

# ANATOMY OF SUPPORT

## Russian citizens on the “special military operation” in Ukraine: independent opinion poll

Which is more important, support for the military operation or support for ending the military operation?

According to the 3rd wave of the Chronicles survey, **60%** of the population supports the military operation in Ukraine.

**60 / 71 / 75 / 80 / 81%** of people support the operation; these are the figures from various sources.

By the beginning of April 200 administrative and criminal cases regarding "fakes" have been opened, and the number is growing rapidly. In this context, the question "Do you or do you not support the military operation in Ukraine," is increasingly less effective in getting the real picture.

As a result of military censorship, social desirability in responses to some questions biases the data to the extent that a correct interpretation of the results becomes impossible.

We see the point in shifting our focus to an analysis of **support and non-support for cessation of hostilities**. To a significant extent, this is an inversion of the original question of support, which has become an almost useless mantra.

In the table below we show the overlap of these two categories.

We see a very interesting group splitting the monolith of support.

Who are these people who support the military operation but would like the operation to end as soon as possible without seeking the surrender of the Ukrainian army?

	Total	Support for the military operation	
		Support	Non-support
Should Russia push for the surrender of the AFU or terminate the military operation as quickly as possible?			
Yes, capitulation should be achieved	50%	64%	13%
The military operation should be terminated as quickly as possible	32%	27%	68%



Significantly less than **Total**



Significantly higher than **Total**

There are overall 16% of such people in the sample. They are older than the others: there are fewer young people in this group than the average for the sample, more older people, and the same number of middle-aged people. There is a lower percentage of people with high education and a higher percentage of those with secondary vocational education. There are no differences in occupation and income level.

They have felt the sanctions less than others and are more optimistic about the dynamics of material well-being and social tensions.

They believe (**70%** vs. **50%** in the sample) that the West is to blame for the conflict, and consider the entry of NATO troops into the military operation as a sufficient justification for the use of nuclear weapons. They are ready to bargain for the termination of the military operation. They would be more satisfied than others with the recognition of Crimea as Russian and the recognition of the LPR/DPR in exchange for putting an end to the operation.

**61%** of them are convinced that the Russian government should pursue the objectives of the military operation despite the damage to the Russian economy. But most surprisingly, **41%** against **29%** in the sample are confident that the Ukrainians will give a friendly welcome to the Russian army, and another **23%** are confident that the Russian army will be met neutrally.

Who are they? How should they be called? How should they be interpreted?

If a third of those supporting the operation believe it should be ended as soon as possible, is this not a sign of the attitude shifting to another phase?

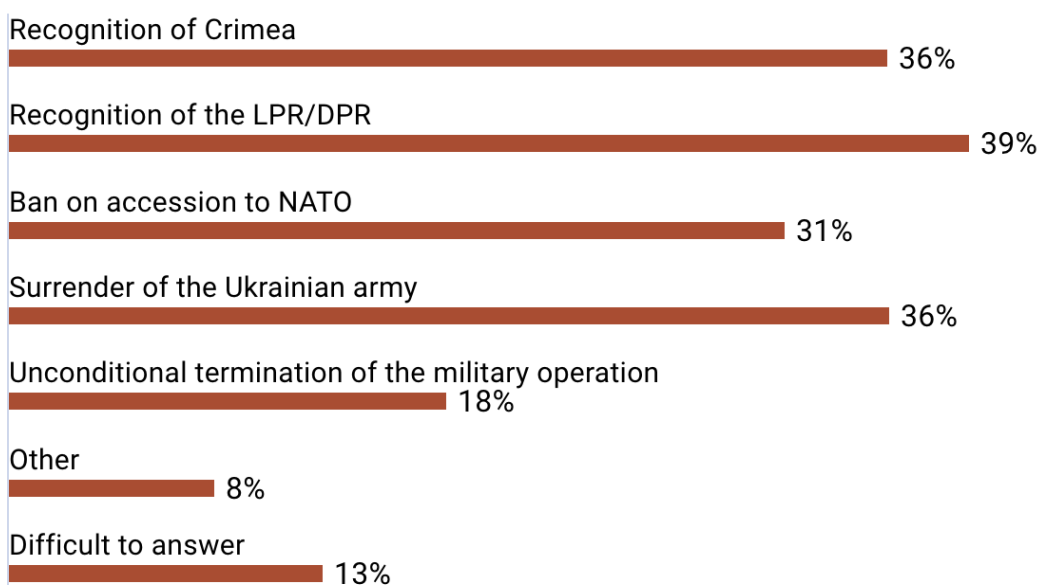
In any case, the focus on analysing the support for the cessation of the military operation seems productive when it comes to understanding the state of the society.

## Termination of the military operation in Ukraine

We offered the respondents a question **simulating the negotiation process**.

*In your opinion, which of the following scenarios would be sufficient for Russia to terminate its military operation in Ukraine? (Indicate all options that apply)*

1. Ukraine's official recognition of Crimea as part of Russia
2. Ukraine's official recognition of the LPR/DPR independence
3. Ban on Ukraine's accession to NATO
4. Surrender of the Ukrainian army
5. Unconditional termination of military operation



The most favoured sufficient compromise scenario for the termination of the "special operation" is the official recognition of LPR/DPR independence by Ukraine (**39%** among all respondents and **45%** of those supporting the operation).

This is hardly a surprise: protecting Russian-speaking citizens of Donbass has been a major goal of the operation. It was this incentive that served as the trigger for crossing the border on February 24. "The tragedy of the people of Donbass" became the content of the political programs of the state media for many years. As recently as 3 weeks ago, **15%** of people were convinced that the operation was only taking place on the territory of Donbass, not all of Ukraine.

When we ask a more stringent question, we get a slightly different distribution.

*Do you think Russia should push for the surrender of the Ukrainian army or should Russia end the military operation as soon as possible regardless of the surrender of the Ukrainian army?*

1. Should push for surrender
2. Should end it as soon as possible



The ratio of **50%** to **32%** is radically different from the picture (80% to 10%) of support for the "operation" claimed by the other pollsters.

There is no overwhelming support for the military operation.

At the same time, only **18%** of the respondents chose "Termination of the military operation without any conditions" from the list of scenarios for the end of the "special operation". The ban on Ukraine's accession to NATO is of less concern to the respondents than other possible scenarios.

There is no contradiction here.

Respondents give their answers in the space of the desirable and the possible. Even if people are predisposed to termination of the military operation, some of them are willing to compromise. People understand that without a declaration of having achieved at least some goals, Russia will not stop military action.

**32%** say "the surrender of the Ukrainian army is not needed, what we need is termination of the military operation", and when terms of this termination are proposed, more than half of the respondents in this category look for some sort of a compromise that would satisfy both sides.

	Total	Conditions for termination of the military operation		
		Without surrender	Surrender with some conditions	Unconditional termination
Should Russia push for the surrender of the AFU or terminate the military operation as quickly as possible?				
Push for surrender	50%	45%	72%	36%
Terminate the military operation as quickly as possible	32%	39%	22%	54%

Significantly less than **Total**
 Significantly higher than **Total**

In order to simplify the analysis, we combined the allowed scenarios for the termination of the military operation in the table.

Again we see a complex combination of models of attitude towards the military operation and its termination.

**A third of all respondents**, regardless of their support for the military operation, are ready for it to be terminated on condition that there are some compromises on the part of Ukraine (recognition of Crimea as part of Russia, recognition of independence of the LPR/DPR, renouncing NATO - these three answers may overlap).

**A quarter of those** who chose the option "surrender of the Ukrainian army" out of all the suggested scenarios for terminating the operation believe that Russia should not insist on surrender and that the operation should be terminated.

## Termination of the operation vs the Ukrainians' reception of Russian troops

To understand the complexity and diversity of people's perceptions, let us show the distribution of "push for surrender - terminate the military operation" against the question of how Ukrainians are welcoming the Russian army.

	Total	Expected Ukrainians' attitude towards the Russian troops	
		Friendly	Hostile
Should Russia push for the surrender of the AFU or terminate the military operation as quickly as possible?			
Yes, capitulation should be achieved	50%	56%	45%
The military operation should be terminated as quickly as possible	32%	33%	40%

Significantly less than **Total**
 Significantly higher than **Total**

We see 4 perceptual scenarios and attempt to understand the logic behind these combinations:

### 1. Friendly welcome - push for surrender (16% of the sample)

Apparently, the logic of this scenario is related to the model where power in Ukraine has been seized by the Nazis, people are waiting for liberation, and the surrender of the Ukrainian army has to be achieved.

## 2. Hostile welcome - push for surrender (14%)

The people are poisoned by Nazi propaganda and it is imperative to achieve surrender and proceed with denazification.

## 3. Friendly welcome - terminate immediately (10%)

Whatever the welcome, the military operation causes all sorts of economic damage and losses, so it has to be terminated.

## 4. Hostile welcome - terminate immediately (12%)

The Ukrainians are defending themselves, there could be a lot of bloodshed, it has to stop.

# Support vs the conditions of termination of the military operation

	Total	Support for the military operation	
		Support	Non-support
Sufficient conditions for terminating the military operation			
Recognition of Crimea	36%	42%	17%
Recognition of LPR/DPR	39%	45%	16%
Ban on accession to NATO	31%	37%	17%
Surrender of the Ukrainian army	36%	46%	9%
Unconditional termination of the military operation	18%	13%	50%
Other	8%	10%	6%
Difficult to answer	13%	7%	11%



Significantly less than **Total**



Significantly higher than **Total**

Both the fact that **46%** of those who support the military operation want the surrender of the Ukrainian army and the fact that **50%** of those who do not support it want an unconditional termination of the military operation were to be expected.

There might have been more supporters of the “pushing for surrender” option if the support for the operation were more conscious.

Paradoxically, **13%** of those who support the military operation speak of its unconditional termination, while **9%** of those who do not support it speak of pushing for surrender.

It is quite easy to imagine the reasons for not supporting the operation. It is disapproval in principle. It is much more difficult to comprehend how the military operation is conceptualized in the minds of those who support it, since orders, rhetoric, and pictures on TV keep changing. No one knows what has been the intention of the author of this military operation, which is why its conception is dynamic and diverse.

## Segmentation: militarists vs pacifists

The topic of constructing different clusters (i.e., homogeneous groups that behave in the same way) is very interesting for researchers as well as for a public understanding of society.

There are many possible grounds for clustering. In the context of the situation, we have synthesised concentrated holders of war values and antiwar values: core "militarists" and core "pacifists".

**In this case** we used the overlap of three questions to search for such clusters:

1. *In your opinion, which should be the priority for the Russian government today*
  - achieving the goals of the military operation in Ukraine
  - saving Russian economy
2. *Do you think Russia should push for the surrender of the Ukrainian army or should Russia terminate the military operation as soon as possible regardless of the surrender of the Ukrainian army?*
3. *In your opinion, which of the following scenarios would be sufficient for Russia to terminate its military operation in Ukraine?*
  - Ukraine's official recognition of Crimea as part of Russia
  - Ukraine's official recognition of the LPR/DPR independence
  - Ban on Ukraine's accession to NATO
  - Surrender of the Ukrainian army
  - Unconditional termination of the military operation.

We have called "**militarists**" those **16%** who believe that

1. The priority for the Russian government should be not the Russian economy, but achieving the goals of the "military operation" in Ukraine.
2. Russia should push for the surrender of the Ukrainian army.
3. Only the scenario in which the Ukrainian army surrenders is acceptable for termination of the "military operation", no other compromise is acceptable.

The "**pacifists**" in our classification are the **6%** of respondents who believe that:

1. The priority for the Russian government should be saving the Russian economy.
2. Russia should terminate the "military operation" as quickly as possible.
3. The "military operation" should be terminated unconditionally.

The overlap of the three parameters is a fairly rigid grouping criterion, but we wanted to get "clean" lines.

The question about support/non-support for the "military operation" is not included in the segmentation, since we understand that the answers to this question are subject to censorship.

Demographically, the "militarists" and the "pacifists" differ in age and financial status (the "pacifists" are younger and estimate their wealth lower).

	Total	Segmentation	
		Militarists	Pacifists
Age groups			
18-34	26%	14%	37%
35-54	36%	46%	40%
55+	37%	41%	23%
Income level estimate			
Low	26%	19%	40%
Middle	53%	64%	49%
High	16%	14%	10%

  Significantly less than **Total**      Significantly higher than **Total**

Education and geography are not significant factors of distinction.

We took the topic of sanctions as a differentiating block of questions.

The two groups appear to represent different camps in their assessment of the damage to the country, to them personally, and in their assessment of the goals that Western countries set for themselves by imposing the sanctions which concern almost all spheres of life and economic areas.

It is worth noting that even though **72%** of "pacifists" are affected by the sanctions, they believe that the sanctions are meant to stop the military operation.

The "militarists" believe in an unfair, aggressive model of the sanctions: to weaken the economy, to impoverish the population, to provoke its mass discontent.

		Segmentation		
		Total	Militarists	Pacifists
The damage from the sanctions to the country				
Massive	35%	32%	65%	
Little	53%	63%	25%	
The effect of the sanctions on the personal life				
Felt it	41%	36%	72%	
Didn't feel it	56%	62%	26%	
Objectives of imposing sanctions against Russia				
Weakening the Russian economy	55%	69%	35%	
Impoverishing the population	29%	42%	20%	
Causing mass unrest among the population in Russia	42%	59%	26%	
Influencing the Russian president, the government	33%	45%	38%	
Stopping the military operation	21%	25%	43%	
Punishing Russia for the military operation	26%	38%	26%	

Significantly less than **Total**
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Although these groups have different views on the "military operation," what is happening in Ukraine is what worries them most. It has been the first position in their spontaneous responses.



		Segmentation	
	Total	Militarists	Pacifists
Perception of personal safety in Russia			
Feeling absolutely safe	93%	99%	60%
Feeling constantly in danger	5%	0%	36%
Impact associated with the military operation			
You have been laid off at work	4%	2%	7%
Your family's income has decreased	39%	36%	55%
You have been buying food and household goods in a different way	15%	13%	28%
You have had arguments or quarrels with people close to you over political issues	20%	17%	41%
You have had bouts of anxiety or depression	32%	29%	58%
Feeling anxiety or depression			
No	81%	88%	37%
Yes	15%	11%	57%
Emigration of those close to you from Russia			
Yes, they have emigrated	7%	2%	31%
No, they haven't emigrated	92%	97%	68%
Readiness to emigrate from Russia			
Yes, would like to	10%	3%	41%
No, don't want to	89%	97%	58%
Personal effect of the sanctions			
Yes, felt it	41%	36%	72%
No, didn't feel it	56%	62%	26%

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Impact associated with the military operation			
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Your family's income has decreased	39%	36%	55%
You have been buying food and household goods in advance	15%	13%	28%
You have had arguments or quarrels with people close to you over political issues	20%	17%	41%
You have had bouts of anxiety or depression	32%	29%	58%
Feeling anxiety or depression			
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The “pacifists” are people who have experienced the effects of war to a much greater extent, both on themselves and in their lives. Their income has dropped, they buy food and goods in advance, 57% experience depression. They have a higher level of anxiety and sense of danger, so 41% would like to emigrate.

All these parameters distinguish “pacifists” from “militarists” as well as from the rest of the population.

One can assume that in reality their percentage is somewhat higher, since the criteria are built on questions that may be sensitive to censorship, but it is unlikely that more accurate figures would change the picture:

For every core "pacifist" there are three "militarists".

We should point out (especially to journalists) that these two **core clusters** with definite attitudes toward the operation represent only **22%** of those surveyed, while the remaining almost **80%** represent a complex conglomerate of different patterns of attitude toward the military operation, including a large number of people who are confused or, on the contrary, confident in victory, the essence of which they cannot describe, who have difficulty formulating their thoughts, who are growing anxious and depressed or are becoming increasingly euphoric.

For us, as researchers, this nonlinear perception of the military operation means one thing: we need to look for questions, approaches, and experiments that will allow us, in the conditions of verbal limitations, to come closer to understanding the internal model of people's attitude to the situation of an armed conflict.

## Post Scriptum

Support for Putin and the military operation is apparently quantitatively large, but it is not the **70-80%** or even the **60%** obtained in the Chronicle project. Analysis shows that it is incorrect to speak of unity and a monolithic majority supporting the commander-in-chief's arbitrarily formulated orders.

For now, we believe that the formula for the attitudes toward the campaign in Ukraine that is the most universally applicable and the closest to reality is a **50/30** distribution.

## Methodology

The research was carried out between March 26th and 30th (days 31 to 35 of the "military operation")

- The research method included a telephone poll with random sampling of cell numbers
- The research involved respondents from all regions of Russia
- The survey respondents were aged 18 and over
- The total number of respondents amounted to 1602 people
- The 95% confidence interval for a weighted average of the entire sample does not exceed 2,6 percentage points
- Weights were applied to adjust the final sample based on gender, age and location
- The average survey completion time was 11 minutes

SPSS database, the questionnaire:

<https://github.com/ExtremeScan/open-data>