Public opinion in today’s Russia: recent trends and research challenges

Stepan Lvov
VCIOM, Russia
director of strategy & research
Data source: «VCIOM-Sputnik»

Sample Design

**SAMPLE SIZE**
1600 respondents every day

**REPRESENTS**
Adult Russian Citizens (18+)
by sex, age, level of education and
type of locality

**SAMPLE TYPE**
The random (probability) sampling classical technique is used. It is based on a full list of cell phone numbers used in Russian Federation

**M.O.E.**
2.5% (p<0.05)

Survey

**INTERVIEW TYPE**
Standardized telephone interview

**COVERAGE**
- Up to 80 regions
- 500 cities and towns
- 100 villages

**CONTROL**
- Listening at least 10% of interview
- Duration Control
- ISO 20 252, Certificate №: RU003012
“Rally-around-the-flag” cases in Russia and USA
Ups and downs of Russian unity
Nov’12 – Nov’22

Do you think there is unity of the people in Russia today or there is not?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>There is unity</th>
<th>There is no unity</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>56</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2022</td>
<td>56</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

G. Bush Sr. ratings boost during Gulf War
Jan’91-Feb’91

George H.W. Bush's Presidential Job Approval
Do you approve or disapprove of the way George Bush is handling his job as president?

% Approve

- DEC 20, 1989  Invasion of Panama
- JUN 26, 1990  Bush breaks "no new taxes" pledge
- AUG 02, 1990  Iraq invades Kuwait
- JAN 16, 1991  Persian Gulf War begins
- FEB 27, 1991  Victory in Persian Gulf War
- JUL 16, 1992  Bill Clinton accepts Democratic nomination
- NOV 3, 1992  Bush loses re-election bid

Two jumps in approval of George Bush Jr.
Sep’01. & Mar.03

President Putin’s ratings lift
May’18 – Feb’22 – Sep’22

Increase in retirement age
Special Military Operation (SMO) begins

https://wciom.com/our-news/ratings/state-institutions
Society as a corporation: Is that helpful for society’s survival?
Society as a corporation

1. These societies are entering in a situation of strong mobilization, requiring quick decisions
2. Goals are clearly expressed and they are beginning to be accepted by the most
3. The competitive environment is defined. At the level of society, the term “enemies” are more often used
4. Risks are being recognized
5. Special communication environment is being created

All these processes are aimed at survival and/or success
Support for institutions rises in hard times
Jan’20 – Sep’22

RUSSIAN SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS’ INDEXES

**Question:** Do you generally approve or disapprove the ...?

**Index** = Sum of positive and neutral answers – Sum of negative answers

Σ = sum of all Indexes

- **Start of the Pandemic**
- ** Failed Vaccination in Russia**
- **Start of the SMO**
- **Some success in SMO**
- **Partial Mobilization in Russia**

https://wciom.com/our-news/ratings/social-institutions
Survival depends on conformity to myths
Meyer & Rowan, 1977

“Organizations that incorporate societally legitimated rationalized elements in their formal structures maximize their legitimacy and increase their resources and survival capabilities”

Conformity and life satisfaction
Jan’20 – Sep’22

SOCIAL WELL-BEING INDEXES

LIFE-SATISFACTION

FINANCIAL SITUATION

SOCIAL OPTIMISM

QUESTIONS:
• Speaking in general, to what extent are you satisfied with the life you are living?
• How would you assess the current financial well-being of your family?
• In your opinion, in a year from now will your family live better/worse/the same way as today?

INDEX = SUM OF POSITIVE AND NEUTRAL ANSWERS
– SUM OF NEGATIVE ANSWERS

Goals of the state shared by society
**What are Russia’s goals in Ukraine?**

Mar’17 – Aug’22

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Mar'22</th>
<th>Apr'22</th>
<th>May'22</th>
<th>Jun'22</th>
<th>Jul'22</th>
<th>Aug'22</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To occupy Ukraine and annex it to Russia</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Change in Ukraine’s political course</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To protect the population of Donbass</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To protect Russia, disarm Ukraine and prevent the deployment of NATO military bases on its territory</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

https://wciom.ru/analytical-reviews/aniticheskii-obzor/specialnaja-voennaja-operacija-polgoda-spustja
How competition is formed
IN YOUR OPINION, WESTERN CIVILIZATION, DEMOCRACY AND WESTERN CULTURE...
(CLOSED QUESTION, ONE ANSWER, % OF ALL RESPONDENTS)

YEAR 2000 / YEAR 2022

YOU CAN TAKE A LOT OF GOOD FROM THEM

NEEDED, SAVING RUSSIA

55

30

25

26

2

2

33

10

8

9

IT IS NOT RIGHT FOR US

DEVASTATING, FATAL FOR RUSSIA

COULD NOT ANSWER
The threat of war and enemies
Jun’17 – Aug’22

Is there any threat of a military aggression against Russia from any country today, or not?

Yes / No / Don’t know

- Jun’17: 37% Yes, 54% No, 9% Don’t know
- Apr’18: 53% Yes, 40% No, 7% Don’t know
- Nov’18: 43% Yes, 52% No, 9% Don’t know
- Dec’18: 37% Yes, 53% No, 9% Don’t know
- Jan’19: 31% Yes, 61% No, 8% Don’t know
- Aug’19: 41% Yes, 50% No, 9% Don’t know
- Aug’22: 43% Yes, 57% No, 10% Don’t know

If you think that there is a military threat to Russia, what countries does it come from?

2018 / 2022

- USA: 62% 54%
- Ukraine: 57% 32%
- Poland: 18% 26%
- Great Britain: 8% 6%
- NATO countries: 18% 5%
- Germany: 8% 2%
- Baltic states: 14% 1%
- Japan: 13% 2%
- China: 3% 3%
- Other: 15% 10%
- Don’t know: 10% 9%

Obvious and not obvious risks of the situation
Russians’ worries
Jan’20 – Sep’22

Social Fears Indexes

QUESTION: HOW DO YOU ASSESS THE PROBABILITY OF THE FOLLOWING PROBLEMS OCCURRING IN YOUR LIFE?
(IN % OF RESPONDENTS, SUM OF ANSWERS: “I AM QUITE SURE IT WOULD HAPPEN” AND “I THINK IT’S LIKELY TO HAPPEN”)

- Conflicts between Russia and other countries will intensify? military action will begin
- Increase in social injustice/ inequality among people
- Decline in income
- Refusal to provide free medical care
- The usual products will become too expensive/ we cannot buy them
- Job loss
- Internal unrest caused by protests against the authorities

https://wciom.ru/ratings/indeks-strakhov (rus)
Certainty improves mood
Jan’20 – Sep’22

**Questions:**

- **How would you assess the situation in your personal life?**
- **How would you assess the situation in Russia, in general?**

*Index = Sum of positive and neutral answers – Sum of negative answers*

Understanding matters takes time
Jan’20 – Sep’22

Questions:
• To what extent do you agree/disagree that things are doing in the right direction in Russia?
• How would you assess the current political situation in Russia in general?
• How would you assess the current economic situation in Russia in general?

Index = sum of positive and neutral answers – sum of negative answers

Three ways to understand one topic
Special Military Operation
Support/opposition to the decision

Tell me, please, do you support the decision to conduct a special military operation of Russia in Ukraine or do you not support it?

[SUPPORT 70%]

[SUPPORT 65 72 71 70 70 69 70]

[DO NOT SUPPORT 17%]

[DO NOT SUPPORT 25 18 18 18 18 19 17]

Found it difficult to answer 13%

https://wciom.ru/analytical-reviews/analiticheskii-obzor/c especialnaja-voennaja-operacija-polgoda-spustja
### Do you personally support the actions of Russian military forces in Ukraine?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Definitely yes</th>
<th>Rather yes</th>
<th>Rather no</th>
<th>Definitely no</th>
<th>Can't say</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2022/Feb</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2022/Mar</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2022/Apr</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2022/May</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2022/Jun</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2022/Jul</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2022/Aug</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2022/Sep</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2022/Oct</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*results of the representative telephone poll 1000 resp., February 27; Левада-центр, @levada_center, внесен в реестр иноагентное
Created with Datawrapper*
Special Military Operation
Support/opposition to the operation of Russian troops

Do you support the military operation of Russian troops on the territory of Ukraine?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wave</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Support (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>February, 26-28</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>March, 5-7</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>March, 13-16</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>May, 23-26</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>July, 28-31</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>March, 5-7</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>March, 13-16</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>March, 13-16</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>May, 23-26</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>July, 28-31</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

https://russianfield.com/statisticasvo