

# Call of Duty: Research in Warzone

Speech by Elena Koneva at the 75th Annual Conference of the World Association for Public Opinion Research (WAPOR)

On February 24, Putin announced the invasion of Ukraine. A day later, several spontaneously assembled research groups were preparing questionnaires under their own steam. Four days later, about 300 operators from several call centres were polling Russian residents about their support for the "special military operation".

We rushed to survey without even realizing what had happened. We thought the country was in shock. Through quick independent research, we wanted to show the authorities the people's reaction and warn against further destructive decisions.

It turned out to be more complicated – the special military operation entered the minds of **60%** of the population like a hot knife in butter.

The mass consciousness turned out to be ready to accept the war.

Under conditions of censorship, and aggressive mass propaganda, the share of those opposed to the war was much smaller.

## Why do we need the sociology of war?

The sociology of war demanded new approaches to all aspects of research. They predicted developments to plan research content, phrasing questions under censorship, and accounting for biases in the general and sample universe.

But the main challenge became interpreting the data and searching for an answer to the question: of how this war was made possible in people's minds and what might influence the "infernal mixture of optimism and fear."

ExtremeScan focuses on the research of countries in the context of war. In addition to Ukraine and Russia are Belarus, Moldova, and Kazakhstan.

My presentation today is based on research conducted in Ukraine and Russia.

## Why do we need the sociology of war?

1. Society at war is a unique and dynamic research subject
2. Alternative, independent data
3. The basis for communication
4. War is a medium for the exaltation of the mind hidden during routine times
5. Surveys as a source of humanitarian statistics

WAPOR 75<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference, Dubai, Nov 2022

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1. We hope this is the continent's last war of this magnitude. But since it is happening, it is necessary to actively study the state of society in the countries involved to see its genesis empirically.

2. By the beginning of the war, there was virtually no free sociology left in Russia. Censorship, regulations, and repression effectively led to a ban on the profession, leaving the study of public opinion to state institutions.

But at the same time, the war mobilised independent sociologists in Russia, who operate voluntarily and mostly unpaid while being aware of the risks.

3. Years of well-funded propaganda have set the stage for this war. The sociology of war is needed to counter Russian propaganda and information policy in the countries affected. It allows us to target content and determine communication channels.

4. War is a unique prism, which can be seen as a social "Collider" for a virtual laboratory study. In it, we gain access to states of mind and search for archetypes that are nearly impossible to study that deeply in peacetime.

5. In conditions where a traditional statistic cannot be collected or is incomplete (as in Ukraine) or is falsified (as in Russia), surveys provide a dependable humanitarian information source.

## How to estimate consequences of the war

Comparing the available official sources of information with the data received, we are convinced that the latter, in the absence of other sources, can be a reliable guide to the consequences of the war.

According to surveys and the United Nations data, estimates of the number of refugees from Ukraine are virtually identical; today, it is **7.2 million** people.

According to the Institute for the Study of War, **12%** of Ukrainian territory remained occupied in October. Our survey-based estimate is **14%**.

## Surveys as a Source of Humanitarian Statistics

### Ukraine

	Total	West	Center	Kiev	North	South	East
<b>Happened to you or your family members</b>							
Moving within the country	32%	12%	19%	51%	35%	42%	63%
Family separation	27%	13%	25%	29%	27%	37%	45%
Death of close relatives or friends	3%	2%	2%	1%	3%	3%	5%
Loss of savings, home or other property	25%	16%	16%	22%	25%	33%	48%
Russian occupation of your locality	14%	1%	2%	8%	26%	29%	31%
Starvation	5%	1%	3%	3%	7%	9%	10%

West to South and East of Ukraine gradient - the Russian-speaking regions have suffered most.

Kiev and East the most internally displaced.

Significantly higher than Total  
Significantly less than Total

Source: Survey of ExtremeScan, Ukraine, October 2022

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The surveys show massive humanitarian effects that have a valid correlation with their regional differentiation. The closer to the front lines, the worse the situation.

**32%** of respondents were forced to leave their homes, and **18%** went abroad—the war-separated **27%** of families. **4%** of Ukrainian respondents experienced torture and violence by the Russian military.

## Hundreds of thousands and millions of Ukrainians affected by the war

The same data are perceived much more materially when expressed in absolute values.

We extrapolate the percentages to the corrected general universe: **32 million** people if to exclude those who left the country and the population of Russian-occupied territories.

**3 million** were unable to get medical care. **2 million** were starving. **Nearly a million** lost close family members and friends.

## Massive Humanitarian Impacts

Ukraine	Total	Adults	Including children under 18
<b>Happened to you or your family members</b>			
<b>Family separation</b>	27%	8.6 millions	10 millions
<b>Starvation</b>	5%	1.6 millions	2 millions
<b>Death</b> of close relatives	3%	900 thousands	
Moving abroad	18%	6 millions	7.2 millions
Moving within the country	32%	10 millions	12 millions
Loss of savings, home or other property	25%	8 millions	
Russian occupation of your locality	14%	4.5 millions	
Bodily injury, illness, disability	21%	4.5 millions	
Torture, violence by the Russian military	4%	1.3 millions	
Inability to get medical care	9%	2.9 millions	3.5 millions

Our goal is to record the scale and localization of the humanitarian consequences of the war

Source: Survey of ExtremeScan, Ukraine, October 2022

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## The Ukrainian research industry

Our Ukrainian colleagues collect these data under harsh conditions. But thanks to the excellent service of mobile providers, interviewers reach respondents reliably and representatively.

It is important to note that the readiness of Ukrainian respondents to cooperate with interviewers got higher than in peacetime.

In the first two months of the war, Ukrainian interviewers even detected military personnel in the army and territorial defense among respondents. They stopped asking questions about the military services of respondents for ethical and censorship reasons.

Russian researchers can only dream of such availability of respondents.

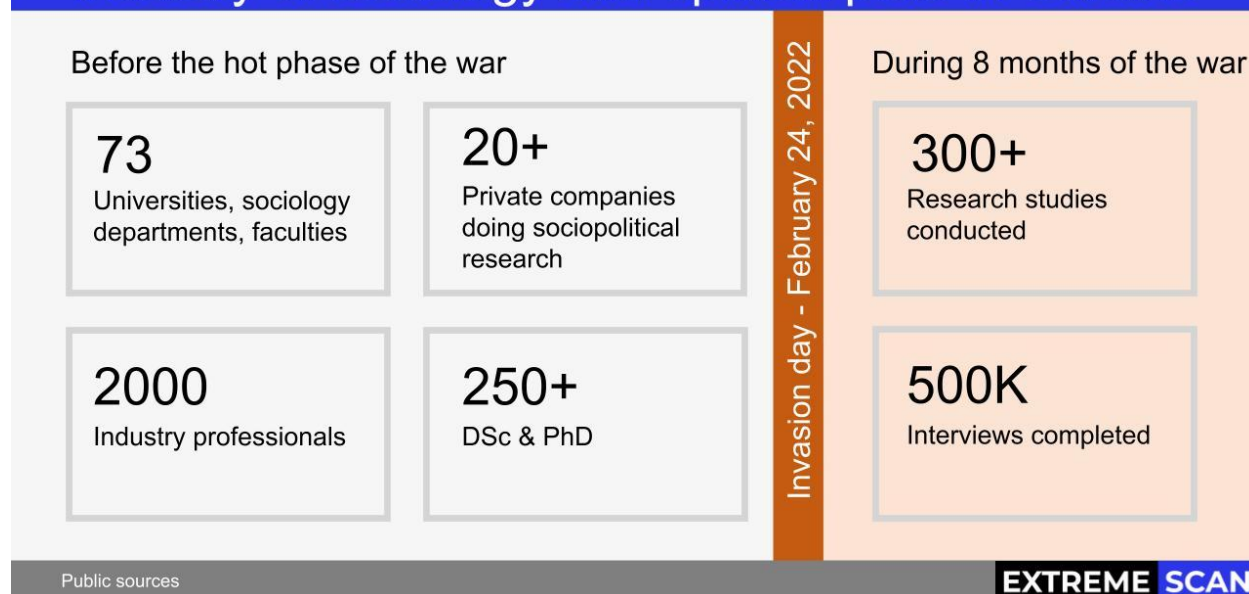
I am infinitely proud of my colleagues from Ukraine and my cooperation with them.

Today I am delighted to present not only Ukrainian data but also a flash summary of the research industry state in Ukraine.

I just attended Ukrainian round table and was greatly impressed by the number and level of scientists and their dedication to the profession, even amid the war.

One can only imagine how difficult and dangerous it was to conduct in-depth interviews in occupied Mariupol.

## Industry of sociology and opinion polls in Ukraine



I want to thank my Ukrainian partner, the research company **Info Sapience**.

We coordinate surveys and methodological materials.

We exchange data and model mirror topics covering the war situation simultaneously from the Russian and Ukrainian sides.

While there is unity in assessments of the war and Russia's role, we have disagreements about collaboration with Russians.

A recent joint project by ExtremeScan and Info Sapiens focuses on the possibility and format of collaboration between Ukrainians and Russians on anti-war issues, modelling the postwar world and attitudes toward opposition-minded citizens and those fleeing Russia.

## Dialogue and the Responsibility of Russians

We have done a joint project, but our working title is different.

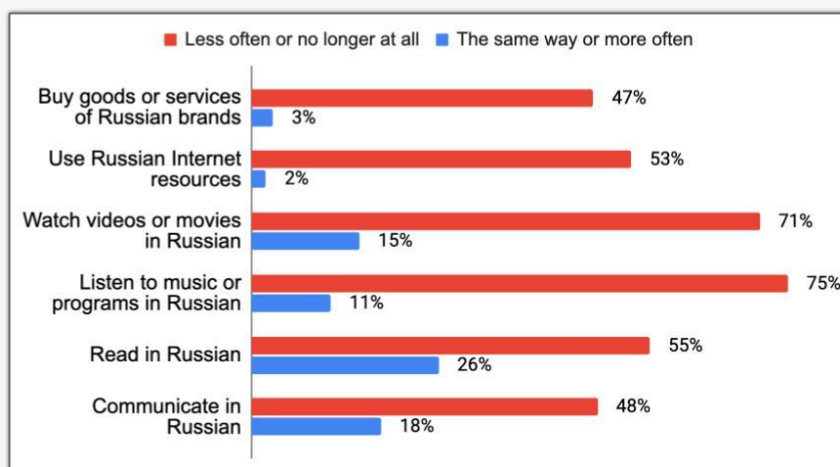
For me, it's a study on "anti-war collaboration," Inna Volosevich, director of Info Sapience, says it's a project about "Separation from the Russians."

We are both right.

Indeed, on questions about attitudes toward Russians, Ukrainians answered largely negatively.

A relative minority of Ukrainians seek revenge, but the most massive desire of Ukrainians is not to see, not to know Russians, to erase everything Russian from their lives.

## Cancelling Russians



As a result of war, Ukrainians repel all Russian: language, music, books, brands

Source: Survey of ExtremeScan, Ukraine, October 2022

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At the same time, to achieve their strategic goals, Ukrainians are ready for pragmatic interaction with the right Russians.

We asked questions about responsibility for the war unleashed, readiness to cooperate with Russians in anti-war activities, and whether dialogue with the future government in Russia would be reasonable if it were to condemn the war.

## Dialogue and the Responsibility of Russians

Collective responsibility of Russians	The entire Russian people (including the authorities and the army)	61%
	Supporters of the war (including the authorities and the army)	29%
	Only the authorities and the army	7%
Anti-war cooperation with Russians	Acceptable	49%
	Not acceptable	42%
Dialogue with the subsequent Russian authorities	Yes, if they condemn the war	39%
	No, in any case	51%

Source: Survey of ExtremeScan, Ukraine, October 2022

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By jointly analyzing the cooperation with Russians and the dialogue with the authorities, we again get two parity parties.



## The Pragmatics of Anti-War Action

### 27% Cooperation Party

it is acceptable to **cooperate** with Russians against the war and a **dialogue** with subsequent authorities in Russia is expedient, **if they condemn the war**.

### 30% Rejection Party

**no cooperation** with Russians and **no dialogue** with any subsequent authorities in Russia are acceptable.

Source: Survey of ExtremeScan, Ukraine, October 2022

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#### General Cooperation Party

**27%:** believe it is acceptable to cooperate with Russians against the war and that a dialogue with new authorities in Russia is reasonable if they condemn the war.

#### Rejection Party

**30%:** no cooperation with Russians and no dialogue with any authorities in Russia.

We see that under different segmentation, we get a consistent group of Ukrainians who, under certain conditions, are willing to cooperate for practical goals.

The numbers of support for cooperation and assistance are unexpectedly high.

They should also be used as a reference point when discussing the cancelling of Russians and European countries' non-acceptance of Russian migrants.

## How Russia accepted Ukrainian refugees and captives from Ukraine

**9%** of Ukrainian respondents know people who voluntarily left for Russia, and **6%** know people who were forcibly deported. The range of contacts of Ukrainians in Russia on the Russian side is enormous: from Russian military and filtration camp staff to volunteers and ordinary citizens.

Their impressions of interactions with Russians vary, but generally, the experience is split roughly in half between positive and negative. Much of the positive experience is related to the work of Russian volunteers.

Volunteering in Russia has gained momentum due to the war, and helping Ukrainian refugees, according to confidential research, has become a form of anti-war resistance for many volunteers.

## Ukrainian Refugees in Russia

		Knowing people who left for Russia after February 24...		
		Total	Voluntarily	Under duress, having no other
"Russian" experience (if left for Russia)	Good, treated with sympathy / Mostly	25%	29%	16%
	Bad / Mostly bad	34%	27%	45%
	I don't communicate with these people	18%	19%	15%

The sympathy of Russians toward Ukrainians is detected

Source: Survey of ExtremeScan, Ukraine, October 2022

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## War aftermath in Russia and Ukraine

Ukraine has experienced disproportionately harsher consequences of the war than Russia. Loss of home, job, and income, **67%** experience anxiety or depression.

### War aftermath in Russia and Ukraine. 8 month later

	Russia	Ukraine
Getting fired, being laid off	9%	38%
Your family's income has decreased	39%	70%
Saving money on food	52%	73%
Not communicating with some close friends and relatives	23%	57%
Had attacks of anxiety or depression	39%	67%
Important medications are no longer available	16%	36%

The consequences of the war for the Ukrainians are incomparably more significant than for the Russians.

Source: Survey of ExtremeScan, Russia and Ukraine, September-October 2022

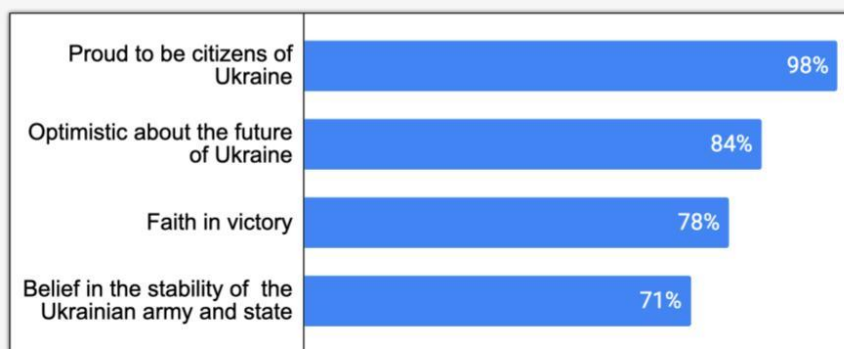
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But despite all the hardships, Ukrainians today are proud of their country, army, and volunteers and are optimistic about the future. We see nation unity in all studies in Ukraine.

One can only admire the Ukrainians' incredible solidarity and willingness for fighting without compromising with the aggressor. This phenomenon will be a subject of historical studies.



## Ukrainian spirit "Despite"



ВСЕ БУДЕ УКРАЇНА! Everything's gonna be Ukraine

Source: Survey of Info Sapiens, Ukraine, July 2022

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**92%** of Ukrainians are not ready to give up captured territories in exchange for an end to the war. **70%** of Ukrainians are willing to fight with weapons in their hands. This figure has increased slightly since the beginning of the war and remains stable. Partisan resistance, the army, and territorial defense are proving their readiness.

## Support for the “Special Military Operation” and mobilization by Russian citizens

The main subject of our analysis in these months has been the support for the war among Russian residents. In a mass discourse in Russia and abroad, there are 70-80% support figures.

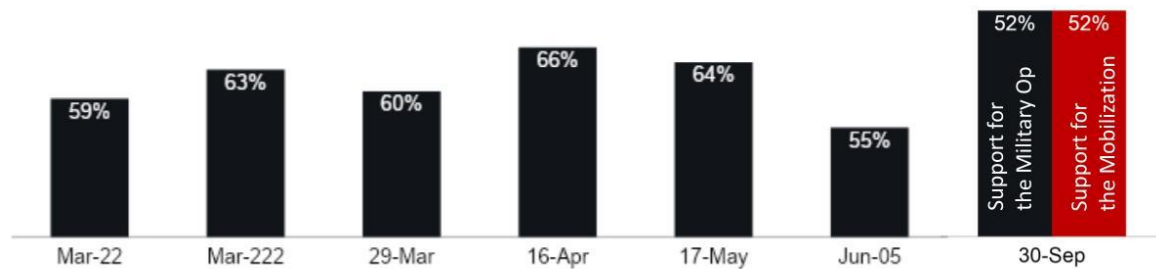
We asked Ukrainians: what percentage of Russians support the war? And we got the same result: **80%**. Today we heard similar figures in the reports of our colleagues, and tomorrow we will probably hear the same.

Despite wide circulation, these data are mistaken.

Unfortunately, there is no time for a lengthy argument, so that I show you a table on the dynamics of support for the special military operation and the mobilization.

For further understanding, welcome to our [website](#) or the WAPOR [library](#).

## Support for the “Special Military Operation” and mobilization by Russian citizens



Source: Survey of ExtremeScan/Chronicles, Russia, September 2022

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The level of support for special operations/war dropped in the summer from about **60 percent** to **50 percent**.

We do a lot of segmentation and estimate genuine, conscious support for the military operation at **30-40%**. This figure is half of the widely circulated official ratings of Russian support for the war.

But even this is a monstrously high figure.

The reasons and the origin of such support are well-researched.

Support for the mobilization and verbal readiness to go to war turned out to be unexpectedly high. But the war party is opposed by the pacifist camp.

According to various estimates, the Ministry of Defense mobilized more than half a million people in the last 8 weeks.

But more than 400,000 men of conscription age left Russia, and an indeterminate number evaded war participation.

For the first time since the war, we have traced a change in the general universe and a shift in the sample universe.

However, the willingness to go to war is a reality. The suggestive power and content of propaganda, the sense of duty to defend the homeland, or simply submission, never cease to amaze.

## Who are the belligerent Russians?

The genuine militarists are relatively few: such "hawks" are about **20%**.

## Core support of the war with Ukraine among Russians

**“Hawks” as core of war support - 19%**

Support the mobilization	52%
AND	
Expressed their willingness to participate in hostilities	37%
AND	
Not willing to accept Putin's potential decision to interrupt the military operation without achieving its objectives	35%

Source: Survey of ExtremeScan/Chronicles, Russia, October 2022

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They are the reference group for Putin and the target audience of one of the most effective propaganda ever.

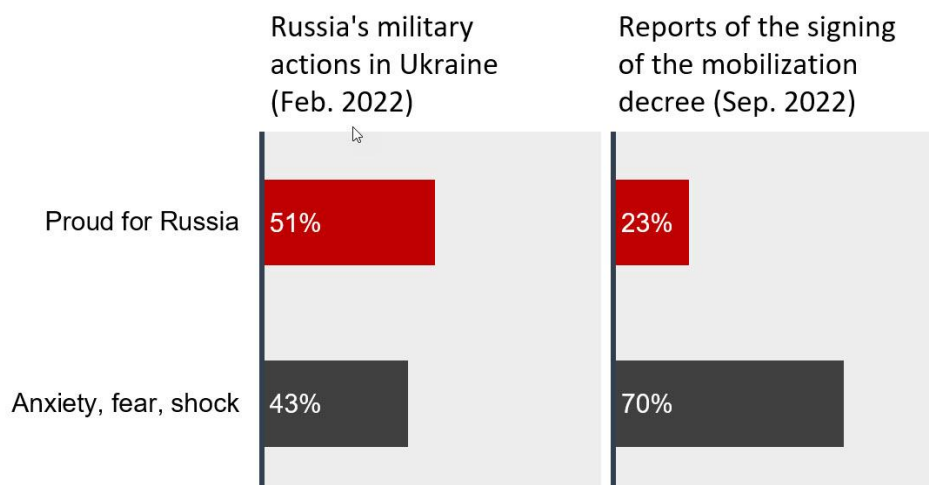
The "hawks" characteristic traits are euphoria, a supremacy complex, an accentuated power masculinity, and the anticipation of an inevitable victory march.

Behind their triumphant proclamations emerge complexes of low social subjectivity, the inability to influence their own lives decisively. In this sense, the attack on someone else's sovereignty becomes a kind of compensation for them.

## What motivates the other supporters of the mobilization?

- Fatalism. We see a more significant lack of subjectivity, repeatedly confirmed in our research.
- The chance of making a living in the situation of poverty.
- A vague sense of duty, at times incredibly paradoxical. It is essential to do qualitative research to hear: "We have done so much evil in Ukraine that Ukrainians will inevitably come for revenge, and then I will have to go defend my home."

## The second phase of the War.



Source: Levada Center, Russia

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Russians are scattered and confused, and Russia's future today is not palpable in our respondents' answers.

No matter the answer to the direct survey's questions, only an insignificant fraction of Russian people are confident and optimistic. By all indications, the war has entered its second phase, with anxiety and fear dominating most of Russia.

## The sociology of war: fighting for peace

And to conclude, I want to mention one more role of the sociology of war. For Congress participants, developing best practices for communicating research data to policymakers is a familiar task.

For us, this is a new experience. Working in real-time has encouraged us to see policymakers' mistakes and missed opportunities.

We have to provide not only data analytics but actionable insights as well.

I can cite our attempts to communicate an empirically substantiated understanding to stakeholders and the broad public that the war has finally divided Russians into two different populations.

Only some people can see that.

President Zelenskyy said: "let them (Russians) live in their own world until they change their philosophy" - this statement has no addressee.

About **30-40%** of the population represents today's belligerent Russia, and they hardly would change their "philosophy."

But there are other **40%** who stay in Russia or leave Russia, they do not accept this war, and they are not the bearers of that imperial "philosophy."

These "other" Russians react in various ways – fleeing abroad, migrating internally, protesting, sabotaging, and actively resisting in the media and real life.

Hundreds of lawyers defend activists, political prisoners, draftees, and the mobilised.

Journalists, risking their freedom and lives, conduct war crimes investigations.

About 100,000 volunteers inside Russia help Ukrainian refugees.

More radical anonymous groups sabotage army supply lines and fire military recruiting offices.

Support and cooperation with these other Russians is not just a matter of justice.

These people are a resource for fighting beyond the front lines.

Distinguishing them, despite the current conjuncture, is one of our Sociology of War goals.

I hope it will help to move from the Sociology of War to the Sociology of Post-War.

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*Dubai United Arab Emirates 10-13 November 2022*

*75th Annual Conference of the World Association for Public Opinion Research ([WAPOR](#))*

*Parallel Session: Ukraine: Public Opinion in a time of War*

*Chair: Colin Irwin (University of Liverpool, UK)*