



The Associated Press-NORC
Center for Public Affairs Research

PUBLIC OPINION IN RUSSIA: RUSSIANS' ATTITUDES ON ECONOMIC AND DOMESTIC ISSUES

In a recent poll of the Russian public, the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research finds President Vladimir Putin is extremely popular, and most Russians believe their country, which is facing mounting economic pressures and international conflict, is headed in the right direction. Although few Russians say the country's economy is in good condition, most report their families' finances are in fair shape and are optimistic their financial situation will improve in coming years. Many Russians believe economic sanctions from Europe and the United States are hurting the country's economy, but fewer than half report the sanctions are harming their personal finances, and most favor Russia helping Ukrainians who want to break off from the Kiev government.

In order to better understand the Russian public's attitudes toward both domestic and international affairs, the AP-NORC Center directed this study which includes a nationally representative in-person survey of 2,008 Russian adults between November 22 and December 7, 2014. This report presents findings from the poll, funded by NORC at the University of Chicago, and examines Russians' attitudes on domestic politics and their perceptions about the economy against the backdrop of Russia's increasingly tenuous macroeconomic position.

At the time of the poll, Russia's currency, the ruble, had lost about 40 percent of its value to the dollar since the start of the year. Oil – the main driver of the economy – is selling at record low prices. In addition, Russian banks and businesses face challenges in obtaining capital due to economic sanctions imposed by the United States and Europe resulting from Russia's involvement in the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. Russia annexed Crimea, formerly part of Ukraine, in March, and Russia continues to support Ukrainian separatist groups.



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Three Things You Should Know

From the AP-NORC Center's Russia Poll:

- 1) The Russian people are rallying around Vladimir Putin, who now enjoys an 81 percent approval rating, much higher than the 58 percent rating he received in a 2012 AP poll.
- 2) Economic woes are top of mind among the Russian people even though few Russians report a negative impact on their own pocketbooks. Most say that sanctions are hurting the Russian economy, though impacts on personal finances are more concentrated among those with higher incomes.
- 3) Two-thirds of Russians favor efforts to support Ukrainians who want to separate from the Kiev government.

The key findings from the study, summarized below, provide policymakers with a rare, in-depth examination of public attitudes in Russia and provide important context for understanding Russian society and politics.

- A majority of Russians rate the economy as fair or poor and more than 4 in 10 say it is worse now than it was three years ago.
- In spite of those economic assessments, Russians remain positive about a number of facets of the country. Two-thirds believe Russia is headed in the right direction, and about half are optimistic that the next generation will be better off than current generations. Most think the economy and their personal finances will stay the same or improve over the next three years.
- When asked what are the most important problems facing Russia, Russians cite the economic and financial crisis (21 percent) and the situation in Ukraine (16 percent) most frequently. Russians say the most important problems facing their families are price increases, inflation, and low wages/pensions (40 percent), followed by poor quality or lack of access to health care, education and social services (13 percent).
- Asked specifically about the severity of 14 different problems facing the country, the issues Russians most commonly identify as serious are drug abuse (83 percent) and corruption (79 percent). The number of Russians identifying each issue as a serious problem decreased from 2012 for all items queried in both studies.
- Eighty-one percent of Russians approve of the way Putin is handling his job as president, which is a significant increase from his 58 percent approval rating shortly after his most recent inauguration in May 2012.¹
- Eight in 10 support Putin's handling of the situation in Ukraine, and 2 in 3 favor Russia supporting Ukrainians who want to break off from the Kiev government. Sixty-four percent of Russians say economic sanctions have hurt the economy, and 45 percent say they have had a negative effect on their family.
- Public opinion in Moscow on most economic and domestic political issues differs from the rest of the country. And while most of the country relies on state-owned TV for their news, Russians who rely on other sources hold different views on a number of important issues—from economic assessments, to approval of various leaders and institutions.

DOMESTICALLY, PRESIDENT VLADIMIR PUTIN IS VERY POPULAR, AND HIS APPROVAL RATING HAS RISEN MORE THAN 20 PERCENTAGE POINTS SINCE HIS ELECTION TWO YEARS AGO.

An overwhelming proportion of Russians approve of President Putin. Eighty-one percent report they strongly or somewhat approve of the way Putin is handling his job as president, and only 6 percent say they somewhat or strongly disapprove. This is a significant increase from his 58 percent approval rating shortly after his inauguration in May of 2012.

How people obtain their news about the country is related to their views about many issues, including Putin. Three in 4 Russians say state-owned TV stations are their main source of news about what is going on in the country while 14 percent say the Internet and 5 percent say independently-owned TV stations. When asked how often they read, watch or hear the news, 56 percent of Russians say at least once a day, 22 percent say several times a week, and 21 percent say weekly or less.

¹ The AP-GfK Poll: Russia. Interviews with 1,675 adults between May 25 and June 10, 2012. http://surveys.ap.org/data/GfK/AP-GfK%20RUSSIA%20Poll%20Posted%20Topline_Drugs%20story.pdf

People who report that state-owned TV is their main source of news are more likely to approve of Putin (84 percent) than those who use other media outlets as their main source of news (73 percent). Eighty-three percent of people who report that they read, watch or hear news daily approve of Putin compared with 76 percent of those who consume news weekly or less.

Approval also varies between people living in Moscow and those in the rest of the country, though sizable majorities living both inside and outside of the capital approve of Putin. Eighty-two percent of people living outside of Moscow approve of Putin compared with 71 percent of those living in the city.

PUTIN IS VIEWED MORE FAVORABLY THAN SEVERAL OTHER NOTABLE RUSSIAN POLITICIANS.

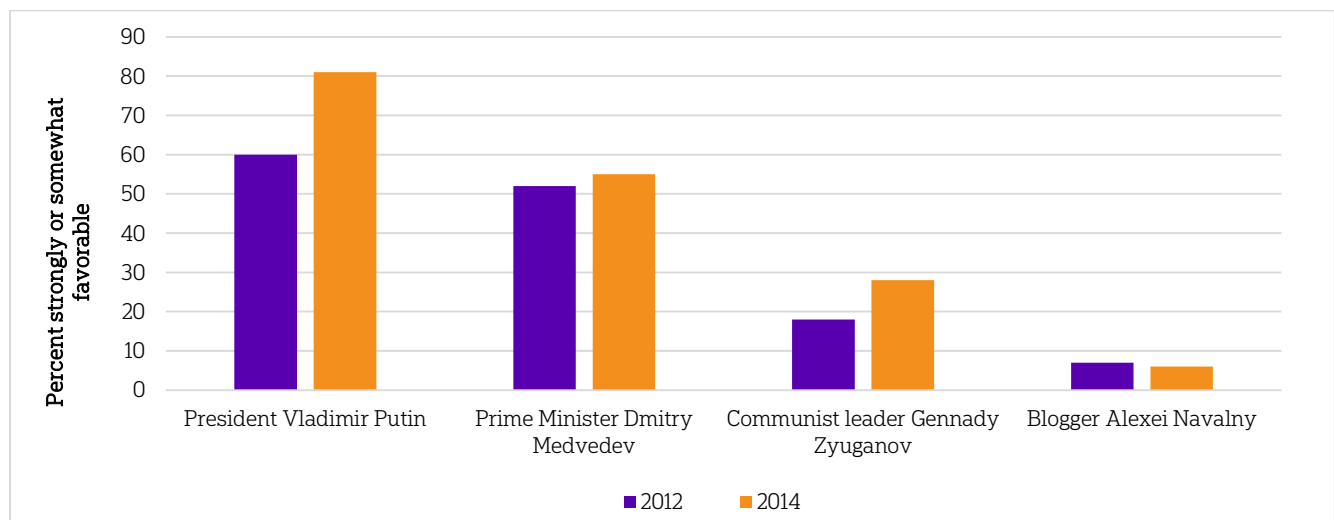
Putin's popularity is strong even when compared to several other leaders in Russia. More Russians hold somewhat or strongly favorable views of Putin (81 percent) than Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev (55 percent), Communist Party leader Gennady Zyuganov (28 percent), and blogger Alexei Navalny (6 percent).

Medvedev's favorability has changed little since the end of his Presidency in 2012 and his support is highest among women, those who watch state-owned TV for news, and less educated Russians. Sixty percent of women view him favorably compared with 51 percent of men. Those whose main source of news is state-owned TV are more likely to rate Medvedev favorably (58 percent) than those who have a different main source of news (48 percent). Sixty-one percent of Russians with a high school education or less rate him favorably compared with 51 percent of those with a university or post graduate education.

More Russians view Zyuganov favorably now (28 percent) than in 2012 (18 percent), and fewer now view him unfavorably (21 percent vs. 35 percent). His support is greatest among older Russians. Those 55 years or older are much more likely to rate him favorably (44 percent) than adults between 35 and 54 years of age (25 percent) and adults between 18 and 34 years of age (18 percent).

Navalny's favorability has not changed significantly in the last two years and remains relatively low across all demographic groups. Fourteen percent of those with incomes of more than 34,000 rubles a month have a favorable view of Navalny compared with 4 percent of those with incomes of less than 17,000 rubles a month. Overall, 35 percent of Russians say they don't know if they have favorable, unfavorable, or neutral views of Navalny.

Percent of Russians who rate each individual as favorable in 2012 and 2014



Question: Please tell me if you have favorable, unfavorable, or neither favorable nor unfavorable view of the following people?

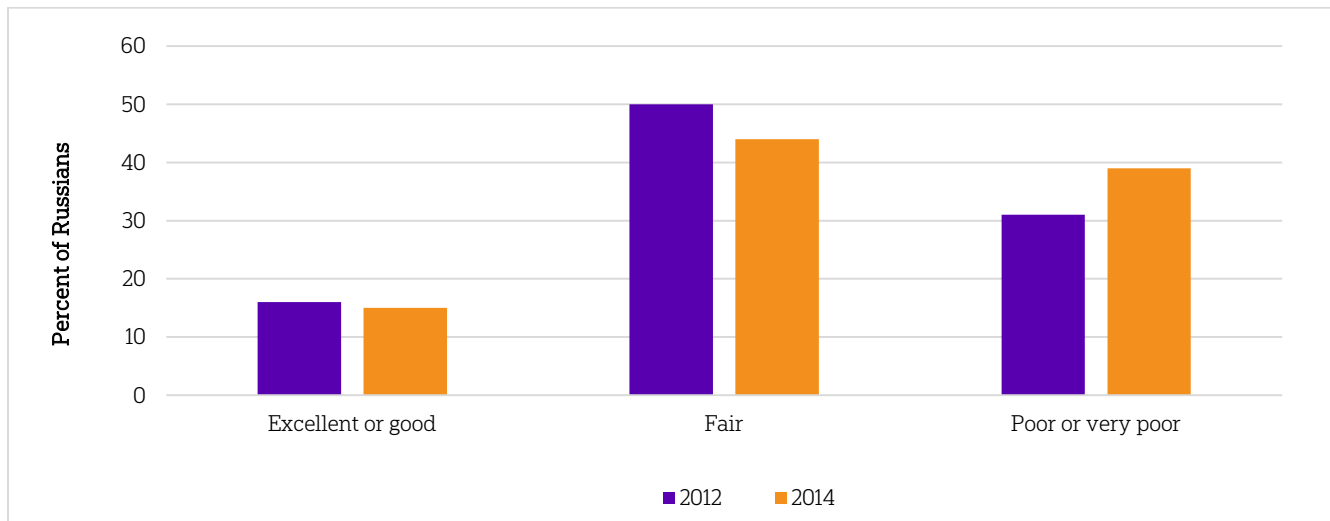
A MAJORITY OF RUSSIANS RATE THE STATE OF THE ECONOMY AS FAIR OR POOR.

Economic issues are important to many Russians. When asked about the most important problem facing the country, Russians cited the economic and financial crisis most often (21 percent of respondents). In addition, 4 in 10 Russians report the most important problem facing them and their family is price increases, inflation, and low wages/pensions.

Russians hold mostly negative views about the state of the Russian economy. When asked to rate the condition of the economy, 15 percent of Russians say it is excellent or good, 44 percent say fair, and 39 percent say poor or very poor. The public outlook on the economy is slightly more negative than in 2012, when 16 percent said it was excellent or good, 50 percent said fair, and 31 percent said poor or very poor.

Russians with more education are more likely to rate the economy as poor. Forty-three percent of those with a university or post graduate education say the economy is poor compared with 30 percent of those with a high school education or less.

Russians' ratings of the condition of the economy in 2012 and 2014



Question: How would you rate the condition of our country's economy today? Is it excellent, good, fair, poor or very poor?

When asked to compare the condition of the economy relative to three years ago, 44 percent say the economy now is somewhat or much worse, 28 percent say about the same, and 24 percent say much or somewhat better.

Ratings of the economy differ between those living inside and outside of Moscow. Residents of Moscow are significantly more likely than people living in the rest of the country to say the economy is worse than three years ago (61 percent vs. 42 percent).

People with higher incomes are more likely to say the economy has worsened in the last three years. Fifty-six percent of those with higher incomes (more than 34,000 rubles a month) report the economy is worse than three years ago compared to 45 percent of middle-income earners (incomes between 17,000-34,000 rubles a month), and 39 percent of lower-income Russians (less than 17,000 rubles a month).

RUSSIANS RATE THE CONDITION OF PERSONAL FINANCES MORE POSITIVELY THAN THAT OF THE NATIONAL ECONOMY, AND THERE HAS BEEN LITTLE CHANGE IN THEIR OUTLOOK IN THE LAST TWO YEARS.

About 1 in 4 Russians say their families' finances are excellent or good (24 percent), about half say fair (51 percent), and about 1 in 4 say poor or very poor (23 percent). Russians' views of their finances have not changed significantly from two years ago, and there is no clear trend that people perceive their families' finances as having worsened in recent years. Just over a third (37 percent) of Russians say their own finances have worsened in the last three years, while 39 percent say they have stayed the same and 23 percent say they have gotten better in the last three years.

Moscow residents are more likely than those in the rest of the country to say their families' finances are poor (31 percent vs. 23 percent).

Adults between 18 and 34 years of age are more likely to say their families' finances are excellent or good (30 percent) than both adults between 35 and 54 years of age (21 percent) and those 55 years or older (19 percent).

Differences in opinions toward business and industry are associated with Russians' financial assessments. When asked whether there should be more private ownership or government ownership of industry and business, 57 percent say more government ownership, 28 percent say more private ownership, and 15 percent say they do not know. People with a more market-oriented belief about business are almost twice as likely to say their families' finances are excellent or good (35 percent) than people with a less market-oriented belief (19 percent).

IN SPITE OF THE CURRENT ASSESSMENTS, RUSSIANS ARE MORE POSITIVE ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE ECONOMY AND PERSONAL FINANCES.

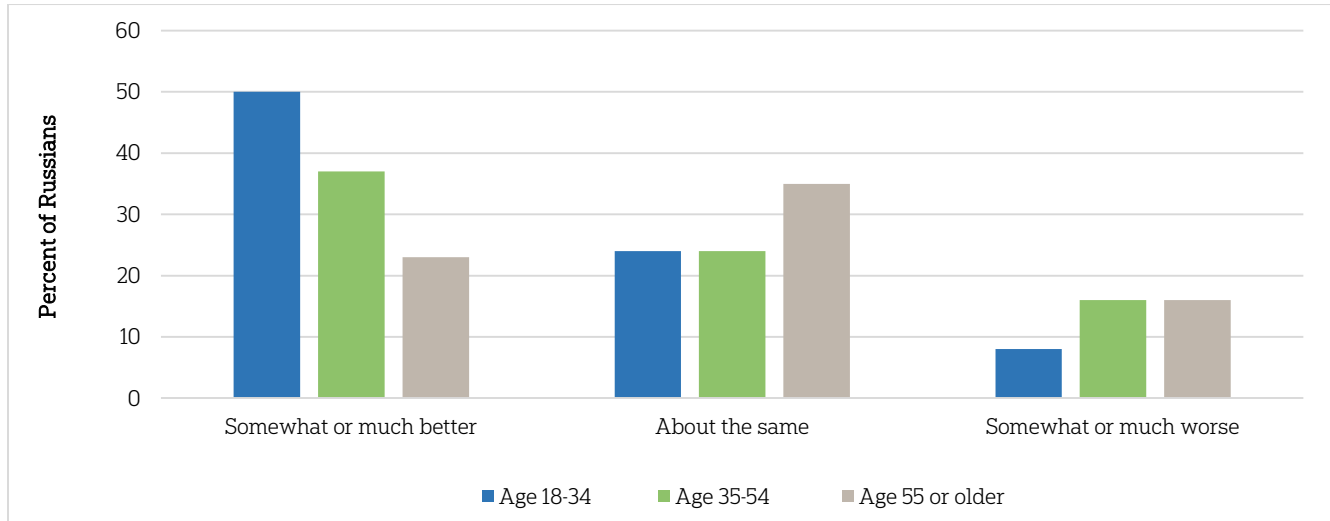
Relatively few Russians think the economy will get worse over the next three years. Nearly 4 in 10 (38 percent) expect the economy to be much or somewhat better in three years, 26 percent expect it will be about the same, and only 18 percent say somewhat or much worse.

Views on Russia's future economic prospects reflect differences in opinion between Moscow and those living outside of the capital. Moscow residents are more than twice as likely to say the economy will be worse in three years (40 percent) than people living in the rest of Russia (16 percent).

Younger Russians are the more optimistic about Russia's economic prospects than older Russians. Forty-three percent of adults between 18 and 34 years of age expect the economy to be somewhat or much better compared with 36 percent of adults between 35 and 54 years of age and 34 percent of those 55 or older.

Russians are also optimistic when it comes to the future outlook of their families' finances. Thirty-seven percent expect their families' finances to be somewhat or much better in three years, 28 percent say about the same, and only 13 percent say somewhat or much worse.

Regarding their own families' finances, younger Russians are again more optimistic than older Russians. Half of adults between 18 and 34 years of age expect their families' finances to be better in three years compared with 37 percent of adults between 35 and 54 years of age and 23 percent of those 55 years or older.

Russians' beliefs about the condition of their families' finances in three years, by age

Question: Looking ahead 3 years from now, do you think the condition of your family's finances will be better, worse or about the same?

Again, adults in Moscow are more skeptical about the economy than others. Moscow residents are less likely than those in the rest of the country to say their families' finances will be better in three years (23 percent and 38 percent, respectively).

Thirty-four percent of those who say state-owned TV stations are their primary source of news expect their families' finances to be somewhat or much better in three years compared with 47 percent of those who have a different main source of news.

BEYOND THE ECONOMY, A MAJORITY OF RUSSIANS ARE OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE DIRECTION OF THE COUNTRY.

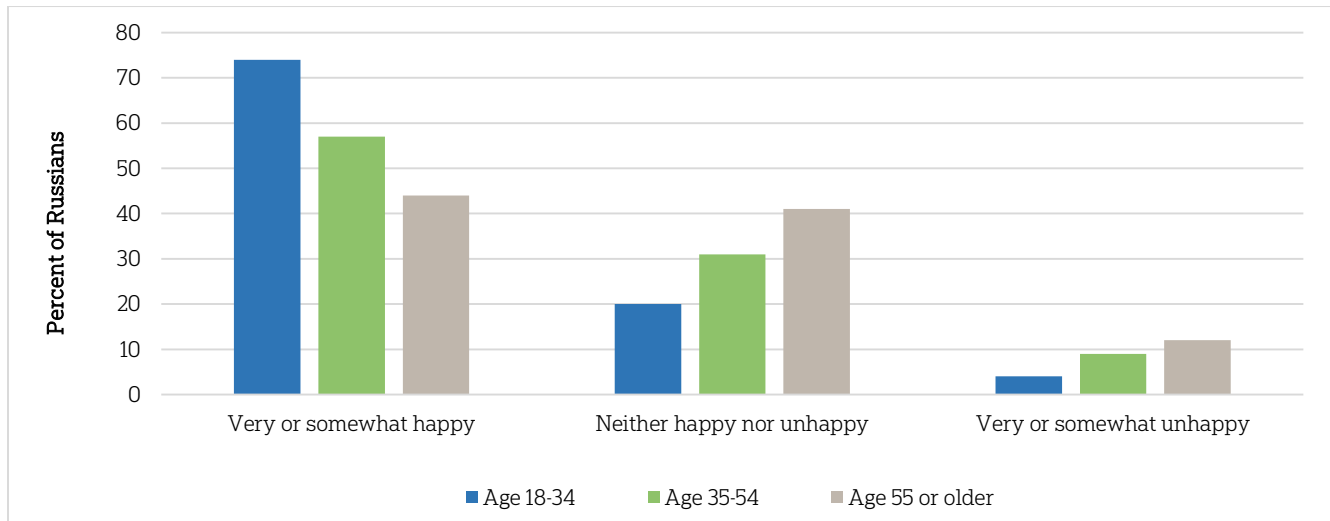
When it comes to Russians' general outlook about the direction of the country, responses are more positive. A majority of Russians are optimistic about the direction of the country. Two-thirds say Russia is headed in the right direction. Only 20 percent say the country is headed in the wrong direction.

Those who say their main source of news is state-owned TV are more likely to report Russia is headed in the right direction (71 percent) than those who say their main source of news is something else (58 percent).

The survey also probed Russians' views about their personal happiness. Nearly 6 in 10 Russians say they are somewhat or very happy (59 percent), 3 in 10 report they are neither happy nor unhappy, and only 1 in 10 say somewhat or very unhappy.

Adults between 18 and 34 years of age are more likely to report they are happy (74 percent) than adults between 35 and 54 years of age (57 percent) and those 55 years or older (44 percent).

Younger Russians are more likely than their older counterparts to report being happy



Question: When you think about how things are going in your life in general, would you say you are very happy, somewhat happy, neither happy nor unhappy, somewhat unhappy or very unhappy?

HALF OF RUSSIANS BELIEVE THE NEXT GENERATION WILL BE BETTER OFF IN 20 YEARS THAN PEOPLE ARE TODAY.

About half of Russians (49 percent) say people born today will be better off in 20 years when they are grown-up compared to how people are doing today. Nineteen percent believe people born now will be about the same as people today, 13 percent report people will be worse off in the future, and 19 percent do not know.

People living in Moscow are less optimistic. A third of Muscovites say the next generation will be better off compared with half of those living in the rest of the country.

Russians with preferences for greater privatization are more likely to believe people will be better off in 20 years (58 percent) than those who prefer government ownership (46 percent).

ECONOMIC ISSUES AND UKRAINE TOP THE LIST OF MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEMS.

When asked what are the most important problems facing the country, the most common responses include the economic and financial crisis (21 percent), the situation in Ukraine (16 percent) and price increases, inflation and low wages/pensions (15 percent).

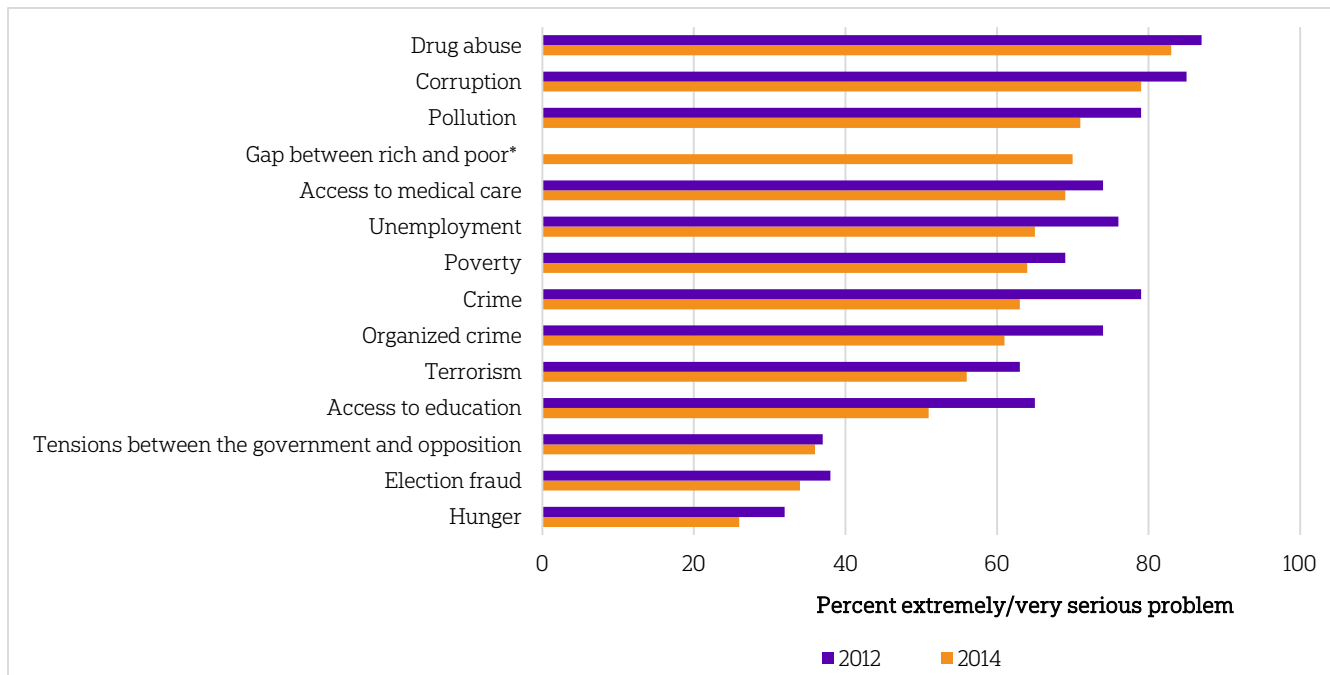
Russians also say economic issues are the most important problems facing their families; these include price increases, inflation, and low wages/pensions (40 percent), poor quality or lack of access to health care, education and social services (13 percent), and unemployment (6 percent).

When asked specifically about 14 different problems, Russians most often identify drug abuse, corruption and pollution as serious problems. More than 3 in 4 rate drug abuse (83 percent) and corruption (79 percent) as extremely or very serious problems; 71 percent rate pollution as a serious problem. In contrast, fewer say tensions between the government and the opposition (36 percent), election fraud (34 percent), and hunger (26 percent) are serious problems.

Across the board, fewer Russians report key issues as being serious problems now than two years ago. In particular, there have been significant declines in the proportion of Russians who identify crime (79 percent

vs. 63 percent, access to education (65 percent vs. 51 percent), organized crime (74 percent vs. 61 percent), and unemployment (76 percent vs. 65 percent) as serious problems.

Percent of Russians who rate each issue as an extremely or very serious problem in 2012 and 2014



* This question was not asked in 2012.

Question: How serious a problem is each of the following in our country today? For each one, please tell me if it is an extremely serious problem, very serious, somewhat serious, not too serious, or not at all serious problem.

Older Russians identify many issues as more serious problems than their younger counterparts. For example, those 55 years or older are more likely than young people (those between 18 and 34 years of age) to say the gap between the rich and poor (76 percent vs. 54 percent), terrorism (61 percent vs. 49 percent), access to medical care (73 percent vs. 64 percent), organized crime (64 percent vs. 56 percent), and corruption (81 percent vs. 74 percent) are serious problems. In contrast, 18 to 34 year olds are more likely to say access to education is a serious problem (54 percent) than those 55 and older (46 percent).

Those in Moscow are more likely than people in the rest of the country to say hunger (41 percent vs. 25 percent) and election fraud (44 percent vs. 33 percent) are serious problems. In contrast, only 68 percent of Moscow residents identify drug abuse as a serious problem compared with 85 percent of those in the rest of the country.

People whose main source of news is state-owned TV are more likely than those with another main source of news to report drug abuse as a serious problem (85 percent vs. 78 percent). Russians who follow news infrequently are more likely than those who follow news daily to view issues such as unemployment (71 percent vs. 61 percent), election fraud (44 percent vs. 30 percent), and hunger (36 percent vs. 20 percent) as serious problems.

TWO-THIRDS FAVOR RUSSIA'S SUPPORT OF UKRAINIANS WHO WANT TO BREAK OFF FROM THE KIEV GOVERNMENT.

Nearly 7 in 10 Russians say at least a few parts of Ukraine rightfully belong to Russia. Twenty-one percent of Russians say many parts of Ukraine belong to Russia, 48 percent say a few parts, and 31 percent say no parts.

Eighty-three percent of Moscow residents say few or many parts of Ukraine belong to Russia compared with 68 percent of people in the rest of the country.

When it comes to President Putin's handling of the situation in Ukraine, nearly 8 in 10 Russians approve of his handling of the situation (79 percent); only 6 percent say they somewhat or strongly disapprove.

Those whose main source of news is state-owned TV are more likely than those who have another main source of news to approve of Putin's handling of the Ukraine situation (82 percent vs. 71 percent).

The survey also asked whether Russia should support Ukrainians who want to break off from Kiev. Two in 3 favor Russia supporting Ukrainians who want to break off from the Kiev government, 1 in 4 neither favor nor oppose, and only 9 percent somewhat or strongly oppose it.

How Russians learn about news has a significant effect on their views toward the Ukraine situation. Sixty-nine percent of those whose primary source of news is state-owned TV favor Russia's support of Ukrainians who want to break off from the Kiev government compared with 58 percent of those who have a different main news source. Seventy percent of those who follow news daily favor the policy compared with 55 percent who follow news weekly or less.

HALF OF RUSSIANS SAY ECONOMIC SANCTIONS ARE NOT IMPACTING THEM PERSONALLY, BUT MOSCOW RESIDENTS AND THOSE WITH HIGHER INCOMES ARE MORE LIKELY TO SAY THERE IS A NEGATIVE EFFECT.

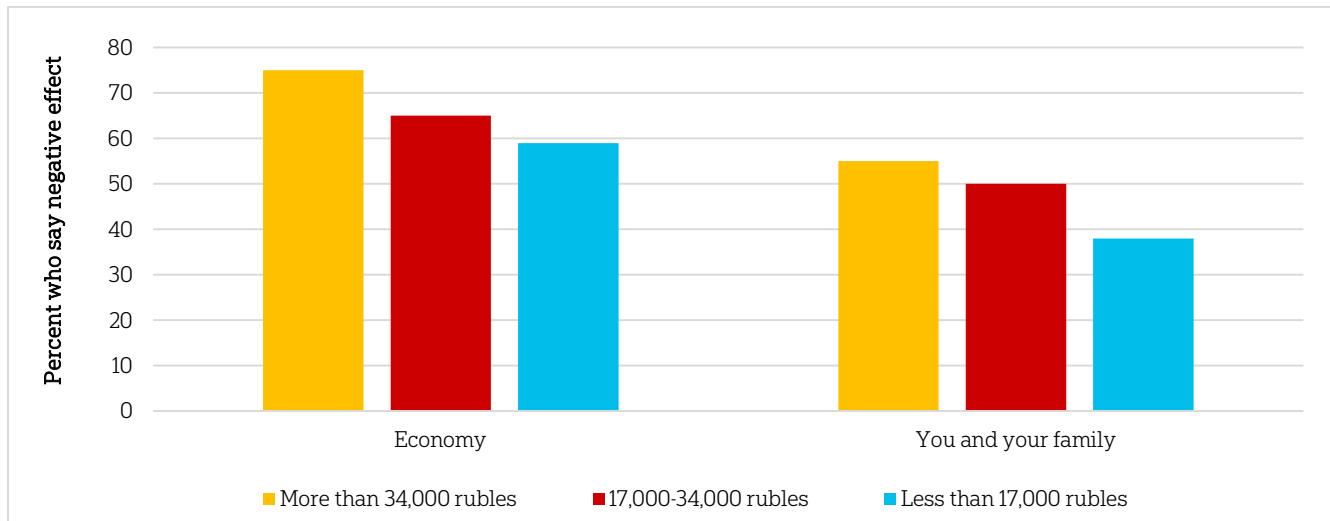
Most Russians think economic sanctions from Europe and the United States are having a negative effect on Russia. Nearly 2 in 3 say the sanctions have had a negative or extremely negative effect on the Russian economy (64 percent). Twenty-nine percent report the sanctions have had no effect on the economy and 7 percent say they have a positive effect.

Fewer Russians say the sanctions are affecting their families. Forty-five percent say the sanctions have had a negative effect on their family, 54 percent say no effect, and 2 percent say a positive effect.

Moscow residents are more likely than those in the rest of the country to say economic sanctions have had a negative effect on the economy (81 percent vs. 62 percent) and their family (63 percent vs. 43 percent).

Income also has a large effect on people's views about sanctions. Three in 4 Russians with higher incomes (more than 34,000 rubles a month) say the sanctions have had a negative effect on the economy compared with 59 percent of those with lower incomes (less than 17,000 rubles a month). Likewise, 55 percent of those with higher incomes report the sanctions have had a negative effect on their families' finances compared with 38 percent of those with lower incomes.

Russians with higher incomes are more likely to say economic sanctions have had negative effects on both the economy and their families



Questions: What, if any, effect have economic sanctions from Europe and the United States had on the [Russian economy/you and your family]? Would you say extremely negative effect, negative effect, no effect, positive effect or extremely positive effect?

A MAJORITY OF RUSSIANS TRUST THE PRESIDENCY AND MILITARY, BUT FEW HAVE HIGH TRUST IN THE FEDERAL ASSEMBLY, JUDICIARY OR POLICE.

Levels of trust vary across a number of institutions queried in the survey. Three in 4 Russians say they trust the presidency to do what is right either just about always or most of the time while about 2 in 3 have this same level of trust in the military.

Muscovites are less trusting of both the presidency (59 percent vs. 76 percent) and the military (41 percent vs. 67 percent) than Russians in other parts of the country.

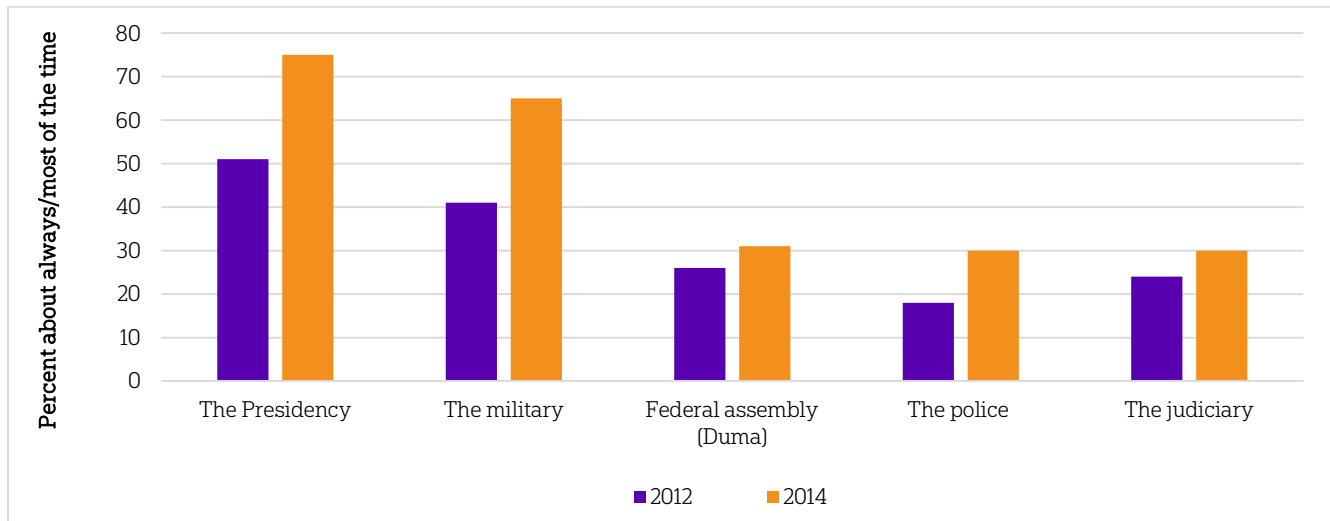
Those 55 years or older are more likely than adults between 35 and 54 years of age and adults between 18 and 34 years of age to trust the presidency (81 percent, 72 percent and 73 percent, respectively) and the military (71 percent, 62 percent and 64 percent, respectively).

Seventy-eight percent of those whose main source of news is state-owned TV say they trust the presidency to do what is right “just about always” or “most of the time” compared with 66 percent who have a different main source of news.

Fewer than 1 in 3 Russians trust the federal assembly (31 percent), the police (30 percent) or the judiciary (30 percent) to do what is right “just about always” or “most of the time.”

Russians’ trust for all five state institutions has increased in the last two years, but the biggest increases are for the military (41 percent vs. 65 percent) and the presidency (51 percent vs. 75 percent).

Percent of Russians who say they trust each institution to do what is right “just about always” or “most of the time” in 2012 and 2014



Question: For each of the following institutions in our country, please tell me how often you think you can trust each one to do what is right? Just about always, most of the time, only about half of the time, only sometimes, or never?

ABOUT THE STUDY

Methodology

This survey, funded by NORC at the University of Chicago, was conducted by NORC with fieldwork by GfK Russia between the dates of November 22 and December 7, 2014. Staff from NORC at the University of Chicago and the Associated Press collaborated on all aspects of the study.

The survey featured a nationally representative, multi-stage cluster, random route-sample of adults 18 years and older in Russia. The poll was conducted with in-person interviews of 2,008 adults.

At the first stage, the population was stratified into six groups, based on population size, for each of eight different regions of the country (Central, North-West, Southern, North-Caucasian, Volga, Ural, Siberian, and Far Eastern). In the end, 142 different groups were selected across 75 different regions. At the second stage, secondary sample units were randomly selected from a full list of election districts. At the third stage, a starting address point was assigned for each election district. On average, six interviews were conducted in each sampling point. Within-household selection was based on the last birthday method.

Interviewers selected and visited 14,021 addresses, and had a 57 percent contact rate. Among those contacted, 21 percent responded. Including non-contacts, the cumulative response rate is 14 percent. The overall margin of error +/- 2.4 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level (including the design effect).

Sampling weights were calculated to adjust for sample design aspects (such as unequal probabilities of selection) and for nonresponse bias arising from differential response rates across various demographic groups. Poststratification variables included age, sex, and region of the country. The data are weighted to reflect the Russian population based on the 2010 Russian Census.

All analyses were conducted using STATA (version 13), which allows for adjustment of standard errors for complex sample designs. All differences reported between subgroups of the Russian population are at the 95 percent level of statistical significance, meaning that there is only a 5 percent (or lower) probability that the observed differences could be attributed to chance variation in sampling. A comprehensive listing of all study

questions, complete with tabulations of top-level results for each question, is available on the AP-NORC Center website: www.apnorc.org.

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The two organizations have established the AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research to conduct, analyze, and distribute social science research in the public interest on newsworthy topics, and to use the power of journalism to tell the stories that research reveals.