

Press release, 3 May 2023

How Russians in Armenia and Georgia view the war

A new ZOiS Report presents the results of a survey among Russians migrants in Georgia and Armenia. An overwhelming majority of the respondents were opposed to Vladimir Putin and attributed responsibility for the war against Ukraine to Russia. The data also indicate that their level of political activism before leaving was higher than that of most Russians.

In 2022, the year when Moscow began the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, a large number of primarily young people left Russia. Armenia and Georgia were among the most popular destinations, as they can be entered without visa and are geographically close. To find out more about these Russian migrants and their attitudes, a team of researchers from the Centre of East European and International Studies (ZOiS), Princeton University and Harvard University has conducted a face-to-face survey in those countries in late 2022 among a total of more than 1,600 respondents. Of those, over 90% have arrived after January 2022, with peaks in March (Armenia) and September (Armenia and Georgia) (Fig. 1). Although this is not a strictly random sample, and therefore does not represent the experiences and attitudes of all recent Russian migrants in Armenia and Georgia, the findings illuminate important patterns both within and across countries.

The respondents are younger than the general population in Russia and overall better educated than Russians their age. Over 80% of them come from large cities with more than one million inhabitants. Consistent with numerous media reports, a sizeable share of respondents in both countries were employed in IT: 27% in Georgia and 37% in Armenia. ‘The survey also showed, that respondents in Georgia and Armenia have substantially more liberal social attitudes compared to the general Russian population’, the authors say.

Negative view of Russian institutions

Respondents clearly attribute responsibility for the war to Russian authorities. In Armenia, three-quarters of respondents blame Russian authorities; in Georgia, the figure is nearly two-thirds (Fig. 2). Respondents in Georgia continue to monitor the progress of the war more closely: over half said they followed the war ‘very closely’, compared to just over 40% in Armenia. Migrants’ views on Russian institutions are overwhelmingly negative, particularly among those interviewed in Armenia. By contrast, around 66% of respondents in Armenia and 46% in Georgia gave a positive rating to Ukraine’s president, Volodymyr Zelenskyi. Attitudes to NATO, the EU, and Western media are also largely positive, although sizeable shares of respondents avoid the question and choose not to give an evaluation.

More political and younger respondents in Armenia

Russians interviewed in Armenia were more politically active prior to their emigration, both in terms of news consumption and participation in political or civic activities, such as volunteering, donating to NGOs or organising cultural events. Respondents in Armenia were also more likely to report that they had participated in protest events against the war in Ukraine while still living in Russia (25% in Armenia versus 11% in Georgia, Fig. 3). However, respondents in both countries seldom engage in volunteer activities or participate in protests unrelated to the war in Ukraine.

The political consequences of the recent migration from Russia remains uncertain, ZOiS researcher Félix Krawatzek remarks: ‘On the one hand, the Russian regime has exiled some of its most vocal critics; on the other, the comparatively liberal environments in their host countries might allow exiles to connect with one other and mount a challenge to the Putin regime.’

The project was realised with financial support from Friedrich Ebert Foundation, the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute (HURI), the Davis Centre for Russian and Eurasian Studies at Harvard, and Harvard’s Minda de Gunzburg Centre for European Studies.

Publication:

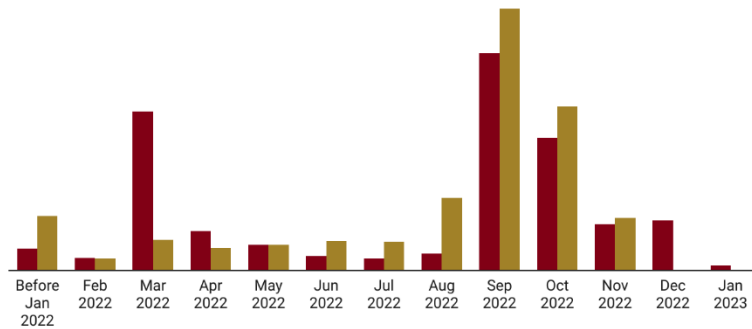
[Félix Krawatzek, Isabelle DeSisto, George Soroka: ‘Russians in the South Caucasus: Political Attitudes and the War in Ukraine’, ZOiS Report 2/2023.](#)

Figures

Figure 1

When did you leave Russia?

■ Armenia ■ Georgia



Survey of Russians in Georgia (853) and Armenia (801), 18+, conducted in December 2022 (CAPI)
 Source: ZOIS / Harvard / FES • Created with Datawrapper

Figure 2

In your opinion, who is primarily responsible for the conflict in Ukraine?

Russians in Georgia



Survey of 853 Russians in Georgia, 18+, conducted in December 2022 (CAPI)
 Source: ZOIS / Harvard / FES • Created with Datawrapper

In your opinion, who is primarily responsible for the conflict in Ukraine?

Russians in Armenia

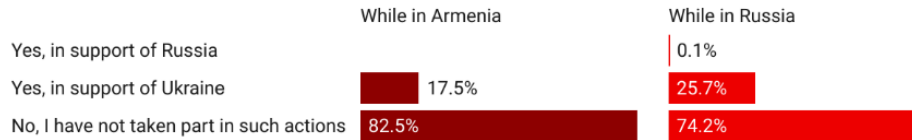


Survey of 801 Russians in Armenia, 18+, conducted in December 2022 (CAPI)
 Source: ZOIS / Harvard / FES • Created with Datawrapper

Figure 3

Participation in protests by Russians in Armenia

Have you taken part in demonstrations in support of or against the war (Russia's 'special military operation')?

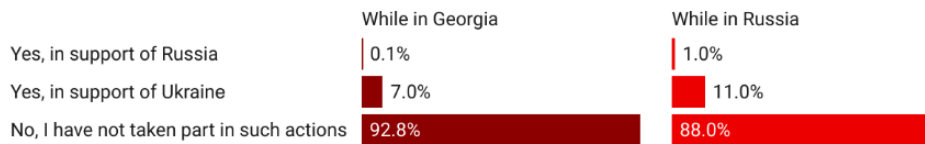


Survey of 801 Russians in Armenia, 18+, conducted in December 2022 (CAPI)

Source: ZOIS / Harvard / FES • Created with Datawrapper

Participation in protests by Russians in Georgia

Have you taken part in demonstrations in support of or against the war (Russia's 'special military operation')?



Survey of 853 Russians in Georgia, 18+, conducted in December 2022 (CAPI)

Source: ZOIS / Harvard / FES • Created with Datawrapper

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