtowicz, Denis Volkov, and Stepan Goncharov

A May 25–31, 2023, joint Chicago Council-Levada Center survey finds that many Russians would support ending the conflict in Ukraine and moving to negotiations, but few are willing to make meaningful territorial concessions to Kyiv. Focus groups among Moscow residents on April 20, 2023, help to contextualize this resistance.

Key Findings

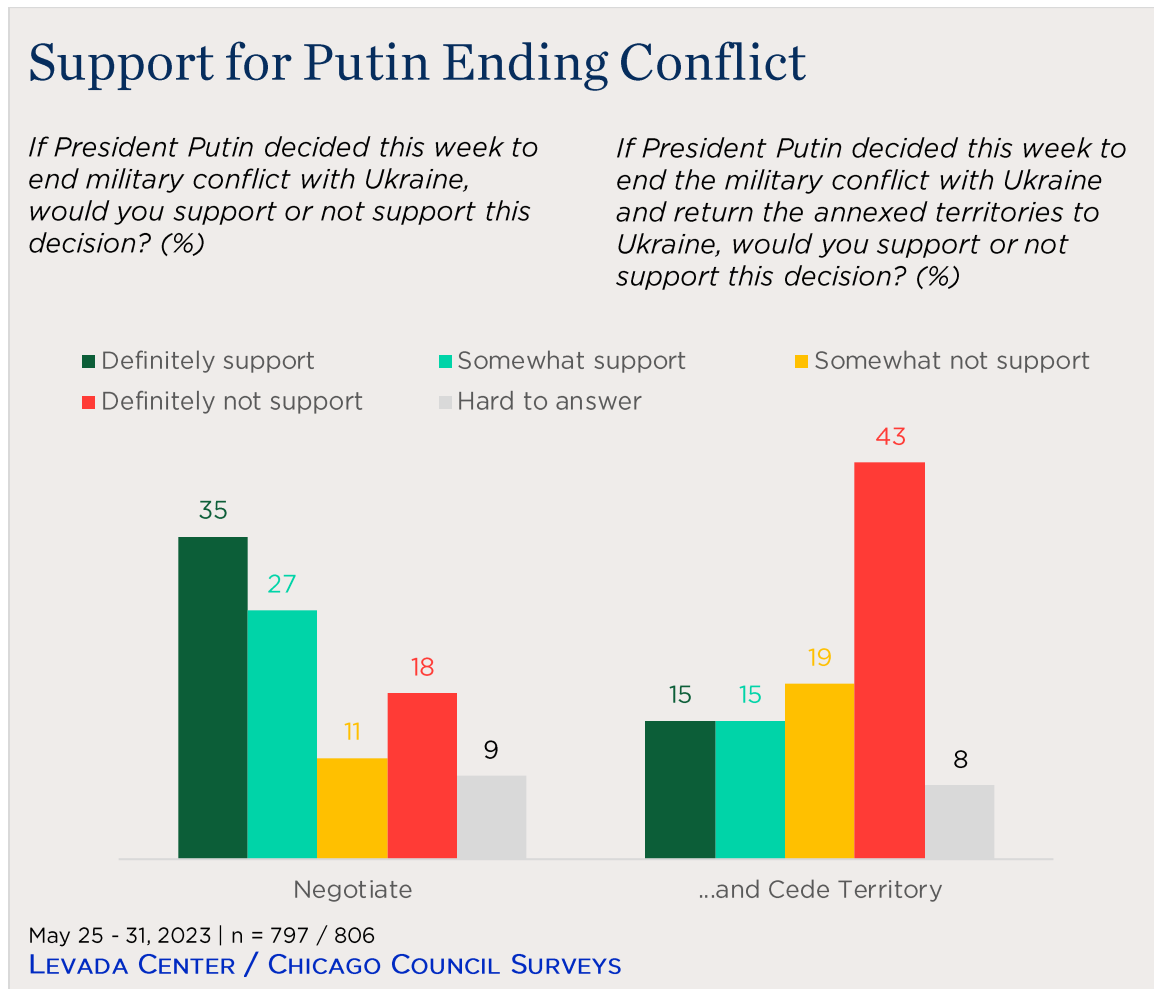
- Sixty-two percent say they would support Russian President Vladimir Putin ending the military conflict with Ukraine this week (35% definitely support, 27% somewhat support).
- But if ending the conflict this week were dependent on returning territory to Ukraine, the same percentage (62%) would oppose it.
- Seven in 10 (73%) think that returning Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, or Kherson to Ukraine is unacceptable under any circumstances. Even more, eight in 10 (82%), would find returning Crimea unacceptable.
- Few Russians believe their country alone will have to make concessions (3%) to bring about an end to the war; 41 percent think both Russia and Ukraine will have to make concessions. And 39 percent think Ukraine alone will have to make concessions.

Continue Fighting or Negotiate?

The average Russian and Anthony Blinken may agree on one thing currently, albeit for wildly different reasons: [there's no possibility of a Russian-Ukrainian peace deal acceptable to both sides](#). A joint Chicago Council-Levada Center survey conducted May 25–31, 2023, finds more Russians now prefer to continue the “special military operation” (48%) rather than [begin peace negotiations](#) (45%). This increase in support for continued military action might reflect a combination of increased optimism after Russian military gains in Bakhmut in May and increased anxiety over attacks inside their own country.

In a separate question (asked of half the sample) that tests whether an announcement from Putin could influence support, 62 percent said that if the Russian leader decided to end the military conflict with Ukraine this week, they would support his decision (35% definitely support, 27% somewhat support). Four in 10 would oppose it (39%). Yet this support

drops dramatically to just 30 percent when the other half of respondents were asked if they would support Putin's decision to end the military conflict if it included returning annexed territories to Ukraine. Six in 10 Russians would oppose returning territory to Ukraine (43% definitely, 19 somewhat).



The May survey further supports this view. When asked about particular concessions in exchange for the cessation of fighting, two-thirds (64%) of Russians would find an immediate ceasefire and new borders on the frontline to be either a preferred outcome (45%) or an acceptable one (19%). Younger Russians prefer this ceasefire option more so than their older counterparts (51% among those ages 18-39; 42% among those 40 and above).

Large majorities oppose ceding conquered territory back to Ukraine. For 73 percent of respondents, returning Luhansk,

Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, or Kherson to Ukraine is not acceptable under any conditions. Eight in 10 (82%) feel the return of Crimea would be completely unacceptable.

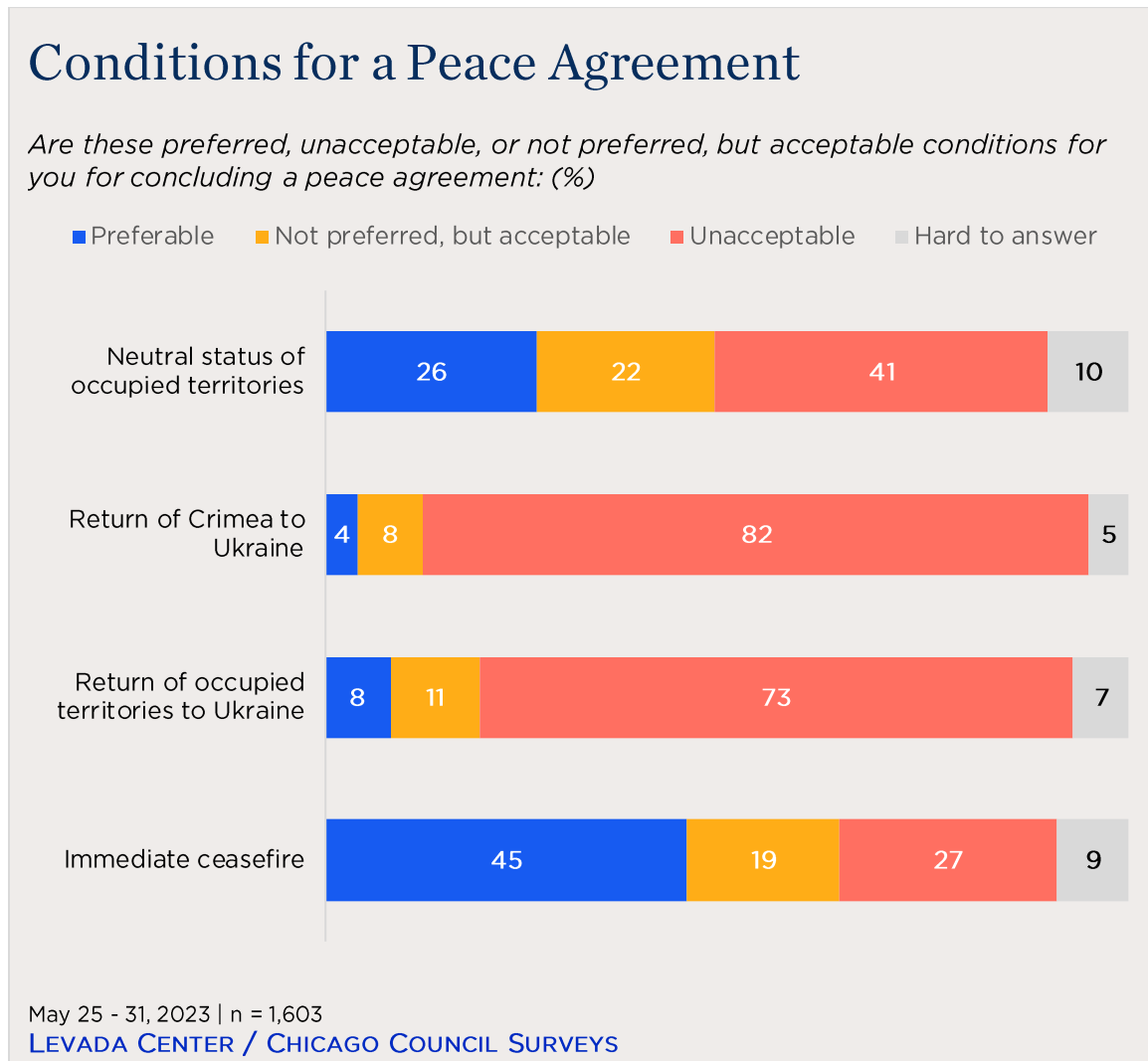
Focus group discussions underscored an unwillingness to consider outcomes that would entail returning territory back to Ukraine. One of the male participants said he preferred “a clean victory,” a “complete victory.” Another added “it must be finished once and for all, because if history teaches us something, it is that we can’t repeat the mistakes of the past.” Another man explained that victory would justify the action; there would be “a powerful surge of pride in society, and people [will] see that everything was not in vain and this would be worth all the losses, and the money spent, and so on.”

For many men, a complete victory entailed “full annexation [of Ukraine] to Russia, so that there are no incidents in the future.” Another man agreed: “I also think a positive scenario for [Russia] is a complete victory . . . complete disarmament, well, we completely unite Ukraine with Russia.” But at least one male participant said that if complete annexation is not possible, then “it is best to preserve what is [currently under Russian control]: Crimea, Luhansk, Donetsk, Kherson.”

Many women were also fairly unyielding when it came to territorial concessions. “Crimea is ours, and Donbass, the LPR [Luhansk], the DPR [Donetsk], it all remains with Russia. If this does not suit someone, then it turns out we will not have peace,” one woman asserted. Another woman described retaining the occupied areas as “a matter of honor for Russia to return [to Russia] the complete territories of the [Luhansk] and [Donetsk], as well as the Kherson region. To get back to us what we have already announced to everyone that this is ours.”

The survey further finds that just under half say granting Donetsk and Luhansk “neutral” status would be acceptable (48%), but four in 10 would find even that outcome unacceptable (41%). A female focus group participant thought this might be a possible outcome, predicting that “no one will get these disputed territories. They will have some kind of controversial status à la Kosovo.” Another woman also posited that neutral status might be a possible end goal for Ukraine. “It seems to me that Ukraine would go to the conclusion of peace only . . . on the

condition that these new territories will have neutrality, some kind of neutral status. Otherwise, it would have ended long ago.” Another woman even suggested giving eastern Ukraine independent status: “Let them shoot each other with darts. Let Luhansk and Donetsk be separate countries, let them live as they want. Neither to us nor to Ukraine.”



In an open-ended question about what concessions they would find permissible for Moscow to make, Russian respondents either struggle or are unwilling to name acceptable compromises. More than half say it is too difficult to say (57%). Not a single tangible response—from a prisoner exchange to returning territory—was put forward by 10 percent or more respondents.

As for acceptable concessions Ukraine would make, Russians volunteer to the open-response question the top three suggestions of Kyiv's recognition of Russian territorial gains (27%), surrender (17%), and change of power or "de-Nazification" (10%). However, a plurality say it is difficult to say (38%).

Most curiously, participants in both the male and female focus groups discussed the possibility of dividing up Ukraine, with western Ukraine going to Poland. This is likely due to [claims](#) made by the Russian intelligence service that this is Poland's goal. As one man put it, "I do not think that the full annexation of Ukraine to Russia is the best outcome; it is unlikely that it will ever happen, much rather some part of Ukraine will pass to Poland." One woman suggested that Zelensky himself does not want the borders to return to those prior to the annexation of Crimea because he "wants to give something to Poland." Others suggested that Western countries and Russia would carve up Ukraine. One man elaborated, "Half of Ukraine, it seems to me, will go to the West, half to Russia, and the West will invest money in restoration."

Which Side Will Have to Concede?

Few Russians believe their country alone will have to make concessions in the end (just 3%). Nearly as many Russians think both Russia and Ukraine will have to make concessions (41%) as think that just Ukraine will (39%). Even though focus group participants were unwilling to imagine an outcome where Russia would have to give up territory, one woman did acknowledge that an outcome without concessions from the Russian side would be challenging: "Russia will never give up the Donbass . . . Russia will not give up Crimea, so in principle, some concessions from Russia . . . are considered inappropriate. They won't be easy." And yet, most would prefer that other countries not participate in any negotiations on Ukraine's future; a majority of Russians think the resolution of the conflict should be left to Ukraine and Russia to reach (72%). Just two in 10 (18%) think other countries should mediate an end to the conflict.

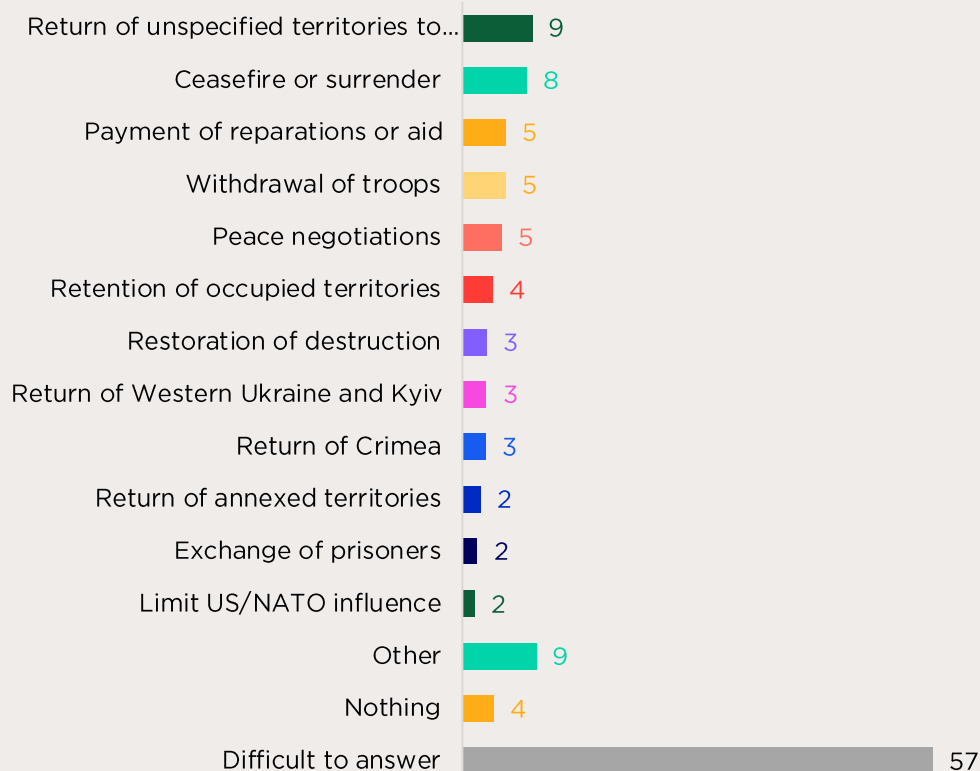
Conclusion: Dim Prospects for Peace Talks that Russians Would Support

While many Russians say they would support ending the fighting and moving to negotiations, this is heavily conditioned on significant, if not complete, territorial concessions from Ukraine. This leaves little space for the Russian government to negotiate and creates yet another roadblock to ending this conflict.

Appendix

Concessions for Russia

If you had to decide what concessions are permitted for Russia, what would you answer [OPEN-END]? (% among those who said only Russia or Russia and Ukraine would have to make concessions)



May 25 - 31, 2023 | n = 714

LEVADA CENTER / CHICAGO COUNCIL SURVEYS

Concessions for Ukraine

If you had to decide what concessions are permitted for Ukraine, what would you answer [OPEN END]? (% of those who said that only Ukraine or both Ukraine and Russia would have to make concessions)



May 25 - 31, 2023 | n = 1,281

LEVADA CENTER / CHICAGO COUNCIL SURVEYS

Survey Methodology

This survey was part of Levada's monthly omnibus survey. [Read the full methodology.](#)

For this particular wave of the Levada Center's monthly omnibus survey, the interviews were conducted between May 25–31, 2023, among a representative sample of all Russian urban and rural residents. The sample comprised 1,603 people 18 or older in 138 municipalities of 56 regions of the Russian Federation (including Crimea). The survey was conducted as a personal interview in respondents' homes. The answer distribution is presented as percentages of the total number of participants along with data from previous surveys.

The statistical error of these studies for a sample of 1,600 people (with a probability of 0.95) does not exceed:

- 3.4 percent for indicators around 50%
- 2.9 percent for indicators around 25%/75%
- 2.0 percent for indicators around 10%/90%
- 1.5 percent for indicators around 5%/95%

Focus Group Methodology

The group discussions were conducted on April 20, 2023, at the Levada-Center's Studio, among eight men and eight women aged 20 and older. Participants were selected by professional recruiters in Moscow using the "snowball" method through recruiters' networks as well as those of previous participants of Levada-Center's focus groups and were screened by age and gender. Any person who had participated in a focus group less than one year prior to this study and anyone who worked in the field of marketing or political and social sciences was excluded from the selection process. All 16 participants represented average Muscovites with some level of awareness about political news and with a variety of political attitudes.

JULY 2023

Do Russians Fear the West?



By Dina Smeltz, Lily Wojtowicz, Denis Volkov, and Stepan Goncharov

At this week's NATO summit, enlargement will be a key topic of discussion. Just one day before its start, [Turkey announced](#) that it will support Sweden's application to join the Alliance which—combined with Hungary's statement that it will not be the last to ratify the bid—clears the country's path to membership. And Ukraine and nine Eastern European states hope the alliance will offer Kyiv a [clear pathway to membership](#), making good on a 15-year-old pledge that Ukraine has an “[open door](#)” to joining. While Ukrainian leaders are not holding out too much hope that it will get an invitation to join NATO at this summit, NATO's expansion to Russia's neighbors is a [key component](#) of Moscow's rationale for the conflict with Ukraine. So how do Russians view NATO? A May 25–31, 2023, joint Chicago Council-Levada Center survey demonstrates that Russians express both fear and defiance in views of NATO and Russia's ability to counter what the government paints as Western aggression.

Key Findings

Russians seemed to sense more of a long-term than immediate threat from NATO.

- Six in 10 Russians said they have reason to fear Western countries that are part of NATO.
- Nearly half (48%) were concerned that the war in Ukraine could escalate into a Russian confrontation with NATO (48%).
- Seven in 10 said NATO membership for Ukraine would be a threat to Russia (71%), and preventing Ukraine's NATO membership is seen as a top benefit of the Russian military action in Ukraine.
- At the same time, seven in 10 Russians do not fear an imminent attack from NATO (53% unlikely, 20% absolutely improbable).
- More Russians said NATO has become weaker (37%) than stronger (14%) over the past year. By contrast, a majority say Russia has become stronger (60%).
- A plurality of Russians did not believe their country's actions are responsible for Finland and Sweden's applications to join NATO (49%).

Russians Considered NATO a Long-Term Threat Justifying the Military Operation in Ukraine

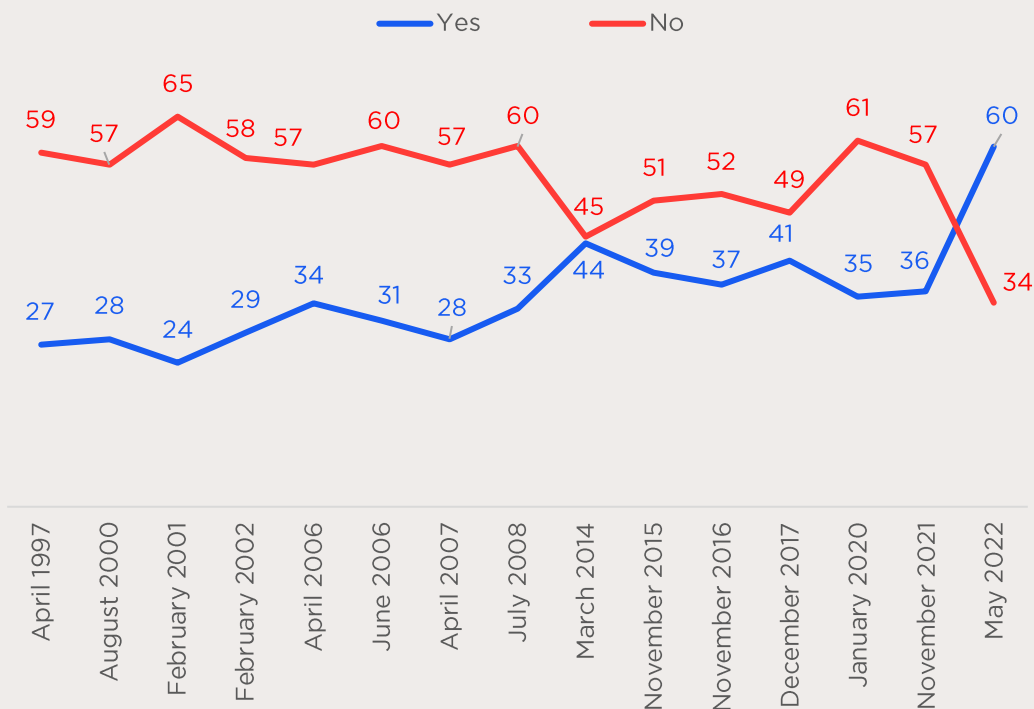
The 2023 NATO summit, held at a venue in Vilnius roughly 20 miles from the Belarussian border, is taking the threat from Russia [very seriously](#), as allies from across NATO have sent troops, air defense, and advanced weaponry to deter an attack while NATO leaders are in town. Meanwhile, [Ukraine was making advances](#) in pushing Russia out of Bakhmut in the hours leading up to the high-profile meeting. One former NATO secretary general [makes the case](#) for Ukraine joining now; however, routing out Russia is essential for Ukraine's bid to join the alliance.

Russian President Vladimir [Putin has consistently](#) linked this war with NATO expansion. Yet Yevgeny Prigozhin—the head of the Wagner Group who challenged Putin's government directly by [overtaking](#) Russia's Southern Command at Rostov-on-Don—has [criticized the Russian Ministry of Defense](#) (MOD) for “[trying to deceive the public and the president](#) and spin the story that there were insane levels of aggression from the Ukrainian side and that they were going to attack us together with the whole NATO bloc.”

At least at the start of the war in Ukraine, most Russians seemed to accept the official narrative that the United States and NATO countries initiated the escalation in eastern Ukraine (60% in a February 2022 Levada survey). And by May 2022, 60 percent of Russians, up from 36 percent in November 2021, said Russia had reasons to fear “the Western countries that are part of NATO.” In fact, nearly half (48%) said they were somewhat (33%) or very scared (15%) that the situation in Ukraine could escalate into a potential war with NATO.

Russian Fear of NATO

Do you think Russia has reasons to fear the Western countries that are part of NATO? (%)

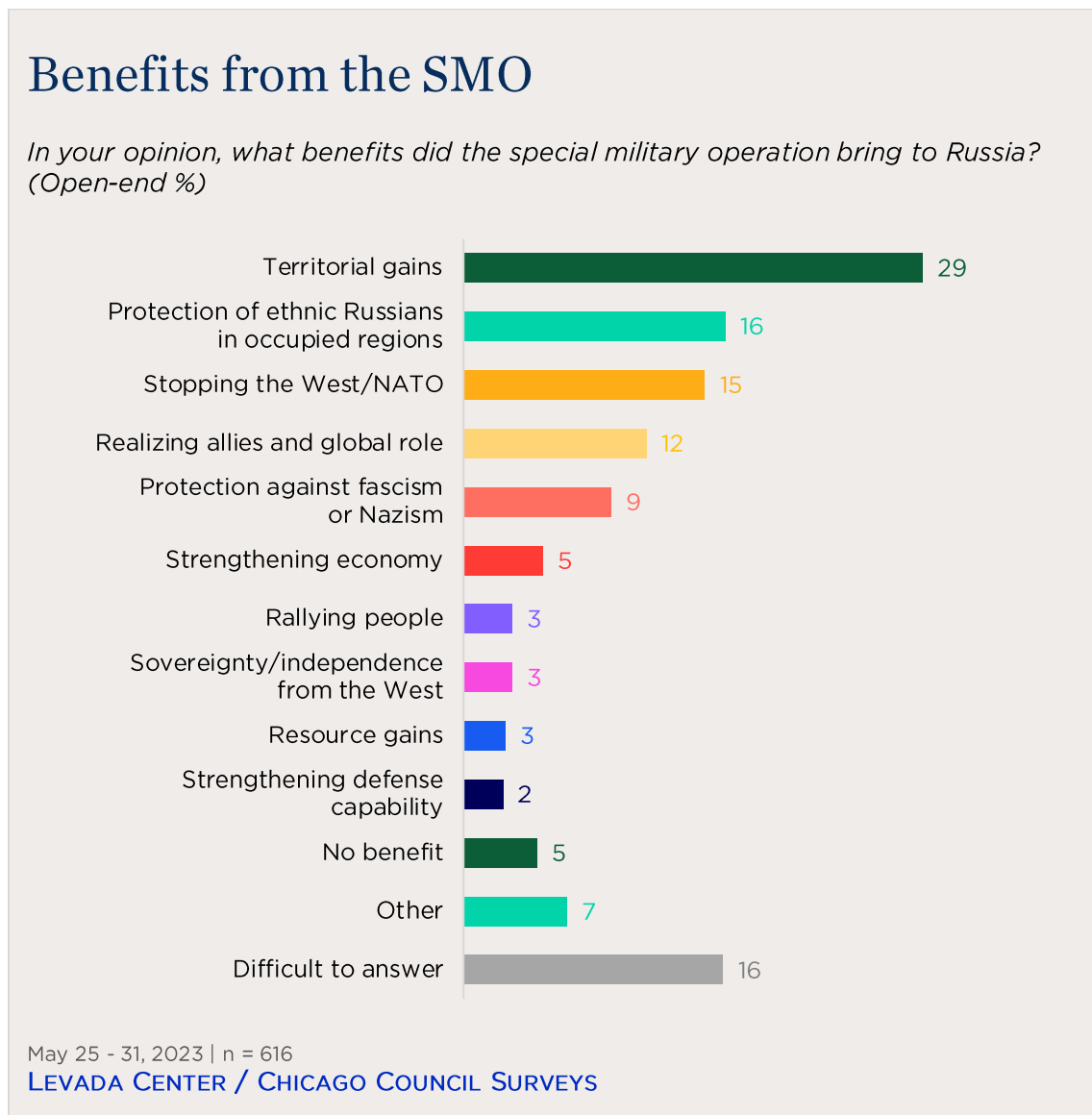


LEVADA CENTER

Potential NATO membership for Ukraine further exacerbates these fears: 71 percent of Russians responded that they would view Ukraine joining NATO as a threat (52% serious threat, 19% some threat). Russians sense a greater threat from Ukraine's NATO membership than from Finland (34% serious threat, 24% some threat), Georgia (34% serious threat, 23% some threat), or Sweden (30% serious threat, 25% some threat) becoming members of NATO. This discrepancy is likely due to NATO's Article V, as Ukraine joining NATO with an ongoing war would likely mean other NATO members would intervene.

The potential for Ukraine to join NATO could impact how some Russians view the war. This most recent survey, conducted in May 2023, found that [Russians were split](#) on whether the military operation brought more harm (41%) or more benefit (38%). A top response to a follow-up question asking those Russians who sense greater benefit what

advantages the operation brings was to curtail the threat posed by NATO. The third-most-common response was preventing Ukraine from joining NATO or fighting back against the threat from the West (15% of Russians who view the effort as beneficial). These rate below territorial gains (29%) and protecting ethnic Russians and inhabitants of Luhansk and Donetsk (16%).



Focus groups participants among Moscow residents (conducted in April 2023; one among men, one among women) said a best-case scenario outcome for the war would include a commitment from Ukraine not to join NATO. One man took this further, arguing that the only outcome is “full annexation to Russia, so that there are no incidents in the future, no

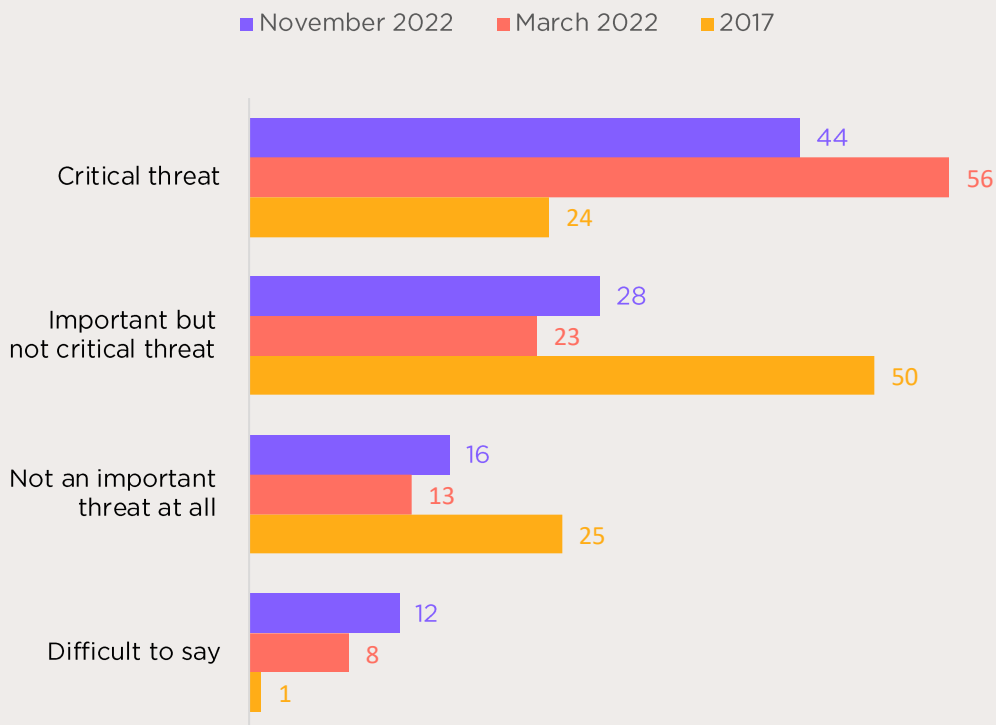
NATO, because even if the West divides it, and we split it in half, then most likely everything will repeat again. But the worst-case scenario would be that it will come to nuclear strikes because Western Ukraine perhaps will join NATO, and this means nuclear war.” [Previous surveys](#) have seen the threat from NATO and the West as the third-most-reported reason for the invasion of Ukraine. Yet, as discussed below, the longer-term threat of NATO expansion appears far more pressing than any potential short-term threats.

In the Short-Term, NATO Is Considered Less of a Threat

Currently, Russians largely do not fear a NATO attack. When asked how probable a NATO attack is in the coming months, the majority said such a turn of events is “unlikely” (53%) while an additional 20 percent found it absolutely improbable. It is possible that the fact that NATO forces have not entered the war and President Joe Biden’s statements that the United States [would not send US troops to Ukraine](#) may have dampened fears about the alliance in Russia, despite all of the military aid NATO countries are sending to Ukraine. In fact, last November, another Chicago Council-Levada Center poll found a 12 point dip in Russians who view NATO as a critical threat to Russian interests (44% in November 2022, down from 56% in March 2022).

Danger of NATO

How dangerous is the NATO Alliance for Russia, in your opinion? (%)



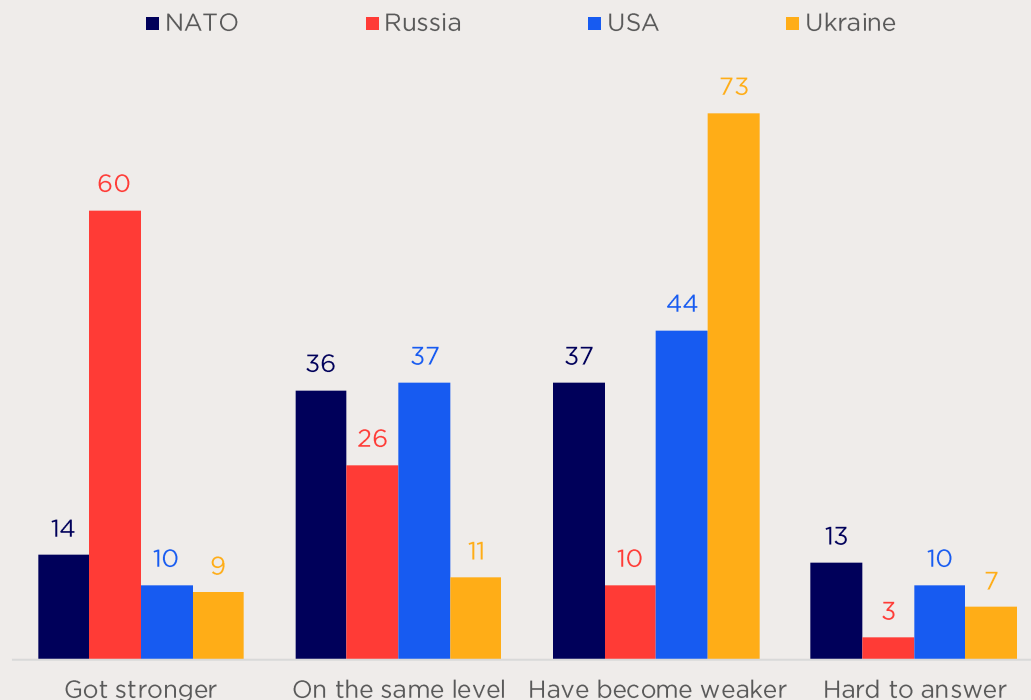
November 24 - 29, 2022 | n = 1,601

LEVADA CENTER / CHICAGO COUNCIL SURVEYS

Further, roughly one-third of respondents believed NATO is weaker today than it was one year ago, while the same percentage think NATO's strength is unchanged. Only 14 percent think NATO is stronger. A plurality said the United States is weaker (44%), and a majority said Ukraine is weaker (73%). Some of these responses may reflect defiance as well as some of Russia's battleground gains in Bakhmut that Wagner forces helped achieve before the start of the Ukrainian counteroffensive. It could also amount to some wishful thinking, given [Ukraine's military strength](#) after a year of combat experience and NATO military aid. Comparatively, the majority of Russians think their country is now stronger (60%).

Views on Strength

During the last year, did the following get stronger, stay the same, or get weaker? (%)



May 25 - 31, 2023 | n = 1,603

LEVADA CENTER / CHICAGO COUNCIL SURVEYS

Focus group discussions touched on both strengths and weaknesses of NATO in the context of the conflict with Ukraine. Most of the men in their focus group seemed to think NATO is weakening. As one male participant posited, “In principle, I can say that NATO remains at the same level, but at the same time, those states that have NATO bases on their territory are weakening due to pressure from the United States. European countries...the economy of European countries, we can say, has already collapsed.” However, a few male participants disagreed, noting that NATO’s budget is “10 times larger than ours” and “they are starting to get stronger, because new countries are joining them.” Female focus group participants were divided on whether the military operation strengthened or weakened NATO. As one woman offered, “Financially they have been weakened after such spending,” prompting

another woman to counter, “I think that [NATO is] strengthening, because they have expanded in quantitative terms, they have trained, they have...updated their weapons, so how did they weaken? They’re doing great.”

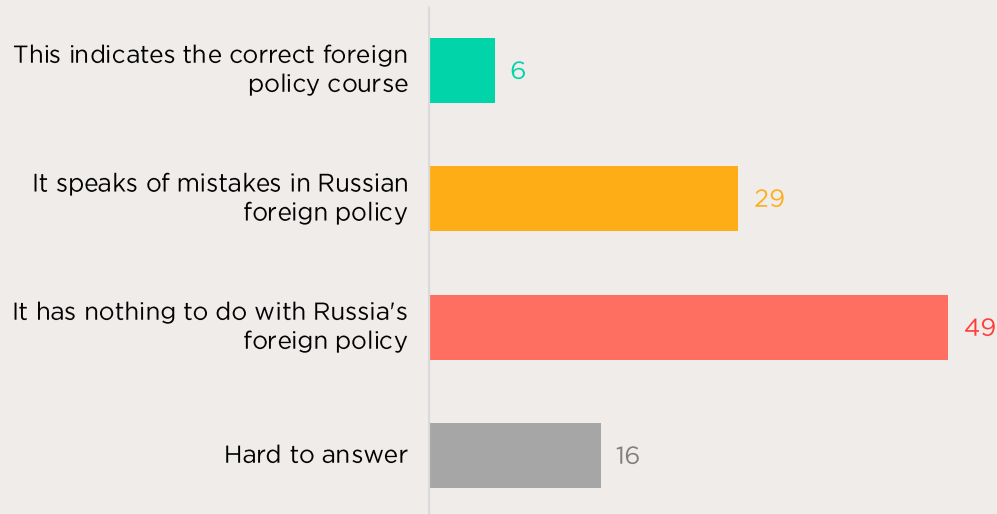
Most Do Not Believe Russia Is Responsible for Finland and Sweden Joining NATO

As some of the quotes above reflect, Russians cannot deny that NATO is enlarging. Finland’s membership is official, and Sweden is on its way. And in a twist from when the subject was last seriously discussed, France’s position—which strongly opposed NATO membership for Ukraine in 2008—has shifted to a position “[now closer to that of Poland than Germany](#)” (Poland is advocating for Ukrainian NATO membership while Germany wants to delay it). And yet, in the May survey, almost half of Russians were unwilling to accept this as a byproduct of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine (49%; see figure next page). One male focus group participant offered this view: “To be honest, I don’t think Finland and Sweden wanted to join NATO because they are afraid that [Russia] will seize their territories. I think it was done simply because the United States wanted it.” Another man thought the Finns and Swedes might fear a Russian attack, but “the most obvious answer is that they were pressured to join [NATO] by the United States.”

Roughly three in 10 Russians, however, viewed NATO enlargement as a sign of mistakes in Russia’s foreign policy (29%). This view was more common among the Muscovite focus group participants, as one man said, “I think this [war] is a good reason [for Sweden and Finland] to try to join, and...I think they see a threat from Russia, in this regard, that’s why they joined NATO.”

Foreign Policy on NATO Enlargement

In recent months, Finland and Sweden applied to join NATO. Do you think this demonstrates that Russian foreign policy is on the right course, has made mistakes, or that their application is unrelated to Russia's foreign policy? (%)



May 25 - 31, 2023 | n = 1,603

LEVADA CENTER / CHICAGO COUNCIL SURVEYS

Conclusion

Both the general public opinion poll and the Moscow-based focus groups suggest some degree of confusion among Russians around the threat NATO poses and how to leverage any success against the Western bloc. This could be due to several factors. While the Russian media landscape presented NATO as a threat for years and the cause of the conflict, NATO countries have not taken any direct military action against Russia. Second, while there are concerns among Russians about what Ukrainian membership would mean for Russian security, that's still unlikely to occur while the war is going on. And while NATO is seen as a threat in the longer-term, most Russians feel it is unlikely that the situation with Ukraine will escalate into a conflict between NATO and their own country.

Survey Methodology

This survey was part of Levada's monthly omnibus survey. [Read the full methodology.](#)

For this particular wave of the Levada Center's monthly omnibus survey, the interviews were conducted between May 25–31, 2023, among a representative sample of all Russian urban and rural residents. The sample comprised 1,603 people 18 or older in 138 municipalities of 56 regions of the Russian Federation (including Crimea). The survey was conducted as a personal interview in respondents' homes. The answer distribution is presented as percentages of the total number of participants along with data from previous surveys.

The statistical error of these studies for a sample of 1,600 people (with a probability of 0.95) does not exceed:

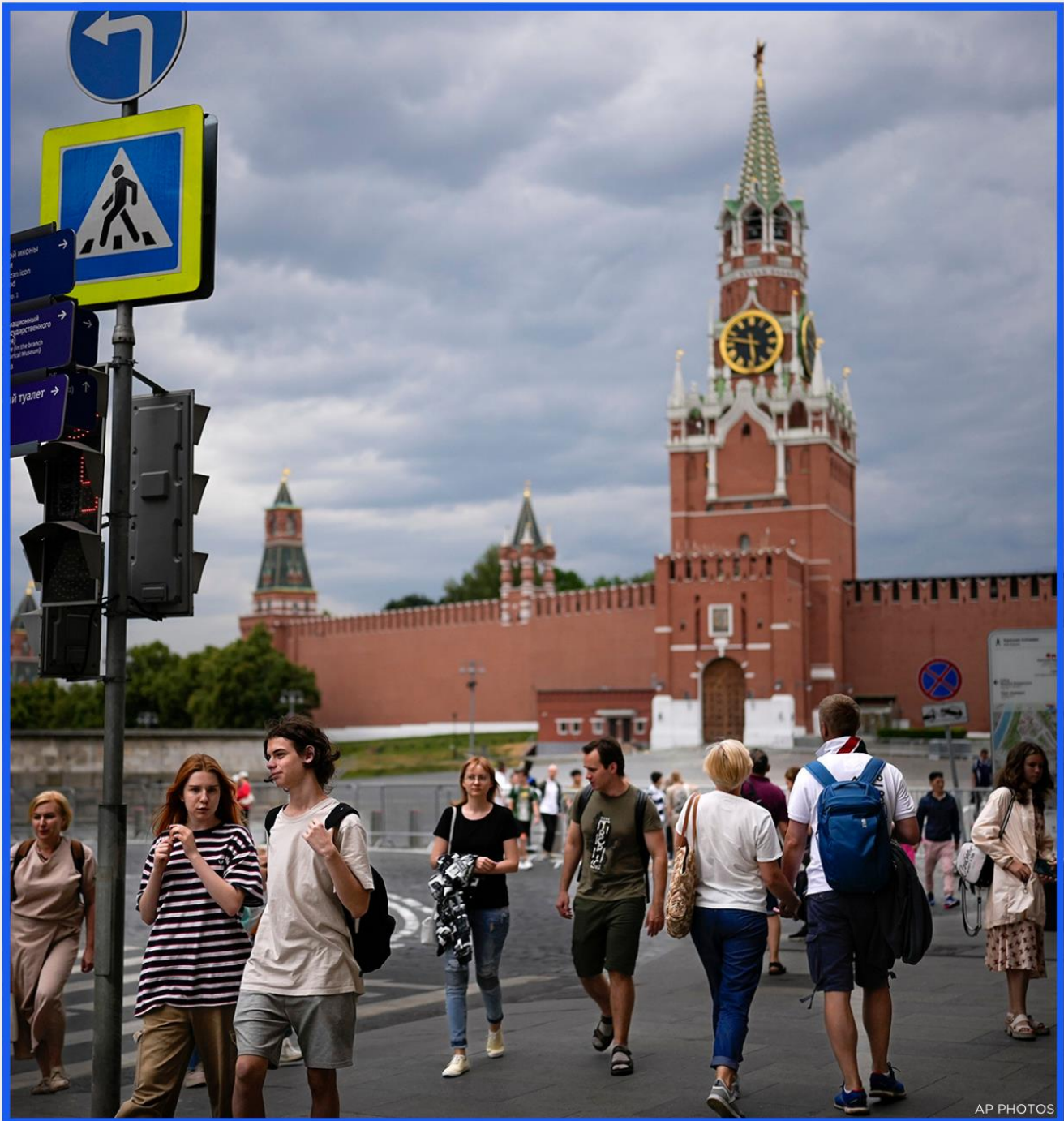
- 3.4 percent for indicators around 50%
- 2.9 percent for indicators around 25%/75%
- 2.0 percent for indicators around 10%/90%
- 1.5 percent for indicators around 5%/95%

Focus Group Methodology

The group discussions were conducted on April 20, 2023, at the Levada-Center's Studio, among eight men and eight women aged 20 and older. Participants were selected by professional recruiters in Moscow using the "snowball" method through recruiters' networks as well as those of previous participants of Levada-Center's focus groups and were screened by age and gender. Any person who had participated in a focus group less than one year prior to this study and anyone who worked in the field of marketing or political and social sciences was excluded from the selection process. All 16 participants represented average Muscovites with some level of awareness about political news and with a variety of political attitudes.

JULY 2023

Western Sanctions Have Largely Spared Ordinary Russians



By Lama El Baz, Dina Smeltz, Denis Volkov, and Stepan Goncharov

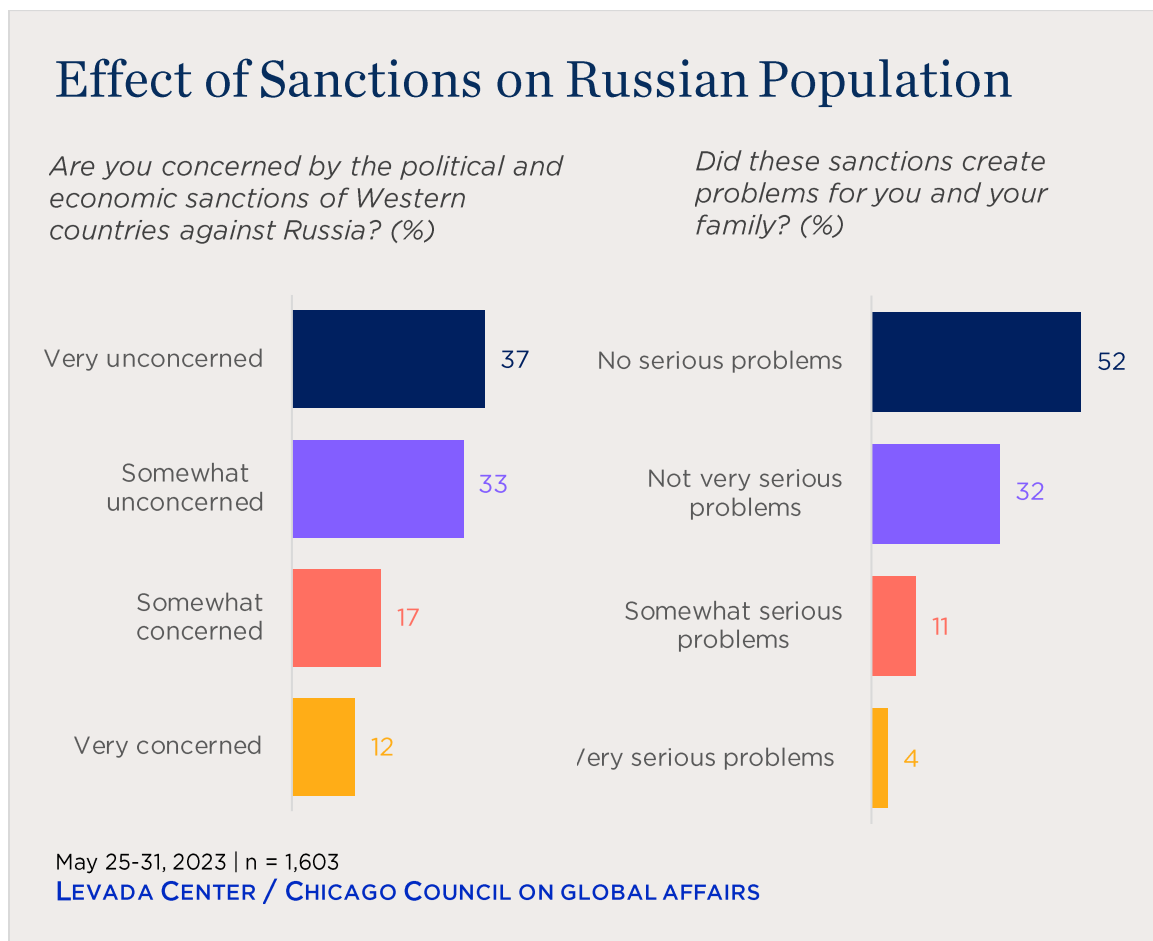
In a unified effort to curtail Russia's most recent military operation in Ukraine, the United States, the European Union, and their allies continue to impose sanctions packages and export controls on Moscow. According to the [US Department of the Treasury](#), the cumulative impact of the sanctions has significantly eroded Russia's military capacity, defense supply chains, and key sectors of its economy. However, polls show that it has not affected the daily lives of most Russians. A May 25–31, 2023, Chicago Council-Levada Center survey and April 2023 focus group discussions reveal that most Russians have grown less concerned about the sanctions and are not directly affected by them. The minority of Russians who say they have been affected by the sanctions may be expressing discontent with the socioeconomic conditions created by the war in Ukraine rather than a tangible impact of the sanctions and export controls levied against Russia.

Key Findings

- A strong majority of Russians (70%) are not concerned by the sanctions imposed on Russia, while 29 percent of Russians remain concerned. This is the lowest level of concern reported since 2017, when only 28 percent of Russians reported feeling concerned about the sanctions.
- Eight in 10 Russians report that the sanctions levied against Russia have not created serious problems for themselves or their families, while 15 percent say they have experienced somewhat or very serious problems.
- A majority of those who say they have experienced serious problems as a result of the sanctions imposed on Russia express support for the actions of the Russian military forces in Ukraine (61%), though at a lower level than the overall population (76%).
- Russians who report experiencing serious problems as a result of the sanctions have the same median income as those who do not report experiencing serious problems. They are also more likely to voice more favorable views of the West and are more disapproving of Russian President Vladimir Putin than the general public.

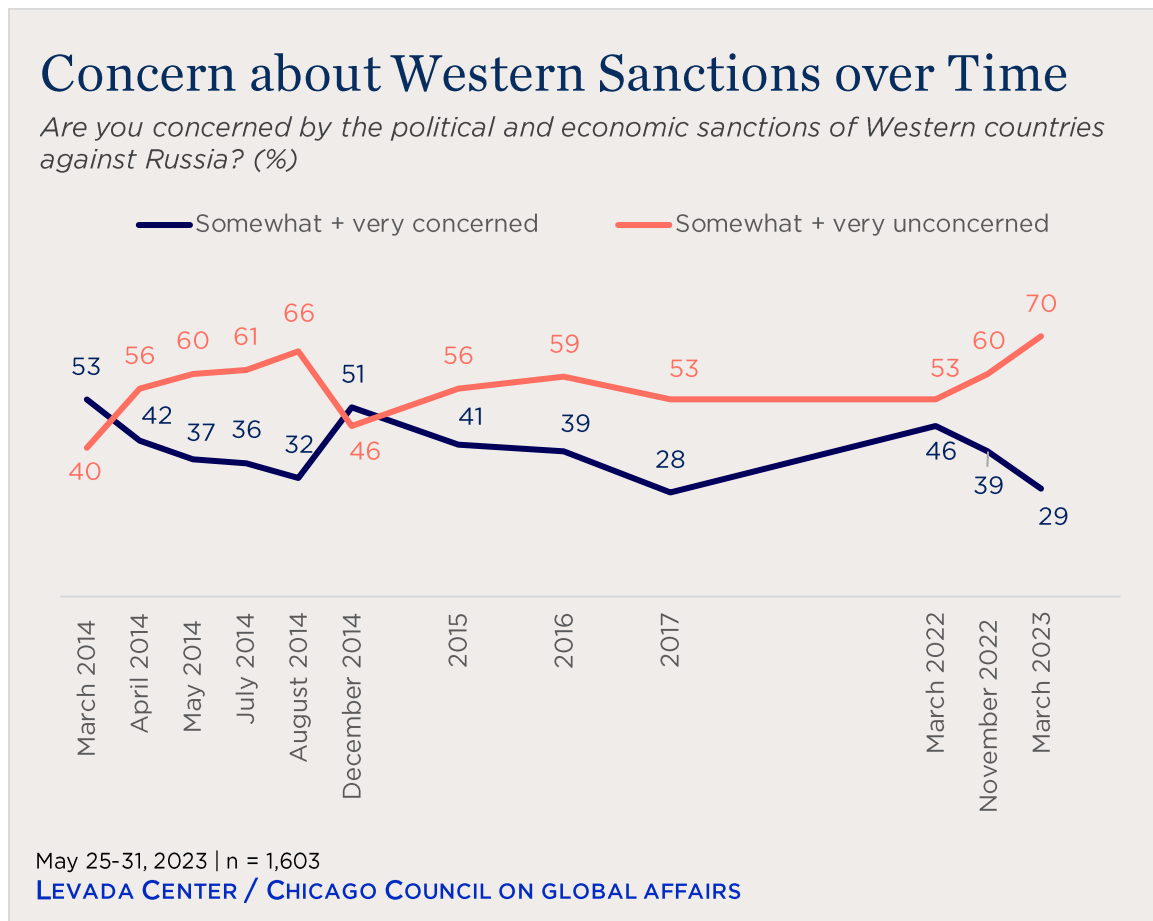
Fewer Russians Now Concerned about Sanctions

The Russian economy [remains relatively resilient](#), despite Russia being one of the world's most sanctioned countries, with almost 13,000 restrictions spanning government officials, imports and exports, financial institutions, and companies in key economic sectors. To counter these penalties, Moscow has turned to other trading partners like China, Turkey, and India to maintain its footing amid an already costly war without decreasing living standards for the Russian population and triggering political backlash.



The majority of Russians (84%) report that the sanctions have not created serious problems for themselves or their families—the highest percentage reported since 2014, when sanctions were first imposed on Russia for taking control of Crimea (at which point, 79% did not experience serious problems). On the other hand, only 15 percent of Russians say they have experienced somewhat or very serious problems

as a result of the sanctions; this is also the lowest percentage reported since 2014 (when 16% reported experiencing serious problems). Similarly, the majority of Russians (70%) say they are not concerned by the sanctions levied against Russia, while fewer than a third (29%) remain concerned. Today, Russians are 17 percentage points less concerned about the sanctions than they were in March 2022, at the onset of the military operation in Ukraine (when 46% were concerned). Notably, lack of concern about the sanctions among Russians is at its highest level since 2014.



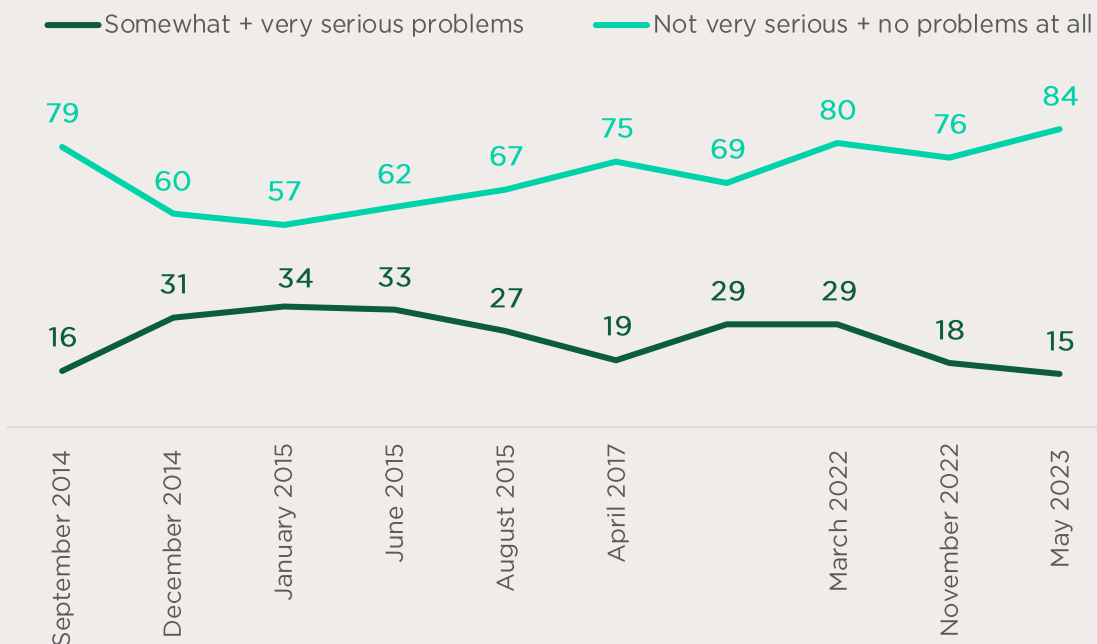
Conversations with focus group participants in Moscow (one with a group of men and another with a group of women) reveal that some Russians expected a greater economic strain from the sanctions than they experienced over the last year. One individual reported being “pleasantly surprised that despite all the sanctions, Russia pulled through; although no one in the world had thought that 11 sanction packages would be introduced, we are still afloat.” Another participant

noted that “despite the sanctions and the sort of closed borders, everyone still flies easily around the world through Turkey.”

However, when asked about import substitution, participants asserted that “we did not start producing more of anything; we are just buying things in China” and “we still haven’t replaced all the imported goods, we still do not know how to make a lot of things and will not soon learn how to produce.” One participant gave examples of how import substitution is falling short: “many goods have left the market...and the fact that we have no analogues for those goods that have left the market is also a big problem, including medicines, and the automotive industry.”

Problems Caused by Western Sanctions over Time

Did these sanctions create problems for you and your family? (%)



May 25-31, 2023 | n = 1,603

LEVADA CENTER / CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS

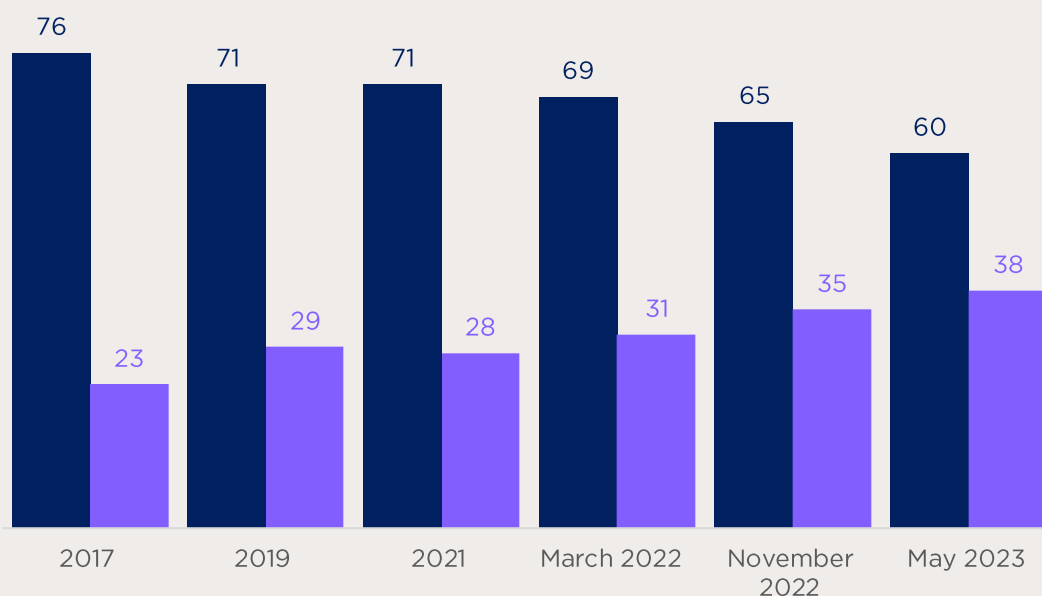
Bleak Economic Outlook among Affected Russians

Chicago Council-Levada Center polling also provides insight into how Russians perceive their economic status and household financial situation amid the war in Ukraine. Today, 43 percent of the population report they can only afford food and clothing, 12 percent report they can only afford food, and 5 percent report they cannot even afford food. In contrast, only 29 percent of the population say they can afford to buy a new domestic appliance, and an even smaller amount (6%) can afford to buy a new car; at the moment, only 3 percent of the population can afford to buy an apartment. While still bleak, Russians' perceptions of their household financial conditions have improved since the start of the military operation in March 2022, perhaps reflecting a sense of relief that the Russian economy has weathered the effects of Western-imposed sanctions.

Russian Household Economic Conditions

What category do you best consider yourself part of? (%)

- Cannot afford food + can only afford food + can only afford food and clothing
- Can afford large appliances + can afford a new car + can afford a new apartment



May 25-31, 2023 | n = 1,603

LEVADA CENTER / CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS

Western sanctions have been [designed to target](#) and concentrate their impact toward Russian elites and oligarchs rather than everyday Russians; the data suggest that the sanctions are working as intended, as they have mostly spared the public from additional economic hardship. The median per capita income among those affected by the sanctions (those who say the sanctions have created serious problems for themselves or their families) and the overall population are about the same.

Polling also shows that Russians who are affected by the sanctions are more likely to disapprove of Vladimir Putin (36% vs. 15% overall) and have more favorable views toward the United States (23% vs. 12% overall) and the European Union (27% vs. 16% overall) than the overall population. Taken together, the data might indicate that Russians who report experiencing serious problems as a result of the sanctions may be more pessimistic about their socioeconomic situations than the general public because of a combination of their less negative views of the West, less positive attitudes toward Putin and the war in Ukraine, and the impacts the war has had on their lifestyle.

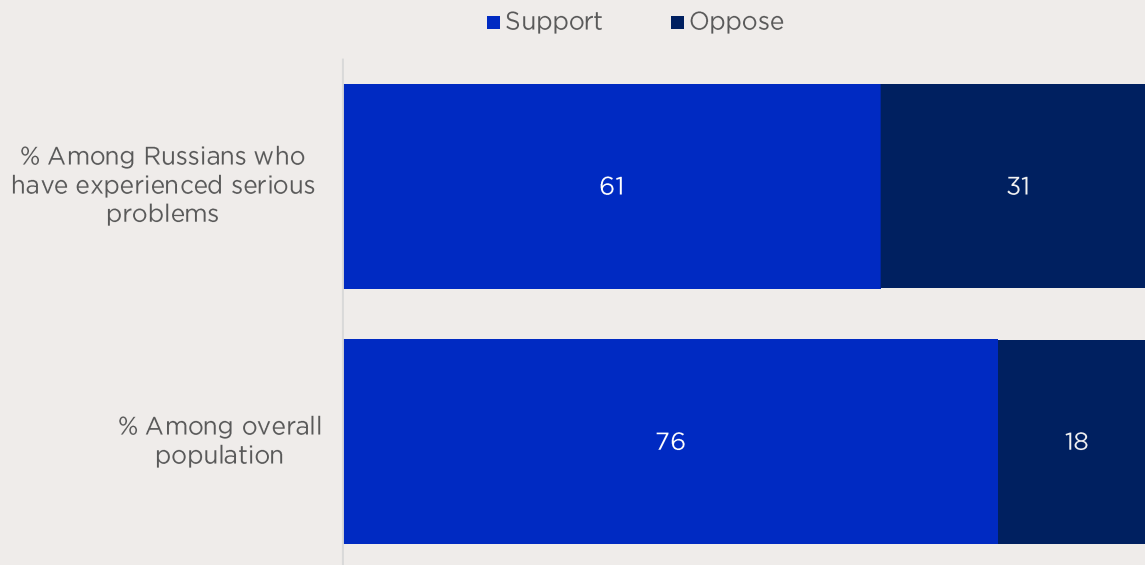
[Sanctions Don't Have Much Bearing on Support for Military Action](#)

As the Russian military operation in Ukraine enters its 16th month, the United States, the European Union, and their allies [continue to expand](#) and strengthen the sanctions and export controls they have levied against Russia in hopes of pressuring Moscow to enter peace negotiations.

The survey data show a modest relationship between Russians who have experienced serious problems as a result of Western-imposed sanctions and support for the Russian military operation. Those affected by the sanctions are only 13 percentage points more likely to oppose the actions of the Russian military forces in Ukraine than the general public (31% vs. 18% overall), and still overwhelmingly support the military operation.

Support for Actions of Military Forces in Ukraine

Do you support the actions of the Russian military forces in Ukraine? (%)



May 25-31, 2023 | n = 1,603

LEVADA CENTER / CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS

Although they largely support the actions of the Russian military forces in Ukraine, Russians who say they have been affected by the sanctions are, interestingly, 21 percentage points more likely to consider the military operation more damaging than beneficial to Russia than the general public (62% vs. 41% overall). There are also differences in attitudes toward negotiations between those who have been affected by the sanctions and the general public: those who have reported experiencing serious problems as a result of the sanctions are 14 percentage points more likely to prefer negotiating over continuing the military operation in Ukraine than the general public (59% vs. 45% overall).

Attitudes Toward Military Operation in Ukraine

Do you think it is necessary to continue military actions or start negotiations? (%)

■ Continue military operation

■ Pursue peace negotiations

% Among Russians who have experienced serious problems

35

59

% Among overall population

48

45

Do you think that the military operation in Ukraine has been more beneficial or more damaging? (%)

■ More beneficial

■ More damaging

% Among Russians who have experienced serious problems

25

62

% Among overall population

38

41

May 25-31, 2023 | n = 1,603

LEVADA CENTER / CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS

Among focus group participants, the consensus is that Russia should not make concessions for the sake of lifting sanctions, since, according to one individual, the policy of sanctions relief in exchange for some compromises is “more beneficial to other countries than to Russia.” It is evident that because most Russians are unaffected by the sanctions levied against Russia, they feel no pressing desire or economic motivation to enter negotiations or make concessions to Ukraine and the West.

Conclusion

Of all the weapons in its diplomatic armory, economic sanctions and export controls seem to be the ammunition of choice for the United States to address Russia's military operation in Ukraine. Although the continued efforts of the United States and its allies to end the war through economic coercion are not yet bearing the intended fruit of getting the Kremlin to withdraw Russian forces from Ukraine, data from this survey show that at the very least, the West has been successful in sparing the Russian population from additional economic strain.

Survey Methodology

This survey was part of Levada's monthly omnibus survey. [Read the full methodology.](#)

For this particular wave of the Levada Center's monthly omnibus survey, the interviews were conducted between May 25–31, 2023, among a representative sample of all Russian urban and rural residents. The sample comprised 1,603 people 18 or older in 138 municipalities of 56 regions of the Russian Federation (including Crimea). The survey was conducted as a personal interview in respondents' homes. The answer distribution is presented as percentages of the total number of participants along with data from previous surveys.

The statistical error of these studies for a sample of 1,600 people (with a probability of 0.95) does not exceed:

- 3.4 percent for indicators around 50%
- 2.9 percent for indicators around 25%/75%
- 2.0 percent for indicators around 10%/90%
- 1.5 percent for indicators around 5%/95%

Focus Group Methodology

The group discussions were conducted on April 20, 2023, at the Levada-Center's Studio, among eight men and eight women aged 20 and older. Participants were selected by professional recruiters in Moscow using the "snowball" method through recruiters' networks as well as those of previous participants of Levada-Center's focus groups

and were screened by age and gender. Any person who had participated in a focus group less than one year prior to this study and anyone who worked in the field of marketing or political and social sciences was excluded from the selection process. All 16 participants represented average Muscovites with some level of awareness about political news and with a variety of political attitudes.

MARCH 2024

Generation Putin: Proud Russians but Disengaged



By Dina Smeltz, Lama El Baz, Denis Volkov, and Stepan Goncharov

Experiencing no leader other than President Vladimir Putin, Russians between the ages of 18–34 are described as being “[raised on a diet of political indifference](#)” and, at least at this point, seem unlikely to redirect Russia’s political future. A just-completed Chicago Council on Global Affairs-Levada Center survey of Russia’s youth population finds a generation that is largely positive about their own lives and career prospects but apathetic about participating in the political life of their country.

Key Findings

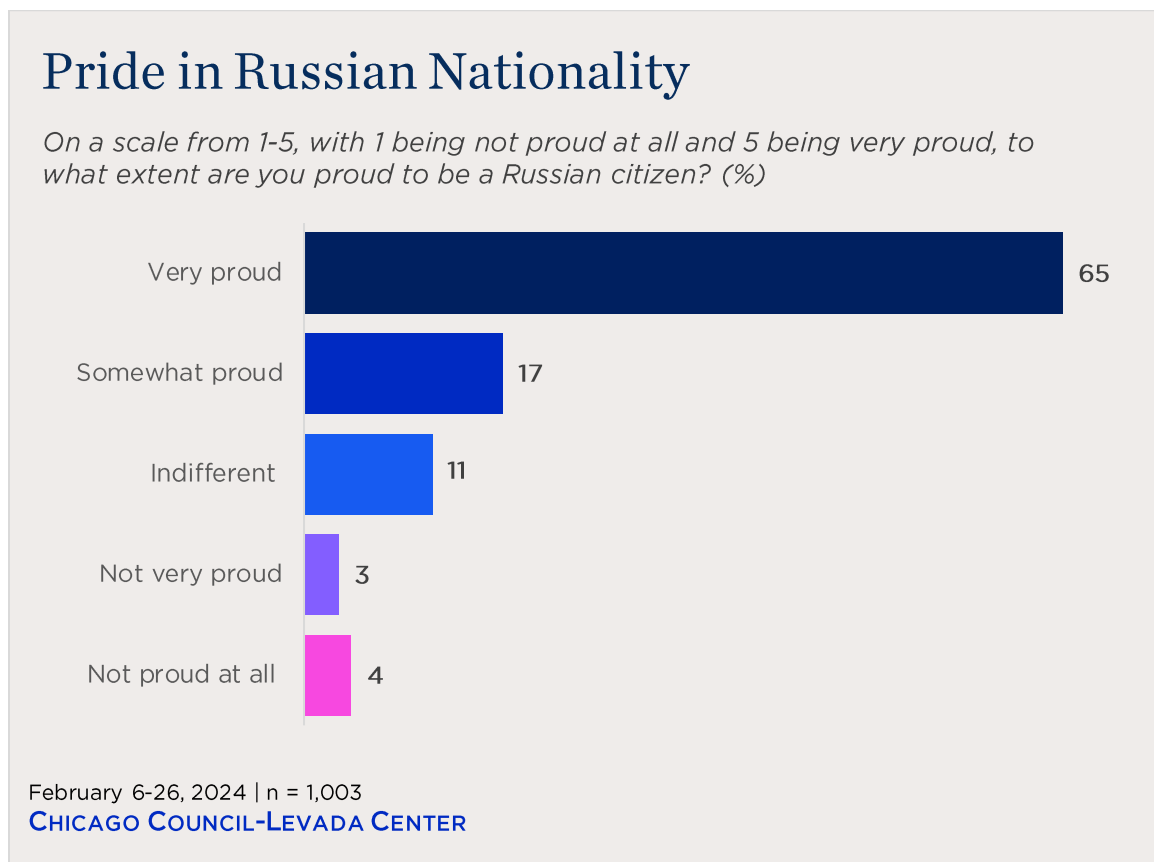
- Eight in 10 young Russians (82%) say they are very (65%) or somewhat (17%) proud to be Russian citizens, while few say they are not very (3%) or not at all proud (4%).
- A majority say their political views are the same (25%) or somewhat similar (32%) to those of their parents; a third say their political views are somewhat different (20%) or very different (13%) from their parents’ views.
- Just under half of Russian youths say democracy is preferable to any other kind of government (48%), while roughly equal amounts are amenable to authoritarian governments (20%) or do not think it matters for people like them (21%).
- Asked before this past weekend’s presidential vote, just 30 percent say they have voted in an election in the past two years, and even fewer say they have signed a petition (21%), filed a complaint (21%), participated in public hearings and committees (15%), or participated in a protest (2%).
- When thinking about their lives in 10 years, three in 10 young Russians say they feel optimistic and two in 10 say they feel excited.
- These positive attitudes may be attributed to their optimism about career prospects. Young Russians are more likely to say that career opportunities are increasing (47%) than decreasing (22%) or stagnant (24%).

Most Russian Young Adults Are Very Proud Citizens

The Putin Generation—as young adults in Russia are often labeled—is entering adulthood at a time in which Putin’s tenure is poised to rival

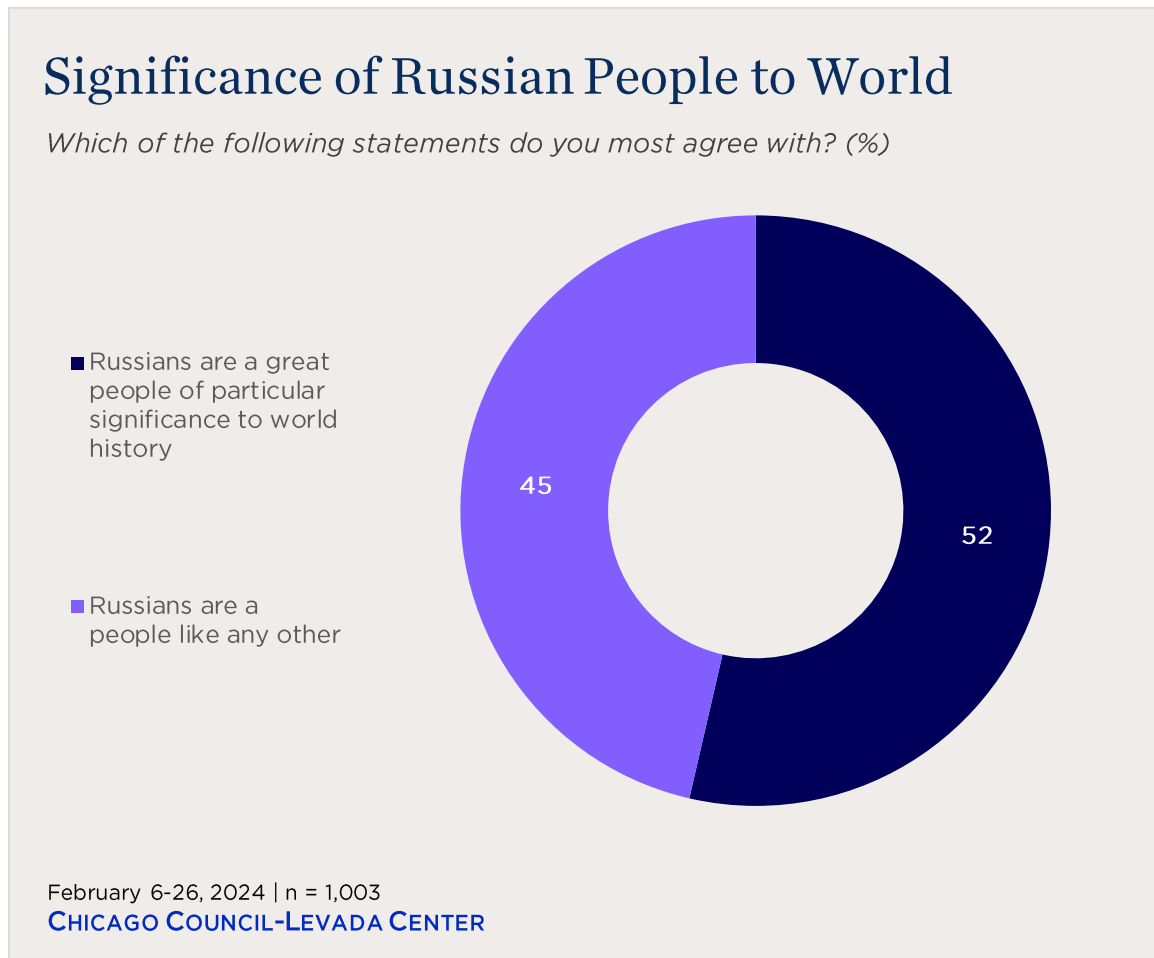
the 31-year reign of Soviet leader Joseph Stalin. A [February 2024 Levada Center survey](#) found that the majority of young Russians view Putin favorably (84%). In addition, 68 percent of Russian young adults said they believed things were going in the right direction.

Data from the most recent Chicago Council-Levada Center survey also shows a generation with great pride in their nationality. Two-thirds of young Russians say they are very proud to be a Russian citizen (65%) and another 17 percent say they are slightly proud. Just 7 percent say they are not very or not at all proud, while one in 10 say they are indifferent toward their citizenship (11%).



Although the majority of Russian young adults are very proud of their nationality, they are more modest when it comes to the unique significance of the Russian people to world history. A little over half of young Russians say that they are a great people of particular significance to world history (52%), while slightly less than half say they are a people like any other (45%). This divide is similar to those noted

in [previous Council polling of young Americans](#), who tend to say that the United States is no greater than other countries.



Although a considerable share of Russia's youth population thinks they are a uniquely significant people, this most recent reading is the lowest level ever recorded by the Levada Center. The Center first started posing this question to young Russians in 1999, at which point 57 percent affirmed their significance to world history.¹ By 2017, the share of young adults that said Russians were a uniquely significant population rose to 64 percent but dropped by two percentage points in 2018. This survey—which used a different mode of interviewing than the previous face-to-face surveys—suggests that fewer Russian young

¹ Between 1999-2018, the Levada Center posed this question to survey respondents via a face-to-face interview method. By contrast, the most recent survey used a computer assisted telephone (mobile phone) interview method; as a result of the different methodologies, the responses are not directly comparable but may suggest an important shift.

adults are now convinced that they are a unique population (from 62% in 2018 to 52% in 2024) (see Appendix Table 1).

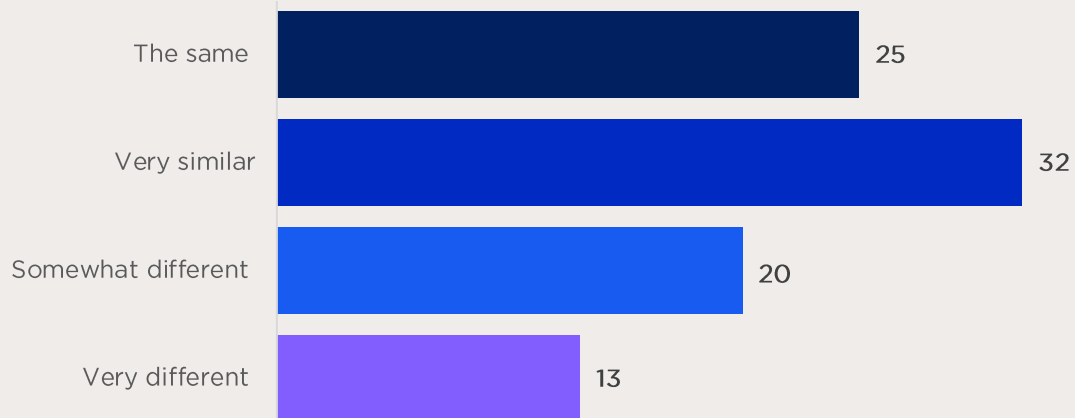
Young Russians Say They Share Similar Political Views with Parents

Data from [previous Levada Center surveys](#) show that young Russians are more likely to express confidence in Putin and national institutions, like the government, media, and local authorities than their parents and grandparents. Much of this confidence can be attributed to state efforts to reorient the educational system and instill a more patriotic ideology in students. These efforts include [revising school history curricula](#) to emphasize the positive aspects of the Soviet era and the Soviet role in World War II, with the ultimate intention of aligning classroom teachings with Kremlin thinking.

According to Levada Center adviser Lev Gudkov, a Russian sociologist who previously served as the Center's director, such [efforts by the state reinforce](#) anti-Western ideals, a lack of political alternatives to Putin, and the collective sense that Russia is a great power among younger generations. In this way, he notes, the attitudes and perspectives of Russian young adults resemble those of older generations.

Russian Youth Political Views Compared to Parents

To what extent do your political views align with those of your parents? (%)



February 6-26, 2024 | n = 1,003

CHICAGO COUNCIL-LEVADA CENTER

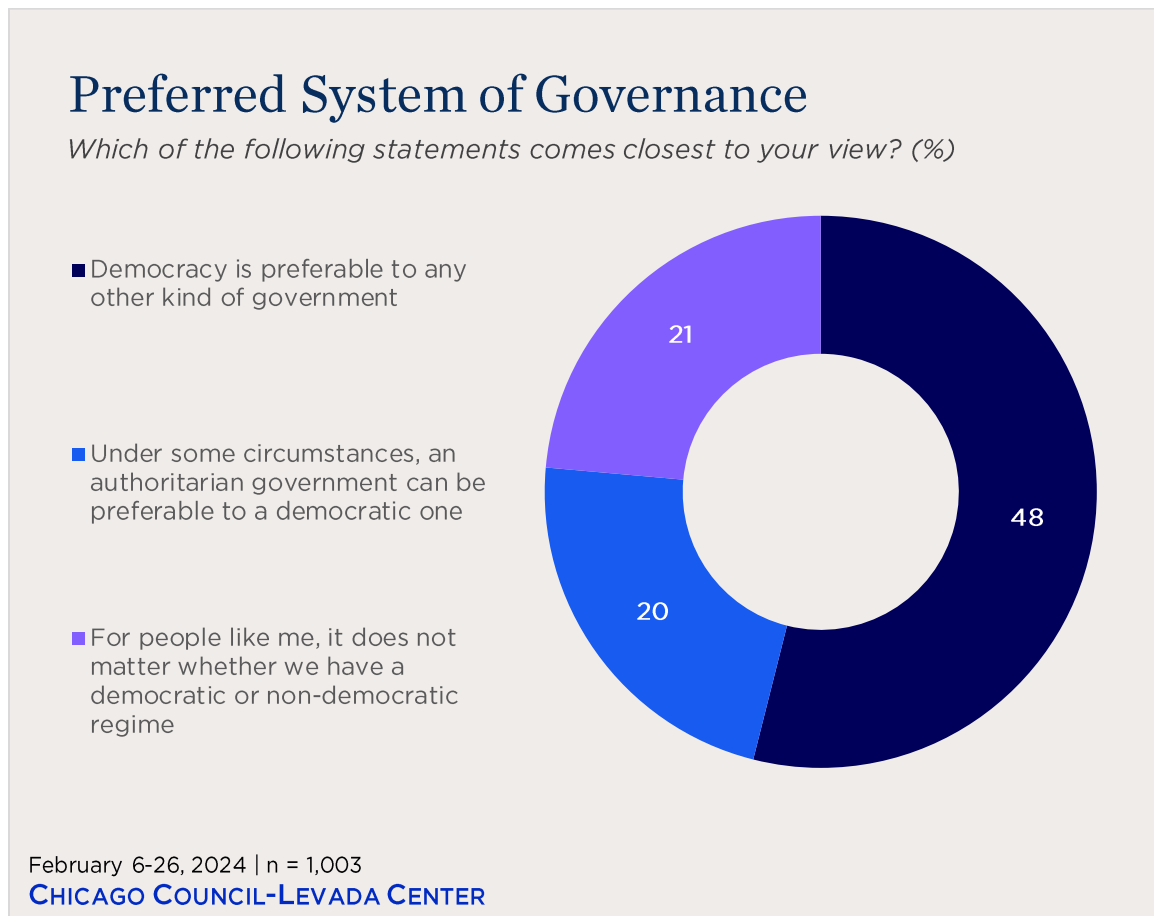
These polling results seem to back up that assertion, as most young Russians do not think their views diverge greatly from those of their parents. A majority of Russian youth say that their views are the same (25%) or similar (32%) to those of their parents. By contrast, just a third say they are somewhat (20%) or very different (13%).

Plurality Are Anxious about Future Political System

When asked to consider Russia's political situation 10 years into the future, a plurality of young Russians say they feel anxious (32%) and another one in 10 feel pessimistic (9%). However, sizable percentages are optimistic (22%) or excited (14%).

The data show that those who are pessimistic about their country's political future are more likely than others to support a democratic system of government. As a whole, nearly half of young Russians believe that democracy is preferable to any other form of government (48%)—more than twice as many of those who say an authoritarian government might be more preferable under certain circumstances

(20%). An additional 21 percent say that it doesn't matter for people like them if their government is a democratic or authoritarian system.

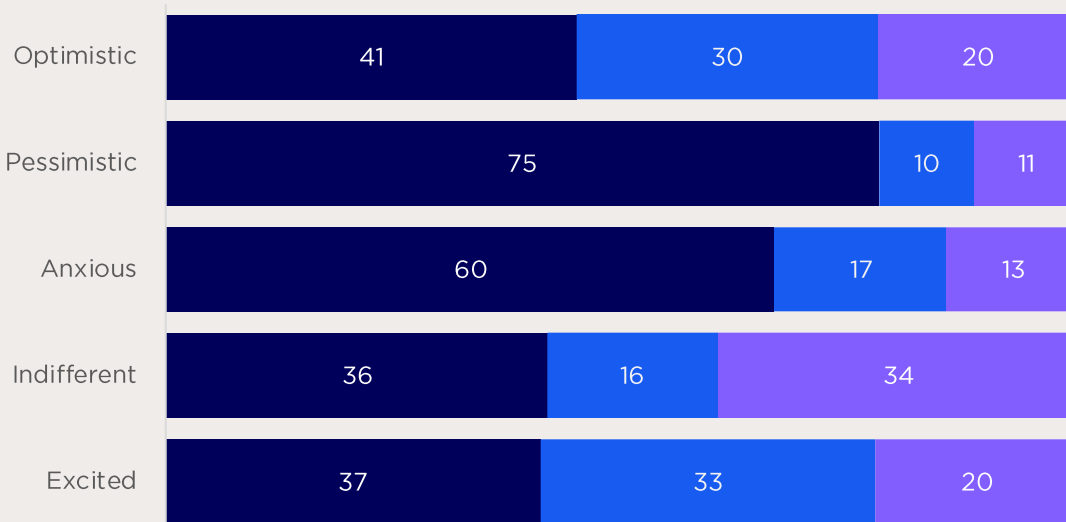


Those who are pessimistic (9%) or anxious (32%) about the future political state of the country are more likely to prefer a democratic regime (75% pessimistic, 60% anxious) than those who have a more positive political outlook (41% optimistic, 37% excited).

Feelings Toward Russia's Political Situation by Regime Preference

When you think about the following in the next 10 years, which of the following best describes how you feel? (%)

- Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government
- Under some circumstances, an authoritarian government can be preferable to a democratic one
- For people like me, it does not matter whether we have a democratic or non-democratic regime



February 6-26, 2024 | n = 1,003

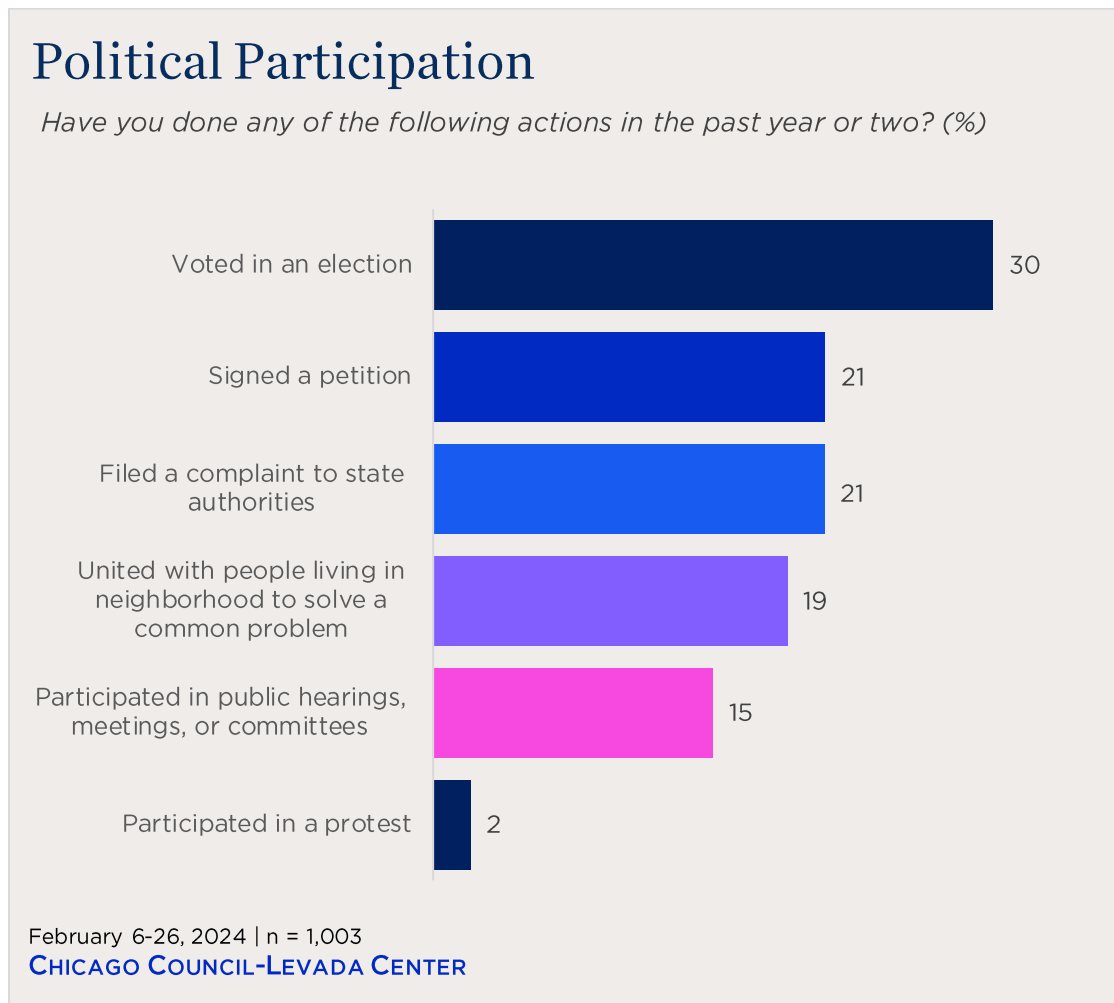
CHICAGO COUNCIL-LEVADA CENTER

Relatively Few Young Russians Vote or Participate Politically

Most young Russians appear personally detached from politics. For example, few Russian young adults say they are interested in pursuing a career in politics or government (5%), and just slightly more are interested in state security or the military (7%).

Moreover, just 30 percent say they have voted in an election in the past two years, and even fewer say they have signed a petition (21%), united with neighbors to solve a common problem (19%), filed a complaint to solve a problem (21%), participated in public hearings, meetings, or

committees (15%), or participated in a protest (2%) in the same time period.²



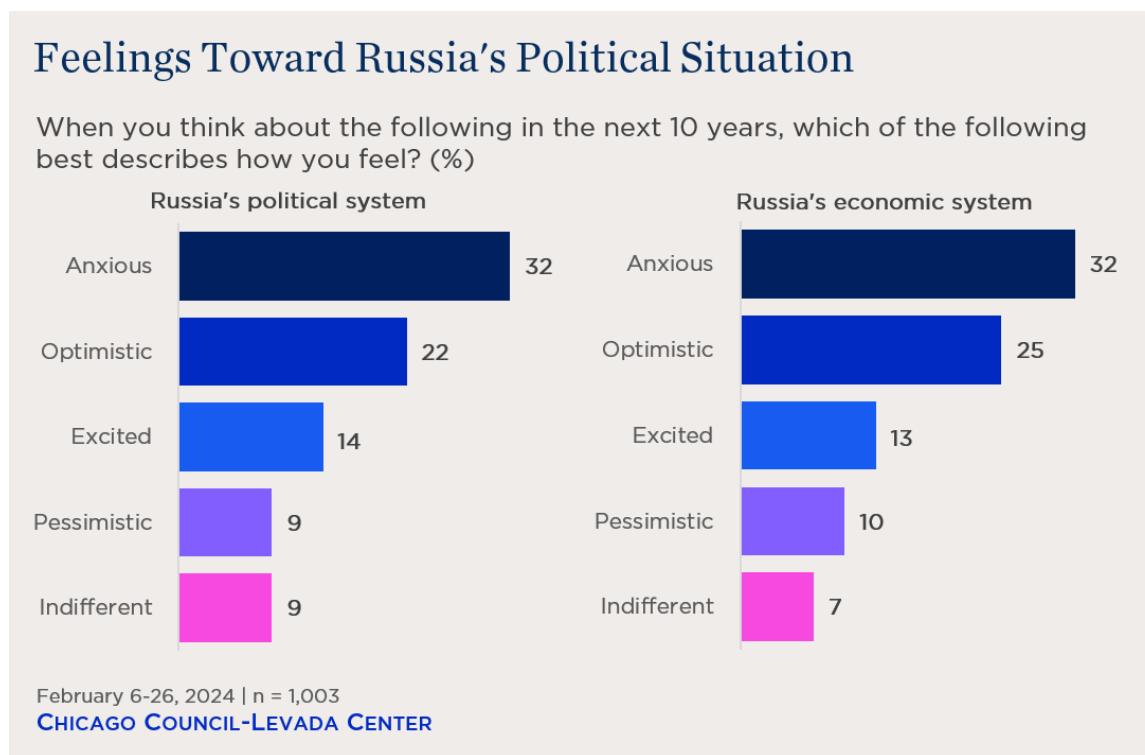
Young Russians Have Mixed Economic Outlook

Young Russians, and particularly those between the ages of 18–24, tend to have a more optimistic economic outlook than the overall population. Levada researchers attribute this to a generational self-confidence and

² The last parliamentary election was held in September 2021, almost three years ago. Since then, there have only been regional elections that typically draw a lower voter turnout, so it may not be unusual that only 30 percent of respondents say they have voted in an election in the past two years.

self-reliance, especially when compared to older generations, who rely heavily on state institutions for confidence.

According to the most recent Chicago Council-Levada Center survey, about four in 10 Russian young adults say they feel optimistic (25%) or excited (13%) when thinking about the Russian economy in the next 10 years, but the same proportion say they feel either anxious (32%) or pessimistic (10%).

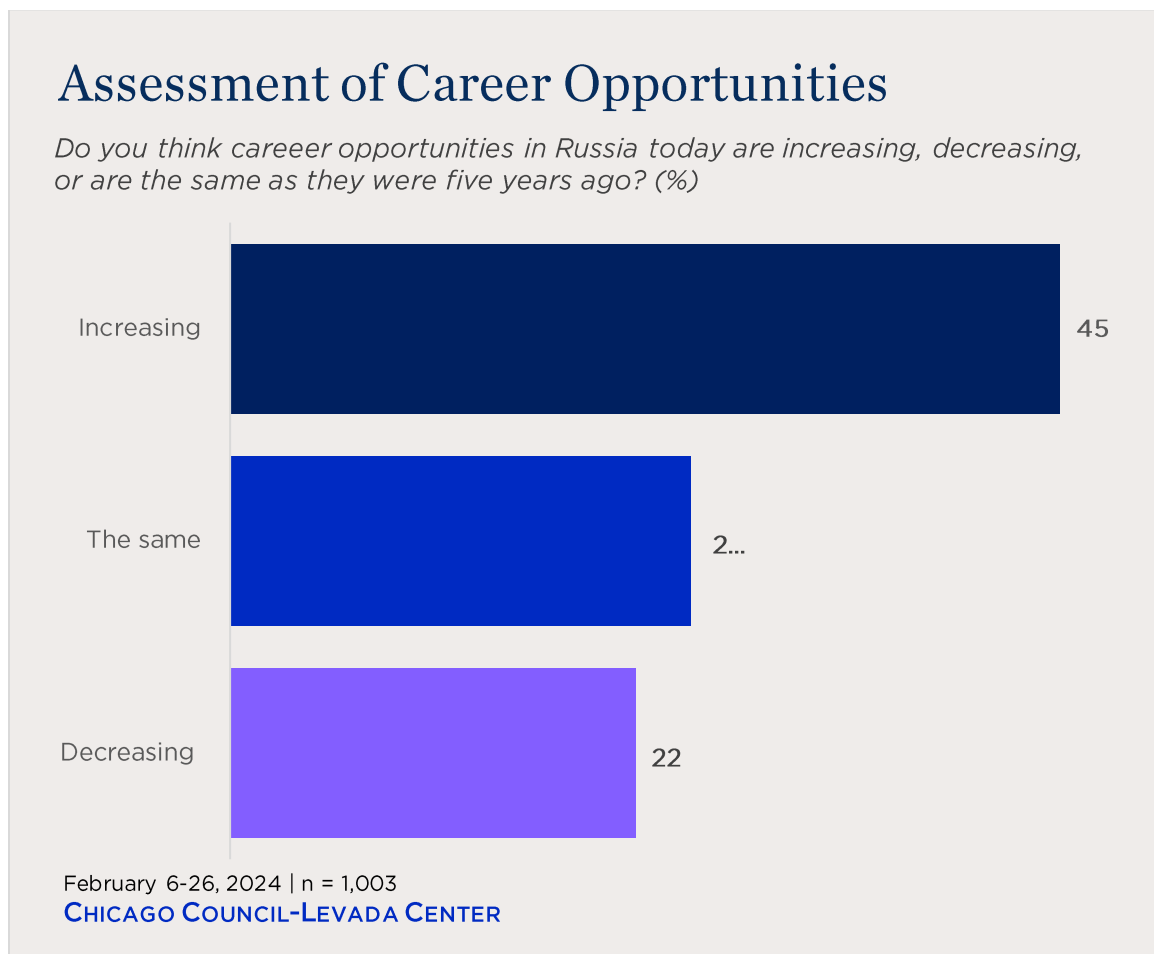


When asked what potential careers they are most interested in pursuing, Russian young adults most often choose some form of economic activity, including business, finance, entrepreneurship, or retail (25%). Others select professions related to business, like information technology (8%), manufacturing (7%), engineering (6%), and construction (6%) (see Appendix Table 2). By contrast, few from this generation of Russians are interested in government-related fields, like politics and government (5%) or the army (7%).

This data reflects the current state of economic affairs in Russia. According to [Grant Thornton](#), the fastest-growing sectors of the Russian economy are energy and fuels, information technology,

pharmaceuticals, and agriculture. Since 2011, two-thirds of the Russian workforce has worked in the [private sector](#).

When asked about career opportunities in Russia today compared to five years ago, young Russians are more likely to say they are increasing (47%) than decreasing (22%) or stagnant (24%).

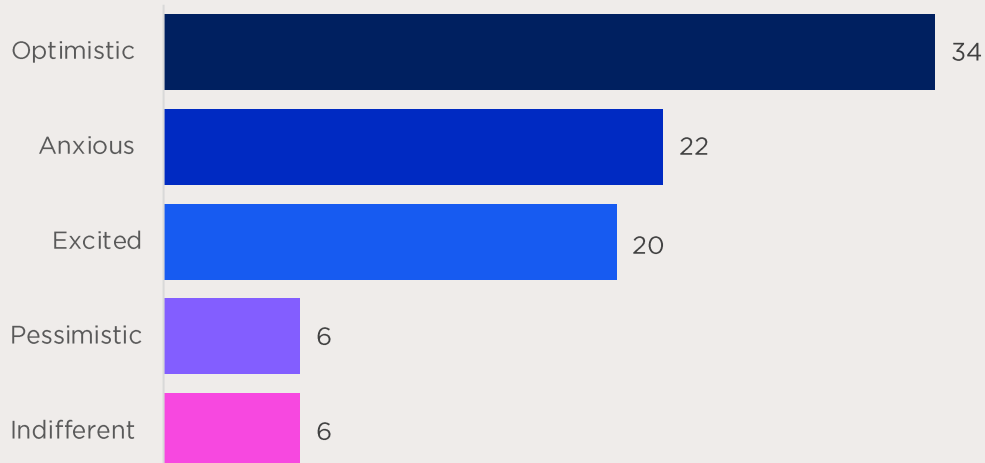


Russian Youth Positive about Their Own Lives in 10 Years

Russian young adults have more favorable views toward their future lives than they do toward Russia's economic and political future, likely because they have more agency over their life paths than they do over the latter. A plurality says that when thinking about their lives in 10 years, they feel optimistic (34%), and another two in 10 say they are excited (20%). About three in 10 combined say they are either anxious (22%) or pessimistic (6%).

Feelings Toward Life in 10 Years

When you think about your life in 10 years, which of the following best describes how you feel? (%)



February 6-26, 2024 | n = 1,003

CHICAGO COUNCIL-LEVADA CENTER

Reflecting this optimism, relatively few young Russians say they have ever thought about emigrating to another country (30%). That share is lower now than that recorded in previous polls, including a 2019 Levada Center survey that found [53 percent of young Russians wanted to emigrate](#). The percentage of those thinking about emigrating may be much lower today because many young Russians have already left, [especially in the aftermath of Russia's February 2022 incursion into Ukraine](#). But now, some may not even consider the idea of emigration because the process of obtaining a visa or international residency is expensive and complex.

Among those who say they have thought about emigrating, most cite the political situation in Russia (42%), an unstable economic situation inside the country (40%), and higher standards of living abroad (39%) as reasons why. Fewer say it is because of better business conditions abroad (17%) or to avoid military conscription (16%).

Conclusion

In the last couple of years, surveys by the Levada Center have shown that young Russians were more supportive of [opposition figures](#) and less supportive of the Russian [military action in Ukraine](#) than older Russians. However, the most recent Chicago Council-Levada Center survey shows that young people do not perceive a great deal of daylight between their own political views and those of their parents, and are just as likely to express nationalistic feelings of pride.

Russian institutions such as the workplace, schools, and the army [tend to reinforce](#) the notion that Russia is a great power and that there are no political alternatives to the current regime. In addition, the Kremlin seems to have succeeded in numbing this generation toward politics by suppressing and discrediting critics of the regime, stifling independent media, and feeding its citizens a steady diet of state media. While this might create an apolitical generation for years to come, it also seems to leave the Putin Generation fairly upbeat about their personal futures.

Appendix

Appendix Table 1.

Question 9. Which of the following statements do you most agree with?

Views on the significance of Russian population to world history (%)			
	Russians are a great people of particular significance to world history	Russians are a people like any other	Difficult to answer
1999	57	36	7
2016	57	34	9
2017	64	32	4
2018	62	35	3
2024	52	45	3

Appendix Table 2.

Question 6. Which one of the following career paths are you most interested in pursuing?

Career Paths of Interest (%)	
Career Paths	(%)
Business/Finance/Entrepreneurship	24
Law	3
Medicine/Healthcare	7
Engineering	7
Construction	6
Manufacturing	7
Tourism	3
Education/Academia	5
Politics/Government	6
State Security/Siloviki/Army	6
Information technology	11
Journalism	1
Blogging/Vlogging	2
Entertainment	3
Psychology	0
Farming	2
Sports	0
Housework	0
Art	2
Logistics/Transportation	1
Ecology	0
Other	1
Difficult to answer	2

Methodology

This Chicago Council on Global Affairs-Levada Center survey was conducted between February 6–26, 2024 among a weighted national sample of 1,003 adults between the ages of 18–34 living in Russia. This sample was obtained from a randomly generated sample of mobile phone numbers, which were used to contact respondents and survey

them via a computer-assisted telephone interviewing method. The margin of error for the full sample is ± 3.1 percentage points at a 95% confidence interval.

The eligibility of respondents was verified based on their answers to questions about age and their region of residence. For the study, respondents residing within the territory of Russia between the ages of 18–34 years old were considered eligible to be surveyed.

APRIL 2024

Young Russians Feel More Threatened by Terrorism Than War in Ukraine



By Lama El Baz, Dina Smeltz, Denis Volkov, and Stepan Goncharov

In his electoral victory speech last month, Russian President Vladimir Putin [committed to strengthening Russia's defense capacity](#), especially in the context of its war with Ukraine. However, the [recent terrorist attack on a concert venue](#) bordering Moscow has emphasized the importance of bolstering the country's counterterrorism efforts. The attack, for which the Islamic State claimed responsibility, killed 145 people, wounded another 551 people, and marks the deadliest act of terrorism on Russian soil in more than a decade.

Fielded on February 6-26, 2024—just a month prior to the attack—a joint survey by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs and the Levada Center finds that Russians between the ages of 18-34 consider international terrorism to be the most dangerous threat to Russia's national interests, even more so than the war in Ukraine. In addition, a plurality of young adults say protecting the country from direct military threats should be a top foreign policy priority.

Key Findings

- Seven in 10 young Russians consider international terrorism to be a very dangerous threat to Russia's national interests (69%)—more than the percentage of those who say the same about the war in Ukraine (50%).
- A plurality of Russian young adults say protecting the country from direct military threats should take precedence in the making of Russian foreign policy (36%).
- According to this poll and a separate February 2024 Levada Center survey of the Russian population, Russian young adults are significantly less likely than their elders to say they personally support the Russian military operation in Ukraine (65%, vs. 83% among Russians older than 45).
- Yet five in 10 young Russians think military spending on the war in Ukraine is just right (51%), while 25 percent think it is too much and 13 percent think it is not enough.
- Young Russians express more favorable views of the United States, the European Union, and Ukraine than their elders, and a majority (72%) say Russia should improve its relations with the United States and other Western nations.

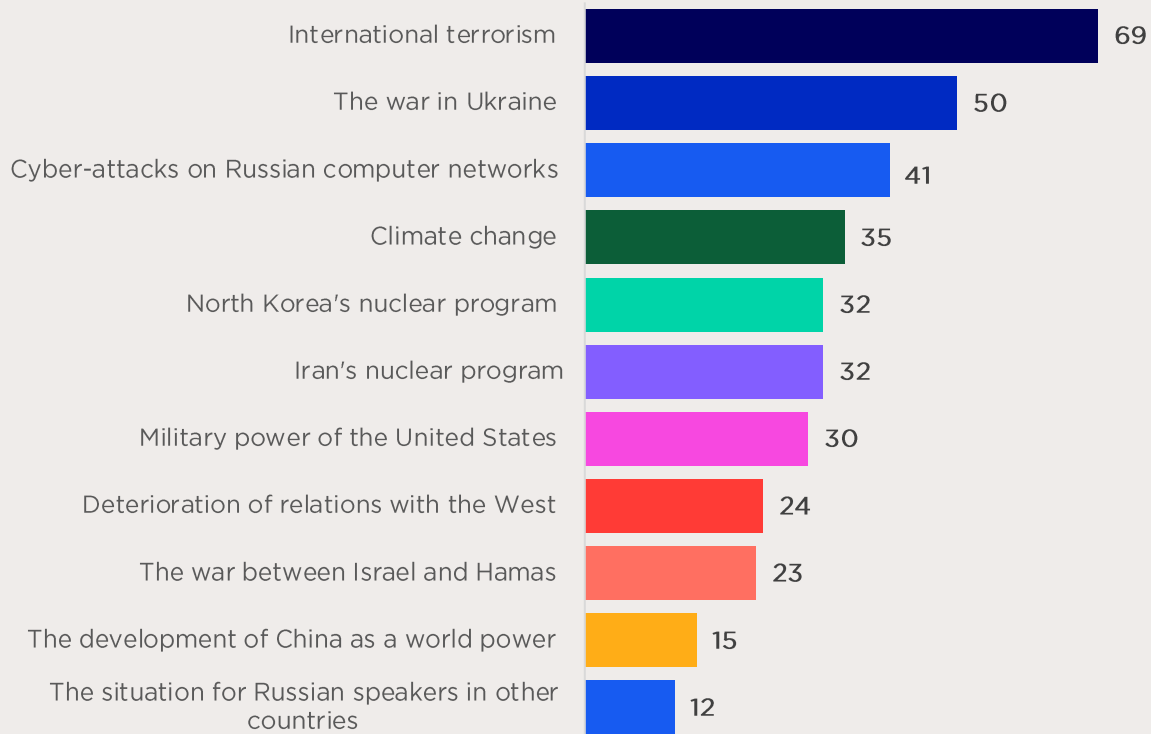
International Terrorism and Ukraine War Seen as Most Critical Threats to Russia

The devastating terrorist attack in Moscow confirms the fear of terrorism that young Russians expressed just a month prior in the Chicago Council on Global Affairs-Levada Center survey. The February 2024 poll found seven in 10 Russian young adults say international terrorism poses a very dangerous threat to Russia's national interests in the next 10 years (69%)—more than the number of those who said the same about the war in Ukraine (50%).

Heightened concerns about terrorism among young Russians may certainly be related to the war in Ukraine and Ukraine's recent string of [long-range drone attacks](#) and [railway diversions](#) in Russia, in particular. However, Russian young adults may also be expressing separate concerns about terrorist activity by other groups, like the Islamic State, who have [long resented the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and Putin's support for Bashar Al-Assad](#) in the Syrian civil war. Although the Islamic State claimed responsibility for the recent attack on Moscow's border, Russian state media continues to place blame on Ukraine.

Critical Threats to Russian National Interests

Below is a list of possible threats to Russia's national interests in the next 10 years. For each one, please tell me how dangerous this is for Russia in your view. (% very dangerous)



February 6-26, 2024 | n = 1,003

CHICAGO COUNCIL-LEVADA CENTER

Though to a lower degree than terrorism and the conflict in Ukraine, a sizable percentage of Russian youths also find cyber-attacks on Russian computer networks to be a very dangerous threat to Russian national interests (41%). Roughly a third of young Russians perceive climate change (35%) and both North Korea and Iran's nuclear programs (32% each) to be dangerous threats. While Putin has pointed to the protection of Russian speakers in Ukraine as a major motivation for the conflict with Kyiv, few Russian youth see the situation for Russian speakers abroad as a critical threat to Russia (12%).

Despite these concerns about foreign policy threats, a plurality of Russian youth say they are personally more concerned about internal threats (43%) than threats outside of Russia (27%). A quarter of young Russians say they are concerned about both threats equally (26%).

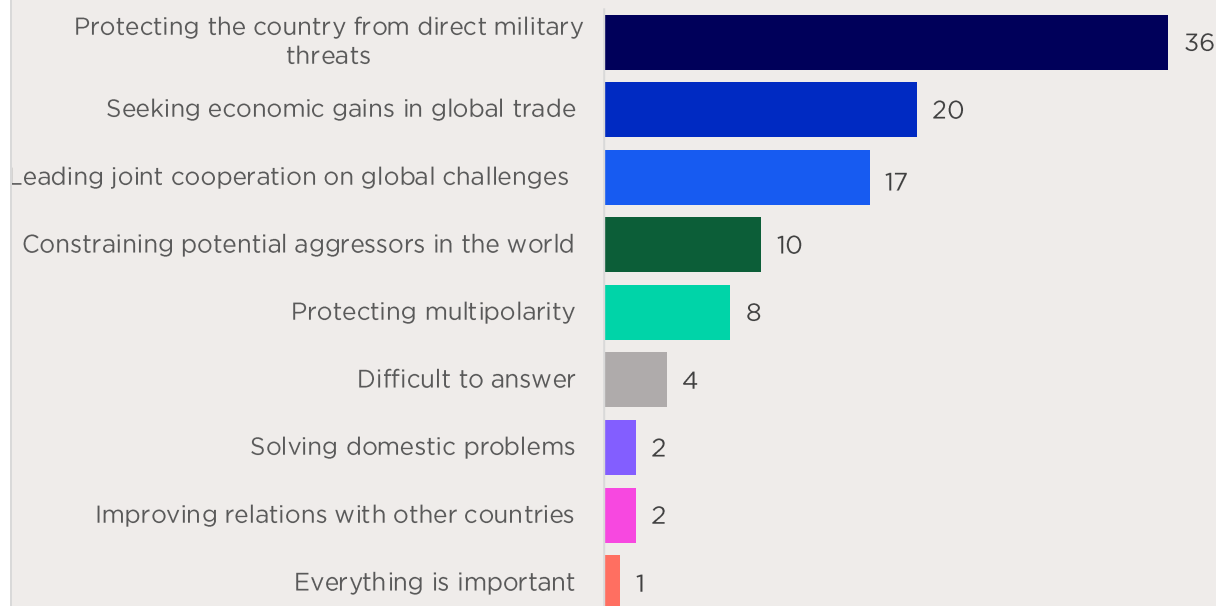
Young Russians Emphasize the Importance of Territorial Security

Putin's reelection speech also touched on the prospect of a [full-scale military conflict](#) between Moscow and NATO, and characterized the goal of Western nations as [containing Russian development](#). Wars and invasions have been a frequent fixture in Russia's long history, one that helps shape Putin's concern about external [threats to both Russian territorial integrity](#) and national identity. Young Russians seem to agree with the president's focus on territorial security, and especially in the context of their heightened fear of terrorism and the war in Ukraine.

When asked what priority should take precedence in the making of Russian foreign policy, a plurality of young Russians say the physical defense of the country (36%). However, other aspects of Putin's worldview, such as constraining potential aggressors in the world (10%) or protecting multipolarity (8%) are seen as less important to young adults. By contrast, economic gains in global trade (20%) and international cooperation on global problems (17%) are slightly more important to them.

Foreign Policy Priorities

Which one of the following priorities do you think should be the most important for the making of Russian foreign policy today? (%)



February 6-26, 2024 | n = 1,003

CHICAGO COUNCIL-LEVADA CENTER

Half of Russian Youths Say Military Spending on War in Ukraine is Just Right

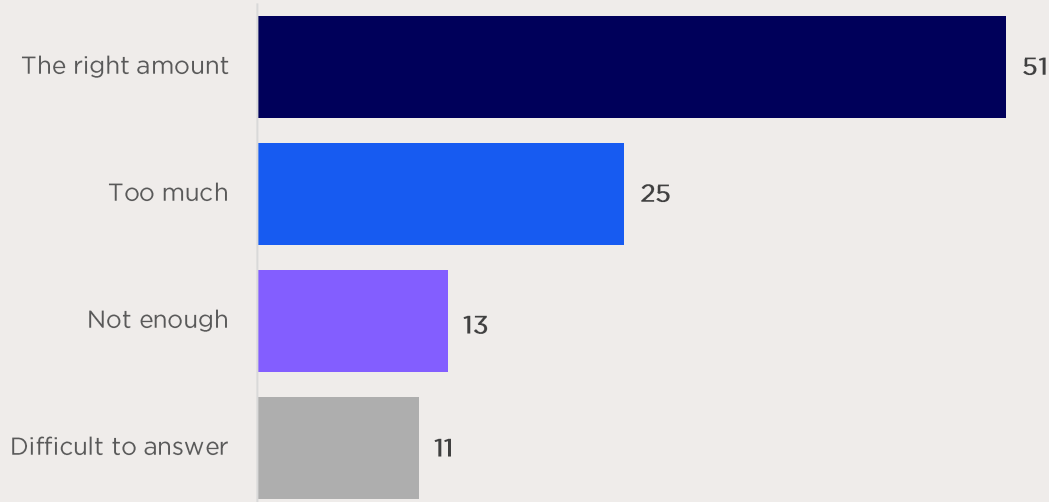
Previous surveys by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs and the Levada Center find that young Russians are generally less supportive of the Russian military operation in Ukraine than their parents and grandparents. A February 2024 Levada Center survey of the general Russian public found that Russian young adults are less likely to say they personally support the Russian military operation in Ukraine (65%) or see it as successful (67%) than older Russians (83% support and 72% successful, among Russians older than 45) (see Appendix Tables 1 and 2). They are also more likely to say that Russia should start peace talks (67%) than their elders (44%), who are more likely to support continuing the military action (see Appendix Table 3). However, young Russians are also less likely to follow news about the war in Ukraine than older Russians, which may contribute to their declining support for the conflict (see Appendix Table 4). The data additionally show that 22 percent of these young Russians report that a relative or friend has emigrated to another country because of the situation in Ukraine.

The Russian government recently announced a proposed budget for 2024 that allocates [\\$140 billion, or 7 percent](#) of the country's gross domestic product (GDP), to military spending. The war against Ukraine is not only the Kremlin's biggest priority but one of the main drivers of economic growth in Russia; as such, [defense spending will exceed social spending](#) for the first time in Russia's modern history.

About half of young Russians think the government is spending the right amount of money on the conflict in Ukraine (51%). Conversely, a fourth of Russian youth say the country is spending too much (25%), while 13 percent say it is not spending enough. When asked about the general costs associated with Russia's global involvement, young Russians are closely divided on whether the cost of maintaining Russia's role in the world outweighs the benefits (39%) or whether the benefits outweigh the costs (44%; 17% say it is difficult to answer).

Spending on War in Ukraine

Do you think Russia is spending too much, not enough, or just the right amount on the conflict in Ukraine? (%)



February 6-26, 2024 | n = 1,003

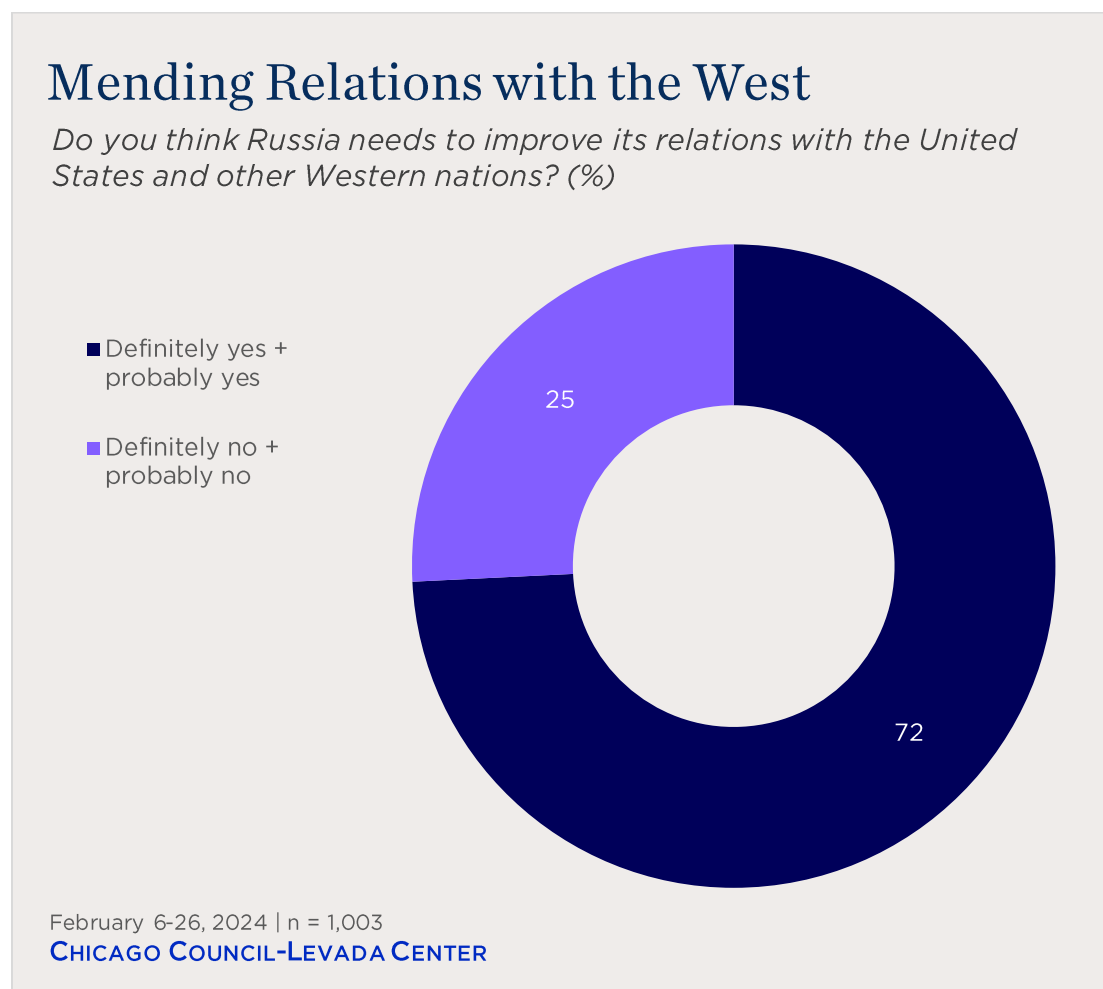
CHICAGO COUNCIL-LEVADA CENTER

Seven in 10 Young Russians Think Russia and the West Should Mend Relations

Putin frequently uses anti-Western rhetoric in his speeches and public appeals to unite the Russian population against Western encroachment and position the president as a defender of Russian sovereignty. While these anti-Western sentiments are shared among older Russians, young adults less susceptible to these messages and think Russia needs to improve its relations with Western countries.

In an October 2023 survey by the Levada Center, Russians between the ages of 18–34 were found to have more favorable views of the United States, the EU, and even Ukraine than their elders (see Appendix Tables 5-7). [Levada Center surveys](#) also show that the overall Russian population has grown less likely to say that Russia needs to improve its relations with the West, while young Russians have grown more likely to support improving those relations. In May 2023, the Levada Center found that 61 percent of Russian young adults said Russia definitely (20%) or probably (41%) needs to improve its Western relations—a rate higher than that recorded among the overall population (57%, 20% definitely and 37% probably). In February 2024, the percentage of

young adults that say Russia should improve its relations with the West rose to 72 percent (29% definitely and 43% probably). At the same time however, the data show that deteriorating relations with the West are lower on the list of young Russians' concerns, as only a quarter see such as a very dangerous threat to Russian national interests (24%).



Conclusion

Young Russians presciently had their eyes on international terrorism as a higher potential threat to Russian security than the war in Ukraine, and the recent attack has likely only confirmed these fears. On the conflict with Ukraine itself, Russian youth are less enthusiastic about the military operation than older Russians but seem satisfied enough with continued funding for the war. Moreover, as our previous report showed, [young Russians are unlikely to register any opposition](#) through any type of demonstrative public action against the government.

Appendix

Appendix Table 1

Do you personally support or not support the actions of the Russian armed forces in Ukraine? (%) (February 2024, n=1601)

	Total	Age				
		18-34	35-44	45-54	56-64	65+
Strongly support	46	31	43	53	49	64
Somewhat support	30	34	33	31	28	23
Somewhat oppose	9	15	9	4	8	4
Strongly oppose	7	11	5	7	8	4
Haven't heard anything about it	8	10	10	6	8	4

Appendix Table 2

In your opinion, how successful or unsuccessful is the “SMO” in Ukraine? (%) (February 2024, n=1601)

	Total	Age				
		18-34	35-44	45-54	56-64	65+
Very successful	18	15	19	19	16	22
Somewhat successful	52	52	50	54	50	55
Somewhat unsuccessful	10	10	11	10	11	7
Very unsuccessful	5	7	3	4	5	5
Difficult to answer	15	16	16	13	18	11

Appendix Table 3

In your opinion, should Russia continue military action now or start peace talks? (%) (February 2024, n=1601)

	Total	Age				
		18-34	35-44	45-54	56-64	65+
Definitely continue military action	26	13	22	33	31	40
More likely to continue hostilities	13	10	15	12	16	13
More likely to start peace talks	29	38	31	30	21	23
Definitely start peace talks	23	29	23	19	22	17
Difficult to answer	9	10	9	6	10	7

Appendix Table 4

Do you follow the news about Ukraine? (%) (February 2024, n=1601)

	Total	Age				
		18-34	35-44	45-54	56-64	65+
Very carefully	20	7	15	27	22	36
Quite attentive	31	24	29	32	37	38
No special attention	36	49	41	33	30	21
No attention at all	12	18	15	9	12	4
Haven't heard anything about it	1	2	1	0	0	1

Appendix Tables 5-7

What is your attitude to the US, the EU, and Ukraine now? (October 2023, n=1607)

US attitudes

	Total	18-34	35-44	45-54	56-64	65+
Very favorable	2	3	2	1	1	0
Somewhat favorable	14	28	13	10	9	5
Somewhat unfavorable	25	23	27	27	25	22
Very unfavorable	44	29	40	42	50	63
Difficult to answer	16	18	18	19	14	10

EU attitudes

	Total	18-34	35-44	45-54	56-64	65+
Very favorable	2	4	2	2	2	0
Somewhat favorable	15	28	15	10	10	6
Somewhat unfavorable	26	23	30	31	25	24
Very unfavorable	38	23	36	37	46	52
Difficult to answer	19	21	17	20	17	18

Ukraine attitudes

	Total	18-34	35-44	45-54	56-64	65+
Very favorable	2	2	2	3	1	2
Somewhat favorable	15	19	16	14	15	11
Somewhat unfavorable	23	27	25	18	20	21
Very unfavorable	44	33	39	46	49	54
Difficult to answer	17	18	18	18	15	13

Methodology

This Chicago Council on Global Affairs-Levada Center survey was conducted between February 6-26, 2024 among a weighted national sample of 1,003 adults between the ages of 18-34 living in Russia. This sample was obtained from a randomly generated sample of mobile phone numbers, which were used to contact respondents and survey them via a computer-assisted telephone interviewing method. The margin of error for the full sample is ± 3.1 percentage points at a 95% confidence interval.

The eligibility of respondents was verified based on their answers to questions about age and their region of residence. For the study, respondents residing within the territory of Russia between the ages of 18-34 years old were considered eligible to be surveyed.

This work is made possible by the generous support of the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

MAY 2024

Young Russians Are Skeptical of Most Media Outlets



PAVEL GOLOVKIN/AP

By Lama El Baz, Stepan Goncharov, Dina Smeltz, and Denis Volkov

Under the leadership of Russian President Vladimir Putin, there has been a significant consolidation of state control over mainstream media outlets and restriction of independent journalism. However, digital media platforms, like social media apps and blogs, have emerged in recent years as vibrant spaces for the dissemination of information and public discourse. While the virtual sphere is also subject to restrictions and censorship, a myriad of Russian voices and perspectives have managed to find audiences through digital channels.

A joint survey by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs and the Levada Analytical Center, fielded February 6-26, 2024, finds the majority of Russian young adults do not trust information reported by any media outlet; whether they be state-controlled outlets, like television news broadcasts, newspapers, and the radio, or less regulated digital media platforms, like social media, blogs, and other websites. The data further reveal differences in public sentiments and foreign policy preferences between young adults that do trust information reported by traditional, state-controlled media outlets and those that trust information reported on digital media platforms.

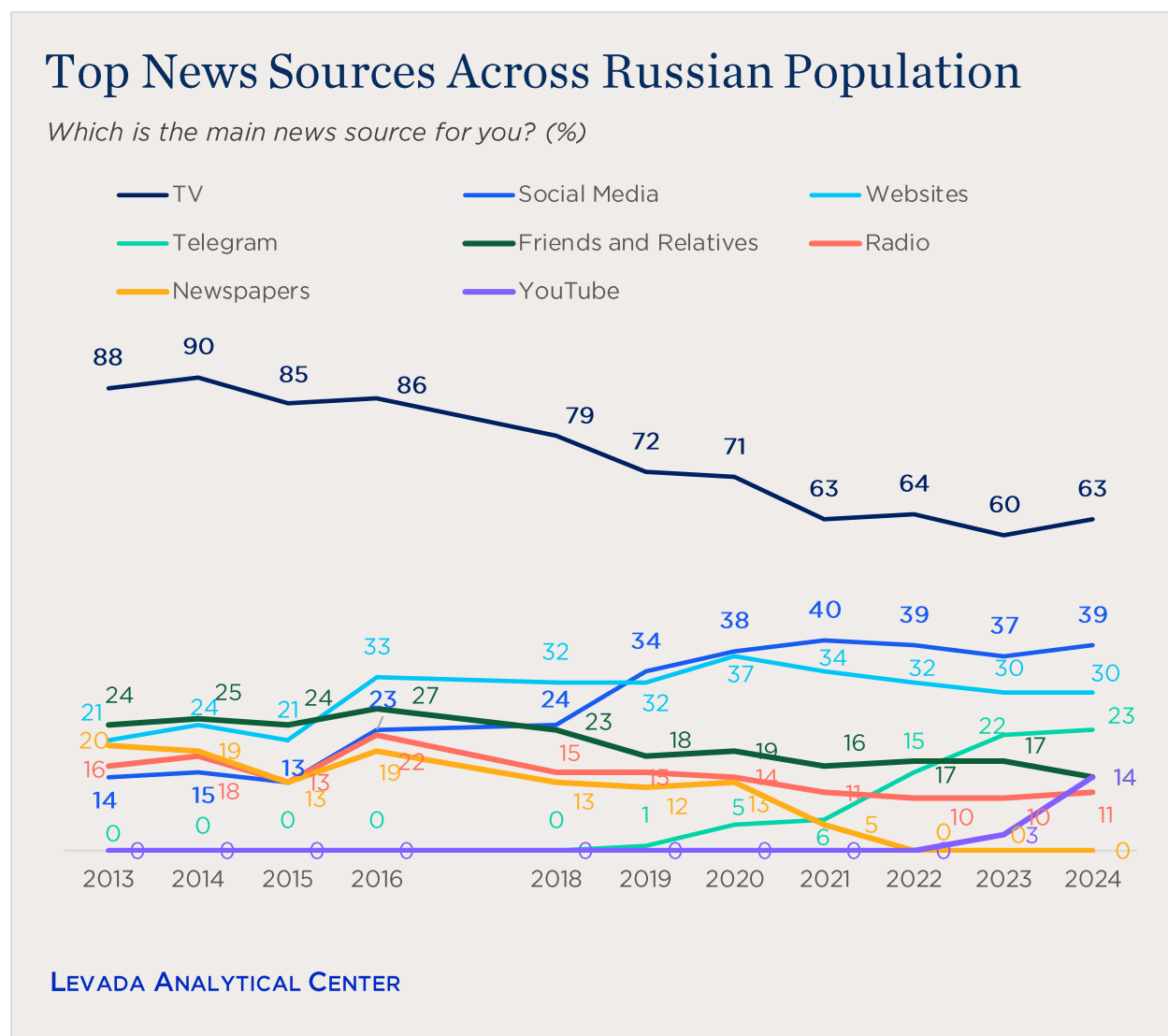
Key Findings

- According to a February 2024 Levada Center survey, social media is the primary source of domestic and international news for young Russians (54%), whereas older Russians (75%) and the overall population (63%) most often turn to television news broadcasts for their information.
- Seven in 10 Russian young adults say they do not trust any media outlet to publish unbiased, factual information (72% on average, across various media outlets).
- Young Russians are just as likely to trust the information they receive from social media, a digital media platform, (24%) as they are to trust newspapers, a state-controlled media outlet (25%).
- Russian young adults that trust the information reported by traditional, state-controlled media outlets are more likely to have nationalist sentiments, similar political views as their parents', and optimism about Russia's political future. They are also more likely to support Russia's spending on the war in Ukraine and worry about external threats than those who trust the information reported on digital media platforms.

Social Media is Primary Source of Information for Youth

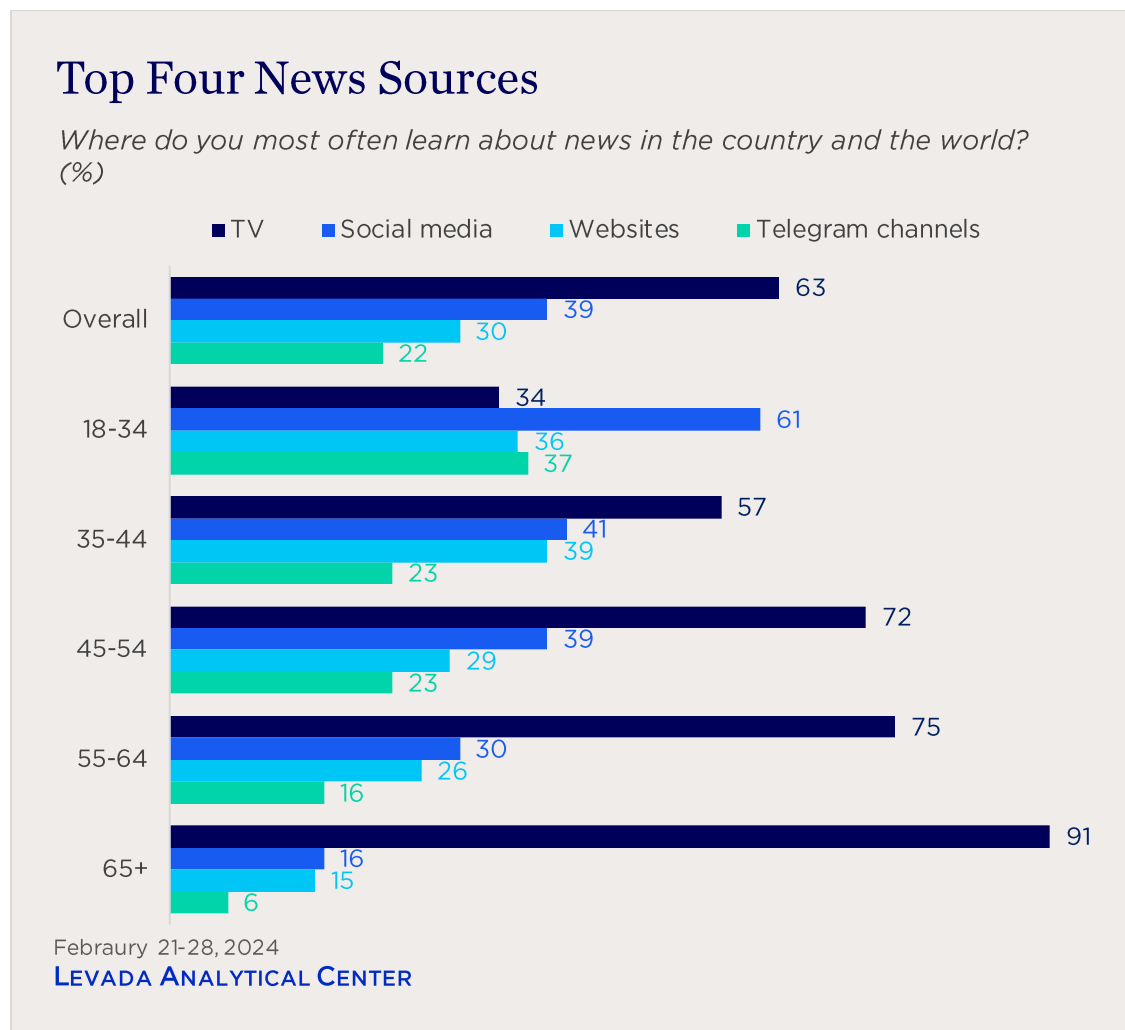
According to a survey conducted by the Levada Center in February 2024 of the overall Russian population, the majority of Russian citizens tune into television news broadcasts for information about their country and the world (63%). The share of Russians whose primary source of information is television declined between 2013-2021 but began to increase after Russia launched its special military operation in Ukraine. This shift in media consumption could be associated with the state's monopolization of information on the operation

and marginalization of media outlets attempting to provide key updates, information, and alternative perspectives on it. With the exception of cable entertainment channels, all privately owned television channels were banned from broadcasting in Russia and many independent media organizations, as well as journalists themselves, were designated as “foreign agents” and forced to shut down their operations. As a result, [hundreds of independent journalists have either fled the country or been arrested since the military operation in Ukraine began](#), a move that has only strengthened the state’s monopoly over the press.



While most Russians cite television as their primary source of news and information about the world, there are stark differences across age groups. Unlike older Russians, Russians between the ages of 18-34 most often turn to digital media platforms, like social media platforms (61%), Telegram channels (37%) and other websites (36%), than to traditional, state-controlled media

outlets, like the television (34%), radio (5%), or newspapers (2%) for news and information (see Appendix Table 1).

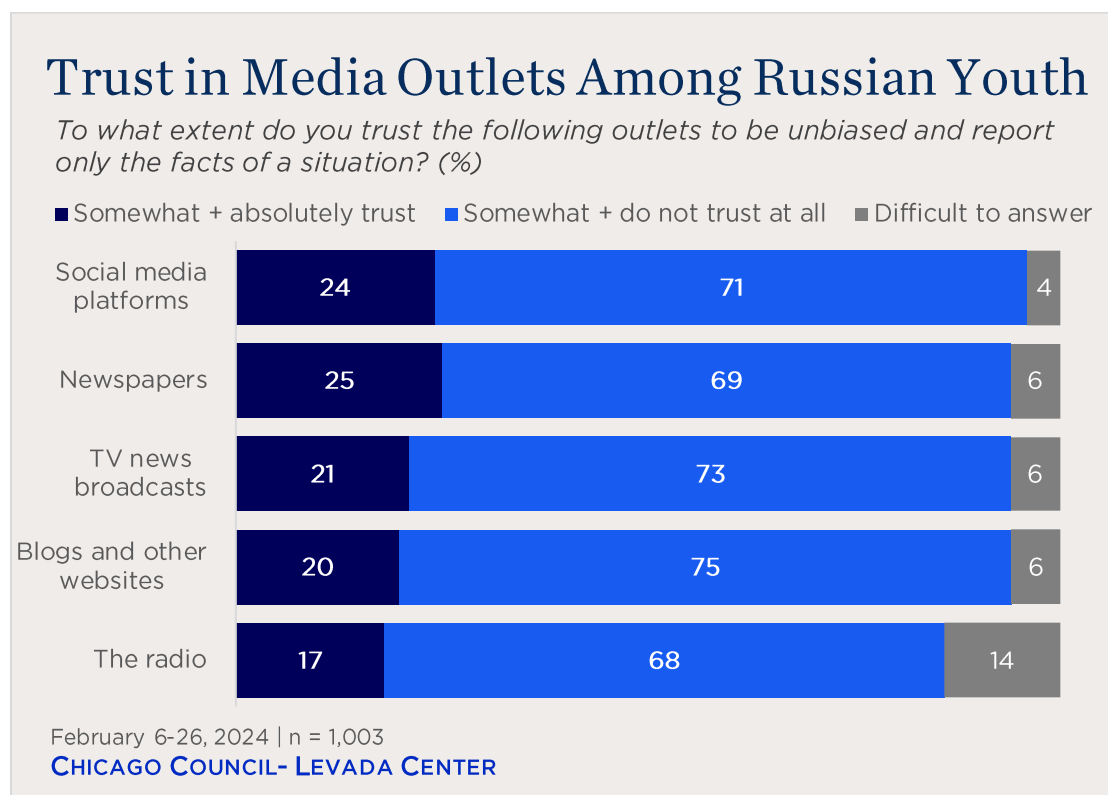


Whereas older generations of Russians primarily receive news and information from state-controlled television broadcasts, young adults are unique in that social media platforms, like Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter, are their primary sources of news about their country and the world. Telegram channels have also grown in popularity among this age group and especially after other social media platforms were blocked by the government in response to the special military operation in Ukraine. These channels not only provide diverse and alternative sources of information and spaces for public discourse, but also offer insight from nationalistic correspondents on the frontlines of the military operation.

Russian Young Adults are Skeptical of All Media Outlets, Including Social Media

Data from the Chicago Council-Levada Center survey show that young Russians are skeptical of the information they receive from all media outlets,

regardless of whether they are state-controlled media outlets (television, newspapers, and radio) or digital media platforms (social media, blogs, and other websites) that are less censored and restricted by the state.

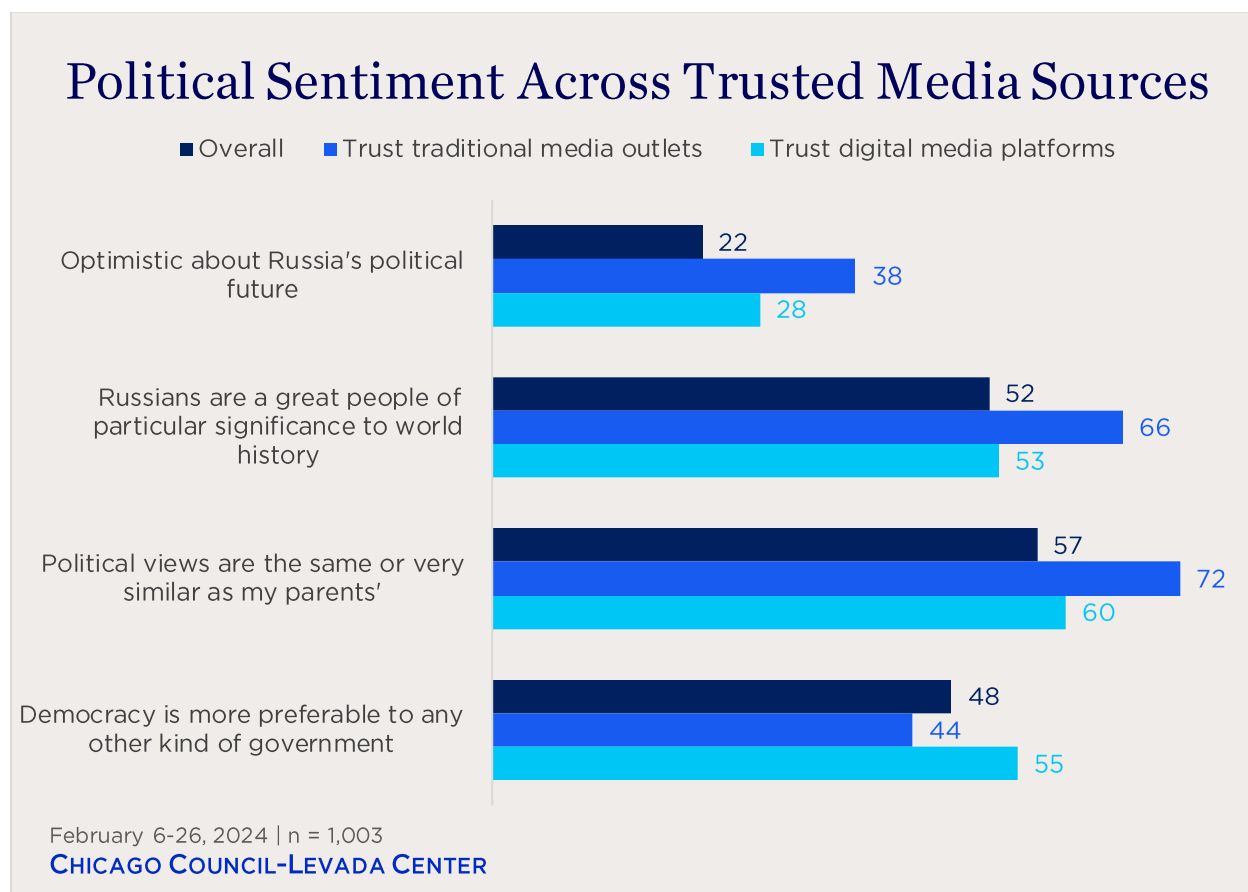


Seven in 10 Russian young adults say they do not trust that any media outlet publishes unbiased information and reports only the facts on a situation (72% on average, across various media outlets). Although social media is the primary source of information among the youth population, they are just as likely to trust the information they receive from social media, a digital media platform, (24%) as they are to trust newspapers, a state-controlled media outlet (25%). Only about two in 10 Russian young adults say they trust the information received from television news broadcasts (21%), blogs and other websites (20%), and the radio (17%).

Differences in Political Attitudes Between Those That Trust State-Controlled Media Outlets and Those That Trust Digital Media Platforms

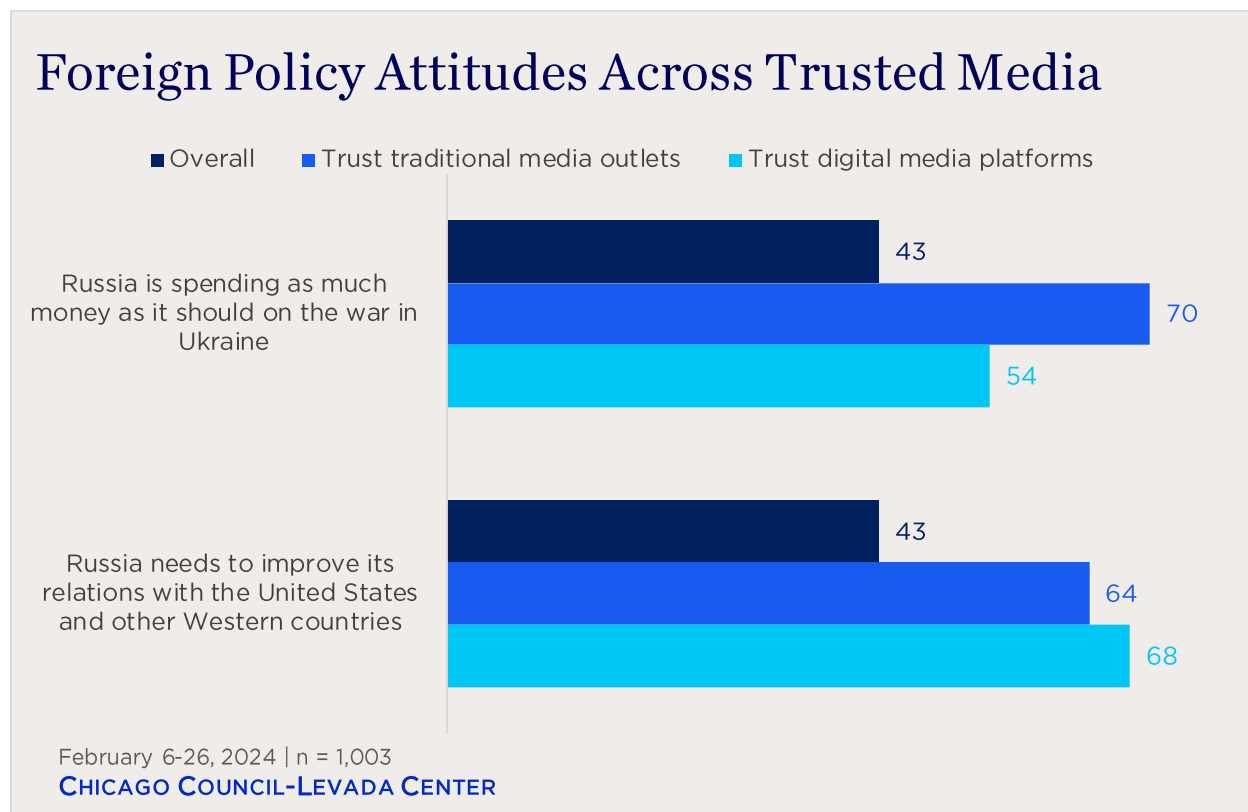
While the data show marginal differences in the degree of trust young Russians have in both traditional, state-controlled media outlets and digital media platforms, data analysis reveals differences in political sentiment and support for Russian foreign policies across the minority of Russians who do trust those media outlets. It finds an association between trust in traditional media outlets and a heightened sense of nationalism, optimism for the future, and support for current foreign policies, and a weaker preference for democracy as a system of government.

When thinking about Russia's political situation in 10 years' time, young adults who trust traditional media outlets are more likely to be optimistic than those who trust digital media platforms (38% traditional media vs. 28% digital). They also have a greater sense of nationalism and traditional political views, as they are more likely to say that Russians are a great people of particular significance to world history (66% vs. 53%) and that their political views align with those of their parents (72% vs. 60%). When it comes to democracy, Russian young adults who trust traditional media outlets are far less likely to say that democracy is preferable to any other kind of government than those who trust the information they receive from digital media platforms (44% vs. 55%).



The data also show that trust in traditional, state-controlled media outlets can impact foreign policy attitudes among young Russians, particularly in the context of Russia's special military operation in Ukraine. Russian young adults who trust traditional media outlets are more likely to think Russia is spending an appropriate amount of money on its war in Ukraine (70%). By contrast, only a slim majority of those trusting of digital media platforms think the same (54%) and are more than twice as likely to say that Russia is spending too much on the war than those more trusting of traditional media outlets (33% vs. 15%, see Appendix Table 2). At the same time, however, majorities of both

groups say Russia needs to improve its relations with the United States and other Western countries, though those who trust digital media platforms say so to a greater degree (68% vs. 64%).

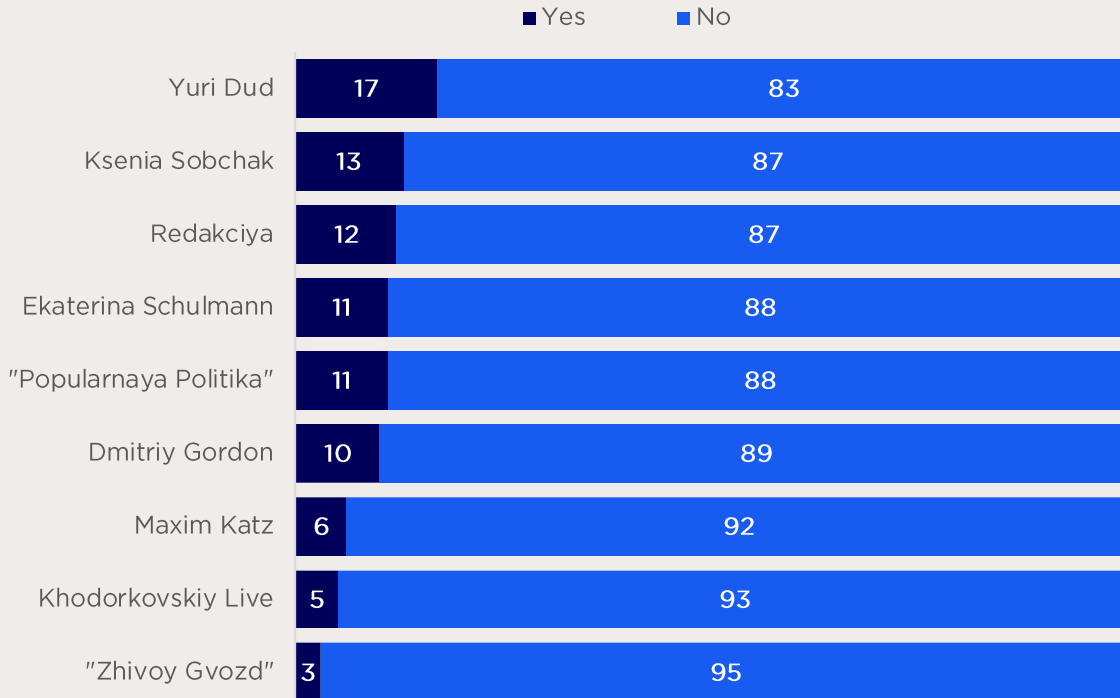


Minority of Russian Youth Consume Content from Opposition Leaders

When presented with a list of opposition leaders that are popular across various digital media platforms and asked which, of any, they regularly follow, 17 percent of Russian young adults put Yuri Dud at the top of the list. Dud rose to fame by posting interview-style discussions about culture, media, and politics on YouTube. Though viewed less than Dud's, the channels of Ksenia Sobchak and Redakciya (13% and 12%, respectively) are also somewhat popular among Russian youth, as their content is geared toward more neutral and less critical audiences.

Political Content Consumed By Young Russians

Do you ever consume content from the following bloggers and politicians? (%)



February 6-26, 2024 | n = 1,003

CHICAGO COUNCIL-LEVADA CENTER

Roughly one in 10 Russian young adults tune into Ekaterina Schulmann (11%), a political scientist and publicist; Popularnaya Politika, a former member of Alexey Navalny's team (11%); and Dmitriy Gordon (10%), a Ukrainian journalist and interviewer. Less than 10 percent of young Russians consume the content of other important players in the field, Maxim Katz, a Russian politician and blogger on YouTube (6%), and Mikhail Khodorkovsky, former chief of Yukos, a Russian oil company, and now founder of the Russian anti-war committee.

Overall, the majority of Russian young adults say they do not consume content from the aforementioned bloggers and politicians. However, young Russians that trust information reported on digital media platforms are also more likely to say they consume politicized content online than those trusting of state-controlled media outlets – a facet that may explain their differing political attitudes.

Conclusion

In lieu of traditional media outlets, digital media platforms have, in recent years, emerged as alternative avenues for information sharing and public discourse for young Russians, in particular. While studies show that social media is the most popular source of news and information for young adults, the Chicago Council-Levada Center survey finds that this cohort does not trust the validity of information reported by any media outlet, whether it be a traditional outlet or digital platform. Moreover, there are differences in political attitudes across the small share of Russians that trust information from either traditional media outlets or digital media platforms.

Appendix

Table 1. Primary Source of Information Across Age Groups (February 2024)

Where do you most often learn about news in the country and the world? (%)					
	18-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
TV	34	57	72	75	91
Radio	5	8	13	14	14
Newspapers	2	3	7	8	16
Friends and relatives	20	13	13	21	9
Websites	36	39	29	26	15
Social Media	61	41	39	30	16
Telegram channels	37	23	23	16	6
YouTube channels	18	14	15	15	6
Other	0	0	1	0	0
Not interested	1	1	0	1	1
Difficult to answer	0	0	0	0	0

Table 2. Spending on Ukraine War by Trust in Media Outlets

Do you think Russia is spending too much, too little, or just as it should on the conflict in Ukraine? (%)		
	Trust in digital media platforms (social media, blogs, and other websites)	Trust in traditional media outlets (television news broadcasts, newspapers, and radio)
Too much	33	15
Too little	10	10
Just as it should	54	70

Methodology

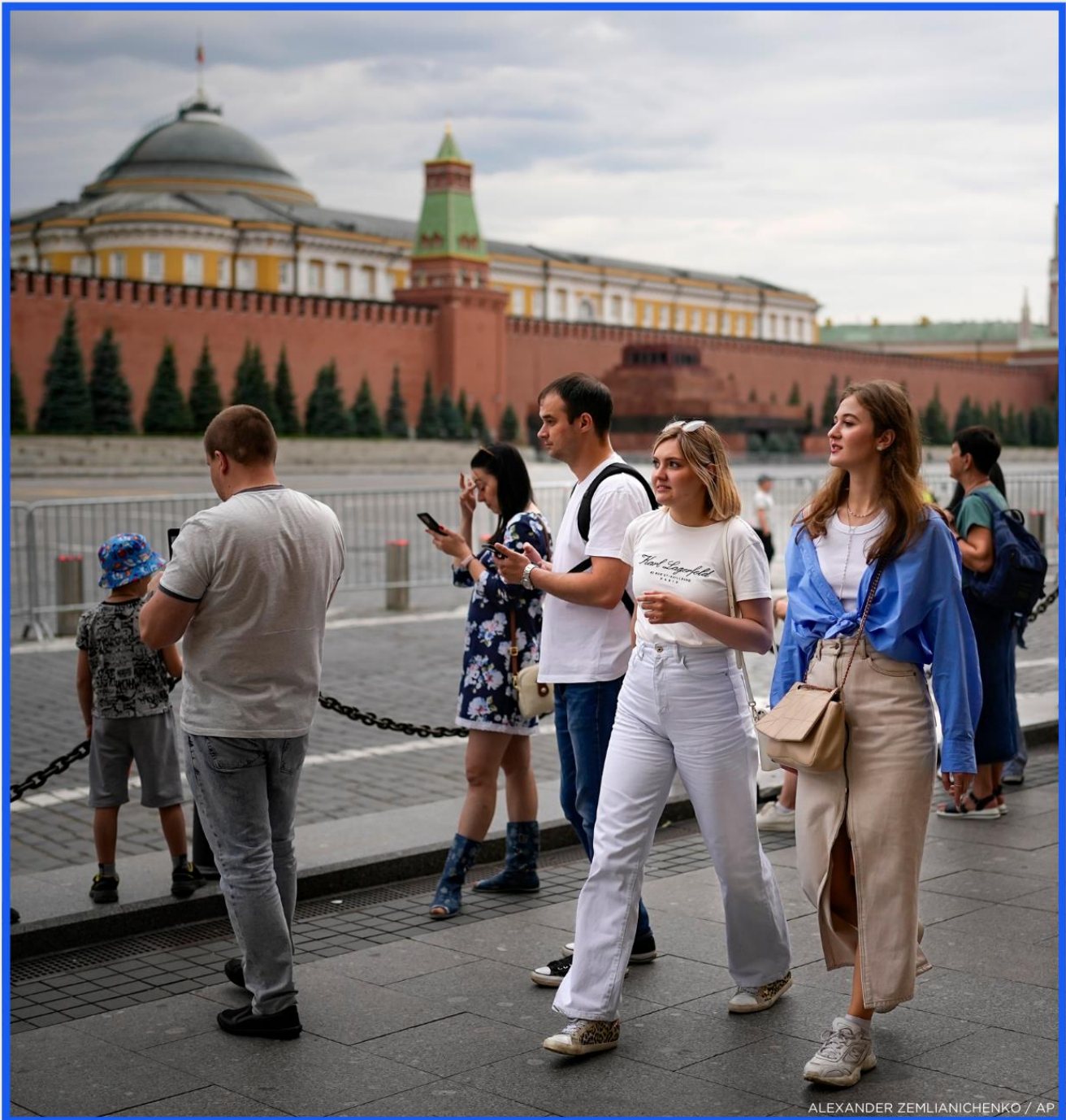
This Chicago Council on Global Affairs-Levada Center survey was conducted between February 6-26, 2024 among a weighted national sample of 1,003 adults between the ages of 18-34 living in Russia. This sample was obtained from a randomly generated sample of mobile phone numbers, which were used to contact respondents and survey them via a computer-assisted telephone interviewing method. The margin of error for the full sample is ± 3.1 percentage points at a 95% confidence interval.

The eligibility of respondents was verified based on their answers to questions about age and their region of residence. For the study, respondents residing within the territory of Russia between the ages of 18-34 years old were considered eligible to be surveyed.

This work is made possible by the generous support of the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

JULY 2024

Young Russians See Brighter Future Than Young Americans Do



ALEXANDER ZEMLIANICHENKO / AP

By Lama El Baz, AJ Caughey, Denis Volkov, and Stepan Goncharov

Chicago Council on Global Affairs and Levada Analytical Center surveys find that 18- to 34-year-old Russians view the future of Russia's political and economic situation more positively than young Americans view the same in the United States. The data additionally show that context, nationalism, and governmental preferences play a significant role in shaping future outlooks among both youth populations.

Key Findings

- Four in 10 Russian young adults (38%) express optimism (25%) or excitement (13%) when thinking about Russia's future economic situation, compared to just two in 10 Americans (18%) of the same age (16% optimistic, 2% excited).
- At the same time, 42 percent of Russian young adults say they feel anxious (32%) or pessimistic (10%) about the future economic situation in their country, compared to nearly six in 10 young Americans (57% total, 30% anxiety, 27% pessimism).
- When it comes to their countries' future political situations, 36 percent of young Russians are optimistic (22%) or excited (14%), compared to less than one in 10 American young adults (8% total, 7% optimistic, 1% excited).
- Four in 10 (41%) young Russians say they feel anxious (32%) or pessimistic (9%) about Russia's future political situation, compared to seven in 10 young Americans (71% in total, 32% anxious and 39% pessimistic).
- A strong majority of Russian youth (82%) say they are very (65%) or somewhat proud (17%) to be Russian citizens, while less than half of American youth (43%) say they are very (22%) or somewhat (21%) proud to be American citizens.
- Three in 10 Russian and American young adults (30% and 31%, respectively) have thought about emigrating and cite their economic and political situations, as well as the perceived higher quality of life abroad, as reasons why.

Young Russians View Their Economic Futures More Positively Than Young Americans

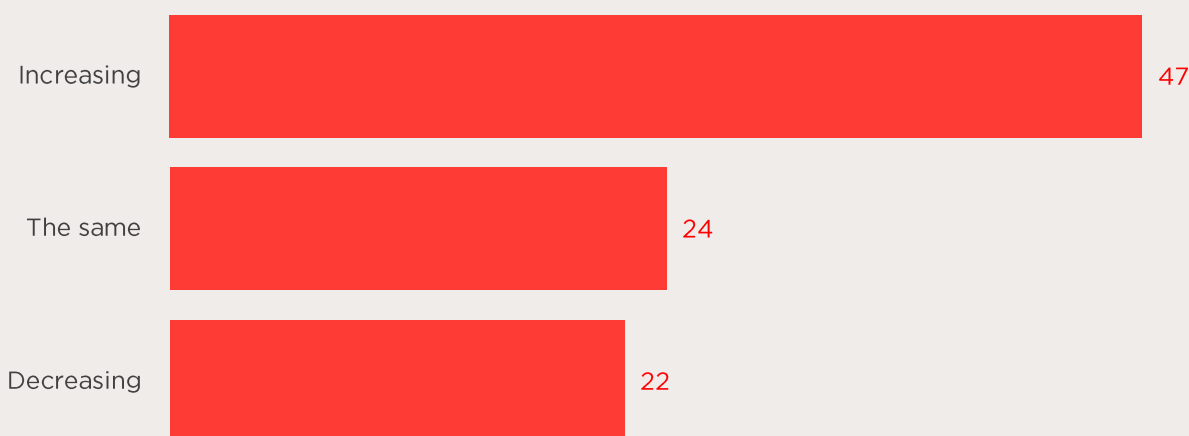
Despite negative initial economic forecasts and continued efforts by the United States and other Western nations to cripple the Russian economy, [Russian President Vladimir Putin's wartime economy seems to be weathering the storm](#). In fact, the International Monetary Fund expects [Russia's economy](#)

[to grow](#) faster than the world's most advanced economies, including the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and Germany, this year. While the mass exodus of wartime migrants caused [the Russian labor market to tighten](#), it also dramatically [increased real wages](#) across the military and other sectors of the economy and encouraged greater consumer spending. As a result, the [Customer Sentiment Index](#), which is measured by the Levada Center and reflects customer confidence in economy and personal financial situation, nearly reached its peak last month.

The joint Council-Levada survey, fielded January 26 to February 26, 2024¹, finds that Russian young adults are of two minds when thinking about their economic situation in 10 years. While 42 percent of Russian youth express anxiety (32%) or pessimism (10%), nearly as many (38%) say they feel optimistic (25%) or excited (13%). One reason for that excitement: almost half of Russian young adults think career and salary opportunities are increasing (47%), while roughly equal shares say they have stayed the same (24%) or decreased (22%) in the last five years.

Career Opportunities in Russia

Do you think career prospects in Russia are increasing, decreasing, or the same as they were five years ago? (%)



February 6-26, 2024 | n=1,003

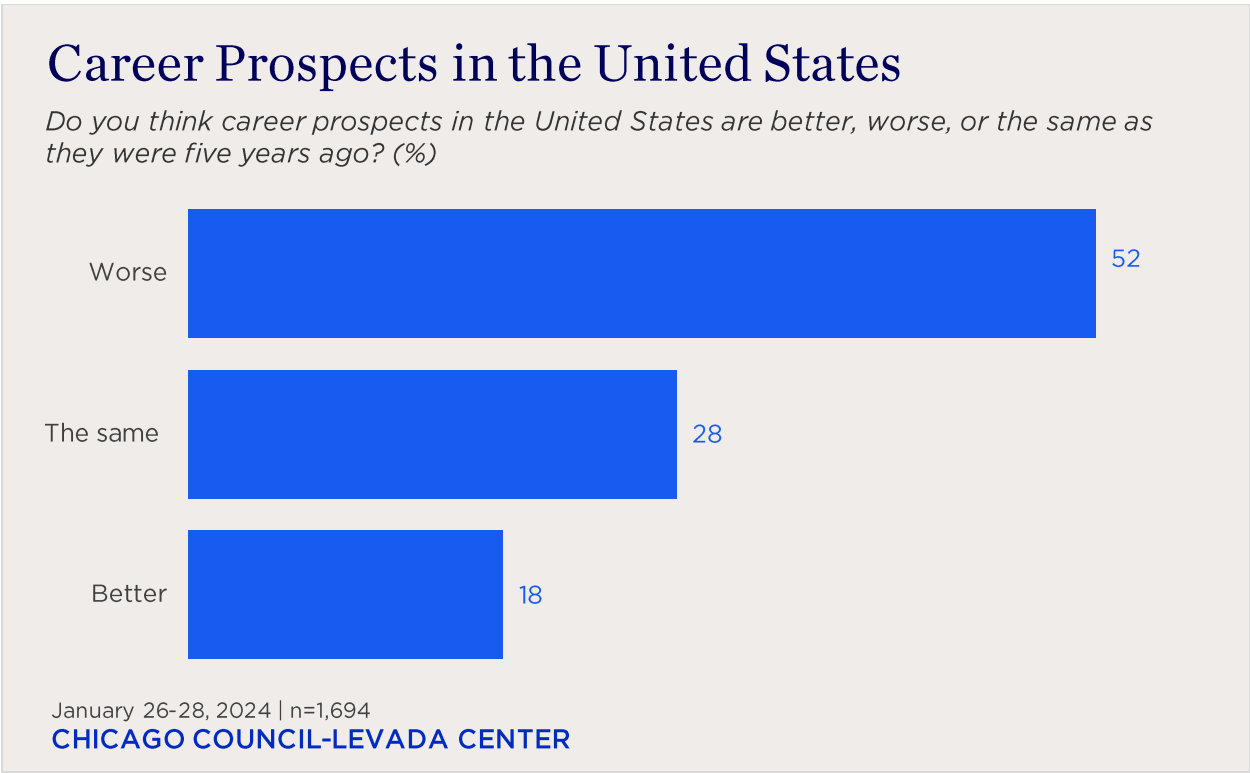
CHICAGO COUNCIL-LEVADA CENTER

While economic growth in the United States is expected to slow this year, economic experts [do not foresee a recession](#) on the horizon and instead report low levels of unemployment, record high stock indices, a rising Gross Domestic Product, and slowing rate of inflation. Still, the stubbornly high

¹ The US survey was fielded January 26–28, 2024, while the Russian survey was fielded February 6–26, 2024. Please see the methodology section for more information on the survey methods, fielding, and sample.

prices of goods and services continue to frustrate American consumers and seem to elicit a bleak economic outlook among the youth population.

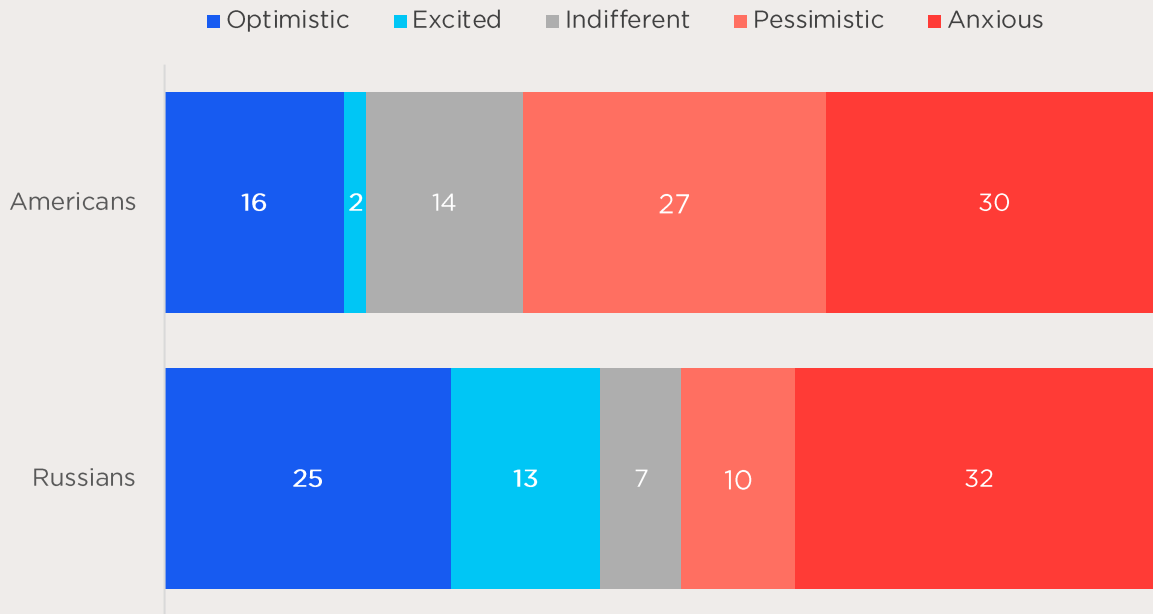
Despite these positive indicators, half of young Americans (52%) think career prospects in the United States are worse today than they were five years ago, and only two in 10 young Americans (18%) think their employment opportunities are better.



When thinking about the US economy in 10 years, the majority of young Americans are either anxious (30%) or pessimistic (27%). As compared to their Russian counterparts, this youth population is far less positive about their economic future, as less than two in 10 reports feeling optimistic (16%) or excited (2%) about it.

Economic Outlook among Russian and American Youth

When you think about the United States'/Russia's economic situation in 10 years, which of the following best describes how you feel? (%)



January 26-28, 2024 | n=1,694 (US)

February 6-26, 2024 | n=1,003 (R)

CHICAGO COUNCIL-LEVADA CENTER

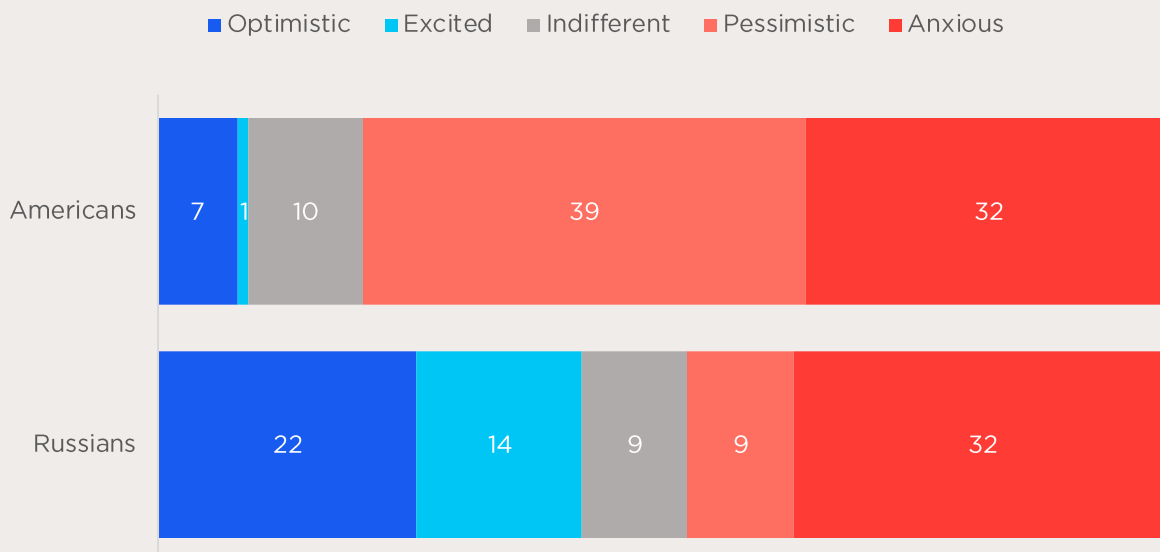
Russian Young Adults Also Have a More Positive Political Outlook Than American Young Adults

As Russia's military operation in Ukraine continues, the question of what is to follow remains at the forefront of many minds. In Russia, similar shares of young adults express both negative and positive emotions when thinking about their country's political future (41% negative, 36% positive, 9% indifferent). Despite feeling slightly more anxious (32%) or pessimistic (9%) than optimistic (22%) or excited (14%), young Russians have a much more positive outlook toward the future of Russia's political situation than Americans have toward theirs.

Young Americans paint a much bleaker picture of American politics in 10 years, as seven in 10 respondents (71%) say they feel either anxious (32%) or pessimistic (39%) toward it. They are far more pessimistic (39% American vs. 9% Russian) and are far less optimistic (7% American vs. 22% Russian) or excited (1% American, 14% Russian) about their political future than their Russian counterparts.

Political Outlook among Russian and American Youth

When you think about the United States'/Russia's political situation in 10 years, which of the following best describes how you feel? (%)



January 26-28, 2024 | n=1,694 (US)

February 6-26, 2024 | n=1,003 (R)

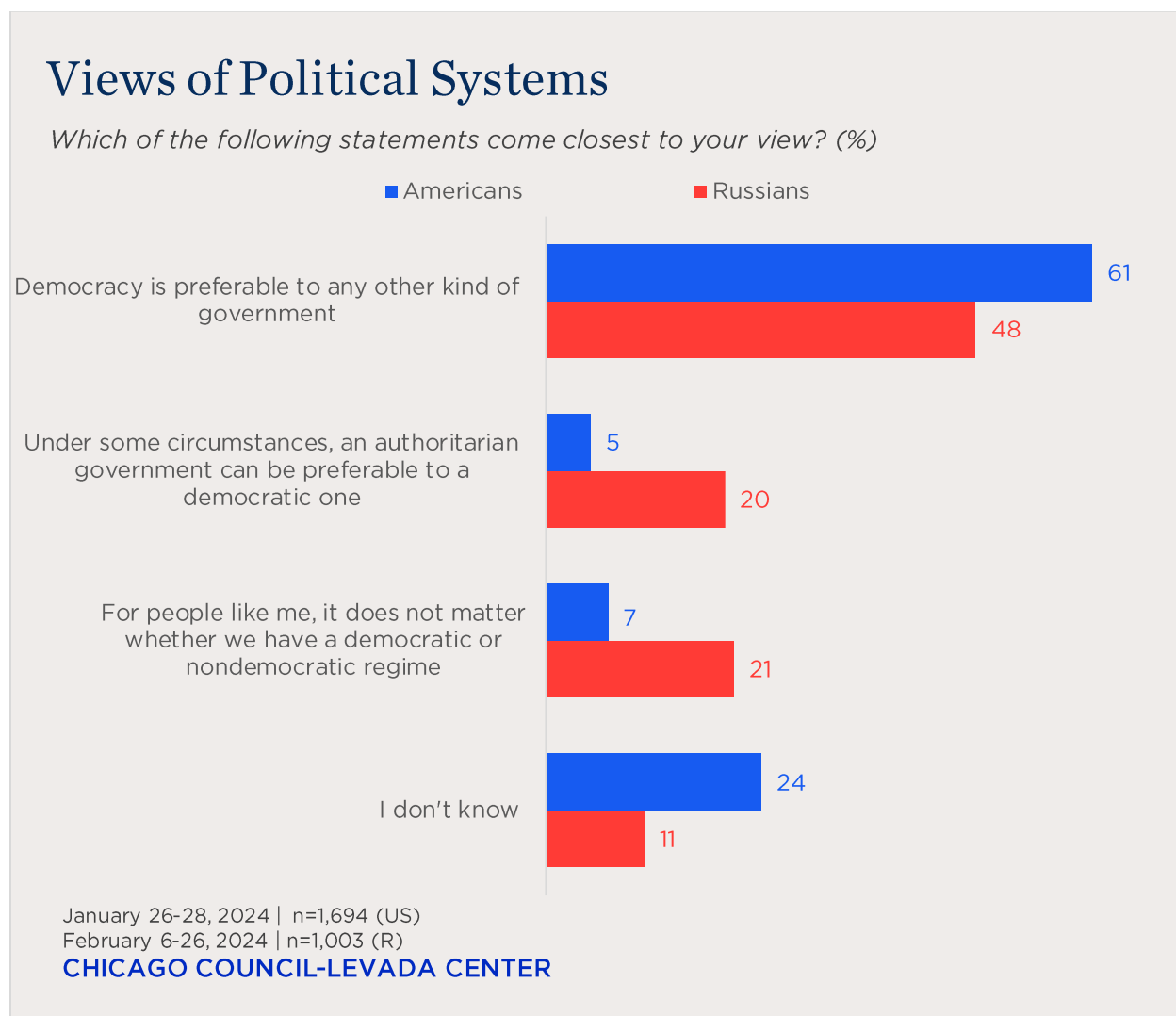
CHICAGO COUNCIL-LEVADA CENTER

Experts contend that the United States has experienced [significant democratic backsliding](#) in recent years. In the [2023 Chicago Council Survey](#), majorities of Americans 18 to 34 also saw weakening democracy (58%) and political polarization (54%) as critical threats to the vital interests of the United States in the next 10 years (see appendix table 1).

For a youth population that prefers democracy over any other kind of governance system (61%), their negative political outlook is likely due, in part, to such perceptions of democratic erosion and polarization. However, it is important to note that almost a fourth of American young adults say they do not know what sort of government they would prefer (24%).

Further data analysis confirms that both Russian and American young adults are more likely to have a negative political outlook if they prefer a democratic system compared to those more amenable to authoritarian systems or those who are indifferent (see appendix tables 2 and 3). However, the preference for democracy has a greater effect on anxiety and pessimism toward the future among young Russians than young Americans.

Almost half of Russian young adults say they prefer democracy over any other kind of government (48%), but only slightly less (41%) either think an authoritarian government can be preferable to a democratic one in some circumstances (20%) or that the regime does not matter to people like them (21%). One in 10 young Russians find it difficult to say what system of government they prefer (11%).



Taken together, these data suggest that, compared to American young adults, young Russians have a more positive political outlook because a substantial share think authoritarian governments are preferable in some circumstances or that it does not make a difference to them either way.

Putin often refers to Russia as being [a besieged fortress](#) to bolster both support for the special military operation in Ukraine and a highly centralized government. Despite such rhetoric, the plurality of young Russians is more concerned about threats within Russia (43%) than threats beyond its borders (26%). However, the data show those most concerned with external threats

are almost twice as likely to say that authoritarian regimes can be preferable under certain circumstances (29%) than those most concerned about internal threats (16%). They are also more likely to be apathetic about their governance system and think that it does not matter to them (24%) than those who consider domestic issues a greater threat (17%).

Young Russians may be more likely to desire a strong, consolidated government in a time of war or when external threats loom because such provides the domestic stability and decisive leadership necessary to protect national security and achieve victory. Since the United States is not directly involved in any current conflicts and faces only minor external national security threats, a much smaller share of young Americans reports being more concerned about external threats (16%), comparatively.

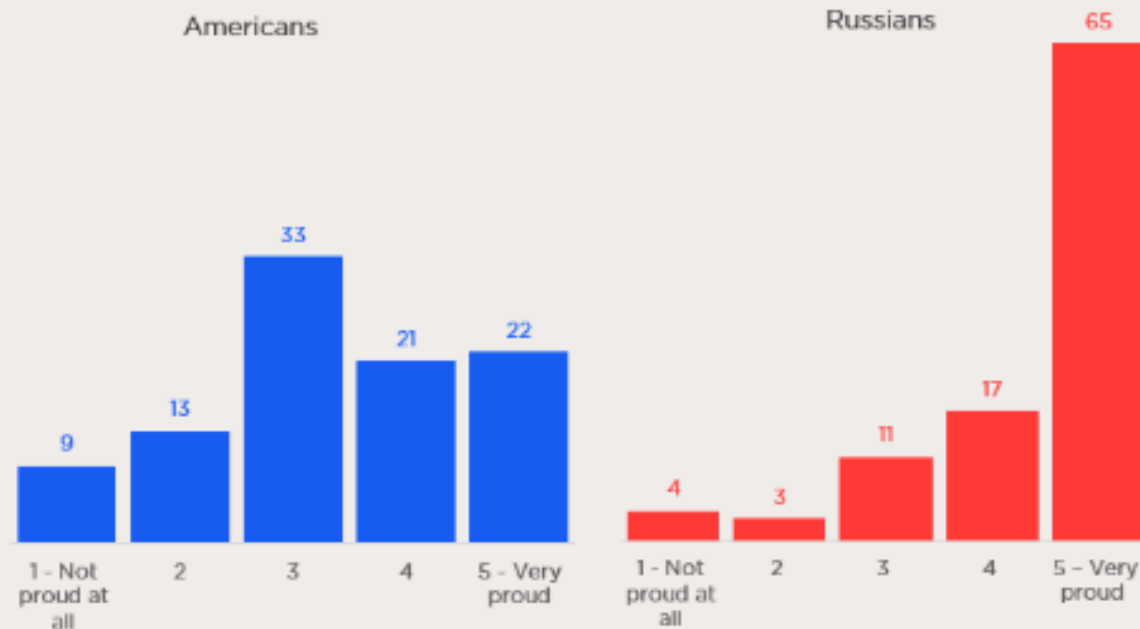
Young Russians Express More Nationalistic Sentiments Than Young Americans

Russian young adults are often described as being part of the [“Putin Generation”](#) of apolitical yet very patriotic citizens who have come of age during Putin’s 25 years in power. Together, a cultural emphasis on national pride, [regulated media landscape](#), and [patriotic educational curricula](#) have created a robust sense of national identity among the youth. Thus, more than eight in 10 (82%) say they are very proud (65%) or somewhat proud (17%) to be Russian citizens.

On the other hand, a strong culture of dissent and stark sociopolitical divisions in the United States contribute to more tepid patriotism among young Americans. Less than half of American young adults (43%) say they are very (22%) or somewhat (21%) proud to be American citizens, and on a five-point scale, with one being not proud at all and five being very proud, a plurality of American youth (33%) place themselves squarely in the middle.

National Pride among Young Russians and Americans

On a scale from 1-5, with 1 not being proud at all and 5 being very proud, to what extent are you proud to be a Russian/American citizen? (%)



January 26-28, 2024 | n=1,694 (US)

February 6-26, 2024 | n=1,003 (R)

CHICAGO COUNCIL-LEVADA CENTER

When it comes to national exceptionalism, young Russians are also more likely to assert Russia's superiority than Americans are to assert that of the United States. A slim majority of Russian youth say their population is of particular significance to world history (52%), while less than half say they are a people like any other (45%). Young Russians who claim authoritarian rule as preferable to democratic are more likely to believe in Russia's exceptionalism than those who prefer democratic systems (64% vs. 46%).

By contrast, the majority of Americans 18 to 34 said the United States is no greater than other nations (64%) in the [2023 Chicago Council Survey](#). However, a third contended that the United States is the greatest country in the world (35%).

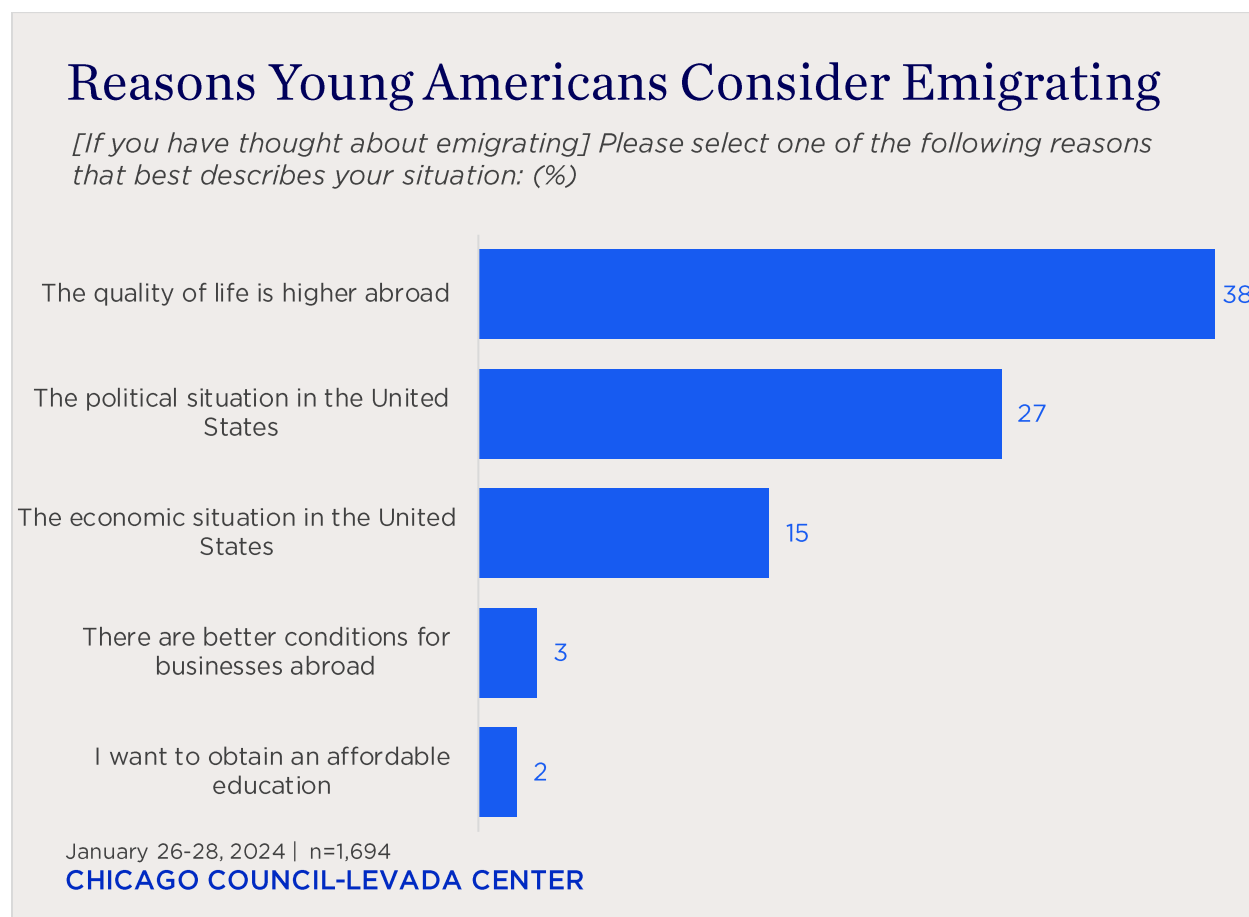


Among Russians and Americans, data analysis suggests that patriotic youth have more positive political and economic outlooks than those with less national pride. Young Russians and Americans who say they are very or somewhat proud to be Russian or American citizens are more likely than others to express optimism or excitement (and less likely to express anxiety or pessimism) when thinking about their future economic and political situations (see appendix tables 4-7). The more positive political and economic outlook among young Russians may thus be associated with their high level of patriotism. Young Americans, on the other hand, express far less national pride and, perhaps as a result, view the future of the American economy and politics through a much more critical and pessimistic lens.

A Third of Young Russians and Americans Have Thought about Emigrating

With tepid patriotism and a bleak view of the future, three in 10 American young adults say they have thought about emigrating (31%). Among those who have considered emigration, a plurality (42%) cites either the political (27%) or economic situation (15%) in the United States as a push factor (42%),

but nearly as many say they have thought about emigrating because they perceive the quality of life as higher abroad (38%).



Although at a similar level to those of American youth, Russian sentiments toward emigration are far more complex and contextual. In a survey among the overall Russian public in February 2022, ahead of the special military operation in Ukraine, [19 percent of the overall Russian population wanted to emigrate](#). However, the share of those that wanted to emigrate declined by 10 percentage points a month later and has, since, remained at that level. This sharp and sudden decline—experienced across all age cohorts, but especially among the youth population—likely reflects the exodus of more than [800,000](#) wartime migrants who fled the country within days of military operation’s launch, including economic migrants, conscientious objectors, and political refugees.

However, difficulties obtaining employment, renewing residencies, and assimilating have led [thousands of wartime migrants to return](#) to Russia. [Rising incomes, improving standards of living, and a seemingly stable political](#)

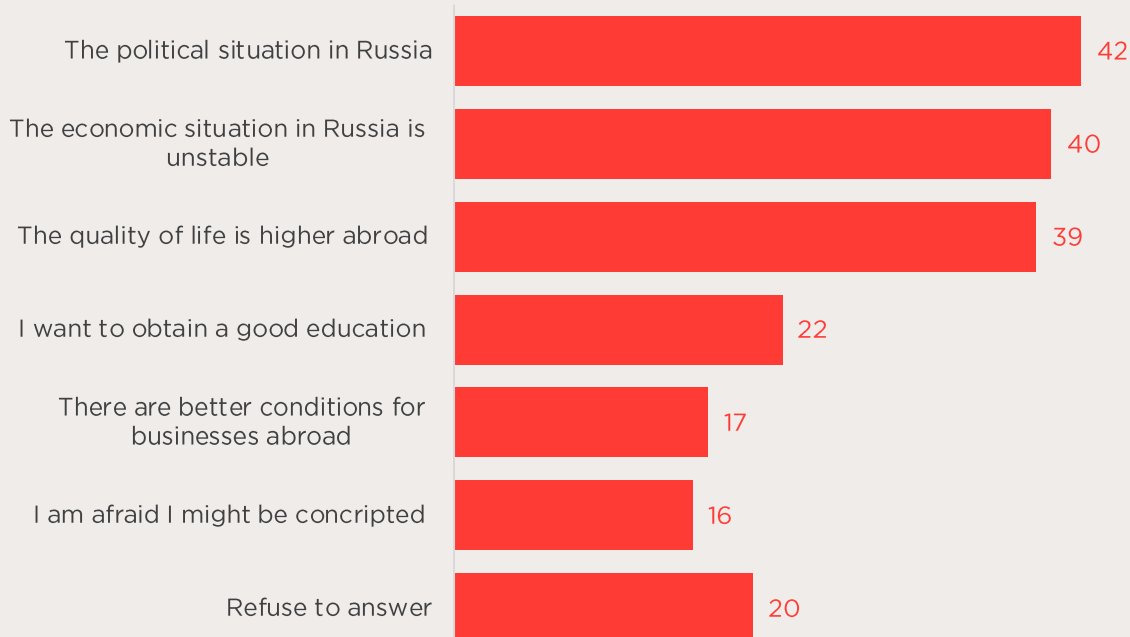
[situation](#) have also led many of those who considered emigration in the past to forgo this option, even if they have the financial or legal means to leave.

Today, the Chicago Council-Levada Center survey finds that three in 10 young Russian adults have thought about emigrating at some point in their lives (30%) and likely represent those who had plans to leave but were unable to as a result of financial, political, or logistical constraints. They may also represent a segment of young adults who are interested in living abroad and experiencing life outside of Russia.

Provided the opportunity to select multiple reasons why they consider emigrating, many young Russians cite the political (42%) and economic (40%) situations in Russia, the perceived higher quality of life (39%) and education (22%) abroad, perceived better business conditions abroad (17%), and fears of conscription (16%).

Reasons Young Russians Consider Emigrating

[If you have thought about emigrating] Please select one of the following reasons that best describes your situation: (%)



February 6-26, 2024 | n=1,003

CHICAGO COUNCIL-LEVADA CENTER

Conclusion

Americans and Russians are often cast as polar opposites, positioned at either ends of the political and cultural spectra. Data from Chicago Council-Levada Center surveys do show differences in nationalism, governmental preferences, and political culture across Russian and American youth populations; when taken together, these factors contribute to their very nuanced economic and political outlooks. For young Americans, tepid nationalism, a strong preference for democratic systems, and concerns over democratic backsliding have led them to see a bleak political and economic future for themselves. On the other hand, a stronger sense of national pride, greater political apathy and amenability to authoritarianism, and belief that their country has persevered in the face of Western sanctions have led young Russians to remain confident in their political and economic futures. However, despite their differences, the survey also finds that both youth populations share similar anxieties and equally think about emigrating for a higher quality of life, better education, and more economic opportunities.

Appendix

Table 1. Critical Threats across Age Cohorts					
<i>Age Cohorts</i>					
<i>Below is a list of possible threats to the vital interest of the United States in the next 10 years. For each one, please select whether you see this as a critical threat, an important but not critical threat, or not an important threat at all: (% critical threat)</i>	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	All
Large numbers of immigrants and refugees coming into the US	28%	34%	50%	55%	42%
Climate change	60%	52%	43%	50%	52%
International terrorism	42%	46%	58%	60%	52%
The military power of Russia	41%	42%	50%	52%	46%
North Korea's nuclear program	42%	45%	64%	59%	52%
Iran's nuclear program	36%	44%	57%	59%	49%
A global economic downturn	60%	55%	54%	48%	54%
Weakening democracy in the United States	58%	64%	73%	83%	69%
The development of China as a world power	42%	52%	65%	73%	58%
Political polarization in the United States	54%	53%	63%	74%	61%
Cyber-attacks on US computer networks	61%	66%	83%	82%	72%

Table 2. Political Outlook among Young Americans					
<i>Which of the following statements come closest to your view? (%)</i>					
<i>When you think about the United States' political situation in ten years, which of the following best describes how you feel? (%)</i>	Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government	Under some circumstances, an authoritarian government can be preferable to a democratic one	For people like me, it does not matter whether we have a democratic or a non-democratic regime	I don't know	All
Refused	0%	1%	2%	4%	4%
Optimistic	7%	8%	7%	8%	7%
Pessimistic	46%	41%	41%	25%	39%
Anxious	36%	27%	30%	26%	32%
Indifferent	8%	11%	12%	15%	10%
Excited	0%	10%	3%	1%	1%
Something else	1%	0%	1%	2%	1%
None of the above	2%	1%	4%	20%	7%

Table 3. Political Outlook among Young Russians					
<i>Which of the following statements come closest to your view? (%)</i>					
<i>When you think about Russia's political situation in ten years, which of the following best describes how you feel? (%)</i>	Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government	Under some circumstances, an authoritarian government can be preferable to a democratic one	For people like me, it does not matter whether we have a democratic or a non-democratic regime	Difficult to answer	All
Optimistic	21%	28%	21%	21%	22%
Pessimistic	14%	4%	6%	3%	9%
Anxious	39%	29%	22%	22%	32%
Indifferent	7%	6%	14%	14%	9%
Excited	10%	23%	14%	18%	14%
Something else	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%
None of the above	6%	6%	17%	14%	9%
Difficult to answer	1%	3%	4%	9%	3%

Table 4. Economic Outlook among Young Americans						
<i>On a scale from 1-5, with 1 not being proud at all and 5 being very proud, to what extent are you proud to be an American citizen? (%)</i>						
<i>When you think about each of the following in ten years, which of the following best describes how you feel? (The United States' economic situation) (%)</i>	1 - Not proud at all	2	3	4	5 - Very proud	All
Refused	2%	3%	1%	0%	3%	3%
Optimistic	9%	5%	14%	19%	25%	16%
Pessimistic	38%	34%	26%	25%	24%	27%
Anxious	26%	35%	36%	26%	24%	30%
Indifferent	14%	19%	14%	20%	9%	14%
Excited	0%	1%	1%	4%	3%	2%
Something else	0%	1%	3%	1%	2%	2%
None of the above	10%	3%	6%	5%	10%	6%

Table 5. Economic Outlook among Young Russians						
<i>On a scale from 1-5, with 1 not being proud at all and 5 being very proud, to what extent are you proud to be a Russian citizen? (%)</i>						
<i>When you think about Russia's economic situation in ten years, which of the following best describes how you feel? (%)</i>	1 - Not proud at all	2	3	4	5 - Very proud	All
Optimistic	5%	10%	2%	10%	35%	25%
Pessimistic	22%	34%	26%	15%	5%	10%
Anxious	36%	48%	47%	44%	26%	32%
Indifferent	19%	0%	10%	9%	6%	7%
Excited	7%	3%	5%	10%	16%	13%
Something else	6%	2%	3%	1%	2%	2%
None of the above	6%	3%	6%	8%	8%	8%
Difficult to answer	0%	0%	2%	3%	3%	3%

Table 6. Political Outlook among Young Americans						
<i>On a scale from 1-5, with 1 not being proud at all and 5 being very proud, to what extent are you proud to be an American citizen? (%)</i>						
<i>When you think about each of the following in ten years, which of the following best describes how you feel? (The United States' political situation) (%)</i>	1 - Not proud at all	2	3	4	5 - Very proud	All
Refused	2%	3%	2%	0%	2%	4%
Optimistic	6%	2%	6%	7%	12%	7%
Pessimistic	46%	48%	41%	37%	34%	39%
Anxious	31%	35%	34%	36%	26%	32%
Indifferent	3%	8%	11%	12%	10%	10%
Excited	1%	0%	1%	2%	3%	1%
Something else	0%	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%
None of the above	11%	3%	5%	5%	11%	7%

Table 7. Political Outlook among Young Russians						
<i>On a scale from 1-5, with 1 not being proud at all and 5 being very proud, to what extent are you proud to be a Russian citizen? (%)</i>						
<i>When you think about Russia's political situation in ten years, which of the following best describes how you feel? (%)</i>	1 - Not proud at all	2	3	4	5 - Not proud at all	All
Optimistic	12%	6%	1%	8%	31%	22%
Pessimistic	18%	32%	26%	16%	3%	9%
Anxious	27%	54%	43%	39%	27%	32%
Indifferent	16%	6%	13%	10%	8%	9%
Excited	4%	0%	8%	15%	17%	14%
Something else	2%	2%	1%	2%	1%	1%
None of the above	17%	0%	7%	7%	10%	9%
Difficult to answer	3%	0%	1%	2%	4%	3%

Methodology

This Chicago Council on Global Affairs-Levada Analytical Center survey was conducted February 6–26, 2024, among a weighted national sample of 1,003 adults 18 to 34 living in Russia. This sample was obtained from a randomly generated sample of mobile phone numbers, which were used to contact respondents and survey them via a computer-assisted telephone interviewing method. The margin of error for the full sample is ± 3.1 percentage points at a 95 percent confidence interval.

The eligibility of respondents was verified based on their answers to questions about age and their region of residence. For the study, respondents 18 to 34 living in Russia were considered eligible to be surveyed.

The Chicago Council on Global Affairs-Ipsos survey was conducted January 26–28, 2024, by Ipsos using its large-scale, nationwide, online research panel, KnowledgePanel, among a weighted national sample of 1,694 adults 18 to 34 living in all 50 US states and the District of Columbia. The margin of error for the full sample is ± 2.4 percentage points but is higher for partisan or demographic subgroups.

The data for the total sample were weighted to adjust for gender, age, race and ethnicity, education, census region, metropolitan status, and household income using demographic benchmarks from the 2023 March Current Population Survey Supplemental Data.

This work is made possible by the generous support of the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

OCTOBER 2024

Russians Tend to Say Neither Israel nor Hamas Are Justified in Military Actions



JEHAD ALSHRAFI / AP

By Dina Smeltz, Lama El Baz, and Denis Volkov

On the one-year anniversary of [Hamas' October 7 attack on Israel](#), both parties continue to engage in hostilities with [few viable prospects for a ceasefire](#). The conflict has since spilled into [neighboring countries](#), drawing both regional and international actors, like Russia, into the fold. Russian President Vladimir Putin has been vocal about his opposition to Israel's war in Gaza, even supplying Iran with [weapons and military equipment](#).

Data from a September 26–October 2, 2024, Chicago Council-Levada Center survey show that most Russians prefer not to take a side in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Among those who do, more tend to side with Palestinians than Israelis.

Key Findings

- Like Americans, significant shares of Russians (up to 42%) say they do not know enough about the conflict in the Middle East to express their opinions.
- Russians tend to say that neither party in the Israel-Hamas conflict is justified in its actions. A clear majority say Israel has gone too far in its military actions in Gaza and is not justified (59%, 15% justified, 26% unsure). Russians also tend to believe Hamas' actions on October 7, 2023, were more unjustified (40%) than justified (18%), though 42 percent are unsure.
- Russians believe the United States and NATO countries (38%) are most responsible for the continued bloodshed and instability in the Middle East, but a significant portion also say it is difficult to answer the question of who is most responsible (19%) or that no party in particular is to blame (9%). Russians are more likely to say that Israel (22%) bears responsibility for the ongoing conflict than Hamas and the Palestinians (8%) or Iran and other Mideastern countries (1%).
- Half of Russians (49%) favor the establishment of an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, while 14 percent oppose it and nearly four in 10 (37%) are unsure.

Introduction

Relations between Russia and Israel have deteriorated in recent years, due in part to Moscow's [growing bilateral security and defense relationship with Iran](#). In the aftermath of the October 7 attack, President Putin condemned Hamas' actions but refused to designate the group as a terrorist organization. Instead,

he invited a [delegation from Hamas](#) to Moscow for talks on the release of foreign hostages.

Putin also [condemned Israel's retaliatory military operations](#) in Gaza, [advocating for a two-state solution](#) that establishes an independent Palestinian state. While the joint Council-Levada Center survey reveals a significant portion of Russians (up to 42%) find it difficult to express their opinions on the conflict, those who do provide their views seem to be in sync with Putin's positions on it.

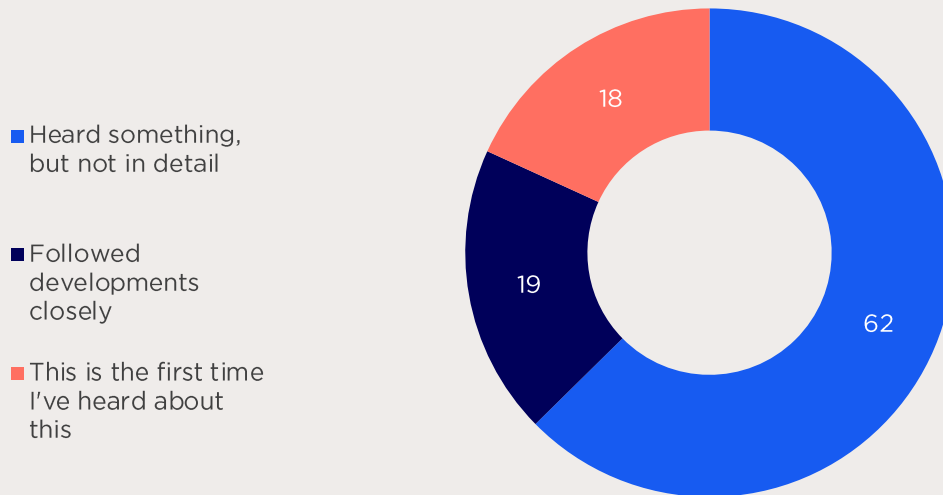
Relatively Few Russians Are Following the Conflict Very Closely

Only two in 10 Russians (19%) say they are following developments from the Israel-Hamas conflict closely (subsequently referred to as “informed Russians” in this report), but six in 10 (62%) say they have “heard something” about the clashes². For some (18%), being asked about the conflict in the survey was their first time hearing about it.

² The sample size among this subgroup of “informed Russians” is 301 with a margin of error of ± 5.6 percentage points at a 95 percent confidence interval.

Russian Awareness of Israel-Hamas Conflict

Are you aware of the clashes in Israel between the Palestinian movement, Hamas, and the Israeli army? (%)



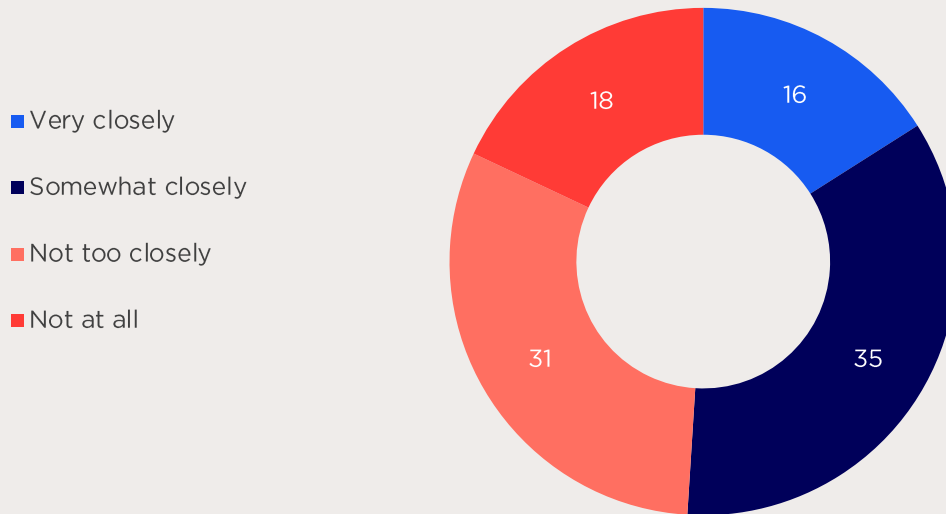
September 26-October 2, 2024 | n=1,606

CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS-LEVADA CENTER

By comparison, [the June 2024 Chicago Council Survey](#) finds that about half of Americans (51%) say they are following news on the conflict between Israel and Hamas very (16%) or somewhat (35%), while the other half say they are not following too closely (31%) or at all (18%).

American Awareness of Israel-Hamas Conflict

How closely are you following news about the following issues? The conflict between Israel and Hamas (%)



June 21-July 1, 2024 | n=2,106

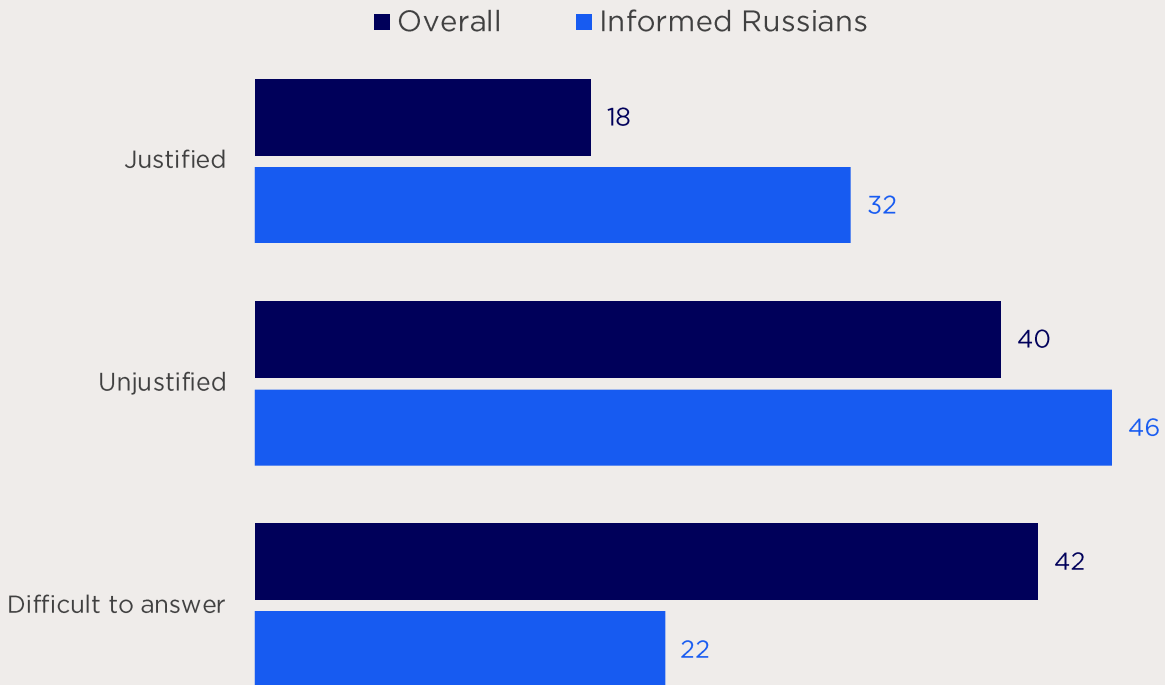
CHICAGO COUNCIL SURVEYS

Higher Portion of Russians Condemn Israeli versus Hamas Military Actions

When asked about the October 7 Hamas attack against Israel, a plurality of Russians (42%) find it difficult to say whether or not the group's actions were justified. However, among those who do provide an opinion, more believe the attack was unjustified (40%) than justified (18%). Better-informed Russians are more closely divided on Hamas' actions on October 7, as 46 percent maintain that the attack was unjustified, but 32 percent describe it as justified (22% difficult to say).

Russian Assessment of October 7 Hamas Attack

Regarding the Hamas October 7th attack against Israel, do you think Hamas' actions were justified, unjustified, or are you unsure? (%)



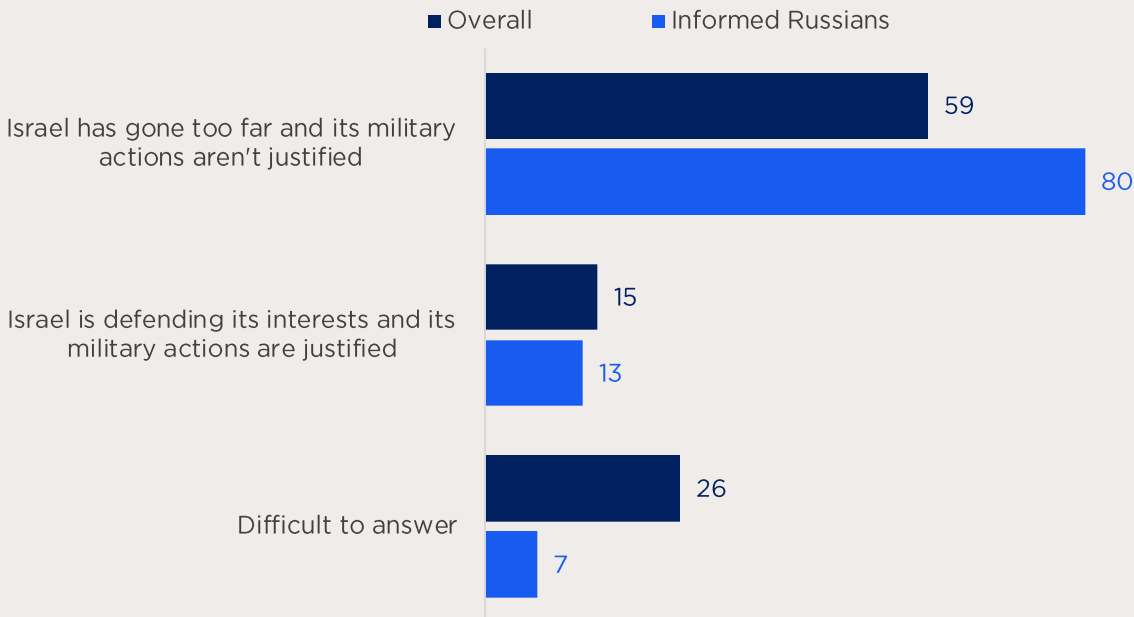
September 26-October 2, 2024 | n=1,606

CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS-LEVADA CENTER

Russians are more decisive when asked about Israel's retaliatory military action in Gaza, as only 26 percent say they find it difficult to answer. The majority (59%) say Israel's military actions have gone too far and are unjustified, while 15 percent say Israel is justified in defending its interests. Criticism of Israeli military action is higher among those Russians who follow the conflict closely, with eight in 10 (80%) saying Israel's military action has gone too far and is unjustified (13% justified, 7% difficult to say).

Russian Assessment of Israeli Military Actions in Gaza

Thinking about the Israeli military action in Gaza, which statement best describes what you think... or are you unsure? (%)



September 26-October 2, 2024 | n=1,606

CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS-LEVADA CENTER

[Council polling](#) finds that the US public has a much different take on the situation. Americans are much more likely to say Hamas' actions on October 7 were unjustified (67%) than justified (3%, 28% unsure). However, they are more divided in their assessment of Israel's military actions in Gaza, as roughly equal shares say it is unjustified (34%), justified (32%), or that they are unsure (33%).

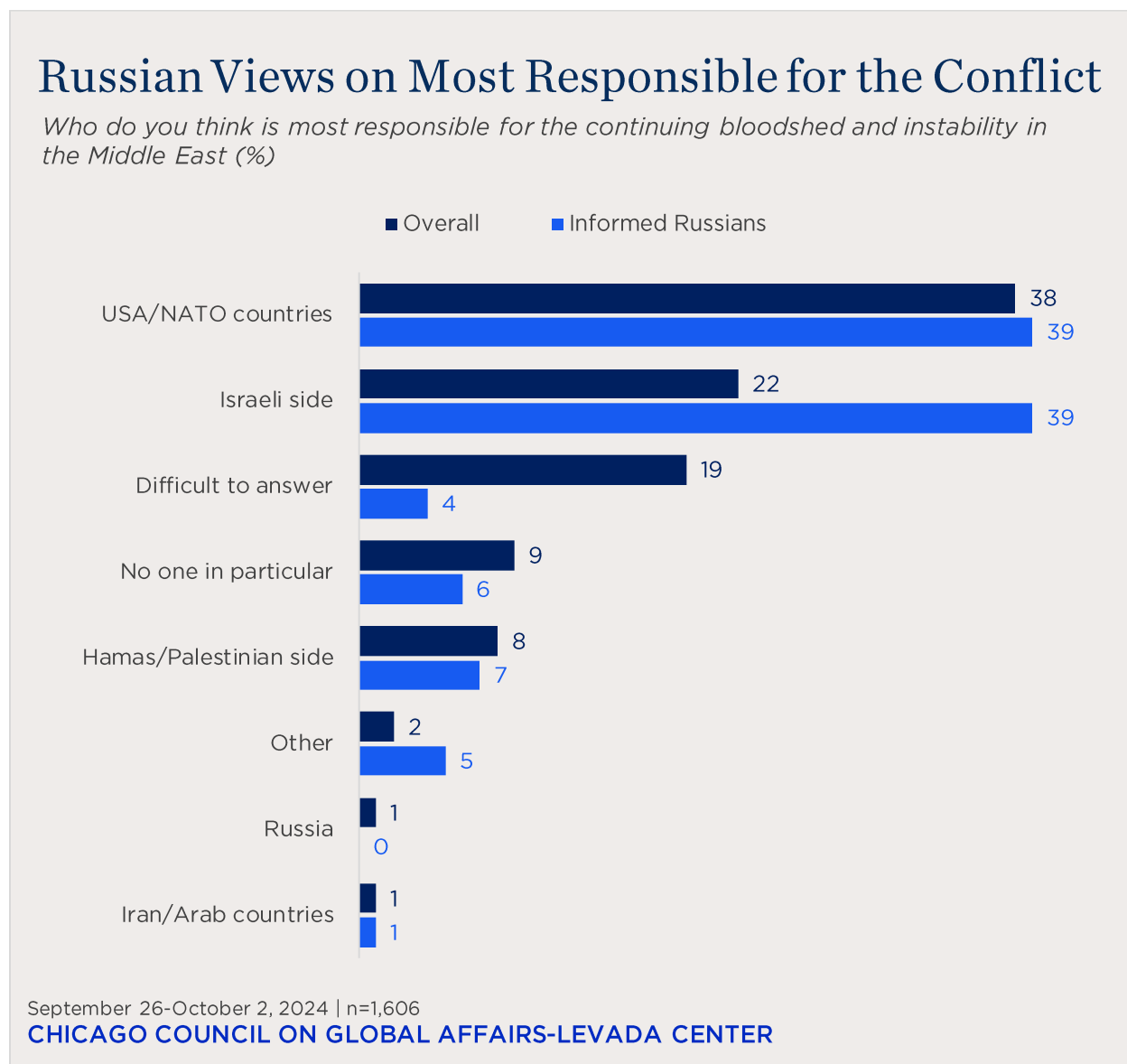
Russians Blame US and NATO Most for Conflict in the Middle East

Like Putin, who calls the conflict a "[failure of United States policy in the Middle East.](#)" the Russian population is more likely to blame the United States and other NATO countries (38%) for the continued bloodshed and instability in the Middle East than other parties to the conflict. In fact, more Russians say these Western countries are most responsible for the ongoing conflict than say the same about Israel (22%) or Hamas (8%).

However, Russians are now more likely than in October 2023 to say that Israel bears the most responsibility (22%, up from 12%) and less likely to blame the

United States and other NATO countries for the continued bloodshed and instability in the Middle East (38%, down from 45%) (see appendix table 1).

Today, just one percent of Russians place responsibility on Iran and other Arab countries, like Lebanon (1%). However, three in 10 combined (30%) say they find the question of responsibility difficult to answer (19%), say that no party in particular is to blame (9%), or select “other” without specifying (2%).



Among informed Russians, equal shares say the United States and NATO countries (39%) and Israel (39%) are to blame for the continued bloodshed and instability in the Middle East. Just 7 percent think Hamas or the Palestinian side bears the most responsibility, and 6 percent say no one in

particular is to blame. In addition, two in 10 find the question too difficult to answer (19%).

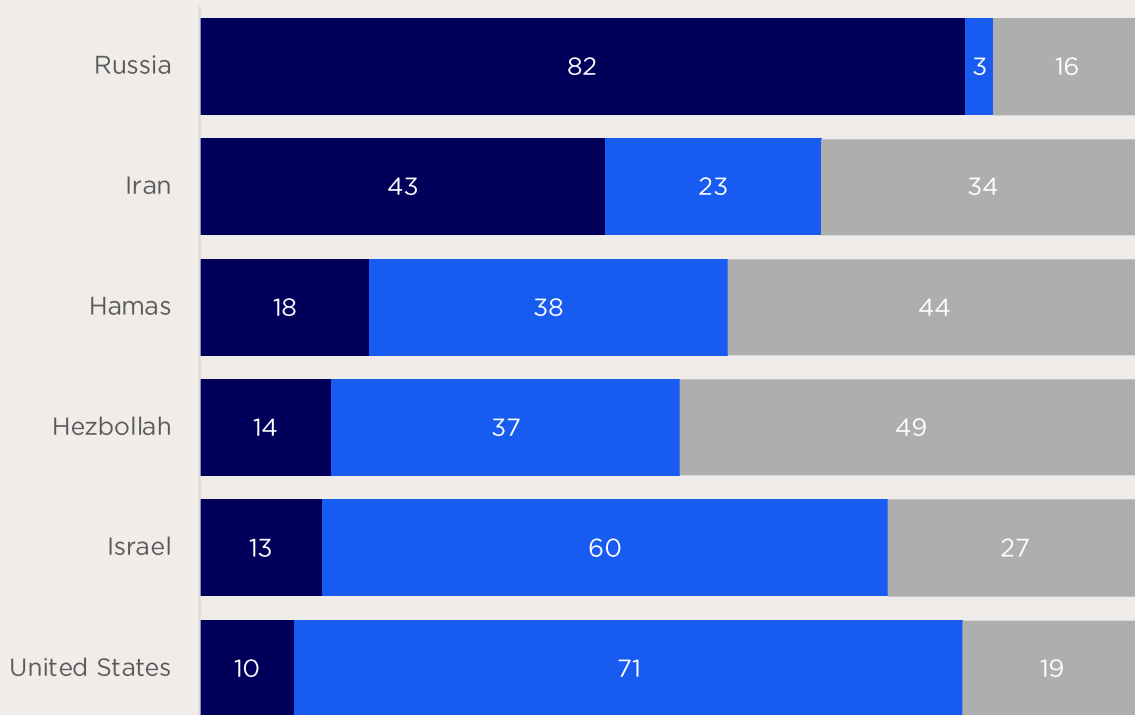
Russians Believe Russia and Iran Play Most Positive Role in Mideast

Majorities of Russians say the United States (71%) and Israel (60%) are playing a negative role in resolving the key problems facing the Middle East and North Africa. Russians also tend to think Hamas (38%, 18% positive) and Hezbollah (37%, 14% positive) play a more negative role in the region than a positive one, though pluralities say the question is difficult to answer about either group (44% Hamas, 49% Hezbollah). By contrast, a majority thinks Russia plays a positive role (82%) in resolving the region's challenges, with a plurality saying the same about Iran (43%, 23% negative, 34% difficult to answer).

Russian Ratings of Parties in the Region

In your opinion, are the following countries and groups playing a very positive, somewhat positive, somewhat negative, or very negative role in resolving the key problems facing the Middle East and North Africa? (%)

■ Somewhat + very positive ■ Somewhat + very negative ■ Difficult to answer



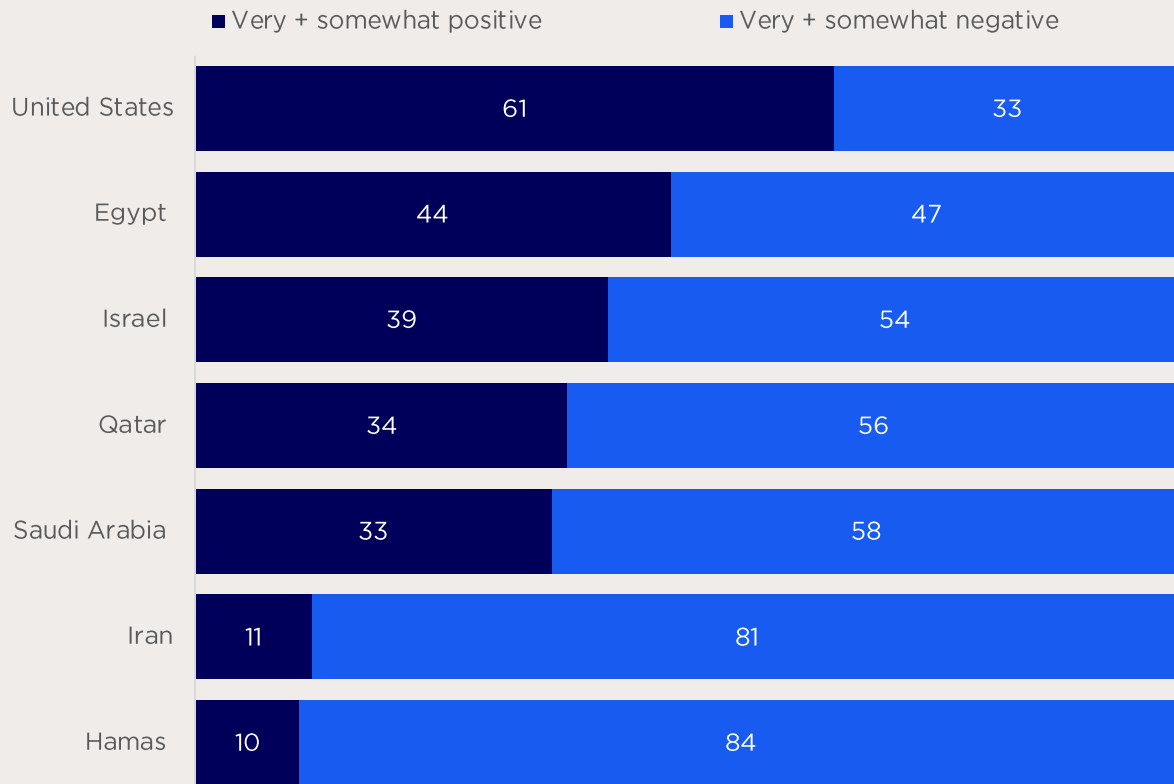
September 26-October 2, 2024 | n=1,606

CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS-LEVADA CENTER

These views contrast greatly with [those of Americans](#), who say the United States is the most positive actor in resolving the key problems facing the Middle East (61%). Americans characterize both Hamas (84%) and Iran (81%) as negative actors. The US survey did not ask Americans to rate Russia on this question. However, Americans' attitudes toward Israel have grown more negative over the past decade, with more now saying it plays a negative role in the region (54%, up from 46% in 2015).

American Ratings of Parties in the Region

In your opinion, are the following countries and groups playing a very positive, somewhat positive, somewhat negative, or very negative role in resolving the key problems facing the Middle East? (%)



June 21-July 1, 2024 | n=2,106

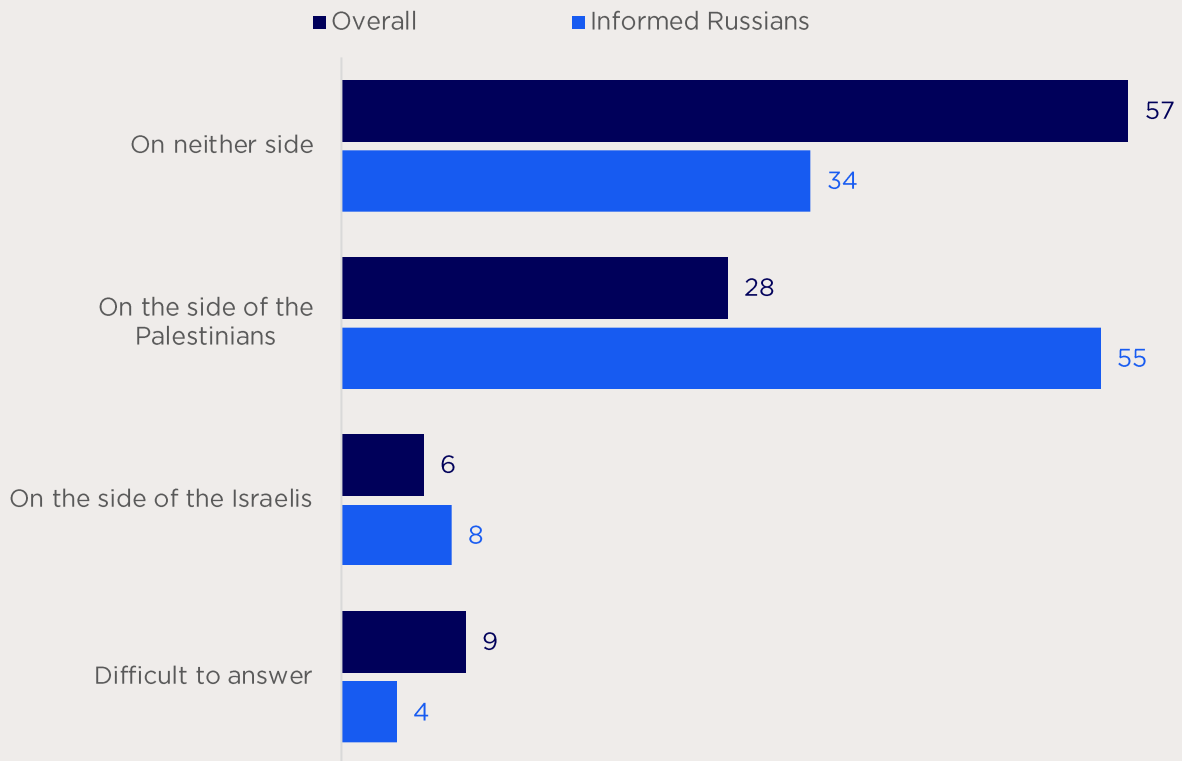
CHICAGO COUNCIL SURVEYS

Like Americans, Most Russians Do Not Take a Side in Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

The majority of Russians (57%) do not wish to side with either Israelis or Palestinians. Among the rest, more sympathize with Palestinians (28%) than Israelis (6%). Informed Russians are even more likely to side with the Palestinians (55%), compared to only 8 percent who side with Israelis (34% prefer to not choose a side).

Russian Sympathies in Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Whose side are you on in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict now? (%)



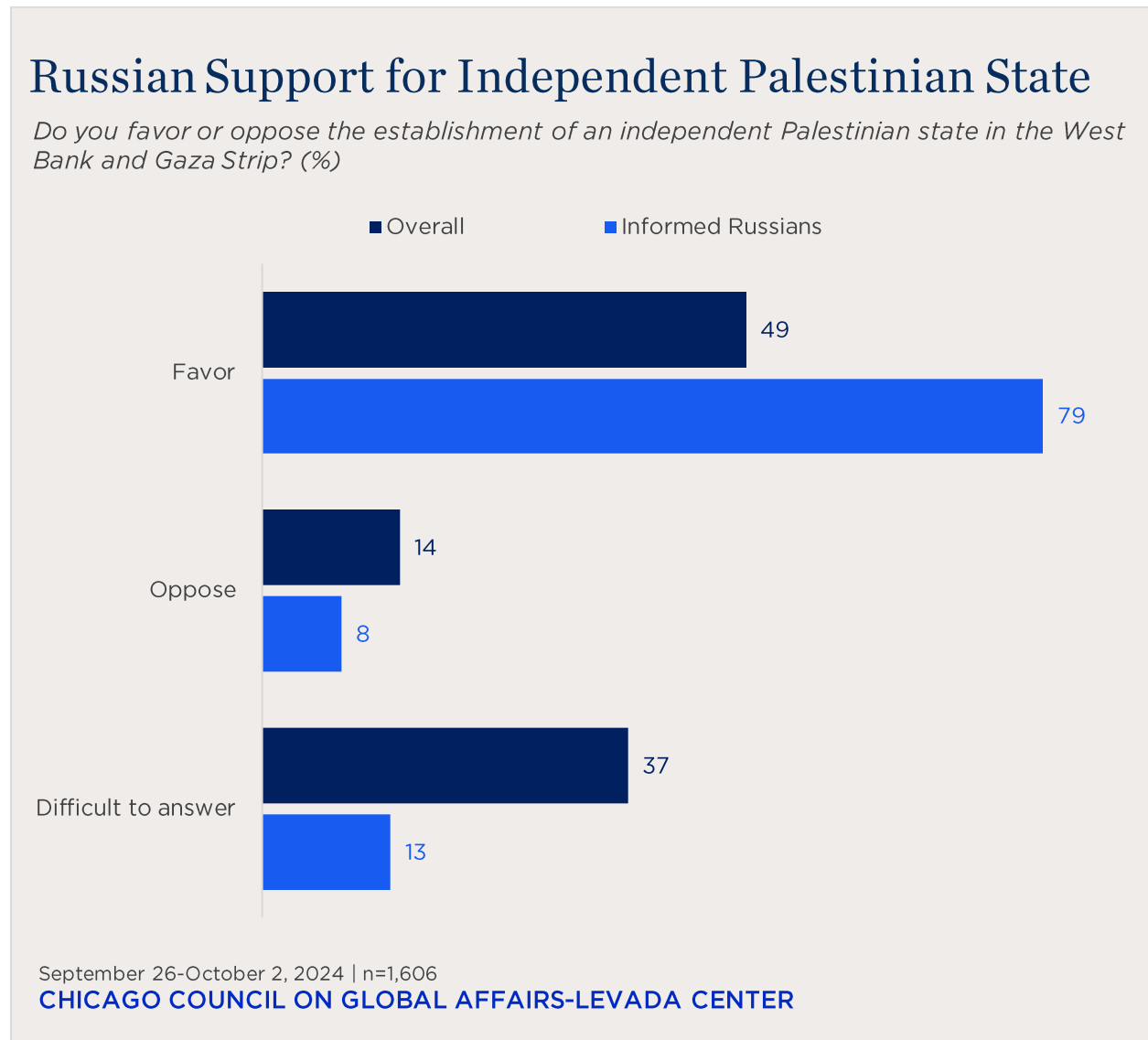
September 26-October 2, 2024 | n=1,606
CHICAGO COUNCIL - LEVADA CENTER

Americans also would prefer to stay on the sidelines. According to a [February 2024 Council-Ipsos](#) poll, a majority of Americans (56%) prefer not to take a side in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Unlike Russians, those Americans who do choose a side are more likely to side with Israel (31%) than the Palestinians (11%).

Half of Russians Support an Independent Palestinian State

In line with Putin's [own stance on a two-state solution](#) to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, half of Russians (49%) favor the establishment of an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. While 14 percent oppose an independent Palestinian state, nearly four in 10 (37%) say they find the question difficult to answer. Informed Russians are far more likely than

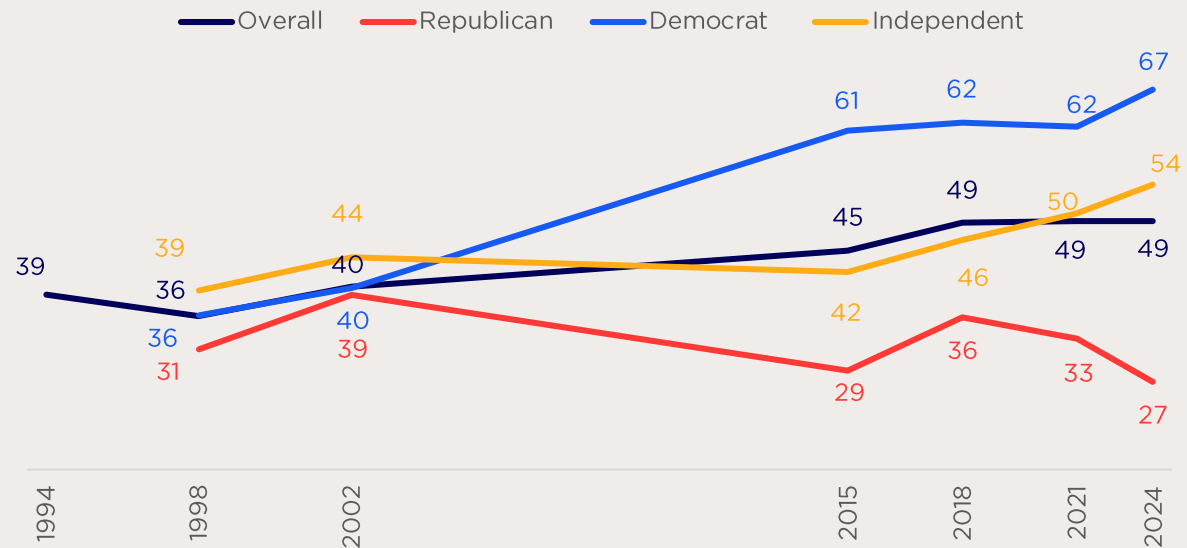
average to support the establishment of an independent Palestinian state (79%, 8% oppose, 13% unsure).



US President Joseph Biden has also advocated for [a two-state solution](#), and, like Russians, half of Americans favor the establishment of an independent Palestinian state (49% support, 41% oppose). However, there are [large differences in support](#) for a Palestinian state among self-described Democrats (67% support), Independents (54%), and Republicans (27%) on this issue—similar to divides on other results related to the Middle East.

US Support for an Independent Palestinian State

Do you favor or oppose the establishment of an independent Palestinian state on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip? (% favor)



June 21-July 1, 2024 | n=2,106

CHICAGO COUNCIL SURVEYS

Conclusion

Previous Chicago Council-Levada Center surveys show that the Russian public considers the Kremlin's current conflict with Ukraine a [defensive reaction](#) to the suppression of Russian speakers in Ukraine and Western meddling in its "[sphere of influence](#)." Likely for this reason, they do not perceive a disconnect between their condemnation of Israeli military action and their support for Russia's military operation in Ukraine.

In addition, they likely associate Israel with the United States and direct their hostility toward both Israel and Western countries in this conflict. This is not to understate the population's concern over the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza or their relatively negative views of Hamas and Hezbollah, but to highlight that Russians' sympathies lie more with Palestinian civilians rather than members of militant factions.

Appendix

Table 1. Responsibility for Continued Bloodshed and Instability in the Middle East and North Africa Over Time		
<i>Who do you think is most responsible for the continuing bloodshed and instability in the Middle East (%)</i>		
	October 2023	September 2024
USA/NATO countries	45	38
Israeli side	12	22
No one in particular	11	9
Hamas/Palestinian side	8	8
Iran/Arab countries	2	1
Russia	1	1
Other	2	2
Difficult to answer	20	19

Methodology

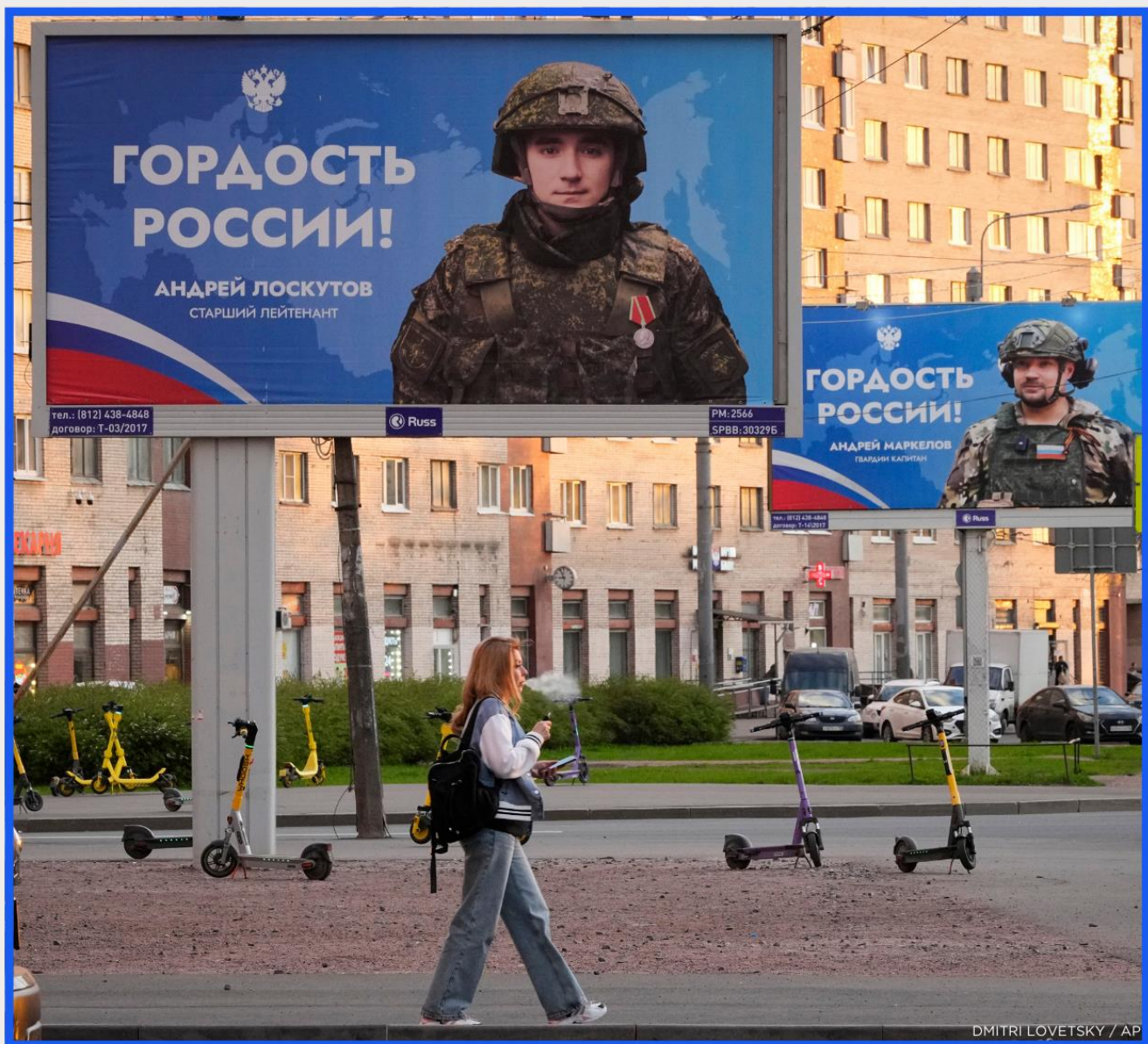
The Chicago Council-Levada Center survey was conducted September 26-October 2, 2024, among a representative sample of all Russian urban and rural residents. The sample consisted of 1,606 people aged 18 or older in 137 municipalities of 50 regions of the Russian Federation. The survey was conducted as a personal interview in respondents' homes. The distribution of responses is given as a percentage of the total number. The data set is weighted 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 margin of error for the full sample is 3.4 percentage points at a 95 percent confidence interval.

Additional analysis is based on data from the 2024 Chicago Council Survey of the American public on foreign policy, a project of the Lester Crown Center on US Foreign Policy. The 2024 Chicago Council Survey was conducted June 21-July 1, 2024, by Ipsos using its large-scale nationwide online research panel, KnowledgePanel, in both English and Spanish among a weighted national sample of 2,106 adults aged 18 or older living in all 50 US states and the District of Columbia. The margin of sampling error for the full sample is ± 2.3 percentage points including a design effect of 1.1229. The margin of error is higher for partisan subgroups or for partial-sample items.

These projects are made possible by the generous support of the Crown family, the Korea Foundation, the United States-Japan Foundation, and the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

OCTOBER 2024

Russians More Interested in Peace Talks with Ukraine, but Most Oppose Making Major Concessions



By Dina Smeltz, Lama El Baz, and Denis Volkov

A just-completed September 26–October 2, 2024, public opinion survey in Russia conducted jointly by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs and the Levada Center seems to demonstrate some level of war fatigue among the Russian population. A plurality of Russians now think the conflict in Ukraine has more disadvantages than advantages for their country, and a slight majority now support the Kremlin moving to peace negotiations. But the results in total suggest that everyday Russians want a peace agreement to cement Russia’s battlefield gains—not to make any meaningful concessions to Kyiv.

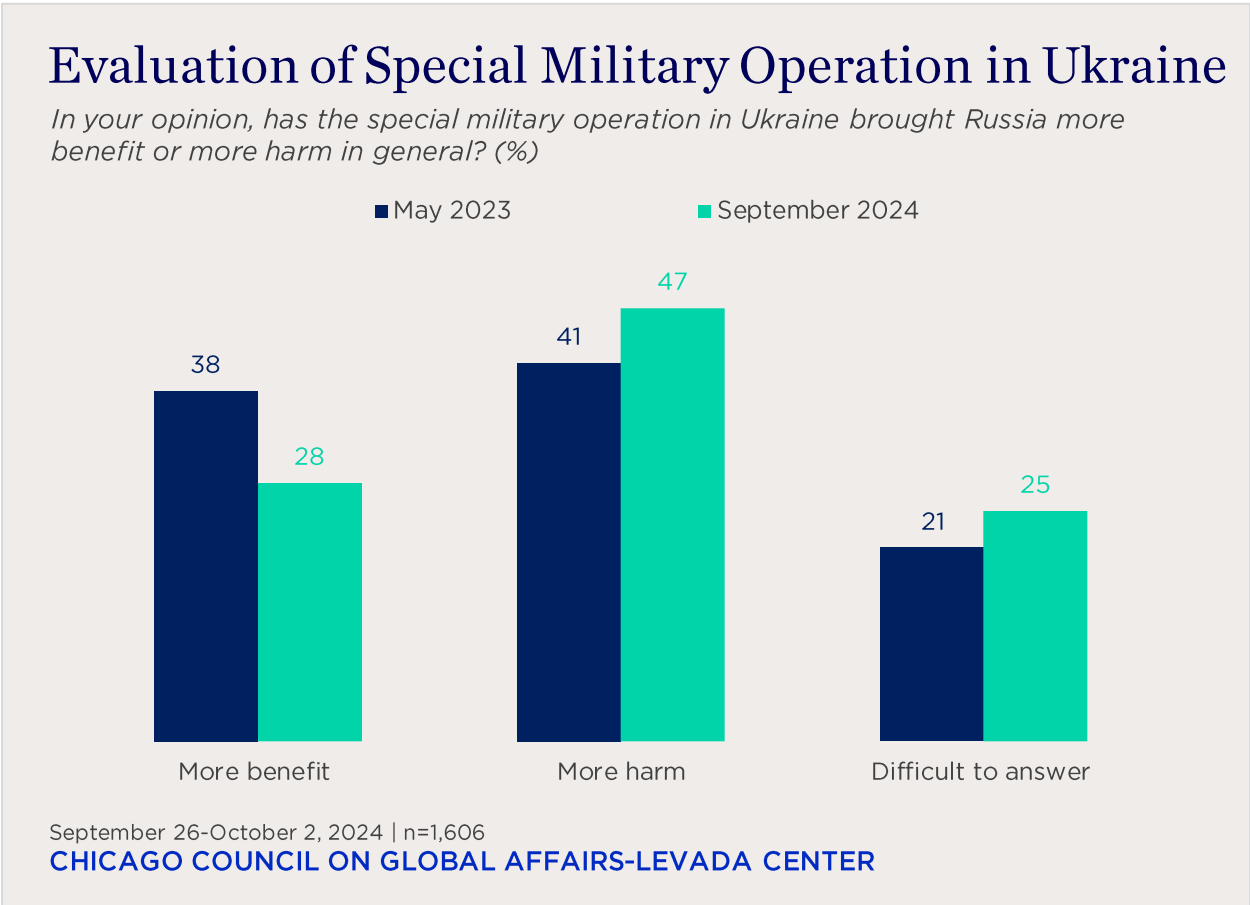
Key Findings

- Six in 10 Russians (60%) believe that the lack of a peace agreement with Ukraine is a critical threat to Russia, and a slight majority (54%) say it is time to start peace negotiations rather than continue military action (38%).
- By a five to three ratio, Russians say that the special military operation in Ukraine has caused more harm (47%) than good (28%).
- Eight in 10 Russians (78%) say the possibility of the special military operation in Ukraine escalating into a conflict between Russia and NATO poses a critical threat to Russia, and 53 percent say a military confrontation between Moscow and NATO is likely if Russia prevails in the conflict with Ukraine.
- Despite these risks, three in four Russians continue to support their government’s military action in Ukraine (46% strongly support, 30% somewhat support).
- When asked directly whether Russia should make certain concessions to Ukraine to end the conflict, only two in 10 think it should (71% oppose). As in previous surveys, Russians remain unwilling to cede any of the occupied Ukrainian territories back to Kyiv.

Plurality Now Say the Conflict Has Caused Russia More Harm Than Good

Since launching its special military operation in Ukraine nearly three years ago, Russia has incurred significant economic and humanitarian costs. The Pentagon reports that military operations in Ukraine have [cost Russia up to \\$211 billion, in addition to \\$1.3 trillion](#) in previously anticipated economic growth through 2026. More than that, the special military operation in Ukraine has cost Moscow billions of dollars’ worth of [sanctioned assets and losses in trade and oil revenue](#), not to mention the [mass emigration of skilled workers](#) and hundreds of thousands of [killed or wounded troops](#). In addition, Ukraine’s incursion into the Kursk region in Russia proper [unsettled many Russians](#), as did Ukrainian [drone strikes](#) against targets in Russia.

Many Russians express some dissatisfaction with the negative effects of the conflict. By a five to three ratio, more Russians say that the special military operation has caused more harm (47%) than good (28%) for Russia. Another quarter find the question too difficult to respond to (25%). This represents an increase in negative evaluations from 2023, when Russians were more closely divided (41% more harm, 38% more good, 21% difficult to answer).³



More Now Support Peace Negotiations Than in 2023

Although [several rounds of negotiations have been held and international actors have proposed at least 25 different peace plans](#) since the start of the conflict in 2022, the path to a peaceful resolution still remains unclear. Before a [Ukrainian-sponsored peace summit](#) in Switzerland last June, Russian President Vladimir Putin offered up a ceasefire plan that called for Ukraine to pledge not to join NATO and for the withdrawal of Ukrainian troops from all

³ In 2023, survey respondents who perceived more harm than benefit were asked to volunteer (in an open-ended question) what harm they see from the military operation. A majority focused on the death of civilians and soldiers (70% combined), followed by economic deterioration (20%) and international isolation (10%).

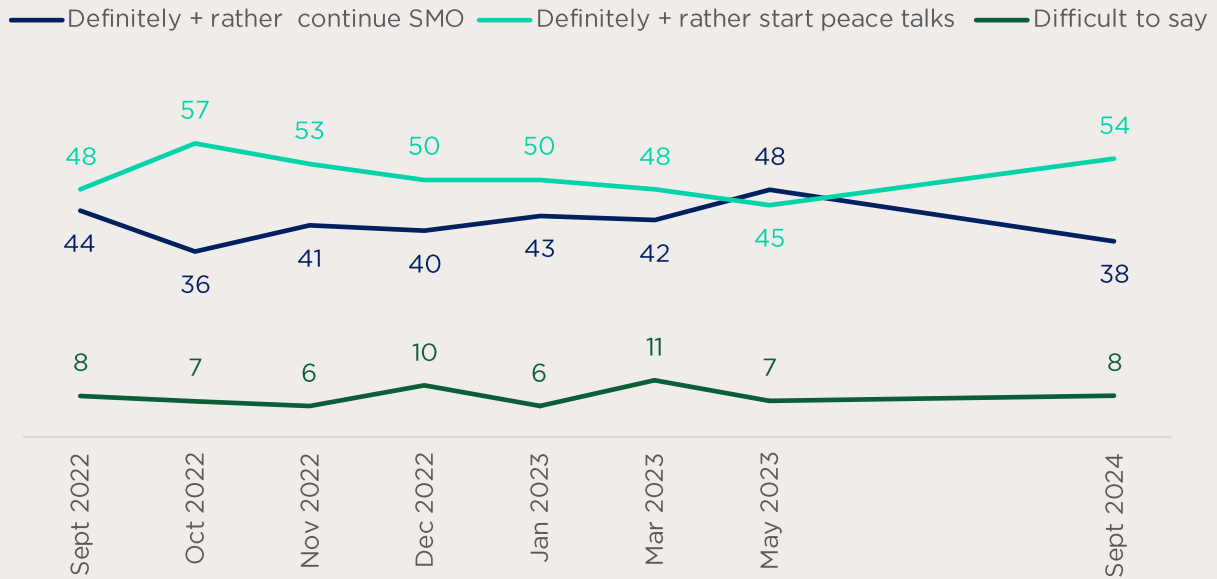
the territories partially occupied by Russia. However, leaders from both Ukraine and the United States rejected these conditions.

Whether they are aware of Putin's proposal or not, six in 10 Russians believe that the lack of a peace agreement with Ukraine is a critical threat to Russia (60%). To place this result into context, the lack of a peace deal rates lower than terrorism (80% critical threat) but slightly ahead of NATO's presence in Eastern Europe or the prospect of large numbers of immigrants and refugees entering Russia (55% each). The lack of a peace agreement also rates well above the possibility of an economic downturn (44%), climate change (35%), and weakening democracy in Russia (30%) (see figure on page 8).

A slight majority of Russians (54%) now say it is time to start peace negotiations, while just under four in 10 say it is better to continue military action (38%). This contrasts with results from May 2023, when Russians were evenly divided (48% continue military operations vs. 45% start peace talks). The data suggest that support for ending the special military operation and pursuing peace talks increases among Russians when Putin puts forth a peace proposal. By contrast, if Putin speaks out against peace talks, as he did around the Russian elections and [Ukraine's Kursk offensive](#), popular support for negotiations wanes.

Support for Peace Negotiations

Do you think we should continue military operations or start peace negotiations?
(%)



September 26-October 2, 2024 | n=1,606

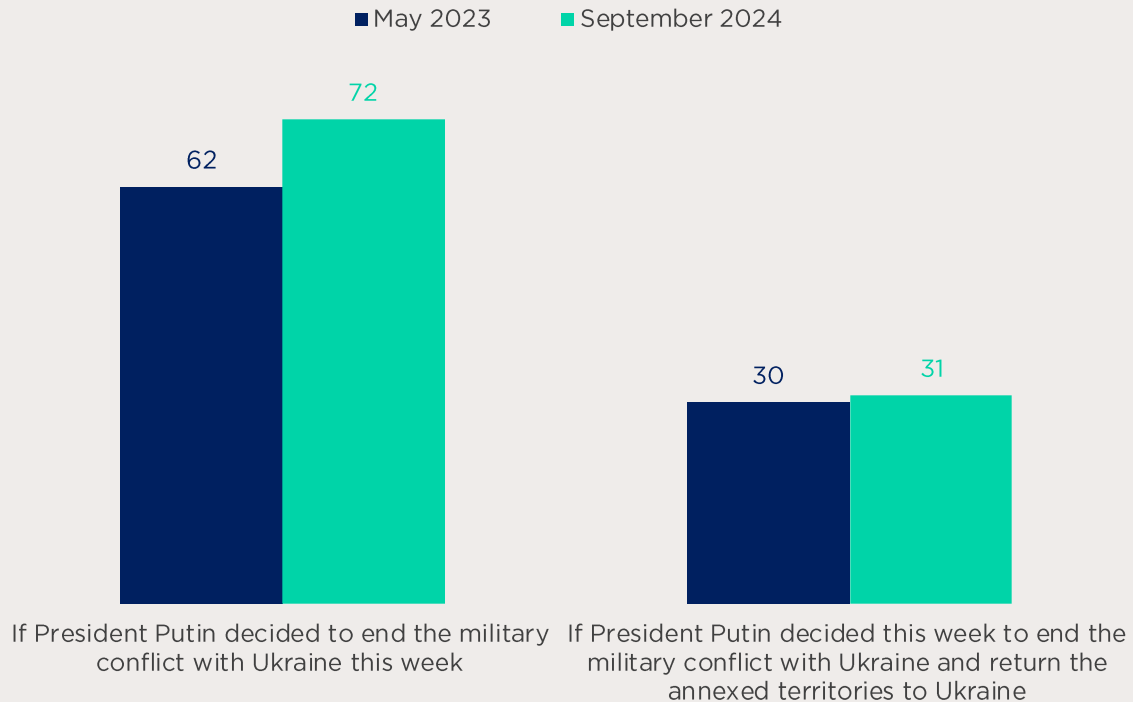
CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS-LEVADA CENTER

Survey results are somewhat mixed on what Russians would think of a definitive peace deal. In a question randomly asked of half the survey sample, three-quarters of Russians say that, if Putin decided to end the military conflict with Ukraine this week, they would support this decision (73%, up from 62% in May 2023).

Yet support for peace talks drops dramatically—to just 31 percent—if such a move includes returning annexed territories to Ukraine. Ceding the territories Russia has gained in the war remains unpopular, with six in 10 Russians continuing to oppose returning territory to Ukraine (60%, similar to 62% in 2023).

Support for Ceding Territories to Ukraine

Would you support or not support this decision: (% definitely + rather support)



September 26-October 2, 2024 | n=1,606

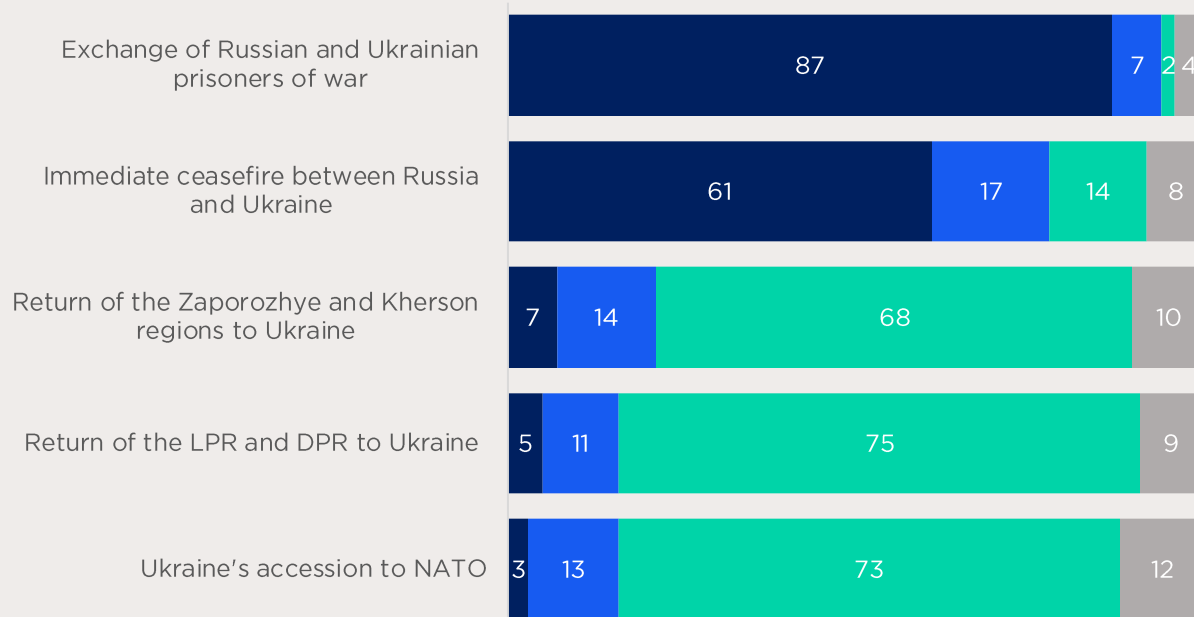
CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS-LEVADA CENTER

A subsequent series of questions makes Russian opposition to compromise as part of peace talks very clear. Majorities of seven in 10 or more say that returning Luhansk and Donetsk (75%) or the occupied areas of Zaporozhye and Kherson to Ukraine (69%) are not acceptable under any circumstances. Three in four also say it is completely unacceptable for Ukraine to join NATO (73%). On the other hand, solid majorities support an immediate ceasefire (61% say it is preferable, 17% call it acceptable) and prisoner exchange (87% preferable, 75% acceptable) as part of a peace agreement.

Conditions for Peace Negotiations

For each statement, please indicate whether it is preferable, acceptable but not preferable, or unacceptable under any circumstance for concluding a peace agreement: (%)

■ Preferred
 ■ Not preferred but acceptable
 ■ Not acceptable under any circumstances
 ■ Difficult to answer



September 26-October 2, 2024 | n=1,606

CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS-LEVADA CENTER

Russians Expect Trouble from NATO and the West if Russia Wins War

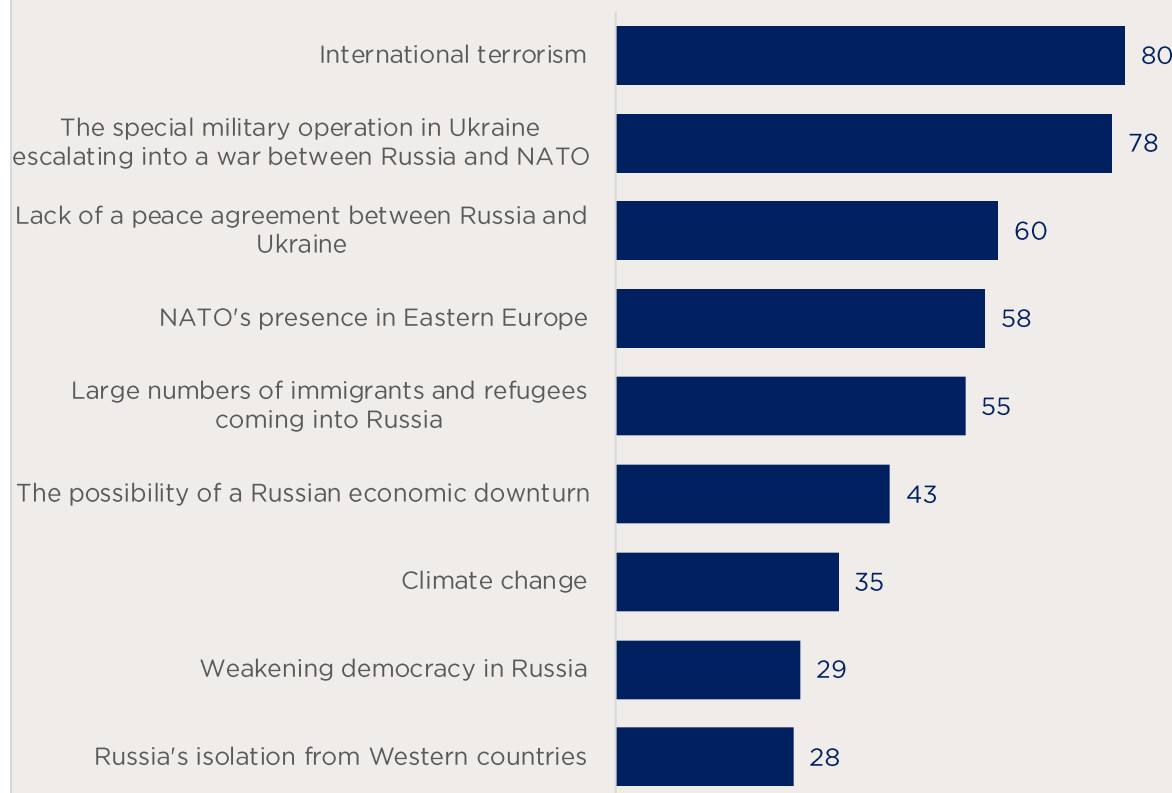
In late September, Putin released a video on the second anniversary of the 2022 referendum he claims annexed four Ukrainian territories to Russia. He used the platform to repeat his assertion that “Western elites” are using Ukraine as [“a military outpost aimed at Russia.”](#) He was also [quoted](#) as saying that these same elites “systematically instilled hatred and radical nationalism” in Ukraine and “fueled hostility towards everything Russia.”

This type of rhetoric has bolstered [Russian negativity toward NATO and a sense of threat from the West](#) among everyday Russians. Eight in 10 Russians consider a possible escalation of Russia’s military action in Ukraine into a wider war between Russia and NATO a critical threat to their country (78%). And a smaller majority consider NATO’s presence in Eastern Europe a critical threat (58%). While only three in 10 Russians consider Russia’s isolation from

Western countries a critical threat (28%), an additional 36 percent rate it as an important but not critical threat.

Critical Threats to Vital Russian Interests

Below is a list of possible threats to Russia's vital interests in the next 10 years. For each of them, choose whether you consider it a critical threat, an important but not critical threat, or not an important threat at all: (%)

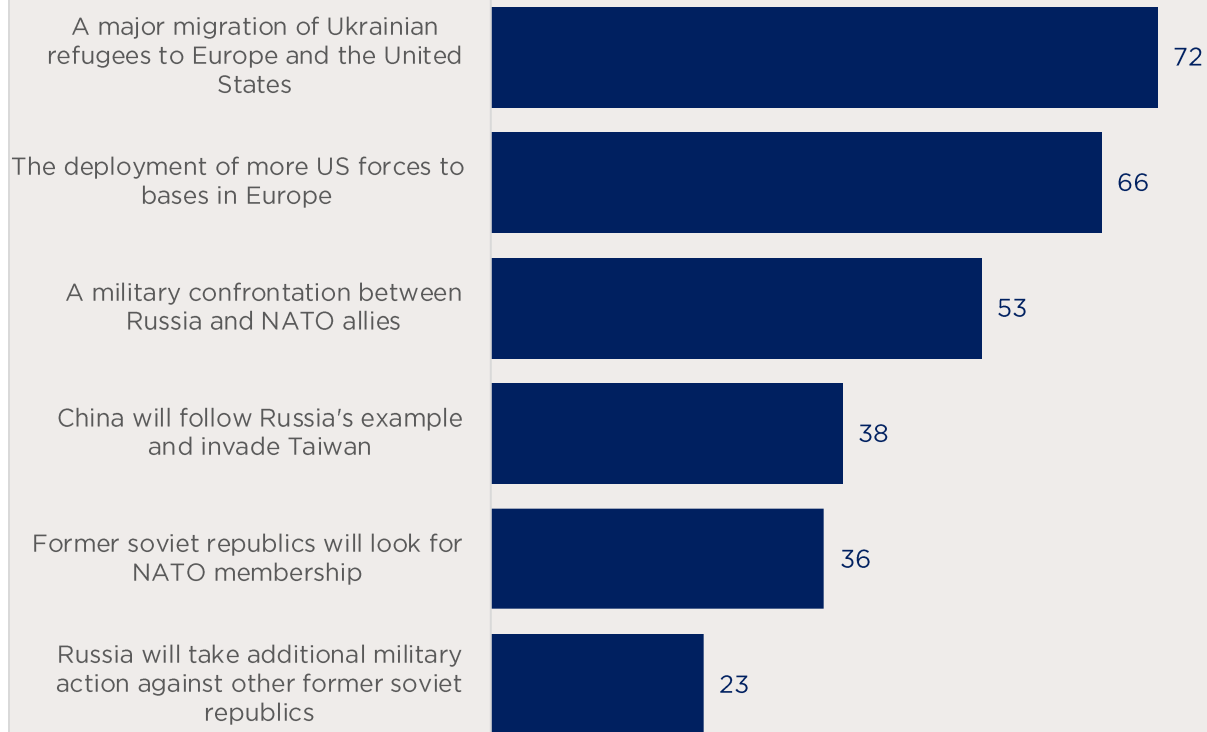


September 26-October 2, 2024 | n=1,606
CHICAGO COUNCIL - LEVADA CENTER

Should Russia win the war, Russians say it is very or rather likely that there would be a major migration of Ukrainian refugees to Europe and the United States (72%) and that the United States would deploy more military forces to US bases in Europe (66%). A smaller majority believe there would be a military confrontation between Moscow and NATO allies (53% call it at least somewhat likely). Only 36 percent think it is likely that additional former Soviet republics would seek NATO membership, and only 23 percent say it is likely that Russia would take additional military action against other former Soviet republics.

Outcomes of a Russian Victory in Ukraine

If Russia wins the conflict with Ukraine, how likely is it that the following will happen: (% very + rather likely)



September 26-October 2, 2024 / n=1,606

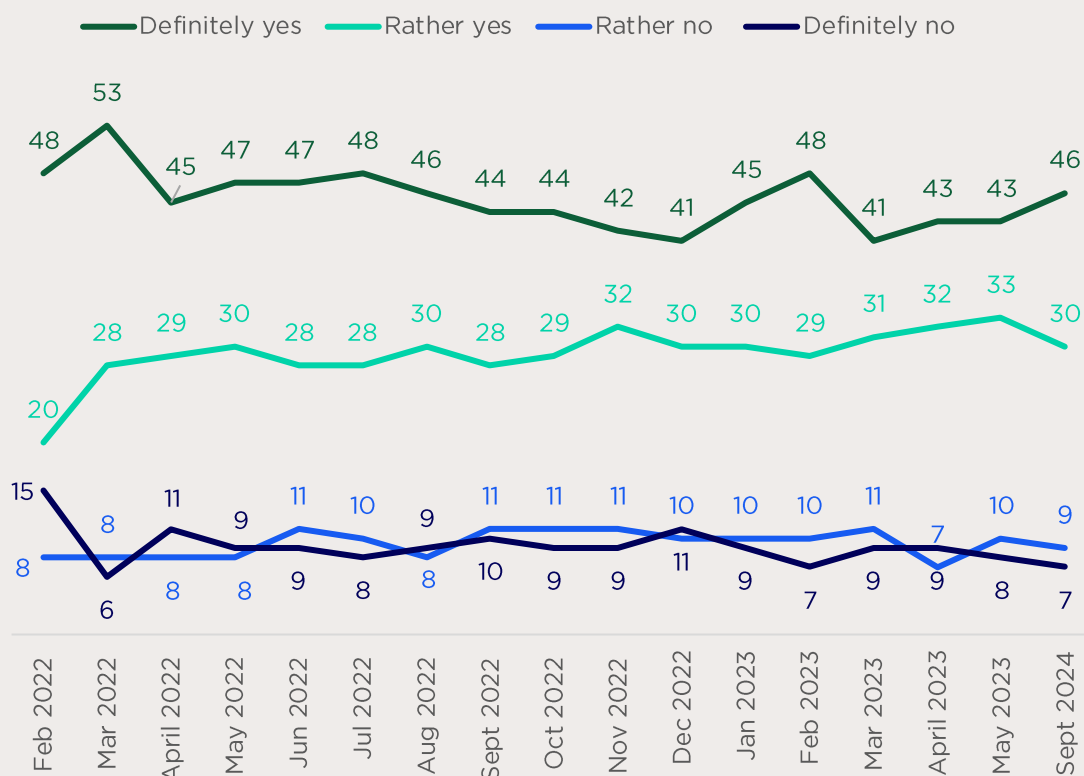
CHICAGO COUNCIL - LEVADA CENTER

Russians Defiant despite Potential Consequences if Russia Defeats Ukraine

Despite the risks associated with a potential Russian victory in the conflict, including a potential military confrontation between Russia and NATO, Russian public support for the special military operation remains solid. Similar to attitudes since April 2022, three in four Russians (76%) continue to say they strongly (46%) or somewhat (30%) support Russia's special military operation (16% strongly or somewhat oppose it). Approval for the special military operation has been generally stable since the war began, except for slightly elevated levels of strong support in March 2022 and February 2023 (see figure).

Support for Actions of Russian Armed Forces

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



September 26-October 2, 2024 | n=1,606

CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS-LEVADA CENTER

This continued support could reflect both the public's “rally around the flag” sentiments, given Ukraine’s more aggressive attacks inside Russia itself and recent Russian military advances in eastern Ukraine. A majority say that Russia has been successful in the conflict with Kyiv (60%), similar to attitudes in May 2023 (61%) and up from 53 percent in November 2022. About a quarter say it has been unsuccessful (23%, 27% in 2023, and 31% in 2022).

Success of Special Military Operation in Ukraine

How successful is the special military operation in Ukraine? (%)

■ Very successful ■ Rather successful ■ Rather unsuccessful
■ Very unsuccessful ■ Difficult to say



September 26-October 2, 2024 | n=1,606

CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS-LEVADA CENTER

Conclusion

These results show that Russians would support a peace agreement if it was basically freezing the current battle lines so that Russia could secure its gains in Ukraine. Most Russians are unwilling to make the concessions that would lead to a peaceful resolution of the conflict, and a wide majority continue to support Russia's ongoing military action in Ukraine.

Appendix

U3. Do you think it's time to continue hostilities or start peace negotiations?

Do you think that military action should continue now or peace negotiations should begin? (%)	Definitely continue hostilities	Rather continue military operations	Hurry up and start peace talks	Definitely start peace talks	I find it difficult to answer
22-Sep	29	15	27	21	8
22-Oct	22	14	31	26	7
22-Nov	24	17	31	22	6
22-Dec	27	13	29	21	10
23-Feb	27	16	29	21	7
23-Mar	26	16	29	19	11
23-Apr	26	13	29	23	11
23-May	30	18	28	17	7
23-Jun	26	14	30	23	7
23-Jul	25	16	27	24	8
23-Aug	24	14	27	23	12
23-Sep	25	14	28	23	11
23-Oct	24	13	32	24	7
23-Nov	21	15	33	24	7
23-Dec	25	15	31	22	7
24-Jan	24	16	31	21	9
24-Feb	26	13	29	23	9
24-Mar	27	13	26	22	13
24-Apr	26	13	29	22	10
24-May	26	17	30	20	8
24-Jun	23	14	34	24	6
24-Jul	21	13	32	26	9
24-Aug	26	15	27	23	10
24-Sep	25	14	30	24	8

Methodology

The Chicago Council-Levada Center survey was conducted September 26-October 2, 2024, among a representative sample of all Russian urban and rural residents. Levada Center interviewers conducted these personal interviews in respondents' homes. The survey sample consisted of 1,606 people aged 18 or older in 137 municipalities of 50 regions of the Russian Federation.

The data set is weighted by gender, age, and 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 margin of error for the full sample is 3.4 percentage points at a 95 percent confidence interval.

OCTOBER 2024

Russians are Indifferent Toward 2024 US Presidential Election



By Lama El Baz and AJ Caughey

Although presidential nominees Kamala Harris and Donald Trump stand worlds apart on [key issues related to US-Russia relations](#), a Chicago Council on Global Affairs-Levada Analytical Center survey, fielded September 26–October 2, 2024, finds that few Russians believe the outcome of the 2024 US presidential election will affect their country or its relationship with the United States. While a segment of the Russian population prefers Trump over Harris, more express disinterest and cynicism toward the election than a clear preference for either candidate.

Key Findings

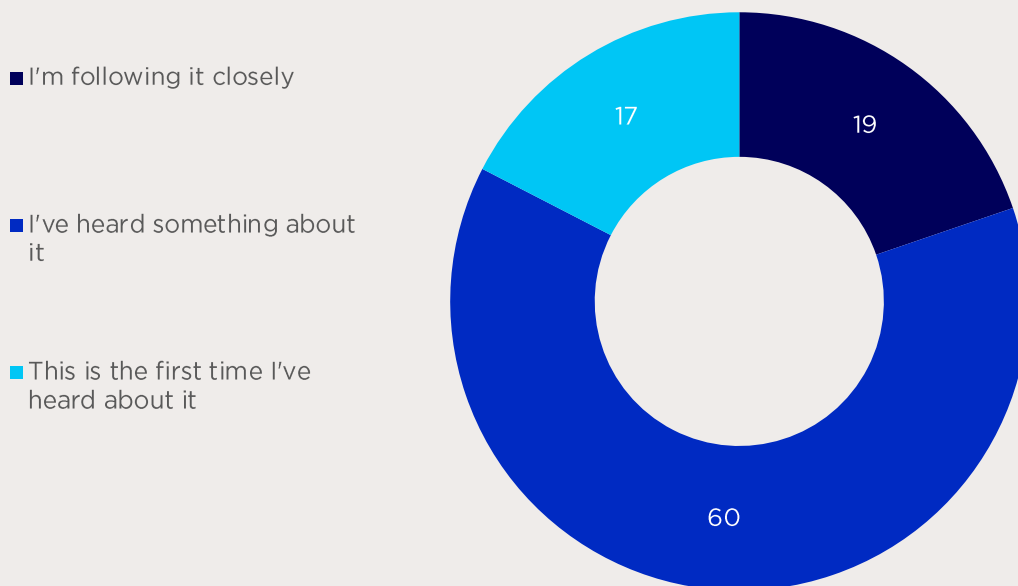
- Only one-fifth of Russians (19%) are following the US presidential election closely, though the majority (60%) say they have heard something about it (17% say the survey was their first time hearing about it).
- A plurality of Russians (46%) say the outcome of the 2024 US presidential elections doesn't matter to Russia, while the remainder tend to say it would be better for Russia if former President Trump (37%) were to win the election than Vice President Harris (5%).
- Four in 10 Russians believe US-Russia relations won't change much if either Harris (44%) or Trump (40%) win the election. Similar shares believe bilateral relations will improve if Trump wins (33%) and worsen if Harris wins (30%).
- The minority of Russians who are closely following the election are more likely than the overall population to say it will be better for Russia if Trump wins (52%) and that US-Russia relations would get better under his administration (44%).

Few Russians are Tuning into the US Presidential Election

Although the 2024 US presidential election has garnered international attention, the data show that most Russians are tuning it out. Just two in 10 (19%) say they are following the election closely, while about as many say they haven't heard about it at all (17%). An additional six in 10 (60%) say they have heard at least something about it.

Awareness of Upcoming US Presidential Election

Are you following the current election campaign for the US presidential election? (%)



September 26-October 2, 2024 | n=1,606

CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS - LEVADA CENTER

Among those who haven't heard anything about the US presidential election, substantial shares also say they haven't heard anything about the conflict between Israel and Hamas (49%) and don't closely follow the situation in Ukraine (74%) (see appendix tables 1 and 2). The data suggests that this segment of Russians, who tend to be younger and less educated, is disengaged not just with news about the American election, but global news more broadly. They are also less likely than the overall population to receive their news and information about the world from television (51%, compared to 60% overall) (see appendix table 3).

Plurality Says Outcome of US Presidential Election Doesn't Matter

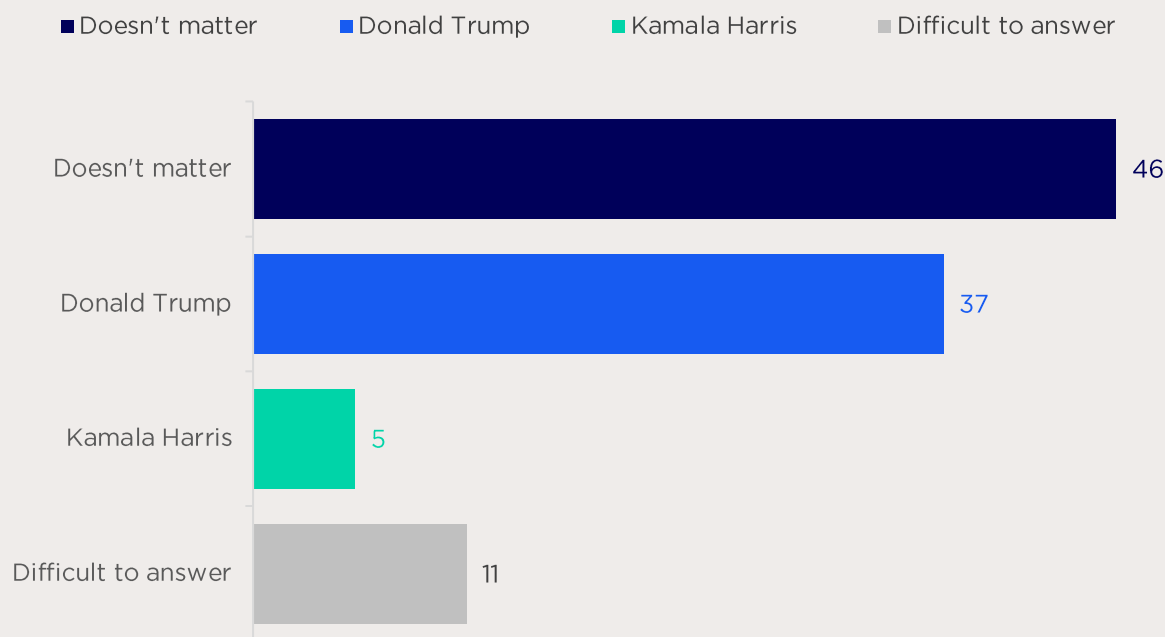
Throughout her campaign, [Harris has reaffirmed](#) the US commitment to NATO and pledged to continue providing economic and military support to Ukraine. Trump, on the other hand, has [long disparaged the transatlantic alliance and said he would cut aid](#) to Ukraine if elected. Despite these key differences, the data show that Russians are largely indifferent toward the upcoming US

presidential election, believing its outcome won't make a great deal of difference to Russia or its relations with the United States.

In fact, nearly half (46%) say it doesn't matter who wins the upcoming US presidential election. However, a substantial share (37%) expresses a clear preference for Trump, believing it would be better for Russia if he won the election. Few say the same of his opponent, as only 5 percent think Russia would be better off if Harris won the race, while 11 percent find the question difficult to answer. Among those closely following the election, about half (52%) say it would be better for Russia if Trump wins the upcoming election, compared to 9 percent who say the same of Harris. However, over a third (36%) even of this engaged group say that it doesn't matter who wins the election (see appendix table 4).

Preferred Outcome of US Presidential Election

Do you think it would be better for Russia if former President Donald Trump or US Vice President Kamala Harris won the US presidential election? (%)



September 26-October 2, 2024 | n=1,606

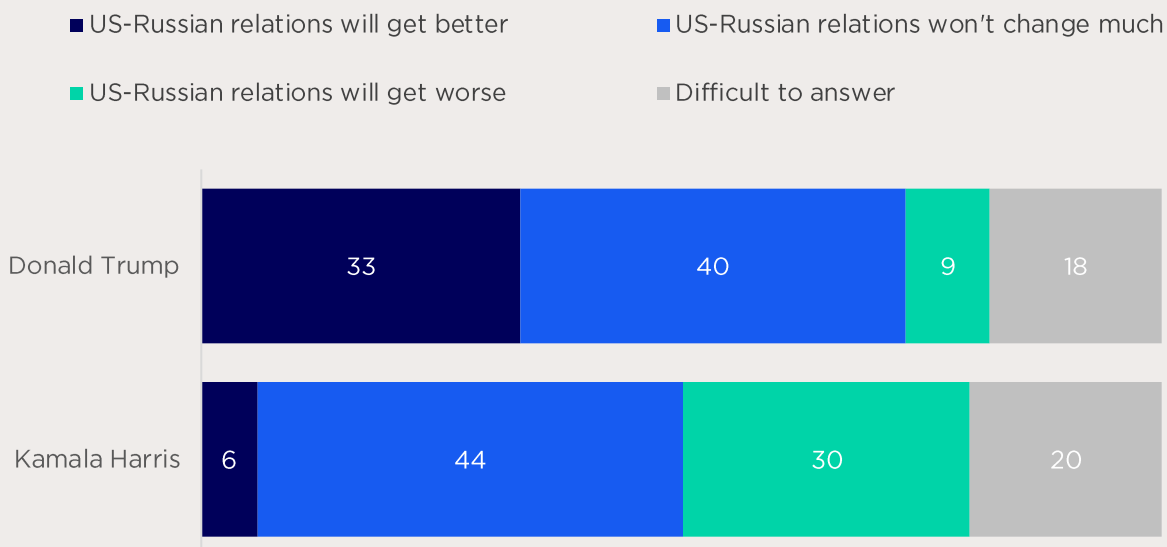
CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS - LEVADA CENTER

In the same vein, a plurality of Russians are skeptical that the outcome of the presidential election will have any bearing on the US-Russia relationship: four in 10 say bilateral relations won't change if either Harris (44%) or Trump (40%) win. There is significant overlap between these groups, as 77 percent of those who say US-Russia relations won't change much if Trump wins the election also say that Harris' election wouldn't make much of a difference. This indicates Russians are apathetic about the election itself, not just the candidates running (see appendix table 5).

That said, one-third (33%) believe US-Russian relations will get better if Trump wins the election, compared to just 6 percent who think bilateral relations would improve under a Harris presidency. On the other hand, three in 10 (30%) predict that relations will worsen under a Harris administration, versus 9 percent if Trump prevails. For both candidates, two in 10 (18% for Trump and 20% for Harris) find it difficult to assess the impact of their election on relations between the two countries.

US-Russian Relations after US Presidential Election

In your opinion, will relations between the United States and Russia improve, worsen, or not change if Kamala Harris or Donald Trump are elected in the 2024 US presidential election? (%)



September 26-October 2, 2024 | n=1,606

CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS - LEVADA CENTER

Those Russians paying close attention to the race are equally as likely to say US-Russian relations won't change (45%) as to say they will change for the worse (42%) under a Harris administration. By contrast, they are slightly more likely to say US-Russian relations will get better (44%) under a second Trump administration than say they will stay the same if he is elected (39%) (see appendix tables 6 and 7).

Despite Trump and Harris' contrasting views of NATO and Russia's military operations in Ukraine, data analysis additionally shows that Russians' views toward the special military operation in Ukraine and toward NATO have little bearing on their preference for a candidate (see appendix tables 8 and 9). And while [Russian state media often favors Trump's candidacy](#), the data show only marginal differences between the electoral preferences of Russians who receive their news from traditional, state-run media sources (like television, radio, and newspapers) and those who turn to digital media sources (like social media, Telegram, or other online blogs and websites) for their news (see appendix table 10).

Conclusion

Although Trump and Harris have tried to differentiate their foreign policy platforms, particularly as they relate to NATO and to Russia's special military operation in Ukraine, the Russian population is skeptical that anything will change after the election, no matter the victor. Perhaps as a result, few are paying close attention to the election. Still, there is a substantial share that believes Russia and US-Russian relations will benefit if Trump wins the election, while few think the same of Harris.

Appendix

Table 1. Share of Russians Who Are Following the US Presidential Election and the Situation in Ukraine

Are you following the current election campaign for the US presidential election? (%)

<i>Are you following the situation around Ukraine? (%)</i>	I follow it closely	I've heard something about it	This is the first time I hear about it	Difficult to answer
Very + quite closely	90	51	25	51
Not particularly closely + don't follow at all	10	48	74	44

Table 2. Share of Russians Who Are Following the US Presidential Election and the Clashes between Israel and Hamas

Are you following the current election campaign for the US presidential election? (%)

<i>Are you aware of the clashes in Israel between the Palestinian movement Hamas and the Israeli army? (%)</i>	I follow it closely	I've heard something about it	This is the first time I hear about it	Difficult to answer
I follow the developments closely	54	12	6	9
I've heard something, but not in detail	41	74	43	53
This is the first time I've heard about this	5	13	49	31
Difficult to answer	1	1	2	7

Table 3. Media Consumption among Russians Following the US Presidential Election

Are you following the current election campaign for the US presidential election? (%)

<i>From where do you learn about news in the country and in the world? (% mentioned)</i>	Overall	I follow it closely	I've heard something about it	This is the first time I hear about it	Difficult to answer
Television	60	73	59	51	54
Radio	10	11	11	5	4

Printed media (newspapers, magazines)	5	8	5	4	2
Friends, relatives, neighbors	16	10	18	18	19
Online publications (newspaper, magazine websites, information portals)	29	29	31	21	25
Internet social networks	37	30	37	42	31
Telegram channels	28	25	30	24	22
YouTube channels	12	12	13	9	10
Other	0	0	0	0	2
I'm not interested in this	1	0	1	3	6

Table 4. Candidate Preference among Russians Following the US Presidential Election

Are you following the current election campaign for the US presidential election? (%)

<i>Do you think it would be better for Russia if former President Donald Trump or US Vice President Kamala Harris won the US presidential election? (%)</i>	Overall	I follow it closely	I've heard something about it	This is the first time I hear about it	Difficult to answer
Donald Trump	37	52	38	21	21
Kamala Harris	5	9	6	1	4
Doesn't matter	46	36	45	62	51

Difficult to answer	11	3	12	16	25
---------------------	----	---	----	----	----

Table 5. Expectations for US-Russian Relations

In your opinion, will relations between the United States and Russia improve, worsen, or not change if Kamala Harris or Donald Trump are elected in the 2024 US presidential election?
Donald Trump (%)

<i>In your opinion, will relations between the United States and Russia improve, worsen, or not change if Kamala Harris or Donald Trump are elected in the 2024 US presidential election? Kamala Harris (%)</i>	US-Russian relations will get better	US-Russian relations will get worse	US-Russian relations won't change much	Difficult to answer
US-Russian relations will get better	5	25	4	2
US-Russian relations will get worse	53	48	17	8
US-Russian relations won't change much	32	30	77	7
Difficult to answer	10	7	3	83

Table 6. Expectations for US-Russian Relations if Trump Is Elected among Russians Following the US Presidential Election

Are you following the current election campaign for the US presidential election? (%)

<i>In your opinion, will relations between the United States and Russia improve, worsen, or not change if Kamala Harris or Donald Trump are elected in the 2024 US</i>	Overall	I follow it closely	I've heard something about it	This is the first time I hear about it	Difficult to answer

<i>presidential election? Donald Trump (%)</i>					
US-Russian relations will get better	33	44	34	21	17
US-Russian relations will get worse	9	10	8	8	10
US-Russian relations won't change much	40	39	42	39	32
Difficult to answer	18	7	16	32	41

Table 7. Expectations for US-Russian Relations if Harris Is Elected among Russians Following the US Presidential Elections

Are you following the current election campaign for the US presidential election? (%)

<i>In your opinion, will relations between the United States and Russia improve, worsen, or not change if Kamala Harris or Donald Trump are elected in the 2024 US presidential election? Kamala Harris (%)</i>	Overall	I follow it closely	I've heard something about it	This is the first time I hear about it	Difficult to answer
US-Russian relations will get better	6	6	6	5	7
US-Russian relations will get worse	30	42	29	20	19
US-Russian relations won't change much	44	45	47	38	29
Difficult to answer	20	7	18	36	45

Table 8. Preference for Candidate in US Presidential Election by Support for the Special Military Operation in Ukraine

Do you personally support or not the actions of the Russian armed forces in Ukraine? (%)

<i>Do you think it would be better for Russia if former President Donald Trump or US Vice President Kamala Harris won the US presidential election? (%)</i>	Overall	Definitely + rather support SMO	Definitely + rather not support SMO
Donald Trump	37	39	34
Kamala Harris	5	5	8
Doesn't matter	46	47	48
Difficult to answer	11	9	11

Table 9. Preference for Candidate in US Presidential Election by Perception of Threat Posed by NATO's Presence in Eastern Europe

*Below is a list of possible threats to the vital interests of Russia in the next 10 years. For each one, please select whether you see this as a critical threat, an important but not critical threat, or not an important threat at all: **NATO's presence in Eastern Europe** (%)*

<i>Do you think it would be better for Russia if former President Donald Trump or US Vice President Kamala Harris won the US presidential election? (%)</i>	Overall	Critical threat	Important but not critical threat	Not an important threat at all
Donald Trump	37	41	38	31
Kamala Harris	5	4	6	14
Doesn't matter	46	45	48	50
Difficult to answer	11	10	8	5

Table 10. Preference for Candidate in US Presidential Election by Media Sources

From where do you learn about news in the country and in the world? (% mentioned)

<i>Do you think it would be better for Russia if former President Donald Trump or US Vice President Kamala Harris won the US presidential election? (%)</i>	Overall	Traditional media sources (television, radio, and newspaper)	Digital media sources (social media, Telegram channels, YouTube, and other websites and blogs)
Donald Trump	37	37	38
Kamala Harris	5	5	6

Doesn't matter	46	47	43
Difficult to answer	11	10	12

Methodology

The Chicago Council-Levada Center survey was conducted September 26-October 2, 2024, among a representative sample of all Russian urban and rural residents. Levada Center interviewers conducted these personal interviews in respondents' homes. The survey sample consisted of 1,606 people aged 18 or older in 137 municipalities of 50 regions of the Russian Federation.

The data set is weighted by gender, age, and 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 margin of error for the full sample is 3.4 percentage points at a 95 percent confidence interval.

JANUARY 2025

Russians Rally Around Putin's Foreign Policy



MIKHAIL KLIMENTYEV / SPUTNIK VIA AP

By Dina Smeltz and Lama El Baz

In the last decade, Russian President Vladimir Putin has pursued an aggressive foreign policy to restore Russia's status as a global power. Joint surveys by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs and the Levada Analytical Center conducted between 2019 and 2023 have revealed some reservations among the Russian public about the high economic and diplomatic costs associated with his more aggressive policy choices. However, the most recent Chicago Council-Levada Center survey, fielded September 26–October 2, 2024, finds that Russians seem to think that the corresponding increase in global respect for Russia has been worth it.

Key Findings

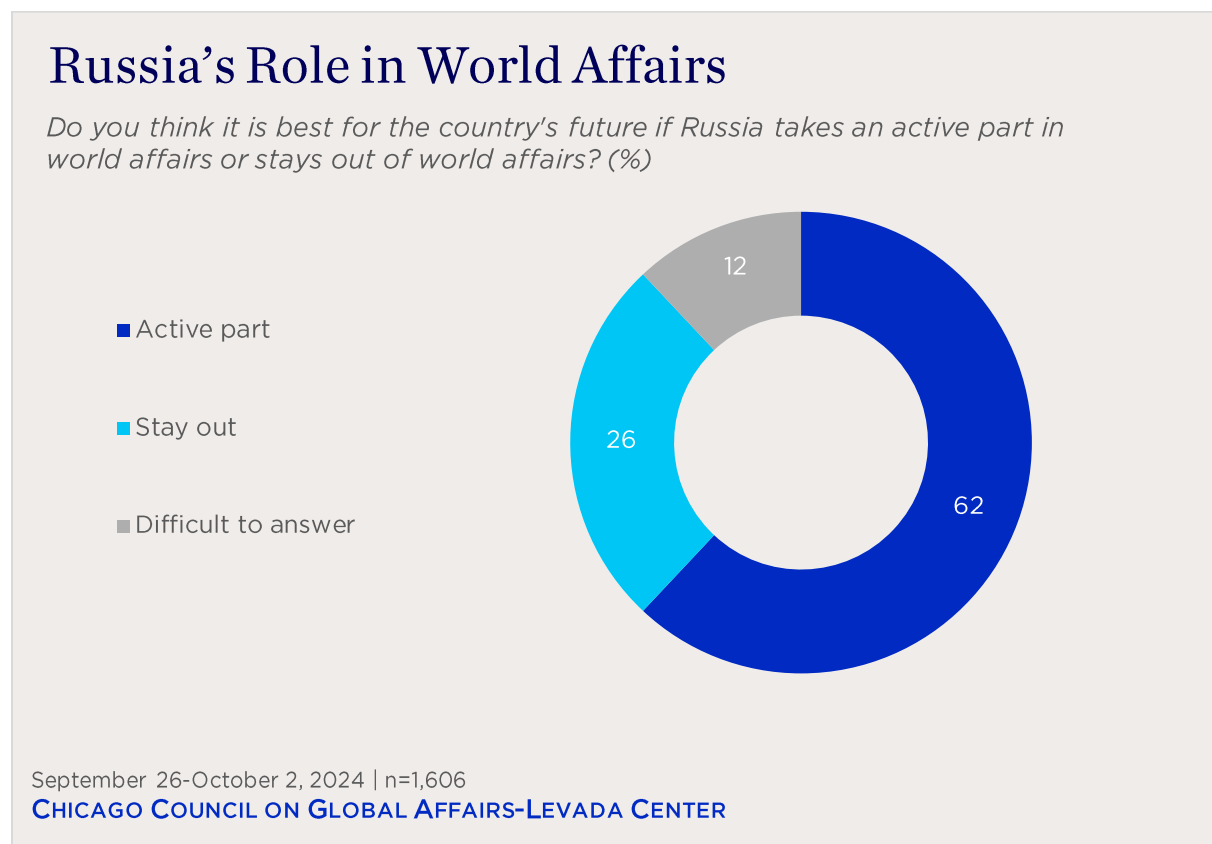
- Six in 10 (62%) Russians believe it is best for Russia's future if it takes an active part in world affairs, while a quarter (26%) believes it is best if Russia stays out of them.
- Russians are more likely to say military power (48%) has greater significance in determining Russia's overall strength and influence in the world than economic power (39%).
- Maintaining Russia's military superiority (85%) and strengthening cooperation with BRICS⁴ countries (83%) are seen by Russians as the most effective approaches to achieve Russia's foreign policy goals.
- More than half of Russians (54%) say their country is now more competitive in the global economy than it was 10 years ago, but nearly two in 10 say it is either less competitive (19%) or equally as competitive (18%).
- Majorities of Russians believe their country should strengthen its relations with Belarus (79%), China (76%), India (67%), North Korea (64%), and, to a lesser extent, Syria (59%), and Iran (56%).

Russians Broadly Favor Playing an Active Role in World Affairs

Under Putin's 20-year leadership, the Kremlin's foreign policies have focused on restoring Russia's influence in post-Soviet Eurasia, reestablishing the country's international status, and countering both Western global dominance and encroachment on Russia's sphere of influence. For their part, most Russians endorse their country's involvement in world affairs: six in 10 (62%)

⁴ Brazil, Russia, India and China founded the BRICS group in 2006, and South Africa joined in 2010. Since then it has expanded to include a group of nations that jointly represents [nearly half the global population](#).

believe it is best for Russia's future if it plays an active role in the world, while a quarter (26%) believe it is better for it to stay out of global affairs.

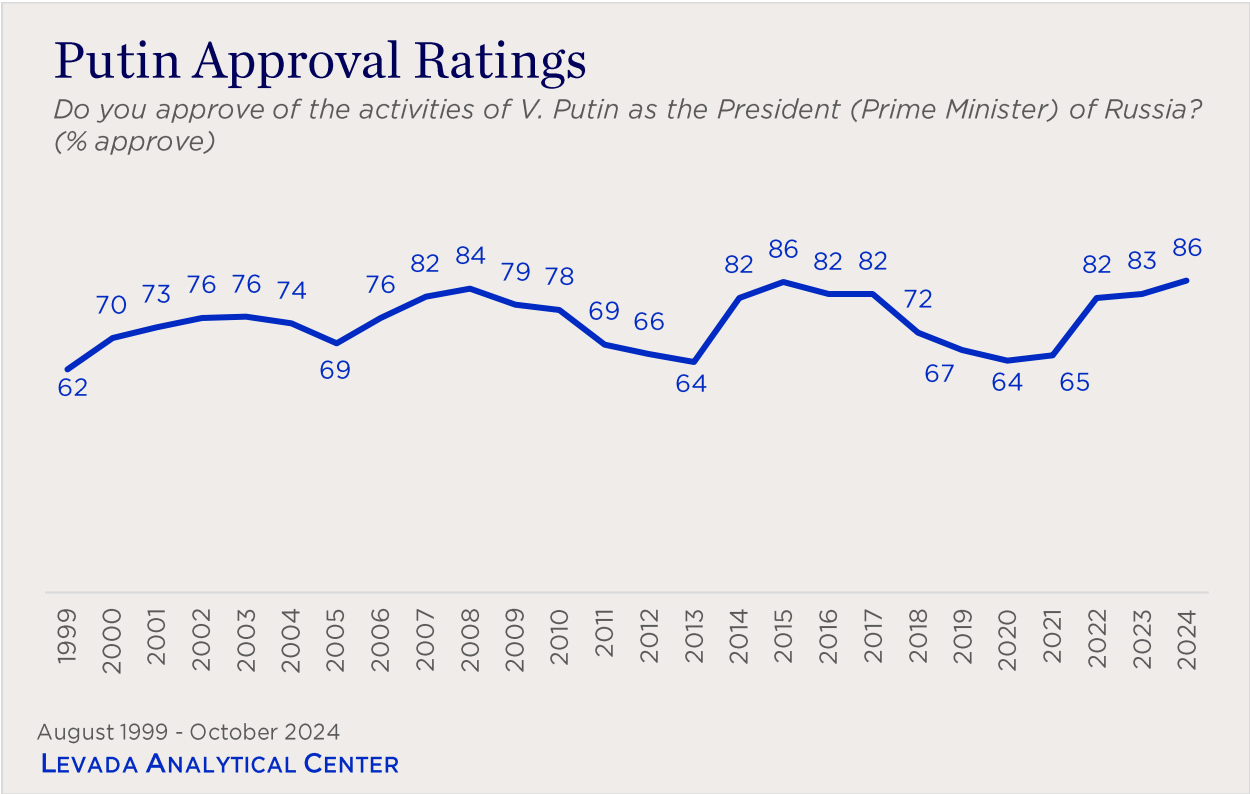


There seems to be broad public support for Putin's major foreign policy decisions, especially when it comes to the annexation of Crimea: In a [2023 Chicago Council-Levada Center survey](#), seven in 10 Russians (69%) said it brought more good than harm to Russia. Since the Levada Center [started asking this question in 2015](#), majorities have perceived more benefit than harm from annexing Crimea.

Attitudes toward the more recent and ongoing "special military operation" in Ukraine are a bit more nuanced, as nearly half (47%) in the same survey said it caused more harm than good, while less than a third (28%) said it was more beneficial to Russia. A [2019 Chicago Council-Levada Center survey](#) found nearly two-thirds of Russians (62%) said the Kremlin's foreign policies had increased Moscow's influence abroad. At the same time, majorities also said it had worsened relations with the United States (78%), Russian living standards (64%), and Russia's economic situation (58%).

Despite this hesitation, about three in four Russians continue to support the actions of the Russian armed forces (76%) today and [oppose making any territorial concessions](#) for the sake of a ceasefire (71% oppose).

Moreover, Russia’s recent forays beyond its borders appear to have contributed to everyday Russians’ pride in their country. When last [asked, in 2022](#), two-thirds (66%) said Russia is respected in the world (compared to one-third who said the same about the United States). Additional indicators of the public’s satisfaction: The majority continue to say [Russia is moving in the right direction](#) (67%, while 17% believe it is on the wrong track) and Putin’s approval rating in September–October 2024 is among his highest and marks a steady increase in public approval since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in 2022.⁵



Military Strength Seen as Most Effective Foreign Policy Tool

The Kremlin places a high value on military superiority as a core component of Russia’s foreign policy, viewing it as essential for maintaining both regional and international influence. When it comes to determining Russia’s overall

⁵ Although Putin’s domestic approval ratings have always been relatively high, they have tended to spike around military operations or other measures that position him as defending Russian values or countering US influence, like the annexation of Crimea in 2014, intervention in Syria in 2015, and invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

strength and influence in the world, the Russian public is more likely to say that military power (48%) has greater significance than economic power (39%). [In 2019](#), eight in 10 Russians (83%) considered their country to be a rising military power and thought recent foreign policy decisions had improved the state of the Russian military forces (83%). Today, a large share say maintaining Russia's military superiority is the most effective approach to achieve Russia's foreign policy goals (85%).

While economic strength is judged to be the lesser force in determining their country's overall influence, a majority of Russians say that compared to 10 years ago, their country's economy is more competitive (54%, 19% less competitive, and 18% equally as competitive).

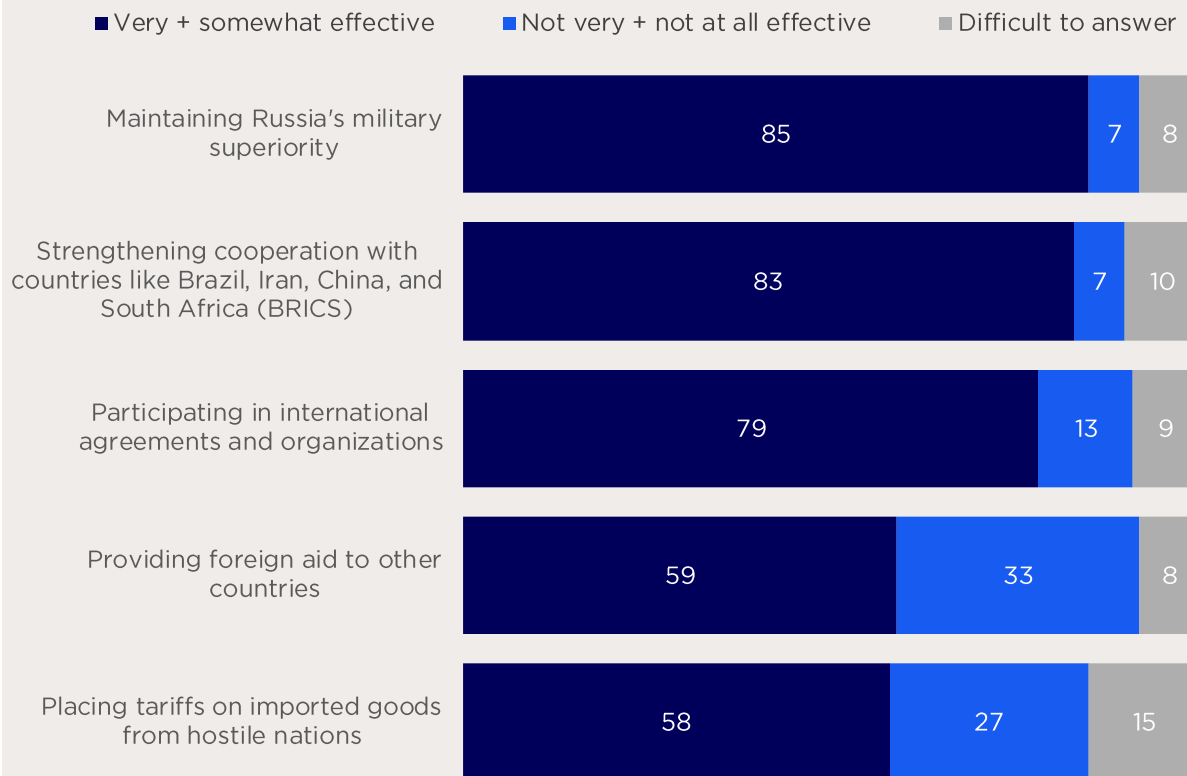
Russians Favor Strengthening Ties to BRICS Countries

To supplement Russia's military superiority and play a more active role in world affairs, the Kremlin has engaged in greater multilateral cooperation over the last decade. Russia is now a key power in many international organizations, using its veto power in the United Nations; building a cadre of like-minded governments in the [BRICS](#) dialogues (including Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, among others); and actively participating in the Eurasian Economic Union and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

While maintaining Russia's military superiority is seen as the most effective foreign policy approach (85%), a large majority also consider their country's participation in international agreements and organizations an effective approach to achieve Russia's foreign policy goals (79%). They especially favor cooperation with the BRICS countries (83%).

Effective Foreign Policy Approaches

To what extent, in your opinion, is each of the following approaches effective in achieving Russia's foreign policy goals? (% very + somewhat)



September 26-October 2, 2024 | n=1,606

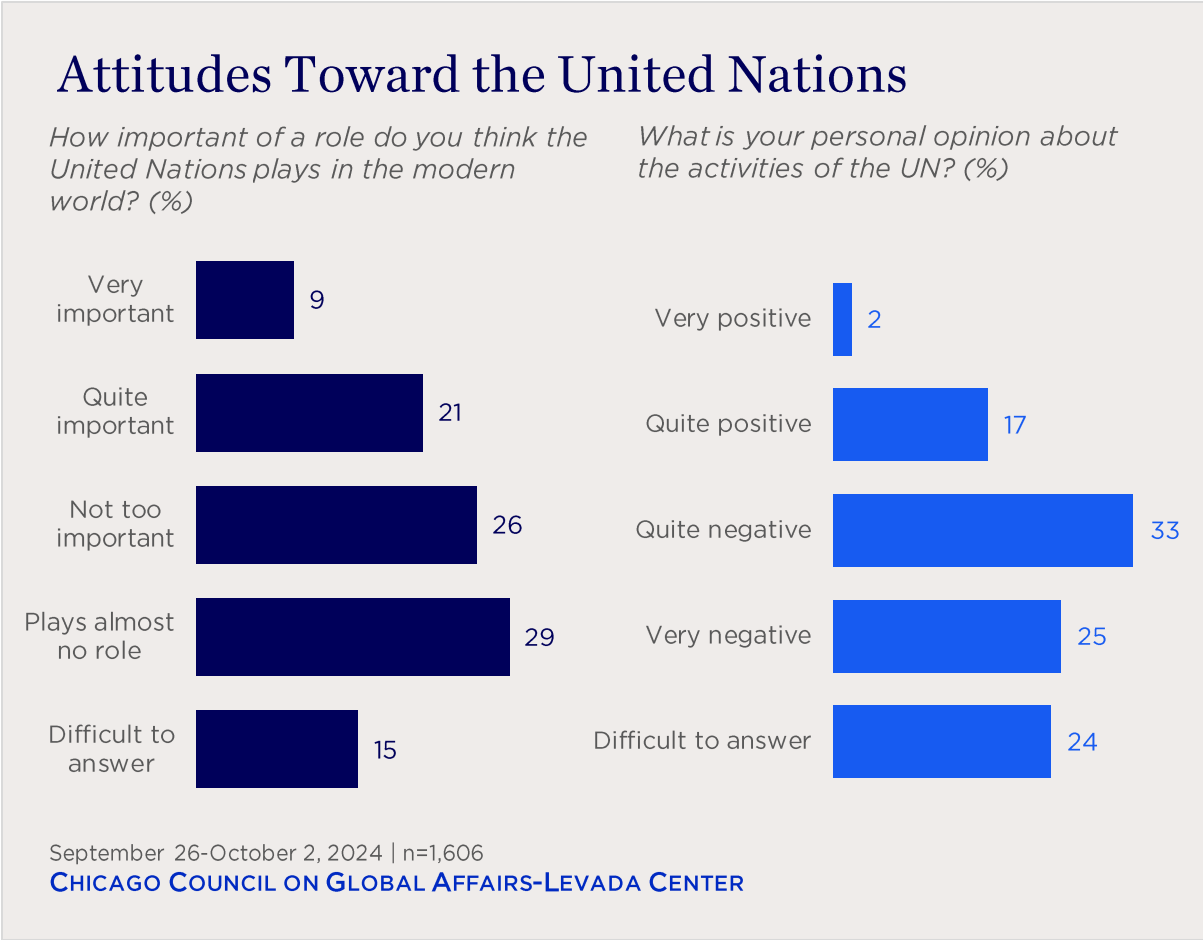
CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS-LEVADA CENTER

Six in 10 Russians Express Negative View of United Nations

Although Putin has taken advantage of the status and opportunities provided by [Russia's seat in the United Nations Security Council](#) to advance his foreign policy interests, Russia's relations with the organization have been strained since the [annexation of Crimea in 2014](#) and—even more so—since the ongoing war in Ukraine. The United Nations General Assembly [adopted a resolution](#) in the immediate aftermath of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 that affirmed the international community's commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity, and demanded that Moscow withdraw all Russian forces from Ukrainian territory.

For their part, nearly six in 10 Russians (58%) express a negative opinion of the institution (up from 34% [in 2015](#)) and more than half (55%) believe it

either plays a minor role (26%) or virtually no role (29%) in the modern world. Still, a small share of Russians feels positively about the United Nations (19%, down from 34% in 2015) and believe it plays at least a somewhat important role in the modern world (30%).



Elaborating on their negative views, three in 10 (31%) Russians say “the United Nations is a useless organization,” while smaller shares say the institution either “acts against Russia” (16%) or is “a pro-Western organization acting like an American puppet (12%).”

Russians Feel Warmly Toward Countries Outside the West’s Orbit

The public’s more negative outlook toward the United Nations and more positive view of BRICS cooperation likely reflects Putin’s broader alignment with countries that have also been sanctioned and ostracized by the West, like China and Iran. The [Kremlin began to look East](#) and develop stronger ties with China, India, and other Southeast Asian countries after Russia annexed

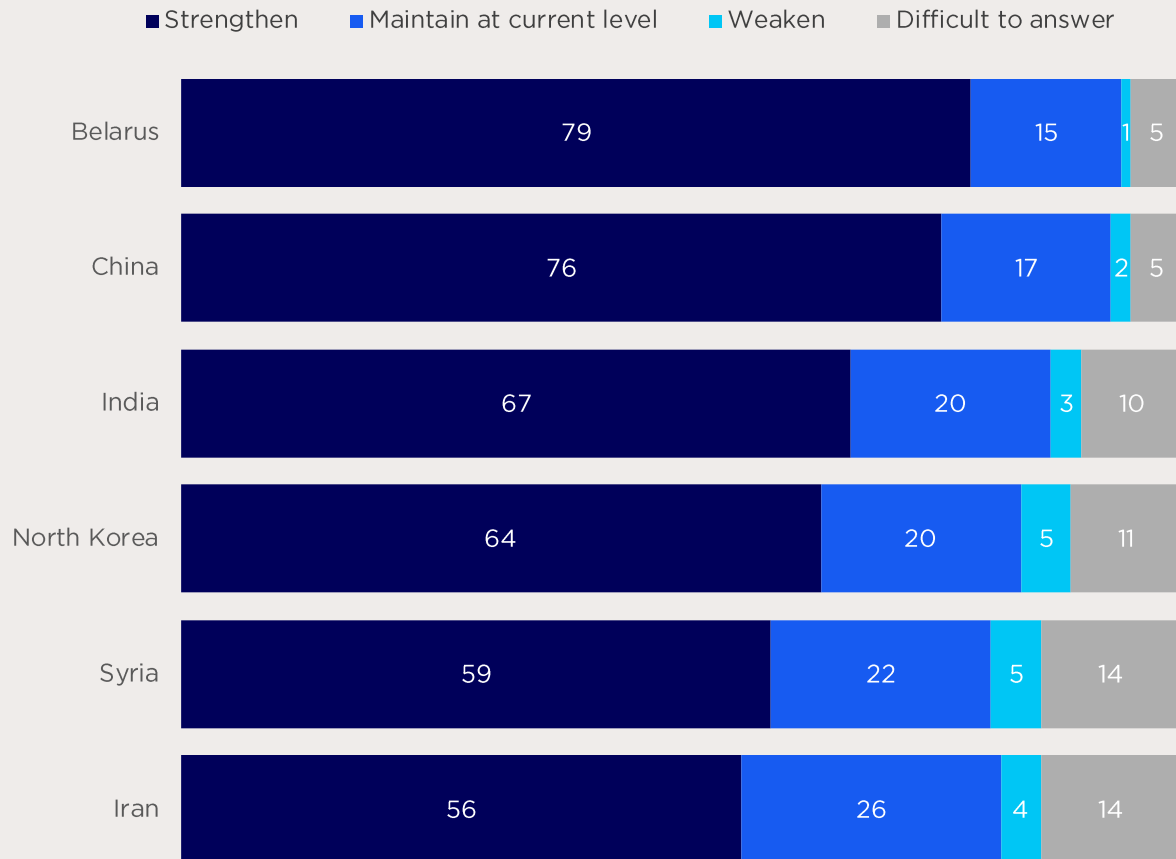
Crimea in 2014 and its relations with the United States and Europe deteriorated as a result.

Russians feel most warmly toward countries that are also experiencing tense relations with the West, including China (81% favorable), North Korea (64%) and Iran (50%). They are also more positive toward Brazil (55%) and Turkey (52%), countries that generally refrain from involving themselves in the competition between the United States, Russia, and China.

[China, in particular, has provided an economic lifeline](#) to Russia in the face of Western sanctions, and most recently, [North Korea has deployed troops](#) to support the Kremlin's conflict in Ukraine. These data show that the Russian population is supportive of this eastward pivot: At least two-thirds of Russians say their country should strengthen its relations with China (76%), India (67%), and North Korea (64%). They are only slightly less supportive of strengthening relations with Syria (59%), and Iran (56%). But of all the countries presented in this question, they most want to strengthen ties with Belarus (79%), a staunch ally of Russia.

Strengthening Relations with Other Countries

Should Russia strengthen, weaken, or maintain at the current level its relations with the following countries: (%)



September 26-October 2, 2024 | n=1,606

CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS-LEVADA CENTER

Russians Express Frosty Views of Western Countries and Israel

By contrast, majorities of Russians view the United States (59%), France (55%), the European Union (56%), and Israel (51%)—a Western ally in the Middle East—more negatively. However, they save the most damning ratings for Ukraine (74% negative). Positive views of the United States, the European Union, and Ukraine [dropped significantly](#) after Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, but slowly increased until the Putin invaded Ukraine in early 2022, at which point favorability dipped again and has since remained low.

Russians' hostility toward Western nations is, in part, related to Western governments' criticism of Russian foreign policy and the imposition of sanctions on Russia. Yet Russians remain defiant in the face of these punitive measures. The September 2024 results find that relatively few consider Russia's isolation from Western countries to be a critical threat to Russian security (28%). Similarly, few Russians in [the 2023 survey](#) appeared to be personally affected by the sanctions (15%). Moreover, [in 2016](#), Russians told interviewers that the goal of the economic sanctions placed on their country in response to the annexation of Crimea was to weaken Russia (74%) rather than to stop the fighting in the Donbas (6%) or to return Crimea to Ukraine (17%).

Russian fears of NATO are also a factor here. The Russian public has largely [accepted their government's narrative](#) that the United States and NATO are the main sources of tension between Russia and Ukraine. A June 2024 Levada survey found that two-thirds of the public say the United States and NATO bear most of the responsibility for the "death and destruction" in Ukraine (65%); just 6 percent blame Russia and 11 percent Ukraine. Sixty-two percent in the same survey say they are very concerned about Western military aid to Ukraine. The joint Chicago Council-Levada September 2024 poll also found that a majority consider the presence of NATO in eastern Europe a critical threat to Russia (58%).

And finally, Russians seem to share Putin's views on US hegemony and a need to counter US global overreach. The data show that while about half of Russians (53%) believe it is [necessary to improve relations](#) with the Western countries, twice as many Russians believe their country should try to limit US power and influence in the world (62%) as say their country should be open for cooperation with the United States (30%).

Conclusion

These September–October 2024 data reveal the Russian public's continuing appreciation for Putin's foreign policy endeavors. Everyday Russians approve of their country's eastward ties with China, Iran, and North Korea and consider these relationships worthy of cultivation. Russians also share the Kremlin's dim view of both US and Western global influence and sense of threat from NATO. And in the case of the current conflict in Ukraine, public support for—or at least tacit acceptance of—the Russian military operations has endured since the start of the campaign. Wrapped around this suite of attitudes is the

population's broader sense that Russia, not the United States, “is back” and getting the international respect it deserves.

Appendix

QCH8. Threats to Russia (%)				
<i>Below is a list of possible threats to the vital interests of Russia in the next 10 years. For each one, please select whether you see it as a critical threat, an important but not critical threat, or not an important threat at all:</i>				
	Critical threat	An important but not critical threat	Not an important threat at all	Difficult to answer
QCH8/A. Large numbers of immigrants and refugees coming into Russia	55	35	6	4
QCH8/B. Climate change	35	43	18	5
QCH8/C. International terrorism	80	15	2	2
QCH8/D. Lack of a peace agreement between Russia and Ukraine	60	27	7	6
QCH8/E. The special military operation in Ukraine escalating into a war between Russia and NATO	78	13	3	6
QCH8/F. Weakening democracy in Russia	29	35	21	14
QCH8/H. The possibility of a Russian economic downturn	43	37	12	8
QCH8/I. NATO's presence in Eastern Europe	58	25	8	9
QCH8/J. Russia's isolation from Western countries	28	36	27	9

Methodology

The Chicago Council-Levada Center survey was conducted September 26-October 2, 2024, among a representative sample of all Russian urban and rural residents. Levada Center interviewers conducted these personal interviews in respondents' homes. The survey sample consisted of 1,606 people 18 or older in 137 municipalities of 50 regions of the Russian Federation.

The data set is weighted by gender, age, and 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 margin of error for the full sample is 3.4 percentage points at a 95 percent confidence interval.

FEBRUARY 2025

Three in Four Russians Expect Military Victory over Ukraine



By Dina Smeltz, Lama El Baz, and Denis Volkov

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

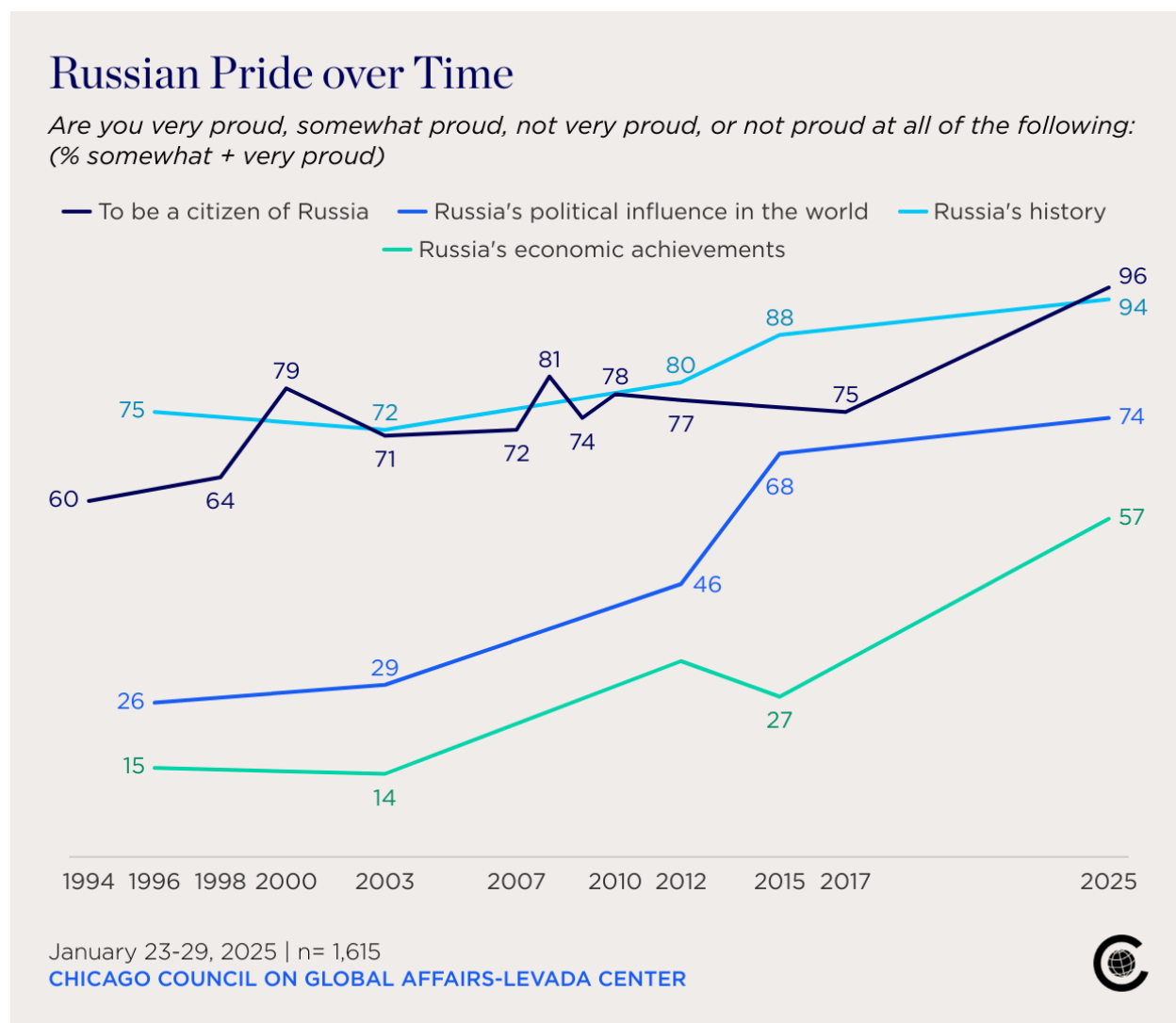
- Majorities of Russians express pride in their country's history (94%), political influence in the world (74%), and cultural, military, and economic achievements (88%, 82%, and 57%, respectively).
- For the first time, a majority of Russians say they would like to see Russia as a great power that is 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).⁶ They have also grown more proud of Russia’s economic achievements but to a lesser degree (57%, with 21% being very proud).



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

⁶ Between 1994 and 2017, the Levada Center asked Russians “How proud are you of being a citizen of Russia?” in a stand-alone question.

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).



Public Favors Power Projection over High Standard of Living

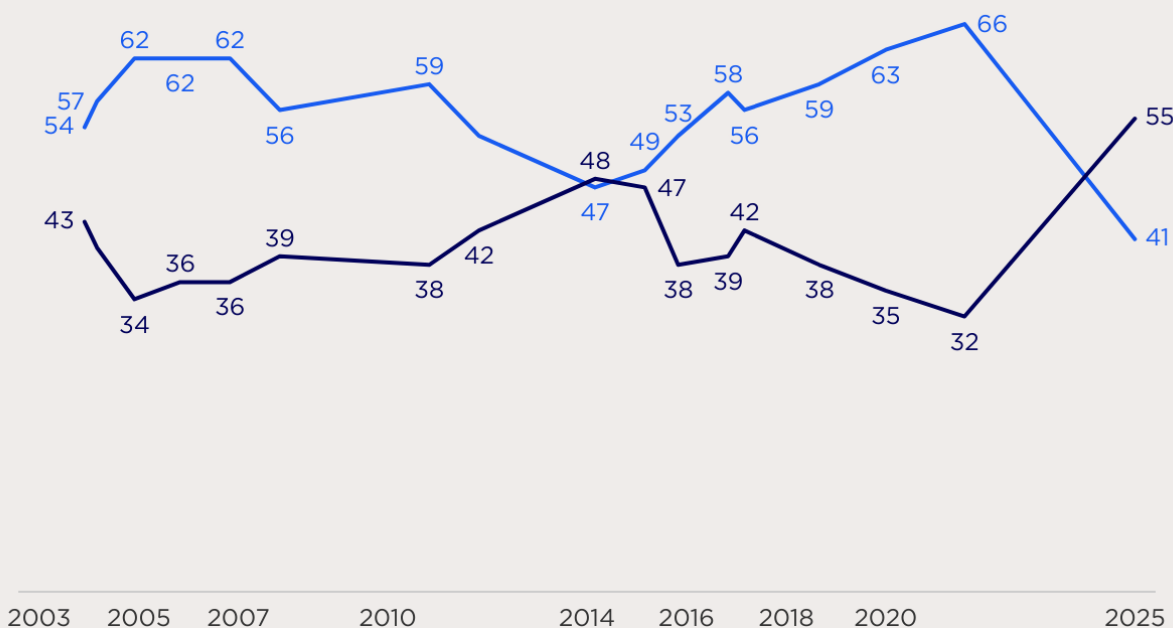
With the military conflict with Kyiv in the backdrop, the Russian public seems to have shifted its preference in the primary goal for their country. For the first time, a majority of Russians say that above all, they would like to see Russia as a great power that is feared and respected by other countries (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



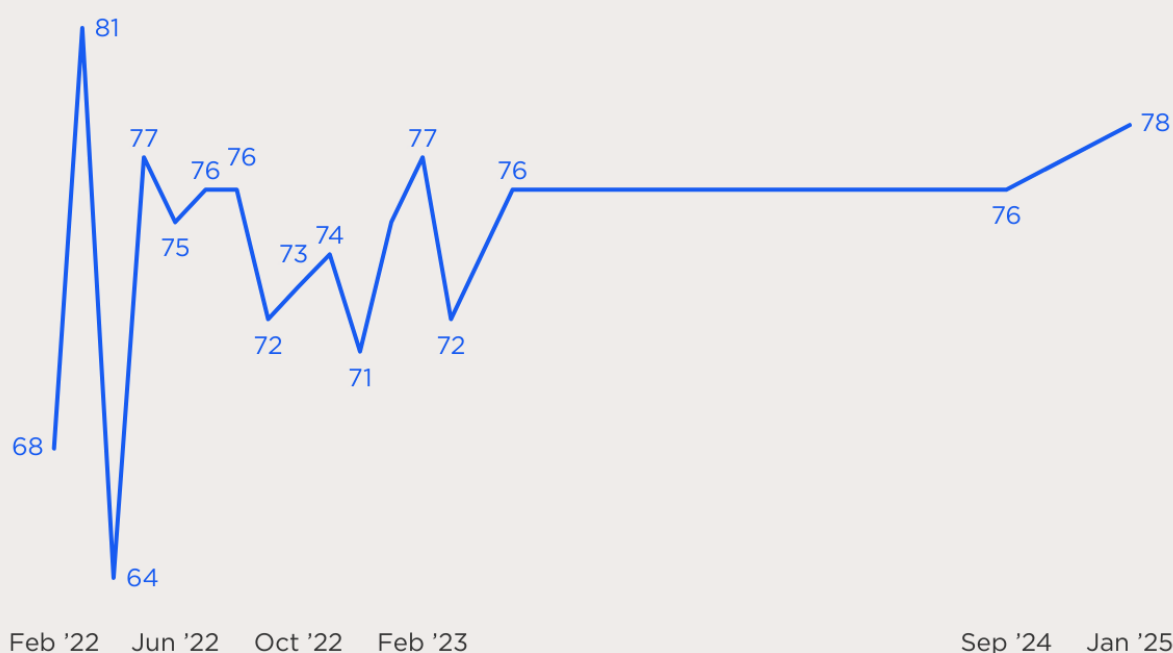
Consistent Support for Russian Military Operation in Ukraine . . .

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)

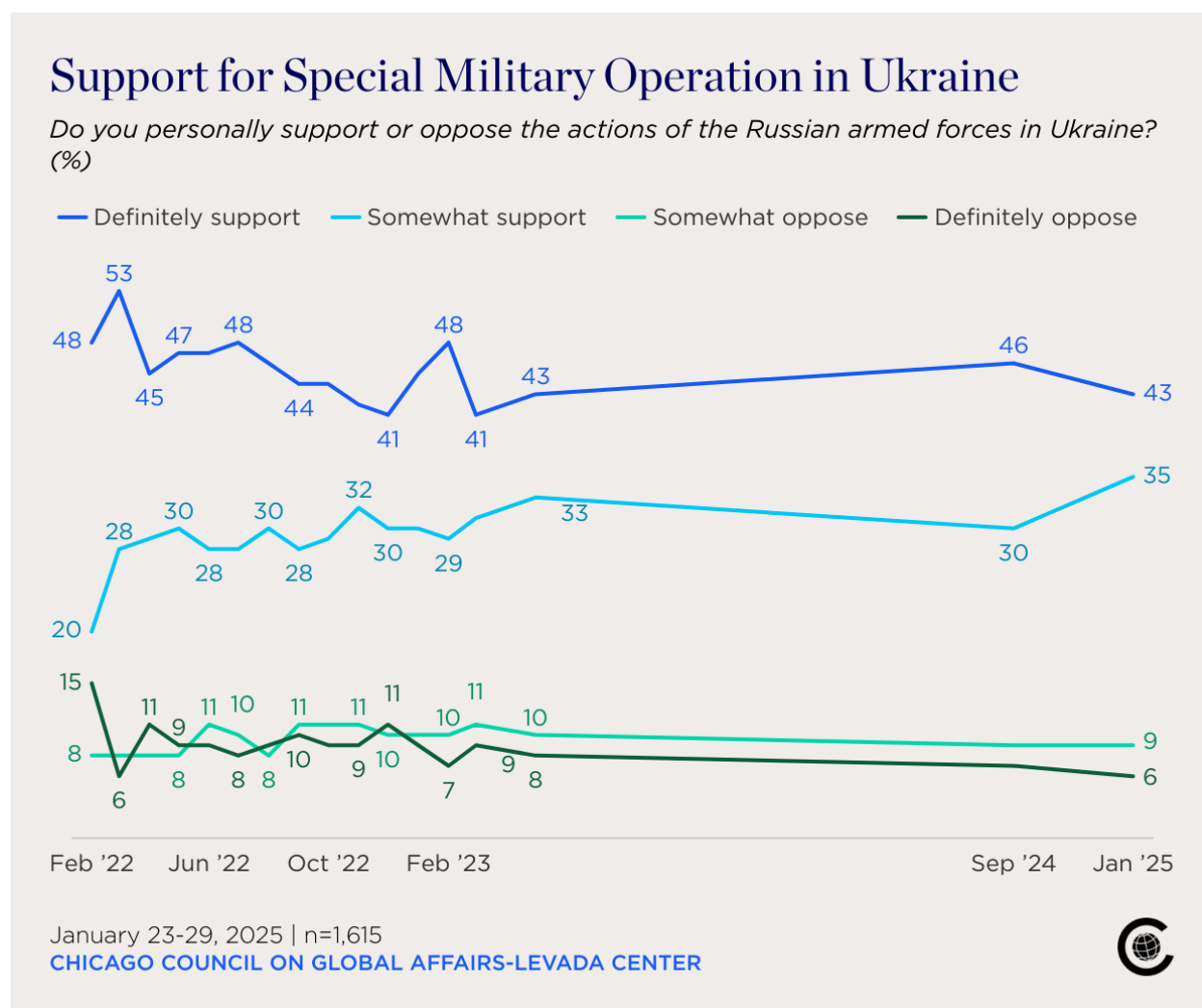


January 23-29, 2025 | n=1,615

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.”



... 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.

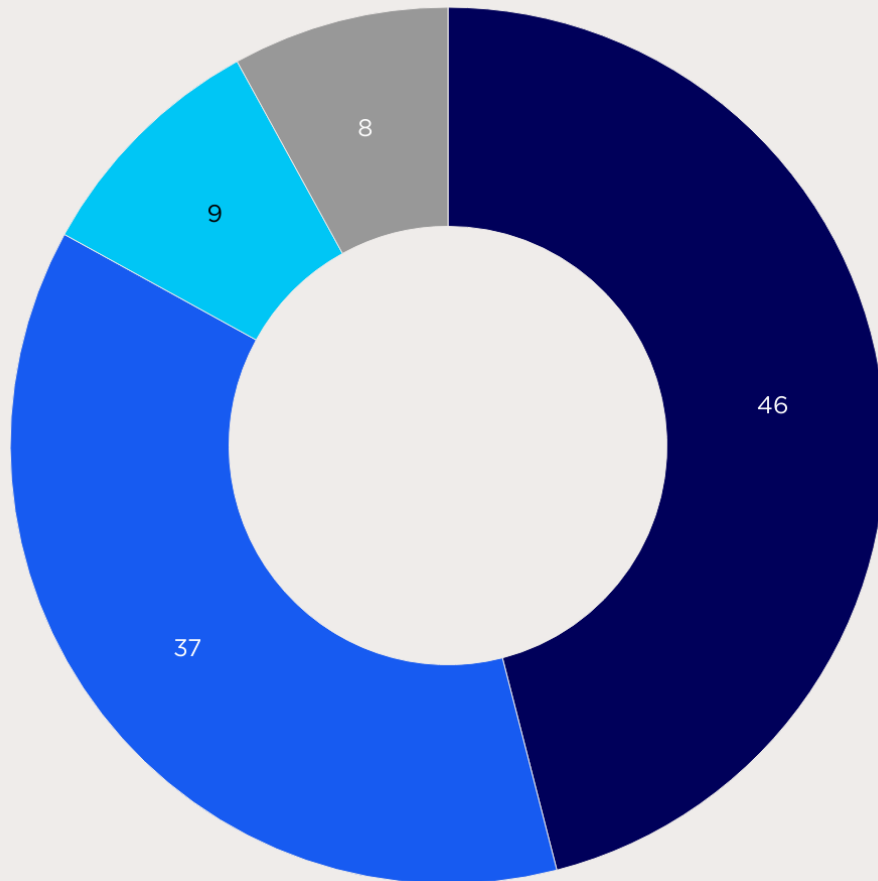
The data show some indications of war fatigue among the Russian public. A combined majority expect the fighting to continue for six months to a year (27%) if not more than a year (32%), and a growing percentage are not sure when it will end (25%, up from 18% in May 2023) (see Appendix Table 4).

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.

Resources Invested in Military Operation in Ukraine

In your opinion, has Russia invested too many, the right amount of, or not enough resources in the special military operation in Ukraine? (%)

■ The right amount ■ Too many ■ Not enough ■ Difficult to answer



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

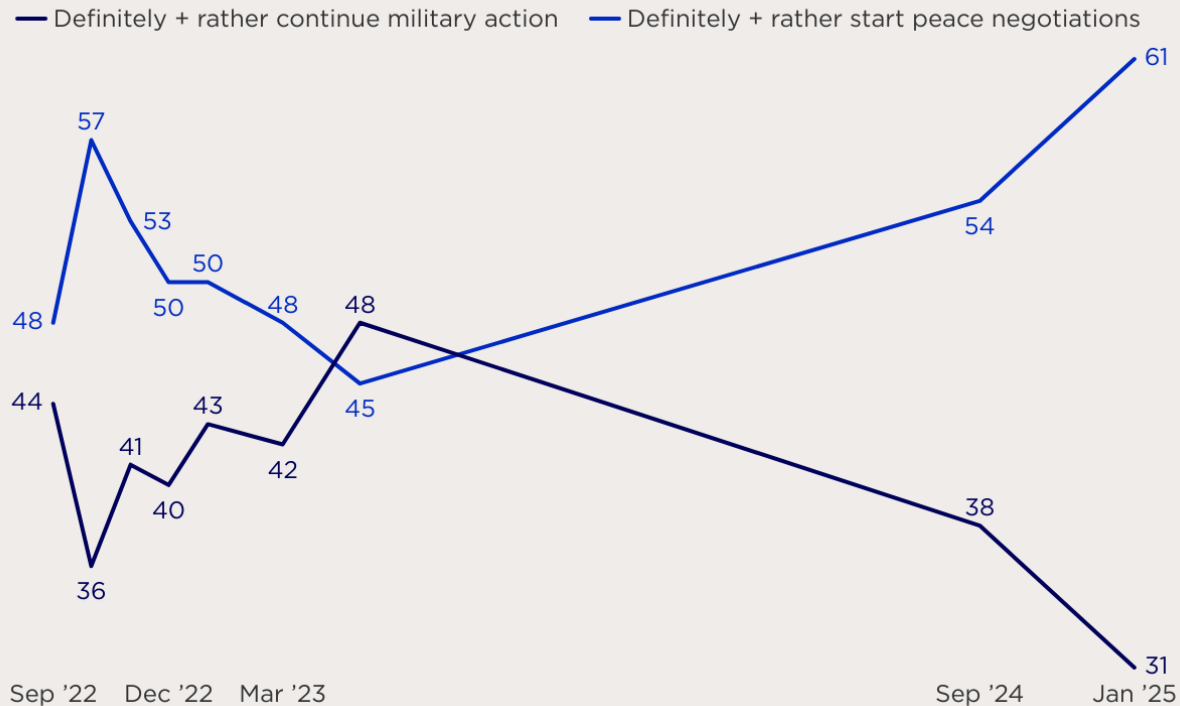
CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS-LEVADA CENTER



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.

Support for Peace Negotiations over Time

Do you think that we should continue military actions or start peace negotiations now?
(%)



January 23-29, 2024 | n=1,615

CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS-LEVADA CENTER



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).

Push to Enter Peace Negotiations

Which of the following statements is closest to your view? (%)

Russia should continue the special operation for as long as it takes (%)



Russia should seek to enter peace negotiations as soon as possible (%)



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

CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS-LEVADA CENTER



Conclusion

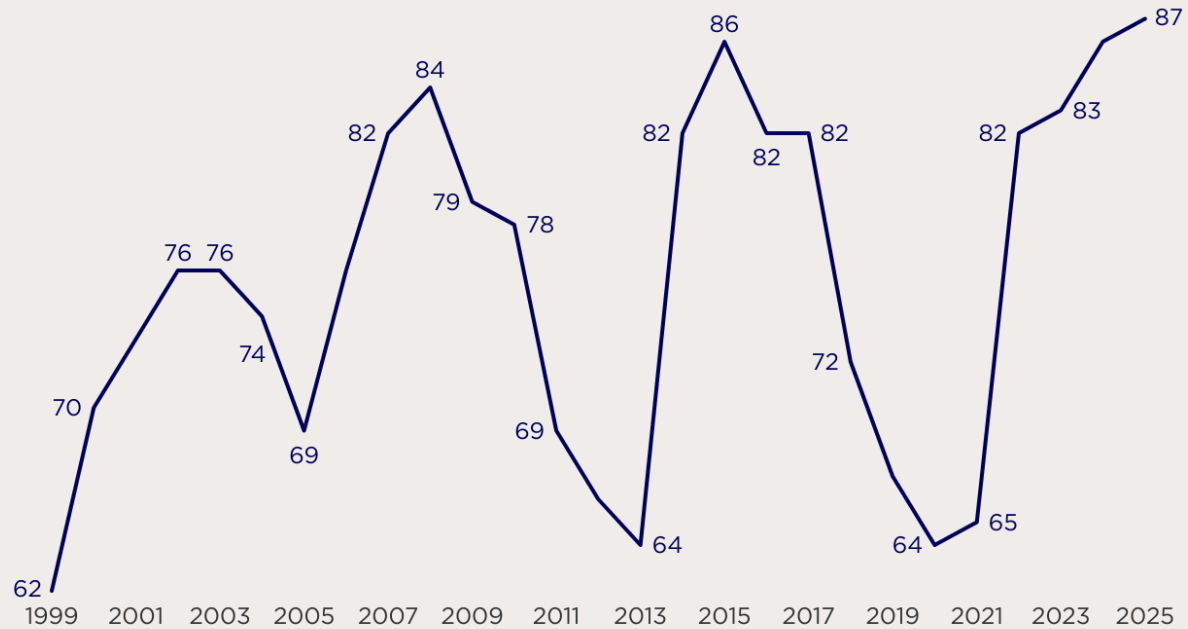
With high expectations for the conflict's outcome, Russians are still broadly supportive of the special military operation in Ukraine. While they may not be fully aware of the true casualty count or the amount of money being spent on it, they perceive their country to be under siege and, therefore, believe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

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



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.

MARCH 2025

Russians Rather Endure Sanctions than Concede Ukraine War



DMITRI LOVETSKY / AP

By Dina Smeltz, Lama El Baz, and Denis Volkov

On February 18, [American and Russian diplomats met](#) for the first time since the start of the conflict in Ukraine to discuss an end to the “special military operation” and a revival of US-Russian bilateral relations. The meeting marks a [dramatic shift](#) away from the United States’ transatlantic allies and stunning reversal from US-Russia policy under the administration of former President Joe Biden, which led international efforts to sanction and isolate Moscow. At this point, it seems that Russia’s resolve and refusal to make territorial concessions to Ukraine despite being heavily sanctioned has proven successful.

A Chicago Council on Global Affairs-Levada Analytical Center survey fielded January 23-29, 2025—just before the United States’ remarkable shift in policy—finds that Russians remain defiant, as most believe the Kremlin should not change course in exchange for sanctions relief. Given the recent turn of events, their expectation that relations with Western countries will return to normal in the future—at least with the United States—may come sooner than they predict.

Key Findings

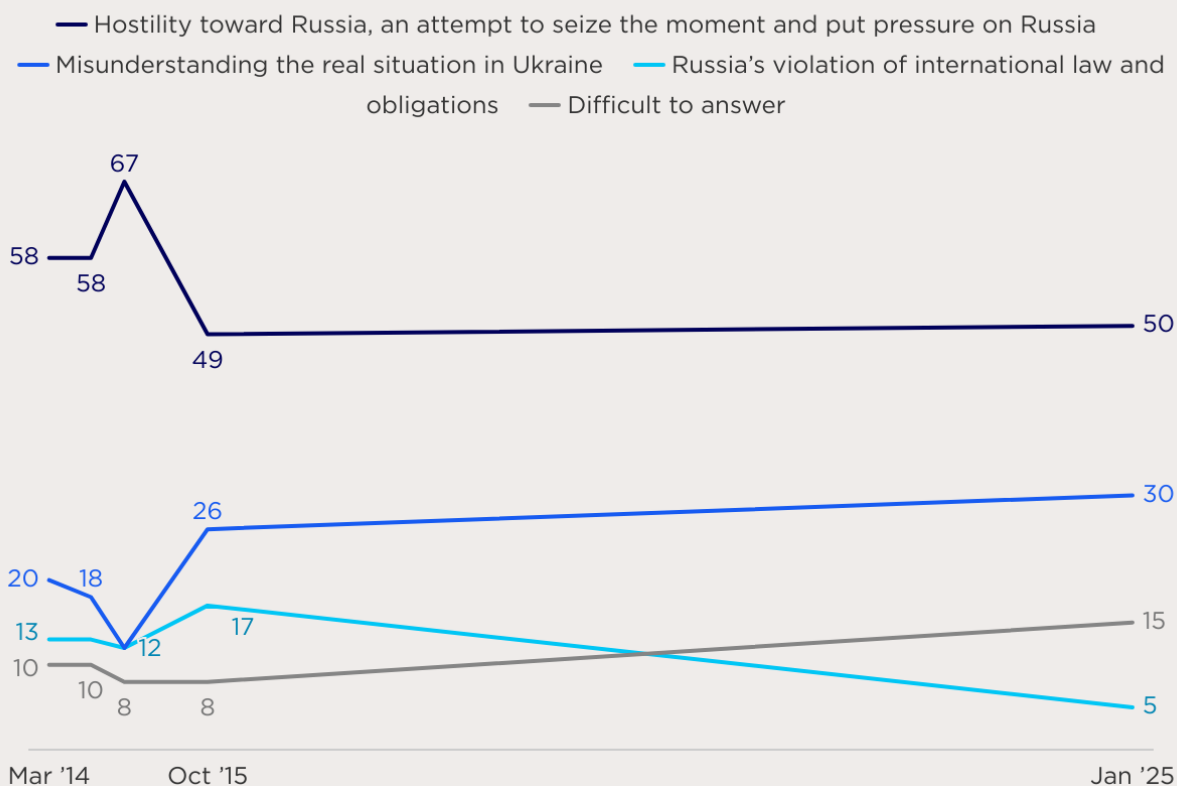
- Few Russians think Western nations imposed sanctions against their country because the Kremlin violated international law (5%). Rather, they believe the sanctions were implemented out of hostility toward Russia (50%) or a misunderstanding of the real situation in Ukraine (30%).
- Despite Western sanctions, nearly eight in 10 Russians (77%) think their country should continue its policies rather than compromise or make concessions to have the sanctions lifted.
- Russians are most inclined to say that cooperation with countries from East Asia and the Pacific (23%) and Central Asia and the Caucasus (20%) is most important for Russia’s economic development.
- For their military security, Russians believe Central Asia and the Caucasus (24%) and Europe and North America (22%) are most important.
- Despite tensions with the West, six in 10 Russians (58%) support expanding ties to Western countries. Once the conflict between Russia and Ukraine has ended, half expect relations with the West will gradually return to what they were before the war (50%).

Plurality Believes Western Reaction to Russia-Ukraine Conflict Based on Hostility

When asked what best explains the West's reaction to the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, just 5 percent say it is because Russia violated international law and obligations. Instead, half (50%) of the Russian public believes that Western countries reacted in hostility against Russia, while three in 10 (30%) believe Western countries misunderstand the real situation in Ukraine. Over time, the public has become a bit more likely to attribute Western reaction to misunderstanding and a bit less likely to say it is based on hostility or a violation of international law and obligations.

Explanation of Western Reaction to Military Operations

What do you think best explains the Western reaction to the events in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine? (%)



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

CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS-LEVADA CENTER



Majority Continue to Support Kremlin's Policy Despite Sanctions

Although the Russian economy has been able to weather the effects of Western sanctions for the first two years of the military operation in Ukraine, reports show that it is [finally starting to feel the full impact of the penalties](#). In recent months, the ruble has weakened, the price of oil exports has dropped, and inflation and interest rates have risen.

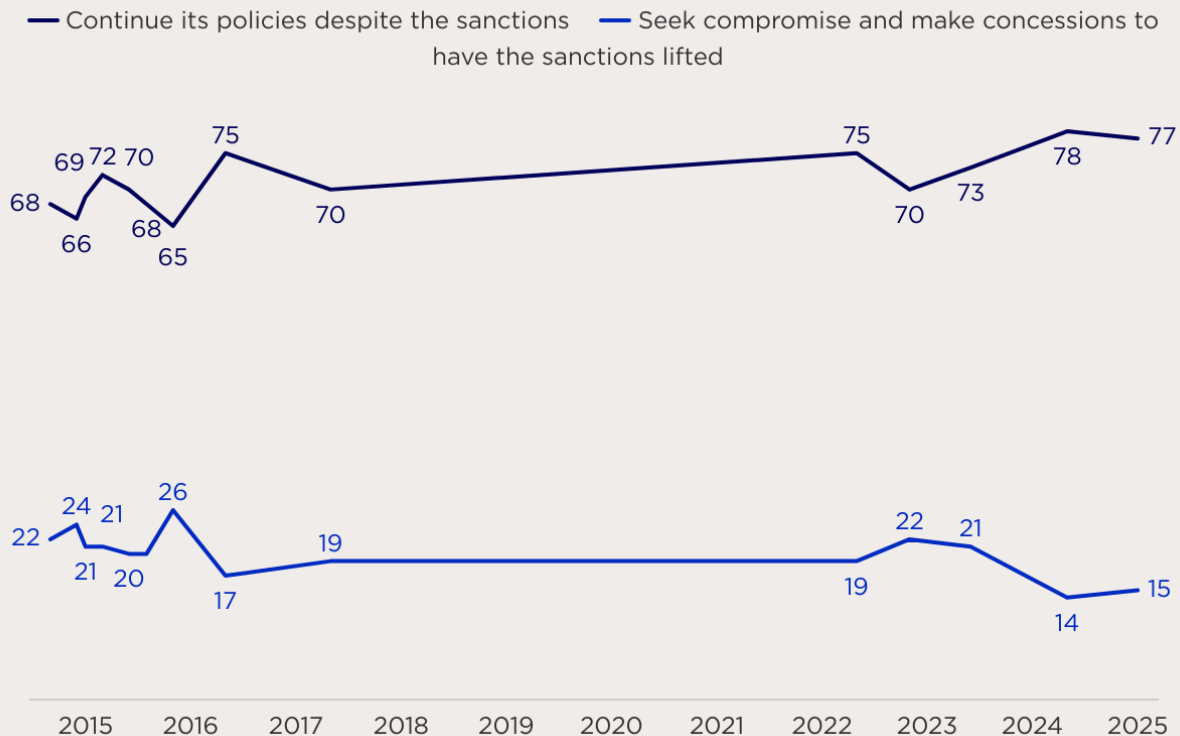
Despite this, Russian President Vladimir Putin and other top officials [remain optimistic and often mention the resilience](#) of the Russian economy under Western sanctions. Most Russians trust the reports released by the government about the impact of sanctions on their country's economy (57%, 30% do not trust) (see appendix Table 1).

Survey results indicate that the sanctions levied against Russia have generally spared ordinary Russians. In a [May 2023](#) Council-Levada Center survey, just 15 percent of Russians reported experiencing problems as a result of Western-imposed sanctions and only three in 10 (29%) said they were concerned about the sanctions. These results are broadly consistent with readings from the past two years.

While Russians would prefer that the Kremlin [start peace negotiations](#) to curb the effect of Western sanctions on consumer prices (59%, versus 32% continue military operations), this could be due more to securing Russian battlefield gains than easing the sanctions. Nearly eight in 10 Russians (77%) think their country should continue its own policies despite the imposition of Western sanctions. In fact, support for sticking to its own policies despite sanctions has risen to its highest levels in 2024 and 2025.

Russian Response to Western Sanctions

In your opinion, how should Russia act in response to sanctions from the West? (%)



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

CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS-LEVADA CENTER



A [September 2024](#) Council-Levada Center poll suggests that everyday Russians would only accept a deal if it froze current battle lines and cemented Russia's battlefield gains in Eastern Ukraine. So while Russians favor peace talks, they do so on their own terms and remain unwilling to make the meaningful concessions, like returning occupied territories to Ukraine, that could lead to a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Asia and the West Deemed Most Important Regions for Russia's Future

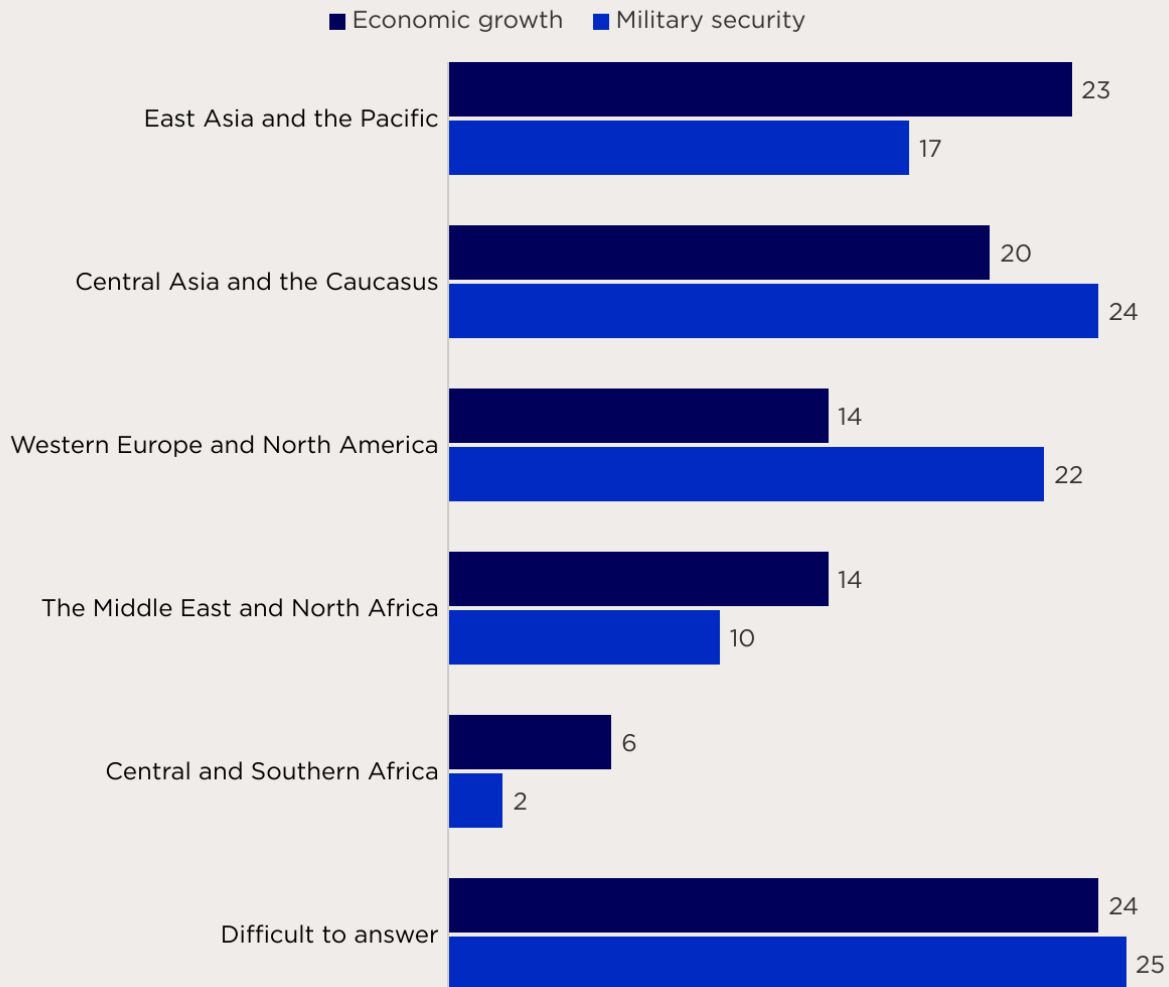
To circumvent the effects of Western sanctions, Russia has had to look elsewhere for economic cooperation and trade relations, like East and Central Asia. China, in particular, has become one of Moscow's most important trading partners over the last two years, as it has [dramatically increased its exports to Russia](#) and serves as an [economic lifeline](#) to the Russian government and Russian businesses. Russia also remains the [most important](#)

[trading partner to and investor in](#) countries across Central Asia and the Caucasus, despite its [waning influence in the region](#) as a result of international isolation.

To most Russians, East Asia and the Pacific (23%) and Central Asia and the Caucasus (20%) are seen as the most important regions to Russia's economic growth. Less than 15 percent of the population believes Western Europe and North America (14%), or the Middle East and North Africa (14%) will play a pivotal role in Russia's economic development, and Central and Southern Africa are considered the least important (6%). However, one in four Russians find the question difficult to answer (24%).

Regional Importance to Russian Economy and Security

When you think about Russia's future, cooperation with countries from which region of the world do you think will be the most important to its economic growth and military security? (%)



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

CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS-LEVADA CENTER

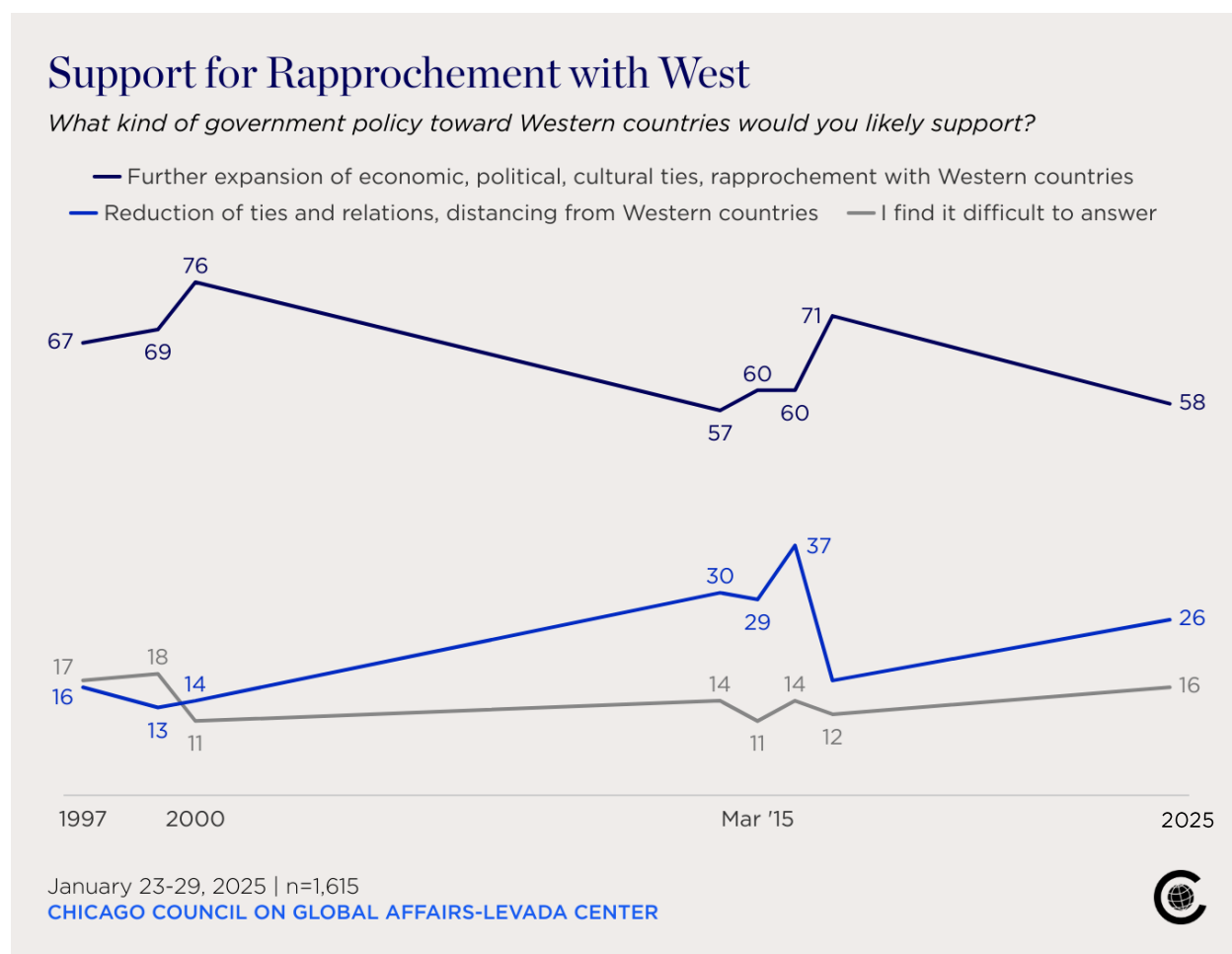


When it comes to their country's military security, Russians view Central Asia and the Caucasus as the most important region (24%) but nearly as many name Western Europe and North America (22%). In doing so, Russians are likely referencing military threats from NATO as determinants of their military security rather than expectations of military cooperation with Western nations. East Asia and the Pacific (17%), as well as the Middle East and North Africa (10%), are seen as less important to Russia's military security, but not

as insignificant as Central and Southern Africa (2%). Again, one in four Russians finds the question difficult to answer (25%).

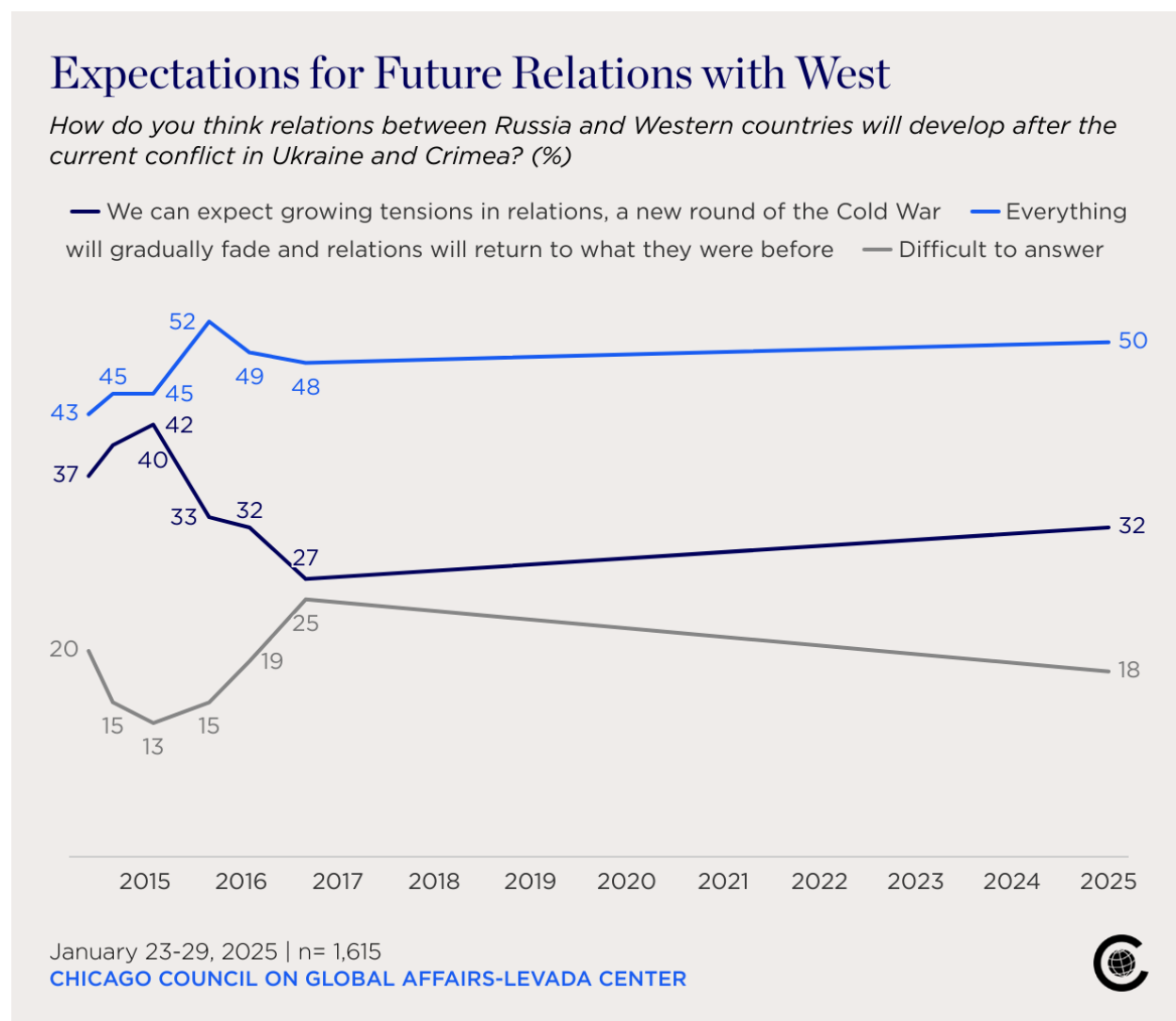
Despite Anger at West, Majority Expect a Relationship Reset after War

Despite expressing [negative views](#) of the United States, the European Union, and France, six in 10 Russians (58%) support the expansion of economic, political, and cultural ties with Western countries. A quarter support reducing ties and distancing Russian relations with Western countries (26%). This marks a sharp decline in support for rapprochement with Western nations since 2016 but is consistent with levels recorded around previous military operations in Ukraine, specifically the “reunification” of Crimea from 2014 and 2015 (57-60%).



In addition, half of Russians (50%) believe relations with Western countries will return to the way they were before the current conflict in Ukraine, while a third (32%) expects tension to grow; nearly two in 10 (18%) find the question difficult to answer.

Looking at these results longitudinally, Russians were more narrowly divided between these two options during the Crimean “reunification” with Russia. But starting in September 2015, a declining share of Russians have expected tensions to grow into a new round of the Cold War.



Conclusion

Despite their country being heavily sanctioned and ostracized by the international community, Russians believe the Kremlin should continue to pursue its foreign policies. At the same time, many think it would benefit Russia to increase ties to the Western nations. Given the recent warming between President Trump and Putin, perhaps Russians would be more amenable now to a US-negotiated agreement to end the conflict —though based on previous surveys, they likely would not support giving up any territory in concession.

Appendix

Appendix Table 1: 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



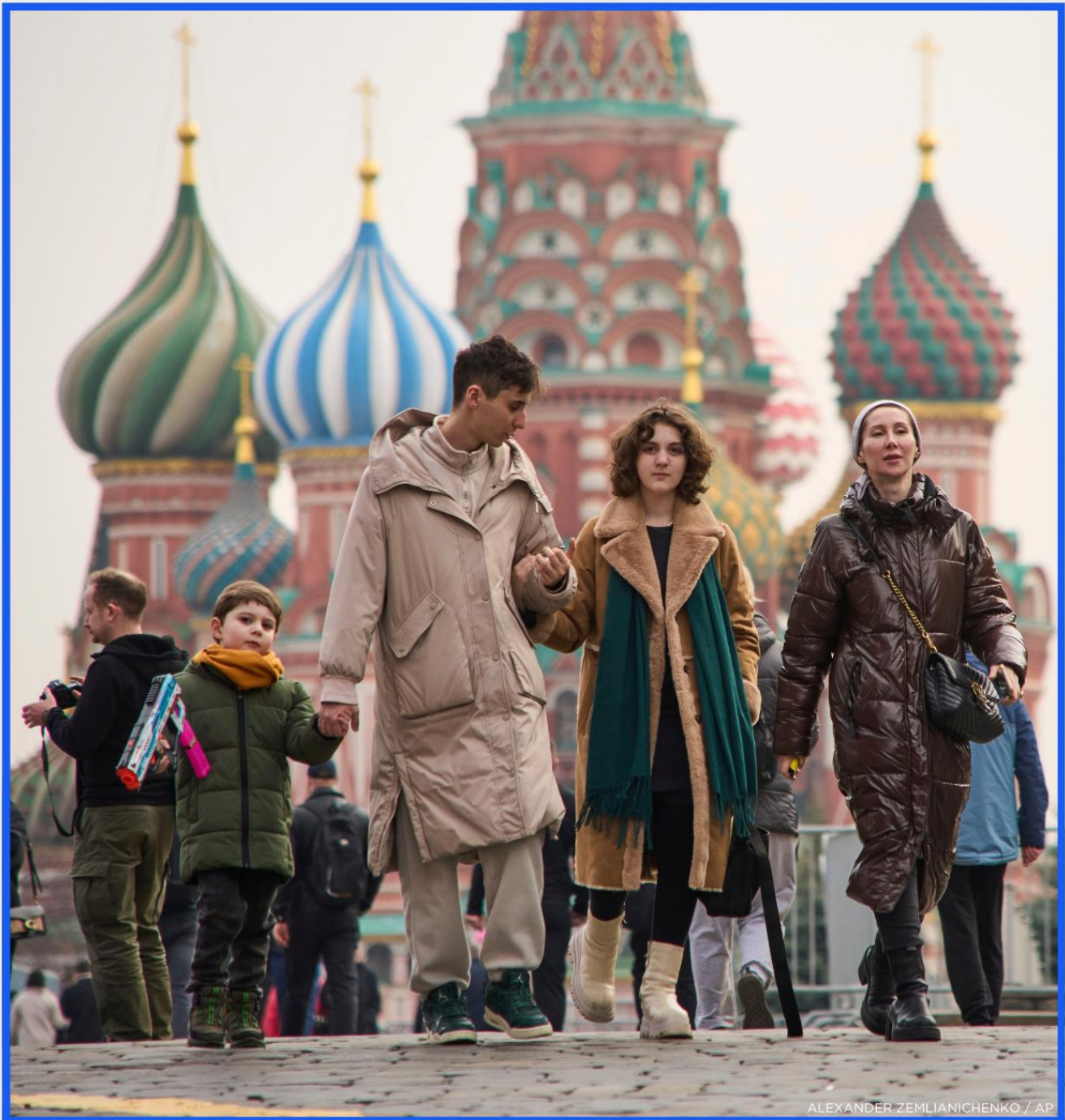
Methodology

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.

MARCH 2025

Russians Feel Mixed Impacts from Kremlin's Foreign Policy Moves



By Dina Smeltz, Lama El Baz, and Denis Volkov

After holding several rounds of separate negotiations with Russian and Ukrainian officials, the [White House announced this week that both sides have agreed](#) to halt all military action in the Black Sea and develop measures to stop striking each other's energy facilities. Russian President Vladimir Putin added a caveat to the cessation of hostilities that requires [lifting trade restrictions imposed on Russian agricultural exports in 2022](#).

While the Russian public response to the agreement is yet to be seen, previous polling by the Levada Center has shown high public approval of both Putin's performance as president and the direction of the country under his leadership. However, according to a February 20–26, 2025, Chicago Council on Global Affairs-Levada Center survey, everyday Russians perceive mixed impacts of the Kremlin's foreign policy.

Key Findings

- Russians believe their government's foreign policy decisions have improved the state of the defense forces (76%) and the country's international influence (64%). But they are more divided on their effects on the economy (49% improved, 36% worsened).
- Pluralities think Russia's foreign policy has worsened its international image (45%), standards of living (44%), and relationship with the United States (44%).
- Russian President Vladimir Putin is seen as having the most influence in Russia's foreign policy (90%), followed by the Ministry of Defense (78%) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (74%).
- Two-thirds of Russians (65%) support the use of private military contractors to conduct combat operations on behalf of Russia's interests abroad.
- A smaller majority (56%) support using North Korean forces to conduct combat operations in Ukraine.

Public Sees Improved International Influence from Putin's Foreign Policy

In the last two decades, the Kremlin's foreign policy has greatly focused on reestablishing Russia's status as a global power and Russian influence in post-Soviet Eurasia, culminating in the ongoing special military operation in Ukraine. Despite being heavily sanctioned and isolated from the international community, Russians are [quite proud of their country's achievements](#) in the world (per the January 2025 Chicago Council-Levada Center survey). Large percentages say they are proud to be a citizen of Russia (96%), of Moscow's

political influence in the world (74%), of Russia's military achievements (82%), and—to a lesser extent—of Russia's economic achievements (57%).

A more recent February 20–26, 2025, Levada Center survey asked Russians about the impacts of their country's broader foreign policy in recent years. The findings point to a sense that the Kremlin's international actions have had a positive impact on the political and military fronts, but less so in the economic realm.

As in 2019 (when last asked), majorities say Russia's international policy has improved its international influence (64%, 62% in 2019) and the state of its military forces (76%, 83% in 2019). Fielded after [US President Donald Trump's initial outreach to Putin](#), there has been a notable increase in those who say Russian foreign policy has improved the US-Russia relationship (32%, up from 11% in 2019), though a plurality continues to say Kremlin policy has worsened bilateral relations (44%, dramatically down from 78%). In fact, 85 percent of Russians have [a positive view](#) of the meeting between US and Russian officials in Saudi Arabia last month and 51 percent of Russians have a favorable opinion of Trump (compared to 79% who have an unfavorable view of Biden). Moreover, six in 10 Russians (58%) support the expansion of economic, political, and cultural [ties with Western countries](#).

Russians See Deterioration in Country's Global Image, Slight Improvement in Living Standards, Due to Kremlin's Policies

Russians have also shifted their views on how the Kremlin's foreign policy has affected their country's reputation abroad. Only three in 10 (29%) now believe Russian foreign policy has improved the country's image abroad, down from 44 percent in 2019. A plurality say Russia's foreign policy has worsened its international image (45%, similar to 42% in 2019). Additionally, more now say they are uncertain (25%; an increase from 14% in 2019).

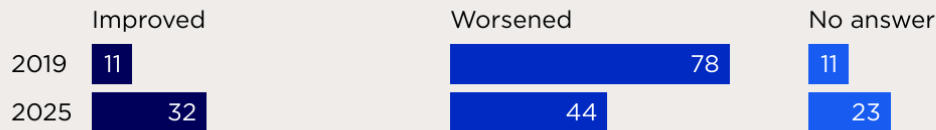
Perceived Impact of Kremlin's Foreign Policy

What impact do you think Russia's international policy in recent years has had on: (%)

Russia's international image



Russia's relationship with the US



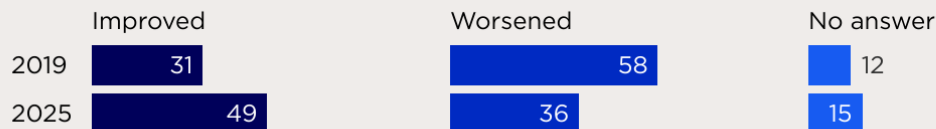
Standards of living in the country



Russia's international influence



The state of the economy



The state of the defense forces



February 20-26, 2025 | n=1,615

THE LEVADA CENTER

The public is less pessimistic about the economic impacts of Russia's foreign policy than they were in 2019. A plurality now say the Kremlin's foreign policies have improved the economic situation (49% vs. 36% worsened). This is a reversal from views six years ago, when a majority said it had worsened (58% vs. 31% improved). While a plurality still believe Russian policy has negatively impacted standards of living in the country (44% worsened), this is substantially lower than the 64 percent who felt this way in 2019.

While one might expect that a perceived deterioration in living standards could turn some Russians against the continuing military conflict in Ukraine, last month's results revealed that everyday Russians believe they need to trade off improved living standards for the Kremlin's international posture now. [For the first time since 2003](#), 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%). Levada's focus group discussions around these topics reveal that some participants believe Russia is currently being pressured collectively by the West and the United States and that Russia has to project power abroad to counter this pressure.

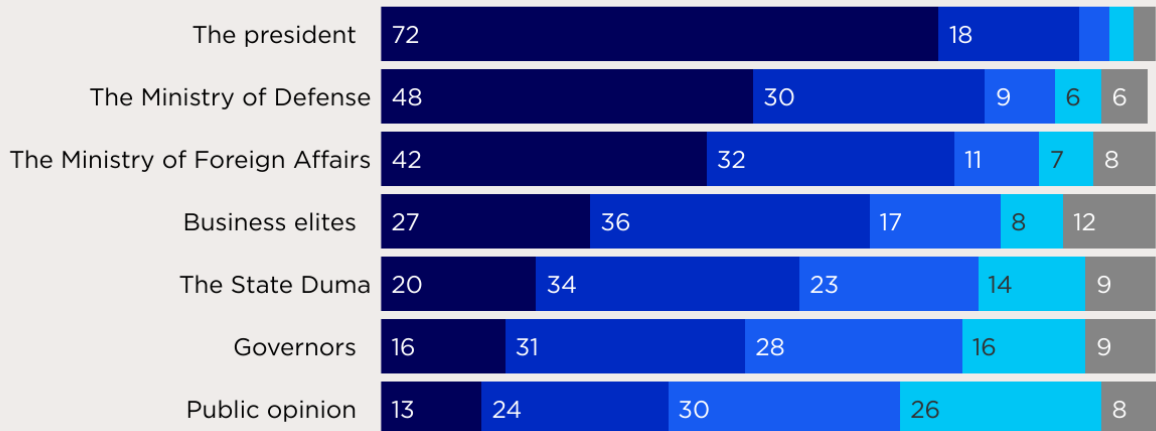
Putin Clearly Seen as the Chief Foreign Policy “Decider”

Russia's constitution grants the president [express authority over the foreign policy](#) of the Russian Federation, and the public is clear-eyed on who is calling the shots when it comes to Russia's international policy. When asked about the relative influence of people and groups on Russian foreign policy decisions, by far, Putin is seen as having the greatest influence (90%, including 72% saying he has a great deal of influence). At the same time, majorities also believe that the Ministry of Defense (78%) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (74%) have at least a fair amount of influence. Business elites (63%) are seen as having a greater voice on foreign policy than the Duma (54%) or regional governors (47%). Least of all, public opinion is considered by just 37 percent as having a great deal or fair amount of influence on foreign policy.

Influence on Russian Foreign Policy

To what extent is Russia's foreign policy influenced by the following? (%)

■ A great deal ■ A fair amount ■ Not very much ■ Not at all ■ I find it difficult to answer



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

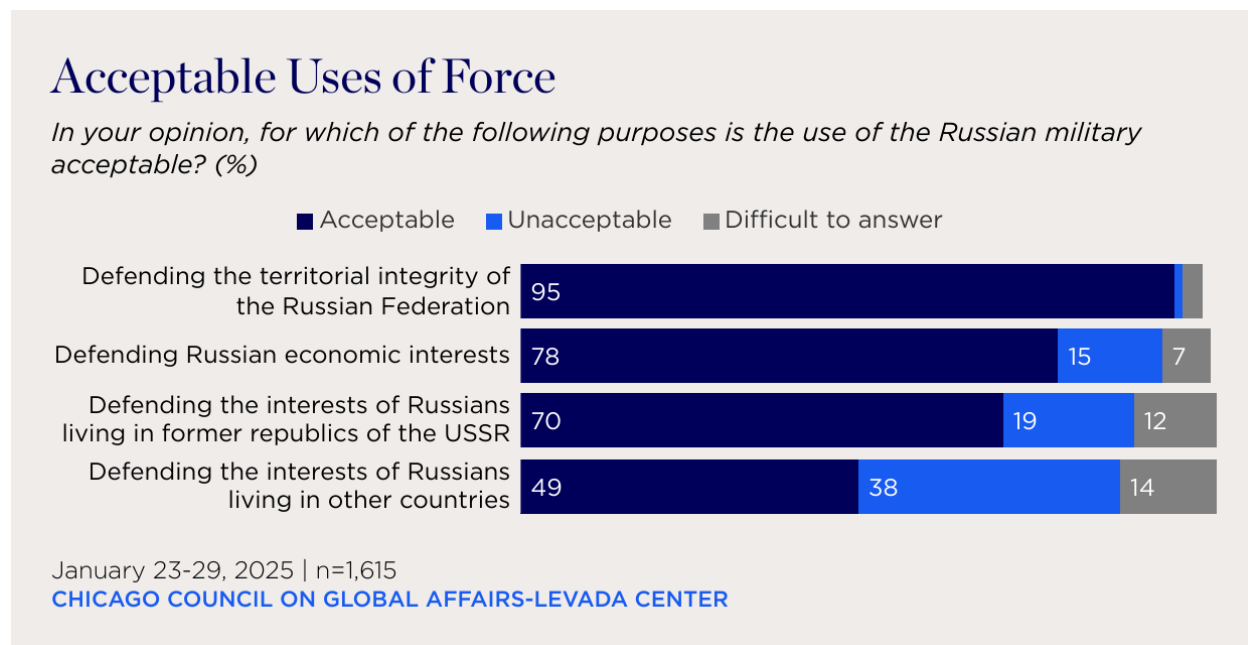
CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS-LEVADA CENTER

Broad Support for Using Military to Protect Russians at Home and Near Abroad

Many analysts worry that Moscow will feel emboldened if a peace agreement with Kyiv allows Russia to hold the territory it has gained in Ukraine—and that it could lead to additional incursions in other former Soviet countries. For their part, the Russian public is closely divided on whether their country's national interests should be limited to its current territory (45%) or extend beyond (41%).

But in a separate question, there is majority support for using military force against some other countries if Russians living there are at risk. Asked about scenarios when it would be acceptable to use military force, Russians overwhelmingly agree that defending the territorial integrity of their country is an appropriate use of their military forces (95%). Most also believe it is acceptable to use the Russian military to defend their country's economic interests (78%) and to defend the interests of Russians living in former Soviet countries (70%). In a separate question, eight in 10 Russians continue to support the special military operation in Ukraine (80% in the February Levada survey).

Beyond the former Soviet republics, everyday Russians are more divided on whether it is appropriate to use military force to defend Russians living in other countries (49% acceptable vs. 38% unacceptable).



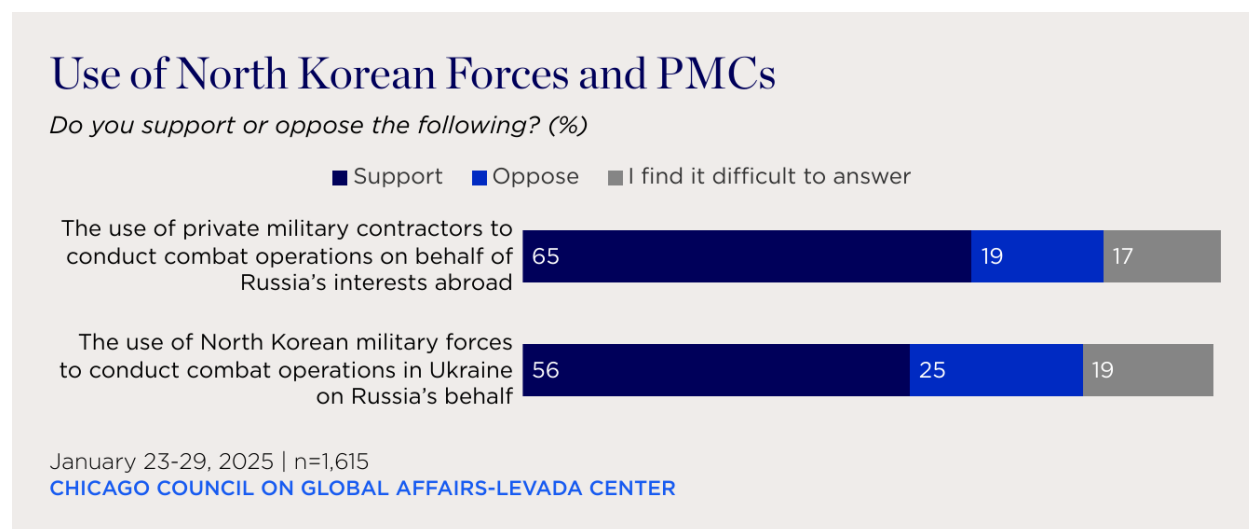
Little Opposition to Private Military Contractors or North Korean Troops Fighting on Russia's Behalf

The Russian government has broadened its use of private military companies (PMCs) since approximately 2015 after it moved to retake Crimea. They are used to [spread the Kremlin's global influence, broaden its military and intelligence-gathering footprint, and secure access to resources and other economic gains](#) in places as far-flung as Libya, Sudan, Mali, Ukraine, and Venezuela.

The Russian PMC most familiar to observers abroad was the Wagner Group, led by Yevgeny Prigozhin, [who briefly challenged](#) the Russian military leadership over its handling of the conflict in Ukraine. Since Prigozhin's death in August 2023, the Wagner forces operating in Ukraine have been [incorporated](#) into official Russian security structures.

Despite the turmoil caused by Prigozhin's Wagner Group, Russians seem unfazed by the government's use of these PMCs or other troops fighting on their country's behalf. Two-thirds support the use of PMCs to conduct combat operations on behalf of Russia's interests abroad (65% vs. 19% oppose). This

may be because PMCs are seen as [sparing ordinary Russians from fighting](#) in conflicts themselves.



In addition to PMCs, North Korea has deployed an estimated 10,000 to 12,000 soldiers to aid Moscow in fighting Ukrainian forces in southern Russia ([according to South Korean and Ukrainian sources](#)).⁷ Just in the past month, Russian and North Korean troops have [regained control of several villages in the Kursk region](#) of Russia; Ukraine had been holding this territory to use as a bargaining chip for peace negotiations. As far as the Russian public goes, a majority support using North Korean forces to conduct combat operations in Ukraine (56% vs. 25% oppose).

Conclusion

Putin remains the dominant force shaping Russian foreign policy, and the public largely backs the use of military force to protect their country's perceived interests, both within and beyond its borders. As Russia navigates the conflict with Ukraine and broader geopolitical challenges, there is growing recognition that its foreign policy actions have come at the cost of its international reputation. However, the Trump administration's concessions in recent peace negotiations and reestablishment of ties with the Kremlin may indicate to some Russians that, at the end of the day, the Kremlin's strategy is paying off.

⁷ They had been forced to withdraw from the battle and [regroup last January but have since returned](#).

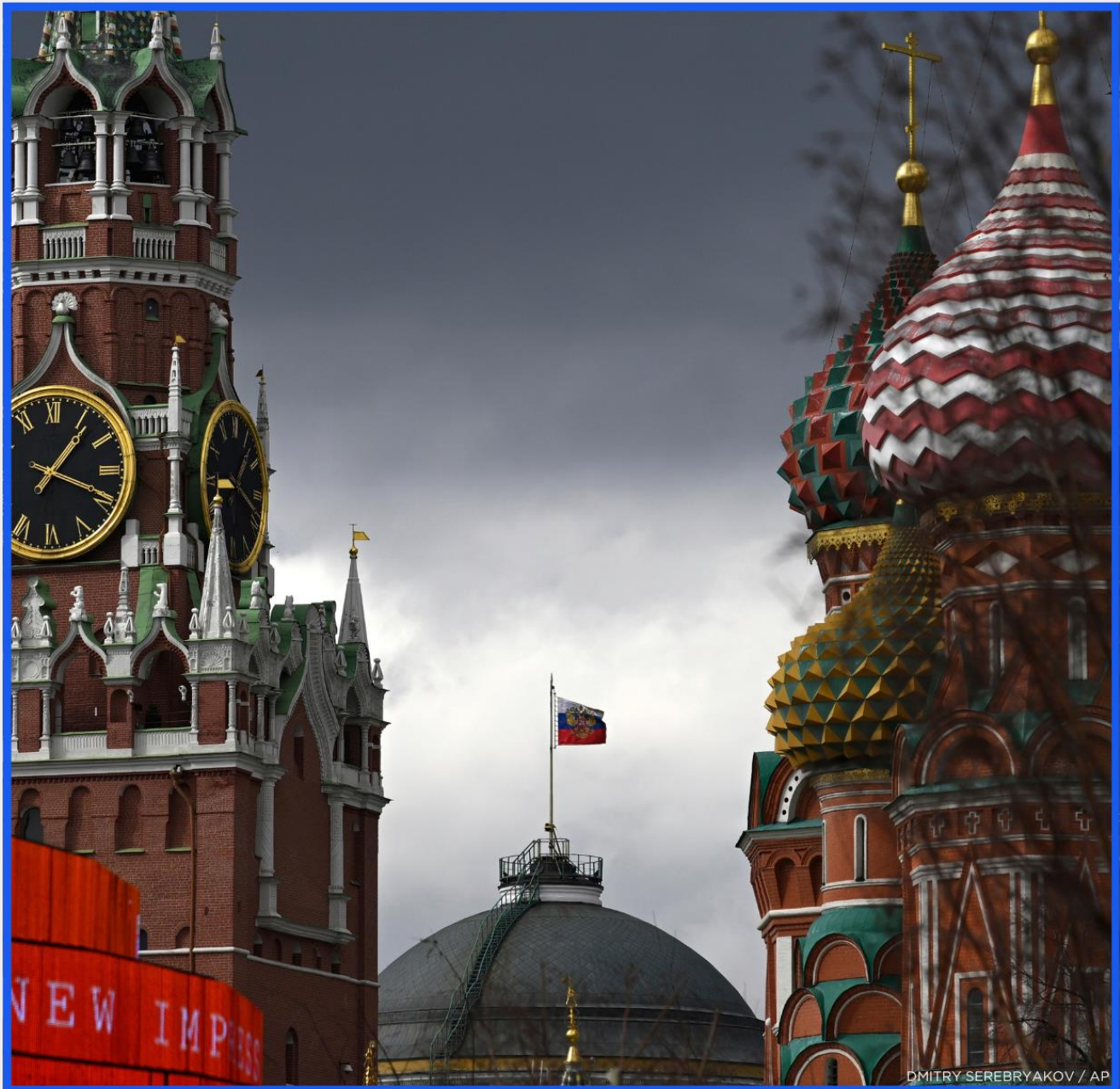
Methodology

This Chicago Council-Levada Center survey was conducted February 20–26, 2025, among a representative sample of all Russian urban and rural residents. The sample consisted of 1,615 Russians 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 1,600 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.

APRIL 2025

Russian Public Makes Fewer Demands of Government During Wartime



By Sam Dong, Lama El Baz, and Dina Smeltz

In a contentious meeting on February 28, US President Donald Trump and Vice President JD Vance [publicly berated](#) Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, opening a rift between the administration and the embattled leader. Russian officials have since used the heated exchange to portray a pro-Russian [shift in the United States' position and policy](#) on the conflict.

Polling dating back to 1999 shows that Russian public opinion tends to rally behind Moscow's military interventions before dropping off after several years. Whether the conflict with Ukraine results in a positive or negative outcome for Russia, it is Russian President Vladimir Putin whom the people will hold responsible.

Russians More Grateful, Less Likely to Make Demands of Their Government than Years Ago

Even before the Trump-Zelenskyy spat, the Russian government was already riding high in public opinion. A Chicago Council on Global Affairs-Levada Center survey, fielded January 23-29, 2025, finds Russian attitudes toward their government are much more conciliatory than they have been since before the conflict in Ukraine. In addition, a more recent February 20-26 Levada Center survey, fielded just days before the Oval Office rift, showed Putin's approval rating rising to 88 percent, the latest in a string of [record highs](#) since the special military operation began in February 2022.

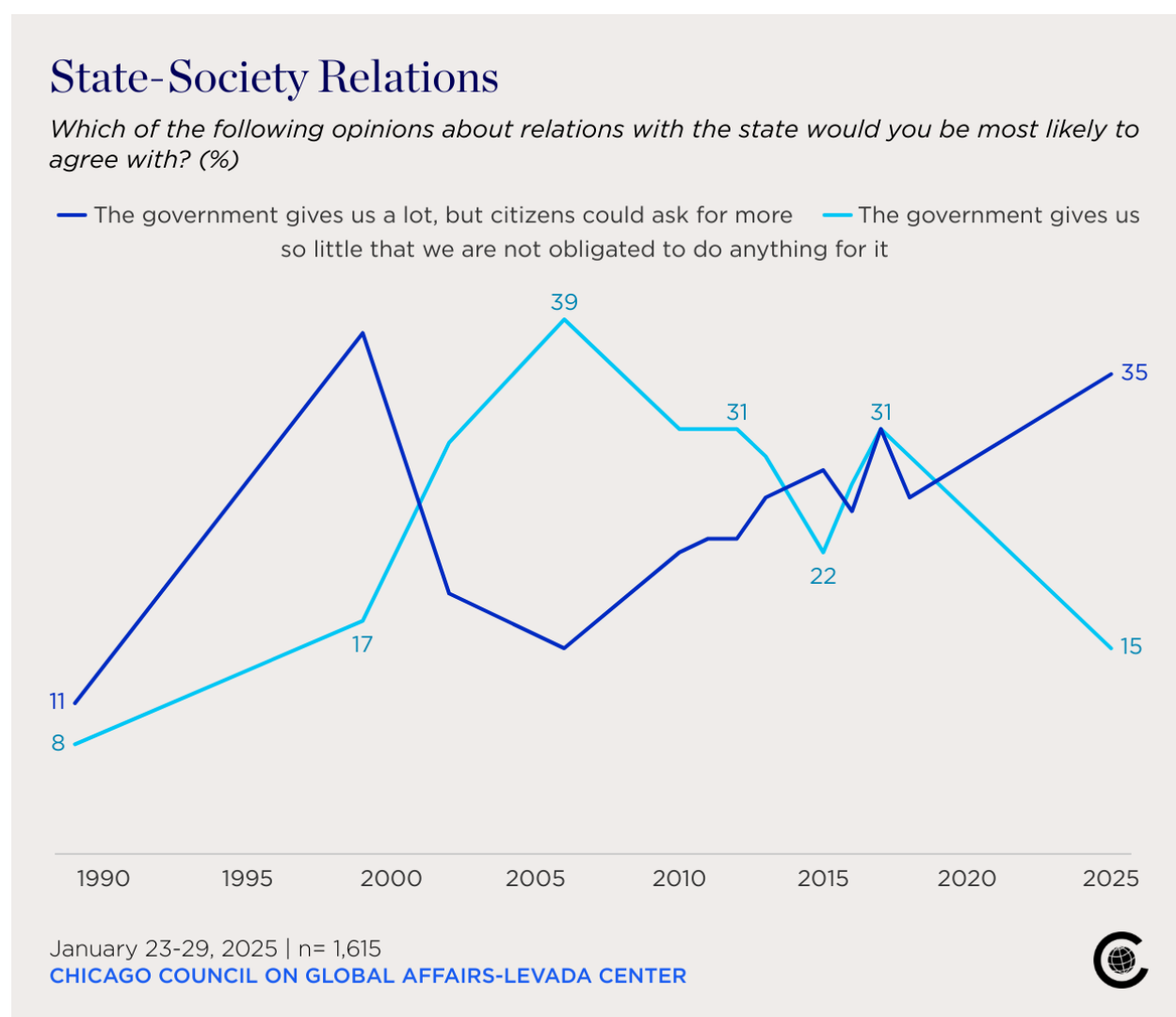
Given the public's confidence in Putin and government institutions, the data show that Russians are now more prepared to bear sacrifices and less inclined to make demands on their government than in the past.

In January, Russian citizens were asked about their views toward mutual obligations between themselves and their government. Though sizeable numbers think the Russian government should do more for its people (49%), overall levels of gratitude toward the state have risen since the last time similar questions were asked in 2018.

A plurality of Russians (35%) feels their government gives them a lot but that citizens could ask for more, the highest rate on record since polling began in 1989 (11%). Furthermore, just 14 percent believe the government has given them everything, and that no one has the right to demand anything more. The figure for this is also the highest on record, having bottomed out at 1 percent between 1999 and 2006. Mirroring these increases, those willing to make

some sacrifices for their government nearly doubled between 2018 (8%) and 2025 (15%) (see appendix table 1). In addition, the data show Russian citizens now [prioritize their country's great-power status](#) (55%) over improved living conditions (41%) for the first time in over two decades.

Fewer than two in 10 (15%) say the government gives them so little that citizens have no obligations toward it, the lowest in the post-Soviet era. Between 1999 and 2012, subscribers to this cynical view stayed consistently above 30 percent, peaking at almost four in 10 people in 2006 (39%).



Given the above, it's not surprising that only 14 percent of Russians advocate for forcing the government to serve their interests, compared to 24 percent in 2018 and a whopping 37 percent in 1999.

A similar pattern of change in domestic views on state-society relations occurred in the wake of the "reunification of Crimea." In 2015, the sentiment that the government has given citizens a lot and the willingness to bear some sacrifices increased from 2013 (from 29 to 36%, and 9 to 16% respectively). Those demanding the government serve popular interests more than halved from 23 percent to 10 percent, while those declining any obligation toward their government dropped from 29 to 22 percent in that period.

Putin's Approval Riding High, Even Before Trump's Oval Office Firestorm

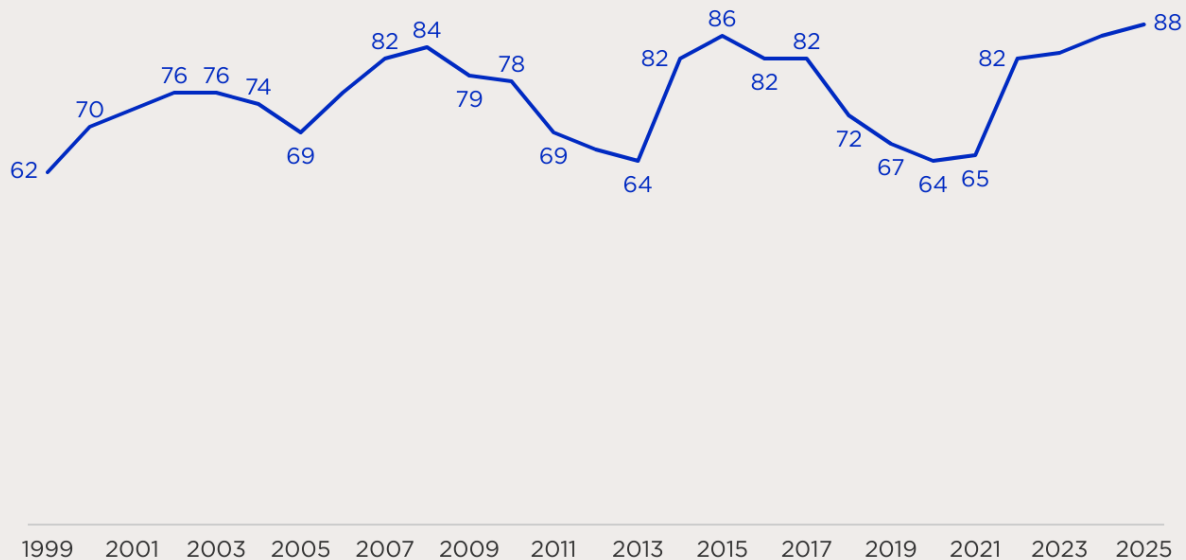
Conciliatory attitudes are also reflected in views toward Putin. A February 20-26 poll fielded by the Levada Center shows that 88 percent of Russians approve of Putin's actions as president. This is consistent with figures recorded in January.

This marks two straight months in which the Russian public expresses close to all-time high approval ratings of the president (since 1999, the year Putin became prime minister and then acting president upon Boris Yeltsin's resignation). His approval has been inching upward in the years since 2022, when it spiked to 82 percent from just 65 percent in 2021.

The past quarter-century of Levada Center polling shows rises in wartime support for Putin followed by decline after the dust settles, an example of what political scientists call the "rally- 'round-the-flag" effect. Most recently, his approval jumped from 64 percent to 82 percent after Crimea joined the Russian Federation in 2014, then held steady for four years before dropping.

Putin Approval Rating

Do you approve the activities of Vladimir Putin as the president (prime minister) of Russia? (% approve)



August 1999–February 2025
LEVADA ANALYTICAL CENTER



Two earlier episodes also shifted opinion in Putin's favor. Following a string of apartment bombings in 1999, Putin swiftly [occupied the breakaway territory of Chechnya](#) as acting president. The invasion, credited with helping him win the presidential election in 2000, evolved into a grinding insurgency that dragged on for nearly a decade. Putin's approval saw another bump around the 2008 Russo-Georgian War, which ended with South Ossetia and Abkhazia [seceding from Georgia with Russian backing](#).

Russians do not only offer praise for Putin. Approval of Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin has also reached a recent high (75%) compared to just 54 percent in December 2021. Roughly the same can be said of the government as a whole (74% in February 2025 vs. 49% in December 2021).

All Eyes Are on Putin

The outcome of the conflict in Ukraine is critical for public perceptions of Putin in particular. Whether or not everyday Russians are aware that the

Russian constitution [grants foreign policymaking authority to the president](#), they describe Putin in the January Chicago Council-Levada Center survey as having the greatest [source of influence on Russia's foreign policy](#), followed by the Ministries of Defense and Foreign Affairs, and business leaders.

In the public eye, the State Duma (the equivalent of the House of Representatives), regional governors, and the views of the public are less influential. Finally, Russians overwhelmingly feel that public opinion has the least influence on foreign policy.

Conclusion

Taken together, the data suggest that the Russian public is likely to praise its government and leader if they manage to reach a settlement perceived as advantageous toward Moscow (or if they are persuaded that this is so). Even before the highly visible schism between Trump and Zelenskyy, Russians expressed more gratitude toward and a greater willingness to bear sacrifices for their government than in 2018, when dissatisfaction reigned.

This is not new. Over the last quarter-century, the Russian public has rallied behind the Kremlin in times of conflict. That historic pattern, however, also shows enthusiasm waning after several years. Whether, when, and how the drop repeats itself depends on public perception of Russia's position. Whatever the eventual consequences of Moscow's gamble with Ukraine, citizens will give Putin the credit—or the blame.

Appendix

Appendix Table 1. State-Society Relations <i>Which of the following opinions about relations with the state would you be most likely to agree with? (%)</i>						
	Our government has given us everything, no one has the right to demand anything more from it	The government gives us a lot, but citizens could ask for more	The government gives us so little that we are not obligated to do anything for it	Our government is currently in a position where we must help it, even if it requires some sacrifices	We must force the government to serve our interests	It is difficult to say
1989	5	11	8	37	25	15
1999	1	6	38	17	37	2
2002	1	19	30	13	31	7
2006	1	15	39	9	27	9
2010	3	22	31	7	24	13
2011	4	23	31	5	26	10
2012	3	23	31	5	30	9
2013	3	26	29	9	23	10
2015	8	28	22	16	13	13
2016	3	25	27	17	9	9
2017	4	31	31	11	19	5
2018	5	26	29	8	24	8
2025	14	35	15	15	14	7

Methodology

These Chicago Council-Levada Center surveys were conducted January 23-29, 2025, and February 20-26, 2025, among representative samples of all Russian urban and rural residents. The samples 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.

APRIL 2025

Plurality of Russians Support Military Withdrawal from Syria



LEO CORREA / AP

By Lama El Baz and Denis Volkov

The formation of a new transitional government after the [ouster of former Syrian President Bashar al-Assad](#) and [large-scale withdrawal](#) of Russian forces has left the future of Russia-Syria relations uncertain. While the interim Syrian government remains [open to further cooperation with Russia](#), many Syrians consider Russia an accomplice of the Assad regime and want to [expel its forces from their homeland](#). Data from a Chicago Council on Global Affairs-Levada Center survey, fielded January 23–29, 2025, finds the Russian public is also keen on withdrawing from Syria.

Four in 10 Russians Favor Reducing Military Footprint in Syria

In [a stunning offensive campaign](#) last November, a coalition of opposition groups seized control of major cities across Syria, eventually capturing Damascus and ousting Bashar al-Assad from power. To the shock, surprise, and relief of many around the world, the operation toppled the Assad regime—which had [ruled Syria with an iron fist](#) for over half a century—and, in a matter of days, ended a [civil war](#) that plagued the country for more than a decade.

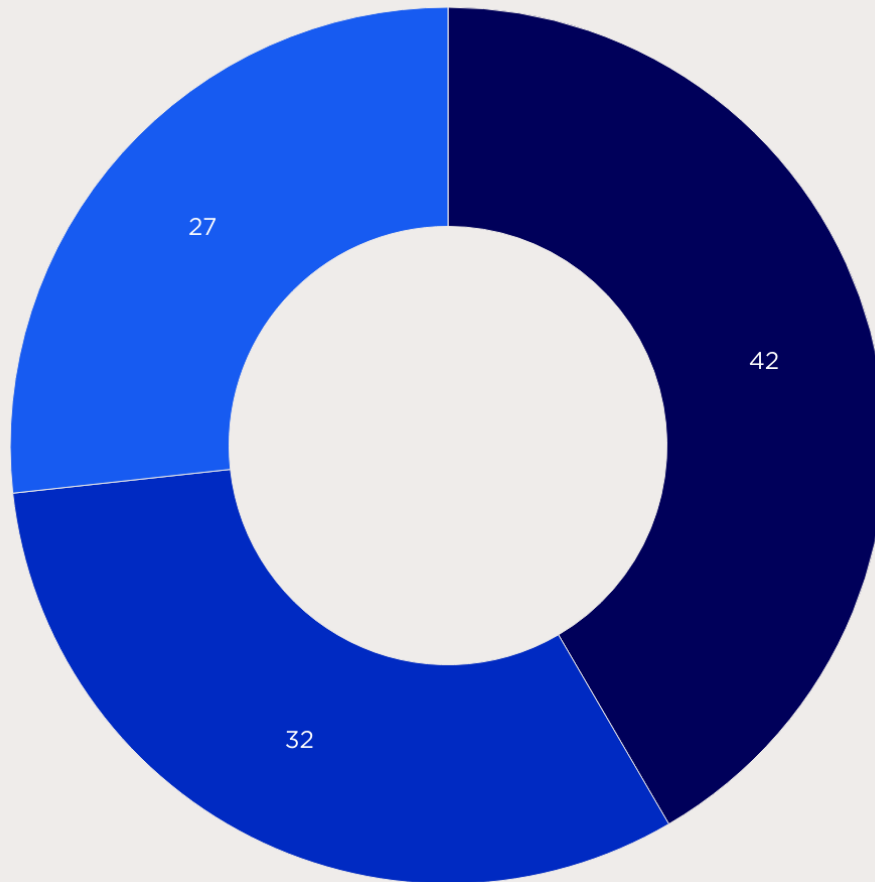
Embroiled in their own conflicts and disillusioned by Assad’s intransigence on the negotiating table, the regime’s core allies, Russia and Iran, were poorly positioned and largely unwilling to provide additional military support or launch a counteroffensive attack on its behalf. The Syrian military quickly crumbled without the backing of Tehran and Moscow, leaving Assad and his family to flee for Russia, where they were [promptly granted asylum](#).

Soon after the collapse of the Assad government, the Kremlin began a large-scale withdrawal of military equipment and troops from Latakia and Tartus, [key military bases that represent Russia’s foothold](#) in the Middle East and eastern Mediterranean and are conduits for Russian activity in North and West Africa. Data from a recent Chicago Council-Levada Center survey finds the plurality of Russians (42%) support the recent withdrawal of Russian armed forces from Syria. However, a third (32%) of Russians oppose the withdrawal and 27 percent are unsure.

Support for Military Withdrawal from Syria

Do you support or oppose the following: The withdrawal of Russian armed forces from Syria? (%)

■ Support ■ Oppose ■ Difficult to answer



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

CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS-LEVADA CENTER



Public Support for Involvement in Syria on the Decline

Russian intervention in Syria dates to 2011, when the Kremlin began providing [economic and military support](#) to the Assad regime after large-scale protests during the broader Arab Spring escalated into a civil war. In 2015, Russia [launched a direct military intervention](#) to back the government in Damascus, capture territories from American-back opposition groups, and fight against the Islamic State in Syria (ISIS).

The early years of Russia's involvement in the Syrian civil war enjoyed some public support, as the Kremlin framed Russia's role in the conflict as one of fighting terrorism, restoring security, and rolling back American influence in the Middle East. In 2015 Levada Center surveys, half of Russians (47%) said their country should [support Assad in his fight](#) against ISIS and the Syrian opposition, while three in 10 (28%) argued against getting involved in the military conflict. However, the Russian public was more likely to favor providing the Syrian government with political (67% definitely + probably support), humanitarian (55%), military (43%), and economic (41%) aid rather [than with a direct military intervention](#) (14%). In a separate question, a third (35%) said they were afraid direct involvement in the conflict would escalate into a "new Afghanistan" for Russia.

By [2016](#), most felt the Kremlin had achieved its goals in Syria (69%) and favored withdrawing its military forces from the country (81%). Although Russian President Vladimir Putin [declared victory and the withdrawal](#) of Russian troops from Syria on several occasions, Russia's armed forces remained stationed in the country indefinitely. Levada researchers say that by 2019, Russia's involvement in the civil war began to move away from the public eye and most Russians became indifferent toward the conflict. However, the majority continued to say Russia should end its operations in Syria (55% [in 2019](#)).

Conclusion

The political upheaval in Syria represents a strategic setback for the Kremlin—having spent more than a decade backing the Assad regime—and for broader Russian foreign policy in the Middle East. It is, however, a change welcomed by the Russian public, which has long sought the withdrawal or reduction of Russian forces from Syria. With much up in the air, what shape relations between Russia and the transitional Syrian government will take remains to be seen.

Methodology

This Chicago Council-Levada Center survey was conducted January 23–29, 2025, among a nationally representative sample of all Russian urban and rural residents. The sample consisted of 1,615 Russians 18 or older from the 137 municipalities in 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 1,600 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.

The **Chicago Council on Global Affairs** is an independent, nonpartisan organization that provides insight on critical global issues, advances policy solutions, and fosters dialogue on what is happening in the world and why it matters to people in Chicago, in the United States, and around the globe. As the premier, nonpartisan global affairs organization in America's heartland, we believe an informed, engaged public with access to fact-based and balanced views on global issues helps to ensure effective US engagement and supports a more inclusive, equitable, and secure world.

Learn more at **globalaffairs.org**.

